

Wires & Tyres

December 2020



www.memphisbritishcars.org

British Sports Car Club, LTD Memphis, Tennessee

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Secretary	Jim Duke

Membership Meetings

Coletta's Italian Restaurant, 2850 Appling Rd.

3rd Monday of each month
6:00 p.m. if you wish dinner
7:00 p.m. for our program

Mark your calendar

For now, write TBD on all calendar pages!!!



Alright, admit it, we're all bored. This Covid plague is wearing more than thin, and medical experts are saying we won't start seeing light at the end of this tunnel for at least three more months. The BSCC isn't doing anything, so how do we pass the time? Give these a try -

Try to grow an avocado. It will die in a few weeks, but at least you can say you tried. Plan your next vacation down to the very last detail. We don't know when it will happen, that's up to the fates, but we can at least guess how it will happen and what we want to see when we're there.

Learn something that's not exactly essential in life, like juggling. Three balls minimum. Transfer photos from your phone to an external hard drive. This is your chance to banish the "full memory" warning for at least a month.

If you have a dog, teach him something he can't do. Fetching a ball won't cut it and playing a piano is too hard.

Unsubscribe from all those newsletters and blogs clogging your inbox that you never open. Google your name in quotation marks and see what comes up. It might be time to delete that Hotel account you'd forgotten about.

Learn how to crochet: you will get so pissed off at the tutorial you'll forget about anything else for a good half hour at least.

Lt. Mednikow's Love Affair

Adapted From Jon Sparks in Reviere 2013

A keen interest in the mechanicals of automobiles isn't quite what we'd expect of a fine jeweler, but Bob Mednikow often runs counter to form. The Mednikow family has been Memphis jewelers for 130 years, yet Bob's father would complain about the unseemly grease under Bob's fingernails. Bob wasn't deterred.

In the U.S. Army, after attending the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO, second lieutenant Mednikow was assigned to a base in Germany. There he saw Grace Kelly and Cary Grant in the movie 'To Catch A Thief'. In the movie, Kelly drove a sapphire blue Sunbeam Alpine roadster and Bob thought to himself, "That's the most beautiful car I've ever seen." He was so enamored that he set out immediately to buy one. And, immediately, Bob encountered a roadblock...

"The dealer first told me that the car wasn't



being made anymore. I said, how is that possible, I just saw the movie!" The dealer had to remind Bob that it had been a while between the film being show and when it was released, and in that time they'd stopped making the car.



Bob responded by asking, "Can you call other dealers? Maybe there's one somewhere. So he got on the telephone and started calling all over Europe trying to find one. He finally got back to me and said nobody had one. They only made 3500 of them and that's all there were in the world."

Bob Mednikow isn't one to surrender that easily, so he asked, "Surely someone has one on a used car lot or somewhere. Can you look further?" So, the dealer kept searching and finally called a representative at the Sunbeam factory. "There's one of them on a ship that's in the English Channel right now," the representative said. "And, it's the last one ever made." The dealer said, "If you give me a firm order, they'll radio the ship and divert the car to Germany."

Bob promptly said, "I'll take it."

ASSOCIATED INTERNATIONAL
TRADERS
DARMSTADT

BILL of SALE

For and in consideration of the sum of
\$ 2,075.00
(two thousand and seventy-five)
we do hereby sell and assign to :

Lt. M e d n i k o w
Fulda / Germany APO 26
Finance Office

the following described motor-car on behalf of the
Rootes Group Division, Devonshire House, Piccadilly,
London, W. 1

1 Sunbeam-Alpine
Two-seater Roadster

Chassis No. A5501706
Motor No.

Colour: alpine-mist
Model : 1955

Lt. Mednikow having paid the full purchased price
for the above mentioned car, is now the lawful
owner of said vehicle.

ASSOCIATED INTERNATIONAL TRADERS
DARMSTADT
ZITRUSSTRASSE 10
DARMSTADT 11
TELEFON 11 11 11

Darmstadt, May 20, 1955
(A. J. van Gilse)

So, the coveted Alpine was officially purchased on May 25, 1955 for \$2075. It was

off-loaded at Bremerhaven, Germany where Bob went to collect it. It really was the last Alpine made—Serial Number 3501 (they didn't designate any car with number 13), so it was the last just as the dealer said.

