



SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB NEWS

Miata

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 6

OCTOBER 1996

A CHAPTER OF THE MIATA CLUB OF AMERICA

UPCOMING EVENTS



October 19
Highway to Heaven



October 24
Wheels 'n Meals
Boll Weevil



December 14
Holiday Lights & Party

Key to Icons



Wheels n' Meals (Social)



Fun Run



Internet



Tech



Autocross

From the Editor

The Right Time

It's O-nine hundred. It's Tuesday. It's time to finish Mark's 60,000 mile service. Myself, Voodoo Bob Krueger, and Mark Booth gathered once again for some auto work. This day we set out to replace the cam cover gasket, alternator belt, power steering/AC belt, and the infamous timing belt. For tools we used: a couple of torque wrenches, 8-10-12-14 and 21 mm sockets, various wrenches, 3 feet of galvanized pipe, jack stands, a box of doughnuts, and some beer (in increasing order of importance).



When I arrived at Mark's house, he had already placed his car on the jack stands and had the thermostat hose removed. Soon thereafter, Bob arrived. We then started what would turn out to be a very interesting day. We pulled off the air tract, followed by the two electric radiator fans (gave a little more room in front of the engine). Then off came the cam cover. Next we loosened the power steering pump and removed the belt and pulley. Then Mark loosened the alternator and removed the associated belt. Finally, off came the three front engine covers. The timing belt was now exposed, and only about 40 minutes had gone by. By this time, I'm thinking, "What's so tough about this?" Well, the fun was only beginning.

We then removed the accessory pulley, and we were now ready to remove the crank bolt. To make a long story short, we couldn't get the bolt off. I don't care how many four letter words were thrown at that bolt, it wasn't coming off. So we decided to use the starter motor to break the bolt loose. So we went to a local hardware store and purchased a 3 foot piece of galvanized pipe.

Back at the car, we found a small oval panel on the left side of the plastic under-tray (could this hole be just for this purpose?!?). Feeding the pipe up through the hole, Mark placed the socket wrench in the pipe, and the socket on the bolt. With the pipe braced against the garage floor, we let Mark have the honor of turning the key. A couple of quick turns of the key and the bolt came loose. We removed the belt and the pulley boss (keeps the belt from sliding off the crank), loosened the tensioner, and the belt was ready to slide off. But first, we lined up the intake and exhaust cams with the crankshaft, which is extremely crucial for the valve timing. These shafts must stay in place after the belt is removed. We pulled off the old belt, which looked almost new, even after 60,000 miles. After a few tries, we positioned the new belt and got ready to tighten the bolt.

Well, we couldn't keep the crankshaft from turning as we tried to torque the bolt to it's 120 lb.-ft. specification. At this time, Anthony Wilde showed up and lent his services to the job at hand. At first we tried to jam the pipe into the exhaust cam against the head to keep the crankshaft from turning. This seemed to be working and we thought the torque wrench was doing it's job. In reality, the belt was skipping a tooth on the crankshaft each time the torque wrench was used, a sound we mistook for the torque wrench. So when we thought we were done, Mark rotated

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



the crankshaft to get the cam shafts to line up with the timing marks. Needless to say, the crankshaft was off by a few teeth.

So off came the bolt and we realigned the belt. Now we were wracking our college educated brains to find a way to secure the crankshaft while we tighten the bolt. One of us (I'm sure it was me) came up with the idea of using metal perf strips between the lower alternator bolt and the pulley boss, which had four bolt holes for the accessory pulley. We turned the crankshaft so that the distance between the alternator bolt and one of the boss holes was as short as possible. Once secured, we tried the torque wrench. 40 lb.-ft., and no movement from the crankshaft. We tried 80. Again, no movement. We were getting excited now. 100 lb.-ft., no problem. Excitement is really building. 110 lb.-ft. Again, the crankshaft isn't budging. 118 lb.-ft. and the bolt is torqued to spec. High-fives all around as the rechecking of the timing marks displayed a perfect alignment.

We replaced all the pieces removed, doing so in the reverse order, torquing bolts to factory specs. Mark put in a new 160 degree thermostat, replaced the radiator fluid (which was flushed earlier), and now came the fateful moment. Turning the key once more

and starting the car. Again, Mark had the dubious honor of turning the key. Bob and I stood back (way back as exploding engines can be deadly), and Mark turned the key. The car fired right up, and ran perfectly. More high-fives and congratulations. Besides some valve clatter that eventually went away as oil was pumped back into the HLA's, the engine sounded perfectly normal. Mark took the car for a quick spin, and the job was finished.

