

VOL 41 #3 March 2023



MARCH MEANS SEBRING
SEBRING'S HISTORY STARTED WITH MG
(fresh off the plane from England, March 1959)

From The Editor:

Everyone of us knows what "Sebring" means. The first and still the most important endurance race in America. Located in central Florida, nowhere near the beaches of the Atlantic or the Gulf. Nothing but miles of orange groves and sandy soil. Yet somehow it became the stuff of legend by hosting a sportscar race.

From Pete Lyons R&T 2011 "The first, and oldest, European-style endurance race in the Americas owes its genesis to a Russian-born aeronautical engineer (MIT, class of 1928) and entrepreneur named Alec Ulmann.

In the booming years after World War 2 Ulmann was in the surplus aircraft business, so he frequently dropped in at a former military airfield in central Florida where many old planes and parts were still to be found. But Ulmann also was a car enthusiast, especially of road racing. Sebring's long, broad runways and intricate network of access roads sparked a dream.

He made it happen in 1950—barely. It was December 31st at 3 in the afternoon when a gaggle of sports car drivers executed a "Le Mans Start" by running across the rough runway cement and jumping into their cockpits for a 6-hour enduro.

Many big, fast sports cars—Allards, Aston Martins, Ferraris, Jaguars—raced into that Sunday night, but under Ulmann's "Index of Performance" handicap formula, pure speed wasn't necessarily the key. Tampa resident Vic Sharp had driven over in his American-made Crosley Hot Shot simply to watch the fun, but he wound up loaning his tiny, 724-cc roadster to a pair of racers named Bob Deshon and Fritz Koster. They stripped off the windshield and bumpers, drove regularly...and won! Imagine *that* New Year's Eve paddock party.

Ulmann spent the next 15 months pulling together the first 12-hour race, which was flagged into life early in the afternoon of Saturday, March 15, 1952. A Ferrari led the early going but dropped out when its differential broke, and in the pitch blackness of 01:06 the following morning a Frazier-Nash took the victory flag."

Since those early days, Sebring has flourished and famished. Years with well over 100,000 spectators to going silent in 1974 due to the gas crisis, Sebring has dusted itself off and continued. Monsoon rainstorms to stifling heat could not stop the 12 hours of Sebring, and today, the track is busy non-stop with a huge WEC Championship race and the 12 hours on the same weekend and numerous club events, track days and test days during the year. Through it all, our marque, the MG, has been a part. There was an MG racing at Sebring from the very first in 1950 through to 1971 with an off year in 1958 that nobody can understand. Later, the wonderful MG-Lola returned from 2002 to 2005. This month we'll chronicle three Sebring MG's, all proudly owned by MGVR members.

If possible, get to Sebring. The place has so much history, is so different from any other race, anywhere. You have to be there to understand it. I first went in 1960 and have returned a dozen times including many years with my MGA Honey Bee.

Do NOT forget our 100th at Lime Rock. Enter now and don't pay until June.

1960 MGA twincam UMO 93

The first time I saw YD2 2571, the 1960 Sebring #40, was at a NAMGAR event in the 70's. Of course, it belonged to Lyle York, the USA MGA Twin Cam Guru. I snapped a bunch of pictures of all the neat factory mods and additions thinking I might make a clone someday at a time when "clone" and car had no business being in the same sentence. That day I asked Lyle to write to me if he ever decided to sell #40. I told him I would mortgage my house if I had to. As the years rolled by, I would lightly hint to Lyle that I was still a player so to speak. Eventually, around the time of the NAMGAR GT of 2002, as life would have it, Lyle sat next to me at the evening banquet. He turned around and said, "Call me, I want to sell UMO 93." He added "But wait two weeks because I'm going fishing." I had several sleepless nights, and it was more than 2 weeks before he sent me an email stating simply, **"I am Ready to Proceed"**



the start line with Stirling Moss's Maserati

Linda and I hooked up my trailer to the GMC and drove the 620+ miles from Bucks Co. PA to Anderson Indiana to pick up my prize. All went as planned getting home and I began happily fixing and fettling to bring it back to road worthiness. The Dunlop 4-wheel disc brakes were rebuildable. The 4.55 ring and pinion gearset was shot, so I bought a new set. The HD 8 Carbs needed thorough cleaning and SU rebuild kits. And the list got longer.

