



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

March • 2011

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STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

After only 3 days of winter this year with no threat of ice or snow on our January "Winterfahrt" (winter drive), we have more driving activities planned.

We have the chance to be critics or admirers of the Grand-Am and Indy Car drivers on 31 March-1 April at Barber. Mercedes-Benz is always well represented in the car corral. Be sure to order your discount tickets to the best parking in the entire park. Alabama Section Vice-President Bob Hinds, Sr and I will be handling the parking of all the European marques. Pause long enough to say, "Hello", or "Guten Tag".

I was asked to represent our section on behalf of Startech 2013 and MBCA Education Foundation at the Mercedes-Benz black tie dinner at Amelia Island on 9-11 March. This is one of the two leading concours d'elegance events in North America. This was a great opportunity to network with MBUSA management and it was cool to rub elbows with the rich and famous. The cars are the stars whether you are admiring them with Jerry Seinfeld, Wayne Carini, or Dario Franchitti and his wife, Ashley Judd, or with any other "car guys".

Of course, on 20 May we will again celebrate Heimatfest with a few touring laps at Barber followed by an escorted "rallye" from the track to the lovely Mountain Brook village where we will stage an informal car show and dine at the wonderful "Avo" restaurant overlooking our elegant cars.

We will schedule a Mercedes-Benz factory tour for Monday 21 May for car show participants.

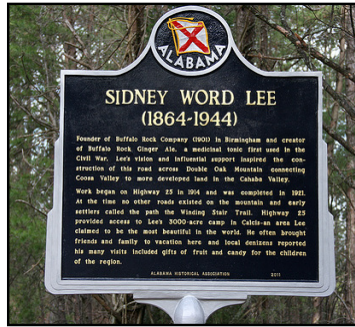
Plans for Startech/Heimatfest 2013 are progressing. We will schedule the steering committee meetings for weekends to make attendance easier. This could welcome the largest Startech ever and establish guidelines for future events.

We are working on interesting driving /social events in the coming months. Please get your ideas and suggestions to us.

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

"The Copperhead" (Ala 25) gets a historical marker

Shelby County has erected a historical marker to honor the vision and support of Sidney Word Lee for the construction of a road linking Leeds in the Cahaba Valley with Vincent and Harpersville in the Coosa Valley by crossing the daunting Double Oak Mountain.



Construction of the road took seven years: from 1914-1921. Today this wide but serpentine billiard table smooth ribbon of asphalt which is the closest I know of to the German "Bundersstrasse" is a favorite of the European cars and motorcycles in the area. Fortunately, slow moving car haters and Harleys seem to avoid this treasure that car enthusiasts refer to as "The Copperhead".

The memorial marker to Mr. Lee, who also founded the locally popular Buffalo Rock Ginger Ale is between mile markers 162 & 163. His great grandchildren, James C. Lee III, current chairman and CEO of Buffalo Rock, and Elizabeth Peyton Lee unveiled the marker.

The next time we enjoy this fantastic road, let's pause to raise a glass of Buffalo Rock to the vision of Sydney Lee of a road to provide access to what he considered to be "the most beautiful place in the world".

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

- 20- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 31- Car corral at Grand Am race

April

- 1- Car corral at Indy car race
- 7- Driver Education with PCA(Heart O'Dixie region) at Talladega
- 17- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

May

- 15 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 20-21- Heimatfest

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das Heimatblatt

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Coming events

Car Corral at Indy Car Race

31 March- 1 April

We will again have discounted parking for the Grand-Am/Indy car race at Barber on 31 March-1 April. Note the date change.

This event continues to increase its success each year. It is the best attended road course event on the schedule. For Indy cars it is only surpassed in attendance by the Indy 500 and the Long Beach street circuit. For Grand-Am it is second only to the Daytona 24-hour race in January.

MBCA always gets a prominent spot in the massive car corral. This year we are working on a Saturday drive after the Grand-Am race



Members enjoying the car corral at last years Indy race

2012 Honda Indy Grand Prix of AL & Porsche 250 Sports Car Corral!

March 29 – April 1, 2012



PORSCHE 250



How to order tickets and a discounted Car Corral parking pass

1. Click [HERE](#) or call 205-262-2832
2. Place your order for all tickets and Car Corral parking passes
3. You will receive a confirmation email with the link to your “print at home” tickets and parking passes!

PLEASE NOTE

- **You must drive your special interest/club vehicle to the event to park in the Car Corral. No exceptions.**
- **This offer applies to advance ticket purchase only. Offer will not be available at the gate.**



Coming events

Heimatfest Hold the Date!

