

Member Car of the Month...

Steve Markman's 1950 MG TD

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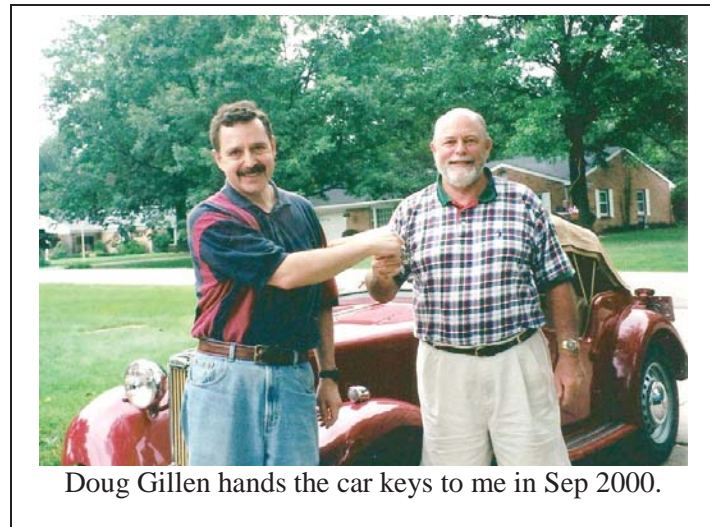
I've never been a car guy, so I really cannot tell you where, when, or why I fell in love with the MG TD, just that I've always wanted one. By the late 1990s, I started thinking seriously, not for a real one, but a kit car. I never realized that real TDs were both available and affordable, so was mentally planning out a five-year project to build a replica. After months of internet searches, I finally found the Canadian company that made the fiberglass conversion kits. I also found dozens of ads for TDs, and shifted my thinking away from a fake one to the real thing (BTW – I figured it'd cost me about \$10,000 or more to build the kit version, but completed ones that were for sale seldom went for over \$5,000).



My favorite picture, taken at the 2nd St Market in May 2004.

I attended my first British Car Day in 2000. Upon finding the row of TD's, I asked one proud owner how I could buy one. He directed me to a distinguished gentleman in a straw hat standing next to his red TD, who he said was the president of the MG Club. This was how I met Phil Johnson. I repeated the question to Phil, who told me the best thing to do is to join the club, since members usually know of any TDs that come on the market locally.

Within a few months, Phil got me in touch with former member Ernie Streifthau, who knew of a TD for sale in Franklin. It'd been completely restored by former club member Doug Gillen. Doug had been an



Doug Gillen hands the car keys to me in Sep 2000.

active member for many years, but his wife had had a hip replacement a few years earlier and now found it too difficult to get in and out of the TD. Doug continued driving to events by himself, but said it wasn't as much fun without his wife, so decided to sell the car. He hadn't advertised it, but figured he'd part with it when the right person came along. I guess I was that person.

The car's original owner was a doctor in Atlanta. By the late 60s, he sold it to someone in Portsmouth, Ohio. It sat in a barn for the next twenty years. Doug bought it and spent about six years

restoring it. (BTW, Doug gave me the name of the original owner, now long deceased. On a hunch one night, I looked up the name and found a doctor with the same name, but Junior, in Atlanta, possibly his son. I called and got a fax machine. I should try again one of these days.)

I drove the car home in September, 2000, only a few days short of what I eventually learned was its 50th birthday. I was too embarrassed to tell Doug that I never actually had driven a TD. He probably was shaking his head as I drove off, wondering if he'd made the right decision as he watched me trying to shift. The first thing that I learned was not to wear wide athletic shoes when driving a TD (you step on your own feet a lot). The next thing I learned while driving the car home was that a lot of nice-looking women you don't even know smile and wave (maybe they were thinking 'Doesn't the dumb s--t even know how to drive a stick?').

While Doug had to replace the wood frame and interior with modern reproductions, all the sheet metal was original. The engine and transmission also were original, although having been overhauled over the years, which is to be expected. The engine and body numbers match. One of the things I liked about Doug's restoration is that it was very authentic. The only changes he made from original were installing red, instead of factory-standard black carpet, adapting the engine to take a modern spin-on oil filter, replacing the vinyl on the dash with mahogany, and painting the car red, instead of its original green (since he already owned a green TD).

I've only made a few upgrades to the car in the nine years I've owned it. The first was to add seat belts, as I never felt comfortable without them. The belts have tan webbing to match the interior, and chrome latches. They look completely period-appropriate and I carefully cross them over the seats for car shows. Next came a temperature gauge a few years later (the 1950 model didn't have one). I placed it on the bottom edge of the dash where I could remove it easily for shows where the judges might know that it's not correct. The last upgrade came only last summer, when I replaced my Dunlop bias-ply tires with Kumho radials. The difference in ride and handling is incredible! The car feels like it is twice as heavy and twice as wide; it really hugs the road.



Seat belts neatly placed for display. Note the temperature gauge on the bottom of the dash, just left of the steering wheel.

After having owned my TD for nine years, I love it as much as the day I first saw it. I do five or six car shows each summer. While I don't drive it great distances, I still love taking it out on hilly, winding country roads and just having fun.