

BMW Car Club
of America
Los Angeles Chapter



Whispering Bomb

FALL 2016

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What's Inside

INSIDE FRONT COVER _____

NEW CENTURY BMW

2 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Kurt Helm

EDITOR'S COLUMN

It's All About That New Car Smell

by Jean Helm

RESPECT YOUR ELDERERS

by Baabak Afshar

3 (MORE THAN) FIVE QUESTIONS (A) NEW CENTURY

4 BMW vs. PORSCHE EUROPEAN DELIVERY

by Paul Silver

5 BAVARIAN WORKSHOP

6 ROBOTS IN REGENSBURG

by Mike Buhbe

7 BETTING ON THE NEXT e30

by Mark Buehler

8 M2 DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

by Greg Uhler

A CONUNDRUM

9 SoCAL VINTAGE

by Fred Larimer

10 LEGENDS / FESTORICS / O'FEST

13 AN ACCIDENTAL BIMMERPHILE

by Mike Buhbe

14 SIX MONTHS OF TESLA OWNERSHIP

by Bill Blowers

15 DIVA'S WORLD - MONTEREY MUSINGS ...

by Diva Moose

16 THE INCREDIBLE HULK THE BMW X5 xDRIVE40e

by James Chew

17 NEW MEMBERS

18 TWO MORE BOXES CHECKED OFF THE BUCKET LIST

by Blaine McNutt

19 FIRST TIMERS

by Jim & Connie Patterson

20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

INSIDE BACK COVER _____

JEFF KOONS ART CAR

Photo by Kurt Helm

BACK COVER _____

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FRONT COVER:

A mint condition 1939 BMW brought to Festorics by BMW AG. Photo by Kurt Helm

CORRECTION:

In the Summer issue, the Editorial Staff was reminded that we did not give credit where credit was due. Our front and back cover photos were taken by Kurt Helm.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Kurt Helm

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer!

By the time you read this column, Legends of the Autobahn, Festorics, and the CCA's O'Fest will have wrapped up. If you were able to attend, why not write an article for the Whispering Bomb that shares your experiences with the rest of our Chapter members? You can submit it to our Editor via email.

As I mentioned in my last column (Summer), a group of CCA members went over to Munich to take delivery of our new BMWs in mid-May. You should have read about the event in the August issue of Roundel. Several of the participants wrote sidebars to accompany the great article written by Dan Tackett of the San Diego Chapter (Dan was the driving force behind our trip).

There were also other participants who wrote sidebars as well; however, due to space limitations in the Roundel, not all were published.

Fear not, this issue of the Whispering Bomb includes several of those sidebars so that you can learn more about the European Delivery Experience and just how much fun it can be.

Until the next issue, enjoy your car and enjoy your Club.

Editor's Note: The President was brief in his remarks this issue, as he was either in the garage pampering his new M2, getting ready to go to O'Fest in Monterey, or arriving home from O'Fest to continue his pampering routine.

RESPECT YOUR ELDERS

by Baabak Afshar

Hunting down Bimmers when out and about can be great fun. "Respect Your Elders," this one read right off of Hollywood Blvd. behind the Egyptian Theater. Never mess with the elders and their classic cars. Though I never got to meet this particular "elder", his or her magnificent BMW is a shining example of the 5 series E28. Father had one in champagne, a 525e (e stands for "eta", or high efficiency), was a 2.7L 6-Cylinder, with only 122 HP, and maximum RPM at 4500, like a diesel but purely gasoline driven, and much too much torque!! A great overall 1970s family ride. The same body was made in 528i, 535i flavors as well. BMW even made an M5 version with 286 HP! "Respect your Elders" indeed.



EDITOR'S COLUMN It's All About That New Car Smell

by Jean Helm

Are you a car widow? Haven't seen your significant other since the new car was delivered? The garage seems to be off-limits now-a-days? Yep, I know how you feel.

Even though we spent two weeks together in our new M2, when the car finally arrived back in California (at the port and not quite the dealer), MY significant other emailed and called the dealer, and otherwise made a pest of himself until we were told we could pick up our new (slightly driven through Europe) car. And even though I was not supposed to drive for 24 hours after a minor medical procedure, the day of my procedure was the day they could first delivery our – um – HIS new car. So off we went to pick up the car on a late Friday afternoon. Don't tell my doctor.

Since then (only two weeks ago at this writing), the car has been washed 3 or 4 times (I lose track how many times after awhile and he will dispute how many times he has babied his baby), it's been waxed, the garage has been cleaned out

at least once, the tires have been removed to clean the back sides, and he's polished the exhaust pipes (evidently, someone didn't do a good enough job before final delivery).

I poke my nose out of the back door every once in awhile to see if my significant other is still alive/around/happy and see by his smile from ear to ear that he's all that and more.

Anyone who has taken delivery of any new car, but especially a new BMW, knows the good feeling you have when you finally get behind the wheel of YOUR car.

In this issue, besides the usual suspects who write for us (and we REALLY REALLY appreciate your contributions!!), we are featuring articles written by our fellow Centennial MTour compatriots – all from our fellow San Diego Chapter. Some talk about what to do the first time you travel outside the US, as well as first impressions, bucket lists, and how some other European delivery programs compare to BMW's. Have a good time reading all of the articles in this month's WB.

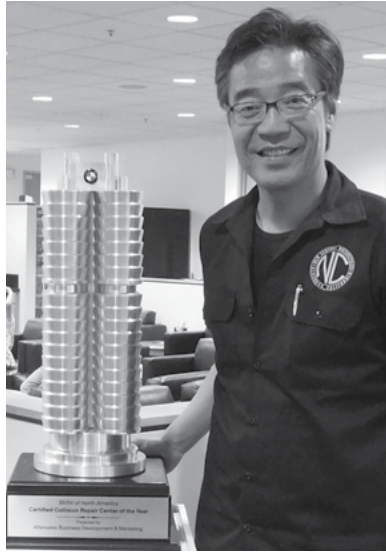
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(More Than) Five Questions

(A) New Century

This year New Century BMW has partnered with our BMW CCA Los Angeles Chapter to be our Platinum Sponsor. I recently had an opportunity to sit down and chat with Stephen Pan, New Century's General Manager. We talked about New Century and their progress, as well as Stephen's career with New Century BMW.

In 1992, Century BMW was purchased by the Lin family, and subsequently became New Century BMW. Their dealership includes the BMW Automotive Group – an M-certified dealer, BMW i-certified dealer, their BMW Factory Certified Collision Center (the first certified BMW body shop in the Los Angeles area – more on that later), and BMW Motorrad (for those who love not only BMW cars, but motorcycles too). New Century has always been located in Alhambra. The Lin family is the best to work for; Mr. Lin is not just a good dealer, he is an overall good person. Stephen told us he is a better person from his association with Mr. Lin.



Whispering Bomb (WB): Stephen, thanks for meeting with us today. So, how did you come to work for New Century BMW?

Stephen Pan (SP): I joined the firm in 1989 when it was Century BMW. I had moved here to the Alhambra area to go to school, walked in, and asked for a job. Luckily, they hired me on the spot and I've been here ever since. In 2003, I was named the New Century BMW General Manager. I split my time amongst all of the areas of New Century BMW.

WB: Why the BMW marque? What makes BMW so special?

SP: BMW is a product that is always fun, great, and new. They are always enhancing and advancing automotive technology and style. Just when I think that there is nothing new, BMW pleasantly surprises me. Take the i3; it is the fastest BMW off the mark from 0 to 30 mph, but BMW is always looking to improve their designs and technology. BMW heard consumers when they said they really liked the i3, but wished it had a better range per battery charge. In 2017, the i3 will be outfitted with a new 90Ah battery, have 50% more power reserves, and will have a range, conservatively, of 114 miles.

WB: As a big fan of BMW, what BMWs do you personally own?

SP: I have a 1983 BMW 320i for club racing, a fully restored 1987 BMW L6 (black exterior, lotus white interior) that won the Huntington Beach Concours d'Elegance, 2014 428iX, 2014 i3, 2015 i8 and eleven motorcycles, three of which are BMW.

Editor's Note: Stephen admitted that in order to ride his beloved motorcycles, he needs to do a lot of moving around in his garage, as well as take some out of the garage to get to the ones in the very back.

WB: What is different about New Century?

SP: We are in the people business and we know it starts with our clients. They are extremely loyal and we like to reward that loyalty. We host several different kinds of events for our most loyal clients throughout the year including track events (two in 2016 at Willow Springs and one in Fontana) and driving events out at the new BMW Driving Experience in Thermal. In fact, we have been sponsoring client track events for seven years. It's a lot of fun for them and us!

As the General Manager, I like to create a family feeling at our dealership and bring the best out in our people. It creates a great atmosphere in which we all work. My job is to offer my team the tools to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. I like dealing with people, making a difference in someone. Managing this team is easy. Fortunately, I have very good team members who really care for New Century, and take ownership and pride in this place. The team, across all of our entities, makes me look good. I really appreciate the work they do and their dedication to New Century.

You know, things change in any business. And when they do, everyone has to adapt to those changes. Here, we smoothly execute changes because of the commitment of our entire team. When a business faces change, there are two ways it can go – either 80% explaining and 20% executing, or 20% explaining and 80% executing. Because of the New Century Team's support and their ability to work well together, there is always 20% explaining and 80% executing. That's one of the many things that makes my job so easy. This team knows that if it's good for the company, it's good for them.

