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A Publication of the RROC Atlantic Region

*Scintillating Silver Shadow*

*Spring 2021*



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# The Atlantic Lady



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### On The Cover

Michael J. Thompson's 1967 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow, Chassis # CRX 2378. Photograph courtesy of Michael J. Thompson. Background: former Nyack College.

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# MEET OUR BOARD

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Bill Wolf

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

**JOE MARLEY**



Hello Atlantic Region Members and Friends,

As I write this column, I'm remembering our Saint Patrick's Day Luncheon exactly one year ago at the '76 House in Tappan, New York. Fifteen or so Rolls-Royces, Bentleys and one Studebaker, filled the parking lot outside. Inside we ate, drank, and made merry and wondered how our speaker never fell off of any of those bridges! There was an occasional comment about people beginning to hoard bathroom tissue. What a difference a year makes.

In my last two entries I articulated my hope the pandemic would soon become a memory. Finally, that hope is being realized. As I write this missive I am a mere forty-eight hours away from receiving my first COVID vaccination. I've spoken with numerous people who've already received one or both of theirs. More than ever I'm confident that the worst is behind us. And I'm not the only one with that confidence; our annual meet at Lake George is on for June 22-26; our brothers and sisters in the Iroquois Region have a 'Mini-Meet' scheduled at Watkin's Glen on July 29-August 1st; and we hope to have a schedule of activities including an early October Concours ready very soon. The New Hope Pennsylvania Car Show, an event we attend with members of the Keystone Region, is scheduled for August 15th and the Greenwich Concours d'Elegance is back on this year but on new dates -- October 22-24th.

The prior description of events is not by any means complete but intended merely a representative list. It shows that there's a bright future ahead. In a very few months we may never receive invitations to inventively-named "virtual banquets" and "zoom cocktail parties" again.

So, clean up the Rolls or dust off the Bentley and try on those blazers, sport coats, or sun dresses languishing in your closet. You're going to need them.

Cheers,

Joe Marley,  
Chairman





## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**JOAN O'IMOWITZ**

Dearest Atlantic Region Club Members,

Entering into the new year, has brought a slight sigh of relief. Now that there are vaccines to address the Coronavirus, hopefully, as we move further into 2021, we can go about our normal business once again. Let's look forward to driving our PMCs and enjoy getting together with our fellow Atlantic Region and other regional club members at events such as the National Meet at Lake George in June.

As Nora Ephron once famously wrote: *"Everything is Copy,"* meaning that 'everything that happens to you is fair game to write about.' I concur. It would be wonderful if our club members volunteered stories about themselves and their PMCs, just as Harry H. Herman, Jr., has done. After all, **The Atlantic Lady** is all about **YOU**. We want to get to know you. Did you take any interesting trips? Which events have you attended. Did your PMCs win any awards along the way? Tell me what has been happening in your life these days. Inquiring minds want to know.

Our thanks go out to Michael J. Thompson for writing the featured covered story about his beautiful 1967 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow. Great job Michael!

I'd like to welcome our newest members, William Finney, Joseph B. Mortell and Charles Summers, who wrote wonderful profiles. William wrote about his newly acquired Bentley S1, Joseph about his 1964 Silver Cloud III and 1986 Silver Spur and Charles about his 1989 Corniche II. Thank you gentlemen.

If you have anything to say, or would like to see your PMC featured in **The Atlantic Lady**, please direct your comments to Joan Imowitz at: [rroc.tal.magazine@gmail.com](mailto:rroc.tal.magazine@gmail.com)

Joan Imowitz  
Editor-in-Chief  
The Atlantic Lady Magazine



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

- April 10, 2021 Rally Across America. Sign up with the registration form: <https://files.constantcontact.com/63ae0dbb001/afb540da-16a4-4e81-b773-31fc475a80d9.pdf>
- April 24, 2021 RROC National Judging School - Mechanicsburg, PA
- April 25 - May 2, 2021 Phantom I Society YOYO Tour - Asheville, NC
- May 14, 2021 Mechanicsburg, PA. A Proper Motor Car Mixer, Roaring 20s Theme. Telephone: (717) 795-9400 or [www.rollsroycefoundation.org](http://www.rollsroycefoundation.org)
- May 15, 2021 Rolls-Royce Foundation 25/30 HP Seminar - Mechanicsburg, PA
- June 22 - 25, 2021 Silent Auction: [museum@rollsroycefoundation.org](mailto:museum@rollsroycefoundation.org)
- June 23-26, 2021 Annual Meet Lake George, NY email: [RROCHQ@RROC.ORG](mailto:RROCHQ@RROC.ORG)
- July 29 - Aug 1, 2021 Iroquois Region Grand Prix Weekend, Watkins Glen, NY. Contact David Corbett: [david.elwingrant@gmail.com](mailto:david.elwingrant@gmail.com)
- Sept 10-12, 2021 British Invasion XXX Mini-Meet - Stowe, VT
- Sept 10-18, 2021 National Fall Tour - Vancouver Island Pootle
- Sept 18, 2021 Fall Golf Outing, Mayapple Golf Course, Carlisle, PA: For further information, contact: [museum@rollsroycefoundation.org](mailto:museum@rollsroycefoundation.org)
- Sept 20-26, 2021 National Fall Tour - Michigan
- Sept 22-26, 2021 Saugatuck/Douglas National Fall Tour
- At this juncture events are in the planning stage. Contact Merrie Webel, VP of Activities, for your event suggestions: [rroc.vp.activities@gmail.com](mailto:rroc.vp.activities@gmail.com)

# SPOTLIGHT ON RARITY

## *Scintillating Silver Shadow*

MICHAEL J. THOMPSON

*H*appy Spring!! We have all survived another cold, cruel winter and I trust everyone reading this will be able to enjoy a new automotive season after taking their Proper Motor Cars out of hibernation.

I am Michael J. Thompson, an Interior Designer with over 25 years of experience throughout NY & NJ, from Bergen County, New Jersey. Please take a moment to view my revamped website which is: [MJTinteriordesignsLLC.com](http://MJTinteriordesignsLLC.com). Find more pictures of this car on Instagram: [mjt67rr](https://www.instagram.com/mjt67rr).

For those of you that know me, the photograph featured on the front cover exemplifies two of my favorite things. It is the perfect combination of a beautiful English car with a beautiful English house. While sadly the house is not mine, it does serve as the perfect backdrop to my classic Rolls-Royce.

The passion for both houses and cars started around the time I was in junior high school. I've always admired Tudor Mansions and Castles. As a young aspiring designer, I drew up many elaborate mega-mansion floor plans and visited many fine examples of them around the country. Subsequently, everywhere I went that had a Rolls-Royce out front or while driving on the road, I was completely mesmerized. Since that time, I could spot a Rolls-Royce from a mile away and it became like second nature and a sixth sense. I quickly learned where to find Rolls-Royces everywhere I traveled. I'd start finding

Rolls-Royces parked out front of the very best hotels and restaurants from Beverly Hills, to Paris, London and New York. I believe I was one of the first cars spotters, before it was popular.

It is no coincidence that I am the proud owner of this pristine 1967 Silver Shadow two-door Saloon with Coachwork by H.J. Mulliner Park Ward. Chassis #CRX2378.

This car is much rarer than the standard four-door Silver Shadow and had to be special ordered. Only 571 were produced between 1966 and 1982. The two-door version does have a sleeker and sportier appearance than the four-door, but all Silver Shadows are incredibly timeless. In particular a Midnight Blue 1967 Silver Shadow Coupe was made famous in the Thomas Crown affair in 1968 featuring Steve McQueen.

With only 53,900 original miles and for only the last two years, I am the vehicle's fourth owner. The first owner was from New York City. He had it completely restored and repainted in 1987. The original paint was black which was changed to St. James Red. The second owner was from Philadelphia and the third owner, from whom I bought the car, is Pelle Gaglione. I first saw my car at a local "Cars & Caffe" event where the magnificent color and flawless chrome work sold me. Pelle still owns an amazing blue 1935 20/25 limousine and a two-tone 1983 Corniche drophead. We have become good friends and he

always answers any questions and concerns I have with my car. I feel very lucky to have bought the car from a local owner rather than having it shipped to me sight unseen from another part of the country.

So far my “land yacht” has been a pleasure and privilege to own. Like clockwork, I do take “Her Royal Highness” out every two weeks so she is not sitting around for too long. The car is like driving a gorgeous, powerful and iconic work of art. Each time we go driving, the pride of ownership continues and there really is nothing like watching over the bonnet with the curves

of the fenders culminating at the peak with the Spirit of Ecstasy guiding us along. For someone that never had a second car and based on her age, I was a bit nervous each time turning the key that she would start up. She has proven to not be temperamental at all and is perfect for taking on nice leisurely weekend drives. The quality of engineering is spectacular and one thing that I love that proves this precision is the sound the bonnet makes when it closes. It is unlike any other sound in the world.

The many refined details of the car’s interior prove the superior level of engineering as well,



Sixty-Seven Silver Shadow Stops to Shop



1967 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow at the Curry Estate, August 22, 2020



especially the brilliant chrome instruments accenting the amazing English Burl Walnut Chippendale dashboard. The wood framing surrounding the windows is one of my favorite details. There is Champagne color Connolly Leather on most surfaces and soft wool carpeting on all the floors. However, the driver side seat needs some restoration work in the very near future.

On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, I drove my 1967 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow Coupe to the very charming Curry Estate in Hopewell Junction, NY for the RROC Concours d'Elegance.

The Saturday before the Concours, a rather large leak developed on the rear passenger side. My mechanic, Greg Hellstern, from Greg's Coachworks in Midland Park, NJ had said it could be one of three things so to be on the safe side I had the car towed to him. He knew that the car was going to a Concours to be judged for the first time on the following Saturday, so he proceeded to repair the entire rear hydraulic system in a timely fashion. He also knew that going to Hopewell Junction was going to be the longest drive I would be making with the Silver Shadow thus far and that I was nervous it would make it back and forth. He was very reassuring, granted it was only about 50 miles each way from where the car is stored.

Upon arrival, I had told the judges that the Silver Shadow almost didn't make it there!!

The judging aspect of the Concours was very interesting as well. I entered the car merely out of curiosity to learn more about her. Since my car does not have the original paint or carburetor, I was not expecting anything major in terms of scoring. I was told that for a Touring Car that is over 50 years old, it was in relatively decent shape. A few items were pointed out in the engine compartment and inside the cabin. The one I remember most vividly was that the screws on the dashboard were not all facing in the same direction as they would have been from the



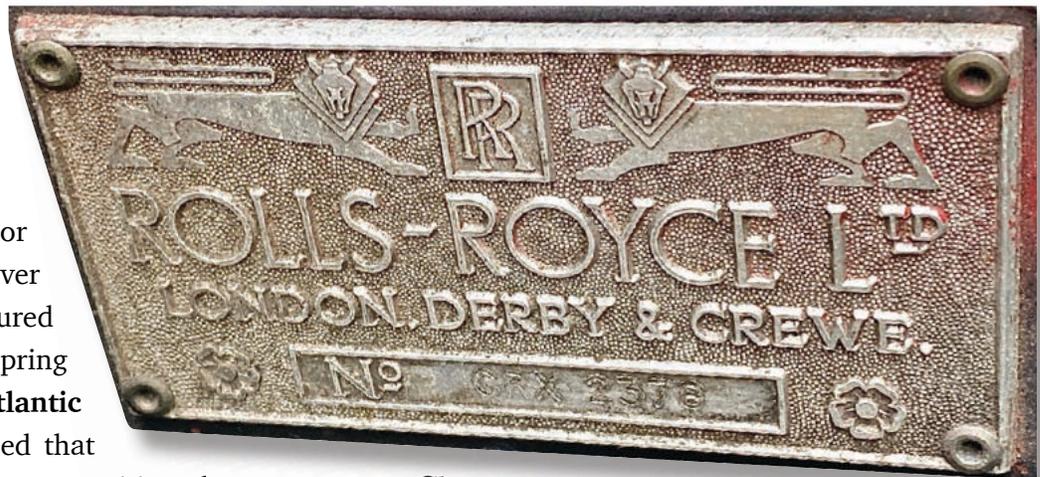
factory, which is the main clue that the interior had been taken apart at some time in the past.

