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MGVR FOCUS RACE AT MOSPORT
Larry Smith awarded the Tony Simms Cup

From The Editor :

The first MGVR Focus race is in the books. Held at the Mosport circuit, now known as Canadian Tire Motorsports Park over the June 17-19 weekend, we'll have photos and stories in this issue. Several photos courtesy of Bill Stoler.

The next focus race will be at Put-In-Bay, a very unique setting for a car race. We'll bring you some history about the island and the race as well as a piece brought to us by Manley Ford, MG racer and one of the organizers.

A grand story about a man and his machine. A story of a guy who dreamed of racing cars and then went out and did it. Not the easy way, but reality in MG racing that will make you laugh and cringe. The tale of Bob Schoeplein and his MGA known to all as Honey Bee. Longtime MG enthusiast and racer Bob Vitrikis writes the story. It is a long one and Part I is here in June, Part II next month.

For those of you who get motivated by the Honey Bee story, Stan Heath has an MGA project perfectly made for the next MG racer. It's for sale and it might be the right thing for you.

Ralph Zabarsky is well known to this community and in this issue you'll learn about his factory MGB GT's in a neat composition named

This MGB GT Is the Forgotten Hero of Sports Car Racing's Golden Age

This is a long newsletter, I think there is plenty to enjoy.

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This MGB GT Is the Forgotten Hero of Sports Car Racing's Golden Age

In 1967, this factory-backed 100-hp MG ran alongside Ford GT40s and Porsche 906s and won at the highest levels of motorsports.

BY BRENDAN MCALEER
SEP 1, 2017



You may be forgiven for thinking the Battle of Britain was won by the Spitfire alone. That silhouette of elliptical

wings banking to dive on a Messerschmitt or Focke-Wulfe is memorialized time and again on film and canvas, a machine made legend by its deeds. In reality, the wood-and-canvas Hawker Hurricane inflicted just as much damage on the invading Luftwaffe. The Hawker lacked the romance of the Spitfire, but had no difficulty handing out quad-Browning .303 beatdowns.

So too it is with the automotive world, where history lionizes the beautiful and overlooks the prosaic. England's banner is hoisted by the likes of the Jaguar E-Type, the Bentley Speed Six, and, more recently, the Aston-Martin V8 Vantage GTE. But if these are the royalty of the realm, leading the charge, they do not fight alone. History remembers the knights; it should also spare a moment for the foot soldiers of speed.



In an empty industrial complex on the outskirts of Delta, British Columbia, an engine coughs to life like Keith Richards waking up after a triple-encore gig. Hack-hack-hack-Jesus another day-hack-catch-huffhuff-vrummmm. Four cylinders hawk out a quarter-pint of internal-combustion phlegm, then settle into an idle that lopes along like a reformed drunkard's guitar lick. It sounds like it's running on unfiltered cigarettes.

It's one of a pair, the Blaze Red MGB GT familiarization car from the 1967 running of the 12 Hours of Sebring, sibling to the British Racing Green example that ran the event in the hands of Paddy Hopkirk and Andrew Hedges. The latter won its class, placing 11th behind Ford GT40s and Porsche 906s, and ahead of multiple Shelby GT350s and 911s.

I think we can all agree that's punching above your weight for a car that made not much more than 100 hp, with a theoretical top speed close to 100 mph. It's a bit like the sleeve of dear old Grandad's cardigan riding up to reveal a 1st Special Air Services Tattoo. MGs, and pretty much all British cars for that matter, have long been the butt of jokes.



Nearly everyone's heard about Lucas, Prince of Darkness, and the three headlight settings he perfected: Dim, Flicker, and Short. Common knowledge states that British cars are unreliable heaps of junk which leak oil like the Exxon Valdez, break down more frequently than diplomatic talks with North Korea, rust out so fast you'd think they were being slowly beamed aboard the USS Enterprise, and drop



parts as if infected with automotive leprosy.

Except. Twelve hours at the limit. Mixing it up with the likes of Andretti, McLaren, Foyt, Yenko. Beating the stuffing out of eight-cylinder Shelys and 'Vettes. Perhaps the 'B, like the Hurricane, has been hiding its light under a bushel.

Known by its registration number, LBL 591E was plucked from MG's production line in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. It would be the marque's final four-cylinder factory works racing effort, and while the '67 Sebring was its first outing, it would go on to further glories, finishing second in class at the 1968 Targa Florio. Again, it beat a Luftwaffe's worth of 911s, as well as all manner of Alfa Romeos and a Ferrari Dino.



