

MGOC Octagon  
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<http://www.MGOC.org>

# THE OCTAGON

Newsletter of the M.G. Owner s Club & the Peninsula T Register  
 The Northern California Centre of the M.G. Car Club



love is...



...going for a drive in his  
 vintage two-seater.

1996 Los Angeles Times Syndicate

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# February 2004

## About *The Octagon* and MGOC...

The M.G. Owner's Club, formed in 1957, is the Northern California Centre of the M.G. Car Club, formed in England in 1930. The Peninsula T Register is a register of the MGOC and was formed in 1973. We receive two copies 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 on the second Thursday of 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 M.G. Owner's Club. Opinions expressed in ***The Octagon*** are not necessarily those of the MGOC, its members, or Board of Directors.

### DIRECTORY of MGOC OFFICERS for 2004

**President:** Bob Stine, 650-349-5128, [RAStine@rcn.com](mailto:RAStine@rcn.com)

**Vice President:** Randy Grossman, 510-483-3171, [r.m.grossman@comcast.net](mailto:r.m.grossman@comcast.net)

**Treasurer:** Mike Jacobsen, 415-333-9699, [MikesMuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:MikesMuseum@yahoo.com)

**Secretary:** David Wright, 510-653-3831

**T Register Director:** Jim Carlson, 408-257-9976, [mgjim@att.net](mailto:mgjim@att.net)

**Activities Director:** John Hunt, 925-299-9006, [Huntsails@worldnet.att.net](mailto:Huntsails@worldnet.att.net)

**Corresponding Secretary:** George Steneberg, 510-525-9152,

[j2george@pacbell.net](mailto:j2george@pacbell.net)

**Membership Development:** Bob Stine, 650-349-5128, [RAStine@rcn.com](mailto:RAStine@rcn.com)

**Octagon Editor:** Dan Shockey, 408-923-3927, [DPSHockey@earthlink.net](mailto:DPSHockey@earthlink.net)

**Commercial Advertising:** Mike Jacobsen, 415-333-9699,

[MikesMuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:MikesMuseum@yahoo.com)

### CLUB ADVISOR PROGRAM

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

**MGB 1962-74:** Felix Wong, 510-226-7721 home, [mgoc@felixwong.com](mailto:mgoc@felixwong.com)

**MGB 1974-1980:** Ed Adams, 510-483-6821

**MGC:** Kent Leech, 925-253-9757, [kent@kentleech.com](mailto:kent@kentleech.com)

**M.G. Midget:** Kingsley Klarer, 707-226-1955

**MGA/Coupe/Twin Cam 1955-62:** George Steneberg, 510-525-9125

**Z-Magnette Saloon 1953-58:** Marty Ray, 831-247-5863,

[martyray@cruzio.com](mailto:martyray@cruzio.com)

**M.G. 1100 Sports Sedan 1962-67:** Lora Lerner, 831-464-3795

**T-types:** George Steneberg, 510-525-9125

**Pre-war Midgets-Magnas-Magnettes:** George Steneberg, 510-525-9125

**PA/PB Midget 1934-36:** Eric Baker, 510-531-7032, [mgpb36@yahoo.com](mailto:mgpb36@yahoo.com)

**Lucas electrics:** Marty Ray, 831-247-5863, [martyray@cruzio.com](mailto:martyray@cruzio.com)

**S.U. Carburetters:** Marty Ray, 831-247-5863, [martyray@cruzio.com](mailto:martyray@cruzio.com)

**Bodywork:** Bill Weissberg, 510-658-4335, [weissber@slip.net](mailto:weissber@slip.net)

## Natter & Noggin with Club Meeting

February 12, 2004 (Thurs.), 8p.m.

The Englander Sports Pub & Restaurant  
101 Parrott St., San Leandro, 510-357-3571

### Driving Directions:

From Northbound I-880, take the Washington Ave. exit within San Leandro and turn right on Washington St. Travel 2.2 miles until you see Parrott St. Turn right on Parrott Street. You will see The Englander on your right.

From Southbound I-880, take the Davis St. exit and turn left on Davis. Travel 1.3 miles, then turn right on E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. Travel 0.3 miles, and then turn right on Parrott St.

### Details:

The Englander is an enjoyable place where we have our own cozy room. The food is good so bring your appetites.

## South Bay Natter & Noggin

Friday Evening, 8 p.m., February 27, 2004

Join us for an informal gathering in the South Bay. We'll meet in a lamp-lighted courtyard setting. Not crowded and with restaurants right there. Look for us at McHart's Pizza if you don't see anyone with their cars. Bring your interesting cars and bring some friends. We've had a good turn out lately.

This is the Marketplace Shopping Center next to Long's Drugs at 19732 Stevens Creek Blvd. It is right across from the Sears at the Valco Shopping Mall. It is just off I-280 at Wolfe.

Directions: Take the Wolfe Rd. exit from I-280 and turn west. Turn right on Stevens Creek Blvd. Turn left at first light.

