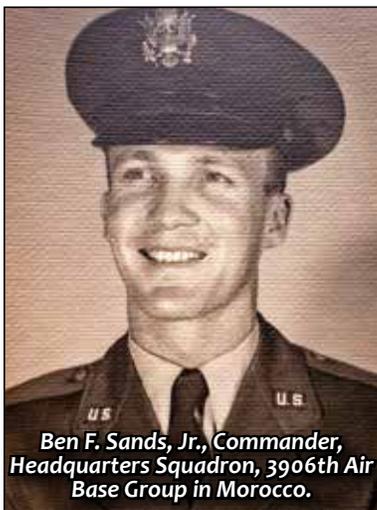


# One Amazing Story! 100M won with a raffle ticket in 1956 and owned ever since

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Many of us have dreamed of having a rich uncle leave us a flashy new sports car or perhaps winning a beautiful new car in a lottery or raffle. The following story is about a man to whom this amazing good luck actually happened!

Ben Sands was a native of and grew up in Madisonville, Tennessee. After high school he attended Hiwassee College and then joined the Army Air Corps in 1946. His service career took him to postings in such far-flung places as Morocco, Japan, Omaha, Chicago, Washington DC and Georgia. While in Georgia in 1953, Ben met Mary Lou Ryder, a young nurse. This was the start of a lifelong



**Ben F. Sands, Jr., Commander, Headquarters Squadron, 3906th Air Base Group in Morocco.**



The Air Force newspaper article that announced Ben Sands as the winner of their fund-raising raffle in August 1956. This took place in Morocco where Ben was stationed at the time.

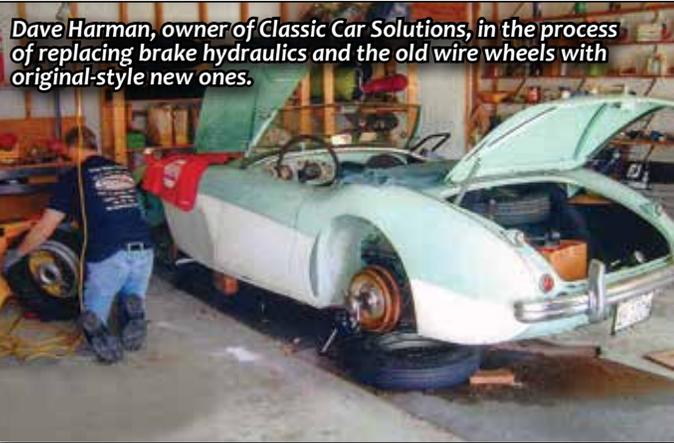
romance that has grown ever deeper and endured for 66 years.

In August 1956, while Ben was stationed in Morocco, the Air Force Aid Society held a raffle to benefit their personnel emergency relief operations. They were raffling off a 1956

Austin-Healey 100M and a Lamberetta motor scooter. The raffle tickets for the car were \$5 each. Ben bought six tickets for \$30 so he would have a good chance to win. To Ben's amazement, he was notified the next day that he had won the Austin-Healey! (See Air Force Aid newspaper article).



Ben standing beside his new 100M the day after he took delivery. That's his friend Joe Reedy in the driver's seat.



**Dave Harman, owner of Classic Car Solutions, in the process of replacing brake hydraulics and the old wire wheels with original-style new ones.**

in business management from George Washington University. He joined the faculty of George Mason University and for two decades helped the University's School of Business to hugely expand in size and stature.

Bringing the Healey along, Ben, Mary Lou and their five children settled into Vienna, Virginia in the early 1960s. About this time, his Austin-Healey started to develop a bad oil leak in the rear main engine seal as it was approaching 30,000 miles. As so often happens, Ben loved the car so much that he couldn't part with it, so the 100M went into storage in a barn on the Sands' property until 1981.

After years of storage, Ben's desire was to get it back in service, but keep the car completely original. In 1984, Healey Surgeons in Hyattsville, Maryland, assisted him with this refurbishment work and a paint respray in the original Florida Green over



**The interior of the car is original except for the carpets and door panels.**



**The well-preserved boot.**

Ben went to pick up his new car with his friend Joe Reedy. The car was a factory-built 100M model, complete with louvered bonnet and Le Mans strap and finished in beautiful Florida Green over white with black interior. (See photo taken the day after he won the car.) Ben proceeded to drive and enjoy the car locally and then he brought it to the states when his military service returned him to the USA. In a telephone conversation I had with Ben this past year, he told me he had used his car in competitive racing events during this period of time on the East Coast.

In 1962, Ben obtained his Masters Degree from the University of Chicago and then, through the 1960s, worked for a decade at the Pentagon. Retiring from the Air Force in 1970, Ben went back to school again to earn his Doctorate



**The unrestored engine compartment.**

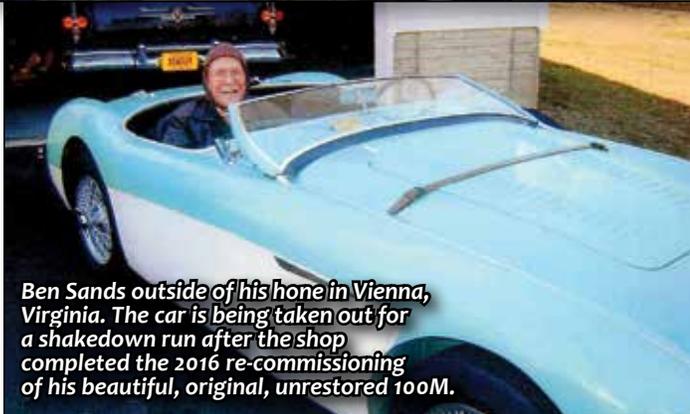


Not bad for a car after 20 years in storage.

into top condition, considering its value as a very rare, one-owner 100M since 1956. Rim Vining with Classic Car Solutions, of Stafford, Virginia, was asked to make a house call and evaluate the car. Rim found the car on stands and in need of minor bodywork and refreshing, but absolutely original and complete. The mileage was less than 30,000 miles.

