

A SHORT GATOR MOG MORGAN TALE

BY PERRY NUHN

[A letter (Written Fall 2007) to the Gator Mog club membership, as forwarded to British Marque magazine, by Perry Nuhn with a history of the Gator Mog club. Perry, Thanks for your many years of service to the Florida Morgans and rest assured Gator Mog and MOGSouth will both benefit, in terms of spirit and the breadth of activities, with the combination of the two Morgan clubs. Ed.]

It has been my pleasure to serve you [*Gator Mog*] for the past 17 years. Since we started, the club has grown from a few Morgan families into well over 70 memberships and more than that many Morgans. The membership numbers continue to hold around 70 as our specific members change due to moves, deaths, and other life changes. Over the years, our newsletters have matured from my simple few pages of mailed copy to a well-read entry in the "British Marque." We have become an Affiliated Member of the Morgan Sports Car Club, and are a recognized, established Morgan club here in the United States and throughout the world. As a result, Ritamarie and I have enjoyed getting to know and hosting Morgan friends throughout the U.S. and Europe. But, when and how did this "long run" begin?

I initially became interested in Morgans on occasional business trips to the San Francisco area. Following open-heart surgery in 1981, I set myself on a regime of long walks: enjoyable at home, but even more so when traveling, whether for business or pleasure. At the time I had retired from the Air Force and was an executive working at an ITT research center in Connecticut. On one of my walks in San Francisco, I discovered Isis Imports, on the wharf, and my thirst for things Morgan began. On every visit Bill Fink would let me test drive his Morgans, and soon thirst changed to craving, but the price of a new Morgan was too high.

Then, one Saturday in 1984, Ritamarie and I went used Morgan shopping in Connecticut. A newspaper ad listed a used 1951 Morgan at what looked to be a reasonable price and, so began our now 23 years of Morgan ownership. Our 1951 Morgan Plus 4 flatrad purchase was probably not the smartest "buy" we ever made, but after many years it is now one of the family. The car was a mess as the body was rotted, the wheels were heavily modified for hill climbing, and the gas tank was filled with leaves and other debris. But, on the bright side, most of the mechanicals were good and with the exception of missing front fenders, a wood firewall, and no glass in the windshield, most of the parts were visible. I had no idea of what the cost of restoration would be. Looking back, the new Morgan may have been a cheaper option, but then maybe we "saved" a 1951 Morgan flatrad from the scrap heap.

I began with some backyard repairs in our garage in Madison, Connecticut, but soon discovered that our Morgan's restoration was going to involve some serious professional help. After contacting Peter Morgan at the "Factory" I began to understand where parts could be obtained, but I still thought that with local assistance the Morgan "would rise like the mythical phoenix," so I had our local expert to Madison body shop look at the wood rot. His remarks reflected little experience with carriage-built vehicles. I expanded my search, and soon came to know Bob Couch and Morgan Spares. Conversations with Bob convinced me that it was worthwhile to restore the car, but Bob was booked solidly for the future, so I put the restoration on the back burner.

Then change intervened in 1986, ITT, my employer, sold their telephony business sector and with it the advanced research center that I was part of. A facility that the French purchasers had no need of, so I like my fellow executives and researchers, I was shown the "door," albeit with remuneration. Rita and I listed our home for sale, thinking I had plenty of time to find new employment. But, within seven hours of listing it, we had a full-price buyer. And, we had to move within a few weeks. At the time we owned a condo on the Inter-coastal in Lantana, Florida, so we decided to move there, get our youngest daughter settled into school, and then sort out future employment opportunities. Fortunately, I had my 28-year Air Force retirement and the ITT settlement to fall back on while I looked.

