

I'm 5 VD 73

It was fifty years ago today...

## The Lennon Phantom



A story told by the Phantom itself –  
written down by its friend Stephan E. Weidlich

***Life is what happens while you are busy  
making other plans.***

John Winston Lennon

Now is the 1st of August in 2017 and I am standing in the spotlight again. Since three days I am now in this hall in London. Face to face there is an older colleague, behind him another. At the end of the hall, where all people are coming in, there is a younger RR-partner exhibited. For heaven's sake, where had I been stranded. They call us the Great Phantoms. Since years I am standing lonely in a warehouse on an island near Vancouver and I am rusting. Yes, I am rusting and it seems that nobody take an interest in this. Is this a good life? 52 years ago it began very promising.

I was ordered at the 21st of december in 1964. Ok, human beings will do it another way, but I was ordered. I think, I should be something very special. This place where I was born generates

only the most wonderful and best cars in the whole world. And I was a very special and not often ordered model. Only a few persons were able to afford and this John Lennon seemed to be a very special person - so I could find out later. He really wants me and he had so many good ideas how I should be. Perhaps he allows something to himself so short before Christmas. He could do and I think he was deeply impressed and convinced in cause of my beauty. He had the possibility and he took a chance of it. He could imagine his dreamcar and therefore ordered all the details he was dreaming of. So I became to this what I am: a Rolls-Royce Phantom V.

I was a wonderful extremely elegant Phantom V from H. J. Mulliner Park Ward in black, no, I must specialize: in *Valentines Black*. You know: black is beautiful. Also the wheel discs must be painted black including the centre hubs itself. In modern times everything will come again. Black fellows are in right now, aren't they? Even in those days John Lennon was a visionary. The upholstery was carried out with black leather to

the frontseats and black Bedford Cord on the rear seats, occasional seats and doors.

The woodwork had to be black leather covered. Any woodwork that may be showing must be in darkest grain possible. Triplex Deeplite glass had to be used to backlight quarters, rear door windows and division, therefore no one could take a look into the passengers quarter.

There had to be a trigger action manual blind to division.

John ordered two fully automatic Hirschmann electric aerials. One for the radio, the other for use with TV set with a Perdio Portable television receiver to lower part of division cabinet with cocktail cabinet above containing two decanters and four glasses. The finish of division and cabinet as per drawing No 2003/AZ approved – you can never know.

The radio controls had to be fitted in offside rear armrest. There had to be fitted a mirror to rear compartment to fold down from the roof on the offside. John needed a detachable writing table on rear armrest – type as indicated on drawing No 1113. The writing table is to be fitted for the offside passenger only and housed in offside occasional seat.

You are thinking John had ordered all these things at the 21st of december in 1964? You are wrong. During the pleasure of anticipation John had cogitated over me and what he could do with and within myself. So beginning at 26th of january in 1965, he gave the details of his wishes and the special orders to the Rolls-Royce dealer. This one would have been very lucky. Nearly every week a change.



John Lennon ordered for the rear compartement a rear Nylon Rug to pattern in black. This was very comfortable for me when people with dirty shoes will come in.

Sometimes even a Rolls-Royce will be assembled and ready for delivery. So I was

handed over to John in 1965 on the 3rd of June. He was so delighted with me and I was expecting my interesting life. You know? The real pleasure of anticipation will be to work out all your ideas and fantasies. Like the enthusiasts of a railway model: You will be planing and you wanted to be a hobby constructor with the rails and build up a railway line. But when you are ready it is in a way devoid of interest. You had your fun but know it is over in a special manner. I think this happend to John after the delivery.



While fashion is changing very fast in the sixties and the Beatles were a significant part of this development, John had the very best idea for me in 1967. Everything was coloured and gay, Sgt. Pepper was bright, the Sgt. Pepper uniforms were coloured but I was only totally black. John said, we could change this. In those days there were those Gipsy caravans painted with coloured flowers. Perhaps John was inspired by this as he gave the order to J. P. Fallon Ltd. to transform myself to a work of art, that would split the whole Rolls-Royce world and at least would make myself to the most valuable and important car of the world. Therefore it must be allowed to praise myself.

On the 25th of May in 1967 in a way there was my second delivery to John – now in my true covering. I saw myself in a mirror and I must say that I was looking extremly good. But im June 1967 I was not allowed to take part in a Concours d'elegance in London. I was shocked. I was discriminated against because I was coloured. We had to tell those people that exactly fifty years later I would be the highlight of a Rolls-Royce exhibiton at Bonhams in even this London. But in those day I might be to progressive. So John Lennon himself had a lot of fun with me just in cause of the colour and he would use me with great pleasure.

In january of the year 1968 I was shipped to America where I could find my new home. Well, I has often lend out to Bob Dylan, The Moody Blues, The Rolling Stones and other curios



people – I don't know and I could hardly believe it. You should never lend out your car! But if you do it, don't give it to The Rolling Stones. Hey, these guys will destroy all and everything. You don't know what I lived through with these persons. In those times I received the one or other bump in my bodywork. Of course, from where else should they be when not from these Rolling stones? I was a little bit troublesome with the boys. They could have informed their insurance. Well, now it became obsolete. But in a way those former times in America where damned well-off. I could tell you stories. You won't believe me. So it will be better to hold my tongue.



