

Spark & Spanner

The Official
Publication of
the South
Alabama British
Car Club

December 2023 / January 2024



From the President

Tom Renick

Finis

Here we are again at Christmas season [OK, *were* – mea culpa-Ed.] with another record breaking year behind us. The British Car Festival saw more autos registered than ever before, and went off without a hitch due to the impeccable leadership of **Brian Daly**, and near-perfect weather. The Autojumble was alive with swapping and buying, and the annual picnic at Oscar Johnson Park was a roaring success.

Our Christmas luncheon was attended by a greater number of members, 64, than any previous gathering. After swearing in the new officers for 2024, awards for a few of the many notable accomplishment performed during the year were presented. They are:

- **Michael Bertagnolli “Jack of All Trades and Master of Them All” Award:** Michael devised a quick and simple frame for the BCF photographic backdrop, meaning that we don't have to rent one in the future. We have found that he can fix about anything and has all the tools to do it.
- **Lyman Dykes “Gustave Eiffel” Award:** The guy who designed and built the Eiffel Tower may be a big deal, but Lyman designed and built the magnificent SABCC valve cover ramp which makes him about Eiffel's equal, some would say.
- **Rick Black “In His Majesty's Secret Service” Award:** Even though frequently out of the region during the year accomplishing the

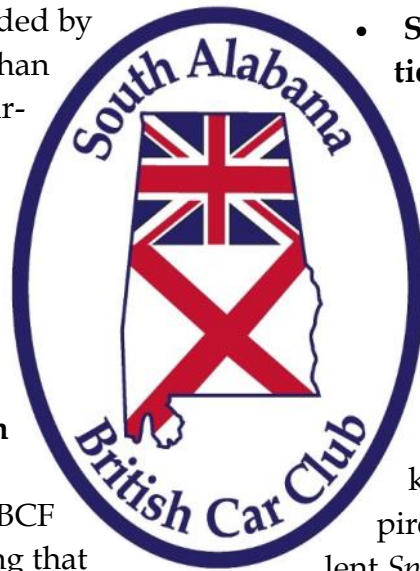


Photo by Noel Eagleson

King's vital business, Rick, as VP Membership, still manages to stay abreast of club membership duties and provide timely reports. Well done.

- **Scott Paradise “Wall Street Connection” Award:** The club still runs on money, and, as baron of sponsorships, Scott elicited a general sponsor for the Festival overall, and several major sponsors through his efforts and those of numerous club members.
- **Michael King “Randolph Hearst” Award:** Hearst may be known as having a publishing empire, but editor Michael with his excellent *Spark & Spanner* is gaining ground. He has gotten the club name and articles in publications nationwide and is commended for it [*Aw shucks-Ed.*].
- **Andrea Bertagnolli “Master Scrounger” Award:** Not everyone has a special knack for procurement, but Andrea does. She has contacts throughout the Southeast and internet, and that is how she assembled all the door prize gifts for the BCF Friday night dinner. Her gifts were highly appropriate and very well received.

(article continues next page)

On the cover: Incoming president **Ben Cummings** recognizes **Tom Renick** for six years at the SABCC helm (photo by **Ron Wolverton**).

Finis, continued

- **Ben Cummings “Prizes in the Dump” Award:** Ben has the uncanny ability to sniff out available British cars for restoration where ever they may be. Somewhere near downtown Dogtrack, Alabama, he found an MG and a Triumph in a valley amongst dozens of destroyed and damaged hurricane boats. Strangely enough, it was a good find.
- **Peter Lee “Reliant” Award:** Secretary, Webmaster, BCF sound man and valve cover race manager. A member who wears at least three major hats in the club is someone that you could say to have reliance in, and be deserving of a Reliant award. Besides, he's the only club member to have a three-wheeled car to match his hats.
- **Rodney McDonald “Indiana Jones” Member of the Year Award:** One of the big attractions at the BCF was the 250,000th MGB-GT. Rodney had been pursuing the whereabouts of this elusive orange prize for years. His world-wide search and success in finally capturing this elusive Brit has won him the high honor of SABCC Member of the Year.

