

The Caterham Maple Leaf News

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2 seven or not 2 seven ?

Mark Mackenzie from Calgary, Alberta talks about the purchase and recent restoration of his 1969 Lotus 7 Series 3.

Having decided it was time for a small, middle-aged indulgence and gaining the support of my wife, I started my search for a sports car. Lots to consider; S2000, NSX, Pantera, Skyline, Cobra, kit vs. production, etc. Having always wanted to build my own sports car from scratch but not having the time, purchasing a kit car or an older car that needed some TLC seemed the thing to do (at least at the time).



After much consideration I decided a Seven would provide everything I wanted; something to tinker on, something unusual (at least here in Canada) and something that provided great performance for the dollar. Another consideration that may seem different to most, I wanted a car that was not really suitable as a daily driver. Face it,

after a few years, an S2000 would have simply become another worn out commuter car with a value depreciated down to little or nothing.

So it was time to start looking. Off to Toronto to see a Superformance S1, then to Vancouver to see a home built Seven. I looked at Wolf, Birkin, a couple of "who knows what it was" and I spent much time on e-bay. While in California in 2004 I tried to see California Sevens (no luck) but did stop to see my first Elise (you have to look).

Then when in Arizona I stopped at the local Caterham dealer to see a SL R500, a Roadsport and my first SV chassis. One thing became clear very quickly was the build quality of the Caterham product as compared to most of the other kits or copies I'd seen. This also would have been my first opportunity to at least ride in a Seven, but the dealer was in a rural area and the roads were deep mud at the time. ARG - another day perhaps.



Lots more looking, reading, visiting and e-baying later I found and purchased my first Seven. Dream of all dreams, this was a real Lotus, a 1969 S3. It came with a host of new components and a real Lotus Twin Cam. How much better could it get? The most amazing part is that after all the looking, in all the places, and all the cars I'd seen, this was the first Lotus I'd seen and the car was located within 8 km. of my home - Thank you e-bay gods!



Mark continues his story next month.

The South American Lotus 7. Part 2

Between 1969 and 1972 around 30 of these Argentinean Sevens were sold with the Lotus emblem on the nose. The cars were only offered completely assembled with the engines and drive train coming from the Fiat 1600 in two states of tune: 87bhp. and 100bhp. Optional equipment included: tinted windscreens, two tone paintwork, close ratio 5-speed gearbox, luxury upholstery and alloy wheels. In 1971 the price of a standard Seven was two million Argentinean pesos. The name of the enterprise was "Lotus Argentina S.A.I.C&F".

In 1970 the Uruguayan Renault factory started working again and Jorge Mutio decided to build a Seven for the Uruguayan market using Renault 12 components instead of Fiat 1600. Richard Vignoles modified one of the chassis frames to take the Renault transaxle gearbox in the back of the car with fully independent suspension hung from it and a prototype was produced. The result was less power [75bhp] but better cornering and braking with a better balanced car.

Later, things got better for Renault in Uruguay and both Seven projects were dropped. Today Jorge Mutio lives in Montevideo and Richard Vignoles is in San Diego, California where he is building another Seven with his two sons. Sadly Edgardo Boschi died and his widow sold the moulds; so now there are lots of other replicas in Argentina using Fiat 125 engines, a different front suspension design and a slightly larger chassis.

As for the cars that survive: I have details of four of in Argentina and also the Renault powered prototype in Montevideo. From the photographs it can be seen that all the cars are well cherished.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

This article was written with information supplied by Pablo Benech, the current owner of the Uruguayan prototype.



NEXT ISSUE

In our next issue we will talk to David Saville Peck CEO of Super 7 Cars Inc. here in British Columbia, Canada. David has been involved with the 7 since 1975.

We will also continue with Mark's article and the recent restoration of his 1969 Lotus 7 S3 Twin Cam.

LOTUS 7 CLUB-



For those of you who have yet to join the Lotus 7 Club, let me encourage you to take the leap. The club's monthly magazine 'LOW FLYING' is a superb publication with excellent articles from enthusiastic owners.

For further information on joining the club use the link below:

www.lotussevenclub.com

ARTICLES WANTED

If you would like to write an article for this publication, please email us and we would be pleased to include it in the next available issue.