Winning First Place in the Class 114: Silver Shadow & T Type category at the Atlantic Region Concours Rolls-Royce Owners' Club, was completely unexpected and truly the pinnacle of ownership. In addition, I'd like to mention that my Shadow had appeared in the Iroquois Region's flagship newsletter, **The Lady of the Lakes**. Thank you to Chairman David Corbett and Editor Teresa



Reile for the mention on page 15 of their stellar periodical.

It is the greatest honor having my 1967 Silver Shadow Coupe featured on the cover of the Spring 2021 issue of **The Atlantic Lady**. I am so pleased that this car is getting the recognition she deserves and makes me extremely happy for people to be exposed to the classic beauty and elegant design of a vintage Rolls-Royce. The knowledge that I am preserving history makes me very happy as well.



Chassis number CRX 2378

Please stop by and see the car in person next time we are at the same event, as I'd love to show you all the details of this fine Proper Motor Car.



Photographs courtesy of Michael J. Thompson

First Place, Class 114: Silver Shadow & T Type, Atlantic Region Concours, August 22, 2020



Rich Halprin Presents:

# *Welcome Newest Members*

Article provided by WILLIAM FINNEY

My name is Will Finney and I'm now the recent caretaker of a 1959 Bentley S1 with Chassis #B507LFD. My admiration for PMCs started early with a 1956 Silver Wraith with HJ Mulliner touring coachwork that belongs to a cousin. I'd always looked at his car with appreciation for its lines, presence, as well as the sense of quality that doesn't come with everyday drivers.

Knowing the different generations of Rolls-Royce and Bentley, I'd been looking for either a Silver Cloud or an S Series for quite some time. When this particular S1 appeared on a listing online with very little information and only one photo, I decided to pursue it to make sure it's originality had been maintained and cared for as I had hoped. After a thorough review of the service records, I learned that the car had been repainted



the original Maserati Black in the late 90's, but fortunately it retained the factory red leather interior and maroon carpets that I've since confirmed with the Chassis sheet from the RROC. The odometer read 78,350 upon my initial inspection and based on service records, appears to be valid.

After 3 mask-wearing visits alongside my brother and father, we decided that we would take on the challenge, and had her brought home on a flatbed to our home. Fortunately, it was only about a 50 minute drive door to door, after which I proceeded to immediately tackle certain maintenance items that were within my skill set. Luckily, there weren't any major concerning issues, just things that needed attention as a result of it being driven very infrequently. My initial to-do list included topping off the oil, adding fluid to the PAS reservoir, topping off the RR363 brake fluid, checking the coolant, tire pressure, and finally adjusting the idle and mixture screws to back off a very high idle.

I've really enjoyed learning about the car's history. I discovered it was delivered to a wealthy woman in Princeton, NJ by way of New York City in January of 1959 on the S.S. Media, but upon further digging, I found out it appears

to have been ordered by the mother of socialite Bunny Mellon. From what I've gathered, it made its way from the New York area in the early 80's to Washington DC. Since then, it's been with two owners--and now me--making me the fourth owner to my knowledge. Compared to a few Mercedes, Triumphs, and others that have come



Photographs courtesy of William Finney

and gone, there is truly no comparison to the feeling of driving this car through a country road.

In the future, we are hoping to drive the car to local Meets, and also potentially to Lake George for the RROC National Meet. In the meantime, I'm really excited to get to know the car more and look forward to many years of enjoyment. The one thing I've concluded is that there is a never-ending education with PMCs.



Newest Member article provided by JOSEPH B. MORTELL



Joseph B. Mortell with his wife, Crystal, standing by their 1964 Silver Cloud III, chassis number LSFU45.

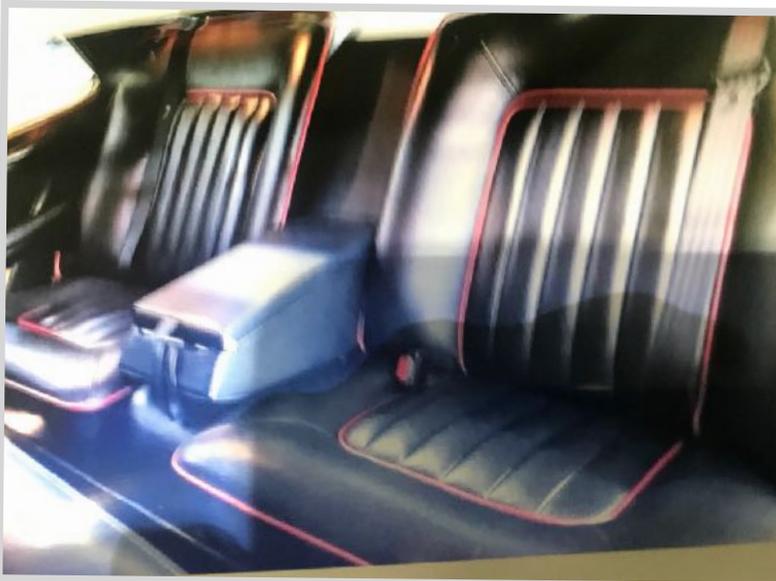
Photograph taken in 1976 on their wedding day.

It was the year 1950. I was eight years old when a dark green Lincoln pulled into our driveway at 1796 West 6th Street in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn where we lived. My father, at that time, was driving a 1942 dark blue Chrysler and allowed the Lincoln to share the driveway.

The owner of the Lincoln rented the basement apartment and was moving in. His name was Joseph Barbera, who eventually became famous for

producing such shows as The Flintstones, Yogi Bear, Scooby Doo and The Jetsons, just to name a few.

Mr. Barbera opened the passenger door by pushing a circular button (as there were no outside door handles). As he was removing some of his belongings, he looked at me staring at his car. He invited me to see the inside and let me push the button after he closed it. I did it three times! At that instant, I was fascinated and thence began my



Silver Spur chassis number X16224

attraction to luxury cars at eight years of age!

My father, Ben Mortell, was an immensely prominent guitarist who was employed by CBS, NBC and eventually ABC and has also recorded with many famous stars (too many to mention).

The year was now 1953. We moved from Brooklyn to Long Island, NY. Dad was driving sexy Studebakers. Two years later, he gave me a black 1955 Studebaker Speedster as my first car upon graduation from High School. Dad was then buying a new Cadillac every two years.

In 1964-65 I had a great job at the World's Fair. Then, I toured with my dad and Mitch Miller for eight weeks in Las Vegas for the summer (I was a professional drummer, as well.) **THAT IS WHERE I SAW MY FIRST ROLLS-ROYCE SILVER CLOUD! I WAS IN LOVE!!!**

In 1976, I was able to attain a 1964 nutmeg colored Silver Cloud III. That Silver Cloud had belonged to Academy Award nominee Chester Morris, best remembered for his role as "Boston Blackie" and resided at the Ritz Towers in New York City. I used all my savings and took a \$10,000 loan to buy it. I later purchased a black 1986 Silver Spur and have been exceedingly happy with it. [See photographs of my Silver Spur at left].

PS: I still have my 1985 RROC membership card!



Photographs courtesy of Joseph B. Mortell

Newest Member article provided by CHARLES SUMMERS



DAK24773

## Love at First Sight

Hello Atlantic Region Members! My name is Charlie Summers and I'm a residential real estate broker in New York City and also the Bucks County/Philadelphia region of eastern Pennsylvania.

In late 2018, I fulfilled a long-standing dream and bought my first Rolls-Royce, a gorgeous white 1989 Corniche II with tan interior and white piping. I nicknamed her "Bubbles" and she lives at my second home in New Hope, PA, with garage-mates "Maria-Teresa" (a black 1995 Mercedes E320 Cabriolet), "Christine" (a Sherwood Green 1970 Oldsmobile Cutlass convertible purchased in 1978 as I entered High School and cherished ever since), and "Axel" (an Obsidian black Mercedes C300 sedan).

As a real estate agent I often work on weekends, but I manage to find time to enjoy the cars and make it to occasional car shows and club events.

My purchase of Bubbles was a story of "love at first sight" starting at the 2018 New Hope Auto Show where a classic white Corniche II caught my eye and so I took several pictures of it with my phone.

Later that fall as I decided to start investigating a car purchase, I would glance at those pictures and find myself inspired. I called on listings for various types of cars (assorted Mercedes SLs, a 4-door Lincoln convertible, even a black Corniche) but none gave me that "must have" feeling. Then, a listing for a white '89 Corniche II caught my

eye and I went to check it out. A nervous first drive (my first drive in a Rolls!) lead to a second, longer, drive some weeks later, a visit to the seller's office to collect a large stack of service records photocopied for me by the seller's secretary, who assured me this car was NOT the car I'd seen at the New Hope Auto Show, then a third visit (by which time I had been able to verify by my pictures that without a doubt, the car I'd been driving WAS in fact the car from the show!) and by visit four, I was completely smitten. I followed my gut instinct and my heart and Bubbles became my car. A year after that very first glimpse of the car, I showed Bubbles at the 2019 New Hope Auto Show and we won 2nd prize. To this day I've still only driven ONE Rolls-Royce!

Every time I drive Bubbles, I'm reminded of the features that made her so special when I first saw her. The fit and finish are superb; just opening the vault-like boot to turn the special switch inside that overrides the battery (and deters both theft and continual battery drain when not driving the car), you see that Rolls-Royce went the extra mile. The boot is fitted with the same wool carpets with contrasting leather piping as the passenger areas. A solid "thump" upon closing that lid just keeps reminding me why this car weighs in over 6,000 pounds! The interior of the car is amazing! Open one of the two massive passenger doors and notice that the four side windows sit in thick chrome frames, a quality detail not seen in many - maybe any - other convertibles built since the early 1960's.

When you enter, buttery soft leather surrounds you, still in excellent condition after 32 years, and little details such as the stitching on the leather dashboard, coordinating white piping on the tan seats and door panels, luxurious thick wool headliner sheltering occupants from the inner side of the hood (convertible top) and polished wood accents everywhere (including the visible surfaces of the several hood rails) make this interior a

bespoke masterpiece and explain why it took six months to build a Corniche!

The leather clad center console contains a hidden drawer, push-activated, and upon opening it you've got a great space for your sunglasses, cassette tapes (this is a 1989 car!), diamonds, who knows what! On the dash panel above is a subtle little switch nestled in a polished wood surround that says "HOOD UP" and "HOOD DOWN". Unlatch the two big chrome handles at the top of the windscreen, hit that little switch (gently...it's an ironically discrete little switch for what's probably the most important feature of this car!) and in about four seconds you're in open touring mode. I like the fact that the time-proven 6.75 litre engine and companion GM transmission seem bullet-proof and give this massive car a surprising amount of get-up-and-go! It rides slightly higher than most cars, which for a tall driver like myself, is a plus! Replacing an older set of S-rated tires that were on the car when I bought it, Bubbles now has a new set of original equipment spec V-rated Avon tires in place, and I'm impressed with the improvement in handling. It's such a quality car in all respects that every trip in Bubbles is a too-short one, and when I get home after a drive, its tempting to just sit there enjoying the surroundings (and more than once upon returning home from a ride, I've decided it's not been enough and hit the road again!)

I feel very grateful to have cars that I love and a garage big enough to store them and to be part of the community in two amazing areas of the United States.

I look forward to meeting you all at various events of the RROC and Atlantic Region, and to hearing your own stories of special cars!





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## Next in Our Series of Rolls-Royce and Bentley Service Centers, Rich Halprin presents:



Black Horse Garage is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year in business as a leader in craftsmanship, engineering, and achievement in the classic and exotic car community. Frank Buonanno founded Black Horse Garage in 1991 in Bridgeport, CT.

“Everything with my father’s legacy is well-deserved,” said Frank’s son and President of Black Horse Garage, John Buonanno. “My father was always true to himself. His values, morals, and beliefs never altered. That’s a challenging path to follow.”

