

# George Chase's '1970' MG Midget

By George Chase

I first fell in love with British sports cars back in my senior year of high school. One of my friends was driving a Sunbeam Alpine (must have been a present from good old mom & dad?). My best friend was driving a '65 Sprite at the time and let me take it for a spin—well, that was it, I was hooked. Shortly after getting married, I was looking around for a sports car, but being under 25 and living in New York, the insurance was going to be a real budget stretcher.



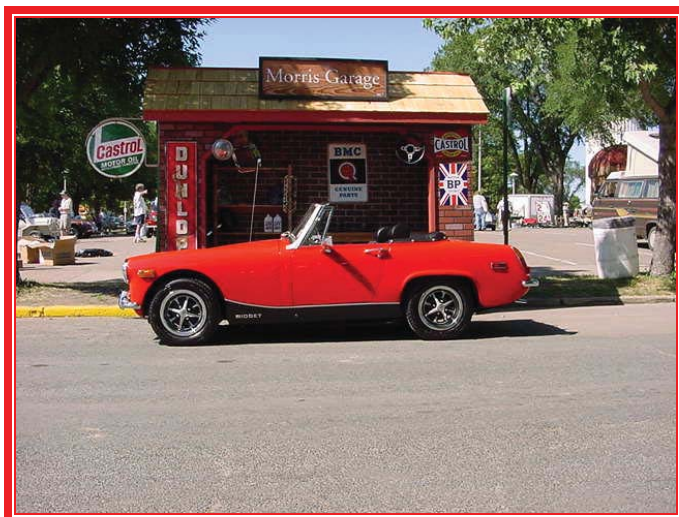
Finally settling on a used Karman Ghia convertible, I was happy with the open air thrill for a few years. Sadly that car went away and I resigned myself to the good old boring everyday ride.

In 1991, having a mid-life crisis, I started looking for a sports car again, something I could drive while playing with it. After checking the papers and looking at a bunch of pretty well used examples, I ran across a fairly descent 1970 MG Midget in northern Kentucky. The owner was convinced he had something that was going to be a valuable investment sometime down the road. After a lot of bargaining, and still paying more than I should have, the deal was done.

After picking up the key to my Midget, and adding a bottle of brake fluid to keep the pedal from sinking to the floor, I began the worst drive of my life. I-71 is not an easy drive at 6 PM on a weekday in an unfamiliar car with poor brakes, four old bias ply tires and playing dodge-em with 18 wheelers.

My first stop the next day was getting a good shop manual and a set of brake pads and shoes and lots of brake cleaner too. New spark plugs, wires, points and all got it running better. A new set of tires was in order as well as a muffler. I don't know where they came up with the muffler that was on the car? This introduced me to the all too familiar term "DPO."

The paint looked to be in fairly good condition, however quite dull from sitting outside. A can of Color Back,



some rubbing compound and a lot of elbow grease got it looking respectable again. The interior carpet was new but the door panels had a reddish tint to them due to poor masking when the car was repainted sometime in the past. A can of vinyl spray on the door panels and on the dash worked wonders. The only problem was, as they were out drying, the neighbor's cat walked across them. So, I cleaned them again and re-sprayed, this time putting them up to dry in a safe place. Covering the new fiberboard footwell pieces with padding and new vinyl, finished off the interior.

I learned about Lucas electrics and the "Prince of Darkness" quite early on. After a few drives at night with the lights going off for no reason, the task of checking wiring was quite enlightening. There were odd things done in the past (again that term "DPO" came creeping back to mind).

Sorting most things out, and feeling more comfortable in the reliability, I have been enjoying restoring and driving my MG Midget to car shows for the past 20 years. As we all know, work on these cars never ends. It is always an ongoing project! A lot has been done dressing things up, cleaning more things, re-doing past work and replacing parts that just give out over the years.

My Midget will never be a concours car, but with the help of Moss Motors, Victoria British and parts vendors at car shows and of course, tips and advice from fellow club enthusiasts; I have been able to do all the work myself except for sending the bumpers out to be re-chromed and having new throttle shafts installed in the carburetors.

