



THE OCTAGON

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



North American MGB Register



Since 1957!



Shockey Photo

Leprechaun Don Livingood
and his green coach from
Oregon on the St. Patrick's
Day Tour, 2019

March 2021

**St. Pat's Day
Tour March 17!**

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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COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING IN *THE OCTAGON*

Direct all questions about advertising to **Mike Jacobsen** at 415-333-9699 or MikesMuseum@yahoo.com. 2005 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. 1st, and fees for a partial year will be pro-rated to that date. Deadline for ad materials is the 10th 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 15th of the month preceding the issue in which you want them to appear. Please email all contributions to magnut_dan@hotmail.com or send them to: Dan Shockey, 10 Willis Rd., Scotts Valley, CA 95066.

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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MGOC & SSTS invite you to a Safe and Socially Distanced St. Paddy's Day Tour, Wed Mar 17, 2021

We hope you can join us for a picnic at Spring Lake, Santa Rosa
Bring your own chairs and picnic lunch to enjoy at the Lake.

Note: Spring Lake is just 5 mins from 101 for the trip home.



CORNERSTONE GARDENS our first stop



SPRING LAKE for picnic lunch

IF IT'S RAINING THE TOUR WILL BE CANCELLED & RESCHEDULED

Please wear masks and practice Social Distancing at all times.

Date: Wednesday March 17, 2021

Organizers: Andy and Marla Preston 707 795 3480

Meeting Place: Harvest Market, 155 San Marin Dr, Novato 94945, with a full tank of gas, there are no gas stations along San Marin Drive,

Time: Meet at 9:30 for a 10:00 departure

Tour: We will meet outside the Harvest Market in Novato where you can pick up a sandwich for lunch at their deli. Our first stop is Cornerstone Sonoma Marketplace, 23570 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, where you can get a snack or sandwich, browse the eclectic shops and stroll around their beautiful gardens.

We will leave Cornerstone and drive through the beautiful Sonoma Valley countryside lined with vineyards to our final destination at Spring Lake Regional Park in Santa Rosa, Newanga Ave entrance. We will park and have a short walk to the lake where we can enjoy our lunch. Bring your own lunch and chairs. There is a \$7 fee for parking.

Bathrooms (with running water) are available at all stops.

Please RSVP: to Andy or Marla Preston at 707 795 3480 or marlapreston@hotmail.com by March 14 so we can send you final instructions and tour directions.



From the Editor

Hello, isolated bored MG folks,

I find myself in the position of having the newsletter all done – except for my column. It is a mad rush to get the rest together then I step back to consider what I would like to contribute. These are very odd and challenging times.

I have done little 'MG' lately. I filled up the MGA and drove it a bit. I also ran the PA to drive out the bugs. I have been remodeling the laundry area to be more like 'house' than 'garage.' There were many cabinets there where I had stuffed many of my car and home supplies and it took a good while to relocate those. Now I can't find anything.

We had a holiday weekend with Valentine's Day and with Tet, the Vietnamese version of Chinese New Year. I got a new red dragon tunic! (See photo.)

The 'Ghost Track' series has reminded me of what the sports car scene was in the 1960s and earlier. I only caught the end of it really, getting my crusty TR3 in 1971. We still had Friday evening rallies in college. Owning a sports car meant enjoying it. We were young and innocent then, I think, unaware of the dangers. Buy an MG, tape the headlamps and go racing! During the 70s, I saw all those fun things get regulated and controlled – and more specialized and expensive. Then the gas crisis made even "joy riding" antisocial.

The MGOC had a member die on a local rally (early 60s). His TD went over a bank. His wife was only slightly injured so perhaps he hit his head or perhaps it was the solid steering column. We promised to never forget him.

I look forward to the St. Paddy's Day Tour. It will be good to get out with the MGs and MG folks – even without the close contact. Hope to see many of you there.

Come spring and no virus!



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Member Notes

From Paul Williams:

I saw Marty Rayman's photo of my car ('Eight ball') in the latest Octagon. That's the '57 MGA 1500 I brought over from the UK in 2016. The story of the '57 car is unusual: I found it on a southern California farm about 10 years ago, had it shipped to the UK where I got it changed it to RHD, raced it a bit, and then moved here.

The guy in Marty's photo is Clint Wright of British Car Repairs in San Rafael. He and I have spent the Covid months rebuilding the engine and it's running well. My 18-year-old son (whose car it really is) has insisted the paintwork, which he's known for more than half his life, stay the same. I have been amazed by the number of drivers who say to me, 'Don't change a thing,' (referring to the stunning paint job). Pic: Son, Paul flank Andy



From Bev Morgan:

Here is the CSRG schedule for 2021, with a photo of a lovely racing MGB. As for spectators at the April, May and June events, Scott Brown advises that it will depend on the county regulations at the time (Sonoma, Glenn and Monterey, respectively). Charity Challenge will (most likely) be spectator-friendly, but check CSRG racing.org closer to October to be sure.

The black MGA is not on the road yet this year. Tom is still inundated in rebuilding the Morgan motor and re-welding the trailer. Happy Motoring!

CSRG
Classic Sports Racing Group - Vintage Racing Since 1968

2021 SCHEDULE
WWW.CSRGRACING.ORG

APRIL 9-11
DAVID LOVE VINTAGE RACES
SONOMA RACEWAY

MAY 15-16
THUNDERHILL VINTAGE RACES
THUNDERHILL RACEWAY PARK

JUNE 5-6
LAGUNA AT LAST
LAGUNA SECA VINTAGE RACES

OCTOBER 1-3
18TH ANNUAL CHARITY CHALLENGE
VINTAGE RACES
SONOMA RACEWAY

NOVEMBER 6-7
CSRG 54TH SEASON FINALE
& AWARDS DINNER
THUNDERHILL RACEWAY PARK

From Don Davis:

I especially liked the reference to the SCCA races in the Candlestick Park parking lot. I never went to them but remember reading about them. I did go to the Pebble Beach races in 1952. A pal and I sat behind the hay bales and spent the night throwing our sleeping bags on a hillside in Carmel and cooking dinner on our Coleman stove - my Boy Scout training really paid off!

