



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

January • 2011

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STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

On 29 Jan 2011, 125 years ago Karl Benz received his patent for an internal combustion carriage that he had built over the previous year. He thus invented the automobile as Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach were doing the same nearby. Daimler's patent was issued in August of 1886, so both automobiles were patented in the same year.

There will be many celebrations in 2011 of this one and a quarter century anniversary, and Mercedes-Benz will have a very strong presence in many of them. Notable in this country will be the Amelia Island concours d'elegance chaired by my good friend, Bill Warner. If you have never visited this, you owe it to yourself. Some of our members and many of the Peachtree Section attend so you won't feel alone.

We will start the season by staging a Winterfahrt (Winter Drive). Last year it was the Eisreise (Ice Trip), because it was icy in spots. This has proven so popular that in addition to the Porsche Club, the British Club wants to join us this year.

Bob Hinds has arranged another visit to the exclusive cutting edge Mercedes-Benz authorized body and paint repair facility at Classic Car Motoring for our February event.

March starts with a Porsche Club Drivers' Education track event at Barber on 5-6 March. This is a rare opportunity to drive your Mercedes-Benz as the designers intended.

The very next weekend (11-13 March) is the Amelia Island concours d'elegance.

On the fourth weekend in March we will have our greatly anticipated visit to Mobile and Bellengrath Gardens at the peak of the Azalea Festival. This should be a wonderful weekend event. Again, if you have not been to Mobile in late March, you owe it to yourself to go at least once before you die.

The April 15-16 Indy car and Grand-Am races at Barber will feature a

car corral with discount parking for MBCA. We have been asked to have activities in conjunction with this.

The third weekend in May is Heimatfest in conjunction with Bobby Rahal's "Legends of Motorsports" vintage races. This 5 day regional event has become so well known that I'm getting requests from South Florida to Virginia to Kansas and even California. After that I'll probably lead the northeast participants back through the mountains like we did for Star Trek.

Peachtree Section has asked us to plan a visit to Columbus, GA in July where we will also meet up with the new Central Georgia Section for a visit to the Infantry Museum and other historic sights in the area.

It will be a memorable 2011 and 125th anniversary for Daimler and Mercedes-Benz. We look forward to seeing you at several of these events.

Errinnerung (Remembrance)

It is with heavy hearts that we report the unexpected passing of Alabama Section and Emerald Coast Section Board Member, George Koteles. In fact, George liked to refer to himself as "the last vice-president of the Emerald Coast Section". George encouraged and supported the formation of Alabama Section and played a key role in merging the former Emerald Coast Section into Alabama Section. He has served on the Board of Alabama Section for the last three years and was very active in planning and staging events. He will be greatly missed.



As some Gulf Coast members may know, George still had the 1962 220Sb that his family took factory delivery of and traveled to his father's hometown. This vintage had the distinction of being part of Hungary when Mr. Koteles was born but lay within the borders of Romania by 1962.

George had started restoration and kept very careful records. According to his son, Geoff, all the parts are still with it. Geoff wants to find the 220S a good home within the MBCA family and will let it go for a very reasonable price to let it live on. You may reach Geoff at gk6516@gmail.com or (770) 974-6544.

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das Heimatblatt

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Coming Events

2011 Regional/National Kalender

Our new Eastern Region Director, Bill Hopper has sent us the schedule of National and Regional events. Note that our own Heimatfest is featured.

Personally, I'm planning on Heimatfest (19-23 May) along with Amelia Island on 11-13 March. Mercedes-Benz will be prominent in this first celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the Automobile and therefore Mercedes-Benz. Peachtree Section has a great dinner at the Crab Trap on Saturday evening.

I will also attend the Board meeting and Startech in Milwaukee on April 30- May 2 to take notes for our 2013 bid for Startech. I would like to have some other members attend as well.

Marque madness at V.I.R on 9-10 June is for the track driving enthusiasts among us. Virginia International Raceway on the NC/VA line is almost as lovely as Barber—challenging and fast. Contact Greater Washington Section for details.

This year's Aug 13-21 Star Trails based around Ouray in western Colorado features 3 levels: the traditional off road route for the Geländewagen enthusiasts, milder gravel road and light off road for the ML & GL drivers, and a totally paved route for those of us who are more "tarmac" drivers. All of them are a great way to enjoy this spectacular part of the Rocky Mountains.

