

TWICKENHAM

TVR-SCCA

# INDEPENDENT/RACKET

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

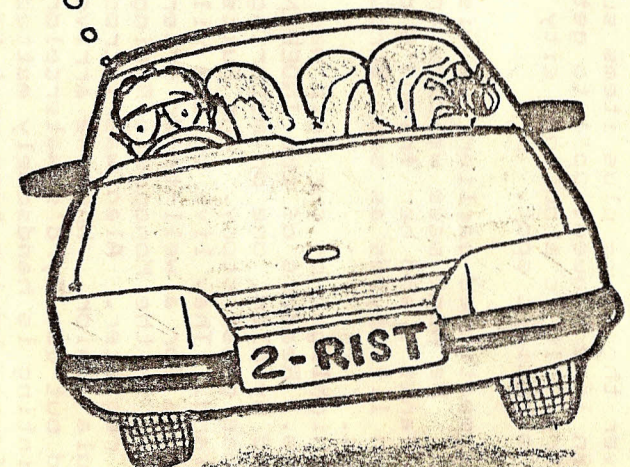
OCTOBER 1985

The combined monthly newsletter of the  
TWICKENHAM AUTO CLUB and  
SCCA's TENNESSEE VALLEY REGION.

TWICKENHAM AUTO CLUB  
% Nancy J. Martin  
1556 Slaughter Road  
Madison, Alabama 35758

ON HER MAJESTY'S TURF

KEEP LEFT,  
KEEP LEFT  
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# Calendar of Events

- Oct 12-20      SCCA Valvoline Road Racing Classic (the Runoffs!), Road Atlanta.
- Oct 19-20      T&CCC Dual Event, old Huntsville airport.
- Oct 26          TAC Halloween Night Slalom. This Saturday night fun event has become one of the high spots in TAC's annual schedule. This year, slalommistress Chris Graham promises the return of the lighted pylons (save your empty milk jugs for her!) and even the special message jack-o-lanterns! Cars must have working headlights and parking lights for safety. Be at the North end of the old Huntsville airport by sundown! For more info, call Chris at 533-5793.
- Nov 2-3        Gulf Coast Region-SCCA Solo I, Bronson Field, Pensacola, Florida.
- Nov 10        TAC Slalom #7, the annual Awards Slalom featuring merchandise prizes! Registration and tech open at 11:00 AM; first car off at 1:00 PM. All at the North end of the old Huntsville airport. For more info, call Chet Langley, 852-1301.
- Nov 17        TVR-SCCA Solo II #5, old Huntsville airport. Registration and tech open at 11:00; first car off at 1:00. For more info, contact TVR-SCCA Activities Chairman Rich Crowell, 837-8023.
- Dec 7-8        T&CCC Dual Event, old Huntsville airport.

TAC - Twickenham Auto Club, Huntsville, Alabama.  
TVR - SCCA's Tennessee Valley Region, Huntsville, Alabama.  
T&CCC - Town & Country Corvette Club, Huntsville, Alabama.  
SCCA - Sports Car Club of America.

## \* Meetings \*

The TWICKENHAM AUTO CLUB meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7:30 pm at Mando's Restaurant on Jordan Lane near its intersection with Holmes Avenue NW. For information, contact TAC President John English, 210 Concord Drive, Madison, AL 35758, phone 837-4396. Visitors are always welcome!

Sports Car Club of America's TENNESSEE VALLEY REGION meets on the last Wednesday of each month at Mando's Restaurant on Jordan Lane near its intersection with Holmes Avenue NW. Dinner 7:30 pm; meeting 8:00 pm. For information, contact TVR Regional Executive Chet Langley, 2814 Brett Road NW, Huntsville, AL 35810; phone 852-1301. Visitors are always welcome!

This issue of the INDEPENDENT/RACKET was printed courtesy of TELEDYNE BROWN ENGINEERING in Huntsville's Cummings Research Park.

## Fall Festival Rally

This year the Fall Festival Fun Rally...the "Fun" intimating a non-TSD event...graduated out of the "Fun" category. It reverted to a TSD rally. Ann and I have been hankerin' to put one on for years. The philosophy was to make it a simple one and allow easy course-following for a pleasurable Sunday afternoon. So you can imagine how worried Ann and I were when, by the time all the cars should have been through CP-1, only four cars had made it. The "press-on-regardless" spirit held up, though, and all cars found their way back into the rally.

September fifteenth was a perfect day for a rally. It was cloudless and in the seventies. Eight cars with eighteen participants entered to run. Car number seven, the Axis Racing Team, had four occupants. This is understandable since, during the War, our foes generally put more crewmembers in their aircraft to prevent defections. Their Camaro had Rising Suns and swastikas on it for identification. For those of you too young to remember those logos represented Japan and Germany but their results were more in keeping with an Italian team. Despite three navigators they only got third place...snicker.

