

The Story of the Loose Nut!

Dale Brown tells the story of the trip that earned him the club's annual Loose Nut Award.

Over the last many years, Lise and I have had a chance to travel extensively in the MGB. We've driven to Ottawa, Quebec City, Montreal, St. Louis, Stowe Vermont, Watkins Glen, Indy, Pennsylvania, Mosport and even St. Paul Minnesota. But we always thought it would be nice to drive to the East Coast. So in the summer of 2004, we set aside 16 days at the beginning of July and started making plans. We received lots of travel brochures from Maine, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and New Brunswick. We even heard of a major British Car Show that would be going on right on Prince Edward Island during that time period. We said, "Let's go for it!"

We have lots of camping gear and decided we would rough it on this trip. But for such a distance and time, there just wasn't enough room in the B to at least bring enough stuff to rough it comfortably. Lise just got a new Malibu Maxx but with the heavy tongue weight of our car trailer I decided it just wasn't worth trying to tow the MG. (In the past we have sometimes used our Chevy Astro which was just fine.) So I looked into the possibility of renting a car dolly to save on weight, but it was so expensive that I realized it would be best just to pay the extra fuel price and drive them both. I figured since we had walkie-talkies for the travelling part, we would simply camp at just two or three central areas and use the MG once we got there for most of the trip. Little did I know that we would actually move camp many, many more times than that!

So anyway, on the first of July with lots of maps in hand and our faithful walkie-talkies Lise jumped in the Maxx loaded with camping gear and I left in the front with the top down MGB and we had quite an enjoyable ride pretty much non stop all the way to our friends home just this side of Montreal. Our first evening and next morning was spent casually around a pool eating wonderful French cuisine. After saying our goodbyes the next morning, we departed toward the south-east and made our way into a bit of New York State and then over to Lake Champlain and into Vermont. It was fabulous driving and we finally made it to Highway 2 to the east. It was getting cool and time to put the top up and start looking for our first campsite. The hills were getting higher and higher and it was getting cooler and cooler. We drove and drove and stopped at a tourist information place just near the Vermont, New Hampshire border. After a brief break, we continued on and found a family owned campground just about in the middle of the top of New Hampshire. We set up, started a fire and had nice dinner. I could have sworn that it got cold enough to snow, but we survived and continued our quest to the east down highway 2 into Maine the next morning. The weather warmed and we had yet another nice drive (separately) all the way through Maine and crossed the border into the west side of New Brunswick. About 20 miles down the road, we found a nice Provincial Park and set up camp just before nightfall. (That was a long drive!)

Well, we finally made it into the Maritimes and we were looking forward to less separate driving. We again checked the maps the next morning and decided to make it to Fundy National Park and set up for a couple of days to take in the highest tides in the world. We got lost and separated while driving around St. John and were out of walkie-talkie range.

But thanks to Lise's quick thinking, she used On Star in the Maxx and contacted me on my cell phone that I just decided to turn on. We were back together in no time, thank goodness. We drove through miles and miles of hilly forest areas with little or no gas left in my car and finally pulled into Fundy National Park. We found a site on the top of a huge cliff overlooking a fishing harbour across a river. Fishing boats were sitting on the bottom as the tide was out. It was a beautiful sight.

The next morning, we woke up to heavy fog and ventured out together in the MG into the tiny fishing village of Alma for the day. We walked on the ocean floor collecting seashells and eating at the local establishment. At least we had one whole day of not driving apart!

The next morning we planned a route that would take us to the northern shore of Nova Scotia. We figured it would be pretty central to the whole area and be able to leave the Maxx alone for many days. Actually, Amherst Provincial Park that we found turned out to be a beautiful location although it took a while to get use to the little black biting flies that we encountered. We spent several days there, walking the beaches, driving along the cliffs of the south west side of Nova Scotia on a Light House drive and enjoying all the local hospitalities and shops. We even came across an area for fossil hunting.

