

DISTRIBUTOR



Mid-Atlantic Chapter, North American MGA Register

September 2009

▲ **Hunt Country Classic Car Show** ▲

The MG Car Club will host their 14th annual classic British Car Show on Sunday, October 11, 2009.

Once again the event will be held at **Willoughby Farm**, home of Bill and Barbara Scott in Marshall Virginia. **Willoughby Farm** is located midway between historic Marshall and Middleburg in the rolling hills of Virginia Hunt Country. The drive to and from the event will be spectacular as the trees are just beginning to turn color.

This event has long been considered our “home” car show of the season with many of the MGAs on display being members of our Mid Atlantic Chapter. In last year’s event, there were 17 MGAs competing for honors. Let’s try to equal that number again this year. Please make plans to attend and support the MGCC in making this a successful event.

Selected by popular vote as the best MGA last year was the 1962 Mark II shown by Liz Ten Eyck. Liz will show this year in the *Prince of Wales* class – competing with all class winners from 2008 for the coveted *Prince of Wales* award for the “best of the best”.

Early registration runs to September 30th and is \$20.00 per car. Late registration is \$25.00 per car. The show field opens at 9:00 am, balloting closes at 12:30 pm and the Awards ceremony begins at 2:00 pm.

The MG Car Club has put out a request for volunteers to help with parking both the show cars and spectator parking. Volunteers are requested to fill one-hour time slots - which actually passes quite quickly.

Please contact either Bryan Sieling (bryan.sieling@verizon.net, 703-486-2439 - show field parking) or John Hambleton (mgtd3@msn.com, 703-799-2185 - spectator parking) if you can offer an hour of your time. If you’d like to volunteer to help in some other way please contact Charles Scott of the MGCC at seescott@cox.net or 703-863-8707.

More information can be found at www.mgcarclubdc.com.

▲ **First Pub Night of the Fall** ▲

Our first *Pub Night* of the season will be held Sunday, October 25th at the home of new members Charlie and Alana Adams. Charlie and Alana live in Fairfax Station VA – real convenient to Steve and Nancy Woodall – and not too bad for the rest of us off either Route 123 or the Fairfax Parkway.

Charlie purchased a project MGA a few months ago and is excited to show off his project and of course – solicit advice from our members who have been through the process.

The format for our Pub Nights is rather simple. We gather, talk MG talk, order pizza delivery, eat and have more MG conversation. The Redskins game is a Monday night game so we won't be interrupted by moans and groans of Redskin fans during our event.

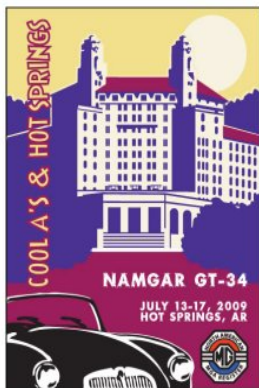


For directions and to RSVP, please email Charlie and Alana at adamscas@msn.com.

▲ **Drive to Lunch November ??** ▲

Bill and Kathy Wemhoff have organized our last *Drive to Lunch* of the season. We don't know where we are starting from, where we are going or what we will do once we get there, but it promises to be a wonderful day driving our MGAs. Mark your calendar for November and we will have full details in the October issue of the *Distributor*.

▲ **Drive to GT-34 Report** ▲



The MGA was developed prior to the time of our growing Interstate Highway System. This begs the question: Is the MGA still a viable mode of transportation in today's environment? To answer this question, we decided to make the 1,100 plus mile drive to attend GT-34 held in Hot Springs Arkansas.

With NAMGAR being formed in the Washington DC Capital Beltway region, the early GT events were held in proximity to the East Coast. By GT-5, it was time to share the experience with those living on the West Coast and Lake Tahoe Nevada was selected as the event location site. Since that time, the GT has followed a general pattern of locating somewhere convenient to the East Coast, Mid West or West Coast in successive years. Being relative newcomers to NAMGAR, Karen and I arrived too late to attend GT-30 in Mackinaw City Michigan. The following year, we were part of the caravan that made the 800 mile drive to Gatlinburg Tennessee for GT-31, traveling with Butch & Judy Smith, Terry & Martha Anne King and Bill & Liz Ten Eyck. This was our first distance trip in the A and it was pleasant and uneventful until a half-shaft broke 45 miles from home on the return trip. We skipped the 3,000

mile drive to Whistler BC Canada for GT-32 but made the short trip to GT-33 in Seven Springs Pennsylvania – a mere 200 miles from home – adding Larry Newman and Dick & Cheryl Farwell to our traveling group.

