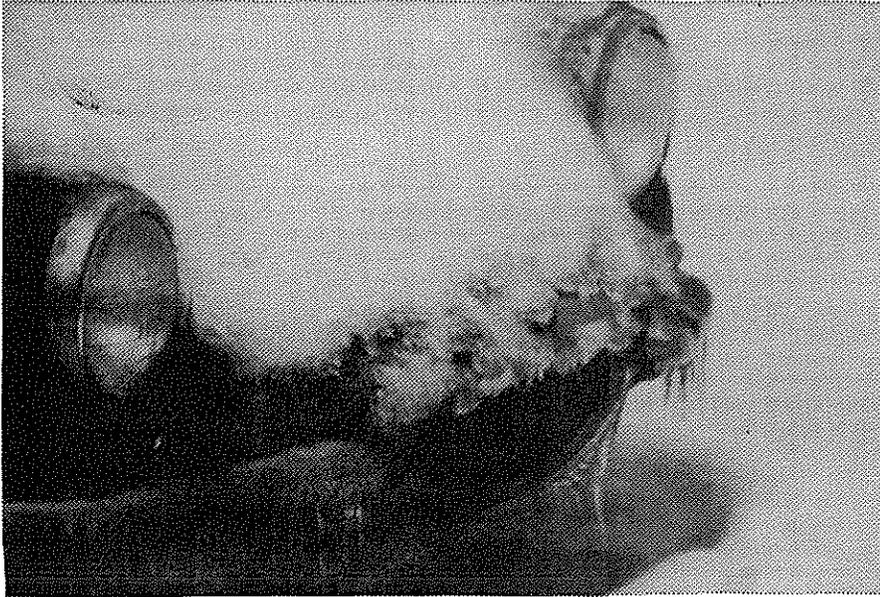


CLUB ELITE
NEWSLETTER

July 1974

Volume 4
Issue 4



Dear Member:

My name is Donald Plettenberg and I'm handling the newsletter for Bill and Barbara this month. The newsletter is devoted to providing information concerning Mr. Jay Chamberlain, the elusive importer of Elites during the 50's and 60's. Included in this newsletter are two letters from John Timanus, who is Technical Administrator of the SCCA and a fellow Elite owner. Mr. Timanus sheds some light on Mr. Chamberlain's past and present activities.

Dennis Ortenburger has done some research into the whereabouts of Mr. Chamberlain and has even gone so far as to check corporate and business records to try to find information. (An extract from his letter is published below.)

Maybe Club Elite should hire a detective to trace down Mr. Chamberlain! Seriously though, Club Elite would like to contact him. If any member has any additional information concerning his whereabouts, please contact either Bill or myself. Also in this Newsletter is a reprint from the October 1957 Sports Car and Lotus Owner article on Mr. Chamberlain.

We are starting a new feature in this issue, one which will be helpful to many members. As Bill mentioned last month, the Club is starting a 'problem/solution' section in the Newsletter.

Each page of this section will be concerned with one portion of the car (front suspension, rear suspension, electrical, etc.). By doing this it will be easier for a member to find a particular 'problem/solution'. I'm sure we all have short cuts and solutions to problems that can save other members time (and money) in repairing and maintaining their Elite.

#1186

The 'problem/solution' section should help some of you as it will certainly help me. My car is a 1961 Series I, 1186, RHD and MG Gearbox. When I bought it, it had over 100,000 rough miles on it. Now it has over 150,000. As you can see by the picture, the car is not pampered and I use it every chance I get. Rather than tell you what I've replaced or repaired, I'll just say that the diff and steering box are the only parts that I haven't taken apart -- yet.

The July 27th issue of Autoweek is an issue which all Club members would be interested in having. There is a section of the magazine devoted to Vintage Car Racing. In this section is a four page article on the Elite written by Club Member Dennis Ortenburger. The article is pretty interesting and should be added to your auto literature collection. Also, in the same issue, is a letter to the Editor of Autoweek from Club Member Barry Swackhammer. In it he expresses his opinion of his Elite. By the way, Barry Swackhammer and Gary Koller are the two members who have contributed to the 'problem/solution' section.

I hope that more members take up the Newsletter in coming months. I'm sure Bill and Barbara can use the break.

Happy Motoring
Donald Flettenberg

Extract from Ortenburger letter...

