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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2009

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sat., Feb. 14: Valentine Tour (9:30 am; see page 7 for details)
Tue., Mar. 3: 7 pm, Rainbow Station,
Burnaby: VCB AGM and election.
Social time and nibbles. Join us!
Tue., Apr. 7: Meeting TBA
Sun., Apr 12: Ft. Langley Run
Tue., May 5: Meeting TBA
Sat., May 16: VanDusen ABFM
See the complete Calendar on p. 8!

EDITOR'S BIT

The Roundabout is now back on schedule! This is the quiet time of year when we start planning for good things to come. Please help your old Editor by taking photos and providing write-ups of events you attend. I always need content. I'd enjoy feed back on the series on the British auto industry. This is a good time to start getting our cars ready for spring!.

BRING YOUR VALENTINE ON THE VALENTINE TOUR ON FEBRUARY 14!

Alec Issigonis - Part IV: The Issigonis Lightweight Special Racing Car Walter Reynolds

During his early years, Alec Issigonis toyed with making cars for himself, one of which was the Lightweight Special, the topic of this Part Four of the Issigonis story. The remaining topics will be reviewed in future issues of the Roundabout, and are detailed at the end of this article.

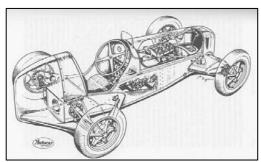


Issigonis and the Lightweight Special (date unknown)

In earlier Parts of the Issigonis story I described his work for employers, designing components for someone else's car, however the first complete car he designed was the Lightweight Special.

During 1933 to 1938, in his free time, he and friend George Dowson constructed the hand-built car in Issigonis' home garage without the aid of power tools. In his book "Specials", John Bolster wrote, 'The Lightweight Special is one of the most amazing specials ever constructed'. Though a pre-World War 2 design, many of the car's design ideas can be found in his post-war family cars

The chassis was monocoque made of alumi-



Lightweight Special cut-out drawing from Autocar Magazine (undated)

num/plywood sandwich side panels that made it strong but lightweight. The side panels were linked by steel cross-members while the wishbone front suspension and swing rear axle suspension were unique to the car. The springing medium was rubber – in compression at the front, in tension at the rear.

To reduce unsprung weight, ultra lightweight Elektron wheels and hubs with integral brake drums were used; more unique features. His weight-saving philosophy even meant that the aluminum-alloy skin of the Special was left unpainted.

Power was from a supercharged 750cc Austin Seven



Issigonis' Lightweight Special at Prescott Hill Climb (2006)

(Continued on page 2)

Ulster engine which was used to great success (some say that his own Austin Seven Ulster was butchered for the Special). The engine accounted for some 20 per cent of

the Special's 587 lbs, and was replaced after World War II with an experimental OHC engine made by Morris which boosted the little car's power-toweight ratio to more than 200 hp per ton! This en-



Issigonis' Lightweight Special at Prescott Hill Climb (mid-1990s)

gine is in the car today and the car is still used in hill climb competitions.

The car enjoyed great success in hill climbs and sprint events. In 1939 the Special beat a works Austin with the same engine at the Prescott Hill Climb. Issigonis was the car's principal driver



Lightweight Special at the British Heritage Museum (2006)

up until 1948 when the demands of his job forced him to stop.

The Lightweight Special is still racing in VSCC events at Prescott Hill where, in 1949 Issigonis and

Dowson discovered the road-holding benefits of negative camber by removing some of the rubber loop suspension units from the rear axle.

It was Issigonis' belief that,



Lightweight Special at Curborough Speed Trials (May 2007)

"There is no use designing and studying one part of a car. Everything is too tightly integrated for that." This philosophy he was able to successfully demonstrate in the Special (and repeat later in the Morris Minor and the Mini).

Issigonis later described the Lightweight Special as, "A frivolity in my life. It was not so much a design exercise as a means of teaching me to use my hands."

