



# NEWSLETTER

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## COLLIER CUP TROPHY ISSUE



Sept 1958, starter Rex Hopkins presents the checkered flag to the Collier Cup winner Bob Bucher. The car owner Spanky Smith is along for the ride.

# From The Editor :

Today is June 15 and it seems the US population has finally forced the most critical of States to open. Hallelujah.

On the weekend of September 9-12, the SVRA will honor the MG Marque with the continuation of The Collier Cup race. This event is for MG's only. No sprites, no couriers, only MG badged cars.

Perhaps more important is the fact 2021 is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MGVR. Some of you have been members since the beginning, some are just joining.

The pairing of our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and the renewal of the Collier Cup's 36<sup>th</sup> birthday needs to be a weekend of celebration.

WE need all racers to support this celebration. WE need the fans and families who are not racers to come and support the sport.

Bring the old, bring the new. Old timers who can't remember what they had for breakfast and young, hard charging members need to meet, to learn from each other and to (as John Thornley said) keep Maintaining The Breed.

**THIS ISSUE; I'm very thankful to Fast Eddie Kovalchick, Mark Barnhart and Kenny Williamson for some great stories of their MG experiences. I know you will enjoy them and now it is time for us to hear from YOU. This newsletter is only as good as you make it. Write something, sell something. I'm just the guy who collects and reflects.**

**DN**

# THE COLLIER CUP AND ITS IMPORTANCE

I imagine most of you know the story behind The Collier Cup, but it is time you should read again and understand the significance of the Collier brothers not just in naming a race, but in all they did to bring sports car racing to the US.

**Reprinted from HISTORICRACING.COM**

From a wealthy background, Sam Collier and his brother Miles played a significant role in the re-introduction of road racing into the USA after the war. He was killed in the 1950 Watkins Glen Grand Prix.

Sam Collier died 71 years ago, he was 38.



Sam Collier, 1937, photo courtesy of the Revs Institute

*BARRON GIFT COLLIER* made a substantial fortune in subway and streetcar advertising and in 1921 he purchased 1.3 million acres in Florida. He then built the 368-mile long "Tamiami Trail" highway, better known as Alligator Alley, to link Miami with Florida's west coast.

In 1930 on the vast family estate at Overlook in Westchester County, New York his three sons Baron Jr (21), Miles (15) and Sam (17) along with their friend Tom Dewart designed a racetrack using the service roads on the estate. Initially they raced simple go-carts powered by lawn mower and garden tractor engines. Over the next two years more friends joined in the racing and the cars became slightly more sophisticated. Then in 1932, Barron, Jr's fiancée, Barbara Mav, presented him with an MG-J2 as an engagement present. They married in November 1933 the same year the Colliers' founded the Automobile Racing Club of America.

Early in 1934 Sam and Miles traveled to Europe to look for better cars to race. They had a passion for European cars and came back with a 1929 Riley Brooklands for Miles and a six-cylinder MG L-type Magna for Barron Jr. Not only that but they successfully negotiated with **Cecil Kimber to become the first official MG importers into the USA**. Sam and Miles formed the MG Sales Company and arranged with George Rand, a fellow racer, to sell MGs through Rand's foreign car dealership in Manhattan.

Also in 1934 the Colliers arranged for a 3.3-mile road course to be sanctioned on public roads in Briarcliff, New York. Briarcliff had held a race in 1908, so ARCA renewed the tradition of the Briarcliff Trophy. 18 cars lined up on the grid in November including five MG-J2s. At the end of the year after five races Barron, Jr. was second, Sam third in their MG-J2s and Miles was a disappointing sixth.

Early in 1935 three MG-PAs were built for Le Mans. These works cars featured special tuning, suspension upgrades, and super-chargers. MG, looking for publicity entered three two-woman teams captained by George Eyston and dubbed by the press as 'Eyston's Dancing Daughters.' All three cars finished the race and Miles struck a deal to buy one. Miles handed the PA to John Oliveau to build a light-weight aerodynamic aluminum body for it. The car was nicknamed Leonidis.

Meanwhile Sam and George Rand went back to Europe looking for late Maserati and Alfa Romeo grand prix cars. However, Sam had other ideas, he wanted to go racing. Briggs Cunningham, a Yale friend of Sam and Miles, had an MG K-3 Magnette in storage in England. Sam and George Rand raced it in the County Down Trophy in Ireland. They also drove in a series of minor races in France before returning to the States.

In 1936 the Collier's had lost the use of the Briarcliff road circuit, but they managed to organize a road race at the Annual Cotton Carnival in Memphis in May. Sam won in an Auburn 12 Speedster. Barron, Jr. was third in his MG L-type Magna. As Miles was chief steward, he had lent his MG-J2 to a friend from Chicago, LeRoy Kramer. It turned out to be a bit of a handful for him and after spinning a number of times in practice he handed the car back to Miles.

