



das Heimatblatt



VOL. 5 • NO.7

Alabama, Mississippi, Gulf Coast November/December 2009

"Home of Mercedes-Benz US International"

Sternblick (View Through The Star)

Jim Roberts, President Alabama Section MBCA

Wow, what a year for the Alabama Section!

We were able to host a special national event that drew participation from as far as South Florida, Maine, and Minnesota including four MBCA national directors. We had a great time with this and greatly appreciate all the assistance we enjoyed from our good friends in the Peachtree Section.

We are already planning another Heimatfest for 2010 that should certainly include a factory tour this time as well as a very upscale vintage racing event, and a Bonham's auction to go along with the concours d'elegance & car show at Barber Motorsports Park. Preliminary details are in this issue.

We have just had a great fall drive up Little River Canyon and on to Chattanooga.

We are looking forward to our holiday party on 12 Dec and the Polar Bear Run on 9 Jan.

I'm pleased to announce that our newest member, Rhiannon Schlangen, is now our official newsletter editor. Rhiannon has actually been putting Das Heimatblatt together and producing it for its entire existence. She also sifts through the sometimes inconsistent information we get from the National Business Office—dozens of you would have been omitted for at least one month, if she had not tediously checked our previous records.

Please come to the holiday party to meet Rhiannon in person and thank her for her efforts. She is receptive to driving a Mercedes-Benz, if you have a spare one!

Membership Meetings

Note: No meeting in December

Dale's Southern Grill
6pm dinner, 7pm meeting

Membership meetings take place the 3rd Tuesday each month at the Hoover Dale's Southern Grill. This is 1/2 mile south of the Vestavia location and is south of I-459 and 1/4 mile south of the Alabama 150-US31 intersection on the left.

Visit Our Website

This will keep you informed on the exciting events planned by Alabama Section, MBCA.

It will also serve as a reference if you lose your newsletter.

This will have a description and registration for upcoming activities. Many thanks to Carl Cullison for establishing and updating our website.

www.mbca.org/alabama



Birmingham Police add Smart© to Fleet

In a surprisingly rational move the Birmingham Police Department has added four Daimler built Smart© cars to use in dense high visibility applications like shopping centers, special events, and downtown.

The Smart's at \$14,000 equipped with light bars and other police equipment will eventually replace the 3-wheel Cushman scooters which cost \$32,000 and have no a/c, heat, or seatbelts. They effectively combine the danger of a motorcycle with the mass of a car, while the Smart© has the mass of a motorcycle and the safety and comfort of a car.

Does this mean that police forces in this country are finally wiseing up to the German way of using small nimble cars in town and really quick ones on the open road? Most now use the cumbersome and not very quick Ford Crown Victoria or even worse the Chevy Yukon SUV which is a heavy body on a truck chassis!

Dodie has already met one of the B.P.D. Smarts on 20th street in Birmingham. Rather than a light flash to salute each other, Smart© drivers do a silly clown wave. When she did this, the police officer responded with the same wave. Ya gotta love it!

At 16,000 miles hers is still trouble free and delivers 40+ mpg in town with a non economy driving style.



MERCEDES-BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA ALABAMA SECTION

Executive Board

President, JIM ROBERTS
205.933.9333
Fax 205.933.9338
jertoothsaver@bellsouth.net

Treasurer, CARL CULLISON
205.274.4706
cmculli@otelco.net

Secretary, DODIE ROBERTS
VicePresident, MANNYSOUSA 205.871.7235
205.995.4911
edbrowron@windstream.net
porgal@charter.net

Board of Directors

Member-at-Large, BOB HINDS 205-967-5014

Member-at -Large, GEORGE KOTELES 850-729-0566

Member-at -Large, SAM POWERS 256.461.4252

Eastern Regional Director
Greg Magnus
greg@eoecho.com

das Heimatblatt

das Heimatblatt is published monthly by the Alabama Section, Mercedes-Benz Club of America, Inc. Copy deadline: 10th of the month preceding the month of issue. Please type and double space copy.

ABOUT OUR ADVERTISERS: We hope you will support our advertisers. No inference, however, should be made that advertising in **das Heimatblatt** implies approval of their products or services by the Club, its Officers or members, or by Mercedes-Benz-USA Inc. or Daimler-Chrysler AG.

MEMBERSHIP information or renewal, call toll free:
[1-800-637-2360](tel:1-800-637-2360)

You can send your articles or ads via E-mail or FAX for inclusion in das Heimatblatt.

Event Recap

Farbenreise (Color Trip)

Jim Roberts

In spite of intermittent light rain which decreased the traffic and made the waterfalls spectacular, we had an unforgettable drive through breathtaking fall colors at their peak.

