

Whispering Bomb

FALL 2017

BMW Car Club
of America
Los Angeles Chapter



DATED MATERIAL

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OF THE BMW CAR CLUB OF AMERICA
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THE DUMBING DOWN OF THE AMERICAN DRIVER

by Bill Blowers

What has happened to the intelligent driver? Is the species becoming extinct? Is it just my critical nature, or are today's drivers totally oblivious to road and traffic conditions? It seems that the presence of other cars, the weather, time of day or night, or the presence of emergency vehicles, have zero impact on how most drive.

Ethnic, age, gender or hair color humor aside, poor driving habits seem to have become the norm for everyone. It's an equal opportunity malady.

I commonly see one or more drivers at a red light come to a stop several car lengths back from the car in front of them. What is the thought process here? Is there any thinking at all? A short safe distance make's sense—but 60 feet?

Did I miss an important announcement? Has the California DMV been passing out stupid pills? Does modern driving school limit its course topics to:

1. How to turn the big round thing.
2. To go faster, press the one on the right (Use your foot).
3. To go slower, press the one on the left (Yes, you must use your foot again).
4. How to use the mirror to fix hair, shave, apply lipstick, etc. while driving.

The forgotten rule is: Right turn on red after a complete stop. I say forgotten, because other than the occasional stray, no one bothers to stop and many don't even slow down. I've observed many a near miss, and one nasty accident, as some unsuspecting driver going with the light is practically t-boned/side swiped by the idiot that didn't even look before turning right.

I suppose one should admire the driving skill of a young parent who can back a huge SUV the size of an Abrams Battle Tank full of squirming kids out of a narrow parking space in a busy parking lot while carrying on an uninterrupted conversation on the cell phone cradled between his/her cheek and shoulder. But what about paying attention to where that behemoth is going? Do safety and visibility no longer apply?

And on the subject of parking lot driving, is there a new rule that says a driver can leave all common sense behind? I have often made an emergency stop while trying to back out of a blind parking space to avoid a nasty collision from a car speeding through the lot. Can't the driver see me? Or does he/she think, "Well, he should see me and stop." Ever hear of caution? I propose a warning sign be posted over the entrance to all parking lots and structures, "Abandon all hope ye who enter here", especially for those of us who want to escape with an undented, unscratched vehicle.

But my favorite parking lot moronic behavior, the one that begs for special punishment, goes like this: You are trying to

find a parking spot in a nearly full lot. You see a person carrying packages heading for his/her car. You follow them. You stop as they put away their packages, get into their car, and start the engine. When the back-up lights come on, you feel a wave of relief. However, your contentment is short lived because for the next 10 minutes Mr. or Ms. Driver sits there, with foot on the brake, engine running, texting Grandma, their spouse, checking the latest weather report, and if they're really good, making a couple of long distance phone calls. The pièce de résistance of this all-too-common scenario occurs only after you finally give up in disgust, drive on just in time to watch Mr. or Ms. Oblivious back out and the lucky s.o.b. waiting behind you gets your parking spot.

The designers of our local highways build in numerous locations where a three-lane road becomes a two-lane road. The lanes are diligently and accurately marked with arrows and accompanying signs indicating a need to merge over, usually at least a half-mile prior to the lane's end. I have become an observer of driver's habits in these scenarios. I would venture that 80% of drivers do not merge until the lane actually comes to a complete end. They follow the curve of the lane and pass into the next, rarely looking to see who might be driving there. Of course, we must all cooperate when the road conditions require merging from lane to lane. But don't drivers know, aren't they aware that they are given ample time and room to safely merge long before the lane ends? Doesn't common sense come into play at all here?

Is the concept of situational awareness dead?

Have speed limits become mere suggestions? I don't have a problem with drivers, like myself, who routinely tool along 10-15 miles over the posted speed limit. On a clear day, on a good road with excellent visibility, in a well-maintained car, that's no crime, nor is it dangerous. But those dreamers limping along at eight miles per under the speed limit, usually in the fast lane—those are the ones that rattle my chain. They are most likely related to, or are the same moron who, while driving under the speed limit in the passing lane, synchronizes with the leisurely driver next to them in the slow lane and stays there for five or so miles while a veritable parade of angry drivers builds up behind them. They are oblivious to the traffic jam they are causing, and get annoyed when in disgust you finally flash your lights or blow the horn.

While on the general subject, I need to rant about pedestrians. California law rightly gives them the right of way over vehicles. The law needs to add: "Be courteous". Too often they stroll through the cross walk like they were enjoying a day at the local park with no apparent concern for the cars backed up waiting for them. I'm not sure if I was taught it, or it's simply common sense to walk quickly across a street so that traffic can move on. But then again, the concept that with rights comes responsibility probably no longer applies in modern America.

I'll tell you folks, it's getting really bad. I often don't feel safe on the road any more. Just a few days ago I was cut off while trying to make a right turn. It was so bad I dropped my cell phone and my Starbucks Grande Pike Place, spilling it all over my new copy of Roundel. ■

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FRONT COVER:

Apex Everything. Photo by Maggy Reid

BACK COVER:

Legends of the Autobahn Preservation Class First Place
Winner. Photos by Fred Larimer

CORRECTION:

In the Summer 2017 WB, we incorrectly identified the person in the photo on page 21 in the lower right corner as Paul Bonnie. It is Ray Rivera in his car. We apologize for the mistake. -WB Editor

FASTER

by Mark Buehler

"How fast have you been?" I can't tell you how many times I've been asked that question.ⁱ What I can tell you is that Das Boot, the Mercedes E550, tops out at an electronically-limited 130; and that Nikita, the M235i, tops out at an electronically-limited 155. I can further tell you that Hopper, the new-to-me '05 Porsche Carrera is rated at 177, but I can also tell you that Porsche has, from time to time, understated these numbers.ⁱⁱ I can finally tell you that it has no electronic limiter, and the top speed is restricted only by aerodynamics, power, distance, testicular fortitude, and your comfort level with risk -- risk of death, risk of dismemberment, risk of the loss of your license, and risk of the disdain and approbation of Prius owners. This last one should not be determinative.

I verified the first two top speeds from experience; both on open, empty freeways near Armadillo Sphincter, Nevada.ⁱⁱⁱ I haven't had the Porsche long enough to find a safe place to experiment, but I expect that I will at some point. I want to know, and I expect the top speed to be about 180, but the real question is, "Does it matter?"

I think the answer is a solid, "No." Certainly not to me, and probably not to most of you.

Yeah, top speed may give you bragging rights, but unless you're really racing on a track, it just doesn't matter. Even there, it's only one factor. Races really aren't about speed, they're about time, and so the fastest car with the fastest driver may lose to the quickest car or the quickest driver. Case in point: the last time we were at the Performance Center in Thermal, my wife, Stephanie, had a higher top speed on the straight, but my lap times were faster. This also gave us each something to brag about, an important consideration in any successful long-term relationship.

