

The Oil Spot

JAN-FEB 2010

The Oil Spot is the monthly Newsletter of the Birmingham British Motoring Club
an affiliate of the North American MGB Register

The Presidents Corner...

The Presidents Corner will return for the next Issue but first I owe the Birmingham British Motoring Club a sincere apology for the lack of an Oil Spot over the past three months.

My work required quiet a bit of my time and energy to close out some rather large projects. The Deadlines were critical and the client was not ready to hear about other responsibilities that I may have had.

Other parts of my life also required attention and slowly but surely that is coming together. Nothing like being blind sided a bit and needing to re-group.

My New Years resolution has been to get the Oil Spot back on track and provide the BBMC with an informative and entertaining newsletter. I fully intend on providing you with this and feel that I can with your help.

Please feel free to send articles or information directly to me for consideration for publication. My email is ruben9388@att.net, send your letters or questions to this edress.

Again, my apology to you and a request for your understanding.

Sincerely,

Ruben Greenwood, Oil Spot Editor



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Tech Session February 20, Empire Autohaus

Come join your friends at Empire Autohaus on February 20th beginning at 9 am to discuss and learn

LUCAS ELECTRICS AND BRITISH WIRING

...or...

WHERE DO I REFILL THE SMOKE CANISTER?

A Pizza Lunch will be provided along with cold drinks and coffee

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A letter from Mike Fliegel aka CW3 Michael M. Fliegel

Hi everyone.

It's Sunday early afternoon as I write this and all is well here. It has rained on and off for the last several days but it keeps the dust down. The ground is hard packed here and the water tends to collect and pool for days. People who I barely knew three months ago have become good friends. We are all doing the best we can in a place where no one wants to be.

In the DFAC (dining facility) today I met soldiers from England and Canada. Nothing new there. If you are nice, people are nice to you. It is enlightening to see just how much alike we are, wherever we are from.

If I have not told you, KAF (Kandahar Airfield) is posh by the standards of Afghanistan. There are three barber shops (\$5.25). The Brits even have a movie theater and an indoor soccer field. There are several gyms to for exercise (I need more time there because I've gained a few pounds) and multiple PX's to spend money. We have a Boardwalk with shops and restaurants like Pizza Hut, Subway and TGI Friday's (new). Saturdays there is an outdoor market where you can buy everything from rugs to gemstones to boot-leg movies (made in China). There are multiple church services to attend. I have participated in two charity runs and another is scheduled for Valentine's Day. Television is rare, what you get it is the AFN (Armed Forces Network). We will get the Super Bowl but with a 10 1/2 hour time difference I will have to get up very early and find a TV (Go Saints!).

People in the FOB's (Forward Operating Bases) live in tents with no internet and no hot water. They eat MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat) and go out on convoys every day. For the most part they are kids from 19-25 and their rank is typically E-1 to E-5. It's great to talk with them when I see them.

Some sections are on on 24 hour shifts and two of my roommates work nights. It makes the room less crowded while you are there. Sunday is the only day where I can sleep late because our (Legal Center hours are 1200-1900). Most days it's get up, go to work, eat, get cleaned up, and go to bed. It makes the days and weeks go by faster.

As you would expect on a military base, tactical military vehicles are everywhere. There is an almost constant roar of jets overhead 24 hours a day. You would think a war was going on here.

I really enjoy SKYPE. It has allowed me to keep up with my family. I have been able to SKYPE with a few of you and it is great to hear your voices. Please email me and let me know how you are doing and keep me up on things back home. It really means a lot and I do read all emails.

Terri told me about Jim Luger. He was a great friend and Fraternity Brother. I can't think of him without remembering his smile. I will miss him and my sympathies go out to his family. I hope that he is the last friend I lose during this deployment. Life is too short and so precious. Take care of yourselves and each other.

My Pastor, Bill Elder, is recovering from a stroke. Bill, you are in my thoughts and prayers. I know that you have a long recovery ahead, but I also know you have the resolve to complete the journey and your life's work. God does perform miracles every day and I do expect to hear you preach again.

Well, that's all for now. Take care of yourselves and each other. I love and miss each of you.

CW3 Michael M. Fliegel

Mike is currently serving in Afghanistan and will be back with us soon. We wish him the very best and have sent him BBMC window stickers to add to vehicles of his choice. Take care of yourself Mike, we are looking forward to having you back.

