



SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB NEWS

Miata

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 6

JUNE 1997

A CHAPTER OF THE MIATA CLUB OF AMERICA

UPCOMING EVENTS



June 14—Saturday
Highway to Heaven



June 19—Thursday
Wheels 'n Meals
Boll Weevil



June 26—Thursday
**Caravan to
Miata at the Ranch**



June 26-29
**Miata at the Ranch
'97 National Event**



July 13—Sunday
**Tijuana Estuary Run
and Olympic Training
Center Tour**



July 26—Saturday
**Tech Day with the
Members of VROOM
and SOCALM
Plus Side-Trip to
Jackson Racing**

Membership Renewal

If the month/year found on your mailing label matches the month/year of this newsletter, this is the last issue of the newsletter you will receive unless you renew your membership. Don't miss a single issue...renew today!

From the Editor

Breathe A Little Easier

Club member Greg Dunlap posted a message on our Internet mailing list inquiring about local shops that do smog tests. I never really think about it myself until that 2-year time rolls around and a certificate is required. Luckily, most of our Miatas are still fairly new (and well maintained, right?), so getting the smog certificate is more of a hassle than a worry. We just want to find the quickest and cheapest place possible so we can prove to the almighty California Air Resources Board (C.A.R.B.) that our Miata isn't a rolling smog-mobile. If your time has come, hopefully this list of shops collected by Greg will be useful. If you have someplace else you like to go to, let us know.

1. "Shell station on the corner of Oceanside Blvd. and Coast Highway (formerly Hill St.) that is inexpensive and quick."
2. "Tune-Up Masters in Casa De Oro on Campo Rd. They charge \$19.99 + the state certificate."
3. "The garage on the corner of Robinson and Park Blvd. in Hillcrest. They charge \$10.00 + certificate."
4. "Advantage Tire and Auto Service at 1330 India St. downtown did a really fantastic job for me. Give Peter a call at 231-3456."
5. "The Smog Station on Black Mountain Road between Mira Mesa and Miramar. They have coupons in the PennySaver and do it while you wait."

One of the things that still irks me is the necessity for all aftermarket companies to get CARB certification for their products that can be applied to the car upstream of the catalytic converter. CARB sets limits on the amount of pollutants that can exit the tailpipe, so I feel we should be free to do what we want to OUR cars as long as

we stay within those limits. There are a half dozen or so header pipes for the Miata, but only one, the Jackson Racing header, has the CARB certificate that makes it legal to use in California. I'm sure the others would be legal as well, but those companies probably don't have the resources to go through the bureaucratic hoops, or they don't feel they can recoup the costs from sales and keep the cost of the product down and stay competitive. So we end up paying for those costs. What's really amusing is there may be some gadget that will give you more power and make the emissions cleaner, yet still be considered illegal because it hasn't been blessed by CARB.

Don't get me wrong; I feel that emission limits are important in California, considering the number of people moving into the state. In a few years, they estimate that San Diego County will grow by 1 million people, and with them will come a like number of vehicles. But the heavy handed nature of CARB has become a little too "Big Brother"—like for me. My favorite proclamation is the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) standard, the forefront of this being the electric car. Where do they think the electricity comes from? The wall? It comes from your local power station that burns oil. And the batteries themselves have hazardous materials that require special attention. You have the same pollutants, but they are now coming from



other sources. And CARB was going to require that auto makers sell a certain percentage of these ZEV's each year, or they would not be allowed to sell non-ZEV's in California. Luckily CARB saw that the technology is nowhere near capable of mainstream use yet. By the year 2000, you may see some fuel cell technology emerge from the laboratories, or hydrogen power may become more practical, but until then, we'll have to rely on companies finding techniques to make gasoline engines more fuel efficient and emission stingy.

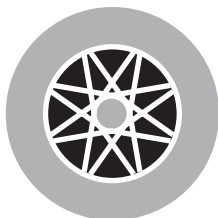
And Now For Something Completely Different...

On a lighter note, summer and warmer weather is just around the bend. There are some fantastic club runs coming up that you really should

plan on attending. We have over 150 cars in our club, so we should hopefully be seeing some high turnouts. I'm pretty sure most people didn't pay \$20 just so they could get my ultra-informative editorials (OK, maybe 70%-sure). It's not easy for someone to stand up and say "I'll do a run", then plan, test, and execute the run for our enjoyment. I attended the last run done by Steve and Yvonne Hart to the Campo Railroad Museum, and it was a blast. So if your schedule permits, please consider attending our monthly runs put on by some great folks on some of the best roads in the best climate the United States has to offer. Otherwise all you'll have this summer are my articles. Scary, huh?

