

“Go West Old Man”

Fred (Jack) Horner and I have been good friends for many years and between the two of us, we have many stories and experiences that would never have occurred if an MGA hadn't crossed our lives and changed it forever. This month, Jack asked me to contribute a story to the “British Marque”.

No doubt most of you reading this have had similar experiences and stories. However, I want to share an experience and story that happened to me recently that allowed me to make another great friend due to the common bond of the MGA that we share as a hobby.

Early last November, out of the blue, I received a hand written letter from a gentleman in Utah informing me that he had never restored an MGA or any other car for that matter. It was his dream to restore his 1960 MGA and would I mind if he could contact me to give him some advice? He ended the letter stating that he was retired and hopeful that I would reply and as such, he provided me with his phone number. The first thing that occurred to me was, “how did this guy find me? “I'm in Massachusetts and there is a lot of advice to be had between here and Utah, so why me? After some thought, I asked myself “why not me?” In any case, I mulled my decision over the next few days and decided to give “Mike” a call.

Needless to say, Mike was more than ecstatic to hear from me and from our conversation I learned that he had been working on his MGA for over six years and had gotten to the point where he “did not know how to correctly put it back together”. I asked him, “What do you mean”. Mike explained that he had taken the car apart, worked for years getting the frame and body together, purchased thousands of dollars of parts from Moss Motors and Cecelia at Scarborough Faire and came to an impasse relative to his mechanical ability and proper assembly.

After learning the above, “the plot thickened” as one would say and at the same time I started to wonder if I could be successful providing advice from so many miles away. The MGA is not an easy car to restore and as such, it is not uncommon to see cars for sale due to ill-fated restorations where the best of intentioned “would be” MGA enthusiast simply gave up.

During the ensuing weeks of conversations with Mike, I learned that he had never driven an MGA, and that he had always loved the classic and graceful lines of the MGA and that he came from a three-piece suit background and, as such, he could have easily afforded to have someone restore his car or purchased one already restored. However, the more that I learned about Mike, I discovered that he was not the type of guy to give up and that he wanted to experience the trials, the tribulations and the

satisfaction of restoring his own MGA so that he could fulfill his dream of taking his wife, Pam, for rides within the foothills and within the beautiful canyons of Utah.

I also learned that Mike had read everything there is about the MGA and as part of the experience that many of us cherish such as driving our cars . . .he also wanted the personal enrichment provided by restoring his own MGA with his own hand. Learning this, how could I say no and not help him?

As the weeks and months passed, we had countless phone calls and emails regarding various restoration techniques and assemblies until one day, we decided that the time had come for us to make arrangements and for me to fly to Salt Lake to get his MGA assembled.

I ran the idea past my wife, Mary Jane and she sanctioned an eight day visit. Fast forward and on Sunday, March 24th, I arrived in Salt Lake and on Monday, we started work on the car. Looking at Mike's car the first day, I again asked myself. "What have I gotten myself into"? Before me was a royal blue MGA sitting on newly shod wire wheels with windshield and bumpers attached and even fender mirrors for good measure. Nothing else.

The first thing I did was to inspect his work thus far and baseline what we had to accomplish over the next week which amounted to everything! Along with taking inventory of parts and fasteners that would be required over the next week, we put Cecelia on notice in case we needed parts sent out the next day. We did the same with Moss Motors. Both companies were stellar in their performance with Cecelia going out of her way to supply some elusive bits! The real work started with examining the suspension and preparing for piping the hydraulics and fuel lines. Unfortunately, the old lines no longer existed as guides and that added a great deal of time. However, I did bring my laptop for reference along with Todd Clarke's, "MGA owner's information & technical Guide" which helped immensely. Two days later, we completed the piping for the brake, clutch and fuel lines along with assembling the brakes and master cylinder and before we knew it, my visit was half over before we moved on to wiring, steering and engine compartment.

At mid visit, and based on the work yet to be completed, we decided to work 8 to 10 hours a day so that we could finish and breath life into the beast by my Monday departure. For those of you who have restored an MGA, you know that things do not go as planned and we ran into many unplanned problems such as hydraulic leaks due to bad fittings and compromised sealing surfaces, a frozen steering column and minor but critical missing parts reinforcing the idea that nothing is easy or goes as planned in restoring an old MGA.

In the end, we came within hours or a day's work of finishing the restoration. This story is not over. No doubt I will find myself in Utah in the very near future since I am also one not to give up.

After all, I have a dream to fulfill!

Don Tremblay

The Utah MGA



Mike working on the rear wiring



Mike under the dash of his MGA



