Searching for Historical Traces of the Trident
MASERATI – The history of the company with the mystic trident is as unconventional as its trademark. Founded more than 100 years ago in Bologna, Italy as workshop for racing cars by the Maserati brothers, the company like hardly any other manufacturer represents the trinity of elegance, sportiness and comfort. The brand stands for sensual emotion, for pure understatement as tradition. Pursuing the motto “The best of all”, famous coachbuilders like Allemano, Pininfarina or Giugiaro contributed to the success of the Maserati cult brand, alongside the legendary engines with their mighty capacity and the addictive sound they make. The targeted focus on innovative drive solutions is distinguishing the Italian models. No wonder the Italian manufacturer has ever since – up to the presence – relied on German transmission technology by ZF.

We wanted to know how it all started with ZF and travelled to Modena to find an answer. We met one of the most loyal ZF customers …
Those who go looking for historical traces need eyewitnesses from the relevant time period. We were lucky enough to find a living legend who knows everything about the company with the trident logo - Ermanno Cozza. We met the 85-year-old man, who is associated with Maserati like no other, in his home town of Modena. Even as a young boy, he found a passion for the auto brand with the trident, and now he has just published a book about it.

His elementary school was no more than a kilometer away from the Autodromo di Modena and during breaks he was able to hear the race engines in the test cars. “I could even see the cars from the school fence, but they didn’t interest me at all. I was totally fascinated by the sound of the engines. All auto makers tested their vehicles there – Maserati, Ferrari, Stanguellini – however, when I heard the Maserati engines, I closed my eyes and savored the sound. It made me curious, I wanted to see what was inside,” he explained with a smile. His eyes lit up as he talked, as if it were yesterday.

In 1943, he had just turned ten years old and, during the war, a friend asked him for help to hide his motorcycle. In the process, they also talked about race engines and that’s how he found out that these brothers from Bologna might indeed build the best cars in the world. From that day on, he never forgot the name Maserati. After finishing his studies at a trade school, the 17-year-old began to work for the Maseratis under the trident logo. Adolfo Orsi hired him personally and he worked his way through all the departments, from race car and engine assembly to test driving and documentation to the control center. In the 1960s, he had already begun to collect all the information he could find on race cars from the 40s and 50s in order to document their history. Though he officially retired at the age of 78, he has since continued working as a consultant for the company. Today, Signore Cozza is a walking, talking Maserati archive loaded with 66 years of knowledge, experience and anecdotes about the company that no one else can match.

In answer to the question on how the cooperation with ZF came about, he responded: “I remember precisely, it was in November 1956. Management was tired of expensive motorsports and wanted to focus on constructing road sports cars. After his success with race cars 250F and 300S, head engineer Giulio Alfieri received an order to build the 3500 GT with the start of volume production not far off. So he began looking for the very best suppliers. Alfieri traveled

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to England which is where he first heard about ZF from Aston Martin. As an experiment, he installed the S4-15 from ZF in the last four versions of the previous A6 G 54 model. The quality quickly spoke for itself and that's how the prototype of the 3500 GT came to be equipped with ZF technology. It was presented as the “Dama Bianca” (white woman) in 1957 at the Geneva Motor Show. All 3500 GT engines, except the automatic versions, were immediately equipped with transmissions from ZF."

He continued to talk and spared no praise for the German quality work: “It was an outstanding cooperation with ZF, I went to Friedrichshafen for the first time in 1957 and we had a close relationship. ZF was truly the best company in Europe and the only one with whom we never had any problems. Whenever we ordered something, regardless of whether it was a complete transmission or spare parts, everything always arrived after a week – and the quality was always perfect.”

The anniversary of Maserati’s second major World Championship title, won by Fangio with the 250F on August 4, 1957 with the 250F at the Nürburgring race track, was his fifth and last World Championship title. For Maserati, it was the end of an active motorsports career and simultaneously the beginning of a new era since Alfieri once again hit the mark with the 3500 GT. Embedded in the timelessly beautiful design, an inline six-cylinder engine produces the entire 240 HP from 3.5 liters engine displacement with two upper camshafts and three dual carburetors. This enabled it to reach its highest speed of 230 km/h and immediately become an equal of Ferrari, though its sports car had the double cylinder number at its disposal. The interesting tube frame design, consisting of a solid axle in the rear and a front independent wheel suspension

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ERManno Cozza
on trapeze v-rods, offered sufficiently creative space, in addition to the touring factory configuration for well-known chassis manufacturers, such as Frua, Bertone or Vignale. The Vignale version impressed customers so much that it was later accepted into the factory product line. During its nine-year production period, the various customer requests also led to three different ZF transmission variants being deployed: through the S4-17 and S4-30, the five-speed version was later also equipped with the S5-17. Even the Shah of Persia ordered the model as a stronger 5000 GT version.

"Luciano Pavarotti also owned a 3500 GT in the Sebring configuration," explains Signore Cozza spritely. "He was a friend of the company and also a brand ambassador – regardless of where he lived in the world, there was always a Maserati waiting for him as soon as he left the house. When the Maestro made an appearance, the importers had to make a car available. Then I would receive a call: Signore Cozza, the Maestro is coming, he needs a car – preferably a Quattroporte since it had to be a big car." In Europe, Germany was the main importer of Maseratis in the 1960s. Automatic transmissions were not an issue at that time and no more than 15 or 20 units in total were sold annually.

