



METRO TRI-STAR

www.gws-mbca.org

December 2005 - January 2006

Out With the Old Year, In With the New . . .

New Members' Reception

**Sunday, Dec. 11, 2005
Mercedes-Benz of Alexandria
1 - 4 p.m.**

Mark your calendars for Sunday, Dec. 11. That's the newly scheduled date for the Greater Washington Section's get-together for new members. This will be a great way for all of us to celebrate the holiday season and meet and welcome some of our newest members.

Mercedes-Benz of Alexandria will be our host for the afternoon event, which will start at 1:00 p.m. Check the GWS web site (<http://www.gws-mbca.org>) for final details.

Invitation postcards will be mailed to all members who joined our section within the last two years, but this event is open to *all* GWS members. It's the perfect chance to socialize and get to know other members.

While there is no fee for this event, we would like to get an idea of how many people are attending. Please reply to Phillip Alexander at (703) 718-0128 or e-mail him at phlxdr@aol.com. All attendees are asked to bring an unwrapped toy for the



Salvation Army's annual holiday toy drive. If you can't make it to the event and still would like to help with the toy drive, send a check to GWS Treasurer Jim Glenn, payable to GWS-MBCA, and we'll get it to the Salvation Army as a part of their Toys for Tots program. Jim's address is on page 17 in this issue.

Annual Holiday Party

**Saturday, Jan. 14, 2006
Belle Haven Country Club
Cocktails at 6; Dinner at 7**

What better way to start off the new year than to join us at our first event of 2006. The newly renovated clubhouse at Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria will be the venue for this year's holiday party.

In past years, we have held both dinners and brunches for our holiday parties at a number of lovely restaurants and hotels. This year, we are returning to a dinner-dance format at the Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria. After a massive one-and-a-half-year, multi-million dollar renovation of the grounds and buildings, the club house has been transformed into a grand stone mansion in the Federalist style.

Continued on page 3

**For the latest club news, go to the GWS web site at:
<http://www.gws-mbca.org>**

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Calendar of Events

Greater Washington Section Events 2005-2006

Dec. 11 New Members' Party, 1 - 4 p.m.
(Sun.) Mercedes-Benz of Alexandria
Alexandria, VA
Contact: Phillip Alexander – (703) 718-0128

Jan. 14 Holiday Party
(Sat.) Cocktails: 6 p.m.; Dinner: 7 p.m.
Belle Haven Country Club
6023 Fort Hunt Rd., Alexandria, VA
Contact: Phillip Alexander – (703) 718-0128
(Please fill out coupon on p. 15)

Jan. 26 Board Meeting
(Thurs.) [If you would like to attend, please contact
Joe Wozney at (703) 437-7866 for more
details]

Holiday Party — Continued from page 1

This event will be the first of three occasions in 2006 to hand out anniversary pins to members who have been with the club for multiples of five years. (The other two events are the summer picnic and the annual meeting.)

Various other awards also will be presented, including one to our “Member of the Year” as well as recognition of those who won their various classes in the 2005 autocross season.

Join us for a fun evening of dining and dancing (to the tunes of a D.J.). The cost will be \$49 per person (which will include a voucher for one drink). Additionally, there will be a cash bar.

If possible, we encourage everyone to bring a canned good or non-perishable item for us to donate to a local food bank.

Choices for the dinner will include a chicken breast roulade, herb-roasted sirloin steak and filet of salmon.

Please fill out the coupon on page 15 and mail it as soon as possible to Phillip Alexander at the address listed.

May 14 Country Drive (with water sports and a crab lunch). This is a joint event with the Central Virginia Section. More information will appear in a future edition of the *Metro Tri-Star*.

Our Regional Director, Robby Ackerman (seated), has been elected to the office of MBCA Director at Large. With him is Greg Magnus, past president of the Central Virginia Section, who was elected to fill out Robby's remaining one-year term. See article on page 5



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From the President . . .

Dreamin'

Several years ago in a Mr. ed column, I wrote about the ultimate garage—the car house of my dreams. With Christmas coming up I thought I'd fill that imaginary garage with my list for Santa. Let me state that this list is not all-inclusive! It's not my ultimate collection but rather a starter collection—nothing too exotic.



Dear Santa,

I want an ivory (off white) 1960 Austin-Healey Bugeye Sprite with red interior. I had one and I want it back! It was my first sports car. It wasn't fast. It needed lots of attention (read money). It was, as a friend told me, not a car you drove fast but, rather, one you thrashed about. I saw the identical car at the Amelia Island Concours a few years back. It was a perfect restoration, and I spent as much time with the car (and its owner) as I spent with any of the exotics that day.



