



# Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section  
Mercedes-Benz Club of America  
2014 Printed Newsletter of the Year

April • 2015

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## Sternblick (View through the Star)

*Mason Beale*  
President, Alabama Section MBCA

**S**pring is here and outside fun begins! Many special events are planned for Spring and Summer months.

Our March activity included a special visitor appearance by Fred and Elisabeth Smits from New Zealand as they drive their Mercedes-Benz around the world. The Section enjoyed their travel presentation of current and future locations and targeted arrival dates. Also, a factory tour was arranged enabling them to accomplish a stated goal of visiting every Mercedes-Benz factory around the world. Thanks to Heinz Neunzig for hosting the couple and to Jim Roberts for finalizing the factory tour.

Our April event is the Indy Race at Barbers. The Car Corral is once again available for Mercedes-Benz owners who purchased a corral ticket. Thanks to Ken Champlin and Jim Roberts for managing the Car Corral for all manufacturers. There is still time to purchase Race and Car Corral tickets. Contact Barber's ticket office and join us at the race.

Upcoming Spring and Summer events include Historic Car Races at Barber Motorsports Park and Mercedes-Benz Car Corral (May 15-17), Huntsville Euro-Brit Car Show (June 6), Pensacola European Car Show (June 6) and Tech Session at Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham (July 18).

Our Newsletter contains an event's calendar identifying these opportunities. A week prior to the event an e-mail blast will remind members of the fast approaching activity. I encourage you to attend these upcoming events.

It is an honor to serve as your section President. I look forward to visiting with you at our next event.

ALABAMA & FLORIDA PANHANDLE

## Schedule Of Events

### April

- 21 Birmingham Stammtisch -  
Logan's on 280
- 22 Huntsville Stammtisch -  
Hildegard's
- 24-26 Indy Grand Prix of Alabama & Car Corral

### May

- 15-17 Barber Historic Races
- 19 Birmingham Stammtisch -  
Logan's on 280

### June

- 6 Eurobrit Car Show -  
Madison, AL
- 6 European Car Show -  
Pensacola, FL, Naval Air Museum
- 13-15 StarTech 2015 -  
Cincinnati, OH
- 16 Birmingham Stammtisch -  
Logan's on 280
- 24 Huntsville Stammtisch -  
Hildegard's
- 27 Advanced Driving Skills -  
NCCAR

### July

- 18 Tech Session at M-B of B'ham
- 21 Birmingham Stammtisch -  
Logan's on 280

### August

- 8 MBCA Concours Judging School
- 18 Birmingham Stammtisch -  
Logan's on 280
- 26 Huntsville Stammtisch -  
Hildegard's
- 27-28 Tuscaloosa Car Show

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# Coming events

## Upcoming Event Spotlight

### Indycar and World Challenge at Barber

April 24-26th

**M**BCA always has a prominent place in the car corral, and MBUSI engineer Scott Maloy will bring the newest preproduction or just released vehicle built here in Alabama. Hint: The new C63 and GLE 63 and coupe will soon be at the dealerships.

We will have a MBCA canopy and an always interesting assortment of members' cars as well as the Firestone/ Bridgestone hospitality tent.

The car corral actually costs less than regular onsite parking at \$35 for all 3 days. There is direct access across the access road to the best viewing area as well as the fan zone with reserved seating, food court, and other activities. Even if you already have tickets, you will need car corral parking. To buy go to [www.barbermotorsports.com](http://www.barbermotorsports.com)

and tell them you are with the Mercedes-Benz Club. You will need to drive your Mercedes-Benz or Smart© to get in. ML, GL, GLK, and G-wagen are ok-- don't know about Sprinter, but call us if you have one.

The World Challenge race on Saturday should have three SLS racing in it as we saw last year. Mercedes-Benz vs. Cadillac vs. Aston Martin vs. Ferrari vs. Porsche vs. Chevrolet vs Ford vs Kia/ Hyundai vs Honda vs. Mazda. All three Alabama manufacturers. It doesn't get any better than that!

