

September, 2023 Edition

# Oil Spots

*A Newsletter of the Plateau British Car Club*



## **THE PREZ SEZ**

Well, another year of Rugby is in the books. We had great weather and 70 cars from all around middle Tennessee. I would like to take a minute to thank all the people that work all year round to make this show happen; Boyd and Barb Mitchell, Jim and Melinda Watson, John and Barbara Rigby, Dennis and Pat Rainey, Jon Renault and all the ladies that ran the hospitality tent and helped with the silent auction whose names I don't know. Please know you are all appreciated. We also had a small attendance at Swing On Brewery car show on the Saturday the 12th, but storms made short work of the afternoon. Still, good beer and conversations were had by all. Look for emails about September events coming soon and remember, a clear conscience is usually a sign of a bad memory!

THANKS ALL - Chris

**O**il Spots is the official monthly publication of the **Plateau British Car Club of Tennessee**. Material is actively solicited for the newsletter and every effort will be made to use appropriate material from the membership. Unsolicited material from non-members is also encouraged. The editor reserves the right to edit for length and appropriateness. No placement of material is guaranteed. Your contributions should be submitted to: [dprainey@att.net](mailto:dprainey@att.net)

Deadline for submissions is the 20th of the month prior to publication.

### **PBCC Officers and Support Positions**

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## All British Cars/Owners Welcome

The Plateau British Car Club was created to band together owners of the Little British Cars (LBC) to provide a way of exchanging ideas, technical data, amusing stories, and just plain fun. All LBC owners are invited to enjoy the "LBC experience" to the fullest with friends. Ownership of an British car is not required for membership, but non-British car owners are classified as Associate members and have no voting rights.

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The Membership Chair report.

The membership chairperson reports that there have been two new members added to the PBCC during the month of August. If you know someone who would like to join, please don't hesitate to encourage them to do so.

**[Membership applications are available on the club website at PBCCTN.org](#)**

Click on the Ferrari and enjoy.....



# JUST SITTING HERE ON THE CORNER OF AWESOME AND BOMB-DIGGITY

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## August Treasurer's Report - Edna Horony

There is no August Treasurer's report as the details from our annual the "Return of the British" event held in Rugby is still being compiled and hopefully all that will be done in time for the next newsletter.

## An LBC Story

I HEAR A NEW STORY FROM A STRANGER ALMOST EVERY TIME WE HAVE ONE OF OUR CARS OUT ON THE ROAD. ALL THE STORIES ARE ABOUT AN LBC OWNED IN YOUNGER DAYS OR A MEMORY OF A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAD AN LBC AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER. THERE IS USUALLY A BIT OF EMOTION THAT RISES TO THE SURFACE AS THEIR STORY IS TOLD. FOR MOST OF THESE PEOPLE THE CHAIN WAS BROKEN SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY AND THERE IS NO LONGER A SOLID CONNECTION TO THE LBC IN THEIR CURRENT SITUATION. SEEING A LBC PULL UP IS ALL THAT IS REQUIRED TO BRING BACK A FLOOD OF MEMORIES AND GET THEM TALKING.

HEARING SIMILAR STORIES AGAIN AND AGAIN GOT ME THINKING ABOUT THE LBCS I CURRENTLY OWN. WERE THEY ALL SOMEONE'S FAVORITE CAR AT SOME TIME IN THEIR HISTORY? HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE TIES TO THE LBCS THAT I NOW DRIVE?

OF ALL THE LBCS THAT WE HAVE OR HAVE HAD, THERE IS ONE THAT REALLY STANDS OUT US. ALL THE OTHERS WERE GREAT CARS, AND WE ENJOYED THEM THOROUGHLY, BUT THEY COULD BE REPLACED AND WERE OVER THE YEARS. I ACTUALLY LIKE THE THOUGHT OF THEM MOVING ON AND HELPING MAKE MEMORIES FOR SOMEONE ELSE.

THE '65 MGB ROADSTER IS THE CAR THAT I WILL HAVE 'TILL THE DAY THEY PUT ME IN THE GROUND.

HERE IS MY MG STORY. IT HAS TAKEN ME A WHILE TO REALIZE WHY I AM SO ATTACHED TO THIS PARTICULAR CAR.

