

BRONTE 2008

By Michael Eddenden



There had never been this many Lotus at British Car Day.

The line of parked cars began at the southern boundary, a gravel lane, and extended north across the grass field to the concrete bunker housing Registration. It was double the length the Club took over when I first came in 1990. Every few minutes more Lotus arrived, swelling the row, an intermittent parade working their way down the line looking for a place to join.

I dug out my notebook and headed for the start of the row, jotting down the required headings as I went: Elan, Esprit, Plus II, Seven, Elise, Europa...

"How many cars are here?" Chris Marson stood at my elbow smiling; he wore the Club sweatshirt, the old one with the chest sized logo - a fire engine red leaf on a Lotus yellow circle on British racing green.

"I don't know, I've just started countin-"

"How many cars have we got?!" Kevin Marson peered over my other shoulder at the blank page. A very large Europa, in Bahama yellow & white, was charging across his shirt.

"I've just started counting. You see -"

"I've never seen so many Loti!" Mike Potter joined the group beaming. His hat said Castrol and a tastefully small Lotus badge was stitched on his green shirt. "How many cars so far?"

"Well I've just-" I said.

"Smile!" A camera clicked. Mike McGraw stood a few feet away in a plaid shirt. He owned an MGB. "How many Lotus's you have here today?"

"Don't know," I said slipping the notebook back in a pocket.



Europa: three. Plus II: two. Elan: two. Esprit: one..." Beside each heading I placed a stroke, one per car -one, two three, four and a stroke through them for five- little picket fences marching across the page. Chris Kevin and Mike, had wandered off to check vendors, leaving me to resume the Official Lotus Tally. "Europa 4, Elite, 1; Elan coupe, 1..." I moved slowly along the line, marking down each car in the notebook, side stepping onlookers, getting in the way of photographers. The list grew rapidly.

"Mike!" Rob Cattle stood smiling, shaking my hand, "How are you? It's been a long time!"

Rob was one of the longest serving members in the Club. He'd owned Europas, Lotus and Caterham Sevens, an open wheeled Formula Lotus. He'd organized our first Track Day at Mosport. For too short a time he and Ray Binns ran a Caterham Dealership. But between kids and work he hadn't been active in the Club for years. The cars had been sold; the dealership, always a part-time investment, closed. He looked older, rounder. So did I, I realized looking at him.

"I've been looking for you everywhere!" he said. "Could you autograph some drawings?"

Rob was moving to a new house. No longer having the room, or a Lotus, or taking the opportunity to rid himself of decades of accumulated stuff, he had taken a vendor's table and was selling off Lotus odds and ends, including some cartoons I'd done for Club t-shirts. Rob had acquired them in the days when he and Ray had their fledgling Caterham dealership. Someone had bought them. Rob instinctively set off for the Lotus area to find me. I slipped the notebook back into the pocket and we headed for Rob's table.

Threading our way through the thickening crowd was difficult; every third man seemed to be snapping a picture, the rest were preoccupied with composing one. Perhaps 1,100 British cars now crowded the field. MGBs, Triumphs, and Minis naturally dominated, but the rarities stuck in my mind: the wooden Marcos, the Aston Martins redolent of Bond, the row of Rolls Royce stretching

back to the Second World War, the Allard, the pristine 1932 MG J2 Midget - robin's egg blue sides and black cycle fenders.

Rob had just returned from Italy, from a motorcycle vacation with Jamie Caswell and Ray Binns. On Ducati Multistratda. The wives stayed home. In Tuscany Ray entered a corner too quickly, hit the guardrail, then an upright supporting the rail. The bike stopped instantly tearing itself in half and throwing Ray headfirst into the rail. "I remember thinking, 'It's a good thing I have a full face helmet'," remembered Ray. Behind him, Rob heard the crash. He stopped and drove back. "There was my friend who I've known for years, lying in the road, not moving, kevlar and plastic and metal strewn all over. I thought he was dead," said Rob. Ray's shoulder was broken, but other than bruises he was fine. The Tour organizer, seeing the bike remains said, "Oh dear." Ray spent the rest of the trip in the passenger seat of the support van, in pain, but alive, in pain and with "Three gorgeous English women," commented Rob. Ray went shopping with them.

Rob's table, when we reached it, was unexpectedly impressive. Vendors' tables never vary to me. Year to year they apparently display the same worn and neglected parts, smeared thickly with the oil and road dirt. Authentic, yes; enticing, no. Who buys these automotive scraps? Every year I wonder how vendors survive, but then I've never understood how there can be so many shoe stores. Or why.

