

A 100M Restoration

Part 1

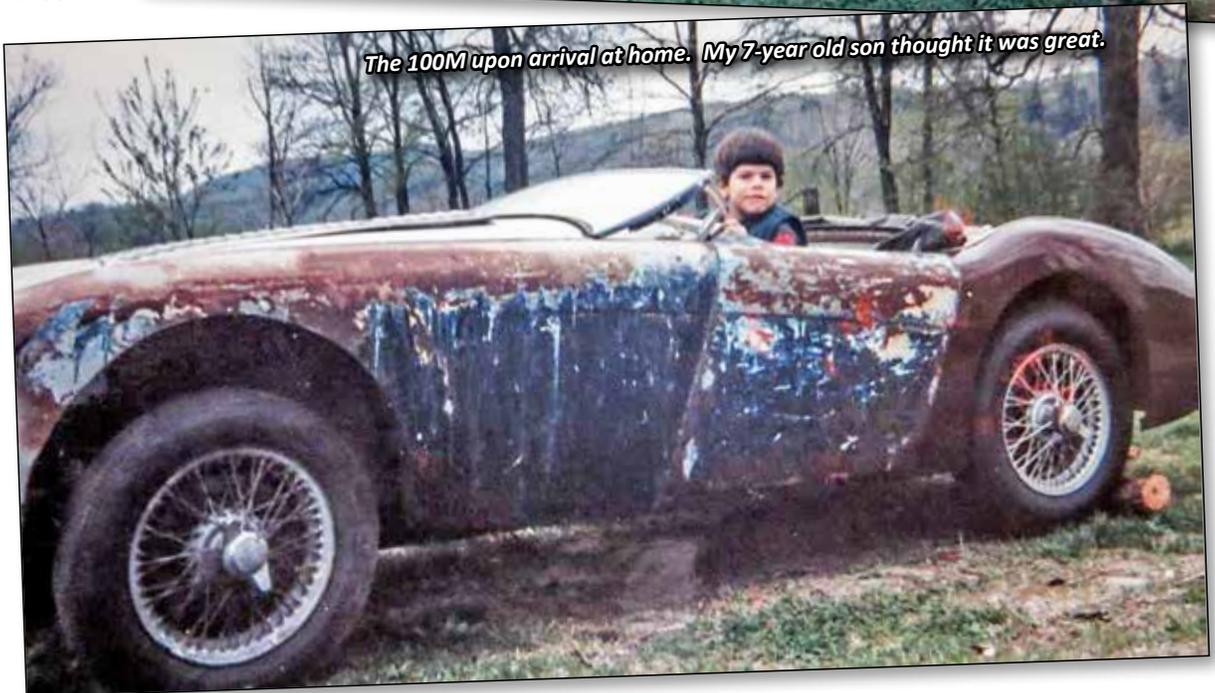
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My very first car was a 1956 BN2 purchased in 1970 for \$600 while a chemical engineering grad student at Iowa State University. The car's interior and exterior were quite good, but while the mechanicals were pretty solid, they did need some attention. A slipping clutch, dragging brakes, a front-end vibration at 50+ MPH, no choke and no starting under about 40 degrees F, overdrive unstable, cracked cylinder head, and a legion of electrical problems. Despite all this I grew to love the car. Simple drives around town always gained admiring looks. Gravel roads a few miles out of town were a great way to beat the summer heat and humidity and clear the head of vexing research problems amid the cornfield forests under a starry night.

With a 100 shop manual, *Healey Highlights* newsletters, a list of new/used part suppliers and a growing tool set, problems were corrected as time and cash allowed. A good cylinder head with new valves, rebuilt front shocks, a new clutch, and a brake system overhaul became valuable learning experiences, successfully done. One Iowa winter in a partially



My first Healey, BN2L231869, in 1972 before the 1974 rear-ender.



The 100M upon arrival at home. My 7-year old son thought it was great.

heated garage was spent adding a new wiring harness along with a generator and starter overhaul and installation of new voltage regulator.

Unfortunately, while waiting at a light one day in 1974, the car was rear-ended by a 16-year old driver with learner's permit. The resulting fire basically trashed the car's back half. Within six months of graduation and new job back east, the car had to



My MG TF, 4494, as it appeared in 1974.



My MG TF as it appears today.

My Healey skills came in handy along with precise oak framing of body tub / door pillars, and a gearbox rebuild. Painting and machine shop engine work was left to professionals. The car is fun to drive and nice looking, but even with the "bigger" TF-1500 engine (~63 HP/5,000 RPM) and the smaller 8.75-inch drum brake, it's no match for 100 performance or styling, at least in my opinion.

