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2+2

"EQUALS NEAR PERFECTION"

AND TWO PLUS TWO. . . PLUS TWO. . . PLUS TWO
ALWAYS EQUALS TWELVE, AS IN V-12.

A LOOK AT FERRARI'S 250 GTE VIA A PAIR OF 2+2s.
PRESENTED BY 2+2 AFICIONADO ALAN BOE.

A SUCCESSFUL VENTURE

Back in the early 1960s,
Ferrari GTEs rolled out of the Maranello Factory
at the rate of better than one per workday for nearly three
years until 955 examples had been completed and sold.
Ferrari had never experienced anything like this before.

Prior to the 250 GTE 2+2, Ferrari production numbers
had not topped 360 for any one body style,
and the company had never come close to cranking out
a car a day for any single model,
but with the new 2+2,

Ferrari suddenly had hit the mother lode.
(It should be noted, however, that for most of 1963,
GTE sales probably benefited from
the limited model selection offered by Ferrari –
only the GTE and the Lusso were readily available
for road use during the GTE's last year.)

Thanks in large part to those robust GTE sales,
a new level of fiscal solvency was realized by Ferrari,
which helped to underwrite the
Company's multifaceted racing program in the 1960s.
Important years for Ferrari.



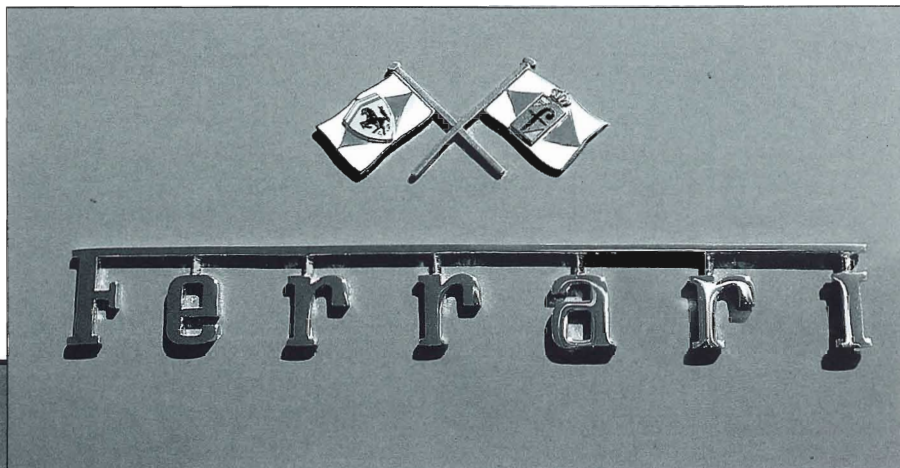
Alan Boe Photograph

2+2+2+2

Above, a mid-range 250 GTE 2+2, s/n 3339, in an elegant silver finish, while below is a later example, s/n 4289 GT, finished off in burgundy, which contrasts nicely with the chrome trim. Cars are essentially the same, but notice the different placement of the driving lights, and the modified treatment around the headlights.



William Domm Photograph



2+2+2+2

Above, seen on the 250 GTEs and only a few other models of the era – the crossed flags of the firms of Ferrari and Pininfarina. It made for a distinctive decorative touch but was eventually discontinued, with Ferrari retaining the horse emblem on the hood and Pininfarina taking a secondary position on the lower flanks.

NOW UNDERATED...

Fast forward forty years. In today's world, Ferrari's first big commercially successful vehicle is largely overlooked and under-appreciated by car collectors and connoisseurs, unless some metal smith has it in mind to create another GTO, SWB, or 250 TR using the engine and a shortened undercarriage from a sacrificial GTE. Just cut up the car and toss the beautiful Pinin Farina body away. A quick run through the list of GTE serial numbers reveals that over 120 of these 2+2s have bit the dust at the replica Ferrari altar. So, maybe the 250 GTE has finally found its true purpose – as a donor car.

BUT STILL A CLASSIC...

Many would disagree, however. And, thank goodness, because the GTE is a classic Ferrari no matter how you slice it. From the outside, there are the clean cut lines of Pinin Farina's design, the classic Ferrari grill, and the jewel like Borrani wire wheels supporting wide profile tires that properly fill each wheel well. Inside, there's a Connolly leather interior, Wilton wool carpeting, and a dashboard full of just about any Veglia gauge a driver could want, plus a handsome large diameter Nardi wood rimmed steering wheel, and a nice assortment of warning lights and switches. In the engine room, you get one of the best motors ever put in an automobile, the nonpareil three liter Giachino Colombo designed single overhead cam V-12 residing under a trio of Weber carburetors. In addition to this, GTEs come with Dunlop disc brakes, a four speed gearbox with electric overdrive in top gear, and that same unmatched twelve cylinder scream that real GTOs, SWBs, and TRs produce.