Signore Cozza also explained the legendary rivalry between the two major manufacturers Maserati and Ferrari in the 50s as follows: “This is how it seemed at the time: Maserati belonged to Modena and Ferrari, in our minds, was practically in Stockholm! There were 20 of us students in the vocational school. Ten of them started working for Maserati when they finished and the other ten from south of Modena went to Maranello to work for Ferrari. This drew an invisible line through the city which made it inconceivable for Maserati employees to assemble a Ferrari. If someone had said to us back then that we would one day work for Ferrari, we would have said they were crazy,” he explained.

The fact that it did happen like that in 1993 was nevertheless reflected on by all employees that we met as a positive development. But how did it actually come to that?

Let's go back in time: After Alfieri Maserati, the driving force of the Maserati brothers, was in a severe race car accident in 1927, he died a few years later from associated complications. Yet despite his tragic death in the 30s, the young company was nevertheless able to grow stronger, but the fierce competition from Germany and the pre-war years put the Italians under major pressure. In 1937, the Italian businessman Adolfo Orsi purchased the company and moved it two years later to its current location in Modena. The Maserati brothers continued to manage the company for another ten years before they returned to Bologna and started focusing again on building race cars under the brand name Officine Specializzate Costruzione Automobili or OSCA, for short – they did stay loyal to ZF.
At the end of the 60s, the unions were growing and crash tests were introduced, both putting severe pressure which got him into financial difficulties. He sold the majority of the company shares to the Citroen Group, which also made it possible to incorporate the technology of the major manufacturer into the Maserati models. In this phase, the mid-size engine car Merak was introduced, which had the same size engine as the Citroen SM and represented the only model that made it without ZF technology. In the early days, only 330 employees worked for Maserati, but they produced 50 engines a day. The chassis were never built by Maserati itself. Just over a year later, there were already three times as many employees working there. Nonetheless, the subsequent years were not very easy: Though Maserati was able to launch on the market the legendary Bora built by Alfieri, under the aegis of Citroen, the announced volumes were never achieved. Another complication was the fourth war in the Middle East conflict in 1973, the Yom Kippur War, which brought about the oil crisis of the 70s. Michelin held majority shares in Citroen and sold the beaten brand Citroen to its competitor Peugeot – in light of the fact that luxury brands were no longer part of the portfolio at all. In order to survive, the parent company forced Citroen to sell off anything that was active outside the French borders. For more than ten months, employees tried to empty the warehouses by flooding the Citroen dealerships with cars.

Management tried to find a buyer for Maserati, but it did not succeed. A few Arab sheiks came by and even BMW took a look. Although Maserati was considered the jewel in the crown, there was no plan since all other brands were experiencing tough times at the oil pump. On May 22, 1975, Maserati along with its
30 employees, who were waiting at home, declared bankruptcy.

“Several Citroen managers drove back home to Paris that day with tears in their eyes,” adds Giorgio Manicardi, who was the sales director of the company at the time. He continues: “To prevent the final closure, Maserati was then taken over by the government-owned Holding GEPI which exclusively looked after companies that were facing financial difficulties. Because it was a company that was under government oversight, there were no managers to appoint. At the time, the government was already working with Alejandro de Tomaso. In addition to his own company, De Tomaso also headed up various companies such as Moto Guzzi or Moto Benelli. Although only 200 units were produced annually instead of the 900 that were originally planned, the volumes gradually rose and the workers forced to stay at home were able to return to work. The saving grace was the Biturbo in 1981. It was able to increase annual production of 700-800 units to 7,300.”

There was a dark side also in this phase. Because, while the Biturbo massively increased the volumes produced, quality problems began to emerge at the same time. Quality control could no longer be guaranteed with the sudden rise in production and the image of the sports car manufacturer began to suffer. At the same time, the U.S. passed a new law which stated that if a car had a problem that recurred more than three times in a row, customers could return the car. In the end, this led to De Tomaso selling the Maserati brand with roughly 600 employees to the FIAT Group in 1993. By now, a lot of young people were working for Maserati because the number of employees began to rise again for the first time. In view of the fact that Ferrari was financially very well positioned, acceptance among the employees was positive. The old rivalry between the two legendary racing stables no longer had solid ground on which to stand.

Text: Janine Vogler
Photos: Gudrun Muschalla/Archive Adolfo Orsi

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Following the saying "no future without a past", it has become common practice for auto manufacturers to flaunt their tradition when launching new models on the market. At Maserati, the idea that things that take time to grow conveys quality and strength attributes and create trust on the market was a popular marketing strategy, the subjects of which, i.e. its classic cars, were almost lost forever. Today, the iconic collection of cars once housed in the company's factory museum can now be viewed in all its grandeur in probably the most beautiful car museum in Italy. However, the museum itself is located on an organic cheese farm.
If you didn’t know it was there, you would pass right by. Somewhere between Modena and Maranello, down a well-maintained dirt track and far from the hustle and bustle of the Lamborghini or Ferrari museums lies "Hombre" – a large ranch with wide open spaces. It covers 310 hectares of land on which a good 500 head of cattle can be seen grazing. They produce 6,000 liters of milk daily which is turned into the finest organic parmesan cheese. But hidden in an unnoticeable, barnlike hall flanked on each side by numerous tractors from the most diverse brands and manufacturers – almost welcoming incredulous visitors and letting them know that they are indeed in the right place – is Mecca for any true Maserati fan. Around the corner, behind a glass door, is the largest and most exclusive Maserati collection that can be marveled at anywhere in the world: the "Collezione Umberto Panini (CUP)." An impressive starting field of historic race rarities such as the 250F, A6GCS Berlinetta or the legendary 420M/58 Eldorado is – to our amazement – headed up by the more modern Maserati Levante. Giovanni Panini, the youngest son of Umberto, explains why: "The Levante was shown with the classic car collection as part of a cooperation. Because the Maserati classic collection from the former factory museum is located here, newly launched models are presented to special guests by the manufacturer."

