

Anthony Martinis

He raced at the Pebble Beach Road Races and he may be the last one standing

At age 98 in 2026, Anthony Martinis is thought to be the only surviving driver in the Pebble Beach Road Races of 1950-1956. His concluding words at the Pebble Beach Forum on August 13th, 2026, made an emotive impact on the 1950s motor sport cognoscenti present including Mark Brinker, Rob Manson, Ken Gross, David Steele, Simon Taylor, Derek Hill and family and Bill Pollack's family.



Anthony Martinis in August 2026 at Laguna Seca.
Photo by Geoff Zimmerman

Anthony F. J. "Tony" Martinis is a Northern California vintage sports car racer from Sacramento who began competing in the early 1950s. He famously raced an MG TD alongside friend Mike Simpson at early post-war events like the Pebble Beach Road Races. The MG TD Era: Tony Martinis and his co-driver Mike Simpson pooled resources to buy a stock MG TD in 1951, using it as a daily driver before prepping it for weekend road races by taping the headlights and removing hubcaps. At the Pebble Beach Road Races in 1952, Martinis famously found his team pitted right next to Tom Carstens' racing crew, which fielded the legendary #14 Allard.

The Junkyard Find: Years after his initial grassroots racing days, Martinis salvaged a derelict Allard P1 chassis and partial body components from a local junkyard. The "J2XXX" Special: He heavily fabricated and restored the frame—incorporating modern updates like a live rear axle on coil springs—creating a unique hybrid machine often referred to in The Allard Register as his custom P1/J2X-style special. Source: The Allard Register.

Interview with Marcus Bicknell (marcus@bicknell.com) of August 15th, 2026, at the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion

MB: Tell us how you got to go to the Pebble Beach Road Races, as you say, in the forest...

Anthony Martinis: I was born in 1928 and was racing by the time I was 20. I started out in Sacramento racing hot rods drag racing down a straight piece of road. We called ourselves the *Roaring Roadsters*. I had a Alexander on a B block with an overhead valve system¹ in a 32 frame rails '27 T body from 1948 to 52. It was a very fast car. We went round the quarter-mile ovals in the Sacramento and Northern California - the Bay Cities Racing Association BCRA.

And so I heard about this thing called sports car racing; I didn't know anything about it. I had a MG TD I found and bought brand-new from Feil Motors in Sacramento and California and I said well I'm gonna drive over there I read about this in one of the hot rod magazines about the races. I'm gonna go over and find out what those fellows are up to. So I took off from Sacramento but I didn't have

¹ An Alexander overhead valve (OHV) conversion for a Ford Model A or B engine block replaces the stock flathead design with a rare, high-performance cast iron or aluminum cylinder head that relocates the intake and exhaust valves directly above the combustion chamber. Produced prior to World War II by Colonel Alexander.

any money. I was very poor at that time. My mother wouldn't pay me. We had a winery I worked for her but she wouldn't pay me so I had to find us somebody to help finance me so a young feller my friend Michael Simpson had some money and I said Mike I want to take the MG down to Monterey and see if we could find out what the racing is like down there and he said okay I said I don't have any money well I got no money to take us down. In those days all you had to have was tape on the headlights, seatbelt and the helmet.

MB: Did you need a license?

Anthony Martinis: No, you didn't even, they just let you in. We didn't make a reservation or anything so we got down there and we bought our gasoline and stuff in route. We drove the car down there and when we got there we went up and talked to some people and they gave us a number 57. But Michael had the money so he registered the car under his name. But what happened was Mike had one eye and he couldn't see too well. His depth perception was not much good. He said even though I'm the one registered, you drive. So I said no that's not fair. You've paid for this so you drive some too. So we swap drivers and I let him go out one time for practice and the next time I'd go. We went out whenever we could and we alternated back-and-forth. I drove the race.

MB: and just back up, remind me, what year this was?

