



HORIZONS

The Official Newsletter of the Sun Riders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

Winds of Change

By LoAn Nguyen, President

Dear Fellow Sun Riding Friends,

Happy New Year to you and yours! May this be a year of good health, good memories, good friends, good deeds, and good fortunes.

First and foremost, did you notice the heading of this issue of our newsletter, signifying the club's entrance into its second decade of existence? The Sun Riders Miata Club of Tampa Bay, since its inception in 1995 by club founder Nico Pavan, has transcended from a small and informal gathering of Miata owners/enthusiasts into a State-of-Florida-incorporated non-profit organization (2003). Over the years, the number of club members at times reached as high as 175+. Currently, the club consists of about 100 members with a diverse range of cultural background, professional career paths, and life experiences. The past decade has brought us many exciting changes and certainly this new decade will present perhaps even more.

Serving the club and our members in 2005 is a "mostly" new slate of volunteer officers/board members and appointed committee chairpersons, all sharing a common vision of ensuring that being a member of the club is an enjoyable and worthwhile endeavor for all. Conversely, there are a few "seasoned" veterans who graciously offered to extend their term another year, ensuring continuity. Together, the 2005 Board is ready and eager to serve and help make this year a fun-filled one for our members.

Our efforts began with a Strategic Planning Session that was held on December 7, 2004. The objective of the meeting was to identify a set of common goals, upon which the majority of our efforts will be built during 2005. Naturally, our primary goal is to increase

members' enjoyment of club membership and associated activities/events. In addition, we identified the following strategic goals and objectives:

1. Increase the frequency of driving events.
2. Hold regularly scheduled Board Meetings.
3. Increase members' participation in the Club's newsletter.
4. Improve the Club's merchandise ordering system.
5. Increase public awareness of the Club's existence.
6. Develop and implement a club-wide operating budget for 2005.

Many innovative ideas and supporting objectives/tasks were presented for discussion at the meeting as the means to accomplish the above stated goals, including an events committee (chaired by Loren Williams) which will focus on increasing the number of monthly driving events and re-emphasis of the "Calendar of Events" to concentrate solely on our club's activities; bi-monthly Board meetings during which official club business is conducted; regularly scheduled newspaper article contribution submittal deadline; an exciting program to enable club members (and non-members) to order our shirts/hats/badges/etc. on-line; and the recruitment of a marketing committee chairperson to initiate contact and increase community awareness of our club. These are but a few examples of the methods by which we plan to accomplish our goals.

The new slate of officers, board members, and committee chairs are all very excited about the opportunity to serve you in 2005. Please plan on

Holiday Party a Success

By Kathy Davis, Club Secretary

Time flies when you're having fun and we all have to admit, driving our Miatas IS FUN!

Yes, another year rolls by and we topped it off (or should that be **TOOK** the top off??) with a holiday gathering complete with good food, the best friends and lots of fun!

This year's party was held at The Charthouse Suites on Clearwater Beach. This is a great location and the boat parade right off our balcony was an added bonus for our viewing pleasure. Approximately 42 Sun Riders came out to enjoy the great food catered by Shepard's Restaurant.

There was something on the menu for everyone. Chicken Marsala, rib eye or stuffed flounder topped off with an assortment of vegetables, rolls and salads. Delicious! We also had many desserts brought by club members that were the perfect ending to a great meal!

A rousing game of Dirty Santa followed our dinner and with such a large group there sure was plenty of good natured "stealing"! Car related items such as tire gauges, wash kits and even certificates for detailing were coveted and lost but all in good fun.

As I write this, the party is over but I reflect on the fun and memories and want to say thanks to all the SunRiders who make this club so special. Have a wonderful and warm 2005!



2004 Christmas Party at the Chart House Suites, Clearwater Beach.

2004 Charity Drive

In keeping with previous years' community outreach efforts, the Sun Riders donated a total of \$1,300 to two organizations: The Spring and Joshua House. The proceeds came from the sales of raffle tickets during meetings/events, plus a generous contribution from the Motorsports program. For more information on The Spring and Joshua house, visit www.thespring.org and www.joshuahouse.com, respectively.

