

Magazine of the National Capital Chapter BMW Car Club of America

November/December 2019

# der *Bayerische*







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**Cover:** The Turner Motorsport M6 GTD driven by Bill Auberlen and Robby Foley at the VIR IMSA races. Read Steve Tenney's article on page 18. Photo: Steve Tenney

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# derBayerische



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## BMW Car Club of America

### National Capital Chapter



## President's Message

I can't believe this is the last issue of 2019 and what a crazy year it has been. Lots of great memories from all the fun events going back to the spring. But, more importantly the last few weeks have been extremely tough for many of us who lost a great friend, Phillip Cummings. A longtime club supporter, hardcore BMW enthusiast, and Chairman of our DIY committee, Phillip was one-of-a-kind. I was lucky enough to have called him my friend and we shared a lot of laughs and camaraderie over the past decade. Some of us knew he was sick with a long road ahead, but we saw him fight through it as he continued to run DIY events. As we gathered at the hospital, we saw the way that Phillip touched other people's lives outside of our car club and it was no surprise. It was truly an honor to speak at his memorial service in front of his family, friends, co-workers, and fellow club members and I shared this with his family in Alabama:

*Phillip Cummings was always full of life and truly dedicated to everything he loved, whether it was his family, friends, or cars. I'll always remember our Montreal Formula 1 trips, the endless car events, and more than anything, a laugh that could fill the room and bring joy to everyone around.*

*Phillip was instrumental in creating our club's Do-It-Yourself program, at which participants work on their own cars using a dealership's facilities, since he was an avid mechanic himself. Throughout the years, he elevated the program by bringing in new sponsors and increasing the number of events each year. His excellence was the reason why our chapter was the only one in the US to offer this program to its members. Phillip was also the first person to win both Volunteer of the Year and Program of the Year. Because of his dedication and love for BMW CCA, our chapter will formally change the name of our prestigious annual recognition award to the 'Phillip Cummings Volunteer-of-the-Year' award.*

*On behalf of the BMW community, we celebrate your life and have always been amazed by your accomplishments. You will be missed my brother.*

## 2020 National Capital Chapter Officer Nomination Period

Each year, our volunteer-run organization elects the leaders of this great chapter. Every elected position is up for grabs annually: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

For more information about the officer positions, please see our chapter bylaws.

To run for an elected position, you must be a CCA member in good standing and nominate yourself during the Nomination Period which runs from November 1 to December 31. Please submit your candidacy statement to our webmaster at webmaster@nccbmwcca.org so it can be posted to our website, nccbmwcca.org.

Voting will take place online starting January 1, 2020 and ends during our 2020 Annual Meeting.



Transitions. Loss. Bereavement. When we think about our car club and what it means to us, these are not the words we typically think of. Our club is the place to let our hair down and indulge in the joy of automobiles. When we lose one of our finest to terminal illness, however, we face the reality of those difficult words.

We lost our DIY Program Head, fellow club member, Phillip Cummings on August 26, 2019. He was 62. During the period before Phil's death, when he was in hospital, many of us gathered at Holy Cross Hospital to visit. We could only go in to his hospital room two at a time, so the rest of us convened in the corridor outside the Intensive Care Unit trading stories about Phil and communing with his dad Rheuben, his brother Kevin, and with non-BMW Club friends of Phil's that had shown up. We spent several evenings, and several hours, at the hospital because we wanted to be there for Phil. We wanted him to pull

through, and we wanted to stand in solidarity with him and in support of his family and friends.

When I think of Phil, the first thing I see in my mind's eye is his broad, generous smile. I believe that everyone else who knew him will think of this too. Phil was one of the most optimistic, gracious people I have had the pleasure of knowing. He made everyone feel at ease, and he was always upbeat and positive.

Phil epitomized everything that is good about this club and the people in it. He was a very active member who showed up smiling and in good spirits to volunteer whenever needed. He helped create the club's Do-It-Yourself program and grow it into the thriving program it is today, a program via which members can take their cars to various independent shops and BMW dealerships across the D.C. metro area. He organized these events flawlessly and made it look effortless.

As I write these words, I'm struggling to find the right ones. I had some personal moments where Phil helped me through some of my own issues. If I could share them they would illustrate what a caring and kind individual Phil was. I know that each of us who knew Phil has their own stories of how he touched their soul and uplifted their spirits. Phil was just that kind of person.

This is not just a car club. It is a place where real, true bonds of friendship are formed. We all loved Phil. He left everything and everyone a little better just by being Phil.

Phil – we will truly miss your smiling face and your great company. We are all so lucky that we had you in our lives.

Anna Maripuu  
Co-Editor

## Help Wanted

The National Capital Chapter is in need of a volunteer to take on its marketing responsibilities. This position provides the opportunity to interact with some of the leading businesses in the automotive sales, repair, accessory, and support industry.

Previous marketing and/or business development experience is necessary, a strong desire to interact with sponsors, and a belief in the benefits offered by the BMW Car Club of America and the National Capital Chapter in particular are a plus.

Briefly the **Chief Marketing Officer** is responsible for the following:

- Develop overall marketing, sponsorship, and communications strategies
- Identify and secure new advertisers for the chapter's newsletter, web-site, email, and social media outlets

- Ensure that current advertisers are properly invoiced and collected
- Work with the *der Bayerische (dB)* newsletter staff to ensure that ads are correct, timely, and current
- Marketing/sponsorship communications for all social media and membership growth activities

This position will report directly to the NCC Board of Directors and has the flexibility to build a team immediately.

If this position appeals to you and you feel that you have the skills necessary to meet the position requirements, please send your resume to Paul Seto, mail to: Paul.Seto@nccbmwcca.org, immediately to schedule an interview.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## November

- 2 DIY @ Bimmer Werks
- 13 Nov Board Meeting/Social - Vicino Restaurante Italiano, Silver Spring, MD
- 14 Nov Columbia Social - BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse, Columbia, MD
- 16 DIY @ BMW of Sterling
- 17 Pie Run XXIV
- 21 Nov MoCo Social - Pizza CS, Rockville, MD

## December

- 8 DIY @ Craftsman Auto Care
- 11 Dec Board Meeting/Social - Vicino Restaurante Italiano, Silver Spring, MD
- 12 Dec Columbia Social - BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse, Columbia, MD
- 19 Dec MoCo Social - Pizza CS, Rockville, MD

# COMING EVENTS

### DIY@ Bimmer Werks

**11333 Old Baltimore Pike, Beltsville, MD 20705**

**Saturday, November 9, 2019**

Sign up at <http://ncc.motorsportreg.com>

### November NCC Board Meeting & Social

**Vicino Restaurante Italiano**

**959 Sligo Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20910**

**Wednesday, November 13, 2019, 7pm**

### November Columbia Social

**BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse**

**6181 Columbia Crossing Cir, Columbia, MD 21045**

**Thursday, November 14, 2019**

6pm (hang-out in parking lot), 7pm (inside)

Please RSVP at <https://forum.nccbmwcca.org> (scroll down to "Upcoming Social Events")

### DIY@ BMW of Sterling

**21710 Auto World Circle, Sterling, VA 20166**

**Saturday, November 16, 2019**

Sign up at <http://ncc.motorsportreg.com>

### Pie Run XXIV to Catoctin Mountain Orchard

**15036 N Franklinville Rd, Thurmont, MD 21788**

**Sunday, November 17, 2019**

Sign up at <http://ncc.motorsportreg.com>

### November Montgomery County Social

**Pizza CS**

**1596B Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852**

**Thursday, November 21, 2019**

6pm (hang-out in parking lot), 7pm (inside)

Please RSVP at <https://forum.nccbmwcca.org> (scroll down to "Upcoming Social Events")

### DIY@ Craftsman Auto Care

**7001A Manchester Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22310**

**Sunday, December 8, 2019**

Sign up at <http://ncc.motorsportreg.com>

### December NCC Board Meeting & Social

**Vicino Restaurante Italiano**

**959 Sligo Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20910**

**Wednesday, December 11, 2019, 7pm**

### December Columbia Social

**BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse**

**6181 Columbia Crossing Cir, Columbia, MD 21045**

**Thursday, December 12, 2019**

6pm (hang-out in parking lot), 7pm (inside)

Please RSVP at <https://forum.nccbmwcca.org> (scroll down to "Upcoming Social Events")

### December Montgomery County Social

**Pizza CS**

**1596B Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852**

**Thursday, December 19, 2019**

6pm (hang-out in parking lot), 7pm (inside)

Please RSVP at <https://forum.nccbmwcca.org> (scroll down to "Upcoming Social Events")



# Get Your 2020 NCC BMW CCA Calendar Now!

The new **2020 NCC Wall Calendar** is coming soon! It will be filled with a wide variety of pictures covering many of this year's events. It is a must-have for every club member and makes a great stocking stuffer for all BMW enthusiasts! Pre-order yours today and it will mail as soon as they become available.

**The price is only \$10.00** (plus \$10 for shipping and handling if applicable). Order a few, use them as gifts and share them among your BMW friends.

Order at <http://msreg.com/2020NCCcalendar>

*Future event dates are listed as known at the time of printing. Actual cover photography may differ.*





# CARS & COFFEE AND NEW MEMBER RECEPTION



**Join Us in Celebrating  
Vintage BMWs, New  
BMWs and Welcoming  
New Members to the  
National Capital Chapter!**



**Location: BMW of Catonsville, 6700 Baltimore National Pike, Baltimore, MD 21228**

**Date: Sunday, November 10, 2019**

**Schedule: 9am BMW CCA Cars & Coffee • 10am New Member/Open House • 12pm Lunch**

**BMW Car Club  
of America**  
National Capital Chapter



BMW CCA membership is not required for this event. Whether you've owned your BMW for 30+ years or are thinking of picking up a new one, we look forward to seeing you and your friends on November 10 as we welcome our newest club members to the NCC family.



Registration link: <http://msreg.com/Fall2019NME>

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## IN MEMORIAM



**Phillip (Phil) Ray Cummings**

December 11, 1956 – August 26, 2019

Phillip (Phil) Ray Cummings was born on December 11, 1956 in Guin, Alabama to Reuben and the late Ethel Cummings. On Monday, August 26, 2019, Phillip transitioned peacefully into God's loving embrace at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, Maryland.

He graduated from Johnson High School and then from Alabama A&M University where he obtained a B.A. in Civil Engineering. From there, he received a commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program and served for 28 years as a commissioned officer.

He transitioned from active duty to reserve in 1993 and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2010. He was also a civilian member of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

His awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service medal, the Joint Services Commendation medal, Army Commendation medal, and the Army Achievement medal. He also had a M.A. in management.

Phil was an active member of the Laurel Church of Christ where he served as a Deacon. He was also a member of the BMW Car Club of America where he served as Chair of NCC's DIY program.

Phil was a positive thinker and always looked for the bright side of everything. He will be sorely missed by all his friends and colleagues who had the pleasure of knowing him.

He is survived by his wife of 31 years, Theresa Cummings, his sons, Christopher and Jonathan, his brother, Kevin, his nieces, Jasmine and Tara, and his father, Reuben Cummings.

Phil's Homegoing Celebration was held at Laurel Church of Christ on August 31, 2019.

## A Remembrance

By James Laws

If I do the math, I've probably known Phillip Cummings for a dozen years, but it feels like I've known him all of my life. Phillip had the kind of personality that made you feel like you'd always been friends.

