THE MGC REGISTER of NEW ZEALAND



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The <u>Magical Grand Cruising Tour of NZ,</u> celebrating the MGC's 50th Anniversary

(continued)



The touring group in Wanaka
I to r: Ross & Shona Osborne, Jack & Jenny Shuttleworth,
Doug & Maureen Stanaway, Jock Burridge, Ian Grant, Ross & Chris Butler.
Not at this photo-shoot – Shirley Burridge

The five MGCs arrived in the Central Otago town of Cromwell for our three-night stay after that very enjoyable and picturesque drive through the alpine lakes region. I hadn't made any dinner arrangements, deciding instead to leave it to the group to make the call on "how are we dining tonight?"

Our accommodation at the Cromwell Motel had an area with shade trees and a picnic table so the decision was made to make a trip to the local supermarket, utilise the microwaves in our units and dine outdoors – as we weren't driving anywhere a glass of either red or white

wine complemented our meals and, as the weather was beautiful for all of our stay here, we dined this way on all three nights, very relaxing.

Before commencing the trip, Ross Osborne had made the suggestion that while in Cromwell we should visit John Martin. John runs his business Designs N Wood from home, specialising in the manufacture of vintage vehicle framework and wooden-rimmed steering wheels. So straight after breakfast on our first morning in town we made the short drive to John's place where we spent the best part of a couple of hours looking at and admiring John's skills with wood as he explained in some detail the processes he uses. Impressive stuff!! He took us into another garage for a look at an Alvis, with which John appeared in the Driven magazine section of the NZ Herald last month, so it was very interesting to read the article especially having seen the car just a few weeks previously.

While at John's place I took the opportunity to ask him for any suggestions as to where in town I could get my brake issue addressed. The first place he suggested was fully booked for the next few days but his second option bore fruit. Gary at Gary's Garage specialises in classic and older cars but, even though he had a full book of work, he would have a look at the C if I could have it there by 8am the next morning.

The car was still driveable with care, and as the weather was stunning, I was determined not to miss out on the day's activities. We were now joined by Central Otago residents Doug & Maureen Stanaway in their green roadster, so five Cs made their way to Highlands Motorsport Park in Cromwell for a look at the facility and the museum. When we arrived we found there was a group of supercars doing a tour so we had the chance to drool over Lamborghinis, McLarens and Aston Martins.

After morning coffee at Highlands we hit the road for the forty-minute drive to Wanaka where our first stop was at the airport for a browse through the aircraft and car museum, followed by lunch at the café. Here we met up with Jock Burridge as he and Shirley were staying with Jock's brother in Wanaka.

Wanaka is the home of the southern Warbirds and the biennial "Warbirds Over Wanaka" which is held at Easter where over 80,000 people turn up to enjoy the weekend's activities. Among the exhibits in the aviation section of the museum are a Hawker Hurricane, a Vampire and a Skyhawk as well as detailed tributes to New Zealand airforce personnel who made important contributions during the Battle of Britain and the war effort. The automotive area has a number of superb high-class pre-war American cars including Packards, Fords, Cadillacs and a Duesenberg Phaeton, once owned by actress Carole Lombard.



After lunch, the group made the short drive into town, which was pretty busy as it is a popular tourist very destination, where we found the spot for our lake-side photo-shoot as shown on the first page of this newsletter. The group then split up for the afternoon to pursue activities that individual were of interest, Ross & Chris Butler and I made our way to the Toy &

Transport Museum that

is located close to the airport. What an amazing collection of toys – Barbie, Sylvanians, Star Wars, to name just three of many, radios and television sets through the years and a very

large collection of cars and trucks. There were too many to house indoors and quite a number are outside in the weather.

The drive back to the motel runs alongside the man-made Lake Dunstan and the day concluded with another relaxing outdoor dinner.



As requested by Gary, I had the C at his workshop at 8am the next morning while the others were getting ready to set off for the planned excursion to Queenstown and Glenorchy. I had been really looking forward to doing this but it was not to be as the brake issue had to be resolved.

Gary asked me to drive the car between the posts of his two-post hoist and, in keeping with the good luck I was having on this trip, as I got out of the car I noticed the bottom of the rim of my right-rear wheel was a lot closer to the ground than it should be. Well, if you are going to get a puncture you couldn't be in a better place, I suppose. Two doors away was a tyre shop so I took the wheel there for them to sort out.