20-21 May

This year our spring Heimatfest (Home Festival) will again be on the third weekend in May (20-21), but it will be a bit different due to the Legends vintage race not being held at Barber this year. Porsche has the track for all of May to introduce the new Boxter to the press and their dealers.

The drive from the track to Mountain Brook Village was so popular that this will take place on the weekend without the race cars. This should give more of our members the chance to participate.

This will be followed by a concours in Mountain Brook Village, and then dinner at one of the nice restaurants there.

We will also arrange for the factory tour as we have in the past. It will be on the Monday following since the drive/show is Sunday.

Barber directors assure us that Legends of Motorsports will definitely return in 2013—on the same weekend—with even more to offer. We will include this great event as an intro to Startech.

--Stay tuned--



**Members enjoying last years
Heimatfest**

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/ AACA 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!

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



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Event Recap

Winterfahrt (Winter Drive)

by Jim Roberts

After two consecutive Winterfahrt drives in below freezing days with patches of snow and ice, it was almost disappointing to gather on a crisp cool day that saw temperatures climb from just below freezing to 55°F at midday.

Thanks to combining the Mercedes-Benz and Porsche Clubs of America with our friends the Birmingham British Motoring Club as our guests, we assembled 50+ cars and 65+ people at the beautiful and warm Barber museum. Director Jeff Ray and auto curator Lee Clark had graciously arranged for their staff to open the building early for us to register in comfort and use the facilities before setting out on the route that MBCA Vice-President Bob Hinds and I had laid out.

Barber is so close to one of our favorite roads, "The Copperhead" (Alabama 25) that any drive starting at Barber would not be complete without including this smooth but very serpentine asphalt jewel.



Silver arrows at the Brierfield Historic Park

We followed 25 across the mountains with their switchbacks past the Morgan Creek Winery and then through the fertile rolling land of horse farms past Columbiana and Montevallo to the ruins of the 1850's Brierfield Iron Works destroyed by Union raiders in the last days of the War for Southern Independence.

After a brief break with our cars literally filling the park we set out again across a less productive, rugged, forested Bibb County crossing the Cahaba Wildlife Management area to emerge just south of West Blockton. From there the roads are still challenging and lightly traveled, but housing density increased as we approached the village of Vance and the Mercedes-Benz US International factory.

We stopped there for a photo-op although the visitor center and museum is closed on weekends. Again our group completely filled the upper parking area.

The circle of the two massive factories was completed with the three mile drive past the front entrance and back to US 11. It was really neat to look back down this ½ mile long line of Mercedes-Benz and Porsche cars followed by MG's, Triumphs and Austin Healeys. I felt like I was back in Germany!



Members stop for a photo-op at MBUSI

forces while driving the products of that company. History has a way of turning upon itself.

Quite a day to see the beginnings of the Iron and Steel industry destroyed in war by U.S. soldiers to the factory that has turned the world's perception of Alabama around that was built by the company whose original production site was destroyed by US forces while driving the products of that company. History has a way of turning upon itself.

Many thanks to MBCA Vice President Bob Hinds for his help in prerunning the route and suggesting the lovely Cypress Inn. Thanks also to the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum and staff and our friends there Jeff Ray and Lee Clark and especially to Bud for opening so early in the morning!

At the end of the day no one got lost, no one crashed, no one broke down, and no one got a ticket.

Event Recap

Celebrating Feiertagsfest in Alabama, the American Home of Mercedes-Benz

By: Bill Hopper

The Alabama Section does things in true German style hosting Feiertagsfest on Saturday December 17, 2011 at the home of Bob and Jane Hinds as their section's celebration of the Holidays! This is the largest gathering of Alabama Section members to a holiday event ever to date, with members attending from all over the state.

Everyone enjoyed fine German fare with a variety of homemade dishes followed by a fine selection of desserts and sweets. Each of the tables held a variety of discussions of section events, the latest techno gadgets, Mercedes-Benz's loved and many other stories were swapped, including that of Ian Lamb's recent acquisition of a classic 1971 Opel GT. Ian an SLK55 driver has become enchanted with this little European sports car built twenty years before he was born! Other attendees recalled their memories of when this snappy little roadster was brand new.



Eastern Region Director, Bill Hopper presenting Alabama Section Vice President Bob Hinds the Eastern Region Officer of the Year award

Feiertagsfest was not only a celebration of fine food, but of two Alabama Section members who were honored that day. Brenda Brown received the MBCA | Alabama Section Member of the Year Award from Section President Dr. James Roberts. Brenda received this well deserved award for all she has contributed to the section over the past year, much of what the section accomplished in 2011 was due to Brenda's tireless work on the Board and with the members of the section.



