

The Theft of 0384 AM

In the late-night hours of a New Year's Eve party in 1988, a plan was hatched. A plan to steal what is ultimately one of the most valuable cars in the world. At the time, it was nothing more than a wrecked and rusted out shell of a race car with a tree growing through it but it was something special. Today, it is at the center of a multi-year, multi-national, multi-million dollar lawsuit. Those involved include a nuclear scientist, a famous race car driver, shady under-world characters, and of course, lots of lawyers. Now restored to factory-correct and as-new condition, the car brings up not only the legal issues of ownership but some philosophical ones as well. If a vehicle, or any artifact for that matter, is of historical significance, should it be rescued from decay so that the world may enjoy it? Now that it is restored, with many parts and panels fabricated for the restoration, is it truly even the same car? At what point is it no longer what it once was? Now, at this point with nearly all traces of originality erased, should it be used as intended or left on static display? If used, it will surely break and wear, causing more parts to be replaced, furthering its transformation into nothing more than a replica of its former self. However, if not used, can it truly be appreciated? If the vehicle is to be treated and viewed as functional art, then without that function occurring, it's really not art. Finally, there's the issue of perceived value. When the car sells this June, it's expected to achieve a sale price of nearly \$30 million. Why? What does one get for that money? Certainly not the car it once was. History? Only in pictures, print and the spoken word, as the car bears no traces of that past. What someone is buying is an idea, and image of what once was. Something like a three-dimensional photograph.

To set the stage, one needs to know a bit about the collector car market in the mid to late '80s. It was on fire. This was primarily due to the actions of one man; clothing designer Ralph Lauren, who today possesses one of the most historically significant car

collections in the world. In the mid '80s Ralph Lauren retained the services of a man by the name of Stan Nowak. Nowak operated as a broker-dealer who became a well-regarded historian, specializing in Ferrari and Alfa-Romeo. Mr. Nowak was charged with the task of building a collection for Mr. Lauren, and he was given \$30 million to accomplish this goal. At this point, it was not so much about buying the right car at the right price as it was about acquiring the right car. This had a trickle-down effect on the entire collector car market. So much so that speculators had driven the market to the point that many cars traded at 100%-1000% premiums over where they had just a year or two prior. This time of rampant speculation had a particularly profound affect on the Ferrari market.

This brings us back to our thieves at the New Year's Eve party in 1988, Brad Kettler and Eric Neilsen. These young men weren't hardened criminals. Recent college grads, they were childhood friends who had grown up together in Oxford, Ohio. Brad, the son of a Miami University professor, worked at a classic and exotic car dealership in Atlanta called Global Motorsports. Eric, still living in Oxford, worked as a carpenter. These guys were just a couple of car nuts who were well aware of the current collector car market and wanted in on the action. And, they just happened to know where a forlorn and forgotten Ferrari race car just happened to be sitting. They figured they could steal the car, move it along quickly, pocket the cash, and go back to their daily lives.

The car is a 1954 Ferrari 375+. They were raced successfully during the '50s, winning outright at Le Mans, Silverstone, the Buenos Aires 1000km, and the Carrera Pan-American. The 375+ was the final variation of the 300 series cars. In appearance, the car was imposing. It had massively long pontoon fenders that ran to the doors. The rear fenders were short, and highly arched, giving the appearance the car was squatting under heavy acceleration, even when sitting still. The front end had two prominent headlights, integrated into the

fenders, and the oval shaped, egg-crate grill was set between them. The hood was long, with a large scoop, open at the front to feed air to the carburetors. And the wind-screen, set just forward of the instrument binnacle, was about the size of a sheet of paper. Painted rosso corsa with saddle leather seats, it was a most beautiful track weapon.

The engine was a 4.9 liter V12 penned by Aurelio Lampredi. It was a robust engine, fitted with a big single overhead cam, a rank of three Weber carburetors, and produced north of 330 bhp. All in a car weighing under a ton, fitted with terrible brakes, ox cart like suspension, and tire contact patches at just over four inches. The car was brutally fast and only Ferrari's best drivers were allowed to drive it.