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The Polar Bear Run....times 2

What a great thing. Count 'em, two (2) Polar Bear Runs! Take your pick after you decide what you are willing to endure. The original date was cancelled after a brief conversation with weather people and the Sheriffs Department in Blount County. Neither could say what the weather could or would be like nor could they predict the condition of roads after a short term of freezing temps. Knowing that trying to rearrange the drive for another day on that Saturday morning would be next to impossible and wanting to try and gather as many participants from surrounding clubs, I made a decision on Thursday to postpone the drive. Most of the people I spoke with were in favor telling me that they preferred not to take their cars out on less than dry and good days.

The original date was kept by a few frosty folks willing to put their cars on the roads despite the weather. Thanks to Diana and John for leading the troops with their trusty GPS device. Their Garmens didn't realize the bridges were closed that had been the intended route of choice. But despite the ice and backtracking a little they joined forces and had a great time I am told. I thought about joining the group that Saturday morning, but these old bones just were not that prepared for the jaunt. I decided to wait until the 23rd and see how the group turns out.

I didn't realize that there was another event happening that day at Barbers that kept a few folks from joining us, they were missed. The group that did attend came and joined in a very orderly manner and cars from every type club in the area joined in.

In the previous PBR drives I have tried to keep the group of cars together, this is akin to herding cats. Last year I tried to send groups out almost on the path of their own choosing with a single destination in mind. This went pretty well, but, still similar to the cat analogy.

David Boger and I got together and drove the route and discovered the bridges to be closed for "repair". It seems that someone tied a rope around the Horton Mill Bridge and tried to pull it down with their truck. No clue why that was attempted, but Blount County decided to close all the bridges in the area until all could be examined and made sure they had not been tampered with. So, with a hand held GPS and a bit of following of the nose, we plotted a course.

The directions that Jim Roberts had passed along to us were pretty good, we just had to figure the way around the closed bridges and keep the drive feasible and enjoyable. We thought about making side trips to see the bridges that had been closed but it really would have been a side trip and in one case a cross country trip. We decided to keep to better roads. I think that was a better idea.

Our friends at The Birmingham News came out to see us off and to catch a glimpse of the rolling car show that was created. Many of you have seen the video on al.com. Cars reminiscent of The Rockford Files and Starsky and Hutch came from out of the group, a beautiful Packard that had been lovingly restored by Dale Baker made its first trip further than the Winn Dixie with us. Ford GT, MG's, Triumphs, Datsun, Jags, Miata's, Toyota's even a Rolls and a Bentley.....great group coming together for one day to show that they love their cars and enjoy making friends. We all strolled around daring to touch and gawking at the beautiful machines parked in the outer most lot at Barbers Motorsports Museum. The museum opened that morning for a Tech Session for the Porsche guys and so we fell into step and out of the way.

The weather was a bit overcast which brought a bit of a chill to the day but no one seemed to mind. One person (maybe two) mentioned they would have preferred it a bit cooler. Okay.....

The groups left with the Corvette group leading the way, the rest of the groups fell in line and followed the directions handed to them. I was told that the map and directions were well put together and easy to follow. My thanks to David Boger for his patience in assembling the information and keeping notes as we drove the route back in December for this drive.

Our route took us along back roads towards the Palisades Park and a brief layover for bathroom

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The Polar Bear Run...times 2 cont.



A stop near the Horton Mill Bridge



Lunch at The All Steak in Cullman

breaks and a great view of the countryside. We will need to go back there on a spring day to make better use of the view and picnic tables located there. The groups left about in the same order as arriving, Corvettes leading the way. A short distance from the park was a rather nervy goat that wasn't sure if he should butt heads with the cars or simply stand his ground. I am glad to report that he backed off and let us pass without incident. We stayed in our cars just to be on the safe side.

The cars started to arrive in Cullman on cue to meet at The All Steak Restaurant for lunch. All Steak provided us with a dining room and excellent service to go along with our meals. The Orange Sticky rolls and muffins were a treat for everyone. Groups gathered at tables and discussed their cars, the weather, the day and a lot of talk about Top Gear.

After lunch, the participants had a choice of what they would like to do next. The easy way back to Birmingham or backtrack along the same route or a side stop or two. My son Ryan and I decided to side trip down to Mother Angelicas' Monastery. This beautiful facility was opened in 1999 and is beautiful. The rolling manicured grounds, a wonderful winding road leading to the Church and peacefulness that seems to surround you. If this road were anywhere else, it would have been a good chance for a few cars to test their suspensions and road holding capability. But it just doesn't feel that way as you move along this ribbon bisecting the green pastures.

After visiting the facility and walking away totally awestruck, we headed back towards Birmingham and to an end of a great day.

