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Issue 10  
October 2002

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## *Four Wheel Drift...* by Chuck Wills, President

Summer's nearly over and it's given me pause to reflect on what a great Miata summer it has been. Over the past few months, I've had the opportunity to mingle with "car people" of all description. From Deal's Gap to the USGP F1 race, Spec Miata racing and instructing racing schools, it's been a gear-head summer for me. I've enjoyed every minute of it, too. No matter where we've gone in the Miata, there have been other speed freaks and car fanatics.

We're pretty fortunate in our Miata community. We've got great clubs locally and nationally, a great newsletter (thanks Sara!) and the best on-line forums of any marque. With all of that Miata saturation, it's easy to think that the automotive world stops turning as soon as we shut off the ignition on our little two seater roadster.

With all the mingling I've done, I've realized that there are lots of folks that love their cars. Recently, Shane Benson and I were instructors for a Mercedes Benz driving school. While they are a different breed of cat from Miata people, they were still extremely enthusiastic about their cars and fast driving. You could hear conversations in the pits that were similar to many Miata events. "What wax do you use?", "Do you like those new tires?", "You wouldn't believe how fast I passed that other guy!". It was all good fun and brought me back to reality that Miata folks aren't the only ones that love their cars. I know the same can be said of Porsche and BMW owners too. They all have a "thing" about their vehicle.

As most of you know, some other car-crazies and I trekked across the country helping to campaign Shane's Spec Miata. We met so many other car people I can't begin to remember them all. What I remember most, though, was the feel within the racing community. Everyone was so helpful and friendly, which was not what I expected. The Spec Miata guys were all great. Even though you battle it out on the race track, back in the pits it felt like a brotherhood (and sisterhood for you lady drivers!). The competition was fantastic and really helped me grow as a driver and crew member, but the camaraderie really made the event special. Maybe it has something to do with the level of commitment it takes to make the events and compete, there was always a warm welcome from the Miata brethren.

I will say this, even though there are other clubs and organizations and marques in the automotive universe, there is none that will outshine the Miata community. I remember standing around chatting with some of the Miata faithful before the World Series Parade in Connersville. Someone made the comment "It's a Miata thing, they wouldn't understand!". I think to a certain extent, that's very true. There are plenty of nice cars in the world and lots of people that like their car, but I don't think any can really evoke such a pure driving spirit as the Miata can. Porsches and Ferraris are special cars, so are Aston Martins and Lamborghinis, but they are special for other reasons. The Miata is special because it's about pure, distilled driving passion. It's accessible to most anyone -- if you can afford a Porsche, you can probably afford two or three Miatas. People own a Miata because they WANT to. It's not to impress the neighbors, it's because of the special feeling of top down driving. I think that's what makes the Miata community so special, the common bond is the joy of top down motoring... just because. It's not something that's easily explained, it just has to be experienced.

Recently, I got to drool over a Lotus Elan at the Mid-Ohio race course. It's one of the cars that Mazda set as a benchmark when they developed the Miata. To look at it now, it's very small and spartan - no A/C, no ABS, no insulation between you and the road. It's like a motorcycle with four wheels and two doors, and it makes the Miata look like a big car. Like the MGB, the Elan had something special. Colin Chapman, the founder of Lotus always felt like "Less is More". He was always "adding lightness", and with that he kept the cars simple, nimble, and in touch with the road. I think this imparted a soul to the car. I can't thank Mazda enough for transfusing that soul into the Miata. That automotive soul makes the Miata beg for a twisty road and conspire with you to take the road less traveled. There are plenty of other convertibles you can buy, but I don't think there are many roadsters. The Miata is a roadster.

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