Ron Harshman has developed a fitting sequel to his 2008 "Circle of Lake Michigan" with a "Circle of Lake Huron" on 20-24 September. I've already signed Dodie and me up for this one. I have some of the details, and I can connect you with Ron.

The AMG driving Academy will return to Road Atlanta this year, but dates have not been announced.

The \$1500 credit MBCA members received for service at M-B dealers with a new M-B purchase will expire on 31 December. For 2011 purchases MBCA members will receive \$1000 off on any new Mercedes-Benz purchase for all models including AMG.

Bill also notes that the Mercedes-Benz Roadside Assistance will be added as an MBCA member benefit during 2011. Hmm, I always thought that was included with ownership. Perhaps that was the case when mine was new in 1977.

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

January

- 15- Winterfahrt
- 18- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

February

- 12- Tech session at Classic Car Motoring
- 15- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

March

- 15- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 25- Südstammtisch-- Mobile (Southern quarterly meeting)
- 26-27- Bellengrath Gardens and Mobile

April

- 9-10- Car corral at Indy Car Grand Prix of Ala
- 19- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

May

- 17- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 19-23- Heimatfest (MBCA Regional event)

Coming events

Winterfahrt

When: 15 January 2011

Cost: \$5 per person

Depart: 8:30am from Barber Museum

On 15 Jan we will gather at the Barber Museum at 8-8:30 for a briefing and to hand out the directions. By 9am we should depart for a 2 hour scenic and challenging drive down Alabama 25, across Logan Martin Dam, through picturesque Talladega and its courthouse square, to a covered bridge, past my father's Clay County birthplace to ascend Mt. Cheaha from the east.

We will have lunch at the state park. The restaurant is acceptable if not memorable, but the view is. The return route is even more challenging but there are two choices:

You may want to continue north from the park along the Skyway Motorway or Talladega Scenic Drive. This runs along the crest of Talladega Mountain all the way across I-20 to US 78 near Heflin. It is an easy jaunt along US 78 west back to I-20. This road is similar to the Blue Ridge Parkway—wide with some challenging turns and multiple heroic vistas to both east and west.

The other route plunges through the national forest. It is narrow and twisty. I count 176 turns in 12 miles. That's almost as many as the "Tail of the Dragon" without the heavy traffic and police. This should be the "Alabama Drachen Schwanz" (Alabama Dragon Trail) See how easy German is?

Lest people be offended, perhaps a brief German lesson is in order:

Of course, you recognize "Winter" as a saxon word which is a direct cognate to linguists. The difference is that a "W" is pronounced in German as a "V" is in English.

The verb, "fahren" (to drive) becomes the noun "Fahrt" (drive). Types of drives are made as contractions would be in English: For example "Ausfahrt" (out drive or exit) is made from the preposition "Aus" (out) and "Fahrt" (drive). Thus "winter drive" becomes "Winterfahrt".

On the Autobahn you seen signs saying, "Ausfahrt" (exit), "Einfahrt" (Entrance), "Zufahrt" (connector), etc. In fact, my North American friends would say, "you just don't know which way to Fahrt here".

Both routes have lots of elevation change, so they are exhilarating to drive. We will have different groups for different driving tastes as we will be joined by our friends in the Porsche Club, and the British Club.

On the way back we will let those who wish to stop at the Talladega Motorsports Hall of Fame Museum. I understand they now have a video of my last race at Barber in the Alabama Auto Racing Pioneers room.

We can also make arrangements to visit the Barber Museum. If you have not been there in the last few months, they will have different exhibits. Their Lotus collection is the world's largest.

We need to have a headcount, for the restaurant and the museums, and you may get a prize, so please send in your registrations.

Winterfahrt

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Please send \$5/per person & entry form to:
Alabama Section MBCA, 2301 Arlington Ave S, Suite 200,
Birmingham, AL 35205

Coming events

Tech Session at Classic Car Motoring

When: 12 February 2011

Time: 10am

Bob Hinds has again arranged a visit to Classic Car Motoring. This is the only Mercedes-Benz Factory authorized body and paint repair facility for Alabama, Mississippi, and the Florida panhandle.

They will show us everything from how they work with the latest composite bodies made of steel and aluminum to how they mix the paint to detailing services. This year they will have a question and answer section on maintaining the beautiful exterior and interior finishes of these wonderful cars.

Lunch will be served. There is no charge for this event, but we need to know who is attending, so the caterer can prepare adequately.

