

MONACO – MAY 1ST, 2010



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"Would you like to come with me to Monaco? All expenses paid, travel first class and we'll take the helicopter shuttle from Nice to Monaco?" Asked a friendly client. "Well, I don't know, I think I'm washing my hair that day". I replied. Of course, that's a lie, I accepted on the spot! Especially as said friendly client also invited Su along as well.

The object was to go and help sell SL70/1, the very first T70 and an ex-John Surtees car to boot. On top of that, it had also won Lola's first International victory (Mosport, June 1965) and had involved me in one of the most extraordinary investigations into a car's history in my experience, ably assisted by private investigator Krolls.



So it was that on Thursday, April 29th, Su and I boarded a Delta flight in Tampa and flew up to JFK airport in New York, where we met up with our friend Greg and took another flight to Nice. Arriving there on Friday morning, we were quickly ushered onto a five passenger helicopter and a few minutes later, having taken in stunning views as we flew along the Cote d'Azure at five hundred feet, landed in Monaco, where we transferred into a local taxi and were whisked to the Hotel, which, being situated on Princess Grace Avenue, was a mere five minutes walk from the Grimaldi Forum, a stunning glass roofed emporium, where the cars were available for preview.

A quick shower and change of clothes and we walked to the Grimaldi Forum, where the cars for auction were laid out in serried rows. They really shone in that natural light coming down from the glass roof and presented a very attractive sight to the potential buyers; a lesson to every auction company in how to do things right.



Yours truly did his bit in explaining the illustrious history of SL70/1 (first T70, first Lola to win an International race, Team Surtees car, unbroken chain of history) and, at the end of the day we went back to the hotel for dinner and then back to the cocktail party at the forum, where I saw a good many old friends from when I used to live in England, amongst them David and Liz Piper, both looking great and David was soon discussing his plans to race his Porsche 917 next.

The auction was on Saturday and took place in a standing room only house. The prices realized were very high, leading me on to musing "recession? What recession?" RM turned over \$43,206,692.00 in a single afternoon, establishing a new high for any classic car auction. Max Girado, the auctioneer and boss of this auction did a terrific job, blending cajolery, humor and knowledge to keep the buzz going. My only criticism would be that, half way through, RM sold approximately twenty-five old Rolls Royces and a lot of customers left before returning to bid on the remaining exotic cars.



“Our” T70 sold for a very respectable \$547,000.00, at which point we departed and went to the Cafe de Paris for dinner, adjacent to the Casino, which we then also visited. Have you ever been to Monaco? The sight of the parked cars outside the Casino is enough to make any enthusiast’s eyes water. There sat Lamborghinis, Ferraris, a Bugatti Veyron plus..... If you don’t have a Ferrari at the very least, don’t bother to turn up!

Indeed, that seemed to be so much of Monaco, fabulous wealth all around. Cost of breakfast? \$44.00. Cost of apartment? Ninety square feet equalled \$2,000 per month. The receptionist at the hotel told me that she couldn’t afford to live there, traveling in from Nice every day. Truly, I felt a church mouse by comparison.



Sunday was "Classic Monaco GP" day and Greg had very kindly arranged with promoter Steve Austen for us to view the proceedings from a rooftop overlooking the start/finish straight. This "rooftop" had been turned into a very slick carpeted and tented open air viewing and dining area and a grand day was had by all, such luminaries as Alain de Cadenet and Brian Redman turning up to view the races and chat to the customers. Some of the races actually turned out to be just that, real races with two abreast, although how you can possibly carry out a race on such a narrow circuit beats me! Walking back to the hotel, mainly following the track left me in awe thinking of the F1 race that is due there in ten days time now.



Another excellent dinner in the hotel, off to bed, up early and into the helicopter for the return flight back to Nice. We said our thanks and goodbyes to Greg at JFK and then waited four hours for our flight in sweltering conditions. They don't turn on the air conditioning there until May 15th, apparently. Home at midnight and a relieved crash into bed. It had been a fabulously enjoyable weekend. Thanks Greg!