Alabama Section President Jim Roberts presenting the Member of the Year award to Brenda Brown who is now Alabama Section Treasurer

The other was a Regional Award presented by MBCA | Eastern Region Director William West Hopper was the MBCA | Eastern Region Officer of the Year Award. This went to Bob Hinds, Alabama Section Vice-President. Regional Director Hopper said "With Bob's guidance and work over the past year, not only has the Alabama Section benefited, but so has the Eastern Region and the rest of MBCA been improved by what Bob has accomplished." "The time and effort Bob devoted to Heimatfest this year did not go unnoticed. MBCA members from around the country commented on what a great regional event it was and how Bob made each member who attended feel like they were a special invited guest to the event."

Upon the completion of the celebratory event the section was back to business with a StarTech® 2013 planning meeting, and of course a thorough inspection of the Opel GT.



Ian Lamb (R) shows off his 1971 Opel GT

In der Presse

History of Imitation

Starting with the Super Bowl Hyundai has picked up the Mercedes-Benz lead of featuring the Montgomery, Alabama factory in the TV commercials. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Am I the only person who has noticed the Mercedes-Benz styling cues in the current Hyundai offerings?

Of course, this is not the first instance of other major auto manufacturers trying to emulate Mercedes-Benz styling. Consider the three pointed star which is by far the most recognizable automobile logo in the world—the cars don't even have to write out "Mercedes-Benz" except in the tiny wreath at the base of the star. In the past neither this nor the current door sill words were utilized.

Back in the 1950's , Ford gave an initial nod by making the exclusive Continental MK II have a stand-up four pointed star on the hood while most Americans put down Mercedes-Benz styling as being stodgy. Perhaps the 50's were restrained compared to the striking 500 & 540 K from the 30's, but the 300SL and 190 SL as well as the 300 series were the Bugatti Veyrons of that time except they didn't cost so much—of course, they do now!

Desperate times for Ford and Chrysler in the 1970's saw both of them adopting Mercedes-Benz styling themes for the midsize Ford and the Chrysler "K-cars".

You might also recall that Chrysler got very creative and put a five pointed "pentastar" standing up over the Mercedes-Benz style grille.

Everyone was anxiously awaiting General Motors to come up with a six pointed star, but being more creative they adapted the Benz victory wreath (the circle around the three pointed star represents the wreath)around the meaningless Cadillac shield and stood it up over their Mercedes-Benz type grille on the hood.

I should not close this diatribe without mentioning the Studebaker featured Mercedes like grilles in 1957-64. The last Larks even had an art deco "S" in a circle as a hood ornament. Mercedes-Benz did not object to this and even encouraged it.

General Curtis LeMay had purchased Studebaker when it fell on hard times in the 1950's. He was a great admirer of Mercedes-Benz and worked out

an agreement for 1,000 Studebaker dealers to sell and service Mercedes-Benz by convincing Daimler-Benz, AG management that if each dealer could only sell 2 Mercedes-Benz cars a month, it would equal the entire annual M-B production at the time. Max Hoffman had only imported the costly 300 series. Daimler built new buildings to increase production by 30,000 units a year.

As it turned out, the Studebaker dealers weren't any better at selling Mercedes-Benz than they had been at selling Packards. The mechanics did not even want to buy metric wrenches!

Studebaker went under and Daimler established Mercedes-Benz North America to have total control of distribution and service. Unlike their British, Italian, and French colleagues the German marques thrived by having high standards and well trained service technicians.

MBUSI and Barber Motorsports Park in ads

Sharp eyed viewers might have noted scenes from the Mercedes-Benz US international factory in the Mercedes-Benz "year end event" as well as other MBUSA tv ads.

Many commercials show vehicles on the beautiful Barber track. The natural beauty, lack of paint on the curbing, and lack of advertising signage contributed to this. Many of them are shot in reverse direction, so you may not realize that Barber is the setting.

Currently the Hyundai Genesis ad is done in the conventional race direction, so it is more obvious that the setting is at Barber.

Mercedes-Benz Stars and ML Sales Up

The Birmingham News reported that Mercedes-Benz sales are up 17% overall in February 2012 vs. 1 year ago. By comparison, Honda, Hyundai, and Ford were up 12%, Chrysler 40% from an abysmal February. General Motors was up 1%.

The Alabama built ML sales for February were up a whopping 77% from a year ago which was up significantly from the previous year.

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

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

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



Mercedes-Benz Club of America
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