

THE DIPSTICK



MARCH 1989

President..... Dave Bowling

Secretary Tom Lund

Vice President Don Jones

Treasurer Frank Benson

Editor Gloria Benson

Marque Time:

An extraordinary Wicker Basket affair was hosted by Ross and Ann Haines at their lovely home in Thalia. Thanks to Ann's skillful organization and the pure talent of all our chefs the selection of gourmet masterpieces was outstanding. No two food dishes were duplicated, and there was more than enough roast possum for everyone! It was nice to see out-of-town members, Bill and Cindy Gibbs, and Suzan Boswell.

Thanks to Peggy Bradford for hosting the February meeting. Her hot spiced punch, cold beer and the crackling fire in the fireplace brought out that special spirit of MG comraderie- many stories about the trials and tribulations of bringing old basket cases back to the road - and plans to get more fun out of our cars at coming events.

If your MG is a little sick, come join us at the next tech session. Rick Mullins' heated garage and the best free expert advice from our members will help you tweak up your machine. Top down MG weather can't be too far off! Till then -

Safety fast,

KURALT CRAB SPREAD

- 2 8 oz. packages cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. hot pepper sauce
- 2/3 cup horseradish sauce
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 lb. back fin crab meat, picked through

Combine all ingredients in bowl; mix well with fork. Shape into a ball using plastic wrap. Chill until firm. Sprinkle with paprika. Serve with assorted crackers.

submitted by Beth H. Barber

Here is one of the many wonderful recipes sampled at the Wicker Basket affair!

Deadline for the April newsletter is Friday, March 24th.

February MG Meeting
February 7, 1989

Thanks to Peggy Bradford for hosting the meeting and thanks to Anne and Ross Haines for organizing and hosting the Wicker Basket Affair. We had one guest - Jim Villers - Welcome Jim.

Treasurers Report - We had a beginning balance of \$792.41, income of \$224.50, expenses of \$184.24 for an ending balance of \$832.67.

Spares Report - Robert Davis brought some wood from a 1958 ZB that he is restoring. It was refinished in Rosewood by John Hill for \$200.00 for the Dash and door wood. Hardwood will crack or warp so veneer over plywood is much better. He also had a Wiper Delay Motor with a 20 second delay timing from J. C. Whitney for \$4.00 - \$5.00.

Technical Report - We have a flyer from Clark Spares that has good prices on MGA & B parts. The next Tech Session is February 26 1989 at Rick Mullins Shop. Bring your own tools.

Regalia Report - We've ordered some new items but have plenty of the older stuff there. Make an offer! Don Jones displayed a flag of the club crest that was very well done. The club members voted to buy the flag and display it at club meetings and functions.

Activities Report - As mentioned already a Tech Session on Sunday February 26, 1989 at Rick Mullins garage. The March meeting to be held at Anita and Jock McGrigor's home. Jennifer recommended a brunch and matinee outing for March 19, 1989 depending on the play (if one will be playing at that time). She will look into the matter and report at the next meeting.

