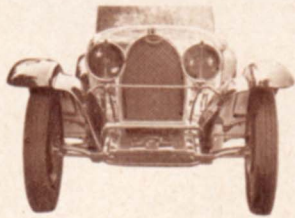


Salon





TYPE 38



A unique blend of Molsheim and Pasadena



photography: Poole

GATHERING dust in an old shed at the Bugatti works in Molsheim, France, are two ancient American Miller specials. How they got there and what this has to do with our Salon car makes a rather fascinating story.

The two Millers were raced throughout Europe by Leon Duray, in the very early 'thirties. The cars were, of course, not successful, lacking both adequate transmissions and brakes, but Ettore Bugatti, was most impressed with the design and workmanship of the engines. Accordingly, a little horse-trading ensued, and Leon came back to the States with a full Grand Prix type 35 Bugatti and a type 38 chassis.

This chassis, which is the one shown here, was purchased by Mr. Howard of horse-racing fame. The fact that Mr. Howard also owned a string of Buick agencies in the West should not detract from his appreciation of the *pur sang* qualities of Ettore's automobiles. The Murphy Body Co., of Pasadena, was commissioned to build a neat roadster body, which is still on the chassis and practically like new. Mr. Howard sold the car to Bunny Phillips who put a blown 2.3 Bugatti engine (which he just happened to have!) in the chassis. In this form the car achieved 124 honest mph at Muroc Dry Lake, running stripped (no fenders, windshield, etc.). That was a very creditable speed for the prewar era when the Ruffi streamliner held the "Lakes" record at 141 mph.

After several other owners, among them one high school lad named Phil Hill, an ad appeared in R & T for February 1949. The owner then was Jim Hum and the price was \$950. Two owners later, in March of 1951, the type 38 was a typical Bugatti "basket case."

Here, for once, the right man comes into the picture: Bob Kountz of Hollywood, California. Mr. Kountz bought the car, and, being a mechanic, work commenced at once. Three years of painstaking labor followed, and the result is one of the best restoration jobs we have ever seen. During this process a spare engine, an extra transmission, three clutches and another rear axle were acquired as reserves.

The original engine was in the chassis, a two-litre, straight-8 with single overhead camshaft, 3 valves per cylinder, 3 main bearing (ball-type) and babbitt-lined rods. Condition of the power unit was not too bad, considering. One cylinder was scored and had to be sleeved. The crankshaft was re-ground, all main bearings were replaced (American ball bearings, being metric size, will fit) and the rods were re-babbitted. New pistons were cast and machined, all new exhaust valves were cut from blanks, but the original intake valves were in usable condition. The water pump had been ruined and the new owner finally used the old parts as patterns, had a new cover and impeller cast and machined.

The original starter-generator arrange-

ment was a single Dynastart unit, projecting forward from the nose of the crankshaft. These are nasty things, notoriously weak and troublesome. Pending a complete re-work of the Dynastart, the rebuilder installed later type units from a type 40. Ignition is also non-standard—an old Northeast unit from some unknown 8-cyl. American car. New Solex carburetors were ordered from Molsheim, and they work very well. However, they arrived rather "scuffed-up," and the original carburetors, highly polished, are installed by the owner for concours competition. Incidentally, the tappets are set at .020" and since this operation requires removal of the entire camshaft assembly the job takes about 3 weeks to complete—in spare time!

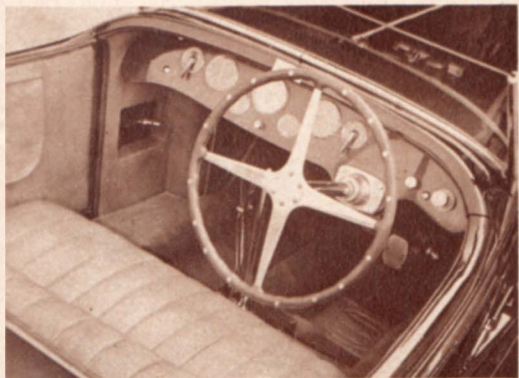
With four clutch assemblies available, rebuilding the clutch presented no special problem. But like all Bugattis which used multiple plates running in oil, it leaks. One good transmission was obtained from the two; the same for the rear axle. Every single ball bearing in the car was replaced, the rear axle alone requiring ten. The rear axle gears (ratio 56/12 = 4.666) are straight-cut bevels, were in very good condition and are surprisingly quiet.

The chassis was sound but rusted, of course. Every plated piece was painstakingly cleaned and polished, then replated. The rear springs had been damaged (leaves shortened and/or bent), and 3 new leaves

were required on each side. Most of the firewall was missing and a new one had to be made.

The body was in good condition, even to the oak-wood framing. A movie studio had once rented the car and all the wood flooring for the trunk area was removed and lost. The same studio had also reversed the lid hinges to provide a rumble seat and added a rear windshield. All this damage was undone and new quilted leatherette was used to line the rear compartment. The original Murphy-built steel fenders were full of drilled holes where various owners had installed gadgets of the moment. These holes were filled. The instruments are all original except that the speedometer is missing. Upholstering is in tan leather and no top is, or ever was, provided.

Better than new in every detail, even to the EB on the floor mat.



The engine is the quietest running Bugatti we have ever heard with very little of the mechanical clatter one usually associates with this marque. Mr. Kountz admits that the ride is very hard indeed around town, but smooths out remarkably at high speed on the road. He usually cruises at about 60 mph and once reached 75 mph. The steering requires 1¼ turns lock to lock, and it is nearly impossible to cramp the wheels when the car is at a standstill. Brakes are described as "only fair," and near-continuous tinkering has so far produced little or no improvement. The only additional refinement which is contemplated is another set of pistons. Those now installed give an even lower-than-original compression ratio. The only trouble encountered on the road, so far, has been the loss of 4 bolts in a

propeller-shaft flange. These are now safety-wired in place.

This car is *not* for sale, and to avoid being pestered Mr. Kountz is currently in South America for a few months. When he gets back there is another basket-case ready for the attack—a type 40!

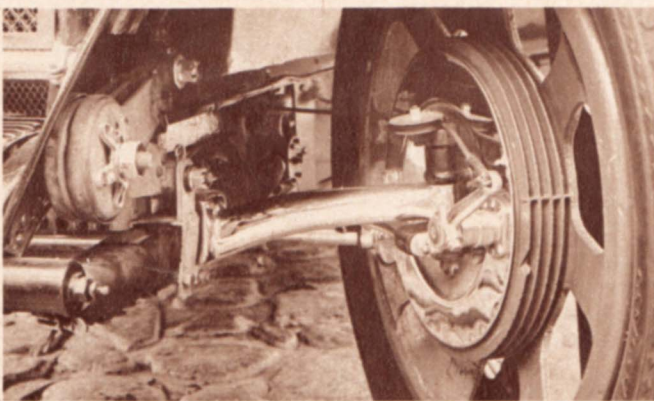
Brief Specifications

Year first produced.....	1926
Wheelbase, in.	122.9
Tread	49.2
Tire size	5.50-20
Curb weight, approx.....	3000
Engine	line 8
Valves	sohc
Bore & stroke, mm.....	.68 x 88
Displacement, cc	1990
Bhp70
Top speed, approx.....	.75

The justly famed Bugatti cast aluminum wheels with detachable rims and integral brake drums.



Typical Bugatti. At right the spring passes through a square hole in the hollow, swaged axle beam. Below, two views of the square-cut, straight-8 engine, one during, one after restoration.



JACK CAMPBELL

