

## MY DAUGHTERS SPORTS CAR

“What brings you to town “Posey?” --- I've got a fresh pot of coffee in the back-- what about a coke”? Entering my hometown bank today did not seem to be a proper time. I am a guy who always feels a tendency to sense danger or common errors. Call it what you want to, but sometimes huge tidal wavelengths permeates my conscience thoughts in mystical fashions. Yes, deep inside, my gut said, “wait it out”. So leery in this place, oh my, uncomfortably out of sorts. Perhaps the right thing to do right now is make a prompt about face through those rose colored double glass doors and think it through overnight with the spouse. Yes, my wife could test my emotions but most important my plans and facts. It is too late, Will recognizes me standing at the interior counter from behind a teller window. He motions for me to come over and asks if I would like a coke or even fresh coffee.

I said, “ Will , you look great for a tired old banker, yeah, give me a coke-- I don't drink coffee after certain hours but thanks for the coke.” Will said, “ thanks for the nice compliment but being in the banking business, handsome money makes the world go around”. Trying to relax, I said ” Now Will, how about making ole Posey a car loan and you can go home and take a well deserved afternoon nap”. A wide grin came over his face, but knowing him & his position,he was not one to roll in the floor with a hilarious “belly laugh”.

Will was behind the head teller's booth so I figured every customer in the bank heard our commentary.. Will was the bank's senior officer. We had known each other all our lives. As a matter of fact he defeated my father in a City Council race many years before. In small towns friends or enemies tend to endure from one generation to another. Perhaps this is what happens where common bonds and not holding grudges always existed between us. “Will, I need to talk with you about a purchase I am seriously considering, got the time”-- Will said, “sure, come on back to the office, right now would be a good time for me”. Well, after we exchanged the usual frivolous talk like old friends do, I decided to get down to my business at the bank.

Will said, “ now you said you need a loan of some sort, better idea--- How about letting us invest some of your money---- you know CD s are paying terrific interest now”. I said, “Not now, I need to borrow at least \$1800 for a used car.”---“Posey, what kind of car are you thinking about, lets see what we can do”. I told Will I had been thinking about a used sports car for my daughter, a 1971 MG-GT coupe I had seen in the paper, listed by owner. I said, “as you know my wife and I work and my 17 year old daughter needs a reliable way to get to high school each day”. When I said MG, Will's face lit up like a “thunderous bolt of lightning” followed by a intense stare I had never seen before. My thoughts, definitely “red flag”. Uh oh, my mind now racing overdrive for what was to come next.

“Bob, I will loan the money for a car but there are some things you need to understand before you hand over the check”. I said, “ Will, is there something you know that I don't, if it is, let's open this thing up”-- Will said, “OK, here it is. I've got a 1972 MG, it would never, I mean never crank or run right.-- Posey, guess where the car is right now—I haven't sat down in it or seen it in over five years-- - It is stored in a barn near Mt. Vernon & it did have a heavy tarp on top of it! It will probably be in that shed another five years”. Furthermore, Will said-- “my advice to you is to buy a low mileage Chevy or Ford-- However, if you are still stubborn enough to refuse my advice, find a good

automobile mechanic to tell you even more about a MG vehicle. I know that little car is real pretty on sight but you will tire of the problems and expense. It will break your wallet and your heart as well". He continued, "I know you were raised in a gas service station and I was raised in a bank. Owning a car like a MG might work for you, so don't let me rain on your parade". Rising from my chair, Will said, "we will cut the check when you want it". I told him I valued his opinion, would look at some other type vehicles but would like to see the MG and drive it.

I liked classified adds in the newspapers. I looked forward each evening scanning the entire classified advertisement section after work, including the legals to see if there might be a once in a lifetime deal just waiting to pounce on. I especially preferred the truck and automobile classified probably because of my upbringing around a gasoline station and garage. As a teenager, I always admired the Ford Thunderbird car with removable hard top exposing nothing but windshield and the whistling, rustling wind. That special mellow exhaust sound of the T Birds enhanced my fantasy. The glamorous Thunderbird automobile was the solitary car I always dreamed of owning. Just maybe it would happen.

When daughters turn 16 years of age, some parents think that entitlement of a personal car is essential to their social station in life. In my daughters case, my wife and I considered that her transportation needs at age 17 were important for our family. Coins always have two sides. One side of the coin contain parental pitfalls granting such entitlement. High teenager insurance rates, not excluding basic maintenance such as oil changes, battery failure, tire replacements, front end alignments caused by deep potholes, add heavily to the decision of the loving parents. There are obvious positives about what type of car would be best ---then the obvious legal dangers such as collisions and of course, paying it off with interest through a bank loan.

October 20, 1986 was the day I read about a candy red 1971 MG-GT for sale in the Tuscaloosa News classified advertisements. It was located in the Kirkland Community, about 7 miles northwest of Fayette, Alabama. This MG was advertised as having a 5 speed manual transmission, good engine, average interior/exterior body condition. It came with a fair asking price of \$1495 which I thought was within the average price range unseen. The next day, I called the owner and made plans to look at the car. I realized it was a British made sports car from the "get go" and that naturally raised suspicions or at least a caution flag. The only good car I ever heard the British ever manufactured was the ultimate, the Rolls Royce.