Anthony Martinis: You know I'm confused either 52 or 53 it was early. I had the '51 MG new and it was about a year later.² It was quite new and we added a little bit of speed to it. And so anyhow we did that and so I got out on the track and doing the best I could getting in everybody's way. Then that was my first vision of an Allard and of course the number 14 belong to Tom Carstens, you know, the driver and all that. And he blew by me and I said boy if I ever get some necklaces to rub together I'm gonna get me an Allard.



MB: was that in practice that the Allards overtook you?

Anthony Martinis: No it was in the race. We weren't allowed on the track at the same time those big guys were out.

MB: can you remember, did you have two practices and one race? How did the day go?

Anthony Martinis: I think we had two of them. There was a whole line-up of MGs; just about everything there was an MG. The car we raced was Mike Simpson's MG, not mine. My MG was marked #100, his was #57. The #100 picture was at the Clear Lake Hill Climb. Mike's #57 was a

² Michael Simpson is listed in the #57 MG TD competing in the Preliminary Pebble Beach [Novice], Pebble Beach Sports Car Road Race on 20.4.1952. Results given as "did not arrive (Not known if ran)".

yellow car and the fenders were modified on the car by a guy named, Harry Westergard³ of Sacramento who taught George Barris⁴ and all of those guys. We were #57, a yellow MG with fenders kinda pointy-looking at the top. We kind of made it look like a TC fender

That was us. And we had no racing tires or anything like that so we realised early on that we better just stay out of the way and we so we survived the event. It really wasn't a magnificent experience but I was learning and I learned an awful lot there and that was my introduction to making to the right as well as to the left because all I ever had done before was to go round the quarter-mile ovals.

MB: you mentioned at the Pebble Beach Forum on August 13th when you spoke so eloquently, and humbly, that you were leaning over the fence looking at these famous racing drivers looking really important...

Anthony Martinis: That's the way I feel. You know when I was around even people today right now I feel like a young man, a kid, looking through the knothole in a baseball game and admiring the players. I see these gentlemen here with a grey hair like me and they're sitting in the very powerful race cars and they were the real people of the time and I never thought I would be one of those.

MB: but that's your humility but in the actual fact you got into your MG and you raced with them.

Anthony Martinis: Yes I did that

MB: So did you think of going back there again with Michael the year after?

Anthony Martinis: No we did not. The next time that we raced under Michael's name was at San Francisco at Golden Gate Park. That was a very interesting race and we didn't win anything there either. Then we drove up to Nevada and they had the Virginia Lake races. I stopped racing after about five years and became a parole officer in the prison system in Sacramento. I started out with Sacramento police department and then I became a probation officer. That was a pretty good job and then I got a better job being a parole officer. Then Ronald Reagan, president of the United States, appointed me as a chief liaison officer for the US Secret Service but in between I was a criminal investigator for the Attorney General with the CI&I. I retired from that 1970 and in the meantime always had a couple of businesses going on the side. I sold out the winery in 1970 and did very well because the movie stars from Hollywood all wanted to be in the wine business and we were able to sell a whole bunch of antique wine-making equipment to these nobs who didn't know anything about it.

MB: In the words you gave us on Thursday at the Pebble Beach Forum which was remarkable you ended with them a couple of phrases which should become apocryphal already with Rob Manson, Mark Brinker and the people listening to you talked about how you could go racing on a modest budget and with humility. The phrase which you ended with was "The Ark was made by amateurs. The Titanic was made by professionals". That makes you a bit of a philosopher Anthony.

Anthony Martinis: I've been saying this for years and I've learned part of that from an old Allard driver by the name of 'Cottonwood' Bob Lytle and he used to say 'keep the road between your thumbs'. That was all you had to know to drive. And the other one was 'keep the shiny side up and the greasy side down'. We were always on a short end of the dollars like most race car guys and so

³ Harry William Westergard (1916-1956) of Sacramento, California was a pioneer in the world of custom cars.

