

Featured Car of the Month:

Elaine's MGA

by Ron Ramer

A proud owner of Brian's red MGB (featured in a previous newsletter), my boss Kevin came to visit my home office one day in 2016. While showing off the MGB he said his father-in-law had something like it, but it was in a barn since he dated his wife of 30 years! Kevin lived in Latrobe PA.

And thus, it continues!

I made a day trip to PA to visit the car, and it truly was in a barn. But it was all there. All there in many pieces, as his father-in-law took the car apart in the late 70's to paint it, or something.

Kevin said his relatives would be interested in selling the car if it would be preserved. Preserved? I assured them. \$1000 later we agreed.

For the return trip to get the car, I bought a trailer on my way to Latrobe and spent the day boxing up all the parts and trying to move the car from the barn. 2 Flat tires (snow tires on the back) that wouldn't rotate as the brakes were seized. I'm real proud of the extraction and loading on the trailer:



Shown at Cincinnati Concours d'Elegance with owner Elaine Ramer

Jack each wheel up 2" or so and place a 2x4 or plywood under each wheel longways. Squirt a liberal amount of Dawn Dishwashing Liquid on each 2x4 and lower the car down. It'll slide with

ease! Take a couple spare tires mounted on their wheels (also flat) and use them to chock each trailer wheel. Unhook the tow vehicle (my bad-ass red truck), hook on a tow rope, and yank the MGA up onto the trailer! New surprise though, with the trailer unhooked the nose end shoots up into the air when the MGA starts up the ramps. Ramps are now flat on the ground and you're pulling the car uphill onto the elevated trailer! Until you get mid-way, then it gradually lowers back down onto earth. I suspect Kevin's relatives were as shocked as me, as none of us had any trailer experience, especially a trailer only 6 hours old!



As dragged out of a barn in Latrobe PA with my boss looking on.

The drive back to Cincinnati was long and scary. Trailer with no trailer brakes and rush hour traffic near Pittsburgh. Got lost. Entered I-70 Eastbound instead of West. Seems the PA Turnpike starts right there. To the West it's I-70 and free. To the East it's I-70 and PA Turnpike and costly! I was way too far over in the left lanes to go to the toll booth (I suspected the left approach lanes would go West, and the right lanes East.) So, I was far left. EZ Pass lane. Damn! I slowed but all I could hear were horns behind me! No big deal, I saw an exit sign just one mile ahead. Took that exit and there was a person in the toll booth. I explained what happened and she was very polite and told me \$89 cash only. What? Without a ticket they charge you for the entire length of the PA Turnpike. If I had an issue I needed to contact the Turnpike Commission. That did go really well, though, as they refunded all my money a couple of weeks later.



Back home late that night in Cincinnati eased the trailer into my drive, and my wife Elaine had wonderful words for me. "...and you also bought a trailer?" Finally, she said if it was to stay here it was her car. Hers. And she didn't want it Old English White with red interior either.

Now I'm not suggesting she's in charge, so I compromised. Made it her car and changed the color to MGA period-correct Iris Blue! Probably one of the better decisions I (she) made.

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Now for those who know I'm a fan of American Metal Cleaning, I took all the body panels there (not boot, doors, or bonnet. They're aluminum). And not the frame! MG originally installed sound



deadening material in the hollow frame that cannot be removed, so the only option is sandblasting or media blasting.

I'm in my office one day (home office recall) and I hear sandblasting outside. Seems some guy has a contract to paint all the fire hydrants in Green Township so he has to remove all the old paint first. We cut a deal to have the MGA frame blasted for \$100 cash in my front yard. No one ever told me to put down a tarp first. Do you know how much sand is used to do the entire frame? And where it goes? Look closely after I moved the car. Grass was replaced with gray sand.

The restoration took four glorious years. Special thanks to brother-in law Tom, who did all the engine work and helped with all aspects of the car. Well, all welding also. I mostly handed him tools and coffee.

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I'm proud we did all the work ourselves; apart from Jim Collins Autobody in Cincinnati who did the paint. BES Racing Engines in Guilford IN did the engine machining. WE did the build. The upholstery. The windshield (twice). Oh, and of course Moss Motors! While all the body panels are the originals, Moss did the custom upholstery gray with light blue piping. It's not on their web page but one phone call and it's on order!

The MGA runs and shows great! Everything is original and correct, except I've since replaced the two 6-volt batteries with one 12-volt. While the 6-volt tar-top batteries were new they still out-gassed corrosion on the terminals. And usually produced something slightly less than 6 volts! And from all the car shows I've been to, and Concours d-Elegance in Lexington, Cincinnati, and Dayton, no one has ever looked in the battery compartment! And now Interstate no longer makes the tar-top 6 volt batteries.

The blue car now rests comfortably at The British Transportation Museum in Dayton. Apparently a fan favorite! Go visit it and the other awesome British Cars on display, open Saturdays and Monday.

