

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER

# THE ULTIMATE CLASSIC

BMW CLASSIC CAR CLUB OF AMERICA

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ADIRONDACKS CLASSIC • THE VINTAGE AT SARATOGA  
HITTING THE OPEN ROADS IN WILL GRAN'S SENIOR 6  
TARGA CALIFORNIA 2019 • FOR THE LOVE OF THE 1600  
FABULOUS SPORTCOUPES • TOM PESIKEY'S 507 SAGA (PART 2)



## 1939 BMW 327/28 COUPE #74599, JIM & GLORIA SMITH

Jim Smith had acquired this very rare Autenrieth-built pillarless coupe in late 2004 from fellow-Californian Gaylord Lineaweaver, who had reportedly bought the car in Munich in 1958 for the equivalent of \$285.- while stationed in Germany with the U.S. Army. At that time the car had been repainted blue, from the original "deep red". After using the car during his time in Germany he shipped it to New York in 1959 and drove it across country to Oakland, CA. During the next forty five years this pillarless coupe was serviced with the help of BMW

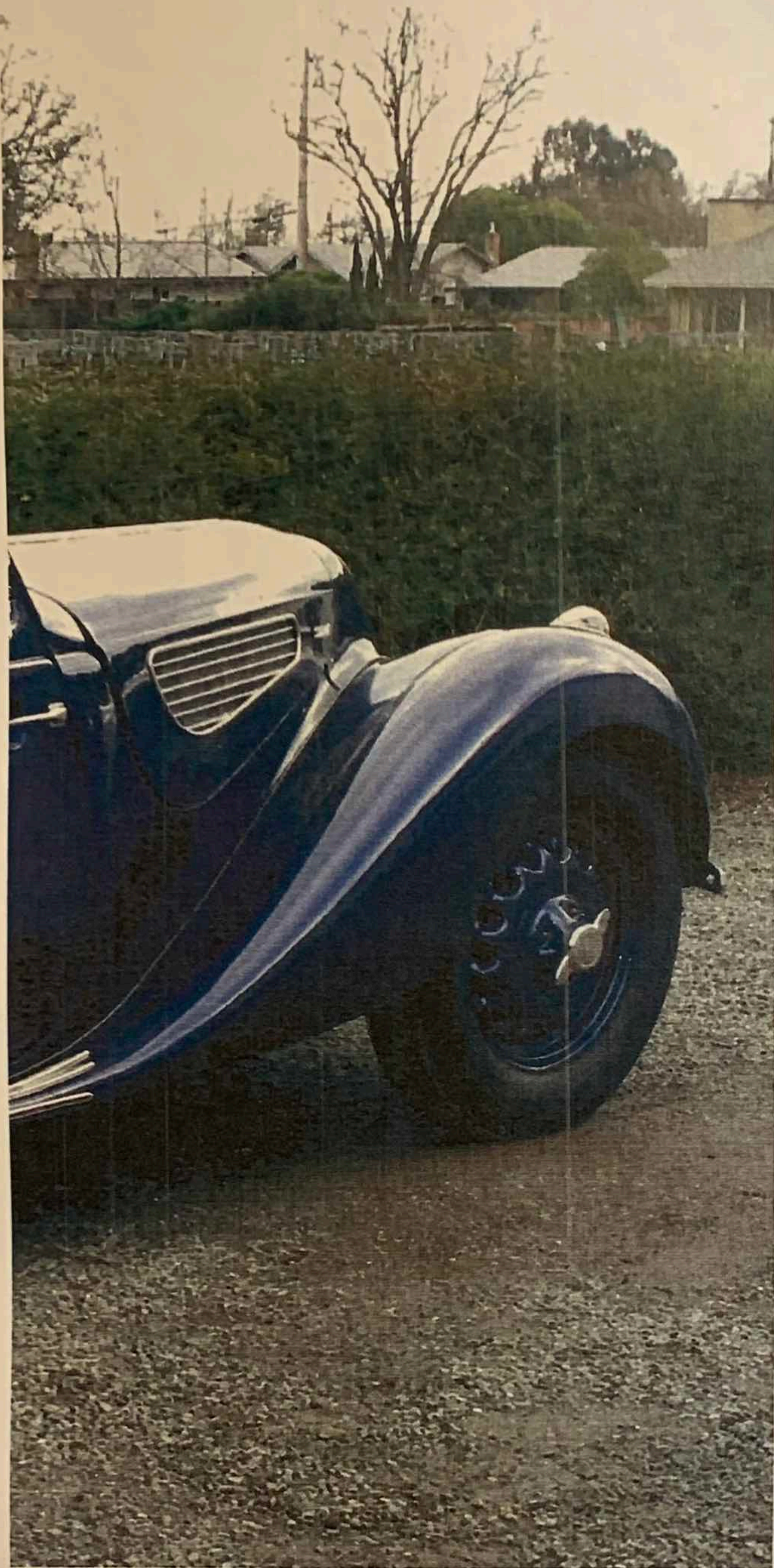
superman Bob Sonsten, had the engine rebuilt, and was re-painted in a two-tone silver/gray. It had never been fully restored.

