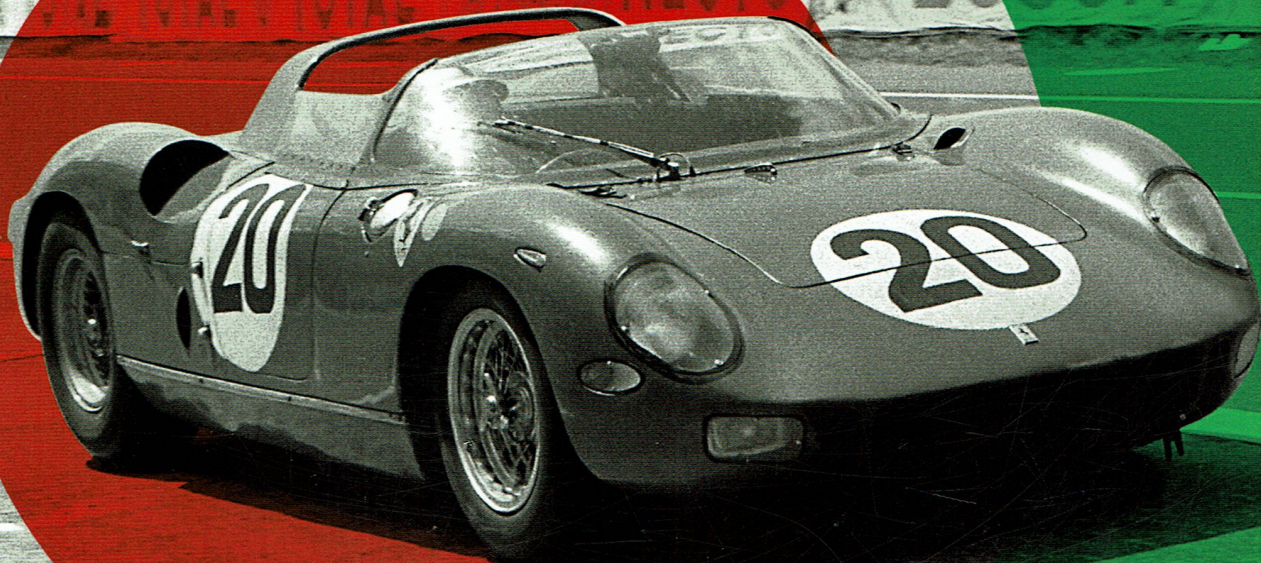


AUTOMOBILSPORT

RACING | HISTORY | PASSION

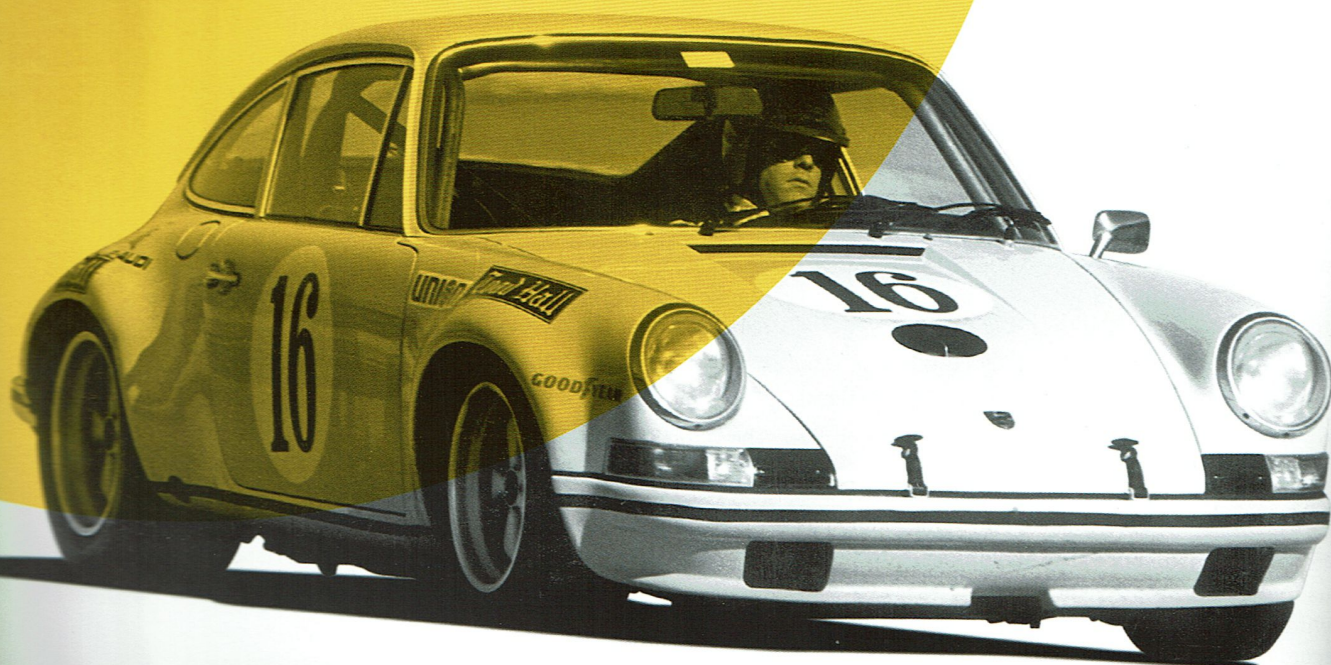
FERRARI'S MID-ENGINE SPORTS PROTOTYPES

1962-1965



ADVENTURE TARGA FLORIO

When Michael Keyser started in five races for the 1972 World Championship of Makes with two private Porsche 911 STs, he brought along a camera crew to have himself and the other protagonists filmed. From the resulting footage, he created the motorsport documentary *The Speed Merchants* and the book of the same title, both classics of their genre. For *AUTOMOBILSPORT*, Keyser opened his archives and recounts how filming went at the first race in Europe – the legendary Targa Florio.



BY MICHAEL KEYSER

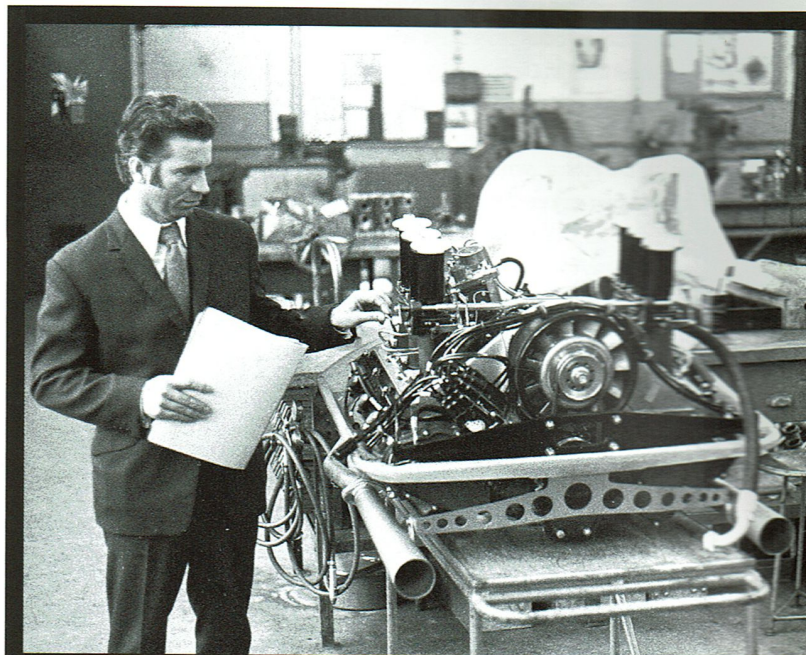
PHOTOGRAPHS: COLLECTION MICHAEL KEYSER (26), JÜRGEN BARTH (1)

My association with Porsche goes back to the late '50s when I was occasionally allowed to drive my father's red Speedster from the main road to the house. In 1966, the summer after I graduated from school, I was assigned the enviable task of picking up his new 911 at the factory. Three other classmates were in the party, and with two of them behind the wheel of a rented VW fastback, we made a Stuttgart-Strasbourg-Paris-Chartres-Tours-Beaune-Dijon-Geneva-Lausanne-Zurich-St. Moritz-Innsbruck-Munich-Salzburg-Cortina-Venice-Florence-Siena banzai "cultural" run, eventually ending up at our family's summer home on the Mediterranean coast, in Porto Ercole, Italy.

In 1969 a good friend named John Shaw had been at the Sebring 12 Hours and returned to Maryland with a hearty endorsement of the sport of motor racing. The next thing I knew, the two of us had bought a 1967 911S, converted it for two-litre Trans-Am racing and prevailed on Bruce Jennings to drive it. At the end of the season, I took the car to a PCA event at Marlboro, attended an SCCA school at the same track later that fall and another the following spring at Bridgehampton. There was no looking back after that, and for the next two years, I drove the car under the team name, Toad Hall, in SCCA regional and national events, the first IMSA races, and the Daytona 24 Hours, Sebring 12 Hours and Watkins Glen 6 Hours.

