



THE TIDEWATER MG 'T' CLASSICS

THE DIPSTICK

OCTOBER 1979

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Hail, T-folk--

As all will know by the end of this newsletter, we are witnessing the decline and fall of the M.G. Not to be overly dramatic about it, is this perhaps another nail in the coffin of Western civilization? First the extended family, cheap energy, and the three martini lunch and now--the M.G. Is nothing sacred? Oh, well, it was all downhill after they stopped making Ts.

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

The September meeting was held at the Colkers' in Newport News. It was an extremely informal and fun meeting. Those who didn't make the distant trek to Newport News missed a lovely neighborhood of old, extremely attractive homes. Proof of the existence of Randy's TD was exhibited and it is coming along extremely well, even with the 'B' engine. Thanks, Colkers.

In the Naval Reserve we have a term known as a "wet" weekend. Derived from the "blackshoe" Navy, it means a weekend away from home, generally at sea. Those who went to Nag's Head understand the term very well. Boy, did it rain, but more on that later.

Elections will be held at the October meeting at the Banwards'. I hope attendance will be good. I am sure that Brenda will have some delectables, making the visit well worthwhile.

As the club's organizational formalities wind to a close, a couple of items come to mind. Following membership renewal and elections, a new roster is compiled and distributed. The roster has a great deal of information which may be taken for granted. It includes a listing of all the cars and the associated 'T' Register numbers as well as names, addresses and telephone numbers. The information for the roster is taken from your registration forms and depends heavily on the care taken in filling them out. A brief review of last year's roster reveals some potential shortcomings that have been created largely by oversight. These include the fact that all Ts owned by our members are not recorded and that several of our members do not appear to be New England MG 'T' Register members. Before someone cries foul, two errors of this sort are adjacent to the names Jim and Brenda Banvard. It is of interest to the membership to see all of the cars owned by their fellow members. Also, the club encourages membership in the NEMGTR. THE SACRED OCTAGON, received as part of your NEMGTR membership, is an informative and interesting magazine. If you did not include all of your 'T' cars on your application form, please contact Susan Boswell prior to the November newsletter deadline and the additional info will be included. If you desire to join the NEMGTR and need an application form, please give me a jingle and I'll see that you get one.

As you all must have noted by this time, MG production is short lived. British Leyland is streamlining operations and reducing overhead. In view of the fact that MG is the oldest design currently sold by B.L., it is a sound management decision to terminate the MG. There are those of us who understand this from a management viewpoint who will never forgive B.L. from an emotional standpoint. Those of us who are crazy enough to drive these little funny cars which must be maintained by our own hands may never

Ocean View Holiday Inn at 1010 W. Ocean View Ave on Willoughby Spit (no map-- I called the motel to get more specific details, but they didn't know where they were located.) absolutely no later than 9:30 a.m. so we can join up with the Newport News people at 10:00 at the Ramada Inn at the junction of I-64 and U.S. 17. The trip will include a tour of the brewery with lots of free samples and pizza also, I think. So if you like beer or just want a pleasant drive through the fall foliage, come join us.

OCT. 11-14 (THURS-SUN)--GOF MK XXIX, Cooperstown, N.Y.

OCT. 12-14 (FRI-SUN)--"A Fall Festival of the Faithful," Lake Lanier Islands near Atlanta, Ga., sponsored by the Southeastern MG 'T' Register and The Southlands MGA Register. Levi and Elsie Tarr are going. It's not too late to join them. I have the application forms.

NOV. 16 (FRI)--Dinner at Steinhilbers Restaurant in Thalia.

DEC. 14 (FRI)--Christmas Party (already??).

NO MORE MGs? ARE THEY CRAZY??

PAST HAPPENINGS--Tech session at the Boswells'.--This was a very productive tech session. Jim Rudd learned first of all why his engine broke down every time he made a right turn (ask the mechanics or Jim why) and secondly, how to do a complete brake job. After his first test drive, he came back astounded. "I didn't know Ts could stop that fast."

They finally broke the nuts loose on Bess Mann's wheels--actually had to cut one of the recalcitrant little beasties free. Bron Prokuski and Robert Davis helped her finish her brakes. How does Bron stay so clean?! "It's all in your mind," he declares cagily.

