



# Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section  
Mercedes-Benz Club America

June • 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*

As you can see from the article below as well as the next issue of The Star, StarTech 2013 was an unprecedented success. The positive comments were overwhelming. It was most gratifying to see so many of our MBCA members and leaders from all over North America enjoying the activities we had planned over the previous 2 ½ years.

As you can also see in this issue we have three major events in June including a car show, a track event, and a scenic drive along with the finish of The Great Race for antique vehicles in the historic center of Mobile. Our cup runneth over

We will have other events later in the summer with beautiful drives in the fall along with our holiday party in the winter.

The goal for founding the Alabama Section was to host an MBCA national event at the home of Mercedes-Benz production in North America. We have achieved that so well that MBCA, MBUSI, and MBUSA want us to stage other major events in the near future.

Personally I was most gratified that our StarTech 2013 steering committee of co-chair Bob Hinds as well as registrars Liz and Don Roberson, Treasurer Brenda Brown, Eastern Region Director Bill Hopper, Alabama Section board members Pierce Williams, Carol Wadley who chaired the associate activities with assistance from Jane Hinds and Brenda Brown, Mason Beale, William Powers, Chad Stevens, Peachtree Section newsletter editor Diana Quinn who produced the event guide, Peachtree past president Daryl Williams, and Central Georgia board member Tommy Couch worked closely and tirelessly with Lisa Juhl at the national business office to make this the great success that it has been.

We also developed much closer ties with MBUSI (the factory) leadership with Felyicia Jerald and her team that pulled together everyone from the Visitor Center that we already worked with to Judy Cox of the Bill Taylor Training Center, to team leaders and engineers, to even

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

MBUSI President Markus Schaeffer who expressed an unforgettably sincere appreciation to me of the honor he felt that the largest Mercedes-Benz club in the world would ask him to speak.

All of this shows me that we have developed a very strong core of enthusiastic dedicated leaders and that we are attracting more passionate enthusiasts to carry the Alabama Section and MBCA to the next level. This is most gratifying.

It is now time for me to pass the leadership of the Alabama Section on to other members of our leadership team. This is really long overdue, but I stayed on to see StarTech 2013 through. I'm not going away as I will be senior Advisor to the Board and I have been passing my contacts on to Bob Hinds who has served as Vice President and co-chair of StarTech 2013 for the last 2 years. Mason Beal who transferred to Alabama from leadership positions in the Greater Washington Section (1500 members and MBCA's largest) has agreed to serve as Vice President. Chad Stevens from Huntsville who made many of the arrangements for events there has agreed to join the board. The position of Secretary is open. This needs to be a person with the time to attend membership and board meetings.

We also need other board members. We would especially solicit someone from the southern part of our beautiful section. Please let us know, if you have an interest no matter where you live. Elections are in October.

Thanks again especially to the StarTech 2013 committee members and to all our members who supported this great event. It has been a mountaintop experience.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### June

- 15-16 - H.P.D.E at Barber with PCA
- 18 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 30 - Finish of The Great Race - Mobile

### July

- 16- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

### August

- 20 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

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# Coming events

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

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*June 15-16*

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Several Alabama Section members have signed up for this great event. You get to do what you want on Fathers' Day, right?

If you didn't get in on this, you are welcome to come out to the track. There will be touring laps at 12-1 on Saturday and 11-12 on Sunday, if you missed the touring laps at StarTech 2013.

Just go to the registration window and tell them you are with me. I will be instructing and driving my red Porsche 944 #5 that I paddock near the base of the control tower. Chad Stevens will be driving his red C-55 AMG significantly faster than the Porsches in his group. Sometimes we will be together. Liz and Don Roberson will also be there as will Porter Fell. Porter is also President of the PCA Alabama Region, so you won't see his 108 280SE that he had at StarTech.

Stop by and talk with any of us, if you can get there.

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## Finish of the Great Race

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*June 30th*

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The Great Race is a time, speed, distance rally along the byways for cars built in 1969 and earlier. This year it starts in St. Paul, Minnesota and finishes two weeks later at Bienville Square in Mobile on 30 June. The previous format basically went coast to coast for prewar cars. Birmingham residents were some of the original participants, and it came through Birmingham on at least two occasions.

