



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

April • 2013

Inside this Issue...

Sternblick	1-2
Cakender of Events	3
Coming Events	4-6
Event Recap	8-9
In Der Presse	10

STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

These last two months have been full of excitement as the StarTech 2013 planners have been filling out all the events. We now have a full slate of 20 speakers plus several other department managers from the MBUSI factory that will be addressing our tours. Most of the evening events, lunches, and associate lifestyle activities are well along with their plans.

Felyicia Jerald at MBUSI has pulled together a great team to support this international event. She has even managed to get MBUSI President/CEO Markus Schaefer to address us at the Monday night banquet. MBUSA is supporting StarTech 2013 financially and with vehicles, publicity, and press.

Most gratifying of all is the wonderful support of the Mercedes-Benz Club America's officers especially from National President Steve Dierks and Eastern Regional Director Bill Hopper, national business office Director of Marketing Lisa Juhl and virtually all the other national officers and directors, most of whom will be attending with several presenting programs.

Above all we are humbled but the enthusiastic support of so many of our MBCA members in the USA and Canada including an amazing number of section presidents. Registration is well on the way to a recent record for StarTech.

So now, my fellow Alabama Section members and friends, our challenge is to graciously host all these wonderful people. If you have not yet registered, I urge you to do so right now. The online registration site is in this issue, and we have printed the paper registration and a summary of the schedule for those who prefer a hard copy.

We will need as many as possible to help us with managing the 250-300 we expect to attend. If you have not notified us of your availability to assist, please notify Bob Hinds at bobjanehinds@bellsouth.net or 205-967-5014 or Jim Roberts as jertoosaver@bellsouth.net or 205-933-9333.

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

You don't want to miss this opportunity to attend a national MBCA event that is closer than it will ever be. You really need to experience one of these to appreciate how great they are. You actually get to meet and interact with those you have read and read about. You may be surprised to learn that they are really car guys and especially Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts like you and me. If you are shy or self-conscious about crowds as I am don't worry, you will be among likeminded people who share your passion for the three pointed star. You will almost certainly find other things you have in common. I try to sit at a table with only people I don't know. Interestingly this gets harder and harder at each event, because I get to know more and more!

Of course, StarTech 2013 is not the only event we are planning. Note the articles on upcoming events from the northern most to almost the southernmost parts of the Alabama Section.

The Barber Indy Car race is starting to rival either of the NASCAR Talladega races in attendance and the Alabama Section is prominently involved.

We attended the start of The Great Race in Chattanooga two years ago when our friends from Peachtree Section took second in their class and a 1910 Daimler licensed car won overall. A few years earlier Birmingham was an overnight stop. This year the race ends in Mobile on 30 June. To see these cars ranging from 1900-1969 after they have covered 3000 miles is quite an experience. To have them so close to us over 6-7 years is probably unique in North America.

The finish will most likely be on Dauphin Street in the historic district. We will plan on a festive weekend around Mobile.

We will have other driving and social events in the summer and fall including a return to dramatic Little River Canyon for the striking fall colors and The Club in Birmingham for our holiday party.

If you have ideas of places you enjoy, let us know, so we can share this with our other Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts.

**StarTech 2013 Registration
is now open**

<https://www.regonline.com/mbcastartech2013>

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Coming Events

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April

3-4 - Car Corral at Indy Car/ Grand Am Races

5-7 - Eastern Region Leadership Meeting
Charlotte, NC

16 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

May

18-22 - StarTech 2013

21 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
at StarTech farewell reception
Hilton Perimeter South -Birmingham

June

15-16 - H.P.D.E. at Barber with PCA

19 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

30 - Finish of The Great Race- Mobile

July

16- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

August

20 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

September

18 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

October

15 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

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

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 car 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 together 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 a couple of Mercedes-Benz's and VW'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. In fact, the MOB, INC guys leave this one to drive down US 280. The crowd varies from week to week.

Coming Events

Car Corral at Indy Car Race

April 5-7

Barber has expanded the Continental Sports Car Corral for the Honda Indy Car Grand Prix of Alabama on 5 -7 April. There are not only more spaces, but there will also be more activities with the drivers and team visits as well as prize drawings through the weekend.

The car corral is the strategic location in the entire Barber Motorsports Park complex, since it is between the "fan zone" with its midway type multiple activities and the shaded hillside spectator area towards the end of the curving backstretch with a great view of the daunting "tunnel turn" complex.

