



Golden Gate Healey Happenings

This edition...more fun in the sun, good comraderie, new member, and a reach back in history with DMH.

Next time...the Fall Colors Tour, Ironstone, Breakfast Club Rally experience, Monterey, and more!

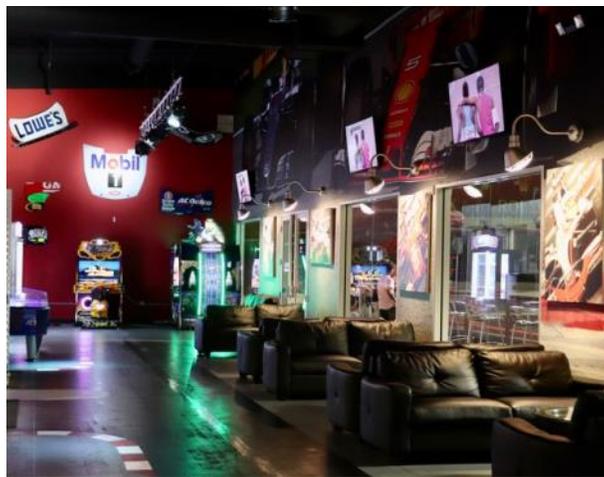


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HEALEYS GO KARTING

Contributed by Steve & Patty Darfler



This long awaited event finally happened this year. Most of you will remember that last year's attempt at some fun was cancelled due to Covid. This year it was held on August 7th in Dublin and by all accounts it was way too much fun!

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[https://
goldengatehealeys.com/](https://goldengatehealeys.com/)

After a thorough track briefing covering kart operations, safety rules, and flag meanings, we got into our Italian all-electric 20 HP carts for three races. The first was for practice - getting a feel for the karts and best lines through the eight turn quarter mile track. The second was a qualifying race to determine starting positions in the final race and the third was the actual race for places on the podium.

Each race was 8 to 10 laps at speeds up to 45 mph, which feels pretty fast when you're sitting a couple inches above the track. The races required a good line through the track, judicious braking, and an aggressive push when even a small opportunity to pass someone presented itself. Some of us thought we did pretty well with lap times of around 21 seconds, but the adult course record is 18.8 seconds so there is plenty of room for all racers to get faster.





Mike Sonneman took first place, Steve Darfler took second, and Dave Nock took third. Of course, we must keep in mind that some cars have better tires and motors before we jump to any conclusions about the deeper meaning of this race day, except to say that any opportunity to pass Mike out on a Healey trip should be taken with gusto !



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ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL RECAP

Contributed by Len Hartnet

Great weather, enthusiastic attendees, and free ice cream. Well, almost free as the Club issues a \$5.00 discount coupon for each member when they purchase their ice cream. To qualify for the coupons the attendee must be a member of the Club, RSVP that they will be attending, and drive a Healey to the event.

What more could one ask for the annual National Ice Cream Social? Golden Gate Austin-Healey Club held their event on August 22nd at Fosters Freeze in Vacaville, CA, as it has done for the past 14 years. Prior to that, the Club sponsored the first Social in 2005 at two locations in Sacramento and then in 2006 an ice cream parlor in Vacaville. This year, 17 Club members showed up in 8 Healeys.

One club member arrived in his Thunderbird and one couple in a Brand X because their both of their Healeys were in Southern California. Yes, they each have their own Healeys. Distance traveled to the event in a Healey ranged from 8 miles to 63 miles. This year it seemed like there was more interest by the general public with conversations, questions, and pictures taken.



The "couple" of the show was the Andersons who attended on their 57th wedding anniversary. Cully told Julie that he would take her out for an ice cream cone on their anniversary. That he did! He said, "It was a wonderful way for us to celebrate our 57 years of marriage".



Attendees	Vehicle	Origin	Miles
Len Hartnett	1967 MK III BJ8	Fairfield	8
Gerry Silva	Thunderbird	San Leandro	58
Pete & Veronica Davies	1961 3000 MK I	Antioch	46
John & Cathy Turney	1957 100-6 BN4	Concord	35
Cully & Julie Anderson	1958 100-6 BN4	Pleasant Hill	35
Pete & Colleen Tortorice	1967 Sprite MK IV	Concord	35
Blair Barnett	1959 Sprite MK I	Hayward	63
Steve & Kim Korbay	1964 3000 MK III BJ8	Santa Rosa	60
Mike Sonneman	1966 3000 MK III BJ8	Sacramento	40
Roger & Donna Hawk	Brand X	Arbuckle	60
Marc & Pattie Lewis	1963 3000 MK II BJ7	Clayton	38

FROM THE ARCHIVES @ 1971

- A call came to donate one's spare/used parts to the club parts warehouse. Parts were offered to members **only** at 1/4 the list price from dealers. Workers willing to dismantle donor cars were being paid \$1.00 per hour for hard labor.
- One member, John Englund, had a warning about taking one's Healey to National Parks. It seems a Yosemite bear ate most of the interior.
- **Healey Hints** for the weekend mechanics was introduced. The first edition talked of sandblasting a frame and the proper care for wire wheels.
- A '67 BJ8 with 27K was offered for sale for \$2,250.
- Finally, Sarah was selling her '58 100-6. It was advertised as being in excellent condition with new valves, clutch, and upholstery, all for for the princely sum of **\$800** to finance a trip to Europe. At the time the exchange rate was 5DM to the dollar. Hope you had a great trip Sarah, because it was in fact possible to travel Europe on \$5/day! The buyer got a steal...



