

Wyres & Tyres

March 2020



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Membership Meetings

Coletta's Italian Restaurant, 2850 Appling Rd.

3rd Monday of each month
6:00 p.m. if you wish dinner;
7:00 p.m. for our program

Mark your calendar
March 16th, 2020 - Clint Harris, Blue Angel
April 20th, 2020
May 18th, 2020
June 15th, 2020

What do these two cars have in common?

Answer at end of W&T



Morris Oxford



Chrysler Windsor

Member Profile

Both Charles and MaryAnne Coleman were born in Blytheville, AR and basically grew up there. Blytheville is the largest city in Mississippi County, Arkansas, a major cotton growing center and home to a Strategic Air Command (SAC)



bomber base. They met one another in a 'Training Union' class at the small Baptist church they attended. Both were about fourteen years old at the time, and they are still together!

Opportunities for young men were quite limited in Blytheville

Like most boys of that era, Charles grew up admiring airplanes and automobiles. His heart was set on becoming an aircraft pilot, but he just didn't know how he would manage to make his dream become reality. He built and flew model airplanes, either static models or U-control flying models. That's about as far as a small-town boy could take his imagination in those days.

He graduated high school in May, 1953. Opportunities for young men were quite limited in Blytheville, so in June he and a couple of friends headed to the bright lights and factories of St. Louis, MO. Charles and one friend quickly found employment at General Motors Chevrolet assembly plant working the evening shift.

Charles came back to Blytheville and to MaryAnne as often as possible but mobility was limited because he didn't yet own a car. Meanwhile, MaryAnne had found a good job as a telephone operator for Southwestern Telephone Company. Things didn't stay that way very long, anyway. The GM plant was shut down for assembly-line change over and Charles was laid off by February of 1954.

Returning to Blytheville, he was hired to drive a truck for a local laundry and dry-cleaning company. With MaryAnne still working for the telephone company, they got married on September 12, 1954. They were both 19 years old.

Still yearning to become a pilot, Charles got to talking with a U.S. Air Force recruiter. Charles mentioned his aim to fly but recognized the need for at least two years of college to become a cadet. The recruiter convinced him his chances

would be excellent to qualify for Officer Candidate School once he was part of the USAF. So, Charles signed up and went to Lackland AFB, Texas for basic training.

Never trust a Sargent!

Out of basic, he applied for and was assigned to Russian language precursor training (beginning also at Lackland AFB). There were 36 students in the Russian four-week class, and they began by studying English. Half the class washed out at the end of the first week. Another half left after the second week, and so on. Those who were successful were aiming at a university assignment at Syracuse University for the actual Russian classes. Charles made it to the end. But only four persons would be assigned to Syracuse and he was beat out - one competitor grew up in a Russian-speaking household, another also came from a Russian-speaking neighborhood, another was especially adept at grasping new language. Whatever, Charles wasn't headed for Syracuse.

He and the other few who missed the cut were called in by the Major who told them they had demonstrated excellent capability and should be able to get any USAF training assignment they desired.

Called in for career discussion with the Master Sargent, Charles asked to be assigned to a training class for 'Radio Traffic Analysis'. But, the Sargent insisted there were no openings in that training field. Instead, the Sargent suggested weather training. Charles knew there were openings for the Radio Traffic Analysis class and argued for his assignment. The Sargent continued to push for weather training. Eventually, Charles demanded jet aircraft mechanic training and the Sargent said OK.

Charles quickly called MaryAnne and told her to get ready to move to San Antonio where the mechanic training would occur.

Then, the assignment list was posted directing Charles to Chanute AFB in Rantoul, Illinois where weather observers and forecasters were

trained! Never trust a Sargent!

After success at Chanute, Charles was posted to a USAF installation on Iwo Jima in the western Pacific. While there he managed to visit Japan, the Philippines, and Okinawa but wasn't able to swing a trip to Hong Kong. MaryAnne meanwhile held the fort at the phone company in Blytheville.

*management trainee is another term
for jack of all trades*

Charles was discharged in June 1959. MaryAnne and he decided they'd rather settle in Memphis to finally start their married life together. Charles located a management trainee job with the Stewart Potato Chip Company. He says a management trainee is another term for jack of all trades. He drove a fork lift, peeled potatoes, cooked potato chips, and everything else.

