

THE RAGTOP

WELCOME TO THE CLUB

by STEVE JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

This was the 25th year for Vintage Triumph Register South Central Regional. We are one of the few VTR Regions that have a yearly Regional event. VTR's newest Board Member in charge of National Events, Jack McGahey, came to observe and participate in our VTR. He's an avid Auto-crosser and SCCA Drivers Trainer. His motto is "*I didn't come here to lose*" and he didn't, taking home a trophy with his TR8 three runs in the Autocross. Since Jack was so nice to come, we put him to work.



That's Jack in the picture above, judging my TR6 in the Concours. We were also fortunate enough to have our VTR South Central Regional Director Dave Massey and his TR8 with us. Dave also participated in many of the events with his TR8, taking home his own trophy.

The participants I talked to unanimously felt this was the best regional our region has ever put on. Jack McGahey sent me a thank you note after he arrived home and said "I don't think I've ever been

to a VTR event (and I've been to a lot of them) that had as high a percentage of attendees participating in Concours and in the Autocross as this one did - I'll be anxious to check that out when results are posted."

We had 91 Triumphs in attendance, from TR2s through TR8s, along with Dave and Cindy Pilcher's 1949 TR2000. We had 121 people attending the Welcome Party Thursday evening after a day packed with drives and our first of its kind "Stone Mountain Slalom" (by Mike McPhail). At the Awards Banquet, 147 arrived in a room that held 150 maximum. You add a few guests, and we were cozy elbow to elbow. I've never seen such a happy group of people, having fun. They were outrageous as we gave out the trophies and extremely appreciative for what your Hill Country Triumph Club had put together. What a success story.

Mike Cook, editor of VTR's "The Vintage Triumph" magazine wants to do an article on the Regional this year, so we will all need to help with that too. It is scheduled for the TVT #116 - the

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June/July issue. We need to get our write-up on the Regional to Mike by June 1st. I'll ask the chairperson for each event to write an article that I'll put into a larger article for Mike to edit to the size needed. I'll send event pictures and results to Mike as soon as they are ready.

In this Ragtop issue you will see a number of those write-ups on event escapades and experiences. You will definitely get a kick out of each article. My hat is off to those club leaders who have been meeting every other week since January, and have now pulled off a Regional we could have only dreamed about.

As you will see in this Ragtop issue, we brought home our share of trophies for the club. We also brought home one of the most coveted trophies, the **Gary Johnston Award**. This award is a "spirit award". It's

given to those folks who most exemplify the excellence that Gary Johnston portrayed. Gary was one who attended as many



of the local, regional and national events as he possibly could. He always drove. Gary worked on his own car as most of us do, and he also found the time to help others get theirs rolling any time he was asked. He held many club officer positions, and was a constant contributor to his Houston Club.

Everyone in the Region knew him and what he did.

The individuals during 2008-2009 who have most exemplified Gary Johnston's spirit are Bob and Marilyn Skewis. Bob has been a long time contributor to our club, as well as helping the other clubs in the Region with his art work which we are familiar with. The example next to this paragraph is only one. There are many other examples within our club, as well as within other regions and at the



national level (e.g., 2006 Nationals in Las Colinas). Bob does his own work on their TR250 for which Marilyn is the original owner. He now has a blast with his white Spitfire, and helps other keep theirs up and running. Bob has been instrumental in not only preparing us for the Regional, but bringing home the trophies. He and Marilyn competed with both cars. Bob's leadership while I have had to miss meetings is exceptional. Please congratulate Bob and Marilyn on their contributions, their leadership and their friendship with each of us.

Our next club run is to the Annual Blanco Classic Car Show on May 16th. Mike McPhail will be putting that together for us, and has added the details to this Ragtop. You will find a copy of the registration form in this issue. Please mark your calendars and let's see how many TR's we can line up for these Hot Rod folks. They don't give out many trophies to Little British Cars, but they are very curious about them, so we have lots of people looking. Nothing but good car folks, excellent cars, and a beautiful drive. I'll see you there.

Don't miss the club meeting Tuesday, May 12th at 7:00 PM. It will be held at Pok-e-jo's BBQ in Brodie Oaks shopping Center (512-440-0447). Send me a note if you need directions stevenjohnson7@sbcglobal.net.

