

DECEMBER 1995

BMW



The unique
MS Touring
built by
Bavarian
Professional

*"Twas the night before Christmas we heard Santa decide:
"I'm trading my reindeer for a much faster ride!"*



The unique M5 Touring poses in front of Bavarian Professionals' equally unique building. The triangular window opens into Kathy Dennison's design studio.



By David Schwoegler
Photos: Klaus Schnitzer

'Tis the holiday season.
But brace yourself: This story about our cover car begins on a less-than-festive note.

The donor had been young, in prime condition, with a sturdy frame and near-flawless body. Small surface bulges bespoke the power that lay beneath. Kinetically, this combination produced a swift pace and adroit maneuvering.

The day had been perfect. The pavement had been dry. But violently and almost without warning, a short but proud existence ended tragically. The mangled body oozed vital fluids back to mother earth, crumpled evidence that in a battle with the laws of physics the undefeated champion once more emerged the winner.

Yet buried within the tangled mass, the heart of a champion continued to beat, and the sprit of a competitor was destined to live on.

Trackside Nightmare

It was 1993, and Ray Wallace had been pacing his '91 M5 at about 90 mph on the Arizona track, when suddenly Ray was no longer guiding his car's direction. And "which way is up" changed repeatedly during several quick 360-degree iterations, according to Michael Dennison of Bavarian Professionals.

When all the inertia had been spent, Ray and his passenger released their restraint harnesses and walked away from the inverted wreck. That alone could have been enough of a happy ending. But there's more.

Enter Bavarian Professionals

For 15 years Michael Dennison has been in the automotive service business. He owns and runs Bavarian Professionals in Berkeley, Calif. This compact shop with three lift-equipped bays is housed in a



The donor car, an M5 that unselfishly gave of itself to make a new life possible.

stylish, custom-built cinder-block building. Both the interior and exterior show the professional design skill of his wife Kathy, whose

studio nests upstairs above the parts room and office. Michael considers his business as both BMW service and after-market tuning.

MMMM, MMMM Good!



Golden Gate members check out a colorful and beautifully maintained M-engine.

In conjunction with presenting his M5 wagon to the *Roundel* staff and readers, Michael Dennison produced an M-car expo for local Golden Gate Chapter members and supporters. The event demonstrated a quality

about Michael that both *Roundel* photographer Klaus Schnitzer and I immediately recognized and appreciated. No matter what the issue, Michael took the time and expended the resources to do it right—but never to excess.

Michael also helped me acclimate Klaus to left-coast culture. Michael identified the lumpy sweet stuff on the sandwiches as mango-peach chutney, one of the major food groups in California. And Klaus marveled at the number of Bimmers that appear to have never been driven.

The Bavarian Performance M-car expo was a fine success. More than 80 M-cars were on display, drawing nearly 130 fanciers, peering and pointing — but never poking. German Motors, the San Francisco

dealership, provided a new, red 8-Series M-car with a six-figure price tag.

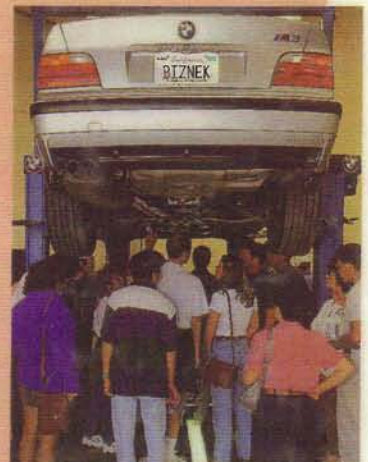
Michael had every detail dialed in precisely. The street in front of the shop had been barricaded and closed to public traffic. Guest traffic and parking were controlled by attendants. Like diners hailed by the hostess in a restaurant, owners were queued and called one-by-one for a posed photo in front of the shop. The tech talks were well-paced show-and-tell sessions that focused attention inside and outside the cars, as well as under the hood and beneath the lifts. Duct tape marked spots on the asphalt out front that would center each car in frame during the photo.

From the name tags during sign-in, to the catered sandwich lunch and snacks, Michael was

always in charge, but never imposing.

