

NOVEMBER 2008

Route 1

BMW
Z8 CLUB

0007

PLEASE TAKE CARE TO PROTECT THE CAR FROM
DAMAGE AND THE DRIVER FROM INJURY.
WE WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY
DAMAGE TO YOUR CAR OR INJURY TO YOU OR
ANYONE ELSE CAUSED BY YOUR NEGLIGENCE.
WE WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR
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ANYONE ELSE CAUSED BY YOUR NEGLIGENCE.

2000 MONTEREY



Run, Otter, Run!

The biggest gathering of Z8s in America marks a spectacular BMW Festorics weekend.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ANDREW MACPHERSON

California's Monterey is well known for its otters, funny creatures that are harder than cats to herd—not unlike Z8 owners. It is also the home of the most celebrated “cargasm” in the world, a week full of Historics, Festorics, concours, and rallies. An otter has to keep up a good pace to take it all in—and whoever rides herd on the otters is in for an adventure!

The notion of a Z8 assault on Monterey was hatched during the Z8 Club's Mille Miglia trip in May 2006 (see *Roundel*, XX 2006). A whisper circulating in Munich said that 2008 was to be “our year,” that BMW would again be the honored marque

at the Monterey Historic Races—the first time since 1996—and there was talk of all sorts of special events, so the Z8 Club planned to bring over fifty cars!

Alas, the realities of this recession pulled that rug from under us. In fact, there was no honored marque at Monterey this year. The European owners bailed; but as usual, the Central California Chapter, with their Ultimate Clean Car Contest at Concorso Italiano, and the Golden Gate Chapter's Festorics festivities—everything from backroads tours to a festive dinner to a member corral overlooking Laguna Seca's Turn Five—planned an even bigger get-together

than they'd had before. And the BMW Vintage & Classic Car Club jumped into the affair, using Monterey as the starting point to their 2,500-mile California tour.

Honored marque or not, it was obvious that 2008 would be a banner BMW year in Monterey—and our U.S. Z8 posse wanted in.

Somehow I became the organizer of the Z8 presence. I could write a book on event planning now—but it's the wonderful days of Monterey that I want to share with you here. Z8s came from all over the states, and one from Canada, but the biggest group was from Texas, where Classic BMW of Plano put on a splendid event to send off



Evert Anton "Tony" Singer, the creator of the Automobilia Fair at Monterey—and fellow Z8 owner—mans his stand at his own show on Wednesday morning. Rally plates and some of these original vintage posters command prices as high as \$80,000! The show is full of stunning hand-made models; the craftsmanship of these was especially impressive.

the "Texas 8," with eight Z8s leaving for Monterey on 08-08-08... at 8:08!

As the chief wrangler, I have to get a head start on the otters. So Monday morning, my wife, Pegah, and I jump into the already packed car; there are still many T's to cross and I's to dot in Monterey before everyone arrives. Dawn breaks high on the Grapevine, and the Five is clear. We turn west at But-tonwillow, dropping the top for gorgeous Highway 58, one of my favorite roads. The early sun behind us paints perfect light on the high desert plains, and rolling oaks dot the hills for the sprint to Paso Rables. There we pick up 46 West in the bright blue-sky

morning. Just south of Cambria, we crest the final ridge before the ocean, and there it is: the fog. The thick leaden blanket hiding the rugged coast is colder than usual this year, and sweeps a mile or more inland. As we glide down into, then below it, the Pacific appears, a cold slate floor vanishing into the gray just offshore.

The early start and the cold fog give us a clear road and a blissfully fast drive north from Cambria. The swirling gray ceiling sits halfway up the massive bluffs; again and again we rise up into it, then drop below it as the engineering masterpiece of Highway 1 climbs, curves, dips, and dives up and down

the breathtaking coastline. This road really deserves its status as a national treasure.

Cresting the ridge into Big Sur, we finally climb back into the blue. Our first stop is the Ventana Inn, perched high above the fog, where we'll be having lunch on our Thursday drive. My heart sinks as I see fire trucks lining the driveway. The inn has survived the fires that ravaged Big Sur this summer, but now an electrical fault has burned the kitchen and restaurant to the ground! Scouring the coast for a lunch spot for sixty people while out of cell-phone range isn't the ideal start to our trip, but by mid-afternoon the Highlands Inn saves our day.



