

The Seven Year Itch or Mid-life Crisis or Whatever

Seven years is a long time to look at your car sitting under a cover and nothing being done. Seven years ago a young lady on a cell phone came over the double yellow line and totaled our 1957 MGA. We bought the wreck back from the insurance company not wanting to give up the engine I had built and the 5-speed transmission. I got lucky and found a donor car relatively fast and started the rebuild. Linda and I sat down and talked about what we wanted from the “new” car. We had a strong engine and good transmission but what next? I had done some research and discovered Hoyle Suspensions in the UK. They specialized in track day conversions mostly for MGB’s but did have a modification for the MGA. As we planned to drive the car a lot we went with the full conversion: adjustable coil-over-shock at each corner, large ventilated disc brakes with billet machined 4-piston calipers in the front and independent rear suspension with solid discs in the back. There is much more to the kit but rather than take up space you may go to www.hoyle-suspension.co.uk to see what is involved. Hoyle sent the required conversion parts and instructions ahead so I could work on the frame while waiting for the kit to arrive from England. I repaired the better of the two frames, installed the conversion parts and sent it off for powder coating.

The kit arrived after a reasonably easy trip through customs and proved to be everything they said it was. All the required hardware was there and the parts went into position with ease. The rolling chassis was fitted with the front of the donor and rear of the original. Then the new body was sealed, blocked, primed and painted. Then the floor fell out of the economy. I couldn’t work on a “toy” while everyone, including myself, was struggling for survival.

Previously, again after some research, I had purchased an ISIS Intelligent Multiplex System for the wiring. I was not real confident with the MGA wiring having only two fuses, full voltage across switches and light gauge wires. I know this system has worked well over the years but with such improved systems available we decided to modernize this area as well. The wiring sat; with the modules in place but no connections attempted. I did a little work customizing the dash. We had a nice Moss Motors wood dash that survived the crash but I had some ideas. I put hinges on the blanking plate so it could drop down revealing a provision for more switches concealed behind the plate. We had previously fabricated a new fire wall eliminating many holes but mostly the heater. An after-market heater was mounted under the dash so that heat would only be delivered when called for; not bleeding through a poorly sealed heater and fire wall. The switch for the heater was the first to go behind the blanking plate. Next was a switch for flashers – we may have one of the only MGA’s with flashers; I hope I never need them.

Now go ahead seven years and despite a strong recovery, I realize that family and business issues just don’t give me the time I need to complete the job. Enter my good friend Steve MacKay, MacKay’s Garage, Waterboro, ME www.mackaysgarage.com. Steve agreed to take on the job of picking up all the pieces, trying to make sense of what I had done and completing the car. In no time the car, now almost finished, came down for a custom stainless steel exhaust. While my requirement was that it be as free-flowing as possible without attracting too much attention, the exhaust specialist was more concerned with getting something to fit around all the custom suspension in the rear. After a fair amount of discussion they came up with a great solution and we “motored” the car onto the trailer.

The next stop was the upholstery shop. In keeping with our plans to have it look as good as possible we decided on leather inserts in our after-market seats, leather binding on the “Bentley” carpet, leather cover on the shifter console and leather for the spare tire cover where it protrudes into the cockpit. With the car being a deep green; not really British Racing Green, the color of the leather (green) was chosen to compliment the color of the car... and it does with style.

Next was alignment front and rear then a trip to the RMV to get the registration updated to the new VIN from the donor car. While, despite their reputation, the RMV representative made the conversion in good time, there was one condition; he wanted a ride at some point being a British car fan.

The last two items will be to first figure out why the tachometer is not working and lastly a conversion to waterless coolant. Summer may almost be over but not the driving season. I'll scratch that itch, push my courage a bit and see just how good that suspension is.

Safety Fast,
Leverett Flint