Jay Chamberlain: Jay was selling Elites for anywhere between 5 & 7 Grand. He sold or consigned approximately one dozen Elites to Frank Millard (a sports car dealer in Encino known as 'the man in red' who was partners with Roy Rogers!). Anyway, Millard sold them for \$2995 each! Shortly afterwards Chamberlain disappeared and has been missing ever since.

May 6, 1974
Dear Bill,

I am sorry that I cannot supply much information as to Jay Chamberlain's activities after he became disassociated from Lotus. After closing his agency in North Hollywood he moved to Florida working for the Southeast distribution of Porsche which was then controlled by Jon Von Neuman. Every once in a while at Daytona or Sebring I would see a mutual acquaintance who worked with Jay, but never Jay himself. I have heard through the grapevine that after Von Neuman sold his interest in Southeast Porsche distributors back to Porsche Audi, Jay moved to Tucson, Arizona and opened a VW agency. If he has, it certainly is a well-kept secret because none of the people who used to be fairly close acquaintances ever hear from him. Since his disassociation from Lotus, he has been like a ghost.

I have enjoyed the Elite Newsletter and hope some day to fully restore mine to its "as new" condition. Unfortunately time seems to slip away faster and faster as each year goes by.

Sincerely, John Timanus

June 5, 1974
Dear Bill,

I don't mind your using my non-authenticated version of the Jay Chamberlain story in the Club Elite Newsletter. I wish I knew more of the details, but Bob Challman of Ecurie Shirlee probably knows the whole story. I remember meeting Colin Chapman in England in 1961, at the preview of the "Green Helmet" and he jokingly referred to the "Elite Debacle" when he introduced me to Hazel Chapman.

Originally the Elite was to have sold for \$3995. in the U.S. and Jay ordered as many cars as Lotus could build. Even before the first production Elites were delivered, the cost had climbed \$1,000. and continued to escalate. Lotus was caught with many more cars than they could sell and blamed Jay for not living up to his committment. Jay departed the scene and his backers formed Western Distributors as the West Coast Outlet to various dealerships such as Ecurie Shirlee. Lotus even went so far as to disassemble completed cars and sell them kit-form in England. Western Distributors folded sometime in 1963 or 1964 and Bob Challman became distributor for the remnants of Elite production or actually what was left after production ceased. Maybe somebody should write a book. I am sure that many Elite owners would find it fascinating. You really should contact Bob Challman for his reminiscences of that time.

Sincerely, John Timanus

'PROBLEM/SOLUTION'

REAR SUSPENSION

Problem/Diagnosis	Cause	Solution
Premature wear of trailing arms/bearings on Series I cars.	On Series I Elites where the trailing arm meets the rear bearing housing the entire assembly must be taken apart to lubricate the small bearings. Difficult access causes neglect at this point.	1/8" stock washer-retainers were drilled + <u>partially</u> tapped to accept <u>long</u> grease nipples. Care must be taken that threaded part of fitting does not extend into bearing area and that nipple part of fitting extends above retaining nut to allow fitting of grease gun.
Removing stub axles from housing.		Construct wood brace to support housing. Two 2X4's about 2' long and a shorter cross piece arranged in a "A". Shape the wood so that you have as much contact as possible between the wood and the housing. When driving the stub axle out a bar inserted down into the hollow stub axle seems to be the best place to apply force.
Vibration or Looseness	Worn U-Joints Worn Diff Mountings Worn Hub Bearing "Rubber Ball" Worn Shock Mountings, Worn or Loose	Replace Replace Replace (See above) Replace Replace or Tighten

LOTUSEERS No. 12 - Jay Chamberlain, Extracted from October 1957 Issue, Sports Car and Lotus Owner (Kindly donated to the Club Library by Adrian Schagen).

LeMans this year brought the name of Jay Chamberlain to the notice of the majority of motor racing enthusiasts. For at the classic twenty-four hour road race this likeable American and his fellow countryman, "Mac" Frazer drove their 1100cc Lotus to a brilliant win in the 1100cc class, finishing ninth overall. To Jay this success was the achievement of a long standing ambition to compete in a major European event -- and it certainly made his 8,000 mile journey from California very well worth while.

"Lotuseers" are usually confined to private owners, and this month we are not breaking with tradition, for, although Jay has driven for Team Lotus three times this year he is not a regular member of the team and owns his own Lotus in America. Unfortunately, Jay's recent visit to Europe was all too short and at the one British event which he entered he had the misfortune to fracture the DeDion tube of his borrowed XI in practice. However, the Brands Hatch crowd was able to see him as he was driven round the circuit draped over the front wing of one of the LeMans cars, driven on a "tour d'honneur" by Colin Chapman.

