

# IMAGINE

RICHARD BOSLEY  
AMERICAN COACHBUILDER



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## RICHARD BOSLEY AMERICAN COACHBUILDER



**Dedicated to Ron & Sonya Kellogg in grateful appreciation of their vision to acquire and restore the Mark I, and their friendship with our father, and to Stephen & Kim Bruno, whose discerning eyes and entrepreneurial determination brought the Interstate back to life.**

Except as otherwise noted, all photographs in this book were taken by (and all drawings made by) Richard Bosley.  
Compiled and printed by his family. For more information, email [brb@chmx.com](mailto:brb@chmx.com).

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# From Ohio roots

Peace... Golden Wings... June Bride... all roses grown by Bosley Nursery. Once known as the *Rose Capital of the Nation*, Mentor, Ohio was home to more than a dozen wholesale growers. And home to Richard Bosley.

Bosley Nursery boss Paul (at left, holding Richard) was a plantsman and a natural salesman, and his wife Edith was both matriarch and a businesswoman ahead of her time. When Paul got out of the Army in 1918, he courted his future wife, who lived in distant Geneva, via the Cleveland, Painesville, and Eastern interurban railroad. The land they kept passing (and eventually acquired) at Stop 68 in Mentor seemed to be an ideal place to establish their family and business.

While supplying their plants to a six-state area, they raised four children - Paul Jr., Patricia, Richard, and Virginia. In those halcyon days before labor laws, the young siblings were called upon to "thorn" roses in the fields.

At far middle left is Richard with his first vehicle, likely in about 1930 - just a few yards from where he would build the Interstate thirty years later. In the closer photo, RWB (center) and his friends seem to be having a good time fishing despite the Great Depression.

At left are some of the airplane models, such as the high-winged Spook 48, that Richard loved to build. He would later say that "I built models, so I was sure I could build a complete car." He also admitted that he occasionally set a plane on fire and threw it out his bedroom window, to his mother's annoyance.





While earning his degree in Horticulture at Ohio State, Richard participated in the ROTC program, and then served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army Reserve until 1957. Not many Army captains have a command at sea, but as shown here, he skippered a tug as well as a DUKW platoon. Perhaps this contributed to his interest in driving things that went faster.

Having been interested in sports cars since the war, Richard acquired one of the first Jaguars in the Cleveland area in 1951 for \$4,000. In later years, Richard recalled picking up his XK-120 in Columbus, accompanied by his mother. They had a grand time on the drive home to northeastern Ohio with the top down.



In a time when owners and drivers were as colorful as the cars, Richard embraced the social aspects as well as the machines and the races. In 1951, he became a charter member of the Cleveland Sports Car Club. He was also an early member of the NE Ohio Region of the SCCA, and a charter member of Ecurie de Sport in Painesville, Ohio. Through SCCA, he officiated at the International Grand Prix in Sebring, Florida beginning in its first year, and attended a number of other races in the eastern U.S. in the 1950's and '60s. His photographic record captures not only iconic cars and drivers, but also the context from which the Bosley designs would emerge.

The rest of this book is about the cars he built, and the period of his life from 1950 to the mid-1960's that involved the inspiration, construction, and enjoyment of the Bosley Mark I and the Interstate.



# Early influence and inspiration



Chinetti won Class D driving Cunningham's 1950 Ferrari 195 S in the first-ever race at Sebring.



Kimberly's 166 MM Touring Barchetta, pictured at the first Sebring race - just six hours duration- on New Year's Eve 1950, where Gentleman Jim took second.

John Fitch cornering at speed in 2.3L Ferrari - Watkins Glen (1951)





Upper left: Spear/Hill Ferrari 225 Spyder next to Kimberly rig - Sebring (1953)

Above top: Spear/Hill 375 Plus - Sebring (1954)

Middle left: Bill Spear's 4.1 Mexico

Above middle: Fangio's Lancia D24 factory car - Sebring (1954)

Lower left: Shelby/Wallace Aston Martin DB3S - Sebring (1954)

Corvette SS Mule at Sebring (1957)



Briggs Cunningham's D-Type - Watkins Glen winner (1955)

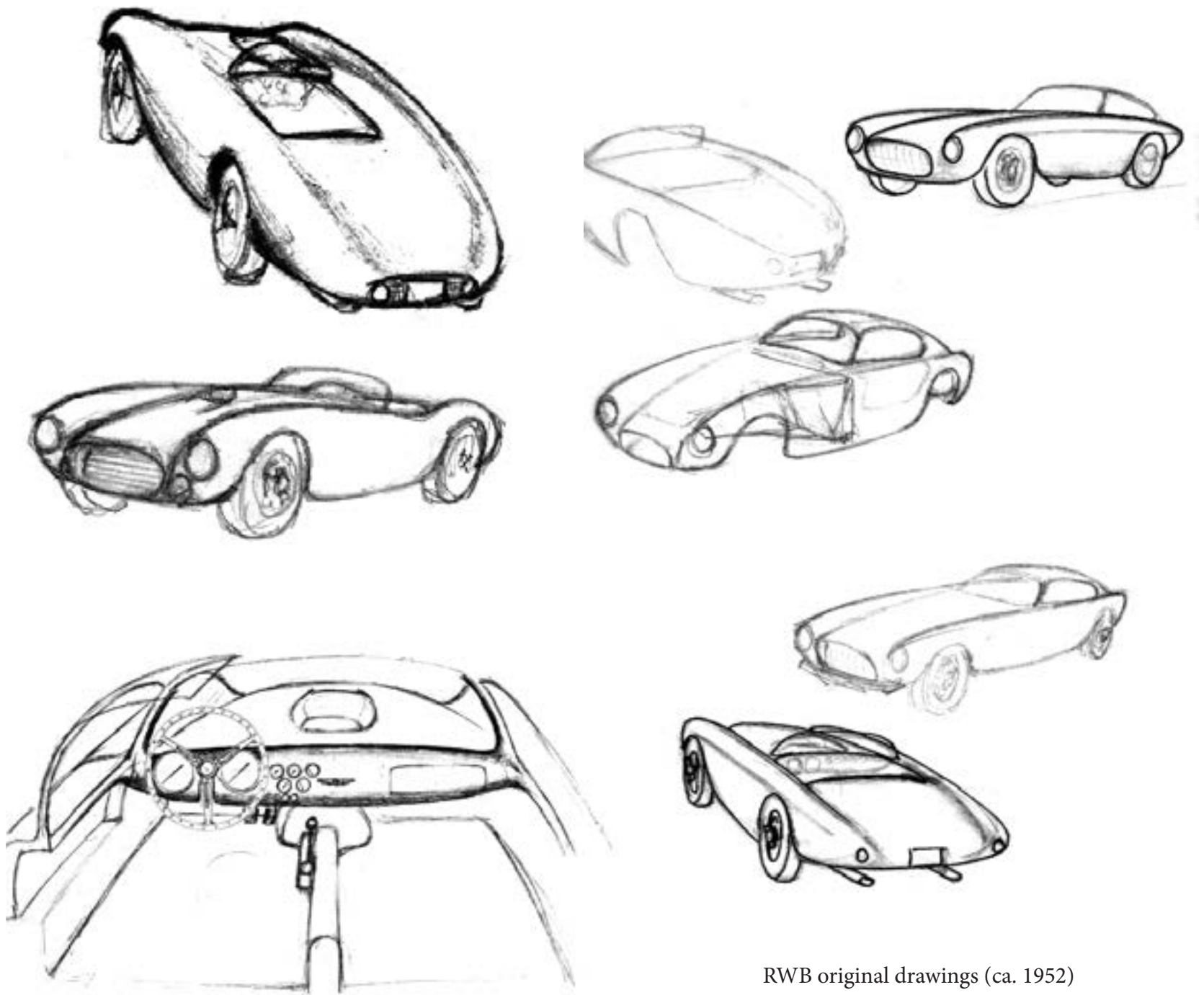


RWB with friend Dick Irish's 375 Mexico at Chanute AFB (1954)