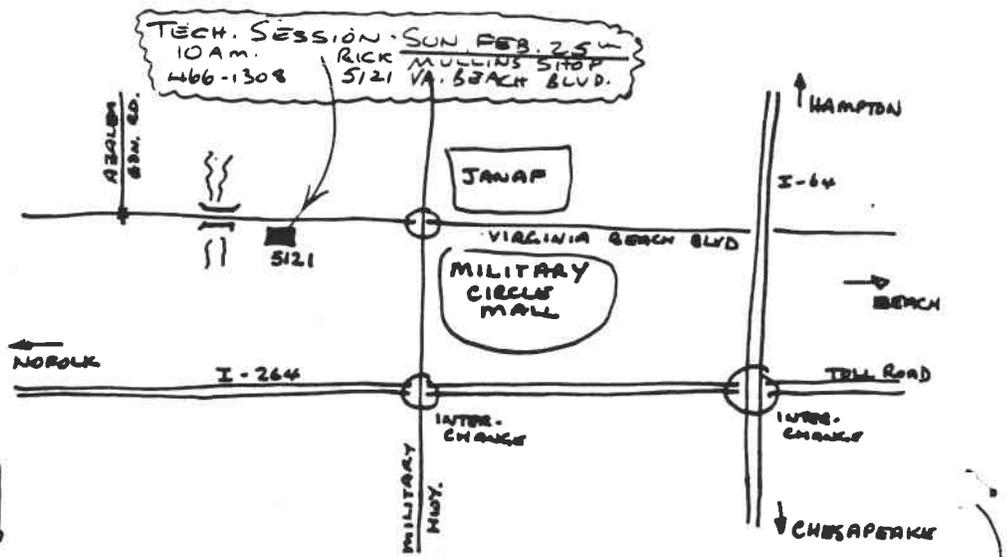
Old Business - none

New Business - none

Marque Time - Robert Davis has the engine in his Magnette and is now starting on the interior. He is leaving on the 18th or 19th of February to go to Indy and Milwaukee to get another ZB with a good interior. Dave Bowling is driving around the block again. Jim Newman reviewed the work being done on a 72 B which he hopes to have on the road by top - down - time. Andy Wallach rebuilt the brakes on his TF and Paul Speaks discussed some ailments on his 71 B.

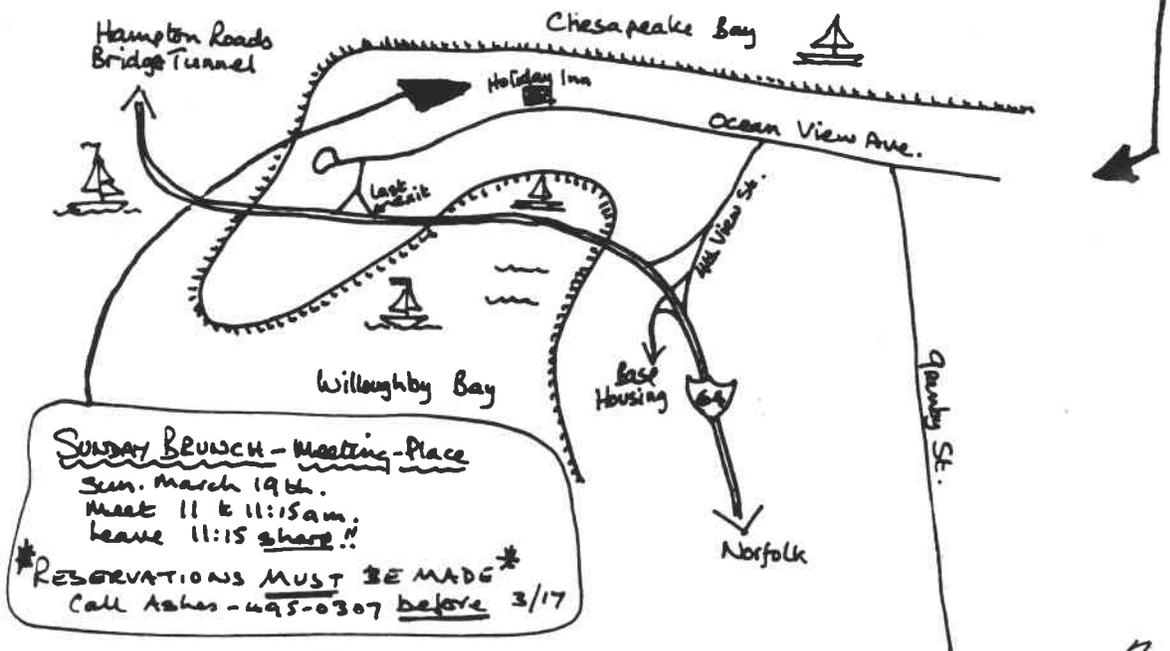
The raffle drawing was won by Cynthia Fasehim.

Those in attendance were: Jim Newman, Paul Speaks, Mike and Jennifer Ash (1969 B), Andy Wallach and Cynthia Fasehim, Susan Bond (1972 BGT), Robert Davis (60 MKIII Magnette), Brenda Banvard and Jim Villers, Gloria and Frank Benson, Peggy Bradford, Dan Boswell (1977 B), Dave Bowling, Don Jones, Butch Ballback, Tony Perino, Anita and Jock McGrigor (1974 B) and Tom Lund.



