



STAR TRACKS 2005

MERCEDES-BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA – NORTHERN NEW JERSEY SECTION

January / February 2005

Volume 6 Number 1

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2005 JANUARY JUMP START MEMBER MEETING

The very light and fluffy snowfall measuring a bare inch's worth that fell the night before the first Member meeting of the year designated the January Jump Start Meeting was hardly enough to deter eager and serious Clubsters from gathering in Florham Park on Sunday, January 30th for a luncheon and business meeting.

We had rescheduled from the weekend prior, when ominous threats of a New Jersey blizzard circulating came true with up to eighteen inches of snow resulting in a true Governor's State of Emergency to stay home and off the roads unless critically necessary. By meeting start time of high noon, Members rolled in, but not in Star Cars in many cases.

For those of us to whom our Stars are Garage Queens during winter or stored in hibernation like the famed Garden State Black Bears of the northern counties, we made our appearances in alternate SUV's or "Winter Beater Specials", but it mattered not, as the devotion to our cars in all seasons brings us together no matter what the given circumstances may be.

Capo Vaticano, a small family owned Italian trattoria located in a shopping mall, was the perfect Club meeting venue allowing us private time, otherwise closed for Sunday business in order

to conduct our agenda without outside interruption. The young and attentive staff saw to our every need from describing the chef's salmon recipe to providing us authentic biscotti at meal's end. We even had Italian operatic overtures to enhance the soothing background beckoning us to "Mangia!" with pleasure.

NNJS provided wine aperitifs during the arrival social hour, a very nice and warming perk of attending meetings for both longstanding as well as new Members. Before the main course was served, President Valerie Cristiano called for a motion to dispense with reading of the Club Minutes from the last meeting, which was seconded by Kris Conner and affirmed by the general Membership. A summary of 2004 events was recapped verbally, following which Treasurer Lucille Chabala delivered a state of the Treasury Report including event expenditures and charitable donations. We were then free to mingle and enjoy our lunches for a leisurely and relaxing hour until after which, we would discuss New Items of Business and 2005 Calendar. At this time the forum was opened to the floor for all Members to participate and contribute to comments, feedback, fertile ideas, suggestions, and improvements to our Club after a reading of the tentative events schedule. Promotion and advance press at this point of the year indicate a very active 2005 schedule on the national level ranging from Summit Point racing, Star Tech in April in North Carolina, to Tri-O-Rama and so much more, along with monthly feedback for NNJS activities, should render even the most active Mercedes-Benz enthusiast a very full plate. Valerie reported on creating a Board of Directors, a By-Law Review Committee, and plans to designate our VP Communications Fred Perry as Star





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

write out this message, all I can think of is how many SL's with tops down I saw on the road yesterday and that makes me think that Spring isn't all that far away. Since the roads were dry, the sky bright blue, and the sun was glistening off of the little snow that remained, we decided to uncover Black Beauty, our 560 SEC, and take her for a little spin. The sun was streaming in through the open sunroof, the crisp clean scent of fresh air rushed in, and there were wide grins on our faces as we toolled through the countryside enjoying a magnificent February day. The joy of driving this marvelous vehicle is just one of the small pleasures of life. Even if the beautiful weather and sunshine do not hold, and she has to hibernate for a few more weeks, I can still look forward with eager anticipation to when I can take her out and let her strut her stuff once again. Just in case you might think that I only drive a Benz in beautiful weather, let me assure you that my 91 420SEL and I have driven in all types of weather. Sea Breeze and I have gone through many a snow and rain storm and she has always handled like a dream.

- Valerie

The groundhog may have seen his shadow, but as I sit here and write out this message, all I can think of is how many SL's with tops down I saw on the road yesterday and that makes me think that Spring isn't all that far away. Since the roads were dry, the sky bright blue, and the sun was glistening off of the little snow that remained, we decided to uncover Black Beauty, our 560 SEC, and take her for a little spin. The sun was streaming in through the open sunroof, the crisp clean scent of fresh air rushed in, and there were wide grins on our faces as we toolled through the countryside enjoying a magnificent February day. The joy of driving this marvelous vehicle is just one of the small pleasures of life. Even if the beautiful weather and sunshine do not hold, and she has to hibernate for a few more weeks, I can still look forward with eager anticipation to when I can take her out and let her strut her stuff once again. Just in case you might think that I only drive a Benz in beautiful weather, let me assure you that my 91 420SEL and I have driven in all types of weather. Sea Breeze and I have gone through many a snow and rain storm and she has always handled like a dream.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Spring 2005 is beckoning around the next corner, playing tag with our hearts and teasing us with a fine day or two on occasion, whetting our appetites for the best yet to come. While too early in the northern calendar to fully retire the snow apparatus, we can dream with full certainty it won't be long before tiny green sprouts appear in Mother Earth, her rains wash the asphalt clean of salt smear and road grits, and her skies invite us to reach for the panorama/sunroof button OPEN! If you are like me, your loyalty to a given Marque is not only very fierce, but strongly protected by proven automotive heritage, performance, and ownership. Recently I was given the keys to a brand new imported British automotive machine with full historical provenance making a model change debut for the first time in a decade, as a loaner with unlimited privileges for editorial research. Although familiar to my stable, I found this new beast

a challenge to my calculated wits. She was a challenge I relished the more I drove her. There were so many familiar features I had come to know adoringly.....but yet so many new things I had to adapt to. By Day Two, we'd made a truce, then a bond strong as love. We were old friends in a new body, and we looked good. Friends forever. You, and your Mercedes-Benz! Enjoy your cars in good health always! Warm regards, Ellen D. Ruck, "190-Girl. The Star Cruiser".

