

StarTracks 2011



Volume 7, Issue 6

November - December 2011

COVERED BRIDGE TOUR – A NICE DRIVE IN THE COUNTRY

Someone had to be in charge of the weather - I decided it would be me ... that worked out pretty well.

Folks started showing up about 10, most were on the road by 11. What a nice time. The storm (hurricane-whatever) Irene had closed many of the roads. Carl Schwartz and I spent eight hours in Bucks County figuring out alternate routes from the original plan Julie Levine brought us five years ago.

We added an alternate (less foreboding) ending leg for those who preferred to not face the steep slope, closed in, drop off to the left, cliff to the right half mile of Uhler-town Road. Closed from Dec 1 due to snow, actually the roadbed was sound and all you needed to do is overcome the optics (and the directions).

Several folks said they would have liked to take longer on the drive but they knew dinner started at 3:30. How nice! The trip was 80 miles. On my final (of five) test drives I did it in about two and a half hours. I had said there was no rush. Folks stopped at the flea market, went up Bowman's Tower, visited local farm stands – Tom Elder stopped to buy some tomato preserves – I didn't know Tom liked tomato preserves.

As the writer of the directions it was a lot of fun to write – 'IGNORE road closed sign', 'continue, but pay attention', 'caution', or 'significant, unseen down slope'.

As planned, the ride ended across the street from the Stockton Inn. They had a 40 foot Mercedes-Benz banner strung across the front of the hotel. What a great place for dinner. We chose either filet of beef or chicken breast something-or-other; both wonderful; real mashed potatoes. If you are in the area and want a reliably good meal choose the Stockton Inn.

Election of officers resulted in Valerie Cristiano - President, Ken Spingarn – Vice President, Pankaj Dayal – Secretary and Lucille Chabala – Treasurer / Registrar. Congratulations to us all for having a great team of enthusiasts to lead us for the next two years.

This event was every bit as good as we had hoped. We should add a couple of more bridges, add some miles and do it again in five or six years. If you missed it and would like a copy of the faultless directions let me know. I can email them to you. Don't go if it's raining – and absolutely not in the snow. Many of these roads are remote, narrow, poorly marked and lightly travelled – how's that for understatement! **Joe Grattan**



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787 Featherbed Lane, Clark, NJ

About 10 minutes WEST of Exit 135 of the GSP.

Sunday, December 4, Noon to 4pm. Get there a little early

Served appetizer choice of

Shrimp Cocktail

Smoked Scottish Salmon

House salad, pick a dressing

Buffet selection of

Sauerbraten

Goulash

Bratwurst and Bauernwurst w/ sauerkraut

Red cabbage and spaetzle.

I think buffet is better than plated/served because you can sample all of the entrees, that's what I'm gunna do. We were here last year. We took a vote. Everyone (except two – the heck with them) of the crowd of 70 voted to return.

In addition there will be a selection of fruit juices, cut fresh fruit, breakfast breads, rolls and butter. The Viennese table will include black forest, plum, mozort cakes as well as apple strudel. Coffee, tea, soft drinks are all included. Cash bar.

Costs will be \$25 per grown up, maybe I should say **adult** because some lucky adults – like me - are yet to grow up. Price is \$5 for the 12 and under set for the same menu.

The GA Club web site & directions: <http://www.deutscherclub.us/>

See page 15 for information about our annual "Toys for Tots" charity drive.

For reservations and payment, please contact Lucille Chabala, 6 Brook Way

West Orange, NJ 07052. 973-731-9133 Luluchab@aol.com

FOR SALE: 1971 Mercedes-Benz 280SE 3.5 Coupe Metallic blue exterior, blue leather interior. A/C, Good running condition. Three owners, 210,000 miles Needs some TLC. Asking \$9,500. Andrew Permison thepermitage@comcast.net 973-379-7283



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FOR SALE: Mercedes Benz SL removable hard top including stand and cover, \$1000.00 or best offer. This mint condition top (signal red with a palomino headliner) is from a 1991 SL with 34,000 original miles. Located in Northern New Jersey. Carl 201-401-4421 nbehriinger@hotmail.com



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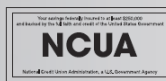
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Technical Corner

By Andreas Molde, Tech Advisor

As we head into the Fall/Winter season I would like to remind you to check and clean the water drains on your MB, especially on newer vehicles. They can clog up pretty quickly with leaves and other debris and could cause water to enter the interior of the vehicle, which can cause extensive (and expensive) damage.

This might be a good time to replace the wiper blades, too, which should be done twice a year, preferably in the spring and fall.