Dear Santa,

I want a 1937 Ford Roadster. I had one and want it back. As a teenager, I found the Ford for sale and paid the incredible price of \$225 for it. It ran well and was in quite good shape. I wanted to keep it "stock." When several major parts were stolen, I was forced to sell it. There was no eBay for the missing items, and since I was going on to college, my parents refused to store it in the only garage we had.



Dear Santa,

I want a Shelby Cobra—a real Cobra. While the thought of a 427 side-oiler makes me drool, I'd even accept a 289. No, I did not own one, but I almost did. While working in New York I met a man named Paul who shared office space with my employer. He had a 427 on order and wanted me to buy his 289. Since I was getting married soon, I "needed" a more (I hate this word) practical car than the Cobra. And as a recent grad, I didn't have the money for a second car—a toy. But what a toy!

Dear Santa,



I want an original Studebaker Avanti R2—the one with the supercharger. This is the car I almost bought instead of the Cobra. I think Raymond Loewy's design is still one of the all-time great pieces of car art. The man was a genius and, as the saying goes, way ahead of his time.



Dear Santa,

I want a 1967 Firebird 400 H.O. 4-speed in metallic green with black interior. A set of Cragar wheels will set it off just right. Oh! It has to have the tach on the hood. This is the car I did buy instead of the Cobra and the Avanti. I was in love with this car. I don't think I ever would have sold it. On the day before we were to leave for vacation, we stepped outside to find it missing. It was found days later, stripped and rolled down a hill. I'm just glad I never saw the photos. They would have haunted me forever.



So you see, Santa, these are no super exotics... no multi-million dollar cars. The only car that would be really expensive is the Cobra. Call me if you have questions on the options and colors if I haven't been clear enough. Thanks! Once we get this list accomplished after the holidays we'll move on to the Mercedes-Benz and Porsche lists... then the Italian cars... then the...

— Joe Wozney

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS
TO
ALL!**



At the National Level . . .

MBCA holds national board meetings in the fall and spring of each year. This November, the Pikes Peak Section hosted the event in Colorado Springs, Colorado, close to the National Business Office and on the site of Mercedes-Benz of Colorado Springs. This offered attendees a chance to visit with local section members as well as spend some time at an MB dealership with service bays overlooking the Rocky Mountains.

The MBCA Board Meeting is a one-day event that is preceded by three days of committee meetings and followed up by a meeting of the Mercedes-Benz Club Educational Foundation. Much of the committee work that is done during the year gets finalized at the committee meetings, and plans are formulated for the year ahead.

One of the big issues this year was the installation of newly elected National officers after this summer's MBCA elections for Directors at Large and Regional MBCA Directors. Other topics were membership, the 2006 budget, *The Star* magazine contract, and 50th anniversary celebratory events around the country. MBUSA's Mary Alice Ritzman was on hand to provide input and let the club know how successful the new Ombudsman program has been. In 2005, 60 MBCA members took advantage of this MBCA benefit to get issues with their new Mercedes-Benz resolved that could not be taken care of at a dealer or at the regional level.

Of importance for the Greater Washington Section was the election of our Regional Director, Robby Ackerman, to the office of MBCA Director at Large. Greg Magnus, past president of the Central Virginia Section, was elected to fill out Robby's remaining one-year term. Jim O'Sullivan (Triangle Section) was elected National MBCA president; Rodger Van Ness (Great Lakes) will serve as National vice president; Roy Kuck (Finger Lakes) will continue to serve as National secretary; and Pete Lessler (Western Reserve) will continue on as National treasurer. GWS Vice-President Bill Hopper was appointed to serve on the 2006 national election committee.

An important issue for MBCA is declining membership. Efforts are under way to retain current members as well as recruit new ones to the club. With

Mercedes-Benz sales at record highs, membership recruitment and retention are an important factor for MBCA. Each member who recruits a new member will now receive an additional month of membership for their efforts, all the while still being eligible for prizes, such as tires and other auto essentials. An impressive MBCA recruitment brochure is now being placed in every new Mercedes-Benz delivered in the United States and Canada. There also will be an MBCA presence at all the top U.S. new car shows within the MBUSA booths.