Cars of that era needed to be driven gently for the first few hundred miles as part of the break-in. When that process was finished, Bob decided it was time to see what it would do. "I got it out on the Autobahn, the top down, and I opened it up. It wasn't made to race," Bob said, "but it was successful in rallies, very sturdy and durable with a sporting body."

"So, I took it out on the Autobahn, opened it up and got it up to 85 mph, put it in overdrive, and it moved up to 100. Then it crept further up to 106 mph and it was on a level road, and I probably had a tailwind going to get it that fast." That's about when Bob glanced at his rearview mirror to spot a red spot growing larger and larger. "Sure enough, this red spot was the new Austin Healey 6, a six cylinder engine in a little body, and anyone that cared about sports cars knew that with the 6, you'd let out the clutch, step on the gas and then hang on for dear life because it was like a rocket ship taking off."

That's how Bob discovered he wasn't the fastest man on the Autobahn, but he didn't care. He was in love for life.

With his Army tour of duty soon coming to a close, Bob arranged for his Alpine to be shipped to New York, where his cousin Marilyn, who lived in Greenwich Village, would pick it up at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. She had agreed to hang onto the car until he got back, but Marilyn and husband Alan found it difficult to manage the Sunbeam's gearbox. Bob explained, "The gearshift in the Alpine is the reverse of any normal car of that era, second is where third was and fourth was where first gear was, and overdrive was on the steering wheel. Four gears plus overdrive. Marilyn says she had to take the whole day off from work to pick it up and they couldn't figure how to drive it back to Greenwich Village. Alan finally figured it out enough to get it moving without stripping the

gears." They left the Alpine with a nearby garage while Bob finished out his Army tour.

Following his Army discharge, Bob elected to hang around to see some of Europe. "I stayed until September at which time my money ran out. I'd purchased the plane ticket in advance, so I knew when my money ran out, I could still get home. I landed in New York City with my passport and \$8." He called his cousin to ask if he could stay at her apartment. She said to come on over, and the taxi from the airport to Greenwich Village was \$7. "I didn't have enough money to buy a meal with," Bob said, "but my cousin fed me until I was able to get some money out of my bank account in Memphis."

When Bob went to retrieve the Alpine from the garage, he found a big dent in the rear bumper. "I told the guy at the garage that someone was careless in parking the car and asked whether he would accept responsibility. He said, "No, that's what bumpers are for, to take dents." Bob wouldn't give up. The garage wanted \$125 for three months storage, so Bob told him, "I tell you what, I'll keep the \$125 and not hold you liable for the dent." Bob got in his Sunbeam and drove off, and never heard from the garage again.

Still in New York City, "I was driving down Broadway and it started to miss a little bit," Bob said. "I pulled over and was reaching under the dashboard trying to reach the wires, but pulled too hard and whole wire harness came out. Now I'm at Broadway and 55th Street in this little foreign car and nothing is happening. I managed to get it pushed to the side to work on it." Bob had to remove the seats to get at the problem. "There's a picture from the movie showing Cary Grant and Grace Kelly with the car and the seats taken out," Bob said. "You could push a button take them out and use them as beach chairs." Bob wasn't on a beach, however, he was stuck under the dashboard with screwdriver and the car's manual with his feet sticking up while he corrected the

wire issue. "People are walking by looking at this scene in a little foreign car. Just another day in New York City."

Bob got it running, drove it home to Memphis where it has been ever since.

Not counting a small 30-year gap when the car lived in a barn in Marked Tree, Arkansas. How that occurred is another love story.

Fresh from the Army, Bob came home to the family business – he was the latest generation of Mednikows at Mednikow Jewelry that had opened in 1891.

Bob knew beauty when he saw it -The Sunbeam Alpine. And then there was Betty.