We spent about 8 hours on this job. Most of the time was trying to remove and replace the crankshaft bolt. The perf strips were a real lifesaver. Knowing what we know now, and having the new tools (3 foot breaker bar and perf strips), we could easily do the same job in 3-4 hours. We didn't replace the front crankshaft seal, as that is a delicate operation. Since it wasn't leaking, the seal stayed in. At the 120,000 mile service, I'm sure the seal will have to be replaced.

So, did this job sound like a horror story? It did to us when we couldn't figure out how to tighten the crank bolt. If anyone wants to do the timing belt, give us a call. We have the tools and knowledge. Once done, it wasn't that bad. I think...

See you on the twisties...

—ROBERT "JTBOB" HOLLAND

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NOTICES

THE SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB is an official chapter of the Miata Club of America. We are a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote the enjoyment of—and enthusiasm for—the Mazda Miata.

SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB NEWS is the monthly newsletter of the San Diego Miata Club. Use of articles or stories by other MCA chapters is hereby granted, and provided proper credit is given.

Submissions to the newsletter are welcomed and encouraged. Did you just add a new accessory to your Miata? How about writing a review and submitting it to the newsletter? Where possible, please send your electronic submissions to the newsletter editor, Robert Holland (robert@caliban.ucsd.edu). Submissions can also be faxed to the club's dedicated phone line or mailed to the club's post office box. Submission deadline is the 15th of each month.

Internet: The San Diego Miata Club has established a dedicated World Wide Web Home Page at <http://mmdshare.ucsd.edu/sdmc.html>.

The club has also established a members-only electronic mail list for those members with E-mail capability. If you included your E-mail address on your membership application then you should already be subscribed to the electronic mail list. If you recently acquired your E-mail account, please contact Cindy Paloma (paloma@cs.ucsd.edu) and request to be added to the electronic mail list.

Dedicated 24-hour voice/fax phone line:
(619) 670-7948

San Diego Miata Club

P.O. Box 2286
Spring Valley, CA 91979-2286



San Diego Miata Club members gather at an overlook as the rains came during the second half of the run to Idyllwild.

Right: The run uphill to Idyllwild had some members opening headlights to get more cold air to the engines.



MEETING PLACES

Highway to Heaven

Date: Saturday, October 19

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: North County Fair mall under the large sign parallel to I-15

Run Leader: Rainer Mueller

Note: RSVP by October 7 is required!

Time to head for the hills! The fall foliage can be seen on our way up to Palomar Mountain. We'll head up to over 6000 feet. We'll have lunch at Mother's, where you'll find some of the best sandwiches and smoothies this side of heaven. From there we'll head to the Palomar Observatory, run by the California Institute of Technology, where we'll get a guided tour by a graduate student.

Please note that the tours are limited to 30 people, maybe we can fudge a few, but that's why I want you to RSVP — first come, first served!

After the tour, we'll head down the back side of the mountain, giving us a beautiful look at the top of the Palomar Mountain as well as Lake Henshaw.

RSVP to Rainer Mueller via E-mail at rmueller@msd.cts.com or via telephone at 439-1596. Those that don't RSVP may not get lunch or the guided tour.

Wheels 'n Meals at Boll Weevil

Date: Thursday, October 24

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Boll Weevil, 9330 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. (At Ruffin Rd.), San Diego (571-6225)

Keep in mind that the 6:00 p.m. start is just the suggested meeting time. We usually hang out until well past 8:00 p.m. Even if you arrive a bit late there is still plenty of time to have fun! Come join us!

Rainer Mueller has started a SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB LICENSE PLATE REGISTRY. When you see a car from behind or in a parking lot, just a quick glance at your list will tell you if that car is owned by a member. To get on this list just E-mail or phone him. If you aren't already on the net and have a computer, see his amazing free offer in the classified section.

