



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

August • 2010

Inside this Issue...

- Calendar of events 2
- Event recap 3
- Coming events 4
- Test Drive 7
- In der Presse 8

STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

We have been having a very active summer with a tech session at Bud's Benz, a challenging drive down the "The Copperhead", followed by a visit to Morgan Creek Winery, a poolside soiree given by Dodie Roberts, and another "Fahren zum Essen" (Drive to the Meal) through scenic Cullman and Winston counties. We are in the final stage of executing our second special national event of 2010: Startrek to Starfest 2010©.

We will have a great 4+ days with MBCA members from all over North America as we lead them from the MBUSI Factory in Vance through Little River Canyon to "Tail of the Dragon", the Cherokee Skyway through our southern Appalachian Mountains and the monumental places built by Harold Vanderbilt, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe via the unique Blue Ridge Parkway. These sights and roads that are so familiar to us are a major treat to those who live in the flat areas of Florida or the plains and are so very different from California or the desert west.

Even if you can't join us for the entire trip, please try to attend the welcoming dinner at Brio on Sunday, 19 Sep, the factory tour on Monday, 20 Sep, and possibly the Monday drive through Little River Canyon National Park.

We are planning an event at Perdido Key for early November that will be a chance for the Gulf Coast members to get to know each other and those from the northern area to extend summer a bit.

We are seeing a significant increase in membership participation and involvement. There are exciting developments underway with more opportunities to enhance your MBCA experience.

Remember, the elections are due in October. We will have positions open, so be sure to let us know if you want to be more involved.

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

Visit Our Website

This will keep you informed on the exciting events planned and will have descriptions and registration information.

It will also serve as a reference if you lose your newsletter.

www.mbca.org/alabama

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September

21 - Membership Meeting

19-23 - Startrek to Starfest

24-28 - Starfest Winchester, Virginia/ Summit Point, WV

October

19th - Membership Meeting

November

6-7 - Indian Summer at Perdido Key

16 - Membership Meeting

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

Executive Board

President, **JIM ROBERTS**
205.933.9333
FAX 205.933.9338
jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

Treasurer, **CARL CULLISON**
205.274.4706
cmculli@otelco.net

Vice Pres., **MANNY SOUSA**
205.995-4911
porgal@charter.net

Secretary, **DODIE ROBERTS**
205.871.7235
edbowron@windstream.net

Board of Directors

Member-at-Large, **BOB HINDS** 205.967.5014

Member-at-Large, **GEORGE KOTELES** 850.729.0566

Member-at-Large, **SAM POWERS** 256.461.4252

Member-at-Large, **CAROL WADLEY** 205.529.5400

Eastern Regional Director
Greg Magnus
greg@eoecho.com

das Heimatblatt

EDITOR

RHIANNON SCHLANGEN

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. Please type and double space copy.

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

MEMBERSHIP information or renewal, call toll free:
1-800-637-2360

You can send your articles or ads via E-mail or FAX for inclusion in das Heimatblatt
jertoosaver@bellsouth.net or FAX 205-933-9338

Fahren zum Essen (Drive to the meal)

Fahren zum Essen (Drive to the meal)

Manny Sousa had arranged for us to visit the private car collection of Hilliard Brannon in addition to the "Talk of the Town" restaurant in nearby Houston on 21 Aug.



The "Star Train" at the Clarkson Covered Bridge

This called for a fun drive on the challenging roads around Smith Lake in Cullman and Winston counties. I was able to utilize roads that we had driven a few years ago to the very well kept

Clarkson covered bridge where our "Star Train" was joined by more from Northeast Alabama.

Mr. Brannon is an amazing man who, with only one mechanic to help him, has managed to restore 15 cars in 4 years. These were not just garage finds that only needed to be dusted off. They ranged from rust colored hulks to cars that trees had fallen on. From the photos it appeared that most of these would have been left to the laws of entropy if Hilliard had not intervened.

Remarkably he has done all this in his "spare" time from his business of developing lake front property that he owns.