After adjusting the hand-brake to give less travel in the lever, it became apparent the problem was in the master cylinder, probably with the main seal on the piston. We also found that the clutch master cylinder had started to develop a leak as well, though the clutch had been performing perfectly since Lawrie's repair on Saturday. To find these faults with both cylinders was pretty disappointing as they had been overhauled and re-sleeved back in 2011 just after I bought the car.

Gary said he would have to send the brake master cylinder away for repair. He uses Southern Brakes & Driveline in Invercargill and that southern city just happened to be our next tour stop after leaving Cromwell. So I needed to get the car to Invercargill which is about three hours and 150 miles away. My AA membership (that's Automobile Association not the other one, even though events on this trip were getting me close to it) includes roadside assistance which I had already used on Saturday in sorting out the clutch issue. After a couple of phone calls, a truck would be at Gary's workshop later that afternoon to take 69C to Invercargill the next day.

While all of this was going on, the rest of the group continued with the planned trip to Glenorchy. Once through the Kawarau Gorge the Cs made their way into picturesque Arrowtown for a delightful coffee in the historic main street. From there Malaghans Road is an alternative route to Queenstown and runs along the base of Coronet Peak and on past Arthurs Point and the famous Shotover Jet Boat ride. After negotiating the Queenstown traffic, the group enjoyed the 28-mile lakeside drive to Glenorchy for a very pleasant lunch in the mountainous surroundings. The remainder of the day was spent sightseeing in Glenorchy and Queenstown before heading back to Cromwell late in the afternoon.



The northern arm of Lake Wakatipu as seen from the Queenstown / Glenorchy road

At around 4pm the truck arrived and I drove the car up onto the flat-deck. The driver told me he was now taking it to the company depot and it would be on its way to Invercargill at 8am in the morning and he gave me George, the driver's, phone number. The best way for me to get to Invercargill would be in the passenger's seat in the truck as, although I really like the MGC, spending three hours in the back seat of a CGT was not the most desirable option. I made the short walk from Gary's workshop to the motel and very soon afterwards, the tour group arrived home from the day's outing. While enjoying our outdoor dining and sharing stories about the day's activities, the others were interested to know what stage I was at with my car. I explained that it was on the truck and would be leaving at 8am in the morning and I had the address but hadn't had the chance yet to look up exactly where it was in Cromwell. I disclosed the address as 144 Glenda Drive to which I was informed by the Osbornes that my car was now in Frankton, some 45 minutes away and close to Queenstown. What happened next was one of the highlights of the trip for my fellow travellers as they told me the expression on my face was priceless as I exclaimed, "Bloody hell, he never told me that!!!" Now I am faced with the challenge of getting to Frankton by 8am in the morning. Ross Butler offered to drive me there before returning to Cromwell and heading off with the group to Invercargill but Ross Osborne took up the challenge and made a few phone calls to his contacts in the area.

It all came together when Robbie, who owns the region's Novus glass franchise and lives in Bannockburn which is about ten minutes from Cromwell, offered to pick me up from the motel at 7am and take me to Frankton on his way into work as his business premises are also in Glenda Drive. Problem solved – well done, Mr Osborne.

So, the next morning I bid farewell to my fellow-travellers with a "C you in Invercargill later today" and arrived at the transport depot at around 7:45am to see the truck all ready to go with one red roadster perched on the deck. George and I set off on time with an ETA in Invercargill before midday.

Generally all of these unfortunate situations have an upside if you are willing to look for it and so it proved with George, who was well into his 70s and was still working because he enjoys the driving. After completing the very scenic trip alongside the southern arm of Lake Wakatipu, we made a brief stop at one of his favourite coffee spots in the hamlet of Athol, before continuing on our journey southwards.

George had spent some time during his working career as a tour bus driver in Southland, so by the time we reached Invercargill pretty much on time, I was now very well informed about the history and the places of interest in the region.

After I took the car off the truck at Southern Brakes & Driveline I thanked George for his assistance and for a most enjoyable trip. The manager of SBDL, Luke Nicol, took over from here and, after setting up the job, offered to and gave me a ride to the motel where we would be staying for the next two nights.

