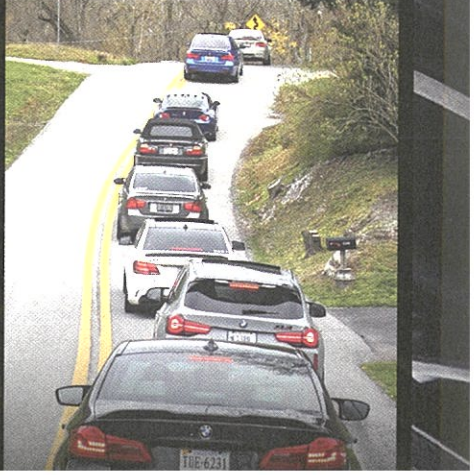
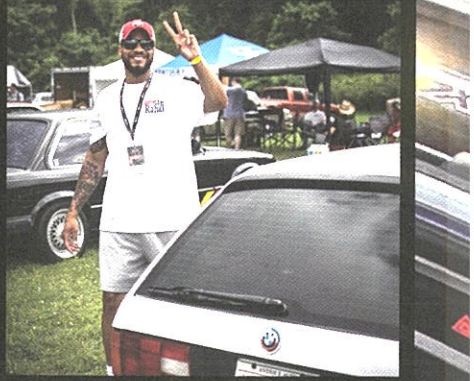
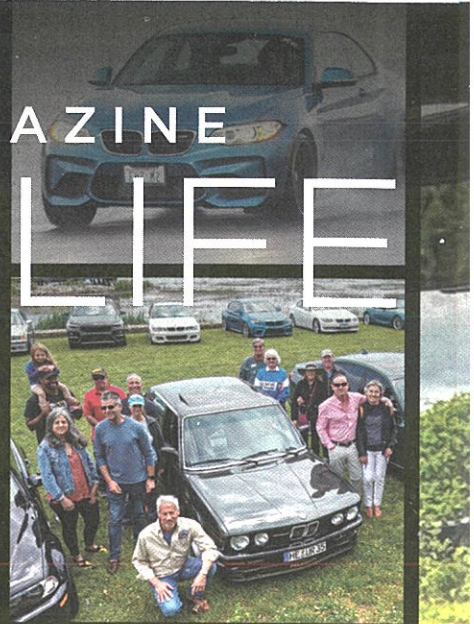


BMW CAR CLUB MAGAZINE

# BIMMERLIFE

FALL/WINTER 2021



# ENGAGED

CELEBRATING THE BMW ENTHUSIAST LIFESTYLE



# THE ENGAGEMENTS

## OF GUMBY AND EMMY LOU, AND ROB AND MEL

BY MELANIE MASLO



Rob poses with Gumby's original owner.

In early November 2012, I found myself driving to a barn dance in Fargo, North Dakota, only to find out on the way that the dance had occurred the prior night. My friend Jeff, who was like a brother to me, decided that we should all meet at a bar in the opposite direction. After waiting for what felt like hours for others to arrive, I saw a small group of strangers walk in—and one particular person stood out. As other friends arrived, Jeff jumped to greet them, while I decided to introduce myself to the stranger who had caught my eye.

Rob was a recent transplant from Indiana and he drove a big Jeep. I had never experienced a modern Jeep and I was genuinely curious. The group wanted to

change locations; I agreed to go—on the condition that I could see Rob's Jeep.

Rob explained that he worked on airplanes; I have been intrigued by planes since I was a kid. He and I discussed our overlapping interests, old Indiana stomping grounds, seeing the Indy 500 in person, etc. A few days and several Facebook messages later, we were on our first date. A month after we met, we became exclusive.

Sometime before Christmas, Rob texted me about a car he had always wanted, this one for \$1,800. He was going to pick me up from work in the new car and drive me to a work party. A jade green, boxy car was not what I expected. Confused, I got in and asked, "What is this?! This is not a 2002 anything!"

As I fought with the seat belts (if you know, you know), Rob was dying of laughter. "Mel, it's a 1975 BMW 2002."

The car would not stay the bane of my relationship existence for long. Despite many attempts long before knowing Rob, I accepted that driving a manual car was not a skill I possessed. But Rob somehow connected the dots and taught me how to drive a stick shift as I started to get the hang of driving his Jeep. The 2002's pedals were mounted in a weird way. Why would

they come up from the floor and not be suspended from the dash? This German engineering made no sense to me.

