




Spark & Spanner

The Official
Publication of
the South
Alabama British

September 2024

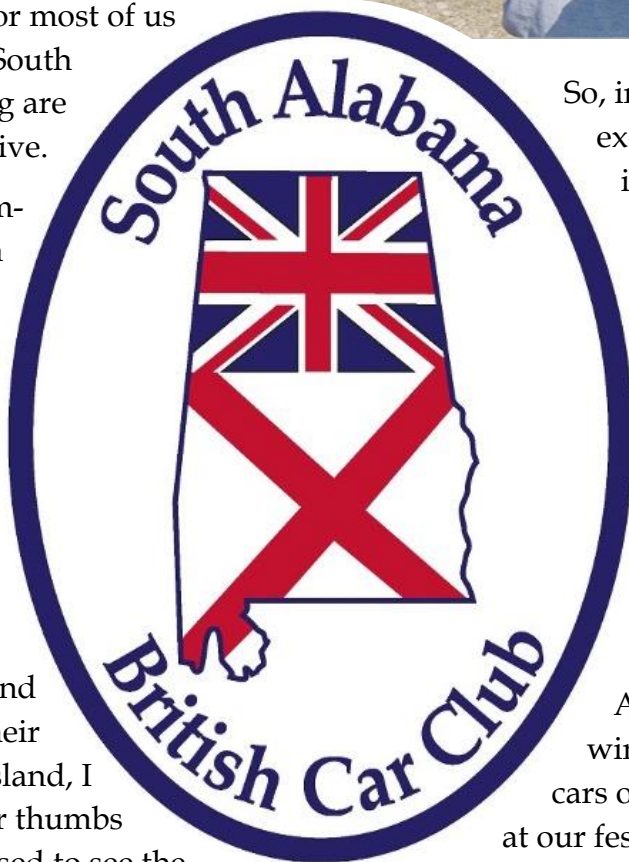
British Car Festival 2024 Celebrating 65 Years of MINI  "MINI Gets Medicare"  October 19, 2024 • Fairhope, Alabama		Payments must accompany the application Make checks payable to: "South Alabama British Car Club" or "SABCC" and mail to: Donna Eagleson - Treasurer 25604 Friendship Road Daphne, AL 36526							
ENTRANT REGISTRATION FORM									
Last Name		First Name		MI					
Address									
City		State		Zip					
Phone		Email							
Club Affiliations									
CARS TO BE ENTERED									
1	YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	BODY STYLE	COLOR	FEE*			
	YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	BODY STYLE	COLOR	FEE**			
2	YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	BODY STYLE	COLOR	FEE**			
	YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	BODY STYLE	COLOR	FEE**			
* \$25.00 if entry is received on or before October 1st, 2024 \$30.00 if entry is received after October 1st, 2024 ** For each Additional Car, add \$15.00					Total Registration:				
					Fees Due:				
Want a T Shirt? \$ 15.00 PLEASE SPECIFY SIZES & QUANTITY									
Pre-order only!!!! Orders for T-Shirts MUST be received no later that October 1st									
	Small	Medium	Large	XL	2XL	3XL	4XL	Amount Due:	Total
With Pocket								x \$15.00	
Without Pocket								x \$15.00	
Grand Total Due (Registration and T-Shirts):									
Friday Night Welcome Dinner free to all registrants at FUMC Christian Life Center at 7 p.m. the 18th. Free coffee, tea, and doughnuts for early entrants. There will be a food truck available for lunch.									
<small>Waiver: In consideration of this entry, I waive any and all claims for myself and my heirs against the South Alabama British Car Club, it's officers and members, Fairhope United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church of Fairhope, their officers, and any sponsors of this event for injury and illness which may result directly or indirectly from my participation. I also give my permission for use of my name and/or picture in any broadcast, telecast, or other account of this event.</small>									
Signature:					Date:				
									

From the President

Ben Cummings

The temperature the past few days has been pleasant, especially in the mornings. Our cousins in the north may think of summertime as the season to enjoy a little convertible British car. But here in the deep south it can be brutally hot, too hot, to drive with your top down during the summer months. My Sprite and MGB don't have air conditioning, unless you consider the triangle window vent as air conditioning. During the extreme summer heat, I get a little jealous of my Jaguar friends with a real working air conditioning system. But for most of us British car owners here in South Alabama the fall and spring are the preferred seasons to drive.

