

THE TIDEWATER MG 'T' CLASSICS

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JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year--

Now that we have all recovered (I hope) from the holidays, it's time to face the two dreariest months of the year when we wonder whether we'll ever again get to lower the top and take out the side curtains. Of course we could all live in Minnesota (except we have better sense than that) when T-time for all but the hardiest is limited to the weeks between the fourth of July and Labor Day (just joking, Minnesota 'T'-Tattler folks). Speaking of side curtains, if you're looking for a challenge, try throwing your dime into the toll booth buckets on the Va. Beach Expressway from under the side curtain without dislocating your elbow. Or if you're really into masochism, do business at the drive-in window at the bank. Arms just weren't designed to bend that way.

From Old Number 5078--The club year was successfully concluded with a smashing party at Jim and Tina Pagleys. Our thanks to the Pagleys for opening their spacious and lovely home and to everyone else for the veritable cornucopia of caloric delights that graced the dining room table. 1978 was a very active and productive year for the club. We co-chaired a very successful mini-GOF with the Chesapeake Chapter and enjoyed excellent participation in our own club activities. I would encourage everyone to take another look at the 1979 calendar of events and mark your calendars or planners for the next year to include these activities. It is a very ambitious and fun-filled schedule.

NEMGTR dues not renewed by the 31st of December will cost an additional \$5 reinstatement fee. I hope that didn't catch anyone napping. I held out for the self-addressed mailer that NEMGTR finally sent out which was running as late as TSO (I received my October TSO the first week of December). It is obvious to me that the classified section of TSO is of little use if the advertisement loses its timeliness. It was good to see the Groovers on the membership list. The December TSO had the all important calendar of events for all GOFs, mini-GOFs and other major chapter happenings. Look these events over closely and let's see if we can't get some group expeditions on the move in '79. I would appreciate being called by anyone who receives TSO with the calendar for '79, as I still haven't received mine and I will gladly photocopy it for the membership if necessary. I'd like to wish a happy and prosperous new year to everyone.

Ron

IT'S TIME FOR THE THIRD ANNUAL WICKER BASKET AFFAIR!!

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY--As Ron mentioned in his message, the Christmas Party was its usual grand success. About 50 of the Tidewater faithful descended on Jim and Tina Pagleys' lovely Lafayette Blvd. home in Norfolk for good food, good fun and lots of T-talk. Of course the highlight of the evening was the tour of the Pagley home which Jim, Tina and their sons have spent the last two years restoring. They have done a remarkable job and have every right to be proud of what their hard work has wrought. I don't think we could have had a lovelier setting for the party.

It was nice to see Randy and Brenda Colker representing the contingent from the far side of the Elizabeth River. The Colkers have volunteered to

axle ratio change is by far the simplest technique available for the gearing swap. As his article implies, it is not fully complete without further background information in the form of the Southern California treatise, the MGA manual, and the MGTD/TF manual. Reading the appropriate sections of these sources is essential to a thorough understanding of the process. I have all of these references and will make them available to anyone who is serious about improving his car's highway drivability.* Additionally, I attended his excellent presentation on the gear change at the GOF in Toronto and may be able to assist those interested in performing this feat. I also am prepared to put a 4.30 gear set into my own TD rear axle housing when time permits. Is anyone up to this "trial and error" process? The challenge is before you!--Jim

