



# A-Antics



*First MGA-Bill Gallibugh*  
*MG Magnette History*  
*Driving A Twin-Cam*  
*Quinns Go To The Glen*



## MICHIGAN CHAPTER OF NORTH AMERICAN MGA REGISTER

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**History:** The Chapter was established August 14, 1976. It was NAMGAR's first chapter. We are a low-key club, dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of our MGA's/ Anyone is welcome to join our chapter and they are asked to join NAMGAR as well.

**Chapter Dues:** \$25 annually (\$40 for printed newsletter)

**Nickname: Rowdies**

**Motto: People First!**

**Rowdies Site:**  
<http://www.mg-cars.org.uk/michiganrowdies/>

**MG Car Council Site:** <http://www.mg-cars.org.uk/mgcouncil/>

**NAMGAR Web Site:** [www.namgar.com](http://www.namgar.com)

**Past Chapter Chairpersons:**

1976-1980	Bruce Nichols
1981-1982	Tom Latta
1983-1984	Dick Feight
1985-1988	Dave Smith
1989-1990	Dave Quinn
1991-1994	Mark Barnhart
1995-1995	Herb Maier
1996-1996	Tom Knoy
1997-1998	Neil Griffin
1999-2002	Bruce Nichols
2003-2004	Bob Sutton
2005-2008	Gordie Bird
2009-2015	Dave Quinn
2016-	Bill Weakley

Rowdies Website: Larry Pittman,  
Webmaster

<http://www.mg-cars.org.uk/michiganrowdies/>

Larry Pittman's Database Report: 55 Active and Paid-Up Members

**Deadline for submitting material for the next issue is: April 20, 2021**

## Register Your MGA With NAMGAR!



Join over 2,000 enthusiastic owners in the restoration, preservation, and sheer enjoyment of driving an MGA, Magnette, or variant of this noble breed. You'll receive six bi-monthly issues of *MGA!*, our full-color, award winning magazine, invitations to National and Regional Get-Togethers throughout the U.S. and Canada, plus a knowledge base and support group second to none. All this for just \$37.50 per year (North America), or \$52.50 (International). **Get more information at <http://www.namgar.com>, or contact [registrar@namgar.com](mailto:registrar@namgar.com).**





# MEMBERS PAGE

## Letters

### Financial Statement

Jeff Zorn sent our financial statement in as follows:

**Michigan Rowdies**  
**Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison**  
As of December 31, 2020

	Dec 31, 20	Dec 31, 19	\$ Change	% Change
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Current Assets				
Checking/Savings				
53 Bank	9,260.71	9,505.16	-244.45	-2.6%
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<b>9,260.71</b>	<b>9,505.16</b>	<b>-244.45</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>9,260.71</b>	<b>9,505.16</b>	<b>-244.45</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>9,260.71</b>	<b>9,505.16</b>	<b>-244.45</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>				
Equity				
Opening Bal Equity	3,390.54	3,390.54	0.00	0.0%
Retained Earnings	6,114.82	9,385.73	-3,271.11	-34.9%
Net Income	-244.45	-3,271.11	3,026.66	92.5%
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>9,260.71</b>	<b>9,505.16</b>	<b>-244.45</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>9,260.71</b>	<b>9,505.16</b>	<b>-244.45</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>

### Hot Off The Press

Mac McDonnell sent in a picture of his newest T-shirt to cheer us all up from the "Pandemic Blues".



### Dee Johnson

Since a lot of us knew this great couple, Wayne & Dee, I thought I would share this post from February 18th on NAMGAR.

"NAMGAR has lost a long time member and past board member. Dee Johnson lost her battle Tuesday Morning. Dee was our Treasurer 2007-2012. Dee was a friend to all and an avid Mquette enthusiast. We attended GT-35 in Delavan Wisconsin from our mid-Michigan home with our last chance to park our MG in premier. To be eligible you have five years after

qualifying. By winning the 1500 group at GT-30 we did.

After sorting out the MGA's endless issues that spring we took the ferry across the lake. Departing the ferry the car balked and stalled. I was able to force it into a lower gear. We then drove 20 miles south of Milwaukee in 3rd gear to get us out of the inner city. Upon stopping, the transmission was bone dry, locked in



GT-35 Lake Delavan, WI

gear, and oil leaked immediately out when topped up.

It was Wayne and Dee Johnson, who towed their 1958 blue ZB Mquette from San Diego, CA who answered my emergency call for help. With Larry Pitman as copilot the now empty Johnson trailer carried us the final 30 miles to the GT. I scrambled to figure out a way for us and the car to get home. A shop owner who dealt in British sports cars was coming to Michigan with an empty two-car trailer in August. We were able to make arrangements with him to deliver my MG.



Thanks to our new friends, Wayne and Dee, we were able to swap the MG from one trailer to another at his home. Another huge stroke of luck was Tom Fant had brought two cars to the GT, so we were able to ride home with the Fant's. The GT had nearly 200 MGs and twice that number of people. It was the largest gathering of Mquette owners on record. It was a great event except for my transmission lock up. This was the first time in 38 years of MGA ownership, not counting an accident, that we were unable to make roadside repairs and travel on. Our car arrived as planned thanks to a great MG community and especially Wayne and Dee. They will be missed."

**Dave Quinn**

### People In The Photo

Last issue we ran an old photo from GT-8 but couldn't name too many of the people. Bill Gallihugh

and Steve & Diane Mazurek wrote in later with a few more names from the past. Bill wrote: "On the photo in the last A-Antics: If that's Jack on the left, then the women in the back (in partial profile) is Laura. We're quite sure the women next to Jack is Sarah Richey, though we don't see Bill Richey in the picture." Then



Diane answered, "Yes, you are right: Laura and Sarah. Next to Steve is Pat Newman. Behind them in the doorway is Danny Beha. I don't know the big guy with the Union Jack shirt. Then it's Dave Zyp with his back to the camera. And in the back on the right are Jodie and Joe Dennis.

### **Spy Photos Of New MG All-Terrain**

Your Roving Editor has uncovered some secret spy photos of a new All Terrain vehicle that MG



will be introducing into the North American market in the near future. These never before seen pictures are being shown now for the first time in print. The marketing slogan will be "MG-The **Mean Green** machine for all your needs!

### **Spymaster Ken**

### **Too Good Not To Share**

Bruce Nichols sent in this story, saying "I don't even care if this is true or not, it's too good not to pass along". Taken from the *Yorkshire Herald*.

"A furious row has broken out between a **local tattoo artist** and his client after what started out as a routine inking session left both of them requiring

emergency hospital treatment.

Furious film fan and part-time plus-size XXXL model **Tracey Munter** (23), had visited the '**Ink It Good' Tattoo Emporium in Wellgate, Yorkshire** last week, to have the finishing touches applied to a double buttock representation of the chariot race scene from the iconic 1959 film, *Ben Hur*.

**Tattooist Jason Burns** takes up the story.

"It was a big job in more ways than one", he told us "I'd just lit a roll-up and was finishing off a centurions helmet. It's delicate, close up work. Next thing is, I sense a slight ripple in the buttock cleavage area just around Charlton Heston's whip, and a hissing sound – more of a whoosh than a rasp – and before I know what's happening, there's a flame shooting from her arse to my fag and my beards gone up like an Aussie bush fire."