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NEW MEMBER PROFILE: Paul and Charan Van Noord

Contributed by the members

I'm Paul Van Noord, a new member of GGAHC. My wife Charan and I are California natives, raised in Southern California. We married and moved to the Bay Area in 1972. Not knowing what else to do, I took a job with Security Pacific Bank and retired from banking 43 years later, in 2015. Charan was a Registered nurse for 45 years, most of that time caring for patients at John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek. We raised a daughter and a son who are married and in turn have blessed us with four grandchildren. Our families all live in Concord. We are active in our church, Walnut Creek Presbyterian, and enjoy road trips, the Sonoma Coast, (Sea Ranch), and I enjoy almost any automotive endeavor.

My Healey is a 1959 Bugeye, it is the third one that has come under my stewardship. It's original paint was Whitehall Nevada Beige with red seating and interior. The other two were not true restorations, I would call them cosmetic although I rebuilt the engines and freshened the transmissions. I long to know what happened to those two bugeyes!



This Bugeye is a work in process and is a true nut and bolt restoration. From complete disassembly to thorough media blasting, epoxy primer, metal work, hundreds of new parts, to powder coating some things and painting most things, reassembling and bringing it

back to close to its factory finish. It will be a homage to a concours car but will be driven frequently. I make a little progress frequently and am challenged with back orders and third party delays, but I will get there!



I was drawn to Healey's and especially the bugeye when that car was new. A friend of my oldest brother owned an Iris Blue car and I was struck by its wonderfully proportioned styling.

My dream garage contains a Series 1 Lotus Elan, a 1966 XKE coupe, (and a 1965 Buick Riviera Grand Sport). I think the Mk 1 Spitfire is under appreciated and will likely one day have its day in the sun. I did own a '66 E type coupe in rough condition many years ago but was not able to afford a proper restoration at the time and sold it to some one who could do it justice. (I believe that car is in the Netherlands now). I also currently care for a 2001 MX5 Miata special edition (BRG).

There are many great Healey memories surrounding the first two Sprites. I recall asking Charan to help fit the pistons in the cylinders of one of the cars. She complained that they were "all greasy", I explained as kindly as I could that it was "clean grease!" Another is the overpowering smell of raw gas in the interior of our Bugeye while ascending the Sunol Grade on 680 on our way to a car event in Monterey. I stopped the car and lifted the bonnet to inspect. the tiny float bowl of one of the HS1 carbs was overflowing fuel very near to the very hot exhaust manifold. The float valve had, of course, stuck open. A gentle tap tap on the bowl and off we went.

I'm pretty sure, but have no records, that I am a former member of the club when it was called Austin Healey Club - Pacific Centre. I have a jacket patch along with an embroidered bugeye patch from that era. I look forward to participating in club events and have already been benefitted by meeting Brian Blivens and talking to him about his beautiful leaf green concours winner and other bugeye owners in the region. Meanwhile I will have to join events driving my BJ8 (Miata).



HealeyDoc's Corner



Well, the 2021 Healey season is quickly coming to an end, there are only a couple of events left and then it's our 2020/21 50th anniversary a year late Christmas Party / Bay Cruise.

This has been an interesting year for tours with all the unknowns, will people attend, should we mask up or not, should we require vaccinations and all the rest. Then at the end of the day the events of 2021 have been some of the best attended in a long time. Even Marc Lewis had his 4 Bay area pass tour and had several cars do the whole trip with one a new Sprite owner.

To wrap up the tours for the year we have two tours left, Jerri and I will be hosting the Sierra Pass / Fall Colors tour in a couple of weeks, we have 30 cars attending for this 3 day trip with 12 coming from Southern California. Then there is the last local tour of the year, the Russian River Tour in November.

Last month we attended the Ironstone Concours in Murphy's and our club came out in force we had 12 Healey's show up this year. So we had our own class located on the shores of the Ironstone Lake for a back drop. Congrats to Brian and Naomi Bliven for their best in class for the Austin Healey class.

We are also looking for a "few good Healey owners" that would like to help out with some of the activities at next year Healey Rendezvous May 29 – June 3 in South Lake Tahoe. Especially we need someone to do the Regalia Sales position all orders will be on a Pre Order only so no sitting around all week trying to sell the regalia.

Happy Healeying
David Nock

BARBEQUE AT THE NERLOVE'S IN NAPA

Contributed by the Editor

Once again Ken and Faith hosted the annual Club barbeque and celebration honoring Bacchus at their winery in Napa, aided by daughter Elise (as sommelier) and a local catering company that took responsibility for the afternoon repast. It was another of the typical hot August days, with temperatures in the 90's in and around Napa, and even hotter in points East. Many still braved the weather in their Healeys, while others, hesitant of getting caught in the notorious weekend traffic jams in Napa, in the sun, in a hot car, chose the comfort of modern vehicular engineering and air conditioning.



Camp Followers began to gather around 1:00 and enjoyed an hour + catching up after emerging from the relative isolation brought on by Covid which had canceled the event in 2020.

