



Around the Benz

the official central florida section club newsletter

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition
Jan-Feb



In This Issue

- 2
Officers / Directors & Contact Information
About: MBCA Membership, the Central Florida Section, the Newsletter and Benefits
- 3
The Presidential Address
How To: Volunteering with the Club
- 4-5
Event and Membership Map
Event Calendar
Upcoming Event Details
- 6
December Event Review
AMG Showroom Grand Opening
- 7
Article: European Delivery, Yesterday and Today
- 8
December Event Review
Mission Inn Holiday Party
- 9-11
The Car Wash: Just Say No!
- 12
Ordering Custom MBCA Name Tags
- 13
November Event Review
24 Hours of Daytona
- 14
October Event Review
Hilton Head Concours
- 15-18
A Case for Classic Mercedes

Welcome to the MBCA Central Florida Section



December Section photo at Mission Inn

The Presidential Address

...The hope is that this newsletter will be entertaining with its articles, informative with regards to Club events (both past and future), and finally timely, so that you can plan to be engaged with all of the wonderful events that are planned for this year....[read more page 3]

December Event Report

A large number of "old and new" Central Florida Mercedes Benz enthusiasts met on Sunday, December 3rd, at the lovely Mission Inn Country Club located at Howey-in-the-Hills,... [read more page 8]

The Car Wash: Just Say No!

We've all been there! Forced to drive down a dirt road, stuck behind some gravel hauler spewing dust like a volcano.. [read more page 9]

A Case for Classic Mercedes

As a shameless apologist for classic Mercedes, I have always found it fascinating how these cars frequently outlive even the worst circumstances...

[read more page 16]

Upcoming Events

- January 21-22
24 Hours of Daytona
Daytona International Speedway
- January 27
Tech Session: Detailing
MB Orlando Dealership
810 N Orlando Ave, Maitland, FL
- February 24
Museum Visit & Drive
Mt. Dora Museum of Speed
206 N Highland St, Mt Dora, FL
- March 9-10
Concours de Elegance
4750 Amelia Island Pkwy, Amelia Is, FL
- April 7
British car show at Meade Gardens
1300 S Denning Dr, Winter Park, FL



visit centralflorida.mbc.org for more info



About the Club

The MBCA was established in 1956, and currently has over 20,000 members across the nation. There are over 84 local Sections organizing hundreds of local and National Events each year. You can enroll as a member of MBCA by calling 1-800-637-2360, or by using the National Website at www.mbca.org. Cost is: One year = \$55.00 | Two years = \$107.00 | Three years = \$157.00 You may select your Section, or be assigned the closest local Section by your zip code to be closest to Events and activities in your area. More information can be found on the MBCA website: mbca.org/membership.

About our Section

Your National dues include membership in the Section of your choice. Each Section publishes a newsletter defining it's activities and Events. Year round calendars of Events include social, technical, and driving Events. Within your MBCA magazine, The Star, you will find information on Section, Regional, and National Events. Any MBCA member may attend any Section, Regional, or National Event by registering and paying the member fees advertised. If you need a referral for a service provider to maintain your Mercedes Benz, reach out to a fellow club member.

About the Newsletter

The Mercedes-Benz Club of America—Central Florida Section, Inc. publishes this newsletter every two months starting in January — March — May — July — September – and November. Special editions may be published from time to time to address events or interest items of special significance. Opinions expressed are those of the Authors and Editors. Express permission is hereby granted to other Sections of the MBCA to reprint articles contained herein, without exception. Articles of general interest are solicited for inclusion and should be e-mailed to the newsletter editor Pierre Hedary at mownersforlife@bellsouth.net. Submissions will be considered preceding the month of publication. To download newsletter copies, visit: centralflorida.mbca.org/section-newsletters.

Member Benefits

There are additional and sometimes unknown benefits to being an MBCA member. Take advantage of some of them.

-Mission Inn Resort, Howey in the Hills: purchase two nights and get a consecutive 3rd night for free.

-Area Mercedes-Benz Dealers: \$500 off the purchase of any new Mercedes-Benz.

-Pierre Hedary and Company: \$5.00 off per hour (pre-1995 models only).

-Hagerty Classic Car Insurance: discounts available for members in good standing.

-Brooks Brothers: Fifteen percent off regularly priced merchandise with presentation of MBCA card.

Section Leadership

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Around the Benz

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

Jan-Feb

The Presidential Address

Bob Hartmann

Happy New Year everyone and welcome to our first installment of the MBCA Central Florida Section newsletter. Hopefully everyone had a safe and happy holiday season and as we start 2018, we'd like to share what's going on within your Club Section. The hope is that this newsletter will be entertaining with its articles, informative with regards to Club events (both past and future), and finally timely, so that you can plan to be engaged with all of the wonderful events that are planned for this year.

As I mentioned in my initial President's message, this newsletter is a vital part of our club's revitalization. For our first edition, you'll find articles from our section member's point of view, as they talk about their personal Mercedes-Benz adventures and the love affairs that they have had with their automobiles. As you read these articles, think of how you might share your own personal experiences with other members in our club through this forum. We'd love to hear from you.

