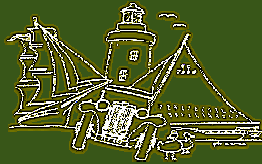


# THE SQUARE RIGGER



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF  
THE CHESAPEAKE CHAPTER OF THE NEW ENGLAND MG-T REGISTER

[www.chesapeakechaptermgtclub.com](http://www.chesapeakechaptermgtclub.com)

## SPRING 2011

### Chairman's Comments:

Greetings!

So, the sun is rising sooner and the days are getting not only longer but warmer — quite different from where we were at this time last year. Hopefully this weather will entice us to get our MG-TC/D/Fs ready for the road again.



Last month our Club held its annual EatOut at Morgan's American Grill in New Market, MD. There was a good turnout for the event, and to add to the air of festivity there were door prizes — wine from a local vineyard, Old Speckled Hen Ale, and a few books specifically related to T-Series MGs. Our thanks to Lin Snider for putting this together.

You will remember that in the TSR Winter issue I solicited suggestions from members regarding organizations that could benefit from financial contributions our Club might make on their behalf. We're fortunate in having accumulated enough money in our treasury to do that. For those of you who were not at the EatOut, I announced that we will be making contributions to: Pets on Wheels; The Alexandria Seaport Foundation; The Foundation Fighting Blindness; the Highland County (VA) Medical Center; Hospice of Frederick County (MD); The Boy Scouts of America; and the McPherson College Automobile Restoration Program. I should point out that most of the money in our treasury is generated through The Original British Car Day. As you all know, this year's OBCDay (Sunday, June 5) will be the 34th year in which it has been held, and volunteers are still needed. If you've not already signed up, please contact John To-kar to discover how you can help.

During the weekend of May 6-8 the Chapter will once again stage our annual MiniGOF, this time under the superb direction of Jim Bradley. From conversations I've had with Jim it looks like there'll be opportunities for everyone to have a lot of fun. Please register early so that Jim can firm up the details.

You'll also see in the body of this issue that Vintage Restorations plans to host a tour of their Union Bridge facility in July. It is always interesting to see their cars in various stages of restoration, as well as to learn about their varied histories.

On a parting note, I've thought to mention a DVD I recently bought which covers rebuilding the MGA/MGB 3 Synchro Gearbox. I know some of us may have either an MGA or an early MGB, and this DVD would be an excellent addition to your toolbox. It's published by Prime Hawk Innovations and can be purchased at [www.primehawkinnovations.com](http://www.primehawkinnovations.com). I spoke with the company and was told that they're working on a similar DVD for the T-Series.

Safety Fast!

Shaun English

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## **Editor's Corner**

02/28/11

### **Origins and Purpose**

The Chesapeake Chapter of the New England MG-T Register was organized during the summer of 1971 by Register members in the Baltimore-Washington area where local interest in classic MGs was high. Its purpose was and still is to encourage the maintenance, preservation and enjoyment of T-Series and other vintage MGs. We welcome new members who share our interest in these unique cars. Membership in our parent organization, the New England MG-T Register, Ltd., and payment of modest annual dues are the only requirements. Membership application forms can be found, along with previous issues of this Newsletter, on our Chapter's website: [www.chesapeakechaptermgclub.com](http://www.chesapeakechaptermgclub.com)

Our Newsletter is circulated electronically on a quarterly basis to Members who possess email capability, and by regular mail to Members who do not. The electronic version contains color photos, whereas the regular-mail version is in black & white. In any event, the full color version is always available for subsequent viewing on and downloading from our website.

We're always on the lookout for stories, technical submissions, anecdotes, jokes, cartoons, photographs and other contributions of interest to MG fans. In addition, we seek to encourage fullest possible participation by Members in Chapter events, mention of which can be found in further pages of this Newsletter.

### **Celebrating the TF**

As envisaged in our previous issue, this Spring issue celebrates the TF, at least 19 of which currently grace the garages of Chapter members. It was the last of five T-Series models whose first iteration, the TA, appeared in 1936. Total T-Series production over those 19 years in amounted to 52,643 vehicles.

We are grateful to those who submitted TF and other material for this issue. We also thank Vicki Leonard, Julie Swisshelm, Jim Bradley, Ward Hill, Philip Carolan, and Charley Howard for their photographic contributions.

### **Coming Attractions**

Our Esteemed Chairman has suggested we celebrate our 34th Original British Car Day by devoting the cover page of our next (Summer) TSR issue to a photomontage of our own T-Series cars. Sounds like a fine idea, and we're going to give it a try. Even though we already have a few photos of members' cars on file, we invite you send us more for this special purpose.

Our colleague Milton Babirak has been playing detective in Sweden in pursuit of a famous MG racecar named "Aramis," one of a trio of NE-Type Magnettes known as "The Three Musketeers" which carried the Union Jack to racing glory in the mid-1930s. His quest has paid off, with results we hope to reveal on these pages in the near future.

For our part, we've been reading up on the historic 1933 Mille Miglia, in which three supercharged, 1,100cc LBCs (K-Type.3s) knocked the socks off their Italian and other European competitors — and astounded the racing world not only by winning their class, but also by carrying home the prestigious Gran Premio Brescia team trophy, a symbol of overall mastery in international motor racing. That story also awaits its chance to appear in TSR.

### **MG Quiz Feature**

This issue contains Question No. 3 in our series of tests of Members' knowledge of MG lore. If you don't know the answer off the tops of your heads, don't be shy about doing a little research. Three Members responded to the Quiz question in the Winter issue, all with correct answers. (See page 6.) □

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## Membership News

Milton Babirak  
Membership Chairman

We welcome:

Pete Loercher

Email: [stjp@verizon.net](mailto:stjp@verizon.net)  
MGA

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## Recent Chapter Events

### EatOut 2011,

We were delighted to see 31 of us turn out on on Sunday, February 13, for our annual luncheon event at Morgan's American Grill at New Market, MD. The venue, food and atmosphere were all we could wish for, and we gather everyone else thought so too. Kudos to Lin Snider for discovering the right place. (See page 5 for photos taken during the proceedings.)

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## Upcoming Chapter & Chapter-Related Events

### Mini-GOF 2011

Members will have received our email message, dated February 21, 2011, containing detailed information about this event, which will take place at Alexandria, VA over the weekend of May 6-8.

Our colleague Jim Bradley is working hard to organize this project, which seems certain to become one of our most enjoyable and memorable events in many a year. Baptized as the "Potomac River Run," its many activities will include several T-Series excursions, visits to historic sites in the area, fine dining, and many other opportunities for relaxation and good comradeship. We feel confident the entire weekend will measure up to your fullest expectations.