I appreciate all who participated in the drive and their willingness to remain courteous to others on the road with us. Those that participated in the January 9th run I hope can join us next year as a group. I am not sure of the numbers that gathered on the 9th, I have heard everything from 30 to 90, so with that much difference in the estimate I am not sure if it was done by counting tires or cars. The January 23rd drive had 73-75 cars leaving the parking lot and a count of 79 people at the All Steak restaurant. Some of the group decide to take lunch elsewhere but not sure where they may have went, there are several great places in the Cullman area to enjoy lunch.

Next years event is already in the planning stages and I have talked with George about joining the GTA again for a mega run. George and I have decided to turn Southward and maybe.....well.....a lot still has to be finalized before spilling the beans on this. But put January 15th in your calendars as a tentative date for the next Polar Bear Run.

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“THE TOUGHEST

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METAL KNOWN TO

MAN IS THE BOLT

RUSTED TO THE

FRAME THAT YOU

ARE TRYING TO

REMOVE”

...UNKNOWN BUT

SAID BY MANY...

Event Calendar

Birmingham British Motoring Club Events.

February 9: The BBMC Monthly meeting will be at Dale's Southern Grill in Vestavia. Come for Dinner at 6pm and the meeting at 7pm.

February 20: Tech Session at Empire Autohaus, 9am

Lucas Electrics and British Wiring. Pizza Lunch will be provided along with Drinks and Coffee. Bring your electrical problems and questions for discussion and solutions.

February 27th: *The Italian Job* at Barbers Motorsports Museum Theatre. The original 1969 movie with Michael Caine and a group of Mini Coopers. Pay attention during the movie, prizes will be awarded if you can answer the questions correctly. Mark your calendars for 1pm on Saturday February 27th.

March 13: The Patio Room of the Barber Motorsport Museum at 1pm for the BBMC Club Meeting.

April 3rd: Weekend trip maybe to the Aprils Fools British Car Bash at West Bar Lake near Chattanooga. Come join the BBMC on a drive northward to meet with other British Car Fools and enjoy the day. Plans are still underway for this drive so let us know if you might like to go with us. Check on line at www.etmgdc.org

Mark your Calendars for these up coming Events.

March 12-14: Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

March 20th: 20th Annual New Orleans British Car Day

New Orleans, Louisiana - 20th Annual British Car Day - Join us at Delgado - City Park Campus in New Orleans, Louisiana. All British cars and bikes are welcome. Registration is 9am to noon, with popular choice judging from noon till 3pm, awards at 4pm. The host hotel is the Hampton Inn - Elmwood, 5150 Mounes Street, Harahan, LA 70123. Call (800)426-7866 and ask for the British Car Show rate. There will be a reception on Friday, March 19th at the hotel. For more information contact: Karen Murray: (504) 236-7509 or Cathy Greensfelder: cgreensf@cox.net , or visit the club web site at <http://www.bmcno.org>

April 9-11 Indy Gran Prix of Alabama. Tickets can be bought on line from www.barbersmotorsports.com . Come join the inaugural event at Barbers Motorsports Park.

May 21-23: Racing legend Bobby Rahal, partner in Historic Motorsports Productions, brings his newest venture to the Barber Motorsports Park for its inaugural event. Come watch actual rolling pieces of history as they compete on North America's most beautiful circuit. The BBMC will participate in this event in the Car Coral. Details are forthcoming.

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Interesting Mini Facts

1. The record for most people to fit into a classic Mini at one time is currently 21. The record was set by Malaysian students and two of them were in the boot.
2. The Mini was almost called the Austin Newmarket.
3. The Japanese have bought more classic Minis than anyone else.
4. There are 3,016 screws, nuts and bolts in an original Mini.
5. If you parked all the Minis ever made end to end, the line would stretch from London to Sydney - over 10,000 miles.

Tony Barnhill

It is always sad to hear about the passing of a friend and fellow Car Enthusiast, even more so to have to pass the info along to others.

Tony Barnhill who has long been a respected member of the British Car group has passed due to injuries sustained in an automobile accident this morning.

Tony has long maintained and cared for MG's and the MG tradition, his web site The Autoist has been a great place to find information and the occasional funny.

We are asked to keep a prayer in our hearts for Tony and Jerri Barnhill and their family

As I receive additional information I will be glad to pass it along.

<http://www.theautoist.com/>

Tony will be laid to rest in Arlington Cemetery as soon as his wife is able to leave the hospital.