As is the case with many chapter members, I was first introduced to Phillip through the chapter's Do-It-Yourself (DIY) program. At the first event that I attended, I was greeted by Phillip like an old friend and made to feel welcome and comfortable. This, I was to learn, was Phil's standard method of operation – make people feel welcome and comfortable.

As I came to know Phil better over the years, I often marveled at the calm he showed when dealing with the occasional difficult situation or member. I remember telling him after a particularly long and at times trying DIY session that I couldn't do his job; I didn't think that I had the patience. He just smiled that calming smile of his and said it was just another day.

Over the years I watched Phil go out of his way to extend himself to club members to make sure that their experience with BMW club events was completely positive. Often he had work that he wanted to perform on one of his own vehicles and he would either not be able to do it or was the last person at the DIY working on a car because he had accommodated the needs of someone else.

Phil wasn't given to talking much about himself, but when he did you learned that he had many incredible experiences during his life as the child of a military serviceman, his own service as an Army officer, and his life and career after the military.

Phillip was a valued member of the club and a good friend; he will be missed.

## Phil Taught Me How to Fish

By Marc Caden

I first crossed paths with Phillip Cummings almost a decade ago when I signed up to attend one of his Do-it-Yourself (DIY) events to wrench on my recently acquired vintage 70's BMW 2002. At the time, I really didn't have any clue how to do my own work on the car, but I desperately wanted to. With a young family at home and no known trust fund, I simply couldn't afford to pay others to service my hobby car.

Phil immediately took me under his wing and showed me the basics – changing fluids, replacing brakes, servicing the cooling system, and more. As it is often said, if you give a man a fish you feed him for just a day, but if you teach a man to fish you can feed him for a lifetime. Well, Phil taught me how to fish and I am just one of hundreds of other chapter members that have learned to turn a wrench either directly or indirectly through Phil and the very successful DIY program he pioneered.

For the last ten years, I have maintained my fleet of long-out-of-warranty BMWs by doing most of the work with my own two hands at our DIY events and I have Phil to forever thank for this gift. Phil taught me how working on my car could give me a Zen-like high, immense self-satisfaction, and save some money too.

In return, I tried to give back in some small reciprocal way to Phil and his program. Many years ago, I started writing the articles in the *dB* that accompany each DIY event, so that Phil wouldn't have to. To be clear, Phil never asked me to write these articles (and I really don't know if he even liked my often-goofy stories and writing style), but he also never failed to thank me for them.

Early on in our friendship, I noticed that at each DIY event Phil arrived in a different car – always a BMW of course. First, it was his black E36 M3



convertible, looking cool with the top down and wearing a big grin on his face. A month later, he showed up in an E39 5 Series with a manual transmission and that torquey V8 engine. To my surprise, I later find out that he also owns a very collectible first-generation 1988 M5, a car that he truly adored and hoped one day to fully restore. I happened to be with Phil when he inspected (and later purchased) a garage queen, low-mileage "Clownshoe" (E38) Z3 Coupe.

To this day, I really have no idea how many BMWs Phil actually owned, but I am pretty sure it was more than toes on one foot. He was a truly humble guy and when I once asked him how many BMWs were in his stable, he gave me a shrug of the shoulders and replied "enough." Phil didn't like to brag, and he certainly didn't own BMWs in some misguided effort to convey status. Instead, he just loved driving them. And if you ever had the opportunity to drive a twisty back road with Phil, you learned he knew how to make a car hustle.

In all the years I have been attending DIY events, I can only remember Phil working on his own cars maybe a handful of times. Why? Because he selflessly cared more about others having the first opportunity to use the lifts and enjoying the program - so he repeatedly down prioritized himself and his own projects.

Phil was truly a beautiful person whom I will miss and always remember with great fondness. He had a deep laugh that could fill a room and a personality that encouraged everyone around him to be a better version of themselves. He led a life that anyone would be proud to emulate - a loving husband and father, a devotion to country through a long-distinguished career in the military, and a Deacon in his church. Phil spent his whole life serving his family, country, and God, and somehow still found time to be the chair of our chapter's DIY program. It is only fitting that going forward the NCC Volunteer of the Year Award (which not surprisingly Phil received several years ago) will now be known as the Phillip Cummings NCC Volunteer-of-the-Year Award.

## The Phil Story

By Chris Wootten

Many new members join our club/crazy-quilt community and their first event is a DIY. Usually apprehensive, the newcomer would show up and Phil would take the time to get to know and welcome them, explaining how the program works and NCC's offerings other than the DIY program. He would walk them around the shop explaining how things work and introduced them to the old timers in the program who, in turn, would help them work on their cars. Phil made sure that when they went home from their first DIY they felt they were now part of something special. Phil made them feel that they were too.

I attended my first DIY in January 2011 and, although I had been a CCA member for 11 years, I had participated in a limited number of events with the chapter. I remember meeting Phil and getting the full treatment from him, including that infectious laugh.

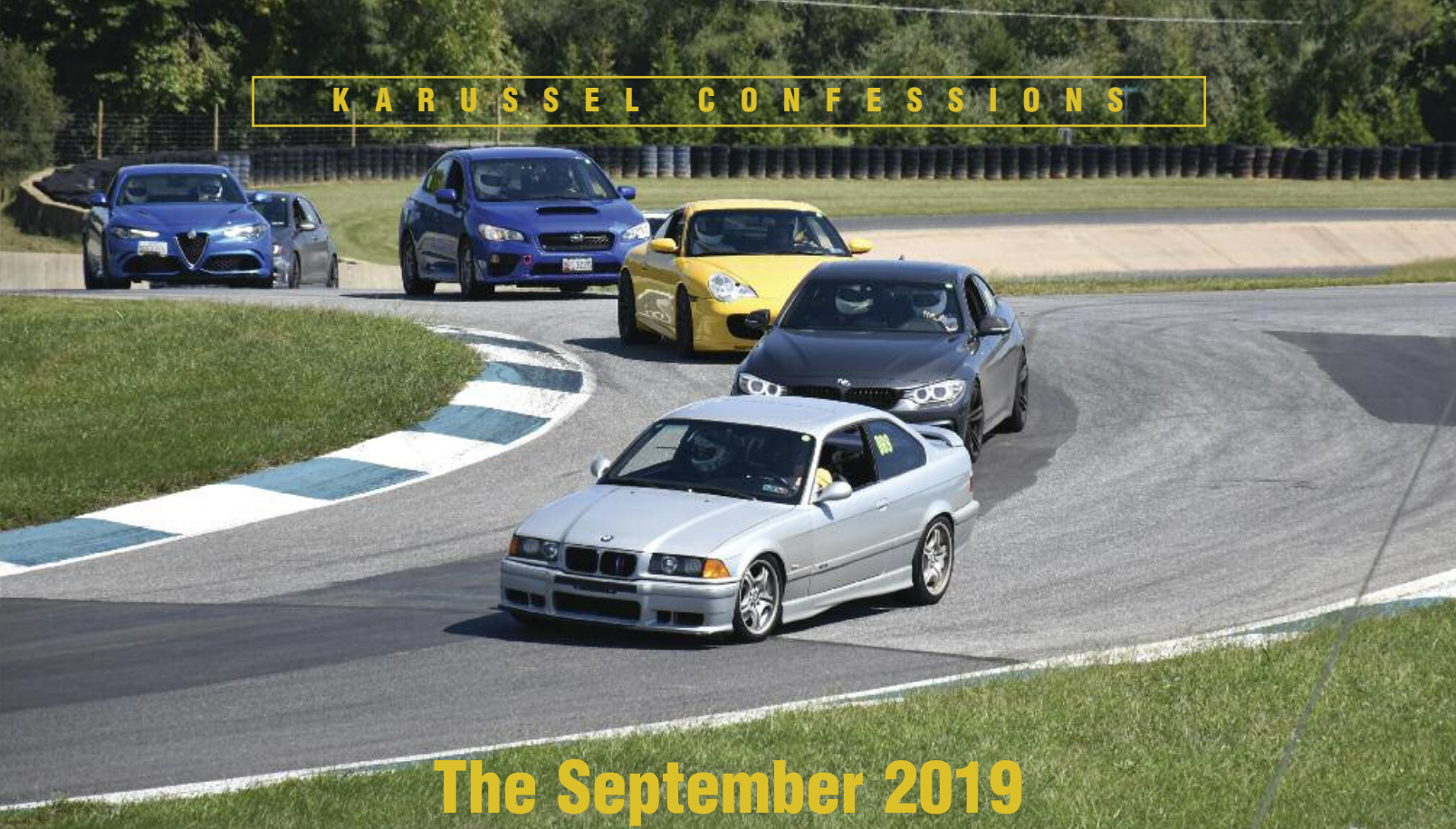
Over the time Phil and I became fast friends and I eventually became co-chair of the DIY program. Both being avid club members, we ventured to CCA events all over the country. I remember having dinner with Phil and his father at O'fest in Monterey. Phil drove from Maryland to Alabama to pick up his dad, and then they headed out to California for some special epic road trip time. That's the kind of son Phil was.

Phil was one of the most humble and graceful people I have known. Many of us knew Phil for years and had some idea he worked for the government, but he never gave many details. One had to "stumble" on the fact that Phil was a Lt. Colonel in the Army Corps Of Engineers, and after fulfilling his active duty, continued to work there as a civilian, serving the needs of this country. Phil was not big on talking about himself, he was interested in talking about you ... and your car.

Hi legacy is a fantastic DIY program with memories of service and kindness. In all matters, he was one of our finest.







## The September 2019

# NCC Summit Point Shenandoah HPDE

The weekend after Labor Day, I had the pleasure of driving in the National Capitol Chapter's September 2019 Summit Point Shenandoah HPDE.

For the past 15 years, I've been participating in HPDEs as frequently as my schedule allowed, but this was my first NCC event. I must say that NCC organizers, volunteers, and instructors did a wonderful job of running a safe, fun, and memorable event on my favorite track, Summit Point's Shenandoah Circuit. For this event the motorsportreg website boasts, "As you have come to expect, we provide a lot of track time, top-notch instructors, and an abundance of fun!". Can you believe it? Truth in advertising still exists!

As I reflect on that weekend I am reminded of the first time I drove a BMW. It was in 2007 when my girlfriend at the time (now wife) had expressed an interest in taking a trip to Europe. After much planning, we made the trip overseas and spent a day lapping the Nürburgring in a race-prepped 1995 BMW 318ti. Every time I drive my M42 powered '91 318is through the smaller-scale replica of the Karussel on Summit Point's Shenandoah Circuit

I am reminded of that epic day driving the M42-powered '95 318ti through the famous Karussel on the Nürburgring.

I was particularly looking forward to this HPDE because it would be the first time I'd be taking my beloved E30 back to the Shenandoah Circuit after a number of improvements, including completely overhauling the suspension and adding wider, more aggressive rubber. It's always fun to see if your research and hard work pays off.

By Mike Bevels



(Top) A group of students and instructors warm up under a full-course caution.

(Above) A white E92 M3 shows how it's done on the skid pad.

