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### Ferrari 250 GTE



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# The 250 GTE



## The First Family Ferrari

by Alan Boe

From the beginning of Ferrari automobile production in 1948 until 1960, the vehicles produced at the small factory in Maranello, Italy, were either single seat formula racers or two-passenger sports or grand touring cars, but since 1960 a major element of Ferrari production has been four-place cars. Granted, a very limited number of Ferraris were produced in the early 1950s with back seats, mostly with Ghia bodies, but it wasn't until the appearance of the 250 GTE 2+2 in 1960 that a commitment was made by the factory to produce an automobile suited for family travel.

By the late 1950s Ferrari had come to realize that sales potential existed for a four-passenger, high performance, grand touring Ferrari — both Aston Martin and Jaguar, for example, were offering such vehicles. The car that opened the door to this new market for Ferrari was first seen by the public at the 1960 LeMans 24-hour race, one of three prototype GTE's having been entrusted to the course marshal that June weekend. But testing, design, and development work had been going on quietly at Ferrari and Pininfarina head-

quarters for about a year prior to the LeMans introduction.

In conjunction with Pininfarina, the necessary design studies were undertaken and what emerged was a Ferrari sedan (serial number 1287 GT) that very closely resembled the eventual production vehicle. Following this original, or *ante-prototipo* car, two more prototypes were constructed, each with subtle differences in accent, trim and styling characteristics. For example, the first of the prototypes (serial number 1895 GT) had fresh air vents in the sail panel behind each rear seat window, but no marker/turn signal lights were used on the front fenders. The second prototype (serial number 1903 GT) did not have the fresh air vents since the rear windows were now hinged on their leading edges allowing them to be opened slightly for air extraction (a feature carried over to the production GTEs), but this car did acquire marker/turn signal lights mounted low-down on each front fender. Once production was underway these amber lights were moved to the upper tips of each front fender and given a new shape. Both prototypes were completed in June of

1960, the first finished in red, the second in white.

After completion of chassis number 2043 GT (the fourth car built) production began, although styling variations continued to be seen on these early cars. Marchal driving or fog lights appeared in the grille openings of most of the early cars. Front fender vents containing 13 slots were incorporated into the design to aid in exhausting engine heat. It is interesting to note that only minor amounts of hot air actually manage to escape the engine compartment, even at speed, since passage out the venting is blocked by fresh air ducts, heater hoses, the battery and brake booster and other oddments.

Other minor styling changes continued to show up after production began but probably the most noticeable variation in styling on these cars involves the taillight design and driving light location. The taillights on the early cars were set vertically in a plated panel mounted on the tip of each rear fender. A red reflecting lens was located over an amber or red turn signal light which, in turn, was set above the red rear and stop light. In late 1961 the rear

light treatment on some cars was changed putting the two bulbs under either an all-red plastic lens or under a single lens with the upper half amber and the bottom half red. A red reflector was fixed below the one piece lens. By mid-1962 most GTEs were equipped with the one lens taillight and by late 1962 most, if not all, GTEs were delivered with a one-piece taillight that now included a back-up light. Also, by late 1962 the driving or fog lights were moved from the ends of the grille opening to a spot below and just inside the headlights. However, to confuse things, a few 1961 cars exhibit this styling (2579 GT and 2843 GT, for example). This change necessitated relocating the parking lights slightly. At about the same time a more pronounced chrome trim ring was added around the headlights. Deeper dished Borrani wire wheels were added to the car in late 1960 and again in 1963. Finally, a very limited number of cars were fitted with hood scoops in the style of the Ferrari 250 GT Cabriolet then in production.

In the Ferrari scheme of things, the 250 GTE 2+2 was a replacement for the two-passenger 250 GT Pinin Farina\* coupe which had been offered since 1958. Using the same 102.4-inch wheelbase, the factory created a four-passenger tourer where the two-passenger coupe had been. The extra interior room was achieved by moving the engine and gearbox ahead about eight inches in the chassis. At the same time the car gained over 300 pounds compared to the weight of the coupe. The factory sales brochure and published reports on the car soon after its introduction generally list the GTE's weight around 3300lbs. with fluids and two people aboard. The new 2+2 was nearly two inches wider, two inches lower and 12 inches longer than the Pinin Farina coupe (185" vs. 173"). Interestingly, the factory GTE sales brochure claims that the car's total length does not exceed that of the coupe it replaced. (The brochure writers must have been thinking of the cars' wheelbases, not their over-all lengths.) Along with the added interior space came an increase in trunk capacity.

