

THE BOOT, HOOD AND BONNET

Monthly Newsletter of British Cars of New Hampshire

March, 2010



1958 TR3

Next Meetings

March 1st, 2010 7:00 pm at The Weathervane in Bedford
(603) 472-2749

Car of the Month

By Ray Boas

On Tuesday, January 26, 2010, I finally mailed my membership application to British Cars of New Hampshire. Although I had printed it from the internet back in November, it sat on my desk until now. Recently I had renewed my quest for a restored TR3 and all the books I had purchased said to join the local clubs and let the members know you are looking. I am a passive person, not a networker, but finally in filling out the application I added the note that I was looking for a restored TR3. The next day, Wednesday, I bought my 1958 TR3A. On Friday I thought I should email the club that my search was over. I added the link to the Shutterfly Album and journal I had started to document my new adventure (<http://raystr3a2010.shutterfly.com/>). John then asked that I contribute this “car of the month” story. However, this story goes back much further than the events of the past few days.

During the 1950s, my dad worked as an auto mechanic and became an avid collector of old cars. He really loved them. Many unique automobiles, all with interesting stories, passed through his hands. And, since I grew up with them, I came to love them too. There was the 1920 something Lincoln limousine that was too big to turn around in the driveway, and as a result he was thrilled to sell it immediately for \$75, making a \$25 profit in a few days. I remember the 1929 LaSalle 7 passenger touring car (radiator never held water for long) that could easily carry a TR3 in the rear passenger area. But Model “T” Fords were his first love. The first one he completely restored was a 1919 Touring. One day, when I was maybe fourteen, we were driving down US Route 7 in our home town of Wilton, Connecticut. Suddenly my dad turned to me and said, “Ray, take the wheel.” Thus it was that I learned to drive on a Model T Ford, a fact of which I am very proud.

His prize, however, was the 1910 Touring, and he was the cranking champion at all the shows and meets. It was in my blood. I loved following him around, digging into barns and seeing original cars. But as my Dad always told me, “Ray, you are not mechanical.” I knew he was right, but still to this day, I wish I had insisted he teach me to work on cars.

In the late 50s, or early 60s (I was not of driving age yet), our neighbor bought two TR3s; one for each of his sons. One was black and the other white. The boys often would switch tops back and forth for variety. I will never forget my first ride in one of their TR3s. I loved it!

**FIFTY YEARS
LEADING TO MY
TR3A. IT WAS
MEANT TO BE!**

In 1961, the year before I got my driver’s license, my dad bought an un-restored 1929 Model “A” Ford roadster for speculation. Because I loved this car so much I pleaded with him to sell it to me for the \$350 he had paid for it. Finally he gave in and it was mine. I think he always regretted that he did not make a profit on that sale. That car was my life through high school. When I left for college in 1964, it went into storage. After graduation, I earned a commission in the US

Navy Supply Corp and then began twenty-two years of active duty.

Key West, Florida was my first duty station. I commuted to the ship on a Honda 50 motorbike. However, soon an MGB caught my eye. These were the days when base pay was \$343.20 a month, and you would still have money left at the end of the month. I think I bought the MGB for \$600. Soon I was transferred to Charleston, SC, and the MGB became my daily transportation. But I wanted my Model “A” back, so I had it trailered down to South Carolina. I sold the MGB to a sailor. I later saw it torn apart in a parking lot – he had blown the engine.

Next I was told that I needed to attend fuel school in Virginia in preparation for duty in Antarctica. This was too far to commute in the Model “A” even in 1972, so I began to look for another car. There was a TR3 advertised for sale on the Charleston Air Force Base, for \$600 as I recall. I almost bought it. But for some reason I ended up buying an Opel Station Wagon for the commute. Not a bad choice for it lasted over 150,000 miles including a number of miles towing the Model “A” during moves, and two ocean voyages on the fantail of the USS LUCE DDG-38. In 1978 I got the “bug” again and almost, almost bought a TR3 while stationed in Philadelphia. But it did not happen. Sadly, after over twenty years the 1929 Roadster was sold and gone for good.

Fast forward about twenty years. In 1995 my late-wife, Cathy, and I married and we moved back to my home state of Connecticut. She understood my love for Model “As.” One day a car enthusiast customer mentioned a Model “A” pickup that was for sale. We were on our way to New Hampshire for a break and to buy books, so we stopped along the way to see the pickup. It was stunning, sitting in a private airplane hanger under the wing of one of the last DC3s. We bought it at once. However, it was not the same.



