



Z Magnette Group Newsletter September 2001

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Dear Enthusiats,

This is the first mailing in approximately a year and a half. Welcome to all of the new ZMG members - check the address list for members in your area. To make this easier the list is printed by state (some of the new members are on a separate list and will be added to the complete list next revision). Please check your information and contact me with any changes.

Included in this newsletter are magazine articles and articles written by ZMG members. Ron Cobb and Dave DuBois both wrote great stories regarding their personal experiences maintaining their Magnettes. Grant Howlett submitted articles dated 1955 thru 1958 and an article about the ZB. Don Tulloch sent an editorial that he wrote several years ago - I have held it on my desk too long! Thanks for all of your efforts as I am always looking for Magnette info to share. Also included in this newsletter are photos of members and their cars taken at various car shows over the past two years.

If you have not signed up for the ZMG web list please consider doing it today. Chris Kotting has done a great job setting up this thread. To date there are 66 members with email and approximately 50 members on the web list. I will be using the web list to update address changes and additions of new members. I hope to eventually use the web list for the newsletter to reduce printing and mailing costs. For those of you without email I would continue to mail the newsletters and address list.

I hope that everyone enjoys this newsletter - as it has been a long time coming. As you can see by it's size and submissions by ZMG members enthusiasm for our Magnette's has never been higher.

Finally, I have been unable to locate the following members: Burt Gunter, Alphretta, GA., Bob Aszmus, Gainsville, FL., and Sandy Smith, Milwaukee, WI. Does anyone have an address or email for them?

Safety Fast!

JEPP

Magnette Wanted

ZB in original condition, not modified and in good running order. Please contact:

**Kenneth J. Michell
The Forge Building
451 D Street Suite 800
Boston, MA 02210
(617) 261-4646 ext. 11
kenm@michelltd.com**

Magnette's for Sale

ZB - rolling chassis/body with all doors, hood, trunklid, wheels, seats, gas tank and several misc. pieces. Please contact:

**Aaron Spaulding
(310) 639-2582
aronspaulding@aol.com**

1958 ZB - 1800 engine, 3.90 axle, rebuilt trans. Great dependable driver. \$10,900 OBO. Please contact:

**Jeff Zorn
mgajeff@aol.com**

1958 Magnette ZB - dark Carmine red, 4 cyl., 53,000 miles. Black interior with red piping. NOS sunroof, WWW radial tires. Trophy winner, nice driving. Photos available via email. \$9,250.00. Please contact:

**Phil Pitts
mga12345@aol.com
(913) 219-3247**



Z Mquette Group Web List

ZMG member Chris Kotting has produced this great thread for all ZMG members to keep in touch with each other.

You may have a question about front suspension assembly or where that oddball part fits. Your questions will go out to approximately 50 ZMG members and will be answered quickly as most of us have "been there, done that"!

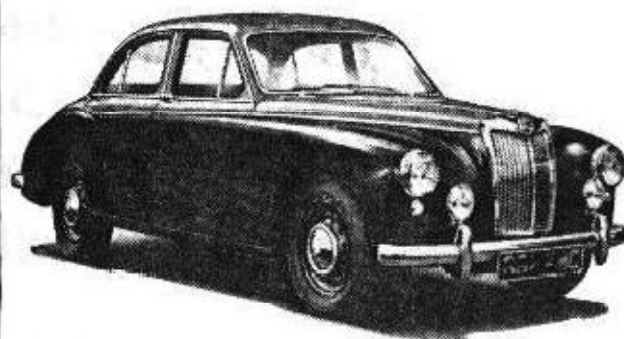
Are you planning on going to a car show? E-mail the group - chances are that you will have other Magnutts in your area join you.

Also, if you are looking for parts or have parts to sell, your message will go to the right audience. For details on subscribing to this free list, email Chris Kotting at ckotting@core.com.



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the
expert*
in you



M.G. Magnette (Varitone)
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M.G. Magnette (Standard model)
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If you like a car with spirit and good breeding you are going to like the M.G. Magnette. If you like the feeling of absolute mastery under all conditions, you are going to enjoy every moment at the wheel of this lively sports saloon. The track-bred 1,500 c.c. engine gives you crisp acceleration. You can enjoy fast cruising all day . . . safely . . . effortlessly . . . luxuriously. And expert driving comes naturally to the M.G. owner, because every detail of its design makes for ease of handling; that means safer motoring!

* Nancy Mitchell is one of the most expert of all M.G. drivers. Her many successes include two Ladies' Touring Championships, and she has twice won the coveted "Coupe des Dames" in Monte Carlo Rallyes.



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Safety fast!

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London Showrooms: Stratton House, 80 Piccadilly, London, W.1
Overseas Business: Nuffield Exports Limited, Cowley, Oxford, and 41 Piccadilly, London, W.1

New Members

**The new members listed below are
not yet on the member roster**

**Jim Basque #196
Windermere, FL**

**Steve and Diane Kirby #197
Escondido, CA**

**Tom Webb #198
Marengo, IL**

**Bill West #199
Windsor, CO**

**Dan Pharr #200
Lexington, VA**

**Marty Loken #201
Langley, WA**

**Paul Casarona #202
Auburn, AL**

**Don Carlson #203
Fargo, ND**

**Jerry Keller #204
Green Lane, PA**

**Charles Smith (no car yet)
Marietta, GA**

**Robert Sutton (no car yet)
Mason, MI**

**Mike Casey #205
1945 So. Quintero St.
Aurora, CO 80013
(303) 755-4013
'59 ZB**

**Jack E. Davis #206
100 N. Cheyenne Ave.
Silver City, NM 88061
(505) 538-5955
'57 ZA**

**Chuck and Jan Benner #207
4633 DE Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49004
(616) 385-3160
'58 ZB**

Address Change:

**Jack Kurkowski
501 State Road 267
Mooresville, IN 46158
(317) 831-1666**

The accompanying drawings (3) are taken from the Service Parts Manual, page 90 and show the exploded view of the late (ZB) Horn/Turn signal Assy. If you have the Shop Manual for the ZB, the same drawing can be found on page J.4, but without the view for the latter assy.

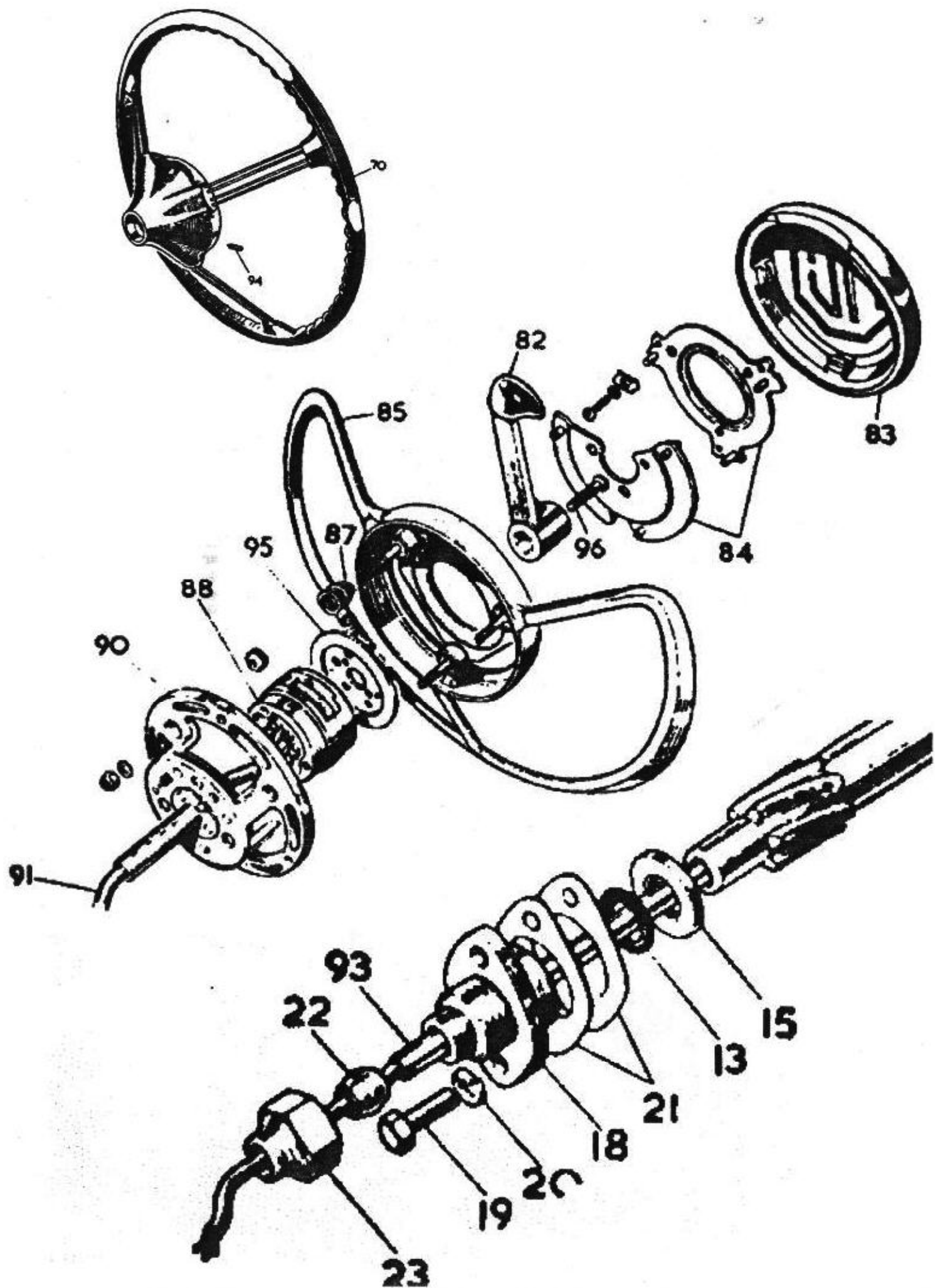
The problem with the horn blowing when the steering wheel is turned, is in all likelihood the result of the horn push assy needing to be adjusted. This is assuming that the tube through the steering column is intact and is not allowing the Horn/Turn Signal assy to rotate with the steering wheel. See Drawing 2 for the following explanation. The lower part of piece 84 (motif support) in the drawing is bolted to piece 85 (horn ring and contact) and can cause a certain amount of distortion in piece 85 especially if any spacers, washers, etc. are missing. This will cause a high or low spot on the inner ring of piece 85, allowing it to touch piece 95 (bottom contact) and cause the horn to blow. If you look at the drawing of piece 85, you will notice three studs that go through spring, piece 87 (horn ring return spring, 3 each) and through piece 90 (sleeve and horn ring bracket assy). There are shown in the view, unidentified nut and washers, again there are nuts and washers for each stud, even though there is only one shown. It is these nuts that adjust piece 85 up or down. The problem is how to get to these three adjusting nuts and it is here that thing begin to get complicated. Obviously, one has to raise this whole Horn/Turn Signal Assy. sufficiently high, out of the steering wheel hub, to gain access to the nuts.

