Retired machinist and expatriate Dutchman, Herman van den Akker was for many years an avid sailing enthusiast. He built his own yacht in the back yard—a monumental task which apparently few people ever complete—and, in the company of wife Helena and daughter Heide, spent many a weekend cruising the waters around the southern California islands of Catalina and Santa Cruz. Although Helena was happy to accompany the family on their trips on the ocean waves, she was never that keen, particularly when they were marooned for many days on one occasion when rough seas prevented craft from leaving the safety of Catalina to return to the mainland. Although Herman opted to continue his hobby for some time on his own, he felt that in order to maintain harmony in the household it would be prudent to give up the yacht and seek some other form of spare-time activity in which the trio could participate.

A penchant for early British sports cars—the family patriarch had previously owned an MGA and an Austin-Healey 3000—led to Heide acquiring a '63 TR3B on which her dad undertook the prolonged task of a frame-off restoration. Herman, meanwhile, had tried to buy a '68 TR250 before tackling the 3B renovation, but the then owner, an undercover cop, was reluctant to let it go. The car had been stored in a garage for 14 years and it was only because of divorce proceedings that the officer’s plans were set aside, allowing Herman to intervene in timely fashion.
Dutch Treat

Above: Herman's skills as a machinist are evident in the number of special items used in the engine bay — check out that rocker cover for example! Power output of 2.5-litre six was boosted with a 270 camshaft and modified SU carburettors. Union Jack on the bonnet is another amazing feature of this car.

The car's loss was Herman's gain, "Even though it was in terrible condition, a proverbial basket case, but at least it was all there," he recalled. "No history came with the car, although I know it was originally imported to the East Coast dealership of Genser & Forman in Union, New Jersey, at the end of 1968. But when it came across to California, I really have no idea, apart from a Golden State registration document issued in 1974. When I purchased the car it was painted red, was in anything but good order, there was corrosion present and the chassis was tweaked, because at some point it must have taken a hard whack from behind." So, quite a challenge for even an experienced restorer, let alone a part-time enthusiast!

Work began in January of 1994 and, compared with the 3B's straightforward refurbishment, the 250's involved much more toil than originally anticipated — just to bring the frame up to scratch required three or four days of welding — though by March of '95 matters were progressing at a reasonable rate. Powder coating of the chassis was a plus point, as was Herman's decision to take the body along to a local specialist to be striped to bare metal. Repairs were then undertaken on various panels and, once the whole kit and caboodle was reworked to the owner's satisfaction, the shell was delivered to Dave's Auto Body for colour to be added to the primer coats. The body shop was less than prompt in getting the work completed, alas; it was more than six months later before the shining sheet metal dazzled neighbours back at Herman's Simi Valley residence.

Resplendent in a fetching shade of Mack Truck Blue, the acrylic enamel hue was Helena's choice. And, although the colour may not be pukka factory spec, the same cannot be said of the bodywork which shows no trace of rust or imperfections.

Above: Long distance travel to events is something that owners in North America take for granted — Herman van den Akker's TR250 has covered over 37,000 miles since the rebuild was completed.

Above: Herman van den Akker has established a reputation as an expert on the Laycock-de-Normanville overdrive and has built a special rig to test the performance of rebuilt units.

The bonnet, which is as per stock.

With regard to mechanical matters, the drivetrain was refurbished as necessary and no problems were encountered. Herman was happy to point out that the TR250 has not been the subject of a mechanically stock restoration. For example, modified SU H6 carbs and polished manifold have been installed in place of the more familiar Stromberg setup, and there's also a black anodised radiator shroud and aluminium alternator pulley. Other detailed delights include a custom battery bracket and a machined valve cover, along with a Union flag on the bonnet underside that serves as a colourful reminder of the TR250's heritage.
over-bored by twenty-thousandths and a 270 camshaft fitted therein. A Laycock-de-Normanville overdrive unit has been added to the vehicle’s specification, something with which the craftsman is extremely au fait, to the point that fellow members of the Southern California Triumph Register — as well as TR enthusiasts across the country — invariably seek his guidance whenever their car’s units need attention.

The wire wheels that came fitted on the 250 have been discarded in favour of a set of Panasport Racing 7x15-inch alloys mounted with Michelin P205/70 radial rubber, and Datsun 240Z aluminium, finned rear brake drums now offer a greater degree of cooling. A noticeable improvement in the handling department comes courtesy of a combination of KYB gas-a-just shocks and air bags fitted in place of the standard rear lever dampers.

Interior enhancement takes the form of replacement leather seat coverings, new carpeting and a pair of slip mats emblazoned with the model designation. The Moto-Lita wood-rim steering wheel sports an Aviva clock as a centre-piece: "I don’t like wearing a watch and this handily enables me to keep an eye on the time when I’m driving." And there’s also a Radio Shack CB to maintain contact with fellow road users whenever out on long trips.

Smoked Lexan wind wings, TR4 interior door grab handles and a passenger-side, wide-angle rear-view mirror are further added custom touches. With an AC Delco 62-amp alternator fitted in place of the standard Lucas current provider, Herman replaced the dashboard-mounted ammeter with a voltage gauge. This apart, the complement of gauges is as per factory spec, as indeed is the five push-button, medium wave radio.

A natty non-stock innovation is the cruise-control arrangement which takes the form of a modified bicycle gear-change lever that’s hooked up to a couple of pieces of hardware under the bonnet. Simple yet effective, according to the innovative owner, likewise the boot-mounted combined fuel filter/cut-off switch and 1/8-inch aluminium sheathing that offers a greater degree of load space when used in conjunction with the slim, pressed-steel spare wheel that now occupies the lower cavity.

Although the 250 project turned out to be decidedly more difficult than the 3B restoration, the end result is fine and dandy. Hermann has put 37,000 miles on the odometer since completion and he reckons it’s a treat to drive, “Far more sophisticated than my daughter’s Triumph”!

And no, it really isn’t a nightmare as the licence plate intimates, the NYMAER designation merely serving to remind the owner that, compared to the work he did on Heide’s 3B, his 6-cylinder model was a bit of a pain to bring to the excellent condition it is today. Then again, it has provided a lot of post-restoration pleasure to the van den Akkers, to the extent that Herman is keeping an eye out for a TR3 or TR6 to fill the vacant space in the garage when Heide moves into her condominium, taking the 3B with her. Oh well, this has to be better than being at the mercy of the temperamental ocean; at least it is in Helena’s eyes...