

# PAY TO PLAY OR WALK AWAY

By Michael Sheehan



**One-off 410 SA (dubbed "4.9 Superfast") s/n 0719 SA, seen here at Pebble Beach in August, 2000. Garrison, who purchased 0719 SA in 1980, held on to the car until early 2003.**

Greg Garrison was the producer of the Dean Martin show from its beginning in 1965 through the show's last airing in 1974 and directed almost 4,000 different television shows during his long career, including highlights such as the 1960 presidential debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Just as Dean Martin was well-known for his love of wine, women and the good life, Garrison was well-known in the Ferrari world as an ultra-private aficionado of the best coachbuilt Ferraris. I knew Greg well, meeting him at many shows including Pebble Beach. Although usually friendly and outgoing, Greg was well known for his obsession with privacy and his short fuse when asked questions he didn't want to answer.

Garrison's collection consisted of the best of the Lampredi-powered coachbuilt Ferraris of the 1950s and very limited production or one-offs of the 1960s. Garrison's collection included the only 250 Europa convertible built, s/n 0311 EU; a trio of special "one-off" bodied 410 Superamericas, including s/n 0483 SA; 0671 SA; and 0719 SA; as well as a trio of "production" 410 Superamericas, s/n 0491 SA; 0717 SA; and 1311 SA. The collection also included 400 Superamerica cabriolet s/n 2407 SA, 500 Superfast s/n 6039 SF, 365 California s/n 9631 and a 330 GTC Speciale s/n 10241 GT, all from the 1960s! Among the many unique 250 GTs were the

Pinin Farina “speciale” s/n 0725 GT built for Prince Bernhard of Holland; a Series I Cabriolet s/n 0729 GT; a Tour de France s/n 0895 GT; a one-off Pinin Farina coupe s/n 1187 GT; and one of only three alloy-bodied competition short wheelbase California Spydery built, s/n 2383 GT. Also included in the collection were a special-bodied 275 GTB/4 and the last Daytona Spyder built, s/n 17073, sold new to Garrison, and with only 70 miles on the odometer. Attesting to the quality of his cars is the fact that, over the last 20-plus years, many of them were invited to and shown at Pebble Beach.

All of Garrison's cars were regarded as "unbuyable." He didn't need the money, and he only bought, he didn't sell. However, as the collectors in Garrison's generation reach the age where estate planning takes precedence over car collecting, some of these collectors begin selling all or part of their collections. In Garrison's case, his children apparently had little interest in coachbuilt Ferraris, so cars that had been "unobtainium" for decades unexpectedly became available.



**This special-bodied 330 GTC, s/n 10241, was yet another highly sought after Ferrari that landed a well-deserved premium when sold by Garrison in the spring of 1999.**

In May, 1999, the word was out that some of the cars might be available. Within weeks, about half of the collection was sold to a small circle of friends, all well-known collectors. There were no negotiations, no package deals, no tax trades. You had to pay to play or walk away.

In speaking with collectors who each purchased several cars from Garrison, all felt that having the opportunity to talk with Garrison - and inspect and walk through his collection - was much like an audience with the Pope. Although these collectors were aware that they were paying a premium for the cars, they knew they were buying the best examples, with no questions or stories in their history, and they knew that the cars would immediately be sold to the next person in line if they did not buy.

While buyers have been reluctant to discuss exact prices, this author can report that the alloy-bodied SWB California Spyder that many valued around \$1,250,000 sold for much closer to \$2,000,000. And the Prince Bernhard 250 Speciale, valued by most at about \$500,000, actually sold for around \$1,250,000. Simply put, these collectors paid up to own the best.

In 1999 these were “all-the-money” prices but... in the rear view mirror of the Ferrari market in 2005 all look like well bought one-shot chances to buy the best-of-the-best!

Between 1999 and 2005 Garrison quietly sold off most of the important cars in his collection. Greg Garrison died on March 25th, aged 81, in his Los Angeles home, of pneumonia.