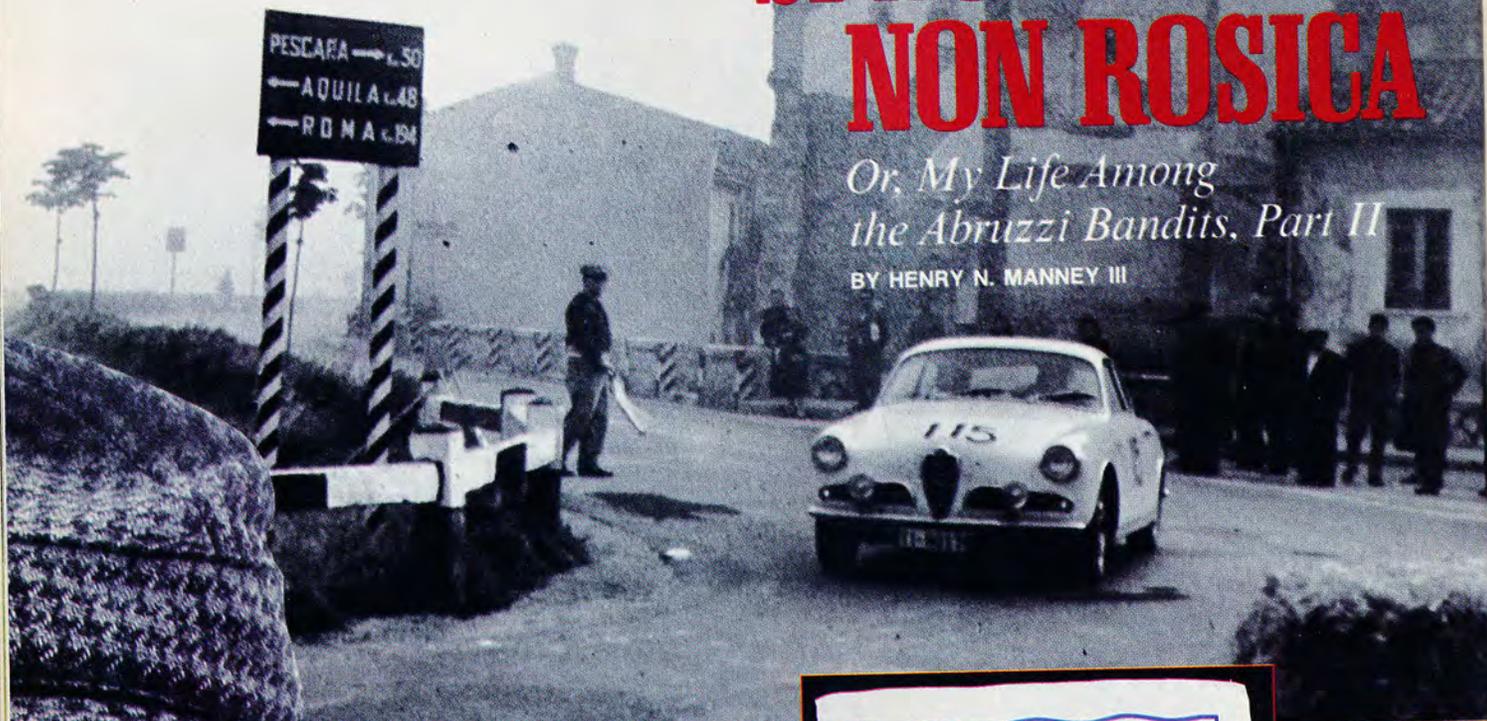


# SI NON RISICA NON ROSICA

*Or, My Life Among  
the Abruzzi Bandits, Part II*

BY HENRY N. MANNEY III



*Manney and Giulietta clattering the last 48 km into L'Aquila after Jenny had finally relinquished the wheel.*

