



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

February • 2013

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STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

Alabama Section has had a very active time this winter with a great and well attended holiday party at The Club in Birmingham and a "Winterfahrt" of 70 through the mountainous east central part of Alabama culminating in lunch at the gourmet Spring House Restaurant on Lake Martin.

During my holiday break I was able to drive the scenic routes to Birmingham from several directions to help guide our StarTech 2013 guests from all over North America. An added side benefit was that I was able to combine this with helping a granddaughter perfect her driving skills in my 35 year old W116 280SE. For the record she never put a wheel off the pavement in 1500 miles of the great challenging roads that we have from the Tennessee line to the Gulf Coast.

Preparations are moving rapidly for StarTech 2013. Many thanks to Eastern Region Director, Bill Hopper for completing the website enough to open online registration. Daniel Taylor did the initial construction with the help of the MBCA national business office. More information will be added as we learn more specifics. We already have an impressive lineup of speakers on maintenance, repairs, restoration, modification, and valuation. We will be adding presenters from MBUSI on the manufacturing process.

Be sure to register early to get priority on schedule choices and to save on registration fees. Liz and Don Roberson are cheerfully fielding multiple inquiries and processing registrations.

If you missed the sign-up for the track events at Barber on 2-3

StarTech 2013 Registration is now open

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

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

March, there will be another on Father's Day weekend with sign up on 9 May.

Even if you are not a fanatic about car shows, the Amelia Island concours d'elegance is well worth the trip. We have a good number of Alabama Section members who drive over even from the northern part. It is an even easier trip from the southern part of the section.

The Indy Car/Grand-Am race at Barber on 5-7 April has developed into a major event with 84,000 attending. Fortunately they value our participation as much as we value our cars, so they are enhancing the "sports car corral" with a hospitality tent and reserved parking adjacent to the most popular viewing areas and the "fan zone". Be sure to sign up under "Mercedes-Benz Club".

All this and StarTech 2013, -- the only MBCA national event for 2013.—right here in Alabama Section. All of our dealers that I have spoken with are welcoming our visitors with courtesy safety check, wash, and even lunch. This hospitality has been extended by M-B of South Mississippi (Biloxi) , M-B of Mobile, and M-B of Dothan.

Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville is hosting lunch at the Space Center and Crown Mercedes-Benz in Birmingham is hosting the Tuesday farewell reception. Classic Car Motoring is hosting tours of their regional M-B body and paint repair and providing lunch Sunday.

MBCA and MBUSA are helping us with the opening reception at the Barber Museum and, of course, MBUSI (the factory) is granting us tours and the use of the entire training center.

Other sponsors are stepping up to insure enjoyment and success for a very different national StarTech event. This could be the biggest one in recent memory. We need all of our members to join in to enjoy and assist. We look forward to seeing you at an event soon.



Olivia Flowers at the Biloxi Lighthouse learning to drive in Jim Roberts 280SE

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Members cars

35 Years with a 280SE

By: Jim Roberts, DMD

Our Alabama Section holiday party was the 35th anniversary of my taking factory delivery of my 280SE in Sindelfingen. This was my 11th factory delivered car, as I had experienced this a few times when I lived in Germany from 1968-71 and then visited several times later.



While my dad had been driving M-B Diesels for several years, my mother really liked the 116 (1973-80) S-class so much that she considered this the most beautiful car ever.

Of course, you can't say no to your mother, so in the summer of 1977 I ordered it to her specifications. It was to be a 450 SE, but for 1978 model year only the 280SE and 450 SEL were to be imported to the U.S. The extra length would not fit in the garage. Her specifications included the shocking for the time "Icon Gold" paint which today places it firmly in the 1970's.

That initial trip was memorable as it included driving from Germany through the Iron Curtain into then Czechoslovakia which was once the German then Austrian Kingdom of Bohemia now known as the Czech Republic. In those days most people in Eastern Europe were fairly fluent in German due to their wanting to know about the outside world from broadcasts from Germany, Austria, and West Berlin. I got into a 130 mph street race with a Czech Tatra on the unfinished Czech Autobahn and met up with relatives of a refuge Hungarian couple I knew from Germany. They were auto enthusiasts and were fascinated with this most advanced product of West German engineering. Their own car was the East German Trabant which they had driven from Budapest to Spain and back with no mechanical issues. They had to leave one child behind to insure their return. Seeing the world through their eyes, and their experiencing the S-class were memorable in both ways.

