



November-December 2003

Holiday Party 2003

This year's holiday party will be a brunch on Sunday, January 11 at the Inn at Brookeville Farms in Brookeville, Maryland.

Where the heck is Brookeville, Maryland? Well, it's halfway to Baltimore or halfway to Washington depending on where you are located geographically. So, that's where Brookeville is.

Now for a few historical facts about Brookeville. Roger Brooke had 15,000 acres of land in the countryside of Maryland. He left the land to be divided equally among his eight children. One of his daughters, Deborah Brooke Thomas, and her husband decided to create a small town out of their acreage and named it Brookeville in honor of the family name.

President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the first Post Office in Brookeville in 1802, and Caleb Bentley assumed the duties of Postmaster. In 1808, the Brookeville Academy was opened, becoming a premier educational institution.

Oh, ho hum, who cares? Well did you know that Brookeville Maryland was Capitol of the United States? Yes, that's right – the Capitol of the United States. How can that be? Well, in 1814 President Madison fled Washington, D.C. because the British were invading the capitol city and burning everything in sight, including the White House.

So, President Madison beat a hasty path out of town. When night fell, the President was in Brookeville, Maryland. Needing rest, he stopped and took refuge in the Caleb Bentley house for the night. That was all it took to officially make Brookeville the Capitol of the United States.

That was August 24, 1814; and, it was the Capitol for just one day. Yes, you read it correctly, just one day. On August 25, 1814, President Madison and his entourage departed the Bentley house and headed further north.

The Bentley House was later renamed the Madison House. The house, the Academy, and many other houses of that period (1794-1860) still stand today. So, that's Brookeville's claim to fame. It's a sleepy little town about 35 miles north of Washington, or south of Baltimore.

The Inn at Brookeville Farms now occupies the property of the Neeley farm. The Inn was constructed in 1919 and is located on Route 97 – Georgia Avenue.

I think you will find the place charming, with five dining rooms and a banquet room, a day suite for brides, an outdoor rotisserie, and a Gazebo. Surrounded by acres of land, the Inn boasts elegant and

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charming setting.

Brunch will begin at 12:30 with an hour of socializing while enjoying fresh Danish and pastries, coffee, tea, and juice.

Alcoholic beverages will be available to be purchase at the cash bar in the banquet room. Brunch will be served at 1:30.

You will have a choice of:

- Brookeville Eggs Benedict with Virginia Ham
- Maryland Quiche with Jumbo Lump Crabmeat
- Hickory Smoked Chicken with Yukon Golden Mashed Potatoes

In addition to the good friendship and good food, the Holiday Party is the event at which we present the Member of the Year Award, the autocross series awards, and membership pins (see the following article).

Also, we ask that you remember to bring some canned goods that we will pass on to the local food banks. It's still the holiday season and still a time of giving!

The cost for the brunch is \$40 per person. Wine will be served with the meal and is included in the price. The cash bar will be available to those who wish to enjoy other spirits.

When making your reservation, be sure to circle your entrée choices on the registration coupon. All reservations must be received by January 5. So come and relax, enjoy the company of friends. Sit back and let some one serve you after the long holiday season.

The driving directions:

From the Washington DC area: take the Beltway (I-495) to the Georgia Avenue exit (Rt. 97) north and travel on this road all the way to the gates of the Inn.

From the Baltimore area you will need to use the Beltway (I-695) North to I-70 West and exit at

Olney onto Georgia Avenue (Rt. 97). At the bottom of the exit, take a right onto Georgia Avenue south and continue for about 20 minutes to the gates of the Inn.

Those of you coming from the Baltimore will drive through the Historic town of Brooksville.

So, be sure to check the historic makers on your way in.

Look forward to seeing all of you there. Happy Holidays!

Judy Roth

Membership Pins

The Greater Washington Section has many opportunities to get together each year, but at only three of these events are longevity pins awarded to members according to how many years they have been with the club.

The first of these three events is the Holiday Party, which will be held on Sunday, January 11.