...entertaining,
informative,
timely...

As we all know, what is a club without activities? There are several very interesting events scheduled over the next few months, and we hope that both the timing and the topics are of interest to you. Again, your thoughts about possible future events, places of interest, and, of course, driving events are welcomed. This is your newsletter, and we hope that it helps to build a strong rapport between yourself and other club members.



Our Section President Bob in his 2008 SL55 AMG

Finally, a word of thanks to all of those executive committee volunteers who have been working behind the scenes, to not only create this first edition newsletter, but to also create activities that will be of value to you. Saying that, we look forward to seeing you at our first event on January 27th at Mercedes-Benz of Orlando – Maitland. This "tech" event will focus on how we can keep our prized automobiles looking good. It's an opportunity to gain "up close and personal" knowledge and see how professional detailers get results.

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming events and as always appreciate your ideas and comments. Please feel free to share those thoughts with me at hartmann.r@att.net. Until then, just keep following the road ahead with that "three pointed star" on your hood.

How To: Volunteering with the Club

We are in need of volunteers for:

Membership Committee: The Membership committee will be developing a system for membership recruiting and for member event participation. It will also develop apparel (shirts/caps/etc.), support recruiting tables when available and welcome new members at events. Three to five volunteers are needed.

Events Planning Committee: Help in selecting and coordinating the Section's Social, Technical, and Driving Events, preparing pre- and post event information, coordinating event advertising, planning the Section's charitable support and dealer support opportunities. Three to five volunteers are needed.

Publicity Chairman/Chairwomen: Such an individual is key to distributing promotional materials and press releases to local media, developing section posters and flyers and cooperating with German Car Clubs for MBCA-CFS exposure.

We are also seeking individuals to set up speaker opportunities, select section advertising, coordinate recognition at charitable events, input info to the CFS website, and send in newsletter inputs, help in developing articles, develop new columns of interest. Areas include "Tech Talk", Car Ownership Experiences, "From a Ladies Perspective", etc. Please contact Bob Hartman if you'd like to volunteer.