Grey clouds were now filling the sky and the forecast for tomorrow (Friday) was not looking good which could be very disappointing as I had organised a photo-shoot with Quinton Taylor from NZ Classic Car magazine.

While waiting at the motel, sans wheels, for my tour companions to arrive, my phone rang. It was Don Carter, MGCC Otago's southern representative. I send Don our newsletters and he had been keeping track of when we were due in town and wanted to catch up. During our conversation I mentioned where my C was so Don offered me the use of one of his cars until mine was ready and he would bring it round to the motel. A very generous offer and it shows



what MG people will do for MG people. Expecting something like a Toyota or Mazda or something similar, how surprised was I when Don arrived in his BGTV8. How appropriate too, as we had celebrated "The Mighty MGs" on the first day of the tour. After chatting with Don for a little while, I gave him a lift home, my first drive in a factory V8.

I used the car sparingly that afternoon and started feeling somewhat guilty as it had by now, started to rain.

While I was having my early morning ride on the truck, the tour group decided not to repeat the frustrations of

Queenstown traffic and set off from Cromwell for Invercargill via Clyde, Alexandra and Roxburgh. At Ettrick, the route changed as the Cs left State Highway 8 and made their way towards Moa Flat. This was a most enjoyable section of open, twisting road at altitude with great views across lush farmland. The trip continued on to SH90 through Tapanui and on to Gore for an early lunch at "Howling At The Moon" where the group was joined by Austin 3-Litre owners Neil & Karen Hogg, who accompanied the Cs for the journey to Invercargill.

I was at the motel when the group arrived and questions were asked as to why there was a BGTV8 outside my unit. My response was, "I saw it on the side of the road, liked it, so I nicked it!"

I returned the V8 to Don after breakfast the next morning as my C was now all set to go with its overhauled brake master cylinder and a new clutch master cylinder, so no more problems from the deep south to home – he hoped!!

The forecast rain had well and truly arrived overnight as we set off for a look at E. Hayes Hardware store which contains the Motorworks Collection, an interesting display of motorbikes and cars amongst all of the hardware products, and it is also the home of the "World's Fastest Indian", the legendary Burt Munro story of passion and determination to become the fastest man on two-wheels. On his first trip to Bonneville Salt Flats in 1962 with his 1920 Indian Scout at the age of 63, Burt achieved a speed of 179mph which amazed the people attending not only due to the age of the bike but also the age of the rider.

From there we moved on to Bill Richardson's Transport Museum and what a stunning place this is. Bill's working career revolved around heavy transport so this vast collection of trucks covers a multitude of makes and models from many years. There is also a motorbike collection and cars as well including an interesting line-up of Fords, one of each from 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1939, 1941 and 1946 as well as a Model A and a Model B – very impressive.

After lunch at the museum's café, we set off following Quinton on the twenty-minute drive to Bluff, a popular photography spot which is almost the southern-most point on mainland New Zealand. Unfortunately, it was raining steadily and the wind was blowing so the photo taking didn't take long and we were soon on our way back to Invercargill.



6 MGCs and an Austin 3-Litre lined up for a wet photo-shoot at Bluff with the southern ocean boiling away in the background

After breakfast on Saturday we set off for Dunedin taking all day to enjoy the drive through the Catlins, the road running along the south-eastern coast of the South Island. Thankfully, the rain had now moved north and we had a relatively dry trip albeit under grey skies. We stopped at Curio Bay and made the short walk to the clifftop to look down on the beach where fossilised trees lie embedded in the coastal bedrock. From there we continued our scenic drive to a coffee stop at the "Whistling Frog Café" at Papatowai, then on to Kaka Point for lunch. This is a popular seaside village with a permanent population of around 300 people which increases noticeably during summer.

We continued on through Balclutha and Milton to our two-night stay in Mosgiel, which is over the hill from the city of Dunedin.

Our Sunday activities were a planned get-together with members of MGCC Otago at Allan Dippie's premises for a look over his car collection, then a run alongside Otago Harbour to Portobello Domain for lunch, then on to the albatross colony at Taiaroa Head, returning to Dunedin along the top of the peninsula to finish the day with a barbeque in the spacious grounds of our motel – well, that was the plan.