Two new organizations will be selected as our charities for 2005. If you would like to nominate an organization for consideration by the Board, please contact LoAn or any club officer, board member, or committee chairperson.



LoAn with the daycare staff at The Spring, December 2004



hearing from those officers/committee chairs who will soon solicit your input and ideas as they carry out their assigned objectives/tasks. In addition, I am compiling a general membership survey questionnaire which I hope to distribute to all members in January or February. Additional goals resulting from the survey will be incorporated and serve as our road map for 2005.

Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the officers, board members, and committee chairs who volunteered their time and effort to serve the club in 2004: Joe Wessling (President), Don Reese (Past President), Joe McCormick (Vice President), Owen Johns (Board Member), Bob Bartlett (Board Member), Mike Benishek (Board Member), Kathy Davis (Secretary/Newsletter Editor), Loren Williams (Motorsports), George Bickner (Membership), JoAnn Forte (Fellowship), Jonathan Skinner (Historian), Ilona Wessling (Merchandise), and Kevin Morrison (Webmaster). THANK YOU!

See you at the next event!

2005: A Year of Activity

By Loren Williams, Events Coordinator & VP

I don't know how I let this happen, but somehow I've volunteered myself into a position that the club seems to have a real need for lately. I don't think the position ever had a name, if it even existed, so I'm calling myself the "Events Coordinator". Using methods learned from heading up our motorsports program, I'm going to try to make great events happen without actually DOING any of the work myself! Trust me, it's more fun for everyone that way. We'll end up with a wide variety of different events run by different people, and the burden of making things happen will be more evenly spread among the active membership. If YOU help organize just one event in the coming year, and 23 other people do the same, we'll have an event every month and nobody will get



burned out from doing all of the work.

One of my first thoughts, that will likely be brought before the membership for vote at the January monthly meeting was to replace the monthly Wednesday night dinner meeting with a monthly Saturday "event", preceded or followed by a more casual meeting and some sort of meal. I'm of the opinion that this is a CAR club, and we need to be doing more with our cars and less hanging out at Jimmy Mac's in the dark. I really don't think we'd miss the Wednesday meetings, either, because a great number of our members also get together almost every Friday night for dinner in various places. So, keep your eyes open for the results of that vote. Come to the January meeting if you'd like to cast your vote one way or the other. Our bylaws won't allow us to change the date of the monthly meeting without membership approval.

So, what do I plan to do as Events Coordinator? With or without the Wednesday meetings, I'm going to schedule a monthly event on the 3rd Saturday of each month and draft members to make them happen. I've got the first few months of 2005 loosely planned already (check the calendar), and I'm looking for people who have ideas and motivation to put on events for the rest of the year. Events can be anything from a simple drive, to a complex rally, a car show, a picnic or bbq, or anything else you can think of... we'd just like the main focus of the event to be either the car itself (such as a car show), or a good drive to see or do something of interest.

January will be a back roads jaunt down to Punta Gorda (yeah, you can get there by driving I-75... but what fun is that?) for lunch at Harpoon Harry's, and perhaps a side trip to Charlotte County Speedway for those who are interested. (they likely won't have any racing going on that day, a few of us are going to examine the track for possible SunRiders Motorsports events) February will be a rally through NW Hillsborough County ending with dinner at Cody's. March and April are also in the works, but many more months remain, so let me know if you're interested in doing something.

Continued on page 5...

Custom Creations
352.799.7313
www.4customcreations.com
We digitally transfer any picture / text on:
Jackets, Shirts, Mugs, Ceramic Tiles
License Plates, Key Chains, many other items
Discount pricing for Sun Riders members
Ask about our Miata Only Parking Signs with your Miata pictured

Christmas Shopping After Midnight

By Hank & Frank

Before addressing the issue at hand, we'd like to introduce ourselves. We are Hank & Frank, a couple of devoted Miata enthusiasts who want nothing more than to share our knowledge, experience and love of the car with you, our readers. Oh, and maybe a few slices of Pizza. But don't put nothing weird on it like anchovies or pineapple!