At the end of 1971, the new 2.5-litre cars were introduced by Porsche, and I placed an order for one. Figuring it would be helpful to show my face in Zuffenhausen, I took a trip to the factory in mid-December with Franz Blam. Franz had just taken over as service manager at North Lake Porsche-Audi in Tucker, Georgia, and had agreed to oversee the preparation of the car. Somewhere over the Atlantic on the way to Germany, the idea I'd been kicking around for some time crystallised in my mind. Since being bitten by the racing bug two years before, I'd made it an almost personal crusade to try and explain what a fantastic sport motor racing was to the uninitiated.

To that end I'd spent much of that time hopscotching around the United States and Europe, taking photographs for what would eventually be a photo essay on the sport entitled *The Speed Merchants*. Work on this book was nearing completion, and I thought the logical progression was a documentary film along the same lines. I'd seen a one-hour network television special on stock car racing called *The Hard Chargers* that had the cinéma vérité look and feel that appealed to me, and had tracked down one of the producers in New



ABOVE In December of 1971, Michael Keyser and Franz Blam visited the Porsche factory in Stuttgart. Here Franz examines the new 2.5-litre engine of the 911 ST.

OPPOSITE The first race for the Toad Hall Porsche was the Daytona 6 Hours on February 6, 1972, where the car failed to finish.

York to discuss possibilities. Why not, I thought, take the new Porsche, race it in a number of the Manufacturer's Championship events, and at the same time make a documentary film about the series. Where allowed, I could also use it as a camera car. It all seemed so logical at the time, not to mention that I felt money could eventually be made on the distribution of the film, Bruce Brown's surfing classic, *Endless Summer*, still being fresh in my mind.

Arriving at the Porsche factory with Franz, we were met by Jürgen Barth who was working in what I came to know as the "sports department". Our car was in production and I snapped a few shots of it in the metal shop where wider fender flares were being mated with the stock body. We were also allowed to inspect one of the new 2.5-injected motors. Before leaving I made an offer to Jürgen, who was already following in his late father Edgar's footsteps as a driver, albeit on road courses, not in hillclimbs. Would he be interested in driving with me in some of the races in 1972? I told him about my idea for the film, and his immediate response was positive. We agreed to communicate over the next few weeks, and with that, out the door we went, back across the Atlantic.

Between the last week of December and the first week of January, I moved ahead with what now seems like mind-boggling speed, assembling an entire New York-based film production crew and making plans to both race and film at Daytona, Sebring, the Targa Florio, the Nürburgring, Le Mans and Watkins Glen. I'd already asked Bob Beasley of Richmond, Virginia, to drive with me at Daytona, which was a 6-hour event that year, but Jürgen agreed to come on board at Sebring and co-drive in the remaining events. We ran into problems at Daytona and DNFD, but the weekend wasn't a complete loss. Hans Mandt, who had worked for Peter Gregg for a number of years, decided to abruptly part company with him and before the race was over, Hans agreed to come to work with me. Franz, whose job at North Lake would have prevented him from making the trip to Europe, graciously stepped aside.

Working out of the garage at his house in Jacksonville, Hans prepared the car for Sebring. Being a member of the PCA, I decided to run a Porsche Club of America windshield sticker in all the international events, which we did. The rough Sebring airport circuit took a toll on something that escapes my mind, and again we DNFD, this time Jürgen and I driving together. After filming the first race at Daytona with a small crew, including shooting some footage from the race car, Toad Hall Productions, as the company was called, launched an all-out assault on Sebring. I can't remember the exact number in the company's employ, but there must have been 30 or more "toads" poking cameras and microphones in every nook and cranny of the airport circuit.

Before the Daytona event, I'd written personal letters to all the team managers and principal drivers for Ferrari, Alfa Romeo, Lola and Mirage explaining what it was I was trying to accomplish by making the documentary film, and enlisting their help. Basically, I asked them to "act naturally" when they saw us lurking around. To our pleasant surprise, we found most of them were genuinely interested in helping, not the least of whom was Peter Schetty, the Ferrari team manager. We'd received permission from him for one of our camera crews to place lights around their garage in anticipation of shooting the engine changes on the night before the race and other preparations of their three-car team. The camera crew hadn't finished mounting the lights when the Ferrari mechanics were ready to leave for dinner, so amazingly Peter handed the keys to the garage to the production manager, told him to lock up when they were finished and bring them to him at the restaurant where they'd be eating!

After Sebring, we had a little more than a month to prepare the car for the three European races, having made arrangements to ship the car inside a small slant-bed GMC transporter from Jacksonville to Hamburg. We were running Firestone tyres at that time, and in addition to taking spare parts and a spare engine and transmission, we packed in as much rubber as we possibly could. Hans was to fly to Frankfurt, take a train to Hamburg and return to Stuttgart with the transporter and race car. Actually, the base of operations was to be the Max Moritz' dealership, south of Stuttgart, in the town of Reutlingen. For personal transport during the month and a half I was to be in Europe, and also to use as a practice car for the Targa Florio, I'd arranged to purchase, through Max Moritz, a second 2.5-litre "lightweight" or rally 911. Both the race car and the rally car were bright yellow, the colour my Toad Hall cars had run in for the past two years.

RIGHT AND BELOW RIGHT

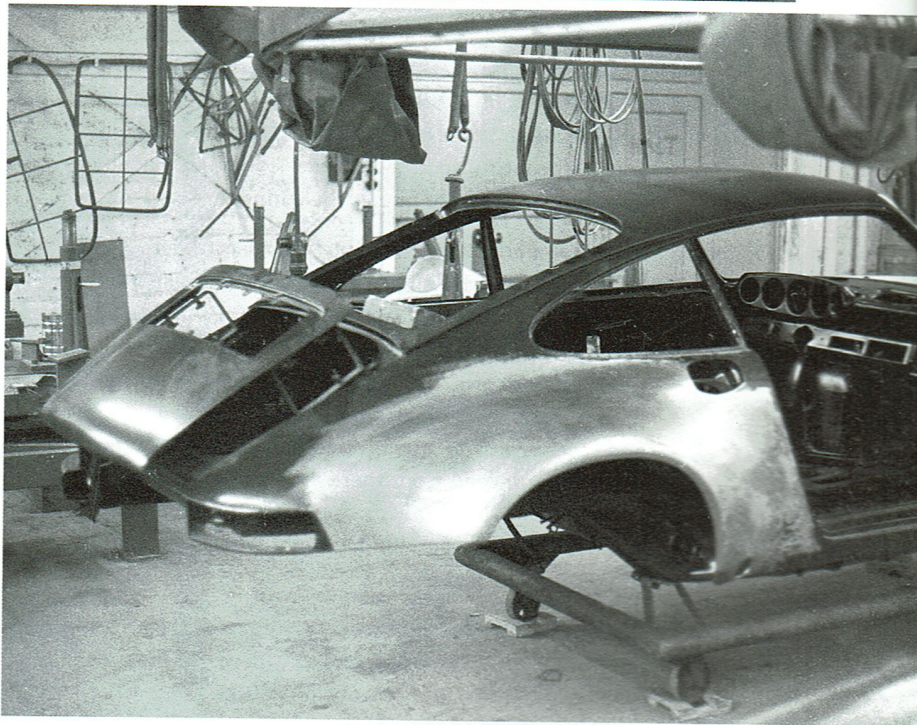
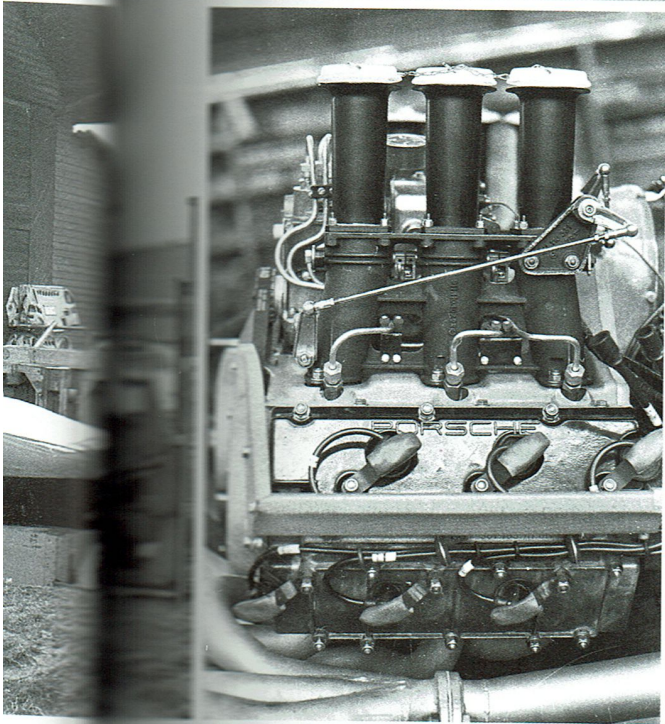
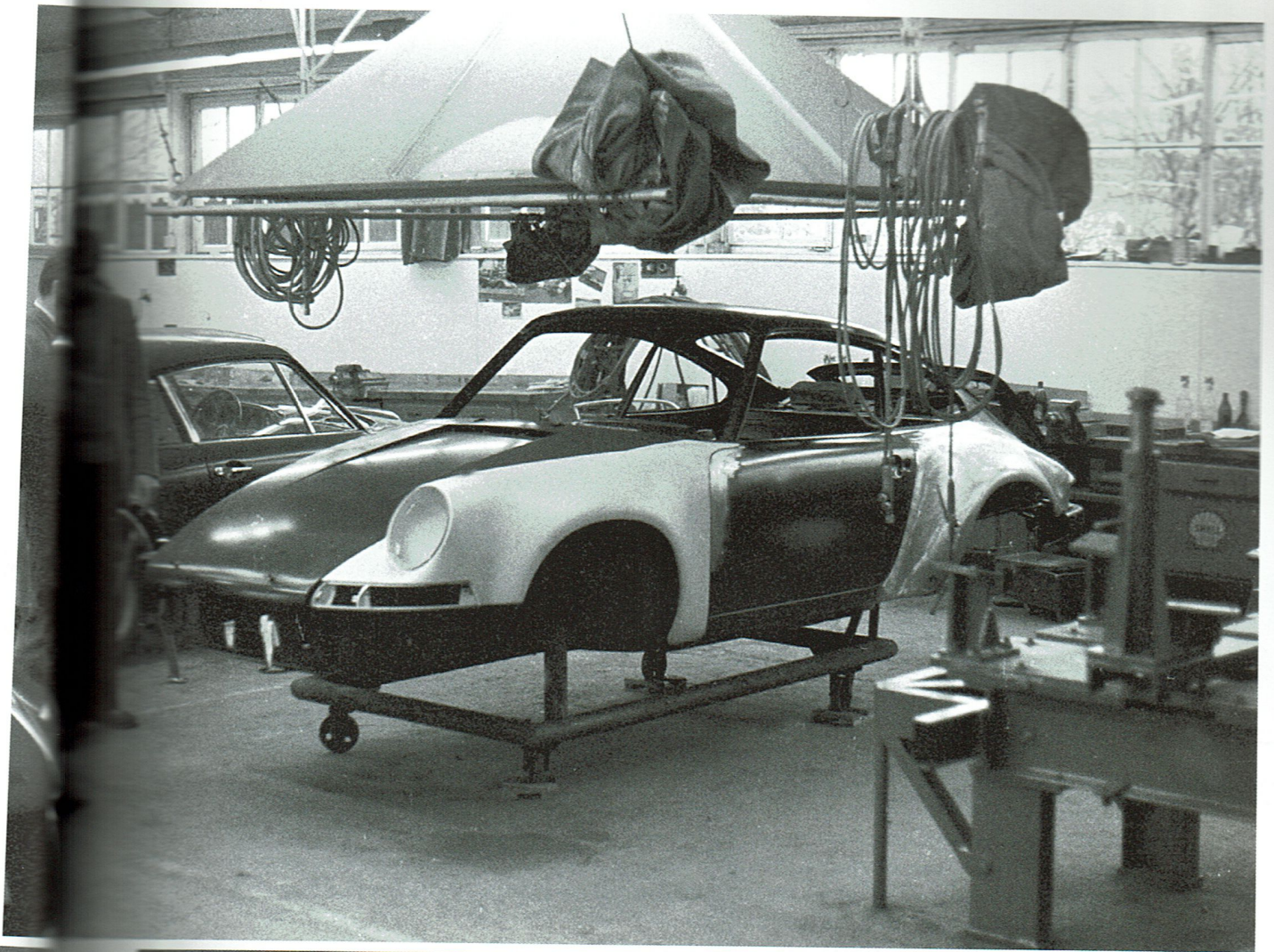
The Toad Hall 911 ST in the body shop at the Porsche factory where the fender flares were mounted.