Almost any child who collects stickers is familiar with the name Panini, the company that kicked off the sticker trading and collection craze. Together with three of his brothers, Umberto Panini owned a small newspaper publishing company in the 1950s in Modena, Italy. Out of this business later grew the sticker empire. However, Panini actually worked as a trained welder and mechanic for the companies Stanguellini and Maserati. He initially went looking for his personal luck in Venezuela, where he worked from 1957 to 1964. He started there as a farm equipment mechanic, eventually becoming an absolute subsistence farmer and ultimately maturing to become a true "hombre". In the meantime, back home in Modena, the sticker album business was heating up. Once his brothers were barely able to keep up with demand,
they had to build factories. They called Umberto back to Modena where he began developing highly innovative mixing and packaging machines for the stickers. However, he did not want to give up his dream of a life on the land, so he purchased this "Finca" or ranch in 1972 and named it "Hombre." Panini started out with 30 head of cattle, producing pure organic parmesan cheese, typical of the region, in a closed ecological system.

In 1989 the Panini brothers sold the entire sticker empire, which enabled Umberto to concentrate on his cheese production as well as pursuing his passion — collecting vintage tractors, motorcycles and cars. Inspired by the Schlumpf Collection at the Mulhouse Car Museum, he decided in the early 90s to construct a building on his ranch to house his auto collection. To this end, he searched painstakingly throughout all of Italy for the right antique vehicles to add to his inventory and spent two years setting it up.

His car-loving sons Matteo, Marco and Giovanni now manage the collection they inherited from their father who died in 2013. "My father was certainly a collector, but at heart, he was a simple man," explains Giovanni, who, meanwhile, gives tours of the museum with just as much enthusiasm as his father: "The satisfaction of the visitors was very important to him as well as the museum's ambience. This is a fantastic place and he wanted every visitor here to have a true experience for both the eyes and the heart — and to come away with fond memories." Originally, his father wanted to focus on collecting anything and everything powered by an engine. With his love of detail in designing the museum, it is almost as if Umberto Panini had already sensed at that time that he would one day provide a home to a very special treasure.

Actually, how he came to own this unique collection of Maseratis is the stuff movies are made of. In the early 90s, about a year before the Fiat Group bought out Maserati, Alejandro de Tomaso, the government-appointed CEO at the time, split the company into two: Maserati S.p.A and Officine Alfieri Maserati (OAM) where this company's factory also had a small museum that housed the almost 20 iconic Maserati classic cars. To be on the safe side, he first removed these vehicles to have them restored, so for a while they disappeared from the picture. When he then sold Maserati S.p.A. to Fiat in 1993, the collection of valuable vehicles was not included in the deal. To celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of Maserati, a small exhibition was planned for the Bologna Motor Show in 1994. For
this occasion, De Tomaso loaned the company a few chronologically arranged models and several engines. The company wanted its true customers and visitors to at least be able to enjoy a sampling of this piece of Italian automobile history. Two years later, De Tomaso wanted the cars back, but offered Maserati the opportunity to purchase the 15 engines, which were then acquired to be exhibited at the company’s headquarters. De Tomaso then secretly shipped the rest of the vehicles along with the true milestone vehicles of Maserati auto history, to London where he wanted to auction them off. Some of the workers who were initially involved in restoring the vehicles – the project commissioned by De Tomaso – found out about his dreadful plan and informed Adolfo Orsi Jr. He was the clever grandson of the former company owner and sounded the alarm by informing the press, the minister of culture, the mayor and also the Stanguellini family. Sure enough, the very next day, De Tomaso was surrounded by an angry mob of Modenans in front of his house. In fact, the entire city was in an absolute uproar about the idea that their inherent automobile history was about to be taken out of the country and scattered around the world, to be lost forever. The pressure was so great that De Tomaso had no other choice than to withdraw the vehicles from the auction and return them to Modena.

At the same time, Umberto Panini, who had become very rich due to the success and sale of his company, was able to persuade Adolfo Orsi and his allies to sell him the entire collection. Panini made an arrangement with the auction house, paid the commission and brought an important piece of Italy’s auto heritage back to Modena, to his ranch. Two years later, Maserati offered to sell him the surprising remnants of the collection, which included many spare parts and special car chassis. I say surprising because they were unexpectedly discovered on the top floor of the old factory museum. This was quite a find! Everything had to be cleaned out and there were enough parts and materials to build four additional cars. The discovery included a 250F with V12 engine. The V6 variant of the model helped Juan Manuel Fangio become the F1 world champion in 1957. Also among the findings was a Type 63, the successor to the Type 61, known as the "bird cage", whose chassis was produced out of 200 thin lattice pipes. Not only that, the treasure revealed a beautiful 6A64 (the first Maserati equipped with a ZF transmission) and the world’s only 420M/58 Eldorado! "Each of the Maseratis here tells a small piece of Maserati history," explains Giovanni with a look of pride on his face. "The Eldorado, for example, was built for the 100-mile race in Monza. At that time, the company – an ice cream manufacturer – that sponsored this Maserati project wanted an American style race car, which is how the small Eldorado cowboy logo ultimately ended up on the car. In fact, this Maserati race car was the first ever in Europe to advertise the products of a company that had nothing to do with cars."
Along the sides of the museum are exhibited more well-known production models such as the 3500 GT, Bora, Ghibli, Quattroporte or Mistral; the upper gallery also houses interesting prototypes like a Simun, which went into volume production as an indy with three ZF transmission models (S5-20, S5-325 and S5-24/3) or a Chubasco. You can even see a flange-mounted ZF transmission S4-17 there.