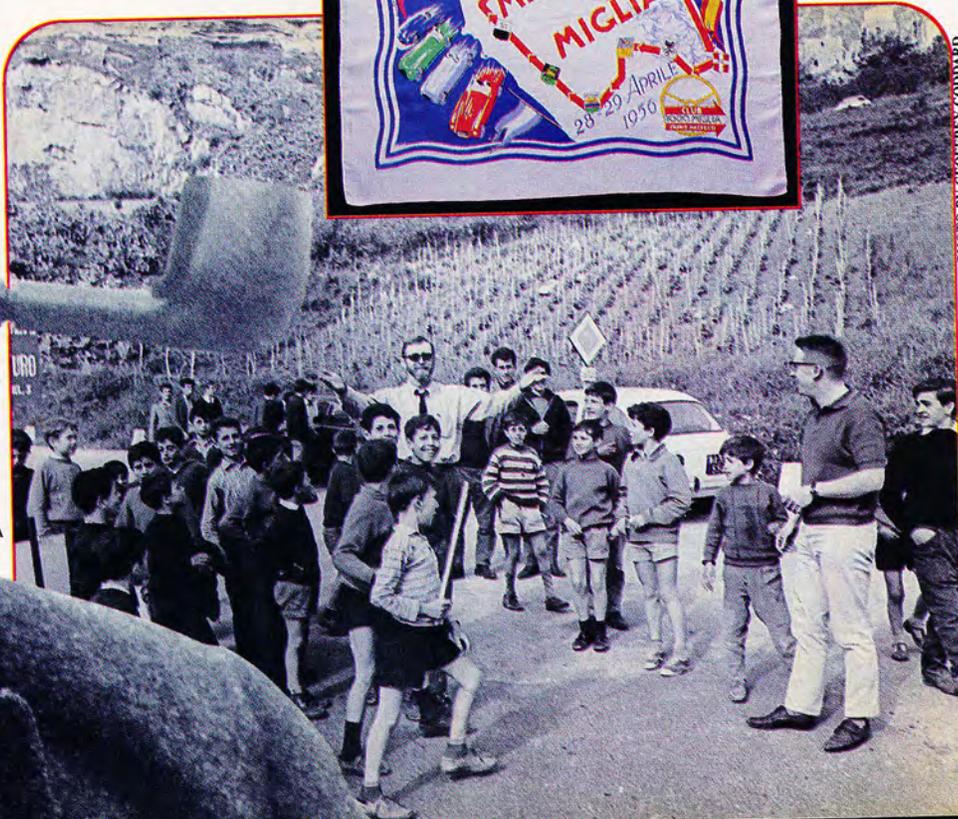
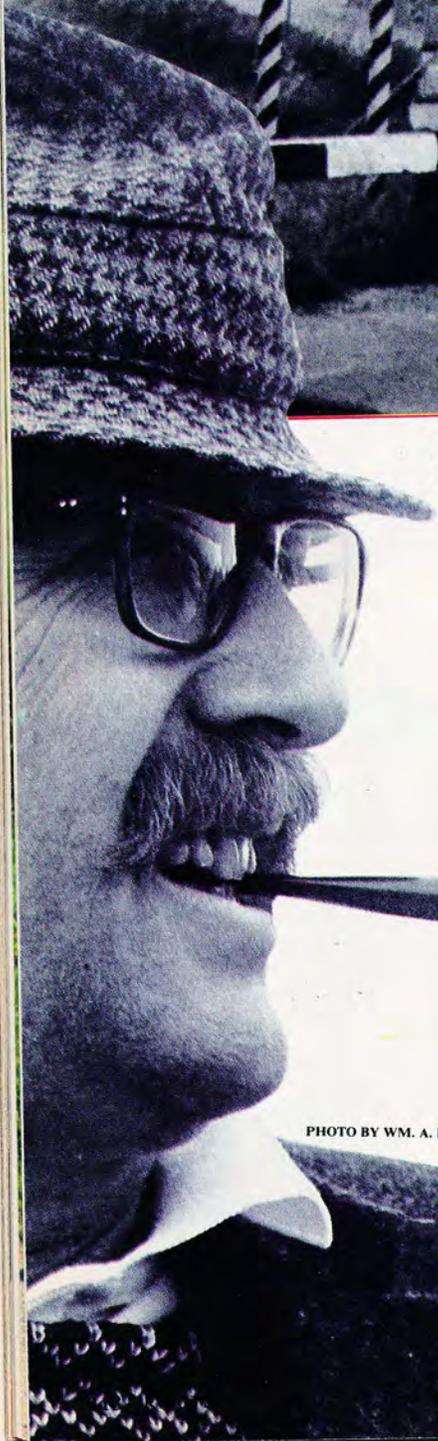


PHOTO BY WM. A. MOTTA

PHOTO BY GEOFFREY GODDARD



*Henry Manney, still hospitalized from a brain hemorrhage he suffered in November 1981, wrote this personal Mille Miglia account in 1957. Being published for the first time, Part I appeared in our June 1986 issue. Henry and co-driver Robert Jenny had just completed scrutineering of their entry, Henry's own Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint Veloce. We left them as they headed for the race start, the ramp in the middle of the town, Brescia:*

THE FRENZIED GABBLING from the loudspeaker works closer, and the light from the TV floods becomes more intense. The occupants of the still generously filled grandstands lean forward, as did the spectators in the Roman Colosseum, as each new number arrives on the ramp as if to wonder at the unending supply of Christians for their amusement. Christians shmishitians . . . I wonder how much loot is tied up in rolling stock in this race. Move up, move up . . .

Renzi's red Giulietta disappears abruptly from the ramp in front of us and as all eyes turn expectantly our way, we jump in, Robert fires it up as I tighten up my seatbelt and we lurch up the incline to the top. We squint as the Kleigs reflect off our white hood and almost don't see the hands that are thrust into the car bearing route book, bearing our minimum qualification times and to be stamped at the main controls, and the long-sought gasoline vouchers.

As the man lifts the flag, there is a flurry of flashbulbs; I think of Miss Wiggle with her moustache and wonder which fotog is shooting up film for nothing. Let me see, is there anybody out there we know? There's that nice lady from *L'Equipe* . . . thank you for the Bocca del Lupo, madam. Look around some more, check everything is in its proper place; anything to keep from staring hypnotized down the highway like a cat at a rathole . . . Migawd, how long is a minute?