It was a journey that started when Frank, who is now 80 years-old and retired, was incredibly young. When Frank’s father needed the engine rebuilt on his 1952 Ferrari 212 Inter, an eager 15-year-old Frank managed to get the job and nearly completed it, except that the markings to set the timing were written in Italian. Frank’s near success drew the interest of famed Ferrari master mechanics Alberto Pedretti and Alfredo Caiti who inspected his work and immediately offered Frank a position to work with them at Luigi Chinetti Motors. Frank honed his skills under their guidance and developed a love and interest of other fine foreign automobiles including Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Mercedes-Benz, and Lamborghini.

Black Horse Garage was the culmination of all of Frank's training and perfection of his own engineering and craftsmanship techniques. Today, Black Horse Garage is one of the leaders in sales, service, and storage of all fine automobiles.

"The success we have had for 30 years is very gratifying," said the younger Buonanno. "We have had a perfect record with the Better Business Bureau and to do that in the automotive field is very satisfying."

John took over for his father as owner and president of the company in 2005. It is a position that John takes seriously in both the preservation of his father's heritage and the further growth and expansion of the Black Horse Garage brand.



"I think you have more pressure following in the footsteps of someone like my dad," said Buonanno. "I don't want to be the kid who took over Black Horse Garage and represented the name in a way that would be upsetting to what my dad worked for. But the fun part is putting my own stamp on the company and trying to surpass everything before me."

One of the most exciting projects that Black Horse Garage has been a part of over their three-decade history was the restoration of a 1935 Rolls-Royce 20/25. John's father performed the restoration on the entire car, which had many customizations for the prominent family it was built for. The client wanted to drive it straight from Black Horse Garage to a Rolls-Royce national show in the Midwest. The client got about 150 miles away when a valve spring broke in the engine. The car was transported back and Frank replaced the spring right away. The 20/25 was then driven about 800 more miles to the Meet and ended up winning the whole show. The two deciding factors in the victory was that the car was driven to the show and it produced less vibration of a nickel sitting on the radiator than its closest competitor. Buonanno is still proud of this story today.

"The fact that it made it all the way out to the Midwest and back flawless after a restoration, that's unheard of."

While the shop is not currently in its original location, they still call Bridgeport home. Black Horse Garage is conveniently located right off of I-95 and is easily accessible from anywhere in the Tri-state area.

“I love the history and people of Bridgeport,” said Buonanno. “I love everything this community can be.”

Black Horse Garage is moving again, but this time just a few doors down. They are moving into a building that used to be the manufacturing home of Moore Tools. The new shop will be in a streamlined space that includes a showroom, storage and museum space, detailing area, service area, paint booth, and machine and wood shop. Along with the new lifts and space, they also have a new Hunter alignment rack installed which has already been getting use.



Photographs courtesy of John Buonanno

“Obtaining this type of equipment for what we do is pretty exciting,” said Buonanno. “These alignments take time, but like in F1 racing, the only object is to make the greatest car and use the best tools to reach that goal.”

“We work on all models of Rolls Royce...Phantoms, Silver Clouds, Riviera, Silver Dawn and Bentleys. We also perform mechanical, electrical, hydraulics. We sublet out our coachwork to a fine craftsman we trust, and our body and paintwork.”

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Black Horse Garage

Current address:

726 Union Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06607

Telephone: 203-330-9604

[blackhorsegarage.com](http://blackhorsegarage.com)

Future address:

800 Union Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06607



If you would like the service center you use to be featured, please contact Rich Halprin at:  
[rah4539@yahoo.com](mailto:rah4539@yahoo.com)

Disclaimer: “The featured service centers have been compiled from queries submitted to individual Atlantic Region RROC members about their own experiences and appear in random order. The list is for reference only and inclusion of an individual or business in this listing should in no way be construed as any kind of endorsement or guarantee by TAL, The RROC Atlantic Region, or its Board.

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# 1951 Bentley Mark VI Cresta II Facel-Métallon

BILL WOLF

In the Fall 2020 issue of our *Atlantic Lady*, in his delightful series "Memories", Richard Halprin presented a photo of this one-off Bentley coupe taken at a long ago Tuxedo Park Meet. Richard posed the question: "Does anyone out there know more about this one of a kind Bentley?" As I had seen and photographed the car at Lime Rock Park in Connecticut circa 1990, I too wondered about its history, current location and ownership. In Bernard King's Complete Classics book on the Bentley Mark VI, the last owner is listed as Meehan, Great Britain, 2006. King also mentions that this Bentley "had been returned to Crewe for fitment of 4 1/2 litre engine when it became available".

Relying on the camaraderie of Rolls-Royce scholars and enthusiasts, I sent out inquiries concerning the car's present whereabouts. No luck—at first. Tom Clarke, however, replied with the following: "B98KM was first registered here in April 2003, and last registered in the U.K. on 16

Oct 2012. It was green and the number was MAS988. The car is listed on the RREC database as black and currently with dealer Lukas Huni in Switzerland, but that may be old information." (Mr. Clarke has published books on the 20/25 and Wraith—and others).

For the better, my luck changed. Two emails came through long after our editor, Joan Imowitz, and I thought we had the article wrapped up. The window for submission for this issue was closing fast—but I became inspired. If you look at the picture of the car at Lime Rock, you will notice a banner for Guernsey's Auction. Knowing it to be a

long shot, I emailed the auction house. Within an hour I got a reply from the president of Guernsey's, Arlan Ettinger: "Please give me a call. I'll tell you all about the 'mysterious' Bentley." Turns out he had owned the car at the time; he had purchased it from Dr. Halsey G. Bullen. Interesting man, Mr. Ettinger—he has owned various classic cars through the years; he also raced some of them at the Lime Rock vintage races. A second email came through from a former president of the RROC, Mr. Rubén Vérdes—I should have contacted him much earlier.

He mentioned that the car had appeared at Pebble Beach somewhere in the last ten years, and that the Facel-Métallon Bentley's last known owner is Alexander Baggli of Switzerland. To answer Richard's question then—we have made some progress.

To finish up, some quick observations: As this car, a one-off coupe, is a very handsome example of Facel-Métallon coachwork, it surely has

not disappeared from the world of Rolls-Royce/Bentley enthusiasts; it just has to eventually turn up again at a show, Meet or Concours d'Elegance. Also, a possible explanation of the confusion of color (black/green) is that the velvet green is so dark that it appears black both in photos and, depending on the light source, in life. When I saw the car at Lime Rock, back in the day, I thought at first it was finished in black. Back then I didn't realize that this Bentley was so very special—but I sure am glad that I have both the experience of having seen the car "live and in person" and the photographs to prove, at least in this instance, that my memory has not deceived me.



Chassis: N° B98KM  
Colour: Velvet Green

Photograph courtesy of  
Rich Halprin



From Rich Halprin's "Memories" article,  
Fall 2020 *Atlantic Lady*



Interior photographs courtesy of  
Rofsfeldt Archives



Above: 1951 Front and rear compartments. Note: the "wood" trim is actually metal

Front photograph Bill Wolf and Martin Bennett  
Rear photograph Bill Wolf



At Lime Rock c. 1990, photographs by author, Bill Wolf





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# Seeking Purrfection

GENE EPSTEIN



**In addition to buying items on eBay for necessity,**

I browse through the various columns seeking interesting automobiles, mostly to kill time. One such automobile that caught my interest was advertised as a 1953 Bentley Graber R type Continental convertible. It stated in the advertisement that it was originally owned by Simon Patino, an extraordinary wealthy tin baron from Bolivia. The advertisement went into detail about its fantastic restoration. When I saw the auction price of \$575,000 my interest greatly diminished.

Nearly a year went by and I sent a note to the seller of the 1953 Bentley Graber wondering if it was still for sale and to my surprise it was! I had no intentions of paying the price that he was asking. Over the course of the next couple of months, I expressed my interest, however I held firm at my offer price.

I asked around the Newport Beach area to fellow Rolls-Royce and Bentley enthusiasts if they knew anything about this automobile. One reply came from Tony Handler, well known throughout the Rolls-Royce world for his extensive parts selection and his wonderful restorations. He knew the car

well. Prior to the seller that I was negotiating with, I was informed that it was owned since the late 50s or early 60s by a former naval commander who could usually be seen driving the Bentley having the top down with a attractive young lady at his side and a shot glass in his hand. There would always be a shot glass with scotch in the car, but many a time a different young lady. The naval commander was the bon vivant of Newport Beach.

At the peak of my interest I commissioned someone to have the automobile checked out. He confirmed that the fit and finish on the automobile was quite attractive and that the chrome work was close to show level. Then he gave me a list of things that needed attention. The convertible top frame needed triple plating to bring it to show level. The exhaust system sounded terrible and contrary to being a correct restoration, it was done at a generic muffler shop just to make it serviceable. The tires were oversized and the spare tire would not fit into the tire well. It was a Mark VI and not an R type, nor was it a Continental. The wood facia on the dash was very attractive, however there was a cut out for an incorrect radio.

Going over the list I made a new offer based on the report that I received. The seller was adamant that he would not take it. I let it go and kept it in the back of my mind envisioning what I wanted the end product to be. A few weeks later I sent him an email with a revised offer giving him one day to accept. He called me immediately informing me that he just had a problem at one of his businesses and would accept my offer. We put together a bill of sale which we both signed scanned and sent back to each other. I wired him the funds immediately.

I coordinated a pick up with the shipper and waited anxiously to see my 'new baby' arrive. Five days later Passport Transport's dark green tractor trailer pulled up to a designated area in front of our property. I stood there waiting for the rear tailgate to open and unveil my new acquisition. The

rear California license plate proudly proclaiming **53BENT** backed out and there I saw the very attractive body lines by Graber. As the driver backed the vehicle onto the ramp there was a distinct misfire of the engine and an extremely loud exhaust noise. I was not one bit phased.

I drove the car into my property going down our very long driveway and pulled up to my shop. A cursory inspection showed several things that the vehicle inspector did not notice or possibly noticed but did not report to me. The convertible top was in decent shape however the front seal obviously was not fitting correctly and any type of rain would have come right into the interior. There was also a pair of what appeared to be screen door latches affixed to the front top bow in the owner's feeble attempt to keep the weather out. There were many areas in the windows and windshield showing delamination.

Under the hood were items that were chrome plated that should not have been. The loud exhaust noise that I heard was coming from the exhaust manifold in addition to the terrible replaced exhaust system.

Beneath the dash was a panel of controls the likes of which I had never seen before, prompting me to immediately call the previous owner. He then



explained that he was attempting to have the car run on hydrogen instead of gasoline and there were switches that would be necessary. Why the vehicle inspector never questioned that is beyond me. The white finish which I assume was original and refinished, was in very good condition, but extremely bland. The carpeting was excellent and done professionally, however it was also bland. Now this was starting to look more of an improper prior restoration for someone like myself who is always seeking perfection. I am sure that there are a countless number of people who would have loved the automobile the way it was - but that would not satisfy me.

My biggest question was, *where do I start?*

The first thing that I had my mechanic do was to remove the hydrogen switches and to trace the wiring to make sure that nothing was live. Then, I had him remove all the wiring that came from this four panel switch. The next thing was to take a compression test. That came up with good numbers which was one of the first pluses that I encountered.

I located a pair of very good exhaust manifolds and upon arriving, we sandblasted and coated them with the material that would seal the pores of the cast-iron and ensure a very attractive and correct finish. They had to be placed, one manifold at a time, in a 400° oven for several hours each.

My mechanic suggested that he pull the engine pan to take a good look inside the engine. The oil was clean and the cylinder walls looked good,

however the pistons were put in **backwards!** Seriously, they were in fact put in backwards.

Lucky that next to no miles were placed on it since the prior owner had worked on the car.

The cylinder walls looked excellent as did the crankshaft and bearings. The following morning I ordered a new set of pistons and rings not wanting to even think of simply turning around the new pistons that were there. That certainly would have saved me over \$1000, but at this point my commitment wasn't to make this just a driver, but to make it an outstanding vehicle that I could count on driving and enjoying taking it to the top shows. I placed a call to Corky Coker of the noted Coker Tire Company and ordered the correct size tires.

