

September - October, 1999
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HORIZONS

The Official Newsletter of the SunRiders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

DAYTONA 2000, MIATAS IN PARADISE

Every year, one of the local chapters of the Miata Club of America takes complete leave of their senses and undertakes the task of putting on a national Miata rally. These events are attended by hundreds of Miata owners in hundreds of Miatas. Well, for the year 2000, it's our turn. More precisely, it's the turn of all the clubs in Florida. A committee of some 60 people from six Florida Miata clubs was formed on August 13, 1999 at a meeting in Daytona Beach, the proposed site for the October 2000 event. Headed up by Peter Warrick of the Everglades Miata Club, the committee elected to approve the Adam's Mark Resort as the host hotel for the event, and the Daytona International Speedway (DIS) as the track for driving activities.

Several Sun Riders attended the 1999 event which was held near Dallas, TX, and they all reported that the event was a lot of fun. That event hosted some 450 cars. The Daytona committee is shooting for 400, but if 500 want to attend, they will be accommodated. Seven Sun Riders represented the club at the August 13 meeting, and most of those seven have formed the Track/Motorsports committee, of which yours truly is the chairperson. As a group, we are responsible for coordinating all events which are to happen at the DIS facility. These events will include an Autocross, mega-funcana, touring laps (limited to 60 mph), a group photo on the track, and a lunch to be served in the infield garages. It should go without saying that we hope all of the Sun Riders will want to help out with this effort. Several committees have been formed, and anyone is welcome to serve on any of them. If you would like to volunteer for the track committee, or would like information on the

other committees, give me a shout by phone or email.

The event, which is scheduled for the last week in October, 2000 (Tuesday through Friday) will cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$325 (maybe less) to attend, not including hotel accommodations. Those who are actively working on a committee will get a substantial discount off of the regular registration price. Sharing hotel rooms is also possible, so this can be a very affordable and fun vacation.

The Adam's Mark Resort, on the beach at Daytona Beach is truly impressive. There are three restaurants inside, a sprawling pool, beachside bars, volleyball court, live music every night, an underground parking garage, and every room has an oceanfront view. The Adam's Mark has agreed to block off all 435 of their rooms for Miata people.

The Daytona International Speedway is one of the world's most famous race facilities. The speedway consists of a 2-mile oval with 31-degree banked turns, and an infield road course that adds more than a mile to the length of the track. Each year, the Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona race hosts the world's top sportscar race teams in a grueling test of endurance, and the NASCAR Daytona 500 and Pepsi 400 are two of the biggest events of their kind.

Daytona Beach itself is a great place to be. A city that is used to large groups of fanatics (bike week, speed week, spring break...), Daytona Beach offers a dizzying array of attractions, restaurants, and leisure activities.

Before this starts sounding too much like a sales pitch, let me just say this - if you miss this event, you are going to be kicking yourself for the rest of your life. Enough said. ♦

- KEVIN MORRISON

NEW MEMBERS!!!

PETER SANCHIRICO
BRIAN WOLSTENHOLME
TIM TILTON
DOHNIA CWIK
RYAN RUSSON
DALE NABORS
PAULA MCWILLIAM
SANDRA CULLER
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GARY RICHER
PETE MATASSA
SUZANNE STARK
KATHIE SAIS
DAVID SOUZA
DAVID FISHER

WELCOME ABOARD!

ATTENTION!

The Sun Riders' Sizzle on the Beach event is fast approaching. The registrations have finally started to roll in from all over Florida and it looks like there's going to be a lot of great people there. If you would like to attend, there's still time to register. You can register by phone by calling either Kevin Morrison (813-222-0509) or Jonathan Skinner (727-784-5529) and let us know you want to come by September 6. The cost is \$65 per person, or \$99 for a couple. Accommodations are available at the BilMar Resort in Treasure Island for \$70 or \$78 a night (800-826-9724). Note, however, that **you do not have to stay at the hotel to participate in the event.** For your money, you're going to get three meals, all the events, access to the hotel facilities (we have a hospitality room and a deck all to ourselves), and a T-shirt to commemorate the event (a second shirt is \$12). Don't wimp out on us! Be there!

Sponsors!

A Word for Our Sponsors

This month we're going to use this spot to give you some useful information. Some of the companies listed here are not sponsors of the club (but they really should be).

