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ALL TO PRESERVE AND DRIVE THE TRIUMPH

marque my words

ODETOTHEGT6

BY ROGER ELLIOTT

t was late fall 1975 in the Niagara region and I was turning sixteen on December 31st. I had worked to save some money and was setting my goals on owning my first car. I had learned to drive in a Cortina and a Rover 2000TC, my father owned a BSA and my brother a Norton Commando, I was destined to own British! I had my eye on an MG Sprite (please don't hold that against me), but things changed.

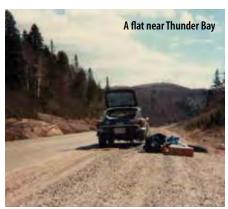
My father told me of a car he saw for sale and we should have a look. It was later in the evening when we pulled up to a house and the silhouette of a GT6 emerged. We parked beside it and Dad said "I like the lines". I was in total agreement. We were looking over the car when we were met by the owner in the driveway. He was a long haired chap and seemed quite content with himself. He explained he just bought a Z28 and needed to sell the GT6 and then handed over the keys for a test run. With Dad at the helm we ventured off down the road, Dad getting used to the gears. We hit our first red light and when it turned green we were off leaving headlights behind us and my father enthusiastically saying "this really goes", my smile at that time was from ear to ear. We purchased the GT6 that evening.

I received my license in the New Year and was off and running. My first order of business was installing an eight track player in the glove box coupled to the existing AM FM radio. You could store a number of eight tracks in the glove box and Pink Floyd, Steve Miller and Neil Young were a mere arms length away.

Most girls liked the car except for the snobby ones (they were not my type anyway). I soon discovered the GT6 was







somewhat of a birth control device. I mean a Pinto was plausible, the GT6 not so. I started thinking my mother had something to do with this.

Time progressed and like any teenager I was coming home later and later. My mother would stay up, but my father would rest listening to his police scanner. One weekend around midnight I was pulled over by the police. My last name was spelled pho-

netically over the radio followed by first name "Roger". My father got up and joined my mother in the kitchen indicating what he had just heard. I came home at a decent hour, I think it was four in the morning, most lights were on and my mother was standing by the backdoor, my father was still at the kitchen table, he looked tired. I told them I was pulled over because both taillights were out and I told the officer I

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RAGTOP | SUMMER | 2012 www.TorontoTriumph.com would tend to it first thing in the morning. He told me to make sure of that and no ticket was exchanged. The Prince of Darkness paid me the first of many visits that night and my father retired the scanner. I guess I should have had a

e had a British muscle Triumphs over German engineering, GT6 stays, 914 goes

cell phone.

I enrolled in Engineering at Lakehead University in 1979. I wanted to get as far away as I could and Thunder Bay seemed like the perfect fit. Driving the GT6 along the Superior route was a dream. In the summers I would go out west for work and when I had some free time we would drive through the mountains, the two of us were inseparable. I had installed a new AM FM stereo c/w a built in cassette player in the GT6 and was learning a computer language called Fortran (punch cards and all). Technology was flying through the roof at that time.

Fast track to the year 1987 and a May

wedding was in the works. I still had the GT6 and had also acquired a Porsche 914. There seemed something logical about driving a car in 90 degree heat with the roof off and the engine behind you verses a closed coupe with a fiery inferno in front of you. Long trips in the heat with the GT6 left you feeling a little lethargic and the occasional break was necessary.

Dawn and I bought our starter home and the garage was big enough for both cars. A few years later we bought our lovely home on the water, which we still reside in. It came with one glitch, a single car garage. A decision was made and the Porsche was sold. I uncovered the GT6 each spring and the fascination of spending another summer driving her never escaped me. The people who knew the car would wave and on occasion, someone at a stop light would shout over "I used to own one of those." I replied, "I still do".

Enter the spring of 2005 and Dawn mentions about going to Kingston in the GT6 for the Classic that is being put on by the Toronto Triumph Club, we had just become members. She sugared the conversation telling me there will be a day at Shannonville. The car was packed, including an 85 pound yellow lab secured in the back for a 45 minute drive to the kennel. The one thing about the GT6 is that you can put a lot of stuff in it. Upon arrival at the kennel the dog could not be happier to disembark the GT6, it just had to watch not to step on his tongue getting out.