### Day One (Saturday)

My friend, Garret, also registered for this event with his manual-transmission 2016 Chevy SS. We met up early Saturday morning and caravanned to Summit Point. We arrived when the track opened at 7 am, knowing that registration and the on-site tech inspection needed to be completed by 8 am. After unpacking our cars, we registered and proceeded to the on-site tech line. The tech inspection line worked like a

well-oiled machine and we were through in no time. Group assignments and schedules were handed out at registration. There was a good mix of





(Above from Left) A collection of cars parked in the paddock next to Karussel Concessions, which happened to be closed. The NCC HPDE organizers arranged for Jill's Mobile Kitchen to provide dinner on Saturday and be available for lunch both days.

classroom, track, and skid pad time.

After the drivers' meeting all of the students were able to take parade laps with their instructors. It had been 11 months since I was last on Shenandoah so this was a good refresher before driving my first session. Coincidentally, Garret and I were assigned the same instructor: Jackson Allen. Riding in Jackson's 135is was a lot of fun, and being a passenger gave me a new and different perspective of the track.

My first session went well. I gradually let my car and myself warm up. Initially we did not run the banked concrete section of the Karussel, but when my instructor gave me the go-ahead at the end of the session I gladly took the opportunity. Such a fun section of the course! As the day went on I gained more confidence and speed on the track. My 318is is by no means a fast car, but it's very rewarding to drive when you get the line right. Regardless, there were a lot of fast drivers and cars in my group, so I was getting a lesson in giving point-bys (when a slower car/driver signals a faster, overtaking car to pass in a designated passing zone).

The third session of the day was an "off-line" track exercise. The instructors told the students "left", "right", or "middle" and you had to drive that "lane" until told otherwise.

It gave an opportunity explore sections of pavement off the normal line. My last driving activity on Saturday was the skid pad, which is always a hoot.

Once the day came to an end and the track went "cold", NCC provided food, drinks, and a great setting to catch up with old friends, make new friends, swap car stories, and reflect on the day. It had been successful, fun, and exhausting. It was time to go home, get some rest, and do it again on Sunday.

### Day Two (Sunday)

Without registration and on-site tech on Sunday, I could sleep a little longer and arrive a little later. However, I was excited to get back to Summit Point, so I woke up early to check over the car. Garret and I once again caravanned to the track, unpacked our cars, and prepared for the day. After the 8 am drivers' meeting, I headed out for my first session. The weather was cool and mostly overcast. The first two sessions went well. Jackson suggested I try some new things which helped me carry more speed throughout the circuit. Between classroom and track sessions, I enjoyed taking photos and talking to other drivers in the paddock.

The third session of the day was a "passing" track exercise. For

this exercise, you are partnered with another car and trade passes and point-bys as many times as possible in the designated passing zones. I was paired with Alex driving his E46 330i. This exercise built well on Saturday's "off line" exercise because a good number of the passes put us off our normal line. It was a blast chasing and being chased through the non-passing sections of the course!

My plan for the last session of the weekend was to dial it back, work on what I'd learned, and drive my

car home afterward. What ended up happening was I cranked out some of my fastest laps of the weekend. On top of my best driving of the weekend, I received my first point-by after taking some time to reel in a 340i! I was having fun. Jackson was having fun. It was a great ending to the weekend.

### Final Thoughts

I met a lot of great people this weekend and discussed a number of topics, usually related to a shared passion for cars. However, one

(Below) Jackson Allen takes turn 19 (Big Bend) in his BMW 135is.







Garret Bowser photo.



Nicole Falceto photo.

(Above from Left) Mike Bevels scoots around the Karussel in his 1991 BMW 318is. It's hard not to smile when enjoying some time on the skid pad.

conversation stands out among the rest. I learned that one of the other drivers will be having his first child, a daughter, early next year. This person is excited to share his automotive passion with his daughter, which I think is great. My wife and I have two children, our daughter, Avery (5), and son, Carter (2). My daughter absolutely loves spending time with me in the garage. She

soaks up mechanical knowledge like a sponge. She probably knows more about braking, ignition, and suspension systems than most adults. (Side note: If you're ever on R3VLimited.com, check out my journal, "Mike's 1991 Alpine White 318is". Avery makes the occasional appearance helping work on the car). The reason I mention this is I've found people typically assume that

since she's a girl she's not interested and not included in these activities, which couldn't be further from the truth. As long as she's willing and shows interest, I plan to continue to encourage and include her. When she's old enough I would absolutely love to start bringing her to events just like NCC's 2019 Summit Point Shenandoah HPDE, which provided me a safe, controlled, fun environ-

ment where I could hone my driving skills, push myself, and make lasting memories.

Big thanks to all the NCC organizers, volunteers, instructors, and Summit Point Raceway for making this event a great success!

(Below) You don't have to own a BMW to be an NCC BMW CCA member or attend NCC HPDEs. There was a nice assortment of imports and domestics. (Below from Left) A Shelby Mustang waits patiently for a designated passing zone. An E36 M3 carries speed around the Corkscrew. An F80 M3 lets the tail end hang out on the skid pad. A Chevy SS chases an M2 around the Corkscrew.



Garret Bowser photo.







# July DIY Event at Benchmark Motors

By Marc Caden

We just added a new driver to my household - my almost-sixteen-year-old daughter Bonnie just passed her learner's permit test in Maryland. It is a twenty-five question multiple choice exam and she aced it. Now while I realize this wasn't a college admissions test, I was still pretty proud of her.

A learner's permit allows her to drive a vehicle as long as someone age 21 years of age or older (e.g., mainly her parents) is with her in the car at all times. I view this instructional period in a young driver's life as indispensable, since the leading cause of death among teens is a car accident. Of course, the term "accident" is in itself a misnomer coined by the insurance industry to make us feel a little better about our vehicular misdeeds, since rarely does a car crash happen by acci-

dent. Instead, car collisions are typically the result of carelessness, inattention or recklessness on the part of the driver.

While I wouldn't label my daughter a gearhead, she also "gets" cars way better than most of her peers. If she spots an interesting sports car or a vintage BMW, she makes sure to tell me about it and sometimes even snaps a picture. Like her brother, I have made it a priority for her to learn how to drive an old-school manual transmission using our faithful five-speed E46 wagon. Bonnie has reluctantly embraced learning to drive a stick shift and she has been progressing quite well. She is well past any fear of stalling the car (for a while she just hated the thought of coming to a halt at a red light) and now we focus on polishing her gear shifts so

that the rev matches are silky smooth.

Of course, learning how to safely navigate the roads, coupled with figuring out how to work a manual transmission, are a lot to take in for any new driver. You must learn to make sense of both the operation of the vehicle and the rules of the road all at once. On the positive side, I consider a manual transmission to be an anti-texting device because with one hand on the steering wheel and the other hand rowing the gears, there is very little opportunity to even think about texting.

Bonnie has been taking Irish step dancing lessons since she was a little girl, and now, with her learner's permit secured, she frequently drives to the Teelin School of Irish Dance located in Columbia,

Maryland. For quite a while, I have noticed that a few blocks before we arrive at the Teelin dance school, there is an independent shop called Benchmark Motors; little did I know that our upcoming DIY would be held there.

Danny Grant is the long-term owner of Benchmark Motors located in Columbia, Maryland. Danny has over thirty years of experience himself, and Benchmark employs six skilled technicians. They have a large, modern facility that includes 10 lifts and an alignment rack. You can drop-ship tires to them from Tire Rack; they will mount and balance them. They also have an updated Road Force balancing machine.

Benchmark Motors offers a discount for all BMW Club members. They specialize in service and



(Above from Left) The whole DIY gang including the owner of Benchmark Motors Danny Grant in the middle; John Francis installed stainless steel brake lines and replaced the rear pads/rotors on his 1991 M5.

maintenance of BMWs, but can also work on your Mercedes and Porsche. They take great pride in being chosen often by other shops to fix the really hard problems that other car professionals just can't figure out for themselves. They can also handle some of your other automotive needs such as detailing, tinting, and an official Maryland inspection. They are open on weekdays from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm ([www.benchmarkmotors.com](http://www.benchmarkmotors.com)).

Many do-it-yourself tasks were successfully completed at our July DIY event hosted by Benchmark Motors. John Francis put on stainless steel brake lines and replaced the rear rotors and brake pads on his 1991 M5. Vice President James Laws removed the stock steering wheel on our chapter's "club car", a 2001 528i Touring, and replaced it with an upgraded sport steering wheel. Matt Ytzen did an oil change and replaced the transmission fluid

on his 2003 330i. Fuad Khan replaced the spark plugs and changed the oil on his 2008 528i. Phil Petrides replaced the fuel filter and some muffler clamps on his 1998 328i. Emrah Kocak, with some assistance from helper Rick MacGregor, replaced the front brake pads and sensors on his 2017 340i. DIY regular Brian Lovecchio and his girlfriend Allison O'Brien replaced the brake pads and a fog light bulb on his 2007 335i. Nurbek Ismailov

replaced the rear hatch struts on his 2009 Porsche Cayenne.

The DIY committee provided a nice doughnut breakfast and pizza lunch. We had several first time attendees at this event, and helpers were on hand to assist them with their tasks. We appreciate Benchmark Motors sponsoring this DIY, and we hope to see you at a future event.

(Below from Left) Emrah Kocak replaced the front brake pads on his 2017 340i; Benchmark Motors is a large facility with 10 lifts; James Laws installed a sport steering wheel on our chapter's "club car," a 2001 528i Touring.





# Dine and Vine

*"Where there is no wine there is no love"*

- Euripides

The members of the National Chapter of BMW CCA are a fortunate group. We are large enough that there are always numerous social activities every month to partake in and participate. Of course we love to drive our BMWs, and participate in DIYs, Autocross, Tech Talks, sessions, and other car-related events that are regular favorites for many members. But the social events are a highlight for many, including yours truly. Steven Pera was the tour guide for the Dine and Vine Tour on Saturday morning, June 15th. We met at Founding Farmers in Potomac, Md. for a great breakfast before we started our ride to Black Ankle Vineyard in Mt. Airy, Maryland.

There were a total of 26 vehicles and 42 people; 37 of them had reservations for breakfast and 40 for the winery itself. After signing our required waivers and a short ride briefing by Steven Pera, we lined up for the one and a half hour, 51-mile ride to Black Ankle.

As a student in Madrid, Spain and Paris, France in the mid-1980's, I knew that being in those countries would be a learning experience in itself. I learned to appreciate more the pleasures of wine and understood better why those countries have some of the best wines in the world. While a student there, I looked forward to tasting Rioja wines in Spain, the "Beaujolais Nouveau in the Fall" in Paris, and took part in a few school-sponsored tours of wine and champagne vineyards. As a matter of fact, I had taken a bartending course just before I left for Europe, thinking it might be a future career or at least a part-time job so I was not totally unknowledgeable about alcohol, and even learned a bit about wine. However, I was by no means an expert or in any way qualified to be a Sommelier. In case you don't know what a sommelier is, basically they are wine experts and will recommend wines based on your tastes, and also can "pair" wines with the food you're ordering in a restaurant. Unless you're an expert on choosing wines and pairing them, a sommelier can definitely insure that your meal will be enhanced by the right wine. A bit of trivia - Did you know that a wine cannot be called a "Bordeaux" unless it comes from Bordeaux, France?

