



Nickel City Star

NOVEMBER 19, 2007

WINTER 2007

www.mbca.org/niagara

Coming Events: See page 2

Niagara Section
Mercedes-Benz Club of America

Letchworth Park Road Rally



Perfect weather, a great turn-out, loads of fun, superb luncheon, prizes and a car show too! All 23 drivers + 30 navigators had a great time following directions and picking up clues, ending our sojourn at Letchworth State Park. Mike Hoegl brought his famous 600 limousine from Canada and was an immediate hit. Becky Reed shared her knowledge of Mary Jemison's story beside the memorial statue. After lunch in the Glen Iris Inn, we showed our cars to interested onlookers in the Iris driveway and then took a leisurely trip home. Special thanks to Becky and Joanie for their rallymaster skills and for organizing and running this great event.



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EVENTS CALENDAR

- **December 9 - Christmas Party and Charity event.** Details have been mailed to all members. For more information please contact Becky Reed, 652-4548, as soon as possible.
- **January 20, 2008 - Wine & Cheese Tasting in Williamsville.** Mark your calendar! Niagara Section members David and Shelly Doherty will host a wine & cheese tasting event at their home from 2 to 5 p.m. Rather than a commercial presentation by a store owner, this will be a chance for you to bring a bottle and show off your favorite wine. Watch for an email reminder before the event.
- **February 10, 2008 - Valentine's Brunch at Shanghai Red's.** This year we will change venue and sample a different brunch. Details to follow.

Members of all sections and guests are always invited to Niagara Section events.

**Details will appear in future issues of this newsletter or sent via email and/or posted at www.mbca.org/niagara. Or you may call Ed at 716-873-9226 for more information.*

Check The Star and www.mbca.org for National events listings.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY GENE LONG



As you are aware, Niagara Section elections were held last month. I appreciate the time and effort members took in responding to the ballot request in the mail. The election yielded no change in our slate of officers, who are glad to continue to serve the needs of our members. Of course, we are always looking for interested workers for committees, especially for running events. If you have time to invest, please call give us a call!

We held two fantastic club events in as many months, which you will notice in this issue. I want to personally thank Becky Reed, Joanie Long and Ed Yungbluth for planning, organizing and executing, especially on a time consuming rally. We had a great time on both!

The snow will be flying soon, so please be careful driving your Mercedes, and any other vehicle you may find yourself driving.

Monthly meetings have been interesting with the inclusion of invited speakers. I thank Joe Kennedy who talked about auto detailing in September and, in October, Peter and Jeff Leyonmark who spoke to us about the latest issues in auto insurance. More attractions to follow, so keep tuned to email notices for future meetings.

If you would like to know more about anything club-related, give me or one of your officers a call.

Lastly, even if you haven't attended before, I urge everyone in the club to put our monthly meetings on your calendar - the Eagle House - 5578 Main, Williamsville - attend, bring a friend!

Skip Barber 2 Day Driving School

- By Karl Hutchinson

If you've been paying even the slightest attention while driving, you've noticed the deplorable lack of skill shown by the vast majority of American drivers. Driver Education in this country could be called a bad joke, except that motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among teenagers, so no one would be laughing. After several decades of practicing bad habits, I recently decided that my skills needed improving, so I attended a 2-day driving school at the Skip Barber Racing School at Lime Rock Park, Connecticut.

Despite the school's name, this was not a racing school. The classroom discussions and driving exercises were focused on anticipating and avoiding emergency situations on the street, and handling those situations safely if they could not be avoided. Some racing-like driving exercises were included, but their primary purpose was to help improve car control skills. The class consisted of 12 students and 6 instructors for an excellent student-instructor ratio. Student experience ranged from newly licensed drivers to veterans like me.

We drove Mazda 3 and Mazda RX-8 automobiles, all with manual transmissions. The ABS brakes were disabled, allowing the wheels to lock up during hard braking to demonstrate the problems that can occur when tires skid. All driving was done in special training areas, not on the track itself.



Each morning and afternoon, session began with classroom discussions. Topics included vehicle weight transfer and its effect on handling, tire traction limits, proper downshifting procedures, swerving to avoid obstacles, and proper positioning on the roadway for maximum visibility. Lunch was provided each day. Following the classroom sessions, our time was spent either behind the wheel or riding as a passenger with another

student. The majority of our time was spent in the cars.

The driving exercises allowed us to practice what had been discussed in the classroom. The first morning was spent practicing threshold braking and skid recovery techniques. After lunch we did more braking exercises, this time turning and braking hard at the same time. We also continued our skid recovery practice and added a downshifting exercise.

