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Moss Motoring

ISSUE 2, 2025

Papa's Triumph!

Nostalgia, heartbreak, and memories.
This car is more than the sum of its parts.

Read about it on pg 4.



Install & Drive: Corbeau Bucket Seats



In this video, we install a set of Corbeau classic bucket seats in our 1979 MGB and take them for a spin! To achieve this, we use our very own MGB adapter kit (also available for the Triumph TR6). Note that you will also want to add the optional seat rails in order to use the adapters and to be able to slide the seats forward and back. These are a great-looking, hip-hugging option to level up your classic MG or Triumph....and naturally we sell everything at MossMotors.com!

Featured Video

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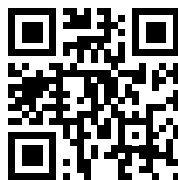
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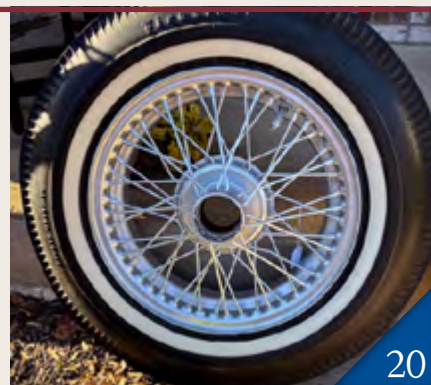
Rain or shine, here's to the partners who are always along for the ride.



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On the Cover:

This TR4 sat in an old Ohio warehouse for years before being shipped to the family home in Altadena, CA. Photo by Brandon Butcher.

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From the Editor's Desk...

In honor of Father's Day, we wanted to highlight the ways that family intersects with British classic cars. For many, their love of this hobby comes from early memories of riding around in dad's roadster. For others, it was dad's ingenuity and know-how that kept their own sports cars on the road, bonding over being thrown headlong into an unexpected restoration. The teaching, the labors of love, it all plays a vital role in this community, which is what we aimed to showcase in this issue. We hope you enjoy our collection of stories just as much as we enjoyed putting them together.

—Amanda Lundquist



TC/9507

by Richard Townley

I purchased TC/9507 from Darwin after Cyclone Tracy in 1975. The MG was fully restored in 1998 using many components from Moss Motors. The image shown is me with my grandsons Charlie, Harry, and Josh.

When the boys were young, they could all fit in the TC together for a ride but now in 2025, they are older so it is strictly one at a time.



A TRIUMPH OF HIS OWN

by Eric Langreder

My son Tim grew up in the passenger seat of my previous TR6, going to car shows and races. A few years ago, he was able to get his own Triumph: a super clean, early TR7. Now we get to drive together to lots of British car events.



A GREAT BONDING EXPERIENCE

by Anonymous

My very first car back in the '70s was a 1958 MGA Roadster. I've always wanted to get another one so as I approach retirement I started searching. I found this 1958 beauty in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and had it delivered to my home in Arizona. I get by as a mechanic for simple things, but my son-in-law really knows his stuff! His son, my grandson, is already displaying his father's talent for all things mechanical. This picture is of all three of us working on getting the car up and running. It's been a great bonding experience for all three of us.



KEPT MY PROMISE

by Glenn Obert

This is my dad's '59 Austin Healey. I promised him that someday I would restore it and take it to my daughter's wedding. 50 years later, I kept my promise!



MY GREEN CAR

by Patrick Dingman

This is TD1748, or as my daughter calls it, "my green car." After being totaled in 1953, the car sat in boxes for decades until my father-in-law brought it into our family. It took 10 years to restore it, with him letting me help over the last few. Needless to say, my wife and I fell in love with the car, so when it came time to clear some space in her dad's shop, we happily volunteered to be its caretakers. Now, our kiddos are growing up right alongside TD1748. They love cruising around the block while blowing the horn and waving at everyone in sight and turning wrenches to fix the Green Car when it's "not feeling well." It fills us with joy every time I see the third generation of our family hugging it before school or begging to go around the block one more time.



LEARNING EXPERIENCE

by Jon Acosta

These pictures are from 2020. It wasn't our first experience working on cars together, but it's one of our most memorable. Here we are test fitting a Rover V8 into our '69 BGT for the first time. The car is still under construction today and has served as an amazing learning experience for my girls. Metal shaping, welding, and fabrication have all taken place as we've been turning this derelict GT into a Sebring replica.



Papa's

T R I U M P H

by Brandon Butcher

I've dreamt of writing the story of my Papa's 1963 TR4 for years, but never did I think it would be against the backdrop of a wildfire.

My "Papa," Jack Butcher, passed away in 2014 at the age of 88. Born in rural Kentucky alongside his sister Doris, Jack enlisted in the Navy at 15 and served in WWII aboard the USS Midway. It was during this time that he acquired an infamous tattoo of a Hawaiian woman whose ink, by Papa's account, had the magical property of predicting rain.

After his service, Papa worked as a salesman for Singer Sewing Machines and eventually opened his own repair and sales business in Toledo, Ohio. It's there, in Toledo, where my first memories of Papa's Signal Red 1963 TR4 began.

Every summer, I flew out from Southern California to stay with Papa and Mimi, spending carefree childhood days getting seasick on Lake Erie, playing tennis and Rummikub,

and, of course, tinkering on cars in Papa's "warehouse."

The warehouse was located on the outskirts of Toledo, a sprawling industrial space with big rolling doors, factory style lighting, shelves with stuff stacked ceiling high, and ample square footage for everything from vintage sewing machines to an assortment of gas-powered toys: mini bikes, rideable lawn mowers, and a host of British cars, including TR4s, TR6s, MGAs, and MGBs. It sounds fancy, but most of the cars didn't run. Instead, they were there for tinkering, as "parts cars," or trading leverage for something else Papa could fix up.

One of my favorite memories of Papa was his uncanny ability to barter. Whether it was a discount at the grocery store or trading a gutted MGB for two rideable mowers, he always seemed to make a deal—no matter where or what he was buying. Papa's father wasn't much of a presence in his life, and I think that absence shaped his determination to be a hands-on

father and a loving grandfather. In the warehouse, he taught my dad and uncle (then kids) the sewing business, machine repair, and the ins and outs of small engines. It's no surprise that my uncle would later spend his career at Dana Corporation and my dad would become an engineer. I sometimes wonder why they never combined their talents to build the next great American automaker.