It has been a pleasure serving as President of SABCC for the past six years. I am looking forward to a fresh approach of the new administration during the coming year. The club has grown and improved over the years and there is every reason for it to continue. It is the talent and vigor of the membership that makes things happen, and we have the same imaginative pool going forward.

I want to sincerely wish you all a Merry Christmas and Very Happy New Year, and look forward to seeing you at our next meeting at the Don Carlos Restaurant on January 23rd.

Tom Renick served with distinction as president of SABCC from 2018 to 2023.

SABCC Club Officers

President	Ben Cummings
VP-Membership	Rick Black
VP-Activities	Dave Roloson
Secretary	Peter Lee
Treasurer	Donna Eagleson
Member at Large	Dick Bishop
Member at Large	Don Blosser
Member at Large	Tom Renick
Member at Large	Frank Stabler
Member at Large	Ron Wolverton
Technical Advisor	Pierre Fontana
Technical Advisor	Mike Darby
Webmaster	Peter Lee
Historian	Robb Ogletree
Newsletter Editor	Michael King

Spark & Spanner is the official publication of the South Alabama British Car Club and is published monthly for the benefit of SABCC members. Permission to use this material by other British car club publications is granted provided credit is given to *Spark & Spanner*. Address comments or submissions to SparkSpanner@gmail.com.

Membership in SABCC is open to anyone with an interest in classic or modern British cars, and dues are only \$20 per year [*Inflation? Not here! Ed.*].

British Car Festival is Supported by



Activities Calendar

January 23, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting, Don Carlos Restaurant, eat at 6:00 p.m. (new year, same routine – you pay), meet at 7:00.

February 10, 2024

John Twist Seminar, Eagleson Garagemahal, 25604 Friendship Rd., Daphne, AL, 36526, 9:00 a.m – 5:00 p.m. Free to all members and guests; doughnuts, coffee, cold drinks, and a pizza lunch will be provided. Watch for a sign-up request to be sent soon.

March 16, 2024

Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival Car Display, sponsored by Mardi Gras MGs, Bancroft St. between Fairhope and Morphy Avenues, 9:00. Watch for more details.

January 2024

Su Mo Tu We Th Fri Sat

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 Club Meeting	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



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Spark & Spanner Submissions

Ed. needs for your submissions for *Spark & Spanner*. Categories include

- **Activities Calendar:** SABCC events, car shows, and other events worth noting
- **Sparks:** news about club members, activities, and events
- **Spannering:** car repairs, restoration projects, tips and tricks, and prepping a car for a show
- **Spare Parts:** Auction Roundup, British car news, and whatever *Ed.* finds interesting
- **Gotcha!:** how members acquired their cars
- **Just Around the Bend:** Synopses of upcoming car shows and other events
- **Feature Stories:** Longer general interest items
- **Classifieds:** Sell your car or parts, or list what you need to buy

Submissions should be sent to SparkSpanner@gmail.com. Almost any text format is acceptable. Please include relevant photos.

Sparks

Club and Member News

2023 Christmas Party

Continuing the trend of “largest turnout ever” [see 2023 BCF-Ed.], the Dec. 10, 2023 Christmas fete’ at Rock Creek Golf Club drew 64 attendees, who dined on chicken supreme, assorted sides, and desserts. The attendees brought enough toys to rival a certain denizen of the North Pole; these were delivered by **Dave** and **Pat Couling** to the Salvation Army.

The official business of the day was to formally install the new club officers, most of whom are not new at all. A notable exception was incoming club president **Ben Cummings**, who takes over from **Tom Renick**, whose six years of service were duly recognized with the traditional plaque and gavel.

Entertainment was in the form of said **Mr. Renick**, who presented his annual club awards [pages 2 and 3-Ed.] with his usual sardonic wit.



Gifts donated by SABCC members for the Salvation Army toy drive (photo by **Ron Wolverton**).

Ed. would be remiss if he did not recognize **Donna Eagleson**, whose preparatory efforts ensure the party always runs smoothly.



