



Overdrive

Contents:

From the President.....	1
Officers and Contacts.....	4
Meeting Minutes.....	5
From the Editor	5
Event Calendar	7
Vintage Racing Goes Full Circle.....	9

President's Message May 2020



President's Message

Hope springs eternal. How many times have we heard that cliché? Now more than ever do we need to be filled with hope. Hope that COVID-19 will quickly end. Hope that no friends, family or loved ones will get this virus or worse yet succumb to this disease. And hope that all our lives return to normal.

So many events have been cancelled that a better question is what has not been cancelled. As of now the tech session at Jim Frakes warehouse and the Ladies Tea on the same day have been

delayed. The April meeting is cancelled and May probably will also as we observe social distancing and the stay at home order.

The 500 has been re-scheduled for August 23rd. This means we will have to wait another 2 months to enjoy that Brown County hospitality of Jon Monies and Joann Wright at their annual race party. I won some money at the Daytona Party so maybe I can keep the streak alive in August.

There are fewer cars on the road; you can just see it. Smog/pollution has decreased and air quality has improved. Speeding has seen an uptick as drivers take advantage of the uncongested roads. I read that the elapsed time for the Cannonball Run (New York to Los Angeles) has been lowered to 26 hours and 38 minutes.

One event not cancelled yet is the Lake Michigan lighthouse tour on June 12 – 15th. Several CIAHC members have already booked hotel rooms for this event. Go to the Northern Indiana Austin-Healey Club webpage <http://www.niahc.org> for details. Or give Bev or I a call at 317 -835 -7827 if you have questions.

Stay safe out there!

CARS/PARTS FOR SALE or WANTED TO BUY

(Please send Jim Frakes or Steve Halleck any news of cars/parts that are for sale.)

-Jim Frakes supercharged Bugeye.

Next Business Meeting:

NOTE: Depending on progress of COVID-19, we may need to cancel the gathering.
**The May meeting will be held May 12th at Grindstone Charley's 5383 W Rockville Rd,
Indianapolis
Dinner at 6:30, meeting at 7:30 PM.**



We will continue to use Grindstone Charlie's for meetings going forward.

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Mr. Healey's Neighborhood

Central Indiana AHC
<http://www.ciahc.org>

Bluegrass AHC
<http://www.bluegrassclub.com>

Miami Valley AHC
<http://sites.google.com/miamivalleyahccom>

Mid Ohio AHC
<https://sites.google.com/site/midohioahc/>

Northern Indiana AHC
<https://www.facebook.com/NorthernIndianaAustinHealeyClub>

Ohio Valley AHC
<http://ohiovalleyahc.com>

Indiana British Car Union
<http://www.ibcu.org>

Austin Healey Club of America
<http://www.healeyclub.org>

CIAHCA April Business Meeting Minutes

Meeting cancelled due to virus.

Miscellaneous Meanderings

By Steve Halleck

I hope everyone is staying safe during the crisis. Most of our crowd falls into the 'vulnerable' category, so take care of yourselves.

I asked the group what they were doing while in garage lockdown and got back several responses...

Jon Monies replied 'so far I have been working on new and or rebuilding brake and clutch master cylinders on our 1967 Sprite and 1976 Spitfire. Also doing things with the 1992 Jaguar. Had the head for our 1955 A-H 100 rebuilt and work on it now and then. Next work to do on the 100 is to check the ring gaps and hone the cylinders, etc, etc, etc. In addition, I also bought new alloy wheels and tires for the 1967 Sprite and will put the older alloy rims and tires on the 1960 Bugeye. I also put the hardtop back on the Spitfire.' I asked Jon how he kept everything straight with that many diverse cars. He responded; 'It is easy to keep track of all the "toys", because they let me know when they need attention. Also, Joan said if I don't get the Bugeye ready for the road this year, I might not get any attention!!!!'

Debbie Bruce sent a picture a picture of Pat relocating the roll bar in his Silver Bullet Healey.



