

THE CLEAR HOOTER!

THE NEWSLETTER OF CENTRAL COAST TRIUMPHS
ALL BRITISH CAR CLUB



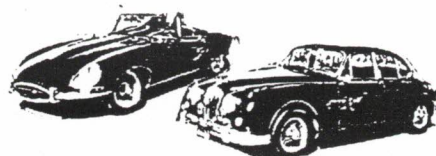
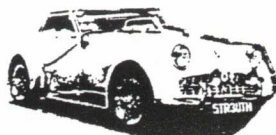
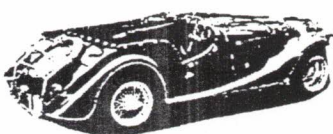
GENERAL MEETING ATTENDEES

JULY 5th 1995

Name	Driving
Howard & Tricia Ashe	'74 TR6
Daryll & Cindy Clark	'69 Ford Mustang
Al & Jessie Calvin	Woolsley
Bill Czerwinski	'69 Morris Minor
Claudia Diebolt	'91 Honda
Michael Doyle	Porche 914
Richard E Doyle	'63 Sprite
Don Greene & Susan Raty	TR-Volvo
Tricia & Jim Gray	'95 Chevy Lumina Van
James R Karlsen	'88 Jaguar XJS
George Kinsolving	'70 MGB
Bob Klope	'70 Nova
Jon Korbin	TR3A
Jim Lester	'89 Subaru
David McIlhaney	'69 TR6
Lee Maxwell	'86 XJ6
Tim Mikel	Jaguar Mark II
Craig Newswanger & Sally Weber	Bugeye Sprite
Harvey & Marilou North	'89 TRysler
Ellen Quinenoz	Honda
C Darryl Struth	'63 Morgan +4
Jeffrey A Truttman	Mac Truck
Herman & Helena van den Akker	Astro Van

VOLUME 12, NO. VII

JULY 1995



CENTRAL COAST TRIUMPHS
ALL BRITISH CAR CLUB

FOUNDED in 1984 by Ms Lee Blomquist

A Chapter of the Vintage Triumph Register. Dues are \$20.00 per year payable in February to:

CCT All British Car Club
P O Box 503
Ventura CA 93002

1995 BOARD MEMBERS/OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT

C Darryl Struth (h) 805-644-6211
(w) 805-656-3673

VICE-PRESIDENT

Jane McIlhaney 805-642-4441

TREASURER

Don Greene 805-652-0330

SECRETARY

Tom & Teri 805-987-4629
Crawford

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

David McIlhaney (h) 805-642-4441
(w) 805-982-7937

EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR

Daryll & Cindy 818-887-5518
Clark

VOLUNTARY POSITIONS

HISTORIAN Position Open

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Susan Raty 805-641-2607

AD CHAIRMAN
Tim Mikel (h) 805-644-8690
(w) 805-643-5621

MEETING INFORMATION

MONTHLY GENERAL MEETINGS:

FIRST WEDNESDAY EACH MONTH

7:00 pm

HUDSON'S GRILL

4722 Telephone Road
Ventura CA
Ph 805-642-4349

1995 Meetings			
Jan	11	Feb	01
Mar	01	Apr	05
May	03	Jun	07
Jul	05	<u>AUG</u>	<u>02 !!</u>
Sep	06	Oct	04
Nov	01	Dec	06

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS are currently held SECOND WEDNESDAY of each month. MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND! Call one of the officers for Board Meeting location.

"THE CLEAR HOOTER" is published monthly.

DEADLINE for "CAMERA READY" contributions to the newsletter is the TUESDAY FOLLOWING THE GENERAL MEETING. Mail to Club's P.O. Box or contact any one of the officers.

FOR NEWSLETTER CLASSIFIEDS, contact Susan Raty (805-641-2607) or send to:

CCT All British Car Club
P O Box 503
Ventura CA 93002
* * * * *

HAVE YOU MOVED????
PLEASE LET US KNOW!!

EDIT . . . er, THAT'S ME!

If you are unable, for whatever reason, to attend our Monthly Meetings, we hope that this newsletter publication of the 'Clear Hooter' is keeping you up-to-date with the Club's activities.

Recent meetings have brought a pleasant surprise with attendance from new members and members who have surfaced from their garages! I do believe there are about 20+ new members to the Club since February. With some assistance from our Membership Chairperson (hint, hint), I will soon pay special tribute to those new members in an upcoming newsletter issue. If anyone of you would like to submit a personal article on how you became interested in British Cars, I would welcome the opportunity to add this to our newsletter! PLEASE SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS (ANY & ALL YOU MEMBERS OUT THERE!) TO OUR CLUB'S ADDRESS SHOWN IN THE INSIDE COVER PAGE.

Now that the Summer months are gearing down, we look forward a few remaining events. Next up will be the Santa Paula Air and Car Show on 12 & 13 August. See you there???



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another great turnout at the July meeting, but enough about that. Please read the minutes.

I think it's about time we get back to doing our Sunday brunch runs. With this kind of weather (finally) we should be out and about more, around these beautiful Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. If someone in the Club wishes to contact a restaurant in a quaint setting and plan a small, easy drive, please let me know. Better yet, call Daryll and Cindy Clark, our Events Chairpeople.

This month we're getting the double whammy with Moss's Flag Is Up Farms Festival and the North and South Morgan Clubs with MogWest '95 in Cambria, both on the same weekend.

Don Greene, Susan, Claudia and I were talking about another Wine Tour in the Paso Robles area and inviting the Bakersfield British Car Club, TRSC, SCTOA and both North and South Morgan Clubs, the Austin Healey Club, South Coast and the Triumph Travelers all meeting at a nice hotel for a weekend event later in the year. What do you think?

Oh, did I mention that I bought a 1969 Land Rover, 88 Series II-A?...which will be justified by my closing quote:

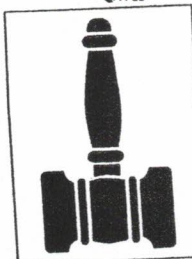
"The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything."

- Theodore Roosevelt

Keep 'em running . . .

C. Darryl Struth

C DARRYL STRUTH

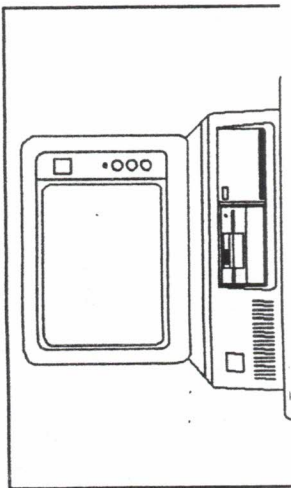


SWEATSHIRTS



• ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PURCHASING A 1995 VENTURA ALL BRITISH CAR SHOW SWEATSHIRT?

- THEY ARE \$20 EACH.
- PLEASE CALL CLAUDIA
- (805) 642-5855 TO ORDER
- (WE NEED A MIN. OF 15 MORE TO ORDER)



July Minutes

The July meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by President C. Darryl Struth. Everyone introduced themselves along with 2 new members.

