



Great Garages

SIMEONE FOUNDATION MUSEUM: SURGICAL COLLECTING PRECISION

Written by David M. Brown

Next time you're in the City of Brotherly Love, even before you altruistically cruise over to Pat's Steaks, ascend Rocky's favorite art museum steps and grab a hot pretzel on a cold street corner, stop in at the remarkable Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum.

The approximately 100,000-square-foot collection, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation today, is near the airport in southwest Philly, so, after deplaning, you don't have to move too fast to arrive quickly at one of the world's great collections of racing sports cars.

Assembled during 50 years of passionate collecting by renowned neurosurgeon, Philadelphia native Dr. Frederick Simeone, the eponymous museum contains approximately 65 of the rarest and most significant racing sports cars, 1909 to the mid '70s.

The cars star in dioramas that represent some of the famous race courses where they competed: Watkins Glen, Bonneville, Sebring, the Mille Miglia and Le Mans.

Among these great racing cars are the early 1909 American Underslung by the first American manufacturer to exclusively produce sports cars — "The Car For The Discriminating Few"; a 1912 National Speed Car powered by a 7-litre engine which, in a similar car, powered the only stock car model to win the Indianapolis 500, in 1912; a 1916 Stutz Bearcat; and a 1913 Mercer Raceabout, the only known one modified for racing.

Dr. Simeone is particularly fond of Alfa Romeos, and his collection includes a 1933 8C 2300 Mille Miglia Spider, bodied by Castagna, the fastest, most powerful, best handling sports car available in the early 1930s, reportedly making 135.1 mph at Brooklands, and a 1938 Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B, winner of the great Mille Miglia.

And, the collection showcases marques such as Allard, Vauxhall, Lancia, Jaguar C- and D-Types, a Delahaye, a Ferrari "Testa Rossa," a Ford Mk IV, a Duesenberg race car, and a "S" Series supercharged Mercedes Benz, which won the 1927 Nürburgring race (the first German Grand Prix), driven by Otto Merz, who chauffeured Archduke Franz Ferdinand the



24 Hours of Le Mans



Targa Florio



America at Le Mans



Mario Andretti and Dr. Fred Simeone with the Spirit of Competition Award

day he was assassinated in Sarajevo, June 28, 1914, igniting World War I.

A 1926 Kissel 8-75 Speedster represents the car favored by Amelia Earhart, Douglas Fairbanks, Jack Dempsey; the "Hippie" Porsche 917 reveals its psychedelic paint scheme; and an MG K3 Magnette finished fourth overall in the 1934 Le Mans 24-hour race against competition with much larger engines. Dr. Simeone even has the first 1933 Squire Roadster built; only seven cars were built because they proved too expensive to build.

Muscle cars are well represented: A 1970 Plymouth Superbird aerodynamically built on the Roadrunner frame helped make this model the first stock car to exceed 200 miles per hour. The first muscle car is here, too, the famed 1953 Hudson Hornet Twin H-Power, which proved its stinging stuff, from strips to mountain climbs, becoming "The Satan of Morimar."

The collection has been open to the public since June 2008. Three years later, Dr. Simeone, who serves as executive director of the museum, received the prestigious Lee Iacocca Award, which recognizes outstanding classic car enthusiasts. And last year, it was chosen the Museum of the Year by the International Historic Motoring Awards in London.

In the same spirit as Philadelphia's famed Barnes Foundation paintings, the exhibition is a personal collection of the doctor and, because of this, differs from most other automotive col-

lections in that the cars tell a story, explains Harry Hurst, the museum's communication director.

"The central theme of the Simeone Foundation collection is the spirit of competition," that competition and racing improves the breed," says Hurst, not related to the famous car family, whose shop was not too far from the museum, north of Philadelphia in suburban Warminster.

These great cars reveal that breeding at every vignette. Hold on for the ride, as Hurst shows *Highline Autos* this outstanding collection:

- 1964 Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupe CSX2287 — This was the first of six famed Daytona Coupes produced, was the first to race, Daytona, 1964, and the last, Bonneville, 1965, and remains the one that has not been completely restored. Completed 50 years ago in January 1964 by designer Pete Brock and crew for Shelby American Inc. in Los Angeles, this extraordinary racer is among the most historically significant automobiles in America.

Recently, it became the first automobile to be recorded under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Heritage Documentation in conjunction with The Historic Vehicle Association (HVA) and permanently archived in the Library of Congress.

