



Das Heimatblatt

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

January • 2016

Inside this Issue...

Calendar of Events	2
Coming Events	3-5
Event Recap	8-10
Club News	10
In Der Presse	11

Sternblick (View through the Star)

Mason Beale
President, Alabama Section MBCA

The Alabama Section has been busy this Fall. Spring events are also planned to continue the momentum for member enjoyment.

In December we initiated our 10 year anniversary celebration during the Holiday Party at The Club. Program featured a history of the Alabama Section's beginning with several founding members in attendance. Members enjoyed delicious food and amazing views on a cloudless day.

In January we led our annual Winterfahrt for an enjoyable drive. The route included a stop at the MBUSI Brand Immersion Center where host Terri Richey shared insight into the various areas of the Center, provided a Mercedes-Benz video regarding new car technology, and opened the Gift Shop for Club priced purchases. Joining the Winterfahrt were members from Porsche, Audi, and BMW Clubs who expressed pleasant surprise with the contents of the Center and Gift Shop. The Winterfahrt continued to the Bright Star restaurant for a delicious lunch.

The Board has scheduled several excellent Spring activities. Events include Tech Session (March 19), Car Corral at Barber's Indy Race (April 22-23), Car Corral at Barber's Historics Race (May 21-22), and Euro-Brit Car Show (June 4). Other events are being planned during this timeframe. E-mail "blasts" will be sent as friendly event reminders.

There are vacant Board Member positions still available. If you would like to serve in this capacity, let any officer know of your interest.

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

Upcoming Event Spotlight

Pensacola to Atmore Drive

February 6th

Registration 10-11:15am

See page 3 for event details

ALABAMA & FLORIDA PANHANDLE

Schedule Of EVENTS

February

- 6 Pensacola-Atmore Drive & Lunch - Page 3
16 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
17 "For the Love of Lotus" Barber Museum - Page 3
23 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's Biergarten

March

- 11-13 Amelia Island Concours d'elegance - Page 3-4
15 Birmingham Stammtisch - Hickory Tavern
19 Ask Klink - Page 4

April

- 19 Birmingham Stammtisch - Hickory Tavern
22-24 Indy Car at Barber with Car Corral - Page 4
26 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's Biergarten
29-30 Pinehurst Concours - Eastern Region Event
Pinehurst, NC
30-1 HPDE with PCA at Barber

May

- 17 Birmingham Stammtisch - Hickory Tavern
20-22 Barber Historic Races with Car Corral - Page 4

June

- 4 EuroBrit Car Show - Huntsville
4 Euro Car Show - Pensacola
4-5 Advanced Driving Skills: NCCAR Track-
Garysburg, NC -- Eastern Region Event
21 Birmingham Stammtisch - Hickory Tavern
28 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's Biergarten

July

- 19 Birmingham Stammtisch - Hickory Tavern

August

- 3-6 StarFest2016 Thompson, CT
16 Birmingham Stammtisch - Hickory Tavern
23 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's Biergarten

Mark Your Calendar

StarFest © 2018 - May 17-22, 2018
Birmingham, Vance, Talladega

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

Executive Board

President MASON BEALE 205.837.7003 masonbeale@msn.com	Vice President KEN CHAMPLIN 205.995.0237 homescan@bellsouth.net
Treasurer BOB MELTON 205.621.1367 bmelton227@aol.com	Secretary DODIE ROBERTS 205.933.9333 jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

Board of Directors

Member-at-Large JACK SCHILLECI 205.540.5338 avecaesar@bellsouth.net	Member-at-Large CHAD STEVENS 256.426.1548 rotodome@gmail.com
Member-at-Large CAROL WADLEY 205.529.5400 hwadley@bellsouth.net	Membership/ Reiseführer JIM ROBERTS 205.933.9333 jertoosaver@gmail.com

Eastern Region Director
JIM ROBERTS
205.933.9333
jertoosaver@gmail.com

das Heimatblatt

EDITOR: RHIANNON GAGE
205.933.9333
jertoosaver@gmail.com

das Heimatblatt is published bi-monthly by the Alabama Section, Mercedes-Benz Club of America, Inc. Copy deadline: 10th of the month preceding the month of issue.

ABOUT OUR ADVERTISERS: We hope you will support our advertisers. No inference, however, should be made that advertising in **das Heimatblatt** implies approval of their products or services by the Club, its Officers or members, or by Mercedes-Benz-USA Inc. or Daimler AG.

For more information on advertising rates please e-mail jertoosaver@bellsouth.net or call 205.933.9333

Coming events

Pensacola to Atmore Drive with Lunch in Atmore

February 6

This has become a great tradition in the Pensacola area. Several car clubs get together to shake off the winter doldrums.

