

The Ragtop

March 2017

TRIUMPH

Letter from the President

By Don Couch

February sure seemed to go by fast! For some reason it always does. I was very happy to see our turnout for both meetings.

We had great attendance at both, even though many wrote off the Tuesday night meeting due to Valentines Day. Bill Waller had a bit of bad luck on his way home from the Tuesday evening meeting. Glad to know he is fine and the TR6 will live on. Read all about it in his article.

We didn't have much in the way of drives but I'm sure as the weather gets nicer we'll all be out in force again.

For me, I have been "turning wrenches on Triumphs" all month. I have no less than three projects in the works keeping me busy. All my time these days are spent putting back together my 1962 Spitfire for the upcoming

SCCA race at COTA at the end of the month. Also, I have taken on a TR6 to "sort out" for a friend. And lastly, another Spitfire restoration project Bob Skewis and I have been working off and on with.

Great to see Phil McKenzie wrote the first of hopefully many member's stories of how they got infected with the TRIUMPH disease.

First Lady Brenda came up with the idea of nominating the next member to write their story as a way for each of us to get to know each other a little better. We should all be getting the member roster from Nel, who by the way, I want to give a shout out to, is doing a thankless task as our membership chair. But I'll change that right now, THANK YOU NEL!!!

Don

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Back issues of The Ragtop are available on our website:
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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 editor@hillcountrytriumphclub.org. Car related classified ads are free to members and will run for three months unless otherwise instructed. Contact editor for other ads.

McKenzie's Meeting Minutes

HCTC January Meetings: 10 and 14 February, 2017

By Phil McKenzie

Meeting at the Tavern

Valentine's Day at the Tavern was not the sorry spectacle many believed it would be. Most of us have substituted an evening before or after the 14th to avoid the crowds, long waits and poor service. Those of us in attendance instead shared a "love" of the Triumph marquee, and a few beers as well. Bill Waller and Mike McPhail arrived in style in their TR6s! Roger and Tina Bolick, Dan Julien, and Don Couch and I were Triumph-less, but heartily welcomed newcomer Nathan Quiring. He is looking for a Triumph to buy, and as you might expect, he got a wide range of suggestions from this crowd!

Don held a brief meeting which included a discussion about the upcoming VTR regional being hosted by the San Antonio Triumph Club, and our club's participation in it. The consensus was that as a club we could only commit to running the Funcana since at meeting time we were uncertain as to how many HCTC members would be in attendance. Don finished up with a report on the fix-it day meeting at Robert MacKenzie's Spitfire Garage outside Georgetown, and his experience at the Jaguar Club's rallye to Luckenbach.

Meeting at the Frisco

The HCTC filled-up our tables in the back room of the Frisco Sat-

urday morning. Quite a few members had their Triumphs as well, including me! Phil Taylor in his TR8 roadster, Mike McPhail in the TR4 he recently brought back to life, Dave Schroeder in his Spitfire, Steve Johnson in his TR3, and Don Couch in his Spitfire. Unfortunately, I lost the sign-in sheet for the meeting, so I apologize to the TR6 and TR4 owners who I missed, and everyone else not mentioned - I'll make it up to y'all next month.

Don opened the meeting with thanks to Dan for the newsletter, and Mike for another great article. Don started a challenge to the club for an ongoing series of articles from HCTC members on the theme of "How did you get started with British Cars?". Each person who contributes an article then nominates another member to write next month's article on the same theme. I vol-

unteered for the first, and have already nominated Robert MacKenzie to do next months. After Don's announcements of past events, he quizzed the attendees on the state of their Triumphs. Once our meals arrived all the meeting focus went from talking to chewing, so those at the back of the room were spared making excuses, or missed out on sharing their success as the case may be. There will be a chance for both at next month's meetings!

Still WANTED:

The lost charter of HCTC

Since no one has been able to produce a copy of the club's charter, the reward is still available. Search those piles of papers, old magazines, nooks and crannies, and come claim some \$green\$.



