

The Dipstick



“The Newsletter of the Tidewater MG Classics Car Club”

www.mg.org

Volume XXXI, Issue 9

Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

September 2002

MARQUE TIME

Thanks to Paul and Carmen for hosting the August meeting. A brief reprise from the very hot weather brought out a lot of members and their MGs that evening. A walk around the beautifully manicured front and rear lawns shows that they enjoy working out in the yard! As usual, Carmen laid out a delicious spread of food. If you went away hungry, it's your own fault! Also, be sure to check out the picture on the web site that Sue took that evening as dusk settled over the neighborhood, with a glorious sunset overhead and the image of MGs below.

August was a busy month with several events to attend. Be sure and read about them in this issue. After the meeting, the first club event was the Tech Session at the Bond's on Saturday the 10th. Again another reprise from the heat saw a good turnout, and they didn't even have to use their new air conditioner. I saw several cars being worked on, and they all left under their own power. Thanks to Terry and Susan for fixing lunch, and for once again hosting a Tech Session at their garage/museum.

The next event was the drive to Knotts Island to the Moonrise Bay Vineyard on the following afternoon. The hot weather in Virginia Beach subsided slightly the further south we drove, helped no doubt by the ocean breezes. After a relaxing drive down, we were greeted by the owner and parked our MGs in a semicircle around the pond, across from the main building. The owners had set up tables and umbrellas for us to relax under and enjoy the wine, food, and each other's company. What a great afternoon it turned out to be. Thanks to Robin Watson and his family for organizing this event, and to the owners for their hospitality. After sampling several delicious wines, I hope a lot of bottles left in the boots of the various MGs.

The August Ice Cream Social/Drive-Out was almost rained out. But, once again, the weather came through at the end and allowed about a dozen members to enjoy a drive through 2-lane roads around the Courthouse and Salem Road area, ending at the Farmers Market for a hoe-down, complete with country music and ice cream. Dan's directions and questions were both interesting and a little perplexing, but I'll let someone else talk about that. Thanks to Dan for organizing both the July and August events, and thanks to Alan for coordinating the June Ice Cream Social. This has been the second year for these popular summer events, and I hope they continue every summer.

One of the most difficult tasks of being club President can be the writing of the monthly *Marque Time* column. Sometimes the writing is easy, and some subject or event just naturally unfolds across the paper or computer screen. Writing is easier for some than others. This month I face the unenviable dilemma of suffering from both writer's block and a looming

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Check www.mg.org for the latest info!

- Sept. 1 SCCA Autocross, Pungo Airfield
www.odr-scca.org/
- Sept. 4 **Meeting at
Jim & Betty Villers'**
(see map on back page)
- Sept. 6&7 Loch Norman British Car
Festival, Mooresville, NC
<http://www.pbmclub.org/>
- Sept. 14 TRAACA Car Show, Chesapeake
City Park
www.aaca.org/tidewater/
- Sept. 15 TSSC Autocross, Little Creek
members.aol.com/odrscsa/index.html
- Sept. 18 **Ice Cream Social Run**
(see page 3)
- Sept. 22 Brown's Island BCS, Richmond
<http://www.britishcarclub.com/>
(their web site has been down but
I can send you an app)
meet at Cosmos at 8:30
- Sept. 28 Wings and Wheels, Topping
www.wingsandwheels.us/
meet at Cosmos at 8:30
- Sept. 28 Mad Dog Days, TSD Tour, Wake
field, Old Dominion SCCA
www.odr-scca.org/
- Sept. 28 MGs on the Rocks, Bel Air, MD
www.mgob.net/mgob.html

(continued on page 3)

deadline. It's the stuff that haunts newspaper writers, who are under a lot of pressure to turn out copy in a hurry. Although I make no claims of being anything close to a writer, I can begin to understand the pressure that these folks face on a daily basis. So this month's topic, if there actually is one, will be about writing. The past three issues of the *Dipstick* have been outstanding! It's great to see the resumption of technical articles from Mark, who has a way of writing that is both entertaining and informative. Kind of like watching PBS or listening to "Car Talk" on NPR, where you can be entertained and, if you're not careful, might actually learn something. The articles written by various members about club events and trips are always well written and interesting. But what really helps to round out the newsletter and add depth are the "other category" type articles, such as reading about Dan's rally school adventure in New England, or the 4 part article by Bob McClaren's cousin about the early years of MG racing. Like a good book, stories like these can help transport us to another place or time. I know there are a lot of interesting MG stories out there just waiting to be shared with our members. There has to be more than one member who has driven an MG in Europe. Or, how about that cross-country trip in your MG? Share your road (or racing) adventures with the rest of us.

