

## Pilgrimage

**M**Y WIFE SANDY hadn't had a real vacation in four years. And because I get a lot of opportunities to travel, I definitely owed her one. We'd decided that the InterMot show made a great excuse to do a little European travel, as it coincided with the one long interval between magazine editions all year, meaning that if I could get my work done early, I could have two weeks away, essentially one to cover the show and the other for a vacation in Italy.

I love Italy. The roads are wonderful, the people are friendly, the food is great and the pace of life a welcome change. And I've taught myself enough of the language that I can count, ask direction and understand the gist of most answers. Okay, I'll resort to hand gestures if I have to, but they are extremely well versed in those, too.

My plan was to take Sandy to Tuscany, to see some of the sights I'd seen when my brother Don and I toured Italy with the American Flyers on a Lotus Tour.

It so happened that my brother's daughter Veronica had begun attending school in Bologna just weeks before we left, so it seemed only right to try to get together while we were there. Of course, Bologna is also associated with Ducati, and although it isn't technically in Tuscany (but Emilia Romagna), it isn't far, perhaps just 65 miles north of Florence, making for a neat day trip. Because adding another bike-related destination to our vacation might have been asking too much, I asked Sandy if she'd mind. She didn't. Cool, so I asked Vince Chiaro, our Ducati PR contact in America, if he could arrange for a visit. No problem, he said.

Of course, Bologna isn't far from Maranello, which is a southern suburb of Modena. It seemed only natural that we should make a side trip to Maranello, too, before heading south to Tuscany. If you don't already know, Maranello is the home of Ferrari, and I am not only a *Ducati* (even though I don't own one at the moment, I'm sure I will again) but a *Tifosi*, meaning I am a fan of Ferrari.

I have never even ridden in a Ferrari, and I have no illusions of ever owning one, but I have followed sportscar and Formula One racing since before I could drive, and Ferrari has always been very special to me. Without Ferrari, the world of racing would have been far less colorful. If motor racing ever had a Pope, it would have been Enzo Ferrari.

The religious aspect of the Italian devotion to its motor racing heroes is unique. The drivers and riders that win for the home



teams are national heroes, lionized and held close to the nation's collective bosom. And although I have no Italian blood in me, I feel it, too. Even in defeat, I care. But when the Italian's win, I always wish I could be there to experience the warmth of their rejoicing. It doesn't make sense, I know, but I have often found myself drawn to the inexplicable, the irrational and the emotional.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but can you think of two men whose work on two and four-wheeled machines has resulted in such a devoted following of enthusiasts as Ducati's Fabio Tagliani and Enzo Ferrari? That they were contemporaries and personal friends is even more remarkable.

Slightly lost when we got off the autostrada in Borgo Panigale, I soon learned that I didn't know how to say Ducati in Italian. Just a mile or so from the factory, I asked directions at a roadside restaurant. My question, "*Dov'è se trovè Ducati, per favorè?*" (said in the usual American monotone) was met by a blank stare. Incredulous, thinking we must be very close, I repeated, "Ducati?" The waitress say, "Oh, *Du-KAHT-ee, si!*" Now I know!

We met my niece Veronica at the Ducati factory gate at our appointed time and had a fascinating tour of the place, seeing the bikes come together, and then were given a tour of the museum after, where we got a sense of the company's history and its less well known accomplishments. The most significant fact, in my view, was that Ducati's quality has benefited enormously from the Texas Pacific Group's investment. They may have been slow to modernize, but they have done it, and we really shouldn't hang on to any

deprecating characterizations about their motorcycles that might have been accurate once upon a time.

Also, you might think it's some kind of corny spin to say Ducati is "passionate" about its products, but I don't. Italians feel deeply about their legacy, and their engineers have been some of the most creative on the planet, and they still are.

I felt somehow energized when we drove away from Borgo Panigale, and headed west to Modena. Less than an hour later, after we had followed the signs to Maranello, there was a sign that said Fiorano. I knew that name. And on our right appeared a tall chain link fence that had been filled to create a wall. A group of people was peering into the fence for a look at something. Then it dawned on me, this was Ferrari's test track, and I knew the factory backed up to the track so that cars could be driven straight onto the track for testing.

There were no signs saying what was where, but I took several right turns until I was at the entrance to the track. It was beautiful. And somewhere in the distance you could hear the powerful growl of an engine tearing around the circuit. Oh yeah.

My plan was to have dinner at the restaurant outside the factory gates, the *Ristorante Ferrari*, but alas, as is typical of Italian dining establishments, it didn't open for hours, until 7:00 pm, so we had pizza in the neighborhood instead. We watched the factory workers in their red jumpsuits leave work, and you could sense their pride to be working at Ferrari, perhaps the proudest name in automobiles in the world.

After dinner, we drove back to Bologna, dropped Veronica off at her apartment and headed south. But somehow, the experience of actually visiting Ducati and Ferrari made our trip to Italy the fulfillment of some inner need of mine. As if they were somehow Holy Shrines of Speed. No famous statuary, no Romanesque architecture, but to the real places where men made vehicles that inspired millions, and that made the reputations of countless racers.

If Donatello had created statuary to honor the likes of Tazio Nuvolari, Juan Fangio, Mike Hailwood, Paul Smart and Renzo Pasolini and we had a place to burn candles and place flowers, I could have become a very religious person.

But I'm still glad to be a mere gearhead!

*DAVE SEARLE*

—Dave Searle  
Editor