THE 65 BRG ROADSTER WAS ACTUALLY MY SECOND MG CAR. I HAVE THE ORIGINAL SALES ORDER. THE ORIGINAL OWNER BOUGHT THE CAR IN 1965 FROM A DEALER IN THE LA AREA. THIS PARTICULAR ROADSTER CAUGHT MY ATTENTION WHEN I HAD REACHED THE POINT IN MY LIFE THAT A "FUN" CAR WAS FINALLY AFFORDABLE. I WAS THE THIRD OWNER FOLLOWING A YOUNG MARINE CORP SARGENT WHO OWNED TWO MGBS AND AS A MARINE, HE WAS CONSTANTLY BEING RE-DEPLOYED SOMEWHERE AROUND THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE SAID THAT SOMETHING HAD TO GO.

AS I SAID, HE OWNED TWO MGBS, THE OTHER WAS A '70 ROADSTER WHICH HE "LIKED" BETTER BUT BELIEVED THAT THE '65 WAS THE BETTER CAR OF THE TWO. MY WIFE AND I JUMPED ON BOARD AN AIRPLANE TO SAN DIEGO AND THE SARGENT PICKED US UP AT THE AIRPORT AND WE DROVE

THAT CAR BACK TO SACRAMENTO COMPLETELY TROUBLE FREE. MY WIFE WAS JUST AS ENTHRALLED WITH THIS ADDITION TO OUR FAMILY AS I WAS. SHE HAD GROWN UP WITH MGS IN HER FAMILY BACK IN JEFFERSON CITY, MO. IN FACT, SHE HAD LEARNED TO DRIVE IN AN MG 1100 ON THE HILLS OF THAT CITY. WE NOW HAD A FUN CAR TO USE ON WEEKENDS DRIVING THROUGH THE WINE COUNTRY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA.

YEARS EARLIER, THE LATER 50'S IN FACT, MY OLDER BROTHER BOUGHT A '53 MGTD WHICH WAS MY FIRST INTRODUCTION AND EXPERIENCE WITH ANYTHING LBC. HE HAD ALREADY FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL AND A STINT IN THE ARMY WHEN HE GOT IT BUT IT WAS THE NEATEST THING TO EVER COME TO TOWN AS FAR AS BOTH OF US WERE CONCERNED. MY BROTHER WAS VERY GOOD TO ME. HE USED TO LET ME DRIVE THAT MGTD TO SCHOOL IF I'D TAKE HIM TO WORK AND THEN PICK HIM UP AGAIN AFTER HIS WORK DAY WAS COMPLETE. THIS HAPPENED ABOUT TWO DAYS A WEEK AND TO THIS DAY I DON'T KNOW WHY HE DID THAT CAUSE I WOULDN'T HAVE LET ME DO THAT. THAT LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY WAS WHEN THE HOOK WAS SET AND I GOT REELED IN TO THE LBC SCENE FOREVER.

THE POINT IS THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE, MOSTLY OLDER ONES NOW, OUT THERE THAT HAVE SOME FOND MEMORIES OF THEIR OWN LBCS AND LIKE TO SHARE THEM WITH LIKE MINDED PEOPLE. ACTUALLY, SOME OF THEIR STORIES ARE VERY GOOD IF NOT RIGHT ON THE EDGE OF UNBELIEVABLE. BUT THEY ARE USUALLY TOLD WITH A GOOD MEASURE OF PRIDE AND A SMILE.

I GUESS I AM LIKE MOST PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPENT SOME TIME AROUND A LBC IN THAT THERE IS A STORY TO BE TOLD THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THE CAR. -ED

Eds note: I'm sure that you have a story of your own, in fact, I've heard a few from some of the members. I would encourage you to relive them and share them with the rest of us. Please consider writing them up and sending them to me and I'll include them in the "Oil Spots".

Ed-

XOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXOXO

As most everyone knows, there was a tech session held on Saturday, the 22nd of last month. It was at the home of Jann & Pat Nielsen to help them get their '52 MGTD MkII back into running condition where it belongs. This car happens to be one of the 1710 TD/C's built from 1950-1953 and 1593 of those were built for the North American market. The "C" designation behind the "TD" stood for "Competition" and had many features which were developed by the competition dept. at Abington and made this model a racer which enjoyed a couple of decades of successful racing.

Anyway, we weren't able to complete our mission as some new parts were needed and that takes time to order them and get them shipped and received and all that goes with that. We gathered again on Wednesday the 30th and made a lot more progress. Still, somethings need a bit more attention but we are gettin' there. Further details will be posted on the club's Facebook page as they become available. Plan to join the fun.

Ed-

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Once again, here is my appeal to get your submissions to our newsletter. Please don't worry about punctuation and

spelling and all that sort of thing. That's my job as editor to tidy things up. Nearly everything that appears in our newsletter was written by myself, Ed. The point is that if I can do it then ANYBODY can.

