

# Oktoberfest RELI



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# YES THE OLDEN DAYS



IT WAS **OLD-BMW HEAVEN**, THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF THE **PITTSBURGH VINTAGE GRAND PRIX**, THE **2002 CONTINGENT**, AND THE **BMW CLASSIC CAR CLUB OF AMERICA**.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY **JACKIE JOURET**



**B**ack in the Olden Days, sports-car races were held in places like Watkins Glen and Bridgehampton, at Palm and Pebble Beaches, at Elkhart Lake, on public roads and in public parks. It was romantic and exciting, and it disappeared almost completely in the 1950s, when the inadequacy of hay bales to protect drivers and spectators alike became deadly obvious. These days, even vintage-car races are held on modern tracks, which hold spectators at a safe remove and give drivers plenty of run-off room in which to correct for error. Trouble is, the old cars don't look nearly as romantic on the wide expanse of Laguna Seca as they did on the old 17-Mile Drive course at Pebble Beach.

They do, however, look absolutely fantastic racing on the roads of Schenley Park, a 456-acre expanse not far from the center of Pittsburgh. This is an old-school city park, laid out in 1889; like New York's Central Park, it contains plenty of trees and open space intermingled with fountains and statuary, and it's criss-crossed with winding

public roads. Every summer, those roads are closed to the public for the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, the nation's only vintage race held on city streets.

Given the limitations of the course itself, the PVGP is less competition than spectacle—but who needs fender-banging racing when you've got a field of twenty or so 2002s, Alfa GTAs, MGs, and 914s running at good speed and close together on narrow park roads lined with stone walls, statues, and more than a few hay bales? If that won't put a smile on your face, well, perhaps a game of golf is in order. (But not today, because the Schenley Park golf course is covered in vintage cars. So there!)

I'm smiling a lot this weekend. I've been hearing about the PVGP from the BMW Performance Center's Mike Renner and *Roundel* photographer Klaus Schnitzer for over a decade now, and it's every bit as cool as they say. I'm lucky to catch a ride with Renner on his warm-up lap before the charity rides begin—for just \$50 a seat, all of which goes to the PVGP's chosen



charities—and the course is simply spectacular, especially when Mike's "Ring Taxi" M3 or M5 is hitting 120 mph on the back straight, or drifting around corners just a few feet from a stand of trees or a hard stone wall.

After riding around the track with Renner, I'm even more impressed when the first BMW I see on the course is a white 1939 328 roadster going around the downhill hairpin that is Turn Eighteen. Three months after a full restoration, this car is being *raced*, just as God and Rudolf Schleicher intended. Bravo to its owner-driver, John Romano, for being so bold, and for bringing this time-warping 328 #85406 to the PVGP!

In addition to the recommendations from Renner and Schnitzer, I've also been enticed to Schenley Park by a happy coincidence: This year's BMW CCA Oktoberfest is being held in conjunction with the PVGP, giving CCA members a great excuse to take in this fabulous event during their annual get-together. For further inducement, 2018 is the 50th anniversary of the 2002, the car that inspired Boston and Los Angeles enthusiasts to start the clubs that became today's CCA.

BMW's late-'60s two-door is also a fantastic vintage race car, and the PVGP reciprocated with a special class just for 2002s. They're also racing in the Vintage Sedan category for Under Two-Liter cars as well, and it's hard to decide which is cooler: seeing 30-some 2002s of every possible description or seeing the BMWs mix it up with their Alfa, Porsche, Lotus, MG, and Triumph contemporaries—and even the odd Volvo!—from SCCA Trans-Am and IMSA RS racing.

One of the BMWs on track was even a former IMSA RS champion: the Miller & Norburn



2002 raced by Nick Craw to the 1973 and '75 championships. The car is now owned by Scott Hughes, who remains committed to actually racing the significant BMWs in his collection despite hitting the wall with this one at Schenley Park. Scott was unhurt, fortunately, and the car can be repaired. His pride is probably dented, however, given that the crash took place in Schenley Park's Turn Thirteen, also called BMW Corner for its location just down the hill from the CCA's hospitality tent. You crashed among friends, Scott, and we were all happy to see you get out of the car intact.

The PVGP may have provided a rationale for many of us to

John Romano raced a prewar 328 roadster.

Scott Hughes (#64) leads a gaggle of 2002s through BMW Corner at Schenley Park.

go to Pittsburgh, but the BMW CCA Oktoberfest offered plenty to do in the week leading up to the races. I've been on a bit of a 2002 kick lately, and this year's O'Fest turned Pittsburgh into 02 heaven, with a full slate of 2002-specific events organized by Terry Sayther and Jeff Gomon. Starting with a parking-lot gathering on Monday, 2002 folks could take a driving tour on Tuesday that included many of the Pittsburgh area's covered bridges, tech talks on Wednesday, and a driving tour to Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater on Friday—all in addition to the CCA driving and social events open to all members, regardless of year or model.







