

Driving Home Without A Gas Pedal

by Rich Wagner

With the temperature well into the 70's on the day of the last meeting, Adrienne and I headed out in our Triumph to enjoy another top down drive and dinner at the Brass Pointe with the club. As it turned out, fate had other plans for us when the car's accelerator pedal suddenly stopped working.

Sure that I could easily make the repairs (things like this have happened before), my confidence quickly vanished when I could not see anything wrong. Placing the floor mat on the ground along side of the driver door to stay clean, I was able to kneel down to reach the pedal with my hand only to have it come right off when I pulled on it. Unlike MGs, my TR has no accelerator cable, only a linkage and the gas pedal had sheared the roll pins that coupled it to the shaft.

It was sundown and the daylight was fading quickly, but I managed to get machine wire through the hole of the coupling while Adrienne moved the pedal up and down inside the car. After tightening up the wire, I was sure we could continue on to Brass Pointe for dinner, but that's not what happened. It was much too loose at the pivot point and my makeshift repair did not work.

Eight miles from home at 12 Mile and Farmington Rd. with the "Prince of Darkness" closing in, I told Adrienne that I could drive without an accelerator by raising the idle on the carburetors. Initially, I set it up to 2500 RPM and we began the return trip on 12 Mile Road.

Barely able to reach 25 MPH, the car really slowed down when ever there was a slight incline. Knowing we needed more speed, I turned onto Drake and stopped the motor to kick up the revs since the idle speed changes dramatically when you begin driving. It was now dark out and starting the car, I watched the tach hit 5,000 RPM just as I was engaging the clutch. On the road, we were easily going 50 MPH, but would accelerate rapidly when ever the road went slightly downward and this was too fast since we had no speed control.

Like the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" and the bear's porridge, my first attempt was too slow and my second too fast, but my third was "Just Right". With the idle now set somewhere between 3500 & 4000 RPM, we were able to move easily with the other traffic towards home. Forward shifting to accelerate with a fast running motor is no problem, but how to control deceleration still needed to be figured out.

Braking seemed out of the question and if I push down on the clutch to downshift the engine would roar to a high RPM.

Just up ahead was our turn at Maple Rd. and the light had turned red. We were going about 45 MPH and knowing that we'd be at the light before it turned green, I reached for the ignition key and turned off the motor. To my delight, this was very much like taking your foot off the gas and the car gradually slowed down. Turning the ignition on, the car smoothly increased it's speed. Now this was starting to be fun.

Stopped at the light, I left the car turned off waiting for the left turn arrow. As soon as I saw that I was ready to make my turn, I started the car and immediately engaged the clutch and we headed home once again. Cruising between 35 and 45 MPH everything was fine. Approaching our turn onto Welch and knowing that I had to decelerate and downshift, I simply turned off the engine as we began the turn, downshifted and turned the motor back on. The result was amazing as it duplicated normal operation completely. Repeating this several times as we made other stops and turns, I learned that the Ignition Key really worked well to control the speed of the car without needing to engage the clutch at high RPMs .

Safely back in the garage, we still made it to the meeting, although not before 8 PM.