Allan suggested we meet at the café in his garden centre at 10am for a "Mix & Mingle" before heading over the road to view his collection. It was here that another MGC joined the tour, Dunedin residents Andrew & Lana Morrison in their red GT which Andrew has owned for thirty years and, as Ross Osborne is the national membership secretary for the Austin Healey Car Club, we had invited local Healey members to join us for the day.

While having coffee I was told there were people looking for me and it was a reporter and a photographer from the Otago Daily Times who wanted to do an article on the tour. This appeared in the ODT the following day.

Allan and his brother Martin are well known in motorsport, both on the track and in Targa NZ. The garage housed two Porsches decked out in Targa competition livery as well as four other Porsches, the competition Rover SD1, a couple of race MGBs and other interesting cars. One in particular, a racing Austin Healey, has an interesting pedigree and is very valuable. Allan took us through the garage and explained the history of each one of the cars. Two other cars stood out, the very detailed replica of the factory GTS, RMO, which was built



in Australia to order for a client who didn't like it because it drove like a racing car. Allan brought MGC this into New Zealand back in 1998 and has used it in competition. He fired it up for us and I captured this on video. But the real attention stealer was his Sizaire & Naudin, which drew applause from the when crowd Allan returned from his trip around the car park. It was a great way to spend a couple of hours and

Allan made the visit a real treat, everyone thoroughly enjoyed it.

The next item on the day's agenda was the drive alongside the harbour for our lunch stop at the Portobello Domain, my thanks go to Kevin Carter from MGCC Otago for his assistance in setting this up. This is a very scenic drive and before embarking on the tour my planning



revealed high tide would be right at the time we were on the run, just perfect.

It was overcast as we left Allan's place and as we rounded the corner on the harbour road, the point where you get your first view right up the harbour to the entrance, all we could see was a black wall, then a clap of thunder, a couple of lightning strikes and then a hailstorm, and did it rain. Further along the drive we encountered major road works which had great chunks of gravel as the road surface – oh well, best laid plans!!

Fortunately, Kevin had built in a Plan B and there was an old farmhouse on the domain so we were able to enjoy our picnic lunch indoors while the rain continued to fall. With the weather the way it was, the decision was made not to bother the albatrosses and the penguins, so we made our way back along the top of the peninsula, views of the city and harbour appearing occasionally through the breaks in the cloud.

Back at our base in Mosgiel, Shona took care of the shopping in preparation for the barbeque where a group of around twenty got together for good company and conversation, mostly held in my unit as the temperature outside had dropped noticeably.

Monday morning and it is still wet. Ross & Shona said their farewells as they were now on home ground but six Cs made their way north out of Dunedin. We had a coffee stop in Oamaru where Doug & Maureen Stanaway and Jack & Jenny Shuttleworth left us to visit family and to take care of other commitments.

By now we were in a fair weather corridor but it was still looking stormy to the east over the Pacific and not much better to the west over the inland high country.

After leaving Oamaru, Ross & Chris Butler peeled off to head home to Christchurch so this left three Cs to complete the drive to Hanmer Springs - the Burridges, the Morrisons and me. It was a big driving day as we were on the road for over 6½ hours and 320 miles, making the decision to have lunch in Geraldine and then taking the inland scenic route under the Southern Alps through Mount Somers, the Rakaia Gorge, Windwhistle and Oxford to join the main highway north after Rangiora.

The rough weather caught up with us in Geraldine and when we returned to our cars there



was ice sitting on the wiper blades and up the windscreens such had been the hailstorm that went through while we were eating. That wasn't the end of it either as another ice-laden storm hit as we were heading north. The scenic Southern Alps were out there to our left, somewhere!!

Fortunately, we left this weather behind us as it moved north-east towards Christchurch and by the time we made State Highway 1, the sun was warming us up.

As we made the turn at Hell's Gate Corner, leaving SH7 for the last six miles into Hanmer Springs, I glanced down at my

instruments to see the speedometer needle take a couple of flicks and die completely – what else on this trip!! The odometer wasn't working either so, too bad, I will sort it out when I get home. It also became apparent as the latter part of the tour progressed that my tachometer was becoming a bit erratic as well. For a car that has an average annual mileage of 1,300 over its fifty years, perhaps 2,500 miles in just 2½ weeks was proving to be a bit too much.