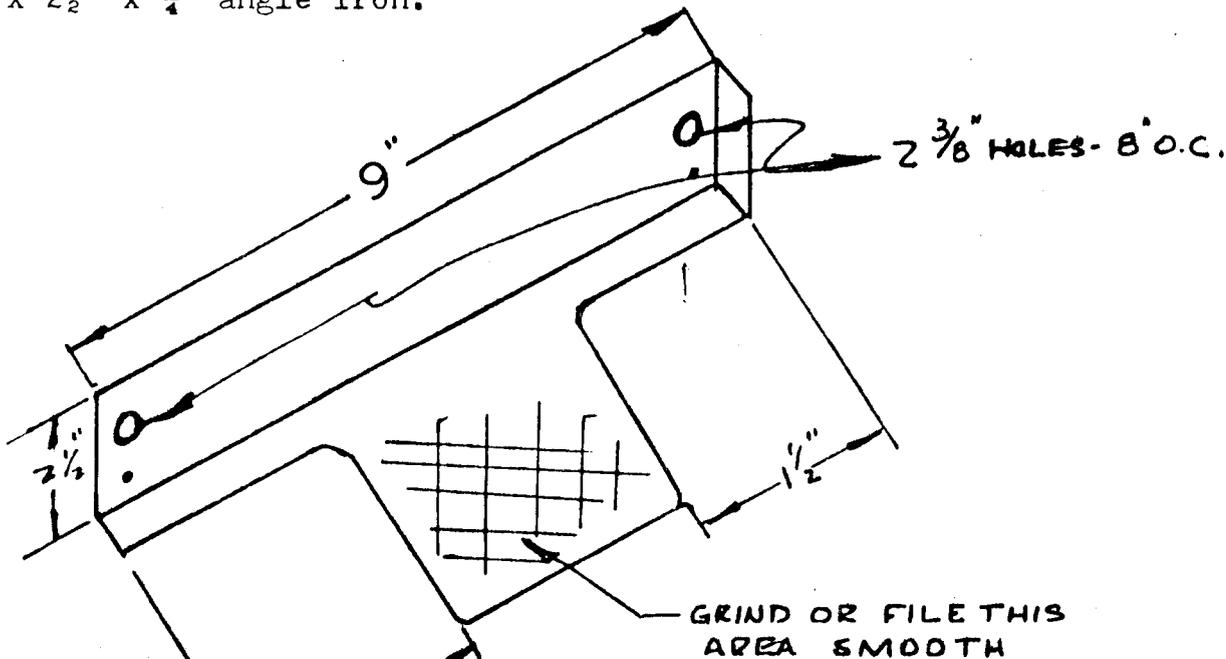
(*Ed. note--Changing your rear end ratio reduces engine revolutions, thus reducing the wear and tear on the top end of your engine (pistons and valves). This is particularly important for those of you who do a lot of long-distance, high-speed driving. However, the increased torque needed to drive the rear end places greater stress on the bottom end of your engine (crank shaft and main and rod bearings) and results in slower acceleration. So those of you considering this change must weigh the pros and cons.)

AND NOW, THE GRUNAU TECHNIQUE--

I know many of you are interested in installing an MGA 4.30 or 4.55 to 1 differential ratio in your TD or TF. Having just gone through the exercise myself, I'll briefly write down my experience so you can benefit.

Follow these steps--

- 1) Read "Ring and Pinion Interchanges for the MGTD/TF" written by Carl N. Cederstrand of The Vintage MG Club of Southern California. This is essential.
- 2) Decide which ratio you want, the 4.30 to one (stock MGA 1500) is probably the easiest ratio to obtain.
- 3) Buy a complete MGA differential; the complete rear end is not required.
- 4) Split the TD/TF rear axle in half and remove the crown wheel. DO NOT REMOVE THE PINION.
- 5) Make up an angle bracket to measure the relative distance from the bracket to the head of the TD pinion. Mine looks like this and is made of 2 1/2" x 2 1/2" x 1/4" angle iron.