Back to those summers in Toledo: a typical morning would find Papa wearing a smile and a USS Midway hat, toting me along for a discount breakfast, a senior coffee at McDonald's, then heading out to the warehouse. With Papa close by, I hunted for frogs, explored the sewing machines, and tinkered with spare parts. Seemed like every summer, Papa had a new project: getting a bike, a lawnmower, or best of all, a car running just enough for me to take a spin around the property—or, when he wasn't looking, down the farm roads.



But, time went by, and, as Papa began to age, it became clear that his days as a “snowbird” were coming to an end, and full-time Florida residency loomed. The Ohio warehouse, once a place of adventure, started to look more like a junkyard, and decisions were made to help him downsize. For our part, my cousins and I shipped Papa’s best-maintained car, a Signal Red 1963 TR4, to Altadena, California, where I was living with my parents. The idea that a classic British car would be sitting in our family garage, a piece of Papa’s legacy, was exciting. It felt like a part of Ohio and Papa was coming to us.

The TR4 appeared to be in decent shape when it rolled off the delivery truck, despite a rusted crossbar, and was running just well enough for me to sneak it out after work and cruise from our house in the Altadena foothills up along the winding ridges of the Angeles National Forest with the top down. To my mind, the car felt like it was made for California, and dreams of a full restoration started to build. Papa would be proud, I thought.

But adulthood intervened. My dad was still working, and I was falling into the rhythm of a full-time career. Soon, I met my wife—without the bait of the TR4—and we started our own family. Around that time, Papa died at age 88. Saying goodbye was bittersweet, but with his passing, we welcomed a son, appropriately named Jack Butcher, born in 2015, and ultimately passed the affectionate name “Papa” on to my dad.

Despite the excitement of owning a classic British roadster, playtime became scarce. Car repairs were put on the backburner, fixes were neglected, and a once small project list grew into a decade-long endeavor. And the truth was, I—like most millennials—lacked the hands-on automotive skills my dad and Papa shared.

Then, last year, a new phase of the TR4 restoration began. My dad retired, and after some much-needed rest, dove back into the project. Every time we opened the hood, fond memories of Papa resurfaced: Alligator clip wiring, a coat hanger replacing a carburetor spring, gauges and knobs from other British cars at the warehouse. Papa

would do anything to get a bike, car, or mower running so we could enjoy it when we were kids. Apparently, he’d done the same with this TR4.

With my dad as lead mechanic, a substantial restoration soon took shape. He watched YouTube videos, consulted with Moss Motors, attended TR club meetings at Bob’s Big Boy, and perused British car forums. Together, we began replacing wiring, hoses, the alternator, water pump, the clutch and brake cylinder, hoses, an electric fan, timing chain, and starter, just to name a few! My two boys, Jack, 9, and Cooper, 6, often sat in the front seat and pretended to steer “Papa’s red car” while we worked. I think my dad loved getting his hands dirty again, but I also think he enjoyed working on something that reminded him of his own father.

Then, a few months ago, after nearly ten years of the car sitting idle, my dad and I turned the ignition and fired up the TR4. We stood together in the garage, both of us smiling, listening as the Standard wet inline-four roared. Sure, after a few starts, there was a



faint knocking, but it seemed as though things were finally coming together.

Then, on January 7th, 2025, everything changed. Days before, Los Angeles forecasters began to warn of 60-80 miles per hour winds—stronger than we’d seen in years. That morning, I phoned my dad to check in. He said the morning winds had been rough but that power had returned, and things seemed fine. But, by afternoon, the wind had built; it began to pull down trees and power lines. Later that evening, when I called my dad again, his tone had shifted. He told me that my brother-in-law had just arrived at their house, along with urgent warnings to evacuate as a wildfire had started in nearby Eaton Canyon. Together with my mom, they loaded up what valuables they could, grabbed their dog, evacuated an elderly neighbor, and then headed to my home a couple of miles down the hill.

We were anxious that night, uncertain of what would unfold. We’d been through wildfires before in Altadena, living at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, but nothing had ever threatened our home. Then,

a call came from the father of my son’s classmate that would change everything. Alex, a local policeman, reported that his nearby family home had burned to the ground. As an officer, he had access to the burn area, and he offered to check on our place. Minutes later, he called back: my parents’ house, my childhood home, was gone.

As of writing, it’s been a week since the Eaton Fire, which burned more than 22 square miles and destroyed or damaged more than 9,400 structures in Altadena, California. Together with my family, we’re grieving a community, neighborhood, and home we had known for 30 years—the photos left behind, the heirlooms lost, the walls and rooms that will never stand again.

It feels trivial to mourn the loss of a car, but Papa’s TR4 has stuck with me in the intervening days: the bump of the hood, the dent on the fender, the SU carbs. But, even more vividly, what lingers with me now is the way “Papa’s red car” was more than a car. It was a bridge between generations, a place to teach, to be together, to laugh, cry, and find joy. It was never about

a value, it was about the experience, the camaraderie, how we had found a common love, and experienced community with fellow Triumph owners. About the magical way an old roadster had taken us all back in time. That car is lost now, taken in the flames, but in so many ways, the story lives on. The story of how a simple machine can stoke endless memories. Memories of my Papa, my dad, my boys, and me. *MM*



THE CIRCLE CLOSES

by Aaron Porter



My family's history with the MG T-series goes back to the mid-60s when my family lived in Singapore. My dad was a press attaché with the State Department and starting in 1960 my parents, my sister Elise, and I lived in Southeast Asia. After posts to the Philippines and Malaysia, we moved to Singapore in 1965, just as it formally declared its independence from Malaysia. In 1967, the United Kingdom began withdrawing its troops, ending its post-World War II military presence there.