What's coming up? Moss Festival at Flags Up Farms in Buclton, MogWest and the Santa Paula Citrus Festival. Read the calendar of events for more dates and times.

Treasurers report; Don Greene reports that there is \$4739.58 in the working fund and better than \$1600 in the savings account. A \$500 check was sent to Will Rogers School for the Ventura All British Car Show that was held in May.

David McIlhaney, our Membership Chairman, reports that there are over 100 active members in our club. He also reminded us that there are still T-shirts for sale. Member shirts are \$15 or 2 for \$25 and the 1994 car show shirts are on sale for \$10.

Advertising Chairman, Tim Mikel, reported that there are 2 new advertisers, Moss Motors and XK's Unlimited.

Bob Klope talked about the upcoming Triumphfest in Palm Springs. He needs help with the checkpoints of the rallye. Please call him if you are able to help. Get your reservations made now as the hotel is closed for the month of Aug.

Mark your calendar. Teddy Bear Run is Nov. 5th. and the Christmas party is Dec. 9th. at the Glen Tavern Inn in Santa Paula.

Ron Kibbe was awarded a plaque for his outstanding dedication as president in 1994.

Mike Doyle, son of member Richard Doyle, talked about Centerplex and the plans to include a car museum and racing.

Don't forget to fill out, and return to David, your updated application. It's critical that he gets this soon. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Claudia (filling in for Tom and Terri)

Claudia

We were blasting down the freeway, late in the evening, the road was completely deserted, and Frank, not altogether uncharacteristically, had taken to expounding on his lack of kind feelings for the French, French waiters, French hotels, French poodles, and just about everything else in France. I, however, like the French, but no matter, he was charged up and venting great explications and hostilities. There came a pause in the dissertation, a kilometer or so went by, and Frank began to tug on the shoulder strap of his seat belt.

"This don't work," he so eloquently stated. (Frank is from Manhattan). G D French can't even make a seat belt that works." (tug, tug).

"Frank, it's English" I offered.
 "Don't matter," he said, "the French probably bought the car from England then added the crummy seat belts. Besides, since when do the English use seat belts?" (tug, tug). "G D thing don't work".

"Frank" says I, "they work on a different principle here, so many Gs have to be involved for the brake to set."

"Don't matter, the G D thing probably wouldn't work anyway!"

Well having had just about enough, both to drink, and of Frank, I helpfully offered, "You wanna see it work?"
 Pause... "Yeah!"

So at 75 mph, I stood on the brakes.
 I was restrained by my grip on the wheel, but Frank catapulted forward, only to be caught in mid flight by the belt. Eyes bulging, tongue out. Too surprised to yell. Hanging in space like a fly caught in a web. I downshifted hard and floored it. The acceleration slammed him into the seat, and for a long while he was really quiet. I was smiling slightly, enjoying the proof of my theory. We drove in silence for a few more kilometers, then, in a manner indicative of the highly skilled and inquisitive rocket scientist that he was, Frank says, "Let's see that again". **WRAM!!** I obliged immediately.

The next morning, a Sunday, I was in the Hotel dining room recovering from the joys of the evening over an incredibly thick cup of cafe' o lait and a day old hard roll (bakeries being closed on Sundays). Only slightly enjoying this marginal hangover cure and contemplating the possibilities of a new day, I looked toward the door and in comes Frank, holding his shoulder. He sits down, pauses for a minute and says "Howard, did we get in a fight somewhere last night?"

"No" I said, "Why?"

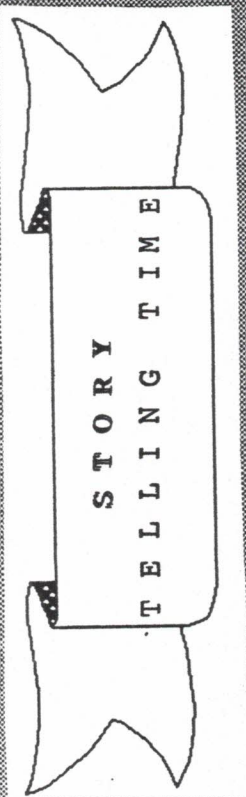
"My shoulder, it's all bruised, I've got bruises all across my chest. I'm hurtin' all over. What the Hell happened?"

"Ah" I offered, "We don't remember the seat belt check?"

"The seat belt check?" says Frank.

"The seat belt check" I confirmed.

"Oh right" says Frank, "...and then he was quiet again, for a long time."



Mr. Toads' Wild Ride

by Howard Ashe, 7/95

Was there ever such an energetic, high performance compact little bomb to equal the Austin Mini? Those who have had the opportunity to drive or ride in one of the European versions, undiluted and unincumbered with limitations placed on the American versions, would surely agree that it would be hard to pack any more fun and power into such a tight little box. If you ever happened to have the pleasure of riding in one driven by a young, beautiful, French maniac at 120 kph through city streets, you have an appreciation for the term "white knuckle experience".

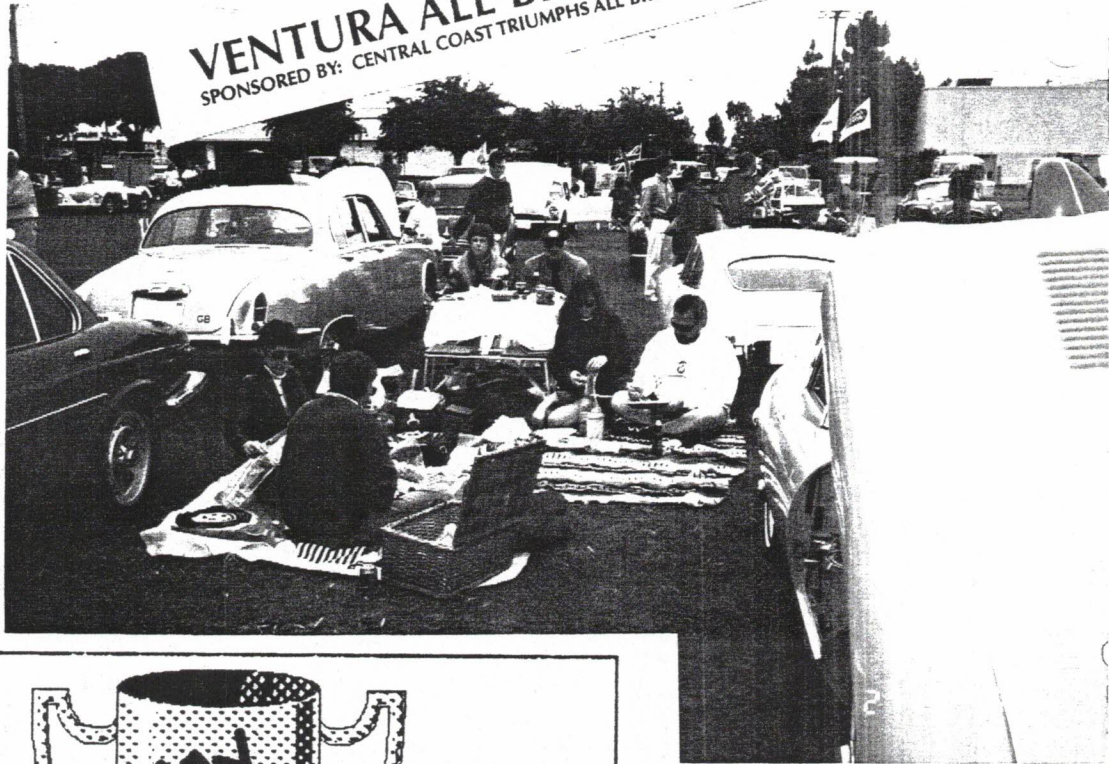
The European version of the shoulder harness seat belt used on the Minis and other Continental cars, had in the late 70s and early 80s, a G sensing brake that allowed unrestrained movement of the belt until such time as you engaged in a sudden stop, like crashing into someone.