Award winners, from left, **Scott Paradise**, **Michael and Andrea Bertagnolli**, **Rick Black**, **Tom Renick**, **Ben Cummings**, and **Peter Lee** (photo by **Ron Wolverton**).

More Christmas Party photos



*Clockwise from top, the buffet line (photo by **Ron Wolverton**); **Dave Couling** delivers the gifts (photo by **Pat Couling**); fellowship around the tables (photo by **Donna Eagleson**).*



A Letter from Our New President

[In November 2023, **Ben Cummings** was elected the fifteenth president of SABCC. He was installed at the recent club Christmas party. **Ed.** asked Ben to share a few words about his background, and his history with British cars.]

I look forward to serving the South Alabama British Car Club as president. My first "Letter from the President" is a good opportunity to inform the members a little about me. Who is the person that the club elected as president? I am a husband and father of two wonderful children. I am an architect with a small practice in Midtown Mobile. I like historic houses and old cars. As a young boy a "little British car" (LBC) always caught my attention, but my family was too practical to ever own a sporty little car.

But I did marry a girl with similar interest as she owned a 71 MGB GT. We had the car many years in our early marriage, but a home mortgage, running a private practice, tuition, doctor bills, and food were just a few things that forced me to sadly part with her car. Then as life became a little less chaotic, I felt it was time to renew my interest in British cars. I bought a rusty



Ben and Laura's first grandson arrived Nov. 30!

Midget (that is aptly named Rustie), then a MGB and then I was fortunate to buy back my wife's very same 71 MGB GT. Being a member of the SABCC has been so helpful in getting and keeping these cars running. Being able to speak to people with like-minded interest and discuss the joys and challenges of owning a LBC allows me to keep the cars running and to discover the joys of maintaining the cars.

This year is the 34th year of the club and I am glad to say that the SABCC is a thriving club with over 150 members. As president, I thought it might be beneficial to learn more about the SABCC. To better serve the club I thought it

would be good to know how we came to be and what we have done for the past 34 years. Several years back one of the charter members, **Mike Thomason**, wrote a series of articles about the



early days of the club. At this month's meeting I have asked **Rodney McDonald** to give a presentation of our history. He will summarize Mike's articles and elaborate on what has transpired in the past 34 years. I have also asked several of the charter members (and almost charter members) to speak on their memories of the early days. For me I think it is important to know our past so that I have some direction of how to lead the club into the future.

To lead the club into the future and to ensure the club's sustainability, I believe we need to actively recruit younger members. The honest truth is that there is a lot of gray hair at our monthly meetings and activities. For the club to last another 34 years we need members with a little less gray. You may hear me say this many times during my presidency, so I apologize in advance for being a broken record, but I challenge the members to encourage younger participation. One simple and fun way is to invite your children or grandchildren to attend our meetings and events. Most members have a British car (or two, or three, or more) in their garages. Let's get the next generation interested in our cars.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting in January and at our future events. For those that I don't know, I look forward to getting to know you. For those that I do know, I look forward to getting to know you better. Its going to be a fun year serving as your president.

How I Started with British Cars

story and photos by George Brown

In the mid-1970s, I had the privilege of serving in the U. S. Air Force stationed at beautiful Denver, Colorado at Lowery AFB for six wonderful years. Being a single Airman from Virginia in my twenties, I loved Denver, the Rocky Mountains, and all the excitement that comes with living on the eastern slopes of the Continental Divide.

One day in the fall of 1975, I drove my 1965 Corvair Corsa to a local mechanic for some minor repairs, and there in bay next to my car sat a Triumph TR6. I was so impressed by the looks of this stupendous vehicle, I asked the mechanic what it was and how to find one.

He enlightened me as to the pleasures of owning a TR6 and recommended I look for a 1971 model, and so my search began.

Having limited funds but a good basic knowledge of auto repair, I happened across an ad in the Rocky Mountain Times for a slightly

modified, but salvageable 1971 TR6 in Colorado Springs. A short trip south to a salvage yard, and I first laid eyes on my future Six.



