



# *The Houston Star*

MBCA Houston Section Newsletter

**January  
2010**

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March

**Annual Bluebonnet Run**  
April

**Spring Autocross**  
May



## **CHRISTMAS BRUNCH**

On a rainy and dreary Sunday, 16 hearty members of the Houston MBCA section ventured out into the weather for the annual Christmas Brunch and gift exchange. One by one and two by two they arrived at "The Brasserie" beginning at an early 10:30 to the last one in just after noon. The venue had chanced because the number of attendees was insufficient to open the original meeting place "Café Rabelais"

While the weather was wet and gloomy, the atmosphere inside was warm and inviting and made better by the camaraderie and refreshments.

There was lots of time for conversation about all things and our different Mercedes models and issues. After initial conversations and the arrival of the "last" member the food began to be served.

First, the baked brie appetizer with an accompanying raspberry sauce.

This was followed by a choice of chestnut bisque avec creme fraiche or a celery root remoulade.

The courses were served in a leisurely pace so that conversations were never interrupted or caused to stop because of steady flow of food.

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# President's Message

Happy New Year Mercedes Enthusiasts.

It's amazing the time has flown by; a new year and more new year's resolutions. One of those resolutions I'm pulling for is to have activities that bring out more of our members. We're looking to have the car club bowling night, a trip to Lake Charles, a museum tour, plus a few other great things to do and places to go. Throw me an email with your thoughts of what you do and may not like about our events. My resolutions is to increase membership and attendance overall and at these events. How about we include nice door prizes at these events like we used to do?

Here's to having a safe and prosperous 2010 and to meeting every member in the Houston area.

Cheers,

Damon Stith  
Houston Section

Christmas Brunch from page 1



Then came the entries: Beef Filet with Blue Cheese and Bordelaise Sauce, Salmon Filet with Hollandaise Sauce, and Pork Tenderloin with Prunes and Port Reduction. The tables were filled with “mmms and aaahs” as the diners bit into their meals. The food was excellent.

The end came with a choice of Chocolate Mousse or a Strawberry Tart. As with all the courses there were discussions of which was better. But all agreed the entire meal was excellent and compliments were asked to be relayed back to the Chef.

With the meal complete the gift exchange began. As in past years the gifts were excellent and

while there was some “stealing” of previously opened gifts the “crimes” were not as extensive as in past exchanges.

With the gift exchange completed it was time to brave the elements once again. With greetings of Merry Christmas and Happy New Year we departed and went our merry way.

More pictures on page 5.



# CASARI'S

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**Texas-German Autohaus, L.P.**

## **Service and Repair of MERCEDES and BMW Automobiles**

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Located on *Edloe St.*, between *Richmond* and *Westheimer*.  
State of the Art computerized equipment and tools.  
*Oil Change Special* while you wait.  
*Complimentary Shuttle Service* to your home or office.  
*Free oil & filter change using standard mineral oil or \$35.00 for synthetic motor oil, for new Mercedes Benz club members, with this ad. (Limit one per customer)*  
Factory trained and certified technicians.



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### Gift exchange at the Christmas Brunch



#### F&J EUROPEAN AUTO PARTS INC.

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SPECIALIZING IN MERCEDES BENZ PARTS  
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Parts Rep.



## Technical Q & A

**Question:** I have a '94 320SL and the check engine light has just come on. The computer facilities of my local independent mechanic were unable to determine the problem and he recommended I take my car to the local M-B dealership. On the way there I noticed the cruise control was inoperative. Sure enough; the dealership says I need a throttle actuator (\$1894.63 installed) and a CC control unit (\$1472.93 installed). I did some checking and was told to start with replacing the throttle actuator as this may re-engage the cc control unit. What are your thoughts?

**Answer:** Both of those items are pricey as you mentioned. I would give it a shot and if it doesn't work out you can always go back and replace the CC control unit later. Another thing to keep in mind is that the wiring harnesses in cars of that era were prone to failure. This is due to Mercedes attempting to make the insulation for the wires biodegradable which causes almost certain failure after this many years. Replacement of the wiring harness is also an expensive item but is fortunately only required once. Check the vehicle's maintenance records to make sure that this item has been addressed at some point in its life. Another point worth mentioning is that you can find a good used throttle actuator for much less than the price of a new unit. I hope this addresses your question and helps you save some money in the process.