Around this time, my dad acquired an MG TC from a British army officer who didn't want to ship the car back to the UK. It was white with red paint under the front fenders, a feature I haven't seen since on an MG, and it had red seats and a black hood. I think my dad was able to buy the car relatively cheaply. I have a feeling that he couldn't resist the appeal of driving around Singapore in a sports car. I don't remember exactly what year he bought

it, but the first photo of the family in the TC is dated 1967. I was 12 years old at the time, too short to reach the pedals. I would accompany my dad on drives around town, looking at the speedometer which was mounted in front of the passenger seat on the TC; the tachometer was mounted in front of the driver. We almost always had the hood down, and I remember the smells of blooming tropical flowers or fruits and vegetables being sold at open-air markets. I also have fond memories of sitting in the luggage area behind the seats if my sister or mother came along on the drive. Being the youngest and smallest, I was able to just fit back there. One can only imagine the outcry if parents did something like that today!

In 1971, our time in Singapore ended, and my dad was reassigned to the State Department in Washington, DC. We moved to Arlington, Virginia, where I finished high school. The TC accompanied us to the US, but before long my dad decided to sell it. I was disappointed to see it

go, but he said, "It's a rich man's toy." Although he didn't say it at the time, I believe the thought of driving it in crazy DC traffic was a major dissuasion. He sold it to an MG enthusiast, and we found out later that it won many awards, being in excellent condition and having mostly original parts. We have one photo of me in the TC looking like a character from "That '70s Show", dated to 1972 just before it sold.

Fast forward 50-plus years, and I am now retired from a 30-year career with the US Navy and have settled in Milbridge, a small town in Downeast Maine. Milbridge is about as far from Singapore geographically and culturally as you can imagine. Life is quiet here, with the nearest big city, Bangor, about an hour and 15 minutes drive away. One early fall day in 2023, I was driving to a woodlot to fill the bed of my pickup truck with firewood for the coming winter. There's a vintage car dealer along the road in which I had never taken much interest. On this day, to my surprise, right by the road,



sat a very good-looking MG TD. As I drove by, I said to myself, "Wow, that's a TD!" The smaller wheels, chrome bumpers, and slanted gas tank were dead giveaways. As I drove to the woodlot, it was all I could think about: how great it looked, like a shiny gem in the sun. It was painted in a cream color, with red upholstery, and the picture of it in my mind took over with a vise-like grip. I decided that I would stop on my way back—just to look at it, just for fun and nostalgia's sake. It won't hurt just to look at it, I told myself. I should have known then that resistance was futile but stop I did. I talked with Terry, the proprietor, and told him the story of my dad's TC, and he took a picture of me next to the TD. I was surprised that the car looked so much smaller than I remembered, but then it occurred to me that I was remembering the TC as a 12-year-old. I'm now 6'2", significantly bigger than I was then! I asked Terry if it still ran well. He reached in, popped it into neutral, turned the key, and pulled the starter. It rumbled to life right away,

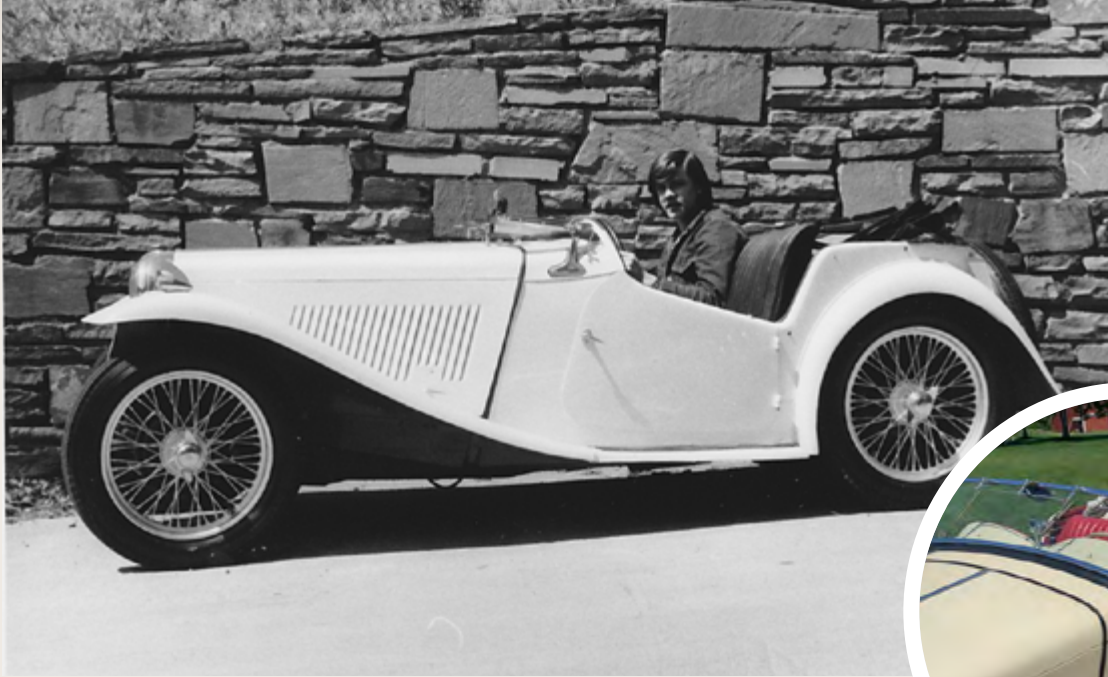
as if it was eager to get on the road and feel the wind flowing over the curved, wing-like fenders.

More memories came back to me—the smell of the exhaust, the familiar MG sound (if there is such a thing—it sounded familiar to me). I looked under the hood and remembered my dad tinkering with his TC, while I "helped," probably getting in the way more than anything. Another memory came back...how everything was laid out in a logical way, and how you could see where everything was. Compared to the engine compartment in a modern car, it was simplicity itself. You need an advanced degree in auto mechanics to know your way around under the hood of a car today.

At one point, Terry asked me how old I was—68 then—and he said something that stuck with me on the drive home to stack the firewood: "You're still young enough to enjoy this car. Think about it. Now's the time to do something like this, while you can still enjoy it." I know Terry was trying to

sell a car, but the more I thought about it, the more he made sense. I did some investigating online, looking at TDs in similar condition, and realized his price was reasonable for an MG that I thought I could drive off the lot without any problem. At this point, I knew I was won over, but I wanted to make sure that I was getting a good deal with a car that was in decent shape. I'm not a mechanic; I've done my share of oil changes and simple things, but I wanted a car I could drive and enjoy and not have to spend endless hours in the garage fixing problems. As it turned out, I had a great resource to call upon.

