



# THE OCTAGON

Newsletter of the M.G. Owners Club  
The Northern California Centre of the M.G. Car Club



**Since 1957!**



Gather for the South  
Marin Tour by Marty  
Rayman

## May 2022

**Must register by  
May 7 for the  
Dixon Meet!**

## About *The Octagon* and the MG Owners Club

The M.G. Owners Club, formed in 1957, is the Northern California Centre of the M.G. Car Club, formed in England in 1930. The Peninsula T Register was formed in 1973 and is now an informal sub-group of the MGOC. We receive a copy of the MGCC's *Safety Fast*, available to members on loan from the Corresponding Secretary. The club is also associated with the North American MGB Register, the North American MGA Register, and the New England MG T Register. The MGOC holds a business meeting each month at an event known as the "Natter and Noggin" in the style of English clubs. *The Octagon*, our newsletter, is published monthly by the MG Owners Club. Opinions expressed in *The Octagon* are not necessarily those of the MGOC, its members, or Board of Directors.

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Feel free to call these members, who have volunteered to help with purchase, repair, and restoration of various M.G. models, etc.

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### COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING IN *THE OCTAGON*

Direct all questions about advertising to **Mike Jacobsen** at 415-333-9699 or [MikesMuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:MikesMuseum@yahoo.com). 2022 rates are: monthly (yearly): full pg. \$25 (\$240), half page \$18 (\$175), third page \$12 (\$120), business card \$8 (\$75).

All ads expire on Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, and fees for a partial year will be pro-rated to that date. Deadline for ad materials is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the preceding month. The MGOC makes no claims as to the reputation or quality of work performed by businesses advertising in *The Octagon*.

### MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS TO *THE OCTAGON*

Your stories, photos, tips, questions, and anything MGOC-related are always welcome in *The Octagon*. Please make your contributions by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the issue in which you want them to appear. Please email all contributions to [magnut\\_dan@hotmail.com](mailto:magnut_dan@hotmail.com) or send them to: Dan Shockey, 12632 Edith Dr., Garden Grove, CA 92841

### RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR THE MGOC

Have you helped recruit any new members lately? The club roster is available from Steve Kellogg upon request.

### MGOCSE.ORG

Upcoming events, MGOC history, photos, membership forms, *The Octagon*, and helpful links are posted on the Club Web site at <http://mgocsf.org>.

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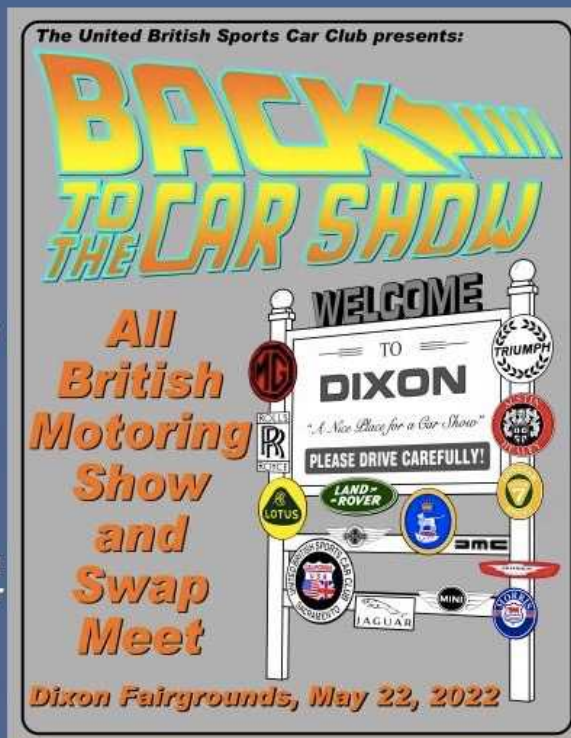


## ***The Annual All British Motor Vehicle Show and Swap Meet May 22, 2022***

**Great Scott! The British Motor Show and Swap Meet is returning this May. We'll go back in time to see some of the greatest machines to ever come out of the British Isles. So jump in your time machine and join us!**

After two cancellations (heavy rain and covid) and a restricted show in the fall, we're finally returning to an open show on our usual May timeline.

**All entries must be made on-line or by mail in advance. There will be no day-of entries.**



**The event is FREE to the public to see the cars and attend the swap meet. Free parking is across the road from the fairgrounds entrance.**

### **A British Motor Vehicle Tradition**

#### **Participants' Choice Awards**

All registered entries will receive a dash plaque, goody bag and a ballot for voting in the Participants' Choice Awards. This is a show for the pleasure and company of others who share your interest in vintage British machinery. Judging is by popular vote of your peers, each of whom has a vehicle entered in the show. Each entrant receives one ballot and may cast one vote per class. There have been over 35 classes at past shows and classes will again be determined by pre registered vehicles. Three or more of the same vehicle type make a competition class, not including the Winners' Circle entrants. Based on early registration results, classes are created for each major marque, and certain subdivisions within marques. Where there are not sufficient early entries to justify a separate class, entries will be grouped by type of vehicle.

Vendors and participants set up at 7:00 AM. Gates open to the public at 8:00 AM. Final entries to the gate must be in by 10:00 AM. Voting closes at 12:00 PM. Awards Presentation: 1:30 PM. This is not a "concours" but a chance for British vehicle lovers to get together, display their vehicles and have a good time. Any vehicle could go home with a trophy. So bring your British "ride" and enjoy the camaraderie!

**The close dates for registration are May 4th for the mail-in form and May 7th for on-line.**

**[Click here for On-line Registration and Regalia](#)**

**A mail-in version of the registration form can be found [HERE](#)**

**All entries must be made in advance.**

**Mail in registration must be postmarked by May 4th, but please mail your form with a check as early as possible as the USPS is very sluggish. Online registration closes on May 7th at midnight.**



# From the Editor

My Fellow MG-icans.

1 May 2022

Happy MGA Drive Day! It is Spring now. Hope you have been able to drive your MG. I have been very busy re-assembling and improving my 1935 MG P-type following its quick paint job. I am pleased at how it has turned out. I found I had a valve cover leak that explained some of the oil burning and smells. It seems to be running well despite all the abuse I have given it. However I fear its beauty is very much skin (Bondo) deep.