From Andy Preston:

Marla and I are planning on driving to the GOF in Oregon in July. We haven't decided what car to drive yet. Marla will probably prefer the GT with AC but I'd prefer the blue B; far more fun to drive. We have booked our room and they only had 2 rooms left in the block. Phone them up and book your room NOW. Do it on the phone not online.

From Mike Jacobsen:

The NAMGAR national meet in Colorado Springs is in 2022. It ought to be fine to travel by then, and I plan to drive to that one. We could set up a caravan like we had to/from Breckenridge years ago. The NAMGBR meet for 2022 will be in Ontario, Canada.

From Mindy Hungerman:

Working from home for a med device company, keeping very busy. Can't wait to get back in the shop to give the B a spring makeover: moisturizing fluids and maybe some new shoes (tires). The best remedy I've found for my Covid blues is a trip up Mt. Diablo with the rumble of the V8 and a dose of sunshine. Looking forward to the next in-person club get-together.



New Members!

Welcome Roger Van Craeynest of San Rafael with a 1952 MG TD that is undergoing its third frame up restoration

Welcome back Carl and Dian Brown of San Lorenzo with a 1966 MGB/GT and a 1970 MGB Roadster. They are active in the Sorry Safari Club

And welcome back Chris Attias of Felton with a 1964 MGB Roadster that is currently under mechanical restoration

Welcome Timothy Fuller of Half Moon Bay with a 1957 MGA which has been non-op since 1972



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How to reinstall pieces on my MGA is proving frustrating as a solo experience. I would love help from any and all that would be able to be available with photos of their cars, and any experience in their restorations. After this car, I have a 1965 MGB that I will get from my cousin. It was my mother's car while I was growing up.

The MGA was purchased by my aunt and uncle from the original owner in 1962 and was only driven around San Francisco (there was only 13,000 miles on it when I got it). When they divorced in 1972, my aunt sold the car to my uncle in Sacramento who drove it on weekends until 1978. In 1980, he took it apart to restore and never finished.

The MGA was in a sorry state and I started a ground up restoration. I would say I am 60% done. It's been tough, since I didn't have visuals prior to it going to pieces. It was in pieces when I got it.

- Tim

**Welcome Ken Collins of
Cloverdale with a 1979 Midget**

I'm having mechanical issues and budget issues and need advice. Where is the best MG repair garage near Cloverdale where I won't get overcharged? It is fun having this car but I can't afford major repairs right now. It's been a sweet car since I got it in 2004, and looks-wise, it's excellent. I have decided that I want to find a buyer for it.

- Ken





President's Ponderings

MG Prices

Have you noticed the prices of MGs recently? There definitely seems to be an upsurge in the market based on recent prices on "Bring a Trailer" with many cars selling way over the value listed in "Hagerty Valuation tools". Several early MGBs have sold for high 20s and several MGAs have sold for high 30s and these aren't concours cars either. In fact just this week an MGB went for \$29,000 and an MGA for \$39,000, they were both nice cars but nowhere near concours condition. Restomods are also doing very well and MGBs with V8 power are selling for good money; in fact there was an MGA with a Rover V8 in it which was very nicely done and went for \$48,000 last month. Maybe time to swap out the 1600 in my Coupe!

I think this is a positive sign for our hobby and I put it down to the online auction site "Bring a Trailer" where anyone can have immediate access to all types of collector cars and be able to bid on them. You only need 2 bidders who want the same car and you get good money! It's also good to know that if you keep your car in good running condition you should be able to get a decent price when and if you ever decide to sell it.

Garage Door Opener Update

If you read my column last month you'll know that I passed on the estimate to raise my existing garage door track by 3" and install a Lift Master "Jack Shaft" garage door opener because it was too much. Well, the owner of the company came around to take a look at the job and gave me a wonderful price which I couldn't pass up. So I now have a very quiet opener and nothing hanging down from the ceiling and have gained another 3" of height over the car on my car lift; all very neat. BTW I can also open and close it with my iPhone! I highly recommend this type of opener, which is also known as a "Side winder" because it attaches to the end of the spring shaft.

Brake fluid leak

For some time now I've noticed that the front brakes on the GT have been sticking a little but not really enough to worry about. A couple of weeks ago after driving the route for the St. Paddy's Day tour I noticed a small drop of brake fluid on the drivers side floor mat. I traced it back and found it was dripping down the brake pedal, which normally indicates a leaking master cylinder. I checked the fluid level and it was a little low so I decided it was time for a complete front end brake job. (I replaced both rear cylinders a year ago). The tandem master cylinder is very difficult to work on as are the brake calipers so I ordered a new master cylinder, calipers and flex lines. The parts arrived today so I'll update on my progress in the next issue.



We hope to see many of you on our St. Paddy's Day tour, so stay safe and see you all soon,

Andy





MG Love

by Don Cowgill

It was the summer of 2004 that I acquired my TD. It came as a rolling chassis on a flatbed along with a 1967 MGB engine/OD transmission and lots of boxes of parts – perfect as my retirement project. Rod Schweiger had obtained it in 1986 from a SF policeman, who kept it for parts. Rod had planned to remake it pre-war style with cycle fenders, upgraded mechanics & brakes. I re-mounted the engine as low and far forward as possible to make room for my big feet in the footwell, cut out the floorboards, fabricated a transmission cover that just cleared the overdrive, and assembled an exhaust manifold.

Within a few years (still working full time), he was on the road with MGB electrics, black-faced Triumph gauges, and Sprite bucket seats. He ran like a top, but was eight different colors with lots of dents including one white rusty front fender that really stood out. He got lots of looks – one youngster remarked, “Look, there goes Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.” Many friends wanted us to keep him that way, but over time, rusting fenders needed some primer for protection. That dull look prompted daughter Marci and me to paint whiskers on his fenders to restore some of his fun character.

When I finally got around to a paint job in 2014, I gave him new, removable whiskers made from an old tomato cage. “Wiskers” is much fun to drive and has been on tours to Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona – and I still haven’t retired.

Ever since high school days, I’d wanted an English sports car. My dream was an Austin Healey. However, we had just started a family and were pretty poor after many years of college. It was 1975 and I had just landed a new job in Albuquerque and was beginning to get my feet on the ground when I spotted an ad on the bulletin board at work: Blue 1966 MGB, some rust, only \$450! What a deal, I thought. I phoned the number and arranged for the owner to bring it to work so I could take a look. Love – in spite of all the rust – Love! I gave him 400 bucks and took it home the next day, watching the roadway move by beneath my feet.