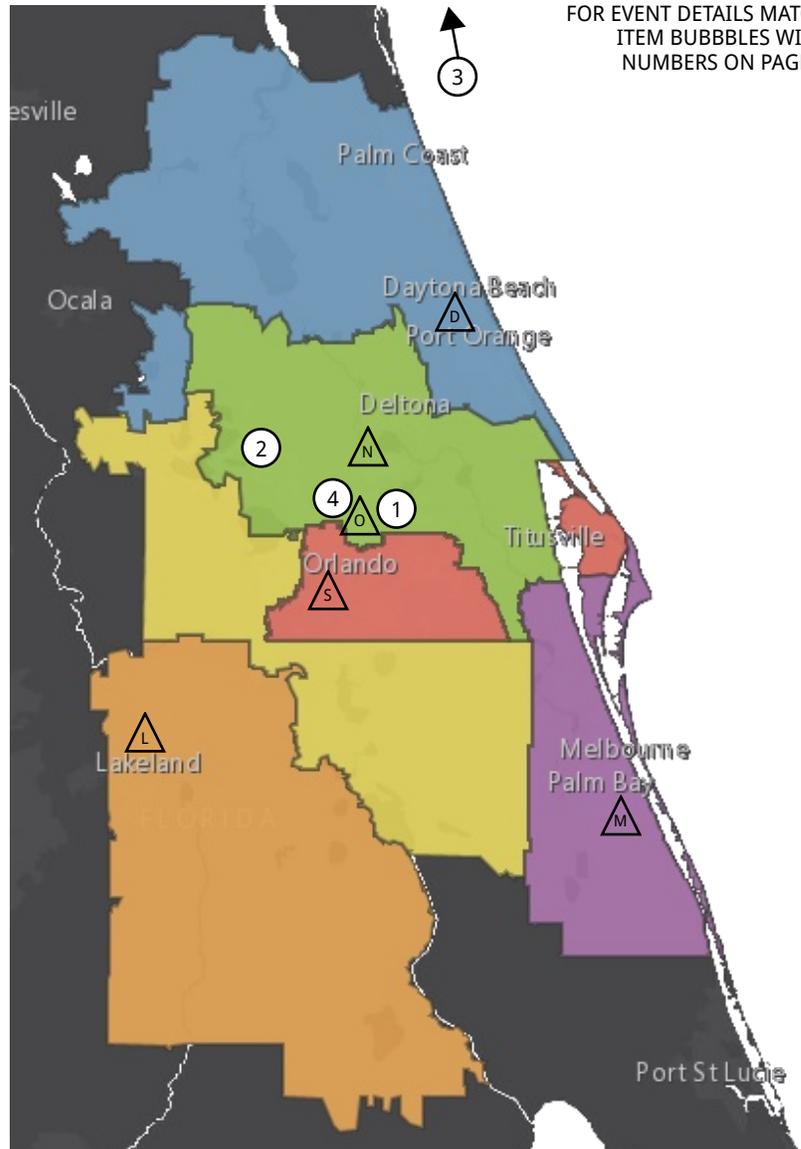




Event Summary and Membership Map

LEGEND

-  NORTH (32)
DAYTONA, VILLAGES, PALATKA
-  MB OF DAYTONA
1188 N Tomoka Farms Rd
Daytona Beach, FL 32124
-  NORTH CENTRAL (57)
SANFORD, EUSTIS, MAITLAND
-  MB OF NORTH ORLANDO
1100 Rinehart Rd
Sanford, FL 32771
-  MB OF ORLANDO
810 N Orlando Ave
Maitland, FL 32751
-  CENTRAL (23)
ORLANDO, DISNEY, MERRITT ISLAND
-  MB OF SOUTH ORLANDO
4301 Millenia Blvd
Orlando, FL 32839
-  WEST/KISSIMMEE (24)
KISSIMMEE, CLERMONT, LEESBURG
-  SOUTHEAST (28)
MELBOURNE, PALM BAY, COCOA
-  MB OF MELBOURNE
509 E Nasa Blvd
Melbourne, FL 32901
-  SOUTHWEST (18)
LAKELAND, DAVENPORT, SEBRING
-  FIELDS MOTORCARS
4141 N Florida Ave
Lakeland, FL 33805



FOR EVENT DETAILS MATCH ITEM BUBBLES WITH NUMBERS ON PAGE 5

[click link to view interactive map](#)

Upcoming Regional Events and Beyond...

Rolex 24 at Daytona

Jan 27-28 - This 24 hour race, begun in 1962, is one of the premier North America endurance races.
<https://www.daytonabeach.com/event/rolex-24-at-daytona-2018/37051/>

Retromobile

Feb. 7-11 at Paris Expo Porte de Versailles in Paris, France.
 If you are interested in a car weekend in Europe, there are reasonable direct flights from Orlando to Paris on Norwegian Air.
retromobile.com/

Starfest 2018

May 14-21 at Barber Proving Grounds and Talladega Raceway. This is the premier Mercedes-Benz event in North America. See page 5 for details.
starfest2018.mbca.org/



Around the Benz

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

Jan-Feb

Upcoming Central Florida Section Event Details

1. January 27 – Detailing clinic at Mercedes-Benz of Orando

Where: 810 N Orlando Ave, Maitland, FL 32751

Time: 10 am- noon. Ed Taylor, Mercedes-Benz of Maitland Service Manager, has arranged for vendors and employees to discuss detailing of your Mercedes, both interior & exterior; helpful hints for minor body repairs, tires, wheels and more. Light refreshments will be served.

2. February 24 – Classic Dream Cars Museum and Lunch in Mt Dora, FL.

Where: 206 N Highland St, Mt Dora, FL 32757

Time: 10:30-noon

Cost: \$18.00 for museum admission only.

Visit this Private Museum and take a trip through time with some of America's finest classic muscle, "Pro Cars" and foreign cars, plus a half century collection of automobilia (auto antiques).

3. March 10-11 - Amelia Island, FL

March 10 – Amelia Island Cars & Coffee

Where: The Ritz Carlton Amelia Island

Time: Entrants must arrive at 7 am, observers at 9 am.

Founded in 2013, The Amelia's Cars & Coffee allows individuals with vintage, exotic, and collectible vehicles to gather with other enthusiasts on The Golf Club at Amelia Island to see some unique special interest vehicles. This is a free event. For more information, or to enter your own Mercedes-Benz for display at C and C, please check out the following site: <https://www.ameliacconcours.org/car-classes.aspx>

March 11 - Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

Where? The Ritz Carlton Amelia Island

Time: get there as early as you can

Cost: \$95.00

Since 1996, Sunday's main event is limited to a select group of vehicles with unique historical significance, chosen to tell a thoughtfully-scripted story, and has featured many significant cars, drivers, and concepts. Mark your calendars for the MBCA-CFS Event date.

4. March 24 - Driver's Safety Course

Where: MB or Orlando

Time: 9:30am

Cost: Free

The two hour course on Florida Rules of the Road will include many practices most drivers are not focused on including perception versus visual acuity and influences that affect our driving as we age. Also information will contrast DUI versus DWI.

Our knowledgeable speaker will be Captain Robert Frangione who is a certified driver education teacher in three states and has taught the AARP Safe Driver course for five years. He is also a highly experienced military and airline pilot.



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May 14-21, 2018
Talladega Speedway and
Barber Proving Grounds, AL
Scheduled Activities:
Safe Drivers - Safe Families
Autocross (Acceleration Runs)
High-speed track driving experience
Off-road track driving experience
Concours
Road Rallies
Off-road Rallies
MBUSI plant tours
Reception and dinner
at the famous Barber Museum
Acceleration Runs
Talladega Superspeedway /
Autobahn Experience

starfest2018.mbca.org





AMG Showroom Grand Opening

Bob Hartmann

Mercedes-Benz of Orlando – Maitland Florida marked the opening of their new AMG Performance Center Tuesday, December 19th. Club members had the opportunity to get a first look at the only standalone AMG performance showroom in the country. A delicious spread of appetizers and refreshments were served and MBCA members and guests also had a personal tour of the facility by General Manager Bob Berryhill. Our thanks to Bob and his staff for including us in this very special event.



