



CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER
VINTAGE TRIUMPH REGISTER
P. O. Box 5263
Jackson, MS 39216



NEWSLETTER

February 1986

6A ■ The Clarion-Ledger ■ Monday, January 27, 1986

Help getting car fixed reflected well on state

Each year during the holiday season there are many heartwarming stories in the newspapers and on television. This past Christmas my family had the good fortune to meet an extremely generous Jackson man at a most opportune time. Our encounter with Frank Peel made me realize why, as a transplanted Floridian, I have loved the state of Mississippi and have chosen to stay here.

My brother, Bill Cranston, was on his way from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to Jackson to spend Christmas with my family when his Triumph TR-6 quit on I-55 north of Briarwood. We were all relieved that, even though we knew his car has serious problems, he had made it within five miles of our home. The next day Bill went to check on his car only to find a note on the dash that read,

"Dearest TR Owner!

"If you are in need of parts or mechanical help and do not want to be at someone's mercy, please call me. I have a shop at home with

plenty of TR-6 parts. I will be glad to get you back on the road.

"Frank Peel

"Central Mississippi Chapter of the Vintage Triumph Register."

My brother called Mr. Peel and he was an instant friend. He helped my brother by letting him work on his car in his shop and offered him all the spare parts — even a new engine! After a week of diligent work, Bill was on the road. It would not have been possible if it had not been for Frank Peel. My entire family is grateful to Mr. Peel who helped a total stranger out of a dire fix.

Now I know why my Dad, who lived in Mississippi as a child, encouraged us to attend Mississippi State University so that we could experience the Mississippi way of life. Frank Peel is truly Mississippi hospitality personified.

BETH CRANSTON NOWELL
Madison



TOP DOWN PARTY

The daffodills and dogwoods are in bloom and that can mean only one thing - it's time to drop those tops and let the good times roll!

Kicking off this year's driving season will be our annual "Top Down Party" to be held at 103 and 105 Dana Street in Brandon and hosted by Julia Cappello and Keith Anderson.

Take I-20 East and exit at the first Brandon exit, turning right (south). Drive to the first traffic signal and turn right. Drive approximately one mile and look for Dana street on your right.

Please arrive with

your tops and side curtains erected for the ceremony.

