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With a new epilogue
by Stacy Bradley

ENZO FERRARI

THE MAN AND THE MACHINE



1.

The autoroute to Beaune lay ahead, an inkblot of asphalt. Behind him a few remaining lights of Lyon flickered in the rearview mirror as the big Renault sedan settled into a steady lope at 125 mph. He would be in Paris before dawn.

He was a driver. At eighty-two years, he still handled an automobile with the same authority and resolve that had carried him to three victories at Le Mans. Twenty-four hours. Around the clock. Those races were his specialties. He had never been a sprinter, never particularly fast in the twitchy, pitiless single-seat Grand Prix machines. But give him a full-fendered Alfa Romeo or Ferrari sports car and he could run like a marathoner, hour after hour, kilometer banked on kilometer, crushing the opposition with his sheer grit and the reserves of muscle coiled in his compact bricklayer's body.

He checked his watch. The hands were slipping toward three o'clock on the morning of August 14, 1988. It was a drive he had made a hundred times; Modena to Paris, now a headlong rush along the table-smooth Italian autostradas and the French autoroutes. For forty years, the mission had been the same. The central theme had been the cars; those low-slung beasts that had caused him so much joy and grief. Up and down the autoroutes, crossing and recrossing the spine of the Alps like some crazed tourist, back and forth over the bleak expanse of the Atlantic, always with one singular purpose – the glorification and enrichment of the most supremely outrageous, over-powered and oversexed automobiles of the modern era, the crimson bolides of Modena and Maranello – the magic machines of Enzo Ferrari.

Ferrari. There had been times, often lasting months, even years, when he had wished he had never heard the name, but too

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much time had passed for that. Seventy years, he mused. He had known this incredible man since 1918, when both had been young veterans poking around the postwar automobile business in Milan and Turin. Ferrari had made Luigi Chinetti a rich man while making himself richer. Ferrari had made him important and respected, while elevating himself to world fame and becoming a demigod to the poseurs and nouveaux who seemed prepared to sell their firstborn into white slavery in order to obtain one of his automobiles.

It had all been an insane aerobatic display of emotion and ego warfare and now he was tired of it all. They had dueled too long and, if a winner had to be declared, it would have to be Ferrari. But did he not always win? Did he not always prevail, sometimes coming off the mat after repeated, bloody knockdowns to land a knockout punch? They had sparred many times, hugging between rounds, and he had often scored well, but now it was over, and the old warriors had fought their last fight. There would be no more confrontations, no more angry words, no more window-rattling arguments, no more lawsuits, threats, walkouts or vile insults, all generally forgiven or forgotten. Still, Ferrari towered over his life, having given it purpose and meaning, and for this he knew all the madness had been worthwhile. Yes, Ferrari had been at the center of it all.

Both men were hard, unyielding, classic Italians, easily tempted to let a relationship flare into wild boasts, vicious insults and barefaced fabrications. For all the years he had known Ferrari, business negotiations with him remained an elaborate, protracted drama of artful parlays, suspended agreements, temper tantrums, operatic claims of impending bankruptcy, social ruin, family shame, incurable disease and violent death. It was in this Byzantine atmosphere that Ferrari had thrived and men like Chinetti had either learned to survive or been summarily defeated. At the core of any dealings with him had been the money – preferably Swiss francs or American dollars. Winning automobile races had been his obsession, but *only* if the money was right.

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As the carefully preened image of Enzo Ferrari had risen to world prominence, Chinetti and those other old associates who had been with him since before the war had faded into the shadows. Ferrari shared the spotlight with no one, not even the man who had helped create a market for his automobiles larger and more lucrative than anyone could have imagined. Chinetti understood the crazed, comic-opera politics of the factory as well as anyone. On his numerous trips to Maranello he learned when to flatter, when to threaten, when to simper, when to sulk and when to primp and pamper the soaring ego of the man who rivaled the Pope as the most famous and popular personage in all of Italy.

This contentious friendship of the old warriors had often stretched to the point of shredding, yet the bond could not be broken. As for Chinetti, he came to know Ferrari too well – to understand his chameleon-like public persona, his ability to orchestrate the press and the public, to artfully and floridly articulate positions perfectly tailored for his audience, to play the lovable, beleaguered, poverty-stricken patriarch one minute and the ruthless, egomaniacal despot the next. He had seen the public Ferrari, the regal old don who oozed respectability, as well as the private Ferrari, the ribald, belching, farting, cursing, bragging, hectoring 'Modenese *paesano*' who bore his lower-class background like a caste mark on his forehead. He knew him as the consummate manipulator of men, especially of the racing drivers who had driven the vermilion cars of the Scuderia, sitting in splendid isolation in Maranello monitoring his teams' successes and failures by telephone, telex and television but not attending a single automobile race for the last thirty years of his life.

There was no question that he was uncomfortable in large crowds, and as the years passed, his public appearances were restricted to flawlessly choreographed press conferences during which he traded verbal blows with the fickle and often contentious Italian sporting press. His true friends could be counted on the fingers of one hand and included a few longtime, utterly faithful business associates. Beyond that perimeter he tended to a flock of supplicants,

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sycophants, customers, adoring fans and a legion of racing drivers with baronial aloofness, handing out favors, slapping wrists, administering punishments and settling arguments from an invisible throne.

Once, when asked to comment on an observation made by another close associate that Ferrari cared little for his drivers, despite his public bleatings to the contrary, and that he in fact felt closer affinity to his mechanics in the shop, Chinetti paused for a moment, then replied, 'I don't think he liked anyone.'

Now he was driving away from that place in Emilia, that place occupied by that Goliath of a man whom he somehow knew he would never see again. He rushed on, calling up part of the reserves of endurance that had served him so well since he began to drive automobiles at unseemly speeds.

He was on a long, flat stretch when a sharp explosion shuddered through the Renault, jarring the steering wheel and causing him to jerk upright in the seat. He slowed to a crawl, checking the dimly lit instrument panel for a possible source of the detonation. It had been a thunderclap, spearing the car without warning. He groped for a reason. The car felt perfect. No strange noises or vibrations, no odors of burning wires, boiling oils or frying paintwork. Cautiously he rolled to a stop on the shoulder of the autoroute and climbed out. It was still. Moonless. Only the distant hiss of traffic intruded on the otherwise tranquil scene. He walked around the car, feeling the stiffness in his legs following the long hours behind the wheel. He poked under the automobile, then lifted the hood. He could find nothing that even suggested a possible murmur, much less the deafening salvo that had mysteriously rattled out of the night.

Nonplussed, but relieved that the Renault was undamaged, he crawled back aboard and resumed his journey. He reached the southern suburbs of Paris by dawn. Traffic was building and his pace was slowed by the notorious anarchy that was the daily Parisian commute. He turned on the radio. A newscast was beginning.

It was the lead story. In matter-of-fact tones a voice announced

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that earlier that morning death had come to Enzo Ferrari at his home in Modena, Italy.

Ferrari. Dead. It was expected, but somehow it stunned him. This old warrior, this curmudgeon, this masterful manipulator, this tireless competitor, this overwhelming presence, this imperfect but perpetually fascinating man was finally gone. A blizzard of incomplete thoughts rushed through his brain: what of the factory? The racing program? His son Piero? His mistress Lina? Would the aura of the automobile survive now that its life source was gone? Would the technocrats at Fiat destroy the personality of the company? What of the fabric that the Old Man had so carefully woven over the years? What part would be preserved and what would be shredded? He ruminated about these things, reaching no conclusions.

And then it struck him. He checked his watch in disbelief. No, not possible. He was a rational man. Yet it gnawed at him. The explosion on the autoroute. That great, thudding noise in the Renault. If the radio bulletin was correct . . . yes, if it had given the time of Enzo Ferrari's death accurately . . . that ominous burst of sound had come at almost the same moment as Enzo Ferrari's last breath. Surely there was no connection . . .

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Winter bit hard at northern Italy in February 1898. On the eighteenth a blizzard swept down from the Alps and sluiced along the Po River valley in an icy assault, burying the small trading city of Modena in a foot of snow. Because of the bad weather it was two days before Alfredo Ferrari could dig out of the drifts and make his way to City Hall in order to register the birth of his second son, Enzo Anselmo. Therefore his official age would be recorded as two days younger than it actually was, not surprising in a nation whose commitment to record keeping could at best be described as casual. Italians evidence no urges to imitate the prissy German and English need for detailed civil documentation outside their omnipresent Catholic Church. Therefore the official records of most Italians below the noble class during the nineteenth century are cursory at best and in the case of Enzo Ferrari inaccurate as well.

His father, Alfredo Ferrari, was born in 1859 at Carpi, a farming town eighteen kilometers to the north of Modena, where the family had been small food merchants. Enzo's mother, the former Adalgisa Bisbini, came from Forli, in Romagna, sixty kilometers to the southeast along the ancient Via Emilia, that amazing, ruler-straight Roman road that had served as the lifeline of the region since its construction in the third century BC. Both were members of the petit bourgeois merchant and landowner class that had developed in the region during the centuries since discharged Roman legionaries had settled there on land given them as a reward following twenty-five years of service. Those early veterans had drained the swamps and on the Padana Plain created the farms and vineyards of the area. From them had developed the traditional Emilian distrust of authority and of outsiders.

Modena, which the Romans called Mutina, enjoyed perhaps its

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greatest notoriety in 43 BC., when Mark Antony pursued Decimus Brutus to the city following the assassination of Julius Caesar. Brutus was one of the major conspirators but not *the* Marcus Junius Brutus who is said to have administered the fatal wound. Following that brief action, the city fell into a thousand-year slumber before becoming a member of the Lombard League. The powerful Este family developed Modena into a first-rate manufacturing and trading center in the seventeenth century, but it began to molder again during repeated invasions by the French and the Austrians.

When Enzo Ferrari was born, it was a drab city of 50,000 souls, noted more for its steaming summers, stifling humidity, voracious mosquitoes and grim, fogbound winters than for its local wine, Lambrusco, or for its culinary specialty, *zampone*, a spicy concoction of stuffed pig's feet. Its citizens were known to be rather dour, industrious people (by Italian standards) with legendary skills in all sorts of crafts, particularly those dealing with the casting, shaping, cutting, forming, molding and fabrication of metal. Such was the tradition of the city about which Enzo Ferrari was to develop an enormous, almost overweening pride.