Rob's table was different. It was loaded with the rarest of sportscar items, Seven memorabilia: Caterham key chains, watches, brochures, parts, even a ten foot long Caterham Cars banner. All of it authentic. Before the day was half done he would sell out. Knowing Rob, he most likely gave some articles away to friends.

The cartoons had been framed making them look better than I remembered. I signed the back in an illegible scrawl, and slipped away, back to the Lotus section.



The tally was mounting. Columns of ticks, each representing a Lotus, filled the page yet half the row lay ahead. The jumble of Elans, Esprits, Elites and Europas now changed to a uniform row of Sevens, a lifesaver line of colours. The first three however, weren't Lotus or Caterhams. A man was talking.

The one-piece coveralls did not quite hide his belly and made him massive. He was a head taller than his two companions and heavy, broad-shouldered; his arms hung loosely, not touching his sides. You noticed the arms. They were bare to the shoulders to the frayed holes where the sleeves had been cut off. When he took a drag on his cigarette, or pulled his baseball cap down tighter you saw his armpits.

The three were admiring his yellow Seven. It was a replica, a lo-cost as they are sometimes called, but not crude, fit and finish being clean, crisp, and consistent. It had quality. The details were different from any Lotus or Caterhams ever put together in an unheated garage, but I wondered could I criticize originality in a Seven without being a hypocrite. I could only say it wasn't my taste.

The car however, like the man, looked big.

"I got the seats from a tractor," he said. You could hear him smiling. "They're not even bolted in - they're so spongy they just stick there. Sort of..."

I didn't catch the next bit over the background noise. Then his friend's voice broke through. "...Yah, I looked at those. Did you have to cut off"

"They're rear fenders from another tractor. Got the rear lights on eBay."



His friend, whose yellow and aluminum Replica was parked alongside, bent down to scrutinize the work. The look of an approving professional.

“Just finished the doors last night. In time for the Show,” said the big man.

“Got a top?” asked his friend.

“Yah, yah!” He gestured to a stainless steel strip, an inch wide, running along the top of his windscreen like a miniature wing. “I attach the top using this – the seal goes underneath. Perfect fit!”

“I was thinking about a top...” said his friend slowly. I looked at his yellow Seven; its surface looked clean, spartan. There were no snaps on the body or on the frame around the windscreen.

“Notice anything?” interrupted the bigger man. “I’m big.” He waited for it to sink in. “I made the whole car two inches wider and four inches longer!”

I made a note not to brag about altering the Seven’s wiring to allow all six indicators to flash as hazards instead of only four to flash as hazards.

An ear-splitting cackle burst from the organizers sound system, like tinfoil scouring a barbecue grill, and a voice crooned out, obliterating conversation:

*“...ONCE AGAIN I BEGAN TO FEEL THAT OLD YEARNING,
THAT OLD, OLD FEELING STILL IN MY HEART SO BURNING...”*

I resumed counting cars, stoically.

Then slowly, but unmistakably, the engine drone of four 1,000 hp Merlins began to drown the singer until abruptly the PA system shut off. I looked up knowing what I would see. Over the crest of the tree-edged field appeared the Lancaster, ponderously heavy and slow, defying gravity. It banked steeply, more than I thought possible, and circled the field. Once a month it passes over our house in Toronto. The boys and I rush out of the back door, sun or rain or snow and watch it. It’s almost the last of its kind. Only one other in the world stills flies. This one is kept airworthy by the Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton; the monthly flight over our house is its mandatory maintenance Run. The Lancaster circled once more then set off straight and level to the south east and home and was soon out of site.



Could you spare a moment?"

The voice sounded ingratiating in that way voices endowed with authority often do. Don Horne, six and a half foot of him, loomed over me, smiling. Don is not naturally cheerful. But then, neither am I. He cradled a roll of construction drawings under his arm, the way gunslingers finger their holsters.

"Hi!" waved Paulette happily, with a big smile. She is naturally cheerful.

They had just bought a place together in the country, up near Flesherton. It was an enormous change. After a lifetime of life alone in Toronto apartments and cramped condos, working on his Elan coupe in freezing underground garages, Don now lived in a building big enough to house the Waltons, with a heated three car garage, and a workshop. He had also bought the urge to renovate.

"It's the Entrance," he said.

I remembered the entrance. It was hidden and unexceptional and didn't look like an entrance. It was a complex problem, difficult to solve, at least inexpensively. It was probably slowly possessing Don, goading him every time he entered the house. This was dangerous. Don liked to obsess.