Heimatfest 2011

When: May 19-23

For registration info:

*[http:// section.mbca.org/alabama](http://section.mbca.org/alabama)
or call Jim Roberts at (205) 933-9333*

The 2011 Heimatfest has been named a regional event. We are already making plans for this to be a multiregion event with interest from South Florida, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington, as well as

our friends in Peachtree, and Central Georgia sections.

We understand that the Thursday drive from Barber to Mt. Brook Village and the evening soiree will again take place.

We will again have a prominent place for our car show with Ferrari and Lotus. This year we will be joined by the Porsche Club and other British cars, so the party should be even bigger.

Bobby Rahal's "Legends of Motorsports" vintage races are again scheduled for May. Both Ed Jones and I will be competing with our vintage Lotus race cars.

The Barber Motorsports Museum will again have special rates for us.

From Thursday through Sunday we will stage evening dinners. Typically the Saturday evening one is a gala in the Barber Museum. While the one last year featured Mario Andretti and Bobby Rahal, the vintage motorcycle gala featured John Surtees and Dan Gurney. You never know who they might attract.

Of course, MBCA people are thrilled to visit the MBUSI factory in nearby Vance on Monday.

In addition to the local drives and shopping excursions being planned for the weekend, I will lead a repeat of the "Star Trek" trip we made to Starfest via Little River Canyon, Tail of the Dragon, and Blue Ridge Parkway to conclude Heimatfest.

Make plans now to attend, and let us know if you would be able to help with some of the activities.

Tech Session at Classic Car Motoring

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Mail registration to:
Alabama Section MBCA, 2301 Arlington Ave S, Suite 200,
Birmingham, AL 35205

Event Recap

We had a great Feiertagsfest (Holiday Party) at the beautiful home of Nancy and Ed Jones. The large Mercedes-Benz show in the monumental driveway became a vintage museum inside with Ed's collection of vintage Lotus (including race cars), Mustangs, and Mopar cars. Carol Wadley assisted with preparations and one of or larger gatherings of Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts enjoyed celebrating the season with each other.



L to R: Sam Powers, Ed Jones, Cheryl Cullison, Evelyn Neunzig, Heinz Neunzig, Brenda Brown, Herta Powers, Pierce Williams, William Powers, Dodie Roberts, Jane Hinds, Bob Hinds, Don Johnson, Peggy Johnson, Carol Wadley, Nancy Jones, Carl Cullison, Shelley Watkins, Taylor Jones, Steve Watkins

L to R: Jim Roberts, Nancy Jones, Carol Wadley, Carl Cullison, Bob Hinds, Ed Jones

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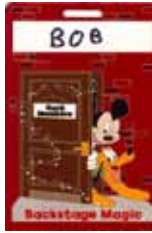
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A Member's Experience

A different twist for a Walt Disney World visit

Robert Hinds



We have been to Walt Disney World enough times to have "done" it all. In 2010 we planned a trip and took the "Backstage Magic" tour, which turned out to be a good choice.

These tours fill up quickly so we registered and paid in advance. After parking our Mercedes-Benz in the vast Epcot parking lot, Jane and I, and 27 others, gathered outside the entrance to Epcot at 8:45 a.m. on a cold December day. We were introduced to our two tour guides, registration was confirmed and everyone received a Backstage Magic pass on a lanyard. We then boarded a warm bus. All backstage areas are secured with manned gates and barriers that rise from the ground; all bags, backpacks and purses were inspected at each park before we could enter. No photos were allowed backstage as propriety details might be visible.



The first stop was Epcot. We entered the American Adventure Pavilion from the backstage side and found ourselves behind the screen and animatronic figures. The show was running for testing, as this part of Epcot was not yet open. Every day, maintenance and testing is done at night at every attraction. Considering the 1982 technology still used, it was impressive to see the ten separate stages move into position and raise their sets up and down. The entire presentation is sequential, that is, each scene must complete its function before the next scene can happen. Outside, it was noted that only the part of the buildings seen by the public are detailed, the backstage of each building is utilitarian. This is similar to a movie set where only what the camera sees is finished. We went around the building to the front where "forced perspective" was

pointed out. Most theme park buildings in Walt Disney World use this technique to make them appear taller than they are. But the American Adventure Pavilion uses it in reverse. This five-story building is made to look like a three-story building so as not to overwhelm its neighbors. Landscaping, earthen berms and fences are used to hide the backstage areas from view. Also interesting is that most of the stand-alone backstage buildings are portable so additions to the park can be completed without the need to demolish structures.