The other two events are the Annual Picnic in the summer and the Annual Membership meeting in the fall.

Since the pins are awarded in increments of five years, that means that if you joined the club in 1999, you are eligible for a 5-year pin this year. If you joined in 1994, you will get a 10-year pin, and so on.

There is one catch, however. You must be present at one of these three events at which the pins are awarded. Invariably, eligible members attend one or all of the above events but leave before the pins are given out. We do not mail pins; you need to be present! If, for some reason, you must leave before the

event is over, please see me or my wife, Deborah, so we may give you your pin at that time. Otherwise, you'll have to wait five more years before you are again eligible!

The following members are eligible for pins in 2004.

35 Years!!!	Neill and Elaine Darmstadter
30 Years!!	Thomas Draude
	John Gray Jr.
	Norbert Lamp
	Reuben Richards
	M. Davis Streaker
25 Years!	David Ballard
	Lahugh Bankston
	Larry Buel
	Simon Cain
	John Gersic
	Klaus Hirtes
	Harold Hostetler
	James Keith
	Edwin Lehnert
	Thomas Morrow
	Robert Richards Sr.
Also:	21 twenty-year members
	37 fifteen-year members
	50 ten-year members
	110 five-year members

The Greater Washington Section offers many different events for almost every taste and fancy for our 1,600 members, so we hope you'll join us for one that interests you. See for yourself what the officers and various chairpersons are working so hard to offer you. And always try to recruit a new member any opportunity you get. We are the largest section within the national club and strive to keep it that way.

Klaus Hirtes, Membership Cochair

Under the Hood Event

Designs that helped make Mercedes great

From the sporty 230SL to the powerful 300SEL 6.3, from the finbacks to the beautiful 280SE coupes and convertibles, classic Mercedes shared certain design elements. This is a rare chance to learn about one of them – the kingpin front suspension. This pervasive suspension design was used on most postwar cars up until 1972.

Ever wondered what made the older Mercedes such fine automobiles? Have you ever wanted to look under your classic Mercedes, or have you been afraid to? Or, even if you just want to hold up your end of

the conversation at the front end alignment shop this session will be of interest.

In the comfort of a living room, you can see, touch and learn about the classic Mercedes-Benz kingpin front suspension. The entire component has been removed from a car and prepared for display. One side is assembled; one side is in pieces.

See how it works, understand the important features, learn about the major parts. Basic suspension concepts will be discussed, too, and the session will be suitable for "techies" and "non-techies" alike.

Depending on interest, future sessions can be more technically focused, and cover maintenance, repair and alignment.

The session will be held on Sunday, January 18, from 1:00PM to 4:00PM, just south of Old Town Alexandria (directions will be forwarded to those who register). Light refreshments will be served, and participants will have a chance to socialize and ask questions to their heart's content.

There is limited space available and advance registration is required. So, mark you calendar and send in the reservation form today with a check for \$15. If you have questions, contact Steve Walters at gwstech@earthlink.net or call 703-765-9405. This is really a great opportunity to look "under the hood" at one of the design features that helped Mercedes earn the reputation it has today.

Calendar of Events

Greater Washington Section Events

January 11	Annual Holiday Party The Inn at Brookeville Farms Brookeville, Maryland Contact: Judy Roth Call: 301-774-5390	February 28	Wagonwork Tour Alexandria, Virginia Contact: Bill Hopper Call: 202-363-4189
January 17	Autocross Social Event 2002 Awards! Il Lupo Restaurant Fairfax, Virginia Contact: Tom Newman Call: 703-378-6737	March 13	DIY Fluids Tech Session Curry's Auto Service Contact: Steve Walters Call: 703-765-9405
January 18	Under the Hood Event Belle View, Virginia Contact: Steve Walters Call: 703-765-9405	June 26-27	Drive and Dine Weekend Eastern Shore, Maryland Contact: Bill Hopper Call: 202-363-4189 More info later!
		August 7-8	Drivers' Education Event Summit Point Raceway Summit Point, West Virginia Contact: TBA

Regional and National Events

April 24-25	Drivers' Education Event Western Reserve Section Nelson Ledges Road Course More as it becomes available	July 31 to August 4	StarFest 2004 Mansfield, Ohio See The Star for more info
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President's Message

Good Guys Wear White Hats!