In talking with a friend who knew of Charles' Air Force experience, the friend urged Charles to go get a job with the U.S. Weather Bureau. Charles was loathe doing so, knowing how poorly government workers were paid - he made as much as a management trainee at the potato chip company. Still he called out to the Weather Bureau office and spoke with Mr. Marine Rowe who convinced Charles into going out to tour the facility. The Weather Bureau office was at the Memphis airport and Charles was greeted warmly by Mr. Rowe and was introduced around and offered an application for employment.

Though he was hesitant due to the low pay, Charles applied and was accepted for employment as a meteorological technician for the U.S. Weather Bureau in December 1959 - at the princely salary of \$4040 per year.

Mr. Marine Rowe, his supervisor urged Charles to pursue college studies to enhance his potential for career growth. But, his employment entailed shift work; rotating shift work, which made finding time off for classes nearly impossible unless colleagues were willing to make sacrifices

for Charles' benefit. But, they did. So Charles began taking math and physics classes at Memphis State University (now University of Memphis) while gaining course work in meteorology via correspondence from Pennsylvania State University. After five years, Charles had completed his junior year of college but was stymied by the unavailability of a couple of high-level meteorology classes via correspondence. Again Marine Rowe intervened and finagled a government scholarship to attend Florida State University where the courses were offered.

After FSU, returning to the Memphis office of the U.S. Weather Bureau (it had become the National Weather Service by then), Charles now qualified for the higher graded / paid meteorologist position, and was soon reassigned as a forecaster at the Oklahoma City office in 1972.

*His interest in British cars came from
seeing and reading about them in
Road & Track Magazine*

Two years later, Charles was transferred to the weather forecast office in Little Rock, AR - this time as a Senior Forecaster. He was subsequently reassigned to the Memphis Forecast Office in the dual role of Senior Forecaster and Aviation Evaluation Officer. He remained in that position until retirement in 1995, after 42 years of service to the people of the United States.



Charles' interest in British cars came from seeing

and reading about them in Road & Track Magazine, especially the square-rigged MG TD. Then, when Charles was about 17 years old, he spotted an elegant silver roadster touring around the local race track at Blytheville. It was a Jaguar XK-120, the most beautiful car Charles had ever seen; a pure work of art. The only construction of man that was comparable was the P-51 Mustang of WW-11.

The first sports car he owned was the black 1956 Thunderbird that graces his garage yet today. His first British sports car is the 1958 Austin Healey 100/6 that is also in his garage though in many pieces amidst a full restoration. He acquired the Healey while living in Little Rock and wasn't confident it would survive the drive to Memphis when the Coleman family moved. So, Charles enlisted his friend Tom Hollis to bring the car from Little Rock to Memphis in the dead of summer. Charles would drive the Healey and Tom would follow in his car as rescue vehicle.

Have you ever driven, or ridden in an Austin Healey? If so, you well know the heat endured in the cockpit. To make the situation worse, the transmission cover wasn't fastened down in Charles' Healey. The interior heat just about roasted the two drivers and they had to spell one another about every 20 miles all the way to Memphis.

Around 1981 the same friend, Tom Hollis, heard that a meeting was going to be held to organize a British car club in Memphis. The meeting was at the Shakey's Pizza Parlor near the (now gone) Mall of Memphis. Both Charles and Tom attended and shared in the organization and design of the British Sports Car Club of Memphis.

The British Sports Car Club has been a grand club all these years

The Jaguar XK-120 remains Charles best loved British car, even though he's never owned one. He once bought a slightly rusty XK-150 in an

attempt to slake his love, but quickly passed the car on when he discovered the rust was more than slight.

He recalls a BSCC event in which the club motored to multiple venues to take part in the activity offered, especially including driving go-carts at the go-cart track.

Charles closed our interview with this statement, "*The British Sports Car Club has been a grand club all these years. A lot of great people in it; the best club in the area, and widely known as such.*"



P-51 Wheels up with Charles in the cockpit

Asking Price

What is your special car worth? Nearly priceless to you, but how much would you get for it if you chose to part with it? Some cars always command high prices, others struggle to even get decent offers. And, watching the auctions on TV doesn't seem a reliable source of valuation.