A good friend of mine in Milbridge has a TD in British racing green that he drives around town during the balmy Maine summers. By sheer coincidence, his name is George, which was my dad's name (are you beginning to get the feeling that a higher power was influencing things?). I told him all about the TD, and he was interested in seeing it, so I called Terry to arrange a test drive, and we agreed to meet at



the car lot. George invited his friend Tom, another MG enthusiast, to meet us there. Tom has done extensive MG restorations at his garage on Mount Desert Island, not too far away. I thought they would be able to give me an objective assessment of the car's condition, and whether I was getting a good price for it. I must admit I was a bit nervous about the test drive, as it had been several years since I'd driven a manual shift. Well, like the adage about riding a bicycle, it all came back. We took it on a short test drive, and feeling the gears change, hearing the rev of the engine, and watching the tach respond brought back more memories. After the drive, Tom pulled me aside and said, "I thought this was a good car before you drove it, but now my assessment of it just went up a notch." George also gave it the thumbs-up, and my fate was sealed.

Some days later, on a beautiful, sunny early fall afternoon for which the coast of Maine is famous, George and I returned to pick it up. I asked George to follow me back to Milbridge, about 35 miles up the coast, just to make sure I didn't break down on the way

home. I needn't have worried, as the TD hummed along Route 1 without a hiccup. I couldn't help but miss my dad during that drive. I felt his presence next to me, feeling the wind in his face with a big smile, reveling in the memories of the drives we took around Singapore so many years ago. When I go out on a drive now, I feel him sitting next to me. Instead of tropical flowers and open-air markets, today I smell the sea and the salty pungency of seaweed at low tide. The small country roads around my town are perfect for a car like the TD and, though my dad didn't say it at the time, now I can see why he might have been reluctant to drive it in the frenetic traffic of Washington, DC.

Based on some information that Terry told me about the family that sold it to him, I did some sleuthing around and found out that it was built in late 1952, and that the previous owner was a man who lived in Greenville, a town in North-Central Maine, on the shores of Moosehead Lake. I found his obituary online, which mentioned that he was a "car enthusiast." He'd had it fully restored in the early '70s, and a little brass plaque on the dashboard

says it attended a "Gathering of the Faithful" in Springfield, Massachusetts in June 1975.

One particular and unexpected pleasure I've experienced as I drive the TD around Milbridge is the feeling of control an old car can give you. Modern automobile electronics and computers manage so many aspects of driving today. Every driving decision you make in an MG TD is yours alone, no computer, chip, or advanced electronic device is going to take it away from you. There is no electronic "brain" that will intervene in the experience; everything that transpires is the result of a decision taken by the most advanced brain there is: the human one. That has a way of focusing your attention on the smallest details.

So that's the story of MGs in the Porter family. I had no idea that I would someday be TD owner, nor did I have any ambition in that direction until I saw this little gem beckoning me in the fall sun one day on the coast of Maine. One day, you're living your life, and then fate, fortune, or a higher power steps in and helps you close the circle. *mm*

DAD AND HIS



by Mario Somoza

My father with his MGA,
circa 1982...



My father, Francisco “Cuco” Somoza, was a dentist by profession and a diehard sports car enthusiast. He was a very successful rally driver in the late ’60s and ’70s, winning several of the biggest rallies on our native island of Puerto Rico and a few races across the Caribbean. Through those years, he owned several classic sports cars: split-window Corvette, Mini Cooper, Porsche 911, and Maserati Ghibli, among others.

In 1980, he bought a 1961 MGA 1600. The engine of the car had been replaced with an MGB 1800 engine, but other than that, the car wasn’t in bad shape. My grandfather had been an airplane mechanic in his younger years, lending him some rather useful technical knowledge—he and my dad fixed up the MGA, tinkering with it over the years. One fond memory I have is of helping my dad install a new convertible top. I was always proud of how well that top held up over the years.

When I got my driver’s license a few years after he bought the car, he taught me how to drive a stick shift in the MGA. It wasn’t long until the car

became my daily driver while in high school, switching to my summer car while I was in college. My dad was a firm believer that cars are meant to be driven and enjoyed. It made him happy to see how much I loved and cared for that car.

A few years later, he bought a 1954 MG TF 1500. Working out of his garage, he kicked off a full restoration of the roadster, enlisting the help of a few fellow MG enthusiasts. As you can imagine, that was a time when Moss Motors packages would arrive almost daily at our doorstep. It took him two full years to finish the TF, and when it was done, it was a beautiful car—shining and pristine. So, I was surprised when he sold it shortly thereafter to one of his buddies who worked on the car with him. When I asked him why he sold it, he said that restoring it was the fun part.

He never sold the MGA, however. He always kept that car, doing a few restorations on it over the years. My father passed away in 2013, and at the time, the car needed some mechanical and engine work to get it back in running shape. Since my

technical abilities are limited, I found a trustworthy shop to work on the carburetors and brakes to get it running again—excited to find that the car was just as much fun to drive now as it was 40 years ago. I recently put a new top on it and new wire wheels. I know my dad would be happy to know that the car not only still looks good but is being driven on a regular basis.

Even though my father owned several sports cars throughout his life, the pleasure and joy he got from the MGs was unmatched by anything else, and I believe that is why he always kept that MGA. He passed that on to me, and I am hopeful that one day my daughters will enjoy that car as much as I have for over 40 years. *MM*



...and here’s the MGA today.



THE MGA NAMED “Dotty”

by Chris Adams

My oldest brother was 15 years my elder and, in 1966, he purchased his first car—a low mileage 1962 MGA 1600 MkII. I was just three years old when he brought the little car home. Southern California was a great place to be a teenager with a roadster in the tumultuous '60s.

By 1969, he was in Vietnam, fighting for his country, and left the MG at mom and dad's house so we could keep the batteries charged, driving it now and then to keep the cobwebs out. In a couple of years, Paul made it home

from the war safely, returning to normal work and college life. The “A” was waiting, ready for his return.