But I have endured the summer heat and I have driven my cars. This summer I brought my little Sprite to Dauphin Island. It has been a joy to drive on the island, even in the heat. The island has a large number of golf carts now. And I love to drive next to one and get their reactions of a car not much bigger (and sometimes smaller) than their cart. When I drive on the island, I get lots of waves, smiles, or thumbs ups. And I am always pleased to see the kid's reactions. They always act as if they have never seen anything like it before. And they probably haven't. This is an era of big cars and trucks. A little (very little) Sprite is a rare site on Dauphin Island, and I enjoy the joy it gives others to see it.



So, in these mild weather days exercise your cars and get them in tip top shape for our fall British Car Festival in Fairhope. If you haven't registered your car yet, then please do so. There is a five-dollar savings to pre-register your car. Take advantage of the savings and send in your registration form now. Your car doesn't have to be in pristine shape to be in the show. As a "Diamond in the Rough" winner, I can assure you that cars of any condition are welcome at our festival. I look forward to seeing you in Fairhope on October 19th.

Safety Fast,

Ben

[Ben Cummings is president of South Alabama Car Club. Ask him about the latest car to join his fleet, or better yet, see it at the BCF.]

On the cover: A less-than-subtle reminder that now is the time to register your car.

SABCC Club Officers

President	Ben Cummings
VP-Membership	Rick Black
VP-Activities	Volunteer Needed!
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 Advisors	Pierre Fontana, Mike Darby, and Scott Paradise
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! Well, at least until 2025, perhaps-Ed.*].

British Car Festival is Supported by



North American MGB Register

The only MEMBER-RUN organization
for MGB, MGC, Midget, 1100/1300 and
Post Abingdon Car owners.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$30 (\$45 overseas)
• *Dash plaque* • *Membership card* • *Window decal*
• *Six bi-monthly issues of The MG Driver,*
a 68-page informative magazine.
• *Annual national convention – a four-day MG party!*

North American MGB Register

PO BOX 876 • Downers Grove, IL 62897-0876

Toll-free phone: 800-NAMGBR-1

www.namgbr.org

Want a Club Shirt (or Jacket or Hat)?

SABCC uses Queensboro, which offers a large variety of embroidered shirts, jackets, hats, and other items, in men's, ladies, and youth styles, all of which can be embroidered with the SABCC logo. Here's it works:

1. Visit the [Queensboro site](#), find a shirt (or other item) you like, and note the style number, size, and color name (make sure the item is available in your size and color). We can usually get items at half retail.
2. [Send Ed. \(Michael King\) an email](#) listing what you want, including quantity, style number, color name, and size for each item.
3. When Queensboro runs one of their sales, I will place a group order – **but we need at least five to get the best pricing.**
4. Once the order is placed, I will send you an email with your total, which will include the price of your items plus shipping and tax.
5. When I receive the order (usually a couple of weeks) I will let you know.
6. I'll deliver your items at the next club meeting or event, and you'll reimburse me.

Simple, right? So, start shopping, and send me your list! If you have any questions, call or text Michael at 251-689-1040.

Around the Bend

Upcoming Club Activities



Sept. , 2024

BCF Planning Meeting

Ed's Seafood Shed 6450 US-90 Suite J, Spanish Fort, AL 36527; 6::00. The show is almost here and we are counting on every member to be involved! Even if you cannot attend the meeting, please contact [Peter Lee](#) to volunteer your help.

September 24, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting

We'll have our last meeting before the British Car Festival at our usual place, Don Carlos Restaurant, 29699 AL-181, Daphne — 6:00 to eat and 7:00 to meet.