Coker Tire owner Corky Coker of Chattanooga acquired the rights to it a couple of years ago and attracted Hemmings Motor News and Haggerty Collector Car Insurance as sponsors.

The first event of the new format ran from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Bennington, Vermont (Coker to Hemmings) along the Appalachian Mountains and included cars through 1967. This means that it now includes Jaguar, Austin Haley, Morris Minor and Mini, Triumph, Mercedes-Benz SL's, and Porsches as well as pre and post war domestic cars.

That event included a 1910 Velo (a Daimler Patent car) that won overall as well as friends from Atlanta in a 1967 Mercedes-Benz 280SL that finished second in the novice class.

The start and the finish are fantastic as you see 80-100 historic cars actually being driven at probably 80% of their potential.

We are honored to receive an invitation for V.I.P. parking near Bienville Square for the finish on Sunday, 30 June. The winner will cross the finish line at 2pm, so we need to be in place by 12:30-1pm.

At this point the British Club of Mobile is organizing the event with participation from the Panhandle British

# Coming events

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Club, the Gulf Coast Region of the Porsche Club of America, and the Alabama Section of the Mercedes-Benz Club America.

To add to the fun we are working on a drive from Point Clear along the canopy road of the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay.

I'm working on organizing breakfast at the Grand Hotel or some other place Sunday morning. We definitely need to know who is participating, so we can get passes to those who will be gathering at Bienville Square.

If there is enough interest we will try to organize events for Saturday.  
Please let me know

1. If you would like to join us for Breakfast Sunday morning.
  2. You want to participate in the drive.
  3. You want to park with the car clubs near Bienville Square
  4. You would like to take a scenic drive on Saturday
  5. Meet for dinner Saturday
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## Cruise-ins and Gatherings

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**Y**ou 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 cars 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 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 a few street rods. Euros are mostly British with a couple of 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. In fact, the MOB, INC guys leave this one to drive down US 280. The crowd varies from week to week .

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THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE DESTINATION.



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# Event Recap

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## Car Corral at Indy Car Race

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*April 6-7*

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**A**labama Section was well represented at the Indy car race at Barber Motorsports Park on 6-7 April.

Scott Malloy brought an Australian market ML 63 AMG from the factory that attracted quite a bit of attention.

There were also several Mercedes-Benz and Indy Car enthusiasts from Alabama, Florida and other states, many of whom were eager to join MBCA and to participate in StarTech 2013.



## StarTech 2013

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*May 18-22*

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**A**fter three years for planning and two years of preparation StarTech 2013 was a huge success.

Over 250 MBCA participants representing 51 sections from all parts of North America, Germany, England, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand enjoyed four great days of technical immersion. Traditional StarTech seminars on maintenance, repair, restoration, and performance were supplemented with manufacturing, valuation and photography. Non typical events included a very special visit to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center led by members of Dr. Werner von Braun's team that put astronauts on the moon in 1969.

Following a visit to the Mercedes-Benz authorized regional repair facility everyone got a few parade laps of the beautiful and challenging Barber Motorsports Park's road course.



Saturn V & Apollo mission described by a member of Dr. Von Braun's team at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, AL



Chris Baggett oversees the latest welding technique at Classic Car Motoring near Birmingham

# Event Recap



A reception in the fabulous Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum featured speakers from the Daimler team that devised the ML as a replacement for the beloved Geländewagen, the Alabama team that recruited Mercedes-Benz, and the first president of Mercedes-Benz US International (the factory) to explain why Mercedes-Benz chose Alabama as the location. No, it was not the incentive package, and many MBCA participants were surprised at the reasons. Hint: Many of the German, European, and Canadian managers have chosen to retire in this part of Alabama.

This was echoed by current MBUSI president Markus Schaeffer at the Monday night banquet.

Panel at Barber Museum featuring from L to R: Don Erwin, Alabama Recruiting Team; Heinz Neunzig, Daimler Selection and Development Team; Bill Taylor, MBUSI President for 10 years and now Director of Alabama Economic Development Partnership

The centerpiece, of course, was the only Mercedes-Benz Factory in North America which is the only place in the world that the ML, GL, and R class are built and will soon be the producer of all the C-class sedans and coupes for North America and several other countries.

MBUSI went all out to insure that our technical interests would be satisfied by taking StarTech 2013 participants to areas that regular tours do not cover with team leaders to explain the processes.

