

MATHIS VL 333

Before the War, Mathis was the number 4 car manufacturer in France, behind Renault, Citroën and Peugeot. In 1934, Emile Mathis made an agreement with Ford and his plant in Strasbourg was producing the MATFORD, a contraction for Mat(his) + Ford.

In 1940, Emile Mathis left France for the United States. He started a company, MATAM, to manufacture munitions for the Navy. By the end of the War he had 200 employees and delivered more than 260 million artillery shells to the Navy. He later received the "E" award from the Navy with 5 stars.

Also in 1940, Jean Andreau, very well known for his success with aerodynamics , was in charge of a new project; a small car to be produced after the war by Mathis. During the 1930s, Jean Andreau designed with Dubonnet the Dolphin, a rear engine car with a Ford V8 engine. The car was demonstrated in Detroit around 1935. He designed a race car for the Captain John Eyston; which was competing with John Cobb in Salt Lake City. The maximum speed was 86 miles per hour. He was also responsible for the Peugeot "Andreau" which was supposed to be in production in the forties with a V8, but the war made the project impossible.

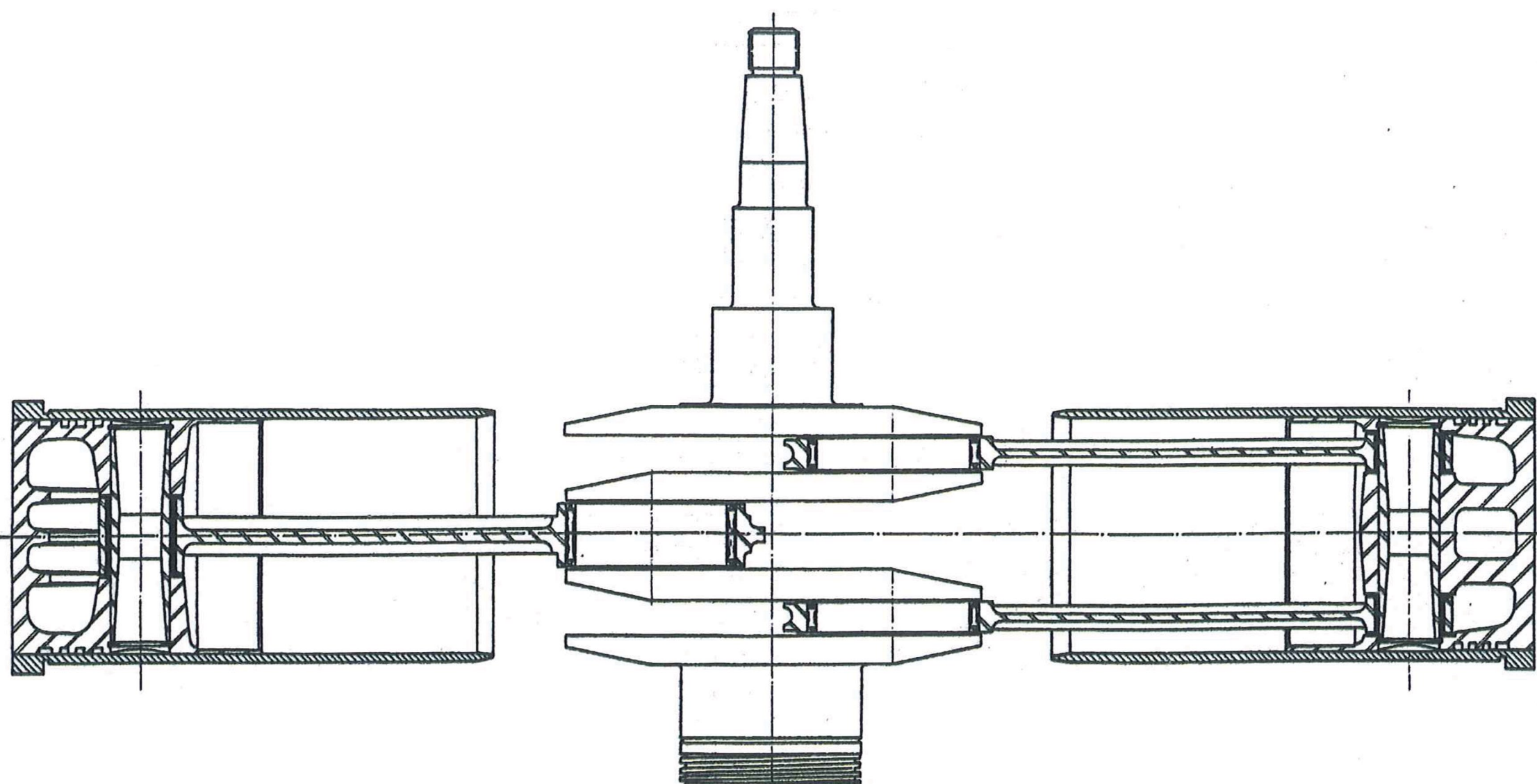
The VL 333 is built from 20 gauge aluminum sheet metal. The body is welded together. There is no chassis; it is a bubble. The engine is a flat twin 700 CC and the car is front wheel drive with a full independent suspension. Only 9 prototypes were made during the war from 1940 to 1945; they were hidden from the Germans, as any work on automobiles for the civilian sector was forbidden.

