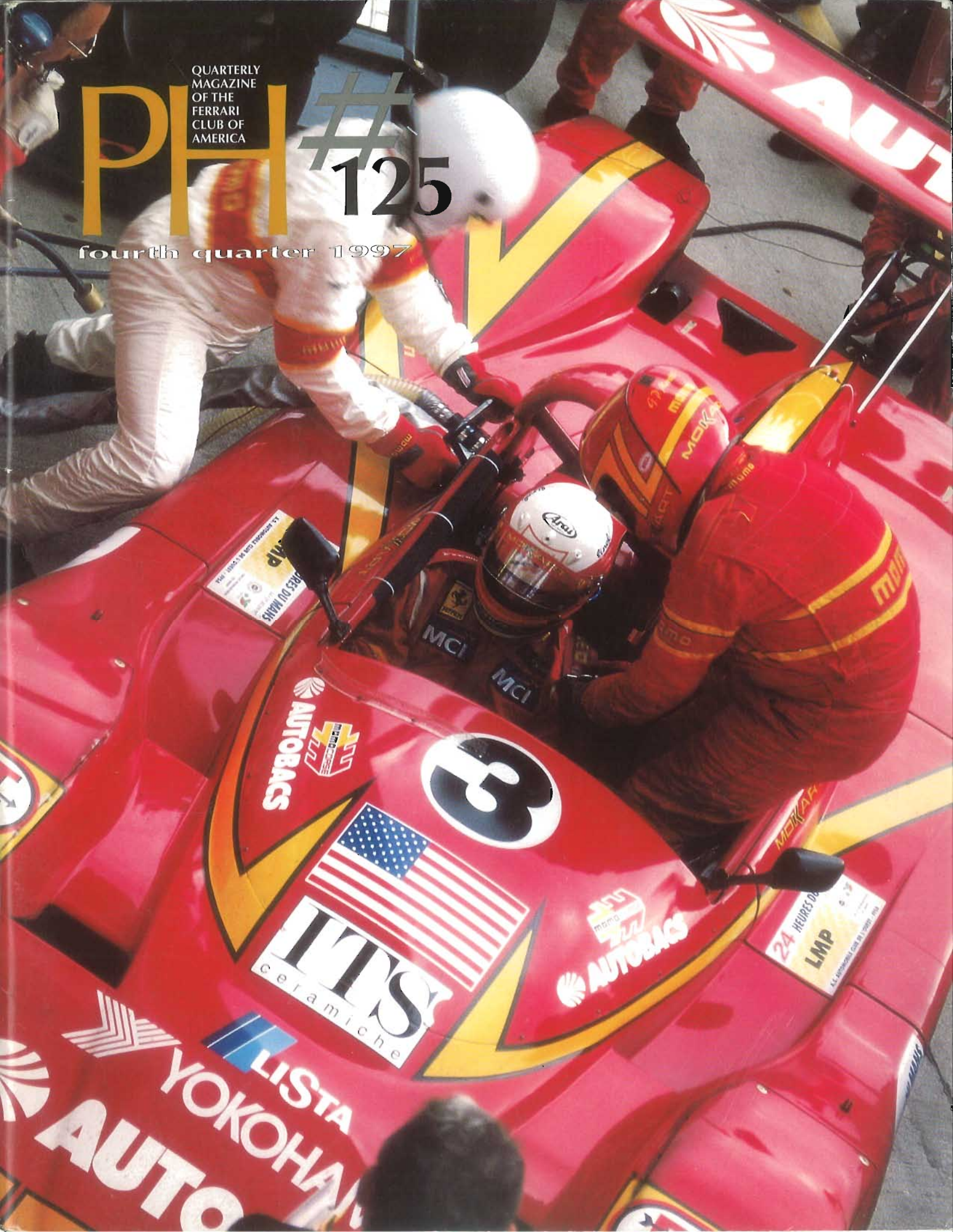