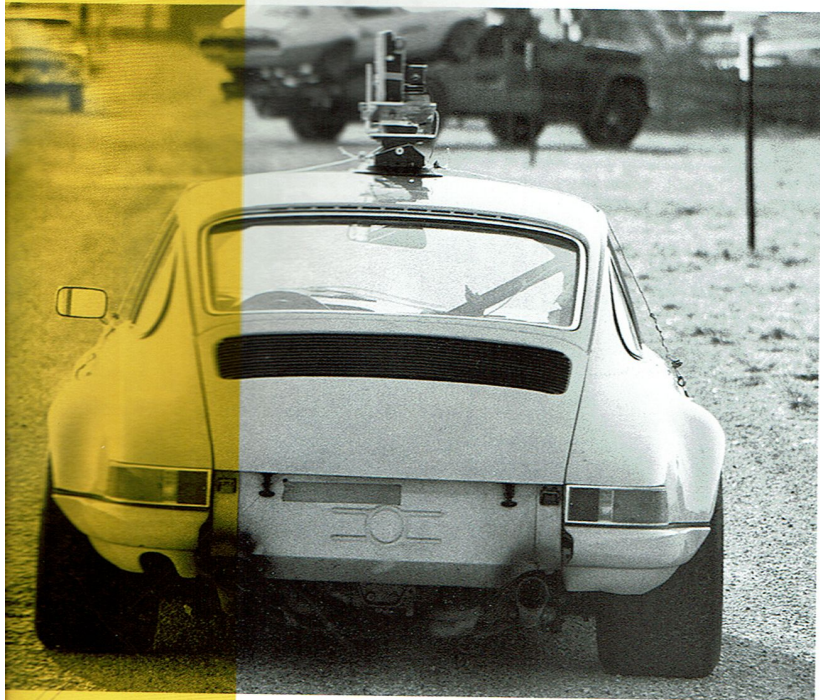
BELOW CENTRE

A side view of the 2.5-litre engine.

BELOW The body buck for a long-tail Porsche 907 sits covered by a tarpaulin and a dusting of snow outside the old Karosserie Reparatur Reutter building at the factory.







On the appointed date, I flew to Stuttgart, met up with Jürgen at the factory and drove out to his house where I met his mother and sister, both of whom couldn't have been kinder. Hans had just arrived from Hamburg with the transporter, and we unloaded the car in Jürgen's driveway to check and see how everything had weathered the ocean voyage. The car and equipment inside was just as Hans had packed it, so we celebrated with a feast prepared by Mrs. Barth with much discussion of the upcoming Targa Florio, which Jürgen's father had won in 1959. On the wall in the den was the beautiful sculpted bronze "Targa", or plaque, that was presented to him as the winner of the event.

The plan of attack for reaching Sicily was for Hans to head south over the Alps to Italy with the transporter the weekend prior to the race. A young American named John Russell, who was working with Jürgen in the Porsche sports department at the time, would go with him, as would John's girlfriend, Martha. Jürgen and I were going to stop off in Monaco for the Grand Prix, then proceed from there around the coast and down through Italy, meeting up with Hans, John and Martha in Naples on Monday night where the overnight ferry left for Palermo.

Working at the Porsche factory, Jürgen's street car was, quite naturally, a 911, and as luck would have it, also yellow. So on Friday afternoon, Jürgen in his 911 and I in mine headed for Monaco with plans to spend

the night en route. Around dusk, I followed Jürgen up and down through a twisty section of road that he told me, on reaching the hotel, was used as a special stage in the Monte Carlo Rally. I could only imagine what it would be like in the dead of winter, covered with ice and snow.

We hooked up with one of our film crews that was at the Monaco Grand Prix to shoot some footage, then after watching Jean Pierre Beltoise win the race in a BRM in heavy rain, Jürgen and I set out on the next leg of our journey. We planned on driving as far as Porto Ercole that night, the small fishing village on the east coast of Italy, about a hundred miles north of Rome, where the family home was. It was still raining when we set out, and after following the coast road and crossing the border into Italy near San Remo, we took the autostrada around the top of the boot and down past Genoa. I remember distinctly Jürgen and I leapfrogging each other as we blasted in and out of the many tunnels interspersed along the route, going from the pouring rain and slick road surfaces into the eerily lighted dry of a tunnel, then shooting out again into the rain. The tunnels stopped and the road gradually leveled off north of La Spezia, and with our left-hand blinkers on, we drafted each other at triple digits on down the boot.

Around midnight we were flagged over to the side of the road by a pair of jack-booted carabinieri with the complaint that we had overdone it with our fights. I spoke fairly fluent Italian and understood exactly what the problem was, but decided the best policy was to play dumb and, in English, plead ignorance of any offense. After five minutes of non-communication, the carabinieri tired of the game and sent us on our way with disgusted shakes of their heads. A short time later, we arrived in Porto Ercole, where we had no trouble falling dead asleep.

The next morning we woke to a brilliant Mediterranean sun, and after giving Jürgen a quick tour of the beautiful little village, we headed south for Naples. Two of my old friends from Porto Ercole and their wives made it a three-car caravan as we skirted around Rome and arrived late that afternoon in Naples. I'd been forewarned that this was the only city in the world where your wheels could be stolen from your car while it was moving, so we made our way directly to the port, where we were happy to find Hans, John, Martha and the transporter.

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1977 A Bolex 16mm camera mounted on top of the Toad Hall 911 ST at Sebring.

