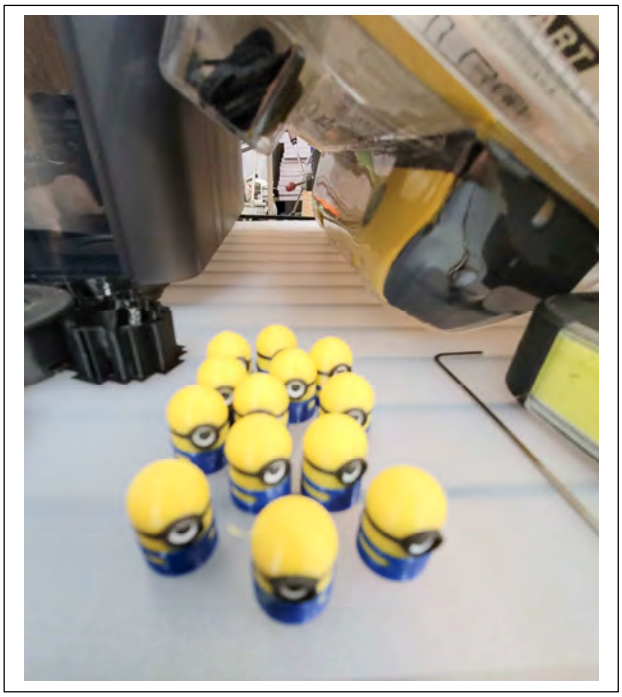
My Minion Yellow MGB

by Dave McCann Jr.



I got the yellow car almost ten years ago in Richmond, Virginia. It's a 1974 MGB/GT with the bumpers removed and a 300ci Buick V8 from 1964. The engine was a one year successor to the all aluminum GM 215 V8 used by Buick, Olds and Pontiac. (The Olds version was slightly different to allow for turbocharging, but that's a different story.) After discontinuing the 215, Buick built an iron block 300ci engine with aluminum heads. The block shares some details with the 215, and the heads are also similar (and still aluminum). The intake manifold is not identical as the block is taller and the stroke is longer. After a year Buick changed the heads to iron, and may have also modified the block, as the intake manifold is not the same between 64 and 65. So it's all an interesting combination of parts that are mostly not available anymore coupled to a combination of parts that were never used with this engine in an attempt to fit it all in the engine bay of an MGB. Buick, for the record, was still not happy with things and bored and/or stroked the second iron block to 340 in 66 and 67 and then built a completely different engine in the 350 in 68 and after. And don't confuse the Buick 350 with the Chevy 350. Or the Olds 350. Or the Pontiac 350.

The interior includes a custom dash built from the metal frame of a MGB MkIV dash overlaid with plywood and wood veneer. The seats are from an early limited edition Miata and are tan leather (with the headrest speakers). Tan carpet covers the floor and the gearbox tunnel. The console and tunnel cover are dyed tan to coordinate with the remainder of the interior.

Coupled to the engine is a Borg Warner T-5 5-speed gearbox, presumably from a Camaro (based on the ratios and the shifter). The axle is a combination of 60's Mustang parts, but does include a limited slip unit (Auburn, from the notes I have). The fuel tank was stock when I got it, but modified to be centered in the car to work with dual exhausts. The exhausts are muffled by a pair of no-brand Flowmasters followed by a pair of glasspacks. The no-brand mufflers are well built enough to stand up to years of being dragged across every speed bump between Ohio and the east coast.

The front suspension is mostly stock MGB, but with longer arms on the bottom to increase negative camber. The front brakes are an MGB big brake kit from TSI. The rear brakes are stock 4 cylinder Mustang. The rear springs are the single piece composite fiberglass ones that were available for a few years, and the axle also has a panhard rod to keep side loads from damaging the springs.

The car was built by a guy named Jim Stuart. Jim built four MGB V8 conversions, and all four are documented on the British V8 website. Jim had this one for four or five years, long enough to modify it a second time in an attempt to make it fuel injected. This didn't work and he returned it to the Edelbrock four barrel carb that it had when I got it. It changed hands a number of times before a friend bought it in about 2013. Another friend bought it from him in 2015, and then sold it to me later that year. It's not that it's built poorly, it's just that anything built from as many different types of cars as this one is going to be trouble when things go wrong. And it's difficult to get the engineering right enough to hold up long term on a car like this. Even some of the parts that are MGB specific are low production aftermarket and are not made anymore.

