

I Wrote The Book About Restoring Miatas

by Terese Mac Davis

*Just
Miata's*

Do you know how many Miata books are out there? Hundreds! Maybe thousands! You can find a Miata book on anything to do with performance, and mods, and racing and many more Miata subjects. I haven't seen a lot of Miata books that are like mine, *Just Miatas*. It's not technical, for one thing. It's just about Miatas and Miata people and my wonderful experiences finding them, fixing them, owning beautiful cars, and then passing them on. It's an easy read, with plenty of pictures of gorgeous cars. I hope some of the 'techies' might like it, too. After all, they're Miata people, too.

I restored Miatas for over a decade. I liked the flip up headlights, so we concentrated on the first generation (90-97) NAs. We restored these wonderful little cars, turning them over as new and beautiful works of art. Miatas are sturdy work cars which are cheap to own, cheap to maintain and cheap to run. And they hardly ever break down. They take you where you want to go without complaint and with style and grace.

Restoring beautiful sports cars and meeting fascinating people was the most fun I've ever had. When that all came to an end a couple years ago, I concentrated on being a Miata *owner*. I kept two Miatas. Now I could have my own cars to fix up, just for me, and keep them forever. I could even go to Miata club events.



Then I was laid up for a couple of months. To pass the time, I began to write a book about my experiences with the Miata people and cars I've known. The book just came pouring out. I knew the people, I remembered the individual cars. I was feeling the same obsession about the cars, again, but this time I was writing about it. I finished my rough draft in a month.

I had always wanted to write a book. My house is full of books, as my mother's house was and as my daughter's house is. I didn't really know how to go about writing one, though. I knew a bit about story and characters and plot, but I didn't know how to write a non-fiction book.

I had several people read the first few drafts. Jeff (he's our mechanic) zipped right through it. He said it was good and he got through it fast, but it was a little choppy. Another guy who was a reader and had a Miata, couldn't get past the first few pages. He said it had interesting stories, but for some reason it was hard to read. It didn't 'flow'. Clearly, it was not right yet.

So I did what I always do when I can't do it myself, I found an expert. I had struggled with the manuscript for half a year. Then I found Nancy and Biff Barnes of *Stories To Tell*. Nancy is a super nice lady editor. I'm not really sure about Biff. I mean his picture's there on their website, but he's a mystery man. My sister Farris met them both at an Authors and Publishers convention. (She said there really is a Biff.) You can see them at www.StoriesToTellBooks.com .

Nancy took the book apart and rearranged the chapters and pictures and tweaked it here and there. When I got it back, I couldn't really put my finger on all the changes she made. It was what I had written, just so much better. *Just Miatas, How I Buy, Restore and Sell* is the title we finally settled on.

Nancy taught me as we went along. She said that the way to improve my writing was to focus each section on a separate subject. She's helped me with some other editing since then, and helped me refine my writing skills.

This whole book thing is a lot more complicated than I imagined. The editing was the hardest. Nancy said to go over every single word and make sure that's the word I wanted there. So I did. It took over a week, working on it an average of six hours a day. I'd have to make myself take a break, just to uncross my eyes and unscramble my brain. But I wanted to get it done! I was in overdrive. I really wanted it to be good. I finished my edit, and then Nancy finished up the final, edited, formatted and proofread version.

The pictures all had to be pulled out and the largest versions of each one found and put into a folder, and another folder of numbered captions to go with the pictures. That was a long, tedious job. The words and pictures will go into the book separately, in book design software; it can't be done in Microsoft Word.

We decided to self-publish. A lot of authors are doing that now, both out of necessity and by preference. Nancy is an excellent editor and designer, and will go with me all the way up to a

published book sold on Amazon. She's designing the book, page by page, since it is full of Miata pictures. She also designs the cover, front and back. She makes all that happen.

While Nancy is pulling together the final version, I'm getting my business license, my resale license and publishing a fictitious name statement in the paper (*Just Miatas*, of course).

Publishing a book is a very interesting process, from my point of view. Nancy shopped around for price quotes, and we chose the printer I wanted. Once we know the exact number of pages, she can buy the ISBN number, and that's the last step. Then she will submit my book to the printer. I'll buy 500 books to start with. I plan to work with the Miata clubs and use my website for distribution.

At the same time, Nancy will create an account through CreateSpace. This allows the book to be sold on Amazon.com or through an Amazon e-store. Amazon will print and ship the books they sell online, and I'll get a royalty payment for each of those books sold.

There are advantages to self publishing your own book, especially one like mine with a limited market. My 'limited market' is *Miata people* and sports car people and car people in general. There are *millions* of us out here who love our Miatas! I know how to find Miata people. I'm getting to know the Miata clubs. I'm posting on Miata.net forums and meeting other Miata buffs. I'm attending events whenever I can. I'll be doing more of that when I actually have the books and can donate some to the clubs.

Now is the time to begin work on promoting the book. It will be released in April officially, but should be on Amazon.com sometime in March 2012. To spread the word, I've already published articles in the Sacramento club (SAMOA) newsletter and then the Bay Area Miata Assoc. (BAMA) newsletter. This isn't my first time writing about Miatas. I also had an article in Miata.net as Miatas of the Month, May 2008 and I go on the Miata.net Forums to talk about our favorite subject.

I ran across a little club called Miatas of Muskoka in Canada. I've gotten to know them and have published several articles in their newsletter, *Show Me Your Curves*. I love that name! They only have 22 cars in their club, but when they go on a run, they all go, and they have a wonderful newsletter.

Have you ever surfed through the other Miata clubs websites and newsletters? Fascinating. They're all different, but they're all Miata people, too. The clubs are very supportive and I give them articles to use. My writing has gotten better by working with my editor, Nancy, and the newsletter editors. I'm making new Miata friends all the time. Take a peek.

www.sacramentoareamiata.org

www.bayareamiataassociation.com

www.miatasofmuskoka.com

I'm getting the Miata community interested, and they are helping me to promote my book. This is not a ground-breaking book, and definitely not a technical book, and it probably won't make

the New York Times Best Seller List, either. But it's entertaining and informative and it's about Miatas and Miata people.

This is a new phase for *Just Miatas*. I have developed my website (still a work in progress) and included stories from the book, lots of pictures, articles I've had published, some helpful hints, and even a clicker to reserve a book. You're invited to visit at www.justmymiata.com. Since I've been writing articles in the newsletters, I have almost 30 book reservations. They're coming to my website from all over the US and Canada, and even five from Switzerland and one from the Netherlands.

I'm planning a launch party when the book comes out. I'm inviting all the people who are in the book, or whose car is in it, all the people who worked on my cars, all the people who have or had *Just Miatas* cars and some of my Miata club friends. One more time my street will be lined with Miatas. If you've bought a car from me, or think you might have sold one to me, I would love to hear from you. Come to the party! My email is justmiatas@yahoo.com.

Stay tuned,
Terese Davis

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