Even with the heat the Nerlove's 28 acre winery offers a perfect setting for such gatherings: A large rear yard with ample seating and mature tree cover that

provides good shade throughout the afternoon. Elise made sure that five of Elkhorn Peaks finest offerings (2 Pinot Noir, a Chardonnay, a Rose, and a sparkling) were amply poured to a thirsty crowd while appetizers were consumed. At around 3:00 the caterers laid out the repast and the lines to the food table quickly appeared.

For those who have not taken advantage of this event the winery is a picture perfect small family enterprise, the antithesis of the large corporate venues that have come to dominate the Valley. It was originally founded in 1983, and for years merely grew grapes for sale to other wineries. On-site amenities were marginal, confined to the requisite out buildings, barns, sheds etc. to house necessary farm equipment. The family took up residence in a repurposed shed. Water had to be trucked in so basic necessities such as weekly laundry chores were taken off property. In 1993 the charming farm house, with large covered front porch, was built and at great expense they joined the Napa City water supply. They began their own label in 1992 and as noted in the last issue of **Healey Happenings** have been fighting a battle to enable



them to have a proper tasting room. At present the Wine Club can be found upstairs in the main redwood barn that hosts Ken's collection of antique slot machines. The BN4 is relegated to the barn with the other farm vehicles. When visiting you will undoubtedly be met by Monty, the family dog for whom the only strangers are friends he has not met.

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A total of 36 Healey acolytes made the pilgrimage. For the record:

- Anderson, Cully & Julie
- Cory, Greg & Sanlin
- Darfler, Steve & Patty
- Freese, Ken & Marsha
- Freese, Phil
- Groom, Darryl & Tina
- Hawk, Roger & Donna
- Hensler, Joe & Gayle
- Klimaszewski, John
- Korbay, Steve & Kim
- Lewis, Marc & Patti
- Olson, Rich & Tweety
- Roberts, Peter & Jill Meyers
- Sardeman, Rob & Marie Louise
- Sonneman, Mike
- Stevenson, Glenn & Wife
- Trewin, Greg & Mary
- Turney, John & Cathy
- Vranicar, John



SIA Interview: Donald Healey

by Alex Meredith

IT WAS OUR extremely good fortune that precisely at the time when we were scheduled to travel to Los Angeles to do the driveReport on Fred Cohen's Austin-Healey 100-M, Fred was entertaining a house guest: Donald Healey! Eighty-three years old now, the originator of the Austin-Healey (and many other memorable automobiles) is a sharp, lively, delightfully witty gentleman. Upon being introduced to Mr. Healey we inquired whether he is to be addressed as "Sir Donald." "No," he replied. "The Queen has conferred upon me the Order of Commander of the British Empire. That's one step below knighthood." We then observed that since Prince Charles is a sports car buff, perhaps when he succeeds to the throne the knighthood will be granted. Donald Healey's eyes sparkled and an impish grin crossed his face. "Oh," he said, "that will be rather too late for me, I fancy!" Then, in a thoughtful aside with reference to the Prince, he added, "Poor chap!"

Our interview with Mr. Healey lasted well over an hour, as short an hour as we've ever experienced. Here are some of the highlights:

SIA: We understand that your father had cars when you were a boy. Tell us about him, and about his cars.

DH: His first car was a Panhard-Levassor. French car, with a peculiarity I'll always remember: It had "hot-tube" ignition. That is, you lighted a blow-lamp and warmed up the tubes which extended into the cylinder head. He did a great engineering job, I thought; he transferred it to a Bosch magneto, driven by a bicycle chain. My first memory of him and motorcars is him breaking his arm cranking it!

Then some years after that, 1914-1915 I suppose, the war years, he had a Regal Motor Company car, made in the United States. It had an underslung frame. Most unusual. That was a four-seater open car.

SIA: That would have been about the time you joined the Royal Flying Corps?

DH: I can't remember accurately whether that was when I went in or when I came out. Because I had an



photo by Vince Manocchi

aviator's certificate before I had a road license.

SIA: In American terms, you were licensed to fly before you were licensed to drive?

DH: Yes. The only thing I could drive was a motorcycle. You could drive a motorcycle when you were 16, but you couldn't drive a car until you were 17. I started to fly when I was 16. But then the war was on. I was in the Flying Corps, and you couldn't get to drive anything.

SIA: Then following World War I you went to work at Triumph?

DH: No. Halfway through the war I was invalidated out of the Flying Corps due to a crash in France, and I went into the Air Ministry in the aeronautical inspection department. I stayed in that until about 1920, 1921. During that period I did my engineering studies, preparatory to going into the automobile industry. I wasn't able to go straight into the industry because my health was so bad, and I opened up a repair shop and worked in that for a year or two.

And then I started driving competitively. I did some racing in a car called the ABC, which you've never heard of! My biggest successes were in a car called the Invicta, a four-liter car. I had my first success in winning the Monte Carlo Rally. That was mixed up with some successes with the Triumph. I once drove a Triumph "Seven" with a maximum speed of 48 miles an hour, competing in the Monte Carlo race. We arrived three minutes late. Somehow we didn't qualify! A few years later I did finish second in a Triumph, and then third again.

SIA: What was Triumph building at that time?