Although attendance was a little on the sparse side, we did score one for the ol' Gipper: Johnnie Prater gave it a try. Fifteen years ago, Johnnie and I were single and Sunday-afternoon rallying was a great way to pass time with good looking females. (There were other ways, too.) On this rally, I ran Sweep with my son Dan and Johnny's navigator was his daughter, Lacey. We were all impressed with the attentiveness and professionalism Lacey showed in her first rally. She didn't turn green once as her dad tore around Madison County in search of checkpoint one.

Eventually all the rallyists completed the course and met back at Godfather's. With them were the workers who did an absolutely great job and who should be recognized for their work. Many of them met on the Sunday before the rally to iron-out any possible kinks before they could be serious. There were three crews, each working two checkpoints. Consider that crew three, consisting of John English, Jim Burruss, and Grant Roberts (hope I didn't leave anyone out), had to travel 14 miles in 13.5 minutes between CP-3 and CP-6. Everybody's help was appreciated during registration.

John English and I are pretty enthusiastic about promoting rallying. You will be hearing more about a rally school which will cover the subject not only from the driver's/navigator's side but from the worker's side, too. Remember, working a rally is a lot of fun, also.

But enough of this. On to the results:

| Place | Car No. | Driver        | Navigator                                    | Car           | Score |
|-------|---------|---------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| 1     | 13      | Lester Ross   | Lynn Cauthen                                 | Porsche 924   | 498   |
| 2     | 11      | Jonh Campbell | Scott Pate                                   | Maxda RX-7    | 728   |
| 3     | 7       | David Boling  | Mike Clem<br>Mark Richards<br>Michael Tucker | Camaro        | 781   |
| 4     | 4       | Danny Boyles  | Jack Laswell                                 | Porsche 911S  | 836   |
| 5     | 8       | Johnny Prater | Lacey Prater                                 | Pinto         | 964   |
| 6     | 9       | Gregg Hanks   | Tom Wiesenmaier                              | BMW Bavaria   | 1166  |
| 7     | 10      | Bobby Burruss | Andrew Herfurth                              | Toyota Celica | 1601  |
| 6     | 5       | Murray Walker | Steve Worthy                                 | Chevy Nova    | 1985  |

Our workers were:

Barbara Robinson, Teresa Gardner, Sue Gardner, Dan van Leeuwen, Lanie van Leeuwen, Chris Graham, Nes Gurley, John English, Greg Heiney, Grant Roberts, Jim Burruss, "Dr. Akbar"-Darryl Holder and Nancy Van Valkenburg.

A hearty thanks to all for making this a very enjoyable afternoon.

Vic and Ann van Leeuwen

**RESULTS OF SCCA SLALOM  
SEPTEMBER 22, 1985**

| <u>CLASS</u> | <u>DRIVER</u>   | <u>BEST TIME</u> | <u>CAR</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------|------------|
| CS           | Charles Wright  | 1:15.922         | RX7        |
|              | Dan Mellen      | 1:17.489         | GLH Turbo  |
|              | B. J. Robinson  | 1:19.767         | RX7        |
| DS           | Greg Hanks      | 1:16.041         | MGB        |
|              | Chet Langley    | 1:16.163         | GTI        |
|              | Tom Wienmaier   | 1:23.003         | X1/9       |
| GS & ES      | Steve Hoelscher | 1:16.493         | 124 SC     |
|              | Frank Prince    | 1:17.478         | TR-7       |
| CSP          | David Stevens   | 1:16.245         | Datsun 510 |
|              | Herb Aderholdt  | 1:17.022         | Spitfire   |
|              | Chris Graham    | 1:21.725         | Datsun 510 |
| BM           | David Boling    | 1:09.092+1       | FF         |
|              | Heinz Sage      | 1:11.859         | FF         |
| EM           | Jim King        | 1:11.166+1       | V8-Sprite  |
| ASP          | Mark Detter     | 1:15.320         | RX7        |

WORKERS

|              |              |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Chet Langley | Jim Burruss  | Rich Crowell | John Stevens |
| Bob Blunt    | Chris Graham | Joe Byrd     | Mark (?)     |

A big thanks to all the people who helped make this a smooth running event. Even with eight runs there were no re-runs due to timer malfunctions or problems on the course.

Dave Shollenberger

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**THE TRICK OR TREAT NIGHT SLALOM**

TAC's Trick or Treat Night Slalom will be Saturday, October 26. Tech and Registration will open at 5:00 and the first run should start about 7:00. I will need quite a few workers to help "build" pylons, set up the course as well as work timing and scoring and corner watch. Speaking of pylons we still need gallon plastic milk jugs and a few more cat food cans. (In spite of Grant Roberts bringing me 60!)

