

## Gulliver's Travels

Originally published in 1994 in the Austrian Magazine *Auto Review*, written by Bernhard Schmidt

"That sound is pure sex", roars Ron Phillips over the shrill of the engine on the testing stand. His smile is so broad, his glasses slide off. One could also describe the sound somewhat differently -someone attempting a chainsaw massacre on a concrete pillar. What falls so distinctly on one's ears is nothing less than America's only twelve-cylinder engine.

Manufacturer of the rarity is naturally no fat cat auto giant, but rather a sleek newcomer: "Phillips Quarter Classics" (PQC) That means: highly polished wheel spokes, laser cut hubcaps, seven layers of lacquer, delicate walnut wood steering wheels.

All this for a price, which is inversely proportionate to its size: a top model costs around 400,000 shillings. **(37.500 Dollars)**

Regardless, the owner remains out of the race. Nothing bigger than a Barbie doll can fit behind the steering wheel of the one- meter model. PQC builds in a ratio of 1:4.

The stars of the house are the three twelve-cylinders: Mercedes W 154 (the original dates from 1939), the Ferrari Testarossa (1957) and the Ferrari GTO (1960). The engine is 19 cm long and weighs 9 kilos and, can you believe it - it runs! 45 ccm "piston-space" (**capacity**) creates 6.5 PSI (**bhp**) at 8500 revolutions. Maximum: 12,500 rpm.

CEO Ron Phillips knows the screaming sound of the powerful (in spite of their size) miniatures all too well, because every one of the fine- crafted machines is tested, with all patience and love, on a stand in the basement of the home where he and his family live.

The smallest automobile factory in the world is found underground: the coal-cellar is the chassis division, final assembly is in the former bar and the testing stand roars in the hallway where the acoustics are particularly good.

One is amazed by the precision (even if not strictly true to the original) and somewhat astonished at the attention to the authenticity of the details: perfectly turned nail heads, hand-sewn dollhouse-sized driver-seat. One worries a bit about the people behind it, who with painstaking care make autos so small that they're good for nothing. Yea, yea, fine mechanics, stooped over their work, crazy idealists in their workroom, and the world just laughs at them...

Ron Phillips has a different opinion. To him, it's all about business. "Well", he says, "not only." Every day for 32 years, he worked as a patent attorney in an office at General Motors. Earnings weren't bad: luxury villa, Ferrari, and two E-Types in the garage. But the yearning for something different kept growing.

First breakthrough, 1976: flowerpots. His (naturally, immediately patented) design consisted of pressing them out of sand. Unfortunately, the construction wasn't so great. The things crumbled in your hand. This flop resulted in a repentant return to his desk at GM, where he prepared for his model car career with renewed thoroughness.

By 1985, he'd gotten this far. The concept of the 56 year- old entrepreneur: first-class quality, only the coolest classics, but simple models, few details, beauty and function over authenticity, the model had to be able to run. And: the output would be limited, so that collectors would speculate over its increase in value and be proud to pay for such a rarity.

Phillips specialized in racing cars from the time between Caracciola and Moss, which were the years in which his customers were wide-eyed children, but now could afford to indulge in their hobbies without having to calculate the cost- to- need ratio.

Already, the first examples have been grabbed from his hands. There are nine models in the program. Besides the 12-cylinders, there are six one cylinders: Mercedes W 165, Ferrari 801 F, Maserati 250 F (two versions), Alfa Romeo Alfetta 159, Lancia-Ferrari D 50 going for 200,000 shillings (**16.000 Dollars**), Mercedes W 154 and Ferrari Testarossa coming in at around 350,000 shillings (**32.500 Dollars**). The 12-cylinder Ferrari GTO, Ron's first coupe, costs 400,000 shillings (**37.500 Dollars**).

All of this for our eyes and our clumsy fingers in a filigreed dolls world. In the cockpits are tiny (functioning) instrument panels behind (polished) aluminum dash boards, (adjustable) rearview mirrors. Whenever Gulliver's finger strokes the Lilliput-steering wheel, the front wheels (rack and pinion steering) respond and turn. There's more: 36 (chromed) brass spokes per wheel, a racing-rubber mixture from the 50's in the Firestone tires, a precision differential in the rear axle, disc or drum brakes.

Controlled by remote, the models have reached 100 kilometers per hour. Off the charts. One Schwabian (**Swabian**) customer has his own private miniature races which always pits Mercedes against Ferrari. And one thoroughly adult, but American collector plans to build a Lilliput-Racetrack. With a "racing ladder tower" in the middle of the course.