Interested members should complete the registration form attached to our February 21 email message and return it to Jim no later than Wednesday, April 6. We look forward to having as many of you as possible, along with a goodly number of your MGs, join us for a great weekend at Alexandria!

## NEMGTR GOF MK 89

Our parent organization's signature event will be held at the Margate Resort on Lake Winnepesaukee, Laconia, NH from Wednesday to Sunday, May 18-22. Registration deadline: May 1, 2011. [www.nemgtr.org](http://www.nemgtr.org) (click on "EVENTS")

## The 34th Original British Car Day, Sunday, June 5, 2011

John Tokar's eloquent appeal in our Winter issue for improved member response to our need for volunteer help in mounting this, our traditional annual event, has met with partial success. Half a dozen of us — new members and old — have responded positively. We are grateful to them for stepping forward.

At the same time, we note that this flagship event needs further volunteers to help with functions which John enumerated at our February 13 EatOut. These include field set-up on Saturday, June 4, plus additional hands to help with show car parking and vehicle registration on Sunday, June 5.

We really deserve your help, T-Series fans, so please be sure to get in touch with John at his office (410-775-0500); his home (301-865-1339); or by email at [jtokar51@verizon.net](mailto:jtokar51@verizon.net).

As special incentives, all members who turn out to help in one way or another can expect to receive free registration for one car at the show, an invitation to an "appreciation luncheon" a month or so after the show (probably in July), and their choice of a free T-shirt or cap.

## Projected Tour of Vintage Restorations Ltd. and Historic Downtown Union Bridge

Vintage Restorations Limited, a full-service antique and classic car restoration shop specializing in British cars at Union Bridge, MD, has offered to hold a series of activities for Chesapeake Chapter members. While the precise date remains to be determined, plans include a 10 am doughnuts & coffee session, followed by a tour of the shop and its many restoration projects in progress, an open discussion of T-Series MGs, their history, technical and restoration/service techniques, and ending with a Question & Answer session. Also on display will be large-scale, ride-on trains currently under construction. These trains are in 3¾" scale, and can pull ten cars with 20 people on 7½" gauge track.

Around noon we would gather for a special tour of the Western Maryland Railway Historical Society Museum. It's located in the **Union Bridge Station**, built in 1902 as a stop on the Western Maryland Railway. After the museum tour we'll dine at The Buttersburg Inn, which serves up home-cooked food just like your mom or grandma used to make. Following lunch, all are welcome to take a walking tour of Union Bridge, visiting the Country Store and other points of interest. In 1994, the town was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the Union Bridge Historic District.

So plan on taking a drive through scenic back-country roads and be sure to include this event in your summer MG driving activi-

ties. We look forward to seeing you in Union Bridge in July!

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### Upcoming Events Sponsored by Others

(For details, click on the blue links)

#### Sugarloaf Mountain Region 41st Annual Antique Auto Parts Meet

To be held Friday-Saturday, March 25-26, 7 am to 4 pm, at the Frederick Fair grounds, 797 E. Patrick Street.

<http://www.motortopia.com/car-shows/sugarloaf-mountain-region-41st-annual-antique-auto-parts-meet-3471>

#### 12th Annual British and European Car Show

Mounted by the Williamsburg British Car Club on Sunday, April 3 at Chickahominy River Front Park, 1350 John Tyler Highway, Williamsburg, VA.

[www.wmbgbrit.com/carshow\\_registration\\_form.htm](http://www.wmbgbrit.com/carshow_registration_form.htm)

#### 14th Annual Britain on the Green

Sponsored annually by The Capital Triumph Register, this show will take place on Sunday, May 1 at the Collingwood Museum and Library, Alexandria, VA. An enjoyable annual event in a delightful setting beside the Potomac River. [www.capitaltriumphregister.com](http://www.capitaltriumphregister.com)

#### Spring Carlisle Collector Car Exhibition and Swap Meet

To be held at Carlisle, PA, Wednesday-Sunday, April 27-May 1. "Filled with anything and everything."

[www.carsatcarlisle.com/ce/events/spring-carlisle](http://www.carsatcarlisle.com/ce/events/spring-carlisle)

#### 16th Annual Lewes British Motorcar Show

The British invade the City of Lewes again when the British Car Club of Delaware, the Lewes Chamber of Commerce, and The Lewes Historical Society host the 16th Annual British Car Show on Saturday, May 7. **The featured marque for the 2011 show will be the MG T 1936-1955.** On Saturday, May 7 at the Lewes Historical Complex in Lewes, DE.

<http://www.leweschamber.com/news/16th-annual-british-car-show.htm>

#### Carlisle Import-Kit/Replicar Nationals

This large display of sports and exotic cars, with a host of vendors of parts, accessories, regalia, etc. will take place Friday-Sunday, May 20-22. [www.carsatcarlisle.com/ce/events/import](http://www.carsatcarlisle.com/ce/events/import)

#### British Car Awareness Week

Celebrated nationwide from Saturday, May 28 to Sunday, June 6. For details, see: [www.britishcarweek.org/events.html](http://www.britishcarweek.org/events.html)

#### Meeting of the Marques Motor Show

An open car and motorcycle show at Hershey, PA with benefits going to the Children's Miracle Network at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital. Held last year on June 4. Dates for 2011 not announced thus far.

[www.SVVSCE.org](http://www.SVVSCE.org) (doesn't respond as of 03/02/11). ☐

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### A Levantine Auto Tale

From a Friend in Lebanon

A Lebanese gentleman walked into a bank in New York City some weeks ago and asked to speak to a loan officer.

He told the loan officer he was flying to Beirut for two weeks on important business and needed urgently to borrow \$5,000.

The bank officer told him the bank would require some form of security for such a loan. The Lebanese man handed over the keys to a brand new Ferrari 458 Italia parked on the street in front of the bank. He produced a title, and everything checked out.

The loan officer agreed to accept the car as collateral for a five-year loan at 12% interest.

The bank's president and its officers all enjoyed a good laugh at the Lebanese fellow for posting a \$280,000 Ferrari as collateral against a \$5,000 loan. A bank employee then drove the Ferrari into the bank's underground garage and parked it there.

Two weeks later, the Lebanese man returned and repaid the \$5,000 plus interest, which came to \$43.77.

The loan officer told him: "Sir, this transaction has worked out nicely, and we're very happy to have had your business. But we're a little puzzled. While you were away, we checked you out and discovered you to be a multimillionaire.

"So that's what has us puzzled. We wonder why you'd bother to borrow \$5,000 from us."