On the second day we again continued our skid recovery practice. We also practiced rapid lane changes, or swerving, to learn how to avoid obstacles when we couldn't stop in time. After lunch on day 2 we practiced smooth driving techniques. We attempted to keep a tennis ball in a bowl fastened to the hood of a car while driving an autocross course as fast as possible. We finished the day by putting everything together on a small track. After practicing for several laps each, we divided the class into 2 teams and conducted a timed relay race. Each team member drove 3 laps around the small track trying to avoid knocking over any of the cones which were set up as obstacles. The team with the best overall time, including time for driver changes and penalty time for knocking over the defenseless cones, won. This was followed by a short graduation ceremony.

As you can see from my description, the course focused on handling emergency situations, which is just the kind of thing NOT practiced during typical driver education classes. Unfortunately, since the course is not taught in New York, your insurance company is not required to provide any discount on your automobile insurance premium for completing this course. However, you can still call them and try to negotiate something on your own.

Skip Barber is not the only driving school available. A search of "driving schools" on the web will yield several options. For those interested in the Skip Barber program, go to www.skipbarber.com on the web. The area around Lime Rock is very scenic, so make a short vacation out of the trip.

Editor's note: As Karl points out there are many commercial driving schools. Mercedes Benz Club of America holds national and regional events with real behind-the-wheel participation, similar to the school that is described in this article. If you are interested in improving your own driving skills—in your own Mercedes—while increasing your potential to avoid accidents, having a GREAT time, and doing so at a lower cost than commercial driving schools, please consider attending one of the club's numerous events. Check the [Star](#) for details on Gemutlichkeit, StarTrack, StarFest, and other regional and locally sponsored events, and talk to Niagara Section members who have participated, such as Ed Yungbluth, Roy Kuck, Gene and Joanie Long.

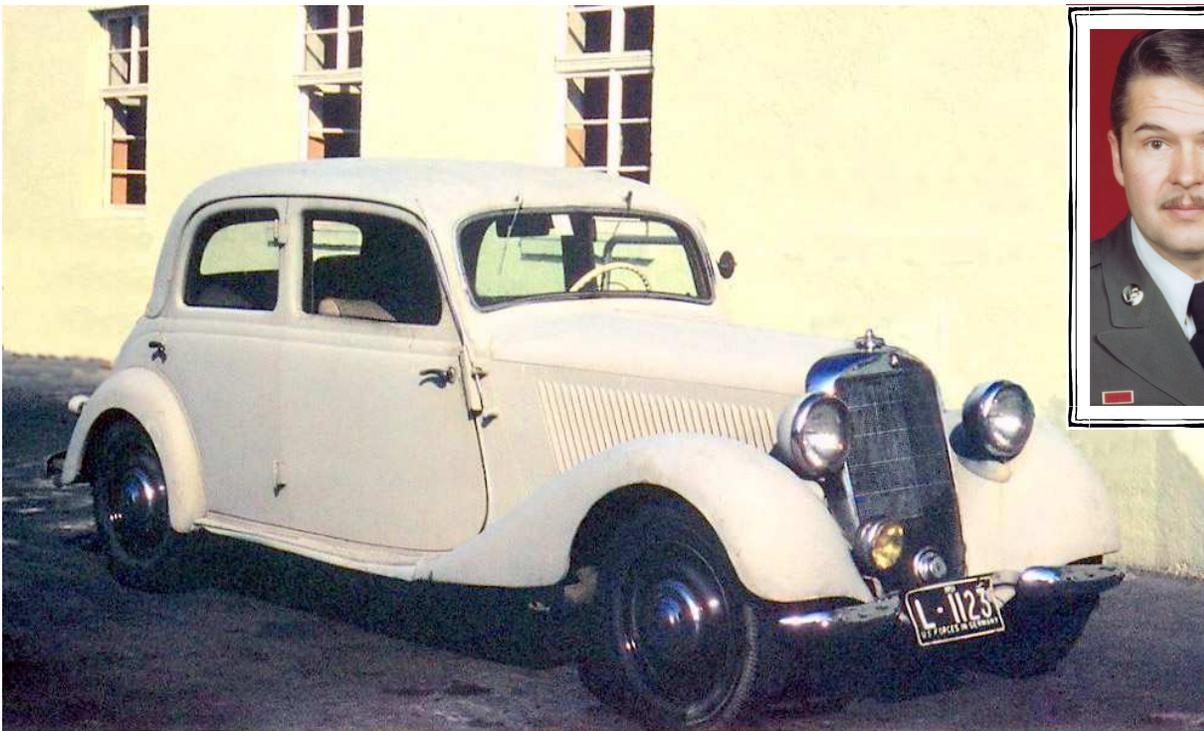
Becoming an Advocate...