I had the marvelous good fortune on one occasion, to obtain a Austin Mini from a local rental agency during a business visit to France. Frank Gary, my partner in numerous travel adventures, and I, were headed back to the Continental Hotel in the city of Brest in western Brittany. We were coming from the picturesque seaside town of Morlaix: were we had a fine dinner but Frank, was unfortunately, once again, over-served by the bartender. I was, of course, a veritable pillar of temperance. (This all took place in the early 80s when a few too many was not quite the heinous crime it is today, in fact in France, drinking and driving was required.)

THE CLEAR HOOTER!

VENTURA ALL BRITISH DAY
SPONSORED BY: CENTRAL COAST TRIUMPHS ALL BRITISH CAR CLUB

WINNERS ARE...
THOSE ENJOYING
THE DAY,
ie...? →



FEATURING
5TH ANNUAL
MORGAN
MAY 21, 1995
MORGAN

MAY
21
1995

CENTRAL COAST
TRIUMPHS
C C T

AND THE
WINNERS ARE ...

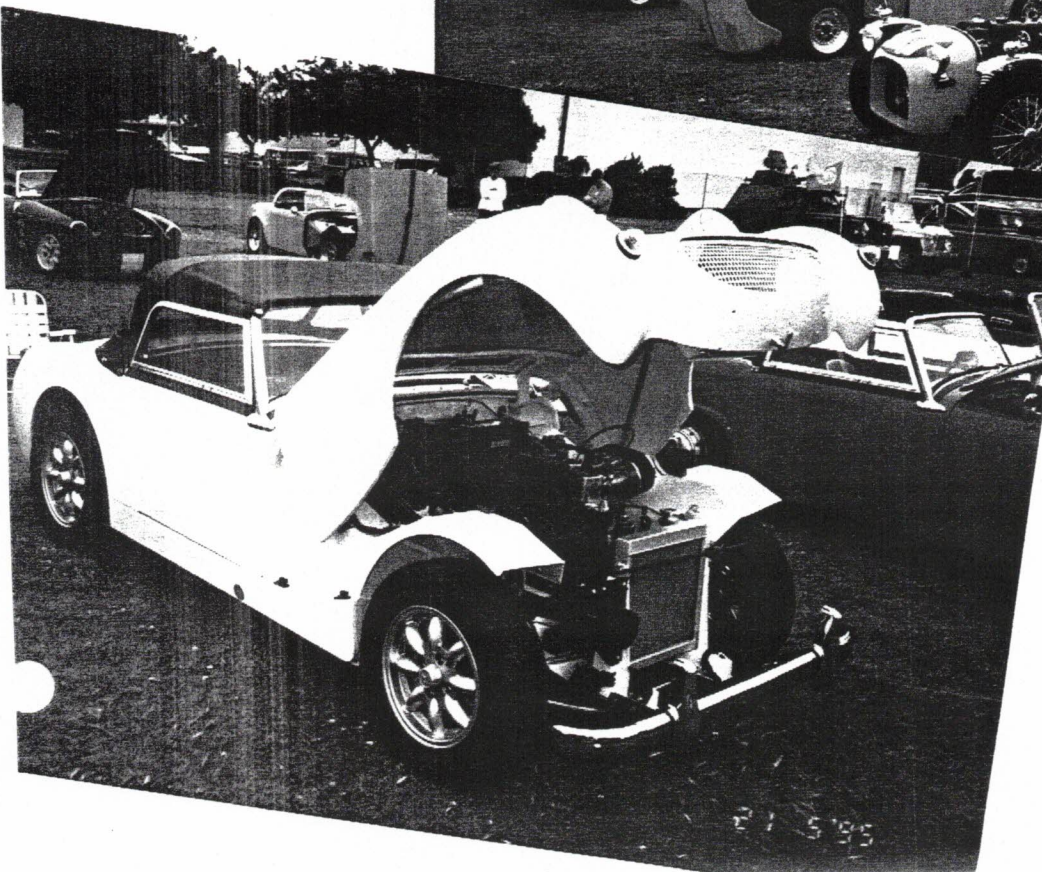
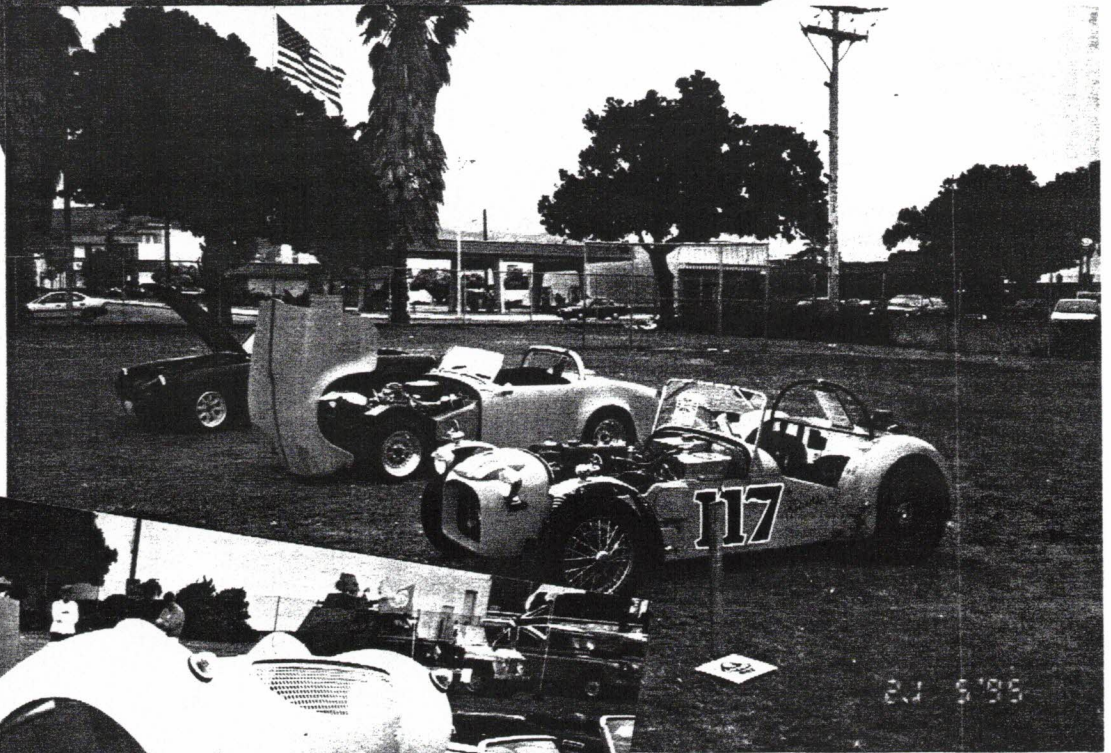
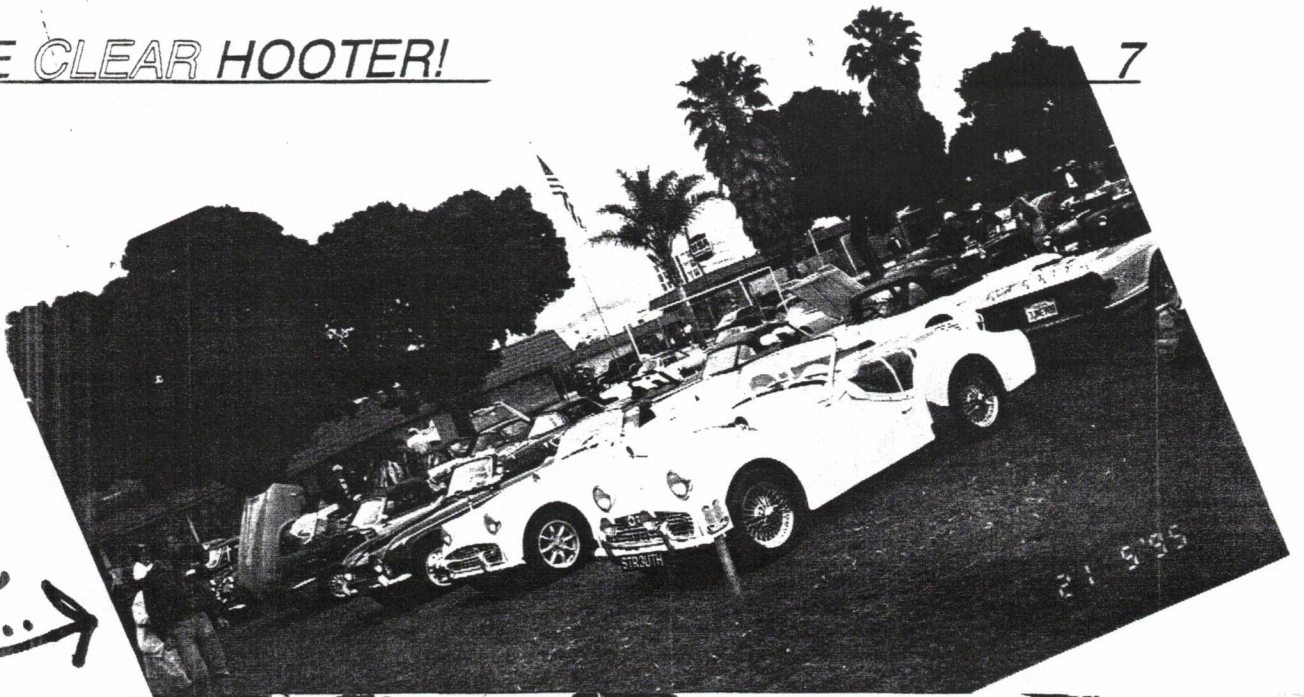
AND WINNERS
LIKE HEIDI
VAN DEN AKKER
AND HER TR.
TRIUMPH...
FROM "OUR
CLUB!"



