

What have you been doing in your quarantine?

Without talking about the “elephant in the room” I want to find out what others are doing with the self imposed “garage time”. Please write to me and let me know if you have tackled special projects during this past month or two. I have been tackling a 1974 MGB GT that has been off the road since 1992. A friend of mine purchased the car about 10 years ago and I helped him start it up about 5 years ago just to see how the engine ran. This involved turning the engine through by hand to make sure that there were no valves stuck in the closed position (this will cause the cam and crank to stop rotating or bend a push rod). This was not a problem. So, we cleaned the points and checked the gap, disconnected the fuel pump (as we did not know what condition the gas tank and fuel was in) and connected up a spare fuel tank and pump. We installed a battery to the normal connections and ensured a good ground connection at the battery. We made sure that the throttle dampers in the carburetors were free moving. We then turned on the ignition and cranked the engine. It cranked over well but did not want to start. I noticed that there was not much exhaust coming out, so, we added a shop vacuum to the exhaust and cranked it over again and it started up! There were a lot of acorns and debris coming out of the exhaust pipe, but it ran!!! A clogged exhaust will prevent the engine from “breathing” and thus cause it not to start. A prank back when I was in college was to shove a potato into the exhaust pipe and the would cause a car not to start, or if it did start there would be a loud bang and the potato shot out of the exhaust!

Now, five years later the car is in my garage and I am limited as to what I can do with others in the current quarantine. So, I decided to go through the car and take care of any issues I found. I put it up on the lift and examined the undercarriage. These are the things I found: worn (but serviceable) rear axle rebound straps; missing grease Zirk fitting on drive shaft sliding shaft (replaced and greased); worn out steering rack boots (replaced), front end alignment done; worn but serviceable lower trunnion dust boots - front end greased; King pins OK; A arm bushings worn, but serviceable for now; clutch slave cylinder frozen and full of corrosion (replaced and system bled); brake master cylinder empty (filled and bled and checked for any leaks (there is a crushed rear brake line from a towing hook being hooked over the rear axle and crushing the brake line, but it seems to be still working - a future item to replace). All flex brake lines are serviceable but should be replaced soon. I replaced the gas tank as the condition was unknown. The old tank as probably serviceable and had fresh smelling fuel in it, but it needed to be serviced and painted anyway, so, that is set aside for a future project. Even though the fuel was old, it must have had a preservative in it as it still smelled fresh after perhaps 10 years! The inside of the tank looked good to boot!

I checked the antifreeze and it was old but still up to the level in the filler neck of the radiator, so, I decided to leave that alone. The hoses looked like they would be fine for the start up. I installed a battery and made sure everything looks ready for the start up. The moment of truth: I turned the key and the ignition light came on but I did not hear the fuel pump! I installed an external fuel pump and fuel tank to try to start the engine. After fitting everything up I cranked over the engine and after a few long cranks the engine sprang to life again! Only a few acorns out the exhaust this time! While the

engine was warming up I examined other telltale signs of issues. One that became apparent pretty quickly was that there was rusty water appearing at the front of the engine. This indicated a worn out water pump. I shut the engine down.

I replaced the water pump with a spare I had on hand (unknown condition) and filled the radiator again. It immediately started leaking out of the weep hole in the replaced water pump! Lesson learned: only install water pumps of a known good condition!!! Since Moss is not shipping currently I checked with my friend Geoff Rogers of Rogers Motors in Shutesbury, MA. He did not have one on hand, but he sent me to British Miles in Morrisville, PA who had an NOS water pump on hand. When the water pump arrived I installed it and started the car up again and it is running smoothly and not leaking!

Another project I decided to tackle was the pile of used Lucas fuel pumps I have piled up to see if any of them could be repaired. I watched videos on Youtube from John Twist, Tony Hillyard, and one from "Living with a Classic". They were all informative and I was able to take the fuel pump from my project car and refurbish it. I currently have a solid state fuel pump in place while doing further testing, but will plan to re-install the original fuel pump later. I went through six or seven fuel pumps from MG T Series, MGA, and MGB and now have a half dozen working original fuel pumps.

Another project I tackled on the MGB GT was examining the monocoque body for rot. It is a remarkably rust free car (a few small blemishes here and there) but the undersides are very good. I used an interior frame coating rust converter/inhibitor from Eastwood to spray inside all the areas that normally don't get treatment. There are drain holes provided in the side member bottoms, rockers and cross members to spray onto as well as areas inside the front fenders and rear fenders in the front and rear quarters to help protect these areas from future rust. I also sprayed the inner rear wheel arches and the insides of the lower door skins as these areas are prone to rust. The bonnet was sprayed with primer 5 years ago, but now needs to be stripped and repainted. The entire car was resprayed in its original Blaze Orange years ago (perhaps after a minor fender bender) and there is quite a bit of overspray, but at least it is the original color. I am hoping to just freshen it up a bit and start driving it soon. So, one can see that there are a lot of items to look for in a vehicle that has been off the road for a while. This will become a driving project over the next couple years.

I hope this has been informative and again, please feel free to share your garage stories with the rest of the club members.

Safety Fast,

Jack Horner
President, Bay State MGA Club

The 1974 MGB

