



Rear View Mirror

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Pity the poor Historian! – Denis Jenkinson // Research is endlessly seductive, writing is hard work. – Barbara Tuchman

Automobile Racing History and History or Case History and Casey and Clio Has a Corollary: Part I

How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!

Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, 1717

Buried deep within Alexander Pope's poem, *Eloisa to Abelard*, these are several lines that are remembered more because of their use in a recent movie than by those of us who read those lines in our English literature classes in college. ¹ It not difficult to see the connection between those lines and automobile racing and its past. Well, at least not to some I would imagine, particularly the "spotless mind" part.

Which, of course, leads us to the topic to be examined in this issue: Yet another rumination on automobile racing history.

Case History: Casey and Playing the Game

You look up and down the bench and you have to say to yourself, 'Can't anybody here play this game?' There comes a time in every man's life and I've had plenty of them.

Charles Dillon "Casey Stengel, 1962" ²

It is not difficult to share Casey's sense of bewilderment at the inability of those on the bench to grapple with the past of automobile racing. Whereas the New York Yankees rarely faltered under Stengel, Clio must sigh heavily and often at what is produced in her name when it comes to

automobile racing history. Indeed, what is considered automobile racing “history” covers such a latitude of efforts that it is easy to forget just what is the purview of automobile racing history.

It is this fragmented, disjointed nature of the topic which lends itself to being dominated by those outside the discipline of history. Journalists and publicists tend to be the active agents in generating what we accept as the past of automobile racing. Few historians – and even fewer scholars – venture into the discipline of automobile racing history. There are, of course, very good reasons for this. First and foremost, it is a frivolous, inconsequential area of Clio’s realm, one lacking any substance or established contours of study. Therefore, scholars and “serious” historians tend to give automobile racing history a wide berth. Second, there is the tendency to simply let the journalists, publicists, and enthusiasts continue to do their work since they do manage to get most of it correct. In other words, it seems to be working so leave it alone. However, that also implies that it really is not all that important, so who really cares?

It is quite a challenge to stir up much interest in automobile racing history as a discipline within history, even if a very small niche within the field of automotive history. Which, of course, then begs the question of whether or not it is actually a part of automotive history but rather a part of sports history. This is an interesting question for scholars and historians, given that those more aligned with the field of automotive history tend to more active – relatively speaking – than those from the sports history side of the house.

That automobile racing history straddles the fields of both automotive history and sports history is something that the scholars and historians need to come to grips with given that the journalists, publicists, and enthusiasts actually writing what we consider automobile racing history give such distinctions fleeting thought, assuming that it even crosses their minds, of course, which is doubtful.

One must drop his anchor somewhere along the coast when one examines the coastline, the beaches, and then the interior of the island. I have chosen to anchor the bow and the stern with the International Motor Racing Research Center (IMRRC) and the Society of Automotive Historians (SAH). The former is, as much as it might seem out of place given the rather dispassionate nature of scholars and historians, a labor of love, the result of a passion for the remembrance of the past of automobile racing and a desire for its history to be recorded. The IMRRC is the result of what Jean Argetsinger saw as the need – the necessity – for a place to make available archival materials to facilitate research into the history of automobile racing. Along with her husband, Cameron, and others in her family – sons J.C. and Michael in particular, the IMRRC has celebrated its first decade and continues to grow and expand its collection of materials for researchers to use.

It took a great deal longer for the stern anchor, the SAH, to be dropped. Since even mavericks need company once in awhile, I looked at various organizations and, generally, found them lacking for any number of reasons, not the least being my reluctance to join an organization.³ As I considered what I intended to do, where my interests would more than likely lead me, it became clear that the SAH was the best “fit” for my interests. That the SAH is in the process of establishing a special topic group for automobile racing history was a major factor in finally tipping the balance in favor of joining.

While contemplating an organization or group to join, I did come across more than few that might be interesting: the Motor Press Guild (MPG), the Guild of Motoring Writers (GMW), the Transportation Artists and Authors Guild (TAAG), the International Motor Press Association (IMPA), the National Motorsports Press Association (formerly the Southern Motorsports Writers

Association) (NMPA), and the American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association (AARWBA).

What seemed to be clear after awhile was that either I did not meet the requirements to join or was not very sure I would really want to given that my interests and those of the organization seemed to not be aligned with one another that well. Plus, I kept thinking about what Marx said.

Two of the organizations I looked into do have automobile racing as their *raison d'être*: the NMPA and the AARWBA. The first is the NMPA which is apparently composed primarily of those working NASCAR events and other activities related to that organization. The NMPA has a "Hall of Fame" which is located at the Darlington Raceway in the Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum. Formerly the Joe Weatherly Stock Car Museum, the museum was renamed after it was renovated in 2003. The NMPA Hall of Fame is dominated by drivers who competed in NASCAR events, which is scarcely a surprise given its membership.

Out of curiosity, I looked at the listing of those in the NMPA Hall of Fame and their accomplishments. When I did so, this particular entry caught my attention:

JOE LITTLEJOHN (1975)

A charter NASCAR member, Littlejohn promoted successfully at the half-mile Piedmont Interstate Fairgrounds for 30 years, *the site of the first race in South Carolina in 1939*. He was instrumental in establishing Darlington Raceway. The Joe Littlejohn Award, named in his honor, is presented annually for outstanding service to the NMPA.

This must have come as quite a surprise to those attending races in Columbia, Cayce, Bennettsville, and several other locales, to say nothing of those who were present for a held race at the Piedmont Interstate Fairground track in October 1937. True, this was the only *faux pas* that leaped out at me, but it also indicates that I might not be too much a fish out of water with this group. That said, it is doubtful that I meet the requirements necessary to be a member of the NMPA.

The AARWBA Web site informs me that, "The American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association is the oldest and largest organization devoted to auto racing coverage. Founded in 1955 in Indianapolis, AARWBA has grown to more than 400 members throughout the United States, Canada and Europe." The AARWBA has a "Legends in Racing" designation which was formerly their "Hall of Fame."

One of the AARWBA honors is the "Bob Russo Founders Award." When I read the citation for the 2009 recipient, the late Shav Glick of the *Los Angeles Times*, I must admit to literally dropping my jaw on the keyboard when I read this at the bottom of the award: "Bob Russo, for whom the award is named, was one of the foremost historians the sport has ever known."

I wish to suggest that this veneration of Bob Russo would seem to be rather misplaced.

As with the NMPA and its "Hall of Fame," I was prompted to read through the entries for the AARWBA "Legends of Racing." I did so great trepidation. As it turned out, this apprehension was quite justified. After reading through a number of the "Legends in Racing" entries, I decided to create a listing the most obvious errors and pass this on to the organization. The following is the content of the email I sent to the AARWBA:

Sir,

My name is H. Donald Capps and I would like to point out factual errors in your entries for several individuals in your "Legends in Racing."

(1) JIMMY BRYAN: **"He joins Earl Cooper, Ted Horn and A.J. Foyt (all Hall of Famers) as the only drivers to win the National Championship three times."** Earl Cooper was never a AAA national champion, much less a three time national champion. The AAA national championship did not begin until 1916 and was not conducted from 1917 to 1919, resuming in 1920. Louis Meyer, who actually was a three-time AAA national champion gets no mention. Very odd. Plus, the years of Bryan's death is incorrect, he was killed in 1960, not 1961.

(2) RUDOLPH "RUDI" CARACCIOLA: **"When Mercedes disbanded its F1 team because of the Depression, Caracciola used his own funds to field a Mercedes SSK that he drove to victory in the Irish GP."** "F1" did not exist until 1947, so this is not correct. One could use "GP" for "Grand Prix," but not "F1."

(3) GASTON CHEVROLET: Any mention of Chevrolet being the 1920 AAA national champion seems to be missing from his entry. It was Chevrolet and not Milton who won the national championship for 1920.

(4) LOUIS CHEVROLET: **"His driving career was equally impressive with 1,610 Championship points earned from 1915 through 1920."** Chevrolet scored exactly zero (0) points in 1916 and zero (0) points in 1920, the only two years he competed in the AAA national championship. However, in the 1905 AAA National Motor Car Championship, Chevrolet won the very first race in that championship, held at Morris Park in New York City in June. He won two other races in that championship as well, the Empire City and Brunots Island events, all in June.

(5) EARL COOPER: **"Was the first three-time National Champion, annexing the coveted crown in 1913, 1915 and 1917."** There was no AAA national championship for Cooper to win in those years so this is not correct.

(6) RALPH DePALMA: **"He won Indy in 1915 in a Mercedes and was the National Champion in 1912 and 1915."** Again, there were not AAA national championships for the 1912 and 1915 seasons, so, once more, this is not correct.

