



A TALE OF TWO MG'S

1961 - 2008

BOOK ONE: 1953 MGTD

THE FIRST SEED IS PLANTED

By Dick Goodman

CHAPTER ONE:

In 1950 I was a 26 year old brand new Captain with a 4 year old daughter (guess who?) and a 2 year old son stationed near Nashville. One day in the parking lot I saw a strange looking sports car that I had never seen before. It turned out to belong to the group navigator who sat next to me. A couple of days later, coming back from lunch, I stopped him and discovered that it was a 4 seater MG YT roadster. I was intrigued. The seed was planted. I WANTED ONE.

We had just been informed that we were being transferred to Wheelus Field, Tripoli, Libya, North Africa in December. I met a recent returnee from Tripoli that told me there was a British new car dealer there that represented almost all British manufacturers and that prices were considerably lower than US prices. Wow!!! The seed had now sprouted.

During the 6 months in 1951 that I spent in Tripoli before Maurine and the kids came over, I went car shopping! The dealer had the most beautiful red 1951 TD on the floor. But a two seater. To my dismay I learned that they were no longer making 4 seaters. And I had 2 kids. (See, she was cramping my style way back then.) I ended up with a rather boring, grey 4 seat Morris Minor convertible.

CHAPTER TWO:

Jump ahead to Easter weekend 1961. We were on a family vacation in Fort Walton Beach, FL. We had picked up a newspaper so that Kathy could look for Easter church services. (See, Kathy occasionally contributes to the tale. Then, nearly 15, her interest in sports cars was nil to zero.) I was scanning the "Cars for Sale" ads (as usual) when I saw: "For Sale: 1953 MGTD, needs some mechanical repair \$400.00". I couldn't believe the price so I called to check it out. The owner was Tom Sheridan, a British civilian with the RAF contingent at Eglin AFB, FL, and as I recall he had bought it new. As you can guess there was a reason for the low price. The next weekend I found myself back in my glider pilot days in the cockpit of an MG at the end of a section of glider tow rope on our way to Montgomery, AL. I finally had my MG. It didn't run, but I had an MG.

Vital Statistics: Car No.: TD/19728

Engine No.: XPAGTD2/19950

Body Type: 22381

Body No.: 19079/93262

I have since discovered that although it was sold and registered as a 1953, it actually came off the assembly line the last work week of 1952. Consequently, it has many 1952 features such as 1952 wiring harness (no direction signals) and rectangular rather than round tail lights, and 1952 wind shield wipers.

During the ensuing several weeks, after replacing every moving engine part, it was running again. (Total cost for parts including crank shaft, cam shaft, pistons, and all other associated engine parts was \$382.08. Imagine that!!!) As might be expected the engine

wasn't the only problem. It turned out that the car had been raced in Florida and sported dented fenders, crumpled bumpers, accordion running boards, various dings, dents, etc, etc, etc. But it had an almost new Sears Roebuck top and side curtains.

In June, we were transferred back to Wright Patterson. Maurine drove the family car with Kathy and Doug and I followed in the MG. It made it all the way to the north side of Cincinnati before the fuel pump died. So, back at the end of the glider tow rope for the remainder of the trip to Fairborn.

CHAPTER THREE:

Since we had sold our second car to buy the MG, it became my daily driver – summer and winter and boy were they unfriendly winters. Incidentally, the MGTD is a terrific handling car in the snow and it had a heater.



Off to work we go.

Circa 1967

It also had a hole in the muffler. I wrapped it with asbestos tape held in place by a three pound coffee can, secured further with baling wire. We had some good friends with a three year old daughter. As you might expect she could hear me coming for some distance and would announce “Uncle Ick’s DeeDee Car”. The nickname stuck and it is still the DeeDee car to the family. The throaty rumble accentuated by the muffler repairs was also my first introduction to the Fairborn police department. No citations were ever issued but it was strongly suggested that I get into a higher gear with less rpm as quickly as possible. Occasionally a new officer would not have gotten the word and history would repeat itself.

Time and money (I had two teenagers by this time and a mortgage) prevented anything but the most necessary repairs from being made. I just had to keep it running so I could get to work.