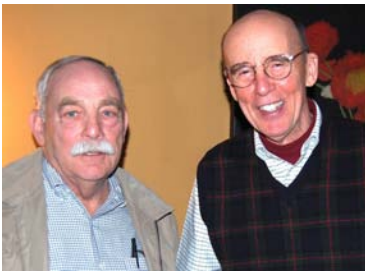
The Lebanese gent replied: "Where else in New York City can I park my car for two weeks for only \$43.77 and expect to find it there when I return?" ☐



# EatOut 2011

## Selected Photos

*(copies available upon request)*



## “Stump the Chapter” Quiz

### Answer to Question No. 2

(Winter 2010 issue)

**Q. What significance, if any, does someone named John W. Thornley have in connection with British automotive history?**

**A.** Chip Old, Jim Bradley and Charley Howard identified Thornley correctly. All of them contributed welcome details to the following biographical sketch:

John W. Thornley (b. 1909), an English university student and automotive enthusiast, purchased a “standard blue M-Type MG Midget” in June 1930. He would later recall that, delighted with its performance, he made a point of calling on Mr. Roy Marsh, who was then in the process of forming what would become The MG Car Club. Thornley emerged from their meeting as the Club’s first Honorary Secretary.



He soon found himself extremely busy trying to cope with his accounting studies plus the demands of what was rapidly becoming a very popular and expanding automobile club. To quote from his classic 1950 memoir, *Maintaining the Breed: The Saga of MG Racing Cars*:

“Quite early in the life of the club I came down to Abingdon and met Cecil Kimber to get his blessing, as well as official MG approval, for the use of the trademark, and on a subsequent visit — indeed several subsequent visits — I said to Kim: “Now, look, one of two things must happen. Either you will have to find someone else to take over the secretaryship of this rapidly growing baby, or you’ll have to give me a job here at Abingdon.

“The first once or twice I said this, it did not seem to register very much, but at length Cecil Kimber agreed that if I cared to come here there would be a job for me in the Service Department.

“The day was fixed — 1st November 1931 — and I duly arrived and reported to Kimber. We talked in general terms for a while, then he said: ‘Well, now you’re going down to the Service Department. Of course your primary job is to run the MG Car Club, but as that will not take up all your time, in spare moments you can assist the Service Manager, John Temple.

“‘Before you go down to the Service Department this morning, however, I’d like you to meet our General Manager, Mr. Propert.’

“I was introduced to George Propert, and left with him. We, too, talked in general terms for a while, then he said: ‘Well, now it is time for you to go down to the Service Department. Of course you understand your job here is to assist the Service Manager, and in your spare time you will run the MG Car Club.’”

As Thornley wrote, looking back two decades later, “That was the basis on which I started work here, and it has been substantially the same ever since!”

Curtailing a promising career in accounting, he rose steadily in the MG organization to become, from 1952 until his retirement in 1969, “Mr. MG” — i.e., Director and General Manager of the MG Car Company, Ltd. In that capacity, he supervised the conception and creation of the MGTF, the MGA and the MGB, thereby enhancing the renown of the MG marque on the international stage.

John Thornley died in 1994, some 49 years after the tragic death of his mentor, idol and good friend, Cecil Kimber. The latter would be appalled, as Thornley almost certainly was, by the smug mismanagement, resistance to innovation and change, mounting financial losses and, finally, desperate restructuring efforts that by the late 1980s would drive major British-owned car manufacturers into extinction.

**Here’s Quiz Question No. 3:**

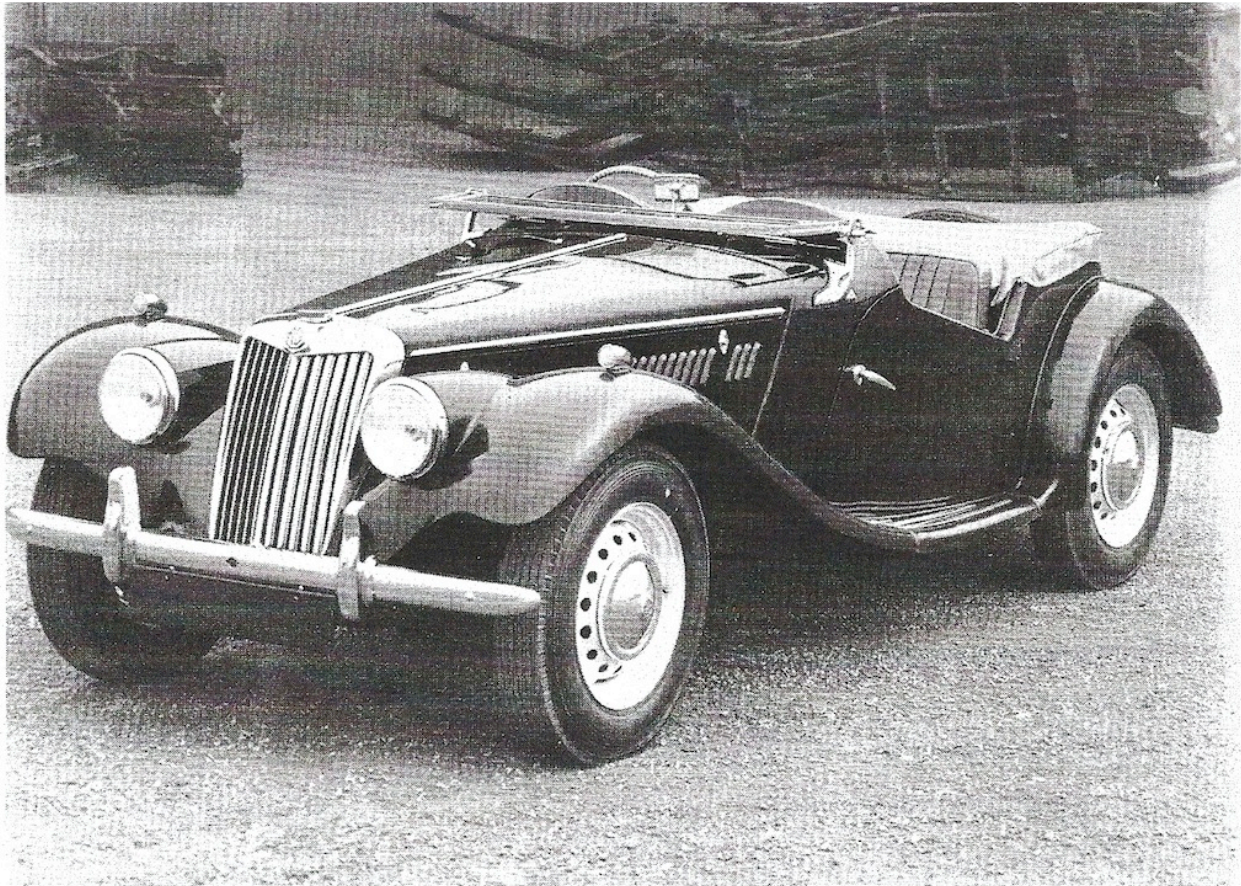
**Q. What was the nature of the connection between the MG Car Company, Ltd. and an organization known as “the Pavlova Works”? □**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Celebrating the TF



The last of the true MG Midgets — the TF — with lowered radiator and built-in head lamps, has a clean frontal appearance retaining the traditional character

Published *The Autocar*, 16 October 1953

### Lowered Body Line for Midget

The M.G. Midget is a car that, probably, has changed less in outward appearance than any other model over the same period of time, and it is this feature that makes the car contrast so sharply with the production models of overseas countries such as the United States of America, where the Midget is particularly popular. By these remarks it is not meant to imply that the design has remained static since the first M.G. was produced very many years ago. Nothing could be further from the truth. Over the years, the model has been developed to improve its performance, handling qualities and general comfort. However, in spite of this, the main external features have remained more or less unchanged, and even now the recently introduced TF model shows that the bodywork has been restyled to produce a much cleaner external appearance though retaining the M.G. Midget characteristics.