Some time ago, Barry and I were trying to come up with ideas for articles for the *Dipstick*. We each decided that articles on how people got interested in British cars, and MGs in particular, would make a good series for the newsletter. As usual though, neither one of us had gotten around to actually writing such an article. Last month, I talked about my project cars, and asked members to share their stories about their projects. Frank Worrell must have been reading my mind (not too hard or interesting) because in that same issue was an article he wrote that encompassed both subjects of how he got started in MGs and the state of his project. Frank gets an A+ for his early, well-written article! I'll wait to tell my story for another time when I can't think of anything else to write about. Again, I know among our members there are numerous tales to be told about how they became interested in MGs, especially from our members who grew up on the other side of the "pond". So, please consider sharing your MG story with the rest of us. Don't think that you can't write, or that no one will be interested. You'll be wrong on both counts. If you need "technical help", don't worry about it, one of our co-editors was an English major (no, she wasn't in the British army).

Another month has passed with nothing getting done on my MGB, except driving it several times. Since it seems like I spend all my time working on the house, I may just have to take time off from work to spend a few days in the garage. With over a month of "use or lose" leave on the books, and several car shows coming up in September, that looks like my only option. I'd much rather spend a few days in the garage working on the 'B than in the office, and I'll be darned if I'm going to lose any leave. The Fall Car show season gets into full swing in the 2nd half of September. Check the *Dipstick* for dates on the Richmond, Topping, and Waynesboro shows. See ya on the road.

Safety Fast! Mike

AUGUST MINUTES

Doug Kennedy

Mike Haag opened the meeting promptly at 8:04 Lucas Standard Time on an absolutely beautiful August night. The temp was cool, the sunset beautiful, birds were singing and the sweet smell of grilled meat was wafting through the air. Yes, it was time for our annual pilgrimage to the Thiergardts beautiful home and we all thanked Paul and Carmen for their hospitality.

Membership: Robin Watson noted that Craig and Joyce Cummings from Alexandria were new members. Welcome! Membership renewal letters were sent again with the last *Dipstick*. If you get a FINAL NOTICE in September PAY YOUR DUES! Come on, we can't build up a big budget to blow on great social events if you don't pay your dues. A discussion of sending the *Dipstick* out via e-mail ensued but it was decided that it was a pain in the, uh, you know where.

Minutes: Approved as written. (The editor would like to thank Barry Tyson for pinch hitting during the last meeting)

Treasurer's Report: In...\$295 Out...\$169.53 Left...\$2880.04

Newsletter: The throng agreed that it was absolutely GREAT! Thanks to all for their contributions. This is your opportunity to see your name in print. Again, come on and join in. Just think of the notoriety, potential to win a Pulitzer prize, and the opportunity to count the publication toward tenure. Send your contributions and pictures on to Sue Bond. Mike also mentioned that he wants to see more articles on how people got started in this MG stuff, and thanked Frank Worrell for giving it a shot.

Regalia: Frank Linse has new glassware available with and without handles. He also has 45 grille badges available. T-shirts in Navy, green, and ash are on their way as are hats. Bring your money to the next meeting and get a head start on your Christmas and Hanukkah shopping.

Social: Dan jogged his fine memory with the *Dipstick* and noted our upcoming driveout and tech session. The ice cream social is Friday this time around. Sue has information on a British car and boat festival held north of Charlotte. Hey, if you have an antique British amphicar you'll be the hit of the event I guess. Robin discussed the upcoming winery trip and had us as excited as winos on "Free Ripple Day." By the time you read this you'll either be in one of two groups; group one comprised of happy members who attended the trip and group two comprised of those who didn't but wish they had. Kudos to group one!

Archives: Sue needs pictures from 1999. Please get her some so we can fill in the details from that year.

Clubs: Mike Ash reported that the Richmond Car Club was

going to invite us to their snowball rally this winter in January/February. They drive to the Sanderling Inn and want us to join in. More info in future *Dipsticks*. Mike attended NAMGAR in Charlottesville which had an excellent turnout. He and Jennifer also stopped by the T-Register in Canada.

Old Business: Discussion of a club banner took place and we're moving ahead with some design ideas. Magnetic decals are also a possibility.

New Business: Not much.

Marque Time:

Alan Watson talked about www.prewarcars.com and was suitably impressed.

Dan Kirby talked about an April Fools rally and possible destinations. Several people talked about how far west was too far to drive.

Phillip Ford is looking for a speaker to discuss MGs at the North Suffolk Rotary Club meeting on September 6. If you like to wow a crowd please give him a call.

Mike Ash reported that the 5-speed trans advertised in the MGB Owners Mag is a good product for B's and A's. Cost is about \$1835 with shipping from South Carolina. Talk to Mike for more information since he's ordered one.

