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## On The Fence...

by Ben Hermann, President

A wet, frigid January now gives way to a short and hopefully warmer February. But remember ladies and gents, even if it's cold out, there's a special day in the middle of the month to warm the hearts of loved ones. If you forget, the temperature outside will be hot compared to the chill in the house. That being said, we've given you the perfect opportunity to celebrate early by coming out to our February dinner. We're getting together on the 12<sup>th</sup> at Café Nora on the north side of Indy. (Details on page 2.) Thanks to Beth and John Vernon Oaks for putting this together. We also have the traditional February museum trip on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Sara McBride has planned for us to go to the National Museum of United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, OH.

Thank you to everyone who sent in their survey from last month's newsletter. We still have quite a few outstanding, about 200 were sent out and I've only gotten around 70 back so far. I really appreciate the input and suggestions. This is an easy way to tell me your thoughts and opinions (and an easy way to pay your dues!). The results are still being analyzed and will be in March's Open Road in some form. It was mentioned in some of the responses to bring back a certain event or we should have more events in this region or we should have more of this kind of event. My response to that is "Make It Happen".

This club is all about its members, all of our events are planned by members for the enjoyment of members. If you want something and someone else isn't planning it for you, then take the initiative to get more involved and plan one yourself. There are plenty of people around that are willing to help if you need it. It's the perfect opportunity to share your interests with the rest of the club. Remember, it's like voting, if you don't take the time to vote and be involved, then you can't complain when things aren't just the way you want them. It's good that you sent in your wishes and let us know what you want; now it's your turn to make those wishes come true. The calendar is looking good, but there are a few spaces open. There are a few events in the works that I know about, but I've never heard anyone complain about too many events on our calendar!

One thing that was mentioned a few times was track events and autocross. Unfortunately, the money and perceived demand for these things just aren't there. The SCCA has a well-run autocross program that some of our members already take advantage of and I'd encourage all those who have an interest to check it out. There are several regions around the state for you to get involved with. As for track days, you can also go through the SCCA for racing events or go to open lapping days with a few groups in the area. I know of a couple, but if you know of some more, feel free to email them to me. I don't have a problem advertising dates of events in the newsletter as long as it doesn't get out of hand and if it doesn't open us up to liability issues.

On the Miata news front, we're about a month away from the unveiling of the next generation Miata at the Geneva Auto Show (March 3-13). There have been many attempts at guessing what it looks like, but whatever emerges from under the sheet, let's just hope it puts the upcoming Pontiac Solstice/Saturn Sky to shame. It's nice that the roadster market is alive and well, but what we need for the "others" to do is to push Mazda into making the Miata even better. Of course, better is a matter of opinion, but since this is my column, my opinion of better consists of lighter, faster, and more agile. They're targeting 180 horses according to product design and development chief Joe Bakaj. That will do just fine as long as the weight stays down. The RX-8 platform that they're going to be using has already proven it can handle the agile part.

Another news item was the fire at Mazda's Ujina No. 1 plant. It's the plant that produces the Miata

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## *On The Fence...continued from Page 1*

RX-8, MPV, and other cars. There were unsubstantiated rumors that the fire ended production of the current model Miata and they would retool the line for the next generation. On one hand, it made sense because production was scheduled to shut down soon anyway with next generation to start in May/June and there was an 180-day supply at the time of the fire; but on the other hand, the fire was in the paint line and fairly contained, it wouldn't make much sense, at least to me, to trash the parts they have for the current model. Some dealers were sending out information that shipments will be delayed with production coming back on line in March/April. Others were advising potential customers to buy now because production has stopped for good. Marketing hype or real info? Well, Mazda issued a press release on January 27 that MX-5 production would restart in February. (See page 5 for more information.) Between the conjecture of what the new Miata would look like and the guesses about how the fire affected production, the rumor mills have been busy! I'll pass on any information that I receive through the newsletter or the website. Or you can participate in the rumor mills yourself in the club forum area, or on the internet at the Miata.net forums!

