



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club of America

DECEMBER • 2014

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Sternblick

(View through the Star)

Mason Beale
President, Alabama Section MBCA

The cooler temperatures are ushering in a new season for the state. The new season also brings a change in Section Officers and Board Members.

Board members who are continuing to serve include Pierce Williams, Carol Wadley, Chad Stevens, Jack Schilleci, and Ed Jones. Their contributions have produced a variety of activities and events which are essential to maintaining a vibrant section. All of their efforts are greatly appreciated!

New to the Board is Bob Melton who loves to drive his ML, E class, and show his SL. Bob has also volunteered to be our Webmaster.

Officers who are continuing to serve include Brenda Brown as Treasurer, and newly elected Liz Roberson as Secretary, Ken Champlin as Vice President, and Mason Beale as President. As Treasurer, Brenda Brown's financial skills and attention to detail ensure our resources are well documented and reported. As Secretary, Liz Roberson has been an active participant in numerous section events and regularly works behind the scenes to ensure administrative details are complete. As Vice President, Ken Champlin is a car enthusiast and new member recruiter who will serve the section well in his new position. As President, I hope to successfully follow the path of the section's founding President, Jim Roberts and the section's most recent President, Bob Hinds. Both previous Presidents have placed the section on a solid financial foundation. Many thanks for their outstanding leadership contributions!

Continuing to serve as Newsletter Editor is Rhiannon Gage. Rhiannon has done an incredible job producing an excellent product. In fact, our Section was recently awarded the printed "Newsletter of the Year" for the entire MBCA. Congratulations to Rhiannon for her dedicated efforts!

Founding President Jim Roberts has been elected as Eastern Region Director (RD). Jim's responsibilities just increased ten-fold as he visits and mentors the remaining seven Eastern Region sections. His travels will take him from Florida to Maryland. The Alabama Section is proud to have Jim serve in this capacity. Congratulations Jim from the entire Section!

My MBCA background spans almost 18 years. I served as Secretary and Vice President of the Greater Washington section while living in Northern Virginia and working at the Pentagon. I have planned and participated in various Regional and National MBCA events for

many years. Involvement in these events has presented unique opportunities to meet diverse MBCA members from across the country. Many of these individuals have become personal friends who I still remain connected with to this very day. I can truly say that MBCA is more than a club - it is a community!

The Board is actively planning many excellent events for your enjoyment which will be listed in our section Newsletter. We will continue to use e-mail "blasts" to remind members of upcoming activities or special events. I encourage you to attend these upcoming events in order to enjoy former friendships as well as create new ones.

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

Schedule Of Events

January

- 17 Winterfahrt to Cheaha
- 20 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280

February

- TBA Tech Session
- 17 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 25 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's

March

- 7-8 Advanced Driving Skills with PCA at Barber
- 13-15 Amelia Island, FI Concours d' Elegance
- 17 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280

April

- 21 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 25-26 Indy Grand Prix of Alabama & Car Corral
- 28 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's

May

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

June

- 6 Eurobrit Car Show - Huntsville
- 16 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 24 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's

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 BRENDA BROWN 256.237.5277 bama69@cableone.net	Secretary LIZ ROBERSON 205.822.8460 lizroberson2013@gmail.com

Board of Directors

Member-at-Large PIERCE WILLIAMS 256.399.1181 phwj15@juno.com	Member-at-Large CHAD STEVENS 256.426.1548 rotodome@gmail.com
Member-at-Large JACK SCHILLECI 205.540.5338 avecaesar@bellsouth.net	Member-at-Large/ Webmaster BOB MELTON 205.621.1366 meltncs1@aol.com
Member-at-Large CAROL WADLEY, 205.529.5400 hwadley@bellsouth.net	Member-at-Large LIZ ROBERSON 205.822.8460 lizroberson2013@gmail.com
Membership/ Reiseführer JIM ROBERTS 205.933.9333 jertoosaver@bellsouth.net	Eastern Region Director JIM ROBERTS 205.933.9333 jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

das Heimatblatt

EDITOR: RHIANNON GAGE
205.933.9333
jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

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Coming events

Advanced Driving Skills (Driver Education) with PCA

March 7-8

This is another opportunity to learn to drive your car better. Clubregistration.net will give you the details as will pcaalabama.org

Amelia Island, FL Concours d'Elegance

March 14-15

Mercedes-Benz race cars are featured this year. The Saturday Cars and Coffee will feature SL's. Send photos of your SL and its story to Bill Hopper. wwhrestoration@att.net. for an invitation by 5 Jan. Peachtree Section hosts a dinner Saturday night and we are working on a leaders' meeting Friday night.

