

Der Schlangenbiss

Memoirs of a New Car Purchase

by Ken Summa

Last newsletter, I spoke of our negotiations for my wife’s first new BMW – a 2011 Vermillion Red X3. Well, it finally arrived in mid-October and I must say that the delivery experience we had with BMW of Tri-Cities was like no other I’ve ever experienced.

Ian Wilkenson, our customer associate, kept us well informed about the car’s status, letting us know within hours when he got an update. In fact, he helped us find the link to a video that BMW produced of the X3 being assembled. It was a neat little video, found under the MyBMW link on BMWUSA.com, that had a few video clips of the actual car going through the production line. After having waited nearly two months for an allocation and the start of the build, the video really helped Liz’s morale about her first new car.

So, with a lot of anticipation, we finally received word from Ian that the car had arrived at BMW’s vehicle processing center in Oxnard, California after a cross-country train ride from the factory and that the car would be arriving at the dealership within the week. Well, it took 3 days for the car to be trucked to Richland where we awaited delivery. We were notified the day it arrived and were allowed to take a look at the car before they had done the delivery prep. Matt Pettit met us at the front counter and walked us out to the car. There, we got to witness the priceless look on Liz’s face when she saw her new car for the first time.

(Continues on page 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
1	Memoirs of a New Car Purchase
1	Contact Information
2	From the President
2	Driving the 335d, or, ‘Tis Better to Have Loved, and Lost...’
5	BMW Rattlesnake Tour of BMW Tri-Cities

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From the President

My fellow Rattlesnakes, by the time you read this, elections for the upcoming year will have been ratified and a new President will be in place serving the vision of the membership. Thus, this President’s Page will be the last of my tenure. I would like to thank all of our volunteer members who have helped create, coordinate, host, and participate in Chapter events over the past two years. It has been an honor working alongside you.

For those who have not come out to an event, please make 2012 the year you do. Planning for next year is currently in full swing with the events calendar forecast to be complete in January. Ideas and event concepts from any member are not only welcomed but encouraged. We know both what we have done in the past and what we are kicking around currently for 2012, but you should tell us what you would like to do and provide critical feedback on past events. The Board strives to make your car club experience the best possible and new ideas only make that result more likely.

Club involvement is not limited to events coordination, however. Involvement also occurs through website management, writing an article for *Der Schlangenbiss*, casting your vote for Board Member elections, or simply coming out and driving your car. You can get involved in whatever manner you would like, that is the beauty of a volunteer organization.

And while I may no longer be the Chapter President, I will remain very much involved. I look forward to working with you.

Mark Blankenship

Driving the 335d, or, “Tis Better to have Loved, and Lost...”

by Karl Agee

Last summer, my E39 was laid-up at BMW Seattle waiting for parts for a repair. This was an unexpected delay. The lady I was seeing at the time, Jan (some of you met her at the evening at Bookwalter Winery) and I were spending the weekend in Seattle while my car was undergoing repairs. Since they couldn't finish the

car and had to order parts, they graciously loaned me a 335d. So, after we got back to the dealership from our day-tripping around downtown Seattle, we had them bring down my car and we unloaded our luggage and put it into the 335d. It was a tight fit but we got everything in the trunk. I keep a lot of emergency stuff in my own car including a bag of Griot's cleaning supplies. Of course that stayed behind.

For those who do not know, BMW builds more diesel powered cars than gas (petrol) engine cars. BMW builds its diesel engines at its engine plant in Steyr, Austria along with most of the 6-cylinder engines. BMW considers the Steyr plant its “Diesel Center of Excellence.” Diesel is the standard fuel in most of the world. Low-sulfur diesel has been available around the world for years but only recently in the US. This is why high-quality diesel cars have only been recently available on this side of the Pond.

The diesel engine that BMW brought to the US is the 3.0L turbocharged N57 motor putting out 265 BHP at the flywheel and a near-stump-pulling 425 lb-ft of torque. And pull it does! This motor was not only put in the E90 but also in the X5. The N57 motor is of the common fuel rail direct injection design with variable geometry turbos. Instead of injecting fuel to mix with

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air in an intake manifold, the fuel is injected directly into each cylinder. This allows for a very efficient and quiet motor. Most modern engines now use direct fuel injection. Gone are the noisy, dirty, smelly diesel engine cars of the past! Now we have very quiet, very fast, and very efficient diesels, but at a price.