I plan to haul it to an MG gathering (TC club) in Placerville this Mother's Day weekend. Rather a long trip from down south. I will use the Ford pickup again. Have to be extra careful loading and tying it down with the new paint.

The Dixon meet is a good one with lots of interesting Brit cars and some bargains at the swap meet. Weather can be hot or windy or pouring rain – or very nice. We park on grass with plenty of shade nearby. Try it!

Many of us are making plans for the GOF in late June. It is not too late to join us.

Happy trails!

**Dan**



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APR09



I had to find vinyl to match the seats so I could recover the panels.

Below: Now the hood (top) shows its great age. Shockey photos.



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# Brake Problem Solved

By member Stuart Locke

Big Thanks to John Seim and J.R. Boye! They had the answer to my MGTD pulling drastically to the left when braking. They suggested that the right front wheel cylinders could be facing the wrong way. I switched them and now my MG finally brakes straight as an arrow.

Both the left and right front brakes should have the forward cylinder piston pushing downward, with the adjusting screw at the bottom and the rearward cylinder piston pushing upward, with the screw at the top. Turns out there are two ways a wheel cylinder can be fitted, UP or Down. The pics and manuals can easily be misread. All British cars with front wheel cylinders at 3 & 9 o'clock need this configuration for proper braking.

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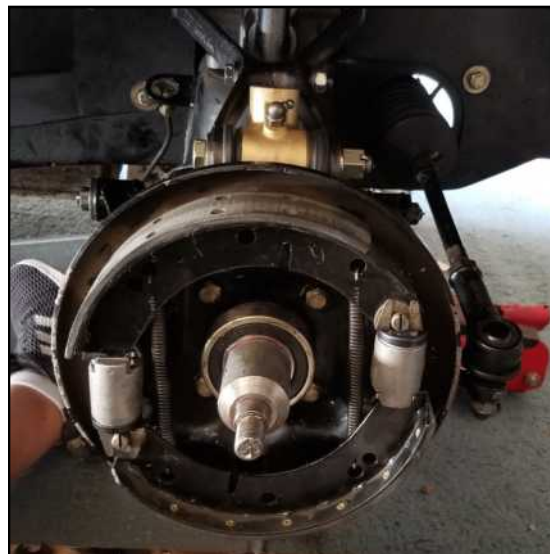
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The Wrong Way!



The Right Way!  
Photos from Stuart





## President's Ponderings

### Southern Marin Tour

This was a wonderful drive and we had lots of fun driving around southern Marin with fellow MG members in their beautiful cars. Many thanks go to Bob Bundy and Marty

Rayman for organizing this spectacular drive. See my article about the drive later on in this edition.

### Thanks to George, Marcia and Jennifer

We've held our annual car show **MGs by the Bay** at Bon Air, Greenbrae for the last 4 years and they have been wonderful to deal with. They provide all the facilities and equipment for free. They are holding their 70<sup>th</sup>. Birthday Celebration on May 7<sup>th</sup> and asked me if I knew of any car that was also 70 years old that they could showcase at their party. I really wanted to help them out for obvious reasons and was frantically looking for a car when George Steneberg told me his MG TD was built in 1952, so is 70 years old. George has kindly offered to have his daughter Jennifer drive the car to their Birthday Celebration with George as passenger and Marcia riding back up. Thanks to all of you. If you're in the area please pop in and say hi; the party is from 11:00 to 2:00pm.

### What's on the Calendar

We don't have any club events scheduled for either May or June at the moment so if you have any ideas about a drive or place to visit please let me know and we'll make the arrangements. If you're looking for somewhere to drive your MG, "The All British Car Show" in Dixon is on May 22 and that's always a great show with lots of MGs and a large swap meet. Marla and I get back from our Ireland vacation on May 21 so I'll have to see how I feel before committing.

### In my garage

It's been one month since I started the removal of the engine from my 1969 E type Jaguar and things are moving along smoothly, albeit slowly. I'm very cautious with my approach and spend a lot of time re-reading the manual and checking everything for safety. It took me around 60 hours to remove everything prior to dropping the engine/gearbox out of the bottom of the car. I mean everything; bonnet that weighs 350 lbs, radiator, entire exhaust system, all hoses and piping, intake and exhaust manifold, alternator, torsion bar plate, you get the picture.

After all of that it only took my neighbor John and myself 1 ½ hrs to drop it out of the car. That was the easiest part. Now it's time to start taking things apart in preparation to swap out the gearbox. BTW, I do have a 4-post lift that makes life a little easier.



Also BTW, notice the 2 MGA jacks supporting the front of the car!

**Keep driving your MG and see you on the road,**

**Andy**



# Southern Marin Tour

by Andy Preston

Many thanks to Bob Bundy and Marty Rayman for organizing a wonderful tour around southern Marin highlighting some of the history of the area from back in the day. We had a good turn out with 14 cars (including a beautiful Series 1 Land Rover owned by Andy Hunt) and 18 members. It was a beautiful clear sunny day and couldn't have been more perfect.

We met at Bon Air, Greenbrae and drove some of the older historic roads through Ross and San Anselmo lined with spectacular older homes and beautiful manicured gardens. We continued through San Rafael where I worked for 28 years and it was great to see some of my favorite spots. We stopped at the Marin Civic Center that seems ageless even though it was built over 60 years ago. It's a true legacy to the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright who never got to see the building completed. We stopped for a break in China camp which was an original Chinese shrimping village on the shoreline of San Pablo Bay in the late 1800s and into the first half of the twentieth century. It's now part of China Camp State Park. This would make a wonderful location for a club picnic sometime in the future.

We continued into Tiburon and drove along the shoreline of San Francisco Bay on the very winding Paradise Drive. This was first for me and views out into the Bay are fabulous.

We finished up at The Corinthian Yacht Club in Tiburon for lunch that commands one of the best views of the bay and retains an old world charm. Even though we had a large party the service and food was superb. It was a really fun day and enjoyed by all. This is what MG ownership is all about having FUN and meeting new people.

Thanks again to Bob and Marty for putting it on.

