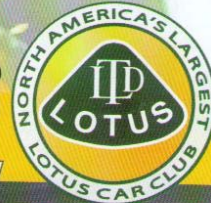


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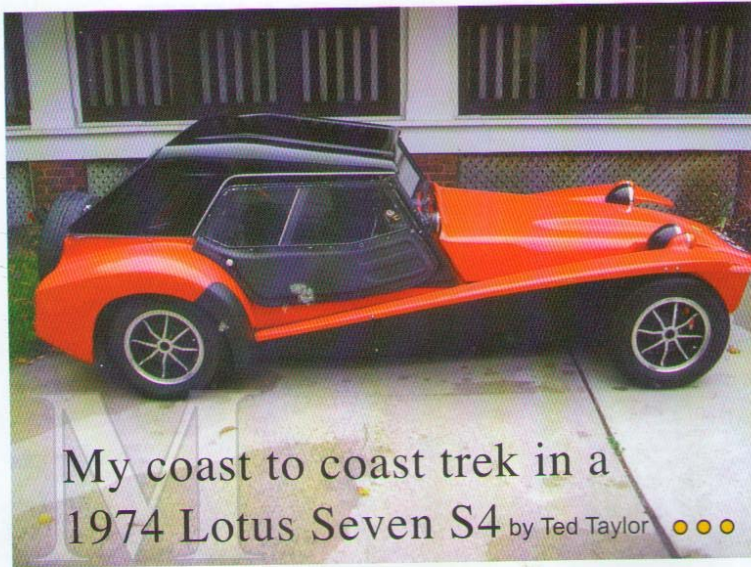
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- LOG 35 - News on the Guest Speakers



My coast to coast trek in a 1974 Lotus Seven S4 by Ted Taylor ●●●

Having owned several Lotus cars over the years, I was searching for a Lotus Seven Series 4 for some time to add to my collection. Often considered the "ugly duckling" of the Lotus Seven series, to me they are stereotypical 1970's funky styling and I love them. Something Austin Powers would drive! After some lengthy research, I found a car guy on the west coast who owned two of them that he had imported from New Zealand. They were right hand drive Steel Brothers cars and earlier in the year, he sold one of them via Ebay. Since I knew he originally had two of them, I contacted him to see if the other one might be for sale. He indicated to me that the original sale had fallen through and that the car was still available. We discussed details and struck up a deal that first week in October.

I just bought a very original 1974 Lotus Seven S4 that resided in Los Angeles, California, but I lived on the east coast in New Jersey. What to do? I figured I had three choices. 1) Have it shipped, 2) drive out and trailer it back, or 3) fly out and drive it back. If I went with option #3 and ran into trouble, I figured I would either rent a truck and trailer it home, or make other shipping arrangements and fly back, so I booked a flight for the morning of Tuesday, Oct 21st and arrived in Los Angeles before noon. I planned to go over the car and check everything over before heading out in the afternoon.

The car had been well maintained and was in very original condition. It was currently titled, registered and being driven in California. The owner took it to the track, so he attested to everything in working order and claimed that it passed a safety inspection for the track use. The car came with a very rare optional factory hard top. In order to get the top home, I would need to drive it with it on.

Since I'm tall at 6ft 6ins, with a size 12 shoe, I don't really fit in the earlier Sevens, but was told that the S4 has a larger interior. A test fitting was in order. Thanks to fellow Lotus, Ltd. member Kyle Kaulback, I was allowed a "test fit" into his son Colin's Steel Brothers Seven S4 "Super 907". After some contortion, I fit like a glove and I mean a tight fitting "O.J. Simpson's" glove! I was able to coerce myself to get in and out of the test car (although not in any hurry) and my feet reached the pedals OK. My hips were wedged between the center tunnel and body sides, so no movement was possible. My head was touching the soft top. This would be interesting.

I planned to take a lot of pictures and write about the adventure. The GPS, cell phone, cash and credit cards were all vital, but I felt a very important thing to bring along was the Lotus, Ltd. Membership roster. I might need to call upon members along the way if I ran into trouble. Hopefully this wouldn't be necessary, but the Lotus folk are a great resource for those traveling in their cars.