See you on the twisties...
—ROBERT "JTBOB" HOLLAND

Tire Testers Needed



As most of you already know, our club and SOCALM are participating in some tire testing for Kevin Lakkis of Toyo Tire, who is a member of both clubs.

Several rounds of the testing are already complete, and I am now looking for interested club members who would like to add their input to Kevin's database of information. There are two sets of wheels and tires available for testing... a set of 195/50VR15 Toyo Proxes FZ4s, an all season moderate-performance tire, on 15 X 7" TSW "Blade" wheels; and a set of 215/40ZR16 Toyo Proxes T1s, a truly high-performance tire, on 16 X 7.5" TSW "Evos".

All that is asked of testers is that they record their experiences and opinions on a form provided by Kevin and submit a picture of themselves and the car with the tires on it with the report when their testing period is over. Each tester will get to run the test tires for one month. At this writing, the plan, as far as I know it, is to continue to test the tires until they are worn, or at least

nearly worn, out. I cannot guarantee, however, that Toyo will not decide to terminate the testing earlier than that, as one can easily see that such a plan could make for an excessively long testing period. The point of my saying that is to make clear that it is possible that everyone who signs up may not actually get to test the tires. But if you ask to be on the list, I will put you on the list on a purely first come, first served basis.

Please try to reflect on your personal driving habits when you ask to test a specific wheel/tire combination. If the mainstay of your driving is commuting, it may be more appropriate for you to test the FZ4s. If you own a heavily modified car or drive like Rainer, your impressions of the T1s may be more useful to Toyo. The main purpose of this testing, after all, is to provide meaningful data to Toyo.

I have one more FZ4 tester as I write this. President Mark is just about ready to give them up to Tonya Zalenski and I have nobody on the list to follow her. The T1s are spoken for until early July, but I would still like to have some more testers for those tires as well. If you are interested, please E-mail or call me at (619) 486-4711 to get on one of the lists.

Thanks.
—VOODOO BOB

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

MARK BOOTH
(619) 670-3789
markb@adnc.com

Vice President

RAINER MUELLER
(760) 439-0067
Rainer_Mueller@compuserve.com

Secretary/Events Coordinator

NATALIA RISSOLO
(619) 287-7582
library2@class.org

Treasurer

TONY BEECHER
(619) 549-6660
beecher@bigfoot.com

Membership

"VOODOO" BOB KRUEGER
(619) 486-4711
voodoo@adnc.com

Autocross

STEVE HART
(619) 579-9093

Club E-mail Postmaster

CINDY PALOMA
(619) 534-0969
owner-sd-miata@cs.ucsd.edu

Newsletter

Editor/Webmaster
ROBERT "JTBOB" HOLLAND
(619) 546-8218
robert@caliban.ucsd.edu
Design and Layout
TOM & STEPHANIE GOULD
(619) 298-8605
tomgould@adnc.com

NOTICES

THE SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB is an official chapter of the Miata Club of America. We are a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote the enjoyment of—and enthusiasm for—the Mazda Miata.

SAN DIEGO MIATA CLUB NEWS is the monthly newsletter of the San Diego Miata Club. Use of articles or stories by other MCA chapters is hereby granted, provided proper credit is given.

Submissions to the newsletter are welcomed and encouraged. Did you just add a new accessory to your Miata? How about writing a review and submitting it to the newsletter? Where possible, please send your electronic submissions to the newsletter editor, Robert Holland (robert@caliban.ucsd.edu). Submissions can also be faxed to the club's dedicated phone line or mailed to the club's post office box. Submission deadline is the 15th of each month.

Internet: The San Diego Miata Club has established a dedicated World Wide Web Home Page at <http://mmdshare.ucsd.edu/sdmc.html>. The club has also established a members-only electronic mail list for those members with E-mail capability.

Dedicated 24-hour voice/fax phone line:
(619) 670-7948

San Diego Miata Club

P.O. Box 2286
Spring Valley, CA 91979-2286



MEETING PLACES



Highway to Heaven

Date: Saturday, June 14

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: North County Fair mall under the large sign parallel to I-15

Run Leaders: Marianne & Rainer Mueller

Note: *RSVP by June 7 is required!*

Time to head for the hills! The early summer foliage can be seen on our way up to Palomar Mountain. We'll head up to over 6000 feet. We'll have lunch at Mother's, where you'll find some of the best sandwiches and smoothies this side of heaven. From there we'll head to the Palomar Observatory, run by the California Institute of Technology, where we'll get a guided tour by a graduate student. Please note that the tours are limited to 30 people—Rainer has reserved two tours! (one group will eat while the other group sees the dome) After the tours, we'll head down the back side of the mountain, giving us a beautiful look at the top of the Palomar Mountain as well as Lake Henshaw. RSVP to Rainer Mueller via E-mail at Rainer_Mueller@compuserve.com or via telephone at (760) 439-0067.

