



# The Roadster Factory



## SPITFIRE GLOVE BOX COMPANION

### Introduction by John Swauger

The Triumph Spitfire has always been a favorite of ours here at The Roadster Factory. Charles Runyan's brother Don had a 1968 Spitfire that he bought new, around the same time Charles was driving his second Triumph, a 1969 GT6+. My first car was a red 1969 Spitfire mk.3 that I bought used from the local Dodge dealer. That first car was almost a Fiat 850. For some reason, my father wasn't as keen on the Spitfire as I was, possibly because I had looked at a very tired 1962 MG Midget earlier in the winter. The Midget was covered with snow the day we went to look at together, and the dealer had to jump it to get it started for a test drive. It was a neat car, grey and with side curtains. We later looked at a Fiat 850 at the local Pontiac dealership that also sold Fiats. My dad spotted the 850 and said, "That looks like a good one." It was sitting up awfully high in the back so I wasn't surprised when I opened the trunk and found that the car had no engine. That pretty much sealed the deal for buying the Spitfire.

My Spitfire had belonged to a local businessman, and I used to admire it, as well as his two daughters, while I was in high school. I would walk by the car every morning on the way to school and say to myself, or to anybody who would listen, "If I could someday have a car like that." In the winter of 1972 I bought that very car for about \$1,300.00. My father felt that was too much to pay but looking back on it now, I should have bought a dozen of them at that price. There was a time when it could have been done. Our local Triumph dealer was A & L Motors in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. They are now a Jaguar, BMW, Nissan dealer, and there is no longer any sign of the Triumphs that used to cover their lot. I went to A & L many times to look at all the cars

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**Introduction by John Swauger—Continued**

—new TR6's, GT6's, and Spitfires on the showroom floor, and used Triumphs in all conditions and prices, including a row of Spitfires lined up along one side of the building. At the time, I was delivering pizza in my mom's VW Beetle while saving every cent that I earned to buy my first car.

I knew very little about fixing cars so maintenance and repairs were done by a local import repair garage run by a fellow named Bob Byrd. I went through the usual repairs—all four u-joints (one at a time), exhaust manifold (cracked), exhaust (fell off), brakes, tires, needle float valves in the carbs (again, one at a time), and more. My major repair came as the result of a broken valve experienced during a TSD road rallye. My navigator was a young lady named Janine. I don't remember her last name now, and likely didn't know it then either. We were lost, and after going down yet another wrong road, I turned and roared back up the road, revving the engine like crazy. Bang! I had Triple-A tow it to Bob Byrd's where he pulled the head off and had me peer down into one of the cylinders. One of the valves had broken and buried itself into the top of the piston. In addition to running an import repair garage, Bob was a weekend minister so I hesitated to say out loud what was going through my mind, not to mention that there was a sign on the wall advising me not to use that kind of language as "There may be ladies, or gentlemen present."

Bob's estimate revealed that a new piston and cylinder head would be required, and that it would cost about \$500.00 to put it right. I had no money. Dating a girl like Janine was a stretch, and now I didn't even have a car, unless you counted my other car which was a rusty 1960 TR3A with a disassembled engine and no floors. Bob offered me \$400.00 for the car as is but I didn't see that as an option either so we tied the Spitfire to the back of my mother's VW with a rope and dragged it home. I pushed it into the garage, leaving her car outside, and learned about fixing the Spitfire myself. The chewed-up seat in the head was repaired by a local machine shop, a new piston and rod bearings came from A & L, and with the help of a Kenneth Ball Spitfire Repair Manual, I put the engine back together. Of course it wouldn't start, but after towing it back to Bob Byrd on the end of a rope behind the VW, it came to life and ran well for the remainder of the time that I had it. Many lessons were learned from that experience—don't over-rev your engine, learn how to fix your own car, and don't let a girl like Janine hang out with a guy like Andy while you're fixing your car. Janine and Andy were later married and subsequently divorced.



Expensive Lesson:  
Don't over-rev your  
engine...



The photos above and on page I were given to us by Bill Gillespie and taken when the Portland Triumph Owners Association toured the Tillamook Air Museum in Tillamook Oregon.

### **Introduction by John Swauger—Continued**

Over those few years I drove my Spitfire many miles in all sorts of weather. One winter my generator was weak, and during cold weather my car wouldn't start in the morning, so I would park it nose to nose to my roommate's Dodge Dart each night. We would then jump my car off of his and the generator would generate enough to allow me to start the car the rest of the day. The procedure would be repeated the next morning until springtime. Eventually the generator conked out completely. I removed it and took it to the local generator/alternator repair business. The owner's first words were that they don't work on Lucas generators but that he would look at it. He called me and said that he fixed it but it would probably only last about six months—\$10.00. Seemed reasonable. About six months later it died again so I took it back. He remembered what he had said and asked me how long it had been. I told him that it had been six months. He asked me why I was back and I told him that I would like him to do whatever he had done six months ago again so I could have another six months. He did it again, whatever it was, and charged me another \$10.00.

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TRF Salesman, Dan Mabon, often drives the Spitfire he shares with his father, Ron, to work at TRF. Dan and his father are restoring the Spitfire.

### **Introduction by John Swauger—Continued**

When I traded in my Spitfire in 1974 for a new orange Opal Manta Rallye (there's no accounting for taste), I instantly missed the Spitfire. I had had many good times in that car. It was the perfect car for a college student, who had always loved sports cars in general, and Triumphs in particular. Spitfire cars have a magnificent heritage, being named after the airplanes that saved England during World War II. They are easy to fix, parts are still readily available, and they have a classic design that is appreciated by all those who encounter them.

The following pages comprise TRF's new Spitfire catalogue. All Spitfire variations are covered from the Spitfire mk.1 with its gutsy little 1147cc engine through the Spitfire 1500. Many parts are available still from original suppliers, others have been reproduced by ourselves and by others throughout the world. As it was back in 1972, today is a good time to own and drive a Spitfire.

John Swauger  
The Roadster Factory  
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