



Vancouver Island Section
February, 2015

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CALENDAR

- Visit to Rudi & Co., Sun. Mar. 22**
- Breakfast, Mill Bay Marina, Sun. Apr. 26 (new event)**
- New Models & Technology, Sun. May 24, (new date)**
- Cat & Mouse Rally, Sun Jun. 7**
- Advanced Driver Training, Thu. Jul 16 or Fri. Jul. 17**
- Motor Gathering, Sun. Aug. 16**
- Summer BBQ, Sat. Sep. 12 (new date)**
- Salt Spring Tour with the VIR-PCA, Sat. Sep 19 (new)**
- MB's Safety Technology, Sun. Oct. 4**
- Morning Coffee, Sun. Nov. 15**
- Annual Party, Sun. Dec. 12.**

More information about upcoming events is inside

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
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Coming Events

Sunday, March 22, 11:30 am: Visit to Rudi & Co. What better way of greeting the spring driving season than a visit to Rudi Konicek's restoration facility in Saanich? We'll gather for a no-host brunch beforehand, 11:00-11:30 at the Fireside Grill. 4509 W. Saanich Rd. The restaurant is easier to enter from the south than the north. Driving instructions will be provided to get you from there to Rudi's.

If you're coming from out of town the day before, you might like to try our **Tour of Victoria** on the afternoon of **March 21**. Contact **Rob Watson** ([click](#)) for a route sheet that will lead you round the city's scenic highlights. If enough interest is expressed we will run this as a separate event with an organised start and finish. Accommodation is available at the **Union Club** ([click](#)) for \$129 including breakfast and parking, or at one of the area's hotels.

Rudi's shop is one of the world's top restorers of classic Mercedes-Benz and was featured in *The Star* last year. We expect Club members from the Seattle and Vancouver Sections to attend.

Please drop a note to the organizer **Jamie Graham** ([click](#)) to let him know you'll come. There will be a charge of \$10 per car for this event.

Sunday, April 26: Breakfast, Mill Bay. We'll meet for breakfast at **Bridgemans Bistro** ([click](#)), on the water at Mill Bay Marina. We have a reservation for 9:30. The restaurant's address is 740 Handy Road, Mill Bay. Please drop a note to the organizer **Rob Watson** ([click](#)) if you intend to come.

Sunday, May 24: New Models & Technology, hosted by Three Point Motors. This annual event is always one of the most popular in the calendar. This year's presentation by Three Point Motors will focus around MB's new models for 2015, which include the B, C, E 400, S coupe, CLS, GLA, and AMG GT. That's a lot of new models for one year. After the introduction, Three Point Motors will kindly let us take some of these for a short drive. **Dennis and Hazel Ostrowerka** are organising the event on our behalf. There will be a charge of \$10 per car to cover the cost of food.

Conversation & Coffee, Feb. 8

Vancouver Island's first event of the season attracted 20 people to the Serious Coffee shop on the Malahat, just south of Mill Bay. The weather was drizzly on the way there but cleared up in time for us all to enjoy a fine trip home.

The conversation and interaction made this a successful event. It was rewarding to see such a good turnout, including three members at their first event: Hal Neumann and Maureen Rivers, and Bob Wootan. Hal and Maureen drove down to Seattle Section's event the next weekend! We hope to see Bob again soon.

Welcome New Members!

Michael Bergh (Shirley)

Renewing Members!

Lou & Cathy Hobson - 04 ML350

Terry & Barbara Peace - 05 C55, 02 SLK32

Marke Simmons

Thank you!





Part of the group inside Serious Coffee

Sweetheart Drive, Feb. 15



Three cars from Vancouver Island went down to Seattle Section's Sweetheart Drive, a day of touring and eating in the countryside just south of Bellingham. The following write-up by Bob Willits is taken from Seattle Section's newsletter.

As the sun shone brightly, 27 Mercedes - Benz automobiles wove their way down Chuckanut Drive to our first destination, Chuckanut Manor. There, all 60 attending members enjoyed the Manor's famous and delicious brunch along with the panoramic view of Samish Bay and the San Juan Islands beyond. From there, we were given a tour of the Taylor Shellfish Farm with a chance to sample a variety of fresh oysters.





Then, we headed to The Breadfarm for artisan pastries and breads and off to Golden Distillery for a tour and a tasting of their single-malt whiskeys and brandy. Our next stop at Gothberg Farms was highlighted with a tour and

the appearance of newly born baby goats. The flavor and variety of cheese we sampled was outstanding, but we were ready to eat our way to our final destination, Bow Hill Blueberries . We ended our day with another tour, some blueberry ice cream and warm memories of a day spent with our MB friends!