THE OFFICIAL SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB LICENSE PLATE REGISTRY

| LICENSE | NAME | E-MAIL |
|----------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2SOG028 | Jack & Sue diLustro | jdilustro@attmail.com |
| 2SUM125 | Tony & Mary Beecher | beecher@adnc.com |
| 2VRP959 | Alan & Debbie Elster | AElster@aol.com |
| 2WJV235 | Stephanie & Tom Gould | tomgould@adnc.com |
| 3EGA188 | John & Catherine Godden | JGodden@aol.com |
| 3GKV418 | Tony & Maria Igar | TONY7451@AOL.COM |
| 3GTW518 | Greg Dunlap | greg.dunlap@uniontrib.com |
| 3JRT355 | John O'Hara | ohara@globalink.com |
| 3LDB519 | Woody & Maggi Woodhouse | 75260.2210@CompuServe.com |
| 3MCS984 | Anthony Wilde | NevadaBob@miata.net |
| 3NAX791 | Cynthia S. Jones | cynthia@nosc.mil |
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AUTOCROSS AT THE MURPH

The following autocross events scheduled at Jack Murphy Stadium in San Diego for the remainder of 1996:



| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Sunday, October 6 | Racing |
| Saturday, October 19 | Practice |
| Sunday, October 20 | Racing |
| Saturday, November 2 | Practice |
| Sunday, November 10 | Racing |
| Sunday, December 8 | Racing |

Autocross information sources:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Steve Hart: | 619-579-9093 |
| Richard Scherschel: | 619-286-2412 |
| San Diego SCCA Hotline: | 619-441-1333 |
| Cal Club SCCA Hotline: | 818-988-7223 |



UPCOMING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

October 3-6, 1996

Miata Games

Atlanta, GA

Hosted by: Peachtree Chapter

October 12-13, 1996

28th Slalom School

San Bernardino, CA

Hosted by: Lotus West Club

October 12, 1996

Palm Springs Run

Hosted by: SOCALM

October 26, 1996

Ditto Run & Gimmick Rallye

Hosted by: SOCALM

November 9, 1996

Central Coast Winery Run

Hosted by: SOCALM

SOCALM Hotline: (805) 492-1475





Installing My New KONI Shocks

I decided to take a stab at installing my Koni shocks on my 1990 with 86,000 miles. I purchased the shocks from IMPARTS for \$96 each.

After reviewing all of the information available (*Service Manual*, *Enthusiasts Manual*, *Miataville* and *Miata.Net* postings and *Miata Magazine* articles) I decided to start with the rears to get experience prior to tackling the fronts.

I assembled all of the parts and tools, including the new spring compressor (\$50), $\frac{15}{32}$ drill bit (\$8) — which required a new $\frac{1}{2}$ inch drill (\$45).

The actual process of removing the rear shocks from the car is rather

 straightforward. Jack up and support the rear of the car. Remove the wheels. Remove the sway bar to lower wishbone link (14 mm). Remove the lower shock mounting bolt (17 mm). Inside the trunk, remove the upper shock mounts (14 mm) and LOOSEN the center shock mounting nut while the assembly is still in place. Step on the lower wishbone and pull the top of the shock/spring assembly out and then lift the lower part out and away from the car. A Teflon gasket was on the top of the assembly even though the *Miata Magazine* article claimed they are only on the front.

Once the assembly was out of the car, the real work begins. Even though I had acquired a good quality spring compressor, it takes a bit of fiddling to get it to work properly. Once the spring is compressed far enough that the upper cap can be rotated you can safely remove the center nut and disassemble the unit.

The bump stop/dust boot assemblies were no more. The bump stop was in good condition, but the dust boots were in pieces, not torn, pieces. I trimmed the remainder of the dust boot from the bump stop so I could attach a new dust boot I had acquired at an offroad shop for \$3.95. The 4x4 dust boot was longer, so I trimmed the length. I actually used one 4x4 boot, cut in half, for both sides.

I drilled out the upper mounting cap with the $\frac{15}{32}$ drill bit. The instructions call out 12 mm but the $\frac{15}{32}$ is 11.9 mm so that was close enough. The bump stop washer also had to be drilled as well.

I measured the overall length of a removed spring, and it was $13\frac{3}{4}$ ". I installed rear springs from a '92 Miata and the overall length was $14\frac{1}{4}$ ". The springs removed had a yellow mark on them while the springs installed had a blue mark. I installed the spring perch on the lower setting, as it came from Koni. There were only 2 perch settings — stock and lower. Reassemble the unit (shock, perch, spring, dust boot attached to bump stop, upper mounting cap), install new center mounting nut. Decompress spring. There is a white plastic disc that comes with the Konis. This disc has a slot cut in it to allow it to be put on the shaft on the top of the shock. I think that this disc is to minimize dust on the upper seal of the shock or it is a spacer, just don't forget to put it on prior to reassembling the shock/spring.