This is a chance for our MCBA members in the southern part of the section to get to know each other. Those who wish may want to stay after lunch to go over some plans for activities.

Lunch will be at David's Catfish House, Atmore, Alabama. David's catfish is second to none and will be prepared to handle the crowd. Last year there were 128 cars from 22 clubs.

Our drive will take us on 50+ miles of well-paved "Roads Less Traveled". Printed course instructions will be provided after you register.

Registration will take place from 10-11:15am at Nine-Mile Plaza (312 E Nine Mile Rd, Pensacola, FL 32514-2737).

Here are directions for those from Montgomery South as well as from Tallahassee or Mobile:

From Mobile & Tallahassee via I-10:

- Exit 10B - North on US 29 N (Pensacola Blvd) toward Cantonment
- 2.4 mi Right on US90 Alt/ West 9 Mile Road
- 1.2 mi Make a U-turn at Louise Ave (no left into the parking area)
- 0.1 mi Pull in this lot on the right (where Burger King used to be)

From I-65 coming from Montgomery:

- Exit 69 (AI-113) toward Flomaton/ Wallace
- 0.34 mi Turn left onto AI-113/County Hwy 17/ Barnett Hwy
- 13.6 mi Turn right onto Hwy 31/US 31 S/ US 29 S/ AL 113
- 1.15 mi Turn left onto Sidney Manning Blvd/ US 29/ AL 113. Continue & cross into Florida
- 31.6 mi Keep right at fork to go on US 29 S/ FL 95
- 4.01 mi Take the ramp toward Mobile-Tallahassee (US 90 alt)
- 0.17 mi Turn left onto W Nine Mile Rd/US 90 Alt
- 1.06 mi Make a u-turn at Louise Ave (no left into Parking area) Pull in the lot on the right (where Burger King used to be)

"For the Love of Lotus" at Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum

February 17
6:30-7:30pm

The Barber Museum will update progress on the Paul Newman/Bobby Carradine Lotus Esprit that they raced in the SCCA World Challenge series in the 1990's. This makes an interesting comparison with the cars racing in the current World Challenge at the Indy car races.

There is no charge for museum members, but others are \$25.

Contact Jmoody@barbermuseum.org for more information.

Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

March 11-13

This event has grown in stature with the number and quality of the invited cars second only to Pebble Beach. If you love great cars, this should be an annual event for you.

This is the third year that MBCA has been invited to participate in the Saturday morning Cars and Coffee informal car show.



2015 Cars & Coffee

Coming events

Because so many MBCA members from as far away as San Diego attend this event we have arranged for restaurants on both Friday and Saturday Night.

Friday night, 6:30pm: *The Kingsland Millhouse 1215 E King Ave Kingsland, GA 31548 (912) 576-4349*

Located off of I-95- exit 3 just west on GA 40 (at the south-bend exit ramp)

Saturday night, 6pm: *The Crab Trap: 31 North 2nd Street, Fernandina Beach, Amelia Island, FL 32034 (904) 261-4749*

From the Ritz Carlton:

Head northwest on Amelia Island Pkwy
toward Regatta Dr 2.0 mi
Keep right to continue toward S 14th St 151 ft
Slight right onto S 14th St 3.5 mi
Turn left onto Atlantic Ave 0.4 mi
Continue straight onto Centre St 0.3 mi
Turn right onto N 2nd St
Destination will be on the left

Please contact jertoosaver@gmail.com to let us know you are attending. My cell # is 205-529-0071 – Jim Roberts

“Ask Klink”

March 19

Mercedes-Benz Birmingham’s David Kalinkiewicz aka “Klink” has agreed to another “tech session” at M-B Birmingham. He will demonstrate a few things we need to know and then respond to questions. David has an encyclopedic knowledge, of Mercedes-Benz, and he presents it in an entertaining way.

We will have lunch at Jim N’ Nicks next door, so park in their lot. Parking is extremely tight at M-B Bham. If your car needs service, please try to schedule it on Sat, 19 Mar. We want the dealership to know that our members support them.

Please let us know you will be attending, so both the dealership and the restaurant can prepare.

Please send your attendance response and your questions for “Klink” to jertoosaver@gmail.com

Indy Cars and World Challenge at Barber w/ Car Corral

April 22-24

The Indy cars are the top US series in performance. Their speeds and their proximity to you at Barber are thrilling. But the Mercedes-Benz focus is in Formula One.