The car in front of you was presented at the Paris Automobile Show in 1946, but after the war France was in turmoil. Raw materials and energy were in short supply. With a Communist minister in charge of production, Politics ran amuck. In fact, Louis Renault was imprisoned and died shortly thereafter, and the Berliet brothers in Lyon were also imprisoned.

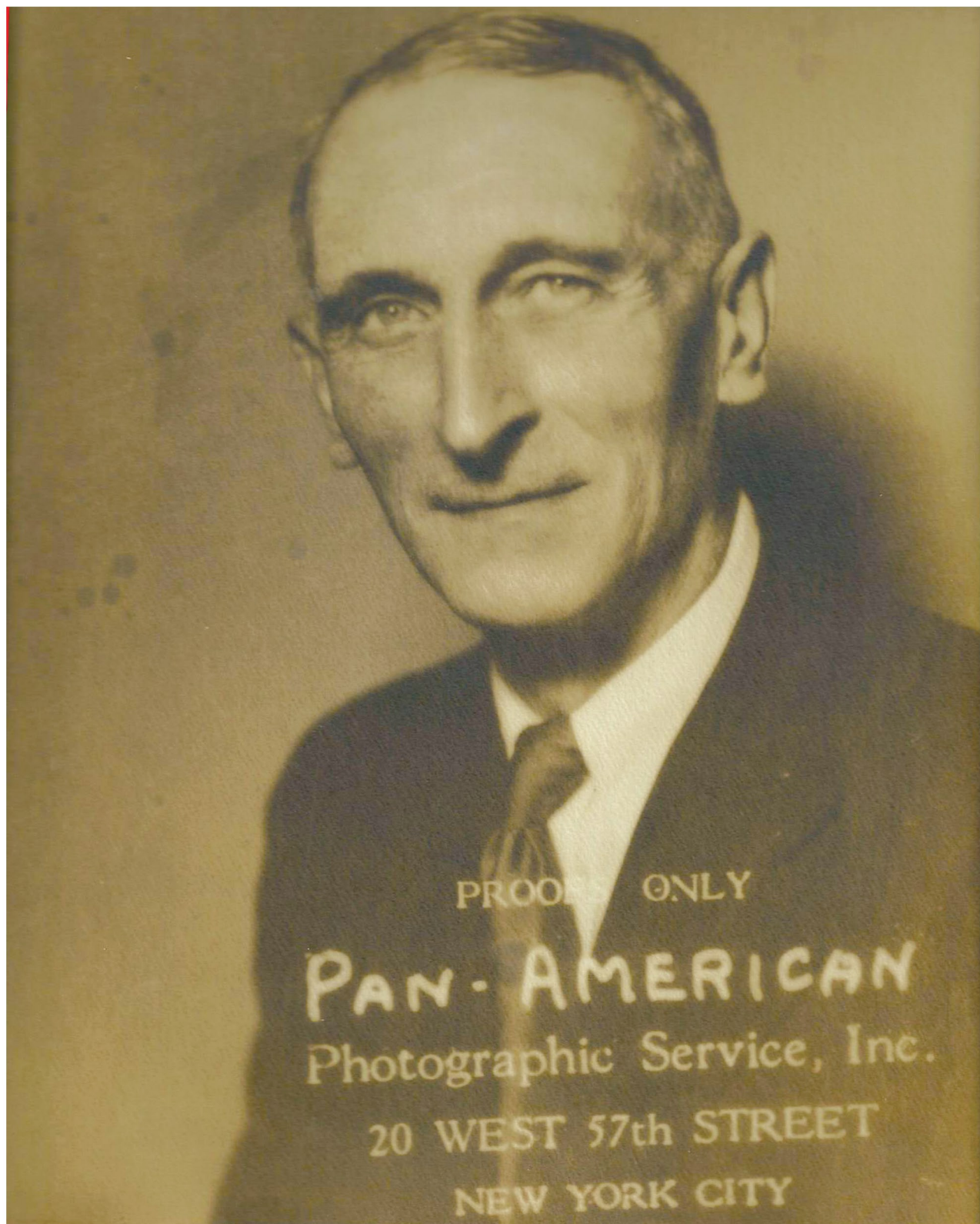
The French Government through planification and heavy bureaucracy refused the access to Mathis of supplies to manufacture the car. The VEL 333 was doomed and there is only one survivor; the one right here in this museum.