It was announced at this meeting that the contract to produce *The Star* magazine would be going out for bid the first part of 2006, as the current contract with the publisher will expire at the end of next year. *The Star* is considered one of the best club magazines in the industry, and MBCA leadership wants to keep it that way, while continuing to make it a better value for the club and its members.

The national budget for MBCA is just under three quarters of a million dollars next year. With all that MBCA offers its membership, cost constraints and efforts to improve the overall membership numbers are a key item in next year's budget.

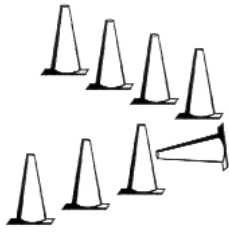
The 50th Anniversary Task Force will be offering celebration activities at the national, regional and local levels for the club's 50th anniversary in 2006. Starfest - Las Vegas (October 1 to 5) at the South Coast Hotel and the Spring Mountain Motor Sports Ranch race track (<http://www.springmountainmotorsports.com/>) will be one of them. The Route 66 tour in September, just before Starfest, starts in Chicago and ends at the brand new Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Irvine, California and will surely be a trip to remember. For the Route 66 drive, members can partake in the complete event or just a portion of the trip.

A 50th Anniversary Book is now in the works to publish the history of the club. Every book will include the members who have won member of the year, officer of the year, and section of the year. Each section has been asked to submit their section history by December 1. The deadline for ordering a copy of the book is December 31.

— **Bill Hopper**

pylon alley

by
Joe Wozney



Autocross #8

The early November weather was fantastic. Ted's last course for the year was simple, quick, and challenging. The competition was fierce—a great end to the 2006 series!

Bill Stewart took his sixth first place and put the punctuation mark on his series title for the 16-Valves, losing only one event in which he participated. Denise took second place and Ladies Fastest Time of Day, and Ted and Denise took second and third, respectively, for the series. This was among the best-fought classes this year.

Jim Lozoskie beat a surging Ben Weber (in his switch from the diesel class) and a much-improved Bill Hopper to take event #8 and wrap up the season title. With the win, JLo bested Jim Smith, Julian Reeves and Bill Hopper in that order for the 190/C-Class championship.

Deborah Hirtes took her seventh win (she missed event #6) over Greta O'Malley and wrapped up her umpteenth series title in a row. The other Hirtes—Klaus—also won his class, taking six of the seven events he competed in. Hans O'Malley finished the day and the series in second place.

John Robinson won all seven of the events he ran and took the day and series for V8s over second place finisher Bill Repass. This makes three championships in a row for John! We welcomed Andrew Feldman and his friend Alex Crenshaw to their first event. Andrew's birthday present was a day of autocrossing in his dad's E500 wagon. Happy Birthday!

In the AMG/SLK350 class, Ted took his fourth win in a row. John Krahulec and Jim Glenn were second and third. The season title, however, went to Bruce Roth. John, Jim and Larry Paulick took second through fourth places in the series.

Bobbie Wozney won the Ladies non-Mercedes class and fastest Ladies non-Mercedes Time for event #8, besting Barrie G. and Sharon Payne. Bobbie wrapped up the season title with Sharon and Barrie finishing second and third. This class championship was decided by the last runs of the top two drivers—now that's close!

Fastest Time of Day and first place for the non-Benzes went to Pete G. with an absolutely screaming run of 29.991 seconds! Fernando Puig, François Bru, Ramsey Khoury and Harry Newman filled out the next four positions. The top 10 index times were less than a second apart! Incredible!

The series non-Benz champion is Mike Wirt who took four firsts in the eight events. Pete G. was second, François was third, and Fernando took fourth. Bill Lear finished fifth and did so while braking axles in his final two events. John Jens, Harry Newman, Ramsey Khoury, Bob Robinson and Gonzalo Puig filled the next five places.

For the year, Denise Dersin took the lead with eight Fastest Ladies Time of Day events—an incredible record. Pete G. had five Men's Fastest Time of Days and François Bru had three. Ted Joseph and Bruce Roth had four Fastest Mercedes Time of Days each. Bobbie Wozney had six non-Benz Fastest Ladies Times and Barrie G. had two.

Thirty-six drivers ran in five or more events and more than ninety drivers participated in at least one event in 2005. Congratulations to all the winners and to everyone who made the series such a great success!

If you haven't yet tried autocrossing, it's too late to start this year, but plan to join us in 2006 for a new season. New to autocrossing? Read Eric Wagner's account of his fun family day on the autocross course (page 11).