In 1938 Miles and Leonidis finished either first overall or first in class in every race they entered through the entire year.

In 1939 he entered Leonidis in the Le Mans 24-hour race. Miles drove with Lewis Welch. As the race began, Miles drove the first four hours and was running second in class when he handed over to Welch. Welch maintained position, but at 3½ hours he came into the pits needing fuel. The tank was filled but after two more laps he was back. The fuel tank had split, and repairs could not be made.

Throughout 1940 and 1941 America was preparing for war. October 1940 saw ARCA's last race, the World's Fair Grand Prix, at Flushing Meadows, New York. The race was run on a tight course around various nations' pavilions. Miles took his Riley Brooklands out of storage for the event and started installing a Mercury Flathead V-8 engine but ran out of time and ended up driving Briggs Cunningham's Bu-Merc Special, a special Buick chassis and modified Buick straight-8 engine, under a modified lightweight Mercedes SSK body. Miles was up against some very fast machinery, but he worked his way up to second behind Frank Griswald in an Alfa Romeo grand prix car. Three laps from the finish Miles left the course and hit a lamppost. Sam Collier in a new MG finished 5th overall and 1st in class.

Shortly after the race, ARCA was disbanded as was The MG Sales Company. MG production had ceased at Abingdon in 1939. In the light of WW II such matters seemed irrelevant.

The Collier brother all served with distinction during the war. Barron, Jr. with General Douglas MacArthur's staff, and Sam was a Navy pilot. Miles spoke French fluently without an accent and became a member of the Office of Strategic Services, trained to drop behind enemy lines.

Barron Gift Collier had died in 1939, and Barron, Jr. sold off the Collier's New York businesses. The brothers now all lived in the Palm Beach area. Each brother had a Beachcraft Bonanza airplane, which they used to commute to the Collier offices in Everglades City, Naples, and elsewhere in Florida. Just to add icing on their

already very large cake, the Humble Oil and Refining Company discovered a large field of oil on their land in 1942.

On October 2, 1948, the newly formed SCCA organized a series of races on a road course at Watkins Glen, New York. Sam and Miles entered finishing 4th and 5th respectfully in the main race.

The following year Miles had his Riley Brooklands with the 3.9 litre Mercury Flathead V-8 finally installed painted a lurid green which led to the nickname the Ardent Alligator. Sam and Miles drove in the inaugural Bridgehampton race on June 11, 1949. Sam finished third overall with his supercharged MG-TC but Miles did not finish.

At the Watkins Glen Grand Prix on September 17, in the Seneca Cup, George Weaver won in his Maserati R1 'Poison Lil', Briggs Cunningham was second in the first Ferrari to race in the 'States, and Sam Collier third. Miles had stopped to report an oil spill in one of the turns and finished back in the back.

In the feature race, the Grand Prix, a Le Mans-type start was adopted. Unfortunately the Ardent Alligator refused to start and Miles finally left the line a minute late. 14th at the end of the first lap, he was up to 4th by the end of the second. Cunningham passed George Roberts who was leading on lap 8 and the pair of them pulled away. However, they were unaware that Miles was now up to 3rd and flying. Halfway through the last lap he passed Roberts for second and at Big Bend going downhill to the finish line, the Ardent Alligator caught the Ferrari. As they entered the last turn Miles passed Cunningham. Miles had turned in a final lap time of 5:12.2.

In 1950 at the Bridgehampton, Long Island races, Miles won the race for small-bore cars in his MG-PA 'Leonidis' and Sam won the second race in Cunningham's Ferrari 166 SC. In the main race Sam came second.

The Colliers had persuaded Briggs Cunningham to lead an All-American effort at Le Mans that year. Cunningham prepared two Cadillacs. Sam and Miles drove a 61-50 coupe with Cunningham and Phil Walters in a special aerodynamic roadster nicknamed "Le Monstre". The Collier brothers drove in business suits, shirts, and ties and finished tenth overall, Cunningham and Walters were eleventh.

At the 1950 Watkins Glen Grand Prix, Miles was third in the Seneca Cup in the Ardent Alligator and then acted as pit crew for Sam, who was entered in Cunningham's Ferrari in the main event. Sam was up to third from the fifth row of the grid by the first corner and was in the lead at the start of the long straight on

the second lap. On this, the fastest part of the course, Sam's Ferrari hit a patch of loose gravel. The Ferrari left the road into a meadow and cartwheeled twice. As the car cartwheeled, the seatbelts pulled out and Collier was thrown from the car. The race continued and the ambulance had to drive against the oncoming race cars. Sam Collier was taken to the hospital in Montour Falls where he died at 6:30 PM. Bruce Stevenson stopped in the pits to report Sam's accident and Miles ran the three miles to the scene but arrived after the ambulance had left.