His father's family was but one line of literally dozens of Ferraris that still dot the region. Even today, the name is as common in the Modena phone book as Smith or Jones in any midsize American city. Over nine hundred Ferraris are listed. If there was noble blood in Enzo Ferrari's veins, either he was not aware of it or he chose to manifest a mysterious and notably uncharacteristic modesty in concealing its presence.

Prior to setting up his own business, Alfredo Ferrari was trained in the metalworking trades and for a number of years was employed as a senior technical supervisor at the Rizzi Foundry in Modena. His academic background is unclear, but he was sufficiently sophisticated to enjoy the company of teachers, local university professors, clerks and fellow engineers while Enzo and his brother were growing up.

Ferrari later fostered the impression that his father was a poor worker, scratching out a living by fabricating crude buildings and

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other components for the Italian National Railway System. He wrote how he and his brother, Alfredo, who was two years older, 'shared a room over the workshop and were awakened in the morning by the ringing of hammers. My father, who employed from fifteen to thirty workmen according to the amount of work on hand, made gangways and sheds for the state railways and acted as the manager, the designer, the salesman and the typist for his firm all at the same time.'

The Ferrari home was located at 264 Via Camurri (now renamed the Via Paolo Ferrari) on the northern outskirts of the town and adjacent to the rail lines that were the source of income for Promiata Officina Meccanica Alfredo Ferrari, as the firm was called. It was a long, narrow brick building, with the machine shops dominating most of the space and the family's rather spacious and comfortable quarters tucked upstairs on the western end. It still stands, essentially unchanged today (at number 85), blindly shuttered and set back from the street, unmarked and undistinguished as the home of Modena's most famous native. Alfredo Ferrari was hardly a wealthy industrialist, but Enzo Ferrari reveals that his father's business created sufficient wealth to afford more than a modest inventory of amenities. By 1903 they had an automobile, an expensive single-cylinder French De Dion Bouton, which was but one of twenty-seven private cars in Modena. Two more were to follow it into the family garage, and the Ferraris enjoyed the services of a combination handyman and chauffeur. As boys Enzo and his brother Alfredo (who was familiarly known as Dino) were provided with state-of-the-art FN three-speed bicycles and a stable of pigeons, with which they competed. After young Enzo learned that he was not sufficiently athletic to win on the 100-meter running track that he and his friends had laid out on the wide front yard of the family home, he turned to shooting; he says he became quite an expert at skeet and at killing rats that lurked along a canal bank behind the house. He also received fencing lessons at the local gymnasium. None of this – the automobiles, the bikes, the leisurely hours at boyhood play – smacks of a youth drowned in poverty.

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In fact, the general impression given by Ferrari in his oddly haphazard memoirs is one of a rather pleasant boyhood. Ferrari endured the heartbreak of losing a Great Dane who died after choking on a bone shard, but there is little to suggest anything in his early life that could be described as traumatic either in terms of ill health or family disorders. He does admit, however, that he hated school. While brother Dino was an accomplished student, Enzo brought home sufficiently poor grades to qualify for harsh strappings from his father, who was insisting that he enter technical training to ultimately earn an engineering degree. Ferrari writes that he simply wanted to be a 'worker' and nothing else.

It is reasonable to assume that Enzo was brought up in a relatively normal Italian household, with Papa Ferrari operating as the undisputed despot, demanding respect from his children and silent, groveling subservience from Mama Adalgisa. The family unit was sacred to the Italian male of Ferrari's generation, within, of course, the rather wide latitudes defined exclusively by the man himself – who remained free to philander, spend freely and ignore the tenets of the Church, while in turn demanding goose-stepping obedience from his children and saintly fidelity from his wife. He adored his children, and treated his wife as a basically asexual helpmate modeled on the most perfect female of all time – his mother. Mothers were worshipped, wives tolerated and other women treated as objects of either scorn or lust, or both. Women, to men like Ferrari and his forebears, fell into two simplistic categories: the chaste females who produced them and lustful, low-life harlots from whom they selected their mistresses and concubines.

This idiotic double standard generated within men of Ferrari's generation (and their sons) perhaps a greater fixation with sex than any other civilized race. For example, adultery by a man in Italy is not punishable, unless attended by scandalous behavior. However, if committed by a woman, she can be sent to jail. But for a man, having more than one woman is a measure of manliness, pure and simple. This, of course, presents contradictions, confusion and ultimately massive insecurities. In his seminal work on his countrymen,

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The Italians, the noted journalist and historian Luigi Barzini put it this way: 'Most of them [men] harbor secret doubts and fears. A moment comes when every one of them is struck by the fact that most of the women he has had an affair with are somebody's wives and that it is not, therefore, materially possible for all the husbands in Italy to stray from marital fidelity while none of the wives do so. There is no escaping the fact that each day a substantial number of proud Italian males, jealous, suspicious, overbearing, proud men, are being made *cornuti* and become the object of scorn and ridicule.'

Such was surely the mind-set that blossomed in the psyche of Enzo Ferrari. He was to become a classic Italian male: the haughty, tyrannical, sex-obsessed, posturing *padrone* who expected little of himself and his male children but everything from his women, either in terms of beatific, Madonna-like perfection or undemanding performance in the bedroom.

Until the end of his life Ferrari remained handcuffed to his late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century origins. He learned to communicate in the florid style of old Italy, always in broad terms of flattery and scorn, never directly dealing with an issue that could be treated obliquely and without revelation of his true feelings.

His first contact with automobile racing came on September 6, 1908, when his father took him and his brother to a race outside Bologna. He was ten years old as they cruised along the Via Emilia to Bologna to see two of the world's best drivers, Felice Nazarro and Vincenzo Lancia, race their powerful Fiats over a long, flat 53-kilometer circuit composed of public roads outside the city, including the Via Emilia itself. Lancia had already begun the company that would bear his name, but remained on the Fiat team. He set a lap record of 84 mph, manhandling his monster machine across the Po flatlands at speeds exceeding 100 mph, but it was Nazarro who won the race, averaging a prodigious 74.1 mph.

The following year young Ferrari trekked two miles across open farmland to watch his second race. It was a minor event, on the Navicello straightaway of the old Modena–Ferrara provincial

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highway. Ferrari recalled watching local volunteers for the Modena Automobile Association sprinkle buckets of water on the dirt surface to keep the dust at bay between runs. A sportsman driver named Da Zara won, averaging 87 mph. Ferrari said, 'I found these events immensely exciting.'

Still, there is no evidence that his passion for automobiles and racing overwhelmed other interests in his youth. He retained a boyish enthusiasm for the local Modenese football team and at one point seemed to be headed for a career in sports writing. He made several contributions to Italy's powerful national sporting newspaper, *Gazzetta dello Sport*, when he was seventeen years old, revealing a strong sense of drama and a purposeful hand with his prose.

Years later Ferrari would confess that as a boy he dreamt of three careers: sports writing, opera singing and race driving. Ironically, he would make his mark at none of them, although it is likely that his skill with words and his stridently stated opinions might have led to success in the Italian press. As for singing, he openly admitted to possessing a tin ear and was never known to try an aria, even after a few too many Lambruscos. He warmly recalled dinners in the small family dining room with a tenor named Bussetti, an ex-mechanic who had sung in the chorus of the Metropolitan Opera Company. At one impromptu after-dinner concert, when Bussetti rattled the tiny room with a soaring high-C, Ferrari remembered that the lights went out!

Though he was raised, like virtually everyone else, in the arms of the Roman Catholic Church, Ferrari was never religious and would later lament, 'Although a Catholic by baptism, I have not the gift of faith, and I envy those who find in it a refuge from their torments.' He wrote of finding the catechism 'repugnant' and recalled that the old parish priest at Santa Caterina was openly annoyed with him for his obvious lack of enthusiasm. He also admitted that the first and last time he confessed his sins was on the Saturday before his first communion – this despite years of being carted off to church with Dino, decked out in their matching blue sailor suits.

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The recollections of Ferrari and other examinations of his youth supply nothing to indicate any extraordinary talents, no glittering, undiscovered genius, not even the singular talent for leadership and organization that was to blossom later in life. Enzo Ferrari, for his first twenty years, was simply another Italian boy who liked bicycles and car races and football but who was slowly being sucked into the gory maelstrom that was to engulf Europe after Gavrilo Princip fired his two pistol shots at Sarajevo on the morning of June 28, 1914.

From that moment the world was immersed in the most frustrating, gruesome, mindless mass slaughter in the history of mankind. Virtually every European male of Enzo Ferrari's generation would be affected, although nearly a full year would pass before Italy entered the war on the Allied side in May 1915. The mission was clear. *Italia irredenta* was a national obsession centered on lands held by the Hapsburg Empire in the Trentino salient and along the Adriatic coast. Italy, while nearly as populous as France, was the poorest of the so-called great powers, with the south locked in a medieval agrarian society and the north barely able to sustain a nascent industrial economy. Worse yet, Italy was weak politically, having united its warring regions and provinces less than fifty years earlier.

The youth of Italy, especially those northerners who had grown up with an endemic hatred for the Austrians, rushed to join the Army, duplicating the fatal naiveté that was surging through the young men of France, Great Britain and the Central Powers. Dino initially operated the family Diatto as an ambulance, transporting wounded from the Alpine fronts to hospitals around the Po Valley. When he reached nineteen, he joined the Italian Air Force, a decision that, by coincidence, was to have an impact on his brother long after the war. Dino became a member of the ground crew of Squadriglia 91a, whose insignia consisted of aviator's wings and a *cavallino rampante*, or prancing horse. This insignia was carried by the squadron's most famous ace and Italy's supreme flying hero, Francesco Baracca (34 kills), before his Spad S. 13 biplane crashed at the front.

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In February 1916, Enzo Ferrari had his first close encounter with death – an acquaintance that would stay with him for the rest of his life. His father died of pneumonia. The little business in Modena collapsed, and Enzo, untrained and apparently disinterested in maintaining the metal-fabricating operation, drifted through a series of menial jobs.

He apprenticed for a time with the Modena Fire Department, then took instruction in a lathe operator's school and became a trainee in a small factory manufacturing artillery shells. This was a confusing time for Ferrari. His father was dead, and with the convulsions of the war, plus his lack of serious career goals, he meandered through his late teens without direction, awaiting his call to the colors.