In the last few weeks, two members of your board of directors have resigned. Al Angulo has been the club's secretary for a bit more than a year. Al is a dedicated guy who loves the cars we choose to drive but it was getting harder and harder for him to get free from his heavy work obligations.

I knew the writing was on the wall when he had to cancel his registration for Tri-O-Rama in September. That event and the track at Virginia International Raceway had been on his mind for more than a year. He had really been looking forward to running his V12 SL600 in the driving events. But the powers that be said he couldn't be spared from work.

The event was a great success and one of the most thoroughly enjoyed national events in memory. At least ten times since then, Al has said how much he regretted not being with us. We missed him too.

When Al was scheduled to take a trip to South America, he let me know that he didn't feel he could perform his duties for the club and suggested I begin looking for a replacement. I reluctantly accepted his resignation and began looking for a new secretary.

With a unanimous recommendation from the board, Tracee Glass will assume the role as our secretary. Tracee has the skills and enthusiasm to make a great officer and I look forward to working with her.

Al will still be around and will still come to all our events. So, when you see him... Thank him for his wonderful service to the club.

At about the same time, Rob Kaplan—one of our appointed members of the board—let me know that he too had work obligations that prevented him from dedicating the time to the club that he thought he should.

Rob is another Mercedes crazy! In the recent past, he has owned several AMG and other very exclusive and desirable models, including two E55s, an ML320, two SL500s, a 2002 SL500 Silver Arrow an SKL32, a 2002 C32, and a 2002 G500. His current ride is a G55.

Rob has made several trips to Germany in recent years to see the Mercedes-Benz Museum, the Mercedes factory, and (of course) the AMG works.

Rob will be replaced on the board by another Mercedes-Benz nut—Mark Elie. Mark owns a W124 series Cabriolet and a magnificent green 500E with which he trophied in the acceleration runs at Tri-O-Rama. Mark worked constantly during the entire event.

Folks like Al Angulo and Rob Kaplan dedicate many hours to make this the best section in the club. If you'd like to follow their example and are willing to don the white hat, let us know. Just walk up to any officer or board member at any event and say, "I'd like to help."

Joe



Wagonwork Collision Tour

Body shops are something we wish we knew more about when we need them, but when we need them, it is too late. In a perfect world we will never need one, but if we do, it's good to know what to look for in a shop that is going to work on our Mercedes!

On Saturday, February 28, from 8:00AM to 2:00PM you'll have the chance to find out about how a first class body shop operates. Also, it will be an opportunity for you to try your hand at some body shop skills! The Wagonwork staff will be on hand to answer all your questions—from the technical ones to how the insurance companies deal with the question of body repairs.

Wagonwork Collision, one of the top body shops in the area, is hosting an all day event for MBCA members at their new facility in Alexandria. The day will start with coffee and doughnuts, a tour, and a chance to talk with their techs on the subject of Mercedes-Benz sheet metal. Hands on demonstrations of how they pull out dents (Wagonwork drills no holes) where you will not only see how it is done, but give it a try yourself. The Wagonwork team will also show a variety of alternate dent removal techniques—and again will ask for volunteers to try it for themselves.

During lunch (included with the tour) you will see the intricacies of the modern painting process. The use of computer color matching along with the modern paint used by Mercedes will be demonstrated... Sorry folks no hands-on painting as only the experts are allowed in the spray booth! We'll see an up-close demonstration on the use of waterborne paint—the kind used in the modern Mercedes-Benz factory.

This will be a great time to see this new facility dedicated to Mercedes-Benz and Porsche. Wagonwork is considered to be one of the best shops in the country and has been written up in many to-the-trade body shop publications, not only for their body and paintwork, but also their personnel. We will get to see first hand how Wagonwork is on the leading edge of technology and employee training.