Dan Shockey (408) 923-3927 or Bob Wall (408) 739-2373

## Attention!!

Have your MG painted by a fellow sports car lover with 11 years experience. High quality rubbed-out polyurethane finish at reasonable cost. I do bodywork, rust repair, and welding. Fast turn-around time. References and examples of my work available. Call for an appointment for a free estimate.

Andy Schank 510-236-5232

## Classified Ads

Ads are free to MGOC members and \$6.00 per month for non-members. Please send copy (and check **made payable to MGOC** if a non-member) to MGOC, 3219 Mabury Rd., San Jose, CA 95127. Members may also email ads to the Editor at [DPSHockey@earthlink.net](mailto:DPSHockey@earthlink.net).

**MG TF Hard Top** and curtains. Good condition. Unique accessory. \$375/obo. In San Jose. Member Don Nelson at (408) 202-0702 or [DonaldN@Pacbell.Net](mailto:DonaldN@Pacbell.Net)

**Wanted:** Nice condition open XK-120, XK-140, or XK-150. Member Dean Spielman, 815-235-1448 (now in Illinois), [spielmana@yahoo.com](mailto:spielmana@yahoo.com) (Note corrected email address)

**1969 MGB-GT Body Shell.** Body shell extensively rebuilt, ready to paint, rebuilt front and rear axles. Needs paint, glass, rubber, trim, electrics, mechanicals. See to appreciate. Marty Ray

**1967 MGB-GT Body Shell.** Complete. Nice condition underneath with NO RUST. Also overdrive trans, some motors, and lots more. Member Marty Ray, Santa Cruz, 831-247-5863 or [martyray@cruzio.com](mailto:martyray@cruzio.com)

**MGA 1500 Parts for Sale.** Complete engine, other engine blocks, brand new crank, three 1500-style transmissions, doors, trunk lid, lots of brakes parts (no disk brakes), complete frame with suspension, flywheels, more. Non-member Jim Murray, San Jose, (408) 298-4151

**1972 MGB/GT.** Blue (paint and body are not great), painted wire wheels, nice dash, running gear is very good. Worth \$900? In storage since 1984. Non-member Doug Alsop (650) 365-0185, Redwood City

### Fremont Automotive



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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). 2004 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. The editor's address is: Dan Shockey, 3219 Mabury Rd., San Jose, CA 95127. Or, you may email contributions to [DPSHockey@earthlink.net](mailto:DPSHockey@earthlink.net).

## RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR THE MGOC

Have you helped recruit any new members lately? Bob Stine (650-349-5128) is in charge of new member recruitment and can send you flyers.

## Membership

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at future meetings and events of the MGOC and having your stories, photos, and tips printed in *The Octagon*. The club roster is available from Mike Jacobsen upon request.

## Calendar of Events

MGOC (which is us!) events are in **bold** type.

Every Sat. — Donut Derelicts, Mtn View, Martinez (see MGOC web site)  
Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> (Thurs) — **MGOC Meeting and Natter**, see page 23  
Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> (Sat.) — **MG Lubrication Tech Session**, Mike Jacobsen, see page 5  
Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> (Sat.) — SSTS Lover's Tour  
Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> (Fri.) — **South Bay Natter**, see page 23  
Feb. 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) — Cypress MG Club Garage Tour & Lunch,  
[bruceobbink@mbayweb.com](mailto:bruceobbink@mbayweb.com)  
Mar. 6 or 27 — **MG Tune-up Tech Session, Santa Clara**  
March 20,-21 — **MG Reunion Historic Races**, Laguna Seca, see page 8  
Apr. 3 or 10 — **MG Tech Session**, Fremont  
Apr. 17<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) — **Mt. Hamilton Drive**, Bob Wall, see page 7  
Apr. 17 — 18 — North Meets South, Arroyo Grande, see page 21  
May 8<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) — **Trip Prep Tech Session**, San Francisco  
May 15<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) — **MGs at Jack London Square**  
May 16<sup>th</sup> (Sun.) — Dixon All British Car Show  
June 4-6 — Wine Country Classic Vintage Races, Sears Point  
June 20<sup>th</sup> (Sun.) — Hayward British Car Meet

June 27<sup>th</sup> (Sun.) — Palo Alto Concours d'Elegance  
 Aug. 13-15 — Monterey Historics, Laguna Seca  
 Oct. 9-10 — **MGOC North Coast Weekend**, Dave Newhouse

## New Members

Ellen and Bud Alderson of San Rafael have a white '78 MGB that Ellen purchased new 26 years ago. It was the first car that Ellen purchased and came after she got her first job out of school. Bud drives it daily and calls it their swing car. The MG has only 70,000 miles and the furthest it has gone has been Lake Tahoe. Bud jokes that they like to stay within AAA's 100 mile range with it. He looks forward to some mods after it no longer needs to be smogged. The Aldersons were referred to us by Jim Stone.

