

# THE TALE OF THE TIGER



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Interesting cars tend to mirror the personality of their creators. Ever since the world of cars began, they have been studded with the original ideas of great designers and engineers who have expressed themselves in the automobiles they have developed and driven.

This is particularly so in the case of high performance cars — Bentley, Ferrari, Bugatti, and Porsche, for example. These designers at different times made great contributions to the development of the high performance car as we know it, and their cars were conceived with two ends in view — Speed and Safety. The means to those ends however, were very different.

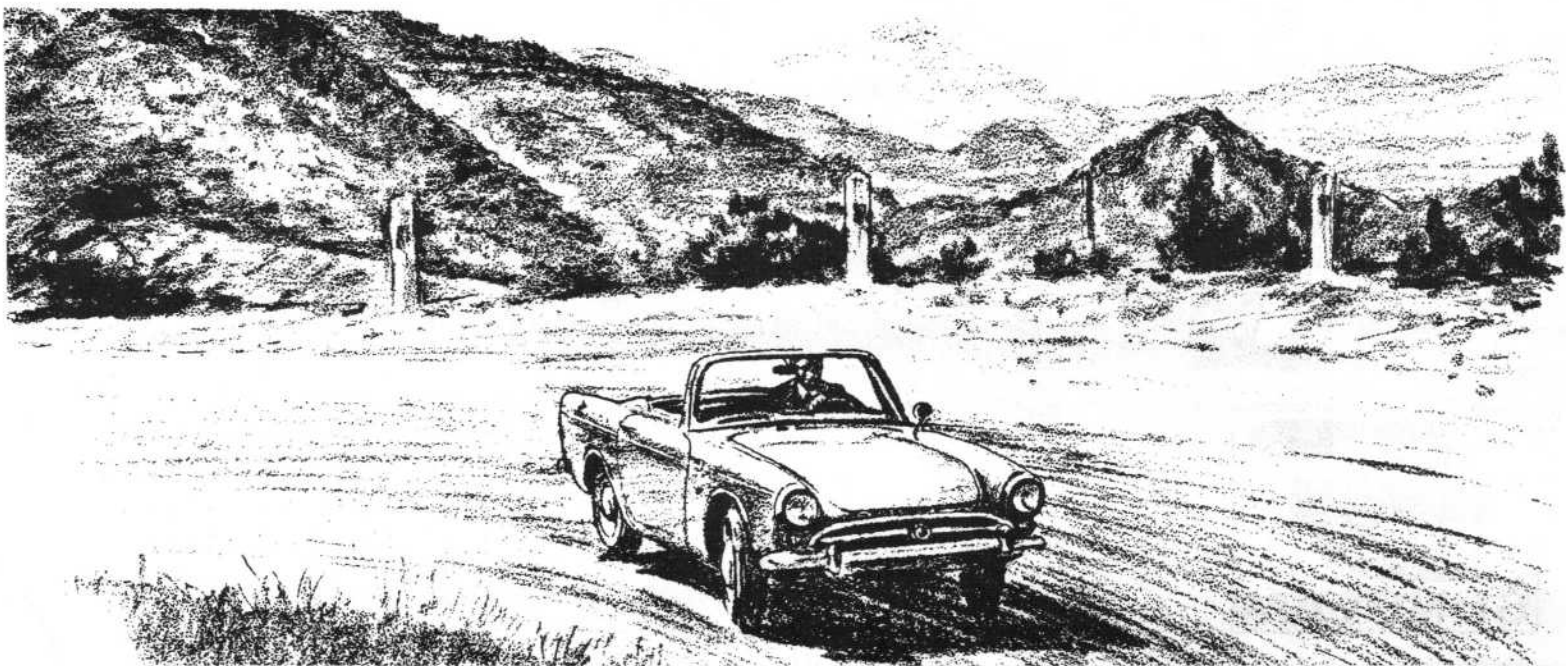
Ettore Bugatti, for instance, was a wildly temperamental artist by instinct, whose cars were built with the delicacy of a watch, and were just about as easy for the average mechanic to repair. W. O. Bentley, as typically English as Bugatti was Italian, produced powerful, imposing, solid sports touring cars that somehow reflected their Anglo-Saxon designer.