Then suddenly, shockingly, Dino was dead as well. Ferrari describes him as a victim of 'a malady caught while doing military service.' This could have been influenza, typhoid fever or any one of a dozen illnesses that ravaged the trenches and camps of the World War I combatants. Dino lay ill for a time before passing away at the sanitarium at Sortenna di Sondrio later the same year. Ferrari was devastated by the loss of his father and brother.

Dino had volunteered, but Enzo waited to be drafted two years later, at age nineteen. By then the Italian infantry was mired in a brutal mountain impasse, facing the Austrians along a front that stretched from the Isonzo River northeast of Venice into the craggy Alpine peaks of the Dolomites and the Trentino Alto in the west. Ferrari was assigned to the 3rd Mountain Artillery, at the time bogged down in the Val Seriana Mountains to the north of Bergamo. Claiming a background in mechanics, Ferrari expected to be assigned to one of the crews tending the big Breda howitzers that lined the highlands controlled by the Italians. But a Piedmontese second lieutenant chose instead to assign him to a detail shoeing mules – the beasts of burden employed to haul artillery over the mountain terrain. At that time the better billets, including the entire officer corps, were saved for the upper classes, and Ferrari, coming from a backwater city in Emilia and possessing no bloodlines with

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which to negotiate better duty, was quickly shunted into the menial labor thought to befit his origins. This lasted but three months before he was leveled by a near-fatal disease, thought in retrospect to be pleurisy. He was removed from the front and placed in a military hospital at Brescia, where two operations were performed. If the diagnosis is correct, it is possible the procedures were done to remove fluid from his lungs. Whatever the ailment and the proposed cure, he was then removed to a crude hospice of battered huts for the incurably ill near Bologna. He recalled being left in a chilly, darkened room on the second floor of a building from which he could hear the steady clatter of workmen's hammers as the lids of coffins were pounded into place. There, following more cursory treatments, much pain and a long rest, Ferrari was finally released, broken physically and mentally, but infinitely luckier than hundreds of thousands of young countrymen whose bodies littered the mountains to the north.

He was discharged in 1918 as Europe gasped for breath and men groped to justify the sacrifice of 30 million lives. While he makes no mention of it in his memoirs, and no student of his life has been able to ascertain the reason, Ferrari seems to have been seized with an epiphany of sorts during this period. A gap exists in the story that is hardly unusual in the Ferrari papers, but leads to intriguing speculation. Who was the mysterious person, or what was the pivotal event, that caused Enzo Ferrari to decide, between the time he entered the Army in 1917 and his release a year later, that he wanted to follow a career in automobiles?

In his autobiography he recalls sitting, prior to the war, outside the family home on a warm summer night with a friend named Pepino. Under the light of a gas lamp, they had examined a photograph of Ralph De Palma, the marvelously talented Italian who had moved to America in 1893, by 1916 had won both the Indianapolis 500 and the Vanderbilt Cup and was believed by many to be the greatest driver in the world. Ferrari claims that he told Pepino, the son of a Modenese importer of foodstuffs, 'I will become a racer.' Moreover, he often repeated, probably apocryphally, that

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the inspiration for his choosing V-12-type engines when he started to build his own cars lay in his fascination with the big Packard V12 command cars he saw used by the American Army at the end of the war. These stories may or may not be correct – Ferrari openly employed history at his convenience – but there exists a thread of truth, implying an interest in cars that had become a central theme in his life by the end of the war and that took him far from home when the fighting stopped.

Following the Armistice, Ferrari surfaced in Turin, seeking work with Fiat. Unlike his hometown, Turin was a center of Italian manufacturing, a bustling, congested city along the Po River that had prospered from the war effort. When Ferrari arrived in the city in the winter of 1918–19, all of northern Italy was in turmoil. The Great War had seemingly solved nothing, and the powerful voices of socialism, Marxism and ethnic nationalism were ringing through the cities. Italy, its treasury ravaged and its feeble political contract of unity badly shredded by the rift between the industrial north and the backward, rural south, was aflame with social unrest. Gabriele D'Annunzio, the fabled war hero, poet and ardent nationalist, was assembling a noisy rabble of disenchanted veterans in hopes of capturing the Dalmatian coast, a prize denied Italy by the Treaty of Versailles. In Milan a pugnacious left-wing journalist named Benito Mussolini was making an artful switch from idealistic socialism to political opportunism. As editor of a fiery paper called *Popolo d'Italia*, Mussolini formed a virulently anti-establishment organization called I Fasc, which miraculously began to attract the disaffected, the frustrated and the malcontented from both the left and the right. For a while the Fates would smile on this bloated, preposterous poseur from Romagna as his black-shirted Fascistas took control of Italy and led it successively through a period of artificial pomp and prosperity and finally into shame and defeat.

Ferrari was seemingly unaffected by these swirling winds of social and political change that ripped across Italy. He had come to Turin with a single purpose in mind, to gain employment with

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the rapidly expanding Fiat works. Founded in 1899 by Giovanni Agnelli, di Bricherasio, and Count Carlo Biscaretti di Ruffia, FIAT (Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino) had been reorganized in 1907 and renamed simply Fiat SpA, with the Agnelli family firmly in control. The change signaled the expansion of the company from a small, regional automobile manufacturing firm to an industrial giant that produced not only cars but trucks, ball bearings, aircraft and marine engines, military aircraft, railroad locomotives, rolling stock and even complete cargo ships. By the time Enzo Ferrari appeared at the company's headquarters on Turin's Corso Dante, final plans were in place to mass-produce the 1.5-liter Tipo 501, a technologically advanced, low-priced passenger car that would become a staple of the company for years. But more to Enzo's liking was Fiat's continued interest in motor racing, where a small, elite crew of designers, mechanics and drivers were ready to contest the great continental races with the likes of Mercedes, Peugeot, Ballot and the upstart American company Duesenberg. The Fiat design team, led by chief engineer Guido Fornaca, enjoyed the services of a brilliant young Piedmontese designer, Vittorio Jano, in addition to a staff of experienced, university-trained engineers. In those wildly creative times, when little was known of the metallurgy, combustion-chamber science, suspension geometry, aerodynamics, etc., that would ultimately hold the keys to speed and durability in automobiles, Fiat was an acknowledged leader in the new technology. This prompted an Italian authority on the subject to proudly reflect, 'Fiat did not copy; it taught, after having created.'

It was into this exclusive milieu that the poorly educated, still unhealthy, totally unqualified former Army farrier poked his prominent nose on a winter day in 1918. He was bearing a letter of recommendation from the colonel of his regiment, the contents of which are unknown. Whether or not it was merely a form letter outlining Ferrari's vague skills – presumably revealed while hammering nails into mules' hooves – is lost to history. Whatever the message, it was useless. The postwar job market was glutted with

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veterans and Ferrari was doomed from the moment he entered the mahogany-paneled office of engineer Diego Soria. Soria, whom Ferrari described as 'stalwart, with close-cropped reddish hair turning gray', politely but firmly described Fiat as too small a firm to absorb the services of the thousands of veterans who were seeking work in Turin. Worse yet for Ferrari, residents of the city were getting the available billets.

Ferrari wrote of this moment with poignancy, describing how he lurched into the wintry gloom outside the Fiat offices and wandered through the busy streets to a bench in Valentino Park on the banks of the Po. There in the shadow of the immense Castello del Valentino, he said that he brushed away a layer of snow and sat down. 'I was alone. My father and brother were no more. Overcome by loneliness and despair, I wept.'

Fiat owed him a debt of honor that would have to be repaid. If, as Nietzsche wrote, a capacity for protracted revenge is the sign of a noble mind, Enzo Ferrari was an aristocrat of the highest order. The slight by Fiat festered in his brain, creating an anger that blossomed with the passage of time. Revenge was a priority within him that would not be subdued, and repayment in kind to the Agnellis and their Fiat minions was a debt he swore to fulfill, no matter how many years it might take.

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It was only days after Enzo Ferrari's arrival in Turin that he began to display the gritty resourcefulness and powers of persuasion that were to become his trademarks. Operating on what he described as a small inheritance from his father, he began to poke into the thriving community of automobile manufacturers, drivers, mechanics and promoters that had sprung up as satellites to the Fiat operation. By frequenting a network of bars and restaurants along the Corse Vittorio Emanuele II where racing champion Felice Nazarro and the equally prominent driver Pietro Bordino ate and drank, this twenty-one-year-old upstart made friends with some of the very same daredevils he had seen race as a small boy in the Emilian outback.

The Bar del Nord, near the immense Porto Nuova railway station, was a center of racing gossip and deal making, and it was here that he hooked up with a Bolognese car dealer named Giovanni, who hired the eager Ferrari on the spot. Giovanni was purchasing war-surplus Italian Army trucks – primarily small Lancia Zeta lorries – and stripping them to the bare chassis. He was then transporting them to a coach maker in Milan where passenger-car bodies were fitted and sold to car-hungry postwar motorists.

Ferrari was taken on as a general handyman, first helping to remove the truck beds and cabs, then driving the bare-boned vehicles the hundred-odd miles to Milan. When he learned to drive is unknown, and it is unlikely that he did much motoring while shoeing mules in the Army, but by the time he reached Turin he had developed at least minimal skills operating the crude, cranky, unforgiving cars and trucks of the day. For the rest of his life, Ferrari carried Italian driving license number 1363,

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implying that he was one of the nation's earliest motorists and was driving well before his release from military service.

Whatever his credentials as a driver, Ferrari found himself crashing over the bumpy roads of the Po Valley, ferrying skeletal surplus Army trucks to the tiny Carrozzeria Italio-Argentina in the center of the giant, grimy, industrial and political hotbed of Milan. But this was hardly work for a man who had aspired to employment with the elite firm of Fiat, and he quickly moved to improve himself. Once again he made for the trattorias where the racers and automotive sportsmen of Milan gathered – places like the Vittorio Emanuele Bar, where he made the first important decision of his young career.

Ugo Sivocci was a brash, mustachioed former bicycle racer who had moved into the world of cars, first with the small Milanese firm of De Vecchi, then as chief test driver for the new automaker CMN (Costruzioni Meccaniche Nazionalia). It had gone into business during the war manufacturing four-wheel-drive artillery tractors powered by Isotta Fraschini engines. Now the company, located on the Via Vallazze, was embarked on a full-scale campaign to manufacture high-performance sporting vehicles. And as was the universal custom of the day, the factory was entering a variety of races and hill climbs to demonstrate the prowess of its products. Parlaying his modest credentials as a driver, no doubt with considerable hyperbolic flourishes, Ferrari was hired by Sivocci as his assistant. He had begun his climb up the ladder.

