

The Dipstick



“The Newsletter of the Tidewater MG Classics Car Club”

www.mg.org

Volume XXX, Issue 10

Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

October 2002

MARQUE TIME

Thanks to Jim & Betty for hosting the September meeting in their lovely home. What a beautiful place they have, and I'm not just talking about the garage! About midway through the meeting we had to call a timeout so everyone could go outside and put their tops up as a shower brought some much needed rain. It turned out to be more than just a brief shower, so I hope everyone made it home safe and dry.

Thanks to Dan for organizing the final Ice Cream Social/Drive-out of the season over in Portsmouth. Unfortunately I had to miss it as I was at a Navy base in Crane IN. So, what is a Navy base doing in southwest Indiana in the middle of farm country, several hundred miles from the nearest ship or submarine? It's actually the 2nd largest installation in CONUS, with a huge repair depot, electronics R&D group, and logistics center for many shipboard systems. It was established in WWII as an ordnance center, away from any large population center. Folks, it still is! Driving to the base one day through the countryside (emphasis on country) I started humming the theme song from “Green Acres”. I could have sworn I saw Mr. Douglas in his three-piece suit driving his old tractor. Was that Mr. Haney I just passed in his Model A truck? What I didn't see was one British car during the entire trip. The closest thing that related to anything MG on this trip was the octagon shaped coffee mugs used by the group I visited. Hmm, maybe an idea for regalia – octagon shaped club coffee mugs?

In getting ready for the upcoming fall car shows, I decided to check the rear end and transmission fluids in the MG. About 6 months ago I drained and replaced the rear end fluid with new gear oil. Since then I have had a slow drip from the drain plug, despite using sealer on the threads and re-tightening the plug occasionally. Much to my surprise, when I removed the filler plug, the rear end was still full of gear oil. How can it still be full after 6 months of a slow drip? Likewise, the transmission drain plug always has a drop of oil hanging from it. When I checked its level, you guessed it; it was still full also. How can these units be still full of oil after several months of a

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Check www.mg.org for the latest info!

- Oct. 1 Meeting at Alan & Beckey Watson's**
(see map on back page)
- Oct. 4-6 Waynesboro British Car Show
www.svbcc.org
- Oct. 6 SCCA Autocross, Pungo Airfield
www.odr-scca.org/
- Oct. 13 Pig Pickin at Mark & Debbie Childers**
(see page 3)
- Oct. 16 Lucas Night Rally**
(see page 5)
- Oct. 19-20 Sportscar Vintage Racing Association at VIR, www.virclub.com
- Oct. 20 Hunt Country Classic
www.mgcarclubdc.com/index.html
- Oct. 26 Driver Days
1975 & older
- Nov. 3 Tech Session at Mark & Debbie Childers**
- Nov. 3 SCCA Autocross, Fort Monroe
www.odr-scca.org/
- Nov. 5 Guy Fawkes Day
- Nov. 6 Meeting at Frank & Anna Worrell's**
- Nov. 17 TSSC Autocross, Little Creek
members.aol.com/odrscca/index.htm

slow drip? Is the car generating its own oil supply?
Should I take out a patent?

The bottom of my car has always been wet with oil. Before leaving for MG2001, I replaced the front crank oil seal, which helped to dry up the front of the engine. While my car was getting its disintegrated clutch replaced in Alpena MI while returning from MG2001, I had the rear engine oil seal replaced, which I thought would stop any oil leaks at the rear of the engine. So why is the car still so wet with oil underneath? Where does it come from? I have to assume that it was designed into the car by those clever engineers to help keep away the tin worm in wetter climates. Or maybe it's just one of those unexplained, quirky things about these cars that you just stop trying to figure out and learn to live with.

The fall car show season is a busy time, with three shows in as many weekends, followed by the annual Pig Pickin'. By the time you read this, the Richmond and Topping shows will be history for another year. I'm sure we had a great time, and the weather was perfect for driving our MGs. Probably the best show of the year is the one in Waynesboro the first weekend in October. It's always an enjoyable trip, driving the back roads of VA with friends. Even though its fun to just jump in the MG and drive somewhere, it's more fun when you caravan with other MGs. Maybe the safety in numbers rule applies here. It's even better when you take along your spouse, better half, or best friend. If you're really fortunate, they are all one in the same person!

Safety Fast! Mike



SEPTEMBER MINUTES

Doug Kennedy

On a calm and muggy night Mike opened the meeting promptly at 8:07 Lucas Standard Time. Betty and Jim Villers were thanked for their gracious hospitality in hosting our meeting. Ed Soloman was welcomed back from his hiatus.

Membership: Robin Watson is working on renewals and the next directory. If you paid your dues, THANKS. If not, pay up you cheapskates.

Treasurer's Report: Out: \$431.91, In: \$268, Balance:

\$2716.13

Minutes: Approved as written

Newsletter: Wow, ayy karumba, man-o-man what a great job. All agreed that the newsletter was wonderful. Sue Bond reported on her hard work with Peggy Craig and implored us to submit stories, pictures, anecdotes, etc. Robin was thanked for assisting with the mailing duties. The October dipstick will be a bit thin unless people submit their work. Deadline for October is early because the meeting is the first. Chuck inquired about the printing cost and Sue related that it amounted to about fifty bucks a month.