UP-COMING ACTIVITIES

- FEB. 25 (Sun) TECH SESSION at Rick MULLINS' workshop; 10 a.m.; please bring any specialized tools you think you may need, or call Mike Ash if you don't have them (495-0307). Coffee and donuts provided. (see map)
- MARCH 1 (Wed) MONTHLY MEETING at the home of Anita & Jock McGRIGOR. 7:30 p.m. (see map on back)
- 19 (Sun) BRUNCH at THE CHAMBERLIN HOTEL. Hampton.
 - Time - 11:30 a.m.
 - Cost - \$8.95 (\$4.50 age 6-12; under 6 free)
 - After-brunch activity - tour Casemate Museum, which is on base at Fort Monroe. or walk along the sea-wall...Anything to exercise off brunch! (Put a pair of comfy shoes in the car).
 - Meeting-place: Holiday Inn. Willoughby Spit to leave at 11:15 sharp. (see map), or meet us at the Chamberlin by 11:30.
 - RESERVATIONS - call Jen or Mike Ash 495-0307 or sign up at March Meeting.
- APRIL 4 (Tue) MONTHLY MEETING - Dan Boswell. Program - Auto Appraisal
- 9 (Sun) TECH SESSION - Jim Jackson
- 23 (Sun) SPRING RALLY - see next issue of Dipstick

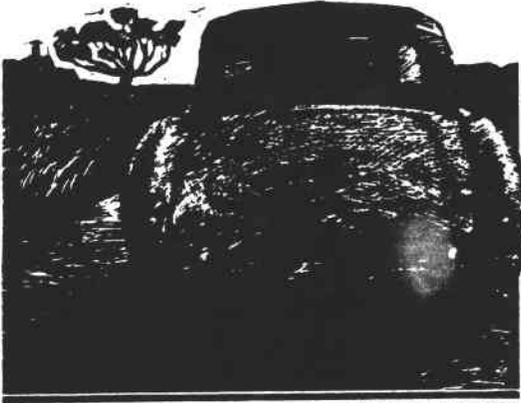


Sunday Brunch - Meeting-Place
 Sun. March 19th.
 Meet 11 & 11:15am.
 leave 11:15 sharp!!
 RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE
 Call Ashes - 495-0307 before 3/17

Here is another article from Peter Egan of "Road & Track". Mr. Egan is really into sports car racing but, as you can see, he really has "The Spirit"! This is one of Peter Egan's monthly columns in R&T, and I can identify with every one of them. Mike A.

Side Glances

BY PETER EGAN



DRAWING BY LEO BESTGEN

SEAGULLS

Scene I, 1958

IT'S A LONG time ago and we are sitting at a window table, my family and I, at a restaurant in the town of Wisconsin Dells. The restaurant is called Uphoff's, a fancy dinner-club kind of place where local people go for special occasions like proms and graduations. We are there because it is somebody's birthday; I can't remember whose. Not mine, because it's early summer and I was born in a February snow storm.

I'm sitting there all dressed up, no doubt wearing a Pat Boone-length sport coat and one of those nerdish mechanical clip-on bow ties, clinking the ice cubes in my water glass and looking out the window at my dad's 1956 Buick Special. Three-tone, light blue, white and dark blue. Huge bumpers.

Suddenly I hear a sound like a mixture of ripping canvas and angry hornets.

It's the sound of three MGAs double-clutching and downshifting as they turn into Uphoff's parking lot. They pull right up to the window, parking three in a row, next to my dad's Buick. The cars are white with American blue racing stripes, and they have octagonal number panels on the doors and leather hood straps holding down their small, tongue-shaped hoods. There are tattered pieces of tape on their headlights.

Three sunburned men in sport shirts and sunglasses get out and come into the restaurant, seating themselves at a table not far from our own. With my parents' prodding, I eventually get up the nerve to walk over and ask where they are going.

"Not going," one of them says. "Coming home. From the races at Elkhart Lake."

"Those are nice cars," I observe. "Thank you."

I go back to my table and sit through dinner and dessert transfixed, watching the evening light dim and finally darken on the three cars.

Scene II, 1962

WE ARE riding in a large Ford sedan, my friend Pat Donnelly and I, and Pat's dad is driving. Through weeks of perseverance, whining, subliminal and superliminal suggestion, we have finally browbeaten Pat's poor dad into driving us to Elkhart Lake to see the June Sprints. Sports car races. Our first ever. It's a trip of about 120 miles, and we are very close to Holy Ground (Pat and I keep imagining we can hear racing cars in the distance), but we are meandering and slightly lost on a county road between the little village of Greenbush and the track.