Indy Grand Prix of Alabama Car Corral

April 24-26th

Alabama Section welcomes all Mercedes-Benz owners. We need volunteers to assist with parking. More info to come in the next newsletter.



**MBCA members gather at car corral at last years
Indy Grand Prix of Alabama**

Barber Historic Races

May 15-17

Finally the Barber Museum will partner with Historic Motorsports Association (the hosts of the Monterey Historics) to build historic auto racing to the level that the vintage motorcycle races have achieved. They want MBCA involved with car shows, drives, etc. Please let us know if you are interested.

Upcoming Event Spotlight

Winterfahrt

January 17th

Our traditional and very popular winter drive to thumb our noses at Ol' man winter will again set out from Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum. Gather at 8:15 for release signing and a briefing on the route and rules with departure no later than 8:45. Tentative plans include the challenging drive up the west side of Mt. Cheaha with a stop at the Motorsports Hall of Fame and lunch at the Summit or in Anniston

Since this could be a severe winter, we will have an alternative route at a lower elevation.



Thank You, Loyal Member(s)

Forrest Cook
Birmingham, AL

Robert Marchman
Guntersville, AL

Ken Ford
Pensacola, FL

Joe Myers
Pelham, AL

Ronald Froehlich
Birmingham, AL

Leif Nilsen
Falmouth, ME

J. Leonard Henry
Albertville, AL

Daniel Poset
Maylene, AL

Howard Hudson
Navarre, FL

Lawrence Pugh
Rosemary Beach, FL

Rich James
Montgomery, AL

Jerry Tucker
Madison, AL

Richard Johnson
Huntsville, AL

Rick Wilson
Shelby, AL

Welcome, New Member(s)

John Baggett
Fairhope, AL

Terri Parker
Santa Rosa Beach, FL

Jeff Bolton
Pell City, AL

Robert Steber
Birmingham, AL

John Bonifay
Vestavia Hills, AL

Gilbert Stone
Mt. Brook, AL

Mark Boyd
Pensacola, FL

Ronald Bradstreet
Hoover, AL

Michael Carter
Bay Minette, AL

Jimmy Moore
Cullman, 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.

Event Recap

Cullman Oktoberfest

Event Planner: Jim Roberts

In spite of threats of rain the entire day on 11 Oct was beautiful. This did, however limit the crowds, so waits for food were minimal.

The organizers were pleased that MBCA was able to bring some nice cars. They want the German car aspect to build more. They will coordinate with us early to avoid the conflict that we had with Heimatfest the previous weekend.

Back to back weekend “fests” made it seem that October had been a continuous festival.



From right: SL's of Chad Stevens & George Smith, Brenda Brown's E coupe, Bob Steber's GLK diesel, Jim Roberts 280SE. Note: Col. Cullman's home on left and church towers center.

Farbenfahrt (Color Drive) to Little River Canyon and Beyond

Event Planners: Jim Roberts, Bob Melton, Bob Steger

November first is celebrated in Germany as either All Saints Day or Reformation Day depending on the predominant religion of the state. Living in a border area we celebrated both. Whatever you called it, this day represented the seasonal change to serious winter with cold, blustery, often including snow that would not end until April.

Unfortunately this year's fall color drive reminded us more of a typical first of November in Germany than Alabama. An arctic blast with cold temperatures producing snow in the mountains all the way the into North Georgia. Relentless winds blew most of the colored leaves off the trees for the first time that I can remember at this latitude—again, very much like Germany where the leaves turn brown due to freezing temps in late September without ever going through the beautiful colors that we enjoy.

Nevertheless the roads and views were great with even less traffic than usual. We did not venture far from the climate controlled comfort of our star cars. It must not have been terribly cool at 50 degrees, however, since everyone opted for iced tea at lunch. This is the South, you know!

Many thanks to Bob Melton for prerunning the route with me and to Bob Steger who led us to a breathtaking treasure near Mentone across the Georgia line. We will do this again.



A few of the hardy souls on All Saints Day at Little River Canyon.

Event Recap

Heimatfest *Special National Event*

After the months of planning and then the frantic pace of multiple activities of a national event, life seems almost surreal.

Thanks to extraordinary efforts by Felyicia Jerald, Dustin Raney, and Terry Ritchie at Mercedes-Benz US International our MBCA group was first to visit the Alabama Factory to see production of the new C-class on 3 October.