See Drawings 1 and 3 for the following explanation. Start the removal/access process by undoing the wire connections at the end of the steering column (keep track of which wire goes where, you will be tested on this when you have to put everything back together). in Drawing 3, remove item 23 (nut, olive). Remove item 22 (stator tube olive). Don't worry about taking these items completely off, just let them hang from the wires. The stator olive may be a problem to remove as it is this piece that pinches down on item 93 (stator tube) to hold it in place. If the olive will not come off of the stator tube, you will be faced with a dilemma. The lower portion of the stator tube can be pulled out of the end of the steering column, but it may be a bit dicey to get it back into place as it slides over or in the next tube in line and is keyed so it will not allow any rotation of the tubes. It is possible to get things back together blind in the steering column, but you may have to withdraw the whole thing, which means cutting off the wire connector bullets, getting a new lower tube (standard steal brake tubing can be modified to work and getting a new olive from NTG (you have been warned). Next is to remove the three stator ring to steering wheel grub screws (item 94 on Drawing 1), only one of three shown in drawing. Once everything is loose, the whole Horn/Turn Signal assy can be lifted up out of the steering wheel hub and the three adjusting nuts run up or down to insure that the horn contacts hit evenly all the way around when the horn rim is pushed, but that the contacts do not touch anywhere when the steering wheel is rotated. This is a trial and error adjustment - adjust, reassemble, test, @#%\$ it, remove, adjust, reassemble, test. Eventually everything will work as it is supposed to and you can button it up and quit worrying nest time you are behind a bunch of mean looking biker dudes and want to turn the steering wheel.

It has been something like ten years since I had to fix and adjust the Horn/Turn Signal Assy on my car, so I may have forgotten something. If so, e-mail me or call me at (360) 479-0462 (after 10:00 AM Pacific time as I work swing shift) and I'll try to straighten it all out for you. As I said above, a standard steal brake tube can be used for the lower stator tube. As I remember, it is 5/16 ID and it will have to be slotted at the top und to receive the key on the next tube up.

Good luck,
Dave





AD FOR PERILS OF WINTER



THE M.G. MAGNETTE: Perhaps best described as a family saloon for the sports driver, the popular Magnette is a medium-sized fast saloon, available in a most attractive range of colours.

A Car That Gives a Lot of Pleasure

M.G. MAGNETTE

A car which has given me a lot of pleasure lately is the M.G. Magnette, the 1½-litre successor to the famous 1½-litre saloon. The new model not only retains the agreeable handling for which its predecessor was noted, but also accommodates comfortably four persons. It is not a large car, its wheel base being 8ft. 6in., and overall length 14ft. 1in.

The engine is one of the B.M.C. 4-cylinder "B" series of 1,489 c.c., with overhead valves operated by pushrods. Two S.U. carburettors are standard fittings, and a power output of 60 at 4,600 r.p.m. is claimed, with a compression ratio of 7.15 to 1. Docility is a great feature of the engine, and top gear running at anything from 10 to 12 m.p.h. is possible, with a smart getaway when the accelerator is pressed—although naturally the close-ratio gearbox yields the best results in this connection if used freely as intended.

On third gear, one can get within reach of the mile-a-minute mark: the ratio is 6.69 as against the 4.875

on top, while the drop to 10.8 in second indicates that the designer's aim was a snappy start from rest on this gear, with a full 35 m.p.h. available before a change-up was called for. This ability of the Magnette to leave most cars standing when it comes to a brisk departure is one of its attractions in traffic driving.

Maximum speed I found to be about a genuine 80 m.p.h., and the car would cruise as long as one wanted at more than 60 m.p.h. Over hundreds of miles covered at varying speeds (but not pressing the car hard, owing to traffic congestion), I found the petrol consumption to work out at around 30 m.p.g. This would probably increase to about 24-26 m.p.g. under hard driving, while in open country it would fall below 30 m.p.g.

VERY CHARMING CAR

The Magnette, which costs £645 basic (£667 17s. with p.t.), has very comfortable seating: the seat backs give firm support, and the range of movement is wide enough to provide a comfortable driving position to persons of almost any shape or size. There is no separate chassis so the floor is set low to give generous headroom: visibility is also good.

The gears are worked by a short, handily-placed lever which sticks up from the centre of the floor: it makes one realise how retrograde are some of those under-the-steering wheel handles which at times make one despair of ever getting the gear "home". The handbrake lever is situated between the seats, nicely out of the way when in the off position.

Altogether, the Magnette could hardly be better laid out, and it has great charm in not only its outward appearance but in its furnishing and general finish.

Submitted by Grant Howlett

1956 - MAGAZINE
READERS' CORRESPONDENCE

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Riley and Magnette

Support for M.G. I have read with interest Mr. J. W. Bull's letter "Riley and Magnette" (July 15). Mr. Bull criticizes the radiator grille and the boot, and says he dislikes the body.

I am a very proud owner of a new Magnette, and in my opinion the grille is most elegant and in keeping with the body, which also has very sleek lines. How could anyone say they were ugly?

A point strongly in favour of the Magnette is its cornering; this is quite superior to that of cars I have owned in the past, which include a pre-war Mercedes-Benz.

Acceleration of the M.G. in the lower ranges is extremely good and so is its finish. I refuse to believe that the 1½-litre Riley has better cornering ability and its acceleration could surely not be better? As for the Riley shape, it may be pleasing to the eye, but haven't the designers forgotten about people over 5ft 10in in height?

My Magnette has caused no trouble at all so far, and I hope to get many thousands of happy miles out of it.

Stirling, Scotland.

B. J. ELDER.

"Cannot Remember a More Pleasing Car." As the proud owner of a Magnette for the last fourteen months I cannot understand Mr. J. W. Bull's criticisms of this car. Steering, road-holding, brakes, suspension, gear box, comfort and finish, all leave nothing to be desired.

In 42 years' driving experience I cannot remember a more pleasing car. Furthermore, 60 b.h.p. is better than the 55 credited to the 1½-litre Riley. The new B.M.C. engine has the power where it is needed. It is a grand compromise.

I purchased my Magnette without any kind of trial, to replace my five-year-old 1½-litre M.G., and I have had no cause to regret the decision.

As a former Bristol owner I have seen the Magnette described as a smaller edition of the Bristol, and couldn't agree more.

Cyncoed, Cardiff.

J. A. MALINS.

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FAMILY-CAR COMFORT!
SMALL-CAR ECONOMY!



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ALMQUIST ENGINEERING

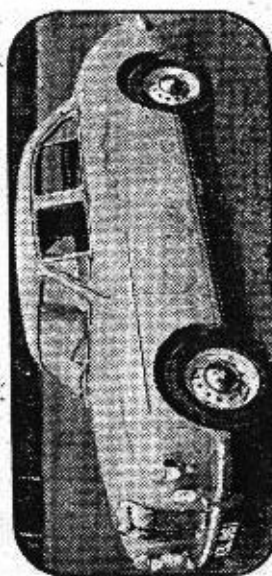
Dealers Wanted

Millersville, Pa.