BMW Seattle has two diesel powered X5's they use as customer shuttles. I have ridden in these and have asked the drivers how they like them. They report to me they are a bit sluggish at city street speeds but on the freeway on-ramps they get on it pretty quickly. I found this to be true in our loaded 335d but it was not bad on the streets. The E90, even fully loaded, is not as heavy as an X5.

My initial impression was that the motor is a little rough at idle (while sitting in the car with windows up) and at immediate on-throttle from a stop. But standing outside the car with the engine running at idle, you hardly notice it's running! Get it up to about 35-40 mph and the engine quiets right down and is nearly as smooth as the M54 motor in my E39, especially at (legal) freeway speeds.

Power? You Want Power? With this motor, you get all the power you can legally use. It is very quick to get up to merging speed on Seattle freeways, even with the A/C running. Yes, we do use the A/C in Seattle—two months out of the year. In hot years. Punch the throttle and Hold On! You are pushed back into your seat and the Power keeps on coming! I drove Jan back from Seattle to her home in LaGrande—a 6-hour drive, all freeway, during early August when temperatures were in the 90's and the car did not care. Going up Snoqualmie pass, it was quiet, powerful and smooth as my E39. It flattened the Manstash and Untanum Ridges between Ellensburg and Selah like they weren't there, despite the heat, steep grades and elevation changes. Up and over Horse Heaven Pass and over the Columbia River. We stopped in Pendleton, Oregon for a break at the US395 exit, where the Rodeo arena is located. We got back on I-84 eastbound, and the entrance ramp is a pretty steep, long incline. I decided to see what this engine had—and I found out! I gave the throttle just a little angle and WHOA!!!! NELLIE!!!! We climbed the ramp and we entered the freeway at more than the required speed to safely merge. I didn't want to scare Jan—or threaten my driver's license—so I kept it sane. But, I doubt I could

scare Jan—she grew up driving V8 powered Mustangs!

Then on to Cabbage Hill—in the left lane. The sign really should say, “BMW's Only--Left Lane”. Rising from an elevation of 1500 ft at the Casino to nearly 3200 ft at Poverty Flats, this ten-mile stretch of road with its 6-percent grade and hairpin turns tests us amateur little car drivers and professional truckers every day. 55-gallon drums of water are located at strategic points along the shoulder in case your engine overheats! The diesel laughed at this challenge and I kept it at 65 all the way up - including hairpins! Yes, the E90 is an excellent handling road car!

Then onto Deadman's Pass, then Meacham Pass at ~4500 ft, then finally, down to LaGrande and the beautiful Grande Rhonde Valley. I dropped Jan at her home.

The gas mileage was impressive. It was pretty steady at 35 mpg for the entire trip to LaGrande, and several days later, back to Seattle when my car was ready, even with a fully loaded car with the two of us, our luggage, hot weather, long grades, and the a/c on all the time. Lots of Power whenever I needed it. Very impressive.

The other thing I noticed was the amount of heat the engine generated. Whenever I exited the car I could feel heat coming from under the car. The auxiliary electric fans were no doubt running after I turned the car off to continue cooling, as it was during a hot period. I have not noticed that much heat coming off my E39, or other newer cars I have recently driven.



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The BMW mpg gauge on the instrument cluster was another interesting difference. I forgot what it started at, something like 25 mpg! It went up as high as 55 mpg.

This engine comes at a hefty premium--\$4500. BMW did have incentives at one time for this motor, which I believe were attached to some tax breaks for customers who bought high-mileage, low CO₂ cars. That premium could be one reason BMW no longer offers the diesel in the 3-series, but is continuing to offer it in the X5. It does offer a tremendous performance boost with an increase in fuel economy, even with the higher price of diesel fuel. If you're in the market for a fast yet efficient E90 and you want to avoid the fuel pump problems with the twin-turbo N54 motor but do not want the expense of an M car, then the 335d would make a very worthwhile choice. Too bad it was not available in the convertible E93 chassis.

The E90 diesel and my Jan—"Tis better to have Loved, and Lost, than Never to have Loved at all!!!"

New Car (con't)

One of the things I noticed right off the bat after we arrived was how everyone at the store knew it was our car and were excited for us. It was a strange feeling to be treated like family at a car dealership. Ian was off that day, but he came in to give us the proper delivery experience – something we have to commend him with. The rest of the process went very smoothly. TJ

Bush got me a better interest rate on my loan that I had been pre-qualified for and gave us a good deal on our trade-in. Armando Cisneros did a great job processing the paperwork so we could officially take delivery of the car. While I was signing away, Ian helped Liz understand all the new features of the car. Such was the professionalism of the staff and the excitement that just about everyone involved stayed after hours to make sure our delivery went smoothly and we were happy.