The flag drops, Roberto feeds the clutch in, and with a sickening thud we accelerate out into the void, with lights, trees, loudspeaker, flashbulbs, ramp, grandstands, Uncle Tom Castagneto and all fading behind. Mercifully, the first bit of highway is quite broad and reasonably straight, for it is as black as your hat out on the road after the *partenza*. We are keeping the speed down at first to let all the bits warm up thoroughly and, besides, neither one of us has been around the course more than once. As we get used to the darkness, we see that what we thought were bushes are really people, standing almost solidly along the edge on both sides.

We have gotten off the pavé section now and that infernal bourrée has stopped, although Italian roads being what they are, there is still a good bit of jouncing around, especially noticeable since I have never ridden in the passen-

ger's side before at any speed over 60 mph. For that matter, I haven't ridden with this yodeling hotshoe before . . . oh, well, when you gotta go, you gotta go. Rezzato comes up and then Treponti, where a blind corner bends around the end of a barn. Well, we made that one all right. Wonder how much I extruded the floorboards? The road wanders around a little bit and I discover a new drawback; the passenger seat has not sagged as much as the driver's and I have to sit with my head cocked like a budgie to keep from knocking on the roof. In between wiggles I peer out at the weather; there are a few clouds but it looks as if it will be dry. It would be hard to keep me out of the back seat with my head under a blanket if it rained.

Presently we approach Lonato up a long hill and thunder through its narrow streets, with people pressed against the walls to give us room. There is a sharp downhill left-hander at the end of the village, with a concrete barrier to keep the cars from pitching off the backside of the hill. In spite of its being festooned with flashing lights and hay bales, a little man springs out well in advance, bearing a Scotchlite sign that shows the direction of the corner. We shut down in plenty of time and as we rumble around and down, I wave genially out the window at the farmers who are sitting on the wall with their feet hanging down.

After that it is one sweeping curve after another until after Desen-Zano, where the road straightens out along the bottom of Lake Garda. Sitting there, rushing along in the wet-smelling darkness, one meditates on the numerous cars that haven't even gotten that far! For that matter, it's a wonder how anybody ever finishes the first leg, let alone the whole race. Lots of lights up ahead herald Peschiera, a picturesque little town straddling the creek that drains Lake Garda, beloved of drivers, photographers and spectators alike for its unique collection of trolley tracks, right-angle reverse-cambered corners, hump-back bridges, archways, railway underpasses and concrete telephone poles. There have been some real dillies there, but none to surpass that of the good Doctor Farina a couple of years back who lost one of Enzo's ill-fated 4. Is approximately 200 yards outside the city limits coming in, played a form of automotive snooker through the town on any available solid surface, and almost made it out the other side. The marks are still there, and the villagers, hanging out of the windows and festooning the bridge, fondly hope for a repeat performance.

Early on, Scotchlite signs or no Scotchlite signs, you learn to recognize the real hairy curves by the number of enthusiasts present, and never mind what the map says; little Peschiera seats more than La Scala on this one night a year. And seat they did; another Giulietta had come

up behind us just before town and as we whirled through, rubbing the maker's name off the sidewalls, the grape-jumpers sprang to their feet from the sidewalk cafes, cheering, and toasted us in the local squeezins.

And, by golly, I could have used some of that Popskull too; we had been taking it pretty easy up till then and, after town, let the pursuer by. He, however, had Padua plates, obviously knew the road pretty well and was tramping right along; the thing to do was to tuck in behind him without straining things too much and use his know-how. The road was reasonably straight from then on but it did have some unexpected squiggles. Now, I really can't see too well at night and I am sort of a granny about other people's driving anyway: From then until daybreak I don't think that I have ever been so terrified in my life. The man is a good driver and a pretty safe one but the well-known butterflies became eagles as the race progressed.

The only thing to do to keep yourself from frazzling is to occupy yourself with something else; wrap up in the blanket, as the Veloce is not a particularly airtight car at speed and it was pretty drafty, hunt around for the proper road map, stop things rattling in the side pockets, listen to the engine, reflect on wife and kids asleep in the sack . . . still we droned on down the tree-lined roads. Padua had gotten away as he was doing pretty well on his home ground and was charging a little too hard for us at this stage.

Jenny and I had agreed at the first to take it reasonably easy and try to finish, so we buzzed along about 5500 in top; naturally every so often some lights would show up in our rearview mirror and after five minutes or so they would overhaul us. Some were quite late numbers and were booting it right along; all, however, were very good about the lights and would shut off high beams and/or driving lights long before they got to us. There was always a flicking exchange when ready to pass and then a wave as they went by. The high standard of courtesy in this race is very nice . . . none of that carving-up jazz. After they got by, we always dipped our beams, naturally, and tailed them for a while as an indicator. In a long night race like that it eases the mind if taillights can be seen a long way in front, as you can thus tell that you are not going to get frightened out of your wits by an unexpected corner.

