

MY DAUGHTERS CAR PART 2

December 3, 1986 came quick as the day we turned the keys over to Sarah. We left the little car over at uncle K.B s house with a canvas tarp for a few days. Uncle Kenneth always had plenty of those on hand. Diane, last week told Sara that we had purchased a car for her but nothing more than that. I could see the suspense building in Sara as she would ask for clues as to what would be the breed and color of her first car. I would attempt to keep the excitement going by saying things like, “the rain in Spain lies mainly on the plain” or I would sing a old tune from World War 1, called, “over there, over there” or I might even try to sing a tune from the movie “Rome Adventure”. By doing that I figured she might get the idea the car was a foreign make and maybe a European model. Then she would ask for the color of the car and I would tell her that the primary color was on the United States Flag. Of course, she would say, “mom, it has to be red, white or blue, right”. I said, “yes Sara it is red, white or blue so which color do you think it could be- I really believe you have it down to two colors, right”. She said, “well, blue is not a girls color so it has to be red or white,--- daddy does the car have leather seats or cloth seats”? I told her that the car was a five speed manual shift and that she must get used to the clutch since it was a different feel than my Mazda pickup I had allowed her to drive in the past. Thank goodness, there was no teaching period involved for a manual transmission.

We had decided to let her have the car a week later so on Saturday, December 10, 1986 I drove the car from Kenneths house and parked it in the driveway. Sara had been working at a local mall fast food place so she had been sleeping off a night shift along with school papers and homework. I allowed our son Walt to see the car and he thought it was terrific, in his words, “a killer of a car”. He reminded me that his time was coming soon, meaning he wanted a good looking vehicle. I reminded him that his grades had to get better in Junior High School but that we were very proud of him for many things. I told Diane, “let Sara have a couple more hours of sleep and we would let her see the car-- also tell Walt, this is special, only for his sister and by no means is he to complicate the surprise.

Diane led Sara out the kitchen door blindfolded, gently holding her hand while I leaned back on the right front door. We released the white linen handkerchief and Sara took her first glance at the little red MG-GT. “ Mom, Dad—it is beautiful. I cant believe you have gone to this much trouble to buy such a pretty car, I just love it-- can I take it around the block now”? I said, “sure Sara, but remember the clutch is different than the pickup but it is a 5 speed, clutch a little more on the high side, so you will have to get used to that.” -- “ I will daddy, say Walt, get in here and let's ride down to Bowers, thanks Mom, I love both of you for thinking this much of me and to put such trust in me.” I said, “remember Sara that a car is to be taken very seriously, not only in getting around town, getting to classes, making it to work but using caution day in, day out. Your driving record will follow you for a long time and it is always out there as public record”. “Now, you and walt take it for a spin. I watched as they headed out the driveway and under the hill. The responsibility is now shared but a parents underlying thoughts lie somewhat dormant.

December 12, 1986, 4 pm: Christmas was closing in. My secretary buzzed me over the intercom: “Bob, your wife is on the phone, sounds urgent to me, I know you have someone with you now”. I took the phone off the hook, “ Sara is over at the University and the MG will not crank, dont believe the battery is dead, says the engine turns over--- I said, “ what is she doing over there anyway, the child is still in high school for goodness sake”--- Diane said, “well she is over there to take her ACT test to get in college, I know you can't turn loose right now, I just got home, I'll go

over there and get her, but you will have to do something about the little car". I was more concerned now about the University having the car booted and towed.

This was the start of my problems with the MG, so on January 9, 1988, I wrote this letter to Will, my banker that loaned the money to buy the car. The letter went somewhat like this:

****Dear Will: It has been about 18 months since I borrowed the money from the bank to buy the MG you encouraged me not to buy. Well, as you probably know the loan is paid off but this is to tell you about what happened with my ownership. You were right on in your assessment and I was not in my right mind at the time. The following is a summary of problems and expenses with the pretty little red car.**

- 1. replacement of the electric fuel pump on three occasions with MG towed in from places as far as Birmingham. \$400**
- 2. replacement of the brake shoes on the left rear, actually the brake shoe came off and locked up the wheel with towing costs, \$175**
- 3. MG stalled in Tuscaloosa traffic twice with towing/ garage costs on the dual carburetor, new plugs, plug wires, and all parts in the wiring cap. \$500**
- 4. the little cars hood damaged severely by a big truck backing up and leaving the scene. \$175**
- 5. six months later MG s little trunk bent in by another large truck at a undisclosed location.**

Battery, tire and wheel in trunk had to be replaced along with a used chrome bumper \$450

- 6. extra parts I purchased from various junk yards in Tuscaloosa County \$200**
- 7. extra car insurance premium paid for collision damages for a 12 month period \$400**

I do not want to add all of this up, Will as ole Posey is exhausted from the extra nights spent under the car tying up the tailpipe, adjusting the carbs or changing out the tires, oil changes and the like. I have traded this little MG car as of yesterday for a used 1982 Mazda RX-7 hoping for happier days ahead**

**Sincerely,
Posey**

The following was written by my daughter concerning her red MG-GT recently. She is now 42 years of age and I thought it appropriate to finish up the story with her comments:

MY RED MG

Like all sixteen year-olds, I was very thrilled to receive a car for my birthday. I was especially elated to have a cool, retro red hardtop MG for many reasons. It was red. It was sporty. It was unique. The manual shifting was different too. My peers admired my car and I had a strong sense of pride when I drove it.

I guess that comes to a big point about the MG- when I drove it. Like all older foreign cars, it had its share of mechanical problems. These problems often required a special mechanic or some intense trouble-shooting from my father. Often times, he would have to get me when the car broke down being quite patient through it all. I liked the car tremendously, but even in my hormone racing mind I began to realize that this was not a car for a sixteen year old girl. I believe my father recognized that too. He sold the MG and I went through more cars in my

teenage lifetime, including one beautiful RX-7 Mazda my parents bought for me later.

I felt that I did not have the maturity to drive and maintain such nice cars. I will always have such fond memories of the MG and the RX-7. Now, I have three sons of my own and they are of driving age. I realize the love my father had for me to buy such nice cars. I remember this MG car so fondly now as it represents a time in my life that is often both exciting and confusing. I can now appreciate the sacrifice my father and mother made for me not only in purchasing this little red MG but all the other things I could never count.

Sara Maddox Harpole,