## Addendum

Driving old cars is always an adventure as Eric Baker discovered with his 1965 MGB. According to Eric as he drove into Tiburon, the car developed a tinkling noise from the engine and as he pulled to the side of the road steam rose from the front of the car. Eric opened the bonnet and found the water pump impeller and fan loose and leaking coolant. However, undismayed Eric got a ride to lunch in the MG behind him and was having the car towed back home later.







Bob Bundy leads the Drivers Meeting  
At left by Andy Preston  
Other photos this page from Marty Rayman



At China Camp



An MG Vista!

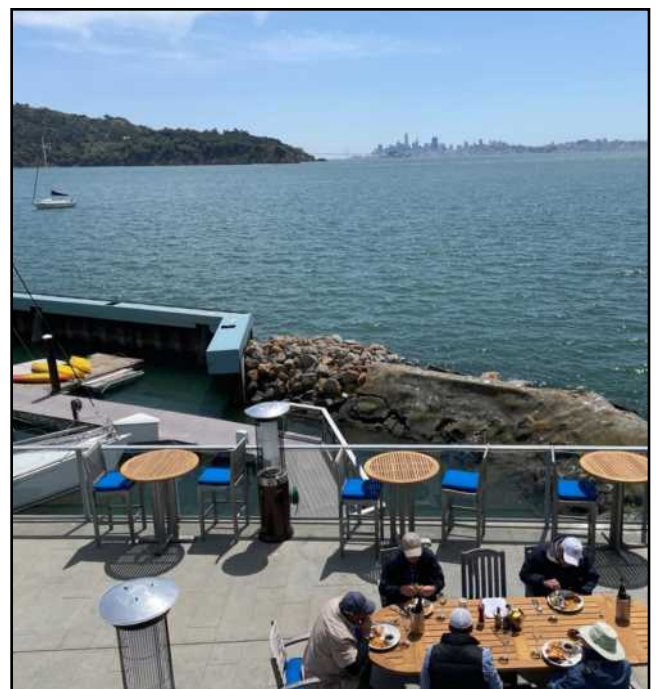




At the Corinthian Yacht Club

At tables by Andy Preston

Above and below from Marty Rayman





*The 28th Annual*

# MGs by the Bay

**Saturday, July 16, 2021  
BON AIR, Greenbrae**

**BON AIR**

**GREENBRAE**

EST. 1952



**401 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.**

**Registration: \$25 by July 1, \$30 at the gate**

**Time: Entry opens at 8:30am, Show starts at 10am**

**Popular Vote Awards Presented at 1:30pm**

**Event T-shirts: Order in advance**

**Free entry and parking for spectators**

**See registration form at [www.MGOCSF.org](http://www.MGOCSF.org)**

**Photo: Kirk Prentiss**

# Announcing the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual MGs by the Bay

## Saturday, July 16, 2022 at Bon Air Greenbrae

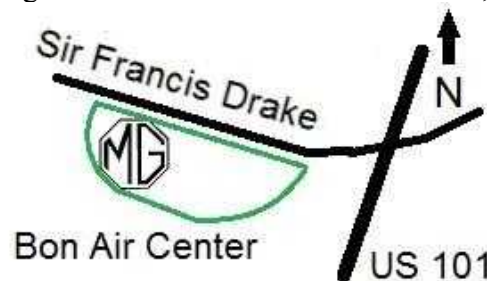
### General Information

All MGs are welcome, from daily drivers to complete restorations. Advance registration is \$25 by July 1 and \$30 thereafter. Additional cars registered to the same owner are \$10 each. Event T-shirts are \$15 and must be pre-ordered. The deadline for advanced registration and pre-ordering T-shirts is July 1.

Entry starts at 8:30AM and the show starts at 10, rain or shine, and awards are presented at 1:30PM. Popular vote judging, with awards for People's Choice, Best Daily Driver, Most Customized, and individual classes will be presented. The class awards are determined by the number of cars registered.

### Driving Directions

From US 101, exit at Sir Francis Drake Blvd. heading west. Bon Air Center is ½ mile on the left, opposite La Cuesta Drive, near the Wells Fargo Bank. 401 Sir Francis Drake Blvd, 94904



Fill out the form below and mail with the entry fee, or register and pay online at [www.MGOCFSF.org](http://www.MGOCFSF.org). One form is required for each car.

Mail before July 1, 2022 to:

*MGs by the Bay*  
320 B Monterey Blvd.  
San Francisco, CA 94131-3141

Make checks payable to **MGOC** or use PayPal on our website

**For information call**  
415-333-9699  
or visit [www.MGOCFSF.org](http://www.MGOCFSF.org)

Show Use Only

\$ / #

### Please print:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MG model: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

MG body style: ☐ Roadster ☐ Coupe

City: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Saloon ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Car color: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

T-shirt size: ☐ M ☐ L ☐ XL ☐ XXL

*T-shirts are \$30 each. There will only be a limited number of shirts available at the show.*

Short description of your car: \_\_\_\_\_

Has this car ever won First in Class at *MGs by the Bay*? ☐ Yes

**Release:** Neither I nor my heirs will hold the MG Owners Club or Bon Air Center liable for any loss, damage, or injury done to me, my party, or my vehicle, while engaged in this event or traveling to and from this event.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Remembering Joe Huffaker

Joe W. Huffaker 1927 - 2022, article submitted by John Hunt

Joe Huffaker, an icon of the sports car racing world since the 1960s, passed away peacefully in his Novato home on February 25, 2022. He was 95 years old. Born in 1927 in Terre Haute, Indiana, at age 17 Joe built a roadster out of various donor cars from junkyards and drove it to California in 1944.

In 1945 he enrolled in Marin Junior College (now College of Marin) where he received an education and met the love of his life, Jean Johannsen. Joe found a job as a welder at Al Stein's shop building midget race cars, where he learned a good deal about building cars, which he would put to good use a few years later.

Joe was also a true talent behind the wheel of a race car, having entered a few races known as "Harry Hotcake" back in those early days. He built his first sports car in 1953, the Huffaker Marston Special, which was followed by the more sophisticated Huffaker Knoop Special in 1956.

His career took a major step forward when he teamed up with British Car Importer, Kjell Qvale, to form the BMC Competition Department in San Francisco. The Huffaker Formula Junior and Genie Sports Racers were two very successful designs that came from this shop.

In 1963 Joe designed and built three cars which all qualified for the big show at the Indianapolis 500, the Liquid Suspension Specials. He was the first and youngest man to do so.