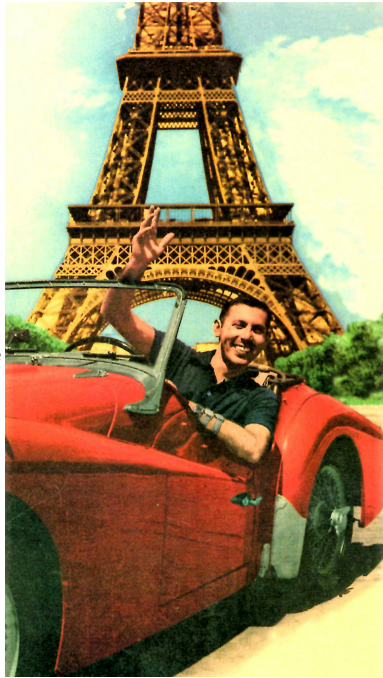
"I was working downtown at my office one day," Bob said. "I was on the, mezzanine and could see the showroom floor. I saw this girl coming into the store and she was the most beautiful girl I ever saw in my life. I couldn't believe my eyes, so I stopped what I was doing and I went downstairs. Mr. Cardwell, who worked for us, introduced himself to her and saw me approaching. He said to me, 'Would you like to help this young lady?'"

"I started talking to her and she had this beautiful soft southern accent," Bob said. "Her voice was like Zubin Mehta conducting the New York Philharmonic—it was just unbelievable, and I couldn't believe anyone could be this beautiful."

She was shopping, it turned out, for a present for her boyfriend. Mention of a boyfriend didn't deter Bob. "Where do you go to school?" he asked. "Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri," she replied. "What a coincidence," he said, "I graduated from the University of Missouri there in Columbia."

"We had common ground, now," Bob said. She chose cufflinks for the boyfriend and Bob asked, "Would you like to get them engraved? Because

there's no charge for engraving and takes about a week." She agreed to the engraving, so Bob proceeded to ask, "What is your name and address and where can I reach you by phone?" When she returned to pick the cufflinks up a week later, Bob said, "By the way, would you like to go out with me?" She replied that while it would be fun to talk about Columbia, Missouri, she did have a serious boyfriend, so no thank you.



As you should know by now, Bob wasn't stopped by that.

He sent her a photo of him posing in front of the Eiffel Tower, and says, "I sent this to Betty and said I hoped when she came back she would stop by and we could get better acquainted. She answered my postcard, and we started writing back and forth."

When Betty came home for spring break, Bob

said, "Your boyfriend is in a different school and he's not home. Go out with me." She agreed, and they set a first date. Since it was raining the night of their first date, Bob didn't want to drive his Alpine convertible and borrowed a friend's car instead. He picked her up at her home in Marked Tree, Arkansas, and the date went well, so they decided to go out again before she returned to school. "It wasn't raining this time, so I drove down and picked her up in the Sunbeam, and we drove back to Memphis." Unfortunately, rain started before they got to Memphis.

"In the Sunbeam, you have two choices: stop and put the top up, which two people with experience can do in 30 minutes. Or you can drive faster so the rain blows over you. I liked to drive faster. That was fine until after crossing the bridge into Memphis they had to

stop for a traffic signal. The rain then poured in.

Bob's quick, inelegant fix was to use the tonneau. Bob drove while Betty scrunched down under it. "She's only half drenched at this point," Bob said, "just enough to ruin her hairdo." The rain let up and they labored through putting the top up, but otherwise had a fine time on their date.

With that adventure under their belts, they decided on another date. Bob knew he was greatly attracted and that the relationship might get serious. He also realized he had never asked Betty about one detail of her life.

"I asked her how old she was and she said she would be 18 in January." Bob was dumbfounded! She was in college and seemed to be at least 19 or 20. "Here I was a grizzled 28-year-old dating a 17-year-old girl, driving back and forth to Arkansas. I said, 'Oh my gosh, what am I doing?'"

That she was headed back to school helped. The next summer when she was 18, Bob felt better about the situation. "At least she was over 17," he said. "So we continued to date and it really did get serious. We talked about getting more serious, but I thought that I just couldn't get married to an 18-year-old girl. I was 28 and didn't want it to get out of hand." They went on like that for a year though. And it did not get out of hand.

