



The Houston Star

MBCA Houston Section Newsletter

**October
2009**

In this issue

President's Message
Page 2

The W 126
Page 8

Mercedes Marketplace
Page 11

Upcoming Events

Octoberfest
October 17

Fall Autocross
November 15

Christmas Brunch
December 6

Bowling Tournament
January TBA



FALL SOCIAL AND ELECTION DINNER

Those who attended the Fall Social and Election Dinner enjoyed a wonderful evening. It was held at a great place, The White Flamingo Restaurant. Following the social hour our hostess and proprietor, Evelyn DeChiro, was introduced as our newest Houston Section member. Also Chris Coppman was introduced as a new member.

Ann Ankrum who was the first to register received a bottle of wine as the early bird award. Throughout the evening door prizes of a bottle of wine were presented to Marjorie Russell, Gail Werner, Christie Wyatt, Joe Middleton and Teran Martin.

A spinach salad preceded a choice of entrees of Hawaiian Chicken, Talapia Meuniere, Chicken Saltim Bocca and Veggies Plate. Desert was a choice of Strawberry Cheese Cake or Chocolate Mousse Cake.

continued on page 4

President's Message

Hi fellow Mercedes enthusiasts

I had the pleasure of joining the Porsche club for some spirited driving during Boxsterfest in the hill country this past September. We were off to a rainy start for Saturday's driving event from Fredericksburg that eventually let up for us to allow the pavement to move quickly under our tires. I'm thankful for the leaders who drove the routes days before we went out to ensure a safe trip from falling rocks and water over the roads.

There were several groups totaling 80+ registered cars (some decided against the trip due to the inclement weather) and 150 persons that set out following the leaders. We all drove about 250-300 miles for the day stopping for lunch at the Frio Canyon Bike Stop in Leakey, TX. This event gave me true appreciation of what my own Boxster is capable of. Also, the scenery was some of the most beautiful in Texas, I almost forgot I was in Texas. The PCA group put on one heck of a weekend. This might be something we should consider with our surrounding chapters. It's an unbelievable blast!

Events coming up:

TGA on October 17th. This promises to be one of the more entertaining Oktoberfest with Hans. Don't miss this one!

Our fall autocross will be held at the same location on November 15th at North Harris Community College.

Our Holiday Brunch will be on December 6th at our usual hangout in Rice Village. Stay tuned for more details.

Hope to see everyone then.

Happy Motoring,
Damon Stith
Houston Section

Bakkies

Gary Bowes / Daimler AG, South Africa / January 27, 2004

The idea of producing a Type 180D Ponton pick-up originated with the six original post-World War II independent South African importers, namely, Cargo Motors (Johannesburg), NMI (Durban), Stanley Porter (Cape Town), Haaks Garage (Pretoria), Ronnie's Motors (East London) and John Williams (Bloemfontein). They were all marketing Mercedes-Benz and various other makes in the late 1950s and were looking at how they could increase their sales which were severely limited by the strict allocation of passenger car import permits, e.g. in 1955 only 100 Mercedes-Benz cars could be imported. A pick-up or "bakkie", as we call them in South Africa, was classified as a commercial vehicle which was subject to fewer import restrictions. With the co-operation of the Mercedes-Benz central office which then operated in Johannesburg, the six importers arranged with Daimler-Benz AG to import "half-cars" i.e. the built-up Type 180D but without the body section behind the "B" pillars to which they then fitted a locally made load-box. The biggest problem was to find a local coach builder capable of making a "car-quality" load-box which fitted the lines of the 180D. The work was eventually entrusted to body builders, Morewear Industries of Germiston, which after laborious efforts, a very successful result was achieved. The distributors were insistent that a high quality standard should be maintained, particularly as buyers were found to use these vehicles mostly as passenger cars. Several hundred were built between 1956 and 1958. Local assembly of Mercedes-Benz passenger vehicles started in East London in January 1958, which allowed more units to be imported and the necessity for continuing with the 180D pick-up therefore disappeared.



As far as I am aware, there are two versions of this pick-up; The South African version which is recognizable by the gap between the cab and the load-bin, the spare wheel is situated behind the left seat inside the cab. The Binz version does not have the gap between cab and load-body and the spare wheel is stored in a compartment below the tailgate. I don't know how many of the Binz versions were imported to South Africa but I have seen a few running around, but I definitely prefer the body lines of our local version.

- Gary Bowes gary_george.bowes@daimler.com

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HOLIDAY BRUNCH



The Holidays Are Coming!

It's not too early to start planning for the holidays. Mark your calendars for a special event to celebrate the holidays on Sunday, December 6 at Café Rabelais beginning at 11:00 a.m. Again this year we will be including the famous Houston Section gift exchange.



Café Rabelais is a small French bistro located in Rice Village. Seating is limited to the first 50 people who RSVP to Gail Werner (352-263-1990 or peterbgaim@juno.com). More details will follow in next month's issue. In the meantime, please contact Gail if you have any questions.



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Fall Social and Election Dinner -continued from page 1



After dinner it was on with the election of Officers and Board Members to serve next year. The following slate of candidates was announced and with no nominations from the floor, the slate was elected by acclamation.