WB: We understand that BMW NA has named New Century BMW Certified Collision Repair Center "Best Overall Certified Repair Center" for the second year in a row – the only two years that BMW NA has awarded this prestigious honor. Congratulations! How did you do it?

SP: Hard work and attention to detail. We ensure that we have highly factory trained collision specialists and of course, we only use new BMW-certified parts. It is all about customer service. We pay close attention to our clients' needs and make sure that their experience in the collision center is a good one.

WB: Finally, throughout this interview, you have consistently focused on customer service. How does New Century approach customer service?

SP: We strongly believe in great customer service. We know we are not perfect and are always looking for opportunities to get and act on suggestions, both from our clients and within our team. That's how we here at New Century improve ourselves. Criticism is not all bad – it only becomes bad in how we perceive and treat the criticisms. Even if there may be no immediate resolution, we will always acknowledge the message and work diligently to address it in a timely manner.

WB: Stephen, thank you for your time today and talking to us. You have a well-run organization and a great team of people here.

SP: Thank you for stopping in today to speak with me. ■



BMW vs. Porsche European Delivery

by Paul Silver

BMW and Porsche are two different car companies with different missions. They both build great cars, and they both offer European Delivery programs. I've now had the opportunity to experience both companies' programs, having just taken delivery of an M3 (*Editor's Note: Paul was part of our Centennial MTour*) and, in 2013, a Porsche Boxster S. So how do the two programs compare?

Cost is the first factor that comes to mind. Obviously there is a difference in the average price of a BMW versus that of a Porsche. But BMW has an additional advantage. BMW European Delivery customers receive a discount of about 5% off the base MSRP. Depending on the model purchased, this can cover much of the cost of the trip. Porsche used to charge extra for the privilege of European Delivery, but now it's a no cost option.

When it comes to amenities, BMW provides a chauffeured BMW limousine pick-up at the Munich airport as part of the program, while Porsche provides two one-way transfer vouchers, which can be used for taxis at any time during the trip. When I did the Porsche European Delivery, we used these to get from the hotel to the plant on delivery day and to get from the plant to the hotel after drop off of the car. BMW's airport pick-up is very nice, indeed, while the Porsche transfer vouchers provide much appreciated flexibility. Porsche also provides a voucher for a free one-night stay at one of the Stuttgart business class hotels. Our hotel was well located in the center of town, and the room was spacious and comfortable. BMW doesn't have an equivalent offering.

How about the actual delivery experience? Porsche and BMW both have very nice lounges for the exclusive use of European Delivery customers, though BMW's Premium Lounge at the Welt is much larger and has extensive food and beverages offerings. Porsche's lounge is more intimate, as is to be expected for a company with lower production and delivery numbers, and while there are food and drinks, these are much lighter than is available at the Welt. The BMW is the clear winner in this category. The Premium lounge is amazing.

The delivery experience at Porsche is best described as relaxed, yet thorough. There is a simple room, adjacent to the lounge, in which an array of vehicles await their new owners, parked side by side. The delivery specialist spent a significant amount of time going through every feature of the car, and making sure I understood everything. At the end of the delivery, I signed many forms, accepting delivery - getting the temporary insurance and registration set up, and the car was moved to the customer parking lot outside. BMW, on the other hand, provides quite a unique experience, with the walk down the "Stairway to Heaven," the stop along the way to see your car below, glittering in the light from above. The car rotates on a turntable, as if to show itself off. The delivery specialist spent much less time explaining the car's features, focusing on features different from what I already knew in my current E90 335d. The paperwork had been done the day before, and even that was a streamlined experience. To sum up, Porsche's delivery was very thorough and focused on the car, but perhaps a bit dry. BMW's delivery was shorter, but focused on creating an unforgettable experience.

Both companies provide free admission to their respective museums and free factory tours. BMW's museum is much larger, and is focused on telling the history of the company. Porsche's museum is smaller, very well organized, and is focused on its racing heritage. BMW's factory is massive, so a two-hour tour still only touches on parts of it. Porsche's factory is much smaller and more intimate, to the point that you actually are on the factory floor with the workers as they assemble the cars.

Finally, insurance coverage is quite a bit different, with Porsche requiring a €1000 deductible, while BMW's coverage has zero deductible. Both cover the vehicle for a period of two weeks, with longer periods of coverage available for an additional charge.

So which program is better? It depends on your priorities. They're both excellent programs. If you are considering a new vehicle purchase or lease, European Delivery is definitely the way to go, regardless of whether you buy a BMW or a Porsche. ■

Steve Saeta on the Road Again ...



BMW Dealer in Bangkok



Seen on the street in Tangier

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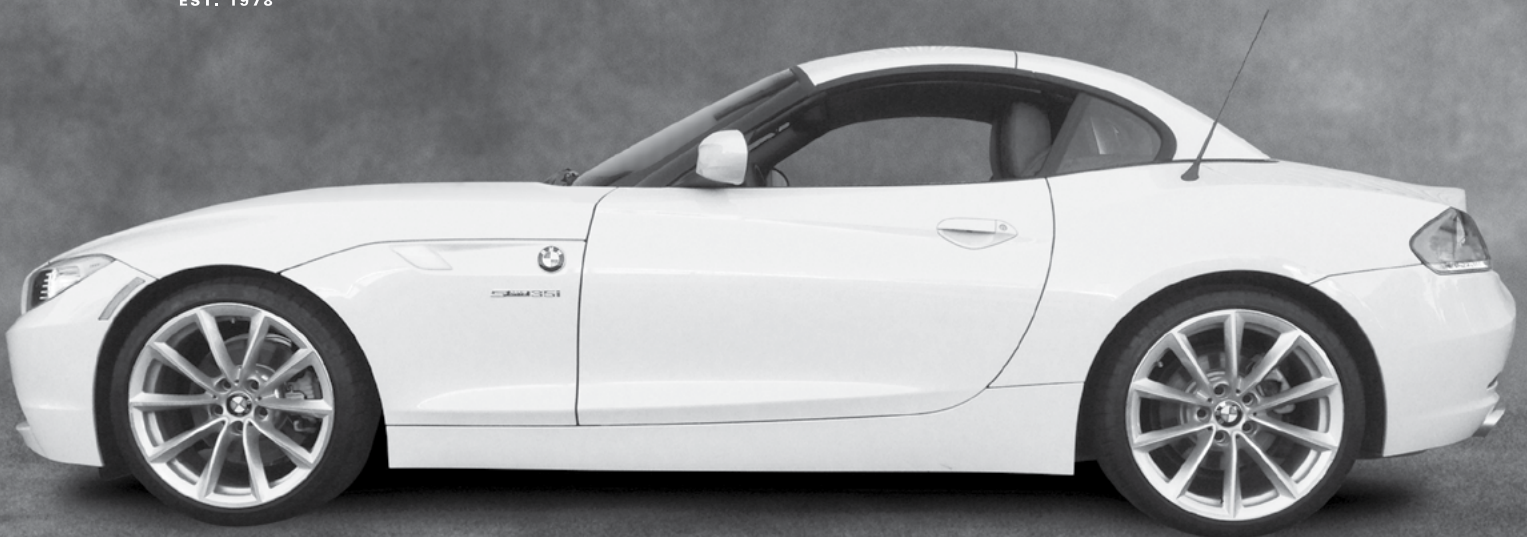


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Robots in Regensburg

by Mike Buhbe

BMW robots – I can't help but think of them as highly evolved humans in a futurescape. Then again, we witnessed enough in the New Millennium enough to know that change it-is-a-coming. Part of my good fortune is travel in Europe, where Maria was born. We got a tour of the Regensburg BMW factory while on a river cruise in May. These marvels cost \$50,000 with a ten-year life span. Compare those costs with the salary and benefits of a worker.

Germany has always been Maria's favorite destination. A luxury European river cruise had always been on our list, just like the one you see advertised on TV with the aerial shot showing a long, narrow boat coursing through a winding river. Castles sprout atop the hills. Scenic towns set at river's edge are surrounded by vineyards stitched together like a grandma's quilt. Vineyard tours are part of our inclusive shore excursions. Maria came up with the final deal clincher: the BMW factory tour in Regensburg. That meant I could see BMWs being made for the 100th anniversary of the company. Among the many benefits, the Uniworld bar would be open for endless pours starting at 9 AM. That's right: nobody keeping a tab. Pour me another one, barkeep! Land ho to starboard and shore leave will be granted. Uniworld staff was top notch and everything was planned to the minute. We boarded the ship and found that at the dawn of our seventies, we were in the middle range of our fellow passengers. The grey hair clued us: these people understood the Beatles.

The morning of the tour came, luxury buses were filled, and Rheinhold Schneider oriented us. Disappointingly, no photography would be allowed. Rheinhold described in general terms severe consequences if we even displayed a cellphone while on the tour. I kept my palm camera in my pocket, hoping that there would be a break and I could sneak a photo. No such luck came my way. I can't say that anything looked like trade secrets that Audi and Mercedes Benz would love to have.

My previous car production tour was in the late 1970s in South Gate, when blue-collar jobs paid a lot more than they do

now and were more numerous. The GM factory was noisy, and everything was done by people. The closest thing to a robot was a giant metal pressing machine that made floor pans with a clangor to wake the demons of hell. None of the workers wore ear protection. Later, at a Christmas party, Chuck told me that this was the job in the plant where the beginning workers were stationed, and that animals were more protected by the SPCA than assembly line workers.

