

## B59 SEALING THE DEAL FOR REAL

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011  
SUBJECT: B59 SEALING THE DEAL FOR REAL  
DATE: 30 AUGUST 2011

Following the Sunday evening festivities, Evi and Michael Stadler kindly invited us to spend the night in their home and, in the morning, she fixed what amounted to a German power breakfast. On her table were various breads, cold cut meats, local cheeses, fruit juices, home-made condiments and freshly brewed coffee. What made it a power breakfast were all the scraps of paper on the table that constituted our deal. Aside from the title of ownership, there was a bill of lading, a government stamped acknowledgement of arrival in France, vehicle history and checklist of items contained in the vehicle. In addition, Michael needed our Swift Code to transfer the Euro amount into our Dollar account in the U.S.

By now I'm sure you're all thirsting to know how much the car sold for and I'm afraid you won't find that information here. Our CPA (who used to work for the IRS) advised us, "That's nobody's business but yours and the new owners." Since I pay him for advice when he talks to me on the phone, this time I'm going to listen. Let's leave it at this; They didn't steal it and we didn't give it away. I guess that's what they call a real deal.



We paid one last visit to the MG on our way to catch a train in Frankfurt. The Stadler's were respectful of our desire to say goodbye properly. In effect, the MG was our first-born and we were doing what all parents do...seeing her off to a new life with hopes that it will be half as good as the time she spent with us. We smiled for the camera but if I were to tell you we walked away with our cheeks dry, it would be a lie.



We were chauffeured to the Frankfurt airport bahnhof by Michael Stadler in his new 7 Series BMW complete with heads-up windshield display and all the safety options that keep you from plowing into the rear of the slower Mercedes

sedans. Feeling flush, we chose to go 1<sup>st</sup> class on the TGV to Paris and said goodbye to Michael with a warm hug. Riding on the TGV is a real kick when you realize you're traveling at 173.5 MPH (so says the brochure) and the wine in your glass is barely rippling. Just to make sure I tried this test with several glasses and the results were the same each time. Because of on board WiFi, I was able to put together a blog and send it all from my comfortable seat. After blogging and doing wine tests, I had little interest in lifting our bags off the train when we arrived in Paris but lift I did.

You might be lulled into thinking, with the sale of the car, this blog's mission is complete but that was only part of our original plan. The other goal was to re-do the honeymoon and now we are back in Paris where it all started. Since our daughter and grandson have returned to California so he could start school, our friend, Herve Laurent booked us into Le Relais Montemarte, a recently renovated hotel right in the middle of the famed bohemian district.





Since we had two whole days to spend in Paris we decided to do what we did fifty three years ago...just bum around. For starters we had croissants and café au lait at a little sidewalk cafe just opposite the world famous Moulin Rouge nightclub. It looks a little tawdry in the daytime so we made a note to come back at night to see if it improves.

We hadn't been to the touristy top of Montmartre for decades so decided to see what changes there were, if any. Although this area has always been popular we weren't prepared for the human tide that flooded the streets. Yes, we know during August in Paris it's difficult to find a Frenchman on the streets and these crowds would bear that out. I had to wait to take this picture.



It only got worse as we approached the basilica of Sacre Coeur. I couldn't figure out where the people were going. Maybe inside the church? Never found out and lost interest rapidly when I realized this crowd situation is pickpocket heaven. There are signs everywhere that make you want to check your wallet. Of course, that shows the pickpocket exactly where you keep it.

Louise did find a friendly face that became unfrozen at the sight of a couple of Euros. She hopes he'll use the money for much needed dental work.



Window-shopping is another distraction in the Montmartre area,



but it gives the shopkeeper time for a cigarette break at the curb while Louise is making up her mind not to buy.



With nowhere to be and not much to do, there was plenty of time for a wine break to watch the passing crowd.



Since I had control of the camera, I found women to be far more interesting subjects than the men walkers. The one with child almost bumped into the camera but, of course, she was walking for two. Maybe three.

Before we knew it, it was time for lunch and we already had a table. There was no problem striking up conversations with our tablemates, all who spoke English without a French accent. For sure, it is August in Paris.





It was a quick ride by metro to the Louvre where they were featuring l'art de l'auto Mobile... masterpieces from the Ralph Lauren collection of...of all things...cars.



