

**January 4th 2006**

## **Night Drive**



**Story and Photos  
by Ean McDowell**

The piercing headlights stretched 300m ahead down the narrow winding road, picking out substantial trees that projected from the vegetation on each side of the road reserve and formed a canopy over the road. Every so often the full moon sailed through the cloud cover, highlighting sections of the road through gaps in the trees and exploding on the flat, almost featureless grazing land beyond.



Where rivers cut into the plains the road would twist and turn as it fell, climbing steeply out the other side only to continue on... relentlessly. There was no other traffic, no life in the fields, no lights in the occasional farmhouses that appeared in view and then quickly faded into the distance behind as the little car pressed on. Tree branches moved casually and slowly in the wind in contrast to the car itself for which all motion had a real purpose.

Inside the car the subdued glow of the green tinted instrument lighting reflected in the faces of the two occupants. Adding a fourth dimension in light to the headlights, the moon, and the instruments, the passenger would occasionally flick on an interior lamp, check the trip meter on the huge speedometer and, referring to the map and instructions, give directions....

"Straight on through the next crossroads";

"Left at the T", or

"Keep going".



No other words were spoken and the level of concentration was intense. Both the driver and passenger kept looking at their watches and the speedometer needle was held constantly at 150 to 160kph although this drive through the night was on public roads. Like most old Ferraris it slightly exaggerated the true speed. Inside, the car was warm and comfortable unlike the cold, crystal clear air outside, and there was a slightly sweet aroma of synthetic oil and 100-octane fuel. The driver sat with arms in the fully extended position, lightly gripping the large wood rimmed steering wheel through which every detail of the road was transmitted back to him. The steering was light and direct and absolutely neutral through the bends and the cornering was commendably flat. His view of the instruments was complete in a single downward eye movement, only momentarily taking his gaze from the road. On the driver's right hand one finger was permanently extended behind the wheel resting lightly on the overdrive stalk projecting from the steering column whilst on the left hand the opposing finger rested on the high beam switch. Single finger movements would activate either control. His left foot was braced against the angled rest and the right foot was extended, but not flat to the floor.

There was no need to dip the powerful lights but as the road snaked down to the river crossings overdrive would be disengaged, holding the revs high up on the dial and climbing until the country leveled out and the switch was flicked again. Apart from intersections where the driver would work through the gears and brakes, the car pulled strongly and willingly in top. At all times the motion was smoothly forward, the main indication of any change to the occupants being the movement of the rev-counter which, out of respect for the age of the car was held to 6000 rpm, and the healthy note that emitted from the exhaust and the carburettor intakes. The noise, continuous but not excessive, was an unusual bark that



sharpened considerably at higher revs, obviously from a small four.

A red light appeared in the distance. Just a single glimpse at first, but gradually the appearances increased and were longer in duration until a pair of taillights were constantly in view. The little car gained quickly now on the one in front and the headlights picked up firstly the color and then the shape. "Alfa GTV" the passenger said--no other communication was necessary. The powerful lights were dipped and the speed dropped back slightly. There was no room to pass. "Only 5km to go," the passenger muttered. "We'll be a few minutes late." "Left at the next turn."

The competition-bred engine sang as the driver blipped the throttle on every down change and the speed was hauled back by steady brakes. The driver both enjoyed but expected the perfect layout of the pedals as this car was designed and built by those who also understood such driving. Out of the turn, with a much larger engine, the Alfa pulled away only to find the little car hard at the back of it again within seconds, but without sufficient speed to pass on the narrow road. "There's the control on the left," the passenger said and the little car braked hard, pulling in behind the Alfa. The cold air rushed in as the window went down and the only comment was "11.42... you'll be out in a minute", as the Rally official took the route card.

The driver relaxed and noted how the engine settled back to a steady idle with no sign of roughness after an hour of determined driving.

Very few have had the opportunity to experience such a drive which was made in a 1964 ASA 1000 GT of only 1032cc capacity. More than 40 years after production ceased the story of ASA remains somewhat of a mystery.... and the performance unknown to all but a few who have had the opportunity to drive one hard.



Now out of the darkness, we see that Ean's car is an ASA--Ferrari's forgotten small car.

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The events portrayed in the above story took place during the night navigation section of the West Australian Classic Rally.



Ean's ASA ran faultlessly for 1000km over the three days of spirited driving.