

THE MAGAZINE FOR 'AUTOMOTIVE AMERICA

SEPTEMBER 1981

\$1.25

Crossroads

ITALIAN DESIGN

FAME & GLORY

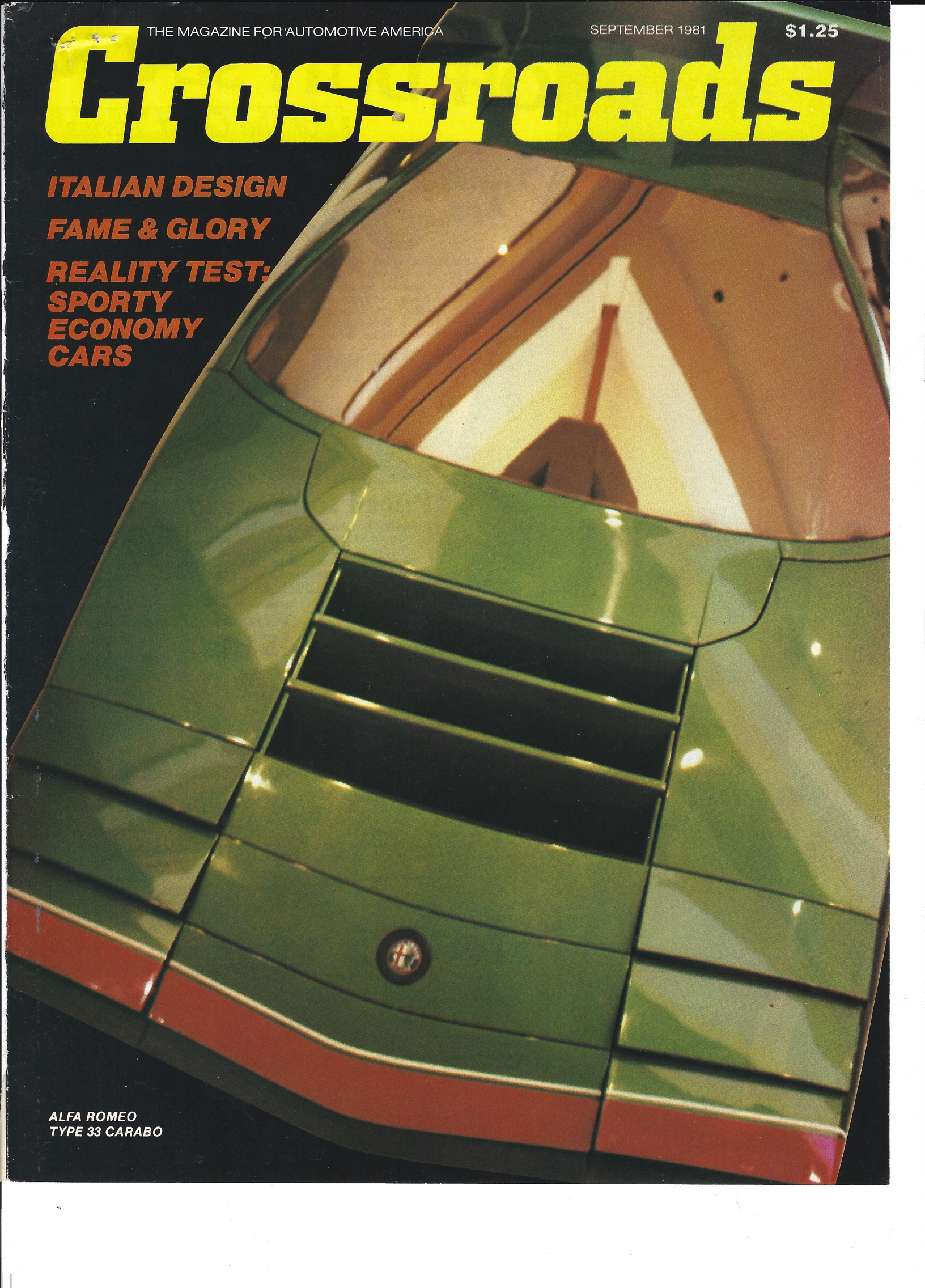
REALITY TEST:

SPORTY

ECONOMY

CARS

ALFA ROMEO
TYPE 33 CARABO



DESIGN ITALIANA

By Gary Witzenburg

Probably no product is more dependent on design for its ultimate success than is the automobile. A lot of very good cars have failed dismally because they were ugly; and mediocre ones have succeeded because they were beautiful, or at least visually appealing to their prospective buyers.

