



# 1950s Allard Special Mystery

## by Mark Brinker

The car collector world is full of automotive puzzles and owners and pundits with “theories”. Some theories arise out of ignorance. Others are motivated by potential financial gain. And some are simply the result of unadulterated hubris.

This month’s Hidden Treasure is a mystery car whose identity remains uncertain at this time. The chassis to this car is owned by Pasadena-based Erich Schultz, and yes, he has a theory. However, after personally knowing the man for more than a decade, I can promise you this...when Schultz has a theory, it is motivated by keen observation and research coupled with total integrity; note to the car hobby, you best pay attention.

Schultz was born in Saint Louis in 1959 and developed his love of the automobile beginning with small-displacement English cars. His father played the French horn with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. He was also a College Professor who reviled those who lavished attention on their automobiles.

From an early age, it was clear that Schultz was something special. He was a gifted athlete, straight-A student, and an honest-to-goodness genius. Now you don’t have to take my word for it; consider this; Schultz was President of the high school student body, played five varsity sports, and studied art at famous institutes during the summer. He attended Yale University where he became an All-Ivy Oarsman before graduating with a degree in Political Science in 1982. He could have become a doctor, a lawyer or anything else he wanted. But, like his love of the automobile, Schultz was driven by intellectual curiosity and passion. His love of film and cinema led him to Hollywood in 1985, and for the past 33 years he’s been a professional Designer/Artist for the Motion Picture Industry.

Which translates into this—Schultz can basically build anything, starting from scratch.

Schultz’s most memorable cinematic creations include: the electronic props for *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, the Ferrari Lusso replica for *Tower Heist*, the machine-work for the massive engine in *Titanic*, and the original *Tower of Terror* for Disney Imagineering. He also served as the Construction Coordinator for a huge number of music videos including those for Madonna, The Rolling Stones, ZZ Top, Michael Jackson and many more.

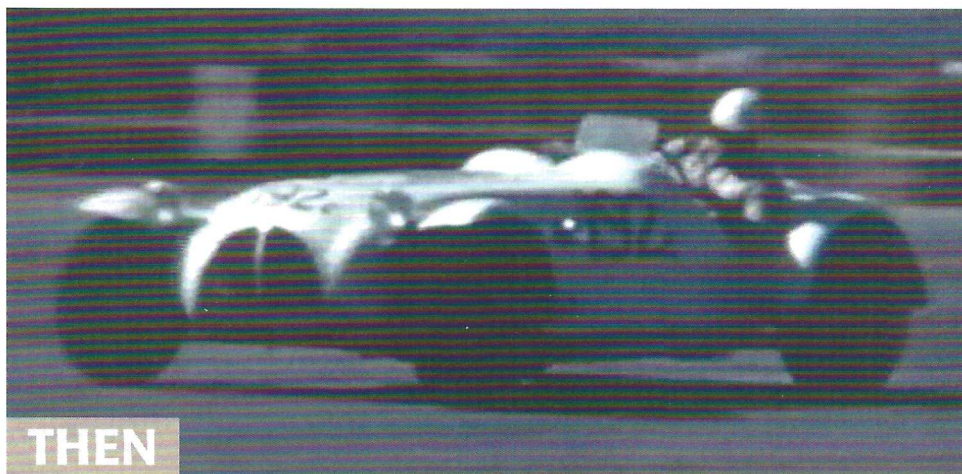
Schultz has owned a huge array of cars and done some racing. He’s always on the hunt for interesting projects and stumbled across one in 2007; an Allard J1 chassis that he purchased from a well-known broker. The story that came with the chassis was that it had been converted from J1 to J2 spec at some point in its life. The package came with no definite history, but was sold as the genuine artifact.

On delivery day, things didn’t go as Schultz had hoped. He said, “As the trailer carrying the chassis approached I noted it was not like any Allard chassis I’d ever seen. When I inspected it more closely it was obviously Allard-like, but did not seem to be built by Sidney Allard’s shop.

The front axle was a genuine Bellamy split front unit with an Allard mounting plate and steering linkage, but the rear DeDion tube was home-made. It was rather disappointing.” From there Schultz stored the chassis feeling like he’d been taken advantage of. Life went on as it does and he went about his work, life and car hunting.