If your MB has a Tire Pressure Monitor System, make sure you have the correct pressure in the tires. The pressure can easily drop several pounds when the ambient temperature drops, let's say from 60-70 degrees down to 20-30 degrees overnight and that may just be enough for the TPC/TPM light to come on.

Lastly, if you drive your MB in the winter, consider snow tires on all 4 wheels, whether it's a 4-Matic or rear wheel drive. I also like to add some weight in the trunk of a rear wheel drive MB, since most of them are fairly light in the rear. About a 100-150 lbs of Kitty Litter or Salt will do, which you can use for traction if you ever get stuck on an icy driveway.



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Forty-One Section Events in the Past Two Years

As shown here, NNJ has sponsored, cosponsored or endorsed 41 events in the past two years; something for you to choose every three weeks. Clearly, no one, except me, goes to all of them. I won't be going to all of them next year, but I did in 2010 & 2011 (whew).

There are, of course, several traditional events; Antiques Road Show, AACA in Florham Park, June Jamboree, German Marque in Fleetwood, Alpine Classic, Fairfield Concours, Annual Picnic, Holiday Party. It took us a while to develop these favs; lots of trial and error. Trends change; events fall out of favor and need to be replaced.

There is also a lot of other stuff; car shows, concours, tech sessions, lunch at someplace nice, maybe even a little kulture now and again.

New ideas are sometimes hard to come by. I've asked for suggestions in the past and have received / acted on a couple of good ones. I've also acted on a couple of duds but nothing ventured, etc. **Joe Grattan**

Column1	The 20 Events of 2011	The 21 Events of 2010
Jan	Pre-owned inspection@MB Flemington	
Feb	Becker Auto Sound	Tech Session @ Euro Tire in Fairfield
Feb	Tech Session -Precision Motors	
Mar	Antiques Road Show	Antiques Road Show
Mar	Piano Recital in Princeton	
Apr	Auto XX with Porsche	Tech at Details and Shade Tree
Apr	Judging Seminar at Globe	
May		Edison Lab Tour
May	AACA in Florham Park	AACA in Florham Park
May		Rallye at the Meyersville Inn
June	June Jamboree	June Jamboree
July	Deutsche Classic/Fleetwood	Deutsche Classic/Fleetwood
July	MB night at German Club in Clark	MB night at German Club in Clark
July	Auto XX with Porsche	Open Road Car Classic
Aug	Tech Session at MB Collision Center	Kart racing rained out
Sept		Oktoberfest
Sept	Regional Picnic - rained out	Regional Picnic
Sept	Fairfield car show	Fairfield car show
Sept	MBCA Day in Summit	Starfest in VA
Oct		Autocross in Englishtown
Oct	Covered Bridge Tour	AAA Driver Improvement
Oct	Alpine Classic	Alpine Classic
Nov	Tour of MB in Manhattan	New car intro at Benzel Busch
Nov		Karting in Millville rained out
Dec	Holiday Party at GA Club	Holiday Party at GA Club

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THE MOST EXCITING OPEN VEHICLE

On September 18, 2011 the 8th Annual Fairfield Concours d'Elegance was held on the grounds of the Fairfield County Hunt Club in Fairfield CT.

Perfect weather brought over 8,000 visitors to view a wide spectrum of stunning automobiles.



The selection of cars, representing some of the most significant cars in existence, makes the Fairfield Concourse one of the premier events on the East Coast show circuit.

A Bonhams Auction, held in the afternoon, brought a further highlight, in addition to factory displays showing their latest models, with the new McLaren MP4-12C getting the most attention.

I participated with my 1957 Mercedes 300SL Roadster and was pleased to receive



the "Most Exciting Open Vehicle" award, which is quite an honor considering the over 200 magnificent automobiles on display.

More so, it is a wonderful present and recognition for Mercedes-Benz, in the year of celebrating the 125th anniversary of the invention of the Automobile.

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High Gear

John Kuhn Bleimaier



The automobile and the concept of freedom are intimately intertwined. The open road and the sense of mobility are at the epicenter of American culture. When foreigners think of our country their predominant image is of the US citizen behind the wheel of his car going wherever he chooses, whenever he chooses. Furthermore, the choice of vehicle driven by the free American represents a statement of his personal values and fundamental beliefs. This is the essence of the American dream

There is no question in my mind that, if the US Constitution had been written in the 20th Century, the automobile would have found its way into the bill of rights. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the right to bear arms, the right to a jury trial, the abolition of cruel and unusual punishments; these would have been joined by the right to drive, free access to highways and bridges as well as freedom of vehicular choice. Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues were molded by the independence of the frontier life style. Self reliance and self determination were the natural by-products of an environment far removed from king and constabulary. When the automobile came on the scene a century and a quarter ago, it was just in the nick of time to reclaim the sense of freedom that could otherwise have been eroded in a hyper organized modern society.