- 6) Bolt the angle plate to the TD differential housing using the 2-3/8" holes in the angle plate, drill 2-1/8" holes and install 2-1/8" dowel pins to allow repeatability of the angle plate installation. These pins must go through the angle plate and into the housing.
- 7) Measure the distance between the smoothed area on the angle plate and pinion head using feeler gauges. In my case this was 0.057".
- 8) Remove the angle plate and then remove the TD/TF pinion. You will need some special equipment to hold the pinion flange and an extension pipe or a "Johnston Bar" to turn the nut. I used a piece of 1 1/4" x 1 1/4" x 3/16" angle iron 25" long with 2-5/16" holes drilled to match two adjacent bolt holes on the pinion flange. This allows room for the socket to be placed on the pinion nut.
- 9) Disassemble the MGA differential and remove the pinion.
- 10) Install the MGA pinion into the TD/TF rear axle housing, install either the MGA or TD/TF front tapered roller bearing without the bearing spacer. Install the MGA pinion flange and tighten the pinion nut gradually until you obtain the required 12 lb. in. of preload on the pinion bearings.
- 11) Reinstall the angle plate and measure the distance to the MGA pinion using feeler gauges. Compare this measurement to the previous TD/TF measurement. The new MGA final measurement must be 0.018" more than the TD/TF measurement. Therefore, in my case the required final distance was $0.057" + 0.018" = 0.075"$. My measured MGA distance was 0.048", therefore I needed to move the MGA pinion $0.075" - 0.048" = 0.027"$ forward.
- 12) Disassemble the pinion and remove the large inner tapered roller bearing. This will require a suitable puller.
- 13) Measure the thickness of the MGA pinion spacer shim. In my case this was 0.122" thick. Since I had to move the MGA pinion forward by 0.027" the final thickness of the required pinion spacer was $0.122" - 0.027" = 0.095"$ thick. Have the spacer accurately ground to your required thickness.
- 14) Reassemble the pinion spacer and inner roller bearing and reinstall in the TD/TF axle with 12 lb. in. preload. Reinstall the angle plate and measure the distance with feelers. This measurement should now be 0.018" greater than your original TD pinion measurement, i.e., 0.075" in my case.
- 15) You will need to shorten the MGA pinion bearing spacer; I arbitrarily reduced mine in length by 0.020" by having it accurately ground.
- 16) Reinstall the MGA pinion, bearings, bearing spacer, flange, washer and nut and tighten the flange nut to 140 ft-lbs torque, ensuring that the pinion turns at all times. Turn the pinion a number of times to seat the bearings, then measure the torque required to turn it, 12 lb-in is required. I used a 1 lb. carton of margarine hung 1 ft. from center line of pinion. Some fiddling, disassembly, additional grinding or shimming will be required to obtain the correct bearing preload when the flange nut is fully torqued to 140 ft-lbs. Install the MGA ring gear on the TD/TF differential carrier.
- 17) Grind the left side TD/TF 1/2" thick differential carrier bearing spacer to reduce its thickness 0.015".
- 18) Cut a 0.015" shim and install on the right side in addition to the 1/2" thick differential bearing spacer.
- 19) Reassemble the rear end by installing the crown wheel and differential and installing the left half of the housing.

20) Measure the amount of back lash of the pinion flange at one of the drive shaft bolt holes. A reading of 0.026" is equivalent to a crown wheel clearance of 0.010" on an MGA 4.88 differential; a reading of 0.032" is equivalent to a crown wheel back lash of 0.014" on an MGA 4155 differential. Therefore, attempt to obtain a reading of approximately 0.020" to 0.030" at the flange without moving the crown wheel.

A crown wheel back lash of 0.008" to 0.012" will result; it is better to be a little loose rather than tight. Adjust spacers further if required.

Assuming the TD/TF carrier bearings were in good condition, the above brief description should result in a properly set up 4.30 ration in the TD/TF. I know the above description is very brief and certain to be confusing, but if you read the TD/TF Ring & Piston Interchange Manual as well as the MGA and MGTD/TF Manuals, it should become clearer. If anyone has problems understanding the work, let me know and I'll try to assist. Good luck.

More on "Go Faster Gears" for the TD and TF next month--

Bob Grunau
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Mississauga, Ontario
Canada, L5A 1E4

DON'T FORGET THE THIRD ANNUAL WICKER BASKET AFFAIR!!

And now, the third installment of MG FEVER--by Robert Davis (Ed. note--As you remember from last month, Robert was driving his A through Richmond in fourth gear while his friend Rick was pushing the car to get up some speed, and then diving head first through the window on the passenger side. The citizens of Richmond were treated to the site of a one-speed, 4-wheeled, 2-legged A limping down the street.)

The MGA ran down the road without any trouble until the tunnel. A knock developed in the gearbox which became increasingly louder. Rick had to push off a few more times at stop lights. I even drove all through a neighborhood area to avoid lights.

Upon pulling in the driveway, a loud bang was heard. I pulled up the parking brake and tried to put the car in neutral, but the shift selector wouldn't move. The car was in fourth and only in fourth. Rick and I took the drive shaft out, then pushed the car into the garage. We pulled the power unit, put in another gearbox and were planning to drive the MGA back to school. But Rick liked the TD and asked if we could go for a ride. It ran well, but burned so much oil you could hardly see the car from behind. However, by then I had made up my mind to take the TD back to school.