About this time we whooped through Verona, where I looked in vain for the Two Gentlemen; perhaps the fact that we were routed around the bypass had something to do with it. All I remember is lots of trees and bushes. After that, of course, it is lots and lots of straight to Vicenza, where one goes roaring slap into the center of town past all the signs saying 50 km, attention trucks or streetcars. Romeo and →



# MANNEY

Juliet Bar, etc. I do not know if I am law-abiding or just getting old, but one learns to proceed fairly gently in Italian towns to avoid shunting some of the incredible variety of rolling stock that debouches without warning from any side street. Accordingly, my already acrobatic stomach got ready to do the high-wire bit as Roberto lifted his foot not at all; the arcades of the steadily narrowing main drag went by like a picket fence and my poor floorboards got pushed on harder and harder as I waited for the inevitable cretin scooterist to shoot out without looking, sweetie perched sidesaddle on the back.

Suddenly, many luminous signs appeared before our eyes and we popped like a cork from a bottle into the main square and turned to the left, obeying the summons of the red arrows in front of us. As we slithered sideways on the polished stone slabs so beloved of the medieval Italian traffic engineer, we saw why the rest of town looked dead . . . Everybody was right here, decorating the fountains and statuary, hanging out of windows, encrusting the roofs and crowding every available piece of road. Scarcely finishing with the slide he was in, Robert banged it to the right for the turn into the Piazza XX September; missing the customary howl from Pirellis (we were on Michelin X), the

boys evidently thought that we were completely out of shape and flew in all directions at once. I was still laughing at the sight of 10 grown men trying to get atop one Topolino when we quitted the city and shot out into the night once more.

It was downright restful out there in spite of not being very straight after all the lights and hubbub of the Beeg Ceety; even at this hour, though, lots of the people were still up, some with wives and children and others with drinking buddies, perching alongside anything that could be remotely called a curve. Small campfires twinkled here and there and sometimes one could even see the relaxed and classic faces of the *contadini* as they lounged in their annual spot, discussing the prospects still to come.

Every now and then, silhouetted by the lights of a following car, one or two lonely soldiers could be seen guarding the entrances of the dirt roads that run into N 11; they have stood there since before the race started and they, or others like them, will remain until after the road is opened. I started to count them between here and Padua but what moon there was had been veiled with clouds and it was too hard to tell the Indians from the trees. They apparently need the *rurales*, too . . . a while back, belting through one of the smaller villages, we got into a mighty slide on a steaming fresh pile of cow-flop thoughtfully left on a corner. I don't know which we were more worried about; hitting something, having to change the tire, or finding the cow around the corner.

Still musing on the possibility of encountering similar movable chicanes, we arrived suddenly in Padua and were directed hard right along the bank of the canal that runs south; at last we were off the Venice road and about to commence the long drop to Pescara. All of a sudden

another ghostly little man leaped out with his glowing sign and then yet another, bearing only a large exclamation point; well done, as we must turn left across a narrow stone bridge, overshadowed by a solid-looking blue building, which has an immense Mille Miglia arrow painted on it in red . . . we slithered around that one and shortly were out of town again. Recalling the almighty struggle with traffic when I went around before, I think it would be uncontested to state that it is both safer and more scenic to run in the race than look at the back end of some *rimorchio* for umptyump miles.

For quite a while we ran along a lovely wide road alongside the high banks of a canal. Various signs invited our attendance at Abano Terme as others have plugged their waters for one or another specific complaint, mostly for the liver. Boario for the *fegato*, Chianciano for the *fegato*, S. Pellegrino for the *fegato*, wonder what a *fegato* looks like? Nasty dark thing rather like a combined oil pump and sea urchin. I should think. One of these days we really must have a Rallye de Fegato and hit all the spas, clean out the old pipes. At the end have a big dinner at Sabatini's in Florence and ruin them again . . . give a cup (tarnished, naturally) with Sic Transit Gloria Fegato on it . . .

Steady, Roberto, here is that nasty little town with the humpback bridge over the slough set in an S, with the narrow street just beyond. I bet that is a real *pistola* in wet weather; even in the dry you can practically see your face in it. I have to think of the carnage if that was in California. Two Cadillacs, two little old ladies with 300 bhp who can't see over the wheel, and smesh. I hope that joker in the Thunderbird makes it through there. If he doesn't, nobody after him will. After him . . . let me see. About six or seven Giuliettas have

*In the cities, too, Italians lined the course. Here they cheer on the Strahle/Linge Porsche leading the 1600 GT class.*

*Typical view on the Mille Miglia: roadside "barriers" of country folk.*



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passed us by now and we haven't passed anybody although there are taillights in the far distance.

That minute-apart business really spreads them out, but you would think that you would catch some of the little ones. Ha. Vidilles in the DB, we heard before we left, averaged around 140 km/h to Vicenza and Thiele, in an Abarth, gobbled up the 51 starters before him in short order and is leading on the road. The little bugger is probably quicker than we are . . . the Piccolo class for me next year; this car travels too fast for me. A Zagato Goggomobil would be just about my speed.

