

lot of the St Louis Bread Company at Tesson Ferry/MO Hwy 21 and Kennerly Rd; we'll depart at 9:30 AM with a planned one-hour tour of the sanctuary starting at 11 AM, followed by a run to the winery. Cost for the tiger tour and wine tasting is \$20, you can buy lunch at the winery if you so desire. Please RSVP to Thomas Loew at bigcat92@hotmail.com NLT 5 June; in the meantime, monitor www.jagstl.com and the online *Growl*.

- 11 Jun 17**—St Louis Region SCCA **As Time Goes By Rally**. Do-it-yourself introduction (with some help) to classic Time-Speed-Distance Rallying. Meet at the City Hall Parking Lot, 208 S Rapp Ave, Columbia, IL, registration 12 noon-12:45, rally school 12:45-1:15 PM, first car departs at 1:30 PM. \$10 entry fee, bring a car, driver, navigator, clipboard, calculator, watch or clock, pencils/pens. For info contact Rallymaster Jim Heine, Rallymaster, editorialsolutions@sbcglobal.net or (314)922-6120.
- 11 Jun 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Gateway**, Gateway Motorsports Park, 12-3 PM.
- 16-18 Jun 17**—**15th Kastner Cup**, Blackhawk Farms Raceway, South Beloit, IL. The Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis and St Louis Triumph Owners Association will mount an expedition to the track for the VSCDA's Blackhawk Classic vintage races, the Kastner Cup all-Triumph race and to cheer on **JAGSL's** Phil Taxman in his E-Type coupe. Monitor www.jagstl.com and www.sltoa.org for preps; for info on the Kastner Cup see www.kaskastner.com/kastnercup.html.
- 17 Jun 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Westport**, at Westport Plaza, 8-11 AM. Info at <http://carsandcoffeestl.org>.
- 17 Jun 17**—**Annual Hazelwood Baptist Car Show**, 6161 Howdershell Rd. For vehicles 30 years and older, food, beverages and music all day, display your car for free, People's Choice Award. Car owners sign in between 8 AM and 1 PM, Info (314)731-2244 or call up www.hazelwoodbaptist.com, pre-registration highly encouraged.
- 18 Jun 17**— St Louis Region **SCCA Autocross No. 3**, Gateway Motorsports Park. Info at www.stlsolo.org.
- 18 Jun 17**—**Annual Father's Day Car Show**, Museum of Transportation, 2933 Barrett Station Rd, 11 AM-3:30 PM, sponsored by the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri.
- 24 Jun 17**—**Gateway Cars & Coffee**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 9 AM-12 noon, pastries and coffee provided by Dunkin' Donuts. For information call (618)589-9952 or call up www.gatewayclassiccars.com.
- 24-25 Jun 17**—**SLTOA drive** and overnight at **Hannibal, Missouri**. In development, details to follow, monitor the club web page at www.sltoa.org.
- 1 Jul 17**—**Cars & Coffee-O'Fallon**, SunRise UMC, 7116 Twin Chimneys Blvd, O'Fallon, MO, 8-10 AM.
- 3 Jul 17**—**4th Annual Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church Car Show**, 1230 Big Bend Rd (Big Bend and MO 141), register 9 AM-noon, limited to 200 vehicles. Entry fee of canned goods or non-perishable food items to restock the church food pantry. Judging 1-2 PM, awards at 2 PM, raffle to benefit youth mission trips. Return at 9:15 PM for the fireworks display. For info, call (636)225-5625.
- 8 Jul 17**— St Louis Region **SCCA Autocross No. 4**, Gateway Motorsports Park. Info at www.stlsolo.org.
- 9 Jul 17**—**BSCC Autocross No. 4**. Family Arena, show around 9:30 AM, six runs for \$35. Contact Racer Steve at sshab@yahoo.com for info or to get on the emailing list.
- 9 Jul 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Gateway**, Gateway Motorsports Park, 12-3 PM.
- 10 Jul 17**—Annual MG Club of St Louis **BBQ Meeting**. Starts at 5 PM; dinner at 6 PM, short meeting at 7 PM. Location and details TBA, monito www.stlouismgclub.com.
- 14 Jul 17**—**Scott AFB Centennial Car Show**, celebrating 100 years of Scott AFB, 2-6 PM. Free event, music, kid zone and food booths available. At the Scott Event Center, just inside the Shiloh Gate on Seibert Rd east of IL 158/Air Mobility Drive (I-64 Exit 19). All cars welcome, call Scott Jenkins, Scott Arts & Crafts Center (618)256-4230 for information and to register. Note: If you have a Missouri, Washington, Minnesota, Montana or Maine driver's license, bring additional photo ID for access to the base and the show.
- 15 Jul 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Westport**, at Westport Plaza, 8-11 AM. Info at <http://carsandcoffeestl.org>.
- 16 Jul 17**—**JAGSL Birthday Party**, at the Fox Run Golf Club, 1 Putt Lane, Eureka. Details to follow, monitor www.jagstl.com and the online *Growl*.
- 16 Jul 17**—St Louis Region SCCA **Solo Novice School**, Gateway Motorsports Park.
- 29 Jul 17**—**Gateway Cars & Coffee**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 9 AM-12 noon, pastries and coffee provided by Dunkin' Donuts. For information call (618)589-9952 or call up www.gatewayclassiccars.com.
- 30 Jul 17**— St Louis Region **SCCA Autocross No. 5**, Gateway Motorsports Park. Info at www.stlsolo.org.
- 4 Aug 17**—**Memories Car Club Monthly Cruise** – aka "The Zoo" – at Faith Church, 13001 Gravois Rd, Sunset Hills, 4-9:30 PM. Held the first Friday of each month through October for cars 1979 and older; door prizes, please bring a canned good item for the church's food pantry.
- 5 Aug 17**—**Cars & Coffee-O'Fallon**, SunRise UMC, 7116 Twin Chimneys Blvd, O'Fallon, MO, 8-10 AM.
- 6 Aug 17**—**BSCC Autocross No. 5**. Family Arena, show around 9:30 AM, six runs for \$35. Contact Racer Steve at sshab@yahoo.com for info or to get on the emailing list.
- 19 Aug 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Westport**, at Westport Plaza, 8-11 AM. Info at <http://carsandcoffeestl.org>.

