

Car of the Month

1957 Triumph TR-3

By Craig Flanagan

My love/hate relationship with Triumphs began over 50 years ago, when I was 16 years old. I restored a 1957 TR-3 my older sister had owned. My younger brother and I rebuilt the engine, did the body work, and painted it. We were fortunate to have a Triumph dealership in Arlington just a few blocks from our home. The owner, Triumph racecar driver, Bob Tullius, was our idol, and he and his staff were always there for us with information and advice.

After restoration I drove it for several years, cruising through the Tops drive-in restaurant, or stopping by the Little Tavern in Clarendon after a late date for 10 cent hamburgers and nickel cokes. Unfortunately, my little TR was hit by a drunk driver and was totaled during my senior year of high school. I sold it for parts, and started looking for another TR, but settled for a 1960 Ford Sunliner. I never forgot the TR, and renewed my quest after retirement. I found two TRs in Maryland and towed them both back to my home in Manassas. Using one of the TR-3s as a parts car, my son and I restored the other one over a period of about five years. And that's the one you see in the photos.

Triumphs were built by the Standard Motor Company –Triumph Sales LTD in Coventry, England. Production of the TR-3 model started in 1955. It was equipped with a 4 cylinder O.H.V. pushrod engine with 3.268” bore and 3.622” stroke. Displacement was 121.5 cu inches (1991cc) with an 8.5:1 compression ratio. Carburetion was via twin S.U. H.6s. Rated horsepower was 95 at 4,800 R.P.M. giving a top end speed of about 110 m.p.h. By 1956, the TR-3 was equipped with Girling disc brakes on the front and Girling HL.3 drums on the rear. Gearing was via 4 speed manual transmission. Overdrive was optional. Overall the car's length is 12' 7” with a width of 4' 7-1/2“. It has a wheelbase of 88 inches and weighs 2135 pounds. My grandkids have all claimed ownership of this TR and think it is theirs. So I guess we have Triumph in our blood.

Afterword by Steve White

When I arrived in the DC area in 1964, I needed to find a ride to work. When I learned a co-worker lived nearby, he agreed I could ride with him, but said nothing about his car. So, when he picked me up the next morning I was bowled over, but couldn't have been happier. He was driving a Triumph TR-3 with just enough room for one passenger.

The owner, whose name I forgot many years ago, drove very spiritedly and I loved it. This arrangement started in summer and we went top down long after the convertible season ended. I was used to California weather and the early winter here tested my resolve. In hindsight, I believe the driver was testing my resolve. But finally, when the first snows arrived, his resolve caved in and the top went up. During all the time I had this ride, Mr. Lucas's electrics never

once let us down.

I was a sports car guy at heart, but with a family that demanded a station wagon. Many years after I lost track of the Triumph and its owner, the experience still haunted me. With the family now grown, an alter ego, who preferred sports cars, emerged. But that's a story for another edition.



