PROMOTING TRIUMPHS AROUND THE WORLD
WITH OUR SISTER CLUB
THE ISLE OF WIGHT TRIUMPH CLUB, U.K.

Our DCTRA Veterans
NEXT CLUB MEETING
Sunday, January 11, 2015
BUSINESS MEETING & Election of Officers
Starts @ 1:00 p.m.

Claim Jumpers Restaurant
1530 W Baseline Rd; Tempe, AZ 85283

2014 CLUB OFFICERS

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ADVERTISING
ONE YEAR placement in the newsletter AND a link on the www.dctra.org website:

AD SIZE – COST
FULL PAGE….$100
½ PAGE:……………..$60
¼ PAGE ……..$ 35
BUSINESS CARD:….$25

On the Cover: Twelve Veterans attending our Nov 11, 2014 DCTRA Business Meeting on Veteran’s Day.
Prez Sez – January 2015

John Nuss, President

Hello everyone,

Happy New Year to all. I trust the holiday season was joyous and fun for all.

Changes for the club with some new or repeating officer. I think all who have allowed me to be president of the organization. I look forward to continuing attending the meetings without the anxiety of presiding. I was in the Northern Ohio Valley Region of SCCA years ago and they presented a “Spark Plug Award” to members at the end of the year. Points were given for attending meetings, holding office, organizing an event and participating an event. I’m willing to organize that.

I hear talk about dynasty- Bush / Clinton. Maybe there will be a Nuss dynasty?

See you all January 11, 2015 at our annual meeting at the Claim Jumper restaurant. We will not meet at Denny's this month.

Drive those Triumphs!

John C. Nuss

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EDITOR’S DESK

George Montgomery, Editor

Our November business meeting this year, happened to come on Veteran’s Day. Denine Mur’ asked to take a photo of all of the DCTRA veterans. She sent me a copy of the photo and asked if it could be added to the December issue of the TRiumph TRumpeter in recognition of their efforts and sacrifices. I said yes, however forgot when it came time to publish it. So… here it is on the cover of the January issue. Thanks, Denine, for your efforts and thoughtfulness.

A feature story in this issue is a rather long one. I found this story in the Hemming’s Classic Car issue for April 2014. Although, not about a Triumph, I thought it was an interesting one about a homemade sports car built during the ‘50’s. It was built from salvage yard pieces and almost had a TR2 brake system. It was interesting to follow his thought process. I liked this story because of my passion for history and for automobiles. I hope that you enjoy it as well. Please let me know either way, good or bad.

This month there will be no business meeting at Denney’s on the 2nd Tuesday but instead at our annual Election Brunch. This year Ron Gurnee has arranged for us to have a fabulous menu choice at the Claim Jumper Restaurant; 1530 W Baseline Rd; Tempe, AZ, on Sunday January 11th. They will open the doors for us at 11am and begin service at noon. The cost
of the dinner (menu selection elsewhere in this newsletter) will be $20 per person. Our Club will pick up the balance. Please RSVP to rongurnee72@centurylink.net or telephone him at (480) 816-0836.

See you there on the 11th!

George

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January 2015 Slate of Officers

The bad news is... Marie has decided not to run for treasurer. The good news there is another willing candidate, Kathy Nuss. I think that will be made official to the annual meeting at Claim jumper’s in Tempe.

The officers at this point are:
President Stu Lasswell
Vice Pres. Matt Reynolds
Secretary Betsy Kavash
Treasurer Kathy Nuss

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Calendar of Events
Matt Reynolds

DCTRA & British Auto Events 2015

January 4th - Mini Club Scavenger Hunt (Contact sponsor by Fri Jan 2nd)
January 8th - British Clubs Pancakes in the Park
January 11th - DCTRA Election Brunch-Claim Jumper-Tempe
January 11th - Arizona Concours de Elegance – Biltmore
January 10th-18th Russo-Steele Auto Auction
January 10th-18th - Barrett-Jackson Auction
January 30th – 31st – Tubac Car Show (sponsored by Santa Cruz Valley Car Nuts)
February-March (?) - Tech Session at Horton’s
March 21st-22nd - Highland Games & British Auto Show

On-going events:
Saturday Night cruise @ Kmart, Power Rd & Hampton.
Minutes

DCTRA Triumph Club Meeting
December 9, 2014

DCTRA Meeting Minutes – December 09, 2014
President John Nuss called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM at DENNY’S RESTAURANT, 670 N. Scottsdale Rd. Tempe, AZ

ATTENDEES 39 total. 36 members and 3 visitors signed the attendance sheet. All the visitors promptly joined tonight. Thank you! 15 members drove TRs to the meeting and 2 members drove a different LBC.


Visitors: Visitors tonight were Mike Dolimpio (owner Delta Motor Sports) who has been absent for more than a year and looking forward to being in the club. He drove his 1973 Stag.
Frank Dominguez came tonight because of Mike and drove his Pimento Red 1974 TR6; happy to be here. Chaz Kopacz is also happy to be at the meeting and proud he made it. He got his BRG 1972 TR6 on the road 2 months ago; is anxious about driving home (12 miles); something about not all the electrics are working. (I heard from him later that he made it home without incident). Each joined the DCTRA tonight.

MINUTES from last month’s meeting
No changes were made and the November Minutes were moved and accepted as printed in the Newsletter.

TREASURER
John Reynolds gave the Treasurer's Report noting expenses for name tags and cash in. He provided total amounts in the two checking accounts: one for the club and the other reserved for the next Triumphhest. Copies of the recent (Nov) bank statements were provided to the secretary.