"I've sketched up a few ideas for your 'Architectural' Opinion..." he said unrolling the drawings, a sheaf of papers coated with tiny scaled doodles trying unsuccessfully to escape his grasp. I closed the notebook...

The hood of my Seven was not visible now. Construction plans covered the aluminum and swept up over the windscreen. A single headlamp peeked from under the other end. I wasn't much being much help. I was finding it hard to concentrate, Don in one ear, the P.A. system singing in the other, British Car Day swirling around me like a buoy in caught in a rising tide.

"But if we did start the stairs back here," Don waved a sketch in front of me, "We could utilize the space underneath the new entrance by building another garage."

"But that makes four garages-" I began.

"Ah, but we could put the lawn tractor and the snowblower in there!"

On the other side of the Seven stood a man. He was looking at the car, not us, but it was the second time he had shifted from foot to the other.

"Just a sec Don. Um..."

The man opposite looked up hopefully at me.

"Did you have a question about the Lotus Club?" I said.

I gestured to the Club Notice inserted under the wipers, now obscured by architectural sketches. We were always looking for new members.

"Oh, I don't want to interrupt. I can wait."

Before I could answer Don Horne, the Club Membership Secretary, spoke for me.

"Go right ahead," he said, "We're going to be a long time yet."



Don and Paulette had moved on. We hadn't solved the problem. It had been like those desultory conversations standing around a leaky, oil dripping British engine. There was no easy fix and no one was going to admit it.

I pulled out my notebook.

I was nearly finished the Sevens, mostly Caterhams, with a sprinkling here and there of Locosts. One lonely Lotus Seven, Mike Potter's beautiful red 1968 Series 3, had made it. Ahead stretched an assortment of Esprits, Elises, Europas and more Sevens - latecomers who had to fit in where they could.

"Hey Mike!" I turned around. It was Jamie Caswell. His newly acquired 2002 silver Esprit gleamed in the background. It was one of the last Esprits made, aV-8.

"Could you sign this?" he said.

It was another framed t-shirt cartoon, grouped with two more for a Club mug. These were general Lotus sportscar cartoons, unlike the first one at Rob's table. That depicted an actual event, the Club's first Run to Sir Sam's Inn in Muskoka. Doug Howey was bent over the back of his Europa, attempting to adjust the recalcitrant five-speed Fuego gearbox he had just installed to improve the car and make driving easier. Doug is ever the optimist. The cartoon was dated 1992. He still tweaks the linkage.

I ticked off the last car began adding the columns: four Europas, three Elan roadsters, three Elan coupes (a first), four Plus II's, (Why is it never Plus 2s?), two early Elites, nine Esprits, seven Elise, thirteen Caterham Sevens, one Lotus Seven, one New Elan, one Lotus 23E, one pre-litigation aluminum Westfield Seven. Not including the three Locosts Sevens and two motorcycle engined Deman Sevens, that made 49 cars.

A record: 49 cars.

All I could think was, "Couldn't there be just one more for Christ sake."



TARNISHED

Mark Rector



We have all had dreams of driving a European exotic or a fighter jet, or even a seventies muscle car. Or maybe it was to meet a 70's rock legend or that blonde TV star whose posters filled your bedroom wall. Sometimes those dreams turn out less glamorous than what we thought. The rock god often turns out to be a pathetic drunken lout with less intellect than his great lyrics suggested. The leggy superstar is now the hideous plaintiff in a court case against her plastic surgeon and could win a Freddie Krugger look-alike contest. The car that you lusted after on your bedroom wall turns out to be a nightmare of repairs or worse, it drives like a TTC bus in need of an overhaul.

My Lotus Esprit Turbo and Jaguar XK8 both still fulfill my dreams every time I drive one down a deserted Caledon roadway. But like many other young boys I had dreams of driving some other fine machinery too one day. Recently I learned that wanting and dreaming is sometimes better than the reality of having.

One overcast June day, I set out with friends to see if indeed those objects of automotive lust were really as great as they seemed on our dog-eared pages of old Road & Track issues. In one day we would drive well over one million dollars worth of the finest names in Automotive Fantasyland. A Toys-R-Us for big boys: a Murcielago, a 360 Modena, a Viper, a Mustang GT500, and a lowly Corvette. Most of those cars don't need manufacturer names, model years or specs to clarify. If you don't recognize them you

probably read Readers Digest or Chatelaine. Totalling over two thousand five hundred horsepower. Would the glamour and promise of these legendary mighty machines hold up under the close intimate scrutiny that 6 well read, well trained and well experienced drivers could level at them.