For anyone interested in cars or Italian automobile art, a visit to this museum is an experience not to be missed. Entry is free, but you must call ahead of time to schedule your visit. In addition to the fascinating journey back in time as you tour this unique collection, a visit may also entice you to make a small financial contribution toward the upkeep of this legendary Italian automobile treasure trove and walk out the door with a warm sense of satisfaction.

“Each of the Maseratis here tells a small piece of Maserati history.”

Text: Janine Vogler
Photos: Gudrun Muschalla
Guardian of the lost treasure

Maserati stands for sensual emotion, for pure understatement as tradition. In 1937 the successful entrepreneur Adolfo Orsi from Modena bought the company Maserati from the charismatic brothers. How does it feel when one of the most emotional automotive brands had been owned by your family but had to be sold?

There is only one person who can answer this question: Adolfo Orsi jr. is the grandson of this famous entrepreneur with the same name and guardian of this historic legacy. Today, he is one of the most popular personalities in the vintage car scene. With diligence but without pomp, he dedicated his life to classic cars. In an extensive interview in his hometown Modena, he told us about growing up under the charismatic banner of the trident, his message to all aficionados of the scene and the future of vintage cars …
Adolfo, more than 80 years ago, in 1937, your grandfather Adolfo Orsi Sen. bought Maserati. You have lived your whole childhood under the mystic symbol of the trident. How would you describe this experience and how did it influence your life?

For sure it influenced my life, because the first day I opened my eyes, I saw red cars – very noisy – and that impressed me. Honestly I was born in the Orsi-family, but it could have been another family and Maserati was part of the family in some way. Therefore I did not realize how lucky I was until I became much older, because for me it was absolutely natural to be involved in the business in some way, following my grandfather’s and father’s steps. I consider myself today to be a very lucky person, as cars have been the passion of my life and I was lucky enough to become professional in this field. My passion became also my profession and I work 365 days a year without any problems – therefore I consider myself to be a very lucky person.

Under the management and the outstanding missions of your father Omar, such as hiring Tarzio Nuvolari and Juan Manuel Fangio or the first woman in the world Championship Maria Teresa de Filippis – the 1950s became a very successful decade for Maserati and its brilliance seems to have returned. Has it ever really faded during the past decades?

Yes for sure – Maserati had a very dark period during the DeTomaso-years and naturally the image of Maserati faded together with the quality and the production. I have to say as you know Fiat took over the company in 1993, and – not immediately but after some years – they were able to take it back to good quality production standard and I think that today the image of Maserati is much better than in 80s or 90s. I would say that the Maserati image during the 1950s and 1960s was still much more brilliant, not only because of the racing history but also for the quality and because of the Gran Turismo models, which were the ones used by the VIP-persons of that time. If you take the 1960s, Maserati were the cars for the kings, for the major personalities in the industry, in the movie business and that probably has been the best period in the Maserati-history ever.

Regarding the performance of the values of classic Maserati cars, it seems as if the brand had suffered from the sale to Citroen?

I would say that the Maserati market changed a lot within the last 25-30 years. The Maserati racing cars
were always been considered very highly also the price of the racing cars remained very strong during the years because the people understood the quality of the machining and manufacturing of the racing cars. What was surprising is, that the price of the GT-cars has been very low for many years, and then the collectors started also to purchase the quality and the rarity of the Maserati cars and they started first with the GT-cars built in the 50s and then they moved a bit to the 60s. I still think that today some models like the 3500 GT and all this series of cars are still a bit undervalued if you compare to the period competitors like not only Ferrari but also like Aston Martin.

**But in the meantime, the models have caught up incredibly...**

Yes, they grewed. But if you see the value of the corresponding models of Ferrari or Aston Martin, there is still a lot of difference between the Aston Martin and the Maserati value, which in my opinion is not based on real material, because the image of Maserati in racing was much more important than the one of Aston Martin. To speak about heritage – not speaking about Ferrari – because the Ferrari-value is a world apart, I would say the Ferrari is the real blue chip of the collectors market. To take an example: the difference between the Ferrari 275 GTB and the Maserati Mistral it is incredible. At that time the pricelist of the two cars were the same, today there is a difference of nearly 15 times between the values and I consider that probably the multiple is too much to my opinion, that difference is too high.

More than 60 years ago, in 1957, Juan Manuel Fangio had already won the second Formula One World Championship with Maserati. One year later in 1958, Stirling Moss was successful with the famous

“**The contact between ZF and Maserati started then for this historical reason, because Maserati wanted to find the best possible supplier for the gearbox and they chose ZF to be their supplier.**”
420M/58 Eldorado, the first non-automotive promotion campaign in motor sports. Do you see it as a mission that the brand name Maserati has to lead the way to innovative ideas?

“Maserati has always been in advance for fitting new technologies or fitting new materials.”

The Eldorado has been the very first in European races, because this custom, to name cars with a sponsor name, was already used in the states during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Yes, Maserati has always been innovative and I will say it has also later been innovative, because in the winter 58/59 was built the prototype of the Maserati Type 60, which the people named birdcage. This was a real innovative car and also in the production of the GT cars, Maserati has been the very first manufacturer in Italy and I would say the second in Europe to use a full injection on the cars. While other manufacturers have always been followers, Maserati has always been in advance for fitting new technologies or fitting new materials.

Maserati is one of ZF’s most faithful clients: Since the 1950s nearly every model has been fitted with – at least optional – ZF gearboxes. Do you remember how the partnership with ZF began and who initiated it?