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1958

by LAURENCE CADE, Star Motoring Correspondent

The MG Magette



★ The run out of London, through traffic, was mostly a joy ride in third gear, with vivid acceleration from traffic lights in second. Out on to the Surrey hills, I was delighted with its steadiness and firmness on bends. On a rough section suspension was excellent with the front independent and rear half-elliptic springs. On an acceleration test with rough timing, I reached 70 mph in 35 seconds and an emergency stop demonstrated the power of the brakes under easy foot pressure.

gear is a fine one for traffic driving. Petrol consumption at normal speeds, about 26 mpg.

★ The Magette lives up to the firm's slogan of Safety First, because of the controllability of a thrustful engine, with the really superb remote control to the gearbox and the convenient placing of all controls. Visibility is good and there is no body roll even on fast cornering. The brakes are powerful and smooth with pedal operation "velvety."

★ A nice car for the mother of small children who have room to move about and the kind of steadiness that is necessary with young passengers who have a tendency to car sickness. Good, steady, well-upholstered back seating, not too bouncy. A handsome car, a pleasant exception to the modern high-shouldered styling. Plenty of luggage and locker room, too.

★ Inclusive price: £1,072 7s 6d. Engine: 4-cyl (1,488 cc) overhead valves. 4-speed gearbox. Tank 9 gallons. Overall length: 14ft 1in. Height 4ft 10in. Width: 5ft 3in. Four-seater passenger accommodation is adequate and luggage space ample.

★ A strikingly handsome, well-finished car with flowing lines. The interior is well appointed, with real leather upholstery. Rather cramped leg space at rear, with front seats extended. A cozy car with plenty of headroom. Suspension is firm, yet yielding, giving the car a feeling of safe rigidity at all speeds.

★ The flexible engine gives a peak speed of 80 mph with a "dawdling" top of 12 mph without judder. The third

GE 16—THE STAR

MOTOR LIFE, July, 1956



Robert DePue Brown

Frank Schroeder sets out in his newly restored 1948 MGTC (above) for a test drive over twisting country roads. (See his M.G. story, page 27.) Schroeder bought the car in 1977 and drove it for several years before commissioning a full-scale ground-up restoration.

wonderful spring day many years ago. The point of all this is that I can personally vouch for the fact that a special car can hold a place in a man's heart for a long time, if not forever. Not, of course, ahead of the woman he loves, however. Thanks to Jack Sanft of Philadelphia, whose great cars we drove and photographed (page 4), I've had the happiest nostalgic remembrance on all counts.

Which brings me to the beautiful, true story and exhibition of M.G.s that begins on page 27. The story is about Frank Schroeder and his experiences with M.G.s. We know that it is true, because several of us on the *Varia* staff have known him throughout this time. One bit that writer Bob Brown did not tell happened in Frank's early days, before he came East. He would hitchhike along one particular California highway, and a handsome and cordial man in a green Pontiac would pick him up regularly. Frank didn't realize that this man, actor Ronald Reagan, would also, one day, travel East.

There has been a lot of press about the investment value of collecting cars. What impresses me from my exposure to car collectors, though, is that most people collect cars for their own pleasure. Cars have been collected ever since Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler first developed the automobile. The early collectors were all undoubtedly motivated by emotions—by nostalgia for "the good old days," by the remembrance of adventures made possible by motor cars, by the love of elegant de-

sign, fine woods, and supple leather. And for many enthusiasts there was and is the engineering and mechanical aspect—the challenge to fabricate the intricate parts needed to restore a thoroughbred car to its original state.

I know of one Englishman, a great lover of vintage sports cars, who began with only an engine block and part of a chassis, and who was able to make or locate all the bits and pieces required to bring back to driving life one of the greatest of all the French racing cars, the rare Th. Schneider. It took him years, but it was a labor of love. Much of his character was crafted into the reconstruction of that spirited blue machine. Today, every time the car is raced—it is *raced*—his spirit rides in the cockpit.

The true lover of fine cars is genuinely saddened that so many classic cars have become blue chips in a very high-stakes investment strategy. Fortunately, for every collector who buys and then promptly sells a Duesenberg or a Bugatti for a seven-figure sum, there are hundreds of others who sacrifice to buy a vintage M.G. or an original Ford Mustang, and who spend long but happy hours in nursing the car back to its original condition. It is these collectors who know the true creative pleasures of restoration and preservation. May they never lose their passion! I'm sure the growing importance of the economic factor of the activity will support restorations and collections that might not have existed before—but our stories here are about emotions.

Because we publish stories about classic and vintage cars, I hear from a lot of people about their cars. Friends and business associates who never otherwise would mention the great cars they have, tell me about their marvelous automobiles. If you have a great classic or vintage car I wish you'd drop me a note. Send me a picture if you have one. I'll send it back. I'm curious about how many of you are hiding a wonderful car behind closed doors. ■

Don Iulioch



Courtesy Octopus Books



Chai Dawson

Chris Linton (left) and Ian Dawson, photographers for M.G. (page 27), are both Londoners. In his studio, Linton now focuses on commercial still lifes. Dawson's specialty is vintage cars—he is noted for photographing the great marques with a fresh approach.



Hubert de Santana



Carol Lee

Hubert de Santana, whose story and images on page 36 celebrate Dublin's 1,000 years, now lives in Ontario. Photographer Steve Hansen (right) likes magic—on stage (page 8)—and uses magic in his art, as seen in *Time*, *Life*, *Esquire*, and elsewhere.



Michel Lulland



Brescia Brooley

Wine and food writer Richard Olney (left) lives in Toulon, France, near Château d'Yquem (page 64). Robert DePue Brown, author of articles on classic motor cars (page 27), is also contributing editor for car magazines.

Hi Jeff

I have been reading all the good info that is coming to the new Zmagnette group on the internet. I thoroughly enjoy it, great idea. I put together a few items that maybe of help to the group. I managed a dealership in Indpls., In. for over 20 years and grew up (maybe) with the BMC cars. We carried all the British cars plus Saab-Volvo. It was a fantastic way to make a living doing something that I thoroughly enjoyed. Started right out of military service as a salesman and through the years advanced to VP & General Manager. Was there through the invasion of MG liquid suspension cars at Indy. Our company also raced sports cars and midgets. We believed in having a good time and did. Which brings me to the info at hand on the Magnette. I had a 58 ZB in Island Green, black interior with green piping. I really loved the car, it drove so well and on the 2 land roads of that time, keeping up was no problem. I drove to the races and carried tires and tools in the back seat and trunk. My car was 8 months old when I purchased it from a Chevy dealership, "the owner had not serviced it and it burned a valve. I bought the car for myself and pestered the mechanics to give me advice on doing a valve job on the car. While I had it apart I also sent all the rotating parts to the machine shop that worked on our race car and had the engine and clutch balanced. I would cruise at 70-80 mph with no problems. I purchased the present car I have, from Jack Kurkowski in Indpls. Due to a handicap, I installed an automatic transmission from an Austin Marina (same as MGB) Borge Warner T35 and it works just fine. I built a 67 MGB engine with the cam from the Magnette engine and 8.1 pistons to be able to use the fuel we have today. Some modifications I did helped improve the car. I had to cut the bolt pattern off a 5 main oil pan and weld to the Magnette oil pan to have the sump in front to miss the cross member. I also added a 13 row oil cooler and had to use the upside down oil filter to clear the starter on the Marina transmission. After driving the car, I found I didn't have the brakes I needed, so I purchased a remote 8 inch brake booster from Godman Performance in Memphis, Tenn. And kept the drum brakes and they stop the car just fine. Had the radiator re-cored and had new neck to use generic cap and changed the top hose neck to use a straight hose. This allowed me to make it a sealed cooling system. It gets pretty hot here in Florida. Had the drive shaft made in Holly Hill, a part of Daytona Beach and used a complete differential from the 67 MGB that I purchased for a parts car.

To use the differential from the MGB I had to cut off the spring perches on the axle housing and move over to match the Magnette. I got the help on this modification because you have to keep the slight degree of pitch (about 10 degrees) so when you accelerate, the differential torques some and is at the correct position. (I learned this from race mechanic and fabricator) You can't set up the drive line straight, there has to be a slight pitch at the differential. I chose the MGB Banjo differential because of the availability of parts in the future. The MGB differential is narrower than the Magnette differential but after driving the car I can notice no difference in the handling. Converting the emergency brake cable was no great problem.

I have heard many Magnetters ask about a better gear ratio for highway cruising. You can use the standard 1957-61 MGA differential 4.30 without any problem. But to go to on 62 MGA MKII with 4.1 or 3.9 in MGB. You have to change the small gears that the axle slips into at the ring & pinion, because of the different number of splines on the axles. So if you purchase a Banjo differential to do the swap, don't throw away the parts you need to make to swap, also order new gasket.

My Magnette parts car was a manumatic so the master cylinder only had one outlet (no clutch) so it worked out perfectly with the automatic in mine. I also measured the master cylinder and the Magnette m/c is about 1 inch longer than the MGA (Sprite, etc.) master cylinder. I have never measured the master cylinder on a TR but feel sure it would be the same as on the MGA and Sprite. The English use what is on the shelf.

