



DS Cinquantaire

by Greg Long

Some guys have a dream of playing a round at Pebble Beach, others prefer going to the World Cup or the Super Bowl, but for me it was the 3 day 50th anniversary of the DS, in Paris (France, not Texas).

Three solid days of nothin' but D's.



Wednesday, October 5/6 - Paris, France

Day 1: A Nice Slow Start

Leave SFO at 4:30 pm, arrive the next afternoon at CDG. Take bus, train and Metro to the Hotel Relais-Bosquet near the Eiffel Tower and meet up with my brother John and our friends -- and long time Citroen nuts -- Gary and Caroline Cullen from Vancouver, BC. We do a protracted walking tour of Paris and end up at the Parc Andre Citroen (the old Quai de Javel Citroen factory). But, of course, it's dusk so it's closed. We go to a

wonderful little restaurant on the way back to our hotel and have our first delicious French meal.

DS sightings today: 0

Friday, October 7th - St. Quentin

Day 2: Off to the 1st Big Event!

Metro and RER it to Saint Quentin-en Yvelines which is SW of Paris. Bump into some fellow Canadian Citroen fanatics from Ontario and Newfoundland (Edison Wiltshire of Targa rally fame where he's known as the "Faster Pastor" -- he's raced his Traction, DS and CX against factory sponsored Subaru's and Chryslers!). We ask a local for directions and were told we are at the wrong station; we need to go to the next one up the line (doesn't seem right because our program specifically states to get off at St. Quentin and walk 10 minutes but...)

We arrive at the station and ask a bus driver where the Citroen meet is. "Just 10 minutes up this main road", was his response. Twenty minutes later we see a huge Citroen sign and banners. Guess I was wrong after all; but, after we got closer, we notice it's a huge Citroen

dealership! I wipe the egg off my face and we call a taxi.



The driver thankfully knows exactly where the event is and says she'll take us to the "Camping Entrance". I say, from the far back seat, "please ask her in French if there are other entrances to the event". Everyone tells me to relax, don't be so anal and all will be fine. We arrive at the gate, see tons of DS parked around a large white tent so proceed to walk to it. This walk isn't so bad because there's DS's to see everywhere! But, again, it just didn't

seem right. We finally reach the tent and are told this is for car registration and that the gate is actually 4 km's away.

Silver lining

I came very close to a "I told you so", but refrained. But we did get a ride in a lovely Dutch daily driver DS 21 so all was not lost. We finally end up at the proper entrance and hit DS Nirvana straight on: multiple matching 1956 DS 19's, Chapron Palm Beaches (yes plural!).



Spectacular DS's by the hundreds

Every year, model, colour (inside and out)! Even Englishman

Len Drew's multiple concours winning D Super is there (and had a lovely chat with Len himself), met back up with Aussie Buttercup Bob and his famous sidekick, Buttercup, a 1957 Right Hand Drive, Slough-built DS 19 complete with Roo-bar on the front. Fell in love with a 1961 ID 19 Safari station wagon in a spectacular original green, complete with bamboo-like front and rear bench seats, and vintage luggage on the roof rack.

Next up was the DS Museum tent whose centre piece was a 1956 DS 19 with the same colours as the original Paris Auto Show, sitting on a recreation of the rotating pedestal. Surrounding it radiated, like the petals of a flower, a fine selection of D's - racers, Chapron 4-doors, etc. Flanking the DS's were true 'pieces of art', Citroen-style. And I do mean fabulously creative, with a douse of total strangeness and wonderment thrown in (just like the original DS). Actually, like most art, it's next to impossible to describe but think, obscure, used DS parts taking the place of butterflies in an antique butterfly collection, or interior DS handles sitting vertical in an antique specimen jar, complete with formaldehyde. I told you it was strange! There were also some beautiful lamps made from DS engine parts.



Parts Car Anyone?

Finally, there was a 2 foot long hand-built metal



model of a DS in a glass case. But it definitely wasn't what everyone would expect as it was of a parts car DS that had sat outside for 25 years-- with lots of parts missing and rest all covered in rust and little fallen leaves. It too was truly spectacular and yours for only \$15,000. See, I told you old DS's were appreciating!

Next up was the “new DS parts tent”. Lots of cool stuff here but it didn’t make sense to lug anything around. Outside were some used parts but the only thing we bought was a beautiful, original DS 19 key chain, in blue and silver, complete with a stylized semi-clad women standing on double chevrons. It was the buy of the show!



From there we met up with Lon Price



and Lance & Joanne Hellman of East Coast Citroen fame and chatted about, and looked at, guess what, more DS’s.

