

StarTracks 2013



Volume 9, Issue 6

November-December 2013

2013 Holiday Party

For the 4th year in a row the Mercedes Club was back at the Deutscher Club in Clark. Once the food started to arrive it was obvious this is one of the reasons this venue is so well liked. But we digress. Let's go back a bit to our arrival. As we entered with grand children Jaiden and Kaila in tow, we were greeted cheerfully by Club President Valerie Cristiano & Treasurer Lucille Chabala, both of whom were definitely in the holiday spirit.

We picked a table and were soon joined by two more couples. It was great to make new friends as we had not previously met either couple. Before the party was over, we were talking to one couple about getting together at a future driving event. We were not among the first to arrive, but also not the last. By the time everyone found a seat we had 54 adults and 2 children. Nice size crowd! So while we were chatting with our new friends, the servers came around with the appetizers— smoked salmon and chilled cocktail shrimp. Delicious! During this time Lucille and Valerie were busy passing out raffle tickets. Unbeknownst to us at the time, the beautiful wreath center pieces on each table would go to one lucky winner at each table. Janet was the lucky winner at our table.

With the first course over, Valerie called each table to the buffet for the main course. We dined on sauerbraten, chicken marsala, bratwurst, and assorted sides. For dessert we had an incredible choice of Black Forest cake, apple strudel, Mozart cake, and plum cake. With this selection the diet went out the window as we just had to try each one. We did, however, share so we each just had a half a slice. As we were all enjoying dessert, Valerie reviewed next years proposed calendar of events. We definitely have much to look forward to in 2014 with all the Board is planning for us. We hope those of you who are sitting on the sidelines will come out and join us. We always find ourselves

having a great time no matter what type of event it is. Just being with others who share our passion for the Mercedes marque and the camaraderie always makes participation fun. After the review, we were informed that Matt Huda had agreed to take the President's position next year. We should all be grateful as this position entails a lot of hard work and responsibility. We wish Matt a successful term and look forward to a great 2014 with him as our President.

Now Matt stepped up and took charge. What's he got up his sleeve? Gifts for the outgoing President of course, in appreciation of her hard work and dedication.

The first gift was two five piece place settings of china with the Mercedes logo complete with a platter and sugar and creamer. But it gets better! The next gift was an incredible Star Magazine cover poster with Valerie smiling ear to ear. Simply majestic! This was, we are told, a team effort by Gary Anderson, Charlie Bennet, Allen Gold, Carl Schwartz, Dave Hall, and Joe Grattan. Great team work guys.

Now it was Valerie's turn to make things interesting. She asked everyone to form an oval around the buffet table and handed everyone an envelope with something inside. She then read us "**The Story of the Right Family**". Every time she read right we were to pass the envelopes in our hands to the right and to the left when she read left. At the end of the story we all kept the envelope we were holding. When we opened our gifts we found a beautiful Mercedes - Benz tree ornament.

During most of the event our 5 year old grandson, Jaiden, who had appointed himself event photographer, circulated throughout the room taking pictures. We hope you like his work. We would like to thank Valerie, Lucille, Matt, Joe, the staff of the Deutscher Club, and everyone else who helped make for a great afternoon. See you soon.

By Murray & Akemi Kane—Photos By Jaiden Kane





Toys for Tots

The generosity of our members for the Toys for Tots program never ceases to amaze me. Even though the tree was yet to be decorated, that didn't stop our members from generously donating toys for those less fortunate than ourselves.

There were many wonderful items such as: dolls- Barbie, Brittany, and Fashion; a radio controlled truck (thanks for attaching the batteries); Star Wars Darth Vader; Block Tech Firefighter Emergency Unit; Headbanz; Play Doh Sweet Shop; a big cuddly plush bear; Mad Machines Burnout Chopper; Turbo Buggy; Radio Controlled Ford Mustang; Dora the Explorer kit; a duffle bag; Wooden train set; Extreme cruiser truck; Fisher Price Rock-a-Stack and Baby's First Blocks; Mind Games tin; Havoc Heli; Royal Dinner Party set; My Sweet Love doll; story books with stuffed animals; Gingerbread cottage kit; Spiderman bouncy ball; little white bear; Hot Wheels cars; Mr. Potato Head (had a hard time not opening the box and start playing with him); and the big yellow Tonka dump truck (I must confess that I did have to wheel him around and dump it a few times).