The Night Slalom is a "fun" event and as such no points will be awarded toward Year End Trophies. All cars running MUST have two working headlights and working parking lights. Since it is very dark out at the north end of the old airport I'd like to ask all drivers and workers to keep a sharp eye out in the pits. We need to use extreme caution to avoid mishaps or stray cars. The course will be short and simple since the candles do burn rather quickly. We'll have treats for all entrants and workers and a prize for best costume. Hope to see you there!

CHRIS GRAHAM

## RETURN TO ROAD ATLANTA

When I first went to Road Atlanta last year I was still a rank novice in spite of the fact I had a full competition license. I got my first crack at a real road course, had a bad case of the red mist, and a quick lesson in humility at turn three. Since then I've gotten a little more experience. I wasn't near as apprehensive and the Datsun was in much better shape. I had new tires, clutch, pressure plate, throw-out bearing and Reggie did have to do some minor brake work after Grandfather Mountain. I felt ready and wonder of wonders I had company! A real live caravan! There was even other TVR drivers, Bill Baker and Howard Brown. I even had PIT CREW. Jim Burruss offered any help he could give and I knew if the need arose Dave, John or Rich would help and Reggie would be there on Howard's crew.

The trip over was like riding in an oven but was mercifully short. It was also incredibly humid but a cold drink and good company evened things out. Tech was a breeze after last year's hassles; I was almost hurt that they didn't check my new double throttle control return springs and new fire extinguisher. Folks seem to come out of the woodwork for Road Atlanta and I was actually pleased to have some competition. Stephen Shepard came down with his IMSA Renault Cup car (whom I've "chased" all year quite unsuccessfully), and a contingent of well prepared 510's showed up piloted by Mike Hutson and Keith Coble. Bill Baker's Z brought Improved Touring up to 9 cars, a good showing for a fairly new class.

Saturday morning came up as hot as Grandfather had cold and I dreaded the thought of all that nomex. We got to the track just prior to the novice drivers meeting which I did not attend. I spent the time cleaning up the Datsun, taping up the headlights and getting the magnetic numbers on. Being in Group VII means you don't have to hurry, it also means you have a long wait. Like last year I didn't get my first run in till after lunch. My turn finally came and I got suited up, in line, and gave The Starter my best time from last year, 2:28.379. I had already vowed to take 10 seconds off that and I plotted my lines while I waited. GO!! I blasted out of pit row and headed for Turn 1 and the hill. Turn Three was right where it always was and this time I KNEW where it was. For the esses I went much faster than last year and aimed for the tiger teeth; not quite but close! Six and Seven will probably always be tough corners for me but I used the brakes and throttle with more success this time. (I told you I learned something useful at Dothan!) I nailed it for all it was worth and wound up the RPM's as high as I dared. As hyped as I was it still took awhile to get to The Bridge. (I'm just glad they have those billboards on the back straight, I had something to read along the way.) Into the Dip and the moment of truth. Previously I had braked at the first white line and went for third at the second white line. This go around I wanted to see if I could stay on the power just a little longer. Ooo SHIT! BRAKE!! I'm sailing out from under the Bridge and drifting WIDE. 4th gear and I'm getting damn close to the tiger teeth. If I chicken out now and lift or brake all I'm gonna be is a memory. Stand on it and aim for the inside corner. I didn't get all that close but I'm still headed in the general direction of the Start

## RETURN TO ROAD ATLANTA CONT.

and the beginning of my first hot lap. Two more rounds and I try to get a little braver. I don't know about anyone else but I don't slow down on the cool-off lap, I experiment a little like I do on the warm-up. I slow down for the pits and wind my way back to my pit area, take off my helmet and draw my first deep breath since the starting line. I don't find out my time till late afternoon but I'm quite pleased, 2:20.444 and 2:18.935.

By the end of the day Group VII hadn't finished and it was getting late. A quick check with Roy Herring to confirm that I'm up first Sunday morning and we all head back to the hotel. Sunday morning comes up even hotter than Saturday and my second run is considerably hotter. I take a second and a half off my previous time. Quiet time and another long wait for my group to come up.

We're finally up again and I get in line. On my warm-up lap I decide to wait just a little longer to brake after the esses. I wait too late. I'm not only sideways, I've got two wheels off in the dirt and trying to prevent a third one from joining the fun. But really, the corner workers didn't have to jump that far. So much for late braking at five. Fake it to the Straight. As I was approaching the Bridge I realized I was lifting a little. OK, change that too. GREEN FLAG! I late brake for turn one and that works. I even get a bit more power for the hill. I drift thru three and hit ALL the tiger teeth in the esses. My new revised braking point for five works much better and I'm flying thru the little hills towards six when my windshield wiper blade blows off the car. SHIT. No big deal but it destroyed my concentration. Six and seven are pretty fair, for me. Before Road Atlanta Reggie had set the adjustable red line on the tach for 5600, fairly safe for my car. Just once I wanted to see what it was on before I braked for the Bridge. On this run I don't read the signs. The Dip is coming up and I had it on the floor, determined to keep it there till the last second. I glance at the gauges just before I hit the brakes, the speedo is jumping between 100 and 110 and the needle on the tach is past red line. I can smell the brakes after that punch and I'm practically in the road to pit row by the time I start to swing back in for 12. Ann Wurzbach gives me the checkered flag and it's all over with for this year. Was I faster? Unfortunately, no. I don't know whether to blame it on the windshield wiper trick or to echo everyone else's opinion, that the track was slower that afternoon. I was 1/10 of a second slower than my fastest time from the last run but I know I was faster as far as my driving was concerned.

