



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club of America
2014 Printed Newsletter of the Year

FEBRUARY • 2015

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Sternblick

(View through the Star)

Mason Beale
President, Alabama Section MBCA

Spring is here and with it brings exciting events for everyone's enjoyment.

The New Year has started with great success! The January Winterfahrt attracted more than 100 participants from four car clubs. Jim Roberts developed an excellent drive leaving from Barber Motorsports Museum to Talladega Super Speedway Museum to Mt Cheaha and concluding in Anniston for a delightful lunch at Classic on Noble.

In February, we gathered for an enjoyable breakfast at Klingler's German Deli where Frau Klingler shared with members special Deutsche menu options. After breakfast members traveled to Alabaster for a Tech Session at Impatient Creations hosted by owner Dennis Lyons. Many exotic foreign and older domestic cars were observed in various stages of restoration. Dennis also provided refreshments enjoyed by club members. Thanks to Bob Melton for organizing this special event.

The Board has many excellent events planned for Spring and early Summer. Events include Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance (March 13-15), Car Corral at Indy Race at Barber (April 24-26), Car Corral at Historic Races at Barber (May 15-17), and Euro-Brit Concours in Huntsville (June 6). Another Tech Session is being planned for early Summer with more details in the next newsletter. E-mail "blasts" will be sent as friendly reminders of upcoming events. I encourage you to attend these events to enjoy former friendships as well as create new ones.

A special welcome to the new owners of Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham. Club officers have met the new team who are anxious to be involved with our Section. Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham has placed a significant advertisement in our newsletter as well as offering a 10 percent member discount on all services. Welcome Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham to the MBCA Alabama Section family!

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

Upcoming Event Spotlight

Birmingham Stammtisch

When: Tuesday, 17 March

Time: 6:30pm

Where: Logan's Roadhouse on US 280

The around the world New Zealanders, Elisabeth and Fred will present a program on how they prepared their 58 year old Mercedes-Benz for this four year journey with highlights on their trip to this point.

Schedule Of Events

March

- 7-8 Driver Education & Taste of the Track
- 17 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 18 Tour of MBUSI Factory

April

- 13 Advanced Driving Skills at Barber w/ Hooked on Driving
- 21 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 22 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's
- 24-26 Indy Grand Prix of Alabama & Car Corral

May

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

June

- 6 Eurobrit Car Show
Madison, AL
- 6 European Car Show
Pensacola, FL, Naval Air Museum
- 12-14 StarTech 2015, Cincinnati, OH
- 16 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 24 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's
- 27 Advanced Driving Skills, NCCAR

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Coming events

Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance featuring Cars and Coffee©

March 14-18th

MBCA has again been invited to the Saturday morning Cars and Coffee©. This is also an invitation only event. This year the Amelia Island Car Committee asked MBCA to bring 40 SL's. Of course, three times that number applied, and they selected the ones that fit their idea of a display. Be sure to stop by to say hello, as Dodie's red 380 SL has been selected.



Last years Concours D'Elegance at Amelia Island

Social Gatherings

Friday evening we will gather for dinner with national leaders at Millhouse Steakhouse. This is located just west of Georgia exit 3 (Georgia 40 at Kingsland) at 6:30.

On Saturday evening we have arranged for dinner with the national leaders at 6:30 at the Crab Trap in Fernandina Beach.

We will order from the menu like a group of friends having a casual dinner together. This is a great time to meet and talk with fellow Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts from all over North America and beyond, so please wear your MBCA nametag.

We need to give the restaurants a head count as space is limited Saturday night and severely limited Friday night.

Please let us know the names of who will be attending and which night at: Jertoosaver@gmail.com

Factory Tour of Mercedes-Benz US International

Wednesday, March 18th
8:30am

Heinz Neunzig has arranged for Elisabeth and Fred to tour MBUSI as their first factory tour. They plan to visit every Mercedes-Benz factory in the world.

There will be room for 12 more on this tour, so let us know right away, if you can join us. We need the names of those participating along with driver's lic. or passport numbers to jertoosaver@gmail.com by March 8th

We will confirm with instructions on dress.