Upon arrival in the hotel parking lot in



Kingston we were affectionately greeted by everyone on hand. There was a guy named Wayne who made me laugh immediately and still does to this day. Frank, who showed me a magazine layout from the seventies that shows him behind the identical GT6. A couple named Jack and Cathy who we spent a lot of time in the parking lot with and still get in trouble with to this day. There was a myriad of other great people. What a weekend!

I was told I should bring the GT6 up to British Car Day, so that fall we did and placed third... and again the following year. I was invincible, until a fourth GT6 showed up the year after.

We were now fully involved with the club, so why not buy another Triumph?

His and hers in their new two car garage

Dawn was now the proud owner of a 1976 Inca Spitfire, however we still had a single car garage. We enlisted the help of Cathy, whom we had met earlier in Kingston and she came up with a great design and construction was underway. What a dream it was to have both cars side by side in the new garage, life was complete.

That winter we were involved in a serious accident with an impaired driver and when I did get out of the vehicle I knew something was wrong with my knee. I had played a lot of sports including soccer (or football as Fid would say) and after my second scope the surgeon at that time told me to lay off the sports as I may need a knee replacement later in my years, I took his advice. Unfortunately the impact had compressed my knee to a point I was bone on bone and a replacement was necessary at the age of 48. The surgery was slated for mid September 2008 and a week later I was at British Car Day chasing Vic down with my walker to see if he would redo the GT6 seats. Not long after infection set in, I was back in surgery and then I had a portable antibiotic pump attached to me for three months. I merely looked at this as a temporary setback and was installing my new seats in the GT6, pump and all. I was optimistic I would be driving that summer, but that summer passed and so did the next with the GT6 sitting idle. The knee replacement has never been right to this day. Reality plays some funny games with you and the thought of selling the car finally crossed my mind, after all it has now been four years.

Is it a guy thing to become attached to an automobile? I suppose so. I do think we all have a cherished memento that flourishes good memories. The GT6 was that to me.

The GT6 is now for sale, 37 years after my father and I took it for its first run. In closing I say, Godspeed old friend, it has been a slice. **RAGTOP**

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marque my words

Quest for a Special Car with the TRIUMPH SMELL'

BY GARTH SADDLER

y passion for the Triumph GT6 started many years ago in my early child-hood when I was living in Jamaica. Two doors down the road from our house lived an army officer who had a GT6 Mk III. I can clearly remember hearing him starting the car and revving the engine. I would dash to the window just to get a glimpse of the car racing by and promised myself that one day I too would own such a car.

Let's fast forward a few years - actually, more than a few years! I am now living and working in Canada. One day a co-worker and very good friend started talking about cars. He mentioned that someone had given him an old Triumph. He said it was a 1968 GT6+. I could not believe it! I just had to go and see it, thinking I could buy it from him. I was amazed at this great little car. The engine started, but the car was not in drivable condition. However, seeing it rekindled my desire to own a GT6. I did everything possible to buy the car from my friend, but he was intent on keeping it.

With a newly awakened sense of enthusiasm my quest started in earnest. I probably bought all the GT6 books that were available on the market and delved into internet sites to learn as much as possible about the marque. I started to learn about the differences between the three GT6 models and concluded that I preferred

the Mk I model best. I liked the look from the front and also the interior. I knew that the rear suspension geometry was not as good as in later models, but I had no intentions of racing the car so that would not be a problem. In fact, my goal, if I found a suitable car, was to keep it as near to original factory specification as possible.

As my search continued, I realized that it was not going to be an easy task as GT6s are getting harder and harder to

find. On one occasion, I came very close to acquiring a beautiful signal red 1968 Mk I, but I was a few minutes too late - the car had been sold by the time I arrived.

During the course of my search, I became temporarily side tracked and ended up purchasing a 1980 Spitfire and later a 1974 TR6, neither of which satisfied my ultimate goal and both of which required restoration budgets beyond my means and mechanical abilities, so they were passed on to others to tackle.