No, I don’t remember – I was born in 1951 and therefore in 1955 or 1956 I was still a boy, I don’t remember the fact. I studied a lot the history of Maserati, especially of that period and I understand why this collaboration was born. Maserati was building I think the most advanced gearbox and differentials for racing, these
have always been a very strong Maserati point for racing and they were so good built that Aston Martin, when they decided to build their own Formula One cars, they asked Maserati to sell the Maserati gearbox to Aston Martin. Just to give you an idea of how Maserati quality was considered. But racing is one thing and the production of GT cars is another matter. Maserati has started to produce the GT cars already at the end of the 1940s and 1947 with the A6 1500 and then the 2-litre, but they were very little numbers, and the A6G 2000 were fitted with Maserati gearbox. But in 1956 the company decided to start to produce a car in a bigger number, which was the 3500 GT. Maserati decided not to build everything at home, but to try to find the best suppliers for many components. For example the brakes: Maserati was building its own brakes for racing cars, which were the most advanced drum brakes built at that time. But when they decided to start the production of the 3500 GT, they contacted Girling for the brakes and they contacted ZF for having the ZF gearbox. Therefore when they decided to start with a larger production model in order to have a good quality and to have a clear cost of all the parts fitted on the car, they decided to contact the best possible suppliers of this parts and to focus Maserati only on projecting the car, building the engine and assembling the car, as the bodies were built outside the company like Touring or other companies. The contact between ZF and Maserati started then for this historical reason, because Maserati wanted to find the best possible supplier for the gearbox and they chose ZF to be their supplier. The relationship started at the same moment as the production of the 3500 GT and for the last small serie of the A6G 2000. The last 2-litre cars built with a body by Frua and Allemano were fitted with ZF-gearboxes.
How come that some models (e.g. Indy, Quattroporte I, 5000 GT) are fitted with several ZF gearboxes?

Because there was a development in the model: some models started with 4.2-litre and then were fitted with a 4.7 or 4.9-litre engine and therefore the power was different. Most probably it was a technical reason behind the possibility to have one gearbox instead of another because it was only given by the fact that ZF probably developed a more modern gearbox or Maserati needed a gearbox which was able to accept more power.

Your father sold Maserati in 1968?

Yes, the agreement was probably in 1967 but for the reason Citroën asked my family to keep it frozen for a year the contract started on January 1st, 1969 but the agreement was already signed more than one year before.

Can you tell us a bit about the background-situation and how did you experience the sale of the company from a teenager’s perspective?

The background of the reason was multiple I would say. My grandfather was already old at that time and my father had some healthy problems and there were already some new problems with trade unions, with the social surrounding around the manufacturing – which arrived at the end to the famous 1968...
The offer of Citroën came in a moment when my family was searching a new horizon for the company."

student-revolution. That was the situation inside of the family and outside. For the production in 1965 and 1966 the US-government established new rules for air crash and air pollution, which forced all the manufacturers of small production cars to make anti-crash-tests. Therefore Maserati was forced to take one car for each model to test in crash tests and that was very expensive. At that time Maserati was producing 600-700 cars a year and taking 4-5 different models and to take one car of each model crashing, was quite expensive. But also for air pollution: because it was necessary to fit all the cars with a catalytic converter and to make a test of 20,000 miles and check afterwards that the catalytic converter is still working, therefore was really very expensive – and you need a kind of development and research division to do that. At that time this US situation hit not only Maserati – but hit also Ferrari, Lamborghini, Aston Martin, Iso Rivolta, Bizzarini – all producers of small production cars were hit by this situation. It was just in time that Citroën contacted Maserati, because they had in mind to produce a new admiral for the company, which should have been the Citroën SM and they asked Maserati, if they were interested to study a new engine for this model. Maserati has built immediately a couple of prototypes which were tested by Citroën and Citroën said "ok, we are very happy with your project and now we would like to make an order of 30 engines a day". Having such an important customer for the Maserati company, because 30 engines a day was probably 50% of the monthly turnover at that time, would have been too dangerous for Maserati, to invest a large amount of money in new tools, new machines etc. So Citroën told Maserati that they could be interested in financing the project by buying the majority of the shares of the company also. The offer of Citroën came in a moment when my family was searching a new horizon for the company. My grandfather was old and my father was the only person active in the company. My father had two sisters, but they had no interest in the company – both had two sons but they were also not interested at all in the company. Therefore there was a period of about ten years in which no one of the family could have taken over the place of my ancestors. The offer felt exactly in the right moment. I have to say that looking from today you can say it was not successful. But looking from the eye of time it was a very good collaboration, because Maserati would have given his heritage, his knowledge of cars and engines and Citroën was a very advanced company at that time. If you look at the history of Citroën, it has been the most advanced company of the 30s until the 50s. There was a lot of potential. But unfortunately, then what happened, was that there was the petrol crisis in 1971 – 1973 which hit a lot the sales of the high performance cars. Furthermore Citroën was part of the Michelin-family, was owned by Michelin at that time and Michelin decided to sell the company and it
was purchased by Peugeot. Peugeot on the other hand found itself in front of big problems, for the reasons I told you before and they decided to put Maserati into liquidation in 1975. That was what happened. But already in 1971 my family was totally out, because Citroën moved to Modena some managers, who were taken from the big industry, they were missing a bit the feeling to understand this very narrow niche of the market of sport cars. As my father was still in the board – he was in charge of the commercial – he decided, that the managers were not taking to the goal which they had seen at the beginning, therefore my family came out totally in 1971.