But, Bob had concluded it couldn't continue she was so young and still in college. He went to pick her up for one last date where he would tell her the relationship couldn't keep going. "I went down to pick her up in the Sunbeam with the top down," he said, "I rang the doorbell and she came to the door holding a plate of homemade chocolate chip cookies. I inhaled! Chanel has never produced a fragrance like that. I bit into one of the cookies and thought to myself, 'What have I done?'"

They drove back to Memphis for dinner at the old Embers Restaurant. They talked about this and that and the cookies. "Finally," Bob said, "I

told her this was the most absurd romance any two people could get into. I was 28 and had traveled all over the world. I knew what a good drink was, and there weren't many bars I passed by without stopping to get acquainted with the bartender. And, I was Jewish and she wasn't. We had all these impediments and she hadn't even finished college. I told her we had to put an end to it."

Betty told Bob, though, that she didn't see any impediments from her point of view. She wanted to continue. "So I said the only thing for us to do is get married – and she said all right."

Bob was a man with an accounting background, a careful businessman, a mature gentleman used to having things go according to plan. But this date hadn't turned out anywhere near what he had envisioned when it started out. It began with that chocolate chip cookie and spun out of control, going from talk of a breakup to a marriage proposal over the course of one dinner.

"We walked out of the restaurant," Bob said, "and when we got to the car, Betty said, 'do you want to take the napkin back?' I still had the napkin tucked into my belt."

He was flustered, but happy. They drove back to Marked Tree and he told her they'd talked enough for one night and he was going back to Memphis in his Alpine to ponder what had happened.

One of the first things he considered was that he needed to get Betty an engagement ring. "I was looking at what we had in the store," he said. "We had a nice mom-and-pop business and the largest diamond we had was a one carat diamond. But I wanted to give her something larger – we were in the business and everyone would be looking at it. So I told Betty I didn't have a ring yet, but that I was going to the New York jewelry show with my father and would find something there."

One week turned into two and Bob went and found the gem he liked, but it had to be mounted. "Meanwhile," Bob said. "Betty's mother is getting suspicious. We're getting married but there's no engagement ring? And, I have a jewelry store? Her mother felt something wasn't adding up."

Finally, the ring came from New York. "I called her," Bob said, "but didn't tell her the ring had come in. She was sick in bed with a cold, however. I told her I was driving over anyway. I took the ring and the box it was in and put it in a brown grocery sack. I drove over to Marked Tree and Betty was in pajamas feeling just awful. Her parents had gone out to a rodeo. I looked at her and said, "I've got something my doctor says will cure your cold."

Betty still had no idea. She sniffled and complained that nothing would work. But she took the bag anyway. She opened the box and put on the ring. Suddenly, Betty was better.

"She got up and said she was going to get dressed," Bob said. "I asked where we were going and she said we had to go find her mother and father. We drove over to the rodeo and found them in the stands."

They were delighted, not only at the ring, but at the fact their daughter had been miraculously cured of her cold.

"That ring had a carat and a half diamond," Bob said. "By the time the night was over, everybody in Marked Tree had built it up to a 6 carat diamond that came from this old guy in Memphis."

Through it all, the Sunbeam Alpine was there for them. Rain or shine, doubt or certainty, top up and top down.

"That's part of the background with the car," Bob said. "I drove this car with her and we were fine."

They got married in 1961 and before long were having children. But the Alpine, an expression of

adventure, travel and romance, was not really made for more than two people.

"When Jay was born we could barely drive to Marked Tree with an infant and all the baby stuff like the carriage and so on," Bob said. "When Molly came along, it became impossible to use for general transportation although I could drive it to and from work. So we had to get a bigger car."

But Bob was not about to part with the other beauty in his life. Betty's father told him he could keep it in one of his barns in Arkansas. "I said fine. I'd park it there for a couple of months, and that turned out to be 30 years."

Bob had put a tarpaulin over the car, which helped protect it from the elements. But there it stayed for three decades, from about 1965 to 1995, while Bob and Betty raised a family and tended to business.