Jason says he rushed to the studio sink to quell the flames, only to turn round and see Tracey frantically fanning her buttock area with a damp towel. The flames had travelled down the gas cloud and set fire to her thigh which was smoking like a cheap firework.

"To be honest", said Jason, "I didn't even realize she was wearing one. You'd need a sodding mining license and a torch to find out for sure. She could have had a complete wardrobe in there and I'd have been none the wiser."

Jason and Tracey were taken to Rotherham District Hospital accident and emergency department where they were treated for minor burns and shock. Both are adamant that the other is to blame.

"I'm furious" said Jason, "I've got a face like a mange-ridden dog and my left eyebrow's not there any more. I don't know about *Ben Hur* – *Gone With The Wind* would be more appropriate. You don't just let rip in someone's face like that. It's dangerous."

But Tracey remains both angry and unrepentant.

"I'm still in agony," she said, "and Charlton Heston looks more like Sidney bloody Poitier now. Jason shouldn't have had a fag on the go when he's doing close up work, there's no way I'd guff on purpose. He'd had me on all fours for nearly an hour. I can only put up with that for so long before nature takes its course. My Kev knows that I give him my five-second warning, and I'd have done the same for Jason, but I didn't get chance – it just quietly crept out."

Ted Walters from the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue service wasn't surprised when we asked him to comment on what had happened.

"People just don't appreciate the dangers," he told us. "We get more call outs to flatulence ignition incidents than kitchen fires these days now that people have moved over to oven chips. **We have a slogan 'Flame 'n fart – keep 'em apart'**. Anyone engaging in an arse-inking scenario would do well to bear that in mind in future. On behalf of the entire **Fire and Rescue Service**, we wish them both a swift recovery."

**Lost Tools**

Hi Ken, I got my **MGA!** today and read your column first. I certainly relate to your lost tool situation. Some years ago, after giving up looking for a lost tool and buying a replacement, I used it and went to put it away. Of course that's where I found the missing one. So now when I can't find something like that, I pretend that I have one and need to put it away, hoping that the different mental process will do the trick. It has actually worked once or twice.

Recently, I took the master cylinder out of my new MGA project car. I remember taking the cotter pins out of both push rods and removing the pedals. Then as I was putting everything away, I only had one pushrod. The car was sitting with clear space all around. It's pretty well stripped, so there aren't many places for it to hide. I've gone through boxes, swept the floor, cleared work benches, but not luck. The only possible conclusion has to be that someone snuck in and stole my old, worn, dirty m/c pushrod. Who would have guessed? (Ed note: *Yep, there're thieves everywhere aren't there?*)

**Bill Weakley**

**Politics Anyone?**

I am preparing a 3.9 differential to go into my A. The only complication is that the 3.9 has 25 splines for the axle, while my axles have 10 splines. So I have disassembled the spider gears and ordered new thrust washers. After I have those, I will pull the diff out of my '56.

The newest member is the fellow I sold the estate sale car to last year. He is an 88 year-old retired science teacher, who has restored a number of cars. He is nearing completion of his car with help from several friends. He is planning to send you a story about his first MGA experience.

I was at his house today to work on his differential. Besides replacing the pinion seal, we decided the pig needed to be pulled because of excess play. I'm hoping that replacing the thrust washers will help. The only critical part I see is that the two pieces that clamp the carrier bearings in place are matched to their respective sides, so note the stamped marks on the clamps and the sides of the housing. I'm not planning to change anything on the pinion, so the pinion-to-crown spacing should not change.

Boy, it's nice to think about something other than politics. (Ed note: *Yeah, and there's always the pandemic also*)

**Bill Weakley**

**Required Viewing**

If this half-hour video does not make you smile, you do not love racing! <https://youtu.be/6iS7WJVH5jY>

Even if you've seen it before, watch it again. I never tire of this one.

**Dave Quinn**

**Hey, Where's My Driver?**

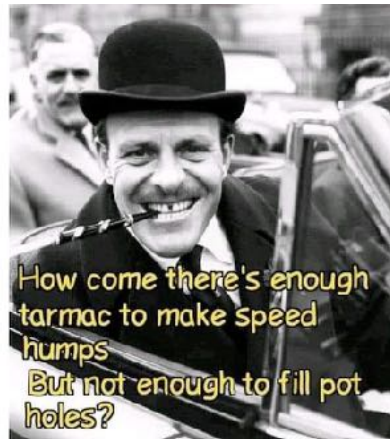
This lonely bear at a park somewhere seems to



have been abandoned by the driver of this car. Can it be due to the policy of "no hitchhikers allowed", or perhaps the bear hasn't had his weekly bath lately?

**Fix The Damn Roads**

Terry Thomas offers the question of the decade. It seems particularly appropriate for our Michigan roads.



How come there's enough tarmac to make speed humps But not enough to fill pot holes?



**Tentative Schedule of Events 2021**

- May 1st Drive Your MGA Day
- ??? Cecil Kimber B'day Party
- 15th Spring Party at Camp Dearborn \*\*\*
- June 6th British Return to Ft Meigs
- 14th - 17th MG 2021 International
- Last week of June Mid-Ohio Vintage Races \*\*\*
- July 11 Mad Dogs
- 23 - 25 Waterford Vintage Races \*\*\*
- August 8th or 14th Alden Car Show \*\*\*
- TBD Rowdies B'Day Party
- TBD Rowdies Beach Party
- Sept TBD Battle of the Brits
- Last full week of month Put-in-Bay Vintage Races
- Oct TBD Rowdies Colour Tour
- TBD Rowdies Up North Weekend
- Dec Rowdies Christmas Party
- \*\*\* (Good guess at actual date)

## Chairman's Chatter

### Bill Weakley

It's been a year since the start of this pandemic. Now I am hearing that we might be back to normal by late this year. So that will be almost two years of dealing with this. It makes me worry about the next pandemic disease that arises, because there will surely be another at some time. I just hope we can get back to something like normal for a while before the next one hits.

I have yet to hear of any Rowdies or anyone else in our circle of friends who has caught COVID, which is very reassuring. I think most people we know are taking it seriously and exercising precautions. Of course, there are good reasons for that, since most of us are automatically in a higher risk group just based on age. Fortunately, I have had both doses of the Pfizer vaccine and had no adverse reaction.

Unfortunately, Mary Ellen has not been scheduled yet. We were expecting to both receive the vaccine through the U of M Michigan Medicine. They have since run short and are not scheduling first shots. So Mary Ellen has signed up in other places. I know they say that we still need to take precautions after receiving the vaccine, but I do feel really good about having it behind me. With the infection rate going down and vaccines getting out, albeit slowly, it gives me hope for the future. In the meantime, there isn't much going on, so I'll just chat about my life at home. When I am not watching local wildlife and shoveling the driveway, I work on my 1600. I think I am done repairing the center body. Fixing the one area of the nose that had some accident damage took the most time. The previous owner's repair consisted of covering the bent part with up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of lead and doing nothing to the mangled mess underneath. After my repair, I did a test fit of one front fender and was pleased with the alignment of my repair work. So now I can start assembling the suspension on the frame. I want to have the body on the frame when doing the final fit-up of the fenders, etc. More fun. I've started painting suspension components. At some point, I will need to buy tires in order to have a rolling chassis, but I'm holding off as long as possible to maximize the usable life of the tires. I see that registration is now open for MG 2021 in Atlantic City. I'm not ready to commit to anything yet. To tell the truth, I am not a big fan of huge events, and I'm not 100% convinced that it will happen. I wouldn't mind going to Atlantic City, never having been there before. The one thing I know I would like to see there is the pipe organ in Boardwalk Hall. It is the largest pipe organ in the world with over 33,000 pipes.