For a long time it was believed in fact that only Europe could produce world-

By Brad Amador | Photos by Brad Amador and Anna Maripuu



(Above) Breakfast at Founding Farmers.

class wines. However since the 1970's, the U.S., in particular California, New York, and Virginia have produced wines that have beat French wines in blind taste competitions, and earned grudging respect and admiration from Europeans. Wine has been grown since the late 1600's in the U.S. John Smith's Virginia Company made nearly twenty gallons during its first year of settlement, wine that Smith later remembered being "neere as great" as "our French British." The third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, thought of wine as a mark of civilization. For nearly thirty years Jefferson planted French, German, and Italian vines at Monticello. However almost all of them died and he resigned himself to inferior domestic vines to produce wine. Often the problem with producing wines in the east was THE EASTERN CLIMATE, with its high summer humidity and severe winter cold, but the real problem was phylloxera, a small yellow aphid that kills grapevines by attacking

their roots. Eventually eastern grapevines grew immune to phylloxera through centuries of evolution.

*"Wine is sunlight, held together by water"*

- Galileo Galilei

Because of the less-humid climate and drier soil, California was the favorite site for growing wines for many years, and in terms of volume, still produces most wine in the U.S. (89%). As of 2016, Virginia was ranked the #5 wine producer in the U.S. in terms of bearing acreage and grape production and there are currently around 300 wineries at present in Virginia alone.

Black Ankle is a vineyard in operation open since 2008, and sells white, red and dessert wines. They are an estate winery, which basically means all grapes are grown locally on their farm. The name of the plantation comes from the name of the road the planation is on, and probably derives from the muddy and dirt road that it was for years, but it also reminds us of the centuries-old tradition of stomping grapes to produce wine. The owners are visibly





(Top) Black Ankle Vineyard. (Above) Line up of cars at Black Ankle.

committed to preserving the environment and sustainability, as evidenced by their recycling water for use in the fields, the use of locally made compost, and they have solar panels on their winery and tasting room roofs to save on energy costs. One thing I noticed when entering the farm was the earth with grass on the rear end of the tasting room. This is, in fact, a geo-thermal heat-



(Above) Vineyard view - Black Ankle Vineyards.

ing system for the farmhouse to take advantage of the steady temperatures of the earth, just below the surface. That earth is a very good insulator and keeps the temperature more constant inside. I was surprised at the amount of labor required to produce a good grape crop...According to Black Ankle's website, "Each of our 80,000 vines is hand-tended at least eight times each season as we make small adjustments to crop load, leaf density and fruit position."

At the vineyard, we either enjoyed the wine tastings and either bought food or enjoyed food we brought, and ate at the beautiful shading setting, or on the surrounding grounds. After a short time, Steven announced that the first tour of the vineyard would begin soon and we eagerly gathered for a short briefing before we began.

.....  
*"In wine there's truth"* - Pliny the Elder.  
 .....

Dennis Smith was our tour guide, and guided us as we walked near the vineyards and the buildings that support the farm. Tastings are held

Saturdays and Sundays, subject to weather, at 1 pm and 3 pm. He was very knowledgeable and adeptly explained the intricacies of wine-making in a way that anyone could understand, and also answered our curious participants questions.

It was fascinating to see the processes involved in producing quality wines, and also to see the huge casks used to hold the wine before it is bottled. Finally we walked back, conversing amongst ourselves, more educated about wines, and some of us ready to buy a bottle (or case) to take home...

Some of us went to wine tastings, purchased wines or other sundries at the store, and others just sat and enjoyed the cheeses and other foods they also sell to complement their wines. For those who want to return and enjoy music to enjoy with their wine, Black Ankle also has live music in the tasting room 6-8:30 pm Fridays. The club-sponsored rides are always nice, but the vineyard visit and tour was definitely worth it by itself.

<https://www.blackankle.com/>

(Below from Left ) Dennis Smith explaining what to look for when wine tasting. Enjoying breakfast at Founding Farmers.







# Driving Spa and the Nürburgring

By Jacques Raymond

Photos by Jacques Raymond, Hugo Carreras, and BMW Driving Experience

In the spring of 2019, while attending a monthly NCC Board of Directors meeting, Doug Verner mentioned that he was planning a trip to drive the circuit at the Nürburgring. The Nürburgring? The Nürburgring! THAT Nürburgring!! The Green Hell, as it was nicknamed by racecar driver Jackie Stewart, is one of the most famous racetracks in the world. According to Wikipedia, "The **Nürburgring** is a 150,000 person capacity motorsports complex located in the town of Nürburg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. It features a Grand Prix race track built in 1984, and a much longer *Nordschleife* "North loop" track which was built in the 1920s around the village and medieval castle of Nürburg in the Eifel mountains. The north loop is 20.8 km (12.9 mi) long and has more than 300 metres (1,000 feet) of elevation change from its lowest to highest points." Estimates on the number of turns range from 73 to 154, depending on your source. A trip to drive the Nurburgring had been my motorsports fantasy for years, but I never thought I'd actually get the chance.

I couldn't raise my hand fast enough. It was all I could do to keep from jumping up and down.

But wait, it gets better. Our point-of-contact from the BMW Performance Driving Center, Mike Renner, said that the hotel in Nürburg was booked the weekend before our planned event, so he suggested that we start out with a side-trip to the F1 circuit at Spa. Spa? Spa! THAT Spa!! The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, arguably the other most famous racetrack in Europe, was the site of the 2019 Belgian Grand Prix. Twenty turns and 4.352 miles of fun, fun, fun, including the

(in)famous Eau Rouge corner: a blind uphill segment traversed at well over 100 mph. So, now the plan was to drive two of the most famous racetracks in Europe? During the same trip? Pinch me. I must be dreaming.

The centerpiece of our trip was built around The BMW Driving Experience (Google it), which is organized by BMW Corporation. More specifically, our event was the BMW M Race Track Training Nordschleife Level 1, which includes two days lodging, meals, and two days of instructor-led driving around the 'Ring' in a brand-new M2 Competition provided by BMW. The logistics of getting to and from Germany and arrangements for the weekend at Spa, however, were up to each individual. Ultimately, eight of us enrolled for the adventure: Hugo Carreras, Doane Harrison, Scott Hughes, Doug Macnair, Dennis Pippy, Steve Tenney, Doug Verner, and yours truly, plus Mike Renner, our trip coordinator from the BMW Performance Center in Greenville, South Carolina.

Finally, travel day arrived! Like they say, getting there is half the fun, and the logistics of getting to and around Europe were an adventure in itself. Once we got out of the city of Frankfurt, the drive to Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium, was glorious. The weather was mild and remained so throughout our trip. I didn't need anything more than a windbreaker. The 170 miles (I mean, 274 kilometers) passed quickly as we drove past rolling hills, pastures, farmland, woodlands, and hill-sides dotted with little villages. It reminded me of the rolling hills of Pennsylvania as we traveled along routes with designations such as A60, A61, B50, E42. Thank goodness for my Garmin.



(Top) Lead and follow. (Above) Our Gang at the Ring (L-R): Hugo, Gerald Beck (instructor, kneeling), Doane (standing), Dennis, Jack, Steve, Scott (standing), Doug M (kneeling), Doug V (standing), Mike.





(Top) La Source Corner at Spa. (Above) Flyin up Eau Rouge a speed. (Right) Map of the Circuit de Spa.

I never did figure out how to operate the built-in navigation system in my rented Passat diesel wagon. It communicated only in German (unlike the locals, virtually all of whom spoke excellent English).

Speaking of the A60, if you're driving on a highway in Germany whose designation begins with "A", followed by a number, that means you're driving on an autobahn ("federal motorway", in German). The autobahn? The autobahn! Yes, THAT autobahn. Contrary to popular imagination (or perhaps, my imagination), the autobahn does not resemble an American interstate highway. It looks a lot like Route 32 in Howard County, Maryland. A four-lane divided highway (two lanes in each direction) with a small shoulder on the right. Contrary to popular belief, there ARE speed limits on the autobahn, at least in certain places: in cities and when entering or leaving more densely populated areas. In those sections the speed limits range from 80-130 kph (50-81 mph). German drivers are precise about mashing the brakes right where the speed limit drops. Once in the countryside, however, all

bets are off. You know you are in an unlimited speed zone when you see the circular speed limit sign with a red border and red diagonal slash through the middle, or when the driver a half kilometer behind you flashes the high beams at you to get out of the way! Though widely ignored in the US, in Germany it is understood that the left lane is for passing, not cruising.

(On the trip back to Frankfurt, getting into the spirit of German autobahn driving, I briefly recall seeing 180 kph [111 mph] on the Passat's speedometer, until we approached the city limits and I saw what looked like an overpass speed trap up ahead, despite the fact that none of us had seen a speed limit sign. Hey, we were behind schedule to get to the airport, thanks to a detour to drop off a member of our group at the train station in a small village fifteen kilometers in the opposite direction. It's a good thing the Passat had good brakes.)

Our accommodations in Spa-Francorchamps were at Hotel-de-la-Source, a modern, 4-star establishment with a bar and restaurant.

Picture what a hotel would look like if it was designed and furnished by Scan (the furniture company), and you have Hotel-de-la-Source. As with all our meals on the excursion, the food at Hotel de la Source was excellent. After a week of buffets at virtually every meal, Dennis ended up remarking that it was a good thing we don't eat like this at home! More to the point, the hotel was just a stone's throw away from the La Source corner of the Circuit de Spa racetrack.

Monday morning arrived, and after a fine breakfast buffet (I think I was already starting to put on a little weight), we hoofed it over to RSR Spa for our track day experience. As it says on their web site, "RSR Spa hosts high quality track days at the F1 circuit of Spa-Francorchamps. We are renowned for quality track time, great service and lovely hospitality. You can enter your own car be it a road car or race car or you can hire one from our extensive rental fleet. RSR Spa has the widest selection of road cars, sports cars, super cars, track cars and race cars for rental on track. These can be rented during any of the many events hosted by

the circuit."

I had reserved a Honda Civic Type R street car, with an all-inclusive package plus instruction for my four sessions on the circuit. It set me back a couple thousand dollars, but since this was a bucket list experience, I had already made a conscious decision not to let expense get in the way (within reason). If you decide to engage RSR Spa for your track day experience, be sure to ask for Konstantinos in sales, he will get your reservation squared away. Track day insurance is also a good idea, since you're liable for someone else's \$35,000 car. I obtained mine from Jerod Blakestad of OpenTrack: [jb@opentrack.com](mailto:jb@opentrack.com).

After the expected informational video and drivers' meeting, it was time to get in the car with the instructor! So here we go. After grouping in the grid area, the pit marshal waved us single file to the pit-out straight, driving uphill parallel to the famous Eau Rouge corner. Building up speed, pop out onto the half-mile long Klemm Straight. Stay to the right and give the Porsches a point-by on the left. (By the end of the day, my top speeds here were in excess of 220



kph [136 mph]). Brake hard, then right, left, right, downhill through Les Combes. A couple of hundred yards to the 180-degree turn at Bruxelles, late apex, short straight, and left hander at turn 11. Another couple of hundred yards to the two left-handers at Pouhon, then accelerate until you reach the S curves at Campus, the right hander at Stavelot, and then a sweeping right to Courbe Paul Frere. The Blanchimont (White Mountain) section has a gentle curve to the left, but you can treat it as a straightaway. Start on track right, arc into the apex at the gentle curve on track left, let the car track out to the right. Another high-speed left hander and you arrive at the Chicane, an ultra-tight right-left double turn that's designed to slow you way down before you accelerate past the grandstands. Approaching the La Source hairpin, get to track left, brake hard, downshift to second gear, make the hard-right turn, and accelerate past the pits and the second set of grandstands. Bottom of the hill, red line in fourth gear, move the car to the left, then a slight right up the famous Eau Rouge (Red Water) corner, full throttle. Stay on the gas, don't lose your nerve! However, the tricky part is that Eau Rouge is a blind uphill curve. Have faith, the exit apex on the left is in the same place it was on the last three laps. Pop out over the top onto the Kemmel Straight, and around we go again. Woo-hoo!