1977 Michael Keyser and his Toad Hall racing chief mechanic Hans Mandt.

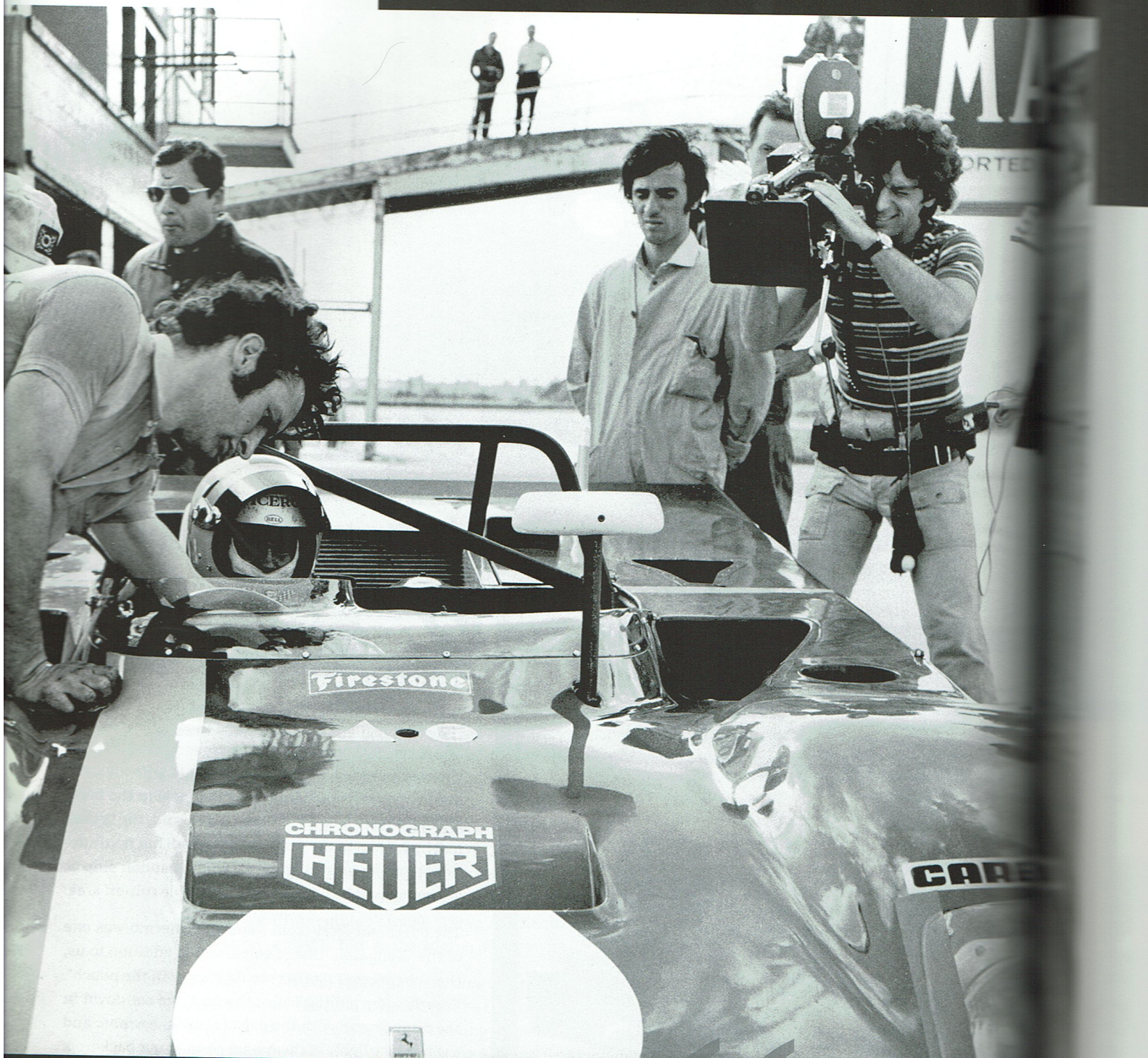
1977 At Sebring, Michael Keyser wears a hat: as the driver of the Toad Hall 911 ST and also the executive producer of a documentary film which would be known as The Speed Merchants.



The three of them had some harrowing tales of their trip over the Alps, the fully-loaded GMC with an automatic transmission being less than ideal in the braking department. Several times, Hans said, the brakes had heated up to the point they were all but nonfunctional and he was fully prepared to abandon ship at any moment if he hadn't found a suitable run-off area.

The overnight ferry from Naples to Palermo was one of the "Kangaroo" line of ships, and in addition to us, there were several other racing teams "in the pouch". Shortly after pulling out of the port, we sat down in the dining room with the Bay of Naples, Sorrento and the blinking lights of the Amalfi coast as our backdrop.

The following morning we arrived at the port of Palermo, disembarked and drove out along the coast road to Cefalu, another picturesque fishing village, where we checked into our hotel. The entire film crew had arrived in Palermo the previous day by air, and between their number and our team, we managed to turn the place into a temporary Toad Hall, the yellow and black stickers with the old English print being much in evidence. Trying to explain in Italian what Toad Hall meant to the hotel employees and other guests was a chore in itself.



AFTER FILMING THE FIRST RACE AT DAYTONA WITH A SMALL CREW, TOAD HALL PRODUCTIONS LAUNCHED AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT ON SEBRING.

On arriving at race headquarters in the pit area, which was on the course a few kilometres north of the small village of Cerda, we received a nasty bit of news. Earlier in the winter, I had written to the Automobile Club of Palermo, the organising body, requesting an entry for the race. A month or so later, I'd received a typed reply in broken English, telling me that the automobile club was honouring my request and would accept my entry. Not having received any type of official entry form and knowing how Italians can be a little lax on details, I figured my mission was accomplished, and I hadn't given it another thought.

In fact, an official entry form should have been filed, and we were told that the deadline for entries had passed. Consequently, we would not be able to race! The fact that we had travelled thousands of miles and spent a considerable amount of money to do so didn't seem to cut any ice with the officials. They were nice, but firm, however agreeing to cable the authorities at the FIA in Paris and see if they would grant a waiver. The cable would have to be sent from the automobile club office in Palermo, which was 40 miles away, and since no business was conducted between 1 and 4 pm (after all, a man has to eat), the cable could not be sent until late afternoon. In the meantime, we were free to practise. Of course, anyone with a car, or donkey, for that matter, was free to practise, as all but one day, when the official qualifying runs were held, the roads were open and shared with Fiat 500s, tour buses, pedestrians and sheep, not necessarily in that order! So, trying to come to terms with learning the course, Jürgen and I set out in our respective 911s, with road maps firmly in hand.

From the pit area, the road climbed gradually to the town of Cerda, where the three-car Alfa Romeo team had set up shop in one of the local garages. The road ran in pretty much of a bee-line through the centre of Cerda, then continued to climb for some time through the rolling hills before dropping down through some wooded glades to the valley floor, climbing again through a number of switchbacks and a rock quarry to Caltavuturo. The traverse through Caltavuturo was more winding than Cerda's, with high walls and rock faces which were used as grandstands on race day.

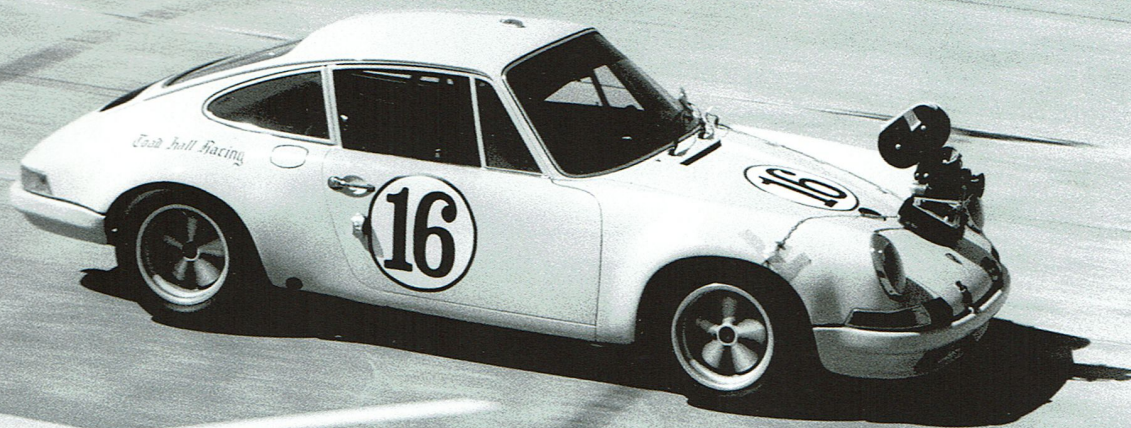
LEFT Director of The Speed Merchants, Richard Witt, films the Ferrari 312P of Mario Andretti in the pits at Sebring with an Arriflex 16mm camera.

ABOVE After meeting Jürgen Barth during his visit to the Porsche factory in December of 1971, Michael Keyser asked him to co-drive with him in the Toad Hall 911 ST.