Jim, who had been aware of this very rare, perhaps the only one such Coupe (and at most one of three) ever built by BMW / Autenrieth - car for many years, and had previously attempted to buy it on several occasions, finally purchased it in November 2004, - and that led to the beginning of a new life for this coupe. In terms of the car's first life, we know from BMW Classic that the chassis had been delivered to Karosseriebau Auten-

rieth in Darmstadt on May 8, 1939, and that it was evidently not returned to BMW as a finished car; there is no record of it having been delivered to a BMW dealer, which leads to the speculation that this car either was a development project for Autenrieth, or had been customer-ordered from Autenrieth.

The "new life" began with a total tear-down of the car to every nut and bolt, just as Jim had done with two other BMW 327s he had rebuilt, a rare 1937 Weinberger bodied 328, a 1929 DIXI, and a number of other pre-war and post-war BMW collector cars.

The tear-down revealed that the wood frame under the sheet metal of the body had to be totally replaced, - no surprise to Jim, as he had experienced the same on his previous vintage BMW restorations. Rebuild-



William Edgar



Gaylord Lineaweaver

ing the frame is an exceedingly tedious and time-consuming job, which, without a 5- or at least 3-axis tracer means endless planing and chiseling hard wood, in Jim's case oak, until pieces fit.

Jim rebuilt the engine, and in the process raised the compression ratio from originally 7.5:1 to 9:1, installed larger valves and a number of other tweaks, which raised the power of the restored Pillarless Coupe to well over 100 hp.

In addition to not having a "B" pillar, this coupe also has a unique rear-entry trunk, the optional 327/28 features of round dashboard instruments, including a tach, the center-lock wheels, options, which had been available since the introduction of the 80 hp version of these models in October 1938.

The restoration was completed in 2011, after 1,400 hours of Jim's time (plus many dollars paid to outside contractors; for the paint job, the upholstery, engine parts, etc.). Jim and Gloria had signed up to join the club's 2,300 mile Canada Expedition that July, but unfortunately that participation did not materialize. Also Jim's plan to join the BMW Centenary celebration in Monterey in August 2016 with the Pillarless Coupe was cancelled due to Jim's failing health.

Our good friend and long-term enthusiast of collector BMWs passed away in 2018. His pillarless Coupe continues to reside in Sonoma as a prominent member of the Smiths' fabulous BMW collection, being attended to by the Smiths' daughters and grandson Pete.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many friends and members of the club have been of invaluable assistance in assembling the histories and photographs of these four BMW Coupes. In alphabetical order, these are: William Edgar, Dirk de Groen, Charles Drescher, Ralph Harding, Jerry Lynch, Hagen Nyckel of BMW Group Classic, Heidi Ostertag, and the Smith Family. Sincere thanks to all!

- Goetz E. Pfafflin