

Member Featured Car of the Month June 2010 Jeff Fields' 49 MG TC

by Jeff Fields as interviewed by Ron Parks

I had gone with my Grandparents and a cousin to the east side of Cleveland's Madison-on-the-Lake in about 1953. We thought it was going to be all fun and games, and it turns out here are two pre-teenagers with everybody else one or two generations older; a bunch of old people with their summer cottages. The only good thing was that my Grandmother liked to gamble a few dollars, so we would go to Geneva-on-the-Lake every day so she could play bingo or whatever the game of the day was and we were free to run around playing arcade games and things like that. Well, one day--I saw go past our arcade place, a green MG TC with some longhaired blond driving it and that was it. I was hooked!



It so happened a day or two later, it rained and my Grandmother took us to the 5 & Dime and we were both allowed to buy a model. Well, the model I bought, and I'm looking at what I think is the same box, it turns out is a TD; they just called it an MG. It was right hand drive and there's shorthaired blond driving it. My cousin bought an airplane instead. I put that model MG TD together that day and that hook was buried deep.

Regarding my purchase of real MGs, I bought the MGA in 81 and within three or four years I bought my MGC GT and then in another three or four years in the late eighties and early nineties I started seriously looking for an MG TC. I joined the Ohio Chapter and the New England Register, I started showing up at Ohio Chapter meetings in my MGA, wearing a sign saying, "Seeking unrestored unfinished restoration MG TC fairly priced." People would laugh at me, but at least I got people talking. I did that for a year or two with very little luck. Any car that was available was finished and way out of my price range. Then I came home from school one day on a Thursday or a Friday, I'm a now retired sixth grade school teacher, and I stopped at the mailbox—there was my Hemmings. As I had my pay check and was going to the bank anyway, while I was sitting in bank drive-through waiting my turn I spotted an ad



in my Hemmings for a '46' MG TC, that I can afford. It is located in Indiana. I am four blocks from my Mother's house. I get out of line, tear down the street to my Mother's house, dial the number as fast as I can and a gentleman answers the phone. And, I say, "I'm extremely interested in your TC, I would like to send you a deposit, if what you tell me fits my needs, tell me about your TC." His reply was, "Sir, I'm sorry it is sold, I've already cashed the man's check for the car." He lives in Vermont; he goes to the publisher of Hemmings every month and gets a copy right off the press before they are mailed. I said, "How can I beat that?" I was very depressed, and, of course I did not get to cash my pay check that day because the bank was now closed.

So, in my state of depression I said Ok, I'm going to bite the bullet and for one year; I'm going to subscribe to Hemmings via First Class mail. This was in 1990 so there was nothing like E-bay or anything like that and email and the internet were still in with academia and had not hit the general public. This was in September of 1990. So, October through July, I did not make one phone call from Hemmings. I got Hemmings First Class and did not call about one TC for all those months. So, I was beginning to think a TC was not in my future; maybe everything is going against me? Then in July, I decided there was only one thing left to do, and that is to put and wanted ad in Hemmings that comes out in August.

Well, a fellow calls me and says, "I think I have your TC." I replied, "Sir, you've got to give me the details, because I am so frustrated at this point, I can't believe it." He tells me about this TC. He tells me the price. And, then he tells me, "I'm in Bolivar Ohio." I have an MGA friend at the time, who lives in Bolivar, Ohio. The car is one mile from my friend's house. So I say, "Sir, you are correct, you may very well have my TC?" Now, I had always dreamed of having a '46' TC to be the same age as I am. This one turns out to be a 49 EXU, but I'm at the point where I've got to give something up to get my TC! I called my friend Tom Baumgardner, and arranged a time we could go look at this car and get his opinion. The fellow who was selling the car was packing up to move and was either selling the car or storing it. He said that if he stored the car he would move it in a year, because he was moving to the desert southwest. The car was literally all apart; it was three colors—it was black, red and primer. This guy had bought it a couple of years earlier from a gentlemen who had wanted to build a red TC with black interior, which was not factory. Anyway, we saw everything; he pulled parts out of the attic above the garage and he realized that Tom & I wanted to talk, so he says, "Who wants a cup of coffee or something to drink, I'll be right back." He very politely left us alone to talk. Tom gets about three inches from me and says, "If you don't buy this car today, I will. And, I will have sold it again in a month and I will have made money." So, I go, "Oh, I guess I just bought a TC." So, we



agreed on a price and I bought the car. My son, who was thirteen at the time, and I went to pick up the car a couple of days later, towing a trailer behind the mini-van. We rolled the chassis onto the trailer and loaded everything else into the mini-van and took the car home.

Since I went into debt to buy this car, it sat for the next couple of years. A friend told me that



when I got the money for the motor, he had the motor man for me. So, I refereed every basketball game I could throughout the summer and winter to earn extra money for the engine rebuild, done by a man in Cleveland, with whom I've remained close ever since.

Now for the body work and paint—I met a young man who was a professional body and paint man who had just built an MGA for his finance'. I looked at this MGA and I looked at this paint work and I said, "I've got a car I want you to look at, cause I've got a car I want you to paint." He said,"Yah, no problem." He came and looked at the car, we went to a couple more meets together and then I once again called on my friend Tom Bumgarner. I asked Tom to come to my house to listen to what this guy says, etc. etc. He gave me a price that neither one of us could believe. I did not have to even look at Tom to know if I should make this deal or not; for him to paint this car and reassemble the body for me. He fell in love with the car along the way while he was painting it one winter. I'm very pleased with the way it turned out!

I decided to do something different with the gauges and I just sent them to a place in Cleveland. I went to Greg Seabrook's and picked out my dashboard. I did a Moss interior and top through Dave Zip when those things were on sale. This all took a few years after which I drove it the first couple of months with no windshield and with the Model A tires that had come on it. It was still in this condition when I tailored it on its first outing to John Twist's University Motors Summer Party in Grand Rapids Michigan



in 2005, where it took a sixth place ribbon. Not even a plaque. It beat some completed cars that showed up late. Anyway, since then it has done well in local and out of town shows with a windshield and proper tires. I drove it trouble free to GOF Central in Auburn Indiana in 2008 in a caravan of other Ohio Chapter members. In 2009, the car receive awards of excellence against stiff competition at the British Car Meet at the 2nd Street Market and the 25th Annual British Car Day; both in

Dayton Ohio. It received the Best in Class award at the Columbus Ohio Show last year as well. I continue to enjoy driving my MG TC.

When the fellow who painted my car would come over to my house to help me hang fenders, running boards, etc., he would bring his five year old daughter, who would play with our dog, throwing a ball in the yard and running around. She had been here three or four times and that next time she came over her Dad opened the half door of his cab and ½ pickup truck to let her out and she was grinning from ear to ear. Her Dad, a very mild-mannered, soft-spoken sort of guy who smiles a little bit more than normal, said, “You’d better tell him! You’d better tell him!” Well, she looks at me, looks at him, looks at the car, looks back at him and looks at me and says; “Your steering wheel is on the wrong side!” I played along with it saying that it was terrible, we would have to tear the whole car apart; I really played it up and she was laughing to beat the band. Maybe that next generation will be interested in our hobby? TC 9976exu is BRG with biscuit and has done about 5,000 miles with me behind the wheel.

