

The Strange Travels of GT40 P/1032

— Greg Kolasa

*Editor's Note: Had the details of this story come together in time, it would have made up a chapter of **The World Registry of Cobras and GT40s**. Unfortunately, they didn't, so it was not included. Nevertheless, it is interesting on several fronts; not only because of some fascinating details of the car itself, but the story also illustrates how a seemingly disparate collection of information can be combined to yield the complete story of an event.*

Competition GT40s, Cobras and GT350s (and probably all other marques) have an interesting paradox associated with them. There is a time in the history of each race car when historians and enthusiasts, decades removed, come to know the intimate details of that car's whereabouts. We're talking, of course, about during a race; especially a high profile, cham-

pionship race such as Daytona, Sebring or LeMans. Because these events were so well documented, both photographically and in print, it is possible for someone who wasn't even born at the time of the race to recite, with absolute certainty and almost like they were there, what happened to the car every hour, nee every minute of the race. Who started the race. Who spun the car. Why. What position the car was in when it started raining. And, of course, who was driving when it finished the race. All of these details are captured in lap charts or in photographs.

As well known as the during-the-race details were, there is the other side of the paradox: post-race. After the champagne stops flowing (or being sprayed), and the dust settles, the car (even a race-winner) goes into seclusion so diametrically opposed to its time under the bright lights and magnifying glass that it defies imagina-

tion. It's not necessarily that the car owner wants to go into deep cover; it's just that, all of a sudden, very little gets documented about the activities surrounding that car. Until, that is, the next race—when the cycle starts all over again. It is this post-race period of one otherwise well-known GT40 that forms the basis of this story.

Almost anyone with even the most rudimentary knowledge of the 1966 LeMans race can identify the lineup of "*The American Steamroller*," the derisive European description of Ford's factory effort. There were the finishing cars: the black, gold and light blue cars of Miles/Ruby, McLaren/Amon and Bucknum/Hutcherson. There was the almost-winner, the red Dan Gurney/Jerry Grant car that led for much of the race and dropped out oh-so-close to the end. And there were the lesser-known machines like the dark blue Andretti/Bianchi mount and the bronze





Donohue/Hawkins car.

The car Mark Donohue drove, P/1032, was one of a trio entered by Holman-Moody. This car had finished second in its very first race at Sebring back in March (driven by Walt Hansgen/Mark Donohue) and was now poised for a try at the long race in France. It was painted a beautiful shade of copper (the 1966 Mustang color "Emberglow") and it carried the

race number "4." Upon seeing his car for the first time in the Peugeot garage (where the entire Ford team was quartered for the LeMans race), co-driver Mark Donohue commented that he had never seen a more beautifully-prepared car. This was a tribute to the efforts of the Holman-Moody team.

In racing, however, just as in life in general, it is sometimes said that

good luck is more important than good planning. The corollary to that is that bad luck beats good planning any day, and that's exactly what befell the copper MKII. It was on the very first lap (by which time the car had gained gaudy, but necessary Day-Glo green identification panels on the flanks and front fenders) when a half-shaft let go. After spending time in the pits fixing that, Donohue took the car back on to the course.

A couple of hours later, while traveling at a good clip down the Mulsanne, Mark felt a lurch. It was the entire tail section of the car parting company! He stopped, drove back to where the errant bodywork lay, placed it atop the car and proceeded slowly back to the pits. Pit crews went to work hastily duct-taping and wiring the bodywork back in place, but it was all for naught. Four hours after the Tricolor had dropped, signaling the start of the race, 1032 was unceremoniously rolled into the paddock, the victim of a failed transmission. Actual-



ly, the car would have been well worth fixing, but would have been disqualified because it would not have been able to complete the requisite number of laps for a given time period. Understanding this, it was retired.

The next known data on the MKII (considerably sketchier in nature) was that it was displayed at a show or two in Europe. It was then shipped back to the 'States, where it was placed in storage. After a brief time, it was repainted as a quasi-lookalike to the winning black and silver P/1046, and put on display at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, where it has sat ever since. But the "several car shows in Europe" has always been somewhat of an information black hole and multiple attempts to garner more specific details all met with no success. Then everyone stopped trying, and that's when stuff started to happen.

