



NEWSLETTER

Vol 38 #1 May 2020



Happy Days Photo at the MGVR race, Summit Point 2013

**This year come join us at Lime Rock Park
October 16-17**

Yes, this is really an MGVR newsletter.

From The Editor :

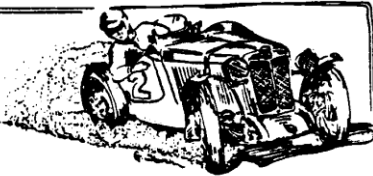
Dave Nicholas, editor

Chris Meyers, who has worked himself into a wreck with MGVR, his family and business has turned the reins over to me. I haven't done a newsletter since the 60's so please bear with me. With luck and help from you, the members, we will have this thing once every two months, and if successful perhaps once a month.

The Covid shutdown has certainly affected all of us. My gal Rosemary and I were in the south to race at Roebing Road, Georgia, then at the SVRA race at Sebring. We had a wonderful month planned. I left the race car and trailer at a friend's factory which just happens to be at the Sebring airport and headed north to Amelia island for the concours. I'd been there with Mike Eaton, John Wright and 3 of their ex factory Sebring cars in 2012. Kevin Richards, Joe Tierno and I had the neat job of wiping the cars down, making sure everything was clean and then wandering the grounds. What amazed me this year is how Amelia has grown. In those few years the award grounds had twice the grandstand and sponsor bleachers. The grounds for the car displays was also twice as big. Regardless, it is something to witness – bring money. Parking each day is \$40. Some hotels do have free shuttles so if you are thinking of it, start asking around. The seminars are extra cost, but usually worth the price.

We stayed south expecting to spectate at the Sebring 12 hour and then finish our trip with the MGVR focus race at Road Atlanta. Both were cancelled. So instead we spent a week at a nice RV park in Sarasota. What we didn't know is that 1 mile away was Big Cat Rescue park – where the main character of the Netflix phenomena, Tiger King tried to kill the owner. We went to Big Car and it is fabulous. Not to sound all Wizard Of Oz but they have Lions, Tigers and Bears. Great docents to talk to and who give presentations. Not publicized is the fact they have a huge pen of goats. My question was why? My theory? Goats multiply quickly and Lions, Tigers and Bears get hungry. Hey, no proof but just sayin'.

Competition



Nobody is quite sure when and where racing will start again. NASCAR has announced it is starting May 17 at Darlington and is jamming in two more Darlington races on May 19 and 20. No spectators but for the teams and sponsors a few million will watch it on TV. Formula 1, being the Globally Correct institution has said **“As stated recently our intention is to start the 2020 season at some point this summer.”** IMSA is pushing for June 25-28 at Watkins Glen with their Salen’s Six Hour.

In California the VARA is going forward with its Brit Extravaganza vintage races on May 15-16 at Buttonwillow Raceway near Bakersfield. The SVRA is holding firm on their schedule starting with Indianapolis June 17-21 followed by Mid-Ohio June 25-28. Many of us are planning on the Watkins Glen Vintage GP September 9-12 which will include the Collier Cup.

The MGVR Focus race will be at Lime Rock amid the wonderful Berkshire Mountain fall colors the weekend of October 16-17. Please keep in mind there is no racing at Lime Rock on Sunday so the event is Friday-Saturday. Best part is the entry fee for any MG racing is \$100 and that amount is refunded if you make the Saturday 2:20 all MG Feature.



Long before our friends at SVRA and the guys who brought back the Collier Cup, there were all MG races usually promoted by the MG Car Clubs. For some entertainment during the lock-down give a look at 60+ photos and descriptions of the Western New York Council of MG car clubs 1959 and 1960 races at Watkins Glen.

<https://www.barcboys.com/watkins-glen-mgcc-5960> There’s more to see about racing in the 50’s and 60’s so snoop around end enjoy. Naturally I want you to go and look; after all it’s my website.

Say Hello to some of your MGVR race cars

We'll try to show you a few up close photos and stories of our members and their cars each month.