We maxed out the tour capacity at 50 with several more that waited too late to be included. MBCA participants came from South Florida to Ontario and from the East Coast to Phoenix. Notable were MBCA National President Terry Kiwala, Directors at Large Frank Cozza and Bill Hopper, Eastern Region Director, Jim Roberts, Past National President Walt Anderson, Education Foundation President, Doug Dees, E.F. member, Mary Alice Cozza, Memphis Section President, Bill Sudikum, Three River Section President Julie Bruggner, and Alabama Section President Mason Beale who along with Chad Stevens, Ken Champlin, and Dodie and Jim Roberts planned and hosted the 2nd national event in 17 months for a 200 member section.

We were also treated to a visit to the expanded museum that is part of the new brand immersion center where North American Mercedes-Benz dealer employees will be gaining a better understanding of the company's history, engineering, design, and research. Since this was not yet open, we were not permitted photos.

After lunch with the greatly expanded number of team members, we drove 50 miles back across Birmingham to the fabulous Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum for a special tour of the massive Lotus race car collection which exceeds that of Lotus Cars and Classic Team Lotus together. This was led by Lotus, Ltd (our partner at Barber and Watkins Glen) board Member and Treasurer, Mike Pearce. Barber Asst. Manager, Lee Clark continued the tour through the normally off limits restoration facilities downstairs where the magic happens.

Concurrently MBCA president Terry Kiwala was presenting a seminar on staging autocross events to section and region leaders.

Dinner was provided each evening by Heimatfest.

Saturday and Sunday were full days of both classroom and in car instruction in Advanced Driving skills on the challenging Barber Motorsports Park's 2.4 mile 17 turn track. Again Lotus, Ltd members joined MBCA members with others from Tracks Unlimited providing additional instructors and participants. About 43% of the participants were from MBCA and Lotus, Ltd. Everyone made excellent progress, and had more track time than they could use.

Concurrently on Sunday, Education Foundation President Doug Dees along with Mary Alice and Frank Cozza as well as other instructors were teaching teens basic driving skills in a classroom as well as a course setup on the fourth level of the paddock.

Heimatfest was the fourth Advanced Driving Skills event on a full race course (Watkins Glen, NCCAR, Summit Point, and Barber) this year with 3 in the Eastern Region bringing the total MBCA participation to close to 150 drivers. This is about 3 times as many as the typical Starfest© has on the track.

Our partnerships with Tracks Unlimited and Lotus, Ltd are very positive. Watch The Star for future events.



**Ryan Hinds drives his late Grandfather's C-300
in the Education Foundation's
Safe Drivers-Safe Families event
as volunteer Manuel Barje observers.**

Event Recap

Brand Immersion Center

We were allowed to gather inside the new “Brand Immersion Center” before our factory tours. This houses a historic collection of not only the first Daimler and Benz 2 wheel, 3 wheel and 4 wheel vehicles from 1885 & 1886, but also a 1938 500K Cabriolet, 1955 W196 “StreamLiner” Grand Prix car that won its first race and dominated the next 2 years, a 1958 300 SL roadster, 1968 280SE Cabriolet, and a 1972 600 “Pullman” limo. Race cars continue with a 2001 DTM car, a SLS GT-3, and a 2013 Formula One car.

There is a workbench with an AMG engine being assembled complete with all the signature plates.

Other AMG's and racing history are displayed with a series of interactive stations. Other interactive stations allow you to “build” your own AMG, Designo, or Standard version of every car and tell you how many are available.

Interestingly, many of the new C-class were in very short supply as production struggles to meet demand.

There is also a new S-Class with an interactive room explaining and demonstrating its multiple features--- particularly the active safety features.

We got a peek at some of the great new clothing as the new gift shop is being stocked.

Most importantly they are reserving a place for MBCA at the welcome center just inside the entrance. Alabama Section will be challenged to staff this.



The former visitor center has been expanded, totally rearranged, and rebadged.

Mercedes-Benz über Alles US Grand Prix

On 2 November we joined with our friends in the Porsche Club, BMW Club, and Corvette Club to view the U.S. Grand Prix on the jumbotron on the roof of Cantina Laredo in the new Uptown entertainment district in the Birmingham Civic Center area.

We parked in gated parking and had a great time while enjoying a great tex-mex buffet in a private room while watching the Silver Arrows absolutely dominate the race. Second row Williams cars also use Mercedes-Benz engines as do McLaren, and Force India. Next year Lotus will also use Mercedes-Benz engines.

We conjectured about the reaction of drivers on the interstate only 200 feet away at the sight of Formula One on the huge TV. We were very sure it was the only place they would see this in North America.