Joe ran his business, Huffaker Engineering, for more than 55 years in various locations between Marin and Sonoma Counties, but most prominently at Sonoma Raceway (a.k.a. Sears Point). Throughout the years his cars have won numerous Sports Car Club of America, International Motorsports Association and Trans Am championships, plus winning countless individual races throughout the U.S.

Today, many of Joe's cars have been restored and continue to race at historic car races in the United States, Europe, Canada, and beyond. Joe won many awards for his talent including being inducted to the Infineon Raceway (now Sonoma Raceway) Wall of Fame in 2007 and the Sports Car Club of America Hall of Fame in 2017.

Joe is survived by his wife of 73 years, Jean (Johannsen) Huffaker, whom he married in Larkspur, California on August 20, 1949. He is also survived by his three children, Susan Huffaker (Kris) Mellon, Joe (Leslie) Huffaker, and Lynn Huffaker. Joe is survived by three grandchildren.

## From SCCA.com:

For more than 30 years, Joe Huffaker Sr. was one of the most successful race car constructors. In 1954, he was contracted to build an Austin-Healey Special. The car, known as the Huffaker-Healey, was a common sight in the late 1950s on race tracks in Northern California. In 1959, Huffaker joined British Motor Cars in San Francisco to open a competition department. Known as BMC Competition Department, this effort spawned a very successful string of cars including the BMC Formula Juniors and Genie Sports Racers. During this era, BMC Competition Department became one of the largest race car manufacturers in the United States.

From 1964 to 1966, Huffaker's attention was turned toward Indianapolis 500 competition. He helped build the famous MG Liquid Suspension Specials, for which he received an engineering award for design and development. Huffaker also helped develop safety technology in the form of the deformable fuel cell.

Not forsaking SCCA racing, BMC Competition continued to build dominate production racecars such as MGBs and Jaguar XKEs. But in 1967, Huffaker left BMC and formed Huffaker Engineering where preparation of winning cars continued. These included SCCA championship winning MG Midgets, MGBs, Triumphs and Jensen-Healeys. In the 1980s, Huffaker Engineering built Pontiac cars for the Trans Am and IMSA series.

Following retirement, He left Huffaker Engineering in good hands with his son, Joe Huffaker, Jr.



## From Racer.com:

By [Marshall Pruett](#) March 24, 2022

One of motor racing's supremely inventive characters has passed. Joe Huffaker, whose free-thinking Indy 500 creations, numerous junior open-wheel and sports car designs, and racing teams made significant contributions to the sport, died in late February at the age of 95.

Born in 1927 in Indiana, it was a move out west to the San Francisco Bay Area where the Huffaker name would become forever linked to British cars and motor racing. Having built a couple of homemade race cars in the 1950s and competed under the pseudonym "Harry Hotcake" on a few occasions, it was Huffaker's turn towards learning to weld and the other race car fabrication arts where his immense creativity was provided an outlet.

A connection with Kjell Qvale, whose pioneering foreign car importation and sales business brought the products of BMC — the British Motors Corporation — to the West Coast, led to Huffaker taking charge of the San Francisco-based BMC Competition Department. It wasn't long before their racecar brand "Genie" was among the most prolific names in North American racing; at one point in the early 1960s, more Genie Formula Juniors and sports racers were being produced than any other domestic constructor.

"When I went to work for Qvale we ran a [Jaguar], one of the lightweight Jags and I maintained all those and did motors and all that for him," Huffaker told me in a 2011 interview. "I decided I thought I wanted to build a series of cars. Formula Juniors were just coming out in Europe. So we started building Formula Juniors and we built a whole run of those, front engine and rear engine cars. We built a bunch of small Genies, which were 1100cc to 2-liter, and we made the larger cars — V8s, Ford- and Chevrolet-powered — and built 20 of those.



"While we were doing that, he came up with the idea of going to Indy and he bought a Cooper. Put an Offy engine in it, stretched the chassis little bit. Had it about two thirds done and he came back from England with an Aston Martin engine that the factory talked him into. They said, 'This is a great thing. You'll sell Astons. Put this in the car and run it at Indy. That'll be great.'"

As the Indy 500 projects began to decline, Huffaker and Qvale turned their attention to other forms of racing with BMC-related products. SCCA regionals and nationals and the SCCA Trans Am and Can-Am series kept Huffaker's team busy; production-based racers representing Jensen-Healey, Triumph, Mini, and more spring forth from the team in the 1970s on through the 2000s. As one of the few independent road racing specialists on the West Coast that was capable of designing and building its own cars and engines, Huffaker Engineering developed into a powerful entity where auto manufacturers and privateers found a willing home for their various ambitions.

With high-volume chassis production demands slowing down in the 1980s, Huffaker Engineering came to the forefront as a powerful presence in IMSA's smaller GTU and GTP Lights classes. Building and fielding factory-linked Pontiac Fieros, the small mid-engine coupes were a success with 16 wins earned by Bob Earl and Terry Visger across 1985-'87 as the GTU category began to grow. It was a switch to prototypes in the GTP Lights class where the Huffaker team established itself as hardened competitor using the same four-cylinder Fiero engines it built and tuned for GTU.

Huffaker's Spice-Pontiac took three wins in 1988 and added its biggest victory the following year as Dan Marvin and Bob Lesnett combined to claim the GTP Lights win at the 12 Hours of Sebring. Huffaker's team also earned a reputation as one of the fastest pit crews in IMSA as the outfit routinely won the lucrative Pit Stop Competition events that were held by the series.

### Huffaker Indy 500 Efforts:

Three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Bobby Unser made history at the Speedway in a Huffaker chassis that carried the first turbocharged Offy engine. Formula 1 and Le Mans legend Pedro Rodriguez got his first taste of the Brickyard in a Cooper chassis retrofitted by Huffaker with an Aston Martin engine — the marque's only Indy appearance. Who could forget the Indy chassis he formed with Porsche engines mounted at the front and back, or his innovations with his liquid-filled suspensions? And we haven't even touched on his closed-wheel concepts.