"Maybe we should have gone on the main road, through Plymouth," I say, frowning at the map.

"I think this is the way," Pat says. "Look at all the snakes on the road." It's true. The road is full of serpentine rubber burnout marks, the kind college kids make when you give them Corvettes.

"Still, you'd think they'd put up some signs, if this is the way..."

Just then, I hear that sound again. I look out the window just in time to see a black MGA rip past our Ford in a sudden burst of 3rd-gear revs and sports-car commotion. The MG has its convertible top up, snug as a tweed cap, and a chrome luggage rack on the trunk, loaded down with a suitcase tightly wrapped in a canvas tarp.

I can't see who's driving, but I'm left with a lingering image of double-eared knockoffs, blurred wire wheels

and that tiny black envelope of a car and its tidy chunk of luggage disappearing into the distance like a dropped bomb.

"We must be on the right road," someone says.

Scene III, 1988

IT'S MIDMORNING on a Friday, but it still takes us four hours to get out of the greater LA area and into the lesser LA area, where traffic creeps bumper to bumper all the way north to Santa Barbara. My wife Barbara and I are in an Acura Legend, on our way to the Monterey Historic Races at Laguna Seca. Luckily we have a good air conditioner and a tape deck or we'd go crazy. We almost took the MGB, but now I'm glad we wimped out and didn't. This 1st- and 2nd-gear traffic would be hell on the clutch, not to mention the cooling system and the left leg.

Traffic finally starts rolling north of Santa Barbara, and the rest of the drive is easy. We arrive in Salinas at 7:00 p.m. and check into our motel (no rooms left in the seaside communities of Carmel and Monterey). We are only about 10 miles from the Laguna Seca circuit and one of the world's largest concentrations of historic sports cars, but there is no sign of it in the parking lot of our motel. A black Porsche 928 is the only piece of sporting machinery in sight.

In the morning we get up early, have breakfast and head toward the track on Highway 68. Just out of Salinas, I accelerate around a motor home, pull back into the right lane and suddenly find myself staring right into the taillights of a red MGA. Ahead of it are two more MGAs, an MGB and an MGB GT. A whole damned MG club, motoring down the road.

"This must be the way to the track," Barb says.

I nod and smile to myself, studying the lovely, rounded, compacted mass of the MGA ahead of us. The group isn't driving very fast and we could pass them easily, but I respectfully slow down and follow them all the way to the track.

By the time we reach the gates, I find myself thinking about seagulls and what a welcome sight they must have been for lost sailors when they were looking for land. ■

TECHNICAL CORNER - by Mike Ash

Things still remain quiet on the technical front. Maybe the February Tech Session will yield a few interesting topics. So, this month I will discuss a recent project of my own.

For some time now, I have been intending to replace the rear springs on both the TF and the MGB. J.C. Whitney have the best deal on MGB rear springs. At about \$45 each, these are the same imported British make sold by the MG suppliers at about \$25 more each. Too bad J.C. Whitney don't sell T-series springs as well. MGB rear springs have a tendency to sag after about 75,000 miles, so I ordered the stronger 7-leaf GT springs for the roadster. At the same time, I decided to try the J.C. Whitney rear shock kit for conversion to tubular shock absorbers, at \$85 for the pair. This is about the same price as the MGB kit from Moss, but considerably cheaper than the Moss TD/TF or MGA kits. Before installing the springs and shocks on the MGB, I decided to try to see if the shock kit could be adapted for the TF, since Moss's TF kit is about \$100 more. The rear suspension geometry is the same for the TD, TF, MGA and MGB, except for the increased ride height for the rubber bumper MGB. Since the TF needed new springs, I decided that the best time to try the MGB shock kit was when I replaced the springs. I ordered the TF springs from Moss at about \$40 each more than the MGB springs from J.C. Whitney and, of course, they were back-ordered. They eventually showed up, so I was able to replace them a couple of weekends ago. At the same time, I found that the J.C. Whitney MGB shock kit would almost bolt directly onto the TF, but that the emergency brake cable was in the way. Not having much time to experiment, I decided to put off the project until I had time to figure out a way of re-routing the brake cable or time to re-design the mounting for the tube shock. So I put the lever arm shock back on, and went on down the road!