**MEMBERSHIP**
Bev Peterson reported by her calculations we have 108 paid-up memberships representing 169 people in the club (increase of 4 memberships and 7 people). The available name tags were distributed to new members in attendance or to those who ordered them. More will be distributed as they are completed. Bev also read the names of new members who haven’t picked up their New-Member-Packets to see who may know them or where they live (to drop off) as mailing the packets may be cost-prohibitive. A complete list may be provided later.

**NEWSLETTER**
George Montgomery hopes all enjoy the Newsletter but had apologies some errors that he called to our attention and corrected. As always, he wants your stories and requests your input for any articles or items of interest. Please send directly to George for inclusion into the Newsletter.

**A.A.H.C**
There was no report from our representative on the Arizona Automobile Hobbyist Council, so the club Secretary looked on their webpage and found the following information in case anyone is interested in attending their next meeting. AAHC battle cry is “UNITED WE DRIVE, DIVIDED WE PARK!!”

Next AAHC public meeting:  Jan 6, 2015 7:00 PM
Location: Dang It Herb’s Restoration Shop
650 W. McKellips Dr. Mesa, AZ
Dogs will be served, please RSVP to 623-204-9172
Doors open at 6:30pm, Meeting at 7pm
Agenda will include - Updates on Toll Road and other Legislative Issues, and a Special Treat, “A Detailing Clinic” by M3S Mobile Detailing (Learn the Dos and Don’ts of Detailing)
Raffle will include tickets to Barrett-Jackson, Russo Steele and the Silver Auction at Fort McDowell
For more information see [http://www.arizonaautomobilehobbyistcouncil.com/](http://www.arizonaautomobilehobbyistcouncil.com/).

**EVENTS**
Matt Reynolds reviewed the upcoming events (2014) which will also be provided in an email to the membership since most will be over by the time this is published: DCTRA December Holiday Party hosted by Armand and Ann LaCasse is December 13; the Christmas Lights Tour is Dec 20.
2015 Events: DCTRA Election Brunch January 11, 2015 at the Claim Jumper (McClintock & Elliott) 11:00 AM (see details elsewhere in Newsletter); 2nd Annual Arizona Concours d’Elegance at the Biltmore January 11, 2015; Car Auctions – Russo and Steele (January 14-
18); Barrett-Jackson (January 10-18); Tubac Car Show January 30-31, 2015 sponsored by Santa Cruz Valley Car Nuts.

**TECHNICAL**

Armand reported he “fixed the lights in the backyard!” The real tech session started after the meeting in the Denny’s parking lot where there were 15 Triumphs, one Morris Minor and a new MINI for all to see, ‘kick the tires’, tell stories and look under the hood. (I left the restaurant at 8:22 PM and there were still TR cars and a group of members standing around the parking lot chatting).

**OLD BUSINESS**

John Nuss asked any new nominations for the 2015 DCTRA Board? There were discussions and talk of others but none confirmed. (George Montgomery nominated Marie for Treasurer, but she declined; Betsy agreed to stay as Secretary) so here is where we stand for the upcoming Election Brunch.

- Stu Lasswell nominated for President.
- Matt Reynolds agreed to serve as VP again.
- Betsy has agreed to continue as Secretary.
- John Reynolds again said he will serve but if anyone is nominated he will (willingly) give way.

Nominations still open. Send any nominations via email to John Nuss at any time (self-nominations accepted). Nominations will also be taken from the floor at the Election Brunch at Claim Jumpers. Please make plans to be there. Details should be provided elsewhere in this newsletter or via email from John Nuss. Doors open at 11 with salad served at noon. There will be separate parking available for the TRs. Cost $20.00 per person. Meal includes beverage, salad and entrée’ with fresh tomato herb bread, complimentary dessert and champagne toast.

**Charity Donations Report:**

As promised, the committee formed last month by Ron Gurnee, Jeff Fairman, George Montgomery and Betsy Kavash, presented its proposal to the DCTRA members for charity donations by the club. The committee kept in mind the goal from our discussion last month to keep it a local charity and not-for-profit so most money will go for operations and not salaries. The committee met via email and in person. George Montgomery did financial research using the Charity Navigator a website that rates various charities with High Operation and Low Salary being the most desired and highest rating. George brought the printed financial report and rating for each to the meeting for review by the membership. The committee proposed the following two charities as the best choices that met these goals. These two were also selected because they are new to the DCTRA and it was thought our $600 ($300 each) will have more "bang for the buck" to these particular charities rather than to similar but larger or more widely known charities.

1) HALO Animal Rescue – [http://www.halorescue.org](http://www.halorescue.org) 2500 South 27th Avenue Phoenix, AZ 85009. HALO (Helping Animals Live On) is a private, 501(c) (3), non-profit organization founded in 1994 by Michel Herstam and Heather Allen, out of their homes in Phoenix, AZ. HALO is a no-kill facility that provides temporary shelter to abandoned cats and dogs until
they can be adopted into a permanent home. With just under 90,000 dogs and cats entering Maricopa County Animal Care and Control and the Arizona Humane Society’s shelters each year and approximately only half of these pets leaving the shelters alive; HALO does its best to save as many lives as possible.

2) Fresh Start Women’s Foundation – [http://www.freshstartwomen.org](http://www.freshstartwomen.org) 1130 E. McDowell Road Phoenix, AZ 85006  Fresh Start Women’s Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting women who want to thrive, and empowers them to transform their lives through education and engagement. Whether a woman is going through a divorce, just became unemployed or is looking for something new in her life, Fresh Start Women’s Foundation empowers women to transform their lives through education and engagement. In 2002 the Jewell McFarland Lewis - Fresh Start Women’s Resource Center opened in October.