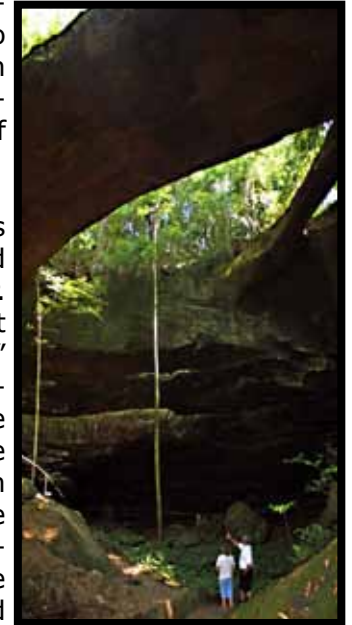
He says he really enjoys tracking down ex-

clusive parts and taking others to be chrome-plated in nearby Tusculumbia "because it gets me out of town". What a great guy, we really appreciated his warm hospitality.

"The Talk of the Town" was a surprising find in a village with only three buildings, one of which was an 1866 log cabin jail and the other a post office. Obviously if you prepare good food, they will come.

After lunch Nancy and Ed Jones took up the offer (or challenge) to continue a few miles west to Natural Bridge. This iron ore double arch is the longest natural arch east of the Rockies.

The proprietor was a fierce unreconstructed Confederate sympathizer. When I asked him about the "free state of Winston" that seceded from Alabama in 1862, he told me this was a small committee that had no authority. Upon arrival in Montgomery, the representative was arrested by the Confederate government. He assured us that the vast majority of Winston County residents in the 1860's supported the Confederacy.



Ed and Nancy Jones at Natural Bridge

As we left, Ed Jones said he had been wanting to visit Natural Bridge for over 40 years. We are working on another drive to this and the even more striking Dismal Gardens for next year.



Mr. Brannon and his car collection



Coming events

Startrek to Starfest

We are getting e-mails from close to 3000 miles away from MBCA members wanting to join us on our tour of the southern Appalachian Mountains to Starfest. See the article in the current issue of The Star. Birmingham is the obvious starting point for the tour because the opportunity to visit the MBUSI factory at Vance is a big draw, as is the Barber Museum.

We will have a welcoming dinner at Brio in Brookwood Village on Sunday, 19 Sept at 7 pm. We would like to have as many people as possible to help us lead the Startrekkers up Little River Canyon as we head for Tennessee and the "Tail of the Dragon" on the way to Asheville, NC and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Once in Asheville, we will visit the fabulous Biltmore House. The NC section will join us here for 180-380 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway into Virginia. We will spend the night in Charlottesville, VA and visit Thomas Jefferson's house, Monticello, on Thursday morning followed by lunch in an 18th century tavern. In the afternoon there will be more challenging roads in Shenandoah National Park to get to Starfest in Winchester, VA by Thursday night.

Starfest is: tech sessions, car shows, a concours, rallies, tours, autocross, acceleration runs, accident avoidance, and road course track events with instructors, as well as dinners, speakers, and 400 Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts.

MBCA Gelegenheiten (Opportunities) on the Startrek to Starfest

September

19th

Special visit to Barber Museum - 3:00pm

A rare opportunity for a special tour of the outstanding collection. Emphasis will be on the automobile collection

Dinner and meeting at Brio - 7:00pm

Even if you will not be joining us on our Startrek to Starfest or the factory tour on Monday, try to join us for dinner to welcome our MBCA guests.

20th

Special MBCA tour of the MBUSI factory in Vance, Alabama - 8:15am

Following lunch we will caravan through Birmingham and up Little River Canyon National Park to Sweetwater, TN

21th

Chattanooga, TN to Asheville, NC

Via the "Tail of the Dragon" or Cherohala Skyway and the Blue Ridge Parkway with a visit to the Biltmore House.

22nd

Asheville, NC to Charlottesville, VA

Via the Blue Ridge Parkway I26, I-81, and I-64

23rd

Charlottesville, VA to Winchester, TN

Visit Monticello, lunch at 18th century Mitchie Tavern, visit Shenandoah National Park

24-28

Starfest—Winchester, VA and Summit Point, WV

Coming events

Indian Summer at Perdido Key

The Perdido Key, Florida, Chamber of Commerce will be hosting the Alabama Section on 6-7 Nov. They will arrange discounted hotels, restaurants with meeting areas, a place to show and shine our cars on a golf course practice tee and even a drive to the Baldwin County Alabama, German communities of Lillian, Elberta, and Josephine.