Sometime in early 1969, while Paul was still somewhere in Bien Hoa, I really enjoyed playing “Gas Station” with the MG. I would sit in the driver's seat and drive wherever my little mind took me. Apparently, at a gas station stop, I decided the car needed a fill-up. A wooden ruler, a rubber alligator, and a handful of sand seemed to be just what the service manual said the car needed to keep me fueled up for my journey. MGA's have great petrol

tank access for such things. I was too young to remember it, but mom and dad practically had to put chains on my big brother to keep him at bay, absolutely enraged by my innocent act. Not long after, the electric fuel pump gave up the ghost somewhere along the I-15 on the Gorman Pass, trying to visit Grandma in Bakersfield.

Fast forward many years, the “A” went to pasture in 1981 due to worn out SU linkage and “electrical gremlins” amongst other things. Nonetheless, Paul refused to sell his first love. He kept it until he passed away in 2001 from a





This is Dotty at her lowest. Brother #2 attempted a full restoration, but life ended up getting in the way.



It took a full year to get Dotty back up and running. With patience, research, and one carpal tunnel surgery, Chris and his family were able to restore the MGA to her former glory.

hard but happy life resulting from his experiences in Vietnam.

My second brother, 13 years my senior, inherited the car and went to work vigorously restoring it. By this time, opossums were living in it. After years in storage, there was much work to be done. He completed a total nut and bolt tear down, restoration of the rolling chassis, and an engine rebuild. However, eyesight, available time, and other interests took their toll so that this second brother ended up stopping at that point of reassembly and offered the car to me at a "Family Discount."

Fast forward again to 2021, after Brother #2 gave me his blessing to come and pick it up, the car sat in my garage almost entirely in boxes and parts on the floor transported from Emmet, Idaho to my home in Orem, Utah. I was determined to put it back together. The next phase began!

All the boxes full of parts had to be identified and sorted. This took up all the garage and my mancave upstairs in the house. My wife graciously gave up her car's parking space in the garage as a contribution to the project.

Having never taken on a project like this, manuals, online resources, Moss Motors, and plain good luck helped me complete the car. I decided to start with the "easy" things first, so I went to work on the dashboard. I ground the rust down to bare metal and prime coat, covered it with a vinyl kit from Moss, reconditioned all the gauges,

and assembled. With that done, I moved on to the first part of our all-new wiring harness. Voltage checks, it worked!

I aimed not only to complete the car but to make it road and show-worthy. I tried my best to build the car as 100% factory issue as possible. My grandkids all visited me often in the garage. Benson, age 9 at the time, asked after having the car home for only a week, if the "MG is done yet?"

Body prep was extensive. I had to buy an air compressor and paint gun, tons of sandpaper, and various body fillers and glazing compounds to achieve a nice old-school finish. The grandkids all tried to sand a bit, but little hands tire and bore quickly, so they mostly watched from the safety and comfort of the swing set. We did encapsulation of all interior body metal, then two epoxy sealer coats, three primer coats, two color coats, and two clear coats. Whew! I had to undergo carpal tunnel surgery when I was done with the paint.

Body fitting day was all hands-on-deck! All three of our children, their spouses, and the grandkids pitched in. Grandkids were spotters while adults lifted and lowered. A scary process, but exciting!

Much final fitment was needed once the body was on. It needed the third section of wiring harness, foot pedal linkage, fuel lines to tank and carbs, and final interior carpeting along with the doors, bonnet, and trunk lids. Aurora, 6 years old, learned to use a

socket and driver on the fuel line clips. She also put the nuts on the firewall badge nameplates that no adult hand can reach!

All the kids did a lot of sitting in the seats during the final days of details. After a full year of working day and night on the car, at last, the MGA was complete and was dubbed "Dotty" after my mother. We started going to car shows, and "Dotty" won lots of awards, including two People's Choice awards and a Best of Show out of 226 cars while being parked next to an Auburn!

We are so lucky to have ended up with my brother's car. I'm sure he would be proud. Thank you so much to Moss Motors for endless parts, The MG Guru for endless resources, and my family for enduring with me for one full year during this build. *MM*





Let's Hear It for the Wives!

by David Mathias

I don't think my wife, Amber, ever rode in a British sports car before she met me, and surprisingly, twenty years later, we're still married. We live for the months in Upper Michigan where we can drive for miles and miles on the winding roads surrounded by tall pines, lakes, rivers, and the occasional deer that jumps out to see if I'm paying attention—or maybe to test my brakes.

The partner of anyone who is impassioned to own at least one British sports car has got to be a real trooper. A time I truly tested my wife's limits was on one particular day when we set out on a drive in our '53 MG TD. She asked if we had enough gas—as you know, there is no fuel gauge on a '53.

With a serious measure of loftiness, I waved my hand dismissively, saying, “*of course.*” Less than a minute later, the car sputtered to a stop. I peered into the gas tank—dry as a bone. Fortunately, we were less than a mile from where we started, and so we began our walk back to get the gas can I keep at the storage facility. I called out to my wife, “Hey...good thing we weren't on the other side of the lake when it happened—right?” She didn't answer but kept walking yards and yards ahead of me at a very brisk pace. Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Now, I always say, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a full tank of gas.” And I keep a

small can of gasoline tucked behind the seat—lesson learned.

Another time, we were driving along one of those fine roads on a beautiful but hot Michigan day when we came upon a snapping turtle in the middle of the road. The animal lover that she is, my wife has saved many a turtle from being run over, so I thought this should be my turn. I shut off the Triumph TR7, hopped out, and ran about ten yards back to see if I could convince the turtle to hurry off the road and back to the nearby marshy pond. I kept circling around the turtle, trying to grab it from behind—as I am still rather fond of my fingers. This big, old snapping turtle just kept hissing at me, mouth open, ready to teach me a lesson as it kept



Best to not stray from your pre-flight checklist when your car doesn't have a fuel gauge, lest you and your 1953 MG TD be stranded lakeside this time.

Now that the wiring has been sorted out, this TR7 is a reliable ride. Though the author keeps it running during animal rescues, just to be on the safe side.



moving in a circle, not allowing me to pick it up. My wife watched from the car, rather amused. Who knew there was a technique to this? I finally gave up and began walking back to the car. I looked back, and the turtle hurried off the road. *"You're welcome."*

As they say, no good deed goes unpunished—the Triumph wouldn't start. The heat of the engine melted some starter wires that were likely not routed properly by the previous owner. Lucky for us, a father and son came by—fellow car collectors. They gave us a push start, and we made it home. We have a driveway that's on an incline, and so the next day, my wife gave me a little push, the car started, and I drove it to a local mechanic. She never

seems to be annoyed by these things, par for the course for her. I decided that from that day on, my wife would handle saving the turtles while I sit in the car and keep it running—you know, just in case.