Oct. 18 - 19, 2024

British Car Festival

SABCC's biggest event of the year! Held at Fairhope First United Methodist Church, we host a pre-show dinner on the 18th at 6:00 p.m., and the show field and registration open at 9:30 a.m. on the 19th. For more details, visit [here](#).

October 22, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting

Don Carlos Restaurant, 29699 AL-181, Daphne — 6:00 to eat and 7:00 to meet.

Nov. 3, 2024

Autojumble

Buy, sell, and trade at the Schmitz "Garage-mahut," Elberta. Details and directions soon.

September 2024

SU	MO	TUE	WE	TH	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
		BCF Planning				
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
		Club Meeting				
29	30					

October 2024

SU	MO	TUE	WE	TH	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
					BRITISH CAR FESTIVAL	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
		Club Meeting				
27	28	29	30	31		

Sparks

Club and Member News

The British Car Festival – How are We Doing?

SABCC's British Car Festival is about six weeks away, so this is a good time to review show preparations and progress.

The dates for the show – October 18 and 19 – and its location – Fairhope United Methodist Church – have been long set. Also, the theme – 65 years of the Mini – was established many months ago.



A scene from the 2023 show

Peter Lee is the (new) show chair this year, and his team of volunteers includes both old faces and new [*who you calling "old," Ed.?-Ed.*]. **Donna Eagleson** once again is wearing multiple hats, including chair of the Friday night dinner, voting chair, finance manager, and generally person who does whatever needs doing. Yr. humble srv't. is the show registrar and will handle the awards ceremony. However, **Robb Ogletree** will be our photographer this year, taking over from **Ron Wolverton**, who served faithfully for many years. **David Pierce** is logistics chair, but his predecessor, **Dick Bishop**, is still carrying part of the load. **Gil Stuart** is the new sponsor chair, **Marvin** and **Chylene Kampenga** are organizing the courtesy kits, and **Dennis Carroll**

is the new vendor chair. "We have had a lot of changes this year and I appreciate the ones that have stepped up to help," said Peter.

Looking at some show statistics, we have good news to share on sponsors and registrations. "We are over our goal on general sponsors and halfway there on class sponsors," said Peter, and total sponsor funds collected or committed to date are already within a few dollars of last years' final number. We have (as of Sep. 9) 42 cars registered; by the end of August last year, we only had 31, and yet the final number of registrations last year (154) was the best ever.

Our show has 29 car classes, and the 42 cars registered to date (Sep. 7) cover 18 of those. So, if you do have more than one car and aren't sure which to show, or if you are considering buying a car and want to increase your odds of winning a plaque, here are the makes and models you should consider:

- Austin Healey 100/3000
- Jaguar Classic Saloons (pre-1995)
- Jaguar XJ-S/XJS
- MGB and MGC GTs, 1965 – 1980
- Modern Britannia (other makes and models, post-2000)
- Small Britannia Saloons and Shooting Brakes (other makes, pre-2000)
- Sunbeam, All Models [*Tom Renick will enter several, but he needs some competition-Ed.*]
- Under Restoration

Besides more cars and more (class) sponsors, we are still looking for help. "We are still looking for some different jobs to be filled Friday night and show day," said Peter. "Without volunteers, the show dies."

Spannering

Advice on Repairs, Parts, and Services

Custom Car Build Update

story and photos by George Bruno, PBCA

I can't believe it's already been about a year since PBCA member **Fred Veenschoten** wrote the article about my latest car project: the custom build of what I hope to will look like an early open wheel racer, with a flare of aircraft influence. I figured I'd give our readers who are interested in such crazy endeavors a yearly update on the project. The idea of an update article came up during a discussion with Fred about the project's progress, at our inaugural valve cover water craft challenge.

I've named the project the "Turner Special", as it is a tribute to my late father-in-law's (Donald Turner) love of airplanes. Which is where the aircraft influence idea came from. His retirement project consisted of an ultra-light airplane kit that he planned on building and flying. Unfortunately, he fell ill and wasn't able to finish the project, so he reluctantly sold it. Since I had no desire to fly an airplane, but always wanted to build a replica vintage racer, I figured I'd make a car that somewhat looked the part of both.

