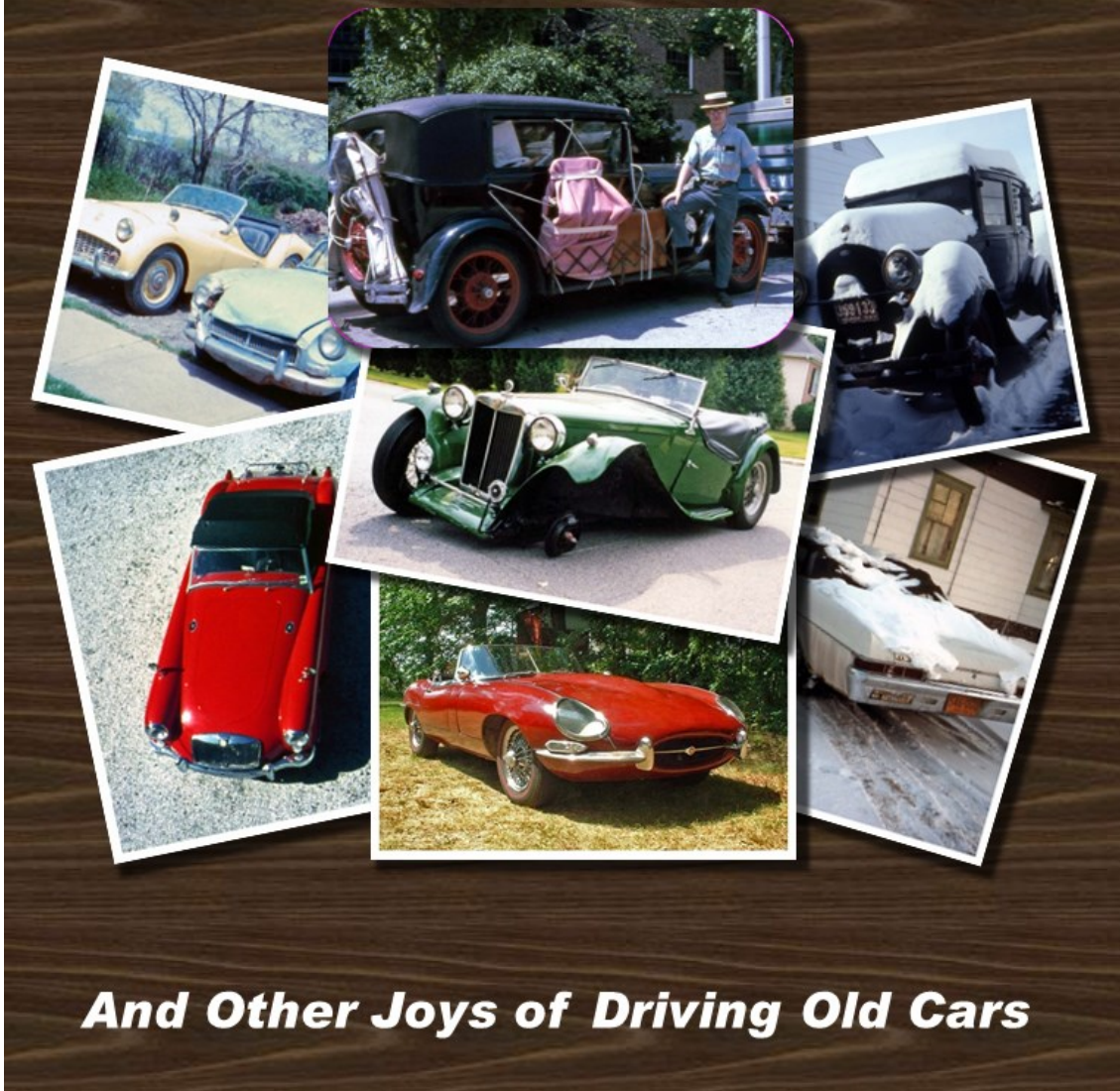


Excerpts from the book

Flaming Firewards



And Other Joys of Driving Old Cars

Available from [Amazon](#) and [Barnes&Noble](#)