In detail, the centre of the scuttle has been lowered slightly, while the radiator grille height has been reduced by over  $3\frac{1}{2}$ in, so that the bonnet now has a marked forward slope. The front wings have also been re-styled and the head lamps are faired into the main wing pressings, instead of being bolted to the wing stay as on previous models. The general style of the rear end has also received attention, with tail, stop

### M.G. TF MIDGET Specification

**Engine.** — 4 cyl, 66.5 X 90mm (1,250 c.c. Compression ratio 8 to 1. 57 b.h.p. at 5,500 r.p.m. Maximum torque 65 lb ft at 3,000 r.p.m. Three-bearing crankshaft. Inverted “bath tub” combustion chambers. Overhead valves operated by push rods and rockers. Single side camshaft.

**Clutch.** — 8in diameter dry single plate. Six springs. Mechanical withdrawal mechanism.

**Gear Box.** — Overall ratios: top 4.875; third 6.752; second 1.09; first 17.06; reverse 17.06 to 1.

**Final Drive.** — Hypoid axle (8:39). Ratio 4.875 to 1. Two -pinion differential.

**Suspension.** — Front: independent, coil springs and wishbones. Rear: half-elliptic. Sus-

and indicator lights built into the rear wings. Modifications also have been made to the fuel tank and spare wheel mounting to help to tidy up the overall appearance.

The overall height is reduced by 1½in and this should help to reduce the wind resistance and further improve the performance of the new TF. Although no major modifications have been made to the basic design of the mechanical components, a number of modifications have been made to the engine which is, in effect, now similar to stage 2 of the makers' tuning recommendations for TD Midgets. It will be remembered that the results of the stage-by-stage tuning were tested by *The Autocar* and described in the issues of July 18 and 25, 1952, together with performance figures.

The modifications to the engine include raising the compression ratio to 8 to 1, fitting larger valves and stronger valve springs, and using 1½in diameter twin S.U. carburettors. The reduction in radiator grille height has also reduced the height of the radiator core and, to prevent any possibility of overheating, the core thickness has been increased.

In keeping with the external alterations, the cockpit layout has also been modified, and in place of a one-piece back rest, two adjustable seats are now fitted. The fascia panel has been completely redesigned to provide two useful lockers, one on each side of the central instrument panel, and the top of the swept scuttle is padded with leather-covered rubber. (The left hand locker will house a radio unit if required.) The previously screen-mounted windscreen wiper motor has been replaced by a cable-rack unit with the motor housed in the engine compartment (below the fuel pump and just behind the rear air cleaner). The wipers can be individually parked by means of knobs in the glove lockers.

Pressing twin release buttons on each side of the engine compartment will disengage the bonnet catches, and spring-loaded rests will throw the bonnet clear of the catch.

Other items of equipment include a map reading light and flashing direction indicators. The car is supplied with steel disc wheels as standard, although centre-lock wire wheels can be supplied at extra cost. Other optional extras include a badge bar, fog lamp and luggage carrier. □

pension rate (at the wheel): front, 74 lb per in; rear: 139 lb per in. Static deflection: front, 6.45in; rear 3.4in.

**Brakes.** — Front: hydraulically operated two-leading shoe. Rear: leading and trailing shoe. Drums: front, 9in diameter, 11½ wide; rear, 9in diameter, 1½ wide. Total lining area: 105 sq in (52.5 sq in front).

**Steering.** — Rack and pinion.

**Wheels and Tyres.** — Four 15in tyres on four 15in rims. Steel disc wheels (centre lock wire wheels, optional extra).

**Electrical Equipment.** — 12 volt, 51 ampère-hour battery. Head lamps, 42-36 watt bulbs.

**Fuel System.** — 12-gallon tank. Engine sump oil capacity 10½ pints.

**Main Dimensions.** — Wheelbase 7ft, 10in. Track (with disc wheels): front, 3ft 11in; rear, 4ft 2in; (with centre lock wire wheels): front 4ft, 2 13/16in Overall length 12ft, 3in. Width 4ft 11in. Height 4ft, 6½ in. Ground clearance 6in. Frontal area 16.1 sq ft approximately (hood up). Turning circle 31ft, 3in. Weight (with ½-gallon fuel) 17¼ cwt. Weight distribution: 51.4 percent front; 48.6 percent rear.

**Base Price (1953):** £550, plus British purchase tax £230 5s 10d. **Total:** £780 5s 10d. □

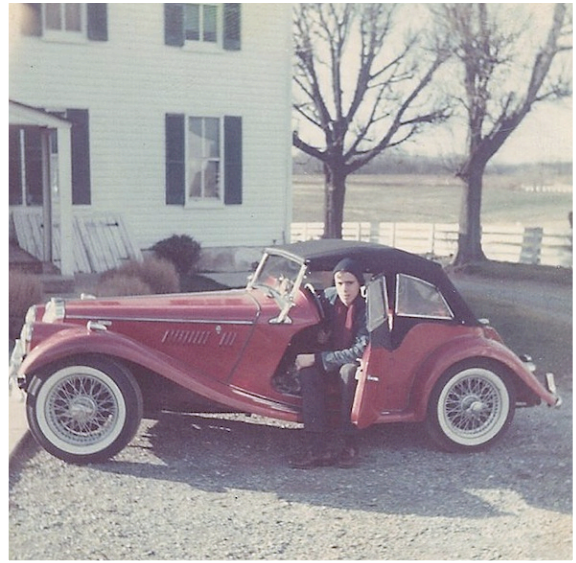
## My TF Journey

By Jim Bradley

My TF journey started — indirectly, upon graduation from college in June 1963 and commissioning as an Ensign in the Navy — with the purchase of a white 1952 Jaguar XK120 Fixed Head Coupe in Lancaster, PA for the sum of \$600. It was a great car. It was also, however, a well used car. I loved the lines, but it was not always easy to drive. In town it was sometimes difficult to drive because it had such a long bonnet/hood that the front of the car would be well into an intersection before the driver could see into that intersection. The Jaguar also had quite a few miles on it and more problems than I realized or was able to deal with. In Philadelphia, while enroute to my first duty station in Athens, GA, a friend and his Dad, who operated a machine shop, did a valve job on the engine. Shortly after getting to Athens, other problems developed, and I realized that on an Ensign's pay I could ill afford to support both myself and that lovely car. I then drove it to Atlanta where I traded it in on a bright red 1955 MG TF1500. That was when my real journey began.