DH: Triumph was then building a seven-horsepower car. They advanced to a ten-horsepower job. The Triumph "Southern Cross" was one that I did. That was in 1934—there's a good guess! I joined Triumph in 1933 or '34 as experimental manager for both cars and motorcycles. They were then building the best motorcycles in the world. Then I went over the whole time on cars, and became technical director. I held that job until the war started. During that time we made a series of cars called the Gloria, the Southern Cross, the Dolomite.

The first Dolomite was an eight-cylinder in which I pulled an Alfa-Romeo eight-cylinder racing car apart and copied the engine, nut and bolt, as closely as I could in English dimensions.

SIA: We thought only the Japanese did that!

DH: Even Rolls-Royce did it! Rolls had no idea how to make V-8s, so they were wise to go to one of the best engines of its kind, Chrysler. The Americans had all those years of experience making V-8s. So I don't apologize for making that copy!

SIA: That was in the Dolomite?

DH: That was in the eight-cylinder Dolomite, yes. That car never went into production because the first prototype was wrecked when a train hit me in northern Germany—cut the front of the car off and didn't hurt us. The second one I ran in the Monte Carlo Rally. That one was a two-and-a-half liter without a

supercharger. And then that and a box of parts, unfinished engines and cars, were sold. The car seems to have disappeared.

Then there were the war years. I went into the RAF Training Command and then out of that into armored car work.

At the end of the war, when the war was still drifting on, I decided to design a postwar Healey, using an engine supplied to me by a very old friend who made the Riley car, Victor Riley. There were no engines available at that time, but he'd got a few stored away underground somewhere during the war years, and he let me have one. And that was the first of the Healeys.

SIA: That was introduced when, late 1945?

DH: Forty-six.

SIA: Let's go back to the Dolomite for a moment. Were just the two of them built?

DH: Well, we probably built three engines and two cars. There must have been two cars because I wrecked one! It was a beautiful car.

At this point, Russ Thompson, who was responsible for the restoration of our driveReport car, joined the conversation.

RT: Was that the accident where you thought the train whistle was the supercharger?

DH: I heard this screaming noise and I said to m' mate, "This bloody supercharger's seized up!" But it was no supercharger; and there we were, sitting. There was no front on the car! This chap said, "My mouth's bleeding!" He'd knocked his tooth out.

They took us to the police station because I had to prove to them that I had insurance to cover damage to the train! They held us there for a couple of days. But the funny thing was, we felt no pain until a whole day after, and then neither of us could move. We were stiff as could be! Probably started my hip on its way. [Mr. Healey recently underwent surgery for the replacement of his left hip joint.] The orthopedic man told me, "Yours is a typical overworked hip!" It was probably from pushing out cone clutches with straight-tooth gears!

SIA: In developing that first Healey you were teamed with [A.C.] Sampietro, [Ben] Bowden and [James] Watt, right?

DH: Sampietro was working with me in armored car research in the Humber company. He was an alien, being an Italian, and he was working under license. Bowden was the body designer at Humber. Watt was an active pilot in the Air Force, and I had a good connection with the Air Force because I was in the training command. It was one of the big jokes of my Healey that—you know when you make drawings, you make tracings for production pur-

"...all the tracings on the Healey were made by women Air Force personnel at an Air Force station!"

poses. And all the tracings on the Healey were made by women Air Force personnel at an Air Force station!

Then when I started making the Healey we did it in our evenings during the war, Sampietro, Bowden and myself. Sampietro's contribution was the most expensive suspension that's ever been built on a motorcar. That was these high-duty alloy links and very expensive bearings. Quite an impossible design for production, but we didn't think it would matter when we only made two or three cars a week.

So we did the whole car in the last year of the war, when we were waiting to know whether it was all over or not—while you Americans were finishing off the Japan job. Then after the war I formed a very small company, mostly with my father's money, and I got one or two friends to subscribe. One of them was Watt. He was the sales direc-

"Then we were doing the most complicated manufacture of motorcars you could ever believe."

tor of the company. Did a good job of selling them, but unfortunately he passed away after a few years. Sampietro and Bowden couldn't see any future in my little company, and they departed to America.

The original Healey cars were the Westland and a sedan on exactly the same lines which we called the Elliot; and I suppose the most famous of that line was the Silverstone. It was a short-chassis edition of the Westland. Had a Riley engine. But I suppose what made it famous was that I had an order from Briggs Cunningham for some of the Silverstones and one was equipped with a Cadillac motor. And *that* car I'd like to find! I have no idea where it is.

I've an idea it was wrecked. There's no Healey in [Cunningham's] museum, and if there was one it would be that one.

SIA: What happened to the balance of the Silverstone when you popped a Cadillac V-8 in it?

DH: Terrific improvement! Because the Cadillac V-8 didn't weigh any more than the Riley engine. Perhaps a shade lighter.

I went to Cadillac to meet Ed Cole, to see whether he could let me have some engines, to tool up for production of these [cars] in small numbers. He said, "We'd like to do it, but we haven't got enough engines to satisfy even our truck line." So he couldn't promise us any engines. But I had met George Mason, president of Nash-Kelvinator, and he said, "If you don't get engines from Ed, come back and see me."

SIA: We'd often wondered about that. The Nash Ambassador engine was as good as you'd find anywhere from a durability standpoint, but it wasn't a performance engine. A Hudson-Healey or a Ford-Healey would have made better sense.

DH: It was doing something under a hundred horsepower. We raised the compression ratio, altered the manifolds. We got it up to perhaps 106, not more. And it ran third at LeMans, as you know. Fantastic! Kept going 24 hours without a break.