Comparing my '84 time of 2:28.379 to this year's 2:17.549 I was pleased to reach my goal of taking 10 seconds off. I found My wiper blade on my cool-down lap only to lose it again to a thunderstorm on the way home. It was a good event and I'm going back because next year I'm going to take five more seconds off?

CHRIS GRAHAM

## ELECTION NOTICE

The Tennessee Valley Region of the Sports Car Club of America will hold it's annual elections for Officers on Wednesday, October 30 at 8:00 at Mando's on Jordan Lane. At that time the floor will be reopened for further nominations and then the elections.

### TENTATIVE SLATE OF NOMINEES FOR OCTOBER ELECTIONS

Regional Executive (President)

Chet Langley

Assistant Regional Executive (Vice President)

Steve Brolliar

Christine Graham

Secretary/Treasurer

Rich Crowell

Board of Directors (Four Members)

Joe Byrd

Ken Geci

Joe Graham

B. J. Robinson

Dave Shollenberger

Nominating Committee

Christine Graham

Joe Byrd

Ken House

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### TVR TRIVIA

Short and sweet. The Run-offs! October 18, 19, 20 at Road Atlanta. Elections at the monthly meeting October 30 at 8:00 and TVR's Last Solo II of the series, event #5 November 17. See you there!

CHRIS GRAHAM

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### NOTICE TO TAC MEMBERS -- ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

It's that time of year again, when TAC officers are elected for the coming club year. After initial nominations on October 17, nominations will be reopened and elections of TAC officers will be held at the first regular TAC meeting in November -- November 7, at 7:30 PM. Please be present for this important occasion!

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### WANT AD

FOR SALE: 1977 Fiat X1/9, radials, AM/FM/Cassette, no rust, average condition. Best offer. Also, 1982 Kawasaki 440, best offer. John Morris, 233-0602 (athens) or Joe Morris, 876-3271 weekdays.

## ON HER MAJESTY'S TURF

It was definitely in a weak moment that I spotted the flyer in the travel agency promoting a week in England for two. As soon as I entered the house with it in hand, the die was cast. My daughter, Janet, adopted the idea irrevocably, just knowing that she would see a British rock star. My protests that there are no British rock stars in Britain -- they're all over here making American money -- fell on deaf ears.

The flight from Atlanta to London's Gatwick airport was long but otherwise uneventful. We left in the early evening, lost five hours as we flew East, and arrived in England early the next morning (London time). This had the effect of keeping us awake for nearly two days.

The travel package we bought had two options: Six days in London with certain features included (such as theater tickets) or a fly-drive option which provided a rental car instead. Well, a car enthusiast could hardly pass up the opportunity to drive there, even if they do drive on the "wrong" side of the road. Besides, we wanted to see more of England than just London -- a decision which I heartily recommend. Because the four of us would share a single car, we were to get a larger car than the normally provided "Ford Fiesta or equivalent." The upgrade was marginal -- a "Ford Escort or equivalent." The car provided was an Austin Maestro, a front-drive four-door hatchback econobox with a 1.6 OHC and automatic. Initially, I was a bit disappointed at the prospect of an automatic. It wasn't long before I was just as happy not to have to be concerned with stirring the stick. Although we had endeavored to travel light -- Americans don't travel light -- our luggage very nearly overwhelmed the fairly generous space in the Maestro. One small bag occupied the center of the back seat. At least it was all inside, with room left for us. We were now ready to venture out, muttering "keep left, keep left."

Common sense told us that a car would be a liability in London, but it was necessary to pick up the car at the airport and drive to the hotel. The hotel was not nearby. It was still early morning, probably London's rush hour. With my son Bob in the left front seat as the primary navigator, we charged out. It was a baptism of fire, pure and simple!