This event is for every MBCA member! Men and women alike! We all love our Benzes and need to know how to handle a body repair if the time comes! Come out, have breakfast and lunch, and learn all you ever wanted to know about fine bodywork and the application of paint. It is truly an art form!

Cost for this event is \$15 and is only open to MBCA members. Space is limited. Register early! The registration form is in the centerfold. More information will be sent upon receipt of your registration. Call **Bill Hopper** at 202-363-4189.

Do Yourself a Favor! We need your email address!

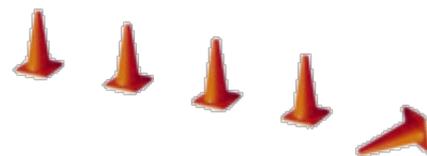
Over the last few years, we have been able to add "extra," last-minute events to our schedule. A few examples are a recent DIY Tech Session and a Car Care Seminar. The newsletter is not necessarily the most timely method of notifying you there is something new on the schedule.

National and local MBCA rules are very clear... Your addresses will not be sold or otherwise distributed! Janet McFarland has been maintaining a list of members' email addresses. We do understand that you don't want unsolicited mail. The list is only used to send notices and reminders that events are coming up.

We don't want you to miss a single event. We also need a way to contact you if an event has been canceled or changed. So, if you are not receiving Janet's email bulletins, please send her an email from the address that you want added to our list.

Send your email to jmcfarland@retrospectpublishing.com.

pylon alley by Tom Newman Autocrosses #6 and #7

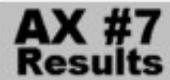


AX #6—"Sands Through the Hourglass"

Could it be? Another glorious day at James Woods High School. A chilly start left some of autocrossers hopping to keep the blood flowing, but it quickly warmed up having

**AX #6
Results**

a dramatic effect on the course surface. Suddenly, there was grip. The course was laid out in devious style to allow the high horsepower cars to stretch their legs, but a radical decreasing slalom at the end ended up stuffing more than a few competitors for the tight turn into finish. Many fists were shaking in the air as a blistering run went suddenly awry.



The Benz classes proved to be as exciting as ever. Bruce Roth claimed his second MBFTD in a row. Denise Dersin edged the ladies again in the CLK320. Ted is shopping for a new car and contemplating sabotage as the only way to slow her down, especially since she finally bested him.

Klaus and Debbie Hirtes solidified their hold over the vintage class by taking top honors. Mr. Smooth, Bill Stewart, returned to claim top honors in the 16V class and continues his dominance in the latter half of the season.

The dynamic duo of Bill and Angie Brochu returned to James Woods to once again show the non-Benz classes that ponies aren't everything. Both handled the competition and took overall wins for the men's and ladies' classes. It was a squeaker though. Mike Wirt has steadily improved over the course of the year and lost to Bill by only hundredths of a second. Mike is a driver to watch in coming events.

Gonzalo Puig muscled his way through the field to gain yet another FTD. Over the years, we have watched "Gonzo" become smoother and smoother. Always a tough competitor. The fastest lady in the field was once again, Dana Argiro in a borrowed Audi S4 Savant. Andrew Danforth was left shaking his head as Dana spanked him by almost a full second in his own car.

AX # 7—"L" is for Lost

The return to WSSC was marked by a devilish streak in course design. The longest slalom of the year that doubled back on itself had many competitors dizzy. It saw the return of the decision gate which, predictably, left some folks a little befuddled.

The Benz competition heated up again with Bill Stewart claiming another MBFTD and top spot in the 16V class. Jim Glen continues to gain confidence in the flagship AMG classes and continues to improve. If this keeps up, Bruce Roth will have a real battle on his hands for the last event and next year's series.

The vintage class saw Steve Walters upset Klaus Hirtes securing first place by 6 one hundredths of a second. Don't let anyone tell you that autocross is not competitive—even the smallest mistake can make or break a run.

