

# ***Der Sonnenfleck***

## ***Sunshine Bimmers Newsletter***

*Summer 2013*

*Volume 17 Issue 3*

### **Chapter Conducts Summer Events**

We had two great events during the past couple of months. The first is the annual summer picnic in Satellite Beach, for which members Mark and Amy Rutenberg led the way. Social Events Director Deborah Pandeline said, "The beach picnic was a huge success. We had about 35 people in attendance. It was hot, but everyone had a good

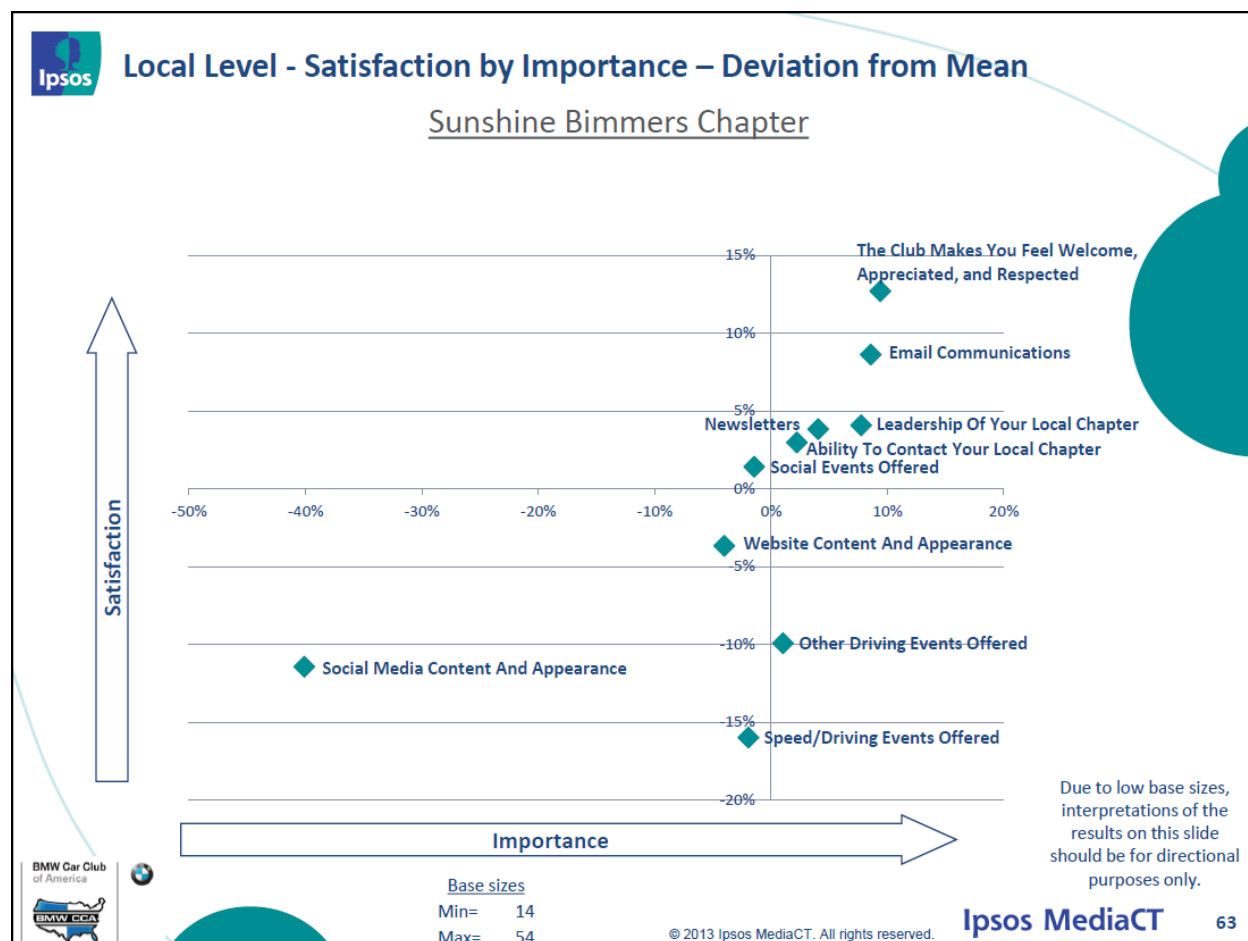


time. There were a lot of members from the Brevard County area in attendance, many of whom I had never met. It was nice to meet some new members.”