Braking and cornering capacity are important considerations for your long-term automotive happiness too. Even more important, in racing, you don't have to be the quickest car on the track, just the quickest car in your class. As for track days and HPDE's, I have to say slower cars -- momentum cars -- are better. You are forced to learn driving skills, not just cover up their absence with an overabundance of torque and horsepower. Back when I had The Smurf of Death, the '04 Mini, a bunch of cars could and would walk away from me on the straights, but I was right back on their tailpipes in the twisty bits at the end of those straights. They could pull away, but not get away. More important, at least to me, was that I was having at least as much fun, frequently for less than half the money. I'm not opposed to power, but if I hadn't worked myself up from slower cars to what I have now, I'm fairly sure that being in over my head would be a far more frequent occurrence.

Assuming of course that I was still alive. When I was

15-and-change, I had the money to buy the big block '65 Corvette our neighbor was selling, but my Dad pulled the plug. I was pretty cranked at the time and ended up with a Chevy Vega, but in hindsight, I'm still alive because I didn't buy the Corvette. In that case, I'm pretty sure that I wouldn't have survived my own sense of immortality, in no small part because I really had no place to use the car, other than around town.

And top speed on the street is a real non-issue. Putting aside the issues of stupidity, testosterone intoxication, poor judgment, safety, and legality, it really doesn't matter there either. Think about your most idiotic fast car adventure.^{iv} It wasn't about outright top speed; it was about some combination of acceleration, cornering, or braking, wasn't it?

Maybe the better question is, "How have you been fast?" Were you that guy that gives BMW owners a bad rep: sloppy, out of control, and ripping through sclerotic traffic like unrefrigerated potato salad through your grandmother at the Fourth of July picnic? Were you a menace to those around you?

If you were, knock it off!

Or were you honing your skills? Were you slipping through traffic without leaving a ripple or brake light in your wake? Maybe you were giggling like a loon at an autocross with the tail hung out, not because you should, but just because you finally could and still not take any cones out? ^v

I'm not suggesting that growing up is always a good thing, but maturity -- at least behind the wheel -- does have its rewards.

-
- i** The answer is that I have no idea, but it was at the end of the main straight at Spring Mountain in a C6 Z06 Corvette. I was too busy trying slow down enough not to die. I didn't look. Sorry.
 - ii** Yeah, I bought a Porsche, but I 'fessed up in the Roundel a couple of issues ago. Again, sorry.
 - iii** Not a real place, though it should be. Fun Fact from the trip: the cruise control in Das Boot will engage up to 129.
 - iv** Don't lie. You have one. Everyone has one. Yours just may be less colorful than the ones that make it to You Tube.
 - v** I'm not going to rat you out, but you know who you are.

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.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

by Kurt Helm

I'm pleased to announce that the Chapter voters have overwhelmingly approved the proposed revision of the Chapter Bylaws. We are now in the midst of making preparations for the election of Officers and new Area Representatives; you should see those announcements very soon. These changes will help bring local events to your neighborhoods that will be of interest to many of you and it will make it easier to participate. And remember, you can attend the events in other Areas as well.

Speaking of changes, Tom Jacobsmeyer, who held the Membership Chairman on our Chapter Board recently resigned from the Board. He has been elected as the BMW CCA E31 Chapter Vice President. Our loss will be their gain. Please join me in wishing Tom all the best!

There are some great events this fall; the Chapter Wine Tour in Paso Robles (Oct. 6-8) O-Fest in New Orleans (Oct 31 – Nov. 4) and, of course, the driving events at Thermal (Nov. 3-5).

As always, please let us know if you are interested in other activities. We're always open for good ideas and for good event coordinators.

Until the Winter edition of the Whispering Bomb, enjoy your car and enjoy your Club.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

by Jean Helm

Well, I am on the road again. This time I edit the Fall WB from a hotel overlooking US Route 95 in Las Vegas. Just across the highway is an In N Out calling my name. In fact, it called my name as soon as I got here. I had heard before I even got here that the company had recently opened 3 restaurants in the Las Vegas area. Little did I know that one of them would be "freeway close". What does that have to do with cars, you ask? Well, since I've lived in California, I've noticed that In N Out, by their own advertising, is closely linked to the Southern California car culture (most of their annual t-shirts feature cars of some sort or another).

On my first trip to the local In N Out here in North Las Vegas, I couldn't help but notice the Lamborghini and McLaren parked right next to one another in the far reaches of the packed parking lot. No, I didn't take a picture (what was I thinking you all are saying to yourselves), but did stop to admire these cars in pristine condition. On subsequent trips (yep, I am a big In N Out fan) I've stopped to check out the parking lot. Yes, there are the usual American-made cars in the parking lot, but there are also quite a few higher end cars – parked very carefully – at the far reaches of that small cramped parking lot. Good to see that the car culture is alive and well, no matter where I travel.

DIVA'S WORLD

by Diva Moose



Fall is a favorite season of mine despite the fact that it's 100+ degrees outside as I write this and the 7,000 acre La Tuna Fire is still burning.^{1,2} Fall will arrive, and with it, cool weather will replace the heat (the weather change

to cooler temps cannot come soon enough, as Kurt and Jean's AC crapped out just as the weather turned really hot over the weekend – even my antlers are drooping). A fact that did not go unnoticed by the CCA National Board when they rescheduled O-Fest 2017 for October/November in New Orleans.

Oh, and did I mention that the Chapter Wine Tour is slated for October 6-8 in Paso Robles? As a moose with an

exceptionally high level of appreciation for good wine, I look forward to this event every year. Great people, a beautiful location, a fun drive from place to place, nice wines, and fine food. Hard to beat.

Kurt did mention to me that the Chapter voters have approved the revision to the Chapter Bylaws. We'll now have six new Area Representatives. For some reason, I suspect that I'll be involved in helping these new representatives understand how important it is that my expectations be met. (I just got a tug on one of my antlers... apparently Kurt disagrees with that approach. We'll just see how he likes being duct taped to a cactus in the middle of the night.)

So, let the good times roll!

- 1 Speaking of fires, Kurt and I drove up to Sana Ynez a few weeks ago and our path took us along Hwy. 154 which had recently been the site of a major fire near Lake Cachuma and the destruction of the vegetation along the road was scary and unbelievable.
- 2 I want to thank my friend Mark Buehler (Anyone? Anyone?) for his leadership in rediscovering the lost art of Footnotes.

BMW ULTIMATE DRIVING EXPERIENCE Santa Anita Park, CA

Article & Photos by Stephen Harvey

The BMW Ultimate Driving Experience never fails to thrill and impress me. Santa Anita Park in California, with a backdrop of beautiful mountains and horse track, was a fantastic mini proving grounds. I certainly felt like an ultimate driver when I left there with a huge smile on my face.

BMW's UDE didn't make the rounds in 2016 because of the Olympic focus that BMW had being the official car of the games. So, seeing it again in 2017 after a year hiatus made the driving all that much better.

I went solo because of schedule conflicts, but others there had the same issues and arrived solo too. This worked out well because I was able to make friends quickly and get some pictures taken.

The staff, all the way from check-in to the instructors, were the utmost professionals and always made us feel comfortable and welcome. They gave me the impression that their purpose was to ensure I had a great driving experience behind the wheel of a BMW. My UDE driving coach gave expert instructions... he was super patient and very helpful!