My new baby was up on blocks for several weeks of bodywork on the rocker panels, fenders, and floors. I was in a hurry to get her on the road with little additional investment, so the patches were done with sheet metal, pop-rivets, lots of Bondo and a \$39.95 paint job. I just hoped I could get a couple years of fun before she disintegrated on the highway. Around 1980, the rear spring mount did pop up through the floor behind the driver seat, but a couple feet of angle iron and she was back on the road.

I’m still driving that Blue-B to work after 40 years and 325,000 miles. True, I’ve rebuilt the engine and transmission a couple times, added overdrive and recently, a new paint job. With a luggage carrier strapped on the trunk lid, we’ve taken her skiing and on camping trips. I’ve fixed her flats with tire spoons in campgrounds at Great Sand Dunes, CO and Lake Quinalt, WA; reset her fuel pump points and ignition timing at interstate off-ramps. Nearly every part of her is still original and many are hand rebuilt. Overall, she’s been very reliable and I still enjoy my time keeping her going, too.

Maris became part of Blue-B’s life in the late 1970’s and experienced the road trips with us. It was within this little car, that we fell in love and generated many precious memories. The Blue-B will always be a part of our lives together. And – Maris recently told me – she would have been long gone if I’d gotten a Healey.

MG TD

- year of manufacture: 1952
- engine number: 18GB-RU-H 86681
- chassis number: TD20054
- exterior color: cobalt blue on pewter
- interior color: light blue
- modifications: “wiskers”

MGB

- year of manufacture: 1966
- engine number: 18GB-U-H 24122
- chassis number: GHN3L/72199
- exterior color: powder blue

We lost Don on January 1. See February newsletter.

Ghost Track: Vaca Valley Raceway

Vacaville once a racing town!

By Ian Thompson, *Daily Republic*

At one time, drivers from as far away as England came to Vacaville to race. At its height in 1965 and 1966, the Sports Car Club of America held part of its national championship series here, and the roaring thunder of dragsters was a common sound.

The idea to build a raceway east of Vacaville goes all the way back to late 1946, according to research done by local historian and Vacaville Heritage Council member Doug Rodgers, who wrote a history of the raceway in the 2011 *Solano Historian*.

The track was located on vacant land on the northwest corner of Lewis and Weber Road just south of what was then Highway 40. Rodgers described what remains of the raceway now as little more than "a ghost track" with little more than patches of weed-dominated asphalt, a lonely power pole and a decrepit entry gate.

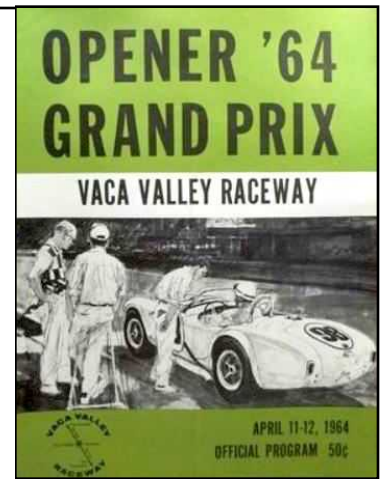
"It just crumbled away," Rodgers said, adding that almost all of the track was disked under after it was closed to keep local kids from sneaking their cars onto the track for impromptu races.

Its promoters in the 1950s said it was the second track in the state to be built for sports car racing and designed in cooperation with the Sport Car Club of America for maximum driver and spectator safety.

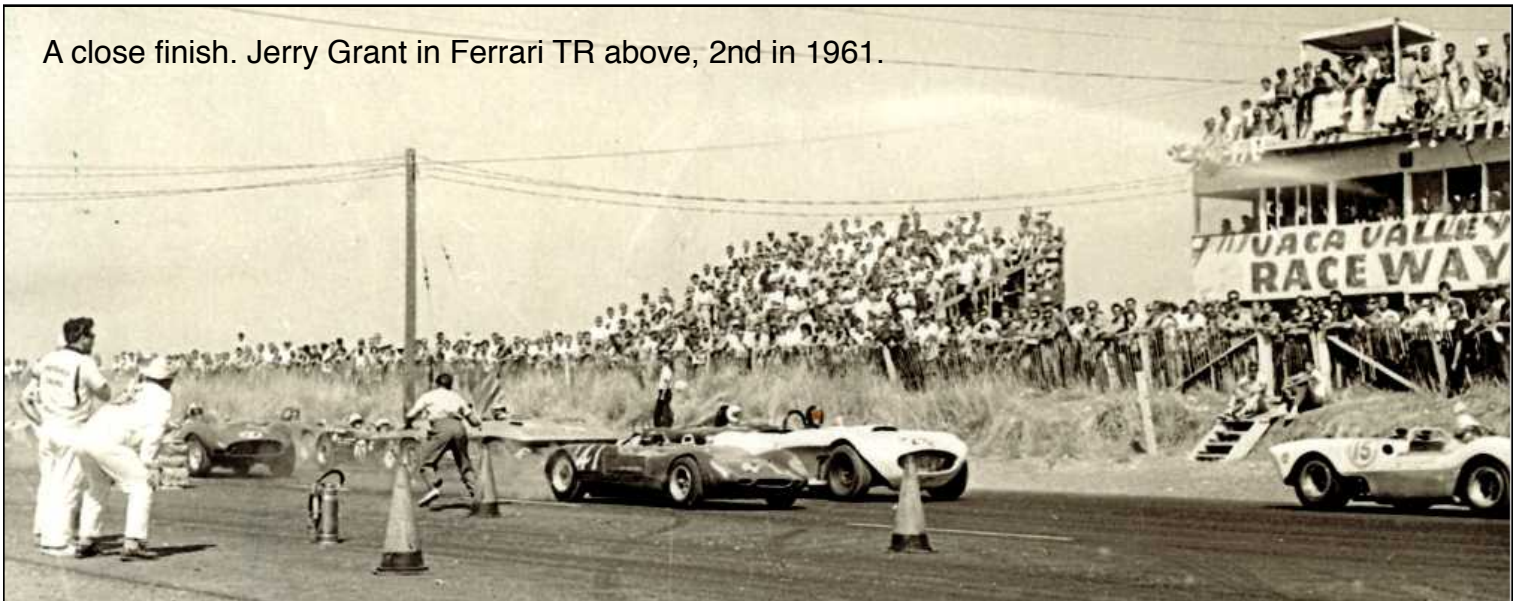
The track was built by Royce Ratterman, a Richmond contractor, and Harry Burge, a Concord businessman, as an Indy-style 2.1-mile, seven-turn race track which also incorporated a 1.25-mile interior oval with banked turns and a 4,500-foot drag strip on the east side. It was reputed to be one of the first such tracks to have all three in one location.