STAR TRACKS 2005

The bi-monthly publication of the MBCA-NNJS.

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14th Annual Princeton Rotary Show

This year's event will be held at Princeton's Carnegie Center on Sunday May 15.

Last year's event was great fun and we had a fantastic sunny day. For our own Mercedes-Benz "area" we need a minimum of 10 cars. There is a registration fee of \$10 per car. Carnegie Ceter is at the intersection of Route 1 (north) and Alexander Rd.

Our participation is coordinated once again by Bob Wegner at 973.515.0052. More details in next newsletter.



Claire Wegner with her fabulous SL at last year's event.

WANTED: 16" OEM wheels (with or w/o tires) from C or CLK Class.
Prefer wheels free of curb rash.
Contact Steven Long, Delaware Valley Section, SDLong329@aol.com

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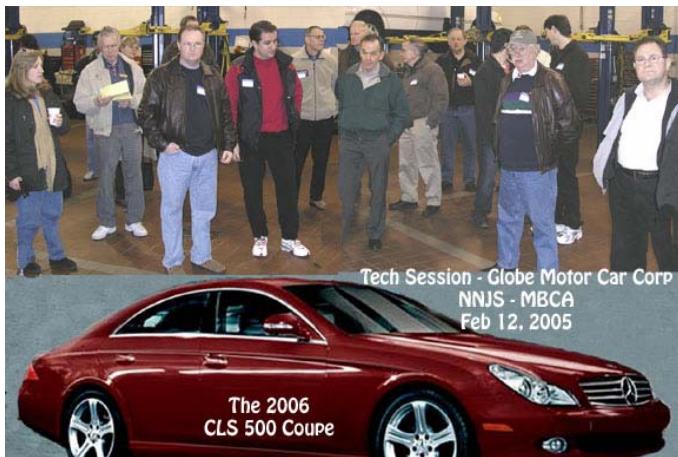
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TECH SESSION at Globe Motors

On Saturday, February 12, over 55 members gathered at Globe Motors in Fairfield, NJ to take a look at the new CLS. We were greeted by Peter Scherr, General Manager, with donuts and coffee in hand for our group. Peter then had the unpleasant



task of informing me that the tech who was supposed to tell us about the car was unable to make it at the last minute. So, we did the best that we could. Jim Sangemino hooked up some

Falling In Love Again, I Can't Help It...

By Randall L. Kress

(Continued from last issue of NNJS Star Tracks...)

First Encounters

My friend called me on a chilly March Saturday morning. With an early scent of spring in the air, I arrived at his house to find a filthy old 190 idling in the driveway. Though the car has been officially off the road for years, it has been started once a week and moved about to keep it from going to total hell. She was very dirty and was tilting to one side. Years of grime had gotten into every nook and cranny. It was a total mess. Scratches, dings, faded panels; they were all there in spades. After all, she's 18 years old. Never kept in a garage, the old 190 had seen its fair share of use and perhaps even abuse.

The tires had dry-rotted from sitting and they must have been about fifteen pounds low. Various bits were either off the car or in desperate need of repair, but everything missing; minor things like dash valances, old switch trims were in the trunk. Oh, the dash had a nice crack but the windshield looked chip free. The paint looked more dirty than tired; but like any old car, must be re-sprayed to be total show quality. Nothing major. From fifty feet away, the car had looked presentable but a "totally '80s" red pinstripe drew undue attention. I have to remind myself, this was indeed a car of the Miami Vice era. Come to think of it, I think every sleazy drug dealer on the show drove a black 190E-16 Valve. Only the good guys drove white Ferraris.

A major concern that irked me was the power driver's seat that wouldn't move back. Then there was a sagging rear shock,

speakers and put on a CD that gave us some information about the car. We were able to get a good look at the car, inside and out and had fun starting her up every once in a while to demonstrate one feature or another. Jim, Ed Simo, and George Pillajo circulated among our members answering the questions that were asked of them. Members with cameras had a field day taking pictures. Check out the website for some nice shots of the



TECH session. After the TECH session was over, we caravanned to Tiffany's on Route 46 in Pine Brook for a lunch.

NNJS would like to say Thank You to Globe Motors and Peter Scherr for all of the things that they do for our section.

-Valerie

which wouldn't normally be a huge problem, but the old 16 Valves came standard with a complex self-leveling rear suspension. So, you can use your imagination from here. The front apron had caught a curb and had been slightly pulled away from the front valance, again, not huge but noticeable. Generally, not a car I would approach in a parking lot to check out, there were however some redeeming qualities, namely the car was honest and all original. Even the original, three-piece US-spec "bucket" headlights were still there, something most 16-Valvers are lacking in favor of the sleeker, flush one-piece European units.

I must have been a drunk, stupid or little crazy to want to road test a car with rotten tires, a saggy rear end and a driver's seat that wouldn't pull back to my comfort, but I've been known to do some stupid things. Suffice to say, I had to drive her.