(7) TOMMY MILTON: **"He earned more than 12,000 Championship points in his career, from 1916 through 1927, and was the 1920 and 1921 National Champion — the first driver to win that honor twice in a row."** and **"He won the first of 23 Championship race victories in 1917..."** The 1920 AAA national champion was Gaston Chevrolet and not Milton, meaning that the first driver to win back-to-back championships was Louis Meyer in 1928 and 1929.

(*) Jimmy Murphy: **" In the 1920 Championship race season he was 1st, 4th, 6th, 3rd and 4th."** Interesting that this information is correct and yet that for Chevrolet and Milton is not.

(8) BARNEY OLDFIELD: Not mentioned is that Oldfield won the 1905 AAA National Motor Car Championship, winning five of the eleven events.

(9) DARIO RESTA: "**He was the 1916 AAA National Champion, and earned more than 7,000 points in his Champcar career to rank third among all drivers active before 1920. ... In those 1915-1916 seasons, Resta accumulated his career total of 10 Champcar victories.**" Resta only earned championship points -- 4,100 -- during the 1916 season, there not being a 1915 AAA national championship. Resta won five victories in 1916 which are his only national championship wins.

(10) EDDIE RICKENBACHER: "**Still, he managed to win seven Championship races and compiled 5,564 points which ranked him fifth among the all-time point leaders of the 1911-1920 era.**" Rickenbacher competed in the AAA national championship in only one season, 1916, winning the inaugural event in May at Sheepshead Bay, the Tacoma event in July, and the last race of the season at Ascot in November. He scored 2,910 points in that 1916 season, his only points in the national championship due to there not being a national championship until 1916.

(11) GEORGE ROBERTSON: "**Credited in modern record books with the very first U.S. National Championship, in 1909 under AAA sanction, after victories in a 318-mile race at Lowell, Mass., and a 200-miler in Philadelphia. At the time the champion was determined by a popularity vote of the press with another driver, Bert Dingley, getting the nod. Later a points formula was devised and Robertson emerged atop the tally (Dingley was 5th).**" The first AAA national champion was Dario Resta. Robertson's championship, which this entry manages to somehow muddle and mangle, should not be credited in "modern record books" or elsewhere for that matter. It is historically inaccurate, simply not true.

(12) MAURI ROSE: "**He earned the respect of European drivers at Roosevelt Raceway in 1936 when he became the first American to finish the revived Vanderbilt Cup race...**" The first American "home" in the George Vanderbilt Cup was actually Bill Cummings in seventh -- rather than the eighth he is usually credited with -- and not Rose. A protest corrected the finishing order in January 1937, Rose not spending the mandatory 60 seconds in the pits per race regulations.

(13) WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT: "**In 1900 he established the Vanderbilt Cup race, first run on a short track at Newport, R.I., and then for several years on Long Island and before moving to Milwaukee in 1912, the West Coast in 1914-1916, and after a two-decade hiatus resuming in 1936-37 at Roosevelt Raceway on Long Island.**" The "William K. Vanderbilt, Jr. Cup" was first run in 1904 on Long Island. It would appear that the event being referred in 1900 as the first "Vanderbilt Cup" event, a short race held on the Aquidneck Trotter Park in Newport, Rhode Island on 31 August 1900, was simply a local event in which Vanderbilt competed and not the Cup he placed in competition in 1904. The "William K. Vanderbilt, Jr Cup" did not resume in 1936 and 1937. Those events were for the "George Vanderbilt Cup," a relative who lent his name to the promoters.

These errors, I am sure, have been pointed out to the AAWRBA in the past. That even a simple, easily "verified" error such as the death of Jimmy Bryan has not been corrected is difficult to comprehend.

I do have a question: Who will be the party (or parties) who will "verify" that the errors and corrections I have pointed out actually exist? I can provide information to substan-

tiate each assertion of error in this email. Indeed, I am quite willing to do so. Plus, there are others who can also vouch for the items mentioned being errors of fact.

Frankly, it is appalling that the AAWRBA can allow such historical sloppiness to continue to be accepted for what is laterally years and years in many cases, without any apparent effort being made to correct any of the errors.

Sincerely,

H. Donald Capps

There was a response to my email which I will now provide:

One of these days I'll get around to checking all that out. But at the moment the Legends in Racing is in something of a hiatus and I have more pressing matters on my plate.

Rocky

"Rocky" is Robert "Rocky" Enriken, the Chairman of the "All America Team" and "Legends In Racing" activities for the AAWRBA. Mr. Enriken is a motor sports writer whose plate is apparently filled mostly with the activities of the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA). I think that it is safe to venture the opinion that one need not hold your breath until what was submitted is "checked out."

So, it is rather doubtful that the AAWRBA will be sending me a membership application at any time in the future. As with the NMPA, I would suspect that I fall short of whatever the requirements or qualifications are for membership.

On 29 May 2009, in a thread entitled "Eifelrennen 1934," on Autosport.Com's *The Nostalgia Forum*, I wrote the following:

Well, not sure if this is the proper place to have this discussion -- or that there are many who even want to have this discussion, but let me start with stating unequivocally that I cannot in any way, shape or agree with this statement: "All the good research has been done and there are no more hard questions left." On the contrary, I feel that we have yet to even begin to scratch the surface when it comes to the history of automobile racing. There are no end of questions and issues and topics which cry out to be given their due with proper research as well as considered thought and discussion.

Nor do I find myself in agreement with this statement: "The Nostalgia Forum has become a victim of its own success." I am not sure that it really has been a success in many ways even if successful in some areas. If anything, TNF is less a "a victim of its own success" and more a victim of its own complacency and a general lack of attention for items smacking of "academic" or "scholarly" interest. Indeed, I would suggest that reaching back to the very beginning of TNF back in November of 1999, that about seventy-five percent -- at least -- of the threads and their contents could disappear with no loss being suffered to The Record of the history of automobile racing.

Having said that, however, it should be noted that is merely the nature of the beast known as an internet forum. That as much as "only" twenty-five percent might be deemed worthy of retention is a remarkably high percentage, an extraordinary percen-

tage when you think about. A worthy reflection on the many valuable and priceless contributions that have been made to this enterprise. One need only to examine the annual listing of the doctoral dissertations in history to grasp this idea.

It is not, of course, all doom and gloom despite an inclination to view things through the "half empty" portion of the glass. Fortunately, there are those who continue to plug away and enrich us with the fruits of their research and considered thoughts.

While *La nostalgie n'est plus qu'elle était* ("Nostalgia Isn't What It Used To Be") seems to be taken as some form of perjorative by some, that is also an appropriate thought because in some ways TNF must be considered as a success -- even if a qualified one -- simply because it has changed the idea, the notion, the whole concept, of how an internet forum can make real contributions to the discussion of various topics and subjects related to an area of history which might otherwise never get their moment of consideration before a broader audience, if you will.

I do not spare myself from any of my criticisms voiced above. I often have problems treating this as anything but just another internet forum, simply one that happens to have a lot more history on it than others. Worse of all, I have allowed myself to become discouraged when topic or subjects I find interesting seem to sink like a stone when the lack of interest expressed is such as to be almost sad at times. Also, like others, a certain complacency has set in: why bother? no one cares? just make the usual inane remarks on the bubba threads and save your brain cells for your other work.... Indeed, it is often more a case of just marking time here until something else comes along that is more aligned with my original -- and obviously misplaced -- aspirations for TNF.

At any rate, this is one of the very best examples of TNF living up to its promise and doing what I hoped it would do. However, there are still many other topics, some related to this one, still needing attention....⁴

This would seem to best summarize my feelings concerning the relationship between the scholarship related to automobile racing history and the unfulfilled expectations that have resulted from the possibilities that beckoned with the advent of the internet and the Web as research tools for historians.

Earlier, I mentioned, almost in passing, the role of journalists, publicists, and enthusiasts upon how automobile racing history has been both recorded and perceived. For those of "a certain age," the source for much of what they know -- and feel -- about a span of several decades of automobile racing is Denis S. Jenkinson, the longtime correspondent for *Motor Sport* magazine.

According to Doug Nye⁵, Jenkinson considered himself less a journalist than an enthusiast who "merely wrote about his enthusiasm." This would seem to clearly be the case when considering Jenkinson from the cold, dispassionate view of a historian. Although Jenkinson provided much in his chronicles, he also dismissed much of what might be importance to a historian as being merely "politics," as well as having distinct likes and dislikes, very pointed opinions and prejudices, which colored his writings. It is important to understand that Jenkinson, as Roger Lund states, "...was the on-site enthusiast writing knowledgeably to fellow enthusiasts back home."⁶

One must, therefore, approach what Jenkinson has left us with some caution. As heretical as it may seem to some, while Jenkinson may have had a sense of history, which was clearly reflected in many things he wrote, he was not a historian. Jenkinson was first and foremost an en-

thusiast, something which can also be said of virtually all those journalists working in automobile racing at any time in its history.

