



THE DIPSTICK

NOVEMBER 1979

PRESIDENT: Jim Banvard (340-6737)
 VICE PRES: Don Moore (481-1801)
 SECRETARY: Andy Wallach (583-9387)
 TREASURER: Sandy Hall (482-2821)
 EDITOR: Susan Boswell (486-1293)

Glubules, gargoyles,

We have it straight from the horse's mouth, our honorary Brit's (to use his terminology) own musings about the whys and wherefores of the demise of the MG. But they're not letting go without a tussle over there in Merrie Old England, as you will see from the accompanying newspaper clippings. Hang in there, boys. Stiff uppah lip and all that, what?

FROM OLD NUMBER 2400, 4270, 6900, 7085, VM199--

In the eyes of this author, the October meeting conducted at the Banvard's resembled the monkey cage at the local zoo, but boy, was it fun. The meeting took on an international flavor with a visitor from England, New England, New Jersey, and a MiGi owner? What variety! Those of us who closed the meeting down found that we had already encountered the new day. The elections went smoothly and I would like to express my thanks to Roy Wiley who headed the nominating committee. The attendance at this meeting was gratifying. There were so many that even the kitchen was needed to hold the balance. For those interested in statistics, we were 7 bottles short of consuming three cases of beer. That may be a new record.

I regret that the Banvards were unable to attend the Busch drive out. While you who went were sampling the product, I was playing Battalion Commander for my reserve squadron's change of command. What a deal!

I was especially pleased to see Dave Barrows' poem in the last newsletter. It has some special significance to me as well. There are several of us who are free with our parts and tools who are willing to lend them to a fellow member in need; however, prompt return will ensure that the item will be available to the other members when required, or, heaven forbid, even to the owner when he requires it. Those who resemble the individual addressed in Dave's poem should take action at their earliest opportunity.

Brenda's TC has received its freshly rebuilt engine and is once again on the road and running very well. Boy, is it a pleasure to drive after pushing it around the garages for the past five months.

Andy Wallach's TF is now without engine and transmission. While Hank Giffin, Andy and Andy's father-in-law Earl were disassembling the engine after aborted attempts to cause it to run, it was discovered that number two and three cylinders had evidence of past residency. Mice had used the engine for a home some time during the last ten years. The moral of this story is that when an engine is to be left idle for an extended period of time, cover any access holes to keep the varmints out, right Andy?

The Oyster Festival trip to Urbana now looks to be more or less of an informal club event due to apparent lack of a caravan leader. More on this elsewhere in this edition. Please get your inputs into Jennifer Ash on the Steinhilbers affair early as any event that involves food and this organization is usually a well attended event.

For me this month has been a busy one largely involving engine work (three engines) and in rounding up chairmen for the club. The list of Chairmen is as follows:

Spares--Robert Davis
 Technical--Dave Barrows
 Newsletter--Susan Boswell

Regalia--Elsie Tarr
 Activities--Still Looking

Still Looking is a funny name for a chairman, but that is in fact the case. I will announce the new activities chairman at the next meeting. It could be a chairperson you know.

Looking forward to seeing you on November 6th at the Ashes.

Jim B.

***** DO YOU WANT TO BE ACTIVITIES CHAIRMAN? IT'S FUN! *****

THE OCTOBER MEETING--Now that fall has arrived, our tyre kicking sessions have been shortened by the early descent of night, though at the last meeting at Jim and Brenda Banvards, we had special illumination--an MG sign from a British dealership which Ron Henry brought from England for the Ashes. He'd picked it up at a flea market. Jennifer and Mike had to fight off the membership who coveted this glorious beacon. It would be quite an addition to anyone's MG memorabilia.

Also present at the meeting was an item not many of us have seen before, at least not up close--a TD MIGI (or MiGi TD or whatever). Owned by one of our newest prospective members, Jeanette Williams, the "TD" was the object of much proding and perusing and a few friendly gibes, which Jeanette parried with good-natured humor. Mike Ash was quick to notice the Moss Motors bumpers; he recognized the rust.

SECRETARY'S REPORT--Tom Lund suggested that since most of us already knew the highlights of last month's meeting, the minutes should be dispensed with. We so voted and Tom was deleted.