2005 Autocross #8 Results

| DRIVER | CAR | BEST TIME | POINTS |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|--------|
| Bill Stewart | 86 190E16V | 31.691 | 10 |
| Denise Dersin* | 86 190E16V | 32.461 | 9 |
| Jim Lozoskie | 91 190E 2.6 | 32.478 | 10 |
| Ben Weber | 86 190E 2.3 | 33.082 | 9 |
| Bill Hopper | 97 C280 | 33.655 | 8 |
| John Bleimaier | 02 C230K | 34.328 | 7 |
| Deborah Hirtes | 67 230 SL | 34.442 | 10 |
| Greta O'Malley | 72 300SEL 4.5 | 34.924 | 9 |
| Klaus Hirtes | 67 230SL | 32.582 | 10 |
| Hans O'Malley | 72 300SEL 4.5 | 33.191 | 9 |
| John Robinson | 88 560SL | 32.873 | 10 |
| Bill Repass | 93 400E | 33.914 | 9 |
| Julian Reeves | 03 SL500 | 34.577 | 8 |
| P. T. Vandenburg | 04 E500 | 35.079 | 7 |
| Andrew Feldman | 05 E500 Wagon | 35.773 | 6 |
| Paul Vandenburg | 04 E500 | 37.560 | 5 |
| Alex Crenshaw | 05 E500 Wagon | 37.761 | 4 |
| Ted Joseph** | 05 SLK 350 | 30.442 | 10 |
| John Krahulec | 04 E55 AMG | 31.321 | 9 |
| Jim Glenn | 03 E55 AMG | 35.242 | 8 |
| Tom Litfin | 04 E55 AMG | 38.237 | 7 |

* LFTD - Ladies fastest time of the day
 ** MB-FTD - Fastest time of the day in a Mercedes-Benz
 *** OM-LFTD - Ladies Fastest time of the day in a non-MB marque
 **** FTD - Fastest time of the day

Scores also are available
 on-line at
www.gws-mbca.org

Other Marques

| DRIVER | CAR | BEST TIME | CLASS | INDEX | INDEX TIME | POINTS |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------|-------|------------|--------|
| Bobbie Wozney*** | 85 Porsche 911 | 33.689 | BS | 0.821 | 27.658 | 10 |
| Barrie G. | 04 Subaru WRX | 35.044 | L-STX | 0.802 | 28.105 | 9 |
| Sharon Payne | 93 Saab Viggen | 36.267 | L-GS | 0.782 | 28.36 | 8 |
| Valerie Dachary-Bru | 05 WRX STI | 38.874 | AS | 0.828 | 32.187 | 7 |
| Katie Wagner | 03 VW Passat | 41.008 | DS | 0.796 | 32.642 | 6 |
| Pete G.**** | 05 Honda S2000 | 29.991 | BSP | 0.838 | 25.162 | 10 |
| Fernando Puig | 99 Mustang | 30.643 | ESP | 0.826 | 25.311 | 9 |
| François Bru | 05 WRX STI | 30.684 | AS | 0.828 | 25.406 | 8 |
| Ramsey Khoury | 04 WRX STI | 31.051 | AS | 0.828 | 25.71 | 7 |
| Harry Newman | 97 Subaru SVX | 32.956 | GS | 0.782 | 25.771 | 6 |
| Tom Newman | 02 Ford Focus | 33.023 | GS | 0.782 | 25.823 | 5 |
| Gonzalo Puig | 02 Subaru WRX | 30.818 | SM | 0.842 | 25.948 | 4 |
| John Brubacker | 04 VW R32 | 32.666 | DS | 0.796 | 26.002 | 3 |
| John Jens | 02 VW GTI 337 | 32.635 | STS | 0.799 | 26.075 | 2 |
| Jon Lamp | 87 Pontiac TA | 32.499 | FS | 0.805 | 26.161 | 1 |
| George Cole | 02 Honda S2000 | 31.326 | BSP | 0.838 | 26.282 | 1 |
| Bob Robinson | 87 Corvette | 31.896 | AS | 0.828 | 26.409 | 1 |
| Eric Stieve | 88 Toyota GT4 | 31.489 | SM | 0.842 | 26.513 | 1 |
| Cale Kastanek | 01 Honda S2000 | 31.683 | BSP | 0.838 | 26.55 | 1 |
| Bill Lear | 92 Integra GSR | 32.434 | DSP | 0.822 | 26.66 | 1 |
| Joe Wozney | 85 Porsche 911 | 32.709 | BS | 0.821 | 26.854 | 1 |
| Dan Dilsaver | 04 Mustang | 32.560 | ESP | 0.826 | 26.894 | 1 |
| Russ Snyder | 02 Honda S2000 | 32.068 | BSP | 0.838 | 26.905 | 1 |
| William Johnson | 03 Honda S2000 | 33.379 | AS | 0.828 | 27.637 | 1 |
| Howard Myers | 90 Porsche C2 | 33.815 | BS | 0.821 | 27.762 | 1 |
| Joel Watkinson | 93 Miata | 33.807 | CSP | 0.838 | 28.33 | 1 |
| Ron Mummert | 93 Nissan240SX | 36.320 | GS | 0.782 | 28.402 | 1 |
| Matthew Zint | 05 VW Jetta TDI | 37.278 | HS | 0.777 | 28.965 | 1 |
| Jeremy Jens | 04 Audi S4 | 35.073 | AS | 0.828 | 29.04 | 1 |
| Eric Wagner | 03 VW Passat | 38.330 | DS | 0.796 | 30.51 | 1 |

