



The Houston Star

MBCA Houston Section Newsletter

**July
2009**

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Centerville Rally

On the morning of Saturday, June 27, 2009, Mercedes-Benz owners from the Houston area gathered at the Cracker Barrel on I-45 North and Airtex to gather up for one of the biggest Mercedes-Benz events in Texas this year, the Fourth Texas Mercedes-Benz Get Together. There were many new faces at Cracker Barrel and they all had nice rides, from newer souped up roadsters to classics.

The group caravanned to Centerville in a line formed by 12 Mercedes-Benzes of various ages and styles. I'll admit right off the bat, it was funny to see late model V8 and V12 powered Mercedes-Benz roadsters pacing my old, aerodynamic as a brick W123 chassis sedan 1982 300D Turbo Diesel at speeds well above the posted limit, but my 300D was just making a point. It just wanted to show everyone that a car with starship mileage (the odometer turned over to 393,000 miles as we exited in Centerville) could run with the big dogs, even if the running start was slower than the rest.

President's Message

Hi fellow M-B enthusiasts,

I'll be brief this month and allow everyone to continue to try and cool down while the temperature is hovering around 100 degrees. Like antifreeze to our engine let's not forget to drink plenty of fluids to keep our own internals combustibles cool. What brings focus on this is; at work we had an occurrence of dehydration that seemed pretty unlikely for this very fit and healthy person. She got up from her desk to go to the ladies room and in route felt light headed and passed out. Upon being revived when the on site paramedics arrived they thought it might be lack of fluids but took her to the emergency room as routine. The Physician on staff, after a couple of tests concluded she was dehydrated by not replacing missing electrolytes, depleted when sweating from just working in the yard. He hooked her up to an I V and sent her home encouraging her to "drink more Gatorade". When we hear "drink plenty of liquids" I used to think this was sometimes over rated nagging suggestion. Yes I'd hear it in the back of my mind but thought nah, that won't happen to me. Well this event has rather opened my eyes and made me think a little more about how much water I drink when doing things outside in this heat. I'll also try drinking a little bit more Gatorade and sport or power ades.

One other thing I know I mentioned in an earlier correspondence was focusing on driving when behind the wheel. Again we've all these nifty electronics to distract us from what we should be paying more attention to. Or, we become engrossed with something or someone in the car such has an heated argument that caused another coworker and her sister to be spun around 3 times on 45N because a couple couldn't handle their own rage. Recently, I was almost rear ended by someone paying more attention to their phone and not the person they had just rear ended. It actually would've been me if an old Ford truck with junk in the back hadn't moved to the left hand lane. Well, at the light behind the pick-up was a new Honda sedan. I went back to looking at the light and 3 seconds later loud screeching was heard and I turned back quick enough to watch an SUV plow into the Honda (which would've been me) hard enough to send him into the Ford pick-up which ended in the intersection. The pick-up's misfortune was my fortune. I know we've all had similar experiences. But if everyone would pay more attention to what they're doing we would avoid occurrences such as these. Please be careful and be alert to not only yourself but everyone else. Young drivers turn down your sounds systems and put down the phone, the call and/or text can wait. There are way too many horror stories that have this root cause.

* * * * *

Coming up we're going to rest for the steamy months of July and August. September we are planning an election dinner at white flamingo in Spring, TX on 9/19/09. October will be festive with Oktoberfest at TGA 10/17/09. The autocross has been moved to 11/15/09. Gail and Buzz will let us know where we are going to have the Holiday brunch.

Happy Motoring,

Damon Stith
Houston Section

Centerville Rally (Cont'd)

Upon arriving in Centerville 15 minutes prior to our expected arrival time, a banner at the corner of Highway 7 and the feeder road welcomed us and directed us to reserved parking just for the group at Woody's Smokehouse. As the other caravans from Dallas, San Antonio and Austin arrived, we found a way to shoehorn all of our three pointed star adorned beauties into the space provided. We were personally greeted in the parking lot by the owners of Woody's Smokehouse, Dudley "Woody" Wood and his wife Diane Wood, and their "His and Hers Corvettes." We found another banner in the parking lot proclaiming "Woody's likes Mercedes, but LOVES His and Her Vettes."