Our Rowdie activities for this year are all still tentative. I'm sure we will find chances to drive and socialize in some way. We'll just have to decide based on the circumstances. In the meantime, the board has started discussion about GT 50. As you know, the Rowdies have hosted every tenth GT and been very successful with them. On the one hand, we are not obligated to do so, yet. As most of you know, setting up a GT is a lot of work. Although it is rewarding to host a successful event, it is not necessarily as much fun as just attending one. On the other hand, someone has to do it. It is not too early to start this conversation, so I would welcome your thoughts on the subject.

I notice in the latest MGA! magazine that Ken Nelson is currently the longest serving member of the NAMGAR board. And he still finds something interesting to write about. Of course, the mix of LBCs that he has does provide a lot of opportunity for LBC involvement of one sort or another. It just reminds me that we have a number of Rowdies who were involved in NAMGAR and the Rowdies from the very earliest days of the club. The Rowdies have played a number of important roles in NAMGAR. **Chairman Bill**



*Chairman Bill predicts better driving coming soon!*



*Meanwhile it's time to get back to work again...*

## *History Of The MG Magnette-From MG Car Club Magnette Register*

In 1949 Gerald Palmer, having already been employed at M.G. from 1937 to 1942, returned as Chief Designer to The Nuffield Group, which had bought M.G. in the intervening years. During his short spell at the much smaller Jowett company, Palmer had designed the Jowett Javelin, of which over 30,000 units had been sold. At Nuffield he was to design new models for M.G., Riley and Wolseley. The current M.G. model, the Y-Type, was intended to appear in 1940 but with the intervention of the war only came to the market in 1946 and was, as a consequence, already dated. As the Y-type's successor, Palmer designed the Z Magnette in conjunction with the Wolseley 4/44 which was intended to take care of the bottom of the middle range. Succession for the Riley line is provided by the Pathfinder, which is somewhat bigger. In his design, Palmer is influenced by the great Italian designers, which explains the similarity to the Lancia Aurelia (front) and other Fiat and Alfa Romeo models.

Although it was the M.G. that was designed first, it is its Wolseley stable-mate that appears first in 1952 because a new Wolseley model is more urgently needed. It is powered by the XPAG unit but this has lower power output than in the M.G. T Types so hardly produces an inspiring performance propelling a saloon weighing over a ton.

### ***Launch of the ZA Magnette***

In October 1953, there appeared at the London Motor Show a green ZA Magnette with beige interior and a grey/grey car, both of which had been completed only a short time before the exhibition opened. Because of production problems the finished cars did not correspond with the advance publicity material in all respects: the M.G.s on show still lacked quarter-lights and also the advertised wooden dashboard could not be produced because of materials shortages.

This situation was reversed in March 1955 when, after barely 6000 units had been produced, supplies of Italian walnut became available. Because of this, the cars were uprated with fog-lights and bumper over-riders as standard. Presumably this was intended to eliminate any difficulties arising from the other changes to the spec. Also the cars were visibly well equipped in other ways. A heater was offered as standard, when this was still not the case with other more expensive models. And what is more, the passengers rode in comfort on leather seats.

The Magnette was equipped with the new B-series engine, which produces as much as 60bhp at 4600rpm. Admittedly, the engine still lacked the external oil filter feed-pipe at the rear of the block as it would later appear on engines used up until the M.G.B. This had the result that at start-up the bearings had to operate for too long without oil and often they managed a life-span of only 10,000 miles. However, the problem was quickly identified at M.G. and so only 1460 Magnette owners had to live with this defect before the noted oil pipe was fitted.



At £915 the ZA Magnette cost less than the Y-Type (£989). Whilst the Wolseley attracted praise in 1952, the launch of the Magnette unleashed an outcry among M.G. enthusiasts. The re-use of the glorious Magnette name on a family saloon with Wolseley bodywork, an Austin engine and a dummy

radiator was not the sort of thing they had come to expect from M.G. Nonetheless, the M.G. is no Wolseley copy. In order to emphasize the sporty character of the M.G. in contrast to the sedate but luxurious Wolseley the bodywork was made two inches lower, which not only looks more sporty but assured better handling. However, this had the result that the Wolseley and the M.G. shared very few body panels. Apart from the roof, the front doors and the boot-lid, the panels were not interchangeable! As the Magnette sits lower, the floor pan, the sills and the front and rear wings are different. What is more, each car carries its own traditional radiator grill so their bonnets are not interchangeable either.

Nevertheless, the Magnette started a new era at Abingdon. It was the first M.G. built onto a unitary "monocoque" body. Naturally, this brought its own problems with it, because thus far M.G.s had always been chassis-built, as was still seen in the M.G.TF and from 1955 the M.G.A. So it is no wonder that the build time for a Magnette amounted to as much as four weeks. After 140 vehicles have been built this reduced to one week, which then also became the norm. Production began in February 1954 after the rear axle was modified on the instructions of John Thornley. (See extra article via navigation bar) The bodies were delivered, fully painted, by Pressed Steel in Swindon; the power train came from Coventry.

### ***More power for the ZB***

*(Continued next page)*

Until July 1956 only minor details were changed, but then the engine output received some treatment. By increasing the compression ratio from 7.15:1 to 8.3:1, with larger H4 twin carburettors and modified inlet and exhaust valves, the output was raised to 68bhp. In September 1957 the ZB Magnette appears but differed from its predecessor only to the extent that the chrome body-trim had minor modifications. For an extra £25 the prospective buyer can opt for the Varitone

model. This offered a larger rear window and a two-tone colour scheme. Nonetheless there exist single colour Varitones. For a further £50 the customer could also have an automatic transmission fitted. However, the first few automatic cars make it clear that the transmission does not work properly and are recalled for

modification in 1958. The "Manumatic clutch" was never popular and was no longer fitted from October 1958. Anyone who had opted for it and later realized that his £50 had been poorly invested could have a conventional transmission retro-fitted for the sum of £75.

***Sporting Midgettes***

The Magnette never provided M.G. with a recipe for sporting successes. The name was no help with this at all. The Magnette was too heavy and produced too little power. Thoughts of switching to six cylinders or to the

already developed twin-cam engine were quickly dropped. Nonetheless three Midgettes took part in the 1955 Monte Carlo Rally under the name of "The Three Musketeers", admittedly without notable success. Only the 1st and 3rd place in the Silverstone Production car Race in the same year brought the desired press attention. A year later Nancy Mitchell achieved third place in the Ladies Competition at the Monte Carlo Rally. But she only won the Ladies

European rally Championship because she competed for the rest of the season in an M.G.A. Pat Moss stayed in the Midgette without success. In 1957 the Midgette disappeared from the Works teams. It was only deployed by BMC as a support vehicle for camera teams. It was, however, campaigned in subsequent years by privateers. The Midgette recorded its greatest sporting successes in stock car races in the sixties and seventies. With its great stability it



was ideally suited to this. However, by this means a large number of Midgettes were consigned to a glorious but destructive fate. Estimates of the M.G. Car Club's Z Midgette Register suggest that about 1,000 vehicles still exist.