Triumphantly Yours,

Steve

Congratulations

Marilyn and Bob Skewis

2009 Gary Johnston Award



Editors Note



This months RAGTOP is packed with VTR stories and photos. Some stories such as the remainder of Greg Blake's account of the birth of his race car will appear in a forthcoming issue. I do apologize to Greg and all who are on waiting to hear the rest.

The VTR was a smashing success. There was always something to keep me in the driver's seat or visiting with old friends or making new ones.

I'd like to take a moment and thank Bill Waller for putting my top up on Ruby. The animals started lining up two by two and the lightning was popping all around when the storm finally woke me. I staggered downstairs in a daze and saw Art Graves in the breakfast room. Together, we braved the storm

and ventured out to my car only to find her top was already put up. I found out later, it was Bill who came to Ruby's rescue. Thank You again.

I remember walking back to my room thinking, it's people like this that make this club so great.

Don



April 4 Fix-it-day at Mike's Busted Knuckle Garage

I would bet that HCTC has more Triumphs on the road than anybody. The reason is that we can fix them faster than we can tear them up! No fewer than sixteen gear-heads were on hand to turn a wrench that Saturday morning. After consuming much coffee, half a dozen tacos (thanks Bob Skewis!) and two dozen Marble Falls donuts (thanks Ralph Herter and Terry Jones!), we set to work.

Alan Palmer found that the Stag's faulty wipers were from a bad motor and not the suspect column switch. Bob Baker replaced a leaky clutch hose and gas tank drain plug. Logan

and Philip McKenzie installed a new Weber carb on their Spitfire. Bill changed the gearbox oil on his Spit, aka "the Waller Valdez". Bob Skewis, in between his duties at the BBQ grill, did a bit of tuning on his Spitfire. David Sanborn repaired his faulty horns and head lights. To the amazement of all, he-man Ralph Herter swapped the tubes and tires on two wire wheels with a manual tire changer. Giving advice and encouragement were Phil Auldrige, Steve Johnson, Harry Taggart, Terry Jones, and a few friends and neighbors.

Nel served a wonderful Barbecue lunch and everyone was able to drive their TRs home!

Mike

BOB'S YOUR UNCLE



Unlike the last two meetings where wet weather threatened, the sky was clear when we met at the Rudy's on 620 last April 14th. This was our final meeting before the VTR in Marble Falls, so that was naturally the bulk of the

meeting. As we went through each leader's responsibilities, calls were made for volunteers, more registrations, video cameras, spare car parts for the "Lifesaver" program, helmets, safety cones and signage. These were all the final details that everyone could think of – the majority of the planning had been covered and we realized that we were ready!

There were a few non-VTR odds and ends discussed:

- **The Blanco Car Show this year will be on May 21st** – although this show is mostly American Muscle, it is always fun to attend. The club will be meeting at the "Y" in Oak Hill at 9:00 am for a caravan to the show. More information will be available at the May meeting on the 12th.
- **Members Terry and Jane Jones** purchased a 1971 Sienna Brown TR6 from Mike McPhail – now they have a driver car while they start to work on the TR3.
- **Member Phil McKenzie** was able to drive his Spitfire to the meeting, thanks in no small part to the work accomplished at the McPhail Fix-It Day. Great job!

- **Bret Liming** visited his first HCTC meeting with his Lotus 7 replica car – a beautiful machine that requires goggles, since the driver is sitting a bit exposed.

Thanks to all the members who drove their Triumphs to the meeting and "flew the flag" for the public to see. **Bill Waller, Jim Icenhower, Dean Mericas, Willis Thorstadt, Dan Julien, Ron Smith and Sam Dixon, Mike and Nel McPhail, Bob and Barbara Kramer, Bob and Courtney Baker, Steve Johnson and Bob Skewis.** All the way to ELEVEN . . . cars in the lot, that is. I'll see you with a sun burned face at Pok-E-Joes on May 12th!

Bob

MILESTONE REPORT

Tom and Nancy Harrison of the HCTC came to the VTR show in Marble Falls with their beautiful Robin's egg blue TR4 and proceeded to walk away with a **First in Class** award AND the award for **Peoples' Choice**. However, they did not know this as they left before the banquet on Saturday night so they could get back to their home in Waco and drive a different car in their garage to the English / European Car Day at Dallas' White Rock Lake on Sunday. As Tom reports it, "My red 1959 TR3A got 1st place among the Triumphs. 2nd and 3rd places went to cars from Red River Triumph Club."