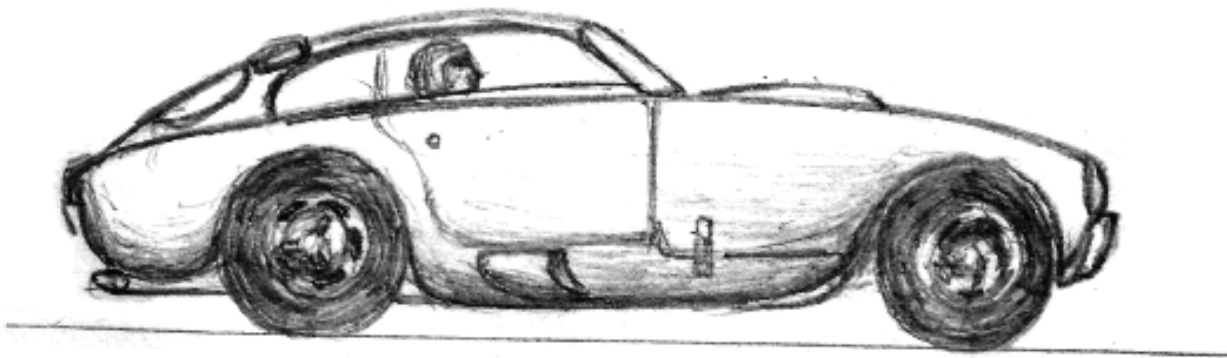
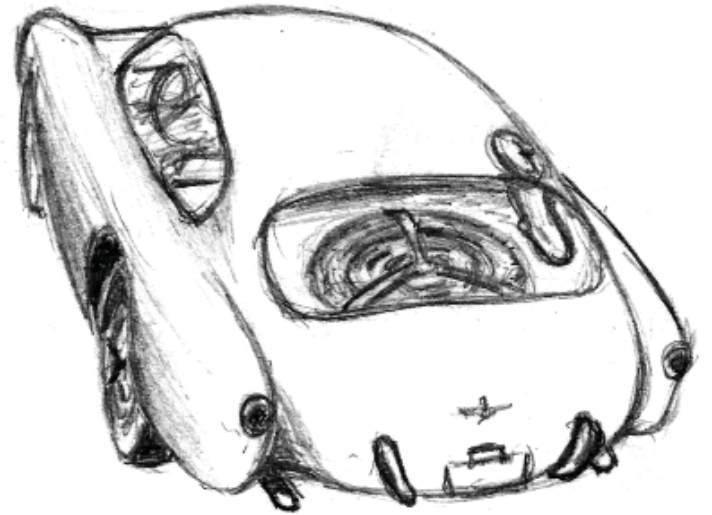
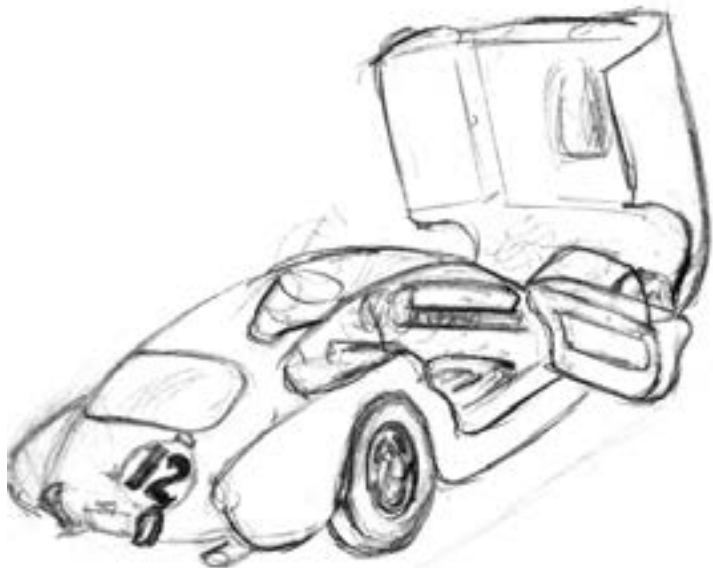
Maserati factory team at Sebring. Fangio's 450S (#19) won; Hill took second in #20 (1957)



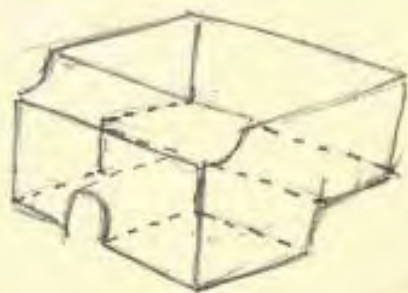
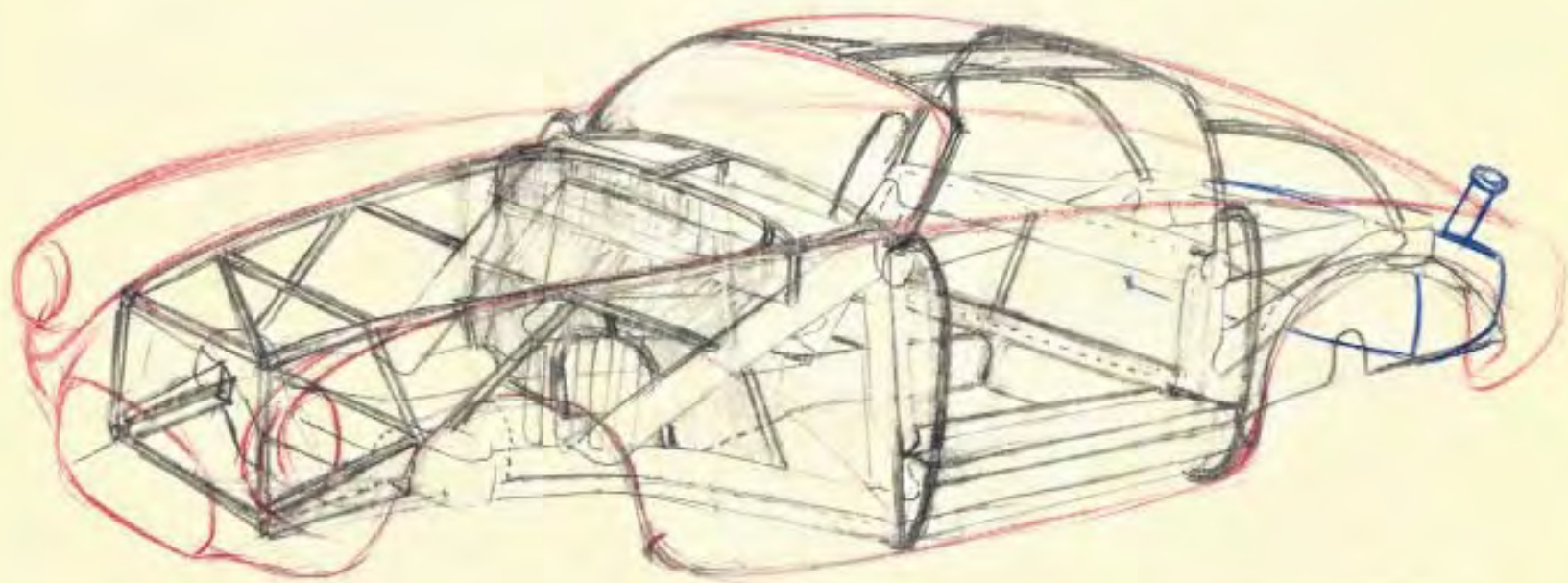


RWB original drawings (ca. 1952)





Bosley's ability to anticipate the direction of sports car design enabled the Mark I to arrive on the scene as a contemporary of designs like the 375 MM Berlinetta coupe from Carrozzeria Pinin Farina.