Roadwork—Going the Distance: The GT Sprites



One of the entertaining aspects of endurance racing is the wide variety of vehicles which show up for the major events at locales like Le Mans, Daytona, Sebring and Spa. Quite literally, you never know what you're going to see out on the track.

Historically, the sanctioning/organizing bodies consistently made an effort to welcome as wide a range of cars with different displacements and characteristics as possible. This resulted in regular images of big-engine/high-horsepower/insanely fast sports prototypes working their way around tracks while attempting (carefully, very carefully) to avoid cars with engines sized down below 1 liter. For example, when the 24 Hours of Le Mans resumed in 1949, the field included several cars in the 1-liter range, competing in the S1100 and S750 classes. France's Jean de Montrémy and Eugène Dussous took the S1100 class in a Monopole Sport, powered by a Simca 1.1L engine; they finished 11th overall, behind a 2-liter Aston Martin Sports/DB1. The highest finishing S750 was a Aero Minor Sport 750, built the Let Aviation of Czechoslovakia and powered by a flat-two two-stroke engine; driven by František Sutar and Otto Krattner, it finished in 13th place. The other cars in the two classes included Simcas, two Simca-Gordinis, a Singer 9 and a Renault 4CV...notably, the first rear-engined car to compete at Le Mans (it DNFd at the 7-hour mark when the engine let go).

No surprise, but following the debut of the Sprite in 1958 with its A-series 948cc, dual SU, 43 horsepower engine, owners immediately started putting them on the race tracks. The car was a huge hit out of the box; per automotive writer Daniel Vaughan, "The Sprite was a popular vehicle because it was small, sporty, and very economical, with the original versions costing about \$2000. They were easy to maintain and had superb handling. Though zero-to-sixty took about 21 seconds and top speed was just under 80 mph, this was respectable for a 1960's vehicle."

In and around the type's initial racing successes, Donald Healey made a point of developing a variant specifically for endurance racing. Geoff Healey handled the modifications and race preparations at the company's Warwick facility, including the addition of four-wheel disc brakes, 1¼ SU carbs, a twin-plate racing clutch and close-ratio transmission. The cars also received a hardtop.