Their initial joint assignment was to act as the support vehicle for ace motorcycle racer Marco Garelli as he ran a team in the Raid Nord-Sud endurance run from Milan to Naples. Sivocci and his new sidekick were to carry extra fuel, tires and spare parts for Garelli's twin-cylinder, two-stroke motorcycle during the event – hardly a glamorous assignment, but still Enzo Ferrari's first taste of competition.

His initial legitimate racing experience in an organized contest came on October 5, 1919. He and the tiny CMN team were entered in a regional hill climb called the Parma–Poggio di Berceto – an

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open road contest leading into the Apennines over a distance of 53 kilometers. Ferrari was assigned one of the 2.3-liter Tipo 15/20 CMN tourers, its bodywork a mere shell for the engine, two seats and a pair of spare tires hung over the wooden-spoked rear wheels. Using a riding mechanic drafted by the team in Parma, Ferrari picked his way along the twisting route up the slope of Mount Piantonia to finish fifth in his class, but well down in the overall standings. It was hardly a dazzling debut, but considering the limited potency of his rather crude automobile and his rank-novice status, the fact that he figured at all in the final standings is worthy of mention. Sivocci, by contrast, finished second overall.

He raced again in November 1919, when he and Sivocci were entered in CMNs for the Targa Florio, an open road race around Sicily organized by Vincenzo Florio, scion of a powerful Sicilian clan that controlled immense tracts of land and a fleet of ships and wielded great political influence on the island.

In those days many racing cars were simply modified passenger cars bereft of bodywork and carrying more powerful engines. The CMN was nothing more than a hot-rodded tourer, unlike the elite of the sport, the Fiats, Peugeots, Ballots, Duesenbergs and Sunbeams that competed in the continental Grand Prix events and at such unlikely venues as the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indiana. Those cars were specially engineered, thoroughbred racing machines representing the best available technology – much of it fresh from the brutal but highly creative crucible of the war. They took advantage of the metallurgy, engine design and fuel formulas that had been learned during the feverish effort to build faster airplanes and tougher trucks and tanks for the front lines.

The tiny CMN firm could not afford to transport its race cars to Sicily by rail or truck, as was the custom for the larger teams, and Ferrari and Sivocci were assigned the job of driving to the race. It was hardly a leisurely tour through the countryside. Ferrari recalled that they drove into a nasty blizzard in the Abruzzi hills. There they were set upon by a pack of wolves, which had to be dispersed by shots from the pistol he always carried under his

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seat. The pair struggled southward to Naples, barely arriving in time to board a Florio-owned ferry, the *Citta di Siracusa*, for the night trip to Palermo – a journey he recalled featuring 'a rough sea and the assaults of every kind of bug'.

This would be a serious motor race. The Targa, as it was known, had been started in 1906 and was composed of a series of long laps around the craggy, rock-strewn, bandit-infested Sicilian countryside. (However, owing to the power and prominence of the Florio clan, all weapons were sheathed during the event and no one ever threatened the participants.) Ferrari's crude little CMN looked like a buckboard compared with some of the more exotic machines from Fiat and Peugeot, including a magnificent prewar L25 Peugeot Grand Prix car driven by the ace André Boillot. When Ferrari and his mechanic, Michele Conti, mounted up for the start, they faced four laps of 108 kilometers each (approximately 64 miles) and had little chance of success against the faster cars.

Ferrari drove as hard as his courage and his limited experience would permit, grinding through the gears as the little CMN bounced and juddered over the dirt and gravel roads. Early in the going the wagon-rutted surfaces jarred the fuel tank loose from its mountings and Ferrari and Conti lost forty minutes jury-rigging it back in place. Then as he thundered along the coast road east of Palermo he was flagged to a halt by a carabiniere on the outskirts of the village of Campofelice. Furious, he demanded to be let through. Impossible, said the policeman. The Prime Minister of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, was giving a speech. The road was blocked until he finished. (Only the Italians, it seems, would schedule a motor race and a political address on the same day in the same place.) Helpless, Ferrari and Conti sat fuming in their car until the Prime Minister said his goodbyes. Only then were they permitted to move ahead, still being forced to straggle along behind the Prime Minister's giant black De Dion Bouton sedan until he turned off the main road.

The road cleared and Ferrari charged on toward the finish, sliding the wobbly machine through the gravel-strewn bends and

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thumping, full-bore, through the tiny, sunbaked villages that lined the circuit. With springs no more supple than those of an ox cart, and an open exhaust pipe blaring in the riders' faces, the CMN was a crude, hostile device that, like an unbroken horse, seemed to savor the opportunity of bucking its passengers into the hostile countryside. Still Ferrari pressed onward, brashly slewing down off the craggy hills toward the finish on the edge of Palermo.

By then Boillot had won, although he had clipped a spectator who had wandered into the road at the finish line and killed him. It was nearly dark when Ferrari finally straggled in. The area was deserted, save for a local policeman, who was doing what remained of the official timing with an alarm clock. Ferrari dismounted and chased down Florio to complain that he had been held up by the speech and therefore had been unfairly treated. A shouting match ensued. 'What are you grumbling about?' asked Florio. 'You were late, you risked nothing and we are even making you a present of including you in the classification!' So, in his second effort as a racing driver, Ferrari was 'given' ninth place overall and third in his car class, which was, he said, 'supposed to represent a success, albeit a small one'.

Ferrari soon left CMN to seek his fortune in other realms of the Italian automobile business and to further his career as a racing driver. His exact movements are unknown, although it is documented that he appeared back at another running of the Parma–Poggio di Berceto hill climb in May 1920 with a car he at least owned in part. It was a prewar 7.2-liter Tipo IM Isotta Fraschini of a type that had been run in the 1914 Indianapolis 500 (where one had blown a tire, flipped and caused a multi-car wreck). The big two-seater was noteworthy because of its four-wheel brakes. At the time most racing cars used brakes only on the front wheels, owing to the complexity of the cable-operated systems and the designers' inability to balance the stopping capacity between the front and back pair. In that sense the 130-hp Isotta was an advanced machine, and how and with whose funds Ferrari obtained it is unknown.

We do know the results of his three-race campaign in the Isotta

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Fraschini with riding mechanic Guglielmo Carraroli: a third overall and a second in the over-6-liter class at Parma–Poggio di Berceto, and two retirements with mechanical ailments at two minor events run in June of the same year. Shortly thereafter the Isotta disappeared into limbo and Enzo Ferrari began an association with Alfa Romeo that was to last for nearly two decades.

He was hardly aligning himself with a Fiat or a General Motors or one of the French or English auto-making giants. Alfa Romeo had been started in 1909 by Cavaliere Ugo Stella, who was formerly the manager of the Italian division of Darracq, the French carmaker. The plan was to take over the financially decrepit Darracq facility at Portello, on the outskirts of Milan, and to begin the manufacture of a line of all-Italian passenger cars under the name ALFA – an acronym for Anomma Lombardo Fabbrica Automobili (Lombardy Motor Manufacturing Company). By 1910 Giuseppe Merosi, a Piacenza native with an engineering background at Bianchi, and a surveyor by training, had designed a range of ALFA cars and production began. Four years later the company was sufficiently successful to warrant the fielding of a 4.5-liter Grand Prix machine.

When Italy entered the war ALFA began producing artillery shells and caterpillar-type military trucks. At this point the company fell into the hands of a brilliant industrialist and politician named Nicola Romeo, a native of Naples and a professor of mathematics in Milan before entering the business world. Romeo was such a persuasive speaker that he later gained the name 'the siren' in the Italian Senate. He also changed the name of his new car company to Alfa Romeo.

The details of the initial contact between Enzo Ferrari and Alfa Romeo are unclear except for two elements: Ferrari's purchase of a car and the presence of a brilliant young engineer named Giorgio Rimini, a crafty Catanian whom Ferrari remembered as having a cigarette seemingly glued to his lips. When Ferrari met him, Rimini was a jack-of-all-trades at Alfa, acting as the chief of the racing team and test department and also as the general sales

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manager. Whether Ferrari hooked on as a test driver with Alfa on the basis of his limited experience with CMN before or after he purchased a car from Rimini is unclear, but somehow a 6-liter G.I. Alfa touring car played a role in the connection.

In one of the few recollections in which Ferrari made himself the butt of a joke, he wrote that he bought the G.I. from Merosi with the loony caveat in the contract that the car would be delivered 'as soon as possible and even sooner'. When the delivery date fell hopelessly behind schedule, Ferrari protested to Rimini and this clause in the contract was produced. Ferrari learned, as he said, to thereafter read all contracts word for word. But the fact that Ferrari bought the G.I. Alfa Romeo in 1920, at the age of twenty-two, is intriguing. The Alfa was an expensive luxury model (based in part on the American Pierce Arrow – at least in terms of its production techniques) and seemingly out of reach of most young men from a self-described poor household. This being his second rather exotic machine, it is obvious he was a man of some means early on, either from his inheritance or from his activities with CMN and his limited motor-racing schedule – or more likely from a combination of all three.

There is no question that by this time Enzo Ferrari had become a compelling salesman and manipulator in the Milan–Turin car axis. He was already nearly six feet tall and towered over most of his contemporaries. His face was dominated by a large aquiline nose and baggy, hooded eyes that were almost reptilian when in repose. His hair was thick and black and combed pompadour style in shaggy waves. It was clear even then that his physiology doomed him to gain weight easily and, like his father, to gray prematurely.

Despite his obvious powers of persuasion and a sufficiently vivid personality to push his way into the inner sanctums of the Alfa Romeo test department, Ferrari remained gripped by his lower-class, bumpkin image. At one point he lamented, 'I feel so provincial, so Emilian.' But that sense of inadequacy was more than compensated for by his street-wise cunning and a brash ability to deal with social and professional superiors like a man twice his

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age. This skill was surely identified by Rimini, who made him a part of the Alfa team, although on a decidedly junior basis. It may be unclear whether the G.I. Alfa was purchased before or after his employment, but there is no question that he was at the Targa Florio on October 20, 1920, at the wheel of a prewar Alfa Romeo Tipo 40-60. He was a member of a three-car team led by twenty-eight-year-old Giuseppe Campari, a beefy, high-living sometime opera singer who was to become a close friend and associate of Ferrari.