Are you tired of cleaning spiders out of your gas gauge? Have you driven for miles wondering what that funny smell was, only to discover your seat was on fire? Did your tender first kiss leave your date needing medical attention? If you can answer "yes" to all three questions, you're probably the author of this book. "Flaming Floorboards" is a true account of these and other adventures which befell the author, a man who ambled through life adopting stray cars the way other people adopt stray cats. Over the years he drove thousands of miles in cars such as a Model A Ford, a Jaguar E-Type, a pair of mid-60's Chevy Impalas, a handful of MG's, and other memorable automobiles. These were not shiny classics, they were rusted hulks that he rescued from the salvage yard. In his struggles to keep these rolling wrecks on the road he encountered people like Fr. Dupree, a reporter/pool shark turned Episcopal priest; Luis Riccotto, the proprietor of Riccotto and Sons Imported motors; and Otis Swineheart, a man of few words and fewer teeth. "Flaming Floorboards" is a warm and funny story about an extraordinary cast of cars and characters.

Advance Praise for Flaming Floorboards:

Much better than I expected, considering who wrote it.

Jean Tom (the author's mother)

Laughed so hard I almost peed my pants.

"Viktor" (one of the characters in the book)

This book is hilarious!

The author's sister-in-law

I laughed my ass off.

The author's boss, now assless

Astute readers may notice these aren't exactly independent reviews. It's hard enough to get people I *know* to write a review! Please feel free to write your own independent review on Amazon.com. But do me a favor and read the book before you write your review.

Excerpts

Over the years, I've met a great many full-fledged car nuts. These are the guys (and for some reason they are almost always guys) who can tell you the compression ratio of every engine Ferrari/Chevy/Ford/Chrysler (pick one) ever built. They spend hours every weekend polishing their own car, and they devour every issue of every car magazine, lusting over photos of the newest Ferrari, Chevy, Ford, or Chrysler. I am not one of these people. On my best day, I could maybe qualify as a semi-fledged car nut. I can tell you the compression ratio of a Model A Ford, and I wash my own car at least once a year. Or at least, that's my goal.

I can't look at a microchip and see clever engineering, and I certainly can't fix it if it goes bad. I can, however, appreciate the unique, some would say bizarre design of an MGB choke linkage, and if that breaks (which is more than likely) I can fix it by the side of the road and be on my way again in a jiffy! And when I look at the cotter pin which Henry Ford put in the drain hole of the Model A clutch housing, I shudder because I'm in the presence of genius. Anyone can drill a drain hole, but drain holes tend to clog with dirt. By putting a cotter pin through the hole, and by leaving it loose so it would rattle around as the car shook (and believe me, a Model A will shake), Henry invented the self-cleaning drain hole! So what if the thing drips oil all over your driveway. The owner's manual says you should count your blessings if you get more than 500 miles to the quart. That hole isn't just a leak, it's an elegant engineering solution!

Even when I was a kid in high school my taste in automobiles was a bit off the beaten track. The teen years are the age when a young man's fancy is supposed to turn to bellowing exhausts and squealing tires. Since I was a teenager in the 60s, the golden age of muscle cars, there was no shortage of potential dream cars. My classmates were literally foaming at the mouth in automotive ecstasy. They spent hours debating the relative merits of Mustangs, Camaros, Corvettes, Super Birds, and GTO's. Somehow, those cars always looked a bit silly to me. Like a Hollywood starlet who's had so many breast implants she looks more like a parody than a paramour, I'd look at the hood scoops, racing decals, and jacked up rear ends on muscle cars and I just couldn't take them seriously. My fantasy was a Stanley Steamer. Any Stanley would do, but what I really lusted after was a 1906 Gentleman's Speedy Roadster. Looking back, it may not have been a coincidence that I didn't get many dates.

I'd like to make it clear that this book is not a memoir. Jack Benny opened his long running radio career with the words "This is Jack Benny talking. There will now be a slight pause while you say 'Who Cares?'" Obviously, Jack knew his audience. I'm no Jack Benny, but I know that no one wants to read a memoir written by someone they've never heard of. This book is not about me. It parallels one portion of my life, but I've done many things that aren't in this book, a few of which might actually count in my favor. This book is about the motley assortment of cars that have covered my hands with grease, and the extraordinary cast of characters I've met while fooling with these cars.