Installation in the car is the reverse of the removal, and don't forget to put the Teflon gasket back on top. I used

the car's jack to load the suspension before torquing down the bolts and nuts. The "New" nut (from Koni) that goes on the center of the upper shock mount/shock shaft, is 19 mm as opposed to the stock nut that was 17 mm. Additionally, the socket for the 19 mm nut needs to be fairly deep as the stem for the adjustment knob sticks up a little higher. Note.....don't drop the upper shock mounting nut. There are several little places for it to wedge into in the upper mount area. I had to use dental picks and a magnet to get it out of there.

When reinstalling the shock/spring assembly, orient the paint mark on the upper shock mount and spring in the same direction as removed. Mine were aligned to the inboard side of the shock. Also, be sure to have the bolt hole in the lower shock mount aligned with the orientation of the studs in the upper shock mount. This allows you to put the bottom of the shock in place, step on the lower wishbone and push the upper mount into place. When you let up on the lower wishbone, the studs will locate themselves into the holes in the trunk.

The first side took 3 hours, the second side took 45 minutes. After dropping the car to the ground, the car looked much HIGHER in the rear. Took it for a spin. Much firmer in the rear, less noise over bumps, less shake. The shocks are set on the full soft setting. After the run, the rear had settled some. —ANTHONY "NEVADABOB" WILDE

Part 2, *The Front Set*, next month.



Miatas at Malibu

On Wednesday, September 11, as the sun was setting slowly in the west, the parking lot at MALIBU GRAND PRIX ON Miramar Road started to fill with a myriad of glimmering, multicolored Miatas. Out from these gleaming roadsters stepped fifteen aspiring race car drivers ready to demonstrate their skills and defend their honor. Eight of these intrepid devotees were present at the first showdown at MGP on June 19, 1996.

Present were: ROBERT (JTBOB) HOLLAND*, VOODOO BOB KRUEGER*, MARK BOOTH* and his friend RICK DEHAVEN, RAINER MUELLER* and his friend MIKE SHIELDS, ANTHONY (NEVADABOB) WILDE*, RICH TAYLOR*, MIKE MARTIN* and his guest SARA WIKMAN*, DEE ROBIDER, JACK and SUE DILUSTRO, NATALIA RISSILO, and JIM HIND. Also present but not racing was KEN EVORY*. Club members with an asterisk after their name also attended the June event.

After that first MGP clash in June, some of the larger (read heavier) members of the club complained that since the race cars weighed only 700 pounds and had 24 horsepower, they were being handicapped by their weight disadvantage. Someone even went so far as to suggest weighing all the contestants and adding dumbbell weights to the lighter drivers to "even things out." This idea was not adopted, even though Rainer had his bathroom scale in his Miata's trunk.

As with the June session, each driver was able to purchase ten laps for \$1.75 each. Those drivers who didn't have the prerequisite MGP license paid an additional \$3.95 for the photo ID. Fortunately, no driver's exam was given, but the photographs on the licenses were on par with those from the department of motor vehicles or the state board of prisons.

Once everyone had their license, this foreboding group headed to the starter's area. Some of the drivers were more anxious than others to demonstrate their prowess. With helmets on, a steely look in their eyes, and a tight clamp in their jaws, our road warriors were ready to eclipse any and all pre-

vious track records. Sixty seconds around the twist and turn laden circuit is considered a respectable time.

Within the first couple of minutes on the track, club members were astounded to see Rick DeHaven post a time in the mid-55 second range, over a second faster than June's record holder, JTBob's best time. Now the center of discussion focused on the specific car Rick was driving to achieve his blazing time. Once Rick finished a series of his laps, all with equally impressive times, the other drivers clamored to drive that particular car. And Dee had to be stopped from going into the parking lot and trying out his Miata, with the new throaty exhaust system, on the track.

After a while it became obvious that Rick's times were the one's to beat.

For the rest of the evening it became all of the other drivers' goal. Any time Rick climbed into another car and still turned in times in slightly over 55 seconds, the throng would rush to use that car. But it became evident that no matter what car Rick was driving, he turned in unbeatable times. A pall overcame the other drivers when the realization set in that Rick might just be a better driver than the rest of us there.

And Rick even had two things going against him: he didn't show up driving a Miata and he wasn't one of the lighter drivers — so much for that theory.

The pressure of trying to beat Rick's times got to several club members, most noticeably Rainer who spun his race car on one lap and left the course on another, driving through the grass infield. Dee was so frustrated after not being able to drive his Miata on the course that he went and purchased another five laps, which, when added to the free lap MGP gives you with your driver's license application, gave him a total of 16 laps for the evening. His persistence did pay off, however, as his 56.39 time was second to Rick's blazing 55.14 second time. NevadaBob had the 3rd fastest time at 56.71 seconds.

