



The Houston Star

MBCA Houston Section Newsletter

July
2004

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Upcoming Events

July 17th
Tech Session at
Mercedes-Benz of Sugar Land

August 21st
Tech Session in Dallas
with George Murphy



Richard Wilkins' 1966 250SE Cabriolet

The 250SE Cabriolet pictured above is one of 954 made during the series run from 1965 to 1967. It was preceded by the 220SE (1961 to 1964) of which 2729 were made and followed by the 280SE (1968 to 1971, 1390 made) and the 280SE 4.5 which had the V8 engine (1969 to 1971, 1232 made). There were also some 300SE Cabriolets made in the 1960s, but these air suspended machines were 112 chassis, while the 220/250/280 series is 111 chassis.

This particular example of the 250SE Cabriolet has been in the hands of club member Richard Wilkins since just before Christmas, (December 22) 1972. That was quite a Christmas present, don't you think? There were two previous owners, the most recent of whom was a friend

of Richard's and had traded the Mercedes in on a "brand new" 1968 Porsche 912. Richard in fact maintained that Porsche until his friend had him install an air conditioning unit, after which he decided to no longer service the Porsche because of difficulty in accessing the carbs and ignition system, now pretty much buried by the air conditioning system. By the way, the newly installed air conditioner in that 912 worked like a charm.

Two days after purchase, Richard drove to North Mississippi for a Christmas and New Years vacation, a round trip of about 1300 miles. Gasoline was selling for 37.9 cents (premium). Asked about fuel mileage, I was told that the worst mileage was "bad" but that he had averaged 15 MPG over 85000

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message



I hope everyone had a safe and happy fourth of July. You no doubt have noticed we chose our July members cover car for it's patriotic theme. Richard Wilkins came out to the Autocross showing more than just a little national pride in his 1966 250SE.

We are continually looking for members cars to show off on the cover, so feel free to submit pictures and stories of your MB to me at the address on the back page. Email works best, but I can scan photos if needed. Please be sure to include a history of the car and any stories of adventures you have had with the car.

We're also still looking for additional Board of Directors and/or people to help with events. We meet at 5:30pm on the first Tuesday of odd number months at Greenway Mercedes-Benz, so if you're interested in helping out feel free to attend one of our board meetings.

Our next event will be the tech session on **July 17th** at **Sugar Land Mercedes-Benz**, hosted my long-time supporters Steve Williams & his technical guru Charles Johnson. Steve & Charles always put on a great event and this will be the club's first 'official' tour of their new facilities, so come on out and enjoy their hospitality.

We are currently working to set up another indoor tech session since we're approaching the hottest part of the year, details will follow as soon as the plans are worked out.

Mike Haney - President - Houston Section



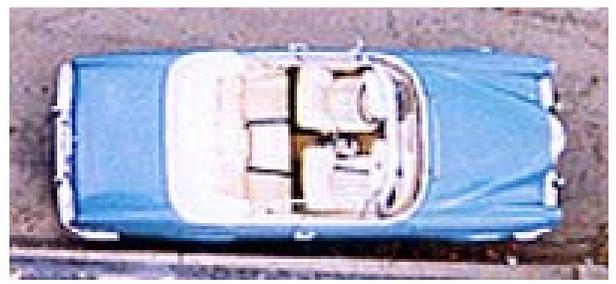
Distant Cousin? sort of... it's the new SMART Roadster developed by the fine folks at Diamler

(Member's Cover Car Continued)

miles (30% hwy/70% city) with a high of 21.4 MPG. He must have had quite a tail wind for that one!! After a bit of chiding, I found out that "bad" meant about 12 MPG.

Richard has done all of his own maintenance except for a repaint in 1978. Asking about the vinyl top as opposed to the original cloth top, I found that he had had the vinyl top custom made by an outfit in Florida. (The vinyl is much easier to take care of than the original cloth top, particularly since it is white.) He sent the original down as a pattern and was completely topless for a couple of months. It's a long story. Before installation of the new top, Richard used his 1923 Singer sewing machine ("Built like a tank.") to fabricate a new headliner and re-cover the full top pad. The interior of a Cabriolet tends to lead a much harsher life than that of a Coupe or Sedan and Richard tells me that he has spent a good deal of time trying to keep everything "presentable". He now has a 1969 Union Special sewing machine which is even tougher than the old Singer.