# The Mark I

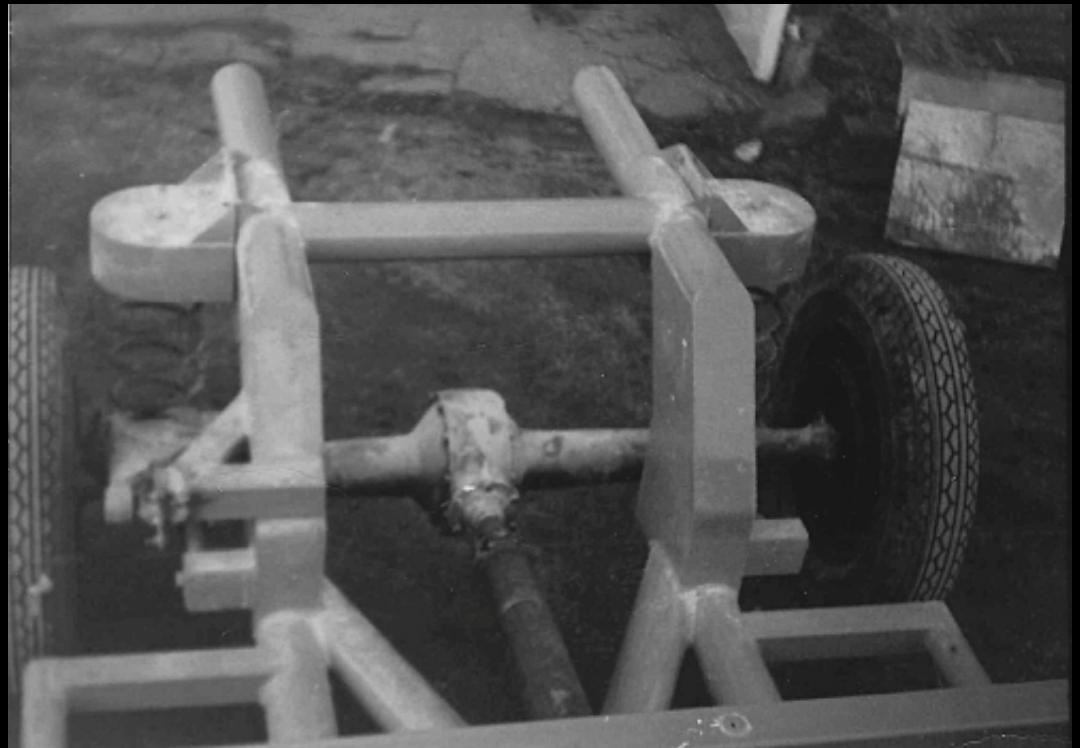
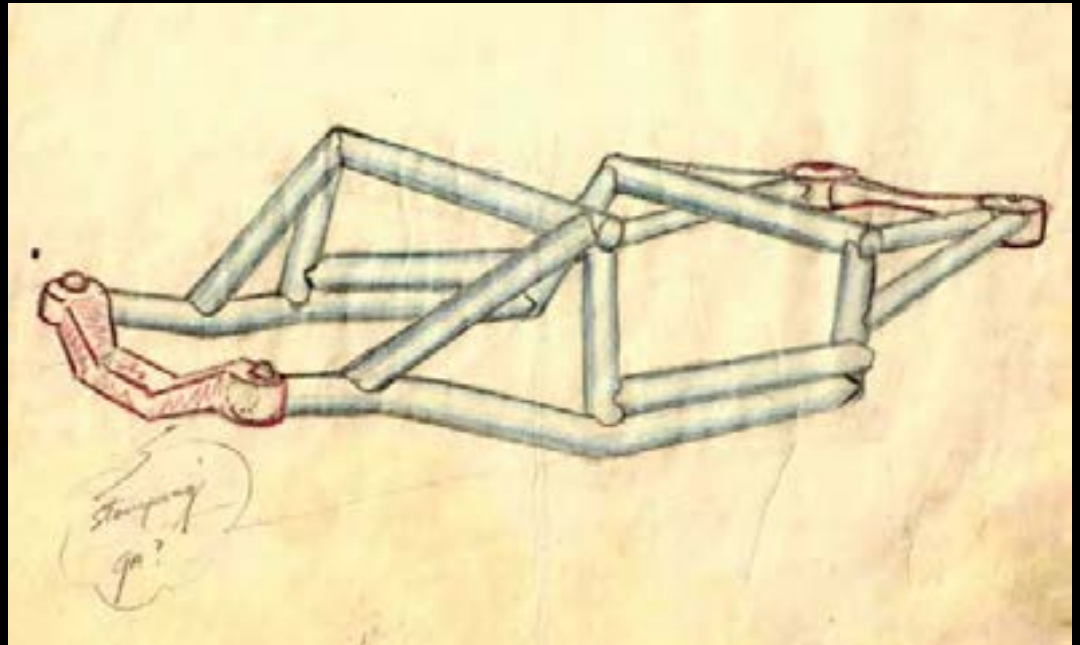
"Three years ago, I was beaten by my mother's Olds in my new [Jaguar] and at that time decided that I had to have something more potent. I had wanted to build a car for several years but lacked the knowledge required to form body panels, and it was about this time that reinforced plastics were becoming a practical material for hand lay-up. I sold the sports car to have some ready capital in the month of June 1952. The entire summer was consumed on the drawing board, and construction started in September 1952.

Since my main interest was to have a free hand in the coachwork department, it was necessary to design a frame from the ground up. Since I am a graduate from Ohio State in horticulture, I had no background except what I read in *Road & Track*. Believe me, those articles on sports car design were my bible."

RWB, quoted in *Road & Track*, August 1955

"Although the car is being built with competition in mind, it will be used mostly for transportation. It is best suited for an endurance-type race, such as Sebring."

RWB, letter to *Motor World*, May 1953





## MARK I SPECIFICATIONS

**Engine:** 1952 Chrysler Hemi V-8 with Cunningham manifold, 331 c.i., 225 h.p.

**Transmission:** New Process synchromesh 5-speed with open drive shaft. 4th gear direct; 5th o.d.

**Chassis:** ladder-type from 16-gauge 4-inch mild steel tubing

**Fuel tank:** 55 gal.

**Front suspension:** 1950 Ford

**Rear suspension:** three trailing arms (patterned on C-type Jaguar) with coil springs; 1948 3.54 Mercury rear axle.

**Clutch:** White 3000 Series truck

**Brakes:** 12"x2.5" drums fore & aft; Bendix power units.

**Dimensions:**

- Wheelbase: 102 in.
- Tread: 58" front, 60 in. rear
- Height: 48"
- Width 70", overall length 168"

**Weight:** 3,360 lbs.

**Top speed:** 160 mph

**Cost:** \$9,000 and three years labor

The Mark I was completed in March 1955 and traded in 1957.



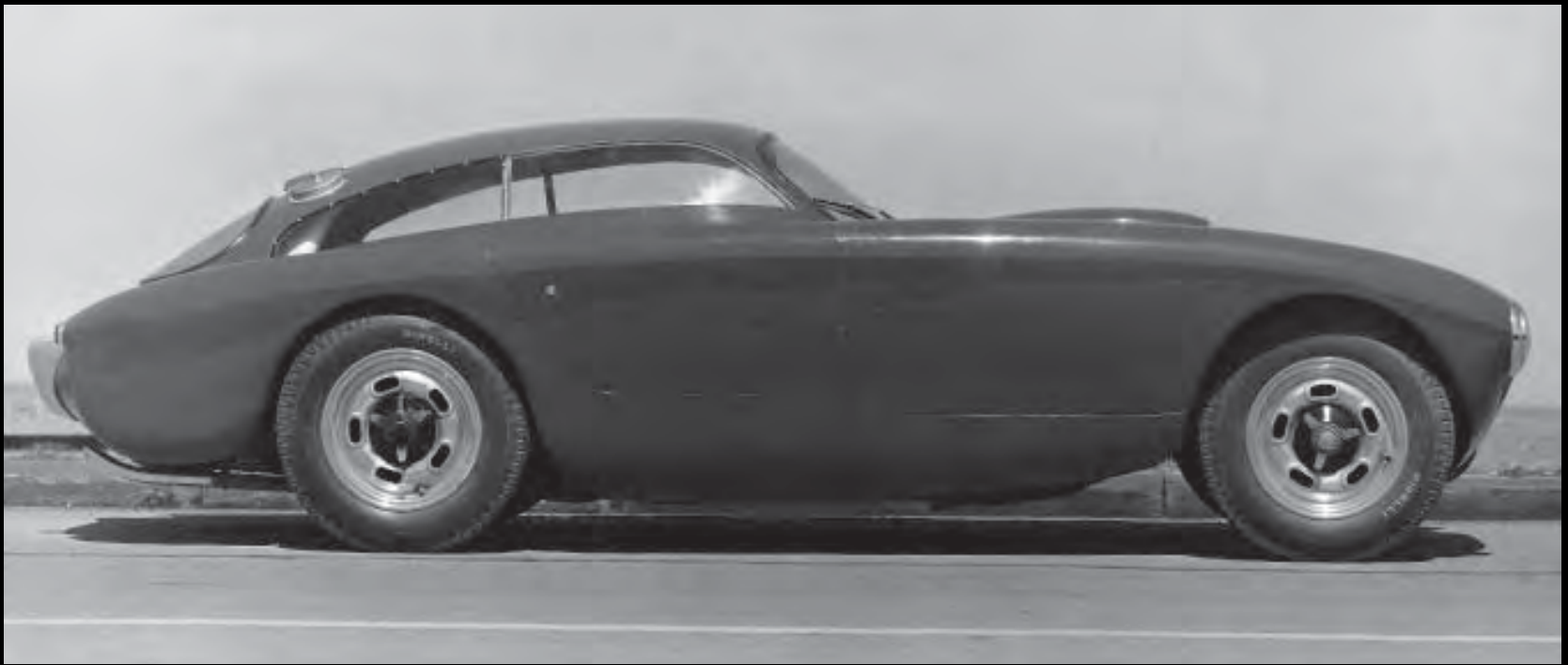


The Mark I was laid up over a male mold (above).

Fiberglass was just beginning to be used for automobile bodies at the time. Throughout his life, Richard had an abiding interest in innovation and design - from his use of this advanced material of its day, to production methods for his nursery business, to his acquaintances with designers and artists like Buckminster Fuller and Wink McGee.

At the same time, much like a farm, the nursery business demanded mechanical, welding, and electrical skills that would prove valuable in coachbuilding.