When I acquired the Graber, the headliner beneath the convertible top had been done beautifully however, an unknowledgeable person had removed the original Graber convertible top latches on both left and right sides believing that the two new latches that the prior owner installed would work better than the original ones. He covered up the original areas with headliner material where the original latches had been recessed in the front header bow. There was also a recess in the center of the rear top bow and through my contacts

around the globe was informed that a very unusual lamp with a 'fan' shaped pattern should be there and the accompanying wiring all which were missing but covered beautifully with new headliner material. I called the previous owner and he told me that the original latches

never sealed the front of the top well, so he threw them out. In doing so I was faced with locating a correct original set of top latches and a special glass fan pattern light for the interior. Doing this would take me several months searching the Internet and



every parts source from Europe to Africa to the Middle East and obviously the entire United States and Canada and finding nothing. I could not see myself owning this car and driving it and ever being proud of it without locating the correct convertible top latches.

## *I was on a mission...*



But that's not all. I wanted to watch the entire car taken apart so that we could make a firsthand assessment and come up with a list of anything that was questionable.

While I was searching the Internet and personally calling as far away as Hawaii seeking the correct latches and clear rear lenses, I started looking for Simon Patino to see if there were any photos of him driving my Bentley Graber. I even went as far as trying to track down any possible living relatives for the Tin Baron, Simon Patino.

What I found out was miraculous, if I was to believe that he was the original owner since all records indicated that he ceased to live on April 20th 1947, five years before the car was built. A resurrection? Well, yes...the 1952 Bentley rising from a totally improper restoration, not the rising of the deceased Tin Baron.

The improperly chrome plated latches were set aside while decisions were made to simply purchase correct ones or to correct them. Not so simple a task.





From the rear of the car, my mechanic, Tony, yelled out: "Hey Boss. Did Chrysler make parts for this car?" He knew the answer then presented me with a pair of rear MOPAR clear and molded plastic with the traditional MOPAR stampings. They were cut and sanded to fit. "No big deal." I said but it WAS a BIG deal.

I contacted any and every owner of a Graber to see if they had a pair for sale. There was not one person who hadn't been looking for one at sometime, including a friend who had recently passed away, Gilbert Steward. He had been searching for a correct glass lens (not plastic), for seemingly forever. That would open the door for a proposal that could benefit both of us - and both of our cars.

Being one who never gives up, I tracked every owner of Bentley Grabers, no matter the year of their vehicle, seeking a source for the Graber convertible top latch mechanism. What I discovered was that many had the same problem that the seller had with mine. Water penetration through the front of the top and excessive wind noises. So that was one 'plus' for the seller however that was quickly offset by a large 'NEGATIVE.'

There were very attractive original Marchal head lamps but there was some minor pitting beneath the freshly chromed plating that was not addressed by the prior owner. In removing the headlamps we discovered that one was screwed into an incorrect headlamp bucket that would not be acceptable to me even though no one would ever know.

The list kept growing. Searching



**Graber** \*

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throughout Europe for correct headlamp housings was daunting. Some very similar - but not correct. I located a used set in the UK and purchased the pair of buckets alone, preferring to keep the chrome pieces with the car and triple plate them.

One owner of a Bentley Graber close in year had one that was obviously a fixed head coupe, as it had a very heavy metal brace from the header showing that was the remains of cutting off the metal roof and trying to support the windshield frame. He was no help at all and wondered why I would do all this work when he thought my car was super to start with.

My decision was made and it was final. I'm taking everything apart. I'm going to make it the best car that I can. The style turned me on and the rarity will be worth the effort.

I had numerous conversations with Tom Clark, UK, the preeminent Rolls-Royce and Bentley wonderland of knowledge, as I communicated with him through many of the steps.

One thing that kept popping up without a concise explanation was that the Bentley build sheet showed it was a fixed coupe and initially sold to someone in Switzerland. It also shows that my car was a Geneva show car. Here is where the confusion came in to play. It seems as though Tom Clark noticed the vehicle went from the Geneva car show to a third-party and was not registered until six months later. Mr. Clark's opinion was that the automobile went unsold at the Geneva car show in 1952, if this was in fact the fixed head coupe that Graber displayed and that they had a new customer who wanted only a drop head coupe, since every fitting and bracket was by Graber's own design, this was not something that some shop would later

convert. Even photos of a fixed head coupe that Graber displayed had items and trim that were definitely not my automobile.

Trying to locate Graber's internal records would have been a major help since they would have shown the progression, albeit, I had no success in locating them.

After calling numerous Bentley Graber owners I discovered that no one that I had contact with had any spare parts that I could use. One person was gracious enough to take excellent photos of their top latches and the interior light housing and lens.



After making contacts around the world I discovered that there were a pair of correct glass lenses that were perfect and correct for the rear backup lamps that housed the incorrect MOPAR plastic lenses. Using that contact I was able to locate about two months later in Australia yet one more

backup lens even though I only needed two of them. I then contacted Gilbert Stewart and asked him to please send me his convertible top latches so that I could have them matched against my car's recessed areas in the top frame. Gilbert initially refused fearing that should I lose them or break them, he would have no way of having them repaired.

It was certainly reasonable to feel that way. I then asked him again about his backup lens on his Bentley Graber and he told me that someone had put it in a red one that was incorrect however for the past two years looking he was unable to find any regardless of price. I then sent him a photograph of the one that I had coming in from Australia and made him an offer.

“How about if I give you one lens for your backup assembly in exchange for you lending me just one top latch?” Less than a half a minute later he was excited and agreed to send me one assembly.

We took a scissors and opened the area where the top latches were recessed into the frame and waited patiently for Gilbert’s top latch to arrive. When it arrived, it took no time to set it in position as it fit perfectly, down to the screw holes. We took some screws and there it was - a perfect top latch that fit well.



I then contacted a company that specializes in custom stainless steel and sent them the left hand side top latch assembly that was originally in steel. They measured each part including an offset internal part of the latch mechanism and then did a 180° reversal mirror image so that we would have a perfect latch for the right side as well. This was all done in highly polished stainless steel.

Ten days later and \$1200.00 for machining the parts, they were back and installed within ten minutes, surprisingly fitting perfectly and securely. There was definitely a benefit in having these made in stainless steel since they sealed the top better than the original grade of metal that was originally installed by Graber.

As soon as the convertible top parts arrived and were installed, I mailed back to Gilbert his latch

that he had loaned to me. He was happy to receive it and excited to get the correct lens for his car, which he never found after two years of searching.

The exhaust system that came with the automobile was also incorrect when I purchased it with the exception of the exhaust manifolds. It looked like it was a generic muffler, but not correct. I contacted Borla Exhaust Systems. The owner graciously came to my property to make sure that he would be able to duplicate the correct original exhaust system that had belonged on this vehicle. He did a commendable job.

With the motor and transmission removed from the automobile along with everything attached to the chassis including oil and brake lines, we then commenced on a long-term disassembly, repair and refinish of all the individual items that had been removed. As this was being worked on, we had the inner fenders, the firewall, the radiator, plus the hood removed to also be disassembled, stripped to bare metal repaired then refinished to be like brand new. Going through every detail on the chassis once it was stripped necessitated using a 3 inch power grinder to get any remaining finish down to the bare metal.

Once this was completed the entire chassis would be washed down with various solvents to prepare to remove any chassis flaws including numerous dents scratches and paint chips. After the chassis looked like pure clean steel, we then used Devcon after dents were heated and removed to fill in all depressions. Devcon is an epoxy steel that has superior strength. After 24 hours it would be cured and then required flat sanding so that the frame rails would be perfectly straight.

On top of the Devcon we applied epoxy primer then high fill primers. Once the primers were cured then sanding all parts down with 400 grit paper would give a perfect base for our final coats of paint. After restoring numerous cars over my lifetime I like the way PPG 9300 black single stage urethane

applies and holds up. The car now can be driven picking up dirt that can easily be cleaned off with any kind of auto detailing spray.

Prior to deciding to disassemble the entire automobile, I looked at the grill and bumpers and everything looked very good. However as I continued to work on the automobile I noticed some flaws in the veins of the vertical grill. One could not believe all the time it took to disassemble the grill pieces and then the time it took to have them properly prepared for triple chrome plating.

Over two months transpired before the parts were returned, then about 7 to 10 hours reassembling just the grill without it being installed. I had located a correct original radio in England that was shipped to me. We bench tested it and found that did not work properly even with a large antenna temporarily hooked up. I sent the radio to a specialist who replaced the inner housing with an AM/FM mode that would also link to my iPhone.

When I initially acquired the automobile, the finish was white base coat - clear coat. We checked every record possible and nothing mentioned color whatsoever. Since I was determined to have the best restoration that I could, I felt that the color was a drawback being that it was very bland. I decided on a deep British Racing Green to be complemented with a tan convertible top and natural saddle leather interior. We threw out perfectly good tan carpeting and had new carpeting made using proper materials in dark green to match the exterior of the automobile. Then, trimming the carpeting with leather for the piping around the carpet brought out a perfect contrast that flowed through the car. We also carried out the same carpeting throughout the trunk.

When the finish was done and we looked down the sides, we could find no flaws whatsoever. It turned out as perfect as I could have wanted.



Chassis #B184MD

## List of Awards



- [AACA National First Place](#)
- [Best of Show](#) winning the [Rolls-Royce Bentley Regional Meet Queen Elizabeth II trophy](#) in 2010
- [Best in Show](#) at the [Buckingham Concours](#) plus featured poster car in addition to:
- [Twice Awarded Most Distinguished Bentley Rolls-Royce Award](#) at [Greenwich Concours](#)
- [Most Elegant Post War Open](#) at [Eastern US Concours](#) and more
- [Boca Raton Concours](#) Awarded [2nd to Best in Show](#)
- [2019 Best in Show](#) Newtown, PA
- [Exhibited at the Phila International Auto Show](#) for the AACA

Photographs courtesy of Gene Epstein



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# Finding and Bringing Back an Atlantic Region Classic

MIKE SERPE



Still dirty from a long slumber, CRA12921 on its first shakedown.

Sometimes I get stuck too. A vehicle related goal, a thought, an idea...usually spurned upon while I envision an adventure or new places to drive to and new people to meet. It leads to repeated 5am browsing sessions of classifieds followed by a fizzling out of the initial excitement.... or maybe more....*Maybe it'll hook me.*

Some folks are locked dead on exactly what car they want. We have a long list of the ones we might like to own "*someday*" but we know full well that it may be a stretch. Realistically, we have to then figure out what we want in the present, given our needs, and our resources, including time. Do we just buy the best car we can, or do we get involved with a project?



Vented discs are a big plus for an early FHC. Ours were corroded and worn so these were replaced along with the lines, wheel bearings, and rebuilt calipers.



The brake pads were, in some cases, no longer available!

Furthermore, figuring out what classic cars are like to drive is difficult. It is tough to get the chance to take a drive in all the different variations you can choose from, so in the long run, beyond just the initial lust or lore, how do we really know we are going to relish the drive? How can we know it's the car for us, not just today, but for the long haul? When considering this, I realize that when I have experience with a particular car then it is easier to determine the fit, and if it is not a close one, then figure on what it will take to adjust it to my purposes. Sometimes this is simple and low cost, other times it is not worth endeavoring upon. This can even become a bit stressful because unlike going out and shopping for something newer, it is quite challenging to get opportunities for drives in various classics. It is also tough sometimes to dig deep enough upon inspection depending on where a prospect is and who is showing it to you.

It is quite foreseeable for anyone to have a hard time choosing which model, which version, which year. Often this is done by stats. Not often enough is it done by seat of the pants experiences. This is a great shame but I see it all the time, especially with younger buyers with fewer

finances or middle age buyers with other pressures in life competing for time and dollars to balance with a hobby.

During 2017 or so we began to live bi-coastal and I noticed that in New England there are a lot of great rallies and car events. Many of the most interesting are hosted by Brit car clubs. Since the car we hoped to purchase was to serve these goals of doing vintage tours and rallies, it seemed like a great idea to look into something from the UK or America. The key things we started to realize is that we wanted long range comfort, a car my wife was not only

willing to drive but would enjoy driving, and one that would be able to occasionally haul the kids. For a long time the Jaguar XJC has been of interest, but a litany of bad memories with Jags were quick reminders that perhaps its best to shy away. No paranoia, just didn't feel right.