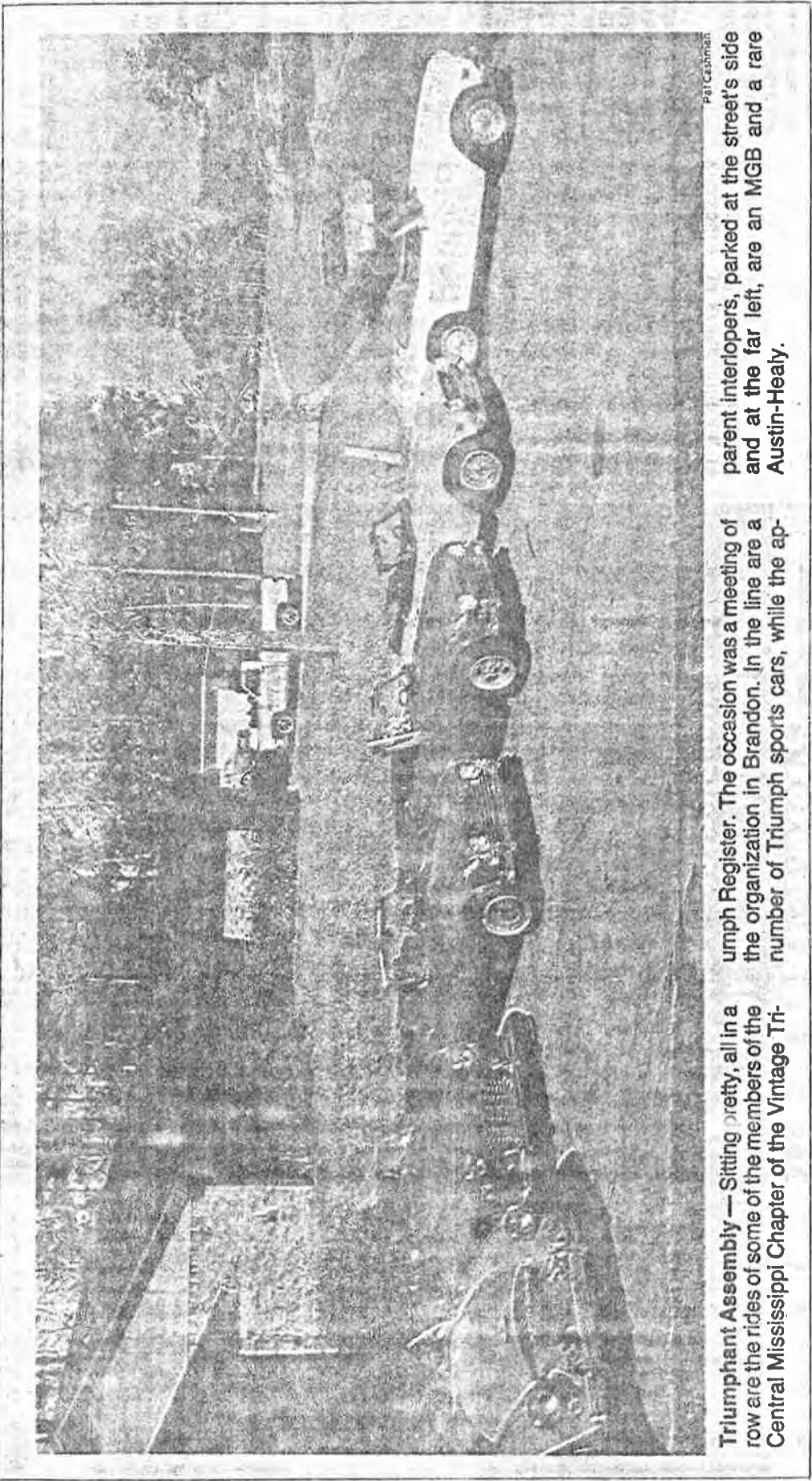
SATURDAY, MARCH 22
1 to 5

NATCHEZ TOURIST TROPHY

Plans are developing rapidly for CMC-VTR's first overnight event: a trip to historic Natchez Mississippi!

A caravan will leave the Jackson area on the morning of April 26 to meet other enthusiasts at a Natchez city park for a bring-your-own picnic. Hopefully, some folks from Louisiana and possibly Memphis will be able to meet us there, along with

Left: This picture and article appeared in the April 19, 1985 Vicksburg Evening Post



Pat Cashman

parent interlopers, parked at the street's side and at the far left, are an MGB and a rare Austin-Healy.

umpr Register. The occasion was a meeting of the organization in Brandon. In the line are a number of Triumph sports cars, while the ap-

Triumphant Assembly — Sitting pretty, all in a row are the rides of some of the members of the Central Mississippi Chapter of the Vintage Tri-

our other CMC-VTR members in the area. A caravan will then depart for a motoring tour past some of Natchez's historic homes and into the surrounding countryside. Observant motorists and navigators may try for a trophy by answering questions along the way.

The evening will consist of a short visit to a local tavern located on a bluff with a nice sunset view, followed by dinner at one of the restaurants located in the infamous "Natchez Under the Hill" district (once the Las Vegas of the United States in the 1800's). An overnight stay at a local hotel will be followed by breakfast and farewells in the morning. Dash plaques commemorating the event are planned.

Jack Pool is putting together a fine event for us and we encourage all to attend. Flyers will be sent out and all local marque clubs will be notified.

Watch for details soon!

DUES ARE DUE!

Time is running out for those who would like to continue their memberships and receive the Newsletter.

If you have not already done so, please forward your \$10 to CMC-VTR, P. O. Box 5263, Jackson, MS 39216.

17 February, 1986

Alex Wade
63 Willowbrook Lane
Brandon, MS 39042

Dear Alex:

Thank you for returning the photograph. I have by now burned it and the only existing negative. Little did I know when you asked to borrow the photo that you actually would recognize it for what it was. I must admit that I was both amazed and chagrined by your depth of knowledge and open reporting of the Nash-Triumph story; perhaps I should say "debacle". I suppose that with all elaborate cover-ups the cat eventually gets out of the bag. The more appropriate metaphor in this case would probably be: "the chickens get out of the coop". I'll explain that.