The end came for the Z Midgette in December 1958 after 36,601 examples had been produced. These production figures had, hitherto, never been achieved by any other M.G. The sequel came in the middle of 1959 in the guise of the Mk III Midgette, with nothing more than its name in common with the Z Type. But that is another story.....

**Malcolm Eades 26.01.2000**





***“Driving the Short-Lived MGA Twin Cam Is Magical”***  
***From April 21, 2020 Classic Motorsports***



**Story by Johan Dillen • Photography by Dirk de Jager (Submitted by Dave Quinn)**

When the Twin Cam engine arrived in 1958, MG was finally able to deliver the power that MGA buyers had been craving for several model years. Fulfilling that promise proved difficult, however, as reliability problems cut short the career of the MGA Twin Cam: MG halted production partway through 1959 after building just 2111 units. Today, driving a well-sorted MGA Twin Cam is nothing short of magical.

The 1959 running of the Alpine Rally, which linked famous mountain passes in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Italy, turned grim for the MG factory entry when John Milne and Stuart Turner crashed their MGA Twin Cam. But for Den Green, the deputy foreman of the mechanics crew, the bad news was just beginning to arrive.

“I was sent off to a local garage to try to find some suspension parts to get the car going again and found a garage with a couple of ‘dead’ Twin Cams,” he recalls in Mike Allison and Peter Browning’s book, “The Works MGs.” These were, he continues, “All customers’ cars suffering from the dreaded engine problems. I asked the garage owner if I could ‘borrow’ some of the suspension parts from one of these cars and replace them with new parts I would arrange to be sent out from England. But when he discovered that I worked for MG he gave me hell about the unreliability of Twin Cam engines and threw me out of the place.” That’s what you’d call direct customer feedback.

**From the Le Mans Special**

The Twin Cam was supposed to have been the crowning achievement for the MGA, which had debuted in 1955 to deliver a much-needed breath of fresh air for MG. The car was derived directly from the experimental MG TD special that George “Phil” Phillips had entered at Le Mans in 1951. Phillips was a strong MG supporter and wanted nothing but an MG, but he was aware that all the company had on offer was the aging TD.

Help came from MG’s development department, which agreed to create an advanced-looking, lightweight body for the TD. Phillips’s MG TD special had to retire from the race at the eight-hour mark due to engine problems, but the effort had shown that the company was prepared to move away from its traditional, bulky approach to sports car styling and follow the lead already embraced by the competition. Sleek was ready to move in.

Within MG, work started on evolved, wider prototypes based on the TD special. Unfortunately, the company found itself just then under the newly formed British Motor Company umbrella. By the time MG came up with a proposal for the MGA, the top brass at BMC had already been sold on the Austin-Healey 100/4 by Donald Healey. There was no place for two competing roadsters within the extended family, so the MGA went on the back burner



It wasn’t until late in 1954 that MG finally got the green light to start up production of the MGA. Although the manufacturer had been slow to release a modern roadster, it countered that history with a most impressive introduction for the MGA, entering three prototypes of the car for Le Mans in 1955. It was the first time in 20 years that MG had entered the race with a works entry.

That running of Le Mans was most memorably marred by tragedy when Pierre Levegh’s Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR took off into the crowd, killing 83 and injuring 170, but despite the pall cast over the event, the MGAs made their mark. Ken Miles and Johnny Lockett finished 12th overall and fifth in class, averaging 86 mph and recording a top speed of almost 120 mph on the long Mulsanne Straight.

The enthusiastic press reports that followed meant that by the time the MGA made its world debut in September 1955 at the Frankfurt Motor Show, the public was already anxious and waiting. Launched under the slogan “first of a new line,” the MGA was a clear departure from the old style.

The new car found buyers eager for just that. In 1956, the first full year of production, the Abingdon factory was rolling out 300 MGAs per week. Most of them were bound for the United States, creating the lucrative export market BMC directors were hungry to explore.

### Poised for Coronation

The form may have been advanced, but the underpinnings were trusted familiars since the suspension design was much like its T-series predecessor— and even shared a few parts. The B-series BMC 1500 engine used in the car, however, was new. At first it gave the MGA 68 horsepower, but output would progress to 78 horsepower. The car could reach 98 mph and accelerate to 60 mph in 15.6 seconds. Later on, a 1600cc engine upped power to 79.5 horsepower.



The MGA was pleasing to the eye and fun to drive. It was also a runaway success. Still, it awaited its ultimate coronation in the form of a truly sporting engine. That, alas, was the task bestowed upon the Twin Cam, which was supposed to give the MGA the fighting power it needed to toss it out with the more powerful cars in the class.

At first glance, the Twin Cam engine more than delivered. Capacity of the B-series engine was increased to 1588cc, connecting rods were strengthened, and special pistons were delivered in order to run a 9.9:1 compression ratio. The engine also received a cross-flow cylinder head topped with shiny alloy cam covers, while twin SU carburetors fed it. The result was a very impressive 108 horsepower at 6700 rpm. The production MGA Twin Cam could reach 113 mph, while the zero-to-60 time had been chopped to 9.1 seconds.

The car also received disc brakes all around along with knock-off wheels. It's the wheels, along with the Twin Cam badge on the hood, that provide the exterior visual clues that this is no ordinary MGA. MG offered the Twin Cam in both roadster and coupe form.

The Twin Cam outperformed the standard MGA, but it also cost more; it cost more than the competition, too. Compounding that disadvantage was the fact that the MGA Twin Cam turned out to be a bit of a nightmare to own. Thanks to the high compression ratio, only the best fuel and most perfect ignition timing would suffice; lax owners would be rewarded with holes in the pistons. The engine also had an unhealthy appetite for oil.

By the time MG got on top of the problems, the Twin Cam's reputation was sunk. Although MG produced just those 2111 Twin Cams, the manufacturer delivered more than 101,000 standard MGAs.

### Sebring Glory

Despite the issues, the Twin Cam had its moments in the sun. In the car's first serious rally outing, the 1958 Marathon de la Route—a 3100-mile, nonstop effort from Liège, Belgium, to Rome and back—it finished ninth overall with John Gott at the wheel. Perhaps more important, Gott reported that for the first time, he felt that he had a car that could challenge the Porsches and Healeys. Two works MGA Twin Cams and four private entries—including the car pictured here—showed up for the 1959 Tulip Rally, an event that started in Holland, but made a big tour of France as well. This Twin Cam, which at the time wore Glacier Blue paint and a hardtop, was entered by the British duo of owner/driver Harry Mainz and artist Rex Vicat-Cole. Although a privateer Twin Cam beat the works entries that year, this one, the results show, scored a DNF. Mainz and Vicat-Cole gave their Twin Cam another go at the 1960 Tulip Rally, where they scored second-to-last in their class.

Right as production wound down, however, the Twin Cam hit its competitive stride in the U.S. and abroad. The model quickly found success at Sebring, with three near-showroom-spec cars taking fourth, fifth and sixth in class in 1956; a Twin Cam won its class in 1957. Twin Cam roadsters finished second and third in class in 1959 before landing one more podium in 1960—the same year that a modified Twin Cam coupe took class honors at Le Mans. Before the MGB took over for 1962, an MGA Twin Cam finished 14th overall and first in class at Sebring.

The Twin Cam eventually did well against the clock, too. Rauno Aaltonen stunned the field at the 1962 Tulip Rally, setting fastest time overall on the famed Col de Turini stage and finishing sixth overall in one.