As for rebuilding the m/c, I had my m/c bored and sleeved back to standard size and the lockheed repair kit for the MGA, fit perfect, this leads me to believe the inside of the m/c is the same on Magnette as MGA. The mounting bolt holes may not be the same, I never tried that measurement. If need be, I'll find out.

Some of the modifications I made on my car, I did to improve the car, I also kept the original bits in case some puriest should want to change it back.

I stripped my car down to bare chassis and I had to widen the transmission tunnel to accept the automatic transmission. I changed all the brake lines and fuel lines. I found that some parts stores and NAPA carry brake lines in various lengths and the ones that fit my new wheel

cylinder, were labeled "metric". To make them bottom out inside the wheel cylinder, you have to grind off the first 3 threads of the new fitting. I did mine by using a die grinder and holding it to the fitting on the new line and let it spin until it ground just the first 3 threads. (practice on an old one before you attack the new ones. The price of the various lengths were from \$3.00 to \$9.00). This way you don't have to do double flares.

I talked to the service manager at the place I purchased the remote booster (Godman Performance) and got some pointers and it was simple once I laid it all out. I have a 67 MGB engine and intake manifold and there is a plug in the manifold that a hydraulic barb fitting threaded right in and I ran the vacuum hose from that over to the booster, on the hydraulic I cut the line after the m/c and slipped a piece of 1/4 line over the 3/16 and welded (brazed) it, the 1/4 line goes to the booster. From the booster to the rest of the car, you do the reverse from 1/4 down to 3/16- and that job is done. I have all the MGB brake parts to change it over to disc brakes but could not find the wheel bearings to match the axle to the MGB hub. I couldn't find a place here in Florida that would take the time to measure both insides and outsides and look up the number part to fit my needs. Therefore, I just installed the booster for approximately \$250.00. They work just fine.

The tool roll that I kept all these years from car to car is intact although the bag is really going to seed. All the vinyl or rubber is falling off the burlap. I have an old original tonneau cover from my MGA. I may use the old roll as a pattern and make one from the tonneau material.

A couple of suggestions: Get or borrow a good tubing bender (Harbour Freight 1-800-423-2567) or parts store carry some of your better ones. It makes for a neat job. Front parking light assembly is Austin Healy 100, Moss Motors, approximately \$25.00 each complete. Apple Hydraulics and White Post Hydraulics also do great work if you can't find a local machine shop. I had mine bored and re-sleeved to standard. Single- \$60.00, dual- MGA \$80.00. Brass or Stainless.

At present I'm fitting a reclining seat on the driver's side and will have it recovered to match the other seats. I had my carpeting and door trim, headliner, all done here by Best Upholstry. I showed him the old material and the old panels that I kept for a pattern and now everything

I ordered all the rubber suspension parts from NTG and rubber for w/screen and rear window, they trim to fit o.k. Have a glass company install the glass and rubber, they did both of mine for \$65.00 labor. After the rubber seals had seated in, I took the car over and he resealed all the rubber to the glass and now no water leaks. Jeff, if I can be of any help to any of the members, I will try my best. I'm not a mechanic, was always in the sales end of it but loved to work on my car with one of the mechanics advise on how to do whatever I was doing. I think they used me for entertainment more than anything else. Oh well, like I said we always tried to make life as enjoyable as possible. Jeff, if you can use some of this, feel free to use, change or do whatever is best for the group. As I remember things that will interchange, I will let you know.

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Deltona, FL. 32738
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904/789-5749
904/789-7948 Fax



M.G. MAGNETTE (Series 'ZA' and 'ZB')

DESCRIPTION	Commencing Car No. 501		Qty. per Veh.	Unit of Issue	MODIFICATIONS		REMARKS
	Part Number	Illus. No.			New Part Number	Commencing and Finishing Numbers	
TOOLS—STARTING HANDLE—GUIDE—CLIPS, ETC.							
Tool kit assembly, including:—							
Roll—tools							
Spanner—adjustable	ACH5268		1				
Spanner—cylinder head	AJH5145		1				
Spanner—tappet adjusting—ring type	ACG5247		1				
Spanner—box—spark plug	ACG5283		1				
Spanner—box— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	ACH5236		1				
Spanner—box— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	ACH5245		1				
Spanner—box— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	794/C		1				
Spanner—double-ended— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	BX50708		1				
Spanner—double-ended— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	BX50910		1				
Spanner—double-ended— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	RNS1112		1				
Spanner—double-ended— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	OES0708		1				
Spanner—double-ended— $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{3}{4}$ " unified	OES0910		1				
Tommy bar	OES1112		1				
Gauge—tappet feeler—.015"	ACA5216		1				
Pliers	ACH5244		1				
Screwdriver	AJ1278		1				
Screwdriver—No. 2 (recessed head screws)	ACA5218		1				
	ACH5480		1				
Tools—Starting Handle—Guide—Clips, etc.—continued							
Handle—starting, including:—							
Guide—assembly—starting handle	ACH5341		1				
Gun—grease	ACH5005		1				
Wheelbrace	ACH5515		1				
Pump—tyre and connection	ACA5217		1				
Jack—lifting	ACH5093		1				
	ACH5396		1				
Spanner—tyre valve	AMK0058		1				
Lever—tyre	AJ1281		2				
Screwdriver—distributor and gauge	AMK9954		1				
Key—rear axle drain plug	1G7372		1				
Tube—brake bleeder	S78/25		1				
Valve suction grinder	18G29		1				
Strap—tool roll	18G890		1				
Screw—strap to trunk floor	RIN604P		2				
Washer—cup—screw	8045		2				
Strap—lifting jack	ACH5434		2				
Screw—strap to trunk side	RIN004P		2				
Washer—cup—screw	8045		2				
Backing plate—jack strap			1				
Screw—jack strap			2				
Clip—jack fixing			2				
Screw			2				
Washer—plain			2				
Clip—tyre pump	S52/5		2				
Screw—clip	PTZ804		2				
Clip—starting handle	S52/2		3				
Clip—starting handle—guide	135659		1				
Screw—handle and guide to trunk floor	PTZ804		4				
Paint TU pencil—Black	ADE1593		1				
Paint TU pencil—M.G. Green	ADE1594		1				
Paint TU pencil—Twilight Grey	ADE1595		1				
Paint TU pencil—M.G. Maroon	ADE1596		1				
Paint TU pencil—Steel Blue			1				
Paint TU pencil—Island Green			1				
Paint TU pencil—Red			1				
Paint TU pencil—Birch Grey			1				
Paint TU pencil—Royal Tan			1				
Paint TU pencil—Twilight Grey			1				
Paint TU pencil—Reseda Green			1				
Paint TU pencil—Mineral Blue			1				
Paint TU pencil—Ivory			1				



151 at the 1957 London Motor Show at Earls Court saw the MG Car Company displaying two ZB Magnettes alongside the MGA sports cars. One of the Magnettes was a left-drive ordinary ZB fitted with 'Monumatic' transmission and white-wall tyres, the other a Varitone with a 'see-through' boot lid to show how many suitcases could be accommodated.

The ZB Magnette

There is little doubt that in styling terms the ZA Magnette was one of the most advanced British saloon cars on the market when it was launched at the Earls Court London Motor Show in 1953. In giving it a modern, aerodynamic shape, Gerald Palmer had designed a car that has stood the test of time better than many of its contemporaries. Mechanically, there were few startling innovations, although the retention of the independent front suspension and rack and pinion steering first experienced by MG buyers in the Y-type introduced in 1947, did endow the ZA with the sort of ride and road-holding calculated to appeal to sporting motorists.

The BMC B-series engine, specified the Magnette in preference to the earlier, Y-type unit used in the visually-similar Wolseley 4/44, gave the car good performance but experience revealed that it lacked sufficient power to do full justice to the chassis of the ZA. This was realised at an early stage as there is evidence that the first few cars assembled



A factory picture of a ZB showing to good effect the straight chrome side strips

duction were fitted with the lower, 4.875:1 ratio. This change had obviously been decided upon before the details of the new model were announced to the press in October 1953, probably after they had tested the pre-production cars.

As the first MG to use the standardised BMC B-series engine, the ZA was something of a guinea-pig for its development. Although it was later to become a strong and reliable engine, the early examples did have a number of

eradicated as the company gained experience of the unit in service. For example, the ZA engine had the inefficient by-pass filtration system, which did not guarantee that all the oil was filtered before it reached the bearings, and a modest compression ratio of 7.15:1. Some changes had been made to increase power output for use in the sports saloon, revised cylinder head, different camshaft, and twin carburettors, but there was still room for improvement.