See you soon and remember... ***The Fun Starts Here!***

## Tour Set For Air Force Museum

Circle February 19th on your calendar and join us as we head east to Dayton, OH to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (WPAFB). Wright-Patterson is one of the largest and most important bases in the US and is home to the Air Force Institute of Technology which trains thousands of students each year and the National Museum of the United States Air Force which receives more than 1.2 million visitors a year. The Air Force Museum, the oldest and largest military aviation museum in the world, is our destination.

There are so many different galleries to see, so this will be a free form event once we arrive. You can choose what galleries interest you or if you're a previous visitor, the galleries you haven't seen. Aircraft on display include planes from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and there are Command Modules in the Space Gallery exhibits. There is also a gallery of Presidential planes and a special Research and Design Hanger which require reservations. These can be made at the desk located in the main museum complex as we enter the museum (reservations are on a first come first served basis.) Everyone will need a government issued ID, such as a state driver's license, to take the tour to the Presidential and R&D hangars as they are located on an active section of WPAFB.

There is a restaurant on the grounds, so we'll be able to have lunch without leaving the grounds. The museum also has an IMAX theater that is currently showing a movie about fighter combat training.

We will leave from the Hardees parking lot located south of the I-70 and Post Road exit at 7:00 am SHARP! (The Hardees is located on the northeast corner of 21st and Post.) Get there early if you need to have a caffeine hit and/or a bite to eat for the trip. Sign up on the website, or give Sara J a call at 317-513-3453 to let her know if you're attending. This is a No Fee event.

If you have never been to the museum, or even if you have, this is a very interesting trip. It's well worth the drive! More information about the museum may be found at the official website:<http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/index.htm> .

## Why Is There A Date On My Mailing Label?

If the date on your mailing label is 12/31/04, that means it's time to renew!

The easiest way to renew is use the survey form in last month's Open Road or you can drop a \$20 check made out to the Indy Miata Club in an envelope and mail it to our membership director at 6837 Hillside Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46220.

## Northside Dinner Set For 12th

Café Nora will be the location of our February Dinner on the 12th. Hosted by John Vernon and Beth Oakes, we'll meet there at 7 pm. This critically acclaimed restaurant is located at 1300 E. 86th street in the Nora Plaza.

Café Nora offers a wide ranging cuisine with a southern European flair. It was recently featured in the Indy Star in their "Eating Out" section. You can check out the menu at <http://www.cafenora.com> to get an idea of what culinary delights are served.

Please RSVP on the event page on the club website or call Ben at 317-727-1401 to let him know you'll be attending. This is a "Miata optional" event, though you could consider it an early Valentine's dinner with your Miata! Be sure to join us for an evening of fine food and conversation.

## Sir Walter Meets the IMC

There were several Miatas in the parking lot of the Sir Walters restaurant where their owners and other club members who drove their MSV's (Miata Support Vehicles) met for the January Dinner. A small but lively group were soon chatting about life cars and other topics.

One conversation starter asked by Joe Lovrinic was "Why did you buy your Miata?". Now, who doesn't love to tell the tale of why they own their roadster?

The service was good and the portions of food were huge. Some folks had carry out boxes for their leftovers. Of course, after dinner and despite the cold, Miatas were inspected in the parking lot.

In attendance were President Ben and Nancy Hermann, Joe Lovrinic and Joanne, Beth and John Vernon Oaks, Martha and Doug Bartlow, Rick Morris, Jay Hofaker, Bruce Hedden, Membership Director Craig Johnson with daughter Skye, and Sara J McBride.



Martha Bartlow chats with Jay Hofaker as Ben Hermann sneaks a peek at the football game on TV. He was hoping for a Jets loss, but it was not to be.



Joe and Doug are having w-a-y too much fun!



Craig eyes Skye's burger and fires. Health food!

## Meet New Officers Rick Booe And Craig Johnson

We have two new officers in the Indy Miata Club and we would like to introduce them to you.

Rick Booe (pictured right) is our Vice President for 2005. He automatically becomes President next year. Rick and his wife Susie, live in Greencastle and have been members since 2000. They drive a 1998 Black which they purchased in 1999 as Rick says "after lusting after Miatas for years". Rick and Susie have a daughter who is a freshman at and a son who is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and is a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force. Rick recently retired from the Indiana Air National Guard and will now have more weekends free to spend in his car. As he says, "Let's put those tops down and have fun."