That trip took the S-class also across the Tatra Mountains of present day Slovakia to Krakow, Poland and then across the former German state of Silesia which the Soviets made part of Poland while driving the German population out.



The 280SE and I then visited the forbidden East Germany. Everywhere people were interested in the car and a German speaking American. I wanted to bring several of them back with me. The roads were rough but almost free of traffic.

My parents picked the car up at the port in Jacksonville, FL and drove to Key West and back to Birmingham. My mother was 60 at the time and told me that they had admired Mercedes-Benz in the 1930's, but thought of them as cars for the aristocracy. She could not believe that they now had two Mercedes-Benz's and said they would never need another car. My dad had traded Ford's every year in the 30's & late 40's.



This was prophetic as she lived to 80 and my dad to 92 and the car has outlasted both by over ten years. My sister still drives my dad's 300D that I took factory delivery of in Dec 1975 with over 300,000 miles now on the odometer. The 280SE only has 185,000 miles and is all original, having made multiple ski trips to New England, Canada, Colorado, Utah, and the West Coast. Its factory delivery badge has been joined by a 250,000km badge and an MBCA Silver Star award for originality.

Coming events

Amelia Island Concours D'Elegance

March 9-10

This has become the premier east coast concours on the golf course of the magnificent Ritz Carlton. If you have never attended, you need to put it on your bucket list. The added bonuses are the fact that Mercedes-Benz as the major sponsor has a nice display of classic Mercedes-Benz, a hospitality suite, hosts the black tie gala Saturday evening, and has multiple new cars for test drives.

This year there will be a special display of MBCA members' cars. Peachtree Section hosts a Saturday evening gathering at the Crab Trap restaurant in Fernandina Beach that draws participation from over 20 sections.

Contact Jim Roberts: jertoothsaver@bellsouth.net or Bob Hinds: bobjanehinds@bellsouth.net for more details and travel places.

Indy Car Corral at Barber Motorsports Park

By: Bob Hinds

April 5-7

The indy car race is coming to the Barber Motorsports Park Friday, April 5 through Sunday, April 7, 2013. The Mercedes-Benz Club of America- Alabama Section has supported this race by displaying their Star Cars in the Car Corral. The Alabama Section has also supported this race by volunteering to help in the car corral. You are encouraged to park with other car enthusiasts in the car corral and to volunteer to help in the car corral.



Members star cars at the
2011 Indy Car/Grand Am Car Corral

Note that non-volunteers, participating in the car corral, are required to purchase entrance tickets. The best available price, if purchased before February 14, for a three pass with paddock access is \$125.00 + \$35.00 car corral parking = \$160.00)

Want to save money and help your club?

Become a volunteer: Volunteers pay a \$50.00 fee which includes a three-day admission pass, on-site parking, a volunteer shirt and hat, plus breakfast and lunch on the days you volunteer. Also included is an extra three-day ticket for a friend.

Please consider volunteering and joining other enthusiasts in this years car corral. You can't beat the price and you can support our club and the Barber Motorsports Park at the same time.

1. log onto barbermotorsports.com

2. click on the volunteer tab

3. complete the volunteer registration and choose "sports car corral" for your assignment. There are two shifts each day, you can volunteer for one shift on one day up to all three days and double shifts each day. I have volunteered for the morning shift for all three days.

If you need more information or have questions, please contact Robert Hinds at bobjanehinds@bellsouth.net or 205 381-0878.

Coming events

StarTech 2013

May 18-22

Since our "Star Trek" from the MBUSI factory in Alabama to Winchester, Virginia for StarFest© 2010 we have had requests for a repeat trip. With StarTech 2013 this could be done in the reverse direction for those attending from the Northeast.

We are also laying out interesting drives from all directions to this little known area. Details will be posted on our website <http://startech.mbc.org>. So plan for an extra day or two to enjoy the journey.

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center & N.A.S.A in Huntsville, AL will be a featured part of Heimatfest/StarTech 2013. Try to arrive by 10am or at least by 1 pm on Saturday 18 May for the special MBCA tours of this world class facility.



Billboard approaching MBUSI factory

Of course, StarTech 2013 will have multiple technical seminars by nationally recognized experts as well as some surprising locals that you may not be familiar with. These will take place in the Mercedes-Benz US International Training Center adjacent to the factory.



