

LOVE AFFAIR

by Gary Horstkorta

If you've ever attended the Monterey Historics, the Wine Country Classic, a Classic Sports Racing Group (CSRG), or any other West Coast vintage sports car racing events, then you no doubt have seen a familiar sight: a bright-red Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa (TR), number 9, circulating quickly around the track—the unmistakable exhaust sound of the 3.0-liter V-12 engine rising and falling with each gear shift, as the driver negotiates the turns and accelerates down the straightaways. This icon of a bygone era of sports car racing remains one of the most beautiful-looking and glorious-sounding cars to ever grace a racetrack.

The proud owner of this particular Ferrari is David Love who first came in contact with the Testa Rossa (“redhead” in Italian) 44 years ago and the two have been racing together almost continuously ever since. However, this is not simply a story of one man and a Ferrari, but rather about his 50-year relationship with racing, his love of automotive history and classic sports cars, and his participation in the development of two significant vintage racing institutions.

CALIFORNIA CALLS

When asked if he recalls the moment he became infatuated with cars, Love immediately recalls, “Yes, I remember the occasion that got me interested in cars and never let me go. It happened while I was in high school. I was walking in downtown Lake Charles (LA) and while passing Parker’s Newsstand, I noticed a paperback copy of Ken Purdy’s book *Kings of the Road*. I bought it, read it, and that was it. I was hooked on sports cars from that moment on.”

With his parents’ firm belief in his attaining an education before enjoying such mundane things as owning a car, Love had to satisfy his newfound enthusiasm for cars through his friend’s involvement in the blossoming hot-rod culture around town. This included hanging out at the local drive-in, watching impromptu drag races on deserted country roads, or working on his friend’s cars. His first foreign-car ride was one night in his friend’s MG-TD, doing donuts on the high school football practice field. Love couldn’t wait for the opportunity to acquire his first car, which his parents promised they would supply at some point after he enrolled in college at Tulane University. After the conclusion of his freshman year at Tulane, his parents presented Love with a “sensible car”...a 1955 Oldsmobile 88 hardtop, a good car but not the new Thunderbird he hoped for.

While the Olds provided good transportation, it did not satisfy Love’s desire for a sports car, so in February 1958, he traded the Oldsmobile in favor of a new Porsche Speedster Normal and drove it off the dealer’s showroom floor. One of Love’s lifelong friends and also a former Tulane University student, Tupper Robinson recalls, “I met David at Tulane and along with a few other students with these little two-seaters, we formed the Tulane Sports Car Club. Even though we were not yet members of the Delta Region of the SCCA, we hung out with them and participated in rallies, tours, and autocross events. We also enjoyed learning how to go fast by driving up and down the levee roads on both

sides of the Mississippi River near New Orleans.” After graduating from college, Love drove the Speedster to California to visit a college friend who had transferred to the University of California. While visiting with his friend, Love got a job as a lifeguard and also decided to enroll in a summer graduate course at UC Berkeley. However, all his pursuits were not academic in nature, as he also attended the Racing Drivers School at Vaca Valley Raceway and earned his SCCA novice permit.

Encouraged by his parents at the end of the summer, Love headed back to New Orleans and Tulane University to begin work on his Master’s degree. However, without his parents’ knowledge, he joined the Delta Region of the SCCA and entered his first road race at Hammond Airport in November 1958, where he finished 2nd in race one, followed by a 1st in class in race two. In his next race at Mansfield, in the spring of 1959, he again finished 1st in class. Love continued his graduate studies and racing the Speedster throughout the South until early 1961 when the car was stolen. Since he was not able to afford another Speedster, Love used the insurance settlement money to buy a used, right-hand-drive Morgan +4 through Tupper Robinson, who by this time was relocated in Houston, Texas. With Robinson helping with the mechanical work on the car, Love raced the Morgan once at Hammond before heading to California again for the summer. During his stay, he traded the Morgan to Bill Hinshaw, whom he had met the previous year. In return, Love acquired a Porsche Convertible D and an engine (uninstalled) along with a set of special carburetors Hinshaw had purchased from another Porsche racer, Gordon Mills. Part of the deal was that Love would crew for Hinshaw, who would race the Morgan. Neither Love nor Mills could have known that, 7 years later, the two would participate in the creation of the second vintage racing club organized in the United States, the Classic Sports Racing Group (CSR).

Love once again returned to New Orleans in the Porsche which he raced only twice before receiving an offer from the Lake Charles–based Merlyn Formula Junior importer to race one of his cars. He raced the Merlyn for the balance of 1961 and into the first half of 1962, until he completed his Masters program at Tulane. After graduating, Love received a few job offers but did not like where the companies were located. With nothing firm in hand, he headed back to California where he took up residence with Hinshaw and Rudy Pabst (famed racer Augie’s brother) and looked for a job. By now, Love was a seasoned, successful, SCCA driver and looked forward to continuing his amateur racing, so he joined the San Francisco Region (SFR).