Over the years the term 'Grand Prix' has been much misused and misunderstood. 'Grand Prizes', as it were, had been awarded for decades for all manner of contests, products, works of art, etc., before the French term was applied to motorsports in 1906. Organized motorsports began in the mid-1890s, with the Automobile Club de France (ACF) having been formed in 1895. This organization was to assume a dominant role in international motorsports and to govern the rules making for the next sixty years. In the beginning motor races were run as a sort of 'Formula Libre'; that is, no specific engine or chassis specifications were required for entry. But as the industry developed, it was recognized that complex rules (which the French were masters at creating) would be necessary both to keep the competition even and to generate technical advances. Numerous major international events were staged in Europe and America during the first five years of the new century. Major race patrons like W. K. Vanderbilt, newspaper magnate Gordon Bennett, and the aforementioned Vincenzo Florio offered cups and trophies and international prestige for victory, but their rules were diverse and often contradictory. In 1906 the first Grand Prix of France was organized by the ACF and it formed the basis for international motorsports for years to come. From that point on, a pure 'Grand Prix' was a race run according to detailed specifications for cars, race distances, and competition regulations. By the early 1920s most nations in Europe had a 'Grand Prix' race run according to ACF rules. The term 'Grand Prix' would often be bastardized and misapplied, but in its classic sense it refers to a series of international races run according to a set of stringent – and

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highly sophisticated – automotive specifications. In the beginning Grand Prix cars bore a faint resemblance to passenger automobiles, but by the end of World War I they had become light, powerful, open-wheel machines with streamlined bodies that were light-years ahead of their production counterparts in terms of raw speed and engineering.

That having been said, the Targa Florio was not run according to Grand Prix rules, but more as a Formula Libre competition. Hence the entry of a pure Grand Prix car for Campari and a more ordinary road machine for Ferrari. But this time he was more successful. With his heavy machine fitted with ungainly, Dumbo-eared front fenders to protect himself and riding mechanic Michele Conti from the mud that coated the 108-kilometer circuit, he managed a second overall in the difficult race. Although many of the faster cars had retired from the race, including that driven by his Alfa teammate Campari, it was a stirring finish for the young man and no doubt briefly convinced him that his future as a racing driver was assured.

But the modest firm of Alfa Romeo was still operating in the minor leagues of the automobile business. Chances of victory in the major events seemed a distant hope, and even with a brilliant driver like Campari on board, the might of Fiat, Mercedes, Sunbeam, Ballot et al. was simply too great to even consider a high placing in the major continental Grand Prix events. But Ferrari plunged into his job with typical vigor and in early 1921 he persuaded Ugo Sivocci to jump ship from CMN and join Alfa in the test department. Sivocci proved so adept at the job – both on the racetrack and on the highway – that Rimini quickly appointed him chief of the department.

During the early 1920s Ferrari was flitting back and forth between Milan and Turin, engaging in all manner of deals – selling and trading cars, buying parts, doing industrial spying on Fiat, gathering gossip, delivering cars to customers – as well as racing. As he grew older, he was to become anchored to Modena and Maranello, but during this period he bordered on the peripatetic, traveling at least

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once to England and France and moving almost constantly around northern Italy and Switzerland. It was during one trip to Turin that he met a fair-haired twenty-one-year-old girl near the Porto Nuova railway station in central Turin. Her name was Laura Domenica Garello, and she was a native of the village of Racconigi, twenty miles south of Turin. She was the daughter of Andrea Garello and the former Delfina Parchetti. Both came from simple peasant stock and there is nothing in their backgrounds to provide a basis for later claims that Laura Garello came from landed wealth or that she was wellborn in any sense of the word. Laura was a rather thickly built woman with darting dark brown eyes and a quick, coquettish smile. Her heavy rural dialect was decidedly working class. Why and how the two met in Turin is unclear, although rumors persisted among those who knew them best that Laura was a cafe dancer who operated among the bars and hangouts frequented by the racing crowd. Whatever the circumstances, Ferrari seized on the relationship and swept her into his orbit. They began to travel together and she appeared regularly at the race meetings where Ferrari competed. By 1922 she was being referred to as Signora Ferrari although the two were certainly not married. A number of letters exist from the early twenties in which Ferrari corresponded with Laura in Genoa and Turin. They are addressed to 'Mrs' Enzo Ferrari, but they were not married until 1923.

This charade may have been played for a number of reasons. It is possible that he wanted to spare the sensibilities of his mother, with whom he maintained a close and docile relationship. Moreover, while mistresses were accepted in appropriately shadowy circumstances among the upper classes, it was more difficult for a lower-class man like Ferrari to flaunt such a relationship. Even at that young age he was keenly attuned to the political atmosphere at Alfa Romeo and may have decided that his fortunes would be safer with a wife on his arm rather than a girlfriend with a questionable background.

Despite the addition of Sivocci to a driving team that already included Campari and the superb young Antonio Ascari, Alfa

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Romeo was hardly ready for prime time. The chief designer, Giuseppe Merosi, as noted, was a surveyor by training, and was referred to by the title 'Geometra' for most of his life. His closest associate, Antonio Santoni, was a pharmacist. Neither had the necessary background to compete with the likes of Fiat and Mercedes with their legions of highly trained mechanical engineers and technicians. The Merosi-designed automobiles were workmanlike tourers that could be converted to usable racing machines, and it was in equipment such as this that Enzo Ferrari saw limited competition, racing five times for the team in 1921, always in a backup role to Campari and Company, and recording a pair of fifth places at the Targa Florio and at Mugello. Admittedly the first-stringers were not doing much better (Campari was third in the Targa), but there is no question that Ferrari was never considered to be the equal of Ascari, Campari or Sivocci as a racing driver. But his skills at off-track organization were in the end to far transcend the value of the others to Alfa Romeo and the Italian automobile industry.

But while Ferrari immersed himself in the internal politics of Alfa Romeo, the nation was engaged in an infinitely more complex and desperate struggle of intrigue and turmoil. By 1919 Benito Mussolini had become a major political force, creating through his powerful oratory and inflammatory writing a Fascist Party which seemed to offer a morsel of satisfaction – wrapped in bravado and wild promises – for everyone. Once a socialist, Mussolini had switched horses to become a rabid anti-Bolshevist, in part to seduce the wealthy industrial classes. Ever the panderer, he pledged to the stolid *Borghese* a return to law and order while the workers were wooed by a siren song of better wages and a liberal contract of co-operation between themselves and management for the glory of Italy. Backed by his black-shirted thugs, Mussolini organized a march on Rome in October 1922. (He let his minions make the rainy trek from Milan while he arrived a day later by train.) Mussolini took over the tottering government from the discredited prime minister, Luigi Facta, and diminutive, weak-willed King Victor Emmanuel II gave him total dictatorial powers.

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Ferrari appeared untouched by these events, immersing himself instead in the world of motorsports and the internal politics of struggling Alfa Romeo. By 1922 he returned to Modena to form Carrozzeria Emilia, Enzo Ferrari & Company in a small rented garage on the Via Emilia a kilometer east of the walled gates of the old city. The use of the term *carrozzeria* in the title is mysterious, in that it relates to coach building. There is no evidence that Ferrari's tiny firm functioned as anything but a minor outlet for Alfas and used sporting machinery. It never engaged in the sort of custom automobile body fabrication the name implies. Carrozzeria Emilia did, however, create for him a base of operations on his beloved home turf although his travels to Milan and Turin continued at a frantic pace.

His aggressive sales tactics permitted him to become the exclusive sales agent for Alfa Romeo automobiles in all of Emilia. By using his growing reputation as a racing driver he artfully enhanced the marque image among the rich clientele in the region.

As his financial fortunes in the car business increased, his racing career entered into a severe decline. Rimini gave him but three rides in 1922, although two were at the wheel of an older Alfa Romeo 20-30ES. In July he defected from his corporate loyalty and drove an Austrian-built 6-cylinder Steyr-Puch sports car in a minor hill climb that ran up the Alpine St Bernard Pass from the city of Aosta. The winner was a diminutive Torinese member of a prominent coach building family named Giovan 'Pinin' Farina.

A development that surely caught Ferrari's attention in 1922 was the construction of the giant Monza autodrome in the Villa Reale Park on the outskirts of Milan. For years the leaders of Italian motorsports had been seeking a major venue where a world-class Grand Prix race could be staged to rival that being held annually in France. Several permanent, specially designed supertracks had already been built for racing and testing, such as Brooklands in England and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the United States. Moreover, it was openly discussed that immense tracks would be built at Linas-Montlhéry outside Paris and on the

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outskirts of Cologne. (The legendary Nürburgring would ultimately be built in the Eifel district, but not until 1927; the Montlhéry track would open in 1924.)

This massive, sometimes ominous track at Monza would enter into Enzo Ferrari's life repeatedly in the years to come. All manner of triumph and grinding tragedy would unfold for him there, but ironically he never rolled a wheel in anger on its smooth, tree-shaded surface. He tested a number of Alfa Romeos there in the 1920s and 1930s and surely made numerous laps in his own machines after the war, but he never actually competed in a race on that famed circuit. For all his attempts at reaching the big time – and Monza was to become the embodiment of major-league racing in Italy – Enzo Ferrari would be doomed to the role of spectator.

But whatever frustrations his racing career was generating, Ferrari's great leap forward in the world of motorsports came in 1923. Ferrari established a brief relationship with Dr Albert Schmidt, the Genevan car builder and engineer, operating as his agent in Italy. He traveled with a party of Alfa Romeo senior executives, including Rimini, to the 1923 Paris automobile show and also made a trip to England, where he visited the immense new Brooklands supertrack near Weybridge and met Mario Lombardi, the British representative for Pirelli tires. According to Ferrari, Lombardi was 'a man who came to count much in my life and my thoughts'. Ferrari would race but four times during the year. Yet his stature as an organizer and leader of men would soar to unexpected heights, in the main because he was able to strengthen the Alfa Romeo team and aid in propelling it to the very pinnacle of the sport. It would be June before his luck would change. His new Alfa Romeo Tipo RL/TF had broken at both the Targa Florio and at Mugello, and he entered the Circuito del Savio outside Ravenna with limited enthusiasm. His riding mechanic was Giulio Ramponi, the nephew of the great Campari and generally the personal mechanic and riding companion of Antonio Ascari. Ramponi was a combative, capable member of the Alfa team who would also play an ongoing role in the Ferrari drama.

