

## Pete Thelander Bio for GoF West

I was asked by the Steering Committee to write an autobiography to show my MG background. Well, I have been into cars since the fourth grade, and MGs since I was in the army in Germany in 1955. There was only a short period when I got home after serving in the army that I thought the TF was not suited to the long straight roads around Chicago so I sold it before getting married and returning to college at the University of Illinois.

It was while we were back up to Chicago for a weekend visit with our parents that I was cruising around and spotted a TF in the back of a used car lot. Of course I had to stop and look at it. Low and behold, it was the car I had sold earlier! Nothing would do but that I had to buy it back. And I have had it ever since.

On the road back down to Champaign it developed a rod knock and thus began my lifelong association with the inner workings of the TF...and eventually other MGs as well, both the earlier and later models. I have owned an MG from every class they built – from the MMM to the MGC GT.

Upon graduation I had taken a job in Connecticut. Fran was pregnant and I took her to the hospital and brought her home with our first-born son in the TF. A couple of winters in Connecticut convinced us to seek employment in California. By then Fran was pregnant again and it became imperative to get a bigger car -- but I was not selling the TF again! We settled on the American VW, a Chevy Corvair Station Wagon (which I still have – but that's another story).

I got a job at McDonnell Douglas Aerospace Division in Huntington Beach which was building the third stage of the Saturn V lunar rocket. On a trip back to Chicago to see our parents, we took a side trip to Champagne to see friends, including Carl Cederstrand who owned a TD, only to learn that he had received his PhD and was living in Orange County, not very far from where we lived.

Upon returning home, I found Carl, and he told me about the New England MGT Register and their semiannual Gatherings of the Faithful. We were encountering more and more local MG people and started the Vintage MG Club of Southern California. Two additional MG clubs had grown in the greater Los Angeles area. We were in contact with one another and decided to put on a GoF out here. We mentioned it to Al Moss, and he was onboard immediately. So in October of 1973 the first GoF West was held in Santa Barbara, and has been held every year since except for 2021 when Covid force it

to be postponed until 2022. I chaired the Steering Committee for the first twenty years, but now I am just in an advisory role.

In January 1972 I managed to acquire the 1934 NE race car (one of only seven made) and an early 1936 SA Saloon. Both ran, but not very well. I did a wee bit of dabbling trying to make them run better but soon concluded that they were both beyond my meager MG experience. The SA was sold off, but I vowed to restore the NE after the kids were grown up.

By 1992 the children were through college and married, so it was finally time to undertake the NE restoration. It made its first appearance at the Monterey Historic Races in 1993 and participated there in all but two of the years until 2015. In 2003 I took it back to Northern Ireland for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the Ards T.T. Races for which it had been designed in 1934.

Covid came in in 2019, and I had reached an age I likely should not be racing any longer. But we have been to GoF West every year, except for 2021 when Covid caused it to be postponed.