Event Recap

Barber “Pre-Historics”

After cancelling the historic car races, Barber Motorsports Park still made good on their offer for a free day in the park. It was effectively a gigantic cruise-in for the area car clubs. Alabama Section MBCA was given a prominent place by Barber hosts John Viviani and Lee Clark. We had more participants than those that preregistered, so it was well that people came and went throughout the day. Some took advantage of the touring laps that were paced by a 1950's Porsche Spyder race car.

A very special treat was a demo of the Formula One Ferrari race car that John Surtees used to win the World Drivers' Championship 50 years ago. It had just returned from a triumphant celebration year in Europe where it was driven by both John Surtees himself and current Ferrari F-1 driver Fernando Alonzo. It turned a few spirited laps.

Unfortunately there was no time to visit the new Mercedes-Benz test track, but we could see 30+ cars being assembled for the time that it gets up to full speed. More on this later.



Some of the Alabama Section cars that gathered in the paddock and drove the track.

Feiertagsfest

Alabama section's holiday party was a great success. The announcement that Das Heimatblatt was selected MBCA's "Printed Newsletter of the Year" was greeted with a round of applause. This was even more impressive considering that many sections newsletters are edited by professionals in this field.

President Mason Beale reflected on other accomplishments of 2014 as well as plans for 2015.

Eastern Region Director Jim Roberts reported on the fall MBCA Director's meeting. MBUSI Brand Immersion Center manager Terri Ritchie joined us and presented a beautiful Mercedes-Benz embossed ipad cover as a door prize. Lucky winner was Hilda Carraway, Guest of Vice President Ken Champlin.



Above: Lucky winner Hilda Carraway needs Santa to bring an ipad to fill the nice cover from MBUSI.

Left: Das Heimatblatt Editor Rhianon Gage is presented Alabama Section Member of the Year by Pres. Mason Beale.

Section News

Stammtisch Changes

In order to make our evening Stammtisch gathering more accessible, enjoyable, and easier to remember, we are making some changes:

Huntsville Stammtisch will still be at Hildegard's German Restaurant at 6:30 pm on the fourth Wednesday of the even numbered months (i.e Feb, April, Jun, Aug, and Oct) to avoid the day before Thanksgiving.

Birmingham Stammtisch will move to Logan's Roadhouse on US280 at 6:30pm on the third Tuesday each month. They also have a private room for us. Dale's has served us well, but we feel that a change of location and time should make this more attractive and accessible. We will assess participation in March.

Alabama Section Member of the Year

Rhiannon Schlangen Gage was presented the MBCA Member of the Year by President Mason Beale. Actually this is the result of several years of studying, producing, and refining our award winning newsletter, Das Heimatblatt. Rhiannon had no prior experience assembling and producing a newsletter, and no long term history of the "culture" of MBCA and its newsletter.

She has diligently refined Das Heimatblatt while constantly checking membership lists that are often inaccurate from the National Business Office, but change on a daily basis.

Rhiannon also produces the weekly e-supplements "Nicht Vergessen" that updates late breaking events and serves as a reminder of approaching events.

This plaque is a small token of gratitude from the 220+ members of Alabama Section.

In der Presse

UAW at MBUSI?

Jim Roberts

Some reports gave the impression that the United Auto Workers Union was in place at the Mercedes-Benz US International Factory in Alabama.

What has happened is that the UAW has established a Local 113, but there are no dues and it does not represent the employees of MBUSI. Fifty-One percent of the employees must vote to have the UAW represent them for the union to have bargaining power with MBUSI. At this point only a handful of associates have signed up with UAW.

As you know, there have been several automobile factories in the southeast including MBUSI where the employees have resoundingly defeated these efforts. The most recent was at the Volkswagen factory in Chattanooga in spite of the company actually endorsing unionization (VW is still partially owned by the German government). The Tennessee legislature and Governor threatened legal action against VW for promoting Union organization after the state spent millions of taxpayer dollars to entice VW. Tennessee was afraid this would make the state less attractive to industry.

The vast majority of MBUSI workers value their above average pay, benefits, and working conditions. They seem to feel that they don't need organized labor to speak for them and fear that they would suffer the fate of the domestic industry having the UAW represent them.

For the UAW it is critical to their survival to organize the southeastern auto industry as their numbers in the GM, Ford, and Fiat -Chrysler factories decline.

Mercedes-Benz and Daimler, AG remain neutral and leave this decision to their employees. In practice union company relations are not as adversarial in Germany as they are in the U.S.

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 every
even numbered month

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