Everything from Indianapolis-style cars, sprint cars and midgets, to dragsters, motorcycles and sports cars from Fords to Ferraris completed at the raceways that also boasted grandstand seating, concession areas and parking for 15,000.

Vaca Valley Raceways opened July 5, 1958 with two days of sports car road races sanctioned by the Sports Car Club of America. An opening-day flier described it as "the greatest competition center in the west."



A close finish. Jerry Grant in Ferrari TR above, 2nd in 1961.



Opening day also had the first death on the drag strip, when a driver lost control of his dragster. "The car did a series of barrel rolls and the driver was ejected," said race announcer Jim McCombe. "The car still sits up there in a heap today."

Races drew some of that era's big names, because the raceway's operators offered purses up to \$1,000 – good racing money then. It became a favorite venue for drivers from throughout the state. It was also leased out for testing and driver schools.

"We were the first one to use the Christmas tree starting



lights (for drag racing), but we never got the recognition for it," McCombe said. The raceway was also the first track in the nation to break the 12-second stock car barrier, when Tommy Grove of Oakland fired his Melrose Missile No. 1 across the finish line in 11.99 seconds.

Neighbors weren't annoyed by the noise because the raceways were so far out of town. The track was doomed by the deteriorating condition of the track asphalt that was never fully refurbished. "We needed to completely redo it and we didn't have the money," McCombe said. "We knew better tracks were coming along, and Sears Point was the coup de gras," McCombe said. The Raceway finally closed in 1972.

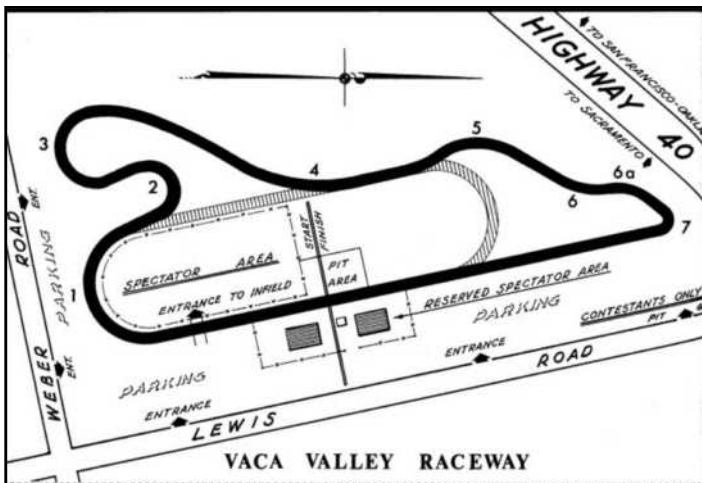
There has been talk since then of bringing back the race track. Consider the cost of creating an entirely new race venue

somewhere else compared to acquiring and repaving this historic course.

Andrew Watry Visits Vaca Valley Raceway:

"In October 2006. I happened to find the gate open. No one was around so I figured I'd go in 'til someone told me to leave. The entire banked oval is still there and visible, though the grass and weeds are tall, and pavement is broken in a lot of places. The two road course extensions you can still find and follow, too, though their pavement is more overrun by nature.

"Banking, and spectator banking on the SE side are quite visible. There is a foundation of a building, presumably the timing tower, and a pit/drag race short wall is still there. I went in in my Explorer and did a few laps at 40mph. There was a Falcon shell upside down in the infield, clearly been a serious drag car."



The race track is still there! Hwy 40 is now I-80.

We drive past as we near Dixon for the British Field Meet. Raise your cap!



You can see the track on Google Maps



Air Conditioning Your MG

by Andy Preston, March 2021

Introduction

This is an article about installing Air Conditioning into an MGB. I installed it into our 1974 MGB GT several years ago and it definitely takes the edge off on a hot day. However don't expect it to work as well as the AC in your daily driver, it just won't. Even though cold air is coming out of the vents around 40° F on a 90° F day it won't cool you down the same because hot air is seeping into your classic from everywhere. That being said it will blow cold air into the car and we did drive back from Chico on a 105° day in the GT with the windows closed and didn't sweat to death. Even though this article deals with a MGB the installation would be similar with most cars.

I'd recommend buying a complete kit from one of the vendors which has all the components required in one kit. There are several suppliers of air conditioning kits made especially for classic cars and I installed one from RetroAir (which is now Classic Auto Air). It was very complete and had good installation instructions (written in English) but was not quite "Plug and Play" so expect some fettling to make it fit well. I also installed a new aluminum cross flow radiator because the existing one is marginal at best and there is a considerable increase in demand on the cooling system.

Before I get into the specifics of AC installation I think it's important to at least understand the basics of how air conditioning works which will make any type of installation a little easier. Although I didn't know much about air conditioning at the time I did learn a little along the way and will pass that along.

The Basics

There are 3 main components to an air conditioning system and these are the **compressor**, **condenser** and **evaporator**. Other components include the receiver/dryer, low pressure switch, electric fan, electrical switches, wiring, thermo-switch, AC hoses, ducts, outlets and misc brackets and fasteners.

Compressor: The heart of the refrigeration system is the compressor. It is mounted to the engine and driven via a magnetic clutch by a belt attached to the crankshaft. It has 2 main functions; to compress the refrigerant and pump it around the system.

Condenser: The condenser is basically a radiator and is mounted in front of the car radiator and is cooled by an electric fan and movement of the car. Its main function is to cool the temperature of the refrigerant vapor.

Evaporator: The evaporator is mounted inside the car (and on my MGB under the dash on the passenger side). Its main function is to draw hot air from inside the car into the evaporator and blow cold air into the car.