On Thursday, the snow on the mountains that closely guard the town looked impressive in the early morning light. Jock & Shirley made early tracks for home in Nelson as they had to be back in town by lunchtime, so this left Andrew, Lana and me to have breakfast and continue our conversations.

At around 10am it was time to depart, the Morrisons heading to Christchurch to visit family and friends and an overnight stop before returning to home in Dunedin. This left yours truly to head north and complete the 530 miles to Matamata.

The original itinerary was to head north using the scenic inland Kaikoura road but Ross Butler had advised against it as there were still a lot of road works going on, these being the clean up after the devastating earthquake. So, the trip would be north-west through the Lewis Pass, on to Blenheim and finally Picton for the overnight stop in preparation for the ferry crossing on Wednesday morning.

The C was running well despite not quite knowing exactly what speed I was doing with an erratic tachometer and a dead speedo.

I stopped in Murchison for lunch and as I am about to get into the car for the next leg, I noticed the rim on my right-front wheel was closer to the ground than it should be – not another one!! I walked up the road to the service station to enquire about a puncture repair and was told Murchison Mechanical, a couple of doors down the road opposite where I had lunch, was the place.

Using my Air Hawk I pumped the tyre up to full pressure and immediately found the leak, the air was coming out around the stem where it poked through the wheel rim. I found that if I bent the stem slightly towards the centre of the wheel, the leak stopped. So, I folded up a paper towel and jammed it between the stem and the spokes of the wheel so I was at least able to drive the car across the road on a fully inflated tyre.

On this tour I found that if you have an issue and you are driving a nice classic car, people are only too happy to help fix the problem and that was the same here too. He expressed some concern that my tubeless tyres had tubes fitted. The Michelin tyres had been fitted

when the car was in John Fernyhough's collection. The water bath test revealed no leaks in the tube, a new one was fitted anyway, the old one was chucked in the boot, wheel on and back on the road for a comfortable and uneventful trip to Picton.

Wednesday – the final day of the tour and my target was to be home tonight.



Leaving the South Island through the entrance to the Tory Channel to the open waters of Cook Strait with the North Island in the distance

On a nice day the ferry trip is quite spectacular, especially through the Marlborough Sounds. There was no more than a one-metre swell in Cook Strait and we arrived on time in Wellington. It didn't take too long to disembark and the final leg was the 300-mile drive home under sunny skies so I stopped and dropped the top, a rare occurrence on this tour.

I had a late lunch stop in Foxton, then continued north noting that up ahead the sky was looking rather grey, rain perhaps or just dull cloud? I decided to stop and raise the hood and not too long afterwards the wipers were required and the road was damp entering Hunterville.

I stopped in Waiouru to call home with an ETA, targeting 8pm. Less than three miles later at the southern end of the Desert Road, the rain started and it rained and rained all the way to Taupo where I stopped for fuel, and it continued raining all the way to home where I apologised for being late as I drove into the garage at 8:02pm.

So, a 50th anniversary comes around but once. Was the tour a success? Weather-wise, not quite. But, events like this are all about the people and we caught up a number of MGC owners we haven't met before.

To the following people a very special thank you for your contributions to the tour.

"The Mighty MGs Run" on the first day was a great event with Barry Hoffman, John Barrett and the Taupo Vintage Car Club making it a very interesting and enjoyable day, well supported by the attendance of members of MGCC Auckland, Team Waikato, Team Bay of Plenty and the Austin Healey Owners Club.

John Bellamore made our visit to Southwards Motor Museum extra special with members of MGCC Wellington and the Wellington Austin Healey Owners Club responding to the invitation for an interesting afternoon's visit.

John & Mary Hutton in Christchurch hosted us at their place and the Canterbury Austin Healey owners turned out en masse for that day's activities.

Paul & Serena McWilliam did a fantastic job putting together a great day's outing on the Sunday in Christchurch which was superbly supported by the MGCC Canterbury members.

Colin & Cathy Sweetman opened up their car collection for us and John Martin gave us some of his time to look over his beautiful woodwork.

Neil & Karen Hogg joined us in the deep south with their Austin 3-Litre.

Quinton Taylor, from the NZ Classic Car magazine, did a great job with the photo-shoot considering what the weather threw at us in Bluff.

Don Carter's extremely generous loan of his BGTV8 was very much appreciated.

