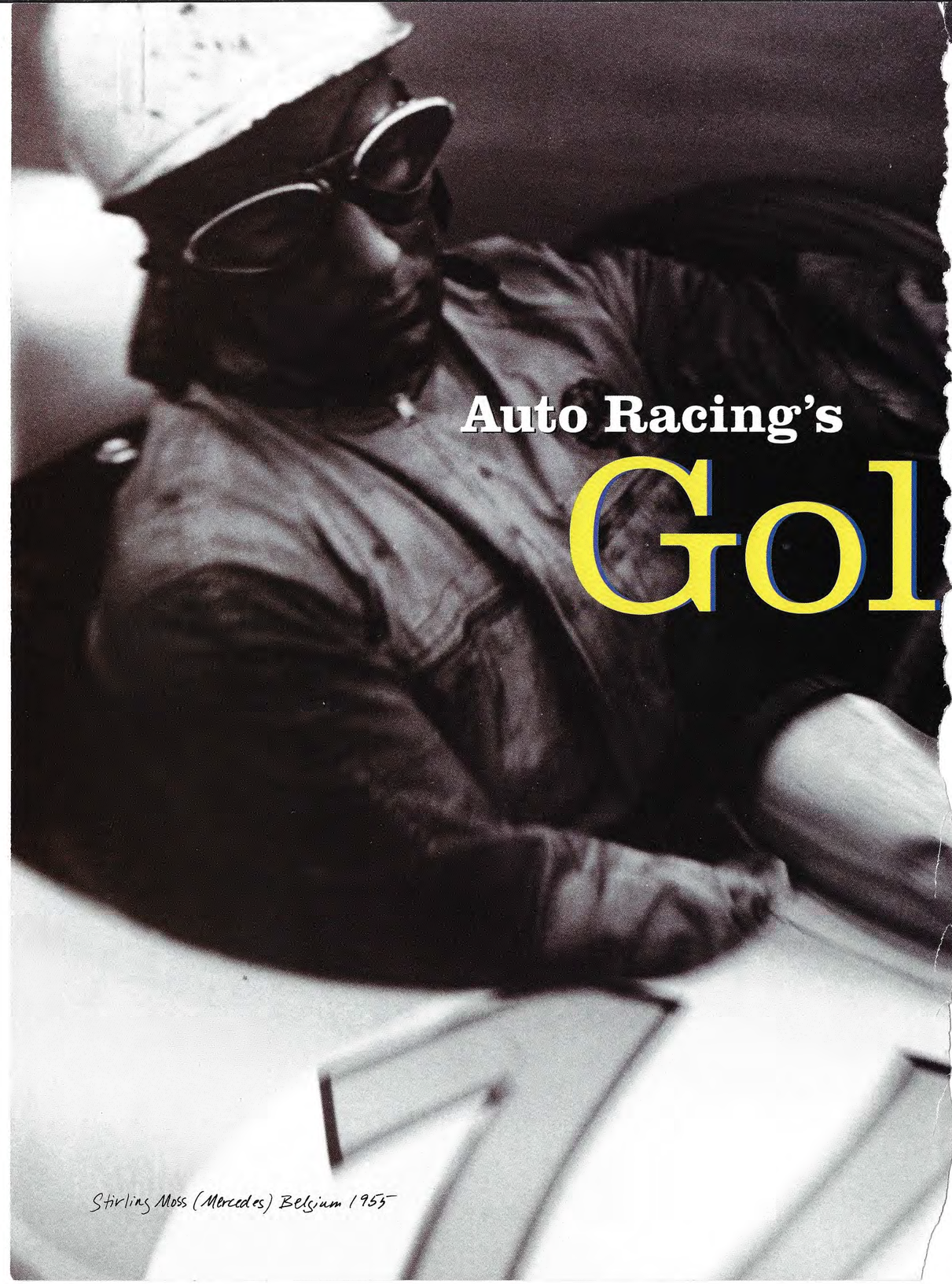
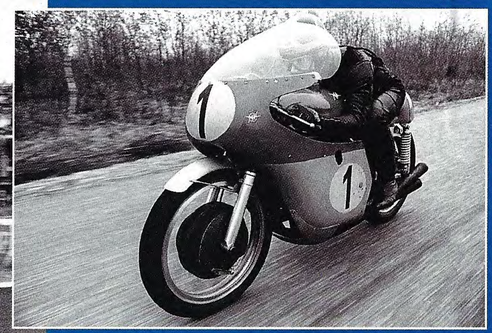



# Auto Racing's Golden Age

**Out of the ashes of post-war Europe rose history's finest generation of racing machines and fearless drivers. We won't see their like again**

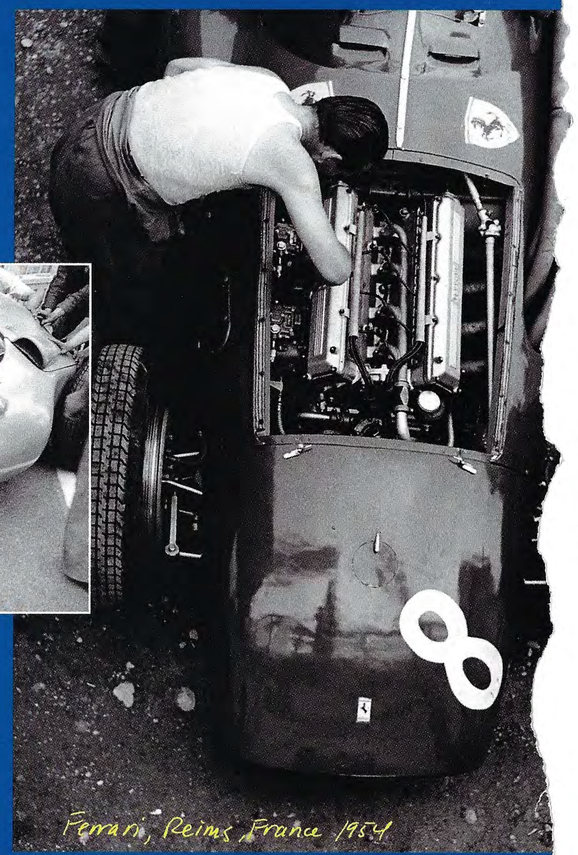
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JESSE ALEXANDER