As always, if you have questions, please send your requests to the Houston Star or contact me directly. I can be reached at [Saleem@JohansenUSA.com](mailto:Saleem@JohansenUSA.com) or call me at 281.883.3792

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## JANUARY BOWLING OUTING

Mike Haney reports that the BMW Club is on board for a bowling event against the MBCA and other German Car clubs. The timing of the event has not been set yet but it will be held at Palace Lanes in Bellaire. The size of each team will initially be 5 people per club, with possibly 20 bowlers total. To save costs, there will be a circulating trophy instead of a new trophy given each year. If you are interested in attending this event please confirm with the Editor or Mike Haney. Complete and final information will be emailed to the membership as soon as it is confirmed.

## Mercedes-Benz ranks first in J.D. Power and Associates 2009 Customer Retention Study

From egm CarTech

Are you one of those new car shoppers that love to remain loyal to a certain automotive brand? According to J.D. Power and Associates 2009 Customer Retention Study, resale value and vehicle quality are amongst the most important factors for new-vehicle shoppers to stick with their automotive brand.

The study found that the resale value of the vehicle as a reason for owner loyalty has increase by 12 percent while the importance of vehicle quality has increased by 6 percent.

In 2009, Mercedes-Benz ranked the highest in retaining vehicle owners when they go shopping for a new-vehicle. The German automakers retention rate improved by 8 percent from 2008. Honda came in second with 64 percent while Toyota came in third with 61 percent. Lexus and Subaru closed the top 5 both coming in with 57 percent.

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 10 December 2009 -Resale value and vehicle quality have become increasingly important reasons for new-vehicle buyers to remain loyal to an automotive brand, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2009 Customer Retention Study<sup>SM</sup> released today. Now in its seventh year, the study measures the percentage of vehicle owners and lessees who replace a previously purchased new vehicle with another from the same brand. Retaining existing owners is critical to a brand's market success, particularly in the current challenging market conditions.

The study finds that the importance of resale value as a reason for owner loyalty has increased by 12 percentage points in 2009, compared with 2008. Meanwhile, the importance of vehicle quality has increased by 6 percentage points. In comparison, in 2008, the reasons with the largest increases in importance for staying loyal to a brand were safety, fuel economy and deals/incentives.

Resale value and quality have also increased in importance as reasons why brands conquest new customers from their competitors, as has the importance of appearance and styling.

"Although there are some signs of economic recovery, the outlook remains uncertain, so for many new-vehicle buyers, high resale value and quality are particularly important considerations that are driving purchase behavior," said Raffi Festekjian, director of automotive product research at J.D. Power and Associates. "Whether manufacturers are striving to increase loyalty or conquering buyers from other brands, offering attractively styled models and having strong customer perceptions of resale value and quality are critical."

Mercedes-Benz ranks highest among automotive brands in retaining vehicle owners when they buy a new-vehicle, and improves their retention rate by eight percentage points from 2008 to 67 percent in 2009. Following in the rankings are Honda (64%) and Toyota (61%).

"Mercedes-Benz has steadily improved its customer retention rates during the past five years, and in 2009, has achieved the highest rate ever attained by a manufacturer since the inception of the study," said Festekjian. "In particular, customers cite the resale value and appearance and styling of Mercedes-Benz models as primary reasons to remain loyal to the brand."

Overall customer retention in 2009 has remained stable from 2008 at 48 percent. In 2009, 13 of the 36 ranked brands have improved in customer retention rates from 2008, while 20 have declined and three have remained stable. MINI and Porsche post the greatest improvements in customer retention rates from 2008, each improving by 14 percentage points in 2009. For MINI, this improvement is driven primarily by incentives and customer perceptions of resale value of the brand's models. For Porsche, the increase is due to resale value, fuel economy and quality.

The 2009 Customer Retention Study is based on responses from 128,939 new-vehicle buyers and lessees, of which 74,610 replaced a vehicle that was previously acquired new. The study was fielded between February and May 2009 and August and October 2009.

- By: Stephen Calogera

## Own a piece of history for \$129,000

from Machine Design.com

The presidential limousine from the Somoza family dictatorship in Nicaragua was put up for sale on eBay. The 1957 custom-build Mercedes 300D features a champagne bar, high-torque engine, telephone, parade light, siren, flag holder hood ornament, and air conditioning with "Polar-matic." *MotoringInvestments.com* is making the vehicle available to the public for the first time in 30 years. On September 17, 1980, the 43-year dynasty of the Somoza family ended with the assassination of Anastasio Somoza Debayle.



