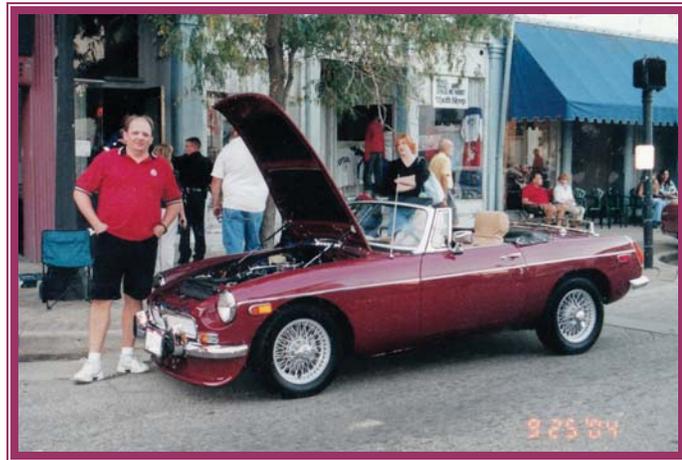


Member Featured Car of the Month Jim Franzer's '77 MGB

by Jim Franzer as interviewed by Ron Parks

I bought my '77' B in 1999, paying \$350 for it. The guy ahead of me had started the project and had replaced the driver side part of the rocker panels. It was disassembled and was in boxes. I had never driven a B before, but I did have a Midget when I was in college. Unfortunately I had to sell it to pay for tuition and books. And, like I said I had never driven a B before, but I knew I wanted something a little bigger. I saw an ad for this one in the Trading Post and my wife kind of encouraged me, since I like to putter in the garage. Part of the deal was that delivery was included for \$350. This started a five year project for restoration. I disassembled the whole thing and then rebuilt it all.



In terms of the infancy of E-Bay, I kind of got involved in E-Bay, bought and sold a bunch of parts online. Although, the car was purchased in Ohio, it has parts on it from all over the country. I bought a rear end out of Colorado. I think one of the fenders came from Washington State and another front fender came from West Virginia. I bought and sold parts all over the place.

Towards the end of the restoration, I was getting ready to rebuild the engine when a buddy at work said that he had seen in the local paper that somebody who was moving had two Bs for sale with a rebuilt engine. So, I bought two more B's right at the end, just to get the engine. This was kind of good in the fact that when I went to final assembly, I held off disassembling one of the other cars. That way I could see, after having it apart for five years, how wires were supposed to be routed and how things were put together. Even though I had taken pictures and video, it proved invaluable to have that one car semi-assembled to use as an example of how things were routed, after have been apart for so long.

Five years later, in about 2004, I went to final assembly and had my Demask Red MGB on the road in late summer of that year. I tried to get it put together for the 2004 British Car Day, but didn't make it. Some other family things were going on that put things into perspective. My Father-in-law passed away during that time, and one of my positive memories is of driving his personal effects to the funeral home in the B. This was one of its first short trips.

One of the odd things I remember from putting things back together; and if anyone ever has an electrical problem that they just can't figure out, they might check this: I put the doggone fuse box in upside down. And, if that didn't baffle me for months, in terms of what was happening. Because, you know, it can physically go on either way. I started looking at the schematics and took things apart and knowing the reputation of Lucas electrics, I had made sure everything was new, including the wiring harness. I'm not sure

what made me decide to turn the fuse block around, but I flipped that and magically, everything worked. Beware, this is an easy mistake to make, if you really don't know, there are no markings on it to tell you to flip it the other way. If you're installing it from scratch and connecting wires, it can really mess you up.

Family events have prevented my participation in British Car Day the last few years, but I'm hopeful of getting out there again, maybe next year?

This was you might say a ground off restoration, as the car was completely disassembled. I converted from the original steel disc wheels to painted wires, all the while looking to upgrade. Someday, when I have an extra thousand dollars or so, I'll put some chrome wire wheels on it. It was a 77 model and I installed lowered springs in the front and rear to bring it down to the right height. And, at that time bought, what was in its infancy, a kit from a club in Britain to convert it to chrome bumpers. I also went back to twin SUs. I had always heard about the dependability of the Weber carburetors, but I'll tell you, I got stranded on the interstate with the Weber and had it towed home. I had had Steve Miller of MG Automotive, rebuild some SUs for me about two years ago and they had been setting on the workbench ever since. Well, I thought, "The heck with it." Now I wish I would have made the conversion years ago. I've been very impressed with the HIF4 SUs. The car seems to me to run a lot better than it ever did with the Weber

Our trips in the car have been limited, as we currently have one daughter in college at Ohio State and one still in High School. When it's down to two, we'll be thinking trips, but for now we think of it as our date car. We're looking forward to being able to participate in the club's tours in the future.

I used to take my daughter to grade school in the MG on my way to work. You know, it's kind of bad when you take your car to get oooos and aaahs from grade school kids! But Hey?