

# Spark & Spanner

The Official  
Publication of the  
South Alabama  
British Car Club

June 2022



# From the President

Tom Renick

## Nature's Heat Gauge is Pegged

The old calendar on the wall knew what it was talking about this year. Precisely on the first day of summer, the 21st of June, the unseen wind steering currents landed a big heat dome right on our heads and it has parked there ever since. Temperature highs have hovered around the century mark, and with a healthy sprinkling of humidity, this has made things mostly intolerable around the middle of most days. This is especially true for those of us who might be somewhat older than our antique British cars (the ones with wooden spoke wheels). It's a far cry from that gorgeous day we had last month at our annual picnic meeting at Silverhill—a roaring success.

The “oven-ly” temps didn't cancel our club function of Saturday last on festive Dauphin Street in downtown Mobile though. Activities VP **Don Pritchett** devised a well-organized tour of automotive establishments of yesteryear that were strung almost exclusively from one end of St. Louis street to the other [see story, p. 4-Ed.]. **Don** had researched the addresses of about all of them, and from our motorcade, pointed out any remaining original buildings, or the site of where they used to be.

The event started out with brunch at the Squid Ink Eclectic Eats near the Square [Bienville, that is. Fountain. Azalea bushes.]. A rather large group of us gathered there at 10:00 a.m., and all had a nice



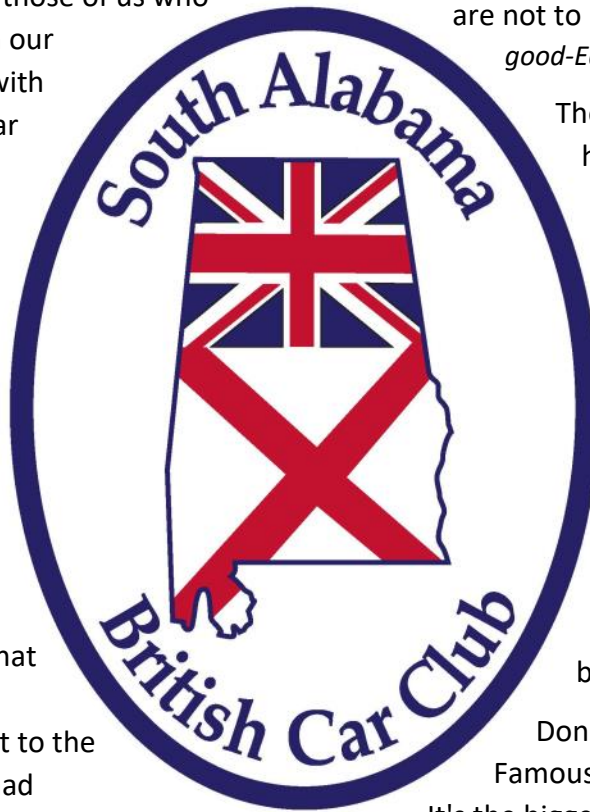
Photo by Noel Eagleson

dining experience around a four-place table with a spare chair for any latecomers. Don's adventures are not to be missed. [*My intentions were good-Ed.*]

The next really glorious day I'm hoping for is October 22nd, our British Car Festival day, and only about four months away. Check with **Brian Daly** if you want to help and he'll find a committee where you can assist. We still need dozens of door prizes—one for each car entered—so if you can donate something new like what you would want to get, take it to the meeting or drop it by the Garagemahal.

Don't forget **Tom Schmitz's** World Famous Pig Roast coming up July 24th. It's the biggest feast on the Gulf Coast and a major strike against car enthusiasts' hunger. As always, if everyone does a little, our big projects become a piece of cake and enjoyable for us all.

[**Tom Renick** is the president of South Alabama British Car Club. Until someone produces photo evidence to refute this claim, he will continue to assert that his first new car did not, in fact, have wooden-spoke wheels.]



**On the cover:** The newest member of our club president's vast Sunbeam collection arrives at the Garagemahal. (photo by **Donna Eagleson**)

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Membership in SABCC is open to anyone with an interest in classic or modern British cars.

# Activities Calendar

**June 28, 2022**

**SABCC Monthly Meeting**, Don Carlos Restaurant, Daphne, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00, your treat.

**July 24, 2022**

**Tri-Club Pig Roast**, Tom Schmitz's home, Lillian, AL, begins at noon, bring a dish to share and your favorite beverage.