An Acknowledgment

My friend Joe Elias died last week in Halifax. That rarity, a genuinely good man, he was a generous, energetic member of his community and a great friend.

Joe and I started the Nova Scotia Section of the MBCA around 1980. In 1977 I'd bought a '74 280. Joe, a neighbour, noticed the new arrival in our driveway and stopped by to ask how I liked it. He had no eye for anything else in the driveway and he was, I remember, driving an Impala, which made me wonder what the conversation was about. My circle then was restricted to people who liked driving, and the others, who drove American. But what seems a short while later Joe stopped by again, this time with a 450 SE.

Joe was my introduction to people who care about their car's appearance. He was the first person I knew who washed his car every week, the first who actually dried it afterwards, and my first friend to use cue-tips, Armorall and, yes, dental picks, to clean under the hood. He had an old-fashioned wringer washer in the garage, whose mangle he used to wring out his chamois. Except for the snowy season, when nobody in Nova Scotia drives a car they care about, Joe and I got together almost every week to wash cars and, slowly, I learned his technique.

Joe developed a lasting passion for Mercedes-Benz and he was my introduction to the MBCA. He was the founding and, I think, the only President the Nova Scotia Section ever had. He followed all the new models and developments, which came along a lot less frequently then than now. He must have driven the local dealer crazy because he was always there, looking at the latest car or configuration. In recompense he was a loyal service customer and he did buy a few over the years.

After Donelda and I had moved to Victoria, Joe and I kept in touch down the years, exchanging information about family milestones and MB milestones. He was a proud owner and a brand ambassador whose influence on me and others has lasted, in my case, half a lifetime. Thanks, Joe.





An early gathering of the MBCA-NS Section, probably in 1980. Joe is the second from right; that would be me on the far left.

Stargazing

Retooling Tuscaloosa

Mercedes-Benz is reorganizing its SUV production and expanding its American production capacity. The U.S. contract manufacturer AM General has joined the production network and will assemble the R-Class in South Bend, Indiana. AM General is best known as the maker of the Humvee.

The production capacity freed up at MB's Tuscaloosa plant will then be used for the M-Class, the GL-Class and the new GLE Coupe due this summer. The plant at Tuscaloosa expects to produce 300,000 vehicles this year, including the C-Class sedan.

The R-class has been sold exclusively in China for the last two years where, perhaps, its customers might be less sensitive to outsourcing than here.

Navigating the Radio Options

The W212 E-class for 2015 will soon come with a couple of choices for the hardware that occupies the space most of us think of as the dashboard's radio slot. The navigation feature from MB up till now has involved selecting COMAND as an option, in which case the navigation software, maps and points of interest were uploaded via the single CD-DVD slot in the hardware. Aside from its initial cost the system works well, but updating the maps and points of interest is expensive and requires the purchase of a new DVD available only from the dealer. Many of us, myself included, have gone the route of buying an aftermarket GPS instead, a Garmin in my case, which moves from vehicle to vehicle according to need.

The standard radio in a 2015 E-class is called the Audio 20. It's been MB's standard radio head unit for over a decade and for most of that time it has included the capability to connect with a cell phone using Bluetooth. What's new this year is an optional Garmin Map Pilot navigation system. I should mention at this point that it is not yet available in Canada and that MB Canada won't tell me when (presumably not if) it's coming. This option



stores the navigation software, maps and points of interest on an SD card and displays it on the screen for the infotainment system. It can be operated by the input controller or by voice command and combines the convenience of Garmin's interface with the ability to update everything via the internet.



Garmin Map Pilot in the 2015 E Class. Daimler photo

Garmin's map updates are not free unless you purchase 'Lifetime Maps', and I don't know whether or not MBs will have this or whether it will have to be purchased separately. MB's Garmin Map Pilot does include a Live Traffic subscription for three years. Live Traffic predicts delays along a chosen route but I've found Garmin's delay information to be quite unreliable.

COMAND will continue to be an option but, perhaps, in a short while it won't be the only way to acquire a navigation system integrated into the vehicle.

MB Classic Archives Go Online

Information, documents, pictures and much more from the archives of Mercedes-Benz Classic are a unique treasure. In future, anyone interested can go to the Public M@RS website to directly access this knowledge about the history of the brand and its products. The portal is available without login at the address <https://mercedes-benz-publicarchive.com>.

As with any new venture of this nature, the first material on line is limited and not comprehensive. The prewar information looks especially skimpy. The main emphasis today is on the basics of the passenger car sector, though more material is coming. Vehicle portraits, technical data and illustrations are divided into five



historical chapters: Benz & Cie. to 1926, Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft and Mercedes to 1926, Mercedes-Benz from 1926 to 1945, Mercedes-Benz since 1946 and Maybach since 2002. Within these chapters, vehicle classes and model series form the structure of the archives. This means that information the first automobiles right up to the series preceding the current model range can be found quickly.