My wife has much more patience than I do when it comes to firing up the old Brits. Every time we have a little *"glitch"* in our plans for the day, she reminds me that it's all part of the journey. I've never seen my wife crawl under a car. I've never even seen my wife hold a wrench, but when I'm staring at an engine that won't start with that familiar crease in my forehead, wondering just what the *heck* it is *this* time, she'll glance over my shoulder and say something like, "Have you checked

the fuel filter? They tend to plug up with rusty scale." And almost as if I'm one of Pavlov's dogs, I'll shake my head and answer, "That's not it." By now, you know where this is going—right? Twenty minutes later, I'm changing the fuel filter, and ten minutes after that, we're on our way. She'll always smile and not say a word. You might think my pride would be hurt, but no, again; years have aged me like the patina on the tan leather seats of a British car. I just smile back as we drive along with the top down, the sun beaming through the pines, and wondering to myself how she gets it right every time. Maybe she's been reading the troubleshooting guide at the back of my shop manual or, late



at night, she's watching YouTube videos about old roadsters.

I'm sure you know what this is like—you're scanning through online ads, you know, "*just to see what's out there*," and you run across a deal you can't pass up—for example, an '80 MGB for only \$2,800. You read the listing, look at the pictures over and over, and convince yourself that "this car would be much happier with you than with someone so insensitive—so uncaring that they'd actually sell it." Like a kid pleading with mom and dad for a new puppy, you think, "I can give this car a good home. I'll care for it, change the oil—use the good stuff, clean it, polish it. We'll go on long drives together."

There are two old Brits in the garage, and thirty minutes away, you're paying a couple hundred dollars a month to store three more, but this looks like *such* a good deal. Ever supportive, my wife never tries to talk me out of these things. Nope, she just says, "Give the guy a call. Let's go take a look."

I like to think there's a toasty little corner of hell for the people who will

sell an old British car—or any vehicle for that matter, without full disclosure—like, you know... "the carburetor is missing a few small pieces and is just about ready to fall apart." In this case, we took it out for a test drive, and although it ran rough, it seemed like something I could fix when we got home...if we got home.

We stopped at a gas station to fill it up and get a little something to eat. A couple of ladies walked past us as we ate our sub sandwiches, and one must've noticed me looking through the window at that new purchase sitting outside. She said, "Nice little sports car." I was beaming with pride. Then, after we left and the MG made it to the end of the entrance of the truck stop, the *nice little sports car* stalled and wouldn't start. I opened the hood and immediately remembered the seller telling me he hadn't gotten around to putting the bolt in that hood prop. My wife stood beside me as we watched a steady stream of gas spewing out of the carburetor. I said, "Here, hold the hood open and put your finger over this fitting." Without

a moment's hesitation, she did just that—I managed to get the car started, she closed the hood and followed me on the two-and-a-half-hour journey home. There were no further problems, and I can only assume the gas leak stopped as the car did not burst into flames.

When we got home, my phone rang. It was the seller asking me if we made it and telling me he was praying for us. That really spiked the level of confidence I had that we had made a good purchase. But in the bigger scheme of things, that moment my wife held the hood open and stopped the spewing gas with her fingertip, I knew that I had married the right woman.

"Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband—to have and to hold, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, no matter how many old British sports cars he has?" If she hesitates in answering, you'd best move along. *Everyone needs their ride-or-die.*

The other day, I took our '52 MG TD to the car wash. The high-pressure hose is great for spraying away the dead bugs from the canvas top. It's

Thank goodness for cell phones.
When David's '52 MG TD won't
start after a quick rinse, his wife
was there in a matter of minutes,
ready to help.



also great for spraying water through the hood vents into places where water really shouldn't be going. I finished up. The car looked great but wouldn't start. I pushed it out of the self-service bay into the sunlight and gave my wife a call. After all the years we've been together, when she sees me drive off in one of the cars, she makes sure her phone is nearby. She was there in a matter of minutes and gave me a push start. Whatever it was that got wet, it dried out on the ride home, and when I parked it in the garage, it was fine.

Despite the mishaps, my wife never complains. She rolls with the punches, always ready to run support no matter what comes our way. I've arrived at the opinion that every man who owns a British sports car or two (or many more) has got to be in a wonderful marriage. So, let's hear it for the wives! Tell her how much you appreciate her great attitude, indomitable spirit, and be sure to check the gas before you take off on that next excursion. *MM*



David Mathias is a retired global advertising exec and writer living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. View his work at authordavidmathias.com. His wife, Amber, is a dedicated nurse practitioner who "comes home to a candlelight dinner, glass of wine, and music every evening."

THE RED TRIUMPH:

A Family Legacy

by Gary Murray



When George Melton first caught sight of the little red Triumph TR3A sitting in that Peoria used car lot in 1960, he knew instantly it had to be his. The sports car with just 1,500 miles on the odometer had been spotted by George's father, who understood his son's appreciation for fine engineering. George, a test engineer for Caterpillar Corporation, wasted no time getting to the lot and handing over \$2,400 for what would become a cherished part of his family's history for generations.

What makes this particular 1958 Triumph special isn't just its immaculate condition or its racing pedigree—the TR3A model had distinguished itself with 1-2-3 finishes in its class at the 24 Hours of Le Mans—but rather the six decades of careful stewardship and family memories it carries within its compact frame.

"The Red Car," as it was affectionately known in the Melton household, was treated with reverence from day one. George drove it only on clear, sunny days, taking the long straight Illinois roads to Caterpillar's proving grounds where he worked.

At the first hint of winter, before salt touched the Illinois roads, the Triumph would be carefully placed on blocks in the garage, preserving its chassis from the corrosive Midwestern winters. This ritual, repeated year after year, explains why today—over 60 years later—the car remains rust-free, a remarkable feat for a British sports car of this era.

