



Die Zugspitze

New York Chapter Newsletter | Summer 2015

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New York Chapter
2015 Events Calendar

March	7	22nd Annual Beach Party
	21	Dyno Day
April	4	New York International Auto Show
	25	Teen Street Survival
May	2	Autocross
	16	Autocross
	24	Autocross
June	8~9	Driving School: Watkins Glen, NY
July/August	~	Kart Racing
September	13	Wine & Shine
	21~27	46th Annual Oktoberfest
	27	Concours d'Elegance
October	4	Wine & Shine (Rain Date)
	~	Kart Racing
December	5	Holiday Party & President's Dinner

For the latest information, see www.nybmwcca.org

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On the Cover : *A BMW enthusiast-in-the-making at New York International Auto Show*
 ~ Photo by André Noël

To join the BMW Car Club of America, call 1-800-878-9292 or visit www.bmwcca.org. BMW CCA national dues are \$48 per year, \$15 of which is for Roundel.

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Services on older cars include:

- Reviving cars that have been in storage
- Engine rebuilding
- Component rebuilding, such as manual transmissions, steering gear
- Maintenance and repair
- Partial and complete restorations, overseeing work which is not done in-house, such as painting, upholstery and rechromin

EuroMeccanica, Inc. was started by Michael Shiffer in 1991. Michael is a tech advisor for NYBMWCCA and EuroMeccanica hosts their annual Beach Party, where dozens of BMW owners and enthusiasts converge to learn more about their cars. The shop's atmosphere is warm and open. Questions and input from our customers are welcome, and we make every effort to explain what we are doing to your car, and why.



Race car preparation:

- Installation of roll bars, harnesses, racing seats, fire systems and other safety devices
- Suspension modification, such as coil-over conversions, larger sway bars and urethane bushings
- Chassis stiffening and reinforcement: Bolt-on engine modifications, such as cams, cold-air boxes, exhaust systems and larger radiators
- Fuel cell installation
- Two-way radio installation

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President's Page | Mike Bizzarro



After a slow start due to the extended winter, our event season quickly shifted into high gear with autocross and street survival. But first we kicked things off with our annual special presentation by BMW North America at the New York International Auto Show (article in this issue). The auto show was something my dad took me to when I was younger and somewhere there exists a photo of a pre-teen at the handlebars of a prototype BMW motorcycle. (The irony is not lost.) Now years later, as luck would have it, he was in town and I was able to take him to the show and spend a day in the city recounting tales of car shows past. We also had the opportunity and great pleasure to socialize with many club members and to meet a lot of you for the first time. Some were carrying on the same tradition, bringing the next generation of wide-eyed 'enthusiasts-in-the-making' to see what the future holds when it's their turn to take the wheel (or whatever we'll be steering cars with then).

Seeing so many new faces got me thinking... How many of you know the number of members in our chapter? 100, 500, 1000? Believe it or not, as of April our chapter has over 2,700 members! Now the next logical questions: What was it that drew all of you into the club; how do we get to meet more of you; and how do we assure you are getting everything you can out of being a club member? Are you in it for the camaraderie? Just can't get enough of the smell of burning brakes and the sound of squealing tires? Or is it the simpler things like a casual show and shine? We want to know and this year we want to get more of you engaged with club happenings.

To aid in finding the answers to these questions and to better tailor chapter events for all of you, we are enlisting Survey Monkey to send out some questionnaires. You may find a few popping up in your e-mail, either as a follow-up to an event you've attended or to inquire about events you would like to see hosted. Please take a few moments to answer them as it will give you a voice in guiding future activities and the direction of the chapter.

We have also expanded our Social Media presence. You can now follow us on Twitter and Instagram (@nybmwcca) to stay abreast of the most up-to-date chapter activities. This will also allow us the flexibility of more impromptu events like cars and coffee, a casual cruise, or even some meet and greets.

We hope these changes will bring a more engaging experience for all of you and show the true value of being a club member.

Well, as I run out of space I leave you with one quick reminder: O'fest registration is open and filling up FAST! Don't miss out.

Have a happy and safe 4th of July and see you at the next event!

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of America
New York Chapter**



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New York Chapter BMW CCA Presents

Admission Fees for Spectators

Members of OWG	FREE
General Admission	\$10
Adults over 62	\$8
Youth (7-12)	\$5

(Payable at the gate.)

Classifications

Street: Judged on exterior only (No undercarriage; tops up on convertibles)

Concours: Judged on interior, exterior, engine compartment, trunk (No undercarriage, tops up on convertibles)

Tuner: Judged on interior, exterior, engine compartment (No undercarriage, tops up on convertibles), with a focus on creativity and uniqueness.