Back in California where I spent many years racing Porsches, I had the thrill of sharing all the ins and outs with my venerable teammate Michael Bernamonti (RROC/BDC). Ever since my spinal injuries this type of driving has been out. I have missed the racing and the fun road trips to tracks around the country, but mostly



The first collection of parts to recycle include a damper, 6x caliper pots and seals, pads, parking brake pads, and several hydraulic as well as fuel lines and fittings.

playing with the cars with my good friend, comparing notes by phone and emailing late at night. Well it just so turns out that we had been playing with another car that they bought new in 1976, an all original Silver Shadow. Often left too long without a drive and with kids leaving little time to maintain, it was and is a struggle, but it is still with him and ready to get all tuned up and back on the road. Reminded of this, I thought perhaps this might be a great way to get back into doing events with an old friend as well, perhaps I should work up a similar car here in the East, and coax my buddy into prepping up the sedan for West coast events. Cars, at least for us, are about the people too!

Searching night and sometimes sneaking it during the day, I must have looked at several thousand Corniche and Shadow models. I re-read everything on the cars and asked a lot of questions. Despite getting out and inspecting these cars and having familiarity from helping my friend here and there (moral support!), I found very different opinions on which years were the best. In the end I realized the years to look for come down to what you like and what you want to do, not so much stats or features. Driving different Shadows and Corniches for client inspections gave me a lot of reality checks.

At first we thought to find a Corniche DHC from 1990-1995 but it wasn't until driving one back to back that the choice was more clear. It was gorgeous, but too new. I tried a friend's SY, went and tested out Cal West's old 1973 LWB, drove about 12 different Corniche DHCs in various states of condition and model years. I

would then come back home and read up on the RROC forum about my discoveries. Apparently stiffer, it was with the rarer FHC that I was told by several folks to expect a nice handling car. I looked all over but at the time I could not find a good one to drive. I was mostly shopping for condition vs. value and was willing to consider a wide range of cars until one day, when it all came together by random chance. Then Covid-19 set in and travel grinded to a halt.

Late last Spring, I had been asked by two clients to go visit PMCs at the same location, a spot I had been to before for the RROC tech event in 2019, Palma Automotive. The dealer had several Shadow and Corniche models available and proprietor John Palma was a real good sport about allowing me to take some long and varied test drives back to back in different models my clients were after. I have to admit that the cars I thought "looked" the best did not necessarily drive the best. All the cars were in excellent shape and I found nothing really to complain about, but as with anything hand built, especially the Corniches, there just are these small differences you can feel between them, how they handle especially, the feedback they give (or not), the flex around the turns, the way they smooth out the road, how the motor sounds and feels when under load. After driving what was the most modern of all the cars, John noted that there was one other car I should just look at for fun.

Having just come off an enclosed trailer there lies a 1972 Corniche FHC in a rather disheveled state. The dusty dark blue (Seychelles) reached out across the lot despite the day's sun drawing

to a close. Time had flown by and I needed to be heading back North but John asked if I might want to take one last cruise and try out this car as he was trying to put some test miles on it anyway, having just gotten it going. The car was in rough shape but had good bones. There was nothing about the looks of the car that indicated it would drive well or feel good, it honestly looked like it might not even make it back from our little run. John assured me we'd be just fine so we got going. Well, we took the car around town and it drove just beautifully, then out on the freeway where I put the hammer down on her and she still felt better than all the other cars I drove that day. Now I must emphasize here that I mean it felt better **to me!** And that is....Not by condition, but in soul, in connection, there was something more to this one, it drove in a way that was just lovely. I knew at least that it narrowed the field to finding a '71 - '73.

CRA12921 was completed in 1972 and John mentioned that it had belonged to the late Howard Krimko. Of course, many of us are certainly familiar with the late Mr. Krimko, as he had been such a big component of the community for years, but I had never seen this particular car in person. I asked John if Ms. Krimko was going to keep it and John mentioned that "She had entrusted it and two others, a 1939 Wraith and a

1952 Silver Wraith and that she wanted to get them running and then locate new caretakers." Rumor had it there was also a Ferrari 330 and GTS in the mix but Howard had already sold it before passing....a good taste in cars for sure! I noted to John Palma that the Corniche needed a plethora of work but that it also had many great attributes and certainly an impressive history. Later, he spent time going through her and forwarded a long list of needs to both Ms. Krimko and myself. It seemed like a great car to try and continue with but when I felt out the price initially it seemed a bit out of touch, given



She ran well for an astonishing eight miles on her first outing

the work needed. I replied with a pretty low amount and pretty much gave up thinking about it....*all summer long!*

A couple months later with boating coming to a close, I began thinking about the car search again

and heard from John that Ms. Krimko would reconsider and meet closer to my initial offer.

Between Covid restrictions and a busy summer at Palma's, it seems the car was still in limbo but she was ready to move on having sold her home and was moving. We had what I can best describe as an emotionally touching call and made a lasting connection.

Since then we met at their home and worked through all the details on the cars and it is always wonderful to purchase a car from a family that loved it. CRA12921 brought Howard tremendous joy and we hope this karma continues! The hospitality and friendship has been truly special and no stranger to this club, Ms. Krimko leaves for the West knowing that their beloved Corniche is going to continue to be cherished. She asked me if my wife, Dimi and I planned to show the car, and I mentioned, well not at first, but once it runs well we plan to drive it *A LOT!* Ms. Krimko asked, will Dimi drive too? I responded with a resounding "*heck yea!*"

Kindly, Ms. Krimko offered me some old books that they had travelled around New England collecting during the 31 years of owning the car. Inside some are trip notes, destinations, and roads less taken. We will make it a goal to revisit some of these adventures and keep you all in the loop. For the time being, we have kept the car with John and with the help of his team including Muhammed and Tommy the baseline for the project is almost complete. The car needed significant brake caliper work, some lines replaced, an accumulator rebuild, wheel bearings, and an assortment of other fixes to bring her back into the fold enough to move her

225 miles up to her new home. The list of to-dos grows and shrinks, ebbs and flows. We look forward to getting the car back up to our place and moving forward with several projects. The plan is to share and document these projects with the club here as we go and then get this great car with awesome club history back in action and bring it out to drive in the rallies and tours.

We started by searching for a '71-'73 Bentley Corniche FHC but really never found any within our set budget that weren't beyond repair. We kept the net open wide considering even the four door cars. This '72 Rolls-Royce Corniche FHC is indeed a major undertaking, but in the long run we think it will be a complete joy. While a coupe has a decent high side valuation potential, this car is not going to be a money maker in the short run. Right now she's referred to in house as "The Blue "Lagoon" ...lots of money sinking and no driving... Stay tuned as there is more to come because we hope to keep her a really long time. Besting 31 years might be tough but as we turn the page from one era to the next hoping that the late H. Krimko knows in afterlife that we appreciate what he gave to those in this club, and that PMCs formerly under his care shall live on in ours! I have found that there are literally hundreds of posts referencing these three cars in the RROC forum as well as other places online and it is great to keep this going. The other two are still for sale, if interested please reach out.

Keep your PMC dreams *proceeding!*

-Mike, Dimi and the "*Blue Lagoon*"  
*Reach us to share your feedback at:*  
[mserpe@yahoo.com](mailto:mserpe@yahoo.com) or on the RROC forum!



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# My Adventure with Mr. Bentley

HARRY H. HERMAN, JR.

I am an engineer and an inventor. My dad was also an inventor and engineer. He loved cars and told me many stories how he use to drive a Stanley Steamer between Denver and Glenwood Springs to the Stanley Hotel. When I had gone away to college, my dad acquired a 1906 Maxwell, which I got to drive during visits home. Jack Benny used to talk about a Maxwell, so when he came Denver for a visit, Dad picked him up at the Station in the Maxwell.

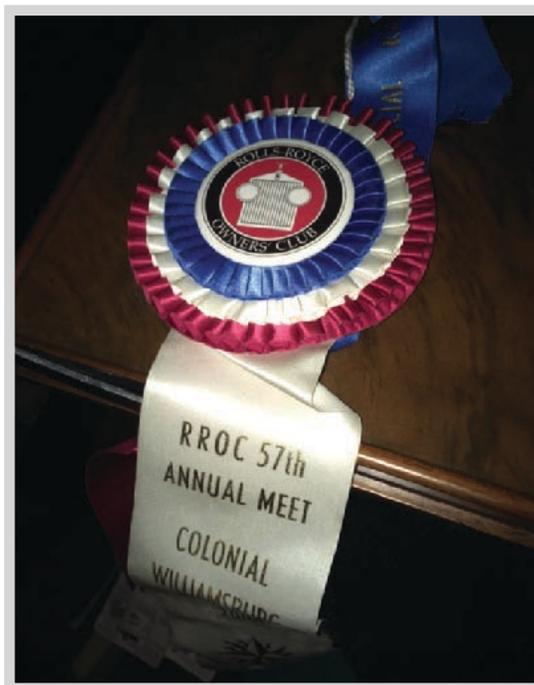
During those years I became fascinated by Rolls-Royce and Bentleys. I especially liked the Bentley because it was “Sporty”.

As the years passed, I had a job with Kaiser Jeep Corp., as director of foreign manufacturing, which really got me into the international automotive world. And in my world ventures, I became increasingly interested in Bentleys. As my career progressed, I ultimately established a small engineering firm and became interested in mobility problems of the disabled. I quickly realized how crude mobility-assist products were and that they were all made in China. I set to work developing new mobility-assist products which took the needs of the disabled into account. I was fortunate that the American Consulting Engineers Council had appointed me as their representative to serve on the President Committee for the Disabled, which gave me

firsthand knowledge of mobility problem of the disabled.

It was this development of the Sure Foot Mobility products that surprisingly guided me to the Bentley. I was advised that I should have a very famous Orthopedic doctor in Pottstown PA tryout the devices. I made an appointment to meet with his group in Pottstown. The meeting was a success, they liked the products. I was invited to

stay overnight at the doctor’s house. When we pulled into his garage, he remarked, “Oh that is my white Bentley” to which I remarked, “Oh, I have always wanted to have a car like this!” His response was totally unexpected “Harry, would you like to have this Bentley? I have it advertised for sale this weekend but I’d rather sell it to you!!” A friend drove me to pick up the Bentley a few days later. I really did not know much about what I had bought, and I had never driven a right hand drive car or a classic Bentley before. It was an



adventure driving it to DC. All the truck drivers along the way honked and waved at me.

With the help of Tony Handler and his parts, I set to work fixing it up; new tires, a heater, etc. I joined the Rolls-Royce Owners’ Club where I gained a lot of advice and lifelong friends.

There are so many highlights from owning this 1953 Bentley R-Type [B135UL]. I have been to



over 40 major Meets and driven it across country. It holds the highway wonderfully at 60 mph! It was great fun driving my daughter and her fiancé at their wedding. I took it to NYC to visit my son, who was in graduate school. I went to the Bentley dealer nearby, who was happy to park it in their showroom! Lastly, I am pleased to note my Bentley won an award at the RROC 57th Annual Meet at Colonial Williamsburg.



# 2016 French Sunshine Tour

TOM HECKMAN



We read about a 20 GHOST CLUB tour, starting on the northwest coast of France in Brittany, and ending in Biarritz, on the southwest coast of France near the Spanish border. We contacted rally master, Tim Forrest, applied and were accepted.

Step one was completed. The next step was to prepare the car – 1914 Silver Ghost – 36 PB, which included a thorough servicing, cleaning and packing of all the goodies one wants to have on board for a two week overseas rally. You know - oil, grease, tools, a spare mag, all sorts of weather gear, new front tires, etc.

Anticipating some of the long distances to be covered, I elected to reinstall my overdrive unit which had just been freshly rebuilt. For those of

you unfamiliar with this installation, there is a removable section of the torque tube (which connects the rear axle assembly/differential to the sphere) which unbolts as does the section of drive shaft inside the torque tube. Once these original parts are removed the overdrive unit simply is bolted into place and the torque tube assembly reattached. This is a job I have done single handedly in about eight hours, but it is a lot easier with two people working. Just as a precaution (I am in the insurance business), I wired the torque tube section to the chassis and put the other bits in the tool tray to take along.

