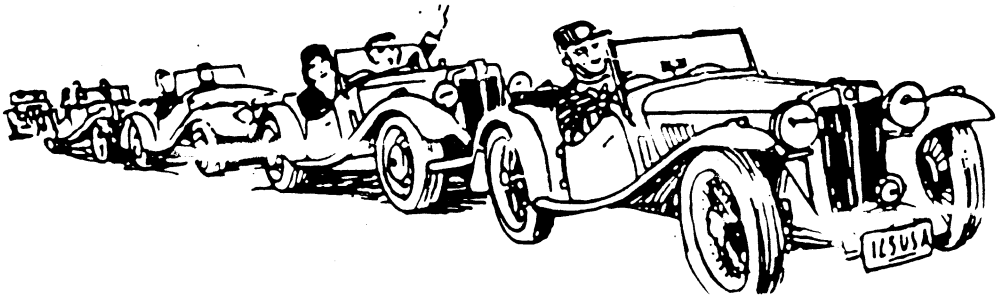
The Can Am CONNECTION

Vol. 21, No. 2- Newsletter of the Windsor-Detroit MG Club- Mar.-April, 2001

First Stupid Driving Event Of The Year Is Coming Saturday, April 7th!

Featuring A Movie, Birthday Cake, Buffalo, And Scads of Fellow MG Enthusiasts



It's Cecil Kimber's birthday party time again!

Kimber, for those of you new to MGs was the founding father of MG sports cars. See the biography in this issue. Born April 12, 1888 (notice all those 8's?).

We'll celebrate his birthday on the 7th, what with the 12th being on a Thursday.

Once again Marcia Greiner will bake a delicious birthday cake (ask anyone who's attended past birthday parties).

We'll meet at the usual Meijer's parking lot at Haggerty and 8 Mile just off I-275 and meander over some great twisting sports cars roads to Lansing.

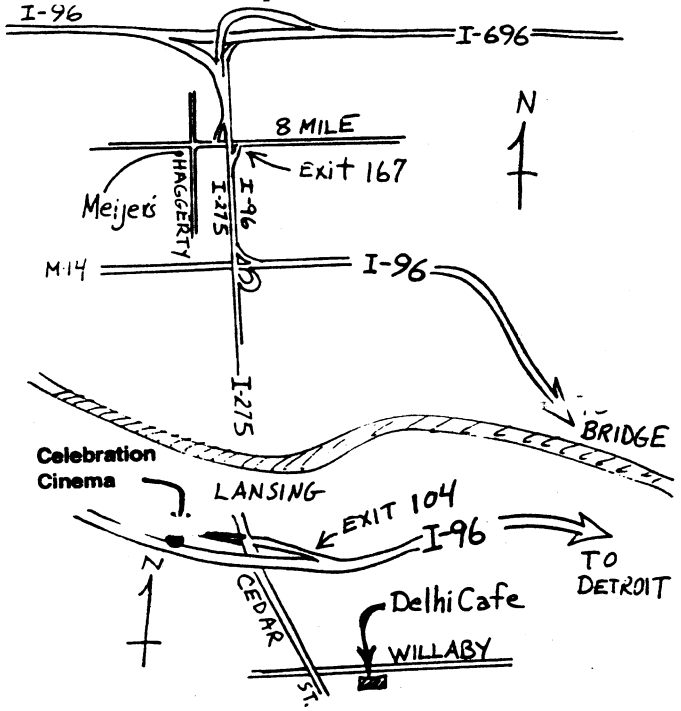
This year we'll again have the option of seeing a "car" movie. When we get to Lansing, we'll attend a private showing of the movie "The Italian Job" starring Michael Caine and featuring scads of Minis. Then we'll head over to the Delhi Restaurant for lunch and cake and parking lot discussions of things MG with the other Michigan MG clubs.

So, put a charge in those batteries, change the oil, check the pressure in the tires, make sure you have a half tank of gas, and a pack of cigarettes, wear your sun glasses, and hit the road to Lansing (to paraphrase the Blues Brothers).

This year I'm making this the Stupid Ride also. What with my luck and stupid rides I figured we could use some help with the weather.

What: Kimber Birthday Bash/Stupid Ride
When: Saturday, April 7th, 8:00 A.M.
Where: Caravan leaves the Meijer's parking lot at 8:20 A.M. (See Map)
What to Bring: Sunglasses, <u>full</u> tank of gas, pack of cigarettes (optional), driving gloves, party attitude. Remember... tops down.

For those late risers, or those wanting to travel on their own, meet at the Delhi Restaurant in Lansing at noon. See other map.



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Safety Fast!

Ed Fleming, Editor

In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of sportscars. **What Robert Burns would have said had he lived 2 centuries later.**

Some of us had a dilemma in February. Valentine's Day and the club's monthly meeting fell on the same day. Who do you love more, your significant other or the MG?

