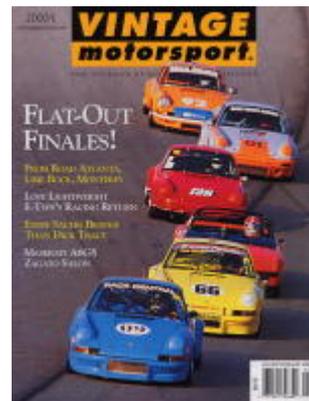




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THE CAT THAT STRAYED by Art Eastman

Sadly, many words lose their true meaning with frequent misuse and the passage of time. As an example, what does "original" mean when it's used to describe a race car? The word "original" in the proximity of "race car" creates an oxymoron and little else. During the competitive life of a race car, the state of originality is a moving target, a single frozen frame of a moving picture, a fleeting moment bracketed by change. A 'race car's originality is a reference to a precise moment in its history, and authenticity must be judged from within that single frame of time. There are precious few race cars that truly deserve to be called "original," as most opportunities for the preservation of originality are forever lost to



ground-up restorations or extensive modifications. The following is the story of a significant race car that escaped this fate with its originality intact.

Jaguar's brilliant success with the C- and D-Types in the 1950s is a matter of record. Afterwards, however, the factory's involvement in racing was reduced to supporting independently-owned cars. When the E-Type was introduced in 1961, its enthusiastic reception resulted in the quick ramping-up of production capabilities at Jaguar's Browns Lane facility to meet the demand. Yet despite the factory's previous involvement in racing, a competition version of the new E-Type was not planned. Although Jaguar prepped and supported E-Types for racing, these cars were merely slightly modified production cars.

New Priorities - The advent of a new GT World Championship in 1961 and the unrelenting pressure of external interest finally prompted Jaguar to reconsider a purpose-built racing E-Type. When Roy Salvadori crashed John Coombs' E-Type at Goodwood during the 1962 Easter Monday race, Jaguar decided to extensively rebuild it as a serious competition car. This became the prototype "Lightweight" E-Type, which spawned a series of 11 cars (all roadsters with alloy hardtops) plus one road car and one coupe. In reading the production requirements for the GT World Championship, Jaguar decided to assign the Lightweights consecutive serial numbers from the standard production line distinguished only by the "S" prefix. These cars were then sold to preferred customers at the regular production E-Type price followed by a substantial second invoice for modifications. It's doubtful such precautionary measures were necessary, since Ferrari's GTO had been accepted as a rebodied 250GT.



The first two Lightweight E-Types were quickly built for the 1963 Sebring race; one for perennial Jaguar entrant Briggs Cunningham and the other for Kjell Qvale, Jaguar's West Coast importer. The latter (chassis # S850660) is the subject of this story. The two cars were air freighted to Miami, where it was discovered that both were painted in the Cunningham livery of white with blue stripes.



At Sebring, a can of red paint was located inside a hangar and used to restripe the Qvale car. Qvale's team of Ed Leslie and Frank Morrill completed the 12-hours in seventh place overall, first in class and one position higher than Cunningham's sister Lightweight driven by Bruce McLaren and Walt Hansgen. Ferrari took the first six places with a trio of Prototypes followed by three GTOs.



After the race, Leslie drove the E-Type, complete with racing numbers, open exhaust and a suitcase strapped to the trunk lid, back to Miami for its first race. The next outing for the car was in June at Laguna Seca for the third Road Racing Championship (USRRC) series. Driven eighth place, while race winner Chuck Parsons Lotus 23.



After Laguna Seca, Qvale's British Motor

where it remained until October when Howard Gidovlenko of Los Angeles purchased the car for \$5000. Gidovlenko, a former WWII fighter pilot who modified and raced War Birds, intended to race the Lightweight beginning with the 24-hour race at Daytona in 1964. In preparation, a series of letters were exchanged with the factory and spare parts were assembled, but Daytona came and went with the car still unfinished. Gidovlenko soon stopped working on the car. Convinced its competitive days were past, he began to prepare it for storage. At this time, random areas of the body were sanded down to bare aluminum, purportedly to reduce the car's apparent value in an upcoming divorce settlement. Using preservation measures he'd learned in the aircraft industry, Gidovlenko put the Lightweight away in his garage, where it was to remain untouched for 35 years!