Don’t despair, however, as there will be Mercedes AMG SLS and GT’s in the “World Challenge” sports car races that take place on Saturday and Sunday. They do well competing against Ferrari, Audi, Porsche, Corvette, Ford GT, and Cadillac all with larger engines or less weight. The AMG’s have to restrict the engines to reduce power. Several of the others are factory teams.

For information on tickets and the car corral go to barbermotorsports.com

When you buy your tickets, tell them you are with the Mercedes-Benz Club America for a car corral count.

Barber Historic Car Races and Club Events

May 20-22

This year there will be no upcharge for the car corral. There will also be all sorts of parts, cars, and memorabilia vendors.

The traditional “rallye” from the track to Mt. Brook Village will probably be pushed back to 5pm, and MBCA cars are invited. We will plan a gathering at my paddock area. I will be driving the red/gold/white Lotus 47 (Europa). My paddock will be flying German and British flags as well as Mercedes-Benz.

For those who prefer to see classic cars that don’t move, the Mt. Brook Driving Club is planning an invitational Concours d’Elegance at the Botanical Gardens on Sun, 22 May. These guys could fill the field from their own garages. Details will follow.

Welcome, New Member(s)

Thurston Bradley
Quincy, FL

Mary Kosis
Madison, AL

Wayne Bucher
Birmingham, AL

Tony Koszarsky
Madison, AL

Barbara Butler
Destin, FL

Raymond Matthews
Webb, AL

David Church
Birmingham, AL

Steven Wagner
Flowood, MS

Rebecca Falcon
Huntsville, AL

Thank You, Loyal Member(s)

George Acker
Mathis, TX

Christopher Robin
Tallahassee, FL

Donald Collette
Hanceville, AL

Darius Slusher
Salem, AL

Deborah Heroman
Pensacola, FL

George Smith
Birmingham, AL

Larry Hodson
Panama City, FL

Robert Steber
Birmingham, AL

Lawrence Pugh
Rosemary Beach, FL

Robert Rausch
Florence, AL

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.

This Year's Class is Ready to Take The Field.

No matter what position
you need filled, we have a
champion suited up and ready to go.



*"For over 30
years now, I've
owned and put
my family's
safety in the
Mercedes-Benz
product."*



Mercedes-Benz
of Birmingham

1800 Montgomery
Highway Hoover, AL
35244

Call Now: 205-403-5179



Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham

mbbhm.com



**We know them inside and out.
Fast, friendly service.
Always at your convenience.**



10% Off Any Service!



**Mercedes-Benz
of Birmingham**

Service Department Hours

Monday - Friday: 7am-6pm

Saturday: 8am-4pm | Sunday: Closed

Call to Schedule Service

Service Direct: 205.402.2290

Parts Direct: 205.989.2801

24-Hour Roadside Assistance

800.367.6372

Online Service Appointment

mbbhm.com/schedule

NOW OPEN FOR SATURDAY SERVICE 8:00AM-4:00PM

Offers only available to Mercedes-Benz Car Club Members. Must present membership card at time of service.

Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham Service Department

1800 MONTGOMERY HIGHWAY BIRMINGHAM, AL 35244 | 205-985-4200 | TOLL FREE: 800-476-0659

Event Recap

10th Anniversary Celebration

It's hard to believe that it has already been ten years since Alabama Section was formed. I had asked the previous region directors twice before MBUSA said they wanted a section near the factory. The new region director, Len Sokoloff helped us canvas the Peachtree Section members in North Alabama and the northern part of Emerald Coast section. All 100 said they would like to have a section in Alabama and would support its activities. In those days 7 members' signatures were required to petition for section formation. We submitted 47.

Thirty-Six attended the celebration of receiving our charter in late October of 2005 at the Birmingham Mercedes-Benz dealer that had been so active in helping fund the section. General Manager Johnny Walker served as our first Treasurer.

As an aside, I had proposed the name "Heimat" (home section), because it was the home of Mercedes-Benz US International. I also knew that Emerald Coast Section was struggling. When Emerald Coast Section ran out of anyone willing to serve as President two years later, most of their members in Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi were placed in Alabama Section. So now you Floridians understand why you are members of the Alabama Section.

After an initial surge of factory opening celebration in 1998, MBUSI had been closed to visitors since 2001. One of our first projects was to arrange an MBCA tour in January of 2006. This overwhelmed the staff with 78 in attendance! Alabama Section has hosted one or two visits to the MBUSI Factory every year except 2008 when the great recession forced closure for two months. The sad fact is that we must stage an event that draws participants from several other sections to have enough participation to ask the factory for special tours. They have responded by training four Alabama Section members to be tour guides. We also help them with special events.

These regional events are called "Heimatfest" (The Home Festival) which has had different themes and different times each year, but as always included a tour of MBUSI. These gave Alabama Section such recognition that this has become a "traditional" MBCA event.