The orange robots pause as if pondering their next move, like highly trained chefs before the teppan grill. Rooted monoliths, they make a few cautious adjustments, then suddenly leap into action and with a rapid series of deft twists and turns put a seat inside the car. The robot reverses itself and comes to a standstill, the massive hydraulic arm returning to an at-ease position. Completely still, it could be contemplating deeply about the meaning of life. Or maybe dinner at home when the shift is over. Perhaps having a beer while watching a soccer game on TV, or even working up nerve to talk to that hot robot a few feet away in the assembly line, the one that is so flexible. "Hey, baby! Let me show you MY moves!"

Robots even fix themselves, just like I do when I get a cut and I apply a Band-Aid. Welding robots will replace their contact points every 100 or so operations, much as we do when we get out a new toothbrush to replace the worn out old one. What? You just keep the old brush until it is scrubbed down to the nubs and the bristles are bent like trees in the wind? If this is you, you are not ready to apply for a robot job in the BMW factory in Regensburg.

Most of the passengers opted for the BMW factory tour, and we boarded busses one Saturday morning for a nice ride through very pretty, orderly countryside. Many Germans we encountered said that they like precision, neatness, and good organization; our guide was no exception.

The guide on our bus was a fountain of automotive information as a casual observer of cars. Car washes, for example, are the only place a car can be legally washed. Law prohibits washing one's car anywhere at home. Our guide told of her father being turned in by a neighbor for rinsing the mud off the family car's tires after a jaunt in the country. The police came, dad was counseled, a ticket was avoided. ■

Schedule of Events

Saturday & Sunday: October 29 - 30
High Performance Driver's Education
at Buttonwillow Raceway Park

Sponsored by San Diego Chapter

Annual LA Chapter Holiday Party
Sunday • January 29 • 2017

Magic Castle
in Hollywood

Two Seatings
Times TBA



Betting On The Next e30

by Mark Buehler

This was not a good week for me and staplers. No personal injuries occurred, but there was a very real risk of drywall damage. In the space of a ten-hour workday, six of them took a powder. Two were cheap plastic pieces of crap, one was a cheap metal piece of crap, one was an electric piece crap, and two were heavy-duty monsters that shouldn't have broken if they were hit by a truck.

I wasn't trying to staple a truck. I was trying to staple 14 pages of copier paper so I could drop them in the mail. In fairness, I have to give the two super-duty staplers a pass. The next day, a little forensic examination revealed that some moron who couldn't read put in the wrong sized staples, jammed them both up, and failed to fess up. The other four still cranked me out.

The one that actually worked is older than I am and has been sitting on various desks and bookshelves since I was in third grade and got my very own desk. The stapler was my dad's.

It's not like this is new technology, so I can't help but wonder how a 60+ year old, well-used relic could keep on going and punch holes and bend wireⁱ better than conceptually identical machinery that is newer and nominally better. I could be a ethnocentric jerk and blame the countries of origin for those that didn't workⁱⁱ, and cheer Germany for building the one that handled twelve years of Catholic education, four years of a bachelor's degree, two years of a Master's, two years of a J.D. and subsequent careers in advertising and public relations, education, and law, but that seems like a cheap and easy out. Plus, if I did that, this column would be really short and our Editor would be left scrambling for filler at the last minute.ⁱⁱⁱ

Instead, I made this an educational exercise for myself and decided to drag you along. So, what's the big deal with old BMW's? Specifically, I started looking at the bug-nut crazy prices of e30 3 Series. Are they like old German staplers?

Just a couple of years ago, you could buy these all day long for pocket lint, like you can now do for e36 3 series.^{iv} A quick look on Craig's List shows just a few e30's available, and even the rats are four grand. Am I kicking myself for not grabbing that absolutely cherry '91 318is for less than two grand? Why yes, yes I am.

The real question is, are e30's really worth the prices now being charged?

Not to me, even though they are a blast to drive. The steering is direct and immediate in a way that none of the electric racks I've driven have been. The handling is predictable. And they're fast enough to be fun, but not so fast as to give rise to felony-stupid behavior every time you get behind the wheel. The same cannot be said for most of the current BMW products. I followed Stephanie in her M235i to work this morning. She blew past two cars on the entrance ramp to the freeway. She wasn't in a hurry. It was just fun. Contrary to the behavior of another a couple of other idiots who buried the gas and did triple digits until they were out of sight on the toll

road^v, she backed off and noodled into work with the flow of traffic. Absent a modicum of self-control, it things could have been ugly. For them I mean.

So e30s are kind of bullet proof in that old German stapler kind of way. What does break isn't usually mechanical and is cheap in the context of BMW's and easy to fix yourself without too many funky specialty tools. Of course, that presumes you like and have time for that sort of thing. E36's are less so and have their issues, but they're still fun.

So do I want an e36 instead? Actually no. For a track rat, I'd rather skip a generation and head for an e46, specifically a 330i coupe with a sport package, but no sunroof.^{vi} I say this knowing that I may be totally screwing myself and giving the e46 market an artificial bump. But that's really not likely. First, there are a ton of them out there. Second, almost no one wants one with a stick, and third, no one listens to me anyway. The current buy-in is about the same as an e36, but there's more room, better seats, more tire and bigger brakes right out of the box. And the aftermarket is very supportive of the cars. Yeah, they're heavier, and the cooling system does exhibit some of that cheap plastic crap and cheap metal crap that piss me off, but most of the car is incredibly solid. Almost truck-like. With careful shopping, a little weight reduction, and some judicious and low-cost tweaking, the performance envelope is pretty much equal to an e36 M3.

Want the next e30? You know where my bet is being placed.

- i Literally.
- ii In this case China, Taiwan, Mexico and the U.S.
- iii And really, just how many pictures of a roundel on someone's hood do we really need to see?
- iv There are those who claim that the door panels of the e36 actually were made of pocket lint given their longevity, but even I have to admit that supports the "older is better" concept of the column
- v Both of the guys she passed.
- vi And I'm skipping the ZHP, but only because it's the easy call.

Calling All Chapter Members

In the past, we have published guidelines for contributing to the Whispering Bomb. (See Summer 2015 Issue page 3). From that we had several new chapter members write articles for this issue. I would like to encourage more of you to contribute to the next issue. Basic rules are that you should be kind, not use foul language, and not speak unkindly of anyone. If you have a picture that relates to your article great! We just need it in 300 dpi or better. If you don't have a photo, no worries. Write something amusing, informative, or show your love for your BMW. We look forward to hearing from more of you.

M2 Driving Impressions

by Greg Uhler

So what's it like to drive the new M2? And how does it compare to previous BMWs I've owned and loved, including the E36 M3, E46 M3, E90 M3 and 135is? Our six country, 3,000 mile journey through Alpine switchbacks, cobblestone roads, unlimited autobahns and track days at the Nürburgring, Zandvoort, and Spa provided a unique perspective to taste what the M2 has to offer. And let me tell you, the taste is GOOD!

HANDLING: With all of the nannies turned off, the first thing that struck me about the M2 was how balanced and neutral the handling was. In that sense, it felt like my very first BMW, the E36 M3, but with a LOT more grip. The M2 just did what I told it to do. When I'd enter a corner too hot, instead of the car plowing to the outside, all 4 tires would just slide equally, scrub off some speed, and allow me to continue through the corner. No drama, just feedback telling me I'd exceeded the car's limits. Similarly, too much throttle too early in a corner resulted in mild oversteer, which was easily corrected by steering into it. The M2 inspired confidence. Confidence to push it to its limits—or at least mine!

POWER: There's no comparison between the torque of modern turbo BMWs and most of their naturally aspirated predecessors. My E90 M3 was a beast in the horsepower department, but lacked torque in most driving situations. The closest thing to the power of the M2 was my previous 135is with DINAN Stage 1 engine management. In the M2, an incredible amount of torque was available at almost any RPM and in any gear. No need for me to downshift two gears to pass a car on the road. I just had to put my foot down! On the track, I could forgo downshifting to 2nd, leave it in 3rd and avoid running out of revs before I exited a corner. Even at 140 mph on the autobahn, when I stepped on it, a wave of torque pushed me back into my seat. It's intoxicating!

RIDE: So much is made these days of adjustable suspensions, that if a car doesn't have one it is seen as lacking or inferior. But what if a car is tuned perfectly to balance the needs of the road and the track for most drivers? That's what I feel BMW achieved with the M2. Despite driving 3,000 miles on a wide variety of surfaces, my wife never complained once about the ride. The M2 communicated the road back to me, but without the harshness of my E46 M3. I think most drivers will be thrilled with the ride, whether they are commuting to work, carving canyons, or besting their time at the track.

SOUND: Leading up to the launch of the M2, much was speculated about the sound of the car. Would it sound like a naturally aspirated car, or be muffled by the turbocharger? My favorite sounding car was my 135is with BMW's Performance Exhaust. But now I have a new favorite. In Comfort mode, the M2's exhaust was noticeable but relatively quiet. Changing the car's mode to Sport or Sport Plus, the M2 emitted a deeper, louder exhaust note with more burble than the 135is. The sound of the car turned pedestrians' heads as I approached them. In Switzerland's numerous tunnels, 2nd gear acceleration followed by throttle lift was manna from heaven!