But with most of the customers, playing doesn't come to mind. With all seriousness, they store their treasures in barricaded showcases, never to be touched. Mark Kahle, from Buffalo, a concrete "multi" (**tycoon**), in a *northern state* (), declares "parties are absolutely dangerous". He doesn't even trust (**dares**) himself to drive it, "I'm too clumsy, and would guaranteed, crash it into a wall." Kahle is a PQC subscriber. Total price for the first nine models of the assortment: \$198,500.

All nine have not yet been delivered. The Phillips-Family hasn't followed up with the Cellar-Production yet. Ron has the whole family involved. When papa's in charge, both sons, Keith (24) and Patrick (26) have become cellar-kids. Wife, Sandy, sews upholstery in the living room, while Ron's father-in-law, Harry, at home in Ohio, constructs tank covers and wooden steering wheels. The 76 year-old has had experience in handwork under a magnifying glass: he constructed the world's first artificial heart

The Research and Development Division is found up in two attic rooms at the villa. Phillips has hired on two engineers for technical improvements to the 12-cylinder.

One of the most difficult jobs is forming the metal parts. Prototype chassis parts for each auto are fitted on their own individual mahogany forms. "All of the forms are destroyed after 25 examples have been built," affirms Phillips. But he will build 37 models of the GTO "exactly as many as were built of the original."

But most important to PQC are the engines. And the 12-cylinder is the masterpiece. "Pure dynamite," hisses the boss through his teeth. The 12er is no exact shrunken model of the original that simply wouldn't function,

but rather a unique construction. The same engine is put in the Ferrari as well as the Mercedes - only the firm's logo on the valve covers distinguishes them from each other.

It has taken the team three years to develop the machine (3,500 individual pieces). There are 48 valves and four over-lying (**overhead**) camshafts which are gear driven. The diameter of the valves are a little smaller than that of a grain of rice, the shaft is about the same as the ink well of a ball point pen. The 12 pistons are the size of a thimble. Computer driven ignition and fuel injection, a radiator (1.1 liter of fluid), two water and oil pumps and a starter with 0.25 PS (**hp**).

The transmission gear (**gearbox**) is missing. In "empty running" (**when idling**) the "centrifugal governor" (**centrifugal clutch**) separates, similar to that in a Mofa. Give it some gas and it grabs. The 12-cylinder runner goes 160 km/h.

The motor and fine mechanics are finished up in a suburb of Detroit. Boss of the "go-to" (**supplier**) firm is Gunther Dieterle, a Stuttgarter (**a man originated from Stuttgart, the Swabian car-capital**) who moved to the States 34 years ago and now speaks a mixture of Schwabish (**Swabish**) and American. "The 12-cylinder is one of the craziest jobs that I've ever done. The first crankshaft was a whole week's work!"

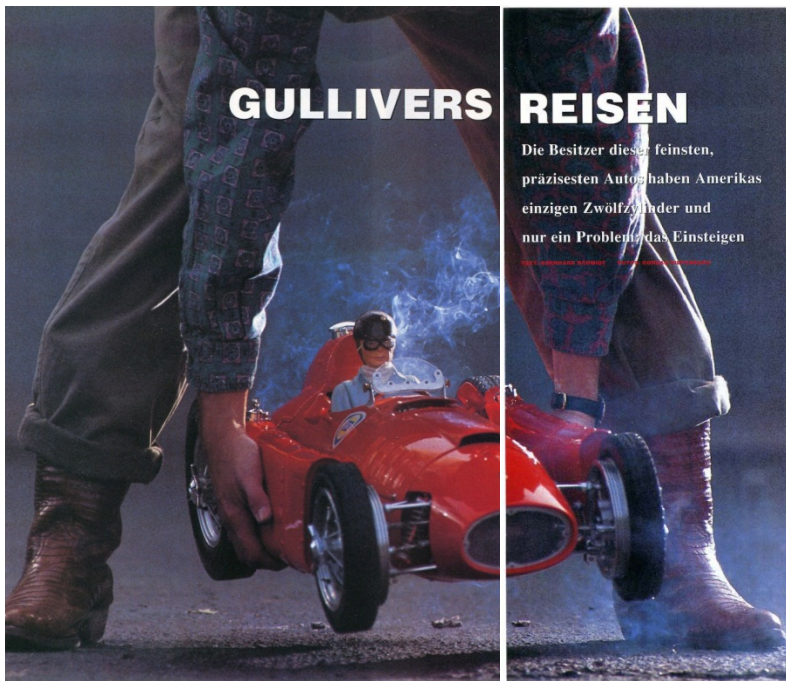
*Most often the customers drive off with the screeching V-12 machinery* (**Many customers like the screeching machinery most and buy only the V12**), even though it alone costs \$16,000 (*around 200,000*) *shilling*. Because of that, Phillips, under the name of PMW (Phillips Motor Works) will in the future offer just engines without bodies. No twelve-cylinders, but rather the legendary Chevrolet "small block" (V-8; 5.7-Liter; "*Hubraum*" of the 60's) and the four-cylinder from the Model A Ford (late 20s). "(**You**) just put them on the table and let them roar", says Ron.