An official **Daimler-Benz** letter indicates that Luis Somoza ordered the car on September 14, 1957. He said the limousine was to have special features including refrigeration, radio-telephone, a military siren, and blue parade lamp. The car also featured a fuel-injected engine and double-acting telescopic coil springs. Mr. Somoza stated his intended use did not require armor plating. On March 2, 1958, the auto was shipped to Nicaragua.

Twenty years later in December 1977, Anastasio Somoza signed the car over to Julio Cesar Gallardo, as a Christmas present for his long-time service to the family. There were provisions Gallardo had to keep: He had to restore the car in minute detail; it was to be considered a museum piece and national treasure; and it was never to leave Nicaragua.

On Wednesday, Sept. 17, 1980, Somoza Debayle and Gallardo were killed when a bazooka rocket hit the limo broadside, tearing the roof away.

When the Sandinistas party came into power in 1979, they confiscated all of the Somoza family property, including the car.

Pictures and additional information are available online at [www.motoringinvestments.com](http://www.motoringinvestments.com).

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# ARE YOU TOO OLD TO DRIVE THIS CAR?

Continued from December's Newsletter



No Steering Wheel

No Pedals either  
You drive this car with a joystick

Do you think that you

Can drive with a joystick?

Your kids and grandkids can.

The influence of video games in our lives

Has really arrived, wouldn't you say?

But there is more !



The SCARY THOUGHT is:

NOW a 3-YEAR-OLD can STEAL your car

“AND DRIVE IT BETTER THAN YOU CAN !”

# Mercedes Marketplace

## 1983 Mercedes-Benz 380SL

Pristine. Red with red hard-top and black soft-top. Natural leather. **53,500 original miles**. TOTALLY ORIGINAL with exception of dealer-installed double timing chain. Absolutely no body work or rust. Always garaged and regularly serviced, all/most records. Purchased in 1994 from second owner with 39,000 miles. New Michelin tires, spare never out of trunk. A/C converted to non-FREON refrigerant. As original as minor repairs will permit. New Alpine radio purchased, but not yet installed. The black soft-top is original and has a totally clear plastic window. The hard-top is removable. I can provide a rack for vertical storage of the top. I also have a new, high-quality car cover. **Asking \$18,000**. Call: 713-850-1128.



## 1995 S320 LWB sedan



For Sale:

1995 S320 LWB sedan with only 97,000 well-maintained miles. Body and interior in great shape, and all systems are functional. Maintenance records and all manuals go with car. My daily driver and favorite vehicle, but retirement forces sale. **\$6300 OBO**.

832-444-9545

## 1985 300D Turbo Diesel

### One Owner

I have all the maintenance records on it.

Less than 115,000 total miles with original paint.

It has been garaged at home and work for the entire 25 years.

**Asking price \$7,500.**

Roger Blakeney  
713-526-6002  
cell 281-797-1715



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## 1967 Mercedes 600

This car was reportedly originally owned by the President of Dole Pineapple. Unfortunately I do not have any documentation.



Due to the varied unexpected turns life has taken, it has not been run for about 8 years, and we are thinking about finding a new owner. I had stopped using it because the drive shaft carrier bearing was noisy. I purchased the bearing, but never got around to having it installed.

The car has the optional cooler/armrest between the front seats. The upholstery is black leather.

According to published information (Robert Nitske), M-B only made 138 units in 1967. I have seen where the 600 is going for up to \$35k. I am asking \$28K or a reasonable offer.

Bob and Gail Supina 281-239-8583 See more at: <http://www.pcube.biz/Cars/MB600.html>

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### ***Moving?***

In order to change your address, go to the web site of the MBCA at:

<https://www.mbca.org/mbca/addchange.htm>

### ***Going green***

Remember if your email has changed from that which you gave to MBCA when you joined or you just want to make sure you receive the future electronic editions send your preferred e-mail address to [damstith@yahoo.com](mailto:damstith@yahoo.com).

## 2010 Upcoming Events

**Bowling Tournament**  
January

**Casino Trip to Lake Charles**  
March

**Annual Bluebonnet Run**  
April

**Spring Autocross**  
May

**Board of Directors Meeting**

5:30 PM of 1st Tuesday of odd numbered months at the Mercedes-Benz Greenway dealership 2nd Floor Conference Room

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