While Jenkinson may have excelled in his ability to give his readers – now as well as then, excellent information regarding the “nuts and bolts” of the racing machinery, he often falls short of providing the historian with a broader appreciation of the *Zeitgeist* of the era. Missing from much of what Jenkinson wrote are the discussions concerning the conflicts that arose due the inevitable differences that occur between sanctioning bodies and competitors. While these might be mentioned, in passing in many cases, they are rarely dwelled upon at any length, unless it was an issue that struck home with the enthusiast that Jenkinson was. If this were the case, then much might flow from Jenkinson’s pen, otherwise it tended to be ignored.

Lest there be any mistake about my opinion of Denis Jenkinson, let me step away from my role as a historian for a moment and state that I admire few others as much as I admire “DSJ” and his writings. I still enjoy reading his race reports and “Continental Notes” in old issues of *Motor Sport*. However, that is a view that is completely separate from that which I hold as a historian.

A thought that did occur to me after writing about him is that Denis Jenkinson was an automotive historian’s historian, if you will. Whatever it may have been that Jenkinson may have lacked elsewhere, he left a true treasure trove for the automotive historians working the automobile racing side of the street.

Something that I have come to realize is that there are many enthusiasts who simply have no use for scholars and historians when it comes to automobile racing. The rather grandly misnamed “RacingHistory” Group on Yahoo was openly antagonistic to several of us who once participated in the group, the “history” that the members of the group were interested in being more influenced by enthusiasm and nostalgia than what many of us would consider history. Our being historians finally becoming an open issue, leading to the departure of several of us. What always fascinated me about the group was that the focus was almost always on what could only be thought of as minutiae related to various bits of racing machinery and very little on the history of automobile racing itself. The greatest sin was not placing your name and location on something you posted, a violation almost guaranteed to get a nasty note from the moderator of the group. I am still shaking my head over that one.

In most cases, internet fora cater more to enthusiasts and nostalgists because that is what attracts those willing to join and participate in such fora. On TrackForum, there is *Eagle 104’s Nostalgia Forum*, which is pretty much what the names says it is. It does have its occasional moments, but one need not check it but every so often to see if anything interesting is posted. For the most part, it rarely provides much of any real interest to a historian, being more an outlet for opinions and enthusiasm than anything related to helping us gain a better picture of the past. However, for time to time those “moments” I mentioned turned out to be true gems of inestimable value to the historian, so I check the site regularly and always keep that in mind when I see the usual sort of blather on the forum.

On Ten-Tenths, the Historic Racing and Motorsport History fora are aligned with each other, there seeming to be more interest in various British racing series and individual racing machinery than in any general interest in automobile racing history itself. It is unusual to find much of what I would think of as history there, although it probably does contain tidbits that could be of help in very narrow, specific situations, otherwise there is not much to commend it for regular visits.

Mercedes Bends History

As part of the publicity surround the launch of the “new”⁷ Mercedes GP Petronas Formula One Team on 25 January 2010 at the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart, the following was contained in the press release issued by Mercedes and posted on the team’s Web site:

The new silver and green livery creates a true marriage between the heritage of the Silver Arrows and the team’s title partner PETRONAS. The legacy of the Silver Arrows goes back to the 1934 Eifel Race when, on the evening before the event, the white paint was sanded off the Mercedes W25 race car to fulfil weight regulations (750kg formula) and the silver colour of the aluminium surface of the car appeared. This season, with the return of the Silver Arrows, the MGP W01 will shine in silver combined with a flow of iridescent silver and green shading. On the nose and other parts of the car, traces of black carbon fibre visible are visible – a reminder of the first Silver Arrow of 1934.

On 24 July 2007, at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center at Fellbach, on the outskirts of Stuttgart, Mercedes-Benz convened a symposium to discuss the following topic: *Das Eifelrennen 1934 – Neubauer’s Dilemma, The Eifel Race of 1934 – Neubauer’s Dilemma*. The reference to there being a dilemma on the part of Alfred Neubauer is a clear indication of the stance that Mercedes took at the time – and which it apparently still takes if the publicity materials associated with the launch of the new Mercedes GP team is any indication.

The gist of the Mercedes argument can be summed up by reading what Tony Kaye posted in a thread discussing the 1934 Eifelrennen on The Nostalgia Forum:

THE NOSTALGIA FORUM VERSUS ALFRED NEUBAUER AND THE PAINT STRIPPING INCIDENT

In the trial of Alfred Neubauer and his Paint Stripping account we have so far heard the case for the Prosecution. It is now time to put forward the case for the Defense.

First, we must itemise the Prosecution’s main arguments:-

1. There is no contemporary evidence to support the paint stripping incident.
2. The mechanic Eugen Reichle testified that the cars were already silver when they left the factory.
3. Alfred Neubauer is an unreliable witness, a mere story teller.
4. Due to its timing, Manfred von Brauchitsch’ testimony is also unreliable.
5. Rudolf Uhlenhaut must be ignored because he was not a Mercedes employee in 1934.
6. Various B&W photos suggest that the cars were not white prior to the race.
7. It is a ploy of the Mercedes-Benz PR department to add hype to the Silver Arrows legend.

Let’s examine this evidence in more detail.

NO CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

The Prosecution claims that it is impossible to prove that an event did not occur, thereby freeing themselves of the obligation to provide such evidence. But this is not true. There are several quite mundane pieces of evidence, which, if found would cast grave doubts about the paint stripping incident. For instance a contemporary journal might have re-

ported that “Fagioli looked impressive in practice in his silver Mercedes” or “At the scrutineering the Auto Unions weighed 740 kg and the Mercedes 745 kg.” So it would not be impossible to disprove the incident, it is merely that no such evidence has been forthcoming.

We must not judge the lack of contemporary corroborative evidence in relation to today’s racing journalism. There are now magazines devoted solely to Grand Prix racing which outline every nuance of every practice session and race. Today it would be impossible for the paint stripping incident and subsequent change of color to be ignored. It would be a headline story.

But racing journalism was very different in the thirties. We can take Motor und Sport’s report of the 1934 EifelRennen as a good example. Including photographs, the report amounted to a five pages. The 750 kg event also included two classes for 1500cc and 800cc cars. On the same day there were three motorcycle races each of which was divided into several classes. All of these events had to be covered within those five pages. The race with which we are concerned was squeezed into the equivalent of a paltry two and a half columns of text; small wonder that there was no reference to anything which took place before the race itself. It must be added that there was no pre-race reporting for the motorbikes and voiturettes either.

So the lack of evidence, which the prosecution finds so damning, is precisely what one would expect in the thirties. The fact that magazines did not provide space for pre-race action cannot be used as evidence that the incident did not occur. Presumably the Prosecution would not claim that the absence of practice lap times in the ‘Motor und Sport’ report meant that Alfred Neubauer also lied when he stated that his cars took part in practice.

So, the fact that the paint stripping episode was not mentioned in contemporary reports, proves absolutely nothing – other than that race reports in the 1930’s were far less detailed than those of 2006.

EUGEN REICHLE

In isolation, the testimony of mechanic Eugen Reichle is crucial. He stated that “The cars had never been painted white, so there was no paint to grind off.” We know that the first part of this statement is untrue. The early prototype without the headrest was definitely white. For example, “...Next morning we met at six at the Avus. The car was there too, small and white, it looked fast; a single seater as I had always imagined it.” (Source Rudolf Caracciola ‘Caracciola Mercedes Grand Prix Ace’ 1955.)

We must conclude from this that Reichle’s failure to remember the paint stripping at the Eifel race may be equally flawed. It would be interesting to know if he was present at the Nürburgring in June 1934.

In contrast, Luigi Fagioli’s chief mechanic, Hermann Lang, was not only present, but he would have been one of those who had to work through the night scraping the paint off the cars. His testimony, which will be dealt with in detail later, is completely contradictory to Reichle’s. He remembered scraping off all that white paint only too well.

ALFRED NEUBAUER

The first known record of the paint stripping incident appeared in Alfred Neubauer’s book

'Männer, Frauen und Motoren, which was published in 1959. The Prosecution's case has centred upon debunking this work and its author, since all subsequent references could then be said to be mere reiterations and therefore equally spurious. The heart of their argument is that Alfred Neubauer was nothing more than a raconteur, a story teller "who never let the facts get in the way of a good story".