Continuing all the way up Little River Canyon Road which is twice as long and features more turns per mile than the more famous “Tail of the Dragon”, we were treated to multiple waterfalls, deserted roads, and always beautiful yellow, orange, and brilliant reds of the greatest fall colors anywhere. As we passed through several “tunnels of trees” or “canopy roads” the swirling multicolored leaves lifted by each Mercedes-Benz created a surrealistic vision as our long snake of star cars proceeded along the canyon rim twisting, turning, climbing, and diving. My antique Becker “Europa” radio added to it with baroque music that seemed to fit the mood of the drive.

One of the falls was over 600 feet and is only seen in rainy weather. Noccalula, Little River, and Desoto Falls were awesome with huge volumes of flow in their spectacular drops of 190ft (Noccalula and Desoto).



The whole trip was a once in a lifetime experience.

We wound up at the historic Chattanooga Choo-Choo hotel/restaurant built in the century old train station that was immortalized by the Glenn Miller Band playing the song of the same name,

Prizes were handed out for those who could answer trivia questions that were a combination of paying attention to where you were and knowing the lyrics to the song. It took some coaching to get the correct answers. I suppose I expected

most to be as familiar as I was having played this music in a “Big Band” in my high school and college days! Everyone had a great time and eventually got all the answers.

For those who are fans of the big band era in the 1930’s and 40’s, the Glenn Miller Band will be performing there in May.

Sleeping in the 70-100 year old passenger train car was a unique experience. Sunday dawned clear and crisp. We had booked a luncheon cruise on the “Southern Belle” riverboat which gave a different perspective on the city and the fall colors.



Eight of the participants had never been on one of our MBCA drives, but all vowed they would return.

Ages spanned several decades and the cars ranged from the new E and C class back to my old (1978) 116. For the first time I can remember, sedans outnumbered SL’s—perhaps the weather influenced the choice of cars.

What could be better: great cars on great roads with great scenery with old and new friends! We’re already planning even more for next year—maybe even a bi-regional event with Peachtree and Smokey Mtn. and Nashville Sections.

Coming Events

9 January

Polar Bear Run

Several years ago a group of Triumph enthusiasts in Atlanta were inspired by the Polar Bear Club in New York who cut a hole out of ice and jump in on New Year's Day, thought they should take their notoriously fragile British cars for a midwinter drive.

The drive has a different destination each year. Three or four years ago their destination was the Barber Motorsports Museum. About a hundred Birmingham enthusiasts met them in Talladega and joined them all the way to Barber.

Since then we have made the Polar Bear Run an annual event for the Alabama marque clubs. You will see about a hundred cars from Alfa to VW. This is great fun and draws a lot of attention.

Meet at Barber Motorsports Park in Birmingham (I-20 exit 140— the first exit east of I-459) at 8:30am. The Barber Museum will be open to use the "Toiletten" which are always immaculate. If they don't have another event scheduled, they have been known to let us drive a few laps of the track.

We will depart by 9am in groups of marques. I think Porsche, Ferrari, and Lotus will lead, followed by Mercedes-Benz, so try to park with the other M-B cars.

The route will take us via challenging but well maintained roads to the covered bridges in Blount County and to the 13th century Tuscan pilgrimage "Church of the Blessed Sacrament" near Hanceville.

We will dine at the "All Steak" (which has many non-steak entrees) restaurant in Cullman where we might entice them to prepare some authentic German food.

There is no fee for the drive, but if you want a static cling decal for your car commemorating the event, they will be available for \$5.00.

This is becoming a great winter tradition that draws over 100 cars. We are fortunate to be toward the front. I know the Porsche, Ferrari, and Lotus guys. Believe me, they will not hold us up!



Empire 
Autohaus Inc.
Extraordinary Automotive Care
www.EmpireAutohaus.com



Audi, Acura, BMW, Honda, Jaguar, Lexus,
Mercedes-Benz, Saab, Toyota, Volvo, VW

South of Hoover in Pelham
270 Yeager Parkway, 35124
205-664-5757

Coming Events

12 December

St. Nickolaus Tag (St. Nicholas Day) Holiday Party

Home of Jim & Dodie Roberts

11:00am

Birmingham, AL

December 6 is the designated day of St. Nicholas. In Germany the advent season begins four Sundays before Christmas, but the first real gift giving time is 6 December (Sankt Nickolaus Tag). You will see people dressed in the long robes worn in Nicholas' day in Turkey as this benevolent saint gives gifts to children long before Christmas Day became a major celebration.