Craig Johnson, (pictured above) who takes over as our Membership Director, is on his second Miata. He was drawn into the Miata world by his brother-in-law John Schaub and purchased his first Miata, a Mariner blue, off of eBay. A SUV ended Craig's ownership of that car as he was forced into an off road excursion. He now is driving a Midnight Blue '99.

Both Rick and Craig welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. They may both be contacted from the officers page on the website, or from their contact information in the officer listing on page 2 of every issue of the Open Road.

Making Sure Your Car Is As Good As Mazda Designed It

# Basic Maintenance Tips For Your Miata

by Chuck Wills

Most any Miata owner, sooner or later, will start to think about how to make their car better. Like Harleys and Jeeps, the Miata has a fanatical following along with the ability to be personalized with an array of aftermarket parts, ranging from interior and exterior bits to serious performance enhancements. When you attend a Miata gathering of any size, you are apt to see sharks teeth, carbon fiber or wood interior kits, chrome, wings and spoilers, wide tires, stripes and maybe even turbos as big as your head. The down side is, how do you choose? What's the right upgrade to make? In this series of articles, I hope to give you a little information to help you navigate the sea of advertisements and possibilities.

**First things first.** Your roadster, as delivered from the factory, was a very good little car. It spent over half of a decade on Car and Driver's 10 Best list, and that was on stock tires, stock shocks, stock everything! Your car also dominated the SCCA Showroom Stock racing series for 10 years with no upgrades beyond tires and a roll cage. Let's face it, though; many of us are driving around with cars that haven't had the proper maintenance since it left the factory. Coolant and brake fluid that were good in 1992 are now well past their "born on" date. Take a slow walk around your roadster and think about what needs to be done before buying a carbon fiber dash kit or a Racing Beat exhaust.

**Brake fluid** needs to be flushed every few years for several reasons – it absorbs water, which lowers its boiling point, causing spongy and fading brakes as well as corrosion of the brake components. If your fluid hasn't been changed in the past 3 years, consider new fluid before spring time. Any DOT 3 rated brake fluid is better than old waterlogged fluid.

**Coolant** wears out too. It will lose its ability to withstand sub zero temperatures, as well as lose its corrosion protection. The engine block is made of iron and the head is aluminum, and these two metals don't like each other much. In fact, when placed near each other with fluid running between them, they will corrode. One of the main jobs of antifreeze is to stop that corrosive action, but it does this sacrificially by wearing itself out. If your coolant is more than two years old, it's time for a flush and refill.

We're going to talk a lot more about **tires** later on, but I will say that they are an extremely important safety item and need to be inspected. Chances are good that the tire pressure sticker inside the door jamb on your car says 26psi. I consider that a bare minimum and feel that 28 to 30psi is very reasonable for normal street driving, with 26psi being reserved for those that demand the cushiest ride possible. After checking the pressure, inspect the sidewalls. Since many of our cars don't see year-round duty or high mileage, the tires may crack and dry-rot before the tread wears out. If your tires have significant cracks or the tread is thin, it is time for replacements. This is also the perfect time to inflate your spare to 60psi.

Does your car track straight down the road? Does it go straight under hard braking, or does it pull to one side? If the latter is happening, it may be time for an **alignment**. We could talk for hours on the details of Miata alignment specifications, but if your car won't go in a straight line, get yourself to a good shop and have it straightened out to factory specifications.

Everyone changes their **oil filter** with their 3000~5000 mile oil change, right? Good! Now what about your air filter and fuel filter? The air filter should be inspected at every oil change and replaced when it looks dirty. Fuel filters

should be replaced at 30k mile intervals. Differential and transmission fluids should be changed every 30k miles too. Switching to synthetic fluids is not necessary, but will offer smother shifting and lower operating temperatures of those components. This will keep your roadster happily purring for many miles.