All 250 GTEs were turned out with Connolly leather interiors in a variety of colors, but the leather covering on the upper dashboard on all cars was dyed a nonreflective black. The trans-

\*The Pinin Farina name was changed to Pininfarina in 1960.

mission tunnel, door panels, and parcel shelf behind the rear seats were covered in leather as would be expected. Permanently fixed arm rests are located between and beside each divided rear seat and, as an added creature comfort, electric windows could be ordered — a first for Ferrari. In 1961 fresh air ventilation was improved with the addition of two extra outlets for outside air on the dashboard, one centrally located and the other to the passenger's right. Two other cold air intakes supply fresh air from under the dashboard. A small fan located under the rear window parcel shelf provides demisting for the inside of the back window.

The Pininfarina design has to be considered a success in that an existing chassis was converted to accommodate four instead of two people with very little loss of performance and, perhaps, no loss of beauty. The sales brochure extols the virtues of the new car, calling attention to the aerodynamic slope of the hood, angle of the windshield, and harmonious blend of the roof, rear window, and trunk. When viewed dispassionately, it must be said that the

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*It is estimated that today  
not more than 650 GTE's  
still exist worldwide..*

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design and its execution successfully convey the Ferrari image — the car is as good-looking as any four-passenger tourer of its time.

Mechanically the 250 GTE was not much changed from its predecessors. Its performance derives from the classic Ferrari chain driven, single overhead cam, 60° V-12 engine displacing 2953cc. The engine's block is cast in a silicone/ aluminum alloy called silumin. Forced-in cylinder liners are used. In the factory catalog of engine numbers, the 250 GTE engine is identified as a "tipo 128E." This, at the time, was the latest development in the Gioacchino Colombo-designed small block 250 GT engine, a process that had been going on since introduction of the type 128 engine in the early 1950s. The major difference between the type 128E engine and its forebearers involved relocation of the twelve spark plugs from the inside to the outside of the engine vee above the exhaust headers, and the replacement of the old mouse-trap valve springs with coil valve springs. Compression ratios and horsepower figures published for the GTE engine

vary somewhat. Factory data sheets for individual cars give a compression ratio ranging from 9.0 to 9.4 to 1 whereas the sales literature lists an 8.8 to 1 compression ratio. Research indicates that the lower compression ratios are generally associated with later production vehicles. Horsepower figures usually list a maximum of 240bhp at 7000rpm for the GTE engine, but the same basic engine set up for racing was capable of turning out up to 300hp in competition Ferraris.

Carburetion on early GTEs was via three Weber 40 DCL 6 units, but by 1961 three Weber 36 DC 3 or 36 DCS carbs were used. The cars are equipped with a choke and an electric fuel pump to aid starting in colder weather. In late 1960 the original valves in the engine were replaced with a size slightly larger. Finally, in 1963 an alternator was used in place of the generator.

Instrumentation on Ferraris has always been complete and the GTE is no exception. Right from the start, GTE dashboards contained a large tachometer and speedometer facing the driver with a smaller oil pressure gauge tucked in between. To the right of the speedometer (on left-hand-drive cars) is a horizontal row of gauges for oil temperature, water temperature, fuel level and a clock. In 1961, the smaller instruments, except for the oil pressure gauge, were relocated in a three over two arrangement, the new instrument being an ammeter. This realignment allowed the addition of a fresh air vent alongside the fuel level gauge on the upper tier of instruments. Gauges were provided in either metric or standard measurement depending upon the initial sales destination of the car.

All GTEs were delivered with an all-synchromesh four-speed gearbox coupled to a Laycock de Normanville electrically controlled overdrive unit operable only when the car is in fourth gear. Although the owner's manual indicates that the overdrive unit was available only on cars equipped with a 7/32 rear axle ratio, all cars seem to have been overdrive equipped. A source of some concern to testers and owners of the earlier GTEs was the common lubrication supply provided for the gearbox and overdrive. Time and regular attention to the oil level within have proven this worry unnecessary as many overdrive units on these early cars are still functioning properly. Prudence dictates that the clutch be used, however, when engaging and disengaging the overdrive. In late 1962 the overdrive



A 1960 250 GTE 2+2 (serial #2297 GT) in Ferrari racing red owned by Dr. General C. Marsh of Elyria, Ohio. (Owner photos)



Two more shots of Dr. Marsh's 2+2. Note early taillight design and the four imposing exhaust pipes typical of the V-12 Ferraris.

unit received its own oil supply. Fuel tank capacity for the cars is about 20 gallons and open highway fuel consumption runs from 14-17mpg.