**Those that don't RSVP may not get lunch or the guided tour.*

Wheels 'n Meals at Boll Weevil

Date: Thursday, June 19

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Boll Weevil, 9330 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. (At Ruffin Rd.), San Diego (619) 571-6225

This month's Wheels 'n Meals is being held on the third Thursday of the month because several members will be attending Miata at the Ranch the following week. We will once again be holding a raffle at this Wheels 'n Meals. Member Sue Hinkle has generously donated a fantastic "Picnic Time" backpack (suggested retail value of \$80!). The backpack comes complete with plates, wine glasses, utensils, cutting board, etc. Everything you need for that romantic picnic lunch at your favorite Miata destination and it fits nicely into the Miata trunk with lots of room to spare! Come to the Wheels 'n Meals and try your luck!

San Diego Miata Club Caravan to Miata at the Ranch

Date: Thursday, June 26

Time: 9:00 a.m. (please be prompt!)

Place: Pea Soup Andersen's parking lot, East side of I-5 at the Palomar Airport Road exit, Carlsbad

Run Leaders: Mark and Cathy Booth

If you are going to Miata at the Ranch, why not caravan up with the rest of the attending members? It looks like we will have between 20 and 30 Miatas in the caravan. What a fun way to take the boredom out of driving Southern California's freeways!

We will leave Pea Soup Andersen's promptly at 9:00 a.m. Our route will take us up I-5 to I-405. We will stop in Orange County to pick up any members that wish to join the caravan. Those Orange County members that wish to join us should meet us at 10:20 a.m. in the Sportmart parking lot located on the west side of I-405 at the Magnolia St./Warner Ave. exit in Fountain Valley/Huntington Beach.

From there we will continue up I-405 to Highway 101 west. We will stop for lunch at a Coco's in Calabasas. We should arrive at the Coco's around 12:00 p.m. (depending on traffic). Any Los Angeles County members that wish to join us should meet us at the Coco's located on the south side of Highway 101 at the Las Virgenes/Malibu Canyon exit in Calabasas. There are several gas stations near the Coco's and everyone will have a chance to fill up before we head out on the final leg of our caravan at approx. 1:30 p.m. Our plan is to arrive at Buellton somewhere between 3:00–3:30 p.m. (again, depending on traffic).

If you are planning to join us for the Caravan to Miata at the Ranch, please RSVP to Mark or Cathy at (619) 670-3789 or E-mail at markb@adnc.com. This is extra important if you plan to join us at either the Orange County or LA County (Coco's) stop points. Thanks in advance for your cooperation on this matter!

UPCOMING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

June 20–22, 1997

Harris Ranch

Hosted by: SAMOA/Oak Tree Mazda
Contact Bonnie J Lutz (916) 652-7408

June 26–29, 1997

Miata at the Ranch '97

Hosted by: The California Chapters of the Miata Club of America
Flag is Up Farms, Santa Ynez Valley.
(800) 472-9445 for registration packet

July 26, 1997

Tech Day, Pot Luck and Pool Party with VROOM and SOCALM

Hosted by: John & Gerry Conn
Fullerton —10 a.m. til ???

Since we're members of three clubs we've extended the invite this year. We'll repeat the popular trip to Jackson Racing where there will be free dynos and a discount on parts and labor. More info in July's newsletter

August 15–17, 1997

Monterey Historic Races

Laguna Seca Raceway, Monterey, CA

The Miata Event on Saturday will include corral pass (Miata-only parking), tent pass (much needed shade), a super gift, breakfast, lunch and day long refreshments. *Please help Barb in planning another great Miata event at the Historics by ordering your tickets by July 15th.* Send a check for \$30 per person for the event to:

Barbara Beach Wolfson
1315 Buena Vista Drive
Vista, CA 92083

Race tickets are additional and can be ordered at the same time.

Three Day pass	\$75.00
Saturday and Sunday pass	\$50.00
Saturday only pass	\$30.00
Friday only pass	\$25.00

September 12–14, 1997

8th Annual Gold Rush

Hosted by: SAMOA
Sheraton Hotel in Rancho Cordova.
3 days—\$90 per car, including some meals, Monte Carlo Night, competitive events—fun! Registration packets:
(916) 646-4435, www.miata.net/samoa

October 9–13, 1997

Hot Air Balloon Fiesta Trip

Albuquerque, New Mexico
Hosted by: SOCALM
Contact: DeLena Cozart (619) 624-9201



The Brakes, Part 2

In the last newsletter, I wrote about changing the brake pads on the Miata. This time, I'll complete the series with instructions on changing the brake fluid. This job is very simple,



but requires the help of one or two other people.