THE CLEAR HOOTER!

TRS.
ON
DISPLAY.. →

ANOTHER CCT.
WINNER...
WALTER
OKON
#117 ↘



COULD THIS
BE A...
"SPRIDGET"?
← ↻

SNEAK PREVIEW OF UPCOMING EVENTS



Santa Paula Airport Airshow '95
August 12 & 13

Benefitting Santa Paula Memorial Hospital

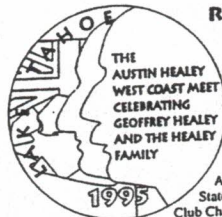
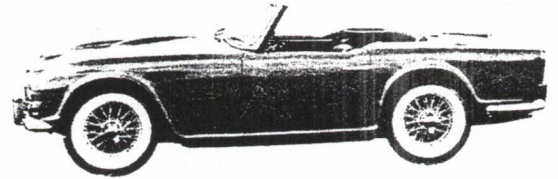
Santa Paula Airport celebrates its 65th anniversary in 1995 with an airshow featuring some of the finest classic, antique aircraft in America on display and flying, a historical re-creation of the opening day in 1930, a two-hour airshow at 1pm each day, food and souvenir booths, and a dinner dance on Saturday night.

Gates open at 9am each day \$3 donation

Dinner Dance 6pm Saturday \$15 per person

Santa Paula Airport will be closed to all air traffic from noon on Friday until 6pm Sunday. Camarillo and Oxnard airports are nearby and car rentals are available at Oxnard.

Santa Paula Airport P. O. Box 308 Santa Paula, California 93060



REGISTRATION
20TH ANNUAL WEST COAST MEET '95
TAHOE CITY, CALIFORNIA
AUG. 30TH - SEPT. 3RD

Registration Number: _____

Name: _____ Spouse/Guest: _____
 Children attending: _____
 Address: _____ Zip: _____
 State: _____ Country: _____ Arrival Date: _____
 Club Chapter: _____ Fax #: (____) _____
 Phone (day): (____) _____ Phone (night): (____) _____ miles

All Persons must be registered. Registration fee covers one car, two adults and children under 16. Additional adult fees apply to members of family 16 and over.