The car idled beautifully, something to watch with these pesky Cosworth four-bangers. The clutch felt great and the "dog-leg" transmission found reverse without major protest. On the road, the car felt amazingly tight, almost new. The manual tranny, of which I've criticized in the past for being a balky, rubbery and disconnected in feel was actually not a Mercedes-Benz unit; but a Getrag, and it felt better than any Mercedes manual I've driven. Thankfully, Mercedes-Benz while always priding itself on building its own transmissions thankfully outsourced this model's. The steering too was precise and tight. It was lovely to take around the block. Upon returning to its original resting place, I found nary an oil leak to be found, to my surprise. Like I said earlier, despite its obvious shortcomings, there was something special about this old car.

(Continued on page 10)

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Editor's Journal - Red Star

February, the second month of the Roman calendar during which St. Valentine plied his magical powers of love, brings us traditional gifts enrobed in the rich color of scarlet red in these modern times. Frilly lace valentine heart-shaped candy boxes, red satin lingerie, a dozen red tea roses, ruby jewelery, and other tokens of affection are bestowed on loved ones on the fourteenth day of the month in tribute to the historical legend.

February, although the shortest month of the year, can also be a wet and sloppy weather bearing winter mode, so the bright red gifts that adorn shop windows are more than welcome to ward off the blues once holiday sparkle has faded from the landscape. I would like to share with my readers the saga of RedStar, my beloved 1988 190E 2.6 sedan finished in gleaming Mercedes-Benz paint code 568 "Signal Rot", and how she joined my stable as the first Star Car in our collection, now almost nine years ago. Many of you are familiar with her placement and appearance in the national concours street-class circuit, but you may not be aware of her origins, a story straight from the heart.

It was a dark and stormy night.....yes, just like the opening sentence of Charles Schultz's Snoopy character as he typed furiously, writing novels from the roof of his doghouse. It was a dark and stormy night alright, as the New York City outbound commuter bus made its way back home to the Dover NJ bus terminal.

But this night was different. It had rained furiously and heavily all day long since morning, and the standing frozen snow banks, unable to absorb the torrential downpour of water, created endless floods rising by the minute coupled with the overflow of the Rockaway River that spilled over its banks. As the bus neared the depot and stopped a half-block away from the park and ride lot, I heard the commuters complain to the driver to pull up closer.

"Not tonite" he replied. "Dover's flooded and some parts of town are completely under water, so I have to let you off here."

As he cranked open the bus door, we could see knee-deep black rippling water outside swirling and encroaching as each further minute passed. At nightfall, it turned into a snowy, sleety type of precipitation as the temperature dropped. One by one we jumped off the bus into the water splashing like unhappy campers as we viewed our cars getting flooded up to the wheel wells that raw night in late January--and there was nothing anyone could do to save the situation. S

Standing on one foot like a flamingo balancing my briefcase while trying to dial my husband on the cell phone, I frantically told him to come over as soon as possible and perhaps use the Jeep Cherokee tow hook to pull my Nissan Maxima out of the water. If I opened my door, I risked soaking the interior, so I waited until he drove over in an attempt to rescue me, but it was futile. He refused to get out of the car and wet his suit in a hopeless situation, and I was a basket case with frozen tears streaming down my face and the beginnings of frostbite from exposure.

There was so much damage that night it was an hour before we could even summon AAA for SOS for towing! The AAA truck hooked up the Nissan and dragged it 15 miles back home for us, but in that time, with water having invaded the body integrity, the car froze solid like an ice pop and opening the doors for days on end in an attempt to view the interior damage was not even possible. Our insurance agent, attuned to the massive damages in Morris County that night, simply wrote the car off as "totalled" and advised us we'd receive straight book value. That news really hurt.....it was our first luxury car purchased as a married couple, we had maintained it beautifully, and even had gone so far as to install a new transmission at considerable cost just months prior because we loved the car so much.

Now, ten years later, we were about to find out the shocking truth about used car values, new car prices, and insurance claims. Lamenting this unhappy news to the fellas in the office, they told me they'd just read the weekly office newsletter, in which was an advertisement for a used Mercedes-Benz from one of the attorneys, and they encouraged me to make an inquiry. I hesitatingly did, with the offer of support from them in case I felt like I needed used car assistance. One of the law partners was going through a divorce, and his wife's car was being sold for settlement to prevent her from shipping it to Hawaii where she intended to move. It was a 1988 Signal Red 190E 2.6 with low miles and a reasonable asking price. Delivering this news to my husband was like talking to a stone wall.

"No *used* cars in this house!" he exclaimed repeatedly every time I asked him to ponder the topic. Three weeks went by, miserable ones I might add, with no wheels of my own, and a meager payout from the insurance company to carry on. The attorney asked me one more time the second week in February

(Continued on page 8)

Mercedes, Quality Dropping, Loses Market Share to BMW, Lexus

(Bloomberg - Feb 9) -- Dominik Wendel got fed up with his Mercedes SLK 350 sports car. First, the convertible roof leaked. Then it wouldn't open properly, sending him back to the garage at least five times. The car also whistled on the autobahn.

"I was not very satisfied with the quality," said Wendel, 40, a lawyer with the Frankfurt-based firm Noerr Stiefenhofer Lutz. Last year he bought a Lexus SC 430 from Toyota Motor Corp.