### And Still Crazy for Revs

The problems of the past have largely been overcome, and right now the MGA Twin Cam's rarity and performance make these cars very much the Holy Grail of the model line. They come with a price premium, however: Where MGAs sell for between \$15,000 and \$35,000—Hagerty says \$30,000 for a No. 2



roadster—you'll need to budget about \$45,000 for an excellent Twin Cam. (And before you scoff at the price bump, get a quote on a Twin Cam restoration.) What can you expect in return? Well, this particular Twin Cam is a charmer. It is in fine condition, having been completely restored and sorted in 1986 by its former owner, Paul Channon. He also extensively and enthusiastically rallied it from the mid-'80s up until 2005. It still sports a rally look, thanks to the added pair of auxiliary driving lights and the Tripmaster in the interior. It's also an icon from a time when sports cars were defined by SU carburetors, wire wheels and those all-important cut-down doors. The MGA Twin Cam is finally the pearl it always wanted to be.

#### Behind the Wheel

The twin carburetors create a profound, deep growl as the Twin Cam engine accelerates effortlessly, and it really comes on song at 4000 rpm, that growl replaced with a rawer rasp.

That still leaves plenty of revs for this engine to truly express itself, with the orange part of the tach only beginning at 6500 rpm and the redline itself marked at 7000 rpm-impressive for a 1959 car that normally wouldn't be considered exotic.

The engine feels best between 5000 and 6000 rpm. Combine it with the four-speed manual box-synchronized in second, third and fourth-and acceleration is lively. The short-throw lever is situated close to the steering wheel and makes the perfect partner in crime. The throw is a bit sturdy, but very precise.

Straight-line acceleration isn't even this car's best performance attribute: It's what it can do in the corners. The four-wheel-disc brakes give good bite and, as a result, instill confidence in the driver. Rowing the big, four-spoke steering wheel takes a bit of work, but the chassis feels very stable in the corners and seems to beg for more.

Downsides to the Twin Cam? Of course, it's best to deal with one that has been properly sorted, and drivers who are on the larger side might find the MGA cockpit less than comfy. Also, the required footwork takes a little while to learn. The reward, though, is very much worth the needed acclimation.



### *MG At The Glen 1994 - A Father & Son Road Trip*

After WWII, Cameron Argetsinger organized sportscar racing at Watkins Glen, NY in 1948. Sam and Miles Collier raced MGs, and the brothers supported holding a road race at Watkins Glen in 1948. They raced their supercharged MGTC's in it. In the years to follow, they raced MG's in many other venues. Tragically, Sam died in 1950 racing a Ferrari at Watkins Glen. In 1954, Miles died from polio. In honor of the brothers, the SCCA established the "**Collier Brother's Memorial Trophy**" race for MGs in 1954. That race was only for MG's until the rules changed in 1959, when other makes were allowed to compete in it. The SCCA still holds it today, although modern cars now compete for it. In 1985, the Sports Car Vintage Racing Association (SVRA), started vintage racing at Watkins Glen and wanted to re-

capture the original intent of the "Collier Memorial Trophy MG race.

With the blessing of Miles Collier Jr., they established their annual "**Collier Cup**" MG race - as an extension of the 1954 concept. In 1985 only eight MGs competed in it. But over the years it has been gaining momentum. 60 MGs competed in 1994. One of the spectators during that **1994 Collier Cup** race was our very own **Dave Quinn with his son Steve** who drove from Michigan that weekend on a father-son road trip which Dave immortalized in the following story about it. I reprinted it below to remind all of us of the joy of getting out on the highway again on a road trip in our MGAs. Hopefully Covid-19 won't spoil our plans this year after we've received our vaccinations. Enjoy Dave's story on the next 3 pages.

## Collier Cup 1994 - 40th Anniversary

by Dave Quinn

American road racing was revived at Watkins Glen, NY on October 2, 1948 with the first road race since before World War II. The 6.6 mile circuit ran through the village streets, starting and ending in front of the Courthouse. The circuit was used for races from 1948 to 1952. Unchanged, it went back to being public roads until September 9, 1994 when the city of Watkins Glen proclaimed a celebration to be known as the Watkins Glen Grand Prix Festival and gave rebirth to road racing, at a much tamer speed, through the village.

Vintage sports cars, race and street, were lined two abreast for nearly a dozen city blocks on Franklin Street, the main artery through the village. Clearly the predominant make, both race and street, was MG. MG was once again in center stage. The celebration was kicking off the largest grid of MGs EVER in North America! Sixty-five MG racers showed up for this fabulous weekend - exceeding everyone's highest hopes. Robert Goldman, Moss Motors, commented "This is the largest turnout of MG's racers I've ever seen." His observation was shared by every single MG owner. In the original 1948 race there were 11 MGTCs competing and one of the original 1948 racers, Denver Cornett, now 67 years old, returned with his totally restored TC to race once again. 1949 racer, Jim Carson,

fired up his TC and returned as well. Chris Economaki, renowned TV sports broadcaster in the 50s and 60s was once again at the start/finish line. The streets were lined on both sides with hundreds of spectators. The entire field of race cars and sports cars were waved off to do two laps of the old course.

The following description appeared in the New York Times on September 17, 1950: "The race course starts in downtown Watkins Glen, winds through the business section, then snakes across hills and valleys on every type of road from concrete to dirt (it's all concrete now). For the Grand Prix, contestants have to cover fifteen laps, or ninety-nine miles. Spectators will see the race from bleachers at the start and finish, and from vantage points along the course -- rooftops, treetops and hillsides. The most sought-after seats will be where accidents are most likely to happen, at sharp curves. Spectators and drivers will be partly protected by 1,200 bales of hay stacked at critical points."

Upon completing the course the cars once again rested in formation on the main drag downtown. Dinner parties began and the crowds got to see the cars up close as the entire downtown remained off limits to public traffic until dusk.

At 8:00 PM the cars were once again fired up and sound of

racing motors bounced off the landmark buildings. I hope my son, Steve, enjoyed the thrill that I did as the flagman waived everyone off single file down the streets lined with spectators. I was sandwiched between the two men who worked for nearly a year to bring this fantasy to reality - Joe Tierno's 1957 MGA was in front of me and Greg Prehodka's 1953 MGTC behind me. The noise, the crowds, the cars, the Glen - for a very brief time I got to relieve the past racing history from the driver's seat. The screech of tires, the roar of super-charged motors -- what a way to kick-off the 40th anniversary of the Collier Cup.

Highlights of the week are almost too numerous to remember. We traveled 1,200 miles over the back roads of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada. An occasional tech session was necessary (every day) but 1960 MGA arrived home running as it had when we left - like a fine watch. Along the way we managed to change the points, plugs, condenser, rotor, plug wires, and distributor cap; as well reset the timing and carb mixture. It would have easier to do a major tune up before leaving. Steve and I had been working on the inside of the new garage right to the night before leaving, so my pre-trip preparation consisted of topping up all the fluids. I hadn't planned on spreading a tune-up over several days but that's all part of the MG

adventure. Stevenow understands the importance of learning what makes the car work, rather than relying on others. Other than the rough running in Cleveland (new plug wires fixed this) and rough running in Canada (new points and condenser fixed this), the two most serious problems were a gasoline leak at the front carb and the partial loss of the pin in the front brake caliper. The latter was detected when the front right brake began to squeal loudly. A check showed the spring clip holding the front pads had lost tension and allowed the pin to slip out of one side. We had just crossed into New York state from Route 6 when this happened. Fortunately, we did not lose the clip or pin. After compressing the clip to create more tension on the pin we were on our way; to be safe I ordered new clips and pins. The other incident occurred as we approached the racetrack on Saturday morning. We were some two-thirds up the very steep hill leading to the track, when we smelled very strong gasoline fumes. We discovered the two gaskets, upper and lower, that hold the float bowl to the base of the carburetor, decided to give out. Neither was split, they just lost their effectiveness due to age.