For six couples, there was no problem. They went to the meeting for Valentine's Day. There were also 8 men at the meeting without their spouses or their MGs. Hmmmmmmmm.

You have to have your priorities. I once told Edna that racing was the number one thing in my life, but she was a really close second. I don't know why, but she took offense at that.

I had just won the Michigan Go-Kart Championship and Colin Chapman had just sent me an application to try out for the Lotus Formula Junior team. I was this close to becoming a Formula One driver, so of course racing was number one in my life.

I rephrased the statement, "She was a really, really, really, really close second." That didn't help.

Men seem to have the same problems with cars as with women. Some women are sexy in a sensuous, hot blooded, stir the senses way like a Ferrari. The kind of woman men would throw a career away for. Just like a Ferrari.

Some are sophisticated, complex, able to do almost everything well. They'll make a man better than he is and take care of him just like a German car.

Then there's the woman that a man thinks he knows, but doesn't. A woman who gives him pleasure just by being with him. Not complex, not wild, but comfortable, easy to be around. A woman who needs constant attention, but one you enjoy lavishing attention on. One who demands that you take care of her, who WANTS you to adjust her carbs and lash her valves. In return she'll reward you with the pleasures of a relaxing yet stimulating time. Just like an MG.

Sounds like I'm getting a little carried away with my cars here. No. You won't find me getting all emotional.

Well there was the one time Edna caught me out in the garage with the Porsche one night. I had just polished that beautiful body and was caressing those last few remnants of dust off those gorgeous curves when Edna burst into the garage.

"We're supposed to be at Rick and Marilyn's in 15 minutes!" Well I was ready to go, It wasn't the first time I had polished the car in suit and tie. I mumbled something about a clean car being a faster car so we really wouldn't be late. To which she replied, "Ann Landers will tell you what to do when your husband's in love with another woman but not what to do when he's in love with his car."

What Ann Landers should have said was, "Get in and enjoy the ride."

Sometimes You Don't Know How Good Someone Is Until They're Gone...

Ray Lewis is gone. He lost his battle with cancer last January 15th.

His death has had a profound affect on me. I knew Ray casually as a member of our club. He was always friendly, always ready to help out, always interesting to talk with. But I didn't know him that well, and I'm upset because it's too late to get to know him better.

I knew he was an interesting and intelligent guy, a rocket scientist or something. At his funeral I found out he really was a rocket scientist, helping to develop the Vulcan bomber in Britain and working for Rolls Royce (jet engines not cars). When he moved to the U. S. he joined Williams International where he worked on gas turbine engines for American Motors and cruise missiles.

At the funeral there was a picture of Ray in a Stearman biplane. Ray loved to fly. When I was a teenager my dad had airplanes and taught me how to fly, but I never got beyond that first interest. Wish I had known Ray better, maybe we could have gone flying together.

He and Fran met while on a scuba diving vacation in Spain. They both loved diving and traveled to exotic places all around the world from the Great Lakes to Australia diving. Like I said a really interesting guy.

Ray was always ready to help. I remember one rainy day at Carnival of Cars, when just about everyone else had left and my Midget wouldn't crank over. It's a little difficult getting into the Midget with the top down, but really hard with the top up. Ray told me to get in and he single handedly pushed the Midget across the wet grass. When I popped the clutch, the car jerked forward and Ray fell into a mud puddle. I backed up and offered him one of the towels I had on the front seat to catch rainwater, but he refused, saying it was OK, he had one in the GT and waved me off with a smile. Like I said, a real good Samaritan.

Ray was an excellent mechanic. Ray and Fran's GTs were always in great running order and always clean. Not trailer queen clean, but just off the showroom clean. My Midget should have known Ray better.

Ray's nephew got up at the funeral and pointed out that God had made a terrible mistake. He let murders and rapist live but took Ray.

Then he said "If God has an MG, Ray's up there helping him fix it."

Kind of sums up Ray. Good enough to go to heaven. Helpful enough to give even God a hand. Knowledgeable enough to fix something God couldn't. Interesting enough to work on an MG while everyone else is playing harps and singing.

Take care Ray, I miss you.

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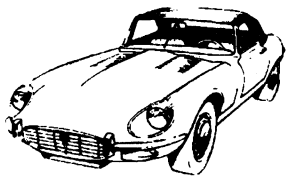

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Cecil Who?
Cecil Kimber, That's Who!
Kimber Who? Let Me Explain.

By Dan Zebarah

If you ask any MG enthusiast, "Who was Cecil Kimber?" most of them would be able to tell you that he built the first MG. However, very few would be able to tell you much more.

Cecil Kimber was born April 12, 1888 in London, the son of Henry and Fanny Kimber. His father and uncle ran a rather successful printing business. His mother was an accomplished artist.

As a boy, he learned to love sailing, learning how from an uncle who did yachting on the Thames estuary. This passion for the sea and boats became his favorite pastime.