GT-34 was our first opportunity to take a long trip in the MGA, with a goal to earn a 1,000 mile GT dash plaque in the process. As always for our GT trips, Judy was our Trail Master planning our route, overnights and finding points of interest to visit along the way. We were joined on this adventure by NAMGAR Chapter Coordinators Lee & Liz Niner from Creamery, PA and Ben and Cyndi Nolan from Elmer, NJ. We would be shadowed later on our drive by a late-leaving Liz Ten Eyck and guest Betty Ann Johns playing catch-up with Liz's MGA safely in tow on her trailer.

Lee & Liz made the trip to their son's home in Springfield, VA a few days early without event, with plans to join Butch and Judy Thursday morning to start our caravan. Ben and Cyndi were not quite as fortunate. After an engine rebuild in June and a quick "make it one color red" spray job, little time was left to work out the bugs. A leaking carburetor seal was discovered in Maryland and they decided to head towards Garland Gentry's shop in Fredericksburg VA for parts. After collecting Karen and I in Manassas, the remainder of our caravan headed south on Route 29 towards our destination of Abingdon VA for the first night – with plans for Ben and Cyndi to catch up on the way.

Carburetor seals replaced, the Noland's were on the road again Thursday morning – for about 15 miles – when a rear freeze plug popped blowing the coolant out of the block. In short time, their MGA was on a flatbed for the return trip to Garland's. With a never-say-quit attitude, a replacement plug was found and worked into place without removing the engine from the car. Many hours behind the caravan by this time, Ben and Cyndi would not join us until the following day in Knoxville TN.

For the remainder of us, we had a pleasant and uneventful 350 mile drive to Abingdon, staying on smaller roads and avoiding the Interstate most of the way. We arrived in time to visit the old town area and dine at The Tavern restaurant. The Tavern occupies the oldest of Abingdon's historic buildings, and is one of the oldest buildings west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. While our fellow travelers had dined there before, Butch would not say if he was there for the grand opening in 1779.



Our travel plans were to have one long day of driving, followed by a leisurely day of travel with plenty of time for sightseeing and relaxing at the hotel pool. Friday was a short day as we planned to travel just 150 miles to Knoxville TN. Again we traveled without incident and enjoyed an afternoon off while waiting for Ben and Cyndi to join us for our planned riverboat dinner cruise on the *Star of Knoxville*. They arrived shortly before we were schedule to depart the hotel, and Ben was happy to report the A had performed flawlessly since leaving Fredericksburg the second time.

Judy's plans had us arriving in Memphis early Sunday afternoon, allowing plenty of time to visit Graceland and the associated exhibits dedicated to the career of Elvis Presley. This meant a long 325 mile day on Saturday to our destination of Savannah TN followed by an easier 125 mile drive Sunday morning to Memphis. All started out well Saturday with the cars performing flawlessly

and our caravan maintaining a brisk pace. Again sticking to smaller roads, we began to realize barbequed anything is a staple in the Tennessee diet.



As we passed through one small town after another, we started searching for the “best BBQ in town” as lunch hour approached. After stopping a local for their opinion and getting directions to such a proclaimed establishment, we began to rag on Butch for his sudden lack of clutch abilities – stalling his A and grinding gears each time first gear was required. The humor faded as the problem got worse and the noise grew louder. The mechanical minds among us determined the problem to be a leaking slave cylinder, preventing proper engagement of the clutch. After confirming the

local’s assessment of the BBQ joint was correct, we were off again towards Savannah, with Butch slowing well in advance of traffic lights to maintain momentum and avoid first gear when possible.

The weather to this point had been hot but not uncomfortable, and short of a few showers we had passed through – reasonably dry. Shortly after lunch the skies opened up and we would travel through rain so heavy it was hard to maintain a visual on the taillights in front of us. This concern was replaced with dread when my MGA began to sputter and miss and would not maintain any sort of highway speed. Driving on the shoulder of the road, we took refuge under the canopy at the first gas station we could find. With the fluctuating gas gauge ruled out after filling up, Ben and Lee stepped forward to diagnose the problem. It was determined the new points installed prior to starting the trip had closed tight. It seem this is becoming a problem with aftermarket points as the plastic used is soft at the outer core, wearing quickly in the first 1,000 miles, then firming up to last a normal cycle. We would have this MGAventure again later in the trip – of course waiting to time it with our second major thunderstorm of the journey.

