JAGUAR SPRINGS INTO THE FRAY

STORY 30

In July 1969, Dickie Arblaster was called in for a meeting with the General Managers at 45 Orchard Road. They told him and six other managers that Wearnes had just been offered the Jaguar franchise. Did they want it?

Cycle and Carriage, which had held the franchise for many years, had only sold 11 cars in the previous year and was giving it up to concentrate on Mercedes Benz. Jaguar had just launched the new XJ6 series a year before, a huge leap forward in luxury car design, says Arblaster. However, the other managers were not interested in taking it on. They said the car overheated, the Chinese would not go for it because of bad *fengshui,* and so on.

"I said: 'Rubbish! This is a magnificent car. I'll take it on.' I was convinced because I'd read the motoring journals which I always had flown in. I'd read the test reports, and I knew it was a good car. I saw the opportunity and grabbed it."

The next month, he went to Coventry in the UK. "After a splendid lunch and two bottles of good red wine, we signed up the deal, starting 1 January 1970." Within the first five months, Federated Motors, a Wearnes subsidiary, had sold 100 cars. Arblaster says: "We got off to a terrific start and I don't think we've looked back since."