We met at GTA Exotic Rentals all pumped for a seven-hour Magical Mystery Tour of some of Southern Ontario's finest roads, swapping drivers and machines every half-hour. I'd invited fellow Lotus Esprit owner and Lotus Club member Robert Roy, race instructor and *Wheels* automotive writer Ian Law and brother Peter Law, (also a driving instructor), and Derek MacDonald and his friend John - both avid car buffs with several sports cars between them. Lastly, myself; I have been an exotic car fanatic since sighting a red Lotus Esprit Turbo at 12. And a red "Lambowhosy?" at the annual Toronto Auto Show. Who could pronounce that at 12? And After years of dreaming, I became an Esprit Turbo owner almost 15 years ago and have had two Jags (XK8 and XJ6). I raced competitively for a few seasons in carts and tried Formula 2000. I have also driven many other exotics during a part time stint at Leny's Garage, the old Lamborghini/Lotus dealership.

In short, all our experience together slightly exceeds the length of the current US presidential race.

Wanting to compare the driving performance of my red headed mistress (the Ferrari Eater, as my Loti is known around here), I drove her down to GTAs lot before our big tour to see how she would hold up to all this automotive ecstasy I was about to try. I was worried that she would seem faded and tired, like getting a longtime girlfriend to drop you off for a date with Hillary Swank, Paris Hilton, Jennifer Anniston and Eva Langoria. Oh yeah, we drove a Corvette too... so lets add an old tart like Joan Rivers to the list to complete the analogy.

Wanting to leave something to anticipate, Rob and I chose the Viper first, saving our ultimate dream machine, the Murcielago for later.

I got in the cramped cabin (I'm 6' 3" and weigh 235 pounds) and actually found it comfortable. The view behind those long fender curves seems to suggest that this will be a whole lotta engine and very little handling. We fired it up and pulled away as I yelled (prayed) to myself, "Keep the shiny side up!!"

My first impression was that the stick was entirely wasted as with this much torque you could drive around Toronto and never leave second gear. Once we got to the QEW on-ramp however the stick, torque and yelps became a decidedly different animal. WOW!!! Now that's torque!! All 500 pound feet in this third generation Viper pulled like a ten year old with a grip on his brothers hair in the playground.

Unfortunately without trying to sound parvenu, we were a little let down. I mean 500 lb ft of torque - we should have been pulling up pavement divots. Still the fun was there as we roared down the QEW at 120 Kms/hr. Wait a minute... its an American spec car!!! THOSE ARE NOT KMS! We then proceeded to test the binders. Quickly. They were pretty grabby! At least that's what I think Rob said. He had his face mashed up against the windshield right then so I'm not 100% sure of the words.

All in all, in my 30 minutes I found the Viper to be too aggressive on the brakes, but much more progressive and smooth on the throttle than I expected. Dodge's beast had all the looks, but I found her a bit twitchy in its steering and too bulky feeling. Kinda like driving Rosie O'Donnell, I suspect. Not to mention like crawling out of a burning building on exit; those 1000 degree exhausts are right there!

A few moments after Rob and I switched his immediate dislike of the Vipers entire man-machine interface became clear with liberal use of the universal noun/verb/adjective for doodoo. He felt the clutch and brake were obviously installed for Bluebeard's peg leg. His thoughts were less complimentary than mine; his dream of Viper ownership was over.

Mine? Once was enough.

A group picture and a few car photos later, it was finally time to dance with the hottest harlot at the dance. It had been 27 years, four months and a few days since I first mouthed the word Laambooorghiiiiiiii. But who's counting? The object of my every waking thought... okay most thoughts ...since that day I saw one for the first time. Having come close to buying one, but settling for the Lotus Esprit, as somewhat more practical and affordable (HA!), I could not wait to see what all those thousand's of articles meant for real. After having driven Lamborghini's poor cousin Jalpa V8 numerous times on various roads, and having done several short low speed runs around the block in a Diablo, I felt I'd just tasted a sample of the meal to come. I was itching to plant my right foot into the holy hell gates of Italian V12 fury and see if the devil would take my soul to the Promised Land.