For the past year I've been mostly working on forming the "skeleton" of the body, which is comprised of steel and aluminum. Side ribs were formed, using wooden bucks, and will be riveted to the side tubes to give the body some "curve appeal". As you can see from the photos attached, I'm going with a "boat-tail" shape for the rear portion of the body. I plan to skin the body with multiple formed aluminum panels, which will be riveted together using aircraft rivets. I hope to capture that airplane fuselage look.

I'm using as many old parts as I can get my hands on for this project, because I want to give it a vintage look and I like to keep the old stuff in use as much as possible, besides using the engine and transmission from a mid-'60s Jaguar saloon (which I believe got Fred's nod of approval) [*as well as mine-Ed.*], I'm also making use of the steering column assembly, the rear license tag light fixture, and the parking brake. The front steering control arms and rear leaf spring assemblies were salvaged from a 1938 Chevy, and all four lever shocks were obtained from our late friend and lover of British cars, Franz Bachmann (I'm sure Franz is looking down and either smiling or laughing).



Here's a pic of the floor pan and trans tunnel, which is being held together with Clico clips until it's time for final riveting. I left the shifter mechanism exposed, to display the unique design of it in action.

(more photos next page)

Custom Car Build Update, continued



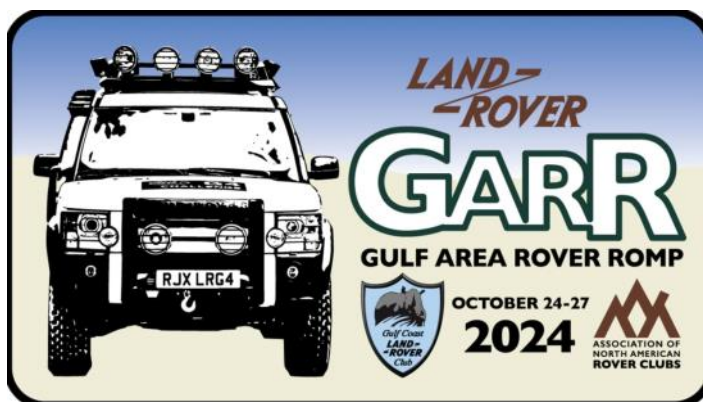
Front view of the basic body layout



Side view of the basic body framing. Note the side ribs on the back boat-tail portion: each rib was formed with a different wood buck as the ribs had to get smaller towards the rear

George Bruno is the technical director for the Panhandle British Car Association. Next time you find yourself frustrated with a project on your own car, just remember you are not building one from scratch, like George, Fortunately for those who don't have his mad skills, he is a regular presence at the PBCA tech sessions.— Ed.

Gulf Coast Land Rover Club Announces Gulf Area Rover Rally



SABCC member, founder/president of the Gulf Coast Land Rover Club, and Land Rover Master Technician (retired) **Charles Bell** [Whew! *Impressive credentials!-Ed.*] asks that we announce the first-ever Gulf Area Rover Rally (GARR). This will be a weekend-long event Oct. 24 – 27 (the weekend after our British Car Festival).

Held in partnership with the Association of National Rover Clubs [acronym "ANARC," which in this case does not mean a drug enforcement officer-Ed.], the event will be held at The Retreat RV & Campground, 24500 Lindholm Rd. Robertsdale, AL 36567. It will feature a full schedule of trail rides, a scavenger hunt, a scenic tour of Mobile, a bonfire, expo sessions, a trials course, and more.

Registration for the event is \$200 for one licensed driver and one Land Rover (\$25 before Sep. 20). Passenger registration is \$75 (\$60 before Sep. 20; child registration (15 or younger) is \$25. Online registration is available [here](#).

Accommodations onsite include "glamper" tents, cabins, tent sites, and RV sites, with and without hookups.

Please encourage your Land Rover friends to participate in this event! More details are available [here](#).

Pierre's Wisdom

Pierre Fontana

One More Tuning Tip

Recently one of our members complained of a slow pickup and very fast idle on a very nice Sprite. The engine looked very neat with professional attention to the carburetors and ignition.