You need the following items: DOT 3 or DOT 4 brake fluid (a quart is more than enough, do NOT use DOT 5), 8 mm wrench, a clear bleed tube (about 1 to 2 feet long and can be obtained from an autoparts store), a jar (to collect the old fluid), some beverages and munchies to keep your helpers happy and about an hour or two of free time. Note: Be careful of brake fluid as it is highly corrosive and will eat paint quite easily. Place a few rags under the fluid reservoir to catch any spillage when adding fluid.

Place the car on jack stands and remove all four wheels. On the back side of the brake caliper is a small nipple with a small rubber cap.



PHOTOS: KEITH RICHMOND

Remove the rubber cap, and clean the nipple if any grease is present. Place the wrench over the nipple, then attach the bleed tube onto the nipple with the other end going into the jar. Make sure the tube is completely over the nipple. Now you are ready to start the process. You need to follow a basic command structure to make sure the process is done in the proper order. One person sits in the drivers seat, and the other works the wrench. If you have a third person, he can make sure the fluid level in the brake reservoir is constantly full (see photo). Otherwise, you'll have to stop periodically to make sure the brake fluid never goes below the "low" line.



The order you should do the brake bleeding is: left rear, right rear, right front, and left front. The bleeding procedure is as follows: Open the nipple about 1/3 of a turn counterclockwise, call out "Down" to the person sitting in the seat to push the brake pedal slowly down to the floor (about 1 to 2 seconds is slow enough). When the pedal is down to the floor, the person in the seat then calls out "Down", and HOLDS the pedal to the floor. When you hear "Down", close the nipple snugly so that no air can enter, then call out "Up" to the person sitting in the seat to let the pedal raise, the seated person then calling out "Up" when the pedal is fully released. Then start the procedure all over again.

The most important part of this procedure is to make sure that the pedal remains fully planted to the floor until the nipple is completely tightened. If not, then when the pedal is raised, air will be drawn into the brake line through the nipple and that is bad, as air is compressible, leading to poor brake pressure. If you do get air in the line, follow the above procedure until you are sure that the fluid being pushed out of the line is free of air bubbles.

Do about 5 cycles of the above procedure, then stop and check the fluid level. Add fluid to maintain the level as close to full as possible. When the fluid coming out the bleed tube looks as clear as the new fluid, then you have completely filled that brake line with new fluid. Be sure the nipple is tight and the little rubber cap is back on the nipple, then move onto the next brake line. Each brake line will take less time to drain old fluid than the previous because the previous bleed pulled new fluid through the junctions that interconnect the brake lines. When done, press the brake pedal a few times. It should be just as firm, or more firm than when you started. If not, then you got air in the line somewhere and need to start over.

If you have the time and inclination, you might also want to change the clutch fluid. The same new brake fluid is used, and the same procedure as well (except the seated person pushes the clutch pedal instead of the brake pedal). Look through the back of the right-front wheel well underneath the car. Towards the center line of the car, there is a small cylinder with a plunger coming out one end. This is the slave cylinder. On this cylinder is a nipple where the clutch fluid is to be drained. The clutch reservoir is to the right of the brake reservoir, and closer to the firewall. It is also smaller. Follow the above bleeding procedure, checking to make sure the fluid level never goes below "low" in the reservoir. When done, the clutch pedal should have a nice, constant pressure when depressed. When done, carefully test your car in your driveway to make sure the car stops when you press the brakes and the car will change gears when you press the clutch.

A little disclaimer is in order. Both the brake pad and brake fluid change are fairly simple, but done incorrectly can lead to smashed sheet metal and smashed bodies if you have no brakes. If you are uncomfortable about doing this procedure, then have an honest-to-deity mechanic do the job, or give me a call and I'll help (Remember, I'm not a real mechanic, I just pretend to be one in our newsletter, but the hours are good).

—ROBERT "JTBOB" HOLLAND

City of San Diego Used Oil Program

This program is only for City of San Diego residents and it is free!

Items Accepted:

Used Oil (*maximum limit—10 gallons*), Oil Filters, Antifreeze and Auto Batteries

NO BUSINESS WASTE ACCEPTED

SATURDAY June 7, 1997

9 am – 1 pm

Bayview Elementary School

2445 Fogg Street

Pacific Beach 92109

For City of San Diego Residents



March in April

A number of members had expressed a wish to have a run up to the March Field Museum. STEF and I had gone past several times and always thought that one day we really should stop, so this seemed to be a good idea for our first run as leaders. We committed and began to plan. The appropriate Miata roads get scarce north of the SD County line, but we staked out some possibilities and went on pre-runs.