The Indy cars now have about 50-50 split between Chevy (Ilmor) and Honda power. This year they look and sound differently. The Hondas have a triple element front wing.



2014 Indy Car Corral at Barber Motorsports Park

## Special Preview

Alabama Section member, Scott Maloy who is an engineer at MBUSI has arranged a special preview of the new C63 AMG sport and the new GLE 63 AMG coupe to be to be in the car corral for the Indy car race on 25-26 April and at the Barber Historic races on 16-17 May.

These new Alabama built vehicles with 500+ HP will not be for sale at the dealers until summer. Many thanks to Scott and to Felyicia Jerald for bringing them for us to see. They will be displayed prominently at the car corral at both events. For ticket and car corral information go to [www.barbermotorsports.com](http://www.barbermotorsports.com) and continue down for the car corral passes. Be sure to mark "Mercedes-Benz" as your car club.

The Pirelli World Challenge races for race prepared street cars on Saturday will have at least 3 Mercedes AMG SLS GT3 cars. They will do battle with entries from Porsche, BMW, Aston Martin, Ferrari, McLaren, Chevrolet, Ford, and Cadillac. These 90 minute sprints with no pit stops are easy to follow. The classes are color coded in the numbers. Last year the SLS led its class until the last lap when it went wide at the "S" turn on the back straight.

# Coming events

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## Barber Historic Races

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May 15-17

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If you are nostalgic for an earlier time when the cars truly drifted or slid through the turns, and a well driven agile smaller car could prevail over high horsepower, this is the event for you.

Historic Motorsports Association is the group that started and ran the Monterey Historic Races for several years. Their philosophy is that they want only cars that have been preserved to their original race configuration up through 1966. Hence they do not allow 3.8 liter Porsches or 351 "Cleveland" Shelby Mustangs. This lets Alabama Section founder Jim Roberts have a fair chance in his 1600cc Lotus 47 in the under 2 liter GT class.

They do, however have an entire race group of 1970-85 Formula One cars. These are the cars you saw in Ron Howard's film Rush. The Niki Lauda Ferrari and the Mario Andretti Lotus, as well as the Hunt McLaren and the Mansel Williams typically race each other just as hard as they did in the film. There will probably be more of these cars at Barber than what you would see at the F-1 race in Austin or the Indy Car race at Barber.

The car corral arrangements and tickets are similar to the Indy car races, but the added bonus for MBCA members is that Jim will welcome you to his paddock area. You can experience firsthand the immense amount of effort that goes into getting a historic race car to and on the track. The experience is priceless.

Go to [www.barbermotorsports.com](http://www.barbermotorsports.com) or contact Jim Roberts at [jertoosaver@gmail.com](mailto:jertoosaver@gmail.com).

## EuroBrit Car Show

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June 6th, 9am  
Dublin Park, Madison, AL

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Dublin Park in Madison is the site of the traditional North Alabama car show. Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville will be the lead sponsor this year, so your complimentary t-shirt will not only have a German flag but also a 3 pointed star.

This will also allow us to award a few MBCA trophies as well as the traditional ones.

Mason Beale, Chad Stevens, and Shannon Gant have been involved in the planning.

While they don't require early registration we would like to know how many and what models of Mercedes-Benz cars to expect. Please respond with your name and the car you are bringing to Mason Beale at [masonbeale@msn.com](mailto:masonbeale@msn.com).

Mason will also have the latest details on the event.

For the last couple of years Mercedes -Benz has been the largest single marque, and our number have grown each year. Let's keep the trend going!

## Pensacola European Car Show

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June 6th, 9am  
Naval Air Museum, Pensacola, FL

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Yes, this is the same day as the EuroBrit Car Show in Madison, but it is 350 miles away. We should have enough members from Montgomery south to support this traditional event as well.

This year, Bill Moseley of the Austin Healey Club is the chairman of this well-established traditional event. Unlike the one in Huntsville, this is an informal non-judged car show at the Naval Air Museum. Just follow Blue Angel Blvd through the gate of the naval base.