The BMC Competition Department was formed in 1954 with the day to day control in the hands of Marcus Chambers. With the decision taken to run cars in competition as a means of gaining publicity for their products, a team of three ZA Magnettes were entered for the 1955 Monte Carlo Rally. In the 1950s that event used to attract huge publicity with the daily papers and news broadcasts on both radio and television carrying reports. Successful manufacturers, therefore, reaped rich rewards.

additional lights and snow deflectors for the windscreen. A considerable quantity of extra equipment, like de-ditching gear, had been deemed essential and the rear springs were stiffened to cope with the extra load by binding them with tape. Unfortunately the extra weight and stiffer springs totally ruined the usually-good roadholding, and some equipment and the



ZA and ZB Magnettes alongside each other, illustrating how replacing the heavy chrome strips used on the ZA with simpler ones for the ZB changed the appearance of the cars

the cars carrying the names Aramis, Athos and Porthos. These cars were driven by the established MG rally drivers, Reg Holt, Geoff Holt and Len Shaw and carried one, two or three chevrons on the wings to aid identification. The team ZAs

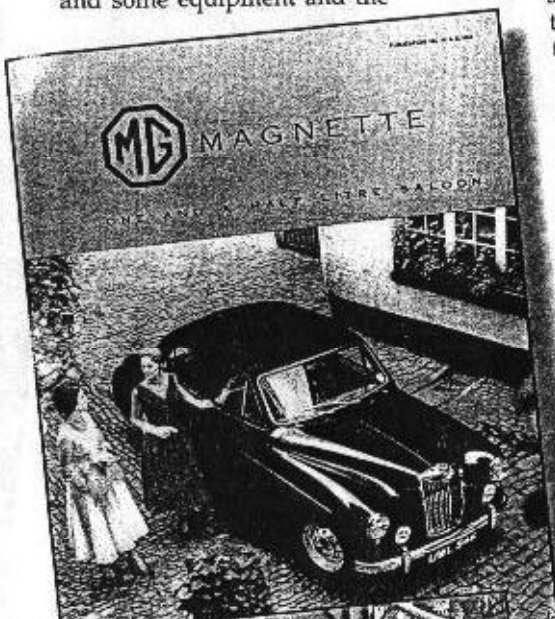
ran next in the 1955 RAC Rally but were once again uncompetitive. For the Tulip Rally that year Pat Moss took over Reg Holt's car but she crashed this prior to the start. It was repaired but undetected damage to an oil pipe eventually put her out of the running.

Although the requirements of the Competition Department held little sway in the overall plans of the company, the need to improve the power developed by the B-series engine if the car was to be at all competitive must have had some effect. Of more consequence, was the use of the same engine in the MGA sports car announced in 1955. For the MGA the compression ratio was raised initially from 7.15:1 to 8.15:1 and then to 8.3:1. With a revised camshaft power was increased first to 68bhp and then to 72bhp with the 8.3:1 compression.

The benefits from these changes worked their way into the Z-Magnette engine in 1956. This also had initially received the 7.15:1 ratio head and then one with a compression ratio of 8.3:1 and, with a different camshaft to that used on the MGA, power eventually increased from 60bhp to 68bhp. A full-flow filtration system was now fitted, necessitating an external oil pipe to return oil to the block. With more power at their disposal the engineers were able to give the car a higher-ratio rear axle. With the 4.55:1 gearing now fitted, higher cruising speeds were possible without sacrificing acceleration. Most of these

changes occurred at car number 18,101 and were shortly followed by the public announcement of revised Magnette to be called the ZB; the first of the new models being car number 18577

In a manner typical of the sales efforts of the British Motor Corporation in the 1950s, little was done to give people the impression that the car had been



Two pictures from the ZB sales brochure. Both photographs were taken in the yard of the Crown and Thistle Hotel in Abingdon and were also used in the ZA catalogue. For the revised model the chrome strips were re-touched by an artist

spring tapes were abandoned en-route. Even with the load reduced somewhat, performance from

POWER PLUS WITH WIDER VISION

When you reach a plateau of your thinking in the driving arena... consider the wider vision... When you reach a plateau of your thinking, that you will be provided with a new sense of freedom and vision... You will find that you are able to see the car in a new way... You will find that you are able to see the car in a new way... You will find that you are able to see the car in a new way...

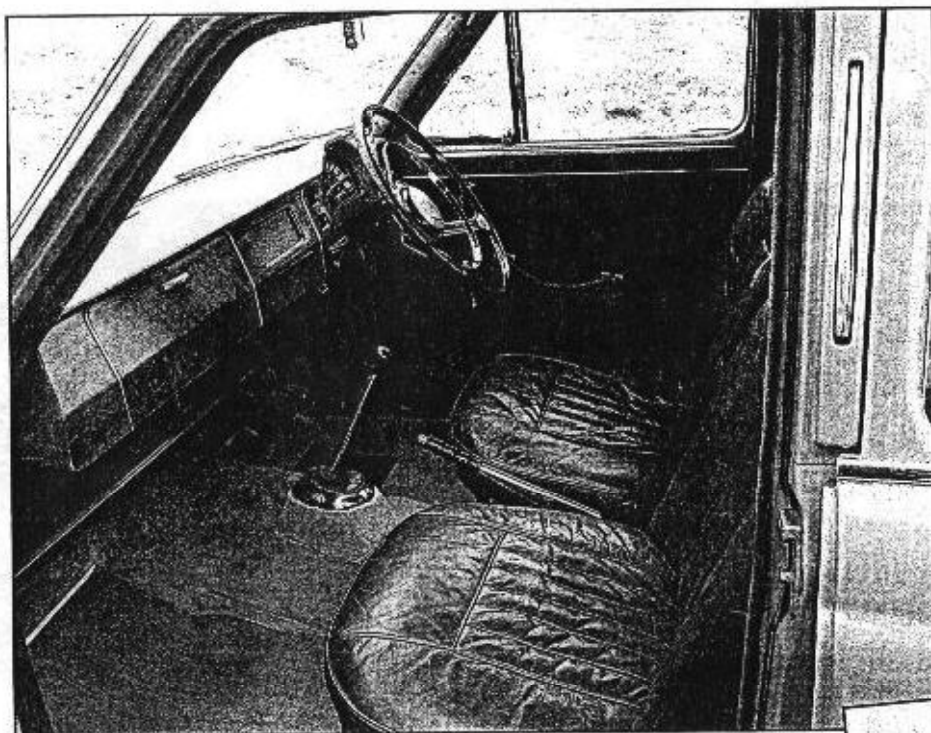
Artists' impressions were used extensively in 1950s advertising brochures, possibly because some liberties could be taken with scale to make the cars appear more spacious than they were

Unfortunately, such modifications were banned and this led to the embarrassing exclusion of the car entered by Nancy Mitchell in the 1956 Tulip Rally.

The Magnette team in the Monte Carlo Rally had revived a pre-war tradition by running as 'The Three Musketeers',



A well-preserved ZB Magnette owned by Tony Gilbert. The attractive lines of the car look just as fresh in 1998 as they did when first drawn by Gerald Palmer in the 1950s



The interior appointments of the ZB Magnette make them comfortable cars to use in all weathers

improved. The sales brochures were retouched to show the revised trim on the front wings; the only external change made to the Magnette. One would have thought it would have been easier to take fresh photographs which would have had the added benefit of emphasising the revisions. However, as with other cars they made, the tendency was to play down the improvements; perhaps they were ashamed to admit that anything they had built needed modifying!

The story goes that the trim on the front wings was only changed because the wife of one of the managers did not like the original 'hockey-stick' chrome strip. It is far more likely that the later trim was cheaper to make and easier to fit. Opinion differ as to the aesthetic merits of the change. Certainly, the Magnette's designer, Gerald Palmer, is on record as saying that he did not like the straight

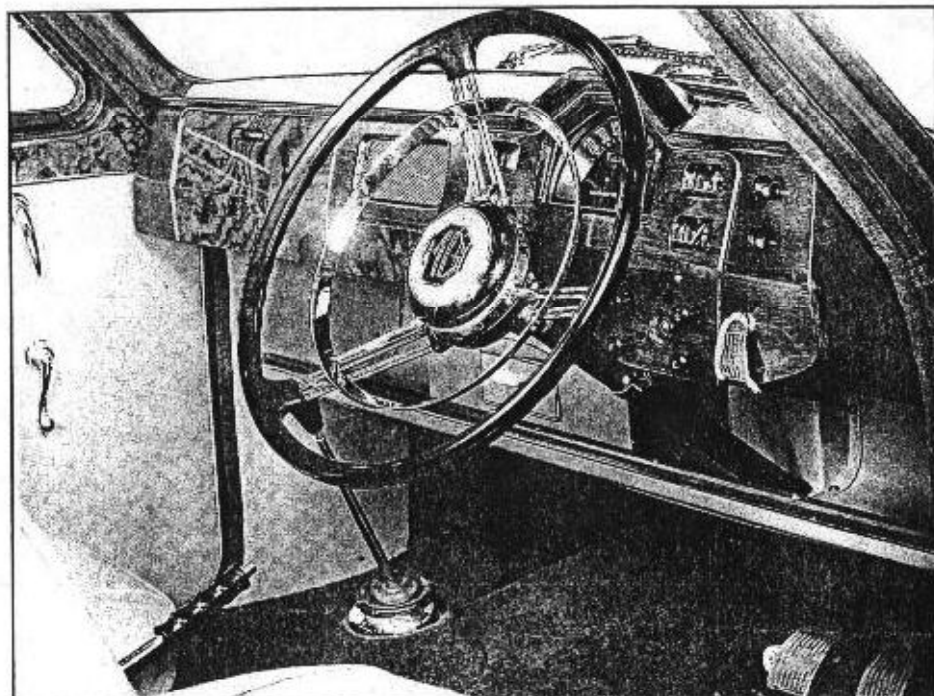
strips; the original trim being shaped to emphasise the rounded, streamlined shape of the car, something the later items failed to do. Incidentally, the Wolseley sister to the Magnette, the 4/44, was revised mid 1956, gaining a single carburettor, 55bhp version of the B-series engine in place of the Y-type, 1,250cc XPAG power unit. Now called the Wolseley 15/50, it also enjoyed the revised axle ratio and other mechanical refinements carried out to the Magnette.