Greg Uhler driving the Nurburgring with your WB Editor along for the (VERY FUN) ride.

LOOK & FEEL: While not a performance metric, the look and feel of the M2 contributed to its driving pleasure. The car has a presence that few other BMWs have. Heads were turning all over Europe. People took long looks as we drove by, their eyes moving from the aggressive front of the car, along the muscular fender flares, to the baby-got-back rear. Traveling with 10 other M2s, I never tired of seeing their artistic shapes in front of me or (preferably) in my rear-view mirrors. I think the M2's visual design will stand the test of time.

I know that right now M2s are in high demand and short supply. I really hope this changes in the coming months. Why? Because the more people who have an M2, the more praise it will get from its owners. And that will only increase the likelihood that BMW will keep making special models for us enthusiasts, like they have with the mighty M2. ■

A Conundrum

The proud owner of a magnificent 1956 Chevrolet convertible wrote to say he had restored the car to perfection over the last few years. On a very warm summer afternoon he decided to take his car to town. It needed gas, as the gauge was practically on empty, but he wanted ice cream, so he headed first to his favorite ice cream shop. He had trouble finding a parking space and had to park the car down a side street. He noticed a group of young guys standing around smoking cigarettes and eyeing his car rather covetously. He was a bit uneasy leaving it there, but people often take interest in such an old and well-preserved car, so he went off to enjoy his ice cream. The line at the ice cream shop was long and it took him quite a while to return to his car. When he did, his worst fears were realized... his car was gone. He called the police and reported the theft, then went back and bought a quart of pistachio ice cream. About ten minutes later the police called him to say they had found the car abandoned near a gas station a few miles out of town. It was unharmed and he was relieved. It seems just before he called, the police had received a call from a young woman who was an employee at a self-service gas station. She told them that three young men had driven in with this beautiful old convertible. One of them came to the window and prepaid for \$20 worth of gas. Then all three of them walked around the car. Then they all got in the car and drove off, without filling the tank. The question is, why would anybody steal a car, pay for gas that they never pumped, then abandon the car later and walk away?

See page 20 for the answer...

SoCal Vintage

Article and Photos by Fred Larimer

Editor's Note: As we head into Fall, we thought you would like to look back to last Fall and the SoCal Vintage, held on October 31, 2015.

Fall in the greater Los Angeles area, while not really resembling Fall in other parts of this great country, usually means there are but a couple of car-geek events remaining on the local calendar; the Los Angeles Auto Show in November and the SoCal Vintage event in October.

Scheduling being what it is, 2015's SoCal Vintage fell on the last Saturday of October. Yep, Halloween. And the day before we endured Daylight Savings time change.

While enthusiasts in other areas of the country were ducking raindrops or snow flurries, here on the "left coast" we were enduring sunshine and warm temperatures, perfect for a drive and spending a day hanging out with other BMW enthusiasts at Woodley Park in Van Nuys.

2015's year's gathering was the eighth that SoCal Vintage Co-Founders John Barlow and Jeff d'Avanzo had organized. To gain a better understanding of the event and some of the planning that goes into it, I caught up with John and Jeff and asked them some questions.

Q: I see from the webpage this is Year 8 and via MotorsportsReg something like 350+ participants registered. Year 8 - hard to imagine eh? Eight years ago were you thinking this gathering would become an annual event?

A: It was always intended to be an annual event, and we were hoping that it would go as well as it has. We're very grateful to the vintage BMW community for helping us grow to this point. By year ten, we are hoping to have more outreach, more tools for the community to join in. It is a gradual growth process for us.

Q: Compared to prior year's events - has it become easier or more challenging to put together?

A: We would say a bit of both actually. The logistics of the show are a moving target, but we have become better with the practice. This year, we have a number of new sponsors that have asked to join us. With the growth, we need to rethink how to lay the show out, so that the growth continues to make sense, as well as still feels like an intimate gathering of BMW enthusiasts. We try hard to make 300 vintage BMWs accessible to as many people as possible. That, and the physical condition of Woodley Park can be challenging, which is why the layout changes significantly some years.

Q: How does this year's event differ from the first year? The 5th year?

A: The trend in which cars choose to be involved seems to greatly change from year to year. Some years are heavy with 2002's, others heavy E21's. Overall we have had a good amount of growth each year. Last year was the first year for E31s to participate and they came in like gangbusters, the SoCal 8's group is

(Continued on page 12)



A spectacularly restored R51/3 with sidecar and Ron Perry's 3.0CSL Batmobile. Two of the many fine examples of BMW's history on hand at SoCal Vintage.



Although critics panned the E31 back in the day these coupes are like fine wine – they have gotten better with age. Their graceful lines still look great.



A couple of the E9's all lined up and showing off for event attendees.



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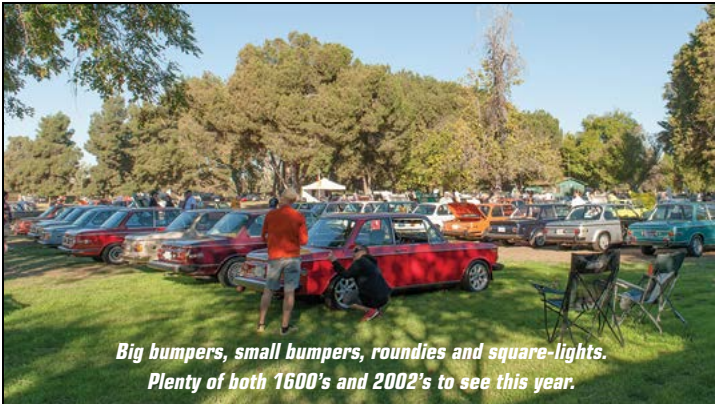
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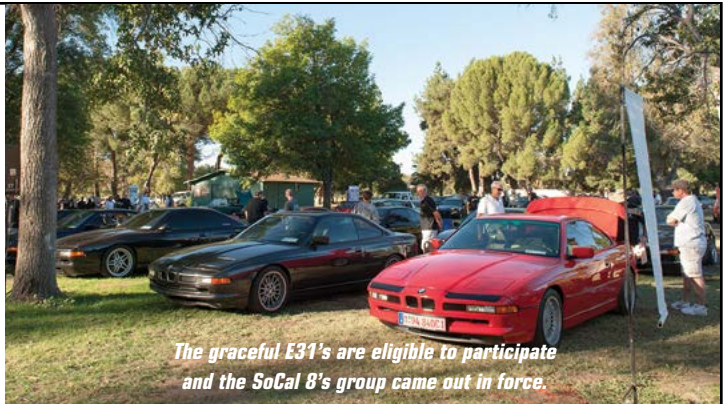




Photos by Kurt Helm



*Big bumpers, small bumpers, roundies and square-lights.
Plenty of both 1600's and 2002's to see this year.*



*The graceful E31's are eligible to participate
and the SoCal 8's group came out in force.*

very organized and they added greatly to the Meet. It is fun to watch and be a part of. We have tried to keep the energy of the show consistent through the years, while still growing, and trying to offer a better quality experience each year.

- Q:** Having attended a couple of these, something I've observed is the quality and level of preparedness of the cars has really risen. Is this a surprise to either of you?
- A:** We don't really see it as a surprise, in that the value of vintage/classic BMWs is rising so much. The days of 15+ 2002's for sale on the local craigslist are gone, making us think that these cars are starting to be squirreled away, or restored more regularly. We try to encourage ALL cars to be involved, and not promote the event as a show, but rather a gathering. Nothing makes us happier than seeing the diversity of cars and their owners all together for the day. We really strive to treat the concours and the daily driver owners equally.
- Q:** Of those attending, any feel for who may have travelled the furthest to attend SoCal Vintage?
- A:** Don Karstens used to get in his E21 and make the 3-day drive from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida to be at our Meet in Los Angeles. We haven't seen him in a couple of years so we hope he's ok. There's a fellow named Markus Vogel who has said he's driving up from Guatemala for the Meet, so we'll see if he makes it. Andrew Wilson, one of the long-term CCA and Nor'East 02 guys will be flying in from Maine, so we're looking forward to seeing him.
- Q:** With 2016 being BMW's Centennial, will there be any special activities planned for year 9?
- A:** Year 9 is going to take a fair amount more planning than previous years. We want to showcase something that really shows off BMW's history, reach out and get more participation from the earlier - pre 1965 and pre-war - owners. We're also going to push more motorcycles to attend. Each of those categories has always been of interest to us, and we have reached out to them, though we have never really attracted the owners to the event to date. However, there is a 1954 R51/3 with a Steib sidecar that is supposed to be at this year's meet.
- Q:** How do you see the event evolving into the future?
- A:** We believe that the next two years will be pivotal for SoCal Vintage BMW, not only because of the BMW 100 year anniversary, and our own upcoming 10 year anniversary in 2017, but because the show continues to grow, and is now attracting national sponsors and national enthusiasts. It was always our goal to be a fun, non-competitive get together for all the vintage BMW owners in SoCal. We love the Driver's Choice Awards we present at the Meet because the

participants choose the winners, it's completely democratic. In order to keep the overall low-key and casual feel to the show, the meet's growth needs to be managed cautiously. While a large number of our long time participants are BMW CCA members and know the benefits of membership, we have a large number of younger owners who are new to Vintage BMW ownership who are not familiar with what the CCA offers. We'll look to work with the CCA to do some outreach to the younger owners. We also want to tighten up the local driving enthusiasts further, and deepen our relationships with the older and historic cars and their owners. Aside from Isettas, many of our participants have never seen a BMW from the 50's - or earlier - in person. That and more participation from the motorcycle guys. We're also planning to be more of a vital source for daily interaction in the community, and not just in driving season. This would be done through more and better planned supplemental events, as well as building a better and more interactive online presence.