Hank is an old school racer living in Valrico with his old lady, Betsy. (Good ol' Betsy was sa-weet back in the day, it's a good thing Hank has a good memory.) Hank's current Miata is a race-prepared '90 base model that was run in SCCA showroom stock for several years before being built to IT (Improved Touring) specs. It was suffering from a blown engine and severe race scarring when Hank traded his brother-in-law's Rottweiler and a 6-pack of beer for it in 1995. Frank helped Hank do a 1.8 engine swap on it, convert it to full 1994 specs and build it up for the Spec Miata class. The car has been on blocks in the front yard since Hank kissed a wall with it at Laguna Seca about a year and a half ago.

Frank (short for Francis) is a part-time Mazda mechanic, part-time freelance sponge diver and part-time Avon lady living with her 2 ferrets and a cat (Huey, Dewey and Lucretia) in Ozona. Frank's baby is an impeccably maintained '92 Sunburst Yellow with a few modifications, all installed by her. The engine is a turbocharged 1.6, running 12 psi of boost (unless she's feeling frisky), the transmission and differential are modified RX-7 parts. After her 5th speeding ticket, she got a case of Krylon and painted the car flat black to make it a little more stealthy. So far, it has worked. Frank and Betsy were best friends back in school and they still get together often, mostly to talk about Hank.

As a part of our regular column, we will be answering questions from our readers. Since this is our first column, this month's question was pulled from our extensive archives (otherwise known as the big pile of crap on Frank's desk.) If you have a question you'd like us to tackle, feel free to submit it to us through the newsletter editor.

Question o' the Month:

*Dear Hank & Frank,
How do I know when my Miata needs new shocks?*

*Sincerely,
"Every other person who buys a used Miata"*

Hank: Howdy, Hank here. My race car already came with a set of custom-valved, double-adjustable Bilstein shocks when I got it. I figa I needed new ones after that lil' axident at the track and 3 of 'em got bent. Oh and for the records, I done told you I did not hit that wall! Money's kinda tight right now. I think I might just replace 'em with a set of Monroe Gas-Matics. My cousin put a set of those on his wife's Monte Carlo last year, he says they're really good. Uh... what was the question?

Frank: Hank, the question was how do you know when a Miata needs new shocks! You need to keep in mind that a Miata is a SPORTS CAR. Shocks that work well on a full-size 'murrican car likely won't provide the level of performance that a Miata was designed for. And the traditional "tests" that can identify a failing shock on a regular car won't tell you much about the condition of your Miata's shocks.

Hank: Oh, you mean like when I tell Betsy to push down on the bumper to see if the car bounces? That trick won't work on a Miata?

Frank: Nope, a bad Miata shock will usually pass that test just fine. The typical signs of shocks going bad in a Miata will be a harsh ride, especially over rough pavement, bumps or railroad tracks. They will also make the car feel very unstable at speed.

Hank: What if I don't know enough about how a stock Miata should feel to know whether or not mine is "normal"? Are there any other ways to know?

Frank: Well, you could always have an experienced Miata person drive the car and

Continued on Page 5...

Hank & Frank, continued from page 4

give you an opinion. Barring that, you could physically look at the shocks. Look for any sign of oil on the outside of the shock body. Leaking oil means a blown seal (in this case, a blown seal is not a happy seal) and a bad shock. You might also check the condition of the rubber boots that cover the shock shaft. If those boots are old and deteriorating, it's a good sign that your shocks are old.

Hank: I betcha lotsa folks reading this don't even know what a shock looks like... there's gotta be some other way.