After looking down into the dual 4 inch exhaust pipes that go right down to the very bottom of the pits of hell, we got in and I started the engine and waited for the unholy rumble. I was surprised at how docile it was at idle. Big sounding baritone, but not pavement shaking like the Countach I once started up...Think oil-sands-sized mega dumptruck idle! I told Rob of my surprise and then blipped the throttle to the floor. GGAAAARRRRRAHHHH! Okay, now think aircraft-carrier-engine on full throttle with your head in the combustion chamber! It was the loudest thing we had ever heard; we were frightened out of our wits... and we were expecting it. That could not possibly be a *car* engine?

We straightened out on a lovely stretch of back road. Then I shifted into second. With a mighty roar we surged towards another multi-hundred thousand-dollar car that was a kilometer up the road ahead of me. Ahhh... *Was* ahead of me. This Tomahawk missile ate up roadway like a dog on a sirloin steak stolen off the kitchen counter. That kilometer gap was gone! We weaved our way through the countryside yelling our observations back and forth. I finally put it in sixth just to get the revs down so I could try to hear what Rob was saying. I still couldn't hear him.

On and on we went, up and down gears. In every gear it pulled like a CN freight train going down hill in a windstorm north of Superior, but the gear changing was not pleasant. Not with this over engineered German wobbly stick. Yes German! Audi has taken all the Italian outta this gearbox and this car. No firmness, no pleasant snick, snick. Just a limp, wobbly, loose gear stick; too little feedback and too much play. Worse yet, no force needed like the Diablo and Jalpa. True Italian supercars had Rigatoni right down in da



DNA! A mans car for a man with *Cahones!* Those Lamborghini's needed a manly shove and grunt for every gear change. No wussies need apply. No girls either. Women yes, girls, no. They were conceived in the sexism of 1970s Italy. They had a clutch that felt like a Nautilus machine set on 50Kg. I almost put my foot through the floor of this big Lambo like I used to do when I would jump in my old Suzuki Swift after hours of Lotus driving forgetting it was so soft versus the Esprit's.

So we soldier on and notice after oh, 3 minutes that my posterior feels like I'm sitting on two vertical two-by-fours that are spaced about 10 inches apart. With no padding what so ever. Okay lets put the windows down, prop the arm out and look cool while enjoying the cruise. My drivers window sticks up about three inches above the door at its lowest point cutting into my forearm which, given the extremely high belt line, is propped out the window above my shoulder height and I'm 6ft 3! Jeesh! I woulda paid how much for this torturously uncomfortable girly mobile built for the air headed Paris Hilton set in

Hollywood? We then discover the traction control ruins any chance of fun at even the thought of wheel spin. We tried several peel out launches and a few mashes of the throttle mid rev range and all you get is a stuttering sound from the engine, a complete loss of all power and a lovely idiot light mocking your half a million dollars of "fun". We laughed when I rolled way over the centre line and almost submarined a half million dollars of German - er - I mean Italian machinery, under an oncoming truck while trying to explain how to use my camera to the photographer. "Not my ½ million dollar supercar!! Ha, Ha, Ha!"

It was time to change drivers. I only had another 30 minutes of throbbing eardrums to put up with. Rob felt that aside from the ungodly noise, the terrible seats and vague handling, the 78-inch wide behemoth was about 6 inches too wide to squeeze by a tractor trailer.

He discovered this unfortunately half way across a bridge in a construction zone.

Rob screamed at me to quit taking pictures and check the right fender! His amazingly steady and skillful threading of the needle was all that saved us from sharing a third mortgage between us for a fender.

I got out and quickly looked for some Advil among the group, my ears throbbing. A headache that would make any Heavy Metal head-banger proud was blasting through my cranium.

The Lambo still looked like a million bucks. She had the same curves. The upright swinging scissor door was still the coolest thing. But it was a dream tarnished beyond repair. The homogenized, over safety-engineered, over indulged, over cool on steroids design had ruined the soul and nuances of what was once automotive nirvana. Long live the Lamborghini's of yesteryear. These are a sad caricature of the legend they once were. My wet dream was dried up and discoloured.

After lunch we swapped cars and I found myself at the wheel of a beautiful red 360 Modena spider with the top down and passengered with a certified genius of car driving knowledge, the aforementioned Ian Law. I was nervous. What if I miss a shift with this expert beside me? We pull out and soon I have forgotten any nervousness in the musical melody of the twin cam chains and 32 valves of Italian symphony right behind our heads. Now that is an enjoyable noise. Just loud enough to emote your every move but quiet enough that conversation was still pleasant. Not a screaming match of hand gestures like the Murcielago.