Todd and Carol Stevenson, MG TD, Bethany Beach, MD

Todd's habit started with him going to vintage races as a spectator. He wisely took Carol to the Lime Rock Historics and the die was cast. Todd saw an ad in Bring A Trailer where Fran LaBelle in Mass had advertised his 1952 MG TD. Todd drove up and bought the car. "I'd always liked the older 1950's cars and loved the TD's looks from back in high school." Fran helped Todd get his VSCCA license and he's been a regular at Lime Rock. Carol has her own set of "Crew Chief" overalls, and functions equally well as catering manager and "umbrella girl." She really enjoys socializing with the other wives and meeting new friends. There's a new motor for the TD and the Stevenson's are hoping to start the season at Lime Rock near the end of May.



FRANK & CONNIE MOUNT, CALEDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Frank Mount has been racing on and off for 7 decades. That is not a typo – he started in 1958 in his MGTC. Above left you see him in 1960 in his “Improved Production” MG TC at Watkins Glen. He bought the car in 1957 and slowly brought it to its racing condition. The current TC 104 was built by Frank in 1997-8 as a close copy of the original #104 in the Glen photo using parts acquired from Bob Grunau’s collection of parts. Frank’s favorite car has to be his 1939 TB MG named Babe for the pig radiator cap. You can find this amazing couple sitting and chatting next to one or the other of their cars at vintage car races.

FROM THE FRANK MOUNT ARTICLE FOR MGVR IN 2008

My 50 Year Association with MGs 1958 – 2008 *by Frank Mount*

The May 2008 VRG Vintage Race at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway was a milestone for me since it marked 50 years to the month since I first raced an MG TC.

My interest in English sports cars started as young teenager reading the early copies of Road and Track and Sports Cars Illustrated. When I turned 16 years old in 1955, I bought my first British car, a 1948 Morris 8 for \$65.00. It was a great little car, but too slow, so a friend and I decided to build aluminum bodied special from the chassis of a 1942 Austin 8. It resembled a Dellow trials car that we had read about in various English publications. I used this special as my daily driver while all of my local friends had graduated to British motorcycles.

My Father was dead set against me having a motorcycle so in the summer of 1957 he loaned me the \$700.00 that I needed to acquire my first TC. It was a well used but tidy, solid car and by the end of that summer I had reworked the engine and repainted it, bringing it up to a condition that I was quite proud of.

When I returned to school that fall, I began working at a gas station where the owner and several customers had TCs. These guys were interested in the competition side of the sports car scene and although they didn't compete, they would go to Watkins Glen each fall and spectate and at the local hill climbs and airport races.

For me just seeing these events was not enough - I had to get involved. In the spring of 1958, I began entering the local races at Harewood Acres and Green Acres Raceway. These were both abandoned 2nd world war air training bases. The farmer would round up the sheep on the weekend of a race and for about a \$20.00 entry fee we were racing. Initially the only safety equipment required was a lap belt, helmet, and a Pyrene (the deadly stuff) fire extinguisher. Within a year or so either a roll bar or grab handle on the floor was required. I was one of the first to install a roll bar. I made it myself out of exhaust pipe tubing and since I had no way to bend it, the top was ½ of an octagon.

The fall of 1958 saw me start a 3 year course at Ryerson Tech. in Mechanical Engineering. This was more of a hands-on approach to engineering and involved some machine shop and welding labs which gave me a chance to make more extreme modifications to the race TC. By the fall of 1959 I had built anti wind-up bars for the front axle and fabricated an extractor exhaust manifold to go with the newly installed factory racing camshaft. Since the manifold was routed outside the steering column it was necessary to cut a large hole in the front fender.

During this period, my enthusiasm for what were already outdated MG rubbed off on some other friends and we formed what we called the "Ontario MG "T" Series Racing Team". The group consisted of about 8 Toronto area guys, some with highly modified TCs and TDs. My main competition in this group was a TD owned by Bill Lepper, which had an engine built by me to similar specs as mine. This same TD coincidentally is currently owned and raced as the pride and joy of Jeffrey Renshaw (the beautiful BRG TD #951).