Mercedes has plunged in customer satisfaction surveys in Germany and the U.S., partly because of technical flaws. The world's largest luxury carmaker has lost sales to Bayerische Motoren Werke AG and Toyota, and profit is falling. Tomorrow, Mercedes's parent, DaimlerChrysler AG, probably will say fourth-quarter net income more than halved to 634 million euros (\$821 million), according to 14 analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

Eckhard Cordes, who took over in October as chief executive officer of Stuttgart, Germany-based Mercedes Car Group, has pledged to reverse the slide. A 29-year DaimlerChrysler veteran, Cordes, 54, says he plans to cut costs to counter the impact of the U.S. dollar's 16 percent decline against the euro in the past two years. Mercedes already negotiated 500 million euros in savings with German workers in 2004. Cordes also says he'll make sure cars produced now meet the company's quality standards.

"Each customer lost is very difficult to win back," says Michael Schneider, a fund manager at Frankfurt-based Deka Investment GmbH, which oversees about \$144 billion in assets and owns DaimlerChrysler shares. "It will take time to improve their image."

Electronic Failures

DaimlerChrysler shares fell 4.7 percent last year, compared with a 15 percent stock gain by Toyota, which is based in central Japan's Aichi prefecture. They closed at 36.16 euros yesterday.

Mercedes-Benz, which makes the S-Class luxury sedan and the A-Class compact hatchback, ranked 29th out of 37 brands in a June reliability study of 3-year-old cars by Westlake Village, California-based J.D. Power & Associates. It logged 327 defects per 100 vehicles, worse than the U.S. industry average. Four years earlier, Mercedes scored seventh out of 38 brands, with 308 defects per 100 vehicles.

At home, Mercedes-Benz had the most electronic failures of all brands sold in Germany, Michelstadt, Germany-based automotive consulting firm 3hm Automotive said in July. It was also last among 33 brands in a March study gauging customer satisfaction by the ADAC German Automobile Club. Car owners were most satisfied with Toyota. Munich-based BMW ranked ninth.

Quality deteriorated at Mercedes, known for its star symbol, as DaimlerChrysler focused on reorganizing Chrysler Group in the U.S. and expanding in Asia with its unprofitable affiliate, Mitsubishi Motors Corp., says Michael Raab, an analyst at Sal Oppenheim in Frankfurt.

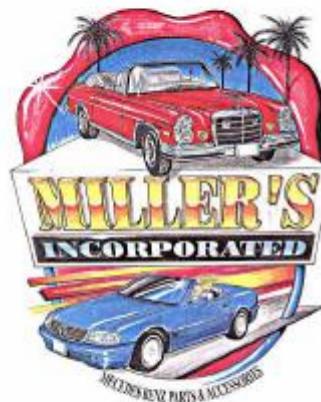
'Accountable'

Cordes, a bespectacled German who reports to DaimlerChrysler CEO Juergen Schrempp, 60, has made improving Mercedes's qual-

(Continued on page 7)

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New Line of ExxonMobil Motor Oils Offers Guaranteed Engine Protection For Up to 15,000 Miles

FAIRFAX, Va., January 25, 2005 – ExxonMobil today announced that it is the first oil company to introduce a line of high-endurance motor oils designed for longer oil change intervals, as recommended by many of today's automobile manufacturers. These new motor oils deliver proven performance and guaranteed, long-lasting protection of critical engine parts for 5,000, 7,500, or 15,000 miles.

"Over the past few years, automobile manufacturers have started recommending longer oil-change intervals, sometimes as high as 15,000 miles; yet, many car owners are confused about exactly how long their motor oil will perform," said Mike Mullins, vice president of marketing, ExxonMobil Lubricants & Specialties. "As an industry leader, ExxonMobil developed the new Mobil high-endurance motor oils to respond to a previously unmet consumer need by guaranteeing performance and protection for 5,000, 7,500 or 15,000 miles."

The new Mobil line consists of:

- Mobil Clean 5000 and Mobil Clean High Mileage, two new conventional oils formulated with 16 percent more cleaning agents than Mobil conventional oil for exceptional cleaning performance and guaranteed protection for 5,000 miles;
- Mobil Clean 7500, a new synthetic blend formulation with 18 percent more cleaning agents than Mobil Clean 5000 to guarantee long-lasting protection for 7,500 miles; and
- Mobil 1™ Extended Performance, a new fully-synthetic formulation containing the Advanced SuperSyn System which includes 50 percent more SuperSyn, ExxonMobil's proprietary high-performance synthetic component, and boosted levels of special cleaning agents to guarantee engine protection for 15,000 miles.

New engine oils come along all the time, but rarely do they represent a shift for the entire category," said Pat Goss, consumer car care advocate and co-host of MotorWeek on PBS. "Consumers have been receiving conflicting messages about service intervals for a long time. It's refreshing to see someone step forward with products designed to address today's complex oil change issues and provide peace of mind for drivers."

Consumer research shows that drivers are ready for an oil that can protect for the longer intervals outlined in many of today's owners manuals. According to a recent survey commissioned by ExxonMobil, half of all drivers already are going more than 3,000 miles between oil changes. In addition, nearly 90 percent of drivers said that they would use a motor oil that guaranteed to protect for up to 7,500 miles.

"Most consumers already go longer between oil changes – in fact, the average driver is going nearly 4,300 miles, according to ExxonMobil consumer research data," added Mullins. "Consumers have told us that while they may not necessarily go 15,000 miles between changes with Mobil 1 Extended Performance, they appreciate knowing that the level of protection they're experiencing can go the distance."