MINI Corral: "Best of Show". Mini's only. Judged on interior, exterior, engine compartment and trunk (No undercarriage, tops up on convertibles)

Location

Old Westbury Gardens
71 Old Westbury Road
Old Westbury, NY 11568

Directions To Old Westbury Gardens

www.oldwestburygardens.org
For additional directions
call (516) 333-0048

Registration

Deadline: September 20th, 2015
Online Registration at
www.motorsportreg.com

For additional information

Contact: Gordon DeShong,
srde28@hotmail.com

Concours d'Elegance

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Sunday September 27, 2015

Gates open at 7:45 AM for entrants, 10:00 AM for general public
Judging will begin at 11:00 AM

Entrants Fees: (includes Gardens' admission fee for driver)

Pre-registration BMWs, \$40.00 (payment must be made
by September 20th);

Registration, day of event BMWs – \$50.00, space available basis

Pre-registration MINIs – \$25.00 (payment must be made by
September 20th)

Registration, day of event MINIs – \$30.00, space available basis

The featured marques are BMW, Porsche and Mercedes Benz

Please make plans to attend this great event. Bring your family
out to enjoy a gorgeous Sunday on the Great Lawns of
Old Westbury Gardens.

Autocross Corner

2015 Autocross Season

Hello Autocross Fans!

The short 2015 season got off to a very nice start on May 2. On a mild, sunny day, 75 members showed up to have a great time at Nassau Coliseum. After the long, rough winter that we had, everyone was ready to test their driving skills. Tony Howell and I set up very nice course to drive. Lots of the members commented on how much fun they had driving the course and could not wait for the next event.

This year we also implemented new classification for the different car groups. Looking at the results from the event, the mass majority of cars in each run group were closely matched in runtimes. We will closely monitor the run groups and make any adjustments we feel necessary for classification of cars for next event.

While this was a short season, we're hopeful a new venue will become available and we'll return to our normal full schedule of events.

As always, it's great seeing every one of you!

André Noël, Autocross Chairman

with photos by Mike Allen



Exclusive Lime Rock Park Offer

to BMW Car Club of America Members & Guests

It's **BMW CCA Days** sponsored by BMW NA Wood Cliff Lake NJ and New Country BMW in Hartford CT. For the last three years, BMW CCA and Lime Rock Park have partnered to offer BMW CCA members an exceptional deal on a weekend of BMW-themed fun at the storied Connecticut racetrack.

This year, we are celebrating **BMW CCA Days** at the region's biggest sports car event, The Northeast Grand Prix featuring the IMSA Tudor United Sports Car Championship and Continental Tire Sports Car Challenge! We want to thank the CCA members for their passion and loyalty to the teams that compete with BMWs, so we've arranged for an exclusive entertainment package on two unique days of the race weekend. Team RLL of BMW NA will not be there with the Z4 GT cars, but Turner Motorsport and Fall Line Racing will be there campaigning BMW's.

Thanks to BMW CCA, BMW North America and New Country BMW, here's what is available only as a CCA Member:

- The flexibility of admission for the Friday, July 24 practice and qualifying day, the Saturday, July 25 race day, or both days in a special weekend pass with access to the BMW CCA Days hospitality tent
- **Free parking** with your BMW in the BMW Corral on the days of your attendance (parade laps on Friday)
- **Special guests** throughout the weekend from Turner Motorsport and Fall Line Motorsports
- **Private paddock tours** and autograph sessions for the BMW CCA hospitality tent guests with a Gourmet VIP Boxed Lunch for each day of choice, which includes a hearty, baguette-style ultra-stuffed sandwich with a selection of Italian Combo, Chicken Breast, Heirloom Tomato and Roast Turkey options to choose from, fresh baked cookies, a local apple or seasonal fresh whole fruit, a sweet snack or mixed nuts, artisanal potato chips, condiments and a chilled bottle of Crystal Rock water. Assorted carbonated beverages and one complimentary glass of beer or wine for each day of choice, with additional adult beverages available at the cash bar located in the BMW CCA hospitality tent.

Limited to the first 200 tickets sold, available for purchase by BMW CCA members only. Each BMW CCA member may purchase as many tickets as they need.

Lime Rock Park is a family friendly venue with lots to do for both adults and kids, with great food and track-viewing areas under trees all around the track. Lime Rock Park, in Connecticut's famous Northwest Corner, is about two and a half hours from Boston and two hours from New York City.

The ticket packages, exclusive to BMW CCA Members and Guests, are listed below. Take advantage of this screaming good offer to come and enjoy the spirit of BMW CCA today!

Friday, July 24 Adult Ticket: \$60.00

Saturday, July 25 Adult Ticket: \$85.00

Weekend (July 24 + 25) Adult Ticket: \$130.00

Friday Child Ticket: \$10.00

Saturday Child Ticket: \$10.00

Weekend Child Ticket: \$20.00

To purchase your "BMW CCA Days" special ticket package, call Lime Rock Park at (860) 435-5000, weekdays between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Have your BMW CCA Membership Number at the ready

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New York International Auto Show 2015 Edition aka Dave's Garage

by Sherwin de Shong



Yup this feels right

The legend lives on



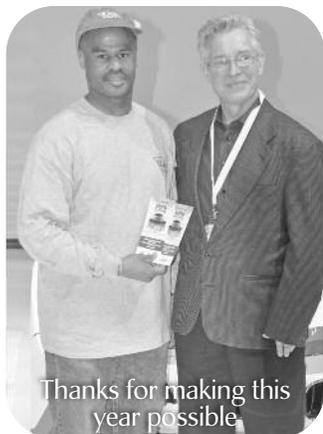
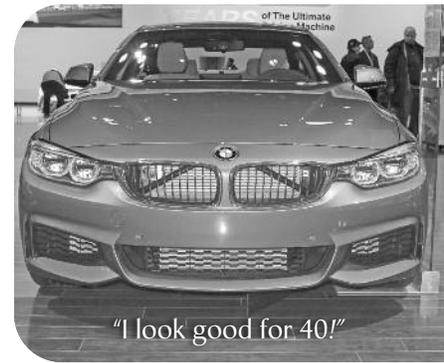
- W**e have confirmed that:
- 9:00 am Early entry for Early Access ticket holders
 - 9:10 am Alpina B6 Gran Coupe walk around for BMW Car Club
 - 9:30 am Q&A
 - 10:00 am Show opens to the public