The photos I picked to illustrate the picnic were mostly taken by our new Chapter Photographer, Bob Compton. That’s him with Sadie in the lower left photo. I thought we should include his photo in this first demonstration of his duties since he normally won’t be in the photos he takes.

Our second summer event was a late lunch banquet at Señor Tequila’s Restaurant in Winter Springs. The turnout for this celebration of summer and our favorite car brand saw 42 people in attendance. As one long-time member declared, “I think it was the best Chapter event I ever attended.”

Such comments are actually fairly common. People who attend our events really enjoy them. So why don’t we get bigger crowds? We seem to consistently get about 40 people to attend our larger events; about 8-12 members attend our monthly Teutonic Tuesday gatherings at OLV World Café. This is out of a total Chapter membership of over 500 persons. About 460 members have provided the Club with their e-mail address. Our e-mail system says that a little more than 50% actually open the event announcement and other e-mails we send them. Both of these participation levels seemed disappointingly low to me. After all, we are a social club and people join (I assume) to participate in social activities for which our preferred brand of automobile is a good conversation starter, but which is rarely the subject of discussion for long once people get to know each other.



I shared my disappointment with BMW CCA Executive Director Frank Patek and other Club leaders, who uniformly told me we had a rather high level of participation, member satisfaction, and e-mail viewing. To back that up, we recently got the results of our membership satisfaction survey. We were ranked high above the norm for such characteristics as “The Club makes you feel welcome, appreciated, and respected.” Members also liked our e-mail correspondence and newsletters. Our overall rating was 92.55, with 6 out of 10 emphasis areas being above the national mean for member satisfaction.

The survey also showed areas where we need to improve, such as in our website, social media, that we can fairly easily address. Truthfully, we have not done as much as we should with these member-interaction mechanisms, although our new website will be launched any day. Plus, you said our poor performance on social media didn’t really make much difference to you. We will do better when the new website is running, because it is made to facilitate our use of social media.

But the tough nut to crack on the “Needs Improvement” part of the survey is the number and variety of driving events. We got our lowest score, 3.2 on a scale of 1-5, on “Frequency of speed/driving events.” Many of us joined the Club specifically to participate in driving events, and we are blessed with many great tracks, either within our Chapter’s borders or just a short drive away. So why don’t we have more track events?

The answer is that we have too many competitors for track time. It is very difficult to get on the calendar for Sebring and Daytona. Not only do other organizations have long-standing reservations, we also have to compete against the pro teams that rent tracks for testing and commercial sanctioning bodies that conduct those races we like to watch on TV. We are currently working with the National Auto Sport Association (the “other NASA”) and other BMW CCA chapters to find a date, probably at the Roebling Road race track near Savannah, to conduct a joint event. Sanctioning rules and insurance complicate such arrangements.

The fact of the matter is that track events cost a lot of money, anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per day for track rental alone. And then you have the event insurance, workers, emergency services, tow truck, technical inspectors, etc. to pay. We can’t afford to be wrong about how many people will attend our event with costs like that to cover. We don’t have enough BMW CCA Club Racers in Florida to cover the costs of a full track event, with high-performance driver education (HPDE) and wheel-to-wheel races under Club Racing rules, without Club Racing participants from other states attending. In fact, BMW CCA’s track rules don’t allow several of the practices that are available at other sponsor’s track events, like convertibles, time trials, and more liberal passing rules. This is why Winterfest at Sebring was so critical to the Chapter’s track program—and why we are protesting PBOC’s attempt to trademark this name for its own use: we can only attract those people in the winter, when they don’t have an event closer to home to attend. And HPDE requires a certified instructor pool. We are in a saturated market and at a competitive disadvantage.