The lever arm shocks on the TF were re-built units, but they had leaked ever since I put them on the car. When topped up with fluid, they seemed to be quite effective when operated by hand. However, with the new springs and old shocks, the feel of the rear of the TF felt no better, and maybe a bit worse, than with the old springs. So I decided that whatever modification was necessary to put the MGB shock kit on the TF should be a high priority item. Last weekend was an appropriate time so, in preparation, I decided to re-read the instructions for fitting them to the MGB. The old adage - "if it won't work, read the instructions" - proved to be true. I found that I had missed a step, and that was to switch the left-side lower shock mounting plate to the right side, and vice-versa. When I did this on the TF, the MGB kit bolted on with no modification, and cleared the brake cable. The whole operation took about an hour! The feel of the rear end is much improved, and it no longer bottoms out at the several places it used to on the drive between home and work. So, I consider the conversion most successful, and no more expensive than some more re-built lever arm shocks that would probably have still leaked. The tubular shocks are from a Volkswagen, and should be easily replaced when necessary for no more than \$20 the pair.

So, for the benefit of others, the following is the procedure for installing the conversion kit.

1. Jack up both sides of the car and support on jack stands placed under each spring just behind the axle mounting. Remove both rear wheels.
2. Remove the old lever arm shocks. Two bolts hold the shock to the frame. The arm bolts through the lower shock bracket, attached under the spring by the axle U-bolts.
3. On each side, remove the lower shock bracket by removing the four nuts from the axle U-bolts.
4. Re-install each lower shock bracket on the opposite side of the car, and tighten the U-bolt nuts. The brackets are re-installed the same way round, but now the hole for attaching the shock is below the spring, as shown in figure 1, instead of at the side of the spring.
5. Attach the upper bracket to the frame where the lever arm shock used to be, using the same bolts. The orientation of the bracket is as shown in figure 2, except that it is upside down for rubber bumper MGBs.
6. Attach the tubular shock to the brackets with the big washers on each side of the shock eye, tighten all of the nuts securely, and the installation is complete. The bolt through the lower bracket is a smaller diameter than the hole in the bracket, so be sure that this nut is particularly tight. Put the wheels back on and lower the car to the ground.

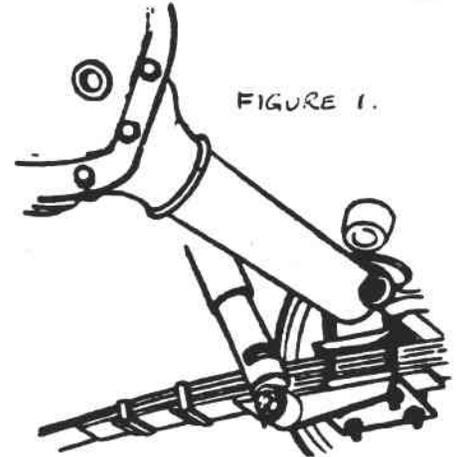


FIGURE 1.

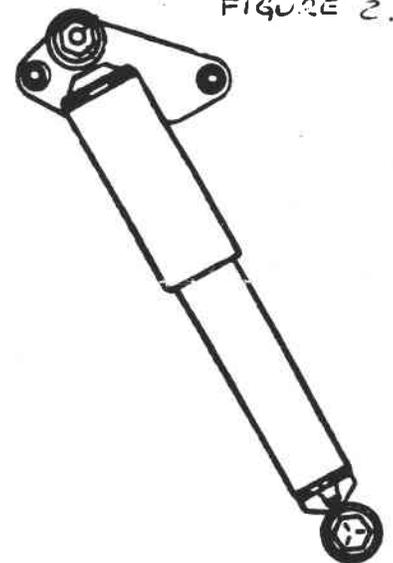


FIGURE 2.

The J.C. Whitney kit is advertised for the MGA and MGB and, as I have proved, also fits the TD and TF. I think it is a worth-while conversion. I haven't tried, or even seen, the front conversion kit. It is quite a bit more expensive and, of course, the original lever arm shock still has to be left in place as the upper member of the suspension. The price of the rear kit still seems a bit expensive, considering that the VW shocks themselves must be worth all of \$10 each.