Accommodations at GRANLIBAKKEN are to be made by contacting Granlibakken directly. (see attached). Check here if you do not require rooms at GRANLIBAKKEN

Would you like evening babysitting services? Y or N What evenings: _____
 Do you plan to participate in:
 Popularity Rally Autocross Pinewood Derby Empire Mine Tour Hobbies/Photo Contest

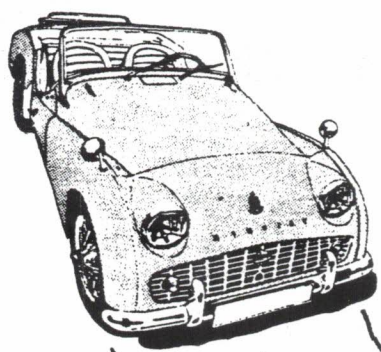
Vehicles to be registered:					
100-4	<input type="checkbox"/>	100M	<input type="checkbox"/>	100S	<input type="checkbox"/>
3000 Mk I BT7	<input type="checkbox"/>	3000 Mk II BT7/BN7	<input type="checkbox"/>	3000 Mk III BJ7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sprite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sprite Mk II	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sprite Mk III	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nash-Healey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jensen-Healey	<input type="checkbox"/>		
HEALEY Marque Car:		Modified:			

REGISTRATION FEES:	US\$	Number	Amount	SPECIAL MEET CLOTHING			
Before June 30	\$70			Price	Size	Qty	Amount
After June 30	\$80			T-Shirts	\$13		
Walk-in/Non-member	\$85			Polo Shirts	\$22		
Additional Healey(s)	\$10			Sweat Shirts	\$27		
Additional Adult(s)	\$10			Sweat Pants	\$16		
Saturday Only Reg.	\$25			Sweat Sets	\$38		
Concours Packet	\$40			All meet clothing has the special Donald/Geoffrey Healey Meet Logo. Please pre-order to ensure you are as quantities are limited.			
FOOD CHARGES:				Grill Badge	\$22		
Thursday B-B-Q/Dance	\$25			Hat Pin	\$5		
Children 12 and under	\$12.50			All items include sales tax.			
Saturday Banquet/Dance*	\$28						
Children 12 and under*	\$14						
TOTAL PAYMENT							\$ _____

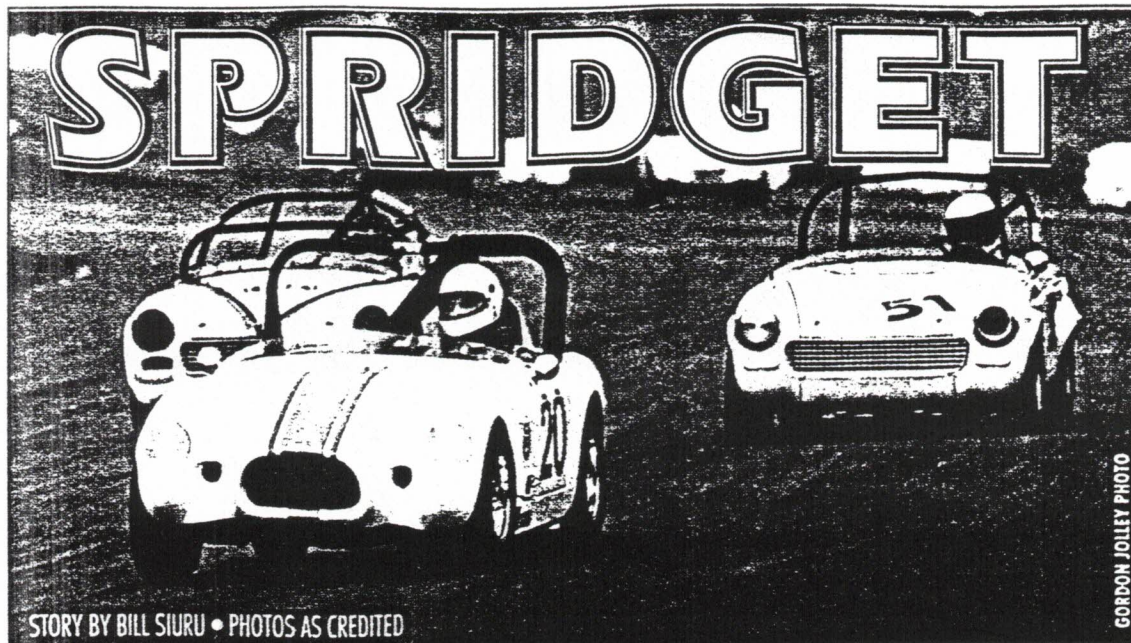
* See Accommodation Sheet for Saturday dinner choices. Enter quantities here: _____ x A _____ x B _____ x C
 Please make your enclosed check or money order payable to: A.H.C. Pacific Center (Money orders only after August 1)
 No refunds after AUGUST 1, 1995

MAIL THIS FORM AND YOUR PAYMENT TO:
 BENJAMIN WHITHAM, 260 EDELEN AVENUE, LOS GATOS, CA 95030

I would like to help with: (There will be a special prize drawing for all volunteers)
 Autocross Popular Car Show Concours Regalia
 Registration Hospitality Raffle Car Detailing
 Rally Signage Tours Videos
 Hobbies/Photos Pinewood Derby Photography



Ⓢ VINTAGE VIEWS



Perhaps No Other Car Defines "Grassroots Motorsports" As Well As these Two Twins from Britain

When the Austin-Healey Sprite was first introduced in 1958, its nickname was probably inevitable. The new Sprite became known as the "Bugeye" in America and the "Frogeye" in Europe due to its distinctive headlights. While this back-to-basics sports car was highly successful—nearly 49,000 were sold between 1958 and 1961—BMC heeded complaints about the original design's somewhat funny looks and lack of an opening trunk, and introduced a replacement in 1961.

There were several other distinct model changes and many running production modifications of these post-Bugeye Sprites and/or their virtual twins, the MG Midgets, because production of the cars continued through almost two decades. While the Austin-Healey version was discontinued after 1971, the Midget soldiered on until 1979.

Affectionately referred to as Spridgets (a combination of the words Sprite and Midget) these cars have done perhaps more for sports car motoring in the U.S. than any other marque. Come along with us as we explore the details and achievements of this amazing, if somewhat crude, little roadster.

SPRITE MK II/ MIDGET MK I

The Bugeye's replacement, the Austin-Healey Sprite Mark II, appeared in May of 1961. It traded the protruding headlights for more conventional ones located in the fenders. The styling was more boxy, there was a real locking trunk lid and taillamps that could actually be seen, and an ordinary hood replaced the huge, clamshell affair of the early car. The lower opening line from the clamshell hood was preserved to the end, though, even though it remained in place strictly for decorative

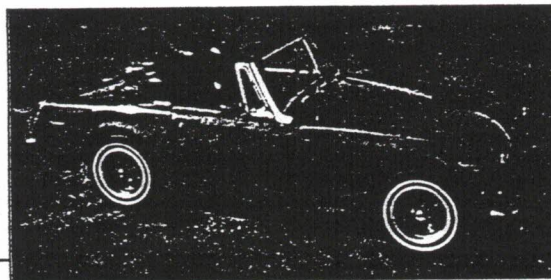
purposes and proved to be an easy breeding place for rust.

In June, 1961, MG offered its Sprite clone, the MG Midget Mk I. The Midget was really just a "badge engineered" Sprite with different trim and a slightly higher price (\$1939 versus \$1868 for the Sprite). The most noticeable differences were the vertically barred, MG-type grille and, of course, the octagon logos. The Midget typically listed for a bit more than a contemporary Sprite due to a few extra features available on the MG. Even with the added sticker shock, Midgets outsold Sprites almost three to one for the entire production run.