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## Return of the British - 2023

On the 19th of August, 2023, The Plateau British Car Club of Tennessee, in conjunction with the Blount British Car Club and the English Auto Society of Knoxville, sponsored the 12th annual "Return of the British" car show/gathering held in Rugby, TN.

Although, all the numbers have not been crunched at this time, it is believed that records were set for almost every category. Hopefully, we'll have a complete report for the next edition the Oil Spots.



Club event ideas; a new feature of the newsletter. Be sure to share your favorite idea with the editor to include in this section of future Oil Spots Newsletters.



# MONKEYTOWN BREWING COMPANY

287 1st Avenue

<https://dayton.monkeytownbrewing.com/#>

**“Defining Delicious**

**We are dedicated to providing the highest quality food and service to our guests. Come visit us and see for yourself! Whether you’re a regular or a first-time visitor, we promise to provide a memorable dining experience.”**

The brewery and restaurant are located in the historic town of Dayton, Tennessee, home of the Snopes Trial. The **Scopes Monkey Trial**, was an American legal case from July 10 to July 21, 1925, in which a high school teacher, **John T. Scopes**, was accused of violating **Tennessee's Butler Act**, which had made it illegal for teachers to teach **human evolution** in any state-funded school.<sup>[1]</sup> The trial was deliberately **staged** in order to attract publicity to the small town of **Dayton, Tennessee**, where it was held. Scopes was unsure whether he had ever actually taught evolution, but he **incriminated himself** deliberately so the case could have a defendant. The 1891 Rhea County courthouse in which the trial was held is The courthouse is also home to the Scopes Trial Museum, which seeks to educate visitors about the landmark case.

Dayton, Tennessee is a beautiful British car ride of approximately one hour from Crossville through shaded, windy roads. It is a great location for a leisurely and fun drive option for the club.

## BST - Buy, Sell or Trade

This section of the Oil spots can be used by our members to advertise items they may no longer need or want. If you've decided that car most go or you've decided to clean out your garage for example, here is a place you can let the rest of the world know. If you are trying to find that elusive part or car, this might be the place to find it.

In the case of cars, pictures are a must. The old saying, "If ya don't have pics, then it didn't happen" applies here.



## The Ballad and Legend of Thunder Road

So, what, you might ask, does the following article have to do with LBC's? Well, perhaps, nothing at first glance, but I think if you look a bit deeper you can find us here. It's about cars, twisty roads, a code of honor (that many may see as misplaced), and a thirst for the kind of seemingly Quixotic adventure that owning, maintaining, and driving a 50-year-old British car often appears to be. But it's more: an indomitable spirit; a love of lost causes; an indefatigable refusal to give up. Many of the people depicted in the film were descendants of English, Scottish, and Irish immigrants who brought with them their traditions, values, and ways of life. They appreciated the simple things and had to do for themselves, much like many classic car owners must do. And the film was made at a time when many of our cars were new or on the drawing board. And then there is the fact that so much of this infamous and historic route runs through the heart of the area that the Plateau group and surrounding clubs represent.

There is also the fact that the name of the main character is Lucas, the light in the dark, though, perhaps, a dim light.

**Let me tell a story, I can tell it all**

**About a mountain boy who made illegal alcohol**

**Daddy made the whiskey, son he drove the load,**

**When his engine roared, they called the highway Thunder Road**



## The Film

In the spring of 1958 *Thunder Road*, a little black and white movie exploded onto movie screens. Though it had a modest budget and, under normal circumstances, might have found itself direct to drive-in theaters on a double bill, it got a boost as the brainchild and pet project of actor Robert Mitchum. Mitchum co-wrote, produced, starred in, and even wrote the title song (more on that later).

Mitchum plays Lucas Doolin, a disenchanted Korean War Veteran who comes home to Kentucky a changed man in a rapidly changing world. Caught between the government on one side, and a criminal syndicate on the other, Doolin answers to his own code rather than giving in to the more powerful elements around him. He is a loner, but with a strong commitment to family and his family traditions. As the song says, his daddy made the whiskey, son he drove the load.



**Sometimes into Ashville, sometimes Memphis Town  
The Revenuers chased him but they couldn't run him down  
Each time they thought they had him, his engine would explode  
He'd go by like they were standing still on Thunder Road**



With the “revenooers” on the one side attempting to shut down the illegal stills and the sale of moonshine because of the unpaid whiskey taxes, and a crime syndicate attempting to corner the market and take what little profit the moonshiners are making on the other, Doolin has his hands full. What finally seals the deal and sends him on his one-man crusade is when the syndicate boss attempts to involve his younger brother. Doolin decides to make one last run to beat the syndicate despite the threat from the Feds.

