



The Houston Star

MBCA Houston Section Newsletter

April
2005

In this issue...

Tech Session at European
Star Motors
Page 1

President's Message
Page 2

"Wild" New Member's
Dinner
Page 7

Bluebonnet Rallye
Details
Page 8

Calendar of Events
Page 12

Upcoming Events

April 16th
Bluebonnet Rallye

May 28th
Tech Session @ Casari's



Tech Session @ European Star Motors

MBCA Houston's first event of the year was, at most, one to set the precedence for our Chapter's future events. The Technical Session took place at Stephan Bacio's "new and improved" European Star Motors.

The morning session began as we observed a crisp cool morning around 49 degrees with a slight overcast day and then one could not help but see a whole line of stars (we counted close to eighteen) arriving through the driveway into the parking lot. Stephan's new facility was most impressive with the customer area being adorned by a 328 GTB Ferrari and a Mercedes SE 600-V12 2 Door Coupe. The new interior featured marble floors,

ornate columns with vases on top, 2 very large chandelier style lighting fixtures and an adjoining customer waiting/reading room with comfortable chairs and couches, ample reading materials and complimentary coffee, most amenities that one would find in the newest and most recent Mercedes Benz Dealership customer service waiting area.

His design of the new facility didn't stop there as the photos reveal a shop area complete with year round air conditioning, the latest design with eight bays for service and a soon to be completed alignment machine. The steel structure is completely sealed to
(continued on page 3)

President's Message



This month's newsletter is running, life has kept me rather busy, aside from dealing with the insurance company, I'm off to Europe for a bit with the 'other' First Lady Laura.

Not a lot to update on that aside from a little bit better feeling from the agents, appraisers, adjusters etc... it seems that when you're dealing with your own insurance company they're much nicer to you. I want to thank the many who have called to offer condolences, and assure you all this amazing car will be back on the roads as soon as possible.

On to club business... Well, I finally got around to doing the article on the January tech session, and Chuck Wyatt was kind enough to put the event together and write the article. The event really was well done and we look forward to many more future events with Stefan. We also cover the New Member's Dinner... I found the pictures of Board Member Carol Bowen's recent Safari to be very entertaining and she even dressed in Safari gear for her presentation.

If you have the chance don't forget the Bluebonnet Rallye, it's coming up on the 16th and should be fun, it's once again being hosted by Board Member Harry Ramirez (details on page 8).

Board Member Richard Wilkins extracted some interesting statistics on the cars our members drive, within the Houston Section it breaks down like this:

Decade	Count	Model	Count
1930's	0	SL	101
1940's	0	SLK	15
1950's	10	SLC	2
1960's	24	SE	18
1970's	42	SEC	3
1980's	85	SED	1
1990's	115	SEL	21
2000's	139		

While this data is not all inclusive, it does give you an idea of the styles and ages of our local members cars.

Thanks Richard!

Mike Haney - President
MBCA - Houston Section



**Luxurious Lobby of European Star
Motor's new facility**



**High Tech new Air-conditioned
Service Shop**

(continued from page 1)

keep the technicians cool in the summer and warm in the winter. The exhaust from the cars vents through a well designed suction system ducted in the overhead/ceiling area. The shop floor was a heavy duty ceramic tile which is kept spotless despite a spot that one of our members quickly picked up and threw into the nearest trash bin. There is space for 10 automobiles and the shop area was full on this particular Saturday.

As one can see the layout is state of the art with the lubrication equipment conveniently located for the technicians to use as well as the abundance of tool chests and computerized testing equipment for those cars requiring Star Diagnostics. Our technical session was to focus on wheel alignments, but alas, German Software engineering and installation was late in arriving for our Chapter's members demonstration of the latest and most advanced of wheel alignment technology. However, our gracious host had prepared an alternate technical session focusing upon the CAM or Computer Assisted Messaging that allows the technicians as well as drivers a more accurate means of knowing what is going on "under the hood" so to speak.

(continued on page 4)

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The remainder of the session focused upon a myriad of questions and answers ranging from customers who buy new Mercedes-Benzes to those more fortunate ones who enjoy maintaining a more vintage breed of Mercedes. There were many questions regarding the transmission, engine communications and a short demonstration of the Star Diagnostics fault searching capability. There were issues brought forth regarding the interior quality found in the new models vs. the quality of workmanship in 1996 and earlier models.