For example, in 1962, I had to completely overhaul the transmission because of stripped 2nd gear. Carefully following the explicit instructions found in the MG Midget Workshop Manual (at that time all T series were called Midgets), son Doug and I removed the engine and transmission. Disassembly of the transmission is a fairly straight forward procedure. Putting it back together again is a different story. In typical British fashion the Workshop instructions are “reassemble in reverse order of disassembly”. This lack of detailed reassembly instructions is further complicated by numerous factory modifications to the transmission over the years, such as incased bearings being replaced by needle bearings and then later back to incased bearings and other complicated modifications. You can only decipher the instructions by knowing the serial number of the transmission you are working on and by tracing the order of modifications as outlined in the disassembly section of the manual. This scenario is a perfect breeding ground for a severe case of ulcers. Solution: let your fingers do the walking. We were fortunate enough to be put in touch with a mechanic who was considered to be the top expert on British drive trains. He agreed to take our boxes of transmission parts and put it back into working order. Total cost including parts (new cluster gear, clutch, bearings, etc.) was \$193.11. This transmission is still performing beautifully, without problems, today.

In 1963, I was sent on a 13 month vacation, courtesy of Uncle Sam, to South Korea and the family stayed in Fairborn. Since this was the DeeDee car, it stayed on blocks in the one car garage and the family Pontiac sat in the driveway in the snow and ice. Nothing has changed, this past winter it was in the garage and my El Camino was in the driveway.

Christmas of 1963, while still in Korea, the family gave me new upholstery for the seats. These were installed after I got back in 1964. With the inside now looking spiffy, I took the car to Hilltop garage north of Donaldsville and had some of the major body work that had been neglected up to now done. The accordion pleated bumpers that were a hangover from its racing days were finally straightened and rechromed

In 1965, my son with a brand new driver's license and a minimum of instruction on driving a TD decided to take a friend for a ride. They walked back to the house. He popped the clutch on a jack rabbit start and broke a rear axle.

From 1965 to 1968 the TD was still my daily driver with no major problems.

In 1968, I was being reassigned to an embassy job in South America, so we stored the TD in a barn outside of Fairborn. Because of unforeseen circumstances, South America became Alexandria, Louisiana. Well, they're both hot and humid and both speak a foreign language. After my experience driving it north from the South in 1961 I was not about to drive it back South again. With the help of a friend with a car trailer, I got it to Louisiana.

After its long sleep in the barn in Ohio the brakes needed a complete overhaul which was accomplished on the back patio without major problems. After it was back in commission, another major problem reared its ugly head. Initially believing that it was a starter problem, it turned out that several teeth in the ring gear on the fly wheel were chewed up. So as a result over the next couple of months the TD took another nap while I sweated on a new ring gear to the fly wheel and rebuilt the clutch. While everything was apart, I discovered that somewhere in its life someone, being unaware of another one of those pesky factory modifications, had installed the wrong size clutch plate.

CHAPTER FOUR

In 1970 I retired from the Air Force and Maurine and I ended up back in Ohio. In the summer 1971 the TD was taken out of storage in Louisiana and had a comfortable ride in a U haul back to Beavercreek. Side note: the TD was ½" wider than the door opening on the U haul. Bet you didn't know that a large pipe wrench will widened the door jamb just enough to get a TD through it. It spent the next 3 years on the patio - on blocks, engine pickled, and covered with a tarp.

CHAPTER FIVE

From 1974 to June 1978, the TD occupied the entire 20 by 22 foot garage on Apricot Drive while it suffered through a complete off frame restoration including, but not limited to the following: removable of all of its parts, except for its frame, engine, drive train, and rear axle. These parts graced the garage walls and many hung from the ceiling. All the sheet metal was sand blasted by Imperial Auto Repair in Beavercreek. The day before Thanksgiving, 1975, a panic call came from Imperial that he had just finished sand blasting all of the sheet metal. It was PORING RAIN. Needless to say to prevent immediate rusting action all sand blasted parts had to be protected, so I spent the that entire day until the early morning hours of Thanksgiving day applying an acid etcher and a coat of primer to all the parts. Note: Do not attempt this in a closed garage. I experienced in the highest high and fiercest hangover of my life.



Disassembled MGTD circa 1974.