Byron and Laura Snow of San Jose, have a '60 Twin Cam, and they noted that they've had it for 44 years. They are interested in meeting other owners of twin cam MGAs. They purchased the Twinky new in December, 1959. It lasted four years and 45,000 miles before it collapsed. Joe Huffaker of the BMC dealer in San Francisco tried to detune it. After sitting for 20 years, Byron has gotten the MGA running again and they are considering cosmetic improvements.

Ellis Brenner of San Mateo has a '77 MGB that he's owned for a year. Ellis asked where he could find a good mechanic between San Mateo and Palo Alto, or at least one that would teach him how to do things. We met Ellis at the swap meet at O'Connor's last fall. He has been trying to sell the MGB since he was having trouble finding someone to work on it. (See recent *Octagons*.) We hope this means he will keep it — and we'll see him at some tech sessions!

## Welcome to the MG Owners Club!



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## North-Meets-South

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY APRIL 17 & 18, 2004**

**In the Historic Village of Arroyo Grande (near Pismo Beach)**

**Scenic Drive, People's Choice Car Show, Trophies, Raffle & Prizes, Refreshments**



Come join us in the beautiful California Central Coast for this biennial event. All British cars are welcome and encouraged to attend. The goal of the Paradise British Car Club is that everyone have a great time and to display all our great little cars. Don't miss out on the fun. Mark your calendar today and tell all your British car friends.

Questions? Lorin Cuthbert at phone (805) 937-6851 or email [Lcuthbert@covad.net](mailto:Lcuthbert@covad.net)

First car: \$20 registration. Enclose check payable to: North-Meets-South, c/o Roger Tanner, 2384 Sweeney Road, Lompoc, CA 93436-9640 Fax: 805-736-3882

## Brands Hatch... A Great Place for the MGB!

The Brands Hatch 1000 miles of 1965 was run in two 500 mile heats. With a works MGB, John Rhodes and Warwick Banks won the first heat, came in fourth (delayed by an oil leak) in the second heat, and on aggregate scored outright victory in the longest British race since before WW II.

Shortened to 500 miles in 1966, the Brands Hatch race was if anything more challenging because Group 4 sports/racers were included that year. In heavy rain, Roger Enever (son of MG's chief engineer) and Alec Poole (son of the Dublin MG importer) took third place overall behind a Shelby Cobra and a Ford GT40, two laps ahead of a 250LM Ferrari, a Lotus Elan and several E type Jaguars.

Source: MGB, by F. Wilson McComb

Submitted by John Hunt





## Identifying Engine Knocks

**Main Bearings:** A dull pound or thud (rumble; dull, heavy metallic note) which comes on during a long hard pull or when the engine is quickly accelerated and sometimes decreases when the spark is retarded will generally indicate loose main bearings. Increases with speed and load. To check, ground (or detach) the spark plug wires one at a time, and knocks should lessen.

Note: Grounding plugs was the easiest method when plug connectors were open.

**Rods: Lower End (Big End):** Light pounds or raps get louder with speed. (Regular heavy knocking) To check, short out spark plugs; intensity will decrease. Reconnect spark plug lead while flicking the throttle. Light thud will be audible.

**Rods: Upper End (Gudgeon or Wrist Pin):** Sharp metallic double knock, less audible with spark retarded, loudest at idle without load and between 20-30 mph. To check, short out plugs. Noise may get more intense. When plug lead is disconnected, a double thud will be heard.

**Crankshaft End Float:** Most noticeable at idle. Can eliminate by operating clutch.

**Piston: Loose Piston:** Knock or slap. Piston rocks back and forth in hole. Noise often disappears when engine warms up. Increases with load up to 30mph. To check, short out (or detach) plug, under moderate load if possible. Noise should disappear.

**Rings:** This has a click or rattle from a broken ring at idle and during acceleration. Tight rings produce a snapping noise. To check, cannot be eliminated 100% by shorting out plugs.

**Worn valve gear:** (or out of adjustment) Noisy tapping (clicking) from rocker box (valve cover). Half engine speed.

**Worn timing chain & gears:** Rattling from front of engine

**Ignition Knock:** Metallic ringing note (pinging), usually when accelerating or laboring. Try adjusting timing but can be other causes such as carbon build up.

We were fooled by a loud knocking in Dan Hampshire's MGB motor. It seemed like big end rod knock but turned out to be a disintegrated exhaust valve seat. (Rod and main bearings were well worn, too.) So it is good to check compression, too.

Notes collected by Dan Shockey



## MGOC Tech Session

### Learn How to Lube Your Car Yourself



When:

Saturday, February 21, 9:00am

Where:

Bill Hiland's shop  
1855 Dobbin Drive  
San Jose, CA 95133

Lubricating your car is more than changing the engine oil and greasing the front suspension. Come to our first tech session for beginners and learn:

How to change the oil

Engine, transmission, and rear axle.

Where else oil goes

The steering rack, generator, and carbs all need oil.

Where all the grease fittings are

Did you know the handbrake cable has a grease fitting?

What other items need lubrication but are often ignored

Door hinges, seat slides, the hood latch... it goes on and on!

