

# Lotus Lines

Evergreen Lotus Car Club

April-June 2001

## Sun International's Lotus Elise

Photography by Josh Jacquot

Reprinted from <http://www.sportcompactcarweb.com>

It's as coarse and undiluted as a concert hall filled with Limp Bizkit fans on crack, and just about as refined. It's also quite easily the most entertaining car we've ever experienced and without question one of the most unique automobiles on the planet. Sun International's Lotus Elise, with a Honda B18 stuffed neatly in place of the original Rover K-series engine, makes no apologies for being the most fun-to-drive car in the world.

British and Japanese engineering join American capitalist instinct in the most raw, pure and potent car we've ever driven by Josh Jacquot

It speaks to the pure, hard-core car enthusiast in all of us like no other car we've driven. It's as simple, light and uncompromised as a modern automobile can be and still be called a car. Plus, it's blindingly quick. Not quick like a Lancer or WRX. It's doesn't have that go-anywhere-on-any-road kind of speed that we love so much at Sport Compact Car. It's a different sort of thing altogether. Take the spirited, fun loving nature of the Miata, cross it with the dynamics and power delivery of a shifter kart and turn it loose on the road with a shapely and ultra-lightweight Fiberglas body. That's Sun International's Lotus Elise.

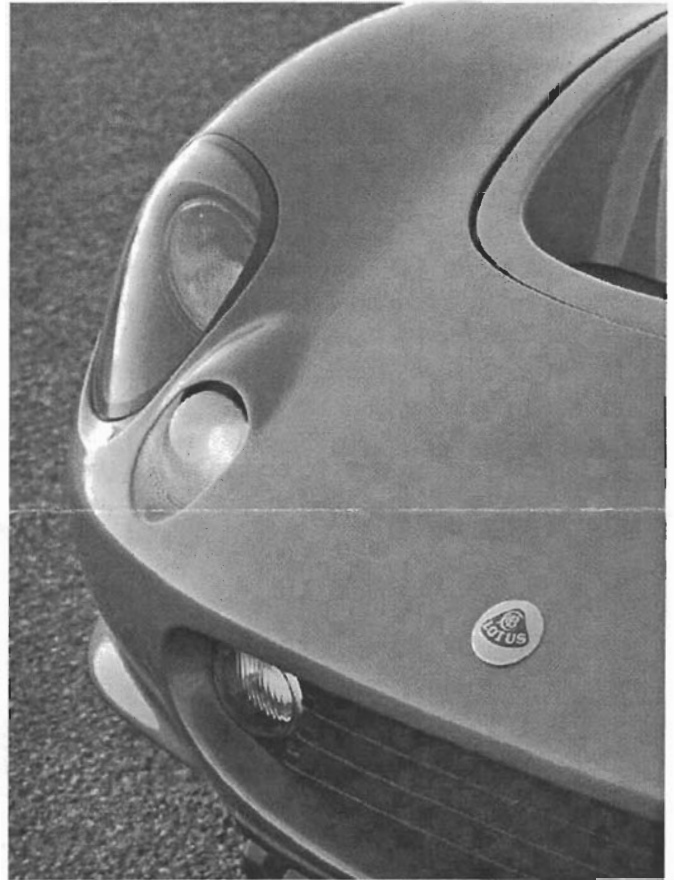
Go

Describing the Lotus's power delivery is going to sound familiar to anyone who reads SCC very often. We've already dedicated far too many pages of this journal to describing how well the B18C5 (yes, the Type R engine) motivates the aging Integra chassis. What we haven't done is tell you what it sounds like 18 inches behind your head in the plastic-bodied Elise. It's weird, it's loud and it's fast.

First up, the noise. If you like the sound of Honda's high-overlap B-series engines, you'll like what you get in the Elise. Although the two cars we drove had slightly different intake configurations, there's no escaping the Honda engine note above 6000 rpm. In the Elise, however, it's not damped by the firewall or hood. In fact, it resonates through the little car's plastic body like a fire alarm in a steel culvert.