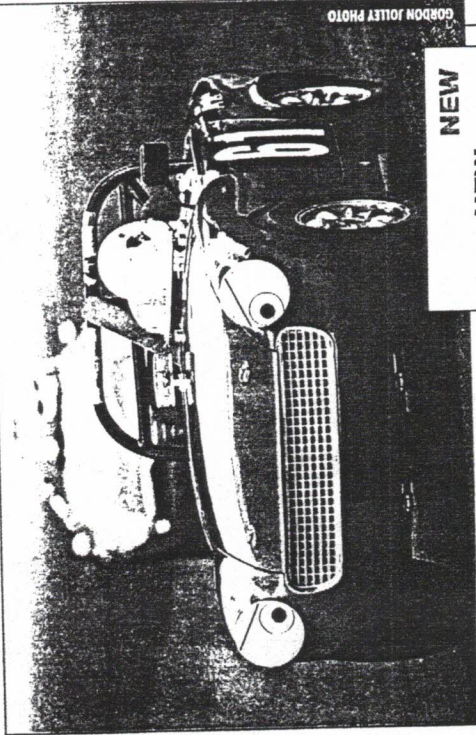
Both the Sprite Mk II and the initial Midget Mark I used the pushrod, four cylinder 948cc engine from the original Bugeye Sprite. This engine also motivated BMC cars like the Austin A40 and Morris Minor 1000. For the new Sprite and Midget, it originally produced 46 hp. A bump from 8.3:1 to 9:1 compression, larger valves, revised intake valves, double valve springs and larger throats for the twin SU HS2 carbs pushed power up to an even 50 hp.

The second generation Spridget was a bit less spartan than the original Bugeye. Along with that real locking trunk (the only lock on the vehicle besides the ignition), a foot of sheet metal was removed from behind the seat to allow a carpeted area for luggage or a kiddie jump seat. The top mechanism was improved and plastic sliding side windows replaced side curtains.

Like the Bugeye, the Spridget's suspension, while rudimentary, allowed go-kart-like road manners. The coil spring and wishbone front suspension came directly from the Austin A35. The live axle with quarter-elliptic rear spring design could be traced back to the Austin 7. Lever shocks were used to the very end. The rack and pinion



VINTAGE VIEWS



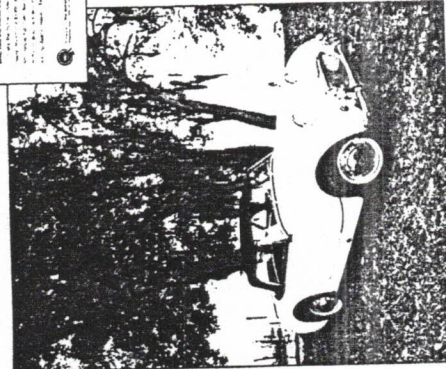
NEW
NEW SPRITE



TOP: Spridgets have become very popular in vintage racing due to their low cost and high fun quotient.

ABOVE: Ad from September, 1961 (Bugeye) is now Car and Drivers says it all about the Sprite Mk I.

LEFT: The Sprite Mk I (Bugeye) is now considered very collectible, with values topping \$8000 - \$10,000.



built. The U.S. received the lion's share of both models. Unfortunately, many have been used and abused, and not an insignificant number have already met the crusher. Unlike many more exotic sports cars that were often bought as Sunday toys, these were bought by younger people as fun-to-drive commuter cars and grocery getters. Typical British build quality (or lack thereof), combined with a car designed for the British rather than American driving conditions, did not enhance durability.

Fortunately, cars do not come much simpler, making for very easy repairs. Spridget parts are still relatively easy to find, though prices are beginning to escalate. Supplies of the so-called "trickle" gearboxes, lever shocks and trim pieces are beginning to dry up, making prices rise.

If you're a serious collector interested in value and historical significance, the Bugeye is the only Sprite that should ever see your garage. While the other Midgets and Sprites make great, inexpensive sports cars, prices will probably never rise beyond used car status. While this is great for the enthusiast, the collector should probably focus his attention elsewhere.

As with many other cars, rust is the number one enemy of the Spridget. Its unit body is a world-class master. Typical places to check for rust include the floorboards in the passenger compartment and trunk. Also look at the lower panels, door sills, and around the edges of the hood and trunk lids. Another rust spot is at the base of the windshield pillars. Look for rust metal where the springs mount to the chassis. This can be very expensive to repair and dangerous if it fails when the car is being driven. Rubber seals and body gaskets are usually deteriorated, but reproductions are easy to find.

As most folks who own British cars can attest, twin SU carburetors like those found on Spridgets can be quite sensitive, requiring delicate and frequent tuning. One common problem with SUs is that the linkage running into the carburetor wears over time. This allows air to leak into the carburetor, thus altering the mixture ratio. Replacing the rubber linkage trimmings can do a lot to fix this problem. The Spridgets also used Lucas electronics—nuff said.

The engines used in the Spridgets, while basically rugged and reliable, do have weak spots. For instance, the A series (948cc, 1098cc, 1275cc) powerplants had problems with the center main bearing, which should be replaced if it is at all suspect. The crankshaft is another trouble spot. It, too, should be replaced if its history is unclear. Oil burning on A series engines can usually be attributed to worn-out valve guides. These generally should be re-

placed as BMC tried to keep up with ever-tightening emissions requirements by adding items like air injection pump and catalytic converter. By 1974, the Midget's 1275cc engine had been chipped down to a mere 55 hp. The Sprite Mk IV/Midget Mk III also got an all-new top that could be folded up and down without having to be assembled like an Erector set. Like most common convertible tops, the Spridget's top folded up neatly and stowed behind the passenger compartment.

With each new model, the Spridgets got more civilized. Unfortunately, the downside was not only additional weight, but also a decrease in interior room as wind-up windows, padded dashes, folding tops, cushier seats and so forth decreased the already tight interior accommodations.

There was a mid-model cosmetic face lift for the MG Midget in late 1969, when items like black rocker panels, a new grille and Rostyle wheels were added. An improved heater and interior lights in the trunk and passenger compartment were added in October of 1970.

At the end of 1971, in an effort to combine models, British Leyland—which owned MG after a merger in the late sixties—quietly dropped the Austin Healey Sprite in favor of the better selling and higher priced Midget.

MG MIDGET MK IV

The Mk IV edition of the Midget appeared in 1974. In an attempt to prevent further performance erosion due to emissions mandates, the Midget now used the 1473cc engine borrowed from the Triumph Spitfire. A single Zenith carburetor replaced the traditional twin SUs on U.S. cars. The bottom line was a mere 55.5 hp that dropped to 50 by 1979. This was about the same as the first of the series in 1962, but in a car that had put on about 300 pounds of additional weight. Speaking of inflation, the 1979 Midget cost \$4500.