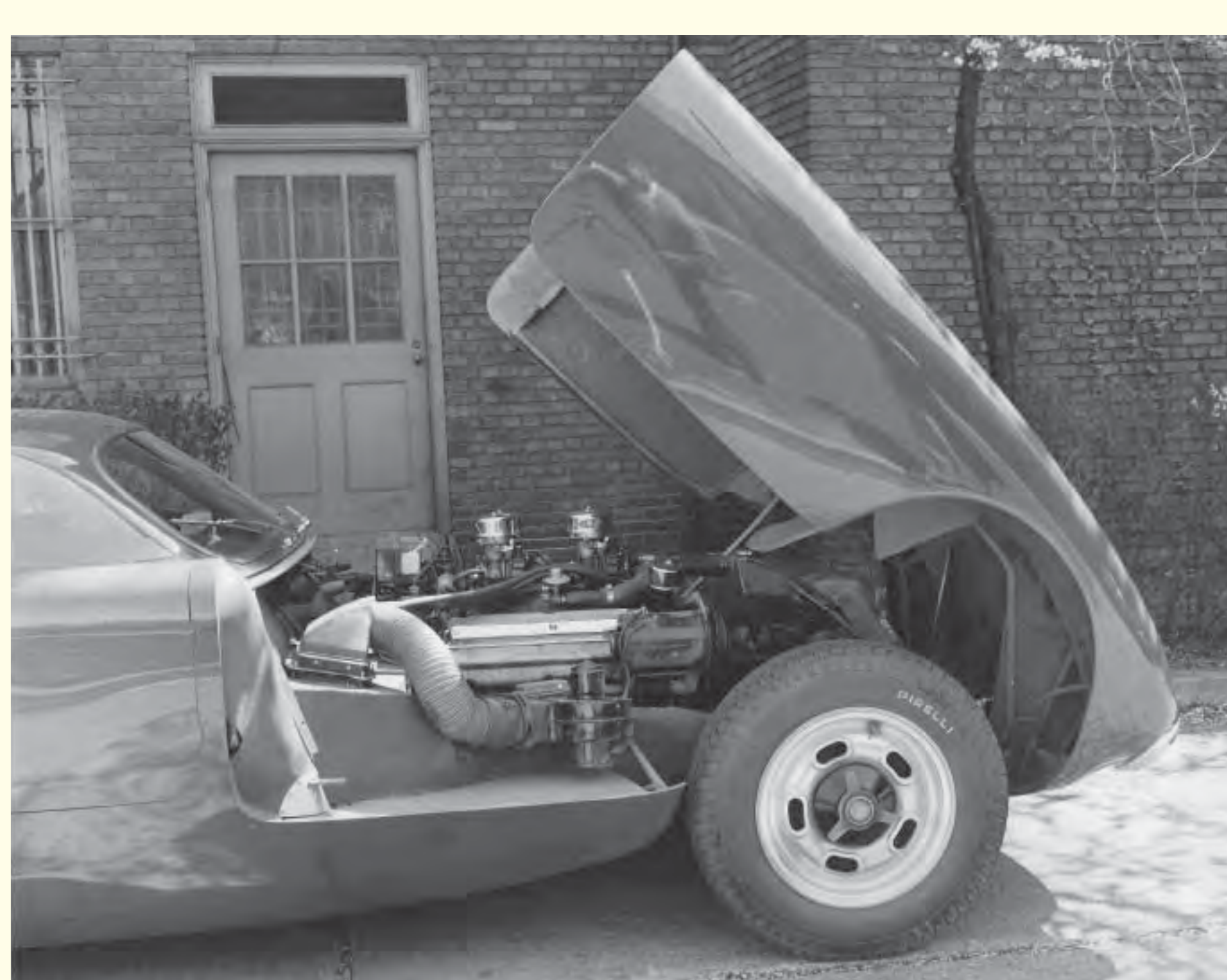


Upholstery and paint was done by friend Earland "Russ" Russell. Russ and his wife Lolly were avid members of Ecurie de Sport.





At Sebring.







Speedometer and tachometer were special-built from Ford police instruments.

*Photo by Brett Bosley*





"Remarkably engineered, beautifully designed, is this American sports coupe from Richard W. Bosley of Mentor, Ohio."  
*Motor Life*, July, 1956





The Mark I soon after completion, photographed at a burger joint in Painesville, Ohio.



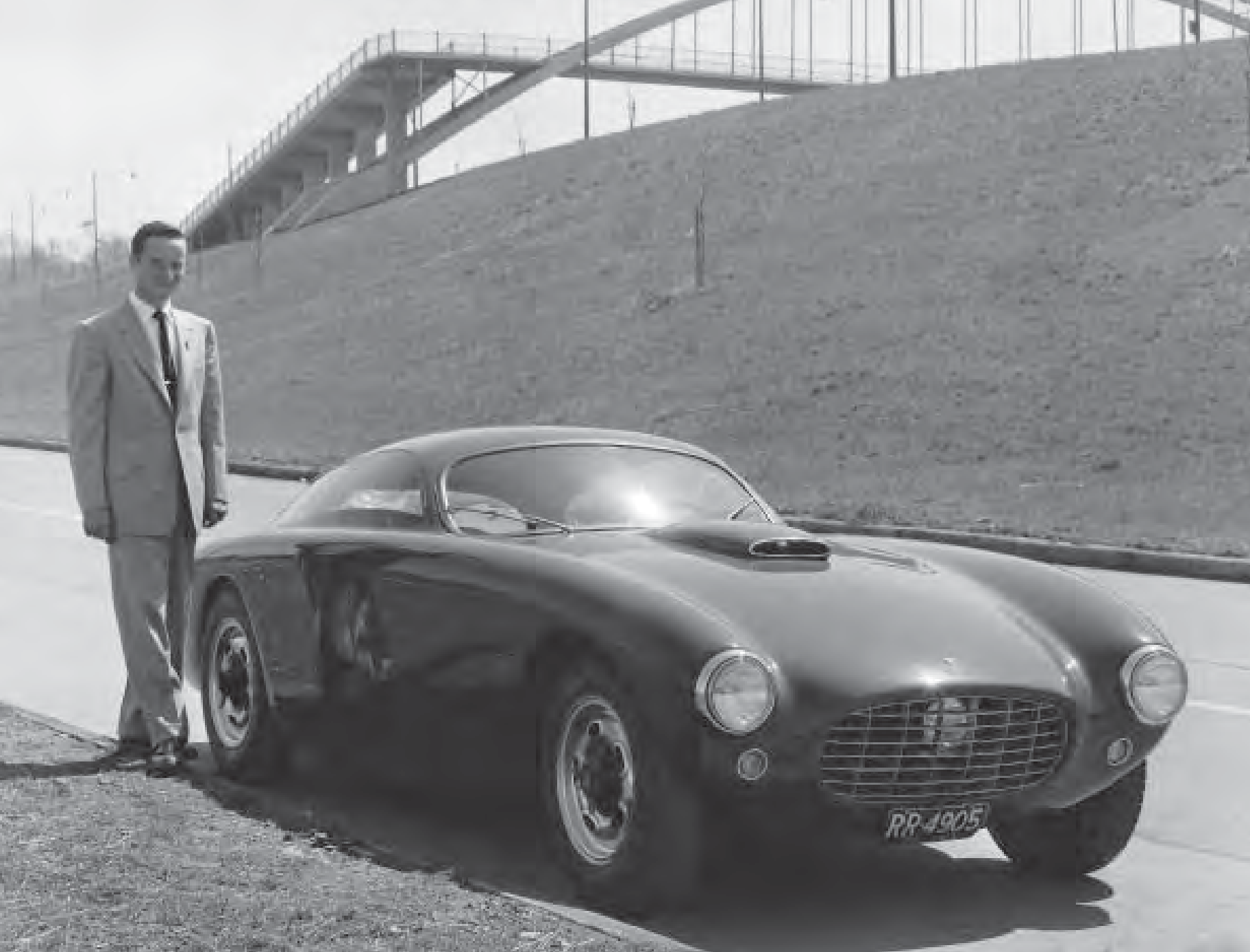
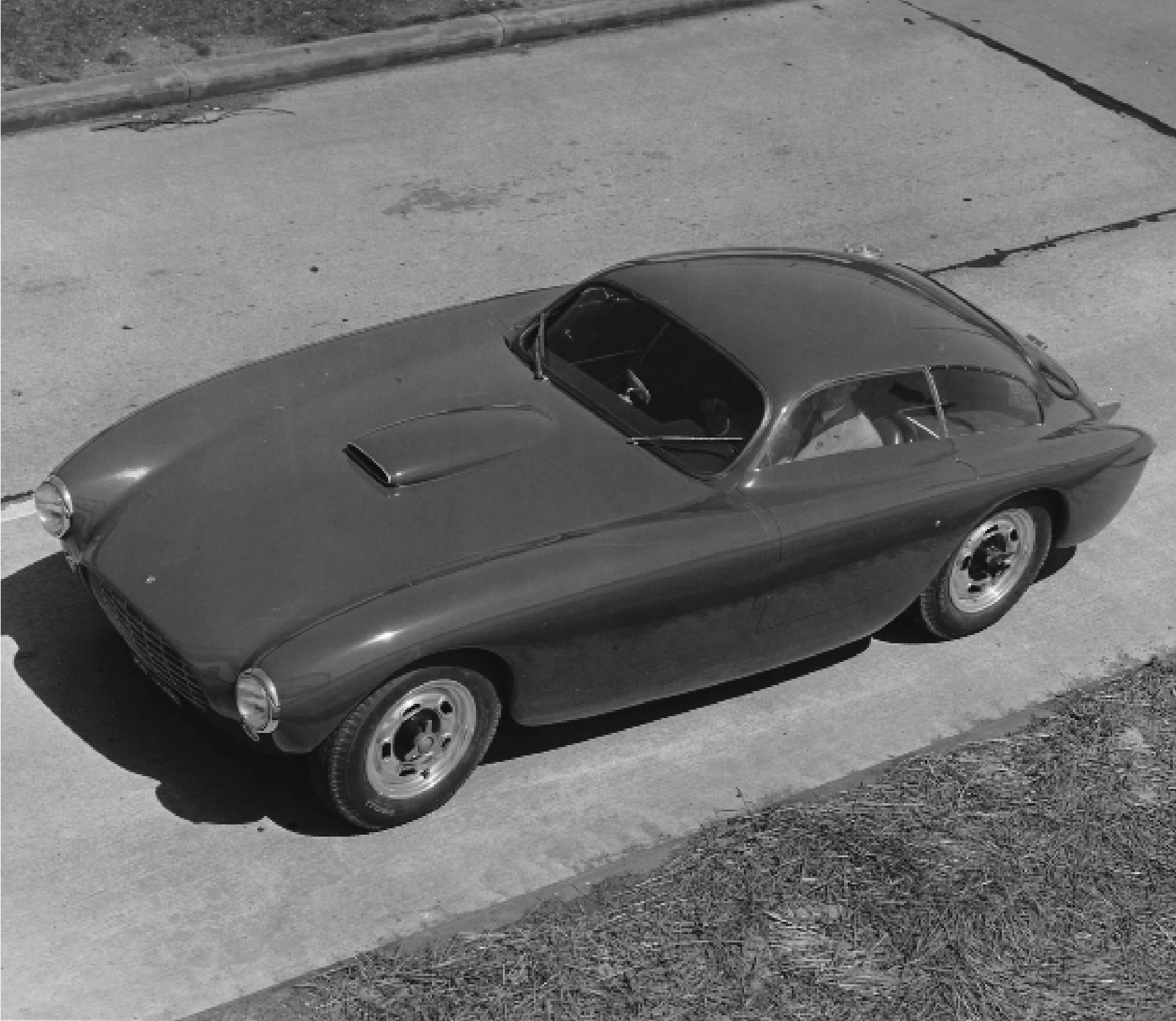