Let's take a look at how it works or Thermo-Dynamics 101

The compressor as its name suggests compresses the R-134 refrigerant which correspondingly raises both its pressure and temperature and pumps the hot gas to the top of the condenser. As it passes through the condenser the gas cools and turns back into a high pressure liquid. The liquid now passes through the receiver/dryer that filters out any impurities and water in the liquid. This unit also houses the low pressure switch that prevents the compressor from engaging if the pressure falls too low.

The high-pressure liquid now flows into the evaporator inside the car and through an expansion valve which causes a dramatic drop in both pressure and temperature as the liquid turns back into a low pressure gas. This dramatic loss of pressure and temperature cools the coils inside the evaporator and cold air is blown into the inside of the car as the warm air is drawn into the evaporator by a fan. The temperature of the cold air blown from the evaporator is controlled by a thermostat connected to a switch on the dash and when the pre-set temperature is reached turns the compressor on and off by the magnetic clutch. The now warm refrigerant gas from the evaporator containing heat from the interior of the car is drawn back into the suction port of the compressor and the cycle starts all over again.

Installing AC into the car

1. Unpack all the components and lay them all out and familiarize yourself with the different parts.



2. Attach the AC hoses to the back of the evaporator and install the mounting brackets. Note the expansion valve is on the outside right of the evaporator.



3. Drill holes in the firewall and heater shelf for the evaporator AC hoses, and a hole in the floor for the condensate hose



4. Remove the glove box, center vents and radio console and block off the fresh air outlets in the firewall. Install the evaporator under the dash and pass the AC hose fittings through the holes in the firewall and heater shelf.



5. Attach the ducts to the center vents and attach the outside vents to the kick panels both sides.



6. Install center vents in dash and connect to evaporator. Now we move to the engine compartment.



7. Remove air pump and alternator and install brackets for compressor and install compressor with new brackets to attach the alternator.

Note if you use a smog pump, you will use the same 2-belt pulley on the water pump.



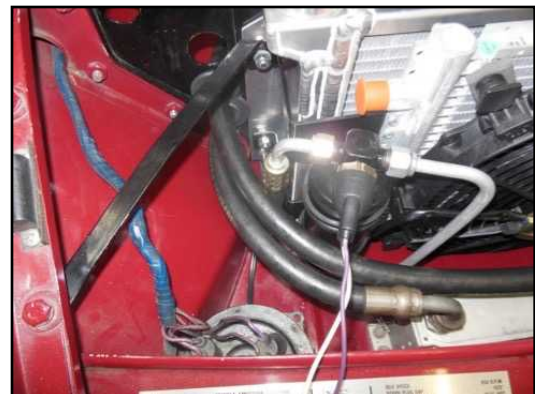
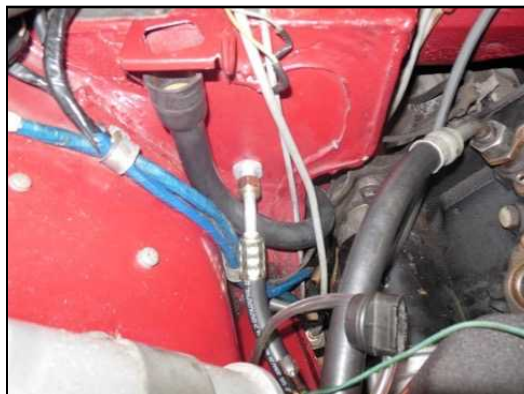
8. Notch bottom of new radiator bracket for new AC hose to pass under and drill holes in radiator support bracket for oil cooler hoses and new AC hoses. Trial fit radiator.



9. Attach receiver/dryer to condenser and attach to radiator with brackets. Note low pressure switch on top of receiver/dryer.



10. Install high pressure AC hose from evaporator fitting on firewall along frame rail and connect to receiver/dryer at top.



Fun fact: Besides making things cooler, A/C will help the handling by balancing the left/right weights when only the driver is in the car. OK, maybe not. – Mike Jacobsen

11. Install alternator to compressor. Connect Low Pressure return hose from evaporator at heater shelf to suction side of compressor. Connect High Pressure hose from compressor to top of condenser.



12. Install new fuse block and wiring to compressor and low pressure switch. Install thermostat control and fan switch to radio console.



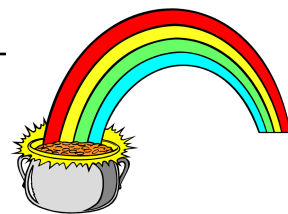
13. Install AC switch and evaporator fan control to radio panel. Install finisher panel over ducting and reinstall glove box.



14. Reinstall air pump and smog equipment and have the AC evacuated and charged by a qualified AC technician.



Keep Planning for 2021



SPRING

**Wed., March 17, St. Patrick's Day Tour, Sonoma,
Marla and Andy Preston, Virus Permitting**

April TBD, Drive-in Movie Night, Mark McGothigan

April 9-11, Vintage Races, CSRG

**Sunday, May 16, Dixon All British Show & Swap, MGOC
Caravan? Virus permitting, of course**

SUMMER



**June 14-17, All-MG Meet, Atlantic City
- only 3000 miles away. See the
USA in your MGA!**

**July 26-30, GOF West, Mt Hood
Resort, Oregon, MGOC Caravan, All
welcome.**



Above: Agatha Christie film Y Type. Below: MGA for sale in the Bay Area. Contact Dan for info.

Front spring data again

Barrie Jones and your editor have been in conversation about front spring data, prompted by a query from Rick Walters. Apparently the dealers seem to be supplying a 'one size fits all' front spring of 10in in length and Rick was having difficulty in fitting them to his TF.

Length	Thickness	Fitment	Notes
9.3	½	MGA1500 (early)	
9.6	½	TD, TF, TF1500	
9.8	½	YA, YB, YT	
9.9	½	MGB not GT (pre 73)	AHH6451
10.2	½	MGB not GT (73-76)	BHH1225 (7.5 turns)
10.2	½	MGB & GT (77-80)	9 turns

Barrie has the table for front springs as on the right above, which differs to the one published in the July newsletter. If we hear from Rick again about fitting his 10in front springs, we'll let you know what he says!