It's our job as car club members to ensure that the inalienable rights attendant upon individual locomotion are recognized, protected and enshrined in the sacred document of the republic. The 9th amendment to the Constitution guarantees that all the rights not specifically mentioned in the Bill of Rights and elsewhere are nonetheless vouched safe to the people. Well and good. However, the Founders recognized that government is an inherently voracious entity which devours freedoms and resources. Thus they framed a unique statement of rights and responsibilities replete with checks and balances. They also provided for amendment of the Constitution in order for this document to address changing times. We now need a new constitutional amendment stating that driving an automobile is a basic human right, that governments and their agencies may not charge for the use of public roads and that there is fundamental automotive freedom of choice.

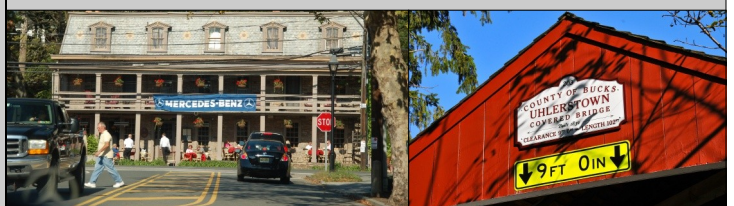


From the dawn of the automobile era Americans took for granted their inherent right to utilize this miraculous new instrumentality as they pleased. Note that in Great Britain and elsewhere in the Old World a very different mentality prevailed. A hundred years ago British law required motorists to drive behind a flagman on foot warning of an approaching motorcar. How thoroughly un-American!

There is a natural bureaucratic tendency to erode freedom even in our democratic society. Behold the invidious notion that driving is not a right but a privilege. Furthermore, governmental authorities have arrogated unto themselves the prerogative to charge tolls for the use of roads and bridges which were built with public funds. Big brother has even devised an electronic device which senses your use of turnpikes and parkways so that you can be sent a monthly statement. Additionally a federal agency has the temerity to tell the populous what cars it may and may not import. The Founders would be indignant.

Because the aforementioned infringements have gradually crept into the body politic notwithstanding our Constitutional protections, it is time to amend that mighty instrument to set right the injustice. If driving is a right your driver's license can not be revoked without a trial before a jury of your peers. The anomaly of charging citizens for the use of public roads must be recognized for what it is: extortion. The convoluted red tape surrounding the importation of uncertified foreign cars must be cut.

When we implement the foregoing agenda we will have given real meaning to the phrase, "land of the free, home of the brave." Gentlemen & ladies of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America: Start your engines! Damn the speed bumps... full speed ahead!



From the President Joe Grattan



JOE GRATTAN'S SWANSONG

As I close out 6 years as part of the leadership team I am entitled to brag, but I also have to acknowledge there are things I could have done differently.

First a little business...

On the up side I was able to build on what Doug / Andreas / Lucille had done and continue to increase the treasury to a level equal to what we spend in a year. You will see in the first issue of 2012 where we stand financially. It is my expectation we will have spent on goods / services / donations about \$24,000 in 2011. Our prudent reserve will be less but we will build it back up.

A big annual expense, the newsletter, costs us about \$5,000 per year. The advertising is essential to the support of the newsletter.

The June Jamboree requires 35- 40 volunteers to run. Including the judge's seminar and lead-in work, this cost us about \$5,500 this year.

We get back about 20% of your annual dues from the National office.

We use the overflow to put gifts on the table, logo shirts at discount, donations to selected causes and subsidize events. There is no free lunch. We work for what we get.

I don't mean to load this message with business stuff but the Club **IS** a business.

We run / support / endorse about 20 events a year. All, or most, have costs. Half, or fewer, have registration fees.

We go to car shows, tech sessions, park on the grass with people we just met, have lunch / dinner, play nice with others, smile when we might not otherwise, so forth / so on; lots of interesting things to do and talk about.

However, the fact is, just as at your house, the money needs to be there.

What would I have done differently....

I'm thinking this is going to be hard to write. No one wants to admit errors/omissions/ flaws. In business I could get insurance for this.

Clearly, I have not paid as much attention to the DRIVER

side of our membership as I should have. I made some good attempts with Auto XX, helped by JKB, and Karting – rained out. I failed to develop the straightaway idea. The Covered Bridge Tour was a big hit. But that's a drive in the country, not a DRIVE.