Photo taken near Lake Erie shore in Cleveland. A fan of contemporary architecture, Richard liked the geometry of the pedestrian bridge as backdrop (it is there to this day, spanning US Rt. 2). Note the "aircraft landing light" in center grill - a signature that Richard added to a number of vehicles he owned over the years, including the Mark I, the Interstate, and even several vans.



# IMAGINE

## From the Mark I to the Interstate

Richard often mentioned that windswept snow on the Mark I provided some early inspiration for the Interstate (pictures taken in front of Bosley Nursery).



The following pages show the evolution of Richard's design concepts from the Mark I, to the first "Model A" concept of the Interstate, and then to its final form.



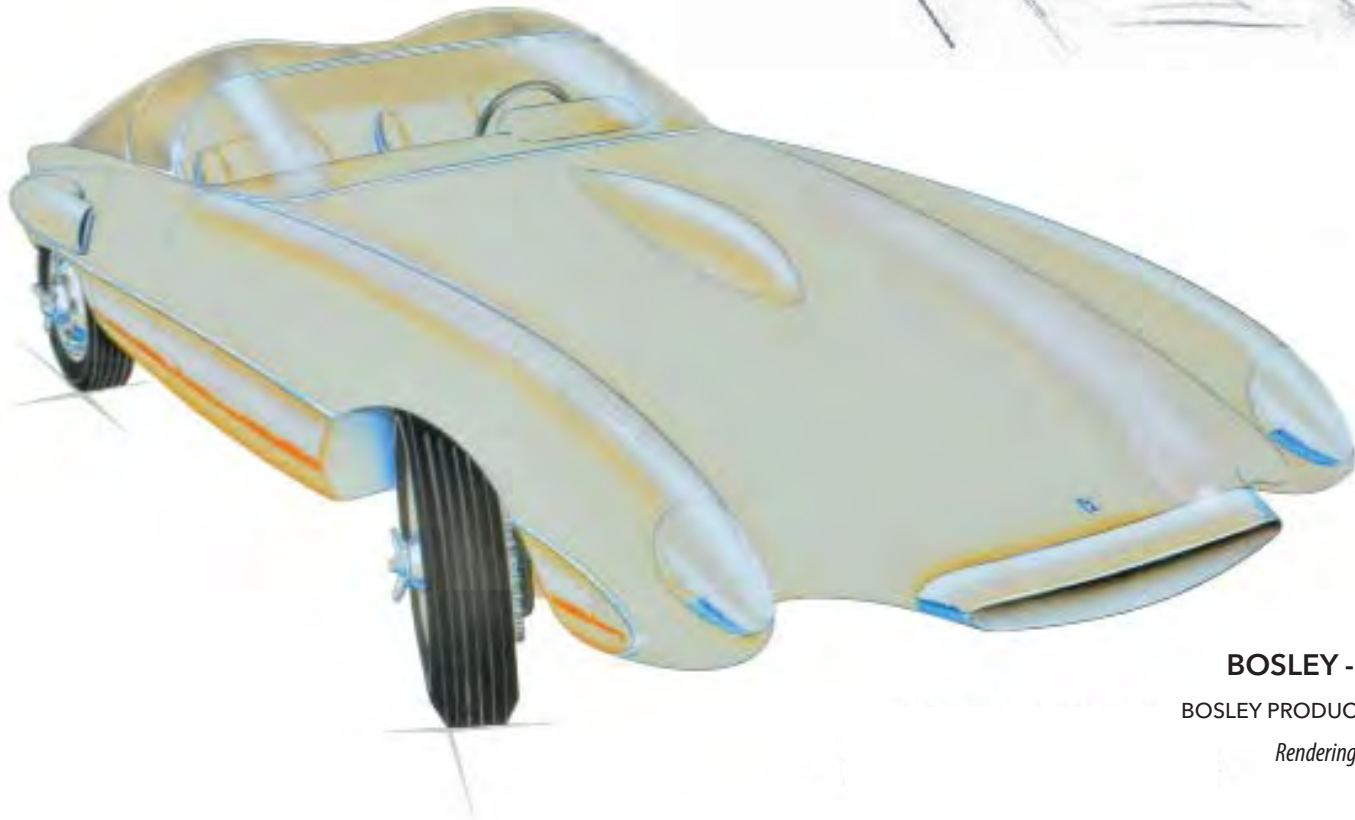
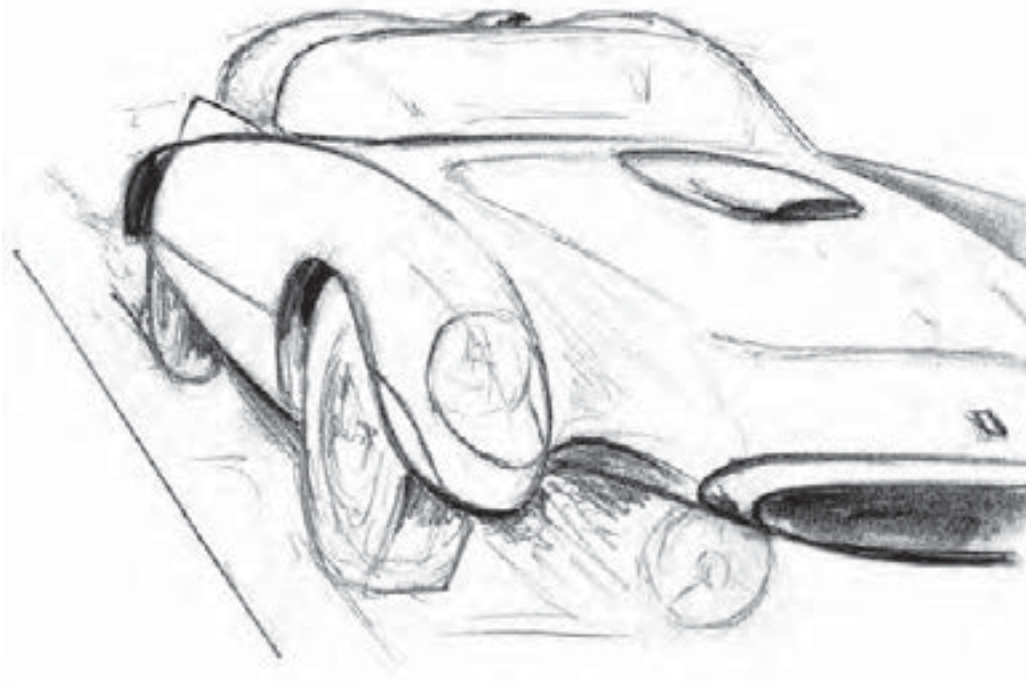






"Mr. Bosley, a sports car and racing enthusiast, wanted a car specifically designed for travel on the new interstate highway systems being constructed throughout the country. "My wife, Carol, and I spend much of our time traveling the new systems, and we needed a car built for this type of travel," he explained. Mr. Bosley often officiates at various sports car races throughout the country. The car, appropriately named the "Interstate," is constructed of hand formed fiberglass. Mr. Bosley first made a life sized plaster model of the car, then formed the actual body panels from the model."