Brenda Flowers, Dodie Roberts, Donna Kalinkiewicz at tenth anniversary celebration



Alabama Section at tenth anniversary celebration

Through the entire ten years, Alabama Section has staged at least one and usually two events each month ranging from purely social "Stammtisch" events in Birmingham and Huntsville, (and soon near the Gulf Coast) to MBCA concours, to informal car shows, to drives on little traveled roads to interesting sights, to tech sessions at several dealers & independent facilities, the regional collision center, to the factory itself. We have also staged defensive driving, Safe Drivers-Safe Families, and even full track driving events at both Barber Motorsports Park and Talladega Superspeedway.

Alabama Section has ascended to a position of leadership among the car clubs in Birmingham and Huntsville with the Gulf Coast next.

After multiple requests from national leaders, Alabama Section

Event Recap

hosted the MBCA national event for 2013: StarTech. Of course, there were 2 1/2 years of planning plus attendance of the two previous StarTech events to learn what was acceptable. Several of our members and Eastern Region Director Bill Hopper in a great team building experience worked very hard to stage the largest StarTech event ever at 300 participants. We managed to have all of them tour the factory over two days. They also visited the US Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville. The dealers in Birmingham, Huntsville, and Tuscaloosa sponsored the events, and those in Biloxi, Mobile, and Dothan provided complimentary service and clean-up for our guests from all over North America, Germany, and the Middle East.

Before the event we heard "I want to see the factory, but why did they build it in Alabama of all places?". After Star Tech 2013 we heard "When are you going to do this again? I want to drive the track next time."

When we volunteered to host StarTech again in 2017, the MBCA national leaders told us we should host StarFest© in 2018. The National Board approved unanimously in Nov 2015. Preliminary plans are already underway hotel and track site visits as well as preliminary discussions with MBUSI as we know all 400+ will want to visit the factory.

There is a lot still to be done. This is the time to step up and join the steering committee. It is a great experience. What a way to connect the tenth anniversary of the Alabama Section!



Alabama Section member George Smith, Vice President Ken Champlin, Eastern Region Director Jim Roberts and MBUSI's Terri Ritchie and others at tenth anniversary celebration

Winterfahrt

The 2015 edition of Winterfahrt (Winter Drive), Alabama Section's challenge to the winter weather had the forecast of thunderstorms.

As it turned out there was just enough mist to dampen the pavement and add a bit more challenge to the serpentine roads. The weather did serve to deter the average and inept drivers of other cars as we drove the twisting, rising, plunging roads south, east and west of Birmingham with very little traffic.



Some members' cars at our stop at MBUSI during the 2016 Winterfahrt drive.

Starting at the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum generously opened for us by Lee Clark we started with a mixture of Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, and Audi club members. We had no British cars this year. We allow club members whose European cars are not serviceable to follow in their Asian or domestic brands. This year three of the Porsche club members were forced to drive BMW's. For the first time, Mercedes-Benz outnumbered Porsche, and all participants drove German cars.



One of the many byways encountered during Winterfahrt 2016

Event Recap

The drive took us to the Mercedes-Benz US International Factory where Alabama section MBCA member Terri Ritchie made arrangements to allow us to visit the Brand Immersion Center which is not open to the public on Saturdays. This crowd congregated in the AMG and Racing section. Even the Porsche club guys were impressed. As usual there was a line in the gift shop. Many thanks to MBUSI for this special visit.

So...after 2 museums and a hundred miles of challenging driving, it was off to Bessemer's "Bright Star" for lunch. The food was delicious – you can see why they have been in the same location with the same ownership for 104 years. The murals were painted in 1904.

As usual, the most fun was meeting new friends and reconnecting with old friends.



From L: Skip Brazeale, Tim & Lynn Heaven (PCA), George Smith & Sheila Bruce (MBCA), and Mike McSwain (ACOH) enjoy lunch at Bright Star

Club News

Stammtisch News

In German this means "The Regulars' Table" or more accurately "the honored friends' table". You will see a silver stand on this table which is prominently visible as you enter the restaurant. One of my proudest accomplishments in German culture was to be invited to join the Stammtisch at the two oldest restaurants (1420 and 1470) in my German hometown of Ulm.

Your MBCA membership grants you and your guests to our Alabama section Stammtisch social events. Presently we hold them monthly in Birmingham and bi-monthly in Huntsville. We are working on establishing these events in the Mobile-Pensacola area as well.

We are moving the Huntsville Stammtisch to the fourth Tuesday of the even numbered months due to schedule conflicts for several active members.