Work on the 2007 *World Registry of Cobras and GT40s* was being wrapped up when we came into contact with Harley Cluxton III of Scottsdale. Any GT40 enthusiast knows Harley's resume quite well: he has owned more of the ex-J.W.A.E./Gulf

cars than perhaps any other person; he was the first private owner of the two-time LeMans-winning P/1075 (the acquisition of which is a story in itself and is recounted, albeit in abbreviated form, in the Registry); he became the eventual owner of the Mirage Team—the list goes on. Harley was digging through his archives and produced a series of slightly faded but otherwise very interesting (emphasis on "very") photos of a copper #4 MKII parked in front of his former employer—Luigi Chinetti Ferrari in Greenwich, Connecticut—in the summer of 1966. A good look at the car indicated that indeed was the ex-Donohue/Hawkins P/1032 and that the car was still in essentially as-raced trim. But there were some interesting details that came to light under very close scrutiny.

The white sunshade was missing from the top of the windshield and side windows. The flat black fuel filler cap had been replaced by one in bare aluminum and it was padlocked shut. The race number showed signs of scuffing, mostly from a pant leg rubbing the sill panel during several of those oh-so-difficult driver changes. A

picture of the opened engine bay showed that the "E&F" decal (which also carried the engine's serial number) was missing from the valve covers. And most interesting was that the Day-Glo ID panels appeared not bright green, but red.

These oddities were dealt with one-by-one. The first being the "green" ID panels. Several photographic analysts were consulted (these guys are uncanny in their ability to determine just what color changes over time a photograph has undergone and what the original would have looked like) and none of them said that there was any way that green in a color photograph would have faded to appear as red. This was interesting, but not nearly as interesting as the car's being there in the first place. Imagine the context: Ford's number one "whip Ferrari's ass" vengeance weapon is sitting in full open display at one of the enemy's dealerships. This was August of 1966, and the MKII was still far from having ended its usefulness as a Ferrari slayer. Harley couldn't recall the reason that the car was there, just that it was. And he had the good fortune to have a camera handy, some-



thing, today, we are grateful for indeed. We surmised that Harley had snapped the MKII as it was returning from LeMans, although with the photos being dated August, where the car was in the two months after the end of the race was anybody's guess. We also entertained the possibility that the photos were taken much closer to June than their August date stamp (which would have been the date of processing, not the actual image-capturing) but Mr. Cluxton was fairly cer-

Was this a rare, photographically-documented case of industrial espionage? Had Ferrari surreptitiously absconded with the car while his minions poured over its construction details, attempting to learn the secret of the all-conquering Ford? Visions of capturing something truly sinister danced in our heads, but when the reply came back from Lee, the bursting of our bubble was audible. The explanation was quite mundane: Chinetti's, located in Greenwich, was in close proximity to

was further borne out by a period photo of Shelby American race mechanic Bernie Kretzschmar standing beside one of H-M's other cars, the third-place P/1016. The photo was taken as Bernie took the car on tour of Ford dealers across the southwest as part of a victory tour, and the photo quite clearly shows that the Day-Glo pink ID panels have bleached out to a very pale yellow (almost invisible atop the car's gold body paint) color. Lee surmised that when H-M was prepping 1032 for its European tour, the panels were repainted in whatever color was on-hand—in this case, red. He also offered that red might have been substituted as being a bit more color coordinating with the copper body paint than the green was.

Now a light blub went off...the French magazine picture! We took a closer look, and while it was not noticeable at first, there does turn out to be one distinguishing detail—the race number illumination light on the rear deck. Fortunately for automotive historians, the location of these small lights varied from car-to-car. Thus, it is possible to identify a particular car with some pretty good certainty by the location of the rear deck illumination light (and on the door also, as they were also unique to each car). Both the photos of 1032 at LeMans and the de Gaulle photo showed that this particular MKII had the light at the extreme outside edge of the rear deck. It sure looks like General de Gaulle was looking at the copper-painted GT40 P/1032 at the October 10th thru the 16th, 1966 Salon de Paris. It now seemed that one of those unidentified “few European auto shows” was now known.

Now it was Harley's turn to again pull a rabbit out of his hat (he has a propensity for doing this, like the time a GT40 owner queried him looking for a “nice shape” Borrani wire wheel for a road coupe and Cluxton not only produced a wheel, but the car's original, serialized spare wheel!) and he did so with a Plexiglas GT40 headlight cover that he said he believed came off 1032. This was very strange as Harley never owned 1032, but he DID obtain some spare parts from the Indianapolis museum when he purchased 1075 and there was a likely explanation for the acquisition. Looking closely at the scratched plastic cover, the edges showed telltale traces of all the right



tain that they were indeed taken in August.