-- *Painesville Telegraph, August 1963*

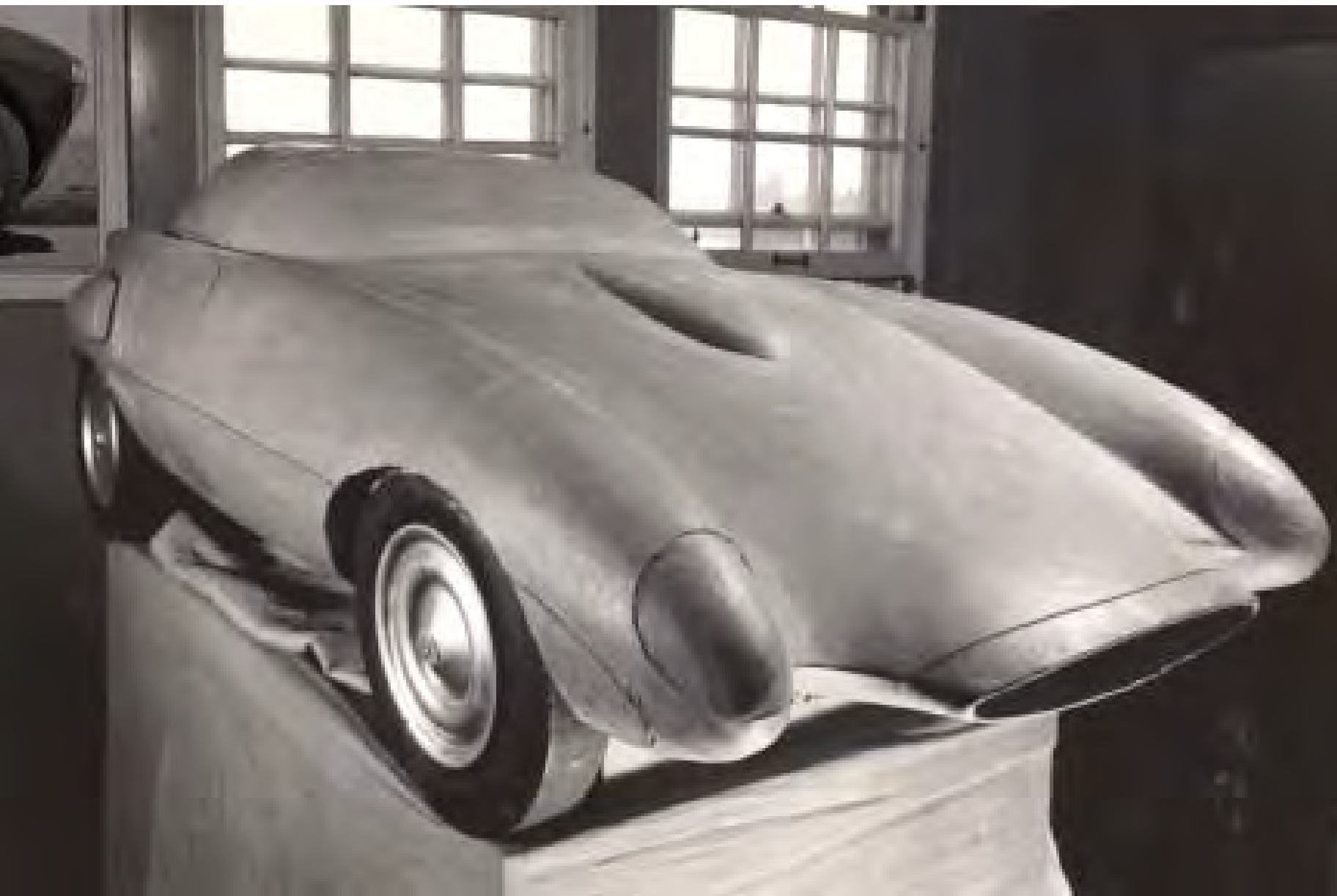


### **BOSLEY - CORVETTE**

BOSLEY PRODUCTS - MENTOR, OHIO

*Rendering by D. Hlebar*





In quarter-scale clay in about 1958, the Interstate anticipates designs like the Ferrari Superamerica and 330 of the 1960's.  
Note picture of the Mark I in background at upper left.

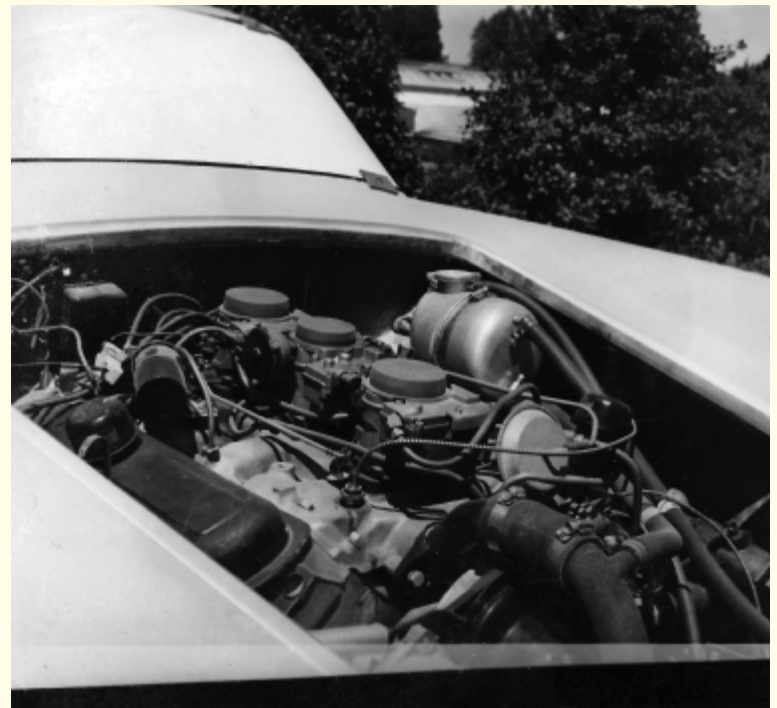
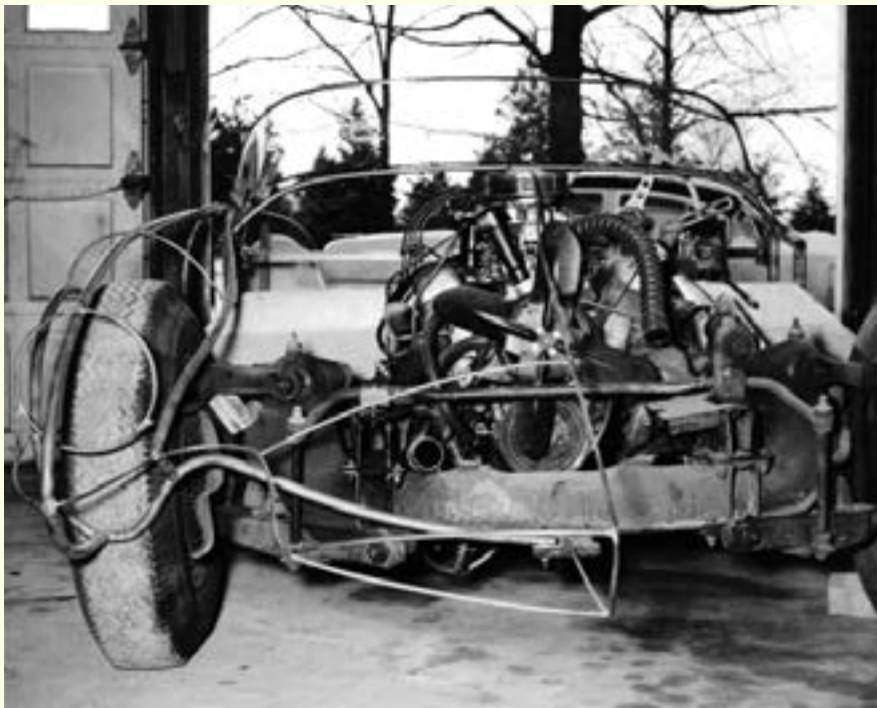




The Carrozzeria Bosley badge features a pelican drawn from the Loomis family crest (lineage of Richard's mother).