You see, the now mercifully demolished Nash-Triumph, some of whose parts I still possess, was not purchased by me from a fictitious antique tractor collector in Indiana (come on, nobody collects tractors) but was inherited from my late uncle, Graham Moss McFarland. Uncle Graham supplied the Rhode Island Reds that played so large a part in the 1955 Le Mans fiasco and the car came to him in lieu of his promised part of the purse. Graham would have preferred to allow the racer to rust into dust, but as it turned out the car had a serendipitous effect in that it enraged generations of Rhode Island Red roosters to perform feats with his flock that vastly augmented egg production. He eventually recouped (recooped?) all of his losses at Le Mans and much more. But enough of chicken farming. I suppose I may as well reveal the details of that venture as Graham told them to me, now that he is gone and you have already published the essence of this sordid chapter in the history of the marque we cherish.

As you know, the three Nash-Triumphs were privately fielded at Le Mans in 1955 by the American racing team, GRH. Nash himself had no interest in racing, being convinced, as you correctly reported, that he had transformed the crude Coventry product into the "Ideal Sports Car for the American Market". Standard-Triumph, of course, were astute enough to recognize the improbability of Nash's alterations (70:30 weight distribution, 35 bhp, zero to 16 mph in 468.11 sec) having improved the racing capability of the TR-2. After all, the TR-2 run at Le Mans the previous June by Wadsworth and Dickson had finished 15th overall and 5th in its class at an average speed of 74.71 mph with no special preparation, and run by an amateur team! This is history. In 1955 Triumph wisely chose to field their own works team at Le Mans, headed by Ken Richardson. All three TR-2's finished the race, and in racing served to prove the Girling disc/drum braking system incorporated into thousands of future TRs.

The Nash-Triumphs would undoubtedly never have re-crossed the Atlantic had it not been for the efforts of GRH's unstoppable visionary, Jaun Gramm. Gramm was at that time an unemployed

aeronautical engineer recently fired by Northrup for allegedly subverting the Flying Wing program by publicly proclaiming that it was in fact a Flying Tail. As we know, the Flying Wing was scrapped by the Pentagon in favor of less controversial airframes. But Gramm had been misunderstood, as visionaries often are. He had merely contended that the Flying Wing was cursed by a severe deficit of stability in the tail which could be cured by automatic cuts in the propulsion units, thus reducing the unbalanced (70:30) weight budget to 50:50. Alternatively, he felt the same result could be achieved by reversing the props and flying backward. This assertion was never explained.

It seems that Gramm suffered through months of despair in his failure to find employment and took to drinking heavily a noxious mixture of ouzo and muscatel, but he never lost his convictions. One night in a drunken stupor, lying on his back on a filthy flop-house mattress and browsing a Motor Trend report on the smashing new Nash-Triumph, he was drawn again and again to an illustration which highlighted that famous massive front bumper. His head throbbing from the effort he somehow managed to steady his shaking, sweating hands and forced his swollen eyes to focus.

Insight struck like a blown Dunlop! He realized that the Nash-Triumph bumper had precisely the dihedral, proportional length, angles of sweep and attack, and the leading-edge chord section of the Flying Wing! What's more, the car was flawed by the same 70:30 imbalance as was the aircraft. If only he could get his hands on a Nash-Triumph surely he could transform it into a sensational high-performance sports machine, thus doing justice to Nash's achievement in automotive style, and re-establishing his own engineering credibility in the process.

In a computational frenzy he grabbed his slide rule and whipped the cursor and bar back and forth so rapidly the aluminum glowed red and nearly melted in his hands. Within minutes he had found the solution: get rid of the engine and transmission! Substitute an alternative that must weigh not more than 62.181 lbs, be mounted in the rear and accelerate the car to a speed just a tick above its present 16 mph tops. At that speed sufficient lift would be generated by the wing-like Nash bumper to reduce the footprint of each tire to less than 0.250 sq. in. and the car would then accelerate to speeds near Mach one and corner with the agility of a Bolshoi Prima Ballerina. Rudd needed a backer!

