

Two Weddings, One MG

By Ralph Poupard

Early in July of this year our eldest daughter, Jennifer, was married in Wasaga Beach, Ontario. She wanted to be driven to the ceremony in one of the MGs. It took a few minutes of arm-twisting. OK, there wasn't really any arm twisting needed! Our MGA is a more perfect example of the marque, but I knew that the honours had to go to our '73 MGB due to its historic significance, and we thought it would be great to have a few pictures taken with the B. I bought this car new in June of 1973, and it played a part in our wedding on June 22, 1974.

Also, we took the B on our two week honeymoon through Muskoka, Ottawa, Quebec City, Montreal, and Morrison Island. The story you are about to read is all true, albeit with apologies to Arlo Guthrie and his classic, "Alice's Restaurant".

Let's take a little trip back to 1974. Ah... 1974. Richard Nixon was busy with last-ditch efforts to save himself from the Watergate scandal, and the first affordable pocket calculators for the general public were being introduced. BTO were "Takin' Care of Business" and Elton John had released his milestone LP "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road". The spring of 1974 flew by in a whirlwind of activity as Kathi and I were preparing for our wedding. Before we knew it, June had arrived.

In those days the "grooms to be" had stag parties. None of those politically correct "Buck and Doe" parties - just the guys - with the profits going to the groom. Mine was held in the basement of the former "Drop In" Tavern in Windsor. It was a wild night, with a fight breaking out between two of my friends from work (who were brothers), and my friends feeding me shots with beer chasers most of the night. I seem to recall getting thrown into a wheelbarrow several times and getting wheeled around the hall! At closing time they stuffed an envelope with the night's proceeds into my shirt pocket.

I didn't feel too bad, (i.e. I could still stand up) so I drove home in the MGB.

Of course I would never drive after drinking now, but in those days many people foolishly did, as I did that night. Kathi and I had rented a house just outside the small town of Gesto, about 25 miles from Windsor, and I had been living there for about two weeks. I still wasn't too sure of the roads and landmarks, especially at night, and being somewhat biffed up added to the challenge.

With great concentration I made it to the town of Gesto, unscathed.

As I headed east into town I knew I had to turn right at the gas station, but I didn't notice the turn until I was almost past it. I hit the brakes, and jerked the steering wheel and the B zipped around the 90 degree corner with a squeal from the



tires. It was a turn that few cars of that era and maybe even today could have made without taking out the stop sign on the corner or flying into the side of Tessier's Service Station. Briefly I thought I had noticed a pair of headlights approaching before I made the turn and the next thing I knew there were lights flashing in my mirror! Oh man, I thought I was done as I pulled over just before the Gesto bridge that passes over River Canard. I put on my best sober act as the OPP officer checked my license and registration, and I thought "I just might get away with this", until he asked "What's that?" as he was looking down at my shirt pocket. I looked down, and we were both looking down at the envelope (remember the envelope?) in my shirt pocket. Printed on the envelope, in the middle of the envelope, away from everything else on the envelope, in capital letters... quoted... read the following words: "STAG MONEY". My spirits sank as I figured I was busted, so I began to

tell him the story of the stag party massacre, and my upcoming wedding ...in four part harmony, until he said, "Hold it right there, kid!" He stood there for a long moment. Then he asked "Kid...where do you live?" I told him "Down at the corner." It was a straight country road about ½ mile long with 3 houses on it. Amazingly, he said "Kid...I want you to go straight home and stay there for the night, and take it easy the rest of the way." And friends, just to make sure, he *followed* me the rest of the way home. You would never get a break like that these days!

As the big day approached, I became aware that some of my friends were planning on "decorating" my MGB, which basically amounted to filling it with paper flowers, and a few gallons of confetti, with a copious amount poured down the defroster vents. We decided to hide the car behind the Baptist Church in Cottam, which was right across the street from Kathi's parents' house. "They'll never find it there", I thought... Saturday, June 22nd arrived bright and sunny. Our wedding was held at Assumption Church, which is right next to the University of Windsor, about 2 blocks from the Dominion House! After the wedding ceremony, the wedding party drove to Cottam to take



photographs in the Cottam Rotary Park. These were pre-limo days, and I wouldn't have had it any other way. Our wedding vehicles consisted of Kathi's '71 Datsun 1200, her brother's '73 MG Midget, and a Pinto wagon! As we were taking the photos in the Rotary Park I noticed some of my friends nudging each other. I turned around and there, behind the church, a few doors down, was the "hidden" MGB in plain view!

During the wedding reception in Kingsville - we used the whole of Essex County that day - some of our friends found time to sneak away, and the decoration of our car

was completed as planned. Eleven large bags of confetti, and dozens of paper flowers were among the items filling the interior, windshield, and air vents... Confetti would continue to rain down from countless cracks and crevices for the next 15 - 20 years! We drove the MGB to Gesto, and up to Muskoka the next day, sitting in several inches of confetti. As we neared the cottage on Skeleton Lake, we stopped at the General Store in Raymond, Ontario to pick up

some supplies. It was getting warm, so when we were ready to leave the store, we lowered the top, turned on the defrosters to blow out the confetti, and pulled away in a blaze of glory! ■