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PHOTOS: DAVE EDWARDS

Man makes incredible MG discovery while on safari

Before the summer of 2007, Dave Edwards had never seen, let alone ever heard of, a four-door MG.

But that changed when he was in South Africa and stopped to visit friends Norman and Jennie Frost, the owners of Frost Brothers Classic Cars in Knysna.

"Jennie was driving a splendid 1947 MG YA, a four-door, and promptly told me it was not for sale. However, if things changed, she said I would be the first to know," the affable enthusiast recounted.

"Before my safari trip had ended, Jennie had found a car she liked better and I became the proud owner of an MG YA."

For Edwards, it was perhaps his most

intriguing encounter in the many years he has traveled to Africa. "I've been to Africa 15 times, over a 25-year period, and went on safari every trip."

Norman Frost arranged to have the car shipped, by way of container, from Port Elizabeth, South Africa. About 35 days later, the container arrived in Spartanburg, SC. After removing the MG, Edwards got inside, turned the key and the car started immediately.

"I couldn't help but feel this was a good omen and I gradually began to understand how special this MG was – and not only because it had just a little more than 37,000 miles on its odometer."

Painted black with a wine-color interior and real wood dash and door trim, it was outfitted with a sliding sunroof, telescopic steering wheel,

Jack-All system and turn signal trafficators, as well as roll-out windshield for great ventilation.

"Amazingly, everything worked," said Edwards. The first few trips driving the right-hand drive car required some concentration, he confessed, when having to change gears with the left hand.

"It's especially fun to see people's reaction when I drive backwards into the drive-through window at the bank or fast-food restaurant," the MG owner joked.

In 2008, he decided to restore the car. But why make such an effort, with a perfectly fine car?

"To help answer that question, and to make me feel better, you need to understand the history of this particular automobile," he explained.



It began with the original registration certificate when in Cape Town, South Africa, Bernard Barh Long registered his new car on Nov. 15, 1948. The next day, he put six gallons of gas in the car and recorded that purchase and the odometer reading of 101 miles.

From then until 1994, at the mileage of 36,495, every gallon of gas, every service, every tire, every battery, and every mileage were recorded in a petrol log book. Also found with the car were the original The First 500 Miles break-in instruction booklet, the Lubrication and Maintenance booklet, the original owner's handbook, the original sales brochure and the original tools."

"The car presumably changed hands in 1994, with 36,495 miles, and barely 2,000 more miles put on the car before I purchased it in 2007."

The restoration of XPAG/SC/X11684 was a major endeavor. Along with powder coating the frame, every nut and bolt was cleaned, shined and made to look perfectly original.

"And by using a rotisserie, we were

able to get a perfect paint restoration. Also, we were able to refinish the wooden dash, the wooden doors and window trim, and the wooden trim around the sliding sun roof," Edwards said.

"Upon looking more closely, we discovered the original paint color had been a pastel green with dark green fenders and running boards. We knew immediately we should return the car to its original color."

"Naturally, this drastic color change would require a new interior to match. We found great pictures of an original interior and the upholsterers we hired were able to duplicate even the stitching and especially the different color piping on the seats."

The engine, suspension and wiring had been rebuilt while still in South Africa. However, Edwards decided to change the carburetion.

"With a single carburetor, the 1,250 cc engine created 46 horsepower. We added another carburetor and increased performance significantly – perhaps as much as 52 horsepower. That increase

makes the YA much more enjoyable." He also chose to improve the cooling system of the YA having heard horror stories about MGs doing a far from adequate job especially in hot weather.

"To make sure we never overheated, a hidden electric radiator fan has been installed to keep the engine cool even when driving during the hot South Carolina summers," Edwards explained.

Today, the MG YA shows 39,023 miles on its odometer and spends much of its time in a temperature-controlled garage – a well-deserve interlude for such a special car.

A special car indeed. Dave Edwards has no other MGs and he only bought this one because of its incredible history. "I have a 1940 Ford; 1952 Mercedes 220B Cabriolet, 1979 Toyota Land Cruiser FJ40, 1970 Oldsmobile 442 Convertible, 2004 Porsche 911 4S Cabriolet and this MG."

"The rareness of this MG was what attracted me to it. I never even knew MG had made a four-door car until I saw this one." ○