It almost choked out so I set the carbs richer and got back in. It had more power and didn't foul as much, but all that smoke! I had a new top and called Dave Barrows and asked him to help me put it on (which meant, could I help him). Rick and I drove out to Dave's. He was as cheerful as ever and seemed to be delighted that we had come to see him. He showed me the Healey for the first time and then Kay and Helen drove up so I met them. The new top was installed and Dave did a super job considering that the top bow had rotted and I had helped him.

I thanked Dave, then Rick and I drove back to Norfolk. Early the next day we packed and headed back to Radford. Between Norfolk and Richmond the TD used about ten quarts of oil. In Richmond I bought a case from a friend's dad, who ran a service station. Something had done a little seating because we only used about five quarts from Richmond to Blacksburg.

Upon pulling into the school parking lot a fellow who lived down the hall from me said, "There is an MG like that one in our side yard. It belongs to the people we bought our house from." I asked him where he lived and he said Atlanta. I was ready to get in the car and drive down, but Joe didn't want to go just then. He gave me the owner's number and I called him. He said it was a '52 TD and that it belonged to his son ~~who~~ now lived out west.

Later the same week he called back and told me he had decided to sell the car for \$400. I told him I thought the price was a little high (Ed. note-- huh??!!!!), but that I'd still take it anyway. I made arrangements with Joe to go home one weekend. We left one Thursday afternoon and headed for Atlanta....

Has he sold the MGA? Has he rebuilt the XPAG in the oil burning TD? Does he get the other TD? Has he seen the YB? Tune in next month for the answers to these and other questions with:

Loads of fun in the capital of the South--or, Lester Maddox, git out yo' axe handle cuz h'yah we all come.

POOR ATLANTA! BUT THEN SHE SURVIVED GEN. SHERMAN!!

This delightfully funny article, which every T-owner can appreciate, comes to us from the Nov. '78 issue of Motor Trend via The Octagon, newsletter of the Classic MG Club of Florida.

RETROSPECT

The year was 1947. America enjoyed a comfortable monopoly on atom bombs. The Pennsylvania Turnpike was the East's only freeway, and a gallon of regular cost 18 cents. John Travolta hadn't been born, and Saturday Night Fever was more likely a trip to the drive-in for a hamburger (25 cents) and a shake (15 cents).

Volume One, Number One of *Road & Track* struggled into print on Long Island. Jean-Pierre Wimille would have won the World Driving Championship (with an Alfa Romeo Type 158), but it hadn't been invented yet. He came to the Indy 500, with a Maserati, as the only European entrant, finishing 7th.

The U.S. industrial plant, unscathed by the war, had swollen to three times its prewar capacity, while American workers were burdened with cash saved during years of rationing and non-production of consumer goods. Pent-up demand for durable goods--especially automobiles--was so great that it would be three more years before the buyer could take delivery of a new car without a long wait, or an under-the-table payment, or both.

On the other side of the Atlantic, manufacturers were trying to pick up the pieces of war-ravaged plants and resume some kind of production. England was no exception; in fact a more critical case. For generations, the British Isles had depended on manufactured exports to pay for the enormous imports required to support a large population on a limited land area. At the end of World War Two, the situation had assumed crisis proportions, and a disgruntled populace, fed up with wartime rationing and shortages, was in no mood for excuses. With a cry of "Export or Die," the government, among other radical moves, placed a heavy tax on domestic car purchases and provided special inducements to companies that would increase overseas sales. Which brings us to the subject of this month's "Retrospect," one of the most beloved British exports ever to reach these shores, rivaling Scots Whisky in its popularity among Americans.

1947 MG TC

*Logic or no, this is
the stuff of which
legends are made*

by T.C. Browne

The 1947 MG TC roadster was the middle of only three years' production of a classic sports car that was to become admired all out of proportion to its total numbers (few) or its technical virtues (fewer). In fact, the TC was all but indistinguishable from its immediate prewar predecessor, the MG TB, and a typical British enthusiast regarded the earlier PB as a measurably superior motorcar. Legends are seldom born of logic.

