

Flatwater Austin Healey Club Newsletter

Austin Healey CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.



Events for December

The only event planned for December for FWAHC is breakfast. Breakfast this month will be in Wahoo at the Wigwam, where we will convene at 9:00. The food is good, plentiful and cheap.

The next breakfast will be the second Saturday in January somewhere in Lincoln. The time will be at 9:00, the place to be announced.

Would You Care to Join The Flatwater Austin Healey Club?

In Lincoln call John Ulrich at 421-9252 or Bob Shaw at 435-4905. In Omaha, call Jerry Needham at 291-7122 or Marvin Marshall at 733-6868.

Shopping for Holiday Gifts?

As the holiday season approaches and we consider gifts for friends, please remember the support our friends at Moss Motors has given the Flatwater Austin Healey Club. They send gift certificates as prizes for the show, placards for the cars, and discount coupons for each participant. They have been very good to us. Please consider this as you order presents.

Why LBCs

It is the evening of the second Saturday of November and I am sitting in our home office, laptop and small assistant filling my lap reflecting upon a question asked by Dianne Mullins, a reporter



for

the *Lincoln Journal Star*. Ms. Mullins joined our cast of nefarious characters at Mahoney State Park Lodge, nestled on the west bank of the Platte River about midpoint between Lincoln and Omaha, to listen to yarns being spun, jokes being shared and the enjoyment of what may have been the last top down driving day until March. She joined us in her capacity as a reporter for the Thursday automotive page of that newspaper. As background for that story she asked why we chose these cars. Why small British Sportscars instead of, say, Porsches or Corvettes?

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We gave the usual answers about size, economy, agility, fun, and basic simple though sophisticated design. We then left the lodge, drove to the tower for photos and gave Ms. Mullins a ride in Ben's GT and in my MGA, for as it turned out she had never ridden in the cars she writes about. As we posed and joked about the Cornhusker Corvette Club meeting over the bank as we heard some goose hunters attempting to bag their prey, the question kept coming back. Why these particular cars?

I continued to ponder the question as I drove the curves on Highway 66 near Ashland at speed to shake the Lincoln Continental who had chosen to fasten himself to my rear bumper, on the drive back to Lincoln and back into the country around the Salt Valley Watershed lakes as Martha and I enjoyed the beautiful autumn weather.

There is no real logical answer that I can choose above all others. There are only snippets of memories and feelings that do not leave with time, emotional affect which may start to explain why these particular cars.

Part of the reason may have to do with memories of my father, P. Clyde Shaw. Dad had always wanted a T series M.G. He had a number of fun cars,

including a '55 Studebaker Commander Coupe and a '73 Cougar XR7 with a 351 Cleveland power plant, but save for an old Midget he had inherited from my brother that he was going to restore "someday" he never owned a sportscar. He was delighted when I called home from the University of Nebraska to inform him I had chosen a '63 MGB to replace the '61 TR3 we had purchased from my uncle, and which had met a bad end after my brother and my car had come into contact with a bridge abutment while trying to avoid a cow. Dad loved my M.G. If I left the keys in the car on a visit home, not a dangerous practice on a ranch in South Central Nebraska, it would disappear. It would come home a bit later, covered in mud after having spent some time in powerslides in a hayfield along Buffalo Creek. But Dad was all grins and, I swear, the car was running better than before the old man had been behind the wheel. He helped me paint that car, recover the seats, replace the front wheel bearings (they were the same Timkin bearings as used in a Massey Ferguson hay bailer) and rebuild the engine. Dad didn't try to discourage me a few years later when I decided to trade the MG for a Camaro. But he often smiled when he referred to the '63 B.



Maybe a part of it is the fun that Martha and I had rebuilding the A early in our relationship. We put the engine together at the ranch on weekends, and used a tractor loader to drop the engine back into the car. That was Martha's car for a while and it went into the country with her on photo safaris. The memory of Martha's hair in the wind, a smell of gasoline, oil, and leather, and the sound of the engine shrieking are so precious that I cannot imagine being without the A.

There was a dalliance with a Porsche 912 about this time, but somehow the Porsche just did not seem as honest as the M.G. About the only thing the Porsche had to offer was the comfort of a closed GT, and snob appeal. But neither of us thought that we had the wherewithal to be considered among the fancy people, so that advantage did not wear well. And we had a chance to drive an MGB GT, with which we both fell in love.