The gear change snicked. The Ferrari's steering was almost a match for the ultra precise, perfectly weighted perfectly damped telepathy of the Lotus Esprit's. Long known as the defacto leader in automotive suspensions, Lotus has finally got some Italian competition nipping at their heels. The Ferrari not only accelerated at close to Esprit like rushes when prodded, it darted almost as quickly at my every thought of maneuverability. And I was doing it al fresco with the wind in our hair! Ahem...

I better tone it down lest my Ferrari hating reputation be in ruins. I hated Ferrari more for the attitude displayed by their owners, the arrogance of the last few years when no one could equal them in F1. That's because Lotus stopped racing and we all know that during Lotus's 20 year dominance of F1 they took seven world championships to Ferrari's paltry second place showing of two championship seasons. 7 to 2 in twenty years. End of story.

That's an ass whoppin' not a competition, but I digress.

One must respect this feat of design, from the driving position to the clutch, from the stick and steering, to the curves that just won't quit. This was the only car today to rival (but certainly not beat) my love for the Esprit. Driving this was truly like a night with Eva Langoria! The 360 Modena arguably has the most sensuous and beautiful lines to ever leave the Pinnafarina drawing board. Think of Eva Langoria in head to toe spandex.

It was however still a rental. The glovebox that fell open banging your knee at every prod of the throttle. The threadbare driver's had seen more action than Pamela Anderson's bustier. But the wear and tear certainly didn't hurt her handling and drivability.

I felt the Ferrari F430 F1 was only a shadow of the 360. No spyder body style here and no clutch. No intimate minutiae of the engine bits singing in your ears here. For me, an automotive dinosaur, it felt like playing a video game at times. Paddle left, paddle right. Faintly hearing the engine change in tone way back somewhere under the sound insulation - but just by flipping a paddle? Gee... where was the simulated crowd sound effects and waving checkered flags of Atari's Pole Position?

We have become a society who has taken the driver out of driving. Most drivers don't want a clutch getting in the way of reading the paper, coffee and bagel while shaving and applying make up while cruising the 401. Not to mention texting on their Blackberry. The F1 tranny is just the beginning of this trend in exotic cars. The full automatic of some of the high end Benz's is so the Paris Hiltons can look cool even though they wouldn't know a heel and toe unless they saw it sticking out of their Gucci's. I guess I want a clutch to push. I want a stick and one that takes some manhandling. If it feels like a light switch than that ain't a stick shift!

The Mustang was my last car and we were glad for the very ordinary interior after the exotics. 500hp? Under that 4000lb car it was hardly noteworthy. The slight supercharger whine and a bit of lunge but she was too little, too late after all the other fast and loose beauties we had tried. I for one was ready for the ride home.

We arrived back at the rental place and ...ah, there she sat in the parking lot. My wonderful British red headed mistress waited so patiently, while I was out fooling around on her with these other hussies. Sliding into the Lotus was like snuggling up to your long time sweetie on a cold night by the fire. Everything fits. The weight of the stick, the depression worn in the armrest. Ahhh this is home! She flicked me out onto the QEW faster than I remembered. The Esprit is blindingly fast, yet this is an 18 year-old model. Acquitting itself this well back to back against some of the most ferocious exotic cars ever

made makes me think the rentals could either have been de-tuned slightly (to keep the mostly inexperienced renters out of trouble) or this Lotus stands up well to much younger competition. Either way I am in love again. The tach needle breathing down on the 8000 RPM limit as I screech by other cars so quick they barely register. The Esprit is a true drivers car, the raison d'être of motor car driving. No ABS, no airbags, no power assisted steering for wussies. I feel every nuance of this battered highway's blacktop. That was an Oak leaf, I believe, I just drove over! Yes, oak not maple. I am, and at this speed I need to be, firmly in control of this machine if I wish to stay alive. Neither blind spot sensors nor traction control electronic water wings for the toddler set here. You may say I am biased, but I believe there is simply no comparison between this '89 Esprit Turbo and the six cars I'd just driven. Few cars will ever match its purity and simplicity of design that makes the driver the master of physics in this car. Maybe a Pagani Zonda or a Maserati or a 1994 Lambo Diablo, before Audi stuck their fingers into the Italian Torta cake batter and ruined it.

No, I am going to remain faithful to my Lotus mistress. She is everything Eva Longoria could ever be. Pink Floyd wrote "The child is grown, and the dream is gone." Well this child has grown and the dream, while not gone, certainly is tarnished. I will continue to enjoy the dream of Lotus ownership. And I will be much less envious of those other starlets when on those rare occasions they drive by.