It would be hard to imagine anyone not liking this cheery, and very often cheeky, American; with his close-cropped hair and ready smile he makes friends everywhere. This happy nature, coupled with a very strong physique, enabled him to shake off quickly the more serious effects of his nasty practice crash at Theims in July, although he is still receiving treatment for his injured shoulder. Although it ended tragically with the death of his compatriot, MacKay Fraser, Jay's trip to Europe was very rewarding as in addition to the LeMans triumph he also notched up a fine second place in the 1500cc race at Rouen. In addition he doubtless has many reels of most interesting entertainment for his friends during the winter months, his cine-camera being his constant companion.

Jay's interest in "the sport" goes back to the early '40s. While still at school he was an enthusiastic but impecunious builder of "hot rods". His studies suffered from hobby and the necessity to spend a considerable amount of time earning money for his creation -- result, a terrible report and a pretty good hot rod! Prior to the war Jay set up several records at the local California Dry Lakes, but then had to exchange his sport for service in the Navy and Marine Corps. However, this had its compensations and on discharge he joined the "52-20 Club" -- at least this was the popular name given to the scheme whereby the United States Government would give war veterans \$20 per week for up to 52 weeks of unemployment.

The opportunity was too good to miss and Jay used his savings to bring his hot rod up to date, living for a year on the \$20 per week -- no work and plenty of hot-rodding!

In 1947 this led to professional racing on dirt tracks -- a very hard apprenticeship. This livelihood is a very tough one in America and participants have to make their own way, no one giving the beginner a chance. Jay stuck to it, and from the small local tracks he graduated to "midgets" and then to the big cars. All of his racing was done on $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 mile oval dirt tracks very similar to our "speedway". In 1948

Jay went to college and managed to major in veterinary science. Since dirt-track racing took place at night he was able to keep on competing. This paid dividends as several of his tutors were racing enthusiasts and their interest in their pupil on the track made them overlook some of his lack of interest in the lecture room!

Late 1949 brought an offer from a Danish gentleman of a car for the Mexican road race. Jay jumped at the opportunity and thoroughly enjoyed his introduction to road type racing. For a while he lay well up, but at about half distance the poor old car coughed and wheezed its last gasp. After this, Jay returned to the midget racing, now in the East and Mid-west. In 1952 he was entered for the Indianapolis 500 but was unable to make the car go fast enough to qualify for the race. By now the prizes of professional racing had dropped so low that it was impossible to make both ends meet - so Jay returned to his home town of Burbank.

There appeared to be a definite need of a foreign car service centre in the area, so in partnership with a friend a building was acquired and Jay was in business. The project was a success and soon on his wife's suggestion professional racing was abandoned in favour of sports car racing. Jay started with a fair degree of experience as compared with the average enthusiast and did very well at the local Californian courses, such as Santa Barbara, Pebble Beach, Torrey Pines and Palm Springs.

A client introduced a Lotus to Jay's workshop in 1954 and in no time Jay had ordered one for himself. He had great success with this car and lavished much care and attention on it. Following the 1956 Sebring Race Jay Chamberlain was appointed Lotus Distributor for the United States and later in the year personally took delivery of an XI.

This car was outstandingly successful, winning at Palm Springs, Honolulu, and Santa Barbara, and crowning its year by being awarded a trophy from the local motor racing magazine for the most outstanding under 1500cc car and driver -- and this with only 1100cc under the bonnet!

Not only is Jay a first-class driver but he also has great mechanical ability. His really up-to-date workshop is equipped with all the latest machinery. The results of his tuning ability were shown when the magazine "Road and Track" tested his XI. The figures obtained were all better than those which had been recorded on Team Lotus cars in this country.

Keeness is essential when grappling with the adversities to be met in competitive motoring, and in this respect Jay excels. A fine example was to be seen at scrutineering for this year's LeMans, when Jay was in the driving seat of the 1500cc car the minute it was unloaded from the transporter. There he sat, checking that everything was as it should be, quite oblivious of the fact that a downpour of rain had started and only a white singlet covered the top half of his body!

It is to be hoped that the injured shoulder heals rapidly and that next year we shall have the pleasure of seeing this fine Lotus ambassador back in Europe and behind the wheel in his "space-man" crash helmet, showing us that the combination of Jay Chamberlain and Lotus results in some very rapid motoring indeed.