These are all the area Miata-related businesses we know:

Lindell Mazda 727-344-3439

Mazda Village 727-791-8171

Courtesy Mazda 813-261-2350

Lakeland Mazda 800-733-3439

Maztech 813-874-0937

Tampa Mazda Repair & Service 813-886-4449

Nationwide Dent Repair (Kevin Byrd)
800-734-3368

Sunbrite Auto Works 813-873-9816

Hi Fi Racing 813-241-0108

If you'd like to make your company a Sun Riders sponsor, contact a board member.



Back to the Gap

by Steve Swiger

After last year I swore to myself that I would go back, and the next time I did, I would have better tires. I was on my fourth or fifth run through Deal's Gap, in the Southeast corner of Tennessee, and it was pitch black. The darkness made it easier and more difficult at the same time: Easier because I could see lights if there was an oncoming car around the next turn, giving me the full width of the road to make my winding way back through the Gap. At the same time, it was more difficult, well, because I couldn't see anything. On the Tennessee side of the mountain, there was a little white round reflector in the middle of each turn, which was really my only clue to the upcoming turn from more than several car lengths away.

The tires that I had at the time were horrible. They didn't stick real well, but when you are working with a car as perfectly balanced as the Miata, this is not always a bad thing. Drifting in and out of the corners was an incredible sensation, so I flipped on my brights, and headed back through in the dark, pushing the car harder in and out of every turn, until I had done all 318 of them again for the last time that trip. Most of it was second gear work, accelerating almost to the rev limiter between the turns, then braking hard to haul the car down to a manageable speed to enter the turn, drifting through the corner, grip coming back, accelerating out of the turn and then doing it all over again.

A year later, I was back. Having caravanned from Tampa with six other Miatas in tow, I was ready to hit the twisties again. The car has been significantly modified since last year, new shocks, springs, anti-sway bars, brake upgrades, and, of course, the new tires I had promised myself after last year, and what a powerful combination they are. Unfortunately, the terrain around Tampa is not too conducive to wringing a car out, so I only had a vague idea of the envelope the car now has.

The rush was back the minute I downshifted to start up the hill from the Crossroads of Time, leading several of my best friends that were still 'dragon-virgins'. The drill was a

little different from last year, however, because the car felt more sure-footed, more nimble, and it was daylight, so I could really push it. Whereas last year there had been lots of drifting and sliding, this year, the car was on rails: Accelerate, upshift and accelerate again, carry speed much deeper into the turn, downshift and brake hard, ride the G's out, accelerating out of the middle of the turn, and then do it again. Where last year the car would drift a foot or two through the turn, now it stuck like glue, neutral all the way through the turn, the G's building and staying on through the acceleration until the braking zone for the next turn.

Several minutes later, but much sooner than I would have liked, we had traversed the 11-mile long Gap and pulled off at an overlook to cool the cars down. As soon as we stopped moving, the smell of brakes – hot brakes – permeated the air around us. It was intoxicating, the four cars gleaming in the sunlight, hot with energy, drivers and passengers grinning ear to ear and ready to do it again.

So we did. ❖

Deal's Gap, Tennessee has long been known as a motorcyclist Mecca, having earned the nickname 'The Dragon' because of its twisty, winding road as well as its propensity for swallowing those unprepared for what it could throw at them. The Author was participating in the Third Annual Miatas at the Gap, a gathering started in 1997 as an 'unofficial, unorganized' regional Miata meeting. In just two years, it has grown from the original 40 cars to over 350 this year. Centering around the Tapoco Lodge in Tapoco, North Carolina, Miatas at the Gap has attracted enthusiasts from as far away as Alaska and New Zealand.

If you get the opportunity to experience Deal's Gap, it is highly recommended. It is located along highway 129, between Robbinsville, North Carolina and the Foothills Parkway in Tennessee.



Places to Go

by Pam Barker

For folks who might be looking for future weekend trip ideas, I'll share the story of the trip that my husband, John, and I planned and enjoyed over the Memorial Day weekend. If anyone would like details regarding routes taken, phone numbers, etc. feel free to email me.

I would also love to hear from folks who have discovered favorite driving destinations, have planned weekend trips that turned out especially well, or know about upcoming festivals and special events in other parts of the state.

