

Starting up the MG TC for the First Time

As many of you may recall, I purchased a project 1948 MG TC a couple years ago. It was not running and was partially disassembled. Don Tremblay helped me to pick it up. I think there were more pieces inside the back of the truck than there were on the trailer! In any event, I have been working on it for a couple years. One reason I did not try to start it up right away was that there was a freeze plug at the back of the engine that was partially popped out and since it was up against the firewall, it was difficult to access. So, out came the engine. It needed to be painted anyway and the crank starting dog was broken off and the threaded bit had to be removed from the end of the crank. Also, the gas tank was not on the car and there was no battery and the wiring harness was all in pieces. The previous owner had been in the process of splicing wires and creating an adapter between the dashboard wiring and the rest of the harness. It was a mess (as described in a previous article).

On October 10, 2020 I decided to try to start the MG TC. I have previously painted the chassis and had the body painted and have reassembled the car to the point where I could try to start it. There is a new wiring harness and the engine has been sorted. I had previously tested the starter and switch to make sure they would work. I had installed the fuel tank and fuel line and rebuilt the fuel pump and tested it. The carbs, I had been told, had been rebuilt by Joe Curto about 10 years ago and since they moved freely I did not do anything with them. I installed a new starter cable and choke cable and reused the fast running cable. I filled the radiator (all new hoses of course) and the engine had new oil in it with a new spin on oil filter adapter. I had changed the position of the distributor to position number one spark plug wire in the proper positions and prevent the low tension wire from shorting to the tachometer reduction gear on the back of the generator. I had already used a test light to position the timing for initial startup with piston number one at top dead center and the distributor pointing to number one plug wire.

With a little gas in the tank, I pulled out the choke, adjusted the fast idle cable, and turned on the key. The ignition light lighted and I pulled the starter cable. The engine cranked over, but not a hint of trying to fire. I cleaned the points (these were the original that were in the distributor when I got it) and turned on the key and made sure I was getting a spark at the points. I was and that is a good sign. I put the cap back on and held the high tension lead from the coil to ground and cranked the engine - I was getting a spark there! I changed the cap and rotor and put everything back together and cranked the engine and it fired to life! So, the cap or rotor was bad, but the engine is now running! I let it run for perhaps 10 minutes and checked for temperature (no gauge, but I have an infra red temp gun). It was not overheating and was running smoothly. I had good oil pressure. The tachometer was not working and I noticed that the ignition light was not going out. I was able to force the regulator cut out to close and then it was charging and the light went out. This will have to be investigated further, but at least the generator works. Also, the ammeter was reading backwards, so, apparently I got the two wires reversed!

I installed the driver side seat bottom and the seat back. I got into the driver seat and tested the clutch and brake. Both were working (I needed to do a little adjustment on the clutch pedal). I put it in gear and drove it out of the garage (mind you that there are no doors and no fenders on the car) and drove it back and forth in the driveway. I then returned it to the garage. This was an exciting day for me. I wanted to have Don with me for the startup, but he has been very busy lately and with all the health concerns about Covid-19 it is probably just as well that I did not have a "start-up party". In any case, I am making progress on the MG TC and perhaps I can drive it next year on the road!

Safety Fast,
Jack Horner



