

CLASSIC DRIVER



1955 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL

Lot sold	USD 0	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1955	Condition	Used
Lot number	018	Location	
		Exterior colour	Other
		Car type	Other

Description

PROVENANCE

Current Owner (acquired new by consignor's father in 1955)

THIS CAR

Ever since the introduction of the famed Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Coupe at the New York International Auto Show in early 1954, the Gullwing has been a truly remarkable automobile. The 300 SL, crowned when new as the world's fastest production car, was almost completely hand built, and each of the 1,400 completed is special in its own way.

This Gullwing, chassis 5500080, was scheduled to be constructed in February 1955, when the factory was still fulfilling the backlog of initial orders. A Midwestern publishing executive, who had become smitten with the Gullwing's otherworldly design and prodigious performance statistics, was seeking to acquire an early delivery date. He contacted Chicago's branch of the Hoffman Motor Car Company and, after paying a \$500 fee, 5500080 was destined to be his. He received written confirmation from the Hoffman salesman that the car would be built to his exact specifications, including dark green paint with tan leather, and would be delivered within an acceptable timeframe. The original typewritten invoice, which is included with the car, cites the buyer's acquisition date as March 31, 1955. In addition to the upcharge for the non-300 SL paint color, options including special tires, bumper over-riders, and a signal-seeking radio brought the total cost to \$7,667.

The Gullwing received a small alteration in its early years, when a driver's-side mirror was mounted to the door and a small hole was drilled in the body, just above the rear bumper, to accommodate a ham-radio antenna. Around 1960, the Gullwing was photographed with all of the family's Mercedes-

Benz vehicles, including its stablemate to this day, a 300 SL Roadster in Silver Blue (Lot 19) that was purchased in 1957, along with a 220 SE Ponton Cabriolet, and a rare 319 Panorama Bus. While the owner maintained homes in Illinois and Florida, the Gullwing was driven very little, reportedly showing just a few thousand miles when the owner's son inherited the car in 1964.

During the ensuing decades, the Gullwing was kept alongside the Roadster in running order and would be used for occasional spirited drives around the nearby rural Illinois towns. The owner's wife recalls being approached by a local police officer who told her that he had clocked her earlier that day at over 80 mph. He admitted that because she had appeared so happy piloting the shining green coupe, he did not have the heart to pull her over.

In recent years, the couple moved to California, bringing their pair of 300 SLs with them, where the cars have continued to be enjoyed on the nearby two-lane highways. At the time of cataloguing, the Gullwing showed just over 16,300 miles, which the owner attests is its accurate total from new. Likewise, he states that he does not recall any paintwork ever being performed, and the interior retains its original leather as well.

To date, the Gullwing has never been exhibited publicly, and it has been maintained by local shops only as necessary. A rare set of Englebert tires was sourced and installed a few years ago, and they allow the Gullwing to retain the proper factory stance on their tall sidewalls. Closer inspection reveals pristine bumpers, still with their original plating; in fact, the front bumper has never been drilled for a license plate bracket. A beautifully preserved concave-star grille, correct for the car's early production date, and the proper clear marker lenses remain in place, just as delivered. According to Eric Le Moine's definitive volume that lists the original specifications of each Gullwing produced, 5500080 is unique, as it is one of just two finished in the rich shade of Dunkelgrün (DB 221). Of the two, this car was completed with a natural tan leather interior, while the other, whose whereabouts currently are unknown to the larger 300 SL community, was fitted with a plaid-cloth, MB-Tex interior.

The significance of this 300 SL is nearly beyond overstatement. It is an overwhelmingly original Gullwing in single family ownership since new that has never been to a concours, displays just over 16,300 miles, and presents in a stunning one-of-one color combination. This singularly unique Gullwing is at the pinnacle of all road-going collector cars. Make no mistake, we shall not pass this way again.

Gooding & Company



Title Ms

First name Charles

Last name Blonigan

1517 20th Street

Santa Monica 90404 California

United States

Phone +1 (310) 899-1960

Fax +1 (310) 526-6594

<http://www.goodingco.com/>