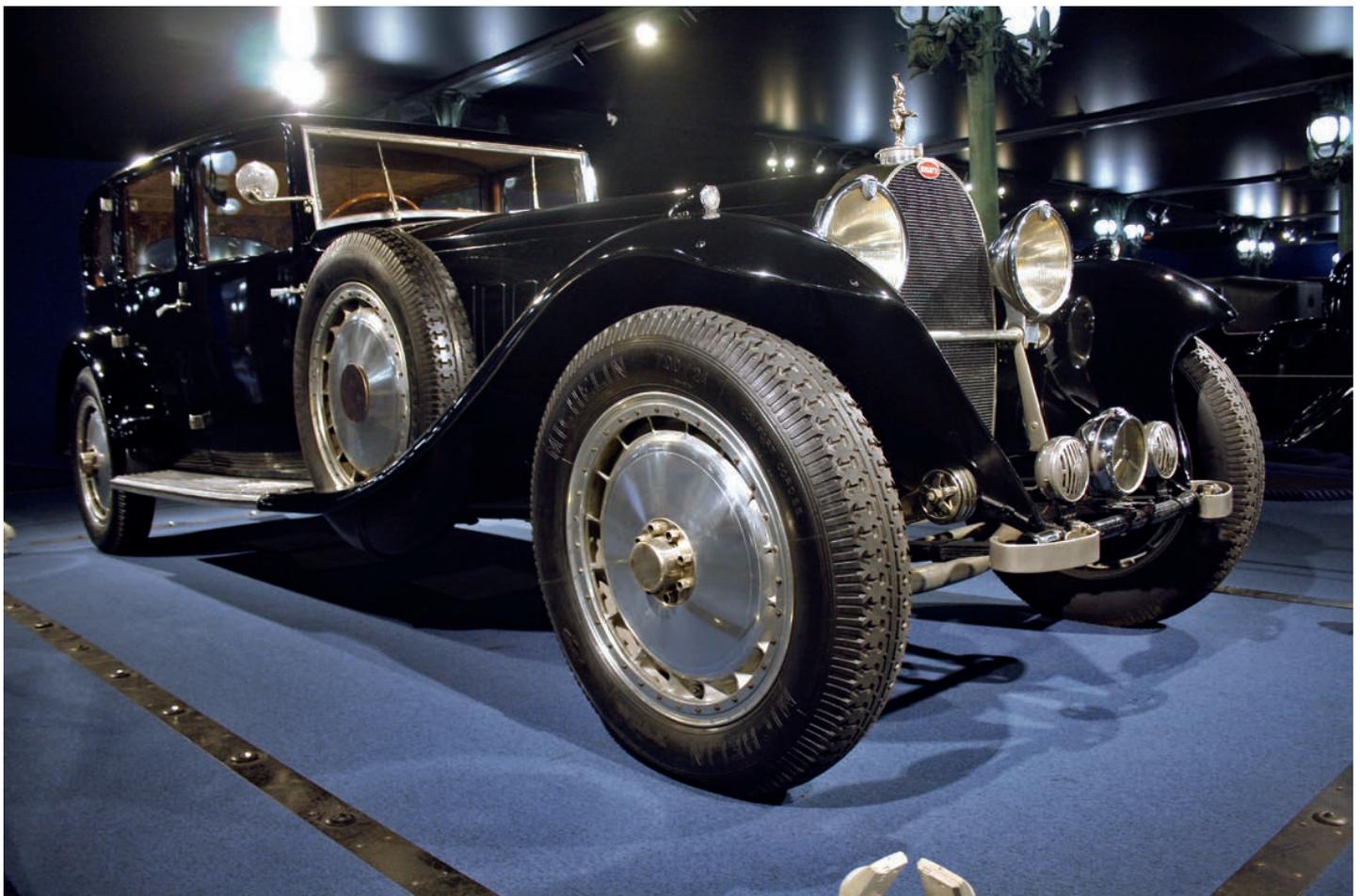


The Schlumpf affair – two men in search of the truth

After we published, together with Kay Hottendorff, our book on Michel Dovaz's mysterious collection (*The Fate of the Sleeping Beauties*), more and more people asked us to investigate the real course of events with regard to the Schlumpf collection and the Schlumpf affair. Initially, we were not enthusiastic. The story of the two brothers and their automobile collection had been milked dry, and judgement had been passed everywhere. Occasionally, an article, such as the one by Erwin Ullrich in the Dutch magazine *Het Automobiel* (vol 11, no 126), tentatively

