



# Sooner Star News

the official Central Oklahoma section club newsletter

Jan / Feb 2021 Issue

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

I write this shortly after we've left 2020 behind. I think it is fair to say this has been one of the most challenging years of our lives, conducting section business especially so. When COVID arrived locally, I approached our section board of directors, and we agreed to pause activities for a time. With the passage of time, I will explain further.



*Jeff Leatherrock, President*

It was an easy decision to hold off on monthly dinner meetings until we got a better understanding of risk. First off, the venues were shut down for a couple months. Second, our board, as well as, most active attendees, are, to put it delicately, in a high-risk category.

The Christmas Party was also derailed by renovations at our venue, Twin Hills Golf & Country Club.

Zoom meetings-We decided quickly enough that Zoom meetings are most effective for businesses, or need based events. We were advised by people that use Zoom on a regular business basis, that Zoom events with more than eight to ten attendees is ultimately unwieldy and unrewarding.

Driving events-We have traditionally featured personal interaction and fellowship as a key part of our driving events, and there wasn't a desire to put one together that was just driving around.

I believe the office of section president is a service role. I have been ready to add events, and push for more contact, if the membership

*(Continued on page 3)*

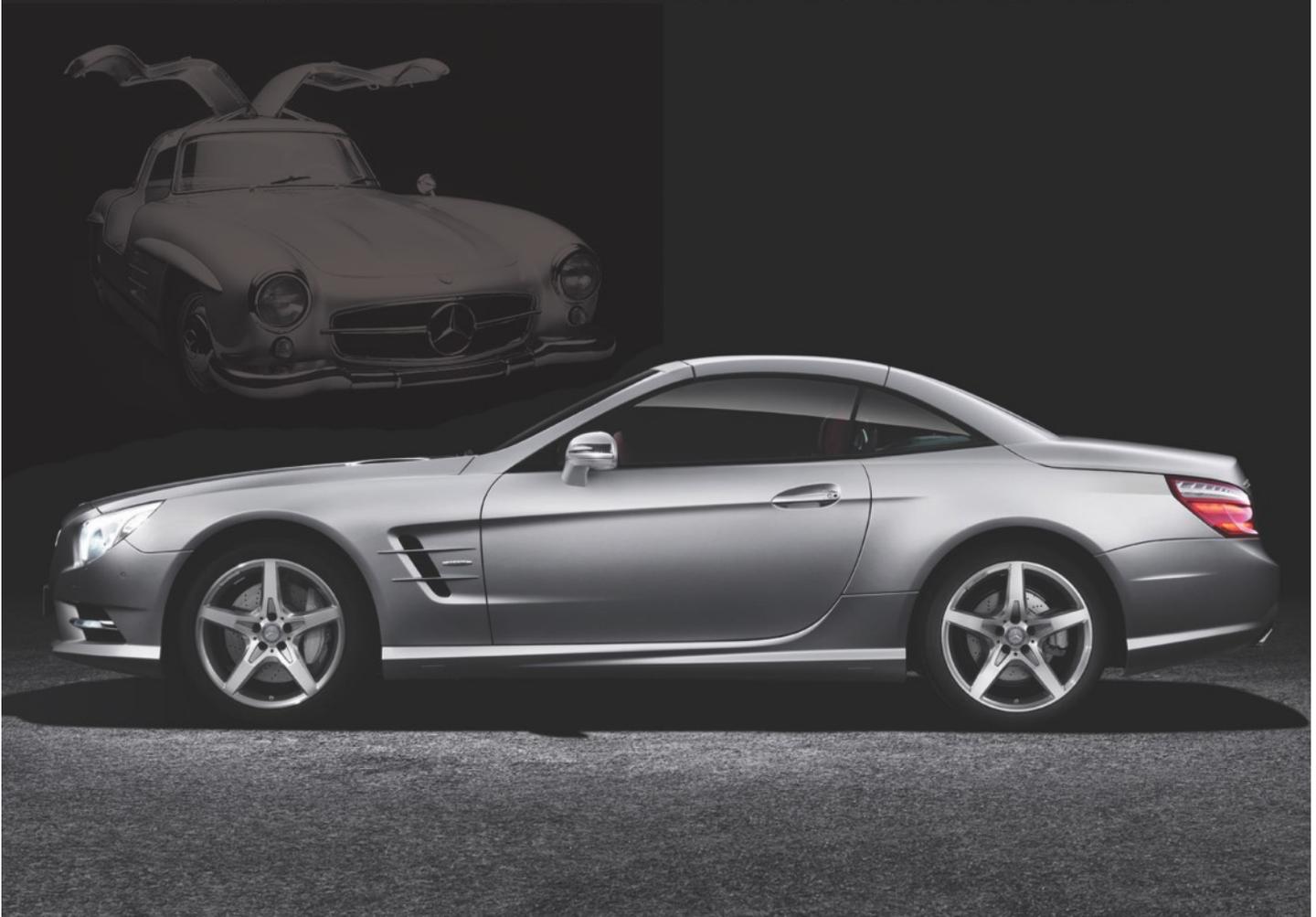
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wanted it. I've had three inquiries about events since we had the picnic in June. An average of one every two months, and one of those people asking about events did not attend any event in 2020 and said they wouldn't because of COVID.