There was a discussion of the article in the last issue of The Star Magazine entitled "Mercedes-Benz USA on Product Quality and Dealer Service" which featured an interview between Mercedes Benz USA's Vice President for Customer Service Klaus Ulkann, MB USA President and CEO Paul Halata, MBCA National President Richard Simonds and Editor/Publisher Frank Barrett. The focus of the article was a discussion about MBCA Members concerns about new car quality, dealer service (our host elaborated upon this point quite well) and the discontinuation of free maintenance for new cars. Some felt that the discontinuation of free service was a good strategy for the dealers and repair facilities, and others were a bit disappointed in this decision.



Stefan Baccio explains the "CAM" or Computer Assisted Messaging systems in a newer MB's

(continued on page 6)

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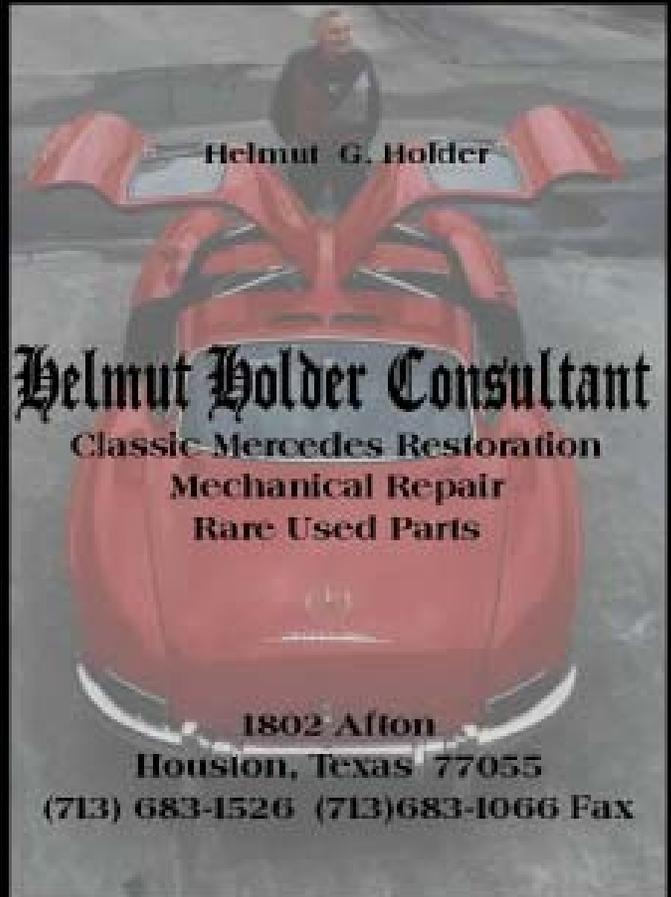
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Other topics addressed were MBCA Ombudsman and Customers and Zone Reps. Another point brought up was the seemingly hard headed German attitude in dealing with the factory in instituting changes or improvements or perhaps indifference to the customer's complaints and requests for improvements. Everyone had a lot to say about that subject but what will really get the attention of MB USA is the migration of loyal customers to other (perish the thought!) manufacturers thereby eroding the bottom line for a few years. Something needs to be done to restore the level of quality to that of the older cars, yet maintain state of the art design and features the customers want. So far the factory may seem slow in bringing about these changes.

Our host provided a special home cooked luncheon consisting of stuffed cabbage leaves and a delicious salad prepared by Mrs. Bacio. There was an abundance of coffee, soft drinks and water to top off a delicious luncheon which was attended by three first time members to the Houston Chapter; Arlyn J. Hausmann, Charles Rice, and Carl Thaemlitz who received their one of a kind Houston MBCA Houston Chapter coffee mugs. Everyone joined in on some great conversation and camaraderie talking about our common interests - especially our Mercedes Benz autos.

There were many door prizes in which two of our three new members won. One cannot help but wonder if the tickets were shuffled or perhaps biased in some way because even long time member Richard Wilkins won!