MBUSI Factory in Vance, AL

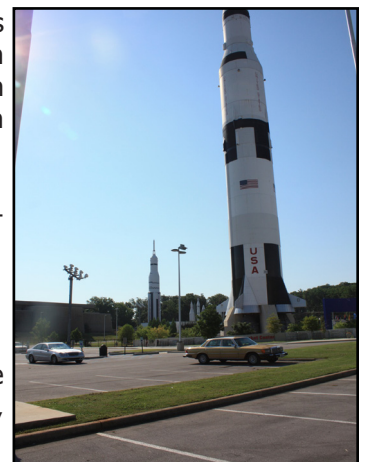
Naturally we will have very special visits to the Mercedes-Benz factory which is being expanded to add North American production for the next C-class in 2014 to its present production of all the ML, GL, and R class for the entire world. There will be a special homecoming for those who bring these vehicles.

We will also have a welcome reception on Sunday, 19 May in the fabulous Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum with its 1700 meticulously restored motorcycles and 50 Lotus race cars (each the world's largest collection). Of course, the motorcycle collection begins with an 1885 Daimler "Person Transport".

There will be an addresses by ranking MBUSA officials who like to give us "teasers" of future models.

Our main banquet will feature both MBUSA and MBUSI officials.

There will be a farewell reception on Tuesday after all of our participants have completed their factory tours. If we have more than can visit by Tuesday, MBUSI has graciously agreed to continue the tours Wednesday.



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

StarTech 2013 Registration is now open

<https://www.regonline.com/mbcstartech2013>

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THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE DESTINATION.



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Event Recap

Winterfahrt

On 12 January after a week of torrential rain the Alabama Section assembled at the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum with a few of our friends. The Alabama region of the Porsche Club of America and the Birmingham Motoring Club swelled the number to seventy as the sun broke through.

The Barber Museum staff opened early for us and provided coffee (perhaps not a good idea for beginning a long drive) warmth, and their facilities for registration.

Alabama 25, affectionately known as the "The Copperhead" due to its multiple challenging turns, is conveniently close to Barber. The climbing and diving switchbacks and the flowing bends led us to Logan Martin Dam and a crossing on the Coosa River.

Our first stop was the Motorsports Hall of Fame Museum at the Talladega Superspeedway. We skipped the town of Talladega and the Talladega Mountains until we could follow 77 south of the mountains all the way to the time warp Clay County seat, Ashland, which looks exactly as it did 100 years ago around the courthouse. I can remember purchasing my license plates there years ago to get "17-220" or "17-911". This was long before vanity plates. You just walked into the office in the basement in the first few days to get "220" and came back in a couple of weeks for "911" which I asked the clerk to save.



Members gather at the Motorsports Hall of Fame Museum in Talladega

Ashland was our first traffic light at 80 miles from Barber, but we were turning right and there was no other traffic, In fact it would be another 20 miles before we caught another vehicle slower than our procession of Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, Alfa Romeo, MG, Triumph, and Fiat. He turned off in less than 3 miles as we proceeded over more challenging roads to Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. The 200th anniversary of this last stand of the Creek Nation " Redsticks" is next year. We will make a proper visit just for the occasion in March of 2014.

Due to time we were not able to completely circle Lake Martin so we turned right on US 280 to head for the wonderful four star Spring Hill restaurant operated by Iron Chef champion Chris Hastings on the shore of Lake Martin. Down to US 280 (120 miles) we had only one traffic light and one slower car that balked us.



Bob Hinds lines up for Winterfahrt 2013

Several participants told me that at most turns other motorists yielded to a headlight burning procession led by a large number of Mercedes-Benz's followed by a larger number of Porsches and then other European cars. Many oncoming cars stopped, and some even got out and took their hats off, as this is the custom when encountering a funeral procession. We weren't exactly going the pace of a funeral, but there must have been many animated discussions after we passed-- only in Alabama.

Event Recap

Holiday Party at The Club

Alabama Section members gathered at Birmingham's landmark "The Club" atop Red Mountain overlooking the city 600 feet below for a great holiday party.

Parking regulations were relaxed to allow the assembled star cars to park adjacent to our special private dining room just a few feet from the precipice.

The food and the conversation were great as excitement builds for hosting StarTech 2013 on 18-22 May, 2013.



Top: Members star cars at The Club.