Bob Rolle and Ed Ho



Mercedes-Benz of Orlando AMG Showroom on opening night

Mercedes-Benz of Orlando



You deserve nothing less than the best. That's why Mercedes-Benz of Orlando is your best choice for new and pre-owned Mercedes-Benz vehicles in the Maitland area. Beyond the confidence of buying from AutoNation, America's largest automotive retailer, you'll appreciate our vast selection. We also offer the best combination of unprecedented savings and exceptional customer service. If you've ever dreamed of driving a Mercedes-Benz, the best time to visit Mercedes-Benz of Orlando is now!



Mercedes-Benz of Orlando



the new GT-R at the AMG Showroom



visit centralflorida.mbca.org for more info

Around the Benz

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

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European Delivery, Yesterday and Today

Pierre Hedary

What makes a Mercedes stand out among other Mercedes? An interesting story about the car, perhaps? One of the truly fascinating aspects of purchasing one of these cars is that fact that you can- and have always been able to- pick the car up at the factory. In the past, this was ideal because shipping fees and the costs of getting the car to the US were waived, so many purchasers opted for it. But European delivery cars are so much more interesting because they were specially ordered from new. And so, the European delivery Mercedes always has a story to tell.



One of the most captivating European delivery Mercedes in our club is Agnes, a 1961 180Db, that was ordered for the US Air Force. Instead of going home right away, Agnes lived on a US Air Force base in Germany, when she was a patrol vehicle until about 1964, when she permanently went home to the US. Agnes was ordered as an American Specification car from new, with SAE instrumentation as the dead give away, as well as English language service documents. Jon can be seen cleaning Agnes up in his garage. After sitting for almost a decade, Jon found Agnes behind a repair shop in Crystal River, and she fired up with some team work. Agnes, however, had been well cared for, so it was no surprise that she ran. All of her service records were written in grease pencil on the inside of her trunk. Mechanical sorting and a frame-on restoration has begun. Many parts are currently not produced widely, so coordination with the Classic Center in California will ramp up over time. In its' day, it was an economy-line vehicle, yet with all the Mercedes Benz style and class that one would expect. Fun Factoid: This 180D line was the first to hit the one million mile mark!



Today, Euro delivery is alive and well. Section Member Jim Gabel recently collected his new S-class via the program, and even today, it has not lost any of its charm. Jim described it as a "bucket list event", and for those of us who have the time, enjoying a new Mercedes in the fatherland might just be the vacation you have been waiting for.



"This was truly a bucket list event. Going to Germany to pick up my S Class with my son Josh. What an experience factory tour, driving the autobahn and taking in a "football" match in Stuttgart. Wow!

-Jim Gabel"





December Event Review: Mission Inn Holiday Luncheon

Peggy Bohl

A large number of "old and new" Central Florida Mercedes Benz enthusiasts met on Sunday, December 3rd, at the lovely Mission Inn Country Club located at Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida to celebrate the holiday season with cheer and camaraderie. The numerous stations at the sumptuous buffet made it difficult to fill one's plate what with the myriad of choices; however, there were no complaints, only complements to the chefs!

To provide an opportunity for all attendees to interact, get to know each other and to have fun, Elaine Spiller and Pierre Hedary devised a guessing game of esoteric Mercedes Benz facts. Judging by the technicality of the questions, everyone was impressed with both Elaine and Pierre's knowledge of Mercedes trivia.



Mercedes-Benz of Orlando-Maitland provided prizes, which were awarded to the winning trivia team as well as a lottery door prize. Thanks to Bob Berryhill and team for their support of this first event of the reorganized Central Florida Section.

The event concluded with a member exodus to the parking lot, where all the attendees proudly enjoyed sharing their vintage and current Mercedes Benz vehicles.

A big thank you goes to Bob Rolle who enthusiastically arranged and coordinated this event. Bob is creatively planning more events in order to continue to foster friendships and meet even more members who share those interests! The MBCA Central Florida Section look forward to seeing you in 2018!and thanks to those of you who helped to make this a successful Holiday event.



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John, Bob, Lars, Bob and Tom at the Christmas Party



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Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

Jan-Feb

The Car Wash: Just Say NO!

Tom Quinn

An MBCA article from Tom Quinn, with over 30 years experience in designing, engineering and building industrial paint shops around the world.

We've all been there! Forced to drive down a dirt road, stuck behind some gravel hauler spewing dust like a volcano, causing the safety sensors to be clogged with dirt, our mirrors no longer willing to show us what's lurking behind, our dirty cars now screaming to be washed!

Not to worry, there's always an automated car wash close by right? Wrong!

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!

You might be led to believe that those spinning abrasive monster car washes of the past have been thoroughly replaced by kinder, gentler wash systems of the present. This assumption is incorrect.

While our Cars, Coupes, SUV's and Roadsters are wonderfully engineered to be uniquely Mercedes, our paint is basically industry standard. There are only a few suppliers worldwide with even fewer choices relative to the base chemistries that dictate how paints wear over the life of the product. That means our Mercedes vehicles are no more or no less susceptible to paint damage than any other brand. When it comes to a paint's ability to resist scratches, we're pretty much all in the same boat!