With all that noise comes the most insane, Honda-motivated acceleration we've been part of. Luckily, it's not just the Honda engine that makes the tarmac disappear so rapidly under the British roadster's flanks. The rest of the Type R drivetrain is working inside the Lotus chassis as well. The entire Type R transaxle, including the Helical limited-slip differential, hides beneath the Lotus's bonnet. That means, and we've said this before, every shift at redline places the engine right back in VTEC-land where it can once again pound back to speed without the delay of a cam switchover. It also means the Lotus is graced with one of the most effective and livable limited slips available today.

Standing on the gas around a corner gave us the results we had always hoped for in this car. Even before the cam switch, the Elise will power sideways with controlled authority. This little car speaks a



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## From the Chair

Hello, one and all, and welcome to the summer driving season. With driving events in June and August, and car-showing-off events in July, all we need to do is hope for good weather. Of course, we can always expect rain the first morning of the SOVREN Vintage races 4th of July weekend. But other than that, let's pray for sunshine.

New for this summer will be a better than ever canopy for our use at SIR and the ABFM. Compliments of Jim Taylor (just ask him), I'm sure this beauty will provide even more shade (or rain protection) than ever before. Sorry Jim, I couldn't resist "outing" you.

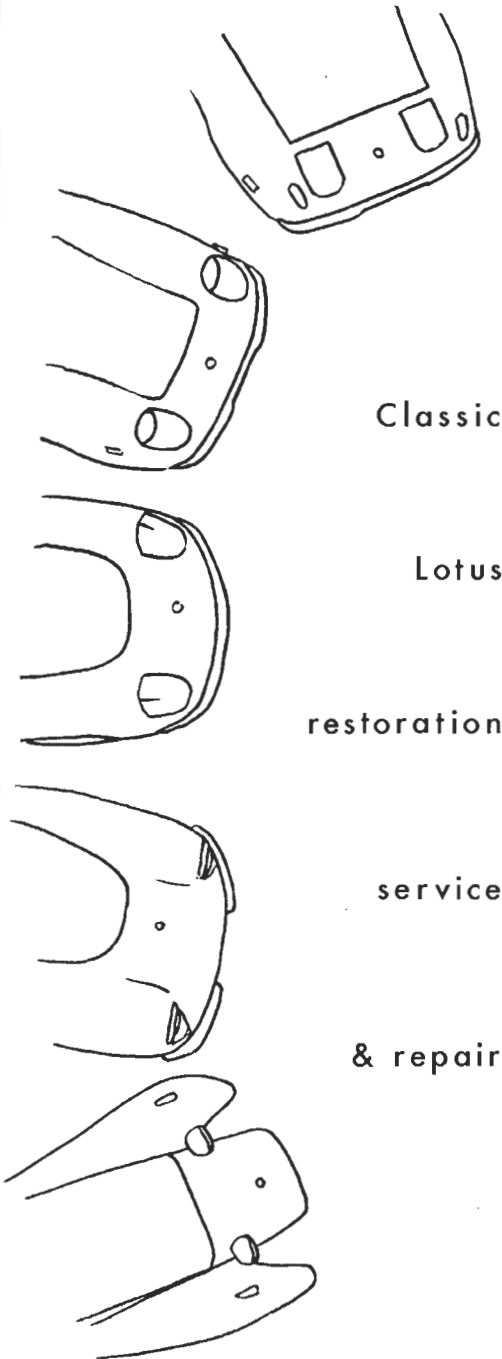
As I mentioned, our June event will be a fun drive in the environs south of Issaquah. Look for details elsewhere in this issue, but we'll be meeting for fueling (Starbucks) and then heading off for a couple hours driving through the best roads in the area. In August, we'll be back to the other side of the Sound, where David & Virginia Caley will be organizing and hosting a rally in their area. This should be a wonderful event, as it was a few years back. Be sure to put it on your calendar.

In Lotus news, many of you may have heard that the M250 project has been scrapped. This is a sad turn for Lotus, who has really been on a tear with the critical and financial success of the Elise, and the additional kudos received for the 340R. The company appeared poised to deliver yet another strong product in the M250, but have decided to totally revise the car to make it more suitable for world markets. The positive spin to all this is that Lotus claims all future cars will be designed for global release and legalization. Don't hold your breath, but let's hope this is true.