**July 26, 2022**

**SABCC Monthly Meeting**, Don Carlos Restaurant, Daphne, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00, you pay this time as well.

**August 27, 2022**

**Day Trip to Barber Museum**, details soon.

**September 15-18, 2022**

Southeast British Car Festival, Dillard, GA, details [here](#).

**Oct. 21 and 22, 2022**

**British Car Festival**, details and registration form (that's a hint) [here](#).

## July 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Jun 26	27	28 Club Mtg.	29	30	Jul 1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Pig Roast	25	26 Club Mtg.	27	28	29	30
31						

British Car Festival is Supported by



Jaguar/Land Rover of the Gulf Coast

# Sparks

## Club and Member News



### Mobile's "Automobile Alley"

story by **Don Pritchett**

I recently became aware of an area in downtown Mobile that is designated as the "Automobile Alley Historic District." It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



*Turner-Todd Motor Company, commonly known as "the Buick Building," has been renovated at a cost of \$5 million. The historic structure, built in 1926, now houses a restaurant, a technical company, and a construction company. (photo by **Tom Renick**)*

The primary interest in this area has been the redevelopment of some buildings that were purpose-built as new car dealerships in the 1920's and 1930's. The historic area is centered around St. Louis Street. The car dealers thrived there into the 1960's when they started following Mobile's population shift to the west.

I wondered if there were any dealers for British cars in the time before this shift. For most locals, White's Imports will come to mind. They were located near this district and were the Austin Healey and MG dealer. New Triumphs were offered at Freeman Equipment, Broadway Motors or M & B Auto Company. In the mid-1960's Freeman added Sunbeam, Rover, and Land Rover to their lineup.

Looking for something less sporty? Hardy Motor Company, the Rambler/Hudson dealer, also offered Metropolitan. The Studebaker dealer, Gulf Coast Motors, also sold the Hillman Minx and the Sunbeam Rapier. Trail Cadillac-Pontiac was the Vauxhall



*Before and after: the former Nash/Ford building now houses Mobile Antiques. (photo from [WPML-TV](http://WPML-TV))*

dealer, and English Fords were sold by Schaffer Lincoln-Mercury. Also downtown, on Broad Street, Martin Motors advertised the MGA, MG Magnette, Jaguar, and the Morris Minor.

At that time there was enough interest in sports cars to support a local car club. That club was the Sports Car Rally Association of Mobile, or S.C.R.A.M., as it was commonly known.

Not many of these buildings remain, but the spirit and interest in the products that came through them still do.

*[On June 25, as noted in the President's Column, Don led a tour of the district, following brunch-Ed.]*

**Silverhill Show Photos, May 28, 2022** [I did not get these in time for the May issue, so I'm making amends-Ed.]



Paul Reese of the Panhandle club admires **Tom Schmitz's** 1968 Morgan 4/4, which won the British I class. (photo: **Dick Bishop**)



**Dick Bishop** and the MGMG crew seize the southeast corner of Hwys. 104 and 55 for all the British cars. (photo: **Dick Bishop**)



Left to right, an MGB, a Jensen-Healey, and an MGA. All told, 23 British cars were registered. (photo: **Dick Bishop**)



That's **Ed's** 2001 XJR turning its back on the camera; it took the British III class win. (photo: **Dick Bishop**)



George Bruno of the Panhandle club took the British II class with his modified TR6. (photo: **Mike Japp, PBCA**)



Center, MGMG member **Stuart Reisinger's** BRG MGB GT. (photo: **Mike Japp, PBCA**)



This Midget looked great, and the custom license plate ("Help Me Up") was perfect. (photo: **Mike Japp, PBCA**)



**Ed** appreciate **Mike Japp** of PBCA for allowing use of his photos, including this one he took of his Spitfire.

## My 1959 Triumph TR-3A

*story and photo by Bruce Mackey*

My interest in sports cars seems to be hereditary. My father owned a number of sporty cars during the 1920's (Auburns) through the 1960's (1965 Mustang 289).

