375 MM 0382 AM

OUT OF THE DARKNESS – ONCE LOST & NOW FOUND BY HISTORIAN ALAN BOE.
Long Lost & Then Found...

Almost everyone enjoys a surprise and for lovers of great old cars, there’s no better surprise than uncovering some long lost four wheeled jewel that’s been squirreled away in a secret lockup for decades - the classic barn find. But when it comes to barn finds and long lost, rare old Ferraris, there aren’t many of these gems yet to be discovered.

Probably the most spectacular old Ferrari to have come out of hiding in the last year or two is the beast seen here. It’s a mighty 375 Mille Miglia spyder from 1954, bodied by Pinin Farina, chassis number 0382 AM, that was raced all over the place during a period that spanned twenty years before going into seclusion for the next thirty-six years, holes up in a private workshop in rural Mt. Kisco, New York.

The Ferrari 375 MM...

It almost goes without saying that a 375 MM Ferrari is a quick ride. To get maximum performance out of one, it might be thought that its beastly nature would require pilots with Paul Bunyan shoulders, Popeye forearms, and Superman bravery whereas, in reality, 375 MM Ferraris are quite tractable and, properly set up, can be a pleasure to drive. But, heaven forbid, if you get into trouble at speed in one of these things, it could bite back badly. Running with drum brakes on hard, skinny tires with no downforce to stick it to the road, and a less than sophisticated chassis and suspension set-up, a Ferrari 375 MM is a fast, loud and potent machine that slides around corners and chews up straights leaving an almighty roar in its wake.

Championship Plans...

In the latter part of 1953 and with the 1954 racing season looming, Ferrari’s decision was to again contest both the Formula One Grand Prix Championship and the World Sports Car Manufacturers’ title, a plate full for the ambitious young Italian company. In 1953, Ferrari had captured both the F1 Drivers’ crown, with Alberto Ascari winning everywhere, and the brand new World’s Sports Car Championship, thanks to a combination of high placings by a variety of both factory backed cars and privateers. So, there was much at stake going into the new season. When all the 1954 dust had settled, the F1 laurels ended up with Juan Manuel Fangio and Mercedes, but Ferrari successfully defended its sports car title, defeating Lancia and Jaguar with its powerful 375 Mille Miglia and 375 Plus Pinin Farina spyders.

A True Racer...

There’s no mistaking the 375 MM’s singular mission - go fast and win races. It’s a 100% pure, purpose built, spartan race car, nothing else. The tidy cockpit of our example is occupied by a pair of red and white vinyl clad bolstered seats, although the metal tonneau cover would have to go to get a passenger in. Plus, there’s no door on that side so a leap of faith is required. Straight ahead, framed by the top of the thin wood rimmed steering wheel and just this side of the tiny Brooklands-style windscreen, are five tightly clustered and easily readable gauges, the two big ones reporting engine revolutions up to 8000 rpm and road speed up to 300 kph. Oil pressure, water temperature and fuel level data get smaller instruments. A minimum of knobbed switches for panel lights and the pump complete the instrument panel. Located down on the transmission tunnel are the ignition switch, with parking and headlight controls, the starter button, the turn signal activator, and the magneto control switch.

Our 0382 AM...

The Ferrari seen here, s/n 0382 AM, was the ninth and last by serial number of the 4.5 liter V12 375 MM spyders finished toward the end of 1953 for the 1954 racing season. In addition, Ferrari and Pinin Farina built five 375 Plus spyders early in 1954 to race as factory entries along with the privately entered 375 MM spyders. The 375 Plus spyders were powered by Ferrari’s even bigger and stronger 4.9 liter V12 engine. Ferrari and Pinin Farina also completed five more 375 MM spyders during 1954 for road work or amateur racing, two going to special customers such as Emperor Bao Dai of Indochina and Italian film director Roberto Rossellini.

A Good Season...