It seems that a previous owner had lost control in a snowstorm but was able to stop the car with the help of a telephone pole and some nearby cars. My initial impression was "I can fix that," so I purchased the car "as is" and had it delivered to my residence in Denver.

After surveying the damage, I thought "no problem." A new hood, grille, bumpers, both front fenders, a left side rear fender, a "little" body work, and a new coat of Pimento Red, and I will be on the road.

Job one, strip the damaged panels off, park the car between two large trees, and with the help of a chain, a come-along, and a large ball peen hammer, I will have the car ready for replacement parts in no time. It took two weeks of applying pull with the come-along and hammering the inner panels and valance back into position.



Above and right, George's TR6 arrives in Denver.

(story continues next page)

How I Started with British Cars, continued

I was able to source a replacement hood, grille, and front bumper, but the three fenders were nowhere to be found. Job two was to pound out the fenders as best I could and through the miracle of body putty, I was able to reassemble the car to roadworthy condition. The new paint job covered up many imperfections and the car looked great from ten feet away.



Top, George has the valance pulled out; bottom, paint-ready.

Mechanically, the car was in good shape and I enjoyed several years and many miles driving my TR6 until the demands of marriage and children necessitated its replacement. I did not realize how much I would miss the excitement of owning a British sparts car and it was several long years later until my dear wife **Caroline** helped my find a 1973 TR6 to replace it.



The finished car on a slightly warmer day.

George and Caroline Brown have been members of SABCC since 2015. Beside the 1973 TR6, which is also Pimento Red, they have the 1967 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow owned for many years by the late **Cecil Pugh**, and a vintage VW Beetle.

Spannering

Advice on Repairs, Parts, and Services

Getting Light on the Subject

story and photos by Rodney McDonald

All of us that work on our classic MGs have our own pet peeves as far as ease in performing certain tasks. Under-dashboard work, for me, is one of those jobs that never seems to have enough light.

I've had to replace the brake light switch on my MGF a couple of times since I took possession of it about a year and half ago. It was inoperable when I got it (meaning the



brake lights were on constantly) and I then I had to replace it one more time when I applied too much pressure to the brake pedal while on my inclined driveway. Briefly, the switch plunger becomes over depressed and the switch then must be removed and the plunger pulled out slightly to reset it. The brake light switch resides on a bracket welded to the firewall and the brake pedal movement actuates the switch.

There are a couple of issues that come to mind in this repair: One – your head is where your feet would normally reside when driving the car, and two – it's dark in there. I've tried "head light" type lights that you wear on your head. I've also tried pedestal type lights the sit on the floor and are pointed toward the work. In both cases, I ended up creating shadows right in the target work area. Not ideal.

An Internet forum I visit once in while had a mention of lighted gloves in one of the posts and I became intrigued over the concept. A quick search on the Amazon site uncovered dozens of offerings, all from vendors with unpronounceable names and priced from a few dollars to about \$35.00. The one I ordered was less than \$15.00 and came with two glove lights, each with two white LED lamps on them. One LED on the forefinger and one on the thumb, and the stretch fabric is locked down with a hook and loop type fastener. Also in the box were four replacement button batteries and a tiny screwdriver to gain access to the battery case.



I tried them out on arrival, and they worked great. With four LEDs on two hands, I was able to position the switch and lock it into the bucket without any shadows over the work area. If there



was a spot that needed extra light, it was easy to move a hand – or finger – and get light exactly where it was needed.

I'll admit that the concept initially caused me to roll my eyes a bit, but now that I've used them, I'm a fan. Now, if I can only find a better way to bend my high-mileage body into position to reach the switch...

The Best of

Pierre's Wisdom

Pierre Fontana

Danger You Can't See

Steering, suspension, brakes – we take them for granted most of the time, and they do not get our attention unless we hear or feel an abnormal event.

One Spitfire was an eye opener. On these cars, it is almost impossible to look at the upper ball joint, even with wheel off. The disc brake's dust cover hides them good, unless you try hard to get dirt and grease out of the way. The one you are looking at in these pictures was at the end of its safe life.