About maintenance, Richard says he has probably worked on or had everything apart at least once during his one third century of ownership. The '66 is, after all, almost 40 years old. Nothing seems to phase him, even automatic transmissions and transmission valve bodies. His first excursion into valve bodies ended up requiring a call to Montvale to verify placement of a spring in front of or behind one of the sleeve valves. Turns out that Richard was right and the manual he had was wrong! A couple of years back, Richard was at one of our club autocrosses (yeah - he does that in a 40 year old car) and one of the clutches inside the transmission disintegrated, but he still managed to drive it back home to Houston from Kingwood, and with some advice from Club supporter and transmission guru Juergen Jaggi (Jaggi Import Export, Inc., in Missouri City, <http://www.jie.com>): got back on the road again. Richard knew Juergen from the time that he presented a memorable tech session at Club supporter Hans Richter's Texas German Autohaus (TGA) on Edloe (<http://www.t-g-a.com/>) some time back. As for ever having been stranded anywhere by mechanical failure, there has only been one incident. Traveling West across North Louisiana on Interstate 20 midway between Monroe and Shreveport (i. e. - in the middle of nowhere) a rear wheel bearing exploded because the car was drastically overloaded to the point that Richard wouldn't even fill the gas tank more than half way. Another long story,



Spring Autocross at Kingwood College

Once again we were cursed with gorgeous weather for the annual Spring Autocross! I tell ya, ONE DAY I'll get my wish and we'll get to run flat out in the rain. What better way to find the limits of our cars than to put them in a controlled environment in the worst conditions? Oh well, maybe in the Fall Autocross...

Gorgeous weather aside, we had a really fun autocross. Due to the fact it happen to fall on Mother's Day, attendance was a bit less than usual... but that only gave us more time for fun runs, and encouraged drivers to invite others for "Ride Alongs"... basically this means asking some poor soul to become human ballast! Personally, I prefer to drive.

The day ended with Haskell Smith taking first place in in Class 'A' in his stunning CLK55... a car I'd hate to pull up next to at a stoplight!. Marvin Boyd came in second place in his more mild mannered S500.

Class 'B' saw C. Smith taking first in his 400E, and Clifford Floek (owner of a recent cover car) taking second place in an E420.

Class 'C' was dominated by veteran autocrosser Jim Flowers in his CLK320. After the time trials Jim brought out his amazing new non-MB toy for a few rounds.

Class 'D' gave Richard Wilkins (this month's cover car) a chance for a first place dash plaque! Congrats Richard, but don't let it go to your head, my 230SL will be back for the Fall Autocross!!!



As always, I'd like to thank the participants and spectators for helping with the extensive setup and takedown of equipment. Kingwood College gets kudos for their continued support of the club by allowing us the use of their wonderful facilities.

Thanks to all that came out, and I hope to see everyone again in the fall.




Mercedes-Benz

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(Member's Cover Car Continued)

but after locating a new bearing in Shreveport and asking a relative bring it over, he spent the night in the car and was able to drive to a local independent rural shop where the new bearing was installed. All was not for naught, as Richard says he met some very nice folks and found a wonderful place to eat at a country store that only long time locals knew about. But, alas, efforts to find that place again since have been to no avail.

Richard says that driving the 250SE Cabrio has always been a treat, as it is a very nice car, but that there are some problems with driving a car like this in that it attracts its share of attention. On more than one occasion he has been pulled over or waved down by law enforcement officers who were more interested in looking at the car than anything else. (He says it is always a relief to find out that that is the case and not something else.)