THE REDHEAD

Love eventually found a position with Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory as a physicist and began participating in local SCCA races in the Porsche. Always on the lookout for a faster car, Love followed up on an ad he had seen in Competition Press for a pushrod Porsche 550A Spyder. The car was located back East but, fortunately, Hinshaw had moved East to finish college and was able to inspect the car. Love bought the 550 and after rebuilding it, he drove it on the street and in club and regional races through the remainder of the 1963 season. Love and Gordon Mills finished the season with a 12th-place finish in the RDC four-hour enduro. He continued racing the 550 through the first half of the next season before deciding to move up a class from F-modified to D-

modified and began looking for a suitable car. Unable to find his first choice, a Maserati Birdcage, he came across an ad in a San Francisco newspaper for a “ready to race,” 1958 Ferrari 250TR. Love contacted the owner and eventually bought the car, using the Porsche 550A as partial payment. Love recalls, “The work of the owner, who bought the car from [Jack] Graham, was catastrophic. Everything he touched was worse, and I later discovered that the man who sold it to me had owned it only long enough to learn how to completely misrepresent its condition.”

As it turned out, this well-used Ferrari had a very interesting history. The 250TR (sn 0754) was one of only 19 such models made for customers, and it was originally purchased new from the Ferrari factory by Jaroslav Juhan, painted blue, and raced at the 1958 24 Hours of Le Mans. Unfortunately, the car was involved in an accident on the 72nd lap and was unable to finish. It was returned to the factory for repairs, repainted red, at which point Juhan shipped the car to the United States to his old friend Vasek Polak, to be sold on consignment. Ernie McAfee raced the car at Del Mar before it was sold to Seattle-resident George Keck in 1959. Keck raced the car for the balance of the year and held the lap record at Westwood in British Columbia before selling it to Jack Graham in Northern California. Graham raced the car extensively in California before he was involved in a crash at Laguna Seca. Graham spun the Ferrari and exited turn four backwards, eventually ending up in a tree. The result was a very battered Ferrari, the remains of which Graham sold to a prospective racer from San Francisco who then sold it to another local buyer.

Prior to Love acquiring the car, the two previous owners made attempts to repair the Ferrari with mixed results. While the car was drivable, it needed a complete restoration to bring it up to race-ready condition. Love found the cams in the engine had been mistimed resulting in bent valves, a cracked crankshaft, and worn-out pistons. The front suspension had been installed backwards as were the front brakes, barely making the car roadworthy, and of course the body needed further attention as well. Over the course of the next year, Love totally rebuilt the car with the help of several local experts, which also included an engine transplant. Setting aside the damaged engine that came with the car for future repair, Love purchased a replacement 3.0-liter, V-12 engine for \$750 that his friend Gordon Mills located at Otto Zipper’s shop in Southern California.

Prior to the 1965 season opener at Vaca Valley Raceway, Love and Stephen Griswold took the Ferrari to Cotati Raceway for a test-and-tune session. The session went well and so did Love’s race at Vaca Valley where he went on to finish 1st overall. He continued placing well for the whole season and finished 1st in regional points for the D-modified class. Love raced the 250TR for the next three years entering events at Cotati, Vaca Valley, Candlestick Park, Sears Point, Riverside, Laguna Seca, and Camp Stoneman with many top finishes in class. However, a combination of SCCA rule changes and newer car designs took the enjoyment out of racing his Ferrari and brought about Love’s decision to pull the car out of competition. However, to keep his driving skills sharp, he formed a partnership with Tupper Robinson and purchased a Lynx Formula Vee, which they shared in local SCCA races for the next three years.

A CHANCE MEETING, A BIG IMPRESSION, A NEW BEGINNING

Historic or vintage racing, in the U.S., was not much of a sport in 1968, but it wasn’t entirely unknown either as, 10 years earlier, the Vintage Sports Car Club of America

(VSCCA) was formed on the East Coast to provide a place for owner/drivers to enjoy their vintage racecars. While the VSCCA had formed a formal organization, there were hundreds of classic racecar owners in other parts of the country with a desire to continue racing their historic racecars but without a structure to provide the opportunity.

Love began to look around for other ways he could use his 250TR outside of SCCA racing, when an impromptu discussion provided a possible solution. In September 1968, Love and two other sports car enthusiasts, Gordon Mills and Dave Burch, were sitting in Mills's living room passing the time talking about old racecars, where they might have gone, and who might now own them. During the discussion, they compiled a list of cars and owners and began to realize there were a fair number of good, but outdated, racecars not getting "exercised." Love recalls, "Some of us had raced with the SCCA, were no longer competitive, but preferred to drive something we liked rather than sell our racecars for an 'implement' that would be more successful."