All 3 factory twincams leave

I remembered that Lyle had told me the cylinder head had a few bent valves and bad combustion chamber damage before he bought it in 1967. Lyle had taken the head to a shop in the late 1960s and had it welded up where new seats and valves were needed. There was an awful lot of noise coming from that valve train. I wanted it to function properly, and I did not want it to look like someone had been practicing their aluminum welding. I was having some mechanical work done at Cloverleaf, so I asked Ralph if he had a skilled aluminum welder. He did, and it turned out better than expected.

UMO 93 at Sebring 1960

The other main issue was the missing fresh air duct for the driver that starts at the rear of the hood. These were very complex as the original duct had an offset S-shaped section. Robin Barker came to my assistance and made patterns of all the intricate pieces. My Stanley Steamer friend Art Hart, an extraordinary machinist and metal man, helped me by recreating the S-shaped sheet metal pieces using Robin's patterns. It was up to me to weld it up and fit it to the bonnet and firewall. I was very satisfied with the results. When it was finally all together, it was easier to see the details that made the Sebring Twin Cams so special.

The hole in the dash for the tach had been enlarged for the 5" chronometric tachometer with tell-tale. The stock cable and starter switch were replaced by a Lucas starter solenoid on the engine side of the firewall. There is no ignition key – to start the car, you flick the Rotax ignition switch (out of a WWII Lancaster bomber) to ON, then press the push button switch on the dash that activated the starter solenoid. If that switch failed, there was a backup. The button on the solenoid was accessible from inside the cockpit through a hole in the firewall. The driver simply reached under the dash and pressed the button.



UMO93 with John's 1962 Sebring car displayed at Sebring 2012

The pair of SU HD 8 carbs had a 1/2" inch spacer under the float bowl lid to allow for more fuel in the bowl and a 1/4" neoprene square between the carbs and manifold to reduce fuel frothing. Double SU LCS Twin Cam fuel pumps in the boot pulled fuel from the large tank. A Lucas RB 310 three post regulator was fitted along with a Lucas 22290 R racing dynamo. Twin Lucas Sport coils are on the left inner fender well. To make it easier to service the distributor, a hole was cut in the inner fender well. This was covered by an alloy panel secured with screws.

The close ratio gears are smooth and silent with just the right ratios. The steering is RHD, and the pedals are modified. To help reduce the engine bay temperature, there's an oval opening on the right side of the grill. There is a similar sized opening in the illuminated #40 roundel to let the air out. Lucas driving lamps are mounted on the valance with very neat, fabricated brackets. Quick-lift jack points are fitted front and rear. Damping is done with heavy duty Armstrong shocks, and the rear are adjustable.

For a race car, these were pretty luxurious. MGA racers may have appreciated the well-padded MGA Deluxe seats and the beautiful Bluemels MGA wood steering wheel. The slightly modified basic MGA interior, with Wilton wool carpeting and leather trim was unusually nice for a race car. For 1960, the FIA required cars like the MGA to carry a suitcase roughly 24"x16"x 8". The solution? A hand made alloy cover, with the leading edge covered with a drape with two zippers in leather cloth materials. They took such pride in their work at Abingdon.

The body was unmistakably MGA. The removable aluminum Vanden Plas hardtop of course had its beehive lamp on top, and I'm sure it made them faster.

The performance of UMO 93 was quite good and noteworthy. Jim Parkinson and Jack Flaherty came in 4th in class just behind the #39 Twin Cam of Fred Hayes and Ed Leavens. These race engines were the best that the engineers, machinists, and mechanics at MG could produce at that time, and they are powerful, smooth and rev happy.

Some may recall Mister MG Magic, aka Bob Vitrikas' description of driving it at the Glen in the Collier Cup 2004 after the Tech Inspection at Smalley's Garage. That, by the way, was the first time in 40+ years that UMO 93 had been on a racetrack. Bob was careful with the red line. I was so lucky to have owned #40 for nearly 15 years. It's an incredible piece of MG history.

