

# Celebrating 50 Years of the MGB in Georgia

By Ralph Poupard

## Driving an MGB in the Mountains

Last year in Reno we had watched the presentation for the North American MGB Register gathering to be held in Dillard, Georgia this year, organized by the Peachtree MG Registry of Atlanta. Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the MGB in 1962, and being the original owners of our 1973 MGB, we considered attendance mandatory. (OK, that sense of mandatory attendance may have been more in my mind than Kathi's)

You may remember that last year on our way to Reno, our car had its bonnet and grille damaged when a large pickup truck backed into it, while waiting in line at US customs. The damage was repaired and the car repainted last summer. This spring besides the usual maintenance, I installed a new Monza exhaust system, replacing the Ansa system, which had the annoying habit of whistling on acceleration. It sounded like I was being followed by a flock of cicadas.



Traffic Jam in Tennessee

We left our house in Gesto at about 1 PM Tuesday June 5<sup>th</sup>. We must have timed things right since the traffic was not excessive on I-75 south. I had hoped to turn off at Findlay, OH and try RT.23 south, but as usual we left way later than planned

so it was I-75. We drove till about 7:45, stopping in Georgetown KY, for the night. The next morning brought sunny skies, and traffic was light. We were making great time until a construction site, about 30 miles over the Tennessee border. Suddenly traffic completely stopped in both north and south bound lanes. We all turned our engines off and got out of our vehicles. There was an exit to "Stinking Creek Road" about 1-1/2 miles ahead, so after about 35 minutes I decided to walk up the paved shoulder to look around the curve to see if the exit was open and possibly bypass the problem. I had walked more than halfway to the exit when I spotted a State Trooper cruiser with its lights flashing, blocking the exit. As I began to walk back, the north bound lane began moving. I began walking faster, then I heard air brakes coming off in our lane and traffic was starting to move. I was running now to get back to the car and it was uphill! Then I spotted the B coming towards me. Kathi had jumped into the drivers seat and I hopped in the passenger side as she pulled up. The remainder of the drive to Dillard went smoothly. The B was running fine, exhaust growling on the hills and curves through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Nantahala National Forest We arrived at our motel at about 3 pm.

After checking in and dropping off some luggage, we headed over to the Dillard House, where the event was held. The Dillard House is a top notch resort. It is a large complex with beautiful large buildings with meeting rooms, dining halls, cabins etc., all set in a treed area. They are famous for their all you can eat barbecues and buffets. We registered, purchased 2 event shirts, and signed up for Friday's wine tour. Afterwards we ventured

over to the hospitality suite, and the Peachtree Registry members were great. They were so friendly, and made us feel right at home. We stayed on the porch partying with them, hours after the hospitality suite was supposed to close. All of us were so impressed that Elvin Davis' sister, Zelda, had driven from California for the event in her MGB!

On Thursday we went on a self guided tour to Highlands, North Carolina. There was really no need to go to the Tail of The Dragon, since most of the roads in this area are dragon tails. They may not be 318 curves long, but



Mountain Look Out

have 15 to 20 or more curves per mile, for 30 minutes. The road we took to Highlands was, as the name suggests, mostly uphill, with guard rails just inches off the road on some of the more dangerous sections. At one point we stopped at "Bridal Veil Falls", a waterfall that you can drive your car behind. Highlands is a tourist destination with many quaint shops. We enjoyed our visit there and had a nice lunch at the "Main Street Inn". After our return we got ready to head over to the Tiger Drive-In Theatre, in Tiger, Georgia. A basic drive-in, normally they are closed on Thursdays, but the MGs packed the place for a cruise night and movie. The movie was "Men In Black 3". Not a cinematic masterpiece, but entertaining. Kathi didn't agree and read her book by flashlight. Back at our motel an interesting set of cars that I had never seen before were being unloaded. They were 4 Triumph 10s from the early 1960s. A pickup, delivery van, sedan, and estate wagon. Mini cars with 948cc engines, a period brochure claims fuel mileage of 40 - 45 miles per US gallon.