⁴ In the 1950s, legendary custom car designer George Barris primarily focused his shop, Barris Kustoms, on American lead sleds and radical hot rods rather than British sports cars. Iconic actor James Dean owned an MG TD that passed through the broader Hollywood and custom orbit associated with Barris.

we would look at these people with the C Jags and stuff that they could buy... we had to make our own stuff.

MB: At the Pebble Beach Forum and what's happening here at the circuit and tomorrow at the Concours, do you feel some acknowledgement of you as a person

Anthony Martinis: Yes I do. I feel like I've grown quite a bit just here that's why I was so - there was nothing written down when I even made that talk in there - it came right out of my head right down there and I just felt so honoured that I could be part of that and for the first time I felt like I belong.

MB: Who had the foresight to invite you Robert Manson, Mark Brinker? Or Simon Taylor.

Anthony Martinis: It was Simon Taylor. I was pitting with Bob Lytle in the Allard car here in 2003. Simon brought the Stovebolt Special⁵. I was mechanic for Bob who was a great mechanic himself and Simon has done a practise lap and is walking up and down looking for somebody could help because he had no tools., no parts , no nothing. Lytle's car was running on a magneto and he was running a nailhead Buick⁶ in it so it was a GM unit and he had a big trailer full of parts. So this feller was walking up and down and he walked up to me - I didn't know him from a load of hay - and he said I've got a bit of a problem, my car has quit and I don't know why and I said, well, he said would you look at it for me you, look like I'm a mechanic. So I said I've fixed a few cars so let's go look. So he had the bonnet off it. I looked in there and I went on one side and wasn't seeing anything there and looked on the other. And there was the coil right next to the exhaust pipe. And I said you just cooked your coil and I said I'll bet you your condenser went with it, and the distributor all went together. I said I'll see what I can do for you. So I went to back to Bob, I said did you carry a backup GM distributor in your collection of fine goods over there. He says I believe I have. I say there's a fellow up here who brought a car from England but it needs a new coil. We have to get that coil away from the exhaust pipe. We fitted the new coil and moved it but the wire from the main supply was too short so we had to change that too. The longer wire was a spark plug wire which we fabricated. We just barely made it and so we flipped that in and I said well try it now. He turned the key and off it went. And that's how I met Simon Taylor.



*Kelli Gonsoulin, Anthony Martinis, Pearl Taylor and Simon Taylor.
Laguna Seca, August 2026.*

MB: have you got pictures of you with the MG

Anthony Martinis: I got one picture of me with a number 100; may be from San Francisco. No, on later examination, it was taken at the Clear Lake California Hill Climb. Date is not remembered. Sam

⁵ The HWM Stovebolt Special started life as a 1950 HWM Formula 2 car but took on a world-famous and much-loved identity of its own with characterful bodywork modifications by Tom Carstens and a Chevrolet V8 engine, earning it the "Stovebolt" nickname.

⁶ The Buick Nailhead is a legendary overhead-valve V8 engine produced from 1953 through 1966. It earned its famous nickname from hot-rodders and mechanics because its small, vertical valves featured unusually long, thin stems that looked like nails

Weiss won in his Chrysler powered J2X Allard, so that was the year. I don't have any other photos but I will give you the Clear Lake picture of me in my MG numbered 100 at speed.

MB: So what I'd like to do is be in touch by email. I'm gonna do an article for the website of this group www.dmtrg.com but I'll send the article to Simon as well in case he wants to do something for another magazine. So to get a couple of photos together would be useful yes. Thank you so much for the interview



*Kelli and Anthony at the Hillsborough co. Concours d'Elegance
16 July 2017. 1950 Allard J2SL 'Fetor'*

Communicate with Anthony through Kelli Gonsoulin-Martinis at Kelligonsoulin@gmail.com

