

Manny's BJ8 maiden voyage March 31st 2018

Thank you to Manny's friends, the Mansfield Rotary club, and the volunteers from the Austin Healey Club of New England, for the tech session on March 31st. The tech session was in memory of Manny who lost his courageous battle against cancer earlier in the week. Manny has been restoring this 38k mile two owner Phase 2 BJ8 for over ten years. The car was purchase as a non-running project in Virginia, while Manny and his wife Donna were living in Charlottesville. When they returned back to New England and moved to Attleboro, the Healey project made the trip north to their detached one car garage, and parts were stored and restored in many rooms in their lovely Victorian home.

Five weeks ago, Manny's BJ8 running chassis was towed to my heated Healey workshop with all the spare parts in convoy in half a dozen additional vehicles. Two weeks prior, on cold Saturday February afternoon the straight six fired to life, after sitting on the garage floor for many years. Manny took his wife Donna for a drive in the chassis without a single body panel and seats mounted temporarily. At that time, everyone new the clock was ticking, and there needed to be a concerted effort with all the volunteers to help Manny with the restoration.



Manny enjoying his first drive in February

The first tech session was on March 10th and Manny was with us for many hours overseeing the assembly of his Healey, and over twenty volunteers focusing on every aspect of a BJ8. While Cindy and I were visiting our family in Maui for ten days, a committed dedicated team held many sessions in the workshop, to install all the body panels, bumpers, and fix most of the electrical challenges.



Tom Williams and Dana Booth admiring Manny's BJ8 in the sun

The second AHC NE tech session was on March 31st with a dozen members from across the region including our President Jud

Perkins. We had several members volunteering for their second time in three weeks, including Ted Stanton, Dana Booth, Bruce Ketchen and Tom Williams. John Conklin drove over 200 miles from NY, with a spare wiper motor to help the cause, accompanied by other first timers; Martin Filardi, Stew Berry, Jim Constantine, and David Shushan and his son Kevin.



Donna Cunard and her daughter Sarah love sitting in the Healey with admiring Jud Perkins and Ted Stanton in the background

The largest joy of the day was when Donna and here daughter Sarah who had just flown in from Argentina, stopped by in the afternoon to see the progress on Manny's car. All the window glass had been completed in the morning, along with much of the front carpeting and we installed the front seats, so they could see the car outside in the beautiful sunny afternoon. The lovely deep blue BMC paint just glistened in the sun, and the huge smile it brought to Donna and Sarah, is something I will never forget. There were lots of tears and Donna expressed her gratefulness to the team of volunteers. We had one more thing to accomplish, as the car started in the garage, but soon died. We tested the spark which was good. Th SU fuel pump was ticking away like crazy. There was no fuel getting to the carbs, so we added a few gallons of gas and we tested the fuel coming out of the gas tank with no problem. Dana Booth notice the fuel inlet was attached to the outlet side of the fuel pump. A quick switch was made and the old girl fired to life with a huge applause from the group of on lookers, including

Donna and Sarah. We told them they must have the first drive in Manny's car, with all the body panels installed looking like a proper Healey. Donna jumped in the driver's seat accompanied by her navigator, videographer, daughter. Their smiles were ear to ear, as they drove the BJ8 around the cull de sac and down Cedar Ridge Lane running through the gears and even the overdrive works!

Manny's memorial service is being scheduled for five weeks' time and our objective will be to have the BJ8 completed before then, and he will be able to ride in his restored Big Healey to his own service. With the help of many of his friends and volunteers, I am confident we can deliver on Manny's and Donna's wish for Manny's last ride in his beloved BJ8. The installation of the convertible top is scheduled, the wiper motor is being restored by Ace Armature, and we will need to source a correct brake light switch. The rest is up to the team to finish the interior installation and fit out. Donna is arranging to have the car registered, and we will want to get some break-in miles on the car, to assure all the systems are working properly.