

REMEMBERING MICHAEL BRITTINGHAM

*Sad news greeted us at the end of 2024 -- the passing of **Michael Brittingham** on Christmas Eve. A soft tsunami of disbelief, grief, and memories was felt throughout our Car Club and beyond and left those who knew and loved Michael silent with loss and the world a little dimmer without him. Below are recollections of some who called Michael mentor, companion, and friend.*

It was Christmas Day when Rhonda contacted me with the news of Michael's peaceful passing. Even one month later, I am still at a loss for words.

Michael has been my "sounding board" whenever I needed advice on not only SVBCC activities but also on a personal level as we both shared similar career paths as well as a love for British cars. It was Michael who introduced me to the Administration of Western Albermarle when I was considering a career change and also to the shipping and transportation people in the UK when I was importing my Volvo. He always knew the right "go to" people.

Michael was also an expert travel advisor and tour guide. If you never took a trip to the UK led by Michael, you truly missed something. The trip in 2003 that Sue and I, as well as a dozen SVBCC members, took is a highlight of our lives. We traveled by planes, trains, and automobiles to visit everything from castles, race tracks, car museums and factories, Shakespeare's home, the Crown jewels, and even saw Samson! (I have never laughed as hard in my life (with Ken Brasfield) at that dinner.) Truly unforgettable events thanks to Michael and his impeccable planning.

Most folks in the SVBCC know Michael for the various offices he held over several decades, most recently as Membership Chair. It takes a special person with real dedication and commitment to Chair an office for many years and Michael was that person.

Michael also supported club events whenever possible, most recently our show last October. I have a photo of Michael and Rhonda, as well as several other SVBCC members, from our trip to Crabtree Falls in 1995 or 1996. Where did the time go?



I am grateful for the time Michael spent with me, with us, with his family, the British car community, and especially his students. He has left us with memories which will be cherished amongst those whose lives he touched.

Bill Krzastek

REMEMBERING MICHAEL BRITTINGHAM... Cont.

As one of the oldest – age and length of membership – members of the Shenandoah Valley British Car Club, I had the privilege of knowing Michael Brittingham since he joined the Club. That said, he had other closer friends.

I don't know when Michael and Rhonda joined the SVBCC, but they were active members from the very beginning. Michael owned MG's, Mini's and even an old Pontiac. Their legendary rallies where they enlisted the help of fellow teachers and friends to work check points, in theme costumes, are fondly remembered.

Michael and I went to the vintage races at Watkins Glen for a number of years. I vividly remember riding as a passenger in the left seat of his right-hand drive Mini. A frightful experience when you have no control of the car and are next to oncoming traffic! The first several years, we stayed in a hotel in Horseheads, NY, about a 30 minute drive from Watkins Glen. Later, we joined other members in renting one of the cabins much closer to the races and activities of the weekend.

Michael introduced Susan and me to European travel. We went with him on the first SVBCC trip to England and also joined him on several other wonderful trips he organized. This enabled us to make further overseas trips with other friends and organizations.

A kind, intelligent and gentle man who I was honored to know and call a friend. He will be missed by many, many people. May he rest in peace.

Bob Shiflet

Most of you probably knew Michael better than I did, but we crossed paths many times over the last 30-plus years. I always felt that he was a kind soul -- just the sort of person I'd want to populate the world with.

In retrospect, Michael must have been quite ill a few short weeks ago when I had to bother him with requests to help me wrest our website domain from the previous registrar (he had been the official registrant). He was very gracious in giving some of his limited time to help our club.

Mark Lee

Dear Michael and I, had a very strong transatlantic friendship for over 25 years, it all started when we met at an SVBCC event in Middleburg, VA. I was driving an MG Magnette – “Lord Peter”, and Michael was driving his white Mini – “Pearl”.

We both chatted about our love for owning British cars. From that first meeting, we went on to have a strong friendship, and many fun and happy memories traveling, driving, and drinking together on both sides of the Atlantic.

We did many memorable road trips together in the USA, and in the UK.

We organized lots of SVBCC group UK trips to England, Ireland, and Scotland. We both researched the trips together, and served as the organizers on the trips together.

REMEMBERING MICHAEL BRITTINGHAM... Cont.

Also, Michael visited UK on his own to visit me many times at my Country House Hotel Wroxall Abbey in Warwickshire from 2004 onwards until 2018. In addition, he made many Mini / LBC purchase trips over the years, several which I helped him on in the UK.

