

HEALEY HIGH ROADS

The Newsletter of the Capital Area Austin-Healey Club

MY TAKE!

Jack White,
CAAHC President

I'm honored to serve as your President for 2004. My "first lady" in the passenger seat of the BT7 is Pam. We have been first-time big Healey owners for nearly six years. So why did we buy our car and then link-up with the Capital Area Austin Healey Club?

Like many of my generation, I experienced the LBC (little British car) invasion in the 1950's and 60's. My first taste of British auto engineering was as a senior in high school. I worked in a community pharmacy after school hours and the young pharmacist purchased an MGA in 1959. It was, of course, a sleek machine and such a radical design departure from the earlier MG's. Would you believe that this guy entrusted me, an 18 year old, with his new MGA for several afternoon rides? Those were the days when every driver of every British make waved to those on the opposite side of the road. Equally exciting for me was the chance to participate with Ernie, the pharmacist, as a navigator in TSD rallies. In that period,

rallies but they were not even imaginable). We also went to several gymkanas and that was when I began a life-long interest in

power of a tiny calculator in those rallies but they were not even imaginable). We also went to several gymkanas and that was when I began a life-long interest in big Healeys. At the gymkanas, it was common to see the Healeys compete without mufflers. The drivers simply removed them rather than crush the exhaust system. Picture a big, thundering Healey tearing around barrels and hay bales spewing dirt and grass and you have a taste for my fascination.

Well the high school days faded and college loomed. The idea of owning a new British sports car was an impossible dream and so I put the Healey passion in the deep freeze for a very long time. For the sake of honesty, I did own a tired Jaguar XK120 fixed-head coupe for a few years in college. It was a real clunker but the engine roar (when it ran) was a thing of beauty. After college I had a brief flirtation with an Alfa Romeo Guilietta Spyder. It was a very nice car but eventually was sold as I entered the U.S. Army in 1964.

Thus began the long drought without a sports car in my life. Those thirty plus years were filled with building a career and raising a family. Somehow, perhaps like a Cicada, I emerged from a dormant state to a deliberate pursuit of a big Healey in 1998. After months of searching, including trips to Princeton, New Jersey and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, I found the Mark I just 10 miles from home. The engine and transmission were balky but the body had a good paint job. I bought the car in May and took it to British Car Day in Bowie just six weeks later. On the banks of Allen Pond, I was greeted with a field of elegant Healeys and their generous owners to provide advice and tips on getting the car into top shape. Most of the car owners were members of CAAHC and I quickly accepted their invitation to join the club.

Over the past five years, Pam and I have discovered the real joy of getting to know our fellow enthusiasts. We have made many drives with an entourage of club members and attended shows, parties and special events. I accepted the role of club President because it will give me and my fellow officers a chance to provide everyone with a range of activities centered around driving and touring. We like driving our cars and exchanging stories and experiences with other owners. None of us minds talking with friendly people who approach us in parking lots and convenience

stores with “Healey stories” about their past ownership or that of friends or family members. Our goal, as leaders of the Club, is to get more members involved in the 2004 driving season. We are fortunate to have a core group of very involved members and our circle gets a little wider each year. We want to make it easy for any member to get personally acquainted with other Healey owners. We will plan a schedule of events to suit any level of beginning interest to get out and meet other members. So I urge you to watch this newsletter, our website or special notices by e-mail and join us for a pleasant driving experience. Like any good leader, I welcome your feedback on our planning so we can make your next Healey ride a rewarding time behind the wheel.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR.....

I apologize for the appearance of this issue of “Healey High Roads”—I’ve experienced major problems with my laptop computer and have had to rewrite this newsletter twice due to crashes. Please bear with me—relief is in the works: This Dude is looking for a Dell....

Thanks—Michael Oritt

**AN INTERVIEW WITH ED
BUSSEY**

By: Michael Oritt

In January I saw a post on the "Austin-Healey list" from Reid Trummel asking if anyone had information about Ed Bussey, owner of Ship and Shore Motors of West Palm Beach, Florida, the Southeast United States' importer for British Motor Corporation (and therefore Austin-Healeys). I had contacted Bussey in 2001 while trying to get some background on my 100's Le Mans conversion, as some documents indicated that the car's first owner, who lived in Daytona Beach, Florida, had purchased some parts from Ship and Shore. After passing along Bussey's phone number I told Reid that I was in Miami for the winter and offered to set up an interview. This is a summary of my visit with Bussey in his West Palm Beach office on January 15th:

MO: Thanks for seeing me Mr. Bussey and do you mind if I call you Ed?