Employing an interesting twist, rather than having a team of judges evaluate the cars as is done at many events, the attendees are given a ballot they fill out to indicate which cars in each category are their, the participants, choices to receive awards. After counting up the ballots, the following cars were nominated by event attendees.

- Best 02 - Robert Pacifici** - 1974 2002tii
- Best E3 - Mike Burger** - 1976 3.3 Li
- Best E9 - Kevin Kolozsvari** - 1972 3.0 CSI
- Best 3 Series - Eddy Funahashi** - 1988 E30 M3
- Best 5 Series - Vince Gormally** - 1985 M535i
- Best 6 Series - Henry Ciudad Real** - 1985 635CSI
- Best 8 Series - Jeremy Barbakow** - 1994 850 CSI
- Scariest Car (Halloween Special Award) - Dorian Hicklin** - 1971 2002
- Best Modified - Daniel Valencia** - 1985 325e
- Best Sponsor Car - Casto Motorsports** - 1972 Bavaria V-8 (owned by Josh Stern)
- Best Early Model - Robert Dietz** - 1962 700 Baur Convertible
- Bimmer Magazine's Choice Award - Darin Stephenson** - 1988 535is
- Best Original/Best Of Meet - Mike Malamut** - 1968 BMW/Glas 1600GT

While the 2015 and 2016 events are history, the 2017 SoCal Vintage marks their 10th Anniversary. Come join in the fun next year at Woodley Park in Van Nuys. More information can be found on their webpage: <http://www.socalvintagebmw.com/#/> ■

An Accidental Bimmerphile

by Mike Buhbe

"A guy hit your car," Marc intoned with a look of consternation as he delivered the message.

Those are the words we never want to hear. My car was parked on a side street in Belmont Shore, the trendy neighborhood of Long Beach. Not being a youthful hipster, why was I there? The only shoe repair shop in my part of the civilized world was repairing my hiking boots.

Marc and I walked back to my car. He assured me it wasn't bad, but he had gotten a neck-snapping jolt while sitting in my car waiting for me to get my boots. The driver applied the brakes too late during a parallel parking maneuver. Going forward, that is.

This car is my 1999 BMW M Coupe, the spawn of the Z3 roadster reborn as a hardtop coupe hatchback, and the first car I ever owned for pleasure. Some people have a mid-life crisis. Mine was delayed until old age. It is my baby, and I do talk to it daily, stroking it fondly even though I do not have a name for it. Perhaps not having a name leads me to deeper feelings for my little green car, as if it were some ethereal lover wandering the mists of time emerging opaquely into my consciousness as my soul mate. Yes, I know it is an industrial object, but I am proof that a grown man can love a car.

From twenty feet away I could see nothing on the rear bumper, so I knew the hit wasn't catastrophic. Marc pointed out the driver and said, "That's the guy who hit your car." I was looking at an OK guy in his twenties standing nearby. The young guy immediately admitted he had hit my car but didn't think any damage had been done.

"I'll be the judge of that!" I said with authority, extending to my full height, cocking my head like a confident James Bond. Taking charge of the situation is a basic.

Bending down I could see marks where his license plate frame had punched my plastic bumper paint. The green surface bore the hexagonal outlines of the screws holding the bracket and plate to his front bumper.

"There is damage here, and it wasn't here before. You did this when you hit my car," I said pointedly.

This is where things started to unravel. Robbie insisted that he would pay a hundred dollars more than the cost of the repairs for my inconvenience. No, wait! Make that two hundred(!) dollars since he had created this situation. I was planning on getting my mobile dent guy to fix this for \$200 to \$300, and I said "No, Robbie, you don't have to pay me any extra. Just pay me the cost." He reluctantly agreed with an aw-shucks shuffle.

I asked if he had a driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance. Oh sure, he said. Out came his wallet and there was a California driver's license with the name and address he had recited to me moments before. This seemed genuine. I had my pencil and paper ready to write.

"No," said Robbie, "We're gonna do it this way." He took a photo of his license and emailed it to me. Getting anything other than a call on my phone is a big deal for me. I wasn't sure if this would work. Robbie assured me it would. My phone pinged and right in front of my eyes was a decent photo of his driver's license, like magic. I fumbled my phone, almost dropping it, exclaiming as if

the Wizard of Oz had just popped out of the screen and was standing on the sidewalk. Gosh! Aren't these things amazing!

I repeated that we didn't have to go through insurance if he wanted to pay me directly. "Yes," he said, "I want to by-pass the insurance." Good with me too.

He said everything would be all right. That he was a standup guy. That his job with Sony paid him well and his check was coming this week. Then Robbie hugged me.

I do hug my friends, but I have never hugged someone I just met, or someone who hit my car. Being the polite sort, and not wanting to be a buzz kill, I hugged him back. Not too much. A quick tentative hug, the way women do when their hairdo has to be protected. Don't want to encourage more hugging or appear like a mark.

Robbie began talking like an innocent from the country lost in the city. I actually felt a little sorry for him. After all, he owed me a few hundred dollars. He hugged me again and repeated his reassurances. I felt so certain that Robbie would treat me right that I didn't even demand proof of insurance or registration. Robbie finally offered an enticing olive branch.

"C'mon! I'll buy you guys shots at Legends!" Looking back I think I should have taken him up on the offer, but it was three o'clock in the afternoon, a little early for drinking with strangers. Then much later I realized he probably would have stuck me with the bill anyway.

When I contacted my insurance company, the photo of Robbie's license was no longer on my phone. I searched for it. Several friends with excellent tech knowledge searched for it. Everyone said it should still be on the phone and that seemed completely reasonable. Except it wasn't there.

Fortunately, I had taken a cellphone photo of Robbie's car with the license plate and Robbie standing in front of the car. My insurance company offered to repaint the bumper under my policy at no cost to me.

I texted Robbie shortly and all I got were texts that first delayed the money and then denied that he had any money because he was sleeping on friend's couches while unemployed. He did offer to trade me a skateboard – a longboard! – for part of the money.

No one wants to admit to being a sucker. But that is the truth of this episode. I was played because I am the trusting sort, and Robbie read me like a book, like a first grade edition. While most of us will admit responsibility for wrong-doing and accept the consequences of carelessness, there are others who will not.

I started my game strong, but let it get away from me. Next time I do it my way and write down the legal information with pencil and paper. After all, I'm a word guy and I should use my strong suit - not beat a retreat to where other people want to engage. Even if they hug me and offer shots. ■

Please... Please... Please

Remember that it is very important to keep your membership information up-to-date. We want to make sure that you are in the loop for any announcements from either us at the Chapter level or the National CCA. It's easier to delete an email than it is to live with the knowledge that you may miss out on something you really wanted to do, know, or have.

Six Months Of Tesla Ownership

by Bill Blowers

The Tesla Model S90D (90 kilowatt, dual motor) is an amazing automobile, the embodiment of an all-electric car done the right way. Elon Musk and his designers had a big advantage. There was no ingrained gasoline powered technology to hamper their creativity. Starting from scratch they built an electric car and optimized everything to support the concept. The result is spectacular. Note that I didn't say perfect. The Tesla has problems, and I'll get into them. But as an overall concept, it is hugely successful.

My number one consideration in choosing the Model S90D was driving range, 290 miles—truly a feat of good engineering. The balance of its capabilities and features; unbelievable torque and acceleration, nimble handling, beautiful esthetics, nice appointments, ride comfort, free rapid charging—those were icing on the cake.

Other all-electric cars pale in comparison because of one glaring deficiency—driving range. I cannot conceive of a reason why anyone would purchase an expensive car that travels less than 100 miles on a charge and then takes 8-10 hours to recharge.

The S90D is powered by two variable frequencies, 320-volt AC induction motors: rear motor - 285KW (382 HP); front motor - 145KW (194 HP). Total power - 430KW (576 HP). Motor speed is continuous from zero to 16,000 RPM, no shifting gears, no clutch, no transmission. A single 9.73:1 reduction gear transfers power from motors to axles. For reverse, the motors rotate in the opposite direction.

The real story of Tesla's performance is the torque of the electric motors, 690 Nm (508 ft. lbs.). There is no lag, no waiting to reach the 'torque range' of the engine, no waiting for a turbo to speed up, and no revving the motor before moving. Right off the line, instantaneous acceleration from a dead stop. That acceleration is there regardless of speed. If I have to make a sudden lane change to take advantage of a traffic opening at freeway speeds, the car handles like my Z4, only faster. I'm not a speedster, nor will I deliberately challenge anyone to a race. But trust me, this car will beat anything on the street. I warn people before I demonstrate its acceleration from a dead stop. I fear I might injure their neck otherwise. The acceleration is achieved with a curb weight of 4,848 lbs.