He found one. A Nash franchise holder in Winnemucca, Nevada, had reluctantly accepted his factory mandated consignment of three of the new Nash-Triumphs. He knew he might as well suck sand as try to sell them. With no highway speed limit and long distances to travel, Nevadans liked fast cars. Also, cowboys don't give a damn about chrome.

The deal was struck. The "Rudman Nash Agency and Coyote Lounge and Motel" would provide the cars. Gramm would modify them, and a suitable event would be found to demonstrate their performance and make lots of money. Just one detail remained: Gramm had yet to find a substitute for the Nash flat-head four and its un-naturally mated British transmission components. To this purpose he enlisted the aid of a former colleague (also discharged from Northrup in the wake of the Flying Wing flap) who was as near a genius in propulsion as was Gramm, himself, in aeronautics. This co-visionary was none other than Ferd Hollings

who at the time was employed as a Fecal Transport specialist at the G.M.McFarland Chicken Ranch in Bovina, Mississippi.

In his off-duty hours, Hollings experimented with adapting the tiny Dyna-Jet Red Head, beloved of U-control model aircraft builders, to run on methane. This small pulse-jet was capable of propelling 4 oz balsa airframes in circles at speeds in excess of 180 mph until the tiny craft either ran out of gasoline or the operator collapsed from vertigo. Hollings reasoned that even greater performance could be achieved by burning methane. The excreta of chickens can be converted into high-quality methane, and Hollings supposedly had discovered a catalyst in okra that made the transformation reaction almost instantaneous. Some say Hollings planned to be the first to fly a Rhode Island Red laying hen cross-country. He allegedly intended to accomplish this by strapping a methane-burning Dyna-Jet to the hen's back, thus using the chicken itself as both airframe and fuel source. I have no further information on this.

Although time was short, the three Nash-Triumphs were prepared and actually accepted for entry in the 1955 vingt-quatre heures du Mans. It was determined that 14 adult Rhode Island Red laying hens and one rooster, together with a 70:30 mixture of black-eyed peas and okra weighing 20 lbs would fit neatly into the Boot of a Nash-Triumph racing car with engine, transmission and fuel tank removed. Various feed mixtures were tried, but the Mississippi-bred fowl performed best on the peas/okra formula. Six Dyna-Jet Red Heads were welded to the floor of the spare wheel compartment of each car, wheel and cover being discarded. Fuel lines communicated from the bottom of the Boot to each of the pulse-jets. Ignition was by kitchen match.

Forty-five of Graham McFarland's finest stock were shipped to France (with his reluctant agreement) together with the three fully chromed Nash-Triumph racers accompanied by their driver/mechanic/owners, Gramm, Rudman and Hollings. It mattered not that there had been no time for testing prior to the race. The theory was esthetically irresistible, the modifications skillful and parsimonious, the ingenuity unrivaled since the Wright Brothers, and thus, the successful outcome ineluctable. All might have been so. Unfortunately, what could have been the birth of yet another Hollywood Legend never got off the starting line.

Can you believe this, Alex? I swear it's the truth on my uncle Graham's dying gasp. I wept tears of bitter salt recalling his words as I bashed my knuckles again and again parting-out that old car. Damned thing was so rusted-up and covered with caked-on chicken dung I could hardly get a wrench on a machine screw and the nuts kept striping, rounding-off, breaking. If I hadn't had a 4-lb hammer, impact-driver and a good wrecking bar I never would have gotten the crummy sucker apart.

I digress.

As you reported, none of the three Nash-Triumphs successfully completed even one lap in the allotted 24 hours. But do you know why? Ha! I'll bet not. Would you believe that it's impossible to buy black-eyed peas or okra in France? Certainly, GRH were not aware of this and unfortunately they had brought none with with them. Neither could they find any suitable substitute such as grits, hush-puppies, cornbread or greens. All they could

get were some pathetic pommes de terre, a bucket of escargot and a few litres of Pouilly-Fuisse Bordeaux Blanc, 1946. This, they divided among themselves as they waited at the starting line with the other drivers, the three spectacularly gleaming fully-chromed Nash-Triumph racers with their Boots full of expectant chickens dotted among the Ferraris, Maseratis, D-type Jags, BMWs, Mercedes and determined but lesser entries positioned on the field.