However, his standout car for me was a 1959 Triumph TR-3A (wide mouth) in soft yellow. My father was a "conservative engineer" and when he bought this new sports car in 1959; it surprised most of his friends and relatives. Of course, I thought the Triumph was terrific. My father used the car as his daily driver through 1964 when he gave it to me. I drove



*"Bruce's Car," as described by his persuasive mom*

the car during the summer of '64 and had lots of fun with it! But, the car lacked some important features for a 19-year-old. For example; it did not have a radio, it did not have any windows (side curtains) and the heater was woefully weak for the Illinois / Wisconsin winter looming in the near future. So, I gave the car back to my dad. The Triumph came to rest outside under a half a dozen tarps; where it was to remain for the next decade.

In 1975 two United Airlines pilots spotted the car and stopped by to see if it was for sale. My dad sold it to them for a few hundred dollars and they picked the car up with a trailer the same afternoon. My mother learned about the sale and was very upset. She claimed he had no right to sell "Bruce's car."

The airline pilots returned about a year later to show my father the "restored" car. Luckily, my father was not home, but my mother was.

The restoration was terrible. The guys changed the color from yellow to black, and it was a poor paint job as well. They removed the original wheels and replaced them with rusty wire wheels. They had about \$800 in receipts and claimed "... the car runs great."

My mother put a very strong guilt trip on these guys. Of course, she said my father should never have sold the car to them! The car rightfully belonged to me, her son. My mother could be very persuasive. After a lengthy discussion and negotiation; my mother purchased the TR-3 for about \$1,500. The pilots and my mother were both happy. I never could imagine the look on my father's face when he returned home and saw the TR-3 in the driveway.

All this happened in the late 1970s. About 10 years later I began a three-year restoration and finished in 1988. I kept the car for another five years or so and drove it regularly. I sold it in 1992 . . . well, it did not have a radio or roll up windows!



*The always sharp-eyed Tony McLaughlin shared a story link with Ed. about a possible new MG electric roadster that may arrive as soon as 2024, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the brand. Designed by a team in London, the car may be branded "MGC EV," since a trademark was filed by MG's parent for that name. Alastair Crooks, writing for Auto Express, a website in the UK, says the car may use some of the components of MG's other electric models, which could result in a 273-mile range and four-second 0-60 performance.*



**Duane Wood** sent Ed. this photo, noting "This may be old news for some, but I discovered an old club member on the deck at the Bluegill restaurant on the Causeway while attending a fundraiser gala this week. It's seen better days and is way beyond restoration or parts. I'm sure it's gone through a hurricane or two." *Anyone know how this car, with its SABCC grille badge, ended up at the Bluegill?*



**Scott Paradise** often has interesting cars in his shop. About this, he says, "You don't see this every day! The long-time owner had the Wankel engine with 5-speed transmission installed some 30 years ago after hand-grenading the original powertrain. After years of fun he decided to freshen up the car. 200 hp in a Sprite . . . what could go wrong with that!?" *Nothing, Scott!*



**David Menaker** sent Ed. this picture of a 1957 MGA, commenting: "Spotted at the Gulf Breeze Import Rally July 18. Mostly Japanese models. A rose among thorns." *Spot-on, David. Those with better memories than Ed.'s might recall seeing this car at the 2022 Brits by the Bay show a couple of months ago, where it won third place. It belongs to Jim Martin of Pensacola. Ed. also saw this car at the recent Marine Corps League show in Pensacola. Obviously, Jim enjoys getting it out and showing it at various events, even those where British motors are in the decided minority. May his tribe increase.*

**OFFICIAL CONVERSION CHART**  
**HOW TO INTERPRET**  
**ANTIQUE CAR ADS**

IF IT SAYS:	IT REALLY MEANS:
Rare model.....	Nobody liked them when new either
Older restoration.....	Can't tell it's been restored
Needs engine work.....	It's been frozen for 30 years
Uses no oil.....	Just throws it out
No rust.....	Body and fenders missing
Rough.....	It's too bad to lie about
One owner.....	Never been able to sell
No time to complete.....	Can't find parts anywhere
Needs interior.....	Seats are gone
Rebuilt engine.....	Has new spark plugs
May run.....	But it never has
Low mileage.....	Third time around
Many new parts.....	Keeps breaking down
29 coats hand-rubbed paint....	Needed that much to cover rust
Clean.....	It sat out in the rain yesterday
Best offer.....	About what I expect to get
Always driven slowly.....	Won't go any faster
Prize winner.....	Hard luck trophy 3 times in a row
Stored 25 years.....	Under a tree
Real show stopper.....	Orange with purple fenders
Easy restoration.....	Parts will come off in your hand
Ready to show.....	Just washed it
Top good.....	Only leaks when it rains
Good investment.....	Can't depreciate any more

Ed. thanks **Tony McLaughlin** for this, which is as true as ever!