So here we are, in line at the car wash, ready to soap, spin, wash and rinse our way back to that beautiful luster and rich color buried somewhere under the earth's dust. And at a passing glance, that's exactly what's about to happen. Or is it?

It's just physics - that harder objects can scratch softer ones. Your car keys and exposed iPhone screen in the same pocket doesn't usually end well now does it! As those seemingly soft blue spongy tentacles of care reach lovingly for your car, all soaped up and happy, you might breathe a sigh of relief knowing the dirty nightmare is almost over!



But a different nightmare is just beginning. What you didn't see, right before you turned into the car wash, were the five Duck Dynasty dudes with their jacked up, mud caked 4 x 4's just returning from a weekend at the Mud City Truck Derby. And while that might excite some of you, your paint is really not very happy about it. Dirt and mud contain particles of rock, some small enough to be considered dust and some large enough to stick itself right in the middle of the those long blue tentacles. Those particles, deposited by the Duck dudes, might as well be diamonds, as they are far harder than your car's paint. That spongy blue tentacle slaps, scrapes and spins on the surface of your paint. The result - thousands of micro scratches etched into the entire surface of your vehicle. Permanently. Forever.

In as few as 10 to 20 washes, you can lose up to 20% of your car's prized gloss. As much as 50% if you are a regular at the house of car wash horror! Yes, if you've sinned, you can arduously apply a coat of wax to bring some of that gloss back. But that's only the wax talking, as your real paint has been permanently damaged and will not produce the original shine on its own ever again. Sounds kind of dire, doesn't it!





The Car Wash. Just Say NO! (Continued)

I've attached a photo of what this looks like. It's not easy to get a perfect picture, but this comes close.

Notice the fine scratches visible in sunlight on a clear day? Yep, this is the result of an automatic car wash system.

So now that you are afraid, very afraid of the car wash... how DO you clean your car?

Before I answer that question, just a couple of housekeeping items. First, I will address the best way to clean your car and keep it looking brand new in more detail in a future article. There is a way! Second, this advice is intended for those cars that have been painted in the last decade, with relatively modern chemistries. Older, classic cars have different chemistries and require a different approach. Thus being said, there are two stages to cleaning your car.



Stage 1: Apply a good wax coating on your paint's surface!

1. Start by using a very mild dishwashing detergent. Many "car cleaners" contain aggressive acids that tear at the base chemistry of your clear coat and leave your car even more susceptible to damage from acid rain, plant resin and animal waste, particularly from birds.

2. Use a hose to wash off as much dirt and dust as possible keeping the hose at least 12 inches away from the surface at all times. Even water, under enough pressure, can damage your paint.

3. Use a microfiber "mitt" to clean off all remaining dust and dirt. Even with all of these precautions, you will be scratching the surface, ever so slightly, to get the dust and dirt off. Dry very softly, using a clean and fresh microfiber towel.

Make sure to clean everywhere you see paint – under the trunk lid, door jambs, interior pillars.

4. Using the soft spongy pad that comes with the wax, apply a good coat of wax (I'll detail your wax options and provide recommendations in a later article, but for now, any top brand of wax will do) to ALL PAINTED surfaces including the plastic parts like mirror housings, front and rear bumpers... EXCEPT black parts.

5. In the case of black plastic trim parts, try to minimize contact with the painted surface wax. Once wax comes in contact with black plastic trim parts it can temporarily "stain" them, making it really difficult to bring back that rich black like-new sheen. Purchase and apply "Black Parts" restorer. This can usually be found sitting a few cans away on the same shelf as the wax. Apply using a microfiber towel, making sure to remove any excess.

6. Right next to that can of Black Parts Restorer, is black tire foam. Pick up a can of this as well. It's simple to use and works amazingly well. No towel required here, just apply and wait a few minutes.

7. After you have no doubt vacuumed the carpets, and cleaned the glass, as well as wiped down the interior... your car should be looking pretty much like the day you brought it home! Shiny paint, a solid black sheen on the trim parts, black tires, clean glass and clean carpets!



The Car Wash. Just Say NO! (Continued)

Whew, time for a shower and a brew!

So, at this point, we have a solid wax coating on our painted surfaces. And while this looks good now, it's unfortunately not going to last. Wax is not designed like the coatings on your car that have been baked in an industrial oven to create lasting durability. It's a temporary fix. But the only option we have! When these steps are done with care, it is my experience that doing them twice a year will keep a reasonable protective coating alive on your painted surface. Once in the spring, once in the fall.

Stage 2: Periodic Cleaning

With a good wax coating in place, your car's paint is now being sacrificially protected. Meaning, the first thing dust and dirt cling to is no longer the paint, but the wax. That wax will slowly degrade over time, however, especially in areas where there's a lot of sunshine (ultraviolet light). Anyone know a place like that?

When we wash a car, we scratch it. Even using the best microfiber toweling, particles of dirt and sand are dragged along the surface until washed off. No way around it. So what is the best way to clean our cars?