In December of that year, I finished the Navy school and headed for San Diego via Pennsylvania. The photo shows the MG and me on a cold winter's day in Pennsylvania. The MG had a heater, but even with the heater and the side curtains secured from the inside in such a way that it took me several minutes simply to get out of the car, it was a long and sometimes cold ride. Within less than a month in San Diego, I drove north of San Francisco to Mare Island Naval Shipyard where I met my ship in overhaul. In the course of a year in the shipyard, I carried out a minor overhaul of the MG. I managed to get it back together after a WestPac tour and then headed back across country to New London for submarine school.



By the time I reached the east coast, I realized that the MG with my maintenance skills was not the most reliable, nor a particularly good all-weather vehicle for New England. So I bought a brand new Detroit car with a hard top and roll-up windows. The dealer offered me next to nothing for the MG and, having regretted parting with the Jaguar, I decided to keep the MG. Good decision!! After a submarine tour, the Navy sent me and my (by then) wife, Ginny, back to the west coast to an MBA program at Stanford. This time I made the trip with wife and a dog in the new car and with the MG in tow. No problem.

Two years later it was back to the east coast and Charleston, SC. This time I made an advance trip with the dog, Sammy, a German shepherd, in the MG. It was a fun trip! I took out the passenger seat and packed my gear there in the form of an inclined plane such that when stopping for the night, I simply pulled the front of the car up on a slope to bring the passenger area level. I stretched out there. Sammy was on duty in the driver's seat and nobody bothered us.

After four years in Charleston, during which the MG was neglected as we worked to restore an 1840's Charleston single house and welcomed the arrival of a baby boy, the Navy transferred us to England. In those days the Navy would ship one's car, so we shipped the MG.

Within the first month in England I got involved with the local MG car club and shortly thereafter resolved finally to do a proper overhaul of the MG. Our daughter, Katherine, arrived and had to compete with her brother and MG car parts for space in our Royal Navy quarters. The MG, now British Racing Green, was for the most part finished just as we were about to return to the States, but we did have time to make the "French Run" as the MG club called it: Dover to Calais on the ferry with South Carolina tags on the MG, and the chrome strips not yet installed in the grille or on the running boards. We made the "Run" through the French countryside with only one incident: While flying through the poppy fields of Flanders, the latch on the driver's door gave way and the door slammed back into the fender — the first scratch after the new paint job! We have great memories of that trip and a constant reminder, even after a John Tokar restoration, is the snap extending from the back of the tub, to which our son, Philip, then two years old and wearing a harness was tethered. No thought about child seats at that time . . . and no room in the MG with the rest of our gear.

Returning to the States and to the DC area in the mid-1970s, we did make it to Bowie for British Car Day and to Williamsburg and Chestertown for MiniGOFs, still without the chrome bits installed.



Then, from 1981 to 1983, during a second overseas tour (in Sardinia), we left the MG behind. It suffered again through a series of unfortunate storage situations, but I kept the faith and kept the car! In the intervening years I did little with or to it until about six years ago, when I made an effort to drive it on a more regular basis. I wasn't satisfied, however. For what I considered to be a classic car, its appearance did not meet the standard that such a car deserved, and there were mechanical issues which I was not properly addressing with the pressures of job, family and other excuses. So I went to John Tokar and asked him to see what he could do. I wanted to make it reliable, drivable and respectable in appearance. John did

that and more! I'm glad he did. Nevertheless, after all this, I still do not have a proper garage for the MG. I keep it in the parking garage of a nearby apartment building where it is out of the weather, but not as warm and secure as I would like it to be.

Still, maybe someday, as the journey continues. . . . □

## A Short Story of Long Ownership

By Ed Fitzsimmons

My good friend and fellow TF owner Tom Carolan asked me to write a short piece about my 1954 MGTF, so here it is.

I have owned this wonderful car since 1963. My first sports car was a 1959 MGA. That car didn't make it through my wild child period. It was totaled after an argument with a tree late one night while driving home from Virginia Beach. With the insurance check in hand, I was limping home when I saw four men in suits pushing a cherry little TF across a Ford used car lot in Newport News, VA. When I inquired as to why they didn't drive it, they said no one could figure out how to start it. I offered my 18-year-old's expertise, you know the kind, and after looking for quite some time found the starter. The salesmen were duly impressed when it started and, truthfully, so was I. I asked the price, and wouldn't you know it was exactly the amount of my insurance check. I asked how they had come by the TF and was told that it had been traded in on a Ford Falcon that morning by a man and his son. They said that the son was just then old enough to drive and that the father was afraid to let him use the TF. The father was a construction engineer on the Freeport Grand Bahamas Casino project in Abaco in 1954 and had purchased the TF to use while assigned there. It had been held by customs so long that he was only able to drive it on the island a few months. He said he stored the TF when he returned home because he didn't feel safe on the new interstate highways. I drove away with my dream car for \$800. Thus began a 46-year love affair.

At the time I was home, and working Newport News Ship Building Company as an electrician was a real chick magnet alone I decided it was the world. In 1965, I wanted to "go adventure" my age, I immediately and drove to North Carolina and decided my TF was trip to Miami for the olds on the loose with



single, living at for the Newport and Dry Dock Company. My new ride net, and for that reason was the best car in the friend asked if I turing." Of course, at ly dropped everything Carolina, where we the best car to make a winter. Two 19-year-very little money to

spend were off on an adventure. Along the way, we camped wherever we could find a spot. The most memorable night was spent along a river in South Carolina, where we found a park that looked safe enough once we drove into the woods a little way. It was very late as we looked for a place to park, with my friend walking along with a small flashlight and me driving behind. We finally set up camp and went to sleep, only to be awakened a few hours later by a loud rumble and screeching. We quickly determined that we were on or very near train tracks. We saw the sweeping light coming through the woods towards us, and we stood frozen in fear. I turned on the TF's headlights to try to signal the train. I really loved the car and proved it then and there by not running away. The train slowly slipped by about 50 feet away from where we stood, and the engineer waved and laughed as he saw us. I'm sure my eyes were as big as the headlights. The rest of the trip south was uneventful, and once in Miami we found work aboard the sailing vessel *Mandalay*, one of Mike Burke's *Windjammers*. I left my TF at Mr. Burke's home for the next year while sailing throughout the Caribbean and West Indies as a crewman and eventually first mate.