These tours total 1.5-3 miles. No walkers or canes are allowed, but wheelchairs are acceptable. You must bring your own. Children under 12 are not permitted.

Hooked on Driving Advanced Driving Course

Monday, April 13th
Barber Motorsports Park

This is a one day Advanced Driving Course on the beautiful and challenging Barber track. This is a great chance to drive your Mercedes-Benz the way it was engineered to perform.

An experienced instructor will be provided for you to help you safely learn advanced driving skills.

To register go to: Hookedondriving.com

Coming events

Car Corral at Indy Car Race

April 24-26th
Barber Motorsports Park

Come join with other Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts in the car corral when you attend the Indy car and World Challenge races. There will be a Mercedes-Benz SLS in the World Challenge race on Saturday.

Car Corral passes are \$30 vs. \$50 for other at track parking. You can get car corral parking even if you already have tickets. Just be sure to state that you are with the Mercedes-Benz Club America.

Go to barbermotorsports.com for ticket information.



2014 Indy Car Corral at Barber Motorsports Park

Car Corral & Hospitality at Barber Historic Races

May 14-16th
Barber Motorsports Park

Have you ever wondered what it's like to be on the inside at a major race? Alabama Section member Jim Roberts has been invited to participate in the new Barber historic races. His red/gold/white 1966 Lotus 47 has been a winner in several historic races as it was in 1966-68. This is a chance to see the tremendous amount of team effort that is required at the track to race successfully on an international level.

Jim's paddock area will serve as a gathering area for MBCA friends. Just look for the red/gold/white trailer with German, British, Alabama, Mercedes-Benz, and Lotus flags.



Huntsville & Pensacola Car Shows

June 6th
Madison, AL & Pensacola, FL

Yes, there are two car shows in Alabama Section on the same day. They are 350 miles apart, so they should not compete with each other.

Both events are rather informal with great opportunities to meet and talk with fellow enthusiasts and see some great cars. Both get underway about 9am. Now is the time to start preparing your star car.

The Eurobrit Car Show at Dublin Park in the Huntsville suburb, Madison has enjoyed growing MBCA participation to such a degree that we have been asked to participate in the planning of this seven year old event. Last year Mercedes-Benz had the largest number of entrants of any single marque.

The Pensacola Naval Air Museum show is older, but this is the first time Alabama Section has been involved. This is also a charity European car show. As you can surmise it takes place at the Naval Air Museum.

Details on both will follow as plans develop.

*Last year at the North Alabama British Motoring Society's
Eurobrit carshow*

Thank You, Loyal Member(s)

George Acker Lacey Springs, AL	Michael Goodman Pensacola, FL	Ralph Salerno Pace, FL
Bobby Aycock Birmingham, AL	Larry Hodson Panama City, FL	Patricia Seitz Mary Esther, FL
Sandra Booker Alexander City, AL	Ronald Howard Pelham, AL	Darius Slusher Salem, AL
Michael Brown Pensacola, FL	Joseph Johnson Navarre, FL	George Smith Birmingham, AL
Leon Byerley Fultondale, AL	David Mitchell Wetumpka, AL	Bill Vickery Crestview, FL
Ken Champlin Birmingham, AL	J. Frank Moore Daleville, AL	Bruce Webster Birmingham, AL
Ernest Colin Huntsville, AL	Wayne Novy Birmingham, AL	John Woodward Pensacola, FL
Cecile Dolan Destin, FL	Heidi Petrikat Miramar Beach, FL	

Welcome, New Member(s)

Mark Barrera Prattville, AL	Margaret Petrikat Miramar Beach, FL
Dan Bodiford Defuniak Springs, FL	Stan Wood Bremen, AL
Robert Cannon Santa Rosa Beach, FL	
James Golomb Montgomery, AL	
Joyce Hehn Birmingham, AL	
Lawrence Hinson Dothan, AL	
Paul McDaniel Hattiesburg, MS	
Frank Oley Panama City, FL	

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.