My wife thought I was absolutely crazy, but I really, really, wanted to do this. Anyone could ship a car, but taking on the excitement and adventure of driving a vintage Lotus across the country would be a real rush! I lost sleep thinking about it. Sure, there was a lot to fear and be concerned about, but hey, these were automobiles and meant to be driven on the roads. 3,000 miles should not be a big deal. I'm not talking about an old Model T Ford (and there have been those who have driven them across the country). We're talking about a fairly modern car and quite capable of navigating today's highways and byways, right?

Wednesday, October 8th - The Preparation

Knowing how close the pedal arrangement was in the Seven, I needed a new pair of driving shoes with very narrow soles. For over 6 years, I drove my Europa (notorious for their close pedal arrangement) with a pair of "water shoes" that one would use at the beach. Needless to say, they were worn out and coming apart, so I threw them away. I wasn't able to find another pair with small narrow soles like those. I was not going to spend a small fortune on custom Italian leather professional driving shoes, so I thought about what would work. Then it came to me... "ballet shoes" of course! Now



you should have seen me, a big burly guy walking into the Ballet Accessory Supply Store and asking to see men's ballet shoes. The clerk was very accommodating. I sat there among the pink tutus and my wife laughed hysterically. They came out with several samples, all in black and my size. They were perfect! Small pads on the heel and ball of my foot, just perfect for pressing clutch, brake, and accelerator pedals, and material that wrapped around my foot snugly, not adding one centimeter to the width of my foot. It was the perfect, narrow driving shoe I had been looking for. Now to find the design and style that was the least effeminate looking of the bunch, and I was on my way. We picked out a pair that could pass for a small loafer, but with all the technical benefits as needed for the intended purpose. For only \$40 bucks, they were a good and sensible buy. If you're looking for a narrow width driving shoe, you should set aside your macho facade, and get a pair for yourself. Just walking into the store was half the battle won.

I sent on ahead a small package of tools and other necessities that I wouldn't be able to take on the airplane, so it was there when I arrived. As an experienced friend once told me, no matter what I brought along, it wouldn't be what was needed when it broke down. Hopefully it would be the scenario that if I brought an umbrella, it wouldn't rain, but if I forgot the umbrella, it would pour. Hopefully, I prepared enough basic supplies that wouldn't be needed! All in all, when boxed up, the package weighed in at 40 pounds and cost \$68.00 to ship. Good thing I was going alone since I would definitely need the passenger seat to store everything.

My supply package arrived in Los Angeles safe and sound. I had been in regular email contact with the owner and was going back and forth with Q&A as concerns came to my mind, especially in light of my intended cross country drive. I booked my flight early on (at least three weeks prior) and got an inexpensive flight for about \$190.00. Having received quotes of over \$1,500 to transport the car, I thought my total costs, including gas, food, and an occasional hotel would be way under that.

I had friends and family along the southerly route I planned, one that ran through Arizona, into Texas, stopping in Nashville, and Virginia, before heading home the last stretch to New Jersey. I might need additional stops along the way which depended upon how comfortable I was and how well the car ran. I charted out a couple of route/map options and printed out a paper copy to have along with me for reference and comparison to the routes the GPS would generate.

Tuesday, 21st - Departure Day

As I packed my laptop in its carrying case and a travel bag as carry on, I remembered a couple little things for the car that I needed and stuffed them in with my clothes. The seller reported he put the car up on the lift in his shop over the weekend and it was all ready for my inspection and prep work. I would report in each night with pictures and updates to my local Philly area Lotus group (www.LotusPALs.ning.com). I was "out to get my kicks...on Route 66", or so I thought!

