

Brian's 1965 MGB

by Ron Ramer

In late 1989 my son Brian started his high school senior year with a request for a sports car, specifically the neighbor's MGB that was stored in his garage for many many years! A 1971 MGB mostly rust with a bent bonnet, trashed interior, and no spare tire, just a wheel. It started and ran, and the tank held fuel, so he wanted to drive the \$100 car to school. I knew the manager at the local Michel Tire store, so I reached out to Jerry for a spare tire. Jerry said he had an older MGB without an engine, with 4 wheels and tires, that he'd sell me for less than the price of a new tire. \$50 later I'm the proud owner of two MGB's, the aforementioned 1971 and a 1965 less motor. No interior



at all, but with four wire wheels and tires.
And thus it begins!

Why work on the '71 rust when I now have a '65 in better condition? Before marker lights, back-up lights, headrests, three wipers, and smog equipment. After a little research (books and phone calls to Victoria British...it is 1989 you know) I determined the engine in the '71 would fit right in the '65, with only a few modifications. Plug the air pump cylinder holes with hex plugs, delete the air pump, struggle with belts (belt) for the pulleys with air pump delete. To this day the fan

MGB downtown on the street (with a Lambo), and racing up OH-28 for the 2024 Bellefontaine Hill Climb Revival, sporting son Brian's college football number



pulley has two grooves, one serves no purpose). Also the gearbox conundrum; the '65 has a 3-synco, whereas the '71 had a 4-synco. I have both gearboxes but one engine ('71 GK, where in 1965 it should be a GB). This issue would come up again later in the reassembly because the flywheels are different (and that was kept a secret for too long). And I wanted to use the 3 synco to keep the car correct. Right. Correct with wrong engine.

So the '65 is pushed into my garage, and a wheel borrowed for the '71 spare, so Brian could drive the '71 to school (gasp). I took every possible safety precaution measure..note the working spare tire! And I figured the car was only 18 years old at that point, what could fail? Oh, weather permitting since the car had no working top. Actually it's a stowaway but the fabric decomposed. I never did understand the MG thing about tops. My 1959 MGA has a folding top, the 1965 a stowaway, the 1971 had the remnants of a folding top. Was the stowaway an experiment? Maybe every six years let's change the configuration?

Back to the story. I was highly trained stripping paint off my English Tudor home woodwork, so I started on the front wings of the '65 with the paint stripper, intent on a few days' work and then I'll paint it! Red he wanted. Never really thought that through. Not sure how I intended to paint it.

Coincidentally, Brian's girlfriend at the time, her father restored Corvettes as a hobby. A serious hobby. Like gold awards or something like that. Anyways, he found out what I was doing, and intervened. Should have been a total intervention. He advised me to take the body to American Metal Cleaning and they'll get rid of the old paint and rust. Excellent. Except everything has to be removed from the car for dipping the entire body. Everything. Everything.

So now I have many many boxes of parts to lose, wiring, differential, front suspension, gauges, more wiring, lights, chrome stuff, bumpers. And now the very light body is trailered to Sharonville OH for the dipping. 2 months later (it was expedited since I had a Corvette guy referral) it was finished. Well most of it came back home. Missing floor pans, the lower quarters were 30% there, rockers 12%, and the rear had been badly wrecked and patched. Patching bondo was gone only to leave lots of dents and small holes where the body shop obviously pulled out dents. But what I did have was shiny metal! Real pretty. Off to the body shop.

The Octagon News – January 2025

That's really body shop purgatory, since the body goes there and won't come back for many months! And they would routinely call me when more money is needed. But when it did return, oh my! It's red! Time to carpet the garage so it's easier to slide around under the car. There are no fluids to leak, and no greasy parts to handle. Since the body looks so good I couldn't bring myself to reuse old cruddy parts. This starts my familiarity with the UPS driver bringing new parts daily, and my reassignment of rooms of the house for new parts' storage. Old parts lay in the yard.

I rebuilt the engine while the body work was underway. Actually my sister's husband rebuilt the engine. I handed him tools. And coffee. And ordered more parts. I could call Moss Motors and say "hi, this is Ron". And they knew who it was. First name basis. BTW, if you're ever considering a project like this (don't do it) contact Moss. They put you in a diversion program. No, they put you in a rebuild car project program and give you 10% off everything you buy. For years as they know it'll take years.

With the finished graduation present, Brian drove the MGB to college in Boston. Drove it to grad school in Connecticut. Drove it to Denver for a girl. Got married with it, different girl.

I've since added some non-stock features over the years: extended lower front control arms, bonnet and boot hold-open shocks, high torque starter, one 12v battery option (instead of two 6v, Mallory dual point ignition,, relays for driving lights, etc.

I was fortunate to drive it the last two years at the Bellefontaine Hill Climb Revival, up OH-28. The car sounded like it couldn't be happier!



The Octagon News – January 2025

It now rests comfortably in the British Transportation Museum in Dayton OH. Come visit it. Note the school decals on the windscreen, testament to the time in the 1990's up East in the snow. Donations are graciously accepted.

By Ron Ramer