Rodriguez qualified on his 1963 debut but was bumped from the field of 33 and later crashed the Cooper-Aston while trying to get back into the show. Huffaker had a better idea for 1964 and got approval

Continued on page 16



# Keep Planning for 2022

Y'all better enjoy your  
20s, 30s, and 40s.  
Because in your 50s,  
that check engine  
light is gonna come on.



## SPRING

May 14: Amy's Run, Triumphs, back side of Mt Hamilton\*  
Sun., May 22: Dixon All British Meet  
Wed., May 25: Logan's Run, Triumphs, South Santa Clara County, run to lunch\*  
June 6-10: NAMGAR GT in Colorado Springs  
June 18: SSTs Father's Day Tour, [sorrrysafariclub.com](http://sorrrysafariclub.com)  
**June 27 - July 1: GOF West, Buellton near Solvang**



## SUMMER

**July 16: MGs by the Bay, Bon Air, Greenbrae**  
July 28-31, Club T MG Rendezvous, Florence, OR,  
[madownsilver@gmail.com](mailto:madownsilver@gmail.com)  
**Aug. 6: MGOc Annual Picnic, Marsha & George**  
**Sept. TBD: Caravan to cricket match, John Hunt**  
**Oct. 14-16: Back to the Beach, Vicky & Steve Kellogg, Carmel**

Cartoons submitted by Marla Preston

\* [https:// triumphtravelers. org/](https://triumphtravelers.org/) MGs welcome

## JR Models Foreign Car Shop

Report from JR Boye, former club member and MG mechanic, now in Texas

I've been working on some background buildings for my train layout. Most of the them are "tribute" buildings, not exact models of actual structures. This one is a tribute to the shop my business occupied in 2006-2011. It was in Burlingame and had an angled façade and arched roof like this one has. I represented it as a shop in the early 1960s. The name, "T 'n T" is a tribute to my late business partner, Tom, and to the current owner, Tyrone.

Also modeled in tribute are the Burlingame Hobby in the Plaza, Adeline Market and a large apartment building that is on Floribunda Drive. This area roughly corresponds with California Drive in Burlingame and Millbrae. There is still a lot of work to do!



Continued from page 14  
from Qvale to build three new cars from scratch, using four-cylinder Offenhauser engines built by Meyer-Drake. Enter Huffaker's sleek MG Liquid Suspension Specials which earned a best finish of 13th by sports car veteran Walt Hansgen, and three of the cars made the race in 1965 with Jerry Grant joining Bob Veith and Hansgen.

As customer sales began to pick up, Huffaker's best Indy 500 result followed in 1966 as Eddie Johnson drove to seventh at Indy in a car owned by the late Tassi Vatis; Bobby Unser placed eighth in his turbo Huffaker-Offy.

If setting the trend with a turbocharged Indy car wasn't enough of a design challenge for Huffaker that year, he was asked by his old fabrication mentor and midget racer Al Stein to build a chassis to carry a pair of air-cooled flat-six Porsche engines.

"He says, 'Hey, I want to build a car and go to Indianapolis and I want to put two Porsche motors in it.'" Huffaker recalled. "He had [East Bay Porsche specialists] Lukes and Shorman, and they built the motors, as a last-ditch thing to do in racing.

"I said, 'I kind of doubt that's going to work very well but it'll be something to do.' I couldn't talk him out of it. Without tying the front and rear together some way I didn't think it would be very good. Nowadays, you could do it electronically but then you couldn't do that. Anyhow, we built it. It's not that difficult to do. It was pretty straightforward. You build a rear engine and put another one in front. The front engine drove the front and the rear engine drove the rear.

"It was just the mechanical linkages between the two. As I recall, we didn't have a clutch; it was straight through into one of the drives, into one of the engines, and the other one fired up and pushed it off. So we only had that one gearbox in it."



*I wouldn't normally give so much space to someone but Joe Huffaker played a very important role in making MG and other British sports cars successful in the States. - Editor*

Above: Huffaker raced MGBs from beginning to end. Two-engine Porsche Indy car. Top: Innovative MG Liquid Suspension Special didn't use an MG engine. (Or is the Offenhauser now an MG engine?)



## a veteran at 24

Throughout the entire interview our greatest difficulty was in getting Phil to talk about himself. He would talk vividly, enthusiastically, and at length about cars, motors, driving techniques, racing in general, and other drivers; but when we pulled the talk back to Phil Hill, his speech would become halting and almost apologetic.

We did learn that he pored over a borrowed book on European road racing and became an ardent champion of the sport even while he was working on the midjets. His first actual contact with sports cars did not come about until 1949. "That was before there were any road races," he explained, "but while I was watching hot rods at an early Culver City road circuit one Sunday, Louis Van Dyke and Roger Barlow ran a few demonstration laps in an MG-TC. It was the first I had ever seen, and within a month I had one."

From that time on he entered every racing event he could find. He managed a few firsts in MGs and, as he became known, received and accepted offers to drive other cars; but when he brought a Jaguar XK-120 back from England, where he had been studying at the British automotive plants, he suddenly became known as a constant and colorful threat for first place honors.

"I was very fortunate in those early days," he said. "Once at Carrell Speedway I won everything—fastest qualifying time, won the trophy dash, won the heat, and then took the main event. In those days I was obsessed by a compulsion to win—to just open up full bore and go through everything on the field. It's a lot different now as we all learn more—it's tougher, and the competition is more keen."

We were impressed by this somewhat introspective analysis, and encouraged it. He went on, "Lately, the pleasure of a race has settled down into a lot of things, mechanical preparation of the car, the friends you make in this business, and the old fun of just letting a car go becomes a sort of fear. It is hard to explain. So many things can happen. There is a fear of putting too much strain on the car too early in the race, or of making some sloppy mistake . . . but don't get me wrong. I still love an all-out handicap better than anything, and I still love to win. Matter of fact, I'd like to win a race: I haven't since Pebble Beach, you know."