About my feeling… ok, I think that it was a smart decision, taken at that time – in order to give Maserati a possibility to survive in this difficult times. If you consider, that also Ferrari made an agreement with Fiat a few month later, and what happened with the people who did not have a marriage with bigger companies like Aston Martin or Lamborghini – they closed, one year later they opened and closed again and so on – I think it was the right decision to take at that time. Naturally I would have liked to own still the company, but most probably my family could not have survived the difficulties of that period. Therefore I think this was good for the company. And my family never put their interests before the interest of the company, they always looked after the company, because the company is not only a name. The company means – in case of Maserati – that there were 400 people working, that were 400 families – therefore it was important for all that people that the company will have a continuation in the future. And that is what happened – because if we are speaking about Maserati today, we are speaking about something that does still exist.

More than 70 years ago, the Maserati brothers separated from the company and founded OSCA (Officine Specializzate Costruzione Automobili) in 1947. Do you know why they didn’t extend their contracts and remained in the company after ten years?

There is nothing written about that. I know that there was a big esteem between my family and the Maserati family, which continues today. The Maserati brothers
were really artisans in the most noble definition of artisan. They were crafting mechanic like it was an art and they were used to build in a small factory, they were used to have everything under control and so on. Moving to Modena (because the company moved to Modena in winter 1939/40) they found themselves in a bigger complex – my grandfather had approximately more than 1000 workers in different companies, after the wartime there were a lot of trade union problems and therefore probably they found themselves not in the right place at that time. As there was a big esteem between our two families, last year we organized with the Maserati nephews a Christmas-party in Bologna at the beginning of December, where we invited a lot of Maserati friends and the benefit was for a cancer institute. We still remain today in a very good relation but at that time they decided to take a different way. And I have to say that I have a big esteem studying the work of the Maserati brothers for the OSCA – these cars are small jewels like the 1100 or 1500 and so on I would say of the same quality as the Maserati cars of that time, unfortunately because the OSCA trademark is not as known as the Maserati one, the value of the OSCA is half or even a bit less than half of the Maserati market value, but I don’t see any reason for that because they are as much interesting cars as the Maserati ones.

Although Maserati was so famous, only a few people – even in the classic cars scene – have ever even heard about OSCA – what is your explanation for this phenomenon?

The classic car market is driven by the universality and if you take the Ferrari name, it is known all over the world. Everyone who has a Ferrari, you can go to China or to Japan or South America – all people know what is a Ferrari, a bit less a Maserati. But OSCA is only known by knowledgeable people and therefore the value of the OSCA cars is lower than the one of more universal trademarks. But what you can see also, to make an example, is that Auto Fraschini in the 20s was well known at that time as Rolls Royce, Hispano Suiza or Bugatti. But now the Isotta Fraschini have some kind of market in Italy and probably in the States, but not all over the world. The knowledge of the mark in the world is an important factor for the market price.

"... the company is not only a name. The company means – in case of Maserati – that there were 400 people working, that were 400 families."
From the 1950s on, the cars of Maserati and OSCA were fitted with gearboxes from ZF – was there still any cooperation between the Maserati brothers and your family after their separation from the company?

There was a good relation, but they did not have any collaboration in a technically way, they were managing their company in Bologna. In Modena my family hired new technicians like Massimino or Colombo, Alfieri and so on. They were sometimes competitors on racing tracks, not everyday – because Maserati built 1.5-litre only 1955 and mostly the OSCA cars are 1100 or 1500, so therefore there was a bit of competition in the racing but not much else.

Looking back and forward: In your opinion – what are the main distinctive features of Maserati cars compared to other competitors?

If we are speaking about road cars, I think that the Maserati cars were built, having clearly in mind, the type of customers. The type of customer were customers, who wanted a prestigious car, elegant with all the features connected with comfort: like electric windows, air condition, leather material and so on but not so stunning or so noisy like a Ferrari or a Lamborghini. The Maserati road cars were studied for people who were using the cars everyday, who were making long travels with it, for business or for holiday. Instead the Ferrari and Lamborghini were built – I’m speaking about the cars of the 60s – for using the cars mainly on the weekend to go to from Milano to Portofino and returning back. But not for going from Milano to Rome and returning back in the same day for business reasons. Therefore the Maserati cars were mainly painted in very elegant colours like metallic or blue, green or grey and not for example in red or yellow or orange like Lamborghini and Ferrari.

What is your favorite Maserati model and why?

That is a very difficult question, it is very difficult for me to have a preference because they are all sons of the same mother and father (laughing). Naturally I am more affective linked to the cars which I saw with my eyes and which I have memories connected with. For example in 1964/65 my father was using a Maserati Quattroporte to take the family around or to take me to Germany or to study, and therefore I have more memories connected with this kind of car than with another but I think that there have been so many important models in the Maserati history that it is difficult to choose one car instead of another.

Can you explain the Ferrari and the Porsche hype in all societies and age groups of men?

Today? I would say that Porsche was very successful in keeping the image of a sportscar during the years and also the image given by the racing heritage. Because they continued to race always with sportscars, with the 911 in different versions, therefore I can understand that the younger generation looks to the Porsche – it was a dreamcar for many generations. The classic car market is linked to that. Because if you dream of a car in your youth and you keep the posters of a car in your bedroom and then, when you start to gain money, you start to buy a car for your own pleasure – the first car you purchase, is the car you dreamt of, when you were young. This could be the Lamborghini Countach, could be Porsche 911 or the Ferrari F40 – to name a few cars. You can clearly understand the reason, why some makers and some models today are very much demanded in the last years in this market.