This year the toys were dropped off at Pet Pizzaz in Flemington and the toys will be picked up by the Marines (the owner of Pet Pizzaz is a former Marine and he will be delivering them to his meeting) for their program. They will then be distributed to the children on the Marine's list. Thanks ever so much for your continued support and generosity for this worthwhile endeavor. *Valerie Cristiano*

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FOR SALE: 1985 Mercedes Benz 300 TD Diesel station wagon. Navy blue exterior, saddle M.B. Tex. interior. With the optional third seat , manual sunroof, am/fm cassette Air Cond. Power windows, luggage rack, Drives great and looks good. too! 229,000 miles owned for the last 8 years and driven locally only in nice weather. \$7985. Andrew Permison thepermitage@comcast.net 973-379-7283

FOR SALE: 1998 Mercedes Benz ML320 AWD Black with gray leather interior. Well maintained and mechanically reliable. 248k miles. Mature, original owner & non-smoker. Mobil 1 oil changed every 5k miles. 3.2L V-6. Complete, professional transmission rebuild @ 216k miles in October 2009. High and low range transfer case. Vehicle is loaded including sunroof, tilt wheel, cruise, PW, PDL, OEM Bose AM/FM cassette & 6-disk CD, heated seats, power seat, PS, roof rack, etc. Towing package. Michelin tires. All records since new. \$2,500 o.b.o. Call Ken 908-377-5982 or e-mail kwmccauley@earthlink.net

FOR SALE: Two New Bridgestone Potenza 265/40 R18 97Y MO Spare Tires. Tread wear 140, Traction A, Temperature A. Other numbers: T0150, E050PZ, E4. Originally for 2004 CL 55 AMG. \$200.00 per pair Mike Esposito 908 213 1396 (h) 908 507 7754 (c) mesposito@verizon.net

FOR SALE: 1983 Mercedes-Benz 300 SD diesel; 31,140 miles; silver with navy interior; all original, perfect low mileage car. \$18,500.

David Barclay 732-544-9035 dcbarclay@optonline.net



FOR SALE: 1985 380SL Red with red hard top, dark brown convertible top, and tan interior. 185,000 miles. Garaged in Morristown, NJ in case you want to check it out. \$9,750.

Contact joe.stivaletti@gs.com or 646-245-8926



FOR SALE: 1997 SL 500 with 37,000 miles. Dark blue, tan interior, halogen headlights, heated seats, 1st place at 2012 Jamboree. Original owner, never in a body shop and always garaged. All service records are available. Contact jeromealpart@gmail.com/ 973-226-2281 Asking \$18,000



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FOR SALE: Just in time for winter driving conditions. A slightly used set of four Michelin 225/45R17 91H Pilot M+S winter tires including stylish 7 spoke Mercedes logo'd wheels. Approximately 15K miles driven and has plenty of tread life left & wheels are like new. Original price from Mercedes dealer \$2000. Asking \$600. Located in Morristown. 973-449-9962 or mikeparent39@yahoo.com



Regional / National News

The Annual MBCA Board meeting has just concluded and there are interesting things happening.

We elected a new slate of officers:

President – Terry Kiwala, (Western Reserve) he was Treasurer last year.

VP -Laura Simonds (Bay Area)

Treasurer- Bill Denton (Chicagoland)

Secretary – Jim Luikens (Michigan)

The Club Store as we know it has changed. We have contracted with a supply house for all logo clothing. The NBO will continue to offer other small items (pens, mugs, key chains etc.)

By the way – the Club store at NBO is selling clothing items currently in stock at discount prices – take a look, they won't last long.

National Teen Driver Safety Week (NTDSW) is in October. MBCA plans to develop / adopt a plan for all Sections to use during that week. This probably won't require much \$\$\$. It will require planning and coordination with others. I would like one person from each Section to volunteer to be the coordinator for the event. We have plenty of time, but we might as well start now.

A few years ago a Preservation Class was established. I will get all the criteria soon. What I know now the car must be 25 (1989 as of June '14) years old and be all original. Doesn't have to be perfect.

If I don't see you before have a wonderful holiday season.