What an exhilarating day! Jacques and Amury were excellent coaches, much like our own HPDE instructors. Thanks to their experience and expertise guiding me around the circuit, I was comfortable driving the third and fourth sessions by myself. But wait, there's more. At the end of the day, we got back into the Passat, fired up the Garmin, and headed to the town of Nürburg, about an hour and a half to the east.

Our accommodations in Nurburg were at the Lindner Nürburgring Congress Hotel, a 4.5 star establishment situated just a few miles from the Nürburgring itself. After another introductory/orientation

session, followed by a good night's sleep, we were up, fed, and heading out to the parking lot to get acquainted with our new rides – the brand new M2 Competition in Sunset Orange Metallic with dual clutch, paddle shifter automatic transmission. The handling of the M2 Competition is phenomenal. The car is well planted on the track without being too harsh on the street. In a nutshell, it goes where you point it. Its 405 horsepower and 406 foot-pounds of torque are quite respectable, though not eye popping. With multiple driving modes, the computer nannies can be dialed down or up, depending on the road and weather conditions. This came in super handy on our second day at the Nürburgring when it rained for a couple hours in the morning. For a full length review of the car, see the article "Turn Your Hymnals to M2" in the September/October edition of this magazine: [https://db.nccbmwcca.org/2019/2019\\_0910.pdf](https://db.nccbmwcca.org/2019/2019_0910.pdf).

The instructor-student format for the BMW Driving Experience Level 1 is lead-follow. This means that the one instructor car is in front, followed by the four student cars in a line: two students in each car. This format enables the student who is riding shotgun at any given time to still see and feel the track while awaiting a turn behind the wheel. Since the Nürburgring is so long, the training is broken down by the track's

various segments. That is, the group drives a segment of the track, each student taking turns as driver and passenger, practicing that segment a number of times before moving on to the next section of the track. Each segment is about a mile long. The segment training takes up much of the day, but the latter part of the afternoon on both days is saved for driving full laps, at speed. No tender-footin' it here. We were driving *fast*. I timed our hottest laps at about 8 ½ minutes. As those of you who are familiar with the 'Ring know, that's bookin' it. I don't think we could have done it without our instructor, though. It's a lot easier when you're following a professional driver who knows what they're doing.

What is it like to drive the Nurburgring at speed? It's exhilarating and a little bit scary. Imagine driving through a forest, along a two lane mountain road, with only two car lengths of runoff room on either side, at speeds that reach well over 100 mph. Tires squealing, hair on fire, driving to the limit of grip, you will use all your track day skills on this ride. Hills and curves abound, some of the most famous in racing lore.

Here they are, as described in Wikipedia: Flugplatz – small airport, since there used to be one nearby, also for that section's jumps that used to make race cars become airborne, before the track was regraded. Fuchsrohe – fox hole, slightly uphill,

under a bridge, then plunging downhill, the road switches back left and right. This whole sequence is flat out and then, the road climbs sharply uphill. Bergwerk – mine, a tight right-hand corner, coming just after a long, fast section and a left-hand kink on a small crest. Karussell – the carousel, with its concrete banked turn. Brunnchen – small well, a favorite spectator vantage point, composed of two right-hand corners and a very short straight. Pflanzgarten – planting garden, one of the fastest, trickiest and most difficult sections of the Nürburgring. A slightly banked, downhill left hander which then suddenly switches back left, then right. Then immediately, giving the driver nearly no time to react (knowledge of this section is key) the road drops away twice. Stefan Bollef S – the Stefan Bellof esses. After a jump at the end of the switchback section, it goes through a flat-out, top gear right hander and into a short straight that leads into two very fast curves called the Schwalbenschwanz – swallow's tail, a sequence of very fast sweepers whose apexes are completely blind.

This trip was literally a dream come true, a motorsports enthusiast's fantasy vacation, a fix for the adrenaline junkie. If you have the time, the inclination, and the money\*, I highly recommend it.

\* Like they say, a motorsports vacation is not for the timid of spirit or wallet.

(Below from Left) Map of the Nordschleife. Yet another Nürburgring corner.





# 2019 IMSA Races at Virgi

B M W C O R R A L B Y T A R H



The trip to Southern Virginia for the IMSA races has become a traditional event for the National Capital and Tarheel Chapters, and the joint BMW CCA Corral has been a continued success. Brenda & Paul Dunlevy from the Tarheel Chapter were the leads for this event with Paul Seto



(Top) The #25 M8 GTE at the top of the roller coaster and on the grid for the fan walk (Above).

and various other chapter members from our chapter pitching in to make this event a great success year after year. Steven Schlossman, from the Club's national office, keeps check-ins and ticketing going smoothly.

There were many gifts to be distributed via raffle with the coveted one-



# nia International Raceway

## EEL & NCC CHAPTERS



day M-School from the BMW Performance Center as well as a set of tires from Michelin. The M-School was won by Sten Sellier and the Michelin tires were collected by Greg Peters.

The NCC HPDE was won by James Bennett. These are just a few of the prizes given out

during the event. We also made paddock visits to three of the top teams competing with BMWs in the two races. Overall, we had 207 people in attendance and over 100 cars in the corral and again given the privilege of parade laps. The tent was in a great location viewing turns 1-4 and up

the hill towards turn 7. Bill Patterson painted a picture live in the tent of one of the Turner cars to be auctioned for the Hatcher Foundation charity.

The IMSA event at VIR has been a GT only event for the last few years. This makes it especially interesting to

those of us rooting for the BMW teams in GT. The IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge race at VIR was officially known as The Virginia is for Racing Lovers Grand Prix. This is a race series for GT4 and TCR cars with the Bimmerworld M4 GT4 holding second place.





(Above) Mike Renner awarding the M-School prize to Sten Sellier.



(Above) The Bimmerworld M4 GT4.



(Above) The corral tent from across the track.



(Above) The #24 BMW Team RLL M8 GTE.

Both classes have international relevance as customer-based racing. As the teams will tell you, this allows them to buy a race car rather than developing a car from scratch, which is a very expensive process. The premier race of the weekend was the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR part of the WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Here we have BMW Team RLL & Turner Motorsport.

The Michelin Pilot Challenge showcases the M4 GT4 customer car from BMW in the hands of the Bimmerworld team with two cars and a single M4 GT4 from Turner Motorsports, along with the Stephen Cameron Racing M4 GT4. Bimmerworld took the opportunity at VIR to bring out a second car, a decision that would pay dividends in the race.

In the WeatherTech series, BMW Team RLL had two M8 GTE cars in the hands of a very strong driver lineup of Connor De Phillippi, Tom Blomqvist, John Edwards and Jesse Krohn. The WeatherTech series includes all of the factory-based teams running the latest in GT equipment with top GT drivers. The GTE cars are a bigger challenge because they do not use the driver aids that are found on the GTD or GT3 cars. The GTD class includes the Turner Motorsport M6 GTD, driven by famous and fan favorite Bill Auberlen with Robby Foley. Bill and Robby got a win in Canada at the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park to get one win closer to Scott Pruitt and the record number of wins in IMSA sports car racing.

The corral saw paddock visits with Bimmerworld, Turner Motorsport and BMW Team RLL. Bimmerworld has had success with the M4 GT4. James Clay (Team Principle) has been driving for the last few years and has shown real speed along with his partners.

This year he has brought in Devin Jones to share the car, and their car is in second place in the series - quite good in a very competitive series. Bimmerworld has raced

BMW's for many years, typically building their own car from a production car, doing the testing, development and parts fabrication. James discussed with us the transition from a car development effort to running a fully developed race car, limiting their changes to tuning adjustments. The cars aren't cheap, but race car development is even more expensive in the long run. It sounds like they are on to a better way. The BoP on the M4 is handled via a USB stick known as a Power Stick. James pointed out that the M4s in the series with the BoP are 80 HP down from the street M4 with the Competition Package. For the VIR race, Bimmerworld added a second M4 for Mike Skeen and Ari Balogh. Turner Motorsport continues to run the M6 GTD in the WeatherTech Championship for Robby Foley and Bill Auberlen. Bill is in pursuit of Scott Pruitt's win total, and we are rooting for Bill to get there. Robby has taken a real step up and is now showing real speed.

He and Bill have become an excellent team. Turner also has an M4 GT4 that they are running in the Pilot Challenge for Robby Foley & Vin Barletta. Their cars are always well prepared and typically very competitive. The win for the M6 at the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park suggests that their bad luck might turn around. The team has been trying very hard to get another win for Bill at each outing; they made a point of telling us that they decided to take a step back and stop stressing their desire to get another win. As soon as they took the step back and relaxed, they got that next win. Luck hasn't been on their side, though. It's good to see them race the M4 GT4. Robby is quite good in that car, and sometimes he has Bill Auberlen as a co-driver. Not at VIR though. They are really pointing towards a more serious effort at the Michelin Pilot Challenge championship in 2020.

The factory effort from BMW NA and BMW Motorsport is BMW Team RLL. We always have a good visit



with them, and it's really enjoyable to be that close to the cars. This year they conducted driver change practice (for time) while our group watched. The M8 GTE is BMWs' top of the line race car, an improvement to the M6 GTE that was previously raced by the team. In 2018, BMW Team RLL got a first win for the M8 GTE at VIR, and we were present for the podium celebration. It was a very special accomplishment and a pleasure to be there to witness it.

Southern Virginia in August can be very hot. Every year we encounter pretty difficult temperatures and usually some intense rain. This year wasn't any different. The corral provides us with a tent and some cover to get out of the sun or rain conditions. The Summer of 2019 has been very hot, and we saw that in particular on Friday. We had rain on Thursday night and then again on Friday evening and even on Saturday for the racing. Qualifying for the Pilot Challenge was rained out on Friday evening, so the starting grid was determined by the current point standings. This put the Bimmerworld #82 second on the grid - good for our Bimmerworld friends, in any case. The second Bimmerworld car had raced at Road America and collected a few points so they didn't have to start dead last. Nonetheless, they started far enough back: 24th position out of 37 entries.

Driving the second Bimmerworld M4, #80, Mike Skeen was also in the Prototype Challenge race where he finished second. Mike is well known in the local racing community, and VIR is probably his home track. James Clay made a good choice with the driver team for his second car. The race was conducted in mixed weather conditions, creating lots of action and ending in a series of full-course cautions in the last 30 minutes. The #82 M4 spent most of the race in the top five or so and seemed to be in position to get a good finish. With Mike Skeen in the #80, Ari Balogh had moved from the 24th position through a variety of

accidents and on-and-off wet conditions to nearly the top ten before handing over to Mike Skeen. In the waning laps of the race, Devin Jones was in the #82 in sixth place and Skeen in the #80 was in ninth. With 10 laps to go, the top 16 were all on the same lap presenting a very competitive situation, and it looked like the #82 Bimmerworld car was in a great position. After a full-course caution, the two leaders went off track causing another full-course caution.