Bob Haskell replied ‘Haven't been out in the garage too much. Doing a little spring cleaning while looking for a couple of things. Did place an order for some MGB parts tonight (gas tank, carb kit, wheel cylinders, master cylinder, caliper kits, wheels, etc). New set of tires arrived today from Tire Rack. So, might have a tech session when the travel ban is lifted. Or I may schedule some vacation time since we're not traveling any time soon.’ Right after sending the note to me, Moss closed it's second location, so no MGB parts for a while.

Tim O'Neill sent a story about his restoration project and the surprise he discovered while going through the car.

‘The 1960 Healey 3000 I've been doing a body off restoration on for the last three years is finally winding down. It is running with a few paint touch-ups to complete. I also need to install the top but will wait for a warm sunny day to do this. I am still fiddling with the brakes as they are not what I think they should be. Keep getting some air in the lines but cannot find a leak. After replacing the master, it got a lot better so I'm hopeful. Everything seems to work.

For those who haven't heard the story of this car I'll fill you in. I bought the car ~20 years ago while living in Northern Wisconsin without seeing it, from a place in New York I'm sure you have all heard of. The car was advertised as an easy restoration and was all there. It was none of the above. It was a parts car looking like it had been parked in a lake for most of its life. All panels were rusted through a foot up all around. The interior was gone and the floors were too. I decided to part the car out (the drive train was good) and junk the rest. When I started to take it apart it began to look familiar. As it turned out it was the car I had in college in 1967-68. I had wrecked the car in Charleston, Illinois and sold it to a classmate from Decatur Illinois. After that it disappeared from my life until I decided to buy myself a 50th birthday present of a car like I had in College. It had the repaired damage I had inflicted on it as well as all of the colors it had been painted by both my brother (previous owner) and me. Also, I discovered some parts from a dealership in my home town that I had bought in the 60's. It also had an Illinois title. If the car had not been the one I owned, it would no longer exist. So, years later and much labor and money, It lives!’



Tim's 3000. Nice Job!

Jim Frakes spent three days trying to figure out why his BN 4 kept having a seal leak. It turned out that when he painted the axle he had POR 15 on a portion of the axle where the hub slides on. The paint was pushing the bearing back about 3/8 inch each time he put on the hub. Jim sanded the paint off and used Loctite to hold the bearing in place. POR 15 is strong stuff!

I also asked our club vintage racers for input into their sport. Doug Bruce, who has published articles in the Healey Marque and presented at the French Lick Conclave sent a report of looking at racing from what was a new perspective for him. It's included at the bottom of the Overdrive and is well worth the read.

Event Calendar

Event cancellations continue. If you know of any I've missed, please let me know!

May:

May 12 – CIAHC business meeting, Grindstone Charlie's, Indy **I'll send out notice on this as the date approaches.**

~~May 15-17 – Carlisle Import & Performance Nationals, Carlisle, Pa – moved to Aug~~

~~May 17-21 – 45th Healey Rendezvous, Montebellu Resort South Lake Tahoe~~

~~May 17-21 – Conclave 2020, Crystal River, FL cancelled~~

May 23-31 – British Car Week, Planet Earth

~~May 24 – Indy 500 Party, Monie's/Wright Home, Columbus, IN race moved to August~~

~~May 31 – Champagne British Car Show, Champaign, IL~~

June:

~~June 6 – IBCU London to Brighton Run. Starting in Pittsboro, IN~~

~~June 7 – 22nd Annual British Return to Ft. Meigs British Car & Bike Show, Perrysburg, OH – cancelled. Will be held June 6th, 2021~~

June 9 - CIAHC business meeting, Grindstone Charlie's, Indy **I'll send out notice on this as the date approaches.**

June 12-15 – W. Michigan Lighthouse Tour, Traverse City, MI

~~June 14 – Cincinnati Concours d'Elegance, Ault Park, Cincinnati, OH - postponed to June 13, 2021~~

June 17-21 – 2020 Brickyard Vintage Racing Invitational, IMS, Indianapolis, IN

June 18-21 – Springthing 2020, New Albany, IN

June 20-28 - Tire Squeal (Schweinfiletring), Southern IN

June 28 – Michiana British Car Show, Notre Dame, IN

July:

July 4 – Indy Grand Prix, IMS

July 12 – Mad Dogs and Englishmen Auto Faire, Kalamazoo, MI

July 12 – British Car Day, Cincinnati, OH

July 14 - CIAHC business meeting, Grindstone Charlie's, Indy

July 25 – Rolling Into Roanoke, Roanoke, IN

August:

Aug 1 – British Car Day, Dayton, OH

Aug 8 – British Motor Day, Zionsville, In

Aug 11 - CIAHC business meeting, Grindstone Charlie's, Indy

Aug 14-16 – Carlisle Import & Performance Nationals, Carlisle, Pa

Aug 23 – Indy 500, CIAHC party, Monie's home.