A westward loop through Fallbrook and De Luz was fun, coming out in Temecula, where we took 79 to the north, through construction detours and fairly dull rural landscape, up past Perris Lake to March Field. Checking with the museum people for restaurants, they mentioned the Bottom Gun Cafe, where air base people hung out and they had aircraft simulators available. This would attract the prop-heads, and the food checked out, so we cranked that into our itinerary.

Returning via Hemet and the R3 finally gave us some twisty roads, and a route began to emerge. As we canvassed members for interest in the simulators, we realized that our ambitious route could be a time problem. We took some alternate runs up Old 395, Rainbow Canyon, and on up, finding the Domenigoni Parkway (not yet on our AAA map) allowing us to avoid Hemet, zipped through Riverside again on a trip to Jackson Racing, WestCo Battery and Motorsports in Orange

County. We knew we had to accept more freeway miles to get everyone who had signed up into the simulator schedule, but next time...

A nice sunny day for the run, and 32 Miatas including new members ROBERT CLARKE, MIKE THOMAS and DONN YEAGER assembled at Deer Springs Road, and bless their hearts, all were ready to roll right on schedule. Some of the crowd: TONY BEECHER, MARK and CATHY BOOTH, PHIL DAoust, KEN EVORY,



PHOTO: STEF GOULD

Intrepid airmen preparing to go aloft. Woody, JT and VoodooBob model authentic red space-alien gear. Below, ready to launch, or was it lunch?

ART HAMILTON, JACK HINKLE and son, VICKY KRUEGER, KEN LALLY, DALE LEE, FRED LERNER, JOHN O'HARA, STEVE RANZANI, FRANK SHINE and STEPHEN DELONGE, WILLIAM SLOAN, DALE and GINGER SMITH, O.D. SMITH, RICH TAYLOR, DALE THOMPSON and TONYA ZALENSKI. We jinked back and forth over I-15 on Old 395, swung back on the freeway over the hill to Temecula and onto route 79 eastward, gradually leaving behind the strip malls in favor of rolling hills. Hanging a left at downtown Rader, the lineup snaked through some nifty curves

along the high-desert stretch to Sage, then rolled down into the agricultural level toward Hemet. The Domenigoni, a mirage-like highway going from nowhere across nothing much to no place in particular, took the group west and closer to 215, and after a couple of rural crossroads, the Miatas surrendered to the freeway again, hitting the Bottom Gun parking lot at 12:00.

After assembling for a group photo, everyone went into the cafe to eat—and some to try their skills at flying F-18s: taking off, landing, even making carrier approaches at night. Noble deeds were done, some paying the ultimate price: having their performance critiqued by the assembly as monitors over the bar displayed their aviating. Among those in the cockpits were "JTBOB" HOLLAND and VOODOO BOB KRUEGER, BILL and KAREN HUSS, JERI JONES and SEAN O'CONNOR, LOUIS MISKO, LAURA ROMAN, LOU STARK, BARB and ELLIOT SHEV, and WOODY WOODHOUSE.

The rest of us moved on our own to the museum, two miles back down the freeway, where aircraft from the WWII era to the present were displayed outdoors, with other memorabilia inside the hangar-sized museum. Some drivers were heard debating the J-47 turbojet as a possible accessory for their Miatas.

One group heading back, led by STEVE HART, did a mini-run on the Rancho California Road–Fallbrook loop that we had to leave off our original route.

—TOM GOULD



Campo Railroad Run

The legendary "cornering on rails."



PHOTO: TOM GOULD



PHOTO: MARK BOOTH

Restored coaches gave a nostalgic feel for bygone days of steam and steel and ice water in paper cups. Left, Steve Hart looks forward to lunch. Others nearby are Frank Shine and Rainer Mueller. Below, tickets to ride.



PHOTO: MARK BOOTH

Thirty-plus Miatas made the run to Campo for a steam train ride. Below, on the Campo Road.



Above, Natalia defies generations of Moms.

PHOTO: ANTHONY "NEVADABOB" WILDE



PHOTOS: ANTHONY "NEVADABOB" WILDE

The Miata Battery

The battery in automobiles today is not far removed from the first lead-acid storage batteries developed in 1859 by Gaston Plante for use in telegraph equipment. An electrochemical process between the lead, lead dioxide and an aqueous solution of sulfuric acid, is constant. What has changed in the intervening years is the technology applied to better materials and advanced production methods.