Frank: Yes. Quite simply, if your Miata has it's original shocks and the car has over 60,000 miles on it, your shocks are bad. They usually start degrading after 30-40,000 miles. Even if you don't feel that they're "bad", you'll realize how bad they really were after you replace them!

Next Month: *How Hank knocked out a tooth on his fuel door release lever!*

Visit us on the Web!
At www.sunriders.com you can see the latest event schedule, update your member information, and participate in our web forum where you can get answers to tech questions or just chat about your car. Not yet a member? You can join and pay online!

2005: A Year of Activity, cont'd from page 3

All of these monthly events will be in addition to the other sometimes "less planned" events that we regularly have. Like the First Saturday runs to Dade City, which I would like to see continue and perhaps have different people lead with some different routes taken (there's more than one way to get to Dade City!). Dade City also has the only operational drive-in theater that I know of anywhere near the Tampa area, we should take advantage of that. Like our autocross and track events that are normally held on the Second Saturday or Sunday of each month. Like the tech sessions that we have occasionally to help people learn to do minor (and major) maintenance on their Miatas. Like the casual Friday dinners that just sort of happen. Oh, and it's not "our" event, but feel free to crash the "East Side Miatas" weekly meeting at Chick-Fil-A in Brandon every Wednesday night! Or start your own weekly gig somewhere else! It doesn't have to be formal or overly-planned to be fun. Just be sure to let me know when you've got something going on so that I can try to let others know.

That's all for now. I look forward to hearing from some eager volunteers. I know you're out there!



SUNRIDERS MIATA CLUB OF TAMPA BAY 2005 Officers

President
LoAn Nguyen
(topless@sunriders.com)

Vice-President
Loren Williams
(loren@sunriders.com)

Treasurer
Jonathan Veilhaber
(jonathan.veilhaber@whitesandworks.com)

Secretary
Kathy Davis
(kathy@sunriders.com)

Past-President
Joe Wessling (joe@sunriders.com)

Board Member
Kevin Morrison
(kevin1@sunriders.com)

Board Member
Bob Bartlett
(bob@sunriders.com)

Board Member
Dan Rasp
(dan@sunriders.com)

P.O. Box 26071
Tampa, FL 33623-6071

Stuff the Lawyers make us say: All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SunRiders Miata Club, Miata Club of America, Mazda Motors, or the Board of Directors of any of these organizations. Technical advice given is based on the writers' experience with their particular cars. Unless otherwise stated, these procedures are not "Factory Approved". SunRiders assumes no responsibility for the use or misuse of any information presented herein. Use any information at your own risk. Some assembly required, batteries not included. Keep away from small children and point away from face when lighting.



Calendar of Events

Saturday, January 15 - Drive to Punta Gorda. Meet at 10 AM at the McDonald's on US 301, just east of I-75 in Ellenton. From there we'll explore some back roads on the way to Arcadia where Ron Camacho will lead us to Punta Gorda for lunch at Harpoon Harry's. Contact Loren@sunriders.com for more information.

Sunday, January 16 - Autocross at St. Pete College, Allstate Campus. See www.sunridersmotorsports.com for more information.

Wednesday, January 19 - Monthly meeting at Lee Garden Chinese restaurant, 8309 W. Hillsborough Ave. Meeting starts at 7:00.

Saturday, February 2 - Dade City Cruise-In. Meet at 4PM at the McDonald's at SR54 and US41 in Lutz. Enjoy a 45 minute drive on back-roads to the classic car show at Dade City. Contact Joe Wessling at joe@sunriders.com for more information.

Saturday, February 12 - Autocross at St. Pete College, Allstate Campus. See www.sunridersmotorsports.com for more information.