I got up at 4am and flew out of Philadelphia airport with one layover stop in Detroit, Michigan. While on the 2nd half of the flight I was squeezed into the mid-section of a 767 aircraft carrying over 250 passengers and thought how cramped can one get? If I can survive flying over four hours like that, then the Lotus should be a piece of cake, right? I arrived safe and sound at Los Angeles International Airport well before noon. The owner's wife picked me up at the airport and we stopped at the local Pep Boys to buy \$100 worth of supplies that I couldn't carry on the flight (engine oil, gear oil, gas can, and other items). We then went directly to the shop where the car was sitting on the lift ready for my eager eyes. Immediately I started with the prep work on the car. I topped off all the fluids, changed engine oil and filter, inflated spare tire, checked lights and electrical systems, secured the hard top, stowed all supplies, baggage and extra parts, mounted doors, and so on. I installed a side view mirror since it was not equipped with one. I had to remove the seat cushions; even then I found the steering wheel pinching against my knees. The short exhaust out the side was louder than I had expected, so I brought along ear plugs. All the electric systems and gauges worked. There was no trip meter reset knob, so I had to rely on recording odometer readings instead.

I left home with frost warnings and entered Los Angeles with 80+ degree heat. I was sweating profusely, working extensively on the car doing all the prep work I had planned. I was working so hard and for so long, and without eating (except for airplane snacks earlier that morning) that at about 4:00pm, I got sick. I knew it just had to be heat exhaustion. I was trashed! It came time to make some decisions. I still had work to do on the car before I would be able to drive it safely and had hoped to be on the road before the evening rush hour. I wanted to get out of the city if at all possible. Unfortunately, faced with heat exhaustion and the lack of progress with the car, I knew that my only option was staying in LA for that first night. I managed to drive the car precariously from the shop just a few miles to the owner's home and they graciously provided me a bedroom with a sofa bed for the night. I walked a block for some food that, I couldn't even eat, so I came back to the house, took a hot shower, and went to bed. I felt just a little bit better in the morning.

I was pretty close to throwing in the towel that first day and was extremely disappointed with the lack of room, even after my test fitting in Colin's Seven. The few miles to the house proved to me the impossibility of driving any long distance. Unless I could get definitive progress the next morning by installing a smaller steering wheel that allowed for more knee travel, I would drag my tail between my legs and make other arrangements to ship the car back home.

Wednesday, 22nd - Decision Day

I woke up early and immediately started to address the problem of operating the car safely. After some exploratory investigation, I was able to loosen the steering column connection under the dash and pull the steering wheel out about 2 inches, just enough for my legs and knees to fit underneath. I was now able to use all the pedals sufficiently and finally decided to leave LA and headed east.

I stopped for breakfast just outside LA at a Denny's Restaurant and went to pay for the meal only to find out my credit card was suspended. One purchase away from home (the Pep Boys supply shopping) set off the credit card security team to suspend my card! I was on the phone "on hold" for 10 minutes before they finally reactivated my card. They recommended calling the credit company in advance of an "out-of-state" trip to alert them to your travel plans to avoid such situations in the future. Good advice, but too late.

I operated in a tight cockpit arrangement while driving out of California. My wallet was on top of dash within easy reach along with other important items (camera, cell phone, sunglasses, etc.). On one sharp left turn onto the freeway on-ramp, the items slid to the right. In an instant, my wallet slid off the dash, the unlatched door swung open and the wallet went flying out of the car onto the long side fender. In the flash of a micro-second, I was able to reach out and grab the wallet before it fell into oblivion! That was a really close call and good reason to stow things away better in future.

I crossed the rest of California and eventually made it into Arizona. By this time, I gave up on sight-seeing and taking back parallel scenic roads....FORGET THAT! I was seeing plenty on the Interstates and I didn't want to have to shift gears and use the clutch any more than I had to. Driving straight in 4th gear without stopping was much more comfortable. I was (almost) able to stretch my leg and left foot out under the pedals. My right heel was killing me rubbing and resting in a constant position while using the accelerator pedal. I wished I had cruise control!

The car drove fine, but ran hot most of the way across the desert. Going up mountains, it reached nearly 130 degrees on the gauge. I got into Phoenix at dusk and was thankful that all my lights and the battery charging system worked well. That night, I bought and installed a new thermostat. The old one was only 160 degrees, had a weep bypass hole, and looked to be slightly stuck open. The new one was 180 degrees and was marketed as 'fail-safe'. As designed, if it overheated, it would remain open to prevent engine damage. I asked myself, if they can design a 'fail-safe' unit, why can't they design and manufacture a quality product that would not need a fail-safe back up in the first place?

