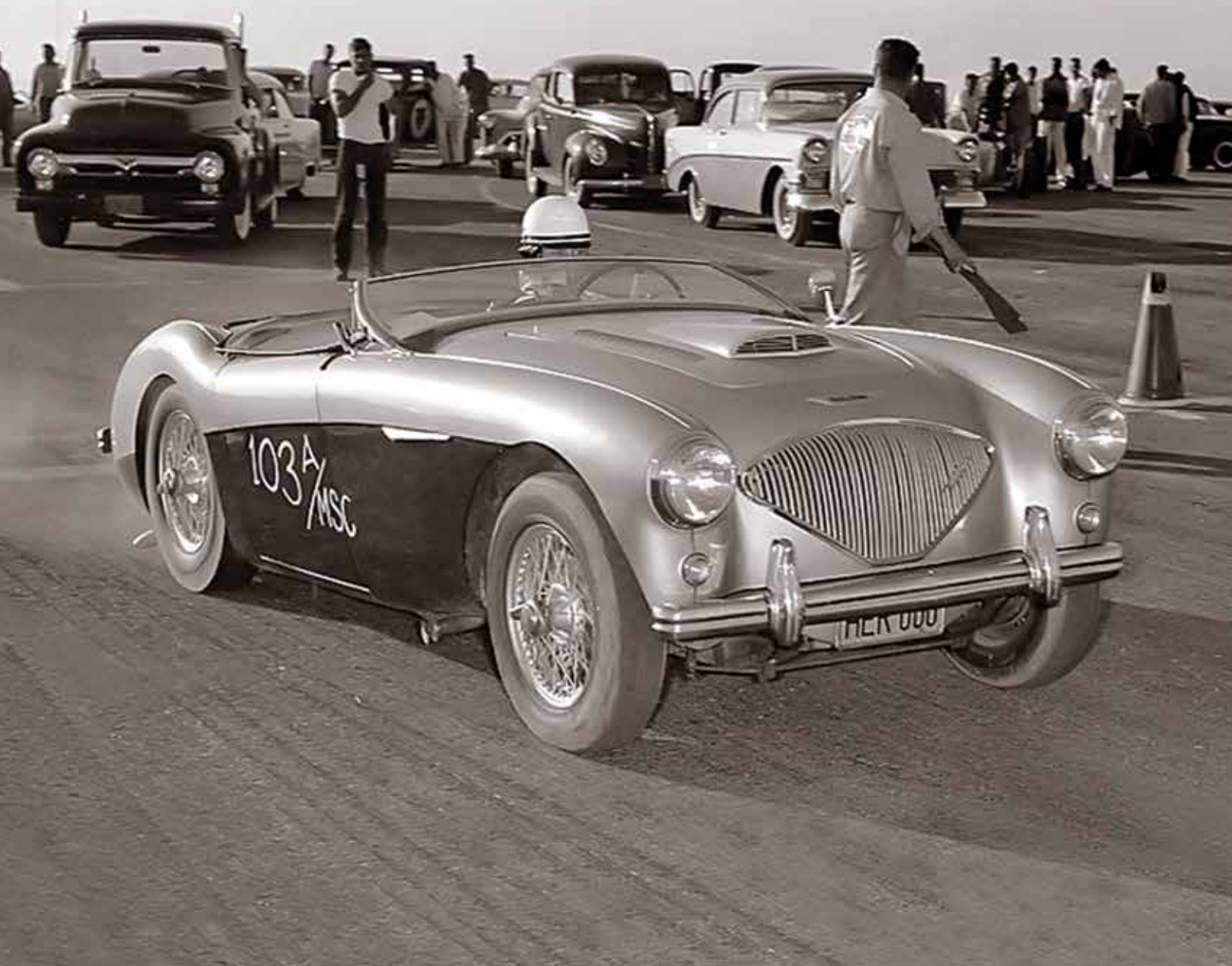


Healey

MARQUE MAGAZINE



NOV. 2020



Russ Keep on the Healey-Cobra could-have-been, Ian Grainger discusses the Trident Healey could-have-been, Nikas on some Big Healey could-have-beens, Neville and Young on estate planning, Piggott in a £135 Sprite, Musumeci and McDonald sing the praises of DMH's cars, and please see page 31 and act now!