Regalia: Frank Linse was absent so we weren't able to learn of all the new goodies ordered.

Activities: Dan Kirby was MIA so Mike talked about the upcoming events and meetings. The pig pick'n is October 13 and Mark and Debbie Childers are hosting this great event so arrange your social calendar ASAP. Robert Davis talked about hosting the October meeting at his home for wayward Rovers and MGs. The Holiday Party will be held at Cynthia and Andy's (after a bit of nudging and peer pressure). Terry Bond talked about the upcoming AACA car show on September 14 at Chesapeake City park and encouraged us all to attend. Get ready for Carlisle and Hershey as well. Call Terry for hints and pointers if you're making the journey.

UH-OH....THUNDER AND LIGHTNING WAS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE SO UNDER ARTICLE J OF SUB-SECTION B OF THE BY-LAWS WE ADJOURNED FOR TEN MINUTES SO EVERYONE COULD RUN OUT TO PUT THEIR TOP UP.

Clubs: We're trying to re-establish ourselves with NAMGBR so keep up your membership with them.

Old Business: The club banner was discussed by Barry Tyson. Thus far we have an estimate of \$171 for a multi-colored banner. What's neat is that the supplier is considering joining and is a Land Rover owner. It would take 3-4 days once the artwork is complete. Size would be 60 by 30 inches. Barry passed around a rough draft and everyone was suitably impressed.

Discussion turned to the budget and the importance of the raffle offsetting the cost of host expenses. Among other items discussed was a dues increase, other fund-raising ideas, and the cost-benefit ratio quotient related to frequent and infrequent meeting participants. Fear not, our budget is in good shape and the discus-

We're having a PIGNIC!!!

The Umpteenth Annual Tidewater MG Classics Pig-pickin' and Second Annual Rally to the Middle of Nowhere™ is on!

Sunday, October 13th at Mark & Debbie Childers' home

TIME: 2:30pm (Come early to help...) Rain or Shine

1:30pm at Greenbrier Mall for the Rally

PLACE: 3909 Pine Grove Landing, Chesapeake

PHONE: 432-9155, Cell phones: 650-7742, 650-7743

EMAIL: ifixmgs@aol.com (RSVP via phone or email)



Please bring a chair and a covered dish of your choice. Club supplies beer/soda/wine, hot dogs/burgers, barbecue pork and chicken, and slaw, beans and potato salad. Fun events!

Fabulous prizes for the rally and contest winners. Horsie-rides for kids

of all ages... Admission is free for all members

but **please RSVP as soon as possible** so

we will know how much food to buy.



Ya'all Come

Directions:

From VA Beach & points west, including Norfolk:

Take I-64 to Battlefield Blvd south, or the

Chesapeake Expressway (\$2.00 toll).

Stay on I-68 South about 16 miles until you cross the Northwest River Bridge.

Turn right at next red light at old Battlefield Blvd. Turn Right at the light at the

7-Eleven store onto Ballaback Rd. Continue past Backwoods Road, the old white

church and a half dozen fields. About 1/2 mile past the Navy base, turn right

on to Pine Grove Landing at Northwest River Estates. Another 1/4 mile

will find you surrounded by friends, food and fun.

For those coming from the Deep Creek area, go south on US 17 and turn left on to

Ballaback Road at the country store. Pine Grove Landing is on the left about 6 miles

east of US 17, just beyond the sharp turn at Conway Road.

Special Note

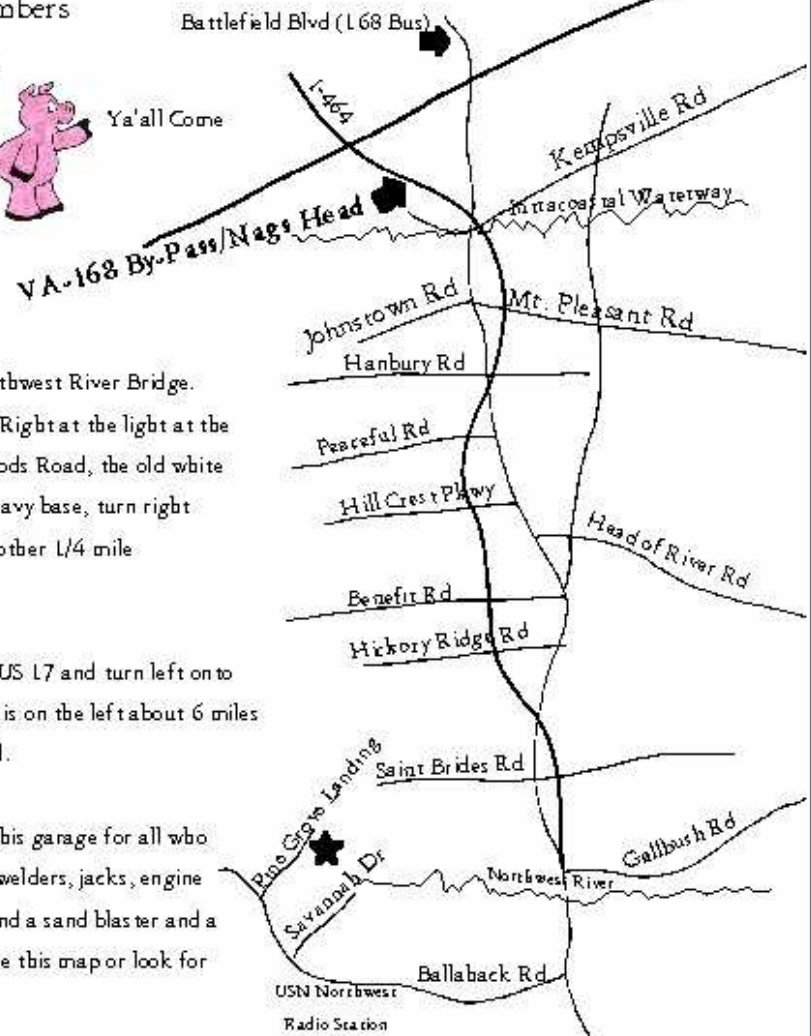
On Sunday, Nov 3rd starting at 8am, Mark is opening his garage for all who

