



Das Heimatblatt

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

November • 2015

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Sternblick

(View through the Star)

Mason Beale
President, Alabama Section MBCA

The transition to Fall is upon us. With the change means festive events will offer special gatherings. One such event is our Holiday Party which initiates our 10 year anniversary celebration.

Most recently (November) we enjoyed a fall foliage drive near Ft Payne. Several members attended which included an enjoyable lunch at DeSoto State Park restaurant. The scenic drive at Little River Canyon was truly amazing. A big thanks to Trip Meister Jim Roberts for developing the wonderful experience.

The Board has scheduled several excellent Winter activities. Events include Holiday Party at "The Club" (December 19), Winterfahrt (January 9), Tech Session (February TBD). Other events are being planned during this timeframe. E-mail "blasts" will be sent as friendly event reminders. I encourage you to attend these events to renew former friendships as well as create new ones.

Congratulations to our newly elected officers: Mason Beale as President, Ken Champlin as Vice-President, Bob Melton as Treasurer, and Dodie Roberts as Secretary. Thanks to all officers for their willingness to serve for 2015-2016.

There are vacant Board Member positions available. If you would like to serve in this capacity, let any officer know of your interest.

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

Tenth Anniversary Celebration **The Club, Birmingham, AL** **December 19th 11am**

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

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

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Total # Attending: _____ x\$45 = _____

Please make checks payable to Alabama Section, MBCA.

Mail with registration form with payment to Bob Melton, 212 Red Bay Dr, Maylene, AL 35114

Questions: masonbeale@msn.com

Upcoming Event Spotlight

Birmingham Stammtisch
Logan's Roadhouse -- US 280
Tues, 15 December 6:30pm

This will be a planning session for StarFest©2018. We will be planning:

1. The social events (i.e. meals)
2. Concours d'elegence with MBCA judging rules
3. Driving events
 - a. Autocross/Defensive Driving
Safe Drivers –Safe Families
 - b. Acceleration runs (drag racing)
 - c. Advanced Driving Skills on Barber track
 - d. Autobahn experience at
Talladega Superspeedway
4. Hotel evaluations and contracts
5. Barber Museum and contract
6. Program assembly & publication
7. Sponsorships
 - a. Ads in Program
 - b. Events
8. Signage
9. Registration

Schedule Of Events

December

- 15 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
This will be a planning session for StarFest 2018
- 19 10th Anniversary of Alabama Section
Birmingham, AL - The Club

January

- 9 Winterfahrt (Winter Drive)
- 19 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280

February

- 24 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's
- 16 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280

March

- 11-13 Amelia Island Concours d'elegance
- 19 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280

April

- 19 Birmingham Stammtisch - Logan's on 280
- 24 Huntsville Stammtisch - Hildegard's
- 26-28 Indy car and Pirelli Challenge races at Barber

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

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Coming events

10th Anniversary Celebration of the Alabama Section

December 19th, 11am
The Club, Birmingham, Al

In October 2005 Alabama Section was chartered as the 80th section of the Mercedes-Benz Club America just before the 50th anniversary of the club.

The event was marked with a presentation of our charter by Southeastern Region Director Len Sokoloff assisted by Central Region Director Bill Johnson at Crown Mercedes-Benz (now Mercedes-Benz of Birmingham).

This event attracted 37 members and associate members, most of whom did not know each other at the time.

Since we had formed a car club, we spent the afternoon crossing the 3 covered bridges in neighboring Blount County and visiting the very Tuscan Church of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Cullman County. This drive has become a favorite of our members.

Most of this original group are still members.

By January of 2006 we had managed to stage a tour of the MBUSI Factory that almost overwhelmed both the Alabama Section and the factory with 78 participants. They had not allowed visits since September of 2001. These factory tours continue each year with the gracious hospitality of the Mercedes-Benz US International.

By 2008 Alabama Section was staging a multi-day regional or special national event called "Heimatfest" (The Home Festival). Unlike other traditional annual MBCA events, Heimatfest has on different years featured concours, defensive driving, autocross, performance driving on the Barber road course, "Autobahn" type experience as Talladega Superspeedway, technical events, or scenic drives. Every one, however, has included a visit to the MBUSI factory and, of course, social events.