No doubt laurels must be set on the head of Paddy Hopkirk. By the time the Belfast-born Ulsterman tackled the Florio, he'd already made a name for himself as BMC's resident hotshoe, having clinched the '64 Monte Carlo Rally in a Mini Cooper S. Further, he was coming off back-to-back wins at the Circuit of Ireland and the Alpine Rally, as well as winning the 1967 Rally Acropolis.

“One lap of the Targa Florio is 45 miles,” says Ralph Zbarsky, owner of both MGB GTs. “Hopkirk told me that he was out of cigarettes by the end of round one.” Zbarsky restored both these machines back to their days of glory.

His garage tells the all-too-common story of an automotive hook being set. A battered red MGA from his youth sits atop a four-post lift, its grille bent in all directions giving it a grin like Austin Powers, its roll bar plastered with decals from vintage races. This was genesis—now there's a similarly battle-scarred twin-cam MGA in the back, and an old frame belonging to one of the little-known MG Liquid Suspension Indy Cars.



Fitted with a 255-ci Offy turbo four, these produced as much as 1000 hp in-period, but never placed a driver on the podium.

Sister car to LBL 591E, the GT wearing

Herrington MGB racing livery has perhaps an even better story. Prepared by BMC USA as a practice car for Hopkirk and Hedges while the racing machine was shipped over from Abingdon, it was later gifted to Herrington Motors and ran a number of races. At the 1970 running of the Sebring 12 hours an ill-considered wheel spacer came adrift, causing the car to barrel-roll spectacularly. The crash was caught and replayed on ABC's Wild World of Sports.

The wreckage was mounted above a bar as cheeky decoration. Then the bar burned down. At last, thanks to an old ad in the back pages of a magazine, Zbarsky stumbled across both the Herrington car and, later, LBL 591E. Restoring both took years, with sourcing period-correct decals presenting a particular challenge. Both machines are setup for vintage racing, but the Herrington car is plated for the street.

Zbarsky throws me the keys. It's a right-hooker in a left-hand-drive country, and first gear requires a modicum of persuasion. In my head, I picture Paddy hammering it up with a muffled [Norn Iron](#) curse. *C'mon, ye bollix*. The 'B shuffles out of the complex in a cloud of hydrocarbons, finds a clear road ahead, and leaps forward.

“Leaps” is a relatively broad term here for basically a factory-engined MGB, but the old battler has spirit. What's more, everything's exposed, making for a rattling, juddering, gear-whining cacophony. It's like the Brits invented an internal combustion maraca.

Details
abound,
each one
delicious.
The factory
position for
the Smiths
oil
temperature
gauge
placed it
behind the
wood-
rimmed
wheel, hard



for the driver to see at speed. Italians would have simply ignored it. Americans would have re-engineered things. BMC's team just installed a second unit a little further over. Reeking of gasoline, I guide the Herrington MGB back home. Twelve hours of this, with the roar of Mk IV GT40s hurtling past in the dark. It'd be the Blitz all over again.

The MGB, both roadster and GT versions, were built up until 1980. By then, like most cars that survived the 1970's they'd become bloated, with jacked up ride heights and rubber bumpers. The short skirts and long jackets of the time took one look, then traded their cars in on white Chrysler LeBarons instead.



The MGB GT at Targa Florio

But the 'Bs left behind a heritage of motorsport, from the last factory-backed LBL 591E to club racing. The sheer numbers of MGBs sold made them cheap, popular options for cash-strapped racers.



Decades later, the Miata resembles the Lotus Elan, but can more properly be considered the B's spiritual ancestor. As for Zbarsky's two special machines, the question is whether to preserve or to continue to compete. "As the last four-cylinder works effort,

with the racing provenance of Sebring and the Targa Florio, what's it worth?" Zbarsky asks, "And what if I get hit?" He shrugs.

"My son thinks we should just keep driving the hell out of them."

I can think of no better tribute. Others may have got the glory, but these little Bs had the guts. Drive the wheels off 'em, and if something gets bent, it's only paint and metal. Paint, metal and proper British fighting spirit.

Put-in-Bay Vintage Sports Car Races 2022 “Focus Event 2” Shaping Up to Be a FUN MG & Triumph Attraction

First off, many thanks to editor Dave for finding the accompanying *Ohio Magazine* story about the Put-in-Bay event. The author did a great job of interviewing several sources and telling the story about PIB racing -- then and now -- through their recollections.