Lever Shock Conversion Kits for Austin-Healey, MG & Triumph

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58-79 Austin-Healey Sprite & MG Midget	(front) 85-8013T	98.98
58-64 Austin-Healey Sprite & MG Midget w/1/4 elliptic spring	(rear) 85-8014A	71.98
64-79 Austin-Healey Sprite & MG Midget w/1/2 elliptic spring	(rear) 85-8015Y	71.98

Make, Year, Model	Shk. No.	I-Kit
55-62 MGA	(front) 85-8016W	\$116.98
62-80 MGB	(front) 85-8017U	116.98
62-80 MGA, MGB, MGC	(rear) 85-8018B	83.48
55-65 Triumph TR2, 3, 3A, 3B, 4 & 4A w/boom axle	(rear) 85-8019P	83.48
65-76 Triumph TR4A w/IRS	250, 5, 6 (rear) 85-8020Y	1

FRONT

REAR

If you are feeling ambitious, the following article from the Chicago Area MGA Club (who got it from the Hoosier A's, who got it from the MG Club of St. Louis) shows a do-it-yourself conversion for about \$30. However, the recommended shocks - Corvette and GM Truck - may be a bit too stiff for the lighter MG. The extra \$55 for a ready-to-install kit is probably worth it to eliminate the fabrication and welding.

The Moss MGB conversion kit is advertised as including adjustable Gabriel gas shocks. At about \$85, it may be a better deal for the MGB, but I haven't seen one to know if it will fit the MGA of TD/TF. As I recall, the Moss kit for the TD/TF is about \$150 and the kit for the MGA is over \$200. So at those prices, the seemingly "universal" kit from J.C. Whitney is a better deal.

A Shocking Rear-End

I wanted a tube shock conversion for years. However, the cost of a conversion kit has prohibited me from obtaining one. If you can't buy one, you build one.

The amount of room for a shock on an MGA somewhat determines what type of shock you can use. I selected a double eyelet shock having a short overall travel. This shock is a Corvette shock and it also fits half-ton Chevy trucks. It is a Monroe 3033. The shock comes with a mounting kit. This consists of a 5/8 inch mounting stud. This sparked further thought.

First, I traced around the lever shock base on a piece of cardboard. I did not want the shock to mount vertical like the rod for the lever shock does, so I measured one half the distance of the lever and used that spacing as a centerpoint for the upper mounting stud.

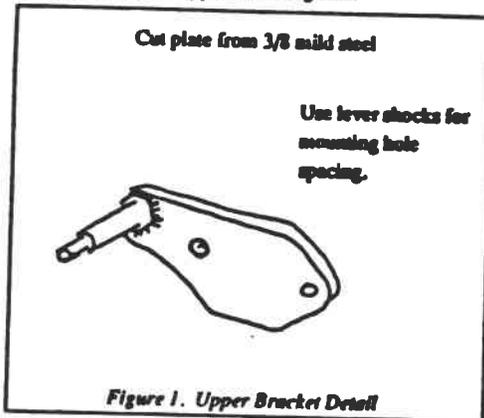


Figure 1. Upper Bracket Detail

These measurements were transferred onto a piece of 3/8 inch mild steel plate. I cut around the bracket (much easier said than done) and drilled the mounting holes for the bracket. The mounting stud hole was also drilled. I put the stud through the hole and tightened up the mounting bolt. I welded the base of the stud to the mounting plate and let the mount cool. Then I removed the nut, cut the back of the stud off, and welded the back of the plate.

With the top brackets done, I turned my attention to the lower bracket. I used the lower plates from the car (you can make duplicates if you wish).

Remove the shock rods and unbolt the U-bolts. Drop the plate and examine the mounting hole. I purchased two mounting stud kits (Monroe D-19). They match the upper studs. The hole will have to be enlarged. I enlarged it using a round file so that I maintained the material on the front of the mounts. The stud should be welded in place as before. There is enough room for the nut, however it might be close.



Figure 2. Lower Bracket Detail

Now for the tricky part. Exchange the left and right lower mounting brackets before remounting. This lowers the mounting point and more closely matches the shock's working length.

Paint and reassemble.

The ride of my MGA was not changed. It is still firm and predictable in its nature. The harshness has been removed along with the little vibration affecting the car. The car does not bottom out and the shocks do not fully extend even with the springs fully descended.