wish to join a TECH SESSION. He has mig & buzz box welders, jacks, engine

boist, rollaway tool boxes, commercial buffing machines and a sand blaster and a

ton of spares and hardware. Mark your calendars and save this map or look for

information in the November newsletter.



DECISION 2002

sion was a general one to make everyone aware of the importance of dues, raffles, regalia, and making sure we can afford special expenses.

New Business: Mike discussed nominations for the next election. The by-laws require a nominating committee. Short one at this point and avoiding an impeachment, Mike turned to Mark Childers who discussed the need for people who were interested in serving as an officer to step forward. Because no one jumped at this August responsibility Mark proposed that the existing slate of officers be retained. Mark will work with "elder" statesman Vince Groover on a full slate to be published.

WITH MORE THUNDER NEARING AND NOW ACTUAL RAIN COMING DOWN THE LONE HOLDOUT AND RESIDENT OPTIMIST PRESIDENT HAAG MADE A MAD DASH TO GET HIS TOP UP. REAPPEARING IN 45 SECONDS WE WERE ALL DULY IMPRESSED.

Marque Time: Mark Childers knows that in the near future a nice 73 B-GT will be up for sale. It was Tom Sawyers old Mallard Green car that passed through other hands. Call Mark if you're interested. He thinks it will be sold for around \$4800.

Robin took the Dipstick down to the winery and was happy to sample a bit of wine as well as pass on the dates for some upcoming events. Unrelated, he is also going to consider adding member car listings to the individual entries.

The rally around Lake Michigan was covered and sounded like a great event encompassing almost 1,000 miles! Nine cars total made the journey and were mainly MGBs. An MGC won the event this year.

Robert Davis hosted someone from California who flew out to see his right-hand drive Land Rover pickup. The gentleman was an arson investigator of particular renown who needed Robert's car to complete his investigation of a homicide involving a man who murdered his wife and tried to burn her body in a Rover. As of this date the jury had not reached a verdict but Robert's help has been instrumental in preparing the case. In fact, he even looked up one day to see his guest on TV!

Hitting the one-hour mark for the meeting and the rain coming down hard enough to make some British electrical system owners nervous, the meeting was adjourned sans raffle and we all jumped to the refreshments like grass seed reaching for some meager rain-fall.

Vince and Mark pondered over nominations for the 2002-2003 candidates, and we came to the mutual conclusion that the club's present leadership team has done an excellent job to date, and in light of their achievement, potential to improve our club, and their willingness to serve, the current elected officers are hereby nominated for the November 02 election.

If any members in good standing wish to nominate any eligible member, including themselves, for any elected office, please make your wishes known either in person at the October meeting, or by proxy (Email to ifixmgs@aol.com) and said name will be added to the ballot for election at the November meeting.