Sadly, two weeks later Liz was rear-ended in the car. Fortunately, she was not harmed and the damage rather superficial. Such was the quality of the new X3's construction that only the rear bumper was damaged but the other car had its front end smashed in. Liz stopped by Curtis Messer's place that evening, thankfully still open after normal business hours, where Curtis took a look at the car to make sure it was drivable. Liz also called Ian the next day to let him know what happened. BMW of Tri-Cities brought the car in that day and did a thorough inspection. It passed with a clean bill of health. So, we are grateful to Curtis Messer and BMW of Tri-Cities for the professionalism they showed Liz to make sure her car was safe to drive, made all the more important as I was out of town at the time.

Between the great buying experience and the superb service we've received, BMW of Tri-Cities has definitely earned our business.

(Photo courtesy of Ken Summa)





BMW Rattlesnake Chapter Tour of BMW of Tri-Cities

by Karl Agee

Photos courtesy of Karl Agee

I don't know too much about Tim Bush, other than he is a local businessman and operated a small used car lot for many years at the corner of Jadwin and Symons, at the north end of Uptown in Richland. He was (probably still is) involved in real estate development in Richland. Sometime around 2000, he purchased a Suzuki Automobile franchise and spent a lot of money remodeling the old Payless Drug Store on Lee Boulevard and Stevens Drive. A large service department went in, and they re-did the parking lot into a car display area with lots of fancy landscaping. About 3 or 4 years later, he sold the franchise to Ted Leskovar, citing "I was tired of the business" as quoted in the Tri-City Herald. He said he was busy with other

business interests, and I believe he was heavily involved in the development of Columbia Point.

Whenever I hear local businessmen say, "I got tired of the business", which I have on several occasions, I usually think "we lost money on it" or "we were tired of the hard work it takes". So, when in May we learned that Tim Bush had purchased the BMW franchise from Hahn Motors of Yakima, I was naturally skeptical. Would he, could he, given the past record with the Suzuki franchise, make a real success of a BMW dealership in the Great Stinkin' Desert of Eastern Washington, where lifted and diesel-powered Ford, Chevy, Dodge and (non-diesel) Toyota trucks, and Harley Davidson Motorcycles rule the asphalt?

After the Suzuki affair, Bush built a used car sales (and service) business on Aaron Drive in Richland, with good visibility and access from the interstate. Prominently displayed were all makes of vehicles including dualies, super-duty pick-ups of various makes, an occasional motor home, vans and box trucks of various configurations, utility trailers and boats

(with trailers). If it has wheels, and could be licensed for use on the public highways, Tim Bush could probably sell it.

From what friends have told me, the last BMW Dealership in the Tri-Cities was owned by Ted Leskovar in Kennewick. It was closed sometime around 1992. So it has been nearly 20 years since a BMW dealer has been located here. When I left here in 2007 for the left side of the state, I hardly noticed a BMW unless it was something cool like a 2002 or a 633csi. When I acquired my E39 and I occasionally came here for business or to visit friends, I saw one here, one there. I thought wow, where do those folks get parts, service, or oil for their M-Cars?

Now, I see a lot of BMW's on the streets of the Tri-Cities. With the growth here, and a more upscale, educated and younger crowd the national laboratory and the growing medical community attracts, more and more BMW's have come to reside in the dry, dusty air, ride the smooth roads and tour the wineries. The coming of a BMW dealer owned not by an outsider or a large corporation, but an established local businessman, certainly was welcome news to everyone in the BMW community here, and welcomed even in Seattle. While I never shopped or used the BMW dealer in Yakima, there are enough anecdotal stories out there to convince people here to shop in Seattle, Portland, or Spokane for cars and use the internet for parts - if you don't need it today, that is.

As reported in the April/May/June issue of *Der Schlangebiss*, Chapter President Mark Blankenship made first contact with the Bush people and gave his extensive report.

