

B U G A T T I



Radiator cap and logo from William Cook's 1939 Type 57C Gangloff Cabriolet

The stories told about Ettore Bugatti are wonderful. When a customer complained that his Type 55 was hard starting on cold mornings, *Le Patron* replied that anyone who could afford the car could surely also afford a heated garage. To another who complained about the brakes on his Bugatti, the man who long preferred cables over hydraulics, pooh-poohed, "I make my cars to go, not to stop." Another customer brought his Type 46 back to the factory three times for adjustment. "Do not," Bugatti deadpanned on the third occasion, "let it happen again."

Obviously there was a giant ego at work here, and the foregoing might suggest Ettore Bugatti was insufferable. But such was not the case. Imperious to a fault, he cloaked his ego with a sly, sardonic wit and an almost impish delight in oneupmanship. He wore his arrogance like a banner. "Loud in voice, high in colour, overflowing with life, a brown bowler sitting on the back of his head," journalist W. F. Bradley wrote of him, "he looked . . . like a horseman strayed among motor cars." The description is apt. Ettore Bugatti was a devoted equestrian. He never built an automobile that was not a thoroughbred. The 7,500 cars he produced in approximately 50 different variations ranged from an exquisitely wrought jewel of a Grand Prix car that was among the world's most successful to the most uncompromisingly opulent production automobile the world had ever seen. That there were better cars than the Bugatti can be debated pragmatically; that there was ever one more fascinating reduces discussion to the equivalent of arguing the number of angels that can sit on the head of a pin. And that is, singularly, because of the man who built it. "There is no figure more amazing or captivating," said Charles Faroux, "Bugatti is Bugatti which says everything. . . ."

Ettore Bugatti was an Italian who produced his automobiles in Alsace-Lorraine, the picturesque land separating France and Germany which for centuries had been a political pawn between the two nations. When Bugatti arrived there in 1909 to set up shop in a former dyeworks in Molsheim, the area belonged to Germany. Following the First World War, and the Versailles Treaty, Alsace was French once again. Already Bugatti's name, if not made, was well known. In 1911 his diminutive 1.4-liter Type 13 had placed second in the French Grand Prix to a Fiat with an engine five times as big. Now he went racing with a 16-valve derivation of the 8-valve Type 13, the design for which had been completed prior to the war, and won the Voiturette Grand Prix at Le Mans in 1920. In 1921 in the Italian Grand Prix at Brescia, the Bugatti victory was overwhelming, a neat 1-2-3-4 finish after which the Type 13 was rechristened the Brescia. The Brescia continued its winning ways until the arrival of the Type 35 which would overwhelm the competition to the end of the decade.

As initially designed, the Type 35

represented a new chassis with a developed version of the production Type 30's two-liter eight-cylinder engine. *Le Patron* abhorred supercharging at first, but as blown Italian and German cars threatened his marque's prominence, Bugatti relented. The supercharged 1493 cc Type 39A was first, and then in 1927 the 35 was supercharged into the 2262 cc Type 35B, like the car in the collection of William Lyon.

The Riddells' Grand Prix Bugatti was delivered new in 1925 to the Juneks in Czechoslovakia. Čenek Junek was a banker in Prague; his wife Elisabeth was the most celebrated and successful woman race driver of the era. Keenly competitive, she returned the car to the factory in 1926 for installation of the supercharged Type 35C version of the two-liter engine. The Riddells have owned the Junek car for eighteen years. "It is an unbelievable machine," says Dick. "The handling is fantastic. The top speed, clocked in 1985, was 136 mph. Although street legal and licensed, the car is too loud for road use. The Type 35 needs a wide-open circuit."