And, they showed us gracious hospitality with on-site food truck dining and a gourmet coffee stand manned with a barista making coffees to order. They even had a photo booth.

A personal highlight for me was placing 6th fastest in my group of 21 drivers. I am far from a race car driver so actually going faster than the majority of the group made my BMW experience even better.

All in all, BMW once again crushed it with innovative marketing and getting people into cars. The best way to sell a car is to get someone to drive it. Being able to take an expensive performance vehicle around an autocross track in anger, that will seal a deal. If you want to have a whole lot of fun and potentially purchase a new BMW, then look for the BMW Ultimate Driving Experience when it comes to your neighborhood. ■



14	Lamy	24.20
15	Yag	① 22.28
16	Cesar	23.90
17	Kirk	25.30
18	Steve	② 22.47
19	Sergio	23.69
20		
21	Stephen	⑥ 23.14
22		
23	Ilyas	23.60
24		



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LEGENDS OF THE AUTOBAHN AND FESTORICS 2017

by Fred Larimer

Each year a group from the LA and San Diego Chapters find ourselves migrating north towards Monterey for the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion. This year our caravan was a bit smaller, LA Chapter member Chris Macha in his 2800 sedan, San Diego Chapter member Gary Collins in his 3.0CSi, and myself in my E30 M3. We met up near Woodley Park (site of the So Cal Vintage event - you have registered for this event right? If not, go to <http://www.socalvintage.com> to register), stopped in Santa Barbara for breakfast, Firestone Walker Brewing Company in Paso Robles for lunch, and then on to Pacific Grove where we caught up with a multitude of other out-of-towners at former LA Chapter member Mike Burger's shop, Matteson's Auto Repair.

Most of you reading this are in some way, shape or form, BMW geeks and geekettes. You don't necessarily need to be focused on just BMWs to attend the Monterey Motorsports Reunion. As you wander about the paddock, the history of sports car racing is right there and, oftentimes you find yourself rubbing shoulders with legends. Imagine, there you are, admiring a race-car you may have seen in one of your dad's - or granddad's - magazines and realize that standing next to you is Sir Jackie Stewart!

This happens more often than you might think. Wandering around this year was Derek Bell, Mika Hakkinen (who was driving the Emerson Fittipaldi M23 F-1 Championship

winning M-23 McLaren provided by the McLaren folks) just to drop a couple of names. It is motor racing history, right there in front of you that often times you can reach out and touch. Literally, not figuratively.

One of my favorite cars this year was Mark Francis' Elva/BMW sports racer. Mark is headquartered in the San Diego area and campaigns a sweet M-10 (that's a 2002 engine) powered Elva sports racer prepared by Carl Nelson from La Jolla Independent - a renowned independent BMW shop in San Diego, and engineered by LA Chapter member Andy Wong.

At the Legends of the Autobahn event, a new class was debuted - a "Preservation Class" - for cars that fit in the "barn-find" classification. While a small group of cars were entered in this category, I suspect we will see more of these cars being presented in the future.

At the track, National and the Golden Gate Chapter hosted the Turn 5 Hospitality Corral. I did not realize this until I chatted up Frank Patek. What was once a local-chapter event, the Festorics Corral has become an event coordinated and organized by CCA's National offices. Good news actually as this ensures the event has the support to be a successful and ongoing event, ensuring it's future. I for one am overjoyed to know this as it means I can put it on my annual calendar and make plans well in advance. Trust me, with the cost of lodging in the area for "car-week" this becomes important. Just know that I already have my lodging for 2018 booked. Yeah, a full year in advance!

Enjoy the photos (found in our centerspread this issue). I hope to see some of you at So Cal Vintage on November 4th. I'll be the one wearing a camera...

NEW MEMBERS

Richard Aldana	Anthony Calvo	Marc Fawaz	J. Keller	Adam Mann	Chris Palaganas	Kristi Sheng
Reza Alipanah	Nelson Carramanzana	Doc Finnucci	Paul Kellogg	Michael Mark	Alexander Pasion	Zachary Simpson
Andrew Alkatime	Jonathan Castillo	Nicholas Fohrer	Rodrick Khachatoorian	John Marler	Norman Pasion	Scott Snyder
Alvaro Alva	Alvaro Castillo	Leonard Fohrer	Bradley Kleinman	Manuel Martinez	Lucita Pasion	Calvin Sonniksen
Arin Arakelian	Jessica Cauffiel	Felix Folster	Martin Knobel	Ian McGregor	William Pegnato	Brent Sparkman
George Ayvazyan	Aaron Chan	Alfredo Garcia	Neil Kotkovski	Bruce McPhee	Michael Perry	Kenneth Sutton
Royd Baik	Rimal Chand	Jorge Garcia	Derrick Kravitz	Michael Mellor	Robert Perry	Jay Taylor
Karl Baker	Kartik Chandar	Matthew Garcia	Vladimir Kudryavsev	Adrian Miles	Chip Perry	Lee Thornburg
Jedrino Balauro	Austin Chardukian	Tracie Zenger Gibbons	Armen Kuilanoff	Sheldon Miller	Peter Phan	Terrence Toji
Gabe Bandy	Matthew Chau	Vince Gibbons	Christopher Kypuros	Ross Minor	Anupam Phukan	Henry Torres
Dana Bateman	Dona Chen	Jay Gonzalez	Dennis Laherty	Benjamin Mizushima	Erick Pulley	Sinisa Trifunovic
Joshua Bencito	Dan Chioralia	Brittanie Greenbach	Nick LaKind	Richard Moreno	Hang Qui	Evgenia Trushko
Bobbin Bergstrom	Curt Chisholm	Vy Han	Andrew Lamborn	Ken Motonishi	Nover Reniedo	Edward Tsui
Kaiomarz Bhada	Sharon Choi	Dale Hanson	Michael Latman	Scott Mullens	Jeremy Romo	Ilvia Uribe
Laura Bliese	Paul Condran	Richard Harison	Chicheung Lau	David Munsee	Jonathan Rone	Richard Van Dyke
Susan Borjas	Gary Corcoran	John Hashimoto	Charles Le	Hani Musleh	Nathan Rosenstein	Randy Vegting
Shon Bowdan	Izzy Cornelio	Regina Henderson	Donald Lewis	Omar Mustafa	Carsten Rueppel	Hector Veron
Desiree Bowie	Mark Costello	Michael Herrera	Ryan Lewis	Benik Navi	Adrian Samson	Don Vrono
Josh Brozen	Matt Dale	Brandi Herrera	Eric Limcaco	Matthew Nelson	William Sayre	Charles Wang
Michael Brydges	Kevin Davis	Tom Houston	Bonnie Liu	James Nguyen	Clark Schaefer	William Washington
Joe Buerba	Victoria D'Cutledge	Hank Hsieh	Joseph Liu	Frankie Nguyen	William Schappell	Scott Webb
Kellie Buerba	John Degrado	Phillip Huber	Raymond Liu	Jon Nguyen	Michael Scheinberg	Daniel Wong
Tom Burns	John Dilger	David Johnson	Richard Longoria	Sierra Niceschwander	Stephen Schrader	Brian Yen
Marcia Burns	Alexander Dukes	Michael Jorgensen	Bryan MacDonald	Stig Nielsen	Amy Scott	Philip Yoon
Mike Burroughs	Andrew Ercillo	Aret Kalfa	Doug Makino	Jason Nitti	Alec Scribner	George Young
Bartlett Burson	Sharareh Ershadi	Seth Karlsson		Jae Noh	Jason Seal	
Austin Caccavo	Julian Escobar	John Keefer		Ronald Paderes	Aimee Shackelford	