Weight: 390 kg (850 pounds)

Mileage test results from September 1942 under control of French Office for Production :
Speed: 105 kmh (65 miles) - 3.475 liters per 100 km = 69 miles per gallon



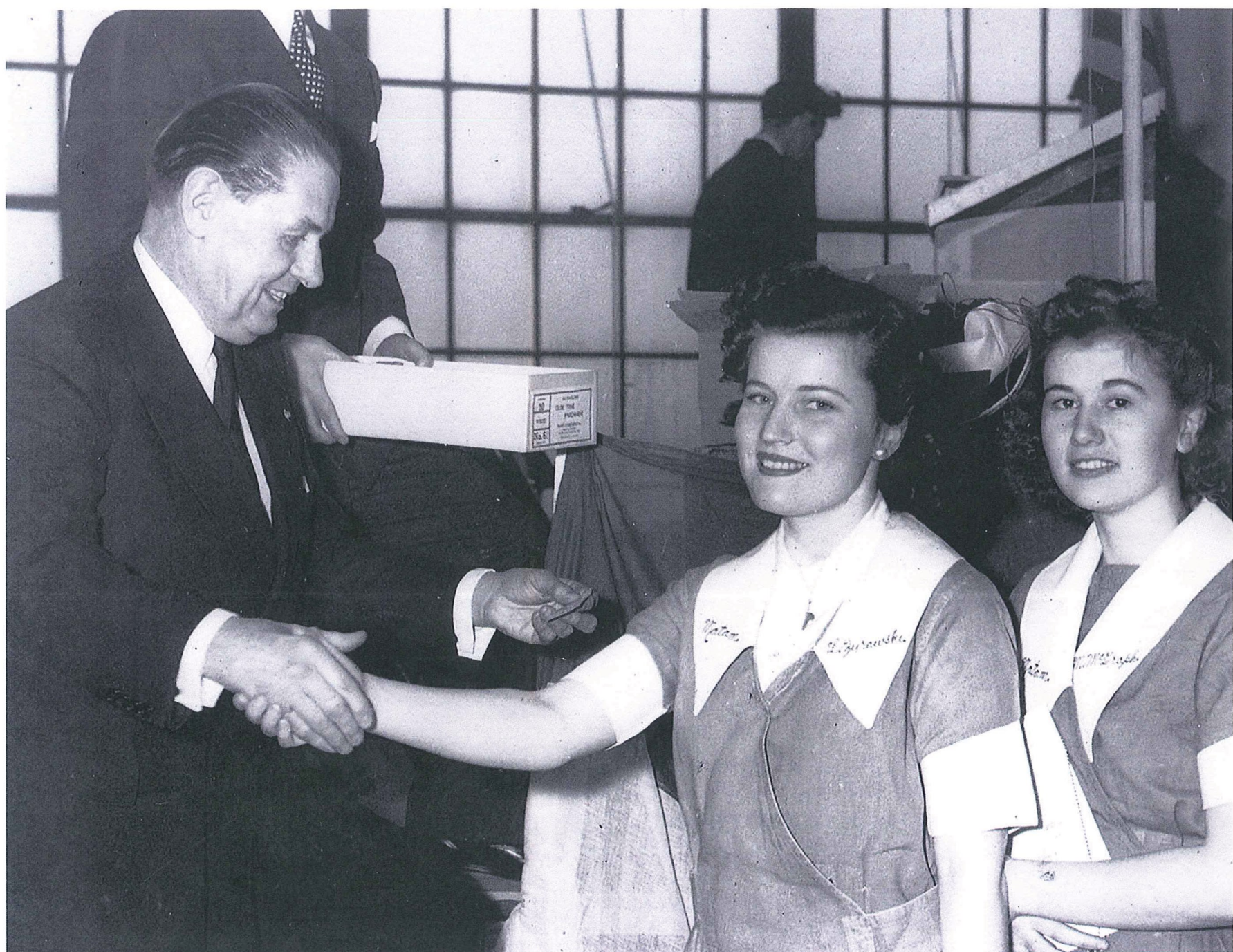
Schematic of the Mathis Twin Flat Motor, as used in the Mathis VL333



Portrait of Jean Andreau



Promotional Poster/Advertisement used for the 1946 Paris Automobile Show



Emile Mathis awarding female employees of MATAM (Ordnance Manufacturing)



Aluminum Sheet Metal Body Construction (Prototype Model Shown)



Mathis VL333 on Display at the 1946 Paris Automobile Show