All good fun must come to an end, and mine did with the arrival of my draft notice. After sitting outside for a year, the TF was not up to a drive back to Virginia, so I towed it using a new Mustang from a drive-away company. That company promised to deliver your car anywhere and did so by lending it to someone who wanted to go that way but had no car. That was me.

I joined the Navy Reserve and stayed until the flight training program I was promised was cancelled, at which time I joined the Army as a pilot trainee. The TF got another year off while I served a tour in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. On my return I was assigned to the 82d Airborne in North Carolina. By this time I had married, so my wife and I drove my TF to my new duty station. It was our only car, but was soon joined by a very old VW bus. One year later found me off to fixed-wing flight school and then back to Vietnam. The TF was stored yet again at my parents' home in Virginia for that year.

Over the next 25 years the TF served me well as a daily commuter in and around military posts across the country, including Fort Hood, TX, Fort Benning, GA, Fort Campbell, KY, and several years in and around the Pentagon near Wash-



ington, D.C. In that time I put over 70,000 miles on the odometer and rebuilt the engine only once. I did break a crank at the front journal while starting off from a stop light in Tampa, FL in 1972, where I was attending college. I towed it home and pulled the engine that night and replaced the crank the next day. I don't think that qualifies as a rebuild.



the TF that day. [Undoubtedly the work of Lin Snider's legendary charm. — Ed.] We placed second in the TF category and were so thrilled that other MG owners liked our baby that we now regularly attend Little British Car shows. We have won several trophies over the past few years, and now have another reason to love our TF. ☐

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## TBD

By Ward Hill

Today's the day. For what? The TF is arriving from California. It's August 28, 2004, and I just got the call from the delivery driver to say he was in the vicinity and needed final directions to the unload spot, a wide open area next to the road a couple miles from home.

Bought sight unseen on the basis of extensive pictures from a broker in California, I was a bit nervous. But the car proved to be just as advertised, a solid survivor with only exterior paint and upholstery redone some unknown while ago. Started right up and drove on home without a problem. Now what?



Go back 40 years to Watkins Glen, the SCCA National sports car races, and a red MG TF 1500 in front of a hotel — I was a camper in those days. Seems like that's where I caught the bug. In the interim, I have owned, restored, driven and sadly sold two Austin Healey 100/4s, an Autodynamics Formula V, a '67 Jag E-type and a '69 Jag XJ-6. More recently I have restored, and still have, a '69 E-type 2+2 that won the AACA Senior award. But I never forgot that TF. So one day, now 6 years ago, while cruising the net I saw an ad for a good looking red TF 1500 and made the deal. Six years ago!



My goal was a "museum quality" restoration to see it like new again. We towed it to our regional expert John Tokar at Vintage Restorations for a thorough evaluation. The verdict: Good basis for a project, figure two years and \$50,000 to achieve your goal. Now, given my history, I think: "I'm retired now so I can do this and enjoy the work." Yes, well — retired, it seems, does not necessarily mean not working.

I put wrenches to the car in December, 2006, starting a complete disassembly down to every nut and bolt. Every part labeled, photo'd, bagged and stored in boxes, bins and shelves cleared in my garage, except of course, for the ones in my basement office. I took time at this point to research tools for

restoration management — the tracking of all parts from removal, storage, replacement or restoration, etc. I found one system developed by a gentleman in the UK that was a stand-alone system, needing no other software, but was rather expensive. In the end I created my own restoration tracker that worked very well using Microsoft Project software that I already owned and was skilled at using. I shall be happy to supply this template [see end of this article] at no cost to any interested person who might find it useful.



The disassembly work proceeded slowly through the winter of 2006 with engine, transmission, axle, carbs, exhaust manifold, radiator, fuel tank, and some chrome work subbed to specialty shops — most parts from Moss, a few from Abingdon Spares and O'Connor Classic Autos (used but good). Kudos to Moss for a restorer's discount and excellent service. *[Sorry to report that O'Connors Classic Autos appears to have gone out of business - Ed.]*



The rear axle was completely rebuilt, using MGA 4.30:1 gears for more comfortable driving on U.S. roads, but retaining the TF housing. The engine was completely rebuilt with new cam, pistons, bearings, etc. and nitrided crank. Radiator and fuel tank were cleaned and recoated. Transmission rebuilt with the usual worn parts replaced. The carbs were completely rebuilt and the exhaust manifold coated with ceramic to match the original finish. All chrome was replaced where available or re-chromed if not. See the list of specialty shops — all gave excellent service and good value — not cheap, but well done.



The body parts were set aside while I worked the chassis. As the parts came off, I rough cleaned them with heat gun and scraper to remove undercoating and solvent to remove the old grease. I took them to a nearby shop that did final grit blasting and powder coating with a satin black that matched the original enamel. I found powder coating no more expensive than prime and paint, the major cost being good preparation in both cases, and powder coating did a better job on corners, recesses, etc. and should be more durable. These folks had an oven large enough for the entire frame, so we used powder coating for that too. The only parts that did not get powder-coated were those like the axle and steering rack that contained lubricants. These were primed and finished with matching satin black epoxy paint. None of these parts, including the frame, had any significant rust or pitting. All the bushings

were replaced using the original materials. The brakes were good, as the broker had redone them before shipping to me. All that was needed was refinishing.

By now, the target date for the first showing had come and gone, and again, and again, and I was shooting for the Eastern Spring National AACA meet at Canandaigua, NY, May of 2010. I was a year past John Tokar's two-year prediction, having spent a year of spare time as Registration Chairman for the AACA Eastern Spring meet hosted by our region in May, 2008. And I still had some serious work yet to do, although I had saved considerable money in labor costs. It was Summer 2008 and time to get the body done.



I had removed the interior, which was not the original red, but an ivory vinyl. All the surfaces that were open to the bottom were covered with a thick layer of undercoating. It took many hours with a heat gun and scraper to remove that — thanks to son David. Most of the remainder of the old paint was removed with chemical stripper since, after separation, there remained no seams that could trap the chemical. A quick coat of etching primer from a rattle can protected the bare metal until delivered to the paint shop.