Classified Ad Manager – Bill Schellhaas
6521 Debbie Lane S • South Pasadena FL 33707
(727) 344-1323 • marketplace@healeyclub.org

Commercial Ad Manager - Laurie Wilford
11 Lee Court • Cambridge, Ontario N1T 1K1
(519) 624-0861 • healeymk3@hotmail.com

Back Issues Sales – Peter Borrone
209 Mt Delight Rd • Deerfield Nt 03037
(603) 490-7170 • backissues@healeyclub.org

Reid Trummel
Editor

Page 31

But before we discuss page 31, I know it may seem a little early to be offering Happy Holidays greetings, but with magazine production schedules being what they are, and there being no December issue (the Austin-Healey Calendar replaces it), now's the time. Actually it's very possible that you'll receive the January issue before Christmas, but saying "Merry Christmas" in the January issue of a magazine just seems wrong.

In any case, this expanded issue of your club magazine, plus the calendar, comprise our gifts to you to help get you through the end of the year that has seen fewer "activities" than just about any year since Austin and Healey became a hyphenated marque name.

We start off this issue with a couple of fascinating reviews of some could-have-beens. **Russ Keep**, the keeper (no pun intended) of the Modified Healeys Registry (a.k.a. the "Nasty Boys" – see page 43) ruminates on the engine choices for Healeys and how a certain Carroll Shelby went to Austin before he went to AC to find a platform for big American engines, and Austin's rebuffing Shelby may rank right up there in the pantheon of Great Missed Opportunities.

Then **Ian Grainger** recounts another missed opportunity with a car called the Trident. Never heard of it? Me neither, but as a possible continuation of the marque it had some potential once upon a time. It's just another of the many could-have-beens, and one that I doubt you've seen before.

Then on pages 16-17 we have what I believe is a first. That story was composed many years ago, but not submitted until this year, following the passing of the author. **Mark Musumeci** of the Golden Gate Austin-Healey Club wrote that timeless story a long time ago, and we're happy to print it now, although sad that it's too late for Mark to see it in print. Thanks to Sydney Musumeci for sending it. It's a powerful comment on the important role that these cars play in our lives, and beyond.

Following that, **Don McDonald** recounts how much fun he has had over the years with his tri-carb Healey. Not surprisingly, one of his fondest memories involves three girls riding in the back of his four-seat roadster, and almost getting a ticket in the process! I think the cop was probably just jealous, but his pre-law friend helped get him out of it. Don never did say what became of those girls.

Then we have a look at still more could-have-beens, only these are of the body, not the engine choice. **John Nikas** breaks out some never-before-published sketches for a real behind-the-scenes look deep into Healey history on pages 20-23.

Our center spread is once again a never-before-published photo of Donald Healey and some friends, this one taken before the Donald Healey Motor Company was formed and even before World War II. Dig those matching plaid jackets! This photo comes to us from the Donald Healey Collection, courtesy of **John Nikas**.



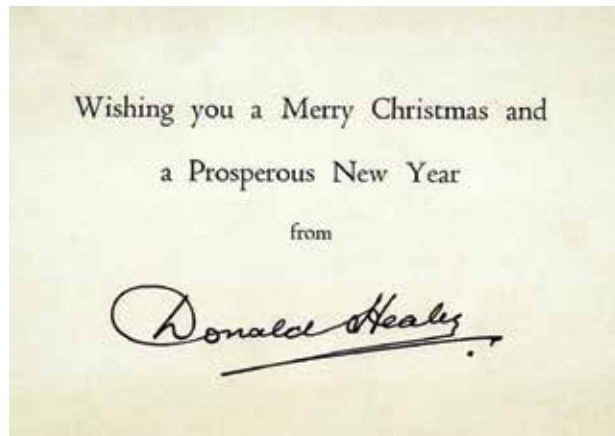
Then in the back half of the issue we have an unusual and thought-provoking auction report from **Rick Neville**. Almost everyone reading this already owns at least one Austin-Healey, and it might be wise to consider what will become of them when their ownership next changes.

Bill Piggott is back in this issue with the tale of his Sprite ownership, and that is never boring. I'm sure that many of you reading this remember buying a Healey for only a few hundred dollars (I myself paid \$152 for a running 100-Six in 1971 or so, and that was from a car dealer), and hilarity is almost sure to ensue!

Then all the way in the back, **Bill Young's** "Technical Service Bulletin" is another comment on estate planning, and perhaps the coming holidays will present opportunities for you to reflect and plan for the future of your cars and Healey-related items.