The raffle was held and the Secretary lost for the 97th straight time. We all then buzzed to Carmen's buffet like Virginia mosquitos to a sweet fleshy arm.

Activities (continued)

Oct. 1 Meeting at Alan & Beckey Watson's

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 5)

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
<http://www.mgcarclubdc.com/index.html>
huntcountryclassic@mgcarclubdc.com

Oct. 26 Driver Days
1975 & older



SEPTEMBER ICE CREAM SOCIAL/DRIVE OUT

WHEN: Wednesday, September 18

WHERE: Meet at D. E. Kirby, 3921 Garwood Avenue,
Portsmouth,

Take 264 to the Greenwood Drive North exit,
turn right on Garwood

WHO: Dan Kirby is in charge, 430-9591

Another chance to win FABULOUS prizes and take home one of the FABULOUS traveling trophies!! Join us for a tour of

Portsmouth and ice cream at Cosmo's. Better brush up on your P-town history, you never know what answers Dan is



TECH NOTES

Mark Childers

The tech chairman is on Dog-Days hiatus. It's 97 degrees and the garage is an EasyBake oven. Too hot to be working on anything made of metal except maybe popping the tab on a cold one. So, this month, I offer a few observations in lieu of boring, rehashed tech tips.

When diagnosing a problem, always eliminate the really stupid "couldn't be" stuff before venturing into the realm of rocket science. Many a great mind has been befuddled by a brand new light bulb with a defective element, or glass fuses that didn't "look" blown.

Don't wait until something is broken beyond repair to jump in and fix it. Unless it takes you by surprise. Especially true for brakes and tie rod ends, although the old adage "If'n it ain't broken, don't fix it" remains good advice when it comes to a working overdrive transmission, even if it grinds a little on occasion going into second.

If your buddy down at the Wrexson Station slaps an inspection sticker on your car without checking it out, he ain't doing you, or anyone else on the road, any favors. Make sure you give your MG a safety-fast inspection, and not a fast safety inspection. Especially if it's inspection exempt.

When working on your MG, if you don't have time to do it right the first time, where are you going to find time to do it over? Spring shouldn't go to waste getting it ready for Summer, and Fall should not be dedicated to prepping it for Winter storage.

A 32oz. hammer and 48" pry bar are fine tools, indeed.

The Lucas distributor and SU fuel pump are both marvels of British engineering. So, if my 86 Trooper with 200,000 on the odo doesn't need a trunk full of tools and spares to commute 60 miles a day, why should our MG's?

If you do every job right the first time, every time, how do you expect to ever learn anything from your mistakes?

Ever notice how nothing runs worse than a car being driven across the field to judges row after winning "Best Detailed Engine?"

Enough philosophy. I wanna fix something. Broke or not. Where's my hammer? Where's my pry bar?



Membership Renewal

Robin Watson

So far we have 30 members who have not renewed for 2002-2003. I am going to send a final notice at the end of August to those who have not yet renewed and if I do not get a reply by September 20 they will not be receiving the October *Dipstick*. (Ed. Note — you don't want to miss a single issue!) If you get a notice and feel you have paid, please contact me with your check number and I will check my records again.

Notes from the Editors....

Susan Bond, sue007@infi.net

Murphy's law is alive and well and it applies doubly to computers. Fortunately the geek had time to look at it right away, the fix was easy, and I am back at work. Unfortunately it had decided to lock up when I had multiple deadlines so I am a day late on everything. You can tell who has had problems with computers in the past, they are sympathetic and ask if you lost any data. The ones who can't even turn the machine on are sure it is just an excuse.

More great articles! As I said at the last meeting, you people sure can write! Having lots of neat stuff to write about helps of course. If you have any suggestions for events for next year — no, it is not too early to be thinking about it — please give Dan a call or e-mail. He has lots of neat ideas but would welcome member input.

By the way, the e-mail addresses for elected officers and appointed chairs are on the web site and the phone numbers are here in the *Dipstick*, tho not always in the same place. It moves because putting this thing together is like doing a jigsaw puzzle where all the pieces keep changing shape. In case you haven't noticed, there is some organization to it. First, club business and regular columns, then future events, followed by write ups of past events. Then all the great articles you have been sending in. Keep them coming!



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

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 2002 at Mark and Debbie's house.