British Motor Corporation and Healey entered three cars – appropriately designated "Sebring Sprites" – in the 21 March 1959 12-hour race at Sebring; they raced under the sponsorship of Hambro Auto Corporation of New York City, a leading BMC importer in the northeastern United States. The cars did

very well, sweeping the top three spots in the GT1.0 class. Number 43, driven by Phil Stiles and Canadian Hugh Sutherland, completed 149 laps, good for 31st place (the race winners, Dan Gurney, Phil Hill, Chuck Daigh and Oliver Gendebien in a three-liter Ferrari 250 TR59, completed 188 laps at an average speed of 80.18 mph). Ed Leavens and Harold Kunz, in No. 53, placed 36th and Fred Hayes/John Christy/



Sebring 1959: the Stiles/Sutherland (54) and Leavens/Kunz (53) Sebring Sprites. Car No. 52 is a Lancia Appia Zagato; Walter Cronkite co-drove the car, which finished in 40th place. Photos via Bring A Trailer.

John Colgate 38th. The small Sprites constituted the entire presence of Austin Healey at the 1959 event. The fourth car, No. 78, served as a reserve and did not start.



While the Mk1 Sprite with modifications proved an effective racer, several individuals initiated projects to turn the car into a more capable (and arguably, more comfortable) long-distance car. Perhaps chief among these was noted race and rally driver John Sprinzel.



The No. 53 Sebring Sprite, restored. Photo via BAT.

In 1957, Sprinzel, George Hubert and Len Adams established Speedwell Performance Conversions, located on Finchley Road in London. Their primary goal was to improve the aerodynamics of the Bugeye/Frogeye; to achieve this, they enlisted the assistance of Lister Chief Engineer and legendary aerodynamicist Frank Costin, brother of engineer Mike Costin (who, with Keith Duckworth, later formed Cosworth). Costin came up with a new, longer hood/bonnet with headlights relocated to the corners and also devised a fixed fastback roof, initially in aluminum with a subsequent shift to fiberglass. Sprinzel and Stuart Turner ran the prototype with the Costin hood in the September 1959 four-day Liege-Rome-Liege rally and took their class.

Production of 25 Speedwell GTs followed, with coachbuilders Williams & Pritchard of London turning out two or three and Classic Motor crafts handling the rest.



John Sprinzel with one of the early Sebring Sprites, Marseille, France, 1961. Photo via Moss Motors.

Each incorporated a heavy duty suspension with Panhard rod on the rear axle and an engine with oversized intake valves and twin SU HS2 carbs which produced 60 bhp. According to Speedwell's sales brochure for the car, it offered "...a true Grand Touring car designed to incorporate all the requirements of the fastidious motorist." Graham Hill, a friend of the Costins, managed to get one of them to 130 mph on the Jabekke Highway in Belgium.

Sprinzel subsequently left the Speedwell concern due to a falling out with the other partners (interestingly enough, he sold his share to Hill) and joined Donald Healey in the formation of the latter's Special Tuning Division and John Sprinzel Ltd in Lancaster Mews. They continued development of more aerodynamic, hardtop Sprites featuring disc brakes, engine and chassis improvements and a full coupe body, fabricated from aluminum and fiberglass. The car debuted at the London Racing Car Show; six were built for racing purposes, including Sprinzel's personal car which was prepared for the 1961 Sebring 12-hour along with a second vehicle.

(Continued on page 4)



Stirling (left) and Pat Moss with their Sprites, 1961 Sebring 4-Hour race. Walt Hansgen's Sebring Sprite is to the right. Photo via *Sebring Sprites*.

For the 1961 edition of Sebring, the event's organizers took all of the 1-liter and below cars and ran them in a separate, four-hour race, held on 24 March. Stirling Moss drove one of the Sprinzel cars to a fifth place finish, while his sister Pat – teamed with Paul Hawkins – came in 7th in the second car. Five Donald Healey-prepared and entered hardtop Sebring Sprites pretty much filled out the rest of the top 10, driven by Walt Hansgen, 3rd; Bruce McLaren, 4th; Ed Leavens, 6th; and Briggs Cunningham/Dr Dick Thompson, 8th. Fiat-Abarth 1000s, entered by Abarth DFL, took the top two spots. In the 12-hour, Joe Buzzeta and Glenn Carlson placed 15th in a Donald Healey Sebring Sprite hardtop; Ed Leavens/John Colgate came in 25th in an open-top Sprite, 25th; and one of the Sprinzel-prepared and entered Sprites finished 37th, driven by Simson/Paul Hawkins.

