

BO4 ADRIFT ON THE SEA OF BUREAUCRACY

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011 BLOG

SUBJECT: BO4 ADRIFT ON THE SEA OF BUREAUCRACY SCRIPT

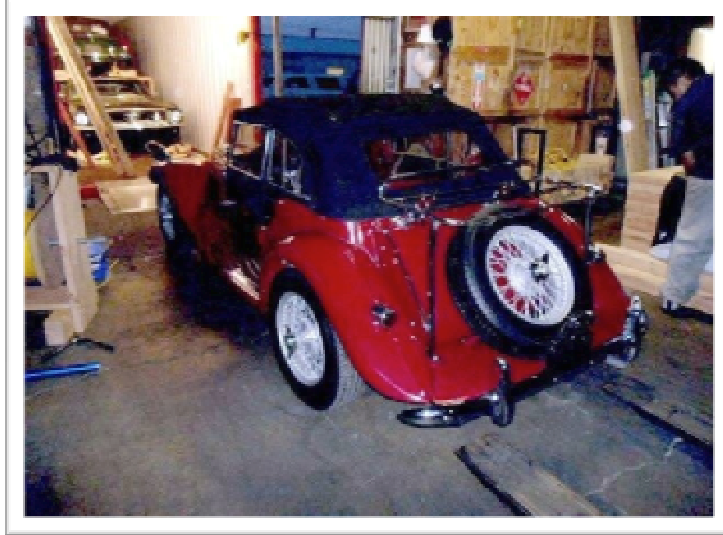
DATE: 14 JANUARY 2012

We are finally committed. The MG was taken to cargo shipper Direct Express last week and is now securely loaded in a container headed for Le Havre. It is bunked in with an over-restored 1949 Chevrolet pickup truck...exactly like the one I learned to drive in 1950. Almost at the last minute we took it in for a tune-up because of some concern about the carburetors. The mechanics worked hard to get it ready for delivery to Direct Express the next day. They called to say it was running beautifully and they were going for a test drive. The next call was alarming. During the test drive the mechanic pushed the clutch pedal in and it never came back up. The clutch connecting rod had severed. There was no time to get a new one from Moss Motors so they elected to weld it the next day. I called the shipper and begged more time. The worry wasn't over. Just before we picked up the MG they adjusted the newly installed choke cable. The wire broke. With no time left it was decided I'll have to order a new one and install it myself in France. Why all these problems you might ask?



My own opinion is the MG has feelings that we were not aware of. It surely loved all the attention it received during the repainting process, especially after so many years sitting under a car cover. In the end though, it must have figured out that it had become the fatted calf and something really big was about to happen. Naturally it dug in its heels.

We retrieved the car late Wednesday afternoon and streaked for the San Diego Freeway. We were commanded to arrive at the shipping office before 5 PM or we would lose our slot. We arrived at 4:15. Chantal took us through all the paperwork and we stowed the custom license plates inside the car.



As they pushed the MG into the shed we looked around and saw dusty, clapped out 356 Porsche's and a lot of Mustangs heading for Europe. Among this grubby and grimy group the MG stood out prominently so it quickly made friends with a '70's Cadillac Mafioso limousine headed for God knows where.



*The ribbon is just Photoshop fun

Everything was so hurried that we had no time to appreciate we were at a fulcrum point in our life with the car. We drove away without looking back. On the way home Louise was strangely silent. After a while she said, "I already miss the MG. Let's go back and get it." I don't know if it was true emotion or apprehension about the upcoming trip...but we didn't. "She's on her way," I said. "We'll see her again in Le Havre on June 2nd." Yes, we are now committed.

NEWS FLASH

Just as we were about to send this off we received an e-mail from the transportation company. It seems our container was randomly singled out by U.S. Customs for inspection and was taken out of the queue. This means it missed the 30 April sailing and will wait till 7 May to ship out. To add insult to injury, each of the four vehicles in the container were charged an additional \$506.70 for the privilege of being inspected and delayed. A rumor says the inspectors were drawn to the container after hearing cries of distress coming from inside. It is completely unfounded of course. (If true, it was probably that tricked out '49 Chevy pickup.)

They X-Rayed the container and decided a closer look was needed so pulled out the four cars inside. After finding nothing of consequence they used a giant fan to blow the contents back in with no regard for proper tie downs or vehicle safety (opinion of export firm). The shipping company dragged the container back to its shop, removed the cars and packed them in again in a proper manner and put it in line for the next ship. We heaved a sign of relief when told several of the cars suffered some damage but were assured that ours is in top condition.

I e-mailed the change to our contact in France whose job it is to ease us through their customs. My greatest fear is the French will reject the car for some obscure reason like bronchitis or med fly infestation and put it back on the next boat to the U.S. The ship is scheduled to arrive in Le Havre on 8 June and we're now concerned about it being released in time for Le Mans on 11 June.

At this moment, the MG is adrift on the sea of bureauracracy and approaching the Maginot Line of French customs. More later when we know more.

L & R