This leaves us in a tough spot. The Sunshine Bimmers Chapter is the Florida affiliate of BMW CCA that has the member interest and ability to conduct track events, but we no longer have realistic in-state track calendar opportunities for such events. We want to do track events. We honor “The Ultimate Driving Machine.” We need to drive it. Your Board of Directors will keep working on finding a way to return the Chapter to the track.

The fact of the matter is that you determine the quality of the Chapter experience more than anything we can do. We need to conduct events in order to have things to post on the website and on Facebook, and you need to help plan and conduct those events for them to happen. For the reasons noted above, high-speed track events are rare for Florida chapters. But we have other events you can attend to talk about cars and other items of interest, and can put you in touch with other groups that do low-speed autocross and other events. Volunteer to help us hold the type of event you want to attend. Just contact any member of the Board of Directors and tell us what you want to do.

---

## President's Column

---

In the last issue, I confessed that I had altered my policy not to wash my wife's car and had, in fact, done so. The "no wash" policy was founded on the principle that it should not mean more to me for it to be clean than it does to her. She didn't wash her car. She either convinced our granddaughter to do it—a process that typically involved the promise of money—or she paid a professional to do the job—another process that involved money. But washing one's car shouldn't be about money. It should be about the connection between the owner and the car.

Notice that I said "didn't wash her car," not "doesn't wash her car," in that first paragraph because she recent did exactly that: she washed her car.

Everything I once believed in is now false, like when the naysayers finally had to accept the reality of global warming. Except *I wasn't prepared*. There were no warning signs, just BAM! I walk outside and she is washing her car. No "Honey, can we talk?" No request for marriage counseling. Just unilateral action. That whole sense of discovering the truth about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy came rushing back. And in that moment, my world moved to a different planet.

They say change is good. And I have always strongly supported the practice of washing one's own car. So, this is a good thing, right? She doesn't wash the wheels correctly, but I can still look at this as a positive occurrence in our lives. We can rebuild.

She did her part to return things to normal by going back to paying the car wash to clean her car, and I have agreed to try to keep the inside of her car clean when I do my own car. Our granddaughter was recently motivated to wash it the next time for a sum of money needed to acquire an item of clothing. It's a start. It seems that I'm back on Planet Earth.

Those of you who have also been following my story of the broken race car will be pleased to learn that I have secured a sponsor who is putting a "new" (to me) 330i engine in the car to get it back on the track in October. BimmerTech, a mostly-BMW repair facility in Edgewood, has agreed to become a name sponsor of the 2002 330i. I'm paying the cost of the used engine and they are doing all the labor. The BimmerTech Team will be a two-car affair, as the owner, Nelson Aviles, is building his own car for the track.

Just for our own edification, we took the bottom off the motor and found the crankshaft bearing on the Number 6 piston to be gone, not scored or burned, gone. Little pieces of bearing were down in the oil pan. I promptly ordered the Bimmerworld oil pan baffle to prevent the oil starvation that likely caused this problem. In a way, it shows how tough the engine was because it was still running when we cranked it up at the shop just before pulling it out of the car. There was all that banging around, though, so the car wasn't happy. But it would still run.

This got me thinking about what makes a good car. A lot of old timers lament the low-bid approach to building cars today, and to the number of fancy doo-dads that are surely going to start breaking at an alarming rate once the warranty expires. And what's up with BMW going from "change the oil every 3,000 miles" when we paid for the work to "that oil's good for 20,000 miles" now that they pay the cost under the free maintenance policy added to the warranty? A suspicious person might conclude that the car companies are building the cars just well enough to make it to the end of the warranty period.

In contrast, E46 my track car had almost 180,000 miles on that engine. It may have been just fine if I had kept it on the street and not pushed it at the track to the point that oil failed to make its way back to the Number 6 cylinder. I had an E30 with 214,000 miles on it when I sold it, and the wife's X5 made it to 163,000 with no engine trouble—although lots of other stuff broke or wore out by then. Yes, they still have the occasional bad design with lots of failures, but the engines remain a strong aspect of the BMW experience.

