

# Midwest Gathering Offered Picnic, Tours

by Gary Collings

The Greater Cincinnati Miata Club (GCMC) hosted its fourth Midwest Gathering over the weekend of September 7-8, 2002. Four cars from the Indy Miata Club left Saturday morning at 9:00 and arrived around 11:30am (12:30 Cincy time), just in time for a cookout at Sharon Woods, a county park in the suburb of Sharonville. Besides the two of us, we traveled with Norm & Susie Arbuckle, Al Jennings & Susan Koerner, and Amy Del Mundo and her daughter. We joined other Indy Miata members John Martin and Margaret Skreko and Claude and Shirley Counciller, who had already arrived at the event.

We estimated over 50 cars from various States had either arrived on Friday or Saturday. Although there were no vendors, many had contributed several nice door prizes that were given away in a ticket drawing on Saturday afternoon. Amy won a car care kit as did Norm Arbuckle. Susie Arbuckle won a parking

light air induction set for an M-1, which she may sell as they have an M2.

On Saturday afternoon, we had a choice of a scenic tour in and around the hills of Cincinnati or an "aggressive" drive through 100 miles of curves, hills, and hollers of northern Kentucky. The Arbuckles' and the Collings' opted for the latter 2.5 hour drive along with 17 other Miatas. We were not disappointed and all of us were probably going much too fast to stop if the unexpected tobacco wagon pulled out from a side road. After the drive, we parked our cars at the base of a high hill by the shelter house in the park. The photographers had a beautiful panorama of Miatas from their perch on top of the hill.

On Sunday, we gathered at the park for a 9:00 AM scenic tour of the western side of Cincinnati that included driving our Miatas onto the Anderson Ferry for a crossing of the Ohio River to Kentucky. The Anderson Ferry has been in operation since 1817. Just think of all the manner of men, women, beasts and machines that have been transported from this river juncture over those 185 years.

Once on the Kentucky side, we traveled along the shoreline to Newport, where the GCMC members had set up a gymkhana course of orange cones not to be confused with an autocross. A gymkhana requires no helmet but is a timed event. It includes a series of challenges designed to test driving skill as well as the dexterity of the navigator who, for example, is to knock off a ping pong ball on top of a cone with a water soaker gun. Although we headed for Indy and didn't participate in this hot afternoon activity on the asphalt parking lot, it was similar to the funcanna events that were included in former national events of the past. We traveled a round trip total of 475 miles for the weekend. Oh, did we mention that we camped out during this hot, steamy weekend?

You have to remember that Kathy's idea of camping out is the Holiday Inn – it was quite comfortable!



# Tom Matano Leaves Mazda

Tom Matano, who led the design of the legendary Miata roadster and influenced two generations of products in a 19-year career at Mazda Motor Corp., is leaving the Japanese automaker for a teaching post. Matano said his North American position had been made redundant in a previous restructuring. With his tour of duty in Japan complete, Mazda would have had to invent a title for him in Irvine.

Matano, 54, will become director of industrial design at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco. Matano has been the acting head of design at Mazda headquarters in Hiroshima, Japan, for about the last four years. Officially, his title remained executive vice president for design at Mazda R&D of North America Inc. in Irvine, California

The Japan-born Matano, who emigrated to the United States at the age of 18, said he had "always wanted to deal with students." "I wanted to do something more experimental than something within one company's confinement. Creating a future designer is more advanced than just doing advanced design," Matano said. Although a graduate of Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., Matano said he felt pulled by the potential of the newer industrial design department at Academy of Art.

After spending about six years at Holden Ltd., General Motors' Australian subsidiary, Matano joined Mazda in 1983 and soon went to work designing the Miata.

Unveiled at the Chicago Auto Show in 1989 and sold for the first time as a 1990 model, the Miata was an instant hit as an affordable, good-looking car with more than adequate performance. In February, it was listed by Guinness World Records as the world's best-selling sports car. Mazda has produced more than 600,000 Miatas.

Matano said he has enjoyed the acclaim for the Miata. But he said his "most rewarding pure design" would be the 1993 RX-7 because of its lasting design characteristics.

More recently, Matano has been the manager behind the stylists who have designed a string of models that are to be the basis of a Mazda revival. They include the Mazda6, Demio and long-awaited RX-8, the successor to the rotary engine-powered RX-7 sports car.