LETTERS TO THE WHISPERING BOMB

August 9, 2017

Dear Jean;

I recently finished the article in the Summer Whispering bomb entitled "Gas or Electric and the Specter of Global Warming" and let me tell you I am astonished that the club would print such nonsense! In speaking about global warming the author, Bill Blowers, states that he is "not one to accept scientific facts that are presented by non-scientific individuals, you know, like ex-vice presidents." Let me remind you that the vast majority of the world's scientists not only believe in humans being the cause of global warming but all the countries of the globe with the exception of 2 have signed the Paris accords to help curb global warming. One of those 2 countries didn't sign it because they didn't believe it went far enough! Of course, then there is Mr. Trump who wants to get out of it but this is also a man that believes exercise is bad for people too. (That is not a shot at his weight, look it up, this is what he believes!) I fully understand that most of us LOVE the sound of our engines. Love to feel the speed in the seat of our pants and LOVE our vehicles as they were meant to be! Yes, I do too. However, denying that global warming is a true fact is akin to me have seconds on dessert because I don't believe it will affect my waistline. I LOVE my cars, in fact, I just purchased an M2 strictly so I can go through as many gallons of gas going in circles around a track as I possibly can, when I can. However, that doesn't mean that I am of the mindset that I deny that realities we live in. HUMANS worldwide ARE affecting our atmosphere. It's a proven fact over and over. Stating otherwise is simply Fake News.

Randy Bart

July 22, 2017

Hi Mark: I love all your columns, but your "The Donut-Car Connection" really got to me.

I, too, love donuts. I consulted with Claremont Graduate University twice, for 6-12 months each time. Once a week I'd drive up and stop by Some Crust in Claremont on the way in to pick up a warm-from-the-oven donut or bear claw. It was so good that I often picked up a box to share with the entire office. Of course, my BMW made the drive worthwhile, but Some Crust just added to the pleasure of the drive. I have driven there just to have their pastries even after my consulting contract ended.

You also mentioned passion fruit pavlova, one of my all-time favorite desserts. Fortunately, we're going back to Australia/New Zealand soon so I can get my fix again.

Another topic you covered in that column also interested

me. I was in my e24 M6, driving south on the 55, just south of the 91. The first off-ramp is Knoll Ranch Road. The long off-ramp ended in a sharp right turn to a T intersection with a traffic light. Just as I entered the off-ramp, I could see the Lexus ahead was going when the light turned green. Not wanting to miss the light, I dropped down a couple of gears and gunned it. As I approached the light, it turned yellow, so I dropped down another gear, and as I got even with the Lexus with 2 lanes turning left, I gunned it to beat the red light and in the process my tail end wiggled a bit. I was thankful my wife wasn't with me or I would have gotten an ear-full. But she encouraged me to buy my e90 M3 so it all works out in the end.

Thanks for connecting with me.

Cary Tamura
Brea, California

July 18, 2017

Dear Jean,

I do realize that editing a club magazine has its own sometimes rather special requirements, and is often a difficult endeavor. But, I do feel that a little folksiness/cuteness in writing goes a very long way, and should (in my opinion) be pretty strictly limited.

Thanks for your efforts as editor.

Best regards,
Kurt Ingham

FOR SALE:

2008 BMW M3 Coupe (E92) – Rare 6 Speed manual, 50,000 miles, Jet Black Silver Leather, carbon fiber roof, Premium Package, Technology Package, 19-inch factory wheels, adjustable seat width with lumbar support, Heated front seats, 4.0 liter 32 valve V8 engine, DSC, M suspension, Xenon headlights Original California car, always garaged, babied, covered, never eaten in, never wrecked, never smoked in. Full front-end clear bra professionally installed, hood, bumper, fenders, mirrors. Front license plate never installed, Original window sticker, dealer brochures, 4 brand new Pirelli's ready to go on. Always used premium top tier fuels. Always hand washed and waxed using Griots or Zymol. Asking \$32,999.

PLEASE CONTACT:

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Festorics 2017 in Monterey, CA.
Our thanks to Fred Larimer
for the great photos.





DARWIN WAS RIGHT

The Volvo XC90 T8 and the BMW X5 xDrive40e

by James Chew

Born and raised in California's Antelope Valley, it was not too hard to become a "car guy". The weekend cruising scene was very much as it was depicted in the classic movie, "American Graffiti". Willows Springs became a very popular Southern California car club-racing track and independently owned "Speed Shops" and auto repair shops were plentiful (one of the more popular independent auto repair shops was Vic's Bimmer Shop). Having been "bit" by the car bug, I took three years of high school auto shop while studying to enter an undergraduate engineering program.

And even though I was born and raised around the center of the classic American muscle car culture, I also gained an appreciation for BMW and Volvo.

The Antelope Valley is home to the nation's premier aviation flight test facility – Edwards Air Force Base. During my primary and secondary school years (late 1960's through the 1970's), I become friends with many of the test pilots' families. I always found it interesting that Dad, the pilot, would drive something called a "Porsh" (or "Porsh-a") or something called a "2002", while Mom drove a Volvo station wagon. It seemed that while Dad wanted a car that he could push to it's limits, he wanted to make sure that his wife and family had safe, rugged, and reliable transportation.

In fact, Volvo aggressively marketed their safety reputation during the first two oil crises - how many remember the print ad showing a family stuffed in a subcompact, luggage tied to the roof, while trying to enter a busy freeway with the tag line, "Is it worth risking your life for 45 miles per gallon?" Their advertising tag line said it all "Volvo. A Car You Can Believe In".

During the 1980s, BMW and Volvo evolved to be the preferred yuppie vehicles. BMWs were driven by single yuppies, while the yuppies with children (yuppie puppies) drove Volvos. It was during that time period I read an outstanding Auto Week column, written by some guy named "Satch Carlson" (which I thought was a nom de plumb – why else would his face be obscured by a World War 1 era aviation helmet and goggles) lamenting how BMW's "Ultimate Driving Machine" heritage and capabilities were not fully appreciated by that shallow, image conscious yuppie buyer.

Through the 1990s, both continued their path to market success as independent European auto companies. BMW strengthened it's mojo by breaking out of the market-declared "yuppie mobile" through the development of uncompromised "Ultimate Driving Machines" that featured the clean, crisp exterior designs, outstanding chassis and drivetrains, and breakthrough technology. Volvo strengthened themselves by developing products that featured classic Scandinavian design themes – clean, functional, and timeless – while maintaining their product reputation for safety and reliability.

Both companies saw the American market shifting to SUVs, resulting in them both independently developing their first entries into this market – The X5 and the XC 90. Both were immediate market success, with the X5 as the "Ultimate Driving SAV" and the XC 90 being the "Volvo of SUVs".