The Ferrari hype is the connection between this reasons. Ferrari always built cars which hit the imagination of the young generation. And Ferrari is the only one, which continued to race in the Formular 1 from the beginning of the championship until today. And also because it became the blue chip of the collectors car market. If someone wanted to buy a car
for investment, would have purchased a Ferrari car. If someone wanted to buy a painting for investment, most probably would have purchased a Picasso. If you have a Picasso at the wall of your house and you invite people, they will understand, what is a Picasso and that you must be a rich person, because you own it. And that is probably the reason, why there have been a lot of new collectors, who were attracted by the Ferrari brand.

You are very much in demand as consultant and judge in all main Concour events all over the world. Are there any automotive brands that you have never seen there thus far and which would you like to be represented?

I worked during the years mainly with four Italian manufacturers, because naturally you have to focus your activity in a field – I have books of every marks but my main interest has always been in Italian cars and in Italian races. And therefore I had collaborations with Lamborghini, with Ferrari, Maserati – but I collaborated also with Bugatti when the company was here in Italy. I organized for them a couple of historical exhibitions in Bologna. And I have been fascinated by the figure of Ettore Bugatti, because he was an Italian and I consider the Bugatti cars are not German cars or French cars – but he is like an artist, like Leonardo, who went to work in France, but Leonardo’s paintings are still Italian paintings and not French paintings. Therefore I consider Ettore Bugatti to have a very strong link with our Italian culture and – he was an Italian, he kept his Italian passport until 1947, a few month before he died and he was speaking Italian. Therefore I consider Ettore Bugatti to be Italian and the Bugatti cars to be a bit Italian cars. I was able to work with Bugatti in the 1990s and I was happy to collaborate with this company.

How do you explain the consistently growing amount of classic car shows and events and do you expect a decline within the next few years?

I am in this field since 1987, already 30 years and some people are linking the growth of the field with the growth of the classic car prices, which I consider they are not linked together. In the last two years for example the prices declined. But until now I have not seen any decline in the organization of events. There are always more events. There has been a change for example, in the last years as there were more Concours d’Elegance born around the world, most recently in China and India.
and other countries. I think we still have a lot of growing possibilities because there are some new countries like China or India, which will for sure be big players in the future. But you have not to expect that they become big players in one or two years, you need at least one generation of people, because in China they have not seen any cars until 15 years ago. So therefore we have to wait that the generation of the people who looked to the cars of the year 2000, they are becoming wealthy people, then they will start to collect. There are already many Chinese collectors, who are not keeping the car in China, because the import of classic cars to China is forbidden — the classic cars are considered as used cars and the import for used cars is forbidden. If they accept, they have to pay 100 percent of duty to import the car. Therefore these people are buying cars but they are keeping the cars in Australia, Kanada, England or in the US. When the Chinese government will decide, that the cars will be part of their historical heritage and should be legally imported, I think we can have a big increase in the number of collectors, also from these countries.

From Russia too?

Yes there are some problems of custom duties in Russia. They started to import modern cars I would say modern classics until ten years ago. And then they stopped, because of the financial situation. But I think that there is still interest in Russia for classic cars. Therefore I think in the future we will have to see the possibility to see new countries entering in our classic car world.

You have dedicated your professional life to historic cars — does that apply to your private life as well?

Unfortunately yes, because if you are working all day long for classic cars — normally on Saturday or Sundays the people have a free weekend to enjoy, but generally the events are held on the weekends. I work during all the week and then at the weekend I am still working, but this is part of my life and part of my passion.

There is a niche in the classic car scene where workshops specialized themselves in tuning classic cars. Do you agree with that or do you insist that the cars should stay purely original?

You see my face, I look a bit like a Taliban, and on this matter I am really a Taliban. For me a classic car should be kept as it was built at that time and should be restored back to the original condition and with the same imperfection if possible, and not making new parts in stainless steel or everything like that. For that reason I am one of the strong supporters for the preservation of historic cars. I am very proud because

” ... Therefore I think that our obligation is to give to the next generation the possibility to understand, how were built the so called classic cars.”
I started the FIVA award in Pebble Beach already 19 years ago and since then I am the chief class juror for this award. And our message is, that the car is original only once. If you decide to restore the car, you will lose the originality of a car, because it is nearly impossible also today to reproduce some materials, some kind of workmanship and so on. Therefore I think that our obligation is to give to the next generation the possibility to understand, how were built the so called classic cars. Therefore we should try to preserve the classic car as much original as possible. We should try to let the message pass through that the car should be driven, should be maintained – possibly not restored – if they are still in the original condition. If there is a small problem in the paint you are not forced to restore the whole car, you can decide to do a repair on the fender but try to keep the car in its 90-per-cent-originality. The same applies for the upholstery or for the engine. A car which has a patina for me has much more to say than a newly restored car. The newly restored cars could have been built yesterday. From a car with patina you can understand, that it was built 60 years ago, you can understand the materials which were used to build a car. You can still find the finger-prints of the people who built the car. And I think that is the message which we have to pass to the future generation of classic car collectors.

**If a young boy would ask you nowadays which current car model would once become a classic car in future, what would be your suggestion?**

In the history there have been many iconic models – also of mass production cars, you can see the Fiat 500, the Citroen 2CV, the Mini or the Volkswagen Beatle. Therefore probably some models could become icons like the very first Volkswagen Golf or some other models. Unfortunately because there was a change in the regulation for homologation etc., the cars became more or less similar each to another. A very few cars still maintain in a strong personality. I think that the cars with a big personality could keep this personality also in the future.

**In the age of digitization and electrification, what role will classic cars play in the future?**

First to say – electric cars are not part of the future only, they are also part of the past! Because 50 % of the cars which were registered in the US at the beginning of the last century were both: electric or steam cars. We had in our past a big heritage with electric cars. Now we have the technology to make electric cars able to perform 500 kilometres. But I own myself a car which was built in 1918 in the US and which has 80 kilometres autonomous use. Therefore the car it is not only part of the future, it is also part of the past.