In 2010 Alabama Section staged a 5 day event including a drive to StarFest®.

By 2013 this had expanded to become the full national technical event, StarTech. This included very special tours of the factory. MBUSI generously allowed MBCA to use the entire training center for the multiple seminars.

We had five days of technically interesting visits and lectures from the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, to Classic Car Motoring (the South Central regional Mercedes-Benz repair center), the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum for a reception and a panel on how Mercedes-Benz chose Alabama for the factory. Fourteen seminars on new, classic, maintenance, restoration, light systems, environmental considerations of the zero landfill MBUSI factory, to collector car insurance and projected values of Mercedes-Benz Cars and most importantly, engineer led tours to all parts of the factory gave all participants many unique and interesting experiences.

At 300 this was the best attended StarTech® ever.

Last year's Heimatfest drew over 100 participants as did this year's.

Driving and technical events have been planned and executed almost every month for ten years. Our monthly social events in Birmingham have been augmented with bimonthly social events in Huntsville. We would like to expand these to the Mobile-Pensacola area and to the Tallahassee-Dothan-Panama City area. We just need our members in these areas to find us restaurants that will reserve us an area.

Alabama Section's membership has grown from the original 100 to 230 at this time. Many of these charter 100 are still members and some are still active. We would like to extend a special invitation to those charter members as well as those who have served as officers and board members, and especially those who have assisted staging the Heimatfest and StarTech events to join with us in celebrating the ten year anniversary of the Alabama Section for the Mercedes-Benz Club America at "The Club" in Birmingham on 19, Dec 2015 at 1130 am. What the chef calls chicken scaloppini with ham and cheese, is called "Cordon Bleu" in Germany.

Dessert will be German Chocolate Cake (even though chef German was not German, it just seems right).

Note: Vegan or religiously required meals may be specified. Please note this.

Coming events

Winterfahrt

By: Jim Roberts, Event Planner

January 9th

This will be our sixth January drive in defiance of winter. The tradition actually began several years ago when the Atlanta Triumph club put their tops down (disassembled would be more appropriate for the TR-2 and TR-3) and made a short drive. Eight years ago their destination was the Barber Museum. They invited the Alabama chapter and the other European marque clubs to join them in Talladega. We showed them the scenic way to Barber, and the next year staged our own Polar Bear Run.

The following year the British Club decided it was too cold, but the Mercedes-Benz and Porsche Clubs felt the German cars would make it in spite of a bit of ice and snow. Winterfahrt (Winter Drive) was born and has grown each year. Last year's event drew over 80 cars.

MBCA has purchased good long range radios to keep the lead driver apprised of where the various groups are. This will allow us to send the clubs off in separate "waves" that will meet up near the end.

It has become a tradition to assemble at the Barber Museum whose staff is kind enough to let us inside to register and use the restrooms.

The important rules are:

1. This is not a race, but it is not a parade, either. The roads are challenging and fun to drive.
2. Start with a full fuel tank
3. Start with an empty bladder.

We can't stop all the cars, because someone forgets to fill the tank or fails to empty their bladder at the start. The roads we search out have very little traffic and therefore very few gas stations.

This year we will head south on Alabama 25 "The Copperhead" and make a wide arc through Shelby County and the west section of the Talladega National Forest in Bibb County to reach the Mercedes-Benz US International Factory in Tuscaloosa County. While it is normally closed on Saturday, they will open the new Brand Immersion Center for us. This is a recently opened addition featuring historical displays, both early and recent Grand Prix cars as well as an AMG assembly line, GT-3 sports cars, and DTM (European sedan) race cars and

memorabilia. There are interactive stations on safety and on building your own Mercedes-Benz.

The gift shop has everything from beautiful leather briefcases to baby blankets, Formula One hats, jackets, shirts, etc. —everything you need to get into the F-1 paddock except the credentials.

We will continue on to the Cypress Inn Restaurant in Tuscaloosa with its dining rooms overlooking the Warrior River.

For planning purposes, we need to know that you will be joining us. Please respond with the car you are driving and the # of people to jertoothsaver@bellsouth.net

Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

By: Jim Roberts, Event Planner

March 11-13

For each of its 20 years the Amelia Island concours d'elegance has grown and drawn the top cars. It is now the premier Eastern Event and is second only to Pebble Beach in prestige in North America. Mercedes-Benz was the first sponsor and continues as the primary sponsor. They build an amazing pavilion right on the 18th fairway each year.

