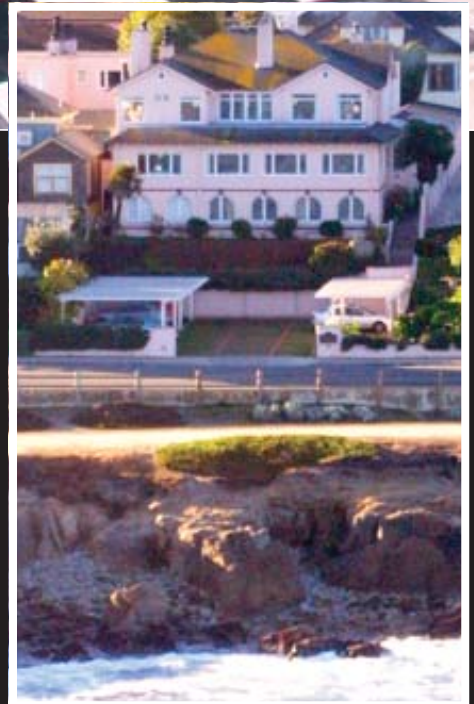


# Martine Inn Welcomes Guests with MG Displays



By Larry Taylor, photos by author or courtesy of Don Martine

Anytime is a good time to visit the Monterey Peninsula in northern California. The summers are air conditioned by Pacific breezes, fall is sunny, crisp and clear; then winter brings its blustery mood to the windswept shores.

On the peninsula, we love to stay in Pacific Grove, the quaint little town, sandwiched between glamorous neighbors Carmel and Monterey. It can easily be overlooked. In fact, it's a jewel itself, waiting to be discovered – magnificent trees and indigenous plants leading down to rocky coves and wide beaches.

And, a big attraction for car-lovers is staying at the Martine Inn which contains one of the largest

*Above: One of the MG displays shown in the museum of the Martine Inn. Right: The beautiful Martine Inn on Monterey Bay houses Don's selection of MGs.*

collections of vintage MGs on display in the country.

The inn sits like a castle on a cliff overlooking the rocky coastline of Monterey Bay. This mansion was built in 1899 and soon purchased by Laura and James Parke of Parke-Davis Pharmaceuticals. They lived there happily for decades.

In 1942, however, during WWII, submarines were sighted in the bay. This made the Parkes nervous, and they decided to sell the place. A local realtor bought it and owned it for the next 30 years.

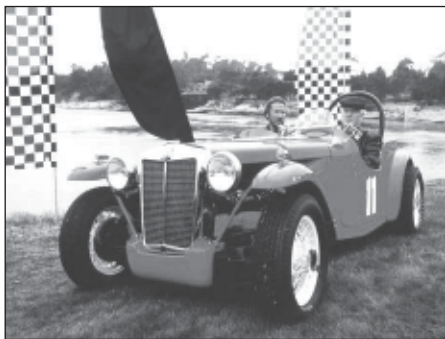
In 1972, Don Martine, a management consultant, purchased the house. He and his family lived there until 1984 when he decided to convert the Victorian mansion into

a 59-room bed-and-breakfast inn. He filled it with 19th Century Victorian antiques and made each room different through furnishings and wall-covering fabrics. Another unique plus at the inn is Martine's MG antique car museum.





**Above and below:** 1950 MG TD Von Neumann Special Roadster – four-cylinder, pushrod, 1.5 litre, TC trans, Alfin drum brakes, Borranni wire wheels, aluminum body by Emil Deidt; most winning West Coast racer in 1950-'51. One only.



**Above left:** 1948 MG TC at Laguna Seca – supercharged, four-cylinder push rod, 1.5 litre, four-speed transmission, dunlop 16-inch racing wheels, Alfin drum brakes, 10,000 made. **Above right:** 1936 MG, NB Magnette Special Roadster – six-cylinder overhead cam, 1.5 litre, supercharged, Wilson preselector trans, airplane hydraulic front brakes, West Coast racer. One only.



Cars from the collection regularly appear in local parades.



## MGs Inn at Martine

Since age three, Don has been fascinated by cars. As a teenager, his interest really took hold when his father purchased a 1949 MG TD. His enthusiasm increased when his dad took him to the inaugural Pebble Beach Road Races in 1950 where he saw Johnny Von Neumann drive his '50 MG TD to victory. (Martine now owns this same car and has it on display at the inn.) He got the collecting “bug” at 19 after his father bought his first MG. He has continued collecting and restoring to this day.

After opening the inn, he moved a short distance away into his old family home, where he grew up. Here, he has turned the garage into a workshop with state-of-the-art equipment where he restores cars and rebuilds engines. When he is not working on his car, he is off racing them. Last year he won second place in a Coronado event, followed by a

first at Elkhart Lake; then four more seconds at various events. Not bad for a “youngster” of 71.

Martine now has 20 MGs, 10 of which run. Normally, he has six of these cars on display. The museum also contains MG-related paintings by Sandra Leitzinger and Peter Hearsey, as well as MG miscellany – posters, prints, photos and signs. In addition, there are antique gas pumps, historic helmets – displayed on a checkered-flag floor of black-and-white tiles.

According to Martine, what makes his display unique is the fact that it is available to view. “I don’t know of another collection that the public can look at that is bigger than mine,” he says. When he first decided to exhibit his cars, he didn’t realize it would become such an attraction. However, in 1994 a travel writer, who was impressed with his collection, published a book about inns, suggesting in it that readers “ask Don about his race cars.” Soon the word spread and Martine had to expand the collection by purchasing additional space for the viewing area.

“Lots of people come to the inn

**Far left:** Display of MG TD. **Left:** 1949 MG Y Sedan – four-cylinder, pushrod, 1.25 litre, four-speed trans, hydraulic brakes, factory sunroof, wind out windshield, roll up rear window shade, built-in jacks. This is one of 6,000 made and was brought to America from New Zealand. Don gets extensive use out of it, driving it around town and taking it on vacations and rallies.

because of the collection,” he says. “For instance, we get women who book rooms here because they figure the cars will be of interest to their men.” He is often surprised at the large amount of visitors who seek him out and want to talk about the cars.

When asked what MG, not in his collection, he would like to own, Don readily answers, “The K-3. To me it is the most significant MG made. In 1933, it won the Irish Tourist Trophy and the thousand-mile round trip in Italy.” Coincidentally, he says, Count Luriani drove the K-3 at Mille Miglia and won, and that same count married a daughter of the former owner of the home that is now Martine Inn.

Over the years, the value of vintage MGs has increased considerably. He bought one of his first cars, an MG TC for \$500 in 1964. Supercharged with 16-inch wheels, “One like it,” he says, “just sold for \$57,000. Mine wasn’t in quite as good condition, but I expect it would go for \$30,000.”

Regarding the recent closing of the MG factory in Britain, Martine says: “It’s hard to say what the effect will be on collecting in this country. I hope, though, some company will buy the operation and continue turning out MGs.”

Usually Don goes on the road several times a year, attending MG events and racing throughout the country. This year, however, he says that he has been particularly busy at the inn and has spent less time traveling, but he is going out of town to two events in August and September, the Monterey Historics and Laguna Seca. “Next year,” he says, “I’ll be more active and go to six or eight events.”

The inn holds many special events, including winemaker’s dinners And, because of its popular Victorian decor, many weddings and receptions, as well as special lunches and teas, are held there each year. At the Martine Inn, rates include full breakfast and vary according to the season. In summer, rooms start at \$170. Call 800-852-5588. Check out the Web site at [www.martineinn.com](http://www.martineinn.com).

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