When I was studying for my driver's test, it seemed like there was an impossible list of rules to memorize. One Sunday morning it all came together. I was kneeling at the front of the church while Father Dupree prepared communion. There's not much for an acolyte to do at that point in the service so I had a lot of time to think. Father Dupree wanted us to think about God, but He's really not on the top ten daydream list for most teenage boys. On this particular Sunday I was thinking about the number two item on that list - cars. It was a warm summer morning and the stained glass windows were pivoted open in the vain hope that they might direct a slight breeze into the church. There was no air conditioning, of course. For one thing, this was Indiana and during the 1960's most Hoosiers viewed air conditioning as a sinful luxury. Father Dupree occasionally made disparaging comments about the "padded pew priests" at other churches, implying there was something decadent about sitting on anything softer than the black walnut pews that had served our church for over 100 years. I couldn't imagine what he'd say about the idea of air conditioning! We simply opened the windows and thanked the Lord for whatever breeze He provided. In the spring He sometimes provided wasps as well, and they would buzz menacingly around the acolytes while searching for a place to build a nest. Sometimes the younger, more skittish acolytes would bolt for the other side of the altar, away from the windows. Even when fleeing wasps, however, they remembered the rules. Fr. Dupree had taught them. They always paused to genuflect as they dashed in front of the cross.

By the time summer arrived the wasps had long since found homes elsewhere, so we had no distractions as we daydreamed our way into semi-consciousness. I was thinking about cars and Driver's Ed while half-listening to Fr. Dupree. Suddenly everything blended together! All the rules I learned in Driver's Ed could be summarized in two commandments:

"Thou shalt not endanger thy neighbor."

This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like unto it:

Thou shalt not impede thy neighbor's progress.

On these two commandments hang all the laws and the statutes.”

Now the rules made sense!

One fall weekend in 1968, my senior year in high school, The Bump and I drove to a neighboring town to look at a fully restored Model A roadster. His dad was looking for a roadster, and this one was advertised in the paper. It was a beautiful car, but the owner wanted the outrageous sum of \$2800 for it. We politely examined it, but we both knew his dad would never pay that much for an old car. Then, for reasons known only to himself, the owner pulled the tarp off a project car he had sitting in his driveway. I was struck by the thunderbolt. It was love at first sight. There in the driveway, dazzling in its brilliance was a 1928 Model A Fordor Sedan. The sun glinted off its nickel-plated bright-work, drawing a sharp contrast to the inky depths of the sinuous curves of its jet black body.

OK. So maybe the only things that glinted were my eyes as they imagined what it could look like, and the only inky depths were my ignorance of what it would take to restore the car. In truth there was more rust than nickel on its bright-work, and what remained of its black paint was buried under a thick accumulation of greasy dust. It had obviously spent several years in a barn, possibly in the company of chickens. The rubberized cloth roof was peeling back, revealing the wood framework, brown padding and, appropriately enough, chicken wire which had supported the roof when it left the factory many years ago. The back of the car showed unmistakable evidence of bodywork done with the wrong end of a ball peen hammer, the rear window was sitting in the back seat amid shards of rotten wood that had once held it in place, and the wheels were shedding the Chinese red paint that had been thickly applied with a brush several decades ago. The car would not start due to a serious accumulation of rust in the gas tank, but the owner assured us this would be easy to fix.

For sheer aimless pleasure, there are few things that can compare with having the school day behind you, the afternoon ahead of you, your best friend beside you, and a Model A Ford to drive you wherever your fancy took you. Gas was 25¢ a gallon so we could fill the tank, add a quart of oil, and get change

back from a \$5.00 bill. Or at least we could if we went to the Hudson gas station on the north side of town. The Hudson station was distinguished primarily by its cheap prices and perplexing billboards. Rumor had it the prices were cheap because they bought refinery dregs and sold it as gasoline, but that didn't bother the Model A. With a 4.24:1 compression ratio it would run fine on almost anything. The billboards were a little harder to explain. Mostly they consisted of odd analogies, such as a picture of a fisherman holding a giant salmon beneath the words "From Coast To Coast Hudson Is The Big Catch." I had never before considered the similarities between fish and gasoline, but that didn't perplex me as much as the picture of a camel beneath the words "First It Was Camels In The West, Now Hudson Serves You Best." My knowledge of cavalry history was rather sketchy, but I thought the experiment with using camels in the west had been a dismal failure. Still, for 25¢ a gallon I was willing to take a chance that maybe Hudson would turn out to be more successful than camels. Hudson gasoline propelled Don and me on many a trip. Along the way we experienced blowouts, loose wires, dead generators, and a host of other minor problems, but those just added spice to the trips. We managed to pick up a couple of straw hats (the traditional "boater" style like you see in the 1920's pictures) and a replica Thompson submachine gun that we hung beneath the lap robe in the back seat, so we were traveling in style.