Nominees

President - Mike Haag

Vice President - Barry Tyson

Secretary - Doug Kennedy

Treasurer - Jim Villers



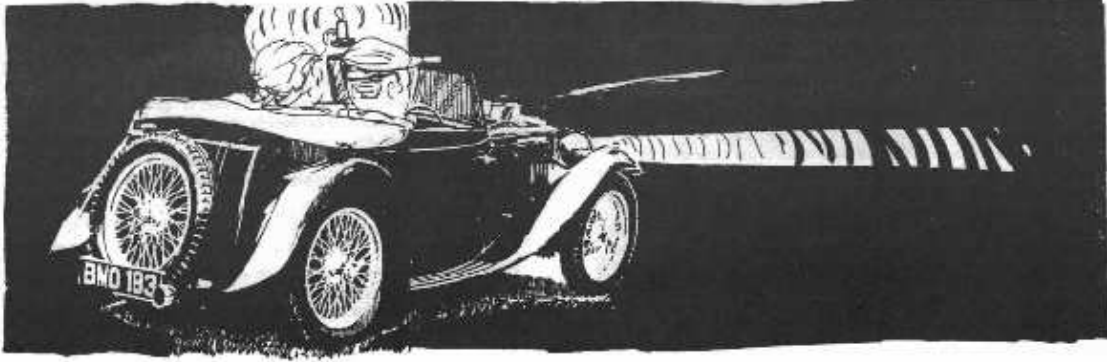
Notes from the Editors

Susan Bond

Last month I was griping about a computer malfunction that left me a day behind on all my deadlines. This month is the opposite -- without computers and the internet you wouldn't be reading this *Dipstick*. I have spent the last week and a half in South Carolina. Peggy is at home calling and e-mailing contributors and chairs (many thanks to all of you!!!), making sure all the contents are in by deadline, and creating all the maps and flyers. (You don't realize how big a job that is till you have to do it!) I am sitting in my parent's living room putting it together, hoping I haven't left anything out, and will try to e-mail it to the printer. Assuming all goes well, Robin will pick it up and mail it out so you will get it before the meeting which happens to be on the first of the month, giving us very little wiggle room for mistakes. (I think next time the meeting is on the first, the deadline will have to be earlier to allow for glitches.) So if this hits your mailbox a little later than usual, don't be too hard on the publication team, this thing has probably traveled farther than you have this month.

Red seems to be the most popular color for LBC's here too, I have seen a Healey and a rubber bumper B so far. Unfortunately they were both headed away from where I was stuck in traffic so I didn't get to thumbs-up the owners (as if they would notice from a van). Can't wait to overdose on British car shows in the next few weeks at Wings and Wheels, Waynesboro and our Pig Pickin'. See you there!

OFF INTO THE DARKNESS! LUCAS NIGHT RALLY!!!



WHEN: Wednesday, October 16th at 7:00pm

WHERE: Meet at Harbor Park, Norfolk

WHO: Dan Kirby is in charge, 430-9591

We will disprove the adage "A gentleman does not motor about after dark".

Tech Notes

Mark Childers

So, your MGB compression has dropped lower than your techstock portfolio, and a new head is about to take a month's worth of food off the table? Bummer. While you are at it, you can pick up a few extra horses by finding the right head, doing some creative work on the ports, and smoothing those horrendous Grecian columns that serve as valve guides. But that's for another article... this one is for those who are about to install an early 18G series head on a later 18V block, and don't give a hoot about go-fast - or just a little hoot, at best. This month's tech tip is actually easier done than read...

When a non-18V cylinder head is mated to an 18V block there is a possibility of the exhaust valves hitting the block deck when the valves are fully open. If the head has been shaved, and/or the seats replaced, the valves start out even closer to the block... The odds get worse if you run tight valve lash. Should you inadvertently buzz your beast to the redline, inertia from the valves can overpower valve springs, forcing the valves open a bit farther than usual. Okay, close doesn't count, except in horse shoes and hand grenades, but why take a chance with valves, versus block decks?

On some swaps, the interference may not be an issue at all (at least statically), or might be so slight as to not even be noticed, especially in the case of a high

mileage engine getting a replacement head with original valve seats. But, if your head has fresh valves and seats, the engine still has a good cam profile and the rockers are tight on the shaft, damage can range from mild compression loss to broken valves resulting in smashed piston tops. Cars with Piper or Kent cams are more prone to the latter.

Why take a chance when the fix only takes about two hours while the head is off. If your new head just came from the machine shop, it's even easier because it's already clean. The job is fairly straightforward and does not require another trip to the machine shop if you have a Dremel or die grinder, with a supply of sanding drums, or a half round, fairly coarse hand file, some sandpaper to smooth the file tracks, and a goodly supply of patience and elbow grease.

The first step is to remove the exhaust valve springs using the traditional "whack-a-deep-socket-with-a-hammer" method to pop the keepers, or the less traditional, albeit kinder-gentler valve spring compressor available on free-loan from Autozone (which will ultimately be needed for reassembly). Leave the exhaust valves in the head and keep them from falling out by wrapping a rubber band tightly where the valve stem exits the guide. With the block deck scraped and scrubbed and free of all grease and oil, and a clean rag stuffed in each bore (all 4 pistons in center of bore) lay 4 two-inch wide strips of shirt cardboard across the cylinder bores to simulate a thin, compressed head gasket, keeping the exhaust valve area open so the valves can

contact the block.

I used a light coat of spray "Kilz" and a cardboard template--although Whiteout or even white latex wallpaint will work--to paint a 1.25 inch crescent on the block deck, from the edge of the cylinder bore, immediately below the exhaust valve. The paint is optional, but makes a much better contrast medium than bare steel. Paint all 4 exhaust valves with Prussian Blue machinist dye or a Sharpie laundry pen, right to the edge of the valve face. If you use Prussian Blue, the white paint is optional; with bare steel, it may be hard to get the laundry marker to transfer. Carefully lower the head onto the block and snug it down gently (no more than 15 ft pounds) with 2 nuts on each end and 2 in the middle. Next, push #1 exhaust valve down till it contacts the block. Gently apply downward pressure on the valve while rotating it at least 2 full turns against the block. This should transfer the bluing/ marker to the block.