I looked for a vacuum leak, but found none. Loosening all the controls between the carburetors, I found the choke cams needing adjustment. This cured the fast idle.

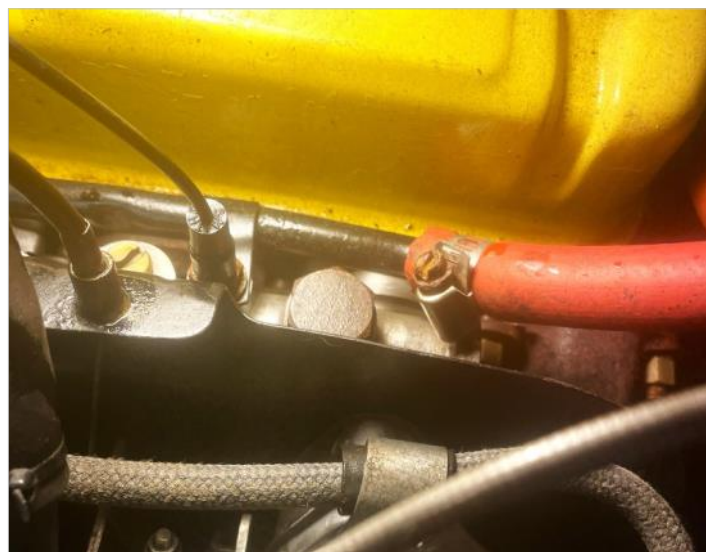


I synchronized the carbs, and the car ran smooth but had no fast acceleration, and it was sluggish in low gear. My timing light was not showing advance, so followed the vacuum line, and it was connected to intake manifold. I looked for an advance port on the carburetor and found it



*All photos courtesy **Pierre Fontana***

blocked with a short piece of hose. I swapped the block to the manifold and the line to the port and bingo, the timing light was showing a big advance. I even had to adjust the carburetor mixture richer to keep up with the acceleration. The moral of the story is those spark plugs must fire at the right time for power.



The now-blocked manifold port was probably used with emission controls long gone.

***Pierre Fontana** is a technical advisor for SABCC. At age 92, he's still working on cars and writing newsletter articles.*

Sports Car Prices – Then and Now

article by **Rodney McDonald**

Whenever you look at automobile pricing from years past, it is striking to see how low prices were "back in the day". Granted, income was also comparatively low but how do the prices of yesterday look when adjusted to today's dollar? After all, the minimum wage in September, 1964 was \$1.15 per hour, or \$11.63 in 2024 dollars.

Let's take a look at the suggested retail price list for British Motor Corporation's products sold in the USA for the 1964 model year (see right). We've got the MGB Roadster (the MGB/GT was still a year away), the MG Midget and its close cousin the Austin-Healey Sprite. The Austin-Healey 3000 topped the range out.

But what if we adjusted the prices from 1964 to 2024 dollars, we'd get this:

- MGB, on disc wheels: \$27,056.00
- MGB, on wire wheels: \$28,074.00
- MG Midget Mk II: \$21,326.00
- Austin-Healey 3000 Mk III: \$37,002.00
- Austin-Healey Sprite Mk III: \$19,595.00

The modern sports car priced closest to the ones listed above would be

Mazda's MX5 Miata. The 2024 MX5 base price is

around \$29,000.00 and can be optioned up to over \$37,000.00. If you're looking for something comparable the Midget/Sprite twins of 1964 in today's market, you'll be looking for while. A Toyota GR86 sports coupe starts at a little over \$29,000.00 while a base spec MINI Cooper will tip the scales at a bit under \$29,000.00. While both of these would be fun to drive, neither of them capture the basic, wind-in-the-hair driving experience of the "Spridget" twins.

THE BRITISH MOTOR CORPORATION/HAMBRO INC.