We arrived in Savannah mid-afternoon – tired and cranky but starting to dry out as we had a few hours of tops down travel after the storm had passed. As we debated to stay the night there as planned or press forward another 3 hours to Memphis – the rain began anew. We found shelter at a Lowe’s in their customer pick-up area and decided to press forward after raising our hoods once again. Overall we traveled over 400 miles in around 8 hours and arrived in Memphis satisfied by no greater thought than we had arrived in Memphis! We were looking forward to a day we could sleep late, take the shuttle bus to Graceland and not need to drive again until dinner time Sunday evening. Other than Butch’s ongoing problem with the clutch, the cars were now running perfectly and we had Hot Springs in our sights.



Among the admirers of our cars were a couple from Australia, Paul and Rhonda, who were on a six week vacation which included crossing most of America. They were quite familiar with the MGAs as MGs remain popular in Australia. We incorporated them into our group and toured Graceland, which was an adventure on its own.

Graceland, the mansion home of Elvis, is now joined across the street by a complex of exhibits connected to the King. On display are two of his jet

aircraft, a car museum – including his red MGA from the Blue Hawaii movie – and artifacts from his Army, Las Vegas and movie career. Each exhibit is enter through a gift shop featuring Elvis merchandise, and you exit though a second gift shop featuring more of the same! Overall, the Graceland complex is a stunning reminder of how successful Elvis was as an entertainer.

As we returned to the hotel, we were met by Liz and Betty Ann who had finally overcome their late departure. It was determined we would leave the cars parked for the night and take advantage of a restaurant that offers a shuttle service through their fleet of pink Cadillac limousines. In keeping with the Elvis theme, these are Cadillac limos vintage to the time of his passing. Two limousines



were found to take our group to the restaurant but as we were ready to return to the hotel, only one was in service. Debating over making two trips or packing all 12 of us into the limo – plus driver – we made the call to *pack 'em in*. Overloaded, in a vintage limo with apparent original shock absorbers, we bounced and swayed out of the restaurant parking lot into the view of a police car waiting to make a turn. Without missing a beat, our driver Jello-ed his way back into the parking lot, waiting briefly for the officer to continue on his way before setting out again for our hotel. Once we arrived at the hotel, we looked like a circus act as people continued to pour out of the car. This proves one does not need to be in an MGA to have an *MGAventure*.

With the weather forecast not promising for Monday morning, there was great debate whether we should leave early and try to avoid the rain, or leave later and hope the thunderstorms would pass before we left. Judy was overruled by the majority who chose a few extra hours of sleep over weather concerns. Hot Springs was only a four hour drive and we did not need to register until after 3:00 pm. It was a decision we would later regret.

The skies were very gray again as we prepared to leave Memphis, so the decision was to raise the tops to be prepared should we run into rain. And run into rain we did less than one hour after crossing the Mississippi River into Arkansas. Once again we could not see tail lights in front of us, and we felt much safer with Liz trailing our caravan with her tow vehicle and trailer protecting our flank from civilian traffic. As we encountered the worst of the downpour, for a second time our MGA began to sputter and lose power, unable to maintain a pace above 10 miles per hour. Again driving on the shoulder, we found an exit ramp and pulled off, unnoticed by the others due to the poor visibility. We were in an industrial area, devoid of gas stations or any kind of public buildings. Not knowing how long the car would run or how long the rain would last, we took shelter in the first covered area we found – a heating oil tanker refueling shed.

Now in a safe haven, we began to work the cell phone to let our comrades know we had left the highway. They were 20 miles down the Interstate before they could find a safe place to exit. Liz volunteered to return to us with her collection of tools and know-how in hopes of getting us running again while to rest continued on towards Hot Springs. For the mechanically challenged, this underscores the value of traveling with companions. The fuel oil company personnel were

kind enough to offer us use of their facilities and once support arrived, Liz was able to reset the point gap and we started and ran perfectly – not missing a beat the remainder of the trip.

Directed by our hosts, we set sail for yet another BBQ restaurant called Nick's as lunch hour was approaching. It was by coincidence the rest of our caravan also chose to stop there so as the sun came back out we were all gathered together once again. Butch continued to experience clutch problems but traffic was light and second gear starts solved the stalling and grinding problems associated with first gear.