At the gun the gallant three ran to their cars, popped the Boots (losing some moments, never having fully mastered the Dzus fastener-carriage key system) dumped the pommes de terre and escargot followed by 4-litres per car of the Bordeaux Blanc in with the startled chickens, slammed shut the Boots and bent to the ignition ports, kitchen matches aflame, waiting to ignite the expected bursts of methane. It took less than the blink of a Lucas dip-switch for the All-American, Mississippi-born and bred Rhode Island Reds to react to the insult of being showered with this effete foreign faire. Enraged and abused beyond endurance they burst as a single chicken through the inadequate millboard separating Boot from Cockpit of each car, and led by their furious roosters assaulted the three hapless racers in a fowlish frenzy. Within seconds the three proudly chromed American entries were reduced to the condition shown in the photograph you published. Of course, the rust came later.

Spectators mistook the flurry of red-feathered avengers for flames and thought some terrible ignition of fuel had occurred. In a sense they were right.

There are few things that money cannot buy, as we know, and silence and forgetfulness were quickly purchased by Nash and his erstwhile colleagues in Coventry. So it has been until now that the Nash-Triumph "accidents" at Le Mans have remained a forgotten footnote of that race and were easily accepted by the motoring public as the result of amateurs tampering with perfectly engineered fuel systems.

The team GRH are still with us, however. All three eventually succeeded in politics and now hold high office. One can only speculate on where their campaign financing originated, but enough said.

All that I have related here is the unembellished truth. I shall eventually complete restoration of TS 2182 and if a piece or two of her is a relic of that unfortunate Le Mans entry then, c'est le bon destiné.

Park away from chicken coops, my friend, and

keep 'em cranking.

Yours in Triumph,



Vic McFarland

CALENDAR

TECH TIP

- 3-22 Top Down Party
- 4-26/27 Natchez Tourist Trophy
- 6-14 Rally to the River
- 9-6 British Car Day
- 10-4 Picnic Rally Natchez Trace
- 10-18 British Car Fest Memphis
- 12-? Christmas Party

this film features Malcomb Campbell and "Bluebird", "Babs", and George Eyston's Napier Railton "Thunderbolt". Period films of record attempts are depicted with full sound effects (oh, for a Dolby stereo system on Tere's VCR! - there's nothing like a V-12 aero engine at full throttle!).

This very interesting film may be borrowed by calling Alex at 825-9611.

You can avoid burning up a set of points every thousand miles on your British iron by installing a ballast resister between your ignition switch and the positive terminal of your coil.

1957 TR-3 TRIUMPH: Many spare parts including new parts to restore body. \$800. NOTE: TR-3 in good shape, is worth now \$8500. Will deliver. Joe (205) 830-1180 (days) or (205) 852-5661 (nights).

AUSTIN HEALEY 3000,
14000,
825-4105

Triumph Parts Cars TR-6
\$450 2-1/2 TR-4's (restorable), \$650. 845-7366 after 6pm

SHORT CIRCUITS

. . . Chris and Liz Maxwell are now the proud owners of three Bug Eye Sprites . . . a new membership directory is in the works . . . the Cappello TR-2 has reverted to the Peel TR-2, where it has been joined at the Peel home with a TR-3A (ex-Speetjens) and an MGB-GT . . . the Houses are still in need of a frame to begin restoring their Austin Healey 3000 . . . Jack Pool has expressed an interest in selling his fabulous 3000 for a 100 M. Anyone out there have an 'M under an old tarp? . . . an Ocean to Ocean MG "T" Tourist Trophy run will pass through the Mississippi Gulf Coast and stay overnight in New Orleans this summer . . .

LAND SPEED RECORD FILM

A 45 minute film on VHS tape presenting the forty year dominance of Britain in setting world land speed records is available on loan to club members.

Courtesy of John Shorkey,

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