Love and his friend George West who owned a Maserati 300S, contacted a few other car owners from the list compiled in Mills's living room. Love, West, and three others agreed to meet at Vaca Valley Raceway with their racecars with no real format in mind. Along with family and friends, the first gathering was comprised of Love's 250TR, West's Maserati 300S, Don Kerson's Allard J2X, Joseph DeMartino's Ferrari SWB Berlinetta, and Larry Maatz's Huffaker Knoop Special. As the day unfolded, each driver took his car for laps around the track, drove each others' cars, gave rides, and generally enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and chance to run their classic sports cars again. Those in attendance would form the initial mailing list for this informal group, which at this point did not have a name.

If there was a need for additional motivation to broaden Love's vintage sports car activity, it was provided while he was visiting England in 1969. During his stay, he was introduced to Neil Corner, a very active historic car racer. Corner and a friend were to race their historic Grand Prix cars at a meeting at Thruxton and invited Love to attend. At the race meeting, Love was taken by the friendly people he met, the paddock full of historic Grand Prix and sports cars, and the general atmosphere of the event. The combination of all the wonderful historic cars and their owners engaging in friendly, organized competition looked like great fun and a way to enjoy and preserve classic racecars at the same time. Love took those images and impressions of the Thruxton historic race meeting back with him to the United States.

MORE GATHERINGS AND A VISITOR

After the initial small gathering of vintage sports cars at Vaca Valley in 1968, the following year was spent locating additional cars and owners to add to the group's list of contacts for future gatherings. Gordon Mills recalls, "We spent quite a bit of time mining inactive racecars and finding buyers for them among the people who were interested in joining us...that was our prime objective. We'd see a car of interest and put a note on it about our group. Gradually, our numbers increased and the meetings at my home grew from the original three people, to six, to ten, and so on."

In 1970, Love and his friends took a step toward increasing their activity by negotiating a May date for use of Sears Point Raceway, but two weeks before their event, Sears Point closed its doors (at least temporarily, as it turned out). George West, who knew the owner of the dormant Cotati Raceway, was able to rent the facility for \$100 and the group held

their gathering as planned. The day's activities consisted of sweeping up the debris left by "uninvited users" of the facility (Saturday-night beer drinkers, drag racers, etc.), then hot laps in their sports cars, time trials, and eventually, handicap races with two to four cars at a time. The format was repeated at Cotati twice more that summer and included a visitor from Southern California—an enthusiast by the name of Steve Earle.

While Love and his Northern California historic car friends were meeting, a group of Southern California sports car enthusiasts were also holding similar gatherings. Road tours along the coast highway or through Malibu Canyon, and gatherings at Willow Springs Raceway organized by Harry Morrow were some of the activities that Earle participated in. He recalls, "I had met a fellow who told me about a group in Northern California who were getting together at Cotati and that I might want to join them. At that time, I had the Ferrari GTO, so I drove up there to Cotati, met David Love who had his 250TR and eleven of his friends and their cars. I had a good time and meeting David was fortunate, as he would prove to be a valuable contact for me in the future."

Love and his friends were able to negotiate an on-track session during one of the intermissions at the October 1970 Can-Am races at Laguna Seca. While the group wasn't listed in the official race program, they did receive an enthusiastic reception during their 20-minute demonstration session. Feeling there was perhaps a wider audience than they had anticipated, the small group decided they better add a bit of structure by providing a name for themselves. Love describes the process: "The name was invented by one of our group, Sid Colberg, at the time when it became obvious we had to call it something. 'Classic' is a nice mushy word with overtones of enduring stable value. 'Sports Racing' defines the kind of cars and 'Group' defines an organization less formal than a club, but better-ordered than a herd. In 1970, it seemed to be enough." The informal group of historic sports car owners now had an official name: Classic Sports Racing Group (CSRG).

CSRG gathered at Cotati Raceway on four dates in 1971, and two more dates at Cotati in 1972; but the second was the last at this venerable old airfield racetrack as developers moved in and the track was plowed under in the name of urban development. Once again CSRG was invited to run a demonstration race at the Can-Am event at Laguna Seca. During this period, there were never more than 15 cars participating in the group's get-togethers at Cotati or Laguna Seca. The year 1973 was pivotal for CSRG, as they were able to negotiate the regular use of the newly reopened Sears Point Raceway, a venue the club continues to enjoy the use of to this day.