Saturday morning weather was all sunshine for the trip to check out the MG sports car. Well, neither I or my wife knew anything significant about the history of this type automobile other than a photo I had seen of several in various trade magazines. Cautiously, I said to Diane, "lets give this car a "simple drive by look see" and go from there". Diane smiled at me, knowing how I hoped we would like the little sports car. Getting to the owners home was no problem as his directions were good, plus I knew the area well anyway. After leaving Fayette City limits, we turned on C.R. 107. About two miles further I turned my 1985 Mazda pickup onto gravel about another quarter mile. There it sat, the little red car on the fresh mowed grass with the huge "for sale" sign. "That is the cutest little car I've ever seen except for the Mustang I always wanted growing up in Jackson", said Diane. I thought to myself, "good news".

We turned in the driveway, sodded with bits of asphalt shingles, which some folks in rural areas use instead of asphalt paving. We were met by John and Susie Stanley who were planting their first batch of "Big Boy" tomato plants when we drove up. They live in what I would call a Victorian period farm house with beautiful ginger bread décor all over the gables and large front porch fascia eaves. It

reminded me of a home I lived in as a child near the old Fayette Southern Railroad Depot.

The Stanleys were a young couple with a new baby girl. They had recently purchased a four door sedan which made travel with their infant easier and more enjoyable. This was the reason they given for their decision to sell the MG-GT. John said, “come inside to see the baby and have coffee and cookies, Susie just finished baking them. This was interesting for us especially with our older kids, viewing young couples just starting out their family. The baby was sleeping in its crib with all the “cu coos” and pink blanket bedding. After seeing the baby and finishing the refreshments, Diane, John and I went outside to check out the red MG.

I circled the MG a couple times, looking for dings or any signs of rust or bundo repair. Bundo is a filler, made of certain type of plastics commonly used up North where snow and ice cause rusting in metal. I found no sign of rust but felt a new paint job would enhance the cars overall look. Taking that in consideration, I then moved to the interior finding no tears in the black leather seats or the dash. In addition all the glass was good, windows rolled well. The black carpet was adequate, had been cleaned recently and the rear area behind the two seats was suitably carpeted with less wear. The seats moved and locked well and the seat-lap belts were intact and working well. With a little help from John, the hood was opened revealing the engine. The tailpipe was examined and it had a grayish tint which is usually indicates good piston rings and engine valves.

The odometer had registered 66,000 miles and it appeared straight lined, however caution on exact mileage was something I always tried to check out with prior owners. The engine looked clean and the oil and filter had been changed recently by the door sticker. I pulled the dip stick, checked the smell of the oil and color and it was positive. I looked carefully at the engine to check for signs of blow by. I also noticed that a new brake master cylinder had been recently installed. John said, “Bob, I checked the brake linings and I had the front lining/ cups replaced also”. I said, “ thanks John, taking care of what stops ya, is golden—by the way we are looking at this car for our 17 year old daughter.”

The last thing I checked was the battery compartment below the area behind the seats. Remember, this is a two seater coupe. John said he replaced the battery six months ago and it checked out. The battery cables were clean and it appeared they were almost new. The battery in a MG is located in the right rear part of the trunk and a little difficult to get to. It was time for Diane and I to take our test drive. I said, “John, we want to drive this car over to Fayette if that is alright with you.---We will replace the gasoline we use, alright” --- That will give us a good idea about talking further with you about buying the car.” He said, “ take all the time you want bob”, which is always a good sign a seller doesn't expect breakdowns.

Diane and I headed back towards Syrup City. Wind blowing inward in the little car reminded us of two courting teenagers. We “tied the knot” in 1966, accumulating a few silly arguments and money baggage problems along the way like most couples. We were now a happy motoring couple, absolutely rejecting any adult problems. Our conversations, strictly tied to how this red car performed plus what we were considering bringing home to meet our daughter's transportation needs. I said, “Diane I really like this one, has a great steering feel, good power-- for a 71 model year I would rate it a 8 at least”. We knew that the bank closed at noon on Saturday so we arrived there with time to spare to see if Will would like to see this vehicle for himself. We were pleased with a smooth test drive. I opened the hood and the rear hatch to check the engine for any obvious oil leaks around the block or fuel leaks. I went in the bank looking for Will, hoping he had not gone home for the weekend. Diane stayed seated with the MG as the temperature and humidity was very comfortable.