shed a different light on the matter, but most books and articles condemned the brothers' pathological collecting, and, at the time, we had no reason to doubt those views. Yet, several people in France, and a number of Bugatti owners, kept encouraging us to conduct a thorough investigation. In France it was in particular the surgeon André Dufilho, a friend of the Schlumpf family and passionate Bugattist, who put pressure on us. In the Netherlands it was the prominent Bugattist Kees Jansen, who, among other things, can claim credit for the Dutch Bugatti registers.



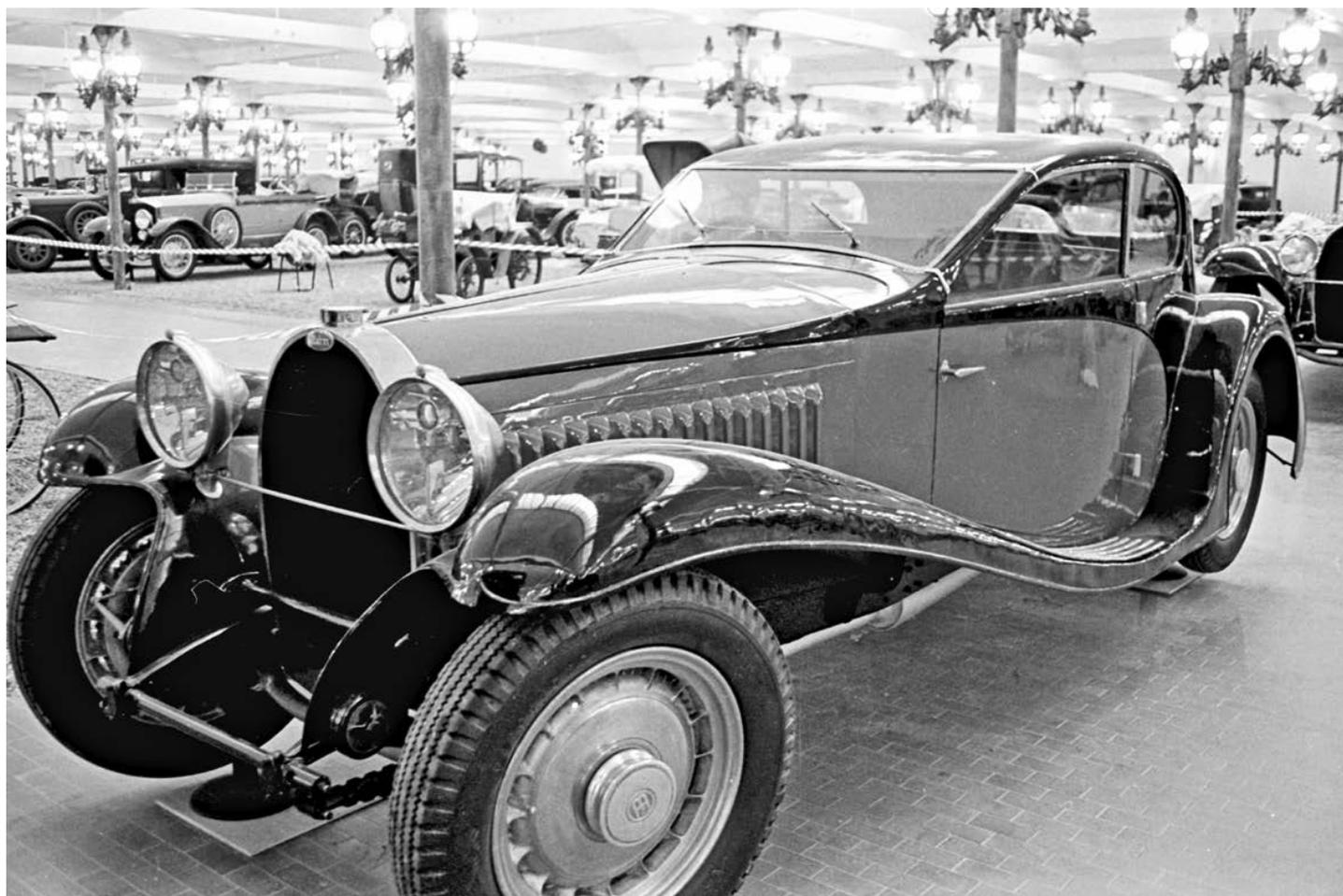
The automobile world's holy grail: Bugatti T41 Royale Park Ward. (Photo collection Op de Weegh)