This concludes Part Four of the Issigonis story. Below are the upcoming parts of what initially was a single-part story on Issigonis. All the parts are connected to the story of Issigonis:

- ▶ Part Five: The Issigonis 9X Project
- ▶ Part Six: Issigonis and the Austin 1800 and the Pininfarina 1800
- ▶ Part Seven: Stephen Moulton, Forgotten Man of the UK Rubber Industry

REFERENCES

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- ► www.lightauto.com
- ► Telegraph Newspaper
- ► Classic Mini (photo on ww.flickr.com)
- The Beaulieu Encyclopedia of the Automobile
- ► The Independent, July 28, 2005 (Motoring lifestyle magazine)

OFFICIAL NOTICE

Vancouver Coast Branch Annual General Meeting: Tuesday, March 3, 7:00 PM

The Annual General Meeting of the Vancouver coast Branch of the Old English Car Club of British Columbia will be held on Tuesday, March 3, at 7:00 at the British Columbia Society of Model Engineers' Rainbow Station, 120 N. Willingdon Ave, Burnaby, BC (the clubhouse is in Confederation Park; enter off Penzance Drive).

Elections will be held for Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. We need volunteers for the following positions: Roundabout Editor, Telephone Committee Coordinator, Telephone Committee members (s), and the London-Brighton Commemorative Run Committee. Come to the AGM and help OECC plan for another great year!

Jaguar: Sales rose 8% in 2008

DIANA T. KURYLKO, AUTOMOTIVE NEWS in AutoWeek.com, Jan. 13, 2009

Special British Car Sales Page

Jaguar Cars Ltd., which stopped reporting sales figures after being purchased by India's Tata Motors in June, said global sales rose 8 percent last year while U.S. volume fell.

Jaguar sold 65,000 vehicles in 2008, Managing Director Mike O'Driscoll said in an interview at the Detroit auto show. Volume in the United States fell 4 percent to 15,500, he said.

Gary Temple, CEO of Jaguar Land Rover North America, said the company expects Jaguar demand to be flat this year. U.S. sales industrywide fell 18.0 percent last year, and analysts expect further declines in 2009.

Jaguar's U.S. sales have plunged 75 percent since a peak of 61,204 reached six years ago under previous owner Ford Motor Co. Along the way, the United Kingdom has overtaken the United States as Jaguar's biggest market.

The brand will continue to get a boost from the \$50,00 XF flagship sedan, which was launched in various markets in the first half of 2008, O'Driscoll said.

In March, Jaguar will add a high-performance XFR sedan and XKR coupe, said O'Driscoll. Prices for those 2010 models have not been announced.



MINI Sales

Three Sources

newswire.ca, 1/13 MINI Brand: MINI 2008 sales up 32% to achieve seventh consecutive year of sales increases.

MINI Canada has set a sales record every year since its Canadian inception in 2002.

In 2008, MINI sales increased 32% over 2007 to a record setting 4,905 units. MINI December sales were 300 units, a 5% increase over December 2007.



bmwblog.com

MINI USA reported December sales of 3,566 automobiles, up 0.1 percent from the 3,562 cars sold in December 2007. In 2008, the division reported sales of 54,077 automobiles, an increase of 28.6 percent, compared to the 42,045 cars reported in 2007.

"Fuel efficiency and small cars had a big year in 2008 even with low fuel prices slowing down the positive sales development in the past few months," said Jim McDowell, Vice-President of MINI USA. "A balance of rational and emotional reasons are going to be the way of the future to continue small car growth in the U.S. MINI's success in 2008 may be a good indication of this balance."

autospies.com, 1/9

Fortunately, Mini and Rolls-Royce brands were both able to see record sales for the 2008 year [on a world-wide basis]. Mini sales rose 4.3% to 232,425 cars and Rolls-Royce saw a 20% sales increase in 2008 for its uberluxury vehicles bringing the year-end total to 1,212 vehicles.

UK 2008 car sales analysis: winners and losers

Car Magazine Online, Jan. 8, 2009

Below are the full UK new-car sales figures, arranged by order of percentage growth or decline. The companies at the top of the page can congratulate themselves; the lower down the page you go, the deeper the do-do.

WINNERS

Seven manufacturers managed to produce positive growth last year. Disregard the quirks of MG and Hummer sales, and you're left with a handful of brands who enjoyed genuine success in a hard market. Total 2008 UK new-car sales, % change from 2007.