The last few items are related to **body maintenance**. I don't care what kind of wax you use, just keep it waxed! The interior and rubber trim also needs to be treated occasionally with Lexol or trim protectant from Mothers or Meguiar's. The only product I don't like is ArmorAll – I feel that it is bad stuff for your car. It is also good practice to hose out the wheel wells and underside of the car to removed dirt and debris, along with making sure that the door and top drains are open and free of debris. Clogged drains are the Number 1 cause of rust in the rear rocker panels. The drains empty out from the bottom of the rocker panel near the jack point. You can also find them **INSIDE** the car – they are about a ½" diameter, located behind the seat belt tower. Team Miata has a handy tool to help clean these drains out: <http://www.teammiata.com/TM400.htm>.

With good maintenance, your roadster should last for a long, long time. In most Miatas, 120K miles is just getting broken in territory! In coming months, we'll cover topics such as suspension, brakes and power (stopping and going!), so until then, keep the shiny side up and the top down!



Proper maintenance can prevent engine removal!

# Plant Fire Fuels '05-'06 MX-5 Rumors

A fire halted production at two of Mazda Motor Corp.'s four Japanese plants on December 15, 2004. The fire broke out near a painting line at the company's Ujina No. 1 plant in western Japan. Television footage showed flames leaping high into the night sky above the Ujina No. 1 plant in Hiroshima, where the auto maker is headquartered. The fire department dispatched 21 trucks and two ambulances to the scene. The fire burned for about seven hours before being extinguished the following morning around 6:00am local time.

Mazda models made at Ujina No. 1 plant include the MPV family van, the RX-8, the Roadster (Miata MX-5) sports car, the Demio, and the Verisa hatchback. The daily output at this plant was about 1,000 vehicles, which accounted for more than one-third of Mazda's total production volume in Japan.

Mazda resumed production operations of the Demio at the plant starting on January 6, 2005 by utilizing the Ujina No. 2 plant Paint Shop and is restarting operations sequentially for other models such as Verisa and MPV. In addition, Mazda will secure its total production volume through increasing the production speed at Ujina No. 2 plant and Hofu plants.

There was a rumor that Mazda announced that there would be no more Miata production for the 2005 model year, as the production line was going to be retooled for the 2006 model. However, on January 27, Mazda issued a press statement that production of the MX-5, RX-8, MPV, Demio, and Verisa would resume in mid-February at Ujina No. 1 by utilizing the paint shop of the Ujina No. 2 Plant and at other company's facilities for integrated production. Manufacture of the Demio and Verisa has already begun and MPV production is scheduled to begin at the end of January.

"Production restoration of the Demio was easier than other models as the Demio has been manufactured at both the No. 1 and No. 2 plants, which was not the case for other models," a Mazda spokesman said.

Mazda also revised their vehicle production loss from 70,000 to approximately 30,000 production units due to the fire's interruption.

Mazda has been doing the clean-up and overhaul activities of the soot filled building and equipment. The restoration of the Ujina No. 1 Paint Shop began on December 25, with the dismantling of the damaged equipment using large-scale cranes.

If a silver lining exists, it's that Mazda must now replace the aging paint shop at Ujina No. 1 and will do so with state-of-the-art, three-layer coating equipment that will not only cut costs and but also boost quality. This system dispenses with the high-temperature "bake" normally necessary between the primer and the topcoat and shortens the painting process. It also features a control system that reduces the number of robots, resulting in a truncated installation time on the Ujina No. 1 line. The paint robot foundations are to be installed prior to the production facility being refurbished. The Three Layer Wet Paint system has already been implemented at Mazda's other plants in Japan.

Additionally, the Ujina No. 1 restoration project is requiring less time than forecast due to the use of a 'module system' that consists of prefabricated steel frame units that can be erected sequentially at the site. These measures drastically shorten the restoration time required, allowing Mazda to target resumption of production in April.

The total amount of the damage is estimated to be about 2.7 billion yen (approx. \$2,635,174 USD). This figure includes direct losses from the fire in buildings, equipment, and semi-finished products but excludes the cost of dismantlement and restoration of the plant.

The shutdown was the latest setback for Japan's car industry.



Smoke rises from the Ujina factory.

Nissan Motor Co., Japan's second-biggest auto maker, and Suzuki Motor Corp., the country's top mini vehicle maker, have cut back production because of a steel shortage.

