



Das Heimatblatt

Newsletter for the Alabama Section
Mercedes-Benz Club America

May • 2011

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STERNBLICK

(View through the Star)

James Roberts
President, Alabama Section MBCA

You are probably familiar with the saying that things seem to happen in groups of three. In the Alabama Section we have recently had three instances of good fortune:

First, we have interest in the Huntsville/Tennessee Valley area for more local activities. This has been spearheaded by Larry Richardson, fleet manager for Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville and joined by our Alabama Section MBCA board members including Sam Powers (Huntsville), Pierce Williams (Gadsden), Treasurer Brenda Brown (Anniston), Vice President Bob Hinds (Birmingham), and yr obt svt, as well as Huntsville members Will Powers and Chad Stevens.

We are planning a 23 June event at the U.S Space and Rocket Center which will be part of Startech 2013 and Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville followed by a meeting to plan future local meetings and events in that area.

Meanwhile, we have interest in doing similar things almost 400 miles away in the Pensacola-- Mobile area. This group is led by longtime MBCA members Ken Kirchgessner (Pensacola), board members David Rice (Mobile), Pierce Williams (Gulf Shores), Treasurer Brenda Brown (Gulf Shores), Vice President Bob Hinds (Birmingham), and yr obt svt. It looks like some of us may be traveling quite a bit. It's a good thing Brenda, Pierce I have Smart© cars!

The other great news is that we have verbal commitment from MBUSI management for access for factory tours and for use of the Bill Taylor Training Center for Startech 2013. This has allowed us to move ahead with firm plans for hosting this great national event.

Our next Startech Steering committee meeting will follow our tour of Aldridge Gardens on 19 May. We would welcome your participation and your talents to help make this the greatest Startech ever. We think the factory tour visit will make it the largest.

During this next year we want to get a feel for the Startech venues,

ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, GULF COAST

so we can answer questions that our Startech participants may have from a familiar point of view.

A fourth opportunity (think of the three musketeers) is that the MBCA Education Foundation's "Safe Teens- Safe Families" teen and family driving program is looking to the Alabama Section for one of the prototype events this fall following the pilot one at Starfest. We are looking for pavement in Birmingham, Huntsville, and Pensacola. If you know of a large obstacle free area of pavement that would be available on a Saturday or Sunday, let us know.

New GL shown at the New York Auto Show

The new GL reflects many of the same changes already seen in the new third generation ML: significantly lighter weight but much stronger construction will result in faster acceleration (0-60 mph in 5.5 sec) as well as a 12-20% decrease in fuel consumption.

This already roomy SUV gets even more space. The interiors seem even more luxurious – again following the similarly upgraded ML.

Pricing has not yet been settled, but there should not be a great change from current prices which start at \$63,000 for the 2012 GL.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May

- 15- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 19- Tour of Aldridge Gardens
Startech 2013 planning meeting

June

- 16- High Performance Driving at Barber
- 19- Stammtisch (monthly meeting)
- 23- U.S. Space & Rocket Center
Meeting at Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville

July

- 17 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

August

- 21 - Stammtisch (monthly meeting)

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

Executive Board

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

Treasurer, **BRENDA BROWN**
Anniston, AL
256.237.5277
bama69@cablone.net

Vice Pres., **BOB HINDS**
Birmingham, AL
205.967.5014
bobjanehinds@bellsouth.net

Secretary, **MICHELLE ROBERSON**
Hoover, AL
205-822-4824
mlro206@bellsouth.net

Board of Directors

Member-at-Large, **PIERCE WILLIAMS, Gadsden, AL**
phwj15@juno.com

Member-at-Large, **SAM POWERS, Madison, AL**
256.461.4252, sapowers99@yahoo.com

Member-at-Large, **CAROL WADLEY, Birmingham, AL**
205.529.5400, hwadley@bellsouth.net

Member-at-Large, **DAVID RICE, Mobile, AL**
251-665-4582, drice2009@att.net

Member-at-Large, **ED JONES, Birmingham, AL**
edwardljonesdmd@aol.com

Eastern Regional Director
William Hopper

das Heimatblatt

EDITOR

RHIANNON SCHLANGEN

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Coming events

Aldridge Gardens

19 May

Birmingham horticulturist and garden shop owner, Eddie Aldridge spent his career cultivating and hybridizing native flowering plants into beautiful varieties that can rival the spectacular displays of many sensitive exotics.