They say that in the spring a young man's fancy turns to love. I have no idea how they came to that conclusion, as it's been my experience that a young man's fancy is pretty much focused on love, or at least some aspects of it, 365 days a year. The Model A didn't prove to be quite the chick magnet I hoped it would be, but it was certainly serviceable in this regard and I had my first dating experiences in that car. I also had my first real kiss on a Model A date, or rather I made my first futile attempt to kiss a girl on one of these dates. At the end of the evening I walked my date to the front of her house, opened the screen door for her, and then paused to look deeply into her eyes. The time seemed right, so I put my arms around her waist and bent forward for a kiss. She looked up expectantly and pursed her lips. Unfortunately, our lips never quite met. I forgot I was wearing my straw hat, and the brim of my hat slammed into her forehead. If you've never examined the brim of a straw boater, it's about as stiff as a sheet of plywood but with a serrated edge. She jerked backwards, sporting an ugly gash above her eyebrows. I leaped backward and managed to catch my belt loop on the screen door handle. I stood there on tiptoes, half-suspended by my belt, while I frantically tried to unhook myself from the handle before I ripped the door off its hinges and woke her parents. When I finally untangled myself from the door I took off my hat and we more or less pecked each other on the lips, but the moment had passed.

The Hurtin' Healey had originally been painted red, but over the years it had mutated into a two-tone: red over rust. A previous owner had attempted to repair the bodywork with racing stickers. Round holes were covered with STP stickers, square rust-outs were patched with Castrol stickers, and a giant American flag covered what was left of the trunk lid. The top was a dirt-streaked white, with a slightly translucent amber rear window. The famous "Kilroy was here" caricature was scrawled on the top in red paint. Like an old horse, it was swaybacked. The doors still opened, but the frame had sagged to the point where the latches no longer met the sill. It took a pair of screen door hooks to keep the doors closed. The wheels gave testimony to the ingenuity, though not the craftsmanship, of America's backyard mechanics. The "knock off" hubs of the original wire wheels had been welded into the center of a much wider set of steel wheels. Three wide strips of steel plate, roughly cut with a torch, served to brace the wheels to the hubs. Through luck or divine intervention (even the most charitable observer would not attribute it to skill), the wheels turned true without a trace of wobble. A set of Goodyear Wide Oval bias ply tires graced these mangled mags. It was easy to measure how far the tires protruded beyond the bodywork, as the fenders had cut grooves in the tires where they bottomed out on bumps. The crowning glory, the *pièce de résistance* of this automotive objet d'art, was a pair of two foot long chromed boat horns mounted prominently on the right front fender. Resplendent in all their gleaming brightness, they were even more conspicuous because they were the only piece of metal on the entire vehicle that still had a shine to it. All in all, the appearance of this car was enough to elicit comment from even the most apathetic non-enthusiast, and it made true sports car aficionados retch.

Beauty, as they say, is only skin deep, and in the case of the Hurtin' Healey that applied to Ugly as well. Despite its appearance, despite the cracks in the main frame members, and despite the bewildering array of hardware store switches someone had installed on the dashboard, that Healey could move! It took a great deal of faith and patience to coax the big six cylinder engine into life, particularly on a cold, damp morning, but once it caught it roared with a ferocity that shook the entire car. First gear was engaged with a "crunch" which tortured the mechanically cognizant. The gear lever had to be held forward with brute force lest it pop back into neutral when the clutch was engaged, but if you could hold it in gear the car would leap forward like a jackrabbit. Second through fourth gears were well behaved by comparison, and with each shift the car would surge forward as though it was riding the crest of a wave. I'm sure the "muscle cars" which several of my friends owned were technically faster than the Healey, but they didn't convey the same sensation of speed and power. Possibly this was because they didn't also convey the sensation that they were going to disintegrate at any moment, or maybe it was because they gave the driver some reassurance that if he relaxed his concentration for a moment the car would continue to travel in a straight line. Whatever the reason, that Healey seemed like the fastest car in the world. It could reach

100 mph in almost no time at all, and with Don at the wheel, it frequently did. A slight ripple in the pavement would cause it to leap into the air like a champion steeplechaser. It would slam back to earth with a sickening crash, then hurtle down the road searching for the next pothole. It seemed accustomed to these leaps, probably because the shock absorbers had given up the ghost years earlier. In fact, the first major jump we attempted somehow "healed" the long dormant electric overdrive. Luis had assured us the overdrive was beyond repair, but when Don turned onto an abandoned dirt road on our test drive the overdrive kicked in as soon as we crashed over the first pothole. It continued to function properly for the rest of the time Don owned the Healey.