This is the first in our series of Tech Sessions for Dummies, or rather for those that don't know how but want to learn. Future sessions will cover basic tuning, trip preparation, and cleaning your car.

Directions:

From 101 in San Jose, exit at McKee and head east

At 2<sup>nd</sup> light east of 101, turn left (north) on King Road

Go thru one light and turn right at the next street, Dobbin

Look for the MG sign

(From I-680, go west on McKee to King and turn right)

## From the President's Desk

Last year I got a chance to better understand why many of our members don't participate much in our club. While we generally have a very good turnout at the annual dinner and the annual picnic, relatively few members attended many of our other events.

I attended most of the membership meetings at The Englander, but I found many conflicts with the timing of our events and the many other activities in which I participate.

Having been selected as president of the club, I feel more compelled to attend our events. This is a good thing because those who participate invariably have a great time! I'd like to see each member commit to him/herself to attend at least one event this year that you've never attended before. On January 31 we're having an event-planning meeting, under the able direction of our new activities director, John Hunt. The meeting will be held at John's house in Lafayette. Look for the results in next

month's Octagon. There should be something for everyone, so plan on joining us in some of these events.

I'd like to use technology a little more in our communications. My plan is to announce events through email, as well as through the Octagon. Hopefully, the added reminders will spark more attendance. If you'd rather not receive these notifications, just drop me an email and I'll remove your name from the email list.

Our Jack London Square show will take place this year on May 15. We've had some complaints the last couple years about the show being too spread out, so we're trying a new display area for the cars so that we can all be together. Be sure to let us know how you like the new arrangement. If necessary, we'll look for an entirely different venue. Remember, this is **your** club; but we can't read your minds, so let us know what you like and don't like so we can make it the best club with which you've ever been associated.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. I look forward to continuing the fine job of leading this club that Dan Shockey provided over the last couple years!

Bob Stine  
rastine@rcn.com

### MG

#### TC-TD-TF-MGA-MGB-C-Midget

##### SHOCK ABSORBERS: Front Rear

MGTC.....	165.00	165.00
MGTD & TF.....	165.00	60/85
MGA.....	69.95	49.95
MGB, MGC, Midget.....	69.95	49.95
HEAVY DUTY UPGRADE.....	10.00	10.00
SHOCK LINK (New or Rebuilt).....	Scall	

##### BRAKES : sleeved and rebuilt

MGB, Midget caliper .....	\$75.00
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MGA, Midget twin master 1956-1967.....	\$165.00
MGB, Midget master 1968-80.....	\$125.00
MGC brake master.....	\$175.00
MGC booster servo.....	\$375.00
Brake & Clutch cylinders brass sleeved.....	\$40-60
Kingpin swivel axle rebushed.....	\$40-\$80
Front end a-arm (Midget).....	\$75.00

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## Bodywork Tech Session Report

By Dan Shockey

On January 17, Marla and Andy Preston proved they can host a grand tech session at their home in Rohnert Park. Nine club members braved the early hours and cold garage to watch the work and consume the breakfast and lunch items. Andy's 1967 MGB roadster is in process of getting bodywork in preparation for paint. It provided several opportunities for show & tell. Andy has the car far along but it still needed some speciality work.

Club member Greg Paulsen made the journey and we are glad he did. A body and paint man by trade, Greg was able to display panel beating, metal shrinking, patching the crack of doom, and tell us about materials and personal experience. Greg did the bodywork and paint on his beautiful black MGA while still an apprentice. Thanks, Greg!

I think the members present all learned something about these skills and may try some repairs on our own. We have more tech sessions coming soon to a garage near you!



Greg shows us how to use your eyes and your touch to get a panel straight.

Photo: Chris Attias

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- Randy Grossman — VP, NAMGAR GT Caravan
- Nina Barton — Secretary, Annual Dinner
- Mike Jacobsen — Treasurer, Registrar, Jack London Square Honcho  
*Octagon* Publishing & Mailing
- David Wright — Regalia, Track Tour
- George Steneberg — Corresponding Secretary
- John Hunt — Activities Director, Planning Meeting, Blackhawk, Black Diamond Mine

#### 2003 Contributors: Events

- Sandy & Chuck Imperatori — Green Valley Tour & Lunch
- Bob Wall — Half Moon Bay to SF Tour
- Marty Rayman — West Marin Tour
- Dennis Cox — Clutch Tech Session
- Jim Carlson — T Register Director, Tech Sessions, Anniversary Party
- Bill Hiland — Tech Session
- Betty & Tom Plemmons — T Register Party
- Dan Hampshire — Holiday Tea
- Jennifer Steneberg — Web Mistress
- Bev Morgan — JLS Music
- Nancy Shane - JLS Poster & T-shirt Art
- Dorothy & John Brookman - Annual Dinner Speakers

#### 2003 Contributors: Special Mention

- Hilary Reddy, Gary Truax - MG Service Tech Session
- Brian O Connor & J.R. Boye for Swap Meet & General Support
- Dave McCann for Jack London Square Support

*Thank you to Bob Stine for arranging the dinner.*



*Dave McCann (at left) qualifying for the Burnt Spark Plug Award. Andy Preston stops in Weed, CA, to bring succor. Shockey photo.*

## Mt. Hamilton II Down the Back Side

**Saturday, April 17, 2004**

### *Movie Preview*

How about a drive from San Jose, up Mt. Hamilton Road (State Route 130) to Lick Observatory, picnic lunch and possibly a tour of the observatory? Then it's down the hill on the backside.