What a great weekend for the Harrisons – congratulations!

The Hill Country Triumph Club, the 50th Chapter of the Vintage Triumph Register (VTR), was founded in 1990 to bring together the owners of Triumph automobiles in the Central Texas area surrounding Austin. In 1991, the membership decided to include other British car fans as associates due to lack of other clubs in our area that represent some of the other marques. As owners and lovers of our unique types of cars, we have a special kinship, which draws us together. Membership is open to anyone who is a British car enthusiast, with or without a car.

Annual dues are just \$15.00 per family group or address per year. We have dinner meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of each month and at least one other event each month. We encourage you to join and support us, even if you don't drive your car regularly. We also offer technical assistance if needed. One goal of the club is to help its members keep their cars on the road. Please call one of the club officers listed in the newsletter for more information about club benefits and spread the word about our club to others.

The Hill Country Club is a local chapter of the Vintage Triumph Register (VTR)/Triumph Sports Owners Association, which is open to all drivers of Triumph motorcars; a chapter of the Triumph Register of America, exclusively for TR2 through TR4A sports cars; and a chapter of the 6-PACK, dedicated to the enjoyment, preservation, and restoration of the Triumph TR250 and TR6 sports cars. Membership in these national organizations is encouraged. Visit their websites at www.vtr.org, www.triumphregister.com, and www.6-pack.org.

The RAGTOP is published monthly by the Hill Country Triumph Club. Material within may be freely reproduced providing Ragtop and the authors are credited. Any and all newsletter contributions are welcome. Deadline for submissions is the end of each month. Submissions may be emailed to don@dcphotos.com Car related classified ads are free to members and will run for three months unless otherwise instructed. Contact editor for other ads.

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Membership Application

☞ Name :

☞ Address :

☞ City / State : ☞ Zip :

☞ Home Phone :

☞ Work Phone :

☞ E-mail address :

☞ Car Make : ☞ Model : ☞ Year : ☞ Color :

☞ Car Make : ☞ Model : ☞ Year : ☞ Color :

☞ How did you hear about the Hill Country Triumph Club?

☞ Please mail application and check payable HCTC to :

Nel McPhail, 1105 N. Canyonwood Dr., Dripping Springs, TX, 78260



TRIUMPH LIFE PRESERVER



A gathering of helpful hints from like minded gear heads, to keep you afloat.



Well another Regional VTR is in the books and I think we all had a great time.

Those of you that attended may or may not be aware of a little added service provided our attendees. I have been to a few of these events and have always observed at least one or two unfortunates working on their cars in the hotel parking lot.

Triumph Lifesaver was a service we provided this year to get your Triumph the parts and expertise needed to get her back on the road. HCTC members responded to my call for breakdown parts and I was prepared for almost any Triumph breakdown. Well let this be a lesson "prepare for problems and they will not happen". We had no serious problems. The Josie's Spitfire transmission went out and went back on the trailer. Dean Mericas and I took a TR4 door apart, put the window back on its

track and put it back together, successfully. I understand Jack McGahey from North Carolina had a problem with his truck, hauling his Vitesse but was able to get it going good enough to get him home. The best service we offered our patrons was Thursday 5:30AM, thunder and lightening woke Art Graves and I. We went to the parking lot to put up his top. We ran into another light sleeper David Kuykendall from Longview, Tx.. The three of us got soaked to the bone but not before putting the top up on about five Triumphs. So this is my official thanks to those unsung fellow Triumph Life Savers. See you next year in Okee land.

Bill

Please give us your favorite tech tip and We will share it with the club.

May Driving Event Saturday May 16

This month's drive will take us to beautiful Blanco State Park for the 21st annual Blanco Classic Car Show. We will gather at Jim's Coffee Shop in Oak Hill for an 8am departure and scenic drive. Our entourage will arrive about 9am, in time to find a great parking spot. Awards are at 2pm. Bring lawn chairs. Food and refreshments are available at the show and restaurants are within walking distance. For

more information about the show go to

<http://www.blanco-texas.com/blanco-classic-car-show.html>

The VTR South Central Regionals... according to Mike

Could a small group of Triumph enthusiasts from the Hill Country Triumph Club organize the best event ever held in our VTR region? That question was certainly on my mind at the early planning stages!