If a day trip in the Hurtin' Healey could be described as "exhilarating," a night trip was downright terrifying. I can still vividly recall the way that car would hurtle through the blackness of an Indiana country road, with one feeble headlight intensifying the darkness by illuminating a small patch of pavement and a shadow of cornfields on either side. (The other headlight, owing to a small rust problem with the adjusting screws, would be helpfully illuminating any tree branches that hung over the roadway.) Don would be hunched over the steering wheel, his grinning face intermittently visible as the dash lights flickered on and off. Like a hapless passenger in a roller coaster from Hell, I would be hunched forward too, trying to spot the next pothole in time to brace for the impact . . . There's one now! . . . Crash!!! The Healey would leap into the air, then fall to earth with a bone-jarring crunch. Sparks shot from the fenders each time the car landed, as the long eroded fenders bit deeper into the Wide Oval tires. A sudden crash, a brief shower of sparks, and the Healey would plunge deeper into the darkness, the moonlight sparkling off those gleaming boat horns.

A Saturday morning in the fall of 1971. Cool, crisp, clear air. I'm driving my MGA to work and there's a light dusting of snow on the ground. This is the first time it's been cold enough to put up the top and turn on the heater. The cockpit's a little drafty and the side curtains are rattling, but my feet are warm and I'm enjoying the drive. The sun is shining and there's a pleasant smell of burning firewood in the air. Someone's enjoying a cozy morning in front of the fireplace! A few miles further I notice the smell of burning wood seems to be getting stronger. Or maybe it's burning leaves. Odd, because I haven't seen anyone burning leaves this morning. I stop the car and check under the hood. Everything looks fine. I get back into the car and drive on. The smell of burning leaves is definitely getting stronger. I stop again, but everything still looks fine under the hood.

As I get to the town of Clymers Indiana, smoke fills the cockpit. I immediately pull over and throw open the hood. Everything's OK there, but I see smoke streaming out of the side curtains and the half-open driver's door. I throw open the door and see a column of smoke rising out of the driver's seat. I lift the seat cushion and flames leap up into the cockpit. Holy Cow! It's like some demented cartoon! I've been driving around sniffing at the smoke while my butt was on fire!

Funny things happen to cars when the temperature drops below minus 40 °F, and I don't mean funny in a positive way. To begin with, you need to plug in an electric block heater and a battery heater before you turn off your engine or it won't start again until spring. Diesel engines need special cold weather additives to keep their fuel from turning to jelly. Even propane turns to jelly at these temperatures. Fork lifts and other propane powered vehicles need electric heaters in the propane tank to turn it back into a gas.

Getting your car to start is only the first step. Moving the gearshift in a manual transmission car is like stirring peanut butter with a canoe paddle. Automatics tend to just sit still and complain for a while, until the transmission warms up enough to actually move the car. If it hasn't moved after 5 minutes, it's time to get your transmission rebuilt, which is what we had to do to the Olds the first winter we lived in Alaska. When your car finally does begin to move, you experience a phenomenon known as "square tires." When you park a car with warm tires the tire naturally flattens out a bit on the bottom, where the weight of the car is pressing it against the pavement. Then when the tires cool off, say to -30 or -40°F, they freeze in this shape. The next time you drive the car drops noticeably with a "ka-Whump, ka-Whump, ka-Whump" every time the tires roll around to the flat spot again. Go around a turn, and the tires on the outside of the turn get out of sync with the tires on the inside. Now the car goes "Whump Whump Whump" and rocks side to side as you drive. Eventually the tires warm up enough to roll smoothly, but your troubles aren't over yet.