Unlike the Jeep, there was a certain charm about driving this tiny car. It was somehow different. It made me smile as no other car had. "Okay, Rob," I said to him one day from behind the wheel. "I get it. I get why you wanted this terribly named car. Let's call him Gumby."

Some time after we moved east together, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix hosted an event on the Clemente Bridge, and Rob and I took Gumby. With the heater blasting to keep Gumby from overheating, we begged to be let on the bridge to park. As we turned, there was a guy who really admired Gumby with a camera in hand. "Rob, that guy is taking pictures of us," I said. Rob assured me that this was normal.

The camera guy was Greg Calvimontes, who became one of the most important people to help us integrate with Pennsylvania. He invited us to join the Allegheny Chapter, and our social circle expanded. Greg introduced us to 2002 guru Paul Wegweiser; not only does Paul operate on a level of caffeine similar to ours, he has the wit of Kurt Vonnegut and Robin Williams, the emotional intelligence of Princess Diana and Leonardo DiCaprio,



Rob and Mel attend the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix.





the heart of Oprah Winfrey and Dolly Parton, with the drive of Malala Yousafzai and Simone Biles all rolled into one entertaining human soul.

Sometime while showing this new friend group our Garage Mahal, I raised a silly idea: “Wouldn’t it be fun to have another 2002? Then we could have his-and-hers 2002s—Mr. and Mrs. Gumby!” Everyone was entertained by the idea, but we had many other plans for our house, and adding another 2002 was nothing more than a dream.

Then, through Paul, we met Billy, who was seeking a new owner for Emmy Lou, his father’s meticulously maintained black 1974 2002. The sale went through only after Billy and his father became convinced that we would love the 2002 as they had. Over the next two years, while navigating his mother’s passing in March 2021, Rob worked with Paul, Greg, and other friends to get Emmy Lou from Billy’s home near Philadelphia to Paul’s garage in western Pennsylvania—all without my knowledge.

Some eight years into our relationship,

Emmy Lou was something of a surprise....



in May 2021 Rob randomly asked if I had plans for one Friday night. He suggested a date night at our favorite restaurant, in a private room to maintain our social distancing. Because I was not feeling great, he drove the hour to the restaurant while I rested in the passenger seat. I sensed that we were close and started to gather myself as we slowed for the turn into the parking lot. Looking up, I saw a sweet-looking but unfamiliar black 2002 in the parking lot. I got out of our car and saw a random couple hanging out in the parking lot nearby.

When I asked Rob whose 2002 it was, he said, “I don’t know. Let’s go check it out.” I hesitated because he had said we needed to be on time for dinner, but I obliged him. The car was a level of perfection I had not seen in a 2002 since the BMW Club’s slice of German Hill at the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix. Rob gestured for me to walk around the front of the car, where I could finally read the papers inside the windshield, which read, “Mel, Will You Marry Me?”

Utterly confused, I turned to Rob, who



Getting a ring and a 2002 makes for a happy engagement.

was now on one knee next to the car, holding up a beautiful ring in complete silence. I looked around and saw that the random couple had a camera pointed at me. For once I was speechless. Rob’s brown eyes, reminiscent of a child who had just given their mom a macaroni necklace, were welling up in tears. I walked over to him, took the ring, examined it—it looked eerily familiar—and gave it back.

Rob was silent and confused. His eyes went from childlike innocence to concern. “Is that a no?” he asked sheepishly.

Then it dawned on me: Rob thought I was telling him no because I gave the ring back, when really I was handing it back for him to place on my finger! I quickly accepted his proposal, and reverted back to my original confusion, asking, “Whose 2002 is this?”

He smiled sweetly and said, “You haven’t figured it out yet? It’s yours,” then handed me the keys. “It’s your engagement gift.”

For months, Rob had worked with an entire team of people who were remarkably quiet about their plan. It’s not every day that you get to plan two weddings at the same time; ours and our BMWs 2002s.

Cheers to Gumby and Emmy Lou! Oh—and to Rob and Mel, too!



**Allegheny Chapter**

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

BMW Car Club  
of America  
Allegheny Chapter

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**CHAPTER EVENTS**

September 15:  
Tire Rack Street Survival, PittRace

October 9:  
Social, German Club

October 19:  
Fall Leaves Tour

December 7:  
Holiday Party, Youghiogheny Country Club  
February 2025 (TBD): Annual Meeting