Repeat this step for each of the exhaust valves. Remove the cylinder head and inspect the cutouts for the bluing or black dye. Cover the oil and coolant holes with cardboard and duct tape. When all the holes are filled, spiral a length of refrigerator door magnet around the bore at the top of the piston to catch any filings. A cardboard disc cut to bore size and coated with grease will also do a good job catching metal filings. Using a half-round file or Dremel sanding drum, carefully excavate the block to a depth of just under 1/8th" (3mm) from the edge of the cylinder wall, out to the edge of the valve markings, then feather another .040" (about 1 mm) beyond the valve circumference for good measure. The block is plenty thick and won't cause any problems should you go a little bit deeper, but do be careful.

Next, repaint the fresh excavation and reblue the valves. Then, reinstall the head with the 6 nuts. Check nominal valve to block clearance by one of the following methods:

- Pull the valve face flush with the valve seat and slide the rubber band against the valve guide. Find the lift spec for your cam in Haynes/Bentley or shop manual. The rule of thumb for stock rockers is cam lift plus .082" or about 1mm. If you have a stock cam, lower #1 exhaust 5/16" (use a wrench or a scale to measure). If it doesn't contact the head, without pushing the valve down any farther, rotate it twice then move to the next valve. Pull the head and reinspect the excavations for any traces of blue. Repeat until there is no interference. Reassemble valves, clean up the head of all traces of metal shavings, and then assemble the engine, resting assured that there won't be any dinged valves in the event of a case of leadfootitis.

- Alternate method; more time consuming but very high tech on the cheap... Once the initial relieving is complete, locate 4 weak springs that are about the same

size as the valve springs. The springs need to be only strong enough to hold the valve in place, and light enough to easily push by hand. Taylor DoIt has them in stock for a buck each. Assemble the exhaust valves and install head same as above. Install the rocker arm and install pushrods on the exhaust valves only. No torque required, just snug. Use the shirt board for a gasket spacer. Once all 4 valves are adjusted to spec, rotate the engine until the first exhaust valve is fully open. If you can depress the valve at least .008" without making contact, then all SHOULD BE well at any rev range. Identify any cylinders requiring excavation. If you do the math and figure how much to take out to get the necessary clearance, there is no need to repeat the process once all the cutouts have been excavated below the minimum clearance depth.

Reassembly, as always, is the reverse of assembly with a few choice expletives added.



The Usual Disclaimers:

Product guaranteed not to rip, run, ravel, bag, or sag at the knees. Not all services available in all areas, prices subject to license, tax and processing fees. Personal weight loss or fuel economy may be less than expected, not a member FDIC. Do not return defective merchandise to point of purchase. Consult your pharmacist if unsure of maximum safe dosage for mood altering medications.

Link of the Month

Can't find the right spanner? Need a Whitworth socket set? Check out British Tool Company!

<http://www.britishtool.com/>

They also sell MG Tool Kits, a few manuals, taps and dies and other stuff

Officers and Committees

President	Mike Haag	496-7348
Vice President	Barry Tyson	488-7304
Secretary	Doug Kennedy	460-5037
Treasurer	Jim Villers	481-6398
Editors	Peggy Craig	382-7547
	Susan Bond	482-5222
Membership	Robin Watson	721-9277
Activities	Dan Kirby	430-9591
Historian	Susan Bond	482-5222
Technical	Mark Childers	432-9155
Regalia	Frank Linse	461-7783
Clubs	Mike Ash	495-0307

The Ice Cream Social/Drive Out that Almost Wasn't!

Barry Tyson

Dan didn't show. Alan Watson brought word that he forgot, or had to take care of the kids or something. So, being the ranking club officer I had to take command, lead and improvise. Since Dan didn't show, there were no questions, "fabulous" prizes or prize winners. We left Dan's place of business after waiting a genteel,



manly 15 minutes past the meeting time of 7 o'clock for late comers. In attendance were: Robin Watson in his MGB, Alan Watson and his friend, Mike Robusto in Alan's MGB, Michael Pentecost and his son Ryan (I think 4 years old) in an MGB, John and Carol Moscoe in an MGB, Jim and Betty Villers in the Mercedes and I was in my MGB. They wanted to retrace last years Cosmic Ice Cream Run #1 route through the Elizabeth Manor golf course--not across the greens and fairways but the roads that run through the middle of the golf course. Darkness was rapidly approaching as we left the parking lot. Boy it sure gets dark early. It was dark by the time we entered the golf course so we didn't have to dodge errant golf shots. Well, if there were any we wouldn't see them. We then turned onto Hodges Ferry Road. Next it was on to route 58. Then we turned onto Joliff Road. Joliff Road is my favorite twisty road to



test repairs on my MG. Joliff Road runs directly (or indirectly depending on how twisty you think it is) to Cosmo's Dinner. We arrived at Cosmo's after about a 25 minute run. Most participants were trying to figure out where we were and how we got there. Everyone



went inside to sample various cobblers with ice cream and real, old fashion milk shakes. Not to be outdone, Ryan (Michael Pentecost's son) tried the "big" ice cream cone. After consuming large amounts of calories we departed from Cosmo's, most participants now trying to figure out how to get back home. Well, except for Robin, he has a Global Positioning Satellite receiver installed in his MG.