Best of all the \$50 on-site parking pass is discounted \$15 to \$35 for all 3 days, if you bring your Mercedes-Benz and purchase your tickets ahead. This is separate from whatever other tickets and passes you have for the race.

See the attached flyer for ordering instructions.

Don't be put off by the term, "Sports car corral". All Mercedes-Benz vehicles, including SUV's and Smarts are welcome.

No, Danica Patrick and Patrick Dempsey will not be here this year, but Simona De Silvestro is in a competitive car this year which she qualified third for the St. Petersburg road course. She ran competitively for the entire race.

There will be lots of action in the two Grand Am races on Friday and Saturday as well as the open wheel single seat races on Sunday. This event has been drawing 80-90,000 spectators, and the car corral fills every year. Just look for the Continental Tire gate to the left after you enter the track. MBCA is between the German flag in the Mercedes-Benz flags.

Honda Indy Grand Prix of AL / Porsche 250 Sports Car Corral

April 5 -7, 2013



Park with your fellow sports car enthusiasts!



- Showcase your favorite vehicle with other Sports Car Clubs in the always popular Car Corral
- Convenient to hillside seating, Fan Zone attractions, merchandise and concessions
- NEW for 2013: Hospitality tent for all Car Corral participants featuring driver meet-and-greets, tech talk, race-related giveaways and more!
- Only \$35 for the weekend! Click [HERE](#) to order yours today!

PLEASE NOTE

- ***You must drive your special interest/club vehicle to the event to park in the Car Corral. No exceptions.***
- ***This offer applies to advance ticket purchase only. Offer will not be available at the gate.***



PORSCHE 250



Coming events

StarTech 2013

May 18-22

Registrations are building at a rate that will make this the most attended StarTech in recent years. The hotel is also filling as fast as we can revise the projected room count.

Our speaker rostrum is complete. There is a summary of speakers and topics on the website. As you can see, many of these are regular contributors to The Star who are nationally recognized experts in their fields. You will note many present and past MBCA leaders.



Billboard approaching MBUSI factory

A large proportion of our present national and section leaders from all over North America will be attending. The Daimler, AG companies, particularly MBUSA (the U.S. marketing arm that sells cars to the dealers) and MBUSI (the Alabama factory that sells cars to MBUSA and the other national distributors around the world) have been crucially supportive to making this StarTech a huge success.

StarTech 2013 Schedule

18th	U.S. Space & Rocket Center Huntsville, AL
19th	Classic Car Motoring, 9-4pm Fultondale, AL
	Touring laps at Barber, 5pm Birmingham, AL
	Opening Reception at Barber, 6-10pm Birmingham, AL
20-21st	MBUSI Factory Tours Vance, AL
	StarTech Seminars at Training Center Vance, AL
20th	Banquet at Hilton ft. Markus Schaefer, 7pm Birmingham, AL
21st	Farewell Reception at Hilton, 6pm Birmingham, AL

In fact, MBUSI President/CEO Markus Schaefer will address our Monday (20 May) night banquet with a leader's inside view of this enormous complex that produces all the ML, GL, and R-Class vehicles for the entire world. If you have not already signed up for this, please do so now. You don't want to miss this historic opportunity.

The opening reception at the beautiful Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum will feature a panel of the Daimler "pioneers" including past President/ CEO Bill Taylor and our own Heinz Neunzig who started arriving in Alabama in 1993 to develop a world class factory on the farmland near the tiny village of Vance, Alabama. Their presentation will be historic, educational, and humorous.

Of course, most of us have visited the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, but how many have been on a tour led by those who helped Dr. Werner von Braun put American astronauts to the moon & back?

Be sure to sign up for the Saturday, 18 May visit to experience this.

The visit to the Mercedes-Benz authorized collision repair facility, Classic Car Motoring, on Sunday, 19 May promises to be a highlight as we learn how they literally remanufacture Mercedes-Benz cars to make repairs nondetectable. They also prepare the Alabama built models for the world auto shows.

You might have joined us for the factory tours before,

Coming events



U.S. Space & Rocket Center
in Huntsville, AL

but these will be more complete as the department leaders and members explain their areas in more depth.

Our StarTech seminars will cover the "tracks" of maintenance, repair, restoration, performance, valuation, and manufacturing. We have never had such complete technical expertise.

If you are not interested in these automotive technical matters, our lifestyle committee has selected everything from specialty pottery making, to garden tours, museum visits, to specialty shopping. There is literally something to interest everyone.