The German speaking countries as well as the Netherlands (Sankt Nickolaus becomes "Santer Klaus" in Dutch) embraced this tradition in the middle ages but added a twist to keep the children in line:

Nickolaus is always accompanied by at least one elf (Knecht Ruprecht) whose mission is to punish those children who have not been good as the pair visit schools December 6.

I'm sure every kid who plays soccer does not receive a beautiful trophy in Germany, or Holland, because Knecht Ruprecht actually gives cinders and sticks to some of the children! Of course, they behave better from first advent, but his memory is longer!

While this is probably horrifying to most Americans today, the practice does make the children aware of the responsibility for one's actions. This continues with them as adults. Perhaps there is a lesson there.

Dodie Roberts has volunteered to host the Alabama Section MBCA at our home in the Birmingham suburb of Mt. Brook. We live on a very Mercedes-Benz friendly street: There are 10 Mercedes-Benz cars among the 14 families, so no one will notice a few more star cars!

We will gather at 11am to allow people from other areas to join us and return home the same day.

We do need to know how many to plan for, so be sure to let us know you will be joining us by 5 December. This is a great way to celebrate a very successful year, meet with old friends, and make new friends.

We will send directions as we receive reservations.

Email: jertoosaver@bellsouth.net Tel: (205) 933-9333 or (800) 228-2997
Cell (205) 529-0071—Jim or (205) 960-1721- Dodie

Holiday Party Reservations

12 December 11:00am

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

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

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Car(s): _____

Mail with reservation form to: 2301 Arlington Ave S. Birmingham, Al 35205
or e-mail to jertoosaver@bellsouth.net

Autorennen (Auto Racing)

Developments are fast are fast and furious in the opera that is Formula One

I. Mercedes-Benz sells interest in McLaren

After several rather contentious years of partnering with the British/Middle Eastern consortium, Mercedes-Benz has sold its 40% interest in the McLaren F-1 team.

Mercedes-Benz will continue to supply McLaren with engines through 2015.

McLaren will continue with #1 & 2 on their cars, because World Champion Jenson Button is moving from Brawn Mercedes-Benz to McLaren Mercedes-Benz. Now McLaren will have two British drivers to favor.

II. Mercedes-Benz buys Brawn GP

As we predicted earlier, Mercedes-Benz has purchased Brawn GP from Ross Brawn and will rename the team Mercedes-Benz F-1. This is the team that won the World Championship in its first year using Mercedes-Benz engines after Honda gave up on this team after the 2008 season where they were often the slowest cars in the race.

This will be the first official Mercedes-Benz Factory team in Formula-One since 1955, although M-B engines have been in McLaren cars for 15 years.

But, wait—there's, more...

III. Michael Schumacher to Mercedes-Benz?

Mercedes-Benz says their driver line-up will be a major surprise. The team will need two drivers, since Rubens Barrichello has also left for Renault.

It is well known that seven time world champion and 91 race winner (the next most successful F-1 drivers were Alain Prost with 51 wins and Juan Fangio with 5 championships, two of which were with Mercedes-Benz) Michael Schumacher would like to be driving in F-1 again. Add in the fact that Ross Brawn was with Schumacher for all seven championships as they moved as a team from Benetton (now Renault) to Ferrari, and you have the ability and the chemistry to go right back to the top again,.

The other driver? How about world champion Kimi Räikkönen who replaced Schumacher at Ferrari and who was bought out of his contract with Ferrari in favor of Fernando Alonso for 2010.

The nice thing about Formula One is that all this Machiavellian politics and deal making keeps the interest up even when the cars are not racing!

At least now we will get to hear the German rather than the British national anthem when Mercedes-Benz wins!



In Der Presse (In the Press)

Mercedes-Benz Top Quality in Consumer Reports

The annual quality survey by Consumer Reports gave the new GLK SUV the most reliable rating of all upscale/luxury SUV's. The GLK is a bit smaller than the Alabama built ML and is built in Germany on the new C-class platform.

There is speculation that the current factory revisions in the MBUSI facility near Birmingham will allow production of the next C-class and GLK in Alabama.

Mercedes-Benz overall was rated of better quality than Audi, BMW, Chevrolet, Saturn, Jeep, Dodge, Cadillac, and Chrysler which was rated worst of all.

Porsche and Saab were the top rated European cars, and GM will dump Saab---go figure!

As anyone who really studies automobiles knows, the Consumer Reports surveys give equal weight to all "problem areas". These can be as minor as a navigation system that actually requires reading the manual while marginal braking or road holding or lack of engineering for accident avoidance or survivability would not even be experienced or valued by the majority of Consumer Reports readers.