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The GT was relatively quick, and the back end did not try to pass the front every time we went into a corner hard. We were both taken with this car, so rather than repairing the rusty floors in the Porsche I bought Martha a '74 BGT for her birthday and sold the Porsche. (It had the last laugh. Its new owner was able to use the engine in his 356 Speedster and sell the body for a bit more than he had paid for the car.) But we had an M.G. that was comfortable to travel in and had room for more than an overnight bag. Martha even hauled a bale of straw to be used in papermaking home in the GT. There memories of countless tours, including one memorable unplanned off road voyage, and after 150,000 miles the car is a bit in need of freshening, but Martha still calls the GT the best present she ever got.

Much of what we do involves these little cars. We love to take drives in the country to relax, or to go on photo safaris. We love to go with others in the group on tours or vacations or just across town for ice cream. Many of our best friends are known to us because of these little cars, and that circle of friends continues to grow. There is no elitism in our group, and new members are always welcome,

whether they drive a rusty midget or a newly restored 3000. For as Jim Danielson has said, "We are not captains of industry. We are not members of the social register, we are bottom feeders. As such we cannot be particularly elite."

So why an LBC? I guess in the end we drive LBCs for the same reason we wear Converse All-Stars and blue jeans. It is part nostalgia and part function. But then again, maybe a great deal of the reason is just that they fit comfortably and feel good.

YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP IS DUE

It is the time of year that our dear friend, brother Ulrich, begins to show that haunted look. The annual membership fee is due January 1, 1999 and the national association is none to patient about

receiving their portion. They know where John lives, and they mentioned something about a red Bugeye, a blast furnace and roller skates for children in an orphanage in some third world country. Please help John reduce the stress by sending your annual dues. Local dues are \$15 for the year. National dues are \$50 (they asked for the increase, not us) and includes the local dues. Please forward the appropriate amount to:

John Ulrich
6845 South 44th
Lincoln, NE 68516

The British Parts Connection

The British Parts Connection is a discount house in Bangor, Maine. They carry parts from Moss, and have many hard to find parts. You can reach them at (207) 990-3422.

The Lazarus Mini, Part 3

by Frank Grover

Getting the body off the trailer and onto the cradle using the engine hoist wasn't the optimum solution; but the transfer was made with only minimal scratched trailer fender paint. Next time I transfer a body I'll use my just ordered chain hoist (Harbor Freight, \$50) and take good advantage of the

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building's clear span I-beams. My neighbor, Edith, was particularly impressed by the beautiful 3 inch

So several weeks ago on what seemed the ideal evening I laid down as motionless as I could in the middle area. The battery box (trunk area) apart. Both the inner fenders rusted at the lower fire wall and sill joint area.

swag in the cradles 12 foot horizontal bars. I could shorten the bars to 10 feet 6 inches or use larger or non-perforated tubing but after a several weeks test all is well and the cradle body rotates nicely. I did see where several restorers opt for an approximately 3 X 4 foot 36 inch high swiveled wheel table/cart to plate the body on as it allows better access to front and rear subassembly removal and installations. I'll probably go that route as I get to the mechanical restoration.

Rust! Johnny Carson said that as a boy in Norfolk, Nebraska for real summer fun he would go out into a field at night, settle in a calm meadow, and listen to Fords (English?) rust.

of my building (where English cars abound) to feel the experience. I think I could begin to hear the rumble when the significant other ruined the moment by exclaiming "do I need to call 911.." She has a trip coming up so I'll..... It must have been in the car's previous lives that some one felt the best solution to the rust problem was to simply place it all out of sight. So supplied with a few aluminum panels (slightly thicker than paper), scores of pop rivets, a bucket of bondo, a little primer, a splash of paint, and a quick spray of undercoating, they had a car taking all the virtues of the \$99 paint job special. The car must surely felt under attack as I proceeded with great vigor to remove all that crap. What I discovered: the outer and inner sills on both sides from wheel arch to wheel arch - gone.

Both front wings from the top door hinge to sill level just about gone (amazingly the doors didn't fall off). The front foot wells to the firewall rusted

also had several small holes but was mostly intact. To add additional insult the Bondo guru had filled the sill inner areas with giant globs resembling sweet potatoes. (I guess to make even Martha Stewart happy). In the endless process of Bondo stuffing (must have been done around Thanksgiving) even the rear seal pocket panels were sacrificed. I'll get a chance to see if I really acquired the necessary skills/talents getting a welding degree at Metro Community College. Although only Rex (my instructor) knows I'll be taking the same welding class over for the tenth time this winter. The removal of he undercoating was a very tedious task. I scraped with a chisel for hours. The I used paint remover and steel wool followed by a thorough cleaning with lacquer thinner. Finally I could use a wire brush, sandpaper, and a chemical rust remover (Metal prep). If I didn't get it clean enough I'll find out immediately with the first weld spark. I've spent many evening hours becoming familiar with the *Leyland Mini Workshop Manual* (ADK 4935) -- I've been very pleased. John Martin (Omaha's Sport Car garage)