Next we were taken to Disney's Hollywood Studio and given an interesting tour of the costuming department where costumes are made for the entire complex. Even for someone not interested in sewing, this tour was very interesting. There were people working with computer controlled embroidering machines and sewing machines. Still a lot of handwork goes into each costume. There were overhead racks full of finished costumes. Special fabric cutting tables held down the fabric by vacuum so many layers could be precisely cut. Back on the bus, various backstage buildings and soundstages were pointed out then we stopped at the rear of The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror. Painters were busy painting the outside. It was explained that when the taller hotels were built, the park view showed unfinished backstage areas and they were upgraded, hence the faux windows on the rear of The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror.



We entered a service area where a spare ride vehicle was sitting. These elevators are unique in several ways. They go up and down and horizontally. The "falling elevator" part of the ride is faster than gravity because the vehicle is pulled

down. The passenger restraint system was initially a bar, but when different sized people shared the bar, smaller ones were not properly restrained, so the bars were removed and seat belts installed. To

A Member's Experience

prevent people from "cheating" after buckling, everyone is asked to hold up their hands thus making sure the belt is latched, warning lights allow the ride operator see the status of each seat belt. The lift motors are so taxed that they need replacement about every two years; the cables are replaced every eighteen months although their expected life is three years. When the tower was built it was built around the motors, Otis Elevator said they would last a lifetime. Access doors have since been installed to allow for motor replacement. Afterwards, we entered the park for a bathroom break, in sight of a multitude of people waiting to enter the Rock 'n' Roller Coaster.

Next was lunch at Disney's Wilderness Lodge in the Whispering Canyon Café where we sat at reserved tables and enjoyed a delicious "all you can eat" barbecue lunch. Dessert was peach cobbler with ice cream. Interestingly, the large rock formations outside are all artificial, as Florida does not have natural formations.

We were bused to a large building, north of the Magic Kingdom, housing the Central Shops. Since no infrastructure was in place when the land was purchased in 1966, this support building was one of the first constructed, it would be years before construction started on the Magic Kingdom. Inside were various ride vehicles undergoing renovation. We saw the paint mixing and painting section, the fiberglass area as well as the welding and machine sections. Almost everything seen in the park was made there and finished in the same standard colors used in Disneyland. When the Magic Kingdom was completed in 1971 the designer found out that the sun in Florida was brighter, the Disneyland exterior colors did not look correct so they were modified and the buildings repainted.

Because of the high water table in Florida, The Magic Kingdom has a large ground-level complex of Utilidors under the buildings so that movement of cast members and supplies can occur efficiently out of sight. The part of the Magic Kingdom seen by the public is the second story. The backstage sides of the buildings were once again plain. Before entering the Utilidors we were allowed to enter the park to use the restrooms. A parade was in progress so most guests did not see us enter and exit through a passageway marked "cast members only". Backstage again, through a door, down a staircase and into the Utilidors. For easy access, overhead were exposed water, steam, trash removal pipes, electrical and communications cables. Cast member ar-

reas such as locker rooms, costuming and cafeteria are provided. It was pointed out that the soft drinks served throughout the park are all distributed from one central area. Maps showed where we were and where the nearby staircase exited. Bicycles and carts were in constant motion around us as cast members went about their jobs.

Disney's Animal Kingdom was the last to be visited. We were not allowed access to the animals because contact from outside untrained people could introduce disease. We first visited the building where the parade floats are stored. Since the afternoon parade was to start soon, cast members were busy going through checklists. The motorized parade vehicles are powered by battery so as not to contaminate the park. The trucks used on the Kilimanjaro Safaris are powered by natural gas and use special non-poisoning antifreeze. Next we visited the building where the topiary figures, used throughout Walt Disney World, are made. Some are grown from plants but the majority consisted of wire frames stuffed with moss and irrigation lines. Various plants are inserted to provide the proper color and texture. A short drive brought us to a backstage entrance into Disney's Animal Kingdom where we entered and watched the parade. Since we were in a public area, photos were allowed. As we exited the viewing area a family followed us and had to be reminded that the backstage area was restricted.

The bus took us back to Epcot. The entire tour lasted about seven hours and the price included lunch (Theme Park Tickets were not needed). By paying with our Disney VISA card we got a discount. Although this tour was expensive, we enjoyed it and felt it was worth it.



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Visit to stay informed on the exciting events planned
and registration information.

<http://sections.mbc.org/alabama>

We have a new web address!



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