So, as a basis for a vague guess to current market values, here's the gist of several ads for Brit cars found at the back of a recent issue of Classic Motorsports Magazine.



1976 MGB. Sierra 5-speed, slotted rotors, downdraft Weber. \$8,800 OBO.

1966 Morris Mini Traveler (Woodie), many new parts including floors, 67,108 miles. \$18,500.

1967 Sunbeam Tiger, beautiful original paint, new interior and top, 71,590 miles. \$87,500.

1967 Sunbeam Alpine, California car, new wheels, tires, radiator, and Weber carb. \$15,900.

1973 Triumph TR-6, one of the best TR6s, rebuilt engine, new top and tires. \$23,500.



1967 Austin Healey 3000, 100 point nut and bolt resto, red on black, concours ready. \$110,000.

1957 Aston Martin DBR2 Recreation, alloy bodied recreation, recent sorting. \$40,000.

1961 MGA Coupe, frame-off restoration, built for touring, 5-speed, A/C. \$25,000.

1970 Jaguar XKE 2+2, BRG, 50,000 miles, auto trans. \$42,000.

1997 Rolls Royce Silver Dawn, excellent in and out, 90,000 miles. \$24,000.

1956 Jaguar D-Type (RAM), barn find, 4-speed with O/D, triple Weber, needs paint and tune, fiberglass/alum body. \$40,000.

1966 Lotus Cortina, documented dual purpose (street - track), for spirited road or track. \$69,500.

I bought a guitar the other day but it doesn't work.

Guess I should've known cause the seller said "no strings attached."

What do you call a fish with no i's?

A fsh!

Want to win a great prize?

Be the first to email the correct answer to the following question - In what year was the first road race held here in the Mid South?

The answer is on the BSCC web page (www.memphisbritishcars.org)

Email your answer to dukemeteo@gmail.com

February 17th Membership Meeting

BSCC Historian and Web Master Joe Reed delivered, at the February 17th meeting, a grand program on the history of the British Sports Car Club.

While Jimmy Ogle can lay claim to being the Memphis Historian, Joe Reed demonstrated that he is a walking library of detail and minutiae about the BSCC history.

Fortunately, Joe wears hats (crowns?) for both Historian and Web Master. So even if you missed his presentation, you can find nearly all he talked about on our informative web page.

My First Car

By Terry Roberts

Everyone remembers their first car. Mine was a black 1942 Chevrolet sedan which I found at a small car repair shop in Dayton, Kentucky. I paid \$75 for the car and \$10 for new seat covers. After cleaning and waxing it, I put some portable whitewalls on the tires and a pair of fender skirts on the rear – it really looked neat!

The Chevy had a vacuum shift on the steering column which moved about 2” when shifting each gear, but you couldn’t speed shift a vacuum shift (as in drag racing from a stoplight). But the Chevy was such a reliable little car – it never gave me any trouble.

One day while I was driving along, I saw a high school buddy and pulled over to the curb rather quickly to give him a lift. Unfortunately the car behind me didn’t stop and plowed into my rear end. My car was hardly damaged – mainly the exhaust pipe was bent. The other car (a new 1957 Pontiac) had to be towed away. I guess the steel they used in late 1941 (when my car was built) was thick and very strong. In 1957 – not so strong! Lucky me!

The policeman, who came to the accident and filled out the police report, asked me how much I paid for my car. When I told him \$75, he wrote “totaled” on the police report. I bent out the exhaust pipe and drove on home. I didn’t have to fix anything.

Later I sold my Chevy for \$50 to a good friend. He drove it for a year or two and never had any trouble.

That ‘42 Chevy was one of the best cars that I have ever owned!

Answer to question on page 1 - both are named for the town in which they were manufactured -

the Morris Oxford built in Oxford, Oxfordshire, UK and the Chrysler Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Wyres & Tyres is a publication of the British Sports Car Club, LTD. PO Box 38134, Germantown, TN 38183-0134

Please visit our internet site at:

www.memphisbritishcars.org

You may direct correspondence to either location, above, or to dukemeteo@gmail.com

