

Members' Cars

A Tale of Two Obsessions

For as long as I can remember cars have always been at the forefront of my mind! Just exactly where this interest came from is a little hard to pinpoint, but listening to some of Granddad's tales about the cars he had owned and/or raced in can't have hurt. Among many others these included the likes of a Mini Cooper S, MG TC, Monaro GTS 350 and a Porsche 356 Speedster, and very few of these cars were left completely standard!

Fast forward to the latter years of high school, and like most youngsters approaching licence age, getting that first car became a much more important preoccupation than studying and exams. The search began and I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw what a Mk1 Ford Capri could be purchased for. These had been one of my absolute favourite cars since about age 10, and they slotted into the under \$5,000 section of the classifieds, so for me it was an easy choice deciding what went to the top of the shopping list! After a lengthy search, a solid car had been found for a bargain of just two grand and took its place in the driveway. This was in year 12 (1998 for those who want to figure out how old I am!), so practically all of my early driving experience was in the Capri. It certainly made for a great learning curve in how to handle a wayward rear wheel drive car, and to me was a whole lot more interesting than some of the shopping trolleys most of my school mates had! There were only



two real downsides to ownership of the Capri. Firstly, the first reaction you would get from people when telling them what your mode of transport was they would instantly visualise one of those boat anchor convertibles from the late eighties and early nineties. The other catch was being a pretty rare sight on the roads, the Capri used to get the odd admirer in carparks etc. Nothing wrong with that you might think, but unfortunately I was never quite sure whether some of the people hovering around it when I would come back to it were plotting to 'borrow' it or were merely casual admirers. If anyone reading this is a past or present owner of an old Ford wearing warpaint like GT badges and bonnet bulges they'll know what I'm talking about!

Needless to say, a deep attachment to my 1969 Ford Capri GT formed over the next few years and, to top it off, it served me superbly during the university years, so by the time the studies had finished and full-time work commenced I decided it had well

and truly deserved the undertaking of a ground-up rebuild. This was 2002, and as anyone in the Club who knows of my Capri will be well aware, it is still to get back onto the road – but it will be well worth the wait! All things willing, it will eventually go back on the road as a bit of a beast ...

But of course, I'm here to talk about BMWs! The Capri's rebuild in 2002 left me in need of a second car. A brief period with something Japanese left me with a yearning for something more entertaining and of course rear wheel drive, so after a few months I felt the need for a change. I've always been rather partial to BMWs and I'd been a bit of a fan of the E28 M535i for some time, so the search was on. Finding one was proving almost as tricky as tracking down a Capri however. Eventually, something a little different turned up however. This was the green machine, and it was the start of my second automotive obsession – BMWs and in particular E28s. The green machine was an E28 528i which had been converted into an



M535i replica from an ex-UK car which had met an unfortunate end on a race track. Importantly, this meant that it came equipped with the more powerful non catalyst engine in addition to the M-Tech interior, bodykit etc. Best of all however, it would shortly be all mine!

The green machine was great and I loved it. The engine had some very extensive headwork and a nice lumpy cam installed among other improvements by previous owners, so it had plenty of power up its sleeve. It even came on a set of Schnitzer rims so it looked the part too. Sadly however, said engine conversion hadn't been carried out in the most professional manner, as a trip to Cervantes was about to find out. Two and a half hours north of Perth in the middle of summer on a 40 degree day travelling at 110km/h, the most horrible clattering noise emitted from the engine. I had barely started applying the brakes when the oil pressure light came on followed by the last noise you

want to hear coming from under your bonnet – BANG! A conrod had just torn itself free from the engine. Fortunately I had a friend following me so wasn't stranded. He was also able to inform me of how spectacular it looked seeing my back tyres catch on fire as they picked up the oil that had just come spewing forth from the holes in the engine block onto the sweltering road. We were later also able to hitch a tow on a dodgy old rope behind a dodgy old ute into town – steering the E28 going round bends with no assistance whatsoever and with only the handbrake to slow proceedings when going down hills proved to be a slightly more intense experience

than I had envisaged the road trip turning out to be!

Back in Perth I entrusted someone much more reputable to salvage what was possible from the engine and carry out a rebuild – Terry Le May. Fortunately the head avoided suffering any damage (miraculously, aside from the obliterated engine block, just about the only damage was a bent valve), and whilst rebuilding a new block, Terry bored it out to accommodate a set of oversized pistons. All of this meant that the car had even more power than it ever had so I was still very much attached to it! I continued the development of the green machine and worked on bringing it up to the sort of condition it deserved when a rare opportunity presented itself – an E28 Alpina B10 came on the market!

This was May 2004 and I'd known about this particular car for a couple of years (at this stage it was owned by club member John Brown). It was in superb condition and was fantastic to drive so there was no way I was going to pass up on the chance to acquire it. I'd been aware of what an Alpina was since high school, and since buying the green machine had really wanted an E28 version – assuming I was ever lucky enough to find one.





Sadly, this meant that there was no longer room for the green machine so it had to go. Sadder still, its subsequent owner proceeded to thrash the living daylights out of it, and it even featured on the news for all the wrong reasons. It was badly abused and I believe that this car shortly afterwards retired to that big scrapyard in the sky ...



to make it just that little bit better again. I'll have to let some of the

club members who've known the car for some time be the judge of that!

Could I pick a favourite out of the Alpina and the Capri? This is a difficult one to say as they are both such different cars, but I haven't driven the Capri in such a long time now that I'd

have to say that the Alpina gets the nod. Its rarity makes it irreplaceable to me and I don't think I could ever bear to part company with it! Just as importantly, I've had so much fun with the ownership experience of the two E28s and have enjoyed sitting behind the wheel of any BMW I've driven, that I simply can't imagine not owning cars with the legendary blue and white propeller emblem. I can think of many, many models that I would be proud to own one day. I just love 'em!

Stephen Hinsley



I've owned the Alpina for a bit over three years now and I'm just as enthusiastic about it as I when I first picked it up. For me in many ways it gives me everything I seek in a car – character, ample grunt, something different that you'll never see in the neighbour's driveway, and best of all plenty of fun to drive. Even though it was in such good condition when I bought it, I still always try and improve my cars as much as possible, so hopefully I've been able