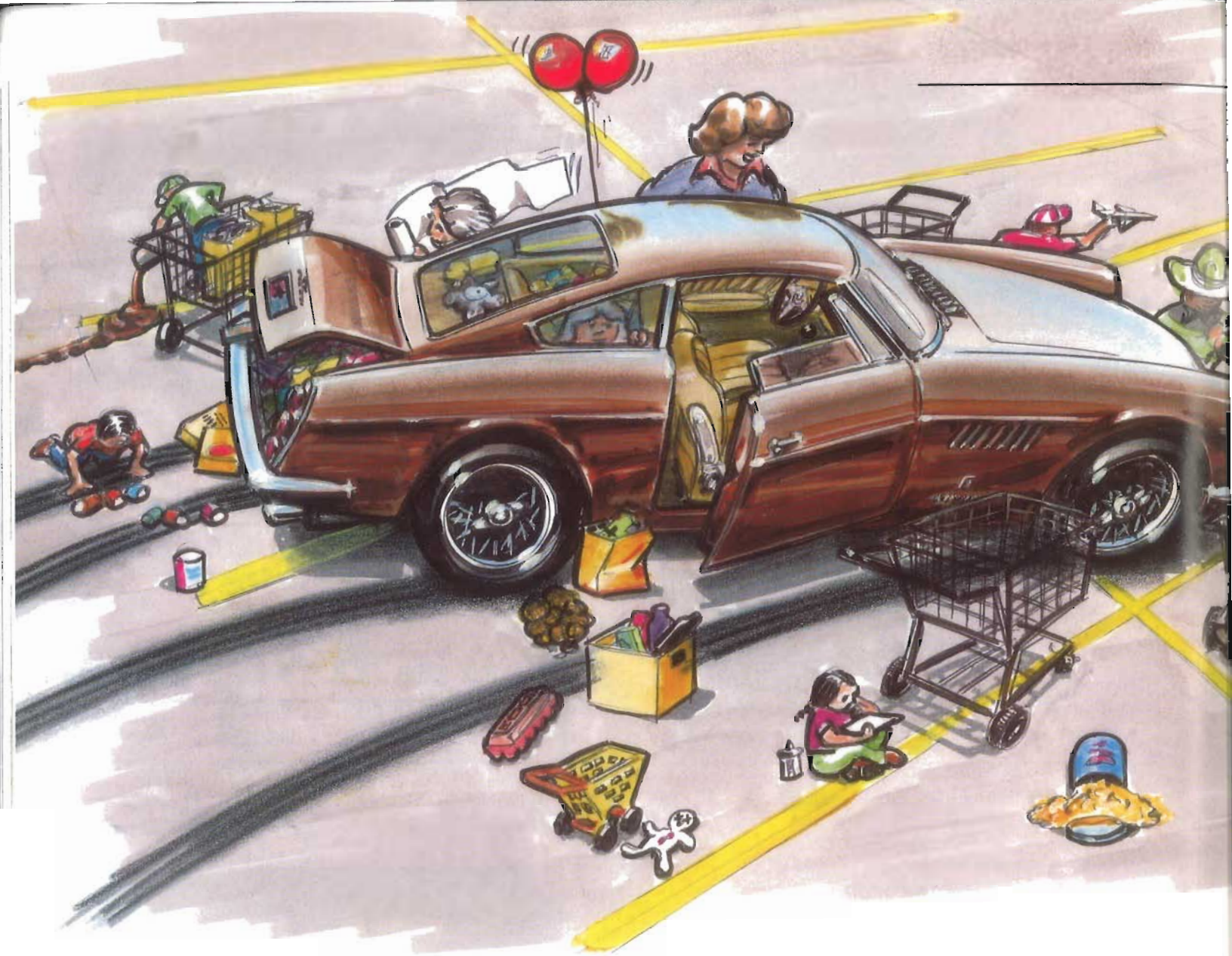


