



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

December • 2011

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STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

We have had a very active autumn with the concours at Columbus, and participation in the traditional Phantom of the Opera at the Alabama Theater as well as the Birmingham International Auto Show. Our members' cars were the center of attention at both events.

At the Detroit national board meeting in November we were able to secure approval for our plans for Startech, the national MBCA event in May of 2013. This should be a landmark Startech that should draw 250-350 participants from all over North America. While several have stepped forward to chair committees, we still need more to make this major event successful.

We are looking forward to a great holiday party at the home of Jane and Bob Hinds on 17 Dec with our MBCA Eastern Region director, Bill Hopper in attendance. This is your chance to speak with one of our national MBCA leaders.

Our traditional Winterfart (Winter Drive) is rapidly approaching on 14 January. We will also have tech sessions in February as well as later in the year.

At the end of March/first of April we will again be privileged to participate in the car corral with the Indy car race at Barber. Following the Saturday races we will take a scenic drive to an evening dinner.

May will again have Heimatfest in Mt. Brook village with a concours, scenic drive, and a visit to the Mercedes-Benz factory.

We are working on other interesting events that will include our beautiful gulf coast area as well as interesting northern mountains.

We are blessed to have such beautiful scenery and great roads to drive in our wonderful cars. Make plans to join us.

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

MBCA announces dues increase

Beat the increase by renewing early

After 12 years the MBCA Board of Directors voted to increase dues by \$4/ year starting Jan 1, 2012.

Increased operating expenses were cited as the primary reason for the increase. Balancing this is an increase in member benefits and discounts. This is covered in the Jan/Feb issue of The Star.

The good news is that you can avoid the dues increase by renewing your membership before 1 Jan 2012. Of course, the savings increase, if you renew for 2 or for 3 years:

1 year was \$45 will be \$49
2 years was \$87 will be \$95
3 years was \$127 will be \$139

The present \$45, \$87, \$127 rate will be honored if you renew now.

As an inducement to extend for a longer interval, you will get an additional 3 months when you extend for 3 years or 2 months when you extend for 2 years. This offer is good even if you procrastinate until after Jan 1 to renew.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

17- Feiertagsfest (Holiday Party)

January

14- Winterfahrt

17- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

February

21- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

March

20- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

April

21- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

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das Heimatblatt

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Coming Events

Winterfahrt

*Saturday, January 14th
8:30am*

In the tradition of the "Polar Bear" swimmers defying winter by diving into icy water in January, we have extended this to driving on the traditionally coldest weekend of the year.

We will gather at 8:30 on Saturday, 14 Jan at the Barber Museum for an exhilarating but not dangerous drive on some of our challenging and lightly traveled roads in Central Alabama. We will depart by 9am and wind up at a restaurant for lunch.

It has become a tradition to follow a different route each year, so arrive with a full, tank of fuel or enough for 150+ miles.

The Barber Museum is nice enough to allow us in the lobby and restroom areas as a respite from the cold, so we can have our releases signed for a driving event.

We will provide printed route instructions for those who may fall out of the group or have to make an emergency stop.

Our Alabama Section Mercedes-Benz Club America and Porsche Club of America have been staging this together for the last couple of years with participation by the British Motoring Club as well.

We have awarded polar bears to those MBCA members who run the entire route with open tops but everyone gets a static cling "Winterfahrt" decal.



Cars, Coffee and Doughnuts

*First Saturday morning of the month year round
8:30 am - Noon*

The Krispy-Kreme donut house in Hoover (US-31 and Patton Chapel Rd.) hosts a gathering of collector cars on the first Saturday morning of each month year round.

If it rains on the first Saturday, the gathering takes place on the second Saturday.

Virtually any Mercedes-Benz qualifies. There is usually at least one.

If you bring a car that is at least 25 years old they will give you a free cup of coffee and a donut.

Cars start arriving about 8:30am. Most drift away by noon.

Questions? Contact Dixie Region/ AACCA member: Gary Adams 205 444-0876

Saturday Exotic Lunch

*Every Saturdays
Just Before Noon*

The exotic car group, M.O.B., INC (officially, "Men of Birmingham, In Nice Cars") gather each Saturday shortly before noon at Logan's on US 280. They admire each car as it arrives and then have lunch.

While most of the cars are Italian exotics, there are Bentley's, Aston Martins, and Porsches. They welcome Mercedes-Benz SL's, SLS's, CL's, and SLR's as well as any of the older cars.