Michael Simpson race record

# 57	MG TD	Preliminary Reno [Novice Handicap], Reno Sports Car Road Races	21.10.1951
		8th	
#47	MG TD	Palm Springs [Novice Modified 1.5], Palm Springs Road Races and Concours d'Elegance	23.3.1952
		7th	
#57	MG TD	Preliminary Pebble Beach [Novice], Pebble Beach Sports Car Road Race	20.4.1952
		did not arrive (Not known if ran)	
#57	MG TD	SCCA National Golden Gate [S1.5], The Guardsmen Golden Gate Road Races	
		31.5.1952	8th
#87	MG TD	Torrey Pines [S1.5]	20.7.1952
		did not arrive (Not known if ran)	
		Stockton Trophy, Stockton Road Races, Class 6	24.8.1952
			18th
		Stockton [S1.5], Stockton Road Races	24.8.1952
			26 th

Anthony Martinis and his Allard

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Anthony "Tony" Martinis is a vintage car enthusiast from Sacramento, California, widely known in vintage racing and The Allard Register circles for driving his modified Allard sports cars, notably the custom P1-based J2XXX "Jurassic Allard" and a 1950 Allard J2 SL (Special Long), called 'Fetor'.

Anthony F. J. Martinis got introduced to motor racing in those innocent days right after WWII. His first racer was a '27 T-bucket that he stripped down, and fitted with a Ford four cylinder Model "B" block and an Alexander OHV head. He had a lot of inexpensive fun running it on circle tracks around northern California. Tony and his friend, Mike Simpson, then pooled their limited resources and got an MGTD in '51. It was basically stock, and served as Tony's daily driver. However, whenever they could scrape together enough spare cash for an entry fee, they would remove the hubcaps, tape over the headlights, don a leather helmet, and go racing. While their racing record did not set any records, they survived, and had a lot of fun in the process. Tony relates one DNF experience when he got run off the road into a heavy patch of iceplant while racing at Torrey Pines, near San Diego. He recently learned that one competitor in that race was some kid from LA named Bob Lytle, who was running a Riley. There is good reason to speculate that Lytle was the culprit who sent Tony off into the weeds.

Tony and Mike also raced at Pebble Beach that year, where they ended up being pitted right next to Tom Carstens' team that was running their famous #14 Allard. Members of the two teams did get to know each other quite well in the course of the weekend. However, Tony admits that once on the track, he only got a few glimpses of the Allard as it blew past him every couple laps during the race. Once they returned to the pits, Tom Carstens and Bill Pollack were called to get the trophy before they were able to park the Allard back in its slot, so Carstens asked Tony if he would do them a favor. Thus, Tony's introduction to an Allard was limited to moving the monster about 20 feet in reverse. But that experience was enough to make him vow that - once he could afford it, he would own an Allard. By the early '90's, Tony found that he could afford an Allard. But, how does one begin a search for one of those rare beasts? Shortly thereafter, he happened to stumble across a wrecked P1 in a Sacramento area junkyard. Not just any wreck, but one that had been virtually pounded into the mud. It seems that the fairly complete car had been reposing next to a dump truck for a few years, until one day someone wanted the dump truck's chassis. In the process, the employee assigned to

the task rather unceremoniously set the truck's box atop the Allard, where it remained for a few more years – or at least long enough for the junkyard's owner to forget that he even owned it. It was not until he was forced to move to another location that he discovered the squashed remains of the P1, at a point in time that roughly coincided with Tony's Allard quest. Tony ended up buying the remains of the P1 for little more than pocket change. Once Tony found himself to be a bona fide Allard owner, he began his research in earnest. One of Tony's Internet-savvy friends plugged him into John Allard, who referred him to Michelle Wilson of the Allard Owner's Club in the UK. She, in turn, referred him to Roger Hayes, Bob Lytle, and Andy Picariello.