Joe Grattan | RD | Mid-Atlantic Region | josephgrattan@aol.com

Welcome New Members

David Brink

Chester Chin

Henry Mazzucca

Victor Otilio

Shawn Rahman

Jeffrey Ricci

Carissa Samonte

Mohammad Siddiqui

Edward Yeterian

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From the President Valerie Cristiano



Wow, it has been a little over 22 years since I joined the club and what a ride it has been. Over the past 21 years, I have had the pleasure of serving on the Board, being the Section Secretary, President, Social Chair Person, and Past-President, and have worn many other hats along the way.



Even though I have stepped down as President, I will still be active on the board and an integral part of the June Jamboree and the September Picnic.

Over the years, I have developed many wonderful and lasting friendships with members from our section and other sections, as well. There have been times that I have laughed and cried and even became frustrated over how things were going, but in the end it always turned out well. I appreciate all of the support that I have received over the years and was extremely touched and moved by the presentation at the Holiday Party. My picture on the cover of the Star Magazine will always be a cherished memento of my days as President and member of NNJS. The Mercedes china is already on display in my china cabinet and I am looking forward to using it. Thank you all.

Member of the Year

Our congratulations go to Nick Ford, on being named NNJS Member of the year. Nick is a person on whom you can count on to do what he says. He has organized events over the years including visits to The Stable and the Warwick Drive-In which he has volunteered to do again for 2014. Nick is also one of our resident cooks at the September picnic.

He has also done the photography for the cars at the June Jamboree and is the one responsible for projecting the winners as they are announced. Thanks Nick, for a job well done!

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? Did You Know ?

Did you know that Mercedes makes motor homes on the Sprinter chassis? They are not available in the US, however, you can purchase one in Canada. How do I know this? While visiting in Asheville, NC, I noticed what looked like a Sprinter motorhome in the parking lot of Antler Village. Being a Benz enthusiast, I stopped and stared at it, as I began walking past it (still looking) the door opened and the owners came out since they had noticed my interest in the vehicle. They were from Oregon and had been traveling the US for about 3 months and told me how much they enjoyed their Unity model Leisure Van and were looking forward to attending the meeting of other van owners in Canada next year. They invited me to come inside and take a look – WOW!! They had the Murphy Bed option (located in the slide) which gave them more living space, a pop-up 32" TV, reclining leather seats for relaxing or watching TV, curved European cabinetry, refrigerator, stove, sink, microwave, plenty of storage, swivel captain chairs in the cockpit, and a washroom with a curved corner shower and skylights. It was amazing to see the amount of space available in this particular model – it gives a new meaning to the words "Road Trip"! *Valerie Cristiano*



Mercedes-Benz Manhattan - Unveiling of the 2014 S Class

On Monday, November 11th Mercedes-Benz of Manhattan hosted their unveiling of the new S 550 along with a display of previous models of the S Class. My 1991 Seafoam 420 SEL (W126) was one of the cars chosen at the unveiling along with a 280 SEL 4.5 (W108), 500 SEL (W 126), S500 (W220), and S 550 (W221). We arrived in the city and our car was then whisked away in order to be washed and detailed for the display. Other owners arrived, members of the NYC-LI Section, and after a little socializing, we set off for some relaxing conversation and lunch. At 6:00 the festivities began with a magnificent display of delicious hors d'oeuvres, wine, champagne, and cocktails. After a few speeches the new 2014 S550's were unveiled – a beautiful pair of black and white vehicles! *Valerie Cristiano*



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Sean Connor, Technical Advisor



DID YOU KNOW 15-inch VERSIONS OF YOUR 14-inch 1969-85 ALUMINUM “BUNDT” style WHEELS ARE AVAILABLE?

Yes, it's true – even though odds are you never knew they were made by the factory in the first place. Knockoffs with slight visual variations were made by multiple aftermarket manufacturers decades ago and can be found used on ebay. But more interestingly, the wheel manufacturer that produced all authentic Bundt wheels for Mercedes-Benz still makes the 15-inchers today. But first, some history...

Observing the performance and handling benefits that lightweight aluminum alloy wheels brought to Porsche models during the 1960s, Mercedes-Benz was inspired to create their own. After relentless testing, a final design was approved during 1969 and the Otto Fuchs company of Meinerzhagen, Germany was given the contract to produce 14-inch aluminum wheels for Mercedes beginning that summer. Known officially as “Premiere” wheels, they quickly became known as “bundt” style rims because of their visual similarity to cakes of the same name. Along the way, the wheels also picked up the nickname “barock” (German for baroque) because of their above-average level of ornateness.