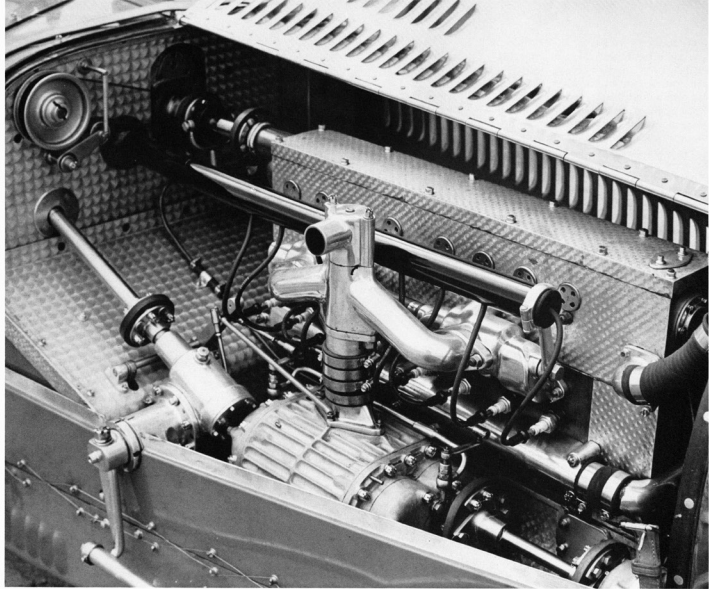
Although Ettore Bugatti reserved

the most up-to-date race cars for his factory team, the others were available for outside purchase. In 1930, for example, a race-ready Type 35B was priced at 165,000 francs (about \$6,500) f.o.b. the Molsheim factory. Among the purchasers was René Dreyfus, a young amateur driver, whose victory in the Monaco Grand Prix that year over the entire Bugatti works team did not please *Le Patron* much. Molsheim was Bugatti's fiefdom, his rule was absolute, his word was law. He did not like being upstaged. During these years of incredible competition success, money flowed into Molsheim but it left just as quickly. Bugatti's pursuit of perfection at all costs was one reason. His expensive lifestyle was another. "He was always broke," remembers René Dreyfus, whom *Le Patron* forgave by hiring him in 1933. "A few times during the two years I drove for the factory, I accepted a Bugatti chassis instead of cash for my monthly salary and prize money. I then drove the chassis to the Paris showroom, where it was sold for me. It was a roundabout way of being paid, but paid we always were, one way or another."

1927 Bugatti Type 35B Grand Prix Car

Owner: William Lyon of Trabuco Canyon, California





1925 Bugatti Type 35 Grand Prix Car
Owners: Bobbie & Dick Riddell of San Clemente, California Photos: D. M. Woodhouse



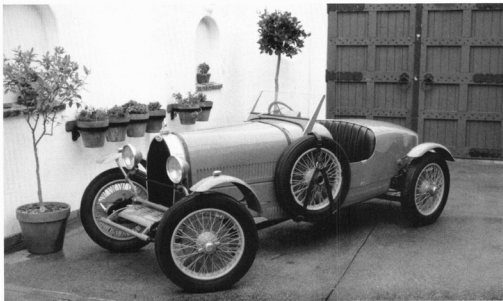
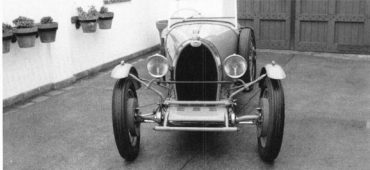
With his rise in the world of motor sport, Ettore Bugatti began listing the victories his cars had enjoyed in the previous season in the new edition of his catalogue. Often as many pages were devoted to the Bugatti laurels as were expended in descriptions of the Bugatti production cars for sale. From 1926 to 1930 the Type 40 was a marketplace Bugatti. A 1.5-liter four, it had replaced the touring Brescia.

Gerald Willburn has owned his Type 40 for seven years: "It was one of the first built and is the oldest 'complete' Type 40 in the United States. Shipped as a chassis only to Paris in 1926, it was bodied by one of the many obscure coachbuilders in the city at the time. There is no body plate to identify which. The rumble seat makes for great open air touring for four people. The car is driven about 1,500 miles a year."

"This is a fun car on which to learn vintage racing," comments Dick Riddell of the Type 40 he and Bobbie have owned for fourteen years. "It's reliable, dependable and easy to work on. There's not much power, but there is the classic Bugatti handling. Probably the cheapest Bugatti made (the price in London in 1929 was £365), it's a great driver."