We certainly would like to have every Alabama Section member attend. Indeed, 10% of our membership is helping to stage StarTech 2013.

Details are filling in daily, so check our StarTech 2013 website startech.mbca.org for updates and more information.

Register online at:
<https://www.regonline.com/mbcastartech2013>
or mail in the paper registration on page 8.



MBUSI Factory in Vance, AL

High Performance D.E. at Barber Motorsports Park with PCA

June 15-16

For the Mercedes-Benz driver: has your family asked what you want for father's day? Here is an idea. Our friends with the Porsche Club of America's Alabama Region have graciously allowed us to participate with them in this traditional Father's Day weekend event. This is your chance to safely drive your Mercedes-Benz or AMG as it was designed and engineered to do well. You will have classroom and on track sessions to help you with both the theory and the practice of performance driving, and I try to work with all the Mercedes-Benz drivers that I can. It is amazing how well the Mercedes-Benz cars get around the track. The only problem is that this is so much fun that it can be habit forming.

These events are usually oversubscribed, so you need to register very shortly after registration opens. The time for this one opens at 12 noon on 9 May. You will need to have your driver's license, insurance card, and car registration handy.

Register at www.clubregistration.net

The other requirement is that you have a Snell SN 2005 or later helmet. A motorcycle helmet is not acceptable.

You may also download your tech inspection helmet release, and general release forms from PCA as well at <http://ala.pca.org>

Obviously PCA has more lawyer members than MBCA does!

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THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE DESTINATION.



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StarTech 2013 Registration Form

Hosted by MBCA| Alabama Section, May 18-22, 2013 - Birmingham & Vance, Alabama

**>>> Firm Registration deadline April 30, 2013 <<<<
No Factory Tours Registered after May 10, 2013**

Name(s)
 Primary _____ Associate _____
 Address _____
 MBCA Section _____ MBCA membership # _____
 Phone # _____ Mobile # _____
 EMAIL _____ ** DL/passport # primary _____, associate _____
 State/province/country _____

**** Note Factory Tour registration requires registration with name & drivers license and/or passport # prior to May 10, 2013 to gain access to the MBUSI Factory Tour.**

#	Description	Total
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StarTech Registration Fees: *StarTech 2013 Registration fee (per person) all amounts shown are U.S. dollars*

_____	Early Registration	if submitted/postmarked before March 15, 2013	\$135.00	_____
_____	Registration	if submitted/postmarked between March 16 and April 30, 2013	\$155.00	_____
_____	Late Registration	if submitted/postmarked after May 1, 2013	\$180.00	_____

StarTech 2013 Registration fee includes the following:

- Sunday** Technical Session & Lunch at Classic Car Motoring, Birmingham, AL
Two sessions, choose one: 9:00 a.m. _____ or 1:00 p.m. _____ (Choice of session is not guaranteed).
Will attend the Session? Y N (circle your answer)
- Sunday** Reception (hors d'oeuvres) (cash bar) and museum admission at Barber Vintage Motorsport Museum, Birmingham, AL.
Will attend the reception? Y N (circle your answer)
- Monday & Tuesday** StarTech 2013 Technical Sessions at the **AIDT Bill Taylor Training Center of MBUSI** in Vance, AL, one lunch at training center is included in the registration.
- Monday, Tuesday** one Tour (per registered attendee) of MBUSI Assembly Plant in Vance, AL
(Requires photo ID (DL or passport), lunch in factory cafeteria (pay on your own.)
(No Registration accepted past May 10 for the Factory Tour, due to security and pre registration needs.)
- Tuesday** StarTech 2013 Closing Reception
Will attend the reception? Y N (circle your answer)

Associate Registration / Travel Companion

_____ **Associate Registration Fee (per person)** **\$60.00** _____
StarTech 2013 Associate Registration does not include Monday or Tuesday Technical Seminars, but does include the following:

