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Horizons

The Official Newsletter of the SunRiders Miata Club of Tampa Bay

President's Thoughts: September, 1998 - A Changing of the Guard

By Dewaine Norris

A changing of the guard... I can think of no better way to describe what is taking place within the Sun Riders Miata Club, a change brought about by the upcoming relocation of our Founder and former President, Nico Pavan. Sincere thanks and appreciation are due Nico for the outstanding work he did in establishing and building Sun Riders. I will be the first to publicly express that. Thanks, Nico. Without you we would not be where we are today. (Prior to Nico's departure, we are planning to hold a "bon voyage/going away" party for Nico. Watch for details!)

What are the next steps? We simply take what we have and build on it. To do that, we have assembled a great interim team, a team really enthused about the possibilities of building on the framework started by Nico. Here they are and their responsibilities:

- * Dewaine Norris, President
(dnorris@sunriders.com, 579-2929 [O], 579-0330 [H])
- * Molly Norris, Secretary/Treasurer
(molly@sunriders.com, 579-0330 [H])
- * Jonathan Skinner, Motorsports Director
(jonathan@sunriders.com, 784-5529 [H])
- * Kevin Morrison, Newsletter/Web Site Editor
(kevin@sunriders.com, 222-0509 [H])
- * Steve Swiger, Events Planning

(steve@swiger.com, 239-9224 [H])

Additionally, Mike Sims has agreed to work with us recording events and helping with media.

We have defined our objective and direction, a statement of purpose to direct all our activities. It is simple and concise:

To provide the opportunity for Miata owners to come together to share their enthusiasm for the car through social, driving, technical, and community service activities.

A number of enhancements are underway and others are planned. Here are a few things that have already started:

- * **Monthly Get-Together/Meeting:** Starting in August, there is now a monthly get-together/meeting at J. Alexanders Restaurant (913 North Dale Mabry Highway between Kennedy and I-275, next to Borders Bookstore) on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, beginning at 6:00 PM. A section of the restaurant will be set aside for us to use. This location was chosen due to location, access to major highways in the Bay area, and the desire of their management to work with us.

- * **Name Tags at Events/Activities:** Name tags will be used at all events/activities so we can put names and faces together and newcomers will feel welcome.

- * **Telephone Event Line:** The club now has a Tampa phone line set up for events, to request information, and make general

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Pocono: Here We Were

By Molly Norris

Miata Mountain Madness, our first National Miata Event and also our first vacation since getting married last summer. In Dewaine's '95 White/Tan with some Butterfly Luggage borrowed from friends (highly recommended and sincerely appreciated) we traveled over 3200 miles during the 11 days between June 24th and July 5th inclusive. In so doing we simply reconfirmed how easy and comfortable it is to travel long distances and long periods of time in the Miata. We were able to visit old stomping grounds (and a few relatives), did some sight-seeing, saw old friends, made new ones, and found out how good an HMO really can be. (More about that later!!)

The trip up was a mixture of interstate (southern states) and secondary roads (WV, MD, & PA) on the way north. The weather was hot and we kept the top up until we got off I-81 in Staunton, VA. Then it was top down through the VA and WV mountains, resulting in great views and cooler temperatures. We used our CB and in one instance, Dewaine was explaining the different types of truck trailers and containers to me when one of the trucks we passed made a comment to the one ahead of him about having his truck inspected by the people in the white Miata. That was all it took for Dewaine to carry on a conversation with him for the next couple of miles. (We were both surprised that he knew we were in a Miata).

Although this was our first visit to the Poconos and they were beautiful, the draw was Miata Mountain Madness '98...and we were not disappointed!! The event was sold out with approximately 265 cars attending. Cars came from across the US and Canada with 3 couples from Europe driving Miatae loaned to them. Many of the after-market vendors were there including Brainstorm, Dealer Alternative, Performance Buyers' Club, and Florida's own Miata World. All vendors were great and showed no hesitation in answering questions, not only about their products, but about Miatae in general.

Activities started on Tuesday afternoon, June 30th, with a brief seminar featuring an instructor from Skip Barber covering handling techniques and did not stop until the event ended mid-morning Friday morning, July 3rd. In between were dinners with door prizes, discussions with door prizes, fireworks with door prizes and door prizes with door prizes (none, unfortunately won by us). Pocono International Raceway activities included autocrosses, hot laps, Funkana (even if no one is sure what it means) and the opportunity to drive two 1999 Miatae, each with a different set of Yokohama tires so they could be compared. For those not interested in the track events, there were scenic drives, "Mission Impossible Rally", shopping and "whitewater" rafting.

All events were memorable, but perhaps the most "traffic-stopping" (literally) was the drive from the headquarters hotel at Split Rock Resort to the Edelweiss Restaurant on Wednesday night. Multiple Miatae (260+) made the approximately 10 mile trip in caravan with police assistance. The looks of disbelief from people we passed were amazing. (Unlike Florida, the Poconos area is definitely "Miata Challenged".) At the restaurant all of the cars were lined up on the grass. It was amazing how all the cars are alike and yet unique. (The Toronto contingent marked their cars with Canadian flags on their antennas.) Even more fascinating were the vanity license tags. Several of our favorites were: KDS N TRK, SILYME, FLOPTOP and TERAPI. The only real problem of the evening came after we arrived at the restaurant. (The MC made an announcement that there was a Miata in the parking lot with the lights on and there was a mad rush of 500 people going to check their cars. Everyone knows how hard it is to find a reasonably priced gel battery.)