One of the nice things about being in the MG fraternity is everyone's willingness to help. Two different Canadians pulled over to offer assistance. One made an excellent suggestion. He suggested I compress the fuel line, using vice-grips, between the front and rear carbs, thus blocking the fuel flow to the front. This allowed us to

continue to the track, very, very slowly, on the two cylinders running off the back carb. Mark Barnhart showed up at just the right time and provide the flashers as we crept the remaining mile or so to the paddock area.

Ted Schumacher, owner of TS Imported Auto, Pandora, Ohio, had a vendor's stand nearby and he not only had the special gaskets - he gave them to me at no charge. At the same time, Andy McSwigan, a MGTC racer I'd met at the Pittsburgh Vintage Races in 1993, loaned me his Whitworth tools which made the repairs much easier. With all the tech sessions, was it worth it? You bet.

Steve and I enjoyed every day. Traveling in an MGA is half the fun. We only had two-seconds of rain the whole trip. . . it was top down weather all the way. We spent the first night in Oil City, PA with my mother, an avid MG fan, who supplied us with the best beef jerky anyone ever tasted.

The Vintage Racers Association hosted a party on Friday evening for drivers and crew members. Steve and I had not obtained the necessary credentials since registration was closed when we first arrived. When I mentioned we were part of the Joe Tierno crew at the party entrance, the SVRA worker replied "You and one-hundred others." Dave Smith and Mark Barnhart were able to vouch for us so we could join the festivities. We spoke with Mark Brandow from Mound, MN, who races both TCs and MGAs, and he graciously

allowed us to sign on as his crew for the weekend. He raced his 1946 MGTC, #47, this weekend. I'd first met Mark at Elhart Lake Vintage Races. He always has a smile and is the most low keyed driver I know and a top driver. We owe a big thank you to Mark.

On Saturday we watched as Joe set a personal best time of 2:38 during qualifying. That was a good six percent improvement over last year. A major improvement! The car worked great and mechanic Dave Smith was enjoying the moment. Saturday night the MG fraternity had a banquet on the grounds of the Glen Museum in the village. A great dinner. The Rowdies were well represented with Dave and Chari Smith, Mark and Marji Barnhart, Dave and Steve Quinn.

Bob Vitrikas, author of "MGA A History & Restoration Guide", was at our table. It was a pleasure to finally meet Bob in person. He had a few great stories involving his assignment to drive/store the only MG RV8 in the USA, during its brief two month stay in the Washington, DC area. Burt S. Levy autographed my copy of his new book, "The Last Open Road", a fiction about road racing in 1952 by an author who actually experienced it. Dennis Simon autographed my hand painted tie of the 1952 LeMans Race. Jim McCarthy, author of "Vintage Racing Start to Finish" drove, rather than trailer, his 1960 MGA coupe racer from Sparta, Wisc to the Glen - - he received NAMGAR's spirit award, awarded by Dave



Smith. Oh yes, we also toured the museum, which had an MGA among the valuables. All this and the Collier Cup race was still ahead.

Sunday we watched the sport carraces from several locations. In addition to MGs, which owned the track that weekend, there were the usual array of beautiful Ferrari, Maserati, Ford GT-40, Can-Am (oh, yes, Brian Redman was there and was he ever fast), Mini, and every other sports car/sports racer one could think of.



Tim Handy, 1991 Collier Cup winner, finished first overall in his race prepared MGB; Tony Simms, the 1986 Collier Cup winner finished second in his MGA TwinCam; and, Joe Tierno, 1988 Collier Cup winner, finished third overall in his #029 1957 MGA 1500! One could almost see Spanky Smith, the original owner of #029, and driver Bob Bucher, the Binghamton Bullet and winner of the 1957 and 1958 Collier Cup in this very car riding along with Joe - clearly his best race ever. Great memories. All 65 MGA racers were winners. Joe and Greg were voted co-winners of the 1994 Collier Cup, as everyone recognized their outstanding accomplishment in putting together this weekend.

Following the races, Steve and I visited the Watkins Glen State Park. The mile and half climb (or decline for the smart ones who start at the top) with 855 steps leading through a beautiful gorge cut by a small stream with waterfalls was a fitting end to a perfect day. But the day wasn't over as we wanted to get a couple hundred miles further down the road before sack time. We drove north, following Seneca Lake and enjoyed the beauty of this 38 mile long, 2 mile wide, 700 feet deep, beautiful lake lined with grape fields (New York wines are well known) and bedded down just before hitting Buffalo. Monday was a beautiful top down drive through the backroads of Ontario Canada back to Rowdie land.

The highlight of the weekend, the Collier Cup, ran at 1:55 PM and the crowd was at the peak of excitement as 65 MGs, three and four abreast, took the green flag. It was sheer delight to see nothing but MG T-series, MGAs, MGBs, and a MG 1100 sedan filling up the track as far as the eye could see. Everyone knew we were witnessing vintage car history being made. It was special, something we will all remember.



## Memories Of A (Nearly) First Car - My MGA Coupe

**Bill Gallihugh** writes in about MY FIRST CAR articles.

### *Hey Ken:*

I see in the last newsletter you issued a "call for papers", particularly for My First Car articles. Looking back through the old Hoosier A's newsletters, I see a few articles of mine that I would be glad to update and send on to you - if you have blank pages you need to fill some day. I don't have a First Car story, I guess since my first car was a 1953 Chevy Deluxe, with a Blue Flame engine and Power Glide tranny - a hard car to get sentimental about. But I do have a First MG story dating back to 1963, and 3 stories about our adventures when our MG trips ended on the back of a tow truck. Some of these you may have seen when I was doing the digital newsletter a few years back. I have photos with each.

Something else I was reminded of that I'll pass on for your consideration: For the issue covering November, we started a tradition of an article each year with then-and-now stories/photos of the veterans in the club. It generated a lot of "you mean you were once that thin?" comments.

We're waiting for our vaccination info, and in the meantime we're hunkering down with only a trip to Meijers every two weeks. Hopefully we will all be able to get together this spring/summer.

**Bill Gallihugh**

### *Hi Bill and Trudy,*

Good to hear from you, and that you're doing well. Kathy and I are fine, although our son Matt (in Virginia) did have Covid back in August. He had aches and fever and cough and shortness of breath, but the worst part was that they found blood clots in his lungs (thromboembolic vascular disease or pulmonary emboli). The GOOD news though is he never had to go into the hospital and since going on blood thinners he seems to have resolved completely, so we're all thankful. He may be on blood thinners for a good while though. No one knows enough about the long term yet for that answer.