Maranello’s sports car opposition in 1954 came from Lancia’s D-24 and D-25 spyders, Jaguar’s venerable C-Type and their new disc braked D-Type, Maserati’s smaller displacement A6GCS, and Aston Martin’s DB3S. Even so, Ferrari 375s won three of the six points races in 1954 starting with the Buenos Aires 1000 Kilometers, thanks to Umberto Maglioli and Nino Farina in a 375 MM, chassis s/n 0370 AM. Ferrari 375 Plus spyders went on to take the 1954 edition of the Le Mans 24 Hours (Froilán González and Maurice Trintignant in s/n 0396 AM) and the season-ending Carrera Panamericana (Umberto Maglioli again, this time in chassis s/n 0392 AM). The result was the 1954 Sports Car Manufacturers’ Championship for Ferrari, 32 points to Lancia’s 20 and Jaguar’s 10.
Bill Spear...

Completed in December, 1953, our barn find Ferrari had been pre-sold to semi-pro driver Bill Spear as chassis number 0382 AM. It was shipped from the factory to Luigi Chinetti Motors in New York City, arriving on New Year's Eve for delivery to Spear in early January. In order to keep the record straight, it should be noted that several serial numbers associated with the 375 MM Spyders while Spear's Ferrari was being built. Chassis numbers were changed between four of the cars, including this one, which originally had assigned chassis number 0374 AM, then briefly became 0362 AM, before ending up as 0382 AM in order to fulfill Spear's order.

Spear, who maintained homes in both Westport, Connecticut and Palm Beach, Florida, was the Sports Car Club of America National Driving Champion in 1953, piloting both a Ferrari 225 Vignale Spyder, s/n 0218 ET, and the only 340 Mexico Vignale spyder built by Ferrari, s/n 0228 AT. He also recorded a third overall at Le Mans in 1954 partnering Sherwood Johnston in a Briggs Cunningham C4-R. In addition, Spear owned and raced an impressive array of competition Ferraris in the early 1950s, including a 166 MM Touring Barchetta, s/n 0054 M, a 340 America Touring Barchetta, s/n 0118 A, and a 340 MM Vignale Spyder, s/n 0324 AM.

Off to the Races...

Spear's 375 MM received its baptism under fire on March 7, 1954, at the Sebring 12 Hours in Florida with co-driver Phil Hill but, after taking the lead with Spear driving, their race ended on lap sixty thanks to rear axle problems. A week later, Spear, averaging 97 mph and hitting 150 mph through the speed trap, finished second overall at the Savannah Grand Prix in Georgia, held on the grounds of Hunter Air Force Base. Spear led for twenty-six of the thirty laps, only to be overtaken by Jim Kimberly in his 375 MM, s/n 0364 AM, at the end of the race.

A Fabulous Year...

The race at Andrews Air Force Base was the second of eight SCCA weekend races that Spear would run in 1954 in s/n 0382 AM, on tracks such as the old Watkins Glen 4.6 mile public road course, the dedicated track at Thompson, Connecticut and the other circuits laid out on Strategic Air Command bases. Spear and s/n 0382 AM won four of these races outright, finished second overall in two more, and DNFed in the other two. In addition, at Watkins Glen on September 17, Spear set the lap record for the old public road course at 3 minutes, 10.8 seconds, at 86.6 mph, which was never beaten.

Duncan Black...

By early 1955, Spear had taken delivery of, and had begun racing in, his ride for the new season, a Maserati 300 S and so, in February, s/n 0382 AM was turned over to Jack Rutherford for the Daytona Speed Week events where the car finished third in the flying mile for Class A sports cars posting a 153.724 mph blast across the beach. A week later, Rutherford took the 375 MM to an eighth overall finish in a preliminary race at the Fort Pierce, Florida, SCCA Nationals. However, by July of 1955, the Spear Ferrari had been sold to Duncan Black from Parkton, Maryland.

Black was quick to embark on an ambitious race and hill climb program with s/n 0382 AM in the second half of the year. He entered thirteen events, winning one, finishing second in another, and posting three second overall finishes. Black kept the car for five years, racing it multiple times, mainly in the eastern USA, including such noted events as the Road America 500 in 1956 and the Watkins Glen Grand Prix in 1956 and 1957.

George Burke...

After retiring s/n 0382 AM for the 1959 season, Black sold it in 1960 to Dr. George Burke of Baltimore, a faculty member at Johns Hopkins University. Now a six-year-old race car, Burke continued to compete in SCCA events with the Ferrari through 1966, primarily at his home track at Marlboro,
"Probably the most spectacular old Ferrari to have come out of hiding in the last year or two is the beast seen here."