Damon Stith	President
Gail Werner	Treasurer
Joe Middleton	Secretary

Buzz Werner Newsletter Editor

Directors

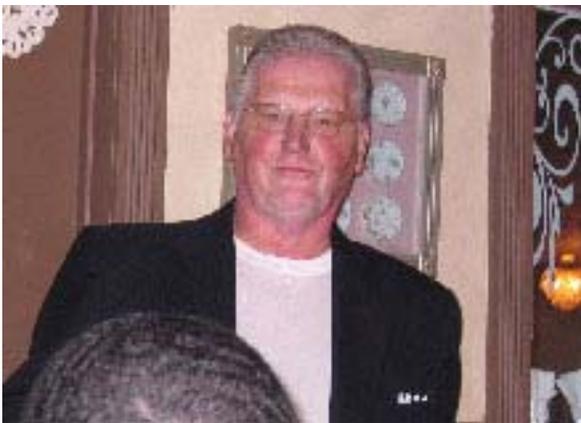
Marvin Boyd
 Paul Danneman
 Gerald Grogan
 Mike Haney
 Harry Ramirez
 Richard Wilkins
 Chuck Wyatt

Fall Social and Election Dinner - continued

A beautiful plaque was presented to Richard Wilkins for his tireless work and distinguished service involving the monthly printing and mailing of the newsletter. It was noticed that the newsletter once cost about \$1200 per month and that Richard was instrumental in reducing this to about \$500 per month. With the newsletter going green, emailing delivery, Richard's job has been outsourced and he is very pleased.



Our guest speaker, Wolfgang Sander, Director of Parts and Service, Mercedes-Benz, Houston, North was introduced. He presented an interesting and very informative discussion describing the planning, effort and cost required to service our vehicles. The cost of modern facilities including air conditioned shop, parts inventory, tools including computer diagnostics, the hiring and ongoing training of technicians, supervision and support staff all necessarily gets reflected in the hourly cost of technicians charged to the customer. The method of maintaining older vehicles based on written instructions, experience and trial and error is grossly obsolete. The high tech complexity of our modern vehicles demands a high degree of computer diagnostics and instruction and computer assisted management of the business.



Evelyn announced the grand prize of the door prizes, a Dinner for Two at The White Flamingo Restaurant. The lucky winner was Bernard Middleton.

Everyone enjoyed a wonderful evening. Sorry you missed it.

The W126: Still looking good after 30 years

-By Joseph Middleton, MBCA-Houston Secretary

September 1979 was a time of great importance for Mercedes-Benz. During the IAA show in Frankfurt, the W126 chassis *Sonderklasse* (S-class) designed by legendary Mercedes-Benz stylist Bruno Sacco was introduced to the public. The W126 would replace the W116, which had been in production since 1972.

For the new design, new engines were introduced, including the M116 3.8L V8 which replaced the M116 3.5L V8, and the M117 5.0L V8 which replaced the M117 4.5L V8 and M100 6.9L V8. The M110 2.8L inline 6 in carbureted and fuel injected variants and the OM617A 3.0L inline 5 turbocharged diesel engines were carried over to the W126 from the W116 without much change to the engines themselves.

While W126s were available in European markets as early as 1979, the W126 wasn't available for sale in the US market until late 1980 as a 1981 model year car. The 380SE/SEL and 300SD were the only models initially offered in the US, with the 300SD being a North American only model, though a few



were made for the Japanese market. The 280S/SE/SEL and 500SE/SEL (500SEL until 1984) were European only cars, but some did find their way to the United States as Grey Market vehicles.

In 1982, the C126 SEC coupe was introduced as a replacement for the C107 SLC coupe. The SEC was available in both 3.8L (380SEC) and 5.0L (500SEC) models. From 1982 to 1984, the 380SEC was the only model exported for sale in the US market. In 1984, the flagship 500SEL and 500SEC models were made available for sale in the US market. In 1985, the 380SE/SEL/SEC models received a double row timing chain to replace the failure prone single row chain.

For the 1986 model year, the W126 received a moderate facelift. These face lifted models sported smooth lower body cladding as opposed to the ribbed cladding found on pre-1986 models, Updated headlamp assemblies with headlamp washers and wipers in US markets, high mounted 3rd brake lights in US markets, noise encapsulation panels, 15 inch alloy rims, new radios, and driver's side airbags and ABS were now standard instead of optional. New engines were available too. The 2.8L inline 6 equipped 280S/SE/SEL was replaced by the M103 2.6L inline 6 equipped 260SE. Like the 280 models, the 260SE was not available for purchase in the US. The 3.8L V8 in the 380SE/SEL/SEC was discontinued and replaced by the 4.2L V8 in the 420SE/SEL/SEC.

The 420SE and SEC models were not available in US markets. The M117 5.0L V8 equipped 500SE/SEL/SEC models were continued until the end of the W126 production run for European markets, but the only variants for the US market, the 500SEL and 500SEC, were discontinued for the US market and were replaced with the M117 5.6L V8 equipped 560SEL and 560SEC. The 560SE was not available in US markets.



