

LOTUS REMARQUE

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Lights, Camera, Action for a Caterham Seven and Nanotechnology

Article and Photos by Andrew R. Barron

Sitting in my office one day at Rice University minding my own business and thinking great thoughts in the field of nanotechnology is possibly the least likely prelude to a day involving Discovery Channel, a race car, and a lot of sweating!

There I was in the cool of my office when the phone rang. It was Jade Boyd Rice University's Associate Director of News & Media Relations. "I have some people from Discovery Channel who want to interview you," he said. "Why, what has happened?" was my cautious answer, since I have worked with several TV stations on a range of safety and chemical stories. But there was no explosion or disaster. "They want you to talk about how nanotechnology will affect the car of the future." Now this I can do thinks I.

Discovery Channel was filming a series of programs about the future of the automobile and they were interested in talking with several Rice professors about our research and our views. But there was a slight twist according to Jade. "I told them you raced and they also want do part of your interview with one of your cars." In fact as it turned out, my function

was to provide (in addition to a discussion of our research) I was to provide the links between the various interviews as well as other interviews that had already been filmed.

I had originally suggested that I just bring along my Lotus Exige daily driver. But there were some issues about GM providing some funding for the program and not wanting competing products shown without direct reference to technology – sorry Lotus no free advertising. However, if the car was older or a race car that was fine. Once the show's Producer, Matt Bennett, heard I had a brace of Sevens (a 1969 Lotus and a SCCA spec Caterham) he urged me to bring one of those and my race gear.

The general idea was to have a Professor in a race suit talk about the impacts of nanotechnology on the race car. Instead of having the car at a track, the Producer wanted to film under the scenic arches and sallyport of Rice's main building.

So early one morning, I took my Caterham Seven by trailer to the Rice campus. Unloading it and moving it to the designated position I went to change into my suit. The fact that I have a bright yellow race suit was just what the Producer wanted visually. So the cameraman and sound engineer set about getting ready for the "shoot".

I spent the first 2 hours having a variety of "artistic" images taken of me with the car in the background, me with the car in the



foreground, me in the car, me viewed through the roll cage. You get the idea. As anyone who has done any work for TV or film, the majority of the time is spent standing around. Now this is normally OK when I am doing interviews in my office. It is air-conditioned and I can make a cup of tea! But today it over 90 degrees and very high humidity – well it is Houston in summer so what do you expect. So between shots I was drinking water and toweling myself off to minimize the drips of sweat. By the end I felt worse than after a race.

With the morning's shooting finished just prior to a rain storm, I was able to put the Seven back on the trailer and get showered and changed for an afternoon of more usual filming in my laboratory. Why is it that TV crews love the images of labs even though they have no idea what anything is?

In all I spent from 8 to 5 working with the Producer and crew. This will translate to probably 5 minutes of total "screen time". It was actually rather fun, if much harder work than you would think. With a bit of luck my new sponsor 'NatCore Technology' and long time sponsor, Houston-based paint shop 'Collision Plus', along with Tire supplier 'Avon', will be pleased to find their names on the screen. Ex-sponsors will of course be not so happy they failed to make payments!

So if you are channel surfing late one night and find a program on the *Discovery Channel* on the future of the car, and want to have a laugh at my expense. Set the VCR or Tivo and tell all your friends. The program should be a delight for any car buff, with a wide range of high technology on display.



LOTUS REMARQUE

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Lotus Owners Gathering

Article and Photos by Atwell Haines

Lotus Enthusiasts Organization (LEO) of New York/New Jersey was well represented in Texas at this year's LOG, the national Convention for Lotus owners of all stripes. While the Naglers, Mike Reed, and Dominick Munifo drove the 1700 miles down to Texas, Jim Cummings, Tony Francica, David Kayser and myself took the easy way and flew to Texas for the convention.

It was great to see many of our Lotus friends from across the country, and to experience first-hand the unveiling of the supercharged Exige S. The Concours was a treat...everyone was provided with a set of Texas Longhorns for their Lotus! LEO members Mike Reed, David Nagler, Dominick Munifo and Atwell Haines (with a borrowed Esprit) took home an award from the show, which was held at the Circle R Ranch. It was the first time Mike got to drive his Exige racer on the street!

The next day the rains came. It was a wet Autocross at the Texas Motor Speedway, but David Nagler gamely participated and had a great time. The Scenic Drive/Rally turned out to be a bit long (210 miles) and the group of us that tried it had to cut the route short in order to make it back for dinner and



cocktails, but it was a fun time while it lasted (except for Dom M who found the cheater race tires he had installed in his Esprit were not too safe when it was pouring). By the way, the rumors were true... Texas is FLAT (except for the oil derricks)! It was like driving on the ocean, you could see all the way to the horizon. The good news was, the two-lane roads were posted with 70 MPH Speed limits!

Monday and Tuesday were given to the track days at the Texas Motorsports Ranch, a wonderful facility about 50 miles from the LOG site. TMR is a technical track, with loads of runoff space, and Monday morning it was raining again...so the runoff areas were MUCH appreciated! Lotus test drivers Alastair McQueen and Dave Minter were giving rides in the Exige S, and Mike Reed was wishing he had bought rain tires for his Exige racer. Even David N did a little "farming", at one point leaving TMR to wash the Texas mud off his Elise. The track was drying by Monday, however, and on Tuesday the full enjoyment of the track was realized.

We can't wait until next year, when the LOG takes us to Aspen/Snowmass, Colorado, August 24-27. ☺

**Watch for
LOTUS REMARQUE's
Official LOG 26 Issue
coming in December!**

Editor's Note:

There was no issue dated October. Because club memberships are 12 issues long, not 12 calendar months long, all membership expiration dates have been adjusted accordingly.

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