SIA: The Nash-Healey always intrigued us, and this helps get it into context. The car really did rather well for itself!

DH: Yes. I'm surprised it ever worked, because that lump of iron was so heavy! It must be nearly the weight of two of those Riley engines. It's a wonder it ever held the road! And it had a most awkward gearbox. You went through freewheel to get into overdrive.

SIA: How did the Alvis-powered Healey compare with the Nash-Healey?

DH: Well, it was a better car. The handicap we had in styling the Nash-Healey was that they wanted to use that great "Joe E. Brown" grille. But at a later date we decided it looked so damned awkward it wouldn't sell very well, so we created another body which was very much better looking. That was quite a pretty car. Then we were doing the most complicated manufacture of motorcars you could ever believe. Engines and transmissions were

SIA Interview:

continued

coming across in boxes to England. We were putting [them] into chassis and shipping them to Farina in Italy, who was shipping them back to America. I don't suppose any car ever traveled further in its production.

SIA: You're right! And you're right about those later Nash-Healeys being beautiful automobiles.

DH: They were too high-priced for the market. That was what the American dealers told me.

SIA: What Mason apparently intended it for was to draw showroom traffic, to help sell his other lines.

DH: I think you're right, and I have heard them use that expression.

SIA: Looking back to the earlier cars, prior to your Austin association, do you have a favorite among them?

DH: Oh, the Silverstone. Has to be. I drove a Silverstone in one or two Alpine rallies. It was a very tough car to drive. Never broke it, except I broke a rear spring once. Had to replace a coil spring with a block of wood, and you can imagine what the rest of the drive was like!

SIA: How come the first Austin-Healey used a three-speed gearbox instead of a four-speed?

DH: It's no secret now. Austin used that gearbox in a car where they didn't take anything like the power out of that engine that we did. A car called the A-90. It was a four-speed box, but

them. I showed them a sackful of gears! But in order to be strong enough for their new taxicab they had to have a stronger gearbox. The BN-2 gearbox, then, was the taxi gearbox. It never broke.

SIA: What were the differences between the Austin-Healey 100, 100-M and 100-S?

DH: Well, the 100-4 was the straight four-cylinder car. The 100-M was a "gimmick" car, to increase sales; so we altered the induction pipe and put some louvers in the bonnet and a few other gimmicks.

RT: Higher compression, higher-lift cam.

DH: Yes. Now it did follow quite a successful run of cars at LeMans, so the "M" stands for "LeMans."

RT: In the book it says that the LeMans had dual valve springs where the regular ones didn't, but all the cars I've ever taken apart had the dual valve springs.

DH: We put the dual valve springs in when we put two carburetors on the first Austin-Healey edition. When we received the first of the A-90 engines from Austin for our experimental work on the 100, we couldn't get revs over about 4000, so we had to put dual valve springs in. Because I pushed the red line up to something like five-two. Am I right?

RT: Well, the red line on the tachometer is four-eight, but they'll go to six, reliably.

SIA: What about the 100-S?

DH: The 100-S was one of my ideas to

"He was a great old motor man. I say what this industry lacks today is motor men!"

ferent engine. Then I said we wanted an aluminum head, and the whole failure of the 100-S was that Austin didn't know how to insert valve seats in an aluminum head. So there are a lot of these 100-S cars running around that have ordinary engines in them, because the heads are in such bad condition that they can't be re-cut any more. You see, Austin got this crazy idea that you put the seat in andpeen it over. Impossible! It's so silly. Austin was one of those companies that wouldn't copy. Now if they'd gone to Fiat, they could have found out how to put valve seats in. But no, they knew it all. I found that, with English designers right through, you see, you get a good designer and you'll find a clutch of foreign engines lying around the shop. That's the only way you can make good merchandise, by being able to take the best out of somebody else's motorcar.

SIA: The MG-TF was widely regarded as a stopgap. What we're wondering is, why didn't they bring out the MG-A at the same time you brought out the Austin-Healey? What was the delay?

DH: I think possibly—MG was always in friendly competition with us—that the TF was an answer to the 100. Am I right?

RT: I think that's true. The 100 came out first, and MG figured they'd better do something with the style of their body, to try to compete with the Healey. Because the late TF and MG-A engines are identical.

SIA: In other words, they weren't ready with the MG-A, yet, so they face-lifted the TD?

DH: I was very closely connected with John Thornley [of MG]. He was chief of engineering. We worked very closely with MG because we knew that the Austin [production] line was no good for the job it was doing, and that was simply putting engines and gearboxes in. Jensen was doing everything else. So we moved it down to the MG plant—a pure assembly plant, nothing else—the bodies came from Coventry, and so on. It was an ideal line for receiving parts and putting them up.

SIA: You're saying that the Austin-

"We had trouble with that gearbox. A lot of trouble."

we couldn't get that bottom gear to stand acceleration starts with the power we were delivering. We used to tear them up. So Geoff [son Geoffrey Healey] said, "Shall we lock it out and put an overdrive in it?"

SIA: So it was a four-speed unit with first gear locked out?

RT: It was basically just a sleeve over the shifting shaft, so it didn't go in [first gear].

DH: That's right.

RT: I have a question about that. The shift pattern being backwards: Was that because of the right-hand drive?