All photos courtesy **Pierre Fontana**

When they collapse, the wheel assembly will fold down flat on the road, tearing off brake line, a disaster in the making. The ball joints are priced low and reasonable. If you can get access to a lift, it would be a good idea to have a look at the bottom of your car now and them.

Pierre Fontana is a technical advisor for SABCC. This column first ran in May 2014.



Pierre sent Ed. this photo last month with the following description: "I'm getting too old for hard exercise. I believed the MGB seat diaphragm was hard to stretch in place; well it's nothing compared to a TR-6 seat frame. I had to use a pair of vise grips at the right place on the clip and a long pry bar to stretch the clip to the mounting hole, and I put a knee on the seat to keep it in place while prying hard. Get a helper and don't let anything slip. A heat gun might help, but mine died."

Classifieds

1960 Triumph TR3

Stored in rear of my shop for the past few years. Too many new projects. This one needs to go.

- Frame clean, straight, painted a few years ago. no rust
- Tires, brakes, and wheel bearings new
- Engine turns free but has not been run in many years
- Gearbox shifts easily
- Body is off the car; floor pans and door sills are rough, but rest of the sheet metal is pretty straight.
- Lots of new parts included
- Carbs were rebuilt by Mike Darby a few years back

I also have a spare TR3 engine and two TR3 gearboxes that I will include or can sell separately.

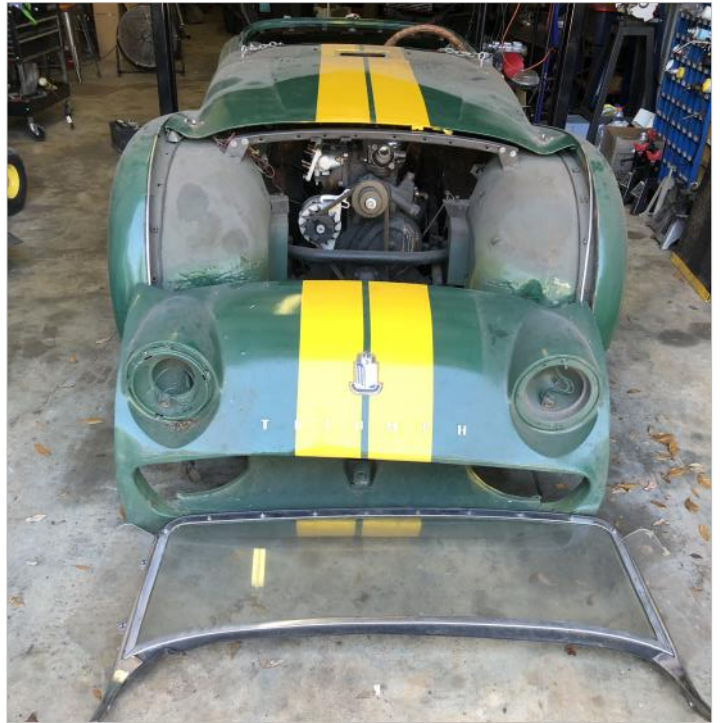
Car can be seen in Daphne. I have lots more photos if anyone is interested.

I'm asking \$2500 for the lot. Let's talk.

Laramie Dixey

251-472-6446

planetdixey@gmail.com



3 quarts of Redline MT90 75W90 GL4 manual transmission lubricant and one of high performance 75W90 gear oil for sale, \$10 each. They are old, but should be good. **Bob Bulfin, Bobbulfin@gmail.com**

1980 Triumph Spitfire 1500

Pageant Blue. Runs and drives, but needs restoration work. New mechanical fuel pump, rear brake parts except drums, seat belts and hardware, gas cap seal and gas filters, windshield wipers, and hood prop rods. Needs convertible top, rust area repair around the trunk lid corner and bottom, interior work. Rubber bumpers in bad shape, so started conversion to chrome; rear complete, front not done. Previous owners used older seats without headrests and a stripe on the hood with the "Triumph" wreath logo. \$3500.