The something tragic happened to Volvo – they were sold to Ford.

First, Ford combined Volvo with Lincoln, Jaguar, Land Rover, and Aston Martin to form their "Premier Automotive Group". Any car guy with a lick of common sense would immediately see that there are NO synergies amongst these five brands. The three UK brands were three of the worst run car companies. In fact, the BMW fan will remember how owning Land Rover almost took down BMW – and in fact resulted in the then CEO and then President both being fired.

Second, Volvo product development was MBA'd into mediocrity. It wasn't just the use of Ford components that lead to their downfall. Ford's Chief Designer, J. Mays, compromised Volvo's benchmark Scandinavian design. Mays could not resist putting just enough of his stamp on all Volvo designs in order to claim them as his own. Fortunately, the first generation XC90 was near ready for production before the Ford purchase.

Third, Ford viewed the XC90 as with the rest of the SUVs – cash cows that needed little attention. So while the X5 had two freshenings and two redesigns, the XC90 pretty much remained the same.

Fortunately for Volvo, Ford sold the company to Geely. Freed from the constraint of component sharing and infused with adequate product development funding, the creativity of the Volvo designers and engineers were unleashed. This new XC90 is the first result of Geely ownership. After a week in the all-new Volvo XC 90, and comparing it to our week in an all-new BMW X5 xDrive40e, to say that Volvo and BMW are again on the same level would be an understatement. Both have evolved to be outstanding premium SUVs for today's market while remaining true to their respective brand's souls.

It's no secret to the readers that the BMW X5 is one of my favorite BMWs. The X5's upscale feel is due to the fact that it was developed when BMW owned Land Rover. It drives like a BMW while having the utility, durability, and reliability that modern American families expect. The first generation X5 (E53) benefitted quite a bit from Land Rover's off road expertise and their upscale SUV technology. The X5's chassis was modified for the second generation (E70) X5, in order to accommodate a third row seat. The current X5 (F15) shares the same chassis with the E70, which gives the 2018 X5 familiar, and still outstanding, performance, handling, and that upscale feel. Having driven the E53, E70, and F15 during a test session, the evolution of the X5 to maintain its benchmark SAV characteristics is quite apparent.

Part of that evolution is delivering high fuel efficiency while maintaining its benchmark driving characteristics. We found the X5 xDrive40e to be the ideal SAV for the BMW

suburban family. The X5 provides the desired room, higher seating position, and cargo space. 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. For typical suburban family duty, you'll find that you're always on better 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 to top off the tank! We were quite surprised that we achieve better than the EPA rated 56 miles per gallon.

The 2018 XC90's gestation is more like the "Six Million Dollar Man" (I know, I'm dating myself). After twelve years of neglect by Ford, one can imagine the product review session with the new Geely owners going something such as this: "And here is the XC90. While still good, it's an outdated vehicle that's competing in one of the hottest North American market segments. If we have the appropriate resources, we can rebuild it. We can make it better than it was. Better, stronger, faster – make it a benchmark in this market segment"

When you are handed the luxurious leather "smart" key fob, you know Volvo achieved their goal.

Volvo clearly studied the American market when they set the XC90 design goals.

- First, they noticed the American infatuation with Downton Abbey. The 2018 XC 90 is unapologetically European luxury. The clean, upright exterior design reminds one of a royal carriage, with the "hammers of Thor" driving lights serving as the Royal crest. When entering the interior, you'll have a "Grey Poupon" moment. The interior design is clean, airy and bright, assembled with the unique combination of luxurious materials that are durable. The crystal gear shifter is the "flourish". When researching famous Scandinavian designers, you'll notice many of their design cues in the XC90's exterior and interior. More upscale than a Land Rover, this driver and the passengers seem to go out of their way to mind their manners.

- Second, they noticed the growing American market popularity of hybrid powertrains. Because the Volvo designers had the benefit of working a new chassis, the XC90 offers the outstanding T8 "twin engine" (their terminology, not mine) hybrid powertrain without sacrificing any interior space. Third row seating is available with the T8 hybrid, something BMW sacrificed (along with some rear cargo space) with the hybrid X5.
- Third, they noticed the American dependence on mobile connectivity. The 2018 XC 90 is one of the most "connected" vehicles we've tested – it rivals the Tesla Model S. Not only does the XC 90 have in-vehicle Wi Fi and plenty of charging outlets, but the Infotainment system has "Spotify". And the large Infotainment screen is straightforward and very readable. Our only complaint was the touchscreen operation – you'd be surprised how quickly any touchscreen can be covered with annoying fingerprints and smudges.
- Fourth, they noticed the American market drive toward assisted and autonomous driving. In full "nanny" mode, you're at a safe following distance when in cruise control, you can't hit an object in front of you when traveling at 30 mph or less, you're immediately notified if you are not exactly in the center of the travel lane, and you are discouraged from changing lanes with first checking the blind spots AND using your turn signals. Its only limitation is that NO AMERICAN drives in that manner.

The BMW X5 and Volvo XC 90 have both evolved to be outstanding 21st century family vehicles. Both have the utility, durability and reliability that the modern American family expects. The BMW leans toward driving performance while the Volvo leans toward luxury.

Today, if I were to visit the U.S. military flight test facility, it would not surprise me to notice one spouse is driving an "M" and the other a Volvo XC 90. ■

CALENDAR of EVENTS

Mid-October; Board of Directors Elections –

The proposed amendments to the Los Angeles Chapter bylaws have passed. Our next Board of Directors will include an Area Representative for each of our six neighborhoods (LA, San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Orange Co, Inland Empire, and Ventura/Santa Barbara), in addition to the President, VP, Treasurer and Secretary. Each Area Rep will schedule two events in their area each year. One event will be a Meet & Greet at an area dealership; the second event can be whatever they choose. Does this sound like a great volunteer opportunity to you? Do you want to meet more members in your area? If so, please watch for the nomination forms (October) and make a difference in your club.

November 3-5; BMW Performance Center Driving Event –

Join us at the BMW Performance Center. You can opt for a full-day regular M-School on Saturday (\$750), or morning OR afternoon half day sessions on Sunday (\$225). Lunch is included on both days. Join BMW CCA members from

surrounding Pacific Region Chapters for a great time in BMW's cars, with their tires, their gas and their brakes. All experience levels are welcome.

November 4; SoCal Vintage BMW –

Classic and Vintage BMWs will gather in Woodley Park in Van Nuys for the 10th annual meeting of the BMWs that started it all.

January, 2018; Annual Chapter Holiday Party –

Stay tuned for an eBlast that will let you know when and where we will have our annual holiday party.

August 24, 2018; Legends of the Autobahn –

Join us on the Monterey Peninsula for the annual meet up of precision German engineering.

August 25-26, 2018; Festorics –

We will again be going out to Mazda Raceway at Laguna Seca for a couple of days of racing.