Next came the job of arranging the shipping of the car to England along with all the necessary documentation. This is really quite easy as I have dealt with the same shipping agent for many cross Atlantic journeys, Martin Button/Cosdel International. In fact, the Ghost is probably eligible for Frequent Container Points due to its many Atlantic crossings!

Eventually it was time for us to follow the Ghost to England. When we arrived at Heathrow we were greeted by our very dear friends, Tim and Susie Forrest, whom we had the great fortune to meet on the 1993 Alpine Rally [*see article in the Fall 2020 Atlantic Lady*]. They live in the quintessential English village of Chiddingfold, located in Surrey about one hour south from

# Over There ~ Americans in France

Heathrow. Tim, Susie and their two daughters, Erica and Katie, were participating in the same rally in their magnificent 1912 Ghost, “Nellie.”

The next day, after a good night’s sleep, we drove about 40 minutes in a modern car to the shipping/receiving warehouse where the Ghost was patiently waiting for our reunion. The Ghost fired right up and we whisked back to “Chid,” heading for the local gas station to tank up for the same day drive to Portsmouth. Here, we would catch an overnight ferry to Saint-Malo in Brittany, France. As Tim was filling the 1912, he heard a terrible sound – like someone realized they had made a horrible mistake by uttering “Oh S - - T !!” It seems that I had been filling my tank with diesel fuel instead of gasoline!

Fortunately, I realized my mistake about half way full, so we decided to drive the two or three miles back to Tim’s garage and drain out the diesel. Well, I almost made it, but had to be towed the last ¼ mile and then the draining began. This was followed by a couple of gallons of petrol to get going, and a return trip back to the same gas station. Believe me, that was the first time I ever



Getting ready to leave Chiddingfold for the ferry

tried to substitute diesel for gasoline and I can assure, you that will be the last!

We had a nice drive to Portsmouth and eventually secured the cars aboard the ferry. We made our way to our cabin, followed by drinks in the lounge and a nice dinner with other participants. As morning broke, we entered the harbor at Saint-Malo and prepared to disembark at 7AM for the approximately 180 mile run for a three night stay at Chateau Marçay, in the Loire Valley. Mary Jo pointed out to



Waiting to board the ferry from Portsmouth to Saint-Malo

me that 180 miles is nothing for a Ghost – especially one with overdrive, and I concurred.

Obviously, she had a plan, which always means we will be the last to arrive at the day's end. Mary Jo is entitled to her "Castle du Jour" so every day has an added historical/cultural stop.

Mary Jo had just finished reading a book called, "All the Light We Cannot See," by Anthony Doerr. Yes, real books, and we carry them everywhere!! The book is about a young French girl and a young German soldier in Nazi occupied Saint-Malo and how they survive the Allied bombing on August 17, 1944 that leveled most of the old city. This required a complete reconnaissance of this medieval town (now rebuilt), with a walk around the ramparts built to protect the city. It included a visit to the cathedral, all historic landmarks, of course the WW I and II Memorials with a review of all the names – noting brothers and cousins from the same families killed in WW I and II and finally a late breakfast at a creperie.

Due to difficulties exiting the parking lot, the machines did not like Euro notes or our credit card, we were finally on our way at 12 Noon. We were driving thru stunning countryside, with farms that were boundary marked by roads with 90 degree turns, causing us to drive at a more modest pace than we had anticipated. The directions were well written, yet somehow we did lose the route and ended up making a "U" turn through a construction yard. We travel with "Alice," our European Garmin. She is most helpful in congested city areas, and when route confusion ensues. We proceeded on our way, only to experience

what I thought were some very strong crosswinds as we motored along. A little further along on a "dual carriage way" I thought something did not feel right and pulled over to check the new front tires that I had installed before leaving home. The front tires were fine. There had been no crosswinds, and it was the right rear tire that was going flat.



My wife, Mary Jo, reading a tourist pamphlet in front of a lovely garden in Saint-Malo



Château de Marçay - Chinon

We exited this busy road and pulled into a supermarket parking lot and began jacking up the car as the tire continued to deflate. The last time I had a flat (a puncture as the Brits would say) was in 2010 on a rally in Spain. Happily, then as now, I had the necessary gear to get the spare mounted and be on our way. As always, we met a lot of nice people who were enjoying this demonstration of early tire changing. Finally, we were back on the road with about 70 miles to go and I am thinking about the nice cocktail reception that was planned for that night – at 6:00PM followed by dinner at 7:00PM – remember, everybody else was up and out at 7:00AM so they were all showered, dressed and cocktailed when we arrived at 6:45PM. We did manage to make it to dinner and thoroughly enjoyed a lot of delicious French wine.

The next morning, I proceeded to fix my flat – a large construction staple had been embedded in the tire and punctured the tube. Maybe the staple

was from where we made the “U” turn? No worries as I had two spare tubes on board and as I never get flats, I would still have a spare tube. Fortunately, a fellow tourist kindly loaned me an air compressor which hastened the project along.

The next several days were filled with lovely roads, beautiful landscapes, terrific hotels and loads of great wine – did I mention we were in the wine region and the “bread basket” of France – glorious green and golden fields of wheat and other crops. The Loire Valley’s most famous residents included Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) and her somewhat dysfunctional family. You may remember, Katherine Hepburn as Queen Eleanor in the 1968 film “The Lion in Winter,” also starring Peter O’Toole as King Henry II of England and Anthony Hopkins as Richard the Lionheart, King Richard I of



Château De Saumur



Descending great Gorges du Lot

England. We visited the Royal Abbey of Fontevraud, where all three of this happy little trio are buried. We also went to see the spectacular gardens at Chateau de Villandry, one of the last renaissance chateaus to be built on the Loire. Dr. Joachim Carvallo and his American wife, Ann Coleman, heiress to an iron and steel empire in Pennsylvania, completely restored this castle in the early 1900's. Once again, a fabulously wealthy American girl rescued this old castle, restoring it and the gardens to their former glory.

For the sake of brevity and tedium, suffice it to say that we traveled almost 2000 miles in about 17 days through one-third of France from North to South on the western third of the country. We stayed in fabulous hotels, not a clinker in the group. As you all know, antique car tourists never go hungry or thirsty on a rally. We dressed and met every evening for drinks followed by a proper dinner at approximately 8PM, dining "en famille" as a group, imbibing in lovely wines before, during and after dinner.

We left the Loire Valley and traveled south to the Limosin region and in to the Dordogne, through the towns of Poitiers and Brantome. We saw hillsides dotted with medieval castles, as we journeyed thru the Languedoc region, over smaller mountains, rivers and the great Gorges du Lot. The driving was challenging and somewhat treacherous, made more difficult by the miscue on the weather. No one told the man in charge that this was the "Sunshine" Tour, and it poured heavily on many days, adding to the woes of the dreaded "airplane" cold from which many of our group were suffering. We persevered and soldiered on.....The sun came out and we journeyed on through more twisting gorges and on to the majestic walled city of Carcassonne, located south and east of Toulouse near the Spanish border and the Mediterranean Sea. It is the largest intact medieval walled city in all of Western Europe. We climbed by foot up to the Citadel and toured this amazing castle with its 31 towers – We passed a lazy afternoon boating on the Canal du Midi, fascinated by the rise and fall of the "Lock" system on the river.



Filling gas tank in the rain



The city is tightly within the walls but offers wonderful cafe in just about every courtyard

Now traveling north and eventually to the southwest corner of the Languedoc, Mr. Forrest had unfortunately noted in his route book that there was a museum in Castres that housed the largest collection of Spanish paintings in France, including some by Goya. Need I say that this was a “must see,” for Mary Jo? Parking was at a premium in this busy little hub, and I decided to park in an underground lot. They are designed for smaller European cars, not Silver Ghosts. Maneuvering the Ghost was a bit of a challenge, especially with Mary Jo reminding me that I



Arriving at Château de Mercuès

should have parked elsewhere. During the parking exercise, a nice looking couple from Austria who spoke English very well, were admiring the Ghost – they had a 356 series Porsche. He politely asked if I knew that the left rear tire was going flat?

OK, out came the jack, etc. and I proceeded to give another demonstration on how easy it is to change a flat. I have NEVER had two flats on the same tour.....Then, finally on to the museum that of course was closed from 12 noon until 2:00PM. We walked around a bit to pass the time. Americans do not understand the mid-day French lunch break, and we do complain bitterly about it – Capitalism vs. Socialism - a quandary.



A boat on The Canal du Midi passing through the center of Carcassonne

Following the museum adventure we continued on to the spectacular Chateau de Mercues, just north of Cahors. This gorgeous Chateau Relais Hotel is perched on a cliff overlooking the River Lot, and one of the fascinating systems of locks was within easy sight of our waterside window. We soon discovered that the chateau had its own vineyard and wine cellar where we were treated to a reception and discussion of the different wines available.



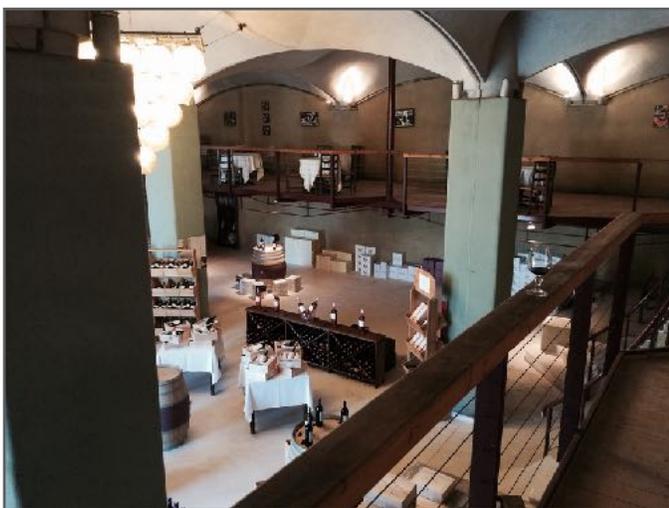
View of lock system from our window



Wine Cave

The next morning I started looking for a tire repair shop so that I might patch my two tubes in case I should have yet another flat. Due to my complete lack of French I had no success in finding any shop that could put a patch on a tire tube. I even tried a bicycle shop! I finally enlisted the help of the most obliging Concierge and between the two of us we located a place in a neighboring city. We plugged the address into “Alice,” and shoved off for the Friendly French Tire Store – or something like that, in the very pleasant city of Mercues - whose name I cannot pronounce.

When we pulled in, the mechanics admired the car, but when I tried to explain what I needed there was no communication – so I did it the old fashioned way: I pulled the two tubes out of the tool box and walked into the shop and pointed at the holes and made a noise like air leaking out – PPsssstttt.... They got the idea and 15 minutes and 4.60 Euros later, we were on our way. Good to have spare tubes again.



Reception area in wine cellar

I neglected to mention, that very early on in the tour the French Petroleum workers went on strike which meant the country was running out of gas and one by one filling stations had signs stating, FERME - closed. This is not a good situation when your car gets about 10 mpg and you have 1,500 miles to travel. Normally I start thinking about gas after three hours of driving, and then after three and a half hours I start looking for the next station, and by four hours panic starts to set in. To combat this situation I stopped at just about every station we passed that was open to keep the tank topped up. Eventually, at one station, Mary Jo spied some gas cans for sale. As I was filling the tank I asked her to buy as many as she could. Only two small five litres cans remained on the shelf, and we

grabbed them as it was enough gas for 25 miles or so, which gave us some degree of comfort.

With two full days of driving left plus our final stop in Biarritz, panic spread through the group amidst threats that airports and all public transport venues would be closed and gas was unavailable. Tourists abandoned the rally like rats leaving a sinking ship. We did not have a plane available to us or a way to get our Ghost back to England, so we somewhat calmly pressed on with the route.