We immediately encountered a traffic circle ("roundabout" in the Queen's English). These devices are ubiquitous in England, where, of course, you bear left and run the circle clockwise. The circle is entered after a yield ("give way") to any traffic already in the circle and approaching from the right. Once in the circle, you hug the inside to permit other cars to enter. As you approach the street you want to take, you head for it, preferably with your left signal blinking. A great deal is taken on faith, primarily the faith that the other drivers will read your mind and avoid your path. The circle is even useful for making U-turns by simply driving all the way around and exiting where you entered. There are rarely any traffic signals used, and traffic flow is stopped only in the most crowded situations (which seems frequent in London). Pictorial signs precede each circle at every approach, indicating which intersecting streets are which, and there are identifying signs at each exit on the circle -- very useful but difficult to fully comprehend in the crush of traffic. Most circles accommodate four intersecting streets, but some tie still more streets together, requiring considerable concentration for the newcomer. Occasionally, a normal cross-type intersection is designated a circle even though a circle does not physically exist there. Cars enter the intersection and execute tight, clockwise loops within the intersection -- circling a white dot in the center! If you're having a dull day, these will liven it up. In a week, I recognized the circle as a very efficient device, given a fair degree of discipline on the part of drivers -- not to mention a certain amount of aggressiveness.

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## ON HER MAJESTY'S TURF, CONTINUED

But this was our first encounter with the British roundabout -- and with driving on the left -- and with their traffic -- and with their direction and route signs. Trying to digest all this newness and not hold up traffic seemed, for a few anxious seconds, like mission impossible. But we bumbled through and emerged on the intended route.

Traffic was heavy and rapid, as in all big cities. Physical conditions and local customs were different, streets were generally narrower, and there was rarely a place to pull off. If it's necessary to stop, you pull up to the curb ("kerb"), even if you seemed to be already driving there; traffic will somehow find its way around you. But I had not discovered this practice and I dared not stop for fear of being run over by whatever was behind us. My next shock was the car that came bombing past our entire line of traffic while straddling the center line -- all in the face of oncoming traffic that simply moved aside to make room.

I hugged the left religiously, trying to make room on the narrow streets. Not being used to judging the car's left side clearance while sitting on the right, I asked Bob how I was doing on his side. "You're a little close!" was the reply. It was then that I came to associate the occasional audible gasp from the back seat with near misses on the left side. At one point, our left side mirror slapped the side mirror of a parked car (they're spring loaded). I resolved to move a little to the right. In those tight conditions, the British know precisely where the limits of their cars are, blithely passing one another at speed with perhaps six inches separating sheet metal. Stopped at intersections with multiple lanes, it is possible to reach into the neighboring car's window and tap the passenger on the shoulder, if you are so bold.

We pressed on, slowly realizing the enormity of this city, one of the world's largest. While the route markings were usually well done, the crowded conditions sometimes meant that the needed signs were mounted on the side of a building rather than on a post. I adopted the Brits' aggressive driving style, which served us well enough -- my wife says I applied my slaloming experience. We became lost on several occasions, sometimes encountering side streets so clogged with parked cars that only one lane was available for traffic -- two-way traffic! Londoners, despite the traffic pace, exhibit a high degree of courtesy, which is their salvation with such crowded conditions. With a flash of the headlights, drivers relinquish right-of-way to other drivers or pedestrians. Horns are rarely used in anger or impatience.

We finally located our hotel at Richmond Hill on the West side of London. It was with much relief that I pulled into the parking lot. We had driven for three hours, and we were probably no more than 40 miles from Gatwick airport!

Single and double yellow stripes are painted along the gutters of virtually every city street. I asked a waitress what those lines meant. She replied that the single yellow line means no parking; the double yellow line means absolutely no parking! It appeared to me that cars were parked all over both single and double yellow lines (and we usually followed the lead of the locals), but Alan Putt explained later that parking is permitted at certain hours and/or by residence permit in the marked areas. Particularly intriguing were the Rolls Royce parked at a parking meter in London and the Lotus Turbo Esprit parked in the commuters' parking lot of a Britrail train station South of London. Even the wealthy must cope with the realities of limited space -- but they can afford to cope in style!

Outside the cities, driving is much more pleasant. The motorways are the British equivalent of our Interstates. These are designated by the letter "M" and one or two digits. Most are six lanes, all with

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## ON HER MAJESTY'S TURF, CONTINUED

limited access and speed limits of 70 MPH. The left lane is, of course, the slow lane. It is populated with trucks ("lorries"), cars with camper trailers (smaller than ours but very popular) and slow drivers. I usually drove in the middle lane at the speed limit or above. Even while running at 80, cars in the right lane would pass me with a 10 to 15 MPH speed differential! Elevated pull-offs are provided for police cars, giving them a bird's-eye view of traffic, but I only saw one such pull-off occupied. Exits with "services" -- food and fuel -- are relatively infrequent. Basically, the motorways radiate as spokes from London without really going anywhere major. The single exception is a triangle of motorways with London, Bristol and Birmingham at its points. M25 is a still-incomplete motorway encircling the outskirts of London (two other, non-limited access routes also loop London, closer to its center). M25 is lightly traveled at night, in contrast to, say, I285 around Atlanta, which is bristling with traffic at all hours. And Atlanta is a far smaller metropolitan area!