DORKFEST

June 24, 2017

by Mike Buhbe

Dorkfest found its way to the sunny shores of Ventura on the California Central Coast north of Los Angeles. Soothing ocean breezes and skies as blue as the eyes of lost love had us all a-swoon in the surf town vibe. The best beach month, August was – Dorkfest always draws me to a beautiful setting that would make a painter set up an easel, uncork the paints, and dip a brush. This year's Dorkfest almost didn't take place, but when it did we found ourselves in sweet reveries and revived friendships. And opportunity presented itself at a thrift shop.

Like Dorkfest itself, our M Coupes and Z3 Coupes clawed their way into existence like evolutionary creatures emerging from a frothing pool of DNA, fortunate offspring of the wonderful Z3 convertible of the 1990s. The great minds at BMW central, seeing that a hardtop with greater torsional stability will out-handle a roadster in the corners, made a decision to expand the marque - and the market too - with a track car. Body design was determined thusly: keep the hood, keep the doors, then make the back half like it belongs with the front half. This budget limitation produced a car with a distinct identity in the BMW world.

To my outsider thinking, this is the coolest BMW of all because it demands a hard look at very creative style lines. I love that it does not have the Hofmeister kink in the lower corner of the side window, that little diagonal jog, the second-most distinct style element after our famous grills. The swooping lines remind me of riding a motorcycle without a helmet - the wind in the hair that brings a sensuous feel to motoring.

The organizers of past Dorkfests now have family and professional responsibilities. There is little time left to attend the myriad details of putting down deposits from personal funds, negotiating prices with hotels, locating an automotive museum or factory to visit, cajoling restaurant management for a private room, and mapping a highway drive with winding roads and scenery. Instead, this Dorkfest was more like the first meetups of earlier decades when a bunch of drivers assembled their cars for a mountain drive in the twists and turns. The road ahead always presents some problems, a corner that was not anticipated, or a corner that should have been in memory. Then we deal with it. Good Dorks always do this. Maria and I easily found our own itinerary in this charming part of the world on the edge of both the LA Metropolis and the rugged coast of Highway 1.

Our first evening in Ventura at restaurant Lure started with chilled oysters on a bed of ice. The seafood sauce and grated horseradish, a hot delight, is something to approach with a caution, like hypnotizing a cobra. Try a little at first,



Robert Leoning's Topaz Blue M Coupe

and then dab more of the sauce onto the next oyster to avoid getting bitten. Our after-dinner stroll down Main Street showed us everything from vintage clothing stores to a restored movie theater marquee with neon colors plucked from a Crayola box. Cool marine air wrapped its arms around us and my Hawaiian shirt, which seemed like such a great idea when we began our evening out, did not hold enough body heat. A thrift store appeared down the block so we quickened our pace with the idea of buying me a layer of warmth. As we got to the door the very nice ladies said sorry, we are closed. "I just want to buy a sweatshirt!" I pleaded. I must have presented a pitiful sight. Either that or they recognized I wanted to buy, not browse, because they immediately relented. My reward was a Hellrot red fleece hoodie that joined my permanent collection.

Dorkfest events began Saturday afternoon almost furtively in the parking lot at the back of the Ventura Marriott where another BMW club had its own event. We were like a bunch of high school kids invading the drive-in, smoking cigarettes and waiting for some action. Well, no one smokes tobacco these days anyway, but still, we felt like juvenile delinquents ready to light 'em up. The parking lot is where the Z Sports Car Club of America held its annual ZFest.

We attached ourselves to ZFest like pilot fish swimming next to a shark. We Dorks rubbed elbows with the ZFest folks, a highly organized contingent of committed BMW fans. These guys and gals had five days of events. ZSCCA people welcome Z3 and Z4 roadsters and coupes, even the ultra-cool Z8, whereas Dorks limit ourselves to the Coupes of the Z3 era, from 1999 to 2001. No matter which BMW shows up, there is always the friendship and camaraderie spurred by our belief in our wonderful cars from Germany. We have more in common than we lack.

Our twisty drive led to Ojai. Driving through the foothills and into a narrowing valley the careful observer sees a panoramic history of California with swaying oil pumps, tile roofs perched on mission style buildings, citrus groves flowing down gentle hillsides, a life-sized mural being unspooled in front of us. Here is a distinct California gem, an enclave of spiritualists, meditators, and the wealthy, but

with a hippie-vibe flashback to the 1960s. The hippies are now either grey-haired elders or Generation Xers decked out like fortune tellers who hit the jackpot and immediately headed to the retro clothing store. Flower prints and granny skirts abound. You can even spot bellbottom pants here and there. The downtown arcade holds a general store that has been in business for more than a hundred years still sells the basics, everything from baby clothes to baling wire. Bart's Books holds the thrall of cheap, used books.

Coming from the Los Angeles region this was a day trip for most of the Dorks. Haig Sujohns was our only Northern California guy, so he had to take a ribbing about why his NorCal pals weren't present. I had my own ribs poked when announcing to the eager assembled Dorks the dinner destination. I wrote the name of our restaurant on my reporter's notebook to show everyone we were going to Ventiki Lounge. Ian Vasquez took my notebook and made a serious effort to swipe and pinch-enlarge, mistaking it for a cellphone. Everyone joined in asking why my "cellphone" was not working. I shoulda known better than to show those kids anything written on paper, a substance they think should be left in the tree.

The Ventiki Lounge and Lanai is a mashup of local surf culture with a South Pacific twist. Amidst the carved Tiki gods and broad-leafed tropical vegetation waiters who look like they just rode the last wave take our orders. As a condition of employment the waiters must be required to grow long hair and tie up a manbun. I was transported to Tahiti to the time when Paul Gaugin lived in a grass shack and frazzled his senses between bouts of applying oils to canvas, forever popularizing the tropics as a sensual land of plenty. My rum drink helped, of course. Our mellow oozed through us as the sun lowered ever so quietly, the gentle ocean breeze rippling shirts. Just as the rum had immobilized me, a fire alarm bell clanged vigorously. I sat straight up and looked for the exit. Confounding cheers erupted from the bar. Next came a honk from a conch shell, its lengthy note tapering quietly as the bartender ran out of breath. What the heck? We soon learned that all the commotion was due to a patron buying a \$25 mai

tai, a concoction of artisanal rums and tropical juices, a ceremonial plea to the Oceanic gods for good surf and plentiful rum. No thank you. I'll stick with the basics.

Dinner ended. We parked our Coupes in an industrial zone in the evening's glow. Conversations drifted to what made each of us buy the Coupe. The answer is usually something like: I wanted this ultra cool car the moment I first saw it. Then I moved the stars and realigned planets to get one. There is a deep affection for this car because of its quirky design and the low profile lines. Quirky=cool. Just like the owners.

From the confines of concrete, we moved to a grassy lawn next to the beach to park our cars and admire their beauty while we chatted. Like toys scattered by an irresponsible child among palms and pines, the Coupes shone like gems from an ancient pharmacist's cabinet, each one a magic potion of speed. Gehry Akopyan's white Coupe is a mechanic's never ending quest for more horsepower. And its wheels are unique – white on one side of the car, bronze on the other. Gehry's story is that he got a free set of wheels for a photo shoot, and the photographer wanted both white and bronze. This car is Ghery's pet at his business, Garage 54.