Entering the bank, I told Mrs. Boyer, a teller I needed to see Will. I had known Mrs. Boyer for years at the bank. When I worked at my fathers gas station years earlier I had brought many deposits to her for bank account credit. I also knew her two children who were talented musicians, appearing in many gospel concerts in the area. "Mrs. Boyer, do you remember the gospel concert Kip played piano for me at the Civic Center on New Years Eve-- what a night of great gospel music-- you were there I know to hear your good lookin boy for sure." --- "Oh yes, Bob, I remember so well and if I may say so he covered you pretty good on a hymn you forgot the lyrics, I'll bet that scared you to death". Her husband, Billy had been a gas station customer of ours but now a retired insurance agent. They were a nice family for sure. Will had someone with him so I took a seat on one of the couch's near Will's office. Will came out in about 15 minutes with another bank customer, Mr. Kinkaid ,my former algebra and Spanish teacher at the local high school. I exchanged pleasantries with Mr.Kinkaid pertaining to my life since high school like who I married, my occupation and other social things he was interested in knowing. I was not one of his better students by a long shot but it did bring back some pleasant memories I carried with me the rest of the day. He said he had a dentist appointment and we said our goodbyes. Mr. Kinkaid was one of those guys who doesnt seem to age or better said, ages gracefully. I thought it would be terrific if I could do the same. Will finished up with his customer and motioned for me to come on back to his office. Diane, sitting across from me said, "well husband, you have made your bed today on this deal, one way or another".

"Well, I guess you want the loan today, Pose."---- I said, "yes, and we want you to see this car parked outside". Will began conversation with Diane, opening the drivers door, checking the odometer, then asking about our kids and if she liked this car. Will wanted to see the little trunk, walked around it a couple of times and said,"well, it looks like it is clean, reasonably low mileage.-- I hope your daughter will enjoy this pretty little car, folks." We went back inside, I signed the \$1800 note with the car as collateral, took the Cashiers check, gave it to Diane and we headed back to Kirkland community to buy the car. The deed was done, at least so far.

After "breaking bread" at McDonalds, which had recently opened as a new franchise, we headed West again on the Vernon Highway to pay for the MG. I wrote a personal check on my bank account since the banks were closed for the weekend, showing John the Cashiers check I received from Will at the bank. He said he would cash it Monday. John said, "let's go inside so I can write a Bill of Sale -- you know a title is not required on a 1971 model car". He wrote the Bill of Sale in a "as is condition" as we agreed. After saying our goodbyes and well wishes for the baby we turned homeward, Diane driving the pickup while I slid under the wheel of the little MG-GT, my daughter's first car. The plan was to keep it at a relatives home in Alberta City when we got into town. My uncle Kenneth agreed to keep it in his carport until we could drive it to the body shop the following week.

I honked the MG's horn when we got to uncle Kenneth's house and the sound of the horn had the traditional European " 2 note" sound that you hear in foreign movies. We called him K.B. Actually. He came out with his usual dialogue, " I don't know if you have lost your mind or not but I hope you don't plan on keeping this thing very long". I said, "Well Sir, I want Sarah to have something different and this car is just that -- it's in great shape, needs a good paint job before I turn it over to her- thanks for keeping it under the shed until I can get it down to Queen City Body Shop". He said, "well I guess that's the least I can do for you – by the way, how much did you pay for this car, probably too much". Diane spoke up, "now uncle K.B., we didn't ask you about that roof job over here that did not turn out too well, so we will just leave it at that". He said, " fair enough, but I didn't pay for the roof, the insurance company wrote the check, I just had to pay for the interior water leak ". Now that was typical uncle Kenneth, a kind but very cranky, cautious man of the depression. One of his favorite saying was, " you had better save your nickels Bobby, for a rainy day is sure to come", meaning a big

expense was just around the corner , not expected. He was probably one of the most economically frugal persons I have ever met in my life. Some days he could be as stingy as Uncle Scrooge and other days he could be generous, I never knew what mood he would be in day to day. I have to admit that uncle K.B. and especially his wife Faye were very helpful when the kids were very small & we appreciated their time or assistance.

The following day I picked up the car, heading to the body shop , made sure the right color of paint to be applied. I was assured that they would prep it well and I would be proud of the little car. I had other body work done at this business and had always been pleased with their workmanship. This company carried a fine reputation for quality in parts as well as their labor. Mr. Barton, the manager said, “Bob, you can expect your car to be in the shop a full week-- we have got just the right candy red you want and you are gonna like it”. Well, that was enough for me. The next step was insuring our daughter on this particular car. Sure enough, in about 6 days, the body shop called, the MG had a new paint coat and was ready to go. Diane picked me up at my office adjacent to Druid City Hospital in her 84 Mercury Marquis. I filled out my annual leave paperwork and headed for the body shop. We had enough proceeds from the loan to pay for most of the paint job and had saved the rest for the extra insurance premium, adding a teen driver to the car.

We were fortunate at that time in that Sarah had no speeding tickets, fender benders that would have put the premium in the stratosphere. We wrote the check for her six months premium at the insurance office and now we were ready to let Sarah have her first car. We were so happy. She had no idea what we had kept to ourselves. As parents, we hoped she would like it, drive responsibly and take care of the little car. It was a real beauty, cherry red and I might say a “real head turner”. My mystical thoughts were now on a positive run.

Part 2: to be continued/ My Daughters Sports Car ( the agony of enlightenment)