- Sunday** Technical Session & Lunch at Classic Car Motoring, Birmingham, AL
Two sessions, choose one: 9:00 a.m. _____ or 1:00 p.m. _____ (Choice of session is not guaranteed).
- Sunday** Reception (hors d'oeuvres) (cash bar) and museum admission at Barber Vintage Motorsport Museum, Birmingham, AL.
Will attend the reception? Y N (circle your answer)
- Lifestyle events for Associates such as Artist Studio Tour, Tours of Museums, Botanical Gardens, led by Alabama Section members. There will be a charge for some activities and daily lunches.
- Mercedes-Benz Factory Tour - One** Tour (per registered attendee) of MBUSI Assembly Plant in Vance, AL
(Requires pre registration and valid photo ID (DL or passport), lunch in factory cafeteria (pay on your own.)
(No Registration accepted past May 10 for the Factory Tour, due to security and pre registration needs.)
- Tuesday** StarTech 2013 Closing Reception **Will attend the reception? Y N (circle your answer)**

Event Recap

Microcar Museum

Several Alabama Section members joined with Peachtree Section members to visit Bazooka Bubble Gum owner Bruce Weiner's "Microcar Museum" in Madison, GA in February. This was the last chance to visit his vast collection of European and Japanese "micro" cars that make the classic Mini and the Daimler Smart look like large cars. The collection was auctioned off in its entirety the next week.

Mr. Weiner had amassed the world's only complete collections of Messerschmitt's (think fighter cockpit on wheels) and BMW Isetta (think front opening door) and others with mostly motorcycle or scooter engines that were popular in Europe in the late 50's and early 60s when the closure of the Suez Canal dramatically increased the price of gasoline in Europe but barely influenced it here.



Front: Messerschmitt collection
Rear: Alabama Section member
Heinz Neunzig says his first car was
one like the car on the left.

Peachtree's past president, Darryl Williams, pointed out that while Mercedes-Benz was building the "Ponton", 190 SL, and 300 SL, BMW was building the Isetta

How times have changed!

On the other hand, perhaps the microcars had the last laugh: the top Messerschmitt bubble car sold for an astounding \$348,000 when its new price was under \$1,100. Of course, several 300 SL's changed hands the month before in Arizona for \$800,000 to \$2,100,000 when they sold new for \$7,500 or as much as a V-12 Ferrari at that time. The 300 SL still seems a bargain compared to a Messerschmitt.

The Weiner museum will probably not go away, as a few early British and German sports cars were seen in storage areas. Employees told us this was the beginning of the next collection and that he had also sold everything seven years ago.

The town of Madison is in excellent preservation/restoration of 19th-century architecture complete with one of the last slave markets in the US.

Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

By: Jim Roberts

My friend Bill Warner has spent the last 20 years building the Amelia Island concours d'elegance on the fairway and grounds of the elegant Ritz-Carlton into the premiere east coast concours and brought it up as second only to Pebble Beach in North America.



Gullwings were out in force.

Bill knows virtually everyone in the car world from collectors to racers, and he is both. He is a person to whom you can't say no. Fortunately the Mercedes-Benz USA leaders did not tell him "no" 20 years ago and continue to be the prime sponsor with GM's Cadillac division and Chrysler trying to get a seat at the table.

This year there was a "Cars & Coffee" informal cruise-in on the fairway on Saturday morning that was mostly Porsches and Corvettes. We need to have more of our classic Mercedes-Benz's join in next year.

It seems that Mercedes-Benz is the most popular car to put in a special parking area by my nonscientific survey. You really do see more SL's than Corvettes, but you see virtually everything there: a Fisker parked next to my '78 280 SE, but we got many compliments on the old Merc.



First public showing of the new CLA

Alabama Section was well represented. After all we do share a border with the host Southern Star Section. Our other neighbors, Peachtree Section hosts a massive Saturday evening dinner that is attended by members of 20 MBCA sections and most of the national MBCA directors and officers. There is also a huge MBCA presence at the Mercedes-Benz gala. This black-tie charity affair is a who's who of the automotive world. The first person I saw was Bobby Rahal whom I've raced with. The MBCA table was adjacent to one with Mr. Rahal who was joined by Dan Gurney, David Hobbs, Sam Posey and Barry Meguiar. To their right and also next to us were Dennis McCluggage, Sir Stirling Moss, Bob Bondurant, and Edsel Ford II. The next table had John Rutherford and Darío Franchitti. Many thanks to MBUSA and MBCA for including us in this galaxy of our heroes.

The auctions did well -- especially our StarFest 2010 special guest, Wayne Carini ("I'm amazed at how much you people really love these cars"). I'm sure he loves them now himself, as he sold a 190 SL for \$220,000 and a 280 SE 3.5 cabriolet for \$247,000. They were very nice, indeed, but these were astounding results. Take care of your 113 and 107 SL's!