When I sold #40, she had only about 6,700 original miles. I remember at an Old York Road Sport Car Club meeting held at Dr. Fred Simeone's car collection near South Street in Philly 20 years ago. I asked Dr. Simeone if he would recommend at least a repaint. I realized then I was talking to the expert regarding Vintage car patina. He told me it could only be original once. A rule to live by. The only reason I let it go was because one of the 10 Works prepared Sebring MGAs ever made had surfaced. The mistakenly long-gone Sebring Deluxe Coupe #53 had popped up in my neighborhood. What was a guy like me to do? True story.

John Wright
BARC # 53
NAMGAR Twin Cam 2486 #001



Mike Eaton is an MG addict. He has owned any number of MG's – I mean dozens of them. He currently has 3 ex factory Sebring MG's in his stable and who knows what will come next.



My MG story Mike Eaton

I still recall the day clearly, it was the summer of 1972, I was seven years old and at swim practice at our local community pool when my father drove up in his new purchase, a 1948 MGTC. I ran out to the parking lot to check out this car that was totally unlike anything I'd ever seen. I ran up to the left-hand side opened the door which to my surprise opened rearward, I hopped in and what...no steering wheel! It was on the other side! Big gauges, wood dash, the smell of that original red leather interior...I was hooked.

Mike with Gus Ehrman's daughter

Growing up, I would help my dad on tasks with the car, holding the drop light as he adjusted brakes or worked on something else. I always read dad's Hemming Motor news and of course checked out the MG section. However, it was when dad got a copy of "MG" by McComb, that things really took a turn for me. Like most kids I guess, I was drawn to the go-fast cars shown in the book, specifically the chapter on MGs in racing! It was there I saw pictures of McComb's own racer as well as the MG Sebring cars. These were forever etched in my mind.

Fast forward past many MGT, MGA, MGB meets and many British car shows later ... I heard word of mouth that Gerry Goguen was selling off his Westminster MG Museum collection. I had known from a visit there years prior that Gerry had an EX-181 Le Mans MGA, as well as an MGA Sebring car. Thankfully a deal had fallen through that was going to send both cars back to England and my father and I were able to strike a deal with Gerry to buy the 1957 MGA Sebring car.

The restoration and research of that wonderful car, lead me to Dave Nicholas, Joe Tierno, Ted Rounds, and all the BARC Boys. From there, another slippery slope would ensue. Upon the completion of the restoration of the 1957 Sebring, I would track down and discover one of the missing 1959 MGA Sebring Coupes. Well, it just so happened that those same BARC Boys were at the Sebring races in 1959 and had some incredible pictures from that race. The association with the racing MGs has led me to many wonderful relationships in the vintage race community. Shortly thereafter, Dave Nicholas got back into vintage racing with Bob Schoeplin's former car, Honeybee. This was extra special to me as Bob had raced with my father in the late 80s when my father got started in vintage racing in a Healey Sprite. It has been so rewarding meeting all the wonderful folks in the MGVR community, and I look forward to many more years to come.

1959 MGA Twin Cam Coupe ex-Sebring YM2/932

This MGA is the only known surviving car from the 1959 MGA Sebring factory team. The 1959 MGA team represented the MG Car Company's first factory prepared "Works" entries at Sebring. MG's General Manager, John Thornley was on hand with works team manager



Marcus Chambers to oversee the race. Gus Ehrman and Ray Saidel piloted the car to a second in class finish. After Sebring, the car was sold to Leon Mandel of Autoweek fame and was immediately driven to California. Leon entered the car at the Tracy Airport races in 1959. Shortly thereafter the car was sold by Leon and was lost for decades.