A motion was made by Armand LaCasse to send the funds to these charities and seconded by Jim Bauder. Both Armand and Jim and the Club offered thanks to the Committee for their work and agreement of these charities. After brief discussion and answering any questions the motion passed. John Reynolds to send $300 each to the above charities on behalf of DCTRA.

NEW BUSINESS

Jim Bauder brought various parts and posters (e.g. Copper State 1000 poster) to give away. Some he brought inside to the meeting, others were in the boot of his TR. See him after the meeting.

Kiwi has TR6 parts for sale and listing of the parts in a flyer addressed to Triumph Lovers announcing parts for sale after completion of the DCTRA Meeting. See Kiwi or call him at 480-986-1268 or Cell 760-505-8504.

Paul, a new member last month, thanked Ron Gurnee for his help with his TR7. He was looking for TR7 parts and came to the meeting last month, not expecting too much of the Club, and was pleasantly surprised with our depth and members willing to help.

Regalia: Betsy announced there were tee shirts and grille badges for sale; that she had samples and that Ron Gurnee had license plate frames for sale. Quick summary: DCTRA License plate holders: Ron reported he sold 44 license plate holders to date. He has brushed chrome and black license frames still for sale at $10. They will look good on any car! See Ron for purchase. Tee Shirts: Betsy took orders tonight for 8 Tee Shirts. DCTRA Grille Badges: Betsy sold 3 Grille Badges tonight with the total sold 19 out of 100 purchased (balance 81). Please consider purchasing a Grille Badge ($25 ea.) to help defray the cost. Already have a grille badge or don’t have a grille badge bar for your car? Include a smart wooden base to display it on your shelf. See Betsy for purchase. Thank you! Side note on the DCTRA Lapel Pins: Last year we sold to the membership 33 out of the 100 lapel pins that were ordered from Lapel Pins R Us. Lapel pins are now included with the
new member packets, so the balance of the pins (67) have been given to the Membership Chair for new members. None left for sale.

AJOURN
With no other business meeting ended 7:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Kavash
Secretary

NEXT CLUB MEETING
Sunday, January 11, 2015
Election Brunch & Business Meeting
Claim Jumper (McClintock & Elliott)
The doors open at 11:00 AM, serving starts at Noon

January 2015 Membership Report:

NEW MEMBERS:  Nothing new to be reported for December activity.

RENEWED:

Dues are $18.00 per year with a discount for multiple year’s subscriptions.
For membership information, contact:  PETE or BEV PETERSON
at 480-488-4872 or email: packratpete@gmail.com or bev@carefree.org

Pete or Bev Peterson
DCTRA Membership
PO Box 3126
Carefree, AZ  85377

Application form on page 25
It’s Election Time!!

Claim Jumper Restaurant 1530 W Baseline; Tempe, AZ
An Interesting Car, Nevertheless
Lost and Found overflow – the Chamberlain Special

story by Daniel Strohl

Photos by Don Chamberlain, courtesy Jeff McKay.

All too often we’re left either without a clue about many of the homebuilt sports cars of the 1950s and 1960s, or else we’re left piecing together their histories from breadcrumbs and moldering photos. Not so with the Don Chamberlain Special, which we included in the Lost and Found department in the April 2014 issue of *Hemming’s Classic Car*, which should be hitting newsstands and mailboxes about now.

See, Jeff McKay, who wrote us about the car, had recently bought it from Don Chamberlain himself and got Don to not only supply some photos of the fiberglass-bodied Studebaker-powered roadster when it was new, but also write down the car’s complete history. We provided a hyper-quick summary of that history in Lost and Found, but felt it deserved to be told in full. So pour yourself a “cuppa” (when we say complete history, we mean complete) and spend some time learning about a spectacular car from the man who built it with his own two hands.

My name is Don Chamberlain and presented here is a history of the small fiberglass roadster that I built many years ago, known variously as The Chamberlain Special, Chamberlain’s Chariot and a few others – but mostly known as “The Little Blue Car.” While this is intended to be the story of the car itself – the concept, design, construction and the several years that I drove it over 22,000 miles, it is also necessarily autobiographical at times. There are three chapters to the story, the Studebaker engine chapter which lasted for about seven years and 22,000 miles, and the Buick engine chapter which, unfortunately, was never completed. The final chapter came in January 2013, when I sold the car, somewhat reluctantly, to Jeff McKay. I felt much better about the deal when he said he intended to restore it, even with a Studebaker engine! Also part of the deal was that I would document the history of the car to the best of my recollection, so here goes.

In the early fifties there were a number of fiberglass bodies available for the home builder, most of them intended to be installed on modified 1930s or 40s Ford chassis. One of the
first, and most popular, was the Glasspar G-2 which was designed by Bill Tritt. Bill was a very talented designer who was also responsible for the line of Glasspar fiberglass boats (one of which I still have) and by coincidence was a college classmate and friend of my uncles. Interestingly, the Kaiser-Darren began life as a Glasspar G-2, then was highly modified by Dutch Darren.

Another descendant of the G-2 was the Woodill Wildfire. Woody Woodill was a Willis dealer in Orange County and planned to market the Wildfire as a complete car, built using contemporary Willis components and a slightly modified G-2 body made by Glasspar. By 1953 I was married with two small children and even the least expensive fiberglass body was beyond my means and I wasn’t too crazy about the Ford chassis anyway. I had by then pretty well settled on my design and built a 1/10 scale model. I was thinking of a full-size plaster model and a fiberglass female mold to make my own body.