Car of the Month continued

It was not my roadster.

On eBay in 2001 a rare Model "A" two door phaeton showed up in the next town. My Dad had restored one. It was expensive, but I went to see it, and next to it was a beautifully restored 1930 Model "A" Roadster. This car had come from the original owner's barn that was just miles from our home and book shop in New Preston. Not overdone, the car looked as if it was just months out of the showroom. I bought it immediately. It turned out that I was only the second owner, not counting the fellow who restored it for speculation or the intermediary. A month later we drove the car to West Cornwall, Connecticut, and I took a picture of the 1930 in the same exact spot of my favorite picture of my 1929 roadster that was taken almost forty years before. Those images are on my website: (<http://www.rayboasbookseller.com/neverchange.htm>)

In 2002 Cathy and I moved to New Hampshire. We shared this wonderful event, our "miracle story", on our website (<http://www.rayboasbookseller.com/message.htm>). Sadly, I lost Cathy and our two Westies in a car accident in May 2008. Life will never be the same! In August, 2009 I visited my step-mother and step-sister in Florida. For some reason I caught the "TR3 bug" when I was there. I saw a restored TR3 on Craig's List nearby, but did not check it out. (It is still for sale today. Makes you wonder.) We went to St. Augustine for an afternoon, and while the ladies were in a craft shop I stopped in a die-cast model shop. There I spotted a highly detailed model of a TR3A made by KYOSHO. It was expensive, but I bought it, and later found out that I paid less than what it is worth. Returning to New Hampshire, the desire to purchase a TR3 continued. In Octo-

ber and November I began to actively follow what was for sale on eBay, Craig's List, Hemming's, and other internet venues. I was getting educated as to what was being offered, and at what price. One car that showed up turned out to be just a few hours drive. I was almost sold before I saw it, because when I called I was told that it had been disassembled and restored. Was this a frame up? Wow, was I deceived. Remember, I am not "mechanical" but my Dad did teach me enough to be dangerous, and I do know what I am looking at. This "frame-off" restoration had paint over dirt underneath,



misaligned panels, a door that would not close. ("Oh, it is only a hinge pin problem," he said. No, I know what a hinge pin problem is from my 1929 Ford!) I was told that the foam insulation I discovered (the kind you use to seal gaps around windows during construction) was to keep water from entering between the inner and outer rails. I am not that dumb!

In November I stepped up my efforts and posted a "want ad" on Craig's list. I received an email from a gentleman in Kentucky offering a TR3 that he had restored. I asked how he saw my ad. I thought Craig's list had to be searched locally, but he directed me to an unaffiliated site called www.Craiglook.com that searches all Craig's list locations and provides the results. We struck up an email exchange, but I was still watching every-

thing, especially with the tip he gave me. A car showed up on eBay that only needed paint. The body had been redone. It seemed to be a bargain, but before bidding I needed to become even more educated.

I headed across the river into Vermont thinking that a VW shop there could help with repairs. The owner said I had to go see David at Sports Car Services in Putney (David Clark – 802 387-4540). I had heard of David before, but being "low-key" I had not pursued the tip. This time I headed off to meet him. He changed my life (at least my TR3 life) with his wisdom and advice. I felt an immediate connection and trust. "If you buy a restored car, you don't know what is underneath," he told me. "But," he continued, "if you find a car within 250 miles I will be happy to look at it with you." He toured me through his shop and dairy barn packed with close to 30 British sports cars. I was impressed! That afternoon the car on eBay that had prompted my visit sold at well over \$17,000.

December was beginning and I was producing and directing A CHRISTMAS CAROL for

The Walpole Players as our gift to the community and as a benefit for the Fall Mountain Food Shelf. The fellow in Kentucky emailed me, and I replied that I had to back off at this time because of these other commitments. The new year arrived, and I started checking what TR3s were for sale "on-line" several times a day. Then my Kentucky email friend contacted me and asked, "Ray, still interested?" We began a more intense interchange, asking for more photos that would show the panel alignment photos, etc. I asked David for advice. He asked for still more photos that would show panel alignment, since much of the rear of the car had been replaced. By now, I was getting desperate. I really wanted a TR3 to fill my time and travels in 2010. Even though I was close to making a commitment for the TR3 in Kentucky, I contin-

ued looking to see what else was out there. If it had not rained that weekend in Kentucky, preventing the car from being taken outside for the detailed pictures of the panel joints, I probably would have bought the car. But fortunately for me, the rains came.