DH: Yes. It was a right-hand-drive gearbox, and you changed with your left hand.

We had trouble with that gearbox. A lot of trouble. I had a great job persuading the Austin engineers that we were getting trouble, but I proved it to

make it into a very much better sports car, in performance apart from its appearance. So the first effort was to tear off all the clobber, such as bumpers and windscreens. Then we had to lighten it, so we went back to all-aluminum panels.

RT: The chassis was still steel, though, correct? And all the sub-structure was still steel?

DH: Yes. Well then we had to have a special engine for it, and Austin had under contract a chap called Weslake, who was the finest designer of engines in England at the time. So we said we wanted a new head for the Healey, for a true cross-flow engine. To do that engine he had to completely redesign the block because the studs wouldn't allow for the induction and inlet ports through the same stud position. So the 100-S engine became a completely dif-

Healeys were assembled in the MG plant?

DH: From the end of the original 100, I would say. MG and Austin were both part of the British Motor Corporation. The merger was in the hands of a man called Leonard Lord. He was a great old motor man. I say what the industry lacks today is motor men! You know, the Fords and the Buicks and the Oldses and the Morrises and the Austins. Lord had the big, nasty job of trying to merge the two biggest manufacturers in England [Austin and Morris]. And all the wars between the designers and the sales departments.... He had a nasty job, and I seemed to come into the picture with the Austin-Healey right in the middle of it. Because the Austin-Healey was first seen by him and Lord Nuffield at the motor show. Well, they got together and said, "This is something for us. We can sell this in large quantities." So Lord said, "Come and have a drink with us tonight." So I did. This would be something like six in the evening, and after too many dry martinis we shook hands. There was never any other agreement between us. The name was to be changed to Austin-Healey.

RT: Was it that you had this car and didn't have the facilities to produce it in quantity?

DH: Well, the conversation was something like this: We had this car on the stand, surrounded by thousands looking at it. It was a great sensation. And Lord said, "You can never make enough of these cars to meet the demand. You can turn out perhaps 20 a week. We can make 200. So why don't you become associated with us? You hand over all your drawings, you supervise all our drawings. We will make it as best we can, at Austin." And overnight the tool room got down to it and made a badge, Austin-Healey. They started on the car the next day.

And I had very good friends, the two brothers Jensen, who were making the Jensen car. Not a very well received car, but they made the odd one or two a week, with a big Austin engine, a big four-liter straight six. They called it the Jensen Four-Litre. They were then making bodies for Volvo. But for some reason the Volvo contract dried up and they'd got no work. They were quite close to Austin, because they were doing cabs for them. So I said, "Go after Austin and get that order!" And they did. And every Austin-Healey body was made, trimmed, electrical panel hung in, all they could put in before it became a running car. It was all done at Jensen. Then it was shipped by road to Austin to have the bodies put on.

We were great friends, John Thornley and I, and old Lord used to make us competitive. So he had us meet him one day, and he said, "I want a little car,

the cheapest little car that can be made. You two chaps have a go at it. Both of you must make a draft and bring it along to me as soon as you can." Well, of course, John's was a much bigger concern; and the bigger a concern it is, the longer it takes to do anything. We had a "bug" in to Leonard Lord in weeks—before, I think, John's drawings were finished. So he told us to go ahead with the Sprite.

SIA: That was the "Bug-Eye"?

DH: It wasn't called the "Bug-Eye" then. When the Americans began to love it they called it a "Bug-Eye." We called it the "Frog-Eye."

SIA: Getting back to the 100, why was the exhaust system placed so low?

frills. I think the original car probably looked better with those louvers in the bonnet; but the original car must be the best.

SIA: We've heard it said that the original 100 handled better than the six-cylinder cars.

DH: I'm sure it did. The 100-S was the best-handling car we had. That was possibly due to a slight saving in weight in the aluminum head, and the saving in weight of all the bumper gear and stuff, and having non-standard shock absorbers.

SIA: Somebody told us that there were more Austin-Healeys sold in San Francisco than anywhere else in the world.

"...there are times when your artistic mind overcomes your engineering mind."

DH: Well, there are times when your artistic mind overcomes your engineering mind. I had a young man working for me, by the name of Gerry Coker. He'd had some experience in the body shop at Humber. He was always drawing pretty pictures, and I loved them. And when the day came that I wanted to do the 100 I said, "Look here, Gerry. You do me some pretty pictures of what a sports car should look like, in your mind. I will correct them from my experience." So his first picture had fins on it. But he and I both wanted to stick to that very low profile. As soon as you jack the car up, it looks all wrong. So then we got the smallest muffler that it's possible to make, but I'm afraid they'll never come up the ramps to people's garages over here! But I think that's what sold the car: It was very low, had a beautiful side line, and it had that folding windscreen—which was quite useless, but it did have the effect of making the car appear to be moving when it was stationary.

SIA: Among the Austin-Healeys, which one is your favorite?

DH: Well, it must be the original, mustn't it? You can't help picking the original, because I thought that was the perfect picture of what a sports car should be. When you start to modify it, after.... I don't know if you know the expression, "When an artist has finished his picture he never goes back to it again." And isn't that something like this? I probably never went back to it except to tell them to put a bigger engine in it and to lengthen it and to do whatever was done to put a "six" in it. As far as the little things like the 100-M, the 100-S—well, they were just

DH: Well, 80 percent of the Austin-Healey production went to America; 60 percent of the 80 percent went to California. There was a very good distributor here, called BMCD—British Motor Car Distributors.