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helped me get copies of the Austin Mini-Cooper Body (AKD 3510) and Mechanical (ADK 3509) Service Parts Lists. John has a super library of

So I started ordering parts. Mini Mania had a rare 997+.030 pistons and brake pads. I tried ordering from Mini City Ltd. but they had none of

She asked if Frank Sifranic was already a member. Second, find a friend in the Mini parts business (he pointed me towards Jack Holdaway in

English car manuals. These illustrated lists have been most valuable in helping identify all the parts; both what I have and missing. They also give good insight as to how the sheet metal parts are formed and attached. The significant other might be slightly bending as she got me several Mini books for my birthday. The book *Essential Mini Cooper* by Anders Ditlev Clausager gives a brief discussion of Mini history and contains several nice pictures of original Cooper detail. This should assist me in getting the body back to a semblance of correct (structurally and esthetically). *The Illustrated History of the Works Minis in International Rallies and Races* by Peter Browning reads like a war history. One interesting fact was that a particular Mini registration number might have appeared on four car configurations (meaning multiple body and engine changes) so to make this car correct from an originality perspective would be a challenge. Chris Harvey's book *The Mighty Minis* has lots of history, plenty of pictures, and excellent sections on buying, restoring, and racing a Mini.

what i wanted in stock. I ordered a catalog from Seven Enterprises Ltd. (Virginia) who had sponsored the Fortech racing Mini. Their catalog, with a 1995 issue date, is very well illustrated and comprehensive. I got sheet metal from HP Motor Sports in Omaha to begin the body repair. Mide Ashbaugh had a Mini some years ago and may have a few parts hidden away. Called Bert's foreign repair in Fort Dodge, Iowa. His father had an English car salvage yard twenty years ago but he still has a lot of MG spares. I got an MGA 1622 and and Sprite 1098 big main bearing engines from him on trips back from the "June Sprints". Bert told me to contact Davis Walker in DesMoines -- I am following up on the lead. I met Corky Swanson several years ago at the Quad City all English car show. I think he has an ex-works Mini rally car and knows of parts. Peter Zekert wrote me providing two pieces of advice. Join the Madmen (Karl Starch in Missouri). The significant other informs me that whatever this organization does she will have absolutely no problem getting me any number of reference letters if that's what is required to join.

California). I've crewed for Peter at the SCCA Runoffs at Mid-Ohio and I've always been impressed by his multitude of acquaintances and abilities to locate tough to find parts. To tube or not to tube? When sills are off and holes exist in the floors is probably the best time to make the decision on whether the mini is to be street driven or a GT-5 racer. I toiled with this one as all I have done for the past eleven years is build and prepare club racers. From that early June in 1966 when I first experienced racing at Road American at Elkhart Lake and joined SCCA I've been pretty singular in thought.

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However, I guess I am preparing myself for a final decision to keep it as original as I can (forgive me WHOOMAH).

I am not sure how many hours of metal cutting, bending, and welding lie ahead but I hope to come out of the smoke with some time to write and mail Christmas cards. I am about three fourths of the way through the

PS: While my father (having had experience as both a Judge and Federal Attorney) was not a man of much wit and humor, he did feel obligated to point out to me the basic differences between his absolutely

I saw a movie on HBO with Bill Murray entitled *The Man Who Knew Too Little* and set in London. At first I thought it might have been my biography but it turned out to be about a man who was mistaken for a spy. The plot wasn't that great but it had an abundance of neat Mini (I think Cooper) high speed racing scenes to require a second viewing (guess I am hooked). I got a beautiful scale model Austin Mini Cooper in crystal (5 and 1/2 inches) at the Mikasa outlet store west of Omaha (crystal classics SN014 980). They had several other cars to include a sharp Jaguar XK 120. Guess you know what I will tell Santa.

tedious task of preparing patterns for all the required sheet metal parts. All the cutting and pasting takes me back to 1950 and my kindergarten years when I was not really in a period of self actualization. Ms. Wilson (the teacher) had told me more than once to pay attention declaring I was risking not learning the essential skills required to properly prepare me to face life's biggest challenges. I am beginning to realize quickly how right she really was. I hate to admit when other people are right about as much as Newt Gingrich does.

basic four door post Chevrolet and my flowing, classic, and work of art MGA. As if he was addressing a jury he looked me squarely in the eyes and with no emotion exclaimed (probably quoting some obscure court decision) his winning argument that when he placed the key in the ignition of his baby and turned it; something always happened.



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