The total cost of the project was as follows:

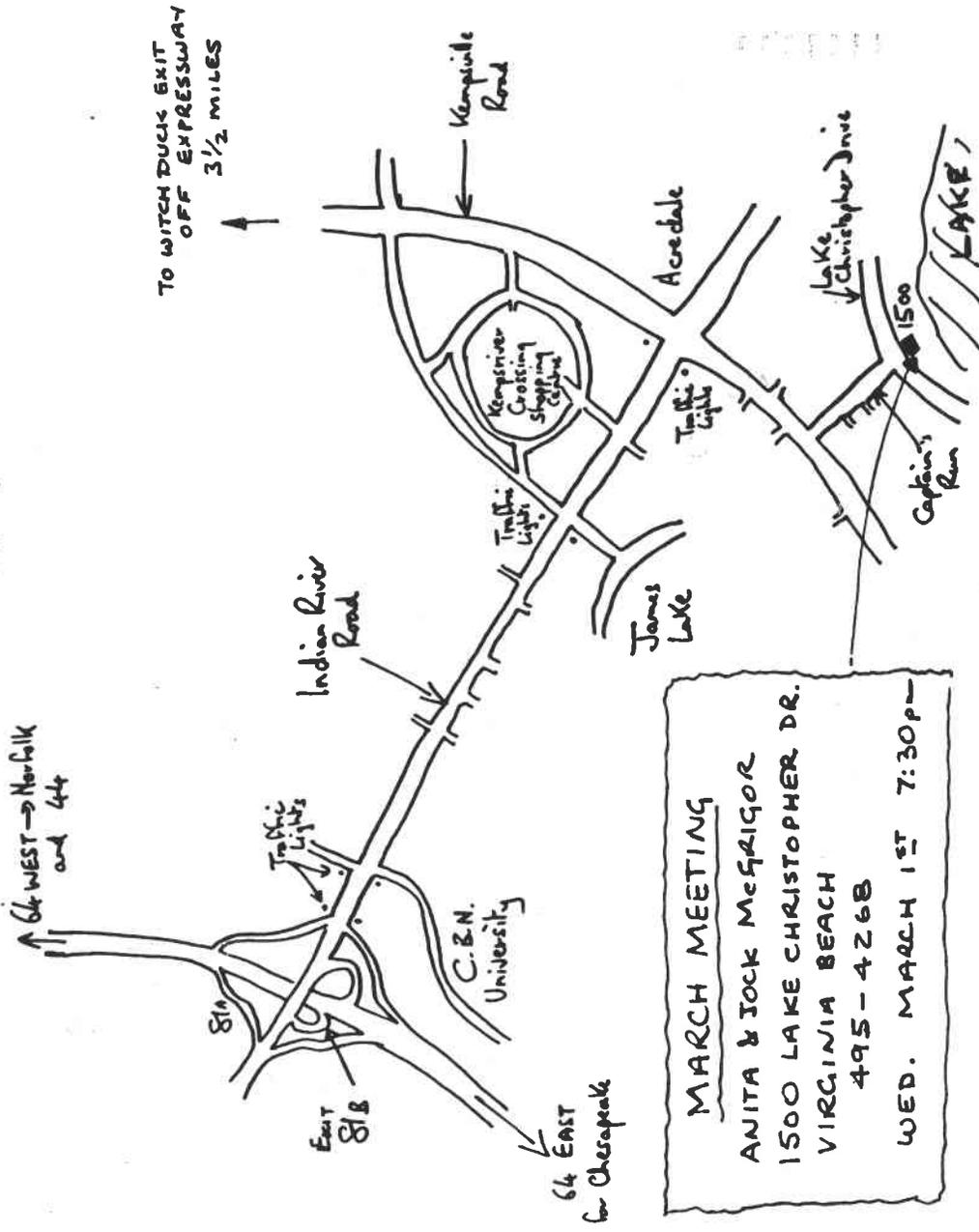
1. 2 Monroe 3033 Shocks - \$25.13
2. 2 Monroe D-19 Stud Kits - \$3.02
3. 3/8 mild steel plate - \$2.00

Time to complete the project was about 4 hours.

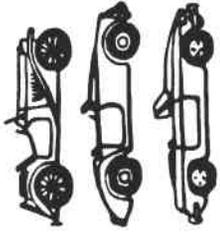
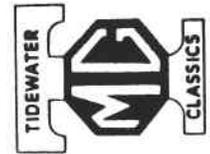
Thanks, and a tip o the hat to
Bob Horzmann
MG Club of St Louis



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MARCH MEETING
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