Well, that's it from these parts. I hope we'll see lots of people through the summer, as well as those lovely little cars.

Cheers to all,

Dave Billings



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# Pacific Northwest Historics July 6-8, 2001 @ SIR

Phil Smart Mercedes-Benz Presents  
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**PACIFIC NORTHWEST HISTORICS**



**VINTAGE RACES**

For the something-something consecutive year, the ELCC will be participating in the Car Corral at the Pacific Northwest Historics. This year's celebrity driver will be Dan Gurney, with the featured hardware being American Powered V-8 Racing Cars, just perfect for the ELCC. We'll be picking a place to meet for lunch for those interested, and will otherwise walk around and drool at (and sometimes on) the beautiful machinery gracing the paddock and track.

I'll be making calls to the Car Corral regulars, but anyone wishing to participate in this should call or e-mail me at 206-241-2116 / bilcoh@home.com. Tickets for the driver and car are \$20/1 day, or \$35/2 days with the 3rd day being free. Prices for general admission are the same as the Car Corral.

See you there,

Dave

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For race information (206) 389-5200 or visit our website at [www.sovren.org](http://www.sovren.org)

## ABFM UPDATE

Entry Forms for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Washington All British Field Meet have been mailed. If you have not received yours please contact Arnie Taub at 425-644-7874 or by email: [ataub@worldnet.att.net](mailto:ataub@worldnet.att.net)

Remember to have your entry post marked before June 28, 2001 to qualify for the \$500.00 prize drawing for early entries.

On Sunday July 29<sup>th</sup> we are having a Continental Breakfast and Tour of Pat Hart's Car Collection

The cost is 10.00 per person. This is a great opportunity to see some one of a kind cars, great fossils and much more.

If you would like to attend please send a check made payable to:

The Puget Sound British Automotive Society

17610 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Place

Bellevue, WA 98008

Please include a phone number and your return address

If you have any questions please call Arnie Taub 425-644-7874 or E-Mail [ataub@worldnet.att.net](mailto:ataub@worldnet.att.net)

Thank You

Arnie & Sue Taub

*(Continued from page 1)*

language we understand. Its tongue is part Miata, part Lotus, part Honda and part full-on racecar. All of which becomes immediately obvious from behind the wheel.

We won't waste your time rambling on about power-to-weight ratios and loony acceleration numbers. Those things aren't what this car is all about. The Elise is about the experience of uncompromised driving pleasure. Besides, the numbers are so good there's no point in that kind of hair-splitting here. Want to beat the car beside you to the next stoplight?

No problem, mash the gas and go. Nothing short of a Porsche Turbo or Corvette Z06--neither of which could provide the minimalist driving experience of the Elise--will keep up.

#### Turn

Up to this point, our benchmarks for dynamics in small cars have been Mazda's wonderful Miata and Toyota's different, but equally capable, MR2 Spyder. There's no comparison with an Elise. It's got the chassis rigidity the Miata can only hope for and the suspension the MR2 deserves--with weight that makes both camps green with envy. It's a straightforward, no-holds-barred cornering machine.

In fact, its focus is so evident it makes our first-generation Miata project car feel like a couch by comparison. And it's not just the suspension that sends that message. Every surface of the Elise serves a purpose, every angle of its body fits that purpose and every driver interface is sharp and precise. The Miata is a toy, while the Elise is a tool. Bend the Elise through a slalom and every input and correction seems second nature. Balancing power with grip is an intuitive compromise in this car--everything just works right together. It's as if the B18 was meant to be there from the beginning--at least as far as the dynamics are concerned.