We will plan to have lunch in the Tiki Bar which is the Officers' Club that was moved here from the closed base in the Philippines. It has been embellished by every squadron that was based there from the 1920's until the end of the Cold War. The food is good, too!

If you are far enough away that you need to spend a night, I have found that "Cottages on the Green" ([www.cottagesonthegreen.com](http://www.cottagesonthegreen.com)) is near Perdido Key and the entrance to the National Seashore and is about 10 minutes away. The prices are reasonable, the rooms are clean, the breakfast is great, and they have Formula One on the room T.V's.

Again, please let us know you are attending and which car you are bringing to [jertoosaver@gmail.com](mailto:jertoosaver@gmail.com)

# Coming events

## Tech Session at Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham

July 18

This new dealership welcomes MBCA with a program on getting the most out of the electronic control, safety navigation, and communication aids on recent Mercedes-Benz models.

There are also some great new models you probably have not seen yet including the new AMG GT, the GLE coupe, and its AMG version along with the new C63 AMG with the engine from the GT.

We will start with breakfast at Klingler's German Bakery at 7:30

After learning and drooling we will be ready for lunch at Jim N' Nicks next door

Please RSVP and let us know you will be joining us and how many you will be bringing for breakfast, lunch and the tech session at [jertoosaver@gmail.com](mailto:jertoosaver@gmail.com)

## Upcoming National & Regional Events

### StarTech 2015 - June 12-13

Cincinnati, Ohio

### Advanced Driving Skills (Virginia Section) - June 27

NCCAR Garysburg, NC

Contact Don LaBar - [dlabelar3@verizon.net](mailto:dlabelar3@verizon.net)

*This is a bargain (\$100 for MBCA members) for a full day of instruction on a very safe track*

### Concours d'elegance (Tarheel Section) - June 27

Rock Barn Country Club, Hickory, NC

Contact Randy Varner - [randalvarner@yahoo.com](mailto:randalvarner@yahoo.com)

*This is a new concours in a striking setting*

### Summer Picnic, Concours, Tech (Greater Washington Section) - July 12

Patonic, MD

Contact Katie Gleeson - [ktclk28@yahoo.com](mailto:ktclk28@yahoo.com)

*The popular traditional event is enhanced by seminars on maintenance and restoration of Classic Mercedes-Benz models by Ulrich Schumann and Pierre Hedary.*

### National Board Meeting (Minuteman Section) - Nov 12-13

## Hold the Date

### Concours Judging School and Certification

August 8

Bud's Benz, Douglasville, GA

This event will demystify the MBCA judging process to a simplified, standardized, fair way to rate all Mercedes-Benz vehicles. This is essential, if you want to show your car, and it will teach you how to prepare your car to be a winner. You will learn how to determine which parts are the ones that Mercedes-Benz uses in crafting these cars.

National concours chair, Pete Lesler will be the primary speaker.

Mainly you will learn that a car does not have to be perfect to be a winner, as bonus points for years and mileage count for more than what is lost due to use.

If your car has incorrect parts, you will learn which need to be replaced with the correct ones.

We will give you registration material as soon as plans are finalized.

## Car Show with Alabama Veterans Celebration

August 27-28

Tuscaloosa, AL

We have been invited to coordinate the limited attendance car show at the Tuscaloosa Municipal Complex. MBUSI is the principal sponsor, so we want to support them with a large number of our members' cars. This is not a judged concours, but, if you would like to practice the process we will help coach you on this.

There are several nice restaurants in the immediate area, and there will be a festival area in the park with the cars around it on pavement.

We will try to combine this with a factory tour on the Friday before the Saturday event.



**STARTECH 2015**  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

**StarTech 2015** is proud to announce it is being held in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 13-15. Like Mercedes, Cincinnati has a rich German heritage, and we hope to showcase that for the attendees at MBCA's biggest event of the year. We will present great technical lectures, and many learning experiences you will only receive at this event!