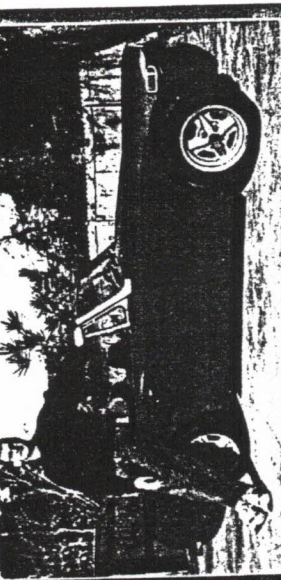
Part of that extra weight came from the obligatory rubber bumper integrated with a black grille. About the only bright spot in the Midget Mk IV was the fully synchronized four-speed gearbox from the Austin/Morris Marina.

Style-wise, the 1975 Mk IV featured a return to the squared-off rear wheel arches. BMC stylist had added rounded rear wheel arches in 1971, apparently without doing a lot of structural engineering analysis. Within a few years, the larger rounded wheel openings began to buckle at the top of the arch. There were a larger fuel tank, a collapsible steering column to meet U.S. safety requirements, and the suspension had been raised a bit to accommodate 1976 visibility height requirements. To meet 1976 visibility requirements, a third windshield wiper blade was also added.

The last Midget was built in November, 1979. By 1980, MG was out of the sports car business, and its famed Abingdon works was closed forever.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Finding a Spridget for racing or restoration should not be difficult, since some 224,363 Midgets and 79,339 Sprites (Mk II-IV) were



JOHN HARVEY'S '74 MIDGET AUTOCROSSER

John Harvey is a college student from Daytona Beach, Florida. He is also an avid autocross enthusiast and car nut—a hobby that doesn't always fit well on a student's budget. Luckily for him, Spridgets are still cheap.

John's 1974 Midget is fresh out of the body shop, where it received a coat of original MG blue. In the six years that John has owned this car, it has been through an ongoing restoration to get to the point where you see it now.

The 1275cc engine in John's car has been flopped up with a Kent cam with a 360 lift and 288° of duration. All of the rotating parts in the engine have been lightened and balanced, and a double-row timing chain was installed in the interim for durability. John runs a Weber 32-36 DGV carb currently, but is preparing a 44 SU on a Holley TorqueMaster manifold.

John estimates the power output of his engine to be about 75 hp at 6500 rpm.

John has upgraded his suspension with Carrera tube shocks in front of the original levers. To lower the ride and stiffen the springs, he removed 17-inch coil springs instead of a big back aftermarket bar. In the rear, Carrera toe shocks also replaced the original levers, and the car has been lowered from a Vega GT. The 1306-lb steel units are direct bolt-ons. Wheels are borrowed from a Vega GT. The 1306-lb Yokohama Y352s.

They hold up 185/60-13 Yokohama Y352s.

comfort department included wind-up windows, swiveling vent windows, locking doors, a slightly taller windshield, updated instrument panel and improved interior trim.

More power (now 59 hp) was obtained by fitting an MG 1100 head and improved manifold. Changing from quamer-to-half-elliptic rear springs brought a somewhat improved ride and reduced the tricky oversteering characteristics a bit. A combination ignition/distributor switch replaced separate lock-and-cable-operated starter setup, and self-canceling turn signals became standard.

A-H SPRITE MK IV/ MIDGET MK III

The Spridgets were updated again in 1966. Performance was enhanced with the installation of the 1275cc engine derived from the Mini Cooper S. The engine was detuned from the 75 hp rating it had in the Mini to 65 hp in the Spridgets. Still, the 1967 Spridgets are considered to be the finest of the breed. In subsequent years, the engine's

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March, 1964, brought a revised Sprite and Midget. Major changes in the creature

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ABOVE: British Leyland badge was added in about 1968. RIGHT: Tube shock conversion kit.

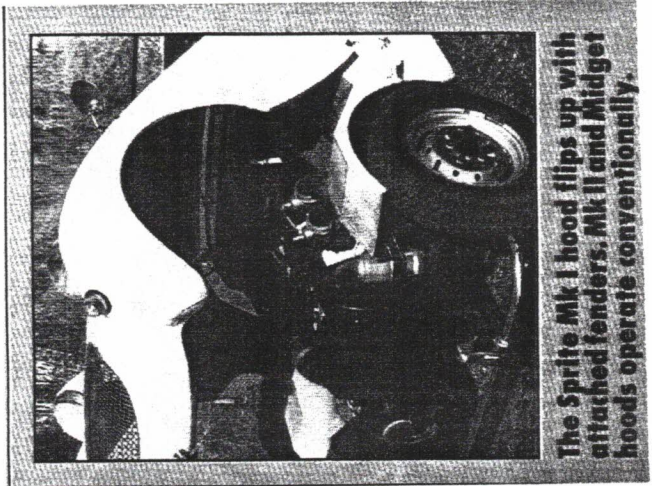
chambers should be prepared so they are of equal displacement (2.3cc) so each cylinder is doing the same amount of work.

As mentioned before, the center main bearing is rather weak on these A series engines. Larger bearing caps are available and higher tensile strength bolts can be used to combat this problem. Another problem occurs with the Cooper S heads that are so popular as retrofits to the 1275. The S heads are very prone to cracking around the center two studs. Check carefully to make sure that the stud holes on the head are centered in the bosses. If they aren't, there could be problems.

The downside of the 1275 engine is that most 1275s came mated to the infamous "ribcage" transmission. These tranny's are known to be somewhat weak, though some knowledgeable folks say that that reputation is undeserved.

As for other modifications to make your Spridget a winner, most experts we spoke with recommended some kind of limited slip differential. These tend to be very expensive, however. If your situation allows, welding the rear gears is a cheap and simple way to gain traction.

Disc-brake-equipped Spridgets are regarded as having better than average brakes. Aside from making sure everything is in tip-top shape, installing a good set of front pads and rear shoes should be more than enough to make a Spridget race ready.



The Sprite Mk I hood flips up with attached fenders. Mk II and Midget hoods operate conventionally.