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Tire Information

Replacement of Tires due to Age

A while back, the news media was making quite a big deal about blowouts and the safety of old tires. Owners of classic cars were targeted because we frequently do not drive our cars enough to wear tires out in three to five years, which is commonly the life of a tire on a vehicle used in everyday life. I even remember one story of a couple in a Sunbeam Tiger on the way home from a car show who experienced a blowout with disastrous results. So, how do you decide when to replace the tires on one of our classics?

Putting the Age of the Tire into Perspective

Last May I checked the age of my Michelin tires and found that I had two that were ten years old and two that were thirteen years old. To find the age of your tires, look for the recessed oval on the sidewall by the "DOT." There you will see three or four numbers; three if the tire was manufactured before 2000 and four if after. The first two numbers tell you the week of the year, and the last one or two tell you the year. If manufactured after 2000, the two numbers tell you the exact year. Before 2000, there is one number that is ambiguous. For example, if it is a 6, it is assumed that it was 1996. However, it could be really old and be 1986 or even earlier. It seems that tire companies did not mean for tires to be in service for longer than ten years.

As far as the condition of my tires, all had excellent tread and were not cracked. I had meticulously maintained them through the years by using Vinylex, an ArmorAll type product. Not completely believing all of the information about old tires, I did find myself at the crossroads of a decision: continue driving the tires I have through the hot summer, or drop the cash and buy new ones.

I asked the opinions of several trusted mechanics, did quite a bit of research on the Internet, and even read all 45 pages of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) report before I arrived at my decision. (To access the report, type in your search engine's bar: Congressional Report on Tire Aging. Click on: [PDF] Research Report to Congress on Tire Aging.) I thought I would write about my journey as you may find it helpful in making your own decision on tires in the future.

The Major Cause of Tire Failure

In all of the articles I checked, there was agreement that the major cause of tire failure through blow-out was due to under inflation. Over loading was also mentioned, but there is little chance of us over loading a standard tire on one of our British cars. So, buy a good tire gauge and use it often. How often you say? It is recommended to check your tires once a week. Time and again I saw references that stated that one couldn't estimate how correctly a tire is inflated by looking at the bulge in the sidewall. To my knowledge the correct pressure on an MGB is 30 psi front and 32 psi rear. On modern vehicles you can just check inside the door jams. You also need to check the pressure on the spare. Yes, a major pain, but the problem is that almost always the spare is under inflated and then when it is put into use you have a dangerous situation.

To further put the problem in perspective, the NHTSA estimated that 400 fatalities per year from 1994 to 2004 were caused by blowouts. Given that there were an estimated 37,313 traffic fatalities in 2008 (www.nhtsa.dot.gov), this is approximately one percent. Needless to say this one percent was not composed entirely of classic car drivers on aged tires. To me this makes it very difficult to judge the true danger of an older tire since these are blowouts on all vehicles with all kinds of tires, new or old, under inflated or not, over loaded or not. My personal opinion is that there was a lot of the standard over reaction by the news media and did not feel the need to rush right out and buy tires because my current tires were in imminent danger of exploding. However, this still left the question of what is the actual situation and what consideration should be given to tires that look great, but just happen to be older.

What Happens in Your Tire

Now I must admit that I enjoyed reading the report from the NHTSA because in my prior life before teaching, I

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was an R&D organic chemist. Just for your information, plastic and rubber nowadays are pretty much the same thing. Both are made of very large molecules, which if you could view them under a microscope powerful enough would look like cooked spaghetti in a pan. When tires and certain kinds of plastics are manufactured, they add something called plasticizers that, like the lubricating oil in

your engine, lubricate the molecules and allow them to slide easily past each other. A real example is the PVC pipe that is used for sprinkler systems and the vinyl or "Pleather" that is used in upholstery and clothing. One is hard and rigid and the other is soft and supple. They are the same material with the only difference being the vinyl has had oil (plasticizer) added so the molecules slip past each other.

As the plasticizer bleeds out (which it is guaranteed to do) the plastic (or rubber) loses its flexibility and cracks. This is why your dash cracks, tires crack, and just about anything else that is plastic or rubber cracks with age. There is an additional problem with rubber caused by cross-linking. Cross-linking is a process where the molecules are joined together in a complex netlike arrangement. Going back to the spaghetti picture in the last paragraph, the strands are able to slide past each other and be separated. Cross-linking joins the strands and holds the entire mass together. This is how a rubber item will hold its shape and Tire manufactured in the 13th week of 2007 be tough. However, too many cross-links cause it to harden and become brittle. When the tire comes out of the mold after it is "cured" which means cross-linked, this process has only begun. Heat, exposure to oxygen and ozone, UV light, and residual chemicals in the tires continue the process causing the rubber to become more brittle with time. With this brittleness comes increased cracking and reduction in the integrity of the tire.