The Triumph wasn't just a weekend hobby; it was woven into the fabric of the Melton family life. George courted his future wife in this very car, a fact confirmed by a faded receipt from a drive-in theater I discovered tucked away in one of the car's pockets. Two hot chocolates and the promise of a future together—the beginning of what would become a 61-year marriage.

For George's daughter Rachel, who eventually became my wife, the sound of the Triumph's distinctive engine coming down their street was the soundtrack of her childhood. She would dash to the end of the driveway at the first distant rumble, waiting excitedly for her father to arrive. George would pause, let his young daughter climb in, and then grant her the special privilege of "driving" the car into the garage—her small hands on the large steering wheel,

guided by her father's steady grip. This cherished ritual created an unbreakable bond between father, daughter, and automobile that would prove significant decades later.

Time, as it invariably does, marched on. George retired and decided to relocate to the Arizona desert, far from the winding roads of Illinois. The question of the Triumph's fate loomed large. By tradition, his son Tom was first in line to inherit the car, but Arizona's punishing heat meant the Triumph would likely languish unused in a garage for most of the year.

Rachel's connection to the car ran deep, but convincing her detail-oriented engineer father to change his plans required more than nostalgic appeals. At my suggestion, she wrote George a heartfelt letter, meticulously documenting her memories of "The Red Car" and outlining our plan to properly house and maintain this family treasure in New England, promising to either keep it in the family or share any proceeds if it were ever sold. The letter worked where conversation had failed.

Today, the Triumph enjoys a vibrant second life navigating the rolling hills of the Blackstone Valley—drives this



car was born to make. With just 40,000 original miles, it remains astonishingly original. Open the bonnet at any car show, and British car enthusiasts marvel at the untouched wiring, original fuses, and factory components. Among the sea of American muscle at local gatherings, this diminutive sports car from Coventry, England draws admirers with its timeless lines and authentic character.

The original owner added just two modest upgrades—a lighter and an AM radio with antenna—but otherwise, this TR3A remains exactly as it left the factory. No overdrive, no modern concessions, just pure, unadulterated British motoring heritage.

What looks like a simple sports car to casual observers is actually three things at once: a meticulously preserved piece of automotive history, a testament to George's careful stewardship, and most importantly, a vessel containing sixty years of family memories. Every drive honors not just the engineering brilliance of Triumph's golden era but also the man who recognized something special in that used car lot all those years ago.

"The Red Car" continues its journey, now with new caretakers but the same spirit, ensuring that the memories and legacy of George Melton's beloved Triumph will cruise along New England roads for generations to come. *MM*





WIRES & WHITEWALLS

by Wayne Dyke

The year was 1963. I was lucky to have my own ride in high school—a 1951 Ford flathead—but I was always envious of classmates who cruised around in any of the British sports cars that we all salivated over in the late 50s and 60s. I remember one silver and blue big Healey and a little cherry red Sprite in particular that were real eye-catchers with the tops down. Graduation and heading to the University of Maryland College Park, MD meant selling my faithful '51 Ford since freshmen were not allowed to have cars on campus. On semester breaks, I had to rely on my dad for transportation home.

My dad was a professional mechanic who was always buying, fixing, and then reselling cars for profit, so I never knew what ride to look for when he picked me up. I remember waiting for him with my dirty laundry bag in tow when

I noticed a beautiful red 1958 Healey BN4, complete with a black hardtop, motoring down U.S. Route #1 in front of campus. I was surprised when the car stopped in front of me, and when I peered inside, my dad was behind the wheel—grinning from ear to ear. I knew it was probably another buy, fix, and sell, but I was over the moon.

Dad was an ace mechanic, having worked for Chrysler dealerships, B-17 engines in the Philippines during WWII, and at the time, was the head mechanic for the Baltimore FBI office. I still have his offer letter signed by J. Edgar Hoover. Mr. Hoover would only let my dad service his bureau car when he visited the Baltimore office. Most of my dad's experience had been with the big block police interceptors used by the FBI. He knew these cars like the back of his hand and could rebuild a Holley 4-barrel in a wink,

but he was about to go through a new learning curve with the Healey BN4. A new set of metric tools vs. SAE was also in play.

My dad, like me, must have loved the car since years passed, and the Healey still had its spot in the garage. When he wasn't working on neighbor's American cars, he would be under the Healey's bonnet—tinkering with the engine and putting in new rings, bearings, etc. He even came up with a PVC modification setup, complete with copper tubing and an oil particle collection jar that Donald Healey would be jealous of. Dad had a passion for whitewalls, so at some point, the Healey sported a set of bias-ply Firestone Deluxe Champion whitewall tires that still grace it today.

I wish I had paid more attention to my dad's skills back then, but he wanted me to be something that didn't involve



“ I myself have been in charge of the paint and powder on the wire wheels, tires, brake drums, and exhaust system. ”

getting grease under the fingernails, so he showed me only basic mechanical skills, trying to keep my interest in check. I graduated from pharmacy school in 1968 and actually think grease under the fingernails is kind of macho, but not when filling prescriptions. Dad drove the car, mostly with the top down, until he passed in 1997, at which point I became the car’s custodian.

Raising 3 kids and working 50 to 60 hours a week as a pharmacy field supervisor for Rite Aid did not leave much time for joy riding, so the car sat for long periods of time, which took its toll. From 2001 to the present day, the car did not leave the garage, and in late 2024, a decision had to be made on its future—sell it or fix it. I couldn’t sell all the good memories so, with the encouragement of my wife, I made some inquiries at a local every Saturday morning cars and coffee get

together that was frequented by several British car owners. One fellow with an old Morgan gave me the name of British mechanic Mark Raspi of nearby Sparks, MD.

We gave Mark the job of giving the 100-6 new life, and with his help and the extensive Moss catalog, the restoration is proceeding. I’m amazed at what parts are available these days. Even got new side window rubbers to replace the dry and crumbling originals. So far, Mark has purged the old gas, installed a new fuel pump, replaced the brake lines and hydraulics, flushed the radiator, installed a new fan belt, replaced old seat rails and wooden bases, fitted the seats with lap belts, etc. I myself have been in charge of the paint and powder on the wire wheels, tires, brake drums, and exhaust system.

This birthday marks 80 years for me, and I look forward to being able

to give my 3 kids and 5 grandchildren a buckled-up ride with the top down. Maybe they will get a thrill like my dad and I did back in the ’60s and keep the car in the family for another 60-plus years. *MM*



My dad sporting his retirement hat and beard.