The 250 GTE is a lovely Ferrari, even though it sits near the bottom of the V-12 value totem pole. From the right angle, it even seems menacing, but that's not its intent. Considering its age, here is a car that is still perfectly at home at near triple digit speeds, seemingly wanting to run that way for hours on end. This is what the GTE does best in true classic grand touring style, but it's not a sports car.

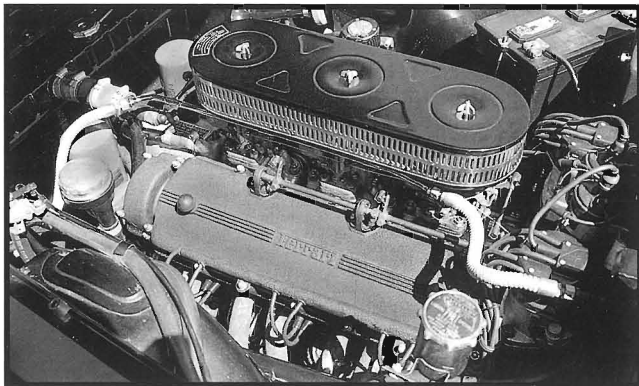
AND THE FIRST OF ITS KIND...

Some would argue that it's impossible to build a four passenger sedan as a sports car. Probably so, but Pinin Farina and Ferrari have managed to craft a pretty neat long wheelbase grand touring car with seating for four. Yes, the rear seats and headroom are spacious enough for adults (but we admit you wouldn't want to spend all day back there). Plus, the GTE has a secure place in Ferrari's history being, as it is, the first production four passenger car to come out of Maranello, which makes it the progenitor of a long, unbroken line of Ferrari 2+2s that continues to this day.

Ferrari's first four seater came on the scene in an unusual way. Rather than wait for the Paris Show in the fall of 1960, Ferrari chose to introduce its replacement for the 250 GT Pinin Farina Coupe at the Le Mans 24 Hour Race on June 25, 1960. One of three GTE prototypes (s/n 1895 GT, which had been completed ten days earlier) was dispatched to France where it served as the course marshal's car for the race.



William Domm Photographs



Alan Bee Photograph

2+2+2+2

Above left and below, the engine compartment of s/n 4289 GT, with that of 3339 GT in the upper right. These are part and parcel of the fabled 250 engine family, and not any form of derivative. These three liters put out 240 bhp at 7,000 rpm, and could keep these cruisers at 120 mph all day. And 140 was an easy max.

WITH MECHANICAL SIMILARITIES...

With the 250 GTE, you get much of the same good mechanical stuff that comes with an SWB, a California spyder, a Lusso, and yes, even a GTO. Insert the key into the ignition and turn it 180 degrees and you'll hear the same distant ticking from the electric fuel pump, press the key to engage the starter motor and you'll hear the same unique whirring sound and, when the engine fires a second or so later, you'll hear that same exciting Ferrari V-12 music. With your eyes closed, it's impossible to identify the Ferrari model you're sitting in merely by sound and smell. But the connection with its higher priced siblings goes beyond the mechanical. The door handles are shared with SWBs, the amber blinker lights are found on GTOs, SWBs, and the last of the Californias, the egg crate grill is a Ferrari tradition, as are the Borrani wheels and knock offs. The Marchal driving lights, headlights, and Carello parking lights were used on other than just GTEs.

Of course, the 250 GTE 2+2 doesn't have the competition history of its two seater relatives, nor does it have the ability to corner as they do, and it's a slower accelerator too owing to its extra weight. But considering what it was designed to do, it still does it very well. Unfortunately, because of this more sedate and less sporty image, GTEs have never commanded the high dollar values of the three liter berlinettas, spyders and cabriolets, and therein lies the problem. No point, some say, in overspending big bucks to rebuild or maintain an undervalued Ferrari when the money might be put to use creating a new GTO or SWB, and that's too bad.

NOW 2 PLUS 2... PLUS 2... PLUS 2...

But let's take a close up look at the GTE as illustrated by the two examples shown on these pages. The silver gray coupe is a mid-range model, s/n 3339 GT, sold new in February of 1962 by Ferrari's agent in Rome, Italy, while the burgundy 2+2 is a later Series III car, s/n 4289 GT, from the spring of 1963. Though not identical (note the tail light differences and the relocated driving lights), both share the same statistics and mechanical components. The wheelbase dimension is 102.4 inches, front and rear tracks are 54.2 and 54.6 inches respectively, and bumper to bumper length comes to 185 inches. Both cars are 52.8 inches tall and weigh just over 3,200 lbs. Using an 8.8 to 1 compression ratio, their nearly three liter V-12s pump out a maximum of 240 bhp at 7,000 rpms. Top speed is just under 140 mph, eight seconds are required to get from zero to 60 mph, the quarter mile will use up just over 16 seconds, and you can reach the 100 mph mark in third gear if you choose.

