

# LOTUS REMARQUE

The Official Publication of Lotus, Ltd.



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## Coming Home

The original plan was to drive some 2,600 miles with a group of about 55 Lotus Seven type vehicles on the USA 2005 tour from Houston to San Francisco, but my 1968 Lotus Seven needed repair after holing a piston at Willow Springs Raceway and struggling into Tehachapi spewing oil at a rate that would embarrass the Exxon Valdez. After suitable time and a generous application of money, the car was pronounced fit to travel under its own power home to Colorado. Knowing mountain weather, I had arranged with a friend and fellow Lotus owner Bill Roushey to tow my trailer to a point west of the Rockies until I joined him west of the potential bad weather. The perfect plan! Remember, Grasshopper, hubris is always tested.

Starting out for home at 5:00PM on November 11th I discovered several things about California drivers quickly after edging my way on to I 80... They drive big SUVs & trucks with very bright lights that pierce down the neck of a Seven driver, and they drive them fast. I thought 80 was the route number, but it must be the suggested speed ...in the slow lane. Never have I felt so small and disposable. I wouldn't have amounted to much more than a speed bump to most of these vehicles. But I soldiered on hugging the right lane with the hope that once past Sacramento, things would be better as I had planned a route over the Sierras on US 50, a lovely winding road through Lake Tahoe and into Carson City, NV. I would have made it fine, too, but for two things. First the misunderstanding and second the weather.

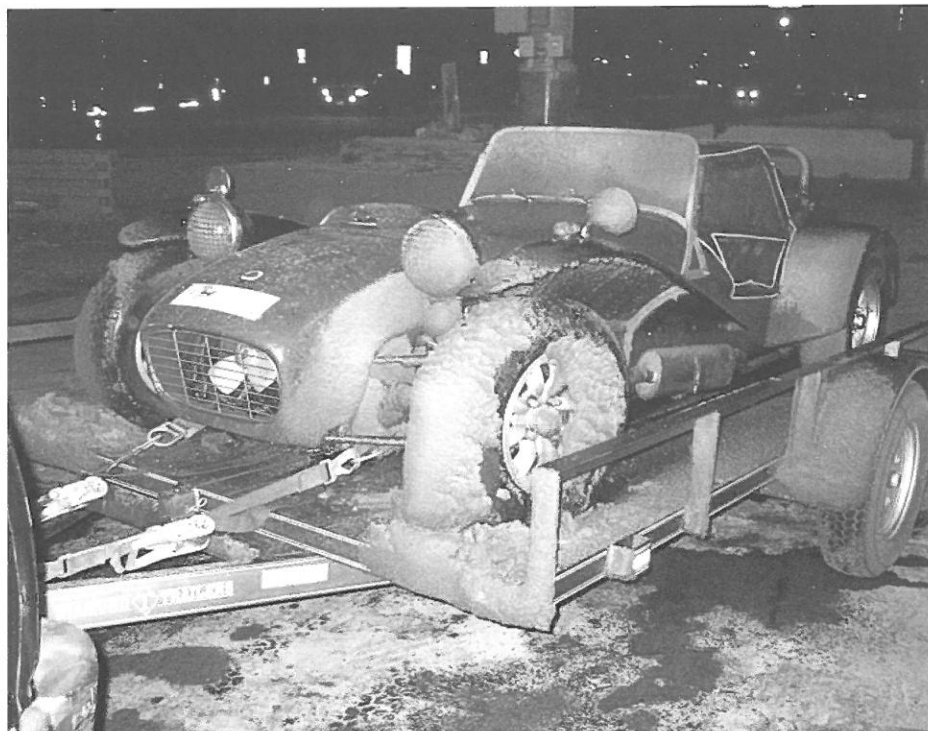
The Misunderstanding: Since they had only finished the rebuild that day, one of the shop guys had gone for a test drive, which, considering the 1350 mile trip I was about to embark on, was a great idea. He said the gas gauge was on empty so he stopped to put in \$5.00 worth and I thought I heard 5 gallons. At \$3.29 a gallon that is a huge difference. I ran out of gas in the dark on the eastern part of Sacramento where the highway is 8 or 10 lanes wide, with no shoulder! Fortunately, I carry a spare gallon (since the gauge always reads empty), so I put it in with the cars

and trucks whizzing by and made it to a gas station. After a refill of the spare gallon jug, the tank and the driver (20 oz. Coke and a giant Snickers bar) it was on the road again. And that's when I met problem two.