This oversimplification is not strictly true, but we did not interrupt and he continued. "Full bore, all-out driving can pay off in the first lap or two and get you a good position before anyone gets organized, but on the other hand, take the 1951 Elkhart Lake race. George Malbrand and I were driving Hornburg's Jag Special, and



*At another Carrell meet, Phil drove Bill Cramer's V-8 60-powered TC, "2 Jr." When this car was sold to Jack Burkhardt last year, Phil drove it again at Torrey Pines and led the field for many laps*

we thought we would be lucky to place tenth. All we had to do was count the cars: there were three Cunninghams, three Cad-Allards, and five Ferraris to beat. I figured there was no sense in tearing the car apart against that competition. In addition, we were afraid of Jaguar brakes—we had experienced fade with them—so we used them carefully and, as it turned out, probably just right. Anyway, driving with about tenth spot in mind, I suddenly found myself right behind the leaders and finished there for third place and a class win behind John Fitch in a Cunningham and Mike Graham in an Allard. So I don't know. There is a lot I have to learn about driving."

As we talked, we began to get the picture. He is a young man completely devoted to cars and racing; and, like all sincerely dedicated people, he has turned, as he begins to mature, to an introspective analysis of both his field and his personal relationship to it. When he switched his interest to road racing, he brought along the enthusiasm and drive, the will to win that pervades the atmosphere of dirt track and championship racing.

In the past, Phil has always had to fight the superior displacement of the Allards and Cunninghams with a Jaguar XK-120 and, for a while, with his 13-year-old 2.9 Alfa Romeo; but in spite of those odds, he has remained a constant threat for first place. At Reno he forced Bill Pollack to use all the speed and acceleration of his Allard for lap after lap until a defective oil pressure relief valve in the Jaguar caused a long pit stop. But, as Phil puts it, "There is nothing I would say against stroking along in a powerful car with the most speed and acceleration on the track, but I get

more pleasure out of working for a win in the smaller ones."

At this point we had to ask about his 2.9 Alfa Romeo that created such a sensation at the second Pebble Beach race. "I can't claim any logic in buying that car." He laughed with some embarrassment. "But it was beautiful! Besides I had an idea my Jag, bored out to 3.9, was developed as far as it would go. Just the noise that Alfa made with its blowers screaming was probably a big influence. It was a great car, but it was thirteen years old. The factory dies had been bombed out during the war and I couldn't keep it in racing shape."

Phil has been hounded by bad luck lately. A wheel fell off the Alfa at the Palm Springs 1950 race. At the most recent Palm Springs race a universal joint of the Cunningham he was driving let go in the first hundred yards. Then there was the oil pressure relief valve at Reno. But Phil has hopes to overcome this jinx by exacting mechanical preparation for the coming races. In addition to the Pebble Beach race, he plans to enter his own new 2.6 Ferrari (turn to page 45)



*During practice at one of the early Carrell Speedway meets. This MG was his first sports car and he hasn't been able to think about any other type of machinery since*

# Stay Cool

From Barry Rosenberg, British Car Service, Talking Rock, Georgia

Want to keep your car running a long and healthy time? DO NOT LET IT RUN HOT!!!!

I have another overheated car in the shop. How many times over the past 47 years have I said if something goes wrong with your car while you are driving it, STOP!!! Low oil pressure; stop! Temp gauge showing high; stop! Amp or volt gauge showing no charge; stop! It may cause some inconvenience such as a tow home; but it could save a lot of money.

This car's problem could have been a very minor one but was allowed to escalate into a blown head gasket. So let us look at what could cause a car to run hot. Loss of coolant; radiator blocked (internal or external); fan belt broken; timing too high; compression too high; stuck thermostat; blown head gasket (could be the cause or caused by running hot) or carb mixture way off.

Most old British cars have a temp gauge so watch it, do not ignore it. If yours does not work, fix it. Some are cheap to fix needing only a new sending unit while others require a new gauge. A blown fuse could cause the gauge to not work but you should notice other things, such as turn signals, not working. On most of our LBCs, if your temp gauge and turn signals don't work, neither do your brake lights so stop and check it out if the gauge quits while you are driving.

Now, back to the causes. A slow leak can be as bad as a blown hose as they both cause a coolant loss. On some of the LBCs, if a hose blows and you lose all your coolant rapidly, your temp gauge may spike toward hot and then return back to the normal range. MGBs are bad about this. And MGBs have a ridiculous lower hose with a small hose "spliced and glued" into it for the heater.

On a lot of the new hoses, this little hose can break off and lose all the water in seconds. Your gauge will go to hot and then drop back to normal as the sender does not read accurately off of steam. And steam does not cool an engine. If you get a new hose with this small attachment, grab the small hose, and shake like crazy for a few minutes. If it stays attached, you may be good to use it. I have had one break off after 10 minutes running time as it sat in the shop. What would have happened if it lasted 30 minutes and the car made it to the interstate? That would be Ok because my supplier would have given me another new \$18 dollar hose. No, they would not pay for any engine damage! None of them do.

You may have noticed and/or questioned why I did not mention a bad fan if your car has electric fans. Most cars do not need a fan while driving down the road, only at stops. They removed the engine driven fans from most cars to improve fuel mileage and emissions. Once a car reaches about 20 MPH, the air rushing thru the radiator is enough to keep the car in the normal range. If your temp increases at a stop and lowers once under way, all is normal. If the temp does not lower after driving a few minutes, there may be a problem. STOP if the temp continues to climb.

If a fan belt breaks on most LBCs, your water pump will cease spinning and pumping water thru the engine. You should notice a bad fan belt when your amp or voltmeter shows no charge and/or your ignition light shows bright red. Again, STOP!

There used to be a problem with some aftermarket water pumps that were made with a plastic impeller. Water corrosion or electrolysis would slowly dissolve the impeller and the pump would still look good from the outside but push no water thru the engine. This took a little bit to discover at first but is some-thing I always think about. Especially if you pump has an aluminum housing. I think most suppliers have stopped selling the plastic impeller pumps by now.

If you have watched any racing, you should know that a blocked radiator will cause an engine to run hot. In racing, the blockage is almost always some-thing in front of the radiator opening or stuck to the core like a sheet of paper or plastic. If the car was running normal and you suddenly notice a rise in engine temp, you could have picked up some plastic bag from the road so; STOP and check it out.

An internal blockage is a little harder to detect. Most of our radiators have brass cooling tube and fins. I know some of you have gone to aluminum radiators, but those that haven't, your tubes become clogged from age, corrosion, or junk in the cooling system like rust. It has gotten harder to find a radiator shop that will "rod" out an old radiator, but they do still exist. You take the radiator to them, and they unsolder the top and bottom and run a rod thru the tubes.