On this day we were the last out of the parking lot, as Mr. Forrest's directions stated that it was a relatively "easy" drive. Mary Jo cavalierly tried to

hasten the wonderful mechanic, Roy O'Sullivan, along his way, assuring him that he need not worry about The Heckman's. Famous last words, and Roy actually suggested to us that that we should not say that, as it could jinx the day! Roy traveled with the group in his "Trouble Truck" from start to finish, and how lucky we all were to have him on the rally. We enjoyed a stunning drive along the River Lot, passing through scenic farm lands and countryside heading south towards Biarritz. In the rally book, Mr. Forrest suggested a stop at the Moissac Abbey and Cloister. You guessed it - Of course we stopped to see this world heritage site that dates back to Clovis I (481-511) and is home to the most beautiful Romanesque Cloister in France. It was splendid, and well worth the time.

Roy joined us for our cultural experience and for a lovely lunch in the town square under large "market umbrellas."

Chatting over lunch, Roy and I remembered when on the 2014 WW I Commemorative Rally in France/Belgium he had repaired a split air pressure line for me. Looking back I realized that the same line had failed when I was on a rally in Mexico in 1994 – but that time I fixed it – so a 20 year fix – not bad for an amateur!

After lunch we had about 65 miles to our hotel for the evening. About 35 miles into the afternoon drive, while climbing a mild hill, the car made a strange "crunching" sound and failed to proceed. Not good as we were on a curve just before the crest of the hill, causing a bit of a traffic hazard. Roy to the rescue! He quickly pulled in front of us, attached a tow rope and moved us around the bend and into a parking area for diagnosis of the problem. Clutch – no, that was engaging and



Moissac Abbey and Cloister



Waterside cafe for lunch in Brantôme

disengaging, Transmission – no, the output shaft was turning so it had to be the overdrive or the differential or an axle shaft – but nothing we could fix by the side of the road.

So Roy towed us for the last 30 miles of the day with Mary Jo riding in his Range Rover trying to keep curious cars from zipping in between the Ghost and the Range Rover. Obviously, they could not see the tow rope. This was especially challenging when going around traffic circles as most French drivers feel that any circle is an extension of the race course at Le Mans – a white knuckle drive to say the least! I don't recommend this form of travel.

Eventually "Alice" told us we were about two miles from our hotel and Mary Jo noticed that "Alice" said there was a "gas" station on the route near the hotel. We carried on and as we turned a corner we were directly across the street from a Renault garage. We stopped and all of the mechanics raced over to look at the old car. The shop manager, who was well versed in the English language, came out and on the spot offered us the use of his garage and any equipment we needed. By now it was 6:45PM, and the shop was closing for the evening. NOW, of



Picturesque town of Brantôme

course, we were happy that they had a two hour lunch break and remained open until 7:00PM. Sometimes the local customs can work to your advantage!

The garage manager promised us they would be back at 8:00AM on Saturday morning and kindly offered shelter to our wounded but valiant Ghost. Still not knowing what was wrong, but suspecting the overdrive, we immediately accepted and rolled the Ghost into a lower level garage bay for the night. We piled into Roy's Range Rover and arrived at Chateau Bellevue in Gascony for a nice bath and fresh clothes followed by a delicious dinner. In spite of my anxiety about whether the Ghost was suffering from a bad overdrive or a bad differential, we had a delightful evening.

Saturday morning Roy and I were at the garage by 8:30AM and first checked the differential and rear axles – all OK – so it had to be the overdrive. And here is where my pre-tour preparation paid off... I had managed to stash all of the original parts in the car so all we had to do was remove the rear-end assembly, which allowed us to access the overdrive and remove it. Then, we reinstalled the original bits, stuffed the rear end assembly

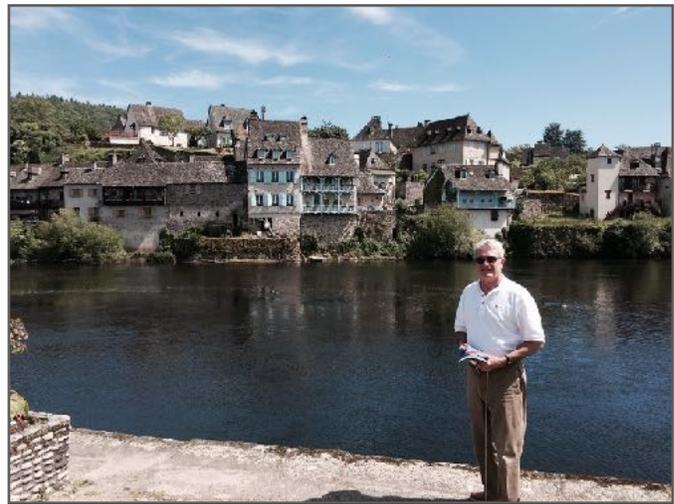


Roy and I working together, completed the job

back in to the chassis, and presto we were ready to go.

Working together, Roy and I completed the job and had the car on the ground and running by 11:30AM – three hours flat - this has to be some sort of record and one of which we are very proud. We returned to the hotel for a cool shower and a late checkout, then on our way to the final destination – Biarritz.

It was now 12:30PM and most people would have elected to take the shortcut on the dual carriageway to Biarritz. The Heckman's are purists, and always follow the written directions. We appreciate all the effort that goes into the design of these routes. The route was a beauty, as we followed Napoleon's undulating "Route Imperial des Cimes" (Peaks) with superb views over to the Pyrenees and the Basque countryside. About three to four hours in to the journey, the weather started to look a bit ominous, and Mary Jo suggested that we don our rain suits just in case.... I prefer to keep the top down, and we agreed to "punch" thru any inclement weather as we were only 40 miles from our final destination. Roy shook his head, and by now I believe he



Beside the river in Argentat

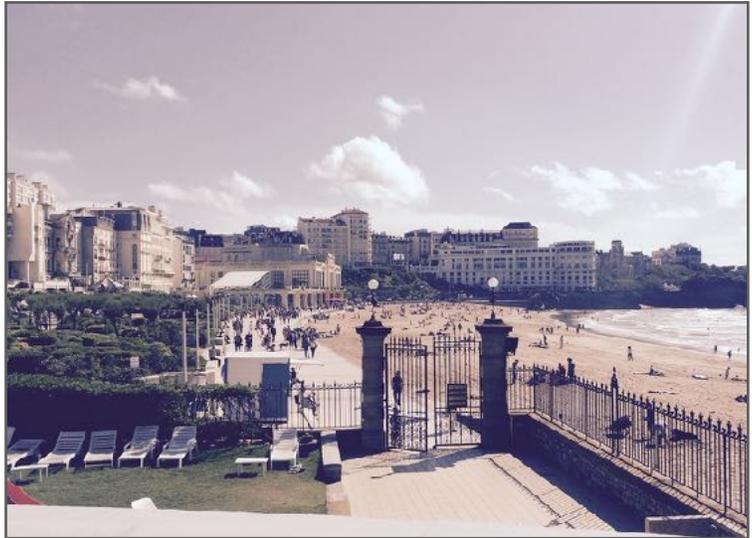
questioned our sanity. Good thing we prepared, as a few minutes later the sky turned completely dark and the heavens opened up with driving rain followed by a fierce hailstorm. We were enveloped in a complete whiteout, with hail hammering down on us. Roy tucked in behind us in the Range Rover with his four-way flashers. Note to self - Get a set for the Ghost! I have heard of hailstorms but never experienced anything like this before. The hailstones were the size of large olives and rained down so heavily upon us that Mary Jo had to use her handbag to protect her head and I used the tour book to cover mine. When it was finally over, we had at least six inches of hail on the front floor of the car. What a waste of pure ice, as it was much too early for a Martini! That would come later.....

At this point I was happy the top was down as it is gently used and would have been shredded from the deluge of hail. Amazingly, there were no dents in the body or fenders – nada, zip – Later in Biarritz, Mary Jo asked if that dent in the head lamp was always there? In fact the hail had not only dented the brass head lamp but actually punctured it!



Blue tape marks punctured head lamp

We were booked at The Hotel de Palais in Biarritz, originally built as a summer villa for Empress Eugenie (wife of Napoleon III) around 1855. After the two days we had just completed, we were warmly welcomed by the group like conquering heroes. We raced off to our luxurious room overlooking the Atlantic Ocean for a quick change and the next event. Finally, it was Martini time, and I can assure you, I thoroughly enjoyed the drink(s) that I had that evening! The next day was splendid, and we basked in the sun on “The Grande Plage,” participated in our own Concours D’Elegance in the town square and celebrated at our Gala Dinner with prizes awarded to deserving recipients.



The Grande Plage

At this time I should mention that upon the conclusion of the rally in Biarritz, our plan had been to accompany the Forrest’s and drive straight back to Brittany for the return ferry ride to England. Obviously with the fuel



Concours D’Elegance in the town square

situation now at crisis levels this was not going to happen. We contacted the ferry line and were able to secure bookings on their ferry that ran from Santander, Spain to Portsmouth, England. The Spanish border is just below Biarritz and once over the line gasoline would be plentiful.

We were able to tank up in Biarritz, and headed 160 miles south posthaste on the “fast” road through the Pyrenees and the Basque region. We passed by San Sebastian and Bilbao for a 1:00PM ferry check-in and a 3:00PM sailing out of Santander. There were no “castle du jour” stops on this day, as tickets to England were precious and we were not going to miss the boat. Our little group was all loaded and we checked in to our rooms and went out on deck to wave goodbye to Santander and Europe. Again, another nice meal and more wine....I see a pattern developing here.

By the time we landed in Portsmouth the following afternoon, it had started to rain. We decided to tank up with gas and put the top up at the same time. A good thing, as it really started to pour..... In the meantime, we had lost sight and contact with the Forrest’s whom we were following back to Chiddingfold on some “back” roads – It was

“rush” hour in England and we experienced a busy, challenging drive in the heavy rain. My navigator was tired of looking at maps, and once again, “Alice” came to our rescue. She directed us back to “Chid” with little difficulty, and upon our arrival, we were pleased to know that Tim & Susie had arrive safely, not too far ahead of us. This concludes the story of the French Sunshine Tour of 2016.

The End — until the next adventure!

Cheers!

Tom & Mary Jo Heckman.



Photographs courtesy of Tom Heckman

Tom & Mary Jo - Concours at Biarritz



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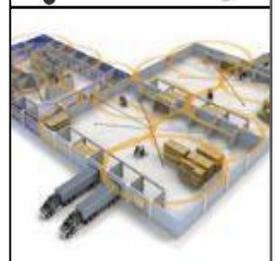
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# So, You Want To Buy a Proper Motor Car? Read This First!

IRA STARR



It all started for me in 1995 when I hit the male mid-life crisis point and was looking to do something off-the-wall; buying my first Rolls-Royce motor car. This was something that I always wanted to do. I was a lover of cars from early age and at eighteen years old, was given a blue 1960 Ford Falcon by my dad as a first car. It wasn't long before I tired of that car and ventured out to find the car I really loved. Back in the early 1970's, British sports cars were very popular and working during the summer, when not in school, allowed me to save up enough money to buy a 1964 Triumph TR-4. Of course, the price was right and the owner of the car was within 20 miles of my house so as soon as I saw the car, I said to myself "I have to have that car." So, with a short drive to the seller's home and one look at the car, I bought the car by giving the owner a small deposit and within the same week, my dad and I went to pick up the car and drive it home. That was my first segue into car buying and needless to say, I did everything wrong in how to buy the right car. From that point forward, I was hooked on British cars and moved on to purchase a Triumph TR-6, a Jaguar XJ6, and XJS, and finally my first Rolls-Royce; a 1979 Silver Shadow II. Now hooked on Rolls-Royce motor cars, I subsequently bought, over the years, a 1990 Silver Spirit II, 1981 Silver Spirit, a 1991 Silver Spur II, a 1988 Bentley Eight, and finally a 1993 Bentley Brooklands. So, from my first Triumph TR-4 to my current Rolls-Royce

and Bentley, over fifty years went by and after buying many pre-owned British cars you'd think I'd learn how to pick the best car for the least amount of money (Newer RR's and Bentley's are very expensive). Well, not really. What I did learn to do and not to do is the subject of this article. Have I practiced what I've learned? I think to some extent but way short of expectations. However, if you follow my advice below, you may be more fortunate than I was in buying a decent PMC for the best price.