A particular Ferrari may be sensu-

ously beautiful. A piece of automotive sculpture with little need for practicality or function beyond eye-bulging performance. A Volkswagen Beetle, on the other hand, is far from aesthetically beautiful, but it was certainly attractive enough in a "cute" sort of way to the millions whose tastes and lifestyles led them toward such a vehicle. In both of these cases, the automotive de-

sign is "right" for the intended market.

Auto designers are constantly influenced by the work of other auto designers. Ideas are recycled from classics of the past and adapted from successes of the present. Many European cars of the Fifties and Japanese cars of the Sixties looked like scaled-down American products. More recently, though, international auto design focus has shifted



PININFARINA MODULO (1970) Designed by the master, Sergio Pininfarina, and equipped with Ferrari mechanics, this award-winning prototype for the future was never put into production.

toward a clean and tasteful "European" look; and the epicenter of European auto design long has been the small city of Turin, Italy, home of the world-famous design and coachwork houses of Pininfarina, Giugiaro, Bertone, and a number of smaller concerns.

Besides serving regular local customers such as Fiat, Ferrari, Lancia, and Alfa Romeo, these three in particular have for many years designed, and sometimes built, prototype and production vehicles (both openly and secretly) for automakers all over the world.

When Germany's Volkswagen needed a long-overdue replacement for the Beetle, it turned to Giorgetto Giugiaro's Ital Design to come up with the hugely popular Rabbit. When England's Rolls Royce wanted a new and ultra-distinctive coupe model, it contracted Pininfarina to create the glamorous Camargue. When Sweden's Volvo desired an exclusive, image-boosting coupe variation of its luxury sedan, it commissioned Bertone. The Fiat X1/9 mid-engine sports car is a Bertone design, while the Fiat 124 Spider, the French Peugeot 505, and most Ferraris

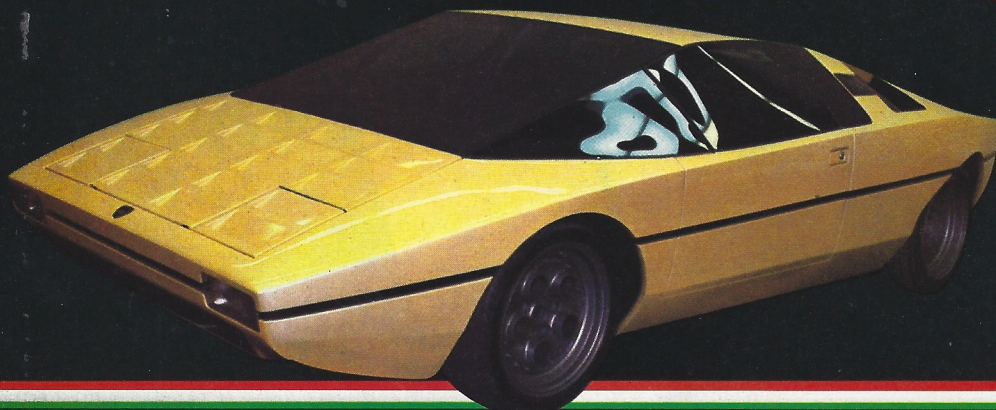
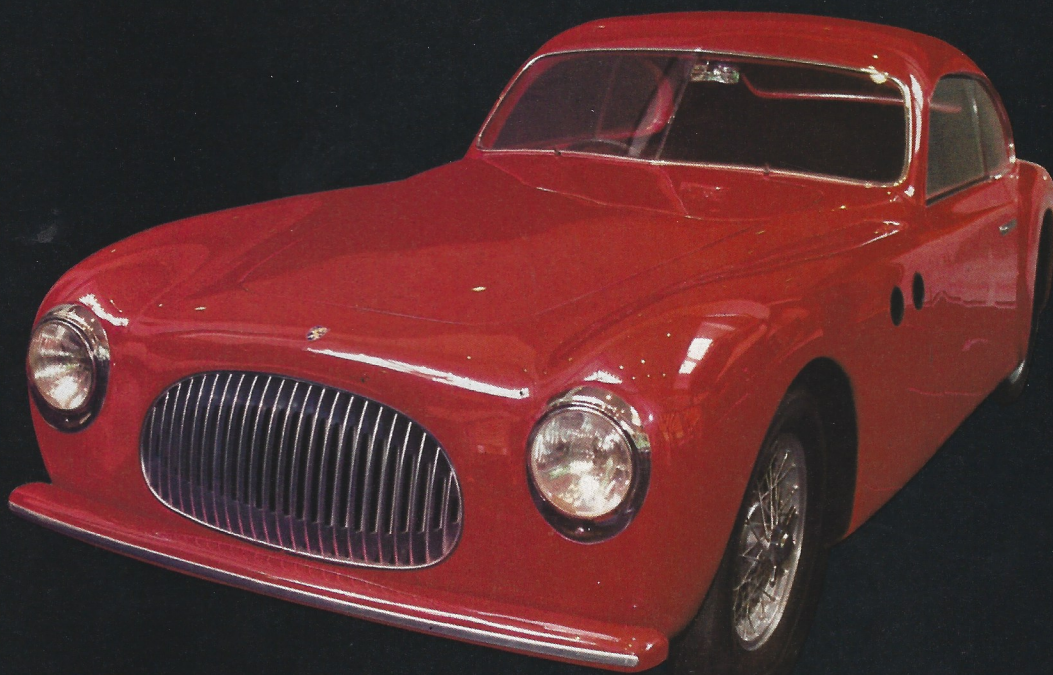
are Pininfarina's work. Giugiaro's many clients have included the likes of Germany's Audi and BMW, Japan's Mazda and Isuzu, America's Ford and Chevrolet, and even DeLorean.