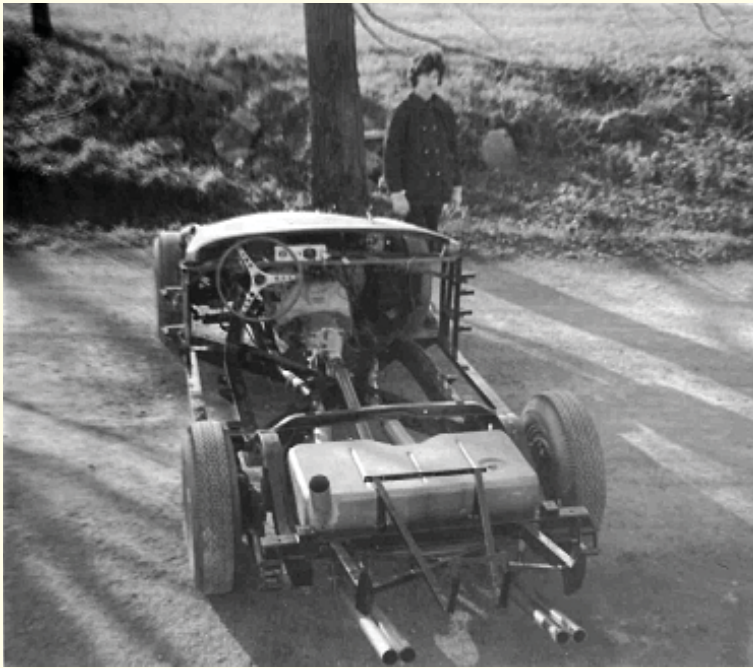






As described in more detail later, Richard acquired a 1956 Sebring Corvette as the platform for the Interstate's coachwork. Keeping the chassis, he eventually swapped the Corvette engine (left) for the Pontiac Tri-Power (above), trading the former for services that would be needed later. He told the Painesville Telegraph that "the engine is not a competition type; it is just powerful enough to do justice to the car's design." He intended the Pontiac to provide good torque and "strong mid-range acceleration for passing while still allowing a substantial top speed."

Serviceability was one of Richard's objectives, which he achieved in part by use of the Pontiac engine and Corvette chassis.



Right and below: the Interstate in "Model A" form in plaster (1959). Note RWB's Renault Dauphine drive car.









## INTERSTATE SPECIFICATIONS

**Engine:** 345 h.p. Pontiac V-8 Tri-Power

**Transmission:** Corvette 4 speed manual

**Frame:** Sebring Corvette, X member, rigid. RWB plated the bottom of the frame rails address the Corvette's flex.

**Body:** Unit construction; fiber glass reinforced polyester resin.

**Wheels:** Halibrand magnesium center lock

**Exhaust system:** 2" stainless steel; full flow mufflers

**Gas Tank :** 35 gallon capacity

**Wheel Base:** 102"

**Weight:** 3,450 pounds

**Tread:** Front - 57" Rear - 59"

**Tires:** Goodyear high traction 6:50- 6:70 15

**Air Horns:** Marchal Fulgor

**Headlamps:** Marchal Optique

**Side windows:** Silbona-Bisano (Italy).

**Seats & Front Bumper:** Reutter (now Ricaro) to RWB specs.

**Original cost:** at least \$18,000 and at least 5,500 man-hours over eight years

**Purpose:** *"Driving in comfort & safety over the interstate highways and for the aesthetic pleasure of good automotive design."*



April 1963



November 1962



Right: the Interstate was built in the garage to the left in this picture of Bosley Nursery taken in 1963.

Note inner-stressed female door mold leaning on the garage. Unlike the Mark I, use of molds for the Interstate's body offered improved finish and lighter weight, and also illustrated Richard's interest in producing more than one.





“The BOSLEY II will go into the paint shop on the 10th of January. Bosley III will be born to my wife in May...” (RWB, 1964)



Above: Bosley III changing a tire on the Bosley II.



"The interior of the Interstate was also designed by Mr. Bosley and executed by a firm specializing in aircraft interiors. The unique interior in tones of golds and burnt oranges in leather and wool is carefully color coded and provides a pleasant environment for the occupants. The inside roof is covered with an ivory simili-leather padded with a layer of shockproof foam rubber. The seats are leather covered in a warm orange and the rich gold carpet is of the finest quality wool which has been flameproofed. The door panels and rear compartment are finished in simili-leather in two shades of gold. The dash is covered with a flat black for non-reflective purposes. The special inlaid wood steering wheel was made in Italy."

-- RWB; *Information bulletin on the Interstate*

Safety & visibility were design priorities for Richard. His use of signal lights to indicate braking and turning in the interior (above dash at left) and across the top of the rear window (perhaps the first use of this now-common feature) is example.

Seat belts, head rests, reclining seats, tempered side windows, smoke colored rear windows, and good visibility front and rear were also among the Interstate's amenities.





RWB, having just loaded the Interstate onto an open trailer to take to its debut showing in Cleveland (1966)



First showing in 1966 at the Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum. In 1967, it would be shown at the Henry Ford Museum.



*Interstate*







At Sebring (1966)





# The Interstate's Corvette context

"We are in the process of tooling for a body that will fit on the Chevrolet Corvette chassis. This car is planned for an initial production of from 12 to 24 cars the first year."

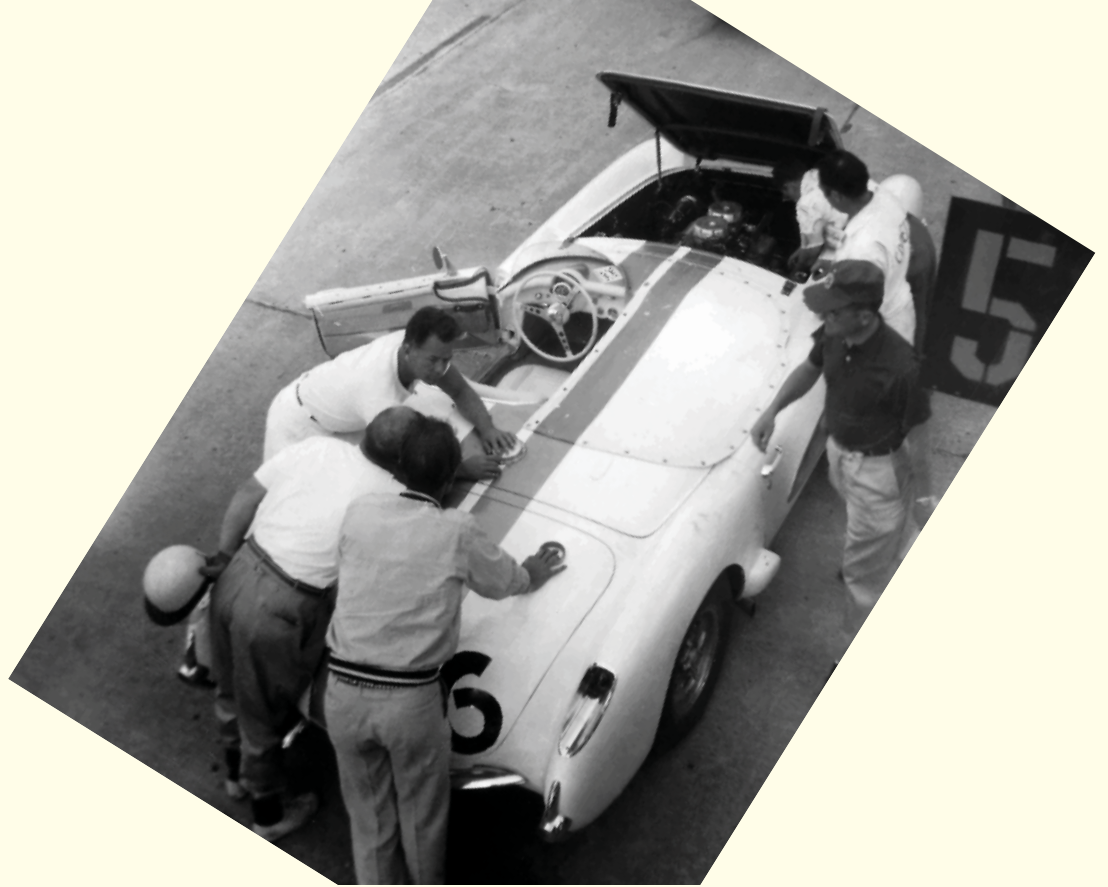
*RWB - 1959 letter to  
Stuttgarter Karosserie-  
werk Reutter & Co.*

"The beautiful Mark I coupe was sold to Dick Doane of Doane Chevrolet in Dundee, Illinois. Part of the "deal" was a full-house Sebring (factory) Corvette, delivered to "Carrozzeria Bosley" in Mentor. Fired by the raving success of his first model, Dick was hard at work on a new idea: "Why not design a 'dream shell' which can be fitted to a stock Corvette chassis and sold to a limited number of fine car fanciers?"

