

One learns a lot about a person listening to them talk about their car. If it is a Jaguar owner you are talking with, quite so. We, Lance Medina and Dan Martin, had the privilege to meet up with Jack Humphrey, a retired U.S. Army full-bird Colonel, at Fort Carson, known as the Army's Mountain Post, to interview him about his journey with the lovely black 1986 US spec Series III XJ6 Vanden Plas he bought on July 26, 1994 in Heidelberg, Germany.

As you may know, the first thing we want to learn from the owner, the characteristic we try to feature in these essays, is that essence the owner likes or enjoys most about their Jag (besides the fact that it most definitely is not a Vett). With Jack, it is the character and sense of "fine appointment" of his XJ6 Vanden Plas. Fine it is!

Our First Impressions of Jack's XJ6

Bold hood lines and gorgeous balance, the symmetrical design of this car distinguishes this Jaguar series from any other vehicle. In a modern world of Corollas, Hybrids, and seemingly characterless sedans, its almost casual display of passion and allure captivates at a glance. The clean chrome complements the precise angles of its lustrous black body. Its interior is dressed in warm tan leather; hardwood panels inlay the dash and center console. It tickled us to think that an automobile as stunning as this XJ6 came out at a time when so many vehicles were as dull as beige wallpaper on the walls of a hospital waiting room. Its interior has such character, a sensuous aroma of well-aged leather and wood, like that of a cigar humidor, and the feel is exquisite luxury.

Ride quality is as expected from a luxury coach, quiet and comfortable, never distracting. Lance describes Jack's XJ6 as having a way of bringing you to speed with a gliding sensation, almost as if the suspension was made of memory foam and cotton, controlled and quite agile. The view down the bonnet through the windscreen is quite special as well, each detailed fold of the hood suggesting detail in every aspect of production of the machinery under it. The vehicle's instrumentation and controls are spread across the length of the dash giving a fitting traditional touch. (This is Dan interjecting here: I'm green with envy because Lance got all the ride time!)

The Story of Jack and His XJ6

As mentioned above, Jack has lived an Army life in service to our country, enduring separations when not uprooting his family with assignments that took him all over Europe and the Middle East. One day in 1994 in Heidelberg, Germany Jack spotted this 1986 Jaguar XJ6 sitting on the post's lemon lot. Having grown up in a part of Nebraska where, let's just say one does not encounter the exotic often enough for many youngsters, Jack developed a passion for British cars, had even owned an MG that taught him auto repair skills.

This particular lemon lot XJ6 looked just like that one he saw glide past in a mystical moment long ago in South Carolina, one of those Roy Orbison Pretty Woman experiences without the return. Here was closure. This could be that very car! Jack had to possess it. Jack was a tank commander about this time and, well, the XJ6 sure ain't no tank!

About the American Spec XJ6

According to the book **Jaguar In America**, by John Dugdale, 2nd Ed. revised and updated by Michael L. Cook, it was towards the end of Sir John Egan's stewardship that Jaguar introduced both the XJ40 and the XJ6 to America, and they bet the proverbial farm on it. Before Egan showed the new XJ6 in New York, his director of product engineering Jim Randle executed "by far the biggest launch the company had ever undertaken and John Egan wrote off millions to this all-important introduction in the 1986/7 accounts." Authors rushed books to press, one about the XJ40 "with a foreword by John Egan; but rival author Philip Porter beat him to the punch, being first out with his **Jaguar Project XJ40**, the inside story of the new XJ6, with a coup of a foreword by none other than **Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher!**"

According to Jag-Lovers.org, here is how you know you have an XJ Series III. Photos by Larry Karpman, the owner of the beautiful 1987 XJ6 Series III Vanden Plas pictured here.



Two round lights on a side, with one in the fender (wing), and one in the hood (bonnet) such that it points down when open.



Crescent shaped taillights.



Two chromed, exposed gas caps, with one on each side. Not removable. Jack's Army tanks had a similar arrangement.



Aircraft-style, with four smaller gauges flanking two large ones.



Chromed metal, with rubber lip around the edge.



Ovoid, metal. Lock mechanism mounted in door separately.



Obvious crossbraces connecting the fenders to the firewall.

According to Daniel Vaughan's Oct 2013 article on conceptcarz.com, the 1986 Jaguar XJ6 Series III sedan has a three-speed automatic gearbox, disc brakes, and a rack-and-pinion steering setup. Pricing began at \$32,250 for the base model and rose to \$35,550 for the Vanden Plas model. The Vanden Plas added a new 40-watt Alpine sound system, a rear-seat headrest, rear-compartment reading lamps, woven throw rugs, a wood-veneer dash applique, rear center armrest with storage compartment, special body emblems, and full leather upholstery. For 1986, the base XJ6 received a walnut finish to the center console.

Automobile-catalog.com describes the 1986 Jaguar Vanden Plas version for North America U.S. as a 4-door sedan body type, RWD (rear-wheel drive) and automatic 3-speed gearbox, petrol (gasoline) engine of 4235 cm³ / 257.5 cui displacement, 8.1 : 1 compression ratio, Lucas-Bosch L-Jetronic DOHC with advertised power 131 kW / 176 hp / 178 PS (SAE net) / 4750 and 297 Nm / 219 lb-ft / 2500 of torque. Trunk (cargo) capacity measured 9.55 cu ft SAE.

According to factualworld.com, the Jaguar XJ is a luxury saloon sold under the British Jaguar marque. The XJ was launched in 1968 and served as the Jaguar flagship model for most of its production span. The original model was the last Jaguar saloon to have had the input of Sir William Lyons, the company's founder. The third and final series XJ6, produced from 1979 through 1992, was the long-wheelbase version that incorporated a subtle redesign by Pininfarina and sold in Europe under the designations XJ6 and XJ12 bearing model names:

Daimler	Sovereign
Daimler	Vanden Plas
Daimler	Double-Six
Double-Six	Vanden Plas
Jaguar	Sovereign (from 1983)

Very little on Jack's car has been altered. Jack repainted it, taking extra care to polish its black coat to a rich luster. He reupholstered its seats and replaced its headliner and windscreen, all stock kit stuff. He considers his Vanden Plas to be part of the family, not just a pretty face. He even left it with his son to drive in one of those leaps of faith every parent of driving age children knows all too well.

Twenty years and over 60,000 miles later, this is Jack's car. Jack, thanks for letting us showcase it!