

February 7, 1964

Mr. Jim Wisniewski
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Dear Jim:

Chuck had told me about your buying the Siam. I gather you changed the name and if you have no use for the nameplate that was on it, I would sure appreciate having it back as it is the only one I had.

The rear end is the Fiat Toppolino which is the old front engine rear axle Fiat 500. This was made in a variety of versions numbered a, b, c, etc., but the main difference from one to the other was for its use in a station wagon in mountain country as compared to its use in a roadster in desert country, and the parts are the same and interchangeable.

The front end is a re-modeled Crosley which has been stretched with spacers to increase the width rather than the generally done job on Crosley front ends of bending the axle straight so as to increase the width. I never changed it because I found it handled so nicely the way it is that the theoretically bad Ackerman setup worked fine, and I always had other things to do that were more important.

The transmission is a 4 speed unit from an old standard car, vintage unknown. I gave Chuck the parts book for that transmission and he assures me that he passed it on to you. It is a blue book and I hope you have it as I don't know where you would get another. Actually, it is an extremely strong transmission that I don't think you will ever need any parts for it. If you did, it would be necessary to go to a standard dealer or distributor who handles the Triumphs, give him the part number of what you needed and then wait for it to come from England. This is not from a Triumph, but from a standard car which is the basic passenger car made in England by the same outfit that makes the Triumph.

The rear brakes are standard Fiat 500 with racing linings, and the front brakes as I recall are drilled Crosley brakes of the very last drum brake model. Again, you should have no trouble with spare parts as my memory tells me that both systems were made by Lockheed and anything that gives out you can match up at an ordinary brake parts house by taking a sample.

The engine was set up by Bruce Townsend down in Bloomington originally and I never changed it much. I had occasion to ask Bruce some time ago the exact specifications to which he set it up, but he had kept no record of it. The compression ratio was raised by removing the steel plate that is normally between the block and the crankcase. The pistons I believe were standard Crosley pistons. The cam is a cam that was ground by Weber to a specification that Frank Isaacson had worked out, but neither Frank nor I have ever been able to locate the specification. It is the only cam of its kind as far as we know, and I found it very good. There are several standard racing cam grinds for the Crosley and this one gives a little more power and I think speed at the top end and is a little less good on low end torque than the other racing cam. In other words, keep the revs up.

The distributor is from a Divco truck and is a 2 point setup similar to that used on many double point ignition systems with 1 point handling the make and the other point handling the brake. I timed it with a tach which I am fortunate enough to have and there are no marks to go by. To accomplish this, I set it up off the engine when I had the engine apart for any reason with new points so that the gaps were right and the dwell was right, and then adjust it at various rpm's to get the maximum on each. I'm very sorry to say, I don't even remember the gap that I used or the dwell, but what I shot for was maximum dwell and was probably around .018 gap or a hair less. She idled very rough at low speeds and I believe that I adjusted it at about 700 rpm, 1000 rpm, 1500 rpm, and 2000 rpm and tried to get the best mean setting for maximum revs at a throttle position close to each of these theoretical rpms. I think you could probably work at 1000 and just set her so that your revs are the maximum at 1000 and lock it, and you would be doing as well as I did. As a matter of fact, a few times I had occasion to reset the timing while I was at a track and this is the way I did it.

The only change I can suggest in the engine department is to turn the carburetors 90 degrees which I don't believe Chuck ever did. I had trouble with the car cutting out on hard corners as the Solex's are suppose to be mounted with the bowls forward, and these were mounted when I last saw the car with the bowls sideward. I am sure turning them the 90 degrees so that the bowls are forward would eliminate this problem. I have seen Crosby's carbureted with practically every type of carburetor known to man and I will say that the 32 PBIC's used on this engine is the best combination for the regular porting from watching everything else. Bruce Townsend ran a single Carter side draft such as is used on the blower Corvairs now, and I don't think he got as much out of the engine as he could

have and as others did with the Solex carbs. The valves are so small that a larger carb probably would not add much to it.

One thing you must do is run them rich as a cob. I found it desirable to richen up or lean out depending on the weather and used several jets and several emulsion tubes. I'm sorry to say I don't remember exactly what changes I made, but the emulsion tube change didn't really help. What I changed was the main jets and the air correction jets depending on the weather conditions.

Hope this will be of some help to you, and if there is anything else you want to know, don't hesitate to ask as I'll be glad to give you what little I can from my somewhat inadequate memory.

The car is a good little car, a real ball to drive, and when set up right and tuned right I was able to take any Crosley and some of the 750 Saabs particularly on a tight course where its handling shows up to best advantage.

There is one other change that I would be inclined to make in the car. I never got to doing it, but I always felt that something to relieve the windup on the front axle on hard braking such as a pair of strong radius rods or something of that type would be a real good thing on the car. While the springs are pretty stiff, the axle does tend to wind up and chatter a little with the result that you will frequently lock the front brakes and go sliding blithely off the course. I had them set up at one time so they were somewhat mushy and I couldn't lock them up at high speed, and I found it much easier to drive as I didn't have to treat them so tenderly. I think stiffening the twist out of the front end would help a great deal on this and it's about the best means of doing it that I was ever able to come up with.

Good luck to you, and I hope I'll see you running next summer and again say, don't hesitate to ask anything I can tell you.