In January 1954, I had a chance to buy a rolling, running chassis from a 1936 Willis model 77. The model 77 was built from 1933 to 1936 and was a small, light car with a 4 cylinder engine. Because they were small and light, a lot of them still appear at drag strips, although modified and fitted with monster engines. Introduced in the depths of the depression, the 77 was relatively cheap, economical, but under powered. It was also, in my opinion, ugly. It was supposed to resemble some of the small European cars but with its odd rearward slanting grille, the weird wheels resembling large Jell-O molds and the headlights nestled between the hood and fenders apparently searching the sky, it was never a big seller. For my purposes however, it was perfect and since the body was gone, I didn’t really care about the styling and it was cheap. When I brought it home on New Year’s Day, 1954, we celebrated by driving it around the ranch with an apple box for a seat. Soon after, we moved back to San Diego and lived in a rented duplex for several years, with a separate one car garage. Looking back, it is amazing that almost all the construction of the car took place in that one car garage.

The Willys had a wheelbase of 100 inches, simple leaf spring suspension and when the frame was “zee-ed” and shortened, the wheelbase became 94 inches and with a tread of 51 inches it was almost identical to the dimensions of the MG TD. So, my final design was downsized a bit to fit the modified Willys chassis. I had begun to envision building and selling fiberglass bodies to MG owners, a popular modification at the time. Since 1951, I had been working for Convair in San Diego as a design engineer in the fuselage design
department and in 1955 I was assigned as the liaison engineer between the fuselage group and the mockup shop. The shop was building a wooden mockup of the F-102A interceptor (later designated the F-106). They used plywood bulkhead formers covered with plywood sheets and strips, and with lots of filler and a coat of paint, it made a very presentable looking airplane. Being made of wood, it was easily modified when the Air Force came for their reviews. After that experience, the plaster model idea went out the window and I began planning my plywood mockup. I received a lot of useful hints on the details of construction and finishing from some of the old-timers in the shop.

In the meantime, I was working on the Willys chassis. The weird original wheels were jettisoned in favor of more conventional 15 inch wheels from a 1940’s Plymouth and shod with 5.50 X15 tires – retreads, much less expensive than new. I had purchased an oxy-acetylene welding outfit and taught myself to weld. Without the welding set the project would have been dead in the water. The frame had channel section side rails and a channel x-member stiffener, typical of the day. I began by removing the x-member, “zee-ing” the frame over the front and rear axles which as mentioned before, shortened the wheelbase to 94 inches. It also lowered the center section to an acceptable floor height for a sports car. The x-member pieces were then used to box in the side rails; slightly smaller, they nested perfectly into the frame sides and when welded in place, formed box section side rails. The purpose of the x-member was to provide torsional stiffness for the frame, so with its removal, something else had to be done. The answer was a couple of 3 inch diameter tubular cross members; one up front which also provided the base for the rear engine mount, and one at the rear, also serving as the forward mounts for the rear springs. These tubes were found at the Convair salvage yard, were made of chromemoly steel and were originally intended for use as the connecting torque tube for the elevators on the ill-fated Convair R-3Y flying boat. The salvage yard was a valuable resource, providing many bits and pieces during construction.

In addition to the cross members, I began to weld on superstructure framing, constructed mostly of various sizes of electrical conduit. Salvage yard again. This secondary structure supported the radiator, firewall, instrument panel, floor boards, door hinges and the bulkhead behind the seats.

Even with the frame modified, the arch of the springs made the chassis sit up too high. The answer was to disassemble the springs and over an improvised anvil, beat them into a flatter profile, following a chalk outline on the garage floor. Crude, but effective, and after more than fifty years, those springs have retained their modified shape. Monroe tubular shock absorbers were fitted (new ones) to replace the oddball original friction shocks.

The next item was to choose an engine. Small engine choices were limited in the early fifties, at least anything that was within my budget. Rated at only 48 horsepower and with no overdrive, the original Willys engine was out. The Ford V8 60 was an option and a number of them had been installed in MGs. However, with the Ford torque-tube drive it required extensive modification to adapt it to an open driveline and it also had no overdrive option. An overdrive was essential because the Willys rear axle ratio was 4.3 and at freeway speeds engine revs would be unacceptably high. That left the Studebaker Champion; it was a small six-cylinder engine, 80 horsepower instead of 48, had an overdrive transmission and weighed only slightly more than the original Willys. Other small engines
were around, but most of them were too new to have found their way to the wrecking yards at reasonable prices.

Thus began the engine search; I located a 1948 Studebaker Champion sedan, running, but with a pretty well bent up body. I got it for 35 dollars. Besides the engine, transmission and overdrive, the car donated the radiator, headlight rims, steering column, shift mechanism, drive shaft, windshield wipers, turn signals, gas tank, bumpers and other miscellaneous parts. The rear window became the first windshield, but it proved to be too small. It was replaced with one from a '55 – '57 Chevy with the wraparound corners cut off as explained later.

The Borg-Warner overdrive, common to many cars of that era, was electrically shifted; when the car reached a predetermined speed, the driver would momentarily lift his foot off the gas and the overdrive would click in. With the addition of a switch, one could activate the overdrive at any speed and have overdrive first and second gears in addition to its intended use as the top gear, effectively providing a rudimentary six speed transmission. First gear overdrive wasn’t good for much, but second over was very useful in traffic and climbing moderate hills.

The engine nestled right into the frame, but the carburetor stuck up too high. A glass bowl Holly carburetor from an early 50’s Ford flathead six was much shorter, bolted right on to the Studebaker manifold and solved the problem. The car ran perfectly with this carb and it never needed any further adjustments or attention.

A friend cut the drive shaft to length on his lathe and the u-joint fitting for the Willys rear axle was arc welded on, the only professional welding on the car. No attempt was made to balance the drive shaft but I had been lucky and never had any driveshaft vibration problems.

