



Vancouver Island Section

November, 2014

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Coming Events - Mark your calendar now!

Fri, Dec 19: Holiday party, Union Club. Drinks starting around 6, dinner -the Union club’s famous buffet - around 7, dancing to a live band after dinner. We have a room separate from the main crowd, so conversation instead of dancing is possible. Door prizes, minimal speechifying, presentation of year pins (see below) and awards. The cost is \$85 per person.

This will be our last Xmas at the Union Club for at least two years, with the Board opting for a lower key event next year. Join us if you can. Jessica, at Three Point Motors (250-385-6737) will accept your credit card payment by December 15. Also, please drop Bob Wilson a note to say you’re coming ([click](#)).

The dress code for this event is business formal. Hotel rooms are available by calling the Union Club (250-384-1151) if you want to spend the night there.

Section Officers

- Membership: [Jeff Cohen](#)
 Director at Large: [Ron Drane](#)
 Director at Large: [Jamie Graham](#)
 Dealer Ambassador, Victoria: [Dennis Ostrowerka](#)
 Secretary: [Hazel Ostrowerka](#)
 Dealer Ambassador, Nanaimo: [Barry Patchett](#)
 Treasurer: [Rob Watson](#)
 Newsletter: [Bob Wilson](#)
 President: [Bob Wilson](#)
 Vice President: vacant
 Hon. Vice President: Peter Trzewik



Renewing Members!

Rob Watson & Linda Derrick – 03 E320

Thank you!

Mon, Jan 12 at 5 PM: Board meeting, Three Point Motors, focused on the first quarter's events.

Sunday, Feb 8, Morning coffee, combined location at Serious Coffee, on the Malahat just south of Mill Bay.

Annual Meeting

The Section's annual meeting was held on October 18 with 9 members and associates in

attendance and one guest. The meeting received reports from the President, Treasurer and Membership Director. We had 77 primary members on the date of the meeting.

The members listed in the panel on the first page were declared elected to the Board for 2014/15. Welcome aboard to Ron Drane and Jamie Graham.

The meeting reviewed the events held in 2014 and used the list to recommend which events might be repeated in the coming year. One change we plan is to move the Section's annual event subsidy from the Xmas party to the annual meeting in 2015, with the hope that a different format will attract more members.

Annual Awards

Recognition pins will be given at the Xmas Party to members whose association with the MBCA reached a milestone during 2014.

15 years: Barry Aldrich, Robert Maitland & Elaine Montgomery, Dennis & Hazel Ostrowerka, Terry & Barbara Peace, Peter & Jackie Taitt

20 years: John & Cordelia McIntosh

The Section provides pins to both Primary and Associate members. If you can't make it to the Xmas party, your pin(s) will be in the mail. Thank you all for your loyalty to the MBCA.

The Section sustains two annual trophies, awarded together with a gift certificate donated by Three Point Motors or MB Nanaimo. The Enthusiast's Trophy, awarded to the member who attends the greatest number of events during the year, was awarded last to Jeff Cohen. The winner for 2014 is Cathy Leblanc. The Chemainus Trophy, for a sustained contribution to the Club, was awarded last year to Cordelia McIntosh and will not be handed out this year.

The MBCA national office provides a plaque and certificate to the Member of the Year. The winner for 2014 is Jeff Cohen. Congratulations, Cathy and Jeff! The presentations will be made at the Xmas party.

Seeking Red

I'm looking for a member who has an older, red MB for a special project. An R107 SL would be perfect—not necessary—but it has to be red. Please drop me a line ([click](#)) if there's one in your garage.



Stargazing

B-Class Facelift

In sales, design and technology, the second generation of the B-Class has been very successful. More than 380,000 units of the W246 sports-tourer have been sold world-wide since its launch in late 2011. The B is now undergoing a mid-life facelift, including exterior and interior design and equipment.

The easiest way to recognise a facelift version is from the front: a new bumper, wide grille with two louvres and daytime running lights integrated into the headlamp cluster. LED headlights are available, giving better vision through a broader beam pattern and a colour spectrum closer to daylight.

Inside, the screen for the infotainment system has grown to 8 inches. Keyless ignition becomes available and the safety systems, such as collision prevention technology, have been upgraded. Both the facelift and current model have Collision Prevention Plus. This feature senses when another car is approaching from behind in a way that threatens a collision. It issues audible warnings and then applies the brakes to minimize the risk of the B being pushed into a vehicle in front. German statistics show that B-Class vehicles equipped with this technology (2011+) are involved in 14% fewer serious knock-on collisions than the preceding model.

Daimler's main website says the B will be offered in three levels of trim, a practice that appears to be the new standard for compact models. These packages are called the Style, Urban, and AMG Lines.