I have been monitoring the membership numbers for the past couple of years. At the end of 2019, we had 125 members. At the end of 2020, we had 119. An attrition rate of about 5%. Of the six members who did not renew, two are over age 90, and two are over age 70. Our retention rate is actually pretty good, as it compares to national trends of the last few years.

After consulting our Regional Director, Brett Jurick, I asked the board to suspend elections for 2020, maintain all directors and officers in place for one year, and then have elections in 2021. The board agreed. We plan to have "normal" elections in 2021.

One piece of business that did occur in 2020 was the selection of our section "Member of the Year". We chose Bruce Rodesney, in recognition of his efforts to photograph and video graph our events of the last couple years. Thank you Bruce!

I'm looking forward to spring and hoping for a more active year.

It is an honor to serve as your section President. Thank you for making it so easy.



Central Oklahoma Section MBCA 2020 Member of the Year, Bruce Rodesney,  
Section President, Jeff Leatherrock

## Coffee and Cars

Coffee and Cars OKC has moved.  
It's still on the first Saturday of each month from 8am-11am.  
New Location:  
Chisholm Creek (near Western and Memorial)  
13230 Pawnee Drive  
Oklahoma City, OK 73114

Coffee and Cars Yukon (aka Yukon Nights Cruise In)  
third Saturday of each month from 6pm-9pm  
Plaza at Stone Mill  
2121 South Yukon Parkway  
Yukon, OK 73099

Coffee and Cars Norman  
second Saturday of each month from 8am-10:30am  
Crest Foods  
1421 24th Avenue NW  
Norman, OK 73069

For more information, visit [coffeandcars.com](http://coffeandcars.com)

# Event Report

## Annual Picnic—Hafer Park, Edmond

For many years our Annual Club Section Picnic has been a great success. In 2019, sixty members and guests joined for the event, from both the Central Oklahoma Section, as well as, the Eastern Oklahoma Section. With this in mind, shortly after last year's picnic, we secured both Pavilion 1 and 2 at Hafer Park in Edmond for our 2020 picnic.

And then....came COVID-19. After several Section Board of Directors discussions about having to cancel so many prior events since the virus arrived, the Board consensus was to move forward with the 2020 picnic, thinking this would be a great opportunity to take advantage of an outdoor event.



*Dick Woolbright, Buzz Forsythe, Juan Franco*



With both pavilions reserved allowing for ample space for responsible social distancing, and attendees bringing their own lunches, it was nice to socialize and catch up with friends that we hadn't seen for months.

Although the turnout was light, it was still a wonderful time for those that attended, including a little Mercedes-Benz loving squirrel.



This was the first and only event we've had since mid-March when the shelter-in-place started due to the pandemic. The board has a continuous conversation going discussing ideas for safe future gatherings. Should you have any ideas of safe meeting venues or activities, please contact any board member.



*Lance Highfill's 2004 CLK55*



*Jeff Leatherrock's 2010 CL550*

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Picnic 2020 continued from page 4)



Tena & Lance Highfill



Kenny Hoffman's 1987 300SDL



John Crain's 2018 E63 S AMG



Buzz Forsythe's 1983 280SL



Tony Marruchella



Scottish Terrier Reba Marruchella



Kenny Hoffman, Juan Franco



Jimmy Tilton, John Crain, Jeff Leatherrock



Dick Woolbright, Jeff Leatherrock's 1993 300TE wagon



Tyler Barnhart



Dick Woolbright's 1987 560SL



Tony, Buzz, Juan, Tyler, Jimmy, Tena



Lisa Leatherrock

Photos and articles for the *Sooner Star News* are welcomed and appreciated.  
Please submit to [leatherrock@att.net](mailto:leatherrock@att.net).  
Editor reserves the right to edit, change, or omit articles for content and style.