The drive to Lick Observatory alone is one worth taking. The drive is challenging, as it is a little over 20 miles (365 turns) of some of the coolest (i.e.: narrow and winding) roads in the Bay Area. There are hairpin turns, wide sweeping curves and lots of uphill, then downhill on the way down the backside. Lick Observatory is 4200 feet above sea level. The views from the road and the observatory alone make the drive worthwhile. Once there, we will take a break at Lick Observatory, have lunch, and perhaps get a tour. This will also give our poor machines a chance to cool down. We have made this trip a few times now, including once in the spring, and everybody loved it. For more info, go to: <http://www.ucolick.org/>.

Then it's down the backside of the mountain through Lolli's Junction and on into Livermore. Another 50+ miles of outstanding roads for our LBC's. The wildflowers will be in bloom in the meadows, so we will also make a couple of stops for photo ops. We will drive through Livermore to Highway 84, then head west. This turns into Niles Canyon Road, another cool drive, although not very challenging. We will end the drive in the historic little town of Niles. This was the movie capitol before Hollywood. Some of the earliest westerns were filmed in and around Niles. We'll stop for refreshments and to wind down at Bronco Billy's Pizza Place.

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# Historic MG Reunion at Laguna Seca

## March 20 & 21, 2004 — MG Clubs Invited

The Historic Motor Sports Association will honor MG in American racing with a special historic race weekend March 20 and 21, 2004, at the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, California. The celebration will feature many race-winning MGs from the fifties and sixties, including the 1950 MG TD Von Neumann Special, and the famous Ken Miles R1 and R2 Shingles.

The event will also pay tribute to the Kjell Qvale's San Francisco BMCD Sebring team. It will be 40 years ago to the day in 1964 that two MGBs from the three-car team finished 17th and 22nd overall at the 12 hours of Sebring. Those two cars will be reunited with Qvale; Joe Huffaker, who prepared the cars; surviving drivers Ed Leslie, Jim Parkinson and Jim Adams; crew chief Frank Morrill; and other members of the original team.



*Restored Sebring Racer  
to be featured at Laguna  
Seca March 20 & 21*

Photo: *Classic Motorsports*

In addition to a full weekend of historic racing, other scheduled highlights include an all-MG race and special paddock displays including the first MGB out of the factory.

The Historic MG Reunion is produced by the Historic Motor Sports Association (HMSA). For more information contact HMSA at 818-249-3515 (Cris Vandagriff) or visit [www.hmsausa.com](http://www.hmsausa.com).

### MG Club Participation:

- Free Admission to all MGs (Obtain special pass by RSVP below)
- MG Corral in the Paddock (No charge with pass)
- Noon Time Track Tour (No charge with pass)
- Saturday Evening Dinner with MG Racing Celebrity Speaker
- MG Clubs Designated Hotel with Special Rate

All MG owners are invited to park in the MG Corral located in the main racing paddock. You may also take your MG on the track during a special

# Annual Dinner Report

By Dan Shockey

We had a boisterous 40 members attend. We were packed into a small room but that just seemed to increase the party atmosphere.

### Meeting Agenda:

- Gift to Club from Rich Kenny: Rich sent us a very special gift — our own MGOC flag with a large MG logo and Safety Fast in script across it. We are now a first-class club and we thank Rich most sincerely.
- List of 2003 Events: 28 events plus 20 meetings or four per month on average. We made a concerted effort to try to have more activities to serve the entire area and a broad range of interests.
- Awards to Contributors: Dan Shockey made glass sun-catchers individualized to the recipient's car color and model. (See list below.)
- Burnt Spark Plug Award: Awarded to the member who experiences great and unusual difficulties in driving his or her MG but who soldiers on regardless.

For 2003, our award winner traveled several hundred miles out of his way to attend an MGOC event; was passed up unnoticed by the MGOC group while broken down along side the road; completed the event despite severe problems with his mount; refused to miss any part of the event despite the severe difficulties; made it home again under his MG's diminished power; despite a seriously broken engine. Our Winner is Dave McCann. The event was the MGOC caravan to the NAMGAR GT in Oregon

- MG Beer Stein Award: Beer Stein Award presented from last year's winner, Andy Preston, to Dan Shockey for his efforts in saving broken-down MGs. This award was initiated by Eric Baker two years ago, apparently because he came across a mug with an MG embossed on it. (Thanks, Eric.)
- **MGs at Jack London Square** Update
- 2004 Officers Presented
- Guest Speaker: Felix Wong provided a very interesting slide show of his marathon bicycle ride across France this past July. The event was the Paris-Brest-Paris race that is the oldest ongoing race in the world, started in 1898, and that led to the Tour de France and the revival of the Olympic Games. Felix covered the 762 miles in 84.5 hours, failing to beat the 1898 winner who did it in 72 hours using the innovative pneumatic tire produced by a new company, Michelin.