# Spannering

Advice on Repairs, Parts, and Services

## Travails of an Anglia

**Mac McNamara; photos by the author**

[Ed. here: Mac sent me this article a couple of months ago, and with all the recent club events, I'm just getting around to running it. I was pleased to see the wee Anglia at the Pensacola show, where it took third in its class, not second as I erroneously reported in the April issue.]

March was a busy month for the Mac family. The Anglia was suffering badly from rot and, being a unibody car with rust a good way through the rear leaf spring supports as well as the support beam between each leaf spring, it was becoming a danger to drive.

Three years ago, I placed an order through Ex-Pressed Steel and waited patiently for the two rear leaf spring supports, the support beam between them, the rear valence section under the rear bumper (it was bent from previous wrecks prior to my ownership in my teen years, FYI), the



Figure 1: Gas tank out, valence removed.



Figure 2: Leaf spring mount out.



Figure 3: Driver leaf spring mount in place.

two rear lower quarter panels and both door skins to arrive. Approximately five months later, I received the parts and arranged for someone to work on the car.

The Anglia was to be



delivered to him on March 28, 2020. But it turns out that was two weeks after Alabama locked down for



Figure 3: Driver leaf spring mount primed.

Covid. It was agreed to wait until all parties knew how this new disease was going to impact the world. Six months later, though, the gentleman had closed his business and wanted nothing to do with that work any-

more. My apologies to all of you for closing not one, but two businesses that would work on car restorations with your budgets in mind.

I finally called Kenny Drake who was able to take the car in early March 2022 and install the parts I had ordered as well as repair a few other needed items within the budget I had. It is nowhere near fully done, but I feel much safer driving the car.

Daniel and I will spend the next few months (years?) working sporadic weekends to do



Figure 5: Rear cross member and valence prepped for installation

some of the remaining repairs as well as learning how to prep, prime, prep, and paint (sand, re-prime to cover mistakes made, re-prim for paint, paint and ad in-finitum).



Figure 6: Rear passenger quarter panel ready for new metal.

*Anglia deluxe*



The Best of

# Pierre's Wisdom

Pierre Fontana

## Cleaning Power vs. Purchase

I am working on an old E-type roadster, a Healey BN-6 100-6 stored for many years, and a P1800 Volvo, a "NEAR" British car with Smith gauges etc. I am not to restore them to new, but to get them up to nice drivers, so the owners can enjoy them again without spending a fortune.



All photos courtesy **Pierre Fontana**



your wheels, not even your mother in law . . . just you.

Naval Jelly is a pink goop which will keep chrome clean, and not attack it. It can be used on all ferrous metals.



For painting, before priming, there are "etching" solutions I use to protect the metal. Some primers have etching solution built in. All are acid-based to fight corrosion. On aluminum, you can't use the same solution; a different acid has to be used, usually phosphoric-based, and it has to be washed off in a timely fashion. I soak carburetors and aluminum parts with deep corrosion, and I use my bead blaster on the outside. It is like a sand blaster in a metal cabinet, but instead of sand, it uses glass beads so fine that they are like powder. Since the beads are so fine, I have to use a parts washer and air pressure to clean the residue from inside.

All sorts of chemicals can help clean and protect parts, and that means your car is ORIGINAL, so that some of it was not made in China.

*Pierre Fontana is an SABCC technical advisor. This article first ran in November 2012.*



The E-Type's chrome wheels looked bad. With Naval Jelly, a paint brush, and a pressure washer, a \$15.00 expense can make wheels look pretty again from 15 feet away, and perfect if the car is moving. That is \$1500.00 in savings, and the chrome looks very good. A few spokes show bare metal that I will touch up with silver paint, and "who" really cares about

# Spare Parts



## Cars of the BMC

[Note from Ed.: Here's the fifth in our series of write-ups of British Motor Corporation autos, discovered by member **Terry Trovato**.]



**The Austin A70** — The Austin A70 Hampshire and later Austin A70 Hereford are cars that were produced by Austin from 1948 until 1954. They were conventional body-on-frame cars with similar styling to the smaller A40 Devon and A40 Somerset models respectively. 85,682 were built.