Allan Dippie provided the group with a truly memorable visit to view his car collection and Kevin Carter did a super job in putting together the run to Portobello Domain, both activities supported by the members of MGCC Otago and the Otago Austin Healey Owners Club. Finally, and by no means least, a very special thank you to our MGC owners who recognised the significance of this 50th anniversary –

John & Graeme Barrett, Jock & Shirley Burridge, Ross & Chris Butler, Peter & Raewyn Dunlop, Ian & Shirley Finlayson, Grant & Michael Fitzpatrick, Graham Guy, Dave Guy & Mischke Combrinck, Stephen & Janet Harris, Harvey & Simon Heath, Barry Hoffman, John & Mary Hutton, Shaun Leahy & Stephanie McGreevy, Andrew & Lana Morrison, Ross & Shona Osborne, Philip & Alida Pickard, Bob & Jill Sherman, Jack & Jenny Shuttleworth and Doug & Maureen Stanaway. Fantastic!!!

50th Birthdays......Ian Grant

Over the last twelve months or so I have been letting our owners know when their MGC has its 50th birthday, i.e. the day it came off the assembly line in Abingdon 50 years ago. As production didn't finish until September 1969 we still have nine MGCs in New Zealand to achieve the 50-year milestone.

Another interesting point is 31 MGCs (20 GTs and 11 roadsters) came to New Zealand new and, believe it or not, we have tracked down 28 of them that are still around fifty years later.

Tour Photo Gallery



John Martin's MGA keeping watch over three touring MGCs



A Skyhawk at the Wanaka Aviation Museum



1929 Cadillac Phaeton at the Wanaka Aviation Museum



1932 Packard Twelve at the Wanaka Aviation Museum



Two Chevrolets and a Lincoln Continental at the Wanaka Aviation Museum



1936 Packard Twelve at the Wanaka Aviation Museum



Ferrari F400 at the Toy & Transport Museum in Wanaka



The vast spoon collection at the Toy & Transport Museum in Wanaka



Part of the 1930s Ford line-up at Bill Richardson's Transport Museum in Invercargill



A small sample of the vast truck collection at Bill Richardson's Transport Museum



The Calendar Girls of Leyland Motors

Years before girls became Ladettes, there was the golden era of the Leyland Lady. The world of trucks is a rather macho one in general but for over 30 years the management at Leyland Motors celebrated the fairer sex with their "Leyland Lady" calendar. It was quite unusual in 1930 to use a free calendar as a promotional tool and it was all done in a very gentsel manner. There was not a wet T shirt in sight as each carefully painted portrait featured on the front of "The Leyland - She's a Lady" calendar.

The Leyland Ladies were based on girls who worked at the manufacturing firm and it would have been a great honour to be selected for a portrait.

The trustee of the British Commercial Vehicle Museum, Stephen Bullock, said "Leyland Ladies were very famous during Leyland Motors' heyday. The company started doing the calendars because they wanted to get the Leyland name known worldwide, so they started making them for offices and workshops. It was a good way of getting the attention of the male workers." After all, a pretty face always sells. The calendars were called Leyland - She's a Lady, because drivers referred to their vehicles as being females, much as they still do today.

These are prints of the original paintings by the painter, Walter Lambert, who used his wife as his inspiration for some of the early calendars and he continued the paintings until the late 1960's. Walter told the Leyland Journal, "The fresh complexioned, typically English girl is easily the most popular for this type of work." A preponderance of fair haired ladies over the 33 years of the calendars was put down, in myth at least, to the fact that "Leyland Directors prefer blondes." None of this sort of thing would go down at all well today in the era of America's Next Top Model.

The last original painting in the British Commercial Museum is dated 1968, but there are seven missing from between 1930 and 1968. The search is still on to find the vanished ladies.

British Leyland dropped the calendars after rival firm Pirelli's more "racy" calendars became popular.



The Calendar Girls of Leyland Motors at Bill Richardson's Transport Museum





The history of New Zealand number plates at Bill Richardson's Transport Museum





Another touring MGC – Andrew & Lana Morrison's GT



Engine bay of Allan Dippie's replica Sebring GTS – front hinge bonnet too

and finally.....



Drive safely, enjoy your MGC and remember C-ing is believing.....

Ian Grant



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NB: No calls after 9pm please

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