If you knew about battery maintenance in 1947, the same procedures would be valid on automotive batteries in 1997. The liquid electrolyte, sulfuric acid, must be maintained by addition of water to replace the liquid that is boiled off during the charge and recharge cycles of normal use. The inevitable spill of acid on or around the battery would have to be cleaned to prevent corrosion of the metal. The battery posts would periodically need to be wire-brushed and cleaned to remove the corrosion present there as well.

Of course we do have maintenance-free batteries now, but the maintenance still seems to be required, and if you get 3 years on a car battery that seems pretty good. If you leave the lights on, or the battery doesn't want to crank the car over, just throw it on the battery charger for an hour or jump start the car and drive it around for a while. If that doesn't work, toss in a new one.

Along comes the Miata, and things change. As retro as the Miata was intended to be in styling, the electrical problems that were common in the British roadsters of days past, were not in the plan. Since the Miata was meant to drive, and not to work on, the battery had to be as reliable as the rest of the car.

In a normal lead-acid battery, the electrolyte is sulfuric acid in sufficient quantity to cover the lead plates in each battery cell. This type of battery is referred to as a wet or flooded cell battery. The main drawback to this type of battery is the continued maintenance and possibility of spillage of acid during maintenance or an accident.

About 1958, attempts were made to immobilize or fix the electrolyte in the cell of the battery using various methods. One of these was to use silica gel to bind the water present in the elec-



trollyte solution into a jelly. Just imagine a battery full of cherry JELL-O. These type of batteries are used in many applications and are referred to as gel cells.

For the record, the Miata battery is NOT A GEL CELL.

In 1985, when the Miata was taking shape in Irvine, a new battery technology was being used in military aircraft. The paramount considerations of power, weight, safety, and reliability were the selling points of this new type of battery. The new technology was AGM or Absorption Glass Mat. This technology was an evolution of previous battery technologies, including gel cells.

In AGM sealed batteries, the acid is absorbed between the lead plates and immobilized by a very fine fiberglass mat. This glass mat absorbs and immobilizes the acid while still keeping the acid available to the plates. This allows fast reaction between the acid and plate material. The intimate relationship of the electrolyte-filled mat and the lead plate, allows the construction of a smaller battery, using less electrolyte and metal plates. This means a smaller battery with nearly equal power ratings to a wet-cell battery of larger size and weight.

This Miata battery uses the AGM technology and is manufactured by the Panasonic battery division of Matsushita Battery Industrial of Japan. The Panasonic battery can only be purchased through Mazda dealers.

A replacement battery is also offered by a company in Anaheim, virtually in the shadow of Anaheim stadium. WestCo (1-800-214-8040), offers a battery of the same AGM technology as the stock battery.

The WestCo battery has a rating of 475 cold cranking amps (CCA) to the stock batteries' 440 CCA. As far as capacity, the WestCo is 35 amp hours vs the stock 32.

The Panasonic battery is vented to the outside of the trunk through a small rubber hose. This vent removes the hydrogen gas that can accumulate inside any battery during use. The amount of hydrogen developed during the use of an AGM battery is quite small when compared to a wet-cell battery. The WestCo battery does not have any vent, as it is sealed. WestCo claims the

gas generation is so small, that venting is not required.

The only real difference in the two batteries is price. The Panasonic battery can be obtained for about \$129 at Mazda dealers. Of course, this does not take into account any discount for being a San Diego Miata Club member. Check the newsletter for participating dealers. Due to the original classification of this battery for shipment, it can not be shipped via UPS.

WestCo sells their battery through many of the vendors of Miata accessories, such as Dealer Alternative, Moss Motors and Imparts. They also sell the battery direct through their Anaheim facility. For \$84.95, minus the 5% discount for Miata Club members, the WestCo battery is very enticing.

The only real difficulty with the WestCo battery is the terminal posts. The posts are reversed, as to polarity, when compared to the Panasonic battery. This will cause an interference with some aftermarket power antennas, due to the length of the battery cables, so check with WestCo first. Several club members use the WestCo battery with no problems.

How will you know if you need a new battery? With most cars, a jump start and driving around will bring a low battery back. Try that with a Miata and chances are you will think the battery is history. Not so fast!!

One of the differences with the AGM battery compared to the wet-cell battery is the recharge rate. That is, how fast you can put energy back into the battery. With a wet-cell battery you can "quick charge" it at about 20 amps or more. Usually this is when you would boil the electrolyte right out of the battery. The AGM batteries require a lower charge rate, for a longer time period. If your battery will not crank the engine, you should charge the battery at a rate of 1 amp or less for 18-24 hours. If you try and charge it like a wet-cell battery, you will destroy the battery.