The 14-inch bundt wheels were manufactured with a forging process that uses high temperatures and pressures to realign the grain structure of the aluminum. Once this process is complete and the grain of the metal faces one uniform direction, aluminum can attain the strength of steel with much less weight. The forging process is complicated and expensive, and Mercedes-Benz dropped it in favor of cast poured wheels after 1985 when the Bundt wheel's 15-year run ended. Forged wheels are far less likely to become bent over bad roads because of their rigidity, and the price premium they command can be worth the extra cost – especially if you're running low-profile tires.

During the early part of the 1970s, the 14-inch Mercedes bundt wheels were a dealer-installed accessory rather than an option that could be checked off on the order sheet. As sometimes happens when certain options are installed at a dealer rather than on a factory assembly line, they simply don't catch on as well. Perhaps it's a subconscious perception of a lower quality level. Or per-

haps it's resistance to automobile dealerships' age-old tendency to mark up accessory items 1,000 percent – paint sealant being one example that springs to mind. The 14-inchers became more popular gradually, and by the mid-1970s they became a straight factory option. At first available only in a 6-inch wide size, the 14s were later produced in 5.5-inch and 6.5-inch widths.

During that time, Mercedes-Benz product planners also conceived 15-inch aluminum bundt style wheels during the mid-1970s - envisioning their performance-enhancing benefits going to use on 450SEL 6.9s and limited production 450SLC 5.0 models in the pipeline. Fuchs Wheels produced the larger wheels as well, and their design was carried over to the bigger size with virtually no changes to the proportions. The center hole, bolt holes, and offset angle were the exact same to ensure 15's and 14's could be interchanged on any model of the day. But similar to how the 14-inchers were at first, the 15-inch bundt wheels ended up being relegated to being nothing more than a dealer-installed option. A complete lack of marketing and customer awareness led to little interest, and their high cost due to low initial production was enough to put off most who did inquire. It's safe to say 99.9% of all Bundt wheels made during the initial run were 14-inchers.



Because the internet is ripe with half-truths, I gave Tom Hanson (Parts Manager at Mercedes-Benz Classic Center) a call to find out more about 15-inch bundt wheels. We discussed the most popular knockoff versions that would be easiest to find. None of them have been produced for decades, but used ones can make a good value purchase for the classic MB owner who doesn't mind their visual differences...or refinishing them. Although all of the aftermarket brand bundt wheels are cast aluminum and not as strong as Fuchs factory ones, the likelihood they've been dented to an out-of-round state from potholes in the road is still low. These wheels were mated to higher-profile balloon tires that absorb shock well, because the vehicles they were fitted to were not meant for extremely aggressive driving. Fuchs factory wheels always have stamped numbers on the inside of the wheel, and aftermarket wheels always have them visible on the outside. Continued on page 10

THE MOST COMMON 15-inch BUNDT WHEEL KNOCKOFF BRANDS:

ATS

ATS Wheels, based in Germany, produced lightweight wheels for Porsche, Volkswagen, and AMG during the 1970s and 1980s. While they are most well-known for their 5-spoke "Penta" aluminum wheels equipped on Mercedes-Benzes modified by AMG during that period, ATS Wheels also created knockoff 15-inch Bundt wheels based on the original Fuchs design. No longer produced today, they are the easiest ones to find used on ebay and other internet retail sources.



ATS bundt wheels feature a center wheel area that looks very close to the original. Upon closer inspection, one notices how the wheel rises up higher in the center area than

OEMs, then drops off more steeply as it approaches the outer rim section. When viewed from a three-quarters angle, this deeper inset leads to a more pronounced wheel lip. If you're standing by the car looking down at the wheels, the vent holes appear larger because of the increased bundt cake center rise. ATS wheels are the best choice for someone who wants to add aggressive visual flair to the original bundt wheel look. Compared to original bundt wheels which have rounded off spokes by the center hole and vent holes, ATS spokes are sharply square in shape. ATS wheels feature an outside stamping that reads "made in Germany", and sometimes feature a stamp with the "ATS" name next to it. Other knock-off brands include Centra and ARC