The Willys had cable-operated mechanical brakes, not suitable for the high performance car I envisioned, so the answer was a 1939 Willys sedan from which the hydraulic brake system was salvaged.

The original Willys steering box was retained but the steering column stuck up at 45 degrees, so the steering shaft was cut just above the steering box, reconnected with a
universal joint and the column lowered to fit a driver in a bucket seat. Salvage yard again, I found the perfect size u-joint from a Convair 340 flap drive mechanism.

The original column shift wouldn’t do for a sports car, so I was able to re-position the shift lever on a bracket I fabricated and bolted to the top of the transmission. It worked quite well; the shift lever was a near perfect size and as they said in the magazines, “fell readily to hand”.

This was about the time that suspended brake and clutch pedals came along, rather than protruding up through the floor as they had for decades. This arrangement was actually much better in terms of fitting into the chassis. The master cylinders from the ’48 Studebaker and the ’39 Willys were identical so they were bolted together and mounted on a bracket welded to the firewall support structure. Pedal arms were fabricated from one-half by one inch steel bar stock (yes, salvage yard) and suspended from the same bracket. I planned a hydraulically actuated clutch which was easier and less complicated than levers, bell cranks or cables. However, very few cars had gone to hydraulic clutch actuation, the only one I knew of was the Triumph TR-2 and their parts department quoted me a price about three times the cost of the engine. Well, after all, it was imported and it was British. The answer was to adapt a front wheel brake cylinder from a Chrysler product. In the fifties, they had a unique front brake configuration using two separate single-ended wheel cylinders (instead of the conventional double-ended cylinders) independently actuating both front brake shoes. One of these cylinders was mounted on the bell housing with a welded-up bracket, an adjustable push rod was made to match up with the clutch throw out bearing lever and after some initial adjustments this system worked flawlessly for the next 20,000 miles.

With the chassis more or less complete and running, I towed the car to the old Otay Mesa drag strip east of San Diego, an abandoned WW II emergency landing field. The Convair Sports Car Club was quite active in the fifties and sponsored rallies, tours and other activities. For this event they had hired J. Otto Crocker who was famous for his very accurate timing system, which was used at the dry lakes and drag strips around Southern California. Known as “Father Time” or “The Clocker”, he also was the official timer at Bonneville for a time. I made several trips through the traps and turned in a respectable 78 in the quarter mile, not bad for a Stude powered homebuilt – even if it was only a running chassis. No one paid much attention to elapsed time back then, just top speed at the end of the quarter.

With the chassis running, I turned my attention to the body. Since I had a drafting table at Convair, I would roll out my one-quarter-scale drawing during lunch hour and sometimes after work, if no one was looking. The Body Group was next door to the loft, where all the contours and cross sections of the airplanes were laid out on large aluminum sheets painted white, with the lines scribed through the paint. The sheets were photo-copied onto more aluminum sheets and used to make frame assembly fixtures and such. I learned about smoothing faired lines and surfaces and chose the centerline of the fenders and the line down the center of the car as my baselines. I did this on paper, not big aluminum sheets. When I was finished I had full size cross-sections of the body every ten inches or so. I developed a set of Plexiglas templates, a large, shallow curve for the top surface of the body, a half circle for the fender tops (with diminishing diameter at the rear) and two templates for the side contours. With these templates I could quickly mark the lines on the
plywood formers and cut them to shape with a saber saw. The center lines between the fenders were 48 inches apart, so with longitudinal plywood formers secured to the chassis, the plywood pieces defining the cross sections could be conveniently cut from a standard 4 by 8 sheet of plywood and fitted right in between the longitudinal formers. Additional pieces were secured to the outside creating the outer body sides. With this skeletal framework in place, strips of 1/8-inch plywood were applied with small nails and glue, the width of the strips varying according to the severity of the contour. If I had it to do over, I would use thin strips of pine, rather than plywood; easier to sand and no delamination to deal with. Solid blocks of pine (salvage yard again – packing cases) were used to fill in at the ends of the fenders and carved to shape.

With the skeleton now covered with plywood, a large amount of wood dough was applied to the joints between the plywood strips and with liberal sanding and filling, a smooth surface was developed. At some point, I saw a picture of a beautiful Siata roadster with a hood scoop and a discreet lip reveal around the fender openings, so I incorporated these details in the mockup. I think this added a touch of elegance to the body and looked a lot better than just holes cut in the fenders. With the plywood mockup, it was pretty easy to make these modifications. A few coats of primer, followed by a coat of glossy gray enamel and the mock up was ready for laminating the fiberglass female mold.

I had purchased several gallons of polyester resin from a local boat yard, PPG Selectron as I recall. I also purchased a quantity of fiberglass fabric and mat, sufficient to build the female mold and two bodies. The mold was made using basic boat building practice with two layers of fiberglass fabric and layer of fiberglass mat in between. It was made in four pieces, with a flanged joint running along the centerline of the fenders and the hood and deck sections as separate pieces. A wooden frame made of two by fours was laminated to the mold to maintain its shape. After removal from the mockup, the mold was assembled with bolts through the flanges and turned upside down to rest on the wooden support structure. A neighbor kindly offered his garage to park the chassis while the body fabrication was under way.

In November of 1956, we laminated the first body; it was a learning experience and I had been given some poor advice. After applying a parting film to the mold, I coated it with resin, because I had been told I needed a “gel coat”. Well, the resin was not gel coat material, as I subsequently learned, and some of it flowed to the lower parts of the mold so the finished body had rather thick resin ridges along the tops of the fenders and the center of the hood and deck areas. That resin-rich area on the fenders is still there, but has had no noticeable effect on the basic shape.