SUGGESTED U.S.A. RETAIL PRICES - EAST COAST PORTS OF ENTRY

(Including U.S. Customs duties and Federal Excise Tax but excluding Inland freight, local and state taxes where applicable)

B.M.C. ROADSTERS AND CONVERTIBLES

<u>Model</u>		<u>Optional Extras</u>	
MGB - Disc Wheels	\$2658.00	Heater	\$ 65.00
MGB - Wire Wheels	2758.00	Folding Hood	30.00
Specifications include:		Whitewall Tires	35.00
Laminated Windshield		Roadspeed Tires	35.00
Windshield Washers		Tonneau Cover	40.00
Leather Upholstery		Hardtop	225.00
		Overdrive	180.00
		Anti-Roll Bar	8.00
MG MIDGET MK. II	2095.00	Heater	60.00
Specifications include:		Tonneau Cover	35.00
Wire Wheels		Roadspeed Tires	35.00
Laminated Windshield		Whitewall Tires	35.00
Windshield Washers			
AUSTIN HEALEY 3000 MK. III	3635.00	Tonneau Cover	45.00
Specifications include:		Whitewall Tires	35.00
Laminated Windshield			
Heater			
Wire Wheels			
Roadspeed Tires			
Servo-assisted Brakes			
Overdrive			
Adjustable Steering			
AUSTIN HEALEY SPRITE MK. III	1925.00	Heater	60.00
Specifications include:		Tonneau Cover	35.00
Laminated Windshield		Roadspeed Tires	35.00
Windshield Washers		Whitewall Tires	35.00

ALL PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

April, 1964

(story continues next page)

Sports Car Prices, continued

What 1964's new car buyer couldn't begin to imagine, however is the array of technology packed into modern cars, either by government mandate or competitive pressure.

Taking a look at the listed optional equipment, we can see that a heater was a fairly expensive option, but still cheaper than a factory hardtop for the MGB, anyway. Again, in 2024 dollars:

MGB:

- Heater - \$661.00
- Folding (vs. packaway) hood - \$305.00
- Whitewall tires - \$365.00
- Dunlop Roadspeed tires - \$365.00
- Tonneau cover - \$407.00
- Hardtop - \$2,290.00
- Overdrive - \$1,832.00
- Anti roll (sway) bar - \$81.00

MG Midget:

- Heater - \$611.00
- Tonneau cover - \$356.00
- Dunlop Roadspeed tires - \$356.00
- Whitewall tires - \$356.00

Austin-Healey 3000:

- Tonneau cover - \$458.00
- Whitewall tires - \$356.00

Austin-Healey Sprite:

- Heater - \$610.00
- Tonneau cover - \$356.00
- Dunlop Roadspeed tires - \$356.00
- Whitewall tires - \$356.00

As can be seen from the option list, it would have been fairly easy to option an MGB up to near Big Healey price territory but it would

have been a loaded MGB, indeed. It is also interesting to note that a tonneau cover for a 1964 MGB can be purchased new from Moss Motors for around the same money as the adjusted-for-inflation 1964 price.

So, how have values held up over the years for these special cars? Very nice MGBs and less than perfect Austin-Healey 3000s could easily bring their inflation adjusted prices. Check out Hemmings Motor News, Hagerty's price guide or one of the dozens of automobile auctions that are televised each year for proof.

Midgets and Sprites from 1964? Well, they have their following, too and while it would not be impossible to find a nice Spridget listed in the upper teens, it would have been a very nice one.

(Inflation calculations via the US Government's [CPI Inflation Calculator](#))

THE NEW SPRITE
NOW WITH ROLL UP WINDOWS
BUT STILL UNDER \$2,000

The Sprite Mk II has the same old will to win—but in other ways there's plenty new. Roll-up windows. Side vents. A completely restyled cockpit. Redesigned instrument panel and new improved rear suspension. This little tiger has been and still is winning more races in the 1100 cc. Class than any car ever built. It's the lowest priced pure sports car. You can buy one for under \$2,000. It offers not only looks and creature comforts, but engineering design that includes big safe disc brakes up front (drums on rear), twin-carb top speed over 90, 4-speed stick shift, and 30-plus miles-per-gallon economy. So whether you're off to Sebring or the supermarket, you'll enjoy it more in a Sprite.