The movie was packed full of booming engines, squealing tires, car chases, fist fights, gunfights, and explosions. Critics at the time complained that the film was a “too talky”, but the action and driving scenes more than made up for it.

*Thunder Road* was popular, but it was not a huge money maker at the time of its release. It has since become a cult favorite and spawned dozens of like-themed though mostly inferior films through the 50’s, 60’s and early 70’s. It could be considered an Appalachian hillbilly response to the Southern California motorcycle culture of depicted in 1953’s *The Wild One*.

As a side note, many of the vehicles used in the movie were actual moonshiner cars. It is also interesting that many of the cars confiscated by the government when runners were captured, were then sold on the court house steps for pennies on the

dollar. Moonshiners bought them back and returned them to the roads hauling illegal alcohol.



### **The Song**

**And there was thunder, thunder over Thunder Road**

**Thunder was his engine and white lightning was his load**

**And there was moonshine, moonshine to quench the Devil's thirst**

**The law they swore they'd get him but the Devil got him first**

The song refers to the actual moonshiner's route coming out of Eastern Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap down Hwy 25 E to Tazewell and then Hwy 11 through Maynardville to Knoxville where it eventually meets U.S. 70 and travels all the way through to Nashville and then to Memphis. There were obviously side routes and alternate locations, but this was a major moonshiner's route.

In the film, the song "Ballad of Thunder Road" is sung by Randy Sparks as a low key, soft ballad. Randy (after Colonel Parker had refused to let Elvis play the part) was supposed to portray Robert Mitchum's younger brother. After a falling out, he was replaced by Jim Mitchum, Robert Mitchum's 16-year-old son.

Mitchum co-wrote the song and used the melody of a Norwegian folk-dance song, “Gammel Reinlender”, that his mother sung to him as a child.

After the movie hit the screens, Mitchum recorded his own version of the song with a more hard-edged rockabilly sound. It hit the Billboard 100 in 1958 and again in 1962 when it was rereleased.

### **Fact or Fiction**

**On the first of April, 1954**

**The federal man sent word he’d better make his run no more**

**He said 200 agents were covering the state**

**Whichever road he tried to take they’d get him sure as fate**

**Son his daddy told him, make this run your last**

**The tank is filled with hundred proof, you’re all tuned up and gassed**

**Now don’t take any chances, if you can’t get through**

**I’d rather have you back again than all that mountain dew**

Through the years fans have scoured the historical record trying to discover whether or not this was based on an historical event. Many stories of various drivers, by numerous “eye witnesses” have claimed to be the true inspiration.

Researchers have been unable to discover an accident that occurred on the first of April 1954 that appeared to be related. My feeling is, perhaps concentrating too hard on that particular date may be part of the problem. Hollywood has a reputation for creating its own facts, even in truly historical films which this is not. Perhaps that date sounded more melodious than “on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1951,” and the April 1<sup>st</sup> seems to add a little bit to the myth as well. What a story for April Fools.

Mitchum indicated that he based the idea on a story he had heard about the crash of a moonshiner called Tweedle-o-twill (real name apparently unknown). Based on hundreds of interviews and hours of research, this is the story that they feel is the



most likely inspiration for the song and the film. Not a biography or actual history, the crash was merely a focal point to build a story around.

John Fitzgerald and his friends rode their bicycles into Gaylon's Service Station to buy Moon Pies and Nehi sodas. They noticed a large number of unmarked cars and men in suits. He heard one of the men whisper to another the words "Thunder Road." Between that and other snippets of conversation they overheard they realized they had stumbled into the middle of a federal operation to capture a notorious Kentucky moonshiner.

**Roaring out of Harlan, revving up his mill**

**He shot the Gap at Cumberland and screamed by Maynardville**

**With G-Men on his taillights, roadblocks up ahead**

**The mountain boy took roads that even angels feared to tread**

As Tweedle-o-twill rocketed down Hwy 33 out of Maynardville he was racing the coming dawn. As he neared Knoxville, he had to make the choice between the old truck route, Papermill Road, or the public highway 11, Kingston Pike. He chose the latter.

