

# The Car I Didn't Buy

I would like to share a chapter of my life with GT40 enthusiasts. My story begins in Germany in 1965, at a military base about 10km south of Soest, within visual distance of the Möhne Dam. During WWII this is the spot where the RAF Dambusters dropped their bouncing bombs. I was stationed as a staff officer while I completed my military service. I was a single, twenty five year old sports-car enthusiast, who had owned a MG TD in Canada, and on arrival in Germany a year earlier had purchased, on the export market, a new Porsche 356C.

I used to go to Nürburgring to watch the races, and in those days, prior to the race, the public was allowed to drive free on the complete 20 km Nürburgring track without helmets or any paperwork. So as you would imagine here we were on the famous track with all the other wannabe race drivers and no marshals. What I didn't know was that, while driving on the track my Allianz car insurance was null and void. I'm thankful my German friends advised me to take it easy, which was my nature anyways. I'm glad I did listen and at the famous Carousel hairpin stayed to the right... well, let's leave it at that. I also tested my driving skills by trying out in an open wheel Formula 3 racing car at the Jim Russell Racing School at Snetterton, this time with a helmet. In that I couldn't make any yards on the guy in front of me and my knees kept banging into the tubular frame members as I shifted gears. It was then that I realized I wasn't going to be a future Jim Clark or Stirling Moss.

This was also the time when Henry Ford was determined that, if he couldn't purchase Ferrari, then he would beat them on the track. In order to do this, he contracted with Eric Broadley, from Lola, to build a prototype racing car with a Ford engine. I had seen Lola GT cars racing at Nürburgring and liked what I saw. The cars were to be built at the Ford Advanced Vehicles (FAV) factory in Slough, UK. In order for the new Ford GTs to qualify under FIA rules for the prototype class and to be able to challenge Ferrari,

Ford had to build and sell 100. As a result, FAV was selling them to the general public. I instantly had a strong attraction to the new Ford GT, as I was struck by the clean and very attractive look of these cars.

Also, being North American I couldn't help but get caught up in the romance of the Ford challenge. Ford GT is what they were initially called; I understand it was under the project to build 100 cars for the international endurance racing circuit that they were called GT40s.

I wanted to ensure that my interest in Ford GT wasn't a passing one, so on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1965, I flew over to London and took the train to Slough, just west of London. After a short taxi ride from the train station to the factory, I introduced myself to a sales person as being interested, and was given freedom to make an unaccompanied tour of the plant.

It was assumed that I was a potential buyer, and cursorily from my perspective, I was asked if I was a New Zealander (there is a difference in accent you know; I wonder if they thought I was a friend of Chris Amon). Because pictures were forbidden inside the plant and I had no place to store my camera, I slipped it under my sweater. In those days Ford was very concerned that Ferrari spies would report what was happening at FAV to Modena. Even though I had been advised not to take photographs, an opportunity presented itself to capture a photo of the chassis frame and not really worrying about the consequences if caught, I took this picture. My interest in the chassis and body structure of the Ford GT was driven by my mechanical engineering background.

I was pleased to see that the chassis was a partial box, and had some