A friend of Bob's who was in a sports car club asked him about it one day and said he'd like to buy it. "I don't even know what it looks like now," Bob told him. So he went back to the barn and took the tarp off. "I opened the hood and a raccoon stuck his head out. He'd made a home in the engine compartment and I just slammed the hood shut and said I guessed I would sell the car."

"My friend said he'd give me \$1000 for it," Bob said. But the more he thought about it, the more he realized he needed to at least see if his beloved Sunbeam could be restored.

He determined that it probably could be done but he didn't imagine it would take 10 years to complete. Bob had acquired as many spare parts as he could when he bought the Alpine in 1955, and that helped but it was still a long haul. There was a false start with a guy in Tupelo who held onto the vehicle and did very little with it. Bob had to get a court order to get his car back and then had to restart the restoration process.

"I asked around some more and finally somebody gave me the name of this man in North Carolina who did wonderful restoration of antique cars," Bob said. "I called him, but he said he was retired. But then he asked me what car I had. Turns out that he would work on a project he found really interesting and this was it. He came over with a flatbed truck, got the Alpine and took it to North Carolina.

"This time it was done correctly, meticulously," Bob said of the job that would ultimately cost around \$35,000. "We had a hard time finding parts, but we called all over. The only things not original are the muffler and the battery – we didn't want to put a British battery in it."



The paint was an improvement over the original. "The paints in those days weren't very good," Bob said. You had to put in all sorts of preservatives and it lasted at best for about four years, especially British paints. So we re-created the paint by going to a body shop and taking a little of this and a little of that until we got it to a 99 percent replication.

Getting the tires was a challenge, as well, they were an odd size and not made anymore. But, eventually Bob found tires that came as close as possible and were able to support the fairly heavy weight of the car.

Finding a windshield was a terrifically difficult thing. It had delaminated and couldn't be fabricated. But – wonder of wonders – a windshield from a Sunbeam Talbot became available. The Alpine was derived from the Talbot, so the fit was exact.

But there's always something that gets in the way. In this case, the seller was in the Cotswolds in England. It's a beautiful part of the world, but at the time, there seemed to be no way to get the windshield out of there. FedEx and UPS weren't an option. He was rarely at home. It was impractical to leave it with a neighbor for pickup.

"This goes on for four months," Bob said. "I finally figured a way we could pick it up. Jay's roommate in college was president of a bank that had a branch in London. I had Jay call his friend and see what could be done. Finally, some junior, junior grade officer of the bank branch in London got in the company's car and drove; I don't know how many hours to the Cotswolds."

He got the windshield, loaded it up and brought it back to London where it was shipped FedEx. "The shipping cost



more than the windshield," Bob said. "But we put it on and there was the car delivered to me in 2005,

completely restored, and that's total happiness."




**Drive a
Sunbeam
and eclipse
your friends!**

This is it! This is the car sports car fans have been waiting for... the Sunbeam Alpine Sports!
 Sunbeam—maker of the first car to do 200 mph and the only British car ever to win the French Grand Prix—now goes on to even greater things.
 Here at last is a sports car with road-race performance... and all-weather, all-day comfort, too. The Alpine Sports puts a roof over your head when you need it. It gives you deep-cushioned seats, a wonderful heater and luggage space to spare.
Discover the thrill of driving the Sunbeam Alpine Sports today!



All-weather top goes up without a hitch and disappears miraculously when folded.

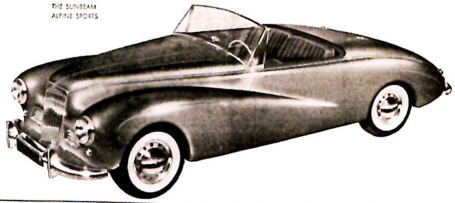


Stow all your luggage in this oversized locker. (The spare wheel goes underneath.)



Replace the removable windshield with this plastic racing screen in competition.