Rubber and plastic do not like cold weather. The rubber floor mats in my Jeep shattered when I stepped on them. When I picked the pieces up in the spring, it looked like someone had hacked them to pieces with a razor blade. Even the paint doesn't like cold weather. On one particularly cold day I slammed the door shut on my Jeep (door latches get recalcitrant at -60 °F) and a big patch of paint fell off the center of the door into the snow. Apparently the metal shrank more than the paint did, and the resulting stress caused the paint to pop loose.

My Jeep had plastic seats, which were not especially comfortable in cold weather. In fact, even when I was wearing insulated long underwear the seats were literally a pain in the ass. When the first cold snap hit my nether regions became badly chapped. Since Chap-Stick didn't sell an applicator big enough to take care of my problem, I bought thick fake wool seat covers. That made things much better, at least in the front seats. I hadn't bought covers for the back seat. I forgot about that detail one time when we had a Colonel visiting from the Alaskan Air Command headquarters, which was located on the tropical coast of Alaska. (Anchorage) We had planned to take him to a fancy restaurant in Fairbanks, but the extreme cold weather made driving dangerous so we settled for a pizza parlor in the town of Moose Creek, which was just outside the base gates. The Colonel insisted on riding in the back seat, as he was the shortest one in the group I was taking to the restaurant. I didn't think anything about it until I noticed he was starting to squirm. He was walking a little funny the next day, and he didn't sit down much during our meetings.

I had only owned my MG TC for a few hours, but already I was learning its secrets. For one thing, I had learned its floorboards were just as flammable as my MGA floorboards. I also learned that it suffered from some form of vapor lock, so whenever I shut it off it wouldn't start again for twenty minutes. I had a full tank of gas now, so I shouldn't have to stop for a long time. The miles flew by quickly and the late afternoon shadows began to shade the road. We were driving through what passes for hill country in northern Indiana. The hot summer day was now softening into a warm summer evening. It was a beautiful time for a drive. The road wound between cornfields and farmyards, now descending into a forested valley beside a small stream, now cresting a hill overlooking lush green fields. The road was lined on both sides by maple trees. Every now and then the leafy treetops met over the center of the road and we drove through a green archway. From the right-hand driver's seat I looked at the world over a long stretch of hood that ended in a chrome radiator shell flanked by twin chrome headlights. The trees beside the road were reflected in the headlights. I was thinking about how lucky I was to own a car like this when I heard the unmistakable "tink" of something metal hitting the pavement. Betsy immediately started honking her horn and flashing her lights behind me. I pulled onto the shoulder and walked back along the road until I found a strangely shaped piece of metal lying on the pavement.

It was a heavy metal rod with two right angle bends. I felt like an archaeologist examining a bone he's just unearthed. The materials and workmanship looked correct for a car of the TC's vintage, and the fresh scratches from the pavement made me pretty certain this item had just fallen off my car. I didn't have a clue what it was, though. It wasn't oily so I didn't think it came from the engine. There was a thin layer of heavy black grease on it. That would be consistent with a suspension part. It sort of looked like a

suspension part too, but I didn't know what part it might be. More importantly, was it a critical part? I walked back to the TC and began inspecting the suspension very carefully. Eventually I found a part that looked just like it on the left front – a link that connected the shock absorber to the front axle. I checked the right front, and sure enough there was no corresponding link on that side. There were, however, holes in the shock absorber and the axle where this part had once resided. Amazingly, it appeared that this link just pressed into rubber bushings and was held in place by friction. I struggled for a few minutes to push it back into place, and then decided maybe I'd underestimated the value of friction. This was clearly a job that required tools I didn't have with me, but fortunately this part wasn't critical to the operation of the car. The handling wouldn't be the absolute apex with nothing connecting the shock absorber to the right front wheel, but the car would drive and steer OK without it. I tossed the part onto the passenger's floor and walked back to the Buick to tell Betsy the good news.

“It's just a shock link” I announced. “Nothing critical. The car will run fine without it.”

Betsy eyed me suspiciously. “If the car runs fine without it, why did they put it on in the first place?”

“To help fight unemployment?” I suggested. Betsy wasn't entirely satisfied with that answer, but she let it ride. The rest of the trip passed without incident. I pulled the TC into the garage just as the gathering dusk was about to require headlights. Home before dark. The goal of every British sports car driver. In the years to come Betsy would refer to this drive as the road trip from Hell, when my car caught fire, refused to start, and rained parts onto the highway. To me it was a memorable drive in a wonderful automobile.