Jim Lozoskie and Tom Heacock continue their battle in the 190E 2.6 class with a back and forth struggle that has lasted all season. Unfortunately, the question is posed as to how this rivalry will play out after the untimely loss of Jim's car at Summit Point. Jim, newly nicknamed "crash test dummy" (his words), is hoping that the "White Lightning" will return in better and faster condition for next season.

Denise Dersin loosened her grip on the CLK class by allowing Ted Joseph to edge her out even though she claimed the MBFLTD. The battle line is drawn and this will be a rivalry to watch. Debbie Hirtes once again captured the ladies vintage class.

Speaking of rivalries, the non-Benz classes have a new scourge to deal with. The Japanese have imported both the Subaru STI and the Mitsubishi Lancer EVO VIII. Steve Roberts gets to keep his license plate "STI ETR" for at least one more event by edging out both STI's in the field.

FTD goes once again to Gonzo, but it was the sleeper of the field that took top honors. Tom Newman secured his first overall win of the season in an SVT Ford Focus. No, I did not design the course around the SVT! Angie Brochu continued the winning tradition for the ladies by capturing yet another overall win.

Next month- "Take the Bull by the Horns."

Autocross Social

On Saturday, January 17, all autocrossers and would-be autocrossers are invited to a social event to celebrate the very successful 2003 Series. This is the one time each year that lying and cheating is allowed!

Come hear Bill Brochu tell how to wring 367 horsepower out of a stock 1987 BMW 325! Listen to Tom Newman weasel his way out of the claim that his courses this year were fair to the high power cars! See Andrew take his keys away from Dana! Find out where Alex is moving to... this week! See Lief-Lief-oh, you'll remember him when you see him. And, playing Santa Claus in a really loud shirt without the need of padded suit will be Matt Yip!

We'll have the long-overdue 2002 awards to give out. One hundred elves have worked for more than a year to get them done!

Here's the best part! There is no charge! For those of you driving non-Mercedes cars, that means "free!" Snacks are on the club. You will be responsible for your own beverage charges! The event is from 2:00 to 5:00PM.

However, you must preregister! Use the form in the centerfold or send Tom Newman an email Tom.Newman@GD-NS.Com to let us know you are coming. Snow date is the 24th.

Il Lupo is on Route 123 in Fairfax City, three blocks south of the intersection with Route 236. It's on the left side (if you are traveling south) across from the Fairfax County Government Center and Courts.

High Gear Pebble Beached

It's not what you think. The Pebble Beach weekend is not merely a high dollar opportunity to rub elbows with the joli riche while strolling between rows of over-restored, never-driven, classic cars which are traded with the impersonal enthusiasm of commodity futures. Well, that is... it is that and more. Much more.

The automotive addiction comes in many forms. Yes there are the investors who buy and sell pre-war Bugattis without ever having held Ettore's delicate wood rimmed steering wheel between their fingers. At the Concours d'Elegance there are poseurs who seek out the company of affluent people and expensive objects. But the Monterey Historic Races bring out the vintage motorheads and the hard-core competition enthusiasts. All the weekend's events, including the Concorso Italiano, the Automotive Fine Arts Society exhibit, the Christies Auction et al, attract dedicated car junkies from around the world.

Thrifty folks who can't bring themselves to ante up the scratch for admission tickets to the various events can be seen strolling around the spectator parking areas where the various car clubs tend to park their cars together. Among spectator cars you'll encounter Lancia Aurelias, Borgward Isabellas, Talbot Lagos, and Corvaair Corsas... drivers one and all! In general, during the Pebble Beach weekend you will spot more Alfa Romeo Giuliettas, more MGAs, more 356 Porsches on the roads of the Monterey peninsula that I can ever recall seeing in any given month when I was a kid during the '60s while these classics were still in production.

Every year you'll find me on the Monterey peninsula at that special time. You see, automobiles are an important part of my life. They are animate. They ingest fuel, expend energy and expel waste. They start out young and later grow old (gracefully or otherwise). Cars have personality and character. A painting of an automobile is not a still life.