The spring of 1961 was a big change for me. I graduated from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and Mosport International Raceway began operations. A racing friend of mine bought the factory sponsored Austin Healey 3000 from Austin of Canada, which meant that his 1958 Twin Cam was for sale. My Father was so pleased that I had actually graduated with a diploma that when asked for a \$2,000 loan to buy the car he paid for it outright. In the first week of May Austin of Canada were sponsoring a press day at the new, untried Mosport circuit and my friend, the new owner of their Healey 3000 could not get the day off work, so he asked if I could drive them around in his new steed. Fortunately, I had one free week until I started my new job, so I was happy to fill in. This gave me the opportunity to be one of the first to drive a race car on the Mosport track.

Although my new Twin Cam had always been a race car the only modifications that it had were a close ratio box, a sway bar and an extra set of Andrex shocks on the front, mounted on the "A" arm. We raced the Twin Cam at all the local events at Harewood and Green Acres and made one trip to the then new Waterford Hills track and one trip to the Watkins Glen September event (probably 1962). The only improvement I made to the Twin Cam was to fit a set of Skinderian racing cams. Each spring a new set of street radials would be installed and when they were done, we were done for the season. If we qualified for the 1 hour feature race we would only run if it was raining to save the tires.

By the mid 60's all the hot Twin Cams had been retired leaving just my friend Hugh Stark and myself campaigning in the all MG races at Greenacres. The pushrod MGAs still hadn't been developed to today's standards so Hugh and I would finish 1st and 2nd. We were uncompetitive against the Porsche Carreras in the 1600cc class and we were getting bored, so a plan was formulated to build two Chevy V8 powered Twin Cams. Probably one too many beers were consumed while making this commitment. Hugh Stark was a law student and although he was a good driver, the mechanical part was in my hands. His father on the other hand, ran a Studebaker garage and had some low cost connections with G.M. Hugh applied for a \$1,000 student loan and I borrowed \$1,000 from the bank to buy "furniture" and we were in business. Through the garage we bought new 327 solid lifter Corvette short blocks and 2 Muncie 4 speed close ratio boxes. At that time, I still had enough money left to buy heads from the auto wreckers and other parts required. Hugh's Dad spotted him new fuel injection heads so as usual his car would have a little more power than mine. The Stark Studebaker dealership provided two positraction units for the rear axles. They had splines in the diff unit that matched the MGA, so I cut the outer ends of the Twin Cam axle housings off and welded them to the center part of Studebaker Lark rear axle assembly. Doing something like that today would be considered sacrilege. The engine was placed so that it was centered where the old cross member was that the pedals mounted on. This required moving the seat back into the rear deck slightly, lengthening the steering column, and a very short drive shaft. My car weighed 2050 lbs. – 1050 lbs. front, 1000 lbs. rear. To widen the rims, I cut them in half and welded a 1 ½ strip of similar gauge steel in place. A little scary, but the price was right. The next Spring they were ready for a test race at the old Harwood airport track. I had no previous experience with Holley carburetors and at the end of the first run down the straight the second two barrels stayed open and caused an exciting ride off the end into a field of cattle corn. Back to the paddock and a linkage change and we were good to go. The car went really fast but was too powerful for the stock MG Twin Cam brakes and suspension. In the first race I started from the second row with a space between George Eaton's new 427 Cobra

and the Gories Chevrolet 427 Corvette. When the flag dropped I shot through the hole and beat them both to the first corner by a good margin, but by the time we got to the end of the first straight, they had got up to speed and simply powered by me in the corner.

The first outing was great fun even if not entirely successful. On the way home on Sunday (no Sunday racing in Canada in those days) we stopped at the Cayuga Drag strip to take part in a day sponsored by the Sports Car Club of Toronto. My car ran the ¼ mile in 12.4 seconds and Hugh's ran 11.7, a run where he shifted from 1st to 4th accidentally and didn't bother to correct.

The next race for the beasts was at Mosport. The outing proved to me that 150 MPH up the back straight hill was too fast for the rest of the car. With a lot more development of suspension, brakes, wheels etc. it could have been made to work but at that time in my life I was starting a family and about to build a house so I packed it in and sold it for money to pay for building supplies. For about 10 years I had no mechanical toy's and spent most of my time working.

