

"Go Souther"

The Key West Regional GT Report

By Bill Marshall



The question always seems to be, "where to drive an MGA in April?" Bruce Woodson's standard response is to "go souther." And so we did. A mix of MGs traveling from eleven states converged on Key Largo to participate in the eighth NAMGAR Key West Regional GT – held at the southernmost point of the United States – and hosted by the Key West British Car Club.

The one-hundred mile drive from Key Largo to Key West is full of spectacular views and there are many points of interest to be found along the way. The Rally committee incorporated many of these sights in organizing an at-your-own-pace rally down the Keys. With each mile traveled south, thoughts of work and worry were swept away by the wind in our hair and rays of sun warming us as we achieve our goal of "souther" upon reaching Key West and the Blue Marlin Motel – our home and headquarters for the week. Once checked into our rooms, old friendships were renewed and new ones made at the welcoming Meet & Greet social mixer.

The combined bocce ball tournament, cook-out, and car show took place the following morning at the Sonny McCoy Indigenous Park. This has become one of the most popular activities and a number of participants have come to be quite skilled at snugging the bocce to the pallino. Though not to take away from the skills of the winning team, luck may also be a factor. Car shows are a little less competitive in the Keys – with not a wash bucket or water hose in sight. KWBCCC Vice Admiral Jim Ferguson's 1959 MGA roadster was chosen, perhaps as much in recognition of his commitment to the success of the Regional as for the outstanding appearance of his fine car. It should be noted that Jim had been elected Vice Admiral the previous year in absentia, not unexpected within the pirate-based Rules of Order followed by KWBCCC membership.



The following days unfolded in similar fashion, with the mixture of MGAs, MGBs, TCs and TDs carrying us to Zachary Taylor Park to view the spectacular Key West sunsets, "norther" to Ramrod Key for our miniature golf outing and back to sightsee and people-watch – a popular Key West pastime. Key West is full of bars with famous names such as Sloppy Joe's, Turtle Krawl, and Green Parrot, and no name bars such as the No Name Pub that are not famous at all. We relied on our feet to carry us to popular tourist sites, art galleries, souvenir shops, and dining options, while keen shoppers made their way to what must be a Key West only flip-flop shop, as this is an annual excursion for the ladies. Vendors selling everything from Conch fritters to Key Lime pie to mountains of ice cream all vied for our attention ... and were often successful.

For many, the highlight of the week is participating in what is billed as the "world's longest parade" – which spans the distance from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico – tossing beads Mardi Gras-style to the spectators lining the street. Regardless of how many beads we bring, we never seem to have enough once reaching the crowds lining the bars as we pass Mallory Square on the Gulf. Next year we'll pack even more so as not to disappoint the more uninhibited spectators who ... um ... know the price of a strand of beads!

At the official KWBCCC Happy Hour and Awards Ceremony, honors were presented to Rob and Tommie Camblin for their Long Distance travel of 1,650 miles to attend, also taking the Rally win with a best-poker-hand tiebreaker over Bill and Carol Shamonsky. Carol took home some tin along with teammates Dottie Ferguson, Linda O'Brien, and Tom Fant as Bocce Ball champs and Tom scored again with fellow Miniature Golf pros Bruce Rauch and Dave Ahrendt.

On a more thoughtful note, special recognition was given to Fred and Cindy Skomp for their years of commitment to the successes of the Key West Regional GTs as well as their contributions to the Key West British Car Club. The KWBCCC selected Fred and Cindy as our first recipients of the

NAMGAR Renkenberger Spirit Award for their service to the Chapter and for representing the spirit of NAMGAR in promoting the use and enjoyment of the MGA at the local club level.

The mission of the KWBCCC is a simple one: Enjoy your MG while spending time with the people you want to be with. These thoughts stay with us as our week ends and we once again head "norther," already making plans to return "souther" next year. •