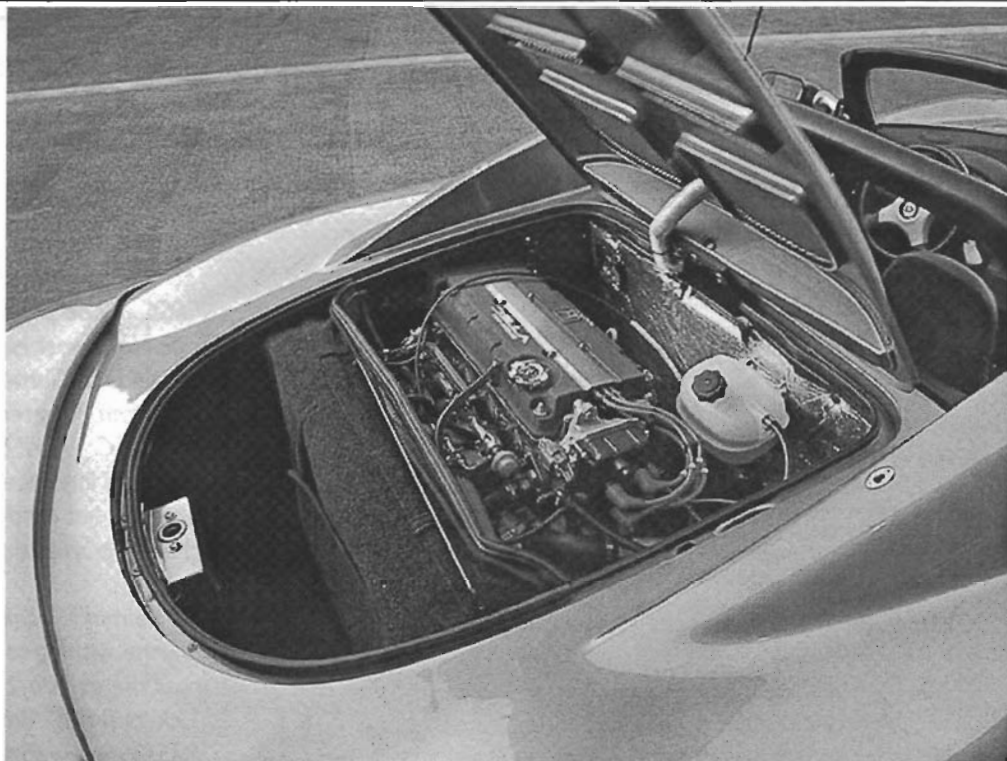
Our time with the car was too short to offer a comprehensive look at the car's road manners. But we have enough seat time to be confident of one thing. The shortcomings of a car this size are easily overlooked by spending two minutes behind the wheel. Even without 200 hp (stock Elises come with 120 hp), this is a lot of car. There's no doubt that Colin Chapman's philosophy drove the design of the Elise.

If there is any area to fault, it's the Elise's lack of suspension travel; we noticed it bottoming on very small bumps. However, that's a shortcoming common to almost any car this size--and the only one we could find.

#### Purity

The best part? The simple lack of unnecessary crap. And we mean that in the most appreciative way. After squirming over the wide sill (necessary for the huge rigidity present here but rarely found in other roadsters), our hind ends found comfort and support in a simple piece of aluminum covered with leather. The beauty is in the details. The seats are hard as hell, there's no question about it. Their design, the shape of the aluminum and the placement of the one or two pieces of padding, is exacting and perfect. They're simple and decidedly effective just like the rest of the car.

The seats are just the beginning. The whole car follows this theme. In fact, the driving experience is so overwhelming we can't even recall if our test car had a radio. The driving is simply that involving. Nothing matters except the next corner. During testing of the Elise, we found ourselves asking why other cars can't be this good. And, without hesitation, we reached one simple conclusion time after time. Weight. Or to be more precise, lack of weight.



*(Continued on page 5)*



(Continued from page 4)

With the exception of a Lotus Europa, which was built with the benefit (if one chooses to see it that way) of 1960s-era safety standards, this is the lightest car we've driven. At 1,710 lbs., there's simply no room for excess. No air conditioning, no spare tire, no power anything. It takes driving back to what it should be--the simplest of interactions between man and machine.

The lack of weight is evident everywhere in the Elise. Its doors and A-pillar must be handled with care; their paper-thin construction makes one instantly aware of their fragility. Don't lean on the body or hang on the door or you'll likely end up with pile of broken Fiberglas. Don't plan on being babied with amenities or catered to in any way. The Elise was designed with one focused goal--hard, fast driving

It doesn't like to be coddled either. Sure, there's room for mechanical empathy, but we get the feeling from our test that this car likes a beating. We pounded it up and down our test facility for more than an hour without a break. Short shifting is pointless as the B18 feels right at home at 8000 rpm--which, incidentally, is the last increment on its Stack tachometer. So our technique--bury the tach and shift, bury the tach and shift--took some time to get used to, but was truly enjoyable.