And herein lies the genius of the Tesla design. The torque of the motors is not attributable to some magic that Musk and his engineers dreamed up. It is inherent in AC induction motor technology. The liquid cooled 90 KW Lithium-Ion battery, occupying the entire undercarriage of the car, is designed to deliver massive current on demand. It is this combination of motor and battery, uncompromised by other concerns, which account for the Tesla's performance and range.

Prior to the S90D I could be found driving my BMW Z4 or my wife's E350 Mercedes Benz, both terrific automobiles. The E350 has taken us many miles in comfort and efficiency. The Z4 was mostly a fun car, great on the local canyon roads. The S90D is as nimble as the Z4, has better acceleration and steering than either car, is as comfortable and roomy as the E350, and its safety features outshine both cars.

The car is charged overnight in my garage from a 240 Volt, 50 Amp circuit. The start time (10 PM) is programmed with the car's touch screen. I have arranged for Time Of Use electrical rates (10 PM to 8AM) with my utility. The rates drop dramatically from normal daytime rates. My average monthly gasoline cost for the 12 months prior to the Tesla was \$180. We use the Tesla almost exclusively now. The monthly cost for gasoline has dropped to about \$55, our electric bill has increased on average, \$45 per month.

Maintenance is minimal. There is no oil to change, no engine coolant and no transmission to service. There is a liquid cooling system for the battery (Tesla service only). Because of regenerative electrical braking the mechanical brakes get minimal usage. With a little thinking ahead, I find that the car can be brought nearly to a complete stop before the brakes are needed. The car is very heavy, 4,848 lbs., which increases wear on the tires. The one big maintenance expense is battery replacement. Life is about ten years, depending on usage. The replacement cost is about \$7000.

Under all driving conditions, the car provides a visual display of my immediate surroundings, identifying all vehicles on either side as well as in front of me. If I rapidly approach an impending collision, the dashboard flashes red and I get a very loud warning blast. If I have chosen to engage the automatic collision avoidance (a driver choice made through the touch screen), the car's brakes will be engaged.

The Tesla drives itself. This does not mean that I can enable Autopilot®, take a nap, or catch up on homework as the car navigates through traffic. Tesla makes a very clear and emphatic statement that it is for driver assist, not driver replacement. Once engaged, Autopilot® maintains speed at five miles maximum over the speed limit and keeps the car in lane as it follows the curvature of the road. If a slower car is ahead, the Tesla will slow down and maintain a safe following distance. If the driver wishes to change lanes, he/she engages the turn signal, and as soon as there is a safe opening, the car accelerates, changes lanes and maintains speed in the new lane.

The driver must keep his/her hands on the steering wheel at all times. If I remove my hands I get a warning message. If the warning isn't heeded, the car begins to slow down and will ultimately pull to the far right of the road and stop.

I have used Autopilot® extensively. At first I was very nervous, especially the first time the car approached a rather sharp right turn with heavy opposing traffic in the lane to my left. Since I'm obviously sitting here writing this, I can say that the car did its job faithfully, navigating that curve and many others since. However, it did scare the bejesus out of me one Sunday afternoon. Traveling north on the 710 Freeway out of Long Beach there is a rising curve that prevented the car's TV camera from momentarily "seeing" the road ahead. Unaware that following the rapid rise there was a quick jog to the right, the car continued straight for 40-50 feet before suddenly correcting back to the lane. There was a very large semi-tractor trailer in the lane next to me and I came within inches of hitting it.

The headlights auto-dim when an approaching car is sensed or when following another car. I remember this feature on a Packard from back in the day. Why did it go out of use?

Autopilot® is in a beta release at this time. Tesla is very clear about its use. It isn't perfect. The big question of course is, can

any auto-driving system replace the eyes and brain of a human being? The public highway is filled with unknowns, i.e. idiots. Completely unpredictable conditions can occur at any time, as can be attested by the unfortunate death of Joshua Brown when his Tesla failed to stop when a truck pulled in front of him. He was known for taking chances with his car. Will we ever know the exact conditions that led to the accident?

What about Tesla's problems? As far as handling, drivability, and features there aren't too many things I can pick on. I wonder though what I will do when the retracting door handles fail to extend.

My wife describes the car as an iPad® on wheels. The console is dominated by a huge LCD touch screen through which all features of the car are selected and controlled. As a touch screen, there is no tactical sense. It is necessary to look at the screen to do things like change the temperature, adjust fan speed, select a channel on the radio, etc. I don't like taking my eyes off the road, even for a few seconds.

The engineers who designed the software have corrective work to do. The touch screen has constant failures. In the five months I've owned the car, there've been six failure messages that required that I reset the car's computer. Resetting is not difficult, but it shouldn't be necessary.

Another software glitch involves the radio. Like everything else in the car, it's controlled via the touch screen. I listen to satellite radio. I purchased the premium sound system, which in itself is akin to a concert hall, excellent quality. I wish I could say the same about its touch screen control. There seems to be little

coordination between the controls and the actual operation of the radio. AM performance sucks. Stations come in weak and the motor control electronics of the car interfere, causing hash noise, various buzzing sounds, etc.

If it were a Windows PC, I would expect regular failures. But it is not. It is an imbedded controller. Such uses are everywhere around us. Properly designed, they do not fail except under extreme situations. In communication with Tesla's tech help, they use the excuse, "It's a computer and computers have glitches." My response is, "It's not a computer, it's a car and it shouldn't fail every three or four weeks."

The quality of the software falls well below the mechanical excellence of the car. It is a constant and recurring disappointment. My message to Tesla –You've built an incredible automobile, now write software worthy of the name **Tesla**. One way to fix the problem; direct all service calls, regardless of time of day, to the head of the software division—it'd be fixed overnight. Fix your *#&\$%^ problem and stop making excuses.

On the positive side, Tesla tech people are in the United States, speak excellent English, answer the phone right away, they are knowledgeable and very helpful. Maybe they should write the software.

We're going to take our first long distance drive in a few weeks. Next time, I'll let you know what its like to stop for 45-minute recharges every 250 miles.

That's it for now, hope you all had fun at O'Fest. I was in Maui. ■

Diva's World Monterey Musings...

by Diva Moose

Another glorious 11 days in Monterey have come to an end. From the perspective of a social moose such as myself, it's hard to beat the great combination of Legends of the Autobahn, Festorics Races at Laguna Seca, and BMW CCA's Oktoberfest. Great people and great cars are a winning combination.

Legends of the Autobahn had a great collection of vintage and modern Mercedes, Audis, and, of course, BMW's, all displayed on the Nicklaus Club Monterey golf course. [Editor's Note: In honor of their 100th anniversary, BMW was the featured Legends marque] In addition, there were numerous automotive-related suppliers showing their latest offerings. After the awards were given, the Kickoff dinner for Festorics was held at the Club where we had great food (albeit, no Moose Munch) and heard great stories from our guest speakers.

Festorics jumped into full swing on Saturday and Sunday at Laguna Seca. BMW set up a special display area showing many of the completion cars that have been fielded over the years as well as classic cars and vintage BMW motorcycles. Many of these cars were flown over from Germany especially to celebrate their 100th anniversary. In addition, there was a lot of racing going on both days as well as lots of opportunity to see the cars up close in the paddock area.

Oktoberfest returned to Monterey again this year. Our O'Fests are a great mix of High Performance Driving Events, Club Racing,

Autocross, Car Control Clinics, Fun Rally's and Time-Speed-Distance Rally's as well as lots of fun social activities such as Gymkhana, Beach Party, Wine Tastings, Local Tours, and Sponsor Events.

Take the O'Fest events and add a great assortment of raffle prizes, and you will generally have a happy group of BMW fanatics. And this brings me to the point of this column. I've been attending BMW events with Kurt for a number of years (my specialty is navigation; I'm always telling him where to go, not that he actually listens to me) and by now, you would think I would have won a

prize. But nooooooo. Last Saturday at the Grand Finale Banquet, Mike Renner, who heads up the BMW Performance Driving School, was there to draw the winner for the 2-Day M School Certificate. You can imagine my surprise when I found out that Kurt had never actually registered me as an attendee, so I had no entry number for the drawing. You can really imagine my surprise when Kurt's number was drawn and he ran up to the stage to get his prize. I glared at him when he returned to the table and told him that I expect two entries in next year's O'Fest

drawing. In fact, I suggest that you start planning your trip now to attend the event in New Orleans; July 11-15 2017. I want everyone to see me finally win a prize. And, if it's not me, let's hope that it's you!

Best, Diva

Editor's Note: I think this is the first time I have not had to edit out the bad and very bad words from this regular feature column. Diva must have mellowed from her time at the spa while we attended the events in Monterey. What? Diva says that Kurt didn't know about the spa and the bills that were to come from her pampering? Well the cat's – uh, moose – is out of the bag now!



The Incredible Hulk

by James Chew

The BMW X5 xDrive40e

After over a decade of BMW SAV ownership, I finally realized the paradox of American SUV/SAV ownership. These types of vehicles, which are best suited for long distance hauling, are most often used as the "Suburban Shuttle". These vehicles dominate the school drop off lanes, athletic field parking lots, and warehouse store parking lots. Because these vehicles all tend to be well built and well maintained, a decades' worth of ownership is not uncommon. Also not uncommon is that these vehicles tend to be low mileage. Powered by V-6's, V-8s, and in-line sixes (in the case of BMWs) achieving an average fuel economy of over 15 miles per gallon is not common.