Photo from "The Tavern."



Photos from the meeting at "The Frisco".

TR4 Carburetor Swap

By Mike McPhail

Sarah Ann's TR4 has been getting a work out lately...a rally to Luckenbach, then a week-end trip to Rockport. I'm happy to report that the plucky roadster is running better than ever! It took a little work to get things right and one annoying problem to be addressed

was the massive oil leaks front and rear.

Replacing the timing cover seal was a no-brainer, but what to do about the rear crankshaft leak? There isn't a seal as such on the Vanguard four banger and oil leakage is a common ailment. My newly rebuilt TR3 engine leaked profusely and

installing the positive crankcase ventilation system from a TR4a all but stopped the deluge.

The 4a uses a rather crude PCV valve to draw a vacuum on the crankcase, which prevents the piston blow-by from forcing oil out of the motor. The problem with this arrangement is that



Old carbs.

when you put your foot in it, the intake manifold vacuum drops and the blow-by increases. The TR6 employs a different approach using carburetor vacuum, which increases with engine speed.

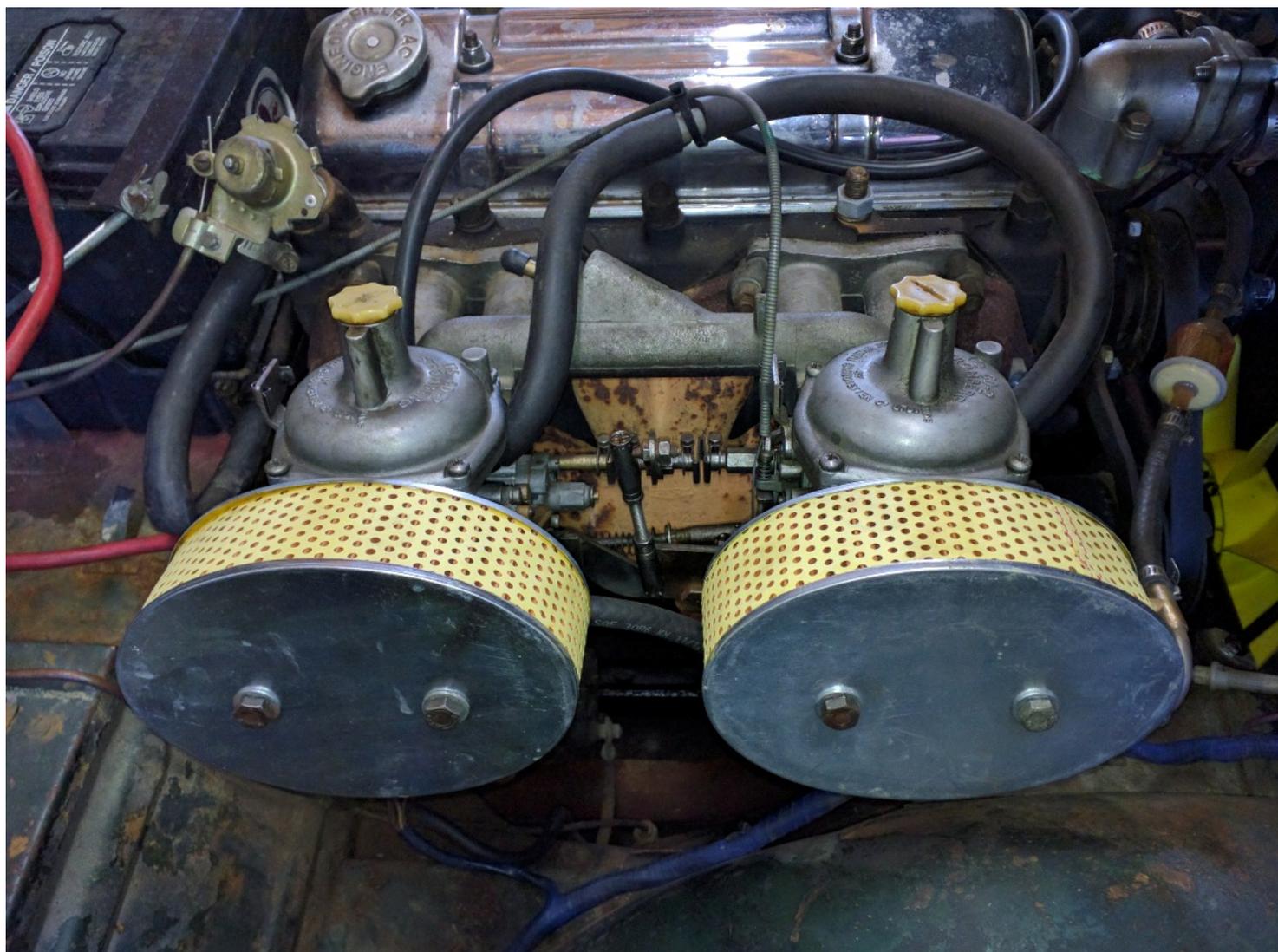
The TR4 in question incorporates twin Zenith Stromberg CD175 carburetors that are unlike the carbs on the TR6 with the same designation. They are actually pretty slick, in that there are no smog controls and the