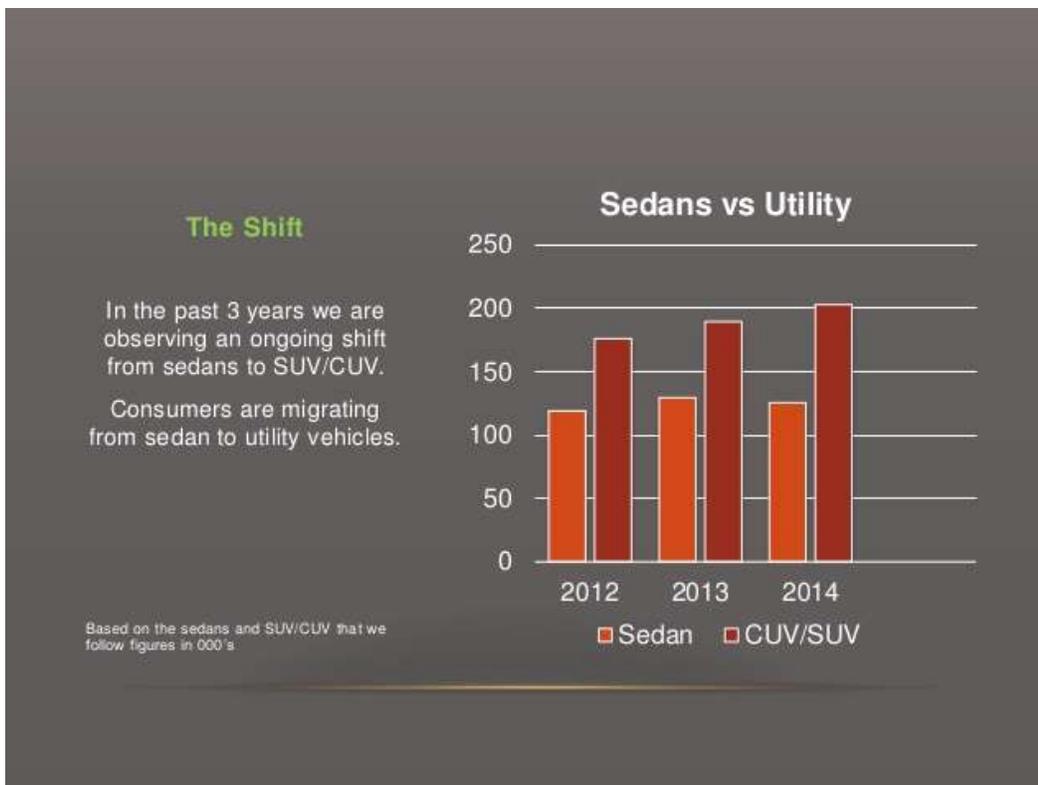
You can look up your own car on the website if it's not a current model. You should be able to find the technical and performance specifications in a mix of German and English and a few photos.

The Changing Landscape

It seems not that long ago that MB's entire line-up consisted of vehicles you have to bend down to get into. They were the sedans, coupes, convertibles and roadsters on which the marque's reputation for luxury, quality and sportiness was built. There was also, of course, the niche-market G-Class (*November 2014 issue*) whose production scarcely figures in the landscape. In 1997 Daimler-Chrysler introduced the ML as a 1998 model, the company's first mainstream SUV and the first vehicle to be made at MB's Alabama assembly plant.

Since then the SUV lineup has grown in number and sales have steadily increased. MB has the ML, GL, GLK and most recently the GLA. Along with MB Canada's sales increase over the years, the market share of the SUV range has grown.

With the blurring of the lines between cars and crossovers, trucks and SUVs, it's hard to tease out what's actually happening. Based on sales of the most popular models, the figure below confirms what a casual inspection of vehicles on the road suggests: sedans and coupes are losing favour with buyers. Sports car sales, never a large component, have fallen along with the sales of convertibles generally. New SUVs easily outnumber new cars in Canada.



Canadian sales of sedans are flat while CUV/SUV sales increase. Image: thestrada.net



New vehicle sales in Canada were up 6.1% in 2014. *Motoring TV* says the most important segment in today's marketplace is the compact crossover, where the GLA slots in. The most successful market segment for cars was sub-compact, where MB has no offering. Compact car sales were off 0.3%, midsize car sales were off 11.1%--this segment of the market has been in decline for over a decade ([click](#)). The bright spot for cars was the luxury segment in which MB operates, up 4.6% overall and where sales of the B-Class have increased by 72%. Sales of the S-Class more than doubled, but both the B and S are benefitting from the bump that accompanies a new model introduction. Sales of luxury sport cars were also up, largely due to the new Corvette, but only 5,399 were sold for the year in the whole of Canada. Sales of mainstream sports cars, a category which includes the American pony cars and the Hyundai Veloster, were again down.