The sun sank lower and shadows blended into darkness. After last year's Dorkfest coinciding with the lavish 100th anniversary of BMW, a multiday affair with laps at Laguna Seca and the energy of a centennial celebration, this year's Dorkfest ended quietly. Engines came to life with purrs and snorts, gearshifts clicked with precision, and our tiny rockets launched us into the night on our homeward journeys. All promised to return next year.

The word is that next year's Dorkfest will take place in the California mountains, at a lake, an Alpine match of the German heritage of our amazing Coupes. Look for Dorkfest, and come prepared to join one of the more avant garde car groups in the BMW brotherhood. If you need to add a Coupe to your automotive experience, look up mcoupebuyersguide.com or z3coupebuyerguide.com for information and a daily update of cars for sale. Check into dorkfest.org for updates. Bring whatever automotive iron stirs your soul and enjoy the company of a group that welcomes all and embraces the extraordinary. Whatever your motor, come join us. And look for the guy in a red fleece hoodie. He might be cool, but he won't be shivering. ■



Alan Ning's M Coupe

FOR SALE: 4 ea., 18"x8" alloy wheels off of my E-46 330 Ci. Structurally perfect, not bent, dented or warped. Slightly cosmetically challenged (minor rash, clear coat exfoliating). Perfect for track days as is or get them clear coated. \$195.00 for the set.

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AN ACCIDENTAL BIMMERPHILE

by Mike Buhbe

Memory is a tricky thing, and a wonderful thing too.

I just forgot to attend the city hearing for my garage remodel project, the project that will put our two BMWs in my garage instead of one. Yes, my garage. The house belongs to Maria where I am a guest with a work permit. I have been anticipating the remodel for at least twenty years and have paid enough in municipal fees and electrical work to spend a very nice vacation anywhere in the South Pacific. A completely different kind of memory comes from delving into my trove of belongings stashed in my garage.

This was not just an ordinary building permit; the double garage with its single 1950 door is too close to the alley under current setback rules. If built today, the garage would have to be pushed back far enough from the centerline of the alley to drive a car in without swinging onto the apron of the house on the opposite side of the alley. The permit requires mailing notices to my neighbors living within 300 feet of my plans. I got some teasing about "too many changes," from those who know me. These are the same friends who have been asking me every month for ten years when I will really actually start doing what I have been running my mouth about.

Although the permit process is pretty much a formality, I had been planning on appearing at the hearing along with the architect who is managing the project. I would have enjoyed mumbling a few words for the sparse crowd about being a car guy and how I would really put two cars in the garage and not junk. How could I forget to go? Having spent eternities in Council Chambers as well as career meetings, I have the normal love-hate relationship with formal meetings. While I know they are necessary and important (especially when I lead them) they can be lengthy and boring.

The inner workings of the mind whispered fiendishly "Don't go! You don't need to go." Turns out it was no problem that I missed the city hearing; the Planning Commission passed my formal request because this will take one more car off the streets of Seal Beach's Old Town, an increasingly crowded place to park a car.

Now my garage is filled, but not with cars. All of the accumulated power tools, seasonal decorations, cans of unsorted screws, even boxes of tax returns are stacked amidst a supply of still more boxes – empties - as I sift, save, and discard. Walking around all of this stuff is like navigating a supertanker out of a busy port in storm conditions with a tipsy captain and woozy pilot.

I rediscover the photo album that my mother put together when she retired. Black and white photos from the 1940s of a woman and a baby with cheerful notations on the back entrance me. Her words, available now only in written form, rivet my attention and place me back to a time when I was not even conscious of my own existence. Then another photo shows my dad on the shores of Long Beach, his body lean and muscular after returning from WW II; he holds me tenderly. His face is wreathed in a wide smile of joy; he did not see his first born until returning from the European Theater. More memories lay in stored boxes waiting to be explored as I organize the stuff I inherited during a period of life when daily responsibilities left no time to catalogue family history. It just accumulated, waiting for the time when I have leisure and desire, and now, the necessity to act.

Letters from my mom to her sister describe wonder and amazement at being a mother, breastfeeding me. Since we are on the topic it must be reported that your writer took great pleasure in it. Extensive notes on my progress and baby-beauty, always more detailed for the first born, abound. Lustrous and sentimental, her words make my eyes mist with impossible longing.

The real world timeline interdicts my wanderings. The clock is ticking. My M Coupe is in a friend's garage, the monthly rent enough to lease a car, even a shiny 3 series. Contractors have to be notified. A building engineer is drawing plans. A custom rollup door can only be ordered after the framing is completed and then there is a month lag time during production. A movie of what I have to do is on fast-forward and I can't find the pause button.

Memory of my grand plan propels me to the task in front of my eyes. There are many more boxes to open. Misty reveries will have to wait. Winter is coming.

SHOW US YOUR RIDE

Attached is a shot of our beloved 2002 between a Model T and a Model A.

The local Model A club meets at the IHOP where we have Saturday breakfast.

Guess which car has 20" rims? ...

Hint: It's not the middle one.

Ed Carloni, Thousand Oaks



CUBA CAB RIDE #2

by Mike Buhbe

Our next Cuban chariot took us on a trip down my high school memory lane in a 1955 four-door Chevrolet Bel Air, the deluxe model. The car was a two-tone white and sky blue. The bodywork was a little rough but in the soft streetlight of nighttime it looked fine. Preserved cars, still in daily use after a half-century, are a tribute to the skills of Cuban car guys who keep ancient iron on the road by the tens of thousands. The glamour and glory of our first cab ride, a wind-in-the-hair 1952 Ford droptop, was forgotten.

The same 1955 Chevrolet was my best man Randy's high school graduation present. This was the year Chevrolet debuted its overhead cam V8, a landmark engine that is still with us today, though in very much altered form. That throbbing rumble, insistent and powerful, inspired me to someday own a car capable of generating the sound that says "I'm in charge, and by the way, I'll kick your ass 'cause you looked at me sideways." Randy's dad was not bucks-up by any stretch; none of us were. So the car was not the coveted two-door hardtop equipped with V8 and manual transmission. Randy's ride was a four-door and seven years old, but it held the 265 cubic inch overhead cam V8 with a two-speed automatic. This transmission fully deserved the name slushbox for its lackluster performance. The coolest guys had the three-speed column shift, and if you were really bucks-up this was converted to a floor shift. There was no way anyone could do burnies in the Anaheim High School parking lot with a two-speed automatic; Randy and I harbored our deeply held illusion that girls would be chasing us down the street if we had cool cars that would shoot clouds of billowing smoke as tires spun with piercing shrieks. Still, I loved going to the beach in Randy's '55 Chevy, tootling along Harbor Boulevard to Newport where the in-crowd hung to catch some rays. My reverie of the bygone good-old-days danced through my cortex in a montage, and then I remembered I was in Havana. We negotiated a price with the driver, easily and fairly. Sitting shotgun I anticipated the startup of a V8. Maybe.