While the itinerary seemed a little thin compared to last year's, with multiple car introductions and speakers, I still couldn't stop looking at the 2015 model year brochure offering and noting over sixty-five (yes, 65) various model combinations. And all that was planned for discussion was the Alpina B6 Gran Coupe? *Confirmed.*

As usual we had over 200 BMWCCA members and their guests from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Washington D.C. rsvp to talk shop with BMW insiders. *Confirmed.*

BMWNA for their part did not disappoint in having Dave Buchko as our host for the morning. His guest from Alpina, Robert Frisch, gave a brief overview of Alpina's history and operations in Germany before delving into the specific attributes and differences of the Alpina B6 Gran Coupe compared to the BMW 640i/650i/M6 Gran Coupes.

Then, it was on to what I will refer to as "Dave's Garage". Dave Buchko handles product and technology communication for BMW, which means he can talk about all things BMW, from



M Cars options, Motorsports' 1975 3.0CSL, the 2015 Z4GTE on display (celebrating 40 years of racing in the United States) to why you should not dismiss the new 3 Series GT. Dave's Q&A/product discussion was made more enjoyable because his talk was tempered with his personal perspective. His current ride, for example, is a 3 Series GT and his explanation – that you don't know how much you can appreciate a car until you have it – was driven home by the extra headroom experienced by his two teenage sons in the backseat. Or the X6 (already in its second generation) as a car that nobody knew they needed or wanted until they drove one. Dave likened this to when people used kerosene to light their homes before electricity: "Why would I need electricity when I have plenty of kerosene?" And then you get your house

electrified and you wonder how you ever lived without it. Kind of like driving an X6 or X6M for the first time. Clever analogy. Whole lot of BMWCCA members and guest? *Confirmed.* Whole lot of brand new BMW's on display? *Confirmed.* Had a good time and looking forward to Saturday March 26th, 2016? *Confirmed!*

Photos by Darby Moses and André Noël

New York Chapter BMW CCA and BMW of Southampton present

The Vineyard Series Ninth Annual Wine & Shine at Pindar Vineyards

Sunday, September 13th 2015 • 12:00 pm (noon) to 3:00 pm

(Rain date: October 4)

Take a leisurely drive east to Long Island's Wine Country and join us at one of the North Fork's most highly rated vineyards, Pindar Vineyards Winery and Pavilion, for an afternoon in the late summer sun. Bring the family and a picnic lunch and relax on the pavilion overlooking the vineyards 550 acres. Sample Pindar's award-winning vintages, tour the vineyard's facilities and enjoy complimentary tastings, open to all BMW members. All wines are available to purchase at a special discount to our members only.

Everyone who pre-registers online will be eligible to enter their BMW in our clean car "Show and Shine" on the vineyard grounds. Pre-registration does not commit you to attend, but creates a framework for meaningful classes in the Show & Shine competition. All registered entrants also qualify to receive their choice of a free bottle of Pindar wine.

Please take the time to register online, it will help to insure there is an appropriate classification for your car.

Registration fee is \$10 per person, children are no charge (payable in cash only at the event).

Winners will receive their choice of select vintages of Pindar wines.

This year we have a new addition, as BMW of Southampton will sponsor our event. They will bring several new BMW models to the vineyard for everyone to see. Make sure to take a moment to check out the cars and chat with their representatives.

Register at: www.nybmwcca.org/shine

For additional information, contact Steve Geraci at stevegeraci@reflexphoto.com

Pindar Vineyard

37645 Main Rd., Peconic, NY 11958

(631) 734-6200

www.pindar.net

Maps & Info:

www.peconiclandtrust.com

www.liwines.net



The 22nd Annual Beach Party at EuroMeccanica

by Dave Flores

With this past winter being nothing short of “Winter” we certainly have longed for a day at the beach. The Annual Beach Party is not an actual day at the beach, but generally a social tech session with various speakers, demonstrations with Q&A and a hot buffet. We have the event in Spring’s infancy with hopes that warmer weather is just around the corner where we can wash, wax and bring our cars out of hibernation. This was our 22nd Annual Beach Party hosted by Michael Shiffer at EuroMeccanica in Yonkers, NY.

EuroMeccanica was started by Michael Shiffer in 1991. EuroMeccanica’s reputation has grown steadily: It is a well-known and highly-respected shop that has overseen the partial and total restoration of BMW, Mercedes, Jaguar, Rolls Royce, Bentley, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, and Daimler among other cars. It has prepared track cars for competition, driving schools and vintage racing. Repairs and maintenance are performed on modern European cars. Michael is also the tech advisor for NYBMWCCA, and like Michael, the shop’s atmosphere is warm and open.