Agents had devised a makeshift roadblock around a bend on Kingston Pike in the area where the Mount Vernon Motel once stood. They nudged two cars together across the road. The rest of the fleet was parked in a nearby drive ready to pursue and capture if the roadblock didn't stop him. Tweedle-o-twill approached at an estimated 90 miles an hour. Never slowing down, he slid off of the road, crashing through small trees and fences, circled the roadblock and raced ahead.

Unknown to the moonshiner, a second roadblock of several cars was parked bumper to bumper in the area of Kingston Pike and Morrell Road. Fitzgerald and his friends were supposedly watching from a nearby farmhouse on the present-day site of West Town Mall.

As Tweedle-o-twill went into a hard uphill right turn "Dead Man's Curve" (no apologies to Jan and Dean as this was years before their hit song), he lost control of the car as he tried to avoid the roadblock. The car, according to a witness, hit the dirt bank so hard that it buckled the frame. It went airborne and launched through the



fence of a utilities substation, spilling 100 proof moonshine from broken jars as it hit and burst into flames.

**Blazing right through Knoxville, out on Kingston Pike**

**Then right outside of Bearden, they made the fatal strike**

**He left the road at ninety, that's all there is to say**

**The Devil got the moonshine and the mountain boy that day**

As mentioned before, a number of other stories abound claiming to be the true one, but in the end it really doesn't matter. It was simply an event that sparked a story, not the story itself. And as editor Maxwell Scott says in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, "when legend becomes fact, print the legend."

### **Afterthoughts**

I actually made this ride on a motorcycle several years ago, starting in Harlan and ending up in the general area on Kingston Pike. Though the roads are, for the most part, much better now than then, there are still some exciting areas coming down Hwy 11. Perhaps there is a future club drive, who knows? We could hit a nice country restaurant and a couple of micro-breweries along the way. I'm always open to a drive.

Photos were from the movie *Thunder Road*.

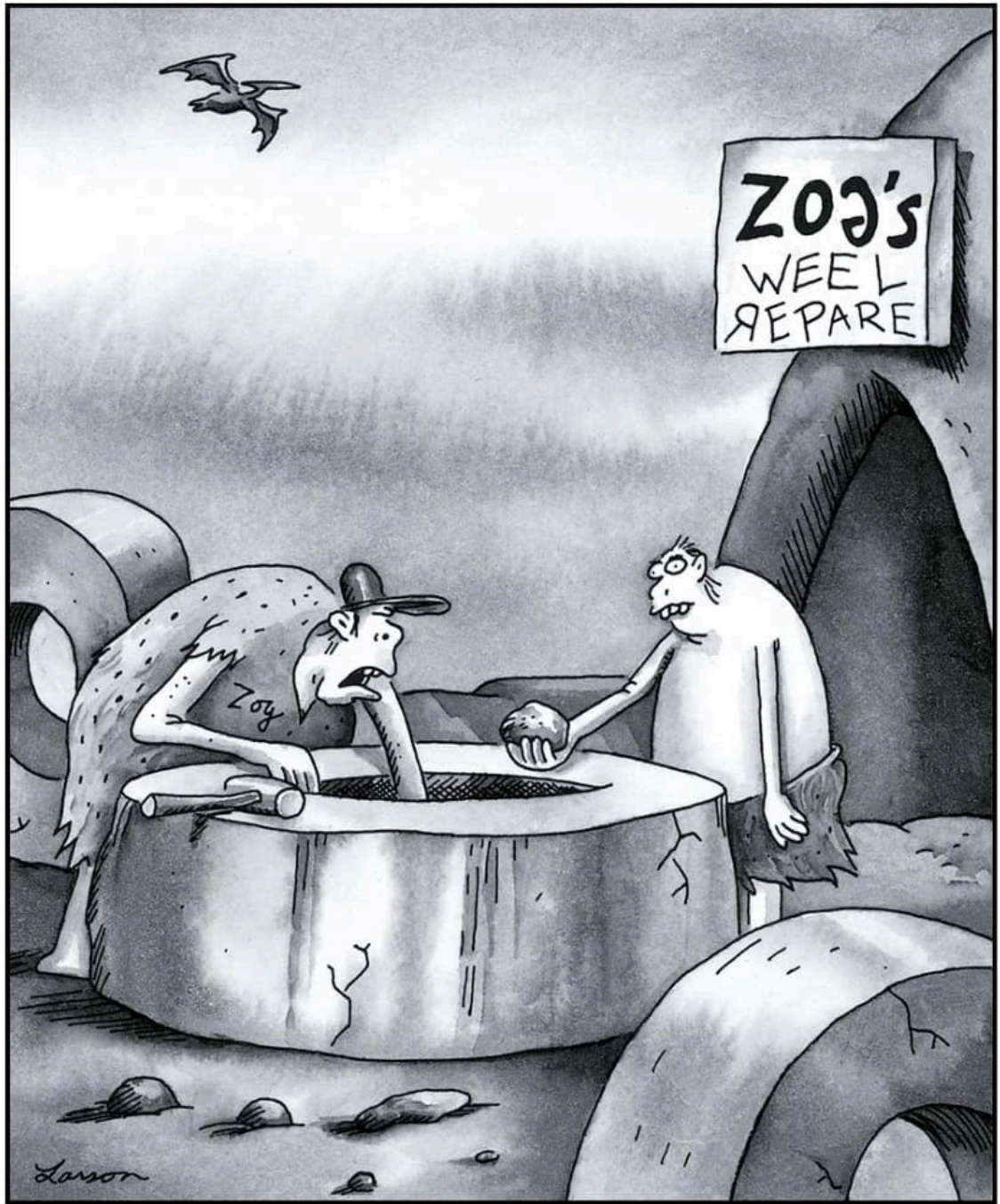
"The Ballad of Thunder Road" was written by Robert Mitchum and Jack Marshall.