Al Butler, President

---

## Finding the Perfect Vehicle

By George Poelker, Chapter Vice President

---

We all share an affinity for BMWs, but the problem, at least for me, is which one car is the “perfect” car? The conundrum lies in the intended use. You see, I like to do many different things. There are track days, trips to the grocery store, hauling the grandkids around, long driving trips...Ah the long trips. They pose a special problem. The car must be comfortable for the Hazel-Eyed Angel to ride in while I flail around mountain curves (and I do mean flail, I make no pretense as to being a great driver, I just like to have fun at it). It must be able to carry the fly-fishing gear for the streams those mountain curves take us to. Also, we have developed a penchant for seeking out local vineyards and distilleries, tasting their wares and deciding oohh, that’s good, we need that. Coming home with a case or two of select vintages is not uncommon. So you see, the car must be versatile.

This search started years ago with a 330 Coupe. Nice car, but for some reason it and I did not get along. I don’t really remember what the problem with it was, but after only a few months I sold it and got a Z4, factory delivery option. Of, course you remember the factory was in Greensboro, SC, so not quite as exotic as European delivery. But still a great experience. We spent that first week exploring twisty roads in the southeastern US and staying off highways. The Z4 has a surprisingly large trunk and we have stuffed 10 days’ worth of clothing, driving helmet (which does not squish very easily) fly rods and gear into it. On top of that we added two cases of good North Carolina wine during the trip and the little car swallowed it all. The perceptive reader will, at this point, wonder about the aforementioned grandkids. Well, when the Z4 came along, grandkids were but a sparkle in the eye of the parents. Not even conceived of, much less conceived. So there was only a need for the HEA and me.

A side note about the Hazel Eyed Angel. She has to be the most patient and accepting woman in the world. During all of my hare-brained schemes to get to tracks, fix up cars, re-do this, and tinker with that, she just smiles and shrugs. Her mantra is “at least when you’re in the shop, I know where you are”. She never, well hardly ever, questions or raises an eyebrow. I love her for that!

Back to the Z4. For a while, I thought this was almost the perfect vehicle. Two things bugged me. It’s a convertible, so no track events. That’s not too much of a detriment because I’m convinced if you want to do the track thing, you really need a dedicated car for that purpose. One that you can modify and play with and not be too upset if you prang it a little. But it would be nice to be able to track the car if in a pinch it was the only way to do a trip.

I also started noticing that the Z4 was not especially adapted to gravel roads with large bumps that lead to potential fishing spots. I started wishing for a taller vehicle, perhaps one with all-wheel drive to get through slippery spots. Of course the X series comes immediately to mind. But those things are huge and too high and the X3 doesn’t have very good luggage room and the X5 gets terrible mileage and... well, I just don’t like ‘em.

But wait, doesn’t BMW make a wagon? And one with AWD, at that? Maybe, just maybe that would be the answer. I started looking around. Hmmm...There are a few with manual transmissions and even a “sport “package. The 5 series would certainly be big enough, but I think I can do with the slightly smaller 3 series, which seems to have more than enough space. I like smaller cars and I don’t want to spend a lot, so I start looking around and discover that the E46 came in those options. I bet I could put a new, stiffer suspension on one of those and it would be fun to drive.

So there you have it. After much rumination, I hatched the crazy idea that a station wagon would somehow make the perfect car for me. Hey, I’m old. I can call it a wagon and not feel weird. Next time we’ll find the perfect vehicle and get it ready for the road. *(Read the continuation of this story in the next issue, when George describes his work on the vehicle.)*



---

## Sunshine Bimmers Chapter Board of Directors

---

**President Al Butler**  
[abutler@mpzero.com](mailto:abutler@mpzero.com) 407-376-3258

**Vice President George Poelker**  
[gpoelker@gmail.com](mailto:gpoelker@gmail.com) 407-230-8052

**Newsletter Nick Katona** 315-404-8711

**Webmaster Keith Proud** 386-238-8971

**Secretary Mark Bivings** 954-566-0705  
[markbivings@twoquystravel.com](mailto:markbivings@twoquystravel.com)

**Treasurer & Club Racing Patrick Spikes**  
[pspikes@cfl.rr.com](mailto:pspikes@cfl.rr.com) 407-454-2057

**Social Events Deborah Pandeline**  
[pandelineda@hotmail.com](mailto:pandelineda@hotmail.com) 407-808-3233

---

## More Event Photos from Chapter Photographer Bob Compton

---



Turner Motorsports No. 94 at the Rolex 24 Hours race. Notice Porsches are *behind*.