Don't be put off by the cars and the family names. We worked with them at Heimatfest and they have a passion for fine cars and the people who appreciate them as we do. They are quite approachable and will even admire your star car.

If you wake up bored on the first Saturday you could hang out most of the day with other car guys you just met... just like California!

Event Recap

Birmingham Auto Show

A call only ten days before the Birmingham International Auto Show by the organizers pleading with the Alabama Section MBCA to participate resulted in several of our members generously displaying their cars and manning the exhibit space for the 3 ½ days of the show.

It seems that neither Mercedes-Benz nor Porsche will support this event. Visitors complained that these two marques were not represented. We were able to fill the void for Mercedes-Benz

Bob Hinds took the lead on organizing the event and set up schedules. Bob's son, Robert assisted and even brought my car home, as I was away at the American Academy of Periodontology meeting when the show ended.

Bob Hinds brought his C300. Ian Lamb brought his SLK 55 AMG and Bob Melton and his son Jonathan brought their beautiful 2000 SL500.

Next to us James Meredith and James Coats brought a nice 65 280S as part of their wedding car fleet. We thus had examples from 1965, 1978, 2000, 2005, and 2008.

Many thanks to all who participated.



MBCA members' cars on display at the Birmingham International Auto Show



Right: Jim Roberts' 280 SE

Left: Bob Meltons' SL500



Left: Bob Hinds' C300

Right: Ian Lambs' SLK 55 AMG



In Der Presse

New ML63 AMG

Mercedes-Benz showed a new ML63 AMG at the Los Angeles auto show powered by the new 5.5 liter twin turbo with 518hp. A performance upgrade brings it to 550hp with less fuel consumption than the previous model.



ML 63 AMG

The front fascia is more aggressive with a horizontal splitter under the lower air intake.

Red brake calipers are visible through the huge 5 spoke wheels that completely fill the wheel wells. Part of this is due to the lower stance.

Mercedes-Benz Record for November

November was a record month for Mercedes-Benz with sales up 55% vs. a year ago to make this the best November on record.

Sales of the new third generation ML were up 38 % and GL sales were up 54%.

Other auto manufacturers also reported increased sales, but percentages were far lower.

In October Mercedes-Benz and BMW were in a tight race to be sales leader in the luxury class, leaving Lexus and Audi far behind.

MBUSI Produces 1.5 Millionth Vehicle

The Birmingham News reported that Mercedes Benz US International reached the 1.5 million mark in production in Alabama, since it began in 1997. The milestone vehicle is a silver ML350 for a customer in Encino, California.

It is nice to know that every ML, GL, or R-class you see around the world was produced in Alabama. Note: there were a few of the first generation ML's assembled in the Steyr facility in Graz, Austria, but the parts were produced in Alabama.

Maybach Brand Ending

Bloomberg News reported Daimler, AG's CEO, Dr. Dieter Zetche's stating that the Maybach brand will end when the next Mercedes-Benz S-class reaches the market in 2013.

While Maybach was considered a finer car than Rolls-Royce in the 1920's & 30's, this project of the son of Daimler's engineer in founding the world's oldest automobile manufacturer failed economically as an independent company. When Daimler was outmaneuvered by its German rivals, BMW & VW/Audi for the British Rolls-Royce/Bentley (with which the British misled their purchasers), company pride produced the Maybach brand as an example that Daimler could do it better with it's own design.

While the Maybach was ostensibly a better made car that could be serviced by many Mercedes-Benz dealers, it never caught on with enough of the super wealthy to be profitable. The fact that its grille resembled Infinity more than Mercedes-Benz, as well as lack of familiarity of the status of the original Maybach along with the 2007 financial crisis doomed the brand. Most English speakers could not even pronounce it correctly, saying "May back" rather than "Mý-bahch" – somehow the former does not convey elegance and sophistication of the latter.

In addition to the great recession which hit high income people more than others, the current S-class is so sophisticated that it played a role in the demise of Maybach.

The three Maybach models will continue for another year before joining the rash of dropped brands such as Oldsmobile, Plymouth, Imperial, Desoto, Pontiac, and dead end experiments including Edsel, Saturn, and Hummer among others.

Daimler indicated the next S-class Mercedes-Benz would be expanded from three models to six.



2011 S-Class

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THE JOURNEY, NOT JUST THE DESTINATION.



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Web Address

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

Time: 6pm dinner, 7pm meeting

When: 3rd Tuesday of every month

Where: Dale's Southern Grill, Hoover

Monthly Membership Meeting



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