My friend in Phoenix is a Principal at a local High School where they have a full mechanic's repair shop to teach students the trade. First thing next morning, we

planned to spin balance my wheels. I had been getting serious vibration shimmy at 60mph, and hopefully the spin balancing would take care of it. I had averaged 60mph most of trip getting about 31mpg which was excellent, but still needed to stop every 150 to 200 miles just to stretch and hydrate. I also bought a convex mirror (stick-on type) that I applied to the side view mirror. I couldn't aim it properly or adjust the mirror on the fly, so this gave me a better and safer side view. The next targeted stop was El Paso, TX, or maybe a little further depending upon how I was feeling.

Thursday, 23rd - Trial & Tribulation

After leaving the high school shop with newly balanced wheels, I headed west and got about 100 miles short of El Paso, Texas. I drove in the dark for about a half hour before finding a hotel. The big issue was the heat of the day. It finally started cooling down as the sun set. I actually got a little chilly, but I gladly took it! The new thermostat did its job and I thought it may have run a little cooler; however the temp still hovered at the 120 degree mark. Oil pressure also reacted in sympathy with the temperature. Going up a grade and maintaining 60mph, the temperature was at 120 degrees and the oil pressure got as low as 40psi. When cooler (starting out from a rest stop), temperature was down and oil pressure was at about 45-50psi. The car reacted very consistently with external ambient temperatures and while going up any grades. There was nothing I could do, and I still had yet to cross Texas!

Although the wheels had been balanced, it hardly made any difference. I still had steering wheel vibration and shimmy. "It must be those infamous Lotus alloy wheels" I thought. We had been able to see bends and unevenness on the rims when we had spin balanced them. I continued to cruise at 60mph, any faster just seemed to simply waste gas, burn oil, and raise temps.

So far, I only had to add a 1/2 quart of oil. Pretty good I thought considering the constant high speed and hot climate. I was now about 1,000 miles into the trip, a third of the way home and the most difficult temperature wise. The locals told me that the temps were unusually high and were running 10deg hotter than normal. Just my luck!

I would have liked to have made it to El Paso since that would have been about half way to Fort Worth, where I was planning to stay with friends. I wanted to get an early start and make a go of it the next morning. The scenery was strange, unique and beautiful, in a rugged sort of way. I saw plenty of it along the interstate and





I was glad I was taking the freeways. Actually, I had an unplanned detour on the side roads as there was an accident with a fatality on Route 10 just south of Phoenix. The accident was in the early morning hours, and even getting underway late morning (after the school shop work) the roadway was still closed. Imagine going down the only Interstate Highway around and seeing the electric warning sign read 'Road Closed 22 Miles Ahead, Plan Alternate Route!' Not knowing the area, but wanting to avoid possible creeping, stalled or detoured traffic; I forged my way into the back country roads and ended up coming back onto Route 10 near Tucson, AZ. Although I avoided the accident area, it added a couple hours to my trip and was the reason I fell short of my El Paso goal.

This trip wasn't for the faint of heart, and I mean physically. I was still dealing with the effects of heat exhaustion even by day two. I was shaky, sweating, and still dehydrated. The southwest has a very, very dry climate and I was feeling it. Also, my ears were ringing, even after the use of ear plugs! I had mole skin and double big band-aids on my right heel from the pain and discomfort being in the same position all day long. I was certainly not trying to be negative, as there was still a thrill about it all that kept me going, but I swore to myself that I would never do this again!