On the next restart, a Mercedes AMG collided with the #82 taking him off track and ending his race with broken suspension. During the course of all that, Skeen moved up to 4th for the final green/white checkered finish. The leading Porsche caused the second place McLaren to spin and even though the Porsche finished in first place he was penalized, and the #80 and Skeen moved up to a podium finish in 3rd. It was quite an eventful race and a nice finish for the Bimmerworld team.

The main event of the Michelin GT Challenge at VIR was the WeatherTech SportsCar Championship, in which the top GT cars in GTLM and GTD compete for 2 hours and 40 minutes. The weather forecast on Sunday was looking good with no rain, just somewhat overcast with moderate temperatures. There were two cars from BMW Team RLL M8 in GTLM and a single Turner Motorsport M6 in GTD. The Turner car qualified sixth out of thirteen cars, so a decent start might move them up to the front. Of course, we were rooting for Bill Auberlen and Robby Foley to get Bill that next win. The car had shown good speed with the 2nd fastest time in the second practice, the last dry practice, and the fastest time in the warmup. During our paddock visit with BMW Team RLL, the drivers maintained that they were OK with the seventh and eighth positions that they achieved in qualifying. They felt that tire strategy was the primary cause of this and once the race started the tires selected by the other teams would degrade and they could move up the



(Above) James Clay speaking to the corral visitors.



(Above) Will Turner, Robby Foley, Bill Auberlen and Don Salama from Turner Motorsport.



(Above) Jesse Krohn and John Edwards practice driver changes.



(Above) The second Bimmerworld #80 car in Hog Pen.





|(Above) Third place finishing #89 Bimmerworld M4 GT4.



|(Above) M8 GTE exiting the old Oak Tree Turn.

order. From a performance standpoint, they were a second off the pace. During the second practice, the #24 car was positioned in fifth - about 0.3 seconds off the best time. The drivers presented a positive outlook to us and felt that Sunday would be better. During the TV broadcast they spoke about the soft versus hard Michelin tires. They commented that many of the cars were running the soft tire, so they had the benefit of extra grip, but that the BMWs could not run that tire. The drivers didn't allude to the fact that there was a tire there that doesn't suit their car. They felt that the softer tires would go off fast and require those running them to make a change.

If we look at the comparative performance of the GTLM cars during the 2019 IMSA season, particularly the BMW M8 GTE, we must look at the Balance of Performance (BoP). All of these series have a BoP that attempts to keep the competition relatively even. We know that Porsche leads the championship points having won 6 out of the 9 races

so far. BMW won a dramatic rain race at Daytona and Ford has won the previous 2. The BoP is adjusted by IMSA via a Technical Bulletin before each race. Porsche has had one adjustment throughout the season: a 10 kg weight reduction after Daytona, going into the Sebring race. BMW won at Daytona in a rain filled, deluged, red flagged race. Augusto Farfus pulling off an amazing pass for the lead just before the red flag. BMW didn't win Daytona on speed. The result, though, was that the M8 got a BoP power reduction for Sebring. There were no adjustments for Long Beach or Mid-Ohio in May, but the results were not good with a 4th place at Mid-Ohio. Heading for Watkins Glen, the M8 got an increase in power to get almost back to the Daytona level. The M8s were mid-pack at Watkins Glen, but at least they were competitive. Moving on to the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park (CTMP) the M8 performed well with the #24 car qualifying on the GTLM pole and the #25 in second. The #24 finished on the podium in 2nd with

the #25 in 4th. At Road America, the #25 qualified on the GTLM pole with the #24 in 3rd. However, both cars were penalized due to the ride height being too low and were moved to the back of the GTLM grid. You might hope, since the BMWs were good at Road America they could have a good chance of moving to the front during the race. The race was unusual though, in that there were no full course cautions to consolidate the race and assist a fast car moving up from the back. As a result, the M8s finished in 5th and 8th. In the end, the team felt that they didn't perform very well, encountering grip problems and with one car losing its brakes. During our paddock visits we got a good description of the IMSA BoP process from the Turner Motorsport team. Will Turner described an equation-based analysis that establishes a range of lap times within which the cars must fall, otherwise they will have their BoP adjusted. He said that winning and losing is not supposed to be part of the decision. We have to look at the Porsche and that they have won 6 of the 9 previous races and only gotten one performance adjustment and that was a weight reduction. Obviously, if there's a system used to adjust car performance someone might be astute enough to manage their performance to fall within the system and avoid adjustments. The fact that wins don't seem to play into these adjustments seems to be part of the flow. Many of these adjustments have been called success ballast in the past.

I recently discovered the twitter feed from The B Pillar (@thebpillar). The B Pillar is developing a data visualization service for drivers, teams, coaches and team management. The B Pillar has a website; thebpillar.com where you can see the full description of their services. They are intending to develop a subscription service with varying available details launching in 2020. For now, The B Pillar is demonstrating their analytics by publicly posting

comparative lap time graphics from various race series. The analysis compares the best lap times from each of the drivers. The number of racing laps considered varies based on the length of the race. A very interesting part of the analysis comes from the summation of the best sector times which creates theoretical best times. Three of the theoretical best times are plotted as a green segment. One would think that as time progresses the best segment times would become consistent and this theoretical best wouldn't be too far ahead of the best actual lap times. This theoretical time might highlight driver consistency, and it might show that there is more potential in the car. If we look at the analysis of the VIR race below we can see that the four BMW drivers were roughly a second or slightly more off the pace of the winning Porsche, essentially off the pace on their own. The theoretical times are all just ahead of the actual lap times with no one showing they have something remaining in hand. IMSA provides all of the data from each of the races for easy download and analysis. I took a look at the trap speeds of the cars. The Corvettes were over 167 mph top speed while the BMWs were around 165. The BMWs were not so far off from the others in top speed, suggesting that tires may be the most difficult part of the problem with their impact on cornering speed. If I go back to Road America where the M8 was very competitive, the times and speeds seem to be pretty even. The car was on the pole there but got moved to the back due to a ride-height infraction. During the race the B Pillar analysis shows that the car was fast but finished at the back. The race had no caution periods making it more difficult to move up from that far back. The times and speeds though were much more even than what we see here at VIR. The M8s showed from the theoretical best that they had the potential to be fastest in GTLM. I don't know if this is what caused the BoP power reduction at VIR.



Looking below, we can see there was little chance of BMW Team RLL winning at VIR with this sort of deficiency. We can only guess if this is the result of a tire problem or the latest power reduction to the M8. If you go to the B Pillar twitter feed, you can see these graphics for yourself from each of the IMSA races and most of the other big events in the world of motorsports. I don't have the space here to go through each of the B Pillar analyses for the IMSA events, but the performance loss is rather clear to see at VIR. If you have interest, I would suggest that you follow the B Pillar on twitter and take a look at the race results throughout the season. I wish I could paint a better picture, but the data is clear. If the M8 cannot use Michelin's soft compound tire, they will be without that flexibility. The BoP process is not transparent for those of us who are fans. No explanation is provided as BoP adjustments are applied to any of the teams. All of the teams have

gotten negative adjustment during the season, in power or weight, except for Porsche which has only had a weight reduction.

After qualifying for the race, in GTLM, the #912 Porsche gridded on the pole with the #911 in 6th after an off during qualifying. The two M8s were in 7th and 8th. As the race started, the #911 with Nick Tandy driving went around the outside of everyone at turn one and moved immediately into second place. If you look below, you can see that the rest of the field doesn't have much of a chance unless something unusual happens. As the only cars in the 1:40s, with about .3 to .4s advantage, there's little chance for everyone else. Things happen, so you never know, but in this case the race ran without incident and the Porsches came out on top. After the race, the other drivers commented that no one had anything for the Porsches. The GTD cars started with the Turner M6 GTD car and Robby Foley moving up.

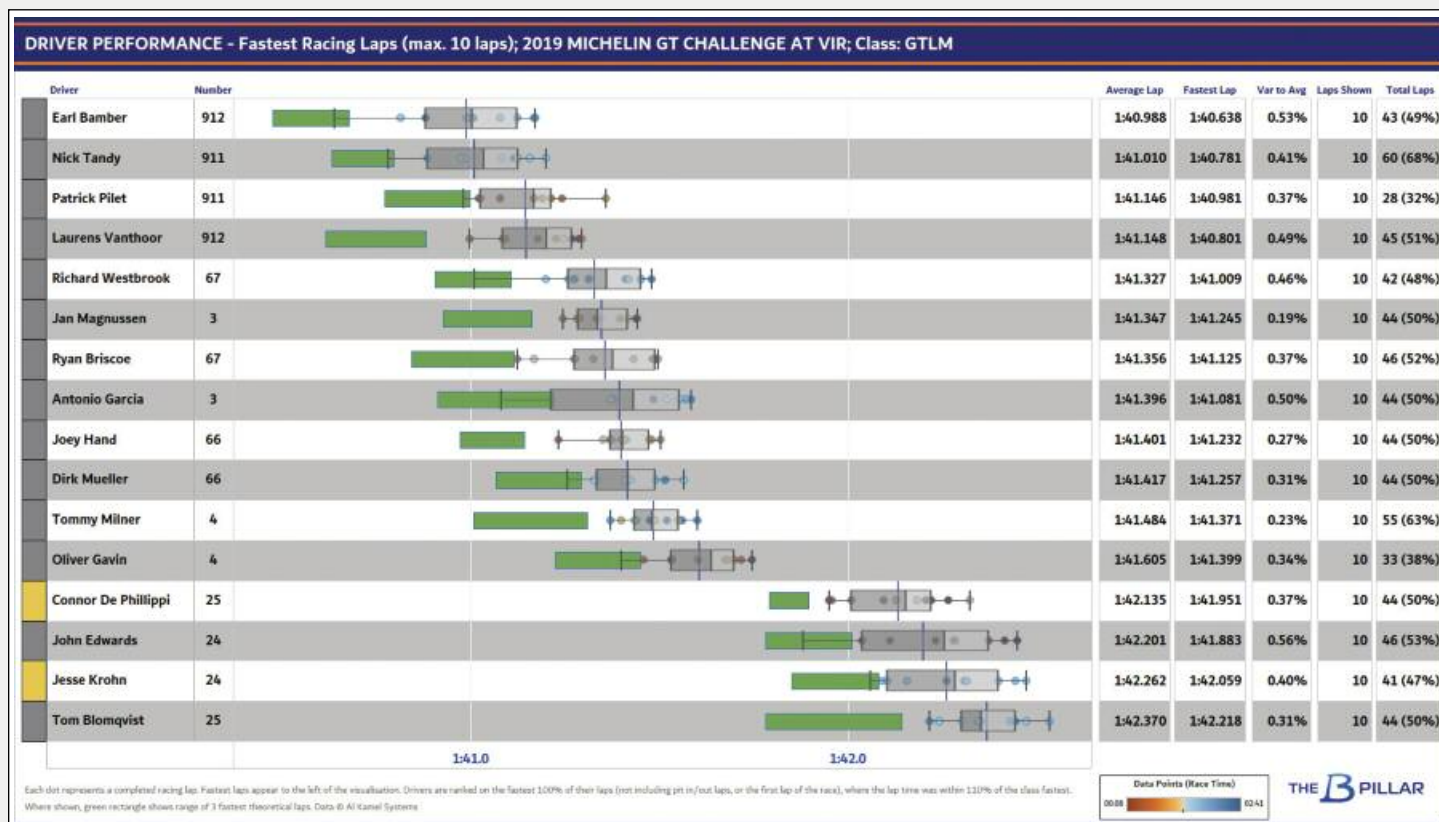
Gridded in 6th place in GTD Robby was able to move up to 4th and hold that position until the 9th lap where he was punted by the #48 Lamborghini and left the race with a deflated tire.