2022 marks seventy years since the first Put-in-Bay Race in September 1952 when a large percentage of the 30 or so entered cars were MG TCs and TDs, so it only seemed fitting to make 2022 an MG Focus event . . .and of course inviting the Triumphs to join in seemed fitting, too!

Looking over the entry lists as of 6/26/22 shows 12 MG and 12 Triumph registered racers and one Exhibition driver (Yes, we still have an “Exhibition” group.) Add in the street car entries (PiB being unique in offering entries for both racing- and non-racing cars) and the totals are: 28 MGs and 22 Triumphs . . . with a couple months to go! Would sure like to see a lot more MGBs. Weird but neat to have a Focus event where T-types outnumber the later cars!

Race Director Jack Woehrle has already seen his inbox bulge to the point where group 3 has been split into two groups (“3A” Midgets and “3B MGA’s”), so it’s possible we’ll have to limit entries before September 19 deadline rolls around. So... if you are considering entering and haven’t done so yet . . . do it NOW! If you have to later cancel we have a very liberal cancellation policy (full refund if you cancel before 9/1/22).

If you haven’t been to this event previously or heard much about it, be prepared for a unique experience. The 20-minute ferry ride from the mainland near Port Clinton, OH to the island is like going back in time in many respects. Put-in-Bay has no McDonald’s, no traffic lights and just tons of history and scenic beauty (but sadly, way too many golf carts). There are many quaint B&Bs and all sorts of lodging available. Lots of great places to eat and drink, and I’m told that unlike the last couple years, the island businesses are well staffed this year, thanks to workers from outside the U.S. (many from Eastern Europe) who have once again been able to get visas to come and work stateside.

As a registered entrant, you get a large PIB 2022 sticker to be placed on your car. With that sticker on your race car, you are welcome to use your ride as transportation around the island should you so choose. Rattle the windows of the public school in town and nobody complains. They love it!

This event is far more than just a vintage race. In fact, somebody once said: "It's like they threw a party and a race broke out." It's a 3-day festival that is really about having a good time with each other both on and off the track. In addition, for an added treat, if you get there by late morning Sunday, there's the traditional Sunday antique car parade starting about 1:30 that meanders around the island and ends up at a locally favored watering hole. A LOT slower than the original course tour on Tuesday and a great way to meet some of the locals!

But the main attraction for us is the racing. The airport circuit really suits our cars well. The surface is exceptionally smooth with good grip even in the wet. It's definitely a drivers track that rewards driving the correct line, paying attention to the right braking points, etc. There are several good passing opportunities and straights long enough to get your attention. As it should be, the racing atmosphere is expected to be competitive but respectful. The course is lined with strawbales. Hitting them is a no-no, especially if you smack one so hard as to screw up the course to the point where your group has to be black flagged.

Away from the race course, there is much to do and see on the island. This is one place where you're only minutes away from quiet places to relax . . . shops, museums, scenic vistas etc. And there's the "rocker cover" races. Anyone is welcome to enter. The more creative the better.

Also, this is an all volunteer event. Don't be surprised if you are asked to help. Whether it's setting up chairs and tables at the wine and cheese reception or maybe (if you've attended before) helping orient a newbie. If you see something that needs to be tended to, by all means please step up and do.

Other key points:

- Any questions, first go to www.pibroadrace.com and check out the FAQs and all the other information listed there. Drill into the online registration tool (motorsportreg) and there is lots of info there, too.
- Entrants most frequently are concerned about the ferry crossing to the island. Short answer is Miller Ferry (www.millerferry.com) can handle anything up to 80 ft. Tractor-trailer rigs service the island daily. Still, those with really large rigs (like over 60 ft. total length) are encouraged to make an appointment with the Miller Ferry, but it's really no problem if you don't. During the times when most are arriving, it's common for them to increase the numbers of ferries running, and it's amazing how they pack every square foot of available space! Even at their busiest, wait times are rarely more than one boat.
- Arrival -- expect to receive notification as we get closer to the event giving you a phone number to call when you are in line for -- or on -- the ferry, so the paddock crew is ready for you. If everyone cooperates, communicates, and coordinates,

you will find that this event has one of the smoothest arrival and paddock-assignment processes of ANY race event.