The MG TC was built, pretty much by aging Midlands iron mongers, at the same mossy shops in Abingdon-on-Thames as its ancestors, to a pattern born when the automobile was young. The legend persists that it cornered as if on rails. And so it did--providing you confined all your driving to billiard table tops. The archaic rigid axles/flexible chassis arrangement just couldn't gracefully accommodate any disturbance on the road surface. The author, in a lapse of sanity, once drove a TC "special" in a road race conducted over a bumpy airport course and discovered the true meaning of life. In a quest for weight reduction at all costs, the factory coachwork had been removed, along with the standard seating, and replaced with a skin of .025 sheet aluminum and a kind of canvas sling to sit on. The resulting alteration of the sprung-to-unsprung

weight ratio produced a truly quick car with abominable handling and an indescribable ride. The special had seat belts--they were required by the rules of the time--and it was a good thing, too, since there would otherwise have been no way for the pilot to stay aboard on the rippled asphalt surface.

In time, the MG TC's lever shock absorbers would lose their fluids, but the driver never noticed, since the half-elliptic leaf springs had by then become rust-bound and introduced a measure of self-dampening which preserved what became known as the "coal-cart ride"; and the chassis went on trying to camouflage road irregularities. Oh, what terror gripped the heart of an MG TC driver the first time he nonchalantly rested his hand on the seam where the door edge meets the cowling. The massive shifts in body alignment, as the infernal device shuddered over pavement irregularities, were attended to by a building material ordinarily associated with houses. There was oak bracing in the doors, oak framing in the body, and the firewall was separated from the cowling by two hand-hewn matching wooden members--one oak, the other mahogany--mated to a thick rubber gasket. Even the floorboards were plywood. Squeaks were rare, but creaks were common; and if you begin to suspect that the average Englishman could make a variety of repairs on his MG TC with a saw and a glue-pot, you are quite right.

The Bishop Cam Steering was famous for its quickness and infamous for its stickiness. With 1½ turns lock-to-lock, a TC driver could emulate the ever-popular GP drivers' crossed arms cornering style. Actually, there was little choice, since a normal respect for life and limb dictated that he use about the same muscle energy to re-center the giant 3-spoke steering wheel as had been expended in displacing it. No lack of caster caused the steering to stay where it was put, but rather the diabolical worm-and-peg steering box, with its flimsy lid, that many drivers over here regarded as some subtle effort by

the British to get even for the Boston Tea Party. In spite of a modest 94-inch wheelbase and a narrow 45-inch track, this devilish device imposed a 37-foot turning circle on a car with "Midget" as part of its proper name. During a time when it was thought unpatriotic to disparage a British product, a contemporary English road tester wrote in a popular motorsports journal, "The M.G. is patently designed to be driven faster than most and is sprung accordingly. Consequently, it must be admitted that at speeds below 40 m.p.h., except on roads with an impeccable surface, the ride becomes increasingly harsh as the speed diminishes, and this effect is enhanced by the slightness of the upholstery." Later in the piece he commented, "The steering is high geared—1½ turns of the wheel being necessary from lock-to-lock—and is, in consequence, not light. This fact is not particularly noticeable under normal conditions, but on fairly sharp turns and when manoeuvring in confined spaces, more effort is necessary than one would normally expect in a car weighing only 16½ cwt. Furthermore, one feels that a smaller turning circle than 37 ft. would be an advantage, particularly for competition work."

Well then, with all this harsh criticism, whence comes all the applause that this minor event in the automotive scheme of things enjoyed in 1947, and commands today in even greater measure? Easy. Compared to the wallowing sedans and tall convertibles that Detroit was turning out in 1947, the MG TC was a thing of grace and beauty. Although knock-off wire wheels were no novelty on British or Continental cars of the time, the 19-inch rolled-rim hoops that carried the TC had a fragile beauty seldom seen before and never since. While the fenders were effective at their design function (keeping mud off the coachwork and the driver's elbow), they also added greatly to the car's esthetic appeal; and the British term—wings—is appropriate.

The hood louvers, with their gentle rake, add to an illusion of motion while the car is at rest. The slope of the door

and the double-bubble cowl are in total keeping with the rest of the shape, while the prominent headlamps increase overall symmetry and neatly balance the stubbiness at the back. The elongated hood—half the car's length—suggests some massive engine lurking below. In fact, almost half the hood's length is taken up by the occupants' legs and feet. While obviously designed for top-down motoring, the MG TC even manages to avoid turning into a pumpkin when the top is raised, a rare trait among roadsters of whatever epoch.