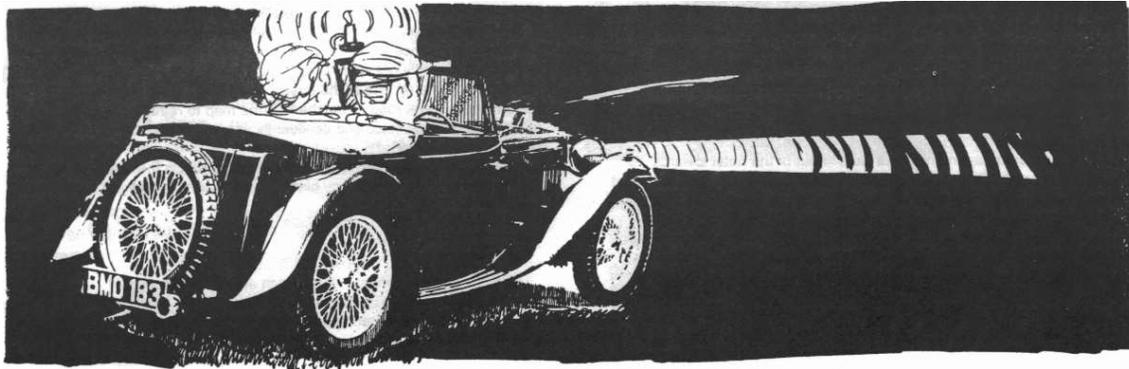
Time: 2:30 pm (Come early to help...) Rain or Shine

1:30 at Greenbrier Mall for the rally

Place: Our House 3909 Pine Grove Landing in Chesapeake

Phone: 432-9155 cell phones 650-7742 or 650-7743

Please bring a chair (except John Jones who left his here last year) and a covered dish of your choosing. Club will supply the beer/soda/ wine, hot dogs/burgers, barbecue pork and chicken, and traditional sides of 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 so we know how much food to buy. (A map will be in the October *Dipstick*)



OFF INTO THE DARKNESS! LUCAS NIGHT RALLY!!!

WHEN: October 16

WHERE: Meet at Harbor Park, Norfolk

WHO: Dan Kirby is in charge, 430-9591

We will have more details next month, but be sure to put this date on your calendar **NOW!!!** We will disprove the adage "A gentleman does not motor about after dark."

July Ice Cream Social Run

Alan Watson

The second Ice-cream Social of the summer took place on July 24th. Veteran Rallye Master Dan Kirby met the participants at Red Wing park. After a quick peek and a lingering sniff in the Rose Garden, we set off. The route took us off the beaten path of General Booth Boulevard to some lesser known sights -- the "moon" was out at the KOA campgrounds, courtesy of two teenage girls.

The Rallye questions were clever ("We know about Armstrong's, but what's a Blue one?" Answer: a Blue Shock Slurpee at 7/11.) And we all discovered what Dan thinks of Hooter Girls. (They're priceless.)



The row of MG's looked appropriately nostalgic lined up at the Sonic Drive-in, the rallye's ice-cream destination. The Watson's swept the trophy awards -- Alan and Beckey took first place with only one missed question, and Rob and Olive were good sports in last place.



Beckey and Alan Watson with the trophy and FABULOUS prize

Summer Tech Session

Frank Linse

The Summer Tech Session was held on Saturday, August 10th, at Sue and Terry Bond's. In addition to the unique "museum" tours and an excellent luncheon of grilled hot dogs, there were several accomplishments of technical note.



Lee Pease was able to troubleshoot the lighting problems on his MGA, with the help of Dan Kirby and Jim Villers. Chris O'Connor managed to sort out the ungrounded lamp on the front of his B, thereby allowing the directional indicators to return to somewhat normal operation. Jack Cabanillas replaced a damaged tail light lens and, with Sue's help, adjusted the rear brakes. Vince added some water to his TD radiator in the hope that the car would run cooler on the return trip. He also found it necessary to readjust the brakes after locking them up in a near canine fatality on Hillwell Road. Sue spent several hours removing chrome bits and trim from the old 74BGT. A fresh paint job is about to happen.



Robin and Olive Watson were present with their recently acquired 74B. Bob McClaren arrived in the vintage TC. Ivie Lister made a visit in the Bentley. Harry Watson, Mike Haag, Barry Tyson, and Roy Wiley were there primarily for the food. Sue's girls, Lindsay and Taylor, were seen cruising around in the old Model T. Sue's black cat, Lucas, failed to make an appearance, much to my disappointment. Overall a great day!

Moonrise Bay Winery Tour

Bob McClaren

Warm Day, Nice Drive, Cool Wine, Great Food, and a Good Time!



Twenty-nine club members/guests gathered at Kellam High School on Sunday afternoon, August 11th, for a leisurely drive out to the Moonrise Bay winery on Knott's Island. We had a turn out of 12 MGs, one Corvette, one Volvo, and one Mercedes-Benz. Prior to our planned departure time, several passers-by stopped to admire the cars. One driver who had the right-of-way even stopped and waved a number of our cars through an intersection.