It's loud, it's buzzy and it has its share of harshness. But none of that matters. We would have given anything for a 500-mile road trip in this car. It's just that much fun.

**Conversion**

No, not the religious kind, although this car makes us think about it. The conversion we're concerned with here is from Rover's conservative, but adequate for a 1,700-lb. car, K-series engine to Honda's raging B18C5. Tom Cahalane, the Elise program director at Sun International came up with the idea after a customer brought in a car with the stock engine.

The rest became obvious in a hurry. The Honda mill fit, made ample power and was relatively light--sort of a no-brainer, if you ask us.

Apparently, Cahalane thought so too as there are now a handful Honda-powered Elises running around. The entire conversion runs about \$55,000--not exactly pocket change, but a reasonable price when considering the company this car keeps from a performance standpoint. Not to mention, with a Type R-powered Elise, all owners will be driving one of the most rare and unique cars on the road. Cahalane said Sun can build the cars at a rate of about one per week, so it looks like their owners will remain in a fairly exclusive club.

If you're not satisfied with the 195 hp from the stock engine, Sun will custom build a B18 specifically for your Elise. Possible upgrades include higher compression, a lighter flywheel, modified VTEC switchover points, a baffled oil pan and a displacement increase up to 2.0-liters. Sun is also working on a carbon fiber muffler, which will scratch 13 lbs from the weight of the stock Elise exhaust currently in use, as well as a free-flow catalytic converter.

We can't imagine why anyone would want more power. Sure, there's always going to be someone with a faster car--so what? This car defines driving pleasure. It's quicker and more agile than almost all of today's road cars and likely rivals many racecars dynamically. Plus, where else could you defy two continents full of brand-loyal purists? It'll have the Lotus and Honda camps riled up for years to come.

Like we said, it's just that good.

'99 Lotus Elise by Sun International	
<p><i>Estimated Price : \$55,000</i></p> <p><b>Engine</b>  <i>Engine Code : B18C5</i>                      Type : In-line four, aluminum block and head                      Valvetrain : DOHC, four valves per cylinder, VTEC variable valve timing                      Displacement : 1797 cc                      Bore &amp; Stroke : 81.0mm x 87.2mm                      Compression Ratio : 10.6:1                      Horsepower : 195 hp at 8000rpm                      Torque : 130 lb-ft at 7500 rpm                      Redline : 8400 rpm</p> <p><b>Drivetrain</b>                      Layout : Tranverse, mid-engine, rear-wheel drive                      Transmission : Gear Ratios                      1 : 3.230:1                      2 : 2.105:1                      3 : 1.458:1                      4 : 1.107:1                      5 : 0.848:1                      Final drive : 4.400:1                      Differential : Helical limited slip</p> <p><b>Exterior dimensions</b>                      Curb Weight : 1,710 lbs.                      Weight Distribution F/R : 38/62                      Overall Length : 146.7 in.                      Wheelbase : 90.6 in.                      Overall Width : 66.9 in.                      Track F/R : 56.6 in./57.4 in.                      Height : 45.2 in.</p>	<p><b>Suspension</b>                      Front : Upper and lower control arms, anti-roll bar                      Rear : Upper and lower control arms</p> <p><b>Brakes</b>                      Front : 11.1-inch vented rotors, fixed two-piston opposing calipers                      Rear : 11.1-inch vented rotors, single-piston sliding calipers</p> <p><b>Wheels and Tires</b>                      Wheels : Front: 15x5.5                      Rear: 16x7.0                      Tires : Front: 185/55-15                      Rear: 205/50-16</p> <p><b>Performance</b>                      Acceleration                      0-30 mph : 2.1 sec.                      0-60 mph : 5.1 sec.                      30-50 mph : 1.8 sec.                      50-70 mph : 2.4 sec.                      Quarter Mile : 13.2 sec. @104</p> <p><b>Handling</b>                      Slalom speed (700 ft.) : 70.1 mph</p> <p><b>Braking</b>                      60-0 stopping distance : 133 ft</p>



# Issaquah Fun Drive

On Sat. June 23rd, the ELCC will be traveling some of the better country lanes south of Issaquah. Winding around the Cougar and Tiger Mountains, there will be scenic countryside and spirited driving through the twisties. Route maps and directions will be provided. We'll be meeting at 9:30am at one of the many Starbucks in Issaquah. Check below for specifics. The drive will start at 10am, and last for roughly 2 hours, after which, those interested will gather for lunch. Remember to bring you cameras for calendar photo ops. Hope to see you there.