Dont Touch Them

Find a local car wash that has hand held washing wands, bring about 5 dollars in change, and follow the steps below:

1. Start by always keeping the wand 12 to 18 inches away from the surface. As I mentioned earlier, you can also damage paint and seals (like around windows) with too much pressure.
2. Select "soap" and walk around your vehicle slowly, making sure all of the surfaces get a good solid clean. Yes, you're right; this is not the best soap for your car, but at this point, you are washing the wax, not your paint.
3. Once clean, move the selector to "rinse" and thoroughly rinse off the soap and road grime, salt and dust.
4. Dry gently with a soft microfiber towel

With a good wax coating and detailing applied twice a year, and by not touching our cars, each and every time we clean them, we will preserve the original coating integrity for many years to come and avoid evil, gloss destroying micro-scratches. That shine you see? It will be your cars true shine, as close to new as possible!

Stay tuned for other articles relative to keeping your cars paint healthy and looking like new!

Tom Quinn

Secretary and Paint Guy





Ordering Custom Nametags

Name badges are available from the MBCA Club Store in three types of backing attachment (magnetic, safety pin, or tie tack) and can be ordered in blue. Costs range from \$8.00 for two lines to \$9.00 for three lines (25 characters maximum p/line), plus shipping and handling of \$1.20 for one badge, \$1.50 for two badges, \$1.75 for three to four badges, or \$2.00 for five to six badges.

You may order by calling the MBCA National Business Office in Colorado Springs, CO at (800) 637-2360 and ask for the Store Administrator, by mailing this order sheet (see address below), or you may order through the MBCA website by going to www.mbca.org and choose Club Store from the main menu, choose Membership and Office Items / Section Events from the next window, scroll down to the desired name badge and make your selection. Order for your Associate Member too!

Please send ___ name badge(s). Specify type of backing: ___ Magnetic / ___ Safety Pin / ___ Tie Tack

Specify color: ___ Blue

NAME: _____

Central Florida Section, MBCA

Use a second sheet for additional names

enclose appropriate dollar amount and return address and place your order...

Order from: MBCA, 1907 Lelary Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80909

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Around the Benz

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

Jan-Feb

Recent Section Photos

November Event Review: Historic 24 Hours of Daytona



Bob Hartmann

The third installment of the Historic 24 Hours of Daytona took place on November 11-12, bringing together racers of various marks who competed over the years at the iconic "Birthplace of Speed".

New to this year's event was the Car Corral, which featured a variety of interesting automotive treasures ranging from a 1940's "Woodie" to a 2017 Ford GT. Each car was allowed to participate in a "Parade Lap" of the super speedway and infield prior to the start of the race.

Divided into a series of smaller 45 minute racing sessions spread over the 24 hours, groups were based on vintage and engine displacement. These groupings then included cars ranging from Group C prototypes to a 1965 Volvo sedan. Time between the various sessions allowed owners to effect repairs on their cars as needed. Overall, a fun event for all involved.

If you haven't had a chance to see these treasures from the past back racing in their natural element, next year's event is scheduled for November 12-13, or check out their website at classic24hour.com.



image credits classic24hour.com



Jay Hixon in his 280SL



The intimidating stance of the GT-R



Our 2015 S550 took us around the country. This pick was taken in New Mexico. The massage seats is what makes it possible to drive 14 hours straight. Of course the ride and awesome handling helps through the mountains.

My wife and I debated on an RV or Mercedes. I believe we did better for handling and mpg's :)

Ray and Diana Hammond
The Villages, Florida





October Event Review: Hilton Head Island Concours de Elegance

Bob Hartmann

Having attended a fair number of car shows over the years, the other day I was considering how similar they are to ice cream sundaes. Looking at the ingredients, my guess is that you would begin with a base of vanilla ice cream. It would be thick and creamy, just like the Amelia Island Concourse that takes place annually in Florida. Next you would need to add certain other ingredients from regional car shows; those might be sprinkles, or in the case of chocolate sauce, Pinehurst, North Carolina. Then of course, the all-important whipped cream, which would most certainly have to be Pebble Beach in California. But to finally top it off, you'd need that luscious, delicious cherry on the top, which would most certainly be the Hilton Head Island Motoring Festival in South Carolina.

My wife and I have been attending this event for several years now, and each year it becomes better and better, despite the occasional inclement weather event, such as an infrequent hurricane or premature winter storm. This year, however, the weather was perfect and both the cars and the crowd exceptional. Unlike the crowds at Amelia Island and Pebble Beach, this Lowcountry event is very relaxed and calm and Saturday's Car Club Showcase mantra especially lends itself to that genteel, Southern style.



This year I was once again fortunate to be a presenting member of the Mercedes-Benz of America Car Club, along with several other beautiful and noteworthy automobiles. Amongst our elite group were two world-class W113 'pagoda' SLs, a remarkable 190 SL, a fully restored 300 SEL 6.3, the powerful SL 600, and a fabulous SLS AMG Gullwing.