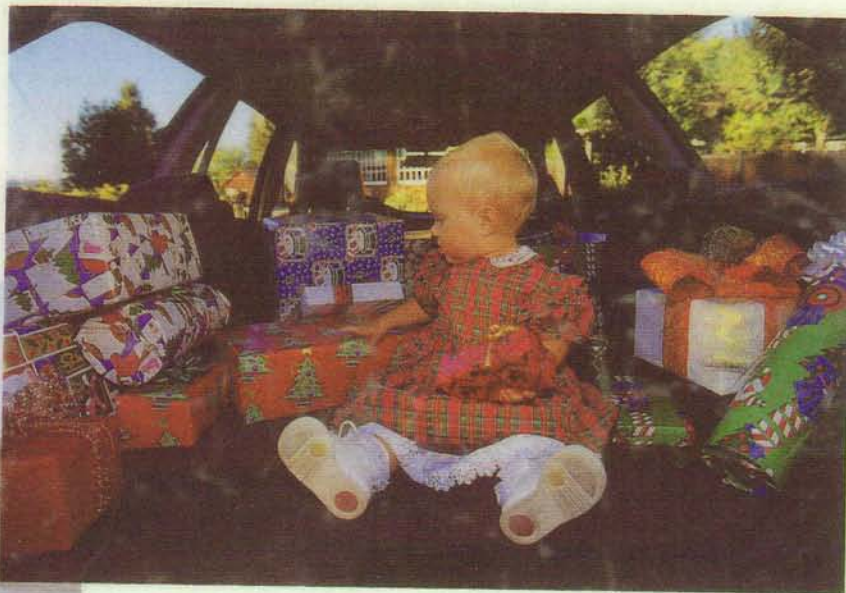
In short, not only would I trust my BMW to Michael, I'd probably trust him with my checkbook. Oh well — same thing.

Tech talks for the CCA-ers included a detailed explanation of the complex BMW underbelly.



Right: A lucky young lady checks out the decorative packages in Santa's 21st century sled.

Below: "I'm thinking! I'm thinking!" Rodin's statue looks down at the Ultimate Station Wagon with unconcealed admiration.



Professional's M5 Wagon.

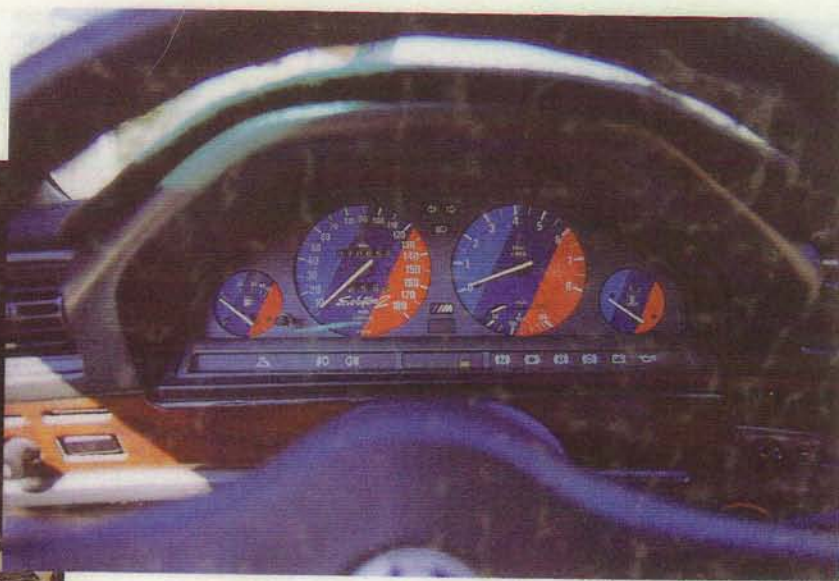
"What a sleeper," was my first thought. But after seeing the car in person, this car is a sleeper like the Mona Lisa is paint-by-numbers. The wagon is low enough to be on tracks, with more tire patch on the pavement than many formula cars.

Michael said that beside the occupants walking away from the roll-over, the next most remarkable outcome involved the wheels. All

four suspension members were folded like retractable landing gear on an aircraft. But the rims, which originated the transfer of all that compressive force, were slightly bent but uncracked.