The revised front end and an Urban Line interior. Daimler photos

Vito/V = Metris

The V-Class/Vito, popular in Europe for people-hauling (V-Class) and commercial applications (Vito), has never been sold in North America. In a sign of potential change, four differently customised models appeared at the year's SEMA show. SEMA, the Specialty Equipment Marketing Association, has a gargantuan show for industry types each fall in Las Vegas. Every facet of automotive design and every aftermarket supplier can be found at SEMA, along with customised vehicles of every description.

The models shown at SEMA were badged 'Metris', apparently the result of the Vito name doing poorly in North American focus groups. Four configurations were shown: a mobile golf pro shop, an executive shuttle van, a



version kitted out as a fire department command centre, and a mobile DJ/party van complete with an opening clamshell roof. MB gave no indication of a market date here for the more mundane versions.



The Metris party van, customised by RENNtech. Daimler photo.

Maybach Back

MB has delivered on its intention of offering an upscale version of the W222 S-Class to be called the Mercedes Maybach. First-year sales of the current S have exceeded those of any predecessor, with over 100,000 finding owners globally. Based on the S 600, the Maybach offers more room, special seats, a lavishly designed interior, and extensive scope for personalization. Interestingly, like the Mercedes AMG GT, its name doesn't contain the word 'Benz'.

The last versions of the Maybach were made from 1997 to 2012, when Maybach was its own brand and the cars were designed and built separately from the S-Class. It was made as the Maybach 57 and 62 in sedan and landaulet (half-convertible) versions. The price went upwards from \$344,000 and sales were poor, about 11 being sold in all the USA over four years ([click](#)). Daimler is calling this latest iteration a sub-brand, like AMG.

Rationalizing the Model Designations

A suggestion that MB would revise the model designations for its SUVs and crossovers was described a couple of issues ago (*September issue*). Daimler has made the changes official, with the revisions being:

- GLA = GL A-Class
- GLC = GL C-Class; previously GLK
- GLE = GL E-Class; previously M-Class or ML
- GLE Coupé = GL E-Class Coupé
- GLS = GL S-Class; previously GL
- G unchanged



The system for the 4-door so-called coupés is constructed along similar lines. The first two letters, "CL", denote the origin, the third letter the link to one of the core model series: in other words CLA and CLA Shooting Brake, or CLS and CLS Shooting Brake (Why aren't these CLE?). Pretentious, if you ask me, but I suppose that's aspirational marketing.



The Maybach's back seat. Daimler photo

In conjunction, the trunk lids will carry a revised designation of the fuel type:

- c for compressed natural gas (Natural Gas Drive until now)
- d for diesel (BlueTEC and CDI until now)
- e for electric (PLUG-IN HYBRID, BlueTEC PLUG-IN HYBRID and Electric Drive until now)
- f for fuel cell (F-CELL until now)
- h for hybrid (HYBRID and BlueTEC HYBRID until now)

In a nod to tradition, there will be no suffix for gasoline-powered vehicles.

From 2016 on all the Roadsters will include "SL" in their names to denote their type, with the third letter again the link to one of the core model series. The SLK therefore becomes the new SLC. Like the G, the SL will keep its old designation.

The new nameplates will start appearing next year and should be fully phased in by 2020. Now if only they'd do something similar with the numeric designations, which have been fairly meaningless for too long.



Frozen in Time, the G-Class Soldiers On

When the Land Rover Defender ends its run next year, the G-Class will become the last surviving old-school SUV. Not conventionally sporty in any sense, the G's strong suit is utility with luxury. Its basic styling frozen since the 1979 introduction, the G retains body-on-chassis construction, an anachronism in a world of increasingly swoopy SUVs, all built like cars on integrated platforms and often (as with MB) on the same architecture. But sales of the G have tripled in the last five years to a global total of 12,000 a year, which is, for perspective, an annual production in the same ballpark as Ferrari's.

A G-Class starts at \$121,600 in Canada. The range-topping V12 model is, incredibly, the most expensive vehicle in MB's entire lineup. The G's survival is proof that ignoring trends can pay dividends.



Photo: autonews.com

It combines a rugged exterior with heated leather seats and a display screen the size of a tablet. Its off-road capability is likely the best available in

today's market. It can be found in extreme environments from Africa to New Zealand to Finland. However, its biggest market is the USA, which accounts for about 20% of global sales and where the roads of Beverly Hills are its natural habitat.



Contrast the stripped out G Professional on the left with the G63 AMG above. Daimler photos



Since 1979, the G has been assembled at Magna Steyr's plant in Graz, Austria, where the 4,000 welding points and 16 feet of welded seam are all made by people, not robots. Its leather seats are stitched by real seamstresses.

