

TRIP 1

HEALEY INTERNATIONAL - OPEN ROADS 2002

50th Anniversary - Lake Tahoe, June 23 – June 28

First let me give you a little history of our BLU HLY before I begin this trip report.

Charlie bought a 1955 Austin Healey 100, in February 1996. It was purchased as *is* up in Turlock, CA. The car had been stored many years and the owner generously delivered it to us on his own trailer. Charlie was still working full time then and didn't kick into full gear on the restoration immediately. When ever we went to a classic British car event Charlie talked with Austin Healey BN1 (body number 1) owners and took photos of their cars and engine compartments for future reference on his Healey restoration. Meanwhile he began the dirty and time-consuming job of dismantling his roadster. Conveniently for us a widow living across the street had a garage but no car. She was a former New York City resident and never learned to drive. Her garage needed to be emptied of storage and cleaned up in order for Charlie to use it as a workshop. At this time Charlie is also educating himself by learning all he can from the Austin Healey Service Manual, which shows every nut and bolt! At this point in the ground up restoration I still didn't know why Charlie is so excited about this car. It isn't that appealing to me. Originally it was English White with green leather seats. At some time it was painted silver. Now it is somewhat dented, rusted and the carpet and seats are rotted and split. The engine, wheels and underside are *an ugly sight*. They are so dirty. Some of the neighbors, like me, shook their heads and thought, "Oh my, what a project Charlie has gotten himself into!" He cheerfully put on old clothes, took some tools over to Adele's and banged away trying to loosen rusted parts, taking photos as he worked so he'd know how to put it back together again. I was not that interested, yet. I didn't want to get all dirty too. By June of '96 he had the fenders and shrouds stripped of paint and off the car. The seats, doors and windshield were removed. We'd been to the June Southern California Austin Healey Car Show, held in Oxnard at the harbor, and also the All British Car Meet in Palo Alto in September. We'd meet owners and learned more about Healey restorations.

We saw another car show at Deer Park July 1997 near San Diego. Our car spent several months in Piru where the body panels were repaired and fitted. Ellery Engel, an expert, did this difficult task and replaced rusted sheet metal. Charlie rented a trailer and brought the car back to Adele's in August. Then the engine and transmission were pulled. We went to Palo Alto again for this year's September British Meet.

We suddenly became aware that our neighbor would be moving and the house rented. Charlie dedicated *all* his spare time now to finishing the dismantling and cleaning of the grubby parts before he had to move everything over to our place. He erected a "portable garage", a tent in the back yard on a plywood floor, for his new workshop. At five feet wide the Healey is just narrow enough to drive through our double gates, fit between the back of the garage and the side fence, and then across the broader patio into the back yard. In June of 1998 the car frame had been primed and then painted Healey ice blue. The color choices available in '55 for the Healey were black, white, red, green and blue. We went to the Cal Lutheran Annual Father's Day Show on their lovely campus. Charlie rigged up a glove box sandblaster for cleaning smaller car parts. In July the rear end and axle were assembled painted and beautiful. By now I am enlightened. My appreciation of car restoration acknowledges and admires the research, skill, dedication, and unaccountable hours necessary to transform a junker into a beauty.

Charlie gets the rebuilt engine home from John's in March of 1999. It is bolted into the car in May. That month we go to Las Vegas to the All British Car Show. It was a poor showing with only three Healeys and about 15 cars total. Also in May was Visalia's Motor Sports Festival at Mooney Grove Park. That was a great show in a beautiful setting. In July All British Day was held in Ventura. The exhaust pipes are fitted at Bob's Garage that month. A U-haul gets it there and we use AAA to bring it back home. In September the car is started, to break in the cam. By November the car is driven for the first time. It is *street legal* with head and taillights mounted on plywood to the cars frame. Seat belts are installed. The bumpers, doors, windshield and body panels are still off. We belt up and are so excited to be in the Healey and driving, even though it is just wheels, frame, engine and seats. We stay in our neighborhood, not on the main streets, showing off Charlie's progress to some of the neighbors.

In August 2000 we go to Laguna Seca, a vintage car race at Monterey, and to the LA British Car Meet at Woodley Park, CA in September. The same month the body panels, doors, windshield and lights are mounted. The car is painted, no bumpers, grill or chrome yet, and still the old wheels. Charlie drives the car to Dago's Paint Shop to get the paint rubbed out. I follow closely behind in the van, just in case. October 7th we take a drive around town in the painted car. We drive the van to Watsonville to pick up the new chrome wheels in December. Charlie parks

the car on the front lawn for it's *after* shot on 12/23, all done! It took Charlie a bit longer than five years, but this is off time hours, between work, trips and home projects. I helped some as an extra set of hands when needed. I have come to love this car and am delighted when we get to travel together on a road trip. I'm so proud of Charlie for the fine job he did.