mixture is infinitely adjustable by a knob on the bottom of the float bowl. It even features a genuine butterfly style choke! The redeeming feature of the later CD175 is the vacuum port. Running hoses from the carbs to the valve cover is all that was required to ventilate the crankcase. Positively!

The swap is easy enough...the new carbs bolt right up to the intake manifold. The TR4 linkage that

operates from the front of the manifold was replaced with the center mounted TR6 mechanism. Swap the TR6 rod end for the original, and everything fits perfectly!

TR4 oval disposable air cleaners were modified by making holes for the float bowl vents needed by the new carbs. The smell of Castrol GTX cooking on the hot exhaust pipe is now a distant memory!



New Carbs

My CRASH

By Bill Waller

Hello friends, Bill Waller here.

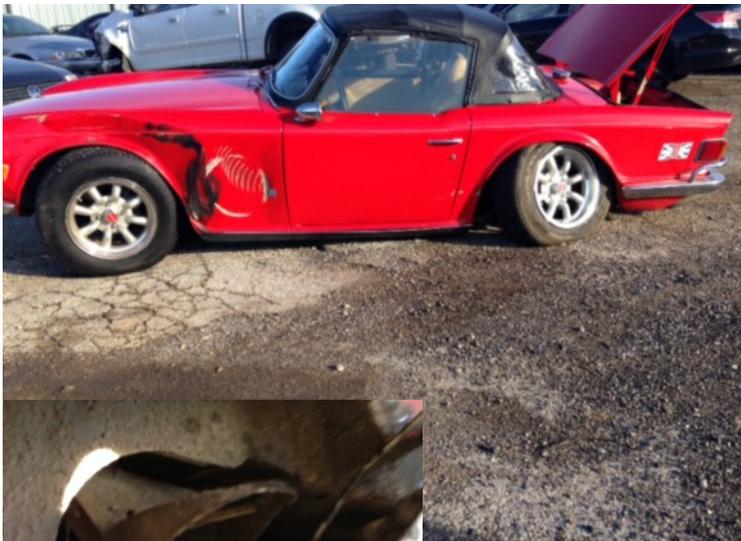
I am very proud and pleased to say that I finally replaced the enameled Cloisnette badge on my 1971 TR6 front grill. Now, for the rest of the story. It was a rainy Tuesday morning, the second Tuesday of February. Weatherman said rain would stop by noon and we would have sunshine. My plan was to return home after work and pick up the 6 for the Tuesday night meeting at The Tavern. On my way to The Tavern I had a little trouble with my clutch. We had a good but sparsely attended meeting, as it was St.

Valentine's Day. Upon leaving I decided to drive IH-35 to reduce shifting, I must also add that I only had one beer. Yes, that's right, one. No wait, 1.5 I shared half one with Mike McPhail. Ok, back to my departure on IH-35.