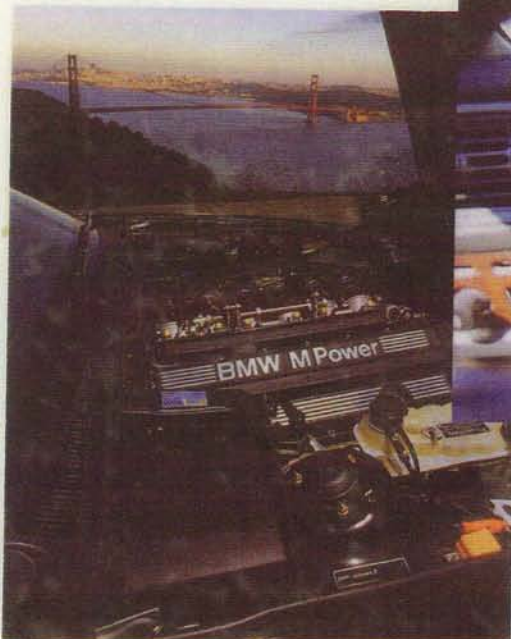
Michael hauled the wreckage to Berkeley on a trailer towed by his '73 GMC Silverado pickup. German Motors, the San Francisco BMW dealership, was so enthusiastic about the organ transplant project, they offered to participate — and ended up supplying the used touring car, with

Michael decided to perform an organ transplant from the track-trashed M5. The recipient he selected for the organ donation produced a wry note that's almost an automotive oxymoron. BMW NA terms the vehicle a "touring car." But we all know what the rest of the world calls it. So out of the wreckage emerged: Bavarian



Above: The Evolution 2 instrument panel makes no attempt to hide the Motorsport heritage.

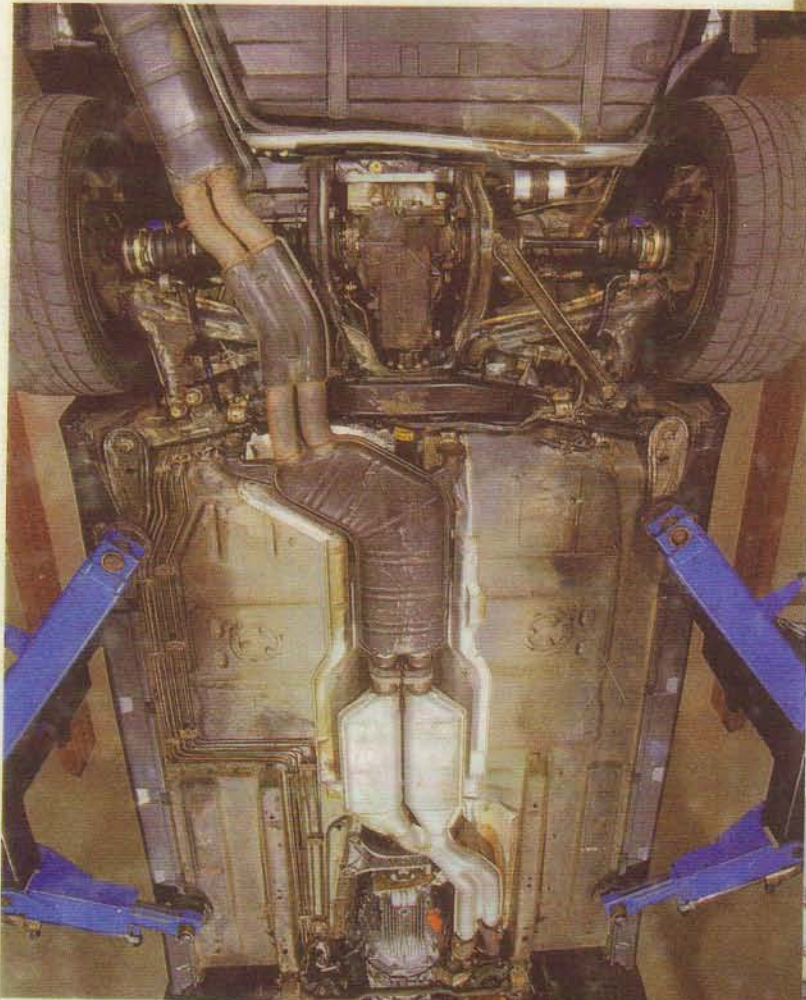
Left: Open your hood and say "Ah!" The M engine in the Touring's engine bay with San Francisco's bay as a background.