The Daytona Coupe was designed by Brock and enabled the



1964 Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupe CSX2287



1937 Bugatti 57G "Tank"

Shelby American Cobra race team, including the Valley's Bob Bondurant, to win the International Manufacturer's GT Championship in 1965 — the first, and still only time an American manufacturer won an international race series.

"I'm quite proud that our California-built Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupe helped lead the way to America's first win in the FIA's International Manufacturer's GT Championship in 1965," says Brock, founder of Brock Racing Enterprises in Henderson, Nev.

Brock brilliantly reconfigured the original Cobra roadster's aerodynamically challenged body for improved speed and handling by discovering and then adapting data conceived by a couple of German aerodynamicists in the late '30s.

"Those men were really on to something back then," says Brock, "but WW II essentially buried that information. Because I'm interested in automotive history, I was fortunate to find and realize the value of their contribution and apply it to my Daytona Coupe design.

"The Daytona's revolutionary shape has since proven its value to almost all modern designs by helping to establish new standards for automotive aerodynamic efficiency," Brock adds.

"We are honored that our 1964 Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupe was selected as the first vehicle to achieve national heritage status," Dr. Simeone says. "Part of our mission is to ensure the preservation of historically important automo-

biles, like this Cobra. With efforts like this from the HVA and Department of the Interior, future generations will be able to appreciate the tremendous contributions these cars made to automotive history."

•**1937 Bugatti 57G "Tank"** — This is the remaining track warrior of the three that were built, and it won every race it entered, including the 1937 Le Mans 24-hour. The 3.3-liter inline 8 was entered by Robert Benoist and Jean Wimille. Ettore Bugatti showed it in his private museum; even the master thought it very special.

•**1938 Alfa Romeo 2900B MM** — In the 1930s, Alfa Romeo made the most successful racing sports cars in the world, with a young Enzo Ferrari the racing team manager, no less. Of all the Alfas made, the 8C (8-cylinder) 2900 is considered the most desirable, and the 2900B MM is the best of them all. This one won the 1938 Mille Miglia, the 1,000-mile race through Italy, and it's one of two left from the original four.

•**1958 Aston-Martin DBR1** — Aston Martin won the World Manufacturer's Championship with a team of these cars in 1959, culminating with a win at Le Mans featuring Carroll Shelby co-driving with Roy Salvadori. This car won the 1958 Nürburgring 1000 driven by Stirling Moss and Jack Brabham (both later knighted). Later, this car was driven by Jim Clark at Le Mans; many say he was the greatest ever. Moss, Shelby, Brabham, Clark: Very few vintage racing cars carry this driver legacy.

•**1965 Corvette Grand Sport** — This is one of only five built



1958 Aston-Martin DBR1



1938 Alfa Romeo 2900B MM



1965 Corvette Grand Sport

by General Motors, developed in 1963 by legendary Chevrolet engineer Zora Arkus-Duntov, "father of the Corvette," to battle the potent Ford Cobra. Ferociously fast, the Grand Sport was modeled on the new Stingray but added a very lightweight fiberglass body, tubular frame and all-aluminum engine.

"The Corvette is really the only sports car that America has produced consistently, and the Grand Sport is the most iconic Corvette racer they ever built," Dr. Simeone says. "If General Motors hadn't stopped the program early, who knows what it may have achieved."

Because General Motors had a corporate ban on racing, the project was terminated, and the five Grand Sports built, of the planned 125, were sold.

This car, serial number 002, started as a coupe but became a roadster, one of two Grand Sports to be so modified. Roger Penske, the Philadelphia Chevrolet dealer and just beginning his legendary career as racing team owner, purchased both.

He modified it for a 427-cubic-inch aluminum engine and sold it to George Wintersteen of Villanova, Pa., who campaigned in several events of the 1966 United States Road

Racing Championship. The originals had 377-cubic-inch small blocks.

The 002 Grand Sport came with a duplicate body and a second engine. "The replica body was commissioned by the former owner and mounted on the original chassis frame so that the car could be used in vintage races without damaging the original body and engine," Hurst says. As a result, this Grand Sport is the most original of the five, making it even more exceptional.

Stop by; you might stay until Hurst courteously offers you a ride back to your home or hotel. You might actually get to meet the doctor; he's in almost every day. And if he's in the lobby, he'd enjoy introducing his marvelous collection.

For more information, call 215.365.7233 or visit www.simeonemuseum.org. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you or someone you know has a GreatGarage and would like it to be considered for an upcoming issue, e-mail us at GreatGarages@highline-autos.com.