From Arizona to Virginia to Attend Tri-O-Rama

Former GWS President Chuck Landenberger, who now lives in Phoenix, Arizona, decided to drive East to attend Tri-O-Rama 2005. Here is his story.

When trying to describe the experience of traveling from Phoenix, Arizona to Danville, Virginia in three-and-a-half days, only one thing comes to mind—blur and boring. But, some moments were not.

“The Old Girl” [a 300 SD] and I headed East on US-40 on Tuesday morning. I would love to describe the lush landscape, but “thar warn’t none” in the 628 miles I covered that day before arriving in Shamrock, Texas that evening. I don’t mean to demean anyone who lives there, but it might as well have been the part of Route 66 that time forgot.

From Shamrock, I continued my eastward journey. I had filled up with diesel fuel in Shamrock and suddenly became aware of the rapid movement of the fuel gauge toward “E”. I then began to notice some aromatic essence in the cabin and decided to check under the hood. Lo and behold, two of the return lines had disconnected themselves from the number three cylinder injector. By the grace of some Mercedes-Benz god (and I am sure there is one), I had brought some tools and a piece of the return line. Within a short time, I had completed replacement of the culprit pieces aided by the inciteful and unsolicited “over the shoulder” suggestions of a long-time resident/farmer of Seminole, Oklahoma. After finishing up, I thanked “my able assistant” and was again pursuing my distant goal of Danville.

However, the MB god had another surprise in store for me. On I-40, just west of Memphis, there was some construction which caused me to slow down and then brake. The pedal was like a brick. What could be wrong? My first hint was that the engine would not shut off! I suspected the vacuum pump. To confirm my analysis, I called Darrell Sigmon and he said “Disconnect the vacuum line and start the engine, then put your finger over the hole, and if your entire body is not sucked into the pump,

the pump is bad!” I tried that . . . and he was right.

Easy solution... Call 1-800-MBHELP (Don’t try that from home!), but my cell phone ran out of battery. Simple solution, flag down a passing driver and they will gladly help. Sure! Well, a kind soul did stop and let me use his cellphone to call that number. An hour later a rollback arrived and took me to Mercedes-Benz Memphis.

(An aside: I didn’t know that my trip was this interesting until I started writing about it.)

Back to reality... Next morning I helped open the dealership. Wonder upon wonder, they did have a remanufactured vacuum pump and got me back on the road before noon. Made up some time with prudent speed management, arriving in Hickory, North Carolina where I met Darrell Sigmon. He and his wife, Carolyn, were kind enough to put up a wayward driver for the night. Next morning I got my tires mounted on the rims I bought from Darrell and we caravanned (albeit a “short” caravan) to Danville, where we met up with the other TOR people.

Tri-O-Rama 2005 was, as usual, a wonderful event. There is no greater pleasure than driving the Virginia International Raceway at speed. Please no more deviant thoughts that diesel drivers don’t know what speed is!!! Great time with many old and new friends, and the dinner at the “For Sale Garage” was a great experience.

After TOR, I accepted an invitation from Janet McFarland and Steve Walters to crash at their place in Alexandria. Gave me a wonderful opportunity to get back together with other friends.