September Meeting

Held at the home of Jim and Betty Villers, September 4





My [Dad's] MG

(As told by Ryan Pentecost to Peggy & George Craig)

All little boys like cars, but 4-year-old Ryan has a passion. Your co-editor recently had the opportunity to interview Ryan, son of club members, Michael and Holly Pentecost, and found him to be the aficionado extraordinaire regarding MGs. We expected a precocious child and to my pleasure found a charming little boy totally devoted to the world of MGs. He was all decked out in his favorite car shirt sporting the words "Startin' with cars (especially little British ones)".



We first met Ryan at a recent dinner meeting and all at our table were wooed by this little gentleman's ability to communicate his thoughts and enter into meaningful conversations. His knowledge of cars is astounding for his age. His first love is his Dad's MGB which he described in detail including its dark blue color, but frankly admitting he would prefer green—or maybe black.

Ryan goes to the YMCA Pre-school program and has a little sister, Erin. He has three cats: Zoe, Tasha Bell and Tonka". His collection of Hot Wheels cars were

brought out for us to admire and said his favorites are race cars, super powerful cars and those that go super fast.

Our first stop in Ryan's tour was to view the "MG picture wall" where many plaques and rally mementos were displayed. Ryan described each and sadly admitted that he had not yet participated as other than a spectator. He is looking forward to the day.



We posed many questions to him regarding his future, his views on life, and how he would react to various emergencies. We stopped in our tracks however when in response to "what would you do if your MG broke down and wouldn't run?", he responded, "I would get in the van". He delightfully related his Dad's verbal reaction when they were out in the MG and the fuel pump "wore out" ("Stupid!").



During a "kick the tires" session Ryan proudly and accurately described the function of each knob, dial, and gauge in his Dad's MGB. He was quick to emphasize that we mustn't touch the wiring because that was dangerous. Likewise, under the hood we

received a dissertation as to the purpose of each major component including the radiator which "contained water to cool the engine" and cautioned us regarding the "propeller". We also were told in detail how he discovered a bad gas leak from the carburetor and informed his Dad. He opened the trunk and explained the purpose of all the items stored there including the all important duct tape, oil., and British and American flags.

Ryan had told us earlier that the club meetings and a love of MGs was "a guy thing", but even so, if you need a guest speaker at a future tech session, both girls and guys would be delighted to listen to what he has to say.

One Expensive MG!

Mike Haag

The September issue of *Classic & Sports Car* magazine reported that the MGB GT belonging to the late John Thornley was recently sold at auction, setting a new record for the most money paid for an MGB. Thornley was the general manager of MG from 1952 until 1969, and worked a total of 33 years for MG. The GT, with the much-coveted number plate of MG 1, was originally estimated to bring around £40K. However, "bidding quickly escalated to £80,000, at which point the telephone players left the field, and it was left to two combatants to slug it out". The winner, a registration dealer, paid £131,250, or approximately \$200,000, for the car and registration. The unsuccessful bidder

My MG Racing Adventure

(continued)

Stephen H. Kelley

Part III

All the work on the engine and general race preparation of the car proceeded over the first two years but I wanted to go racing soon. SCCA required successful completion of three drivers schools before they granted a competition license good for Regional Races. My first school was at Lime Rock, one was at Thompson, and perhaps the third was also at Lime Rock. At these schools, usually held on Saturday, one had to be an SCCA member and bring a car which met all the safety requirements for SCCA racing and pass a tech inspection just as at the races themselves. There were class sessions on safety, rules, flags, proper lines, and so on. Then there were yellow flag (no passing) laps led by a licensed racing driver at modest though increasing speed. On every corner were SCCA officials with clipboards grading everything we did. At some point the instructor drivers got off the course, (probably way off the course) and we were turned loose under a green flag. I seemed to do quite well (perhaps all that practice in the family Ford?) and passed all three drivers schools. But the process was taking most of 1960 to

complete and I was not willing to wait if I could help it. Two other organizations held races in the northeast - the Long Island Sports Car Association (LISCA) and the Hartford Sports Car Club (HSCC). Each had their own licensing procedure which allowed one to gain a license after just one successful drivers school and each recognized the other's licenses. They also recognized SCCA licenses though the converse was not true. So I went to an HSCC drivers school at Lime Rock, passed it and was quickly entered in my first race sanctioned by LISCA also probably at Lime Rock. I do not remember exactly how I fared but I found quickly that my car was at least average in performance wherever I went or perhaps a little better than average. If I may be allowed a bit of immodesty after all these years, I would say that my driving was rather above average as well. The result was that I could always beat *most* of the Sprites but with one exception, could never beat *all* the Sprites. So usually I finished somewhere between third and fifth in class. I remember winning just one race, but lots of thirds, fourths, and so on. This remained true as I moved up to Divisional races and one National race as well. Of course the car kept being more fully race prepared and perhaps my driving improved so I was able to maintain my relative placement even at higher levels of competition.