The primary example of his claimed unreliability is his completely erroneous description of the 1933 Tripoli Grand Prix. We will never know for sure how that chapter came to be written, but there is a far more plausible explanation.

If he had attended the race, he could be accused of creating fiction, but he was elsewhere at the time. It is quite possible that someone else passed the story on to Neubauer and that his only crime was in going to print without attempting to check the facts. One imagines that if he had created the tale himself, he would at least have checked on the driver line-up and would not have included Louis Chiron. If, on the other hand, he was told of the affair by someone else, he would have repeated the story as told, including such an obvious error.

The Prosecution has drawn the conclusion that, because one chapter in Alfred Neubauer's book has subsequently proved to be nonsense, we must treat the whole book, including the paint stripping episode, as similar nonsense. When Count Giovanni Lurani wrote his biography of Tazio Nuvolari, he placed the death of Giorgio Nuvolari just before the 1936 Vanderbilt Cup, though he actually died a year later. Such an error makes one more careful when reading the rest of his book, but no-one would suggest that it renders the book complete rubbish from cover to cover – far from it. In a similar vein, Neubauer's Tripoli Race report cannot be used as evidence that the EifelRennen paint stripping was an imaginary occurrence.

Besides that, there is one vital difference between the two reports. Neubauer was not present at Tripoli, so his version was bound to be second-hand, but he was present at the Nürburgring, where he was the principal of the team concerned.

MANFRED VON BRAUCHITSCH

Manfred von Brauchitsch's book 'Ohne Kampf kein Sieg' appeared six years after Alfred Neubauer's biography. It contains a reference to the paint stripping incident which is, apparently, broadly consistent with Neubauer's version. The Prosecution has used this consistency as proof of collusion. In other words, Von Brauchitsch read Neubauer's account of an incident which never occurred, liked it and included a similar version in his own book. This is an incredibly obtuse conclusion. Machiavelli would have been proud!

Surely the obvious conclusion is that the event genuinely took place, both men were party to it and described it in their own words. It's that simple. It is quite possible that Neubauer's reference reminded von Brauchitsch of the incident, but that's hardly the same thing as compounding a lie. Presumably, if he had NOT mentioned the incident in the book, the Prosecution would then have used the omission as evidence that the story was an invention. They can't have it both ways!

In 1953 Manfred von Brauchitsch wrote 'Kampf um Meter und Sekunden' in which he made no mention of paint stripping. The Prosecution uses this as further evidence supporting the spurious nature of the story. Yet the book is concerned very largely with the author's driving career and omits events which would have been the primary concern of

the mechanics, such as valve timing, plug gaps andpaint stripping. No-one would conclude from these omissions that the Mercedes-Benz mechanics never changed the valve timing and never fitted new plugs. So how can the Prosecution use this as evidence that the paint stripping incident did not occur? It is just another example of the Prosecution's perverse logic.

RUDOLF UHLENHAUT

Rudolf Uhlenhaut has always been a most respected member of the Mercedes team. In various articles and interviews he is invariably treated as a man of great integrity. Yet when he confirms that the paint stripping incident did, in fact, occur, he is suddenly treated as a charlatan. On everything else his word is accepted without question.

Nor is it true, as the Prosecution contends, that he joined Mercedes-Benz in 1936, two years after the paint stripping incident. In fact he joined the Company in 1931, immediately after leaving college and he remained at Mercedes until he retired. Even if he was not present at the Nürburgring in June 1934, during all those years he had ample access to the personnel in all capacities who were. Sooner or later the paint stripping incident was likely to have come up as an item of conversation. He didn't need to be present to be aware of it.

The Prosecution derides his testimony ("We were up all night removing the beautiful white paint") mainly because they believe that Uhlenhaut was not a Mercedes employee at that time. On the contrary, in his position as a carburetor specialist, it is quite possible that he did attend the 1934 EifelRennen. His statement suggests that he actually helped the mechanics with the task.

The hypocrisy of all this is that his statement is dismissed out of hand "because he was not there." Yet what of the members of the TNF Prosecution who dismiss him with such certainty? None of them were 'there'. And none had day to day access to those who were. The Defense maintains that there are absolutely no grounds to discredit Rudolf Uhlenhaut's testimony.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The Prosecution has presented a large number of black and white photographs. However, by their own admission, in these shots silver can resemble white and vice versa. Different exposures, camera angles and location can affect the appearance of the cars' bodywork. There is even one photo in which the bodywork up to the cockpit appears to be silver, but the tail section and wheels appear to be white.

To compound the unreliability of black and white photos for colour identification, there is the suggestion that the Mercedes-Benz Archives department has tampered with some of the photos in their possession to make the cars appear more 'perfect'.

With the exception of the wheels, these photographs prove nothing and must be disregarded as unreliable evidence. Until relevant colour photos can be produced we must rely almost solely upon written and verbal evidence.

PR DEPARTMENT COMPLICITY

The Prosecution contends that the Mercedes-Benz PR department briefed Rudolf Uhlenhaut and Hermann Lang to repeat the paint stripping story. The Company took this extraordinary step because the event is supposedly an important part of the Silver Ar-

rows legend. As a result Lang was prepared to lie to Nixon and Uhlenhaut to the radio audience. If true, it doesn't say much for the integrity of any of the parties concerned.

The broad image that the PR department wished to convey was probably an amalgum of performance, quality and superb engineering. The Silver Arrows legend is an important part of this because it demonstrates the superiority of Mercedes cars over other manufacturers. The legend itself is all about race victories, magnificent cars and the men who drove them. The means by which the Silver Arrows became silver is of negligible importance in comparison.

So why would the Company be so determined to make Lang and Uhlenhaut compromise themselves by telling a lie? And why would they, for their part, agree to lie? The obvious explanation is that it isn't a lie at all. When Lang and Uhlenhaut described the incident, they weren't lying, they were merely describing what actually happened. And the PR department had absolutely nothing to do with it.

Once again, the Prosecution has failed to present a shred of evidence to support their devious contention.

CASE FOR THE DEFENSE

Having dealt with the Prosecution's case, we will now turn to evidence which positively supports the paint stripping incident.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF SCRUTINEERING

Karl Ludvigsen gave extremely important testimony (from the text of 'Quicksilver Century') which has been almost totally ignored by the Prosecution, presumably because it lends great authenticity to the paint stripping story. Here it is in abbreviated form:-

"The official scales at the Nürburgring were unsympathetic. They showed that the new white cars were two kilogrammes over the limit. Last-minute changes had forced the weight up, like the small scoop on the right side of the cowl that led cool air to a duct down to the clutch.

At the first weigh-in, the two cars were passed as meeting the limit. But the team manager of the Scuderia Ferrari, entrants of the Alfa Romeos, on a sudden whim reached into the cockpit of one of them and pressed on the brake pedal. It flopped down to the floor. Some fluids could be omitted for the weighing, but not brake fluid. When properly topped up the cars were over the limit — and the saga of the paint and filler began. Now there was nothing, the engineers argued, that they could or would remove."

Then "Off came all the carefully-applied paint and filler. A light coat of silver paint was sprayed on to mask imperfections. the cars squeaked past the weighing-in and came to the line in matte aluminium."

Ludvigsen added "I am pretty happy with this interpretation of events from a good source."

Unfortunately Karl Ludvigsen does not reveal his source, but there is no reason to doubt his assertion that it is reliable. The absence of brake fluid would have been blatant cheating on the part of Alfred Neubauer and Mercedes, which is possibly why everyone else has glossed over it by saying the cars were merely overweight.

One can extrapolate from this that Neubauer was aware that the cars were very slightly overweight when they left the factory and that draining the brake fluid would be enough to make them legal. It also explains why the relatively small weight saved by removing the paint and filler would accomplish the same goal.

This testimony is so overwhelmingly important to the case that, if the source were known and unanimously accepted, it would remove all doubts about the authenticity of the paint stripping incident.

WHITE WHEELS

It is impossible to determine with any certainty the colour of a car's bodywork from a black and white photograph, but the same cannot be said of its wheels. In some photos the Mercedes racing cars had white wheels even when we can be sure, from written evidence, that the bodywork was silver.

Like so much about this case the answer is obvious and simple. When the paint was scraped off during the night before the EifelRennen, there was little time and absolutely no need to work on the wheels. The weight of the paint on the wheels would have been minimal and would not have affected the result at scrutineering. More importantly, it wasn't the paint on the bodywork that was going to make the difference, but the filler underneath the paint. There was no filler on the wheels, so they were left white for the race. Also, as Leif Snellman pointed out, there would be no need to remove the paint from the new wheels which would be fitted during pit stops.

If the cars had been painted silver at the factory some time before the race, they would probably have attended to the wheels as well. However, it has to be admitted that the presence of white wheels on a silver car does not in itself prove the validity of the paint scraping, but it is so consistent with the episode that it adds greatly to its probability.