This is a great opportunity for us all and especially for those in the Pensacola, Mobile, eastern shore, and Mississippi coast areas to get together. We would like to start a local interest group in this area and this is an excellent opportunity for the great location the Perdido Key Chamber of Commerce is offering us.

It is also a great opportunity for those of us in the other parts of our section's area to enjoy the pleasant weather and magnificent Emerald Coast beaches.

Brenda Brown and Pierce Williams will be facilitating this event, as Brenda has a condo in nearby Orange Beach, ALabama.

More details will follow, but save the first weekend in November!

Startrek to Starfest September 20-24

Names of Member(s)/Guests attending : _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Will you be joining us for:

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Tour of the Barber Museum	___	___	Vist to the Biltmore House	___	___
Welcome dinner at Brio	___	___	Tour of Monticello	___	___
Tour of MBUSI	___	___	Lunch and tour at Mitchie Tavern	___	___

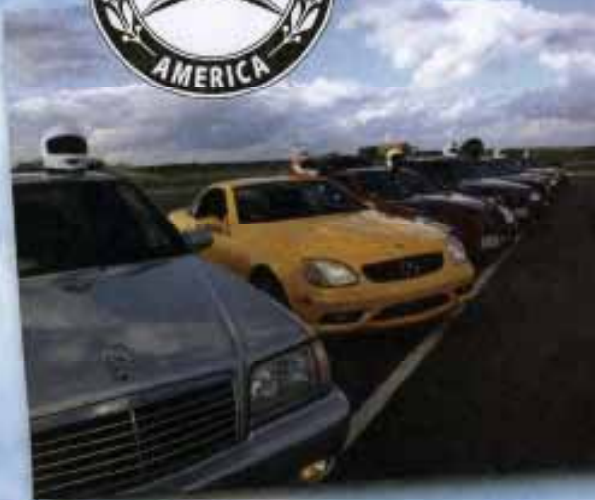
Total enclosed is \$30.00 per car \$ _____

Please make check payable to Alabama Section, MBCA.

Mail with registration form to: Dr. James Roberts, 2301 Arlingotn Ave S, Birmingham, AL 35205

2010 StarFest®

September 24 - 29
Winchester, Virginia



Enjoy the scenic and historic Shenandoah Valley... while sharing in the glory of being a Mercedes-Benz enthusiast.

SPONSORED BY

Mercedes-Benz

BRIDGESTONE



American National Bank
Banking Outside and Beyond



REVERSE LOGIC LIMITED

MASTER MEDIA GROUP

- Events for all Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts
- Trips, tours and events for non-auto enthusiasts
- Mercedes-Benz Concours d'Elegance
- Cocktail parties, wine tastings, banquets and social events
- Seminars and clinics
- Road rally through the Virginia countryside
- Defensive driving school
- Autocross
- Two days at Summit Point Raceway
- Club store and vendor room

Hosted by



Follow Us



twitter.com/starfest2010

Winchester, VA - www.visitwinchesterva.com
Courtyard Marriott Winchester - www.marriott.com/wgocy
The Greater Washington Section of the
Mercedes-Benz Club of America - www.gws-mbca.org

Check the STARFEST® 2010 website often for the official schedule and updates • www.starfest2010.org

Probe Fahrt (Test Drive)

C-Class Comparison to be Sport or Elegant *Jim Roberts*

When the current C-class was introduced as a 2008 model, it significantly changed marketing strategy and appearance.

Arch rival BMW has traditionally appealed to the more sporting drivers while Mercedes-Benz has been considered more solid, luxurious, and elegant.

As things have evolved, BMW has become more luxurious while Mercedes-Benz has become more sporting—and not just the AMG models. Still the perception has been that while the three pointed star represents the highest engineering standards, the cars do not generate the passion in younger owners that BMW and Porsche do.



C300 Luxury Sedan

Now, the “sport” versions of the C-class are different from the traditional sedans to the same extent that the coupes are in the other lines.

The most noticeable difference is apparent in the “coupe” or “SL” grille with the large three pointed star rather than the distinctive stylized radiator grille with the star hood ornament.