This year Mike showed us how diagnostic techniques have been modernized, but are still second fiddle to a simple visual inspection. He had on display a cylinder head from a MINI with a defect overlooked by diagnostic techniques, but a visual inspection yielded a hairline crack. He also demonstrated single and double shear bolt tensions, leading us to an undercarriage inspection of a newer BMW model, the different types of bolt pulling and pushing forces and the benefits of each style.

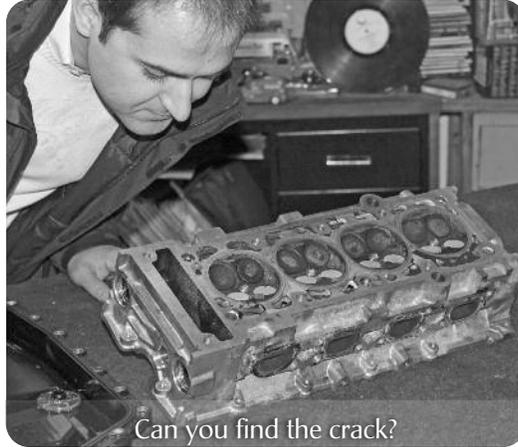
Another guest speaker was Matthew Brod. Matt spoke on the single greatest performance upgrade we can do for our cars, the driver itself. Matt stressed the importance of improving ourselves as the operators of our motor vehicles and the avenues to learn and hone those skills. Matt is the club’s Street Survival Chair. Street Survival is a driver education program sponsored by Tire Rack and geared for drivers less than 21 years of age. Matt touched on our two-day high performance driver school at Watkins Glen International in June. He also spoke about our autocross series this May at Nassau Coliseum. These are all great driving events with large learning curves; however improving the many skills we use in everyday driving situations will make us more alert, safer, and confident behind the wheel.

Thanks to all who attended this year’s event, making it another great success. I look forward to seeing everyone at the club’s upcoming driving events where we all can become better drivers.

Photos by Darby Moses



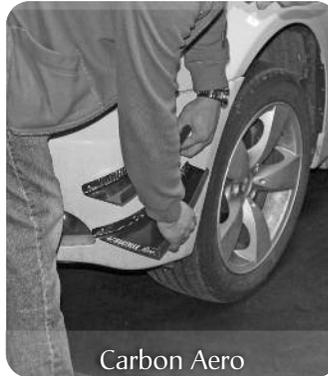
Suspension explained by our host Mike Shiffer



Can you find the crack?



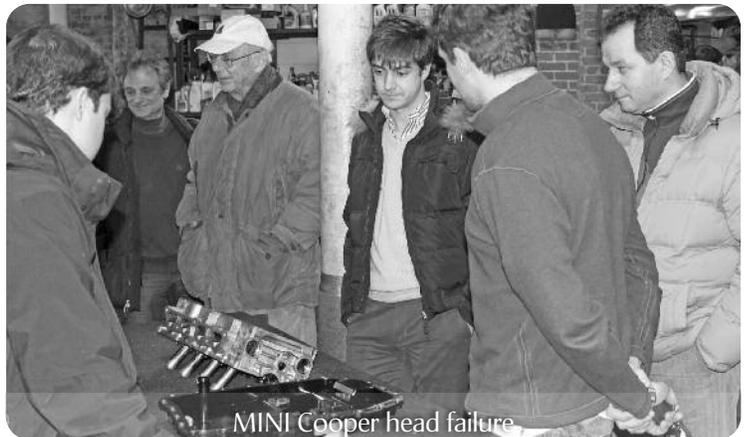
“I’m fierce!”



Carbon Aero



Matt explains driving dynamics



MINI Cooper head failure



Jay and Arvin demonstrate the latest fashions trends

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BMW-PORSCHE-AUDI-VOLKSWAGEN-VOLVO-SAAB

Dyno Day & BBQ

by Dave Flores

JVR Performance and 3 Nicks Auto Repair of Port Washington hosted the BMWCCA NY chapter "Dyno Day and BBQ". The morning started with flurries but soon turned into a warm, sunny day. There was no shortage of beautifully prepared performance vehicles and their owners, all asking the same question: How much horsepower do I have?

"Horsepower" was coined by James Watt, who invented a new type of steam engine in the eighteenth century. Watt found that a horse could do a certain amount of work per second. That amount of work was defined as moving 550 pounds per second (later found to be equivalent to 746 watts). When he attempted to sell his steam engines, this measurement allowed him to estimate the worth of an engine in terms of the number of horses it would replace. Over the centuries the product has changed but the sales pitch remains, and is still just as effective.