Then the trip back. It was back on the road again to visit my daughter and her family in Arvada, Colorado. Driving alone, I am truly indebted to myself for being such a wonderful conversationalist.

After two-and-a-half days of I-70 landscape, but nothing memorable, I arrived and spent four very enjoyable days just blending into my daughter’s family (husband and one son).

Continued on page 13

High Gear

The first time that I ever drove in a Mercedes-Benz automobile was in June of 1957. I was six years old at the time. It was a memorable experience. It took place in a context likely to impress itself on the consciousness of a recent veteran of Miss Fellow's first grade class. Here's the story.

Back in '57, my grandmother, my mother and I set off to visit our relatives in Switzerland over the summer. I remember how my father drove us to the docks in Hoboken, New Jersey in "Black Beauty," our '49 Packard straight eight, with her cavernous trunk filled with luggage for a long journey. We embarked on the *Noordam*, a passenger ship of the Holland-America Line, for the trip across the Atlantic to Rotterdam. This was my first sea voyage. What I recollect most vividly was the *Noordam's* diesel propulsion system. She was a comfortable liner but under way you could always feel the slight underlying vibration emanating from somewhere deep in the bowels of the ship. At some point during the voyage I discovered the source when I was fortunate enough to have been taken down to the engine room where I got my first glimpse of a compression ignition engine. The enormous Sultzer diesels were as big as houses and generated a monstrous din, in addition to enough power and torque to launch a small floating city across the rolling seas.

It was a passage full of adventure. I remember my first taste of yogurt which was served for breakfast in glass jars and eaten with elegant long spoons. I also recall being told that the *Noordam* had served with valor as a troop ship during the Second World War. The Dutch stewards pointed with pride to the places where American GIs had carved their initials in the ship's railing during *Noordam's* daring dashes across U-boat wolf pack-infested North Atlantic waters.

When the *Noordam* arrived in Rotterdam, we were met quayside by our Swiss cousin, Albert Kuhn, in a bright red, new 190D ponton body Mercedes. It was a good deal smaller than our Packard, even more diminutive than the conventional Fords and Chevys which I knew from back home. However, the Mercedes had a stately, dignified quality all its own. My positive impression was enhanced when my grandmother told me that my grandfather had owned a type "S" Mercedes back in 1929. It had been grand-

mother's favorite car.

Cousin Albert and his wife, Julia, had driven up from Graubuenden in Switzerland in order to pick us up for our pilgrimage to the alpine redoubt of our ancestors. They were actually waiving a Swiss flag as they greeted us. I was waiving a little American flag, which went over very well in an age before Yankees were universally told to go home. After an interval of kissing and hugging and my first intensive exposure to the Swiss-German dialect, we loaded the surprisingly comodious trunk of the starship and headed south down the Rhine.

I impressed cousin Albert when I observed, "sounds like a diesel!" Upon hearing the engine at start up, I had noted the characteristic clatter of the Mercedes oil burner and had recognized its kinship with the giant power plants which had propelled the *Noordam*. Once under way, the diesel engine quieted down to a reassuring hum. Our trip following the Rhine to Basel and then striking off into the Alps was very beautiful. We stopped off for tours of two of the myriad castles which we passed along the way. From the perspective of a six year old, it doesn't get any better than this!

Onward and upward into the Alps. When negotiating the switchbacks of steep mountain pass roads, further virtues of the diesel engine became apparent. In those days almost all other cars had to stop and readjust their carburetors before ascending into the high altitudes. The fuel injected diesel did not demand such special attention. It compensated for the more rarefied atmosphere with just a trace of rich, black smoke puffing out of the tail pipe.

Ah, yes, the ocean voyage, the castles, the alpine scenery and particularly the robust little Mercedes diesel. All this impressed itself strongly on my six-year-old consciousness.

Shortly after our return from Europe, before the start of the second grade academic year, it was decided to put "Black Beauty," the old Packard, out to pasture. I lobbied with all the force I could muster for us to purchase a Mercedes diesel like the one owned by cousin Albert in Switzerland. But other considerations took priority, and my parents bought an Oldsmobile with a "Starfire Rocket" V8 engine and

Continued on page 16

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The Wagner Family's Excellent Shenandoah Valley Fall Outing

November 6, 2005 was the date for the last GWS autocross of the season. My daughter, Claire, had been expressing some genuine interest in going fast and trying to make me violate traffic laws around town, so I thought she would derive some enjoyment from a nice day at the autocross. I invited my wife, Katie, as well, and since our son, Kai, couldn't just stay home by himself, we took him with us as well.

