

## NAMGAR GT 39 - Ottawa, Ontario A 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tour

by Ralph Poupard

Editor's note: Last month's Can Am Connection featured a story and photos of this event, but as promised, President Ralph Poupard who was also there, volunteered to provide his take on the event and also some photos..Thanks Ralph!

When I learned that GT39 was going to be held in Ottawa, Ontario (the capital city of Canada) in 2014 I thought about the last time Kathi and I were there. It was the last days of June 1974 on our honeymoon. We had travelled to the cottage on Skeleton Lake in the Muskoka District of Ontario, stayed there for a week, then drove through Algonquin Provincial park, and down the Ottawa Valley to Ottawa. We made this trip in my 1973 MGB, which I had purchased new the previous June. We still own the MGB so it seemed like a neat idea to me to repeat the trip in the same MGB. Somehow I felt a little guilty not driving the 1957 MGA, but I thought this was an opportunity that would not repeat itself. I had been corresponding with Jeff and Jan Zorn and we planned that they would join us at the cottage and on the tour to Ottawa.

Kathi was already at the cottage, so I met Jeff and Jan, with their MGA 1600 and trailer load of merchandise, in Windsor on Thursday, July 10th. We started out in bright sunshine, but before we had driven 40 miles the sky had darkened, and soon it was raining. I had the top down, but driving at speed I stayed relatively dry. We made a pit stop at Tilbury to raise the top on the MGB, and drove the rest of the 350 miles to Muskoka without incident. On Friday we drove down scenic Hwy 141 to a nice farmers market in the town of Rosseau. Jan purchased some Canadian Maple syrup and we visited a nearby antique shop with items that seemed to be priced pretty high. After a nice lunch at the Crossroads

restaurant we headed back for some time in the sunshine.

Saturday we headed to Bracebridge for a Steam, Tractor and Car show. Jeff's MGA and our MGB were a select group being the only British cars there. Besides Tractors there were numerous "Hit and Miss" stationary engines, and assorted antique farm equipment. Later we headed to nearby Gravenhurst to the Muskoka Boating Heritage Museum. In the parking lot there were some people admiring our cars, and Jeff, generous as he is, handed the guy his keys and told him to take his A out for a spin. At first the guy thought Jeff was joking, but he took a spin around the parking lot, fearing that he may put a scratch in Jeff's beautiful MGA. Jeff said "Come on, I'll ride in the passenger's seat and you can drive". When they returned he had a grin from ear to ear. His wife was taking pictures so their kids would believe him, and who knows, he may be an MGA convert.

Inside the museum there were many of the beautiful wooden boats, which were built by the numerous companies in Muskoka in the heyday of wooden watercraft. The boats in their boathouse, ranging in length up to 35 feet, have gleaming hulls, and are still in use today. The highlight had to be Miss Canada IV unlimited hydroplane with her British Rolls Royce Griffon Engine. The cowlings were off and we got to see the massive supercharged V12 close up! In 1949 Miss Canada IV was attempting a hydroplane speed record and achieved a speed of over 200 mph when her gearbox

exploded, damaging the hull. Fully restored now, they had it out running the week before we visited for their boat show, and I sure wish I could have seen it.

Sunday morning we left for Ottawa, driving up Hwy 11 entering Algonquin Provincial Park on Hwy 60. Algonquin is Ontario's largest provincial park and Hwy 60 cuts through the southwest portion. The remainder is natural, with hiking paths and many canoe routes ranging in length from 1 day to several weeks. We stopped for lunch at the nature centre and continued on to Pembroke where we planned on spending the night and meeting the "Cruise to the Capital" group. They began pulling in to the hotel about 30 minutes after we arrived. Several of this group had driven from Victoria, British Columbia. A group of us went to dinner at an Italian Restaurant and had a fun time renewing friendships.

The next morning we all headed out towards Ottawa. On the way we ran into several construction sites with very long waits. We drove through the towns of Renfrew and Arnprior and at one point on Hwy 17 I asked Kathi if she remembered this road from 40 years ago to which she replied "No". "Me either" I replied. Luckily it wasn't a hot day and we eventually met the group at an Irish Pub in Nepean. We had a great lunch at the pub and then caravanned to the Canadian Tire Centre, the home of the Ottawa Senators of the NHL for a photo session. We then caravanned to the Host Hotel, the Marriot Courtyard.