Herschel and Pam Smith towed their TD over. Herschel had an oil pump problem. Took two removals of the thing before the mechanics realized that the pump had been faced improperly and wouldn't work without a little chewing gum and bailing wire--in this case some sanding and a layer of clear nail polish. Herschel drove off with some very healthy oil pressure registering on the meter. By the way, Herschel was home from sea for a few days. By now he's back floating around the Med, but hopes to be home for Christmas.

Dave Barrows replaced his TD fuel pump while Vince Groover pulled the Y engine with the help of Jim Banvard, Dan Boswell and others. Ooglers included Roosevelt Moseley, Roy Wiley, and Dick and Gwen Kearley, who came not knowing what to expect and so weren't clothed in grubby enough fashion. But next time they promise to bring their grungies and their problems.

NAG'S HEAD--I must say that this weekend came off much better than expected considering it's inauspicious beginning. When I got up at 6:30 on Saturday morning, it was already raining rather heartily. On the way over to the Fairfield Shopping Center to meet the other rallyers, my enthusiasm was dampening, along with my right leg and arm as water poured in the usual places. Undaunted, the rallyers gathered in their rain gear--Andy and Carol Wallach, Robert Davis and his friend Carol, Richard and Sandy Hall, and Tom and Jeanne Lund, as well as Dan and I. Our fearless leaders, the Ashes, informed us that the motel had messed up our reservations and we could have a total refund if we wanted it. Some of us thought that sounded pretty promising, but then daring prevailed over common sense. With the weatherman promising us clearing weather in Nag's Head, we voted to postpone the rallye part of the weekend and caravan on down. Armed with beer and wine and an assortment of books and games, we set out.

It rained nearly the whole way, sometimes so hard you could barely see the 'T' in front of you. When we stopped for lunch at the bridge over Currituck Sound, we learned two lessons. We should not have left the side curtains out and we should never have allowed Andy Wallach to sit at a table with a lazy susan in the middle of it. But then life's lessons are generally learned the

hard way.

By the time we settled into the Ashes' room while waiting for the rest of the rooms to be available, patches of blue were peeking through the gray and the air was turning steamy. By the time all the rooms were ready, the sun was out. Spirits lifted noticeably as we swung into action.

Seems almost everyone headed south, first to the Bodie Island Lighthouse museum where Mike and Jennifer Ash were engulfed by George the whale. Then to see the wreck of the wooden sailing vessel the LAURA BARNES on Coquina Beach where she had languished in a state of carefully preserved disintegration since being tossed ashore in 1921. Back on the highway, we continued toward Oregon Inlet and the Pea Island National Reserve, driving across desolate wind-swept islands of scrub pine where herons fed in the marsh grasses and seagulls wheeled overhead, tossed and buffeted by the constant wind. The only signs of civilization were an occasional car, and a line of telephone poles stretching relentlessly toward the horizon. Oh, yeah, and all those state operated out-houses. That straight stretch of black asphalt was tempting for a 'T' and Dan pushed the TF up to 5300 rpm in fourth gear (about 85 mph, but our speedometer is inaccurate). The little car internally combusted her little heart out and I think she'd have gone on forever with the wind whistling in her grille.

Bron Prokuski had arrived by the time we gathered back at the motel and we all congregated on the beach where Jennifer and Mike Ash reported that the water was cold. So much for swimming. Somehow poor Bron, our visitor, got conned into arranging our dinner reservations for 18 at the restaurant across the street. In his Chairman's report to the New Hampshire group, he plans to tell them how he had to come south and square these Tidewater people away.

Joined by the late arriving Banvards and Tarrs, we marched en masse to the restaurant. After insuring that Andy Wallach was seated at a small square table without a lazy susan, we settled in for an excellent meal, followed by a pleasant evening of T-camaraderie on the beach and on the Ashes balcony.

Sunday morning dawned warm and hazy and by 7:30 a few of us were gathered in the gazebo overlooking the beach. Some of us even went swimming, some of fully clothed (some of us lost our car key in the ocean and had to hot wire all the way home). Meanwhile less than 50 yards down the beach at the fishing pier, a fisherman had just pulled in a six-foot shark. A sign on the pier prohibits shark fishing between sunrise and sunset. Don't want to alarm the tourists.