AUTHENTIC FACTORY 15-inch BUNDT WHEELS

Today, Fuchs is still in business and still uses the same design for 15-inch Bundt molds as they did in the 1970s and '80s. According to Hanson, Fuchs has never stopped making these wheels. Demand for them used to be low, but as the decades have passed and 1970-85 models are seeing greater restoration interest, Mercedes Benz owners seeking authenticity value the original proportions the 15 inchers are faithful to, and appreciate the way their greater size fills the wheel wells. Fuchs typically produces a run of 800-1,000 15-inch bundt wheels a year to meet demand – up from 100-200 twenty years ago. While Fuchs 15-inch wheels are produced in only one width of 7

inches, it's a size that is much easier to find tires for than the 14-inch wheels.

The good news about Fuchs wheels produced at the factory today is that they are made to the exact same high specifications they always have been. With Mercedes-Benz parts, that's a good thing. Forged construction methods really do make them stronger and less likely to crack or deform than any aftermarket ones. Like vintage originals, new Bundts also have steel inserts that serve as sleeves where lug bolts pass through. Think of them as a giant washer with threads that the wheel bolts sink into. Their bolt pattern diameter, bolt hole size, center hole, and offset are all designed to allow 15-inch Bundt wheels to fit perfectly onto on any Mercedes-Benz that used 14-inchers. And should you choose to fit 15-inch Bundt in place of OEM 15-inch flat wheels on a 1986-newer 560SL or 560SEL for example, it would be no problem according to Hanson. Center caps and original style steel valve stems will transfer over from 14-inch wheels as well. The opposing bad news is that if forged wheels become damaged, they are more difficult to repair than cast aluminum ones.

Factory 15-inch bundts also come painted in the authentic silver color that's correct for the period of their original run. They also come with a clear coat hard shell protective layer applied on top of the paint. Supply and demand issues aside, Mercedes-Benz Classic Center can be taken to task - for if the extremely high price they charge prevents an owner of less means from achieving authenticity, the alternative road of using aftermarket parts becomes the only choice. And that runs counter to their whole reason for existing in the first place. Tom Hanson understands this, and made a pledge to help all club members interested in 15-inch Bundt wheels get the best price he possibly can. If you've looked at the choices and decided that's your preferred option, contact Tom at thomas.hanson@mbusa.com or 949 598-4842.



Lake Erie Tour

On Saturday Sept 28 I joined 26 other MBs in Cleveland to start the tour. Tourmeister Ron Harshman gave final instructions along with the tour book at the opening dinner. The tour book included specific directions, maps and points of interest along the route for the seven days. Everyone drove at their own pace, stopped where they wanted and met up at the next hotel in time for dinner.

A little background; Ron coordinates a week-long tour around one of the Great Lakes in years that do not have a Starfest. Other recent tours he has run are around Lake Michigan in 2009 and Lake Huron in 2011. Previously he conducted several tours around Lake Superior for the Twin Cities Section.

The only other person from our Region was Amy McKenna from the Delaware Valley who drove her father's 1967 230 SL.

Toledo was the next stop, Sept 29 to visit the Marblehead Lighthouse and a river cruise.

Monday brought us to Dearborn where we toured the Rouge Ford factory (F150 plant) as well as the extensive Henry Ford museum and The Greenfield Village. We stayed at the historical Dearborn Inn about a mile from the plant. It is not far to Chatham, Ont. (bring passport and special insurance card) where we spent the next night.

Chatham, Ont. Is the home of the Retro Suites – a unique, fun, classy hotel in the middle of nowhere as well as RM Restorations and RM Auctions, the largest international auction company for museum quality cars. What a restoration complex and a museum. Although the museum folks call it a 'museum', the restoration folks call it the 'warehouse' where they keep cars that are ready for the clients or cars ready for auction. Some of the cars in the restoration area are truly vintage. RM can fabricate any sheet metal needed as well as completely overhaul engine, trans etc. They also manufacturer the airline seats for a local executive airline.

We arrived at Niagara Falls, Ont. late Thursday, Maid of the Mist on Friday as well as a Journey Behind the Falls, both spectacular. Niagara has several casinos, I am not a casino guy.