Anyway, **YES, certainly and absolutely** I'd love to have your stories and pictures to use down the road in Antics (next issue will be March-April). (*PS I'd love to have a few more stories from our other Rowdies as well.*) However, don't count that 1953 Chevy Deluxe with the Blue Flame engine and 2-speed Slush-O-Matic out yet. Someone's trying to sell this one for \$6000 in Hemming's: <https://www.hemmings.com/classifieds/cars-for-sale/chevrolet/bel-air/2454999.html> and I bet yours was better than that one. **Ken**

**So now, without further ado, here's Bill Gallihugh's story:**

It was 1963, and I was serving in the Air Force in Northern Germany, when I decided I was tired of riding the base bus to downtown. I needed a car. But not just any car – something with pizzazz and style! Something that defined me (or at least my self-image). On checking around, I found that there were - in addition to the sea of VW bugs and Opals, two cars that caught my eye: a 1957 MGA Mineral Blue Coupe, and a 1959 Mercedes 190SL. The MGA was \$700, and the 190SL was \$1200. (A note here: The average price today for a "good" 1957 'A Coupe is \$15,900, while the equivalent 190SL goes for \$86,000. But being a shrewd investor with a keen eye for cars, I bought the MGA).

The deal was made, and I took possession of the keys. I was to meet the owner downtown to do the title transfer. Now, I had not driven a stick shift since trying it on a 1954 Ford station wagon in high school driver's training. Fortunately, I found the gears labeled on the top of the shift knob (rather clever, those Brits). The next problem I found was that I was wearing my brogans (for you civilians, those are big, clumsy boots), so I found it all but impossible to find the foot pedals - and with only pressing one at a time. Then I remember inserting and turning the key - and nothing happened. I looked around and found a knob with an "S" – which I guessed (hoped) meant "Start". I later learned that this was an optimistic assumption. But start it did, and I somehow made it to the title office, and the MG was mine!

The rocker panels existed in name only, the tires were so worn that you could see the air through them, and the two 6v batteries were on life support. It used a quart of oil in the tranny for about every two tanks of gas (honest!), and, needless to say, the radio didn't work. Contrary to regulations, it had no seat belts – which cost me a week's pay to have installed.

The Air Force had neglected to provide me with garage space, so it sat outside year-round. In the winter, when the "Hawk" blew in from across the North Sea with days of freezing misty-drizzle, the MGA would end up completely iced over – often right down to the ground. The boot was frozen shut for much of the winter, and the internals of the door handles would freeze up solid. When I would pick Trudy (*his future wife*) up for a date, we had a small length of rope that we tied through the door pull handles and across our laps to keep the doors from swinging open.

*(Continued next page)*

But we made it all work, and we drove that little coupe all around town every chance we had. One evening my roommate and I meet up with Trudy and a friend of hers (they were dating also) and decided to go to one of our favorite watering holes. But since the MGA was our only transport, all four of us climbed in – and off we went. Hard to believe now, but that’s a true story. On a more somber note, I also remember us sitting in the coupe listening to the sad news from Dallas on November 22, 1963. But mostly, it was a fun time.

After we were married, and transferred down to Wiesbaden, the MGA went with us. But time marches on, and a two-seat coupe just wasn’t working for us anymore. Besides, I was getting near rotating back to the States, and I couldn’t afford to ship a car stateside. So, I sold it to another airman, and said a sad farewell. But of all the cars I’ve ever owned (somewhere around 35 – including 7 MGs), none can replace my memories of that little blue coupe. Maybe it was because we were young, and life was an adventure with no script - and no outcome was certain.

**Bill Gallihugh**

**Postscript:** Looking back now across almost 60 years, and with the experience I have gained through driving, maintaining and restoring many MG’s, I am now truly horrified at my naiveté at thinking that all you had to do was fill up an MG with gas and pull the starter – and you could then blissfully drive the back roads of Europe without the slightest concern about arriving at your destination with clean hands. No back up plan, no road service, no cell phone, no spare parts, no tools (except for a few King Dick spanners in a rapidly rotting canvas pouch – not that I would have known what to do with them anyway). Since the coupe never once failed us in all those miles, I guess there really is a guardian angel who looks after the innocent and the unknowing. I am reminded of the saying: “All parts on a British car will perform flawlessly, until you become aware of their existence – at which time they will fail immediately.” I guess the MGB Gulp Valve would be a good example. But since the only thing I knew about MG’s was where to put oil in, I was spared the knowledge that any trip could go sideways at any moment. Knowledge can be a terrible burden.

**Bill Gallihugh**





## *Buying A Car - One Man's Experience*

Kathy and I bought our 2004 Jeep Grand Cherokee in 2005 as a one-year-old demonstrator and, I suspect, the boss's free transport for the year. It had almost 20,000 miles on it, even though it was only one year old. That was OK with me though, because I bought it for about \$22,000 instead of the retail new price of \$32,000. It served us well since then, and especially whenever one of my 4 old cars needed a tow or another car needed some help getting out of a snow-filled ditch. It also provided a safe ride for family vacations and our yearly winter ski trips with friends to northern Michigan, up until age has limited skiing for many of us. We still take extended weekend trips with other couples up north, but our main concern now is which wine to bring for meals, and who's in charge of supplying it.

Over the years I have done a lot of minor repairs on our Jeep, but I've mainly relied on our local mechanic to do the maintenance while I work on MGs and other British cars. But recently this winter I pulled into our garage on a winter's day, and found a new problem. Well, I got down on my knees, but I didn't begin to pray, because I was too busy looking to see where all my antifreeze was draining out. Hoses, radiator, water pump? Yep, it was the water pump, spinning erratically and spewing antifreeze all over the engine compartment. So, what to do? Replace it myself in a cold garage, or call for a tow to our local garage? I finally decided to do the job myself, but that gave me a chance to look the car over top and bottom, and I didn't like what I saw. Rust had well and truly taken hold in numerous places, and like a bad penny, it was certain to cause more trouble down the road. Holes in the rockers and over the fenders matched the cracker bumpers and windscreen. Particularly ominous were the rusted brake and transmission cooler lines and the crimp-on steel fittings for A/C and other hoses.

Once the car was running sweetly again, I weighed the pros and cons of replacing it, and it looked like those in favor of replacement were winning. Yep, I decided it was time for a successor for this trusty steed, so I started doing some looking around for another 1-year old Jeep Grand Cherokee with a factory tow package.

I soon found myself at the local Jeep dealer's used car lot. My research showed me that you get what you pay for, but once again I was sure I could find a used 1-year old car with low-ish miles that should be as good as a new one to me, and save perhaps \$8-10,000 off the sticker price of a brand new one. New cars are so well made today that my present one lasted 17 years and with proper maintenance should still keep running well. As usual for those of us in the rust belt of America, car bodies often wear out far sooner than the mechanical components.

If any of you out there are like me, you'd probably agree that the process of negotiating a car purchase from a dealer isn't high on your list of fun things to spend your time on. It's been a while since I dealt with a car dealership, and I was rather pleasantly surprised at the easy-going and non-pressured approach they seem to offer today. The salesman assured me of no follow-up phone calls unless it was I who asked, and really seemed fairly transparent in answering questions and dealing with me.

I was wearing my NAMGAR 2020 Colorado Springs GT-45 fleece (unfortunately delivered by mail and not picked up in person-but we all know the reason for that) and the salesman asked what the logo was about. I explained it to him, and it turned out he was also a car guy. He was close to my age, and owns a 1981 Corvette that he works on and drives when he can in good weather. We ended up showing each other pictures of our 'babies' and chatting for a good 20 minutes before even getting back to talk of newer cars.