You could buy a new radiator for less, but a lot of the new "China" radiators have been known to not cool very well. Be cautious of where you buy one. And while on the topic of radiators, what about coolant? I like a 25% antifreeze mix. Water cools best. 25% will be enough to keep your engine from freezing in most southern states and it will keep the in-side of the engine from rusting. Water pump lubrication is a myth in coolants. If any of the coolant got to the seals and bearings, you would have a leak. And, as the impeller does not touch anything in the engine as it spins, it needs no lubrication.



Thermostats, a very misunderstood item, are prone to failure and most fail in the closed position. A thermostat is a small part that blocks the coolant flow thru the engine, on purpose. It allows the engine to warm up a little quicker and when at some optimum preselected temp, opens and lets the coolant flow. Unless it is extremely cold where you are driving, the thermostat does not regulate the temp of your engine. It does, however, provide some heat to the passengers.

Thermostats come in several temp ranges, 160, 180, 190, and a few more. Once your engine reaches the temp of the thermostat, it remains open until the engine cools down below that temp; usually after you shut it off and let it sit a few hours. If you have a 160 inserted in your engine, your engine will not run 160 degrees because of the thermostat. It will run warmer just because engines run hotter than 160. This is perfectly normal. A lot of times, I have had customers say their engine is running over 180 and they want a cooler thermostat. Sorry, once the temp passes 160, the thermostat has no effect of temp.

I like to take an old thermostat and cut out the center section leaving the outer ring. This is a blanking sleeve. It allows coolant to circulate but with a little resistance, so it does not circulate too fast. There is a huge science behind coolant circulating in engines, so I won't go into it very much.

But, if coolant circulates too fast, it may not pick up enough heat from the internals of the engine to cool things down. And when the coolant flows too fast, it can leave little pockets of coolant in tight corners (of which there are many in a cast block) that do not get circulated into the flow. These little pockets can become steam and cause overheating and cracked heads and blocks. Also, coolant needs to spend enough time in the radiator to dissipate its heat to the air. I install blanking sleeves in most of my engines, so they do not overheat, of which two has failed to follow my theory. But one was a bad thermostat in a car with a bad temp gauge.

Now to what caused the other and my latest problem: timing way too high. A car seemed to stop running after traveling a long time running very well. There was no overheating or any problem that seemed obvious as to the cause of the stoppage. Several people stopped to help, and a determination was made the points had closed. Simple enough; get out a screwdriver and a feeler gauge and set the points.

No one had a feeler gauge, so they guessed at a gap and the car started. Unfortunately, the gap was way too big and upon testing at the shop, it advanced the timing 17 degrees. This is the difference between a .015" gap and a .035" gap. The car was set to run at 32 degrees BTDC at 3,000 rpm. Now, it was running at 49 degrees BTDC. This meant the fuel/air mixture was igniting way before the pistons reached the top of the cylinders. They were trying to compress the fuel mixture while it was trying to explode and expand.

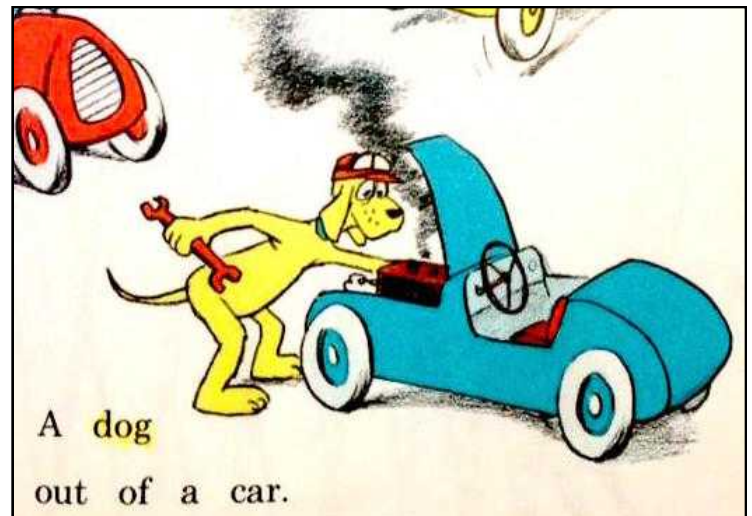
The science behind this says it will make the car run hot. After driving just fine for 30 or 40 miles before it stopped, it ran hot in less than 3 miles. It was blowing water out of the overflow tank like crazy, lots of water. The engine could have been saved at this point if they had let it cool and added water and set the timing. But, no, they did none of that. They continued to drive it until it ran hot again and started making odd noises. Then they stopped it.

Upon arrival at the shop on a wrecker; we found the head gasket blown and water in the oil pan. We replaced the gasket after checking the head and block for warpage of which none was found. We drained the water and oil from the pan and replaced the oil filter.

In this case, it was acting like a water filter as there was very little oil in the filter; it was all water. And we know water does not lubricate very well. I think the noise was only a dry rocker shaft squeaking and the engine ran quietly after oil pressure was returned. It had good oil pressure after only a few seconds of running. The small amount of water left throughout the engine will evaporate the first long drive and do no harm.

We cut open the filter and poured the old oil thru a paint filter to make sure there was no bearing material in them. All looked good, the owner dodged a big bullet. A compression check showed 2 cylinders a little low, 135 and 145 where the rest were around 155 to 160. I think the rings will seat themselves and be OK.

So, in summation, if your gauge shows the temp rising at an alarming rate, be alarmed and stop to check it out. This car will live to run many thousands of miles giving enjoyment to the owners. And may-be, just maybe, they will carry a feeler gauge and extra water in the future.



# James Bond MGs

The Peachtree MG Registry newsletter featured an article about the James Bond movie cars. The author mentioned that he had two 1/43<sup>rd</sup> scale models of MGs that appeared in his movies, a TD and an MGB. Well, he was partly right on both counts.

First the TD appears to be a very poor model. It looks like a TD but the proportions are just a little bit off in every dimension. With the help of the internet he found that the model is not an MG but an LP Lafer, a Brazilian-built MG TD lookalike based on a VW Beetle drivetrain. In the movie ***Moonraker*** featuring Roger Moore, the M16 agent in Rio de Janeiro drives one of these.