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This time his fortunes changed. Running against amateur and semi-professional opposition, Ferrari and Ramponi won the Circuito del Savio at Ravenna, a 25-lap, 359-kilometer race that led to a meeting that was to have an enormous impact on Ferrari. It is an incident that has been recounted dozens of times, being warped and twisted a bit more with each telling until the truth has been almost obscured. Let Ferrari tell it in his own words, with some observations to follow:

'In 1923, when competing in the first Circuito del Savio at Ravenna, I made the acquaintance of Count Enrico Baracca' (the father of Italy's number one flying ace, Francesco Baracca, who had been shot down after recording 34 German kills). 'As a result of this meeting, I was subsequently introduced to the ace's mother, the Countess Paolina Baracca, who one day said to me, "Ferrari, why don't you put my son's prancing horse on your car. It will bring you luck." I still have Baracca's photograph, with his parents' dedication in which they entrusted the horse to me. The horse was, and has, remained black, but I myself added the gold field, this being the color of Modena.'

So goes the Ferrari version of the legend of the *Cavallino*, the Prancing Horse of Ferrari that has become one of the most famous logos of the twentieth century. But his story is rife with alterations and omissions. To begin with, the emblem was not Baracca's personally, but that of his own Squadriglia 91a. (It was still employed even after World War II by the jet squadron 4a Aerobrigata, and therefore was hardly his mother's to give away.) As has been mentioned, Ferrari's brother, Alfredo, was apparently a member of the ground crew for the squadron, and it is possible the countess suggested that the escutcheon be adopted in his memory. There is a reliable story that Baracca took the Prancing Horse after he shot down a German pilot over Tolmezzo in November 1916. The German, who was flying an Albatross BII, was from Stuttgart and was carrying the emblem of his city – also a prancing horse – on the side of his airplane. Therefore it is logical to assume that the *Cavallino Rampante* so revered by Ferraristas is actually of

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German origin and directly related thematically to that later carried by Ferrari's arch-rival from Stuttgart, Porsche! Examination of the two logos reveals a startling similarity. As for the countess giving Ferrari the emblem for 'luck', one must puzzle over what kind of good fortune it brought to her son.

The final irony of the story of the Prancing Horse: while Ferrari sentimentalized the moment and the significance of the gift, he put it in a drawer for *nine years*, and it did not appear on the hood of one of his racing cars until the 24 Hour sports-car race at Spa, Belgium, on July 9–10, 1932!

The Italian automotive historian Luigi Orsini suggests in his excellent history of the Scuderia Ferrari that the Prancing Horse was actually presented to Ferrari in the 1930s just prior to its employment at Spa, but Ferrari himself repeatedly leaves the impression in his autobiographies that the gift was made shortly after his victory at Ravenna.

Whether the *Cavallino Rampante* was offered in 1923 or in 1932 remains a mystery, as do the exact origins of the emblem, although it is known that in later years Ferrari was unable to trademark the Prancing Horse due to complications arising from Stuttgart's proprietary claim on the animal.

Enzo Ferrari and Laura Garello finally made it official on April 28, 1923, after living together for at least two years. The marriage took place in a small Catholic church near the massive Fiat Lingotto works in a working-class neighborhood of Turin. The union had long been opposed by Laura's parents, whom Ferrari described as a 'hardworking couple from modest circumstances'. A small knot of guests, all from Laura's family, witnessed the ceremony. One can almost visualize the tiny cluster of swarthy men and women dressed unremittingly in coarse black, contrasting with the shimmering white dress of the bride, smiling woodenly, stepping into the hazy sunshine from the darkened precincts of the church. Surely Father Alberto Clerici, who performed the ceremony, has seen a hundred such couples blink uncertainly at the outside world, facing what he knew to be the drudgery and

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stylized artifice of the Italian lower-class lifestyle. Little did he know that the tall, barrel-chested groom with the distant gaze already harbored aspirations that would carry him far away, in terms of both geography and financial success. Ferrari's gift to Laura was a small gold purse. This entire episode was treated with shocking insensitivity by Ferrari. He later wrote, 'I married young, somewhere around 1920 [sic]. I cannot remember the exact year, as I have mislaid the marriage certificate.' He added in the third person, 'This young man declared that nothing else mattered where there was love. I later came to realize that the rest did matter and matter a lot.'

That Ferrari's marriage was to descend quickly into a legal arrangement is an understatement. While numerous photographs exist of him and his new wife at various races in the early 1920s, he soon became the traditional Italian husband, seeking sexual conquests not so much for pleasure but for simple gratification of the ego. Enzo Ferrari was to remain obsessed with sex for most of his life, and it was probably within months that his marriage vows to Laura were shattered. Years later he was to remark to Romolo Tavoni, a veteran racing manager and close personal associate, that 'a man should always have two wives'.

Ironically, Ferrari's business fortunes improved due to an event he did not attend. In June 1923 the French Grand Prix had been run at Tours and there had been a fight on the powerful Fiat team. Luigi Bazzi, a thirty-year-old expert technician and engine tuner, had argued with the factory's chief engineer, Guido Fornaca, and upon returning to Italy was approached by his friend Ferrari with a proposal. Because of the acrimony at Fiat, Ferrari suggested a move to Turin and a position with the Alfa Romeo racing department. After all, Merosi and company were in the final stages of developing a new 2-liter supercharged Grand Prix car – the GPR, or 'P1' – that would be introduced on September 9 at the European Grand Prix to be held at Monza. Using the seductive powers that would become legendary, Ferrari lured Bazzi, a quiet, steady, tough-minded native of Novara, to Alfa Romeo. It would begin a

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relationship that would keep the two men together in the automotive trenches for sixty years.

Merosi's new racing car had potential. The GPR, or 'P1' as it would become known in the years to come, was a well-conceived two-seater (a riding mechanic was still permitted by the rules), and with Ascari returned to full health to join Campari and Sivocci, Alfa Romeo appeared ready to join the front rank of Grand Prix manufacturers. But the team's hopes were cut short by tragedy.

On the day before the European Grand Prix at Monza, the field of cars, the Fiats, Sunbeams, Bugattis, Alfas, etc., joined by the great American Indianapolis champion, Jimmy Murphy, aboard a very fast, technically advanced Miller straight-8, engaged in some high-speed practice laps. All returned to the pits safely, save one. Ugo Sivocci, aboard his new Alfa P1, spun off one of Monza's ultra-fast bends and was killed. Sivocci was gone. The man who had brought Ferrari into the sport and given him his first chance to drive was dead. He would be the first of literally dozens of men who would fall around Ferrari, victims of this crudest of sports. Sivocci's death, plus the fact that the P1 did not seem quick enough to run with the fastest cars, prompted the Alfa team to withdraw. The race was to be dominated by a pair of Fiat 805s with Murphy third in the Miller.

The team drove the few miles back to the Portello works in shambles. Not only had they lost one of their ace drivers, and a close friend, but the P1 needed serious debugging and re-engineering. Bazzi had a suggestion. There was a brilliant engineer on the Fiat staff who might be lured to defect. His name was Vittorio Jano. The Alfa Romeo staff of course knew of the thirty-three-year-old Torinese and were aware, through their Fiat contacts (some made by Ferrari), that the man was a legitimate genius with the new supercharged engines that were beginning to dominate the sport.

Vittorio Jano was a member of a family with a long and proud tradition in the technical fields. His father had headed one of the

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major Italian military arsenals located in Turin. Jano was a graduate of a technical institute in that city, the Istituto Professional Operaio di Torino, and within two years of obtaining his degree (not a full engineering diploma, more on the order of a technician), at age eighteen, he had moved into the prestigious Fiat engineering department.

While much has been made of Enzo Ferrari's role in persuading Jano to move from Fiat to Alfa Romeo, the eminent automotive historian Griffith Borgeson, following extensive interviews with Jano prior to his death in 1964, recorded the most accurate version. He says Jano claimed that Rimini, not Ferrari, instigated the contact that Ferrari was assigned to make in the late summer of 1923.

Because Ferrari was familiar with the automotive politics in Turin and because he owned an Alfa, it makes sense that Rimini chose him to undertake the Jano mission to Turin. It was a drive Ferrari had made hundreds of times and there is no doubt he had little trouble finding Jano's third-floor apartment on the Via San Massimo. He recalled that he was greeted by Jano's wife, Rosina, who said that it would be out of the question that her husband would leave his native city. Then Jano arrived home. Ferrari reported, 'We had a talk. I told him the advantages of joining Alfa and the following day he signed up.' Once again Ferrari embellished the story.

Jano told Borgeson that he received Ferrari's offer coldly, stating that if Alfa desired his services, more senior officials would have to enter the negotiations. Only after Ferrari transmitted this rejection to Milan did Rimini – and perhaps Nicola Romeo himself – bring about the transfer of Jano to their company. Jano told Borgeson his salary was raised from 1,800 lire per month to 3,500 lire per month and he was given an apartment as a further inducement to make the move to Milan.

Vittorio Jano was a quick worker. Within months he had transformed Merosi's P1 into one of the greatest racing cars of all time. His P2 was a masterpiece, if highly derivative of the work being

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done at Fiat on their latest racing machines. He knew the Fiat's weak points: feeble valve springs and engine blocks that became distorted when hot. He also knew how to correct them. His P2s were powered by 8-cylinder, 16-valve, 2-liter engines developing 135 hp thanks to their Roots-type superchargers. The brakes were hydraulic, similar to those introduced by Duesenberg two years earlier, and carried for the first time 'balloon' tires that had been introduced at Indianapolis.

The car was an immediate success. With Antonio Ascari back at peak form, and judged to be on the verge of rivaling the all-time greats of the sport, he and Bazzi teamed up to win at Cremona. Their P2 was clocked at 121.1 mph on the circuit's six-mile straightaway and set a record for a lap around the sprawling open-road course of 100.8 mph. Suddenly a new player was on the crowded Grand Prix field and the Alfa management responded by engaging a powerful team of drivers. Joining Ascari and Campari was the wily French veteran Louis Wagner, who, at forty-two, boasted a racing career that dated back to 1906, when he had won the Vanderbilt Cup on Long Island. Also on the squad, as a sort of junior varsity member, was Enzo Ferrari.