TREASURER'S REPORT--Helen Barrows reported that we have a whopping \$986.06 in the treasury, which elicited a comment from our visiting out-of-town member Hank Giffin which will be dealt with presently.

REGALIA--We have tons of regalia items available, including a new shipment of brass hammers, still for \$15. Inflation hasn't hit the hammer market yet.

PARTS--Steve Webb at Phase I has complained to Robert Davis that people ordering parts and then not coming to pick them up. Since parts are not paid for until received, Steve is having to absorb the cost of parts he may not be able to sell to anyone else. Steve is going to have to require that people pay in advance for their orders. He's done a lot for this club and it's the least we can do for him. Also Steve has asked, for the mutual benefit of both parties, that he be given a club roster so he can keep track of our membership and know who is entitled to the special club discount Phase I gives us. If anyone objects to his name being included in this list, please call Jim Banvard (340-6737) before the November meeting.

GUESTS AND OLD FRIENDS--Among the guests was our newest member Jerry Morgan who owns a disassembled TC. Jerry brought with him Mick Mould, a friend of his from England who was visiting this country for the first time. I've already mentioned Jeanette Williams. Also present were Georgia Kelly, one of our newest members who was attending her second meeting, and Gary Cole with his friend Beth Tabb from Newport News. We haven't seen Gary in a while. He reported that he had to store his TD over the summer. Unfortunately, his storage place leaked and he now has a very moldy TD. We were also pleased to have newly promoted Commander Hank Giffin, looking like Captain Ahab with his beard, and newly promoted Lt. Col. Bron Prokuski (Ed. note--Mike West made commander also).

OLD BUSINESS--We had a rather lively discussion of Don Moore's "cars under restoration" project. He wanted to know how we wanted it handled. As usual the quips were flying fast and furiously, which prompted someone to note, "I don't see how we ever get anything done in these meetings!" There will be more on this next month. Frankly I never did figure out what was finally decided.

Jim Banvard gave an "Assorted Machine Shop Report." A&B completed all of his engine work except the balancing. Unfortunately, he had to take the rods back because they were two thousandths over. They were fixed while he waited.

NEW BUSINESS--Hank Giffin thinks we have too much money in our treasury and should throw a big bash with it. Roy Wiley bestowed upon Hank's hapless head

a curse worthy of the Curse Exchange in the "B.C." comic strip--"May your ship sink from the weight of the gold in your hold." Mike Ash suggested that "we amend the by-laws that out-of-town members not be allowed to comment on the treasury." We decided that having once tasted poverty, that fat little balance was rather comforting.

SPECIAL TECH SESSION--In last month's president's message, Jim Banvard suggested that we hold special tech sessions where we concentrate on one car whose problems were too major for our normal tech sessions. After much debate we decided to continue with our regular tech session as is. The idea was tossed around about creating a task force (too many military in this bunch) to work on the big problems.

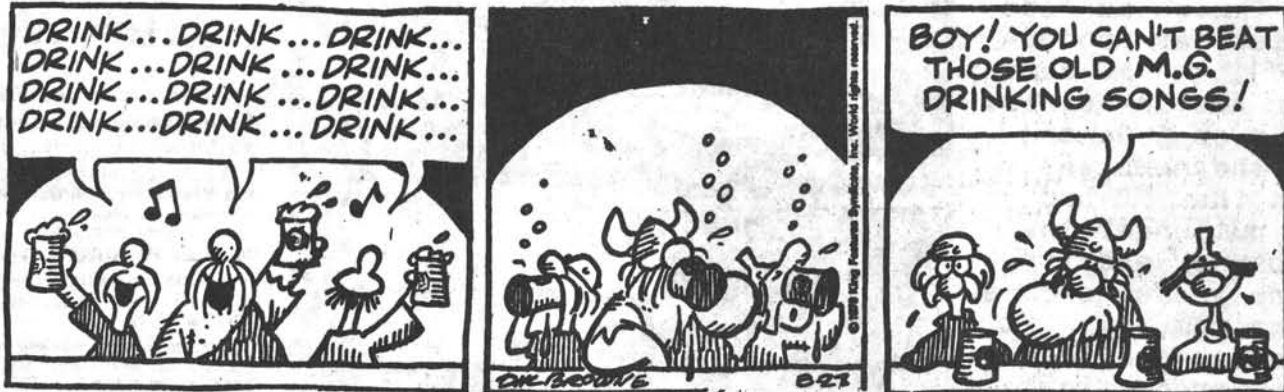
T-SHIRTS--Jim Banvard reported that you can have any color photo reproduced on a T-shirt to size 7" X 10" at Computer Images, c/o Inlet House Motel, 3rd and Atlantic, Va Beach, VA 23451--Jim Brown (owner), 422-8313. Cost is \$8.95 (one to 11 shirts), \$7.95 (12-24), \$6.95 (25-100), or \$6 per shirt if you supply your own 50% polyester shirt.