Friday, 24th - Determination

Since I had fallen short of El Paso, I started out early the next morning, well before sunrise and pushed on hard and steady. At just over 700 miles, I made it to Fort Worth, Texas by 11:00pm and stayed with friends. That long drive was pure torture and I would NEVER attempt that long of a stretch again. I got stuck in construction traffic along the way and pulled over to the shoulder, parked to let the car cool down and waited for the traffic to flow better. I lost about an hour before I ventured out again. You'd think I'd know better to check under the hood 'EVERY' gas stop, but I let one go by. The next gas stop I was down almost a quart of oil. I had better be more careful next time and diligently check it every time I stopped. I was at the half-way point and by God's grace alone I had gotten that far. The car was running fine. The carbs could have used some tweaking since they were not running perfectly smooth, loading up, and had a low idle. Nothing major, just adjusted to run better, but I was not an expert on Dellortos so it would have to wait until I got home (if I ever got home). Even with ear plugs, my ears were still ringing at the end of each day. Cruising on average at 60mph, which equated to about 3,400rpm, I was still consistently getting 30mpg and could make 200 miles

and have a gallon left in the tank in reserve. I had used less than a third of a quart of oil to each tankfull of gas.

Next day I was heading for Nashville, but realized I would definitely have to break it up into two days for a more leisurely 300 miles each day instead of pushing myself (and the car) to our limits and make an otherwise enjoyable ride a real bear! I decided I would stop somewhere nice and treat myself to a fancy hotel, hot shower, and comfortable bed.

Saturday, 25th - Adjusted Expectations

I decided to gear down a bit and made it to just outside Little Rock, Arkansas, about halfway to Nashville where my son lived. I had a minor issue where my speedometer suddenly stopped working, so I pulled over immediately to find the shielded gear had come out of the crimped end on the plug/gear connector on the side of the transmission. I pushed it back in, wire-tied it and it worked fine. I also found one of the half round rubber bung plugs on the cam end of the valve cover had been pushed in too far and was leaking oil. A temporary fix was to use gasket sealant and it seemed to have stopped the leak. I did the other side for good measure, although there was only residual seepage there.

The hottest ambient temps seem to have lifted now that I was further northeast of the desert terrain of the southwest. The temp gauge read 110 pretty regularly now, and the oil pressure read 45psi as well. My only concern then was that I found spots of oil or grime, like mist on the back of the car and I didn't know if it was unburnt gas from a richly tuned carb, or oil burning through the exhaust. I was going to pull the spark plugs the next morning before I headed out to see how they looked.

As noted before, the priority of this trip was now a matter of getting the car home in one piece rather than sightseeing. As a friend had mentioned, I should not drive it like an M100 Elan, and had to remind myself that this was a 40 year old car. The Seven was never a high speed race car since it creates lots of lift from those front fenders, but with super highways now designed for 75mph+ speed limits, it seemed everyone, including the truckers, just flew by me all day long. I rarely ever passed anyone. I kept reminding myself that the twisty, turning, back country roads are what the Seven was designed for.

I finally recovered from my bout with heat exhaustion, but it really threw me for a loop for the first three days. I was stupid not to think of it, but the hot, dry weather, and my lack of hydrating and eating all contributed to a recipe for disaster. Driving in an unventilated, hot oven only adds to that. The hard top was black in color and

had a liner inside with some temperature insulating value; however it had no sound deadening value. I looked forward to getting it home, and take off the top and side curtains for some 'open-air' driving. Next stop, Nashville!

Sunday, Oct 26th - A Mixed Bag Day

I pulled the plugs early this morning before taking off. They appeared fine to me, pretty equal in color and consistency. The fourth one in line nearest the transmission is the one that takes all the oil from the crankcase blow-by tube and was a tad different from the rest. I switched them around and the car seemed to run just a little bit smoother. I had heavy early morning fog and needed to keep the windshield clear, so I was sure glad my wipers worked. Outside temps were in the low 80s so it seemed I was bringing the heat along with me from the west. It was still cooler than it was the last couple days and the water temp hovered at 110/115 all day and oil pressure was 40-45psi. Ambient temperatures definitely played a role on how hot the car ran. I also noticed one of my 'Mickey Mouse' ear headlights was doing a lot of the 'hippie-hippie shakes' due to the wheel imbalance issue. I wadded up a shop rag and stuffed it between the fender and headlight that worked great for awhile, until suddenly it blew off (the rag that is).