A little German car by another airplane maker, the Messerschmitt Kabinenroller KR 200 poses in front of a Heinkel. ♦ A trio of stunning gullwings decorates Ocean Avenue. ♦ Is it a car, is it a plane, or is it a personal aircraft carrier? The 1959 Cadillac Eldorado defined 1950s excess. ♦ Monterey's Ocean Avenue hosts a lovely 1963 Maserati Gran Turismo—along with an abundance of magnificent cars you won't see anywhere else.

Tuesday morning is spent tying up loose ends, making sure our magic carpet is airworthy. With the planning locked down, we drift through the ever-present fog to Carmel for lunch with two other early arrivals. One is the famous Shadowman Special; this 750-horsepower twin-supercharged monster is the most powerful Z8 in the world. The other is one of only five Midnight Blue Metallics made worldwide; it's down from Toronto.

After lunch we walk Carmel's lovely Ocean Avenue enjoying an eclectic mix of cars, from tiny Isettas and Messerschmitts to huge winged Cadillacs and Pontiacs. After the show we drive Seventeen Mile Drive, but the view is gone in the lingering fog.

Arriving back at the Monterey Marriott, we find Z8s everywhere! Like otters at play, their owners are scampering from car to car, saying their hellos, talking tires, wheels, brakes, or colors while the bewildered valets desperately try to herd them off the street, onto the driveway, and down into our own special self-parking area below. It's thrilling driving into the basement to see over twenty other Z8s lined up after all that planning.

Dinner is in a private room of one of the best restaurants in town. After a delicious first meal together, everyone is presented with gift boxes that include maps, T-shirts, hats, badges, and grille emblems. These beautiful packages were created by

fellow owner and co-planner Ian McLean. As each owner is presented their box, they introduce themselves, allowing us put faces to those mysterious Internet names we've chatted with for years.

Wednesday is the Automobilia Monterey event, a huge ballroom full of car art of all kinds: vintage posters, photographs, rally plates, models, badges, and more. We get a special early opening because Tony Singer, who runs it, is also a Z8 owner—BMW made more than a car with the Z8, they created a brotherhood! Tony's event is full of wonderful things that eat up the morning (and the wallet).

Afterwards we meander back into Monterey for lunch. Everyone heads in differ-





ent directions, as the afternoon has been left free for the long-distance owners to catch their breath, clean their cars, and relax a little. We've rented the Monterey Aquarium for dinner, and a bus to get us there and back through the fog. Clambering off the bus, we head into the downstairs bar for drinks in the All About Otters display, and boy, are they cute! After that we're guided up the grand stairs past huge tanks of jellyfish, under a ceiling of circling sardines, and on into the huge deep-water aquarium, where our tables are set in front of the wall of glass that stretches from the floor to the ceiling with sharks, rays, giant tuna, and other open-water creatures circling past us. Dinner at the Aquarium is delicious, and it's certainly one of the most memorable settings anywhere in the world.

Thursday is our big Z8 drive. Getting all those cars out of the hotel takes some doing, so we reconvene out of town at the bottom of Carmel Valley Road. Once assembled, we head inland, breaking free of the cold gray marine layer in a few miles. The road sparkles in the low morning sun, and I know this is going to be a beautiful drive. Laid out by Golden Gate's Ken Whitson, these back-roads drives are a high point of the Festorics for most BMW drivers—and a special treat in a Z8!

Climbing out of the Carmel Valley, spectacular views and panoramas open up before us as the road cavorts through the rolling hills and valleys of the Coastal Range. An hour into the roller-coaster ride, we pull our 28-car train over on a long straight. This is the biggest single group of Z8s assembled in the U.S., and the owners are in heaven. Their smiles are as bright as the baking sun; they want to do this again tomorrow!



An immaculate 2002 Turbo sits at the Quail. ♦ Twenty-eight Z8s pose in loose formation with a Sheridan tank at the entrance to the Hunter Liggett Military Base on Thursday's Z8 drive.

It's not yet 10:00 a.m., but at 85° it's a full 30° hotter than on the coast. After water and sunscreen, we jump back in the cars and follow the road along a narrow valley that gradually opens into the endless agricultural expanse of California's Central Valley, where we arc to the south. Six miles on we pick up Jolon Road; its broad sweepers beckon a brisk pace as it climbs west toward the mountains, racing us to the entrance of the Hunter Liggett Military Base.