VARIATIONS ON THE THEME...

About a third of the way into the production run, an ammeter was added necessitating rearrangement of the now five smaller center dashboard instruments. Tail light design changed twice along the way, fresh air and heater controls were moved from the dashboard to the center console, and larger valves were used in the engines beginning in 1962. Power windows were first introduced to Ferrari customers with the GTE, but they were added randomly to various cars during the production run, seemingly without relation to specific buyer requests. Series III cars received deeper dished Borrani wire wheels, and different trim around the headlights.



Alan Boe Photograph

These are very quiet cars as Ferraris go, in their looks, of course, and not in their performance, since the V-12 power makes all the right noise. The GTEs are very conservative visually, but if looked at with this criteria, then there is not a line that can be faulted. This is what was expected of a luxury grand tourer at the time.

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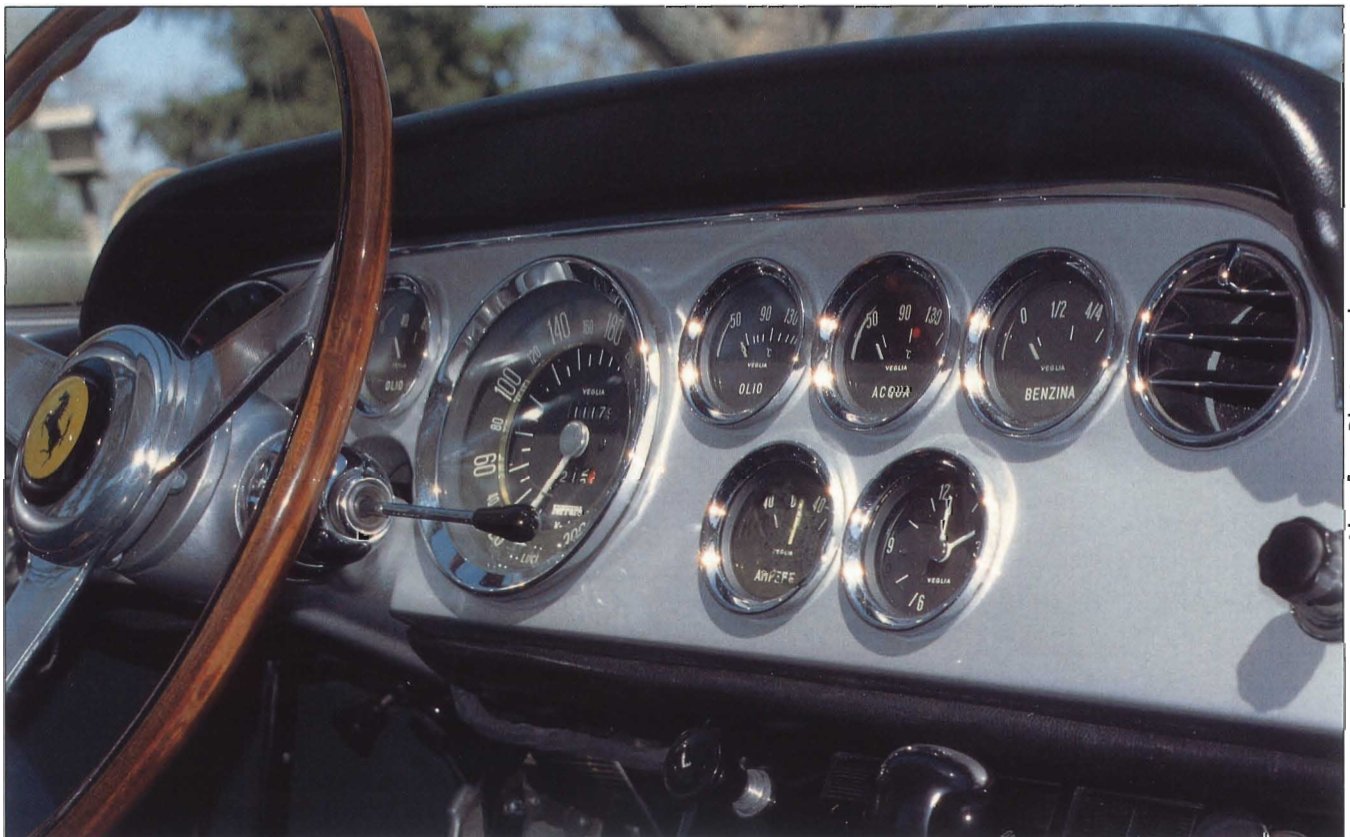
Alan Boe Photograph



William Domm Photograph

2+2+2+2

There is a lot going on in these old cockpits, and look at those dashes with all that information. But grand touring meant keeping abreast of all the functions of the car at speed, so unlike an actual race car where only rpm and oil and water temperature mattered. Chromed beveled edges of the dials add the right luxury touch.



