

Wires & Tyres



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The British Sports Car Club, LTD - Memphis, Tennessee

September, 2020

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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

September 21st, 2020??????
October 20th



Colors (or Colours) and You

Driving a Memphis street a while back I spotted a new Volvo SUV painted in a dusty pale blue with an Old English White roof—Beautiful and memorable. Then, a comment in a recent 'Comedians In Cars Getting Coffee' brought that memory to mind. Jerry Seinfeld and his guest were admiring a teal blue 1956 Corvette with white coves, when Seinfeld asked, "When did they stop painting cars in fun colors; when did we stop having fun?"



Have we really quit having fun?

My informal review of passing cars showed how little fun or excitement we seek through car color—grey, black, brown, white, all drab and uninteresting statements on life. What color is your daily driver? Ours is a dark gunmetal grey, geeze, can you get

any duller? Thinking back on our last several cars, I've got to go back to the early 1970s (a lifetime ago!) to recall a family car colored with any hint of fun.

Have we grown cautious and fearful of visually standing out? Even youth oriented cars



(think Chargers, Mustangs, and Camaros) typically sport sedate color schemes. Or, maybe, automobile builders and vendors have grown fearful to offer sporty colors in the belief they won't sell? Maybe you must 'special order' your next new car to get a color to make an optimistic statement.

Our drab color worldview doesn't seem to spill into British sports cars so much. Those appear in a wide variety of vibrant colors—various reds, blues, maroons,



greens and yellows, many with contrasting

stripes or even graphic designs. We have to admit, however, that bright expressive colors don't seem to fade onto the larger saloon cars such as Bentleys, Rollers, and Jags. Maybe it would violate their stately mien?



Do you think we show our philosophy of life by our choice of car color? Do we show a pragmatic, even pessimistic outlook in our daily driver life as opposed to optimism and joie de vivre in our sports cars? Do the openly

emotional sports car colors reveal our authentic view on life, or does our outlook adopt the 'open road', the 'world is my oyster' attitude presented by steering a spirited car.

Regardless if it is the cause or the effect, getting out in our beloved British sports cars can be an antidote to gloominess. Back when my MG (red) was a daily driver, my habit was to lower the top before commuting to work. That simple act was enough to help ensure a smile creased my face to start each workday.

I need to do it more these days - how about you? Will a dose of the open road give you the spiritual lift you need?

The BSCC hasn't been able to help much of late, but we have a cunning plan underway to change that. Watch for word of a socially distanced driving event around mid-September. All we will need is pleasant weather and a nice open piece of parkland at which to finish the drive. So, stay tuned for later updates.



Nightmare in America

Charles Wells, Oxfordshire, UK



Ed Note: The reader may wish to consult Wikipaedia or other reliable reference for insight into some terms.

In 1934, my father bought an ex-Mille Miglia 1932 Alfa Romeo 1750cc GS Zagato which, with a favourable following wind and appropriate gearing, could just about top the magic ton. It

must have felt amazingly fast because, at the time, British cars were depressingly slow. Out of 77 cars reported on by The Autocar in 1935 only two managed to exceed 100mph and then only by less than a clear mph, a 4.5-litre Lagonda



Rapide and a 28.8hp Railton Sports. For lesser mortals, a 1935 Austin Ruby saloon was 'harry-

flatters' at under 50mph and a 7hp Jowett could only manage 54.5mph. I only mention this because I doubt that my uncle, the owner of a Ruby, had ever travelled at much more than 40mph in a motor car.

In 1935, however, he found himself on the road from San Francisco to Los Angeles. An experience about which he would write later: 'Looking back on it from a distance of time and - thank Heaven - of space also, I can still feel the horror of the nightmare. The hot breath of the Apocalyptic Horsemen is still on my neck and I still wake up on occasions in peaceful England, cold with terror from the dream that I am once again upon the road to Los Angeles.'

A young American friend had offered to drive him down from San Francisco to Los Angeles in his Oldsmobile F35 convertible. He had only



accepted because the alternatives were the train, with which he was getting bored, and

the aeroplane, of which he had always been afraid, and so the prospect of a pleasant couple of days, dawdling down the Pacific Coast, was

alluring. Even when an obvious hint of what was ahead of him was dropped whilst they were breakfasting together in San Francisco, at 7 a.m., on the day of their start, my uncle, still wrapped in a fool's paradise and a European's idea of motor-travelling, hardly noticed it, let alone treated it seriously.