AUSTIN HEALEY
SPRITE

FOR DEALERS OR LITERATURE ORDER INFORMATION, WRITE: THE AUSTIN HEALEY CORP., HAWKES, ILL., 1000 W. 100th AVENUE, WILMINGTON, N.J.

A vintage-1964 Sprite ad.

Dorothy Deen and the Doretti – The Lady and Her Car

story by **Duane Wood**;
photos courtesy the author

The 1950s. Still a time when women stayed home, cooked, cleaned and raised children. The housewife. Business was a man's world.

Dorothy Dean, a Los Angeles native, broke the automotive business mold. Shattered the glass ceiling. She gained her mechanical prowess from her father, Arthur Andersen. He was an engineer, inventor, and an entrepreneur. He redesigned and improved the Whizzer bicycle engine. Dorothy tested the engine on long rides out of Los Angeles and back.



Dorothy Deen

Andersen also built model airplane engines. Dorothy's first business venture, as a teen, was creating a mail-order business to sell the engines.

She became interested in sports cars in 1950 when she purchased a new MG TD. She participated

in rallies and attended races. Her father owned two Morgans. They both were competitive. They would race each other on an abandoned airstrip near their home.

Father and daughter had difficulties finding car parts, so they started a company, Cal Specialties. Deen developed a line of accessories and named them Doretti, an "Italian" derivative of her name, Dorothy.

Arthur Andersen, through his contacts in England, began to explore selling a line of British cars in the U.S. Eric Sanders of Tube Investments in England, a business associate of An-

dersen, arranged for Andersen to meet Sir John Black of the Standard Motor Company, manufacturers of Triumphs. An agreement was reached for Andersen and Deen to distribute the TR2 as well as Sanders's new sports car. The distribution territory was everything west of the Mississippi.

The eastern U.S. was distributed by Fergus Motors in New York and the south-east by South-eastern Motors. A separate company, Cal Sales, was

created for the distributorship. Cal Sales also imported Triumph sedans and station wagons. Sanders purchased the Doretti name from Cal Specialties and named his new sports car the Swallow Doretti. The Doretti was powered by the TR2 engine and drivetrain.

Deen was unhappy with the paint colors of the initial TR2s for the American market. There were white and other light pastel colors. She lobbied the factory for brighter colors, including a Ferrari red. She went as far as repainting new cars with her preferred paint schemes. The factory acquiesced and brighter paint colors were developed and continued with the TR3.



Deen and the TR2

In late 1953 three TR2s and one Doretti were delivered and introduced to the public in Los Angeles in January 1954. Deen ran the distributorship in Los Angeles and Andersen travelled setting up dealers.

(story continues next page)

Dorothy Doretti, continued

There was no factory promotion to consumers. Deen was very successful in promoting the Triumphs and the Doretti through advertising and public relations. She designed point-of-purchase materials for dealerships. She offered incentives to dealers with trips to Hawaii and developing European rallies.



Deen in the Doretti

The two-seater Doretti was powered by the TR2 90 bhp motor, weighed 2156 pounds, and had a four speed Triumph gearbox, TR2 suspension on a tubular frame, the TR2 dash instruments, and steering wheel. It was capable of 100 mph.

The Doretti actually outsold the TR2 in Southern California, but Tube Investments, because of industry pressure, decided to end production of Swallow Motors and the Doretti in 1955. Standard Triumph decided in 1960 to assume distributing their own vehicles as most other car companies were then doing, putting Cal Sales out of business. Arthur Andersen had retired and Dorothy Deen decided it was time to look at new horizons.

After Cal Sales, Dorothy Deen purchased, with a partner, a Piper airplane dealership in Long Beach that was a fixed-base operation as well, offering service, aviation fuel, hangar rentals, tie-downs and flight lessons. Deen also took helicopter flight lessons and became the 45th woman to become a licensed helicopter pilot.

She died in 2007 at the age of 85.

Auction Roundup: 1964 Cars

[Rodney's article inspired another Roundup-Ed.]

