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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 12th 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 19th. 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