By breakfast time at 10:00, a great bank of black clouds was moving down from the north. By noon it was cold and very windy. That didn't deter some of us from touring the Lost Colony and Elizabethan Gardens and stopping to watch the hang gliders breaking their necks on the dunes, or others from going home via the Knotts Island ferry. The rain hit us at some point and from then on, with the side curtains out, not only were we freezing cold, but wet, too. I kept thinking that in a normal car, we'd just roll up the windows and turn on the heat. But then what would we have to gripe about.

It was a wonderful weekend. Lots of good times with good people, no broken ankles and only one minor mechanical mishap, a loose float bowl in the Tarrs' MGA. Next time I'm going to build a fire, curl up on the couch with a cup of hot chocolate, and read a good book.

BEER AND PIZZA(?) AT THE BUSCH BREWERY!!

And now our continuing saga, MG FEVER by Robert Davis

I was out driving my YB one August morning.. When I stopped to purchase some ale at the local country store, I heard a bubbling sound from the front of the car. I touched the radiator cap and quickly pulled my hand away for obvious reasons. I had just rebuilt the engine and didn't remember the eng' boiling over before the rebuild. I drove the short distance home, removed the radiator cap and inserted a hose.

It had to be the thermostat. I pulled the thermostat and installed a thermostat housing without a thermostat. I drilled a hole in my radiator cap to install a motometer. During the late afternoon I drove the car over to

Mike Ash's. It overheated right when I got there. I couldn't understand why. Mike and I worked on trafficators and tuned the dual 1 1/4" carbs I had added.

The next morning it overheated on the way to school, yet in the evening, it ran at normal driving temperatures. During the next week, it overheated lozens of times. I even noticed a drop in oil pressure. Finally I got a Y radiator from Mike that looked as rusty as mine. I took it to a radiator shop and had it recored. The engine ran sooo cool. I decided to drive up to Richmond (this was before the days of the Notorious Disco Vandals). I was playing in a rugby tournament and was supposed to be back in time for a funkhana at my house on Sunday. I was selected to play on Sunday and since I didn't want to aggravate any of the selectors, I stayed for the match. We were supposed to start at 8:00 a.m.. I had plenty of time to play two 30 minute halves and still be back by 11:30. The match started at 9:10. Most of us were hungover from the Saturday night tournament party which consisted of lots of drinking and singing later on...we won't mention any redheads.

I was informed at the match that had we won, I'd be playing in the 1:00 third place round. Well, we lost, no doing of my own, and I headed back for the funkhana (not according to Eastern Davis Time).

I was so late I drove at speeds at or slightly above 65 mph. Entering Newport News, the oil pressure dropped a little. Later I heard a sound that resembled marbles flying around inside the engine. I took the first exit I came to, parked at a service station and called Mike Ash who was at my house for the funkhana. He came out and towed me home. Thank heaven for good friends willing to lend a hand. We towed the car back to my place. There wasn't much of a funkhana going on. My heart sank. It was truly a sad day in Mudville.

The engine was removed that evening, and only after about 2,000 miles. I didn't have any time to chew the fat, I needed to put the engine in and go, so I decided to use the same block and only change the crank, rods and one piston. The gunion pin had all but frozen in the piston. Some say it was because of overheating. Others say that the fit was probably a little tight and when the engine was at high rpm, the pin seized. I changed the crank and rods and had a good used piston. I put each piston back in the right hole and used the rings from the piston with the frozen pin.

I also used a TF head and intake manifold with 1 1/2" carbs. Since the Y's exhaust system is quite different from the TD or TF, I had to make up an exhaust system. After a day's work, the exhaust system was completed. Since there is plenty of room from the carbs to the side of the hood, I used MGA air cleaners.

Two weeks later, I drove the Y all the way to Winston-Salem and back. The XPAG ran beautifully. It held 50 lbs. of pressure the whole way. (I went to visit Betsy Allen, whom I had met some some months earlier during a rugby tournament at Wake Forest.)