*Austin A70*

Most first generation A70s were Hampshire 4-door saloons, though some estate and pickup truck versions were also produced as the A70 Countryman and A70 Pick-up respectively. The 2.2 Litre (2199 cc) straight-4 pushrod engine provided the same power output, at 67 bhp, as it had when installed in the earlier Austin 16 hp. The new car was nevertheless lighter and published acceleration and top speed figures were correspondingly brisker: Acceleration from 0-80 km/h (50 mph) took 14.5 seconds and the maximum speed was 83.3 mph (134.1 km/h).

**The Riley Two-Point-Six** — The Two-Point-Six replaced the Riley Pathfinder as Riley's top-of-the-line automobile when it was announced on August 23, 1957. While its predecessor retained the renowned



*Riley Two-Point-Six*

Riley 4 cylinder twin cam, cross-flow engine, Riley suspension and gearbox with its almost unique right hand gear lever, the Two-Point-Six was virtually identical to the Wolseley Six-Ninety Series III. It used the BMC C-Series straight-6, an engine that produced 101 hp. Regrettably, the Two-Point-Six was a commercial failure and was withdrawn from the market in May 1959.

**The Austin Sheerline** — The Austin Sheerline was a large luxury car produced by the Austin Motor Company from 1947 to 1952 and then by the British Motor Corporation until 1954. The Sheerline was de-



*Austin Sheerline*

signed by Austin during the Second World War, but

*(continued next page)*

## Cars of the BMC, continued

production did not begin until 1947 because of the commitment to war production. It was a luxurious car in the style of a contemporary Rolls-Royce or Bentley but at a much lower price. The first cars, designated A.110, had a 3,460 cc straight-six overhead valve engine but this was soon increased to 3,995 cc with 125 bhp, and the designation then became A.125. Initially only a Saloon version on a 9-foot-11¼-inch wheelbase chassis was made, but this was joined by a Limousine version in late 1949 on a stretched 11-foot chassis also used for a hearse and an ambulance.

**The Wolseley 6/90** — The Wolseley 6/90 was a car produced by Wolseley Motors Limited from 1954 to 1959. The 6/90 replaced the 6/80 as the company's flagship model. It was badged with Six-Ninety on the bonnet and with 6/90 on the boot lid. Riley and Wolseley had both been owned by the Nuffield Organization which had merged with Austin to become BMC, and the marques would soon be heavily involved in BMC's badge-engineering; for Wolseley enthusiasts, in retrospect the 6/90 seemed like the last true Wolseley.



Wolseley 6/90



Duane Wood spotted a few Brits at Hagerty's Car Corral at the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama, including a very nice Spitfire.

## Auction Roundup—Six Figures

*[With inflation, \$100 grand may not be what it used to be, but for most of us, it's still a lot of money to spend on a car. Here are three that topped it—Ed.]*

### 2015 McLaren 650S Spider



**Sold** at \$174,000 on Bring A Trailer

*Somehow, this car, which was sold new in Arizona, "spent time in multiple states" before landing in Wisconsin—and yet had only 4,300 miles. The colors are Tarroco Orange over black Alcantara, and the 3.8-litre V8 is rated at 641 horsepower.*

### 1957 Jaguar XK140 SE Roadster



**Sold** for \$102,000 on Bring a Trailer

*Classic Jaguar XKs are bringing big money, so the final price for this one is only surprising in that it is not higher. A color change from Cream to Orient Red and some non-original parts (including a five-speed gearbox) may have suppressed the value.*

### 1995 Land Rover Defender 110



**Sold** for \$124,000 on Bring A Trailer

*Modifications might have hurt the Jaguar XK140, above, but not here. This tan Defender, with a custom interior slathered in light brown leather, had lots of gadgets . . . and a 6.2 liter GM LS3 V8, mated to a GM six-speed automatic. One wonders if the seller recouped his investment in this bespoke, fully-restored Landie.*

# Weak and Rusty

Michael King, Editor, *Spark & Spanner*

## The Sound of Silencers

Do you recall the last time you replaced a muffler on a car? I had new rear silencers put on my 1991 Jaguar XJ-S about eight or nine years ago. I bought them online, and one of our longtime show sponsors, McDonald Muffler, welded them in place.