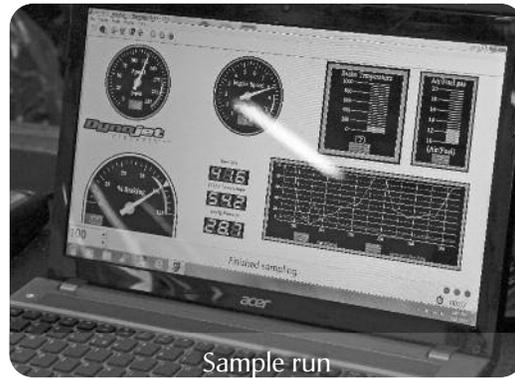
Today there aren't many sports car adverts that don't boast the amount of horsepower their engine produces. Most sports car owners know from brochures how much horsepower their cars have, but would be shocked to find out how many of those ponies actually make it to the wheels. Confused? Wheel horsepower (whp) is the power output measured at the wheels. This is the information a Dyno Run provides and it usually reads around 15% less than the power measured at the engine (bhp or brake horsepower). This is because power is lost in the driveline (including clutch and transmission) and engine accessories. The Dyno Run can also tell you how efficiently your engine is running by analyzing the exhaust gas for lean, stoic, or rich fuel conditions.

Members who opted to test their cars had three runs. The results were then graphed and laminated on a printout. Some cars produced impressive numbers, shocking the onlookers and even their owners. Jonathan Vasquez of JVR performance hosted an amazing event and we look forward to having another "Dyno Day" and BBQ in the future.

Photos by Darby Moses



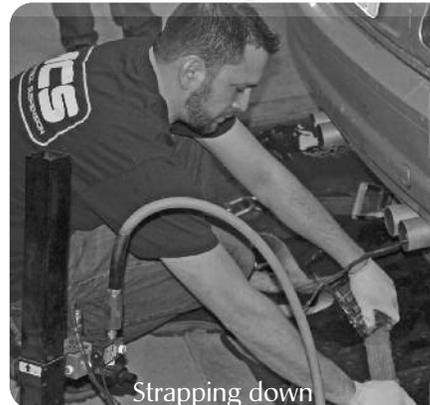
M235 putting down serious power



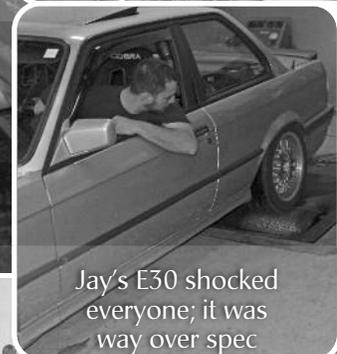
Sample run



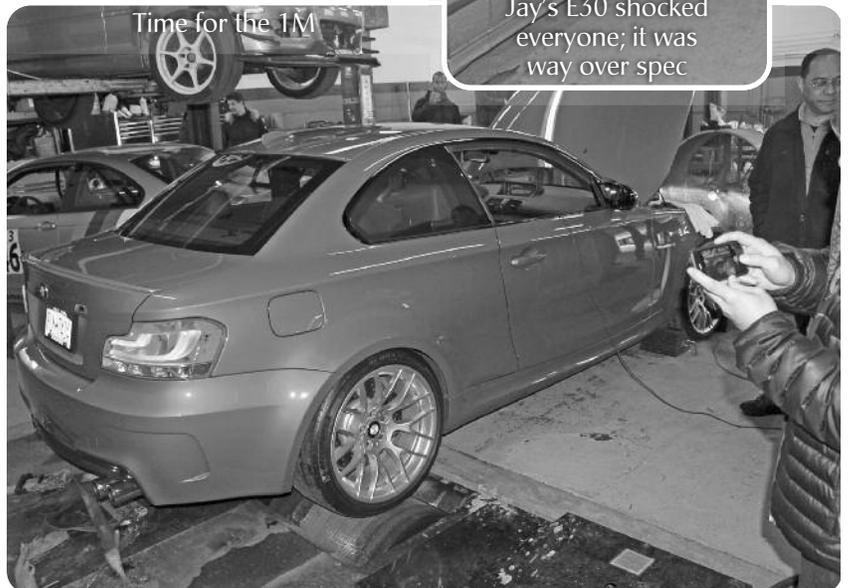
The 1M did what?



Strapping down
Time for the 1M



Jay's E30 shocked everyone; it was way over spec



Welcome

to our New Members!

Dana Abazis
William Abazis
Christopher Abbenda
Robert Acevedo
Sameet Ahmed
Daniel Albritton
Alex Alexander
Ricardo Alexander
Barry Beck
Mark Bento
Edwin Borelly
Gokce Bozkurt
John Breda
Barrington Brown
Howard Chan
Alexandra Choumitsky
Val Choumitsky
Steven Clark
Jordan Collier
Cathleen Colligan
John Cotrone
James Daley

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Adam Davidson
Porfirio Dominguez
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Jose Figuereo
Robert Flisikowski
Kristine Flynn
Geir Friis
KeVaughn Fulton
Mark Gasparini
Amal Gawle
Anthony Genovese
Suresh George
Anthony Giummo
Marat Gluzman
Samoil Grabler
Stephen Grocher

John Fuadagno
William Hayes
Conor Healy
Daniel Honovich
Greg Hubert
Andrey Ivannikov
Lester Jack
Kathy Jaffe
Christopher Jones
Kris Jones
Matthew Kalish
Gary Kanzler
Marc Katz
Brian Kaufman
John Kelly
Alicia Kemp
Pieter Keuskamp
Habib Khoury
Chi-Yuan Ko
Todd Krizelman
David Kung
Roman Kverel