Toyota Motor Corp., Japan's biggest car maker, plans to buy more steel from China and South Korea in the expectation that steel supplies in Japan will remain tight for a long time.

Suzuki has said it would cut domestic output in the second half to about 500,000 units from the previously expected 530,000 due to the shortage.

## Thinking About A Road Trip?

When the snow is on the ground and the roadster is under wraps, some of us are crazy enough to grab an atlas and start thinking about top down trips to scenic places. For those who might be inclined, here's a short list of events that you might want to investigate. One can dream, can't they?

**More Miatas in Moab**-May 13/15. Explore this scenic area with the Utah Miata club. Website is <http://teamzoom.net/miatainmoab/index.htm>.

**Miatas at Deal's Gap**-July 30/31. The "unofficial" Miata event every year. It's organized by no one, attended by many. Info can be found here: <http://miatasatthegap.com>.

**Flyin Miata's Open House**-weekend of August 20th. Held in conjunction with Grand Junctions' Peach Festival. Look for info at their website: <http://www.flyinmiata.com/>

**Midwest Miata Gathering** -Sept. 9/11. The Greater Cincinnati Miata Club hosts this event and it draws folks from all over the midwest, east and south. <http://www.miatagathering.com/>

**Ozark Miata Playtime** - Sept. 9/11. A loosely organized event near Branson, MO. Look for more information at <http://forum.miata.net> in the Events Calendar in the Regional section .

# SCCA Autocross, Rally, Club Racing News

The Indy SCCA has not released their 2005 event calendar as of press time, but they do have a TSD rally scheduled for Sunday, March 13th. This is billed as an easy Time, Speed, and Distance rally, so if you've been thinking about trying a TSD, this could be the right one to attend! Registration is at noon at the McDonalds at I-65 South exit 76B near the Edinburgh Premium Outlets. More information may be found at the Indy SCCA website (<http://www.indyscca.org>).

Indy SCCA has also announced that they and the management of Indianapolis Raceway Park have reached an agreement that will ensure that SCCA racing continues at the Indianapolis road course well into the future. The serious pavement deterioration that affected the 2004 Indy Grand Prix National Races will be replaced for the 2005 season. The company that just completed work on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway re-paving project, Grady Brothers Paving, is in charge of the repairs. Turn one, the oldest, and roughest pavement on the 2.5 mile, 15 turn circuit, will be replaced and along with broken areas at several other corners and curbing will be added at these corners.

SCCA club racing is exciting as you'll see Miatas, Neons, BMW Z3s and other smaller cars go toe to toe in the Showroom Stock B and C classes. We'll provide information about the Mother's Day Regional Race (May 7-8) and the Indy Grand Prix (July 2-3) events when it becomes available.

The Indy SCCA also runs Solo events, (also called autocross) with many of them held in the parking lot of old Bush Stadium on 16th street in Indianapolis. Autocrossing is all about a driver's ability to accurately and precisely maneuver around a pylon-marked course in the fastest time possible. If you think you have what it takes to beat the clock and your fellow drivers, then show up to an event. Prove that you're as good as your car looks, that you have what it takes to go fast. This is also an excellent way to learn more about your car's handling. Don't think your car is up to it? Show up anyway. You can watch other drivers put their car through the paces and someone may offer to show you the ropes and let you ride in their car. We'll post the Indy SCCA autocross events as soon as they become available.

The Cincinnati SCCA is holding a "Test and Tune" event on March 6th if you're going to be in that area. There's more information concerning the event at their website: <http://www.cincyscca.com/solo/solopage.htm>.

## Spec Miata Events Announced

Fifteen events over eight weekends make up this season's SCCA MazdaSpeed Pro Racing Miata Cup series, with events at Laguna Seca, Lime Rock, Road Atlanta and the closest venue to Indianapolis, Mid-Ohio in Lexington, Ohio. On August 27 and 28th, Spec Miatas will line up to race on the course that has been called the "most competitive in the U.S."

The Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course is a permanent road course with both a 2.4-mile, 15-turn configuration and a 2.25-mile, 13-turn layout. Some of the track's signature turns are the Keyhole, Thunder Valley and the Carousel.

