

## **The Case of the Missing Block**

### **By Francis G. Frank Mandarano**

I stay engaged in several business projects throughout the year and prefer spending my winters in sunny Palm Springs California instead of the long dark days of Seattle but even so I like to keep in the game, Maserati speaking, and my current favorite is the 3500GT. I keep 1 in Seattle and 2 in Palm Springs.

After decades dealing in Maserati cars and spare parts, as one might expect I know many people in the USA connected with the marque.

Enter Kerry McMullen who had recently acquired a 3500GT from Mark Fishaut who had owned it since 1985. And so on April 2nd 2012 the title to AM101.916 passed to me.

According to factory records AM101.916 was ordered on Feb 24<sup>th</sup> 1960 and delivered to Bari Italy on May 28<sup>th</sup> 1960.

When I purchased 916 I knew it had a non numbers matching engine.

So now, my challenge was to track down the original engine block. The block currently in the car was, 101.1449 (odd numbers from a Vignale Spyder) a number which sounded very familiar to me.

By checking the internet for Mark Fishaut I discovered Mark actually lived 100 miles away and was a retired dentist.

A phone call was made and Mark answered the phone. I introduced myself to which Mark said "I know you" You're the Maserati guy.

It was a friendly conversation Mark had done business with me while I had owned MIE some 25 years earlier. I asked Mark if he knew the whereabouts of the original 916 block. Mark suggested I contact Village imports in Williamsville New York, the shop that did the work on the car some 25 years ago.

Back to the internet and a phone number for Village Imports popped up, a quick phone call put me on the line with one Gary Brennor, Service

Manager. Keep in mind he had worked on this 3500 over 25 years ago. I introduced myself and Gary's response was "I know you," you owned MIE and we have done a lot of business together. Pleasantly surprised, I asked Gary if he remembered an old grey 3500GT to which his response was a quick, "yea sure," "Mark Fishaut's car"

Gary recalled that there was a problem with the engine, It had spun a main bearing and damaged the block beyond their capabilities or anyone in their area to make a proper repair and determined a replacement block would be the right Course of action.

So we bought the replacement "from you" and now it all came together as I recalled that I was parting out a Vignale Spyder back in the day and the serial number to that parts car was none other than AM.101.1449. An amazing coincidence.

The next question was the big one "Do you know where the original 916 block is?" I asked? "Yes," replied Gary, "I think we may still have it here in the back."

In a couple days Gary called me back to inform me that he in fact had the original block. He sent me some photos and a deal was done. 2 weeks later with a stroke of luck and some good detective work the block was sitting on my garage floor at my Toy Barn.

### **Enter Ed Pink Racing Engines**

The block was eventually sent to the world famous Ed Pink Racing Engines in Van Nuys California where under the watchful eye of Frank Honsowetz, the general manager, it under went a complete professional rebuild. As Frank told me on the first day we met. " we can do what others can't or won't do."

First step was to zyglowed the block and check for cracks.

Then all the oil galleys were opened up and cleaned out including the ones on the side of the block that have aluminum plugs.

The rebuild included new liners, high compression light weigh CP pistons, light weight Carrello rods, new head studs and that nasty main bearing

journal was repaired by using a insert, then re line bored out to proper 76mm spec.

The cam bores were line bored and new valves installed along with new valve springs. Of course all moving parts were computer balanced down to a "nats ass"

The total rebuild included much more than I am relating here, but this gives you a general idea.

The original crank, head, cams and gears have been reunited from the 1449 engine and reassembled back with its original 916 block.

When finished the engine was dyno tested for 9 hours on the test stand.

The complete job took 10 months.

The original engine #916 has been reinstalled into the 916 chassis and is now running fantastic! Very strong.

To put a cap on this story I located the owner of the Vignale Spyder number AM101.1449.

This was the car that I had been parting out, but eventually restored and sold back in the mid 80's. The currant owner was of course delighted to have the original block back to be reunited with his car.

So now he too has matching numbers.

A win, win for everyone.

I clearly suffer for my 3500's

Ciao,

Frank Mandarano