Our subject car is chassis number 0384; the first of six such cars made and one of four remaining (two were destroyed in races). The final car belonging to none other than Ralph Lauren. This particular car was raced successfully as a works entry at the Mille Miglia, Silverstone, and Le Mans. It was then sold to privateer Jim Kimberly, heir to the Kleenex fortune. The car then went to Ohio Cadillac dealer, Howard Hively, then on to Karl Kleve. When Kleve received the car it looked nothing like Enzo Ferrari had intended. It was a mess. Painted white and blue from it's race at the Cuban Grand Prix, it had been wrecked heavily and the engine was missing, having been sold to be installed in a speed boat on Lake Michigan. In 1958 he paid \$2500 for the car.

Karl Kleve, a Cincinnati native, was born in 1913. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati, having earned a degree in engineering. He was drafted into World War II and, as an army sergeant, was tapped to work on the Manhattan Project at the Los Alamos laboratory. Upon returning home after the war, Kleve entered the family insurance business. Kleve was also an artist, author, designer, and collector. His only book, self-published, covered the causes and cure for male

baldness. Kleve believed the cause of baldness was poor circulation and that the cure was to lean forward. He also designed and built a total of 24 experimental cars. One, the Kleve 22, was 19 feet long and wore aircraft tires. He also collected cars, lots of them. His collection included a Bugatti, a 16 cylinder Cadillac, Jaguars, Rolls Royces, and Packards, among many others. The cars were kept outside or in collapsed and dilapidated structures. They kept company with pianos, oil cans, a WWII Navy row boat, and B52 fuselage. Kleve operated under the grand belief that he would one day, restore all his collected cars and house them in a museum, built on one of his properties. In fact, before a court-order in 1990 required their removal, Kleve had amassed a collection of over 300 cars, scattered about 40 properties. Most of which were stored on his Harrison Ave. property in Westwood. It was at this location, surrounded by shopping carts, rusted out cars, and covered by corrugated sheets of steel, where the stolen Ferrari was kept.

Now, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the situation, thus far. We have one of Enzo Ferrari's finest racing creations, an extremely rare vehicle, having raced, and won, some of the most prestigious races in the world, driven by the best drivers of the day. We have Karl Kleve, an eccentric, a hoarder who - when he looks at his rusted-out hulk of a car, only envisions its glorious past. Then, there's the current collector car market, where anything with a prancing horse on the hood brings ridiculous sums. And finally, we have Kettler and Neilsen, who only see dollar signs. All of this is coming together to create a perfect storm; resulting in one of the most ridiculous and convoluted stories ever to surround a car.

When our thieves, Brad Kettler and Eric Neilsen came upon the car, it had been sitting for nearly 30 years, with a small tree growing through it. Over the course of three days, the two moved 10-12 cars, and 0384 - with the aid of come-alongs, is moved to the edge of the property. Kettler, along with a few buddies, load the car into a U-haul and stash it in a barn in

Oxford. At this point, Kettler and Neilsen go looking for a buyer. The car is offered to a number of area collectors. However, there's a bit of a problem for the thieves. The car is known within the Ferrari community and to be in Kleve's possession. Many before have tried, unsuccessfully, to purchase the car from Kleve. So, before too long, word is out that the car is believed to be stolen. Feeling pressured, the thieves once again load the car into another U-haul and take it to Global Motorsports in Atlanta, Kettler's place of employment. Interestingly enough, Global Motorsports is directly across the Street from FAF (Ferrari, Alfa, Fiat) of Atlanta, one of the largest Ferrari dealerships in the US. It is here that Gerald Roush, founder and editor of the Ferrari Market Letter, views the car. The Ferrari Market Letter is one of the most comprehensive databases for the sales and ownership history of vintage Ferraris. Roush questions Kettler about the car, who openly admits the knowledge the car may be stolen but does not admit to being directly involved. At this point, due to the unwanted interest surrounding 0384, the owner of Global Motorsports say he does not care where the car goes but it can't stay sitting in a trailer parked in front of his lot any longer. 0384 is once again moved, this time to a storage facility in Atlanta. At this point, with word spreading and pressure mounting, Kettler is looking to get rid of the car any way he can.