At age 15, he went into his father's business, taking classes at the Manchester Technical School. At that time, he would bicycle for miles, in the hope of seeing a car or motorcycle. Remember, this was 1903 and both machines were rather scarce.

He eventually learned to drive a car, a 10hp Wolseley.

After two years of working for his father in the printing business, he saved up 18 Pounds, enough to buy a motorcycle, a 1906 Rex. He discovered that he could save money by performing repairs himself, eventually acquiring a 1907 Twin Rex. He started racing, winning a race against a 1909 Triumph. The race was held at dawn because of the 20 mph speed limit.

One day, while on an errand for his mother (which got him out of cutting the lawn), he was hit by a car, smashing his thigh and kneecap. After three years of unsuccessful operations, the injury healed by itself, leaving him with one leg shorter that the other. He walked with a limp from then on and was unable to ride a motorcycle.

Kimber married in 1915, while he was working at Shelfield-Simplex as assistant to the chief engineer. He worked at A. C. Cars, and eventually moved on to E. G. Wrigley, when disaster struck. Kimber had invested his life savings in Wrigley when they went bankrupt in 1921.

He moved to Oxford where he started working for William Morris. It was there the MG was born. He started modifying Morris cars, making them fast enough to win gold medals in races. These cars, called MG Super Sports, were just the beginning.

In 1924, he convinced Morris, now Lord Nuffield, to allow him to start building special cars with the MG name, cars which were designed to be MGs, not just souped up Morrises, which were being built up to that point. Nuffield consented, and on March 27, 1925, FC 7900 was registered. This car was built especially for the Land's End Trial, and earned Kimber and his passenger, Wilt Matthews, gold medals for its performance. This car was found in a scrap-yard in 1932 and restored by the Abingdon Works, being called the "The first MG, built in 1923". This was obviously an error, but the car has been called "Old Number One" ever since.

In 1927 Kimber again went to Nuffield, requesting that a separate factory be constructed to build MGs. The factory was ready soon, and in September started cranking out the 18/80 model. In 1928 two new MGs debuted, the 18/80 six and the M-type Midget. These bore a departure from Morrises of past, Kimber had designed a new radiator, whose basic form remained virtually unchange until the 1950s.

The factory moved again, to Abingdon, two years later, and the MG Car Company was registered with Kimber being appointed managing director.

After the outbreak of the war in 1939, MG (along with the other automotive manufactures) turned to defense. His organizational abilities transformed the Abingdon works into an armory in a short time. However, his ideas for wartime production did not fit in with the Nuffield organization.

He got a contract to manufacture the nose of the Albemarle bomber, but the management at Nuffield were not pleased. Kimber was accused of being a non-conformist. He was fired by Miles Thomas in 1941.

He joined Specialloid Pistons, a position to last for the duration of the war. He was also approached by John Black, Chairman of Standard, who had acquired Triumph. Perhaps he wanted Kimber to head a post war Triumph company. Nobody knows.

On February 5, 1945, while traveling on Specialloid business, the train he was on suddenly backed up, flipping the last car over into a bridge. Kimber was killed instantly.

It's ironic that a man whose motto became, "Safety Fast!" was killed in a train moving at walking speed.

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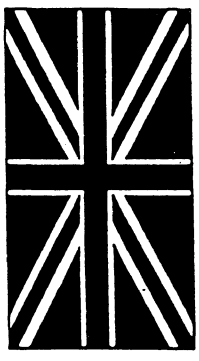

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Calendar of Events

Note: Items listed in **Bold Type are Windsor-Detroit MG Club Events.**

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www.mgcars.org.uk/wdmgcc/

April 2001

Apr 7 Kimber Birthday Bash & Stupid Ride

Apr 11 Monthly Meeting-Shield's

May 2001

May 9 Monthly Meeting-Nisbet Inn

June 2001

Jun 2 Marques on the Green, Louisville, KY

Jun 13 Monthly Meeting-Shield's

Jun 16 Strattford Trip, "Sound of Music"

July 2001

Jul 2-6 MG2001-St. Paul, Minnesota

Jul 11 Monthly Meeting-Nisbet Inn

August 2001

Aug 8 Monthly Meeting, Shield's

September 2001

Sep 12 Monthly Meeting, Nisbet Inn

October 2001

Oct 10 Monthly Meeting, Shield's

Oct 14 Fall Colour Tour

Unclassified Ads

Unclassified ads run for three issues or for however long I feel like running them. They are free for members and $5.00 for non-members. Call Ed Fleming at (248) 349-3799 to place your ad.

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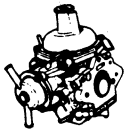

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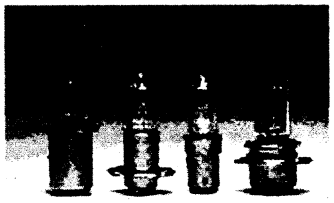

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