The car is basically all as original except for the addition of a paging alarm system, electronic cruise control, a capacitive discharge ignition module, and a couple of manual override switches in the fuel enrichment/starting circuit of the fuel injection system along with a different fuel pump. It is common for these cars to be hard to start when hot, particularly as fuels have become more volatile over time, but they usually start fairly quickly cold. The override switches were installed to help alleviate those hot start problems, and, in combination with the new fuel pump, seem to have done the trick. Oh - and one other thing - Richard has installed an internal regulator GM (horrors!) Delco-Remy alternator and says that it makes everything work better as compared to the original 35 amp Bosch unit. Of course, the later GM alternator is designed to work better with today's batteries, which are quite a bit different from batteries of forty years ago for which the Bosch alternator was designed.

Some of the features of the inline six cylinder single overhead camshaft 250SE engine (2496 cc displacement) are a forged and heavily nitrided seven main bearing crankshaft, alloy iron block, forged pistons, valve rotators, sodium cooled exhaust valves, and, of course, sequential port fuel injection via a high pressure (approx. 213.5 psig) six cylinder mechanical fuel injection pump. This engine, with its 9.3 compression ratio, is rated at 170 SAE horsepower at 5600 RPM. Torque is given as 24 mkg SAE at 4500 RPM. The engine is a type M 129 II.





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(Member's Cover Car Continued)

Other features include a unit frame and body (type 111) with separate sub frame in front that cradles the engine and carries the front suspension. It has an independent double wishbone coil sprung front suspension with stabilizer bar and an independent (swing axle) coil sprung rear suspension (originally with hydro pneumatic compensator). The power brakes are four wheel disk with a dual circuit master cylinder and dual diaphragm vacuum assist. The emergency brake is via a separate duo-servo mechanical drum brake system in the rear. To prevent rear wheel lockup in emergency situations, there is a rear circuit braking force governor valve located in the brake line above the rear axle. The overall length, width, and height are given as 4880 mm, 1845 mm, and 1435 mm, respectively. The power steering is via a wonderful recirculating ball steering box with about three turns lock to lock. Top speed is 115 MPH (remember - this was 1966), which is quite amazing for a vehicle of this weight (3475 lb with a total permissible loaded weight of 4510 lb) and engine size. The four speed automatic DB transmission has two planetary gear sets, three bands, three clutches and three oil pumps.

Richard has enjoyed driving in several parades ("only if I am the lead or second vehicle") and used it once for a friend's wedding (he offered to show me the video, but I artfully dodged that one) As mentioned above, you can usually find Richard at Club autocrosses and Tech Sessions. Last year he gained some notoriety by having the "Quickest Hands in the West" at one tech session, but that's a whole 'nother story.

Cabriolet production information given in this write-up is from the Silver Star Restorations website (<http://www.silverstarrestorations.com/111SE.htm>). Most other specifications were obtained either from the original owner's manual or various Mercedes technical publications.



If you see the car above in the rear view mirror, turn on your right turn signal, move gently to the right, and get the heck out of it's way! This is the new 2005 SLK55 AMG with 360 HP!!!



JOIN US FOR OUR FIRST EVENT AT MERCEDES-BENZ OF SUGAR LAND. WE'LL BE WELCOMED BY STEVE WILLIAMS, SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS AND CHARLES JOHNSON, TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR. WE WILL BEGIN WITH A TOUR OF THE FACILITIES, THEN WE'LL BE TREATED TO A TECH SESSION WITH CHARLES. REFRESHMENTS AND SNACKS WILL BE PROVIDED. EVENT COST IS \$5 AT THE DOOR.