On a fine early September Saturday morning, nine chapter members visited the now BMW of Tri-Cities for a get-acquainted meeting and tour. We were greeted by the dealership's service manager Matt Pettit and client advisor Ian Wilkinson. They were gracious to supply pastries and coffee. They told us about the plans for the expansion of the facility, such as expanding the showroom to show up to six cars and showed us a book of architectural renderings of building elevations and interiors; adding at least 3 bays to the service department, building an "intensive care unit" for car programming that is going in now, a new detail shop also being built now (now housed in two tents), a larger parts department warehouse (now housed in two conex boxes), and a BMW lifestyle/accessories showroom, for such items as clothes, watches, series-number key rings, BMW tire valve cover caps, and BMW bumper shoots.

The parts desk is temporarily located where the lifestyle showroom is now. Right next to (the correct) car batteries on a charging rack are various BMW clothing items for you and your sweetie. Out in the service lobby are display cases with various BMW cleaning chemicals and other accessories including, gasp!—a BMW men's chronometer watch! Can you



control it from your iDrive? Well, you will have to visit to check it out!

Matt Pettit indicated the expansions and other construction are scheduled to be completed by September 2012.

So, why a separate bay for “car programming”? When I went on a tour of the new BMW Seattle dealership in a special open house for the Puget Sound Region Chapter, dealership manager Steve Bates took us to their car programming bay. It was behind cyber-locked doors, and you could barely see through the tiny window! He explained re-programming a car's DME or transmission computer was a slow, delicate operation that took many hours—usually overnight—and that a serial connection is utilized, which is very, very slow. Even walking by a car that is in programming mode and lightly brushing up against it will cause static electricity to break the connection, causing the programming to fail! So BMW has designed a special bay that allows a car to be programmed—but even then it fails sometimes and must be re-done!

On the service department side, in addition to adding a car programming bay and additional service bays, BMW-specified imported-from-Germany chamfered ceramic floor tiles will be added. They have four BMW certified techs, including one master tech. These techs came from Hahn, and Pettit indicated they are very pleased with their skills and customer service

attitude. Several members on the tour indicated they have taken their BMW's into the new dealership service department for immediate needs, and were quickly and efficiently taken care of. Matt also indicated Saturday Parts and Service will be available in early October, so it should be up and running by the time you read this.

On the parts side, I have visited the parts department several times this fall and have not been disappointed. The items I needed were small, such as some expanding rivets and some screws, some of which they had in stock, and some which they needed to order. Dealers do not like to order real small items like this, as they have to order a package of 5 or 10 or 100 (or, more) to fill an order of 2, and the others may be sitting in inventory for months before they are sold. But they had no problem with ordering these items. I also needed a thermostat housing gasket, which they didn't have (but, I was surprised they had the entire thermostat unit for the M54 engine) and a windshield washer pump with grommet and strainer, which they did have. They also had wiper blade inserts. Their parts guys come from Lithia Dodge, a local parts store and one other business. The parts manager, Al Acevedo, seemed pretty knowledgeable on BMW parts. They all seem friendly, eager to look up parts and dive into the conex boxes to find things, and help me get what I came in for.

I do have concerns over their lack of BMW knowledge (“Is this what you are looking for????” “Does it look



like THIS??" as I have heard at other places). They also indicated the local independent shops, such as Messer and Redline, are starting to order parts from them instead of going to Carerra in Bend, Oregon (as Messer does) and BMW Seattle (as Redline does).

Do they know what a RTAB, lollipop or a guibo is? Or do they have one for an E30? Or, do they know what either is? An E30, that is.....Time will tell.

Matt indicated during our tour they would be giving parts and probably service discounts to Club members. I have been extended a discount when I have made my purchases, so they have kept their word. Matt also indicated they are customer focused and want to make the club a big part of their business and want to do whatever they can to service us, and their other customers, too. Our growth is their growth, and vice versa. Good words to hear.

Please remember to visit our chapter website, it is a great place to catch up on current events, review articles including the Der Schlangenbiss, view photos of events, and please leave us your comments suggestions and opinions. <http://rattlesnakebmw.org/BMWblog/>
Feel free also to share with us your photos of BMW's, Chapter events you have attended and more. Send them to me and maybe we will use them in the newsletter.

'Tis the Season for White Elephant Gifts

Lightning McQueen on a 2002 Headlight Housing Will Return at the Annual Christmas Party



SUGGESTIONS WANTED

If you have suggestions for club events, want to see specific articles in the newsletter, or for general comments, please send them to our chapter President, Mark Blankenship, at m.blankenship@gmail.com or the newsletter editor, Ken Summa, at kenandliz@clearwire.net.

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