Mike Japp, webmaster@pbca1.org

1993 Jaguar XJS Coupe

"Facelift" Jaguar coupe featuring smooth, durable 4.0-litre inline six and four-speed automatic. Full power accessories, "basketweave" alloy wheels, climate control, and trip computer. 138,000 miles. Boot lid requires repainting, and driver's seat and console lid need recovering. Good running and driving condition. \$2200.



Bob Henson, 251-962-4617

1948 MG TC



Matching numbers; less than 2,000 miles since frame-off restoration. Many upgrades to engine and drive train. \$29,000.

1980 Triumph Spitfire

Free for haul-away. Need removed as soon as possible. Car is about ten miles north of DeFuniak Springs. Parked outside for several years, non-running but complete. Books and title in hand, but never registered. The seller wants to give the British car clubs a chance before scrapping it!



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Weak and Rusty

Michael King, Editor, *Spark & Spanner*

Resolutions and Excuses

The new year is a good time to make resolutions. You might as well – everyone else is. That’s why gym memberships and sales of exercise equipment always soar this time of year – and I guess we can now add Ozempic to the list.

But, if we make resolutions, we can expect their cousins, excuses, to come along for the ride. “I want to go to the gym today, but I just have too much to do.” “One dish of ice cream can’t hurt.” “I meant to stop swearing so much, but when you bust your knuckles separating a ball joint, that doesn’t count.” Pretty soon, the excuses push the resolutions out of the way.

So, making resolutions is commendable, but be ready to forgive yourself when the excuses get in the way. Having said that, I’ve thought of a few things I’d like to accomplish this year.

First, I need to spend more time working on my cars. I recently had the rear shocks and coil spring insulators replaced on my 2001 XJR, but the front end needs attention. I’m expecting to replace shocks, bushings, and perhaps tie rod ends and yes, ball joints. My 2011 XK and 2011 XFR have slow coolant leaks, the XFR’s headliner has begun drooping, I have a new engine to put in my MGB, and I have a hardtop for that car to refurbish. Finally, all four cars need to be thoroughly cleaned and detailed.

Second, I’m working with the Northwest Florida Homelessness Reduction Task Force on a new program called “[Next Step Vehicles](#).” The goal is to help individuals and families have safe, reliable transportation. In 2024, we will work to develop a network of mechanics, establish access to parts at discounted prices, and

raise funds to support parts, repairs, and the refurbishment of donated vehicles.

Finally, I hope to get a better handle on managing my time. With a part-time job that seems to be creeping toward full-time, community and church commitments, obligations to both SABCC and the Pensacola club, and helping my wife manage her mom’s care (she now lives with us), all I can say is I’m glad I’m retired.

That’s my list. But I hope you will indulge me as suggest a few resolutions for the club:

- **Stay the course:** We saw significant growth in membership in 2023, and record participation in both the British Car Festival and the Christmas party. We had our first **John Twist** seminar, and thanks to **Rodney McDonald**, were internationally acclaimed for discovering the 250,000th MGB.
- **Participate:** Even with the record turnouts noted above, we can always use more members involved in the planning and operations of the British Car Festival and other club events.
- **Do more:** A few years ago, I started a group within the club called the “Do More Committee.” Then, the pandemic got in the way. The goals of that initiative were to increase community awareness of our hobby, and help build interest among the younger generations. **Don Pritchett** has embraced this with his Kids’ Choice and Next Generation competitions at the BCF, and **Peter Lee** is preparing to teach a Boy Scout merit badge program on car maintenance to his daughter’s and other troops. I promise to regroup the Do More Committee soon so we can, well, do more.

What are your resolutions for this year, and are you already making excuses? We have a great club and a great hobby. Tell those excuses to go do something else, and let’s have a great year.

And now, for something completely different . . .



Ron Wolverton sent Ed. this photo, noting the MGB in the lower left corner. No word as to whether the shirtless guy goes with the car. How many other cars do you recognize?

Spark & Spanner

South Alabama British Car Club

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Find us on Facebook! Look for our Facebook page, South Alabama British Car Club, and our Facebook group, Friends of South Alabama British Car Club.