"There's no mistaking the 375 MM's singular mission - go fast and win races. It's a 100% pure, purpose built, spartan race car."

"A Ferrari 375 MM is a fast, loud and potent machine that slides around corners and chews up straights leaving an almighty roar in its wake."
“The 375 MMs had simple interiors, raw, open and bare-boned, with just enough instruments and switches to get the job done.”
Maryland. It was Burke who put the gold number 9 on the car which it still wears today. It was also Burke who gets credit for causing a change in U.S. road racing that is commonplace today, but wasn’t in 1966. While practicing for the President’s Cup race at Marlboro on April 12, Burke ran over a Formula Junior in the subway turn, thereby putting an end to the SCCA’s policy of mixing open wheel formula cars and sports cars.

Colin Crabbe to Joel Finn to Ian Gunn...

Burke kept the Ferrari until 1971 when it was sold to Englishman Colin Crabbe, who quickly passed it on to Joel Finn of Poughkeepsie, New York, on May 5, 1971, for the princely sum of $2,400. Finn then turned it over to John B. “Ian” Gunn of Mt. Kisco, New York, on April 21, 1972, for $10,000.

In addition to his interest in fast cars in general and the 375 MM in particular, Gunn owned a 1750 Alfa and had a strong attraction to Datsun 240 Zs, classic motorcycles, and the equipment to maintain and restore them, and had built a well equipped machine shop at his home. A world renowned physicist, in 1963 Gunn invented a new way to produce microwave oscillations. This led to the negative resistance Gunn diode which made radar detectors and microwave ovens feasible. So, the next time you get a speeding ticket timed with a radar gun, you can give a tip of the hat to Ian Gunn.

Watkins Glen, October, 1973...

Gunn raced his now eighteen year old Ferrari in vintage events in 1972 and 1973, most notably to a fourth overall at the Watkins Glen Löwenbräu Vintage Grand Prix on October 6, 1973. His best time through the speed trap that weekend was almost 114 mph, and his fastest lap was 2 minutes, 41.1 seconds, for an average speed of 75.31 mph. This was the final race in the long career of s/n 0382 AM.

Out To Pasture...

The car was tired, its brakes shot and its gearbox broken, so Gunn trailered it back to Mt. Kisco and put it up on blocks where it stayed until last March. Over those thirty-six plus years, he resisted all efforts to buy the car, vowing that it would never be sold during his lifetime.

After Ian Gunn passed away on December 6, 2008, his three daughters decided it was time to find a new home for the old Ferrari. It was west coast vintner and exotic car dealer, Mark Ketcham, who’d known Gunn since 1994, who facilitated the sale of the car earlier this year after deflecting a flurry of interested potential buyers from around the world who had homed in on the car once word spread of Gunn’s death. The transaction was arranged through the good offices of Keith Duly, a long time friend of Ian Gunn.

Paul Russell and Company...

Next, the red warrior was delivered to Paul Russell and Company in Essex, Massachusetts, where it was sympathetically prepared so it could be safely used, with great effort taken to respect the irreplaceable originality and patina of the old race car. But the 375 needed a lot of work – its Rip Van Winkle years had taken a heavy toll. Then, no sooner had the car arrived in Essex than Ketcham’s application to have it included in the Post-War Preservation Class at this year’s Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance was accepted, putting additional pressure on Russell and crew to get everything done in a little over four month’s time. The shop was already under the gun and working weekends and evenings getting ready for Pebble Beach a rare Bugatti Type 57 S Atlantic that had been hit by a train years ago. That they succeeded with the 375 MM is evidenced by the third-in-class trophy the old Ferrari received at Pebble Beach.

Rebuilding Required...

In order to make the car drivable and get the engine running again, a lengthy laundry list of jobs had to be completed. The magneto, carbs, and water pump had to be rebuilt, and all fluids had to be flushed and replaced. Compression checks were required, and the cooling system and cranking oil pressures had to be tested. The ignition harness had to be restored and valve timing reset. The brake lines and master cylinder had to be replaced, slave cylinders re-sleeved, the pedal box rebuilt, and the brake backing plates and shoes cleaned.