I continued to play rugby and enjoy a life of college classes, excess beer drinking, and all my MG spares projects. The Y provided uninterrupted dependable transportation until a fatal morning in December.

I was merrily driving down General Booth Blvd. when suddenly out of nowhere came a late 60's Chevy driven by a phantom. He decided to pass me to the right. About 30 yards ahead the road narrowed with no shoulder. I was in the only lane in the YB and the phantom was to my right on the shoulder. The shoulder ends with a telephone pole.

Does he let the phantom pass? Tune in next month for:

A speedy race to a dead end--or, How'd you survive that wreck?

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!!

TECHNICAL SECTION--Last spring we searched all over Tidewater for a positive ground radio for the TD and finally found a British Motor Corporation AM radio that was older than the car. It had a few problems but worked fairly well. But now for those who like the luxury of our more modern equipment with its better fidelity that rarely comes in positive ground, we have this gem of

technical info from THE GRAND MARQUE, newsletter of the Eastern N.Y. Chapter.

The following was written by Bud Quist, and appeared in the OCTAGON TOPICS of Vintage MG, as reported in THE BONNET (Northwest MG Register, April, 1970):

So you want to install a negative-ground radio or CB unit in your T-series, which has a positive-ground system. Here is how I did it:

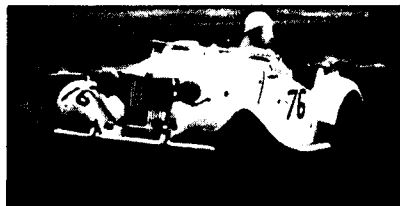
- 1) Turn the battery around in the battery box so that the negative post (-) is on the lefthand side of the car. (Hook up the leads later.)
- 2) Reverse the two small leads on the coil so that the wire from the distributor goes to the negative post and the other goes to the positive post.
- 3) Remove wires from the back of the ammeter, reverse, and reconnect.
- 4) Hook up battery leads. I had original type leads and had to make a shim for the negative post and shave a little from the inside of the positive lead.
- 5) Start your engine and run at fast idle. Flash the generator by holding a length of wire on the positive post of the battery (or F post on the regulator) and momentarily touching the F (field) post on the generator.

This should polarize the generator and you now have a negative-ground system. Check the ammeter for correct charging by increasing the speed of the engine and checking for a plus reading when charging.

FAREWELL LITTLE MG!!

"Safety Fast" was the MG motto, but "Fun Slow" might have been more appropriate.

• The first brand-new car I ever purchased was a 1953 MG TD, metallic tan with red leather in the cockpit. I got a pair of Brooklands windscreens from Vic Derington in England, along with a very *pur sang* Brooklands steering wheel. I sent away to Dale Runyan for a louvered hood, which I installed without the side panels and held down with a red leather strap. There was a badge bar on the front, which carried a Lucas "Flamethrower" pencil-beam road lamp and cloisonné badges for the MG Car Club, the Sports Car Club of America, the Detroit Region of the Sports Car Club of America, and the 1953 Press On Regardless Rally. A local top shop made me a zipper tonneau cover and then I painted the car white, with red underfenders, white wheels, and



a red-and-white checked grille. The *pièce de résistance* was a Boyce Motometer that actually worked, screwed into the removable radiator cap.

The engine was bored .030 oversize, the head was milled, and the ports polished. I scrounged a set of inch-and-a-half SU carburetors to replace the stock inch-and-a-quarters, and dressed them up with chromed Hellings air cleaners. The engine also wore a polished aluminum valve cover and side plate. The exhaust system was removed from the manifold back, and in its place was an inch-and-three-quarter copper straight pipe. Most of the time the pipe's song was muted by a chrome "racket buster," a short muffler that clamped onto the business end, but could be slipped off easily when my youthful blood was up.

Several of my friends owned MG TCs, and most of these were outfitted much like my TD, except that the TC had nineteen-inch wire wheels and fashion dictated that the rears be cut down to sixteen inches and, if possible, laced on a wider rim. The best TD in the world—and mine was a good one—was an innocuous little car that didn't go very fast and didn't do a very good job of keeping the rain and snow off the occupants. The TC was essentially the same, except that it didn't ride at all as a car was supposed to, and the steering required the strength of Sylvester Stallone. The TD was a better car

in almost every respect, but the TC had the advantage of the most rakish appearance seen on this side of the Atlantic since the Army Air Corps stopped flying biplanes.