Mechanical idiosyncrasies and considerations of practicality notwithstanding, the overwhelming characteristic of the MG TC is style. And to an audience of 1947 Americans never before exposed to anything like it, this car was a night on the town with no hangover. Girls thought it was cute, men considered it dashing, and even its detractors were half-hearted with their insults. "How many miles to the quart?"; "How fast can you pedal?"; and, "You can get a Ford for what that costs" were about the best they could do. Supporters countered with calabash pipes, tweed caps, duffle coats and string-back gloves, becoming known as "tea-baggers" in the process. Soon, the faithful began to practice an exotic Sunday ritual known as the Time-and-Distance Rally ("Rallye" if you were a tea-bagger), itself a recent import from the U.K., and that tale is still unfolding.

Meanwhile, up in Cazenovia, New York, some rich guys had gotten together and revived a prewar association called the Sports Car Club of America, purportedly to advance the cause of motorsports in the United States, but mainly to create more opportunities for themselves to go road racing. The arrival of the MG TC (and all subsequent MG roadsters) had happy results for the sport. Virtually all American road racers of the Fifties and early Sixties got started in MGs, the TC appearing prominently in the record books. Briggs Cunningham campaigned a supercharged version. Fred Wacker and John Fitch were early stars

in relatively stock TCs. Phil Hill dominated the class in West Coast races with a supercharged TC that subsequently received a Ford 60 V-8 engine and made "2 Jr." a number to fear at Palm Springs and Torrey Pines. Jack McAfee deserted hot rods to drive John Edgar's highly modified No. 88 MG TC, out of which 148 horsepower (vs. 54.4 stock) was finally, if not often, coaxed.

But enough of nostalgia—how about our Retrospect subject? What we have here is a genuine rarity—a 30-year-old sportscar that has never been raced, wrecked, butchered, altered or abandoned. Incredibly, the present owner—Bob Reed of La Habra Heights, California—bought the car in Arizona from the original owner in 1974. Since his aging prize had been in dead storage for 12 years, Bob took it to Commonwealth Classic Cars of Fullerton for dismantling and restoration. Since Bob thinks all MG TCs should be red, the ancient yellow paint was removed and replaced with the present lacquer. Aside from the color change and mechanical maintenance, the car is as delivered in 1947. The aftermarket turn signals and nerfing bars are typical of additions to cars delivered in the U.S.; but the leather seats and what the English call "Leather-cloth" trim panels are original. Even the carpets are those the car left the factory with.

The handsome wheels are now shod with new 4.50 x 19 Dunlop tires, as before; the windshield folds flat, as it ought to; the 4-speed transmission still shifts well, and the engine shrieks its song while the driver still searches in vain for the place his left foot belongs.

To juice up this Retrospect with a little historical panache, we called up history's fastest MG driver (254.91 mph, Bonneville, 1959) and American's first World Driving Champion (1961), Phil Hill, inquiring if the MG TC held any special significance for him. He hesitated hardly at all: "The TC just changed my whole life, is all I can tell you." 

 DEADLINE FOR THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER IS 28 JAN 1979!!

ODDS 'N ENDS--NEW ADDRESSES--Please make the following change in your roster:
 Randy and Brenda Colker
 55 Post St.
 Newport News, VA 23601 596-3910

An Oops and an Almost--I'm sorry to have to report that the last few weeks have been particularly hard on the local MG population. First to go was Robert Davis's Y-type which he rolled off Gen. Booth Blvd, caving in the top and right side. He has already been in consultation with Mike Ash about the possibility of combining the Ashes' black Y with Robert's poor wounded thing, producing one complete car. Fortunately for Andy Wallach, the night before his near fatal mishap (fatal for the TD, that is), he had