With their "delivery vehicle" like driving habits, one would think that diesel engine options would be quite popular. Ironically, it seems that BMW, Mercedes, Audi, and VW offer the diesel engine option and sales have been less than impressive. Hence, BMW decided to try a different direction with the new X5 xDrive40e.

The vehicle's complicated name clumsily describes this product. Yes, it's an SAV. Yes, it has the proven all-wheel drive system. Yes, it's a "mild hybrid" ("mybrid"?) as it combines an electric motor as well as a turbocharged 4 cylinder engine to produce a combined 309 horsepower. No, I can't explain the "40".

Visibly, the X5 xDrive40e looks the same as a conventional X5. One needs to look hard to notice the door for the electric charging, located on the front driver's side fender. And while the badging clearly states its name, I think most of us have become numb to BMW's ridiculously long product names to notice.

The interior differences are just as subtle. Only the driver will notice the gauge that shows the battery's state of charge, as well as the additional iDrive functions to select the desired "eDrive" mode.

Even the differences in driving dynamics are subtle. While the X5 is the "BMW of SUVs", it's still an SUV. With a curb weight of 5260 pounds (the X5 3.0 curb weight is 4790 pounds) we were surprised that we didn't noticed the increased weight during the typical suburban driving duties. With the



eDrive and turbocharged four cylinder gasoline engine working together, we found that the X5 xDrive40e had great acceleration for entering the freeway as well as for passing. Even with the increased weight, we didn't notice any difference in braking or handling.

What we did notice was the "eDrive" function. The purpose of this function was to allow the driver to achieve the most efficient use of the "mybrid" powertrain. The "Auto eDrive" setting allows the vehicle's computer to optimize the use of the "mybrid" powertrain for the driving condition. The Max eDrive setting is for "EV" only. The "Save Battery" setting maintains the highest level of battery charge, switching on the eDrive only for acceleration.

The "eDrive" function can be combined with the now-standard BMW chassis settings for a fully optimized operation. When "Eco Pro" is selected, the powertrain is decoupled from the driveline when the driver is not operating the accelerator.

This does sound quite complicated. As an engineer, I fully appreciate this wonderful engineering achievement. As a "car guy", I fully appreciate the seamless operation.

The key to realizing the fuel economy savings from any hybrid vehicle is to keep the battery pack fully charged. Because of the second law of thermodynamics, you can never fully recharge the battery solely from regenerative braking. As we've found from evaluating other HEVs and EVs, charging stations are not easy to find. There are web sites that identify the local charging stations. However, even with the new "fast charging" systems, it will take a few hours to fully recharge the relatively small battery in the X5 xDrive40e.

While it is relatively small, the X5 xDrive40e lithium-ion battery pack eliminates the rear under floor storage area. In



fact, we noticed that the rear storage floor is visibly higher in the X5 xDrive40e than in the conventional X5. However, the rear seats still fold, therefore the typical X5 family won't notice the decreased cargo space during the weekly big box warehouse trips.

After a weeklong evaluation, we found the X5 xDrive40e to be the ideal SAV for the BMW suburban family. The X5 provides the room, higher seating position, and cargo space desired by the American suburban family. With the proven xDrive system, you'll never have to worry if your vehicle can be driven in less than ideal (rain and snow) driving conditions (have you all noticed that Prius and EV drivers never drive in such conditions?). For typical suburban family duty, you'll find that you're always on batter power. But you do need to remember every opportunity to charge the battery. In fact, when we returned the vehicle, it took less than three gallons top off the tank! We were quite surprised that we achieved better than the EPA rated 56 miles per gallon.

While BMW has created the ideal "family sized mybrid" SAV, it remains to be seen how the market will react to this Incredible Hulk. Even with the significantly lowered price, the diesel powered X5 does not sell well in the US. And previous SUV "mybrids" – the previous generation GMC Yukon – created a very loyal owner base but did not sell well.

Noticing the lease specials for the X5 xDrive40e, I suspect that the \$5100 price difference, not including the charging station, is impeding sales. Keep in mind the X5d is only \$700 more than the X5 3.0, and sales are lagging. While the X5 xDrive40e is a wonderful SAV, it's clear that the American SAV buyer wants their gasoline engines. Because of the overly complicated Federal Government CAFE rules, BMW will most likely continue to offer the X5 xDrive40e. For that reason every BMW suburban family should consider this vehicle for a short term lease – you all may be surprised will how often you DON'T go to the gas station! ■

New Members

Atilla Acs	Andy Chan	Rob Frazier	Doug Kramer	Trevor Notch	Charles Spangler
Robert Adams	Kia Khuang Chan	Faustino Fredericks	James Krumwiede	Andre Obenaus	Michael Spencer
Venkata Addanki	Chris Chang	Raimund Freihube	Wei Kung	Kurt Oblinger	John Spenik
Enrique Aguilar	Martin Charles	Duane Freitas	Sam Lahham	Paul Ocalian	Joel Sprague
Alex Albrecht	Peter Chen	Clinton Fullen	Kevin Laney	Veronica Ochoa	Broch Stillel
Andres Alcaraz	Josephine Chen	Anthony Fung	David Lapsley	Ralph Ortiz	Michelle Strickland
Fabrizio Aldrette	Dennis Chew	Kevin George	Jose Laureano Ramos	Thomas Pafundi	Christopher Suchocki
Hamlet Aleksan	Rohan Chitrakar	Louis Germy	Gil Lebron	Peter Parry	Joshua Sult
Nick Alkadis	William Chiu	Philip Geyer	Lillian Lennox	Nick Patel	Garry Summers
Chris Alonge	Jason Chowrimootoo	John Glennon	Joseph Leung	Vasilios Pavlakis	Josh Sweeney
Arnold Alsua	Michael Clark	Jose Goizueta	Donald Lewis	Crawford Peitso	Ivan Tang
Nima Ardabili	Patrick Coakley	Mike Gonzales	Martin Lipp	John Perez	Frank Terence
Eli Arviv	Amit Cohen	Michael Goodman	Duane Livingston	Ricky Perez	Patrick Thy
Dennis Au	Tom Colitt	Stuart Grant	Anastasios Livogiannis	Avetis Petrosyan	Stefan Tomalik
Sarkis Aznavour	Manuel Contreras	Justin Gray	Sasha Lotfi	Daniel Pichovich	Sophie Tong-Try
Shant Baghdalian	William Crigger	Fulton Haight	Neda Lotfi	Mark Porter	Paul Tran
Dan Baldauf	Jeffrey Culligan	Yusuf Hamidi	Su Lian Lu	Steve Prothero	Vlcmark Trespeses
George Beavers	Edd Cunamay	Danielle Hammack	Stephanie Lyford	Raymond Quon	Avery Tucker
Mark Becker	Scott Dale	John Hammack	Mike MacDonald	Alon Redko	Ozgur Turkgenç
Chris Belanger	Noah Dalton-Schneider	Robert Hardin	Ross MacLachlan	Gary Reed	William Van
Justin Bergmann	Anthony Damiani	Theodore Harvey	Adam Magallanez	John Reeves	Jonathan Vega
Karlis Biksa	Bob Damico	Oscar Henriquez	Indrek Mandmets	Nick Reva	Travis Veon
Jonathan Bingham	Minh Dao	Luning Huang	Melainie Mansfield	Michael Reynolds	Miguel Verano
Richard Bishop	John Dargahi	James Hughes	Jeffrey Margolis	Michael Rigger	DeWitt Vercher
Hunter Black	Blaine Davis	Andrew Hwang	Sean Marquez	Richard Robinson	Ryan Vergara
Matthew Blackmer	Michael Davis	Randy Inglis	Jennifer Marshall	Orlando Rodriguez	Pieter Viljoen
Ernest Blackmore	Shay De Leon	Aleksandrs Jakovickis	Lucas Martinez	Wayne Rogers	Oscar Villalta
Kaliope Bockleman	Simone Deocares-Lengyel	Chris Jares	Thomas Mason	David Rosolek	Brian Villanueva
William Borst	Michael Dever	Brian Jensen	Michael Mastrocovo	David Safian	Marcus Vogliieder
Rob Brinkman	Bill Dilfer	Allen Johnson	Phil Maurer	Albert Saisho	Brayden Webster
Colton Broccoli	Andrew Dilfer	Li Ju	Taylor May	Theresa Samaniego	James Wei
Doug Brutsche	Scott Dinovitz	David Junco	Justin Meneses	Ron San Miguel	Jonathan Weiss
Tony Buckli	Dave Eck	Andrew Kahn	Seroj Meserkhani	Geoffrey Saville	Cathy Wessel
Jeff Bushton	Joel Eisenberg	David Karner	Daniel Miles	Sanjum Sethi	Jann Wimmer
Matthew Bushton	William Elder	Jeff Kearl	Butch Miller	Ehab Sheira	Jack Winn
George Cabrera	Guy Elhanani	David Kelley	Roxanne Miller	MingShiuan Shyu	Melissa Wu
Colin Camisasca	Tatiana Ellison	Gary Khon	Stefan Mincu	William Siddons	Adam Wucherpfennig
Curtis Carson	Joshua Emperado	Anthony Kimata	Gerald Minniti	Joseph Siraki	Ryan Yamada
Jonathan Carter	Daniel Escobar	Robert Kirby	Marc Moore	Katherine Siraki	Eugene Yee
Hilario Castellanos	Csaba Farago	Dennis Kirk	Aafreen Moses	Robert Sjoberg	Robert Yucas
Joshua Castillo	John Farnworth	Wilt Kishimoto	Ted Napolitano	Gregg Smith	Joseph Zambrano
Fernando Castro	Parker Feyen	Yesim Korkmaz	Eric Newton	Ken Smith	Phyllis Zambrano
Kevin Chai	Evan Fisher	Michael Kotzman	Brandon Ngo	Mike Snyder	William Zeitmann
	Erik Foster		Anthony Nobles	Sergio Solorzano	Francesco Zimone
	Ralph Fox		Ethan Nobles	David Song	Baron Zweber

Two More Boxes Checked Off the Bucket List

by Blaine McNutt

I thought my better half, Robyn, and I had done pretty well by driving a few of the great tracks in Europe on previous trips, including the Nürburgring Nordschleife and Grand Prix circuits, the Hockenheimring, the A1-Ring (now Red Bull Ring) and the smaller Salzburgring. While we had visited Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium a couple of times purely as a spectator, I had only dreamed that I might one day have the chance to drive on it. So when I heard that the Centennial MTour would not only be driving the Nürburgring Nordschleife, but also both Spa and the seaside Circuit Park Zandvoort in the Netherlands, I knew we were in for something special.