"We'll be there in time for dinner", remarked his friend Frank. Knowing the distance to be about 480 miles, he ignored such a flippant excursion into the spheres of unreality, and continued his breakfast. Even when Frank added casually that he regularly did the trip in less than twelve hours, he did not awake to the seriousness of the situation.

They started off at about 7.30 a.m. and bowled out on to the splendid road to San Jose. At first the pace was the ordinary moderate speed to which he had become accustomed in America. That is to say, they seldom dropped below sixty and never rose above seventy. It was a glorious morning. The sun was shining. the sky was blue, the air was crisp, and although he was sad at leaving San Francisco, there was at least the small measure of consolation that is afforded by the perennial thrill of being on the road again, and heading for new country. He lay back in his seat, stretched his legs out, carolled a stave or



two and gazed vacuously at the Heavens or at the landscape.

But after San Jose he began to feel a perceptible change. The wind was blowing a little harder, the note of the horn was a little

more shrill, and the rest of the traffic seemed to be moving a little more slowly when it was going in the same direction as themselves and a little more quickly when it was coming towards them. At first my uncle was a little drowsy and did not appreciate the significance of these small changes. But when, in the middle of a yawn, he glanced at the speedometer and saw that they were moving at about 90mph he sat up abruptly. From that moment he had no more peace.

Frank's jaw was stuck out, his eyes were flashing, and he crouched over the steering wheel like a dark demon. For my timid uncle, it was a terrifying experience. Frank did not let up for an instant. If ever he felt that he was losing his dash he would switch on the radio and the thunder of Tannhauser or the blood-excitng music of Carmen would spur him to still more dreadful excess of locomotion. The landscape whizzed past them, and out of many scores of miles between San Jose and San Luis Obispo he had no recollection of anything except the wide, tree-filled stony bed of the Salinas River, which he reckoned they must have crossed at least a dozen times, backwards and forwards, from east to west and from west to east, and, for all he knew, from north-east by east to south-west by west and back again.

Hour after hour they rushed southwards, and any faint hopes that he may have cherished that Frank might relax the giddy speed as he grew tired, steadily waned. If anything he drove faster and faster as it began to dawn upon him that he had a very good chance of beating his previous record for the course. And then, just as my uncle had given up all thought of ever seeing his native country again, hope flared up again. For a signpost, of which he was able to catch a glimpse as Frank slowed down for an instant to seventy miles an hour so as not to assassinate an elderly pedestrian, told him that they were approaching the City of the Patron Saint and Protectress of all artillerymen and, as an old gunner of the Great War, he knew he was in the safe keeping of the Blessed Barbara.

The sun came out as they ran merrily into the bright, broad streets of the town, and the cheerful colours of the Spanish houses competed with the flowers, the flags, and streamers to give them a triumphal entry. There was high festival that day in Santa Barbara for



some reason or other, and my uncle was determined to join in, if only for half-an-hour, to get a rest from

the demon driver. Threatening, therefore, to brain Frank with a spanner if he did not halt, he compelled him to drive to an Olde Englyshe Tudor Hostelrie, complete with beer mugs, bogus timbers, pictures of hunting scenes with



the Belvoir and the Quorn, portraits of Mr. Pickwick, and cosy little inglenooks, where he spent one of the brightest hours of his life, restoring his shattered nerves, pouring libations to Santa Barbara, fortifying himself against the last lap of the journey. So mellow,

indeed, did he become and so forgiving, that he solemnly withdrew his prayer to the Lady of Cannons that Frank should be served as her father Dioscorus had been served in 240AD, and allotted a whole lightning bolt to himself.



The sun was setting over the Pacific, and

occasionally a ray of golden light peeped through the oil-derricks, as they swung down the last hundred miles into Los Angeles. Frank drove as fast as ever, but my uncle sat happily, in his corner, singing loudly songs about the artillery at the Battle of the Marne, and at nightfall they reached the City of the Angels.

Charles

Ed. the following is added for clarification:

The cafe racer culture first emerged in London in the late fifties. Bikers would meet at pubs or other establishments to admire each other's bikes and generally shoot the bull.

And what bikes they were! Invariably British, usually lightened with the removal of extraneous equipment, bodywork etc (many big bikes of the time had partially enclosed 'bathtub' rear wheels), low clip on bars to emulate the race bikes of the day.