MG 133 +13,200% Hummer 174 +185% Smart 7,526 +43% Dodge 3,911 +20% Volvo 33,358 +11% **Jaguar 20,346 +9%** Kia 31,324 +7%

DOING OK

A baker's dozen held static or posted single-digit decline in 2008. Interestingly, this category included the three German premium giants, but the decidedly mainstream Nissan should be congratulated for holding level in a tough market. Total 2008 UK new-car sales, % change over 2007.

Audi 100,845 0% Chevrolet 18,372 0% Nissan 66,336 0% Mazda 49,858 -2% Daihatsu 4,841 -4% Hyundai 28,036 -6% BMW 113,132 -7% Fiat 55,325 -7% Skoda 37,100 -7% Ford 322,514 -8% Lotus 647 -9% Mercedes-Benz 74,883 -9% VW 179,189 -9%

LOSERS

The majority of car companies suffered double-digit falls last year. The further down this list you go, the redder the faces in the boardroom. The problem is, the coming 12 months are likely to be at least as tough... Total 2008 UK new-car sales, % change over 2007.

Vauxhall 298,912 -10%
Daimler 33 -11%
Toyota 105,717 -11%
Mini 40,736 -15%
Seat 29,397 -16%
Citroen 81,237 -17%
Mitsubishi 15,552 -18%
Alfa Romeo 5,950 -19%
Peugeot 118,701 -19%

Perodua 624 -19% Honda 83,805 -21% Suzuki 26,095 -21% Subaru 4,668 -23% Bentley 1,542 -27% Aston Martin 1,565 -29% Renault 89,570 -29% Land Rover 32.567 -30% Porsche 5.918 -31% Saab 16,074 -32% Lexus 10,122 -33% Jeep 4,062 -34% Proton 1,518 -39% Cadillac 171 -50% Ssangyong 629 -53% Corvette 13 -75% Tata 1 -80% Rover 2 -97%

[Editor's Note: The twelve best selling cars are Ford, Vauxhall, VW, Peugeot, BMW, Toyota, Audi, Renault, Honda, Citroen, Mercedes-Benz, and Nissan.]

The British Motor Industry, 1945-94

David Barron in Organization Studies, March-April, 2002 A review of the book by Timothy R. Whisler (1999, Oxford Univ. Press)

enough attention to the requirements of efficient production. The problem was not lack of investment in new model develop-

This is an interesting and insightful addition to the already voluminous literature on the post-war decline of British manufacturing industry in general, and its automobile industry in particular. Whisler's fundamental point is that either 'traditional institutions' within the

car industry remained unquestioned or they proved resistant to change. These institutions developed during a period when the industry was successful at producing semi-specialist products, on a small scale, for niche markets. It was a strategy with which they were broadly compatible,

Editor's Note: Professor Tim Whisler, author of the 1st article in our series on the demise of the British auto industry, wrote a book on the subject. This article, the 2nd in our series, is a review of a Whisler's book. In it, Professor David Barron, a University Reader in Organisational Sociology at the University of Oxford's Said Business School, critically evaluates Whisler's analysis and perspective. I invite your comments on this series.

and the more successful firms were generally those that followed this strategy. However, as British firms attempted to move into the large-scale production of models aimed at mass markets, these traditional institutions proved a serious impediment. The inability of firms to adapt these institutions eventually led to the demise of all UK-owned car makers.

Whisler's analysis is based on detailed archival research, primarily of corporate and labour records from the Modem Records Centre at the University of Warwick and government files from the Public Record Office. He begins with four chapters outlining the histories of specific British-owned firms and the industry as a whole from 1945 until 1979. This is followed by chapters analyzing engineering and design and development, production and industrial relations, distribution structures, product market strategy and quality-control procedures. One drawback of this structure is that the book is somewhat repetitive, with much of the material in the first four chapters reprised in the chapters that analyze specific institutions.

