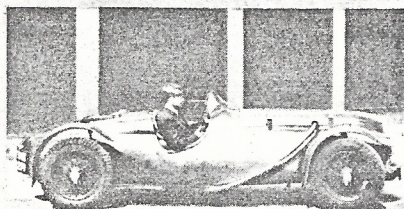


# Roy Lunn—Ford GT to Eagle 4wd



• Born in Richmond, Surrey, England, in 1925, Roy Lunn was an apprentice tool-maker at 14, an RAF pilot trainee at 18 ("They found out I was an engineer before I finished and put me into designing what was the forerunner of the jet engine"), and at 21 a designer (engineer) at AC Cars. A year later he was assistant chief designer at Aston Martin, responsible for the DB2 sports car's design, development, and racing programs, and by '49 was competing himself in Jowett Javelins while developing that maker's Jupiter sports car.

The next move was to Ford of England in '54, and four years later Lunn was heading Ford's U.S. Advanced Vehicles Department in Dearborn. His creation of the stunning Mustang I midship sports-car prototype shown at the '62 Watkins Glen GP led logically to his toughest challenge yet—the Ford GT and Mark Series race cars that would win Le Mans four years straight from 1967 to '70 and World Manufacturers titles in '67 and '68.

Moving to Kar Kraft, Ford's racing shop, Lunn also engineered and built the ground-shaking Boss 429 Mustangs of 1969-70, but in '71 he was wooed away by American Motors to head Jeep Engineering in Toledo, Ohio. We contacted Lunn in his Detroit office, where he is now AMC's engineering vice-president, to discuss the transition from GT to 4wd and his latest creation, the Eagle.

**C/D:** Le Mans to Toledo in one year?

**Lunn:** Well, I'd been in racing since way back with Aston Martin, had gone to Le Mans with them and later with Jowett, and had thoroughly enjoyed going back again with Ford. Doing the racing program is an exciting challenge, especially with the speeds those cars were attaining... like 220 down the back chute... and particularly when you win.

But racing has its disadvantages, and it's not the best occupation for a steady diet, so getting back into production vehicles was kind of fun. Designing something like a CJ-7 to tippy-toe over rocks in the Sierras is a lot different, I know, from going down the back chute at Le Mans, but it involves the same sort of challenge in terms of marrying the machinery together to achieve certain objectives.

**C/D:** They were selling some Gremlins

and Hornets in those days, but the Jeep operation wasn't doing so well. Didn't that concern you?

**Lunn:** I guess I saw a big mountain to climb, which attracted me. Jeep was losing about \$10 million a year at the time, and I'd hate to tell you what it's making now, so there's been a bit of a turnaround. The Cherokee, one of my brainchildren, and the CJ-7 have been instrumental in that, and I'm hoping the Eagle will do similar things for the corporation.

**C/D:** How did the Eagle come about?

**Lunn:** It really started back in 1972. There was this tremendous escalation in the 4wd market, and people were starting to buy them for on-road security as well as off-road capability. We thought that some who wanted that security might prefer a passenger-car body instead of a big, utilitarian body on top, with ride, comfort, convenience, and quietness commensurate with the 2wd vehicles they'd be coming out of. Such buyers, we felt, also wouldn't care much for pushing, pulling, and turning knobs and levers, so we would have to do everything automatically. We built the first prototype to those objectives in 1972, with a Hornet wagon body over a friction-type Quadra-Trac driveline, but it was much too rough and noisy for production.

**C/D:** When was the program revived?

**Lunn:** In late 1976 we had a serious problem. We needed an addition to our product line, and, as in the past, we wanted to get to where the others weren't. I had lunch with Gerry Meyers one day in December, and he said why didn't we look again at the 4wd passenger car.

I'd been following with interest the work of FF Developments in England, formerly the Ferguson Research Company that had designed the units for the old 4wd Jensen cars. They had invented this viscous transfer case back around 1971, chiefly as a traction device for rally cars and special applications such as border patrols in Germany. I went over to see them early in '77 and found they had sold the design rights to GKN in Europe, who in turn had sold the North American manufacturing rights to Chrysler's New Process Gear Division. But I got FF to build some prototype units, which worked fine, then worked with New Process to develop a production version for use in Jeeps as well as the Eagle for 1980.

**C/D:** What's next, 4wd Spirits?

**Lunn:** Obviously, I can't answer that. But I will say that once you build a nest and start hatching, you can hatch more than one set of eggs from the same nest.

—Gary Wittenburg

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