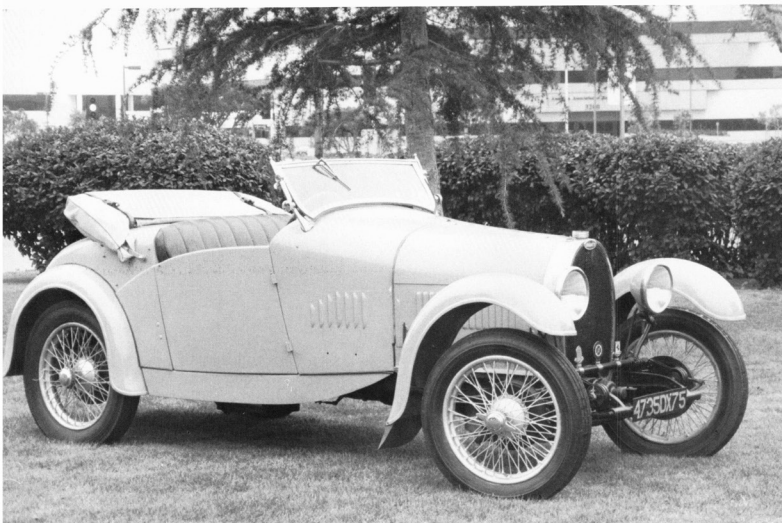
1929 Bugatti
Type 40
Torpedo Roadster

Owners:
Bobbie & Dick Riddell
of San Clemente,
California



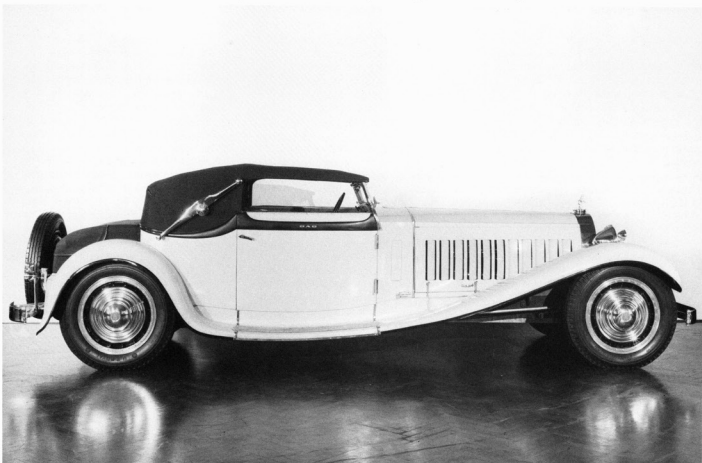
1926 Bugatti Type 40 Roadster

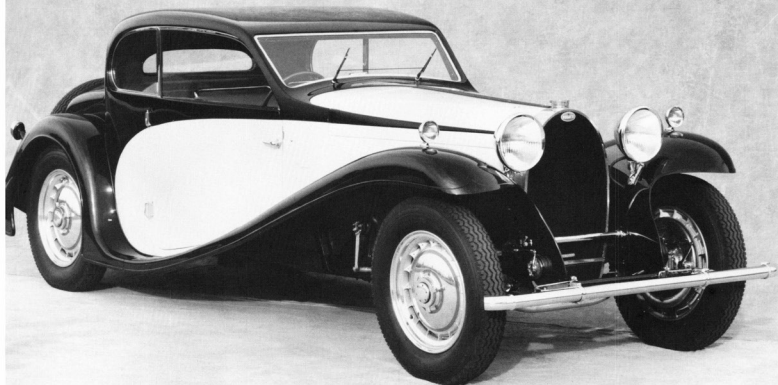
Owner: Gerald Willburn of Cypress, California





*1931 Bugatti Royale Type 41 Cabriolet, Ludwig Weinberger
Owner: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan*





1931 Bugatti Type 50T Coupe Profilé

Owner: John Mozart of Palo Alto, California

Allowing that the Type 41 was in a class all by itself, the 5.3-liter Type 46 was Bugatti's large luxury model of the early thirties. About 400 were built. Production of the 46's companion on the shorter chassis, the Type 50, totaled about 60 cars. Displacement of the latter's straight-eight engine was 4972 cc, and the crankshaft was carried in nine plain bearings as earlier touring Bugattis. There was a big difference, however, in cylinder head layout. *Le Patron* abandoned vertical valves for 90° inclined valves operated by twin overhead camshafts. It is known that Bugatti had acquired two Miller race cars following Monza in '29 and apparently he studied them carefully. Thermodynamics was not a subject Ettore Bugatti knew well. Why not simply adopt what had proven successful for others? After all, others had profited from what had proven successful on Bugattis.