We are also moving the Huntsville location to: Hildegard's Biergarten (1010 Heathland Dr)

From I-565: Take Research Park Blvd (Hwy 255) North, exit University Drive (Hwy 72) East, make a Left (U-turn) in front of Landers McLarty Subaru, and an immediate Right on Heathland Drive (Biergarten located behind Subaru dealership)

Remember: This will take effect with the February event Tuesday, 23 Feb at 6:30pm.

Birmingham Stammtisch is moving to The Hickory Tavern located at Brookwood Village beginning on March 15 at 6:30. The February Stammtisch will meet at Logan's on Hwy 280 at 6:30.

We are also searching for a location convenient for members in Mobile, Pensacola, and the Eastern Shore. Other areas would be the Dothan, Panama City, Tallahassee area as well as Montgomery. We invite you to share your ideas with any of the board members.

In der Presse

Mercedes-Benz Wins SUV Comparison

Car & Driver compared the new GLE coupe with the BMW X6 coupe. The GLE was the 6.3 AMG with 577HP while the BMW was the M version with 575 HP.

Interestingly they compared straight line, corner performance, and lap times on a race course. The BMW was marginally quicker, but the editors gave the Mercedes-Benz GLE the win, because it was significantly more composed on public roads with a more compliant ride. BMW seemed to use the Detroit approach of very wide tires and very stiff suspension to get good smooth pavement grip.

C & D editors failed to grasp the concept of an SUV coupe. When I speak with our MBCA members in Colorado, 70% tell me they have an ML or GL, so I'm sure some would want a more stylish, better handling version

Car & Driver also liked the new C450 AMG. This MBUSI built C-class has more boost in its 3 liter V-6 to yield 367 HP vs. the C63 AMG's 520 HP 5.5 liter V-8. It gets the AMG brakes (they look like large pizza plates on the assembly line) and suspension.

The C & D editors felt this was a nice balance of performance and much better fuel economy and significantly lower costs than the C63.



2016 Mercedes Benz GLE Coupe
Photo: Jonathon Ramsey via autoblog.com

Mercedes-Benz Helps Alabama Top 1 Million

Alabama auto factories produced 1,033,000 vehicles in 2015. Mercedes-Benz with the new C-class in full production topped its 300,000 design capacity. Honda and Hyundai were down due to model changeovers. They are each capable of producing over 400,000 vehicles a year.

Mercedes-Benz has two factories in Alabama that share some processes. Factory one builds the C-class sedans (The coupes come from Germany and we don't get the wagons). Factory two builds the GLE (Previously ML), GLE Coupe, and the GLS (Previously GL).

C-Class Equals Porsche Carrera

The Feb 2016 issue of Automobile magazine features a comparison in Europe of the new C63 AMG coupe and the new Porsche Carrera S.

Both cars were great and had almost equal performance with the Porsche marginally better in race conditions and the C63 significantly roomier, more comfortable, and more entertaining to drive.

The significant difference was that the Porsche costs over \$25,000 more than the C63. For a price to price comparison the AMG GT would have been more appropriate. For a C-class to match Porsche's premier rear engine 911 is phenomenal.

In the future Porschephiles will rue Porsche's decision to produce the four door Panamera. It appears that was the unacceptable assault on Mercedes-Benz territory.

We, however, get to enjoy purpose built true sports cars and sedan based true high performance cars with the three pointed star. We can also enjoy ultimate luxury, fantastic economy with diesels as well as CLA and Smart, and then haul them, if we wish, inside a Sprinter.

Mercedes-Benz Tops Sales

Mercedes-Benz U.S. Sales rose 4% in 2015 to reach a record 380,461. This gave Mercedes-Benz a wide margin over BMW, Lexus, Audi, and Cadillac.

Birmingham Membership Meeting

Where: Hickory Tavern at Brookwood Village

When: 3rd Tuesday of every month **beginning in March**

Time: 6:30pm dinner, 7pm meeting

From 280: Take Exit Ala 149 (Homewood/ Mt Brook).
Turn left onto Lakeshore Pkwy/ Shades Creek Pkwy.
Hickory Tavern is located in the perimeter of
Brookwood Mall

Huntsville Membership Meeting

Where: Hildegard's Biergarten - 1010 Heathland Drive
(just off University Drive) Huntsville, AL 35816

When: 4th Tuesday of even numbered months

Time: 6:30pm

From I-565: Take Research Park Blvd (Hwy 255) North,
exit University Drive (Hwy 72) East,
make a Left (U-turn) in front of Landers McLarty Subaru,
and an immediate Right on Heathland Drive
(Biergarten located behind Subaru dealership)



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