Those of us who enjoy our Miatas everyday—it's our only car—usually don't have a problem with the battery going flat, unless we leave the lights on. Those who only get the opportunity to drive their Miata on weekends sometime will encounter a low charge on the

battery. This is due to the constant electrical load, known as dark current, on modern automobiles. The memory for the clock, radio stations, engine computer all take small amounts of power from the battery. Those who add alarm systems, etc. might have a greater dark current than stock.

WestCo has a small battery charger for the Miata for those who drive their car infrequently. The EZ-12R is a 1/2 amp charger that will automatically maintain the charge in the battery. The advantage of this charger is you can leave it plugged in and it will not overcharge the Miata battery.

Some people might think that the easier solution would be to put a conventional wet-cell battery into the Miata. Indeed there are battery manufacturers who sell wet batteries for our beloved roadster. Before you go down this road, consider the dangers involved.

The generation of hydrogen gas in a wet-cell battery is much greater than in the AGM battery. Even those batteries that are vented still have the problem with all that liquid in the trunk. The potential for corrosion in this area is very great. Battery acid on your luggage and clothing would not be too cool either. In a rear end collision, the potential for the battery to crack open and spill, or possibly explode, should not be discounted. When you consider the cost of a good wet-cell battery is nearly that of the WestCo battery, the justification for putting a wet-cell battery in the Miata really makes no sense. It is false economy.

Some manufacturers are even pushing wheelchair batteries for replacement in the Miata! I don't think I like the connection.

Overall, the original Miata battery and the WestCo replacement are quality products that fit the Miata like a string-back driving glove. This is the first car I have owned where the only battery maintenance I perform is to dust the top of the battery every year. Several club members have batteries that are 6 or more years old that are still performing well. When you factor this into even the non-discounted price of the Panasonic battery, that is only \$21 a year. About the cost of 1 tank of supreme unleaded. —ANTHONY WILDE





PHOTO: GIVEN HARRISON

Member Profile

GIVEN and CHRISTINE HARRISON. Christine and I have been married for twenty-five years and have two children. Katie is nineteen years old, a student at Palomar College, and a checker at the new Target store in Encinitas. Christopher is sixteen years old, a junior at Sunset High School, a thespian (most recently seen as the Mad Hatter in the CYT production of Alice in Concert) and an employee of the portrait studio in the new Target mentioned above. We both teach at La Costa Meadows School in Carlsbad. Christine teaches first grade, and I teach second.

I bought my Classic Red "B" package new in July of 1993. Since then, I have been easy to shop for when Christmas or the birthday rolls around. The additions to date include:

- rear mud flaps
- Koni Adjustable Shocks
- Clearwater Sound
- Voodoo Knob
- rear window pocket
- Borla Exhaust
- Jackson Sway Bars,
- Sebring Supercharger
(Self installed in a weekend with the help of a lawyer who read the instructions!)
- NACA Duct
- Turn Signal Air Ducts.

My other interests include sailing, music, and cabinetry. I have been interested in sailing since junior high school and have owned a variety of boats over the years. At one time, this interest included racing.

I am also a musician. I'm rhythm guitar player and vocalist of the oldest bluegrass band in North County, "The Unstrung Heroes"—a five piece acoustic group which has been thrilling tens and tens of people since 1980. (My advice to other bluegrass musicians: don't give up your day job.) I also play the Dobro and the upright bass.

A newer interest is cabinetry. I'm currently building a desk/wall unit to house all the stuff I've tripped over for the last twenty years in the "spare room" in an attempt to turn it into some kind of "living" space. I thought this project would take about a month to complete, but with the weekend distraction of the Miata Club runs, I'll be lucky if it's done in a year.

Becoming involved in the club has doubled the fun of owning the Miata. There's nothing quite like following the front of the line through some back country roads! We have also greatly enjoyed the opportunity of making new friends with a common interest. We hope to meet many more members at future events.

New Members!

The following are the new members since the last newsletter:

Jay & Deanna Atherton

San Diego
1991 BRG LE

Matt & Janet Carroll

Santee
1994 M (Montego Blue)

Kim Conant

Poway
1994 Red

Robert T. Hyland

San Diego
1992 Red A

Sandy La Fond

San Diego
1992 Red B

Diane Long

San Diego
1997 Red PE

Larry & Diane Peetoom

Encinitas
1992 Silver A

Richard & Sylvia Somerville

Carlsbad
1990 White Base

Mike Thomas

Carlsbad
1994 Black A

Tom & Dona Thompson

San Clemente
1994 Black C

Donn R. Yeager

Oceanside
1997 Montego Blue

There are now 159 memberships consisting of 241 members.