"Tremendous horsepower, 200 or more, for the period," comments John Mozart of his Type 50T (for

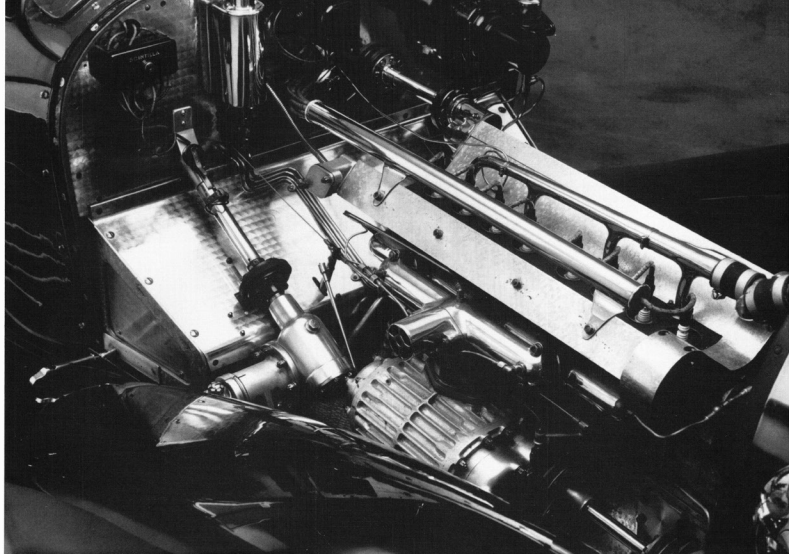
tourisme). "This supercharged car handles and brakes nicely. It epitomizes the perfect packaging of performance and style. Jean Bugatti designed the profile body. Just one of only two such cars that exist, the Coupe Profilé is significant because of its rarity and radical design. Note the extreme slant to the windshield." Indeed, note every line of this exquisite automobile. Ettore Bugatti was an aesthete; his unerring sense of style had been inherited by his son Jean, who was responsible for the look of many Bugattis of this period.

The Type 55 Super Sport Roadster owned by Miles Collier is yet another Jean Bugatti coachwork design. Some people, not necessarily all confirmed Bugattistes, regard the Type 55 as the most beautiful sports car ever built. And its engine, like all powerplants produced by Ettore Bugatti, was no less gorgeous.

The Type 55 was, in essence, the double-overhead-cam supercharged 2.3-liter straight eight of the Grand Prix Bugatti Type 51 fitted into the

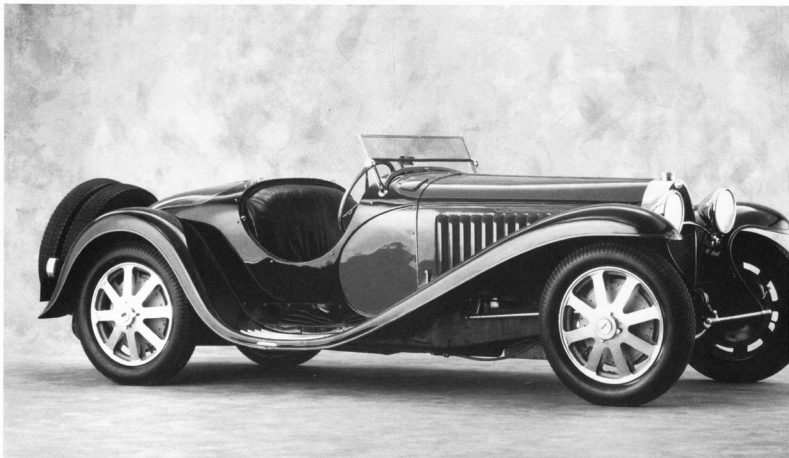
foot-longer 108-inch frame of the GP Type 54. Its performance was astounding. Road tests from the period quote zero to sixty times of less than thirteen seconds. At 98.9 mph at the quarter mile, one tester was still accelerating; another didn't lift his foot from the accelerator until he reached 115.

Just thirty-eight Type 55 Bugattis were produced. Fourteen survive. The price for the car was approximately \$7,500. For all it says about the prowess of Bugatti sports cars of the period, the Collier Type 55 also comments effectively upon another aspect of the character of its maker. Dictatorial though he was, Ettore Bugatti was a benevolent monarch. From lathe worker to race driver, his employees loved him. He could be a very generous man. There is evidence that the engine in the Collier Type 55 originally belonged to a Type 51 Grand Prix car which *Le Patron* had given as a present to the Bugatti Owners Club in England during the thirties.