OLD BUSINESS--As you can see from the masthead, the slate of candidates was passed.

Thanks to Brenda. Her goodies were their usual culinary delight. I loved the cheese fondue in the loaf of bread. The NOVEMBER MEETING is TUESDAY, NOV. 6, at 8:00 at Mike and Jennifer Ashes.

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY AT STEINHILBERS!!

This comes from Philip Ash, who must have witnessed one too many MG functions!



OUR BELOVED MGS--ARE THEY REALLY GOING?

A view from our honorary Brit member, Ron Henry--

LETTER FROM ENGLAND

It has long been the intention of the honorary Brit member to write some news for THE DIPSTICK to prove to club members that he is able to write as well being qualified to read and use the telephone. The late UK-posted member, in the form of Mike West, covered the little-changing MG scene here in his write-ups and really, since then there has been nothing new to report--until recently.

On 3rd September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany; forty years later on 10th September, the news was almost of equivalent gravity for all MG lovers. The news released by BL Cars on this day spelled out the end of the long association between MG and Abingdon. By the time you read this, the message will not be new, but some background to it may be informative.

To everyone in this country, the name "BL Cars" (which came via British Leyland, British Leyland Motor Corp and British Motor Holdings from the old British Motor Corporation which you all knew) is synonymous with everything that is bad in British industry--frequent strikes, walk-outs, over-manning, low productivity, etc. Management blames the workers and the unions, and they blame management. The unions certainly have a lot to answer for, but I feel personally that management is not blameless. The corporation rarely

has the right models for the state of the market and the little Mini has been the only consistently good seller in recent years. A vast amount of taxpayers' money (I believe the figure is in excess of \$1.5 billion) has been poured into British Leyland and BL cars in several large doses by recent Labour (i.e., Socialist) governments just to bail it out and give it breathing space to reorganize for the future. Naturally, when the taxpayer sees how his generosity is rewarded with unabated labour unrest, he is less than pleased. In short, the man-in-the-street is totally fed up with BL and its problems, and doesn't want to know anything more about it. However, one of the election promises of the Tory (i.e., Conservative) government elected in May was to stop all such massive aid to industrial "lame-ducks."

When BL cars was created, the car business was divided into the Austin-Morris division (known as "volume car production") and Jaguar-Rover-Triumph (JRT--known as "specialist car production"), and MG came under Austin-Morris. Only 4 or 5 months ago, the news was given that MG had been put under the JRT banner and its future looked secure. At the same time it was announced that Midget production would end during 1979. Apparently, according to the BL management, y'all prefer Triumph Spitfires! (Ed. note-- Y'all?) At the same time it was implied that MGB production would continue for several years. The good old B-series engine which dates back even slightly beyond the MGA was used in a wide range of BL vehicles ranging from the B to vans. But progress marches on, fuel gets more expensive and scarcer, so BL introduced the new O-series engine to replace the B engine about 18 months ago. This is a straightforward 4-cylinder OHC engine in 1.7 litre and 2 litre versions, and it has gradually supplanted the B-series until now, when only the MGB is still powered by it. Even to BL management it must have appeared obvious that this was bad economics, and a twin-carb version of the O-series was mentioned when the engine was launched. Over-looking the news of September 10, it would seem logical that a modified B was imminent. To me, this seemed a very interesting change as it would have quite changed the character of the car; the O engine has a fairly "peaky" torque

9-23-79
Drivers stage MG protest

Two thousand MG owners staged a rally at Bou Cambridgeshire, yesterday to protest at British Leyland plans to stop making the sports cars. The MG Owners' Club, which has offered £500,000 to save the marque, is organising a petition and another rally in London next Sunday. Leyland want to put the name on cars they will produce with Honda of Japan.