1964 MGB Roadster



Sold for \$12,500 on Bring a Trailer

This red over black B offered good "curb appeal" due to extensive refurbishment, but commenters questioned the quality of some of the work..

1964 MG Midget



Sold for \$10,250 on Bring a Trailer

Unlike its MGB brother, above, this car's refurbishment was done to a high standard and very few quibbles were to be found in the comments.

1964 Austin-Healey 3000 BJ7 Mk II



Sold for \$54,000 on Hemmings

This green over tan Big Healey, owned by the seller since 1965 and refurbished in 2017, attracted 79 bids.

1964 Austin-Healey Sprite Mk III



Sold for \$13,500 on Bring a Trailer

Black over black? No, that's dark metallic green paint, and it looks great on this disc-wheel Sprite. The car was very well-sorted and the only discernable flaw was an older, worn top. This might be all the money for a square Sprite.

Weak and Rusty

Michael King, Editor

Batteries

Last month, I wrote about selling auto parts. Our biggest sellers are batteries and brake pads, and we install batteries (in most vehicles). I thought I'd share what I've learned about batteries through experience and required training.

All batteries are not created equal. Well, there's a huge revelation. But when you work at a parts store you realize just how much variety really exists. At its essence, a car starting battery contains lead plates, an electrolyte (typically sulfuric acid) and positive and negative terminals, inside a plastic case. Actually, the common starting battery contains six 2.1-volt cells, wired in series to produce a total of 12.6 volts. The battery's function is to provide a quick burst of energy to spin the starter, provide a source of electrical current when the engine is off, and stabilize the electrical system (most of the time, the vehicle runs off the alternator). However, batteries differ widely in size, capacity, warranty, and type of construction. One of the smaller batteries we sell is the 51R, often used in Honda Civics. It's about 9 x 5 x 9 inches. Contrast this with the H8 (used in my Jaguars) which is nearly 14 x 7 x 7 inches. Similarly, that 51R might produce 375 cold cranking amps while the H8 can be 800 or more. ("Cold cranking amps," or CCA, are the number of amps the battery can produce in 30 seconds at 0°F while maintaining at least 7.2 volts.) Battery warranties are measured in months or years; my store does not sell any battery with a warranty longer than three years, but also does not pro-rate the warranty—in other words, if the battery fails during the warranty period, the customer gets a new one, at no cost (but the original warranty expiration date re-

mains in effect). Not surprisingly, batteries with longer warranties are more expensive. Part of this cost is an "insurance policy" to cover the cost of warranty replacements, but since the batteries with longer warranties usually have higher CCA ratings, they are of better quality than their cheaper brethren. Finally, we sell flooded batteries and absorbed glass mat (AGM) batteries, as well as EFBs, or enhanced flooded batteries. In a flooded battery, the electrolyte is a liquid. AGMs have a gel electrolyte in sheets of fiberglass between the lead plates (they can't spill), while EFBs have a liner between their plates, giving them many of the advantages of AGMs at a lower price. At my store, we do our best to help you find the right battery for your vehicle—and your budget. Regardless, other than checking for corrosion on terminals, today's batteries are maintenance-free.

Batteries can bite you. When you are dealing with heavy boxes filled with lead and acid, and capable of releasing 12 volts of direct current at a high amperage, you need to show them some respect. Remember that 51R battery? It weighs about 25 pounds. The H8 is close to 50 pounds. Dropping one on a finger or foot will cause pain and swearing. You might also spill the acid, which is highly caustic and capable of causing severe burns. We keep large boxes of baking soda at the store to neutralize the acid. Another risk is shorting the battery. A wrench touching the positive terminal and any metal on the vehicle can suddenly become a welding rod carrying several thousand watts of "juice." Always disconnect the negative battery terminal first and connect it last; when it is connected, the entire car is basically a negative terminal. Finally, since hydrogen gas is produced during battery charging, in worst case scenarios a battery can explode, and the results are catastrophic.

Your car has to have a battery. Make sure you get the right one, and treat it with respect.



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