



ROUNDEL MAGAZINE
BMW CAR CLUB OF AMERICA
JULY 2020

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ROUNDEL JULY 2020

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STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID HAUETER

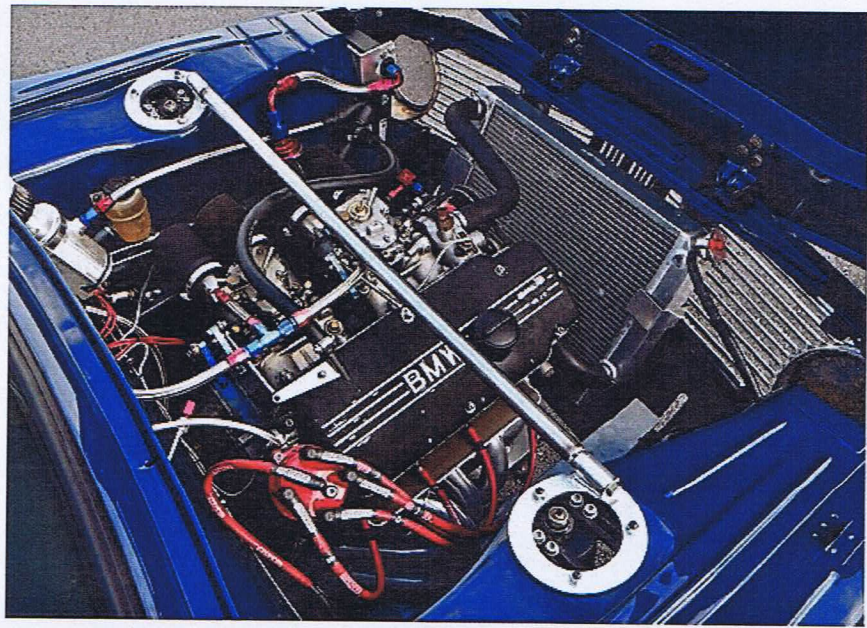


THE MILLER & NORBURN 2002 WON BMW'S
FIRST U.S. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP,
AND THE CAR IS STILL RACING TODAY.

ROUND EL BMWCCA.ORG

The history of BMW in the United States really began when the 2002 hit its stride in the market in the early 1970s. Fans of BMW Motorsport, which made a concerted racing effort in the U.S. beginning in 1975 with the legendary 3.0CSL coupe, may not realize that BMW's first success in a professional racing series in this country came with the 2002, several years before the factory-backed CSL was entered in top-level IMSA competition. That first success didn't come from a works program but from a grassroots racing team in North Carolina, and one of the cars they raced nearly 50 years ago is still hitting race tracks today with current owner Scott Hughes.

Preston Miller's history with BMW goes back to when he was a student working on a mechanical engineering degree. "While I was at North Carolina State, my brother had an 1800ti, which he loaned me," he recalls. "When I first worked on that car, I thought, 'This is heaven,' because everything made sense, everything was simple, and it was well engineered. I fell in love with BMWs by maintaining that car before I even got out of college. I started racing an 1800ti in 1969; Russell Norburn was running a Porsche 911, but they outlaid



the 911 in the B Sedan class, so Russell had to switch to another car, and looked me up because I was racing the BMW. We got together in 1972 and started Miller & Norburn in a little shop in Durham, North Carolina."

The other piece of the puzzle that brought success with the 2002 was driver Nick Craw, who had come from an open-wheel racing background. "We met Nick Craw in 1972 when we were running in B Sedan. We were outrunning the car he was driving, so for 1973 he put together a deal for us to run a

The 2002's 1,990-cc inline four-cylinder engine currently puts out over 205 horsepower.

Miller & Norburn won BMW's first U.S. national championship with a 2002 (shown here at Road Atlanta).

two-car team with one car for him and one for Russell," says Miller.

Craw was initially suspicious of the competency of the 2002, as he recounted in an interview on the LemBo Racing website. "When Russ Norburn and I first sat down to work out the details of my driving one of the team cars, he had already reserved the numbers with IMSA, #64 and #65. He asked which one I preferred; my response was that the \$64,000 question was whether that shoe box would go fast enough. I looked at the car as having the aero characteristics of a brick. That's how it came to have the number 64."

Miller & Norburn hit the track with a pair of 2002s in 1973, competing in the BF Goodrich Radial Challenge series against cars like the Ford Pinto, the AMC Gremlin, and Mazda's RX2, among others. The series catered to teams with modest budgets with cars that were mass produced and could seat four adults. "The good part about the 2002 is that it had functional parts as it came from the factory," says Miller. "The brakes were good enough to race with if you purchased the right materials, and the differential and transmission were strong





enough.” The #64 2002 was much closer to stock as it was raced in 1973 than it is today as Hughes races it (as evidenced by period photographs).

Craw’s questions about the effectiveness of the 2002 were answered at the first race of the 1973 season at Daytona. “Coming from an exclusive open-wheel background, the

other \$64,000 question was whether I could adapt to driving a sedan—on street radials to boot,” he said on the LemBo Racing site. “Both questions were answered at our first race, the February 1973 event at Daytona. Not only were we both quick enough, but we led until the driver peeled off all the rocker arms with an over-enthusiastic downshift into Turn One. We

The cockpit of the 2002 is all business, but quite different from what it was when Miller & Norburn raced it.

had served notice that a BMW 2002, properly prepared and driven, could be competitive against cars with twice the displacement, even on big ovals.”