Plus, the narrow engine compartment makes it much more difficult to work on.

Still receiving *Healey Highlights* well into mid-1980s, and along with repeated reading of the *Illustrated Austin-Healey Buyers Guide* by Richard Newton, provided continual prompts to find another 100.

A four-year Hemmings subscription finally yielded a 1984 ad for a dismantled 1956 100M about 150 miles away. I called the owner right away and took the next day off to go see the car, stored in his grandmother's barn.

A previous owner had installed a Chevy

be sold as it was. I kept only the fire-scorched shop manual. It was a very sad goodbye to BN2L231869.

However, a sizable insurance settlement was really only a piece of paper, and a local ad showed a 1954 MG TF with a Volvo drive train (carburetor fire replacement). It was purchased, moved back east and frame-up restored with a correct MG engine/gearbox over the next six years.

drive train, but the present owner had the original engine with a BN2 gearbox needing rebuild and was pondering full restoration. A partial Le Mans engine restoration was done, but was out of the car, the motor mounts needing to be reinstalled. A spare engine and spare rear end were also included along with boxes of electricals, gauges, engine auxiliaries, etc. The car body, a basic rolling chassis, was in rough shape, but no serious damage to panels, shrouds or frame.



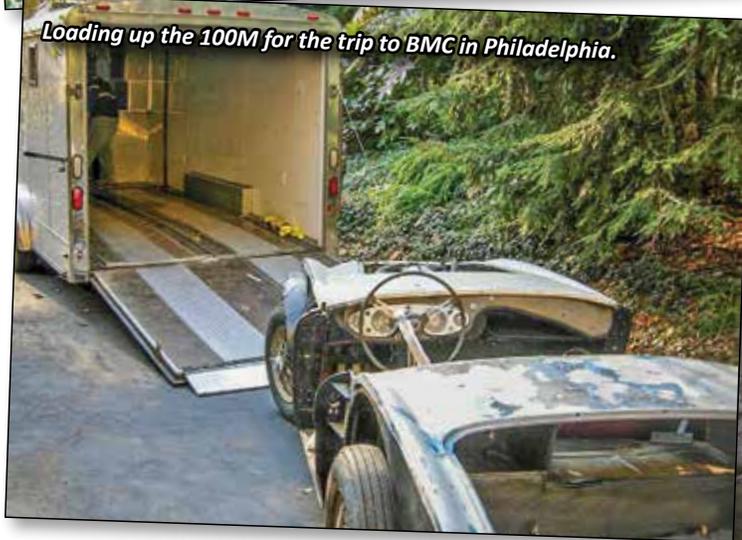
Disassembly begins, 1984.

with stored parts and pieces getting unwrapped and inventoried.

Over these quiet years, BMIHT became a key historical resource, so VIN and body stamp number submission was the first order of business. It was given 100M Factory Certification by BMIHT and later admitted into the Worldwide 100M Le Mans Registry (Bill Meade) in FC Gold Class. I continued the home restoration, but given the value of the car it became out of the question to continue that way, and the realities of repairing firewall modifications, returning to the original pedal configuration, floorboard replacement, frame strengthening and so on made a professional restoration a necessity.

Four restoration shops were visited within a 100-mile radius, and British Motor Corporation of Philadelphia was chosen due to their Healey focus, the number of quality cars restored to date, specific 100/100M experience, 45-mile visiting distance, and a knowledgeable good-guy owner. True restoration began early November 2011 when the car, panels and pieces were picked up by BMC.

To be continued... **HM**



Loading up the 100M for the trip to BMC in Philadelphia.



Also in the shop, this 3000 with accident damage.

It was fairly complete with a steel louvered bonnet, suggesting a factory-built 100M. The stamp number on the left rear hood edge matched the firewall chassis number, a strong indicator of factory M build in days before BMIHT certification became available.

The young owner also had a Porsche 911 and a nicely done 100-Six, so he was a bit over-extended relative to college finances, hence the need for this sale. The price was a little on the high side, but the chance to own a 100M took over. His price was met. He was happy, I maybe a little less so thinking of showing my "new" car to family and non-Healey friends used to the restored TF at home. However, my 7-year old son thought it was a great acquisition upon arrival in the driveway.

Over five years, I disassembled, stripped paint, and rebuilt engine and gearbox, but work activities and transfers took their toll. Retirement in 2010 got the project going again,



You think you've got problems? Another car at the shop was this TR6 with flood damage.