

CHATTER

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THE AUSTIN HEALEY CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.



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The Cars of Bill Wood



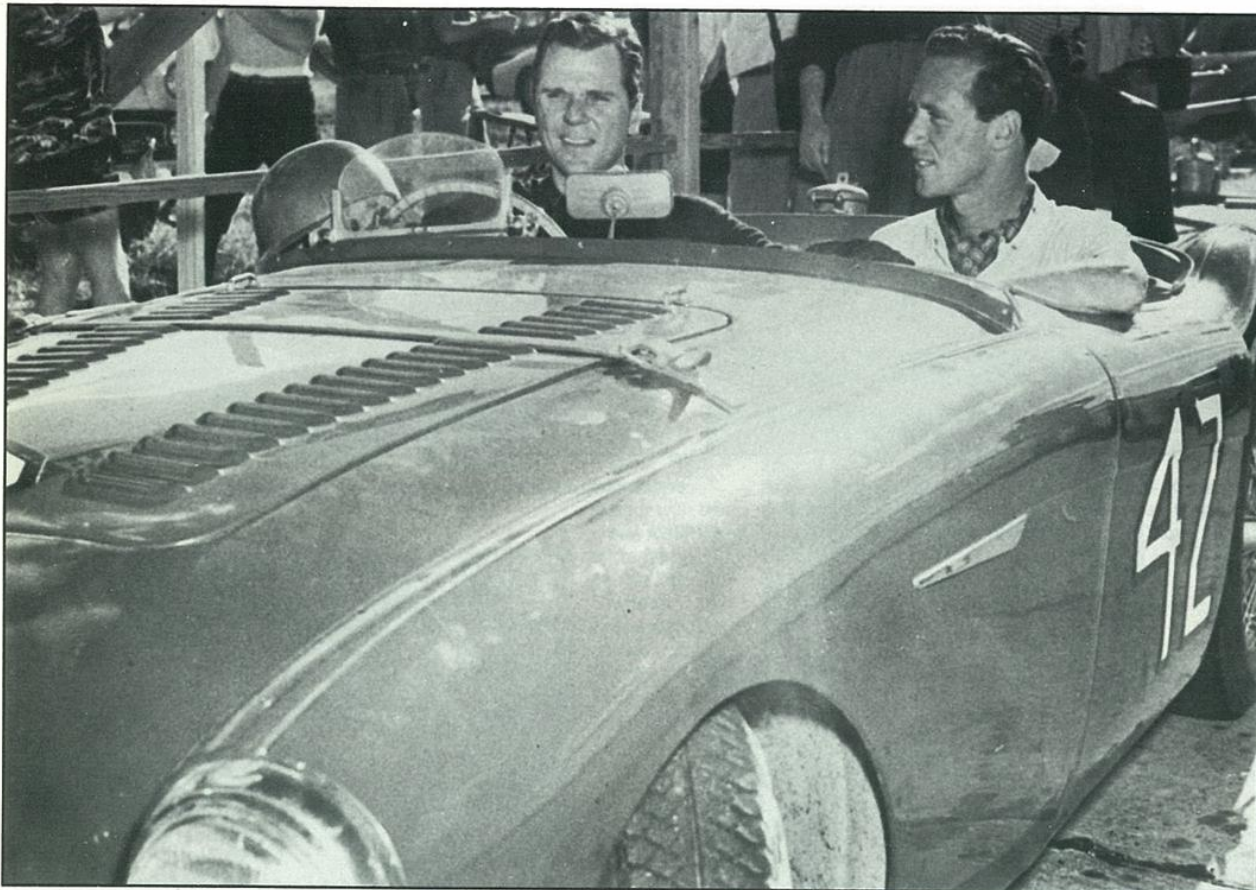
Top: Jackie Cooper's 100-S AHRS 3504 and the 1966 Sebring/LeMans Sprite Coupe represent excellent examples of Warwick's first and last racing prototypes. Bottom: A look into Bill's huge garage sees Briggs Cunningham's and Fred Allen's 100-S's and in the back along the wall the fiberglass 1961 Bugeye Sprite. In the foreground, the left front fender of Bill's immaculately restored 100-M.