A common game was to set a course on public roads and race a record on the jukebox, the idea being that if you could do so before the record ends then you had nerves of steel and earned great kudos. In recent years certain historians - who doubtless wouldn't ride a moped - have suggested that this was urban myth. However, my friend's Dad regales us of tales of the cafe racers, of whom he was one, and tells how he lost a friend who crashed while racing "Three Steps To Heaven" by Eddie Cochran on the jukebox, and hung up his leathers after that. He still cries when he tells



the story, so I'm inclined believe him.

The 'ton' was local vernacular for 'one hundred',

which was derived from cockney rhyming slang (alternately from London dockyard slang).

Today any self respecting Italian 125 would out pace the ton, but back then bikes that could do the magic one hundred mile per hour were rare, even the big bikes. Few could afford biggest Triumph twins or a Vincent, so if you could coax your old English iron past the magic ton you were held in great esteem as one of that rarefied breed, the Ton Up Boys.

I don't think the community here is about recklessly risking your life racing a jukebox. I mean, come on, racing Billy Joel hardly has the same effect. Nevertheless we rejoice in our love of speed - and that can be relative - , bikes, and the style that the era inspired, and a salute to a fleeting period when the cafe racers ruled. Amen.



I wish I was this clever

The phone rings and I answer

Me: "Hello."

CALLER: "Hello. This is Bob Bobson from Microsoft Support. We are seeing a lot of virus activity from your device."

Me: "Oh, no. My device? Are you sure?"

CALLER: "Oh yes, we have many reports."

Me: "Oh, jeez. How can I fix it?"

CALLER "It's OK sir. We can help you right now. Are you in front of your device sir?"

Me: "Yes. I was just about to use it. I'm glad you called."

CALLER: "Yes sir, we are going to help you. Can you please push the Start button?"

Me: "I think it's already on."

CALLER: "Okay, sir. Now you want to click on Control Panel."

Me: "I don't see that."

CALLER: "Do you see a bunch of information above the Start button?"

Me: "Yes."

CALLER: "That is your Control Panel."

Me: "Wow, I didn't realize it had a name."

CALLER "Yes sir, now press on Internet Options."

Me: "Yeah, I definitely don't see any Internet options. I don't think I purchased that feature. This is just a cheap one."

CALLER: "They all have the Internet sir. Press the Start button again."

Me: "OK, it's the same as before."

CALLER: "That's OK, sir. We are going to restart your device. Can you please turn it off?"

Me: "Ummm...I don't know how. I've never turned it off. Since I bought it, it just kind of stays on all the time."

CALLER: "There must be an off button on your device. How do you stop it when it's running?"

Me: "In those cases, I usually press the big button."

CALLER: "OK, sir. Please press that button."

Me: "Ok."

CALLER: "Is your device off?"

Me: "No. The door popped open."

CALLER "Door? Is there a disc inside the door?"

Me: "No, there's a burrito."

CALLER: "Why is there a burrito in your computer?"



Me: "Computer? I thought you said this was microwave support."



Escape By Sports Car

First, let's set the stage. In August 1961, communist authorities in East Germany, to thwart citizens trying to flee to freedom in the west, threw up the brutal 'Berlin Wall'. Only select people, those holding certain passports, got passage through Berlin's walled up gates. Heinz Meixner was among those allowed passage. Meixner, an Austrian, who was living



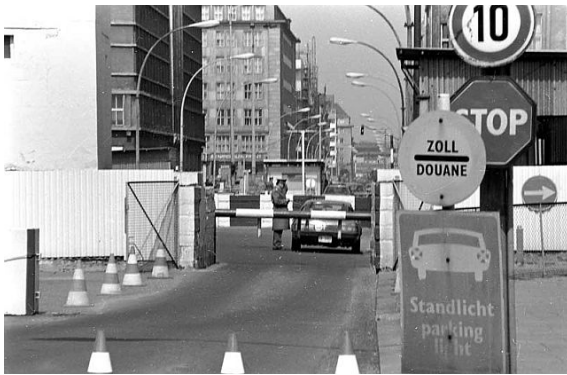
in East Germany while working as an electrical

engineer in West Berlin commuted daily through Check Point Charlie on his motor scooter using his Austrian passport and student visa.