Colours

We were amazed at the number of 1st dash/ 1st front bumper cars -- and the gorgeous, original late 50’s/ early 60’s ID 19’s in their amazing non-metallic colours. Met up with a young German DS restorer who had driven his summertime daily driver 1957 DS 19 -- resplendent in its original yellow, with aubergine roof, and the famous orange/black tiger interior that I had always wanted to see in-person. And there

it was in all it’s original, crazy 50’s, glory.

From there we went to the lake in the park and were captivated by the recreation of the famous Balloon DS from an early DS brochure, floating in the same lake as the original photo. Needless to say, it looked, fabulous (and, if I was super-critical, I’d tell you it was painted the wrong colour -- orange versus the correct ‘brownie flesh’ -- now doesn’t that sound appealing?! But I’m not, so I won’t.)



Get your Thumbs out!

It was now getting dark and time for us to get back to Paris. Easier said, than done. The program said the train station was just a 10 minute walk but we’d been hearing horror-stories all day of it being more like an hour and 10 minutes so we decided to hitch-hike out of the park to the train station. But no one would pick us up. Now, understand, we aren’t hitching on a public road, at night, rather we’re standing in the main field where 1/2 of the DS’s parked and were all being driving down this lovely little country dirt road at, literally, 5 mph. There is not a single person in the entire park that is not a “Friend of the DS” but still no one stopped. And I’d even shaved that morning.

So we ventured to the entrance but not a single official could tell us how to get to the train station, or even point to its direction. Thankfully, we thought, DS seats do fold into nice comfy beds.

Finally, one of the staff people drives us to the park's entrance and they point to a bus shelter across the street. After a while an autobus does come, takes coins and drops us off right in the station. Voila!

Still going...

But the night is not over as we get a call from Doug Pengelly (who organized the DS drive to the 50th meet in Sacramento from Toronto) and girlfriend Ann-Marie who we meet at 10:30 -- a proper Parisian dining time. Lovely Moroccan food and finally hit the hay at 1:38am.

DS sightings today = 500+

Saturday, October 8

Up Late

After a nice late start to the day we ventured off to the Cite, Science & Industry Museum to see the 'much talked about' DS exhibit. And what an exhibit it was.

Standing, pointing to the heavens was a reconstruction of the DS spaceship. In all its silvery glory it certainly played its part; even the underbody was perfectly streamlined.

Inside the exhibit included:

- great early promotional movies,
- a fantastically simple 'moving' display of how hydro-pneumatic suspension works,
- a 1968 DS 21 Pallas with its doors removed so you could sit on its sumptuous black leather,
- the famous cut-up DS,
- a black government Prestige complete with glass partition,
- a rally racer,
- a 1966 DS 21 Chapron Decapotable (that looked deceptively like my own but with incorrect body trim (oops, too critical),
- a 1975 DS 23 IE,
- a perfect late model Safari wagon, and a
- scrumptious 1960 DS 19 in yellow and aubergine. Finally,
- a huge DS model collection presented as beautiful wall art.



Should we Stay or Should we Go?

Now ... it was getting late in the day and the DS grounds were exactly 180 degrees away from us and completely across the city ... but what the hell, we'd be nuts and take a

couple hours to get there, and have, maybe, 1 1/2 hours of daylight left before we had to cross our fingers and find our way back to the train station. But we did fly 12 hours for a long weekend to Paris to immerse ourselves in all that is DS, so that exactly what we did. But this time we were smart and took a bus from the station and noted where the bus stop was!



Everyone Who Was Anyone was There

We soon met up with our own Publisher/ Editor-in-Chief, Larry Dwyer and globe-trotter Clark Rogers avec friend. There was now a new brace of early DS's in Gris Rose with turquoise roofs & 'C' panels, and bright blue interiors -- identical so the famous Paris Match magazine cover announcing the DS with Gina Lollobrigida. Sadly, Gina -- or reasonable facsimile -- was nowhere to be seen.

Back to Work

Again, John, Lon and I hit the field of D's, and we hit it hard! Both John and Lon were on a hunt for their favourite colour as both have a 'paint job' in their future.

Chapron Pecking Order

We would, more times than not, stop and talk to everyone but one conversation was really 'interesting'. John said to someone that I had a Chapron and the gentleman seemed impressed -- "What model?" "A 1967 usine*", I replied. "Oh", was all he said in a dejected voice and walked away. "Tough crowd", John said. (** a Usine is a "factory" Chapron-convertible -- they were designed and built in the Chapron-factory but marketed through the Citroen dealerships. Chaprons, such as the Palm Beach or LeMans were specially ordered from Chapron directly and are subsequently rarer).*)

It was also really neat to see a lot of D's I'd seen in other newsletters, books and websites. There was the highly original French fire-engine support 1959 ID 19



break; the

very rare Slough-built Safari.