He bought from the factory a Tipo RLSS sports car and did rather well, winning the Chilometro Lanciato in Geneva and taking a second straight win at Ravenna. He won as well at the Circuito del Polesine at Rovigo and ran second at the Corse delle Torricelle. Perhaps his greatest moment behind the wheel came in July 1924 at Pescara on the Adriatic coast. He was entered with Campari as an Alfa team driver, except that Campari was aboard one of the P2 Grand Prix machines while Ferrari was assigned one of the 3.6-liter Tipo RL/TF sports cars – a heavier, less nimble car from the Merosi design school that was expected to serve as backup to the faster new model from Jano's drawing board.

But Campari broke his gearbox early, and Ferrari found himself in the lead, far in front of a pair of powerful Mercedes manned by amateurs Count Masetti and Count Bonmartini. Campari had cleverly pushed his broken Alfa into some underbrush on the side

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of the road, which left his competition thinking he was still running somewhere on the immense triangular circuit, which was 15.8 miles in length, with a pair of four-mile straightaways and a series of treacherous bends that snaked through a number of tiny villages. The race was called the Coppa Acerbo after Captain Tito Acerbo, brother of Professor Giacomo Acerbo, a Mussolini cabinet member and a powerful ally of Il Duce. In fact, that same year he had craftily maneuvered a bill through the Chamber of Deputies that had given the Fascists two-thirds of the seats and had handcuffed the nation to Mussolini and his party. Acerbo's Cup had been offered in memory of the late captain, who had been killed in World War I, and carried with it the award of Cavaliere della Corona d'Ltalia. Much has been made of this award by some Ferrari acolytes, but it was essentially meaningless. The Cavaliere award was so common that in the nineteenth century King Umberto was heard to scoff, 'A cigar and a cross of Cavaliere – one does not deny to anyone.' In *The Italians*, Luigi Barzini noted his countrymen's fascination with titles thusly: 'It is in the use of academic or other titles that people affix to your name, as if to prove that you so visibly deserve such honors that it is impossible that you have not been awarded them.' A middle-class man is called Dottore in his youth and becomes Commendatore, or Knight Commander, when over forty. Ordinary letters are addressed 'illustrious', 'celebrated', 'renowned', 'Signore', or simply 'N.H.' – the abbreviation for Nobil Uomo. The award of Cavalière to young Ferrari was a simple formality automatically offered to the winner of the race and meant little in a nation obsessed by hyperbolic flattery and hollow titles.

But the victory at Pescara did produce more tangible dividends. He had driven well, and his performance sufficiently impressed the Alfa Romeo brass that he was promoted to the full Grand Prix team for the upcoming Grand Prix of Europe to be held on a rugged network of public roads near Lyon, France. He was to join Ascari, Campari, and Wagner in an event that was surely the most prestigious and most hotly contested of all the

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major European races. Again, adoring biographers have made much of this promotion, but in fact Enzo Ferrari was taken to Lyon as a substitute for Count Giulio Masetti – who himself was a second-rater and decidedly the junior member of the team. Nevertheless, this selection was a high-water mark for Ferrari as a racing driver and afforded him the chance to demonstrate his talents against the likes of his brilliant teammates, not to mention the great Pietro Bordino from Fiat, Sir Henry Segrave and Dario Resta with their Sunbeams, Robert Benoist and René Thomas, aboard French Delages, etc.

This never happened, and the debate rages as to exactly why. Ferrari appeared at Lyon with the Alfa team and practiced briefly on the tricky, open-road fourteen-mile circuit, but without warning boarded a train and returned to Italy. In his memoirs he feebly explained, 'I was not well all that year, being seriously run down. My indisposition, in fact, was grave enough to compel me to cut down and practically give up driving. This was the beginning of trouble with my health that was to afflict me throughout the years to come.' What was the nature of this serious ailment? Some have suggested it was a nervous breakdown; others feel it may have been heart trouble arising from his wartime illness. A few darkly imply that perhaps it was the beginnings of his connection with the dreaded ailment – the reality, or the rumors of the reality, of which would dog him to his grave.

Giovanni Canestrini, the doyen of Italian motorsports journalists during the 1920s and 1930s, stated flatly that Ferrari was afraid. He believed that the young driver from Modena – who was then but twenty-six years old and had but twenty-seven races under his belt – was simply daunted by the level of competition and the nasty, blind-hilled Lyon circuit and went home. This remark by Canestrini was openly circulated and enraged Ferrari, who refused to forgive him until a truce was finally arranged thirty-five years later! Ferrari's longtime friend Gino Rancati made the following cryptic observation about Ferrari's race-driving abilities in his openly affectionate biography

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published in 1977: '. . . he possessed certain limitations as a racing driver: an excessive respect for the machines entrusted to him [and] perhaps not the highest form of courage'.

Whatever the actual reason, his defection at Lyon doomed his chances for further efforts with the Grand Prix team and he returned to Modena to concentrate on the automobile business. He simply stopped trying to further his sporadic racing career.

The Alfa Romeo team, meanwhile, hardly suffered from his absence at Lyon. Campari won after his teammate Ascari suffered a late-race engine failure. Sir Henry Segrave finished second in a Sunbeam, while Ascari had enough of a lead when he broke down to end up third. The once dominant Fiats were so badly beaten that the Turin firm never raced seriously again. An effort was made a few years later to field a Grand Prix car, but the torch of Italian motorsports honor was effectively passed to the upstart Alfa Romeo team on that warm August day in 1924. While Ferrari could accept no credit for beating Fiat on the track, his contribution to their overall defeat by aiding in the defection of Bazzi and Jano was pivotal. Following the pair's flight to Milan, the once unbeatable Fiat racing department was in shambles. Worse yet, another excellent engineer, Vincent Bertarione, had already moved to Sunbeam in 1923, leaving little technical reserve when Jano departed. Those losses, plus other internal policy changes, prompted Fiat to drop racing after the 1924 season. A short-lived return would be made a few years later, but for all intents and purposes they departed the sport forever. Considering his deeply rooted sense of honor and his need for revenge, one can be sure that this capitulation by the company that had rejected him six years earlier was lustily celebrated by Enzo Ferrari.

Ferrari maintained that he was uninterested in politics and, in view of his antipathy toward Rome and a general disregard for the Catholic Church – which was deeply embroiled in the Italian political scene at the time – there is little reason to doubt him. He did, however, make friends with numerous Fascist officials

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because most of those with power and influence in the domestic automobile industry maintained tight links with the party. Enzo Ferrari was learning to be a supremely political man, but only in the sense that this would advance his own fortunes, not those of any particular ideology. He met Benito Mussolini only once, in early 1924. Il Duce was at the height of his popularity at the time and stopped in Modena during a circuitous motor trip from Rome to Milan. He made stops along the way to meet with prominent Fascists and party sympathizers and to mend political fences in such backwater locales as Modena. There he met with a prominent Fascist senator for a long, typical Italian meal and talkfest. Because Mussolini remained loyal to Alfa Romeo during his entire reign – perhaps because the marque was manufactured in the city where he rose to power – he was driving a new three-seat sportster when he arrived in Modena. Being the local Alfa concessionaire and the city's most prominent motorsports personality, Ferrari was selected to escort Il Duce out of town. He tried to drive carefully on the rain-slickened cobbles, but still ran at a higher velocity than the less skilled Mussolini was capable of maintaining. After several wild skids by the proud but inept leader, Ferrari slackened his pace until the journey ended a few kilometers later.

Ironically, Alfa Romeo would follow Fiat to the motorsports sidelines. On July 26, 1925, their star driver, Antonio Ascari, was killed while leading the French Grand Prix at Linas-Montlhéry.

The death of the popular Ascari shook the team to its very core, somehow deadening the competitive zeal of all the participants from the surviving drivers down to the lowliest mechanic. Young Luigi Chinetti had traveled to Lyon as a team mechanic, but decided not to make the trip back to his home in Milan. He was uncomfortable with the increasingly bellicose posturing of the Fascists and was attracted to the easygoing French, who were enjoying the postwar exuberance that enlivened their nation during the 1920s. Chinetti, whose expertise with automobiles ranged from the arcane field of bearing fabrication to occasional race

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driving, moved to Paris, where he planned to open a small exotic-car repair shop.

Shortly after the race Alfa Romeo announced that they were permanently canceling their competition activities out of respect for their fallen champion. But there was more to the departure than pure grief. Griffith Borgeson speculates that the decision was based on a sagging economy and the intervention of the Italian government. Earlier that year the Fascists had begun to tug Alfa Romeo under the wing of the newly formed IRI, the Istituto di Ricostruzione Industrial, an immense government bureaucracy designed to finance ailing businesses and keep them commercially viable. It is likely that the IRI officials were influential in canceling the expensive and risky racing program.

With the Alfa Romeo motorsports operation inert, Enzo Ferrari concentrated on developing his retail car business. He now held the Alfa Romeo sales franchise for the regions of Emilia, Romagna and Marches and in April 1925 had begun the conversion of a large two-story house on the Via Emilia into a dealership and service center. He and Laura had been living in a tiny second-floor apartment above a nearby restaurant and now planned to transfer their quarters to the new building. Life in that small, steamy space was hardly tranquil. He and Laura were fighting constantly. Worse yet, Laura and his mother, Adalgisa, had grown to despise each other, leaving Ferrari to act as arbiter in a bitter, futile intrafamily battle. He was consumed by the automobile business and was traveling either to Milan – where contacts had to be maintained with the Alfa Romeo executive staff – or to Bologna, where he had opened a satellite Alfa dealership on the Via Montegrappa. When in Modena his life centered on the noisy local bars and restaurants where the motoring enthusiasts spent endless hours discussing their beloved sport. So, too, in Bologna, where in places like the Cafe San Pietro and the Folia Bar along the Via Indipendenza nobleman and commoner alike swilled wine, swirled pasta and nattered incessantly about their universal passion. Ferrari was a celebrity of sorts in such crowds. After all,

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he was a winner of the Coppa Acerbo and had served on the Alfa Romeo Grand Prix team, albeit briefly and without distinction. Still, these were sufficient credentials to impress the locals and he used them to great advantage to promote Alfa Romeo sales. He began to spend more and more time in Bologna and openly discussed his desire to get rid of his wife. Divorce in Italy was utterly impossible, if not unthinkable, but during this period he made no effort to act the loyal husband. His womanizing, in both Modena and Bologna, reached a frantic level. By no means a handsome man, Ferrari still enjoyed great success with women, thanks for the most part to his towering sense of self-confidence and his growing powers of persuasion. In those days his conquests were mainly among the harlots and loose women who hung around the racing crowd, but as his prominence grew, so would his taste in females.