1933 Bugatti Type 55 Super Sport Roadster

Owner: Miles C. Collier of Naples, Florida



The most celebrated non-competition car that Bugatti ever produced—again excepting the Royale—was the Type 57. Introduced in 1934, it remained in production until World War II. A few were assembled even afterward. By Bugatti standards, the car saw big-scale manufacture—about 700 units. Production began with the normally-aspirated Type 57 fitted with a variety of factory and coachbuilt body styles. Nearby Gangloff was often used. The Type 57S, introduced in 1935, was on a lower and shorter (117.3 versus 130-inch) sport chassis. The 57C, introduced in 1937, added a compressor to the 57's twin-cam 3.3-liter straight-eight engine, and the 57SC, which debuted that same year, was the supercharged model on the short chassis. By late 1938, Ettore Bugatti had foregone his allegiance to cable-actuated brakes and switched to hydraulics. By then, his son Jean, whose influence on Bugatti styling came to full flower with this model, had created some very memorable motorcars.

The Ventoux in the Riddell collection is a Jean Bugatti concept car. Comments Dick: "This was probably the last of a style begun in 1932, the final custom-built refinement, so to speak. It's much more elegant than the earlier cars, with dual sunroof, skirts and a luxurious interior."

Of the Riddell Graber Cabriolet, Dick says: "This body was the first on a Type 57 for Graber. The chassis was delivered to the Swiss coachworks in October of 1934, then returned to the factory for the soft-mounted engine (the first 57 so equipped). Graber installed its own hydraulic brakes, which are awful, incidentally. The car was finished in May 1935, in time for the Geneva Automobile Show. A Dr. Kalbern of Zurich bought it. This Bugatti is unusual in being a Swiss car with a high rear-end gear ratio. The styling is rare too. Later Grabers were more streamlined with greater rear overhang."

Noel Thompson's Atalante Coupe shows Jean Bugatti thinking very avantgarde: "This is one of the very few cars on the lowered 'S' frame. It is an exceptionally fine original automobile."

"Tremendous performance and a great styling exercise," comments John Mozart about his Type 57SC. "The body is a one-off by Corsica of England. The car handles extremely well and is very fast, with a top speed easily surpassing 120 miles an hour."



1937 Bugatti Type 57 Ventoux Coupe, Gangloff
Owners: Bobbie & Dick Riddell of San Clemente, California



1937 Bugatti Type 57 Atalante Coupe, Gangloff
Owner: Noel Thompson of New Vernon, New Jersey





1935 Bugatti Type 57 Cabriolet, Graber

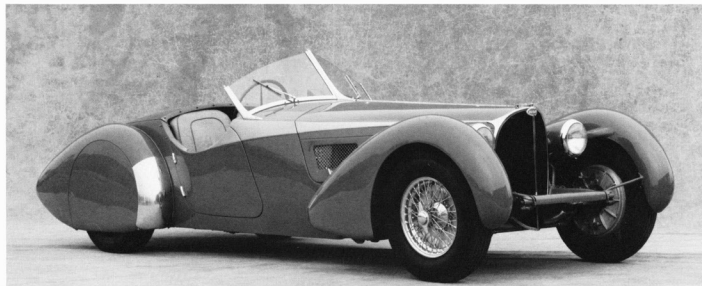


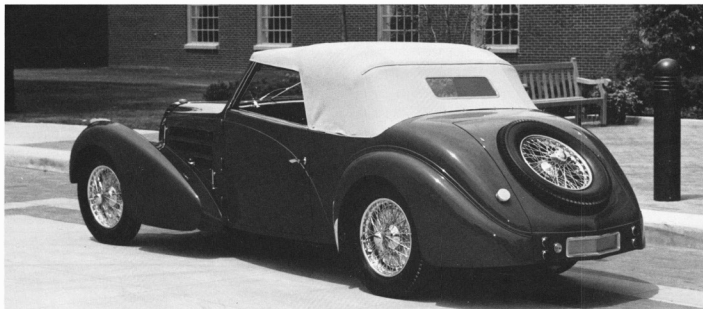
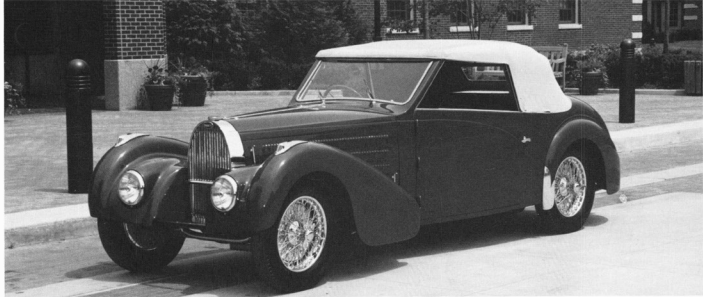
Owners: Bobbie & Dick Riddell of San Clemente, California