The OM617A 3.0L inline 5 turbo diesel equipped 300SD was replaced by the long wheelbase 300SDL equipped with the OM603 3.0L 6 cylinder turbo diesel. In 1988, production of the 300SDL ceased and the 1988 300SEL was introduced. The 300SEL used the M103 3.0L inline 6 engine. A short wheelbase variant, the 300SE, was introduced in 1989. In 1990, the diesel engine returned to the S-class with the infamous OM603 "rod bender" 3.5L inline 6 turbo diesel, which was placed in the 350SDL.



During the final years of the W126's production run, small changes were implemented. The leather interior design received a slight update, changes were made to the audio system with the addition of more speakers, the lower body cladding received new color options to compliment the body paint, and a passenger's side airbag was made standard for the 1991 model year. In 1991, the 350SD was introduced, marking the return of the short wheelbase diesel to the W126 lineup. The successor to the W126, the W140, was introduced in 1991 and official production of the W126 ceased in 1991. However, this wouldn't be the last hurrah for the popular car. Production of "Limited Edition" W126s continued at the Mercedes-Benz factory in South Africa until 1994. .

Due to Bruno Sacco's intention to design the W126 with the purpose to look fresh 30 years after its introduction, the W126 is still a head turner. Even today, the W126 can be found as the car of choice for heads of state and dignitaries. With the longest production run of all S-class models to date, timeless styling and its legendary reliability, it's no wonder that the W126 is still being sought after by first time and repeat Mercedes-Benz buyers today.

2011 Gullwing Revealed!

September 10th, 2009 Roy Spencer, editor MercedesHeritage.com

Mercedes-Benz and AMG reprise the “Gullwing” 56 years on.

Stunning new SLS replaces outgoing SLR

Photography from Daimler-Benz

The speculation is over. In limbo since the original 300SL Gullwing coupe ceased production in late 1956, the “Gullwing” designation lives on with the introduction of the dramatic new 2010 Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG. Largely engineered by AMG, the long awaited SLS debuts September 15 at the International Motor Show in Frankfurt, Germany.

There has been much speculation surrounding the final styling of the new car: We presumed the Dodge Viper-esque camouflage hid a more rounded, voluptuous shape reminiscent of the original Gullwing. Not so. While there were some attractive renderings circulating the web indicative of a smooth flowing design, what we see here continues the long nose, truncated tail theme of the SLR. The wheelbase (2680mm) remains essentially the same as the SLR ((2700) hence the car still hasn't

escaped a somewhat overly long bonnet/ short tail profile. I'll have to study the shape further but early views reveal a less finicky, overly busy shape than that of the outgoing SLR.



According to Chairman of the Board, Dieter Zetsche, “Mercedes-Benz is presenting an exhilarating super sports car in the guise of the new SLS AMG, which is bound to set the pulses of all car enthusiasts racing that extra bit faster. The brands Mercedes-Benz and AMG have joined forces to create the SLS AMG— which is set to become one of the most

alluring sports cars of all time.”

Indeed. With the uprated M159 571hp AMG 6.3 engine connected via a solid torque tube to the robust AMG Speedshift DCT 7-speed transaxle, power transfer will be virtually instantaneous. This drive train platform integrated within the lightweight, largely aluminum space frame should give the SLS dynamic handling behavior beyond what the SLR offered. The entire body shell weights but 241 kg (530 lbs) and curb weight is reported to be 1620 kg(3,564 lbs), well below SLR's hefty 1,768 kg (3,889 lbs).

The true Gullwing doors open a full 70 degrees and this combined with a very low sill height should provide “graceful” entry/exit for men and women alike. Once inside you'll find a satisfying array of technology.

This will have to satisfy your curiosity about this fabulous new Gullwing for now. The release date is noted as “Spring 2010.”

Technical Q & A

Question: I have a 1999 Mercedes Benz S500 (140 chassis). I had some work done on front end and they replaced Upper Control Arm because it was worn out making clunking sound as well as squeaking. A few days after this work was done, the squeak came back. I took it back to the shop and the mechanic showed me the new Upper Control Arm installed on the car and showed me the old worn out part. He is lost. Any ideas as to why it is squeaking?

Answer: Installing Upper Control Arm in 140 series requires a little different approach. In most cars, you can install it on any kind of hoist. Installation on 140 requires that the weight of the vehicle be on the tires before tightening the bolts. In other words, if you are going to use a hoist, use the one where you drive the car on it and the car is lifted with weight of the car on all four tires. Of course bolts need to be tightened to recommended torque. If you do not follow this, what happens is that rubber bushing is tightened at a different angle and when car is put down, there is stress on rubber and it tends to squeak. You may be able to loosen the upper bolt and release the stress on bushing which may take care of the squeak. I know you don't want to hear this; sometimes the only solution for the squeaky new control arm is to put another new one correctly.

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 or call me at 281.883.3792

Mercedes Marketplace

1982 Mercedes-Benz 300CD turbo diesel coupe



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Going green

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2009-10 Upcoming Events

Octoberfest
October 17

Fall Autocross
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Christmas Brunch
December 6

Bowling Tournament
January TBA

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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