His most successful and striking effort was to enhance the flowering of our native Oakleaf Hydrangea to the amazing "snowflake hydrangea" with its foot long clusters of brilliant white flowers on shrubs up to 8-10 feet tall.

Mid May is the peak blooming season in central and North Alabama.

The development of these plants took place on the Aldridge estate in Hoover—just south of Birmingham and less than a mile from Crown Mercedes-Benz. This beautiful estate with its lakes and multiple walking paths was donated to the city of Hoover.

This will be a feature for Startech 2013, so this is a chance for those not familiar with this little known jewel to experience its unique beauty. Those already familiar with Aldridge gardens like any occasion for a visit.

Caution: this is the time of year they conduct plant sales. The smaller ones will fit into any Mercedes-Benz larger than an SLK.

We will gather about 10 am at the gardens.

After our visit we will have lunch at the nearby Costa's restaurant.

Following lunch the Startech committee will retire to Crown Mercedes-Benz to go over contacts with the Marriott hotel and the Barber Vintage Motorsports museum.

Aldridge Gardens is at 3530 Lorna Rd. From I-459 take exit 13 (US 31) south past the Galleria about ¼ mile to Alabama 150 which ends at US 31. Crown Mercedes is on the right. Turn left here on Lorna Rd.

Aldridge Gardens is about 1 mile on the right.

In Der Presse

ML increase leads all Mercedes-Benz models for March

Auto Data Corp. reported U.S. sales in March of the third generation ML at 4070. This represents 45.8% increase over March 2011.

First quarter ML sales were 11,480 in the U.S. which represents a 59.4% increase over the first quarter of 2011.

Total Mercedes-Benz U.S. sales for March increased 7.7% to 23,134. This is an all time record for March.

Worldwide total Mercedes-Benz sales increased 12% to over 314,000 vehicles.

Mercedes-Benz showed the new second generation GL at the New York Auto Show, but it will not be available for sale until September. Pilot production will begin in the Alabama Factory in May.

Aldridge Gardens Tour - May 19, 2012

Name(s) of Member(s) Attending: _____

	Yes	No
Garden Tour	_____	_____

Lunch at Costa's	_____	_____
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Please send registration to MBCA Alabama Section, 2301 Arlington Ave S, Suite 200, Birmingham, AL 35205
Any questions, call Jim Roberts at 205-933-9333 or email jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

Coming Events

U.S. Space and Rocket Museum and Lunch at Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville

23 June

Everyone saw the poignant coverage of the two of the three shuttles being flown to museums after their retirement from service leaving the U.S. with no active spacecraft for the first time in 60 years.

Probably the most significant accomplishment of the U.S. Space program: first extra atmosphere suborbital, first orbital and manned orbital flight, and the extraordinary Apollo moon voyages as well as planning for the international space station were carried out in the NASA and Redstone arsenal facilities in Huntsville.

The U.S. Space and Rocket Museum is a world class immersion into the history of rocketry and space exploration with particular emphasis on exhibits and artifacts beginning with Werner von Braun's handwritten notes – fascinating, if you can read German—of the V-1 and V-2 rockets from the 1940's. The near earth and lunar exploration are very well documented with examples of the rockets and spacecraft.

There is also an I-Max theater with most films featuring space exploration and what it really looks like from an extraterrestrial perspective.

This museum even allows you to experience the G-forces of launch and the weightless of space travel.