Next, in descending order, are the "A" routes -- designated by an "A" and one to four digits. The more digits, it seems, the lower the class of road. Those with four digits are beginning to seem pretty provincial, and we haven't even gotten down to the "B" roads yet!

As a rule, there are no shoulders on the conventional roads. Many even have miles of curbs ("kerbs"). Occasional pull-offs are provided, presumably for emergencies. Not only are there no shoulders, but tall grass, trees, stone walls and even buildings may exist right up to the pavement.

England is not a large country, and we had planned to cover an area that seemed modest. Our first hint otherwise came when Alan Putt, in a letter to us, referred to our "ambitious itinerary." The next hint came from a tourbook which advised that, off the motorways, an average speed of 35 MPH is good. Small towns and villages are frequent along the routes; and given the tourist's inclination to stop and take pictures along the way, we found the slow average speeds to be true. And we encountered some traffic jams along the way due to construction and other things. Realizing that we came to sample the English countryside and not to set elapsed time records, we reduced our itinerary.

England is a showcase of virtually all the world's cars. Most are small, of course, reflecting not only the limited spaces but the gasoline price of about \$3.00 per Imperial gallon.

Most Jaguars seemed to be the XJS versions. The three-wheeler Reliants were interesting and surprisingly common. The most popular British street machine, their equivalent of our Camaros and Mustangs, is the Capri -- usually menacingly outfitted with fat wheels and tires, spoilers and driving lights. They make potent-looking cars.

The homely Citroen 2CV appears to be something of a cult car among the young, very much like the VW Beetle used to be here.

Only the American manufacturers are so crass as to not produce right-hand drive models. I suppose our cars are still generally too big and too thirsty for Europe anyway. GM was the best represented manufacturer among the few American cars we saw. There were several Camaros and Firebirds, one Chevy wagon and one Chevy pickup. We also saw some Mustang IIs and two big Dodge vans. My own Dodge van is a battleship on our roads. I cannot begin to imagine driving anything that big and hard to turn, with left-hand drive, in London!

Large trucks ("lorries") in England are as big as ours. One wonders how they maneuver in the crowded cities and towns. It's probably by intimidation.

British newstands have many car magazines concerning small sedans and sports cars and open-wheel racers -- just the type of things which interest our sports car clubs. One wonders why they have so many while

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## ON HER MAJESTY'S TURF, CONTINUED

we seem to have so few, but the answer is simple. Most American auto interests center around the big street machines and hot rods. We have many magazines catering to that interest while the British have few.

Before departing on our trip, we had read that the average daily high temperature in London during August is 71 degrees; so we were reasonably well prepared for what we encountered. During our visit, the temperature reached 72 once. The other days peaked in the upper sixties. The wind blew much of the time, making the weather -- even in sunshine -- feel like late October here! It rained during a part of every day we were there, generally a light rain or drizzle. There is little air conditioning in England, and it is seldom needed. Insect screens were notably absent from windows and doors, also with apparently little need.

The weather is easy to understand when one realizes that Southern England is farther North than any of the 48 contiguous states of the US! But their winters are described as very similar to ours in the Southern US, due to England's lying in the Gulf Stream.

Apparently the British don't feel compelled to grub for money at all hours of the day and night as we do here. Stores close early, even in London. One does not run out at night for a snack or a tube of toothpaste. One plans ahead, instead.

We saw large supermarkets very much like ours, but we saw no shopping centers such as we are used to here. That term is used to designate business districts in English towns. When my daughter finally succeeded in describing a shopping mall to her pen pal when we met in Bristol, the girl said that there was a mall there. When Janet suggested going to it (she's a mallie), the girl replied that the stores had already closed -- at 6:00 pm!

Believe it or not, we stayed at Best Western hotels in England -- part of the travel package we purchased. Best Western is, of course, merely an association of independent hotels, so all were unique. Some were delightful; one was over 300 years old.

In England, we tended to eat slightly on the expensive side. However, this is typical for us whenever we travel, since we usually choose the "safe" places -- known chains and nice-looking restaurants. In England, we could not rely on the known chains -- all were strange to us -- but we did usually select the nicer looking spots. Our most expensive meal was at a plush restaurant in Bristol where we had Janet's pen pal as our guest. Our lowest cost meal was, just as the tourbooks had said, a noon meal in a pub. It was quite good. We also happened onto a neighborhood British fast food place specializing in fish and chips. It was inexpensive even though it charged a 25 percent premium for eat-in -- as opposed to "take away" -- service. This was because the eat-in services included real dishes and flatware. We were the only customers eating in.

American fast food chains are present in the major cities. We saw McDonald's and Burger-King, as well as "Wendy" -- the same as our Wendy's -- and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Breakfast is included in the hotel room prices and was always quite good. Coffee is readily available in addition to the traditional hot tea. Interestingly, both were provided in small metal pitchers, but the tea was always provided in much larger quantity. British sweets are less sweet than ours but are delicious. Dinner is served late, usually no earlier than 7:30 pm.

