

# The One I Wanted ... The One I Got

By Marty Hunt

For the past nine years - "Yes it has been that long" my wife, Sue, tells me - we have owned a 1978 black bumper, deep red MGB. It came with some assembly required, not my wife's idea, but it was in my price range, almost free. Three years ago I felt the car was in need of a complete paint job, so I bought a 1980 TR7 to drive while I worked on the MG. Just one problem, my wife would not ride in the TR7. Whoever said that it's easier to get forgiveness than permission never met my wife! After several weeks in the garage - me, not the TR7 - it was sold.



*The 78 MGB that has served us very well for nine years.*

The MGB has been a great car and a lot of fun plus we have met a lot of great people and made some life long friends as members of the WDMG club. But what I really wanted was a chrome bumper, wire wheels model, preferably a 1966 or 1967. This time, with permission, I began my search. I found a 1969 in Hamilton Ontario: puffy dash, funny blue and expensive. So back to fixing the car I have and look for a driver while I do the repairs on my B. I found an MGB LE in Windsor, needing more work than mine, but cheap. What the heck, let's buy it! If you're going to have a rubber bumper car make it an LE. But I put the decision off just a little longer when fellow club member Matt Bade mentioned another LE that he was looking at in the classified section of the club newsletter. He kept putting off inspecting it so I thought I would take a look. I was still looking for a chrome bumper car but it doesn't hurt to look, right? I made the appointment for a Tuesday and went for a look. Yep, it's an LE all right, 24,674 miles, no rust, mint interior, original owner and Webber carbs! One rear corner needs paint but there's

no structural damage, just a bad paint job by the dealer when repairing the rear stripes that were damaged at the time of purchase. All that was on the invoice when the new owner picked up the car in the fall of 1979, that is why it's an 1980. I make an offer that was in my price range, considering the taxes I would have to pay, plus moving the car. Not accepted, thank God! What was I thinking of, trying to scoop a car out from under a friend, will he ever talk to me again? When I got home, who should call me but Matt! I tell him what I've done, the offer I made and he tells me that he's not interested in the car after all, no overdrive. Phew! I'm off the hook. Two days later the seller calls with a counter offer, I counter, he agrees, the car is mine. Now all I have to figure out is how to get it home.

## SNAFU! Getting The LE Home

I had brought a car across the border once before, I spent 4 hours trying to convince the customs officers that the bill of sale from the owner was correct, even though the sale had been notarized. The comment to me was everyone in Georgia was a notary public. It's true! The salesman had pulled the stamp out of the drawer, stamped the bill of sale, then paid me \$25 to drive the car to Ontario to avoid the Georgia State tax. This time, I thought I would use a broker to avoid any hassle at the border. Normally I would have called Brian Collacott, a long time member of the club and former broker and auto importer, but as you know he passed away last year. I chose a large brokerage firm assuming they were more experienced and thus the whole process would be trouble free. But as the saying goes; when you assume you make an ass of you and me! They gave me a list of the things I would have to do, filled all my paper work and paid all the taxes that would be due at entry. That was June 29 2009. Great so far.

First thing, call the U.S. Customs 72 hours ahead of time, indicating that I was exporting an automobile out of the U.S. and let them know from what port I was exiting. Done! Saturday and Sunday not included. I call my brother for a truck to haul a trailer then call U Haul to rent a trailer but they inform me that my brother's Grand Cherokee is not big enough to haul the trailer. I could drive the car but I would not have plates or Insurance, so time for Plan B. I call Myers Trucking to retrieve the car, \$250 for two and a half hours. Not bad I thought, so I arrange to hire the truck for Monday July 6,

5:30pm - I had to work that day. I'm at Myers at 5:15. 5:30 rolls around, no truck; 5:45, no truck; 6:00, still no truck! Turns out there's a big accident on the expressway, so all their trucks are busy! Finally by 7:15 Bob (my truck driver) and I are on our way, I call the seller of the car and tell him that we are on our way and to please wait for us...he does.

Naturally the border is packed, and we spend 45 minutes in the tunnel. When we finally head out Michigan Avenue, we find it congested as well! We get to Middle Belt and Michigan, no road sign. Bob and I miss the turn and drive eight miles out of our way. Bob decides it might be time to turn on the GPS... it instructs us to go back! It's now 9 pm so my two and half-hour estimate is shot. By 9:30 we've loaded the car and are on our way to the bridge. We have to stop at U.S. customs to get the Michigan Ownership stamped but I called ahead 72 hrs ago, remember? Everything went smooth as silk and they send us to the Canadian return gate. We get there and it's closed till the top of the hour. They only open the gate every hour to let return vehicles onto the bridge, it's now 10:15! Bob chuckles: been there before, done that, got the t-shirt, all we can do is wait. Finally at 11pm the gate opens and off we go.

Now we're at Canadian Customs, I have a used car so out to the warehouse we go, no other trucks are there. This is going to be a breeze...Not! It seems that when the broker filled out the RIV form he made a mistake and had the car manufactured in the U.S.A not G.B. It's 11:20 pm! My broker doesn't have an office at the bridge so there is no representative there. Their office is on Rhodes Drive 10 miles away and who's going to be there anyway at this time? I call anyway and someone answers the phone, I thought it was the cleaning lady. No, it's a broker! I thought I was going to have to leave the car in the compound overnight and have to pay to have it hauled the next day... it would probably have been cheaper. No, the broker says she will fix the mistake and be there in 20 minutes. She was and we cleared Customs. What next? I call the garage where the car was to go for the safety and the owner said he would meet us there to open the garage. It's now 12:15 am on Tuesday. We drop off the car, close the garage doors and drive back to Myers Trucking to drop off the truck, pay my bill \$250 plus the extra time. Bob says, "that was quick!" I get into my truck, and head home where I have some cold pizza, a shower and get to bed. It's 2:15 Tuesday morning; what an ordeal, and it's not over!

I need a safety check from a mechanic and the paper work to prove it. We redo the brakes. Now we need the last thing on the brokers list: the recall letters, if any. I wait and wait... no letter. My safety check is only good for 30 days so I go anyway with all the paper work that I

have. Not acceptable, I need the recall letter and a form from Canada Customs stating all taxes and duties that were paid at the time of entry. Now what? I will go back to the broker and tell him what they told me I needed. Unfortunately, the broker I was dealing with is on vacation for two weeks, but the head broker overhears my dilemma and asks if he could help. In a word: YES!

He says I don't need a recall letter, that only applies to cars 15 years and younger. Besides, he says, if they had a recall on MGs they would have all had to go back. He too owned one when he was at University. He couldn't understand why the broker's paper work was not acceptable so he called the ministry to ask why. The ministry didn't know why either and they sent me to another License Bureau. Within ten minutes I was done, but I couldn't get plates because I didn't have insurance and to get insurance for more than \$1000 I needed an appraisal, which, you guessed it, I do not have. Sue and I were hoping to take the car up to Niagara On The Lake the coming weekend so I called an appraiser but he couldn't look at the car for three days. Great! Well, not so great, it would take at least another week for the paper work to be done because he was going on vacation. He came, he saw, he heard a lot of pleading and brought the paper work the next day! I took the papers to the Insurance broker but they tell me that they have to send a copy to headquarters for approval before they could give me more than \$1000 worth of insurance.

So I guess we take the Sebring this weekend but that's okay, they're calling for thunderstorms and hail. Better ding the Sebring than the MGB-LE. So we took the Sebring and drove through the worst storm in that area in 20 years. The rest of the weekend was beautiful, however, and we certainly missed the new MGB-LE because that area (the roads, the scenery) is MGB country! ■



*The MGB-LE, home at last!*