QUARTERLY
MAGAZINE OF THE
FERRARI
CLUB OF
AMERICA

PH #125

fourth quarter 1997





Long ago,

in the dusty Texas community of Amarillo, an unknown Ferrari driver innocently reached for the brass ring necessary

to join the ranks of the greatest prancing horse drivers. Her daring and skill wouldn't match Michael Schumacher, but she could, without a doubt, clip a handful of seconds off Gianni Lavaggi's time when necessary.

HISTORY DIDN'T RECORD FRAN whipping a 1961 Ferrari 250 GTE to the limits. Her need for speed wasn't to win a Grand Prix or snatch victory from a Porsche at Le Mans. Her quest was more basic — the need of a mother struggling to get eight children where they needed to be, and never having enough time to keep her sanity. It's the same task today's safety-impaired soccer moms attempt with Volvos, mini-vans, cell phones, and 1990s style husbands who share chores. Unlike these modern day-planner-equipped mothers, Fran was never on time. In her hands, the mink (Ferrari's name for brown) 250 was squeezed of every ounce of its 280 horsepower, the tach needle bouncing up and down near the 7,000 rpm range, the three Webers sucking quantities of air and gas, Fran left behind whatever was the past and offered no mercy — that took time.

A TIME BEFORE

Fran's Ferrari performance driving career was pre-figured by her touch — she had just the right touch to kick the 250 to life at will on a cold winter night or a hot summer afternoon. She could, unlike the car's owner, coolly slip behind the wheel (adjusting the seat as close as possible), wiggle herself firmly into the seat, put a determined grin on her face, turn the key, flick her right foot just so, press the starter button, and bring the engine to life, brown eyes glancing up in a silent thanks to the Gods. Then, without ceremony, Fran would blip the throttle before slipping out of the Ferrari so that the owner — her husband, a surgeon — could take control. He would adjust the seat to accommodate his 6'5" frame and meekly drive away. The car would slip out of sight without flash or daring. The ignorant would easily mistake it for "just

daily driver

a car" with a loud muffler. This ritual was repeated countless times at every hour of the day and night. Fran was left with the yellow Buick Skylark that she used at that time to haul the kids — a racer with a car unworthy of her untrained skills.

THE CHANGE

Change was foretold late one winter night. The good doctor stalled the car trying to leave the emergency parking lot. He was (not surprisingly) unable to restart the 250 without loading-up the Webers and making matters worse. The smell of gas filled the air long after the Ferrari was pushed aside to allow other cars to come and go. Fran was called, as usual, and left a house of screaming kids to go to the rescue. This time, though, instead of waiting while Fran coaxed the 250, the doctor jumped into the Buick and drove off into the night, pressed to attend to an emergency at another hospital.

The following day he traded the Buick for a Mercedes-Benz with an automatic transmission and no low end. With no objection from anyone, the 250 became Fran's daily family runner.

GROCERY SHOPPING

Going to the grocery store was an act of qualifying which started with a warm-up blast through the quiet neighborhood abandoned by residents who had gone to work. It was nothing fancy and not over 5,000 rpm — just warming the tires and lubing the engine. After a few quick turns, she was on the freeway at full throttle singing with the radio, "I want my picture on the cover of

the *Rolling Stone*...." It was always some bubble-gum pop song with a couple of kids singing backup dangerously off key. Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show were safe.

Then, with just the right timing, she backed off the throttle a fraction and started downshifting to enter the off ramp and coast through the left hand turn at the light. This put her on a long straight where the 250 skipped from lane to lane deftly navigating her way around the various bumps in the road. The next light preceded a 90 degree right hand turn onto the silkiest, fastest left hand sweeper Amarillo had to offer — about a city block long.