Juan Manuel Fangio (Maserati) Reims 1958

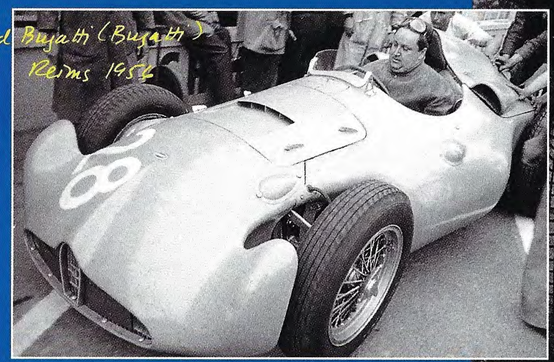


Giacomo Agostini (MV Agusta) 1967

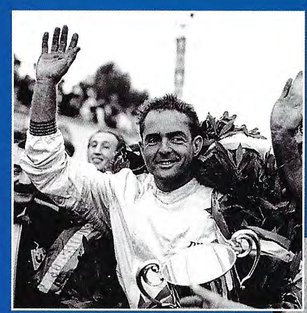
Mike Hawthorn (Ferrari) Monza 1957



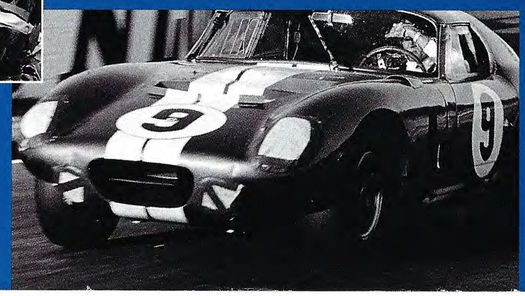
Ferrari, Reims, France 1954



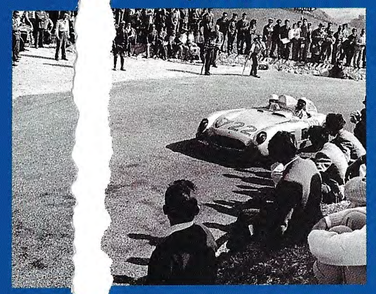

Rolland Bugatti (Bugatti) Reims 1956



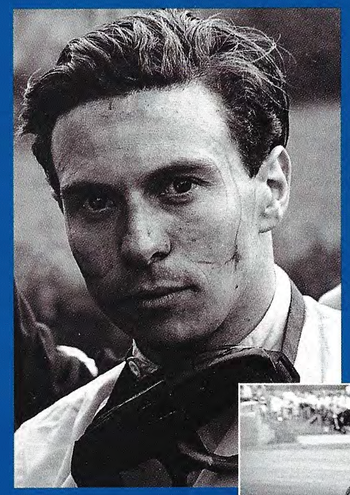
Phil Hill, Monza 1960



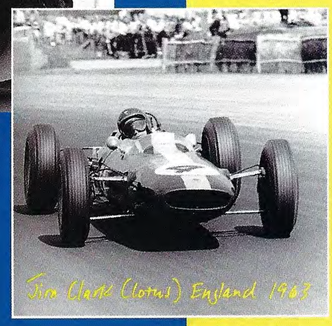

Dan Gurney (Cobra) Le Mans 1965



Stirling Moss (Mercedes) 1955



Jim Clark, Belgium 1962



Jim Clark (Lotus) England 1967

Luigi Villoresi, Milan 1989

Georgio Scarlatti (Ferrari) Nurburgring 1960

Starting in the early 1950s, photographer Jesse Alexander began walking the apron of Europe's great Grand Prix courses, from Monaco to Monza. What he captured through the lens of his Leica over the next 20 years was the *dolce vita* period of motor racing, a golden age when style was as important as speed.

"In many ways those were simpler times," recalls Alexander, who lives now in Santa Barbara. "Some drivers wore polo helmets they'd had made in Bond Street in London." A few sped along in pressed sportshirts and cardigan sweaters, and no one wore a seatbelt. "Being strapped in was thought to be dangerous," Alexander says. "Drivers much preferred to be thrown from the car in an accident."

By the 1970s, the golden age began losing its luster and, to Alexander, the sport became less interesting. "Where once you could clearly watch a driver struggle with the wheel as the car drifted through a corner," he says, "aerodynamic concerns put men lower in the cars and you could no longer even see who was driving. Today it's impossible; they're almost invisible."

What's more, race sponsors began plastering their logos on the cars—and their drivers—and slowly were buried the elegant lines that distinguished the Ferrari from the Mercedes, the Porsche from the Lancia.

Alexander is content, however, as those innocent years fade in the rear view. "Everything changes," he says. "I just feel lucky to have lived and worked in that time."

We're lucky he did, as well. ●

—Patrick Cooke

*An exhibit of Jesse Alexander's photographs will open this October 12th at the Petersen Automotive Museum, 6060 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles; 213-964-6356. His signed prints are available from At Speed Press, P.O. Box 5400, Santa Barbara, CA 93150. For price information, call 805-684-8273.*