Now then, about page 31 ... perhaps you can begin to imagine the magnitude of the job of conducting the annual membership renewal process for our 3,000-member club. Each year, Membership Director **Mike Schneider** handles this huge and complex process (think 40-some chapters, each with its own chapter dues of various amounts, and 40-some chapter contacts that Mike deals with, etc., etc., etc.), and this year, in order to save Mike many, many hours of work, and to save a very, very considerable amount of club funds, we are trying something different. The details are on page 31, and you can do Mike and the club's bank balance a big favor by renewing by mail (or online at www.healeyclub.org) now without receiving an invoice in the mail (printing and postage aren't free).

The last word this month is from the man whom we have to thank for the cars that play such a large and important role in our lives:



Reid

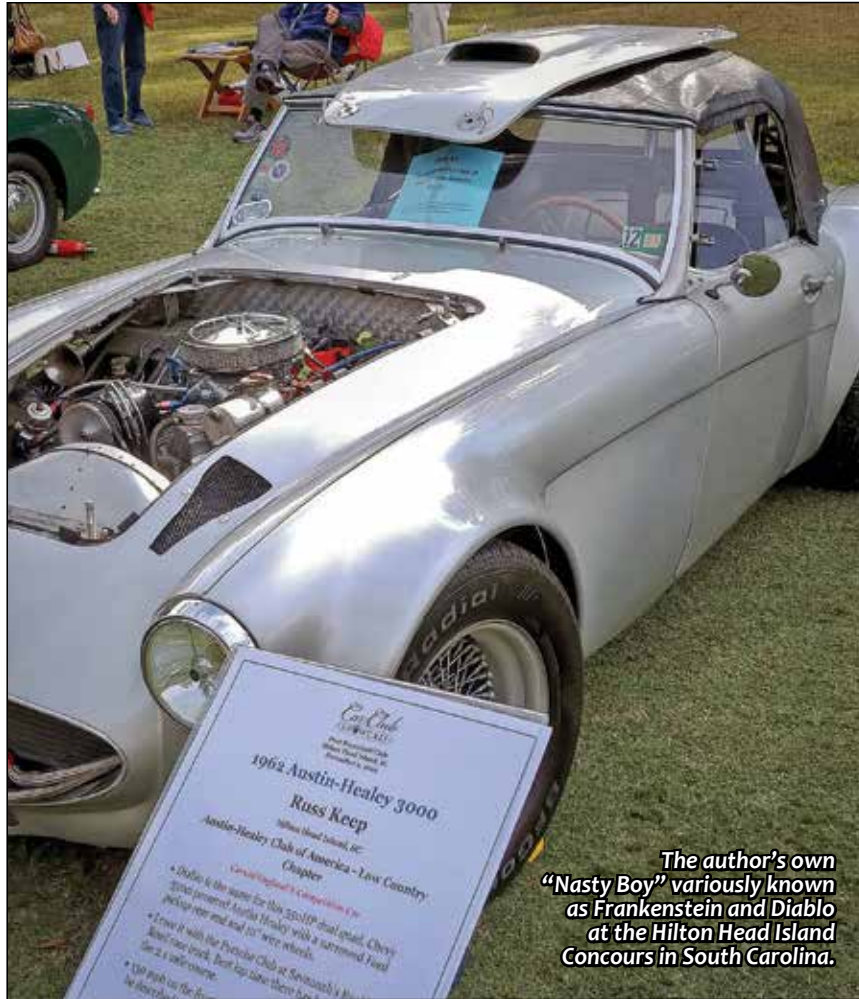
THE SHELBY-HEALEY:

The Cobra That Carroll Tried To Build First

Russ Keep
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina
Low Country Austin-Healey Club

Carroll Shelby created the Cobra by combining an AC body and chassis with a Ford engine and it beat everything in sight back in the '60s. The author tells how close the Austin-Healey came to being a world-beating car, a "Shelby-Healey Cobra."

Why is a ratty, beat-up 289 Shelby Cobra worth a million while someone is struggling to sell his concours Austin-Healey for 60 grand? Or, to put it another way, why did the Cobras beat Ferrari for the World Manufacturers Championship in 1965, but 55 years later a concours showboat Austin-Healey can't even beat a Miata in a spotlight showdown? The Healey and the Cobra handle about the same, and both are good looking. The answer to the above questions is within the heart of the Big Healey: its engine.



The author's own "Nasty Boy" variously known as Frankenstein and Diablo at the Hilton Head Island Concours in South Carolina.