Rick also had the fastest average time with an unbelievable 55.52 seconds. Dee was again second with an average time of 57.51, almost two full seconds slower than Rick, and NevadaBob came in third with his average time of 58.14 seconds.

When comparing our club's two visits to MGP, our most improved driver for fastest lap time is Sara, followed by NevadaBob and Voodoo Bob. Sara is also the most improved driver for the average lap time, followed by NevadaBob and Mark. The most improved for difference between their fastest and slowest laps, as well as the standard deviation of all their lap times are, in order, Sara, JTBob, and Mark.

Sara, who is from Sweden, works as an au pair for Mike Martin. As many of you know, Mike has a turbo charger on his white Miata, and it appears that he has been giving Sara driving lessons. Congratulations to Sara for her improved times.

The day at the races ended with all the drivers crowding Rick and pumping him for his driving technique and any tips they could collect for the next "Miatas at Malibu Grand Prix."

A special thanks to NevadaBob for compiling the drivers' times and statistics.
—RAINER MUELLER

New Members!

Sean Crandell

San Diego
1990 Red A

Terry Merrill

La Mesa
1991 Red

Louis Misko & Kim Couch

San Diego
1990 Red B

Laura Roman

Oceanside
1996 Montego Blue

There are now 83 memberships consisting of 125 members.

- 31 Red
- 15 White
- 9 Montego Blue
- 7 Mariner Blue
- 5 Black
- 4 BRG
- 3 Laguna Blue
- 3 Silver
- 2 Yellow
- 2 Starlight Blue
- 1 Merlot
- 1 Unreported



Gold Rush

It's been nearly a week now since I got back from Gold Rush, and reality is starting to kick in again. So before it goes too far, here's my report on Gold Rush '96.

The San Diego contingent this year



consisted of myself (JOHN O'HARA), ART HAMILTON, and TONY AND MARY BEECHER.

We all went our separate ways both going up and coming back, but we did manage to meet up a few times at the events and exhibits. I'm sure everyone has their own adventures and anecdotes to tell. It's too bad there wasn't more of a San Diego presence this year, but this was my first time at Gold Rush and there were many new people to meet from all over California as well as Nevada, Oregon, Arizona, and even Alberta. For an international flair, there were even attendees from England, Australia, Japan, and New Jersey (yes, Gary Fishman acknowledged that NJ counts as a separate country!).

Mickey and I left San Diego late on Thursday afternoon — around 4 p.m. — after a frustrating morning of packing and finishing up a project at work. The weather was clear and beautiful for top-down driving, but I left the top up with the rear window unzipped to avoid getting fried and to cut down on the Miata-unfriendly freeway “ambiance”. Being a licensed ham radio operator (KF6AVB), I also took my 2-meter radio with me, since it's always fun to talk with other hams and meet new people along the way.

My route was to head straight up I-15 to north of San Bernadino, then 138 across the San Gabriels to 18 through the high desert, north on 14 through Palmdale and past Edwards Air Force Base to Mojave, and east on 58 across the Tehachapis to hook up finally with 99 north and straight up to Sacramento. As I talked with hams while driving up I-15, they all warned me against taking the 138 cutoff. “It will take you forever to get across!” “Those mountain roads are so winding and twisty!” “There's nothing up there, it's all mountains and desert!” Those were the comments I got. It was impossible to explain to them that they were

describing perfect roads for a Miata!!

By the time I got to Bakersfield it was nightfall, and that's when I met Marilyn, a fellow ham and a trucker from Modesto who does the run back and forth to L.A. or San Diego several times a week. Marilyn was running a few miles ahead of me on 99, and kept me company on the air through the lonely miles almost as far as Sacramento, giving me road and traffic reports and introducing me to the other hams who turned up along the way. The difference between ham radio and CB is like night and day — 90% of hams are polite, friendly, and helpful (if anyone is interested in getting your ham license, let me know!). Around 2 a.m. I pulled into the Sheraton, parked Mickey in the Miata-only lot, and collapsed to dream about Miatas for a few hours.

