

# PRESENT DAY BARGAINS



## Present Day Bargains

Many years ago, in 1964, I bought my first car. It was a 1950s Mark VIIM Jaguar Saloon (Sedan) that cost me £40.00 - about \$80.00. I ran the car for about a year and then bought a 1952 Jaguar XK120 (in beautiful condition, it has to be said) and that cost me £125.00 (\$250!).

As the years went by, I bought various old sports/GT cars that were, at the time, absolute bargains, viz: 1958 Ferrari 250 GT "Tour de France" Berlinetta, \$22,000 in 1978 (now \$1.5M); Aston Martin D4GT Zagato in 1982 for \$14,000 (now \$1M +); and a Porsche 911RSR in 1984 for \$25,000 (now \$600k).

I had thought that, with today's very high interest in sports/GT cars, those days of comparative bargains had gone, however, recently I have come across a rich seam of what I consider to be absolute bargains in the fast car world.



It happened when Su and I did some English friends a favor and brought their boat back from being serviced. As we maneuvered the trailer back into their garage, a small dog ran over to us from the house over the road and I started fussing it. It's owner, Lydia, a Swiss lady who we knew, came over to scold the dog for not returning to her when she had called it. I asked her how she was and what was happening in her life and she told me that she was emigrating that very week. I asked her "What about your house?" and she said: "I'm leaving it in the hands of a realty agent." "So what about your AMG Mercedes SL500?" "I'm cleaning it as I'm taking it to the dealer's this afternoon. He's going to buy it."

I had always admired Lydia's AMG Mercedes. It's a 1997 convertible, white, with a glass hardtop. I've never been a fan of Mercedes but you can't ignore an AMG tuned SL500! I asked Lydia how much the dealer had offered her. \$13,500 she told me.

I'm not a Mercedes expert but this sounded VERY cheap to me! I told her that I was going home to look on the web to find out more about the SL and would be back in touch quickly. I did. When consulted, Kelly's Blue Book told me that bottom book price was over \$20,000! I called Lydia back and promptly bought the Mercedes.



"I'll sell it for a profit", I told Su who said, "Why not keep it?" I tried to be the practical type: "No, it'll just keep depreciating and, besides, it'll cost a fortune if it goes wrong." Then I called some friends who had owned SL 500s. "What goes wrong?" I asked. "Nothing" was the reply from one well known GTP driver. "It'll outlast you!" Jean

Guikas, a French dealer friend was more succinct when I asked him what he thought about them. "Wonderful great car" he said. "The only thing the dealer changes are the plugs and mine's done over 200,000 kilometers now."

I put the car on Ebay and then, two days later, I drove it to Daytona and back, a distance of some 300 miles. Upon returning, I took it off Ebay. I'm sold. It's wonderful, and it's mine.



Which brings me back to the subject of this piece. I started looking on Ebay at the prices of mid to late '90's "Supercars". Did you know that you can buy these cars for \$20,000? When they were new, they were over \$100,000! What about the V12 version, the SL600. Over 400 horsepower and it can be bought for less than \$20,000 in some cases!

You certainly can't buy Porsche 911s down at these levels and I wonder why? Appeal, pizzazz, glam? Surely the Merc's got that but I can only presume the 911 appeals to a younger, more image conscious bunch of people.

I'm intrigued. I wonder what other 'wildly-expensive-when-they-were-new' supercars are out there that no one wants any more? Please let me have your thoughts. I'll find 'em!





Site Contents © John Starkey 2006