Some of Whisler's findings are surprising. For example, in Chapter 5, he claims that the reputation for engineering excellence that some British car makers achieved, at least domestically, was largely illusory. Firms relied on 'practical men' who had worked their way up the engineering hierarchy via the apprenticeship system, rather than those with university qualifications. Even legendary designers, such as Alec Issigonis, the designer of the Mini, suffered from this weakness. Although the Mini is generally thought of as a very successful design because of its enduring popularity with consumers, in fact, it was very complex to produce, resulting in high unit costs and low product quality. As a consequence, the Mini's manufacturers made very little profit from it, despite healthy sales. These problems, which were repeated time and time again, were the result, Whisler argues, of the lack of professional training among the 'dominant designers' and their teams. They arrived at their designs through trial and err or, with not

ment, as is often asserted, but the fact that a large proportion of the money invested in development was wasted.

Perhaps Whisler's most consistent theme, though, is his assertion that the root of the problems of the British

> car industry was its stubborn adherence to a fundamentally mistaken product market strategy. This strategy entailed the production of a large number of differentiated models, which was felt by managers to be necessary in order to achieve a large share of the home market, given UK consumers'

preferences. The most extreme example of this strategy was adopted by BLMC, which, in the 1970s, was offering the widest model and component ranges in the world, including eleven different engines and fourteen different body-shell types. Many of these unique models actually competed against each other in the same market segment. Old models continued in production after new models, intended to replace them, had been introduced. Consequently, although the total installed capacity of UK producers was sufficient to have enabled them to reap economies of scale, the factories were small -- on average, only one-quarter t he size of German and one-sixth the size of US plants.

What is more, the British production system was also designed to cope with this product market strategy. It was characterized by the use of labour-intensive, flexible production methods that relied on piece-rate payments to motivate employees. This enabled managers to adjust inputs -- mainly labour -- to cope with fluctuations in demand. The result was a U-shaped cost curve, with high fixed costs at low output, and high marginal labour costs at high output. This contrasts sharply with the declining cost curve that characterizes Fordist production methods.

Whisler's argument is somewhat similar to Chandler's (1990) in a number of respects. In particular, Whisler implies that product market strategy is fundamental, and that other aspects of a firm follow from that. The demise of UK car manufacturers was ultimately caused by their attempts to change strategy without changing institutional structure to match. Like Chandler, Whisler also points to the personal management style that dominated the industry. This was possible, even as the industry became more consolidated, because merged firms typically adopted a holding-company structure, with the constituent firms maintaining a high degree of autonomy. A common pattern with these mergers was that a relatively small firm playing to traditional British manufacturers' strengths would merge with a larger, but less successful competitor. However, it would

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

be assumed that the problems experienced by the larger firm were due to the correct strategy being poorly implemented, and that the merged firm would benefit from the expertise of the managers of the successful partner in the merger.

This book provides a convincing account of the causes of the decline in the UK car industry. If it had been written by a sociologist instead of a historian, it would no doubt not have been based on such detailed archival research. However, what sociologists will find lacking is any attempt to relate the empirical data to theory. The closest Whisler comes to this is in his frequent references to 'path dependence', by which he means that when managers were faced with key decisions, they were constrained in their choices by the past course taken by the organization. However, why managers and politicians were unable to

see the institutional problems is not really explained. It would have been instructive, I think, if Whisler had been informed by the insights of institutional theorists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1984) and by the literature on the problems of affecting organizational change.

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American Sociological Review 48: 147-160. 1977. 'Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony'. American Journal of Sociology 83: 340-363. Meyer. John W., and Brian Rowan

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Teamster's Freight Transportation Museum Meeting Rick Freestone

Our VCB November 4, 2008, meeting was at the Teamster's Freight Transportation Museum in Coquitlam where we found a fantastic display of restored trucks.

Early trucking in British Columbia was like nowhere else in Canada. Drivers had to deal with the heaviest payloads, treacherous mountain passes and the rawest weather conditions.

Their collection of trucks dates from 1914 to 1946. The trucks are restored by a group of dedicated volunteers. These photos are only a small part of their collection. Every vehicle enthusiast should visit this museum. An article about the museum is linked on the meetings page of our VCB website (see Past Meeting Archives on the Meetings page).



1935 Dodge K52 Airflow (5.4 litre 6-cyl, 128 hp): Standard Oil used this truck with its streamlined tank to deliver gasoline to Chevron stations in the greater Vancouver area from 1935 to 1948.