Right: An overview of Bavarian Professional's parking lot shows the donor M5 (center), next to its surviving sibling.

Middle: The underside of the Touring shows the O.E.M. look of the work required for the transplant.

Bottom: "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas!" The M5 tests its hill-climbing abilities on one of San Francisco's famed streets.



Nearly four months passed before the implant was complete, but the results are impressive. The car is equally at home hauling kids to the mall, turning laps at the track or blowing the doors off some five-quart Muskrat at a stop light.

Now Michael says he doesn't quite know what to do with his M5 wagon: keep it or sell it. Meanwhile, he's considering future projects for Bavarian Professionals. He plans to do one a year. Will it be a transplant, an implant or some serious tampering with the new Z3?

Like the guys at the aftermarket shops say, "Stay tuned."



Michael Dennison
Bavarian Professionals
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16K on the clock, at a good price.

At the heart of the transplant was a 343 hp engine, with a Dinan chip. According to Michael most of the operation was unremarkable. The major parts fit right into place. Ducting and a cooler fan for the e-box, and removing the auto-tranny wiring and controls were typical hurdles overcome with time, patience and craftsmanship.

The original rims that survived the crash now sport 235/45ZR17 Toyo R1s. Details like the original lighted shift knob, hand-welded frame attachments and the original M5 instrument cluster complete the M-car authenticity.



WORLD NEWS

This Week



JIM FRENK

The new Chevy Sportside arrives this fall.

Sportside on the flipside. A compact Chevy pickup with step-ups in front of and behind the rear wheels, and an all-steel bed, will be in showrooms this spring. The S-Series Sportside will be available with regular or extended cabs, and with two- or four-wheel-drive systems.

In other Chevy news, the Caprice is going away, but Chevy general manager Jim Perkins says his division wants to show that it is committed to some very special customers. The Tahoe Police Package concept vehicle (see photo on page 56) includes a lowered suspension with tougher antiroll bars, Bilstein shocks and limited-slip rear differential.

For pursuit purposes, the Vortec V8 produces five more horsepower and 15 more lb ft of torque than the standard 5.7 liter. To make the package affordable, Chevy has removed the carpeting and sound system and installed less expensive seats.

Insurance savings? Not all the talk on the auto show floors is about new cars. There is talk about *insuring* new cars. Although USAA insurance recently dropped its antilock braking system (ABS) discount, BMW and Subaru see more promising signs on the horizon. BMW recently managed to convince Allstate to lower its rates on BMW 5- and 7-Series models by one classification, which will save owners money on premiums. The company is negotiating with another insurer to offer below-market rates based on the safety and security records of BMW-owners.

Subaru's top U.S. executive, George Muller, says his company is working with several insurance companies that are considering a discount for cars with all-wheel drive. Muller would not name the companies, but notes that one company in Japan—Cigna—already offers a 10 percent premium discount to drivers with awd-equipped cars. However, Cigna is not one of the companies considering an all-wheel-drive discount here. ■

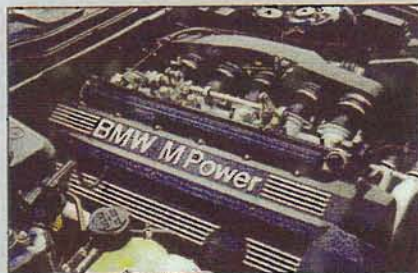
What's New

Home-grown and exclusive

What's the difference between a need and a niche?

The BMW M5 Touring is a great wagon. Too bad BMW doesn't import it into the United States.

That's what Michael Dennison thought, so he's done something about it. Dennison is the owner of Bavarian Professionals in Berkeley, Calif., a shop that has tweaked BMWs since 1989 when it opened. Dennison saw the need for a



If you've got a 525i Touring—and \$35,000—you can turn it into a homemade M5 Touring with 343 horsepower.

ners like thirsty little schnauzers, and the M-spec suspension holds equally well in all types of corners without beating up passengers on bumpy highways.

superb high-performance wagon in America, and got adventurous.