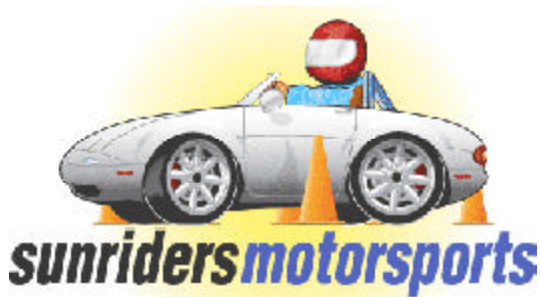
Saturday, February 19 - The Lakes of Hillsborough County Rally. Meet at Timberlan Park at 4902 Timberlan St. in Tampa. Bring a navigator who can follow instructions, and a tank full of gas. Run the rally and end up at Cody's Roadhouse at 11200 W. Hillsborough around 4PM or you can skip the rally and just join us there. Contact loren@sunriders.com for more information.

Saturday, March 5 - Dade City Cruise-In. Meet at 4PM at the McDonald's at SR54 and US41 in Lutz. Enjoy a 45 minute drive on back-roads to the classic car show at Dade City. Contact Joe Wessling at joe@sunriders.com for more information.

Saturday, March 19 - Mystery Drive. Meet at Citrus Park Mall in Tampa (just west of the Veteran's Expressway, at the Gunn exit), in front of Sears at 10AM. More details to come. Contact kevin1@sunriders.com for more information.

Loren Williams is the 2005 Events Committee Chairman. Regular driving events are scheduled for the third Saturday of every month. We need chair-persons to lead events! Contact Loren at loren@sunriders.com to schedule an event. Remember, the club is what we the members make of it. Volunteer to run an event!





By Chad Sutton, Motorsports Director

It's a new year and it's time to kick off the 2005 Sunriders Motorsports season. While the suckers up north wait until March and April to get in their first events, Sunriders participants can look forward to events all year long. The schedule for the year is shaping up like this:

- 1/16/2005 - St. Pete College (SPC)
- 2/12/2005 - SPC
- 3/13/2005 – Charlotte County Speedway Track Event*
- 4/09/2005 - SPC
- 5/15/2005 - Honeymoon Island*
- 6/11/2005 - SPC
- 7/10/2005 - SPC
- 8/13/2005 - SPC
- 9/11/2005 - GCAC Road Trip
- 10/08/2005 - SPC
- 11/13/2005 - SPC
- 12/03/2005 - SPC

*Site acquisition in process

Many of our events will be autocross events and the familiar St. Petersburg College Allstate Campus facility (SPC) at 3500 32nd St. S. You can expect plenty of creative courses and entertaining feats of driver skill.

We are examining other sites that will allow us to run a track event as was started at the

Primus site in 2004. Study is underway of the Charlotte County Speedway site, a sixty-foot wide paved oval with useful pavement in parts of the infield. We hope to have final confirmation in mid January that we can use the facility (this letter has to be written early to get into print you know). Stay tuned for more information.

Sunriders Motorsports is also working to get access to Honeymoon Island for an evening/night autocross at this wonderful location. There is a lot of red tape to secure such a location, but we are hopeful it can be acquired for a May event.

Remember this link - www.sunridersmotorsports.com. The 2005 schedule is already posted there. As updates occur for additional 2005 events, or updates to existing events, this is where to get the info. Also be sure to check out www.sunriders.com/forums/. This is an excellent forum to find out and ask questions about Motorsports events. Currently the Motorsports topics are in the Autocross Forum. I highly recommend using the forum for any questions you may have. You may also e-mail me at altsutton@tampabay.rr.com.

All our events in 2005 will have options to pre-register your entry. I highly recommend that you take advantage of this service. Most of our events have a cap on the number of entries, and we have had to turn people away who waited until the morning of the event. Don't let this happen to you. Pre-register. Use the Sunriders Motorsports web site to find the pre-registration link.

I wish everybody a great 2005 and hope to see you out at many 2005 Sunriders Motorsports events. Drive safe.



HORIZONS

Sun Riders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

Visit the club's web page at www.sunriders.com

Participate in the forums: www.sunriders.com/forums/

Renew or join online: www.sunriders.com/membership.html



P.O. Box 26071
Tampa, FL 33623-6071