

Hidden Dangers When Driving Classic Cars

by former Club Member, Rich Wagner

Greetings from Zephyrhills, Florida where Adrienne and I moved to three years ago. Not being 'water sports' people, we live far enough away from water to make the hot summers more bearable than the more famous humid coastal areas or even Tampa, just 30 miles south of here. Yes, we feel humidity in the morning, but once that tropical Sun rises, it quickly dries up, feeling more like summer in Las Vegas or Arizona. We had no air conditioning in our Michigan home so Florida summers are easy.

In Zephyrhills, I'm able to drive the MGB all year long down two lane, tree covered roads going most everywhere (even to Tampa). With the top up, the zip out rear window helps keep us reasonably comfortable during the hot summer months. This is country living around here with very little traffic.

Our MGB has a long history of strange problems mostly related to age. I've learned the hard way that flexible brake lines don't last forever, first with a car fire in Ohio, returning to Michigan from MG 2006 when the flexible line to the rear didn't allow the brakes to fully open, resulting in a wheel fire when brake fluid overheated.

I wasn't smart enough then to replace the other flexible brake lines to the front wheels because everything seemed to be working fine. I drove the car all the way down to Florida without incident, but soon afterward, my front brake pads were already worn out again! The cause? Same as before, the original equipment flexible hose to the right front wheel didn't allow the disc pads to fully release. This time, I replaced them both.

When I bought our MGB in 1991, I purchased a brand new set of tires never thinking I'd need to buy tires again. That's 25 years ago now. Those 1991 tires still looked good when I drove the freeway from Michigan down to here in 2013 but they were already more than 20 years old! Not long afterward in 2014, Adrienne and I had to abandon plans to cook chicken kabobs at a nearby park when the car began to shake ferociously. Suddenly, those tires were out of round and we were bouncing up and down in the car on what felt like square tires. Simple job, replacing the older tires, but I should have done it years earlier.

Our Florida British Car Club has most all their events up in the Weekie Wachee area so even attending

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the monthly club breakfast is a round trip of 100 miles down tree covered roads. The MG continues to perform well, but like problems we've had before, we can never tell when something will happen.

Just a week before the Fourth of July, when I tried to start the car, gasoline poured out onto the garage floor! This was no small drip; with the ignition on, gasoline was leaking from somewhere, but it wasn't coming from either the fuel line or where the carburetors were. Instead, it was pouring out the overflow near where the distributor is, on the other side of the engine.

I'm fortunate to have a foreign car repair shop nearby where the owner has lots of experience working on MGs. As soon as I described the problem, he told me that very likely, the needle in the fuel



bowl had stuck open (these are HIF carbs). I called Hagerty Insurance to have the car towed from my garage to his shop. He called later, telling me he'd found a small piece of black rubber inside the carburetor's fuel bowl. He planned on replacing the fuel lines between the filter and carburetors, when rebuilding the fuel bowls since they've likely been damaged by ethanol which unfortunately is always present wherever we buy gas today. When



rebuilding the carburetors he discovered another unexpected problem; one of the plastic floats wasn't working properly. Somehow, a small amount of liquid had gotten inside and it was no longer shutting off the fuel (strange since the car had run fine just two days earlier).

Two weeks later, I picked up the MGB expecting to have a hefty repair bill for the labor. It was only \$228.00 which even at \$60/hr is less than four hours labor!

Like my broken drive-shaft from 2006, I've added a pair of fuel floats in my collection of things that only seem to happen to me.