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

So much has gone on in the last month, it almost seems like we've packed two months worth of stuff into August. Between Miata Club events and other motorsport activities I've begun to wonder if sleep is really necessary.

First of all, kudos to Bob Wiley for his fantastic Sundae Mingle on August 25. We had a record participation of 30 cars, many of them new members. Bob's route took us through Morgan county on some beautiful back roads, ending up at Ritters in Plainfield. The evening was the perfect weather for top-down motoring. Thanks for ordering the blue skies and mild temps, Bob!

If you have Speed Channel, the Mazda Cup Spec Miata Challenge race will be broadcast in September. This was the event at Laguna Seca, California that member Shane Benson raced in (with the help of Mike Selvy, Chris Poglitsch and me!). Tune in and watch as Shane carves up the competition on national TV. The dates are 9/9 at 4pm and 2am or 9/20 and 4pm. (check local listings).

A big thanks also goes to Claude and Shirley Counciller for organizing the parade and rally in Connersville. We had 12 cars in the Babe Ruth League World Series parade to represent our club. The parade lasted about 45 minutes as we coasted through downtown Connersville. There were lots of kids lined up along the street to catch a glimpse of Sparky Anderson and get the candy that we were throwing to them. It was great fun, with one exception.... next time we need to line up BEHIND the fire engine, not in front of it. Does anyone know that there is a little known state law that requires all emergency equipment to blare their sirens during a parade? Not only that, there must be another local statute that requires extreme horn blowing at the same time. My ears are still ringing. A special thanks also goes out to Tom Bates, Indy Miata club member that happens to be the assistant chief of police in Connersville. He arranged a special police escort for us to and from the parade. Thanks, Tom!

Another victory for Claude was arranging for all of us Deals' Gap goers to meet with the Cincinnati Miata Club to caravan down to Tennessee. For those that don't know, Deal's Gap is automotive nirvana with 318 curves in 11 miles, just repaved a few months ago. It's on the edge of the Smoky Mountains, nestled between dams and reservoirs of the Tennessee Valley Authority. There were seven cars from Indiana that met up with cars from Ohio and Illinois. I don't think there's any way to be inconspicuous when you are in a pack of 27 Miatas rolling down the highway. We made it down to the Gap in about eight hours. The first thing we did upon arrival was, of course, drive the Gap! We didn't even stop to unpack the cars - we just hit the curves.

The Gap can be a bit intimidating to newcomers. Tall trees all around, blind corners and sharp drop-offs with no guard rails. This is one place where a mistake can mean bent sheet metal. The road is also frequented by motorcycles, motor homes, SUV's and campers. Even the occasional semi truck can be seen trying to thread its way down the mountain. To tell you more about the trip, I'll share with you the following excerpt from my forthcoming book "Life's a Race, So Shut Up and Drive!"

Teresa Turbo woke with more excitement than a ten year old on Christmas morning. The adrenaline was already pumping even before her first cup of java. Even though it was decaf, she was wired like a double espresso. On this day, the road would be hers. She had counted every one of the 318 curves like they were sheep as she tossed and turned the night before. Her palms damp with sweat, she knew that this was the day she would slay the Dragon. Most mortal drivers would not go near Deals Gap if they saw it on a map. The road snakes and jags in ways that no sane engineer would ever design. Remember, though, Teresa Turbo is no normal driver.

Just after sun up, she threw me in the navigator seat of "The Blue Beast" and whispered one phrase through her clenched teeth: "Sit down, strap in, shut up, and hang on!". She was Dirty Harry with a five speed and I was the punk that had better feel lucky. She threw the top back, slapped the shifter into first gear and we were gone in a cloud of tire smoke and supercharger whine.