

Jack and Don's Excellent adventure to the Atlantic City MG International

Considering that most if not all British car events were cancelled last year and now that the majority of us are vaccinated, my good friend Fred (Jack) Horner and I decided to venture out on a road trip to attend the MG International in Atlantic City that was held from Monday, June 14th through the 17th. Our last road trip had been a few years earlier before COVID when we traveled to the NAMGAR GT in Richmond, Virginia towing Jack's 1600 coupe with Cecelia Bruce of Scarborough Faire in the back seat that made a most interesting ride.

This time, we decided to tow my Dove Gray 1600 to the event and not drive my MGA considering the horrendous traffic between the Boston area and down the coast to southern New Jersey. On Monday morning, Jack arrived at my house with his trailer in the pouring rain and in between downpours; we loaded my MGA and headed south. Outside of the constant rain, our journey down was uneventful with plenty of time to discuss the upcoming daily activities, especially the tech sessions. We arrived in the late afternoon at Harrah's just in time for the "First Timer's Reception" and "Meet and Greet". Since neither of us for several reasons are fond of hotel food, on Tuesday morning, we ventured out and discovered a local's restaurant called, "Gilchrist's" right on the waterfront for an inexpensive full breakfast that would also make us sandwiches to hold us off until dinner that night. Right across the parking lot was another gem called, "The Back Bay Ale House", where we decided to have dinner on Wednesday night. The next day, Tuesday started off with viewing all the MGs in the reserved area of the parking garage and watching John Twist of University Motors "Rolling Tech Session" diagnose one MG after another. What we found amazing was the number of serious mechanical issues that John found, yet the owners of these cars of which were for the most part unaware. The line of MGs awaiting John's attention was quite long, so it gave us plenty of time to intersperse and attend some tech sessions, starting with Rob Medynski of British Vacuum Unit fame where he discussed the vagaries of the Lucas distributor. By the time that Rob finished, we decided to hit our room to munch down on our previously procured lunch along with a few adult beverages. After lunch, we decided on a whim take part in a "Funkana" competition to assemble a MG TD wooden model called, The "IKEA-way" without any instructions. By looking over and sizing up our competition, Jack and I really thought that we had this competition in the bag having an engineering mindset along with a complete and pre-agreed upon, "who does what" process only to be defeated for first by only a few seconds when we discovered that we did not receive all the parts to complete the model! No matter, it was fun, so we sauntered over to Len Fanelli's of "Abingdon Performance" to learn what he had to say regarding roller rockers, camshafts and camshaft timing. Getting late in the day, we checked back on John Twist's progress where we found a new friend, Suzie Keppeler with her MGA Deluxe with a broken throttle linkage. Since I had my MGA with me, I was able to help her by donating some of my spare SU parts. Tuesday concluded with driving over to Caesar's on the Boardwalk for the "Meet and Greet" and then attending the NAMGAR dinner and sitting down with a whole group of MG people that we had never met before; when the night was over, we departed as if we were old friends. Club members Michael and Ryuko Rosen were at our table as well.

Wednesday began with a bright and sunny day, so we got up early to drive to Cape May which is the most southern tip of New Jersey to have breakfast right on the beach. The goal that morning was to get back in time to attend Paul Dierchow's, owner of "Sportscar Craftsmen", presentation where he expertly

addressed the steps, intricacies and costs of an MGA restoration. Paul gave an excellent presentation. But even more important was that Paul and I went to engineering college together in Boulder, Colorado and we had not seen each other for many years. Paul and I originally met way back in the early '70s since we both owned MGAs and at the time, we became college friends. At the end of the presentation, I walked up to Paul with my name tag turned around to see if he would recognize me. Paul looked at me and told me that he did not recognize the face. Then again, it had been close to 50 years. Once I turned my name tag over and he looked at my name, his face dropped and it became an emotional moment for both of us. We spoke for about a half hour with Paul stopping by the next day with his wife at the car show to talk some more. This was truly my personal highlight of the trip. The rest of the afternoon buzzed by between the two of us running into Cecelia Bruce of Scarborough Faire, Barney Gaylord, the MGA Guru and talking to other MG enthusiasts that we have known, but not seen for years with later Jack attending the NAMGAR Representatives Meeting that allowed me to head off with my new Rochester, NY friends: Mike Eaton (MGA Sebring owner) , Dan Suter (MKII Deluxe, Twin Cam owner) and Suzie Keppeler who we had met and helped earlier to investigate the infamous Atlantic Boardwalk. Wednesday night concluded where we headed over to our selected dinner establishment, "The Back Bay Ale House" with MGA Bay State Club members, Mike Rosen and his wife Ryuko along with Mike's friend and quite a character named, Cedric Cam. Upon arrival, the restaurant was jammed so we asked some other MG owners (John Meredith and Dave Wilson from I think the British Motor Cars of New England club) who were already sitting down if we could sit with them culminating in a memorable evening of camaraderie.

Thursday was the big MG International 2021 Car Show. According to the organizers, there were approximately 40 MGAs attending the show and approximately 300 other MGs in attendance. Also on this day was the MG Rocker Cover Race with Jack being determined to win this time using Roy Crane's borrowed new and improved MG rocker cover racer. A few years earlier, Jack was defeated at the Richmond, Virginia NAMGAR GT using the same racer. Keeping this portion of the story short, Jack lost again due to an oversteer issue. With that said, I am hopeful that the third time will be the charm. Getting back to the show, the show was great being held at the shaded 4H grounds about 30 minutes from Atlantic City. At the end of the show, at the pre-awards banquet, they announced the second and third place winners, keeping everyone else in suspense pending the Awards Banquet later that night.

The dinner at the Awards Banquet was the only meal that we had at Harrah's and I have to say that it was great and very well organized. In attendance at our table were Mike and Ryuko who own a beautiful dove gray MKII, Cecelia Bruce, Dan Suter, Mike Eaton, Suzanne Keppeler, Jack Horner and myself. The surprise of the night being that I was awarded first place for my MGA 1600 in the wire wheels category.

Friday morning came too soon and we bid all our friends farewell and headed home to our respective destinations only to find out that my MGA that ran perfect all the way to the car show and back to the parking garage the day before would not start under any circumstances that morning. Even though Jack and I both have a combination of over 75 years of serious fiddling with MGAs, we could not get her to even attempt to start. We confirmed the usual suspects such as we had fuel going to the carburetors along with plenty of spark going to the cylinders. Cranking the engine over produced not the faintest sign of life. After working on my car for a couple hours, we gave up and hand pushed her down the parking garage ramp and with head held down in shame to the lower level and hand winched her onto the trailer. Needless to say, we discussed what could have happened in detail on the ride home.

Somewhere in NY, we had an epiphany and when we pulled over at a rest area for fuel we lifted the bonnet to confirm our assumption. Sure enough, the plug at the end of the intake manifold had popped out with the result of a huge vacuum loss preventing the car from starting. Once we arrived at my house I ran in and retrieved a wine stopper that appropriately had an MG logo on it and stuffed it into the hole. The car started immediately allowing me to triumphantly drive her into the garage. In all and in retrospect, the failure was my fault because about five years earlier I rebuilt the engine and restored the intake manifold. At the time I sealed the plug with sealant but forgot to deform the plug to hold it in. Needless to say, the newest addition of my MG breakdown kit is the MG wine stopper! Hoping to see you all at Stowe.

Don Tremblay

Don and Paul



Jack and Cecelia



The infamous cork