I do not know why (Yes I do, God intervenes.) but I checked Craiglook.com an hour earlier than usual on Wednesday, January 27th. An original unmolested TR3 had just been listed in Connecticut. I emailed the seller for more pictures, I stewed about it for a few moments because I want a restored car. David's words haunted me, "You do not know what is underneath the paint, or how they really redid the mechanicals." I called the seller and talked about thirty minutes closing the call saying I would like to come down later. But first I wanted to call a friend. I called David. He was not in the shop yet. A tense thirty minutes passed. I was reaching for a phone to call the seller to take the car sight unseen when my other line rang and it was David. "Sounds like it is worth a look," he said, "come pick me up." I replied, "Why don't we go in your truck and trailer, it might save a trip." He agreed, and twenty minutes later we were on the road. To make a short story shorter – high speed run to Connecticut – look at the car – lunch break – back to make offer – accepted – time to pay. I had about half the cash, and had my check-books. I did not stop at the bank to cash a check, I was in a rush and whenever I have bought books in the last twenty years, checks have never been a problem. Not this time, so we jumped into the seller's car, off to his bank just in time to have the door locked behind us. Out of state check – NO, wire transfer, fine, but will not be in his account until tomorrow. Ugh! It may have been David who said, credit card? The bank checked and agreed to process a cash advance. Well, there was a \$126 fee, but that was cheaper than another trip, or losing the car. We loaded it up and were back to David's shop in Vermont at 7 PM. Ten hours had passed since I first saw this car "on-line". Now, instead of the restored

one I had first considered, I was the proud owner of an original, unmolested TR3!

The next morning, Thursday, we pushed the car into David's shop and took a look. With each inspection it looked better and better. It was more solid than I had imagined. This TR3 had been in a barn since 1969. Supposedly, the original owner parked it there. The 1969 license plate still hung on the rear. Now the ironies of "meant to be" set in. I mentioned before that my Model "A" Ford roadster originally lived in a barn a few miles from my home and shop in Connecticut. Well, if you go over the hill in the opposite direction a few miles to Kent you will find another barn where my TR3 sat for forty-one years. I now have two cars, both



from barns just miles from where I had lived. Both black, unmolested and, not counting the speculator middle-men, I am the second owner of both. David and I spent a few hours discussing our plan of attack. I love to keep old cars in their original condition, if possible, and this particular car has a really good body. I definitely wanted the reliability that a complete engine and mechanical restoration would bring me, but was not sure what to do about the body. So the next step was for David to call his body restoration expert, Jason Marechaux of Mount Holly, VT (phone 802 259-2452). He agreed to meet us on Saturday to examine the car. I said that I wanted to conserve the engine compartment, cockpit, and boot area, and have the refinishing match the exterior finish. "Time for a road trip," David said. He wanted to move a TR6 to

Jason's shop and I tagged along to see work-in-progress there including a gutted bare metal TR3. "Oh no," I thought, "I can't do that to my Black Beauty!" We adjourned for lunch, and Jason talked about full body restoration. David was coming to my aid emphasizing original conservation. Jason saw our point, and the challenge.

Four days into this adventure (I was worried about what would occupy my time in 2010 – no longer) and I was heading off to The Balsams for a break. David had told me about his friend Mike and said I should visit him on the way home so I stopped for a visit. David had filled Mike in on our project, and shared the pictures. Mike was envious of my car, emailing

David saying, "don't touch that car, anyone can restore one, no one can age one like that." For decades Mike has specialized in TR3s and parts. He showed me through his barn - all three levels and around the property. But, we did not get to the house across his fields that he bought to store more parts in. What a resource of used parts and new old stock from Triumph dealers that he has bought out over the years. Who would ever want to buy an overseas repro when NOS is available? Keep him in mind (Michael Buonanduci, Corinth, VT 802 439-5815), I will find what I need in his vast unbelievable stock.

As I am finishing this story, I have owned my 1958 TR3 for less than two weeks, and am more excited than the first day. I am a "shunpiker" and love to traverse the back roads and explore. I know where my "black beauty" and I will tour, picnic, and head for overnights. I don't want to own a show car, I enjoy fun cars so I do not have to worry about scratches. I want reliability, and I will have that 100%. The rest will be a conservation effort, as we are really custodians of these old cars. They should be preserved for future generations to enjoy. Do follow my progress on the Shutterfly site, and email me (rayboas@comcast.net) if you would like me to add you as a member. Reflecting back, this was "meant to be." See you on the road soon!