

Tribune-Review

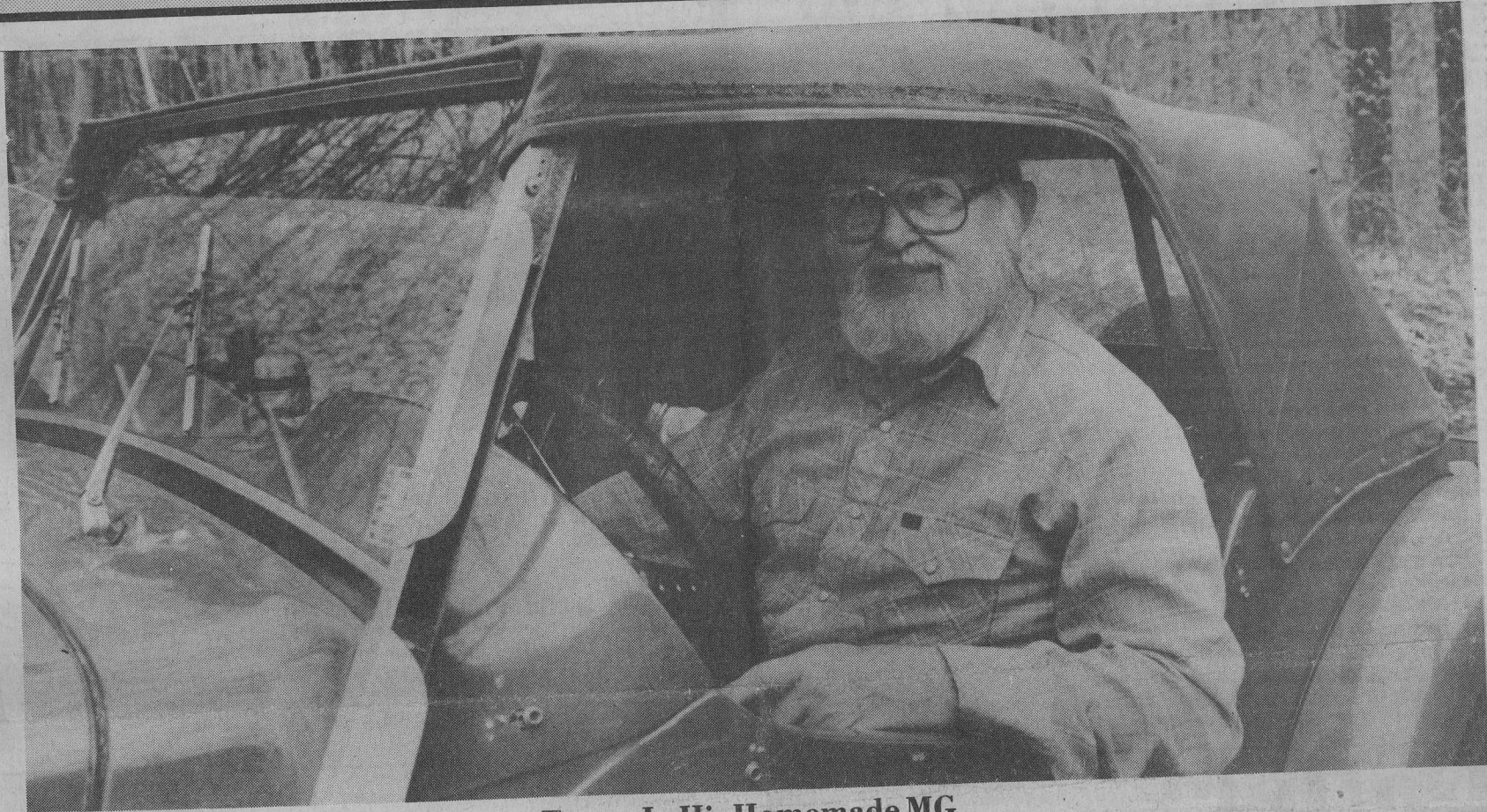
Monday, May 21, 1984

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Foster In His Homemade MG

J.R. Dornas photo

No Rocking Chair

At 71, Eric Foster's Launching A New Career, And Pursuing Two Others On Part-Time Basis

By LINDA ANTONIAK
Of The Tribune Review

"Growing old is simple, you just have to wait," says 71-year-old Eric Foster, who lives in the mountains east of Mt. Pleasant.

