



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

November • 2013

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STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts, D.M.D.
President, Alabama Section MBCA

This winds up a very busy year that has included MBCA's national event, StarTech 2013 which was an unprecedented success that saw Alabama Section host a record 285 MBCA members from all over North America as well as Germany, Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand.

We have been asked to host another national event in 2014 that will include driving the Barber track at speed as well as a visit to the MBUSI Factory to see production of the new C-class.

Alabama Section is also in the running for MBCA Section of the Year. We have staged many events in 2013 including our new bi-monthly Huntsville Stammtisch dinner/meeting. Plans are being made to stage events of this type in the Mobile-Pensacola area as well as in the Dothan-Tallahassee area to bring Alabama Section MBCA to members in all areas.

We have several very active new Board members and officers headed by new President Bob Hinds who has been serving as a very active Vice President the last 3 years.

Bob has felt that he needed this time to learn the "culture" of MBCA.

Vice President Mason Beale has come to us from Greater Washington Section (the largest in MBCA) where he served in many leadership capacities including Vice President. Mason's residence is Birmingham, but he works in Huntsville most of every week.

Secretary Ken Champlin is a newer member, but he and his late wife, Linda have attended almost every event. Ken is a younger retired from AT & T and a real estate agent.

Brenda Brown continues as Treasurer. She has met many challenges in getting our financial records in excellent order. Brenda and Board member Pierce Williams divide their time between Anniston/Gadsden and Orange Beach, so they have agreed to coordinate Gulf Coast activities.

Continued on page 3

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November

- 19 - Birmingham Stammtisch
(monthly meeting)-- See back page
- 25 - Huntsville Stammtisch
(dinner/meeting)-- See back page

December

- 7 - Holiday Party -- 11am, The Club
Birmingham, Al
- 14-15 -High Performance Drivers' Education
Barber Road Course, Birmingham, Al
Sign-up at noon, 8 Nov. at clubregistration.net

January

- 11- Winterfahrt to Covered Bridges
- 21 - Birmingham Stammtisch
(monthly meeting)-- See back page
- 27 - Huntsville Stammtisch
(dinner/meeting)-- See back page

February

- 8 - Birmingham Stammtisch
(monthly meeting)-- See back page
- TBA - Tech Session

March

- 8-9 - Amelia Island Concours d'elegance
- 15-16- Drivers Ed at Barber
- 18 - Birmingham Stammtisch
(monthly meeting)-- See back page
- 24 - Huntsville Stammtisch
(dinner/meeting)-- See back page

April

- 5-6- Car Corral at Indy Car Race

June

- 14-15- Special National Driver's Ed at Barber
w/ Safe Families-Safe Drivers' Program

MERCEDES-BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA ALABAMA SECTION www.mbca.org/alabama

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das Heimatblatt

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Sternblick

Continued from front

Chad Stevens of Huntsville joins the board after being very active in coordinating the dealer and Space Center activities of StarTech 2013. He and Mason Beale are working with me on Heimatfest 2014 and the driving events at Barber Motorsports Park.

Carol Wadley, Ed Jones, and Pierce Williams continue their Board positions, but the open positions were accepted by Liz Roberson who so ably managed StarTech 2013 registration with her husband Don, and by Jack Schilleci who has a great background in organization.

Rhiannon Schlangen Gage will continue her excellent job as newsletter editor.

We give special thanks to Sam Powers who with help from his brother William and sister-in-law, Herta has faithfully served as a Board member for several years despite numerous medical issues. Sam & I will remain active.

I feel most gratified that Alabama Section has grown from our initial slightly over 100 members to over 230 in the last 7 years.

Initially I thought it would take about 3 years to develop the organization to turn the President to others, but other factors in people's lives intervened. The new officers and board members will bring a new vitality and expanded activities.

Now the Alabama Section is ready for the next step. We have become a true star in MBCA, but there are other steps we can take. The special national event at Barber is a step toward StarFest, and Heimatfest has become a traditional regional/national event. We are still working on our 2014 calendar, but it looks like it will be a very busy, exciting year.

Many thanks to all of you who have become such a wonderful community of friends over the last few years and have so enthusiastically supported my crazy ideas. I will look forward to continue seeing you at our monthly events.