I crossed the mighty Mississippi River into Memphis, Tennessee and made it to my son's home in Murfreesboro, just outside of Nashville, with only one minor mishap. I was pulling into a Rest Area for a much needed 'stretch' when I lost the gas pedal. I coasted to a parking spot and found that the throttle cable sheath had come out of its holder under the carbs. A simple fix and I was back in business!

I figured I would probably shoot for Wytheville, Virginia area tomorrow as a halfway point. I had lost all interest in seeking longer side routes and I was on a mission to just get home. This ride just wasn't as much fun as I had hoped it would be (the comfort issue, not the scenic drive issue). I did a lot of thinking about this car and its future with 'too-tall-Ted' and either some modification would need to be done (smaller steering wheel, remove seats, pedal arrangement, etc.), or its life with me would be short lived. Some guys buy a Lotus and never put 3,000 miles on it and yet I would be doing that with this one in just one week.

Monday, 27th - The Lotus Ambassador

Well my luck finally ran out. After leaving Nashville, I drove with my ear plugs in but thought I heard whining sounds coming from the rear differential. I stopped at a gas station and looked underneath, and lo and behold, I found gear oil splattered all around the right rear area under the car. I couldn't access anything lying on the ground and knew I needed to get the car up on a lift to inspect or make a repair. I was just short of Knoxville, TN and out came the Lotus, Ltd. Roster for its big moment! I found Donald 'Z' who I had last seen with his green Westfield 11 at LOG 34 in Ashville. Luckily he was only 20 miles away, so I plugged his address into my GPS and was there in under a half hour.

Don was quite gracious and accommodating. He got down and dirty to help me out. After using his hydraulic jack, stands and light, we determined it was the drive shaft pinion seal on the rear differential. As it slowly leaked, the spinning driveshaft threw the gear oil up onto the bottom of the car, all around the right hand side. My spare gear lube oil bottle was in the trunk and inaccessible since the hard top was installed (dummy me!). Don drove me to the local auto parts store and I bought two more bottles of gear oil. It took about 3/4 of one full bottle! We both felt that I could continue on, but to check the level regularly. A big "Thank you" went to Don for being a goodwill ambassador for the Lotus community. I then departed and was back on track.



At the next rest stop, I 'borrowed' a handicapped ramp and pulled up onto the curb so I could remove the plug and check the fluid level (all was OK). I did this again later and did not have any noticeable loss, meaning the leak was very slow, so a catastrophic loss or failure would have been unlikely. I would replace the seal when I got home. I could still hear a faint whine and this gave me some concern. Coincidentally, I was using better ear plugs (or I grew more deaf), and the exhaust note was minimized enough so that I could hear other things, like the rear whine. I just didn't know if it always whined and I just didn't notice it before, or if indeed, it appeared new due to the fluid loss. When (if) I got home, I would investigate further, but hopefully it wasn't damaged.

I had other problems this day as well. While we were diagnosing the source of the leak, the speedometer cable came out again, so I was without my odometer/trip meter. Now I had to rely totally on the gas gauge which appeared to be very accurate so far. Otherwise, the car was running and driving very well. Thankfully the idle and carbs seemed better too.

That evening I made it as far as a hotel in Lexington, VA, and was glad to know I would be on the home stretch the next day. I was determined to avoid the metro Washington, DC area by visiting a family member north of I-81, and would leave there for the Baltimore beltway after the morning rush hour. The fall foliage through Virginia was beautiful. My how the scenery colors changed from brown, to green, to orange as I rolled along! I really hoped the next day would be the last, and that no further mishaps were in store for me. The adventure continued...

Tuesday, 28th - Home at Last

Before starting out, I checked the gear oil and topped off with only a couple ounces. I stopped at relatives in Boyce, Virginia to stretch my legs and grab a bite to eat. Back on the road, the beautiful rolling countryside was in full autumn colors. It was absolutely stunning.

As I headed home from there, I drove through five states: Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and yes, New Jersey, all under Lotus power!! I never thought I would be happy about being in New Jersey, but it was home. I experienced no further mechanical issues and the car ran just fine. Thank God for His protection along the way. The trip was a real testament to the Lotus brand.