Red arrow points to the body tub and cowl

Complete with windshield

During 1976, the entire braking system was rebuilt, including brake drums turned, new wheel cylinders, replacement of all brake lines (including the steel lines), and the master cylinder. In addition, new fuel lines and complete exhaust system were installed. During this time, in my spare time, the frame and attached hardware were stripped and repainted (with the garage door open this time. I do learn from my mistakes). By the way, black rust-o-leum in a spray can is much cheaper and more durable than using high priced body finishes. If you don't believe it, look under the TD the next time you see it, it still looks just like it did the day I put it on, and still no rust or peeling.



*This is the configuration of the TD when
I performed the test drives circa 1977*

During 1977, the body, tub, and cowl were painted and reinstalled. Since it had a 1952 wiring harness with no provision for direction signals, I updated it with a new 1953 harness. I painted and installed gas tank, doors, and several wood body pieces. The front axle and steering system were installed and the final hook up of electrical system was made and checked out for operation. The wheels were sand blasted and painted. New tires were installed. The side curtain bin, rear body wheel arches and rocker panels were restored. Since in 1977 these items were not available either as new or replacement parts my solution to deal with the severe rust damage was to sandwich the damaged pieces between layers of fiber glass to keep the rust from spreading. I installed new body upholstery and new marine plywood floor boards. Reassembly finally reached the point where I could test drive the car to adjust the brakes, check engine operation, fine tune timing, distributor, and carburetors. The next step was to paint and install the front fenders, running boards, head lights, all new rubber trim pieces, rechromed windshield, door latches, etc.

June 7, 1978 new carpet was installed and, finally it was time for the christening. Restoration complete. 34 months, probably several pints of blood, a few gallons of sweat and more than a few tears. I couldn't have done it without the complete support and constant encouragement of my very loving, understanding wife Maurine. Kathy's understanding, support, and her talented extra pair of hands would have been more than welcome during this restoration. But she had flown the coop and relocated to the East Coast. Cost????? I have never added up the dollars or attempted to add up the man hours. I didn't know then nor do I want to know now.



I thought I had a winner!!!

Fall of 1978

On the Fourth of July, 1983 I met John Lucenti and John Zeno at the Greene County Fairgrounds car show where they were displaying their MG's. I had no idea at the time that there was anything like the MG car club in the area. They encouraged me to join the club and start coming to the meetings. I was selling real estate at the time and my schedule was so erratic that I did not actually get around to joining until 1987. Maurine and I did attend the yearly picnics during this time. In fact the first time I remember driving the TD to the picnic was the one held at Hunter's Lodge at Wright Field. If you remember what year that was fill it in.



Did only TD's make it to this picnic?

After formally joining the club in 1987 my interest in club activities increased to the point that I started attending meetings more regularly and driving the TD to functions that were within comfortable (for a TD) driving distance (read 10 miles which means BCD). I have always said that if you drive over a wire in a TD I can tell you the gauge. Now it seems that as the car is getting older it likes to have company and transfers every creak and every groan to my body. I'm not getting older the car is.

Since joining the club and attending numerous car shows, I became very aware that albeit well intentioned my restoration was not really finished. Over the ensuing years I gradually worked toward upgrading the car to the next level. I replaced the Christmas naugahide upholstery with new leather upholstery, replaced carpeting, new or rechromed hubcaps, a stainless steel exhaust, etc.

In 2007, feeling that I was really neglecting the DeeDee car in favor of the newer LE, I began updating the 30 year old restoration. Up close those tattle tale, spider web craze marks along with a few nicks were beginning to show, so I removed the sheet metal from the windshield forward and had it stripped and repainted. While they were off, I had the radiator, bumper, and overriders rechromed and cleaned and touched up the engine.



Reassembly begins

Early 2007

So far In 2008 I have replaced one running board and restored the other including new step strips. In the near future I plan to have the rear sheet metal stripped and repainted. Please note that I am now, at the insistence of my doctors, contracting out all paint related restoration activities. Other than the few exceptions noted above I have done all the work on this car myself with a little help from my friends and, of course, Kathy. And speaking of Kathy, stay tuned for Book 2, THE SECOND SEED IS PLANTED.



We have a WINNER!!!

May 2008