"Gutless Wonder" 6-cylinder

Basically a chassis and body panel maker, the Donald Healey Motor Company was established in 1945, using a Riley powertrain and his special bodies and chassis. Like small manufacturer Peter Morgan, whose Morgan has been powered (and underpowered!) by a variety of motors, Healey was totally dependent on the kindness of strangers in providing power for his creations.

After the 4-cylinder 100, the Austin engineers (if you want to call them that!) got their hands on Donald Healey's baby and replaced the motor with an Austin 6-cylinder – a "gutless wonder," according to Geoffrey Healey. This "improvement" added hundreds of pounds along with an ugly radiator

hood scoop, and was initially slower than its 4-cylinder predecessor.

In 1952, Donald Healey had set his eyes on the huge surplus of Atlantic motors, transmissions and suspensions left over from Austin's abortive A90 Atlantic, a flop on the American market. Donald employed his tried-and-true Healey philosophy, designing the chassis and body and employing mass-produced (by British standards) Austin suspension and running gear. The result was the stunning Austin-Healey 100, a bastard offspring of a shotgun marriage that was to last until 1967. Donald did not make production Austin-Healeys. He got a royalty from Austin for every Austin-Healey manufactured.

Donald's Faustian bargain with the

devil at Austin eventually forced on him not only a thick-wall casting, 700-pound boat anchor of a 6-cylinder motor (which he hated), but also an aluminum but non-posi rear end, a horrible and heavy transmission with a complicated but "quaint" overdrive, cam and peg steering, and lever shocks – all antique even in 1952!

When Carroll Shelby raced the then-new Austin-Healey 100 in the 1954 Carrera Panamericana Road Race through Mexico, he was certain that the Austin engine must have been directly descended from a 1918 London bus! Some writers described the Austin motor as "agricultural." Shelby ended up crashing the Austin-Healey and apologized to Donald Healey, saying a cute Mexican girl had caught his eye.

Frankenstein at Roebing Road, Savannah, Georgia, running a 1:29 lap time. ►

Frankenstein drag racing a TVR at the Roadster Factory in Pennsylvania. ▼

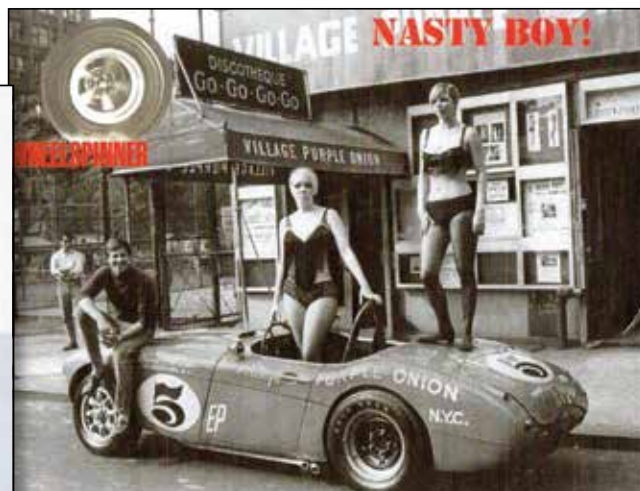


Shelby and the Healey

The concours crowd does not know it, but ol' Shel first laid a coveting eye (and blowtorch) on the Austin-Healey when he was preparing to build the baddest production car ever made, the Cobra.

In 1960, Shelby's racing career was stuck in the pits because of a bad heart, but if he couldn't race 'em, he'd build

'em! Shel's hotrod contemporaries had crammed 392 Hemis into venerable pre-war Aston Martins, Ford flatheads into MGTCs, Chevrolet's new V8 into Ferraris, Mercedes 300 SLs, Jaguars, Austin-Healeys and ACs. But ol' Shel was not just a hot-rodder and amateur racer like Max Balchowsky of Ol' Yeller fame, who often whipped factory team Ferraris with his junkyard juggernauts. Shelby wanted to be a "manufacturer"



Bob Ida "Hemi Healy" Exclusive Interview!

Plus your letters, mystery car and classified section.

Official News Organ of the Austin-Healey Club of America's Modified Chapter

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◀ On a road trip with Kate and Max (Max is the one behind the roll bar).

so he could make 100 cars, get homologated by the FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) and go racing against other production car models instead of expensive exotic one-off rear-engined specials.