- ***Never, ever buy a Rolls or a Bentley sight-unseen***
  - Of all the things that you should never do is buy a Rolls or Bentley without a good site visit to see the car and drive it. I bought my first PMC, a 1979 Silver Shadow II from a listing in Hemmings Motor News magazine when there was no such thing as the Internet, eBay Motors and Youtube where you can see pictures and videos and other information for the car you want to buy. I had to contact the dealer who was down in Delray Beach Florida (I live in NY), to send me a few pictures of the car. So, in order for me to see the car, I had to get on a plane and fly to Florida, with a bank check in hand (I didn't want to fly there twice) and hope I was getting a decent car. I also had to trust the dealer in that he was telling me the truth that the car was in great shape. I had no experience

with these cars and picked the most complex one to buy first. What made matters worse for me was I decided to drive the car back to NY from Florida taking the Amtrak car/train which saved me a whole bunch of non-driving miles from Orlando, Florida to Fairfax, Virginia. I had to pray to God that I didn't break down from Delray to Orlando and from Fairfax to NY, a total of 8 hours of driving a car that I barely knew about or driven before. Luckily, everything went as intended and the car made it to NY without a "fail to proceed" or other issue.

- You'd think I'd learn a lesson after making the mistake with the Shadow. Well I didn't! Due to the pandemic it was scary traveling anywhere and being amongst people who could be carrying the Covid virus. So, I got the itch to replace my 1988 Bentley Eight (which was working fine for the most part) and get a newer Bentley. I did have a supposedly, trusted dealer in mind from the purchase of my 1991 Silver Spur II. So, I watched carefully on his website for the right-priced, and good-looking Bentley to appear and sure enough, one did appear on the dealer's website. So, it was a back and forth situation for a number of weeks discussing the car and I was very close to killing the deal, which I should have. However, my anxiousness and emotions to get a newer Bentley again overtook my common senses and I bought the car. Lo' and behold, when the car was shipped to me (another story to discuss) there were a few issues that the dealer forgot to tell me about. One of the wheel trim locking caps was missing, the driver's window would go down and not up, the front passenger window had problems going up and down and worst of all, there was a whine in the differential that I heard in the first ¼ mile driven from the shipping drop off point to my house. Had I flown out to the dealer (hundreds

of miles from my house) and driven the car like I did the Spur, I would have found all of these issues and saved myself the headache of now having to identify the problem root causes and fixing each issue. Net, net, net don't trust anyone, especially a supposedly, trusted dealer, no less.

- ***Don't let your emotions and anxiety, love for a car, and your very first pick force you to buy a PMC. If it doesn't feel right, skip that car; there are plenty others out there***
- I've had six PMCs since 1995 and in every situation I was so anxious to buy the car, which I had researched, that even though I saw many flaws with the potential purchase, I went through with the deal and was sorry I didn't wait for a better car and opportunity. Going through a myriad amount of effort to locate a car, which one would think is good, and all the time spent with the seller and negotiations is exhausting and that's why I committed to the purchase when in fact I should have bypassed the purchase and started all over again; something that personally for me is hard to do.
- ***Don't let the low price and how good the car looks inside and out be the main factors for purchasing a PMC***
- Those of us who are looking at older PMCs do so because we want to own a unique marque and don't want to pay a six figure price for it. So, we tend to look for great deals; usually the older cars. When you see these low-priced cars that look fantastic on a dealer's website or on eBay, there's a reason why they are priced the way they are. There are hidden issues which you don't see and will when you buy the car and drive it. You know what they say "Looks can be deceiving!"
- ***Don't buy a PMC that's been listed on a website for a long time***

- You must look carefully at cars that are listed on dealer websites or on eBay motors or other Internet sites for a long time. I saw many of these cars listed and from the pictures on the Internet, they looked beautiful. Many of them were hundreds of miles away so shipping the car was the only practical way of buying them. However, you then run into my first “DON’T”; buying a car sight-unseen. There’s a reason why these cars are still looking for a buyer (or sucker). Many potential buyers have seen these cars up close, as they were probably local to the seller, and found all sorts of issues and ran away as fast as they could.
- ***Think twice about buying a PMC in the midst of the pandemic. Registration at the DMV is a nightmare***
- I couldn’t have picked the worst time in buying my Bentley Brooklands; right in the middle of the pandemic. Registering a car at the DMV was a nightmare experience because you couldn’t go to the DMV and wait on line to speak with an agent. Everything had to be done through postal mail or secure drop box. Most concerning was mailing my original Title of Ownership to a post office box. I should have waited until the pandemic was more under control and being able to visit the DMV in person.
- ***Don’t buy a PMC without running through an exhaustive checklist of items to check***
- You don’t need to be a Rolls or Bentley expert to determine if a PMC is worth buying. What you need is a checklist specific to the Rolls and Bentley motor cars. These cars have unique systems (e.g. brake and height control hydraulics) and there are no checklists on the Internet to factor in these systems. Furthermore, there are quirks with these cars that you need to know about. These issues need to be checked during your on-site evaluation. Where do you find such a unique checklist for these cars? Well, I have one that I developed over the years. In fact, I wrote an article in the Atlantic Lady a number of years ago and provided the checklist at the article’s end. You can reach out to me for this checklist at the following email address: [iralans@gmail.com](mailto:iralans@gmail.com). This checklist is “worth its weight in gold” when buying a PMC. Don’t leave home without it!
- ***If you buy a PMC, don’t bring it to your local car mechanic or franchise fix-it repair shop.***
- These cars are unique and the local garage mechanic or franchise fix-it shop mechanics are not trained to fix these cars. In fact, few have ever worked on one of these cars because there are few of these cars around. When was the last time you saw a 1970’s-1990’s Rolls or Bentley on the road? These cars need specially trained mechanics and you must consider how far away you are from them. The further away they are, the more expensive it will be to tow the car to that location. Trust me, you’ll be crying if your closest repair expert is 3 hours+ away from your house as you will pay dearly to get the car towed to that location, or for that matter, if you have to drive there to leave the car for repair. It’s guaranteed that at some point you will “Fail to Proceed.” It’s not a question of “If”, it’s “When.”
- ***Don’t think if you buy a newer PMC that that is better than buying older car***
- The one thing I realized the hard way was the newer the car, the more electronics comes with the car and the more things that can go wrong with the electronics. My first 1979 Shadow had minimal electronics compared to my 1991 Silver Spur. So, as luck would not

have it, my Spur Drivers Information Panel cluster stopped working and now I have no clue as to any warnings coming from the engine bay. To fix this, I have to pull the entire instrument cluster (it's one unit) and have it sent to the UK for evaluation and fixing. Sometimes having mechanical systems are better than the electronic ones. Also, for the DIY car mechanics like myself, the newer the cars, the more complex and expensive equipment is required to evaluate the issues in electronic components. Now, you're forced to go to a Bentley or Rolls dealer and pay exorbitant hourly rates to get your car fixed. Trust me, you can't afford this testing equipment!

- ***You're in for trouble if you don't get maintenance records for your PMC purchase***
- Being fortunate to obtain and review maintenance records before you purchase your PMC will save you from serious aggravation after you purchase your car and drive it a bit. Rest assured, all the issues in the car's past history will raise its ugly head and make your life miserable and costly. Good case in point are the many PMCs I bought without maintenance records and discovered issues such as previous engine overheating which eventually resulted in anti-freeze leaking from the weep holes in the engine block (Cylinder sleeve O-ring failure). However, I did have maintenance records for my 1993 Bentley but they were given to me after I bought the car, sight-unseen. Had I seen these records at the dealer site and driven the car, I would have never purchased it as now I'm dealing with an annoying whine from the differential. Serves me right for not practicing what I'm preaching. I will for the next PMC, and there will be a next!!!
- ***Shipping a car is a risky and expensive venture especially for these PMCs***

- Let's face it, finding a PMC that is local to your home is going to be a long shot. With the six PMCs I bought over the years, only two were within easy driving distance from my house and at the same dealer. So, you have no choice but to ship the car which means you better go and look at it and drive it first before you decide to buy it and ship it vs taking the big risk like me and driving a mysterious PMC a long distance with few places to get it fixed properly. I have shipped a number of cars and can tell you if you are shipping it during the winter, expect the shipper to be challenged by snow and other bad weather. Also, the trucks that are used are prone to breakdowns which happened to me and I had to wait an additional week for the truck to be repaired before receiving my PMC. If you can, stay away from open car haulers as your car is subject to the elements, and it could get chipped by flying pebbles and debris on the highway and side roads, not to mention colliding with tree branches if your car is on the top of a multi-level truck rig. Also, my last shipping experience found that the shipper packed three cars on his open car rig with my Bentley in the middle. There was two inches max between the cars and if they shifted, for any reason, there would have been front or rear-end damage from the surrounding cars banging into mine.

So, these were some (not all) of my experiences owning these beautiful marques. I do hope you take advantage of my mistakes and purchase a real gem of a car and enjoy it trouble-free for years to come. There are gems out there but you need to be patient and keep looking, not buying the first good-looking car that comes your way.

***Good luck, and safe and trouble free motoring to all!!!!***



# In Memoriam

## S. Prestley Blake of Friendly Ice Cream

November 26, 1914 – February 11, 2021

JOHN MATSEN

Long time Atlantic Region member, S. Prestley Blake, held a number of Region events at his estate in Somers, CT. That is just across the Massachusetts line from Springfield MA, which is where Silver Ghosts and Phantom I cars were built from 1921 to 1931. Mr. Blake died recently at age 106.

At any given time he had a collection of about 20 Rolls-Royces, including a number of Springfield built Silver Ghosts and Phantom I models. He kept them in a climate controlled converted barn, with a curator/mechanic to look after them.



S. Prestley Blake of Friendly Ice Cream Corporation



At some point he had acquired a Phantom I chassis which had never had coachwork installed. RR warranties ran from the time that a car with completed coachwork had been delivered to the customer. Pres as he was known, had nice replica coachwork installed on that chassis. Rolls-Royce did indeed issue him a warranty dated sometime in the 1980s. In the early 2000s he had several Silver Spirits converted to convertibles by Nikko-Michael, a coachbuilder on Long Island. On at least one of those he had the woodwork done in black walnut which came from his estate.



The first time I saw Pres was at the 1993 Annual Meet in Asheville N.C. I had recently bought a 1954 Silver Wraith, and that was the first trip I had taken it on. When we got to the Grove Park Hotel in Asheville, it turned out that they were over booked for the first night, and they were offering all takers a free night at a hotel across town. The price was right, but I felt too nervous about driving back and forth across town in my right-hand drive car with British headlights. I was standing in line at the registration desk right behind an elderly man who took the offer. That was Pres, and B.J. Jefferson told me that Pres was not one to leave money on the table.



A Sample of the Blake Collection



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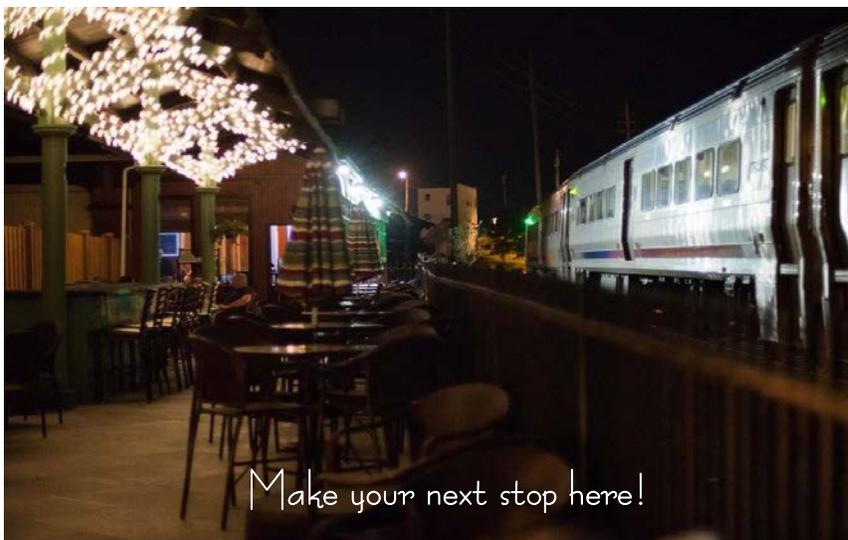
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