The tub was solid requiring only minor rework on the bottom rails to remove some soft wood, then soak with Smith & Co. penetrating epoxy sealer, and fill and file to contour with their high strength epoxy filler. I had used these products many years ago for marine repairs and finishing and found them uniquely satisfactory for this purpose. I replaced two pieces of wood in each door, the hinge posts and bottom rails, and was able to do this without completely removing the skins. One word of caution here is to be sure to measure the door dimensions carefully before removing any wood to avoid problems refitting the doors to the tub. The new wood must be hand fitted as needed and the skin renailed to avoid changing these dimensions, as refitting the doors can be the most troublesome part of the restoration. *[Amen! —Ed.]* The new polyurethane

glues (aka Gorilla™ glue) are great for this work as they expand during cure to fill any uneven surfaces in the joints.

As a practical matter, and on the advice of the painters, I used modern base coat/clear coat finishes. Sorry about that, but repair and rework are much more satisfactory. The painting was done, of course, by the piece, tub first to support assembly on the chassis and installation of the firewall equipment, wiring harness and instruments. Generally this went well because of copious pictures taken during disassembly and guidance from reference material.



There are some discrepancies in the literature regarding the sequence of painting and colors on the TF. The TD Restoration Manual by Schach and the T Series Restoration Guide by Green were useful, especially for installation of the interior, but they don't cover the TF in detail. Too late I found the web sites that follow to be the best source of detail for authentic restoration. The details



for the TF are incomplete as compared to the TD, but the authors are still alive and well and were a great help on specific issues. In any case these are must-see references for any serious restorer:

[http://www.mgcars.org.uk/mgtf/mgtf\\_details.htm](http://www.mgcars.org.uk/mgtf/mgtf_details.htm), and <http://www.mgcars.org.uk/mgtd/index.html>.

Go to the master page for much info on all MG automobiles. Some troublesome items in particular were plating vs. blacking for specific fasteners and for bonnet latches and seat rails. I found a source for authentic white cadmium plating for the bonnet latches and seat rails through a Corvette restorer friend. See the list of sources (below).

I used the Moss kits for upholstery, side curtains and seats, but changed the color to biscuit. Frames for the side curtains and top had to be restored. The top that came had been replaced and was good. All went well with patience and care using the pieces from the old set as patterns where needed. Moss recommends the seats for the TF be done by a professional, but I found them to be manageable by working only one at a time to be sure the other was available for reference. This work is worth an article by itself, as I took many pictures to show the sequence of tasks and details of installation.

Finally finished in March of 2010 and ready for show at Canandaigua in May, 3½ years in the doing, not two, but with substantial savings in labor cost. The car was awarded First Junior in Canandaigua, Senior Award in Blacksburg, VA in August and invited for a National Special Award for the 2010 year.

Now there's this '65 E-Type OTS that appeared in my garage last summer. . . .Oh No! ☐

**Sources:**



- Powder Coating: East Coast Powder, Keyser, WV
- Engine Rebuild: Cresap Machine, Cumberland, MD
- Transmission Rebuild: L&T Transmissions, Cumberland, MD
- Carburetor Rebuild: Joe Curto, College Point, NY
- Exhaust Manifold Coating: MCCI Jet Hot, King of Prussia, PA
- Axle Rebuild: Merryman Modifications, Hanover, PA
- Chrome Plating: New England Chrome, East Hartford, CT
- Cadmium Plating (white): Beringer Plating, Inc., Akron, OH
- Final Prep and Paint: East Coast Powder, Keyser, WV

Group	Part No.	Part Name	Location (O-Code)	Plan	Remove	Restore, Out	Restore, In	Replace	Cost	Duration	Labor
1	Proj:	MG TF1600 Restoration			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
2	Sub	Body			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06/7	\$8.00	191.8 w7	8 h
219	Wh	Wheels			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
220	Wh.1	Rims, steel (5)	Shell O	Restore	1.0.06	11.0.06/7	1.0.06	\$0.00	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
221	chr Wh.2	Hubcaps (5)	Bin 1 (Chr)	Replace	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
222	chr Wh.3	Medallion, spare wheel	Bin 1 (Chr)	Replace	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
223	chr Wh.4	Medallion, road wheels	Bin 1 (Chr)	Replace	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
224	fas Wh.5	Spring washers (5)	Bin 1 (Chr)	Reuse	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
225	fas Wh.6	Flat washers (5)	Bin 1 (Chr)	Reuse	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
226	fas Wh.7	Cones (5)	Bin 1 (Chr)	Replace	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
227	chr Wh.8	Nuts, wheel, road (30)	Bin 1 (Chr)	Reuse	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
228	chr Wh.9	Nuts, wheel spare (5)	Bin 1 (Chr)	Reuse	1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
229	Wh.10	Tire		Reuse	1.0.06	1.0.06/7	NA	1.0.06	\$0.00	1 d7	0 h
230	Fu	Fuel Systems			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
264	En	Engine			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06/7	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
275	Tr	Transmission			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
276	Cl	Cooling System			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
286	El	Electric			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
345	Ch	Chassis			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06/7	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h
366	Ex	Exhaust System			1.0.06	NA	NA	1.0.06	\$8.00	8.2 w7	8 h



## HDC 36-9026

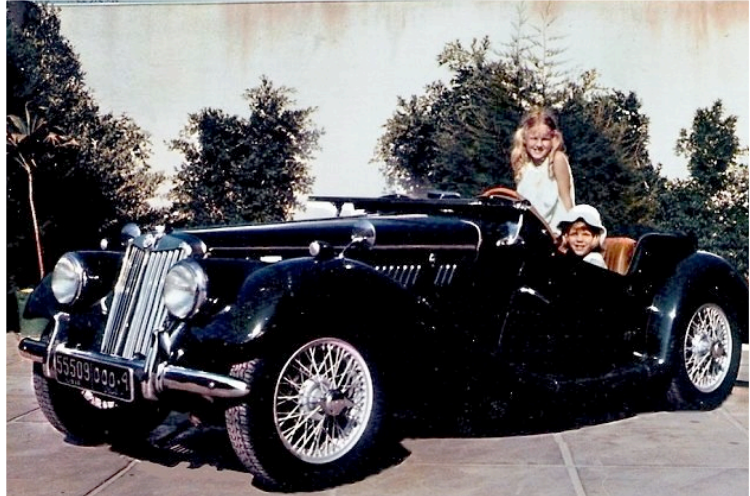
The Editor

She rolled off the Abingdon assembly line in January, 1955.

I stumbled upon her one morning in June, 1972 while walking along the Mediterranean seafront to my job at the American Embassy in Beirut. She was sitting forlornly in a filling station with a "FOR SALE" sign (in French, Arabic and English) taped to her windscreen. My first reaction was a surge of pity; she looked to be in such sad shape — paintwork (BRG, sorta) covered in scratches, chips, and makeshift patches, bodywork dented and dinged all over, fenders askew, no brake or clutch pedals (only their stalks), a very iffy engine, broken and missing spokes, tell-tale signs of leaking fluids, etc. A faded rose, by any standard.