9-30-79
The MG crowd get out and walk

FIVE thousand angry MG owners brought chaos to London's traffic yesterday--by using their feet.

They had planned to drive fr the Victoria Embankment to Brit Leyland headquarters in Piccadilly in protest against plans to stop making their favourite sports car.

But police banned the giant drive-in -- so they marched behind a convoy of 12 MGs.

Behind them, parked nose to tail on the embankment, they left more than a thousand MGs -- ranging from early models to the latest MGB GTs.

Petition

The marchers handed in a 12,500-signature petition at Leyland headquarters, demanding continued production of the cars.

Sadly, the protest seems doomed to failure. The company has turned down a £500,000-a-year 'rescue' offer from the Owners Club and is going ahead with plans to produce cars jointly with Honda of Japan.

An angry British owner summed it all up. 'Who wants to see a Honda-made MG?' he asked.



Protest MGs in Piccadilly Picture: TED BLACKBROW

curve so to some extent it would have been necessary to row the car along on the gear lever to get maximum performance. For us all, it promised improved performance through higher power output (though Brit-market cars do still have twin carbs) and especially for y'all, freedom from all that emission control junk as the new engine was designed to cope with emission regulations, and would not need to be subjected to a series of modifications as happened with the present product. The new engine is advertised as being efficient, so improved gas mileage should not have been out of the question. At the time of the announcement of a few months ago, reading between the lines, it even seemed possible that development of a successor to the B had started.

What is the cause of the present state of affairs? As you've probably guessed, there is no single cause; the causes are manifold. BL has found itself making such a small half-yearly profit (10th September was the end of the first half of their financial year) that future projections cannot justify it continuing with its previously announced plans for the future, so it has taken the option of a drastic pruning operation. MG is only one of thirteen plants affected (a total of 25,000 jobs are to be axed). Strikes, workers, unions, management have already been mentioned. To these can be added the present weakness of the dollar. Over the last two years the value of the pound Sterling relative to the dollar has increased by 23.55%. It is anticipated that to raise MG's US prices by 23% would really kill off sales, and further losses are the last thing that BL wants. Incidentally, more than 70% of MGs are exported to the USA. (Personally, as a pessimistically-experienced Brit viewing the weakness of the \$ instead as a strength of the pound, I conclude that it will only be a transient event!) To develop and tool up for the production of a new car would inevitably cost a lot of money and at a production of about 50,000 per year, it is not possible to consider such expenditure at the present time. It is also contended that the Midget and B have sold so well in the USA because they are two of the very few (cheap) open sports cars on the market. Now, of course, the convertible TR7 is available (aren't you lucky?!) and that will eat into the B market--well, in theory, anyhow! The TR7 also represents to BL a large investment with very small return which they don't seem to be able to bring themselves to drop. Lastly, but not least, the previous management under Lord Stokes was very Triumph-oriented (Stokes was replaced by South African Sir Michael Edwardes when it became apparent that an axe-man was needed) to the obvious detriment of MG and other BL marques. In his younger years, I believe that Stokes had been an apprentice at the Leyland truck firm, and Leyland was the controlling company of what is BL Cars today at the time he had reached chairmanship of the corporation in the early 70's. As a further insight into the TR7 fiasco, a BL factory at Speke, Liverpool was all tooled up to make the car. Industrial relations proved to be really bad there, and in one of the (many) earlier financial crises, the Speke factory was closed down and the production line re-set up at one of the Triumph plants at Coventry.

What of the future? The intentions which have been spelled out do not mean the closure of Abingdon or the end of MG, but they do mean the finish of Abingdon-built MGs. Actually, to put you fully in the picture, it is many years since MGs were truly "built" there. In the case of Bs and Midgets, the body shells are built in a plant at Swindon and shipped by transporter-truck in a fully painted and trimmed state to Abingdon. Here they are fitted with steering, suspension, axles, engines, seats, electrical equipment, and other minor items, all of which are built elsewhere. The plan now seems to be to use Abingdon as an annex of the nearby huge Morris plant at Cowley, maybe producing sub-assemblies. As far as the car is concerned, a Honda-based MG has been mentioned in the press. It is true that since a few months ago, BL has been cooperating on a replacement for some medium (small, to y'all) saloons in the Triumph range, but talk of an MG derivative is, I think, little more than a not very accurate rumour at this stage. One of the major Brit motor magazines forecasts only twelve months more production of the B. Apparently US MG dealers are very strongly opposed to the plans and are putting pressure on BL. In Britain, the major MG clubs are also making protests. The MG