Imagine, if you will, what the car looked like at this time. It is partially disassembled. The rear bodywork has been removed, what panels remain are badly scratched and dented. The wheels, shift selector, instrument binnacle, fuel tank, and hood are missing. The interior has been stripped. The vehicle can only be moved with the use of a dolly. The paint, what's left of it, is covered in mold and dirt from the car's 30 year stint parked outside. There is a tremendous amount of activity and interest surrounding this vehicle that to most, doesn't look like it's worth the effort to even scrap it. In this condition, the vehicle is valued at anywhere from \$100,000 to \$250,000.

Enter Guy Anderson of World Cars in Marietta, GA. Guy, who has a reputation as an unscrupulous dealer, arranges for a European buyer. So, on a Spring day in 1989 Brad Kettler, Guy Anderson, and the European buyer – Giles Christen, meet at the Atlanta storage facility where the car is located. A deal is agreed upon and the car is purchased for \$50,000. A source, who had spoken with Kettler extensively, indicated that Anderson then threatened Kettler with his life, stating he had no involvement in this transaction. Within 24 hours, Guy Anderson and the Belgian dealer set to receive the car, a man by the name of Michel Kruch, have 0384 loaded into a container and on a DHL flight over seas. Some sources believe that Giles Christen and Michel Kruch are the same person as it would be quite difficult for Giles Christen to purchase the car on one day and Michel Kruch be in town to arrange the have the vehicle shipped the very next.

At this point in time, about six weeks have passed since the theft of the vehicle. Now, we'll go back in time just a bit to when Kleve realized the car was stolen, about two weeks after its theft. Kleve had been contacted by a Ferrari Club member who indicated someone had contacted the club as far back as nine months ago about the value of a basket-case 375+. This, coupled with the rumors of someone looking for a buyer of just such a car, prompted the call. I can picture Kleve, nearing 80, disheveled, rail thin, scraggly beard, bundled up against the cold, and accompanied by his constant companion, an old German Shepherd, picking his way through the clutter to the car's resting place, to find it is indeed missing. There may have been a brief look of surprise on his face, followed by a frown and maybe a quick obscenity muttered to the dog, then the slow, labored walk back to the car.

Kleve contacted local car collector Tom Stegman. Stegman enlisted the help of friend and collection manager Bill Victor. Bill was a large, towering man whose size mimicked his knowledge of cars. Bill, with his bald head, mustache, and thick glasses, could spend hours, days even, stooped over a book, pictures, or

an engine bay taking in every detail about a car and its history, retaining all of it. With these men, Kleve contacted the Green Twp. Police and the local FBI office, making a case for their involvement and the importance of the vehicle.

Interestingly enough, this was not the first time the car has been stolen. Shortly before the car was removed from Kleve's property by Kettler and Nielsen, the car had been offered for sale by a man by the name of Gary Trout. Trout owned, and still does, an automotive repair shop that specializes in sports and race car restorations and builds.

Trout stole the fuel tank, shift selector assembly, and VIN tag from 0384. Trout then contacted a man by the name of Michael Sheehan. Sheehan was, and still is, a major player in the vintage Ferrari market. Sheehan was offered the car by Trout at a too-good-to-be-true price. Trout produced the VIN tag as proof that he had the car and Sheehan produced a deposit check with the understanding the rest of the car would follow.

Now, as things tend to do in the small world of collector Ferraris, the word got out the car was for sale, and possibly not by the car's rightful owner. Sheehan backed away from the deal and Trout stashed the stolen parts.

Shortly after these events transpired, Bill Victor received a call from Gerald Roush about the car, its stolen parts. Roush suspected the whereabouts of the stolen Ferrari's parts and knew he could trust Victor with that information.

About this time, the local chapter of the British Car Club had organized a shop outing for its members. The location was none other than Gary Trout's shop. Bill Victor managed to get himself invited as a guest so that he might do some reconnaissance work on the stolen parts. While club members took a shop tour and asked questions, Bill separated himself from the group and did some snooping. In a corner of the shop, on the bottom of a

rack and covered by a tarp, Bill found the riveted fuel tank of 0384. With this bit of knowledge, Bill notified the authorities.