“Flaming Floorboards” is available in paperback from [CreateSpace](#) and [Amazon](#). It is also available in electronic (Kindle) format from [Amazon](#) and in epub (Nook) format through [Barnes & Noble](#) and [Google](#).

Don't own a Nook or a Kindle? All three web sites have free e-reader apps for PCs, Apples, and Droids

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What's In The Book?

INTRODUCTION

Who I am, and why I wrote this book.

CHAPTER 1: MY FATHER'S CARS

Cars I rode in while growing up, and the cars I learned to drive on.

CHAPTER 2: FIRST LOVE

A 1928 Model A Fordor Sedan. It was tired, rusty, moldering, and all mine!

CHAPTER 3: HIGH SCHOOL HEAVEN

The joys and unbounded freedom of owning your own car, even if you do have to blow rust out of the gas line several times a day.

CHAPTER 4: TROUBLE IN PARADISE

A burned out center main bearing brings me face to face with my first engine rebuild. Thanks to a lot of help and ingenuity from my dad I'm soon back on the road, free to experience the trauma of my senior prom.

CHAPTER 5: THE ENDLESS SUMMER

The summer between high school and college. Driving the Model A with my high school buddies, water skiing, and working at a drive-in theater.

CHAPTER 6: GROUNDED

Purdue doesn't allow freshman or sophomores to have cars on campus?! I come to grips with the pedestrian life of a college student, with a little help from some new friends who teach me to smoke, swear, and drink beer.

CHAPTER 7: NEW HORIZONS AND A MINOR SETBACK

Finally I'm a junior and can bring my Model A to school. Unlimited horizons, that is except for the limitations imposed by a broken piston. Lying in the snow under my car in Mentone Indiana, the self-proclaimed Egg Basket of the Midwest!

CHAPTER 8: NEW LOVE

I am captivated by a 1957 MGA roadster. For \$50 I can tow it home!

CHAPTER 9: THE HEALEY

My best friend Don buys a car that's so memorable it deserves its own chapter.

CHAPTER 10: LEARNING TO LIVE WITH AN MG

I begin to learn about my MG and the remarkable company that built it. Did your car come equipped with an anti-dazzle device? Mine did.

CHAPTER 11: BACK TO SCHOOL

Senior year. Don and I share a dorm room and a lot of automotive adventures.

CHAPTER 12: MORE OF THE SAME

I've graduated? What do I do now? Maybe a Master's degree would help. . .

CHAPTER 13: A “PROFESSIONAL” MECHANIC?

Five years of engineering school and I’m ready to hang out my shingle and work as a mechanic in an MG dealership. I even get a blue shirt with “Steve” over the pocket.

CHAPTER 14: OFF WE GO . . .

The Air Force finally remembers that it paid for my college education and that I owe it a few years of indentured servitude. Rome New York, here I come!

CHAPTER 15: THE BALLAD OF OLD NUMBER 12

Another car so remarkable it deserves its own chapter. This one cost me \$40.

CHAPTER 16: HERE TODAY, GUAM TOMORROW

Rule #1. If you’re going to drive an MG through a typhoon, put the top up.

CHAPTER 17: A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

RED HORSE – the Air Force’s answer to the SeaBees. Building buildings and fixing cars in Ft Walton Beach Florida.

CHAPTER 18: A DIFFERENT BREED OF CAT

I buy a 1964 Jaguar E-Type Series 1 Open Two-Seater. Was there ever a sexier car?

CHAPTER 19: PILED HIGHER AND DRIER

Against all odds, the Air Force sends me back to Purdue for a PhD

CHAPTER 20: TRUE LOVE

I fall in love again, but this time it’s with a girl, not a car. I’ll never forget the day we met, when she looked deeply into my eyes and told me to get lost. . .

CHAPTER 21: TEACHING HVAC

Suddenly I’m Major Tom, Professor of Ductology. Teaching heating, ventilating, and air conditioning at Wright-Patterson AFB Ohio.

CHAPTER 22: NORTH TO ALASKA!

Ever try to drive a car at -60 °F? Shattered floor mats, square tires, and chapped butt. It took three years in Hawaii to thaw out after that assignment.

CHAPTER 23: HOME BEFORE DARK

Driving cross-country in my new toy, a 1948 MG TC. Another floorboard fire? Time to bring this book to a close!