Another section of twisting road led through the countryside to the town of Collesano, followed by another serpentine stretch to Campofelice before dropping down to the sea where a long straight led to a diabolical series of high-speed sweeping turns, before beginning the climb back into the mountains and the pit area. From start to finish, the course measured 44.73 miles, and after one circuit it was apparent there would be ample opportunity for a fuori strada or "out-of-the-road", as accidents are referred to in Italy.

Based on previous years, we knew our times should be in the neighbourhood of 40 minutes, so after taking over an hour to make the first circuit, it was obvious our work was cut out for us if we were going to chop off 20 minutes. After several more trips around the course in our street cars, Jürgen and I took turns putting the bit between our teeth and took the race car out. By the end of the day, we'd survived numerous close calls with the ever-present tour buses coming in the opposite direction and were beginning to feel somewhat comfortable with the task at hand. The local farmers and shepherds were some of the most enthusiastic fans, waving us on around corners if the coast was clear. I did note that when possible, the Alfa team went out in pairs, so if one of the cars did "leave the road", the driver of the other would at least be on the scene to give whatever assistance he could. The drivers of the lone 312 P Ferrari in the race, Arturo Merzario and Sandro Munari, had no such safety valve and were on their own if it came to extricating themselves



from any wreckage. There was an autostrada that cut down through the middle of the course, and in some instances, cars would run half the circuit then blast back down this highway to the pits or garage to make any needed adjustments. Once on the scene, there was no need to load the race car up on the transporter at the end of the day, as you were free to drive it wherever you wanted.

During the first day of open practice, we were left to twist slowly in the wind by the Automobile Club of Palermo, which had yet to hear back from the FIA in Paris about whether or not we would actually be allowed to race. So for all we knew, the practice we'd done might be for naught. Regardless, both Jürgen and I agreed, it was a hell of a lot of fun! On one of the circuits, we had mounted an Arriflex 16mm camera with a 10 minute magazine on the hood of the car in order to get some car mount footage. Halfway around the course, I was passed by Rolf Stommelen in one of the **Alfas**. Much to my surprise and delight, rather than **taking off** immediately, he allowed me to follow him for a kilometre or more to get some good action shots. **Finally**, with a wave of his hand, he stepped on the gas, and within several curves he was out of sight. It would only be months later when we returned to New York and viewed the film that we found much of it

unusable. After several minutes of beautiful footage, the lens would suddenly explode in a red smear as we witnessed the "death of a bug".

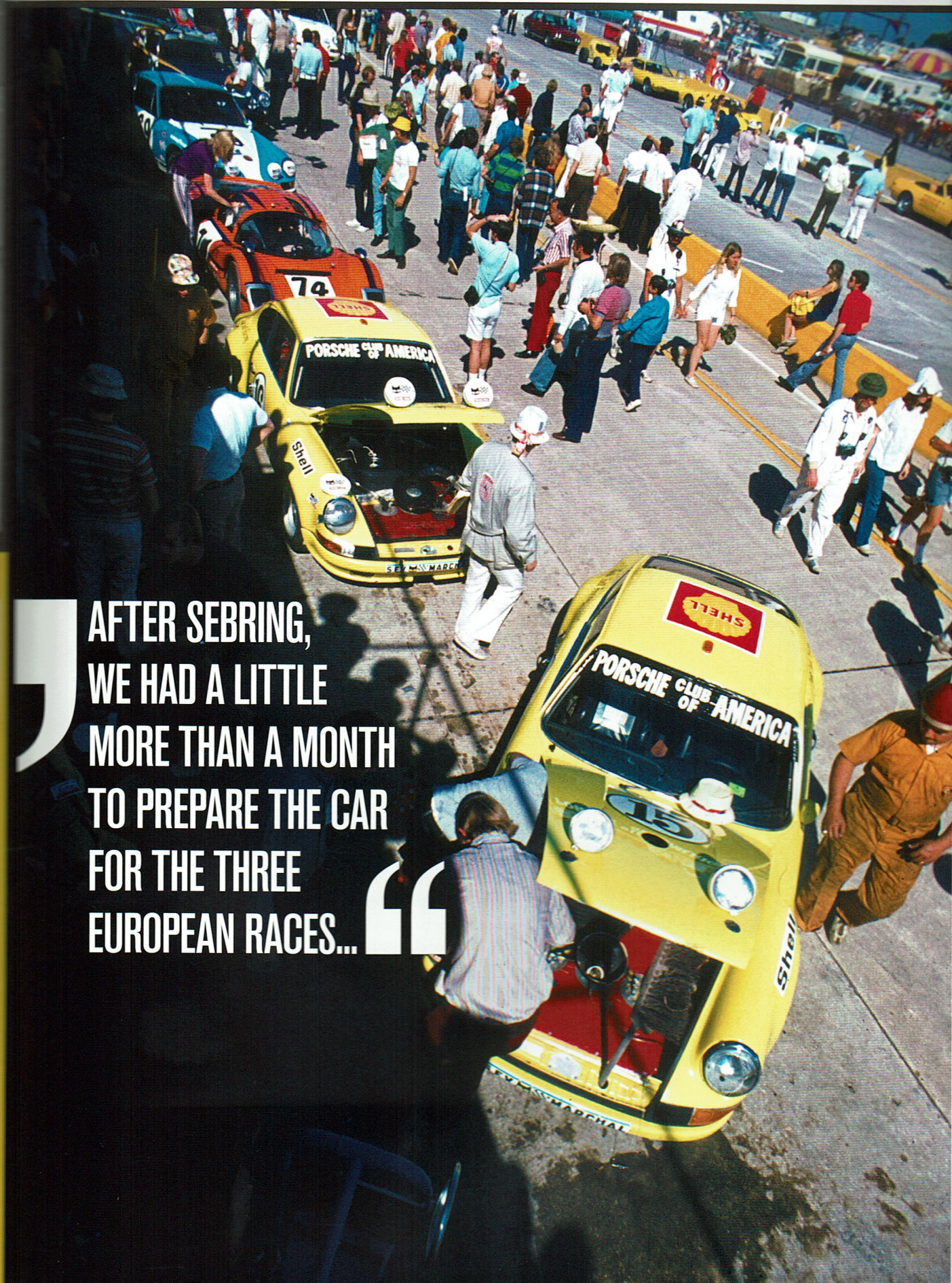
Toward the end of one circuit in the race car, I came on an Italian driver named Carlo Facetti who was driving a two-litre Abarth prototype. His car had apparently broken down and he was on the side of the road with his thumb out, looking to hitch a ride back to the pits. I pulled over and he jumped in. There being no seat, he wedged himself into the back of the car, grasped the roll cage with both hands and I'm sure gritted his teeth as I completed the lap at race speed. In later years when I ran into him on the circuit, we always had a good laugh about the wild ride I'd given him, which he said had deterred him from ever again hitchhiking.

On Wednesday we continued to run the circuit in both the race car and our street cars, and after lunch at a restaurant in Cerda where the entire Alfa team sat at one long table, Carlo Chiti at the head, Vic Elford agreed to take me and one of our sound men around the course. We rigged up a headset for Vic, and driving his Alfa street car, he chauffeured us around, talking the whole way about what to look out for in the way of road surface changes, significant landmarks and so forth. That was a great help in trying to piece the altogether similar, yet different. 44 miles together.

LEFT During practice for the Sebring 12 Hour race, the Toad Hall 911 ST mounted a 16mm Arriflex camera on the hood of the car.

BELOW At Sebring Keyser's Toad Hall Racing team entered two 911s. However, neither car would finish.

AFTER SEBRING,
WE HAD A LITTLE
MORE THAN A MONTH
TO PREPARE THE CAR
FOR THE THREE
EUROPEAN RACES...





ABOVE At Sebring, the #16 Toad Hall 911 ST brakes for the hairpin beside the similar #28 car of Erwin Kremer/Gunther Huber/Juan Carlos Bolanos which finished 12th.

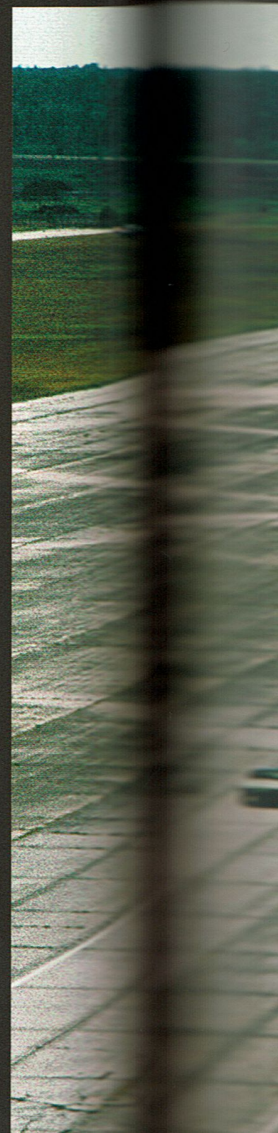
TOP AND BELOW RIGHT The Toad Hall 911 ST on the runways at Sebring.