We had lunch one day at the Hard Rock Cafe in London, which seems to be the "in" tourist spot. It is owned by an American from my old hometown of Jackson, Tennessee, and is a Southern American style restaurant with a rock and roll theme. It is atypical for England, staying open until midnight and serving iced tea -- unheard of anywhere

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## ON HER MAJESTY'S TURF, CONTINUED

limited access and speed limits of 70 MPH. The left lane is, of course, the slow lane. It is populated with trucks ("lorries"), cars with camper trailers (smaller than ours but very popular) and slow drivers. I usually drove in the middle lane at the speed limit or above. Even while running at 80, cars in the right lane would pass me with a 10 to 15 MPH speed differential! Elevated pull-offs are provided for police cars, giving them a bird's-eye view of traffic, but I only saw one such pull-off occupied. Exits with "services" -- food and fuel -- are relatively infrequent. Basically, the motorways radiate as spokes from London without really going anywhere major. The single exception is a triangle of motorways with London, Bristol and Birmingham at its points. M25 is a still-incomplete motorway encircling the outskirts of London (two other, non-limited access routes also loop London, closer to its center). M25 is lightly traveled at night, in contrast to, say, I285 around Atlanta, which is bristling with traffic at all hours. And Atlanta is a far smaller metropolitan area!

Next, in descending order, are the "A" routes -- designated by an "A" and one to four digits. The more digits, it seems, the lower the class of road. Those with four digits are beginning to seem pretty provincial, and we haven't even gotten down to the "B" roads yet!

As a rule, there are no shoulders on the conventional roads. Many even have miles of curbs ("kerbs"). Occasional pull-offs are provided, presumably for emergencies. Not only are there no shoulders, but tall grass, trees, stone walls and even buildings may exist right up to the pavement.

England is not a large country, and we had planned to cover an area that seemed modest. Our first hint otherwise came when Alan Putt, in a letter to us, referred to our "ambitious itinerary." The next hint came from a tourbook which advised that, off the motorways, an average speed of 35 MPH is good. Small towns and villages are frequent along the routes; and given the tourist's inclination to stop and take pictures along the way, we found the slow average speeds to be true. And we encountered some traffic jams along the way due to construction and other things. Realizing that we came to sample the English countryside and not to set elapsed time records, we reduced our itinerary.

England is a showcase of virtually all the world's cars. Most are small, of course, reflecting not only the limited spaces but the gasoline price of about \$3.00 per Imperial gallon.

Most Jaguars seemed to be the XJS versions. The three-wheeler Reliants were interesting and surprisingly common. The most popular British street machine, their equivalent of our Camaros and Mustangs, is the Capri -- usually menacingly outfitted with fat wheels and tires, spoilers and driving lights. They make potent-looking cars.

The homely Citroen 2CV appears to be something of a cult car among the young, very much like the VW Beetle used to be here.

Only the American manufacturers are so crass as to not produce right-hand drive models. I suppose our cars are still generally too big and too thirsty for Europe anyway. GM was the best represented manufacturer among the few American cars we saw. There were several Camaros and Firebirds, one Chevy wagon and one Chevy pickup. We also saw some Mustang IIs and two big Dodge vans. My own Dodge van is a battleship on our roads. I cannot begin to imagine driving anything that big and hard to turn, with left-hand drive, in London!

Large trucks ("lorries") in England are as big as ours. One wonders how they maneuver in the crowded cities and towns. It's probably by intimidation.

British newstands have many car magazines concerning small sedans and sports cars and open-wheel racers -- just the type of things which interest our sports car clubs. One wonders why they have so many while

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we seem to have so few, but the answer is simple. Most American auto interests center around the big street machines and hot rods. We have many magazines catering to that interest while the British have few.

Before departing on our trip, we had read that the average daily high temperature in London during August is 71 degrees; so we were reasonably well prepared for what we encountered. During our visit, the temperature reached 72 once. The other days peaked in the upper sixties. The wind blew much of the time, making the weather -- even in sunshine -- feel like late October here! It rained during a part of every day we were there, generally a light rain or drizzle. There is little air conditioning in England, and it is seldom needed. Insect screens were notably absent from windows and doors, also with apparently little need.

The weather is easy to understand when one realizes that Southern England is farther North than any of the 48 contiguous states of the US! But their winters are described as very similar to ours in the Southern US, due to England's lying in the Gulf Stream.

Apparently the British don't feel compelled to grub for money at all hours of the day and night as we do here. Stores close early, even in London. One does not run out at night for a snack or a tube of toothpaste. One plans ahead, instead.