*Sportscar Specials 1958*

Upper: RWB photo of the #6 Sebring SR Corvette for which he would trade Mark I, upon the chassis of which the Interstate would be built (1956)

Lower: Interstate (in "Model A" form) with RWB's '58 Corvette (1959)





Carol's '57 + Richard's '58. This picture of the newlyweds made Corvette News.



"Carol and I went to St. Louis this past weekend to pick up the Sting Ray at the factory. It was exciting for us to do this... Although the car isn't the final word, I like it the more I drive it."

*RWB letter to Gordon Kelly (1963)*



Interstate and the Kelly Corvette at Bosley Nursery. Mr. Kelly stopped in Mentor on his way through from Boston. (1962)



# Inspiration and influence

*Photos by Richard Bosley*

"Dick Irish and Dick Bosley were in charge of the Ferrari pits this year ... The weather was beautiful for spectating but hot for the drivers. Ferrari sent their latest cars including the rear engine V-8. The Moss disqualification was unfortunate but all a part of enforcing the rules. It was a great and exciting 12 hr. race..." -- *Ecurie de Sport newsletter (1962)*

Right upper: this factory 250 took the flag at Sebring in '63.

Right center: Ferrari 275P's placed first (#22) and second (#23) at Sebring in 1964.

Below & below-right: Ferrari 250 TRI/61- overall winner at Sebring in 1962.







GT40 Roadster prototype at Watkins Glen (1965)



Indy '65 winner Jim Clark in Ford-powered Lotus 38



Winning Chaparral 2A (Sebring '65)



Harley Earl in his personal Olds F88 - Palm Beach (1962)



Carol Bosley & Corvair Monza GT - Elkhart Lake (1963)



Rain at Sebring '65 (P. Rodriguez & P. Hill 330 P)



Hill / Gendebien NART 250 GTO - Sebring GT winner (1962)



Miles & McLaren took second in this GT40 at Sebring (1965)



NART Dino 268 SP (Sebring '63)





Cobra pit - Sebring (1965)



NE Ohio region SCCA driver Chuck Stoddard at Sebring (1964)



Rodriguez Ferrari Dino 196 at Sebring (1960)

## Hidden connections across time

At least three times among the many races and events that Bosley attended, he encountered the 1953 Ferrari 375 MM Spyder #0364AM. It appears at right behind the 121 LM, likely in 1955.

It was special because it was a top performing car at Jim Kimberly's hand, with 17 wins out of 20 races entered in 1954. Also special because 0364 would later be owned and restored by Charles W. - himself a licensed SCCA driver, Ford engineer, and father-in-law of Richard's son. There are also indications that Chuck and Richard attended some of the same events, although they never met. But 0364 is a connector between their respective interesting stories. Small world.

Then there is the 1962 Studebaker Sceptre Concept Coupe by Silbona-Basano (below). S-B also made the side windows for the Interstate, and trunk of this Sceptre was used for "duty free import" of the windows. In a nice coincidence in 2017, the Interstate and the Sceptre appeared in the same class at Pebble Beach.



*Photo: Richard Bosley*



*Photo: Beth Bosley. Taken at Belle Isle in 2013.*





Closer to home, Ecurie de Sport brought together teachers, engineers, nurserymen, music store owners, car dealers, and others through their common interest in sports cars. The club also enabled members to get access to designers like Gordon Kelly and Chuck Jordan, road-test new model cars, enjoy insider access at shows and races, and perform community service, such as their trademark Braille Rally.

Several members were competition drivers, including Chuck Stoddard, Norm Daily, and Edsel Pfabe.

Right: Snow Run (1963). Close friend Margaret in her Alfa, cornering at speed to take the checkered flag. This event made the television evening news in Cleveland.





## Horticulture in the space age

Throughout the time he built the Mark I and the Interstate, Richard's livelihood was the nursery business - first working with his father at Bosley Nursery, and later at his own. He named his business "Plant Systems," reflecting his interest in horticultural innovation to improve quality and yields. He was an early adopter of containerized production, greenhouse systems, and the use of analytical testing of plant, soil, and water samples.

As in sports cars, he engaged with others in the field, including serving as president of the International Plant Propagators Society. In that capacity, he often gave talks, including one entitled *Horticulture in the Space Age*.

Upper left: Richard with Rhododendron and azalea typical of the products grown by Bosley Nursery and Plant Systems.

Left: Rhododendron crop at Plant Systems.



Still, he thought of design. "It was amazing that [the restored Mark I] would win the award [from the Milestone Car Society of California] for the car that most represented the American sports car. It was against beautiful Corvettes, T-birds, hot-rods, and many beautiful California cars of all sorts. It sure makes me think 'what if' I had gone out there instead of into the nursery business..."

-- RWB, letter to BRB (1995)

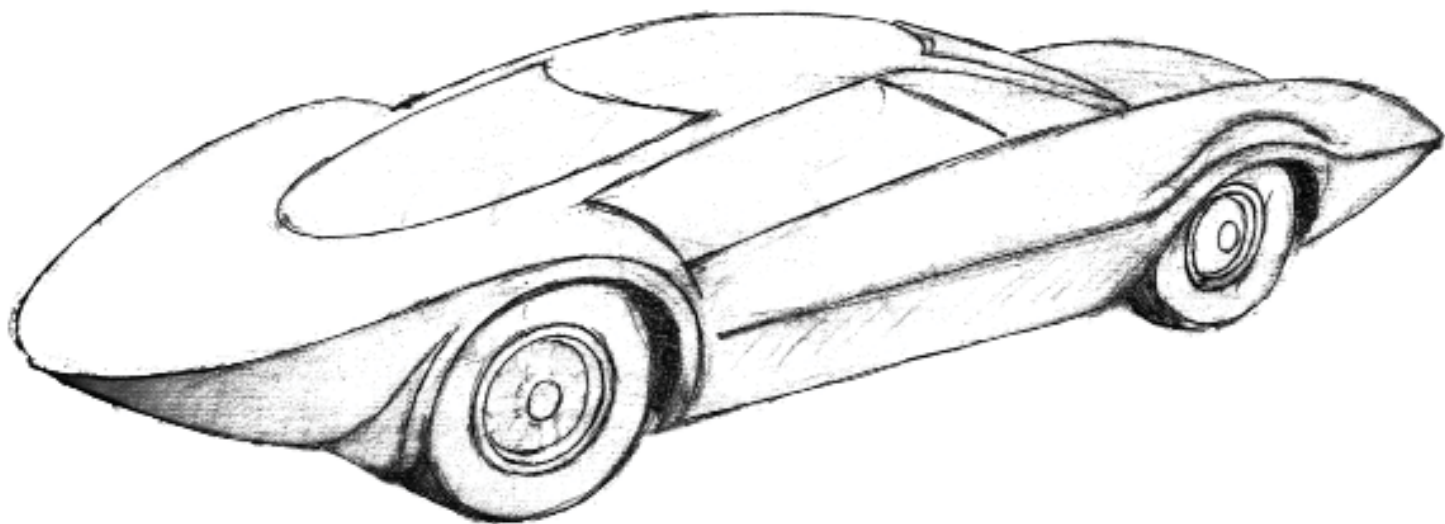




Richard was also keenly interested in the actual space age. Beyond his love of model building, he attended the Cleveland National Air Races (including 1949, when Bill Odum's P-51 crashed), observed the Ranger 9 lunar probe launch (left), inspected exotic planes like the X-3 Stiletto (above) and the XB-70, and later in life enjoyed rides in a number of warbirds like the P-40 shown above.

His passion for aviation certainly influenced his design aesthetic, with the most direct example being his 1990's-era Stealth concept (below).





Richard continued to draw and make models for the rest of his life...

"Let's thank him for building two works of art. So many of us have the dream but not the talent to build the ultimate driving machine."

-- Ron Kellogg



1st Place American Sportscars and Most Exciting Car - *Pebble Beach Concours d' Elegance* 1996  
2nd Place, Postwar Sports Closed - *Pebble Beach Concours d' Elegance* 2011



2nd Place, American Dream Cars of the Sixties - *Pebble Beach Concours d' Elegance* 2017

**RICHARD W. BOSLEY**  
AMERICAN COACHBUILDER

**1928 - 2009**