Mike Lee
Kevin Li
Jerry Libes
Zachary Magid
John Martin
Wesley Martin
Don Mecca
Jeffrey Merritt
Dan Mikhno
Frank Millan
Harris J Miller
Duane Miyagishima
Bruce Moreno
Daniel Mulcahy
Steven Neski
Rafael Nisimov
Al Odierno
Kenneth Olsen
David Pan
Danko Panchich
Sean Parks
Aubrey Persaud
Brian Pettersen
Krystian Pirog
Jean Principe
Vincent Quartararo
Ferdinand Ramos
Taimese Revell
Stephen Riso

Osman Saleh
Thomas Sanidas
Cameron Smith
Christian Stachulec
Scott Stirling
Artur Tadevosyan
Paul Thompson
Ryan Thompson
Lisa Trinidad
Jerald Tsekas
Vadim Vapnyar
Jerman Velasquez
Nino Volpe
Martin Walcoe
Noah Weinstein
Thomas Wienckowski
Rudy Winkler
Kerrie Wittmer
Allen Wong
Joseph Wong
Randall Yang
Kevin Young
Nicholas Zakotiria
Richard Zyta

And a salute to our long standing members!

Anniversary milestones for members who joined between January and March

5th Anniversary

Phil Altman
Rangasamy Anbalagan
Reginald Barrett
Douglas Casimir
Michael Casimir
Mary Lynn Dlabola
John Finnerty
Mark Goodman
Sam Goodman
Stephen Grant
Petros Halkias
Steven Jacowitz
Alex Kuklov
Craig Lambricht
Stephen Lee
Michael Marsal
Michael Pettingill
Glen Sansone
Judith Sarantapoulas
Michael Schwartz
Robert Shapiro
Sharon Shapiro
Jaspreet Singh
Daniel Sperling

Arnold Tanowitz
Esther Tanowitz
Jerry Tessler
Jose Vargas
Scott Wanlass
Andrew Wels
Giuseppe Zeppieri

10th Anniversary

Frank Accetta
Evelyn Ain
Gary Ain
Bradley Amins
Vera Amins
Richard Brown
Domenic Fanelli
Brad Gemelli
Serge Ghio
Richard McIntosh
Rosemarie Pinotti
Janice Redmond
Rich Stevenson
Jammy Tam
Ignatey Terzian
Wes Wathey

Rodger Williams
Robert Wishnew
Ira Zepnick

15 Year Anniversary

Paul Alfano
Christian Balmaceda
Steven Bergman
Brett Berrie
Bernard Campbell
Harvey Cavayero
Salvatore Cocolicchio
David Crawford
Michael D'Arcangelo
Mark Ellis
William Elmore
Steven Fisher
Nicholas Fresella
Eric Jansen
Marc Katzman
Emre Kayaalp
F. Knapp
Nicholas Molnar
Peter Montauderes
Steven Nalaboff

David Panno
Brian Rhee
Ronald Salkow
Norman Silverman
Albert Thomas
Stanley Tso

20th Anniversary

Gregory Fouche
Emilio Harris
William Karasis
Bradley Olsen
Christos Papadatos
Dennis Raptis
Frank Stamatatos
Ernest Wong

25th Anniversary

Laurence Barile
Steven Bernstein
Seiichi Mori

35th Anniversary

Dominic Costa
Alan Hillie

40th Anniversary

John Damtoft



Ramblings of a MINiac

by Peter Burke

While warm weather isn't guaranteed with the arrival of Easter, there is one thing that is, the New York International Auto Show. I've mentioned it before here; it is a ritual I have gone through since I was a child. Though this year's show was not a disappointment, there is one thing that was — the absence of MINI. While there is talk in MINI circles as to why MINI wasn't there, the bottom line is that MINI missed out on an opportunity to present the new 4-door sedan as well as the new JCW F56 to a big fan base.

Two of the biggest hits at the show were the VW Golf R and the Ford Focus RS, as well as the next generation Swindon UK-built Civic, which will be coming to these shores. These cars are all serious competition for MINI, yet MINI was a no show. Meanwhile, at the Shanghai auto show in late April, MINI showed off its Mini Augmented Vision concept: specialized eyewear that projects a bunch of relevant information into the driver's view. Is this what MINI has become? Eyeglasses, no matter how smart, do not make a better car or a better driving experience. MINI did display the F56 JCW in Shanghai,

something that would have been nice to see at the Javits Center. Let's hope the boffins in Oxford, or I mean Munich have something up their sleeve to combat the increasing competition.

Meanwhile on the local scene, looks like we have a new addition to the MINI club scene. Matt Wayne, Assistant Manager of Sales at Habberstad MINI, who has led us on many a MINI adventure, has announced the formation of the Habberstad MINiacs. The structure of Habberstad MINiacs will be different than traditional clubs. The club will be a group effort, there will be no officers. There will be monthly events where having fun is a priority and driving is involved. Check the Habberstad MINI website for more information. The other MINI club on Long Island, USMINICLUB, held their annual MINIQ event May 3rd at Bethpage Park. A barbecue was planned, as well as various activities such as MINI Bingo and a car show.

No matter what club or event you go to, here's to a healthy and happy summer with many miles under your belt! See you at Lime Rock at the Historic Festival in September!