- Speaking of paddock spaces. We will try to have a designated area for an “MG” central (and a Triumph one, too), but there is no way all MG entrants will be located in the same paddock...we have several paddock areas, and it just works out that bigger rigs with motorhomes can only go in some areas and smaller rigs and trailers can go in smaller ones, and the overall rule is “first come first served.” Paddock manager Doug Seib does an amazing job and does his best to accommodate all requests. Also, these areas are primarily provided by individual property owners in addition to the airport property itself. Treat the grounds like you would want a guest to use *your* yard and you’ll help our post-event cleanup go a lot easier!

- To keep up with the latest info and conversations about this year’s event, join the Put-in-Bay Sports Car Races page on FaceBook. The page is “idiot-free” (well, mostly) and a great way to keep up with the latest developments.

- **Plan to bring your own race fuel.** You should have enough race fuel for at least seven 20-minute race sessions. If you need to buy race fuel on the mainland, the closest source is at a Speedway station at the SE corner of the intersection of OH Route 250 and Route 2 about 20 miles south and east of the Miller Ferry landing.

- If you need tire service, best to get it done before coming to the island. Royale Racing (tire service at Pitt Race over in Western PA) was with us last year and I hope they will be there again this year.

Any other questions, feel free to contact me at any time via email:

Manley Ford MGTD #776

manley776@yahoo.com or text/call 734 502 2435.





OHIO LIFE

The History of the Put-in-Bay Road Race

During the 1950s, this annual event brought sports car owners to South Bass Island to face off on a 3.1-mile course set up on city streets.

SEPTEMBER 2019 BY VINCE GUERRIERI | PHOTO BY STU KERR

In the fall of 1954, Joe Bojalad fell in love — with a British sports car.

He spotted the AC Ace at a road race at Watkins Glen, New York, and was thrilled at the price, well within his range at around \$3,000.

He called the company in England from his home in Pittsburgh and ordered one. But what was the point of having a car like that if he couldn't race it? He'd heard about a road race at Put-in-Bay, so in June 1955, "I put my suitcase in my trunk, went up to Put-in-Bay and painted a number on my car to race it," Bojalad recalls.

Because it was on public roads, and shutting them down for even one day was a tall order, there was no qualifying race. Instead, drivers drew from a hat to learn their starting position. Bojalad was the 13th out of 14 cars in his race.

"It was the best thing that could have happened to me," he recalls. "I was so pissed off, I drove like a madman. I was crazy in those days. My brothers came with me to the races just so they

could call my mother and tell her I was still alive.”

By Bojalad’s own estimation, he hit the hay bales put up at every turn on the 3.1-mile road race. As he neared the course’s end, he noticed a Porsche coming up behind him. He also noticed his oil pressure was high. It was his car, and he wanted to keep it, so he put the car into neutral — and coasted across the finish line to win the race.



Participation was limited to sport racers with engines of 1.5 liters or smaller, or production sports cars with engines of 2 liters or smaller. (photo by Stu Kerr)

Bojalad’s racing career was a brief one, but Put-in-Bay holds a special place in his heart, and not just because he won. For eight years, the island was the site of an event that seems almost fantastic now: a road race on the city’s streets, with no serious injuries and a wonderful, collegial atmosphere that participants and spectators to this day try to re-create annually.

“Everybody loved that place,” says Carl Goodwin, who attended the races as a student at Shaker Heights High School and later wrote a book on them. “It was just ... [sighs] ... hard to describe.”

The end of World War II brought two things: A desire to have fun and a desire to spend money. And with war-bond drives and the lack of consumer products being made during the war, there was plenty of money that had been saved up to spend.

Returning from Europe, many servicemen had been taken by the roadsters and sports cars

that they had seen or even driven. Foreign car dealers started to sprout up, particularly in large cities like Cleveland. As a result, sports car clubs started to form as well. In 1951, the Cleveland Sport Car Club was chartered.

“You were an eccentric if you drove these cars,” said racer and Willoughby dealership founder Chuck Stoddard during the 2011 Put-in-Bay Sports Car Races reunion. “The Cleveland Sport Car Club was a commiseration society.”

At the time, there weren’t a lot of racetracks, so racers turned to the street. The most famous road course was at Watkins Glen, where Bojalad fell in love with his AC Ace. (A permanent track was built there in 1956.) But street racing was starting to fall out of favor due to its danger.