Rovigo came and went with its shade trees and still the people were standing silently along the curb, watching the cars go through; up over the canal on the other side and into 4th once more for the long straights to Ferrara. Everything sort of gets blurred together; the tiny red pinpoints in the distance, the shaking, rumbling and roaring of the Alfa, the fidgeting around to find a comfortable place for my arm so it won't get in Robert's way, the leaning sideways every time we come to what looks like a big bump so I won't knock myself cuckoo on the roof, it goes on and on and on. Wonder when the sun is going to come up? Seems like we've been at this for days . . . pretty soon the right-hander under the railroad came up, then the sweeping left at the girder bridge over the Po before Ferrara.

We slithered around in that tortuous and ancient city with the other Alfa, whom we had by this time caught up, boomed through the old archway behind him, and exited onto the fiendishly twisting causeway through the swamplands beyond. He was willing to hammer the car a little harder than we were so early in the race and so we watched his Florence plate disappear. There was fog about, many tricky corners, and practically no shoulder before a big muddy squelch. We soon ran across our first level crossing, heralded by glowing strips on marker posts and also many glowing eyeballs, as it is not only in an S but humped. My sainted aunt, won't that sun ever come up? This must be what purgatory is like, jerking and bounding through the foggy black night, frightened half to death, not knowing when it will end, and being about to burst.

Eventually we came to that nasty shiny

overpass near Argenta with its sharp left (and solid trees) at the summit; eventually we passed Glorie de Mezzano and the polished curve where three cars went off last year, two more level crossings and we arrive in Ravenna and the control. A large important figure stood in the middle of the road with a checkered flag (surprise, no brakes!), I held out the route card to be stamped by a mustachioed figure in a raincoat with shoulders at least 3-ft broad, and we accelerated again to the Shell stand for refueling. Yellow-overalled men descended from all sides, checking oil, water, dumping in gas, even verifying the pressure in the spare. I spent my time searching for the blasted vouchers, which I had put in a Safe Place, and didn't even get out of the car. There! . . . I threw a handful at the head coolie, he threw some back, Little Goody Two Shoes lets in the clutch and we were off again, right behind the Florence Giulietta.

On the way out to Forli, we passed the Alfa "Assistenza" pit . . . two Giuliettas were in there with their hoods up and feet sticking out; both later numbers than us. Much cheered and with the car vastly quieter with a full tank, we headed off in a comparatively straight line compared with the last stretch. Florence was going flat-out again and soon disappeared in the distance, his taillights a helpful beacon as long as they lasted.

After Coccolia we came upon the first accident we had seen; facing the way we had come on the side of the levee paralleling the highway, sprawled up there like a butterfly on a pin and surrounded by hundreds of nonchalant experts, lay one of the Zagato-bodied Seicentos or Appias; which, I could not tell. However did he get way up there? Didn't see a mark on it.

Still wondering about that bit of magic, we shot into Forli, took a left on the ring road, and finally debouched on the famous Via Emilia to Rimini. It is neither particularly smooth nor straight although pretty wide, and it kept us both occupied. Around Cesana the countryside is reminiscent of parts of California, with the low hills to the right and the dry washes, full of rounded boulders, running underneath the highway. Glory be, the dawn was finally coming, after our having covered some 350 km since we left, four hours and something ago. We crossed the Rubican at Savignano and gave a thought to the dusty foot soldiers who crossed it on their way to Rome many centuries ago. Too bad we can't take J. Caesar along with us; it would shatter him to be in Rome the same day. I just hope it shatters us, too.

We were into Rimini and out again toot sweet with no sign of mosaics, Francesca or any of the Malatestas except the one I had gotten because the crash hat had become heavy. Robert and I discussed the merits of stopping for dinner along the other end of the Via Emilia on the way →



# MANNEY

back; they eat real well in Bologna. And should we drop in at some sidewalk cafe for breakfast? Surely we are leading the race and have broken all records already. Bags of time . . . trouble is, none of them seem to be open although there were lots of people standing around. The sun finally jerked itself out of the kip and Night Owl called for his "shades." Doesn't want to destroy his night vision, I suppose. Did he think that the race was going on until the next night? I should live so long.

Well, well! During the wiggles before Pesaro, which we had been warned about in a leaflet thrust into the car at Ravenna, another Veloce had arrived on our tail and flicked his lights to go by; we obligingly let him and then sat on his keester for a while. Robert could stay with him pretty easily on the crooked bits but on the straight he was quite a bit faster. This was okay for a while, but we were getting towed up to 7000 in top, some 200 over the redline, which worked out on the speedo to about 200 km/h; this is my pore old family car that I tote my wife and kids around in and I don't want all the innards tossed out of it. I snuck a look at the instruments, as I had been doing from time to time; everything seemed normal except the water temperature, which was low and had been so from the beginning. Well, one hates to be a spoilsport and, besides, we had to be getting along. I memorized the number (126), the color (red), the license (PG-5 1076), the crash hats (one white, one natural), the tiger in the back window, and the fact that they were smoking slightly. At 200 km/h and with 33,000 km on my car, we were probably smoking more than slightly. Maybe this cat will blow up and we can shut off a little.