There also seems to have been some concern for the ability of GTE owners and/or passengers to find things in the dark as the car is equipped with plenty of light bulbs — two in the engine compartment, one each in the trunk, glove box, and rear view mirror, plus, of course, an interior dome light and red warning lights in each door.

The chassis under the car is typical of Ferrari at that time. It is constructed of tubular steel using two large oval longitudinal pieces with the necessary cross bracing of smaller tubing. The chassis was a further development of the Ferrari type 508 chassis and was designated the type 508E chassis, hence the suffix "E" in GTE. New to the car were the Koni tubular shock absorbers



Dashboard from an early 250 GTE.

— earlier road-going Ferraris were fitted with Houdaille lever action shocks. Later, as development continued, the cars were also equipped with coil springs at the rear wheels. Up front, suspension is independent via A-arms, telescopic Koni shocks and coil springs, while the solid rear axle is located by lateral rods and the rear suspension uses semi-elliptic leaf springs and Koni shock absorbers. A larger anti-roll bar was

provided up front on later cars as further chassis development took place. Original tires were Pirelli Cinturatos in 185-15 or 650-15 sizes mounted on beautiful Borrani center-lock wire wheels.

Counting the prototypes, a total of 955 GTEs were turned out by the factory, all but 53 being left-hand-drive cars. An additional 50 or so cars were produced using the late GTE body style but incorporating the new 330 (4-liter) V-12 engine which debuted in 1964. These cars are referred to as 330 America 2+2's due to the "America" script found on their trunks. It is estimated that today not more than 650 GTEs still exist worldwide and many of these cars are in pieces or awaiting restoration. Neglect, a need for parts and a drop in the value of the 250 GTEs in the 1960s and early 1970s caused many of the cars to disappear.



This mid-1962 Ferrari 250 GTE 2+2 (serial #3339 GT) is owned by Alan Boe of Lincolnshire, Illinois, author of this article. Note European taillight design and Borrani center-lock wire wheels. Counting the prototypes, a total of 955 GTE's were turned out by the factory. (Alan Boe photos)

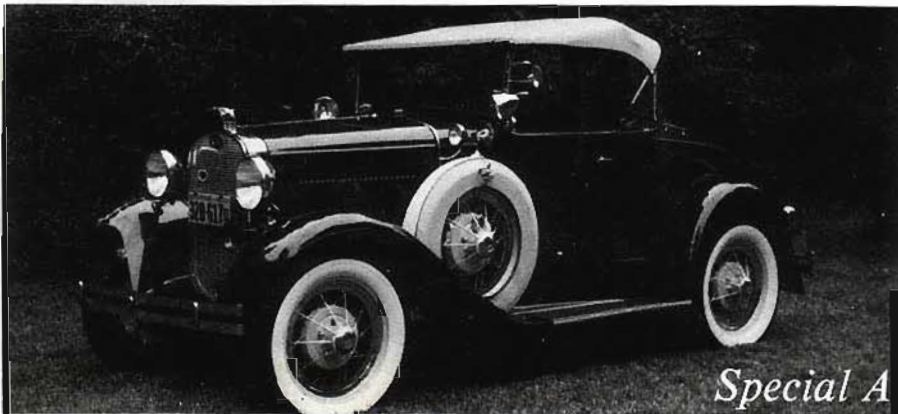
And it's sad but true that it's still not unusual to come across ads for pieces taken off of a recently parted out GTE. Although the car sold well when new (the number built was by far the highest for a Ferrari model up until then), after production ceased few people, it seems, wanted a three-liter, four-passenger "mass-produced" Ferrari that was labeled slow for a Ferrari, that understeered, and that had no pretensions as a racer. Also, the same V-12 engine was available in roadster and berlinetta

bodies that were (and are) more exciting than a GTE, went faster than a GTE and (in the 1960s) didn't cost all that much more than a GTE. Furthermore, Ferrari has continuously offered improved versions of his four-passenger cars thus rendering the GTE quickly obsolete.

Today the market value for a nice, well-maintained 250 GTE is about the same as the car's delivered price when new of nearly \$13,000. While the average asking price of a good GTE has about doubled in the past six years,

Ferrari's first four-seater has experienced nowhere near the rise in value seen in the more exotic and rarer models. This makes the car that much more interesting in today's Ferrari market. Consider this — where else can you find a Pininfarina-designed, V-12 engined Ferrari that even today will outperform most cars on the road and deliver that beautiful Ferrari sound, while it appreciates in value (and becomes rarer) and still spend no more than the same car cost new? ⇌

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