EPILOGUE

Although I got home at about 3pm, it was our day to babysit the grandkids, so I unloaded the car and was quickly thrust into grandfatherly duties. I finally crashed into bed at 10pm and didn't wake up the next morning until 9:30. There's nothing like your own bed to catch up on much needed sleep.

COST

Over 3,000 miles, and at a pretty constant 60mph I made 19 gas stops (6 gallon per refill and 180 miles between fill-ups) and averaged about 30mpg. That equated to about 100 gallons of mid-grade fuel, which at \$3.20 per gallon, came to about \$320 dollars. Add in 5 1/2 quarts of oil (\$25), three nights in a hotel (\$180), 'on the road' food (\$100 approx), airfare (\$190), misc tolls (Maryland and Delaware) \$10, I figured total cost of this trip was between \$800 and \$900 tops! That beat the \$1,400 quotes I was getting for enclosed transport, but of course, you cannot count my time. I could have found 'open' transport for about the same cost...but without all the fun, right?

CAR

Even with some pre-trip preparation, I experienced a few minor mishaps. 1) Speedometer cable disconnected (twice) at the transmission. 2) Oil leak from pushed in cam bung. 3) Wheel shimmy/vibration/balance issue. 4) Changed thermostat to 180 degree. 5) Throttle cable came undone. 6) Rear differential seal leak. I was a

little concerned about using too much oil through the trip but attributed it to the hot temperatures and constant high speed.

PERSONAL

I was NOT prepared for the heat. I had expected a late October mild weather pattern, but experienced more of a summer one instead. I sweat with the 80 and 90 degree heat from the start in California all the way through to Virginia. I suffered heat exhaustion from dehydration, jet lag, not eating, and over working at the shop. It took three whole days to fully recover. With my tall stature and heavy weight (not bragging) I was structurally ill-fitted to a Lotus, let alone a Seven. I made myself fit (an accomplished contortionist) but I paid the price. I could live with minor aches, pains and discomforts, but the biggest pain was on my right heel from having to keep it in one position (arched) for so long. I believe my Achilles tendon was inflamed, and I mean "on fire" inflamed!

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

I was challenged internally and inspired externally to take on this adventure. I've always been a classic car guy and have given lots of focus to the Lotus marque. While driving the Seven and seeing those 'Mickey Mouse' ear headlights, it reminded me of driving a Model A Ford (a favorite antique car of mine in my youth). I just loved looking out the windshield over the long hood and seeing the headlight ears and long nose hood and clam shell front fenders. Taking an antique car, especially a classic British sports car, on a cross country trip should be a blast. Since I was retired and had lots of spare time, I was well situated to take this on. It had all the desirable temptations to lure me into doing it; adventure, pioneering, challenging, scenery, friends and family along the way, and the personal and physical challenge to do it all.

The reality was this, however, and that was the 'unexpected'. I was constantly worrying and listening and smelling, to be on the alert for problems along the way. Many times, the sound or smell wasn't even from my car, but the vehicle that just passed by. Even so, anyone would be foolish not to anticipate some failure or folly. After all, it is a machine and subject to breakdown, no matter how well maintained. You just have to deal with whatever happens. Of course, no matter how hard you try, or think about things you might need, something always happens that you were never prepared for. I am awed by those early pioneers who traveled in covered wagons, and more so, the Grapes of Wrath folk who did similar trips in worn out old trucks. The answer, of course, in today's modern world, are the protections we all take for granted; the cell phone, the credit card, and more importantly within the Lotus community, the Lotus, Ltd. roster. This was my lifeline, reaching out blindly, cold calling a member for help. No Lotus owner should be without one (if traveling away from home).

Would I do it again? Absolutely! But not in the Seven as currently configured. I give credit to God, to family, to the Lotus community, and to the Lotus marque. Regardless of labels, stereotypes, and myth, a Lotus CAN be a reliable form of daily transportation and quite capable of long distance travel. Happy Motoring!

If you have any comments or questions about the trip, please feel free to contact me at: tedtaylor@gmail.com