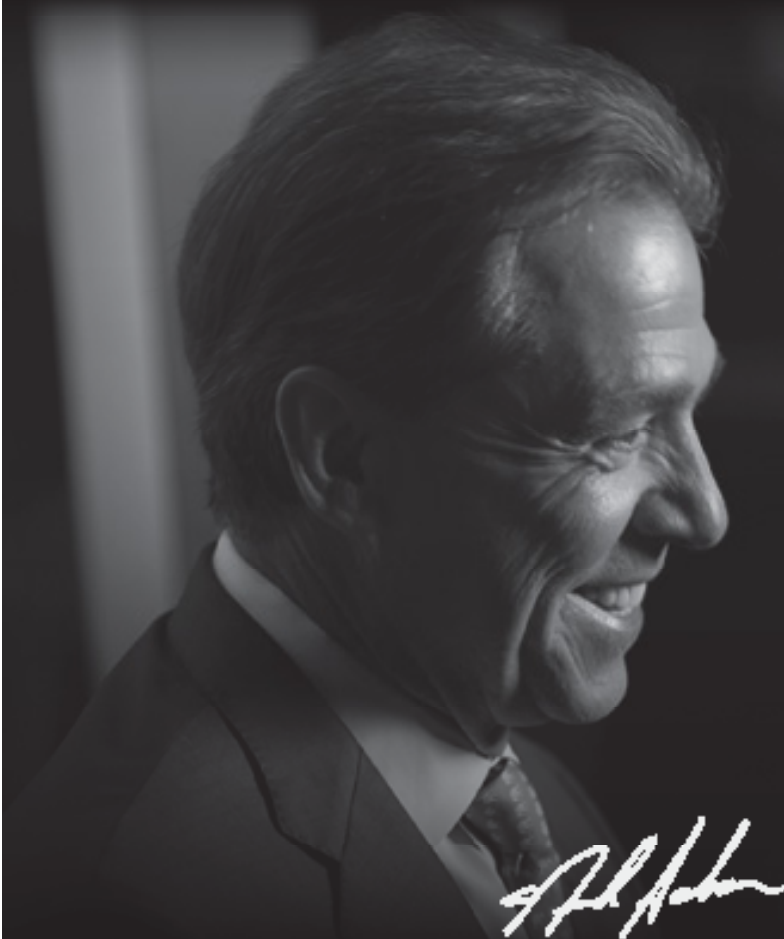
Cars & Coffee, Brookwood Mall

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.

Making the Right Call




*"For over 30 years,
I've owned and put
my family's safety in
the Mercedes-Benz
product..."*



Mercedes-Benz
of Birmingham

I saw my first Mercedes-Benz when I was 7 years old walking out of church one Sunday and said, "I'm going to have a car like that someday." Then working in my father's service station at age 11, you always knew the most popular car, you always were interested in having the best automobile. And in 1981, when I was coaching at the Naval Academy, I bought my first Mercedes-Benz.

Ever since then, for over 30 years, we've owned and I've placed my family's safety in the Mercedes-Benz product. I have a tremendous appreciation for high standards of excellence and now, having the opportunity to be in the automobile business, I can't think of a better company to partner with than Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham.





**Mercedes-Benz of
Birmingham** mbbhm.com



**Mercedes-Benz
of Birmingham**

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Event Recap

Alabama Section Presents Gift to Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum

December 31st

On 31 Dec 2014 Alabama Section President Mason Beale and Vice President Ken Champlin joined Eastern Region Director and Heimatfest 2014 chair Jim Roberts in presenting a \$1000 donation to the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum as a token of appreciation for hosting Heimatfest 2014 at the museum and the track.

For Alabama Section charity begins at home with Barber Vintage Motorsports Foundation in Birmingham and the MBCA Education Foundation that helps teach MBCA members, their children, and grandchildren basic driving skills.