After a late breakfast Friday morning it was off to “Rally Central” to pick up the registration packet and “goody pack” with MX-Files T-shirt, plaque, and pin, and samples from ArmorAll, Bullfrog, and even a tiny bottle of Tabasco sauce (because the Miata is such a hot car??). There was also a chance to fill out the MX-Files Quiz, enter the Mystery Miata Parts contest, and purchase raffle tickets, with proceeds going to the Make-a-Wish Foundation. From the Run and Rallye schedules, there were at least 140 cars registered for these events.

Originally, I had signed up for the Time and Distance Rally. But it soon became clear that, without a navigator and without previous rally experience, the Fun Run/Poker Run was a much better choice. As I was explaining my predicament to the coordinators, Paul Gommel of BAMA, who was standing next to me, overheard and immediately offered me his place in the Fun Run! Thank you, Paul, for your kindness and generosity — you're a great example of Miata owners helping each other.

Walking out the door, the first thing I saw were three very unusual looking Miatas parked all in a row — the Miata concept cars! The Speedster, the Club Racer, and the new M Coupe. The chance to touch and view these famous Miatas up close and all together was a real treat. Rumor has it that some people even got to drive them, but I was happy just to admire and wonder about

the future of our favorite car.

Out in the parking lot the “Miata Corral” was in full swing, with proud owners showing off their latest accessories and modifications, including one handsome yellow Monster Miata. In the dealer area Moss Motors had the largest display, with Robert Goldman overseeing their wonderful selection of great accessories. Senator Mazda of Sacramento was selling factory parts and accessories at good discounts, and Protomotive and Clearwater were also there. I met Bill Cardell from Dealer Alternative — or at least his legs, sticking out from under a car — as he did dozens of free installations for happy Miateers. Jackson Racing did not, unfortunately, make it this year, but Bill did a good job representing them. The new Jackson stainless muffler is beautiful and big, and the new Flyin' Miata dual-exhaust is impressive. The Ginko bike rack is an ingenious, semi-permanent bolt-on arrangement and great for people to want to carry their bikes on a regular basis. Dave DeNuzzo, a.k.a. the Crazy Red Italian, was busy installing his air horns and driving lights in-between his other responsibilities as President of SAMOA. Crazy Red is also now selling a new flexible removable windblocker, made by Carol Horst of SAMOA. I put a tan one on order, and will show it at a future club meeting.

By the end of the day I was both happier and poorer, with a set of mud guards from Senator, and a Kyosho model, leather armrest pad, cockpit cover, and interior light kit from Moss. Jim from Moss did a nice job installing the lights, and they look and work great.

The pasta buffet dinner Friday night was a great place to meet fellow enthusiasts from other clubs and swap Miata tales. This was followed by a Casino Night with blackjack, roulette, and craps. The winners were then announced, and a round of lottery prizes was drawn. I went home with a nice pen-and-pencil set courtesy of Office Depot!

Saturday morning began with continental breakfast and more new Miata friends. It had rained a bit overnight, and out in the Corral dozens of people were busy with towels, detailer, and car dusters getting ready for the day's events. After event registration and



waiver signing, I lined up for my Fun Run departure at 9:34. While in line, one of the Fun Run coordinators came over to me and graciously offered to take my picture. He then commented on how much he liked my Laguna Blue and Tan combination, and I told him a little about the short history and limited production of the color. Only later did I find out that this kind fellow was Norm Garrett! He must have chuckled a bit as I eased out of the parking lot and throttled off to the back roads of the historic gold country.

The route led through rolling fields, twisty hills, and picturesque small towns such as Ione, Volcano, and Pine Grove. At Sutter's Creek a misdirection in the route instructions had dozens of Miatas going around in circles! Fortunately, Sutter's Creek is a great place to get lost, and many people decided to stop there to window shop, enjoy the restaurants and cafes, and admire the interesting Victorian architecture against the backdrop of beautiful, tall pines. By then the sky had turned clear and sunny, and a few extra turns got everyone back on the right course. At each of the five checkpoints along the way there was a chance to draw a playing card for the poker hand.

It was 3:00 by the time I pulled into the final checkpoint, and drew one last card to give me a flush. Maybe I would be lucky. In the neighboring parking lot the Funkhana was already going strong. The traffic-coned mini autocross course was set up as a model of the Sacramento area streets, complete with a circle around Folsom Lake (a wading pool with toy boats), an excursion to dig for gold, a shopping trip at Macy's, and a chance to throw tomatoes at the State Capitol Building! With a volunteer navigator in tow I set off to conquer the course. But as the cones started flying and I missed my turn at Folsom Lake, I had a feeling that victory was not to be mine. My time was terrible — but I was laughing too hard to notice. I stayed for a while to cheer on the other competitors before heading back to the hotel for a video presentation by Barbara Beach, "Secrets of the Miata Universe", featuring vintage Miata ads, news coverage, and features on Miata clubs around

the world. (I talked with Barbara about doing "Secrets" for us in San Diego sometime.) There was also a sneak preview of the handsome new book, "Miata Universe", by author and journalist Jay Lamm (look for it soon).