MB's global sales for January were up 13.6% year-over-year, as the company continues to set sales records. However, SUV sales were up 37%, which means that car sales were down a healthy fraction. Why are cars losing the popularity race? I think the answer is simply that they're less practical. At a time when the romance of driving is being replaced by the seduction of technology, people are looking at their transportation choices in increasingly practical terms. SUVs have a more commanding driving position, they're easier to enter and exit, more convenient for families with kids, they hold way more stuff, and the not-insignificant portion of the marketplace that equates safety with mass thinks they're safer.

So is the MBCA a car club or a vehicle club? I've always thought of it as the former, at least mostly. Most of what shows up at our events is a car. But we do have members whose everyday drive is one of the SUVs or crossovers. Do our events cater adequately to these vehicles? What do you think ([click](#))?

Another Sign of the Times

I wonder how many readers have had the pleasure of browsing the stock at Wilkinson's Automobilia. Started by brothers Bill and Ted in October 1988, this Vancouver adventure has been located on Ontario St just north of Broadway for 26 years. For all that time it has been the region's go-to location for automotive books, magazines, scale models, manuals, sales brochures and car-related bric-a-brac. The bricks-and-mortar store closes on March 28th but an e-commerce version will continue on-line.



Shelves and display cases run from wall to wall and from floor to the 12-foot ceiling. They're filled with scale model cars, books, shop manuals, posters, art work, current and vintage magazines, pins, clothing and caps. But it was as purveyors of the printed word that Wilkinson's really stood out. The owners aimed to provide the broadest selection of automotive, racing and motorcycle literature anywhere.

Those printed words were vitally important to car enthusiasts in the pre-internet days. If you were interested in a particular car, or if you owned one of the emerging classics, your information came from magazine road tests, specialist books, and the very necessary, comprehensive, service manual. Though that information is now all on-line and internet boards have replaced meetings to exchange information and advice, the books and manuals sold by Wilkinson's remain indispensable. They're authoritative, convenient and tactile. They're there when you need them.



Drop by if you're in the area before the end of March. You're sure to find something to support your enthusiasm for the three-pointed star.

Part Numbers

If you've ever wanted to see a system schematic or find a part number, you'll want to bookmark this Mercedes-Benz web page ([click](#)), which covers almost every vehicle the company has ever made. You can look up your vehicle by badge designation and chassis code (e.g., C 230, W203). Once you've found it, you'll be led to a page with links to each major subsystem. System illustrations and English language descriptions will lead you to the part number. For Classic vehicles, you can also learn if the part is still available through the MB network. (*A hat tip to Jerry Cole, Seattle Section president, for pointing out this site.*)

ESP Turns 20

In February 1995, MB presented the active safety system "Electronic Stability Program" (ESP) to the press in snowy northern Sweden. Still used on today's models, the system reduces the risk of skidding in when one or more wheels start to slip. At its introduction, the ESP software was integrated with the new, electronically controlled five-speed automatic transmission of the day. Both components were part of the standard equipment of the S 600 Coupe in May 1995 and trickled down to the rest of the range relatively quickly.

And 90 years ago, a trademark application was lodged with the German Patent Office for the Mercedes three-pointed star encircled by a laurel wreath – a combination of the Daimler and Benz & Cie. trademarks. The Mercedes-Benz logo followed on 25 April, 1925. The two trademarks took over a year to work their way through the process to become official.

The Back End

The Superbowl ad for the AMG-GT: <http://www.autonews.com/section/superbowl#Mercedes-Benz>

A plug-in hybrid version of the C-class called the C 350e has been released for sale in Europe.

Peter Sweatnam, director of the U. Mich. Transportation Research Inst., talks about issues related to autonomous driving and vehicle-to-vehicle communications: <http://bit.ly/1DecKoQ> (link shortened)

MB has recalled all models of the 2013-15 E-Class and CLS, except for the coupe and convertible, for an oddball fire risk in the engine compartment. The Canadian recall is dated Feb. 10 (*Hat-tip to Mike McBride*): <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/tc/2015/43761r-eng.php>





MB's only foray into the world of the classic GT, the C 111 prototype of 1969. Exhibited at this month's Paris Salon Retromobile, it first used a mid-mounted, 3-rotor Wankel engine but later became the test bed for other power-trains. There's continuing regret in the community that this car, perhaps with a different engine, never made it to production. Photo from cartype.com