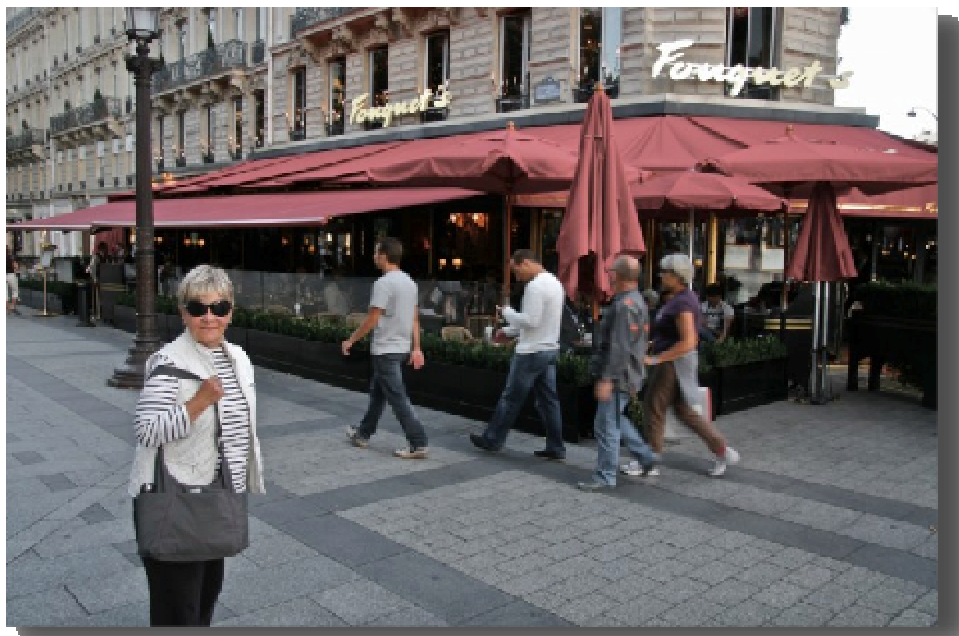
It featured seventeen outstanding examples of automotive design and distinction that came from Lauren's fascination with things beautiful. We were pleased to recognize cars that we first saw when they were new and we were young. It's frustrating to know that we still can't afford them. Cameras weren't allowed so I'm borrowing this elegant layout from the July issue of *Road and Track* magazine.



No visit to Paris is complete without a stop at l'Avant Comptoir, the crêpe and wine bar on the street Carrefour de l'Odeon. Our special mission was to purchase their trademark wine glass with an embossed pig to replace the broken one at home. Of course we had to have a crêpe and some red wine to test the new glass.

During this visit we had a chance to renew our acquaintance over dinner with Philippe Aubry, President of the MG Club de France. We swapped stories about car rallies and our experiences in driving 5,000 miles in a 57-year old car. I think he was more impressed with Louise's resilience than that of the car.





We met long time friend Herve Laurent for drinks at Fouquet's on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. It is a huge tourist magnet and we remember having drinks here in 1958 and 1959.



When the check came we remembered why we stopped coming here. A tall glass of beer cost 18 Euros (over \$25). We sat there nursing it for over an hour just to make sure we got our money's worth of time in the booth. We also used the rest rooms twice.





I joined the daredevils in the center of the Champs to get the classic photo of the Arc de Triomphe at sunset. You can see by the lack of traffic that half of Paris is on vacation and the other is in some wine bar so it wasn't as dangerous as it could be.



We were fooled, once again, by the distances on the small maps and decided to hoof it to the Trocadero to view the Eiffel Tower at night. We even passed up a gaudy Metro entrance that is part of a Paris beautification project. At first we thought it was a casino.