To install the body on the chassis, plywood bulkheads were bolted to the superstructure behind the radiator, at the firewall, the back and floor of the cockpit and the floor of the trunk compartment. The body was put in place, lined up and laminated to the plywood bulkheads with fiberglass strips. The hood and deck lid sections were cut from the body shell and the resin-rich problem caused unacceptable warping. The answer was to make new ones with better laminating technique and fit them to the openings in the body shell. In general, the body has held up remarkably well after more than 55 years.

The door openings were framed with plywood sections laminated to the body and the doors were framed in plywood and cut from the body shell. The doors were just a bit wobbly, so
diagonal braces made of aluminum channel (salvage yard, of course) were installed, fixing the problem. Door hinges were fabricated from steel strap and push button latches from a 1948 Lincoln were installed, inside only. Hinges from a 1936 Ford sedan trunk lid and a glove box latch from a 1948 Packard secured the deck lid. Hood hinges and latches were fabricated from sections of aluminum tee extrusion, salvage yard again. The headlight rims from the ’48 Studebaker had a small parking lamp on the top side and when the rims were inverted they fit perfectly with the body. For tail lights several approaches were tried, tail light assemblies from a 1941 Studebaker looked promising and fit the contour of the fender fairly well when inverted, but they shined upwards so they were abandoned. In one of the magazines I spotted a car with shiny tubular tail light assemblies and they looked great. So, some 3 inch diameter aluminum tube, polished to a shine and backed up with truck clearance lights, became the final configuration. The tubing, salvage yard of course, was from the air distribution system of a Convair 340 airliner.

For the seats, I originally made wooden frames, much like a living room chair, padded with coarse horse hair packing material (salvage yard) and covered with canvas. This approach proved most unsatisfactory, so I started over with new seat backs made from .063 aluminum sheet (surplus yard – used for all those old fashioned loft lines) with a curved shape very similar to sports cars of the day. The seat backs were covered with foam rubber padding and stiffened with a plywood overlay on the back. The seat bottom was made of plywood with “zig zag” upholstery springs and a foam rubber pad. The upholstery, in pleated white vinyl, was done by a local shop – one of the few outsourced jobs, and they turned out fine. The seat belts were heavy-duty military style, from, where else, the salvage yard.

The instrument panel was made from ½ inch plywood and covered with Formica laminate in simulated wood grain. Instruments came from early 1940’s Buicks, with a second speedometer given new numbers to serve as a tachometer. It ended up being purely decorative as this was before the days of electronic tachs and it was never connected with some kind of mechanical drive. The windshield wipers had a unique cable drive system with a centrally mounted vacuum motor, and were fairly easy to install. Vacuum operated wipers, quite common in those days, were not very reliable and when the throttle was opened, manifold vacuum dropped and the wipers slowed down or quit entirely. Fortunately, it didn’t rain much in San Diego, so it wasn’t a major problem.

Many sports cars of the day had “Nardi” style steering wheels, so I made one. The wheel was cut from 1/8th inch 7075-T6 aluminum sheet and a rim of mahogany plywood glued on. The rim soon deteriorated and driving required gloves to avoid the splinters. The wheel was then re-made with the same spokes given a slight dish shape and a new aluminum ring riveted to the spokes. A proper wood rim made from walnut segments was bonded to the ring with epoxy adhesive and small aluminum pins installed through the wood and aluminum ring which added a decorative touch as well as strengthening the wheel. This second version of the steering wheel worked quite well and is still in good shape today.

The grille was made from lengths of half-inch diameter stainless steel tubing spaced about one inch apart (salvage yard – hydraulic lines for some airplane) with vertical supports brazed to the tubing. When polished, this produced a very nice grille but it was flat. To form it to fit the body contour, it was laid flat on the driveway with 4 x 4 blocks supporting each end and a third block in the center. The whole assembly was placed under the front cross
member of our Dodge station wagon and a hydraulic jack used to apply pressure to the grille, carefully bending it into a slightly curved shape to match the body.

The windshield, as previously mentioned, came from a 1955-56-57 Chevrolet and was obtained from a local auto glass shop. It had been very slightly sand blasted and was replaced with a new one so I bought it cheap. The sand blasting was so slight it was never noticeable. The glass shop cut off the wrap-around corners so the remaining main part of the windshield fit very well on the car. Windshield support posts were made from one inch diameter steel bar stock with “feet” welded on to attach them to the body structure. The windshield had a slight curvature along the cut ends so the posts had to be shaped to fit. Attempts to bend a one inch diameter steel bar were not going well until I learned that a gentle curve could be produced by heating the inner side of the bar with a torch and quenching it with cold water. After a couple of tries the posts matched the curve of the glass perfectly. The posts were then chrome plated and aluminum channel sections with rubber lining were screwed to the inner edges to accept the glass. Another piece of aluminum channel finished the top edge of the glass.

In late 1957 the car was essentially complete and drivable, but without final paint and with the interior unfinished. Looking back, it is amazing that all of the construction of the car had taken place in a single car garage. In the spring of 1958 we moved into our new home, with a double garage where the car was painted, the grille installed and some other details taken care of. I was able to license the car as a Studebaker using the engine number, something probably not possible today.