Although official qualifying runs were set for that Thursday, the local firefighters decided that this would be an advantageous time to hold a one-day strike, with threats of it lasting longer, to extract whatever demands were currently on the table. During this additional day of practice, Jürgen had a small fuori strada with the race car, understeering into a wall. The damage was only cosmetic, and back at out hotel, Hans quickly and efficiently put things back in order. Thankfully, by that Friday, the day of official timed qualifying, the firemen having settled their dispute, word had finally come from Paris that they would make an exception to the rule and allow us to race. So the officials gave us our baby-blue number 23 which we quickly applied to the car before they had a change of heart.

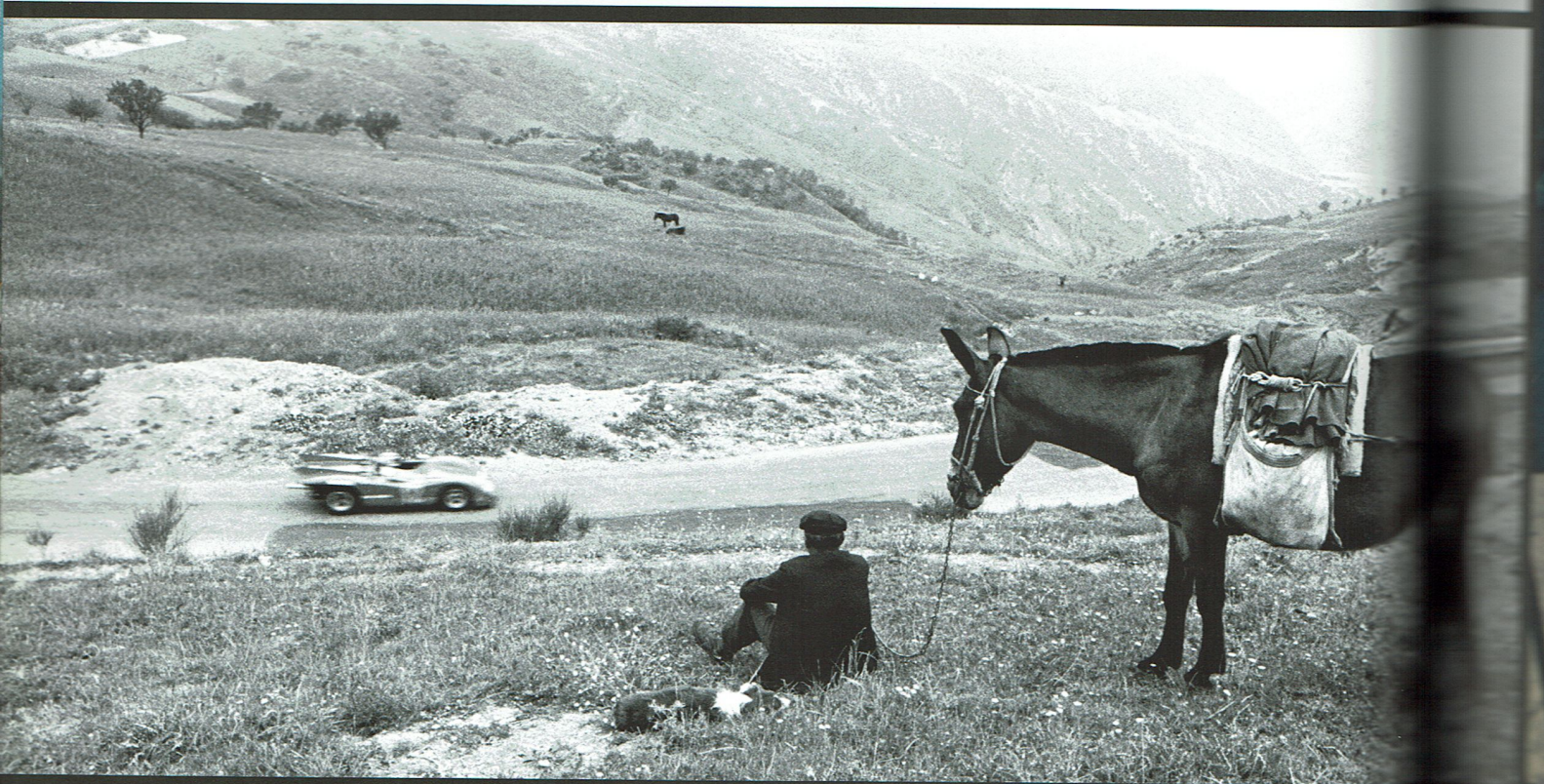
I was first up for qualification and took off from the start/finish line with a 16mm Bolex camera mounted to the rear of the race car. On entering Cerda, I was somewhat shocked to find the streets deserted. Up until then, whenever we reached one of the villages on the circuit, we would slow down and idle through as the streets were filled with people and everyday traffic. Now, ahead of me was a long undulating asphalt ribbon sandwiched between the buildings. Although cleaned by the street sweepers with their brooms, the surface of the road was still somewhat dusty, so I had no idea how fast I could safely go, and as for a breaking point at the far end, I'd never established one.

I managed to make the one lap without any major incidents, turning the car over to Jürgen so he could have his go. When all was said and done, we had qualified with a time of 40 minutes and 37.6 seconds, a full 7 minutes behind the Ferrari of Merzario and Munari who had clocked a 33 minutes, 59.7 seconds to take the pole, such as it was. Vic and Gijs van Lennep were next, less than 7 seconds back. So whatever happened to us, it looked like it was going to be an interesting race for the overall win.

Saturday was a free day for final practice and preparation, and on Sunday morning we were up at the crack of dawn to get to the pits before the roads were closed. The whole week the weather had been picture perfect and race day was no different. As we drove to the pits, we could see that large crowds had gathered along the sides of the road and up in the hills. Many large banners were in evidence inscribed with NINO, for local favourite Nino Vacarella who was driving one of the Alfas with Rolf Stommelen. In many places his name had also been written in paint on the road surface itself or on the sides of buildings. One might have thought that the town of Collesano where Vaccarella was born was actually called NINO.









We had six camera crews scattered around the circuit, each one assigned a local interpreter, and after explaining to the gentry in the towns what it was we were doing, they were invariably invited into the houses and given the run of the place, enabling them to get some great shots of the race cars from balconies and terraces as they passed through.

I can't remember how Jürgen and I decided who would start, but I suppose since it was my car, I decided to get my licks in first. Some 76 cars were lined up on the road that passed through the pits in order of qualification. We were up toward the head of the field, there being many slower local entries. I strapped myself in and waited as the cars ahead of me were flagged off with great ceremony at 15 second intervals. Even with a 44 mile circuit, when you calculate the number of cars in the race and the time between each start, the mathematics show that it wasn't long after the last one left that the first one was completing the initial lap. This was the last thing on my mind when the flag fell.

Soon after the start, I was at Cerda, and again, although this time I was aware of the crowds of people packed between the buildings, the narrow empty street ahead was somewhat unsettling. I tried to control the urge to take advantage of this stretch of straight road and at the same time figure out where I should start braking for the sharp curve at the exit to the town.

Once out of Cerda, I began to get into a rhythm, many of the landmarks now being more familiar. It's best to learn it in sections, Vic had told me. Use a farmhouse or a distinctively-shaped tree as a marker to remind you of the start of a section, then remember the next ten curves or corners. Once you're familiar with one section, you can tack it onto another section and another section until you've got the entire circuit broken down into sections.

TOP LEFT A local farmer and his mule watch a small Abarth prototype pass in the mountains of Sicily during practice for the Targa Florio.