Our first weekend destination was Kennedy Space Center where the initial view when driving up to the Visitor's Center is of a full-size space shuttle along with its rocket and boosters. Simply breathtaking!

We also were fortunate enough to see some of the components which will be heading up to space to the International Space Station. If you have been following the news, a team of astronauts are up there right now correcting some problems with noisy fans and installing yet another module. A relatively new addition to the visitor's complex is the Saturn/Apollo center which features a completely restored Saturn V rocket. It's awe-inspiring to walk the length of that rocket and to realize the complexity of the machinery required to escape our earth's gravity. The Astronaut's memorial which lists the names of the astronauts killed in duty also reminded us of the challenges and defeats sometimes encountered.

As this is "Space Week" at Kennedy Space Center's Visitor Center, several guest speakers were special additions to the daily schedule. Charley Dean who logged 71 minutes on the moon's surface (most minutes on the moon by anyone) during Apollo 16 and Kathy Sullivan who was the 2nd woman in space and the first woman to walk in space each told their stories. And what a story they had to tell about their preparation, their experiences, and how it has affected their lives even now. Charley is currently in his 60's and retired, but is still active through his service on the advisory board for Kennedy Space Center and Kathy is presently director of an innovative children's and science museum in Columbus, Ohio.

Heading south from Kennedy, we stopped briefly in Cocoa Beach to check out Ron Jon surf shop and buy the obligatory tacky t-shirt souvenirs for our teenage sons

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Kevin Byrd



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St. Petersburg, 727-344-3344

Courtesy Mazda
Hillborough Ave., Tampa
813-261-2350



who stayed at home this weekend. Though my husband had been there before, this was my first visit and I was amazed at the size of the shop and the variety of beach and surf items offered for sale. Everything from foam float-boards to high-end surf boards, wet suits to bathing suits, and sizes from baby to XXX-L.

After a memorable dinner in a French bistro in historic downtown Melbourne and an overnight stay in a hotel overlooking Melbourne harbor, we headed back east. Along the way, we stopped in Christmas, Florida and took an airboat tour of the St. John's river for a different kind of top-down driving experience. The alligators were hiding out, but we saw a variety of egrets and herons and had a nice conversation with Cap'n Dave who at the age of 28 has over 20 years of experience with all types of boats and hopes to upgrade his captain's license so that he can pilot tugboats someday.

If the Kennedy Space Center is a look into the future, we then turned back the clock and slowed down the pace by visiting Mount Dora which is located northwest of Orlando. We stayed at the Lakeside Inn which is on the banks of Lake Dora and is a very comfortable country inn with period furnishings and a warm ambiance. The Inn is located just a block away from the downtown district which offers a wide variety of shops offering antiques, collectibles, art, and country furnishings.

Even though a Miata trunk is pretty small and looked even smaller after we stuffed in our overnight bags and a camera case, we did manage to find room for several purchases including a 10" glazed porcelain flower pot, 3 cedar shoe trees to use as cap holders (that brand-new Sunriders hat will hang proudly when John isn't wearing it), plates,

and a flower vase.

We also explored the neighboring towns of Eustis and Tavares and found some nice twisty, turny country roads that provided scenic overlooks of several lakes in the area. Other fun things to do include a trolley ride through historic Mount Dora, plays put on by a little theater group, pontoon boat cruises, horse and carriage rides, and a scenic railroad. Not that we did all of these things though, as we have to save a few things for next time.

Driving back to St. Petersburg on Monday, we wanted to stay off the interstate and away from the holiday traffic, so we headed south and west on some small country backroads until we hit highway 50. We stopped in Clermont and visited one of the original Florida tourist traps—the Citrus Tower. This 22-story tower was built in 1956 on a ridge of land 270 feet above sea level. While the view has changed from only orange groves to a mix of golf courses, housing tracts, and shopping centers nestled among the remaining orange groves, the view is still spectacular.

After looping through Dade City and St. Leo, we eventually picked up highway 41 and the Veteran's Expressway and made it home without seeing any traffic jams, stalled motorists, yellow traffic cones, or broken-down vehicles.