In addition to the roughly 175 automobiles displayed Saturday on the beautiful Port Royal Golf course, a large variety of antique power boats, both wooden and aluminum, were available for inspection. Suffice to say, there is something for everyone to see, as well as a large variety of food and drink to help keep up one's stamina. Our wonderful Saturday was capped off by sharing dinner with fellow MBCA Peachtree section members at the Old Oyster Factory restaurant. Our special guest that evening was Terry Kiwala, MBCA National President, and his comments regarding the strength and growth of our club nationally completed a wonderful evening full of southern cooking and stimulating conversations.

Sunday's main concourse event, with its eclectic variety of cars from the early 1900s up to contemporary racing cars, finished off this stellar event.

So, if you haven't had an opportunity to sample the cherry of automotive Concourses, make plans to attend next year's event, scheduled for the first weekend in November. Trust me, you will not be disappointed by either the people, the event or the locale.



Around the Benz

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

Jan-Feb

A Case for Classic Mercedes

Pierre Hedary

As a shameless apologist for classic Mercedes, I have always found it fascinating how these cars frequently outlive even the worst circumstances. Part of the problem is that these cars often end up with mediocre caretakers, who use them up and then either pass them on to the next serial car destroyer to finish off. Some of these guys actually have pretty good intentions- they just don't have the knowledge, connections or motivation to keep their classic Mercedes tidy.

What purpose does a Mercedes club serve?

As a club, we need to dedicate ourselves- among other things- to making sure these cars don't end up with these serial car destroyers, or worse, that they don't end up in junkyards. Why should we do this? Because cars as elegant, drivable and reliable as classic Mercedes just don't exist today. I'm certain a number of you reading this might not understand what I mean, so in the next few paragraphs, all of your questions will be answered. I will have to start with a basic teardown and rebuild of your philosophy about cars and consumerism.

Generally, most Americans believe that commercial value is more important than intrinsic value, and that newer is better. Let's apply this to a real world problem of dealing with a classic Mercedes. A person buys a 280,000 miles 1984 300D for \$3,500 and takes it in for a major sorting. The car ends up needing a front suspension rebuild, air conditioning compressor, engine mounts, brakes, a few cosmetic and interior issues fixed, climate control actuators, rear window regulators and several oil leaks rectified. The bill for service comes to \$8,100. This person then has a total of \$11,600 invested in what the market deems a \$3,500 car. The typical consensus is that this is a waste of money, and that the car is only a pleasure car- which is fine. However, there are a number of reasons to do this, and many people chose to refurbish these cars.

In the grand scheme of things, most well equipped luxury cars will depreciate about \$15-20,000 in three years. Lesser makes, such as the Korean and American marques, will lose even more money in less time. So let's say you go out and buy a brand new Japanese compact car for \$18,000. Is it worthwhile to compare it to the 300D, or any Mercedes built before 1993?

I believe it is, and here is why. I can say with certainty that anything and everything on a 30 year old Mercedes can be repaired. There are no obtrusive, unobtainable control modules (try getting an engine control unit for a ten year old Chrysler) that cause serious mystery problems. While a 1978 Chevy pickup might deliver similar simplicity, commodities such as fuel injection, disc brakes, independent suspension and excellent handling do not come with the territory.

The money you'll lose on a new American midsize is your purchasing and sorting budget for a classic Mercedes. Now that we have established this in writing, we can start to deconstruct some of the other arguments that potential owners think about when they are trying to make this decision.





A Case for Classic Mercedes (Continued)

Pierre Hedary

Argument number one: Only new cars are safe and reliable

The argument that I hear the most often is that older cars are not dependable. To be fair, this is true under certain conditions, but this is not the car's fault. This has more to do with the people servicing the car than the car itself. Mercedes built each of its vehicles for reliable daily use, and that's why they have survived for so long. Granted, after 1965 these cars became more user friendly, but I have spent hours in neglected pre-1965 Mercedes and still found them to do everything they are supposed to. After 1995, the number of electronic failures can become insurmountable, so let's say anything before 1995 is fair game.

Argument number two: It's an old car, your expectations are too high!

A number of people get this excuse from their mechanics, but this is often a cover up for garages that want to get the old stuff out of the way so they can make a fast buck turning around plug and play repairs on newer cars. Working on older cars takes patience and dedication, and this applies heavily to classic Mercedes.

Most people are stunned when they find out Mercedes makes most of the parts for their older models. It does help to have a good relationship with your parts department at your local dealership, especially when the repair shops swear up and down that "they can't get parts for these old Mercedes!"

Generally, when serviced the right way, these older Mercedes tend to operate in a way that involves the driver- but does not put them at risk. While all older cars have idiosyncrasies, classic Mercedes have very few, if any. The functional nature of these cars is what makes them so delightful to own, even if the AC doesn't blow at 32 degrees.

Argument number three: It's a money pit!

Before buying any classic Mercedes, you should either decide you're going to work on the car yourself or you need to know who you're going to take it to. With your future technician, you need to take the time to create an inventory of problems the car has, so that you can come up with a budget. Do independent research about the issues- and test drive the car- so you can see what issues arise during operation of the vehicle. While you can't plan for every issue a 30 year old car has, you can certainly identify more than seventy five percent of them by doing a careful evaluation.