Mike Eaton tracked down the car to a field in California. Although found in derelict condition, the car fortunately retained all its factory works modifications for Sebring and the spare tire even retained its original Dunlop racing tire. The car has just

completed a full restoration to its 1959 Sebring specification. Known modifications to the car for Sebring include the following:

- Factory works prepared motor with special designation
- Close ratio transmission
- 4.55 rear end
- Dual fuel pumps
- Large capacity endurance fuel tank with lockable quick release filler
- Perspex side and rear windcreens
- Large chronometric tachometer
- Dual Lucas fog lamps
- Fresh air intake system
- Quick lift jack mounts
- Wood rimmed alloy Derrington wheel
- Added side and rear lamps for identification
- Factory competition seats
- Bonnet strap
- Extensive safety wiring of critical nuts and bolts



1957 MGA 1500 ex-Sebring HDR43/24460

This MGA was prepared by J.S. Inskip Motors, NYC, with Factory assistance for the 1957 Sebring 12-hour race. Entered as part of a three-car team by US Distributor, Hambro, the car finished the race and placed second in class.

Additionally, all three MGAs finished and captured the coveted Manufacturer's Team Prize. The car was driven in the race by David Ash, Gus Ehrman, and John Van Driel. David Ash was widely known as "Mr. MG" for his involvement in racing MGs and in signing up MG dealers throughout the Northeast. Gus Ehrman also had a distinguished MG career both racing

and later as an executive for Hambro. Prior to and during the race, the car was filmed by AMOCO, the race sponsor, for a short film on the Sebring race called "12 to Go" featuring David Ash. The car was also featured in many regional and national advertisements for both J.S. Inskip and Hambro.



After its brief advertising career, the car was raced in the SCCA at the hands of Ted Rounds. Mr. Rounds piloted the car throughout the 1959 racing season at events including Watkins Glen, Lime Rock, Thompson, Berwick and Giant's Despair. Over the season, Ted Rounds entered the car in eight races and took four first place checkered flags! After the 1959 season, the car was sold to Dave Zych, a friend of Mr. Rounds and was never raced again.



The car was eventually purchased in 1975 by noted MG collector Jerry Goguen and was displayed at his MG Museum in Westminster, Vermont. The Eaton family purchased the car when they learned that Mr. Goguen was liquidating his collection. After years of hard use racing and later years of inactivity in the museum, the car was in need of a total restoration. John Tokar and Vintage Restorations LTD were chosen to perform the restoration. The restoration was completed in September 2004 and

reunited with David Ash and Gus Ehrman at Watkins Glen for the 50th anniversary of the Collier Cup race.

Known modifications to the car for Sebring include the following:

- Factory works prepared motor with special “EX” designation.
- Extra Andrex friction shock absorbers on front suspension
- Rare early “Le Mans” style ducted oil cooler
- Close ratio transmission
- 4.55 rear end
- Dual headed fuel pump
- Large capacity fuel tank with lockable quick release filler
- Cut down competition windscreen.
- Borrani 60 spoke alloy wire wheels.
- Push button starter and added panic light.
- 7” dual Flamethrower lamps
- Additional side and rear lamps for identification
- Bonnet strap



The late, great Gus Ehrman reunited with his 1957 ride in 2012

DAVID ASH, Mister MG

You cannot speak of MG at Sebring without bringing in a character named David Ash. Ash was an unabashed self-promotor but brought the Octagon with him all the way. After returning from service as a pilot with the Air Force in WWII, David started racing an MG TD. His first race was at the famed Watkins Glen street course in 1950. It was at these races where David met George Jessop who would offer him a job shortly thereafter at the famed dealer/distributor J.S. Inskip, in NY. While at Inskip, David not only sold MGs, he also traveled the east coast setting

up one of the largest and robust dealer networks for British cars in the US. Here are a few of Dave Ash's accomplishments:



Mr. MG competed in AND finished the Sebring 12 hour race in all five years of entries; 1952/1953 & 1955 1956 1957, all in MG's. He missed 1954 with the birth of his daughter.

Ash created the beautiful Motto MG to compete against Porsche & OSCA. David was a dyed-in-the-wool proponent of the MG TD's running gear as a racing platform. He was absolutely convinced that he could utilize the TD's mechanicals as a potent racing force. What was holding the car back was its body and the lightweight aluminum Italian body would solve that. His vision created the beautiful MG Motto

Sebring history:

March 15, 1952 The Sebring International Grand Prix of Endurance [12 Hours]. Co-drivers: John Van Driel (entrant); and David Ash. #4: MG Mk II Special. 6th place overall; 2nd in class; 133 laps of 145; 691.60mi/1113.02km; 57.63mph avg.