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Mobil Clean 5000, Mobil Clean High Mileage, Mobil Clean 7500 and Mobil 1 Extended Performance will be available at retail outlets throughout the U.S., such as Wal-Mart, AutoZone, and Advance Auto Parts. Mobil Clean 5000, Mobil Clean High Mileage and Mobil Clean 7500 will be priced competitively with leading conventional and synthetic-blend brands.

Mobil 1 Extended Performance will be premium-priced over other fully-synthetic brands. For more information about this new line of Mobil products, go to www.mobiloil.com. For more information about ExxonMobil, go to www.exxonmobil.com.

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(*MERCEDES Quality — Continued from page 5*)

ity his priority. "Only satisfied customers can keep alive the future of a brand," Cordes told journalists in January at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. "I will hold myself accountable for this."

Defects have been found in parts ranging from batteries to emergency lights, which flashed when nothing was wrong, says Johannes Reifenrath, a Mercedes spokesman. Sometimes customers didn't understand how convertible roofs and other electronic devices worked, making them suspect a malfunction, he says.

Cordes said in January that Mercedes is working to make sure new cars meet its own standards even if it costs "some money." The company also aims to correct defects on older models when they're serviced so that the resale value isn't affected.

Falling Profits

Based on the internal audits, quality is rising by 10 percent to 20 percent annually, Thomas Weber, a DaimlerChrysler management board member responsible for research, said in November. Cordes wasn't available for an interview ahead of the full-year results, said Thomas Froehlich, a spokesman.

The challenges at Mercedes aren't just technical. Cordes also needs to reduce costs to compete and to offset the falling dollar. Mercedes sells some of its German-built cars in the U.S., and revenue is reduced when dollars are converted into euros. Net income per 1,000 DaimlerChrysler employees was 2.56 million euros (\$3.32 million) in the third quarter, compared with 1.6 billion yen (\$15.4 million) in the same period for Toyota, according to Bloomberg data.

Schrempp's Successor?

Mercedes Car Group's 2004 operating profit probably fell by a third to 2.04 billion euros, according to the Bloomberg survey of 14 analysts. Earnings have been hurt by Mercedes's Smart microcar unit, whose losses reached about 500 million euros last year, according to Fredrik Westin, an analyst at Dusseldorf, Germany-based WestLB.

Mercedes's German workers agreed in July to help the company save 500 million euros annually beginning in 2006 by working longer hours and accepting lower wage increases. To pare costs further, Cordes will have to negotiate lower prices from suppliers, says Adam Jonas, an analyst at Morgan Stanley in London.

If Cordes succeeds in improving sales growth at Mercedes, he may become the lead candidate to replace Schrempp after the CEO retires in 2008, Jonas and Westin say. Dieter Zetsche, who runs Chrysler, also may be a contender for the job.

"Mercedes is essential to the image of the German car industry and is an icon for the luxury-car industry," Jonas says. "If Cordes wants to take on a greater leadership role, he'll need to get Mercedes' profit on an upward trajectory."

Test-Driving Trucks

Cordes got the job after another candidate, Wolfgang Bernhard, clashed with DaimlerChrysler's board over the changes needed at Mercedes and refused to back Schrempp's plan to

bail out Mitsubishi Motors, people familiar with the matter said. Cordes replaced Juergen Hubbert, who retires this year from DaimlerChrysler.

Until September 2004, Cordes, who holds a doctorate in business from the University of Hamburg, was head of DaimlerChrysler's truck division, where he eliminated 16,000 jobs to stop losses. He even earned a driver's license for commercial vehicles in order to test-drive the trucks himself, according to Marc Binder, a DaimlerChrysler spokesman.

The challenge at Mercedes may be more daunting. The truck division, based in DaimlerChrysler's Stuttgart headquarters, was helped by a global surge in demand. No such boom is expected in luxury cars and the competition is tougher, WestLB's Westin says.

BMW's X3 SUV

Mercedes, founded in a 1924 alliance between Gottlieb Daimler and Karl Benz, chose the star as its symbol from the beginning. The durability of the cars made Mercedes the world's most valuable auto brand from 1999 to 2003, according to New York-based Interbrand Corp., a brand consulting firm, and BusinessWeek magazine. Brand value is the net present value of the earnings that a brand is expected to generate and secure in the future.

Toyota, the world's biggest carmaker by market value, last year overtook Mercedes in that ranking.

Last week, Toyota said profit in the quarter ended in December rose 3.5 percent as demand gained for models such as the Corolla compact car and as costs fell. Toyota President Fujio Cho, who says he aims to surpass General Motors Corp. as the largest carmaker by unit sales, raised his forecast for full-year vehicle sales.

Meanwhile, BMW is closing the gap with Mercedes for the title of the biggest maker of luxury cars. Sales of the BMW brand rose 10 percent to 1.02 million vehicles, boosted by new models including the all-new X3 sport utility vehicle and the 1-Series compact car. Mercedes-Benz brand sales fell 3.1 percent to 1.06 million units.

For the first time ever, BMW outsold Mercedes when including the two carmakers' other brands.

New M-Class

BMW sold 1.21 million units, including its Mini and Rolls-Royce vehicles. Sales at Mercedes, with its Smart microcar and Maybach brands, fell 0.8 percent to 1.2 million units last year. Mercedes sales in the U.S. rose 1.3 percent, slower than the market's advance of 1.4 percent and BMW's 8 percent growth. Even Mercedes's Chrysler unit, which DaimlerChrysler bought in 1998, has gained momentum. The Auburn Hills, Michigan-based division is expected to report a 2004 operating profit of 1.43 billion euros, following a loss a year earlier.