The events of the GT will be fully covered in the next issue of MGA! magazine, but our adventures were to continue. As we pulled into the parking garage of the host hotel, the MGA driver in front of Butch chose 3rd gear instead of first to start off on the steep hill, with predictable results. While the sound of metal hitting metal was worse than the resulting damage, damage was done nonetheless. Look for Butch to be sporting new paint and new chrome before the Spring driving season begins.

The GT itself was well-planned and well-run by the hosting Chapter. It was also HOT, with heat indexes in the 100 plus range for most of the week. Mike Ash was overheard commenting he had sworn he would never go back to Gatlinburg after the GT-31 experience, "but here he was again". A comment understood by anyone who attended both GT events.

The car show field was located in a park directly across the street from the hotel. It was nice to be able to park the car on the field, and then return to the hotel for lunch or just grabbing a few minutes of air conditioning. After the car show, Butch purchased the parts to rebuild his slave cylinder and was able to complete the task with the help of Mike True of Ohio, who traveled with a floor jack and plenty of tools. With his clutch working properly again, Butch was soon back in good spirits and the remainder of the GT was enjoyed. Well ..



Our good fortune continued at the Awards Banquet with the Marshalls, Smiths, Niners and Nolans among those that received their 1,000 mile dash plaques for driving over 1,000 miles to attend a GT. Liz was of course recognized for displaying her former Premier class winning 1962 Mark II in the Premier Emeritus class and I was pleasantly surprised to receive a 3rd place award in the 1500 class. Our traveling companions Lee & Liz Niner were recognized for their long and devoted service to NAMGAR with the prestigious **Mac Spears Award** – NAMGAR's highest honor for service to the organization.

Despite our *Adventures* in reaching the GT, our MGAs proved dependable in that none of the problems we encountered were so serious we could not press forward and despite enduring Mother Nature's summer worst in terms of rain and heat, we arrived fresh and no worse for the journey. The GT over, it was time to reset our trip odometers and settle in for the 1,100 mile return trip home.

With Liz and Betty Ann headed to North Carolina to visit friends and family along the way home, we chose to head north leaving Hot Springs, biting off a small section of Missouri as we headed

for the Kentucky border. With my points properly worn in and Butch's clutch again working fine, we were once again maintaining a good pace, with Ben and Lee showing no signs of concern. The sun was shining, roads were well maintained and all was well in the MGA world.

We spent the Friday night near the Land Between the Lakes and enjoyed the slowly cooling temperatures. The two lakes were created by the Kentucky Dam on the Tennessee River and the Barkley Dam on the Cumberland River, with the land in between a state park and resort area known conveniently as the Land Between the Lakes.

Saturday morning we left early with a goal of reaching the Lexington area with a possible tour of a real Kentucky horse farm. To say the temperature had dropped was an understatement. Morning temperatures were in the 60 degree range and we all bundled up to fend off the wind chill. Lacking any real cool weather clothing, this meant improvising with whatever was handy, including using beach towels for neck warmers.

Cold yes, but the tops stayed down and slowly the sun's warmth took the chill out of the air as we cruised our way towards Lexington. The farms we sought – acres of white board fencing with thoroughbreds standing proud in the pastures – were few and far between. They are apparently more prevalent in the Louisville area - home of the Kentucky Derby.



With Butch and Judy continuing as our Trail Bosses, Butch knew it was time to take our minds off the horses and keep a focus on the cars. As we exited the highway for a pit stop, Butch coasted to the side of the road with no power. With Ben assuming the role of chief mechanic, it was quickly determined the distributor cap had eaten the rotor. A quick replacement of the rotor and Butch fired up so all was looking good. When we reached the gas station, it was decided a closer look at the distributor was in order to possibly determine 'why' the cap ate the rotor. All looked in order but there was slop in the shaft of the distributor, allowing the rotor to make contact with the caps firing pins. Our option was to press with only two more travel days and 550 miles left to go – hoping we had enough spare rotors to get us home. Or, replace the entire unit with a complete distributor Lee conveniently carried in his spares!



It seems the benefit of traveling in a caravan is that someone will always have the part needed to get you back on the road again. Tools came out and under the watchful eyes of Bill and Lee, Ben and Butch made the swap, reset the timing and proclaimed the MGA fit to travel.



After finding and stocking up at the local liquor store, we pressed on once again, reaching Winchester KY to relax and raise a glass in toast of our chief mechanic and parts supplier.