Hybrid production cars, powered with American V8s, were already being manufactured in Europe in the '50s and early '60s. Shelby looked closely at the Jensen, Bristol and Facel Vega, which were using Chrysler V8s for power. On the "specials" front, Shelby's pal Briggs Cunningham campaigned Chrysler Hemi-powered creations with the chassis made in Italy. Sydney Allard had his aluminum-skinned Ford flathead and Cadillac OHV-powered English hot rods, which dominated club racing in the early 1950s. Allard's cars went on to compete in the 24 hours of Le Mans in 1950, where Allard posted third overall with a Cadillac OHV V8 against much more sophisticated machinery. Bob Carnes and his Bocar Stiletto, powered by supercharged Corvette motors, dominated the car magazines of the late '50s, if not the races they entered.

Of interest also was Shelby's buddy Lance Reventlow, heir to the Revlon fortune, and his scratch-built Scarabs, powered by Chevy. Carroll also did not overlook Bill Devin, the



This doesn't happen with an Austin/Ago engine.



Only the custom bonnet gives it away that this is not a stock Healey.

A Chevy-Healey Nasty Boy even appeared at the Nassau Speed Weeks in 1960.



Nassau 12/1960 - 250 Mile Race
1960 Chevy-Healey
Forrest (Bud) Dana

self-described "Enzo Ferrari of Okie Flats," and his Devin SS with California fiberglass body, Scottish-built frame, and Chevy V8. Of course, Carroll had not forgotten that in the late '50s, he himself had stuck Chevy small blocks of up to 400 HP into Listers.

However, Carroll wanted a European chassis and something under the hood that was as American as Marilyn Monroe and was fast, cheap and easy to work on.

The First Chevy-Healey

After test-driving several Healeys running hot-rodded Corvette motors in California,



Another example of the rich history of engine swaps.



aluminum high-rise intake manifold, the Ford motor weighed an astonishing 87 pounds less than the Austin mill, and caused Healey's front end to sit up one and a half inches higher. Imagine what headers and aluminum heads, water pump bell housing and flywheel would cut from this weight!

A Chevy-Healey from Shelby?

Carroll decided a Chevy-Healey was the car he wanted to "manufacture" and go racing with against Ferrari for the World Manufacturers Championship. After the Carrera race in Mexico, Shelby and Healey's friendship had grown. They campaigned several record-breaking high-speed runs at the Bonneville Salt Flats in sort-of Austin-Healeys. Carroll described Donald as a "kindred spirit" who was enthusiastic when Carroll gave him the call about his big plan for the Big Healey V8. There were just two problems...

First, Mr. Healey's new masters at Austin said, "Nix!" Austin had plenty of 6-cylinder motors lying around to underpower the Big Healey and didn't want their motors embarrassed by an American V8 that put out twice as much power even on a bad day and probably three times as much on a good one. (I know, I know, somebody, somewhere, claims he can get 225 HP from an Austin motor. Ask that dude if he is driving his sled every day! For way less work and one-tenth the cost, a small block Chevy or Ford will produce two times this

Shelby was impressed, and he wasn't the only one. The aforementioned Max Balchowsky performed perhaps the first Chevy-Healey transplant five years earlier in 1956, a dirty deed documented by *Hot Rod* magazine in their June issue. The Chevy-Healey was lighter than the Austin-Healey – something I know well since I've had to lower the front end by putting spacers in the A-frame spring cups.

Another *Hot Rod* feature in August 1963 – appropriately entitled "Healey with a V8 Punch"



Same for the Sunbeam Tiger, a British car with an American motor.



The Jensen Interceptor is an example of a British car that came from the factory with an American motor.



– saw the diminutive Ford small block (only 20 inches wide across the exhaust ports) transplanted into a willing 1960 Austin-Healey. The 289-inch V8 powerplant rated at 271 horses replaced the 183-inch, 6-cylinder Austin motor of one-half the power. *Hot Rod* reported that with the ubiquitous

Sidney Allard saw the virtue in equipping his namesake cars with an American power plant.



Track, September 1962, 0-100 runs went from 27.5 seconds (for the AC with the Bristol D-2 tuned engine) to 10.8 seconds in the new Cobra! The top speed also changed from 118 153 MPH.

The power-to-weight ratio tells the tale. *R&T* reported a horsepower-to-weight ratio of 1:9.6 for the early AC Cobra compared to 1:16.8 for the AC Bristol. Some quick math reveals that a small block Chevy engine producing 400 HP in a Healey now weighing 2,200 lbs. would produce a mind-boggling horsepower-to-weight ratio of 1:6

amount of horses and still be streetable.)