We will kick things off by hosting a Welcome Party sponsored by MBUSA at the Great American Ball Park's Mercedes Benz Diamond Club on Friday night. The Cincinnati Reds were the first professional Major league Baseball team, so it is only fitting we paired this venue with fans of the first automobile. We will have a great time in one of the newest ballparks to celebrate the kickoff of StarTech 2015.

We have partnered with the DoubleTree by Hilton Cincinnati Airport as our host hotel, and also the locations of the Saturday Technical Sessions and lectures. We have been given a special rate so book your hotel rooms by going to their website ([Click Here](#)) Rooms are \$110 a night.

We have speakers such as Pete Lesler, Tom Hansen, Joe Bernardi, Ted Gottfried, Pierre Hedary, Mary Nohr, Rick Drewrey, and many more. Topics will include the history of German automotive industry, silver star preservation, the classic center, insurance, what to look for in a concours level vehicle. and many more. To see a full list of speakers and topics please visit the StarTech website at <http://startech2015.mbca.org/>

Registration is open and can be found on the StarTech website, or by going here (<https://squareup.com/market/StarTech2015>). The full technical weekend costs \$225, and the social Registration is \$130.

For those of you not interested in the full weekend, we also have 4 offsite events that showcase Cincinnati and its many gems. These can be found on the StarTech website by going here ([Click Here](#)). Our off-site events are highlighted by the Queen City Underground tour. This tour has been rated a top 5 walking tour in the country, and doesn't disappoint. This is a must see if you come to Cincinnati!

Saturday night we are planning a wonderful reception with great food, wonderful company, and possibly a keynote speaker from MBUSA.

As you can see StarTech 2015 has something for everyone, the only thing we will be missing is you. [REGISTER TODAY!](#)

Any questions, please email Peter Emslander at [MBCAStarTech2015@gmail.com](mailto:MBCAStarTech2015@gmail.com). For a Paper registration or to pay by check please call David or Kimberly Hagood at [513.404.8183](tel:513.404.8183).

## Thank You, Loyal Member(s)

Frederick Bryan  
Molton, FL

Tom Patterson  
Pensacola, FL

Rhiannon Gage  
Birmingham, AL

Samuel Powers  
Madison, AL

Richard Goodwin  
Madison, AL

Don Roberson  
Hoover, AL

Shannon Harris  
Fairhope, AL

Kenneth Smoot  
Navarre, FL

Lowell Kelly  
Huntsville, AL

Charles Stratton  
Tallahassee, FL

Dave Ketchen  
Opelika, AL

Michael Wright  
Birmingham, AL

## Welcome, New Member(s)

Lee Clark  
Birmingham, AL

Dustin Rainey  
Tuscaloosa, AL

Mason Ellenberger  
Hoover, AL

Terri Ritchie  
Tuscaloosa, AL

William James  
Huntsville, AL

Donald Wright  
Birmingham, AL

Felyicia Jerald  
Tuscaloosa, AL

Daniel Zirbes  
Fairhope, AL

Mark Metzger  
Scottsboro, AL

Martin Owen  
Shalimar, FL

## Cruise-ins and Gatherings

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 well 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.

# *Making the Right Call*

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*“For over 30 years,  
I’ve owned and put  
my family’s safety in  
the Mercedes-Benz  
product...”*

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**Mercedes-Benz**  
of Birmingham

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading "Al Adams", is positioned over the bottom right of the man's portrait.

I saw my first Mercedes-Benz when I was 7 years old walking out of church one Sunday and said, “I’m going to have a car like that someday.” Then working in my father’s service station at age 11, you always knew the most popular car, you always were interested in having the best automobile. And in 1981, when I was coaching at the Naval Academy, I bought my first Mercedes-Benz.

Ever since then, for over 30 years, we’ve owned and I’ve placed my family’s safety in the Mercedes-Benz product. I have a tremendous appreciation for high standards of excellence and now, having the opportunity to be in the automobile business, I can’t think of a better company to partner with than Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham.