After getting situated, we all made our way to the dining area to feast on some of the best BBQ in Texas. After eating, Woody presented free T-shirts for all of the attendees, and I presented Woody with a certificate of appreciation for treating our group so well over the past few years. Then, I presented a cake to celebrate the 27th build date anniversary of my 300D (built June 30, 1982). It was a good excuse to have cake, and just maybe it will set trends at other Mercedes-Benz get togethers around the world to have cakes in honor of cars. If that does happen, just remember, it all started here in Texas at OUR get together, ha!



After the cake, we headed to Fort Boggy State Park for the Show and Shine. It was brutally hot out there, with a bottle of ice cold water in nearly everyone's hand. One person, though not with our group, was observed being taken away via ambulance (possibly due to the heat), so we had the show and shine as quickly as possible. The winner for the best pre 1980 category was a 1971 280SEL owned by John Britton of North Texas. The best 1980s award went to an immaculate 1985 500SEL Euro owned by Brian Schneider of Houston. The best 1990s award was a tie between two W124s, a 1993 500E owned by Chris Dezevallos and a 1993 300CE convertible owned by Myron Messner, both of Houston. The best 2000s award went to the 2006 SL65 AMG owned by Oscar Taylor of Houston. Unfortunately, Mr. Taylor left the get together before the announcement of the winners, and the award was accepted on his behalf by fellow attendee and neighbor, Calvin Robinson, Jr. After the winners were announced, everyone got into their cars to escape the heat and headed home. Overall, this year's meet marked a high point as we had 35 cars show up, an EXCELLENT turnout. Many at the meet told me that they were anticipating next year's meet, though without the heat. So next year, I will try my best to schedule the meet for late May, when we don't have triple digit temperatures outside. Here's looking forward to next year!

Joe Middleton

Editor's note: For more cars go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahYW1yUxYRA>
(with thanks to the member from Mississippi.)

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Environment Committee Tip of the Month

Driving and Car Maintenance

Driving Tips

- Idling gets you 0 miles per gallon. The best way to cool off a vehicle is to drive it. No more than 30 seconds of idling on summer days is needed. Anything more simply wastes fuel and increases emissions.
- Aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking) wastes gas. It can lower your highway gas mileage 33 per cent and city mileage 5 per cent. Avoid high speeds. Above 60 mph, gas mileage drops rapidly.
- Clear out your car; extra weight decreases gas mileage by one to two per cent for every 100 pounds. Reduce drag by placing items inside the car or trunk rather than on roof racks. A roof rack or carrier provides additional cargo space and may allow you to buy a smaller car. However, a loaded roof rack can decrease your fuel economy by 5 per cent or more.

Check into telecommuting, carpooling and public transit to cut mileage and car maintenance costs.

Car Maintenance Tips

- Use the grade of motor oil recommended by your car's manufacturer. Using different motor oil can lower your gasoline mileage by 1 to 2 per cent.

Keep tires properly inflated and aligned to improve your gasoline mileage by around 3.3 per cent.

- Get regular engine tune-ups and car maintenance checks to avoid fuel economy problems due to worn spark plugs, dragging brakes, low transmission fluid, or transmission problems. Replace clogged air filters to improve gas mileage by as much as 10 per cent and protect your engine.

Combine errands into one trip. Several short trips, each one taken from a cold start, can use twice as much fuel as one trip covering the same distance when the engine is warm.