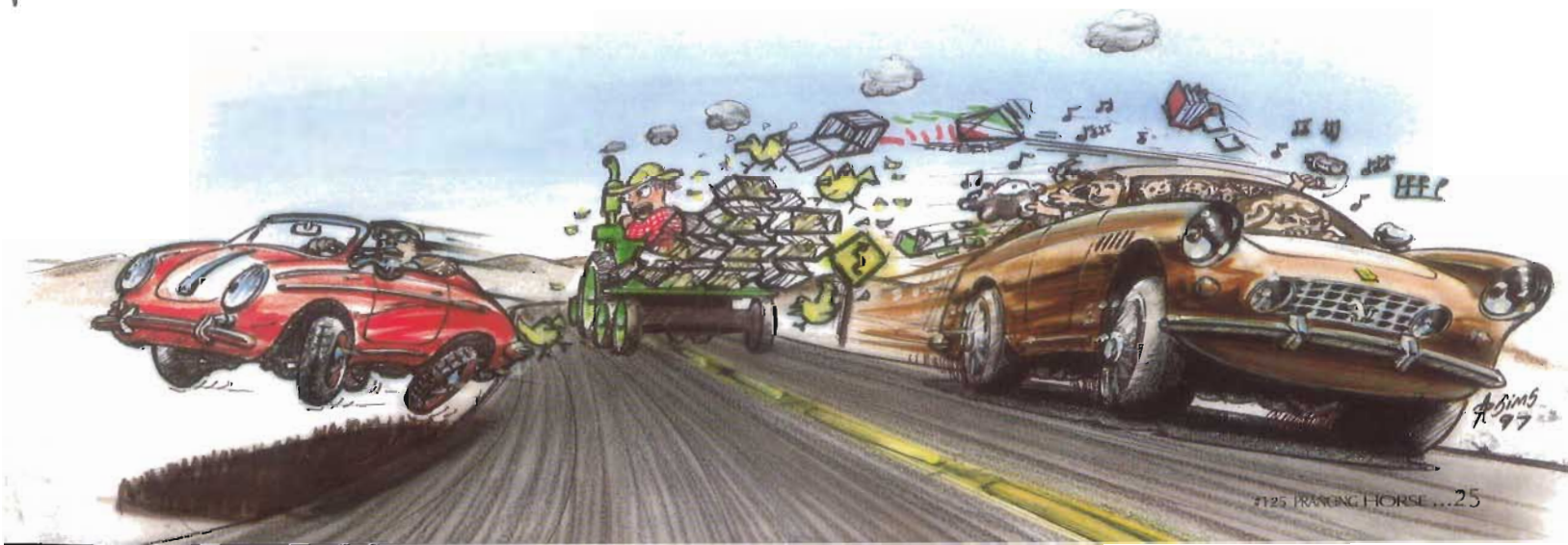
The 250 accelerated hard out of the corner, red-lining the tach while Fran glanced at the backseat to make sure her little passengers weren't hanging out the windows. Houses flashed by, time to shift into second. Flying past the first mall entrance, she shifted from second to third, then bam, into fourth, and the countdown started. One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three.

With the four thousand count she hit the brakes hard and down shifted to second. As the engine regained its 7,000 redline, Fran gripped the steering wheel and turned right into the parking lot, then eased up her grip, backed off, and coasted into the first parking spot in front of the Safeway — it was always empty.

Several hours later, with 14 bags of groceries strategically packed into every corner of the car, and the young ones sitting on top of each other in the front passenger seat, Fran made the return trip. It was never quite as fast due to a deep-seated fear of a potentially broken egg.

by Redding Finney

DRAWINGS BY RON SIMS



PASSING PORSCHEs

From a distance, the Porsche looked like a bug speeding along the two lane blacktop. In no time, Fran pulled up behind it, then zoomed past. It was a matter of pride — no German car would dominate the road she was on. The chase was on as the insulted Porsche accepted the challenge. The two cars cut-and-thrust a half dozen times for the next 20 miles. With each pass, the speeds inched a little higher and the engines whined a little louder. They ran bumper to bumper. In the backseat the kids paid no attention. One played by himself, one worked on homework, and the youngest peered out the window looking for tornados and the mythic "tumble weeds as big as a truck."