Below: Bob and Jane Hinds, Brenda Flowers, and Vann and Doug Fowler enjoy lunch.

In Der Presse (In The Press)

MBUSI Exceeds Production Record

The Mercedes-Benz US International Alabama Factory expects 2012 production to be about 182,000 vehicles. This exceeds the previous record of 174,356 set in 2007 according to MBUSI director Markus Schaeffer.

The value of those exported will be \$5-\$6 billion keeping Mercedes-Benz as Alabama's top exporter.

The record production was achieved in spite of the model changeover in the GL which typically slows production as well as the massive construction and equipment installation required for C-class production in the factory. This construction and installation will continue through most of 2013.

Mercedes-Benz Sets Sales Record

Sales of U.S. Mercedes-Benz cars rose 12% in 2012 to 274,134. When Smart© and Sprinter were added, total sales were 305,072 which is a 15.4% increase over 2011.

New CLS Shown at Detroit Auto Show

Autoweek reported on the new CLS shown privately at the Detroit auto show. The 201HP 1.81 liter turbo drives the front wheels through the 7 speed twin clutch automatic. Essentially this is a progressive mechanical gearbox with two clutches controlled by computers and robots. There is no torque convertor to suck up power. The result is that it outperforms and gets better economy than a manual while shifting automatically. If you wish, you can control the shifting manually.

Size is similar to the current C-class which will get larger with the introduction of the Alabama built C-class on 2014. The CLS will be available in the fall with prices starting at about \$30,000. A Canadian friend who has the Hatchback version says real world driving is 37 MPG or 5.5 liter/ 100km as they calculate it there.



In Der Presse (In The Press)

MBUSI Changes Chief Executive

Effective July first Jason Hoff, 42 will replace Markus Schaefer as president and CEO of Mercedes-Benz US International, often referred to as "The Mercedes Plant". Like Schaefer, Hoff has served at MBUSI in previous positions. Most recently as vice president of logistics until Nov 2010.

Markus Schaefer was made MBUSI President in July 2010 after directing engineering at the facility from 2002-2007. He will become the head of production planning for Mercedes-Benz passenger cars in Stuttgart in July. That seems to be the same track that Daimler, AG President Dr. Dieter Zetsche took.

Jason Hoff currently oversees global procurement preparations for the redesigned C-Class which will be produced at the Alabama MBUSI Facility next year.

Work on the factory is progressing on schedule. It can be easily seen when we visit the factory at StarTech 2013 on 20-22 May. MBUSI is currently increasing its workforce from 3000 to 4000 to be able to produce the new C-class as well as the current ML, GL, and R-class.

President/ CEO Schaefer said that while he welcomes his new position, the move is bittersweet as the relationships he has developed with the MBUSI team members and the local Alabama communities make him feel that Alabama is home. I can certainly relate to the sincerity of this statements, as I felt exactly the same about the area that I lived in Germany a little farther from Stuttgart than Birmingham is from Vance.

Vielen Glück, Herr Präziden Chef Schäfer,
Und vielen Dank,
(Good Fortune President/ CEO Schaefer, and many thanks)



New President and CEO of Mercedes-Benz US International, Jason Hoff

Pope Gets New Mercedes

Daimler, AG CEO Dr. Dieter Zetsche personally delivered Pope Benedict XVI his new official parade and ceremonial car. Like the last "Pope Mobile", it is an Alabama built ML.

It was modified in Sindelfingen with armor plating, bullet proof glass, and an enclosed and illuminated elevated and retractable throne, so the adoring faithful can see the Holy Father without harming him.



Mercedes-Benz has been supplying vehicles to the Pontiff for over 80 years. The mere 600's and Maybachs also have thrones, but they are "daily drivers" rather than ceremonial and parade vehicles.

This one will travel all over the world with him. It replaced a 2002 first generation ML which will rotate between the Vatican Museum and the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart.

It would be nice to see it return to the Mercedes-Benz Museum branch here in Alabama, but it probably has to be a reserve in case of a problem, with this new one. Even the Pope needs a backup car.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February

19 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

March

2-3 - Drivers Ed at Barber with PCA

9-10- Amelia Island Concours D'Elegance

19 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

April

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

5-7 - Eastern Region Leadership Meeting
Charlotte, NC

13 - Tour of Calloway Mansion

16 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

May

18-22 - StarTech 2013

16 - 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



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