On Saturday, 45-50 MBCA Club members are chosen to display their cars in front of the MBUSA pavilion in a "Cars & Coffee" setting. You may submit photos of your car and a good story about it to Bill Hopper wwhrestoration@att.net and Pierre Hedary mbownersforlife@bellsouth.net by 31 Dec to receive an invitation.

Even if you are not presenting a car, the entire event should be on your bucket list. There are always several Alabama Section members at the event.

We will gather on Friday night at "The Mill" on I-95 at Kingsland, GA at 7pm.

On Saturday night MBCA takes over the Crab Trap in Fernandino Beach at 6:30. This place usually fills to capacity, so let me know that you are coming at jertoothsaver@bellsouth.net

Welcome, New Member(s)

Carol Carter
Santa Rosa, FL

Liz Jones
Birmingham, AL

Michael Mercier
Hartselle, AL

Michael Pugh
Huntsville, AL

Thank You, Loyal Member(s)

Michael Carter
Bay Minette, AL

Ken Champlin
Birmingham, AL

Forrest Cook
Birmingham, AL

Roosevelt Daniel
Montgomery, AL

Kurt Hagerbaumer
Pensacola, FL

Rich James
Montgomery, AL

Randy Jones
Owens Cross Rds, AL

Dennis Klosterman
Opelika, AL

John Murray
Albertville, AL

Ronald Steensland
Panama Citry, FL

Leonard Terhaar
Pensacola, 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.

Event Recap

Historic Military Vehicle Drive

By: Jim Roberts

26 September

The Bankhead Highway was the first U.S. all weather coast to coast motor road. It was named for Alabama Senator William Bankhead and established in 1919 linking Washington D.C. with San Diego, CA via Charlotte, Atlanta, Birmingham, Memphis, Dallas, El Paso, and Tucson. In Alabama it follows the old US 78 route. This was to allow straightforward winter travel. The original Lincoln Highway (New York-Chicago- San Francisco) was impassable for long periods in the winter. In 1920 the U.S. army tested the new Bankhead route with a motor convoy. The Historic Military Vehicle Association was re-tracing the original trip on its 95th anniversary. Many thanks to Bob Melton for connecting us with them.



Alabama Section members and cars at Tannehill

They made camp at Tannehill State Park just west of Bessemer on 25-27 Sep. When we visited them on 26 Sep it reminded me of a vintage race paddock. Many of the historic vehicles were undergoing repairs and were supported with several modern vehicles and motorhomes. Interestingly, the interiors of several of the larger historic vehicles had been converted into motorhomes as well. They brought back memories for many of us who had served in the military forces.

One of the more interesting historic participants was a "Half Track" being driven by a New Zealander. He explained that there were designed to be fast reconnaissance vehicles, so it had a very large engine which resulted in a fuel consumption of 3mpg at their 45 mph travel speed.

Our Mercedes-Benz cars attracted a lot attention, as some of the historic military vehicles' owners said they owned M-B cars and wanted MBCA membership applications. Next time we need to have a Geländewagen with the Bundeswehr black crosses!

Cullman Oktoberfest

3 October

Cullman's Oktoberfest celebrating the town's German heritage continues to grow. This year the car show was in an adjacent park. We joined with a large number of VW's, a few domestic cars, and a lone Porsche to stage a car show that was 80% German. We would have preferred the jazz and polka music from the festhalle as ambiance.

We started with breakfast at Klingler's German Bakery in Vestavia, with lunch at Rumor's German delicatessen in Cullman.

Our cars attracted quite a bit of interest, but the Burgermeister's choice was a "Cobra" kit car (!).

We will work out some changes for next year.

Event Recap

Euro Autofest

By: Jim Roberts

10 October

This event originated 20 years ago when a local British car club asked BMW if they could stage a car show on the extensive grounds of the new Greenville, SC factory. Over time both the event (over 500 this year) and the factory have grown so much that this year the event was moved to the golf course of the Greenville Embassy Suites hotel. There were a few gaps in all the groups due to the severe flooding in the other parts of South Carolina.