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As the years passed, the E-Type's trail went cold. Gidovlenko's hibernating car became known as the "Lost Lightweight"— the other 11 lightweight competition roadsters having been fully accounted for, including the one written-off by Salvadori at Le Mans in 1963. Early in 1998, Howard Gidovlenko passed away. During the process of sorting through his personal effects, his family discovered the Jaguar beneath a pile of boxes in the garage. Upon learning of the car's significance, they consigned the Lightweight to RM Classic Cars for their auction at Monterey.

Star Billing - The Lost Lightweight's star billing in the pre-auction advertising generated considerable interest. When the gavel came down on the evening of the auction, John Mayston-Taylor, chairman of Jaguar specialists Lynx Motors International, had successfully bid \$872,000 on behalf of an anonymous client. Not surprisingly, the Lightweight and its boxes of spare parts were immediately shipped off to the Lynx facilities in England.

Under close examination, it quickly became apparent that this old race car was something special. Having been raced only twice (a mere 2663 miles showed on its odometer) and stored with professional sensitivity, this car represented a level of originality and preservation seldom seen. Following a complete analysis, the decision was made to preserve rather than restore. Although this decision was, without the slightest doubt, the appropriate choice, the car most likely would have suffered a complete restoration had it been bought by a typical collector.



No strangers to Jaguar race cars, the Lynx team carefully documented and disassembled the major components of the Lightweight. Tim Card, the engineer in charge of the car's mechanical rebuild, was amazed with the originality and the practically pristine condition of the engine's internals. The 3.8-liter, all-aluminum, dry-sumped, Lucas-injected, 315-hp engine was reassembled using almost all the original parts; only the head studs (which had stretched with age) and the oil-impregnated water pump impeller were replaced. The five-speed ZF gearbox was likewise dismantled, inspected and reassembled using the original components. Because the car's immediate future lay on the track instead of in a museum or on a golf course, certain safety items were installed, including a proper roll bar, a fuel cell and a built-in fire extinguisher.



Examination of the chassis revealed cracks that had resulted from the combination of the car's lightweight construction and Sebring's notoriously rough circuit. They were repaired with reinforcement panels.

Cosmetically, the car received a minimal amount of detailing to bring it back to its original 1963 appearance. After a thorough cleaning, the aged paint was painstakingly matched and carefully feathered into only those areas that had been sanded down to bare metal. The owner wanted the resurrected Lightweight to retrace its 1963 racing history, and Mayston-Taylor was commissioned to



take the car to Sebring and drive it at HSR's 1999 March event.



overall and first in class, Mayston-Taylor improved upon the car's initial Sebring performance. The car was also run in HSR's one-hour night endurance race to make its return experience at Sebring historically complete. Before it was shipped back to England, the Lightweight was invited to Florida's Amelia Island Concours d' Elegance, where its sensitive preservation was recognized with a significant and appropriate award.

Back in England, the E-Type appeared at the prestigious Louis Vuitton Classic at London's Hurlingham Club, where it received another major award. The car was then thoroughly checked over in preparation for its next race outing at Laguna Seca in August. In its appearance at the Monterey Historic Automobile Races (with its racing number changed for historical accuracy), the Lightweight drew its fair share of interest. One man who gave the Jaguar his undivided attention was nearby Carmel resident Ed Leslie, the car's original driver. Again, Mayston-Taylor drove a good



race, finishing 12th overall behind a group of Cobras, Corvettes and Shelby GT-350s. This modern-day race result is historically accurate, as the Lightweight E-Type was introduced at a time when it had little chance of beating the Ferraris and Carroll Shelby's new Cobra. As a matter of record, no Jaguar Lightweight E-Type ever won a major race.



Although the car's two-part pilgrimage had been completed following the race on Saturday at Laguna Seca, it was naturally expected that the Lightweight would be among those race cars invited to Sunday's Pebble Beach Concours d' Elegance. Surprisingly, the car was passed over by those charged with making such choices. Comments about Pebble Beach's selection criteria are irrelevant, however. E-Type S850660 spent Sunday in its proper context, where it was most appreciated... in Laguna Seca's paddock.