

# THE OFF-SIDE UNDO



**“A gentleman does not motor about after dark.”**

**Joseph Lucas**

**June 2023**

## **THIS N THAT TRANSMISSION RENDERING PARTY**

**By Charlie Durning**

Somehow I managed to accumulate 4 non-synchro transmissions. Most folks don't want those because there is no overdrive. Most of those lowly transmissions just get scrapped. Well, I just couldn't do that to an MGB part.

On the bright side, there are parts shared by all of the 4 synchro transmission family. So the decision was made to render all 4 into their component parts. I made a call to see if Bro Clay wanted to join in. Yep, he came right over. The first transmission put up a commendable fight. We ended up cutting the extension housing apart so it could be removed with a gear puller. The rest of the transmissions gave up without a fight. Now the unwanted transmission guts can breathe a new life into a worn out Overdrive transmission.



**Official Publication of the English Motoring Club of Mississippi**

**Online at [www.msemc.org/club-news/](http://www.msemc.org/club-news/)**

**Editor: Kelly Turner**

# NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

## SEATS FIT FOR ROYALTY

By Richard Greene

The last tech session for the club was held at the Cashman's in Vicksburg. A fellow member, who shall remain nameless, did a ride along with me in the Lotus Elise. His two main comments after the ride were, "it sure is fast and my butt hurts." Not to call him candied assed, but he does favor thick cushioned easy chair type driver's seats. It is also rumored that he frequently brings along an orthopedic seat cushion.



The Lotus Elise offers about as little comfort as you can tolerate. The fixed-back seats only adjust to bring you closer or further away from the steering wheel, with no option for changes in seat height or tilt. Not to worry though, a small air bladder attached to the seat allows you to hand-pump a minimal amount of lumbar support. The leather-covered seats offer absolutely very little padding.

As the OEM Lotus seats age the foam padding deteriorates into a fine powder resulting in discomfort for your spine, back, and butt against the fiberglass shell. By most accounts, the padding on the Elise seats start to wear and get less comfortable after a few years. Even after the padding flattened on mine, it still felt pretty comfortable to me though. I did notice a few months ago that the air bladder lumbar support seem to not be working.

Like a bunch of people with early Elises, I wasn't really satisfied with the seats on my '05. For short periods they were ok, but after a couple of hours the thin butt-padding and poorly placed lumbar support was really detracting from the fun of driving the car.

I therefore decided to reform the seats and repair the bladder lumbar support. Exposing the seat confirmed that the original padding was toast. The lumbar bladder was in fine shape, but the hoses and pump bulb needed replacement.



Since originally only the driver's side had the support system, I decided to see if I could retro fit the passenger side. None of the state-side Lotus Parts had any in stock and getting from England seemed particularly expensive I came up with the idea to use a Lock Picking bladder to use on the passenger side and use the parts from another to repair the driver's side. I ordered two from a supplier in China (Holy Churchill, a Chinese part in a Federal English car).

Original Bladder with retrofit tube and pump.





While I had the seat cushions removed and cleaned I decided to update the foam. From the LotusTalks forum it seems to be the consensus that a product called Air2Gel was the way to go.

What I did was to reposition the lumbar bladder and use Kemmler Air2Gel foam in 3/8 and 1/8 inch thickness to pad and contour the seat. I also added 1/8" and 1/4" regular foam padding in places to fill out the seats.



First, I slowly peeled back the upholstery from the top (unsnap the fasteners first). The bottom cushion had foam that was

easy to rip up when separated from the seat, so I used a utility knife to slice it away from the seat shell, almost like scraping a sticker off of the inside of a windshield.

I covered the foam with duct tape to keep it from disintegrating (just separating it from the seat made a huge mess) and to give me a stable surface to reattach it to the seat base with tape or glue. I wanted to move it down by drilling a new hole and reattaching the tube, but it didn't seem to be possible without destroying the bladder and having the dealer replace it. So what I did was to flip the bladder over. The surface facing the upholstery was folded down, and became the surface attached to the seat shell. By doing this, the inflation tube didn't move.



After the first test drive, there is a noticeable difference. The seat feel firmer, but not hard and the lumbar support is working as it should. Total cost for materials was about \$100 and it took me about three days to complete. That includes removing the seats from the car and reinstalling them. I can now declared the seats fit for a “Queen’s Arse!”



# WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

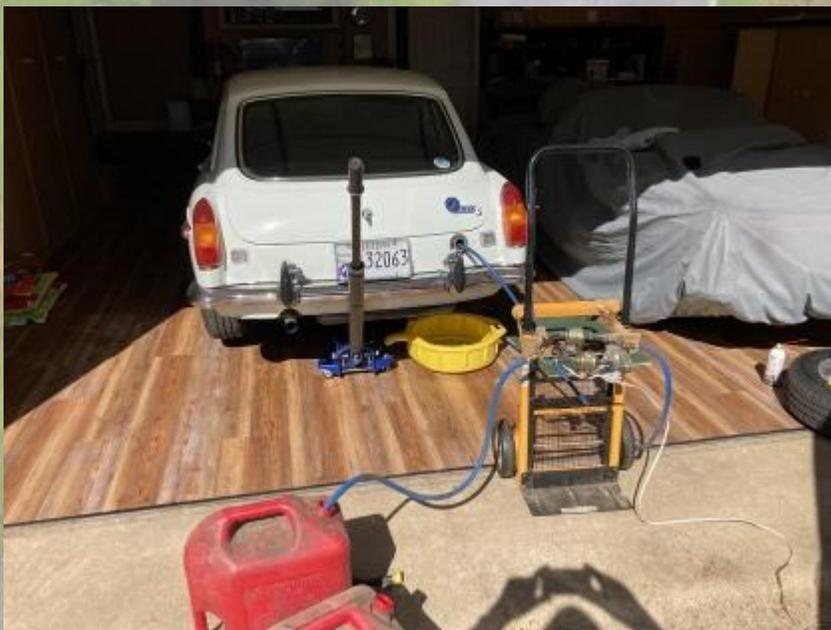
By Gene Johnston

I gassed up prior to starting home from the New Orleans British Car Days back in March and noted a couple of stumbles on the way home which seemed to occur on acceleration. During the days following my return I decided I might do a bit of investigative work to determine if I could find the cause.

My first suspicion fell on the fuel pump only because it was of an unknown age. With Martha switching and my collecting the flow seemed to be OK however Martha's acute vision noted something amiss in the fuel collected. Sure enough, there was a blob of some unknown but easily identified substance that I called gunk.



I circulated the photo around and got an offer of assistance from Charlie Durning to bring up his fuel filtering rig. Charlie arrived at the house with a fuel circulating/filtering rig and we set about pumping gas through the filtering rig into containers. First, we pulled fuel through the tank fuel pick-up but the going seemed to be slow so we wondered how much gunk might be in the tank and if perhaps it had clogged the fuel pick-up screen.



We then started siphoning fuel through the filler neck and once the pumping seemed to have emptied the tank withdrew the siphoning hose and found that the end of the hose had evidence of a tarry substance on it. Makes you want to go Hmmmmm?



I attempted to remove the fuel drain plug from the tank, but it was firmly stuck and not wanting to risk creating a non-sealable situation at the tank drain gave up on its removal. Not seeing any additional evidence of gunk in the containers that we'd drained we wrote off the tarry substance as perhaps an anomaly and emptied the containers of gasoline back into the tank along with an appropriate amount of Sea Foam as a chaser. There were no stumbles when test driven locally nor during our travels down to Pensacola for the Panhandle British Car Club's "Brits on the Bay" show during April. Eureka, problem solved!



# KANGOL-ESQUE

By Will Duncan

Some of you may recall the article I wrote back in December about the mini tech session a few of us had after the Christmas party. We took a look at the static three-point seatbelts I bought to replace a set of original Kangols I had previously purchased and decided not to pursue restoring. With driving season well underway (if you can fit a drive in for all the rain), I finally got around to installing them. With the plentiful amount of hardware they came with, I reconsidered using the new mounting posts and lock buttons



they came with, but, once again, decided the additional fender washers they required to keep the metal buttons from scratching the paint were not particularly attractive, so I stuck with the original posts and some replica plastic lock buttons from Moss.

Because there were several possibilities for arranging all the washers and spacers that came with the belts, I did some searching online to find a photo or diagram for the best arrangement, but I had no luck until I broadened my search for



seatbelts that specifically use anti-rattle washers and found an exploded seatbelt diagram from, of all things, a Delorean that showed almost all the same components. Installation was very straightforward after that, and, with some length adjustments for Jennifer and me, as well as the addition of a seatbelt retainer to each headrest, they were ready to go. It was an unusual feeling on the test drive being so securely held in place after 18 years with only lap belts, but I appreciate the extra security. Now let's just hope we never need them!



# THOUGHTS ON ARKANSAS 2023

In 2020, just before the lockdowns, my wife and I bought a 1973 Midget and began making it drive-able. Over the last three years, we've slowly upgraded it and gained confidence in it. We've branched out from local runs for breakfast, to attending Eurofest in Natchez, and ventured as far as Pensacola. Along the way, we upgraded to a hotter 1275 engine and a Datsun 5 speed to make traveling more relaxing. This was my first time making the Arkansas trip after hearing about it for several years. At 1400 miles, it was the longest, and certainly most spirited miles I've driven in my Midget since buying it.