Nevertheless, I ended up buying her a day or two later after my pals at the station — a pair of roguish Lebanese mechanical geniuses, you might say — assured me they could turn her into a reasonably reliable runner. This they proceeded to do by junking her original XPEG engine and drivetrain (all of which I should have made them save, but stupidly did not) and installing an MGA 1500 engine plus an early MGB transmission and rear-end in their places. As one might imagine, some fairly serious cutting and welding here and there on the frame and certain body panels were necessary to make everything fit. A British friend went to great lengths to bring her a new set of wire wheels on a BA flight from London.

After being cobbled back together and cosmetically enhanced, to my delight she ran surprisingly well, and I drove her quite happily for the next 7 years or so — the last four of which were spent back home in Maryland. Then, by 1979, knowing we were due to go overseas again, I began to dismantle her for storage in my garage. (We would rent out our house minus the garage.)



More than a decade passed before we came home for good, and almost another decade elapsed before I fully retired and began thinking seriously about pursuing a thorough, professional restoration — something my son Philip and I had talked and dreamed about for a long time. Indeed, it was this vision that had led us to collect a 1,250cc XPAG engine during our mid-1980s tour in the Republic of Cyprus, a former British Crown Colony. (We found that engine thanks to my friend and Embassy colleague Dan Howard, a longtime MG nut who made a hobby of scouring the island's junkyards for old British cars.)



Even so, it took Philip to proclaim the inevitable Moment of Truth, when early in 2001 he challenged me bluntly: "Are we finally going to do something about this car, or are we going to sell her for parts?"

Then we really got serious. Embarking on a months-long hunt for missing parts, we found a proper drivetrain in South Carolina, a replacement frame in Connecticut (Bob Seymour's barn), and various other necessary bits and pieces from a variety of sources, including of course Moss Motors and Abingdon Spares.

Together we managed to assemble a powder-coated rolling chassis, but that was about the limit of our technical abilities. In March of 2003 we lugged the "Cypriot" engine to John Tokar and his lads at Vintage Restorations, Ltd. And in April of 2004 we transported the rest of HDC 36-9026 to them on a flatbed trailer.

The restoration work proceeded with painstaking care. A memorable milestone was reached on May 15, 2007 when her XPAG came alive with a glorious roar under the watchful supervision of Alan Tucker and John Tokar. (Photos on next page.)





The entire process was completed on September 14, 2007. A day to celebrate! In our enthusiasm, however, we forgot to check her tank, and so we ran out of gas on the way home. A rather humbling experience, to put it mildly.



Since then, she has run like a dream, clad in her original MG red, and provided countless hours of pure, unalloyed joy — especially for our granddaughters, who can't seem to get enough of her. □

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### **A Lesson in the Art of Hanging In There**

I get up each morning and dust off my wits,  
Open the paper and read the obits.  
If I'm not there, I know I'm not dead,  
So I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed.

— Pete Seeger

(Courtesy of Chip Old)

## Universal Laws

Anonymous

**The Law of Mechanical Repair** — After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch, and you'll have to pee.

**The Law of Gravity** — Any tool, nut, bolt, or screw, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible corner.

**The Law of Probability** — The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your behavior.

**The Law of Random Long Distance Numbers** — If you dial a wrong number, you never get a busy signal and someone always answers.

**The Law of the Alibi** — If you tell the boss you were late for work because you had a flat tire, the very next morning you will have a flat tire.

**The Variation Law** — If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will always move faster than the one you are in now (works every time).

**The Law of the Bath** — When the body is fully immersed in water, the telephone rings.

**The Law of Close Encounters** — The probability of meeting someone you know increases dramatically when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with.

**Law of the Result** — When you try to show the repair person that a machine won't work, it will.

**The Coffee Law** — As soon as you sit down to a cup of hot coffee, your boss will ask you to do something which will last until the coffee is cold.

**The Law of Physical Surfaces** — The chances of an open-faced jelly sandwich landing face down on a floor, are directly correlated to the newness and cost of the carpet or rug.

**The Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy** — As soon as you find a product that you really like, the manufacturer will stop making it.

**Doctors' Law** — If you don't feel well, and make an appointment to go to the doctor, by the time you get there you'll feel better. But don't make an appointment, and you'll stay sick. ☐

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## Male or Female?

Anonymous

**You might not have known this, but lot of inanimate objects are actually either male or female. Here are some examples:**

**FREEZER BAGS:** They are male, because they hold everything in, but you can see right through them.

**PHOTOCOPIERS:** These are female, because once turned off, it takes a while to warm them up again. They are an effective reproductive device if the right buttons are pushed, but can also wreak havoc if you push the wrong buttons.

**TIRES:** Tires are male, because they go bald easily and are often over-inflated.

**HOT AIR BALLOONS:** Also a male object, because to get them go anywhere, you have to light a fire under their butts.

**SPONGES:** These are female, because they are soft, squeezable, and retain water.

*(Cont'd on next page)*

**WEB PAGES:** Female, because they're constantly being looked at and frequently getting hit on.

**TRAINS:** Definitely male, because they always use the same old lines for picking up people.

**EGG TIMERS:** Egg timers are female because, over time, all the weight shifts to the bottom.

**HAMMERS:** Male, because in the last 5,000 years they have hardly changed at all, and they're occasionally handy to have around.

**THE REMOTE CONTROL:** Female. Ha! You probably thought it would be male, but consider this: It easily gives a man pleasure, he'd be lost without it, and while he doesn't always know which buttons to push, he just keeps trying. ☐

## Advertisements

**Note:** Chapter Members are encouraged to submit classified ads free of charge to the Editor via email or snail mail at one of his addresses shown on page 2. Photographs are accepted. Also, please remember to let us know the results of your ad and/or whether you want it to appear again in the next issue of the Newsletter.

### **FOR SALE:**



**Red 1955 MGTF, with black interior and black top.** Mileage: just over 67,000 miles. Very well cared for. Drives and handles well. Engine in excellent shape, with new clutch, new brake shoes and new tires. Always kept indoors.

Interested parties contact Linwood Snider, 314 Fallsworth Ct., Walkersville, MD, Tel.: (301) 845-6381; Email: [snidelf@aol.com](mailto:snidelf@aol.com).

### **TO SWAP:**

**Would like to trade two (2) MG TD/TF brake master cylinders for one (1) new MG TC brake master cylinder.** Local transaction. No mailing, please.

Richard Embick  
5805 Brookview Drive,  
Alexandria, VA 22310      **Tel. (703) 971-2196**

### **FOR SALE:**

**TD: A pair of 7" Lucas 700 semi-sealed headlights for a left-hand drive car.** They need interior cleaning. Please make me an offer.

Bob Cole  
Tel. (610) 388-0898

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