TESTIMONY OF HERMANN LANG

In 'Racing the Silver Arrows' Chris Nixon wrote, "For my previous books.....I went directly to the people concerned with the team, starting with....." the manager ".....and going on to the principal drivers, designers, mechanics and their colleagues. The success of this exercise led me to try the same approach.....During several trips to Germany.....I found a dozen individuals who had been actively involved with Mercedes-Benz and or Auto Union, and were happy to reminisce about their racing days. Once I had typed out the Memoirs, I sent each back to the person concerned for approval." He went to this extra step to ensure that his text was correct.

One of these was "Hermann Lang, who was present at the time in his capacity as Chief Mechanic to Luigi Fagioli. He well remembers the fuss about the cars being too heavy....." Nixon then quoted directly from his interviews with Lang. ".....the decision was taken to remove the paint and we set to work. The cars had been painted white very carefully in order to get an excellent finish, but you must remember that the bodies were of hand-beaten aluminium and so were very uneven. This meant that there was quite a lot of filler applied before the paint was sprayed on and it was probably this filler, rather than the paint, which pushed the cars over the limit. Once all this was removed the cars were covered in a very thin coat of aluminium paint and when they were weighed the next day they were just under the limit."

Nixon wrote that Lang's version threw some doubt on one part of Neubauer's story. Lang "cannot recall that the idea for removing the paint came from any one person." As Lang himself put it, "It could well have come from some of the mechanics, because we were all standing around discussing what was to be done about the extra kilo." This merely casts doubt about the originator of the idea, but it in every other respect confirms the authenticity of the paint scraping incident, i.e. the cars were white in practice, the white paint was scraped off overnight and the cars were silver in the race.

Nixon's conversations with Hermann Lang were obviously lengthy and highly detailed. This is proven by Lang's memoir within the book, which is all of eleven pages long, and that, of all Nixon's contributors, Lang was chosen to write the preface to the book. Lang must be considered the most important witness, for if the paint stripping story is true, he is the only witness who we know with certainty would have had to work through the night scraping paint. Such an activity would be etched in his memory. It seems inconceivable that in the course of his conversations with Nixon he would have told the truth about everything else but lied about this single subject – and in such elaborate detail.

SUMMATION

There are various accounts of the paint stripping incident, but they all contain the same basic ingredients. The cars were fractionally over the maximum permitted weight and unless something was done, they would fail to start. Removing the paint and, more importantly, the body filler was the solution.

"The evening before the race the cars had been weighed - and found to be too heavy. The "silver arrows" are permitted to weigh no more than 750 kilograms - without fuel, coolant, oil and tyres. But as the mechanics push the first car on to the scale, it shows 751 kilograms. What am I to do? Tomorrow is race day, I cannot give order to remove vital parts, everything is calculated to the last gram. "What about one of your famous tricks?", said Brauchitsch. "Otherwise we are the lacquered ones..." "Lacquered?" I asked, and at the same moment it came to me. "Of course - the paint, that's the solution!" The whole night the mechanics scraped the white paint from our silver arrows, and when they are put on the scale again the next morning - the weight was exactly 750 kilograms." (Neubauer/Rowe - 'Männer, Frauen und Motoren' – 1959)

"We were up all night removing the beautiful white paint." (Rudolf Uhlenhaut paraphrased)

"The official scales at the Nürburgring were unsympathetic. They showed that the new white cars were two kilogrammes over the limit. Last-minute changes had forced the weight up, like the small scoop on the right side of the cowl that led cool air to a duct down to the clutch.

At the first weigh-in, the two cars were passed as meeting the limit. But the team manager of the Scuderia Ferrari, entrants of the Alfa Romeos, on a sudden whim reached into the cockpit of one of them and pressed on the brake pedal. It flopped down to the floor. Some fluids could be omitted for the weighing, but not brake fluid. When properly topped up the cars were over the limit — and the saga of the paint and filler began. Now there was nothing, the engineers argued, that they could or would remove."

Then "Off came all the carefully-applied paint and filler. A light coat of silver paint was

sprayed on to mask imperfections. the cars squeaked past the weighing-in and came to the line in matte aluminium.” (Karl Ludvigsen quoting an unidentified source – ‘Quicksilver Racing’)

“The decision was taken to remove the paint and we set to work. The cars had been painted white very carefully in order to get an excellent finish, but you must remember that the bodies were of hand-beaten aluminium and so were very uneven. This meant that there was quite a lot of filler applied before the paint was sprayed on and it was probably this filler, rather than the paint, which pushed the cars over the limit. Once all this was removed the cars were covered in a very thin coat of aluminium paint and when they were weighed the next day they were just under the limit” (Hermann Lang - Racing the Silver Arrows – Chris Nixon – 1986)

Unfortunately no precise quotation has been provided from Manfred von Brauchitsch’ book *Ohne Kampf kein Zieg*’.

With the exception of the dubious Eugen Reichle, the Prosecution has failed to provide any evidence whatsoever to refute the paint stripping incident. They treat Alfred Neubauer as totally unreliable due to his unfortunate Tripoli account, and describe the whole content of his book as ‘fairy tales’. How absurd!

We have the testimonies of the Mercedes team manager, the winning driver, a chief mechanic and a man who subsequently became the Company’s chief engineer. To brand their statements as complete nonsense is to portray these men as idiots, liars or charlatans. This they were not. And the Prosecution requires us to treat Chris Nixon and Karl Ludvigsen as gullible ingenues, rather than as knowledgeable and exhaustive historians, which is their universal reputation.

All the evidence points to one thing. On the evening before the 1934 EifelRennen several mechanics were busily engaged scraping the white paint off two Mercedes racing cars which would then be eligible to take part in the race. ⁸

Being far more an attack on those questioning that the paint-scraping incident happened than an argument for a defense of the Neubauer tale, it also set the tone for much of the discussion that followed. One of the items produced for the July 2007 Eifelrennen Symposium was a paper by Dr. Josef Ernst of the Daimler Benz (then Daimler Chrysler) Heritage Information Center in Stuttgart, “Das Eifelrennen 1934 – Neubauers Dilemma: Eine Auswertung vorhandenen Materials.” ⁹ This paper clearly sides with Neubauer and used the Kaye summation as a guide to defending the tale. Indeed, the paper expresses support for the Kaye argument and admonishes the supporters of the “conspiracy” theory for making a point of ignoring it. ¹⁰

The appearance of **Manner, Frauen und Motoren** ¹¹ (or as the English language edition was entitled, **Speed Was My Life** ¹²), in 1958 heralded the introduction of this myth to the motor racing public. It is, perhaps, more accurate to say that the arrival of the English edition of the book accomplished this feat to the extent that allowed it to become as widespread as it has over the years. The book was taken from a series that appeared in *Quick* magazine in early 1958, Neubauer working with journalist Harvey Rowe on the articles.

The tale, as related by Neubauer in a chapter entitled “Caracciola Crashes,” is actually very brief:

Then on the eve of the race I received a second shock. When our cars were weighed they were found to be too heavy. No more than one kilo over the prescribed 750, but that was enough. And even to reduce weight by one kilo seemed impossible, for there was nothing on the car that could be dispensed with. But a chance remark by von Brauchitsch gave me my inspiration. The whole night was spent removing the glossy white paint from the Silver Arrows. Next morning they turned the scales at 750 kilos exactly. And a few hours later von Brauchitsch clocked up the first victory for the new Mercedes racing-car. ¹³

However, this differs from what appeared in the German edition:

Tiefschlag Nummer zwei: Am Abend vor dem Rennen werden die Wagen gewogen und – zu schwer befunden. Nur 750 Kilogramm dürfen die “Silberpfeile” nach der neuen Formel wiegen – ohne Spirit, Kühlwasser, Öl und Reifen. Aber als die Mechaniker den ersten Wagen auf die Wagge schieben, zeigt sie auf 751 Kilogramm.

Was tun? Morgen ist das Rennen. Ich kann keine lebenswichtigen Teile ausbauen lassen. Alles ist aufs Gramm genau berechnet.

“Shönes Pech,” knurrt Manfred von Brauschitsch mich an. “Lassen Sie sich doch einen Ihrer berühmten Tricks einfallen. Sont sind wir die Lackierten...”

“Lackierten?” frage ich, und im gleichen Moment fällt auch schon der Groschen. “Natürlich – der Lack, das ist die Lösung!”

Die ganze lange Nacht schrubben die Mechaniker den schönen weißen Lack von unsern Silberpfeilen. Und als sie morges nochmals auf die Wagge kommen – da wiegen sie haarscharf 750 Kilogramm.