Everyone on the team has had some experience hosting car club events, and some have been doing this sort of thing for decades. Still, an event with three days of non-stop activities would require a Herculean effort by all. I need not have worried, our folks made short work of the tasks ahead. By all measure, the Regionals were a complete success, raising the bar for any club hosting it in the future.

Nearly one hundred cars registered for the Regionals, a new record, I am sure! I counted about twenty-seven registrations from our club, for about fifty-one members in attendance. About a dozen of these people were officially on the event team, but many others contributed their time and effort. HCTC members participated in the various driving events in great numbers with amazing success. Our folks swept the Time-Speed-Distance rally, the Uphill Slalom, and the Autocross to the point that some times were withdrawn for fear of depriving other clubs of a chance of winning (whining -*Ed*). For instance, hill climb/slalom organizers Don Couch, Bill Waller, Bob Kramer, Roger Bolick and myself had times on the Stone Mountain Uphill Slalom that would have displaced many of the official winners. Oh, the burden of being gracious hosts!

Our lovely and talented hospitality/registration/awards team of Barbara and Nel worked tirelessly from dawn until way after dusk each day of the event, just as they had done for many weeks before. Steve "Johnny Carson" Johnson did a fantastic job as team leader and awards banquet MC. This year's Gary Johnston

Award winner Bob Skewis applied his cool head and steady hand from the beginning of this undertaking, overseeing many tasks, usually far from the limelight. Our

print and graphics man, Bill Waller was always on the scene, with his shoulder to the wheel. Ralph Herter (BBQ Rally, Bluebonnet Run, Breakfast Runs) and Terry Jones (Stone Mountain Slalom) were instrumental in planning and organizing these driving events. Autocross (the most popular of all the driving events) gurus Don Couch, Greg Blake and Bob Kramer also spent much of their time working on the other driving events, and were literally "seen at every turn". Dan Julien's team put on an appropriately clever and amusing Funkana, while Roger Bolick organized the biggest Concours ever. Mike Jankowski's photo team took thousands of pictures to commemorate this great happening. Robert Mackenzie single handedly inspected dozens of cars to ensure the safety of our event. Webmaster Jim Icenhower was ever present, too, as were many of the spouses and un-official event workers. We had many sponsors who donated valuable goods that enhanced the Regionals and lowered the cost to participants. Most notable was the generous donation from the Live Oak Brewing Company, whose products were consumed with great gusto every evening in the hospitality room. Me? I was the guy dealing the cards on Saturday for the Bluebonnet/Poker Run!

Mike McPhail



STONE MOUNTAIN SLALOM



The VTR South Central Regionals AutoCross... according to Don

5:30 AM - Mighty early during a VTR. That's what time I "drug it out of bed" to meet my crew for breakfast before we headed out to set up the AutoCross course. We were fortunate to have the Marble Falls High School's parking lot to run in, a large open lot that made for a wonderful course.

Setting up an AutoCross is tricky at best. The translation from paper to asphalt is not always exact, so I wanted to get an early start at it. We arrived at the lot at 6:30 AM and set out to chart the course! With the limited number of cones on hand, the course started to take shape. Timing and scoring gear was then laid out as well.

As I wanted to be able to run in the event, I had Bob Skewis in his magnificent TR250 test drive the course. After some adjustments to spacing for the "larger" cars, he did a run at speed, ensuring the course was set and the timing was working.

After the 8:15 drivers meeting the course was open for walking. All drivers were encouraged to walk the course and instructed on safety issues.

At 9:09AM the first car was out. The race was on and the course seemed to be winning. An overwhelming majority of drivers DNF for one reason or another. Drivers seemed to be getting lost on the course, but in different places. A decision was made to stop racing and have the drivers walk the course again. This proved to be helpful, for when racing resumed, the DNF rate dropped dramatically.

AutoCross is a sport that requires the drivers full attention while on the track as well during the walk throughs. After each run, a driver needs to

evaluate his errors and correct them on the next run. This course was without a doubt a challenging one.