The car became my daily driver; commuting to work, grocery getting, family outings and a couple of trips to Los Angeles. We had three kids by then, and could actually get everyone in the car; son Bob, seven, squeeze in behind the passenger seat, Barbara age 6, sat between the seats on the driveshaft cover and Ricky, age two, sat on his mother’s lap. We made a number of trips with this setup and participated in Convair Sports Car Club family events such as breakfast meets, economy runs, picnics and club tours. The club also sponsored rallies, drawing entries from all over Southern California and “hare and hounds” events. These events were a lot of fun and probably illegal now. The “hare” would lay out a course by dropping flour sacks at intersections and the “hounds” had to decide which way he went. You knew you were on course if you found another flour sack within a quarter of a mile; if you didn’t, it meant back-tracking to the intersection and taking the other road. Cars left the start at intervals and the one with the fewest wrong turns and shortest time to arrive at the finish (usually a pizza parlor) was the winner. The course was usually laid out on two-lane back roads of San Diego County, still relatively lightly traveled in those days. We actually won one of those events but didn’t find out until later because we had to get home to relieve the baby sitter.

I also competed in a hill climb sponsored by another club. A gentleman recently returned from his tour of duty in Germany, where he had seen some hill climb events, set up a hill climb course at an avocado ranch in Bonsall, near Fallbrook. The course, which he called a “Bergprufung” was about a half-mile long and followed a winding driveway up a moderately steep slope to the owner’s house at the top. Some hay bales were distributed along the way to make it more challenging and to keep speeds down. With the only home-built, I was put
in the “unlimited – modified 5 liter” class, with the only other entry a 1957 fuel injected Corvette. I won two out of two runs, partly because my car was light and maneuverable on the twisty course and partly, I’m sure, because the other guy wasn’t a very good driver. In any event, I got a small trophy which I still treasure.

I had great plans to complete the interior, add bumpers and a folding top among other things, although a top in San Diego was seldom a necessity. In the meantime I took time out to build a couple of boats and some furniture for the new house and continued to use the car as my daily driver.

In 1961 our marriage had begun to fail, and I foolishly left for a “trial separation” with all my belongings in the car. Fortunately, this situation did not last and I was able to retrieve most of my stuff. The trial separation however, in spite of all my efforts, became permanent. Just before Thanksgiving in 1962, some friends set me up with a blind date with Rosemary, the girl who would become my wife and 3 months later we were married. All of my three kids eventually came to live with us and in 1967 we adopted our younger daughter. Although we faced the usual challenges, we have persevered and recently celebrated our fiftieth anniversary.

After a couple of years of apartment living and no garage for the car, Rosemary and I were able to buy a house and the Little Blue Car once again had a proper home, and I continued to rely on it as my daily driver.

As mentioned earlier, there are three chapters in the story of “The Little Blue Car” and the second chapter covers the Buick engine era. In 1961 when Buick introduced their compact cars with a small all-aluminum V-8 engine, I saw it as the ideal replacement for the faithful, but aging, Studebaker. The engine was lighter, more than twice as powerful and relatively compact. In 1966, my insurance agent- who was a friend and fellow car nut, alerted me to a wrecked 1962 Buick Special sedan with a V-8 engine. It had been “T-boned” amidships and because it had unit body construction it was not economically repairable and was totaled by the insurance company. My friend coached me on what to bid for the car and as I recall I got it for around $400.00.

So began Chapter 2 in the life of the car. The Studebaker engine was removed and sold for $35.00 and the Buick engine and automatic transmission installed. The original Willys steering box, never completely satisfactory, was removed and the recirculating ball gear from the Buick was installed. A longer pitman arm was fabricated which effectively sped up the steering ratio and a cross-car link was planned to minimize the “bump steering” inherent in the original trailing link steering setup.

The seats had become worn and weather beaten so I planned new ones. A co-worker was in the process of converting his 1957 Cadillac El Dorado into a pickup truck (!) and had stripped out all the beautiful, pleated, black leather upholstery. I bought the whole lot; seats, door panels and some trim, enough to redo the seats and finish the interior of the car. I was able to finish the seat backs before the project ground to a halt.

I had decided the car needed some minor styling changes, including a slightly sharper front hood line which meant a new grille. I also envisioned a new instrument panel along the lines of the Mercedes 190-SL with separate pods for the speedometer and the tach. I planned to replace the Buick instruments with “new” 12 volt instruments from a 1957
Dodge. I re-numbered the speedometer to read up to 180 MPH (just for show) and a second speedometer as a tach was numbered to 8000 RPM. These “new” instruments are still carefully packed away.

Because the 4.3 rear axle ratio in the old Willis rear end was completely unsuitable for the new engine and automatic transmission with no overdrive, the rear axle from a 1961 Ford Falcon was obtained with a 3.2 gear ratio. The axle was too wide, but because the ring gear was offset and the axle shafts were different lengths, the left side axle housing tube could be shortened, a relatively simple operation, and a new shorter axle shaft matching the one on the right side installed resulting in a tread of about 52 inches, just right for the car. This would eliminate the need for a specially machined shorter axle shaft, saving a ton of money and aggravation. The Falcon axle assembly is still in the back of the car, one of those many jobs that just never got done.

The rebuilding – upgrading process was proceeding a lot more slowly than I had hoped and in late 1968 when I was offered a job in Kent, Washington, the car was far from complete. Fortunately, when we moved north in January of 1969, my mother had room in her garage so there the car sat for almost two years. In the late summer of 1970 we went back to San Diego for a visit and brought the little car home on a tow bar behind our 1964 Ford pickup and camper. Unfortunately, during our move and storage of the car at my mother’s place, the original grille and instrument panel, along with a box of miscellaneous parts, had been lost.