At the winery, we were allowed to set up our food stuffs on up-ended wine barrels inside the cooler. This was a very nice touch on a very warm day. While we sampled the several varieties of wines that are produced at the winery and sampled the various treats brought by our club members, the following comments were overheard: This is good stuff! Do they have any Strawberry wine left? Why do we always have enough food to feed a small army? This is made with Horse-radish? What kind of cars are all of those convertibles parked by the lake?



After we sipped and nibbled to satiation, the owner, who explained the wine making process and even offered samples of wine directly from the aging barrels, treated us to a tour.

All in all, this was a great afternoon. Thanks to Alan, Becky, Robin and Olive Watson for

organizing this neat event and thanks to the owner and staff at the Moonrise Bay winery for an interesting event.

Ice Cream Social Hoe Down

Jim Villers

Dan Kirby came up with another SPECTACULAR ice cream rally with his usual FABULOUS prizes on Friday, August 16. We met at Kellam High School under very threatening skies with the tops up. Some had driven through rain for this event, so naturally, because of weather, it was christened a "GT" rally. The "crowd" poised at the starting line was a little sparse with a total of five cars; Sue Bond with Mike Haag riding shotgun, Jim and Betty Villers and Robin and Olive Watson. Dan brought two cars to accommodate Beth and the two children.



Winners Jim and Betty Villers

We were off with Route Instructions and Silly Questions. The questions were definitely SILLY, ODD and in no particular order. These questions, however, were surpassed by the route instructions that failed to mention one critical turn. The seriousness of the participants could be judged by their "time on course" (since the course was not defined, it was really "time to ice cream"). Mike and Sue posted the top time for this 15-minute drive at somewhere around 90 minutes as they were seen heading in multiple directions on several roads searching either for the correct route or for an odd and silly question. Vince and Pam Groover demonstrated great wisdom by skipping the rally and just stopped by for the Bergey's ice cream and the Hoe Down Music at the Farmers Market. The destination was worth the frustrations. If you haven't been to the Farmers Market for a Hoe Down, put it on your list as a fun and unique experience.

The traveling trophies and FABULOUS prizes were awarded to the lucky winners. The final standings reflected more luck than skill or endurance: First, the Villers'; Second, Sue Bond and Mike Haag; Third, the Watsons get to dust their tow truck trophy for another month.



For more pictures of Tow truck trophy winners Robin and Olive Watson these events, see www.mg.org.

Celebrating in Style

Alan and Beckey Watson

So it's anniversary time, and an extra-special one, too. Twenty-five years of marriage has to be celebrated in a special way. She's thinking, "I want to do something I don't ordinarily get to do; a weekend without the kids, little antique shops, diamonds...." And he's thinking, "I want to do something I don't usually get to do; drive the MG to the mountains, drive the MG to a winery, drive the MG on an over-night trip...." And guess who won? They both did!

The destination was a Bed and Breakfast in Ashland, Virginia. The transportation was a '72 - B. The picturesque "Henry Clay Inn" is located at the train station (which still operates regular Amtrack service, lest the MG not "B" willing to do the return trip.) A scenic route from Virginia Beach took them from Route 17 to Route 10, through Smithfield, Surry and on to Chester, Virginia. A short/long stop (depending on who's telling the story) at Herbs of Happy Hill was fascinating/OK. The next day included a drive up to the Windy River Winery for a few samples and a nice view.



The B in front of the Henry Clay Inn

The town of Ashland is a gem. It is a safe place to leave your top down, plenty of parking right in front of the small shops (including an old-fashioned ice cream parlor called the Whistle Stop, and a beer and ale shop call the Caboose). The scenery on the drive home through farm land and small towns was restful (as in less-traffic-restful rather than smooth-ride-kind-of-restful). But all in all, she said and he said it was a great weekend.

(And in case you were wondering - yes, it included diamonds).



Meeting, August 6

I Know It's Not An MG, but....

Mike Haag

For those of us who were fans of the Inspector Morse Mystery series on PBS, you may have wondered whatever happened to the maroon Jaguar Mk2 sedan driven by Inspector Morse. The car was driven throughout 33 episodes during the 13 years the series was produced. According to the UK-based *Classic & Sports Car* magazine, here is an update. It was reported in the February 2002 issue of *C&SC* that Carlton TV, producers of the show, held a contest in conjunction with Carlton Video and Woolworth to give the car away in a sales promotion. The car was won by a fan of the series, a 25 year old solicitor from Oxford who was "stunned and delighted" to win the 1959 2.4 Mk 2 sedan. This is in contrast to actor John Thaw, who played Inspector Morse, who "famously hated driving it".

In the March 2002 issue of *C&SC*, it was reported that the winner of the car sold it to a co-worker just weeks after winning it after deciding "the Jaguar wasn't for him". The new owner planned on doing a light restoration and selling it at auction.