There is nothing to compare with the first night of anything, and in Havana we had just met up with friends who happened to be in the capital. This required some advance planning stateside and a little luck since cellphones do not easily work in Cuba. Andrea (she owned an E30 325i back in the day) and I managed to connect along with our families and friends for our evening of rooftop dining. Serenaded by old school Havana musicians while imbibing fragrant mojitos the size of oil storage tanks was all good. The food, simple but adequate, was prepared with care and served graciously. Conversation flowed and wandered from our immediate impressions of Cuba to a debate of the revolution. Dinner finished and the musicians long gone, we found our way to the elevator - a cast iron cage with an operator. Partway down we made a stop to see the room where Ernest Hemingway

stayed. I placed my hand on the wall to channel Papa, an effort to launch an adventure career. You know, a second-wind career. More like a third-wind. Papa did not respond and we continued our descent continued to the lobby. We emerged onto a well-lighted pedestrian street with no vehicles. Feeling safe in the crowd, we chatted and commented on the sights set before us as we walked the city.

The street thronged with tourists and locals, the temperatures perfect for shorts, short sleeves, and flip flops. We passed Floridita, Hemingway's favorite bar. Well, one of his favorite bars. Swirls of bright neon signage wafted me back to the 1950s. Parked in front of Floridita with a FOR SALE sign was an immaculate Willys, one of the more oddball cars we exported to Cuba before the 1959 revolution. It was painted glistening silver that looked like the car had been run through an aluminum foundry and its color poured from a smelter. We were at ease in the city. All around us the pulsing energy of bongos, congas, and timbales kept my head turning to see who was playing. Every corner had at least two bands (sometimes four) at the sidewalk restaurants. Eventually we came to the end of the avenue, tired and ready for bed. A taxi stand came into view and we all said our goodnights.

Our driver, a young guy in a baseball cap, opened the back doors. Maria slipped in the backseat with our daughter Melissa and her roommate Kathy. The key was inserted into the ignition lock. I was expecting either the rumble of the V8 or the slow-revving six-cylinder engine, the stalwart motor that powered Chevrolet cars and trucks reliably for decades.

Neither. A clatter arose as a diesel sprang to life with its injectors rattling like quiet marbles in a cardboard box. We could feel the vibration of startup in our seats. I told myself this could not be. But it was. A diesel.

"A diesel!" I exclaimed to our driver while giving him a satisfied smile, all the while wondering what the heck?

"Mitsubishi!" was his proud reply.

A manual transmission with a floor shift completed the driveline, at least the part I could see. Just below the glovebox a glowing gizmo played music. Our driver selected a piece that was full of pumping Cuban rhythms and punctuating horns, but observing the plentitude of grey hair among his passengers he dialed the volume down so we could talk easily. This driver and I exchanged pleasantries in our mixture of Spanish and English, both of us code switching when it became necessary. Our driver said he would show me the engine later. I had no idea how this would work at night. Most amazing of all were the power windows, a technical wonder in 1955, but in Cuba they were to me miraculous.

Driving along the Malecon was both delightful and somewhat unnerving. There is no center divider on the wending four lane high-traffic highway, a major thoroughfare with few signals in its five miles. In California there would be at least a raised center divider with a curb, or more likely a three-foot tall K wall of reinforced concrete. The Malecon's

(Continued on next page)



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winding curves held only the double-double yellow stripe separating us from oncoming traffic, a few inches of neutral space created out of mutual trust. Then on this narrow strip, barely wide enough for a person to stand sideways, was a father with two young children who had all crossed halfway and then got stuck in the middle. Taxis passed within inches. I held my breath. All were stranded on the double-double, the father holding each child's hand while an endless parade of cars continued. We motored on, and my gaze, swiveling to the possible tragedy was soon relieved by our distance.

Though drivers are safe and courteous, accidents do occur. The police come for a thorough investigation. A running car is so valuable to the country's economy that there is a great effort to prevent collisions. Cuba is an authoritarian government with all cabinet posts held by army officers, so naturally police have great authority. That is a huge incentive for drivers to show respect for rules of the road.

We pulled up to the entrance to our hotel, the Sheraton, the only American-managed hotel in the city. I paid the driver our agreed upon fare and gave him a tip. We piled out of the car focused on the doorman's welcome, bed rest uppermost in our thoughts.

The driver called me back. He opened the hood and then turned on a small floodlight clipped underneath. The stubby four-cylinder Mitsubishi diesel was sitting in the huge engine bay, happily idling. Even in the pale light everything looked clean and well ordered. The driver's face was wreathed in

smiles as if he was showing me his first-born child. I reached for my pocket camera and asked him to hold for a quick photo.



Cubans have a certain love of American culture and cars, but overriding this is the practical need for transportation. Grafting diesel engines into 1950s relics is just plain common sense. I got a good look at the Cubans' abilities to adapt, and a wonderful look back at my own American roots.

The third Cuba taxi ride would be a complete opposite and reveal the changing automotive and political landscape on our neighbor Caribbean island. There is more in the transportation landscape than our old cars kept alive by love of Yankees. ■

Los Angeles Chapter - BMW CCA Board of Directors & Staff

The **WHISPERING** bomb is published four times a year for the members of Los Angeles Chapter of the BMW Car Club of America, and our friends in the BMW motoring community. Since October, 1970 it has been carrying information about our club and BMW's many successes throughout the world. The ideas and opinions expressed are those of the authors. The editor ... publisher ... BMW ACA ... BMW NA ... BMW CCA and authors claim no liability for authenticity or correctness. Modifications to a new BMW may be cause to void the warranties.

The Los Angeles Chapter of the BMW Car Club of America (BMW CCA - LA) was founded in 1970 as the BMW Automobile Club of America – Los Angeles Region (BMW ACA - LA). As a separate club, the BMW ACA - LA was affiliated with the International Council of BMW Clubs and BMW Clubs Europa eV. In 1997, the BMW ACA - LA merged into the national BMW CCA and became the Los Angeles Chapter of the BMW CCA. The BMW CCA continues to maintain those relationships with the worldwide BMW community. The LA Chapter has grown from a few charter members in 1970 to a current membership of around 3000, one of the largest BMW CCA chapters nationwide. The Chapter includes members from Santa Barbara, to Orange County to the Inland Empire. We invite Chapter members and all owners of BMW cars to join us at our various activities. General meetings/events are open to all and are held in various venues throughout the Chapter's territory. The time and place for each event is announced on the Chapter website. The Board of Directors also meets regularly, and members may attend those meetings as well. To attend a board meeting, you can contact any board member for additional information. Upcoming events such as autocrosses, driving schools, wine tours, open houses, are also announced on the chapter website, via eBlasts and in the **Whispering** bomb. Come join us at an event, you won't regret it.

CLUB DUES INFORMATION:

Membership - \$48.00 Associate Membership - \$10.00
(for spouses & significant others)

Sign up for 2+ years & SAVE!!!

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WEBSITE: <http://www.losangelesbmwcca.org>

CHECK THE CHAPTER WEBSITE FOR MEETINGS & EVENTS!

STAY UP TO DATE!!! ADD YOURSELF TO THE EMAIL BLAST LIST. SEND YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO:
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This is Chris Macha's/Mike Burger's 2800 sedan that competed and garnered a 1st place Preservation Class Award at the 2017 Legends of the Autobahn. In our next issue, Chris and Mike will tell us how they did it.

Photos by Fred Larimer

