

Member Featured Car of the month November 2012

My 1973 MGB Story

12 Nov 2012 - by Ed Wolf

Ever since I can remember, I've always been a fan of older cars. Back when I was a kid, our new 1976 Mercury station wagon was far less interesting to me than my uncle's bone stock 1954 Chevy sedan and the cloud of smoke it left behind when pulling out of our driveway. After all, the road back then was full of Ford/Mercury station wagons with the wood grain trim, but the Chevy was a true rarity. It was green, it had some rust around the edges and I'd never seen anything quite like it. Inside, it smelled like



an old musty suitcase. It was different and odd and unique. Aside from the “uniqueness” factor, my uncle was pretty lenient with the 21 year old Chevy and I can remember us kids throwing snow balls at it one winter day as it sat parked at the curb in front of our house. By contrast, we weren't allowed to eat in the Mercury wagon, or put our hands on the windows. Maybe that explains why I just prefer older cars to new ones. I don't really know.

Although I cannot remember the details of how this happened, somehow I found myself at British Car Day at Eastwood Metro Park walking up and down the rows of LBC's and saying to myself, “I need one of these”. It must have been 2008. The small displacement engines, the manual transmissions and manual door locks and windows and manual EVERYTHING! Ah, the glorious lack of circuit boards and electronic modules! Am I in heaven? The “cool” factor of these cars was off the chart. These are cars that you can actually take apart and fix without a degree in Electrical Engineering. The engines had a coil and a distributor with real spark plug wires. I was hooked.

It had been 18 years since my last convertible (1972 Cadillac Eldorado sold in 1991), and I was way overdue for another. I went online and researched the Jaguars, Triumphs and MG's and the Sunbeams and the Lotuses. After some rather unscientific data gathering and analysis of things like performance, visual appeal, reparability and affordability, the MG rose to the top of my list. In particular, a chrome-bumper MGB seemed to fit the bill. Color wasn't all that important, but preference was for a factory original color.

Off to ebay to see what was out there. Months and months (OK, more like 2 years) of checking the latest MGB listings and learning the jargon that these British car enthusiasts use. Bonnets



and boots, spanners and car parks. And who is this Lucas fellow? Sounded like someone to avoid if at all possible.

I joined the local MG club and started going to the meetings. Someone advised that I should see Steve Miller, so I stopped by his shop one afternoon. On the bulletin board at his shop was a “for sale” flyer for a tangerine-colored MGB, with

chrome bumpers. I called the number and spoke with the owner Fred (Shaneyfelt). A few days later, I stopped by Fred’s house to see it, and found it to be in very good condition. It was October 2010. The only problem was that I had to first sell my low-mileage, ultra-reliable, one-owner Honda Accord. You know, the one with automatic EVERYTHING and the myriad electronic modules to go along with it. It took me until spring the next year to finally list the Accord for sale, at which point my wife promptly concluded that I was in need of a professional psychiatric evaluation. Was I really going to sell our “garaged- since-new” Accord with 45k miles on it so that I could buy a 38 year old British two-seater with no air conditioning, no ABS and no air bags? The answer was “yes” and it seemed perfectly logical; to me, at least.

The Accord found an enthusiastic new owner in early summer, and once that transaction was settled, I was ready to give Fred a call back. His number was on a scrap of paper in my wallet, and the paper was getting worn around the edges. I hadn’t talked to Fred since the previous fall, and had no idea whether the car was still available. I called Fred and found out that his 1973 “Blaze Red” MGB was still for sale. I still think “Tangerine” is a more accurate description. We arranged for a test drive later that week. It was early July 2011, and a few short weeks later, I was showing it at BCD.

Fred bought the car from the original owner (who had named it “Gertrude” for some unknown reason) in 1998 and Fred treated it to a professional restoration, including an engine rebuild by Steve Miller. Gertrude went on the car show circuit and won a few awards, accumulating about 10k miles during Fred’s 12 years of ownership. With the car came some original documents including the original window sticker (car imported for Davis Buick in Beavercreek) and the owner’s handbook. Also included was the original Ohio license plate “SH 666”. Probably best that I found out about that after the sale was final.

It’s been over a year with the “B” and two Dayton BCD’s and about 3,500 miles driven. The car has been a real pleasure. Since buying the car, the only necessary repairs have been a new

alternator and a heater valve. Both were simple jobs that I could do myself. Aside from that, I've done one oil change, with filter. I like my old British car and drive it, always top down, whenever the weather permits, and occasionally when it doesn't. Such was the situation on the ride back from the Cincinnati BCD this past summer. But that's a whole other story. See you on the road.