Leaving Niagara Falls we drove through Buffalo, visited the Pierce Arrow museum with a full-scale Frank Lloyd Wright gas station recreated inside the building. While the rest of the group went to some nice place for lunch-see photo of the lineup at the vineyard I went to the Anchor Bar, where Buffalo Wings were first served.

Our final stop was Geneva-on-the Lake (Erie, of course), Ohio. We had a final dinner where Tourmeister Ron Harshman issued certificates for Excellence in Touring to all participants and gave everyone a gift of windshield cleaner to get the bugs off.

Back home on Saturday. Somehow the trip home seemed longer than the trip going, though the fall foliage was nice to see.

This was well planned, and fun to do. I got lost only once. I found I can get 28.3 mpg in my E550 if I am on the PA pike for 450 miles.

Joe Grattan



Jack's Barn - Oxford, NJ



Sunday, October 20, was a perfect autumn day in western New Jersey. It was sunny with just enough clouds to make the light interesting, the temperature hit 65 degrees Fahrenheit, and the fall foliage was at peak color. If your Starship had either a sunroof or a convertible top, it was time to open it for one last hurrah for the season!

Warren County is one of the best-kept secrets in New Jersey—lovely small towns, good roads, and great scenery, including the New Jersey side of the Delaware Water Gap near Belvedere.

A total of 47 people signed up to attend either the free-form drive and/or early dinner at Jack's Barn, an antiques shop and events space on NJ-31 about a half-mile south of US-46 in Oxford, New Jersey. Jack's Barn is owned by Section members Darren Muso and Chris Pozarycki, and the barn itself is a fine example of post-and-beam construction.

After gathering at 11:00 a.m. for browsing, bagels, and coffee, we were given maps of Warren County, and shown slides of nearby attractions such as Hope and Blirstown, with its airport and glider field.

Often the older cars prove most interesting, and this event proved was a fine display of the durability, roadworthiness, and support for such beauties as a 1990s vintage S500, with its comfortable interior and big windows, and a beautiful 250 Coupe from the 1970s belonging to the Hoffmanns, new Section members who updated it with an iPad for a nav system and mounting a GoPro digital camera through the sunroof to make on-the-road digital movies.

We drove out independently; many going to the town of Hope for antiques, and others visiting a nearby flea market. Also nearby was the Pequest Fish Hatchery on US-46 and the famous "Hot Dog Johnny's" in Butzville.

Returning at 2:30, we had a "linner" (time-wise between lunch and dinner) which included chicken, fish, sausage, meatballs, pasta, and salad, and ending with amazing locally-baked pies. A great time was had by all! *Carl Schwartz*



Member Nora Ochwat regularly conducts our silent auction which takes place at the June Jamboree and our annual picnic in September. This year we donated the proceeds to the Freedom Alliance. We received an acknowledgement stating that the club's donation was used to help the college education of the daughter of an airman who was killed in Afghanistan in 2003. As a non-profit organization we take pride in supporting the families of our fallen heroes.



Bergen Brookside Auto Body



Driving through Hackensack on November 2 was proving to be a daunting experience with all of the turns and I was beginning to wonder if I really needed or wanted to go to this tech session. Then when we turned onto Zabriskie Street and were greeted with a great BIG sign that said “Bergen Brookside Welcomes the Mercedes Benz Club of NNJ”, that sign alone made the long trip worthwhile! Upon entering the spotless shop we were warmly greeted by Mike, Andy, John, and Dashi and they invited us to have so Danish, bagels, and coffee which our members greatly appreciated.

After spending a little bit of time wandering around the spotless facility, Mike Saleme, General Manager, gave us a little history about the shop. It began in 1986 and now has 50 employees and they have 5 buildings in Hackensack and 1 building in Emerson with a total of 30,000 square feet of combined workspace. They service the 4 the major hospitals of Bergen County, provide 24 hour towing for all cars, specialize in EMS vehicles, and are MB qualified.

Andy Geiger, manager of the Automotive Department, spoke to us about having your car repaired and serviced. He let us know that the more you know about what is wrong with your car, the easier it is to fix it. Dashi Usini, Shop Manager, spoke more about car repairs and the importance of using OEM parts – sometimes the after-market parts are more expensive and sometimes they are even the OEM parts! John Saleme, President, spoke about having your car repaired after an accident and what some insurance policies/companies cover and do not cover. The most important thing is for you to be aware of what your policy covers and what it does not cover. Sometimes when you take your car to a body shop to have it repaired, they do not actually do the work, but send it out to another repair shop. Many insurance policies dictate that generic parts be used, but the customer can request OEM parts and then pay the difference between used or after-market parts. Some insurance companies say that you must use one of their shops for your repairs. There is a big after-market for hoods, fenders, and bumpers and the quality is not the same as OEM parts.