The banquet Saturday night featured great food and more great company, this time with new friends from SOCALM. Tom Matano and Norm Garrett spoke about the past, present and future of the Miata, and Jay Lamm gave a great talk about the "Ten Myths of Sports Cars in America". Dave DeNuzzo and Elaine Fotinos led the crowd in a rousing rendition of "Got a Miata". And, yes, the Poker Run winner was announced — one of the Japanese visitors with five of a kind, all jacks! Afterwards there was a D.J. and dancing featuring Electric Slide and Macarena contests (from which yours truly prudently abstained).

Sunday morning started a bit damp and cloudy again, which forced the mini Grand Prix (radio-controlled Miatas) to a smaller, dryer area. But the contestants were undaunted, and raced to mini victory. By mid-morning everyone had gathered in the main dining room for the closing ceremonies, with Dave DeNuzzo once again hosting. Bonnie Lutz was honored for her years of service to Gold Rush and SAMOA, and the winners of the various contests and events were announced. There was another raffle drawing, and I found myself the proud owner of a gift certificate from Wiz. I was still in shock when they announced the grand door prize winners, and as I heard my name again, Dave handed me an envelope with certificates for two free nights in Lake Tahoe at Harvey's Casino Resort! The temptation was great to run right out to the car and head east, but I'm not sure my employer would have understood on Monday morning. Still, Mickey and

I are looking forward to exploring the beautiful roads around Lake Tahoe sometime soon.

The ceremonies ended around noon and things started breaking up quickly, with many happy goodbyes between old acquaintances and new friends alike. After packing an incredible amount of stuff back into Mickey, I headed home via a more ordinary route — down I-5, over the Grapevine to I-10, then east to I-15 and down to good ol' San Diego. The trip was uneventful, if you don't count the howling windstorm around Tracy, the mile-long caravan of open 18-wheelers carrying ripe tomatoes and dropping (or, more accurately, flinging) them all over the road, or the truck that lost a retread two feet in front of Mickey as we were passing on the left. Mickey was unscathed, and except for a collection of bugs on Mickey's nose that any entomologist would be proud of, we arrived home safe and sound, and looking forward to Gold Rush '97.
—JOHN O'HARA



PHOTO: JACK BRANDAIS

Hummm — could this be an idea for a logo? The Labor Day photo op group heads for breakfast.





PHOTO: VOODOO BOB KRUEGER

Miata Guys Drive a Z3

The long-awaited Z3 is now beginning to appear on our roads in significant numbers and last month Voodoo Bob Krueger and I got the chance to see how the latest from BMW stacks up against our daily driven Miatas. All Z3s are built at BMW's new plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and we were eager to sample the German roadster from NASCAR's heartland. Our test car was a lovely shade of BRG that BMW calls, with Teutonic imagination, 'dark green'. It was fully optioned, including tan leather, and we both were impressed with the quality of materials and the finish of the car. The trunk swallowed VBob's camera gear easily and, with the spare stowed underneath, is much more usable than the Miata's. Score one for BMW. Dropping the top is just like our cars, except that one needn't unzip the rear window which bends but doesn't crease when in the down position. Getting comfortable behind the wheel is easy as the power seat adjusts vertically as well as fore and aft. The cockpit feels much larger than that of a

Miata and anyone short of an NBA center should be able to fit in a Z3.

First impression underway is that the car is a lot like a Miata. Clutch and gearbox are superb (as is the Miata) and the brakes felt superior to the Mazda. We both preferred the Miata's steering though, and commented on the 'sedan-like' feel and response in the BMW. Heading over the Del Dios Highway toward Olivenhain brought out the only other disappointing feature of the Z3—the wimpy exhaust note. Where our Miatas would be happily snarling, the BMW snores along like a Honda Accord, never loud enough to intrude on the driver's phone conversation. Snide comments aside, the Z3 sticks beautifully through the twisty bits, the big 225/60-16s staying firmly planted and the suspension soaking up bumps with no hint of wallowing. Neither of us was going to push someone else's brand new car hard but we were soon hustling smartly along the rural two-lanes with confidence. The Z3 seemed to head naturally toward Rancho Santa Fe and we stopped next to the golf course to photograph the car in what are sure to

become familiar surroundings. Here we discovered one attribute in which the BMW clearly outscores our Miatas — it's a babe magnet! VBob insists those young ladies were honking and waving at him but the realist in me says that two guys in their fifties don't usually get that sort of response — had to be the car. Back on the road, we cruised the back country, enjoying a lovely summer day until it was time to return the car.