Zandvoort was alive and well on the F1 calendar, hosting the Dutch Grand Prix into the mid-eighties, although in a slightly different configuration. You can tell that the track isn't up to modern day F1 standards as it's fairly narrow with lots of tight turns... perfect for a car like the M2. It has more elevation change than a simulation game like iRacing would ever indicate, making for some exciting laps. It's a very fun track that's particularly brutal to the left-front tire and moderately hard on brake pads.

Speaking of brake pads, I arranged a group buy of Pagid racing pads, anticipating that our more aggressively driven M cars would need them to get through three long track days. It turned out to be a great call, as a more advanced driver among us, who didn't put them on his M2, was down to the metal on his stock pads by the end of our track fun. Doug at Turner Motorsports really jumped through some hoops to pull off the

group buy for us... the pads were in short supply in the US and he worked directly with Pagid in Germany to ensure that they were shipped directly to us in Munich prior to our amazing delivery experience at the BMW Welt.

Spa... what can I say? While modern F1 tracks can be somewhat boring for a production street car, Spa has retained most of the really cool traits from the old track throughout its modifications to support current day F1, including an overall elevation change of over 318 feet. Much like the Nordschleife, it's a track that truly feels like you're driving somewhere via mountain roads vs. continually going around the same old lap. The most notable, and certainly the most challenging, turn on the track is the legendary Eau Rouge. While F1 cars can take it flat out from the previous turn (La Source hairpin), I'm going to go out on a limb and say that it's impossible to do so without some very serious aerodynamic down forces at play. Once you figure out where the initial turn in occurs as you drop into the compression of Eau Rouge, it's incredibly exciting to mash the throttle to the floor as you launch steeply upward toward the invisible apex beyond the blind crest left hand bend. And all of that throttle mashing throughout this 4.4-mile long track resulted in literally burning a whole M2 tank's worth of gas in a 45-minute session! It was worth every Euro spent on fill-ups... multiple times. I will jump at another opportunity to drive this incredible track again, hopefully in a car as good as the M2.

At each of the three tracks we drove, the M2 (in completely stock form) stood up very favorably to some serious cars, many of which have a brand name starting with 'P'. I am unbelievably impressed with the M2 and we are anxiously awaiting the arrival of our car to the US.

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Please see your local BMW Motorcycle Dealer for details.



First Timers

by Jim and Connie Patterson

When we heard that Dan Tackett was planning a trip to Europe (what eventually became the Centennial MTour), we were excited to be invited to join the group. As novice travelers, we were happy to take advantage of the knowledge of the veteran travelers and follow the group in their adventures (Thanks to Dan, Anne, George and Ken for all their help). Here are the tips and tricks that we learned before and during the Tour.

If you are planning a trip, getting a current passport is your first task. The documentation requirements are very specific and you might find out, as we did, that the document you had been using as a birth certificate is not actually the official version. Getting the correct document can take days to weeks depending on where you need to go to get it. Once you submit your passport request it takes a minimum of 6 weeks for the passport to arrive, unless you are willing to pay extra. The other document you need is an International Driving Permit, which is required in many European countries including Germany. You can get the IDP at your local AAA office for \$15 - you don't have to be a member.

As monolingual Americans, we were concerned about communication while in Europe. In all the places we traveled we were able to find someone who spoke enough English for us to get what we needed. The biggest issue was road signs and other printed material such as menus. A little creative guesswork and international signage got us through without much trouble. You definitely want to spend some time studying the traffic signs, some of them aren't entirely obvious, and it helps keep you out of trouble if you know what the one-way street arrows look like (*Editor's Note – they are not as intuitive as you may think*).

You will need to purchase adaptors to power your devices. Most power supplies will accept 120-240 volt input so with an adaptor plug everything will work. We found a 4-port USB charger with a European Type C plug that satisfied most of our power needs. We added a few extra Type C adaptors for non-USB devices and we were good for all the countries to which we traveled. While most hotels usually have hair dryers, if you decide to bring your own make sure that it is dual voltage or bring a power converter.

We have become completely dependent on the Internet for everything so being able to use our mobile devices was a high priority. Before leaving the US, you need to make arrangements for international voice, text and data. You can either set up data roaming with your current carrier or you can get a SIM for a European mobile carrier for your unlocked phone. We set up our T-Mobile account for international roaming with data priced the same rate as our domestic plan. Each hotel that we stayed at had Wi-Fi, but the quality was variable and we ended up mostly using phone data.

Before you leave you will want to get a credit card that doesn't charge foreign transaction fees. There are a wide

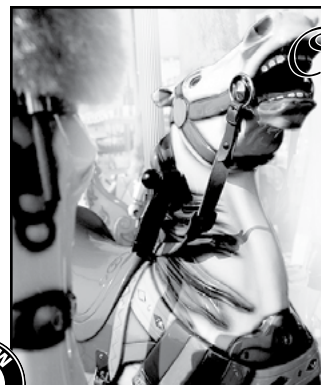
variety of cards available, either offering airline miles or rebates with annual fees from 0 to way too much. The US standard is chip and signature, which worked everywhere except unattended businesses like gas stations or parking kiosks. Having some extra Euros to feed the unattended stations will usually work. We obtained some Euros from our credit union before we left the US so that we had some money in case there were issues with our ATM. You will want to provide your credit card companies with travel plans to keep the foreign transactions from triggering their fraud detection software. We used Visa and MasterCard exclusively; other cards are not as widely accepted.

We were going to be traveling for more than two weeks so laundry would be an issue. It is possible to have clothes cleaned, but it is very expensive. Since this was a casual trip, we were able to get by with a few sets of pants and shirts. Select clothes that don't wrinkle, and that can be washed in the sink. Camping supply stores are valuable sources for clothing and cleaning supplies. We found camping soap sheets that worked great for washing in the sink. In addition to soap, you need a clothesline that can be hung in the bathroom by suction cups or clips. We never found socks that were quick dry, so we brought extra pairs so that we didn't have to wash them as often. You definitely want comfortable shoes; we did a lot of walking around even though we were on a driving trip.

If you get a rental car, you should pick the smallest car that fits the number of passengers and luggage that you need to carry. Fuel is expensive, the city roads are exceedingly narrow, and parking spots are small – you don't want to try out a 7 Series as your rental car! We found our rental car navigation system be extremely helpful, definitely worth any additional cost. You can also use the Waze application to warn about speed cameras.

We hope these tips have helped you prepare for your first European trip. Because we were prepared, we were able to relax and enjoy the trip without any unpleasant surprises along the way.

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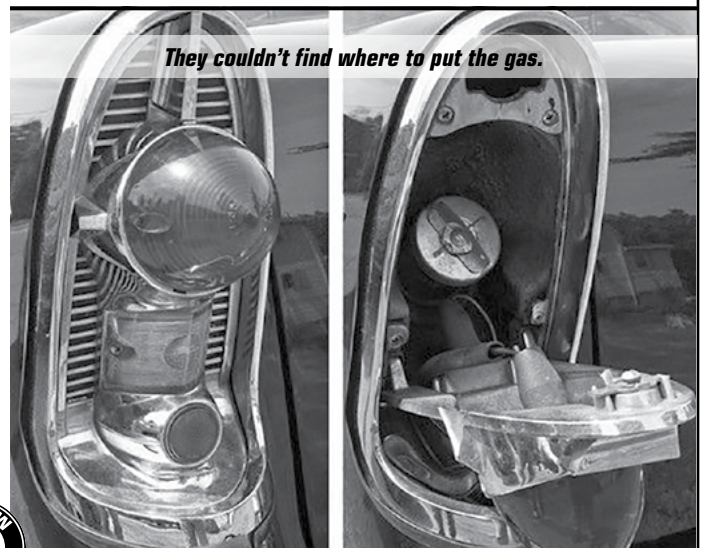
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THE NEXT
100 YEARS



In the Summer issue, we presented a photo of the Jeff Koons art car as it was displayed at the BMW Museum in Munich. Here's another view (one you couldn't get in the museum) from the BMW Classics tent at Festorics at Laguna Seca Raceway in August. -Photo by Kurt Helm

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