Mention the name of Bill Wood and most people who've been involved with Healeys for a few years will say 100-S, past *CHATTER* editor, charter member of the Northwest Region, Healey historian, or just a nice guy.

Living in Kansas I sometimes feel removed from much of the Healey activities that often take place in areas like the Northeast where literally thousands of Healeys reside. This year the vintage races at Lime Rock gave me the excuse to call Bill to say that I'd be in the area and I'd like to come by and visit. Not only did he welcome me and Ron Yates with open arms, but his lovely wife, Lynn, fed us a hearty New England breakfast.

Bill's love of Healeys began in college at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. A fraternity brother had a 100-M, while Bill's MG just didn't measure up. He traded his MG for a Porsche, but his heart wanted a Healey. So, in 1958, he traded the Porsche for a 100-4, thinking it would be his last chance to own one before marriage, mortgage and munchkins.

His current Healey collection must rank as one of the world's finest with 3 100-S's, 2 100-M's, a 1966 Alloy body LeMans/Sebring Sprite coupe and a 1958 all fiberglass Sebring Sprite. In addition, he has a specially built display rolling chassis made by the Longbridge apprentices for the 1954 Earl's Court auto show. He also has the only Healey Fiesta Ford. This car was commissioned by Ford in 1978 as a high performance prototype, but never put into production.



Jackie Cooper at the wheel with co-driver Roy Jackson Moore in the green 100-S at Sebring where they finished 40th after suffering electrical problems.

But Bill's first love is one of the first 100-S's built, Jackie Cooper's spruce green 100-S, AHRS 3504. Originally built in 1955 to campaign with 6 other 100-S's owned by Briggs Cunningham, Bob Fergus, Jim Ferguson, Fred Allen and Vincent Sardi, and a Dr. Fenner. They took delivery of these cars at Sebring and raced together all summer at places like Cumberland, Edenvale, Watkins Glen, Lime Rock and the East Coast racetracks.

Sometime after Lime Rock the cars were sold; they'd raced and now they were second-hand racecars. Cunningham's car ended up in San Francisco and ultimately in Euclid, Ohio. The Cooper car was sold to a fellow in Sparta, New Jersey and eventually landed in Brooklyn, New York with a guy who wanted to put an MGB engine into it. That's when Bill came into the picture.

Bill had bought a basket case 100-S earlier that was missing a grill, among other things. He advertised in Road and Track looking for a grill and got a call from a guy who had acquired a 100-S engine and transmission and wanted to get rid of it. Bill picked up the drivetrain and later discovered that the serial numbers belonged to the racecar driven by the famous actor, Jackie Cooper, in 1955. Still later Bill found out about a 100-S without an engine whose owner was considering putting in an MGB engine. Rushing to the scene of the intended crime, Bill discovered the decaying hulk of the Cooper car. Bill eventually traded a motorcycle for the car.



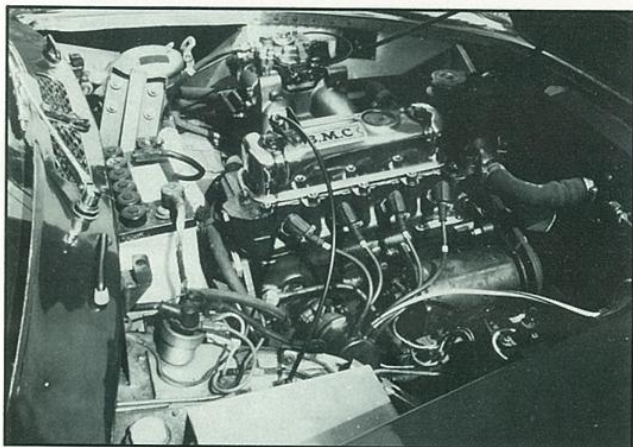
Bill's beautifully restored 100-S was a real eye catcher in the Concours d'elegance at the Lime Rock racecourse.