EB: Ed, please!

MO: Ed, I'm here on behalf of "Austin-Healey Magazine" published by the Austin-Healey Club, USA and I appreciate your seeing me. I hope to do an article for our readers detailing your long association with the Austin-Healey marque. Before we start talking about Healeys I'm

wondering how you came to be the Southeastern US importer for British Motor Corporation?

EB: Well, I was actually importing Austin cars from England from the late 1940's, and of course that was prior to BMC's deal with Donald Healey. In fact, prior to Austins I was selling Jeep/Willy's vehicles and also Crosley cars, if you remember them.

MO—Ah yes, those funny little cars made, I believe, in Ohio?

EB—Yes, Cincinnati. So in any case, my first experience with importing English cars was with Austin. Then I also became associated with MG cars, which was Nuffield, and then when they joined together to form BMC I became their importer for the southeast United States.

MO—I take it, then, that you did not do business directly with Donald Healey prior to his merger with Austin?

EB—No, I never did, though I first met him at the 1952 Earl's Court auto show in London, when he struck his deal with Leonard Lord, owner of Austin.

MO—So your association with Austin Cars brought you into contact with Austin-Healeys since their inception?

EB—Yes. I received some of the earliest consignments of cars in 1953. And when they sent the first

15 100 S's to New York I had one of those cars.

MO—Wow. I know that your agency campaigned an S at Sebring and I want to learn about your association with racing Healeys, but before we talk about that please tell me a bit more about Donald Healey? I have heard that he liked to have a good time?

EB—He sure did, and he and I traveled a lot of places together visiting dealers and distributors, and we had many good times. We subsequently became close friends and visited together both here and in England quite often. He was a wonderful man, a great person. Oftentimes at lunches and such, people would ask him about auto design and he would draw up a car for them on the back of a paper napkin.

MO—I have heard that he like to “bend an elbow” and enjoyed a good party.

EB—Very much—I did too at the time....(laughter). I also became close with his sons Bic and John, and especially Geoff. Geoff, as you know, was very closely involved in the racing development of Healeys—he was quite a guy, actually a bit on the shy side compared to his father.

MO—Ed, what was it like being in the English Car business in the early days?

EB—Difficult! Along with being the regional importer, I maintained

Ship and Shore as a retail store until 1957 and thus was involved on both levels. It was tough selling those cars in those days, tough getting good dealers, tough doing business with the English, getting ships lined up to bring them over here and getting transit damage solved and getting reimbursed for our repair expenses. Likewise on the warranty payments: It was taking up to six months to recover costs that we had to lay out to repair cars under warranty. Ultimately the various US distributors and importers put enough pressure on the English so that things got a bit better, but this was always a problem.

MO—How about parts and service?

EB—Back then it wasn't hard finding mechanics because English cars, like American ones, were pretty simple. Everyone knew what a distributor ignition and a carburettor was! The SU carb was a bit different but we would train the fellows to understand them. Of course, before a dealer received cars for sale he had to have parts on hand and trained mechanics, and this was just part of my being the regional distributor. I ultimately set up training facilities and parts depots in both Atlanta and West Palm Beach and even had a British Leyland van set up for our “mobile training” in various locations.

MO—Fascinating. Ed, 2004 is the 50th anniversary of the 100 S and I'd like to return to your involvement with racing at Sebring.

EB—Well, I fielded a 100 S at Sebring for several years, and in we usually competed against the factory team. We always beat them, and I think our best effort resulted in 10th place overall. Considering the cars that we were racing against, that was pretty damn good for a private entry.

MO—I believe that one of your drives was Phil Stiles?