Dennison calls his U.S.-spec M5 Touring "The World's Fastest Station Wagon." This could be a stretch, considering the Volvo T5-R, Audi RS2, AMG Mercedes 300T and even those hot-rodded Caprice wagons cruising the freeways of Southern California. Still, Dennison's wagon could be the best family-hauling hot rod you can buy. All it takes is \$35,000 and a spare 525i Touring.

Dennison starts by stripping the 525i Touring to the core. He replaces the engine, transmission, driveshaft, differential and brakes with the components from wrecked M5s. It takes six weeks.

The result is just like an M5 sedan, but far more practical; on the road, you don't even notice the roomy rear end unless you check the rearview mirror. The 235/45ZR-17 Toyo tires lap up the cor-

pedal is long, but easy to get used to, and the M5 brakes grip mightily without fade (although the brakes in our test car did start to squeak and smoke toward the end of a vigorous one-hour canyon blast). The handling in transitions between corners is nicely settled, as the Touring shifts its weight without upsetting the grip.

Dennison's Bavarian Professionals is just a few minutes away from the shop of BMW-tuning demigod Steve Dinan. Dennison likes Dinan's work, and even uses a Dinan chip in his M5 to wring 343 horsepower from the 24-valve straight-six engine.

Dennison might respect Dinan, but he believes that Dinan could stand some competition; the town (the market) is big enough for the two of them. Especially since his own niche, for now, is family-oriented drivers.

Or is that driver-oriented families? ■



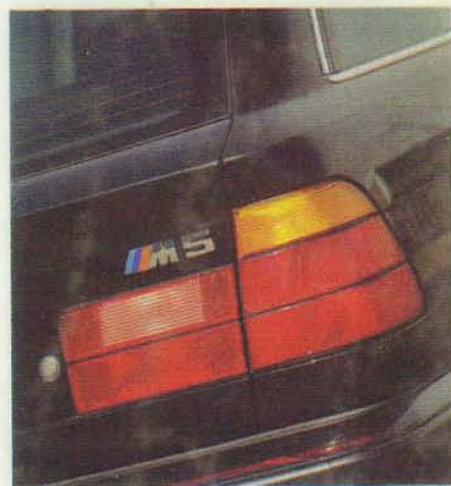
The Hauling Service

P. Ghisold Stout uncovers Bavarian Professionals' M5 Touring, your only chance to carry an American Cub Scout troop in BMW M style.

When you're after high-speed travel with cargo, the fast, nimble and spacious BMW M5 Touring is hard to beat. Unfortunately for us, like a host of BMW's other delectable M variants, this Motorsport masterpiece is not imported stateside.

That's exactly why Berkeley, California's Bavarian Professionals has taken it upon itself to create US-legal M5 Tourings the only way possible: By building them from scratch. The conversion requires a complete M5 driveline, accessory set and some trim parts, preferably from a wrecked example. These donor organs plus labor bring the conversion price to more or less \$35,000, plus of course the 1993-95 BMW 525i/530i Touring recipient.

The conversion requires six weeks, during which time the entire driveline (including accessories) and all the M5's brake and suspension parts are transferred to the Touring body. The donor's complete aero package and related interior items—right down to the backlit Motorsport

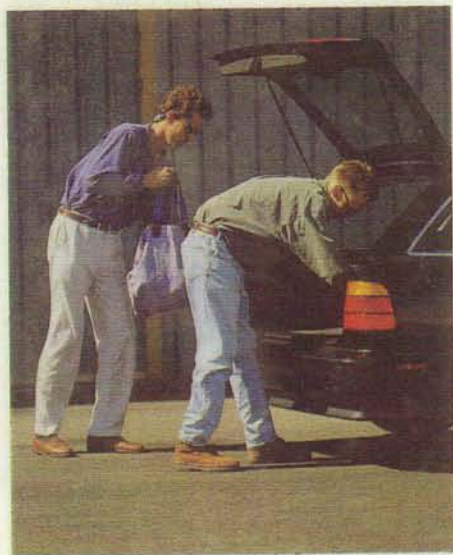


shift knob—are included as well. The finished product is virtually a clone of the factory's own car.