It was 1958 and I was a nineteen year old private first class in the US Army stationed in Bad Kreuznach, Germany. I had never owned an automobile. One of my buddies had just purchased a 1950 Mercedes that I thought looked pretty cool. He told me the dealer had another car just like it that he was selling for \$150 US dollars (the US dollar was equal to four Deutsche Marks (German currency)). I went to the dealership to look at the car; test drove it and bought it. My first automobile...wow!

It was a 1950 170S (not to be confused with today's S-Class). This was a four door sedan with a inline side-valve four cylinder engine and a Solex 32 PICB fuel system sporting a down draft carburetor. It had a displacement of 1767 cc that produced 52 hp @ 4,000 rpm and burned regular gas. Gasoline cost me 14 cents a gallon.

This baby had crank windows; cloth upholstery; an outside trunk lid; integral heating and ventilation; four-on-the-floor, unique flip-up orange turn-signal "trafficators," and an AM radio. Was this neat or what? What it didn't have was: cup holders, CD/ipod (not yet invented), cigarette lighter or ash trays – so there was nothing to distract you while driving.

As a post war model automobile the body was all steel. Pre-war models had wooden frames. With its unladen weight of 2690 lbs. I could easily accelerate 0-60 in only 30 seconds. I was able to cruise the autobahn at a terrifying 76 mph.



I was now free to travel throughout Germany. And travel I did. With a couple of my buddies I even motored to Paris, France for a vacation (another whole story).

One of my buddies had been a "bootlegger" in Georgia before joining the Army. He taught me a few driving tricks that were pretty slick. The one was called the "bootleggers hop." You've probably seen it in the movies. A car is speeding in one direction, then suddenly spins around to speed off in the opposite direction.

One night on the way back to the barracks I gave it a try. I hit the brakes and the back end of the car slid around beautifully... I punched the accelerator but had forgotten to down shift – no engine power. Gravity took over and the car rolled over in the middle of the street. My Mercedes-Benz was suddenly "scrap metal."

Since then I have owned a 1953 220 sedan, a 1960 190 sedan (in Germany), a 1978 450SEL 6.9 ("gray market" car) and my current 1991 560SEL.

I'm reasonably sure there will always be a Mercedes-Benz in our driveway.

by **Bill Fix**



A Nostalgic Ride Through Bicycle History - by Joanie Long



As I went through the preparations for our club event to the Burgwardt Pedaling Museum in Orchard Park, I enjoyed thinking about the different bicycles I'd had and the pleasure, as well as transportation, they brought. In the old days, my family only had one car, which Dad took to work. If I wanted to go anywhere, it was by bike or foot.

Carl Burgwardt has the largest collection of bicycles and memorabilia in the entire country and has some pieces of history that even the Smithsonian covets. Over 300 bicycles of many different types comprise his collection spanning 180 years of pedaling history. So many of the inventions used in creating and developing bicycles have been incorporated into the automobile industry, rack and pinion steering, ball bearings, rubber tires, and braking systems to name a few.



We enjoyed our tour and had fun with the "boneshaker" and "velocipede," early bicycles. After our interesting tour and a rousing chorus of "Bicycle Built for Two" (who knew Mercedes owners could sing?) we met at Mangia Ristorante in Orchard Park for a delicious luncheon in our own private room.

It was a terrific event, enjoyed by all.



Welcome New Niagara Section Members

GORAN ANDERSSON

EDWARD BLAKE

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ROBERT FAROLINO

JOHN MOSHENKO

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Regarding Veterans Day...

Had an interesting encounter on Monday... I had a tech come in to repair one of our fax machines. Something was mentioned about a lot of offices being closed, especially government offices and how come we weren't closed, he asked. I told him I wondered the same thing... "How come I'm a veteran and I'm working on 'Veteran's Day'?" He asked if I really was a veteran, to which I replied "Yup! 4 years in the Air Force." He then said something that made me stop dead in my tracks.... He said, "Thank you for your service and the time you gave to your country to defend us." WOW! - was I suprised! That was only the 3rd time in 33 years that someone had said thank you. How about that? - Ed Yungbluth