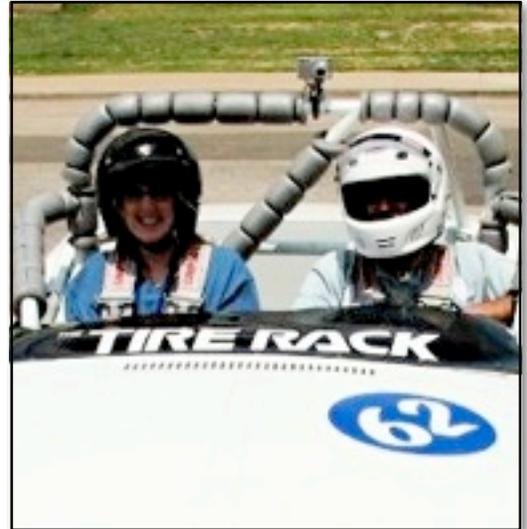
It is always a highlight for me to see TRIUMPHS being thrashed about in the

manner for which they were made! From Paul Higley's 1962 TR3B to the 1980 TR8 of Lisa Waller, almost all the TR range was out on track and fighting hard! Dusty Nicholson in his 1974 TR6 turned in a 54.64 for the fastest time of the day. We even had a Vitesse on the track! Robert Mackenzie even brought out his wonderfully prepared 1962 Spitfire.

Finishing up at 2PM, all drivers were invited to stay for "FUN RUNS". Although these times would not count, about 15 cars stayed to tackle the course and see if they could better their times. We kept the course open another two hours or so longer.

It was now time to tear down the course. I want to thank those who helped set the course up as well as pack it in. Many thanks go to Greg Blake, Willis Thorstad, Art Graves, Bill Waller, Bob Skewis, Bob Kramer, Mike McPhail, Ruth and Ray Josie, Ron Harrison, David Sanborn, Jim Icenhower and Brenda Dillen. These people all either stayed late and help pick up cones and clear the course or dragged their hung over butts out to set the course up at 6AM! If I missed your name, I do thank you. Thanks guys, Don Couch





The VTR South Central Regionals Funkhana... according to Dan

A Whole Lotta Funkhana was had by all on Friday morning at the Regionals. The event was put together by Ron Smith and me. For any who are not familiar with a funkhana, it is a where a driver and a navigator drive a car around course with several stations where they must perform some task. The team with the best time, of course, wins. Speed and driving skill will not necessarily win, so this is an event where no one, from the very young to the very old, and with cars from trailer queens to beaters, should feel intimidated to join in.

The first station was the Bluebonnet Circle. Four cones were arranged in a circle, with a bouquet of bluebonnets in each one. The teams had to move these to another cone in the center of the circle. Other events required the teams to parallel park, pass a tennis ball from one side of the car to the other, knock a ball off a cone with the bumper, and finally to throw a fan belt around a cone.

Here are our winners and their times:
1st place: Bob Kramer & Greg Blake - 1:13.0.
2nd place: Mike Hado Marie Hado - 1:16.0.
3rd place: Bob Skewis Susan Beth - 1:17.0.

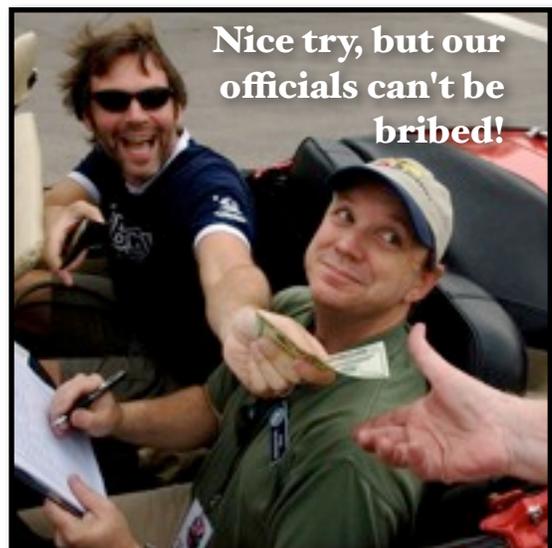


Ron and I had a great time putting this thing together. I think it was as much fun to run as it was to participate. We would like thank everyone who participated, and especially those who pitched in and helped to put the event on. Bob Kramer supplied traffic cones and helped to set up the course. Mike McPhail supplied fan belts. Bob Skewis and Don Couch judged the parallel parking. Dean Mericas helped with the fan belt toss. I know there were others who helped to, so thanks to you all!