We raced these cars, rallied them, ran gymkhanas and British-style trials in muddy, rocky farmland, and drove them to work every day. The fact that they were not as reliable as the American cars of the period was offset by their ease of maintenance. We did our own brake jobs, valve jobs, rebuilt the SU carburetors once a month, and got out to whack the SU fuel pump back to life every time it quit ticking, which was regularly. Our small talk dealt mainly with the vagaries of Lucas electrical systems. The fact that a T-series MG Midget was slow, heavy, and about as agile as a McCormick reaper never occurred to us. They were sports cars and we were sports. Only the arrival of significant numbers of 1500cc Porsches among U.S. enthusiast ranks caused us to doubt the ability of our little MGs to do anything we asked of them. Porsches did things that had never occurred to us. Nonetheless, the postwar Midgets rent the veil of the Detroit temple, we saw fundamental automotive truth revealed, and we never turned back. —David E. Davis, Jr.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER IS 27 OCTOBER!!

Dave Barrows reminds us that at times we all suffer from a lapse of memory.

THE BORROWER

How glad we are to find a friend
Who has the part or tool to lend.
When working on a job we find,
It takes a special part or kind
Of tool that is hard to get.

We quickly travel over there
And get the thing, we do not care.
We have it now, the job is done.
The tool or part was the only one.
We thank the friend and then forget.

As time goes by, days turn to weeks.
Our "friend in need" the loaned part seeks.
To recall that he has loaned it out,
He can't remember where to shout,
"PLEASE RETURN MY THINGS."

VOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTEVOTE

It was nice seeing the Ashes' TD back on the road after breaking down on the trip to Nag's Head last year. Jennifer reports that during the rebuilding of the car, Mike installed the original amber colored gas light in the dashboard. If you've ever had a TD with an amber gas light, you know that it's nearly impossible to notice during daylight hours when the light has come on. So of course, during the maiden voyage, Jennifer and the TD ran out of gas. It was very embarrassing.

DON'T FORGET THE OCTOBER 27 DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER!!!

Triumph's trump

THE proposed phasing out of the MG sports car should not be looked upon as part of the Government's 'lameduck' policy, for this slice of Britain's industrial heritage is still in demand the world over.

Neither can the blame be placed on the Abingdon workforce for their industrial relations record is a shining example to other BL plants.

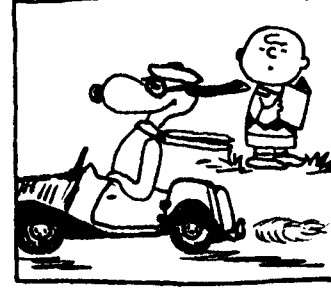
The root cause has been a deliberate policy on the part of BL to play down the MG marque in world markets in favour of the TR7. But their efforts have been constantly frustrated by the MG continuing to outsell its Triumph counterpart.

Now, however, it appears that the accountants have been allowed to play BL's trump card for which the small Abingdon plant has no answer.

The 'sacred octagon' is respected throughout the world as a symbol of the true British sports car with all its long tradition. Yet BL want to put that same badge on a Japanese saloon made at Cowley.

DAVID SAUNDERS,
(MG Car Club Member),
Cambridge.