The pits and paddock for the cars were in the shadow of Perry’s Monument, and the race started and finished on Delaware Avenue. (photo by Jerry Horan)

As a result, a number of safety precautions were taken for the inaugural Put-in-Bay race in 1952. Participation was limited to sport racers with engines of 1.5 liters or smaller, or production sports cars with engines of 2 liters or smaller (by comparison, the four-cylinder engine in a 2019 Toyota Camry is 2.5 liters). There would be no qualifying, and the race would have a rolling start, eliminating the crashes that can occur as racers take off. There were also several no-passing zones. Still, the drivers weren’t wearing flame-retardant jumpsuits (a helmet and goggles were mandatory), and there was only a lap belt in the car. There were also initially no roll bars required, “which was kind of scary when you think about it,” racer Reed

Andrews recalled during the 2011 Put-in-Bay reunion.

Having the race on an island helped reduce the other big safety issue: crowd control. The people there for the race were people who *wanted* to be there for the race. And it's a good thing, because there weren't a lot of barriers, outside of some snow fencing and the hay bales in the corners and in front of lampposts, fire hydrants and other objects.

There were still stories of people running across the street thinking the race had passed only to find themselves staring at a race car, but miraculously, no serious injuries occurred.

"Crowd control was, uh, well they tried," says Dutch Brow, who accompanied her husband Art to the races. He raced; she was part of his pit crew.

The pits and paddock for the cars were in the shadow of Perry's Monument, and the race started and finished on Delaware Avenue. All told, 30 racers came to Put-in-Bay in 1952 for what turned out to be the start of an annual tradition.



The final sanctioned Put-in-Bay Road Race occurred in 1959, after the state of Ohio banned road racing. (photo by Jerry Horan)

The first race was in September, around the same time as the Put-in-Bay Wine Festival, but subsequent races were held in the summer. It was a grand festive occasion, as foreign auto dealers in Cleveland would close for the week and rent a cabin for their employees and families.

Even in the 1950s, Put-in-Bay could be a wild place in the summer. Brow recalled at least one car that went into the water — not during the race, but on the night before.

“One year, they actually ran out of champagne on the island,” she says.

The race also had a minor role in one of the most notorious cases in Ohio history. Dr. Sam Sheppard owned an MG, which he drove in the first three races. Goodwin notes in his book that a witness at the 1954 race recalled Sheppard yelling on the phone, “I’ll kill the b---h!” Three weeks later, his wife Marilyn was murdered in their home in Bay Village. A media circus ensued, with Sheppard as the prime suspect. He was found guilty, but the conviction was later overturned in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case.

The Put-in-Bay race grew in popularity during the 1950s, which eventually spelled its doom. There were only so many entries that could be accommodated, and crowd control was always a concern. Plus, racetracks were being built for both sports cars and stock-car racing, and events were now being held at airports and Air Force bases. Ultimately, the 1959 Put-in-Bay race was the last. The state of Ohio had banned road racing, and it was becoming more difficult to find an insurer to underwrite the event.

There was one more race on Put-in-Bay — an “outlaw” event, not sanctioned by any governing body — in 1963, but the race faded into obscurity, a curiosity from a bygone time. Small reminders of the races came up: autocross races on the town square in the 1980s and an MG owners meeting in 1990. But in 2009, a group of fans and descendants of the original Put-in-Bay racers started holding an annual reunion every September.

“We’re trying to capture the history,” says event organizer Manley Ford. “There were hardly any visible signs the races had taken place.”

But even the reunion only offers a taste of the fun you could find on race days at Put-in-Bay during the 1950s. There’s a race, a car show and a host of events in the island town to remind people what once happened. “The racing life was a good life,” Brow says. “It’s some of the best memories I have.”

For more information about this year’s Put-in-Bay Sports Car Races celebration, visit pibroadrace.com.



**MGVR FOCUS RACE 1
JUNE 17-19
MOSPORT PARK, ONTARIO
Photos by Bill Stoler**



Every MG racer needs food



Lino Baggio leads Mark O'day



Alan Weller



Larry is still grinning



Dave Good now drives an MGB



The prettiest twin cam around
Jim Holody



The MG vsTriumph start

For Sale



Here are pictures of the MGA project that I bought but don't have the time to finish. It is a 1957 MGA with a 1500 Metropolitan engine installed. The engine

turns over and has good oil pressure on the starter, about 60 pounds. The car has been stored inside for 20 plus years. I also bought a 3 main MGB engine and transmission for this project. The engine turns over and is complete. I am asking \$3750. for the MGA and \$750.00 for the MGB engine. The car has a Florida title and a Tennessee bill of sale. I am willing to negotiate on the price for the engine, transmission and car as a whole.