Tuesday, May 2nd, the Baton Rouge group met up with the New Orleans folks in Zachary, Louisiana, and headed up LA 61 towards Natchez. Along the way, my Midget started losing power going up a hill, and only got worse if I pushed the throttle more. "OH NO, Mr. Bill!" Would this be the end of my journey before it really started? Would I miss Arkansas 23 after all? This persisted for a few hills, then we slowed down for a small town. When we sped back up, hallelujah, full power and no knocking! (rust flake in fuel line maybe?) This was the one and only issue (for me) for the trip, but having had that moment of doubt made me appreciate the rest of the trip even more.

We stopped for dinner in Natchez at the Pig Out Inn, then cruised up LA 65 to Newellton, where Tom McMillan graciously hosted us at his family's farm.



Wednesday morning, some of the early risers toured the farm, then we headed up LA65 towards Hoots in McGeehee to meet with the Mississippi group. Hoots looked to have been a gas station at one time, so some of us got covered parking near where the pumps had been. The Mississippi contingent arrived a few minutes later, and old friends started catching up, and new folks got introduced.



Leaving Hoots, we had one Austin Healey 3000, two TR6's, one MGB-GT, one Midget, and an assortment of MGBs - some nearly stock, some with V6 or V8 engine swaps, even one with an automatic, and one Porsche 911. We made our way through England, Furlow, and Rosebud before arriving at Cobblestone Inn in Fairfield Bay, where we were joined by a new Bronco Sport "British car recovery vehicle". Once there, me and a few of the guys played a game of "what's that knocking sound?" with the Midget, before deciding it was nothing that would be made worse by a few days of hard driving, and if it was, well, it would be worth it. Everybody got acquainted over dinner at the hotel, which took quite a while, with only one cook and one waitress, but we needed the time to catch up and swap lies anyway.

Thursday, the group traveled on AR9 and AR5 through Mountain View, Optimus, and Calico Rock to Mountain Home. We hit our first delay when we encountered some road work that had a lane closed on a two lane road, leaving us with a long red light to wait through to pass it. The green was short enough that some of the group missed the light, and had to wait what seemed like twenty minutes. Fortunately, one of the Johnston twins was with us to lead us to meet the rest of the group. We stopped in Calico Rock, where Bootleggers was filmed in 1974, to enjoy the rustic town. When we got ready to leave, one of the B's had a starter issue. "We'll just push start it." Nope, automatic transmission. Fortunately, the owner



was able to diagnose the problem as a broken starter bolt, allowing the starter to swing away from the flywheel, and solved it with a piece of tree branch strategically placed to wedge the starter! On to Jojo's for catfish, then off to Mountain Home for the night.



Friday, we played all day on the mountain roads around Mountain Home, including Push Mountain Road. This was a revelation for me. I had driven the Midget on curvy roads, I had driven it on fast roads, but never mountain roads with switchback curves and elevation changes, that rewarded driving at 3500 - 5500 rpm continuously. Suddenly, I saw the car in a new light - this is what it was made for! I also had to remind myself that this wasn't Disney World; if I screwed up, there were real consequences. This was a roller coaster with no rails, and I could go as hard or as easy as I liked. I started cautiously, then went at it harder until the tires started telling me I was nearing the limit, then backed off to safer pace, all the while re-

learning the car's capabilities in this new environment. Soon I found myself keeping up with someone known for going off-road. Was I in over my head? I payed attention to the lines the experienced drivers were taking through the turns, and copied them. Fortunately, no one went off road this trip. Perhaps angels were guiding our throttles, brakes, and steering?

We made our way to the Peel Ferry Crossing and visited Missouri. Suddenly the roads were narrower but still twisty. Meeting oncoming traffic at the top of a hill took on a new thrill, and not in a good way. Still, the ferry ride was really great.

Speaking of going hard, one of the TR6's lost a front brake pad. The metal backing was still there, but the friction pad melted off. Must have been scary to suddenly hear grinding noises when applying the brakes on a mountain road. Parts were found and the pad was replaced.



Saturday, we had to leave Mountain Home and make our way to Hot Springs. Lots of twisty roads and fast sweepers. The day started out overcast and we traveled through the mountains, hitting AR123 and the Pig Trail, with a stop at Oark Cafe. The wait was longer than expected, but the company was good, and I got some feedback on my driving, which was helpful. "Get on the gas as soon as you hit the apex!"

We stopped at a scenic overlook for pictures. Some of the group had taken a wrong turn and came in HOT. You could smell the brake pads burning on one yellow MGB. Saturday night we made it to Hot Springs for our last night, and hit up Stubb's BBQ for dinner.