**Mercedes-Benz of  
Birmingham** [mbbhm.com](http://mbbhm.com)



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of Birmingham**

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***Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham Service Department***

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# Event Recap

## Amelia Island

March 13-15  
Event Planner - Jim Roberts

Alabama Section Members David Sheppard, Liz and Don Roberson, and Dodie and Jim Roberts were joined by 30 other MBCA enthusiasts Friday night and 125 Saturday night for our MBCA dinners. This also included the MBCA National Secretary Cliff Reyle, Directors Jim Luikens, Steve Ross, Pierre Hedary, and Jim Roberts, Past President Pete Lesler, and Star editor Gary Anderson. Nice turnout for only 2 weeks for planning.

Dodie's 1985 380SL was awarded best original paint over 25 years old at the Saturday morning Cars and Coffee.

The first 300 SL was there along with the W196 1955 British Grand Prix winner and the SLR driven to victory in the 1955 Millie Miglia by Sir Sterling Moss who was also there.

The auctions saw a 113 280 SL sell for \$200,000, so the tide continues to rise.

If you have never attended Amelia Island, be sure to start planning for next year.



*Early arrivals for Cars & Coffee  
Dodie Roberts' 380 SL on front right*

## The World Comes to Alabama Section

By Jim Roberts



*Elisabeth and Fred Smit's 1957 220S and its camping trailer pause in Birmingham on their third visit to Alabama Section.*

Mercedes-Benz Club New Zealand members Elisabeth and Fred Smits have spent significant travel time of their 5 year around the world drive in their 1957 Mercedes-Benz 220S in the Alabama Section:



Before Christmas they crossed the northwest corner of Alabama on the Natchez Trace. A chance meeting with Mississippi Section President Mike Marsh at the Tupelo Auto Museum resulted in a 3 week stay in Jackson, MS with Mike while having the pinion replaced.

They continued south to New Orleans and then stopped in Pensacola to see the Naval Air Museum, the unique white beaches of the Emerald Coast, and the Tallahassee Automobile Museum.

After the Amelia Island concours d'elegence they drove to Tuscaloosa, AL where they spent the week with Alabama Section Charter Member, Heinz Neunzig who had arranged for a few Alabama Section members to join them on a special tour of the MBUSI factory. This was the first of several Mercedes-Benz factories they will visit on their 90,000 mile driving adventure.

Alabama Section turned out in force to see a fantastic presentation of their decision making process on which car and which camping trailer to use. The impressive performance and durability of the 220S "Ponton" made the choice very logical to tow the sturdy and ingenious "Zambezi" compact camping trailer. The sound original car was restored but retained its original specifications with the exception of additional (useless) mirrors for France, light upgrades, and an improved cooling system. Since it is an original New Zealand market car, the steering is on the right.

Due to the trailer's weight, and in deference to the wonderful restored car's age, they cruise at about 50 mph. This has paid off with no stone chips on the immaculate black nose in 17,000 miles so far. They will ultimately drive well over 22,000 miles in the U.S., and Canada before entering Mexico and then drive all the way to the Panama Canal before shipment to Columbia and then drive all the way down the west coast of South America before crossing to Argentina, and then ship to Europe.

They also recounted some of the U.S. part of the trip. They had visited a couple of places that even I had not, but most brought back pleasant memories.



*L to R: William & Herta Powers, Fred & Elisabeth Smits, and Skipper Colin along with the Smits 1957 220S at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville*



*William Powers explains the precursor of today's Mercedes-Benz "ESP" stability control that he helped design for the Apollo project.*

Elisabeth and Fred became celebrities at the Talladega and Barber Museums with George Barber insisting that they tour the track and have a "photo shoot" on Saturday.

On Saturday, a few of us joined Alabama Section member William Powers as he led a personal tour of the U.S. Space and Rocket Museum. William was on Dr. Werner von Braun's Apollo Mission that put astronauts on the moon from 1969-74.

I handed them off to my friend and dental school classmate John DeShazo in Huntsville who had sailed his own 31 foot sloop around the world.