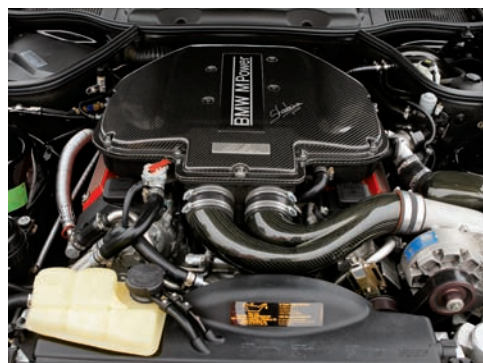
We stop to take a group photo of our cars in front of a large tank right by the base's entrance, causing much hooting and cheering from the military traffic entering and leaving the base, and we cheer them back. By the time our photo is done, the soldiers brush aside formalities, waving us through the gates onto one of the loveliest high valleys in all of California.

There are some signs of the terrible early-summer fires, but happily the beauty of this road has been spared the worst of it. A wall of mountains separates us from the cold coast, so crossing the high valley, the temperature hits a hundred, and stays there until

the road starts to zigzag its way up the side of the Coastal Range like a drunken snake. Cresting the pass, we see the fog far below us spread out to the horizon like clouds seen from a plane. As we wind down to the coast, the temperature plummets, making this the only drive most of us have done going from full a/c to full heat in less than ten miles. Back on Highway One for the sprint north to lunch, it is 45° colder than the other side of the pass, but we're all reveling in the luxurious joy of an open car with hot seats and a blasting heater.

After lunch our magic carpet rolls back into Monterey, and the otters scatter till dinner. The night is full of happy chatter about the drive and the joys of the car for which we all share such a passion. All is good in the planner's world!

Friday is Concorso Italiano, but we're headed to the Quail instead. I'd heard it's the best event of the week, but that it's very hard to get tickets. The Z8 casts its spell again: It happens to be the organizer's favorite modern car, so we all get in—with our own parking area right by the main



One of only five Midnight Blue Metallic (with Arizona Sun interior) Z8s in the world heads a fifteen-car lineup at the Quail. ♦ A Mosler accompanies the famous one-off Enzo P4 Ferrari on the green at the Quail. ♦ Take a look under the hood of the most powerful Z8 in the world, the 750-hp Shadowman Special. ♦ A stunning BMW 507 from Florida was on display at the Quail.

entrance! We are able to return the favor by bringing thirty Z8s, the largest group assembled in one place in the USA.

The tickets are pricey at \$250 a head, but they only sell three thousand of them, and in the days before the event they're over two grand on eBay. I've been to many car shows, and this is one of the best in the world, along with Italy's Villa d'Este. Once you're inside, everything is included in your entrance fee: unlimited oysters, caviar, champagne, and freshly prepared food from five on-site restaurants; wonderful stands of car art, jewelry, and private-jet time-shares; and of course exquisite cars and bikes on display. The Quail is set just far enough up Carmel Valley to be out of the fog in brilliant sunshine, but the cooling ocean air makes it the perfect temperature.

The fog returns as the sun drops, and this evening our magic carpet takes us to the BMW CCA dinner at Rancho Canada. There we're treated to a huge banquet with around 300 owners from all over the country. After dinner there are several presentations, includ-

ing an M Division movie and a talk from Karl Baumer, now head of BMW Classic—née BMW Mobile Tradition—in Munich.

Saturday is the big day for Laguna Seca and the Festorics. The Golden Gate Chapter organizers have arranged the impossible for us: parking on the tarmac! They have pulled off the same coup for the Vintage Club, and Saturday-morning fans of the marque are treated to quite a display: On the left are seven—*seven!*—Z1s, followed by 30 Z8s. On the right are 40 historic BMWs, in vague chronological order—if you think herding Z8 owners is a challenge, try arranging the vintage crowd, only half of whom speak English—ranging from a 1934 309 through late-'30s 327s and 328s to the *Neue Klasse* sedans and 2002s to the elegant 3.0CS coupes. No wonder so many visitors assume that BMW is the featured marque!

Of course, we Z8ers all gravitate to the one BMW 507 in the midst of the vintage lineup, as it is our spiritual forefather.

The day at the track starts out cold and foggy, but by midmorning the vintage racers are screaming around in bright sunlight. I love the Historics; it really is one of the best racing events on the calendar, and seeing all those stunning cars up close, being able to talk to the owners, drivers, and mechanics, then watching them go hammer-and-tongs out on the track is a special treat. Mario Andretti and Jay Leno walk the paddock chatting openly to everyone. Mario then puts in a set of flying laps in his championship-winning Lotus. I remember him racing that car when I was a kid, so seeing him tear through the Corkscrew and hearing him circle the entire track is the highlight of my day.