Craw went on to become co-champion in 1973 with Amos Johnson, who raced an AMC Gremlin. It was BMW’s first national championship in the U.S. “With that kind of





Courtesy of Scott Hughes

omen and the fact that #64 was becoming a brand of sorts to enthusiasts all over the country, we elected to pass up the honor of running #1 on the car the following year and kept #64," said Craw. He finished second in the championship in 1974 and won the championship again in 1975, becoming the all-time winner in the series when he drove to victory at Daytona in November 1975.

Being engineers who loved to tinker with engines, Miller and Norburn added more horsepower to the 2002s over the

The car looked much more like a stock 2002 when it was raced in the 1970s.

Scott Hughes raced the 2002 at the 2018 Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix.

years they raced them, going from around 140 horsepower in 1973 to around 200 by the end of 1975. "The base engine of the 2002 was a two-liter with a forged crank and forged connecting rods, and you could take the stock parts and make good horsepower just by changing the compression ratio and the camshaft," says Preston Miller. The team used American-made pistons and cams and Stahl headers to help amp up the horsepower. "You could almost double the horsepower of the original engine and never worry about things breaking," adds Miller. "We'd tear the engine down after every race, but we usually had nothing to do but change the oil. We only had one engine failure, and that was the driver's fault."

The history of the Miller & Norburn 2002s is hard to track after the team switched over to the new 320i for racing. As Miller says, "Back then we didn't have computers and just took notes on pads." There were no

race logbooks or detailed records kept on the cars. What we do know about the car you see here is that Billy Revis found it for sale in Greensboro, North Carolina, in late 1993—when it was almost completely disassembled. He restored it to SCCA GT-4 specifications, which allowed the extensive modifications that have been made to the car since Miller & Norburn raced it, including the Turbo-style fender flares. Revis competed in the 2002 at the first BMW CCA Club Racing event at Moroso Motorsports Park (now Palm Beach International Raceway) in 1995.

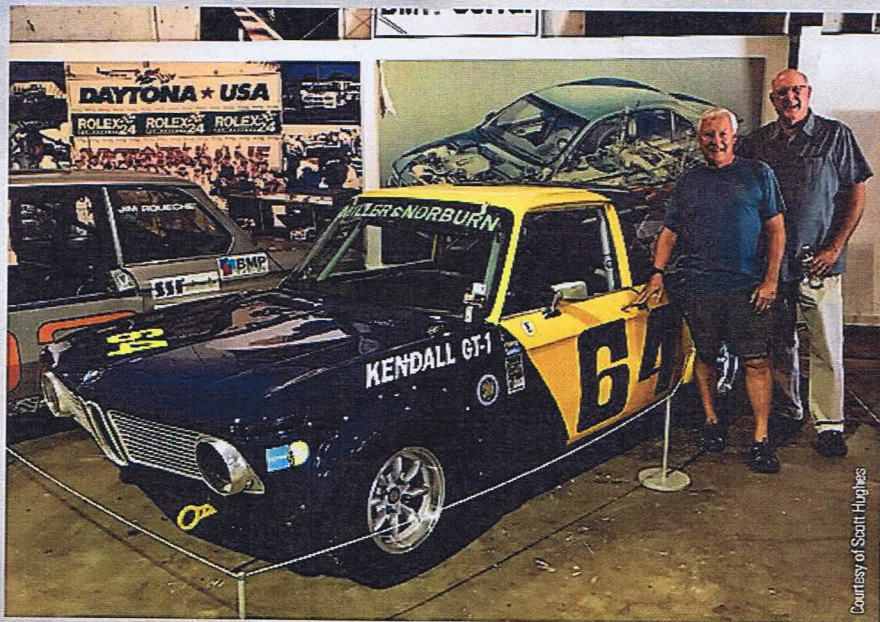
At the end of the 1995 season, Revis sold the 2002 to Bo and Mark Lemmon (of the LemBo Racing website), who refurbished the car twice before selling it to Hughes in February 2011. Part of their refurbishment efforts included reworking the original roll cage, which had an SCCA stamp number on it that may point to the car being the #64 car with which Craw won the championships



Jon Van Woerden

in the 1970s—but Hughes has not been able to verify this with the SCCA. The Lemmons also painted the car in the original Miller & Norburn colors, and believe from independent opinions that this is the original #64 car. On Hughes' bill of sale, the car is represented on the VIN line as "Old 64 Miller & Norburn 2002," and Hughes has had no reason to think that it's not that car, although it's nearly impossible to confirm it completely without official records.

Current owner Hughes has history with this car that precedes his purchase of it in 2011. "We watched this car back in the day when Nick Crow was racing it," he says. "One of the coolest things was at the 2016 Monterey Historics [which celebrated the 100th anniversary of BMW]; we asked Nick Crow to come out of retirement and drive it, and he hadn't been in a racing car I think in decades. He came with a water bottle that was his water bottle back in the 1970s—it was like his security blanket. He left the bottle in tech inspection, so he was ready to go out on track and his wife was searching



Courtesy of Scott Hughes

frantically for his water bottle. She wouldn't let him go on track without it, so my wife, Fran, had to go scampering back to get it. He came out of the car exhausted, because it's a lot harder to drive now, with no power steering and a lot of caster, but he did really well and had a great time. We really enjoyed that."

Preston Miller (right) and Scott Hughes pose with the car at the Heroes of Bavaria exhibition.

Scott Hughes has owned the 2002 since 2011 and is keeping the Miller & Norburn legend alive.

Scott and Fran Hughes continue to give the 2002 plenty of exercise on the track today, competing in vintage racing and showing it at BMW events. It's a fitting life for an old championship-winning race car, one that still has a lot of life left in it—and one that is the forebear of all the winning BMW race cars that have succeeded it. **R**



IT'S A FITTING HOME FOR AN OLD CHAMPIONSHIP-WINNING RACE CAR—ONE WITH A LOT OF LIFE LEFT IN IT.