Suddenly, a slow moving tractor appeared on the horizon, taking up the middle of the road. Seizing the moment, the Porsche zipped past the 250 and started to inch forward when a 50 mph blast of wind cut across the plains and the meek lifted as the cars wobbled from side to side in an effort to stay in control. The Porsche backed off. Fran kept on the gas and retook the lead about 200 feet from the tractor. But it was hogging the middle of the road, so the 250 edged over to the right of the blacktop, its wheels reaching for traction on the hard, baked dirt. The Porsche went left. Both cars flew past the tractor.

As the next junction neared, Fran kept on the gas necessary to keep the lead. The Porsche slowed to turn-off as the 250 roared to the horizon. The kids in the backseat screamed with delight. Fran's determined little face cracked a smile.

Fran was equal opportunity — race what you have, just race hard. She didn't have time to mess around — she had eight kids who had to be six places 20 minutes ago. She put Jags,

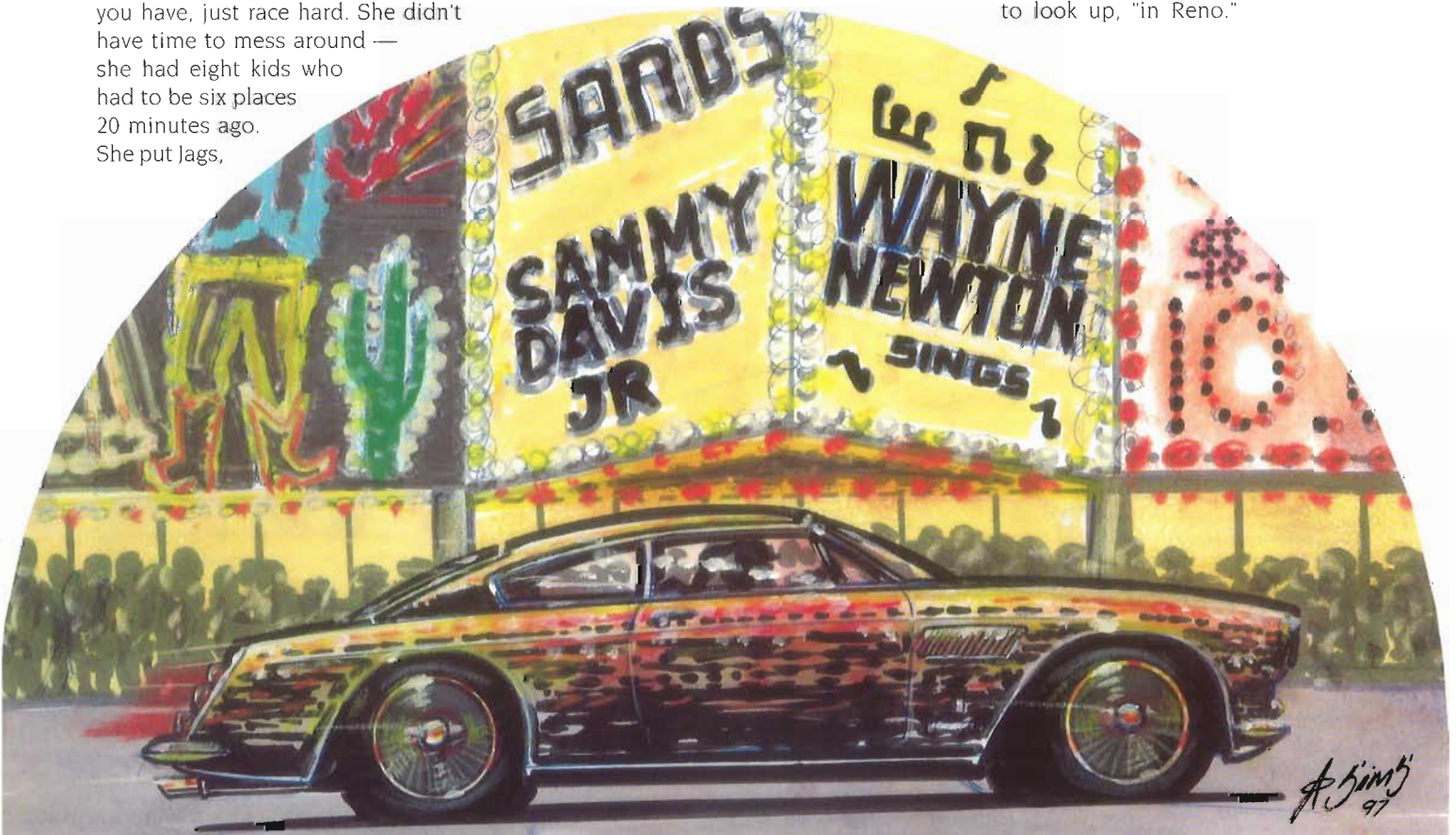
Porches and American's best muscle cars to the test. Some times she'd lose. Sometimes she'd win, — provided the youngest didn't start crying in a fit of fear. No matter what the outcome, there was always passion in the way she whipped the 250 around the streets of Amarillo.