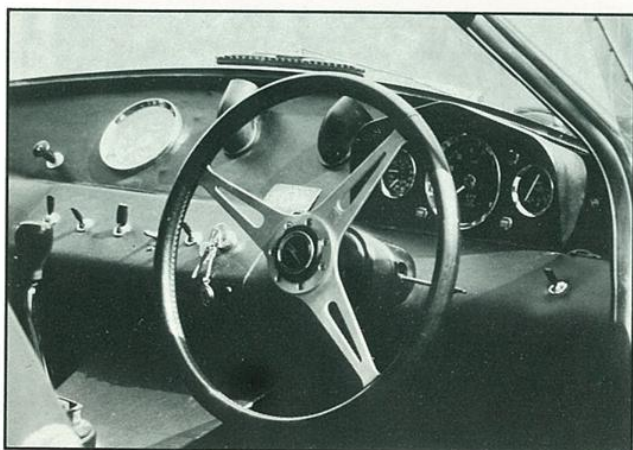
Front cooling scoop opens manually. Donald had hoped that this streamlined Sprite would prolong the series, but even impressive racing victories could not prevent its end.



Unique cast alloy "Healey" wheels provide a distinctive detail.



Highly modified Cooper "S" Austin engine propelled this car to speeds exceeding 150 MPH.



Spartan interior is both functional and comfortable.

Over the years, Bill has owned 8 of the fifty-five 100-S Healeys produced, plus the parts of 2 other S's. These have included the Cunningham and Allen, and Fenner Sebring racers. Each car has been a little different, owing to the hand-built nature of the Warwick operation. For example, a few had steel doors instead of the lighter, but flimsy aluminum doors. Bill has been fortunate to own a lot of cars to look at, document and compare. None of his cars had complete or original interiors. Usually the trunk compartments survived intact, but most of the rest were missing something.

The restoration of AHRS 3504 was completed last year by Tom Kovacs of Fourintune, another Healey fanatic. Between the two of them they drove their wives crazy, but the finished result is one of the most beautiful and authentic 100-S Healeys in existence.

Bill's second love is the 1966 LeMans Sprite coupe. History on this particular car is sketchy, but he knows that it was brought to Sebring as a backup/practice car. It was not raced and after the event was bought by Royston Motors in Philadelphia for a showroom display. When this dealer closed its doors in the 80's, Bill purchased the car. It has less than 1,000 actual miles on it and has the original paint, interior and even decals.

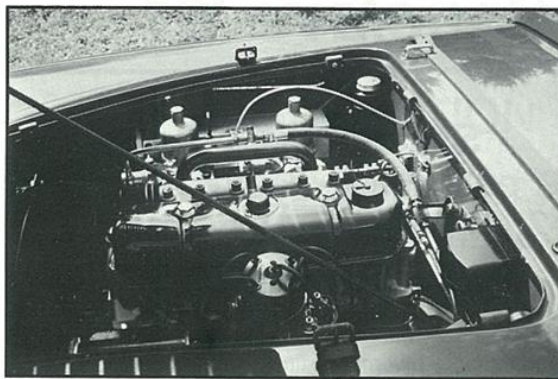
Bill drove both of these cars to the Lime Rock vintage races over the Labor Day weekend. The 100-S entered the concours on Sunday and was grouped with other racecars that included a newly restored Lister, a very rare alloy body LeMans Sunbeam Tiger coupe, and the winningest 289 Cobra in history.