"The MazdaSpeed Miata Cup is one of today's fastest forms of racing in terms of growth," said SCCA Pro Racing Vice President Mitch Wright. "With that being the case, we want to ensure that our drivers have ample opportunity to compete in high-quality events. The 2005 Miata Cup schedule accomplishes that goal."

Club members who race Spec Miatas include Shane Benson and Chuck Wills. Shane and crew traveled to the famous Laguna Seca track in 2002 to race in a Spec Miata MazdaSpeed Cup race. Their adventures were featured in the Open Road (archives at <http://2cat.com/openroad/2002/aug/aug.html>).

We'll keep you posted as more events are added so you can go and see for yourself what fun racing can be, either watching or participating!

## Is A HPDE School In Your Future?

Have you ever watched auto racing and thought "I could do that!" but didn't know how to get started? Since you know that city streets and highways are not the place to learn these skills, what you may want to do is to attend is a local High Performance Driver's Education (HPDE) school.

The National Auto Sport Association (NASA) offers you the chance to learn how to drive on a road course in your own vehicle. Participants are grouped according to their experience and instructors are assigned to novice drivers. Personal instruction is the key and you receive one on one guidance from experienced racers, as you learn to control your car and yourself. Your mentor will provide you with help you learn how to drive at the limit. You will address how to approach a turn, the fast way around it, what gear should you be in, how to brake, and how to exit. You will have class time as well as track time.

NASA will be holding an event at Putnam Park on May 21-22. More information can be found at NASA's Ohio/Indiana regional site: <http://racenasa.com>.

Club members Shane Benson and Chuck Wills have been instructors at NASA's Putnam Park HDPE events and other HDPE schools in the past and would be happy to answer any of your questions.

Knowing your car and becoming a better driver is the result of a school like this!



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## Club Classifieds

**For Sale: 10th AE** - We're are selling our Miata. Car is in excellent condition with approx. 41300 miles, new Falken radials and all the standard equipment of the 10th AE. Second owners, car is always garaged and never sees bad weather unless we accidentally get caught in it. Asking \$12,500 or OBO. Call Ken Koehler at 317-253-4494 or email from club website classified section.

**For Sale: 2001 Miata** - 2001 Miata \$13,900. 41K miles, ga-raged. Crystal Blue with tan top and leather interior. 4 new Toyo tires. 6-speed, sport suspension, Bose CD/cassette. For more details contact: PatrCoyle@aol.com or 513-236-1433.

**For Sale: 99 Mazda Miata Sport, with turbocharger** - Black Exterior/Interior (Cloth Seats); PS; AC; AM/FM Radio w/CD Player; 5 speed manual; 48K miles. See ad on club website for more details. \$16,000 or best offer. Call Chris Bennett at 317-781-9556 or email him at Chris@corporatesystems.com.

**For Sale: Winter tires mounted on Mazda steel rims** - P185/60R 14 - \$175.00 all four or best offer - excellent condition. Call Mark or Jennie Shively at (317) 251-5506, or email us at shivefamily2000@aol.com. Jennie wants the garage cleaned out!!!

298F Gasoline Alley  
aimtuning.com  
317.381.0298

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*Happy Valentines Day!*

*We love our Customers  
and their Miata's!*



## Northside Dinner - February 12

## Air Force Museum Tour - February 19

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**February 12** - Northside Dinner

**February 19** - Air Force Museum Tour

**March** - Speedway Museum Tour

**March 26** - Cabin Fever Rally

**April 16** - Post Tax Blues Rally

**May 14** - Bruce Heddon's Rally

**May 28** - Indy 500 Mingle

**June 3-5** - Southern Indiana Tour

**June 18** - USGP Mingle

**July 9** - Frantic Funkanna

**August 6** - Brickyard Mingle

**August 20** - Rags To Riches Rally

**September 11** - A "Sundae" Mingle

**September 24** - Owen County Tour

**October 22-23** - Madison Madness II

**November** - Hidden Drives

**December** - Holiday Party



The conversation was lively at this table at the January Club Dinner. (L- R) Bruce Hedden, Beth and John Vernon Oaks, Craig Johnson and daughter Skye and Rick Morris.