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-12 IN A PONTIAC
ALL MITCHELL'S
MAGNIFICENT
OBSESSION

swingin' with
the rat pack

MARCH/APRIL 2006



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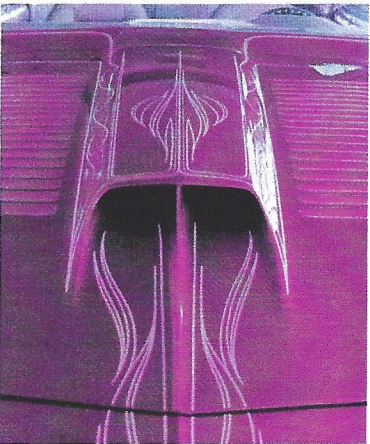
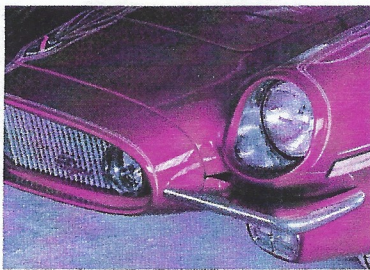
THE OTHER FERRARI MONGREL

A JERRARI V-12

BILL MITCHELL wasn't the only one to think of this. Bill Harrah had a 1977 Jeep Wagoneer fitted with a Ferrari V-12 for making the 60-mile commute from Reno to Lake Tahoe in the winter. The Jerrari idea was also applied to a 1969 Wagoneer, with a 365 nose grafted on. This car sold at auction (with a 350 V-8 retrofitted) in 2004. ♦



MT ARCHIVE



Opening the forward-hinged hood reveals a clean, uncluttered engine bay framing the gorgeous red-headed four-cam engine. With the air cleaner mounted to the hood, there's an unobstructed view of 12 gleaming velocity stacks. The front two are shortened for hood clearance, which compromises the breathing balance somewhat. Similarly, snaking the 12 exhaust header pipes past various chassis obstacles means the runners are no longer of equal length, so exhaust-pulse timing isn't as Enzo's boys originally intended. (Ferrari mufflers and Anza tailpipes ensure that the sound coming out of those pipes is precisely to spec.) Otherwise, the engine fits remarkably well, considering the wheelbase wasn't stretched. Moving the firewall nine inches back, however, elbowed out the air-conditioning system that might otherwise have helped fight the heat radiating off the exhaust. Bill probably didn't rack up many miles on the Pegasus in July and August.

Interior space appears uncompromised, and little of the original Firebird trim remains. The leather-covered dash is modified to accept the Ferrari-spec Veglia Borletti gauges. A new wood-trimmed center console houses the Ferrari shifter (without the clanging chromed shift gate), while the handbrake is moved down to the side of the tunnel. Custom leather bucket seats—sans headrests—are sewn to look like those used in Ferraris and Maseratis. A Ferrari fuel filler is mounted to the rear deck, which doesn't open. A spare gold-chromed Borrani wheel and tire reside in view beneath the rear glass, relegating any luggage to the rear seat area.

But Mitchell never planned to go touring in the Pegasus. He much preferred to spend time in quieter, more comfortable transportation and to use cars like this to make a splash at events, especially at racetracks. He'd set up a show-car corral in the paddock and drive a

few demonstration laps but never race. Leave track at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, one rainy aft he clipped a bridge support while wiping a fog windshield. Mitchell used the occasion to rest nose without the divider in the grille. He rep "restyled" the front one more time in retiremer which the car was properly restored, right down Randy Wittine-designed pinstriping.

Slipping behind the wheel of this mongrel be surreal event. The seats and dash look and feel but the heavy doors, brittle switchgear, and ul power steering scream Yankee Doodle (at telescoping feature allows the wheel to be positi an Italian-arm's length). The fenders bulge upw those of a vintage racer. The engine fires insta subfreezing weather, and the clutch takes up sn near the top of the pedal travel. Without proper and insurance, we dare not probe much of the 20 speedometer, but thanks to a 4.10:1 axle ratio, ample use of the shifter and clutch at reasonable: At 3834 pounds, the Pegasus accelerates like a Daytona with an extra passenger aboard, and th gearing causes the tires to scratch at modest t openings even in third gear. Not surprisingly, it f like a leaf-sprung live-axle Trans Am with a line on board. But the best part is the sound, which w familiar to anyone who's listened to the sho "Rendezvous" with the volume cranked up.

After spending a day with the Pegasus, one wonder what might've happened had it imp Pontiac engineers enough to launch a prog differentiate the F-body twins with high-r smaller-displacement Pontiacs. Maybe two OHC sixes on a common crankshaft? Sorry, the unl hydrocarbons are starting to addle the brain... ♦

MITCHELL AND FERRARI INFLUENCE SANS THE PASSION

THE CREATION of the Ferrari-engined, Ferrari-nosed Pontiac Pegasus concept by Bill Mitchell raises the question "why?" Was Mitchell, like Chuck Jordan (his top assistant, who eventually became GM's Design VP), a Ferrari lover? Did he share Jordan's Prancing Horse passion?

As Mitchell's undercover speechwriter during his last couple years at GM's styling helm, I don't recall much discussion of Ferraris. Nor did any of his dozens of Corvette concepts show significant Ferrari influence. As far as Jordan recalls, the only Corvette design element lifted directly from a Ferrari was the wall-to-wall horizontal body-side groove of the 1970s 308, which reappeared on the 1984 C4 Vette—designed long after Mitchell's retirement.

What of the story that Mitchell demanded both Ferrari and Rolls-Royce influence in the luxury coupe concept that became the 1963 Buick Riviera? "He went to the London auto show and saw these razor-edge Rolls-Royces," Jordan recalls. "Meanwhile, we were

working on this four-passenger Thunderbird competitor, doing jet-plane sides and pointed fro real aircraft-influenced 'wow' car. Later, he said, 'Here's what I want to do. Tell the guys we want a that has sporty elegance, a Ferrari/Rolls-Royce.'

"The Ferrari influence is harder to see, but the s feeling is certainly there. It has some rake and fer that leap a little. There's a stance to it, and the proportion is sporty. It's not stuffy like an English

Did Mitchell own any Ferraris? "He knew he oug learn more about them," Jordan says. "So he told [Warren Fitzgerald, his administrative assistant], buy me a Ferrari.' And Fitz bought him one of tho big, old Ferraris, like a Tour de France, not a really romantic one. And he didn't like it. Those old Ferr were hard to steer at low speeds and not what he used to. He said it was trucky. So he said, 'Fitz, se thing.' That was before the Pegasus.

"No, he didn't have the passion for Ferraris."

♦ **GARY WITZENBURG**