The 1:4 models are one of a kind but not original. Purists shudder when they see how nonchalantly Phillips has dealt with the originals.

Most exact is still the chassis form. Frames, undercarriage and the "aggregate" (**all the mechanical parts**) have nothing in common with the original. For example: the tie rod assembly (**suspension**): the Mercedes W 165 has rear crossed suspension (**control arms**), "screw springs" (**coil springs**) and a stabilizer. The original had a DeDion Axle.

Phillips curries (**follows**) before all the cult of beauty. Just about everything is chromed, what in truth never was and there are more nuts and bolts than in the original. The oil pan on the 12-cylinder alone is fastened with 34 bolts.

"I love nuts and bolts," says Ron, and my customers do too.



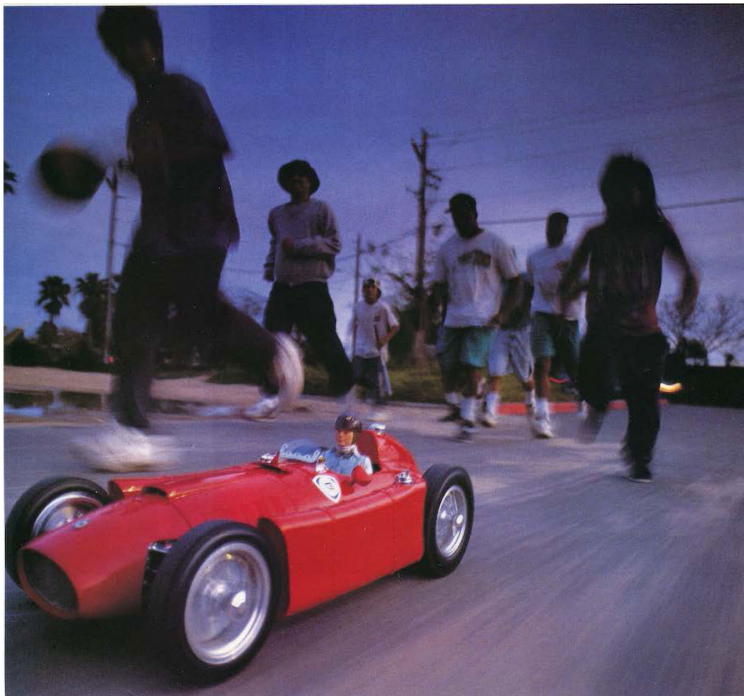
The Title picture says: Gulliver's Travels The owner of these fine, prestigious autos have America's only twelve-cylinders and only one problem: Getting in



The next pictures text: The run of things: engineer, Kenneth Whitelarn working on the millimeter for millimeter modeling of a car body



Keith Phillips while dispatching a Maserati 250F **on a flight to Chicago** Promenading a Lancia D50 for admiring fans







The last pictures: The thrill of the first meter: Patrick Phillips and two groupies and the Lancia D50 on a trial run.



Everything's is so "gigantically" (**incredible**) small: The tie rod assembly of the Ferrari 801. The cockpit of the Mercedes W 165. The V12 Ferrari engine - and the coke can is certainly not a meter tall!



Bernhard Schmidt is a German journalist who wrote the Ron Phillips story in 1992 about the quarter-scale models. It was later published in 1994 in the Austrian “Auto Revenue.”



Conrad Piepenburg was born 1961 on the island of Gran Canaria and raised there, his father was a German journalist. Conrad soon became a photographer and worked for many publications including Stern, Geo, BMW Magazine, Auto-Bild, Auto Forum, Merian, ADAC. Later he turned to advertising where he still works for many international agencies. Currently he is doing most of the photography for BMW M GmbH.

As translated for DFW Elite Toy Museum.com, to accompany our collection of Jeron models.