Just past Riverside going south on IH-35 an 18-wheeler forced me to the rail at 60 miles per hour. It all happened in the blink of an eye. One of the 18-wheels impacted front driver's side and I started a spin. My rear end came around, and here is where it gets fuzzy and very scary. I can't say for sure if I did a 90-degree, 180-degree, or 360 degree and a half but I ended up going head on into the

guardrail. Thanks to an astute driver behind me he put on his flashers and straddled the two lanes saving me from oncoming traffic. I got out of my 6 without a scratch. I was in a bit of shock but I felt almost giddy that I survived the crash. The truck never stopped, although I saw him tap his brake. The 6 is not totaled and I am removing the damaged parts to be replaced. Remarkable my new grill badge was not damaged. I will get back on that horse, maybe not on IH-35 for a while though.

"Keep driving them" Bill



How I Got Started in the British Car Hobby

By Phil McKenzie

This is the first in a series of “tag – you’re it” articles by members of the Hill Country Triumph Club. Don Couch, our stalwart President, proposed an idea to the membership, where every month one member would be nominated by the previous month’s nominee, to write a short article about how they got started in the British car hobby. This idea was enthusiastically endorsed (after I volunteered to do the first one). Dan Julien, our newsletter editor, encouraged future writers to include pictures if at all possible, and one of our members reminded me to “keep it short”.

I grew up in Dayton, Ohio, and turned 16 in November of 1978. The glory days of American muscle cars had waned some 6 years previously, but there were plenty of used Mustangs, Camaros, Cutlasses, etc that were available for a high school student. The sting of the Oil Embargo was still fresh in peoples minds, so gas guzzlers were not in high demand, and truth be told, any car more than 5 years old at that time had suspect reliability, so cars that go for \$20k+ today could be purchased cheaply. In any case, the muscle cars of that era did have power, but handled quite poorly. I always found it disconcerting to point one of those beasts in one di-



rection, but feel the car grind the tires away in another.

About the time I started looking for a car, my brother-in-law returned from military service in Europe with a brand new MGB. British cars were quite rare in a GM town like Dayton, and I had never noticed them before. Once I had ridden in the MGB with the top down, I was determined I would have one. I started poring over the classifieds and “The Tradin’ Post”, Dayton’s version of the Greensheet. I searched for MGBs, MG Midgets, Sunbeams, Opel GTs, Datsun Fairlady’s, and Triumph Spitfires, TR6s and TR7s. In the end, my budget was best suited to the Spitfire, and after driving one, I felt it handled well and looked the best. I found one advertised for \$1800 in the suburbs, so my dad and I drove out of the city and took a look. It was a bit rough, with a few rust patches, and was Sienna brown. I made the seller an offer of \$1400 (which was all I had), which he refused, and we were on our way.

The next day I received an unexpected call. The seller was in fact selling the car for his brother. I never got the whole story, but there was some frustration between the brothers over this car, caused in part by an engine run dry and ruined



somewhere in Pennsylvania (hence the freshly rebuilt engine). Anyway, the conversation ending with something like “you seem like an ambitious kid, and I’m tired of dealing with my brother, so bring your \$1400 and the car is yours; but come quick before I change my mind.”

A few hours later I could hardly believe I was 16 and driving a British sports car!

I owned the car for about 2 years before I decided to sell it to pay for my first year of college tuition. With my father’s help I started to learn about British auto mechanics, starting with changing fluids, then moving on to changing the rear shocks, re-

building the distributor and carburetor, and finally doing the bodywork and prepping the car for the British Racing Green paint job you can see in the photos below.

It wasn’t until nearly 30 years later that I would purchase another Spitfire as my 3 sons were nearing driving age, but that is another story.