Sunday morning was once again cool, but we were better dressed to handle the morning chill. Our travel goal for the day was West Virginia and the Canaan Valley State Park.



With Judy following the directions provided by her GPS system, we made good progress until the GPS directed us to a small state road that appeared as a 'short cut' on the map. The short cut was little more than a paved goat trail used only by the local farmers. With a safe speed limit of around 20 mph, we carved our way through the many turns for miles, often blowing the horn to let any unsuspecting oncoming traffic know there would be two vehicles sharing the narrow pavement. Once safely back on the main road, we found Canaan Valley exactly where the GPS said it would be. After checking into our rooms, we located the dining room and enjoyed a wonderful all-you-can-eat buffet dinner. Returning to our rooms, we disobeyed orders from the park management and fed the many deer that gathered each evening for treats from the resort guests. By the tameness of the deer, it was clear we were not the first to do so.

Monday was time to split our caravan as the Niners and Nolans had plans to visit nearby Blackwater Falls before heading northeast towards Pennsylvania and New Jersey, taking one extra day to return home. The Marshalls and Smiths, with work calling on Tuesday, completing their journey back into Virginia and home.

We said our goodbyes Sunday night so our retired crew could sleep-in while we once again braved the chill of the morning bundled as well as possible. Skipping breakfast at the Resort, we made our first pit stop in Petersburg WVA at the local McDonalds and apparent community center. The dining area of the McDonalds was filled with senior citizens playing their morning round of BINGO. A rather crafty method of increasing breakfast sales by the restaurant management! Our remaining 175 miles home were uneventful and we assumed our northbound cohorts would also have a leisurely trip home, based on the fact neither of their MGAs had suffered a hiccup since Ben's freeze plug replacement that now seemed so long ago.

But, the *MGAventures* were to continue. While enjoying the scenery around Blackwater Falls, the air in one of Ben's tires decided life in wild and wonderful West Virginia was more appealing than the drudgery of holding rubber inflated back in a New Jersey garage. Once again the boots were unloaded and a tech session was performed in the parking lot. Seeking to gain more experience, it was decided a wearing front tire would serve better on the rear, so one tire was replaced and two others swapped in the name of safety. Prudence determined two new tires were in order and fortunately a tire shop in western Maryland had the correct size in stock. Newly shoed, the Niners and Nolans forged ahead to Carlisle PA before calling it a day. Their final day took them towards Lancaster PA where the Niner's headed north and the Nolan's continued east. With home in sight, what could go wrong? Jealous of all the attention given to the other MGAs, Lee's 1600 decided to pull a pity party and expelled air from one of its tires. Just 25 miles from

home, Lee and Liz were able to add their name in our book of *Adventures* and with the flat quickly replaced, brought the trip to a close.



So ... how do we answer the question of MGA reliability and more important, its viability as a long-distance traveler? Despite the *Adventures* we experienced along the way, we are all in agreement the MGA is a safe, reliable and comfortable vehicle to travel long distances in. The woes we faced were more self-inflicted by not following standard pre-trip inspections and maintenance and, as important, getting some break-in miles on the car after replacing parts.

Despite facing mechanical concerns along the way, we were never stranded or forced to call for assistance from the dreaded tow-truck. The cars did not skip a beat after individual gremlins had been sorted out and we maintained highway speeds with modern traffic. All the compliments we received during our travels driving these vintage vehicles were worth the moments of concern. The pleasure of traveling with fellow MGers far outweighs lack of modern creature-comforts. We would not hesitate to jump in the cars today and head off for the next GT event.

In fact, we all plan to make the 800 mile drive to GT-35 in Delavan Wisconsin schedule for July 2010. Won't you make plans to join us?

Submitted by Bill Marshall

▲ What's Next? ▲

NAMGAR in the POCONOS

Sept. 23-26, 2009
Pocono Manor,
Pennsylvania



Our adventures continue with plans to attend the NAMGAR Regional GT in Pocono Manor Pennsylvania. The caravan departs Manassas 8:00 am September 23rd and includes Keith & Kathy Kallapos, Liz Ten Eyck, Bill & Karen Marshall and Larry and Diana Newman.

Look for a full report in the October *Distributor*.



Celebrating 30 years as a NAMGAR Chapter 1978-2008

Mid-Atlantic Chapter

Washington DC - Maryland - Virginia