From L: Vice President Ken Champlin, President Mason Beale, Barber Museum Manager Jeff Ray, Eastern Region Director Jim Roberts, Assistant Museum Manager Lee Clark

Winterfahrt 2015 (Winter Drive)

Event Organizer: Jim Roberts
January 17th

This year's midwinter drive drew nearly 100 participants as we invited our friends from the Porsche, British, Italian, Lotus, and Mt. Brook Driving Clubs to join us. All these people jammed the Barber Museum reception area and the cars filled their parking lots. Many thanks to Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum' manager, Jeff Ray for arriving early to open for us.

As we set out down Alabama 25 (The Copperhead) the line stretched out a mile or more. From my vantage point at the front of the line I could not even see the last Mercedes-Benz – much less the Porsches or others.



Mt. Cheaha from Talladega Super Speedway



Mt. Brook Driving Club Founder,
Elton Stephens' 280SL

Alabama Section President, Mason Beale thoughtfully brought some powerful walkie-talkies that he distributed to Don Roberson, the last Mercedes-Benz, and me. Mason was at the very end and was often out of range, so Don would relay Mason's messages to me. We did manage to stay together until getting into Anniston--the only traffic lights we encountered.

The weather was perfect. Following a brisk early morning the sun shone as temperature climbed to 60 degrees by noon. Roads were challenging and mostly free of traffic. We in fact, created our own traffic congestion.

Our lunch at "Classic on Noble" in the historic heart of Anniston was wonderful. Thanks to David Mashburn and his staff. The restaurant even uses Mercedes-Benz Sprinter vans for their catering service.

Photos by: H. and Liz Page

Event Recap

Brand Immersion Center Grand Reopening

February 4th

The Mercedes-Benz US International Factory hosts Felyicia Jerard, Dustin Raney, and Terri Ritchie and Mercedes-Benz USA asked a few Alabama Section members and several politicians along with Miss Alabama to join them in celebrating the reopening of the Visitor Center and Brand Immersion Center as well as factory tours since production of the new C-class and the new GLE coupe are both underway. Of course, Alabama Section hosted 2 events in 2014 at MBUSI even though it was officially closed to factory tours.



After we met MBUSI President, Jason Hoff and MBUSA President Steve Cannon both of who had served as interns with Heinz Neunzig, they each made brief welcome speeches. The politicians were more loquacious.

There were also dealers in attendance. We were able to speak with Sam Cavett and Mike Musso from Mercedes-Benz Birmingham and Jack Leigh of Leigh Mercedes-Benz in Tuscaloosa.

The new Brand Immersion Center has a much more extensive collection of historic cars from Mercedes-Benz. It also has an example of the engine assembly part of the AMG works at Affalterbach. There are also interactive displays of safety, performance, and luxury features as well as a history of the company back to the early 1880's.

They are looking for a few enthusiastic MBCA members who would be willing to work as guides in the Brand Immersion Center and the retail store as well as serve as tour guides in the factory. They want to instill the passion that we have for Mercedes-Benz in all 26,000 employees of the American dealers.

Contact Jim Roberts at jertoothsaver@gmail.com for details, if you would be interested. What could be better than to get paid for promoting Mercedes-Benz to other people who sell and service these great cars?

Pensacola-Atmore Rally

February 7th
Report and photos by Bill Vickery

Emerald Coast Section (now part of Alabama Section) Past President Bill Vickery reported a fun and successful Pensacola-Atmore "rallye" on 7 Feb.

Attached are photos of David Shephard's 1999 S600 and Bill's 300 CD which was the fastest Diesel in the rally.

This has become a traditional midwinter event drawing more than 100 cars in recent years. Mark the date for next year.

*Top: Bill Vickery's 300CD;
Bottom: David Shephard's S-600 (V12)*



Event Recap

Tech Session at Impatient Creations

February 21st

Alabama Section enjoyed a great visit to Impatient Creations, the restoration and custom shop south of Birmingham.

It seemed like an inside look at one of those T.V. shows as Dennis showed us from start to finish how they marshal the cars through assessment, tear down, media blasting, reassessment, metal work, body work, re-engineering for engines, drive lines, and suspension, interiors and final assembly.

