

Auto club marks 30 years of MG enthusiasm

BY BOB RUEGSEGGER
CORRESPONDENT

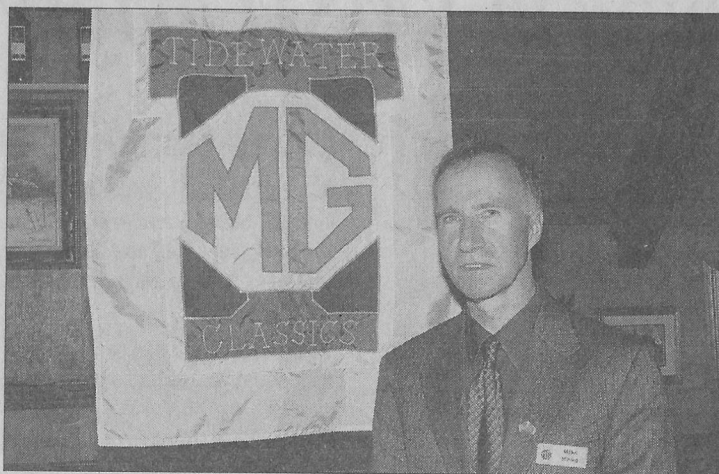
When members of Tidewater MG Classics, an organization of automobile enthusiasts, recently assembled at the Aberdeen Barn restaurant on Northhampton Boulevard, they celebrated 30 years of classic cars and friendships.

Peggy Craig and Anna Worrell teamed to organize the anniversary affair, with the assistance of Beckey and Allen Watson. There were door prizes, spark plug candy favors, three speakers, a big birthday cake.

Mike Haag, the president of the group, is a relative newcomer. He's only been a member for 10 years. "You don't have to own a classic to be a member," he said. "Just show an interest in MG cars or anything related to MGs and you're good to go."

"Anybody can join or come by the meetings. It's just a wonderful group, a laid-back group with a lot of good folks from every walk of life," he said. "It's the cars that bring us together, but the people who bring us back."

Members such as Roy Wiley, Hank Giffin, Mike Ash and Roosevelt Moseley have been coming back for 30 years, to meetings, tech sessions, rallies and assorted gatherings. They are among the founding members. Wiley and Ash are past presidents.



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Mike Haag, president of Tidewater MG Classics, is a relative newcomer to the club. He's only been a member for 10 years.

"I fell in love with the MG because it's smaller and it's a sports car," said Moseley, owner of a vintage 1953 MG TD. It's something that you can work on yourself."

The club has an expert on almost every aspect of mechanical and restoration work. "On Sundays we have our tech sessions," Moseley said. "That's when we work on the cars." When eight MG devotees gathered with their cars in the parking lot of Pembroke Mall on May 6, 1973, they didn't envision the organization they founded would be around 30 years later. After they mustered at Pembroke Mall, they drove to Jim Banvard's house, held a meeting, and formed the Tidewater MG

"T" Classics. Twenty people attended the first meeting; Jim Banvard became the group's first president.

Susan Bond, co-editor of the group's monthly newsletter, The Dipstick, and keeper of the archives, drives an 1972 MGB-GT with 007-MGB license plates. "I like a roof over my head," she said. "MGs are fun little cars. They're fun to drive, they're easy to work on, and you can get parts for them anywhere." The 10-page newsletter that Bond and Peggy Craig edit includes a column by the club president, technical articles, photos, coming events and writeups of recent events.

Bond also has worked on compiling archival material

for the Tidewater MG Classics CD presented to the members at the celebration. "All the stuff that I was putting in the archives has been put on a self-loading CD," said Bond, who worked with others on the project for about three years. The group recently drove to Gloucester, took a downtown walking tour and visited the local museum. In a few weeks, some members will travel to Virginia International Raceway to watch vintage MGs race.

Giffin, who spoke at the anniversary celebration, races his vintage MG TC. Members typically buy, sell and trade cars with others in the group - and look out for each other. A few devotees, such as founding member Roy Wiley, have owned more than one MG at a time. Wiley once laid claim to nine.

Some members, such as Ash, are mechanics. "I've been doing all my own technical work for years," he said. "I've written a couple of articles, and I'm the technical editor of the MGA Register." Ash owns several T series MGs. His first was a 1955 MG TF, which he brought from English in 1967. Kate Fisher is the third generation of her family associated with the MG Classics. Her grandfather, Dave Barrows, just had a passion

for MGs. Fisher still has her grandfather's 1952 MG TD, which is undergoing restoration. "He lived on 86th Street and Atlantic Avenue, and he would park his MGs outside the garage, and all the summer people would check them out," said Fisher. "He'd get all the girls in their bikinis to pose next to his cars, and he'd take their pictures," she said.

Several years ago, Fisher's grandfather gave her the little red car that she had admired as a child "I've kept it. I won't let it go," she said. Doug Kennedy and his wife bought a 1969 MGB that was about to be junked. They towed it home and put it back together, bolt by bolt, with the help of club members.

"I owe a lot of these people for that," said Kennedy. "A lot of these people are practically family members."

Robert Davis credits Jim Banvard and the late Dave Barrows with initially pulling together the club.

"The cars initially bring you together, but your relationships with all these wonderful people is what keeps you coming back," said Davis.

"Being associated with this club gave me a lot of the lifelong friends that I have today. Joining this club was one of the best things to happen to me in my life."

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