MIDGET/SPRITE SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	A-H MK I	A-H MK III	A-H MK IV	MG MK III	MG MK IV
OHV in-line four, cast-iron block and head					
Box 5 Stroke (mm)	67.5/76.2	64.6/83.7	70.6/81.3	70.6/81.3	73.7/87.5
Displacement (cc)	948	919	1019	1019	1493
Compression ratio	9.0:1	9.0:1	9.0:1	9.0:1	9.0:1
Power @ rpm	50/5500	59 @ 5750	65/6000	65/6000	55-58/5000
Torque @ rpm	52 @ 2750	62 @ 2350	77 @ 3000	77 @ 3000	67 @ 2500
Conversion	2.50/1852				1.74/1604
TRANSMISSION	Four speed, non-synchrom before 1975				
Final drive ratio	4.2:1	3.2:1	3.4:1	3.4:1	3.4:1
1st	1.9:1	1.3:1	1.3:1	1.3:1	2.1:1
2nd	1.3:1	1.0:1	1.0:1	1.0:1	1.4:1
3rd	1.0:1	0.8:1	0.8:1	0.8:1	0.8:1
4th	0.8:1	0.7:1	0.7:1	0.7:1	0.7:1
Reverse	4.1:1				
Gears: 1st ratios: 3.4:1 and 2.9:1					
SUSPENSION	Independent, upper and lower A-arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar, live axles, 1/4 elliptical leaf springs (1961-1964), semi-elliptical leaf springs (1964-1975)				
Steering	Rack and Pinion				
Turning Circle	30'				
BRAKES	Front disc (in.) 7				
Rear disc (in.)	8	8	8	8	8
Rear drum (in.)	8	8	8	8	8
WHEELS/TIRES	3.5x13"				
Wheel size	4.5x13"	4.5x13"	4.5x13"	4.5x13"	4.5x13"
Weight	145/813				
DIMENSIONS	80				
Height (in.)	136	137.5	147	147	141
Track (F/R) (in.)	45.8/44.8	45.8/44.8	46.3/44.8	46.3/44.8	46.3/44.8
Width (in.)	48.8	48.5	48.6	48.6	48.3
Height (in.)	48.8	49.5	48.6	48.6	48.3
Fuel tank (gall)	7.2	7.2	7.5	7.5	7.5
Curb weight (lbs.)	1500	1456	1512	1512	1854
PERFORMANCE	0.040 sec				
1/4 mile, sec	19.6	15.5	14.7	N/A	N/A
1/4 mile, mph	21.5	20.9	19.9	100	N/A
Top speed, mph	85	90+	100	N/A	N/A
Average mpg	34	30	24	N/A	N/A

be durable enough to last a couple of seasons with regular preventive maintenance. The rest of the keys to making power are in the details. Both Ken and Crane make camshafts which are highly recommended for these cars. Combustion



ROBERT BERRINGTON PHOTO

should also replace the shock drop links whenever upgrading the shocks. For racing applications, shim-jointed links in the way to go, or switch to tube shocks if your rules allow.

Recommended alignment settings for both autocross and vintage racing are really the same. The car responds well to four or five degrees of positive caster and about 3/4 degree of negative camber in the front. Since no provisions exist from the factory for adjusting camber, some modifications must be made. One of the most common camber adjustments is made by installing offset lower control arm bushings. These bushings, available from most suppliers, move the lower control arm outward to provide some negative camber. Toe settings can be adjusted to suit the individual driver and track. Dennis Day recommends starting at zero toe and making adjustments in 1/8-inch increments.

When building more power into your Spridget, the important thing to remember is not to start with a 1098cc engine. There are much better engine choices available for these cars.

Probably the most popular engine for the older Spridgets is the 1275cc unit. Compression is of the keys to making power with a 1275. Some Spridget racers run as high as 14:1 compression in their motors, but this can just as easily create a hand grenade as a race motor. An 11.5 or 12:1 compression motor will produce nearly as much power and

doing a rebuild, why not substitute a 1275? If you want the ultimate Spridget, install a Cooper S head on that 1275. Be aware, though, that the Cooper S head had a tendency to develop cracks.

The gearboxes, with their non-synchrom first gear, were often subjected to lots of abuse, but a 100,000-mile original gearbox is not unusual. Even very noisy gearboxes can last tens of thousands of miles.

Probably the least desirable Spridgets are the post-1974 Midgets, with their less attractive rubber bumpers and sluggish 1493cc Spitfire engines. Early editions of this powerplant installed in the Midget Mk IV were noted for overheating. By 1976, a revised cooling system had been introduced to correct this problem.

IMPROVING YOUR SPRIDGET

These rather robust little sportsters make popular race cars in all types of competition. At any autocross anywhere in the country you can bet on spotting one or two Spridgets, and they are becoming a vintage racing favorite as well. We asked noted Spridget racer and builder Dennis Day of Classic Auto in St. Petersburg, Fla., for some advice on improving the performance of these little zippers.

Dennis suggested that anyone interested in doing any kind of serious racing should begin by stripping and sandblasting the frame and body of the car and doing some serious seam welding. This, along with a carefully constructed roll cage, will go a long way to adding to the structural rigidity of the car.



The 1275, available from 1966, is a very modifiable engine.

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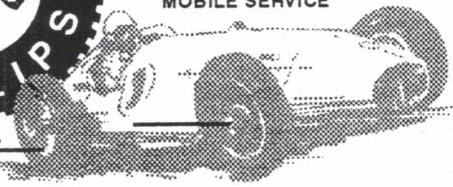
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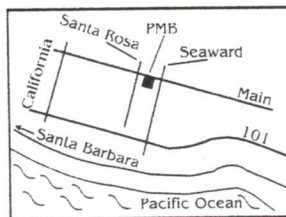
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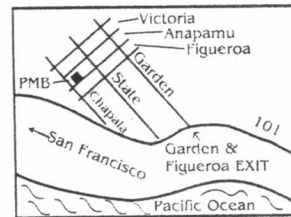
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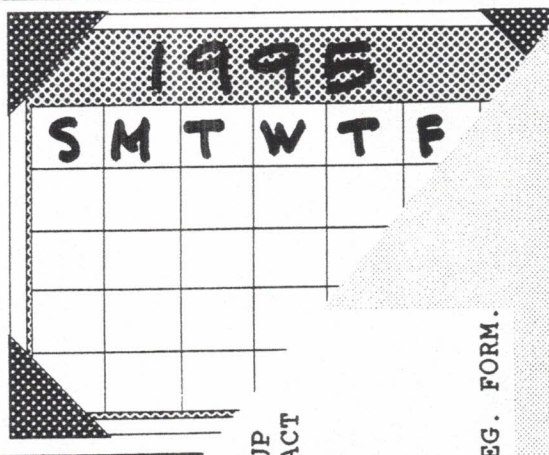
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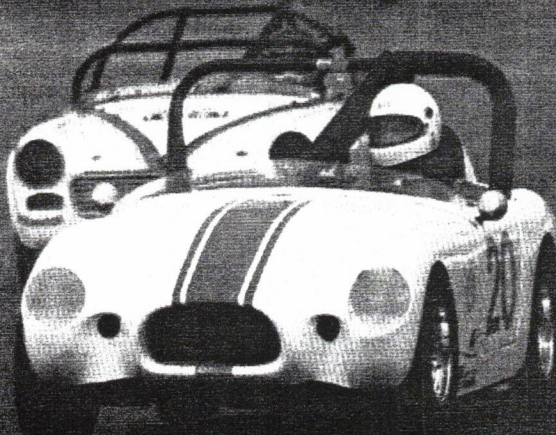
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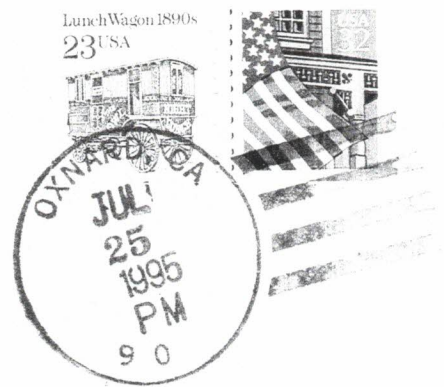


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