TR4A Update

By Steve Johnson

I've transitioned from the 1959 TR3A and started working on our 1967 TR4A again. It's nice to have more TR time. Now that the TR4A is painted and the wiring harness is installed I'm ready to move on to the next stage of my frame off restoration. Currently I'm working on the engine. The first project I tackled was replacing the stock rear main seal. The original seal was a simply felt strip that was stuffed into a groove in the rear main housing. I'm sure that the original seal lasted until the new owner drove the his or her Triumph off dealer's car lot. Triumph turned this problem into a benefit by telling owners that the car would tell them when it need oil when it stopped leaking (no not really but true).

I decided to switch to a modern rear main seal. The kit I chose didn't require machining the crankshaft. It's called a "Vinton Rear Main Seal." It's for TR2 through TR4A four cylinder engines, which includes the Morgan 4's. I'll let you know how well it works. If you decide to install one of these, I have a more complete

set of instructions than those they send with the Vinton kit. Just send me a note. Here are a few pictures:



After installing the Vinton rear main seal, I started on the cylinder



head. When I purchased the 1967 TR4A in 1982 I was told that it had recently been rebuilt with a "Big Bore" kit which I thought would be an 87 mm kit as opposed to the standard 86 mm kit. When I asked the shop mechanic why he used the kit he said "that's what was available locally... time is money". I didn't think much about the upgrade and really thought that the guy was just trying to sell the car.

Well when I pulled the head, I soaked and removed 33 years of carbon off of the pistons (more information follows). The tops of the pistons were marked as "87 mm" and "Made in Germany." Bob

Kramer told me that since the pistons were marked as "Made in Germany" that a company by the name of "Mahle" probably made the kit.

The only problem was that the mechanic who rebuilt the engine had used a stock 86 mm head gasket on the 87 mm engine which almost fit (that's good for Horseshoes but not engines). He had also used a three-spring set of valve springs on the cylinder head, instead of the two-spring set this head required. In order to get the three-spring set to fit, a spacer had been added under the springs. The two and three spring sets aren't interchangeable on Triumph heads. The head is made for one or the other. Not a great solution but I've been driving that Triumph for over 30 years now and it was never a problem. The rebuilt cylinder head now has new valves, guides, the proper spring set, etc. It turned out great from the shop. I also have the proper head gasket.

While the cylinder head was in the shop being rebuilt, I decided to clean the carbon off the tops of the pistons. Carbon build up isn't unusual in Triumph engines due to their low compression and it does build up fairly quickly. The machine shop will take care of the carbon in your cylinder head as it's rebuilt, but that leaves the pistons for you to do.

There are lots of techniques to de-carbon the pistons. I use Scotch Brite Pads (no sand paper or wire brushes please), paper towels from the Grocery Store and an Industrial Cleaner. After trying every cleaner in my garage, I found one that make this job a snap. Bill Hirsch Automotive makes a product called "Heavy Duty Marine/Industrial Cleaner and Degreaser." <http://www.hirschauto.com/Miracle-Cleaner-And-Degreaser/products/19/> There are many industrial

cleaners available locally or on line that may work as well. I do know that this one works.

My process for de-carboning the pistons was simple. I cleaned one piston at a time. I used a one to one mix of Hirsch cleaner with warm water. I applied the solution to the piston and let it soak about five minutes. I cut the Scotch Brite pads in half and scrub the piston top. It took me at least three applications per piston. The Industrial Degreaser also took off the carbon built up on the ridge at the top of the cylinders. A rinse with plain water and it was almost done. Then I used WD40 to help take the water out of the cylinders.

My next task is to install a new timing chain. Then replacing the front cover with a new seal. At that point I'll be ready to paint the engine. Wish me luck. I may need another set of hands with this one so volunteers are welcome.