The CCA crowd has its usual tent by the bridge between Turns Four and Five where members can eat, drink, and take some welcome shade from the roasting midday sun. They also have some lovely rare models on display, much to everyone's delight. The 2002 once raced by the late Rug Cunningham—now owned by Cun-



Mario Andretti does some flying laps in the Lotus 79 with which he won his World Championship in 1978. ♦ A lovely Lotus 49B in Gold Leaf livery waits at the end of the newer classic F1 car pits. ♦ The crazy trumpets of a Can-Am car are played in readiness for the Can-Am tribute race.

ningham BMW's Jeff Gerkin—is a crowd-pleasing favorite, along with a beautiful 3.0CSL and a rare Alpina 2002 Touring.

Saturday night is our own Z8 banquet in the penthouse of the Marriott, where we have a quick dinner so folks can enjoy the auctions afterwards. Our guest of honor is Bill Stuart from BMW NA, who has done a huge amount helping Z8 owners

deal with the oddities of a small-production-run car. After dinner he gives a heartfelt talk; then Larry Koch from BMWNA has us in hysterics with a tale of his trials and tribulations at his first show car in Detroit. Then it's out into the town square, where both RM and Russo & Steele's auctions are in full swing doing record business: What recession?

Sunday is the 58th Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, and we've arranged a bus to pick us up at the hotel and take us right to the heart of the action. It takes almost twenty minutes to wind our way into the center of the event, it is so vast. As we finally pull up to the shuttle stop, there is no denying this is *the one!* The grand old golf resort is festooned with sponsors'



A line of gorgeous Bugattis attracts well-deserved attention. ♦ Seen from the BMW Festorics stands, cars fly out of Turn Four with the massive array of concession and food tents clearly visible behind. ♦ A garage full of Cosworths echoes the long era when all F1 cars had just one winning engine. ♦ A twinkle in the eye: The Z8 and its spiritual forefather, the BMW 507, sparkle in the late sun at Laguna Seca.

banners, and hospitality suites are everywhere; this is where the big money is.

First we pass a small green crammed with concept cars, then on down to the main lawns which are surrounded by more hospitality tents and private functions. It is so grand that the fashion bible *Vogue* even throws a party here!

There are so many amazing cars that trying to describe them is impossible, and the crescent bay of the eighteenth green of Pebble Beach is a picture-postcard-perfect spot to display them. Many of the 200 or so automotive masterpieces on this hallowed lawn are worth over \$10,000,000 apiece. I pull out my phone and tap in the numbers: the

combined value of these cars is greater than the value of all the 5,702 Z8s made!

It's impossible not to be impressed by the sheer splendor, history, and grandeur of the entire Monterey weekend—but if I had to pick one event, it would be the Quail. At Pebble you feel like the hired help getting a glimpse of how the really rich live; at the



Italian style with American reliability, the Bizzarrini 5300GT Strada has V8 Chevy power. ♦ A lovely Corvette sports an Italian-designed body. ♦ GM's big display included their Cars Of The Future concepts. ♦ Another design exercise from the folks at GM, this one looks a bit more practical. ♦ Jay Leno discusses his infamous Tank Car. ♦ Ferrari's California Spyder turned 50 this year, so a few stunning examples were on display to celebrate. ♦ A copper-crazy Roller shows how really bad ideas can be executed really well. ♦ Another odd Rolls, this concept car looks like the illegitimate lovechild of a Z4 and the latest Peterbilt-style two-door Rolls-Royce.

Quail, you get to be one of them for a day. After getting our fill of vintage steeds, we otters pile back on the bus and head back to the hotel to prepare for a very special birthday bash. One of our long-time owners turns the Big Five-Oh today. There is no better way to spend the final night of car week—but

it really isn't our final farewell. Many of us continue on to Napa for a few days of lazy meals, fine wines, and beautiful country roads to decompress after the manic magic carpet ride of Monterey—surely the best ten days of Z8ing I've ever had!

And while the same good time can be

had next year by any BMW enthusiast, it's highly unlikely that such a perfect storm of BMW enthusiasm—hundreds of members, dozens of priceless vintage BMWs, and more Z8s than you've ever seen before—will ever again converge at such an opportune junction. Honored marque indeed. ♦