Friday, was wine tour day. Our group left the Dillard House at 9:30 AM for the 2 hour drive to Wolf Mountain Vineyards. More dragon tail roads with forests, climbs and descents, and growling MG exhausts. The weather was sunny and perfect for top down driving and it was one of the best sports car driving days I have ever had. Wolf Mountain was beautifully landscaped, on a mountain, as you would expect, with steep drives leading to the parking area. We had lunch at their excellent 2 storey restaurant and wine tasting bar. Very large decks looked out over the adjacent vineyards, hills and valleys. As we gazed at all of the perfect stone and stained cedar buildings, someone in the group mused that "You would have to sell a lot of wine to pay for all this" An intriguing surprise was that the owner had a special garage filled with 4 Porsches. A 356, a black speedster that was formerly owned by Olivia Newton-John while she was filming Grease, a modern Boxster Spyder, and 911 turbo both white and cabriolets. Our next stop was Helen, Georgia, a Bavarian themed town. Bavaria in Georgia you may ask? It is a little odd. There were lots of beer gardens, and lots of tourists. While Highlands NC was very enjoyable, this town had a mild case of the "overrun with tourists" syndrome. We poked around for about an hour and then headed back to our

motel. The evening event was the barbecue at the Dillard House. I have never seen such a variety of food, and there was no worry about running out. The dessert table was to die for, and nobody left there still hungry.



*At the Tiger Drive*

Saturday was car show day, held in a large grassy field prepared for the event at the Dillard House. There were over 300 cars on the show field and this day was proclaimed MG Day by Rabun County. That evening we attended the awards banquet, with another all you could eat buffet. Wow. Zelda Davis was

given a special award for driving her MGB from California to Georgia. It amounted to an "Award of Bravery".

Sunday we stopped in at the Dillard House to say goodbye, and began the trip home. Elvin, Janet and Zelda Davis were planning on driving straight home, but they left at 5 AM, *just* a little early for us. We drove in rain for the first hour and a half. I love driving in the mountains in rain and mist. We decided we would try to make the 690 mile trip home in one day. As we approached I-75 the traffic was building up, as was the air temperature. We made it till Dayton, OH where there was another huge traffic jam. Our new GPS was flashing an alternate route at an exit that was about 500 feet ahead. We drove on the paved shoulder to the exit along with other vehicles. At the last second I decided I would raise the bypass route length to 7 miles. That was a lucky guess since as we approached I-75 from the bypass route, the overpass we crossed was the exact one where the accident was, and the road was empty on the north side as we merged. That helped thin the traffic for a while, but things built back up as we approached Detroit. We arrived at the Ambassador Bridge Canada Customs booth at about 10:30 PM. At this point you

may be thinking "Hey they made this trip without any problems!" Well ... not quite. I had turned the engine off while speaking to the customs agent and when I went to restart it there was just a click, the same click that showed up near the end of the return trip from Reno. It hadn't done it in a year, but it was not going to start this time. I gave the car a bit of a push as it was downhill towards the customs buildings. It was rolling faster than I expected, so I clumsily jumped in, put it in gear and let the clutch out. It might have started, but I had forgotten that the ignition was off! I then turned the key and it cranked and started normally, and we made it home by 11 PM.

Members of the Windsor-Detroit MG Club in attendance were Elvin and Janet Davis, and Jeff

and Jan Zorn. Everywhere we went in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, people welcomed us. The Peachtree MG Registry did a top notch job, and will be a tough act to follow. No doubt about it they showed us what southern hospitality is all about. And the MGB itself? Despite being designed over 50 years ago, it remains a classic that you can drive anywhere. Fast enough for modern traffic, great handling, decent fuel mileage, extremely reliable when reasonably maintained, and great fun to drive, creating memories to last a lifetime. You can drive top down on a sunny day or starlit night, or plough through 2 foot snow drifts. With the top down and passenger's seat fully reclined you can, as I discovered, carry 2x8x10 ft. long boards from Huntsville, Ontario to Bert Sims Road on Skeleton Lake. It was the icon of the British Sports Car industry, as well as for freedom loving individuals of a generation. I believe it will live on in automotive immortality. It is certainly deserving.



*At the Car Show*