The Marriott was an excellent facility with secure underground parking and a fabulous breakfast buffet included every morning. After checking in there was an Orientation reception, followed by the Hospitality suite. Many friendships were renewed as the participants rolled in. We met Dale and Lise Brown at the Hospitality Suite. They have a trailer parked at a campsite near Ottawa and attended the GT.

Tuesday morning we boarded buses to tour the Parliament Buildings. When we arrived we went into line to procure tickets for the Parliament tour. After we were in line for a while we realized that we would not have time to complete the tour and see the Changing of the Guard, which Kathi wanted to see. So we got out of line and went to wait for the Changing, which is patterned after the British tradition. About 20 minutes later it began to rain, and about 15 minutes later they cancelled the Changing of the Guard. So now we had no tickets for the tour and there was no Changing of the Guard, but then we overheard one of the tour guides mention that they may open the Peace Tower, which houses the famous clock, earlier than normal. We toured the clock tower and then went into the room where the names of soldiers of the various wars are kept in large books inside climate controlled enclosures. They turn the pages each day with white gloves in a small ceremony. When we got to the WW1 book, it was open to the page with the name Scott, which was Kathi's maiden name. She had heard that her Grandfather's brother had been killed in WW1. In the list was his name, Thomas Scott. They allowed us to take a photo of the pages, and it seemed like this was meant to be, with the series of events leading up to us touring the Peace Tower, and the minimal chance that the book would be open to that page.

Later that day we drove the cars on a tour of Ottawa. We discovered that the city is in a great deal of construction, like everywhere. Arriving back at the Hotel, there was just enough time to get ready to board buses to go to the Red and White Ottawa River Dinner Cruise. The ship cruised up and down the Ottawa River several times while we had a nice buffet dinner. We passed the Prime Minister's residence, the US Embassy and many other buildings of note. Back at the Marriot it was time for another hospitality suite.

Wednesday was car show day, held at the Canada Science and Technology Museum. The location was excellent with the cars arranged along the pathways on the grounds. There were numerous groups of young children walking along admiring the cars. I recall hearing several of them trying to guess which car was the fastest. As the show was winding down, Kathi and I joined Dale and Lise Brown for a tour of the Science and Technology Museum. Afterwards the four of us went to the ByWard Market, a large market district, and toured the wide assortment of shops from fresh produce and foods of all types to clothing boutiques. An interesting sight was an Amphibus. I had never heard of such a thing, and it had a curious name for an amphibious vehicle that is supposed to float, "Lady Dive". Later that evening we met up Jeff and Jan Zorn for dinner at an Irish pub in the ByWard Market. Afterwards, back at the Marriott it was time for the Drive In Movie. The first feature was an episode of "Dennis the Menace" where Mr. Wilson receives an inheritance and goes out and buys an exotic sports car – an MGA. The second feature was of course "Blue Hawaii", co-starring an Orient red MGA along with Elvis and Angela Lansbury. The night ended with another fun hospitality suite.

Thursday morning was the Ottawa Valley Rallye. This was a clue rallye and a great deal of fun. We travelled the local and rural roads of the Ottawa Valley, some of the roads more than once as the participants tried to find the answers to the cryptic questions! We stopped and asked several locals for help and they seemed very willing to help us. I think they hadn't seen so much excitement in years with the all the beautiful sports cars. I always amazes me how just seeing our MGs can bring smiles to so many faces. Later back at the hotel there were several Tech Sessions and then it was time for the Awards Banquet. The WDMGC did well with Dale and Lise Brown winning 1<sup>st</sup> place for the rallye, Jeff and Jan Zorn 2<sup>nd</sup> for the MGA 1600 class, and our '73 won 2<sup>nd</sup> in the MGB class. That is the only prize that our MGB has ever won, somewhat helped by our story of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour. A final hospitality suite followed with everyone in a cheerful mood.

Friday morning it was time for a farewell breakfast, as we all left. Dale Brown went to the Ottawa All British Car Day, Jeff and Jan Zorn headed back with a group of the Michigan Rowdies, and Kathi and I returned to the cottage in Muskoka. Thanks go to The Ottawa MG Club who did a first class job with the entire GT going without a hitch, and demonstrated Canadian hospitality in a big way. We all had a wonderful time. Windsor-Detroit MG Club members in attendance were: Jeff and Jan Zorn, Dale and Lise Brown, Bruce Read, Steve Holiday, Bill and Ellen Weakley, and Ralph and Kathi Poupard.