Sometime in the course of these events I took the car off the road which greatly simplified having it ready to race. While I borrowed a trailer once or twice, I usually took it to races on a tow bar behind my MGA! This was really a tricky situation, especially if the road was wet, because I'm sure the TD was heavier than the MGA and really tried to push the MGA and even pass it! But again, I was young and indestructible! The trailering was not so good either. One day on the way to Lime Rock, the TD came off the back of the trailer, landed on its wheels and for what seemed an eternity, I watched in the mirror with horror as it followed me down a narrow road and finally veered off to the right and hit a tree. The damage seemed minor and I reloaded it on the trailer. I worked feverishly on it in the paddock at Lime Rock, borrowing parts, but to my great dismay was not able to fix and align everything before my race started. The worst problem was that when it hit the tree the hub of the steering wheel cracked and even though I found a sympathetic TD owning spectator who was actually willing to lend me his steering wheel, no one had a suitable puller to get it off. My dismay was intense when H Production roared off with me still in the paddock.

By the end of 1960 things began to go better for me. I was past the point where I rebuilt the engine every week to be ready for the next race and I had developed some consistency. To move up from Regional races and to qualify for a Divisional license it was necessary to complete three Regional races with no metal to metal contact and with no unfavorable comments by SCCA officials. I was able to do this fairly easily I think and sometime in 1961 or very early 1962 I had my Divisional License.

I have many recollections of bits of individual races but it is hard now to say which specific race each glimpse of the past was a part of.

I do remember a Regional race at Bridgehampton in 1961 or 1962 -- it was the only time I raced there. It was the first race of that season and there was less than an hour on the newly rebuilt engine, it having been put together a week before the race. (Tom Stamp had offered to let me race his F Production Porsche Speedster if my car was not ready but I really did not want to do that.) So we improvised some break-in time. A couple of my friends and I decided we would break in the engine, on a Sunday morning, at a nearby shopping mall parking lot. The mall was closed for Sunday morning and was entirely deserted. I ran the car there quite slowly and conservatively for perhaps half an hour and then let one of my friends John Kyles do the same. Until the police showed up that is. I was sitting on a little retaining wall enjoying the day when the police pulled up and questioned me severely about what it was I thought I was doing. I explained exactly what we were doing -- there was a race the next weekend, at least some break in was needed, the car was not licensed or street legal, so where else could I go? They seemed to understand, said something about grumpy neighbors, told us we would have to leave and wished me luck the next weekend.

The next weekend at Bridgehampton I wanted to be conservative with the new engine so in the practice session I kept the rpms down and kept my speed on the main straight down to 70 mph or so. But the car felt really good! After practice, family and friends were all asking me what was wrong — I seemed so slow and everyone else so fast. I explained. For the start, I was well to the rear as usual — starting positions were done by some sort of a "draw" and then assigned to each car. I know I always wondered about the "draw" part as I was always well back. Surely a front row start should eventually come to pass! Anyway I had an exceptionally good start, passed several rows of Sprites by the time I was in third gear including the currently reigning HP National Champion. By the first turn I was in second place and held that for several laps. Eventually though two Sprites got me at the end of the straight before Turn 1 and I finished fourth. This was a great deal of fun as that was the first race when the car was really well prepared. Everyone was delighted when I pulled into the pits. TDs then were already obsolete, seldom was one raced, and good finishes were rare. My sister Susan was there and she told me the announcer, Art Peck, went on at great length about how good it was to see a TD doing well again. I certainly thought so. I must say though that Bridgehampton was a little scary — especially the first turn — it was a downhill sweeping right hander taken in fourth gear almost but not quite as fast as the car could go -- way too fast for a downshift to third. A very uncomfortable feeling I thought especially with all the rollover potential if one got into the sand dunes which surrounded the course.

At the time, I had a friend in Larchmont who was racing a completely stock Sprite. He approached me about doing the Vineland (New Jersey) Four Hour Endurance Race. I was all for it and we decided to use his Sprite. The TD was a lot faster but we thought we had a better chance of finishing in his Sprite. So we went; for some reason he wanted me to drive the first two hours which I did. There were problems

though — first I overheated somewhere on the back part of the course. I limped to the pits and we found the engine block drain valve had unscrewed itself and fallen out — we found one on a Corvette, installed it, added water and off I went. At the end of my otherwise uneventful two hours I came in but with absolutely no brakes. The stock linings did not last even the full two hours. So then he took off. Some-time later he lost the right front wheel and came hiking back to the pits. Help was not allowed so he picked up a spare, a jack, and lug wrench and walked back to the car, fixed it, and he finished the race. I do not remember our finishing position but we were delighted just to complete the entire four hours. The overall winner was a Porsche RS 550 which was one of the truly great racing cars of that era. This was my only race with all classes of cars on the course at one time. I was used to having both G and H Production out there when I was but here we had every class at once — that Porsche RS 550 seemed to be forever in my rear view mirror and traveling at twice my speed. Of course I stayed out of his, and other's, ways but it was not always easy.