At that point the racing was close and there was a certain amount of contact going each way. The #14 Lexus seemed to be slow, losing speed, causing the other cars to compress their separation distance. Not wanting to be passed, the #14 was working very hard to stay in that position even though he didn't really have the speed. Eventually the #48 Lamborghini got just inside the right rear of the Turner car turning him and deflating the tire. There was no action taken by IMSA - not a very fair move on the 9th lap of the race. Consequently, Foley had to limp to the pits for a tire change and return in last place. The chances of another win for Bill Auberlen and Robby Foley were zero at that point. Where last year we had the excitement of both

M8s on the podium with a win, this year we didn't have much success.

My feeling is that Porsche has found a way to manage the system so that they can avoid the adjustment situation. One would think that IMSA would recognize that their system is flawed. We will have to watch what happens in the last two races at Laguna Seca and Road Atlanta hoping for some changes. No doubt Porsche has a very good car and excellent drivers, but this one wasn't even close for any of the other teams. The M8 may have had tire issues at VIR making the power reduction more pronounced in its impact on the car's performance.

We would like to thank BMW NA, the BMW Performance Center, BMW CCA, Bimmerworld, Crown BMW, Griot's Garage, IMSA, Michelin Tire and the National Capital Chapter CCA and Tarheel Chapter CCA for supporting our corral for another great year. If you missed it, please come out next year.



(Above) The B Pillar analysis of the VIR GTLM field. (Used by Permission.)

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# Benefits of Adding Paint Protection Film

Many people have heard of or know about paint protection film, or “clear bra” as it has been called in the past. Let’s dive a little deeper into what the product actually is and the benefits to a consumer.

Paint protection film was invented in 1966 by 3M to help extend the life of a helicopter rotor. The military approached them as the harsh conditions in Vietnam were wreaking havoc on them. Now, let’s fast forward several decades. This film began use as a paint protectant for the front end of a vehicle. Earlier versions of this film left a lot to be desired. It would yellow over time and eventually start cracking. It also lowered the sun’s UV rays on any part of the paint where it was applied. While that sounds good at first, the reality is that when the film was removed, the paint without film had aged more than the protected section, creating a whole other problem.

Let’s move forward to here and now. Modern paint protection film from companies like 3M or Xpel have eliminated the past problems. It no longer cracks, or yellows and it doesn’t slow down the natural aging of the paint below it. The film offered by top manufacturers even has a self-

healing property that allows mild scratches to disappear after being exposed to heat from the sun. It is 8 mil (.2 millimeters) thick and practically invisible to the naked eye.

So now that you know more about the advancements in the film,

Now, imagine that same vehicle with the same mileage with zero imperfections on those wear areas. Your vehicle looks a lot nicer, is worth more at resale time, and gives you more pride and joy every time you look at it. I bought a four-year-old

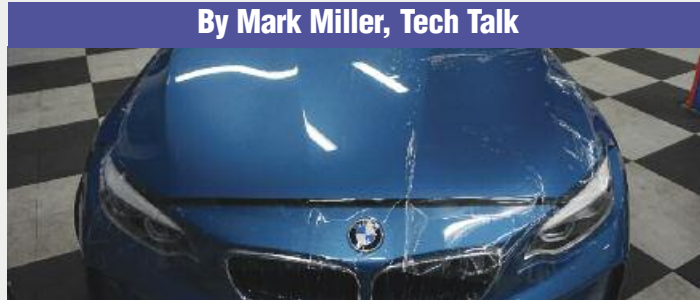
tell that the guy commuted in heavy traffic from looking at the windshield, yet you would never know it by looking at the front end.

If you are the kind of person that enjoys track days or aspires to do them, film is a great option for you. If small road debris can chip your paint at 60 miles per hour, what do you think it is going to do at 120 mph? We have installed film that included the whole front end, headlights, rocker panels, and strategic places around the rear tire expressly for this fun adventure.

Finally, should you choose to have this film installed on your vehicle, choose carefully who is going to do it. The installation itself is very challenging and it takes a unique skillset to do it right. I would suggest talking to the company and making sure you are comfortable with them, their facility, and their ability to be around in the future should you ever need service work.

If I can answer any questions at all, feel free to contact me as I am glad to help our community. My email address is in my bio below. I love BMW’s and have owned them for eighteen years. Once you have owned them, they get in your blood. But I am confident that you already know that.

## By Mark Miller, Tech Talk



*(Above) Paint protection film being applied to a BMW M2. Finished product at the top.*

you may be asking “why would I want it on my BMW?” Great question. Let’s start by discussing a new car. When you buy it, the paint should look perfect, or pretty darn close. The instant you start driving it, imperfections are going to start to occur. Stone chips, road rash, bird droppings, scratches, etcetera, all start to show up on what was once your beautiful car or SAV. Fast forward two to three years and now look at major wear areas on your paint. I think you get my drift.

335i a little while back to which the previous owner had applied paint protection film when the car was new. The front end looked spotless, as though it was in a time warp. There were some imperfections in the paint, but it was on the rear bumper, not the front end. As you can imagine, I was drawn to this car because of the beautiful condition of the paint. To help understand it even better, the car had the original windshield still intact and there must have been 20-30 very small imperfections in it. You could



Mark Miller is the owner of Westminster Speed & Sound, an award-winning vehicle customization facility in business since 1969. He is the Head Judge in the Mobile Electronics category for the SEMA New Product Awards, a two-time board member of the Mobile Electronics Retailers Association, and an 11-time recipient of the Top 50 Retailers Award by ME magazine. Mark is an avid BMW enthusiast and owner. You can reach him at [mark@WestminsterSpeed.com](mailto:mark@WestminsterSpeed.com) or by calling his store at 410-857-5300



# Lutz's Third Law

By James Chew

Securing a book deal seems to be a measure of business success. The shelves of bookstore business sections are littered with the musings of one-hit wonders (Roger Enrico) and false prophets (Jack Welch). Very few of these books go on to be timeless classics. If you're in the Defense industry, Augustine's Laws by Norm Augustine is a must read. If you're a car guy, Guts by Bob Lutz is a timeless classic.

With Guts, Bob Lutz discusses his observations on the actions taken by Chrysler Corporation that took the company from near bankruptcy to



(Above) *Something old, something new.*

being the (then) hottest car company in the world. He refers to these actions as laws, his third one being "When Everyone Else Is Doing It, DON'T".

This "law" highlights the uniqueness of both the new BMW 3 Series and the new VW Arteon. While most of the automakers are falling over themselves to introduce a SUV and EV for every purse and purpose, both BMW and VW decided that there is still strong demand for the internal combustion engine powered sedan. And based on early sales, they may both be right.

The all new 3 Series is a person-

(Below) *Something borrowed, something blue.*





al crusade for Klaus Frohlich, BMW's product development chief. One knew that the all-new 3 Series was to be something special when Mr. Frohlich stated that for him, the 3 Series IS BMWs "halo" vehicle. After thoroughly inspecting it at the 2018 Los Angeles Auto Show, visions of the 3 Series again driving like an E46 danced in our heads.

But, that was not to be. In our all-to-brief encounter with the G20 3 Series, its driving characteristics did not bring back memories of the much revered E46. Instead, it brought back driving memories of the E39 5 Series.

This first thing you'll notice about the 2020 M340i is its size. Parked next to an E30 3 Series, the G20 dwarfs it. Dimensionally, the 2020 3 Series is very close to the 2019 5 Series. The leaves one wondering how much bigger the next generation 5 Series and 7 Series will be. Next to the previous generation F30, the G20 looks sturdier. In Tanzanite Blue, the G20 simply looks stunning and upscale

Compared to Mercedes and Audi, BMW has been lagging in

"driver facing" technology integration and interior design. As an example, for the past 20 years the BMW gauges have had the same look. The new gauges now rival that of the German competition, while not being "game boy" like their Asian competitors. While we found the instrument panel to be impressive, fun, and engaging, we're certain that many "old time" BMW fans will find it to be distracting.

Perhaps because the F30 has been around since 2012, the G20's interior design is a breath of fresh air. Looking modern from every seating position, the G20 seems to recapture the E46 interior's timeless feel.

The fact that the 2020 3 Series is the featured vehicle in this year's BMW Ultimate Driving Experience makes participating in one of these events well worth it. Unlike the sterile dealer test drive, you'll have a chance to push the limits of the 3 Series' handling in an autocross course.

As fun as that autocross can be, be patient and sign up for a street drive in the M340i. You'll



(Above) The Arteon's front end design accentuates its wide track.

(Below) Audi-like on the outside.





immediately appreciate the performance as well as the “livability” of this new 3. The 2020 M340i seems to give the same vibe as the E36 M3. Based on our all-too-brief drive, the M340i is perfect as a daily driver, excels as an executive sedan, and will put competitors to shame on a track. With such wonderful balance and drivability, we wonder what treats are in store when the new M3 is released.

A quick “street drive” does not do the M340i justice. It made us yearn for a longer evaluation period, perhaps something along the lines of our recent i8 review.

The VW Arteon is a very curious product. This car replaces the CC, VW’s previous flagship car. And the fact that VW executives felt the need to have a “flagship” sedan is one of the lasting effects of the late Ferdinand Piech – who brought us the VW Phaeton. While the CC sales were never all that good, they must have been good enough to warrant a replacement. We’re hesitant to call this an all-new replacement because



(Above) The new 3 Series “cockpit” reminds one of the classic E46.

the Arteon, looks, feels, and drives like an Audi A5 sportback.

Now, that’s not a bad thing. In past articles, I’ve waxed eloquently about one of the favorite cars I’ve owned – the 1987 Shelby Lancer.

A sport sedan hatchback design works when the resulting product is stylish, sporty, and practical. It’s why the BMW 4 Gran Coupe design, as well as the VW Arteon design, works. The hatchback design doesn’t work

when it reminds one of an AMC Gremlin – another vehicle that I’ve owned. For that reason that I’ve never understood BMW’s offering of the 3 GT, 5 GT, or the current 6 GT.

The number people who thought the Arteon “looked like a Tesla” was surprising. Yes, we were in California for this evaluation.

We were also quite surprised by the attention the Arteon attracted at the big-box warehouse store parking lots when we opened the hatchback. The Arteon has 27.2 cubic feet of cargo room without folding the rear seats down. With the rear seats folded, the cargo space increases to almost 55 cubic feet. That rivals the cargo room in smaller SUVs.

The Arteon’s interior design is “standard VW”. Ergonomically designed while being functional and clean, it seems that VW’s interior come only in one color: black. The front and rear seats are comfortable, supportive, and roomy. The leatherette seating surfaces connote a “family sedan” feeling of durability.

(Below) The size, stance, and driving dynamics of the new 3 Series reminds one of the classic E39.