That's changing the balance within DaimlerChrysler, which also owns 32.9 percent of European Aeronautic, Defense & Space Co., the parent of planemaker Airbus SAS. Mercedes probably accounted for a third of DaimlerChrysler's operating profit last year, down from more than half in 2003.

(Continued on page 8)

STAR STRUCK AGAIN!

Last year we printed a press review of Hef's custom black 560SEL Limousine at auction.....herewith we present yet another Star Streak..... (Associated Press) The bride's gown was worth more than most American homes. Her diamond-studded ring cost more than many yachts. But the groom's hair? Self-styled. Donald Trump married Slovenian model Melania Knauss Saturday in Palm Beach, FLA with all the glamour, glitz, and gold that money and star power can buy. Knauss walked down the aisle to "Ave Maria" and guests broke into applause when the real estate mogul-turned reality TV star kissed the bride. The couple slipped into Trump's Mercedes-Benz Maybach parked near a side entrance after the 30-minute ceremony and drove past hundreds of cheering spectators with the help of a police escort.



(MERCEDES Quality - Continued from page 7)

New Models

In an effort to win back customers, Mercedes this year will introduce a new S-Class sedan, the company's flagship model; a new M-Class sport-utility vehicle and the all-new R-Class, a cross between a station wagon and an SUV.

Another new Mercedes model, the CLS 350, is aimed at BMW's 630i. Both are six-cylinder coupes that went on sale in 2004. The Mercedes model has a 3.5-liter engine that can accelerate from 0 to 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour in 6.6 seconds. The BMW's 3-liter engine is slower at 6.9 seconds.

Some long-time Mercedes customers still have confidence in the brand. Gregorios Sachinidis, a taxi driver in the Greek city of Thessaloniki, and his 1976 Mercedes-Benz 240D hold the record for the most miles logged by a Mercedes passenger model, with 2.8 million miles. He donated his car to the company's museum in Stuttgart in return for a new C200 model.

"Mercedes cars are expensive to buy, but they last a long time," Sachinidis says. "I'm very satisfied with my new model and expect it to last longer than my previous car, of course."

To contact the reporter on this story:

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Dan Stets at dstets@bloomberg.net.

(RED Star - Continued from page 4)

once he obtained the title from his wife, if I wished to see the car, and I said I would. I remember that day in the Meyers Parking Garage clearly. With one of my coworkers for support, all I could stammer was "It's so RED!" when I first laid eyes on it, and was very nervous during the test drive as I do not make a habit of city driving, ever.

I returned home that night to plead my case, upon which Fred begrudgingly said he'd travel in the next morning to look at the car, just to silence my pleadings. When we were taken into the uptown NYC parking garage where Red Star was stored, it was sure eye candy for Fred as he glanced around the gloomy depths searching for my prospective pick. Then-----he spotted her. There she was. Gleaming red, like a beacon in the night, amongst a sea of silvery Jags and dark Limos. "THAT one?" Fred whispered. "Wow!". His comments, a full 360 degree turn from his original stance, made me eager with hope as we test drove her on Riverside Drive in the early morning rush hour.

Not even five miles later, Fred said he'd seen enough, and could we please return to the conference room to seal the deal? What a relief, and music to my ears! We had some concerns about the longevity of an already eight-year old car, but Mercedes-Benz technology and product are legendary, and we allowed that notion to be our final guiding light in finalizing our offer. We drove her home a few days later on Valentine's Day, after meeting The Mrs.in the parking garage as she cleaned out her personal effects from the car. With tears now streaming down her face, she explained the car was their first married couple purchase, and a symbol of the good times once together, but now that was all ending for her.

We offered her a ride home which she declined, and with newfound feelings of joy to erase my flood experience, we nosed the red Mercedes out of the Big Apple, where she never would return, ever again, once she became a Garden State girl. Soon after I named her Red Star winning my first concours after joining NNJS that spring, and earned my name "190-Girl" as the old time Clubbers noted my arrival on the car show scene. It is a nickname I adore, and a car that I love.

Sure, there are faster, bigger, better, and more expensive Mercedes out there-----but like true love, your first love remains truest to the heart, always and forever.

Red Star is my unabashed favorite in the Stable, not only living a very charmed life as a show piece and careful daily driver, but also has the good fortune of a former owner who asks about her whenever our paths cross in the office. At sixteen going on seventeen, she is still as sexy as the day she was born, garnering much attention and thumbs-up on the open highways as I zip past the truckers. Enroute to StarFest this past summer, RedStar's Becker radio even picked up CB chatter of truck drivers talking about her outrageous body color in full sunshine as I motored along.

I wish each of you the same joy with your personal Star Car as ambassadors to the proud heritage of Mercedes-Benz!

--Ellen D. Ruck "190-Girl"

Mercedes-Benz all new Compact Sports Tourer Vision B.