Several times he invited us by but Jenny graciously refused, so we swirled down the coast, past Fano and Senigallia, by Ancona and Loreto, with its great basilica on the hilltop. Just before Loreto, there is a diving turn through a stream bed; big black marks and an uprooted bollard testify to somebody having been caught napping. Looking way down the bank into the bulrushes, one could just discern a blue Seicento up to its door handles in mud and water. Bet that was noisy at night.

Away we flew, south again, past Civitanova Marche, San Benedetto, Giulianova, Roseto d'Abruzzi. We blew past a

light blue Giulietta; a Zagato Millecento going well but way behind time; a Panhard, one of the first starters, stopped by the side of the road; a battered Seicento with Rome plates going very slowly. Our Alfa seemed to be getting noisier, but then it always does as the tank empties; the instruments seemed to be all right. The Adriatic lay dull blue under the early sun as we flashed through one plain little village after another.

It would be nice to have some coffee and croissants; it would be nice if Jenny let this guy go and we complete the race. I have finished 95 percent of mine and I especially want to finish this one. But the good Roberto had the bit in his teeth and short of reaching over and shutting off the ignition, I cannot reason with him. Well, let's hope it lasts to Pescara. I am getting tired of being jiggled; I am getting tired of being scared to death. Next year *tutto solo* even if (as is likely) I am the last car home.

For some time I had noticed a sort of strange expression on Robert's face, but I assumed that he was just getting bushed, especially since he had been getting sort of sloppy through what corners there were. Just before we got to the far end of the GP circuit outside of Pescara, I happened to look over at the instruments and saw the oil pressure needle swinging back and

forth between 0 and 50 like the pendulum on a cheap cuckoo clock. And do you know that I had to argue with that guy to get him to shut off at all? "Oh, *ça va ça va*," he says. *Ça va*, my aunt Mabel; all he would back off to was 6000 and it broke his heart to let the other guy get away. I was just about to swat him with something when we rolled into the control, an identical Third Man raincoat stamped the route book, and we coasted into the Shell stand. Jenny disappeared, the boys tore into the refueling bit, and, sure enough, we were a couple of liters low on oil, but not by any means off the stick. When they were all through, I fired it up and nothing sounded too horrid so, what the heck, carry on; I never liked Pescara anyway.

Took the bridge over the river, then the right turn toward Rome. I had to negotiate a turn under a railway underpass and almost didn't make it; the brakes were faded out so much. Jenny was huffing and puffing and choking on his Gauloises while he made *his* footprints in the carpet. Serves him right, I thought. Going out of town along the straight past the aerodrome, it just wasn't pulling very well, being unable to get 4500 in top, and the oil temperature was a little above normal. Well, I will piddle along and see what happens. It is awfully hard to hear inside a Veloce any- ➤

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## MANNEY

way and especially with the helmet on, so I couldn't much tell what was going on.

Well, it lasted until the first level crossing; the train was due so the fellas obligingly lifted the bar for us. As I shifted down into 3rd, it seemed to get awfully rough and, sure enough, accelerating out it was very lumpy indeed and going digadigadiga down in the rod department. Well, that tore it. I must say it was hard to be polite. Here it was possibly the last Mille Miglia for some time, for the authorities, pushed by interests that sell no cars from racing, were making final noises; and this character had coughed my lovely Giulietta for me simply because for him, the dials could have been wallpaper. Erk.

Well, what to do? . . . Popoli wasn't far and there might be an Alfa station there. The oil pressure still read around 30 and if we crept—so we crept. I borrowed some of Jenny's Gauloises, figuring this was as good a time as any to commit suicide, and we trickled up the hills and coasted down them, while all the spectators gazed upon us with compassion. And not a car passed us . . . Popoli came up and we held a conference with the cops and townspeople. No, there was no Alfa in Popoli but in L'Aquila, only 49 km away, and Rome was a lot farther.

Well, neither of us liked the idea of staying in Popoli, and the map didn't look too bad, so we pressed on. It is a very steep bit right there, and all the locals were perched on the stone walls watching the race. As we labored painfully upward, each and every one of them made a curious inward pecking motion with both hands held in front and the lips pursed up. By this time it had gotten extremely foggy and our lights were on but still these ghostly mimes appeared out of the mist, hands first, like a nest of pterodactyl eggs hatching. Up on the ridge we found two unfortunates huddled together, an Abarth and a red Veloce; consulting my entry list I found the Alfa was Gorza, a local boy, and a real charger. We later found he had been in the class lead when he crapped out. Both sent us sympathetic peeps as we clattered past.