However, what could we do with the Morgan? I called Bob Couch and he suggested that we store the Morgan in a barn owned by Hans Mark in Connecticut until he could begin the restoration process. Interestingly, Hans moved to the Stuart, Florida area, and he and I always had a chat at the local



Treasure Coast AACA club's Fall Festival car event in downtown Stuart. Anyway, I arranged to tow our "find" to Hans' storage, and with Bob's assistance ordered a new body, firewall, interior, dashboard and other parts from the "Factory." I had previously ordered two front fenders, which had arrived and were stored as well. Fortunately, the exchange rate was a "pound-to-a-dollar" so the price was right. Then for the next year, our Morgan sat in Hans' barn waiting on "Factory" parts and Bob's schedule. Then in late 1987, Bob called saying he, Dave Irwin and Ed Hausman had formed Lime Rock Motors Ltd. And, could begin work on our Morgan shortly. All I had to do was agree and send money. By this time, we were just settled in our new Florida home in Hobe Sound and I was traveling the country as a software technology transfer manager with an Aerospace Consortium headquartered in the Washington D.C. area. Money was available and our Morgan became the second restoration that Lime Rock Motors would undertake. The timing was great, as "Factory" orders made in late 1987, were finally ready as well. For the next year, as one of the Consortium's members was UTC in Connecticut, so I could and did visit Morgan regularly both in storage and while it was undergoing restoration. Finally, in 1989 our Morgan came home to Florida.

As our Morgan was in the skilled hands of Bob, Dave and Ed, I became aware of an effort being initiated by Drs. Alan and Ann Aker to form a Florida Morgan Club. In the spring of 1988, they organized a picnic meeting of interested parties at the Spanish River Park in Boca Raton, Florida. Rita and I went and met other interested Morgan owners. Following this meeting, Alan and I began contacting Morgan owners around the state of Florida. By early summer 1990, we had an interested group that Rita and I hosted at our community clubhouse in Hobe Sound. The love bugs were out in mass, so our meeting became a "greet, meet and car cleaning" affair. We had fun and on the business-side decided that an informal Florida Morgan club was possible. Later that year, at Moroso Raceway, West Palm Beach, Florida, owners and 27 Morgans, including ours, attended the vintage races and established the Gator Mogs – Morgans of Florida as the newest Morgan Club. A vote was taken, and much to my surprise I began my 17-year career as Gator Mog President and Editor.

In 1991, Frank Arthur designed and implemented our club's badge and other club items. More recently, Rick Frazee and Bill Stelcher made available newly designed club badges as our original badges were no longer available. And, while our many gatherings over the past years have been scattered, large and small, we all have enjoyed many friendships and experiences. Our participation in the various All British events, Concours d'Elegances, eastern U.S. Morgan Owners Gatherings, Vintage Racing and other sporting car doings has been great fun. I am certain these good times will continue with everyone's support. The Gator Mogs are your Morgan club and the club's future depends upon your enthusiasm and participation. And, the future is sound, with the Gator Mog's integration as a sub - regional club within MogSouth region.

For me, the Gator Mogs has been a "great run," a wonderful volunteer assignment that now comes to an end with Ritamarie's and my move to South Carolina. With this final column, I bid you a fond farewell as your former Florida Morgan-guy. But, I hope we will continue to see you at the many MogSouth events throughout the Southeastern U.S. I hope you too look forward to the beginning of this new chapter in the Morgans in Florida history with Rick Frazee's steering and Gator Mog's news inclusion within the outstanding MOGSouth newsletter.

Perry

Hey Morgan Regalia Junkies!! Want a piece of history and a true collector's item??

Rick Frazee made a commitment for the Gator Mogs and underwrote the purchase of new Gator Mog club badges. These are unique and will not last long. Some are still available. So, if you do not yet have a Gator Mog badge, contact Rick Frazee, email mog4@earthlink.net or 407-647-1180. These badges are also offered to "the world," so if they are all gone before you act, it will be too late for you to have yours. The badges are numbered from 1 to 100. Numbers will be reserved on a first come first reserved basis. Checks for \$67.00 should be made out to "Rick Frazee" and sent to him at the following address: Rick Frazee, 1921 Englewood Rd., Winter Park, FL 32789. Badge number(s) reservations must be accompanied by a check, or if you reserved a number by phone or email, paid for within 2 weeks of reserving your number(s). You can call Rick at 407-571-7128 to see if the number(s) you want to reserve is available. All badges (unless you can pick them up in Winter Park, Florida) will be shipped in a padded envelope, postage paid, and insured for \$67.00.