Allow me to introduce you to some friends I met this year during the Pebble Beach weekend.

1929 Mercedes Type S. This unrestored classic was in the "Preservation Class" at Pebble Beach. The author's grandfather owned a Type S four door sedan in China during the interwar period.



1947 Veritas. One of the first postwar German sports cars. It was based on prewar BMW mechanicals.

1938 Bugatti. Built in Alsace, France by Italian born, Ettore Bugatti, this is an example of thoroughbred coachwork on the green at Pebble Beach.



1936 Maybach Zeppelin. Daimler-Benz acquired the Maybach company just before World War II. This example was offered for sale during the Pebble Beach weekend by the Blackhawk Collection.

John Kuhn Bleimaier

photography by Marina Pushkareva

TradingPost

230SL, 1966: White/red interior. New black canvas top/matching white hard top. Showroom condition. 56k miles. \$27,900 obo. Call Joe at 410-788-1551.

280SEL 1973: Forest green/tan leather. Immaculate original condition. Garage kept. Hershey Show winner. 23k original miles. Must see! \$27,500. Call Dave at 301-622-1805.

450SL, 1976: Dark blue/new blue leather. Both tops. Not running (overheats) but could. Minor rust but restorable. \$1500. Call Andrew at 301-577-0052.

240D, 1979: White/bamboo. New rebuilt trans. New dash, carpet, tires, more. Engine runs strong, needs vacuum pump. \$1300 obo. Call Daniel at 434-791-8062 or 540-923-9919.

300CD, 1984: Low mileage – 82k miles. Perfect condition. Spotless interior and trunk. Original paint. \$9900. Call Larry at 703-780-1505.

560SL, 1987: Tan/tan leather. Both tops. 75k miles. \$11,500. Call Barbara at (w)703-734-3222 or (h) 703-356-0698.

560SEC, 1991: Champagne/cream beige leather. 113k miles. Full power, heated frt seats, 2nd owner, non-smoker. Must see! New MD insp. \$9999 obo. Call Fred at 301-984-3225.

300TE, 1992: Smoke silver/cream beige. Showroom cond. Optional 3rd seat. 96k miles. \$11,300 obo. Call Joe at 410-788-1551.

S350, 1994: Pearl black/gray. Only 116k miles. New motor at 50k. 6-CD changer. Wonderful condition! No leaks. Dealer service. 2000 MB wheels. Tires have 5k miles. Asking \$20,000. Call Larry at 828-891-1716.

E300D, 1995: Midnight blue/tan MB Tex. Exc. running condition. Well maintained in & out. All records. Garage kept, new blower motor, brakes, rotors. 147k miles. \$13,400 obo. Call Alan at 410-308-1764.

E300TD, 1998: Brilliant silver/gray. 6 CD changer, rear sun screen, rain sensor, winter mats, E430 rims. Exc. condition. 69k miles. New Dunlop tires. Always garaged (home and work). Warranty until 5/04. BO over \$22,000. Call Jim at 703-998-0024.

CL500, 1999: Silver/black. 33k miles. 6 CD changer. Immaculate. Phone and many other options. \$42,500. Call John at 301-706-5433 or 301-686-0500 x 101.

S430, 2003: Silver/gray leather. Heated seats. Loaded. Bose 10 speaker/CD, navigation. Tele-aid. Under 9k miles. Factory warranty. Immaculate. \$67,900. Pictures available. Call Gary at 302- 270-9161 or email <gwallick1@yahoo.com>.

Misc: 4 alloy wheels (1976 SL). Very nice \$200. SL factory service manual \$75. Call Andrew at 301-577-0052.

Wheels/tires: HRE 543 wheels. From 2001 CLK55. Fronts 8.5 x 18. Rears 9 x 18. Email <jdvandemark@adelphia.net> or call J.D. at 304-267-1580.