SUDDENLY, I'M A KID AGAIN

by Mike Harton

I didn't have a car of my own throughout high school, but it was not as if I didn't have something to drive. My dad customized a '50 Chevy pickup, which I drove to my graduation banquet, and a cool '57 Ranchero, which I got to use whenever I had a date. My dad was a craftsman when it came to automobiles. Over the years, I learned a lot from him as we often worked until midnight in the one-car garage attached to our house. The only issue for me was that he insisted on cleaning everything up before we went to bed.

At any rate, I knew there was no chance of owning my own car. Dad made that very clear. I was the first person in my extended family to go to college, and he was afraid that if I had my own wheels, I'd never make it—he was probably right. He always said that when I graduated, I could have any car

I wanted, and, needless to say, I had big dreams!

I had no idea what was in store when I rode home with a friend at the end of my sophomore year. Mom had dinner ready when I arrived. Dad ate quickly, jumped up, and said, as cover, that he was going fishing and I couldn't go. Heck, I didn't want to go—I was still enjoying dinner.

A few minutes later, I heard “varoom, varoom” and raced to the window. Outside, dad was sitting in a 1960 Austin Healey 3000. He got out and handed me the keys!

I drove the car all that evening, Saturday, to church on Sunday, but on Monday, it went in the garage and up on stands. You see, the car...well, it needed some work.

I had actually seen the car before when I was home for Christmas during my sophomore year. When my dad

and I visited my grandfather's garage, and while they were doing something in the back, I examined this awful-looking Austin Healey sitting to the side. Someone had literally painted the interior with a brush, and the exterior was faded and patched; all I could do was wonder, “Who would do this to such a cool car?!”

Little did I know that my grandfather was rebuilding the whole engine as a surprise.

Now that the secret was out, dad and I spent the entire summer working on the car: re-upholstering, re-chroming, and painting it. I did all the stripping and preparation, and dad did the spraying. Although not a mechanic or painter by trade, he learned well from his father, and I picked up enough to be...well, pretty good. We had the car ready to go the week before classes started in the fall.



Shortly after I returned to school, I met a gorgeous freshman and asked her out for a coke. I polished and cleaned the car beautifully, put the top down, and drove in front of the dorm to pick her up. The first thing she said when she saw the car? "Does it have a top?" Deflated, I put the top up, and she climbed in. Of course, those were the days of bouffant hairdos, and she couldn't have her hair blowing.

When I went to graduate school three years later, that same girl—now my wife—would be carpooling across town with three other ladies to teach school. Four ladies in an Austin Healey? Well, it is a four-seater after all, right?

So the Healey was sacrificed for a VW Squareback, and that was that. In the meantime, I picked up a 1950 MG TD that I found sitting in front of a service station with a locked up engine. We pulled it home and discovered that

it had thrown a rod, but it went through the water jacket and did no damage to the cylinder. Dad had it bored, put a sleeve in with a new rod and piston, and it ran fine! Of course, the engine was just the beginning. I didn't know MGs were basically wooden frames wrapped in metal. Anyway, Dad did most of the work, spent most of the money on it, and I couldn't say much to protest he wanted to sell it to buy an airplane.

Through the years, I had several sports cars and considered getting another Healey, but I had inherited several older cars from my dad and didn't have room for any more.

Gradually, I sold them one by one and began to replace them with cars of my era. We have three boys, now men, and they really didn't care for the older cars.

One of our sons has let his brothers know that the '57 T-Bird is his. Another

son fits the '50 MG TD well, but the youngest is tall, the MG being too small for him, and he didn't really care for the '31 Model A Roadster, as I said.

Then a '62 AH 3000 was advertised in our AACA magazine and it was close by. Having held on to the Model A long enough to honor my dad, I sold it and bought the AH, a car that my sons can all fit in and drive. I did not know until the purchase that the '62 was the only year for three SU carbs. I'll let the boys decide who gets what when I'm gone, though I have an idea.

In the meantime, I get to drive the Austin Healey, my wife's hair is shorter now so she'll ride with me, and suddenly I'm a kid again! *MM*

A **TRIUMPHANT** BOND

by Dana Caruso



My father started collecting Triumph wrecks in 1970, piecing together several fully formed cars of the spare parts. I was gifted with a TR4A in British Racing Green, my brother got a red TR4A, and my sister a blue TR250. I drove that car every day down the winding Merritt Parkway to Iona College in New Rochelle, NY. It was the perfect highway for that car, with its narrow lanes and extreme curves—built for a roadster.

My TR broke down plenty of times, though, and each time, my father would just go into his TR pick-a-part junkyard and get the needed part. He was a big man with big hands, which made some engine jobs difficult. His solution was to call me over and teach me how to install a starter or a thermostat—my hands being the perfect size for the job.

Was it a coincidence that two of the men I dated in college were Triumph owners? One owned a TR250 in navy blue, and the other owned a TR4A in white, but, oddly enough, both of them

totalled their cars. When my father heard this, he graciously offered to take the mangled wrecks off their hands. The TR250 was only a mile away, so that was easy to tow home, but the TR4A was 90 miles away in Queens, NY.

The biggest obstacle that stood between the car and my house was the Whitestone Bridge. My father would not let that 2,300 feet of suspended road stand between him and his next conquest. He loaded up his Jeep with tow chains and a tow bar, and with me by his side, we drove to Queens to claim our prize. The white TR had severe front-end damage, but we were able to attach the car to the Jeep. As I was getting in the Jeep's front seat, my father said, "You have to get in the TR and steer and brake as needed." I did as I was told. My life flashed before my eyes as we drove across that massive suspension bridge. The laws were not as strict back in the '70s, since somehow we weren't stopped by troopers in New York or Connecticut.

I have loved Triumphs for over 50 years, and now that I am retired, I can attend car shows and rallies with my beautiful red TR 250. My TR gets a lot of attention, and I stand back as the proud owner and call up to the Heavens, "Thanks Dad, this car is my tribute to you. I love you." *MM*



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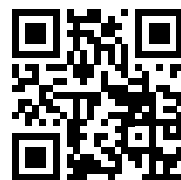
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