

THE OFF-SIDE UNDO

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“A gentleman does not motor about after dark” Joseph Lucas 1834 - 1902

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Ridgeland, MS – It’s not often that I am given the opportunity to publish submissions to the OSU. Having recently received two I couldn’t pass up sharing them with the members of the English Motoring Club. Mike Glore had until recently been chasing the birthday of a new addition to his garage. This submission was provided just prior to the delivery of his new bouncing baby boy or girl, I’m not sure of which at this point but from the photo received I’m sure that Mike and Alice are beaming parents. The second article is a report on a work in progress undertaken by club president Charlie Durning. Charlie has been working at discovering the true heart of “The Chick Magnette”.

Waiting on Wheels

Michael Glore, Braxton, MS

A while back, a friend of mine (Mike Martin) asked me to write an article covering the events surrounding ordering an English car and the saga it has become. Like most people reading this, I am a car nut. Over the years and more recently after joining a few car clubs here in Jackson I have learned I am not alone in this affliction. In most comparisons, I am a real small player. Okay, Bob J. no comments on my height.

To begin with, I have experience in ordering and then waiting on cars. In both cases, longer time than promised. So what I have learned is to get on the list as soon as possible. The car, I committed to purchasing is the McLaren MP4-12C. Rumors that McLaren was working on a street car was first noticed in 2009. McLaren isn’t exactly front and center of well known or little known manufacturers. That is unless you follow International Formula One; which, in all honesty even I stopped watching. In the past, McLaren has only produced two cars. The F1 was produced from 1992-1998 a total of 106 cars were produced. At that time, it was the world’s fastest road car with a top speed of 231 mph. Their second road car was a joint development with Mercedes-Benz called the Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren. McLaren produced a little over 1,100 in a few different variations from 2004-2010. Both of these cars carried many technical highlights; however, central to both of them was their carbon structure.

McLaren was the first manufacturer to use carbon fiber in their race cars and continued its use in their road cars. I had a chance to study a F1 McLaren road car in Kenner, LA at a friend's shop. At that time, the car was 14 years old and the only thing that gave its age away was the tall aspect ratio tires. I was offered the chance to sit in the car but I did not try it. The F1 features central seating, 3 seats across and I can't see how I could crawl over the outboard seat gracefully. Anyway, I was blown away by its shape. The fit and finish was excellent and the sublime shape something to see. Later, I learned it took 4,000 man hours to produce the carbon fiber monocoque chassis. I understood what the cars capabilities were although standing next to it the shape did not shout at you. It had a supple shape most like Honda's NSX. Nothing means looking about it.

Anyway, enough about the 12C predecessors, I was stung with the need to get in line. I bookmarked the forums and all sites I could find and finally in January, 2010, the McLaren website had a place to register your interest intent or commitment to buy. I committed to purchase and instantly they (computer generated) fired back a questionnaire. They questioned year of birth, car magazines I subscribe too and cars owned or previously owned. Now, I figure things are getting serious. My age (64 at that time) shouldn't be a problem, car magazines I should be okay there also. The biggie was I didn't want to mention multiple questionable cars I have and used to have. If your readers want to get a laugh, look up Berkeley cars (British circa 1951-1960). I had the much more popular 4 wheel model also an Austin Mini Moke, this one I keep hidden in Braxton. So I kept the car list short to a couple of Lotus's and a Jaguar and peppered the magazine subscription with a couple of euro car magazines.

I continued to read everything I could find on the 12C and finally the factory announced the first public showing of the car was to be in England at the Goodwood Festival of Speed early July, 2010. With very little planning, I got my wife to book flights and hotels to make it to the show. This car event was evened out with a side trip to Paris for my wife.

About the Goodwood Festival of Speed.....I could write a book, but I will only talk about the car. We found the McLaren display within a short time after arrival. On their stand was the car complete and a naked chassis and the Le Mans winning F1 car. And one hell of a lot of people most of which had cameras on sticks to peer over into roped off cars. At this time not much was know about the car – price – performance – dealers – deliveries. Just a beautiful car and bar chassis, maybe the only one on the planet. It is hard to explain the social system which exist over there. I got the feeling they would prefer all questions in writing so they could decide which they wish to answer tomorrow.

In all fairness, I am sure they were schooled in the many areas that were off limits to discussion. At one point, I inquired about the manufacture of the dual clutch 7 speed gear box and was told he could not say; however, he pointed to the logo, which I spotted as 'GRAZINO'. Quite James Bond – you know.

We left the show after 2 full days and I passed my cards to any McLaren guy that would accept it. During the show, I figured out that supply would never keep up with demand and that if I was

to get one, I would have to step up my game. I was told there would only be 30 dealers worldwide with 9 or 10 in the U.S. and that I would be contacted after one was assigned to me. There was no time frame on the above. However, 3 days later, while I was bored to death in Paris, I received an email stating that I was assigned to the Dallas dealer, Park Place.