In April 2001 we get the car appraised and take our first trip out of the vicinity in May to Buttonwillow, CA for the Moss Motors British Extravaganza and vintage sports car races. We took Rt. 5 over the Grapevine on cruise control. It was very exciting for us. Charlie brought home a first place win for the Austin Healey category. We were thrilled. On Father's Day we entered the Milestone Car Society Vintage Auto Show at Cal Lutheran University, in West Lake. Charlie again received a trophy, for second place. It was the Driver's Choice, for English Sports cars over \$3000.00, original selling price. Actually his car sold just under that price. He competed against Morgans, Jaquars and MG's. That was a beautiful day and a lot of fun. The last of August Charlie bought a '56 Austin Healey BN2! So he has another car to restore. We went to Santa Monica's Museum of Flying "British Wings and Wheels" in September with our BLU HLY. We were given a prime location in the center of the museum floor and Charlie was honored with the People's Choice award. We were on some heavily traveled roads on this trip. It was pretty scary for me. We had a special day mixing with many Club members and onlookers. In November Charlie trailered our second Healey home for restoration. That's another story.

Now for our trip to Lake Tahoe in June 2002:

Day 1, Friday June 21, we went without the convertible top. It would need to be up all the time as we can't lower and stow it because the three point seats belt installation interferes with the room allotted for folding up the rag top. We fit enough in the wee trunk for 7 days. We drove 201 miles. The temperature in the high desert was nearly 100 degrees. We gassed up in Lancaster and had lunch at Wendy's in Mojave. The car did fine until we arrived in Ridgecrest. We stopped to orient ourselves at a pizza parlor as to where the motel was and the fuel pump quit. We unpacked the trunk to get to some tools, had the boot and bonnet up while Charlie pondered the situation. I put our supplies in the shade of the restaurant eaves and stood with them while I waited. Soon a curious man stopped by and offered help. He drove Charlie to an auto supply while I watched the car. In time we realized the car just needed to cool down and then the engine started without any repair. We met up with friends later in the afternoon who were trailering their Healey with their truck. We had dinner together near the Super 8.

Day 2, Saturday, two more couples, Club friends in their Healeys met up with us at Ridgecrest. We had breakfast together at Kristy's where we'd had dinner the night before. We only drove Rt. 395 to Bishop that day, 95 miles, as the other Healeys had started out very early this morning from Orange County. We took a break at Dehy Park in Independence midmorning. One driver has rebuilt many Healeys. He reupholstered our Healey's seats. The other fellow was in his first rebuilt car, in fact on its *shake down* cruise. Our friend hauling the trailer drove on to Carson City. The six of us remaining walked around town and ate dinner at Bar-B-Q Bill's. It was a very hot but enjoyable day. We stayed at a Super 8.

Day 3, Sunday, we woke up *early*, 3:30 AM, to get a good start before the day heated up knowing we had mountain passes to climb and a good distance to go. Bundled up we got underway. We took a break at Crestview Rest area #49 to warm up and soon were watching the sunrise over the mountaintops as we cruised along. Route 395 was new to Charlie and I, acquainting us with more of our beautiful state. The northern drive was really pretty. At Conway Summit we reached 8138'. We saw glacial snow on the mountain peaks and north sides, Mono Lake, flowing rivers, and vistas, especially as we ascended the twisting road. Visibility from an open roadster is a new experience for me. There are no obstructions. The clouds, birds, and view are great. We could smell and hear our trip. The crops, freshly turned farmland, etc. are part of the memory. We had breakfast at Sportsmen's Inn at Bridgeport. This was a fun place, quaint, a good meal and it was time for a rest. A detour was necessary because of a close and stubborn fire burning further north near to Rt. 395. Several fires were ongoing at this time in the state. I never had been in a sports car before. It is really a kick. I now know why people get hooked on cars. We did 232 miles Sunday. We arrived at Stateline, NV 528 miles from home. Healey folk filled the Horizon Resort with overflow participants next door at Harvey's. The whole parking lot out back was reserved for us, with security guards. It was fun and exciting to see the cars. People set out to clean the road wear off their cars and later the pollen from the nearby pine trees. We had a dinner buffet at the Horizon. The room was fine, hard bed, but we still slept.