Remembering Dave Laughlin

By member Stephen Born

Dave Laughlin passed away in December after a long struggle with metastatic prostate cancer. Dave was a great fan of British automobiles and friend of collectors. He is survived by a niece, Cathy Neff. Dave was born in Richmond, CA, and graduated from Harry Ellis High School. After studying automobile mechanics in community college, he opened a commercial garage in Richmond, California. One of his shops, Import Car Service, was located at 435 23rd street where he took care of multiple vehicles, both foreign and domestic.

Over time, he specialized in British motorcars, and moved his shop to his home in Richmond Heights. Dave was a distributor for Moss Motors and was the sole proprietor of English Spare Parts. He maintained an extensive inventory of new and used parts and was well known for his knowledge of obscure parts that he was able to identify at a glance. In years past, Dave was a fixture at British Car Swap meets throughout the country. He was widely recognized as a passionate and dedicated MG mechanic and kept many of our beloved MGs on the road.

Dave also had a passion for collecting automobile paraphernalia. He collected a huge number of antique automobile license plates and enjoyed showing his collection at license plate club meetings. His collection includes plates from every year they were issued in Kansas (his parents came from Kansas), from every state in the United States and many foreign countries.



I could never think of Dave without a dog. He liked to share fond memories of his canine companions. He is also survived by Barron, a German Shepard of sweet temperament. As part of his love for dogs, Dave was a passionate collector of dog license tags. He was especially pleased with license tags from the early 19th century. Dave also collected police dog memorabilia. With Dave's passing, we have lost a community resource - a mechanic who believed in doing things correctly, with original parts, and without shortcuts.

My MGA Mk. II roadster was one of the last great restorations done by Dave. It is truly a top-notch job.

Dave lasted a long time with a horrible disease, but it took its toll on his ability to function. He was hospitalized at Summit Hospital in

November. He survived COVID in the nursing home but was not allowed any visitors. I was able to visit him one week before he died, with Barron, his dog, when he had an outside appointment. He was very concerned about Barron, who did not want to leave the transport that took Dave back to the nursing home.

Here is Dave in action (see above) influencing two younger generations while seated next to Stephen's beautiful MGA.

MGs by the Bay, 2018
Shockey photos



Book Review

By member William T. "Tom" Doyle

From the rear book jacket:

"In *The Complete Book of Classic MG Cars*, motoring journalist Ross Alkureishi presents a thorough retrospective of MG's stylist, affordable, and fun automobiles. A chronological model-by-model history explores design, production, technology, and motorsports, while technical-specification tables, detail key engineering and performance data. More than two hundred photos showing cars at speed and at rest includes gorgeous detailed shots, stunning motorsports imagery, and period literature. ..."

What I Liked:

This volume with 239 pages, with high quality color and black and white images, is one the most complete anthologies delving into history of MG manufacturer and its' many models from 1923 to 1995. It goes into the design and engineering of those models, MG racing history and technological innovations, their brilliant engineers, and heroic race car drivers, as well as the inept marketing, professional squabbling, management, and the constant turnover of post war ownership. It depicts some rarely seen MG prototypes and joint ventures with European automobile manufactures. The book spends its final chapters on the post Abingdon manufacturing from the Rover-MG alliance to the production being done in China to-date. Each model data sheets are extensive and accurate and a good resource for all those who wish to research the MG marques. Besides model images from various angles, the book includes some seldom seen marketing ads throughout the production years of MG.

What I Didn't Like:

What I didn't like was way the "featured" articles were inserted into the text of each chapter. Although these features seemed related to the model being described, it wasn't very clear that they were separate and distinct articles. If the editor had put in a remark like "continued on page xx," I think this would have helped separate the model discussion from the featured articles.

As an example, Alkureishi is describing the engineering and development of the MGC and then you turn the page and there is an article on the Sebring Success which doesn't seem to follow from the prior discussion. Once you're aware of this formatting issue, you can skip these articles and read on. And it not that the featured articles are poorly written or uninteresting they just seem to me to be out of place. Not a serious gripe at all.

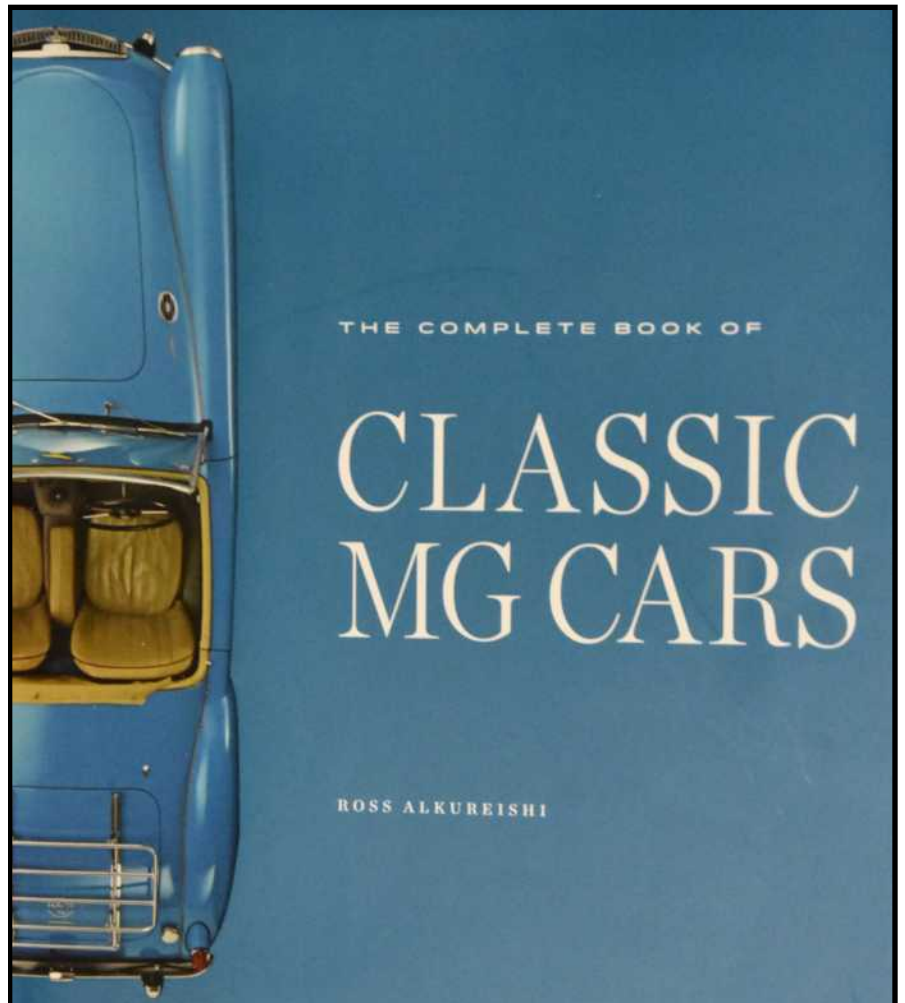
Summary:

I definitely will place this book in my bookcase and plan to use it when needed. It is an excellence desk reference. For those that want to learn more on the MG experience it is a must have book.