Sayther says that the 2002 events were a rousing success. “The traditional Oktoberfest doesn’t have a place for people who are one-model-centric, and a lot of 2002 people are obsessed with 2002s,” Sayther says. “They really want to network about the cars, to find out what other people have done to their 02 and how it works, and they take great pleasure in seeing a bunch of 2002s driving together.” So do I, and it was a great pleasure to see them from the passenger seat of another 2002—this one a Baur cabriolet owned by Don Bower.

I first encountered Bower’s Baur when his car was selected for “The Icon,” the BMW CCA

Foundation’s current exhibit in Greer, South Carolina, and it was really fun to take a ride in this rare car—one of perhaps only twelve in black-on-black. Bower’s been driving 2002s since he bought a brand-new Colorado 2002tii in 1972, and he’s also had a slew of BMWs that includes a pair of 700s, a 2002tii Touring, a Z4 M roadster, and a pair of E9 coupes. He got this 1972 Baur in early 2017, purchased from a dealership in Germany and imported to his home in Georgia. He’s done a bit of work on it since then, including installing the seatbelts that weren’t included on this open-top car when it was new, and it’s pretty darned spectacular. I especially like the upholstery,

A Bugeye Sprite takes the inside line as the 328 lines up for a late apex.



Don Bower’s Baur cabriolet is upholstered in Pepita.

which Bower identifies correctly as Pepita rather than hounds-tooth. It’s a subtle difference, but it’s one of those distinctions that lets me know that I’m in the presence of a real enthusiast.

Bower’s wife, Julie, had opted to stay home this weekend, and he was gracious enough to let me take her place in the Baur’s passenger seat for the drive to Fallingwater. I was ostensibly serving as his navigator, but I’m pretty useless in that role, especially once we got started talking about Bower’s career in academia—or anything else that happened to come up. Luckily, so many 2002s on the road meant that all we really had to do is just stay with the crowd

2002s pose at Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater house.





to find our way to Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece.

Technically, though, we weren't driving with the 2002 group, but with the BMW Classic Car Club of America (CCCA), which was holding its own event in parallel with the CCA Oktoberfest. (Like two-thirds of all CCCA members, I'm a member of both clubs.) The CCCA was invited to boost the number of vintage BMWs at events organized by both the CCA and the PVGP, and that it did; some 60 CCCA members brought at least half as many cars, including three 507s, a 328, a handful of E9 coupes, and quite a few 2002s. The 507s—brought by CCCA president Dirk de Groen, Thomas Pesiquey, and William Scott—were parked in front of the Oktoberfest host hotel along with Lance White's prewar Drauz-bodied 321 cabriolet, and they also participated in driving events along with the 2002s and E9 coupes.

CCCA members Tony and Gwen Verrengia and Frank and Denise Greppo drove from New York to Pittsburgh in their "Ketchup and Mustard" 1973 and 1975 2002s, then took part in all the 2002 and CCCA driving events, starting with the covered-bridge tour. They were hoping to meet Bobby Rahal when the tour stopped for lunch at Rahal's BMW of South Hills dealership, but the Indy 500 winner wasn't at the shop. Rahal had, however, instructed his staff to show his fellow 02 drivers every consideration, and when Frank's 2002 lost its oil cap, Rahal's parts department replaced it at no charge. "That was almost as good as meeting Bobby!" said Greppo.

"They were extraordinarily nice to us at Rahal's," Terry Sayther agrees, "and the roads were spectacular. It was a really fun drive in the country."

The tour included a few gravel



In 1970, Ray King's 2002 was modified by Alpina for a customer in Miami, Florida.

roads, which were no problem for the narrow-tired 2002s—or de Groen's 507. "I think people were surprised that I'd drive it on gravel, and I think people appreciate it when you take a 507 out and drive it rather than put it in a museum," says de Groen. "Nothing against museum pieces, but I like to *drive* my cars, and that's what the CCCA is all about. A lot of our members just like touring their cars, and that's why the emphasis was on getting out into the countryside."

After that adventure, CCCA

members had the option of joining the CCA for dinner that evening, taking a Gilligan's Island-themed cruise on Pittsburgh's three rivers—the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela, to spare you a trip to the atlas—or enjoy a low-key dinner among themselves at the Monterey Bay Fish Grotto. Same for Thursday, when CCCA members had the choice of joining the CCA for a really fun (and educational!) dinner at the Carnegie Science Center or heading to the Allegheny County Airport for the



An impressive array of 2002s gathered at Bobby Rahal's BMW of South Hills facility.





PVGP's "Passport To Elegance" fundraiser, where the 507s, Lothar Scheuttler's 328, and Scott Hughes' 2002 turbo were on display alongside significant cars from other marques.