Wir sind also dabei, mit Manfred von Brauschitsch und dem italienischen Vertragsfahrer Fagioli. Caracciola aber hört sich an disem Tag daheim vor dem Radio an, wie Manfred von Brauschitsch das Rennen vor Stuck gewinnt. Das war der erste Start der “Silberpfeile” von Mercedes – und ihr erste Sieg. Doch Rudi Caracciola ist nicht dabeigewesen. ¹⁴

What is missing from the English version is an important bit of information vital to understanding this story. Whereas the English translation Neubauer states only that “...a chance remark by von Brauchitsch gave me my inspiration,” whereas the German edition reveals just what that “inspiration” was: “Shönes Pech,” knurrt Manfred von Brauschitsch mich an. “Lassen Sie sich doch einen Ihrer berühmten Tricks einfallen. Sont sind wir die Lackierten...”

This can be translated as, “You had better come up with one of your famous tricks,” said von Brauchitsch, “otherwise we will be the painted ones...” “Die Lackierten,” is a German colloquial term meaning to have bad luck. What supposedly caught Neubauer’s attention was that “die Lackierten” caused him to think of “der Lack,” or the paint. This led to the supposed decision by Neubauer to have the white paint removed from the cars so as to meet the maximum weight limit of 750 kilograms. Thus, also creating the “Silver Arrows” of Mercedes. ¹⁵

This tale of Neubauer’s was accepted for years after its publication with little apparent questioning or much in the way of doubt as to its accuracy. If there were any with doubts about the story, they seem to have kept them to themselves. That the man who provided Neubauer with the in-

spiration for the solution to his problem, von Brauchitsch, failed to mention the incident in his first book ¹⁶ seems to have escaped the attention of many in the wake of the release of the Neubauer book.

In an article appearing in *Motor Klassik* in early 1994 ¹⁷, Mike Riedner openly expressed serious doubt that white paint was stripped from the W25 machines on the eve of the Eifelrennen because they could not meet the 750 kilogram weight limit of the new International Formula. Using statements from one of the Mercedes team mechanics at the event, Eugen Reichle, Reidner stated that according to Reichle the machines were not only never white, but no paint was removed from the machines at the race.

The inference was quite clear: the legend of how the “Silberpfeile” or “Silver Arrows” came into being was not true; or at least as Neubauer had claimed it had. Reidner also pointed out the absence of any photographs of the W25 machines in white paint at the Nürburgring that weekend.

In light of later discussions, it is interesting to note that the Reidner article and Reichle’s remarks were not challenged by Mercedes at the time. It is also noteworthy that few outside Germany were aware of the *Motor Klassik* article and the claims made by Reidner and Reichle that the Neubauer tale was not true.

As it turns out, the Neubauer paint-stripping tale had appeared prior to the publication of **Manner, Frauen und Motoren** in 1958. In 1955, in a chapter entitled “Auto-Union Contra Mercedes-Benz” in their book, **Das Grosse Rennen**, Ernst Rosemann and Carlo Demand relate a story very similar to the one which would appear three years later:

Rudolf Caracciola, der sich inzwischen von seinem schweren Sturz erholt hatte, drehte ein paar Trainingsrunden – mehr nicht. Er sollte sich nicht überanstrengen, man brauchte ihn für größere Aufgaben der Zukunft. Mercedes trat mit zwei Fahren an. Der neue Wagen fand so viele Bewunderer, daß man eine Sperrkette um ihn herumlegen mußte. Die vordere Haube des Wagens barg einen 8-Zylinder-Kompressor-Motor. Aber wie es der Teufel wollte: bei der Abnahme wog der Wagen nicht 750, sondern 751 Kilo.

Neubauer tobte, er protestierte, die Waage könne unmöglich stimmen. Die Sportskommissare blieben hart, sie wollten die Wagen nicht zum Rennen zulassen, sie gaben bis zum Renntag-Morgen eine Frist zur Nachabnahme der strahlend-weißen Rennwagen. Was sollte Neubauer machen? Es gab nichts, was man hätte abmortieren können, doch: konnte man Neubauer jemals verblüffen? Zur angesetzten Stunde erschienen die Mercedes-Benz auf der Wagge, sie bleiben wirklich unter 750 kg, aber sie waren nicht mehr weiß Lackierung entfernen lassen, und diese Lackentfernung reichte zur notwendigen Gewichtsverminderung. Den blanken Leichtmetallkörper hatten die Mechaniker noch so gut wie möglich poliert, die “Silberpfeile” waren geboren. ¹⁸

As one can read, the story is quite similar to that which would appear that which appeared in the Neubauer book several years later. So, there is the obvious question as to where did Rosemann and Demand get the story?

Neubauer had written another book prior to the publication of **Manner, Frauen und Motoren** in 1958 which mentions weight problems and paint stripping. It was entitled, **Heute lacht man darüber!** ¹⁹, which translates roughly as “Now we can laugh about it!”. Here is the discussion about the problems of “weight formulas” in the book: “Oh – diese Gewichtsformeln!”

Here is a translation of the passage by Michael Müller:

Oh – these weight formulas!

If one studies the race formulas of the first races of the world one will find out that the tasks presented by the automobile clubs to the automobile industry included the following major items: The weight, given as maximum or minimum figures, the cylinder volume, and the fuel consumption.

Very often formulas had been used which limited the weight of the vehicle, and the last of such formulas existed from 1934-1937, the so-called 750-kg-race formula, by which the maximum dry weight of the vehicle, meaning without water, fuel, oil and tyres, was not allowed to exceed the 750 kg limit. The amateur could merely imagine which hard-to-master constructive job comes along with such a simple weight limit. Basically the constructor has to calculate the weight of each of the various vehicle parts already during construction, in order not to be faced with major problems later on. Already the fixing of weights of engine and chassis are of enormous importance. It may happen e.g. that the constructor requires too much weight for his engine, with the effect that a too powerful engine sits in a weak chassis, while in the opposite case the chassis – roughly spoken – is developed into a “truck chassis”.

Before every departure to a race the vehicles therefore had been weighed on a gauged scale, and with asking eyes team manager, engineers, and technicians awaited the verdict of the weighmaster at race site, which led to a smile when one was under the maximum limit, but to long faces when the car was found to be 1 or 1.5 kilos above the allowed limit. Of course sometimes there had been disputes about the accuracy of the weighbridge, but with gauged weightstones it was possible to prove that old weighbridges due to torn and worn bearings had been unable to show the relatively low weights accurately.

That as early as 1906 there had been already corresponding difficulties, is reflected by a funny series of articles written by J. Miral in “L’Auto”:

“Some instructive examples show how sometimes it was only possible to bring the vehicle to the required weight by some small amusing cheats. In accordance with the regulations a race car is allowed to weigh max 1000 kgs, and by adding the 7 kgs for the magneto machine, max 1007 kgs. This is common knowledge. However, there are some who believe the fixing of a weight limit is ridiculous and foolish, and who refer to facts which we don’t want to discuss here, as also the Sporting Commission of the ACF obviously actually is ready to think about a modification of the regulations in this point. We only would like to narrate some anecdotes, which all had their origin in the constraint to adapt this regulation. When a race car leaves the workshop it is normally some kilograms below the weight limit. This is actually self-evident, if one considers that the manufacturer of a car, in which he laid down all his hopes, has calculated every single part and piece down to the milligram. And normally this remains unchanged till the first race of the season. But then things are changing. An axle must be changed, the gear box or the differential requires reinforcement, and so it happens that the car either just reaches the weight limit, or even exceeds it by 1 or 2 kilograms. How often had we seen these unfortunate vehicles coming to the weighbridge with their weight being 1009, 1011, 1013 kgs! May the driver find a way how he solves the problem. His car is allowed to weigh 1007 kgs – over and out! Normally in such cases the engine cover is sacrificed. But

sometimes even that is not enough. So away with the rudimentary floor to which the driver rests his feet on, and to which the brave mechanic cowers; away with everything which may be dispensable, the weight limit must be kept, so all considerateness is thrown over board! Very often now some amusing incidents happen. So 2 or 3 years ago a driver – who's name I do not remember – was forced to scrape the whole paintwork from his car in order to save 1 or 2 kilograms. A rather painstaking piece of work, but what else should that poor guy do? Everything else had been removed already!”

What becomes apparent is that several years prior to the appearance of the Eifelrennen paint stripping story in the Quick magazine article and the book, there was already a story that Neubauer had told regarding someone with a similar weight problem as he was to maintain that Mercedes had at the Eifel race in June 1934, whose solution was similar to that which Neubauer claimed that Mercedes use to solve the problem: stripping the paint off the vehicle. Also, note the similarities in the form of the story with that which would appear in the 1958 book.