The Sprite coupe was driven to Monday's final day of racing and was parked prominently in the Team Healey pit area. This car attracted considerable attention, especially from Englishmen Colin Pearcey who owns a very rare 1961 alloy body Sebring Sprite built by John Sprinzel. Colin's discussions with Bill confirmed that the green coupe shared the Cooper "S" engine modifications incorporated in earlier Sprites driven at Sebring by Pat and Sterling Moss. Affectionately known as "screamers", these highly modified engines are capable of sustained running at over 8,000 rpm.

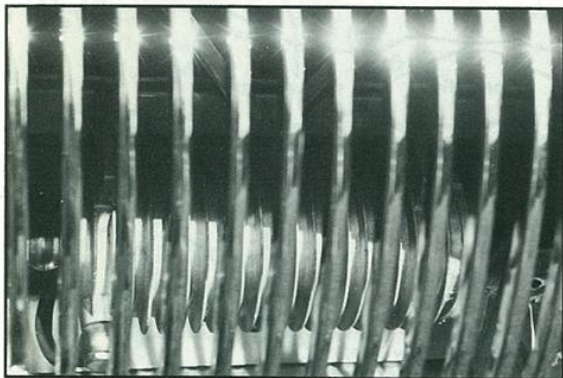
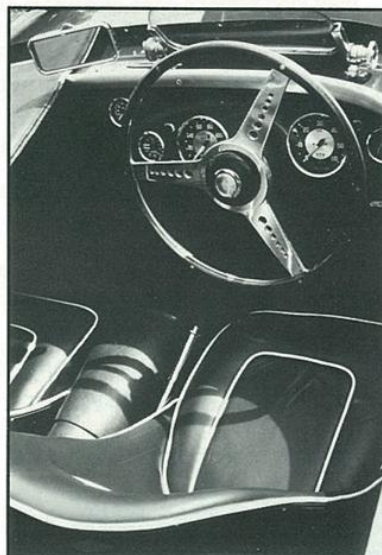
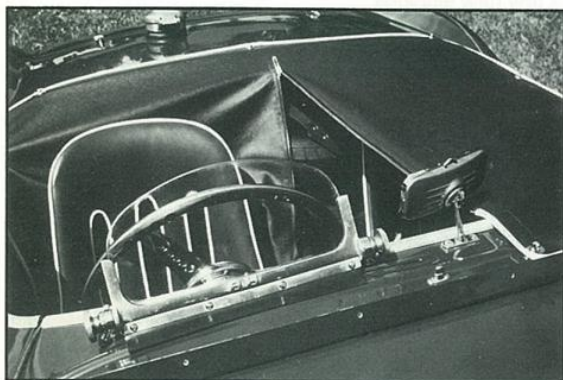
Bill and Lynn Wood share a love of the Austin-Healey motorcars that is amazing. They were part of a small group of people back in the 70's that formed the Northeast Region of our club, holding one of the first meetings in their driveway. They have fond memories of the first Cape Cod meets held originally in a member's home. For over five years they published *CHATTER*.

Bill is amazed at the incredible escalation in prices now brought at auctions around the world. Most of his Healeys were purchased just before the junkyard, literally saving forgotten pieces of Healey history until others who share his love could restore and cherish these wonderful cars.

The visit to Bill and Lynn Wood's home was more than a special treat, it was a religious experience. One can only hope that they will bring these historic cars to Conclave '91 at Sturbridge Village so you can all see these beautiful motorcars.



Top: 100-S engine. Right & Left shows interior with dark green leather and white piping. Middle left: 100-S unique cylindrical oil cooler. Lower left: the Wood family - daughter Beth, wife Lynn, Bill and son Billy.



RENEWALS ARE COMING DUE!!

You will be sent by first class mail the invoice for your 1991 renewal dues to the Austin-Healey Club of America around the middle of January, 1991. You should send in your check before March 15, 1991 **to your local membership chairperson**, or to me if you are not a part of an area club. Failure to return your dues on time will constitute a drop from our membership roles and missing *CHATTER* each month.

Edie Anderson, Membership
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