**Submitted by Jack Spradling**

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It has been suggested that we have a "Letter to the Editor" section in our club's newsletter. This idea came to the editor from a club member in response to a recent article which appeared in the Oil Spots and was written several years ago by a very talented young lady. The article in reference appeared in the last issue (August, 2023) written by Megan Rainey. The "Letter to the Editor" portion of the Oil Spots, is your opportunity to have your voice heard. Below is that suggestion unedited.

I haven't seen a section in the newsletter for letters to the editor but, if there was one, I would want to contribute this. The article, "Let's Do Some Writing" by Megan Rainey was short, well thought out, and one of the most helpful and inspiring things I have read on the subject of writing. In only a few short paragraphs she brought home the point that everyone has a story to tell and the means to do so. She also gave some strong ideas on how to build your confidence and skills. It was truly a one page writing class and well worth reading and re-reading. - Jack Spradling



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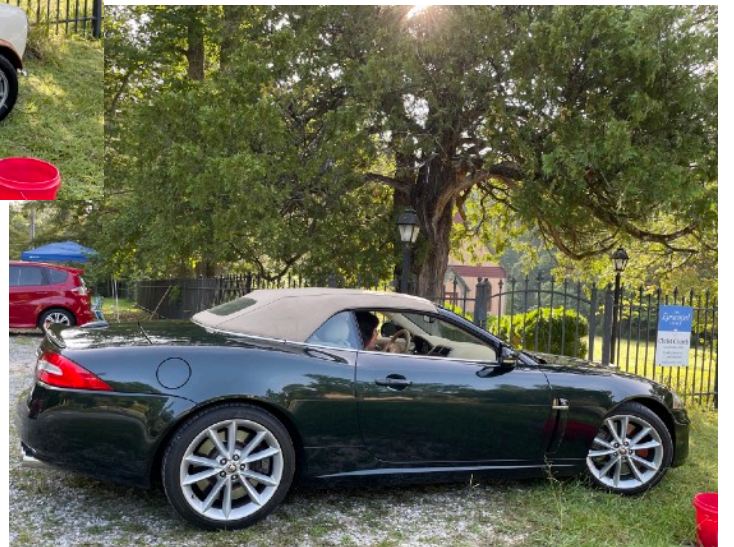
“No, no, no! ... That regular rock! Me need Phillips!”



# A few pics from this year's "Return of the British" event in Rugby...









## Update from Charlie & Pat

Hi Dennis & Pat,

I'm taking a little longer to answer, that's just the way it goes. From all we heard you pulled off another successful event. Well done! Pat and I are proud of starting this with a lot of help and guidance from Watson and with other club's help. But we're happy that we were able to help Rugby financially - It's a neat place.

The additional offerings seem to have made a difference. I've never seen a bunch of Brit car owners who didn't like their beer or ale.

As for us, we're still going with the flow. I think it's slowly catching up with us, but we'll stall it as long as we can. Pat or our son Chuck will let y'all know when I can't respond anymore, but I think that's still a ways off. In the meantime, Pat still is my caregiver and lifesaver. I have gained 50 pounds since being under her care: from 127 to 177 in 8 months.

Let everyone know we think of them of but are really pleased with the way the club has gone with so may more activities.

Keep up the good work.

Charlie & Pat