Sprite hardtops and fastbacks remained fixtures in long-distance racing through the 1960s, regularly scoring class victories with a wide variety of owners and drivers. Donald Healey turned out what were probably the ultimate GT Sprites in 1965, 10 cars total which bore the nickname "wind tunnel" due to their, well, aerodynamic testing in a wind tunnel. The cars featured a cut-down windshield from a Mini and an aluminum fastback rear body. The 1293cc engines had a single 45 DCOE Weber carb and generated 105 bhp, with power to the limited slip rear end through a 4-speed close-ratio gearbox. The brakes were discs at front and drums at the rear. The cars only weighed about 1300 pounds and were quite fast.

The first race for the ultimate Sebring Sprites was in fact the 1965 Sebring 12-Hour. Healey entered two cars; Rauno Aaltonen and Clive Baker in car No. 61 finished 15th overall while Paddy Hopkirk and Timo Mäkinen took 18th place, good for 2nd and 3rd place respectively in the Prototype 2.0L class. Jim Hall and Hap Sharp took the race – which achieved legendary status due to torrential rains and flooding – in Hall's Chaparral 2A.



The Hopkirk/Mäkinen fastback, 1965 Sebring 12-hour, before the skies opened up and started flooding portions of the track. Photo via *Sports Car Digest*.

At the 1965 Le Mans 24-hour, run 19-20 June, Healey ran two of the fastback Sprites. Due to concerns over adequate visibility for the small-displacement GTs at night, Healey had

them painted a screaming fluorescent lime green. However, as recounted in "Sebring Sprites,"

The French scrutineers decreed that the colour would be a hazard on the circuit, perhaps fearing that the new model would be too fiercely competitive with the smaller French entries. As a result the cars had to be hastily repainted in a dark green in a local barn before the race.

Regrettably, the Aaltonen/Baker car DNF'd on its 256th lap due to gearbox failure. Paul Hawkins and John Rhodes, driving the second car, finished 12th overall and first in the Prototype 1.3L class. However, the Healey Sprite fastbacks went on to do quite well in a wide number of races, including repeat appearances at Sebring and Le Mans as well as Sicily's Targa Florio.

According to Geoff Healey in his book *More Healeys*, the company built a special Sprite for the 1965 Targa, with fuel tank relocated farther to the rear of the car and down and the springs remounted, lessening understeer. The car, driven by Aaltonen and Baker, finished 15th and 2nd in class. For the 1967 event, the car was modified with single headlights and a fixed radiator intake, vice the previous small intake with adjustable flap. Geoff Healey recalled this year's race didn't work out too well for the Healey team:

Clive (Baker) was again to suffer misfortune. Approaching a bend, he braked hard just as a local decided to run across the road. The man ended up across the windscreen and Clive hit the guard-rails, knocking the front end askew. The local police locked Clive up, mainly in case any of the locals sought revenge and later delivered him by helicopter to the pits.

At the 1968 Sebring 12-Hour, Baker and Mike Carton finished in 35th place; notably, Healey's MG Midget driven by Jerry Truitt and Randy Canfield finished 15th and first in the sports 1.6 class. After the race, BMC announced it would no longer provide factory support for the Healey Sprites, preferring to concentrate on Midgets. Donald Healey sold his remaining Sprites and moved on to other challenges.

However, private owners regularly ran the cars at several races through 1970. At the 1970 Sebring 12 Hours of Endurance for the Alitalia Airline Trophy (how's that for a mouthful?), Janet Guthrie, Judy Kondratieff, Sharlene Seavey and Rosemary Smith. Smith won the Sports Prototype 2000 class in a fastback Sprite of the Ring Free Oil Team, placing 19th overall and 1st in class.