Steve







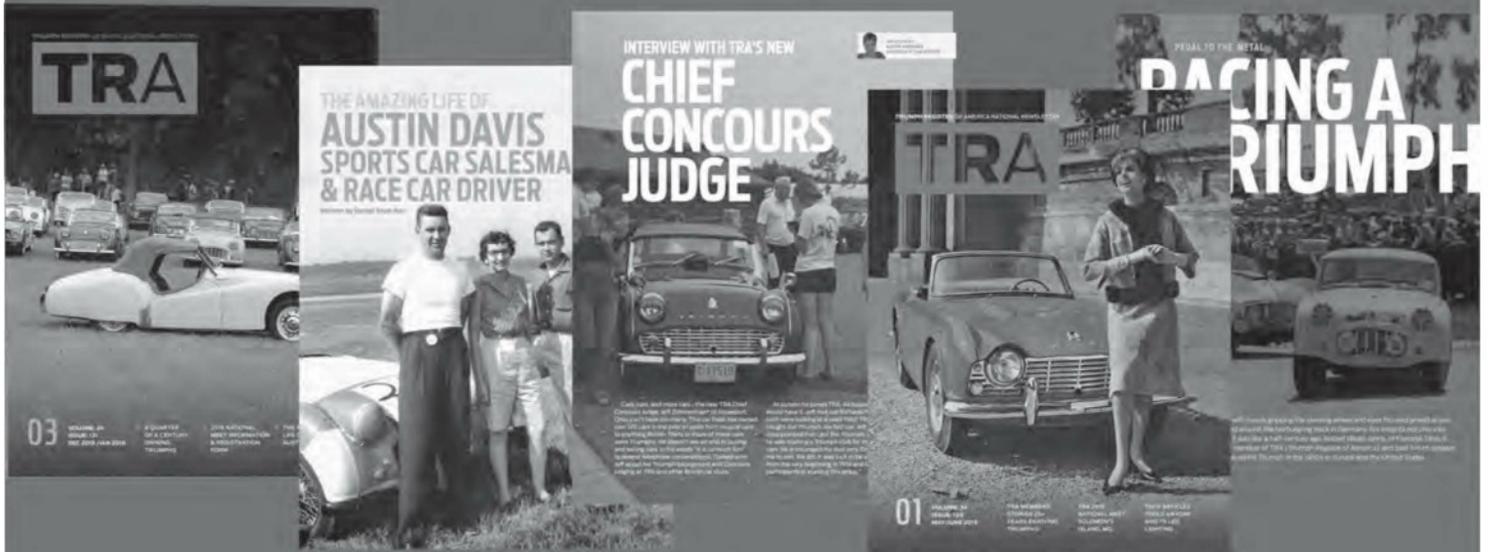
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WITH A TRA MEMBERSHIP WE OFFER:

- 4 National newsletters per year
- Annual National Meet
- Website (member password protected area)
- Concours judging standards

- Factory build records
- Technical articles
- Contact information
- Shutterfly National Meet website



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www.TriumphRegister.com

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TONDA.MACY@MACYSGARGE.COM

Welcome to TRA



TRIUMPH REGISTER OF AMERICA Membership Application Form

Please write legibly.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____
Please include area code

Car _____
Make & Model

Year _____ Commission Number _____

Car _____
Make & Model

Year _____ Commission Number _____

Car _____
Make & Model

Year _____ Commission Number _____

Car _____
Make & Model

Year _____ Commission Number _____

Mail check and/or application to:

Tonda Macy
TRA Treasurer/Membership
4200 Lisa Drive
Tipp City, OH 45371
tonda@macysgarage.com
937-266-1832

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I have steering wheels and hubs for almost all British classics as well as accessories like shift knobs, mirrors, light/badge bars and more. Check out my current listings on eBay at <http://stores.ebay.com/specialtypartshop> or email me at jicenhower@yahoo.com for more information.

Listing change as I get shipments from the UK so check back often or contact me for any special requests.

HCTC Classifieds



I know I have been out of the loop for a while with the club members but still enjoy the Triumph hobby. In an effort to add a unique look to my shop, I sourced a maker of metal signs. This is the sign i have asked him to make.

I thought some other members might be interested as well. Here is the pricing and the different finishes he can offer.