Tony Stokoe's Right-Hand-Drive usine convertible in a luscious medium blue. And we even saw 3 American front DS's -- one with an Iowa plate! We meet a Swedish gentleman who restored his 1960 DS 19 and drove it to the meet. He had restored it 10 years before and shared with us the most amazing restoration tip: His original interior was not ripped but dirty and the blue colour

had faded over the past 40 years. So his furniture maker friend said all you need to do is carefully take the material off the seats, wash them in the washing machine, and re-stitch them by using the same holes. And it worked: they truly looked brand new. Those ingenious Swedes!

Half an Inch, or Two Centimeters?

By the time we finished the evaluation of the functionality, beauty, and proper distance between the leading edge of the hood and the front bumper, we called it a day. Especially since Lon had his flashlight out for us to check roof colours (is it really aubergine or is it just black? -- anoraks, anyone?)

As we walked back to the bus stop we could see row, after row, after row of DS's lined up in the huge parking lot out front -- all facing the same way. All shimmering in the moonlight. I thought that this is what it must have looked like at the factory when hundreds of new cars were queued up outside. And, as a crowning glory to another spectacular day of DS'ing we walked out the gate to find a nice, new, Skoda taxi parked, seemingly, just for us.

DS Sighting today = 1,000+

Sunday, October 9

Day 4: The Parade of Parades

I've never been very keen on parades but Sunday morning we were all up early, consumed our traditional 'carb-filled' breaky of bread, bread and more bread (all delicious!), and ventured out to find the ultimate location to shoot photos from. We ended up on the Alexandre Bridge but, as John was shooting stereo with his 1929 3D camera, we really needed more depth and perspective so dashed into a cab to the parade's beginning: the Arc de Triomphe.



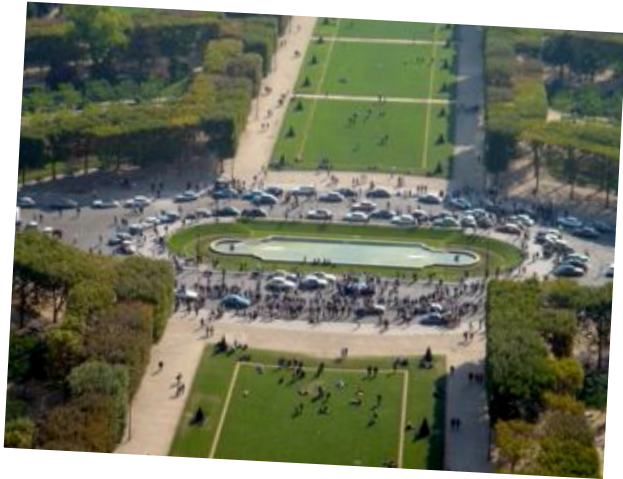
And what a start it was!

It was sort of like controlled chaos ... DS' s, in lines of two, honking, flashing their lights, people hanging out of their windows, some with flags, some with wine (OK, I made up the wine part but I'm sure it happened) -- and everywhere there were smiling, happy people. And I do mean everywhere. Hundreds, no make that thousands, lined the route.

Even at one point the cars had to narrow down to one lane because of the throngs of DS well-wishers.

Warm & Sunny

John and I followed the route on foot all the way through the tree-lined streets (*God Paris is beautiful*) to the finale, where else, the Tour Eiffel. The cars were to disperse at this point but many just parked anywhere, all over. Who would have the audacity to write a ticket on such a grandiose day?



And it was there, at the base of the Eiffel Tower where a spontaneous 'mini-meet' began. I decided to walk up the Tower (to the 2nd stage!) to shoot some pix's of the DS's far below. The real cool part was in looking out in any direction and you'd see 5 or 6 DS's here, 2 or 3 there, driving through the streets: I thought this is what it must have looked like 25 years ago (but avec 2cv's too).

Hour after Hour D's Streamed By

I came back down after an hour and still they kept coming. The only negative to the day was when we headed back after lunch to the Tower to see more D's (can you believe we still hadn't had our fill!) and

we noticed that even though it was 75 degrees out there was no one on the tower; it was then we noticed the whistles, and the police moving everyone back from the tower. We felt this was a strong signal that DS'ing was done for the day and we wandered off into those gorgeous streets.

Vins Des Pyrebees

The grande finale was dinner with fellow DS enthusiasts: Larry, Clark, Lon, Ron Elliot and his friend Mark, Doug, Ann-Marie, Clark's friend and my brother John and I. Lon gave a wonderful and impassioned champagne (what else!?) toast to the Goddess's 50th birthday and we all chased it down with fabulous French delicacies.

The Super Bowl

And, now that I've gone to the Super Bowl, I just can't imagine what could ever top this? Perhaps when I'm 96 at the DS's Centennial? Hope to see you there.

Greg Long

DS sightings today = 1,600+