Wheels/tires: For 107 SL. 4 race tires on newly refurbished 14 inch turbine wheels. Toyo 225 R14 R1 compound tires. Excellent shape. Used 1 season. Asking \$300. Call Al at 703-527-2404.

Wheels/tires: 4 AMG wheels/Bridgestone Blizzak snows 225/45 R17. Fits C & CLK-Class. Exc. cond. Like new tread. \$750. Also FREE roof rack for 300CE. Call Gary at 301-263-0470.

Wheels/tires/stereo: 1992 500SL factory wheels w/Michelin Symetry 225/60 R16 tires \$400. Becker Am/FM cassette w/factory 10 disk CD changer. \$100 obo. Call David at 240-882-3821 or email at <dnproctor@co.pg.md.us>.

Wheels/tires: 4 MB wheels for E320 from 96-02. 16 x 7.5, 11 hole (pointy spoke style). Excellent. Minor scrapes on outside edge. Clean, not bent. \$375. Call Bill at 202-363-4189. Pictures at <<http://home.att.net/~wwhrestoration/eclasswheelswb.jpg>>

Wheels/tires: 18 inch BBS RC aluminum wheels w/235-45 ZR18 Bridgestone Potenza tires. 2k miles. Plenty tread left. Exc. cond. No curb marks. Paid \$2600. Sell for \$1200 + shipping. Call Francesco at 410-302-2021.

Car cover: Mercedes cover for 2000 CLK Cab or hardtop. Great condition. \$60. Call Dick Renner at 410-308-0877, email <RJRTVL@aol.com>.

CD Changer: For 2001 C320. Cost \$695. Sell \$300. Call Tom at 410-825-2346.

SL Panoramic roof: Brilliant silver. Perfect. Asking \$4500 obo. Call Ken at 301-320-2513 or 301-215-5471.

Parts: For 1975 240D/similar body style. Doors, hood, trunk lid, new front fenders, bumpers. Call for prices. Call John at 703-719-0406.

Tail light assembly: For 123 series. New in carton. Retail \$350. \$100. Call Jim at 703-495-9966 email at <jim.neary@longand foster.com>

Parts: For 1981-85 W123 300CD turbodiesel coupe. Pair of front seat belts, \$50. Passenger side electric mirror, \$75. For 1981-85 W123 sedan, wagon, coupe – working ACC push button unit with horizontal buttons, \$60. All plus shipping. Call Andrew at 202-452-7723 or email at <squasher@starpower.net

Concours Corner

The Devil is in the Details, Part 1 by Bill Shaw

Preface

Cleaning your car should be considered routine maintenance. It should be done with the same

commitment and regularity as a 3,000-mile oil change. The advantages to cleaning your car periodically have been stated many times before. Suffice it to say that maintaining your investment is reason enough.

The following is a compilation of techniques that Curry's uses to detail our customer's cars.

Tools of the Trade

Start by purchasing, stealing, or otherwise procuring two buckets that will be used exclusively for your car(s). Do not use a household bucket: You don't want to wash your car with a bucket that recently contained a bleach or ammonia cleaner. Conversely, you want to avoid accidentally transferring harsh chemicals and contaminants from your car to the fine Italian marble floor that was just laid in the foyer. The first bucket will be used only for washing the wheels and other sullied non-body parts. The second bucket, preferably one in a different color than the first, will be used only to wash the painted surfaces of your prized Benz.

Next, buy the softest car-wash mitt available. Mitts with a thick, plush mat/pile are best since they easily lift and carry away dirt, bugs, small children, Buicks and other unwanted debris from the paint surface without scratching it. We use a natural fleece mitt for the paint and a (less expensive and thus more sacrificial) synthetic fiber glove mitt for the wheels and bumpers. But do not use sponges on painted surfaces since they are not as effective as thick mitts for gently lifting and removing grime.