Aug 28-30 – Artomobilia Weekend, Artomobilia Car Show Aug 29, Carmel, IN

September:

Sept 8 - CIAHC business meeting, Grindstone Charlie's, Indy

Sept 12/13 – Columbus Scottish Festival / European Car Show, Columbus, IN

Sept 17th-20th – September Roundup, Springhill Suites, Plainfield, IN

Sept 19 – SIRBrit Motor Cars Show, Newberg, IN

October:

Oct 1-4 – Southeastern Classic XXIV, Lake Lanier, GA

Oct 2-4 – Newport Antique Auto Hill Climb, Newport, IN

Oct 10 – Crown Hill Cemetery Drive and Lunch, Indy

Oct 24 – Halloween Party, The Korner Garage, Indy

November:

Nov 6-8 – AHCA Fall Delegates Meeting, Plainfield, IN

Nov 10 – CIAHC business meeting, Grindstone Charlie's, Indy

December:

Dec ?? – CIAHC Christmas Party, TBD

Vintage racing goes full circle

I take for granted the danger of suiting up and belting myself into a race car; that danger becomes secondary, until now.

My daughter, helmet on, suited up, was sitting in an Austin Healey Sprite on the grid, at the VSCDA Drivers school at Gingerman Raceway, in a racing car, things are getting real.

My heart was beating faster than it has in a long time. I was acting like a mother hen while we awaited the command to start the cars. Race cars, real race cars. It was only 50 degrees as we were only 6 miles from lake Michigan in early May, at a race track, with race cars. I was sweating.

How did I find myself in this situation? I am sure I was the creator of my own fears. I saw it in her eyes when I took her to her first Indy 500 race one May. In our family-the Indy 500 is a tradition that we have attended and looked forward to for decades. My grandfather first attended the race when he snuck out of his house and hitchhiked to Indy and as he said, “paid a National Guard security guy, two bits to look the other way” while he clambered over the fence to watch his first race. It is a whole other story about how he got home and that reception he received since it took him more than a day to do so! I began tagging along to see the race with my grandfather when I was 9; 2019 was my 47th race.

I really didn't help matters either, back in 2008, I raced my 1959 Austin Healey at Road America in Wisconsin and took my daughter along for the experience of the track, the camping, and fellowship with the other racers. Soon after, she decided she wanted to begin go-kart racing. We started with indoor racing, and my challenge to her was “you cannot have your own kart until you can beat me” The following year, she did beat me; and she hasn't stopped doing so either!

So, we bought a go-kart. Then, as she started high school, she wanted a manual shift car, stating “If I am going to race in the Indy 500, I need to know how to drive a stick”. That was taken care of when we brought home a pristine 1999 Miata with only 38,000 miles, her first car. I still have that car. It's British racing green of course.

The go-kart years.

We knew nothing about go-karts and there is a lot to learn. Who knew that a single washer, placed wrong on a single axle, could make such a difference in cornering! I did enjoy Christmas shopping for my daughter before that first year-Helmet, gloves, race shoes, race suit, it was not your typical Christmas shopping list. Spring arrived and we were ready to race. Go-karts are more sensitive to setup than my Bugeye Sprite. They cost just as much to fix too. Don't get me started on the tire costs either. They are not cheap. Luckily, we worked with a group out of Columbus Ohio-Adrenaline Fix Karting, who setup the kart, provide driver coaching, and even had mechanics to keep the kart competitive. It is a steep learning curve though, more like a wall than a curve, until you begin to see the racers finally get it, race craft develops slowly. We raced as much as we could, every few weekends at one of the best facilities in the USA, New Castle Motorsports Park. Owned by an Indy car driver that I remembered watching race at the 500, Mark Dismore; how cool. So, the hook was set. We still have the kart. It might soon be for sale now.