The fascinating part is that much of this was done with pencil, paper, and slide rules with primitive computers by a small group of German scientists leading a larger group Auburn and Georgia Tech engineers. My first cousin, Barney H (Ace) Roberts was one of them. If his health permits, we will have him on hand to give personal recollections of the exhibits.

Our own Alabama Section member, Chad Stevens works with the current programs and can also give us insights to the exhibits.

Finally, Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville is a corporate sponsor and has cars in the museum as a "Green Energy" display. It is directly under a Saturn V rocket—of course, it is a star ship...

After visiting the Space and Rocket Museum we will visit Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville where they will provide lunch for us.

This will be followed by a short get acquainted meeting and a change to canvas the Tennessee Valley members on having more local meetings, dinners, or events.

We do need to know how many are attending for the caterer to plan, so please, send in your reservation by 18 June.

U.S. Space and Rocket Museum and Lunch

Name(s) of Member(s) Attending: _____	Yes	No
Space and Rocket Museum	_____	_____
Lunch at M-B of Huntsville	_____	_____

Please send registration to MBCA Alabama Section, 2301 Arlington Ave S, Suite 200, Birmingham, AL 35205 or email jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

Gelegenheiten (Opportunities)

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 Vintage 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!

High Performance Driving at Barber

June 16-17

Our friends with the Porsche Club have been allowing MBCA members to join with them in High Performance "Driver Education" events at Barber Motorsports Park. This challenging 2.37 mile road course with its 17 numbered turn stations and many more actual curves hosts the Indy cars, Grand-Am sports cars, AMA motorcycles, and vintage motorcycles and cars every year.

This is the kind of road challenge your Mercedes-Benz was designed for. If you have ever wondered what it's like to drive your Mercedes-Benz without fear of oncoming traffic or police, this is your chance.

The Porsche Club provides everyone with qualified instructors—some are MBCA members—to help you learn the skills of performance driving, or just to let you see how well your car was engineered.

The next event is scheduled for 16-17 June (Fathers' day) at Barber Motorsports Park. These events are very popular, and they usually fill within 20 minutes of the opening of registration. If you want to get in, go to the site www.clubregistration.net now to familiarize yourself with the information you will need to give them, and have the computer ready at 12 noon on 15 May. If you are quick, you may be #60-70! They only accept 170 entries which are divided into five performance driving experience—not car speed-- levels.

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



CROWN
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Event Recap

Amelia Island Concours d' Elegance

Jim Roberts

As my friend, Bill Warner has staged this great concours d'elégence on the golf course of the elegant Ritz Carlton just north of Jacksonville, Florida for seventeen years, it has grown in participation, attendance, and stature to become the leading Eastern car show and second only to Pebble Beach.

This year my duties with the Mercedes-Benz Club America as co-chair with Bob Hinds of Startech 2013 and as a member of the MBCA Education Foundation, "Safe Drivers-Safe Families" got me invitations to the Mercedes-Benz gala Saturday evening and to the Mercedes-Benz "tent" on the show field on Sunday.

Of course Amelia Island is more than just looking at the fabulous cars on the show field:

Friday and Saturday feature seminars and panel discussions of everything from projected values of investment grade collectable cars to historic racing oriented presentations by the people who participated in these races.

Since these retired racers as well as current racers, writers, stars, and captains of industry are all "car crazy" as Barry Meguair who was also there says, they are very approachable and even willing to sign autographs, if you are not too pushy.

Endurance champion, Vic Elford, was most approachable and even told me how much he was looking forward to being the honored guest of Lotus, Ltd at Orlando and Sebring in October. He and Brian Redman were the masters of the Targa Florio with its 44 mile laps around Sicily making it the last true open road race. Hurley Haywood who supposedly drove his last professional race at the Daytona 24 hours this year is often in Birmingham with his duties with the Porsche Sport Driving School.