Day 4, Monday, many events were scheduled. We had the breakfast buffet downstairs. Next it was time for the big car show with cars moving out, by class, starting at 8:00 AM. We traveled 5 miles to South Lake Tahoe's high school football stadium. More than 600 Healeys were lined up including 4 Healey boats! It was beautiful weather at 6125', in the 70's. There were 40 other cars in our category. We had extensive ballots to vote for all the cars, from 1952 to 1967. It took

Charlie and me two hours to make our choices. To get *our* vote we wanted the bonnet and boot open, a car that had been driven to the meet, not towed, and we considered how far they came from, besides the condition and it's overall good looks. We didn't place but felt that ours was the nicest anyhow. It was worthwhile to see *so many* cars and best of all to talk to the owners. We were fortunate that this international event was in California! Folks came from Sweden, Scotland, England, Canada, VT, NH, MO, the Deep South, *all* over. Everyone was proud of their car and had stories of how, when and whatever else was interesting about it's history to share with others. One man, George, 86 years young, is an original owner with thousands of miles and journeys to relate. We had a fine buffet dinner at Harrah's with our friends.

Day 5, Tuesday, Charlie had a few tech sessions to attend. I swam in the pool, which was advertised as Olympic size, but I don't think it was. That night there was a nice Italian buffet dinner for all participants of this International meet, accomplished in two settings. It was also awards presentation for the Car Show. Dinner was setup outside by the pool. We sat with some other friends we'd met during the years of Charlie's cars restoration.

Day 6, Wednesday, Charlie and I left by 7:30 AM even though the program continued two more days. We headed west on Rt. 50 to Sacramento and Rt. 99 S. Again we had beautiful views with mountains and pines until we got to the San Joaquin Valley. Temperatures were in the high 90's, low 100's. We traveled with sunscreen plastered over our faces! It's more fun to be in this vintage roadster than a modern car. We get so much attention, waves and smiles. A few cars even momentarily swerved from distraction when they saw us. We had lunch in Modesto and gave Tom Watling, the former owner of the car a call. We weren't far from his town. We'd like to show him the finished transformation. Unfortunately he wasn't home. We followed one large blue truck for about 100 miles on Rt. 99. He drove just the right speed for us to use our cruise control. When he passed a vehicle so did we. When he finally exited the highway he waved goodbye. We tooted and waved back. At Tulare we pulled into a McDonalds. We stayed about half an hour drinking more and more ice water. We were red faced and really over-heated from our exposure in the open car in the San Joaquin summer heat. We stopped in Bakersfield for the evening after 374 miles. We used to live 30 miles north in Delano when Charlie was first transferred to California in '72. We had dinner with our former next-door neighbors at the Hungry Hunter and retired for a good nights sleep at the Red Lion Inn.

Day 7, Thursday, we had a nice breakfast buffet then set out climbing the Grapevine on Rt. 5. We got back home after 134 miles, totaling 1036 miles for the trip. The car performed well and it was a great experience. We feel confident to take more long trips. We unpacked. I got caught up with laundry and mail and Charlie washed the car.

On **Friday** we heard from our friends we'd traveled to Tahoe with. They retraced the same routes we'd used going north. The newest owner had a mishap. He had trouble with over heating during the drive, but his worst problem was the 5 stud nuts of the left rear wheel loosened on the splined hub and all 5 studs were sheared off! The tire and wheel wobbled around with in the wheel well and then shot out rolling almost a mile down the road. The car did a 180, but fortunately traffic was light and they or any other travelers weren't hurt! They were shocked and shaken up though, understandably. Other Healeys also returning home, besides his companion Healey, stopped to help. The left rear fender and exhaust system were crushed. He learned the value of using "loctite". He had to be towed about 60 miles to the nearer by home of one of the members in our Healey Club. We went to visit with these four traveling companions the next week to share about our return trips.

Saturday, June 29, today was an annual Rod and Roses car and flower show in Carpinteria on the main street to the ocean. We had entered and were lined up on Linden Ave. by 8:00 AM. It was mostly muscle cars and early American made vehicles, over 100 all together. We chatted with people as they lingered around the car. Again the best part of a show is talking with everyone. They either had a Healey or wished they had, etc. etc. About 3 PM the awards were presented. We agreed with the Best of Show choice, a gorgeous Chevy Nova. Sponsoring merchants also were able to choose a favorite for an award. We lucked out and brought home a big red, white and blue stars and stripes trophy. So it was a great Healey week for us.