THE SUNBEAM ALPINE SPORTS



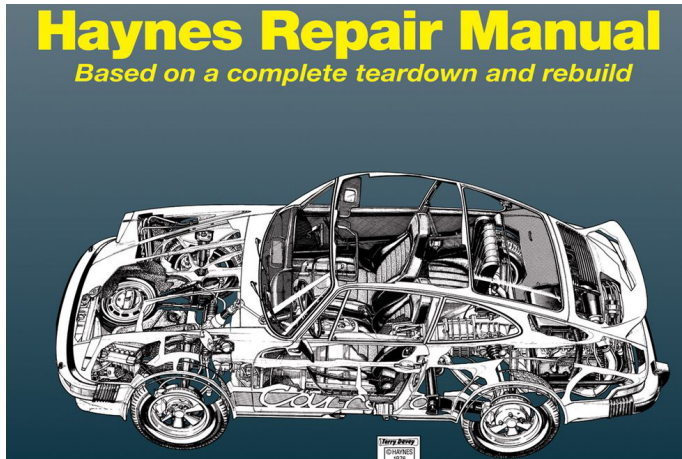
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I changed my car horn to the sound of gunshots. People get out of the way much faster now.

Bye Bye Greasy Haynes Book



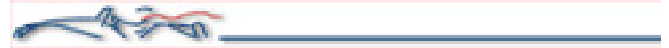
Haynes Manuals, the workshop manual producer that makes detailed maintenance manuals on pretty much every relevant car on the planet, recently announced it will no longer publish any of its new print workshop manuals in paper form. Manuals published by the company from here on out will only be available in digital form.

In a Twitter message, the company said it will continue to print its back catalog of existing manuals, so if there is already one on your car, you're still in luck if you want a physical copy. Haynes, based in the U.K. and founded in 1960, has been a lifesaver for enthusiasts around the world looking to do the work on their own cars. Instead of dropping a bunch of money on a dealer or repair shop, you could pick up a Haynes manual and have all the info you need to get any job done. It's saved many of us countless hours and a ton of money on repairs. Just because Haynes won't publish any of its new manuals in print, doesn't mean they're on the way out the door. "We are currently in the process of creating an exciting and comprehensive new automotive maintenance and repair product that will cover around 95 percent of car makes and models—an increase of around 40 percent over our current Workshop Manual coverage," a spokesperson for the company is reported to have said, "This will provide consumers with more choice than ever before. More details will be provided in due course."

An 8-year old, asked his dad, "Do you want me to throw the confetti in my pocket?"

Dad replied, "Not in the car, and why do you have confetti in your pocket?"

Son, "It's my emergency confetti. I carry it everywhere in case there's good news."



A Very Brief History Of The MG Y

In the years just before WWII, MG sought to supplement their popular range of 'Midget' sports cars with three saloons of various body and engine sizes. These were the 'S', 'V' and 'W' models. As part of the Nuffield organization, the MG factory at Abingdon on Thames had grown by developing Morris - based products.

1939 saw construction of a prototype 'Y' Type with an intended launch at the Earls Court Motor show the following year. However, World War II intervened, and the public had to wait eight more years before production started.

While the prototype of the MG 'Y' Type was primarily a Morris, much of the 'fleshing out' was completed at Abingdon. The car featured independent front suspension, which was very much the latest technology, and the 'Y' Type became one of the first

British production cars with this feature.



Gerald Palmer led the body styling effort. He took a Morris Eight Series E four-door

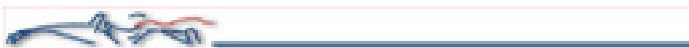
bodyshell in pressed steel, added a swept tail and rear wings, also a front-end MG identity in the shape of their well-known upright grille.

The resulting MG 1 1/4 Liter Saloon kept the traditional feature of separately mounted headlights, although Morris was integrating headlamps into the front wings of their editions. It also had a separate chassis under this pressed-steel bodywork, even though the trend in the industry was toward 'unitary construction'.

The separate chassis facilitated the 'Jackall System', which comprised four hydraulically activated rams attached to the chassis, two at the front and two at the rear.

Connected to a proprietary pump on the firewall, the jacks allowed the front, the back, or the entire car to be raised to facilitate a wheel change.