It seemed to me that John didn't see my bumps. Otherwise he had never lend me out further. I think and hope so. But in New York where John and Yoko were living now they did not really need me any longer. So in 1977 I was donated to the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. This must have been a special deal in a tax business. For me the only probable reason to give me away.

Attention: Now a little bit of malicious pleasure: this museum was even not able to pay the insurance for my exhibition. What's that? But unfortunately this was the beginning of the tragedy in my life. It might be bad enough when your dad will give you away to foreign people when are just twelve years old in the beginning puberty. This would be a time you have lots of problems with yourself and to loose your parents in addition is very hard. If you recognize that your new guardian even had no money for your insurance, what should you think as a young car?

Could it be worse? Yes, it could be. Because they had no money, they locked me away. Somewhere in a dark warehouse in Maryland or where ever, I was crying lonely and I was ignored. In course of all my sorrow and sadness I begun to rust. In those tragical days I could not believe, what a perfidious game about richness and money they will play with a poor car. I never

forget the 29th of January in 1985 when I was sold by auction. Only a few months before my 20th birthday I came under the hammer at Sotheby's. Not a real hammer only the hammer of the auction, you know? Jimmy Pattison should have payed 2,2 Millionen US-Dollar for me. I had to be a piece for an exhibition. Now I would spend a life without love and understanding. I call it misuse of a charge. But this was not enough humiliation for me. No, only one year later I was donated again. Now I had to go to Canada, I had to go into the cold. Now I was standing in the Royal British Columbia Museum in Vancouver. Now and then I was carried to an exhibition and the people took a look at me with astonishment. But I was not loved by anyone. Or perhaps I was wrong?

Could there be a good man in the far Canada? Someone, who was able to take care of me? Yes, there was. One day Jim Walters was ordered for maintenance and perservation.

In 1976 Jim founded Bristol Motors in Vancouver, British Columbia and he is a specialist for Rolls-Royce und Bentley. At last he was the professional, who had the knowledge to take care of me.

There was a lot of work to do for Jim. At first I needed mechanical maintenance, to guarantee my mobility. Moreover there were several problems with my paintwork. My special colour had to be protected doing the restoration. These works are very time spending and you could only take care for a single part of it.



My coloured paintwork is very sensitive and it could take damage by ultra-violet rays, humidity and other environmental factors. You ask yourself: Is it allowed to restore me and if it is, what and how much could you do. What about the originality if you renew a part which otherwise will be once complete destroyed by rust.

I don't know anything about the financial and technical ways a museum could bring up. If they

had the money they also had to be willing to invest it into a car standing in a warehouse for the most time. If they don't have the money this had to be proclaimed and discussed in public. I am sure that in the circle of Rolls-Royce enthusiasts and clubs there must be good helper who will give something and they could do it. Perhaps my old mother, Rolls-Royce itself, could help me. I don't want to die.

And today I'm standing here in this hall at Bonhams in London reflecting my life, oh my friends. What should I say? Even after the today opening of the exhibition such a guy came in and stared at me. It was a little bit strange. My first opinion was: Is this a stalker? But no, it is different. I could hardly describe.



I recognized that his name was Stephan and that today he took a special flight from Germany to London only to visit me. He was standing at my side for nearly five hours and we had something like a telepathic connecting. At once I recognized that he could understand me. He was not seeing the coloured exhibited car, he could see my injuries. We had never seen before, but he seemed to know everything about me (I must say nearly everything). Over ten years he tried to visit myself in Vancouver. Oh my friends, I would had been so lucky if someone would had visited me in my lonely warehouse. But there was no one who grudges it myself. Not even Jim could make it true.

I had never such a deeply contact to a human being. I was to be told so many things I had never heard before. The little Stephan at the age of ten years shocked his parents with his birthday wishes. He only wants the Rolls-Royce mascot, the Spirit Of Ecstasy. I have this mascot since my birth. In a way I am painful with his parents. They were only human beings. Stephan never got the mascot.

But I see that these humans could get a nice disease, the Rolls-Royce virus. You seemed to be lost and your subconsciousness always had to work with Rolls-Royce or Bentley. They had

to think it over and over, how they could get such a car. A strange thing but therefore humans cannot rust.



One of the enthusiasts German Rolls-Royce and Bentley collector told Stephan some years ago that his disease started, when he saw the Silver Shadow of his former boss, a so called senator. From now on he had the aim to own such a car himself one time. I think humans with those aims will reach it once. My father, John Lennon, must have been so resoluteness.

When Stephan grow up, he must have been 16 years old, he collected all and everything about Rolls-Royce and Bentley. Everyone who knows him collected articles and photos from the newspapers. So one day he got a photograph of myself with my coloured paintwork. His first reaction was rebellion, just like this old women in London in the sixties. This woman abused and attacked John, why he could do such a thing with a Rolls-Royce. This was what Stephan was thinking at the first time too.