Second, the bigwigs at GM were not keen on giving themselves competition to their Corvette and refused to supply Chevy motors and Chevy know-how to Shelby for his transplant. Jilted, Shelby hitched up with AC Cars and Ford. Ford did not have a two-seater T-Bird or even a pony car in 1962. Austin's attitude is a pity, because, as Geoffrey remarked, "The small block Ford would have gone into the Big Healey easily."

Shelby's Cobra

Shelby and his new friends at Ford stuffed the AC full of Ford 221, later 260, later 289, later 427 and 428 cubic inch motors. The addition of even the 260 cubic inch Ford motor in the AC produced startling performance claims. According to *Road &*

– this is 427 Cobra territory! Compare this to another *R&T* report in February 1965, which noted that a stock A-H has a



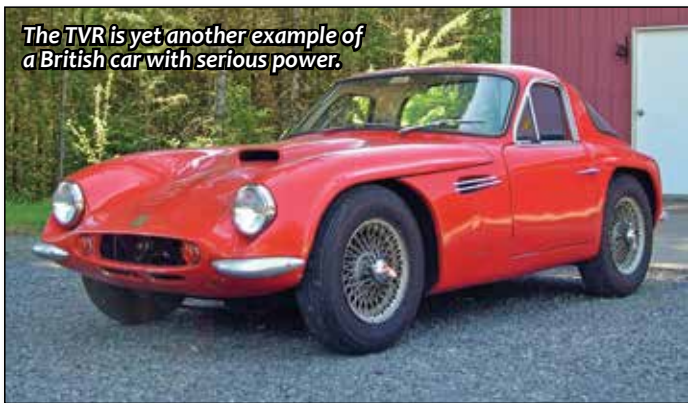
The AC and the Cobra production line ... it could have been a Healey.



horsepower to weight ratio of 1:20.4 with a 0-100 time of 27.4 seconds and top speed of 116 MPH.

Shelby American Inc., "manufactured" the Cobra. The Cobra, as a production American car, thrashed Ferrari and Corvette on every track in the world and won the World Manufacturers Championship. Shelby ended up employing

The TVR is yet another example of a British car with serious power.



over 500 people at Shelby American Inc. in Venice, California. Carroll's creations also dominated NHRA Drag Racing in A/SP class for years. In addition, Shel' inspired the Cheetah, a Chevy V8 and a T-10 4-speed set so far back a single U-joint connected the trans to the rear axle, as well as the 289 Ford-powered TVR Griffin and Buick-powered Apollo with its Italian body and, of course, the Sunbeam Tiger. The rest is history – sadly, a history that passed the Austin-Healey by.

Cobra Spirit Lives On

Delinquent and on parole from the 1960s, that Cobra spirit still lives on in the happy-go-lucky backyard "engineers," cutting torch and a Hurst stick shift in hand, who make up the

One Healey that did come stock with an American motor, the Nash Healey with a Nash power plant.



"Modified Registry." In case you don't know, this group – dubbed the "Nasty Boys" – is dedicated to cutting everything Austin out of a big Healey and putting in something better. The credo of the Nasty Boys goes, "Anybody can restore an antique priceless British car like an Austin-Healey, but it takes a real man to cut one up." Like Shelby with his AC, the Nasty Boys believe the Big Healey is a good place to start. Picassos with a power saw and artists of the arc welder, they make the A-H their canvas, building the car that Healey and his pal Shelby really wanted to build, but couldn't. The Nasty Boys are the true bearers of the Healey-Shelby flame as they continue to campaign their hell-bent Healeys in innumerable stoplight Grand Prix and impromptu highway show-downs with 'Vettes, Ferraris, Porsches, Vipers, and Highway Patrol Cars.

The restoration people will get the Nasty Boys' Cobra-Healeys when they pry our dead, cold hands off our Healeys' Hurst stick shift knobs! After all, if a big American V8 in a small British package beat Ferrari and Corvette on every racetrack in the world in 1965, such a hybrid ought to be able to whip anything on the streets into 2021.

The Healey Silverstone is perhaps another missed opportunity for a racecar with American power.



The Austin Atlantic shared the same basic A90 motor with the Healey 100.



An underpowered stock Healey being abused by a bully Corvette!

Russ Keep, Modified Section Head, is the owner of Frankenstein, his '62 Austin-Healey with a 443 hsp 383 stroker SBC. The Nasty Boys publication, *The Wheelspinners*, may be viewed at: www.bighealey.org/NastyBoy/NastyBoy.htm **HM**