

MIKE HAWTHORN KILLED:

Mike Hawthorn had only sixty hours to live when he was filmed at the National Sporting Club dinner. They called him the Gay Cavalier of motor racing. But gaiety ended for Mike Hawthorn. Life ended too. On the Guildford by-pass he skidded, bumped a lorry, careered onto the verge, hit a tree. It was all over. At 29, world-famous, he met death. Not racing; he'd defeated it there. No, it caught up with him, unawares, on the road.

And it was only sixty hours since they honoured him at the National Sporting Club. They all laughed and wise-cracked as they presented him with a cocktail cabinet. He characteristically invited them all to come round some day and help him to empty it.

It was his very gaiety that concealed from many, that behind the boyish smile lay the determination, without which he could never have been world champion. For example, Silverstone, 1953; his eye fixed on top racing honours; honoured in fact already by being Ferrarier's only driver at the meeting. When he skidded his ice-cool head was equal to the danger. He was back on the track, unperturbed, still in the race.

Mike won the Le Mans twenty-four hours in 1955. Even at this stage they gay cavalier had known tragedy. Only the year before his father was killed, driving home from Goodwood. Mike led the Jaguar team at Le Mans. He got away well but it was the strong Mercedes contingent that made the running. Then, something this generation will never forget. Behind him, two cars collided as he pulled into the pits. More than eighty people were killed. He won, and the inquiry said he was not to blame. Nearly four years later his own Jaguar was smashed against a tree, Mike Hawthorn was dead. The world salutes his memory.....