The final update on the car appeared in the July 2002 issue of the magazine. The Inspector Morse Mk2 Jaguar sold for an astonishing £52,100, or approximately 10 times what a similar car is worth, at the end of April to an undisclosed bidder. Dr. Antony Richards, of the Inspector Morse Society, was hoping to raise enough money to buy the car for it's members, but could not raise anywhere near the amount it sold for.

Sadly, the star of the show, actor John Thaw, passed away in February 2002 of throat cancer, approximately a year after the fictional character he played was killed off in the final episode. Both actor John Thaw and the Mk2 sedan will be fondly remembered for years to come.

On a lighter note, in one of the episodes, the main suspect drove a black MGF. When Sergeant Lewis asked the Inspector what he thought of the little sports car, Morse replied, without skipping a beat, he thought it a "bulbous little vulgarity". Not exactly what MG Rover or MG fans would want to hear, but certainly in keeping with the character of the opera loving, Jaguar driving police inspector.

Link of the Month

If you like reading magazine articles about MGs but don't belong to MGCC or MGOC, check out:

www.mgcars.org.uk/news/news.html

There is news about old and new MGs and articles on everything from restoring vintage MGs to the MG Lola adventure at Le Mans. If you go down to the bottom of the page and click on "Our News Archive" you get 6 years of articles!

Hemmings Museum

Jim Villers

We were on a "back roads" swing through New England with five other 190SL's (*ed. note, also known as MGercedes*) and were going through Bennington Vermont and decided to stop by the home of *Hemmings Motor News*. They have an old gas station with stuff for the tourists. While chatting with an employee behind the station, he asked if we would like to see the Museum. Not knowing that there was a museum, we said sure. It was not large and mostly had the various old panel trucks and other cars that have been on TV from time to time. There were a couple of very interesting cars, the MGTD pictured, a replica of the 1998 Daimler (first successful automobile, replica produced by Mercedes Benz in 1995) and a couple of other strange cars.

It was a fun place to visit and a fun trip.



TD in the Hemmings museum

Rally Time!

Susan Bond

Those of you who have participated in our April Fools' Tours (and been left in the dust) know that Dan Kirby's GT can really fly! My GT does OK, but when Dan asked if I would like to drive his Rocket in the ODR-SCCA "Sufferin' Suffolk Dash", a TSD (time-speed-distance) rally on August 17, I couldn't say no. On what felt like the hottest day of the summer, we met at Greenbrier for the check in. He was running late due to obligations as a soccer coach and I had no idea what we were doing, so I managed to leave all our paper work in my Jeep (unnoticed till we got to Suffolk) and we just barely got away at our assigned time. We adjusted seats, mirrors and vents on the fly.

Fortunately the first leg was for calibration of odometers. I hadn't rallied seriously in 20 years, and that was in a 1935 Morris 8 with an odo that was off by about 20 percent – I had to do calculations on paper to figure out how far we had

really traveled – and with a wrist watch. These people are so serious about rallying that Dan's Halda Twinmaster odometer can measure thousandths of a mile and could be regearing to match the odo in the rally master's car. He also had a Heuer stop watch and a Curta calculator (small black cylinder with a crank) that could do sequential math problems to figure out the exact time that the car should be at a certain mileage. All these are vintage (1960's) and legal for vintage events, the newer cars had electronic and computer versions. And you were wondering why he wasn't driving?

The first checkpoint had to be scrapped when we beat the rally master to it. We settled into a routine, with Dan calling out "You're 5 cents early" or (after a turn) "You're 25 cents late" and me adjusting the pressure of my right foot and trying not to wreck his car. Just before one checkpoint – up to then I was right on time – a truck pulling a boat pulled out in front of us. Getting around him was not the hard part (Rocket power!) but finding a straight stretch of road to do it was. We only got lost once and fortunately it was on a transit, time that doesn't count after a maneuver.

The half way stop was a gas station/convenience store somewhere. We drained water bottles and bought more, compared notes about the course and wondered where the rally master was. We discovered it was cooler on the grass than on the blacktop, and cooler on the blacktop than in the car (we were the only ones without A/C). Back on the road for the second half, it was hard to get back into the routine. I found that I lost way too much time in turns (at intersections, not on curves which the car loved) and spent lots of time making up time. A major headache for Dan occurred when the second to last checkpoint was not where it was supposed to be and threw off the mileage for 2 legs, which were later thrown out of the scoring.

We all met at Pargo's for dinner and awards. The rallymaster tallied results for the 12 teams, most of whom were novices who knew each other and had a great time despite their high scores. We came in first in class and first overall and I have a picture of a 4WD Hyundai to prove it! I am not about to quit my day job to rally full time, but I sure enjoyed driving the Rocket and learned enough about rallying to let Dan do all the navigating! Thanks, Dan!!!