When you get to the Ritz-Carlton entrance you are met by a phalanx of current Mercedes-Benz offerings along with a beautiful Ponton from the Classic Center. AMG was featured -- even the new CLA. This is a beautiful car at any price. At its sub \$30,000 class it is breathtaking. It really looks so much better in the metal than in a photo. You should not buy anything until you see it. It was easier to get a drive in the new McLaren than the CLA.



220SE from the Classic Center in the Mercedes-Benz pavillion

Inside the plush Ritz you are just out of arm's reach of the first automobile ever: the 1886 Benz Patent Wagen which still runs after 127 years.

The seminars are great -- both the subject matter and the personalities. All the time in and around the hotel you run into not only celebrities who will talk cars with you until people badger them for autographs and photos, you also run into people you haven't seen in years and people you see frequently -- especially MBCA enthusiasts.

Then on Sunday the show field takes your breath. From the cars you see only in a museum to those you don't even see in a museum, you just can't imagine seeing one priceless treasure after another. I never knew there were so many 540 K's ever made.

Among the motorcycles was a beautiful pair of MV Augustas from Birmingham's own Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum taking top honors in the Italian motorcycle class. Of course, it shouldn't be a surprise, since they won at Pebble Beach as well.

The Mercedes-Benz pavilion was an elegant oasis in a sea of admittedly elegant humanity. MBCA liaison, Adam Paige, was a most gracious host

As I said last year, this is the east coast car event. Best of all, it is so close for Alabama section -- especially our southeastern part. Be sure to put this on your bucket list, and be sure to wear your MBCA shirt and name tag. We will look for you next year.



1930 SSK and the concours throngs

In Der Presse (In The Press)

Another Expansion at MBUSI

The Birmingham News reports that B.L. Harbert has begun the preparation for the \$70 million almost 1,000,000 square foot parts consolidation center which is expected to employ another 500 people at Mercedes-Benz US International (the factory) between Birmingham & Tuscaloosa.

Construction will begin in April, so we will see this as well as the expansion nearing completion for C-class production while we are there for StarTech 2013 in May.

The expansion for C-class production will add another 1400 employees to the existing 3000 presently employed in production of the ML, GL, and R class. While the R-class is no longer marketed by Mercedes-Benz USA, it is very popular in China and Germany as well as other Asian and European countries.

By 2015 a fifth new crossover SUV will add another 400 jobs.

Initially Mercedes-Benz had planned on 1100-1500 employees in Alabama.

All-Wheel Drive E63 AMG

The new E63 AMG is now 4-matic only for the US Market. The "S" version now has 577 HP and accelerates from 0-60 mph in 3.5 seconds. This is almost 1 sec less than the competing BMW M5 and 0.6 sec quicker than the Cadillac CTS-V. This makes the E63 AMG "S" faster to 60 mph than any Porsche or Corvette, and quicker than most Ferrari's under \$500,000. The E63 AMG is priced at about \$95,000: a lot for an E-class, but a real bargain for supercar performance.

The only better bargain is to wait for these great cars to appear on the used car market: right now you can buy a very nice 10 year old SL 55 AMG for \$35,000 - \$37,000 vs. about 10% less for a similar SL 550. When new the AMG was \$30,000 - \$40,000 more than the non AMG version. This new E-class AMG carries even more of a premium.

These cars have an adjustable suspension for when you are not on the track. Personally I prefer the much more direct "feel" of the firm setting all the time, because the steering is better weighted, the shifts are crisper, and, of course, the car corners better. It is not uncomfortable, but you do hear the suspension and engine more. Isn't that what driving is all about?

If you aren't that much the enthusiast, you can dial this all back. It will still activate in an emergency. What great engineering!

Another New Vehicles from Alabama Factory

Daimler AG Chairman Dr. Dieter Zetsche made reference to an unnamed fifth vehicle. "At our plant in Alabama we are currently preparing for the production of another SUV: ...an especially dynamic all-terrain vehicle, you will hear more about it soon", is what Dr. Zetsche said at the Daimler, AG meeting on 7 Feb.

This project will involve a \$250 million investment and add another 400 jobs at MBUSI. Production should begin in 2015. This is in addition to the \$900 million and 1400 additional jobs in the addition of C-class production that should begin early next year. Most of the new hiring for the C-class should be completed before the end of 2013. This new Alabama model will be one of 13 new models Mercedes-Benz plans to launch by 2020.





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