However, exotic engineering tour-de-forces are very much inclined to be too expensive to be a practical proposition in today's competitive markets. Consequently, recent sports car trends have been towards highly tuned production engines to give the necessary

power; nevertheless, some owners here in America still regard foreign sports cars fitted with these engines as underpowered and "fussy." (In Europe crippling taxes on gas restricted manufacturers from developing larger and more powerful engines.) This then was the problem we at Rootes were confronted with after nearly 20 years of selling Sunbeams in the U.S.A.

The Sunbeam Tiger owes its existence to the foresight of two men, one English and one American. The first one was Carroll Shelby, possibly the greatest sports car driver and constructor America has ever produced; the other Ian Garrad, Rootes' West Coast manager, a sports car enthusiast whose father used to race Sunbeams and Talbots during the roaring twenties.

Garrad had long felt that there was an excellent market for an ultra high performance sports car in the Sunbeam line to supplement the Alpine. One day in April 1963, having watched Carroll Shelby's Cobra-Fords trounce all opposition in yet another California sports car race, Garrad saw the answer to his problem — if the Alpine chassis could be fitted with the Ford 260 V8 Fairlane engine he would have a real winner, for the engine had all the necessary qualifications, plenty of power, light weight, compact over-all dimen-



sions, nationwide availability of parts, and enough "speed options" to satisfy the most demanding enthusiast. Carroll Shelby himself instantly saw the potential of such a car. It could be made capable of at least 125 mph, have Sunbeam's traditional impeccable handling and would offer vivid acceleration, but without losing any of the creature comforts for which the standard Alpine was famous, and equally important, at a price far below any other competitor from Europe or Detroit.

Shelby and his dynamic organization in Venice, California went to work. By the end of May 1963, the first prototype was running, and after a short road test had confirmed all expectations, the car was then taken to Riverside Raceway for high speed testing. At this point Shelby and Garrad decided to consult Ken Miles, one of California's star sports car racers, and himself a highly skilled racing car constructor to help with the chassis and suspension appraisal. To the delight of everyone concerned, only minor modifications were needed. Otherwise the car was perfect. Next came the endurance running. The car behaved perfectly on the track, but it had to perform properly both in downtown traffic and on long high speed runs over the desert and through the mountains. Accordingly, it was lugged round Los Angeles in top gear, and cruised at speed across the Mojave Desert, where ambient temperatures regularly reach 110 degrees F.

At this time the car was still a secret experimental project, although some Los Angeles sports car drivers left gaping at lights by an apparently standard Alpine may have guessed something was afoot. Only a handful of top Rootes U.S.A. executives knew of the existence of the car, but by July 1963 it was felt that the time had come for the car to be presented to the Rootes Board in England.

The showing of the car to Lord Rootes himself was awaited with some trepidation, as he is renowned for his meticulous approach to engineering and for the accuracy of his marketing judgment. If in any way, the Tiger

had resembled a "Hot Rod," or failed to meet his stringent requirements in quality control, the project would be finished.

The apprehension was short lived. The showing was an immediate success. Ian Garrad briefly explained the details of the car and gave performance figures, which were received with faint disbelief until Lord Rootes, an ex-racing driver himself, took the car out. With Garrad as passenger, the car was given its final and most critical test. It was hurled through the twisting English lanes, braked repeatedly from over 90 mph to a standstill, and cruised at over 100 mph down Britain's new super highway close to the Rootes plant in Coventry (the Detroit of England).

After an hour's run, Lord Rootes pulled in through the gates to where his two sons, Geoffrey and Brian Rootes, together with a group of engineers had been anxiously waiting. The smile on their Chairman's face was enough — words were unnecessary; the Tiger was born.