1914 Four Wheel Drive Stakedeck (4-cyl): Built in England with American running gear, it was bought by British Columbia Electric after WWI and used until 1930 to haul coal tar.



1927 Hayes Anderson (Continental 4-cyl, 29 hp): Built in Vancouver by the forerunner of Hayes Truck. Used by Comet Delivery in the greater Vancouver area until 1938.



1932 International A-4 Tractor (4.88 litre 6-cyl, 98 hp): Built as a flatdeck, converted to a tractor in 1935. It was used to haul stern tubes and gun mounts to the shipyards during WWII and general freight around Vancouver until 1948.



1941 International COE 2-Ton Ribtop (3.81 litre 6-cyl, 112 hp): Used by the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, Military District 11 (British Columbia) during WWII.

Edsel dream became a nightmare for reader and for Ford

Auto Biography by Harnvey McEwen, From the Vancouver Sun, with permission Submitted by Bence McIntyre

Columnist Tony Whitney wrote in Driving on Dec. 13 that the Ford Edsel failed for "reasons unaccountable." Based on my experience, I seriously doubt anything could have saved the Edsel.

In September,
1957 1 had the opportunity to take a threemonth vacation after
three years' hard work
in Drayton Valley,
Alberta's oil boomtown. I planned to
order and pick up a
new car at an Ontario
factory and head
south to Florida,
across to California,
and up to Vancouver.
During the 1950s



most new car models were launched in mid-Oct., but a new star had risen and was available for early pickup at Oakville — the Edsel!

Hal Musgrove (later a Vancouver dealer) at Jenner Motors in Edmonton factory-ordered my convertible, but I received bad news one week before the scheduled pickup at Oakville — it would not be built, for unspecified reasons.

However, Ford would discount a loaded Edsel Citation four-door hardtop (\$5,250 list price) if I accepted either this prebuilt car or a left-over '57 white Ford Skyliner. I went for the wild Edsel and looked forward to a dream trip.

After a gracious reception at Ford in Oakville, I started the powerhouse Edsel and was off to visit Dearborn Village; however, at the first stop light, the front seat came off the rails. I had to stop at a service station, buy nuts and bolts, borrow a wrench and. bolt the seat down.

By the time we reached Richmond, Va., the car was due for an oil change. The Edsel dealer there said the car was down two quails of oil and the right front tire was bald on the inside half of the tread. The car was aligned; spare tire placed on the right front, and off I went.

The car continued to use a quart of oil per 500 miles (800 km) till the day I sold it. Other noticeable quirks were:

- · Rough idle (almost like a hot rod)
- Extremely poor fit on hood and doors (paint chips)
- \bullet A loud "boing" every time the car went over a dip in the road
- Popped out of Park (push button transmission), especially on hills(!)

The next major problem was in Nevada, where the exhaust crossover pipe fell off and the car ran over it at 60 m.p.h. (96 km/h). We were running on wide-open exhaust! We continued to the famous Earle C. Anthony Art Deco Packard (now Edsel) dealership in Los Angeles.

A new pipe was flown in via DC6. This entailed a three-day wait. Also, Ford's warranty was invalid out of Canada in the 1950s and all repairs had to be paid for in cash with receipts turned in to Ford of Canada for scrutiny and possible payment.

On to Vancouver — but a loud bang and dead engine in

downtown Bellingham signaled a broken camshaft.

A call to Vancouver Motors (Ford Monarch Edsel) brought a tow truck and all was well in a few more days.

Then a power steering unit, new wiper motor (seized in a

rain storm 60 miles from home), then a shot starter motor (towed off the Ladner Ferry).

Finally I wrote Ford a three-page 1etter and they took the Edsel away for servicing and left me a Mercury Turnpike Cruiser for one week.

When the car was returned, all the problems remained.

By November of 1958 the Bob Hope Edsel jokes were on TV every night and people actually laughed out loud when they saw the car.

On a Saturday night we had decided to go to a downtown movie with another couple and were in front of the Vogue Theatre on Granville Street when "bang" — dead car!