JULY 17TH @ 10:00AM

MERCEDES-BENZ OF SUGARLAND

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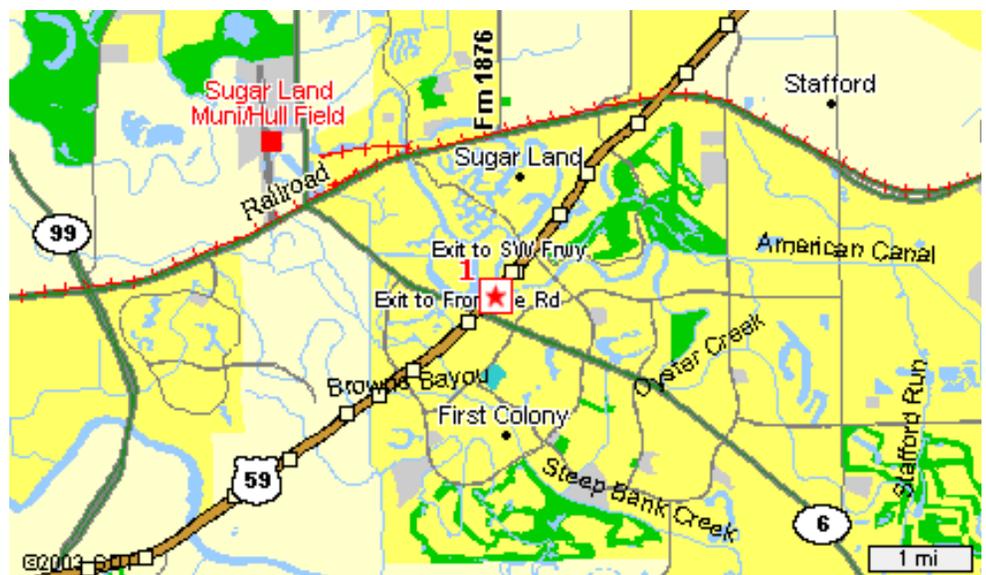
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Mercedes-Benz



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Mercedes Marketplace

For Sale: Silver 1982 Mercedes 300 SD 60,000 miles on engine, Rebuilt transmission \$3,500. Call Fred @ 281-359-6255 (8-6) [04/04]

For Sale: 1996 SL 320, Nonsmoker, extra hardtop, beautiful moonstone grey metallic, 8 speakers, 6-CD changer, all records, maintenance up-to-date, garaged at work and home. Purchased in Houston from Mercedes dealer. I am beginning to do a great deal of traveling and don't need this for an airport car. \$20,995. 713-334-1566 or fincommco@aol.com. [03/04]

For Sale: 2001 Mercedes-Benz SLK 230 Kompressor Convertible. Sport package with all options, including 6-disc CD changer. 17,400 miles. White with black interior. Excellent condition throughout. Warranty. \$30,269 OBO. Call Richard at 713-629-2105 or 713-850-9399. [03/04]

For Sale: 1971 280SE 3.5 Coupe Black w/red leather interior, std. transmission, new A/C, new Blaupunkt Aspen SQR27 AM/FM cassette radio & speakers, original radio available, new leather seats, head rests and center arm rests, new weather stripping on doors & trunk, NO RUST, complete records, excellent mechanical & appearance. Supurb driver. Photos and additional information available on request. \$23,000. Call 325-947-5094 [05/04]

For Sale: Set (2) rear tail lights for 2000 S-Class (220) sedan. Call Ron 713-882-4283 [05/04]

For Sale: 1972 Mercedes 450SL, 99k miles, cream with dark brown interior. New soft-top, and hardtop has a winch storage system. Interior and dash is all original. Great condition and fun to drive. \$14,500 obo. Call Jennifer @ 281-425-6955 (evening) or jschubert@houston.turbocare.com [06/04]

For Sale: 2001 SLK 320. Silver / Charcoal Interior. This car is in New Showroom condition w/ 8,500 mi. Kept in temp. controlled garage. Loaded, custom cover, 6-disc changer, 100k transferrable warranty. \$34,500. Call: Shelton (281) 346-1261 x101 or 281-599-0856 (evening) [07/04]

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.

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2004 Calendar of Events

July 17th Tech Session at Mercedes-Benz of Sugar Land

August 21st Tech Session in Dallas with George Murphy

Want a free car wash?

Mercedes-Benz of Sugarland is giving free car washes to all MB's every Saturday.

MBCA - Houston Section's website now posts the newsletters online every month in full color!!!
Log in and see:

[Http://www.mbca.org/houston](http://www.mbca.org/houston)

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