One day my luck turned as I was browsing the classifieds on the TTC website. There was a 1968 GT6 Mk I for sale. I hurried to take a look. It was not perfect, but it was all original and I promised myself that I was



Garth's 1968 Mk 1 GT

not going to lose this one. A few days later, in March 2011, the car was in my driveway.

My first task was a general clean up and then I started to go through the car carefully trying to ascertain what tasks needed to be tackled. As I have never done any form of mechanical work before, I had to take my time and build up my skill level. I started with some of the more cosmetics issues. Everything seemed to work, but some of the original switches and trim had been replaced by newer, non-original, pieces. I found Canley Classics and Spitfire Graveyard, both of the UK and Spitbits in California to be very good sources for parts for the Mk I.

As soon as the weather started to get

warmer I had the car appraised and insured and it was now time to focus on driving. Armed with temporary plates and CAA card in my wallet, I was ready to see how it ran on today's roads. I was delighted when the car started immediately with only a little choke required and it seemed to purr like a kitten. I let it warm up for about 10 minutes to ensure nothing untoward was leaking and then I was off – on my first solo drive!

Not wanting to venture too far, I initially just drove around the block and then gradually started to increase my distance from home as confidence was gained. The car ran great, accelerated nicely, and tracked well. I was quite amazed at the torque of the engine. It seemed to pull well through the gears. The shifts were easy and very precise. Although the brakes worked well, I found that they did require fairly strong foot pressure... the Mk I does not have servo-assisted brakes.

My GT6 doesn't seem to suffer from the cabin heat problem that I read about in so many magazines. I found that there was ample cooling once the front vent windows were opened and properly positioned. However, I did find the interior to be quite cramped. You do tend to get very intimate if you have a passenger in the front seat. In fact "Road and Track" back in 1967 noted "The GT6 isn't a tall man's car. Our tallest driver, who is 6 ft 3, found himself too cramped to drive it with any degree of pleasure and our two 6-footers complained of their heads touching the roof." I have been told that changing to a smaller steering wheel will improve the cabin space, at least for the driver... I am still using the original stock steering wheel.

Nevertheless, this car is fun to drive. Even when compared to the modern cars that I have owned, the GT6 is by far the most enjoyable to drive. It always puts a smile on my face. It feels and sounds fantastic. No muffled exhaust. No power windows. No air conditioning. This is the real deal – the way motoring used to be.

Yes, I do face some ribbing when I return home from a drive. My daughters are always making comments like, "Dad, why



The interior look was an appealing factor in Garth's choice of the Mk 1

do you always smell like gas and exhaust when you drive the car?" They refer to it as the "Triumph Smell"

In searching for any classic car, I would recommend the following points:

- I have heard this one over and over, but it's definitely true. Buy the best car that you can afford.
- Try to find a car with no rust, good paint and a sound transmission. I believe the other things are cheaper to repair.
- View the car in the daylight and preferably when it is not raining.
- Always bring someone with you that is knowledgeable about these cars.
- Don't be afraid to check the car out thoroughly. However, be respectful to the owner and always ask if it's OK before proceeding. It's a good idea to have a flashlight and wear clothes that you are not afraid to

One of the more difficult parts of my research was estimating what I would have to pay for a GT6. These cars don't come on the market very often, and when they do, they are in varied states of repair and condition. They are not collector cars, so you have to keep that in mind when trying to negotiate a fair price. This is what I experienced:

My intentions are to continue the project as a rolling restoration, driving the car during the summer months and learning and building my confidence levels so that

I might tackle some of the larger mechanical jobs in due course.

So far this spring, I have successfully attempted the removal and refitting of my The ZS carburetors were refurbished by Jeff Palva at Paltech in Ohio

ZS Carburetors with intake manifold. These were shipped to Jeff Palya at Paltech in Ohio for full service and restoration. I had always felt that they were never adjusted correctly, and the throttle body never felt as tight as it should, and many of the springs were missing. I also took the opportunity to get my exhaust manifold sand blasted, and I later painted them with manifold paint.