The clutch was replaced, the pressure plate rebuilt, and the transmission disassembled to remove and replace the disintegrated old synchro rings. Other items that had to be rebuilt included the generator, voltage regulator, and the Autoflux electric fuel pump. The original exhaust system, which came separate from the car, was re-installed, the cockpit vinyl cleaned, and various storage damage dents ironed out.

Vintage Tires and Stickers...

Interestingly, the old non-date coded tires and tubes, which were installed sometime before 1973, still held air after all these years and were not replaced. Additionally, it was discovered that the Borrani wire wheel rims were stamped “4.5 W.S.” for “4.5 liters, William Speir”, something the shop had never seen before. The rear firewall in the cockpit still retained some of the old scrutinizing stickers from the 1950s and 1960s, including those from the 1954 SCCA races at

The 375 MM, s/n 0382 AM, at March AFB in 1954.
"The 375 MMs had large, brutish, untamed 4.5 liter V-12 engines, with three Weber 40 IF/4C carbs, producing 340 hp."
“This 375 MM, s/n 0382 AM, was cleaned up and had parts rebuilt but all the old racing scars have been preserved.”

“In order to make the car drivable and get the engine running again, a lengthy laundry list of jobs had to be completed. The magnetos, carbs, and water pump had to be rebuilt, and all fluids had to be flushed and replaced. Compression checks were required, and the cooling system and cranking oil pressures had to be tested. The ignition harness had to be restored and valve timing reset.”
Andreas Mohringer accepts a well-deserved Preservation Class Award at the 2010 Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance.

Lockbourne Air Force Base and the Les Six Heures du Marlboro.

It’s Public Presentation...

And then the 375 MM was shipped to California after a few Massachusetts test miles. Following Pebble Beach in August 2010, the red number 9, with its Preservation Award, was sent back to Paul Russell’s shop for final work for new owner, Andreas Mohringer of Salzburg, Austria.

Ferrari Lineage...

Ferrari’s 375 MM and 375 Plus spyders were road racing’s giant killers in 1954. They followed on the heels of Ferrari’s 340 America, 340 Mexico and 340 MM sports competition cars from the early 1950s and, across the remainder of the decade, heralded in a remarkable line-up of ever faster and more powerful twelve cylinder competition machines from Maranello.

In 1955, it was the 410 Sport, then the 290 MM from 1956, and the 315 and 335 Sport spyders from 1957. They were followed by 250 Testa Rossas in 1958 and the TR59s and TR60s at the end of the decade. This amazing assortment of front engine V12 competition spyders proved capable of taking on and dispatching the best of the rest. But there’s no other 375 MM spyder quite like s/n 0382 AM – still unrestored and retaining its originality after all these years. And, until recently, it surely was one of the last of the great undiscovered, barn find, time warp machines from Maranello.

Acknowledgments...

The author would like to thank Mark Ketcham and Paul Russell for making the Ferrari available, and David Seielstad, Terry O’Neil and Andreas Mohringer for their racing history research and help.
WHERE ARE THEY TODAY?
THE NINE 375 MM PININFARINA SPYDER...
COMPILED BY ALAN BOE

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Above right: 375 and 375i original PF Job Numbers hand written by someone way back when.

Alan Boe is one of the foremost Ferrari researchers and historians of our time, and he writes extensively, with authority, on the older Ferraris for many prestigious publications. He is also Chief Judge of the Ferrari Class at the important Pebble Beach Concours d'Élégance.

Above: An actual Ferrari Price List from the 1950s, giving the cost of a 375 MM, a rare 735 MM, both a 250 MM Spyder and Berlinetta, and both a 166 MM Spyder and Berlinetta. The Berlinettas are a bit more than the Spiders, but the 375 is the most expensive of all.

Above: Pages from an extensive notebook, with detailed remarks on how the car operated, what had to be fixed, sketches of the parts that had to be ordered or made, hand drawn schematics of how parts were to be assembled, race results, etc. It is a mother lode of material on the operational life of this 375 MM when it raced, and it shows the care and attention needed to keep these beasts running out in the field far from home.