We saw large supermarkets very much like ours, but we saw no shopping centers such as we are used to here. That term is used to designate business districts in English towns. When my daughter finally succeeded in describing a shopping mall to her pen pal when we met in Bristol, the girl said that there was a mall there. When Janet suggested going to it (she's a mallie), the girl replied that the stores had already closed -- at 6:00 pm!

Believe it or not, we stayed at Best Western hotels in England -- part of the travel package we purchased. Best Western is, of course, merely an association of independent hotels, so all were unique. Some were delightful; one was over 300 years old.

In England, we tended to eat slightly on the expensive side. However, this is typical for us whenever we travel, since we usually choose the "safe" places -- known chains and nice-looking restaurants. In England, we could not rely on the known chains -- all were strange to us -- but we did usually select the nicer looking spots. Our most expensive meal was at a plush restaurant in Bristol where we had Janet's pen pal as our guest. Our lowest cost meal was, just as the tourbooks had said, a noon meal in a pub. It was quite good. We also happened onto a neighborhood British fast food place specializing in fish and chips. It was inexpensive even though it charged a 25 percent premium for eat-in -- as opposed to "take away" -- service. This was because the eat-in services included real dishes and flatware. We were the only customers eating in.

American fast food chains are present in the major cities. We saw McDonald's and Burger King, as well as "Wendy" -- the same as our Wendy's -- and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Breakfast is included in the hotel room prices and was always quite good. Coffee is readily available in addition to the traditional hot tea. Interestingly, both were provided in small metal pitchers, but the tea was always provided in much larger quantity. British sweets are less sweet than ours but are delicious. Dinner is served late, usually no earlier than 7:30 pm.

We had lunch one day at the Hard Rock Cafe in London, which seems to be the "in" tourist spot. It is owned by an American from my old hometown of Jackson, Tennessee, and is a Southern American style restaurant with a rock and roll theme. It is atypical for England, staying open until midnight and serving iced tea -- unheard of anywhere

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else over there! -- plus items such as barbecue. It is necessary to stand in line ("queue up") to get in. Another line is provided for souvenirs. It is about one city block from Hyde Park Corner, possibly London's busiest spot.

As mentioned earlier, we visited the family of Janet's pen pal in Bristol. We were made welcome and truly enjoyed our brief visit with them. Janet's and her friend's conversations comparing English and American lifestyles as seen through teenage eyes was entertaining and humorous.

A highlight of our trip was our visit to the home of Alan Putt and his wife. Readers of the INDEPENDENT/RACKET will recall two articles authored by Alan, one on motoring in Britain and the other a delightful Christmas ghost story. The Putts were gracious hosts on our last evening in England. They live in the village of Hartley, to the East of London. Alan crews for a well-to-do friend who races a vintage Formula One car, is active in the Monoposto Racing Club, and maintains the club's Formula Junior register. Alan was introduced to our clubs by Joe Morris, who has a Formula Junior. When we arrived at the Putt's comfortable home, Alan pointed out Joe Byrd's watercolor painting of his friend's formula car. The painting is handsomely matted, framed, and prominently displayed in their foyer, having been sent to them by Joe Morris. Alan devotes one room of his home to an enviable motorsports library containing many volumes of books and periodicals, all neatly organized and cataloged. It was tempting to dive right into it, but I'd have never torn myself away. As it was, we may have worn out our welcome, visiting for over three hours. I wish it could have been longer, but I'm very glad to have visited and personally met Alan. He has also met Joe Morris and David Herring when they visited England, so he can claim several friends in Huntsville. It would be great if he and his wife could visit us here. Perhaps someday.

I regret that our time was so limited, but I believe we succeeded in seeing a good cross-section of Southern England. We spent two days in London and also visited Bristol, Bath, Oxford, Berkeley Castle, Stonehenge, and many smaller towns and villages. England is a beautiful country, one which its citizens may take for granted just as we do our own.

England, excluding the other United Kingdom countries, is almost exactly the same size as Alabama; but it has 12.7 times the population of Alabama! London alone, at over 7 million people, is double Alabama's population. Except, possibly, for closely spaced towns and villages, the English countryside seems as open as our own, belying the population density. The fact that England has several large cities of one and two million people, plus London, suggests that it is far more urbanized than our country; but published statistics disagree. Suffice it to say that England is far more urbanized than Alabama.

We logged 628 miles in the little Austin Maestro, which performed flawlessly and with adequate gusto. We drove on all manner of roads, from the motorways to the "B" roads, and on all manner of city streets. In the London area, we also traveled by subway ("the tube") and Britrail train. Despite the strangeness of driving on the "wrong" side of the road, we did not cause a world-class head-on collision -- but I won't guarantee that the English aren't still cursing a certain carload of American tourists. Most important, it was a wonderful trip which I could recommend to anyone. If I could afford it, I'd go back and devote more time to seeing that historic and beautiful country!

Jim Burruss