Not quite as obvious are the larger rotors with those cool calipers.

There is a “splitter” to provide downforce to the front and air inlets to the front brakes.

Inside, the seats have more prominent side bolsters, the wheel rim is fatter, and the wood trim is replaced with brushed aluminum.



C300 Sport Interior

Mechanically, the springs are shorter and stiffer to lower the ride height, and the shock absorbers are firmer.

This may all be a turn-off to many traditional M-B owners, but to me it is a bargain AMG! You get the improved road holding without the extra power--- and cost.

Board member Bob Hinds purchased one of the first new C-class in early 2008 and chose the traditional or luxury model.

Bob was kind enough to let me drive it as we laid

out one of the many drives for the Alabama Section. My impression was that this car was close to as competent as my mother-in-law’s 2000 S430 with its air suspension. Both cars have a reactive dampening system that gets firmer with more aggressive driving. The S however, allows the driver to “tune” the suspension, transmission, and steering feel with its air suspension in three stages. Mrs. Bowron liked the full soft, but I skip the middle and go to full firm where it will give sports cars a good run on a winding road.

The interesting thing is that the steering feel gets firmer as well. The transmission shifts down more readily and the shifts are quicker.

The suspension is much firmer—so much so that most would not want the full firm on our rough Birmingham streets.

Bob’s C-class is more like the mid S-class setting which is very comfortable, but not exactly my taste for engaged driving.

A trip to Crown for Dodie’s SL was late enough in the day that their courtesy driver had already left, so they loaned me one of their C-class fleet. These all seem to be the C300 sport models.

What a car this is: just the right feel—like an SL, almost as firm and planted as the “firmest” setting in the S-class without the harshness. The steering has just the right balance and the seats connect you firmly to the car which gives just the right connection to the road.



C300 Sport Sedan

I would probably opt for the 3.5 liter engine which will soon top 300 hp. This car really has the fun of engaged driving that the SL or SLK offers for a lot less money. It is actually more fun to drive than the BMW 3 series. The only non-sporting stigma is that it has 4 doors. This will soon be remedied with a new C-class coupe. In fact, the new E-class coupe is built on the C-class platform.

The C-class may be the lowest priced, but it is certainly not the “junior” Mercedes-Benz. If you want the traditional grille and star for the hood, they will both bolt right in. I rather like the “sports” grille, and the car certainly has a different character thanks to excellent engineering.

In der Presse (In the press)

Technology

CL gets new engine

The CL coupe and cabriolet get a mid-term facelift that includes a revised front fascia and grille to meet EU pedestrian protection laws.

The biggest news is replacement of the 5.5 liter engine with a twin turbo 4.6 liter engine that has 47 more HP, bringing it to 429 HP and a whopping 125 lb-ft more torque to 516 lb-ft.

The 7 speed transmission now has an integrated stop/start function with brake energy recuperation. This new technology is worth a 10-15% fuel savings.

So, more power on less fuel emphasizes the point: What is the best Mercedes-Benz? Answer: the next one.

Sales

Mercedes-Benz sales increase

The Birmingham News reported that Mercedes-Benz sales have increased 17% worldwide and 205% in China where a record 14,600 vehicles were sold. The Chinese sales total is close to those of the U.S. and of Germany—the top markets for the ML & GL. China is the largest market for the R-class

Alabama built M-B models post dramatic increases in U.S. sales

July U.S. sales of the ML were up 18% vs 1 year ago while GL sales were up 40% and the R-class was up an amazing 772%! Note that the redesigned 2011 R-class does not go on sale until late August or September.

Although all sales were up, the government motors (GM & Chrysler) increased only 5% while Ford increased 3% and Toyota slipped 3%.



ML450

Empire 
Autohaus Inc.
Extraordinary Automotive Care
www.EmpireAutohaus.com



Audi, Acura, BMW, Honda, Jaguar, Lexus,
Mercedes-Benz, Saab, Toyota, Volvo, VW

South of Hoover in Pelham
270 Yeager Parkway, 35124
205-664-5757

GREAT CARS MAKE US APPRECIATE
THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE DESTINATION.



CROWN
Automobile

1800 Montgomery Highway • Hoover • 205-985-4200 • CrownAutomobile.com



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