They don't typically do this in 1 week like T.V. While they have produced an Amelia Island winner in 2 weeks, we learned that most projects take a few months.

In MBCA tradition, the event began with a delicious breakfast at Klingler's European Bakery and ended with lunch at Jim n' Nicks.

Many thanks to Bob Melton for arranging this and to Dennis for hosting us and explaining how they go about restoring cars; it isn't an accident repair for insurance body shop!



Members gather outside of Impatient Creations



Above left: Alabama Section members' cars outside of Impatient Creations.

Above Right: Older restoration in for interior refresh.

Left: It costs as much to restore this as an SL, but there was only one Mercedes-Benz in the shop. It was disassembled and covered.

Photos by Mason Beale



In der Presse

MBUSA Moves to Atlanta

Mercedes-Benz USA, the division that markets and services vehicles in the US has announced a final decision to move its headquarters from New Jersey to Atlanta in order to be closer to the massive production facilities between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The move will begin in June and involve about 1000 employees. They will initially be in temporary space as a \$95 million facility is constructed.

MBUSI, the Alabama Factory that produces the new C-class, ML, GL, and R class, and soon the ML coupe, is on track to produce 300,000 vehicles in 2015. MBUSA expects to sell 375,000 vehicles in 2015. Of course, 40% of the ML and GL and 100% of R-class vehicles are exported to other countries. Still the C-class, ML, and GL make up close to half of Mercedes-Benz US sales.

We were told that the MBUSA brass wanted to stay in the Eastern time zone and they wanted the larger city with better air connections.

New Names for Mercedes-Benz Models

By now we all know that the term "CL" is reserved for four door coupes while two door coupes will simply be called "coupe" of each series.

To identify the lines of SUV's they will all now have "GL" as the first two letters with the line they are derived from as the third letter. The original Geländewagen (off road vehicle) remains "G".

So we now have:	Geländewagen	stays	G
	GL becomes	GLS	
	ML becomes	GLE	
	GLK becomes	GLC	
	GLA stays	GLA	

To further rationalize, SLK becomes SLC. CLS and CLA remain the same.

It will be interesting to learn the name of the new GLE fast back. Will it be GLCLE or simply GLE coupe? Stay tuned.

New Car for MBUSI

While participants in Heimatfest 2014 got a sneak preview of the fifth Mercedes-Benz model to be built by Mercedes-Benz US international in Vance, Alabama it has now been officially presented at the Detroit Auto Show.

Derived from the ML, the sleek slightly lower fastback 4 door coupes are designated GLE 63 AMG (557 hp 5.5 liter twin turbo V-8) and GLE 450 AMG (362 hp twin turbo V-6). The 63 does 0-60 mph in 4.2 sec while the 450 takes 4.9 sec. These were supercar numbers 5-7 years ago.

In real life the lower stance and more curved body looks dramatically sleeker than the ML. My MBCA friends up north, especially those in mountainous terrain, seem to all have an ML or GL in the family. Many have two. Think of these as the sports cars of the SUV line.

Positive Press for GLA 45 AMG and Mercedes AMG GT

All the specialty automotive magazines tested and were most enthusiastic about the upcoming AMG GT in their February issues.

They praised the design and feel that it is far more a sports cars than the SL or even the SLS. They surprisingly rate it as a worthy competitor and a viable alternative to the Porsche Carrera. This is a great compliment considering Porsche's long dominance of this segment.

The Road & Track testers were smitten with the GLA 45 AMG and ranked it far better in performance, handling, mileage, and fun than the competing Audi Q5 and Porsche Macan.

In order to market this A-Class hatchback in the US, the Mercedes-Benz designers raised it up 4 inches, added fender flares and skid plates to make it look like an SUV. AMG, of course, raised the horsepower from 208 to 355 and added bigger brakes and wheels. Significantly they lowered it back to its European ride height. This really makes it look better, and it is close to the segment standard, the VW GTI in size. It is, however significantly faster and better handling.

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 even numbered months

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.



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