The only time prior to that was when I had my first MG (a 1976 Midget) some forty years ago. When my dad bought the car, the original muffler was long-since rusted out, so I went to K-Mart and bought a straight



Thrush. For those who are younger than me, Thrush is an aftermarket brand whose logo (see above) is sort of a predecessor of one of the Angry Birds. I thought perhaps they had gone the way of K-Mart, but they're still around and serving the hot rod industry.

Before we moved to the house I lived in while I had that Midget, the neighbor across the street, a rather pretentious attorney, was irritated to hear teenagers were moving in. So, I used to enjoy downshifting as I turned in front of his house so that the Thrush would "bark." After a while, though, it was too loud even for a 20-year-old, so I replaced the straight Thrush with a Thrush turbo, a muffler they still make.

But back to our story. When I bought the Jaguar XK pictured above, one of the first things I noticed was a rather flatulent sound at 1650 rpm. I'd read that some XKs have noisy differentials, so I thought perhaps a fluid change would solve the problem, but I then realized that the offensive noise occurred even when the car was not in motion. That meant the problem almost had to be in the exhaust system.

Newer cars typically have stainless steel exhaust sys-



tems. This has all but eliminated routine muffler replacements, which is why Walmart doesn't have a rack full of mufflers. That's good, right? Well, yes, until one actually has to replace a muffler, as I found when I began shopping online for a replacement system for the XK.

An XK has a couple of intermediate silencers, but the hard work is done by a single, large box that nearly spans the width of the car. The cost: \$1,200 plus shipping and tax. However, I could buy an aftermarket system from a company called Mina Gallery in California for

about \$1,400, all in. This system is made of high-quality T304 stainless, finished to a



high polish, as shown on one of the four exhaust tips above. The company owner assured me it installation was easy (45 minutes).

Sure enough, four hours after I began, the Mina system was in place. Overall, I'm quite pleased. It has a mellow rumble, is not obtrusive on the highway, and with the four large, round tips replacing the dual factory ovals, I think it looks great. The flatulence at 1650 is gone. And, one more thing—if I downshift with the paddle control on the steering wheel while decelerating, the car makes rather enjoyable snaps, crackles, and pops. Some things never change . . .

# 31st Annual British Car Festival Celebrating the MGA



**October 23, 2021 • Fairhope, Alabama**

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Tommy and Joanne Hartwell

## SABCC Grille Badges

The South Alabama British Car Club commissioned a grille badge featuring our fabulous club logo. These heavy enameled, 3-1/2 inch high badges on chrome plated metal are the perfect companion for your British car. The club has subsidized the cost so that the member price is only \$20.00.



**Noel Eagleson** is the keeper of the box of badges and brings them to club meetings, so look him up. Or, you can send an email [SparkSpanner@gmail.com](mailto:SparkSpanner@gmail.com) and we'll make arrangements to get one to you-.



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[www.namgbr.org](http://www.namgbr.org)

**SABCC is a Chapter of NAMGBR**

## Spark & Spanner Submissions

Go ahead: make *Ed.*'s day. It's as easy as typing an email. That's right, *Ed.* is looking for your submissions for Spark & Spanner.

Every issue will include some, most, or all of the following:

- **Activities Calendar:** SABCC events, local and national car shows, and other events worth noting
- **Sparks:** news about club members, activities, and events
- **Spannering:** stories on car repairs, restoration projects, tips and tricks, and ideas on prepping a car for a show
- **Spare Parts:** Auction Roundup, news items on the British car industry, the collector car hobby, and anything else *Ed.* finds interesting
- **Gotcha!:** stories of how members acquired their cars
- **Just Around the Bend:** Synopses of upcoming car shows and other events
- **Feature Stories:** Longer submissions of general interest
- **Classifieds:** Sell your car or car parts - or let other members know what you'd like to buy

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

### Resource Directory

Our guide to automotive resources has been released! If you have any other parts suppliers, mechanics, upholstery shops, machinists, or any other business, service, or vendor which might be helpful to SABCC members, please send these to *Ed.* at [SparkSpanner@gmail.com](mailto:SparkSpanner@gmail.com).

Thanks!

And now, for something completely different . . .



*Ed.'s first direct experience with a British car was with a Triumph Vitesse his father owned in the late 1960's. Ed.'s brother has encouraged Ed. to find one to restore. They're hard to find. This Sports Six, the U.S. version of the Vitesse, is on eBay, and has no bids with about two days to go. Ed. has decided to keep looking.*

## 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**.*