We had to get up even earlier than on regular weekdays to get ready and make the 90-minute drive to Winchester where dozens of cars were lining up for the tech inspection. Instead of using my 1982 W123 200, we decided to drive my wife's 2003 VW Passat Variant since I wanted her to feel as comfortable as possible experiencing the autocross—and the Mercedes just had received new tires. After we walked the course twice, we talked to a few experienced autocrossers such as Klaus Hirtes, Harry and Tom Newman and Joe Wozney and received some good tips on how to approach the turns. Finally, it was time to start the practice runs; with the Newman family riding instructor-shotgun with us. Harry went with me and Tom with my wife. Claire found watching the driving action interesting at times but really needed to take some breaks to do some drawing and escape from her younger brother who really did not care what was going on as long as one of his parents held him.

Preparation is essential if one expects to do well in an autocross. I knew I was a little tired since we had a nice party with friends and their kids the night before that really exhausted Katie and me, but it was apparent on the course where I just did not seem to have it all together and registered an OC (off course) on the last run after barely getting the car back in line on the second-to-last-run. My wife improved considerably from run to run, almost catching up to me at the end, although I actually expected her to best me with her methodical approach to new challenges.

Claire's highlight of the day came when she was invited by Deborah Hirtes to take a ride in her 1967



Claire Wagner has a big smile on her face following an autocross run in Deborah Hirtes' 1967 230 SL.

230 SL and by Joe Wozney in his '85 Porsche 911. Claire

proudly donned her racing helmet, buckled up and enjoyed the rides. The huge smile on her face after the runs were proof that she has no fear of going fast. Thanks again to Deborah and Joe for their generosity in allowing Claire to safely experience the rush of speed.

Considering the circumstances with having our children with us, we still all managed to have a fun time, and we all drove home happy and exhausted. That evening at home I thought about the things we would have to do in order to not just have fun but also to become better drivers and be a little more competitive. I realized only then that the ESP system on the Passat had been enabled throughout the runs, which may have contributed to the difficulties we experienced on the course. I was also probably expecting rear-wheel drive behavior from a front-wheel drive car (silly, I know, but that is what I am used to) and I believe that in future events more detailed study of the course between runs will be on the agenda.

Based on my experiences at Tri-O-Rama in September with the 200 and at this autocross, it seems that we need to have a set of dedicated wheels and our own helmets. If we find the money in the family budget, we'll prep the 200 and join the circus for 2006!

— Eric Wagner

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Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Voted 'The Fantasy Convertible'

Mercedes-Benz is proud to announce its award-winning SL convertible sports car lineup has yet another trophy to add to its cabinet—the SL65 AMG was voted “The Fantasy Convertible” by the New England Motor Press Association (NEMPA). NEMPA members, consisting of New England-based automotive journalists, tested the limited-production, high-performance hardtop convertible during its annual Ragtop Ramble convertible driving event from Boston to Kennebunkport this summer.

“Why fantasy?” asks Gerry Miles, NEMPA President and automotive editor for New Hampshire’s *Portsmouth Herald*. “Because it would be a fantasy to own one, never mind be lucky enough to secure seat time behind the wheel of one.” The Mercedes-Benz SL-Class began with the 1954 300SL coupe and has continued uninterrupted production ever since. Decades later, the SL is still coveted as the most luxurious and fantasy-worthy convertible. The SL65 AMG features a powerful 6.0-liter 12-cylinder, twin-turbo charged engine, hand built following AMG’s one-man-one-engine philosophy for unparalleled quality and workmanship. Supplemented by 738 lb.-ft. of torque, the SL65 boasts 604 horsepower and rockets from 0-60 in just

over four seconds.

For those looking to make the fantasy into a reality, the 2006 Mercedes-Benz SL lineup ranges from \$93,675 for the SL500 to \$185,775 for the SL65 AMG. For those dreaming of SLs of generations past, the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, located in Irvine, California, is set to open this winter. The Classic Center will retail, restore and provide parts for all Mercedes-Benz classics, including earlier SL models.

East to TOR — *Cont'd from page 8*

Then it was a ride from over 6,000 feet on I-25, I-40, and I-17 back to the “Valley of the Sun” and home.

“The Old Girl” and I had covered 5,742 miles with minimal interruption. After all, the vacuum pump had only lasted for more than 340,000 miles. No, I did not ask for warranty coverage.