There was a wonderful Q & A period where our members were able to have many of their questions answered and which in some cases generated even more questions. At the end of the Tech Session, Bergen Brookside gave each person in attendance an ice scraper and a little pouch for miscellaneous items. All in all it was a wonderful and informative day. *Valerie Cristiano*



High Gear

John Kuhn Bleimaier



Driving a 1958 Mercedes-Benz 300SL is a hoot. The legendary starship is classically simple: non-assisted re-circulating ball steering and manual transmission with balked synchronization. It is also lightning fast, even by today's standards: zero to sixty in 7.4 seconds. Recently I had the opportunity to drive a 300SL roadster along some scenic byways here in New Jersey. Up shift, downshift, feather the throttle, floor it and chirp the rubber; swirling autumn leaves in our wake.

When you operate a vintage vehicle you are communing with history: gripping the outsized ivory tiller with your string back driving gloves; sitting upright on well worn upholstery creased by g forces of yore. The whiff and whine from an exhaust pipe unobstructed by catalytic converter, untroubled by social conscience. High profile tires compromise road holding but sing out like Anna Netrebko at the limits of adhesion. The genius of chassis design not the chemistry of rubber compounds determines your trajectory and exit speed in the twisty bits.

Mercedes-Benz markets the intangible commodity known as heritage. When we drive down the road in our 2014 starships in our mind's eye we are piloting a 540K special roadster or the fleet Blitzen Benz. The mythos of the three pointed star connects us with Rudolf Caracciola, Stirling Moss, Juan Manuel Fangio and Christian Lautenschlager. This heritage is palpable standard equipment that comes with all the motorcars which hail from Stuttgart Unterturkheim. Weep in inconsolable grief all ye Lexi, Accuræ, weep ye for Infinity.

Driving the 300SL was a pleasurable experience yet it was not a startling revelation or a dramatic epiphany. On the contrary, I felt immediately at home behind the wheel of the legendary roadster. This was in itself an uncanny realization. Not *déjà vu*. I actually knew that I had been there before. The 300SL provided me with familiar tactile sensations. Finally, I fully comprehended, that the 1958 300SL roadster is literally an amalgam of my 1965 190Dc Finback and my 2002 C230K sports sedan. The steering mechanism and four speed manual tranny are

straight out of the same parts bin as my Finback. The rear swing axel and all the suspension design, ditto. The giddy squeal of 80 profile tires, yes indeedee. And when it comes to the powerful acceleration forcing your *derriere* deep into the seat, my C230K goes from zero to sixty in 6.9. With the panorama roof flung all the way open and the windows fully agape, I am in a roadster cum roll cage.

How potent is the magic? What quantum of verisimilitude is in the dream? I taste the elixir on my lips. I am transfigured. Call me Juan Manuel...

Tentative Calendar of Events for 2014

Dates and times to be announced as they are firmed-up

February - Tech session at Shade Tree Garage

March 29th– Tech session at Becker Radio

April – Antiques Roadshow at Bella Italia Ristorante

April/May – The Stable visit

May – Meguiar detailing session

May – AACA Show in Florham Park

June – 51st June Jamboree

July – DIA Foundation in Beacon, NY

August 2nd-3rd - New Hope Car Show

September 20th – Regional Picnic at Falkenhorst

September - Warwick Drive-in event

October – Rally beginning at Jack's Barn in Oxford NJ

November– possible weekend in Lancaster PA including a visit to the dealership and/or visit to the Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton NJ

December – Holiday Party



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New 2013 SLS Coupe VS



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Ken Spingarn khs@openix.com

NNJS upcoming events have been
planned for 2014. Specific dates
and times have not as yet been
finalized for 2014, but a listing of
events planned may be viewed on
page 14.

As specific dates and times are
determined, members will be noti-
fied by email on a regular basis.
Also, details may be obtained by
visiting our Website and the up-
coming Star Tracks 2014 issues.



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