Power came from a single carburetor version of the 1,250 cc engine used in the latest 'TB' Midget. This engine, the XPAG, later used to power both the 'TC' & 'TD' Midgets. The MG Y Type developed 46 HP at 4,800 rpm, with 58.5 lb ft of torque at 2,400 rpm.



More News –

Kevin Kastner, Director of Marketing and Sales, Moss Motors, Ltd., announced on November 20th that Moss Motors will acquire the Victoria British arm of Long Motor Corp.



After more than 30 years, Victoria British Ltd., a division of Long Motor Corporation, has passed the baton to Moss Motors Ltd. to carry on the tradition of supplying car parts and accessories for British car owners around the world.

President of Victoria British, Becky Hanrahan said, "It was not a decision that we made lightly. We were Victoria British before we were LMC Truck, but we know we have not been giving the British market the attention it deserves. We feel our customers would be better served by a company whose primary focus is the British car market."

Victoria British has for many years been a key resource for British sports car owners and their mission to "Keep'em On The Road®". The Moss Motors acquisition of Victoria British is aimed at maintaining the same spirit of supporting the British sports car industry and community.

"As a long-standing name in the British sports car community, we recognize the rich history of Victoria British and will do our best to carry on their legacy," said Ed Moss, President, Moss Motors. "It's an exciting chapter for Moss Motors and we look forward to bringing together the best traditions of both companies to continue serving the industry by supporting car owners, restoration businesses and British sports car enthusiasts alike."

In the coming weeks, both companies will be posting news and reaching out to customers, suppliers, and other contacts regarding the details of the transition.

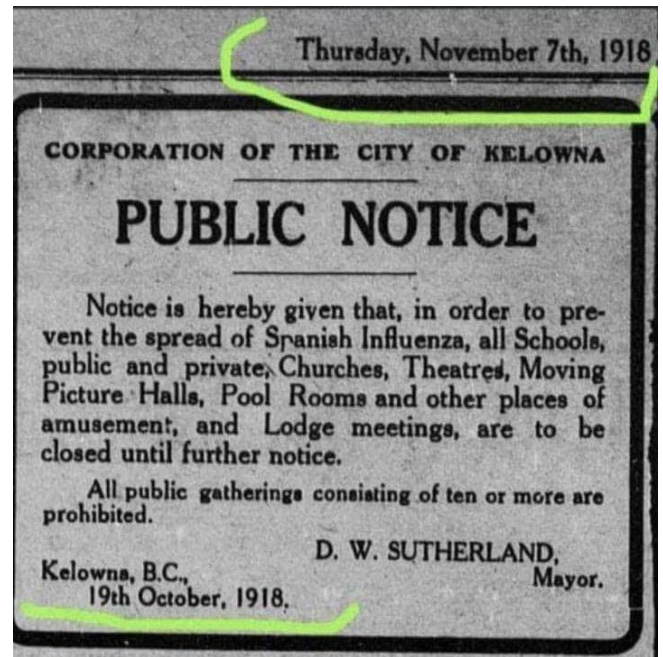
Victoria British LTD. was founded in 1981 and is a manufacturer and retailer specializing in British sports car parts and accessories for MG, Triumph, Austin Healey and Sunbeam. www.victoriabritish.com

Moss Motors Ltd. was founded in 1948 and is a multi-national warehouse distributor, manufacturer and retailer of performance, restoration and replacement parts for vintage British and specialty market vehicles including Jaguar, MG, Triumph, Austin Healey, classic Mini and Miata. mossmotors.com/victoria-british



Breaking News

Connecticut is cold in the winter, and it snows there!



After spending several hours wandering through the woods, Bob and Jim are thoroughly lost.

Disoriented, they sit down to discuss what to do next.

"Hey, I have an idea," says Bob. "If we each fire three shots into the air, someone will hear them and come to help us."

Jim agrees, so each of them fires their shots. An hour later, nobody has come to help, so they decide to fire three more shots. Another hour passes - still no one.

"Okay lets try this one more time" says Bob.

"Dude, this had better work," replies Jim. "These are our last arrows".

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