#### Reflections:

It was good to take my Midget out and test it, to find out what it's capable of and how hard it can be driven for hours on end. It's both a reward for the work put into it so far, and a chance to find shortcomings. I've already started a list for what to improve for Arkansas 2024.

It was good to be with people with more experience in fixing and driving little British cars, who were so willing to share their information. I learned more in a few days than I would in a year on my own about our cars and how to drive them.

It was wonderful to unplug from the job, social media, and entertainment for a few days, and spend time with good people, to fix real problems with limited parts and tools, but lots of know how and experience.

Most of all, it was a gift to be welcomed into a community of similar minded British car lovers, and share meals, stories, and maybe a few drinks. I'm blocking out my calendar now for next year!





# THE PERFECT PICNIC

From Hilda Level's *The Perfect Picnic*

## **Menu No. 17**

*Lobster Cream*

*Pigeon Pie*

*Orange & Celery Salad*

*Rice Cake*

**Lobster Cream** Mince the meat of a lobster and mix it with half a teacupful of breadcrumbs and half a pint of cream. Beat up two eggs and add them and season with salt cayenne, and ordinary pepper. Put the mixture into a buttered souffle dish, tie a butter paper over and steam in a bainmarie for forty-five minutes. Turn out and serve on lettuce leaves and decorate with the claws of the lobster.

**Pigeon Pie** Line the bottom of a pie dish with small collops of lean beef and rump steak that has been previously fried in butter. On this, place the halves of three or four pigeons also previously fried. Season with chopped mushrooms, parsley, shallot, pepper, and salt. Pour half a pint of sauce, gravy, or water with a little mushroom catsup in the pan the meat has been fried in to detach the glaze, and pour this over the pigeons. Add the hardboiled yolks and white of three or four eggs, cut in slices; cover with puff pastry and bake the pie in a moderate oven for about an hour and a quarter.

**Orange & Celery Salad** Slice the oranges and chop up the celery. Make a dressing of the juice that comes away from the oranges while they are being sliced, mixed with pepper, salt, oil, and vinegar, and pour over the salad, using the top part of the celery and watercress to decorate it.

**Rice Cake** (recipe not included in *The Perfect Picnic*) Link: [Rice Cake | BBC Good Food](#)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 12 -16 2023 – NAMGAR GT- 48 Memphis, TN** – If you are into extended driving in your MGA join this group of drivers/riders for the 2023 Gathering of the Faithful. Just a hop and skip up the road and you'll be glad you made the trip for the 48<sup>th</sup> annual national gathering. Details: <https://namgar.com/gt-48>

**June 17, 2023 – EMC Tech Session Brandon, MS** - If our Tech Guru calls for a tech session you know it'll be a real challenge. Join us to see the answer to whatever puzzle Keith has up his sleeve. Wrenching starts at 11:00am and lunch starts at 12:00pm. Details: Keith / Pat Anderson (601) - 829 - 2573.

**July 17 – 20, 2023 – NAMGBR 2023 MGs in the Foothills Calgary, Alberta Canada** – Make plans to attend the 2023 North American MGB Registers annual gathering. For 2023 it will be held in Calgary Canada. If you're follower of the marque and you've not made a NAMGBR event this is the upcoming event for you. Make plans early. Details: <https://mg2023.regfox.com/calgary>

**June 18 – 23, 2023 Triumph Register of America National Meet Oxford, OH** - A bit of a ride for those from the Deep South however if you've never made a national TR event make your plans early. and happen to be in the area drop in. The TR always fills the calendar with events during their annual meet. Make plans early. Details: <http://triumphregister.com>

**July 15, 2023 – EMC Lotus Weekend Braxton, MS** - I'm sure we'll find some interesting roads on our way down to the beautiful burg of Braxton. Come and join the drive and the visit with Mike and Alice. Bring a dish and enjoy lazing on a sunny afternoon in the summertime with the EMC. Gathering starts at 11:00am with lunch at 12:00pm. Details: Mike / Alice Glore (504) 231 – 5801.

**August 19, 2023 – EMC Garage and Food Tour Brandon, MS (Tentative)** – The Bailey family throws a great party in lead up to the EMC Brits on the Bluff car show. Come on out and see what has added or improved on for 2023. Always lots to see and do along with a great meal what else can you ask for. This will be the pre-Brits on the Bluffs gathering so bring along a dish and enjoy the fun. Gathering starts at 11:00am. Lunch starts as 12:00pm. Details: Jo Ann Bailey (601) 992 – 8566.

**August – September (Dates TBA), 2023 – Vintage Triumph Register North American Challenge / (Location TBA).** If you're looking for a national convention to attend this one is a bit closer to home. Tech sessions, vendors and autocrossing along with all sorts of other fun. Details: <https://vintagetriumphregister.org>