This one was easy. Vancouver Motors was only 200 feet (60 metres) around the corner. We pushed the car into the service bay, passed on the movie and wrote up a deal on a leftover new 1957 T-Bird (standard transmission and no radio). This T-Bird was a white elephant because of the manual transmission. The car was \$4,500 and I offered \$500 difference. The next Monday morning the sales manager phoned and said "No deal" — he wouldn't accept the Edsel under any conditions.

On Monday cam and rocker arms were replaced and George Abbot, the mechanic (we were friends by now), confided in me that the engine was unbalanced and would never run properly. He advised me to unload the Edsel.

Not one dealer in Vancouver would take the car — even on consignment!

At any rate, a Saskatchewan farmer moving to Vancouver paid me \$2,300, (a loss of more than \$3,000), 14 months and 16,000 miles (26,000 km) since my dream purchase.

I often thought of the choice of the white Skyliner, and today I just smile as I walk by rows of Edsels at car meets with their loving owners waxing, hovering over and protecting their dreamboats from scurrilous Edsel "myths."

Editor's Note: Ford Motor Co Friday, 1/30/09, said that it has reduced warrant costs by \$1.2 billion over the past two years and cut the number of such claims by nearly half since 2004. Reduced claims are a financial pay-off from Ford's improved quality as tracked by independent experts. Ford credited changes in its vehicle design and testing for the drop in warranty claims. Yes, quality is profitable—if the British auto industry could have done this 50 years ago they might still be in business!

New bodies for old MGBs (also Sprigets and classic Minis) By David LaChance in Hemmings eWeekly, 1/15/2009

Ever wished there was some way to banish rust from your beloved MGB without endless cutting, grinding, welding and painting? Well, there is. British Motor Heritage, which has been manufacturing new body shells for the evergreen MGB Roadster and GT coupe for the past two decades, is gearing up for its annual May-June production run.

Heritage can supply special options, such as finish painting in the color of the customer's choice, or seam welding for cars that will be used on the track. Because there were so many variations of the B's body shell produced over the car's 18-year production life, Heritage builds each shell to order. The shells are pressed on the original tooling, more than 3,000 pieces of which have been found and recommissioned by Heritage.



A new MGB Roadster body shell in primer is available from British Motor Heritage for \$7,500 (photo courtesy British Motor Heritage)

Roadster shells are \$7,500 in primer and \$11,425 finished, while MGB-GT shells are \$8,065 and \$12,350. If that sounds expensive, remember that the costs of bodywork can easily spiral out of control. Those prices do not include shipping, which can vary. Heritage is taking orders, so if you want one, now is the time to let them know by visiting www.bmh-ltd.com. For a list of approved U.S. distributors, see www.bmh-ltd.com. Body shells for the classic Mini and the Austin-Healey Sprite/MG Midget are also available.

VALENTINE'S DAY INVITATION

BRING YOUR VALENTINE ON THE **VALENTINE TOUR ON FEBRUARY 14!**

On Saturday, Feb 14th, bring your Valentine to the OECC's drive through Delta and Richmond ending at the Buck and Ear Pub in Steveston.

The drive will start from McDonald's in Ladner on the corner of Harvest Drive and Ladner Trunk Road. We will meet there about 9:30 am for a 10:00 departure. Weather permitting, we will visit the George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Delta (\$2 entrance fee if you are 60 or over, others are \$4).

Following this stop, we will tour the great river roads of the region, arriving at the pub between 12:30 and 1:00.

Please let Ken Miles know if you are attending so that he can arrange appropriate souvenirs for the 1ove of your life!

(604-576-8036 or kengmiles@shaw.ca)

AUTOJUMBLE

English Cars & Parts For Sale and Wanted See more ads at

oecc.ca/vcb

under the Autojumble menu

1970 Triumph Stag. RHD. Manual transmission with overdrive (rare in North America). Original V8 in pieces. Transmission and drive train out of car. Soft and hard tops. Great 2+2 dark blue body. Stored dry. Manuals. \$4,500. All offers considered, or trade for what have you. Jurgen, 604-737-8065 or jpeterat@hotmail.com.



1978 Rolls Royce Silver Shadow. New paint, brakes and tires. Some interior work done. 108,528 miles. Runs well. \$25,000 OBO. Contact Ken at 250 549 1524 or k-buchana@shaw.ca to view.







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