Bis baldiges Wiedersehen
(Until soon seeing again),
Jim Roberts

Huntsville & Birmingham Stammtisch

Members who attended the bi-monthly Stammtisch in Huntsville on 24 Sep got a preview of the striking new entry level CLA and the marvelous new 2014 S-class.

The 4 CLA's arrived on Monday, and when we were there Tuesday, two had already been sold. It's a good thing we didn't wait until Saturday. Many thanks to Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville for hosting the Alabama Section and staying open late for us.

The next Huntsville Stammtisch is scheduled for Monday, 25 Nov. Again, we will gather at M-B of Huntsville about 5:30 and then have dinner at Ol' Heidelberg at 6:30.

The Birmingham Stammtisch on 17 September was also well attended. The next one will be on November 19th.

We are also working on starting these in the Mobile/Pensacola area as well as Dothan/Tallahassee/ Panama City area. Our Mercedes-Benz dealers are very supportive of these events that seem to be appreciated by local members.

Coming events

Feiertagsfest (Holiday Party)

When: Saturday, 7 December

Time: 11am

Where: The Club, Birmingham, AL

This is one of our best attended events and is a chance to see old friends and make new friends. We have again arranged for the room at The Club that will allow those who wish to park very near the door. This is also one of the few places at the upscale private club that does not require gentlemen to wear ties—but only if you enter from the adjacent parking areas.

The Club on the crest of Red Mountain has a beautiful view of Birmingham, downtown, UAB, and other nearby landmarks 600 feet below.

Traditional holiday fare will be served with the unique flair of the award winning chefs at The Club.

Eastern Regional Director, Bill Hopper will be our guest and will give us a report on the MBCA fall board meeting and other news.

Please let us know by 1 Dec that you are planning on attending



**Members enjoying last years holiday party
at The Club**

Feiertags Fest (Holiday Party) at The Club, Birmingham, AL 7 December, 11am

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Mail registration with \$42/ per person to:
Alabama Section MBCA, 2301 Arlington Ave S, Suite 200,
Birmingham, AL 35244

Coming events

Winterfahrt (Winter Drive)

When: 11 January

Time: 8:30am

Where: Barber Motorsports Park

This popular dare to the north wind has become a tradition that our friends in the other area European car clubs like to join in with us. Last year we had 78 participants.

This year we will meet at the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum in Birmingham at 8:30 am where they graciously open the lobby to allow us to gather out of the weather.

The covered bridges of Blount County have finally reopened to traffic, so we will drive across all 3 of them. Horton Mill is the highest over the stream below, Swann is the longest and Easley is one of the shortest covered bridges. The 13th Century Tuscan gothic Church of the Blessed Sacrament includes a border crossing and in addition to being a great work of art provides a wonderful photo-op for all the European cars.

Cullman is about 20 miles away with its renowned All Steak Restaurant for lunch. There is no charge for this event, but ***please let us know you will be attending by e-mailing jertoosaver@bellsouth.net*** so the restaurant can plan.

Cruise-ins and Gatherings

You will probably notice large groups of usually older and often modified domestic cars in various areas on weekends. You really have to look for the occasional European cars which is rarely a Mercedes-Benz. This doesn't look like much fun, since one reason you joined MBCA was to be around people who understand your esteem for Mercedes-Benz.

Take heart—at least if you are close enough to Birmingham for a Saturday morning visit. The 3 events listed welcome Mercedes-Benz cars. Even if you don't see one already there, chances are that many participants own a car with the three pointed star. In order of seniority.

Krispy Kreme, Hoover US 31

1st Saturday year round

Older cars start to gather about 7:30 and dissipate by 11:30 -12 noon. You will get a free cup of coffee and a donut, if your car is at least 25 years old. This event is staged by the Dixie Vintage Car Club which was founded back in the 1950's. This will be about 75-80% domestics as a few street rods. Euros are mostly British with 2-4 Mercedes-Benz's.

Logan's on US 280

11:30- 1pm Most Saturdays

This is organized by M.O.B., INC, so you will see mostly newer European exotics. Most of them own and occasionally bring a Mercedes-Benz SL, SLR, or SLS. Don't be put off by them, as they love cars and greatly respect Mercedes-Benz. They will almost certainly invite you to have lunch with them.

Cars & Coffee, Brookwood Mall

Every Saturday 8:30-10:30am

Yes, the name is the same and the ambiance is similar to the event in Los Angeles that you have seen on T.V., because a recent California transplant was not satisfied with the existing car club scene.