While it's nice that Mercedes-Benz has put a model at the top of its class, this is only a measure of initial quality and is not really scientific.

Birmingham Mercedes-Benz Supplier Gets VW Contract and More Work for MBUSI

Birmingham's Kamtek, Inc (formerly Ogihara) which supplies body stamping parts for the Mercedes-Benz MBUSI factory in Alabama and its Freightliner truck facility in North Carolina was awarded a major contract for VW's new manufacturing facility in Chattanooga.

Kamtek has already been constructing a major expansion to their sprawling factory in northeastern Birmingham's Pinson Valley industrial complex. This is reported to be in preparation for Mercedes-Benz production of the next generation C-class in Alabama. After starting with Mercedes Benz Kamtek has become a regional supplier not only for the Mercedes-Benz ML, GL, and R class, the "Sprinter" vans sold as Mercedes-Benz, Freightliner, and Dodge, but also for Nissan's vehicles produced in Mississippi and Tennessee.

Twenty years ago there were only 2-3 suppliers to the automobile industry in Alabama. Today there are 400, and the first two (Saginaw Steering and Chrysler Electronics) have closed.

"Alles neu wird alt" ("Everything new becomes old" or "times are changing")

Neues aus Mercedes-Benz

(New from Mercedes-Benz)

Production and shipments begin on ML 450 hybrid

Production of the new hybrid ML has begun at MBUSI in Vance, Alabama

Like the S450 hybrid, this model combines a 275 hp version of the 3.5 liter V-6 with a lithium hydride battery and an electric motor between the engine and 7-speed transmission. Slowing down reverses the motor into a generator.

The system results in 21 mpg city / 24 mpg highway vs. 15/20 for the ML 350. The ML 320 Bluetech diesel gets 20 city/ 26 highway, so the hybrid is more of a political statement than a truly more efficient vehicle.

Interestingly, the true cost of the hybrid is hidden since it is only available on a special lease program for \$659 a month for 36 months or \$549 a month for 60 months.

The diesel version of the ML is only about \$1000 more than the ML 350. At this mid November date diesel is about 15-18 cents less per gallon than premium gasoline, if you pick your diesel sources carefully.

C-Class production for Alabama

Daimler chairman Dr. Dieter Zetsche was reported to say that producing sedans at MBUSI would be a viable way to balance world currency fluctuations.

The dollar has recently fallen to new lows against the Euro, and work is in progress at MBUSI to allow production of the ML, GL, and R-class on the same line. At this time the ML can be produced in both of the Vance factories, but the GL & R class can only be produced in one of the other of them.

The C-class at 45,000+ US sales now slightly leads the combined US sales of the ML, GL, and R-class. The capacity for both plants at MBUSI is 150,000+.

MBCA Alabama Section Election

The following Alabama Section members have agreed to serve as officers and board members for 2009.
Please write in others that you may wish.

President- Jim Roberts, Birmingham Other _____

Vice President- Manny Sousa, Birmingham Other _____

Secretary- Dodie Roberts, Birmingham Other _____

Treasurer- Carl Cullison, Oneonta, AL Other _____

Board of Directors:

Bob Hinds, Birmingham Other _____

Bob Hinds is a retired engineer who has been very active in the Mopar Club and the Antique Automobile Club of America where he is still the newsletter editor of the local chapter. He is a certified MBCA & AACA judge.

Bob joined MBCA before he purchased a 2008 C300. He has become quite a Mercedes-Benz enthusiast and has attended and worked several events for the Alabama Section.

Sam Powers, Huntsville, AL Other _____

Sam Powers is a retired Navy physician who has owned Mercedes-Benz vehicles for 30-40 years. His present star is a 2010 E 550 which he describes as the best vehicle he has ever owned.

Sam has served on the board for the last 2 years and has missed very few Birmingham meetings even though he lives in Madison which is a Huntsville suburb. He has attended most of our events and helped to work some of them.

Carol Wadley, Birmingham Other _____

Carol Wadley has been very active with the Alabama Section. Carol is very attached to her 450 SL which her beloved late husband, Ed, helped her select. She says the SL is great fun to drive and reminds her of the great times she and Ed had with it. She is undertaking a restoration to bring it the reliable and beautiful state it was in when she purchased it.

George Koteles, Crestview, Florida Other _____

George lives near Ft. Walton and served in several different offices in the Emerald Coast section. He still owns the 1962 220S that his father took factory delivery of in Germany and drove to their native townion Romania which was in Hungary when he left.

