

# LE MANS 1968



## La Chartre sur le Loir

Sitting on the terrace of the Hotel de France with a large glass of crisp Jasnieres reflecting not only on the last 24 hours of excitement of the Le Mans race but also on the last fifty years. For it was then in 1968 that the Gulf sponsored JW Automotive Engineering Ford GT40 won the race and by so doing also the sports Car World Championship, I was lucky enough to work for the team from 1967 through 1971...

The world was a very different place in those far off days ....surprising as it may seem today, Britain was trying to join the Common Market , France was mired in civil unrest with

strikes, protests and student riots bringing the country to its knees. The internal problems were so severe that the race was postponed from its traditional June date to the last weekend in September. The reliability of the cars in that era was fragile at best and always the first aim was to finish, so the extra 4 hours of darkness was a major consideration and put extra stress on the electrics. The postponement also meant that this would be the final round of the sports car championship, with Ford and Porsche balanced evenly to win depending on the result.

Saturday 28th September dawned cold and wet, and the showers

continued all through the day, culminating in a heavy burst of rain just before the start, necessitating a tyre change to wet weather treads. The traditional off at 16.00 was brought forward by one hour to reduce the night time driving. From the start the Porsches led with the three Gulf cars in 5th, 6th, and 7th positions. The team had entered a third car for this race hoping to bolster its chances, this however proved a futile exercise as the car was dumped into the sand banks at Mulsanne corner, after only 12 laps; the hapless driver spending three hours trying to dig it out. His further attempts destroyed the clutch