LADY LUCK SMILED

Fear struck Fran only once with the 250. She was in Las Vegas — not rolling the dice or playing the slots — just killing time while she awaited the arrival of her husband. They were going to have a couple of days together with the Ferrari and lots of open road at that time when there were no speed limits. The house full of eight kids was understandably far from her thoughts.

Frustrated that no one noticed the Ferrari prancing up and down the strip, she decided to check out the airport where she planned to pick up the good doctor flying in from Salt Lake City in a couple of hours. Feeling like royalty (no crying complaining kids in tow), Fran cast pearls before swine by parking the 250 right in front of the airport. The vacation was picking up and she felt like acting snotty.

"Is flight 355 going to be on time?" Fran snapped uncharacteristically. Expecting a prompt answer, she was already choreographing her exit in her mind — a spin on her toes and a "let them eat cake" kind of a strut back to the Ferrari. Soon the hot Nevada air would be filled with the sounds of a 250 shattering glass and destroying ear drums. "Yes, it's going to be arriving on time at 1:45 at gate 3B," the attendant replied, not bothering to look up, "in Reno."



Reno? Reno? There are a couple of hundred miles between Vegas and Reno and the good doctor's plane was landing in three hours! Fear gripped Fran as she imagined flying down a lonely blacktop littered with the dried bones of whatever. She ran out of the airport and hopped into the car with none of the aplomb she'd planned.

Out on the highway Fran was passing cars right and left. Things got worse as the question of "what if" crept into her mind. "What if the car broke down in middle of the desert?" That led to the concern of wandering into the desert and a sure death. Maybe even murder — the thought sprang up when she passed a slow moving old pickup truck with a really ratty-looking driver. "I'll break down he'd put my engine in that truck what would he do to me?" "Will anyone help me? Will they ever find what's left of the Ferrari?"

Naturally, Fran started speeding past every old and ratty car on the highway. The 250 roared down the road, slipped into the neighboring lane, and zoomed off. Fran prayed nothing would break, snap or blow. Her eyes were glued to the blacktop, her hands gripped the steering wheel tightly, and sweat seeped from every pore.

New cars, especially station wagons full of vacationing families, got a different treatment. Instead of passing with a furry, Fran would slow for a visual inspection — wife, kids and a gentle looking husband would be honored with a slow, graceful pass. This would include a wave at the kids as Fran completed the pass and pulled away slowly.

Just less than three hours later, Fran pulled into the parking lot at the Reno airport. Soaking in sweat and raw nerves, she crawled out of the 250 and limped to the furthest corner of arrival waiting area. Nervous, she leaned against the wall looking for the good doctor who was nowhere to be seen. "The flight's late," Fran thought, slowly stepping into the open to look for gate 3B, "Thank God for small wonders."