Dan Julien



The Cone Bump





Fan Belt Toss



Tennis Ball Pass



Our winners recovering the ball after the Cone Bump.



Negotiating the Bluebonnet Circle.

The VTR South Central Regionals Dynamic Duo... according to Brenda

I've always believed that if something looks easy, there has been a lot of hard work behind it to make it so. As a participant in last month's regional event, my hat is off to everyone who worked it and made things go so well. It was spectacular!

I'd like to put out a special thank you to the Dynamic Duo – Barbara Kramer and Nel McPhail who were there from beginning to end taking care of things behind the scenes so the rest of us would not have to worry. It's kind of like the clean towels in the bathroom. They don't just jump through the laundry and onto the shelf all by themselves, but, there they are when you need one.

From hotel arrangements to banquet arrangements, Nel and Barbara got it done. They saw to it that registration went without a hitch and everyone got the information and materials that they needed. The banquet itself was a huge undertaking with so many opportunities for things to go wrong. How did those seating arrangements come together? I didn't have to worry about that but someone did. There was space for everyone, enough tables and chairs (a great achievement), food, fun and festivity for all. Do you know how many details go into putting on a banquet? The Dynamic Duo took it on without flinching and made it happen! They dealt with whining that would have made me snap. They did all this without taking time to sit down or even to have a beer. Until they knew everything was under control, they did not stop.

Barbara and Nel deserve an award for their patience and dedication to the club - not to mention their hard work and efforts in making this event successful!

Brenda Dillen



Behind the Shutter by Mike Jankowski

“What are you doing this April?” was how it all started. I was at a bikeart party sponsored by my cycling team and employer, and was talking with my friend Susan. She had brought a number of cool pictures of bikes, cycling, etc, and I figured she might want to try photographing cars. Specifically, Triumphs at the VTR Regional in Marble Falls.

“I’m not sure, but I love older cars. Top Gear is my favorite show.” Well, there it was, proof no more convincing was necessary. I gave a basic outline of what the Regional was all about, and Susan agreed to help me cover the event. Promising to keep details flowing as they became available, we parted not really sure of what to expect. Now I was ready to volunteer us at the next HCTC meeting.

Once volunteered, I set about finding exactly what was expected of us. Quickly it blossomed into not only documentation and candids, but also using a projector at the awards banquet, maybe even video. It wasn’t bad at all, just the time for editing seemed like it might be tight. Of course, being the optimist I am (I mean, I do own a Triumph) I glossed over those concerns, figuring we’ll cross those bridges when we come to them.

Well, the big day arrived. We headed out to Stone Mountain for the slalom, and took a look at the course. After driving it a few times to get a feel for where the action might be (and having to stop to put cones back I knocked over) I set up at the finish, and Susan got a ride down with Robert MacKenzie in his Spit racer. It was on.

From the top of the mountain we could hear the cars wind their way up to us, and the first car was Bob Skewis in his Spitfire. With a smoking time (as Don Couch told him, “You’ve got fastest time of the day so far...”) the slalom was in swing, we began to relax after a few kinks were worked out, and I just made sure to get a picture of every car and driver as they stopped to have their cards marked.

Occasionally I’d get a text from Susan asking how many more groups there were, or what



happened when Mike Hado went agricultural motoring. For the next few hours we shot pics, tried to stay hydrated, and joked around, and corralled bloodhounds. Eventually Mike McPhail closed out the fun with the final run up the mountain. Time to head back to the hotel and see what Susan got, what I got, and relax at the welcome party.

After grabbing some food, drinks, and rest, Susan went back to work shooting pics, I took a few, and began planning what needed to happen and when in my head. Looking at the schedule it then dawned on me just how daunting a task we had undertaken. Had we bitten off more than we could chew? A quick evaluation of my plan showed a few weaknesses, but I began to get excited. I had a challenge in front of me, and Susan and I were going to get it done no matter what.

Friday I woke tired and eager to get back to Marble Falls, since I was commuting to Austin all weekend. I had been up editing and deleting pictures, plus making folders and figuring out how to organize them on my laptop. Driving through some serious storms, I arrived to see the Funkhana just starting, and Susan was there shooting away. I was able to shoot only a few pics before my batteries died. I had loaded the wrong ones, so I ran to the store to get some fresh ones.

