

Putting the nearside rear wheel of our photographer's car down a ditch in the driveway of David Jacobs's country cottage was hardly the right way to get any interview off to a good start! But, with characteristic style — and a voice which has been melting the hearts of his female admirers for many a year — he took charge. A heave and a shove and the car was free.

Jacobs began his broadcasting career in the Navy on the programme *Navy Mixture* in which he did impressions. After a Commander from the Admiralty said his impressions were terrible, although the way he introduced them was rather good, Jacobs was transferred to an office in the Admiralty shared with Lieutenant Jon Pertwee, the two men forming the Navy side of Forces Broadcasting in 1944. Later, he went to work for Radio SEAC in Ceylon and was on Mountbatten's staff before coming back to England to join the BBC as a newsreader.

Since childhood, Jacobs has always been interested in motor cars. His parents had an elderly chauffeur-driven Austin — "which was terribly smart" — and the chauffeur often allowed Jacobs to sit on his lap to steer.

"As a youngster," recalled Jacobs, "I was very keen on learning to drive. When I was in Ceylon I had a friend who owned a Bugatti and I'm afraid that, showing off one day, I said it was mine. But my bluff was called when another friend, with whom I shared a bungalow, was on jury service and got taken ill. He said, 'It's no good, you'll have to take my car and go in my place.' Anyway, I juddered and shuddered and somehow I got there. I then had a motor cycle, which taught me the rules of the road, and I passed my test."

On his return to England in 1948, Jacobs bought his first car, a 1946 Standard 8 Tourer, followed by a Standard Vanguard with a divided front screen, a sloping back, column gearchange and a bench front seat. A Morris Traveller followed as his children had arrived and he needed the space. From that, he went to a Daimler Barker Sports followed by a Ford Zephyr Drophead with an electrically operated hood — "a very good car." Jacobs's next car was a Mk II Jaguar with navy blue coachwork and chrome wire wheels, followed by one of the first E-Types and then a Mk 7 Jaguar and an Alfa Romeo 2600



ME AND MY CAR

JURY SERVICE

Twenty years ago, at the height of his fame as presenter of *Juke Box Jury*, David Jacobs bought a Jensen C-V8. He still has it — Mike Taylor finds out why

Spyder. From the Alfa he went to a Jensen. Why a C-V8?

"I went to the London Motor Show in 1965," said Jacobs, "and saw the most incredible prototype I have ever seen. It was the Jensen drophead. I ordered one there and then and was told that it would be going into production soon and that I would have one of the first. Some time later, Pat Follett of Charles Follett said to me, 'You know the new Jensen is not going to happen. Take a C-V8'. I took one look at it and said, 'I don't want one of those. It's ugly'. Anyway, clever fellow, he lent me one for a weekend and, of course, I was sold. I ordered one and it arrived on 1 January, 1966.

"It is a head-turner. Its shape was contentious then, but now it has a sort of ugly beauty. Today, I think the Interceptor is a very ugly car. It has a sort of cheapness about it. It doesn't have much elegance, whereas I think the C-V8 does.

"I suppose I drive about 30,000 miles a year. I'm driving marginally less now, although until last year I used the Jensen as my sole workhorse. It sat outside my house in London and was never

garaged. But now it is too valuable an asset to leave parked. Also, it doesn't have power steering and since I have a bad neck and shoulders it is heavy to drive around town."

Reliability hasn't been the Jensen's strong point although, as Jacobs said, it is very much as one would expect from a 20-year-old car. With the help of the Jensen Owners' Club, the engine has been rebored and, more recently, the gearbox overhauled. Not bad for a car which has covered around 200,000 miles in its lifetime.

"Although my life has been blighted by car accidents," continued David, "I nevertheless love driving. When I was a boy, I could recognise each make of car instantly. They were all different, a Vauxhall with its fluted bonnet, a Riley with its strangely shaped windows or the Wolseley with its light in the centre of the bonnet. Nowadays, it is difficult to tell one car from another.

One car which made an impression on the young Jacobs was a Cord which, he said, was one of the most wonderful things he had ever seen, with its great pipes protruding from the bonnet.

"Then there was my Uncle Joe," he continued, "who was a very great car man. He had a Hudson Terraplane and then a lovely Armstrong Siddeley. He was so besotted with his cars that, having washed them and put them away in the garage, if it rained he would rather take a taxi than take them out. And I'm a bit the same way. I don't like going out in a dirty car. I always maintain that a clean car goes better."

Why has he kept the Jensen for so long? He has, he said, become attached to it. Even if he wanted to sell it, what could he have afforded as a replacement? Despite its American engine it is, he said, a British motor car and today it is part of the family.

Finally, then, what about a dream car? Does Jacobs harbour a desire for something other than the C-V8? "I would like to have a Bristol because it is a hand-made motor car and is so like the Jensen," he replied. "Lord Barber and I walked out of a building together the other day and his blue chauffeur-driven Bristol was waiting at the kerbside. I said that I coveted it, to which he replied that he would rather have one than a Rolls-Royce. ■