EB—Yes, Phil drove and did very well at Sebring. He and another fellow—he was one of the Colliers from Collier County in southwest Florida. Phil was my warranty manager, but we spent a lot of time practicing on tracks in the West Palm area prior to races making sure that the cars were ready and that the pit crew was trained. Back in those days we would drive the car to and from Sebring on the highway and perhaps just change the tires and spark plugs and tape the headlights just prior to the race. After a minor tuneup the cars were really pretty much ready to go. Of course, cars were usually torn down after races and engines often had to be rebuilt. By the way, Phil also raced one of my cars at Daytona—right on the beach—doing speed runs. I can't recall how fast he went but he did quite well. Phil also used to raced Crosleys—in fact, that is how I

originally met him when I was a Crosley dealer.

MO—Obviously car racing has changed a lot—it's a now a rich man's sport.

EB—Yes, there were elaborate teams fielded by Porsche and Ferrari even back then, but an amateur could still compete, especially in cars such as an Austin-Healey. Of course, racing always attracted the wealthy and I remember that the BMC distributor for the Pennsylvania area—I think his name was Royston or the like—would bring down a private rail car to Sebring and he would throw elaborate parties. Those were great days.

MO—Someone mentioned to me that at one time there was a Healey that raced at Sebring driven solely by women. Do you know anything about that?

EB—I believe that Denise McCluggage shared a car with a male driver one year and some years later another Healey was raced by a team consisting of two or three ladies—I cannot remember any names but I think that one was known as “The Lady in Pink”. She was a great driver.

MO—Back to the car business, when did you conclude your association with Austin-Healeys?

EB—I was distributing them right until the very end in 1968 when they were discontinued. Ultimately I gave up my association with

BMC and began selling Subaru. But until I closed our retail agency in 1957 we were the leading seller in the world of Austin-Healeys.

MO—You've shown me several photos in which Jackie Cooper appears.

EB—Yes, he was a good friend and often visited both our retail dealers and car clubs.

MO—I'd like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me and share your vast Healey experience with the magazine's readers.

EB—My pleasure, and thanks for coming up.

An Open Letter From the Activities Director (Fred McConville):

As many of you may know, I was elected as Activities Director, and member of the Board of Directors, of the Club at the Annual General Meeting held earlier this month. To do this job well, I need your input and, at times, your help. That's what this email is all about.

Healeys and friendship are the things that bring us together. And not surprisingly, the Board would like to put together a program of activities or this Spring, Summer and Fall that allows us to enjoy those things. Possible activities could fall into a few broad

categories: Other than monthly meetings, there are drives, shows and parties!

Drives could be relatively short, day-long affairs focused on a specific destination- say, a 2-3 hour drive to a local vineyard or distinctive restaurant - and then terminate at another watering hole convenient for all. For example, last September Don Margeson led a group of us on a great drive over several beautiful Virginia byways in Loudon and Fauquier Counties that included refreshment at a local vineyard. We are talking made-to-order Healey roads! And there are similar possibilities on the Eastern Shore that could tie into the boating scene at a local marina and/or a super seafood restaurant. (Gotta be careful about that restaurant stuff though; we have to be able to fit back into the Healey!)

And/or we could have longer drives to more distant destinations such as Luray or Seneca Rocks or Gettysburg that included an overnight stay with planned intermediate stops at restaurants or other places of interest both going and coming. For example, an overnight drive down Virginia's Northern Neck to the Tides Inn on the Rappahannock could give us pleasant overnight accommodations at a great marina. Or tie an overnight drive to a destination like Williamsburg or Chestertown, MD with independent enjoyment of the Colonial Williamsburg or historic Chestertown areas. (But

the weekend tourist crowds at those places may make that an impractical proposal). Rallies, gymkhanas and scavenger hunts of various sorts could be a part of, or independent of, any or all of the above. Then there's the Capital Classic in June. But more on that later.

Let us not forget those of us who re-discovered our slumbering driving talents at Summit Point last June! We could have a revival of sorts at AllSports Karting in Sterling, VA. Believe me, these are not your father's go karts. We could have an outing there for an afternoon or an evening and let those skills, those secret ambitions-yea, dreams come out of the closet. Set up some teams and let the competitive juices--and the fun flow forth! And you won't even lose your license!

And then there are car shows. There are many old faithful shows in and around the Capital area and we'll circulate a calendar of those in the near future. Triumph, MG, Jaguar and other various British car clubs sponsor or are featured at those and we should not only show the flag-well, actually the flying wings of our marque--but show off our cars and our affection for them as well as our appreciation of the "other ranks".