Of course, for the paint stripping story to have any validity, the W25 machines had to be painted white and had to be overweight. What makes it very difficult to accept the Kaye argument defending the paint stripping tale of Neubauer is that there is simply no contemporary documentation, especially photographs, for the Mercedes racing machines ever being white, whether at the test sessions at Monza, at the AVUS or at the Nürburgring. While Kaye and the Neubauer supporters trot out Lang, von Brauchitsch, Ludvigsen, and even Uhlenhaut to support their case, these are all claims made years after the incident supposedly occurred as well as after the publication of the Neubauer book.

The photographs provided by Mercedes itself at the July 2007 Symposium inflict significant damage to the case being presented by Kaye and his supporters. The photographs taken at the rollout of the W25 prototype and its presentation to Adolf Hitler at the Berlin auto show in January 1934 show a racing machine that has a less than perfect finish and very light-colored. However, although one might assume that the machine is white at first glance, the closer one looks and examines the photographs the more that it is apparent that the machine is not white, but a silver or light gray. Photograph 21038 shows Hitler and Goebbels looking at a W25 that is clearly not white, but silver. Some have used photograph 21036 as proof that the W25 was white at its introduction in Berlin, but even a closer examination of that photograph leads one to doubt that the W25 is actually white.

Backtracking for a moment, when the prototype was rolled out in December 1933, the photographs taken seem, at first glance to show a machine that could be white. However, there are other photographs from the event which indicate that the machine is metallic, silver or light grayish, in color. Photograph 19681 shows the group standing behind what appears to be a light-colored machine, while photograph 19677 provides an indication that the machine was silver or rather a dull silver in color. Contrasting the white shirts being worn with the W25 clearly indicate it is not white in color.

There is a Mercedes-Benz photograph, R-16650, of the prototype W25 – chassis 86120, wearing registration number IIIA-27801 on its tail, being loaded on a trailer after a test session at Monza in February 1934. The W25 is clearly silver. It would seem that if any of the W25 machines were to be white then the prototype W25 would be the logical choice. And, yet, every known picture of the machine shows it to be silver.

When the unretouched photographs of the March 1934 press presentation of the W25 are examined, there is absolutely no doubt that the machine is silver. Mercedes-Benz photographs

19791, 19793, and 19794 clearly shows the white background to the registration number, IIIA-27801, on the nose of the W25, while photographs 19792, 19795, and 19796 do the same for the registration number on the rear of the machine. These photographs, incidentally, given that the retouched photograph 20146 is generally the sort of photograph that has been seen by most people, were a revelation to a number of us at the symposium.

The press release accompanying the presentation of the W25 on 1 March 1934²⁰, contained the following: “Wer den schlanken Wagen wie einen *silbernen Pfeil* voller Fahrt gesehen hat....” (Emphasis mine.) Given that this predates the Eifel race by three months, it should place a measure of doubt in the minds of those support the Neubauer-Kaye thesis.

Photographs of the original W25 prototype and the second prototype, chassis 86121 with registration number IIIA-27802, taken while testing at the Nürburgring also show the machines in silver.

Then there is the appearance, both figuratively and literally, in Berlin for the “Internationales Autoren AVUS” to be held on 27 May 1934. Although fuel feed problems that could not be resolved meant that the Daimler-Benz entries for von Brauchitsch and Fagioli – along with Fahrer “X” as it was in the race program or Caracciola as it was in the *Allegemeine Automobil-Zeitung* – did not take part in the race itself, the team did participate in the training sessions. The event itself was a “free formula” event, with two races, the first for cars with engines under 1,500 cubic centimeters and the second for those with engines over 1,500 centimeters. Whereas the engine displacement is given for the other entries in the program and other publications, both Auto-Union and Daimler-Benz had this entry instead: “750 kg entsprechend der internationalen Rennformel.” This meant that while it was a “free formula” event, both Auto-Union and Mercedes were treating it as a dress rehearsal for the events to be run under the new International Formula.

Examining photographs of the W25 machines that were present, the prototype, 86120, along with chassis 105193 and 105194, does not reveal that any of the three were painted white. Photographs R1446 and R14447 show a clear contrast between the white helmet of the driver, Caracciola, and the finish of the machine which appears to be not only silver, but rather rough. Once again, the photographs show all of the Mercedes W25 machines in silver, to include the obvious candidate for any of the cars being painted white, the prototype chassis 86120.

The week following the AVUS event was the Internationales Eifelrennen at the Nürburgring. Like the AVUS race, the Eifelrennen was a “free formula” event, with Auto-Union and Daimler-Benz once more treating the event as a dress rehearsal for the Grand Prix de l’Automobile Club de France and the subsequent events run to the new International Formula. Therefore, as at the AVUS event, in lieu of the engine displacement of the machines, the entries for the two teams simply states “750 kg.”

This where the Neubauer paint-scraping story – myth – supposedly has its origin. Given that there have not been any photographs of the W25 machines that would clearly, undisputedly show any one of them painted white to this point, one would assume that should the Neubauer be true that photographs of the three machines brought to the circuit would show at least two of the three painted white. The photographs provided at the Eifelrennen Symposium show what appear to be silver machines in those taken prior to the race itself, the machines being clearly silver in the event.

There is a photograph of the second W25 prototype, with registration IIIA-28092, in a document provided at the symposium that is composed of photographs taken during the training sessions of the Eifelrennen which appeared in the program for the Großen Preis von Deutschland in August. In the section entitled “So ist’s nun mal zur Trainingszeit,” the white background of the registration number stands out clearly against the silver color of the W25. Once again, if any of the three machines at the event were to be white the obvious candidate would be the second prototype. Of course, this machine did not participate in the race once Caracciola decided that he was not yet fit enough to drive on a circuit such as the Nürburgring.

There is also the minor inconvenience of the photograph taken by mechanic Eugen Reichle of the three W25 machines on the Wednesday prior to the Eifelrennen that shows all of them being silver. However, this minor problem is overcome by those supporting the Neubauer story by pointing to photograph R8269. It is apparently this one, single photograph that is the key to proving the validity of the Neubauer story.²¹

In preparation for the July 2007 symposium, Mercedes submitted the photographs it would present to the firm of Hermann & Kraemer, Professional Imaging and Archiving of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Of all the photographs examined, only one did they consider might not show one of the W25 machines in silver but white at the Nürburgring, R8269.

Photograph R8269 was taken on Thursday with Caracciola driving, one of the five laps he completed prior to his decision not to participate. He is driving the second prototype, chassis 86121, and the car is obviously light-colored. The Hermann & Kraemer analysis of the photograph was as follows:

Die Aufnahmen des Eifelrennens 1934 zeigen offenbar Rennwagen ohne Lackierung, beste Beispiele sind die Bilder R342, R477, R1510, R1511 und R1516. Einzige Ausnahme ist die Aufnahme R8269, die einen weißen Rennwagen in direktem Sonnenlicht vor einem grauen Himmel zeigt. Ob es sich um weiße Lackierung oder einen vollen Reflex handelt ist schwer zu sagen. Man möchte jedoch annehmen, der Wagen ist lackiert, da ein so flächiger Reflex unwahrscheinlich ist, besonders wenn man mit der Aufnahme R346 vergleicht, in welcher der metallische Reflex augenfällig ist. Auffallend ist, dass dieser Wagen ohne Nummer fährt, obwohl alle anderen Rennwagen ausnahmslos Nummern tragen! In diesem Rennen sind offensichtlich die beiden Silberpfeile mit den Nummern 20 und 22 gestartet.

The photographs of the 1934 Eifel Race evidently show racing cars without paintwork, the best examples being photos R342, R477, R1510, R1511 and R1516. The only exception to this is photo R8269 which shows a white racing car in direct sunlight against a gray sky. Whether this is white paintwork or a full reflection is hard to say. We would assume that the car is painted white, since such an expansive reflection would be improbable, especially when compared with photo R346, in which the metallic reflection is quite striking. Striking, too, is the fact that this car is without a number, even though all other racing cars are numbered without exception! Clearly in this race the two Silver Arrows to start were the cars with numbers 20 and 22.

However, the same photograph examined by Prolab Fachfotolabor was interrupted this way:

... sind der Meinung, dass es sich ... um ein silbernes Fahrzeug handelt. In erster Linie stützen wir unsere Meinung auf die Reflexionen, die das Fahrzeug aufweist. ... Auch der

Auspuff, der sicher chromfarben war weist auf den Fotos das gleiche Reflexionsverhalten auf, wie das Fahrzeug.

...are of the opinion that the car is silver-colored. Our opinion is based first and foremost on the reflections seen on the car ... Also, the exhaust, which was surely chrome-colored, shows the same reflections as the car on the photos.