My passion heightened even more for this little GT6 after taking part in last year's "Fid's Impromptu Fall Fling" driving tour and a recent trip to Campbelleville where it was thrilling driving through the twisty escarpments and cruising with other Triumph enthusiasts. As my confidence in the reliability of the GT6 is appreciating, I will certainly participate in more club trips. **RAGTOP**



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I haven't owned my GT6 for long enough to be able to offer advice on maintenance and upkeep or for the likes of engine rebuilds or any other major tasks, but the positives I like about the car are:

- Its looks (Inside and Out)
- Engine power
- Rarity of the marque
- Ease of working on the engine
- Driving feel and sound

And the only dislikes would be the somewhat cramped interior, lack of servoassist on the brakes and the difficulty in finding some of the original trim pieces.



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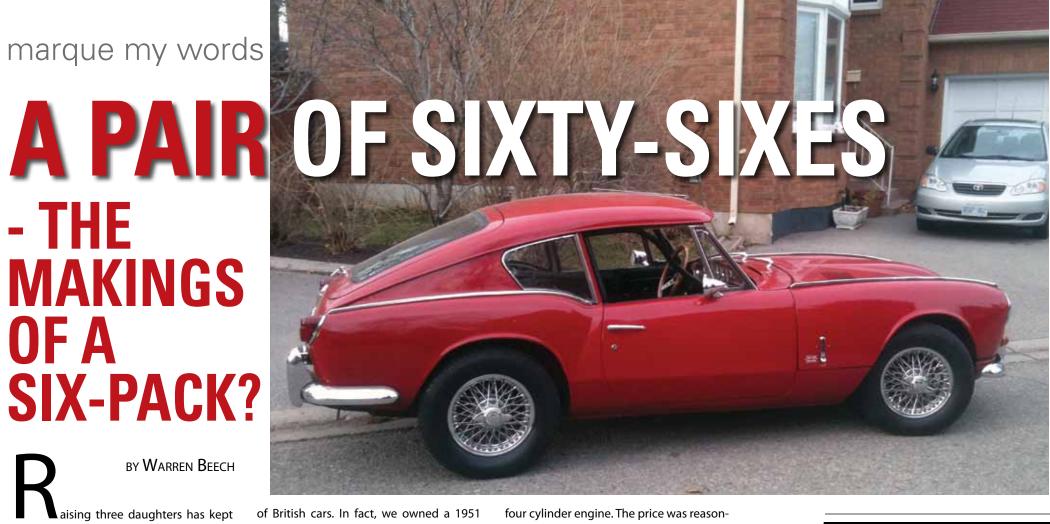
- THE **MAKINGS** OF A **SIX-PACK?**

BY WARREN BEECH aising three daughters has kept me quite busy over the years and now as young adults they have begun to leave the nest. In fact, the eldest is married and has presented me with two granddaughters within the last two years. All of a sudden, there is time for "grandpa" to get a hobby!

Over the years I would often notice, with great interest, some rusty old gems being towed off on flat beds for rebuilding and restoration and have always thought it would be fun to build a car from the ground up. So, in January 2011 my search began.

My automotive exposure stems from my family experience because I grew up with car repair activities all around me. Between 1922 and 1968, my grandfather owned one of the very first Sunoco gas stations - Rosie's Auto Service in Toronto. The shop had no hydraulic hoists, just open pits. One of my uncles owned a Supertest gas station for forty years. Another uncle was an aircraft mechanic in England during WW2 and worked on you guessed it - Spitfires!

My family moved to New Zealand for one year. I was exposed to a vast array



of British cars. In fact, we owned a 1951 Humber Super Snipe. In high school, I took auto shop and three of my friends actually owned TR6s. I worked on my own cars during high school out of financial necessity. When I look back on the things I tackled, I have to shake my head - engine rebuilds, clutch replacements, repainting, etc.

After much deliberation my hobby car selection was destined to be a small British sportscar with a strong racing heritage, slightly rare, but with an availability of new and used parts. I have always been partial to the look of coupés, in particular the Jaguar E-Type, the Volvo P1800, the MGB GT and of course the best of all, the Triumph GT6. Small, powerful, gorgeous lines, and often described as an E -Type that had been left out too long in the rain and shrunk! After I had looked at a few potential cars, I added reliability and simplicity to my purchasing criteria.