So there you have it. A laundry list of general ideas. Nobody has a monopoly on wisdom in this area and we welcome your ideas, comments thoughts and specially your willingness to present your

idea and then take the ball, organize it and bring your idea to life for the benefit of us all.

And one more thing: Participation counts! Following the example of a successful program of the Triumph Club, this year we will establish a system to encourage and reward participation in Club activities. Participation in each activity will earn points and prizes will be awarded at next year's AGM. And the prizes will have real value! But more on that later also.

So what I need now is your input. Let's face it ?I'm a new kid on the block and many of you have been involved in various car club activities for many years. All of the ideas I have listed above are nothing more than that--ideas. Now I need and welcome your ideas as specific as you can make them to make this year fun.

Thanks and all the best--
Fred McConville

2004 Activities Planning Begins

President Jack White and Activities chairperson Fred McConville kicked off your new board of directors with a planning session held on February 8th. The theme for this year's agenda of events is more fun with more of our club members and with other clubs. Our Healey's are ever more popular in shows and growing in value, and keeping them popular is our goal.

Chairperson Fred outlined an excellent preliminary slate of events beginning in March and extending through October 2004. Tech sessions, meets at other British Car club events and car shows, monthly club meetings, picnics combined with country drives, winery tours and scenic drives, the 3rd Annual Capital Classic, Go-Kart racing, and the always popular annual events such as the Crab Feast, Conclave (San Antonio, TX), and Encounter. Our goal is to make the event calendar more visible using our email link and website to allow members to plan ahead for events. Enjoyment is always driving our cars, sharing stories, meeting our fellow club members, fraternizing with other clubs, making new friends, helping a charity, and just getting out with the sound of the car. We will be discussing the event calendar at the next club meeting and will firm it up by March with continuous updates throughout the year.

Our featured event is our own Capital Classic and this year's event picks up from the 2002 Classic since your club hosted the highly successful Conclave 2003. We have a reputation for delivering on fun and we intend to continue this in 2004. A small survey will be sent to club members soon seeking feedback on the venue you would like for this year's Classic. Please take a moment to respond to assist the board on the planning for this year's Capital Classic.

Want to win a prize at the end of the year for recognition as being the best 'ambassador' to the Healey marque and to your Capital Area Club? We will be introducing a point system for participation at events throughout the year and will duly recognize the person or persons earning the most points with special prizes from the club. The point race will be featured in the HHR during the year. Join in!

We have had great attendance at our monthly meetings and urge all members, new and old, to come join us to socialize and find the enjoyment of participating in a small way in club events. It's mildly contagious and always fun. Hope to see you there.

Don Margeson, Secretary

**TECH SESSION AT
VINTAGE RESTORATIONS
LTD PLANNED FOR MARCH
13TH**

In late-breaking news : a Tech Session is scheduled to take place on March 13th and below find the text of email received by Herman Farrar from John Tokar, of VRL. John, as many of you will know, has for years been intimately involved with "British Car Day", formerly held in Bowie, MD and scheduled to take place this year in Lilypons, MD. Please advise Herman of your plans to attend what should be a fascinating learning experience. Herman:

Thanks for contacting me. We would be glad to host a Tech Session for your club at Vintage Restorations Ltd on March 13, 2004. I can provide coffee and a large coffee pot for your use during the session. I'll have a 30" x 5' table set up in the office for the coffee and refreshments.

We will start with a complete tour of the shop beginning at 10:00 AM and then conduct a series of demonstrations on metal repair, panel fabrication, and rust removal/metal repair techniques that we use on British cars. We will cover MIG welding, plug

welding, metal wending and shearing, plasma cutting, and many other interesting techniques. I will also have on display some tools and products used in the auto restoration trade. In addition, if you prefer, I can to hold a question & answer session on related auto restoration topics that are of general interest to the group. If time permits, a "hands-on" welding session can be held for those who care to try MIG welding. We can remain at the shop for as long as there is interest.

Feel free to call me at anytime. As the date draws near, an estimated head count would be appreciated. I would also like a copy of your club's newsletter with our Tech Session announcement if possible.

Thanks for the opportunity to host your group!

Best Regards,
John Tokar

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