It is the last traditional Mercedes-Benz. Like a fossil frozen in amber, the G seems impervious to essential change. Like a favourite old chair, it gets more comfortable with each passing year. Like a young gazelle, its abilities keep improving. Like a famous trophy, it remains a sought-after prize.

A G Well Travelled

In 1989, at about the time the Berlin Wall was falling, a former airline executive named Gunther Holtorf set out with his wife Christine from their home in Bavaria on what they had planned as an 18-month tour of Africa. In preparation, Gunther had bought a light blue 300 GD the year before with which to explore the continent.



Somewhere along the road, or possibly well off it, the couple's plan changed. They determined to drive through as many of the world's countries as they could.

Their odyssey ended last month, when Gunther returned the G back to Mercedes-Benz. He had travelled through 215 countries, many of them more than once, not just visiting but staying long enough to learn about the people and the culture. The G-class, nicknamed Otto, had travelled 897,000 km, equivalent to about 22 circuits of the earth, returning to Germany several times. Christine died from cancer in 2010. Gunther's son was often a passenger but, otherwise, they adventured mostly alone.



In Guinea, 1991 Daimler photo

As they drove on every imaginable surface and in every imaginable weather, the couple spent the equivalent of 3.5 continuous years behind the wheel. Less excitingly, they also spent the equivalent of six months waiting at border crossings.

Otto had few breakdowns. In the air transport tradition, worn parts were replaced at suitable opportunities before they could fail. In a route full of sand and water the biggest problem was the front axle bearings, which were replaced eight times. The journey included 41 ocean container shipments and 113 deep sea ferry passages.

Gunther Holtorf finally passed the keys to Dieter Zetsche last month, his odyssey over. Appropriately, those keys were not the originals. The ignition key came from a suburb of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The door key was hand-made in a small town in North Vietnam, up against the border with China.

Otto now embarks on a two-year tour of European sales centres before getting a place of honour in the Daimler museum. But he'll be transported, not driven.





The high point: Mount Everest base camp, elevation 5,200 m. Photo: ottosreise.de

A Changing Carscape

BMW reports that global sports car sales have declined 50% since the 2008 crash, with customers preferring other body styles in droves. In China, the world's largest car market, hot weather, pollution and a desire for roominess make small convertibles unpopular. In the USA, the world's second largest market, big is beautiful. Honda and Toyota no longer make a sports car, and Mazda's RX-8 has also joined the passenger pigeon in extinction. Though sales of Porsche, Maserati and Ferrari are up and the top of the pyramid prospers, it's a small pyramid for sports cars these days.

Light, low-slung cars are out. Big, all-wheel drive SUVs are in. It's cool to be high. SUVs reinforce feelings of dominance, and the view is better too.

For those who remember them, the experience of a light, open car on a twisty road recalls pure enjoyment ([click](#)). Mercedes-Benz hasn't made such a car since the fifties. MB's sports cars are like sledgehammers, heavy and with massive power designed to crush the road and conquer the corners. They're quick, but offer a driving experience quite different from the finesse of the endangered small sports car. And we drive less for pleasure than we used to. That's progress, I guess, but I'm not happy with it.

Free to a Good Home

Bob Wilson has several duplicate copies of the *Star* magazine from days past. They're free but you have to pick them up in Saanich (all or part) before they head to recycle:



- Jan/Feb 2006 through Mar/Apr 2009 complete except for the Sep/Oct 2006 and Sep/Oct 2007 issues
- Sep/Oct 2002
- Jan/Feb 2001

Bob is at 250.477.9832

The Back End

Gordon Wegener, MB's chief designer since 2008, talks about the design language of the latest cars:

<http://bit.ly/1sylvzj> (link shortened)

50 years ago, MB won the Argentine GP, one of the world's toughest road races:

<http://www.sportscardigest.com/1964-argentine-touring-car-grand-prix-profile/>

MB showed a subcompact crossover coupe called the G-Code at the formal opening of Daimler's new styling studio in Beijing: <http://bit.ly/1pBZfxi> (link shortened)

A long video review and test drive of the R129 SL 600 in the south of France (thanks to Jamie Graham):

<http://youtu.be/LhXOY2wQfqo>

The Infinity Q30 will be Nissan's first product from their technology alliance with Daimler. It's based on the A-Class platform with an MB 2.0 L turbocharged engine. <http://bit.ly/10Wr5bS> (link shortened).

Autoweek takes the AMG GT S for a test (thanks to Mike McBride): <http://bit.ly/1yQCXHi> (link shortened)

A good source of repair and maintenance information and supplies for do-it-yourselfers:

<https://mercedessource.com/>



The Metris customized by RADO as a fire department command centre. Daimler photo