Alan Bee Photograph

Other minor variations that cropped up involved the number and location of the dashboard fresh air vents, a change in the front seat trim pieces, and a relocation of the passenger's grab bar. A few GTEs were built with hood scoops, and a few others were finished without driving lights.

BUT NOW FOR THE FUN...

So, let's take a ride. Climb on board and settle into the comfortable leather driver's seat. Check to see that the gearshift is in neutral and the parking brake is set. Insert the ignition key, turn it half way around, activate the electric fuel pump, give the manual choke a tug, pump the accelerator a couple of times, and then push the ignition key in to engage the starter motor. Almost instantly, the engine is alive with that marvelous V-12 sound. Check the oil pressure, giving yourself a minute or two for the fluids to become warm, then select first gear, engage the clutch, and you're off.

WELL BALANCED INDEED...

When first underway, the car feels stiff and heavy, almost truck like, but after a few miles this disappears, the ride smoothes out, and the car begs to be driven. The GTE's weight distribution, about 53% on the front wheels, should promote some understeer. Due to its suspension design (live rear axle with radius rods, semi-elliptic leaf springs and Koni shocks out back, with an independent front suspension consisting of Konis, A-arms, an anti-roll bar, and coil springs), handling is basically neutral at lesser speeds, but as speeds increase, the car will want to plow ahead a bit in hard cornering – understeer. Increasing tire pressures will improve the situation to a point.

Changing gears requires a deliberate and measured motion, but with a fully synchromeshed gearbox it's easy and pleasurable to pick the next gear. When it comes time to reduce speed, flick off the overdrive, down shift a gear or two, apply the Dunlops, and you'll lose speed in a straight and efficient manner. So while you won't be setting lap records in a GTE, you will get noticed as others do double takes, crane their necks, and gape to follow your progress. Stop at a strip mall or pull into a service station and you're likely to have to field a question or two from curious fellow motorists.

AND ALWAYS A PLEASURE...

Subtleties not found on that many forty year old cars include a left foot rest for the driver, and a rear window demisting fan, plus a trunk that can swallow up plenty of luggage. GTEs also were delivered with a fully equipped tool roll, an owner's manual, wheel chocks, a belly pan, and a full size spare tire.

Problem areas? Not many, based on my experience as a GTE owner for the past twenty two years, although journalists in 1961 were critical of the gearbox and overdrive design which, in the earlier cars, shared the same lubricant. But if the oils and filters are changed regularly, the car is driven often, and the maintenance suggested in the owner's manual is performed on schedule, the payback will be hundreds of miles of trouble free motoring, but starting out with a good, solid car is the best way to ensure those happy miles.

Forty years ago, the GTE was described by *Sports Car Illustrated's* Jesse Alexander as "a most desirable motor car: expensive, ... fast, and luxuriously comfortable with a large luggage compartment. All this adds up to a Gran Turismo with the accent on Gran.... For touring in the grand style, Two plus Two equals near perfection." Apt words then and still true today.

Thanks to Bill Domm for the use of his burgundy 2+2. The silver gray GTE resides in the author's garage. Both cars have benefited from paintwork by Skip McCabe, Mundelein, Illinois.

For more on the 250 GTE, see Cavallinos 27 and 28.

Alan Boe is one of the foremost Ferrari historians and researchers of our day, and he writes intelligently, and extensively, on Ferraris for many serious publications. He is also Chief Judge of the Ferrari Class at the prestigious Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

THE LEN MILLER CONNECTION...

An additional benefit of GTE ownership is the 250 GTE Register maintained by Len Miller, PO Box 955, San Carlos, California 94070. GTE owners and non-owners alike are welcome to sign up (\$35 per year – free plug).

Beginning in 1984, Len decided to identify every GTE built by its serial number, locate each car, and trace the history of as many of them as possible. After doing this for almost eighteen years, Len has cultivated a worldwide group of dedicated GTE spotters who regularly funnel new and interesting GTE lore back to San Carlos which Len then publishes in a quarterly newsletter. All of the cars have now been identified and the vast majority of them have some history attached. An annual Register (it comes out in January) collects and summarizes all of this information in one thick spiral bound publication.

While the annual Register is basically a car-by-car history of all GTEs, the quarterly newsletters contain the latest Register updates along with mechanical tips, a calendar of events, information on repair shops, and a listing of cars and parts for sale, not to mention some pretty interesting technical writing and stories about GTE experiences. Need the correct air horns for a GTE? Need to have your Bonaldi brake booster rebuilt? This information and much more is in Len's newsletters.

Thanks, Len.