Heinz met Margarete Thureau at a student dance in East Berlin, and the two young adults fell deeply in love. They wanted to marry, and move to Heinz's native Lenz, Austria to build their lives. So, they sought permission for both Margarete and her mother to move from East Germany. Rather than approving their request, the East Germans said Heinz should settle in East Berlin.

The determined couple however wanted to locate in Austria, so Heinz came up with a simple but clever plan. He had noted a gap beneath the metal bar that was raised and lowered to permit passage through the check point.

Faking motor trouble, Heinz pulled his scooter over next to



the bar and measured its height above the pavement at 37.5 inches while pretending to work on the scooter.

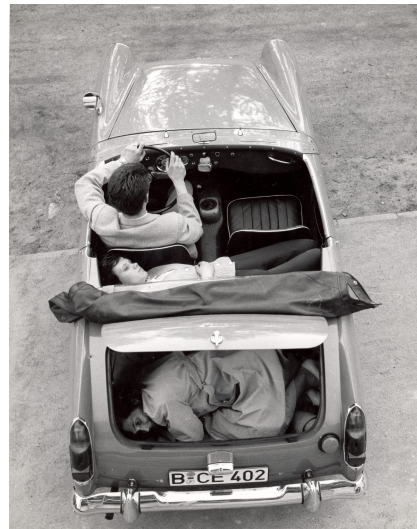
Now all he had to do was find a car which could carry three persons but still be lower than 37.5 inches. A later model Austin-Healey Sprite fit the bill. The top of the windscreen was 48.25



inches, but only 35.5 inches with the windscreen removed; that left two inches to spare. Heinz let

some air from the tires to give them even more of a margin.

With Margarete lying on the rear package shelf and covered by a tarp, and Frau Thureau in the boot, they felt they had a chance. Heinz also placed a few bricks at the back of the boot as



protection against gunshots—the East Germans had a practice of shooting at people trying to flee.

Just after midnight on a chilly May morning, Heinz Meixner slowly approached the East German soldier manning

the check point. He held out his Austrian passport as usual, but the guard sensed something might be out of order and pointed for Meixner to pull over ahead of the metal bar. Heinz pretended to comply but suddenly gunned



the Sprite ahead, dodging around barricades and under the iron pipe.

Maybe surprised by the sudden flight, the guard didn't fire. The Sprite and its precious cargo zoomed safely beneath the pipe, into West Berlin and freedom. Heinz was traveling so fast that he left a 96 foot skid mark coming to a halt.



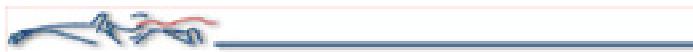
The daring escape gained widespread notice, and Meixner became a hero in the Western media. He later settled in Linz with his East German family.

Two months later, an Argentinean named Norbert Konrad found himself in a similar predicament. He'd heard about Meixner's escape so he, too, rented an Austin-Healey Sprite and headed East to help his fiancée escape.

Konrad didn't know it, but the Healey he was driving wasn't just the same type of car; it was the exact same Sprite that Meixner had used. Konrad's slightly different plan involved loosening the windshield, but keeping it on until the last minute so as not to raise suspicion. The plan worked a second time, and Konrad opened the trunk in West Germany to let his fiancée Helga Werner clamber out.

"The car stopped, and I cringed with fear," she said, according to the Toledo Blade. "Then the trunk opened. Norbert looked at me and said, 'Chubby, we arrived.'"

There would be no more beneath-the-barrier escapes for the Austin-Healey or for any other car. They welded steel bars beneath the barrier, sewing the loophole up tightly. However, for two young German couples, this fix closed the barn door after the Sprite had bolted.



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Turns out it was a marble in the ashtray 🤔🤔



Wants N Gots

Kim Shepard is still selling bespoke face masks. Choose your fabric and if the mask has elastic or ties. \$8 each, they come with a metal nose wire and a pocket for a filter
Text Kim at (901) 283-6762.

Bobby Prior has on offer many E-Type parts both large and small for engine, body, electrical, or mechanical, including nuts, bolts, and screws. For wants, I need: a C23874 aluminum crankcase breather that mounts to front of engine and a C21251 oil dipstick for 4.2 Jag engine. There are just too many to list. email me at ROP AJ@ATT.NET or text to 901-832-4212.

Jim Duke has a container of British car bolts, nuts, washers, springs, etc. They are mostly MGB, but include a few Healey bits, too.

Free to a good home.

Text Jim at 901-428-6905