# Welcome New Members!

Steven Bajema, Norman  
John Carson, Norman  
Robert Crain, Oklahoma City  
Kenneth Doake, Norman  
Carl Dunn, Kingston  
Craig Glasscock, Edmond  
Ernie Guttery, Oklahoma City  
Melisa Hildebrand, Mustang  
Michael Joseph, Moore  
David Kroll, Altus

Mitch Lambert, Oklahoma City  
Leslie Lane, Oklahoma City  
Michael McMahill, Oklahoma City  
Leah Mills, Oklahoma City  
Karen Seaman, Edmond  
Roger Shortt, Jr., Edmond  
Ken R Stone, Nichols Hills  
Tracee Symes, Edmond  
Raina Valkouri, Sulphur



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## What's on Top

by Suzen Rodesney

When I am at the Concours d'Elegance in Amelia Island, I am always in awe of all the different hood ornaments. They are art; and many famous artists of the time were asked to create the hood ornaments for cars from the 1920's to the 1950's – sculptors such as Bazin, Paillet, Sykes, Renevey and Lejeune. In fact, the first “hood ornament” is claimed to be a sun-crested falcon (to bring good luck), which was mounted on Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun's chariot!

Mercedes-Benz began using the “Three Pointed Star” in 1925, which was originally with a stylized laurel wreath. Their advertisements emphasized the hood ornament, representing the “world famous product of the oldest automobile works in the world” and clearly as the ultimate symbol of luxury.

Regulations beginning in the 1968 model years, caused the disappearance of fixed stand-up hood ornaments. Fears that the hood ornaments caused drag and affected fuel economy were also a factor in their demise. In the European Union, all models after 1974 had a directive regarding vehicle exterior projects.



The Laliq Tete d'aigle Eagle head is made out of frosted crystal. This was a hood ornament first designed in 1928. It is known as being seen atop the hoods of the cars of Nazi officers. The current market value for one of these is between \$900 - \$3500, of course depending upon condition and historic value.



The Packard hood ornament named either "Daphne at the Well" or "Adonis" was designed by Edward McCarten, and patented in 1929. The advertising men at Packard felt that Adonis would have a better sales appeal than Daphne. Adonis was a legendary figure from Greek mythology – the god of beauty and desire. It was introduced on sixth series Packard's, and discontinued with the introduction of the tenth series, in 1932.



The 1930's Chrysler Imperial had a winged gazelle grace it's hood. Oliver Clark was one of the original team member's or Walter Chrysler. Oliver Clark found inspiration in Roman mythology, and specifically was drawn to the wings of Roman god Mercury, symbolizing speed. The wings are a recurring Chrysler symbol.



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Mercedes-Benz responded by installing a hood ornament with a spring mount to fold upon impact.



Spanish carmaker Hispano-Suiza chose their hood ornament as a flying stork. The ornament was used on models from 1920-30 and was sculpted by artist, Frederick Bazin for Hispano-Suiza. Hispano-Suiza was an automotive and engineering firm that began making planes during WWI. They created the engine that powered the SPAD fighter plane. Most French squadrons used the SPAD, including the famous Les Cigognes (The Storks). The nickname was earned by reminding French citizens of the storks commonly found in the Alsace region. The Air Force decided squads should have a symbol on their planes to quickly identify each other. As a tribute to the successful flying ace George Guynemere (whose squad had the wings down stork emblem) and engineering of the planes used in WWI, Hispano-Suiza adopted the stork as its official hood ornament.



Barley Motor Car Co. manufactured the '21 Roamer. It was once billed as "America's Smartest Car". Named after a popular racing horse of the era, the grille was nickel plated and modeled after the Rolls-Royce. A Roamer with a Rochester-Duesenberg engine set records for one kilometer, one-two-three-four and five-mile sprints at Daytona Beach in '21.



Boyce MotoMeter was patented in 1912, and used to read the temperature of the radiator. Motometers were at first after-market devices for cars. By 1927, the company was offering a wide variety of styles, but it soon became obsolete when dash-mounted temperature gauges appeared around 1930. This one is atop a Taylor Austin.



Jeff Leatherock

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Please contact any Section Officer or Director (see page 12) for more information or to place your ad.