What: Issaquah Fun Drive  
When: Sat. June 23rd @ 10am  
Where: Meet at Starbucks @ 9:30am

### Directions to Starbucks:

Starbucks - Issaquah Meadows  
1460 NE Gilman Blvd.  
Issaquah, WA 98027  
(425) 427-1890

From I-90 East, take exit #15 East, Highway 900 toward Renton. Turn right on 17th Ave. and get in left turn lane. Turn left on Gilman Blvd. Starbucks will be on the left within the first block.

# ABFM & Olympic Drive

We have 2 great events coming up in late July and August. The ABFM is in its 13th year, and once again will be held at Bellevue Community College. This year's salute will be to the MG. All ELCC members should have received an entry form in the mail. For more information on this event, check online at <http://www.abfm.com/abfm.htm>, or call Arnie Taub at 425-644-7874. Hopefully, the weather will be cooperative, and we can have a strong ELCC showing.

In August, David and Virginia Caley will be welcoming the club out to their house and putting on a rally around their environs. More details will follow, but be sure to put this on your calendar. Aug. 18th, at 11am, there is scheduled to be an exceptionally low tide, which is quite spectacular from the Caley's beach-front home. The drive will commence somewhere after 12pm, trying to allow plenty of time for those crossing the Sound on the ferries. For anyone wanting to drive around and up the peninsula, David said he could offer a route that uses some lovely back roads to make it more enjoyable.

Hope to see you all at these 2 events.

ELCC 2001 Event Calendar	
June 23rd	Issaquah Fun Drive
July 6-8	Vintage Races & Car Corral at SIR
July 28	ABFM at Bellevue Community College
August 18	Olympic Rally, hosted by the Caley's
Sept. 15	TBD
Oct. 13	Calendar Photo Selection Social
Nov. 3	Computer Gaming Social - Racing and Flying



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Questions? Please contact the Editor.

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New Old Stock, Lotus original Elan S1/S2 body and galvanized chassis. Includes all body parts; F&R bumpers, doors, headlight pods, hood (bonnet) and trunk (boot), and chassis bolt kit. May sell separately if I have a buyer for both. \$8500 obo for all. Buyer arranges and pays for shipping (will help as much as I can from my end). Already crated from when it was shipped from England, so no crating costs. Located in the Seattle area, Dan Morrison ([danmo@yahoo.com](mailto:danmo@yahoo.com)), 425-379-6330 (h), 425-444-1628 (cell)

**New and used parts.** Sell/trade. New parts purchased from The Roadster Factory. I'm reconstructing a 1968 Series III Lotus Seven. Looking for early Spitfire uprights with trunnions and steering arms, disc brakes with calipers and other English Ford or British Leyland parts for the Seven. I can use worn non-functioning parts for location "jigs". Please call Andre in Seattle at 206-528-8141.

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**Evergreen Lotus Car Club**

P.O. Box 40481  
Bellevue, WA 98015-4481

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webmaster@fastcorner.com  
Editor: Dan Morrison (425) 379-6330  
danmo@yahoo.com

**Membership** in the ELCC is \$20/year and is prorated in three month increments. This includes a club roster and twelve issues of *Lotus Lines* per year.

**Club Website** <http://www.elcc.org>



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(Classified Ads. continued from page 7)

rebuildable Stock Supergrip Hose clamps, LU69220 Horn (Low note), 501488 Water Pump (grease fitting style), LUNCB100 Regulator (screw lead), LUDLB101 Coil HP 12 45212B 11 74, LUG4012 Generator 22700 J 65 C40, Stock steel wheels (7).

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Axle Case (empty), Axle with differential and 7" drum brakes

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