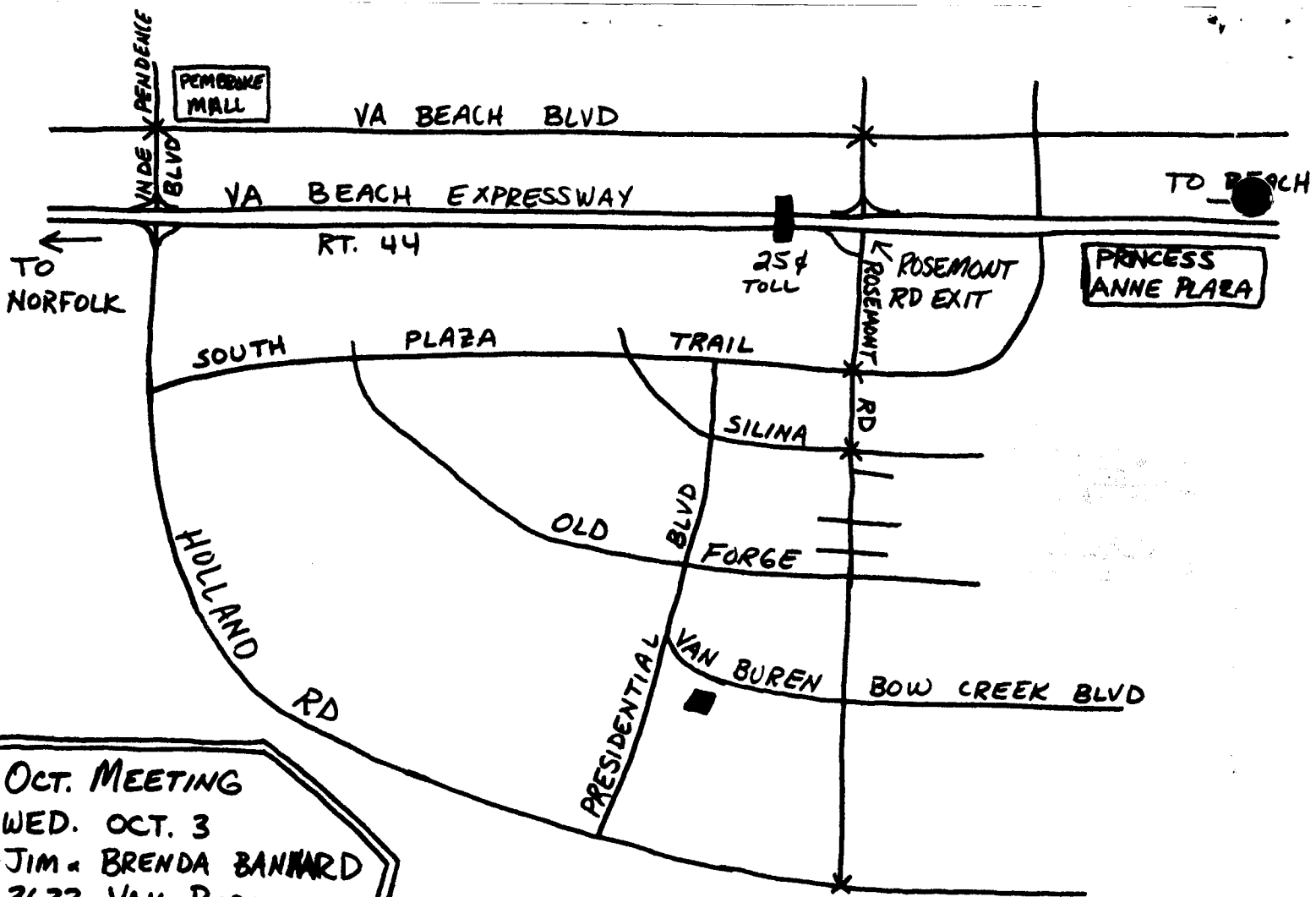
Letter to the Editor
of a British news-
paper via the Ashes.



ABSENTEE BALLOT

To be returned to Roy Wiley, 2221 Poplar Point Rd., Va. Beach, VA 23454, no later than 1 October 1979. Write in candidate's name in space provided.

- PRESIDENT Jim Banvard _____
- VICE PRESIDENT Don Moore _____
- SECRETARY Andy Wallach _____
- TREASURER Sandy Hall _____



OCT. MEETING
 WED. OCT. 3
 JIM & BRENDA BANHARD
 3633 VAN BUREN
 340-6737
 KICK TYRES 7:30
 MEETING 8:00

COME VOTE !!

TIDEWATER M. G. "T" CLASSICS
 635 ROYAL PALM DR.
 VIRGINIA BEACH, VA. 23452

ROSS & ANN FAINES
 633 PINE TREE DR
 VA BEACH VA 23452

