

# An Infernal Triangle

Some time ago a friend offered me a device he had made years ago for a Midget he no longer owned. It was basically a triangle, the base of which he attached to his bumper brackets while the apex, by way of a tow-ball coupler welded to it, connected to his truck. In this way, it provided an easily stored means of towing his car around but, unfortunately, it proved too small for use on my chrome bumper MGBs.

Then, last spring, I saw an advertisement in a Harbor Freight catalog for an adjustable version that would certainly fit MGBs and decided it would be just the thing I needed to get my roadster to and from the paint shop. With the car stripped of all its chrome, including the bumpers, the tow frame proved quite easy to fit, although I did have to drill an extra hole in each bumper bracket and make a cable and tail-board to provide stop, turn and tail lamps to the car being towed.



*Ready to roll. The roadster is hooked up to go to the paint*

Once hooked up, ensuring that the roadster was in neutral, the steering lock was disengaged and the handbrake released, it obediently followed my truck to the paint shop. In all I made about four short journeys with the car in tow and never had the slightest concerns about the system's safety, especially since I had attached the required safety chains between the frame and the truck, just in case the ball hitch should let-go.

Then last summer I had an unfortunate incident with my low slung MGB-GT V8 conversion. To cut a long story short, I rode over a bump and ripped out one of the exhausts and severely damaged the other. Wearing ear-plugs, I drove the very noisy car all the way back from central Ohio on highways, but there was no way I could drive it on residential streets without attracting the attention of the police. As a result, once I had selected a custom exhaust shop to do the repairs, I removed the front bumper and attached the frame so that I could tow it there in silence. As I drove my truck out of the driveway, I had no concerns at all about the journey I was about to take, after all, the roadster had towed easily and hadn't I seen hundreds of bigger cars similarly towed and apparently tailgating Winnebagos as they crisscrossed the continent?

**WOW! SAVE 28%**  
**HAUL-MASTER™**  
**H-M**  
**ADJUSTABLE TOW BAR**  
• Comes with 1" coupler  
• 5000 lb. towing capacity  
• Folds for easy storage  
• Arms extend from 24" to 43"  
• Quick disconnect brackets for easy removal and installation  
• Assembly hardware included  
LOT NO. 94696  
**\$4999** REGULAR PRICE **\$6999**  
**1/4" x 4 FT. TRAILER SAFETY CHAIN \$999**  
LOT NO. 95021

*"Wow!" says the ad., but "Whoa!" might be more appropriate.*

However, as I took the sharp left turn out of my driveway into the narrow street, I heard a bang and with a glance in the rear view mirror, I realized something was wrong. I stopped the truck immediately and got out to see that one bumper bracket had broken. The whole two car caravan was blocking the street and so I had to quickly detach everything and drive the GT back into my garage. On close inspection, I could see that the culprit bumper bracket had at one time in its life been cut, butt welded back together and painted to hide the join, and it was that weld that had failed. If that was the problem, I surmised, then simply borrowing a known good bracket from my previously successfully towed roadster would get me back on the road again in no time.

The second experience of towing the GT out of my driveway and making the sharp left and downward turn had certain similarities to the first, except for the fact that this time I heard two bangs in quick succession and my glance in the mirror revealed the GT heading under its own gravity-aided momentum into my neighbor's yard opposite. The safety chains, of course, were installed between the tow frame and the truck, and so did nothing to prevent the car bounding over his newly sodded lawn, finally coming to a stop only after it straddled itself over some double high railroad ties that formed a boundary for the lawn.

As bad as this whole experience was, I can't help thinking how much worse things could have been. What if this had happened at a busy intersection with pedestrians and other traffic around? What about the times I'd towed the roadster much further with such carefree confidence that I might hardly have noticed had it sailed away on its own? These thoughts are frightening. As for the GT, it had already had its undercarriage damaged so no further harm came to it and I had a long trucker's chain with which my 4-wheel drive V8 Explorer was able to retrieve it.

Once again I was inspecting broken bumper brackets. This time they'd both snapped at the foremost hole where they attach to the vehicle frame, this hole substantially reducing the cross section of metal at that point. I've now decided that using the right-angled MGB chrome bumper brackets as tow points is just plain unsafe and I strongly advise that anyone considering doing so takes note my experience. They are just not strong enough to resist the side forces that towing exerts on them.

Why was the GT breaking brackets and not the roaster? My heavier GT has much wider tires and the steering's self-centering action is much more evident, which makes slow speed steering very heavy. That — fortuitously as it happens — resulted in the rapid failure of the bumper brackets but I now believe it would be only a matter of time before they would have broken when towing the lighter and more narrowly shod roadster.

I'd welcome any advice from members who have solved this problem with modified brackets or perhaps with some other ingenious method that they know to be 100% safe. The idea of having a device that stores flat against a wall and allows me to tow my cars is very attractive, but until I know a safe way of using it, it will stay just where it is — flat against my garage wall.



*Rick Astley*

*The GT, all prepared for its short downhill journey!*