If you want to try rallying, Mad Dog Days on September 28 will be run by Dan. You don't need fancy equipment for the stock and novice classes, just a car and a watch.



Dan and the Rocket at the half way stop

My MG Racing Adventure

Stephen H. Kelley

Here's a note I received from the author after Part I was printed in the August *Dipstick*:

Thanks Susan

-- for sending me a copy of the *Dipstick*. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading through it. Especially I thank you and Bob McClaren for allowing my little article to be printed - I hope some of your members will find something of interest in it. I truly enjoyed writing it as it allowed me to re-live an exciting chapter in my life.

If anyone has comments or questions, I'd be glad to field them.

Sincerely,

Steve Kelley
stevek@cameron.net

Part II

The year was 1960. Sadly my mother had passed away at an early age and now my father had re-married. All of us moved to Larchmont, New York in Westchester County about 50 miles north of New York City. This move created great new possibilities for me to pursue my dream of SCCA racing. We actually lived in a *house!* With a garage! And a workbench! Better than that, I now had a stepbrother, Grant Neason; he was a year or so younger than I and extremely motivated to help me with the car, be a pit crew and all that went with that. Best of all was his uncle, Tom Stamp who was already racing a '56 Porsche Speedster and within the year would be a serious contender for the F Production national championship until he got into the sand at Turn 5 at Thompson and rolled his car and broke his arm, ending that season for him. He was a huge encouragement and source of knowledge to me for the next several years. I am greatly indebted to both Tom and Grant.

My own situation was improved in a number of ways. I still worked for the American Oil Company on Fifth Avenue, and because of a number of promotions my financial situation was better though of course with limitations. The company was paying for most of my college so my expenses there were minimal. Also, with all the trials I had been through with the TD so far, I was beginning to learn more and did a better, though not perfect, job of repairing and maintaining my beloved car. My biggest problem during this phase of my life was time. During the school year I was up at 6AM commuting to New York City for my 9 to 5 job and then off to NYU for four hours of class and then back home by midnight. But, my stepbrother Grant had much more time so he was a great help in working on the car, running for parts, and so on even when I was not there.

My efforts at first were two pronged: preparing the car to

race; and also finding events in which I could compete without an SCCA Competition License and with a car which was *not* fully race prepared.

There were a number of events I could enter even with these limitations that were fun, involved speed to some degree, and were reasonably close to home. Hill climbs especially were great fun, did not always require a competition license or a race ready car, and I ran in several of these, with a modest degree of success. There was one I remember in Pennsylvania in which reportedly I was the leader in my class at the mid-point of the hill when the skies opened into a downpour, soaking me totally, and slowing me vastly and finally raining out the entire event. Too bad - perhaps I might really have placed.. Another was held in the Catskills but I do not remember how well I did. And finally, the best known event was the Mount Washington Hill Climb. This may have been an SCCA event and if it was, it suggests to me that by then I already had my Competition License but I'm not sure. Again, according to reports, my intermediate times were excellent but I blew the engine half way up the hill - I had not known about adding baffles in the oil pan and on some of the steep sections all the oil must have gone to the rear and momentarily the engine lost oil pressure. I remember parking on the side until the event was over; then I had to freewheel the car down the hill relying solely on brakes to control my speed. The descent was far more frightening than was the ascent!

For some of these events I borrowed Tom Stamp's helmet but at the next one that problem was put behind me. Somewhere in the Catskills was a time trial on a dirt course. It was a little like a gymkhana or autocross but was more open and laid out so that more speed was possible than parking lot events allowed. This was a two day event and Tom and I both entered. He must have been tired of lending me his helmet so before we went he told me that if I could do better in H Production than he did in F Production, he would buy me a helmet. As I remember I placed second in class and he was third. So now I had a helmet!

The final event of this sort which I remember was at Lime Rock and we got to take two separate timed laps at speed against a stopwatch. The starting line was close enough to Turn 1 so that none of us could get in trouble in the first turn and thereafter they had placed pylons in such a way that we could not get up to full racing speed without hitting them and suffering serious time penalties. This was still not racing, but lots of fun. I don't know if events like this for unlicensed drivers are held any more but there was a fair amount of danger for unskilled drivers and one guy did roll his Triumph before the day was over.