Photo by Vanessa Vales at Bethpage State Park

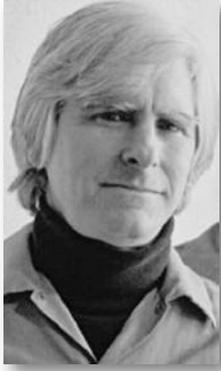


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Tech Talk with Mike Shiffer

My wife is enrolled in a certificate program for botanical artists: a small, highly-skilled group who share some unusual traits and interests. Naturally, the artists are interested in one another as people, and as they walked together to the parking lot after class, one expressed some curiosity about what car my wife drove. She was surprised at the sight of

my wife's wheels, a 2005 Mini Cooper in primrose yellow. The car does not match my mate's personality. The Mini is showy and self-consciously cute: my daughter nicknamed it "The Little Drop of Sunshine". It is a car for an extrovert, which my wife is not. She quickly made it clear that she had nothing to do with selecting the car. In fact, I had bought it from a customer who sold it when it needed major engine work. Now fixed up, it has been my wife's daily driver for the last year or so. She enjoys the great handling, gas mileage and being able to park in tiny spaces. This more than compensates for the wildly inaccurate teeny-bopperesque image it conveys. This got me thinking about which cars make statements about their owners, and which do not. What they say is interesting; more interesting is how loudly and clearly they say it. I currently have five cars on the road, whose volumes span the range.

The softest is a 1997 Subaru Outback wagon. I bought it, sight unseen and for a song, from an acquaintance with a blown engine (the car, not the acquaintance). I replaced the engine with a used one, fixed a few minor problems (including replacing the driver's seat with a BMW sport seat rescued from a flooded E30 325is; why the Japanese persist in fitting their cars with seats that utterly fail to fit my posterior is a wonder to me) and put it back on the road. The car has given us over 200,000 miles of reliable service. It not as prosaic as a Civic or Camry and a bit older than average, but because of its color (black), configuration (station wagon), condition (a little dinged up) and the large number of Subarus in these parts, it refuses to say anything meaningful about its owner's personality.

Next up the scale is a tie. The 1993 BMW wagon with the V12 that I've nattered on about before has few external signs that distinguish it. It is older than most BMWs now on the road and being a BMW enjoys a certain cachet, but a discerning eye is needed to see that it is lowered and sports Big Brakes. It does convey the owner's appreciation for Golden Era BMWs, but it isn't quite old enough to be thought a classic. Since I replaced the noisy performance exhaust ("Rorty!", the Englishman says) with an assertive but civilized M5 muffler, it no longer rattles windows. Rather it slides down the road in its sedate green skin, well under nearly everybody's radar. (Until I punch it. I'm ashamed and embarrassed to admit that shutting down poseurs is still fun.)

The wagon is in a tie with our gray 1982 VW pick-up. Similar to the subtle message of the BMWs "550" badge and large twin exhaust pipes, the Volkswagen's weirdness is clear to only a few.

Cognoscenti will recognize it as being a rare and adorable variant of the ubiquitous Rabbit of 1977-1984, but its only striking feature for most is its size, or lack thereof. I once pulled up next to a full-sized 4WD GMC pick-up. My roof line was even with the bottom of his passenger window. This tininess does turn heads from time to time, and people in the know have offered to buy it on the spot, but its prosaic color, pick-up shape and demure styling make it stand out less for plain folk than a hot red GTI.

I've already covered the Mini, the second-loudest car I own. I must clarify that although the Mini's remorselessly sunny affect is not a reflection of my wife or me, we are not dour and cranky. The next vehicle is proof of that, as it is the clarion call that trumpets our life philosophy to the world as fully as any object can do.

Our 1976 VW Westfalia in orange-yellow.



Yes, the "Little Miss Sunshine"-mobile, though ours has a camper interior, a top that lifts up and a door that doesn't fall off. This is the car that tells the world exactly who we are: people who

embrace what was good and beautiful and liberating in our adolescence, but are now adults responsible and capable enough to take care of this splendid relic and still use it for its intended purpose. We mosey along, at or below the speed limit, with our home on our back, use little gas, carry only what we need, see the world and spread joy by stirring up warm childhood memories in folks who rode in VW busses when they were young. A remarkable number of people, seeing our bus, have come up to us and told us their own bus stories. Most involve travel and camping as children or with their own kids, and how much they loved it, and how large a role the bus itself had in the experience. Tales are told of breakdowns, blown engines and the strange and wonderful people who crawled out of the scenery to help out. Some folk gaze wistfully at our bus, and think out loud about getting one again. No car is as clear an extension and reflection of its owners' personality as this one. Not many evoke an era as thoroughly as the bus, and few other cars have found a place in the hearts of so many people.

I trust the Subaru, enjoy the Rabbit, have fun in the Mini, get rocked silly by the BMW.

But I love the bus.



