

Member Featured Car of the Month

Ryan Looft's 1965 MG 1100

"Third Time is a Charm"

By Terry & Carole Looft

Third time is a reference to how many times we have put the new engine into Ryan's MG 1100.

First a little backstory. Carole and I first saw this little 1100 in San Diego during MG 2017. Carole and I drove our MG's along with 2 other club members to the MGA GT in Solvang and then down to San Diego for the MGB National. Carole was in her 78 B, me in my 76 V8, Dar in his 58 MGA and Kathy in her 80 LE. A nice little 6500 mile, 3 and ½ week trip. We did have a ball.

We had a great visit with the owner of the pretty little blue and white 65 MG 1100. We talked about our affection for these little cars; about the ones we have and how we enjoy them.



Very little thought was given to that MG 1100 after our return. But a couple years later we heard from the owner who was looking to sell his MG 1100? If you know us, you know we rarely turn down an offer for another car. Thinking, we really do not need yet another MG 1100. We thought how about our son Ryan? He also has a real affection for these cars. He has owned his other 1100 since his teen years. He also has the same problem that he can't turn down a car. A deal was made and we set up a time to go retrieve it. Easy trip, just drive from Ohio with a tow dolly and tow the car home. No problem! Maybe that's another story for yet another time. But not here.

Jumping ahead to the Atlantic City all MG meet in 2021, we drove 3 family MG 1100s to that show. Needless to say, we had the 1100 class pretty much locked up.



There were some issues that showed up with this 1100 and we decided that we would go ahead and do sort of a mini restoration on the car. We mostly concentrated on the engine compartment, and anything else needed. As it happened, the owner had also given us a 1300 unit to eventually go into the car and we thought this would be a good time to rebuild the 1300 and gearbox. We decided to do an upgrade on the car making it a MG 1300 out of it.

We proceeded with this plan, including an all-new interior. We rebuilt the engine and gearbox. It was just a 3-synchro box, but that's what we were kind of used to anyway. I did up the final drive to be more suitable for the 1275 engine, making it more of an interstate cruising car.

Engine Installation #1

The engine, gearbox and everything else was gorgeous. All was rebuilt, painted and detailed to perfection. The engine started up instantly, sounded wonderful for about 4 seconds, and then the oil filter blew up. Oil hit the ceiling, hit the floor and us. What a mess! What the hell was going on? It blew the gasket right out of the filter. We put a new oil filter on it, double checked everything and all looked good. Fired it up and it did exactly the same thing. Okay, something was wrong. We checked the pressure relief valve, we looked at everything and just did not see anything wrong. So, we gave it a third try. Well, I don't have to tell you what happened.

So now we are really puzzled and mildly depressed. We are trying to figure out what's going on. We had put on a spin on oil filter kit. Is this the problem? So, I'm on the phone with Kelvin at Moss asking what's going on? Why is this happening?

He said, there have been no issues with the oil filter, and then he threw out something that made me wonder. He asked how many oil gallery plugs did they put in? He had heard of there being an extra one put in that should not be there. One being the outlet for the oil bypass from the regulator into the crank case. Could it be? So, I acquired a good quality very tiny borescope. I ran that into the oil pressure relief hole, then hooked a 90 down toward the sump. I took a look; it sure looked like a plug down at the bottom. The solution, pull the engine gearbox once again out of the car. We separated the engine from the gearbox and sure enough, there was a plug in the hole that shouldn't have been there.

Engine Installation #2

We recovered from that mess. Got the engine carefully reinstalled back into the car. Everything was still perfect, and we didn't even scratch the paint. We started the car and it ran perfectly. Everything was great. We took it for a test drive to see how the new gearbox engine performed. Both worked perfectly. It shifted nicely and smoothly through all the gears. The clutch worked good with proper take up and the engine sounded good with good temperatures. We were quite pleased with it. I put about 25 or 30 miles on the car. Everything was great. We handed the car

over to Ryan and said, here, drive it to break in the engine. After a period of time, which was not very many more miles, like maybe 10, he called. He said, you know, it's catching some teeth going into fourth gear. I'm getting some grinding for some reason. This can't be, it had worked perfectly. The clutch throw was good; everything is just the way it should be. So, I decided to drive the car to see how it was acting. Well, winter was on us so we ended up putting the car in storage and pulling it out this spring and I started driving the car. After just a couple of miles, yes, it was catching a little tooth on a shift. But only fourth gear. Within about another 10 miles, I couldn't even get it to go into fourth gear. It would only grind. What has happened to the synchronizer, it is not working at all. The synchronizer was brand new, which may be part of the problem with the parts supply these days. Or a real possibility, what did I screw up? Everything else seemed okay, except it wouldn't go into fourth gear. Well, gosh, we're getting really good at this. Let's pull the engine and transmission out again and see what's wrong. In the meantime, I'm thinking, I don't want to tear into this transmission again. We're just out of time with all the other projects. But I've got a really nice 4 synchro gearbox that I have actually driven before. It was removed from another car for restoration. I'll just give Ryan that gearbox.

Engine Installation #3

That we did. We swapped the gearbox, final drive with all the bits. All the things necessary to make it all fit into his car. I test drove it today and it was working great. Everything is fine, for now. I took it over to Ryan's house and he took it for a drive. As far as what happened to the other gearbox, I don't know. I don't have time to investigate it, but his car is working great. And hopefully will last a long time.



Tech tip, trust the machine shop, but verify. It's just one of those things you never would have thought of looking at. Unless you were really, really familiar with the car in the first place. Most of us don't do maybe an engine overhaul a year possibly. And this was the first one on the MG 1100 for me. I'm sure it won't be the last.

And thank you to Carole, I could not do this level of work and detail without her. It's truly a team effort doing these cars that we love so much.

Terry & Carole