Argument number four- it's too expensive,

Here's one most of us can relate to. While there is no way around the expense of sorting a classic car, there are some things you can do to make it affordable. First, figure out what repairs you can do yourself. You don't need to be mechanically inclined to do this- you just need to put forth some effort, buy a few tools and do some research. Next, plan on using the car. It's easier to justify spending several thousand dollars on a car you're going to use, so go big and don't treat it like it is a toy.



Lars Morgan with his 1977 240D.



Around the Benz

Volume 2018 - 1st Edition

Jan-Feb

A Case for Classic Mercedes (Continued)

Pierre Hedary

Finally, cut back on other expenses so you can carve out some room in your budget for your new acquisition. Let's say we go back to the example of our \$3,500 300D. While \$8,100 seems like a lot of money, look at your own budget and see where you can cut back to make financial room for your new car.

Realistically, some people just can't afford to do this- but I have seen plenty of people on fixed incomes, with careful budgeting, still enjoy the ownership and care of many Mercedes sedans.

Counter argument number one: Most cars don't look this good

While Mercedes-Benz has been great about maintaining a distinctive style for their vehicles, the design appeal of a classic Mercedes is obvious. There are few cars that are as identifiable as a W123, W108, W107 or W124- to name a few.

While buying a car for its looks might seem superficial, the gorgeous appearance helps to compliment the overall quality of the vehicle.

Counter argument number two: No control modules, no obsolescence

While computers have made our lives better, cars safer and emissions outputs lower, they have also created additional issues when it comes to diagnosis, repair cost and longevity. If you enjoy the modern computerized vehicle, that's fine. However, if you find yourself wishing you had a mechanical steering lock, an engine that doesn't depend on five modules to run and straightforward, easy diagnosis, a 35 year old classic Mercedes- gasoline or diesel- might be right up your alley. Diesel models can run with no electrical input. Gasoline models equipped with Bosch K jetronic injection (1976 to early 1990's) will continue to run even if their modules decide to quit working- which does not happen very often.

Many new car manufacturers stop supporting their product when it reaches the ten year mark. Meaning that once the supply of modules dries up, the junk yard awaits.

Counter argument number three: As safe today as any new car

Safety is not just defined by crashworthiness. In fact, avoiding an accident is just as important as surviving one. With excellent visibility, direct handling and brilliantly placed, unambiguous controls, driving to avoid an accident is fairly simple in the older Mercedes model platforms. In case something does happen, the rigid construction, unforgiving bumpers and , if you have a diesel- minimal fire risk ensure that , to date, Mercedes-Benz passenger cars have saved more lives than any other vehicle. While newer Mercedes are the safest cars on the road



Jon and Priscilla with a 1992 300D 2.5 Turbo

(if you have a teenager, you might want to put them in one until they learn to drive and can appreciate an older Mercedes), older examples had to deal with the horrifically unsafe American full size body on frame battering rams of the seventies. They lived in a very unforgiving environment, where the dominant idea was that one car would destroy the other in a crash.





A Case for Classic Mercedes (Continued)

Pierre Hedary

Besides this, most of today's aerodynamic vehicles have disappointing visibility.

Counter argument number four: Compare classic Mercedes to other classic cars

If you're reading this because you have a soft spot for classic cars, I will also mention that sorting out a classic Mercedes costs a lot less than a Jaguar, Ferrari, BMW, Porsche or similar, just to name a few. Many of these other cars had some fairly obvious engineering shortcomings that rendered them obsolete just ten years

or so after they were built. Many of them died from the tin worm, and even more of them suffered from electrical issues, mechanical failures and interiors that wore out. Today, these issues have not gone away, so you can either spend \$11,000 buying an sorting a 1984 300D, or \$11,000 buying a rusty BMW 2002 with a worn out engine. As you read this, a 280SL still costs less than its contemporary- the 2.0 liter short wheel base 911 or the 2.4 liter updated version.

Counter argument number five: durability engineered into the product

The Mercedes 615, 616 and 617 engines were the last totally cast iron engines used in a Mercedes. As a



Section Member and current VP, Lars Morgan, poses in 1992 with his 300D. Lars hasn't forgotten the 123. Today he owns a 1977 240D.

result, cylinder head failures are rare, castings don't crack and corrosion doesn't eat the engine up from the inside out. These were the engines that powered Mercedes diesels prior to 1985. They are the benchmark for the best passenger cars engines ever built, and have no weak points or vices. Additionally, suspensions don't just collapse, there is no electric fuel pump to seize and there are no timing belts to replace every fifty thousand miles or so. There is no ignition system ,mechanical or electronic, to fail during a

deluge. You can actually buy fuel during an impending hurricane landfall. The down side? You have to check your fluids once a week and get your valves adjusted every 15,000 miles. Transmissions, which, in automatic form usually last about 150,000 miles, are good for three hundred thousand miles or better when serviced regularly. Interiors only fall apart when left outside to bake in the sun for ten or fifteen years.

I suppose you've had enough by now, but I think my point is obvious. These cars are not just mechanical curiosities- they are still usable, safe and reliable cars today, with an indisputable image and durability for decades.

Stay tuned for the next issue where you'll find more great Mercedes-Benz articles, How-To's, Event Reviews and Section News...