Stan Heath 865-599-7223. Email is heathracing@gmail.com



Chasing His Dream Part I

A look into the heart and soul of a very special racer and his race car



Bob and Honey Bee streaking into the future together!

By Bob Vitrikas

Some stories just have to be told. This is one of them.

All of us share a common passion, vintage racing. How we got to where we are makes an interesting story providing insight into our very soul and character. Bob Schoeplein is indeed one of those larger than life characters I've had the privilege to call my friend for over 40 years. This is how his vintage racing story began. This is how he began chasing his dream.

Bob's pursuit of his dream started in 1986 when he attended his first vintage race, the Pittsburg Vintage Grand Prix. If you've been there, I'm sure you would agree that he couldn't have picked a better venue for his first vintage racing experience! Bob was bitten by the vintage racing bug. Bitten hard. When he returned and told me about his experience, I got the bug too! The third party in this story is long time vintage racer Hank Giffin who would go on to be my mentor in vintage racing. Hank is still going strong after 40+ years on the track. Wow!

In 1988 Bob and I made a commitment to go vintage racing. We were soon joined by another Bob, Bob Watkin. The three Bobs encouraged and helped each other get started in vintage

racing, each coming at it from his unique perspective. To truly understand Bob's perspective and level of commitment to racing, you should know that he was going through a period in his



MG friends for life, Bob Schoeplein, Bob Vitrikas and Bob Watkin. Fittingly, Bob S's T-shirt is from the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix where he got the racing bug and passed it on to me and Bob W. I'm still in my driving suit having just completed my last race. Bob W is wearing a T-Shirt commemorating the 50th anniversary of racing at his namesake, Watkins Glen, where he attended driving school, got his vintage race license and drove in his first vintage race.

life when most of his wages and salary were going to an address not his own. This would be a huge financial commitment.

Bob was first off the starting line in September 1988 with the purchase of his beloved MGA "Honey Bee" which in the coming months he, with the help of his MG friends, would turn into vintage race car. Bob named his car Honey Bee in honor of his daughter Mellissa, which in Greek translates to "honey bee." Hold that thought. In November 1988 I bought a race ready, and street legal, 1966 Mini Cooper 1275 S from vintage racer, Dr. Dave Reiter, in Philadelphia. I saw the ad in AutoWeek, drove to Philly, drove the car around the block, bought it, drove it home. In the dark. Still had the racing numbers on it and a big red cross on the roof. We did things differently then. Then came Bob W with his race ready Triumph Spitfire. Over the years we have forged an unbreakable bond of friendship in the furnace of vintage racing.

The choice of an MGA was an obvious one for Bob, a lifelong MG enthusiast and owner of "Waldo" a beautiful black over red MG TD with racing history in California. An MGA seemed the proper vintage and its lines just screamed "race car!" An appropriate car was located at the appropriate price - cheap. The body needed some work and the engine was a wholly stock MGB engine. It ran well and held promise. In fact Bob raced that engine for three straight years and never had to take the head off! Bob arranged for another MG friend, Bob Mason, to have his high school shop class do the body work as a class project. With Bob M's expert oversight, the work was proceeding apace and Bob S was busy studying various racing supply catalogs. The students in Bob M's auto skills class at JEB Stuart High School in Fairfax, Virginia did a great job on cutting out the rust and welding in new metal patches. All students received an "A" except the fellow who worked on the left front fender. Bob S., a former college professor, gave him a "Gentleman's C." Then the first major snag occurred.

Part way through the body restoration, Bob M began to uncover more of Honey Bee's frame and discovered that her 30 year old skeleton was in a bad way. So badly rusted that it was deemed unsafe for racing, even if it were mended. At this point many others would have given it up as a lost cause and looked for another car. Or just given up. Not Bob S. He set out in search of another frame. and found one in Delaware that was in like-new condition. With the help of more MG friends, (are we seeing a pattern here?) the frame was brought to Bob's abode where he lovingly restored it to a gleaming, rust-proofed black. The restoration took place on his front porch...you see Bob didn't have a garage. Did I mention it was now winter?

