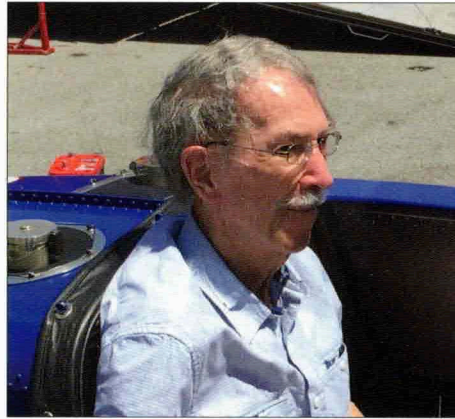


Ray Jones 1926-2019

Raymond John Jones II passed away on April 11, 2019, at the age of 92. He was born on August 26, 1926, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. His first mechanical love was airplanes. He soloed at age 16 and received his pilot's license at age 17. When he turned 18, he enlisted in the Army and served in France and then England, where he worked at the airfield in Lytham St. Annes in the World War II years of 1944 and 1945 before being discharged and returning home.



Ray started fiddling around with cars and took a position with GM Styling in 1950. This took him to Detroit, where he met Delena Bedard, and they married in 1954. He then moved on to the Ford Motor Company, where he worked on concept cars in their Scientific Laboratory. On evenings and weekends he and Delena worked on restoring a 1910 Packard, which became a 100-point winner at the Greenfield Village Antique Show in 1958.

By 1962 Ray was in business for himself, working on Mercedes S, SS and SSK models for several General Motors executives. The legendary Bill Mitchell himself bought a SSLK replica that Ray had produced from an original Type S Sportswagen.

A year later he came into possession of his first Bugatti, a Type 35A (in reality re-engined Ttype 39, chassis 4606). This acquisition was the beginning of the rest of Ray's life, as he immersed himself completely into the world of Bugatti. From 1964 until 1975, when he moved his entire family to Menton, France, Ray would be involved in the acquisition and sale of over 75 Bugattis including the stunning discovery of the dismantled remains of several Type 59 and 50B variants at the Bugatti Factory in 1968.

While Ray owned numerous T35's and T37's, his focus gradually evolved into a concentration on the twin-cam racing and sports Bugattis; multiples of T51, T54, T55 and T59 models went through his hands. His voracious buying of parts eventually led to the need to produce replica chassis frames, a development many felt sullied his work and, in due course, his reputation. Rarities included the only surviving T53 4-wheel



Ray in the T59/50S at Amelia Island.

Sandy Leith

drive car, two 16-cylinder T45/47 engines (for which frames were produced), the "Cork Car" (T59/50B III) and the Benoist 1935 ACF T59/50S, which Ray reconstructed on the unused no. 2 T59/50B frame intended for the still unborn compound blower 3.0 liter T59/50B III. He also obtained the legendary Bugatti 100P airplane with plans to make it flight-worthy, but too many parts were missing. He then removed the two 4.7 liter 50B engines for T59/50B automotive projects.

Returning from France in 1979, having sold many parts, kits and cars to Uwe Hücke and other European enthusiasts, Ray moved to Stuart, Florida, where he operated his Bugatti and antique airplane business. Numerous projects lined the hangar in the mid 80s, but most were T54- or T59/50B-related along with his G17S Staggerwing Beechcraft and his Beech Baron. In 1986 he sold two of the four original T59 frames he found at Molsheim and concentrated on finishing the Cork car and the Benoist car. The Cork car was completed by 1993. Several other cars were built including a replica of the legendary and lost T57S45 and more T54 replicas, but as the parts and business wound down, the desire to get the 1935 ACF T59/50S into running condition became the family focus, led by his son Greg. By 2016 the car was finished, and it made numerous concours appearances.

Delena passed away in September of 2018, and Ray joined her seven months later. While his legacy in the Bugatti world has adherents and detractors alike, there is no question that he saved a vast quantity of parts and cars from the smelter near Molsheim.

—Sandy Leith