In June, I finally zeroed in on a 1966 Spitfire Mk II. The chap who owned the car had already started a body off restoration and had rebuilt or replaced a lot of the unreliable bits - perfect. The car was a little rare, easy to work on and only had a small

able too. It was just a matter of collecting it. I live in Mississauga and the Spitfire was in Renfrew. I rented a U-Haul trailer and off we went on a round trip adventure.

The seller was extremely gracious; he had labelled everything and sorted all the parts into large Rubbermaid containers. I can remember thinking at the time, "how do all these pieces go together?" When I got back home the frame and a lot of the major parts were sent off for sandblasting and painting. I also began learning more about the value of parts and pieces for my new little gem. Items like various rear ends, overdrives, upgraded carburettors, electric cooling fans and bodywork.

It was during this time of searching for parts that I came across a 1966 GT6 Mk I for sale. This little beauty was close by and the asking price was low considering all of the modifications that had been made; Weber carburettors, electric cooling fan, Dayton wire wheels and it had overdrive! Sadly the owner had passed away and his son was trying to move the car fast. Given the fact that I always loved the lines of the GT6, resistance was futile. As the lyrics of



the 1966 hit 'Bus Stop' by the Hollies says "by August she was mine" - delivered by flatbed to my house!

Then reality set in. I had purchased two Triumphs within three months! Fortunately, I only have a two car garage so the insanity hit a natural stop. The GT6 is essentially a blueprint which will be of great assistance to me when I begin assembling the Spit. It will also give me something fun to drive in the meantime. At least that was

what I thought at the time. I temporarily put the Spitfire aside and focused on getting the GT6 back on the road. The car was running, but was very rough. It needed a new windshield and a few other things prior to being certified.

After numerous attempts to get the idle speed down I began researching more about Weber carburettor upgrades and the other modifications that had been done. It became clear to me that



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so many things were changed that it was now beyond my mechanical capabilities. I had been discussing these issues with Fred McEachern who rec-

ommended Phil Allen at Britcar Service to help sort out the mess.

So it was back to U-Haul again to transport the GT6 down to Phil's shop in Woodstock. He immediately dug into the car and discovered a cracked exhaust manifold, a leaking electric fuel pump and the Webers running wild. Phil is currently in

the process of returning the car back to stock. With Fred McEachern's help, replacement carbs and manifolds have been sourced. Electronic ignition is being added and the electric cooling fan is being serviced along with a rebuilt fuel pump. Until work on the GT6 is completed I'm leav- Spitfire arriving home from Renfrew I only have a two car garage



restoration

ing the Spitfire alone.

The Spit requires panel replacement on the tub and the completion of an engine rebuild, reassembly and of course, a paint job.

Both cars are currently signal red, but began life dark green. I plan on ordering the heritage certificates and my direction has always been towards originality as much as possible with both cars. It is absolutely amazing the amount of information available on the web. I have learned so much, but there is still so much more to learn and experience.

> I joined the Toronto Triumph club in August 2011, but really wish I had learned about the club earlier. There is a wealth of experience available through the club members. My first British Car Day was amazing. It is good thing

because I liked everything I saw!

To anyone who is thinking about buying their first Triumph I suggest the

- · Join the club and use those resources to help select your car.
- · Choose a car with little or no rust, perhaps one from the southern states.
- If you can't tackle the work yourself, line up an experienced Triumph mechanic (you don't want someone learning on your car)

I view this hobby as a journey rather than a destination. It has been a lot fun so far. I have acquired a couple of fairly rare, fun vehicles. The GT6 will be a rolling restoration and my fun driver and I am looking forward to having it back on the road later this summer. The Spitfire, my "rusty old gem," will then be brought back to life. I am looking forward to a feeling of tremendous accomplishment and pride every time I start the Spitfire up. At that point the pair of Sixty Sixes will be complete - my own little 6 pack well almost! **RAGTOP**



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