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play evolved into the passions that would shape his adult life. One is an airplane with the slight, minimalistic features of a glider. The other, which Peter built himself in the workshop, is a racing car with an open cockpit and slender chassis typical of 1950s Grand Prix models. On the tip of its nose is a tiny BMW logo with its instantly recognizable color scheme: the blue and white of Bavaria.

The Race to the Top

During Peter Schreyer's childhood, the local hill climb motor races were some of the most eagerly anticipated sporting events of the year. These races, which first started in France toward the end of the nineteenth century, were ideal opportunities for manufacturers to demonstrate their newest models' capabilities not just in straight-line speed but in cornering, torque, and reliability.

The roads of the Bavarian Prealps, with their hairpin turns, could have been built with the requirements of hill climb racing in mind. Indeed, one of the most famous hill climb races in Europe was the annual sprint up the Gaisberg, a mountain near Salzburg, which was within cycling distance of Peter's childhood home. It was here that some of Peter's most striking early memories of particular car brands and models were formed.

Porsche tended to dominate, with iconic sports cars such as the 550 Spyder, the Carrera GTL, and the 906 Bergspyder flying up the mountain roads, their sleek forms and finely-tuned engines passing just feet from the crowds. For the local children in attendance, the atmosphere was raw and thrilling.

"It was nothing like car racing today," recalls Peter. "No VIP tents, no wristbands. I used to go with my friends, and we could walk right through the driver's enclosure, the pits, and the area where they prepared the cars. I remember seeing Niki Lauda's name on one of the cars—this was before he raced in Formula 1. The atmosphere was relaxed, although it was probably also quite dangerous."

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Peter's grandfather was a great craftsman and made Peter handmade toys throughout his childhood. This ornate menagerie is one of the few still in Peter's possession.

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This model, based on the BMW F2 and built by Peter as a teenager, has followed him to every office around the world. It serves as part inspiration, part talisman.