Cost:

Retail cost is \$55 from Barnes and Noble. I bought mine from Amazon for \$35. Reference: Motor Books (UK), 2020. ISBN 978-0-7603-6717-9

William T. Doyle, "Tom" is the proud owner of the 1969 MGC/GT. He has owned three MGs since 2009: a 1978 MGB Roadster, a 1976 MGB Roadster, and the MGC/GT. Tom lives with his lovely wife Heidi on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe.



The Untold Story Of The *MG Night Hawk*

by Mark Barnhart of the Michigan Rowdies

I worked at General Motors Institute, a technical college in Flint, Michigan. A friend I worked with was a student who was co-oping out of Buick Engineering. We all owned MGAs and were all members of the North Eastern Michigan Region of the SCCA and active in racing. When the Cobras started running circles around the 'Vettes, we thought GM needed something that would change that. We formed a company and modified our own 3 cars into something we thought could run with the Fords.

It was our student who discovered the crankshaft switch that was became the "stroker" mod and gave the aluminum Buick 215 CID motor its 260 cubes. There was very little machine work to accomplish the change. When approached, Buick loved the idea and came up with the name Night Hawk. They designed an emblem with the Buick Triple Shield Inside the MG octagon. We had contacted MG about supplying us 110 MGA frames and bodies as they still had the MGA line even though BMC were now making the MGB.

When they found out what we were doing, they said if we could give them prints for the mods on the frame, they would build them to our specs. We pointed out to Buick that with the price we got from MG we could sell the cars for \$200 less than the Fords.

GM had the cars for 3 weeks and when we got them back, they had obviously been driven hard. We got a call from Buick to come in for a meeting. A very frustrated Buick General Manager read us a letter from Corporate informing us that they felt the traditional Buick customers saw the brand as a luxury vehicle and would be offended if they built a sports car. The letter was then thrown onto his desk and he said, "They are afraid you will hurt the sales of their plastic pig!"

Car number one was later radically modified to look like a Cobra snout with a tip up front body and a large flat spoiler rear end, so from the back it looked like a Ferrari. The car was eventually scrapped, and the running gear was put in an MGB.

Car number two was later made into a Bonneville land speed racer with a blown injected 90-degree Chevy V-6 and now holds a record at 243.9 MPH in its class set in 1998. (*Another great story from Mark.*)

Car number three was mine and I sold it years ago and after the buyer blew the motor and parked the car in a field for 6 years. I found it and now have it in an enclosed trailer waiting for a restoration.

(Ed.note: At the time, GMI was owned by General Motors. The best start for a technical career at GM was success there. In the 1970s, I crewed for a GM engineer racing a Corvette in the IMSA Camel GT series and we got under-the-table support from Chevrolet through the corporation. There was a strong racing network within GM. - Dan)



Mark Barnhart

NorCal NAMGAR Club

by Founder J.R. Boye

My father sold me his MGA 1600 for \$300 in 1973. I didn't know much of anything about the car when I took possession, so I did some research and began to respect the car and its heritage. The MG was 13 years old by then, and parts were getting a bit hard to track down. Also, I was a senior in high school and didn't have much to spend on the car.

By 1976 I had met a few other owners and shared stories and our love of the car along with some parts trading and support. Even though I got married in December of that year, the MG was my only car (and was until 1982 when our son was born) and keeping it running was a necessity. I was unaware of any club that welcomed MGA owners, so I decided to organize one. I decided on the name "Northern California MGA Club" and began to contact the handful of owners I knew. This was in 1977.

That summer I made up flyers announcing the new club and left them under windshield wipers or slid open side screens and tossed them in. I also ran down MGAs I came across while driving or riding my bike around and motioned the drivers to pull over. I would give them an application and a handful of flyers to pass on to other MGA owners. By the time I put out the first two-page newsletter in December of 1977, we were up to fourteen members.

Leslie Young was one of the original fourteen members. I remember seeing her red 1600 parked outside her house in Palo Alto, so of course I had to stop. When she came to the door, I told her about the club we were forming. It turned that the car I had seen was one of three MGAs she owned (all red!), and one of them was a Twin-Cam. We just about doubled the number of cars in the club that day!

It's important to note at this point that all of the people in the club then drove their cars on a regular basis. MGAs were not yet considered collectible, and for many of us they were our only vehicle, so keeping them on the road was a prime concern. We were all aware that there wasn't a prettier car ever made, though....

In October of 1977 I had contacted British Leyland Motors. One of our members, Harold Brum, said that the MG Car Club of England had a chapter for MGAs and that I could get an address for them from British Leyland. Maybe we could be associated with them and both organizations would benefit. I wrote to the MGCC address I was given, but never got a response. On December 5th, I wrote back to BL complaining about the delay. On the 12th, a letter from F.S. Horner arrived.

In this letter Mr. Horner mentioned the North American MGA Register, and gave me the address of the chairman, Mac Spears.

On January 29th, 1978, I wrote to Mac asking about NAMGAR. Mac sent me back a very warm letter on February 4th talking about the register, which at that time had a bit over 800 members. Mac said that they had just agreed to form a chapter in Southern California, headed by Ken Palmer, but that Northern California was untapped. He also invited our group to a tentative "GT" they were planning to hold in Colorado.

Our club members thought NAMGAR would be a natural affiliation, so I applied for the Northern California MGA Club to become a chapter. Mac wrote back an acceptance letter, so on May 8th, 1978, we became the Northern California Chapter of the North American MGA Register. We published a letter of welcome from secretary Ruth Renkenberger on July 6th.