The MGB appears in another Roger Moore Bond film. It was driven by Mary Goodnight in ***The Man with the Golden Gun***. She picks up 007 from the airport in the MGB and drives him to his hotel. He didn't drive it himself but appears on the left side of the right-hand-drive MG, likely causing the mistake.

Both models are part of a series of over 100 James Bond movie cars by Universal Hobbies and available for \$20 to \$40 on eBay and Amazon.



## Classified Ads

**Ads are free to MGOC members and \$6.00 per month for non-members. Some ads picked up from other clubs.**

**MGB Parts:** New Aluminum head, complete, professionally ported, non-smog. \$1300; Chromed (not polished) valve cover (used), \$100; Two bumpers, originals re-chromed; Two early original MGB grilles, one stock, one modified, \$50 each. Lots of other parts. Member Ken Gittings, 341-206-0156 (Posted 4/22)

**1958 Mquette ZB Project:** 4-door sedan MG. Heavy lifting done. New paint. Rebuilt 3-main MGB motor with 5-speed installed. Front disk brakes; dual master cylinder; MGB rear axle; new wire harness. Car is running. Final assembly required! \$9000. Member George Steneberg. 510-525-9125, [j2george@pacbell.net](mailto:j2george@pacbell.net) (Posted 5/22)

**Midget tow bar/trailer hitch assembly:** Located in Vallejo. \$225 or Offer. Member Michael Illes, 510-333-2905, [euro\\_lifestyle@hotmail.com](mailto:euro_lifestyle@hotmail.com) (Posted 5/22)

**1968 MGB:** It's disassembled, many new and reconditioned parts, roll bar, o/d transmission. I have books, tools (I'm putting together a list) and a new engine hoist. Member Steven Patton, [steven\\_patton@hotmail.com](mailto:steven_patton@hotmail.com) (Posted 4/22)

**MG Paint:** I have a full gallon of Red for a 1971 MGB in acrylic enamel. I also have 2 quarts of Ivory for an MG TD or a TR3 in Valspar polyurethane. I have 2 quarts of Autumn Red (1951 TD) in PPG polyurethane. Single stage. \$75 each. Dan Shockey (Posted 4/22)

**Enclosed Trailer for Rent:** Enclosed car trailer for rent (16' x 8'). Trailer has integrated braking system and lights, 12 volt Electric Winch. Reasonable rates. Eric Baker (510) 517-2165



**We list ads for 3 months. Advise if you want them extended. For additional ads, see prior issues of *The Octagon* or [MGOCsf.org](http://MGOCsf.org)**



## Member Notes

### China Camp from Marty Rayman:

In the trailer to *Blood Alley* you can see how China Camp was used. Wow!

### George's Magnette from Mike Jacobsen:

I'm trying to help George sell his Magnette. The car is a deal because George wants it gone and the heavy lifting is already done. We just have to find someone looking for a project.

### Biking in Spain from Felix Wong:

Things are well in Spain. A month ago, we saw a red, chrome-bumper MGB in Ourense. That's the only MG I have seen in Spain in the last couple of months. Yesterday I rode the bike I shipped here. It was my first bike ride in Spain: It's more dangerous to ride here than Colorado. "The ride in Spain falls mainly on the plain." (Ed.)

### Regard Andy's E-type engine from Mike J.:

Congratulations! I'm surprised that the front of the car doesn't float with the engine out. The "new" engine for my Integra arrived on Friday. Should be in the car in a week or so.

### Regarding the poster photo, from Mike J.:

I just noticed that the car is parked in a red zone. Too funny!

### Midget Tow Bar from Michael Illes:

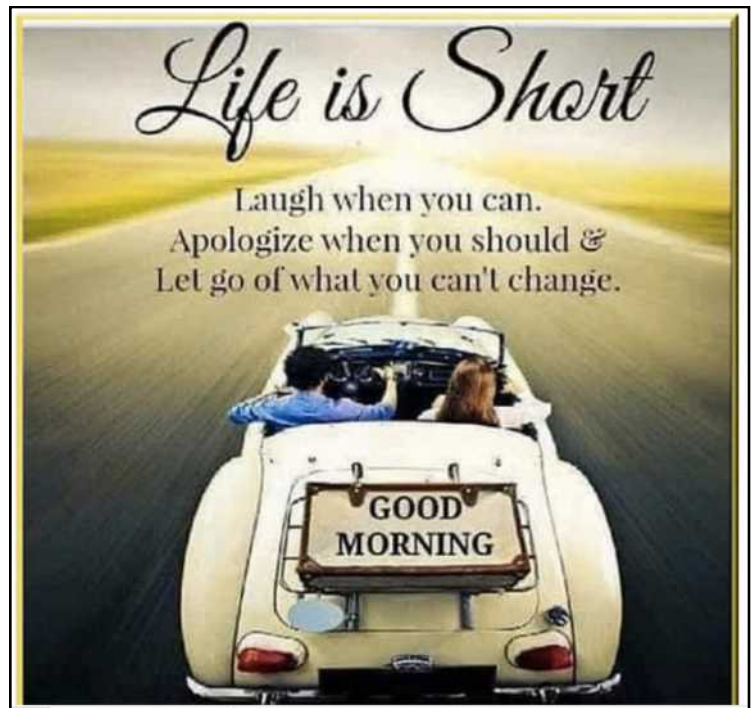
I have a trailer hitch assembly for sale for an Austin Healey Sprite/MG Midget that I do not use. It came with the Sprite I purchased a number of years ago from Rod Sweiger. Thanks.

### Club events from Andy P.:

The only thing going on in May is Dixon although Marla and I will be in Ireland. Nothing for June as yet with the GOF that month. BTW, George and Marcia are displaying the TD at the 70th Birthday Party at Bon Air on May 7th.

PA for Sale: I know of a beautiful, frame-up restoration PA for sale. \$25k. Contact Dan.

Right: Drive Your MGA Day is May 1. Can still join in a bit late!



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## North American MGB Register





MGOC *The Octagon*  
320 B Monterey Blvd.  
San Francisco, CA 94131-3141

This style of lift appears useful for MGs in a standard garage

Right: Is it that used motor oil in the soil that gives this wine its unique bouquet?



**South Marin Tour**  
**Photo: Andy Preston**