Please allow me a brief diversion. Bob shared a home, actually a former parsonage, with two other bachelors; Dick Merritt, one of the founding members of the Ferrari Club of America, and his son Kendall who now manages the Lamont DuPont automobile collection. These three car-crazy guys were willing to live in a 100+ year old home with no central heating or air conditioning in exchange for cheap rent and room to house their automobilia collections. First time I walked into the house I noticed an early '50s Ferrari finned brake drum casually propped against the wall, piles of car magazines and walls adorned with wonderful evocative framed photos of Ferraris from a bygone age. It was a car lovers dream home! In the basement was a collection of Ferrari gearboxes and parts and a nearby garage held Dick's collection of Ferraris. One of which was a 250 GT Lusso that was his daily driver! Dick vintage-raced his priceless Ferraris and his son Kendall would soon join him. Bob was in good company with unlimited high octane inspiration to fuel his vintage racing ardor!

Honey Bee's body work was now complete and Bob began to scheme the next step of the restoration, swapping the chassis. This is not a simple job. Basically, it involves disassembling the automobile and reassembling it on the new chassis. Like building a car from scratch...except first you must disassemble it...and when the nut and bolts have been together for 30 years, they rather like being together. You know the drill. Bob had never done anything this ambitious before, but he knew he was going to need help. The call went out and several Washington DC MG club volunteers stepped forward to lend a hand. One member, Bill Ludtke a professional mechanic, offered his garage where we could do the extreme makeover. Bob drove Honey Bee over to Bill's garage and the refurbished frame followed, along with the MG Club volunteers. Two weeks later, Honey Bee emerged with a beautiful like-new frame and ready for the next step.

Next step for primed Honeybee was a paint shop. A high school student from Bob Mason's shop class volunteered that he had turned his Dad's garage into a paint booth complete with

professional ceiling fans, proper lighting, etc. He would like to paint Honeybee as his first paint job. Sold! The color chosen was 1988 Camaro IROC Z-28 Yellow, a warm yellow that would set Honeybee apart from all other vintage race cars. And the paint job reflecting many hours of hard work was outstanding,

Not surprising, there were lots of other problems that reared their ugly heads. Like clutches that didn't fit and locked up the drive train; but Bob never lost faith in making his dream come true. He worked feverishly on his car, outdoors, lying in the grass and mud, in the cold, in the heat, even in the rain, to get Honey Bee ready for his first driving school. Bob had decided, largely for economic reasons, to get his racing license the hard way, by successfully completing two SCCA driving schools and time was running out for Bob and Honey Bee. After considerable deliberation, a painful decision was reached. It would not be possible to make the 1989 racing season.

It didn't take Bob long to regain his sunny disposition. Race drivers are all optimists! Through the summer Bob kept working on Honey Bee and attended several vintage races which only served to build his ardor. On his way back from the races at Summit Point, West Virginia, Bob's faithful MG TD "Waldo" dropped a valve and ruined the engine. Adding insult to injury, Bob's other prime mode of transportation, a very tired VW Sirocco, had serious engine problems of its own. Another MG Club member John Tokar and owner of Vintage Restorations Ltd, took "Waldo" in for the winter and somehow the Scirocco kept going.

Meanwhile, there were endless things to be done to Honey Bee. Install new floorboards, fit the roll bar, install the fuel cell, sort out the wiring, etc., etc. The list was endless, almost. About those floor boards... Bob drove Honey Bee over to my house where we could do some work in my garage. We finished work after dark. Bob packed his tools and assorted mechanical bits into Honey Bee's passenger footwell and off he went into the darkness. Somewhere on the Washington DC Beltway Bob had to make an emergency brake application. One item on his to do list that hadn't been done was to replace the passenger side toe board. The sudden hard braking threw his tools forward through the gap where the toe board usually resides and his tools, including sockets, spilled out onto the Beltway. Oh boy talk about a traffic hazard! Bob came to a complete stop and thankfully a tractor trailer driver stopped behind him. Bob frantically hopped out of Honey Bee and quickly retrieved his tools and continued, somewhat shaken, on this journey home. At last Honey Bee's extreme makeover was complete and she gleamed with a brilliant Camaro IROC Z yellow paint job. With her black interior she resembled her namesake at last. What a beauty!

Bob's first driving school was scheduled for March 23-25 1990 at Summit Point Raceway in nearby West Virginia. All was ready for the long awaited day. Apparently, it is a tradition among race car drivers that it is bad luck to not have to rush to prepare your car right up to the last minute for a race. Bob left his home in suburban DC about four hours later than planned. Did I mention that he DROVE Honey Bee to Summit Point; without a top, without a windscreen, in 40 degree weather?