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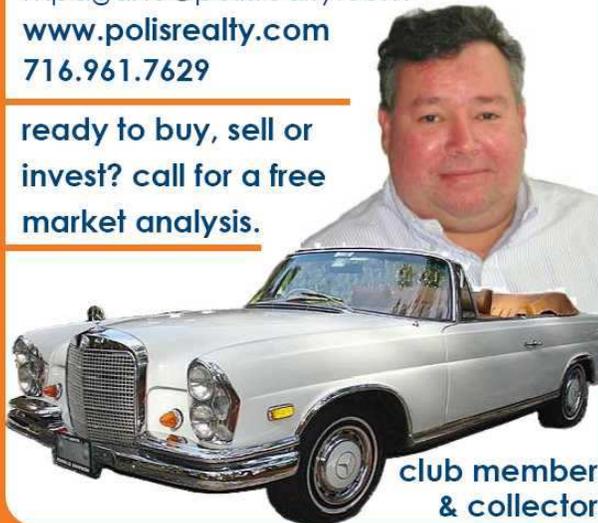
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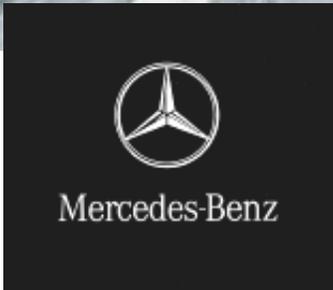
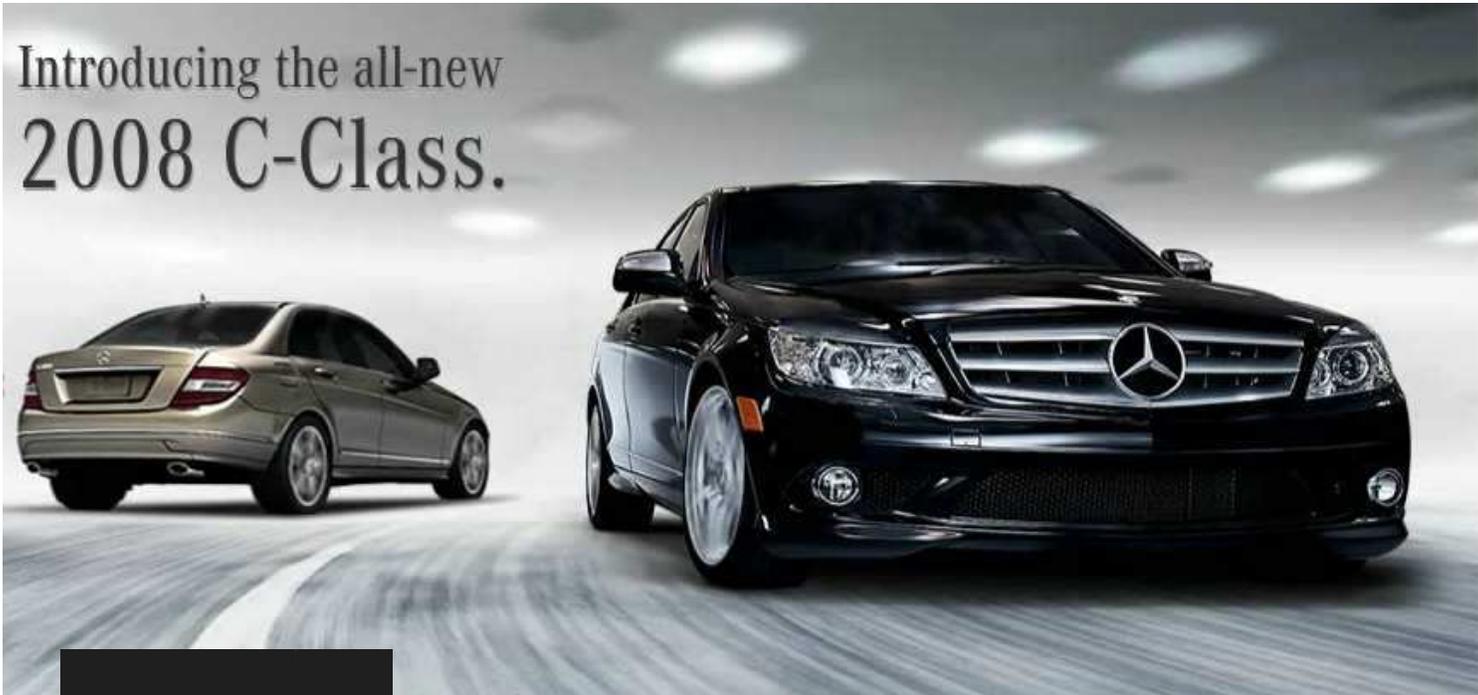
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