Michael and Rhonda together also visited me at Wroxall Abbey on several vacations, and they both fell in love with the historic property, grounds, gardens, and all the local staff. The staff also all loved Michael and Rhonda's visits, and we all had many happy Wroxall memories together.

There are two particular UK trip "Michael memories" that I will never forget: 1.) The Royal Windsor Castle UK rally weekend trip in my MG. & 2.) The ATM cash stash quadruple Mini purchase UK weekend trip.

1). The Royal Windsor Castle trip began in February 2009, when I was invited by the MG car club to take part in a very prestigious 85th Anniversary of the MG car.

The Rally and Royal Cavalcade event took place in June 2009, in the ancient royal town of Windsor and ended up with a Royal wave and drive by in front of HRH Prince Philip.

Only two weeks before the event, I was contacted to say I was allowed to bring one VIP guest as my passenger. I decided to email all my UK and American car friends about the invite, I said, "who ever contacted me first, could come on the VIP trip", and within an hour, Michael had contacted me, he immediately booked a plane ticket, and joined me two weeks later. We had a fantastic time on the rally and Windsor town cavalcade, and we both met Prince Philip together.

This is a photo of us driving inside the inner courtyard of the Windsor castle in my 1955 MG ZA Magnette- "Lord Peter", and you can see Prince Philip is giving us both a wave, as he was with the president of the MG car club.



It was a great memory for us both to have of a Royal occasion.

2.) The quadruple Mini purchase trip began one week in the summer of 2014, when Michael was in the UK purchasing Minis near Heathrow - London with myself. At the end of the trip, he decided that he would purchase four Minis from one dealer that we had met near Heathrow. He contacted the dealer on the last Sunday of the trip, and the dealer said that Michael would need to deliver cash deposits for each Mini on that Sunday afternoon to secure all the Minis.

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So Michael and I drove to Heathrow on a Sunday afternoon, and between us, we made multiple big cash withdrawals in every ATM machine we could find in the town, and we ended up emptying 5 different ATM machines completely! I was luckily wearing an old Barbour wax shooting jacket with a big inside poachers pocket, so Michael and I filled my poachers pocket up completely with a bulging cash stash, and then quickly drove to the dealers personal house in Heathrow and delivered all the stash as cash deposits for securing all the Minis.

It was a memorable, very funny Sunday afternoon emptying lots of cash from all of Heathrow's ATM machines with Michael.

Grant Howlett

My first memories of Michael are the warmth and welcome that I felt in attending SVBCC events and the car shows as a new SVBCC member: going out of his way to make me feel like "one of the gang." That open-armed reception was Michael's magic.

The special drives and rallies that Michael and Rhonda created, such as the Alice in Wonderland Rally, the Peter Pan Rally, and the Scavenger Hunt, were the stuff of legend and always meant to build community, whether in getting friends and members to serve as Rally point guides (some in costume!) or getting members to kick back and relax and have a little fun in life. The costumed Halloween parties, with music, in his car shed/barn/garage were not to be missed, and there among his Minis and other LBCs on display, I found my first Mini love: a truncated red mini-Mini named "Viviane". Alas, she sold to another enthusiast, but Michael and his "Viviane" had planted a seed.

Michael was always about our Car Club community and service, from the Trash Bashes to clean the Club's designated portion of Valley highway, to the Friday Night Car Show mixers and Saturday banquets (oh, back in the good old days!), to recently engaging new members as SVBCC Membership Chair. Michael served SVBCC in every Officer position on the Board, some positions several times or simultaneously if a Board position remained unfilled or was vacated for some reason. Such was his dedication and sense of responsibility to SVBCC smooth operations and to its members.

I often turned to Michael for his wise counsel on many things as he had "done it all." You only had to ask and he was always there with a ready answer, a direction to take, or with advice as to timing or approach. He was the Club Guru. An image that cemented itself for me of the essential Michael was at a Renaissance Faire at Natural Chimneys which he and Rhonda sponsored. We were to be in period costume... and Michael appeared as a robed Druid, with the flowing beard and sandals! Shrewd, sensible, patient, a man of thoughtful action, and filled with a wonderful joyous spirit, Michael, I will miss you in this world.

Ev Gorman

The photo montage that follows are views of the many Michaels experienced through the years, compliments of **Mark and Mary Ann Harris**. They accompanied Michael and Rhonda on many trips and private vacations over the last 10-15 years, and have shared their memories with us.

Thank you.

















