

After a 57 year build the **1959 Tojeiro** **California Spyder** *is complete.*



John Tojeiro was born in Portugal but was still an infant when his Portuguese father died and his British mother moved back to England. Tojeiro was an aviation engineer in World War II and would become known for designing lightweight racing car chassis, including one of the first with a mid-engine configuration. He also did the chassis for AC Cars that eventually evolved into the platform for the Shelby Cobra.

Late in 1959, as he was wrapping up his work with the engine ahead of the driver, he created the framework for the California Spyder, basically a tube-frame structure much like the one he did for the Ecurie Ecosse team to run as the Tojeiro Jaguar in the 24 Hours of Le Mans, though now with coil springs and concentric tubular shock absorbers fabricated within the front suspension's front and lower A-arms, with a DeDion rear axle located by parallel trailing arms with Watts linkage and coil overs.

According to the Tojeiro Registry, two chassis were created — one to replace a car Ecurie Ecosse crashed at the Nurburgring and a second one with Ferrari California-inspired bodywork designed by Cavendish Morton, who was both an aeronautical engineer and had a fine arts degree from the Royal Academy of Art.

However, after starting to work converting Morton's drawings into sheet metal, Tojeiro got busy with other projects, including a new mid-engine car that would be raced by Stirling Moss.

"The chassis was hanging around forever," John Tojeiro's son, Robin, told Classic Car News in a FaceTime interview from his home in England.

As it turns out, Robin may not have realized just how accurate his words were, because the chassis literally was hanging from a ceiling for many, many years.

Robin explained that the family moved its home and his father also moved his workshop and while the chassis moved along with them, "it was just always there, almost forgotten and pushed in a back corner."

In the 1960s, the chassis (TCAL 59) went to Gilbert Dickson, who ran the Tojeiro Registry. He planned to complete the barchetta, though he never did.

Years later, when John Muller, an artist and advertising executive and successful automotive archeologist who has rediscovered a succession of important but nearly forgotten racing cars, visited Dickson to learn more about a Tojeiro Climax he had acquired, he saw the California Spyder and bought it in 1995.

The wire body buck frame remained in Kansas City with John Muller until 2013. He then sent the chassis to Wisconsin to have the coach work done at Coachsmithing by Allen Buresh. After a 2 1/2 year build the car was picked up in 2015 and sent to Redline Service in Tucson Arizona. The mechanical work, track testing, interior and final details were completed by the Redline Service crew.