Owners Club (only about six years old), which likes to think of itself as the biggest club, is organising an MG protest "drive-in" to London on 30th September (see accompanying articles). Unfortunately I will not be able to take part as I will be in the USA at that time--maybe I'll be there in spirit. I think that the MG Car Club is organising some sort of world-wide petition. I'm not prepared to bet on the outcome of all this protest action, but I will be a bit surprised if the announced plans are drastically changed. As a final ironic footnote, the first week of September was an official celebration of fifty years of MG at Abingdon; two days after the celebrations ended, the end of MG at Abingdon was announced.

Ron Henry

(Ed. note--Ron also included a short tech article. I don't normally publish tech articles on 'B's, but one can't look a gift horse in the mouth. Thanks for both inputs, Ron. This will be especially timely for Roy Wiley, who has wrinkled another B.)

MGB Bonnets--Sorry, Hoods!

Those of you with Bs have probably experienced problems getting perfect realignment of the hood after an engine change. In fact, it is easy to get into a position where the hood is jammed down at the firewall, resulting in distortion of the hood at that edge when you eventually prize it open, or, at the least, badly chipped paint work.

However, if you look at the hinge you should find that each one has two small holes of about 5/32" diameter. These holes are drilled in the factory to guarantee correct realignment. The answer is to use two tight fitting pegs or dowels (e.g., twist drills) in each hinge before tightening the bolts. If you don't have any tight fitting frills, it's obviously best to drill out the holes to your own self-selected size before removing the hood.

Be warned that the holes almost certainly won't have any value if you are replacing the hood with another one because, as far as I know, the holes are just drilled "freehand."

And one more tech tip from Blair Engle, Tech Editor of THE OCTAGON, newsletter of the Classic MG Club of Florida:

"I will make one note about wire wheels. Keep paint, grease and dirt off the inner taper. There is a friction fit and among other things helps keep the wheel tight and makes the hub splines work longer."

HAVE YOU VOLUNTEERED TO BE ACTIVITIES CHAIRMAN YET!!

UPCOMING EVENTS--

NOVEMBER 3 (SAT)--We have no official delegation organized, but Bob Salvin is going and says you may caravan up with him. If interested, call him at 340-6174. If he's not home, his answering machine will take your message. Bob's a grand guy to know under the circumstances, since his party will be transporting its own port-a-potty. I understand that unless you have a 10 gallon kidney or a catheter, or you abstain from beer imbibing, you are in big trouble Pedro. Approximately 20,000 souls invade Urbanna for the occasion and the facilities are not in abundance. But oysters are, in all shapes and sizes, to suit all palates, served in every form (fried, on-the-half-shell, fritters and stewed). At 10 a.m. till noon, there will be a 7-mile run, followed at 2 p.m. by a parade (in which T-drivers may be able to participate--how could they resist us?). There will also be a carnival, booths, street sales, and an art show, plus you can purchase an Oyster Festival Cookbook with over 100 recipes. Sounds like an oyster lover's paradise.

NOVEMBER 16 (FRI)--Steinhilbers Restaurant, 653 Thalia Rd. We will meet at 7:30 at the restaurant (see map on page 7). Entrees cost \$8-\$14, the dress is dressy casual (not our usual T-shirts and tennis shoes). Jennifer must know how many are going so PLEASE CALL HER BY NOV. 10. She reserves the right to

say, "Sorry, can't take anyone else" if you're late.

DECEMBER 14 (FRI)--Christmas Party at Dave and Helen Barrows. It's not too early to start thinking about what to take.

***** CHRISTMAS!! ALREADY!! *****

PAST EVENTS--Drive-out to the Busch Brewery--This was not one of our better attended events which was probably just as well since the brewery was closed for renovations. Three TDs, one Y, and a couple interlopers carried Bess Mann, Hank and Stevie Giffin

and children, Mike, Jennifer and Philip Ash and Ron Henry, Jim Rudd, Bob Salvin (with still another new girl friend) and new prospective members Steve and Mindy Remley from Newport News. The Remleys' have a TD that was most recently the home for a nest of mud daubers.