As we raced more-she learned more. We started at the back of the field and slowly worked our way towards the front. It's brutal at the front, like take no prisoners brutal. Go-karts are like small, very underpowered miniature open wheel Indy cars. Without roll bars. Like Indy cars, if (when) they touch wheels, someone goes airborne. Sometimes they can flip, although rarely.

When we were not kart racing-my daughter was always the first to say she wanted to be part of my crew at my vintage races. Off we went, racing at tracks such as, Gingerman, Road America, Mid-Ohio, Blackhawk Farms, Grattan, and the occasional trip out to Kansas to pick up a race engine. We made that one a college visit too,

Kansas has an amazing Automotive Engineering program, who knew? (My daughter did!). Crewing at a vintage race is not a glamorous gig. Fueling the car, cleaning oil from loose oil fittings, checking tire pressures, torquing lug nuts, setting up our tent, cleaning the car, grabbing ice for the cooler, finding dad's beer, its loud and its hot. Oh, and driver's meetings are at 7xx am. Early. My daughter never missed a beat. So, in my eyes she earned her stripes, and was always there on the grid for me to start my cameras when we received the 3 minutes to go notice. Always there to whisper in my helmet to win, and race safe, and always there to ask why I had not won when I came off the track. As she grew older, I began to lose her as just my crew. No, she didn't suddenly discover boys, other racers found that she was pretty useful to their efforts too. She would grab tools, help around the grid with other cars, and even sit in the race cars, starting and warming them up for early morning sessions. Trust is earned, and boy did she earn it.

Like the Austin Healey club, vintage racing has its own "future fifty" efforts. All through the paddock, you find kids of fellow drivers who become drivers too. My daughter took notice of that. Other drivers took notice of that too. It was only a matter of time.

The year before the VSCDA spring driver's school and races, I had a longtime racer come to me and tell me that he would bring his car, a blue Austin Healey Sprite, half way across the country AND act as her crew for the driver's school. Hook, line, and sinker were now set. Well, the planning then began in earnest. My life as a father and race car driver was going to change. First, the logistics. My daughter was attending the University of Mississippi, over seven hours away from me. She is studying sports marketing and hopes to work for a race team or race track. The driver's school was going to take place one week before her spring semester final exams. We worked out flights, to and from school, car logistics and needs, and expectations that I, (dad), would want to see concerning studying taking place for exams when she was not seated in a race car or driver's school classroom. Agreement made, we registered for the event.

Arriving at the track, watching her going through registration and receiving the "driver" wristband, while a rite of passage, was fun for her, and the first of "oh shit, this is real" moment for me. Driver's school begins with the first day of classroom instruction, and moves to on-track driving sessions the following day. Everything is covered from how to get out on to the track, communication with corner workers, flagging, and what the various flags mean, and what to expect during a race on-track. It can be overwhelming. More so for a father, not as much for a go-kart racer.

The racer dons their gear as the 15-minute call to the grid is announced. It was not a question that my daughter could operate a manual shift car. It was not a question that she wouldn't listen and learn from the 1:1 instructor to student ratio, but I still had concerns. Racing a vintage car adds a whole new level of complexity over go-kart racing. First, you have to pay attention to the flagging and the corner worker stations, as they tell you, thru flags, what you need to do, what others are doing, and what are the track conditions. (You have no radio communication-only your awareness of the flagging). Second, you now have a car, (hopefully an Austin Healey Sprite), and that car has gauges. Lots of important gauges. Those gauges tell you water temperature, oil temperature, oil pressure, RPM's, engine exhaust gas temperature, you name it, and these old cars will need it. Add to all of that, these cars, like street British cars, make lots of noises. It is up to the driver, while racing, to know and differentiate the good noises from the bad noises. Like a street car, you need to KNOW your car and have the ability to discern a small problem before it becomes a bigger problem; like when a piston wishes to leave the engine block, or a valve spring breaks and drops a valve, which then meets a piston, valves and pistons are never supposed to meet, Finally, you have mirrors. Go-karts do not have mirrors. Go-Kart racers only need the occasional quick glance over the shoulder to see where another racer might be. Race cars require you to have a keen awareness on everything around you, including the use of the mirror to see what may be coming up on you. All of this needs your undivided attention, while also racing the car. You need to have the confidence to hit your marks every turn, every lap, for 30 minutes. It is not an easy task, and your safety requires that you stay very aware. I had worries, but I know my daughter, she is a smart girl, she would tell me if she couldn't handle it, right?