My source indicates that the FBI pays Trout a visit and confiscates the fuel tank. Trout claims he had no knowledge about the presence of the tank and points the finger at a recent former employee. The employee, a young man completely unaware of the Ferrari or its importance, is surprised and terrified by the presence of the FBI on his doorstep. The employee claims his only involvement was the theft of the shift selector from Trout. An act of retribution for being paid with a bad check. The former employee gladly returned the shifter to the FBI and the VIN tag was retrieved from Michael Sheehan, with all stolen parts returned to Kleve.

About this time, in 1990, the car arrives in Belgium, bound for Michel Kruch's dealership, L'Exception Automobile. Kruch has a buyer for the car, a man by the name of Jacques Swaters. Swaters, born in 1926, made his debut on the racing scene at the wheel of an MG in the 1950 24 Hours of Spa. Later that year, he and team-mates Paul Frier and Andre Piletto established Ecurie Belgique, a banner under which they prepared cars for themselves and other Belgian races. Swaters himself raced a Talbot-Lago in several events, including two World Championship rounds.

Swaters relationship with Ferrari began in 1952 when he split from team-mates Frier and Piletto and joined Charles de Tornaco, forming Ecurie Francorchamps. Their racing stable was primarily comprised of Ferraris, including a tipo 500 raced by Swaters. In 1953, Swaters was contacted by Ferrari to help resolve a problem with a local customs authority for a car that was to be displayed at the Brussels Motor Show as well as take care of the Ferrari Exhibition stand. Swaters managed to get the car through customs and make a sale at the Motor Show as well. As a result, he was appointed as the official Ferrari

Importer for the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) that very same year. This was the beginning of a relationship with Ferrari that was to last over 50 years and make Swaters one of the most important Ferrari dealers as well as one of the brand's most noted collectors.

Here is where things get interesting. While the car is in customs, it comes up on INTERPOL's hot list and the FBI persuades Belgian authorities to confiscate the car. However, somehow, customs authorities are persuaded to release the vehicle back to Kruch, whereupon it is sold to Swaters. Swaters then registers the car under another vehicle identification number, 0394, even though his bill of sale from Kruch states the VIN as 0384. Later, when questioned about this, he claims the number was illegible or incorrectly stamped on the vehicle.

Upon hearing this, Kleve travels to Belgium in an attempt to retrieve the car. Now, stolen property is treated a bit differently in Belgium. First, one must prove the property was stolen. Second, one must prove the end user was aware it was stolen property when they received it. If this cannot be proven, and the item is purchased in good faith, the person from whom the property was stolen may obtain the item by purchasing it from the good-faith purchaser, for the same amount they paid for the item. In this case, Swaters purchased 0384 from Kruch for \$100,000. An amount that Kleve offered to purchase the car back from Swaters. However, Swaters claimed it was a case of mistaken identity, stating he was in possession of 0394. Kleve returned to the US empty handed.

Many believe this was a deliberate attempt on Swaters to launder the stolen vehicle. There has been additional speculation that before the car arrived in Belgium to be purchased by Swaters, it first went to Saudi Arabia, then to France. Each time, with a different owner, putting further distance between Swaters and the purchase of the stolen vehicle. Now, interestingly enough, Ferrari never produced a car

with VIN 0394. That number belonged to a two liter, 12 cylinder engine. My question would be, wouldn't Jacques Swaters, friend to Enzo Ferrari himself, noted collector, official importer to the Benelux, have access to that information and know that 0394 never existed as a vehicle? Speculation even goes so far as to state Ferrari SPA is complicit in the concealed identity of 0384. Immediately after Swaters numbered the car 0394, it went underground, disappeared for two years, only to emerge completely restored. Many believe the car was restored by Ferrari and its vendors. To date, no one has provided documentation as to who restored the vehicle.