George is a major car enthusiast with several vintage racecars. He is in the process of restoring a classic Mini and a Fiat 850 Spyder. He just completed his dream garage—an aircraft hanger!

Return ballot to: Dodie Roberts
3830 Cove Drive
Birmingham, AL 35205
or E-mail: edbowron@windstream.net

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



Mercedes-Benz



INFINITI.

CROWN
Automobile

1800 Montgomery Highway • Hoover • 205-985-4200 • CrownAutomobile.com



ALABAMA SECTION

MBCA Membership Application

Please print clearly

Full name _____

Associate member (spouse or dependent) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

() _____ () _____
Home phone Business phone

Occupation _____

Mercedes-Benz cars now owned (model/year, list additional cars elsewhere)

New Member or Renewing Member (check one)

If renewing, member number: _____

Interests: please check

driving events car shows social events
 car care technical The Star

Enroll me as a member for (check one):

U.S. and possessions:

1 year (\$45) 2 years (\$87) 3 years (\$127)

Make checks payable to MBCA (U.S. funds only); Visa or Mastercard also accepted.

All other countries (including Canada):

1 year (\$50) 2 years (\$97) 3 years (\$142)

Canadians and overseas: use Visa, Mastercard, or American Express, Discover, international money orders, or checks payable in U.S. funds.

Applicant's signature _____ Date _____

Applicant's section preference (see list in magazine) _____

Sponsor's signature and member number (optional) _____

Membership dues include six issues of The Star magazine yearly. If using a credit card, please complete the following:

Visa Mastercard Am. Express Discover

Account number _____ Expiration Date _____

www.mbca.org, or 800/637-2360

MBCA, 1907 Lelary St., Colorado Springs, CO 80909-2872
719/633-6427, Monday-Friday, 8AM to 5 PM Mountain Time



SUBSCRIPTION TO "MERCEDES-BENZ IN ALLERWELT"

To: Daimler-Benz AG
Abt. PR/N, Postfach 202
D-7000 Stuttgart 60
Bundesrepublik
DEUTSCHLAND

Date of Order:
"In Aller Welt" is the international
Mercedes Benz magazine published
six (6) times per year by DBAG.

Please accept my payment in the amount of U.S. \$8.25 (DM 15@ 1.82/\$100 per my check enclosed payable in US\$ to Daimler-Benz AG for one (1) annual subscription to your publication "Mercedes Benz in Aller Welt" in English which I request to be sent to:

Name: _____

(Company): _____

Address: _____

City/Zip: _____

USA

(IMPORTANT: Send in sealed envelope for International Postage \$50 for 1st half ounce, \$.95 up one ounce, Deutschland. Order will take approximately two (2) months for processing.)

MERCEDES-BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA, ALABAMA SECTION

MBCA NAME BADGE ORDER FORM

(2 Line or 3 Line Options)

(For 2 line- leave line 3 blank)

Member # _____

Badge #1:

Circle type: magnetic safety pin tie tack

Circle color: Blue Silver Gold

Name: _____

Line 2: _____

Line 3: _____

Badge #1:

Circle type: magnetic safety pin tie tack

Circle color: Blue Silver Gold

Name: _____

Line 2: _____

Line 3: _____

Feel free to duplicate form or add pages.

Shipping: (Per number of badges)

(1) \$1.20 (2) \$1.50 (3-4) \$1.75 (5-6) \$2.00

of two line badge(s) _____ @ \$8.00 = _____

of three line badge(s) _____ @ \$9.00 = _____

Shipping fee _____

Total Order _____

Enclosed check # _____

CC# _____ Exp. _____

Print name of purchaser:

Mail to :

MBCA

1907 Lelary Street

Colorado Springs, CO 80909

Mercedes-Benz Club of America
Alabama Section
2301 Arlington Ave S.
Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35205



Coming Events

12 Dec--- Holiday party at the home of Dodie and Jim Roberts
3830 Cove Drive, Birmingham, AL 35213

Note: There will not be a December monthly meeting

9 Jan--- Polar Bear Run

Meet at Barber Motorsports Park for our annual winter drive to break the holiday blues.

19 Jan-- Monthly Membership Meeting
Dales Southern Grill Hoover, AL

13 Feb--- Tech Session at Classic on body repair and restoration

16 Feb--- Monthly Membership Meeting
Dales Southern Grill Hoover, AL

March --- Mobile Azalia festival and visit to Bellengrath Gardens

6-7 March--- Track event with the Porsche Club at Barber

10-11 April -- Car corral at the Indy Car Race at Barber

22-24 May--- Heimatfest

Barber and MBUSI in conjunction with vintage races, car show, drive, factory tour (24 May).