1938 Bugatti Type 57SC Roadster, Corsica

Owner: John Mozart of Palo Alto, California



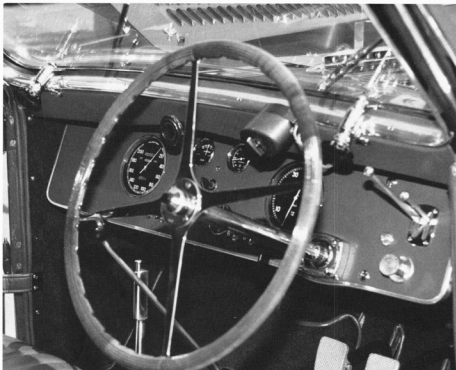


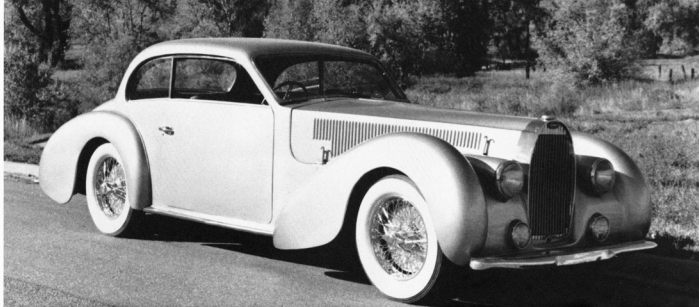
1938 Bugatti Type 57C Cabriolet, Gangloff
Owner: Gary Tiscornia of Milford, Michigan

Gary Tiscornia's Type 57C Gangloff Cabriolet was the 1978 realization of a Bugatti dream that began for him at age nineteen and was first effected in his early sixties acquisition of a Type 37 Grand Prix car.

The 57C with Gangloff coupe coachwork in the Cussler garage is, Clive says, "an unusual body style as it is the only known Bugatti with the radiator extending to the front fenders."

Paul Pazery's 57C Gangloff Cabriolet was delivered to a M. Teilhac in Paris in 1939, hidden during the war in a barn in unoccupied France until 1946, and owned by two Parisians thereafter, until Paul's purchase of the car in 1959: "In the thirties, while a student in France, I used to race on a Bugatti Type 35B. This car is a most exciting one to drive today. Its roadability is unsurpassed. The car has been completely restored. It took ten years!"





1939 Bugatti Type 57C Coupe, Gangloff

Owner: Clive Cussler of Golden, Colorado



1939 Bugatti Type 57C Cabriolet, Gangloff

Owner: Paul H. Pazery of Sante Fe, New Mexico





The '39 Type 57 Gangloff Cabriolet has been in the Cook family since 1960 when Hubert bought it for \$2,650. His son Bill has owned the car since 1982: "This Bug's most memorable Grand Classic was its first, in Indianapolis in 1965, the memorable part being the distance and the weather. The round trip was 1,900 miles, the temperature was 100+ and in those days the CCCA didn't allow trailering. That same year, my father drove the Bug in a hill climb in Arkansas for a second-place finish, the winner being a Bentley driven by a girl. Wish I had been the driver; I wouldn't have let a girl beat me. In 1980 I raced this Bugatti at Laguna Seca in California and, out of twenty entries, finished 7th, not bad for a passenger car among ten all-out racing machines. The Bugatti is a remarkable automobile. Gaskets were deemed unnecessary because of the phenomenally close tolerances between surfaces. The steering is light and precise and doesn't become unsteady when the roads are bad. And the car's looks? Photographs answer that question. The Bugatti can be summed up easily: the fusion of function with form. Auto meets art."

And so it did throughout the Classic Era. Tragically, Jean Bugatti was killed in an automobile accident while test driving a factory car in August of 1939. In August of 1947 Ettore Bugatti died in Paris after an illness of three months. The marquis, in essence, died with him. Without *Le Patron*, there couldn't really be a Bugatti.



1939 Bugatti Type 57C Cabriolet, Gangloff
Owner: William R. Cook of Dallas, Texas