Miles officially retired from competitive road racing the next day. However, he raced under the assumed name of John Marshall in some low key SCCA races. His last race was at Sebring in January 1954, where he drove a Bandini, retiring after 21 laps.

Soon after that Miles contracted polio and died in Everglades City, Florida, in the April of 1954.

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**In honor of the brothers, the SCCA created "The Collier Brothers Memorial Trophy" race for MG's in 1954. That race was only for MG's until the SCCA changed it in 1960 when other makes were allowed to compete in it. The last all-MG Collier Cup race was won by Sherm Decker in 1959, the first won by Gus Ehrman in 1954.**

**In 1985, the Sports Car Vintage Racing Association (SVRA) started a vintage race weekend at Watkins Glen and to recapture the original intent of the Collier Memorial Trophy race, and with the blessings of Miles Collier Jr., they established their annual Collier Cup all MG race.**

**The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
Collier Cup drivers**



## Here Come Da Judge

By: Ed Kovalchick

Back in the late 60's, I was piloting my best friend's MGA in upstate New York, accompanied by several of our informal local teen-age sports car and beer-drinking club members (18 was imbibing age then). We had a variety of sporty, cheap, well-used, mostly English convertible rides, which each owner fixed (often) themselves, or brought it to me at the import dealer I worked at functioning as another Buddy Palumbo stiff. We often got together on the weekends for planned unplanned drives, err racing each other through the beautiful wine country and Poconos where we all resided.

As the evening sun slipped down on this particular run, shockingly (ok, not so much) the headlights would not ignite in the "A". This event, just as we poured down Highway 11 south of Syracuse, trying to make it home before the oncoming blackout. No problem maestro, I just duct-taped a handy flashlight on the driver's front fender and stayed close between the bugeye Sprite and my Sunbeam Alpine, driven by my buddy up front.

Thereafter, my entourage entered a typical one-horse New York town I won't name, but the local constabulary noticed my illumination plan and the top-hat flashing light pulled me over. I couldn't help but notice the officer's worn blue jeans and muck boots, below his official small-town blue police shirt and anticipated badge. As it went, I had to leave the elderly MG and return for court because I broke the law of lights or something like that. Well, I and my friend came back on the "assigned" day to discover the court address was in the only gas station around – maybe Atlantic as I recall.

Upon entry, I noted the typical faded, dented, and formerly green metal gas station desk, beat-up black filing cabinet, and an elder attendant suited in typical farmer bib overalls and another version of muck boots. As we piled in with the arresting general, the attendant headed to the back and within a couple minutes returned with a standard black judge's robe draped over his dirty bibs. We had sat down on the supplied dank gray metal seats, so the constable yelled out, "All rise for Judge Mudge", at which point we couldn't help it – howling laughter ensued along with a stern look from said attendant, now pissed off judge.

I got fined \$30, which was a lot of dough for me in those days. I calculated the burst of amusement probably cost me about an extra ten spot; but it sure gave me a humorous story to recount over the years. Judge Mudge – ya gotta laugh.

## ONE OF A KIND RACING SOUVENIRS

*By Mark Barnhart*

At the Collier Cup Race at The Glen some years ago, my partner Dave Smith and I had made plans to pit next to good friend Denver Cornett. We were going to arrive a day ahead of Denver so when we set up our pit we put some of our items in the spot next to our pit to reserve the space for Denny.

That next morning we called Denver and gave him directions as to where we had set up the pit so he could find us. Denver unloaded old number 7 and un-hooked the trailer. Then drove his truck down to find the pit. He spotted us and started to pull his tow truck into the spot not seeing the items we had stashed there to save the space for him. Bang – crash! Denver had knocked down our portable air tank that was on top of the pile. It was now scratched and dented.

Denver got out of the truck apologizing and promising to buy us a new tank. We told him no way, but he had to autograph the air tank. I have to smile remembering Denver every time I look at that tank.