Lest I be accused of male chauvinism with car salespersons, I offer in my defense that 3 earlier cars I bought were through a saleslady from our local Saturn dealership, and all went smoothly as well. In fact, I would have bought the last 2-seater Saturn Sky sold in town from her as well, except it literally had less storage room in the boot than an MGA. Too bad, because plastic bodies don't rust, and it was a convertible.

Well, Kathy and I found exactly the used Jeep we wanted with the factory tow package I was looking for, and the color and interior that Kathy desired. After very little haggling I traded my old Jeep in for \$2000. It was looking a bit shabby, but I hope someone will use it for another 100-150,000 miles on that engine at least. All in all, once again a much better experience than back in the day when one had to sweat through a multi-hour ordeal of nearly being imprisoned by the car dealer ("I'm sorry sir, we still can't seem to find the keys to your car, but let me show you this new model we have...")

Generally I'd give good marks to the quality of cars today, and the ethics of the salesmen and women as well. So, job done, I'm satisfied, and I've got plenty of time to get back to swapping that MGA 4.1 rear axle with the 3.9 I bought last summer. Now if winter will just get out of the way soon!



**Ken Nelson**

## Some Rowdie Updates

**Diana Keyes** wrote in to me recently to thank the Rowdie Club for everything that was done by all of us to help find a suitable home for Brian Beery's MGA stuff, as well as the writeup that was published in the last issue of *A-Antics* newsletter. She also sent in 2 more pictures of Brian, one of them with his original MGA coupe. It's too bad we never got to see Brian driving it to an MGA meet, but hopefully it will be resurrected at some future date in Michigan.

Hi Ken,

This is Diana Keyes, Brian's niece. My dad asked me to send you the photo of young Brian with his first and only running MGA. 😊

Thank you for the beautiful write up in your Rowdies newsletter. I know it would have been so special to him. He truly loved the MGA Club. When we were cleaning out his belongings we found his Rowdies name tag along with the one that belonged to my grandmother, Correna. We were tickled to see that she attended the shows with him. (See picture of Brian and his Mom also)

Your club was incredibly helpful in putting us in touch with an MGA car enthusiast. We were happy to sell the cars to a young gentleman that is eager to them on the road.

If you have an other questions you can contact me at (949)933-3307 or via this email.

**Hugs, Diana (Beery) Keyes**



**Bruce Nichols** wrote in about **Joe Tolmacs** in January. Joe wanted to sell his MGA to a Michigander. Joe was an MGA owner from 'back in the day' who lived around Kalamazoo. I never heard any followup, but at that time his wife Barb wrote to Bruce "For sale: 1957 coupe many new body panels including post and sills, Motor rebuilt and I think Joe said the suspension and brakes are rebuilt. If interested call Joe Tolmacs at 269-372-3459. if you're not interested pass the info on. Joe's email is [jlt4114@aol.com](mailto:jlt4114@aol.com). Thanks for any help you can give.

**Barb Tolmacs**

The pictures of the car looked pretty good to me. I met Joe a few times and I think his work was pretty good. He also rebuilt transmissions. Does anyone know what happened with Joe's car, and if it found a new home in Michigan or not? Here are the pictures Barb sent in.

**Ken Nelson**



## DISTRIBUTOR SERVICES OFFERED

### *Rob Medynski of British Vacuum Unit*

manufactures original no longer supplied Lucas distributor vacuum units, other ignition parts and is also a re builder of Lucas distributors. One of his latest projects has been to develop a distributor to give efficient ignition timing on British cars using the supercharger.

In the past supercharged cars such as the MGB required limited total timing usually no more than 28 degrees under full boost load to prevent pre-ignition. Setting a distributor up this way you lost efficiency the other 99% of the driving time when you're not under boost load. This has been a age old problem when installing a supercharger on our classic British cars.

I've also discovered this has been a unsolvable problem with most all make and model cars. Timing has always been a problem because of the wide range of engine performance conditions.

First and most important is maximum timing under full boost. As boost pressure increases so does flame speed. The amount of timing needed for the most efficient performance under any and all conditions is calculated by the fuel mixture flame speed. For maximum power and performance the fuel mixture needs to start to expand and build pressure when the piston is at its most power potential of 20 degrees ATDC.

The fuel mixture has a delay from spark to expansion. The 14 to 1 air fuel mixture usually takes around 14.5 MS from spark to full pressure with a normally aspirated engine. This is why spark is BTDC so the air/fuel expansion starts at the 20 degrees piston power potential, not before or after. This is the tricky part. A normally aspirated engine relies on load and RPMs to control timing. With a supercharger we now have enhanced load conditions.

With a naturally aspirated engine "use of a carburetor", the air intake is limited by atmospheric pressure. It can only draw a limited volume of air/fuel mixture. The air /fuel mixture has a flame speed from when spark occurs to when the mixture starts to expand and apply pressure on the piston.

Most supercharged engines are low compression. Not under boost can tolerate up to 36 degrees total timing. The supercharger under boost now supplies air/fuel by lbs of pressure psi greatly increasing the flame speed requiring a reduction in timing.

Carbureted or naturally inspired engines relied on two conditions. Mechanical advance that controls timing by RPMs. Vacuum advance that controlled timing by load and RPMs. Now with a supercharger we need a third condition, boost retard to handle and reduce the over all timing when boost pressure and faster flame speed is present.

Ideally when there is no boost we can run with 36 degrees mechanical advance with another 12 to 14 degrees vacuum advance under light load "cruising speeds" for a total of 48 to 50 degrees. With slight load the timing falls back to the mechanical advance 36 degrees.

Once the supercharger starts to build pressure the timing needs to retard with the increase in flame speed regulated by boost pressure from the 36 degrees to around 28 degrees.

Our simple solution was to design a distributor curve and vacuum unit to give the desired timing under all conditions.

1- We set our distributor for a low compression 36 degrees total at 4000 rpms.

2- Vacuum advance is regulated by load and RPMs mainly at cruising speeds when the fuel mixture becomes leaner and slower to burn to maintain pressure at the maximum piston power potential.

A slower flame speed requires a increase in timing, usually 48 to 50 degrees.

3- Boost retard regulated by lbs of boost pressure with a retard range of 1 to 5 lbs boost for 1 to 8 degrees retard. I also designed the vacuum advance/boost unit to handle the extreme vacuum and boost pressures and incorporated a adjustable advance limiter. Our dual unit design parks the point plate at the same location when there is no vacuum or boost. It is not a floating unit.

We usually supply our distributors with points and condenser. Electronic ignition can easily be installed. With the British vacuum Unit complete supercharger distributor, special advance, boost retard unit along with our unique distributor advance curve, allows full efficient ignition timing when not under load, vacuum advance when under light load and boost retard by lbs of boost pressure. This allows over all efficiency, the best of all worlds" throughout all rpms, loads and driving conditions and greatly enhances the performance and life of the engine.

We also designed our distributor to be a drop in, connect one vacuum line, set 10 degrees static BTDC and you're done. Some of the disadvantages with other supercharger systems are low compression engines can safely run 36 degrees total mechanical advance when not under load. Most other systems have limited total timing. Most others do not have the proper vacuum advance rate and do not have a retarded timing option under boost. Some come close but often at a very very high cost, need a separate boost retard and you often need to know how to program the package.

If you need any additional information contact British Vacuum Unit at 603-731-1788 or email us at [bvu@britishvacuumunit.com](mailto:bvu@britishvacuumunit.com) (Article from March 2020 "Meshing Gears" MG Club of Central Jersey)



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