The oil pressure was still holding but I was glad when we got to the downhill bit and could shut the poor thing off. There were lots of indications that "someone lovely had just passed by" but the best was a downhill hairpin with 6 ft of stone wall

at the apex neatly removed. A lot of the peckers roosting there had stone dust all over their pants so I supposed it was fairly recent. Coasted as far as we could and then turned it on in the middle of the village where, apparently, all the gesturers come from. Felt like Barbara Freitchie: "Peck if you must this old gray head." Still we clanked on . . . there was a mad buzzing behind us and the first of the 750 sports came through, changing up as he did so. Then a couple of Giuliettas; by this time we had gotten into a slightly hilly section so we did the coast and not-coast bit again. Another Veloce stranded by the side of the road; lo and behold it was our Florence friend from way back. Sad peep.

The fog had long since gone now but the car sounded a lot worse over the last kilometer. Just as the town hove in sight there was a terrible clatter from down below as one of the bearing shells came adrift. Shut it off and coasted for a side road with some people in it, against Robert's urging to run just a little farther to the agency. Just as we came to rest, the silver Zagato Fiat we had passed flew by, hit a bump on the inside of the next corner and, evidently having weak shocks, got all gathered up and skittered across the road like an aluminum Ulanova, knocked some grass off the bank, and disappeared off stage in the direction of Rome.

After the spectators, policemen and officials had climbed down out of the trees, they pattered over and solemnly asked what we required. Told that we were fresh out of rods, they all clucked sadly and did the by-now-expected pecking bit with the hands. In mid-peck a messenger was dispatched to the Alfa shop; he vanished up the hill in a very rorty-sounding Millicento with three dollies, a tiger and venetian blinds in the back window. Resigning myself to being in the hands of infidels, I turned to watch the 1300-1600 class, which was coming through. Those Porsche boys were really brave over that bumpy stuff with the swing axles clicking their heels and the whole affair bounding around like a live *blancmange*. They were sure booming, though. Just after three of them pogoed by in close company with a couple of the 750 sports, the Alfa jeep arrived for us with a comic-opera tow hitch on the back; the old Pirelli carcass (Corsa, naturally) was wrapped around something handy underneath and we were drug off ignominiously to the Alfa "cemetery."

L'Aquila is a feudal town huddled around a castle dating from the 12th century or thereabouts and squats in the middle of the mountainous and primitive Abruzzi region, which was famous for its earthquakes, vendettas and bandits who put the snatch on travelers up to the time of Mussolini. The second two have been ameliorated somewhat but there is not much even Il Duce could do about the first. Needless to say, I had visions of my-

self as a mixture of Harold in Italy and the Milord: "Gin, sir, GIN, and none of your local poison, and whaur is my elvenses? And what is that moke doing in the bawth?" If we got out without having our ears chopped off as deadbeats, since naturally we did not bring much gelt along . . . Such thoughts as we wobbled along behind the jeep . . .

No sooner had we arrived, by a circuitous route, at the establishment of one Italo Gasbarri, than the boss man himself separated himself from the phalanx of Pirelli suits and inquired our troubles. He asked me if I wanted to fire it up and I said no it was too horrid. He made a sour face (but didn't peck, for which I was truly grateful) and ripped out a string of commands to his eager minions, who snapped the Veloce out from under me like a rug and spirited it into the depths of the garage. As he turned and bellowed something to an upstairs window, we studied him covertly; he wore no earrings or kerchief nor was he particularly swarthy and, happily, carried no visible cutlery. In fact, he looked more than passably kind, which cheered us up immoderately.

A blast of sound directly behind us heralded the approach of one of the 2-liter touring class, as the shop was right on the course, and so we watched the Alfas and Citroëns (the latter pecked at) battle it out for a minute or two. Scarcely had we started to get our bearings when we were invited into the showroom by sign language (since we spoke very little Italian); we expected to be offered a new Veloce plus a little for our old one so that we could finish the race, but instead Mrs Gasbarri was thoughtfully waiting for us with coffee and three kinds of fruit tart; as soon as we had eaten everything in sight we were offered some of the local red ink, but wary of the consequences, regretfully declined. Hardly had we stepped outside when we were greeted by the chief, surrounded by 20 oily-handed and enthusiastic peons, bearing in his hands the offending rod and bearing, both of which sparkled with misplaced babbitt. "No good," he said. "Kapoot." Then he went on to explain that the crank throw was scored and it had to be ground before a replacement bearing could be made to stay on it. With luck, they could have it running again in the morning . . . Well, better once than twice. I give the word and, itching for action, they disappear like flashes of blue lightning into the dark interior again.

The big sports were beginning to catch up with the GTs now and we broke out the Leica and shot a few off. I was introduced to at least three *Americanos*, two of whom had worked for the IRT digging the subway and one who was going to the U.S. in a month. Everybody wished to practice English, however, and thus we found out that Peter Collins was leading, having taken over from Wolfgang von Trips, that

Piero Taruffi was 2nd. Ak Miller and Ron Flockhart were back in the pack, and Moss had retired right after the start when he snapped off his brake pedal. I was asked a hundred times if I had seen Gorza (the local favorite) and whether there had been any pileups back along the course.