All in all, a nice mix of the high-tech and the low-key for a Memorial Day Weekend. ●

*Send us your favorite weekend getaways. We'd love to publish them here.
getaways@sunriders.com*

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Calendar of Events

September 10-12 - Sizzle on the Beach - See pages 2 and 7 for details.

Sunday, September 12, 10:00AM - Driver's School - SPJC Allstate Campus. Join us at the Police Driver Education course for a 4-hour class taught by the SPJC law enforcement instructors. The cost for this class is \$30, which is an incredible value for the amount of instruction you get. Topics covered will include skid control, threshold braking, shuffle steering, and other critical driving skills. There are still about 10 slots available. Call Jonathan Skinner at 727-784-5529 ASAP to reserve your spot.

Tuesday, September 14, 7:00PM - Monthly Meeting. Steak & Ale, Westshore Blvd., Tampa. Come out to the monthly meeting to dine and socialize with the club. This is a great time for new members to come out and get to know us. We don't really conduct any club business at the meeting, it's just for fun. Bring your appetite and your enthusiasm!

Tuesday, October 12, 7:00PM - Monthly meeting at Steak & Ale.

Sunday, October 10 8:30AM- Fifth Autocross of the season. Registration starts at 8:30, driver's meeting at 9:45, first car out at 10:00. This is a great way to improve your driving skills in a place where you can't get a ticket and you can't hurt your car. You don't even have to own a Miata, any type of car can come. Cost will be \$25 and that will include a lunch. Spectators can eat lunch with us for \$5. Call Jonathan Skinner at 727-784-5529 or Kevin Morrison at 813-222-0509 for more details. A few helmets will be available for rental for \$5. Car must pass tech inspection and drivers will be asked to work a shift on the course.

The Campus is located at 3200 34th Street South, St. Petersburg.

Directions from I-275 Southbound:

Take Exit #6, which is 22nd Ave. South

Directions from I-275 Northbound:

Take Exit #5, which is also 22nd Ave. South

Head West on 22nd Ave to 34th Street,

take a left at the light onto 34th Street South. (this is also known as US 19)

Head South for about a half-mile, SPJC-Allstate Center will be on your left, across from Florida Power.



Sun Riders Sizzle on the Beach! September 10-12

Schedule of Events**

Friday, September 10

- *3:00-6:00pm -Registration at hotel
- *6:00-8:30pm -Reception Dinner Buffet (Cash Bar available)
- *8:30-until -Gathering in the Hospitality Room and Karaoke in the Beach Bar

Saturday, September 11

- *Breakfast on your own
- *9:00-10:00am -Late Registration for those who don't make it on Friday
- *10:30am -Caravan to Fort Desoto Park for picnic
- *11:00-2:00pm -Picnic at Fort Desoto (20 min South of the Bilmar) - fare will be Burgers, Dogs and other American classics (tentative menu)
- *3:00-5:00pm -Funcanna & Show-n-Shine (wax and shine those cars, win a cheesy prize!)
- *7:00 -Buffet dinner 'Tacky Tourist' competition (win another cheesy prize).
Awards Presentation
After dinner - Social in Hospitality Room

Sunday, September 12

- *Breakfast on your own
- *OPTIONAL (\$30 charge) 10:00AM to 2:00PM - Performance Driving School at SPJC
- *OPTIONAL - Self-Guided driving tours.

**Schedule is subject to change.



Where the heck is the darn place?



From the North : I-75 south to Tampa (from the East I-4 west to Tampa) then I-275 to St. Petersburg and the 5th Avenue North Exit. Go straight ahead to Central Ave. then turn right. Central Ave. ends at Gulf Blvd. in Treasure Island and the BilMar Beach Resort.

From the South: I-275 north across the Sunshine Skyway Bridge to the US19 Exit. Go straight ahead to Central Ave. in St. Petersburg (about 3.75 mi.) then left. Central Ave. ends at Gulf Blvd. in Treasure Island and the BilMar Beach Resort.

HORIZONS

Sun Riders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

Visit the club's web page at <http://www.sunriders.com>

Features at the site include "Miatas of the Net"; "There and Back Again" - a trip across the country in a Miata; Photos from SunRiders Events; the Calendar of Events, and links to other Miata-related web sites.

Call the Event Hotline at 813-225-4240 for the latest event information.



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