We wound up not only being seated at adjacent tables to the honored panel of the retired endurance drivers and Bill Warner, but also with such luminaries as Indy 500 winners Johnny Rutherford and Dario Franchitti. To many people Dario's wife, actress Ashley Judd is the more famous. Yes, she

is striking and is taller than he—but that could be due to the heels. Race drivers need to be small nowadays.

I was pressed into service as a photographer on Sunday as MBCA Education Foundation President and former Regional Director **Doug Dees (above)** presented the MBCA "Most Historically Significant" award to MBCA member Hans Wurl for the 1952 LeMans winning W194 which is the oldest still racing 300SL Gullwing. It was joined by 15-18 other street 300SL Gullwings and roadsters celebrating 60 years since chassis number W194002 led to 900 more over five years. These were all seven figure examples.

This also allowed me access to photograph MBCA past president **Roger Van Ness (below)** receiving the Mercedes-Benz "Award for Excellence" on behalf of the Kent Museum's 1935 500K Special Roadster.

If your taste runs to auctions, both Gooding and RM stage excellent events with the emphasis on upscale European cars. A Porsche 917 with no racing history brought \$4.4 million.

Peachtree Section MBCA stages not just one, but two evening dinners at "The Crab Shack" in historic Fernandina Beach. Both were fully subscribed. Peachtree President Daryl Williams told me that the 68 attendees Saturday represented 14 sections all over North America.

If you have not yet attended the Amelia Island concours, put it on your bucket list, but it will become part of your annual calendar on the second weekend in March.



Event Recap

Mercedes-Benz at Birmingham Indy Car and Grand-Am Races

Jim Roberts

Barber Motorsports Park has always featured a “car corral” which is really an informal car show on the beautifully manicured grounds surrounding what is arguably the loveliest and most challenging road racing course in the world.

This year the early spring had the trees green and the flowers blooming in an almost ideal weather window.

Alabama Section MBCA took the lead positions in planning and executing the massive 240 place 3-day car corral with our Porsche friends in their own separate area this year. Alabama Section President Jim Roberts was named acting director assisted by Vice President Bob Hinds, and Roy Eady. Mercedes-Benz of Huntsville fleet manager, Larry Richardson brought a huge cooler of ice and M-B of Huntsville water along with huggies which was much appreciated by all the workers and participants. Larry also worked tirelessly greeting all the participants.



Early production ML63 AMG from MBUSI



Just a few of the many Mercedes-Benz

Since the organizers also omitted a golf cart or scooter to cover the huge expanse, Dodie Roberts’ Smart© was pressed into service to lead participating cars to their places, chase out interlopers-- often rounding them up like errant cows -- or repairing breaches in the barriers. By the end of the event even the muscle car owners were carefully inspecting the Smart and considering purchase.

Of course, the Mercedes-Benz brand of Daimler, AG were the star cars of the show with seven SL’s ranging back to the Pagoda days as well as a multitude of AMG’s led by a just shown but not quite yet available ML 63 AMG complete with its Alabama manufacturer’s plate kindly shown by Mercedes-Benz US International manager, Scott Malloy.

This car corral area was adjacent to the preferred viewing area under the trees along the “back straight” which is really a very high speed “S” then followed by a left kink off the brow of a hill. Depending on location, up to 80% of Barber’s 2.37 miles of complex turns, hills, and straights can be seen. Most of our participants are seasoned race fans and took chairs to stake out their places early.

We were also adjacent to the fan zone with multiple displays, food and drink vendors, and corporate suites. A popular yuppie restaurant/bar even moved to Barber for the weekend.

An astounding 82,000 visitors were in the area. Many of them picked up information about MBCA and most of them seemed genuinely interested in joining. We look forward to seeing them at other events soon.



J. T. Nesbitt with his Magnolia Special roadster at the Indy 2012 car corral

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
Alabama Section
2301 Arlington Ave S.
Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35205