"We had in our past a big heritage with electric cars."
I looked at some photos of Times Square in 1900 and there were all cards with horses and only one automobile. I saw photos of the same place, Times Square in 1913, and there were only cars, not even one more horse on the street. What happened? We killed all the horses? No! There are more horses today than there were at the beginning of the last century. Because the horses changed and became a part of our free time, it became a friend of us. I think, that also in the future we can keep using classic cars. Not for the normal all day use, but for the weekend still to continue, also in the world of electrified cars, we could still have the classic cars to be driven. I don’t know if in the city, but for sure there could be a place to be driven somewhere in the country. I think that we should not have the risk to lose the cars. Also because another way to call to a car is automobile, and an automobile should be driven and not be kept as a piece of art in the museum only. It gave you the satisfaction. Today you will see a lot of young generation who are interested to see classic cars, because this is part of the heritage of our world, the cars have been an important part of our history. The last century would have been different if the car was not invented. The FIVA is working strictly with the Unesco in order to keep the car as a part of our heritage and I think that is a good move.

Interview: Janine Vogler
Photos: Gudrun Muschalla
Those who want to tour the production halls in Modena are first guided through the impressive showroom designed by the industrial architect Ron Arad. On an imposing ten-ton honeycomb structure made of carbon and glass fibers, a large blue hoop, reminiscent of a race track, rises into the air. The main part of it is mounted on a base that nobly bears a perfectly restored 6CM. The entire work of art is painted with the traditional Maserati colors of blue and red and is intended to mainly remind visitors of the glorious victories in Indianapolis.
Maserati is committed to having the most modern production facilities and outstanding working conditions. In the first four years after the takeover, Ferrari management invested extensively in new factories and production lines in Modena. Ferrari itself would not get a facelift until ten years later. The car bodies are built in Turin and from there sent to Ferrari in Maranello to be painted. The engines then (built by Ferrari in the Maranello Plant) are installed in the Maserati Modena Plant. Around 500 employees work at the headquarters in Modena. In the production hall there, twelve assembly stations join the driveline and car body and also install and fine-tune the mechanical components. Neatly lined up to the side are the ZF automatic transmissions, waiting patiently for the “marriage”: the moment when the car body and the driveline are put together. Every screw is perfectly turned, with the computer controlling the torque in Newton meters. This 100-percent control allows no room for errors. All workstations offer optimal ergonomic conditions with the most modern 90° rotation capability. There is practically no over-the-head work, which means employees have the car in front of them and their hands.

"The test driver must feel the car ..."

GIORGIO MANICARDI
The interior of the vehicle is subsequently fitted out on another twelve stations. The assembly lines are operated during one 8-hour day shifts only, five days a week. A total of 20 units of the Gran Turismo and Gran Cabrio models are produced here daily, with an Alfa 4CA squeezed in now and then. All cars are pre-ordered and each one is assembled according to the customer’s request. If you look at all the possible combinations, there is a total of over 40 million (!) accessory and equipment variations. The different models are purposefully lined up one after the other, this guarantees greater employee interest in the work. Nevertheless, on average, an employee will stay at one workstation for a maximum of seven months, then switch. A team manager is responsible for four stations and remains on one line for eight to ten years.

After assembly, each car is tested at 160 km/h on the roller test bench to ensure the ABS, brakes, transmission and clutch are in good working order. Then it must be subjected to the water test at 3,000 liters per minute. And that’s not all. Each car is then checked by being test driven 40–50 kilometers in the city, on the highway or on the race track. “During the test drive, each car must be able to reach 288 km/h. The test driver must feel the car,” explains the former head of sales Giorgio Manicardi with pride: “Lastly, the car goes to the final fine-tuning area where employees spend three hours treating it and eliminating even the smallest of quirks and defects. We have the best “beauty farm” in the world and only women perform this last quality control step!”

And if that is not enough, the car is checked one last time by an external company that then bears the final responsibility.

While only 20 cars are assembled in Modena daily, at the Avvocato Giovanni Agnelli Plant in Grugliasco, 130 cars – the Ghibli and Quattroporte models – are produced per day. This new highly modern Maserati production facility in Turin officially started operations at the beginning of 2013. Advanced world class manufacturing methods and the strictest quality controls were put into place right from the start. The second production location besides the headquarters in Modena became necessary in order to be able to implement the Maserati model initiative and to maintain the company’s growth course. The third production location, the Mirafiori plant, is producing the first ever Maserati SUV, the Levante. The findings and processes gained in Grugliasco were applied to the new production line. In the meantime, the percentage share of automatic transmissions supplied worldwide is 90 percent while manual transmissions have fallen to just ten percent, with most of the demand coming from Italy and Germany. If looking at just the European market, the ratio of automatic to manual transmissions is 70:30. The Fiat ChryslerGroup intends to turn the traditional manufacturer into an electric brand.
The marketing department at Maserati selected the following as their brand slogan: “The Absolute Opposite of Ordinary.” The painful desire to hear its engine or thought processes paralyzed during engine start-up often occur when in contact with a Maserati. The idea that we could be cured of these classic Maserati-induced discomforts in the future does not exactly bring spontaneous joy. But it does make one curious because, after all, many innovations will certainly be possible in the future under the sign of the trident.

Hopefully it will be a future that includes ZF; and also hopefully a future that is the absolute opposite of ordinary.

Text: Janine Vogler
Photos: Gudrun Muschall