A twist of the key brings the highly tuned Six to life with an intoxicating burble many musclecars would kill for. Otherwise, the hulking wagon draws little attention to itself in traffic, though those in the know are sure to do a double-take. Motoring through

town isn't the M5's forte anyway; the car truly comes into its own upon leaving the gridlock and hitting open country.

Your first impression is of the car's sizable mass shrinking down around you. The clutch effort is fairly light, the gearshift direct and positive and the engine motivates this madness with a smoothness that belies its true intent. Entering the freeway its BMW Motorsport-designed Six exhibits a broad torque band and a wonderful siren song from the tailpipes; nary a hiccup interrupts this aria all the way to the 7000-rpm redline, which arrives quickly enough to warrant a careful eye on the oversized tach. The M5's 3.6-liter DOHC powerplant pro-



the grocery store. Long, sweeping roads become equally addictive as two tons of steel set themselves up for each bend with invincible stability and far more grip than any wagon should claim. Massive, fade-free brakes—12.8 and 11.8 inches front to rear—only reinforce that confidence.

The M5 Touring's real surprise comes on small, twisty sections of tarmac. What seems like a recipe for a ponderous low-speed car instead makes an entertaining partner for backroad jaunts. The tuning firm's fitment of 17-inch shoes wearing 235/45 Toyo tires is an inspiration to probe the chassis' limits, which could be a dangerous proposition were the suspension not so nicely sorted out. The steering is not the most communicative, but it's quick and accurate enough to plant the tires where you want them. All these qualities add up to the elusive sensation of a car that seems smaller at speed than it does around town. The garden-variety 5-series sedan feels far larger by comparison.

While Bavarian Professionals' finish work proves generally exquisite, BMW's questionable factory paint quality is always a disappointment. Fortunately, the driver of this wagon may never notice: The Touring's interior receives the M5's excellent power sport seats, and luxury appointments abound in beautiful leather and dark wood. The



duces 343 horsepower, or nearly 100 more than Volvo's new T5R.

Even in fifth gear, the engine is a willing—and pleasantly audible—companion, but it's only when you exercise your right arm and both feet that it truly comes alive. This car is capable of obscene passes with a quick downshift or two—passes that leave other motorists wondering what's on sale at

Motorsport instrumentation is clear and legible—though less than comprehensive for such a sporting car—and a particularly trick feature is BMW's Touring-only double sunroof. The resulting vehicle is more than worthy of the Motorsport badge; the finish of the interior and engine bay is indistinguishable from that a standard M5, which is a high target indeed.

Of course, the high quality of this conversion comes at a not-inconsiderable cost. Added to the already dear sticker of a 525i or 530i Touring starting point, the M5 treatment's final sticker price may induce nosebleeds in its fans. No one is going to make this decision lightly.

If nothing else, though, you can find solace in the fact that even native Germans must pay similarly hefty prices for a factory-made M5 Touring in Europe, where the wagon makes up roughly half of all M5 sales. Besides, this isn't a car for everyone, just the discerning few whose specialized needs—and wallets—will make it the only game in town. While BMW believes there aren't enough paying customers to warrant factory importation of this 5-door work of art, after driving this faithful American analog you can't help but be glad someone else has taken the task upon themselves. ●

SPECIFICATIONS

**Bavarian Professionals
BMW M5 Touring**

General

Vehicle type: front-engine RWD wagon
Structure: steel unibody
Market: United States
MSRP: (BMW 525i or 530i Touring) + \$35,000

Hardpoints

Engine: 3.6-liter longitudinal DOHC 24-valve L6
Power (bhp): 343 @ 6800 rpm
Torque (lbs.-ft.): 294 @ 4000 rpm
Transmission type: 5-speed manual
Wheelbase (in.): 108.7
Length (in.): 185.8
Width (in.): 77.7

Suspension, brakes

Suspension, front: MacPherson struts with lower arms, coil springs and antiroll bar
Suspension, rear: semi-trailing arms with locating links, coil springs and antiroll bar
Brakes, f/r: disc/disc
ABS: std.

Contact

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