Michael Shiffer

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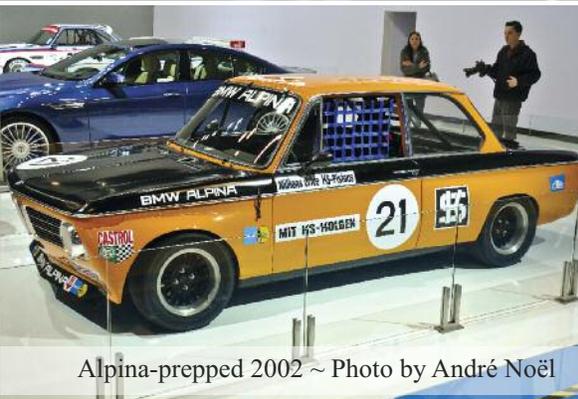


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Photo by André Noël



Alpina-prepped 2002 ~ Photo by André Noël

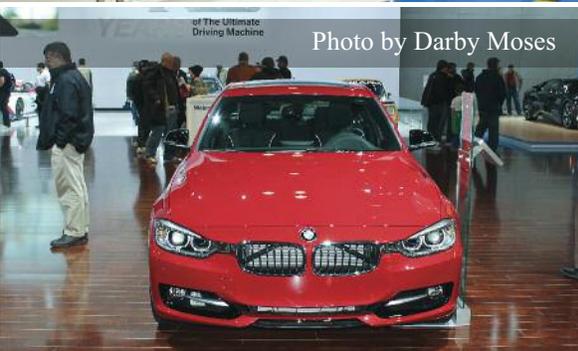
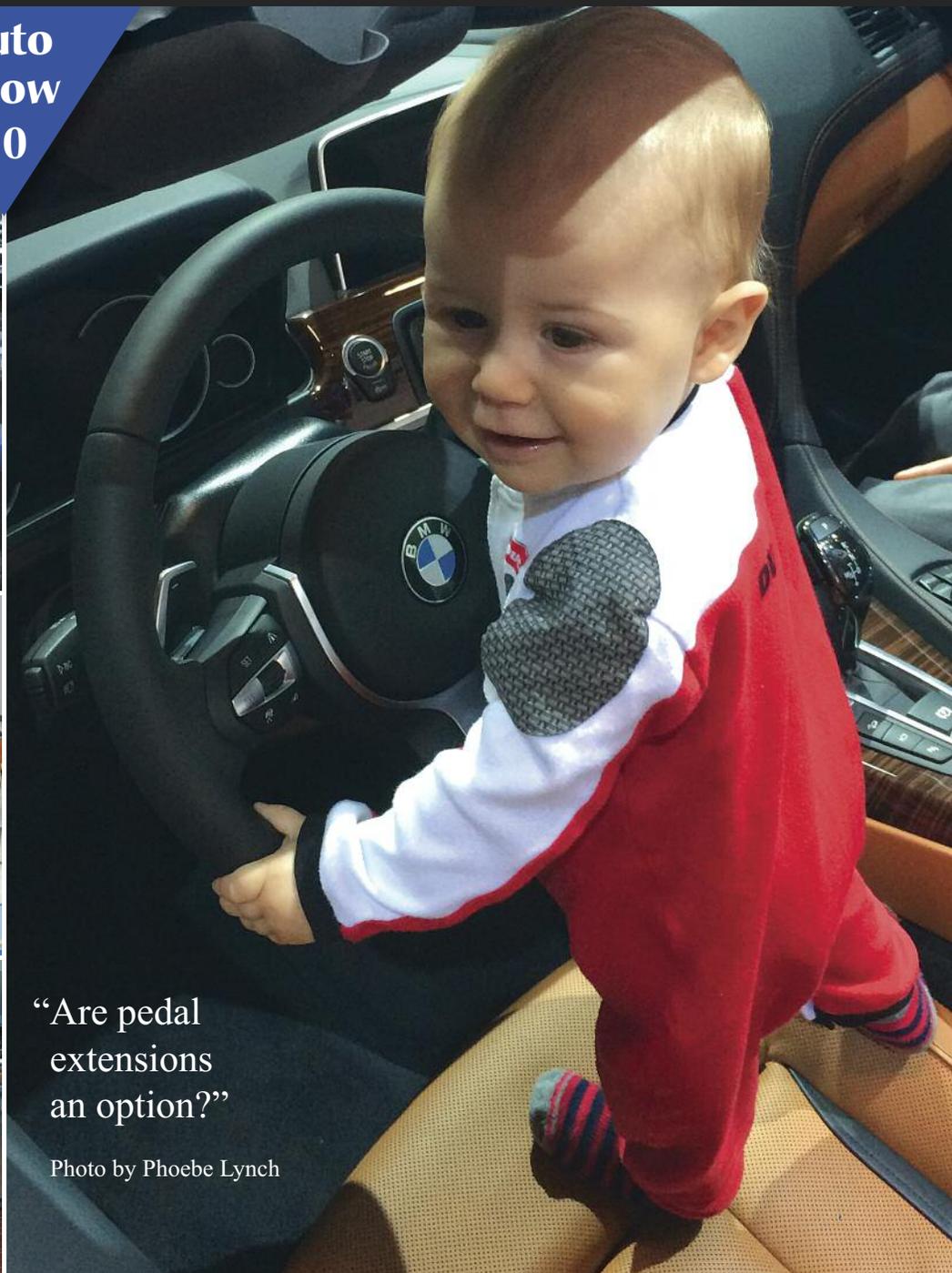


Photo by Darby Moses



“Are pedal extensions an option?”

Photo by Phoebe Lynch