In this process, Tony formulated a vision of his Allard project in his mind, and commenced his pursuit of that vision. Since the P1 body was, for all practical purposes, "history," he decided upon going the J2X route. And this is where one thing led to another. Tony likes to use the analogy of the ultimate costs and complexities that result from a seemingly simple \$2.50 investment in a marriage license.

First off, he decided to retain the P1 frame's basic dimensions and configuration. Next, after considerable fabrication, he installed a live rear axle on coil springs in the rear, and modified latter day components for a split front axle. Concurrently, Tony made several sketches and drawings of the J2X-type body that he envisioned for his project. Once he had basically a "rolling chassis," Tony loaded it into a container for shipment to John Pitney in the UK to have an appropriate aluminum body fabricated.

While things began progressing, the limitations of phone and letter communications soon became apparent. Extensive visits with Roger and Sylvia Hayes helped considerably during their visit to Tony's home in Sacramento, but Tony eventually decided that a personal visit was necessary. So he flew to England, where he had an opportunity to attend an Allard Owners Club meeting, visit Brooklands, and also make a trip up to observe the project in Pitney's shops.

Once the Allard got back to Sacramento, he began with the mechanicals. For engine and power train, he decided upon a modern drive train and running gear, with power from an 800+ HP Ford Mustang DOHC engine with Whipple supercharger. He is also going with a full complement of comfort items that we have come to expect these days. After seeing the pictures of this monster, I dubbed it "The Jurassic J2". Anthony plans to use it as a high speed, long range tourer. He plans to enter in any rallies that will accept a car of this type. I think that Sydney would approve.



Alumnus' Desire to Give Back Spurs Support for Law Enforcement

Anthony Martinis

Sometimes we all can use a helping hand.

For Anthony Martinis '56 (Corrections Work and Administration), credit goes to some friends in high places for his decorated, colorful career in law enforcement. And he's repaying the profession he reveres through a bequest to Sacramento State that will provide scholarships to officers in the field.

"A lot of law enforcement people are married and have children so going to the graduate level is a strain on their budget," Martinis says. "I wanted to set up a scholarship for a person who is already a professional, so that he or she can move up."

Martinis was a parole officer in Sacramento County for 17 years and he's been a member of the Northern California Peace Officers Association for nearly 60 years, including a term as president.

His career got a boost from his friend Pat Patterson, an emeritus Sac State professor and a close confidant with former California Governor Earl Warren.

Patterson's recommendation eventually led to Martinis' appointment as a parole officer by then-Governor Ronald Reagan. Martinis distinguished himself as a valuable contributor for Sacramento County, but obtaining his dream job was not an easy process.

"My phone rang and there was a big booming voice," Martinis remembers. "It was Walter T. Stone, the chief parole officer in Sacramento County. He said I'd been recommended for a parole officer position, but we need to talk to you about your qualifications. He said, 'It wouldn't hurt if you got a little more education.'"

In order to advance in his career, Martinis enrolled at Sacramento State, eventually earning his degree in corrections work and administration.

"They didn't have a criminal justice program at the time," Martinis says. "I took a lot of engineering classes and really enjoyed those but I got my degree in administration."

Martinis embarked on his career as a parole officer and was an outstanding public servant. He served as a liaison officer to the U.S. Secret Service when President Kennedy visited the state, worked undercover and never shied away from extra duties.

Martinis, who retired in 1970, can tell stories for hours about the colorful characters and wild antics he encountered throughout the transformative 1950s and '60s. He transported prisoners, counseled inmates at Folsom and Vacaville and served as a criminal investigator during the Black Panther investigations.

The Roseville native is passionate about grooming the next generation of public servants and maintaining a high standard for law enforcement. The scholarship endowment in Martinis' name, valued at more than \$1 million, will be open to current law enforcement officials in the region who wish to pursue their master's degrees through Sacramento State's highly ranked program.

"There currently isn't any scholarship for graduate-level students (in criminal justice)," Martinis explains. "By setting up the scholarships through Sacramento State, the law enforcement in the area can really get something out of it."

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