Undaunted by the cold and the closing of the brewery, the group indulged in beer and pizza before fanning out to take in the sights. Some went, where else, to the pottery factory, while the Ashes chose Busch Gardens. While Mike Ash's dire predictions of gloom and doom couldn't keep Philip and Ron Henry off the Loch Ness Monster, the rain which closed the park did. Boo! Hiss! Trudging home in the rain seemed a fitting climax to a decidedly disappointing day. Oh, well, better luck next time, gang.

***** HAVE WE FOUND OUR NEW CHUMP-ER-ACTIVITIES CHAIRMAN YET? *****

ODDS N' ENDS--NEW ADDITIONS--Ted and Vicki Spilman announce the happy arrival of their first MG, a '60 'A'. They plan to hone their restoration skills on the 'A' in preparation for their future 'T'.

FOR SALE--'53 TD, J.T. Wall, 425-5580.

FOR SALE--'67 MGB, good parts car or restorable. All reasonable offers considered. Dan Boswell--486-1293.

***** DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER IS 2 DECEMBER 1979!! *****

AND FINALLY--I found a note to myself the other day and among other things, it said, "23464--Ashes new zip" and "Jim Rudd has tow bar for peo. north of river." So now everyone knows that Mike and Jennifer Ash have a new zip code and Jim Rudd has a tow bar for the use of our Newport News/Hampton faithful. You get all the info eventually.

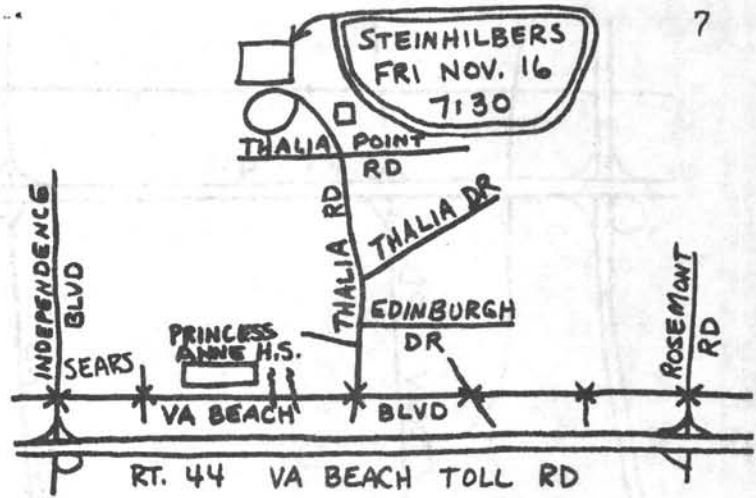
Also, as I begin my third year in this job, it's time to thank all those people who helped make this newsletter possible over the past year:

