



## English Motoring Club

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*"A gentleman does not motor about after dark." -- Joseph Lucas, attrib.*



# Jamie's Healey

by Terry Trovato

They say God moves in mysterious ways, and it must be so. Without what must have been His divine guidance, and the power of the Internet, I would never be able to spin the story I'm about to tell about finding a long lost, dear deceased friend's Austin-Healey 3000. But first, a bit of background.

The year was 1963. The setting, the Kappa Alpha fraternity house at the University of Kentucky. There were approximately 45 of us in the chapter. We eschewed what later would be known as the "preppy" look: blue blazer, button-down oxford cloth shirt, repp silk tie, starched 100% cotton khakis and Bass Weejuns.

And our British car of choice was the Austin-Healey. We had seven of them in the chapter. Fred DeSanto and Barney Sutton had 100-6s, and Jim May, William Wood, Charlie McGuire, Jamie Taylor and I had 3000s. Seven Big Healeys, four of them black, two with factory hardtops.

As we graduated one-by-one and went our separate ways, our daily-driver Healeys became more undependable and troublesome, and each of us, save one, slowly sold or traded away our once-prized pieces of British engineering. Only Jamie Taylor saved his, one of the four black cars, a 1960 Austin-Healey BT7, black exterior with red interior.

After graduation, Jamie became a Kentucky farmer, and I would certainly use the words "gentleman farmer" to describe him — except for the fact he worked his rear end off each day from sunup to sundown. A native of Georgetown, Ky., he returned there to run his family farm, which was blessed with a white-columned antebellum home and 1,000 acres of prime bluegrass which featured a herd of Black Angus cattle, corn, soybeans and tobacco.

One day in 1976, Jamie decided it was time to store his beloved college car, so he simply drove his Healey into a shed on the farm not much larger than the car



The Healey in primer.

Photo by Terry Trovato

itself, turned off the ignition, and walked away from it. And there it set for the next 20 years.

One early morning in late May, 1996, Jamie was operating a large piece of farm equipment on the side of a hill. It had not been as stabilized as he thought. It flipped over, pitching him off, and then rolled over on top of him, crushing and killing him instantly. The phone lines started buzzing almost immediately with this horrendous news and all of the old fraternity brothers began assembling for the funeral. I was some 750 miles away in Mississippi and, because of prior commitments, could not attend.

As I sat thinking of my dearly departed old pal, I couldn't help but reminisce privately about our fleet of KA Healeys and Jamie's car stored in the shed. I had a chance to see his car in the late 1980s during a fraternity reunion party at the farm. Jamie had hired "Johnny White and the Elite Band" from Durham, N.C., a black soul/R&B/Carolina beach music outfit that played our kind of music from the 1960s. On one of the breaks, Jamie had grabbed my arm and said "Trovato, come here and see my old Healey." We opened the shed door and there it sadly sat, with four flat tires and covered with about 4 inches of dust. "I'm going to get it restored one day," he declared. But, working as hard as he did every day at the farm, he just never got around to it.

(cont'd)

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As his estate was being settled, Jamie's widow, Cathy, decided to sell the Healey in its decrepit state, along with an old Packard and Lincoln in similar condition which were also stored on the farm. All three were dispersed of shortly thereafter.

Fast forward to the present. In late July of this year I started casually surfing the Net for a Big Healey, thinking of all of the great fun I had with my college car. There on one of the British car classified sites was listed a "1960 Austin-Healey 3000, black with red interior, Harrodsburg, Ky." The seller had included the car's VIN number in the ad.

Could this possibly be Jamie's old car, I thought aloud, since Harrodsburg was not that far from Georgetown?

I called Cathy and asked, "Whatever happened to Jamie's Austin-Healey?" She related the story of the sale. I told her there was one posted on the Net that sounded like Jamie's car because the year and color scheme were identical. "If it will help, I still have a copy of the paperwork on the car and I'll read the VIN number to you," she said. It was a perfect match. I couldn't believe it — Jamie's old car up for sale.

I contacted the seller and related the story to him. He added that the name "Catherine Taylor" appeared on the title as the seller of the car in 1996. It was still for sale so I bought it on the spot. It had not been totally restored, but it "ran a little" and the body was in primer. What a great thrill to find one of our original fleet of seven Big Healeys from the KA fraternity house some 38 years later!

It is my intention to restore the car to its original color scheme and drive "the Last KA Healey" with great pride, knowing that once the task is completed Jamie, no doubt, will be smiling down from Heaven, seeing his wonderful old car on the road again and one of his old pals at the wheel.

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