Always a frustrated journalist, he began to dabble in writing commentary for several motoring newspapers while maintaining close contact with the elite team of Alfa racing technicians and mechanics in Milan. Jano was completing the design of a new lithe roadster with a small, high-revving 6-cylinder engine that Ferrari assured his friends would be unbeatable both on the highway and in the endless round of minor events that were being staged across northern Italy and the south of France.

It was the prospect of this fresh line of sports cars that infused the company's old racers with enthusiasm and kept men like Ferrari from defecting to other brands. So, too, for Jano and Bazzi, who were slowly weaning themselves away from the pure Grand Prix machines and leaning toward the more lucrative, widely produced two-seater sports cars for the enthusiast market.

Alfa Romeo by no means left the competitive scene, but merely redirected their efforts toward great sports-car races, where more roadworthy, real-world automobiles competed, as opposed to the pure, open-wheel, single-purpose Grand Prix machines. The new 6C-1500SS sports car, with its racy Zagato bodywork, was shown at the Milan Motor Show in April, 1925, but did not go into

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production until two years later. (As an indication of how primitive the car business remained in places like Modena, there was no formal automobile show in the city until 1925 and dealers like Ferrari were forced to exhibit their wares in a barn at the local horse show.)

His mysterious bout with illness notwithstanding, the mid-1920s were years of consolidation for Enzo Ferrari. His fitful racing career was on hold, and while he maintained close contact with the sport in 1926, he did no competitive driving whatsoever. He successfully expanded his car business in both Bologna and Modena, however, thanks to his compelling personality and a rakish line of new machinery from the drawing board of Jano.

By early 1927 his competitive fires were sufficiently rekindled to make a return to racing. He entered an older Alfa Romeo RLSS in the Circuito di Alessandria, a minor 160-kilometer sports-car race, and won the *gran turismo* class. A month later he won on his home turf of Modena at the wheel of a potent 6C-1500SS two-seater with old Alfa Romeo mechanic and compatriot Giulio Ramponi at his side as riding mechanic. Ferrari had the fastest car in the race and won the 360-kilometer event with ease, setting the fastest lap on the twelve-kilometer circuit at 113 kilometers per hour.

The race was one of hundreds of similar local events run across Europe by the automobile clubs of middling-sized cities. It turned nary a head among the sport's major-leaguers. But it was a promotional boost for Ferrari's dealerships and further enhanced his reputation within the region as a rising entrepreneur in the automobile business.

As his thirtieth birthday approached in February 1928, the Italian government, under the auspices of puppet King Victor Emmanuel III, gave him the title Commendatore (Knight Commander) in recognition – presumably – of his business successes and his sporadic efforts as a racing driver. The rather common title was wholly honorary and was vaguely akin to being designated as a Kentucky Colonel in the United States. Still, 1928 marked an

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acceleration of his motorsports activities. He returned to Alessandria and scored a class victory. A second consecutive overall win came at Modena, followed by a third place at Mugello – all aboard the same Alfa Romeo that he had campaigned in in 1927. His second victory at Modena was marked by the appearance of little Pepino Verdelli in the riding mechanic's seat – a copilot's position he would enjoy beside Ferrari on and off for another fifty years.

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As the 1920s slipped away, Enzo Ferrari found himself in a surprisingly pleasant situation. He was established in Modena as well as Bologna, presiding over an Alfa Romeo dealership which enjoyed exclusivity in the Emilia, Romagna and Marches regions, all of which were prospering under Mussolini's Fascist regime. His career as a racing driver was hardly flourishing, but as a former member of the Alfa Romeo team – albeit as a second-ranker – he was able to embellish his association with greats like Campari and the late Antonio Ascari to a point where he became a celebrity in the racing-enthusiast bars and trattorias along the Via Indipendenza. Ferrari by now had gained confidence in his ability to impress and influence the wellborn gentlemen sportsmen who composed his clientele. They were addicted to fast automobiles, and any association with a man like Ferrari, who had climbed considerably higher up the mountain than they had, and who had access to the latest Alfas, was to be cherished and cultivated. Ferrari understood this weakness and was able to exploit it to the fullest, not only in terms of increasing sales of Alfa Romeos but in enhancing his social connections.

If there were frustrations, they centered on his recurrent health problems dating from the war and his wobbly, inconsistent career as a racing driver, which had been reduced to a few fitful starts in minor races and hill climbs. An added irritant was his steadily declining relationship with Laura. It had turned into the typical lower-class Italian marriage with Ferrari operating as the household tyrant on his sporadic visits to their small apartment while confining his sexual conquests to the large collection of flashy, often trashy women who were attracted to the glamour and danger of motorsports. Increasingly he sought solace and companionship

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at places like the Cafe San Pietro, where talk of fast cars – and faster women – was carried on until the dim, still hours of the early morning.

Ferrari was also a regular at the late-night debauches held at the apartment of a likable veterinarian and part-time mineral-water producer named Ferruccio Testi. He was a fixture on the Modena sporting scene, possessed of a wild enthusiasm for motor racing and a keen eye for photography. Indeed, Testi's masterful photographs compose a riveting portfolio of Italian motorsports from this era.

Ferrari's domestic tensions were exacerbated by the acrimony that simmered between Laura and his mother. Daughter-in-law and mother despised each other almost from the first meeting, and Ferrari was caught in the middle. He was devoted to his mother, as is the case with most Italian men, and did his best to support her in Modena (as he would do for the rest of her life) but tried as much as possible to keep her separated from his wife. He would never speak publicly of these conflicts, but the tension between the two women bore heavily on him for years, and no doubt was a factor in his search for other female companionship.

But in spite of his contentious home life and his modest achievement on the racetrack, life seemed filled with opportunity for this thirty-one-year-old, rather portly Emilian as the decade came to an end.

Contrary to the comic-opera legacy left by Benito Mussolini, Italy was actually doing quite nicely, at least prior to the tsunami that crashed over the world economy following the Wall Street crash of October 1929. It has become legend that Il Duce's achievements were limited to draining the Pontine and Campagna marshes and regulating railroad schedules, but that is hardly fair. Between 1922 and 1930 over 5,000 major public works projects were undertaken – including the construction of the first four-lane motorways in the world. In fact, by the end of the decade Italy had 320 miles of such superhighways and led the way in advanced road- and tunnel-building techniques. Moreover, major efforts

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were made to reduce the prewar illiteracy rate of over 40 percent, and that shameful number was in fact nearly halved by 1930. Other efforts, including a campaign to eliminate the Mafia in Sicily, were less successful, although in 1931 Prefect Cesare Mori of Palermo somewhat prematurely announced that his four-year crackdown had totally cleansed Sicily of the brigands.

Mussolini settled old territorial disputes in the Tirol region and signed the Lateran Treaty with the Vatican, which in turn resolved the 'Roman Question' that he had described as 'a thorn in the flesh of the nation'. At roughly the same time the Fascists decided that the Italian population of about 41 million was too small to qualify the nation for great-power status. A goal of 60 million was set and a number of radical social-engineering schemes were instituted, including the prohibition of contraceptives, restricted emigration, and an added tax on bachelors. The legal age for marriage was dropped to sixteen for boys and fourteen for girls, and in 1932 the railroads cut the fare to Rome for newlyweds by 80 percent. The first Italian 'Mother's Day' was established in 1933, to be celebrated on Christmas Eve as further encouragement to childbearing. Whether any of these policies encouraged the birth of Ferrari's first and only child in 1932 is unknown, but the programs apparently had some impact nationally, because by 1934 the population had increased by nearly 1.5 million, although the Depression had by then caused the birth rate to shrink below the level of a decade earlier.

By the early 1930s Italy was making bellicose noises about grabbing territory from primitive, slave-trading Ethiopia and there was the matter of avenging the shameful defeat of its troops at the hands of a gang of barefoot Abyssinian tribesmen at Adowa in 1896. Much has been made of the fact that this expansionism into Africa, the pomp and circumstance of the Fascist poseurs and the rising military production were simplistic bread and circus acts to distract that population from the atrocious economic conditions, but that is hardly correct. The World Economic Survey of the League of Nations in 1934–35 ranked Italy at about the same level

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of prosperity (or lack of it) as the rest of the industrialized nations that had been shattered by the Depression. In the end Mussolini did delude himself and his countrymen with a brand of bloated, bombastic militarism, but for the first ten years following the celebrated March on Rome his odd alliance of socialism and free-wheeling big business worked surprisingly well.

In 1930 the import duties on automobiles was doubled, which essentially closed out French, German and American manufacturers, although Henry Ford, whose sympathies with Mussolini and later with Adolf Hitler are well documented, quickly established an Italian subsidiary in Milan. But the overall effect of the tariff was to hand Fiat a monopoly on the mass-produced passenger-car market in Italy, which it essentially enjoys to this day. Alfa Romeo and a few other small manufacturers remained in business only as suppliers of sporting and luxury machines for the upper classes. As Italy steadily increased its military hardware, however, Alfa's efforts slowly shifted toward the manufacture of trucks, reconnaissance vehicles and aircraft engines.

Enzo Ferrari cruised through this national turmoil with his vision riveted on the tight little world of automobiles and the national craze of motor racing. No nation in the world embraced the sport more passionately, and even the smallest cities had booming automobile clubs which organized all manner of races, hill climbs, and road rallies to bring honor and prestige to their region. By contrast the American entrepreneurial spirit had transferred auto racing to half-mile and one-mile fairground dirt horse tracks, where admission could be more efficiently charged. There the participants were for the most part working-class mechanics and tinkerers. In England, the stuffy Edwardians had banned racing on public roads, and competition was restricted to a few special tracks where only the very wealthy gathered ('the right crowd with no crowding').

But in Italy motorsports crossed all social boundaries, rivaling football and cycling in popularity. While its center was in the industrialized north, races like the aforementioned Targa Florio in

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