



Special to The Mississippi Press

### Donald Chalfant, the Strawberry Kid, poses with "Cece."

"At the time I had a van and a pick-up truck. I had to make a change."

In summer 1997, Chalfant said he saw a "bright red MR2 supercharged: It was love at first sight.

"It opened a whole new world," he said.

But he didn't stop at one. After the red car, named "Cody," he bought a second one. His then-fiancée named it "Chase."

Chalfant's new-found love for the car outlasted his engagement.

When the engagement broke off, Chalfant kept both cars and bought a third MR2 with the honeymoon money.

He named it "Cece."

A fourth MR2 was added to his collection when a fellow MR2 club member died at a young age from lung cancer. "Phil" is named for his former owner.

"To me, it was kind of a wake-up call to start doing the things I want and stop doing things I don't want to do," he said.

Chalfant said when he was buying his fourth MR2, he was asked why he needed four cars.

"I don't need these cars," he replied. "I want these cars."

And the new woman in his life wants these cars, too. Chalfant's new girlfriend already came with an MR2 named "Zippy."

He met his new girlfriend through the MR2 club about three years ago.

So if he stays out 'til "quarter to three," would she lock the door?

Probably not. If Chalfant is out with his car, she's probably not far behind — or ahead.

Chalfant said he spends a lot of time on the road participating in various MR2 club rallies or driving for fun.

One of the most challenging places he has driven is a road in North Carolina called "The Dragon," which features 318 turns in 11 miles.

He said many people from Europe ship their bicycles to the U.S. to experience The Dragon.

### Appeal of MR2s

Toyota MR2s feature a mid-engine design.

The Toyota MR2 is a mid-engined, two-seater sports car manufactured by Toyota Motor Corp. of Japan.

There are several opinions on the origin of the name "MR2." Some of the most popular interpretations of the name are "Mid-engined, Runabout, 2-seater," "Mid-ship Runabout 2-seater," "Mid-engined, Rear-drive, 2-seater," "Midship-engine, Rear-wheel drive, 2-seater" and "Midship Racer 2-seater."

The car is informally known as "Mister Two."

There are three generations of MR2 commonly known as the Mark I, produced from 1985 to 1989; the Mark II, produced from 1990 to 1995 for North America and until 1999 in Japan and other countries; and the Mark III, which began production in 2000. The MkIII has the first convertible model of MR2 offered by Toyota.

The MkI production line includes two engine types: normally aspirated and supercharged.

The MkII production line also included two engine types: normally aspirated and turbocharged.

— Source: [www.mr2.com](http://www.mr2.com)

See CHALFANT, Page 3-C