1969 and 1970 were bad years for the aerospace industry in Seattle. I was able to keep my job as Project Engineer but after a ten percent pay cut I began to take on outside projects in order to make ends meet. One project was to build a wooden mock-up for a cargo container for Pan-Am and then laminate a fiberglass mold for making production parts. I was on familiar ground here, so had no real problems, but because this project took up most of our two-car garage, the little car ended up outside for quite a while. Even though the car was double-wrapped with tarp, the northwest winters were not kind. Some of the metal parts had deteriorated but the fiberglass body stood up very well. About five years ago, we planned to move to our home on Whidbey Island and I rented a large storage unit, big enough to hold the car until I could move it to our house and begin to work on it again. Unfortunately, age and health issues interfered and the car sat in the storage unit.

Chapter 3: Enter Jeff McKay, a friend of a friend and a collector of cars, especially fiberglass cars; he liked my car and wanted to restore it. Since I did not see myself being able to do so, I sold him the car and felt it was going to a good home. Part of the deal was that I would write a history of the car, so, to the best of my recollection, here it is. A lot longer than I thought it would be, with a lot more personal stuff than I intended, but maybe necessary to the story. I am happy that the Little Blue Car has found a new home, with some other fiberglass friends and will not be sent to a dump somewhere.

- See more at: http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2014/02/14/lost-and-found-overflow-the-chamberlain-special-story/#sthash.tvXCAqDy.dpuf
One problem which every auto enthusiast has to handle is rust control. Unless you have done a complete frame-off restoration or can afford to part with some major dollars on a concourse-quality machine, virtually every vehicle is going to have some rust on it somewhere. Even if rust is not visible on the outside, some is likely to be hidden away inside fenders and rocker panels, even inside the frame rails. In part, this is because it was just too expensive and impractical for auto manufacturers to treat every surface on every vehicle. American cars built in the late 1950s are particularly prone to rusting. The combination of complex sheet metal work, with lots of hidden nooks and crannies, as well as cutbacks in the quality of the steel that was used because of the recession at the time, led to the construction of some vehicles which were notorious "rusters" even when new. To their credit, many manufacturers took steps to slow rusting by such methods as using galvanized steel in rust-prone areas and better application of undercoating at the factory in areas not readily accessible after the car was assembled. However, these vehicles are now over thirty years old, and many of the rust control systems have failed. So the problem remains: how does the restorer control rust?

Very basically, here are three different ways to handle rust: removal and replacement of the affected metal, conversion of existing rust, or slowing the spread of rust on areas where the first two methods are impractical.

Ideally, replacing rusted metal with fresh metal is the best way to have a rust-free vehicle, but very few of us can afford the cost of new panels. Besides that many brand-new panels simply are not available anywhere at any price. The remaining alternatives, conversion and slowing its spread are more practical.

Rust conversion involves stopping the rusting process by chemically acting on the rusted metal and changing it into a more stable compound. The chief advantage to this method is that rust does not have to be completely removed for the converter to work. This makes rust conversion the ideal solution for large pieces like the chassis, or difficult-to-access areas, like inside rear quarter panels. The only surface preparation that's required is to
brush off large rust flakes and get the surface free from grease and oil. It's even all right to use a water soluble degreaser to clean the surface before applying. Just be sure that you use plenty of water to rinse the degreaser away and that you let the piece you're working on dry thoroughly before treatment.

The treatment can then be either brushed on in areas where final finish is not important, or sprayed on for a smoother finish in areas which will show on the completed vehicle. Using a treatment that is compatible with virtually all types of paint systems allows painting can be done in a conventional manner. Also of benefit is a special moisture-displacing ingredient which acts to remove any residual surface moisture. This is where some products of this type can fail. Although they may do a successful job at rust conversion, there is still a small amount of moisture left on the surface which can cause rust, despite the previous treatment. It is entirely possible to have this rust form bubbles on the surface of your refinished vehicle in as short a time as a few months!

There are certain situations in which neither metal replacement nor rust conversion are practical solutions. Two examples are treating the inside of rocker panels and frame rails. These are both areas which are prone to rusting, but which are fairly inaccessible. In many cases, these areas only require the use of a rust retardant-type product which is both easy to apply and which will slow the spread of existing rust. Spraying it on makes it possible to treat difficult-to-access areas. The resulting coating seals the surface from exposure to air and moisture and thus slows the formation of new rust and the spread of existing rust. The process is perfect for areas which will not be exposed to direct weather, such as those mentioned above, though the coating is self-healing if it should get scratched.

If you have been fortunate enough to be able to install new replacement panels, you still have the concern of keeping them from rusting. Look for a product that contains 90 percent pure zinc and chemically fuses to bare steel and forms a very rust-resistant barrier. The perfect place for this application is inside new rocker panels and inside rear quarter panels - just about anywhere rust prevention of new metal is important, but where the part treated will not be painted. (it should not be painted over). In addition, this product acts as a great weld-through coating, too. It would be useful to apply it to sheet metal pieces which will be used in inner quarter panel repair, as the coating will not affect the quality of the weld, and will retain is rust-preventative properties.

To restore factory-style protection inside wheel wells and on the undercarriage, a rubberized undercoating can help. It adheres well to both bare metal and painted surfaces and forms a tough, resilient barrier against stone chips and road salt and spray.

The types of products mentioned can be found at shops that specialize in body shop restoration materials. For questions and answers regarding the process mentioned, call The Eastwood Company at (800) 345-1178. Or write to PO Box 3014, Malvern, PA 19355-0714.
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Rick Amundsen, a former member (late 80s to 1993), called. He wants to sell is 1961 TR3A. It is complete- all the parts are there. The engine has been rebuilt, frame powder coated, new electric harness, complete body work. It needs interior, tires and perhaps re-chrome the front bumper. His price is $4,000. He and the car are located in Litchfield Park.

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>>> Claim Jumpers Restaurant in Tempe <<<
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