None of the British motoring magazines made much of the alterations to the Magnette. The Motor Show issues recorded the amendments but it was not until the appearance of The Autocar full

road test in July 1957 that the motorist received any objective views on the effect of the changes. This test was thorough, and showed just how much better than the earlier ZAs the revised cars performed. Given the Magnettes unladen weight of 22cwt (at 1,118kg, heavier than most modern mid-sized saloons that enjoy twice the engine power), the ZB was never going to be quick. However, acceleration to 60mph in 18.5 seconds considerably improved on the lower-g geared ZAs 23.1 seconds, and the top speed at 88mph was a full 8mph faster than the earlier car. Remembering just how pedestrian were the average small Fords and Austins of the day, the Z-Magnette driver still felt they were in charge of a sports saloon. Overtaking manoeuvres and 'press-on' driving of the sort now the preserve of the



The catalogue pictures of the Varitone ZB illustrated both the attractive, two-tone paintwork and the wider back window, the main selling points of the more expensive model



This publicity photograph of the ZB Magnette shows the revised fascia and dished steering wheel introduced for both standard and Varitone models

revised ZBs rolled off the Abingdon production lines and one of the two-tone cars appeared on the stand at The London Motor Show in October 1956. This car was finished in Birch Grey and Twilight Grey, with maroon leather upholstery, and shared the stand with two other Magnettes, a Steel Blue ordinary ZB and a specially-prepared car on a revolving display.

The Varitone models were initially announced as such by the Press Office of BMC, who almost immediately issued instructions that the cars were henceforth to be called 'Duotone' Magnettes. However, the revised name did not find favour and they shortly after reverted to calling the cars 'Varitones' in all official literature. This confusion over nomenclature was compounded by the availability of the cars in single colours; hence the one-colour Duotone, or Varitone, Magnette. Confused? Don't worry, it is all part of the fun! The reason seems to be that people liked having the fashionable 'wrap-around' rear window that made the Varitone look more up-to-date than the ordinary ZB, but were not too happy



Norman Cousins purchased this ZB Varitone to provide comfortable, classic transport following a recent illness



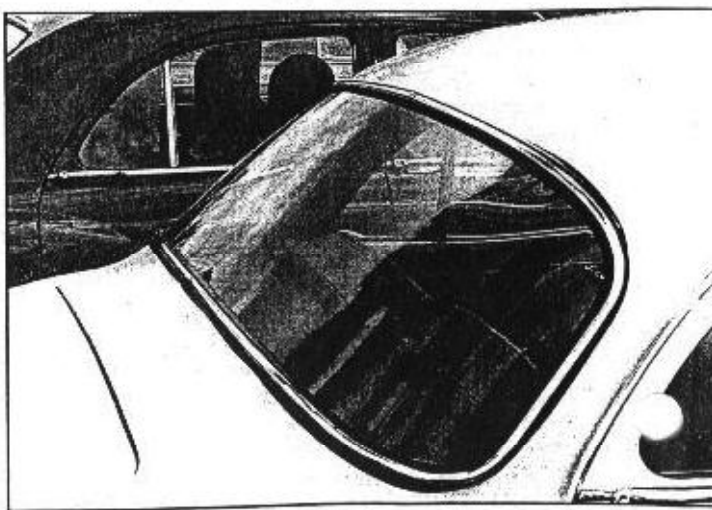
1950s fashion in clothes and transport. At the time the ZB Varitone was seen as both stylish and tasteful, this still holds good in the late 1990s

BMW-shod salesman not being uncommon amongst 1950s Magnette owners.

The road test report in *The Autocar* was very complimentary about the ZB and the writers summed-up their report by saying 'The current Magnette...sets a standard of stability on the road and precision of control which lifts it out of the run of everyday cars. As for speed, it is now our fastest native 1.5-litre four-door saloon, and at the basic price of £714 represents a very desirable property.' There were some criticisms, however, a slightly noisy gearbox and periods of body vibration at certain engine speeds being the most notable. The Z-Magnette was an early venture into modern monocoque bodywork and less was known at that time about isolating the mechanical components from the body shell. In comparison with other cars of

the period, the MG was certainly no worse than most, and a lot better than some of the saloons on offer.

The report also mentioned the addition of another model to the MG range, the ZB Varitone. This was made available as soon as the ZB was announced and whilst it was mechanically identical to the standard cars, the two-tone paint and large rear window changed its appearance considerably. The first Varitone was car number 18,708; this was produced soon after the first of the



A comparison between the rear pillars of a Varitone and standard car show just how much wider was the rear window of the more expensive model



A single-colour Varitone, this car with wire wheels and a fabric sun roof - neither of which were standard features. How were salesmen expected to explain the availability of a two-tone model in a single colour?

about having two-tone paintwork. These cars shared with the two-colour ZBs the chromed strips that ran down both sides of the cars, to separate the two paint colours. The shell of the Varitone was identical to that of the ordinary ZA and ZB; the story goes that the rear window was enlarged by hand, rather than being formed on the press tools.

The ZBs were also available fitted with a clutchless gear change. The 'Manumatic' transmission was not an automatic in the accepted sense, merely a system for relieving the driver of the chore of using a clutch, similar in principle to systems available on one or two modern cars. Briefly, the mechanism was powered by vacuum from the inlet manifold, this opened and closed throttle servos and pressurised the hydraulically-operated clutch. At idle, the clutch was disengaged. When the throttle was opened and engine speed increased, bob weights within the clutch forced it into engagement and the car moved off. Gripping the gear knob activated a solenoid that allowed vacuum pressure to disengage the clutch and, once the gear change was accomplished, releasing the knob re-engaged the clutch. It was an over-complicated arrangement for the technology of the time and doubtless few Magnettes survived with the system

Whilst talking about the transmission, it is worth saying that overdrive

offer an overdrive conversion for the Z-type Magnette. A device called a Handa overdrive was fitted by the Croydon factory of Vehicle Developments Limited of Balcombe Street, London. At a cost of £60, plus a fitting charge of £10, customers had part of the transmission tunnel of their Magnettes cut away so that the unit could be mounted behind the standard gearbox. A shortened prop-shaft was used. The transmission tunnel being a stressed component of the Magnette body, to maintain its integrity the hole was covered by a cast aluminium cover.

The unit was operated by a vacuum-driven cylinder, a tapping in the inlet manifold providing a source to exhaust the Trico-Folberth reservoir. A finger-operated plunger on the gear-lever knob gave the driver control of the overdrive unit.

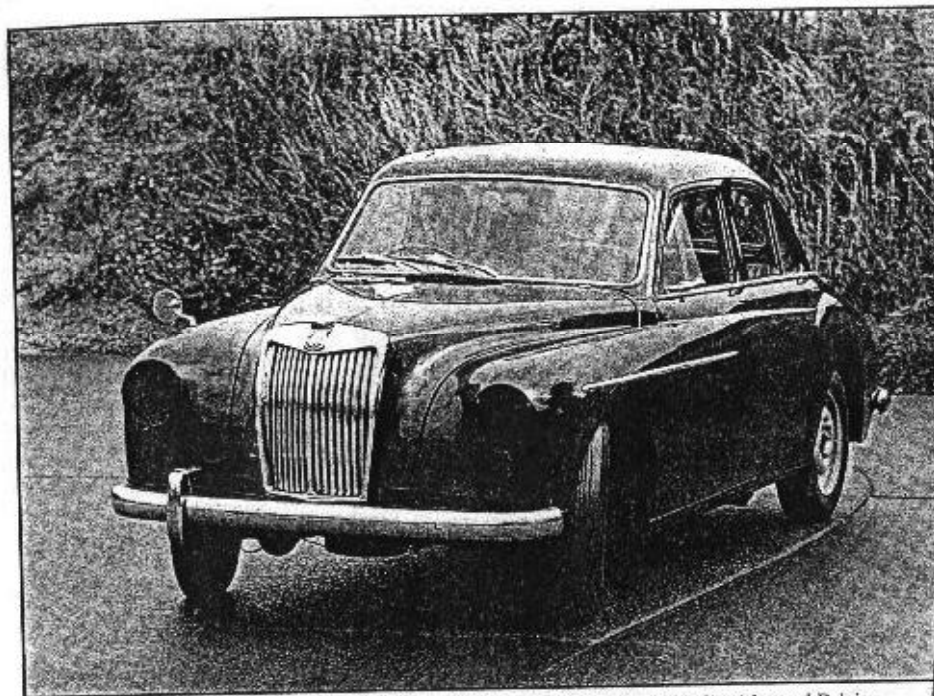
In overdrive top gear engine revs dropped by 25%, a greater amount than usual in modern 'overdrive top'