Value of the collection

When, on March 7, 1977, the workers forced entry into Fritz Schlumpf's well-guarded sanctuary, they must have been absolutely stunned, seeing such a magnificent collection of restored automobiles in almost perfect surroundings. The workers must have felt deeply hurt, first having lost their jobs, then seeing their boss' wealth. They had no idea that Fritz had been willing in 1976 to sell part of the magnificent collection to Tom Wheatcroft in order to pay them at least three months' salary, and had even reached an agreement with Wheatcroft to dispose of the entire collection. As was pointed out

earlier in this book, these deals failed because of the French government's attitude. The workers could not know that it was precisely for that reason that their fate had been sealed. They only saw this opulence, which understandably outraged them. The unions, which were also deliberately kept in the dark, and thus could serve a higher political motive, only fanned the flames of hostility.

But what actually was the value of this immense collection? At what price had it been purchased and then restored? And how had the wonderful museum been built? Above all, how had all of this been



1929 Bugatti T35B #4933

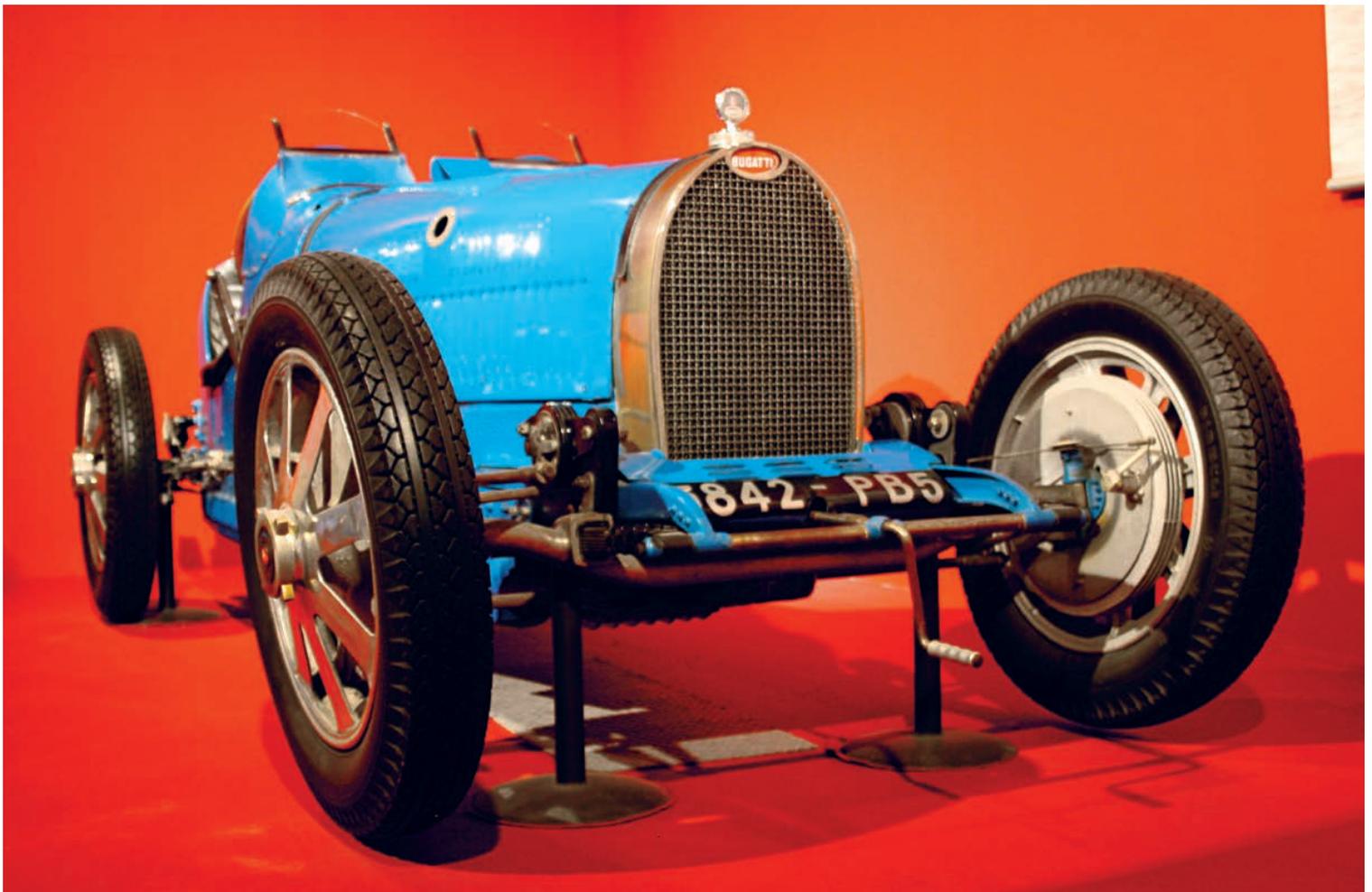
In the early 1930s Ettore Bugatti already had an excellent reputation in racing circles. He drew a lot of attention both for his designs and the technical aspects of his cars.