### 2003 Contributors: Officers

- Dan Shockey — President, **Octagon** Editor, Heather Farms, Highland Games, Annual Picnic



## From da Editor

# Time Machines

Greetings, Earthlings. You wingless creatures seem to actually prefer rolling along on the ground! I have been looking through old club newsletters and thinking how times have changed over the past 20-some years since I drug home our first MGA. Information on the cars, historical and especially technical stuff, wasn't readily available so the newsletters were full of new-found history tidbits and tech articles. Now that you can buy books with all that, we don't have such easy subject matter.

We were mostly younger then and trying to do something with the MGs for very little money. A tip to fix something spendy with a part from the hardware store was very welcome news. At least we could find MGs in the junk yards then. There was a foreign car lot near 101 in Sunnyvale (or Mountain View) that had MGAs in stacks. I remember finding a hand crank there. One day I went back and everything was cleared out and a big building was being built.

I am not sure I miss those days — except for being younger and more energetic. I hope we haven't lost our enthusiasm but there is nothing like the first time you start up an engine or roll out the new paint job. Life was full of new revelation.

The MGs still seem to represent a way of life, perhaps of a simpler, friendlier time. They don't seem to have aged. The 1961 TR3 I had in college in 1972 seemed just as antiquated then as one does now. It is fun to see them anew through the eyes of someone who never knew them or had forgotten.

Lest you forget, get going on those car projects and come to an event soon!

*Dan el*

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session at noon on both Saturday and Sunday. For the track tour event, your car will need to be safe and have seat belts. Drivers and passengers will need to have helmets of any type including motorcycle helmets. (No bicycle-type helmets.)

HMSA needs an estimate of the number of MGs attending so an RSVP is required and please advise if your plans change. (See below.) HMSA will provide passes for MG club participants that will allow entry into the track, paddock corral, and track tour. Passes will be provided to those who RSVP. Gates open at 6:30 and HMSA asks the MG clubs to help with the corral. Advise if you'd like to do that when you RSVP.

Note that the county may collect a minimal entry charge, perhaps \$5 per car.

MG Clubs Participating: MG Owners Club, Sorry Safari Touring Society, Abingdon Rough Riders, Cypress MG Club, Sacramento Valley MG Club, Peninsula MG T Register, Reno MG Club, San Diego MG Club

Designated Hotel: You are welcome to make your own arrangements, of course. For those who wish, we have negotiated a special rate at the Laurel Inn, Salinas. This is a large, clean motel that is convenient to Laguna Seca. Room rates for up to 4 persons are \$61.00 per night. Please make your room reservation right away at (831) 449-2474. Mention MG Club. Web: [www.LaurelInnMotel.com](http://www.LaurelInnMotel.com)

Saturday Evening Dinner: A group dinner is being organized that may feature one or more of the MG racing celebrities. Info to follow. Please indicate interest in attending when you RSVP.

RSVP & Further Info: Dan Shockey, (408) 923-3927,  
[DPShockey@earthlink.net](mailto:DPShockey@earthlink.net).



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# DRIP PAN

*News and Articles from the Peninsula T Register*

## The Spark Plug

By Mike O Connor

Reprinted from the *Drip Pan*, September, 1993

Recently I received a call from a TF owner who had just rebuilt his engine, but was unable to start it. He had done all the appropriate tests, and was convinced he'd correctly set the cam and ignition timing. He pulled off the timing cover and re-checked the chain installation. He verified the firing order, and was getting spark at every wire. Fuel system was working, gasoline was fresh, carbs were clean, and float bowls were filling properly. I suggested new spark plugs. Too simple, he said. Something more serious is wrong. Try them anyway, I suggested.

Two days later he called. Couldn't believe it. New plugs. Started with first pull. Runs fine.

In early July, an MG owner called to make an appointment for repair. He'd been driving in slow moving traffic on a very hot day when he suddenly lost power and began to run very rough. The car had been running hot, but had not boiled. He made it home, barely; the car would not go over 30. Burned some valves, he guessed.

By now, you know what I suggested. Next day, the call. That was it. Really surprised.



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The simple fact is MGA never won a major race or rallye; more often than not Porsche was in the winners circle. By the 1950s the era of the sports racer had firmly arrived, and production-derived sports cars were finding it difficult to be in the winners circle.

However MGA did have its share of credible showings and success — often with amateur drivers in works cars. MGA had its greatest racing success in record-breaking cars on the salt flats. I believe that MGA's greatest contribution may have been their exceptional stability, as insisted on by Thornley, which allowed them to be raced by novices safely at tracks round the world.