The school spends a whole day on the track-mixing together, students of all abilities. Some, who have never sat in a race car, to those with go-kart experience, to others who raced years ago and want to get back into racing. The cars are all race cars however.

The afternoon before the on-track instruction is classroom only lectures and learning. Friday morning, the sessions alternate between open wheel (formula type cars, from Vees to Formula Fords), to closed wheel (Alfas, Corvettes, Porsche, and yes, a bunch of Midgets and Sprites). I was told to only worry about my car and stay from her and her car, be a dad, they said. I was being a dad, and I was even more nervous! Thankfully, my car, after a dozen years of effort, is a pretty easy car to maintain, and has caused me less heartache with each passing year. Maybe, I have become a better driver too; slower is faster. I could write a book on the little things we do to these old Austin Healey Sprites to keep them together, to leak less oil, to produce way more power than they were ever designed for, and to look as nice as they do, but I digress.

So that Friday morning, the call goes out for “closed wheel cars and students to the grid” and my worries heightened. I glance over, to see my daughter suited up, long hair being tucked into a race suit, carrying a helmet and gloves, as she saunters to her car and climbs over the door and roll cage and her crew begin to strap her into the car, I am staring...Do I look worried? Will she see me looking worried? Act busy.

I walk into my race trailer; she cannot see me there-suddenly I hear the cackle of a cold race engine firing up-The race car IS loud! I have been passed by this car before, it is a fast car-it has all the right setup and go-fast parts-The last time I was on track with this car, it passed me like I was sitting still down the main straight at Road America, and I consider my car to be pretty fast-and it has brakes. My Bugeye never seems to have brakes, especially, when I need them most, this car always seemed to be parked in a corner here or there-fast down the straight, but it didn't like to turn. This is the same car my only daughter is about to race in. Without hesitation-my daughter looks over at me, looks down at her gauges, checks her mirrors, and drives off from the paddock to the grid. No hesitation-none. I didn't even get a kiss, nor a bye-bye daddy-nothing. Now, I suppose, like her for all of my racing years, I do what she has done and run to the grid to help. As I get up the hill, I see 28 or so cars all cackling away, drivers fidgeting with their harnesses or talking to crew members as best you can, over the rock concert sound an unmuffled car makes, or sitting and staring off into who knows where. My daughter was looking for me.

I run up to her car, looking to start the Go-pro camera, so we can look over her progress and learn from it, as she motions me to come to her helmet to talk. She opens her visor, I can see her face tucked into the helmet, at that moment, I realized that as a parent-I was doing the right thing, her smile, a huge radiant smile, slight makeup on even, had the confident look that she was doing exactly what she always wanted to do and was glad I was letting her do it. I saw myself in those eyes-I knew then, that she was taking a huge step to do something she too loved, and now we would get to share this for years to come. I mumbled something about watching gauges and being safe out there, she shooed me away and closed her visor as the cars followed each other out for a conga line to learn the track; I might have had a tear in my eyes-possibly. For her, the day alternates between on-track sessions for 20 minutes-then come in, jump out quickly, run to the classroom and debrief. Repeat-all day.

Finally, at the end of a very long day, the instructors get together, evaluate the students-decide who passes and who hasn't progressed enough to be safe, and issue the certificates at the evening graduation banquet. I stayed around at the back of the room-letting her soak in the moment with her classmates-fellow drivers now, it felt like we were all in one large fraternity, and we were, but I still get to be dad.

Her name is Lily Bruce, and she is now a race car driver!

Written by:

Doug Bruce-Dad, and race car driver.