A few general impressions of courses have stuck with me over the years. H Production cars were just not very fast but they cornered quite well. Most courses in the northeast did not really suit them particularly well as the turns were so fast that almost never were two downshifts to second gear appropriate at the end of the straights. I knew Lime Rock best of all and in my early days I know I downshifted for Turn 1 and perhaps also for the "Esses" or before the uphill. Eventually though, I got fast enough that all of Lime Rock was done in fourth gear. I've already mentioned Bridgehampton where Turn 1 was a 100 mph adventure and while there were slower turns ahead, they were third gear turns; none of them was slow enough for second gear. Watkins Glen was likewise really better suited for faster cars; Thompson and Vineland were a little better for H Production as they had tighter turns which allowed more of the car's useful speed range to come into play.

I've mentioned that by the early 1960's TDs were really pretty obsolete and while one could do well, I do not think it was possible even then to be a consistent winner against well prepared and well driven Sprites. Of course I considered alternatives but my budget was miniscule. Another issue I know I considered was that production car racing, in any of the classes, posed a lot of difficulties that were not faced in modified or formula classes. It is simply difficult to convert a road car into a race car. I was sure that it would be easier just to buy a G or H Modified race car if one could afford to do so. I do know that Grant and I went one day to Bob Grossman's Ferrari dealership in Nyack, New York where I test drove an older front engine Formula Junior. And Bob even waited on us! It was fun, but there was no way I could manage the deal.

My final year of racing was 1962 - it was a year full of hope, some exciting times, some goals accomplished, and then a startling end to my racing career and the beginning of a major change in my life.

(to be concluded)

State Law Regarding Antique Cars

Make copies of this and keep one in each antique vehicle you drive, it may save you a lot of time and money some day.

<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+46.2-730>

§ 46.2-730. License plates for antique motor vehicles; fee.

A. On receipt of an application, the Commissioner shall issue appropriately designed license plates to owners of antique motor vehicles. These license plates shall be valid so long as title to the vehicle is vested in the applicant. The fee for the registration card and license plates of any of these vehicles shall be ten dollars.

B. On receipt of an application, the Commissioner may authorize for use on antique motor vehicles Virginia license plates manufactured prior to 1976 and designed for use without decals, if such license plates are embossed with or are of the same year of issue as the model year of the antique motor vehicle on which they are to be displayed. Original metal year tabs issued in place of license plates for years 1943 and 1953 and used with license plates issued in 1942 and 1952, respectively, also may be authorized by the Commissioner for use on antique motor vehicles that are of the same model year as the year the metal tab was originally issued. These license plates and metal tabs shall remain valid so long as title to the vehicle is vested in the applicant. The fee for the registration card and permission to use the license plates and metal tabs on any of these vehicles shall be ten dollars.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of §§ 46.2-711 and 46.2-715, antique motor vehicles may display single license plates if the original manufacturer's design of the antique motor vehicles allows for the use of only single license plates or if the license plate was originally issued in one of the following years and is displayed in accordance with the provisions of subsection B of this section: 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1945, or 1946.

D. Except as provided in subsection E of this section, motor vehicles registered with license plates issued under this section shall not be used for gen-

eral transportation purposes, including, but not limited to, daily travel to and from the owner's place of employment, but shall only be used:

1. For participation in club activities, exhibits, tours, parades, and similar events; and
2. On the highways of the Commonwealth for the purpose of testing their operation, obtaining repairs or maintenance, transportation to and from events as described in subdivision 1 of this subsection, and for occasional pleasure driving not exceeding 250 miles from the residence of the owner.

E. Notwithstanding the foregoing provision of this section, antique motor vehicles displaying license plates issued pursuant to subsections B and C of this section may be used for general transportation purposes if the following conditions are met:

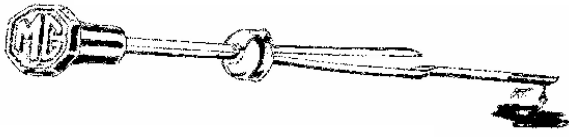
1. The physical condition of the vehicle's license plate or plates has been inspected and approved by the Department;
2. The license plate or plates are registered to the specific vehicle by the Department;
3. The owner of the vehicle periodically registers the vehicle with the Department and pays a registration fee for the vehicle equal to that which would be charged to obtain regular state license plates for that vehicle;
4. The vehicle passes a periodic safety inspection as provided in Article 21 (§ 46.2-1157 et seq.) of Chapter 10 of this title;
5. The vehicle displays current decals attached to the license plate, issued by the Department, indicating the valid registration period for the vehicle; and
6. When applicable, the vehicle meets the requirement of Article 22 (§ 46.2-1176 et seq.) of Chapter 10 of this title.

If more than one request is made for use, as provided in this subsection, of license plates having the same number, the Department shall accept only the first such application. Only vehicles titled to the person seeking to use license plates as provided in this subsection shall be eligible to use license plates as provided in this subsection.

(Code 1950, § 46-99.1; 1954, c. 60; 1958, c. 541, § 46.1-104; 1980, c. 359; 1986, c. 8; 1989, cc. 338, 727; 1999, c. 292; 2000, c. 259.)



The Dipstick



The Tidewater MG Classics

Susan Bond
541 Forest Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322

FIRST CLASS

Monthly Meeting
Tue, Oct 1st
Alan and Becky Watson
1593 Flanagan Lane
Va Beach
426-2600

7:30-8:00pm - Kick Tyres
8:00 - Meeting