For drying, a synthetic chamois is very effective. It can be thrown in a washing machine when soiled and does not crack or become brittle with age. There are a number of detailing aficionados who do not like natural chamois' fearing that the chemicals used in the tanning process might adversely react with car's finish. These chamois' also require more care, and do not last as long as a quality synthetic chamois like those sold by P21S. (The trick to preserving a chamois, by the way, is always keep it moist, store it in its original container, and do not ring it out since this tears the fibers, rather squeeze the chamois to get rid of excess water.)

Another tool that can be used to quickly dry your car is a silicone squeegee. The California Water Blade is one example. The manufacture claims that it removes water in one-third the time of a chamois, the edge applies 15 times less friction than a terrycloth towel, and that it will not scratch your car's finish.

Microfiber towels, as well as 100% cotton cloth towels and diapers, can be worth their weight in gold—and can cost just as much. We use the diapers for waxing and cleaning windows, cotton towels for removing wax/polish (the thick pile is better suited for this purpose than diapers), and the microfiber towels for windows and detailing work. Also buy several heavy-duty cleaning ("shop") rags and/or sponges for use on the grimmest areas of your car (e.g., wheels, engine, drivetrain, etc.). A round, thick, stiff-bristle, wooden-handle (not metal) paintbrush, and a nylon (not brass) toothbrush can also be invaluable tools for getting at those hard-to-reach crevices or for cleaning wheels.

Washing

The quickest way to prematurely age any vehicle is to simply do nothing and allow the dirt to attack your car's finish. Having the right tools helps. But knowing how to use them is equally important, and it all begins with soap and water.

We like to use a liquid soap specifically designed for washing cars/automobiles as opposed to powder soaps since undissolved particles from powder soaps can be abrasive.

We also avoid dishwashing liquids at all costs. These are designed to remove the dried-on and encrusted Lobster Florentine that you had for brunch 3 years ago and they will remove the wax from your car just as effectively. All wax manufacturers (Meguiars, Eagle One, RainDance, Turtle Wax, etc.) sell their own brand of car wash soap.

Generally speaking, the stronger the concentration of soap, the more wax you are likely to remove.

Read the manufacturers suggested directions, and then use half the recommended amount of soap. Also, avoid using hot water when mixing the soap in your bucket since this will soften and facilitate removal of the wax.

Ideally the car should be parked in the shade and cool to the touch before washing. Thoroughly wet the car down with a garden hose, not with a high-pressure system. Even Holy Water will eventually find its way into unwanted areas if a 10,000-psi deck washer or a fire hydrant is used.

Begin by washing the wheels first with the bucket that you identified for this purpose. Generally speaking, properly cleaning four wheels takes more time than washing the entire car—especially with stock brake MB brake pads which produce a lot of brake dust. If the car is washed first, the risk is that the water will dry on the finish before you've completed cleaning the wheels. Also, treat the wheels with the same care as the paint since many late model cars have clear-coated wheels, and be careful when using special products used to clean wheels. Some are for non-clear coat wheels and contain acids that will etch your beautiful wheels quicker than Anna Nicole Smith Hoovering her way through an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Next, using the other bucket specifically for the painted surfaces, start at the top and work your way down to avoid transferring heavy dirt, grease, etc., into the bucket, which is usually found closer to the ground. Also, use plenty of water. As one expert detailer wrote, "If you spare the water, you risk ruining the finish." If, however, a cleaning detergent or engine degreaser is to be used, it is always best to clean this part of the car first, so you can properly remove any chemicals that may have inadvertently been sprayed onto the bodywork. If you accidentally drop your mitt on the ground, set it aside and get a clean one.

The car should then be re-rinsed thoroughly and dried as soon as possible. As suggested earlier, the best method of accomplishing this is to use either a quality synthetic chamois or silicone squeegee. We do not advocate using compressed air to facilitate the drying process since this can easily force water into unwanted areas of your car or imbed dirt into the finish.

Next month: waxing and detailing your car. If you have any comments, criticisms or suggestions, please post them on the Forum at www.CurrysAuto.com. Please address any ideas for future articles to bill@currysauto.com.

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