The Weather: I had been a devoted student of the Weather Channel for about two weeks as I confirmed the dates for the trip and was pleased to note a high pressure dome was resting over the whole southwest for the weekend of my trip. As is often the case with western weather, local conditions belie the forecast and do as they please. Climbing the western slope of the Sierras I encountered a light mist. It wasn't really too bad until I got to Placerville where it started coming over the windscreen and I simply couldn't see. I saw a small motel where the kindly innkeeper allowed me to park under the registration portico; the only cover around. The temp had fallen to about 40 degrees and the motel room managed to get to about 60 with the puny wall heater available, so I tucked in with the idea of an early start and a big day. I awoke before first light, shivering. I decided to get a jump on the day, dressed with every layer I could summon and opened the door to... snow.

At this point, the choice was to press on regardless, or call Bill and abandon the plan. As I have said before, God protects drunks and fools and I clearly wasn't drunk! Press On! The good news was that the sun came out and the road was dry within a few miles, it had been a little local system. On the other hand, as I climbed in altitude, it definitely got colder. And colder. And colder. By the time I got to the summit at 7,735 feet above sea level, it was about 16 degrees and I was getting stiff hands that could barely grip the wheel. So I stopped in South Lake Tahoe at the most wonderful International House Of Pancakes a bit after 7:00 AM and they had just opened. The entire staff came out to look at this tiny car with the bundled up fool. And they gave me a huge mug of hot tea to wrap my hands around. Of course, after my two course dinner, I was starved and believing that loading up on calories would keep me warm, I had the biggest breakfast in months. Finally fully filled and thawed, I re bundled and went out to the car when the waitress came out with a camera to document the stupidity of the human species.

*Coming Home (Continued on page 5)*





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## Fire Suppression System Install in 99 Esprit

Story and photos by Eric Nordstrom

For fear of my cherished V8 Esprit transforming into a melted hunk of plastic, I decided to install a fire suppression system from S.P.A. My main goal was to make the car a little safer for the occasional track day. I wanted the install to be as minimally invasive as possible. The fewer cuts and holes drilled, the better. I also wanted the system to be easily removable in the event I ever sell the car.

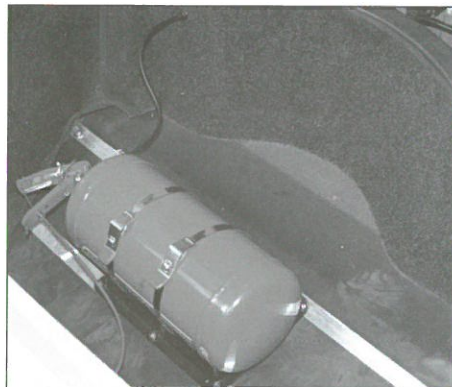
There are various systems available but the most common seem to use Halon or AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam). The AFFF system uses a foam spray that creates a barrier starving the fire of oxygen. It also has a cooling effect, which can control re-ignition. From my research, both will do the job but AFFF is more Eco-friendly. In the unfortunate event I actually have to activate the system, I'll be doing my share to save the environment by not creating a larger hole in the ozone layer. The fire bottles are activated by various methods using mechanical, electrical, automatic or combination type systems. For ease of install and cheapest cost, I chose the mechanical type. Bottles come in all sizes and are made of alloy, carbon fiber, or plastic lined steel. The least expensive was a steel bottle. Specifically, I purchased SPA's Fire Sense Response 4 liter multi-flow, mechanical steel bottle system from Midcoastperformance.com (ask for Gene or Kurt). Cost was about \$300, including shipping. Everything you need, except mounting brackets for the nozzles, comes with the kit. Plus, I spent about \$40 dollars for bolts, nuts, washers and aluminum stock.

First, I want to state for the record that I am not an expert fire suppression system installer. I don't claim my install is 100% correct or the only way to do it. Follow the instructions that come with the kit and abide by all of its warnings. This system is capable

of firing up to six nozzles, although I only used five. The instructions say to use 3 nozzles in the engine bay and 3 in the cockpit. All five of mine are in the engine bay. Just don't become a member of the Darwin Award and aim a nozzle toward the drivers face! How long the install takes is very much dependant on how complicated you design your system. My basic layout took two days to figure out and one day to actually install. If you do the exact same setup as me, I should only take you about 2 to 4 hours.

I try to follow the KISS method (keep it simple, stupid). After two days of racking my brain (and others), I finally decided to lay the bottle smack dab in the middle of the trunk. I won't get into the pros and cons of doing it this way but I will say I can take the bottle, bottle bracket, and a couple of lines out in less than 10 minutes. So if I decide to go shopping and park my car in the Target parking lot, I'll still have a trunk. Well, as much as any Esprit.

To mount the bottle to the trunk, I constructed an aluminum frame for the bottle assembly to bolt to. This unit was then attached to the trunk floor by use using four of the existing trunk floor bolts that surround the perimeter of the floor.



**TIP 1:** I used beveled bolts and came up from the bottom of the bottle assembly with nyloc nuts on top. This allows the aluminum frame to sit flush on the trunk floor.

*Fire Suppression (Continued on page 3)*

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