In November, we met up with Ken Palmer and our Southern California counterparts at the first North-South meet in San Luis Obispo. This beautiful spot is on the California coast, roughly half way between San Francisco and Los Angeles. We toured as a group around the area and out to Morro Bay. The MGA's were lined up for photos. My white MGA proudly displayed its shiny new NAMGAR plaque on its dash - Car Number 884.

We were now up to about 50 members, with more coming in every week. Very soon, the club would shift its focus as MGAs began to be regarded as hobby cars, and then valuable collectors items. I remained our chapter's only "Coordinator" (president) until the chapter merged into the MG Owners Club in 1998. I was the first newsletter author, editor, artist and typist until Gordon Meacham took over in 1981. Our other editors through the years were Pat Korens, Dan Shockey, Jay Johnson, and finally some young guy named Mike Jacobsen.



Member Notes, from Page 5

From Andy Preston:

Ken, you might want to look at the MG Experience website; they have a classified section there, which I think is free. That could be a very promising site for you with your car that only needs engine work.

(Other suggestions: carsandbids.com or just go with Craigslist. And of course other car club sites. -Dan)

From Triumph Man Bob Kinderlehrer:

A Spitfire engine in an MG? Tissue rejection should be expected.... Stay well,

From Mike Jacobsen:

Ed Loughrey called me to say how pleased he was with the February issue of *The Octagon*. He especially liked that you included the license plate explanation on the cover. You made his day!

From Andy Preston:

BTW we drove the GT on Sunday and the car got hot while we had lunch so I put the AC on coming home. After a short while Marla said I'm cold enough now so turn it off! So it does work.

While driving the GT on Sunday I noticed a leak from the dual brake MC so it looks like another article is in my future.

From Jim Silva:

I am doing much better, back to the shop for 6-8 hours every day this week. I still tire very easily but am learning to pace myself. Sore and tired but it's a little easier each day. Cough is still persistent at times but lung function is increasing slowly each day. I have a Hispano in the (upholstery) shop now.

From Dan's father Joe Shockey (age 96) in Illinois:

When is an MG not a car? When it turns into a garage.

After our big snow storm, 3 snowmen were found in the produce department at WalMart, picking their noses. They were cited for not wearing masks. (Oldie updated for Covid.)

Classified Ads

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

1933 MG L-type, MG SA Sedan, SA Convertible: Original condition, apart. Lots of new parts. Sell as a package. In Watsonville. Nancy Reader, Former Peninsula T Register members. 831-722-5128 (Posted 2/21)

1953 MG TD: Owned since 1997. 77k miles, 5 speed transmission, alternator, & rebuilt engine. Cared for by British Automotive in San Rafael. Everything about it is great. I am now looking to replace it with a Mk. II MGA. Member Marty Rayman, 415-250-6299 (Posted 3/21)

2012 MINI Roadster: One owner with 21,000 miles. Cared for by MINI of Marin. Member Marty Rayman, 415-250-6299 (Posted 3/21)

1979 MG Midget: Original condition, no rust, dents, or upholstery damage. Needs engine work. Includes new replacement top, windshield, and radiator (all brand new). Motivated, asking \$4000. Cloverdale (Sonoma). Ken Collins (707) 894-3830 (Posted 3/21)

1965 MGB: Red. Rust-free example. Overdrive, 5-main MGB motor; new tires; three tops. In Arizona, Bob (602) 762-5733 or rhrierson@gmail.com (Posted 2/21)

1979 MGB: White. Everything good. Passed smog last year. Motivated to sell. William Kaufman, 510-381-0756 or uncascroog@aol.com (Posted 01/21)

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 MGOCSE.org



Mrs. Peel is DONE!

By V.P. Kirk Prentiss, reprinted from *The Wind Machine*

Done! Now of course I do understand that one is never really "done" with an old car, but regarding the project I set out to do, it's DONE! For me and my limited skills, this has been quite a learning process. I first considered the undertaking of prepping the car for painting, I recall looking at the car and thinking, "This doesn't look too difficult." And to confirm my consideration I thought, "Sure, it's a small car and there isn't much trim, so how hard could it be?" These were the musings of a novice. But my understanding of how wrong I was did not become clear at first.

Taking apart the car was easy, and almost joyful. This made for a false sense of ability on my part. I did take many photos of the "before" so that I could use them in the reassembly process. Disassembly was not completely easy I admit. Rueful rust fused some nuts and bolts and it required a wee bit of grinding or cutting for removal. At this time I was still feeling capable to proceed.

Time passes quickly when you have a project such as this, especially when you only put a couple of days a week towards the work. The other thing about time is that there is a tendency for parts to sprout legs and crawl away. Yes, all of the parts were taped, labeled and bagged with descriptions for the purpose of the myriad of nuts and bolts. Still, the shop gremlins can reorder your storage system. Some pieces had to be replaced due to age, and orders from Moss trickled in.

Once the car was painted it was time to reassemble it. I started with "simple" items to reattach. I wisely hired a glass expert to put the windscreens on with the new glazing rubber. Installing the other glass looked simple but was not. New weatherstripping provided was not the right shape or thickness. Getting door hardware aligned to the strikers and locks was frustrating.

Some lights that worked prior to painting now did not work. The days to get to finish drug on. Like in a movie sequence, I heard my voice from the past, "Sure, it's a small car, how hard could it be?" repeating over and over. Nothing like a haunting dream sequence to rub your nose in it.

It was much harder than I expected. Never give up! Never surrender! A very Churchill mantra got me to project conclusion. So would I do it again? Nope. Was it worth the effort? Absolutely. Now when I look at "Mrs. Peel" I see how great she looks and I am quite pleased with the outcome. She is a looker for being 52 years old!



Register Your MGA With NAMGAR!



Join over 2,000 enthusiastic owners in the restoration, preservation, and sheer enjoyment of driving an MGA, Magnette, or variant of this noble breed. You'll receive six bi-monthly issues of MGA!, our full-color, award winning magazine, invitations to National and Regional Get-Togethers throughout the U.S. and Canada, plus a knowledge base and support group second to none. All this for just \$37.50 per year (North America), or \$52.50 (International). Get more information at <http://www.namgar.com>, or contact registrar@namgar.com.




North American MGB Register



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



See the tentative
events schedule
for 2021.

Stay Safety Fast!

**St. Paddy's Day
Tour - page 3**



HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY



New Member Ken
with his grandson