He ran out of gas on the way there ... Four hundred feet from a gas station.

He arrived at the motel safely and just made it to his seat in time for the evening chalkboard session and mandatory written test. He was on his way! Bob couldn't stop grinning. He had trouble sleeping that night in anticipation of what his first day of driver's school would be like.

What he hadn't quite anticipated was that it would SNOW.

Undaunted, Bob uncovered Honey Bee, fired her up and headed for the track. Despite being cold, she seemed to anticipate what was ahead and shared Bob's excitement. At the track the final preparations were made more difficult by the weather. Fingers turned numb and blue, tape refused to stick, tools disappeared in the snow. But Bob was tough. Remember, he was used to working outdoors on Honey Bee. Tech inspection was a breeze. The inspector was so surprised to see a vintage car at the track, he seemed more interested in talking with Bob than scrutinizing Honey Bee. Bob didn't seem to mind. He loves talking about MGs!

Drivers and instructors were matched up. As luck would have it, Bob was assigned to MGA racer Kent Prather who most of you know as the penultimate MGA racer, winning the SCCA National Championship six times! Kent provided Bob with lots of advice during the construction of Honey Bee and sold Bob the slick close ratio gearbox that was about the see duty on the track.

At last, the moment arrived. Cars were lined up on the grid. SNOW was brushed off the cars. Just getting dressed was a struggle. Fastening unfamiliar things like helmet stops, visor, arm restraints, and six-point harness were made more difficult by the cold. Finally, all was ready, and the drivers were flagged off for their first laps of practice. At the end of the first lap, Bob slowly entered the pits and stopped. Panic stations! What was the problem? Mechanical failure? One look told it all. Bob's visor was completely fogged over! If he hadn't spent the last 13 years going around Summit Point with the MG Club, he might have wound up in Ohio. A fix was found and out he went again.

A second situation arose. Bob had purchased static cling racing numbers thinking he could remove them for street driving. Little did he know that static cling doesn't work in temperatures below 40 degrees. In his first practice other drivers literally "blew the numbers off" poor Honey Bee. But with every lap, Bob gained confidence in himself and Honey Bee. All his hard work seemed to be paying off. She was running like a top!

After a long COLD day at the track, we headed back to the motel for a hot shower and dinner with lots of bench racing thrown in. Bob was becoming quite a celebrity by this time. The concept of driving your car to and from the track was unheard of outside the showroom stock class. Some of the old timers remembered, and there was a gleam in their eyes when they told Bob how much they admired what he was doing. The spirit of vintage racing was alive and well!

Sunday showed a bit more promise weather-wise, and the practice sessions went much more smoothly. Not so many butterflies and more concentration on braking, shifting and hitting those apexes. A quick lunch and before he knew it, it was time for the final event of the weekend, the five lap race. Two practice starts and Bob and Honey Bee were off to the races! With a stock engine and only slightly modified suspension, Honey Bee wasn't quite as fast as the others, but she looked great! Bob's driving showed terrific form, good judgement, and his lap times were moving steadily downward. All too quickly the final lap came and as Bob and Honey Bee crossed under the checkered flag. Bob's visor sort of misted over again, but not because of the weather. It was a moment to remember!



When Blob pulled off his helmet back in the pits, there was that grin, bigger than ever. He was the picture of happiness! As darkness descended, Honey Bee was packed for the trip home while other cars were loaded on trailers. Bob put on about six layers of clothing to keep him warm on the way home. The temperature was in the high 20s and DROPPING! At last it was time to leave,

driver's school certificate in hand.

Bob passed through the track gate and turned right onto the highway toward home, Honey Bee's lights piercing the cold darkness. Bob wasn't worried about the cold. He knew Honey Bee wouldn't let him down and the glow he felt deep down inside would keep him warm all the way home.

But wait, there's more. About half way home Bob stopped at a gas station to fill up. On the way he had noticed that the headlights seemed awfully dim. Upon further inspection, Bob discovered that the cause wasn't Joe Lucas. His headlights were still taped over! That was an easy fix and once again off Bob went into the darkness and to a warm bed. ZZZZZZZ! (To be continued)

Safety Fast Bob !

PART TWO NEXT MONTH

1950 Watkins Glen – Frank Dominianni on 3 wheels