But, the more he knows about my father John, the music of the Beatles and the mind of John Lennon he could understand and he could see, in which way John had changed this world. Stephan at least must recognize that my coloured paintwork is not a sacrilege but it is art of the finest and a magnificent piece of history.



Since so many years I was standing lonely in my warehouse and now I learn so much about the world and so much about my father John. I didn't know that there are so many Rolls-Royce fans which are really enthusiasts and they joined together in a club since 1957, many years before I was born. This club is called RREC. But back to Stephan. As a young man he found his way to this club. It must be a kind of self-help group for infected humans wearing the Rolls-Royce virus.



After his first meetings with the RREC in Germany in the year 1980 and the lovely reception of the members Stephan as a student could be one of the first junior-members. His godfather, Heinrich Heinen, took care of him. Together with Heinz-Günter Schuhl Heinrich Heinen supported in those days the founder of the German Section, Friedhelm Luckenburg, by the organisation of the raising section. It is always a great pleasure to enjoy small or great meetings of wonderful cars in the circle of like-minded people, so called Rolls-Royce and Bentley virus infected enthusiasts. This is the meaning of the club and it shows, that all people are of the same kind in their hobby and their enthusiasm. They are combined in their love for us, their loved cars. I had never seen the humans this way before.



In the early morning of the 29th of July in 2017 one of the now old RREC junior-members,

Klaus Natalis, called Stephan to tell him, that I am in London for only five days as a part of the Rolls-Royce exhibition *The Great Eight Phantoms*. A former RREC junior seemed to live with this enthusiasm for his whole life and he must be connected to the world to get news about Rolls-Royce and Bentley. Thank you Klaus, that's what I will call friendship.

At this moment Stephan knew, that I could never be nearer to Germany ever and he had to use this unique chance. The same day he booked a flight to London for the early morning of the 1st of August 2017 to reach Bonhams in the New Bond Street in time for the opening of the exhibition at 10.00 a. m.. His flight back to Germany would be in the evening of the same day.

So the now very old Stephan (nevertheless he is five years older than me) was standing next to me for nearly five hours. I could feel, that he likes me so much. And I think, I like him to.



Properly Stephan had the hope that a responsible manager from the museum in Vancouver would be with me in London each time. So it would have been possible for him to take a look into my passenger compartment. He was very interested to see the special features in my rear compartment. Well, it was a pity, that Jim Walters was not allowed to travel with me to London. I was really astonished that they send me on such a long and dangerous journey without my experienced old friend. And I think that the organizers from Bonhams were sure that Stephan could find a responsible from the museum next to myself. The wonderful manager of this exhibition, Miss Emma Rickett, Global Lifestyle Communications Manager from Rolls-Royce Motor Cars in Goodwood, tried all and everything to reach one of the for myself responsible persons. But at last there was no response. She also asked in Goodwood, if she was allowed to open my doors herself. Of course, this was impossible because my owner is the museum not Rolls-Royce. In such moments I had the great wish, that I could be

donated for one another time. But this time to the right person. To a person which could understand what I feel and which really wants to save my life for a long time. Stephan did not see my coloured, shining brightness in the the spotlights, he recognized all the little points of rust and ruined paintwork. Is there anybody going to listen to my story?



May be that this is a philosophical question. But if you look at me for several hours you must come to the conclusion, that there must be done something right now. If you have a little bit of knowledge about cars and I really think that many enthusiasts in such a club will be able to see it in this way, you know that the moment has come to spend some money in your car even seeing the results in the paintwork. You must have a foreboding of evil in cause of what should be behind the small spots. What could you do? I was tested in several institutes to find out a possibility to save, conserve or restore my paintwork. I don't know what to do now.



By the way: Rolls-Royce Motor Cars had to lend out cars for an exhibition. Why didn't they build up their own fruitful division for Rolls-Royce vintage cars? I could be their first subject to buy and saving my life. So I could be sure that everything would be done with best practical knowledge ever to save me as a unique, valuable work of art. But where to find a location for such a division and collection? Of course in Solingen (Germany). An allmost passionate and vehement Rolls-Royce enthusiast is living there and he still knows a perfect location in the city to realize the project. Hey, you in Goodwood, you have to think it over very well. You know that it is essential to give all the honour and reputation to your ancestors.



After this intensive meeting Stephan had to fly back to Germany and I will be back in my dark warehouse soon. But from now on we both will think of eachother and we are hoping to meet again – sometimes – somewhere.  
See you. Yours 5VD73.

all pictures by Stephan E. Weidlich 2017

1. Phantom V – 5 VD 73 at Bonhams in London
2. small dauber of blue colour on left frontwing
3. the back side
4. bonnet and right front wing
5. right mirror detail
6. Stephan with his friend 5 VD 73
7. problems in the area between right rear wing and rear door
8. 5 VD 73 at Bonhams
9. bursting painting above right door-lock
10. big rust at the wheel disc front left
11. wonderfull Emma Rickett from RR Motor Cars
12. 5 VD 73 with father John Lennon at Bonhams
13. left side rear window area with paintwork problems to the roof area
14. one of the great Phantoms – 5 VD 73
15. Stephan with his royal Edelness Princess Tiffany, the wonderful, unique and charming