The winning Sprite team of 1970; from the left, Judy Kondratieff, Janet Guthrie, Sharlene Seavey and Rosemary Smith. Source: "Sebring Forty Years Past," *Along for the Ride*, <http://johnstraub.blogspot.com/2010/12/sebring-forty-years-past.html>.



WSM GT. Photo via *Hemmings*.

Finally, as a side story, during the 1960s WSM in London turned out 14 Sprite GTs which closely resembled the race cars. Developed by Douglas Wilson-Spratt, an Austin dealer, and Healey's London sales manager, Jim McManus, the cars

(Continued on page 7)



Photos by John Moore & Jack T. Bear



In Print (Continued from page 1)

Alfa Romeo Spider, Chevrolet Corvette C3, Lotus Seven S4, Porsche 914-4, Fiat 124 Spider, TVR 3000S and Jensen-Healey. May's *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* covers the restoration of TR2 MVC575 which, driven by ERA and BRM test driver Ken Richardson, set a record of 125 MPH on the Jabbeke Highway in Belgium on 20 May 1953.

June's *Car & Driver* features "Destiny's Dozen," identifying 12 cars which will probably serve as the next generation of collector cars. The list includes the 2011 BMW 1-Series M Coupe and the 1988-1991 E30 M3. Over at sister pub *Road & Track*, a quick look at the BMW M760i with xDrive. Finally, the July issue of *Classic Motorsports* provides tech tips for the TR6.



Photo by Andrew Ackerman

The winners! Lee Fox and Andy Ackerman

Cars & Coffee —Westport

20 May 2017



“Après moi, les déluge” - Louis XV. No doubt, more cars showed up later in the morning but early on, things were a tad sparse...



Photos by
Darren Frazier



Dang, hate it WHEN that happens..

GT Sprites (Continued from page 4)

– designated the WSM GT, go figure – featured the standard A-Series four-cylinder engine, available in 995, 1098 or 1275 ccs, an aluminum body, fiberglass front end and very upscale interior. As described by Hemming’s Richard Lentinello, “... the little sports car weighed just 1,100 pounds, and with an engine putting out close to 100 horsepower, its performance was quite electrifying.” WSM turned out only 14 of the GTs prior to ending production and only one is in the states, owned by Austin-Healey collector and *The Healey Book* author Bill Emerson.



Restored later generation Healey team Sebring Sprite. Photo via Bring A Trailer.

Sebring Sprites, Speedwell GTs and replica/continuation variants are available periodically, if interested. In mid-May, *Car and Classic* listed a 1965 Sprinzel replica done up in race fashion with full roll cage, lim-

ited slip differential, adjustable shocks and a 1380cc engine with single Weber DCOE45 side-draft carb, along with a bunch of other mods/ upgrades. The seller noted the slick little hardtop “...would not be out of place as a fast road car, sprint and hillclimb, or racing in one of the Historic Race Series for period vehicles.” The asking price for the car, located in Kent, was £26,990. The same ad also provided a listing for a WSM GT offered by Woolmer Classic Engineering of Bedford, £49,500.

You never know, you might just turn up something. And, if you find that special, historic hardtop/fastback Sprite, we can pretty well guarantee you’ll be the hit of the monthly Gateway Healey gathering as well as Cars & Coffee.

Sources: *Car and Classic*, www.carandclassic.co.uk; *Racing Sports Cars* (<http://www.racingsportscars.com/>); Daniel Vaughan, “1960 Austin-Healey Sebring Sprite,” *ConceptCarz*, July 2008; “Speedwell GT,” *Sebring Sprite*, www.sebringsprite.com; *Sports Car Digest*, www.sportscardigest.com; “Big Dollar Bug-Eye: 1959 Sebring Sprite,” *Bring A Trailer*, 12 December 2009; *The BARC Boys*, www.barcboys.com; Peter Browning, “Those Le Mans Sprites,” pp 27-29, 32; Richard Lentinello, “Sequel Sprite-1964 WSM GT,” *Hemmings*, January 2017; *Bring A Trailer*.

Featured Events

Rally in the 100 Acre Wood

17-18 March 2017



Photos by Calvin Cooper

"Some tire wear may occur..."

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BMW Car Club of America St. Louis Chapter