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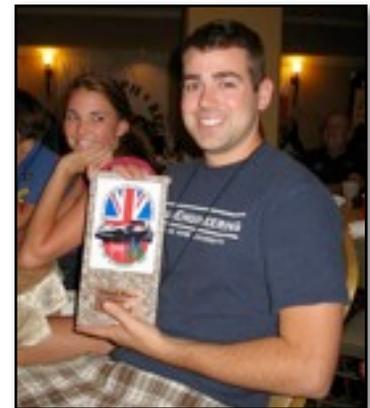
Mission accomplished I got back, and Susan informed me I missed her and Bob Skewis running the Funkhana. Thankfully, Don was able to record the action. I was able to hop into Phil McKenzie's Spitfire as passenger and we were able to post a respectable time, apparently 4th overall. (Hmm, last year I was navigator with Willis in his TR6 at TXABCD and we just missed an award, this year I'm a passenger again and we just miss. Let's give out top 5 awards from now on!) Then I drove and Phil rode. Little did we know that the parallel parking cones would be moved so the spot was only 66% as large as before, the tennis ball cones were spread apart about 500 yards, and the belt toss cone was moved back to the curb. But I had a blast.

During lunch I had brought my laptop, and Susan hers, so we cleared our memory cards, and got ready for the concours while eating lunch. Phil McKenzie deserves a great thank you for getting our lunches for us. Much appreciated, Phil. At this time, Dan Julien stopped by and offered pictures he took from his camera. Again, another thanks. So far things were going smoothly.

The concours was really fun. Susan went off and shot cool pics, I set about trying to document every car there. First I took a pic of the registration card, then I backed up and took a front $\frac{3}{4}$ view of the car. For each car. I did stop and talk to some people, but had to step it up by the end. It was time to head back to the hotel yet again, and begin editing. Dan Julien saved the day when I was in the elevator and got a call from Nel wanting us to take a picture of all the red TR6s lined up. He got some great shots for us.

I decided it was a good idea to do a test run of the projector when I got back and downloaded all my pictures. It's a good thing we did. The plan was for me to burn all my pics to disc that night, bring them in for Susan to download, and run the slideshow off her laptop. Well, her Apple has a different size output cable than my PC, so it was up in the air whether or not the projector would work with her adapter cable. I test ran it with my laptop, and we got a slideshow and video. Again, Phil McKenzie was invaluable in showing me how to fine tune the focus. After some more talking and messing around I headed back to Austin for the night.

Final day! I arrived at the Autocross venue and began to get things organized. Susan showed up a few minutes later and we



came up with a game plan. Bill Waller gave me his video camera, also. Again, I documented and filmed, Susan took cool shots, and Dan, the unsung hero, took shots, then handed me his camera and asked me to take pics of him and his car. I did, and I went to town with it. With the completion of the autocross, I went back to HQ at the hotel, and got to work editing. It was a good thing I brought my laptop, as Susan's adapter cable didn't work. No big deal, I just went out and bought some discs so she could burn them and hand them to me.

Now it was crunch-time. Nel and Barb were getting awards figured out. Susan and I were editing and I was making slideshows. The caterer was setting up. We got the projector set up, I continued making slideshows, and got the Concours award list. This was tough, as I had to find the matching car card pic, then the car, then get them in the right order. I was still putting it together when happy hour started. Finally I felt we were ready, the projector was turned on, and the first slideshow was up and running.

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Then the awards started, and things got rolling smoothly. Well, until I apparently misread a few cards for the awards, and then Roger and I didn't have the same order of awards. No problem, I quickly flipped to thumbnail view and we moved on. I was really happy seeing how delighted people were when they got an award and their car was on display for all to see. After the Concours awards, Steve fired up his deadpan MC routine again for some door prizes. It was at this moment I realized I only had one or two pics for the Hado's best in show award.

I quickly scoured my folders for more pics, and was making sure to verify it was his car in the pics I had. About 30 seconds before the award was announced, I finished my Best In Show folder, fired up the projector one last time, and it all came together. It was a huge adrenaline release when we

formally concluded the banquet. The amount of thanks, handshakes, and compliments made it all worthwhile.

Truth be told, I wasn't sure how things were going to turn out. I am proud of the work Susan and I did for the Regional. We worked hard, but still had fun. When I got frazzled, I took a deep breath, stayed calm, and kept going. I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who gave me help, encouragement, and showed confidence in our abilities. I am also extremely proud to be a member of Hill Country Triumph Club, and to be able to say "Yeah, the 2009 VTR South Central Regional, we put that on. Great event because of great people."