We had just barely digested this news when Italo appeared again, bearing the crankshaft like the head of John the Baptist, his 20 Pirelli-suited dancing girls even oilier and breathing slightly hard, with the sad news that the affected throw was through the hardening and a new crank will have to be had for a permanent repair; at least he gave me the choice! We all paraded in to take a look at the damage and lo! the poor Giulietta was shoved into a corner, covered with oily handprints, and the component parts of the mill were spread mighty thin all over the shop in a variety of cigar boxes, Bel Paese crates and sawed-off olive oil cans.

The patron explained that everything has to be cleaned out real well to prevent a future lubrication stoppage and I agreed; he also pointed out where the #3 rod was unserviceable, the pistons all had partially seized (one touching the valves), and the oil pump was full of glop. I asked why the mill let go and he was noncommittal, until I mentioned the rate at which we had winged down the coast. His eyebrows went up . . . well, there *had* been a modification to the oil pumps and it may have been a little too much for too long. So he made out a list of needed parts and got on the blower to the Rome distributor, where everybody was standing by in the parts department, Sunday or no Sunday. Yes, they will ship it out on the bus tomorrow. He raised his hands out level with his shoulders, dropped them again. Have you out maybe tomorrow night, depending.

Back outside, the leaders had been gobbling up the smaller fry and were commencing to whistle by. I was invited up on the garage roof by an excruciatingly polite salesman about 5 ft tall, a chair was produced for me, a bottle of local *apertivo* appeared carried by Great Grandma on a wooden tray, more fruit tarts . . . while down below Piero Scotti's Mercedes arrived with horn blowing furiously and all the ragazzi, spoiling for action since they had finished disemboweling my Alfa, run all over each other's feet. The co-driver piled out, narrowly avoiding decapitating Italo with the door, the hood popped open, co-driver twisted off the radiator cap but it got away on a 20-ft geyser and was lofted into the street, nearly being nailed to the asphalt by a passing Citroën. Much water was gingerly poured in between eruptions and what looked like oatmeal; the cap, retrieved, was clapped back on and he dug out on the way to Rome.

Shortly afterward the Ferraris of Collins, Von Trips, Alfonso de Portago, Taruffi, then the tail-enders. I perched up on

the roof in the sun, gently drowsing. Italo called up to say we are to eat lunch with him and no arguing; he has also made me a reservation at the local hotel. Fine, although I could sleep anywhere. The Thunderbird rumbles through. Big pile of iron . . . but at least it was running. Well, what is better? To be quietly roasting in the sunshine with a big dinner coming and the Alfa in the hands of a good man with the face of a Pope or possibly in the ditch someplace wearing the car like a hat? No doubt what the wife would say.

The crank arrived late Monday, the boys slaved late at night together with Italo and a works mechanic sent out for the race. The Florence Giulietta was towed when the roads opened Sunday, its troubles were diagnosed as a seized distributor shaft and 2nd gear out in the box of speeds; both were fixed the same day and Signor Chini was on his way home by Sunday night. Jenny, blanching at the thought of spending the night away from the bright lights, went with him, leaving our box lunch and a bag containing two apple cores. I spent my time kibitzing, taking pictures and practicing my Italian on the mechanics. I never saw so many workers in such a small shop but then they fix everything from rhing-dings to buses. Italo tells me that his shop is a regular stopping place; last year Hans Herrmann came in drenched through and got revived, Juan Manuel Fangio always stops since a practice breakdown a few years ago, as did Nino Farina and Luigi Villorelli. Nothing like being in good company.

Sure enough, Tuesday noon the Giu-

lietta was running, the last dozen or so blue bodies stood aside as Italo importantly made the final adjustments. They all smiled proudly as he buzzed around the town to show all the peasants that it really was running. Well might they smile, for everything has been jigged, prodded and tested to make sure it is shipshape. We went by the local bank to get the loot for the bill; this caused some hilarity as Swiss and French currencies are rare enough down there but TRAVELER'S CHECKS! No matter what American Express says . . . I had to produce everything except my death certificate to get \$30 worth. I handed it to Signor Gasbarri to hold as he was going to get to keep most of it anyway; which gave the spectators, who were standing on benches, windowsills and peering from under my arm, a good laugh.

But I will get some back, as he had invited me and the Roman mechanic out to lunch near the Grand Sasso . . . Green Lasagne, Chicken Fra Diavolo, the local rosé. Pleasantly squiffed, we wended our way down the hill, Italo cautioning us not to crash the car. Collected my baggage (ha!), paid the bill, 125,000 lire for a virtually new motor. Not too bad. Said goodbye to salesman, *arrivederla* to Momma, *Ciao* to secretary, so long to the *Americano*, *au revoir* and thanks to Italo and the fellas. Rome mechanic and I climb in and, waving, coast off down the course, following the tire marks two days late. I was sorry to leave . . . it was damn near worth it just to meet those people. Well, maybe we can stop in for a cup of coffee on the way by next year. More likely I. 

*Race over, a brooding Manney demonstrates his fluency in unspoken Italian.*

PHOTO BY GRAHAM GAULD