The location is the top floor of the parking deck of the Merrill, Lynch, office building between the west end of the Brookwood Mall building and the new Target store. There is a coffee shop in the building. This attracts both Asian and European cars including exotics.

GREAT CARS MAKE US APPRECIATE
THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE DESTINATION.



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Event Recap

Farben Fahrt (Colors Drive)

Several of our Alabama Section members enjoyed the beautiful fall colors and challenging roads in East Central Alabama as we drove through the canopy of multicolored trees to reach the summit of Mt. Cheaha. The views and the drive were fantastic, and we had a few first time participants. The only problem was the unexpected number of other people who thought this was a great time to be out as well.

Pictures by: Ken Champlin & Jim Roberts



Event Recap

Kulmann Oktoberfest

No, that's not a typo. It is the original spelling of Cullman and Oktoberfest. In fact, German was the language of commerce, society, religion, and education until the U.S. entered WW I on the Allied rather than Axis side. Authorities in Alabama along with those in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and other states told German communities they could no longer use German openly nor have German organizations due to the Sedition Act. People in Kulmann took this so seriously that they anglicized the town's name as well as many family names.

Prohibition was enforced two years later and remained in force in Cullman until 2 years ago. It's a bit difficult to stage an Oktoberfest without beer, but by the 1980's people in Cullman began to celebrate their German heritage with the world's only alcohol free Oktoberfest.

This sputtered along until the city voted "wet" two years ago. Today, it sprawls over 3-4 block area around the "FestHalle" which was built primarily for this purpose. You can't yet get real German beer and the signs mix German and English, but you do see dirndls, and a few lederhosen, and traditional Bavarian and Tyrolean folk music along with the beer drinking songs. The band was doing its best to educate people by asking if they would like to hear and sing "Rosa Munde" (very light applause) or "Beer Barrel Polka" (enthusiastic applause). Of course, it is the same song so they sang it in German as well as English. It's taking time but the people and the town leaders get it. Interestingly, many locals thought we worked for Mercedes-Benz when they saw our cars and our shirts.

We were very fortunate in having Chad Steven's parents who still live in Cullman take us on a tour of the central part of town and give us some background. They don't speak German, but their grandparents did. Two scenic drives led from Huntsville and Birmingham to meet near Cullman.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, 4 October next year. There will be a car show to open the 2014 Oktoberfest, and we will want to have Mercedes-Benz well represented.



Pictures by: Jim Roberts



Event Recap

Polo at the Point

This 25 year old fundraiser for the charities of the Mobile Bay area becomes an outdoor fashion show with the sport of kings and sheiks giving an exciting action setting. In fact, people from all stations in life are welcome at the Point Clear part of Fairhope on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay.

Mercedes-Benz of Mobile is a major sponsor of the event and even sponsors the winning home polo team of four players uniformed amazingly similar to Mercedes-Benz Formula One team and their 20 thoroughbred horses. They even have their own custom Sprinter van. I'm sure their truck is a Freightliner.

The sponsor tents are works of art and the catered food and drink are excellent. Of course, M-B of Mobile had all the 2014 models in and around their area including a new S-class and a CLA to enhance the ambience.

As you can see, the hats are reminiscent of a bygone era, and there is a competition among the hats as well.

If you have never seen polo in person, you can't appreciate the intense action and agility of horses and riders as they battle for possession of the ball at 35-40 mph by horse pushing against horse only 4 meters from your position with only a low board 6-8 inches high containing them from people in elegant attire sipping champagne. Mercedes-Benz of Mobile defeated Dream Ranch of California 13-10 in a very hard fought and exciting match. Mark the last Saturday in October to attend next year. Our appreciation goes out to Jim Sullivan and Mercedes-Benz of Mobile for their gracious hospitality befitting Gottlieb Daimler's admonition of "Das Beste Oder Nichts" (The best or nothing).

Pictures by: Jim Roberts



In Der Presse (In The Press)

115,000 mile CL 55 breaks cross country driving record

CNN and others have recently reported that Atlanta resident Ed Bolin and 2 friends recently drive his 2003 Mercedes-Benz CL 55 AMG from the Red Ball Garage in Manhattan to the Santa Monica pier in Los Angeles, a distance of 2813 miles in 28 hours 50 minutes. They averaged 98 MPH including stops. Their moving average was 100 mph.