They set off from there for Little River Canyon, Chattanooga (Coker Museum, Wrecker Recovery Museum), the Tail of The Dragon, Wheels through Time Museum, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Washington, DC, and the AACA Museum in Hershey, PA where the Keystone Section will pick them up.

Güte Fahrt (Bon Voyage) Elisabeth and Fred.

# In der Presse

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## Alabama Auto Production Nears 1,000,000 in 2014

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Of the 997,270 vehicles produced in Alabama in 2014, 232,662 were built by Mercedes-Benz US International with the new C-Class adding to the numbers. It has only recently reached full production as demand far exceeds production which should reach 300,000 this year in the 3 shifts per day.

In an attempt to increase production, MBUSI has cancelled the traditional summer break and transferred R-Class production to an idle GM Hummer factory in Indiana. They are also hiring an additional 200+ team members to increase production more.

Mercedes-Benz distanced its lead over BMW as the top selling luxury brand in 2014 with Lexus 3rd, Audi 4th, and Cadillac a distant 5th. About half the Mercedes-Benz passenger vehicles sold in North America are produced in Alabama, and almost half of the SUV production is exported.

About 2/3 of the land at MBUSI is being used at this time, so there is ample room for expansion.

Mercedes-Benz leadership indicates other models will be joining those in production in Alabama in the not so distant future.

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## A Southeastern Focus for Mercedes-Benz

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So, with this latest announcement and the impending move of MBUSA from New Jersey to Atlanta we have Mercedes-Benz with 6700 direct employees aligned along I-20 from Birmingham /Tuscaloosa-Atlanta-Charleston, all in our MBCA Eastern Region.

By comparison the headquarters, truck, and engine production in Stuttgart/ Untertürkheim and the assembly works in Sindelfingen near Stuttgart employ about 40,000 people.

The MBUSI factory in Alabama is the third largest, trailing only the two in Stuttgart. Since the C & E class share significant platform structure. We can anticipate even more models to be built at MBUSI.

## GLE Coupe Begins Fulls Production at MBUSI

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Close on the heels of full production of the new C-Class, the new GLE coupe derived from the ML is now in production.

Since this new model will not be for sale in dealers until the summer, we were not allowed into the SUV lines on our March factory tour. We had seen it at the Brand Immersion Center reopening in February.

It is amazingly different, lower, and more sporting looking than the ML. It probably previews the ML facelift which will be called GLE.



*February Grand ReOpening  
L to R: Liz Roberson, Ken Champlin, Jim Roberts, Mason Beale, and the new GLE coupe.*

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## Sprinter Van Factory in South Carolina

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In early March Mercedes-Benz announced a true factory for the Sprinter Vans would be built near Charleston, SC. These popular vehicles which have redefined what a van should be (note that the new Ford and Dodge vans are very similar) have been built in Germany, partially disassembled, and then reassembled near Charleston to avoid the 25% import duty on trucks.

Starting in 2016 they will be assembled in U.S. This factory will employ about 1,500 team members vs. the 4,100 + in Alabama.

Undoubtedly many of the Alabama suppliers will also be included in the Sprinter and Maxis production.

### Monthly Membership Meeting

Where: Logan's Roadhouse  
100 Resource Center Pkwy  
Birmingham, AL 35242  
205-981-9950

When: 3rd Tuesday of every month

Time: 6:30pm dinner, 7pm meeting

Logan's is on the right if you are headed eastbound on US280 in between I-459 and Valleydale Rd.

### Huntsville Membership Meeting

Where: Hildegard's German Cuisine  
2357 Whitesburg Dr.  
256-512-9776

When: 4th Wednesday of even numbered months

Time: 6:30pm

Directions from I-565 towards Huntsville: Take S. Memorial Parkway (exit 19A), turn left on Governors Drive, turn right on Whitesburg Drive. Hildegard's is approximately 1/2 mile on left at the corner of Bob Wallace and Whitesburg Dr.



Mercedes-Benz Club of America  
Alabama Section  
2301 Arlington Ave S.  
Suite 200  
Birmingham, AL 35205