When I first saw it I liked many of the styling decisions made when it was built and was happy to

buy it when my friend mentioned it was not one he planned on keeping. It is comfortable and has more power than an MGB has any right having (but only a little more, not a lot more).
I have not driven it quite as far and wide as some of the other cars I own, but I did really consider taking it to Katy this year. I do need to find the right long road trip to take it on. Maybe Key West. It has been to nine states, so a trip to Florida would add at least two more, maybe as many as five or eight if I take the scenic route (Take The Long Way Home - words to live by). It has been back and forth to Richmond, Virginia quite a few times, and it was the MG I took to Louisville for the fifth All-MG meet in 2016. I had to take the yellow car to that meet as I had taken a different one to each of the previous All-MG meets. I only repeated at the last one in 2021, with the MGA (which also went to Reno). It's the only vehicle I've ever owned that will accelerate up the big hills on I-64 in West Virginia in top gear. Although the old clutch would slip when I did that. I have a better clutch now.

Even though I liked what I saw when I bought it, I have changed quite a few things since I've owned it. And repaired quite a few things also. I was able to get an aluminum gas tank from a guy in Texas who makes them from sheet aluminum, he gets custom cut. These were more widely available at one point, but when I got mine he only made a batch every couple of years. I think I

ordered at the right time, just before he did a run. I do not know if he is still making any. The tanks are "18 gallons" and I regularly put 15 gallons in when I run it low. I ran it dry on purpose once and I think I might have put 17 gallons in, but I misplaced the receipt and now I have forgotten exactly what the number was.

The tank is plumbed for a return line and I ran two new fuel lines when I put the tank in. The existing tank and existing fuel lines were modified some number of times, I presume dating back to Jim's fuel injection project. I put in one of the Holley throttle body fuel injection units that looks like a carb. It works pretty well, but it could use some tuning in a few areas still.

I've had to rebuild the motor, since the passenger side rocker shaft broke when one of the pedestal bolts pulled out of the head. Turns out the heads are not original Buick, but instead are from a Land Rover. This is both good and bad. Spare Buick heads do not exist, but Land Rover aluminum heads can occasionally have bolts pull free. When I got it, the oil filter was fitted through two adapters with one adapter allowing lines to run to an oil cooler. However, the oil adapters leaked due to the bolt holding one of the adapters together frequently getting loose. I changed to a single adapter that requires the filter to be remote, but the remote filter mount was already present from previous iterations of the oil system. The new adapter is not ideal, but it is simple and simple has advantages.

I have all the parts to reinstall the air conditioning, and I will probably do that in the next couple years. The system was never able to keep up with the engine bay heat of such a large engine, but I've built a box around the air handler and I think after I insulate the box, it might work well enough. I have put together a replacement for the blower that was lost during the tenure of previous owners, and the system was never electrically dismantled, just mechanically dismantled on the V and AC parts of HVAC.

The wheels are from a 280Z, and as it turns out not mounted with any sort of centering mechanism. I've attempted to improve this by printing custom plastic shims to keep the wheels centered while the lug nuts are tightened. These shims do also help to keep the lug washers with the lug nuts. The studs are too long on the rear wheels and rather than cutting them down when I replaced the lug nuts, I went with nuts that required three washers instead of the two that the car came with. But I am sure the nuts fit through the wheel to within less than one washer thickness of the hub flange surface. The center caps that were on the car when I got it were made from the center logo from an MGB LE wheel over the original center caps, but they were all damaged and were held together and on the car with sheet metal screws. I printed custom caps that screw onto a custom nut that fits behind the wheel. I also printed a belt buckle to match.

I printed a rear view mirror bracket as the one attached to the windshield fell off and there is evidence this happened several times through the years. I also printed brackets to cover and improve the side mirror mounts. The mirrors that came with the car were small and ugly and did not work well. The ones I have now are large and nice looking and do not work well. But they work better than the ones that were there before. Maybe more printed parts will help. I also printed a custom license plate frame that includes the name of the car 'Minion', because a friend said the color looked like Minion yellow. I also printed four color minion shaped valve stem caps. It is the only car I have named, but it is also an excuse to print custom valve stem caps. I also printed a custom shift knob with a unique shift pattern.

I've got a few other things I'm working on with the car, and I don't imagine the list will ever drop to zero. I need to cut a cover for the trunk floor as I cut a hole in the trunk floor so I could access the fuel pump hatch in the top of the fuel tank. There was already another hole in the trunk floor to accommodate the fuel injection pump installed in the original fuel tank. The hole I added has

already paid off at least twice, so no regrets there. I need to find a way to bend the shift lever so it does not rub on the side of the hole through the gearbox tunnel. Casual attempts at removing the gear lever bolts have not been successful and that project keeps getting put off.