The Visitor Center branch of the Mercedes-Benz Museum and most of the extensive Bill Taylor Training Center were turned over to MBCA. Several of the MBUSI engineers also presented seminars on manufacturing, lighting and 4-matic.

An unexpected treat was the arrival of four test drivers with new GL's and ML's to take our participants on the test track.

At the farewell reception the panel discussion included many questions about MBCA, primarily the many new members in attendance.



Participants drive the track at Barber Motorsports Park

I can't tell you how many participants took time to personally thank the StarTech 2013 committee members from the Alabama, Peachtree, Central Georgia, and Greater Washington Sections with effusive compliments: "The greatest, largest StarTech ever" "How do you top this", "You should do this again, soon", "When can we drive the Barber track at speed".



In the Barber Museum with StarTech presenter Pierre Hadary, Brenda Flowers, Andrew Gage and his wife, Heimatblatt editor, Rhiannon Schlangen Gage

In fact this was a labor of love. Hosting a national event at the factory was the main reason for forming the Alabama Section seven years ago. This has been a pleasure with the assistance of MBUSI, MBUSA, our four M-B dealers in Central and North Alabama (Crown M-B in Birmingham, M-B of Huntsville, Leigh M-B Tuscaloosa, and Ingram M-B in Montgomery) as well as Eastern Regional Director Bill Hopper and MBCA Marketing Director Lisa Juhl as well as our presenters and directors, the "who's who" of MBCA including National President Steve Dierks.

Many thanks to all the MBCA members who attended.



# Event Recap

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## Huntsville EuroBrit Auto Expo

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*June 1st*

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**O**n 1 June members of the Alabama Section and other Mercedes-Benz owners participated in the EuroBrit Auto Expo at Dublin Park in Madison.

In addition to a large number of British cars in the center, the cars of Germany and Italy surrounded the Brits. Interestingly we had equal numbers of Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi, VW, and Porsche.



We had a couple of brief showers that reminded us of why we had outgrown British Cars: While the SL's put up their hardtop in 15 sec , the British two person teams took so long to get their tops assembled, the rain stopped before they finished. It would have been easier and quicker for them to erect canopies over their cars. Of course, they did not have enough space to bring a canopy.

We didn't say anything, but the scramble of getting out frames, tops, side curtains and attempting to assemble them was rather amusing as we took advantage of nature's blessing to wipe the dust and insects from our star cars.

The British seemed to like my older 116 with the polished cam covers on its incline six as they gave me a first place trophy with a Union Jack on it. Now that's a first for a Mercedes-Benz!

The organizers were gracious. Chad Stevens and I vowed to the organizers that we would be more involved and have greater participation next year. Mark your calendar for the first Saturday in June.

## In Der Presse (In The Press)

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### MBUSI Expansion

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**G**roundbreaking for MBUSI Expansion took place on 2 May. This 900,000 square foot parts consolidation center represents a \$70,000,000 investment that will employ an additional 600 workers. It will support the receiving, handling, and sequencing of parts.

The addition of C-class production to MBUSI which produces all the ML, GL, and R-class for the entire world has necessitated this new facility.

### Record May Sales

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**M**BUSA reported record sales for the fifth consecutive month in May. The previous year was also a record that helped Mercedes-Benz reclaim the position of bestselling luxury brand last year.

May sales totaled 27,359 not counting Smart or Sprinter for an 8.3 percent increase. Best sellers were the C, R, and ML which is built in Alabama up 15%.

Global sales were up 7% to, a record 121,360. The first five months were a record 562,824. MBUSI's May total was up 14.5% to 25,710 even with StarTech disrupting production.



# **Welcome to the New Members** **of the Alabama Section**

Tod Adams - Birmingham, AL

Chris Carter - Madison, AL

Charles Chapman - Theodore, AL

Michael Garver - Mobile, AL

Robert & Jean Hall - Huntsville, AL

Arthur Johnson - Madison, AL

Lowell Kelly - Huntsville, AL

Dave Ketchen - Opelika, AL

Charles King - Tuscaloosa, AL

Rudy & Donna Mays - Ider, AL

Skip & Jill Nunnally - Rainbow City, AL

Gary & Sherrill Waddell - Montgomery, AL

Susan Warner - Tuscaloosa, AL



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