- 55 Red
- 27 White
- 18 Black
- 16 Montego Blue
- 10 Mariner Blue
- 7 Silver
- 6 Merlot
- 6 Starlight Blue
- 5 BRG
- 5 Laguna Blue
- 3 Yellow
- 1 Unreported

To be included in our on-going series of Member Profiles, write a short (200-300 word) introduction and mail (or E-mail) it with a photo (your face should be large enough to be recognized) to the Club P.O. Box or give it to a board member at an event. — Your photo will be returned.



Renewing Experience

We've come full circle. The growth of the club has been phenomenal over the last 13 months. We number nearly 160 cars. Now we've reached the point that sixty eight memberships are receiving renewal applications this month. That's a sizeable portion of the club and I am confident that everyone (well, except for maybe one or two that no longer have their Miatas) will be with us for another year. Please send in those renewal applications as soon as possible. Not only will this help prevent you from missing a single issue of the newsletter, it will help our membership dude, VODOO BOB KRUEGER, get your membership information updated in a timely fashion. Thanks for your cooperation. And...my sincere thanks to VBob for all of his hard work and help in making this club worth joining!

Miata at the Ranch

Miata Club of America's 1997 National Meet is only a few short weeks away. It looks like we will have between 20 and 30 San Diego Miata Club Miatas in attendance! See "Meeting Places" for all of the details on our "Caravan to Miata at the Ranch" on June 26. My thanks to member DAVE OKAMOTO and SOCALM member MIKE SIMMONS for helping me plan the caravan stop points and lunch location.

If you haven't mailed your registration form yet, do it NOW! Registration fees increase by \$25-\$30 if you mail after June 6. Those dollars would be more fun spent on goodies from one of the many aftermarket accessory vendors in attendance. Also, as mentioned last month, both the Buellton Windmill Motor Inn and the Andersen's Best Western are completely booked. There might still be rooms at the Marriott.

If anyone needs a registration form, give me a call (I have a couple left) or call the event hotline at 1-800-472-9445.



Miscellanea

Member RICHARD SCHERSCHEL is once again cruising the streets of San Diego in style! Richard finally found a replacement for his '90 Mariner Blue (may it rest in pieces). Richard found a great deal on a sharp 1992 Black & Tan limited edition. The '92 LE was the first Miata to sport a tan-colored convertible top.

Richard also donated several of the aftermarket accessories that he removed from his Mariner Blue. These items, combined with a book set from CUSH MAZDA, a prepaid Shell Gas Card donated by member LOUIS MISKO and some Mother's Wax/Polish from member WOODY WOODHOUSE resulted in another \$100+ being raised at the May Wheels 'n Meals raffle. Way to go Richard, Louis, Woody and Cush Mazda! Thanks!

Prize Alert!!! Member SUE HINKLE has donated a fantastic "Picnic Time" backpack for our June Wheels 'n Meals raffle. This nifty goody has all the items you need for a intimate picnic for two. If you aren't the lucky winner in June, Sue is also offering these for sale to club members at a 10% discount. See her at the next event or give her a call at (619) 485-8040. Thanks Sue!

An informal vote at the May Wheels 'n Meals showed that the majority of members in attendance were interested in using the raffle "profits" to have club logo lapel (hat) pins made. We are going to see if we can't get these done in 3 or 4 different car colors. Most pin makers require certain minimums. I will research the situation and report back with my findings.

Member JOYCE WELLS reports that

those members aged 50+ might be able to save some money on auto insurance through the group plans offered to AARP members. Joyce says that the AARP rates are significantly lower than the rates offered by the group plan through Miata Club of America. Thanks Joyce!

Malibu Grand Prix Recap

Sixteen members took to the "streets" of Malibu on May 14. The competition was stiff and here are the top five finishers for the night:

MIKE MARTIN with a time of 55.43, RAINER MUELLER - 55.78, MARK BOOTH - 55.85, ANTHONY WILDE - 56.06 and GIVEN HARRISON - 56.20.

Also in attendance were: VBOB KRUEGER, O.D. SMITH, PATRICK SMITH, MIKE THOMAS, TOM TRATAR, DAVID DUNBAR, NATALIA RISSOLO, JASON MOORHEAD, WOODY WOODHOUSE, BOB CLARKE and CRAIG & ANNA JAMESON.

That's all for this month. Until next month — keep that top down!
—MARK



AUTOCROSS AT THE MURPH

The following autocross events take place in the Qualcomm Stadium parking lot.

Date	Event
Sunday, June 1	Championship
Saturday, June 21	Practice
Sunday, June 22	Championship

Autocross information sources:
 San Diego SCCA Hotline: (619) 441-1333
 Cal Club SCCA Hotline: (818) 988-7223
 Steve Hart: (619) 579-9093