A PASSING COMMENT, THEN REALITY

A few years earlier, Steve Earle had been looking for the Ferrari Phil Hill had raced at Riverside. Earle knew the Harrah Collection in Reno, Nevada, had once owned it but had since sold or traded it to a new owner. This was a very special Ferrari indeed, with a very interesting history. The Ferrari's engine was from de Portago's ill-fated Mille Miglia car by way of the single-seater driven by Luigi Musso in the Monza "Race of Two Worlds" in 1958. The engine was a 440-horsepower, V-12 with 24 valves, 4 cams, 6 Weber carburetors, 24 sparkplugs, and 2 dual-point distributors. The body was a Scaglietti-designed 250 Testa Rossa painted bright red. In 1958, Earle had watched Phil Hill in the Ferrari, designated the 412 MI, lead Chuck Daigh's Scarab in the race at Riverside, until mechanical problems sidelined the Ferrari. He never forgot the car.

The Harrah Collection had traded the ex-Hill Ferrari to a friend of Love's, "Pinky," and his wife Millie Pinkham, who would become participants in the historic sports car gatherings. Unfortunately, Pinky died of cancer in 1973 but had asked his wife to make sure the car went to an enthusiast who would drive it, not a collector. Knowing that Earle was interested, Love contacted him and they arranged a meeting at the Pinkhams' home. Love, Earle, and Millie sat around a kitchen table recalling the Riverside race where Earle had watched Hill race the 412 and, shortly thereafter, Millie agreed to sell Earle half-interest in the 412. They also talked about the Pebble Beach Races of the 1950s where the Pinkhams had been corner workers. Love recalls what was said next: "Steve said, 'Wouldn't it be neat to run the Pebble Beach races with the old cars and do it on the weekend of the Concours, like it was twenty years ago? Using the Del Monte Forest roads is out, but why not use Laguna Seca and tie it in with the Concours?' He took his own idea with him and, in less than a year, it became a reality...the Monterey Historics." Earle picks up the story from there, "At the time, there were no events like this in the United States, just some small club events. I put together some ideas, and used some of the business guys I was dealing with and kicked it around with them to see what was missing. The problem was where to hold it. Riverside was one of the places we thought of but I never had a date that wanted to go there! So, it was immediate that half of the people would not be going...but Laguna Seca and Monterey was one place that had the historical background and an area everyone wanted to visit. Organizing the first event was a matter of contacting every guy that I knew around the country who had an old racecar, like David Love and the other guys who ran at Cotati. As I contacted each person, they would pass the information along to someone else, and so it was word-of-mouth advertising that made it work. We ended up with 67 cars for the first event which was also designed so people who didn't have cars could come and see a group of historic racecars run—but you don't know if that was going to happen."

The spectators and cars did come and in increasing numbers as the years went by, making the Monterey Historics the premier vintage racing event in the United States. Now in its 35th year, the Historics' entry list has grown from the initial 67 cars to almost 500 with a good number coming from outside the United States. The Historics has also become one of the cornerstones of the car-related activities in Monterey each August and one of the largest spectator events at Laguna Seca each year.

Of course, Love and his 250TR participated in that first Historics along with his wife, Mary-Hoe, who drove their Ferrari 250 Tour de France. In fact, Love has run in all 34 events held since 1974. Earle adds, "David hasn't changed, he's always had the same demeanor since I first met him, and he is the epitome of what we are supposed to be doing—a good driver with a good attitude. He's there for the genuine purpose—to enjoy the cars. He knows what he's doing, has a good time, and wants others to have a good time, and it's great to see."

THE LOVE AFFAIR CONTINUED

As CSRG, the Historics, and other vintage race organizations continued to grow throughout the next three decades, Love and his 250TR continued to be a regular sight at Riverside, Sears Point, Laguna Seca, Coronado, Thunderhill, Westwood (BC), and Kent (WA). In fact, Love estimates that he and the 250TR have accumulated more than 250 racing starts in their 44-year partnership, which must be some sort of record for a

continuously raced sports car. Love says, “It is this experience of being able to drive and see the cars, and in effect, to be transported back into their time—that, to me, is the true reward of historic motor racing.”

For David Love, it has been a long-term love affair with his 250TR and the other historic cars he has enjoyed in his life. In 2007, two of his photographer friends, Dennis Gray and Bob Ross, received a request from the Danville (CA) Concours d’ Elegance to produce an item for their charity auction, the proceeds going to the Parkinson’s Institute. Gray and Ross decided on a book of photos and asked Love if they could photograph the 250TR and some of his other cars. At the end of the book, the following quote appears from Love which sums up his feelings about his automotive experience:

“This book spends much of its contents on what I allegedly did for the cars. This pales in comparison with what the cars have done for me. They, like a magic carpet, have taken me to places that I would never have dreamed of visiting and over the years, introduced me to the finest friends imaginable.”