Well-known east coast MGA driver Sherm Decker was quoted as saying, You could drive one through a cow pasture and never hurt it. The granddaddy of all US car magazine road testers was Tom McCahill of *Mechanix Illustrated*. If you want a sidesplitting road report, you must find a copy of the January, 1957, issue. Here's how Tom explains the popularity of the MG-TC.

In 1949 all American cars were pretty crumbly sad-sacked affairs that handled like a rain-soaked English sheep dog and had all the stability of a overfull glass of alky in the hands of a Bowery bum on Saturday night.

At the end of his road testing the MGA, he turned more serious and wrote, Believe me, a man who has never owned a sports car — and the MGA is every inch a sports car, even though a slow one — doesn't know what he's talking about when he's speaking of automobiles. I mean that with all sincerity. This is a great, quality car — cheap as dirt when you consider the \$3,000-plus prices some models of our low-priced Big Three now command. I'll guarantee you'll never have as much fun in another automobile as long as you live — and I've owned the best in the world.



Practice Autocross at Tilden Park, Berkeley, MGOC, 1962 Rat Race,  
Bob Smith, Chairman of Event

# MGA Racing

## Taken from an article by Dave Quinn

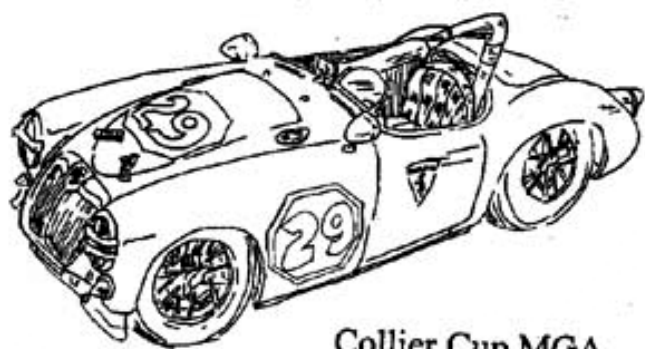
From the Michigan Rowdies *A-Antics*

In spite of its darkest moments, the 24 Hours of LeMans remains one of the greatest events in all motorsports. The images are frozen in time the famous LeMans start with drivers dashing across the track to climb into their racers, the 50 s golden age of sports car racing when LeMans was a battle ground where neither Ferrari, Jaguar or Mercedes could maintain a sustained edge. It was into this rich history that MG chose to write a new chapter of its own rich racing history.

EX182s, three MGA works 1500 roadsters with hand-formed aluminum bodies kept to the production car shape, oil coolers, and 82bhp B-series engines with special Weslake cross-flow heads. The cars were prepared under the direction of Alec Hounslow (Alec, MG history buffs may remember, was the MG K3 riding mechanic with Tazio Nuvaolari when he won the 1933 Tourist Trophy race) and Dickie Green, formerly of Aston Martin.

The engines were virtually stock except for the cross-flow heads that did not carry over to the production cars. Carbs were 1-3/4" SUs, compared to the 1-1/2" stock. The chassis was nearly stock. Higher gearing was fitted for the long high-speed straights at LeMans. A powerful lamp was placed in the right-hand side grill to combat the notorious early morning mist at LeMans. As reported in *The Autocar*, a top speed of 120 mph was reached along the Mulsanne straight.

In the race, MGA #41 driven by Ken Miles and Johnny Lockett came in 5<sup>th</sup> in class and 12<sup>th</sup> overall with an average of 87 mph. MGA #64 came in 6<sup>th</sup> in class and 17<sup>th</sup> overall after losing time due to a shunt with a D-Jaguar that had been abandoned along the track.



Collier Cup MGA

About 15 years ago, after spending several hours analyzing why a car wouldn't run, and substituting nearly every fuel and ignition part on the car with no result, I replaced the two-day old spark plugs. The car ran fine, of course, and based on that experience, I made a rule for myself: any car with a running problem, unless explained by an obvious catastrophic problem, (the con-rods thru the side of the block, etc.), first gets new spark plugs before any other tuneup procedure.

So why do plugs stop working suddenly sometimes, for no apparent reason? Usually it is a combination of a little bit of oil in the combustion chamber (some ring or valve guide wear, typical of most of our cars), plus a slightly rich mixture (our SU carbs get richer as they wear.). It's aggravated by:

- High temperatures. The air is less dense, so the air/fuel mixture becomes richer still.
- High altitude, for the same reason. We saw lots of this at the GOF at Lake Tahoe.
- Stop-and-go driving, because the car doesn't get a chance to burn off some excess fuel and oil on the plugs.

What about cleaning spark plugs? Surely most misfiring plugs are merely dirty, and will work when cleaned? Well, sometimes yes and sometimes no. The problem contaminants often remain deep in the groove between the insulator and the plug body, and can be very difficult to remove.