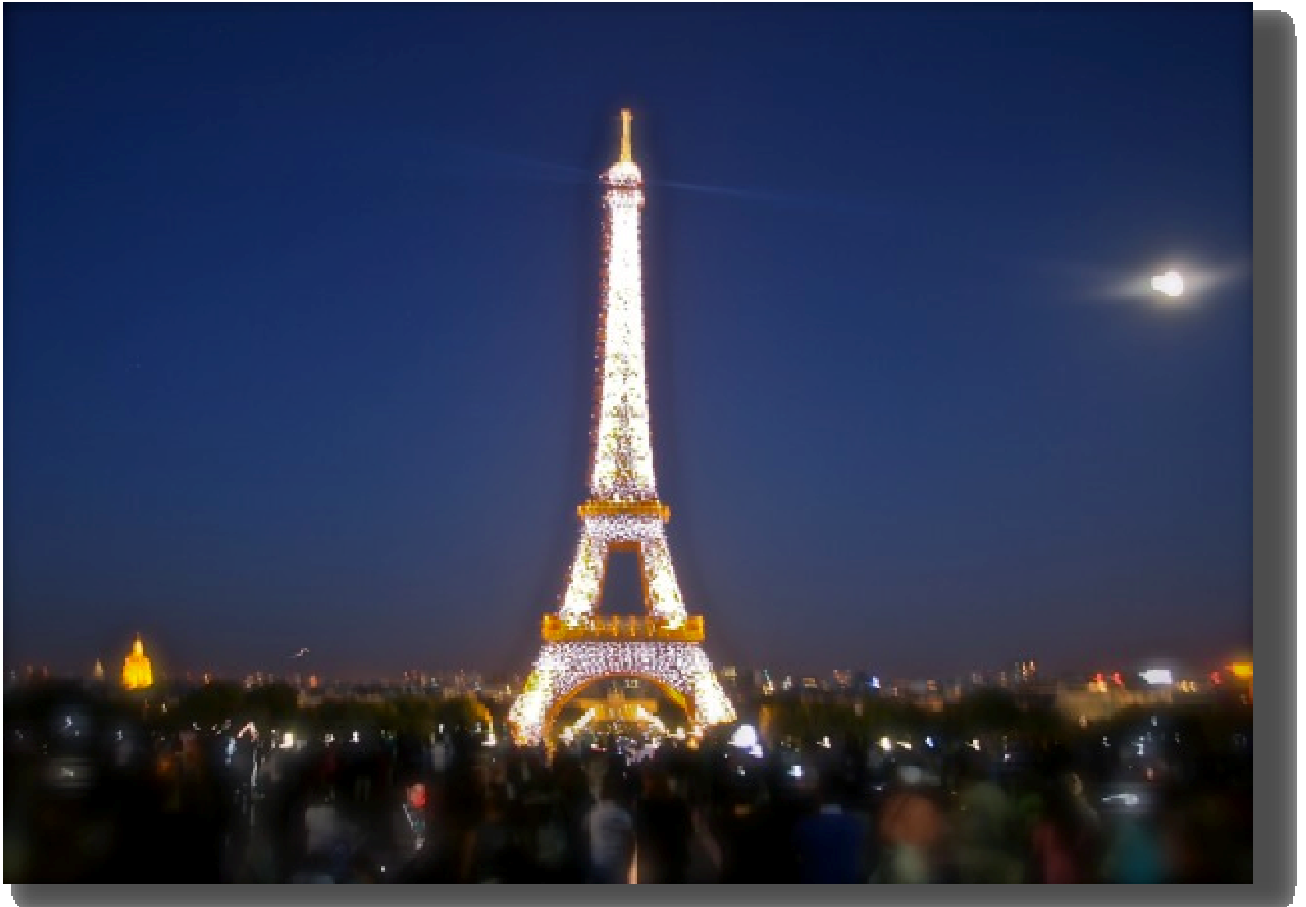


Just as we were about to run out of steam on Avenue Kléber I saw the showroom for Tesla, the all-electric sports car made in California.



A friend and Bible buddy, Franz Von Holzhausen, is the head designer for Tesla so I couldn't pass up the opportunity to show him how an electric car is showcased in the City of Light.

We finally reached the Café Trocadero, the same bistro where we breakfasted on the first day of our honeymoon fifty-three years ago. The evening light display was about to begin so it was supercrowded but we did manage a celebratory glass of wine before we joined the crowd to watch the ten-minute illumination of the Paris landmark, the Eiffel Tower.



When the light show was over it marked the completion of a 2½ month adventuresome journey through our memorable past. Now, for the first time, we faced the future without our MG. It was an extremely quiet metro ride back to Montmartre.



But, when we emerged from metro, we found that Paris was still very much alive and exciting. The lights of the Moulin Rouge were now ablaze and the glamour splashed all around; people were wandering the streets and something in the air said, “You can't be done yet. What about a third honeymoon? Come on. Think it over.”

Louise and Ray...in Paris and thinking it over.