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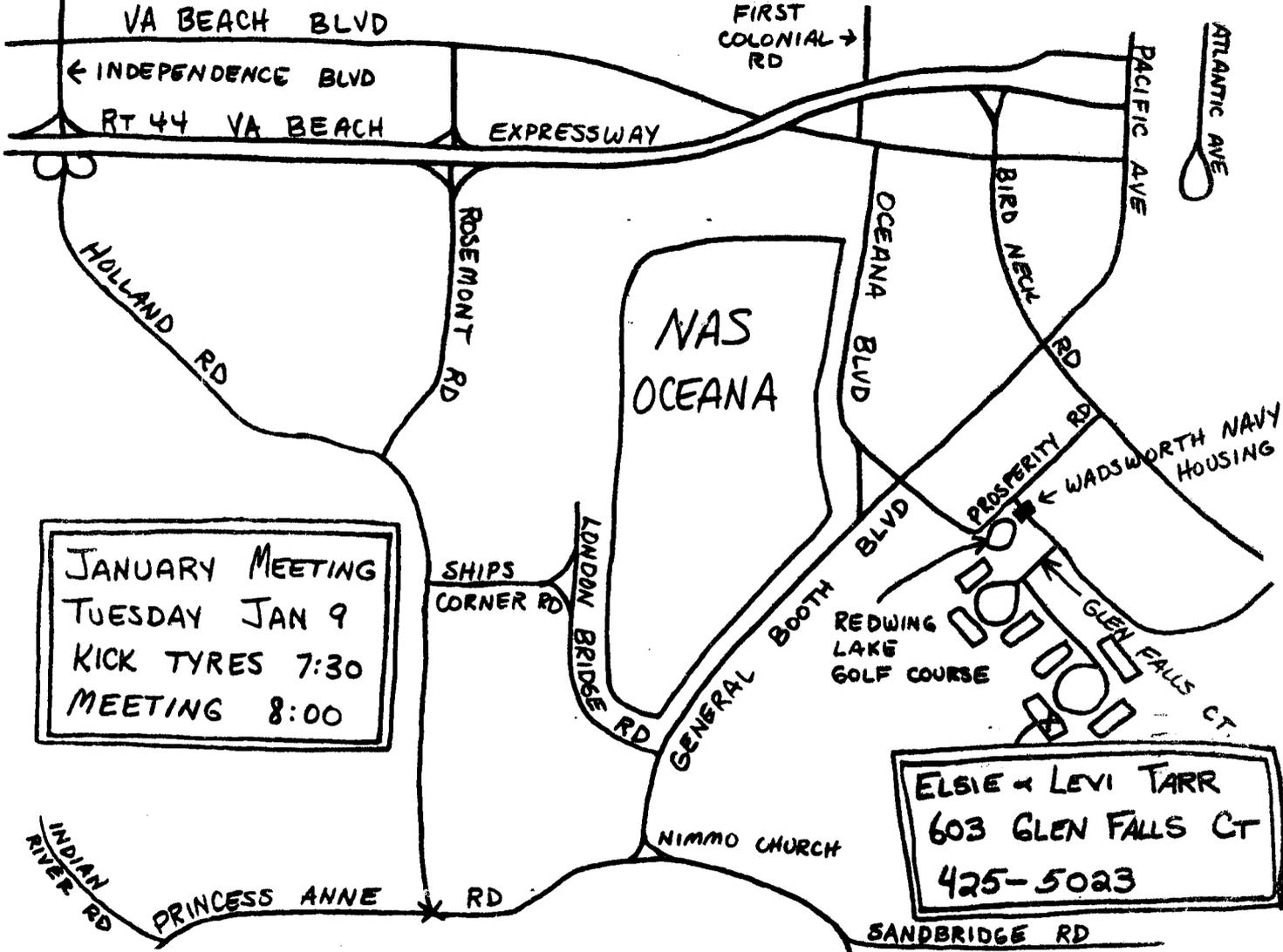
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installed a fire extinguisher. Thus when the TD wiring harness caught on fire, Andy was able to rescue the car with a minimum of damage. As this newsletter goes to press, reports are that Andy and Jim Banvard are preparing to install a new wiring harness. That was too close a call!

AND FINALLY--While watching the classic Alfred Hitchcock movie "Rebecca" the other night, I noticed that the hero (Laurence Olivier) was driving an MG. Later Carl Fisher informed me that it was an SA Tourer with a Charlesworth body. It was enough to bring a lump to one's throat.



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