It is of interest that on 26 July 2007, after the symposium, Mercedes received this evaluation of photograph R8269 from the Landeskriminalamt (LKA), their analysis being this: "... The fact that the complete car, when scanned, appears to be very evenly 'light-colored' strongly speaks in favor of white and against silver." All of this, of course, prompts the question as to just when the car might have been painted white, presumably while moving, given that there no other photographs at any time of that W25 being anything but silver.

So, with the experts split on whether R8269 shows a silver or white car, yet another photograph emerges from the Mercedes-Benz archives posted by Ernst on *The Nostalgia Forum* which shows Caracciola and the W25 from another angle.²² In this photo there enough contrast to cast doubt upon the earlier analyses that the car may have been white.

Unfortunately, in an article in *Motor Klassik*²³ that just happened to appear in conjunction with the introduction of the newly re-named Brawn Grand Prix as Mercedes GP Petronas Formula One Team the LKA analysis is trotted out as conclusive proof that the Neubauer story was true. It was very disappointing to read the article and see how the public relations needs of the company outweighed any obligation it would seem for responsible scholarship.

So, when you take a very hard look at all the evidence and consider it very carefully it is extremely difficult to accept the conclusion that Tony Kaye came to: "All the evidence points to one thing. On the evening before the 1934 EifelRennen several mechanics were busily engaged scraping the white paint off two Mercedes racing cars which would then be eligible to take part in the race." Quite the contrary, the evidence time and again points in the opposite direction.

Whatever the mechanics were doing the night prior to the Eifelrennen, it was not scraping white paint off the W25s that were going to race the following day.

I must note that while Harvey Rowe was present at the July 2007 symposium and defended Neubauer quite well, which only raises the issue of whatever motivated Neubauer to tell the story in the first place, I found that after examining what he said it really did nothing to change the azimuth of the evidence being presented. That said, Rowe and his wife were delightful, wonderful people to talk to and it was a pleasure to meet him.

Next time:

The second part of this discussion on automobile racing history and history which includes some thoughts on the "Catlin Catastrophe" as well as a revisit to the 1933 Tripoli event, plus a few of the other sorts of things that you should expect to see in the rear view mirror.

Notes

¹ When the film, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, appeared and the lines cited were attributed to Alexander Pope, out of curiosity I checked the textbook I used in my English Lit course and saw *Eloisa to*

Abelard starred, meaning that it was one of the poems we were required to read. In all honesty, I did not remember the poem prior to seeing the film. And, no, in my book the lines were not singled out.

² In the Spring of 1962, Casey Stengel led the newest member of the National League onto the field at the Polo Grounds, the New York Mets. "The Mets are gonna be amazing," Stengel informed the New York media. As the manager for the New York Yankees for twelve seasons, from 1949 to 1960, the Stengel led the team to ten American League pennants and seven World Series titles: 1949 through 1953, 1956, and 1958. Only in 1954, when they finished second, and 1959 when they were third, did the Yankees fail to capture the American League Pennant; only in 1959 did the Yankees win less than 90 games with Stengel at the helm. The Yankee management retired Stengel after the 1960 season, after Casey had turned 70 years old. When the National League agreed to an expansion by two teams, one of them to replace the two teams – the Dodgers and the Giants – that had left Brooklyn and New York for Los Angeles and San Francisco, respectively, the new National League team for New York, the Metropolitan or "Mets," offered Stengel the manager's position and the "Old Perfessor," accepted. Still wearing no. 37 from his days with the Yankees, Stengel endured the worse season in baseball history with the Mets. While with the Yankees, Stengel won 1,149 games and lost only 696 in 12 seasons, an average of .623. In 1962, the record of the Mets was 40 wins and 120 losses, finishing 60 and a half games out of first place. The Mets lost the first nine games of the season and had a 17 game losing streak at one point, and never had a winning streak of more than three games, achieving that twice during the season. After their loss on 30 May to the Dodgers, the fortieth game of the season, the Mets dropped to the cellar of the National League, tenth out of ten teams, and stayed there for the rest of the season, eighty games. Only against the Chicago Cubs did the Mets split their series, nine-nine; in their series against the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Pittsburgh Pirates, in each case the Mets won two and lost the other sixteen games. Even against their fellow expansion team, the Houston Colt .45's, the Mets won only three and lost the other thirteen. The Mets lost thirty-seven of their games by more than five runs, while winning only eight by that margin. May was their best month, the Mets winning nine and only losing seventeen for an average of .346 for the month, actually climbing into eighth place for five games that month. Being a Mets fan during that 1962 season, was a mixed blessing. Although the Mets brought the National League teams back to the Polo Grounds that year after the exodus to the West Coast, the play of the home team left much to desired, the "Amazing Mets" won twenty-two games at home and lost fifty-eight, scoring 335 runs while having 510 scored against them.

³ "I sent the club a wire stating, PLEASE ACCEPT MY RESIGNATION. I DON'T WANT TO BELONG TO ANY CLUB THAT WILL ACCEPT ME AS A MEMBER." Julius Henry "Groucho" Marx upon his reaction to being informed that he had been accepted as a member of the Friars Club.

⁴ <http://forums.autosport.com/index.php?s=&showtopic=35024&view=findpost&p=3668524>

⁵ "He saw himself more as a lifelong enthusiast and habitual writer, who merely wrote about his enthusiasm." "Motor Sport," a thread on The Nostalgia Forum at Autosport.Com, <http://forums.autosport.com/index.php?s=&showtopic=1130&view=findpost&p=4101100>

⁶ Ibid., <http://forums.autosport.com/index.php?s=&showtopic=1130&view=findpost&p=4101212> .

⁷ Actually the Brawn GP team of 2009 bought and rebadged by Mercedes-Benz.

⁸ Atlas F1 Bulletin Board (<http://forums.autosport.com/index.php>), The Nostalgia Forum (<http://forums.autosport.com/forumdisplay.php?forumid=10>), *Eifelrennen 1934*

(<http://forums.autosport.com/showthread.php?threadid=35024>), 24 November 2006 15:20, Post 239.

⁹ "The 1934 Eifel Race – Neubauer's Dilemma: Observations based on available documentation," dated 21 July 2007. A second version, "Version 1.1," dated 8 January 2007, was also provided by Dr. Ernst to me.

¹⁰ "Neubauer's Dilemma," July 2007, p. 11, note 46, "Siehe hierzu den schönen und den Anhängern der "Verschwörung" geflissentlich ignorierten Aufsatz von Tony Kaye, "The Nostalgia Forum Versus Alfred Neubauer and the Paint Stripping Incident" aus dem *Atlas F1 Bulletin Board*, The Nostalgia Forum. In the original version in English, on page 11 note 46: "See the fine essay by Tony Kaye – studiously ignored by supporters of the "conspiracy" theory – "The Nostalgia Forum Versus Alfred Neubauer and the Paint Stripping Incident" on the *Atlas F1 Bulletin Board*, The Nostalgia Forum. In the January 2008 version, it is on page 13 note 61.

¹¹ Alfred Neubauer (and Harvey T. Rowe), Hamburg: Hans Dulk, 1958.

¹² Translated by Stewart Thomson and Charles Meisl, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960 and New York: Charles N. Potter, 1960.

¹³ From the Barrie and Rockliff edition, pp. 55-56.

¹⁴ Pages 346-347

¹⁵ This is taken from "What's in a name?" found in Chris Nixon, **Racing the Silver Arrows: Mercedes-Benz Versus Auto Union 1934-1939**, Osprey Publishing, 1986, p. 13.

¹⁶ Manfred von Brauchitsch, **Kampf um Meter und Sekunden**, Chemnitz: Verlag der Nation, 1953.

¹⁷ Mike Riedner, "Auf zum fröhlichen Jagen," *Motor Klassik*, 2/1994, pp. 160-169.

¹⁸ Ernst Rosemann and Carlos Demand, **Das Grosse Rennen: Die Entwicklung des Automobil-Rennsports**, Frank am Main: Nest Verlag, 1955, p. 28.

¹⁹ Alfred Neubauer, **Heute lacht man darüber!**, Luxemburg: Auto-Revue, 1951, pp. 58-60.

²⁰ "Die neuen MERCEDES-BENZ-Rennwagen," dated 1 March 1934.

²¹ Ernst, "Dilemma," version 1.1, 8 January 2008, p.4 and notes 14 to 16.

²² <http://forums.autosport.com/index.php?s=&showtopic=35024&view=findpost&p=4038311>

²³ Malte Jürgens, "Glass-klarer Beweis," *Motor Klassik*, 2/2010, pp. 40-43.