## Learning the ABC's of Mercedes-Benz ABC (Active Body Control)

by Lance Highfill

Mercedes-Benz introduced their Active Body Control (ABC) suspension in 1999. The suspension uses hydraulic pressure in struts in place of the typical struts or air suspension found on other Mercedes-Benz vehicles. The system has several benefits over other suspension systems (controls body roll, is smoother, and reduces dive on braking), but it requires a bit more maintenance, and can be costly to repair. The system contains a number of parts (hydraulic pump, valve bodies, hoses, struts at each corner, a pulsation damper, and accumulators, as well as, a number of sensors and the electronic control unit).

Recently, I have learned a lot about the ABC system, how it functions, how the various components work together, and just how expensive it can be when parts begin to wear out and fail. Fortunately, there are ways to rebuild some of the components and there are a few independent Mercedes-Benz repair shops that know how to properly service the system.



Front ABC valve -  
left front of car in front wheel well

I purchased my 2003 S55 in 2009, with 47k miles. The ABC suspension worked great until about 100k miles, and then I had to replace the accumulator due to a vibration when starting the vehicle. At around 125k miles, the car began to display "ABC Suspension Issue-Drive to Workshop" message (*never a good sign*). The first order of business was to have the car correctly diagnosed using the MB Star system. Mike at Dumont's Auto Repair Shop is very familiar with the ABC system and was able to determine we needed to replace the accumulators. The accumulators are pressurized by the ABC pump (normal operating pressure is around 200 bar or 2,900 lbs per sq in). The accumulators supply fluid to the struts as needed, as the car travels over bumps, etc. When the accumulators fail, the system is unable to maintain pressure resulting in the warning message. After that repair, all was good for another 10k miles, or so.

The next challenge came as I was leaving a store and the rear of the car had dropped down and nothing I tried would make the suspension raise back up. Time for a wrecker and a tow to Hammer & Dolly, the place all injured MB's go for diagnosis. With the help of online forums and a call to Mike, we were able to determine the rear ABC valve block had failed. We (Jeff) was able to locate a used unit at a reasonable price. I was actually able to replace the valve block myself and I was good-to-go, for a while.

I began smelling the odor of ABC fluid and then shortly thereafter, began receiving the dreaded "ABC Suspension Issue" message, again. Mike was able to determine the ABC pump (which is two pumps in one – one runs ABC and the other runs the power steering) was leaking and needed to be replaced. This is a difficult time-consuming task and the pump itself is over \$1,200. When replacing the pump you have to do a complete system flush which requires 12 or more liters of special fluid. But, as we all know, when you own a 17 year old MB with 140k miles on the clock there are going to be surprises - sometimes very expensive surprises.



Rear ABC valve - left rear of car in front of tire

My S55 is not driven much anymore and sometimes sits for extended periods of time. I began to notice each time I would go to get the car the front or rear suspension had dropped down. More online research revealed this is also a common issue with the ABC suspension and is generally due to O-ring failure in the valve bodies. The valve bodies

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contain four electric solenoids. Two control the suspension while driving, and the other two lock in place when the car is turned off and sitting. Each solenoid contains several O-rings that wear over time. The good news is you have several options to deal with a leaky valve body. You can replace it with a brand new MB part (over \$1,000 and there are two valve bodies), you can have them rebuilt by a number of different places, or you can disassemble and replace the O-rings yourself. I choose to have mine rebuilt by DIYBenz. They appear to be the top rated ABC valve body repair guys. You send them your valve body and they return it with new seals in less than a week. They also test the four electric solenoids when replacing the O-rings. DIYBenz charges \$275 to repair a valve body. If you are brave enough you can purchase the O-ring kits for about \$75 and pull the units apart yourself. One of the side benefits of replacing the front valve body was the ability to clean out the spaces between the various cooling radiators in the front of my S55. There are five radiators/condensers tucked close together and apparently all kinds of trash gets logged between them in the course of traveling 140k miles.

So far after rebuilding the two valve bodies, the car has been standing tall and proud each time I have gone by storage. The ABC system appears to be back in full operation and I hope to get many more miles out of the system.



Debris removed from radiators  
(lug bolt for size comparison)

Included are a few pics of both the front and rear valve bodies, so you can see what they look like and get an idea of how they are mounted on the vehicle. I also included a picture of the trash pulled from the front radiators while replacing the front valve body.

If you are interested in learning more about the Mercedes-Benz Active Body Control suspension system, following is a link to a very comprehensive document:

[www.abcspecialist.nl/uploads/documents/active\\_body\\_control\\_uk\\_2019\\_watermark.pdf](http://www.abcspecialist.nl/uploads/documents/active_body_control_uk_2019_watermark.pdf)



## CONGRATULATIONS

Bruce Rodesney

Central Oklahoma Section

2020 Member-of-the-Year



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