Until 1921 Bugatti cars had four-cylinder engines, but this changed when a straight-eight engine was developed, with a capacity of 1991cc. To do this, Bugatti applied what he had learned from the development of airplane engines for the Allies in WWI.

The first model equipped with this new engine was

the T32, also known as the 'tank.' When it participated in the 1922 French Grand Prix, it finished in third place. However, Ettore Bugatti was not satisfied with the car, and started designing a new one. His goal was to build a car that any and every amateur race driver, all over the world, could drive, not only during races but on any street. The result was the T35. Its design, performance, and technical aspects were absolutely fabulous, and the T35 should be seen as one of the most, if not the most, successful automobiles in racing history.

The T35B presently occupies a special spot in the Schlumpf museum: right next to the photograph of the Schlumpfs' mother. (Photo collection Op de Weegh)



1955 Gordini T32 F1 #42

Within the Schlumpf Museum the Gordini collection is quite unique. Besides Bugattis, Fritz very much liked the Gordini brand. The marque produced a total of 50 automobiles, and Fritz bought 14, all directly from Gordini in 1964, with the exception of one 26S, which he got in 1968.

The marque's founder, Amadeo Gordini, was born in 1899 in Bazzano, near Bologna. At a young age he became fascinated by technology, in contrast to his father, who was a horse-trader.

At age 25 Amadeo moved to Paris, a life-changing experience. He became Amédée, and started his career at

the famous Hispano-Suiza company, where he gained a great deal of experience in the automotive business.

Young Gordini was ambitious, and, two years later, started his own garage in Paris, where he primarily repaired Fiat cars, and became very interested in racing. He sharpened his knowledge of racing cars and, soon started participating in the Le Mans races. Even though he was rather successful in these competitions, the winnings were not enough to provide a living.

In the mid-1930s Gordini had developed so much knowledge and experience that several car makers took note. In 1934 he signed a contract with the French car marque Simca.

The Gordini T32 at the 2016 Rétromobile. (Photo collection Op de Weegh)