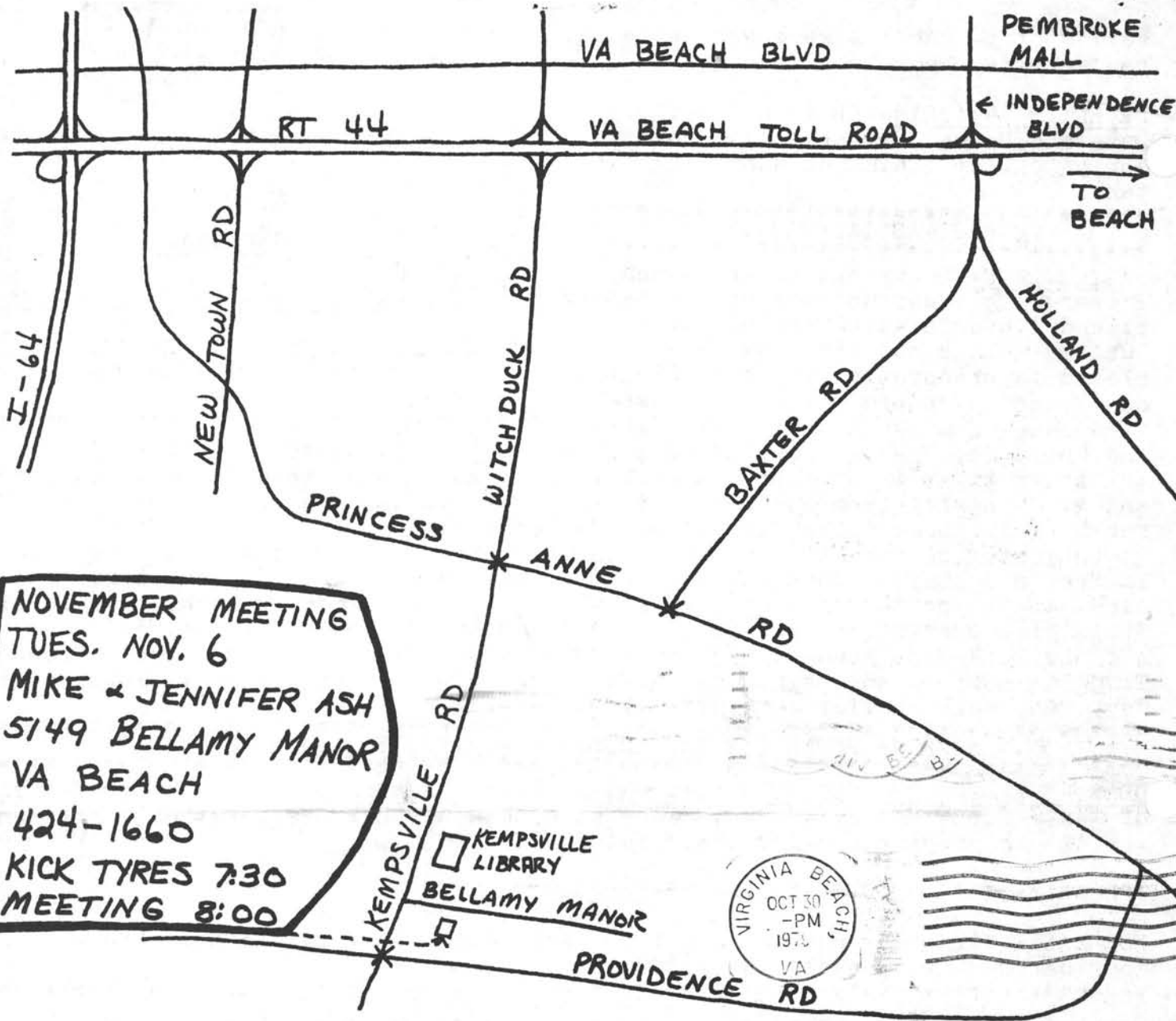
Brenda Banvard, who keeps supplying me with those marvelous mailing labels that save so much time;

Dave Barrows, Roosevelt Moseley, and Jim Krekovich for their wonderful, whimsical, wacky cartoons and poems, and Philip Ash for his 'Hagar the Horrible' creation;

Ron Eaton and Jim Banvard for their inspirational President's messages; Andy Wallach for covering the meetings I missed; Ross and Ann Haines for their report on the Chestertown mini-GOF; Ron Henry for his insights into the death of the MG; Minnesota Mining and Mfg. Co. for its Scotch Brand Magic Transparent Tape; Liquid Paper Corp of Dallas for its Liquid Paper correction fluid; And finally, but most gratefully, Robert Davis for his sentimental journey through his MG past. Does he eat that telephone pole? Tune in (maybe) next month and find out.

And anybody I might have forgotten!! Thanks!!

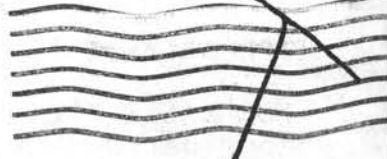




NOVEMBER MEETING
 TUES. NOV. 6
 MIKE & JENNIFER ASH
 5149 BELLAMY MANOR
 VA BEACH
 424-1660
 KICK TYRES 7:30
 MEETING 8:00

KEMPSVILLE LIBRARY
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TIDEWATER MG 'T' CLASSICS
 636 ROYAL PALM DR
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VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
 OCT 30 PM 1975
 23450



JESS & ANN HAINES
 633 PINE TREE DR
 VA BEACH VA 23452