SIA: Mr. Healey, what's in the future? Any more Healeys? We read something about a new car, based on the Ford Fiesta.

DH: No, no. The Ford Fiesta that we did was purely an exercise. Ford's advertising department had to have a "shop-window" car to publicize the Fiesta. *Road and Track* got in on the act and did a story. That was all done by the advertising people at Ford.

RT: One car you haven't talked about is the Jensen-Healey. What exactly was your involvement in that one?

DH: It's rather a long story. It goes back to a gentleman named Kjell Qvale, who owned BMCD, who wanted a car to replace the big Healey after it had gone out of production. I think it's too long a story.

RT: I think it's an important story, because there are a lot of fallacies about it.

DH: Well, briefly, very briefly, Qvale said, "Can you make a car by next summer?" So Geoff and I decided we'd got to get the units out of a big production run, as we were doing out of Austin. We settled for the units out of the current Vauxhall, which was a General Motors car. And we used them in the original prototype. We were to make a prototype running car with a makeshift body, to test it; and the original car was built. Our idea was to get this car into production with the Vauxhall engine, because it was cheap—so cheap, as a mat-

SIA Interview:

continued

ter of fact, that we were able to buy engine, gearbox and transmission for about 250 pounds—whereas the final engine and gearbox that went into the Jensen-Healey cost nearly a thousand pounds. That decision wasn't made by me. Anyway, the car—I thought—was good enough with the Vauxhall engine in it. He tried various engines, the Ford V-8 made in Germany, BMW, until he lighted on the untested, unbuilt Lotus engine. And that poor car suffered every fault. The first run of a thousand engines by any maker.... We shook out every fault—everything, *everything!* Took it on the hill, the carburetors used to flood. Leave it overnight in the cold and in the morning the timing belt used to jump off and wreck the engine. Every sort of break! It was junk.

RT: So you were not especially happy with the finished product?

DH: As unhappy as I am with anything with my name on it. But I had this agreement, and I had to accept it. My whole future, my money was tied up in it. I will say this: With that light Lotus engine the handling properties were better than any car we'd ever had. We had a Dunlop test.... We could test the car up to its limits, and that car went further than anything else, including Porsche and the Lotuses and the rest. So there was nothing wrong with the handling of that car, ever. But its troubles, from the start, were phenomenal. It had a gearbox from the Sunbeam Alpine. Wasn't strong enough. We then went to a five-speed Getrag, a German box, made for BMW. It was too heavy, and a very heavy change. But I don't want to go into all its problems.

Now you asked if there's ever going to be another Healey. I don't know whether I should tell this funny story. I went into his [Qvale's] office in San Francisco one day, after the Jensen-Healey had blown up. And he said, "Did you see that chap going out the door? His name is DeLorean. He came over here to see if he could buy the Jensen-Healey tools, to make a motor car in Puerto Rico." That was the first I'd heard of Mr. DeLorean.

SIA: To make a car *where?*

DH: In Puerto Rico.

RT: And now they're making them in Ireland!

DH: And I'm helping pay for it! He had nearly a hundred million of the taxpayers' money, British taxpayers. What we call the biggest ripoff in the British motor industry!

They did one thing right. They put a Volvo engine in it. But I can't see how he can make a sports car with only 130

horsepower! Even the Saab comes in doing better than that.

He must be a great entrepreneur, DeLorean. I'm absolutely amazed that he could sell that project to the British government, never having made hardly a prototype. *Road and Track* told me it was not a running prototype that he displayed.

We had a very left-wing government in England at the time. Chap called Harold Wilson was Prime Minister. And he would do anything to try and push away the unemployment problem. Northern Ireland was suffering very badly because of the war between the Protestants and the Catholics, and this chap came along and it was a wonderful reason to flood millions of pounds into a project to satisfy the political situation there. It was a political gesture. We all know the small number of men that operation can employ can't make a.... I think the promises were that on every car the British taxpayer would get 40 pounds back, or something like that. He ran out of money a year ago, and came back and drew another 40 million or so. And of course the present Conservative government, politically, couldn't say, "We've turned off the tap and ruined this great project." But I don't think there's any more money coming forth.

One of the people whom the government put in to save the British-Leyland Corporation, after Lord Stokes had made such a mess of it was—well, I've forgotten his name, but his right-hand man was a top Ford executive. And the boys at Jensen, after the company had undergone complete liquidation and the bank had it for sale, said to me, "Can't you find some means of saving this company?" And this Ford executive and I decided that we needed three million pounds to get the work going again and to re-hash the models to an economic price. There were 1400 men engaged in the production of Jensen cars. We went to exactly the same department that DeLorean went to, to raise money. We needed three million pounds. We had raised a million pounds among some friends and we were asking the government for another million and a half to start Jensen up—a going concern—to save 1400 jobs. They laughed at us. Only a year, two years after, DeLorean got his money. So I may be a bit bitter. And I don't mind that part of the story being told.

When the big Healey was due to go out of production, the Austin had changes of management; and they decided that they would replace it with a car of their own design. And for this car they built an engine that was to be called the "C Series." They built a car in which the "C Series" engine went. It was a useless car.