Upon arrival home, the odometer now rested at 344,992 miles. “The Old Girl” (25.4 mpg for the trip) and I rested well that night.

— Chuck Landenberger

Maryland Greater Washington Section License Tags

Maryland license tags with the section logo and the words “Mercedes-Benz Club” on them are still available. These plates will not be available through the MVA. You can purchase them only through the club, and they can only be put on a Mercedes-Benz. Please write to Ed Hainke, coordinator of the program, at 10755 Sawpit Cove Road, Lusby, MD 20657. Send him two checks: one payable to GWS-MBCA in the amount of \$10, and the second check payable to MVA in the amount of \$25. Ed will then contact you for the required MVA information.



New Members

The Greater Washington Section welcomes all its new members. We hope that you will join us soon at one of our upcoming events. Please feel free to call any officer for information on our activities and what you can do to get involved.

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When in Colorado, Do What the Coloradoans Do!

If you happen to be traveling along the I-25 corridor around Colorado Springs, Colorado, take the opportunity to visit with the National Business Office (NBO) of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America.

The NBO Staff—David Cummings, Judy Faas, Renee Herbert, Richard DiSario and the others—will be glad to welcome you and give you a tour of your club's headquarters.

The NBO is a small building in a residential neighborhood, and it handles all of the business operations for the club, as well as the club store. You may want to stop in to pick up some of the new merchandise that the club is offering in celebration of MBCA's 50th anniversary, or just do some research in

the club's archives. Just minutes from the historic Broadmore Hotel, the Garden of the Gods, and not that far away from the Air Force Academy, the NBO is open during regular business hours and is a great home away from home for MBCA members.

— **Bill Hopper**

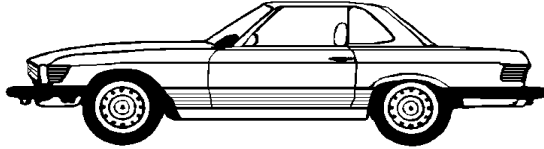


The NBO staff that answers, serves and supports every MBCA member includes (from left) Judy Faas, Richard DiSario and Renee Herbert.

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The Trading Post

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Trading Post Advertising Information

Any GWS member may place an ad of up to six lines in length free of charge in the *Metro Tri-Star*. Include your name, membership number, address and phone number(s) with area codes on your hand-printed or typed copy. Personal ads will appear for one issue. Ads should be sent to: *Metro Tri-Star*, 1307 Warrington Place, Alexandria, VA 22307; telephone (703) 765-9405; or e-mail: janetmcfarland@earthlink.net.

Nonmembers may submit a single personal ad for \$45. For business ad rates, contact Janet McFarland at the same number.

We will print a photograph (from color or black and white original or from high-resolution digital image) with your ad for \$20. If you would like the photo returned, enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. All checks should be made payable to: GWS-MBCA. Advertising copy must be received by the 15th of the month preceding publication or the ad will appear in the following issue. The editor of the *Metro Tri-Star* shall have sole discretion in determining ad acceptability.

High Gear — *Cont'd from page 9*

three-speed manual transmission on the steering column. She was painted "champagne mist with Victorian white" and we named her "Blondie."

It was destined to be another eight years until we would renew our relationship with the Mercedes marque. In 1965, a fourteen-year-old budding enthusiast was able to exercise a bit more concerted influence on the automotive selection process in our household. The Mercedes heritage, Finback good looks, robustness and outstanding handling characteristics made my job of selling the idea to my parents a pushover. It also didn't hurt that in '65 diesel fuel could be purchased for 16.9 cents per gallon whereas gasoline retailed for an exorbitant 21.9 cents per gallon.

The purchase of that white 190Dc Finback way back in 1965 has never been regretted. She resides in

my barn to this day. In fact, she just won a first place trophy in the sedan class at this year's Octoberfest Car Show of the Northern New Jersey Section, Mercedes Benz Club of America.

— John Kuhn Bleimaier

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and use the search menu to find the appropriate documentation. It is all there: Whether you are searching for the Service Manual for a 1959 Ponton 220S (available on paper and CD!), the Maintenance Manual for your classic 1971 R107 450SL or the Engine Manual for the M110 engine of your Euro-

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This is just another way Mercedes-Benz honors its heritage and helps us to preserve our favorite automobile. Based on the current Mercedes-Benz slogan, Mercedes could state with conviction: Heritage. Unlike any other.

— Eric Wagner

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