BMW CCA M6 on the One Lap of America



Jim Shoemaker, race car auto mechanic extraordinaire, contemplating his next task



Ross & Cara Bonar's 535i on the "Ride to Ranch," our All-Florida BMW CCA picnic

## Upcoming Events

Chapter Events in September						
1	2 Labor Day	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 Teutonic Tuesday	25	26	27	28
29	30					

### Chapter Events to Be Held in September

- Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> – Teutonic Tuesday at OLV Café at SoDO, 25 W Crystal Lake St., Orlando, FL 32806, 407.722.5060, olvcafe.com

### Other Events of Interest in September

- Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> – Cars & Coffee at House Blend Café, 8 – 10:30 am, 10730 West Colonial Dr., Ocoee, carsandcoffeearlando.snappages.com
- Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> – Cars of the World, Presented by DeLand Mainstreet Association, 3 – 7 pm, West Indiana Ave., DeLand, 386-738-0649, mainstreetdeland.org

Chapter Events in October						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 Tech Session
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22 Teutonic Tuesday	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 Halloween		

### Chapter Events to Be Held in October

- Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> – Teutonic Tuesday at OLV Café at SoDO, 25 W Crystal Lake St., Orlando, FL 32806, 407.722.5060, olvcafe.com
- Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> – German Motorwerks Tech Session, 164 Hope Street, Suite 1070, Longwood, FL 32750, 407-699-4151
- Membership Dinner (TBD)

### Other Events of Interest in October

- Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> thru Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> – Lake Mirror Classic Automobile Festival, Lakeland, www.lakemirrorclassic.com
- Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> – Cars & Coffee at House Blend Café, 8 – 10:30 am, 10730 West Colonial Dr., Ocoee, carsandcoffeearlando.snappages.com

Chapter Events in November						
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 Thanksgiving	22	23
24	25	26 Teutonic Tuesday	27	28	29	30

### Chapter Events to Be Held in November

- Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> – German Motorwerks Tech Session, 164 Hope Street, Suite 1070, Longwood, FL 32750, 407-699-4151
- Technical Session at BimmerTech (TBD)

### Other Events of Interest in November

- Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> – First Annual Concorso at Windermere Country Club, 12 noon – 4 pm
- Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> – Winter Park Concours d'Elegance, 9 am – 4 pm, winterparkconcoursdelegance.com
- Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> – Cars & Coffee at House Blend Café, 8 – 10:30 am, 10730 West Colonial Dr., Ocoee, carsandcoffeearlando.snappages.com

Check the chapter website, [www.sunshinebimmers.org](http://www.sunshinebimmers.org), for a complete event calendar.



Two more pictures from the Satellite Beach picnic. Lots of food and conversation. Notice the wide range in ages for people attending this and other Chapter events. That demographic is one reason we have an annual membership retention rate of more than 75%.

---

**NOTICE:** *Der Sonnenfleck* is a publication of the BMW Car Club of America Sunshine Bimmers Chapter, Inc., and is in no way associated with BMW AG or BMW North America, LLC. The mission of the Sunshine Bimmers Chapter is to promote an interest in motoring and touring activities, social interaction opportunities for its members, and safe and skillful driving. BMW CCA and the Sunshine Bimmers Chapter are not-for-profit organizations. Reports, ideas, suggestions, descriptions, and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not of the BMW Car Club of America or the Sunshine Bimmers Chapter. The Club assumes no responsibility for any of the information contained herein. Modifications to vehicles within the warranty period may void the warranty.

---



Sunshine Bimmers Chapter  
13840 Darchance Road  
Windermere, FL 34786