One day we headed off into New Brunswick and drove up the east coast in search of Lobster and Mussel Festivals. There were several on in the various small villages. This area was very strong in the French language, so Lise was right at home. It was here that our first of many MG troubles began! We had just finished a nice lunch at a roadside restaurant and we came out to discover a flat tire. Unfortunately, we were on a severe incline and I couldn't get my scissors jack to keep the car up without falling off. Grrrr! (I learned a long time ago not to bring the stock jack on any trip as they have a tendency to put a large scratch on the doors if on a slope. Happened to me in Quebec City.) As I was struggling, an older man, about 80 called Lise into his house just on the side of the street. She came out carrying a nice hydraulic jack just like the one that I had at home still in my garage. Well thanks to the kind generosity of the villager we were off in no time. We travelled all the way to the top of New Brunswick near Bathurst and then came back south towards our camp in Nova Scotia. On the way we found out that there was a major lobster festival taking place in a town called Shediac. It was nearing the dinner hour and we thought that would be perfect. But the Lucas gods were starting to appear. Just as we were approaching, a major rainstorm came up suddenly. (It was a good thing that we had just put the top up on the MG.) We couldn't see a thing and then it appeared all the power in the town went out. Our luck, we were right at the Lobster Festival and they had to close. So we continued down the highway and found another village that still had power. We stopped at a restaurant and had a nice Lobster and Mussels dinner anyway. So all was not lost.

The next day was the large British car show on Prince Edward Island. With the flat tire in the trunk (remember that for later on), we headed over the Confederation Bridge and through nice roads along potato fields we made it to the

show. It was misty and rainy all day, but it was a lot of fun. There was even a door prize from Little British Car Company given out. They brought in Guinness just for the day. That was a treat! After the show we spent the rest of the day enjoying downtown Charlottetown and then popped in to see our neighbours from Windsor that spend summers at their cottage on a cliff overlooking the ocean. After the nice ride over the bridge we settled back to our campground. Still no opportunity to get our flat fixed. By the way, it's not so easy to find a place that can fix a tire that's mounted to wire wheels.

Well, it's Sunday now and we broke camp and headed with both cars down a freeway south toward Halifax. We chose an area on the south shore that was halfway between Lunenburg and Halifax, actually, not far from world famous Peggy's Cove. I was following Lise in the Maxx travelling about 75 miles per hour when all of a sudden... POW! Another tire blew. Remember the flat in the trunk? I radioed Lise and she backed up down the shoulder. The tire on the car was destroyed so we threw the flat one in the back of the Maxx and turned around at the next interchange. We figured we would find a garage that could fix the original flat then be on our way. What luck, a young man at the first garage said sure! Well that's till he realized that his machine wouldn't take a tire off a wire wheel. And these tires have tubes, so they have to come off to make the repair. We asked if there was a Canadian Tire or a Wal-Mart nearby. He said yes and gave us directions. We travelled another 25 minutes and still couldn't find either one. We stopped a motorist and asked again and were on our way. We came across the Canadian Tire and it was closed. We continued and found the Wal-Mart and it was also closed. To our bewilderment, we found out that in Nova Scotia, just about everything and I mean everything is closed on Sunday. (You would have thought that when we asked several people for directions they might have added, yes there is a Canadian Tire and Wal-Mart, but they are closed on Sunday) Grrr! Again.

Well we searched and searched and could not find anything at all. So we headed back down the freeway to the stranded MG, took the other destroyed tire off the MG, left it sitting on the axle at the side of the road with a note taped to the inside of the window and headed for our campsite.

It was a great camp on a nice island in a bay of the

ocean connected by a bridge. In the morning, I got up early and headed into the closest town called Chester and found a service station. To my luck not only did they have the right tire machine, but they had the exact size tires I needed and the tubes. What luck. I got two new tires and went back to the camp and picked up Lise. We drove all the way back to the car (about 90 minutes), put the wheels on and started driving back to the camp one more time. But on the drive, I noticed my brakes beginning to fail. I didn't want to alert Lise, but I gingerly made it back to the camp. I brought the car back to the same garage and after a quick inspection found that one of the rear brake cylinders had sprung a major leak and was beyond repair. (I remember having a spare one back in my garage in Windsor! Grrr.) Where am I going to get one of those all the way out here? Well the owner of the shop had a contact in Halifax and within a few hours he would have the exact part in hand. So after getting a ride back to the camp, Lise and I decided to take the Maxx and spend the rest of the day exploring Peggy's Cove. It was a great afternoon of visiting in the tiny fishing



Peggy's Cove

village, doing some shopping and taking pictures of one of the most picturesque areas in the world. We headed back later that night and retrieved the MG and it was perfect. (I might add, that was to be the end of any car trouble for the whole rest of the trip. Hooray!)



Sitting on the axle



Fresh Mussels for Dinner

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