When nearly new, this ZB was earning its keep in driving tests held alongside the Austin factory at Longbridge, Birmingham in 1959. Z-Magnettes were popular sporting cars in the 1950s

was not an option available from the factory for the Magnette. In recent years fairly major surgery has allowed MGB engines and overdrive gearboxes to be installed in Magnettes, and very nice cars have resulted. However with this not an

five-speed gearboxes. This gave a relaxed cruising at 80mph with the engine turning over at 3,900rpm in the ZA and 3,680rpm in the higher-geared ZB. Doubtless, steeper gradients saw drivers reaching for a lower gear, but having such a high



This ex-police patrol car ended its days being used on the skid pan at the Chelmsford Police Advanced Driving School

must have made the investment in this accessory very worthwhile. Long-established London MG dealers, University Motors, were involved with selling the system and maintained an overdrive-equipped Magnette on their demonstration fleet for a while.

It is always difficult to judge just how accomplished any car is when looking at it more than forty years after it was built. Assessing the Magnette now, when every 1.1-litre cheap family runabout has 100mph performance, is quiet and reliable, and has a standard of ride, roadholding and comfort that was not available at any price four decades earlier, it is easy to overlook just how competent it was in its day. Perhaps the best guide is to examine contemporary reports of the car, and those of its rivals in the market. Do this, and one will soon see sentiments expressed like 'most charming and attractive small cars that has come into our hands' and 'this model has retained a full individuality and character of its own'. There is no doubt that the MG saloon was regarded as being in a class above the standard family car of the era, although one has to admit that it was also rather more expensive.

With overseas markets being so important to Abingdon in the 1950s, it must have been gratifying to read an assessment of an 18-month-old, 24,000 mile ZA in the American Car and Driver magazine. They took this car, which had been driven hard and given the barest minimum of service, and gave it the sort of test they usually reserved for almost-new press cars. They were more than impressed by just how well the Magnette had withstood the hard use, and how few signs of wear there were on the carpets, seats, and interior fittings. On the road, the car still felt as taut and secure as it

had when new and they praised the seating, which they found could adequately accommodate four heavily-built men in comfort. The performance was thought good, with the car able to cruise all day at 70mph and reach 60 in just over 21 seconds. To sum up, they said that the Magnette was the answer to all the owners of two-seater MGs who found they now needed accommodation for a growing family. All this must have been music to the ears of the MG salesmen.

The car certainly sold well. In the five years it was in production a total of 36,599 were built, with the numbers of ZAs and ZBs being roughly equal - 17,599 of the earlier model and 19,000 ZBs. Although the cars were a common sight on the roads right through the 1960s, they are now far rarer than many of the MG sports cars that were built in smaller numbers. The reasons for this have less to do with the durability of the cars than to fashion, as most enthusiasts looking for a hobby car to restore seem to prefer one of the open models - hence the relative cheapness of the MGB GT in comparison with the roadster.

Actually it is the strength of the Magnette body shell that led directly to many having an early and ignominious demise. For banger racing cars needed to be cheap, available, and very strong. The Magnette even in middle age certainly fulfilled

these requirements and large numbers ended their days being battered into heaps of scrap in floodlit banger racing stadiums all over the country. Hardly the sort of use Gerald Palmer envisaged for his creation! Luckily sufficient enthusiasts retained their affection for the cars to ensure their survival. Actually, it is surprising how many have stayed in one family ownership for many years. The Magnette is a car worthy of the MG badge and capable even now of providing comfortable daily transport for the whole family.

Malcolm Green

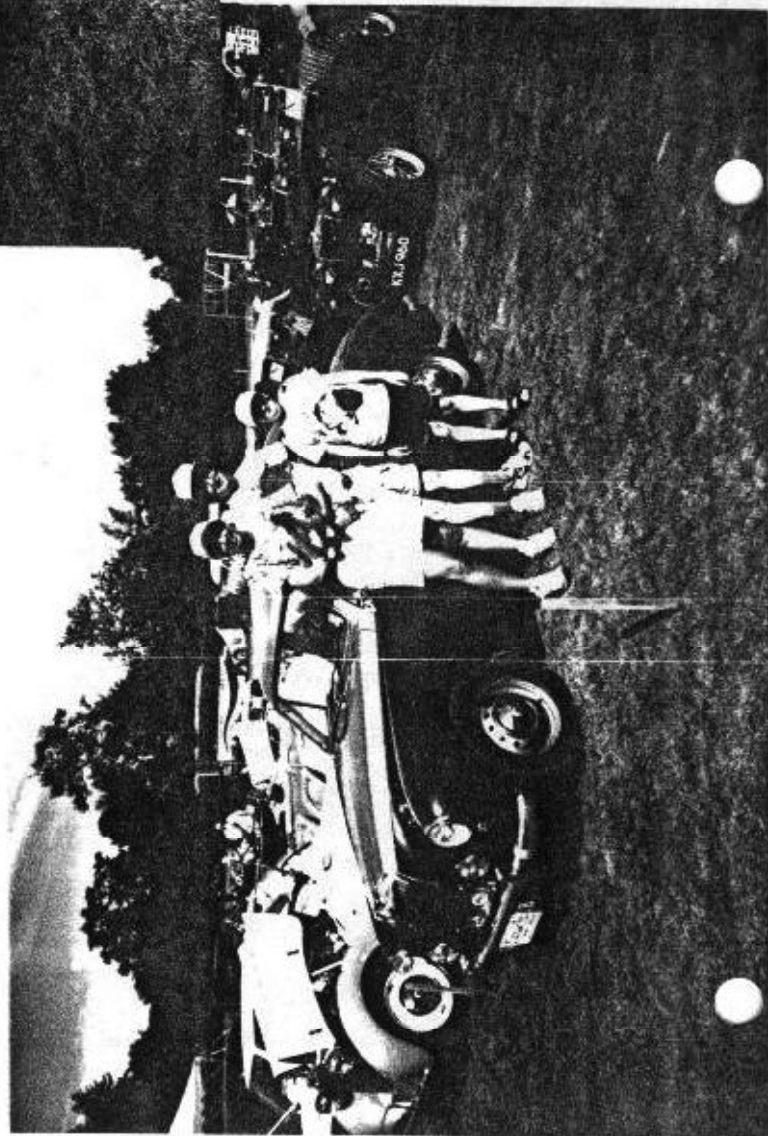
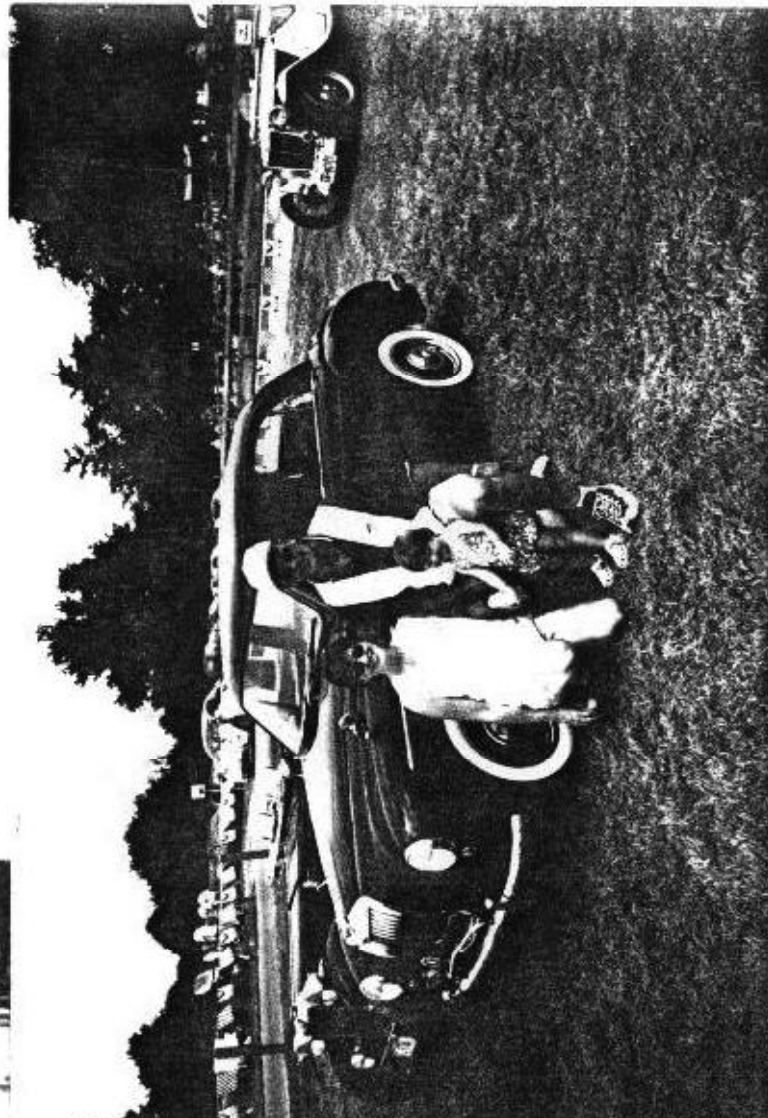
For my kind of motoring -

it must be an M.G.