Gradually, I began to prepare the car for racing and got the necessary things one needed. I've already mentioned the helmet, but I also bought the required flame resistant covers and put a fire extinguisher in the car. A local welder fabricated the roll bar. I know that SCCA requirements are more strict now and feel sure the roll bar I had would not meet their specifications today. For the first season at least, I

was still driving the car on the road and even to and from SCCA drivers schools, races and other events. That was not a good situation but I got adept at removing and reinstalling the windshield, bumpers, muffler and so on

For now, I think I should disregard chronology entirely and talk about the engine. The preparation of the engine was great fun but, I must confess, was kind of a two steps forward and one step back affair as I was still struggling with ignorance and a shortage of funds. The SCCA published a book then (and perhaps still does) which listed all the modifications which were allowed for each model of car. Their goal was to have reasonable equity within each class which meant that for some models which were relatively fast from the factory little was allowed to be done. For others, like the TD for example, more was allowed so they could at least in theory compete evenly with the others. The most common cars in H Production then were the Bug Eyed Sprite, the MGTD, and the Fiat Abarth. Little was allowed to be done to the Sprites but quite a bit was permissible on the TD. I have no idea what rules applied to the Fiat Abarth. All cars could have the engine balanced. The TD was allowed to go to 1 1/4" SU carburetors in place of the 1 1/8" SU's which were stock. The head could be milled a specified amount, or a Mark II head which had larger sodium cooled valves and stiffer springs could be fitted and milled some too. An AEG 122 camshaft was allowed as well. Gradually I installed all this stuff. The carburetors came from a junkyard on Staten Island and were from an early Healey I think. The camshaft I bought new from J. S. Inskip. It was not easy even then to find the Mark II head but a fellow named Barry Brown who lived in Brooklyn had one and I bought it from him. Barry was a prominent driver then in a Lotus XI. Memory fails me as to the exact sequence in which I added this stuff but I do know that with my youthful impatience and lack of funds my tendency was to put performance parts on the engine before the engine was truly sound and dynamically balanced to begin with. This caused me to come to grief a number of times the first and perhaps even the second season. Happily the engine problems seemed to happen on the road and at least once at a drivers school but never in a race. I believe that I finished every race I ever started. And I was learning fast, and heeding mature advice, and eventually I got it right and built an impressive and reliable power plant for the third racing season. The other thing which I learned was that all these modifications work really well together - there is a synergistic effect such that until *all* of the modifications are done, the power improvement is only modest. But when the last part is properly done there is a large gain in power output. I probably added the larger carbs first and the other parts as I could. I think the cam and Mark II head were last and when those two went on the difference was like night and day. Power and response really came on above 4000 rpm right up to 6500 rpm which was my self imposed red line. Actually the car became rather feeble below 3000 rpm when the AEG 122 cam was installed. In the doing of all this work I was greatly helped by my sister Sue and my step-brother Grant - they were often there at all hours of day and night helping me pull or reinstall the engine - which was a frequent occurrence at first.

Other than what I have already mentioned, not too much else was done. We kept the standard transmission though one was allowed to install the gearbox from a TC which had slightly closer ratios. I did get as much weight off the car as I legally could including the spare tire and rack, bumpers, windshield, occasionally the hood side panels, and anything else I could think of. It had a large diameter straight exhaust pipe and made a wonderful sound! The brakes were totally done over with competition linings and the clutch was similarly rebuilt to racing specs by a local shop. The SCCA allowed us to use any tire size as long as all four tires were the same. There was so much power coming out of the engine that I decided to go to oversized Pirelli's to gain a little more top end. This seemed to work out well because even with the higher resultant gearing, it would reach 6300 rpm's in fourth gear at all the tracks I went to. As best I remember, fourth gear had been wound out at 5400 rpm's even with standard tires when it was still stock. This prompted Grant and I one evening to try to calculate the car's top speed. We spent many hours in the living room with sheets of yellow paper, a slide rule (no calculators in those days) even using geometry to help with the difference in circumference between the stock and new tires. We decided that 6300 rpm's in fourth gear with the larger tires was 105 mph! As I think about it now, I doubt I really was going that fast, but at the end of the straightaways at places like Lime Rock, Bridgehampton, and Watkins Glenn I was really gobbling up *most* though never all of the Sprites.

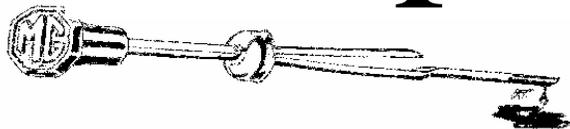
(to be continued)



Meeting, August 6 at Paul and Carmen Thiergardt's

Cynthia enjoys the "magic fingers" of the massaging recliner!

The Dipstick



The Tidewater MG Classics

Susan Bond

541 Forest Road

Chesapeake, VA 23322

FIRST CLASS

Monthly Meeting

Wed, Sep 4th

Jim and Betty Villers

3133 Inlet Rd

Va Beach

481-6398



7:30-8:00pm - Kick Tyres

8:00 - Meeting