Schultz says his early research led him to suspect that his chassis was from the Ed Dempsey Special, raced by Albert Bellavance. However, he subsequently found a photograph of the Dempsey car in the *San Bernadino Sun* that didn’t match the appearance of his chassis at all. Time passed and Schultz was at a dead end on his chassis. Then one day something unexpected happened. Schultz said, “I was surfing on the Internet and wandered onto the website thechicane.com which is dedicated to historic racing cars. The site includes old racing films which I enjoy watching. While viewing footage of the 8<sup>th</sup> Palm Springs Road Race of 1955, I nearly leapt out of my seat when I saw car number 192c zoom across my computer screen. The car was white and had an Allard-like appearance. Although it was captured on film for less than five seconds, I felt instant euphoria.”

To understand this part of the story you have



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to appreciate who Mr. Schultz is and what he does for a living. As a designer and builder of props and sets, his visual field recognition is incredibly skilled down to the finest detail. When most of us quickly look at an object, such as a car, we rapidly form a general impression that the object is beautiful, ugly or something in between. By contrast, when Schultz quickly views an object, the slightest of details are captured and assimilated as a fully developed assessment. In this regard he's simply smarter than the rest of us.

Schultz continued: "After watching the footage a few times I printed out several screen-grabs of car number 192c to study it further. My conclusion was and remains that the chassis of this car matches the one I own, and that car number 192c is not a genuine Allard. To start with, the similarities between my chassis and the one under car number 192c in *The Chicane* film of Palm Springs in 1955, both chassis have a very non-Allard transverse leaf spring ahead of the front axle. Studying the rear of the frame in the film you can see that the rails are bobbed, sticking out of the bodywork in exactly the right place to match my chassis. Also, the relationship of the steering wheel to the front and rear wheels matches my chassis, as does the rectangular box of the footwell that can be seen below the side exhaust pipe in screengrab photos. In addition, the height and position of the steering wheel of car number 192c seems to be exactly the same as my chassis. Comparing the screengrab photos and my chassis, I have been unable to find a single detail that is con-

tradictory between the two chassis. After hours of study, nothing tells me that 192c is not my car."

In most stories this would be the happy ending but for Schultz the struggle continues. He said, "The frustrating truth is that thus far I've been unable to identify car number 192c. Searching the 8<sup>th</sup> Palm Springs Road Race program, race entries and published race results, car number 192c is not listed anywhere. We know that it absolutely existed as it was captured on film, but thus far its identity remains a total mystery. To add to my frustration, I later found the same car pictured on the starting grid of the September 1955 Santa Barbara Road Race in *Road & Track*. In the photo, the car is on the second row, surrounded by some serious cars and drivers. I have also now found a second film on *The Chicane*, this one of the October 1955 Torrey Pines Road Race. In that film there is brief footage of the same white car being inspected by race stewards and the possible owner of the car approaching them. The same car is also in the closing shots of the film on the race course. As with the Palm Springs event, the Santa Barbara racing photo and Torrey Pines race footage prove the car existed, but do not definitively correspond with any car listed in the race program or published results. That makes three separate races that I have absolute proof the car attended, yet I still can't identify it. I've been over this in my head thousands of times; how is this possible?"

Schultz is sure that his chassis and the white car in the photos and films are not genuine Al-

lards. Schultz said, "Although the mystery car resembles an Allard, it is not one. The grille is larger and has a slightly different shape than that of a factory-built J2. It also doesn't have pontoons fared into the nose to cover the front coil springs and split wishbones of a J2. Only two pre-production J2s shared this feature and car number 192c isn't either one of those. The front spring on 192c is transverse leaf, not coil spring like that on a J2. The front shock absorbers of 192c mount above the axle by the spring perch, not at the king pin like on a J2. Whereas a J2 Allard had six vent holes, three on each side, only three driver's side vent holes are seen on car number 192c and these appear to be air cleaners for an inline six, most likely a Chevy or GMC since both the intake and exhaust are on the driver's side. All J2 Allards had two doors and unitized rear fenders, whereas 192c had only a passenger door and cycle fenders. Finally, almost all J2s had a hood scoop or bulge of some sort; car 192c doesn't."

Schultz continued, "It is so strange that I haven't been able to find the white mystery car in the race programs or results of any of the events I now know it attended. If I could locate a photograph showing the number of the car at Santa Barbara or Torrey Pines I might be able to match it to a car in the programs. Perhaps the white car was listed in the programs as an 'Allard' in error?"

The car collector world is full of automotive puzzles, and Schultz's chassis is a vexing one. The raw material required to build a super cool racing machine remains in Schultz's warehouse and he is ready to resurrect car number 192c as soon as he can figure out what the heck it is. Mick Jagger and Madonna know he has the skill to build it. 