Now, I had an urgency to get back to the U.S. and make contact with the Dallas dealer. I managed to have a letter drafted and forwarded to the dealer advising that I was out of the country and would contact him shortly upon arrival. A couple of days later, I took off from Braxton on the 460 mile drive to meet the sales manager. I got to the dealership at 10:00am and got out 2 hours later with very little new information. However, he knew I was serious and knew I wasn't a flipper. A flipper is one who speculates on making a profit on early delivered cars. I find this concept of making money on cars quite foreign from all of my car dealings. Two months go by and I get an email from the factory official first showing of car, Pebble Beach during the 2nd week of August, I get a buddy to go with me and we get a private showing with 50+ other people. Anyway, I see several faces from England and more cards are given out.

There was also a Houston showing that I attended and by now I started to recognize several people. Speed forward several months to the present (December) and I received an email stating the VIN# of the car and that the car was to be flown to the U.S. Now it's getting hard to sleep. I will add pictures and another write up if this saga ends.



I'm happy to announce that Mike and Alice are now proud parents of a new MP4-12C.

The “Chick Magnette” Update

Charlie Daring, Magee MS

On New Year’s weekend I finally decided that it is time to resurrect the Chick Magnette. First order of business was to remove the head for an inspection. The engine is in surprisingly good condition. The bores are clean and straight with no discernible ridge. The residue on top of the pistons was easily cleaned with a rag and mineral spirits.



The head was in similar condition. The mating surfaces were cleaned and the head was ready to reinstall.



Another issue was the felt front crank seal that was leaking. The plan was to install a late MGB front cover that has a lip type seal and with the timing marks on top along with the MGB crank pulley.



Another benefit in changing from the original Magnette pulley is that the MGB pulley takes a much wider 1/2" belt. The original 5/16" belt may have been good for driving the old 15 amp alternator but that simply would not do with the 65 amp alternator conversion.



Before the head went back on I took the time to confirm that TDC on the crank pulley is in the proper place. It's an easy task if you have a dial indicator. The same job can be accomplished with a flat piece of metal and a bolt.

There have been stories about the inertia ring slipping out of place. That was a problem with the Chevrolet engines that I had in the past. In this case the timing mark is spot on.



Having a hand crank helps with the process. If you don't have a hand crank a large socket and extension will do.



Another problem that I want to address is that a suitable thermostat is no longer available. The original thermostat had a blocking ring around its base that left the water bypass open when the engine is cold. By directing the water through the bypass the engine could warm up rapidly. As the thermostat opens the blocking ring would rise and block off the bypass port in the head so that all of the water would be directed to the radiator. The currently available thermostats do not have the blocking ring and is thought to be the reason that some MG's will over heat.

Both Moss and Victoria British have a solution for the problem with this blocking sleeve. It has small holes so that water can bypass when the engine is cold and yet still direct a greater amount of the coolant flow to the radiator when hot.



To install the 65 amp alternator all I needed was a discarded Perkins alternator from work, an “A” series rear alternator support bracket, and some miscellaneous parts that I had lying around in the garage. To prevent an electrical feed back in the system a diode is installed in the exciter lead. I also ran a 10ga wire to the output terminal on the alternator.



I do plan on installing a header and treating the Chick Magnette with a 1 5/8” or a 1 3/4” diameter exhaust system in place of the original 1 1/4” system. That change alone should improve the mind boggling zero to 60 times from 28 seconds to hopefully something more line with 25

seconds. Unfortunately no one makes a reasonably priced header or a big bore exhaust system so that will be a challenge. In this case I'll be using a header designed for an MGB and modifying to fit the chassis.



After the Chick Magnette had set up for a year the rear wheel cylinder seals had perished. The obvious sign was a wet spot below each rear tire and the brake pedal going to the floor. Another bad sign was that the rear wheels were locked up. Apparently the shoes have adhered to the drums. Once I got the car up in the air I got out my trusty hydraulic gear puller to remove the drums.



Once the drums were off I found that 1 return spring had come off. Too bad the shoes were ruined by the leaky brake fluid. The previous owner had installed new shoes without properly servicing the wheel cylinders. That's it for now. The Chick Magnette will live again.

If you haven't had your LBC out in a while seems that winter, for us anyway, may be just around the corner. I believe that I made that comment in the last OSU but this time I mean it. Look for opportunities and here's hoping that they are not too far off.

That's it for this Off-Side Undo lagniappe edition. I hope that you enjoyed it. Thanks Mike and Charlie for the submissions. Both are great reads.

Happy Motoring

The EMC

Next on the EMC Calendar is the 2012 Kick-off Meeting. This should be a good one so make plans to attend!

The location is Sal & Mookies!

<http://www.salandmookies.com>

The date will be January 14, 2012 and you should be there just before 12:00pm. Please bring an appetite, awards and ideas. The appetite is always easy for The Eat a Meal Club!

The awards can be gift or gag for outstanding achievement, under achievement, over achievement, simple or complex flubs in the areas of LBC, EMC, AARP, NCIS or LSMFT or other such acronyms. The award can be pretty much anything that you can get thru the door at Sal and Mookies and is of course legal and in pretty much, generally accepted good taste.

The ideas are for 2012 events and officers. The events can be inside, outside, over hill or over dale you name it and we'll consider it in 2012 and that pretty much goes for suggestions for officer positions in 2012.

Hope that you can make it!