With a proud tradition of automobile manufacturing since 1898, the Sunbeam engineering team assigned to the Tiger project started from scratch. Regardless of what Shelby and his boys had done in California, they had a fixed policy of development and testing which every Sunbeam had to go through. This car was no exception. The name Sunbeam was at stake — even more, the name Tiger, for the first Tiger was built for Sir Malcolm Camp-



bell to attack the land speed record in the '30's. From Belgium pave to the North African desert and over the Pyrenees went the Sunbeam testers in prototype Tigers. Meantime, a team went to Detroit and negotiated with the Ford Motor Company to purchase engines and transmissions. The months rolled by, but on and on went the relentless testing and developing from Coventry. The engines and transmissions made by Ford to our specifications soon began the long journey from Detroit to England.

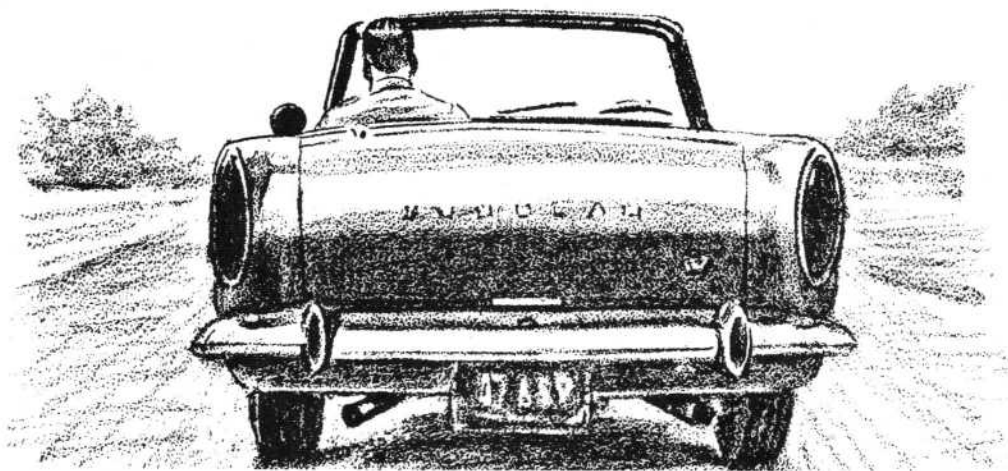
The first car, the Shelby built Tiger, came back to the States for thousands of miles of further testing, to ensure that the modifications made in Coventry for production reasons were suitable for the roads of America. Then the great day arrived, and the Tiger was given its premiere at the New York International Auto Show in April, 1964.

So, the beliefs, confidence and tireless efforts, of the dedicated team of Rootes officials were rewarded, for the car was immediately acclaimed by the press and public alike as a winner.

This, then is the brief background of the Sunbeam Tiger — a car conceived by enthusiasts in America for Americans, and made by one of the most famous names in automobile history — Sunbeam — by craftsmen from Coventry, who, for centuries, have taken pride in their skills.

Here is the car for the young in heart, the enthusiast, the aficionado, the connoisseur — for those who enjoy, respect and appreciate perfection in anything they buy. Last, but by no means least, this is the car for anyone who enjoys driving.

You will be proud to own a Tiger, "The World's Fastest Sports Car at \$3499."



#### SPECIFICATION OF THE SUNBEAM TIGER

**Engine.** Ford V-8 valve-in-head unit, eight cylinders in 90 deg. V.

Bore and stroke: 3.80 X 2.87 in.

Cubic capacity: 260 cu. in.

Engine develops 164 h.p. at 4,400 r.p.m.

Compression ratio —8.8:1.

**Rear Axle.** Semi-floating design with hypoid final drive. 2.88 axle ratio.

**Front Suspension.** Fully independent front wheel suspension.

**Rear Suspension.** Semi-elliptic leaf springs, direct acting telescopic shock absorbers.

**Steering.** Rack and pinion.

**Brakes.** Girling 9.85 in. diameter disc brakes front, 9 in. diameter drum brakes rear, with servo assist.

**Tires.** 5.90 X 13 in. Dunlop 'RS5' Road Speed with tubes.

**Wheel Base.** 86 in.

**Overall Length.** 155.5 in.

**To Test Drive the new  
Sunbeam Tiger  
see your local  
Rootes Motors **S**unbeam dealer**