So, obviously, the convoluted hilarity continues. Imagine this is like someone has stolen your dog, given it a haircut, and changed his name, claiming it as theirs. This is basically what Swaters has done with Kleve's car.

About the time the car disappeared from public view Bill Victor is contacted by a New York attorney, claiming to represent a Ferrari museum and that their client is looking for support in obtaining a title to the car and many of its spare parts. Bill agrees to help, assuming proof can be shown that Kleve has agreed to transfer title of the vehicle, conversation over. Shortly thereafter, Bill is contacted by another attorney, this time claiming to represent Jacques Swaters. The request is the same, they want the title from Kleve. The response is the same, show proof Kleve has agreed to transfer ownership and he'll help. Not long after this, Jacques Swaters himself contacts Bill, making the same plea. His hope is that Bill will convince Kleve to transfer ownership of the car. He argues the car is better off now than it was or ever would have been with Kleve. That it's an important car, historically significant even, and couldn't be left to rot. What Swaters fails to understand is Bill's steadfast desire to see Kleve reunited with his car, regardless of his storage techniques. Bill pitied Kleve and felt Swaters had acted unscrupulously. Bill saw Kleve as an eccentric fellow car lover who was in danger of losing his prized possessions, be it to a court order to clear his

lot or to a wealthy collector who coveted his old race car.

Fast forward to 1999. Frustrated with the lack of progress, Kleve contacts an agent from the FBI's stolen car division in Salt Lake City. The agent's response is basically this; yes we know the car is stolen, yes we know who has it, but Belgian authorities won't cooperate. If the car leaves Belgium and enters another country that recognizes your ownership, we can seize it. Otherwise, you're out of luck. Ken suggests Kleve take action outside the legal realm of what the FBI can do. Kleve is referred to a man by the name of Mark Daniels of National Search, located in West Palm Beach. Kleve signs a contract with Daniels, giving him a limited power of attorney, authorizing him to attempt to recover the vehicle. So, with the help of Daniels, Kleve enters negotiations with Swaters, with Swaters ultimately negotiating to buy the car from Kleve.

It seems impossible but things get really complicated from here. According to Kleve's attorney. Kleve signs a three page contract and sends it to Swaters. Kleve's copy, which is unsigned, shows a purchase price of \$2.5 million on page one. Swaters copy, with all signatures on the final page, shows a purchase price of \$625,000. Another important difference is that Swater's copy of the contract shows the money going to Daniels. Kleve's copy shows Daniels' name crossed out, and his inserted. Though Swaters has produced two checks totaling \$625,000, Kleve claims he has never received any of it. There were two checks written, one made out to Daniels' company, National Search Services for \$225,000. The other check, made out to Daniels and Kleve, for \$400,000, was endorsed by Daniels as Kleve's agent.

Further complicating matters is the contract between Kleves and Daniels and the exact scope of Daniels' authority. The 1999 negotiations were carried out largely by Daniels acting under a POA given him by Kleve. Swaters received a bill-of-sale and an Ohio Certificate of Title to the Ferrari, both signed by Daniels as

Kleve's agent, with the \$625,000 going to Daniels. However, the contract between Kleve and Daniels seems to empower Daniels only to "pursue negotiations...for possible settlement" regarding the stolen Ferrari. It does not seem to authorize him to transfer title or receive payment.

Shortly after Swaters receives the Ohio title and bill-of-sale, endorsed by Daniels, Bill Victor again receives a call about obtaining many of the spare and original parts that were off the car. As was his answer years before, Bill states he'll gladly help if proof can be established that Kleve has truly sold the car. Bill contacts Kleve to verify proof of the sale, and Kleve is surprised, to say the least. He states he had no knowledge that a deal had been finalized or a transaction completed.

Somehow, Kleve is able to obtain a clear Ohio title signed by then Secretary of State Ken Blackwell, and reasserts his claim of ownership to the stolen Ferrari. However, before the mess can be resolved, Kleve passes away on Christmas Eve, 2003.