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STAR TRACKS ????**PAPER or Electronic?**

The general membership in attendance at the January season opener meeting discussed at length the options available for newsletter mailing procedures as we enter and continue into a New Age where internet connections now reach and serve an increasing amount of Star homes. Just about everything nowadays is available one click away, from ordering merchandise to making reservations while in the comfort of your own home. Keeping this notion in mind, many of you told us that you prefer to read your copy of Star Tracks 2005 on line, in color, and print it out for your own use and records at home without hardly a glance to the hard copy paper issue of newsletter publication that arrives in your home street mailbox a few days later. If you are one of the growing number of Members who prefers this method of bimonthly newsletter receipt, you now have the option to inform us you no longer wish to receive a hard copy in the US surface mail. This will not only lighten your paperwork load, but save the Club time and postage from unwanted issues going to press, thereby, hopefully, speeding up our written communications and overall work load. In order to sign up for the "Email-Only Newsletter Notification", we must hear from you in writing of your desire to discontinue receiving the newsletter in the mail in lieu of email only. Please email Ellen D. Ruck, the Editor, with

(Continued on page 11)

Current Mercedes-Benz NHTSA Recalls

Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC

Models: Mercedes Benz CL Class **Years:** 2000-2001
Mercedes Benz S Class **Years:** 2000-2001

Number Potentially Involved: 54,454

Dates of Manufacture: May 1998 - October 2000

Defect: On certain passenger vehicles, the size of the electric conductor of the blower motor fuse holder may be below appropriate tolerances. Consequently, the electric conductor of the holder may dissipate more heat than the plastic fuse holder was designed to withstand, which could result in partial melting of the blower motor fuse holder and disabling of the blower motor.

Remedy: Dealers will install new blower motor fuse holders. The manufacturer has reported that owner notification is expected to begin during July 2004. Owners may contact Mercedes-Benz at 1-800-367-6372.

[NHTSA Recall No. 04V227]

Models: Mercedes Benz CL Class **Years:** 2001-2003

Mercedes Benz S Class **Years:** 2001-2003

Number Potentially Involved: 6,238

Dates of Manufacture: December 1999 - March 2004

Defect: On certain passenger vehicles, corrosion may occur in the inner steel portions of the Active Body Control's (ABC) high-pressure distribution hose due to extensive exposure to heat and humidity. Over time, corrosion may deteriorate the inner steel portions of the hose. This may result in ABC hydraulic fluid leakage.

Remedy: Dealers will install new, corrosion resistant ABC high-pressure distribution hoses. The manufacturer has reported that owner notification is expected to begin during July 2004. Owners may contact Mercedes-Benz at 1-800-367-6372.

[NHTSA Recall No. 04V228]



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Read your STAR TRACKS 2005 online:
http://www.mbc.org/northern_new_jersey/NNJMBCA.html

(Continued from page 3)

The car drove like I remember the 16-Valvers driving. As a teenager, a friend of mine's father had one, and we snuck it out one day after school. She rode tight and composed, yet a little raw with lots of burble and whale. Like a four-door Porsche or something exotic, but in comparison to my '85 300-Class Mercedes, it was a total animal. Totally cool, and I was able to get used to the awkward "dog-leg-first" shift configuration. A price was agreed upon, and the car was soon to be mine.

I took my father along to pick up #147855. It had taken a few weeks to arrange a pick up, for none of the lights worked, making a nighttime drive impossible, not to mention illegal. We had even spoken about towing it to my house, but what fun would that have been? When my father first saw it, his mouth gaped open as if to say- "what the hell are you thinking?" After a few minutes of signing some papers and cutting a check, the car was ready to go. To my pleasant surprise, the power seat I had thought to be dead had come back to life and was working. The sagging rear suspension, my biggest concern, had corrected itself with some new air in the tires. We had some concerns whether or not she'd make it home, but it was worth a shot.

Incidentally, no fewer than two people had expressed interest in #147855 that day I had picked it up. One, a childhood friend of the family, who knew the car when it was newer, and the other, the gardener, both had wanted to buy the old car. But it was too late. This was my new project.

I often say that picking up an old car for the first time, is much akin to flying to the moon, getting into one of those old lunar rovers from the early 1970s, and driving it back down to earth. You really are driving into the great unknown, in a car you really don't trust. In reality, the lunar rovers are in the same condition they were in 1971; however, here on earth we have something called weather to chip-away at a machine's integrity.

The car spewed clouds of brown smoke as it made its way to 287, on its twenty-mile jaunt home. I wasted no time in testing everything. Hardly anything worked. No heat, no air, no radio. The gauge needles shook, the warning lights flickered. The noises, the shakes and rattles were a little alarming, but I had faith she'd make it home. None of this stopped me from taking to over 80 miles an hour. Did I mention I'm crazy? I even accidentally missed a shift at around 70, sending the revs soaring past the red for a brief second. In an event that would have floated the valves in any normal car, the old Cosworth shrugged it off. The old girl was amazingly strong, despite its appearances.

Once it did get home, began the task of cleaning it up, finally making the car mine. I remember washing the car for weeks and weeks, and brown water still came off it. It was that dirty! Eventually I got it new tires, had it inspected and tuned and it was ready to go.

My mechanic warned me- this thing is going to bleed you dry. He deemed it a total basket case, but to my protest-how could a basket case drive so well? The car felt fast and relatively tight, but I'm sure if I had driven a better, well-cared for 190, there was a lot of room for improvement.

To Be Continued...