RT: Was that the MG-C?

DH: It was to be called an Austin-Healey and an MG-C. And I wouldn't agree. So then Austin decided.... They were making a car called the Princess, which was using the military version of the Rolls engine—which was originally designed to be a multi-fuel engine. It didn't give very much horsepower for its size, about 140 from four liters, because it had side exhaust valves. With side valves you can't take the power out of the engine. That was why you started to make valve-in-head engines over here. It wasn't designed to give a big power output, but it was quite nice, a very smooth, reliable engine.

Well, this car didn't sell very well and Austin was landed with the contract to use a quantity of the engines and to take a continuing number of engines from Rolls-Royce. So they said to me, "Can you make any use of these engines in a future Healey?" So with the help of Rolls-Royce on the engine side, we took a Healey and split it down the middle, made it six inches wider and a few inches higher, and put the Rolls in with a five-speed Jaguar gearbox and Jaguar rear axle. It made quite a nice little car. It was smooth, quiet, just about the same performance as a good '3000.' A little better on the bottom end.

It was decided that it was to go into production; and we went as far as Rolls agreeing to put that beautiful little badge that they had on the side of every airplane. What does it say? "Powered by Rolls-Royce." What a selling gimmick on the Healey!

Anyway, at that time the political upheaval started. The British Motor Corporation wound up; all the models they had in production were more or less thrown away, and British-Leyland took over. And this car would not comply with all the Nader requirements of the day, the front impact, side impact, what else? And if you put a catalyst under it you'd be liable to burn the carpets! So that car disappeared. It could have been a good-selling motorcar, because it looked good. It made a bigger car, a more salable car.

Now Rolls did make a handmade, twin-cam engine. That came to Austin just about this time; and I said to Geoff one day, "There are some of those engines down there and they're worth a fortune!" (I think there were two.) So I said, "Get on your bicycle and go to Austin and see if you can get 'em. So he rushed over to Austin. They had gone to the scrap!

So that's the short story of why there's no Austin-Healey being built today. It came in the middle of two terrible upheavals in the industry: one, the takeover of British Motor Corporation by Leyland—they made a complete failure of it as you know—and also Mr. Nader got into motorcars. □

You're Invited!

45th Austin Healey Rendezvous Celebrating 70 years of Austin Healey!

The Healey Rendezvous 2022 will be held in
South Lake Tahoe, CA / Stateline, Nevada
May 29 - June 3, 2022 at the MontBleu Resort.

Events Include: *

- May 29, Reception
- May 30, No Host Happy Hour
- May 31, Italian Buffet
- June 1, No host Happy hour
- June 2, Award Banquet
- Popular Choice Car show
- Drive to Virginia City and ride on the Virginia & Truckee Railroad
- Around the lake drive
- Rocker Cover Races

Event and Registration information is online at
goldengatehealeys.com/rendezvous-2022/



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* Events and schedule subject to change.



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Contact Steve Kirby for full details and event flyer at
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The Golden Gate Austin Healey Club

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Calendar of Events

Contact Marc Lewis to list an event:
events.ggahc@gmail.com. For a more complete list see www.GoldenGateHealeys.com. You are advised to verify the dates of events that are not ours

DATES	EVENT
10/15-17	Sierra Passes/Fall Color Tour
11/6	Russian River/Guerneville/Korbel Winery Tour
12/4	Christmas Party/Bay Cruise

Please Note: More Information will be coming on the Events listed above, once Dates and Details have been Confirmed

Please see Golden Gate Austin Healey Club website for event details:

EDITORIAL NOTES.....

.RESSURECTION OF "TECH TIPS"

To me, one of the more interesting features of Healey Marque has always been the **Tech Tips** section. It was also a core part of **Healey Highlights** even in the first editions, but seems to have been replaced with AHA articles and the proliferation of You Tube tutorials and other on-line sources. Dave Nock has approved the use of Norm Nock's technical articles for Club use, and as space is available we will start to layer some of the tidbits into HH.

We also encourage any and all members to contribute their own ideas and experiences. Among members are those who have performed engine swaps, disc brake conversions, air conditioning add-ons and other creative things aimed at enhancing the performance and enjoyment of our beloved rides. So if you have something to share, email me, send me a draft (Word document please) with JPEG photos, and we'll give you some column inches. (I was going to contribute my own: installing an ignition cut off switch in the cockpit to supplement the battery cut off in the trunk. I thought I was very clever, but found the same solution published in **HH** in the mid '70s.)

Healey Highlights is meant to be a vehicle for members to learn, to connect with each other, and to share. Members are encouraged to contribute articles, personal stories, to make suggestions for format improvements and articles, etc. There are no frivolous ideas, and all are welcome!

HealeyMarket



GGAHC members may submit Healey—related items—either wanted or for sale—without paying a fee.

For Sale:

1967 Austin-Healey - BJ8/3000 Mk. III

Owned since 1988. California car, always garaged. Looks and runs great. New tires and leather interior. 89,000 miles. Asking \$50,000.



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Subject: Any member interested in a decades worth (plus) of the national AH magazine...

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EMAIL: andrewnarraway@gmail.com

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1965 Austin Healey 3000 Mk III / Phase 2, Chassis HBJ8L / 32038. Owned for 30 years, including 8 Year Restoration. Asking \$65,000



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