His Daughter, Kristine Lawson, is the sole heir and estate administrator. In 2005, to help settle the estate, Lawson intends to auction off the the parts to the Ferrari still in her possession through Kruse international. Swaters responds by filing a lawsuit to clear up the title to the car and claim ownership of the removed and spare parts which include the VIN plate, hood, fuel tank, steering wheel, wheels, instruments, and other bodywork removed before the car was stolen.

This has set off a volley of procedural motions from both parties that have been under the consideration of Hamilton Co. Common Pleas Judge Norbert Nadel for the better part of the last eight years.

Lawson, who could no longer afford to mount the continuing legal battle, has sold a significant portion of her ownership rights to a man by the name of Joe Ford, an attorney, real estate

developer, and car collector from Florida. Ford is now in possession of a clear title and all the spare parts.

Before the matter could be settled in an Ohio Court of Law, Jacques Swaters passed away in December of 2010, leaving his daughter Florence to continue the legal battle over the ownership of 0384.

And, just when you thought the fight for ownership of the vehicle couldn't get any more convoluted, a man by the name of Christopher Gardner has stepped in. He claims to be Joe Ford's financial backer and as such, states much of Ford's rights to the car are his.

However, it seems the end may be in sight. As of last year, Christopher Gardner has negotiated a settlement with Florence Swaters. The London Agreement, as it's come to be known as it is governed by the London High Court, states that all ownership documents, clear and original Ohio titles, all the drawings, build sheets, original parts, spare parts, body panels, photographs, the recreation engine, and the original engine (which has since been acquired from its Michigan owner) are ordered reunited with the car. The car is to be auctioned off in June of this year with the proceeds being split 50-50 between Swatters and the Lawson/Ford/Gardner contingent. This agreement has been signed by all parties. As such, the case before Judge Norbert Nadel has come to a rather anticlimactic conclusion, it was dismissed.

The auction house Bonhams will offer the car at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed in Chichester, Sussex. Sold without reserve, 0384 is expected to achieve a sale price of \$25-\$30 million dollars. If this estimate is correct, it may equal or even exceed the most ever paid for a car at public auction. The current record holder being the ex-Fangio 1954 Mercedes Formula 1 car driven to the Driver's World Championship title. That car, also sold by Bonhams at last years Goodwood

Festival, brought \$29.5 million dollars.

So, what are you getting for the money? First, is exclusivity. As previously stated, the car was one of six of which only four remain. The remaining three are in the collections of international billionaires, likely to never change hands (at least publicly) again. The vehicle will definitely serve as a trophy, from the Golden age of motorsport, loudly proclaiming one's wealth and astuteness as a collector. Additionally, the vehicle will most certainly be welcome at the poshest international events, Pebble Beach, the Mille Miglia, the Colorado Grand, and the Goodwood Festival.

What typically matters most at this level of collecting is history, rarity, and provenance. Something our subject car has in spades. Few would argue that 0384 is not a historically significant automobile. Incorporated into the this complex definition is the term historic. Most Ferrari race cars are historic because they participated in many of the great races of their day. They are important or significant because of their extremely limited production and their success in these races. These early successes served as the cornerstone establishing Ferrari's dominance in motorsport over the past 60 plus years, ultimately making Ferrari one of the most recognized brands on the planet. All of this was achieved by the vision of one man, with a limited budget, who was committed to making a car that could go around a race course faster than anything else. 0384 is one of those cars.

Despite the history, coolness, and technological marvels that is the engine and design of the car, 0384 is still just an old race car, with severely limited options for its usability. The costs and risks associated with using the car at speed may be simply too great to bear, even for someone with the resources to acquire it. As such, it's more of a "contemplative object," making it the ultimate "velvet ropes" car. One might think these factors might serve to keep the value relatively constrained. I mean, what good is a car,

if it can't be used as a car? What one has to factor in to the value of the car is the art-market component. The first thing to understand about the "big art" market is that it doesn't follow any of the standard rules about value. An essential point might be that it's not about value at all - at least not in the sense that most of us perceive the term.