Why have Italian designers been so influential in shaping the world's automotive tastes? "First," theorizes Sergio Pininfarina, "Italians love cars and engines. That gives us fertile ground. Second, Italy is a country of craftsmen in wood, clay, and metal, which makes it easier to produce prototypes. Third, Italy is the only country where the manufacturers have helped the coach-



LANCIA MEDUSA (1980) From the creative genius of Giorgetto Giugiaro, whose previous designs include the Volkswagen Rabbit and the Lotus Esprit, comes this exercise in reduced wind-resistance.

PININFARINA CISITALIA (1947) With its hood sloping lower than the front fenders, the Cisitalia set the popular style of sports cars that lasted through the Sixties. One model is displayed at the New York Museum of Modern Art.



LAMBORGHINI BRAVO (1974) Nuccio Bertone, who pioneered the "wedge-shaped" car, updated the concept with the Bravo, which is powered by a mid-body engine.

builders develop. Fourth, Italy has produced some extraordinary design people who have become leaders and teachers, and the reputation has followed." Certainly, the Italians are a dramatic, emotional, and highly expressive people, and it's only logical that these characteristics should be reflected in their design philosophies.

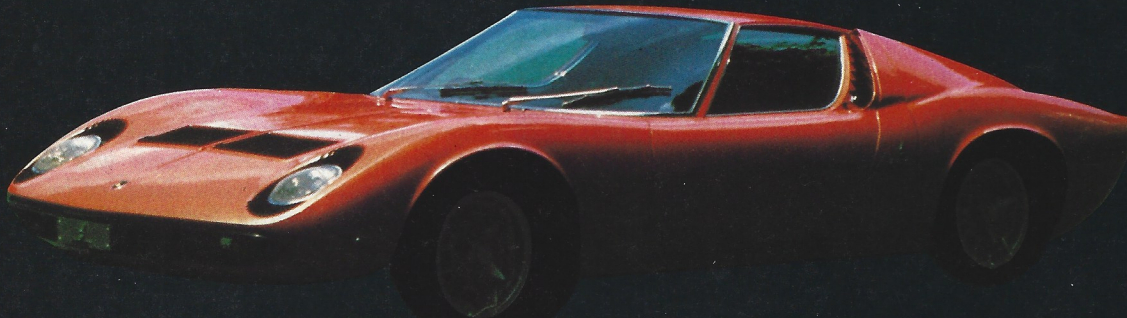
To demonstrate the extent to which Italy has contributed to automotive aesthetics, the Italian Automobile Manufacturers and Coachbuilders organization has assembled a celebratory

display of seventy years of four-wheeled sculpture called Carrozzeria Italiana, or Italian Coachbuilding. The show played to enthusiastic home crowds in Rome and Turin, drew thousands after thousands of car-starved Russians in Moscow, then moved to Pasadena, California, this past May and June, for its only U.S. appearance.