4'x6' sign as per pic/3 colors printed on .040 aluminum sheet -does not include wood borders/aging or crating /shipping, \$325.00

printed on painted 24-26 ga steel sheet no aging wood borders crating or shipping \$425.00

on steel as per pic w/wood borders, aged and distressed \$565.00

If people have questions, they can reach me at 512 517-5325

Thank you,

Fil Valderrama

I have the following items for sale:

1. Triple carb intake off a TR6, may fit other models. Like new.
2. (3) 14" mini lite rims off a TR8. Also one 13" stock rim off TR7-8
3. Soft top rail off TR7-8
4. Intake and exhaust manifold off TR3-4
5. Twin carb intake off GT6-TR6

Call for prices or pictures all parts are in my shop in Marble Falls. 512-909-6849.

PARTS FOR SALE: During the past few years, I have been upgrading many of my 1972 TR6 components. Recently, I have cleaned out my garage and have the following serviceable parts for sale.

Stock front anti-sway bar

Stock rear axle hubs

Stock starter

Stock front brake calipers

Stock front brake rotors

Stock radiator

After market cast aluminum valve cover, black "Triumph Tune".

Interior Dash Side Panels for center console w/o speaker holes

Hella halogen driving lights, 500 series, 6" diameter with covers.

Holly 600 cfm carburetor removed from my 65 Corvette.

Contact Don Burkley: DBurkley@austin.rr.com or 512-203 7558 for description, photos and asking prices.

I am cleaning out my garage and have found the radiator from the 71 TR6 which I purchased a few years ago and later sold. I changed the radiator out after it developed a leak on a club driving event. I never had it fixed, but was wondering if anyone could have a use for it. Obviously it would be free to a good home if someone wants it.

Thanks,

Terry Jones

830-693-1803

terryjane1967@yahoo.com

RH and LH Trunk Side Panel TR3, TR3A, TR3B. These are new steel panels, made in the U.K. They have never been fitted or installed. \$70.00 each. Carol 512 971-6778.





TR-6 Factory Hardtop for Sale \$1500.

Comes complete with new seals and hardware for rebuilding from the Roadster Factory

Contact Joe Payne email: robjoepayne@yahoo.com (m) 210.326.6673



Triumph Doors Complete with Glass and Trunk Lid \$500

Contact Joe Payne email: robjoepayne@yahoo.com (m) 210.326.6673

Pay Your Dues!!!!!!!

Please check the latest spreadsheet sent out by Nel. If it says Jan-17 in the dues column your dues are over-due now. Any quite delinquent member who hasn't paid will be dropped from the roster.

Cost is \$15 per year per family. If you don't wish to renew, please notify Nel.

Mail your check made out to **HCTC** to:

Nel McPhail
1105 N Canyonwood Dr
Dripping Springs, Tx 78620
(512) 656-1456
nmcpvail@austin.rr.com

Membership Application

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____ Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____
Work Phone: _____
Email address: _____



Car Make: _____ Model: _____ Year: _____ Color: _____
Car Make: _____ Model: _____ Year: _____ Color: _____

How on earth did you hear about the Hill Country Triumph Club?

Please mail your application and \$15 check payable to HCTC to:
Nel McPhail, 1105 North Canyonwood Dr, Dripping Springs, TX 78620

Upcoming Events

March 11 — HCTC Saturday morning meeting, 9 AM, The Frisco.

March 14 — HCTC evening meeting, 7 PM, The Tavern, 12th and Lamar.

April 27-30 — VTR Regionals, New Braunfels, TX. Information at www.sotxtriumphasn.org.

August 16-19 — VTR Nationals, Princeton, NJ. Information at vtr2017.org.

Next Saturday meeting:

Saturday, March 11, 2017, 9:00 AM

The Frisco

6801 Burnet Rd

Austin, TX 78757

thefriscoaustin.com — Phone: 512-459-6279

Next evening meeting:

Tuesday, March 14, 2017, 7:00 PM

The Tavern

922 West 12th St

Austin, TX 78703

At the corner of 12th and Lamar

tavernaustin.com — Phone: 512-320-8377