Safe fast!

THE M.G. CAR COMPANY LIMITED, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 128, 130, 132, 134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 152, 154, 156, 158, 160, 162, 164, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174, 176, 178, 180, 182, 184, 186, 188, 190, 192, 194, 196, 198, 200, 202, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 246, 248, 250, 252, 254, 256, 258, 260, 262, 264, 266, 268, 270, 272, 274, 276, 278, 280, 282, 284, 286, 288, 290, 292, 294, 296, 298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, 326, 328, 330, 332, 334, 336, 338, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 350, 352, 354, 356, 358, 360, 362, 364, 366, 368, 370, 372, 374, 376, 378, 380, 382, 384, 386, 388, 390, 392, 394, 396, 398, 400, 402, 404, 406, 408, 410, 412, 414, 416, 418, 420, 422, 424, 426, 428, 430, 432, 434, 436, 438, 440, 442, 444, 446, 448, 450, 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PHOTO GALLERY #1

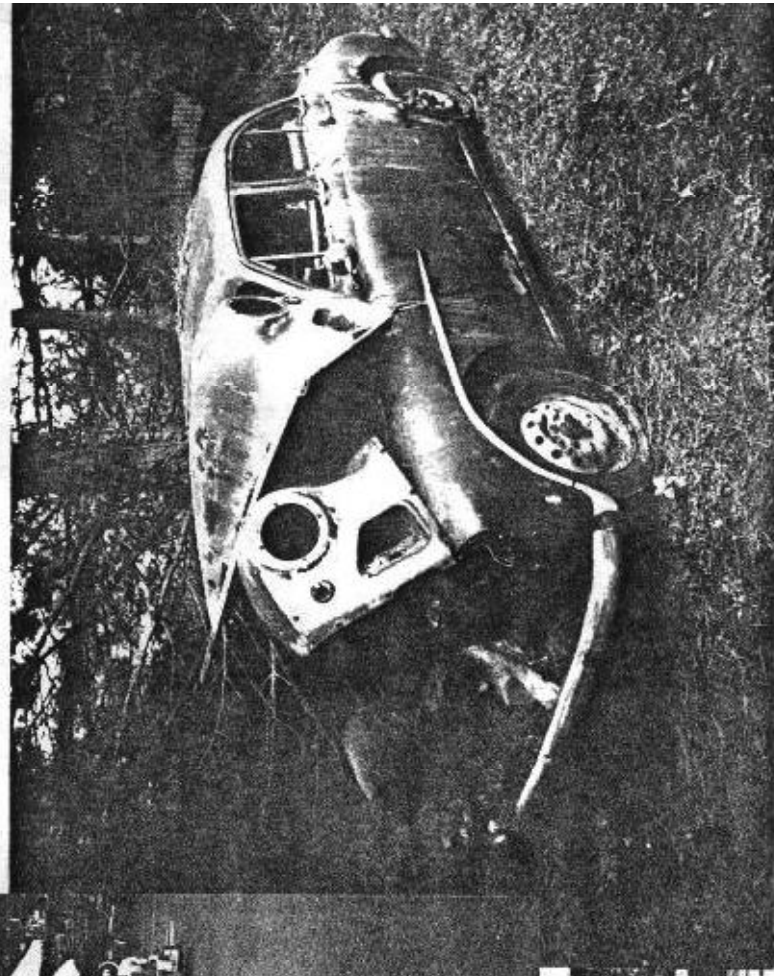


*ZB of Don Carlson
(upper left)*

*Steve Howard and family
(above)*

*John Park and family
(left)*

PHOTO GALLERY #3



*The Magnette line-up at Cleveland, Ohio
(upper left)*

*The Varitone of Joyce and Dennis Brough
(left)*

*The next award-winning Magnette
of Dave Wittmer???
(above)*

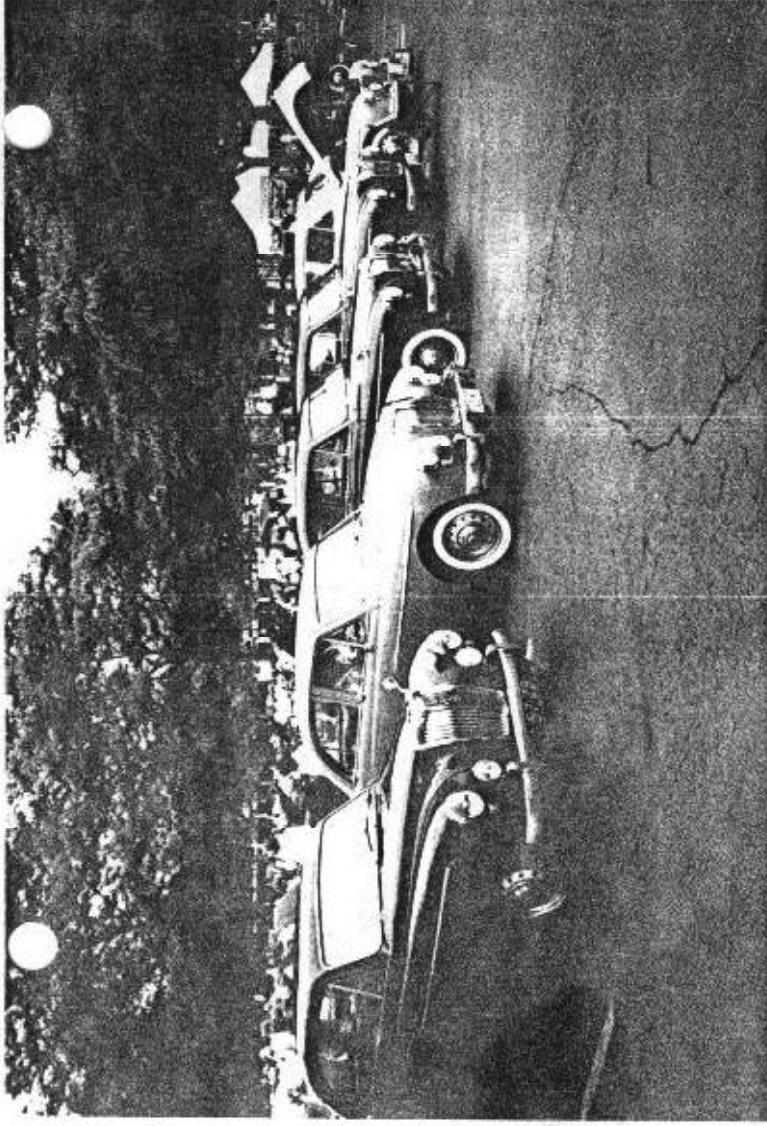
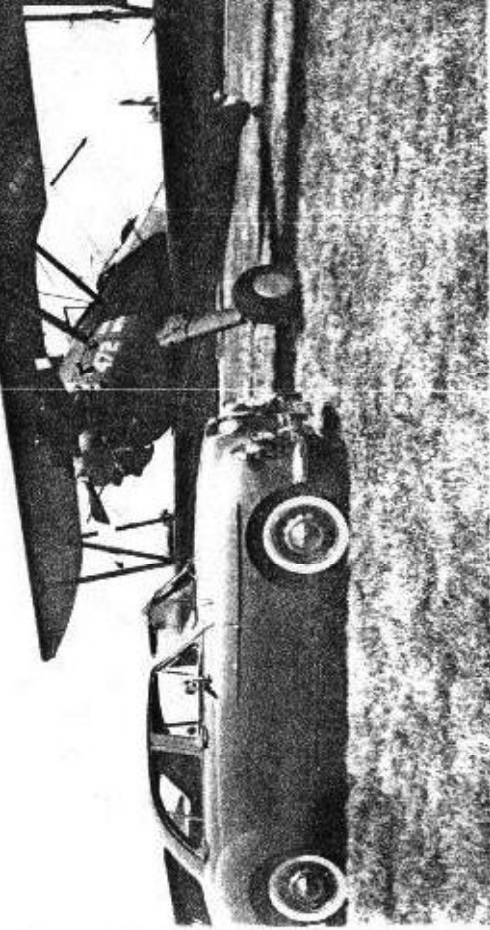


PHOTO GALLERY #4



*ZB of Sharon and Jeff Powell
(above)*

*Keith and Jeremy Holdsworth and friend
(upper right)*

*Ed Polonus and family
(right)*

