

## My Triumph History

**Author: Dennis McKinley, President, Triumphs of Southwest Florida,** My first car was a 1957 Buick Special with a standard three speed shift on the column that I had during my last two years of high school. A good friend bought a 1962 Triumph Spitfire MKI right after I graduated. When more than the two of us went somewhere we would take my car, but many times I would go with him. I fell in love with his convertible Spit and swore that a Spitfire would be my next car.

As it turned out I went into the Army a year later in July 1966 and was gone for the next three years. My last Army assignment before returning home was in Germany. There was a Triumph dealer in Stuttgart about a half hour train ride from my base. A couple months before leaving the Army I had read that there was a program where I could buy a Triumph in Europe, but have it shipped to a dealer in the US near me in Connecticut. I went to see what the Stuttgart dealer had for Spitfires and discovered a newer version had been released while I was away, the GT6. It was not a convertible, but it had the same driving feel with more power than the 62 Spitfire to which I had been introduced. I was not able to take advantage of the transfer program because of a financing limitation. I could finance the car while I was in Germany and later have it shipped to the US, but with only two months left before I went back to the States, it would not be paid off. The Triumph dealer would not allow the car to leave Germany before it was paid for.

I returned to Connecticut and civilian life in June of 1969. In the beginning of that August, I purchased my first Triumph, a new 1969 GT6+.



In 1974 I sold the GT6 and purchased a new TR6 with overdrive, which I drove until to the beginning of 1976.



When I sold the 74 TR6 I bought a new previous year 1975 TR7 hardtop, which had the engine fail within 3 weeks after purchase. The car's driving compartment filled with smoke as I was driving down the road. As I stopped the person behind me came running over to see if I was alright. He thought the car was on fire and could not see me in the car.



When I had the TR7 towed back to the dealer, the service manager told to me to have the tow truck driver to drop it next to the other five TR7s on the side of the building. I was informed after a couple of weeks that my TR7 had been sabotaged at the factory due to the British car labor disputes. The head gasket was correct in the car, but with the openings for water flow into the head had not been drilled to allow the water in.

I worked out an exchange with the dealer's general manager for a 1976 Java Green TR6 that they had sold to a young woman who had traded in her Mustang. Her boyfriend had talked her into buying a TR6 and that he would teach her to drive a standard shift car. Three days later they were back to the dealer with the TR6, because she wanted her Mustang back. The teaching of driving a standard car was breaking up their relationship.

The General Manager took my TR7 back in trade towards her TR6. He sold it to me for an additional \$500 more than I paid for the TR7. The TR6 was a demo that had 197 miles on it.



I sold the TR6 in 1979 to a friend and bought a used Pimento Red 1975 TR6 that included a removable hardtop for my winter driving in CT.



During early spring of 1981, I sold the 75 TR6 and bought a left over 1980 Persian Aqua Metallic TR8. That was the last new Triumph I ever bought because Triumph went out of business in August 1981.



My brother-in-law in 1962 had bought a 1959 TR3A but then he went into the Army, so his girlfriend drove the car while he was gone. He was married in 1966 and had two sons when he parked the TR3A in his garage in 1969 and over time it was covered with a tarp and boxes.

In 1982 one day walking out of the house by the car with his oldest son, who was about 11 years old, who asked him what was under the tarp. The son had never seen anything but the tarp and boxes. It was uncovered to show the mystery underneath. He said he was saving it for him when he was old enough to drive. The son looked it over and finally said who would want that old thing. I got the call that afternoon asking if I wanted the car. The trade was made. I traded a 360 Honda motorcycle that I had purchased for \$800. I worked on TR3A for about six months to make it drivable.



In 1991 I traded my 1980 TR8 by exchanging car titles and cars for a 1966 TR4A IRS with a private owner.



In 1992 I sold the 1966 TR4A and purchased a 1981 Persian Aqua Metallic TR7 FI car with 16,000 miles on it from a friend who had bought it new and had only used it for British car shows.



My neighbor had known me through various Triumphs, but the TR7 was the last one I had acquired. He commented in 1998 that I had not purchased any Triumphs lately, so I pointed out that they had gone out of business, and I could not get anything new anymore. He said he used to restore Packard's with his father for years, so why not build one. He would assemble and I could keep him in parts as needed. We started by me finding a stash of TR4A disassembled cars, with two rolling frames, engines, transmissions with multiple body parts, which was our starting point. We completed the full restore in 2009 before moving to Florida in 2010.



As it turned out, in 2018 I discovered a 1981 TR8 FI for sale in California which is below with me standing next to it. It will be my last Triumph purchase.



The TR7, TR4A and the TR8 are in Florida today as I enjoy my retirement. I find there is nothing better than being able to be drive a Triumph with the top down *all year round*.