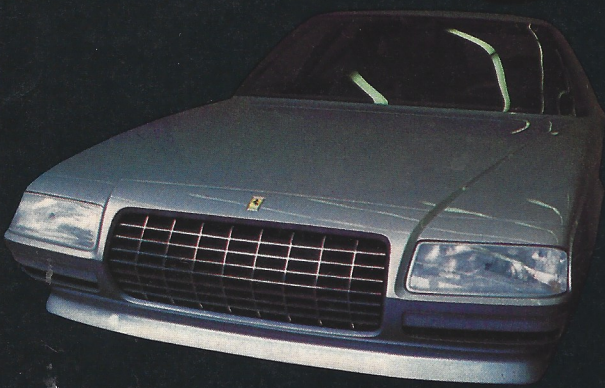
Sponsored here by Fiat of North America and Pasadena's prestigious Art Center College of Design (itself celebrating fifty years of educating some of the world's finest designers), the event

became an undeclared car-design convention. A meeting of the finest minds in automotive art. The world's most notable auto designers flew in from Europe, Japan, and Detroit to size up the twenty-six spectacular examples on display and to exchange ideas.

"Style is the most aggressive point a car can have," said the charming and articulate Pininfarina. "It takes time to convince a customer of a car's fuel economy or trunk room, but that first impression is all important...like sex appeal to a woman." "Everyone having the same car is like everyone having the



LAMBORGHINI MIURA (1966) One of Bertone's most exciting designs, the Miura featured a mid-body engine, now a staple in modern-day sports cars.



FERRARI PININ (1980) Sleek, yet sensible, the Pinin, a four-door sedan, is the latest in the long line of Pininfarina-designed Ferraris.



FERRARI 275 GTB/4 (1968) This prototype, designed by Pininfarina, set the Ferrari standard for style, sophistication, and speed.

ALFA ROMEO CARABO (1968) By Bertone, the Carabo was a landmark in car design as the first "wedgie," with one continuous line stretching from front to back. Notice how the hood and passenger sections aren't separated.



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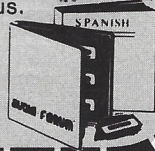
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same tie," philosophized Giugiaro.

Can a committee design a successful car? "If you believe in miracles, and if you have a very astute committee, it could happen. But I haven't seen it happen yet," answered Ford's Jack Telneck. "I would like to see the merging of aircraft and automotive technology," emphasized independent designer and long-time aerodynamics advocate Alex Tremulis. "I think it's time to put a stop to the sadistic torture of innocent air!"

On display at the Pasadena center were automotive artworks ranging from the trend-setting 1912 Fiat type Zero to the sleek and luxurious 1980 Ital Design Lancia Medusa Prototype; from the tiny Fiat 500 Topolino to its modern counterpart, the 1980 Fiat Panda; from the massive 1925 Alfa Romeo RLSS tourer and 1929 Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A roadster to the beautiful 1966 Bertone Lamborghini Miura sports car and the banana-shaped, ultra-aerodynamic 1977 Pininfarina CNR. There was a lovely, red 1947 Cisitalia, designed by Pininfarina's famous father, Battista (Pinin) Farina, which set a new trend for the world's sports cars (an example is on display at the New York Museum of Modern Art); a streamlined 1957 Abarth 750 speed-record car; an attractive, roomy, and practical 1976 Alfa Romeo Taxi prototype by Giugiaro (which gave demonstration rides on Pasadena streets); the stunning 1980 Ferrari Pinin prototype, created by Pininfarina as the ultimate luxury sedan (to commemorate his company's fiftieth anniversary, and named for his father); and much, much more.

A student at the seminar asked the panel of designers to name their favorite cars. "Ferrari 512 Berlinetta Boxer," answered GM's Chuck Jordan. "Lamborghini Miura," said Citroën's Trevor Fiori. "Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spider," said Giugiaro. "Who's the most beautiful woman?" hedged Opel's Gordon Brown, echoing retired GM design vice president Bill Mitchell. "If I could answer that question, I could answer the other one."

Sergio Pininfarina thought for a moment. "This is an impossible question," he replied finally. "If I say one of mine, it is not polite...but I cannot resist the temptation. So I will say what my father taught me to say in such a case: my next one."

Gary Witzenburg has many automotive books and national magazine articles to his credit and appears frequently in *CROSSROADS*.

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