

LOLA 50TH ANNIVERSARY AT ROAD AMERICA – JULY 18TH TO 20TH, 2008



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It's cramped in there. No wonder T70 Mk III B Coupes got forward opening doors.

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After Le Mans, I drove back to England with my daughter Lisa, arriving back at her house on the Monday evening. Tuesday, Lisa dropped me off at Birmingham Airport, where I picked up a hire car and drove to Huntingdon to the Lola factory. I spent an enjoyable couple of hours with Glyn Jones, who runs Lola Heritage for the factory. I am

currently doing more research for a book on the Lola T70, this one showing the history of each car. Afterwards, Glyn gave me a guided tour of the factory and it was very impressive to see teams of people making chassis and all sorts of parts from carbon fiber.

I flew back home to St. Petersburg on Wednesday, slept one night in my own bed and then departed early next morning to catch a 'plane to Milwaukee. Grabbed another hire car and drove to that great circuit, Road America, where it was the Kohler/Brian Redman International Challenge, featuring, as always, the monster Can Am cars of yesteryear. A kind friend was lending me his 1968 Lola T70 Mark III GT coupe and, as I love these cars, I couldn't wait to get in the orange beauty and try it out.

First practice was on Friday morning and I happily climbed into the T70 but then discovered, with twenty minutes to go before the session started, that the safety belts were set up for my co-driver, who was considerably wider than me! Rather than attempt



Louis gets ready to go out.

to change them, which it turned out would take a considerable amount of time, I elected to get Louis to do first practice and, after the belts were adjusted, I would do the second session in the afternoon.

I walked down the hill to the left hander at the end of the straight and enjoyed watching the Can Am cars braking hard for that bend. There was a tremendous entry, both in quality and quantity, this being Lola's 50th anniversary year and there were T70 Spyders and coupes galore, T160s, a T222 and even a solitary T260. Of course, there were also McLarens, Shadows, McKees et al and it made a great sight. "Our" Lola was going well, despite its period correct, treaded, skinny tires and I looked forward to the afternoon session.

After Louis' session, I climbed into the Lola and discovered a hitch; the owner is about 5' 7" and I'm 6'. However, I was determined I was going to drive it! So the mechanics shortened the belts, I scrunched down, took instructions from Craig, the Crew Chief, on the starting procedure and off I went, my helmet banging on the roof.

I drove out onto the track and started to feel out the car and it was here that I learned a salutary lesson: It's okay to drive a track that you know well in a strange car and it's okay to drive a strange track in a car you know well but it's not okay to drive a strange track in a strange car! Particularly when it's worth north of \$500K.

I hadn't raced at Road America since 2000 and really didn't remember it well, so struggled slowly around for some four laps and then decided that discretion was the better part of valor and headed back into the pits. Game over as far as I was concerned, I'll try it again some other day when I can fit into it! The next morning, whilst the seat was out of it, I climbed back in and found that, like my old IIIb coupe, it fitted me perfectly like that.

At least I did discover that the engine has an excellent 355 cubic inch Chevy with bags of grunt, great brakes and okay handling, considering the little eight and ten inch wheels. I must also admit to being somewhat jet-lagged after my trip to Le Mans. A big thank you to Louis, Craig, Henry et al.

Hey-ho, on to the next, Silverstone in September and then Sicily for the Targa Florio in October.



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Getting ready to go...



Ed Swart on the left next to Louis.





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SL73/133 approaching turn 2 at Road America.



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Devi & Tom Atlas with their Lola T70 Mk IIIB Coupe.



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Greg Granum, one of the past owners of SL73/126 (he owned it for over 30 years).



SL75/124, the 1967 Penske/Mark Donohue CanAm car.



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The unique Gurney Weslake heads on SL71/34, the Dan Gurney 1966 CanAm car.



Seen in a trailer, a Miller from the 1920s. Exquisite!



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The Miller Winfield V8 of 1935, the originator of the Novi engines. Eight cylinders, four camshafts, three carburetors, one supercharger - WOW!



Inside the cockpit of the Miller Winfield Special are the three carburetors that feed the supercharger.



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The cockpit of the Miller Winfield Special.



The Miller Winfield Special.



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The rear of a Miller Ford Special from 1930s Indianapolis.



Ed Swart gets ready to go out in a McLaren M6B.

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