In addition to swelling the vintage BMW ranks on the driving tours and at PVGP events, 02 drivers and CCCA members turned this year's Oktoberfest into one of the best on record. Staged along the riverfront near Heinz Stadium, the concours included the CCCA vehicles—and a lot of the 2002s—making

for an exceptionally photogenic concours.

Thursday and Friday saw the CCCA back on the road, taking driving tours to Washington and Mill Run, Pennsylvania. Washington is the home of the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum—an ironic destination, given that the automobile pretty much killed off U.S. cities' once-extensive network of streetcars and trolleys in the early postwar period—while Mill Run is the home of Fallingwater, the spectacular vacation home designed

Mike Self is the original owner of Wolfgang, his Nevada '69 2002.

Sam Moultrie's Taiga 2002 was one of five Baur cabriolets in Pittsburgh.

by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Kaufmann family in 1937. The roads to Mill Run were vintage BMW-perfect, and the CCCA had arranged for us to have lunch in the Fallingwater barn just down the road.

Bower and I were joined by well-known 02 enthusiasts Mike Pugh and Bo Black—Bo organizes the MidAmerica 02 Fest in Hot Springs, Arkansas, every year—and Houston-area CCCA members Jeff and Jackie Haught. Jeff and Jackie are serious architecture enthusiasts,





and both had studied Wright's work—Fallingwater in particular—before seeing it. The Haughts loved the house, and so did the Verrengias. "To see Wright's work in person is really special," Tony Verrengia says. I'd have to agree; being inside Fallingwater was definitely the non-car highlight of the week.

But that was not the only architectural masterpiece we got to enjoy. On Friday night, a Robber Baron-themed dinner was staged by the CCA at the Grand Concourse, a seafood restaurant in a Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad station built in 1901. Being inside this magnificent building was really a treat, especially with so many club members dressed in period costumes that evoked the Gilded Age—or the Monopoly man! The jazz band was terrific, too.

The CCCA had reserved a room to give its members a more intimate party-within-the-party in the Grand Concourse, but everyone ended up mixed together anyway. Of course! We're all friends and BMW enthusiasts, and it gave us an excuse to circulate, checking



BMW's—including more than 160 2002s—cover Schenley Park's German Hill.

out the architectural details and finding fun things to eat around the room.

On Saturday morning, it was time to head to Schenley Park for the PVGP. As much as I'd anticipated checking out the course and watching the races, it was hard to tear my attention from the cars (and people) gathered in the BMW CCA corral. It was impossible to count the cars, but CCA registrar Steven Schlossman reports that 629 members paid for corral admission, and 162 of them brought 2002s. The PVGP's Eric

Zagrocki told me that quite a few Pittsburgh-area 02 drivers turned up with their cars just for that event, so the numbers were actually slightly higher than the O'Fest count.

Regardless of quantity, the quality of BMWs in attendance was stunning. An entire hillside was covered in 1602 and 2002s of every model year and description, including not one but *five* Baur cabriolets, highlighted by one in Taiga green brought by Dallas-area CCA member Sam Moultrie. If Baur's aren't your thing, how about Ray King's







early Alpina, Mike Self's one-owner '69, or Paul Wegweiser's infamous "F-Bomb"? All were present, along with their owners.

Another big section of corral was filled with M cars and other club favorites. Wandering the field, I couldn't help but feel nostalgic for my long-gone E30 325is, especially after I'd checked out Eugene Paulin's 1987 325is in Delphin Gray over Cardinal Red leather. Then again, E31 8 Series coupes like Brooklyn Taylor's have always had a lot of appeal—and I'd never say no to a Golf yellow E9 coupe like

the one Luis and Anne Arriso parked right in front of the beer garden along with a slew of CCCA-member cars; those vintage models included Thomas and Dirk's 507s, Lothar's black 328, and John Romano's white 328—once his race was over—plus an 1800 TiSA. Having BMWs on hand that predate the 2002 made the PVGP corral really special, so kudos to the CCCA for adding depth to an already broad field!

And kudos to the CCA for staging Oktoberfest in conjunction with the PVGP, a stroke

Paul Wegweiser's "F-Bomb" displays a certain patina.

Lous and Anne Arriso brought their lovely Golf 3.0CS coupe.

of genius that made this year's event in Pittsburgh doubly enjoyable for those of us who've long wanted an excuse to check out America's only public-road vintage race. The sights, the sounds, and the atmosphere of the PVGP are definitely worth the trip, and there's nothing better than getting to take them all in with hundreds of your fellow BMW enthusiasts. Next year's Oktoberfest in Greenville, South Carolina, will hold plenty of its own attractions, but the Pittsburgh event will always be a highlight of my own O'Fest history. **R**