In about 1976 I bought my first off-road motorcycle and then began a 20 year period of competing in cross country motorcycle endures.

In 1994 Connie and I ran into Bob Grunau at a car show. I had built a house for Bob's brother in 1975 and subsequently built the foundation for Bob's large MG shop and garage at his home in Mississauga, Ontario so he knew of my MG connection. He talked us into buying a restored TC that he was selling for a friend and we were back in MGs again. It only took a few MG social events for me to realize that I should get back into racing MGs, only this time in vintage races. It would not be hard to give up riding enduros because at my age recovering from the inevitable injuries took longer and longer. In 1996 Bob and I decided to each build a race car from some of the masses of MG parts that he has collected over his life. I decided to go with a TC rather than a Twin Cam MGA because I always thought that I had more fun racing the TC than I did with the Twin Cam. Perhaps it was just the age I was at.

Our target was to have the cars finished in time for the 50th anniversary of Watkins Glen racetrack and be part of the MGVR Focus Event that September. I had to have two races run prior to the event because my previous experience did not count towards getting my CASC racing license. Even the fact that I had been a senior driving instructor and run a drivers school in 1964 didn't count. My car was slightly behind schedule and Bob let me drive his TC for one race at Mosport. I then did my second event at Waterford Hills and the car and I were ready for the Glen in September. It was a great event except my valve cover gasket came loose and I ran out of oil and cooked the rod bearings. We took it apart at the track and replaced the rod bearings with a set graciously loaned by Les Gonda. (Our TCs used MGB rod bearings.) The repair lasted the weekend and allowed us to do the old course tour which was the highlight of the first year back racing. When properly overhauling the engine, I found that the new billet crank from Phoenix in England had been overheated and had a deep crack at the edge of one journal. \$2500 later and we were ready for season two the next spring. When we started vintage racing we were allowed to run the TCs in the Prewar group with the VSCCA and I always enjoyed this group the most. When we got the boot from this class I decided that I needed a Prewar MG. Since I knew all about the XPAG engines and nothing about the earlier overhead cam engines this meant that a 1939 TB was the only Prewar MG

that fit my requirement. In 2004 while on a tour in England with the Little British Car Company, we visited Barry Walker's showroom and shop near Stratford. There in the lineup of cars for sale was a TB Special in a color that Connie particularly liked. We took a casual look and some photos and brought a copy of a tech sheet on the car home. By the time we reached home we had decided that if the VSCCA would issue us a log book for the car then we would have it sent to Canada. I sure wished that I had looked it over more carefully when we were in England. Now we were buying it as described. When it arrived, I put in some gas and started it up. I took it for a run down the road and found that I couldn't drive it properly because of the strange cramped pedal arrangement. After some welding and modifications, I got it to where I could comfortably drive it. Other than lots of little problems the TB has been a good solid car and gets used at every event that allows Prewar cars.



In February of 2007 we shipped "Babe" (named because of the pig on the rad cap) to the South Island of New Zealand to compete in the Southern Festival of Speed, a four race series that runs on consecutive weekends. Although we had a major supercharger failure at the first event, we managed to make all four events, one with borrowed manifold and carbs and the last two with the supercharger miraculously repaired by the machine shop at Auto Restorations in Christchurch.

For the balance of the 2007 season we took in the usual U.S. events including a try at Mount Equinox which was one venue that I had always wanted to try. The course was really too rough for "Babe" but we managed a run just under 6 minutes which for 1350cc was quite satisfying. The highlight of the 2007 season was the MG focus event at Mid Ohio.

The 2008 season is shaping up really well with the Focus Event at the new NJMP track. This will give us the new track for 2008. Each year since starting vintage racing in 1998 we have managed to race at one new venue each year. I don't know how many more years I will be lucky enough to race, but I think there are enough tracks that I haven't been at yet to see me through.

Editors Note: Here in 2020 it is pretty clear Frank had a lot more years left.



CHECKERED FLAG LAP

This issue has come to an end. I hope you enjoyed it and expect to have a new issue every other month. Feel free to email me at davnik6@gmail.com with suggestions and especially if there are subjects or articles you would like to see.