MBCA Delaware Valley Section Spring Tech Session 2005

Please join MBCA – Delaware Valley Section for its Annual Spring Tech Session, **Saturday, May 14th** at **Mercedes-Benz of West Chester (PA)** for a Tech Session featuring MBCA Director at Large, and National Technical Director for MBCA, George Murphy. His presentation will covers cars both old and new, and will be open to questions and answers. The topics will include:

- Maintenance of Older Mercedes-Benz**

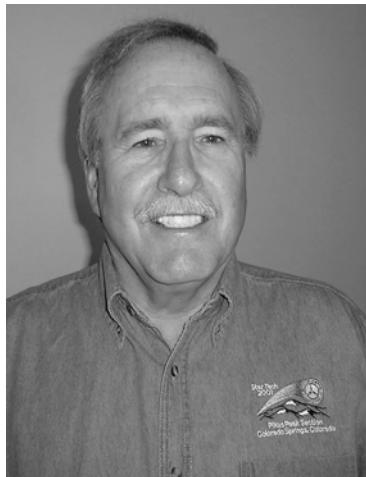
Now that you bought an older M-B, what can you do to keep it in top condition? This session is aimed at both the new car buyer, and one who has purchased a used M-B with an uncertain history. George will discuss such things as degradation of rubber parts, changing fluids, and common problems that can occur as your car ages, as well as addressing non-routine items that should be looked at from time to time.

- The Future with Your Electronic Mercedes-Benz**

Owners of the high tech 1990's (and later) Mercedes-Benz vehicles are beginning to find out that all of those electronics - and the diagnosis of their troubles - are very expensive.

George will offer tips on what to do when the warranty runs out on your electronic MB. What will these cars be like in 20 years? How will we maintain and/or restore them?

For dealership address and driving directions, visit Mercedes-Benz of West Chester online at:



YES – I plan to attend the Delaware Valley Tech Session!

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

MBCA members ...please indicate your Section Affiliation: _____

Enclosed is my check made payable to "MBCA – Delaware Valley Section" for \$20 per person. To provide for appropriate seating and refreshments, registration is requested by May 5th. Those not able to register by May 5th are asked to notify Peter Quinn upon mailing their registration to: Peter Quinn, 506 Patriot's Way, Newtown Square, PA, 19073.

www.westchester.mercedescenter.com ... or, for alternate directions, visit www.MapQuest.com and enter: 1260 Wilmington Pike, West Chester, PA, 19382. Lost? Call 800-505-0342.

This event is open to MBCA members of any section ... as well as their guests! We encourage you to bring someone along. Questions? Please contact event coordinator Pete Quinn at (484) 252-9512 or via e-mail at peterdquinn@comcast.net.

Registration Fee: \$20 per person

Event Includes: Coffee & Donuts, General Sessions, Door Prizes & Luncheon

Event Schedule: Parking & Coffee at 8AM; Event sessions start promptly at 9AM

Luncheon upon conclusion of sessions ... approximately 12:00 Noon

Registration: Registration requested by Wednesday, May 5th, Day of event registration(s) will also be accepted

(PAPER or Electronic—Continued from page 9)

email title " I DECLINE ST 2005 MAILED NEWSLETTERS" and a statement of your newsletter policy acceptance, or send a written statement indicating same notion to me at the P.O. Box address in the Officer column.

You may change your option at any time, of course, with written notification to reverse the procedure within allowable press time. Thank you for your cooperation.....we are always looking for ways to serve you better!

-Ellen

2004 Treasurers Report Summary Mercedes Benz Club of America Northern New Jersey Section

Opening Balance	\$ 4095.96
Income	\$ 24234.00
Expenses	\$ (23425.46)
Ending Balance	\$ 4904.50

Note: Our newsletter expenses were 4327.82. Our income for the newsletter was 1845.00 and that is a special thank you to Ellen for her endless efforts to obtain advertising for our newsletter. If you would like to advertise in our newsletter to help defray our costs please contact Ellen.

Respectively Submitted for 2004.
Lucille Chabala, Treasurer



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UPCOMING NNJS 2005 EVENTS:

- April 9** MB Master Parts Distribution Center - SJS
- April 16** NJ State Police Museum - SJS
- April 17** Poker Run contact Doug Ochwat & Valerie Cristiano
- April 22-24** STAR TECH, Cary NC.
- May 14** May Rallye—Sean Conner
- May 14** Del Valley Section -Tech Session with George Murphy (see p. 11)
- May 15** - Princeton Rotary Car Show, coordinated by Bob Wegner
- June TBA** June Jamboree 2005
- June 25-28** Gemuetlichkiet 2005 Auburn Hills, MI
- Please contact Valerie Cristiano, President, or the Editor for permission to reprint information from this publication.

UNDER THE HOOD STAR

Hello again, it's February and so far this year my car been washed so many times to remove excessive salt off I'm afraid the paint will wash off, I myself have been using zipway car wash for years, just a capful in a ½ bucket of water is all it takes to make my 5th kid stay looking sharp and keep heads turning on the road.

Too much car wash added and that fine hand wax job will wash off also. I apply a coat of carnuba "blitz wax" on my finish every 3 months or about 10 car washes. Even though the car is driven every day of the year, it still looks like it just rolled out of the show room. Never an automatic car wash, always a gentle hand wash with a complete dry off to avoid water spots.

I also would like to recommend replacing your air filter element. With the amount of salt in the air during the winter, it is easily sucked into the filter and gets trapped causing clogging. Less air in the engine means less performance and inadequate gas mileage.

So keep that Benz desalts from top to under the floor boards with plenty of water.

Spring will soon be here.

Happy Mercedes Motoring, Dave

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