It was great to see Tarheel, Triangle, and Peachtree sections work so closely with Carolinas Section. We noted significant interest and signed up several new members ranging from 14-75 years of age (they volunteered this information).

Our MBCA members also dominated the trophies. We recruited other trophy winners to join MBCA.



About 40 Mercedes-Benz cars were at Euro Autofest

Farbenfahrt

8 November

After nine rainy days there was no rain for our 8 Nov drive from Gadsden along Lookout Mountain and then on to Little River Canyon. This year the fall colors peaked a week earlier, and many had fallen on the road surface as we tackled the 26 miles of twists, turns, and roller coaster like elevation changes following the rim of Little River Canyon.

Our cars kicked up mesmerizing contrails of leaves in our slipstreams.

The recent rains made Nockalula Falls, the cascades and Little River Falls and Desoto Falls truly spectacular this year.

Of course, we shared breakfast at Atalla and the lunch at Desoto State Park before splitting up at Desoto Falls. Interestingly, the best color was on the way down from there.



Above: Fall color near DeSoto Falls



Right: Bob & Carol Ann Melton, Mike McSween (visiting from the Audi Club) Kelly & Todd Adams, Mason Beale, and Ken & Hilda Champlin visit Little River Falls.

In der Presse

GLE and Total Mercedes-Benz Sales Break Record

The GLE (ML Replacement) went on sale in September and promptly broke the ML's sales records.

The GLE and GL (soon to become GLS) SUV's along with the new GLC (replacing the GLK), GLA, and original Geländewagen totaled a record 53,000 worldwide sales. This is a 37% increase over the year before.

The GLE and GL are built only at MBUSI in Alabama.

The GLC is built in Germany, the GLA is built in Gyor, Hungary near the Austrian border, and the Geländewagen is built in Steyr, Austria.

In price, the GLA sells for about what the first generation ML brought in 1998, and it is close to the same size. The GLC starts at the price of what the second generation ML cost in 2008, and the new GLE starts at about \$53,000 and goes up to \$108,000 for the AMG's with the GLE coupe ranging from \$66,000-110,000.

MBUSI is now in preproduction of the GLS which will replace the GL in the next few months.



The new GLS

New GLS in Production at MBUSI

The other shoe has dropped as Mercedes-Benz has released photos and specifications for the new GLS that replaces the GL. The "S" represents its relationship to the S-class as GLE (replacing the ML) is to the E-class, and the GLC (replacing the GLK) is to the C-class.

MBUSI between Birmingham and Tuscaloosa is in full production of the GLS now. Dealers will be taking orders in December with deliveries beginning in mid-March. This is the reason we can't tour plant 2 at this time.

All the new engines (diesel, V-6 turbo, V-8 turbo and AMG) have more power and use less fuel. The "face" is distinctive with slots in its twin bars and a chrome lower bar. The terms elegant and assertive come to mind.

Suspensions range from all purpose to off-road to track performance with multiple adjustments for each thanks to air suspension.

This allows ride height to go from low for pavement grip to high for off-road clearance or firm for heavy towing to cushy soft. Just be sure to get a tutorial on delivery.

Mercedes-Benz Dominates On the Track and In Sales

Mercedes-Benz sewed up the Formula One Manufacturers Championship after the Russian Grand Prix with 5 races remaining.

Mercedes AMG driver Lewis Hamilton clinched his second consecutive Drivers World Championship by winning the U.S. Grand Prix with three races remaining in 2015.

Mercedes-Benz driver Nico Rosberg won the Mexican Grand Prix to place himself almost insurmountably ahead of third place Ferrari Driver and 4 time world champion Sebastian Vettel. All three podium positions in Mexico had Mercedes-Benz power. Rosberg qualified on pole and won the last 3 races.

Mercedes-AMG has 16 consecutive pole qualifying positions in 2015. This is a new record as are the 16 consecutive front row lockouts and 16 wins. All of which are new records.

Even though Mercedes-Benz does not mention their unparalleled international successes in the North American market, Mercedes-Benz has sold and registered 270,164 vehicles in the US in the first nine months of 2015. BMW and Lexus trail with 249,956 and 247,455 respectively. Other luxury makes are more distantly behind.

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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