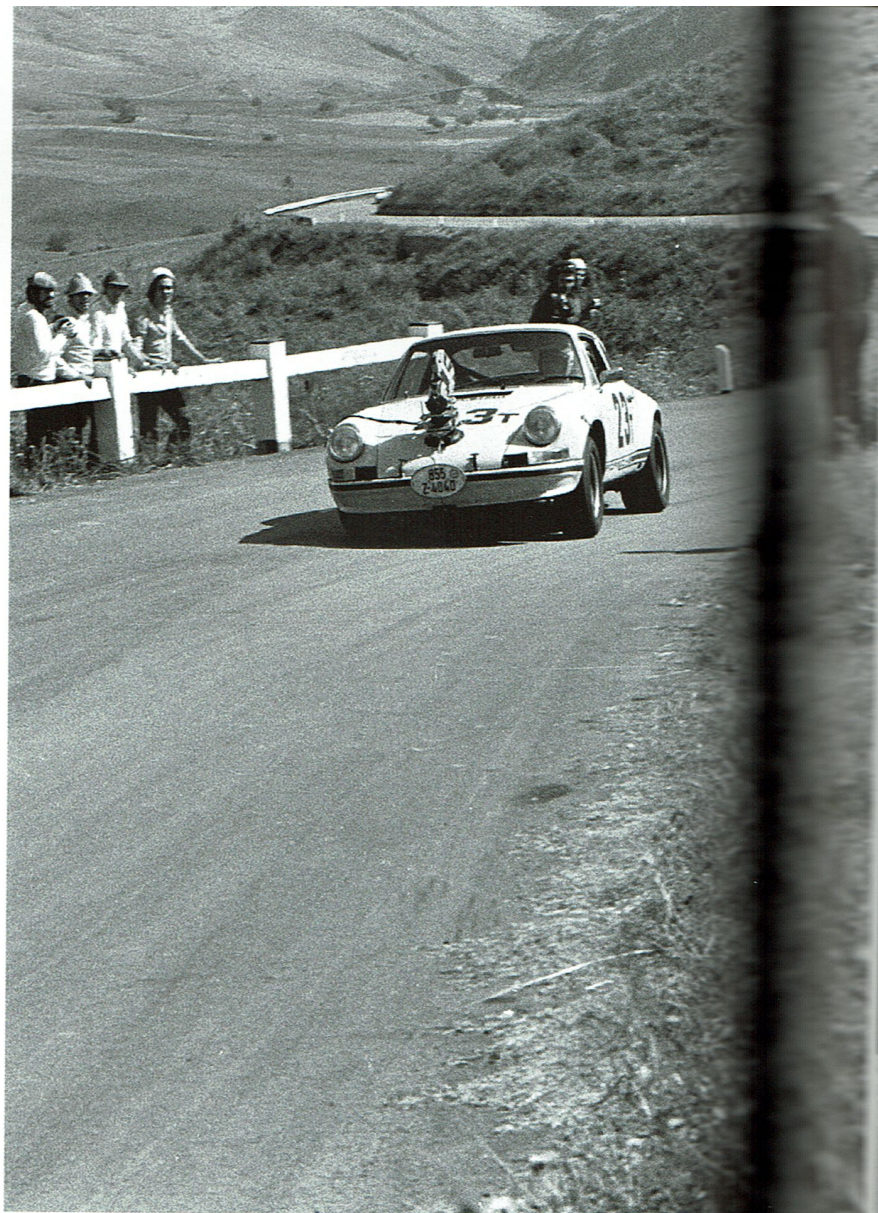
BOTTOM LEFT Both Toad Hall Racing team cars in the pits at the Targa. The #23 Porsche 911 ST in front, and behind the 2.4-litre street car.

TOP A painted sign and a direction arrow painted on the road. "Nino DAI! Nino GO!", it reads.

Along the entire length of the road, there were large groups of people, some of them sitting on walls right at the edge of the course, seemingly unfazed by the cars that were speeding by within a foot or two of them. The more daring, or perhaps intoxicated, fans even emulated matadors, literally leaning out and waving flags in front of me as I passed. A number of American flags were in evidence, and I could tell the Porsche Club of America signage across the top of the windshield really gave them something to identify with and cheer for.

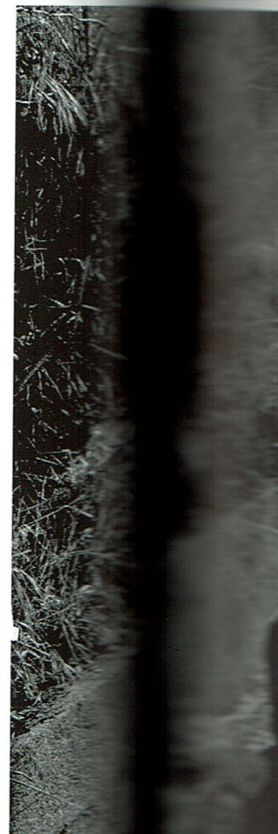
Somewhere between Cerda and Caltavuturo, I finally managed to catch the car that had started ahead of me, in this case another 911 that had a Liqui Moli sticker on its rear bumper. Having reeled him in, I stuck the nose of my car within a few feet of his hindquarters and continued to hound him for several kilometres. I could see that my presence had not gone unnoticed, as he was continually looking in his rearview mirror. From Vic's instructional ride around the course, I remembered that we were approaching a tricky spot where the road made a radical fork to the left after cresting a sharp rise. Of particular significance was the fact that the road surface changed from a sticky new asphalt to an older and slicker section. I was obviously much on Mr. Liqui Moly's mind by this time, having been behind him now for a good five minutes. As we approached the fork in the road, I backed off slightly in anticipation of the road surface change. Liqui Moly, on the other hand, kept the pedal to the metal, and on cresting the rise, had forgotten about the fork. With much delight, I watched as he locked his brakes and slid straight off the road into a freshly cut hayfield. Thank you, Mr. Elford, I thought to myself.

I did two laps and then turned the car over to Jürgen, telling him hurriedly that everything seemed to be operating perfectly. It was a hot day, and after 88 twisting turning miles, I was ready for a break, a drink of acqua minerale and a sandwich. Erminto, Piero, Paola, and Emilia, my friends from Porto Ercole, had decided to watch the race from the pit area, so there was much back-slapping and storytelling about the first two laps, including the running to ground of Liqui Moly. Although it was a little hard to determine what position we were in, based on the non-stop discourse that the female PA announcer was spewing forth, the general consensus was that we were moving up in the field.

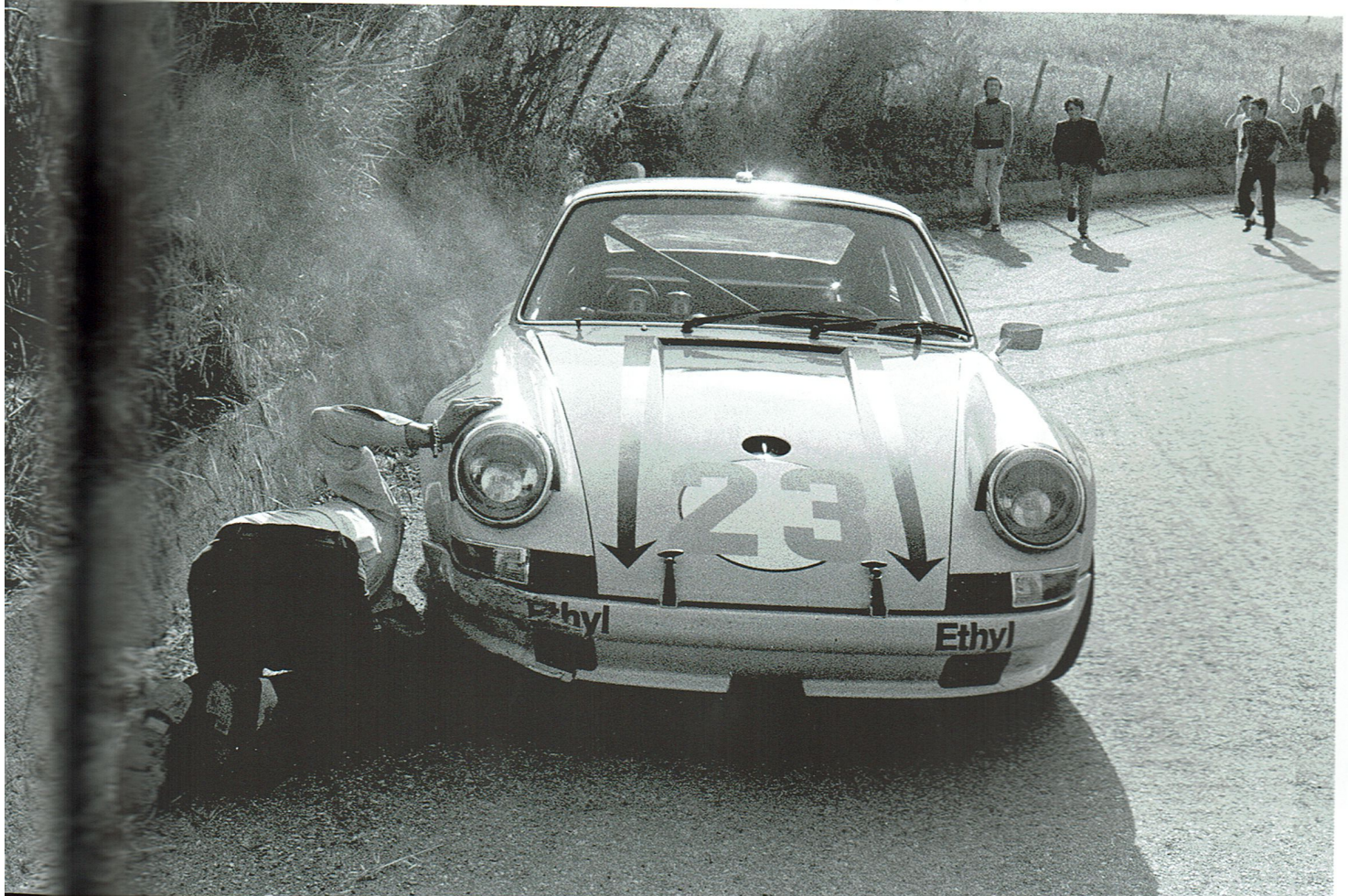


Jürgen did his two laps without incident and turned the car back over to me. I did two more, becoming more and more familiar with the circuit each time around, and when I pitted the second time, we changed all four tyres, more for insurance than necessity. Although we carried a spare tyre and jack with which to make a change out on the circuit, it was obviously something we wanted to avoid. After Jürgen pulled back on course, I remember the PA announcer telling the crowd how the American crew of car number 23 had changed all four tyres with "supersonic" speed, our team being one of the few, aside from those of the Ferrari and Alfa factories, that was using air wrenches.