Phil's ~~MIKE'S~~ FAVORITE TOOL'S

MAY TOOL OF THE MONTH

I have enjoyed reading Mike McPhail's "My favorite tools". His article on the Mity-Vac convinced me to get one. I don't know how I ever got along without one. Since reading Mike's article coincided with finishing the front-end rebuild on my '78 Spitfire (bled the brakes with the Mity-Vac) I was inspired to write about 3 tools I couldn't have finished the job without: Ball joint splitter, Spring compressor, and wheel alignment gauge, and one I wish I hadn't used; a fork style ball joint splitter.

Getting the tie rod ends to separate was the first obstacle I encountered during the front end rebuild. I tried using the fork style ball joint splitter without success. In fact, using this tool I managed to bend the tie rod lever enough to prevent the attachment bolt from aligning with the vertical link.



A tool I could live without – free to any home!

With some more banging I managed to get it to align again. At this point I had to admit that the Haynes manual, the restoration guide and the BL shop manual were probably right, and I had to use the proper tool. The model I purchased was ~\$20 from Sears on-line (only way to get it; not in their stores).

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Ball joint splitter on top, Spring compressors below

You slide the finger of this tool over the bolt/nut part of the ball joint or tie rod, and

the forked part on the opposite side of the piece you are removing it from. It's important to leave the nut on the ball joint or tie rod end you are removing. If you don't, when that sucker lets loose it will rocket across the garage and leave a nice dent in whatever it impacts!

The next step was replacing the shocks. I got a lot of "interesting" advice when deciding how to compress those springs – including some Harbor Freight customer insisting I could somehow just leave the coil in the suspension and use an impact wrench to remove the nut. The term "nut" did come to mind, but in the end I found the pictured spring compressors at the Georgetown Fox Auto/Car Quest for ~\$50. They are very sturdy indeed and not likely to let loose. I assure you the torque I used just to compress the spring an inch or so to remove the shock from the spring left no doubt in my mind that removing the shock nuts without a spring compressor would be a once in a lifetime event!

I thought I was done with tools when I took the Spit for a test drive. On the drive down my street a horrible tire squealing noise was coming from the front of the car. Somehow, despite marking the tie rods with the correct tie rod location and carefully counting the number of turns to remove the tie-rod ends, I managed to get the toe-in off by several inches!. This time I looked on-line and found the exact same alignment gauge

Moss has for \$50 from – where else- Harbor Freight for \$15.

Alignment gauge ready for action.

3 days later UPS arrived with my alignment gauge and after a few rounds of measuring and adjusting, I was on the road to Speedy Align for a proper alignment. They said my toe-in was spot-on, but the thrust angle was off by a degree or 2; good enough to get me there anyway.

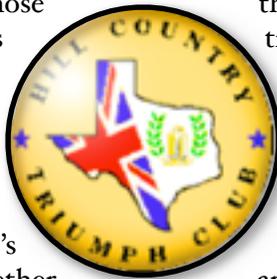
So if you decide to tackle your front suspension, get the tools and get started. Better still, give me a call and borrow the tools! As Uncle Bob says "You're in the club!"



THE RAGTOP - MAY 2009



I'd like to thank all those who contributed articles and photos this month. I'd also like to thank Jim Icenhower and Bob Kramer for helping me by lending me their eyes to proofread this issue. It's always hectic putting together



the newsletter. About the time it ready to go out, I've lived with it too long to catch even the simplest of errors. Most months I have Mr. Skewis' eyes. I do appreciate Jim helping out while Bob is floating around in Mexico. Don

Calendar

MAY 10th, 2009

HCTC meeting - Poke-e-jo's BBQ
Brodie Oaks Shopping Center

MAY 16th, 2009

May Driving Event - Blanco State Park

May 16th, 2009

Blanco Classic Car Show



1105 N. Canyonwood Dr.
Dripping Springs, TX 78620
address change requested



The next HCTC meeting will be held Tuesday, March 10, 7 PM, Poke-e-jo's BBQ in the Brodie Oaks shopping center, Northwest corner of South Lamar and Ben White/Capitol of Texas Highway/Loop 360, Phone 512-440-0447.