

Etceterini & Friends Market Place

1956 Lancia Appia Series II Vanette

Chassis number: C80-1902

Engine number: 12547

Fresh thinking in road-car design and success in both racing and rallying are the hallmarks of Lancia, which has always been known for innovative and advanced designs.

By the 1950s the company was fully involved in motorsport, with Lancia winning the great Targa Florio, the Carrera Panamericana, the Liege-Rome-Liege and the Mille Miglia. The road cars were stylish, and in the case of the Appia, which was the mainstay of the company's fortunes, they were sensibly priced.

The concept was correct from the start: a well-engineered 904-cc V4 engine that suited the punitive Italian vehicle tax system. With the Series II Appia, the engine volume increased to 1,090 cc and discerning buyers could even choose special bodied versions from the likes of Pininfarina, Zagato and Vignale.

Among the options were the commercial variants, ranging from little pickups to vans such as this Series II Furgoncino.

Made for zipping around narrow streets or crossing country roads, only about 2,850 were built between 1954 and 1959, and almost all were exclusively sold in their home country. This vanette was beautifully restored in Switzerland to a very high standard and is presented in complete and correct condition with two-tone gray paintwork. Virtually new and used sparingly since its ground-up restoration, it would be the perfect advertising or support vehicle for any business. While more modest than some of the mid-1950s race car transporters, it is absolutely charming and would be welcomed at period revival meetings.

This Lancia Appia Furgoncino was offered at no reserve and was sold for \$33,487, including buyer's premium, at the Christie's Pebble Beach sale, August 19, 2001.

In today's automotive history class, dear SCM readers, we will try to teach a few things that should be obvious to collectors, but sometimes get lost in the emotional mix that accompanies buying and selling.

Lesson #1. You can find a vehicle that may be considered common and mundane, move it, and discover that even the most avid, rabid enthusiast in another corner of the globe may have never seen it. Our case study, this Lancia Appia Furgoncino, was the ambulance, shoe cobbler's truck or postal transport in Italy. While everybody who lived in Italy in the 1950s and '60s is as familiar with these things as Americans are with Chevy pickups, no one in Monterey, not even the most ardent Lancia fanatic, seemed to have ever seen one—let alone one that was beautifully restored.

Some 45 years after its original manufacturing, with most of its siblings now in a scrap yard in Bologna, this vehicle was one of the most talked-about cars of the Monterey weekend. It created a buzz that had affluent bidders clustering about the car and chattering about how good it would look parked in their pits at Goodwood or Laguna Seca.

Compared to this Furgoncino, Daytonas were a dime a dozen, and 356s as common as VW Beetles.



All this bidder interest translated into gasps of "It sold for how much?" Refer to the Fiat Jolly that Christie's sold for \$39,100 at Pebble Beach in 1999 (November 1999, page 31) for a similar response.

Lesson #2. You can't always believe what sellers tell you. I purchased this Appia in Geneva to use as a Vespa-hauler for a scooter business. (As a sidebar, I found it on eBay and was the only bidder). I've decided that the

Swiss don't measure things very well (except perhaps cash), or at least the yodeler who owned this Lancia didn't. He guaranteed a Vespa would fit inside nicely. Well, maybe a disassembled one would. The van arrived in Boston, promptly failed the Vespa fit test and was consigned to the Christie's sale to find a new home.

Lesson #3. Condition, condition and condition. The former owner of the Lancia spent more than \$55,000 restoring it. Add in the cost of the van itself, and the new owner (a long-time SCM subscriber; Midwest Ferrari dealer and great classic enthusiast) got the car for half price. Further, he didn't have to suffer through the agonies of

restoration. As we've said many times before in SCM, the smartest way to buy something is to let someone else sweat the restoration.

In conclusion, students of collecting, cute icon cars like the Fiat Jolly, Austin Mini Cooper, Nash Metropolitan, Morris Minor and Lancia Appia Vanettes will always attract disproportionate attention and interest at auction if they are well-restored and beautifully presented. Surrounded by muscle cars and racing Maseratis, the cute cars take on a unique appeal all their own. I'd argue that this vehicle was as popular among bidders as any Ferrari, Porsche or Bentley during the historic weekend.

This car is a perfect example of an area in which a "land" auction will always trump an on-line one. At a live auction, the auction company can bring together an interesting array of cars, hopefully fine-tuned to make each stand out. With an on-line auction, you have to wade through a morass of thousands of listings to find what you want. Under the Christie's tent, my Lancia van stood tall, and the bidding rose to commensurate level.—Steve Serio

(Historic data and photo courtesy of auction company.) ♦

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| Years produced | 1954-59 |
| Numbers produced | 2,850 |
| Original list price: | \$2,450 (1956 Appia Sedan US POE) |
| Tune-up/major service | \$350 |
| Distributor cap | \$55 |
| Chassis # | ID plate in engine compartment |
| Engine # | Side of block |
| Club | American Lancia Club, 496 El Dorado Drive, Daly City, CA 94015-2125, 415/992-1486 |
| Web site | www.lanciamotoreclub.co.uk |
| Alternatives | Morris Minor panel van, Austin Morris Countryman |