An art market specialist once pointed out that no painting bought for more than \$30 million has ever been resold for a profit. However, that hasn't stopped someone from shelling out \$87 million for a Rothko or \$120 million for Munch's 'The Scream.' So obviously, different rules apply here. It's as much about being able to have something that others want as it is about productive places to put your money. Art (or more accurately what drives the art market) is about desirability, exclusivity, and peer prestige - knowing that you have a collection no one else can match. It's a game the super-rich play, and it looks like it has expanded to include the top tier of the collector car market.

The comparison of 0384 to artwork does not stop there. As is the case with art, antiques, and architecture, particularly when the object is historically significant, the item should be preserved in its original state. Any deviation from the original state typically results in a decrease in value. Many would argue this should hold true for collectible cars as well. When a car has been heavily modified by restoration, as 0384 has, we have eliminated its ability to serve as a reference for students and historians. When we cover over the historic evidence of an object's travel through time, history disappears. Some might say for an historical object to lose its history is to lose its reality.

Experts believe that over 90% of 0384, as it exists today, is a recreation; built from photographs, blueprints, and build sheets. There is no doubt, it is a truly awesome machine. It's just not the same car, save a brake drum or two. Indeed, for many uses to which collectible automobiles are being put to use,

a perfectly executed replica would serve better. The conventional response to this statement is that people, owners and spectators alike, don't want to see modern copies. I think this response raises a major philosophical question. If an object manifests no signs of its travel through time, in other words its history, how do we know it's real? What makes it real?

These are questions every field of collecting faces as it matures and the field of automobile collecting is relatively immature. Car collecting started as an activity for enthusiast to own a piece of nostalgia that represented a point in history they cared about. Old cars were essentially valueless with much of the focus on salvaging and rehabbing the object. Because the cars were worthless, amateurs performed the repairs and restoration with no regard to historical significance, if any. With hobbies, the activity is about the hobbyist. Whatever the thing used in the hobby it is subordinate the practitioner's pleasure. This is evidenced in the fact that the functionality of the object trumps all of its other attributes. However, as is often the case, hobby turns to collectible pursuit, turns to connoisseurship.

As car collecting evolves, it is occasionally swept by changes reflecting its ongoing development. Much of the appeal of car collecting is the collector's personal connection to the automobile. The automobile often connects the collector to his specific past, which causes him to see it, not as an historic object, but like himself, as an inhabitant of the present. This results in a prevailing ethos in the collector car community that the best way to appreciate the automobile is to restore it to "as new" or "better than new" condition.

It's my opinion that as the field of automobile collecting matures, connoisseurship and scholarship will become the guiding forces. This will result in the respect for a vehicle's history and the human values impounded upon it, ultimately leading to a collecting ethos of careful preservation rather than just its reinvention to "as new."

So, what would Jacques Swaters and Karl Kleve think about the state of affairs surrounding their beloved 0384 today? Both men felt they had so much to lose.

Swaters was a man passionate about fast race cars; it's what drew him to Ferraris. But Swaters was also a sentimental man. Swaters idolized Enzo Ferrari, and, as his relationship with Enzo evolved, came to view him as a brilliant man and an important male role-model, his own father having passed away when he was a young boy. It's this appreciation for the man, the ideology behind the brand, and the history of the cars that led Swaters to become such a collector. These cars embodied so much of what Swaters held dear. It's why he restored 0384 to 'as new' condition and fought so hard to keep it. He couldn't stand the thought of so much history being left to rot under a pile of rubble. It was disrespectful to everything he valued about it. I'm sure it would pain him greatly to know that the car will soon be sold to the highest bidder.

Though as equally important, I think the car meant something much different to Karl Kleve. I don't think the car meant any more to him than any other car, broken down piano, or pallet of empty oil cans he possessed. That car, like every other object Kleve couldn't bear to throw away, inhabited a place in time for him. 0384 was just another object that represented a memory, one he didn't want to lose, and it's why he fought so hard to keep it.

Though virtually all physical traces of its past have been erased under layers of new chrome, paint, and leather, 0384 still holds a deep significance for many. To the new owner, whether it represents a memory, history, power, prestige or some other magical quality it's a significance that exists only in the mind but it's one that many have paid dearly to possess.