I could have done better on getting the teenagers to come to events. I always thought this was a good idea but never figured out the proper incentive for the kids. The logical supporter of an about-to-get-a-license teenager is a parent / grandparent. I was never able to put that together; maybe a gift certificate to Best Buy.

I talked a lot about a Drive-n-Dine or a Weekend Day Drive but it never happened. Wednesday nights at a diner – show up talk cars/kick tires. Going to a cruise night someplace – just show up, hang out and talk cars. Never did it.

We kicked around the idea of a photo / slide night in November; never got off the ground.

We have a lot of young families but they don't have the time to come to many events: soccer practice, band recital, track meets, Disneyland at Spring Break and all that stuff.

What type of event will draw these members?"

My thought about a family picnic didn't draw a resounding Hazzah, especially when someone suggested the picnic be combined with an AutoXX. Guess I should have figured that.

Join with other German Marques for a concours of some kind, maybe at the GA Club in Clark?

Go to Limerock for their big deal in September, started to plan but didn't follow thru.

On the plus side...

We built the newsletter from 12 to 16 pages – 20 pages for the July / Aug issue with a color centerfold. Thank you Ken Spingarn, our supportive advertisers and all the folks that contribute interesting content. It ain't always easy.

We changed to an improved system of emails for all members. Emails are now more professional, concise, informative.

We continue to have 13 members on the Leadership Team. We've even gone into some succession planning.

The June Jamboree is smoothly run and continues to grow

– we had 115 (most ever) cars registered this year. Although this is a Section event it is now listed on the Club's National calendar, discussed, planned for, at National meetings and draws leaders from MBUSA and the National office in Colorado.

Our donations to good causes this year exceeded all previous years.

We continue to enhance our relationship with two agencies that provide training for challenged adults by purchasing their goods and services.

About 75 members are wearing Lands' End shirts with our Section logo when they go to car shows. All purchased at (sometimes significantly) reduced prices. Advertising is good.

All members received a free MBCA static-cling logo, included in the newsletter earlier this year, to put on the car window. Some folks asked for additional static clings for other cars. If you want another one (or two, three?) let me know. Advertising is good.

For the past two years we distributed 'calling cards' and 'hang tags' for members to give to other MB owners that are not members of the Club. Advertising is good.

The Mayor of the City of Summit decreed Sunday September 18, 2011 Mercedes-Benz Club of America Day in Summit, NJ. MBCA was founded in Summit in 1956. Advertising is good.

Included on page 10 is a listing of the 41 events we sponsored / co-sponsored or suggested in the past two years. I enjoyed being here. See you down the road.



Star Tracks 2011 on the web

http://sections.mbca.org/northern_new_jersey

Reminder:

Did you know that **For Sale** ad submissions are free for members? Just email your ad to the editor by the 21st of the month prior to publication. You may include one or more digital photos with your ad. Send to khs@openix.com

Toys for Tots

Time to think

Of others - for

Years we have generously donated

Selflessly to others less

Fortunate than

Ourselves – please

Remember that

This Holiday season we will

Once again be collecting new, unwrapped

Toys for Tots on

Sunday, December 4th at our Holiday Party

Please remember to bring your donation to the Holiday Party on Sunday, December 4th at the German American Club in Clark, New Jersey. If you are unable to attend the event, please consider dropping off a toy at your local collection point or making a donation to a favorite charity of yours. **See page 2.**

Thanks in advance for your generosity and caring.

Valerie Cristiano



MOVING: Send Address
Changes to: MBCA
1907 LeLaray Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
or call 1-800-637-2360

Notice:

The next deadline for submission of all written and graphic material to the editor is Dec 21, 2011. Please email your submissions to Ken Spingarn khs@openix.com



NNJS Upcoming Events

Sunday, December 4 — Annual Holiday Party — German American Club — Clark, NJ — See page 2

January/February 2012— Tech Session at Shade Tree Garage — Morristown NJ — Date to be announced

March/April 2012 — Annual Antiques Road Show — Date to be Announced

Sunday, May 6 — AACA Auto Show at Automatic Switch — Florham Park, NJ — Details to be announced

2012 and beyond —Please remember to visit our website often and read our newsletters in the coming year. http://sections.mbca.org/northern_new_jersey/

We are planning several new activities, including mystery drives, rallies, autocross, defensive driving school and hands-on driving events

We usually have multiple events every month, so take advantage of what our club has to offer you. We also encourage your input.

Please write to any of the officers or board members listed on the second page with your comments or ideas.

On behalf of the Northern New Jersey Section - Mercedes—Benz Club of America, we wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season and a Healthy & Happy New Year.