So, when should I replace my tires due to age?

Needless to say, this is up to you. However, there are some guidelines. If the tire is worn and the tread depth is less than 3/32, of course it is to be replaced. If there is obvious cracking, this allows moisture and dirt to penetrate the tire and cause rusting of steel belts and decomposition of cords inside the tire carcass. This will lead to increased separation of the rubber from the reinforcing materials and create a dangerous situation. I think that tires with severe cracking certainly need to be replaced.

What if there is no cracking? First thing, look more closely. To my surprise my "uncracked" tires had cracks on both the tread and sidewall when I examined them more closely. Even if completely uncracked, separation of the reinforcing cords may occur in general usage. Every time you hit a bump, the cords are pulled against their bond with the rubber. Enough strain over time aggravated by degradation of the bonds and you can have a failure. Age will lead to decreased flexibility of the rubber causing a greater tendency for the cords/belts to pull away from the rubber. The strength of the bond between the cord and rubber will slowly decrease with time as well.

Now that you have waded through all of the technical stuff, here is what I would say is the bottom line. First, the NHTSA report was based on studies performed on tires in the harshest environment in the United States, Phoenix, Arizona. This is because most of the recorded tire failures occur in southern states with the bulk in Arizona, California, Texas, and Florida. So, obviously heat has something to do with it. It is not as hot in our area as it is in Phoenix and Southern California, but it does get toasty here in the summer.

Upon further investigation, I found that it seems mainly the car companies that are pushing for the age limit of tires to be set at six years. The tire manufacturers, (e.g., Michelin in the NHTSA report) recommended 10 years as an age limit.

I finally decided to replace my tires. My decision was somewhat based on their age but was actually made easier when I found that my 175/70R14 tires were wider than recommended for my wheel. Moss Motors in "British Motoring" published an excellent article on tire sizing ("Modern Tires for Classics," Summer 2008). To locate this article go to www.mossmotors.com and click on the British Motoring Magazine link. The recommended tire size for the stock disc wheel on my MGB was 165/80R14. Now these can be a bit difficult to locate, but I found a pretty good tire from Vredestein for \$106 each. I would refer you to the article for other wheel types and acceptable tire sizes. Most wheels can take 175/70R14 tires, which can be found at bargain prices.

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Now the decision is up to you.

A couple of footnotes:

Use of 303, Vinylex, ArmorAll, or other vinyl/rubber protectants should help out your tires and dash. They are oily so there is some hope that a little of the oil will penetrate and replace some of the plasticizer that has bled out. They also contain sunscreen that cuts down on the cross-linking cause by the UV in the sun's rays. For your dash, purchase of a Dashmat will eliminate the UV issue. — Carl Gwyn

Thanks to the [Sacramento Valley MG Car Club](#) and Editor [Lindsay Costigan](#) for permission to reprint this article.



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TRY USING THE FORUM.

**It is that time of year again, your BBMC
dues of \$20 needs to be sent in .**

Please make your checks out to "The Birmingham British Motoring Club" and mail to the address above. We ask that you have this paid by Mach 1st so we can continue to provide events and activities for the club membership. If Ken M. were still on the board there would be a Wall-of-Shame of those that have not paid. The Board has decided not to embarrass you in this manner.....yet.

FOR SALE OR TRADE

NOS Girling Master Cylinder Reservoir Extension Up for sale is a fairly rare NOS Girling master cylinder extension. I know for certain that it'll fit the early Spitfire master cylinders, and very confident that it'll fit most other 1960's to early 70's LBC units. The extension is used to increase the capacity of the master cylinder to avoid the necessity of refilling as frequently as fluid is used to accommodate pad or lining wear (or, more likely, as the system leaks onto your garage floor). This is a cylindrical reservoir extension that attaches to the existing brake (or clutch) master cylinder by first removing the master cylinder cap, then threading the extension's integral cap and gasket onto the master cylinder. The extension includes its own top cap, and a mesh filter at the filler neck. Since the extension is a translucent plastic injection-molded part, the fluid level is easily checked by visual inspection. Triumph offered this Girling extension as a factory approved accessory and it was very commonly found on racing cars. A nice period accessory for any LBC. Asking \$50.

David Boger, 205 531-7243 cell or 205 969-0076 home