# **THE LONG WAY AROUND**

**Kenny Williamson II**

**As a young child growing up, my father's 1963 MGB race car sat in a dark back corner of our small Honda motorcycle shop. Dad had since moved on from racing cars to flying World War II vintage aircraft so the B was relegated to static duty in the farthest rear portion of the storage room. Covered in dust, I remember climbing over a few abandoned motorcycles to be able to sit in the "Blue B". Not really able to see over the dash or even able to reach the pedals, I remember going through the gears on the many tracks Dad had told us stories of racing the car. Upper Marlboro, Watkins Glen, Reading; beating Bob Tullius in the rain, passing Corvettes around the outside of a turn, Setting the E-Production lap record at Watkins Glen (which only lasted until the next race but hey, it was still a lap record!) and many many wonderful stories of him racing the car. Even my Mother (who lovingly attended the races in their early and then final years of marriage) continues to have very fond memories of him racing "The Blue B".**

**Time moves on and life happens. I enlist in the Marines, with every intention to do my time in the Corps as both my Father and Grandfather had done and then return home to take over the family business selling and servicing Honda motorcycles. I became enamored with Serving our Country, Re-enlisted in our Corps and then Dad decides to sell "the shop" and follow his one true love, flying aircraft.**

**Once again, the Blue B moves from the back of one dark and lonely storage place to another. Hangers, garages, you name it, she lived alone. Quietly waiting for some type of resurgence, some type of effort to restore her to the place she was really meant to be...**

**Throughout life, Dad was never much for making normal, everyday life anything but normal. Many long hours spent working always seemed to consume the large majority of his time. A comment in**

passing “Did you Sweep the floors of the shop”, “Are you sure you emptied ALL the trash cans THIS time” or “You better not get into Another fight in school” was usually the extent of our daily conversations but he always made sure large achievements were rewarded with some type of present that fit the achievement. Graduating with honors from Boot Camp, he purchased my Dress Blues for me. Meritorious promotion to Corporal, he purchased my Non-Commissioned Officers sword (The United States Marines is the only military service on the planet that honors small unit leadership SO much that it entrusts a Non-Commissioned Officer with a sword...).

Fast forward some 17 years later: After 14 years of Enlisted service, I earn a Meritorious Commission (without the required 4 year degree from one of our fine institutions of higher learning). Another year later and after graduation with honors from both Officers Candidate School and The Basic School (Yes, I know. Marines aren’t always the pointy end of our intelligence scale so Marine Officers school is literally called “The Basic School” LOL) I earn a slot for flight school, albeit already many years past the maximum age requirement. Another two years of very hard work and I am on standing on a stage at Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Florida graduating from Naval flight school as the oldest Marine ever to earn his wings as a Naval Aviator. Dad is there on stage to “pin” on my wings. We are now in the “Post Hazing” era so any ritual of tradition that results in pain or degradation is highly discouraged and usually outlawed. Dad, as a former Marine grunt, looks at the Colonel presiding over the ceremony and asks “Can I really pin his wings in?” The Colonel bluntly responds “No Sir, I’m sorry you can’t. Not in the old way”. Dads gaze defiantly leaves the Colonel, looks at the crowd (of probably 100 or more family members attending the ceremony for various “Wingers”), looks at me, looks back at the crowd again, presses my newly acquired “Wings of Gold” into the breast of my dress blue uniform and “BAM!!!” proceeds to punch them hard into my chest! My shoulder reels back at the impact of a forceful, man-sized punch and the sound echoes through the hall as it immediately goes church

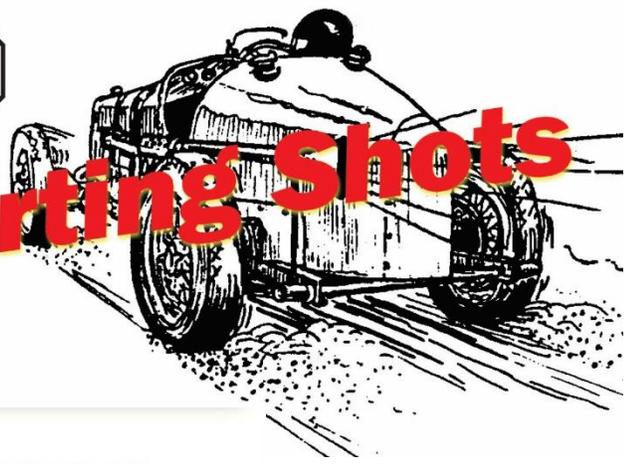
mouse quiet! I can feel the breath being released from the poor Colonel and after what seems like a millennium of uncomfortable pause the room erupts with cheers! Dad smiles, the Colonel energetically shakes both of our hands hoping to wisk us off the stage before any other grievous breach of protocol can be performed and Dad asks me “What do you want?” I respond “Sir?” “For your winging present, What...do... you... want?” My response? “The Blue B of course!” I answer with excitement! “It’s yours”. And at that very moment I had accomplished two dreams of lifetime: To fly helicopters for the Marines and to be given the car I had already raced soooo many times at sooooo many tracks, even if it was only in the mind of a child...



Kenny the “older” figures Jr turned out OK after all, and wants to drive it !



**Parting Shots**



Does a perfect man  
really exist, Mom?



Of course, Darling.  
They all drive MG's.