The wiring harness and hydraulics needed replacement and the special SU H6 Le Mans carburetors were rebuilt. All the chrome was still original with only the bumpers being re-chromed during the earlier refreshing. The seats are original as is the trunk area

and side curtains, including the original pouches. Rim Vining and his firm, Classic car solutions, replaced the carpets with original quality material and the interior door panels were



Ben Sands outside of his home in Vienna, Virginia. The car is being taken out for a shakedown run after the shop completed the 2016 re-commissioning of his beautiful, original, unrestored 100M.

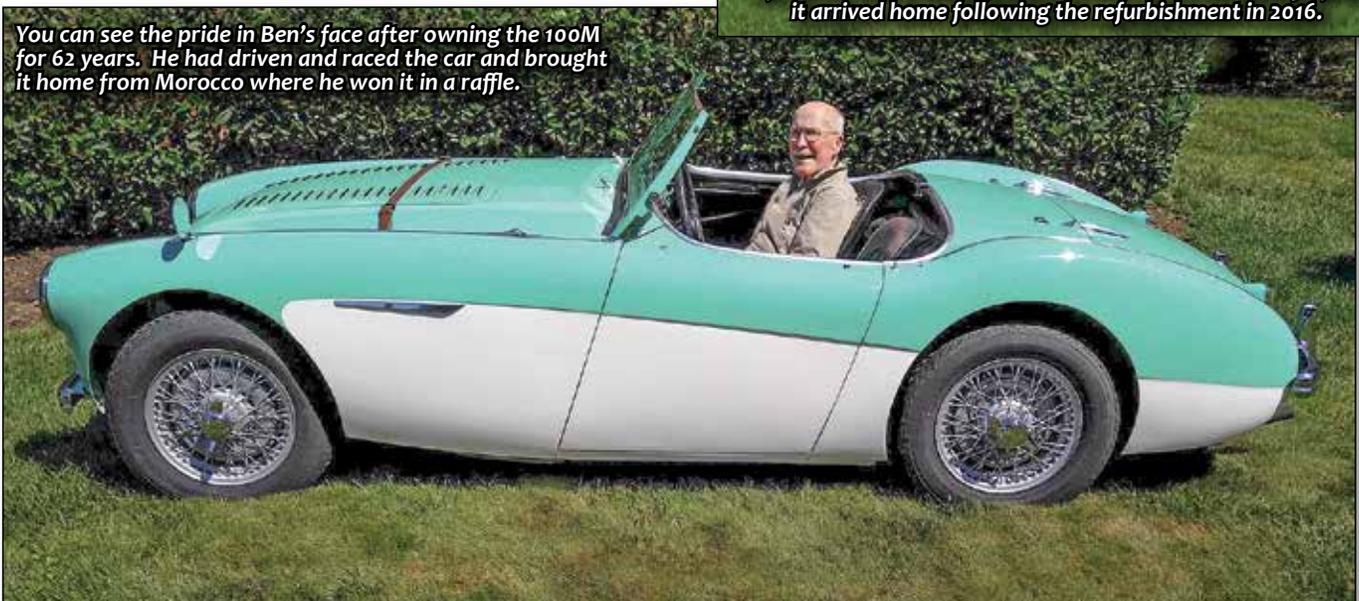


Ben Sands, his son Jonathan and their mechanic, Rim Vining of Classic Car Solutions, stand beside the 100M shortly after it arrived home following the refurbishment in 2016.

white. Ben said the compression on all four cylinders was still excellent when checked by the shop.

Then in 2016, Ben and his son, Jonathan, decided to get the car

You can see the pride in Ben's face after owning the 100M for 62 years. He had driven and raced the car and brought it home from Morocco where he won it in a raffle.





The "raffle 100M" at a car show.



replaced. A small amount of surface rust discovered on the floorboards was treated prior to reinstalling the carpets.

Additional work needed included replacing the sagging rear leaf springs; installing a new set of 48-spoke, original style,

silver-painted wheels; and updated tires for drivability. After this careful, sympathetic refurbishment by Classic Car Solutions, all the car needed was fresh gas and a new battery for this amazing 60 year old 100M to come back to life!

Ben, Jonathan and Rim all report the car is a pleasure to drive. Power is swift and strong, the shifts are smooth and the overdrive is crisp with instant changes. Keep in mind, this car has never been apart or undergone a full restoration, with only the paint, wiring harness, wheels and carpets being renewed. It is absolutely original and complete.

When Ben Sands and his son Jonathan applied to have his car entered into the Worldwide 100M Le Mans Registry in 2018,

I was at first skeptical. Could it really be true that he had won this 100M for a \$5 raffle ticket in 1956, owned it for over 60 years and now still had it in almost showroom condition without a full restoration?

Once I had seen the historic newspaper article, all the ownership documents from over the decades plus photographic records of the car's history, I knew this was real and "One Amazing Story" that I needed to share with all Austin-Healey owners around the world!

Sadly, I also have to report that, as I was working with Ben to write his 100M's lifetime story, he fell ill and passed away in February 2019 at age 91. He was in the

process of getting me more details about his racing exploits with his 100M at the time, but that was not to be. **HM**



Ben with his raffle prize at home in Virginia.