March 8, 1953 12 Hours of Sebring. Co-drivers: David Ash (entrant); and Frank Ahrens. #4: MG Special. 13th overall; 2nd in class; 135 laps of 173.

March 13, 1955 Sebring 12 Hours; Round 2, World Sports Car Championship. Co-drivers: David Ash (entrant); and Duncan Black. #76: MG-TF. 38th overall; 8th in Sports 1500 class; 137 of 182 laps.

March 24, 1956 Sebring 12 Hours; Round 2, World Sports Car Championship. Co-drivers: David Ash (entrant); Gus Ehrman; and John Van Driel. #49 MG A. 20th overall; 5th in Sports 1500 class; 151 of 194 laps.

Note: David Ash was the entrant of MGA #50, driven by Steve Spitler and Bill Kincheloe, which finished one place ahead of Ash's #49.

March 23, 1957 Sebring 12 Hours; Round 2, World Sports Car Championship. Co-drivers: David Ash; Gus Ehrman; John Van Driel. #51 MG A 27th overall; 2nd GT 1600 class; 150 of 197 laps. **Note:** Ash was the entrant of two other cars: #49 MG A, driven by Alan Miller, Ed Leavens and Rowland Keith, which finished 23rd overall and 1st in GT 1600 class, 154 of 197 laps



LIME ROCK CELEBRATES MG'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

SEPTEMBER 1-4 2023



Safety fast!

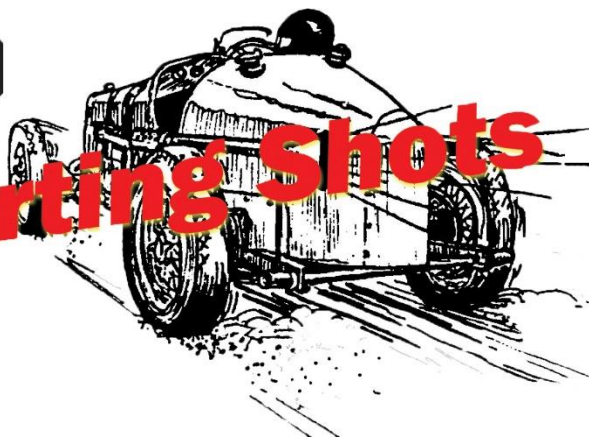
Bob Colaizzi

The cost is \$20 payable to MGVR

Mailed to
Eric Russell, treasurer
5560 Fieldview Rd
Mebane, NC 27302-7031



Parting Shots



THE MGVR 100th ANNIVERSARY
POSTER IS NOW AVAILABLE.

This 13" x 19" work of art by noted
illustrator Bob Colaizzi is printed on
White 80# Ultra Digital Satin Cover,
Printed full color on 1 side. Along
with the poster is the artist's
statement letting the viewer know
his vision and the content of this
piece. We will mail them in a
carboard tube with both pieces
inside starting April 10, 2023.

Bob Colaizzi... "Artist's Statement" about the poster:
The MG Vintage Racers, hosted by Lime Rock Racery, join to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of MG at Lime Rock over the 2023 Labor Day weekend. The race circuit layout leads the piece, followed by the headline. (1)
The poster illustration is designed in halves. The upper, is sepia drawings of Cecil Kimber in Old #1, Doreen Evans in an MGO and the MG EX-181 Bonneville car driven to records by Sterling Moss, shown in the car, at 248 MPH, and raised by Phil Hill the next year to another record 254 MPH. (2)
The bottom group, represents the beginning of "The Greg Prehodka Era" of the MG Vintage Racers and the first Collier Cup Race, more than 50 years ago. Incidentally, there were only eight entrants in the first Collier Cup! They were, left to right, Greg Prehodka, Ed Henning, Tony Roth, Tony Simms, Bob Colaizzi, Alex Quattrebaum II, James Bok and Mike McLaughlin. The closing car is the beautiful MGA of Carl George that hangs in the new library of the AACA (Antique Automobile Club of America) in Hershey PA, Incidentally, Carl won SVRA's Gold Cup in 2022. (3)

Bob Colaizzi