With our car passing the pits once every 40 minutes, most of the time in between was spent waiting and wondering how things were going out in the countryside, along with a healthy dose of hoping all was well. As our stop watches ticked toward 40 minutes, we all held our breath and watched for a yellow 911 to come into view. Sure enough, right on schedule, Jürgen flew by the pits and headed into our eighth lap. Not having



BELOW A few carabinieri and a group of spectators in the town of Cerda. Bottom: During practice Jürgen grazed a stone wall and stopped to check for damage, of which there was only a bruised front bumper.





ABOVE The Toad Hall 911 ST dives into a left-hand turn in the town of Collesano. After four laps they were in 5th place overall.

RIGHT The Alfa Romeo T33/TT/3 of Andrea de Adamich/Toine Hezemans finished in 3rd place.

BOTTOM RIGHT Local hero Nino Vaccarella and Rolf Stommelen in another Alfa were crowd favourites, but fell out of the race after 3 laps.

missed a beat up until this point, we were ecstatic to find out that we were in sixth place! I took a final drink of water, strapped on my helmet and prepared to take over for the last two laps.

When Jürgen came in, a little behind schedule, we were dismayed to see that the right front of the car was in disarray. For whatever reason, he had another fuori strada, but this time the damage was much more severe. As John Russell refuelled, Hans set to work with a pry bar to straighten out the badly crumpled fender. Thankfully, the tyre had not been cut, and again the damage was largely cosmetic. Even so, the officials in charge of the pits refused to let us rejoin the fray until the fender had been pried out further than was really necessary, which cost us a good minute or two.

With the repairs finally made to the satisfaction of the powers that be, and a new tyre on the right front, I took off hellbent for leather, determined to try and make up the time we had lost. It didn't take more than a fast sweeping curve or two for me to confirm that the suspension had not been damaged. Driving like a man possessed and managing to keep it between the

ditches (and away from the walls), I completed what turned out to be our final lap, nine in all. On receiving the chequered flag, I was directed to the impound area and told that the car must remain there until the officials did whatever officials do after a race.

I thought nothing of it and made my way back to the pits where the rest of the team was celebrating our finish. Eventually, we loaded up the transporter and were ready to head for Palermo to catch the overnight ferry back to Naples. It was scheduled to leave at 6:30 that night and it was almost 5. In spite of our protests that tempus fugit, the "poobahs" of the Automobile Club of Palermo refused to release the car. If we took the car out of the impound area before it was officially released, we would be disqualified, they told us.

Things were starting to get serious now. The next race, the 1,000 Kilometres of the Nürburgring, was the following weekend. In addition to making the trip back up the boot of Italy and over the Alps to Stuttgart, considerable bodywork was needed to get the car back in shape. If we missed the Sunday night ferry, the next one would not leave until the following evening, putting us squarely behind the eight-ball time-wise. Becoming more and more agitated with the officials, who still refused to budge, I told Hans and Jürgen to head for Palermo. I'd wait with one of my Italian friends and drive the race car and my road car, over the public roads, and join them when the officials finally let us go.

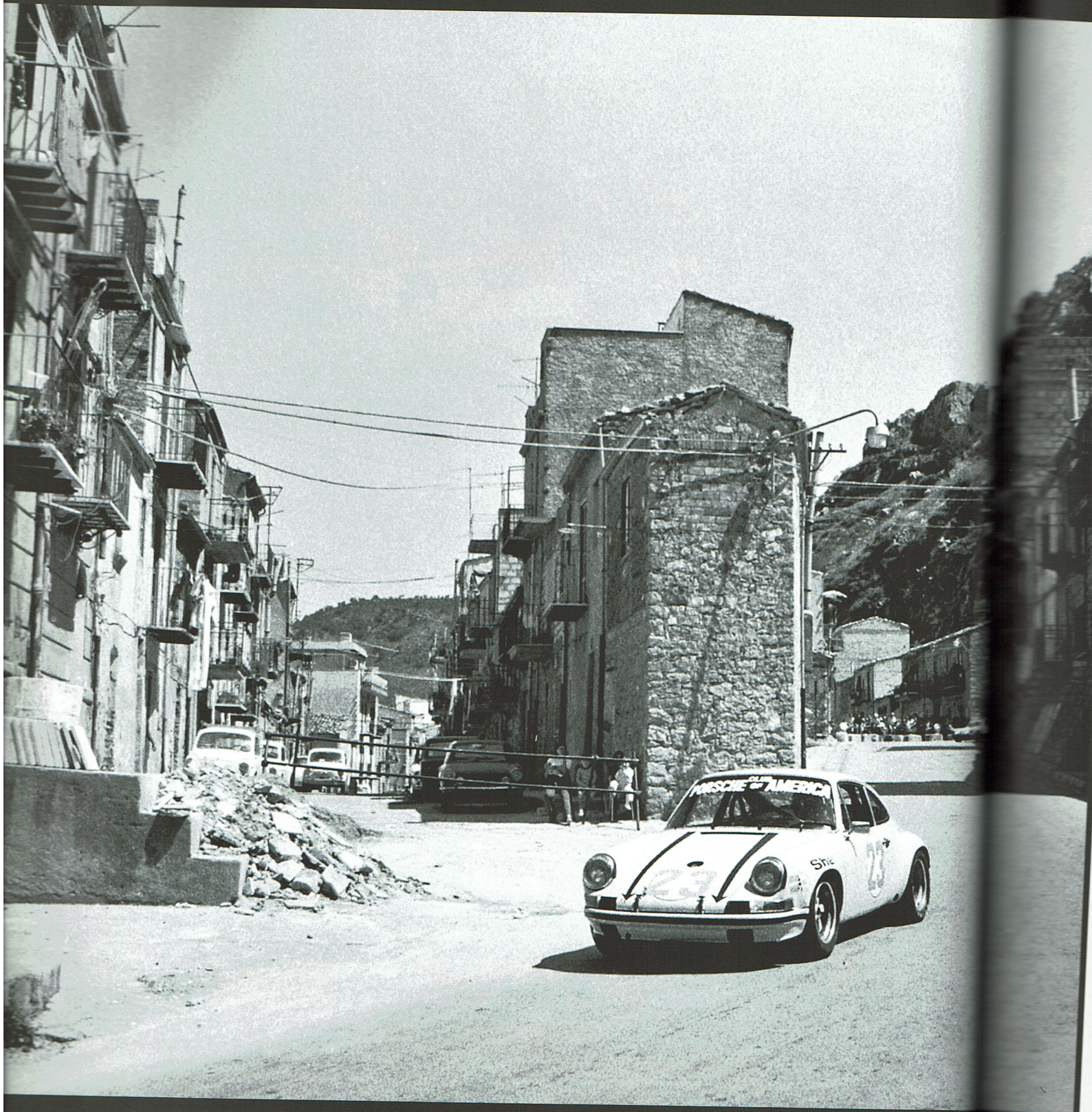


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ABOVE The Toad Hall ST was running well and winning its class until slowed by contact with a wall. In the end, the car came home in 10th place and 2nd in class.

RIGHT The Toad Hall team worked from the Max Moritz dealership in Reutlingen between races. Chief mechanic Hans Mandt (2nd from right) poses in front of the 911 ST with some of the employees.



If they kept us so late that we missed the ferry, we'd head for Messina on the western tip of Sicily and take one of the boats, which ran more frequently, across to the Italian mainland, then drive I up to Naples and meet them there. It would be a desperate move, but these were desperate times!

Half an hour after Hans, in the transporter, and Jürgen in his 911 had left, the officials finally released the race car, having not so much as looked at it the entire time. It was 5:30 and we had exactly an hour to make the 40-mile drive to Palermo in bumper-to-bumper post-race traffic. With my Italian friend in my road car, I jumped back into the battered race car and set out on the coast road. Driving like a madman, often on the shoulder of the road, and passing cars left and right, many of them occupied by race spectators who were no doubt surprised to see one of the cars that had hours ago been competing, we managed to reach the dock where the ferry was tied up just as the gangway was about to be raised.

Once on board and underway, we continued the celebration where we'd left off several hours earlier, eating plates of spaghetti and washing it down with bottles of Sicilian wine. We found out we'd finished in 10th place, having lost four positions in the pits. Merzario

and Munari had won with the 312 P Ferrari, but the real story of the race was Helmut Marko in one of the Alfas. Starting the next to last lap, the Ferrari had a 2 minute and 21 second lead, but at the finish, Helmut had closed to within 16 seconds. He'd covered the final 44 miles in 33 minutes and 41 seconds flat, faster than the Ferrari had qualified. The all-out lap record was still safe, however, and remains to this day, held by Leo Kinnunen in a Porsche 908/03 at 33 minutes and 36 seconds.

As a memento of the race and our 10th place finish, Jürgen and I both received miniature "Targa" medallions, identical to the one his father had won 13 years before. It now hangs in a frame on the wall of my office, and looking at it from time to time, I can't help but remember what a unique and fun experience this mad affair called the Targa Florio was, and how there will never again be anything like it. ⇐

The legendary DVD *THE SPEED MERCHATS* is available from our webshop at www.sportfahrer-zentrale.de or from www.autosportsltd.com.