The Z3 is a very nice machine. If I were in the market for a new car in the BMW price range, it would be a strong contender. The entry level roadster market still belongs to Miata but M edition buyers, especially those on the tall side, would do well to look at the Z3. The test car had a factory sticker price of around 35k with all available options including CD changer. Our thanks to Bill and Tom Brecht of BRECHT BMW in Escondido for the loan of the Z3. The Brechts, to their credit, are not adding 'additional dealer profit' stickers to the hot selling Z3s and treated us with the same courtesy shown to actual customers.

—WOODY WOODHOUSE



San Diego in the Spotlight

When Miata Club of America called to invite San Diego to be the "Spotlight Chapter" in the Fall issue of Miata Magazine, my first thought (other than saying YES!) was, how could we get everyone together for a group photo within the short two week deadline? Well, San Diego Miata Club members proved — once again — that they are the best! On Labor Day, despite the early hour (7:00 a.m.) and the temptation to sleep-in on a holiday, 41 Miatas and their owners gathered in Balboa Park to have their picture taken! It is difficult to express just how pleased I was to see such a tremendous response! My sincere thanks to all of you! By the way, unnamed but reliable sources at MCA inform me that the Fall issue of Miata Magazine should hit mailboxes about the first week of November.

Also, a special thank you to member JERI JONES for the fantastic San Diego Miata Club banner that she put together for the group photo! I visited Jeri's shop ("Sign Up," 689-8238) and was very impressed with her operation. I highly recommend Jeri and Sign Up for all of your sign needs. Please remember to support the businesses that support the San Diego Miata Club.

Holiday Lights and Party

I am pleased to report that member RICHARD SCHERSCHEL has volunteered the use of his home as the site of the first annual San Diego Miata Club

holiday party! Richard's home is located in the San Diego State college area. The current plan is to visit a couple of brightly decorated neighborhoods, followed by the party at Richard's. The party will be pot-luck and we plan to do some sort of gift exchange. Please watch for full details in the November and December issues of the newsletter. Please join me in thanking Richard for his generous hospitality!!

Thanks To Jackson Racing

I am writing this a few days after the "Tech Day at Jackson Racing" event. Oscar, Rick and the whole crew at Jackson Racing went out of their way to show us a good time. Several members had various Jackson Racing goodies installed while the rest of the membership had their Miatas Dyno tested on Jackson's Dynojet Dynamometer! It was extremely interesting to see the differences from Miata to Miata given the various levels of performance-enhancing equipment installed. Truly, a shouldn't-be-missed event. Hopefully, we can go back for another visit soon! Watch for a full write-up in a future issue.

Please Help Spread The Word

Membership growth has slowed a bit over the last month or so. As of this writing, we stand at 83 memberships. Actually, I feel that figure is quite impressive given the fact the club is only 6 months old. The recruiting post-card mailing should go out within the next two weeks and, of course, we are

being featured in the fall issue of Miata Magazine. Both of these should help to boost membership significantly. The reality is, however, that there are many Miata owners in San Diego that do not belong to MCA. These folks are a little tougher to reach. Certainly, not all of them will be interested in joining a local Miata club. To some, the Miata is "just a car." However, I think a good portion of them WILL be interested in joining, especially after they understand the benefits of membership (dealer discounts, etc.). So, I am asking for your help to spread the word about the San Diego Miata Club! If you see a fellow Miata owner during your day, why not take a few moments to mention the club? If they seem interested, please pass along the club telephone number (670-7948) and encourage them to call for the latest club event information. Soon, we will have club recruiting cards to pass out to all interested members. This will make it easier to help spread the word. In the meantime, just passing along the telephone number should prove successful. Think about it...if each member successfully recruited just one new member the club would double in size! Awesome!

Finally, my thanks to each and every member for his/her contribution to the club. I've belonged to several clubs over the years and this group is — easily — the best!

Until next month — keep that top down!

— MARK



PHOTO: MARK BOOTH