The car had 115,000 miles, on it at the start. It was serviced by our MBCA friends at RBM M-B in Atlanta. The only modification was the addition of two 22 gallon fuel tanks in the trunk for a total of 67 gallons. Ed said he needed a car that was quick, reliable, and was self-leveling to allow a car for 400 pounds of fuel and 3 people.

They did not get a single ticket or have any accidents or mechanical problems. The only injuries were the deaths of at least 10,000 insects.

This was quite an achievement, as they had to push the car as hard as possible the entire distance reaching up to 158 mph. This shows that Autobahn speeds here are possible with safety on U.S. interstates. The previous documented record was 31 hours.

For details go to <http://jalopnik.com/meet-the-guy-who-drove-across-the-u-s-in-a-record-28-h-1454092837>

MBUSI Celebrates 20 Years

Mercedes-Benz celebrates 20 years in Alabama. On October 1st 1993 Mercedes-Benz announced the selection of Vance, Alabama as the site of its first North American automobile factory that would be known as Mercedes-Benz US International.

By the time C-class production begins in Mid-2014, Daimler, Ag will have invested over 4.5 billion dollars in Alabama. Employment will have increased from the original 1500 to over 4500 people. Suppliers will have almost doubled these figures.

There is no doubt that the success of Mercedes-Benz strongly influenced Honda, Hyundai, Kia, and Toyota to locate here as well as Thyssen-Krupp Steel near Mobile.

Mercedes-Benz's decision 20 years ago has been a major game changer for Alabama as well as the border areas of neighboring Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee where Toyota, Kia, and Volkswagen respectively have set up production facilities very near or on the state lines. This has concentrated auto production suppliers in Alabama.

Mercedes-Benz Leads All in Customer Satisfaction

Mercedes-Benz Leads All Makes in Customer Satisfaction

While these surveys, are frequently skewed due to buyers not liking the way, say, a nav system works rather than the true quality and service of the vehicle, still Mercedes-Benz was the overall most satisfying brand for U.S. buyers.

This is a great achievement to come from the lower half of the top 10 just a few years ago to the very top. This survey considers not only the car itself but the experience with the dealers. Congratulations to the company and the dealers.

M-B Sales Up

Mercedes-Benz US Sales were up 25.2% for October vs. 1 year ago. This puts Mercedes-Benz ahead of BMW for the year with the CLA barely available.

The revised GLK is doing well, and ML/GL production in Alabama can't keep up with demand.

"Not Just a Road Trip But An Adventure" 2015 Chicago to Key West

Exclusive group of 50 Vehicles/100 Guests
 Total cost for entire road trip:
\$3,975.00 per couple
\$2,927.00 per single

August 16-26 2015
 MBCA Chicagoland Section

This Trip Includes:

- Deluxe hotel accommodations for 10 days
- Private Museum tours & Entertainment pkgs
 - Guided trolley tours
- Catamaran Sailing at sunset in Key West
 - Gala dinner parties every evening
- All taxes, gratuities/service charges

Initial Deposit of **\$400.00 pp MUST**
 be received on or before **April 1, 2014**

Make checks payable to:
 MBCA Chicagoland Section

Mail to: Renee Welsch, 927 Shoreline Road,
 Barrington, IL 60010
 or log on to www.mbclub.com/2015trip

* Guests need to make their own hotel reservations
 to guarantee availability at special rates

Contact Renee Welsch for hotel links at
rwelsch@yahoo.com or (847) 344-1153

Three wild and fun days in
 'Party City' Key West, FL*

*Overnight Stop

Huntsville Membership Meeting

Where: Ol' Heidelberg Restaurant

When: Monday, 25 November

Time: 6pm

Ol' Heidelberg is located on University Drive very close to Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville, so we will gather there about 5:30 for those who want to drool, check out the boutique, or pick up your car from service

Monthly Membership Meeting

Where: Dale's Southern Grill, Hoover

When: 3rd Tuesday of every month

Time: 6pm dinner, 7pm meeting

Dale's Southern Grill in Hoover is 1/2 mile south of the Vestavia location and is south of I-459 and 1/4 mile south of the Alabama 150-US 31 intersection on the left



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