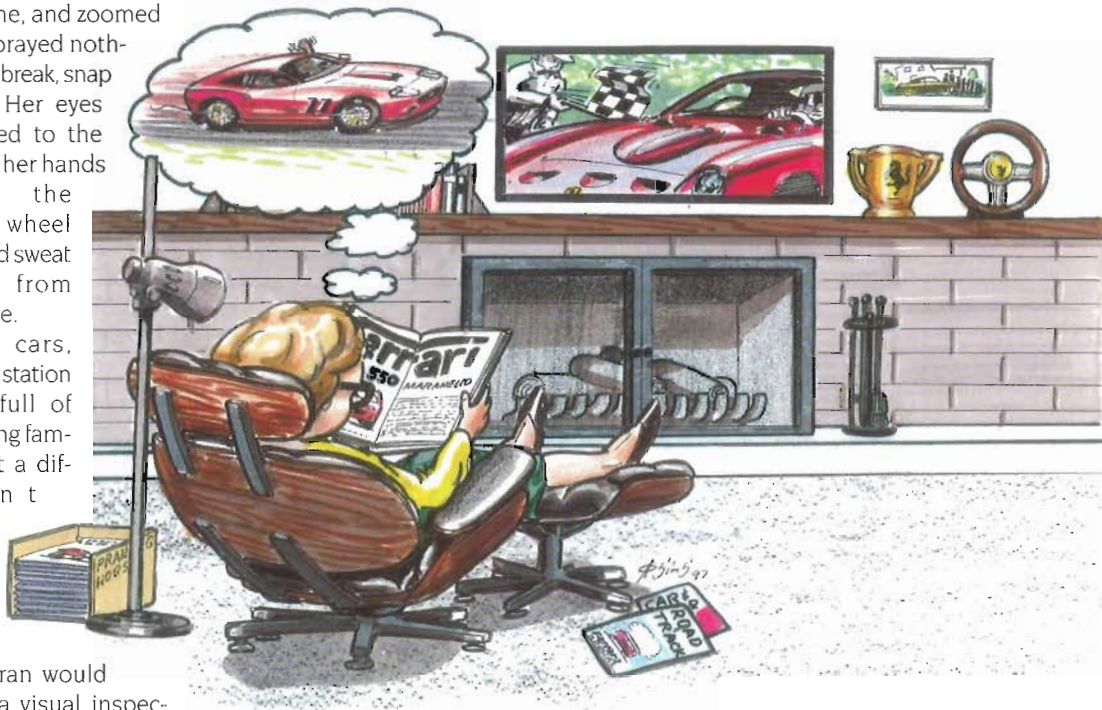
The plane landed thirty minutes later, by which time Fran had regained her composure and was reading a magazine. The good doctor approached with a smile, "Great, you're on time," he proclaimed loud enough for everyone to hear, "This is a first — great way to start a vacation." Without a standing ovation, Fran smiled and bowed.

THE END

Fran's racing career came to an end in a face-off against a teenager out cruising in a new Mustang on a Saturday night. Fran was behaving herself, driving carefully to a doctor's party while her husband, in the seat beside her, read a month old *Wall Street Journal* with the aid of the passing street lights.

The chase started when the Mustang angrily zipped past the Ferrari and started to disappear into the night. Without thinking, Fran answered the challenge. Side-by-side, the two cars flew down the street heading toward a rail road crossing at the crest of a small hill. Fran launched the 250 up the hill, over the tracks, and accelerated for the red light where she waited. "You're one bad bitch," the Mustang driver yelled as he pulled up to the light. "Let's do again!"

Within the week, Fran was reassigned to a new Fiat 124 station wagon — white, with no radio. She still sang Dr. Hook, the children still played in the back, and there still wasn't enough room. But there was no more racing.



A TIME AFTER (A TIME BEFORE?)

Years later on a hot North Carolina afternoon, Fran studied pictures of the 550 Maranello. Silently her squinted eyes darted across the lines of print that praised Ferrari's latest offering. Grim faced, in a trance, she sat thinking quietly — performance, power, style. She was seduced. After a while, she wetted her lips and called out: "Its not a practical car. Where do the groceries and kids go? I don't know why anyone would want it."

"Mom, what you want is a 456 GT," I mumbled from across the room (wondering if my own car was safe). "It has a backseat."

"Pity," she said, and there was a hint of aggression in her voice.