## Correct Spark Plug for Your MG

By Louis H. Schulte, Richmond, CA

Reprinted from the *Drip Pan*, May 1991

MG models TB, TC and early TD use a 1/2" reach spark plug, Champion L10S. The current equivalent is a L82C. Late TD, TF, MGA and MGB use a 3/4" reach plug, Champion NA8, now replaced by the N5C.

Each XPAG/XPEG engine is individually different. (Applicable to all MG engines.) If you go too hot, pre-ignition could damage your engine. Start with a cold plug. If it soots up, move to a hotter plug. This is hard to do because a T engine (and any MG engine) runs rich at idle so the plugs will show sooty. You could drive on the highway, shut off the engine, coast to the side of the road, stop, take out the spark plugs, and check.

Heat Range

	<u>1/2" Reach</u>	<u>3/4" Reach</u>
Hot	L90C	N21
	L89CM, L92YC	RN8 N16YC
	L86C L87YC	N12YC
Normal	L82C L82YC	N5C N11YC
	UL81C	N4C, N74C, N9YC, N9YC4
	L78C	N3C N7YC
Cold	L77JC L77JC4	N1 N4YC



Engines that burn oil and foul plugs run better on hotter plugs. High compression engines run better on colder plugs.

Y Suffix: Projected nose Y gap style projects the spark plug an additional 1/8" into the chamber and, providing there is sufficient clearance to valves and piston, provides the ultimate in performance. Initiating the flame front closer to the piston top at a given spark timing has the same effect as advancing the timing. Therefore, the maximum timing may be reduced; which helps to reduce detonation and octane requirement and still provides good part-throttle response. The N9YC is for MGB, and works great in late TD, TF, and MGA.

For a lot of in-town driving use a hotter plug; lots of freeway driving use a cooler plug, Best of both worlds use Champion's high output gold palladium plug #2415 only in 3/4" reach.

#### Spark Plug Installation

Install the new plug finger tight, and complete the installation with a plug wrench. A gasket type plug will require about one quarter turn to affect a gas-tight seal. This is 26-30 lb. ft. with a torque wrench.

Ref: Champion Spark Plug Co., Robert Daily, Coordinating Applications & Specifications, John Glover, Racing Engineer, (800) 537-8984 & Champion catalog

## Product Review: Champion High Output Plugs By Bob Muenchausen

From Arizona MG Club

(Munch is well known as an MG expert on the internet MG chat lines.)

These Champion plugs are quite a bit different from the ordinary N9YC plugs specified for our MGBs. (Also for MGAs and late TDs — Ed. Construction as well as performance herald a significant change in Champion's design philosophy and puts these plugs somewhere between their racing plugs and previous normal plugs. I first became aware of them in late 1989. Though intrigued by their claims for better performance, their hefty price (about \$6 each) postponed any practical investigation of Champion's claims.

However, I finally succumbed to adding these to the long list of spark plugs I have tested in my own car as part of an ongoing project of mine to maximize the efficiency of the ignition system in it. My previous experience had yielded some surprising results such as:

- The best all-around plugs for my car (68 MGB with Allison ignition), with standard twin SUs, were either Champion N11YC or NGK's BP6ES.

- All others, including the new Bosch Platinum plugs fouled disappointingly under normal stop-and-go city driving, making stoplight idle rough and punishing on the engine.

I put these new Champion 2415s in and was pleasantly surprised that there was almost instant gratification in terms of performance improvement. I don't have a dynamometer, but my subjective impression has been of modest increase in torque and possibly horsepower. I think that this is due to the simple fact that the engine definitely runs smoother, at idle and otherwise, and the fewer misfires are yielding more power from each charge of fuel and air. Champion's little brochure on these plugs states that engine idle variation should improve, and I agree that it has. They also claim that features such as a gold-palladium insert in the center electrode, and smaller diameter insulator tip should all contribute to fewer misfires as well as significantly less fouling due to low speed driving.



My tests concur with Champion's claim. I have never encountered cleaner tips and insulators than these under the less than ideal conditions of urban traffic. After one such journey to the local market and back (top speed 30mph!), I pulled all four plugs and they were all clean and showing perfect combustion properties. This was a first for my experience with the MGB, because in all other types tested, at least the #2 and #3 cylinders would show more carbon fouling due to limitations of the B-series induction system. Not so with these plugs; they all looked the same: clean!

It is rare to find products that truly live up to their maker's claims completely, but these new spark plugs from Champion seem to do that. That exceeds my expectations, and I feel confident in recommending them to anyone who might consider \$24 a very modest investment in improving performance of their MGB. The only word of caution I would give is that these plugs will only help make the engine run better if the rest of the ignition and induction set up is correctly tuned and in good operating condition. Don't expect miracles if those systems aren't up to par. Otherwise I give these spark plugs a full four octagons.

*I had a set of these in my MGB for years but recently replaced them with the Bosch plugs. The engine does not run as smoothly and the plugs seem to foul. I plan to try to find some more of them. Other folks have told me that they have to replace plugs frequently in their MGBs. MGs seem sensitive to spark plug condition. — Dan*