"So why not do something while you're waiting?" asks the retired glass designer who's traveled around the world, owns and flies a 1958 taildragger airplane, and built an MG.

While he's waiting for the golden years, he's teaching French, working part-time in his career field and can now be seen as a fiddler and a whittler in current television commercials.

Living in the backwoods of Bear Rocks in a small and quaint cabin, with his companion Bacon, a tan-colored cat, Foster is not your ordinary senior citizen.

Originally from France, Foster first came to the United States in 1958. "I was working with a U.S. company in India," stated Foster. "They decided to send me to their Chicago-based plant to straighten things out. I really had no intentions of making the United States my permanent home."

After Chicago, the company decided to send him to Venezuela. But, on the day of his departure, Foster was offered a job that would change his life.

"My friends were giving me a going-away party. That's when I met a Dr. Girdwood," Foster said. "He showed interest in my textile designing background, and my versatility. He offered me a job working with laminated glass, and non-reflective glass. It was in the years of early television, and new styles and techniques were always needed."

Becoming bored with this, Foster then went to New Jersey where he began work with Wheaton

works in the plant a few miles from his home on a part-time basis.

At the age of 16, Foster moved from France to England, where he found odd jobs as a youngster. During World War II, he joined the armed services to serve as a tank instructor.

"I was first in the English Army, but because I was bilingual I was later recruited by the French Army," said Foster. "DeGalle's son-in-law, who was a commander at the time, saw a need to have me transferred from the English Army to the French."

His war tales range from the Campaign of Egypt to the surge at Ute Beach.

His life in Mt. Pleasant may seem a bit boring compared to his adventurous youth. However, Foster finds ways to amuse himself. He flies and owns a 1958 "Chief" airplane, and on occasions travels around the United States in it.

"I love the mountains around

here," he said. "and I've been flying since 1958, I'm not going to stop now."

He also entertains himself with his orange copy of a 1952 MG, which he made from a kit using a Volkswagen chassis. Additionally, Foster finds time to teach French at Westmoreland County Community College once a week.

His newest amusement is making television commercials. He can be recognized as the whittler in "You've got a friend in Pennsylvania" commercial, and also can be seen as a fiddler in an "Olds Gang" ad.

"I was watching TV one day, a talk-show. The announcers were interviewing an elderly lady who is known for making local commercials," said Foster. "She said that the agencies were in need of older people to make commercials. She invited people to send pictures in, so I did."

Within a few weeks, Foster was asked for an interview.

"I asked what I should wear,

and they told me to come as I was. So I did. I had blue jeans and a regular shirt on, nothing special."

After a week, the agency phoned again and told him that he was perfect for the part. Foster says that he wore the same outfit for his next commercial interview, and it proved advantageous.

"They told me to look western. So I wore the same outfit, with cowboy boots and a cowboy hat. They told me I was perfect for the part right away."

At 71, Foster finds the acting business exciting, and even has become a member of AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists).

What's next for the man who seems to have seen and done just about everything?

"There's two places that I've never been to," said Foster. "that's South America and Russia. South America really doesn't appeal to me. However, Russia would be something worthwhile..."

FRANKLIN STUDENT

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Becoming bored with this, Foster then went to New Jersey where he began work with Wheaton Glass. After some time, he became totally frustrated with the glass business and decided to move on.

"I got bored of the same old thing," he said. "If things don't continuously change for me, I find them quite boring."

His next adventure was to teach French in Philadelphia. Eventually, a friend offered him a job with L.E. Smith Glass in Mt. Pleasant.

"That was 14 years ago. I had never heard of Mt. Pleasant, but now I'm glad that I had. The people are wonderful around here, and those at Smith Glass have virtually become my family."

Foster has now retired, but still

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