The Arteon's interior has a much more upscale feel than the equivalently priced CamCord or Dodge Charger.

Because of the close family relationship, it's no wonder that the VW Arteon drives like an entry level Audi. The turbocharged direct-injection four-cylinder engine (hmm...my Shelby Lancer had a turbocharged, intercooled sequential multi-port fuel injected 4-cylinder engine) which produces 268 horsepower and 258 foot pounds of torque (the Shelby Lancer's engine produced 175 horsepower and 175 foot pounds of torque) and GTI-like steering gives an underlying "zippiness" to the Arteon's driving characteristics that belies its Autobahn heritage. The standard 4-motion all-wheel drive gives the Arteon a feeling of driving confidence that can't be matched by any Asian sedan. That being said, it almost seems that the VW engineers intentionally toned down the Arteon's driving characteristics so as not to be too close to those of an Audi. That is



(Above) The Arteon's cockpit combines Audi ergonomics with VW materials.

most unfortunate.

VW sales have recovered quite nicely from the precipitous drop following the disclosure of their diesel emissions testing "scandal" (for me the real scandal is the knee-jerk

political reaction to questionable data – but that's another story). Ironically, the sales increase is driven by their new SUVs.

For the 3 Series, Lutz's Third Law is holding – year-to-year sales of

this wonderful sedan have increased close to 7 percent. Ironically, the sales increase may be constrained by the simultaneous launch of the more expensive M340i. A quick tour of local BMW dealers shows an inventory that is heavily weighted towards the more expensive models.

The Arteon replaces the "never big seller" CC, so it's too early to tell if Lutz's Third Law will hold for this vehicle. However, VW has already put a \$2500 incentive on the Arteon, making it very attractive for the Passat, CamCord or "can't quite afford an Audi" shopper.

In a market dominated by SUVs, the sedan is alive and well. BMW's North America sales are still a 50/50 mix of cars and SUVs, showing that the BMW buyer still values a good, balanced, affordable sports sedan. Let's hope that BMW's new CEO, Oliver Zipse, understands and appreciates this unique balance.

(Below) The size, stance, and driving dynamics are Audi-like, while the interior materials and refinement are very VW.





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## The Habits of Highly Effective Autocrossers: Habits Seven and Eight

By Jack Raymond | Photos by Jaclyn Heck

By the time you read this, your motorsports season will most likely be done for the year. Nevertheless, there's always more to learn. Let's recap the autocross tips and habits from the last three articles before we move on:

- Tip: Leave the car unmodified; run what you bring.
- Tip: Go to an autocross school or two and as many events as you can.
  - Focus on training the driver, training the driver, and training the driver.
- Tip: Dial in your tire pressures by chalking the tops of the sidewalls and experimenting with pressures, judging the results by how much chalk is rubbed away and, more importantly, by your times on the course.
- Tip: If you're ready to seriously commit to autocross, acquire a set of extreme performance summer tires and a set of OEM-size, lighter weight wheels on which to put them. (Tirerack.com is a good source.)
- Tip: Get a competition alignment with a little toe-out in front, and dead-neutral toe in the rear (for front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive cars) or half the rear toe-in of the factory specification (for rear-wheel drive cars), plus as much negative camber as you can get with your stock suspension in front, then match that in the rear.
- Tip: Arrive at your competition event with just a quarter tank of gas so as not to carry excess weight.

- Habit 1: LOOK AHEAD, THINK AHEAD
  - Keep looking and thinking around two seconds in front of the car during the entire run.
  - The car goes where the driver is looking.
  - Position the car for what's coming up next.
- Habit 2: ENTER WIDE, EXIT TIGHT
  - Almost all the critical turns in autocross demand a late apex.
  - Corollary 2a: Think of the course as being a series of arcs, not a series of line segments.
- Habit 3: Take the corners by driving IN SLOW(ER) and OUT FAST(ER). If there's any tradeoff to be made between entry speed and exit speed, then favor exit speed. If the car is pushing & plowing (understeering) or sliding tail-way-out (oversteering) as you're trying to exit the corner, and you're losing time while you wait for the car to recover, then you probably entered the corner too hot.
- Habit 4: SMOOTH IS FAST. Jerky inputs unsettle the car's suspension and lead to understeer or oversteer. This doesn't mean that your inputs



can't be quick; they just can't be jerky.

- Habit 5: DRIVE IT LIKE YOU STOLE IT\*, to the limit of grip, beyond your comfort zone, maximizing the load on your suspension while minimizing distance traveled. Where you can go fast, go CRAZY fast.

- \*But not on public roads. Trust me.

- Corollary 5a: Remember the friction circle. If you're braking at 100% of the tires' grip, then the tires have no grip left for turning at that moment. Your tires' available grip is being shared between braking, turning, and accelerating. When you're performing more than one of these actions at the same time (braking & turning, turning & accelerating) then remember that those actions need to share the available grip. This is why your instructor told you to do your heaviest braking while traveling in a straight line.

- Habit 6: TRAIL BRAKE. Approach the corner aggressively, enter the corner wide, brake moderately, ease off the brake as you begin turning. That residual, light braking as you're turning will keep the car's weight transferred to the front tires, helping to rotate the car. When the nose of the car is pointed where you want to go, finish lifting off the brake and smoothly get back on the gas. The result should be that you apex within a foot of the cone and exit the corner pointed towards your next element. If you can't get within a foot of the cone, or if you're not pointed towards your next element as you exit the corner, then you might have entered the corner too hot or too tight. Approach aggressively, enter wide, brake, lift & turn, exit close to the cone, go!

- Tip: if your car's handling exhibits excessive body roll and/or is slow to respond to steering inputs (and you've already done a competition alignment), and you're in the street/stock class, then consider getting firmer (shocks & struts). See the July/August 2019 article describing Habits Three and Four.

- If you're driving in a class that allows it, consider getting firmer springs (these may also lower the car) and matching shocks & struts; a coilover suspension kit includes a combined damper-and-spring setup.

What's next? This article is the fourth of several entitled "The Habits of Highly Effective Autocrossers" (with apologies to Stephen Covey). (Ok, the series started out as "The Seven Habits...", but this article brings us up to eight, plus numerous tips, as you saw recapped, above.) Habit number seven is this: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.

It's just like your parents and your teachers told you: practice makes perfect. Sign up for as many events as you can. The more seat time you get, the more familiar you'll become with your car's handling characteristics, especially at the limit: braking, braking & turning, turning & accelerating, straight line acceleration. All of the habits in this series require lots of repetition before they become second nature, especially the foundation skill from which everything else flows: looking ahead. Okas E recently told me he spent an entire season focusing just on making himself look ahead\*\*.

When I told Okas I was writing this article, he made a point of reminding me that it's not just practice, it's focused practice: practice with a clear, conscious, specific purpose. So what, exactly, does that mean?

Let's start with walking the course, Okas-style. Walking the course the way the top drivers do is much more than just getting a feel for where the course goes ("start, slalom for 30 yards, right for 50 yards, left for 50 yards..."),

memorizing a rough mental map of the course), although you need to absorb that, too. Walking the course like a top driver means analyzing every element in detail:

- First: Slaloms - Where do I need to position the car, exiting that last element and approaching the slalom, so as to "back-side" that first cone and set up the rest of my slalom run?

- As you pass each cone in the slalom, the rear fender of your car should pass by the back side of the cone, giving you as much time and room as possible to set up for the next cone. If you "get behind" and start front-siding the cones, you'll feel "pinched" the rest of the way.

- Setting up correctly for that first cone is the key to the entire slalom.
- Second: Are the cones in that slalom equally spaced, or getting closer together, or further apart?

- Do I need to slow down partway into the slalom, because it's getting tighter, or can I speed up, because the cones are getting further apart?

- Hint: count your steps as you walk from cone to cone in the slalom.

- Another hint: you can usually start accelerating out of the slalom from the second-to-last cone. You don't need to wait until that last cone to apply more throttle.

- Third: Turns - Is this turn 45 degrees? 90 degrees? 135 degrees? 180 degrees?

- How does my car handle in that kind of turn?

- Can I go through that turn without slowing down?

- If I think I'll have to slow down, can I just lift off the gas? A little or a lot? Will I need to brake for that turn? At what point? How much? Just a tap to settle the car or will hard braking be needed? Will trail braking help?

- Fourth: Is this section uphill, downhill, or level?

- Is gravity going to be acting to slow me down or speed me up?

- How does that affect how much braking I'll need?

- Fifth: Is this section on-camber or off-camber?

- That is, is the slope of the hill helping me corner or making it harder?

- If it's off-camber, is my car inclined to understeer or oversteer in the turn?

- Sixth: Speed - Is this a section that I should be able to drive crazy fast?

Don't yak with your buddies while walking the course. Spend the course-walk thinking about where the course goes and how you're going to drive it, element by element. Then use your first run to verify or adjust your analysis.

Next: use a Go Pro or other video camera to record your runs. Preferably, place the camera so that it can see the driver's steering inputs, as well as the view out the windshield. Analyze your last run before your next run:

- Am I close to the critical cones?

- Am I looking ahead?

- Am I entering wide and exiting tight?

- Am I turning for each corner at the right place? Or too early? Or too late?

- Is my driving smooth?

- Am I taking each corner as fast as possible? In slow(er) and out fast(er)?

- Am I driving crazy fast? Or being too conservative?

- Am I trail braking to help rotate the car and avoid having the front-end just push / scrub / understeer?

- What can I do differently to try to get a faster time?

After the event is over, keep reviewing your videos and analyzing your performance. Discuss it with your competitor / colleagues. (You'd be amazed how much the top drivers help each other, especially at the local level.) Chances are excellent that an upcoming event will include corners that are similar to your last event, so review what you might have done better. In other words, motorsports is a thinker's game.

Recently, I've thought that my age might be starting to affect my driving. After all, hand-eye coordination and reflexes aren't like a fine wine: they don't improve with age. Then I remembered my friend Pat G, about my age, maybe a tad older, whose driving has improved remarkably in the last couple seasons. So Okas asked me if I knew the key to Pat's improvement. I was in for a surprise. Like the other top drivers, Pat now practices his motorsports skills, in a simulator, every day. By simulator, I don't mean a Playstation controller. I mean a setup with a bucket seat, a steering wheel, clutch, brake, accelerator, and shifter. A setup like that will probably cost a few \$\$\$, plus the time commitment for the practicing, but if you want to be a top driver, that's what it takes. Okas says he spends an hour a day reviewing and analyzing his driving, comparing notes with colleagues, or practicing in the simulator. Highly effective motorsports drivers are serious about their fun.

Which brings us to habit eight: HAVE FUN! Enjoy the entire experience, including your work assignment. Enjoy bench racing with your colleagues. Enjoy the mad dash of adjusting tire pressures and analyzing your performance between runs. Enjoy the pre-event preparation and the post-event tear down. Enjoy the travel to the event, and the trip home. If you're not enjoying the entire experience, it makes for a long day for a little competition time. If you're not having fun, then why are you here?

**\*\*One last thought:** especially if you're new to motorsports, don't try to put all these tips and habits into use at once. Start at the top of the list; put first things first. Make one change at a time so you can gauge its effect. Do what works for you. Once you've got a particular tip or habit working well for you, then add the next one. But you can always remind yourself to Have Fun.







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