Quite a few members stayed after the drawing to talk one on one with Stephan who personally conducted another impromptu question and answer session. It seemed that a lot of MBCA Houston club members left European Star Motors feeling somewhat better since quite a few of us were able to voice some concerns, air some frustrations, and take home some useful information about their prized and cherished automobiles.



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“Wild” New Member’s Dinner



Our own intrepid Board Member Carol Bowen Shared her pictures and memories of a recent African Safari at our annual “New Member’s Dinner”, this year at the “King Fish Market” on I-10 West.

The private room was near filled with MBCA members, both new and old. it seems many of us wanted to see this for ourselves!.

I assisted Carol in sorting through over 900 pictures, it was a daunting task, but the final result was a slideshow lasting about 20 minutes that showed us the cabins, tents & hotels she stayed in. The native villages she visted. Some beautiful sunsets and flowers & trees.

The Wildlife was a treat not to be missed, we saw varieties from chimpanzees & baboons to all types of antelopes & buffalo, birds of many types, wart hogs, rhinos, hippos, giraffes, zebras, lions, and of course elephants.

The dinner itself was quite good and the facilities were exceptional for our needs, I think we may see future events held at this location.

Thanks to all the New Members that attended, we hope you enjoyed the evening and we look forward to sharing many more events with you. Of course thanks also go out to Carol for sharing her adventure with us all. It’s nice to see that occasionally some of us get to take some great vacations!



Join us April 16th for the Annual Bluebonnet Rallye

The first stop will be the Sterling McCall Old Car Museum, then on to Roundtop for lunch and antique shopping.

We will meet @ 8:30am in the lobby of the Holiday Inn on I-10 at Hwy 6 - depart @ 9 am Lunch included at a local restaurant
Cost: \$5 per car + \$25 per person for lunch RSVP & Info:
Harry Ramirez (713) 308-2891





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Mercedes Marketplace

For Sale: 1986 Mercedes Benz 560 SL. 141000 miles. Located at Odessa, TX. Hardtop hoist, factory tools, and new leather seats. For pictures and more info on condition of car, please email shootinjimster@yahoo.com.



For Sale 1972 Mercedes 350 SL 119,500 miles, Silver with black hardtop, always garaged, no rust, some paint blemishes on hood. Other than that the car is original, runs well. Both tops. \$ 10,500 o.n.o. Peter Parkin (281) 492-2937 peter.parkin@ge.com



Mercedes Marketplace



For Sale: 1970 280S - White with Red interior. Very nice original condition. Chrome is in great shape. Original paint. Presently, I'm hoping to find someone who will finish the work I have begun on this original survivor. It is ready for exterior cosmetics. Work that has been done includes: rebuilt Twin Solex carbs, camshaft turned, timing chain replaced, Duralevers installed, fresh Continental GT8000 tires, front speaker replaced, valve job, engine rebuilt, odometer rebuilt, speedometer cable replaced, new front brake calipers discs and pads, new muffler and exhaust, power steering pump, gas tank cleaned, new gas sending unit, blower motor(in trunk), new distributor, brake booster replaced, transmission overhauled, new battery, radiator cleaned, etc... Over \$11,000 invested, first \$6,000 gets to finish this project! Call Charlie or Cece at (281)354-8871.

MEMBERS: Marketplace ads for members cost \$5.00 for a text ad and \$20 for a picture & text ad. The ads will run for 3 months unless asked to repeat. ALL PICTURE ADS MUST BE PROVIDED IN DIGITAL FORMAT - NO HARDCOPY PHOTOGRAPHS.

NON-MEMBERS: Non-members may run text ads for \$10 or text / picture ads for \$25 per issue. ALL PICTURE ADS MUST BE PROVIDED IN DIGITAL FORMAT - NO HARDCOPY PHOTOGRAPHS.

Make your checks payable to MBCA and send to MBCA Editor, 5528 Jessamine, Houston, TX 77081. **IT MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE 10th** of the preceding month's publication to make it into that month's issue.



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2005 Calendar of Events

April 16th 2005

Bluebonnet Rallye
Harry Ramirez - (713) 308-2891
(meet @ 8:30am in the lobby of the Holiday Inn on I-10 at Hwy 6)

May 28th 2005

Tech Session @ Casari's (12470 Windfern)
Charles Wyatt - 281-469-7428

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