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Test Drive: 2009 GLK

I've finally got down to AROD Mercedes Benz to have a go at one of the new models, a 2009 GLK. To my surprise (yes many of you who know me know SUV's aren't my first choice) I was pleasantly surprised by the feel, handling and ride of this new little cargo hauler. They've come a long way since the first ML, but don't forget the G Wagen (US term) that is still in production and well respected for its abilities such that it's still the yard stick at 30 years old. OK back to the GLK:

I drove the i-tech Multimedia edition with the panorama moon roofs, the front panel over the driver and passenger slides over the viewing panel over the rear seats in back. Voice control that gives you audible access to phone, radio and NAV system with built in rear view camera, and of course all the latest blue tooth technology to date. The exterior was Arctic White with contrasting black interior. It also had the appearance package with the 20in wheels and special aluminum roof rails.

The exterior has many more angles to instead of the flowing lines that Mercedes was known for. This seems to be a trend most of the new mass production models are undergoing. I'm still undecided as to if I'm warming up to the new designs but different they are.

Interior is well thought out. It seems they're trying the less is more, well, the i-drive (a-hem) COMMAND Center system as everyone knows is consuming a lot of the functions but unlike the new E's console this is not full of the push point designations. The materials are of better quality than the early ML's but let you down a little with the softer surfaces of other recent models. The COMMAND Center does seem not to require a PhD in clicking patience as it did before. Voice command does help this (what were they waiting for) for better voice recognition and faster to deduce what you are asking of it. The brush aluminum looked great, but for my tastes I'll stick with the polished wood please. The seats are firm but still provide good comfort and lateral support for more spirited driving. It's easy to quickly find a comfortable driving position. Interior space is on par with the competition if not a little better. Visibility is good all around and cargo room is sufficient for the usual family of four.





For many of the techno seekers, the new GLK is up to date with amenities such as, i-pod adapter, 4GB memory for CD player (that means 1000 songs saved to the hard drive), quickly adapting voice recognition, dashboard and console not over laden with buttons like its competitors. The array of controls are familiar Mercedes the column stalks for the most part do the same functions with maybe added something extra as a sign of the multifunction times.

The ride is softer and more compliant than BMW's X3 (rides like a stiff 3 series) or Acura's RDX even with the 20in wheels. They really found a good balance of sport and comfort without being overly harsh. I've been reading a few of the periodicals and will agree the brakes being a little touchy to modulate. I'm sure in time you will be able to smoothly and firmly apply without it being too jerky at times. Steering feel on the other hand is typical Mercedes excellent feed back even if for an SUV.

The 3.5 liter engine is quite peppy if not fast. Compared to others in its class this stands out as being the quickest. And it sounds it too. The engine hums quietly under normal conditions, jump on the throttle and the mild fluffy bunny becomes a growling wolf, it's a little intrusive but, the others in this class I can't say do any better. The 268 hp and 310 lbs ft torque gets reasonably good gas mileage remember it's still an SUV no matter what size. The fourmatic musters 16/city 21/hwy the 2 wheel drive you'll get 18 city 25 hwy, it won't win many distance competitions but its right with the competition.

Once you're used to the 7speed transmission's jerkiness in traffic you'll soon learn how quickly it adapts to your driving characteristics. There are 11 patterns in the sport memory of the transmissions brain. The more you drive the GLK the more it learns and adapts to your driving style.

Once under way the GLK does display a smoother solid feel lacking with this marquee in recent years. I'm pleased to say that it seems to be a step in the direction from whence they came. Please Mercedes continue on track.

I want to thank Gary Sonnenberg at Alex Rodriguez for taking the time to show me the finer intricacies of engineering that went into the car. More importantly the safety features too many to list but one (kids don't try this at home) the auto stop safety windows. If you have your hand over the window when it's gliding up it will stop and not pinch the obstruction.

And thanks also to Garrick Hatfield for allowing me to drive the car a little longer than normal.

Happy Motoring,

Damon Stith
Houston Section

Technical Q & A

Editor's note: This month we begin a technical Q & A. If you have a question or a problem related to your Mercedes please contact Saleem Durvesh at 281.883.3792 or Saleem@JohansenUSA.com. Each month Saleem will post responses to your questions.

