Getting to Know ...
Peter Crespin of Maryland

Editor's Note: This is the 23rd in a series of articles spotlighting JCNA leaders.

Story Candy Williams
Photos Peter Crespin

Peter Crespin first worked on a Jaguar as a young boy in England, when his father bought him a plastic scale model kit of an E-type. He was only about seven years old, but he still remembers the fun he had creating it.

"I smudged polystyrene cement on the clear screen and it wasn't the greatest job, being only my second try after an easy Spitfire kit, but I loved that little car. I painted it red with a black hard top, as per the kit packaging. That kit might be why so many grown-up boys like red E-types. I spent far too many hours in school lessons doodling that car for the next few years. You could say I was hooked."

He also recalls his first impression of an Mk X or 420G that he saw with his family on a camping holiday in Germany. He was amazed at the thickness of the doors. "For some reason, from then on I looked at door width as a sign of luxury. Our Ford Zephyr was so-so and I never saw anything, even a Rolls-Royce, with doors that thick again," he says.

He finally took a ride in a Jag as a teenager when his history teacher, a friend of his father, gave him a ride home in his bright red Mk2.

Peter, who was born in Merseyside across the river from Liverpool, says he was introduced to engineering and the restoration of Jaguars "via their next-door neighbors," Triumph Motorcycles, who were also in the Allesley district of Coventry. He can't envision not riding both and hopes to do both as long as he's able.

"I ride all year round and even a D-type can't quite match the thrill of a motorcycle."

But as I get older, I do like my creature comforts and Jaguars are second to none in that respect," he says.

One of the pictures shows an array of solar panels on the garage roof. Peter notes: "There are 20 panels for a mean 5kW power capability, generating at this time of year (winter) 1 megawatt every two months, for which we get a cash credit as well as reduced bills. We are hooked in to the regular power lines in order to get these credits, so if there's a power outage we have to get the generator out like everyone else as the system disconnects automatically...we have two of those panels on the house to cut back on electricity bills for hot water..."

Top: Peter in his element, although the oil can looks dubious. He promises that the beard, grown for a church play, "will go any day." Bottom: The Crespin Classics stable - 4 E-types and a MkIX, plus two bikes. It's amazing how a three-bay garage can fill up!

Peter was a JCNA member-at-large for a few years before he and his wife, Dorothy, moved to the U.S., near Washington, D.C. He now belongs to Nation's Capital Jaguar Owners Club and was elected North East Regional Director at the 2013 AGM.

He believes the biggest challenges facing JCNA are related to demographics and varying interests. "How can we pass on the interest in classics and Jaguar's heritage to a younger generation? We will need to replace the 'greying' existing custodians, but there are fewer folks around who lusted after, say, an E-type in their youth. Meanwhile, JCNA cannot be purely classics-focused, since we have many members whose interest lies in the newer and current cars."

Peter says JCNA benefits cover the full spectrum of the car hobby, "from the oily-fingernail mechanical types like me, to the racers, concours entrants, rallyists and just regular owners who like to socialize. We are a broad church and there should be something for everyone."
FACTS ABOUT Peter Crespin

Personal: Peter and his wife Dorothy, a scientist from North Carolina, live in Maryland. "My kids are all grown up and living in England currently with their families," he says. "I used to earn my living doing medical writing until I immigrated, but I have plans to earn a crust from Jaguar and automotive work, especially E-types. Crespin Classics is almost up and running!"

JCNA Position: Peter is a North East Regional Director and member of Nation’s Capital Jaguar Owners Club.

Cars and Awards: "I’ve owned very many Jaguars and Daimlers, due to writing six books about them and needing to get to know them inside out. I think I’ve had every model and every body style, engine and transmission since the Series 2 XJ, except for the DS420 and the Hess and Eisenhardt XJ-S. Many of those models were never sold in the USA, such as the manual XJR and the 3.2L cars. Earlier Jags have included a 1965 Mk 2, a couple of D-type replicas and my current 1960 Mk IX. My first love has always been the E-type, though, and I’ve owned examples of all Series including S1.5 and every engine and body style, except a 2+2 Series 3 or 3.8 OTS. The one I’m most excited about is the alloy D-type replica that’s underway at the moment, which will ‘out-Lynx’ a Lynx and be the next best thing to a toolroom D-type copy."

“I’ve never entered anything with cars except a small JCNA slalom in Richmond, Va., last fall. I was lucky enough to win it, but credit should go to John Larson for driving me to the event in his superb XJC and encouraging me to give it a try. I won some motorcycle events in the late 80s and early 90s, plus second place in a UK national motorcycle special-building competition."

Dream Car: “The one I’m building comes pretty close – an alloy-bodied, dry sump long nose D-type replica. I’ve always enjoyed pared-down, no frills competition machinery and Ds really are a blast to drive, though not for shy retiring types. On days when not having a roof, wipers, heater or seat adjustment would be problematic, I’d like a well-sorted XJ Coupe with a 6.0L under the hood and stick shift. For daily driver use, a current model luxury-spec XJ would fit the bill."

Quote: “I would be amazed (and shocked) if there was any Jaguar owner for whom JCNA membership did not enrich their Jaguar experience in some way and help them get more from their fine cars.”