At about the same time, noted GT40 author and photographer John Allen sent us something of interest, also unexplained and also unsolicited. It was a series of photographs from a French automobile magazine article and showed several GT40s displayed at the Salon de Paris over the years (this show was held annually in October). One of the pictures was of the very stern of a Ford MKII. Only a little of the car was visible, and the main focus (pun intended) of the photograph appeared to be Charles de Gaulle inspecting the car on display. What was visible of the car in the black and white photo told very little, other than that the car was neither white nor black, but some “in between” shade. The tail section was definitely MKII with the brake intake “snorkels” perched atop the deck, but little else of interest was visible.

Setting that aside, we contacted Lee Holman (since the car was one of Holman-Moody's trio of 1966 LeMans entrants, we figured he ought to know) to attempt to solve the mystery of the MKII at the Ferrari dealership.

New York's Kennedy Airport, and its abundance of overseas cargo flights. Holman-Moody, in Charlotte, had nowhere near the access to such air travel. Luigi Chinetti was a very good friend of John Holman. Often, Mr. Chinetti arranged for Holman-Moody cars to be shipped from nearby J.F.K., and often Lee and his brother drove the race-ready cars up the coast from North Carolina to Connecticut for shipment across the pond. [Yes, *there are stories of Lee's exploits on some of these trips, but that's also for another time.*] This was one such instance. It was beginning to look like the car was snapped at Chinetti's not as it was returning from France, but as it was headed back across again for display at those “unknown auto shows.”

But why the not-green ID panels? Lee couldn't recall the specifics, but did shed some light on that as well. Despite being highly visible, one of the drawbacks of Day-Glo paint was that it weathered extremely poorly. Lee recounted how on several race weekends, the cars' ID panels needed constant repainting to keep them bright. The paint faded very badly after just a few hours' exposure to sunlight. This



colors: copper, white (the base color for the Day-Glo paints), Day-Glo green and on top of it all, Day-Glo red. This was exceptional circumstantial evidence, but the one piece lacking was the confirmation that the headlight cover did indeed come off 1032.

Enter, again, Lee Holman, who ponied up a photograph of 1032 and 1016 as the cars were being wheeled to scrutineering at LeMans. We didn't ask him for the photo, and it came to us in a "say, while we're on the subject of 1032, I found this picture and thought you might be interested." Yes, we were interested. Very. The photo was sharp enough to show that the right headlight cover of GT40 P/1032

had an unusual attaching screw pattern, with several very close-together screws. This was not seen on any other car, but matched perfectly the screw pattern of the cover Harley produced. So we can chalk up another confirmation, that being that the car did indeed carry several different color ID panels.

Lee's supposition that the car's original Day-Glo green ID panels were repainted in red was right. Then, about a month later, Lee again came up with a tidbit that, by itself, would have certainly been interesting, but in the context of our story, was another "smoking gun." It was a letter from Luigi Chinetti Ferrari to John Hol-

man, and the wording of the letter indicated that it clearly was in response to an earlier note from John to Luigi. The letter was dated 7/21/67 (yes, that's right, 1967-almost a full year after the car appeared at Chinetti's, bound for Europe) and is quite clearly a response to the question, asked by Holman a few days earlier, "does anybody there have any idea whatever became of our car?". It elaborated that a cable was received (by Chinetti) from the Monza Auto Show people (where the car was displayed) and that they had turned the car over to Ford France. The note went on to say that Mr. Chinetti had seen the car at the Paris show and that surely contacting Ford France would yield the present location of the car. Recall that both of these shows were the year before anybody at H-M started inquiring as to the whereabouts of the car! It seems that not knowing the whereabouts of a well-known race car between races is not limited to just the casual motorsport fans—it extends to the actual car owners as well. There are still some blanks in the car's timeline (such as the exact date of its donation to the Indianapolis Museum), but the events that had just unfolded contributed greatly to answering some of the questions on the copper car's whereabouts. What we've demonstrated was that despite literally years worth of in-depth investigating as to the exact whereabouts of GT40 P/1032, no amount of hard work beats sheer dumb luck as a seemingly unrelated series of photographs and letters came together to fill in more blanks in the history of this historic race car. Good luck really IS better than good planning. Or, in our specific case, good research!

In closing, we would be remiss if we didn't again recognize several individuals for their contributions— not only to this brief article, but to the whole puzzle of GT40 P/ 1032's strange travels: Harley Cluxton III, Lee Holman, Claude Nahum and John Allen. We appreciate their sharing their information and photographs with us.