Question: Locking system works when I turn off the car. About 3 months ago, I started having problem with the locks. 12 hours after shutting off the engine, when I unlock the driver side door with key, rest of the doors stay locked until car is started. About 30 seconds later the doors unlock. What happened to cause this?

Answer: This is a very common problem in older diesel cars. These cars develop leaks in the vacuum system as the vacuum lines become old and brittle. Your symptoms indicate that there is a slow vacuum leak and you need to track it down with a good quality vacuum gauge. If you have a few golf tees, they will come in handy to plug the lines during testing.

I would suggest starting at the most obvious place. Check all the connections near oil filter to make sure all vacuum connections are tight and nothing came lose during last oil change.

Second most obvious thing to check is door lock check valve located right next to oil filter. This yellow color valve can be checked by connecting your hand held pump to supply side and blocking the other 2 outlets. Also replace the two 1" pieces as they are inexpensive and they wear out.

If this did not fix the problem, then you need to test the yellow lines to determine if there are any leaks in master vacuum switch or one of the door lock actuators leaking. I will address the steps necessary in next month's newsletter.

I know a lot of places to get new and used parts very inexpensively. If you need locating any parts, please contact me. Thanks. Saleem Durvesh



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We look forward to seeing you at the Classic Center — and sharing 120 years of automotive history.

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Whether you are looking to restore a classic or buy one for your collection, the Classic Center can help meet your needs. Expert restoration and repair services — including spare parts information and sales — are available to assist owners in maintaining the prime condition of their classics to factory standards of originality and preservation.

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The Classic Center is your source for nearly 40,000 spare parts for classic Mercedes-Benz vehicles — from major assemblies like transmissions to small individual parts for virtually any need. Each product is made to Mercedes-Benz specifications and backed by the same factory limited warranty (12 months, unlimited mileage) that covers parts for brand-new Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

We can even access your vehicle's original build sheet and other archival data, free of charge. It's all part of the exceptional customer service you've come to expect from Mercedes-Benz.

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Please have the following information available when you call: model, model year, and vehicle identification number (VIN).

From movie shoots to hosting a memorable event, the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center and its wide range of expertly restored vintage vehicles is available for rent.

To find out more about classic event services, call 1-866-MB-CLASSIC (1-866-622-5277) or stop by the Classic Center.

FALL SOCIAL AND ELECTION DINNER

The White Flamingo Restaurant in Spring has been selected for our fall social and election dinner. Mark your calendar for the evening of Saturday September 19th and plan to attend. You're sure to enjoy this quaint, little known French restaurant. Details will be in next month's newsletter.

All offices are open for nominations. Please send nominations along with the nominee's signature and two (2) nominating members signatures to the Club Secretary c/o the Editor of the Newsletter. The election results will be announced at the Election Dinner.

Mercedes Marketplace

1985 Mercedes TD-T-300 Turbo Diesel

161K miles, Auto transmission, 5 cylinder, White exterior/Navy interior. Runs well. The interior and body are in excellent condition. Very clean. One owner; Sun roof; low mileage on tires; Garaged in Houston since purchase. \$5000. Call Louise or Bob 713-664-6706.



'82 Mercedes 300CD coupe turbo diesel



160K miles, Auto transmission, 5 cylinder, Brown w/Palomino interior. My car for the past 25+ years, it has been well cared for and is reliable, economical, and in excellent condition. Must be seen to be appreciated. **\$6500.00**

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Moving?

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

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

Want to know about events in a more timely manner?

For improved communication: If you desire to receive reminders and updates regarding Section events electronically please send your preferred e-mail address to service@danngo.com.

2009 Upcoming Events

Auto Restoration
July - Cancelled

Election Dinner
September 19

Octoberfest
October 17

Fall Autocross
November 15

Christmas Brunch
December 6

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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