The other memorable event was preparing for the group picture and touring laps on Thursday afternoon, both of which were done at Pocono International Raceway. Getting everyone in line on the track was quite a trip. We got in line to get in line. The cars were finally lined up in pit row 6 across (and who knows how many deep) nose to trunk. They took a group picture and then each deep line took two touring laps on the NASCAR portion of the track. We were at the end of the first group to go out for the speed controlled run. It was quite a sight, the line of cars in front of you and the group on pit

row waiting for their turn.

DelVal Chapter, the event host, did a great job of coordinating the event. Everyone who has been or is connected with the Miata was there...Tom Matano, Vince Tidwell, Norm Garrett, Barbara Beach, Jay Lamm as well as the presidents of Mazda US and Canada. Hot laps had 2 accidents, but no major injuries. Old friendships were renewed and new ones made. And as a result, we highly recommend attendance at a national event. We had such a great time that we have already signed up for next years event in Dallas, May 6-9. How about joining us??

Oh, yes, the HMO...Since we arrived a couple days early and knew we would be doing hot laps, we decided to go rafting the day before the event started. We were in a 2-man inflatable and the rapids were only Class 1 and 2, a was a nice leisurely trip down the river. The problem came when our primary source of guidance (also known by the acronym "DEWAINE") decided to detour slightly out of the primary channel and got us stuck. In helping us get "unstuck" I twisted my back and was in utter misery the following day. Not knowing any doctors, hospitals, etc. we could see our trip disintegrating. In total pain (and picturing our trip ending before the event even started) I called my HMO late Tuesday morning. Within an hour they had called me back with an appointment with a doctor that afternoon. He examined me, gave me 2 prescriptions, and by early evening, the pain had eased. Thanks to my HMO and the doctor, I was able to take part in the events which began that evening and drive the hot lap sessions which began the next morning. The trip back was uneventful, if you do not count the Florida fires which caused some detours.

A Few Laps at the Malibu Gran Prix

On Saturday, July 25, a few SunRiders converged on the Malibu Gran Prix (MGP) in Tampa to try our hands at piloting the "Virage" race cars. The Virage is a purpose-built miniature race car, with a 2-cylinder snowmobile engine. The carts are shod with wide racing slicks for tires and are equipped with full harnesses and roll bars, making for a pretty realistic racing experience. The afternoon started around 1 PM when everyone arrived in the parking lot. We milled around for a while, looking at the three new '99 Miatas in attendance, and then

went inside to buy our tickets for the race cars. MGP gave us a discount on the laps, even though we didn't have officially enough people in attendance to qualify for the discount. We walked out to the track, ready to do some racing. For those of us who had not done it before, it was a bit of a disappointment to find out that we would not be racing wheel-to-wheel, battling for position through the apex of every turn. Instead we would run timed laps, one at a time. That was fine, though as we soon learned that just driving these little race cars was enough of a job without worrying about passing each other. We started off with a quick briefing on the rules from "Ira", a young gentleman who was obviously not a seasoned racer. Ira warned us not to use the gas and brakes at the same time in order to make a quicker launch off the line, and told us that if we flipped over, we should remain in the car until someone came out to help us. YEAH, RIGHT!!

Anyway, we put on our well-worn helmets and each sat in a car of our preference. They are all the same, but reportedly some are set up to handle better than others, while some are faster in a straight line. Once belted in, one by

See MALIBU, page 4

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR
LOCAL DEALERSHIPS WHO ARE
SUPPORTING THE SUNRIDERS.

Mazda Village
Clearwater, 813-791-8171

Lakeland Auto Mall/ Lakeland Mazda
Lakeland, 800-733-3439

Lindell Mazda
St. Petersburg, 813-344-3344



Thoughts..., continued from page 1...

comments. The phone number is 225-4240. Please make use of it.

* **Autocross Schedule:** Plans are for an on-going autocross program set up on a one per quarter schedule, to be held at St. Petersburg Junior College on 34th Street South in St. Petersburg.

* **Newsletter:** Sun Riders Horizons will become a bi-monthly publication to insure it is a quality publication. Watch for new columns and sources of information. Current plans call for mailing of a post card of upcoming events in off-months, something that can easily be posted on your refrigerator, by the phone or in some similarly convenient location to keep Sun Riders and their events handily in mind.

* **Membership Cards:** New membership cards should be in your hands by the end of October. While these cards will expire at the end of the year with current membership dues, it should allow you to take advantage of discounts where they have been established. New cards will be sent to all members as next years's dues are paid.

* **Newspaper Listings:** Beginning by mid-August, Sun Riders is due to be listed in all editions of The St. Petersburg Times with other car clubs. This will include our phone number and monthly meeting location.

* **Adopt A Highway Program:** Preliminary information has been received to "Adopt A Highway", the first of what we hope will be several on-going community service and support activities.

Other activities are on the drawing board or under investigation:

- * the possibility of joint activities with other car clubs in the Bay area
- * joint activities with other Miata Clubs in Florida
- * development of shorter and more frequent events, whether it be dinner, movies, Devil Rays games, cultural events, Christmas light tours, etc.
- * event discounts
- * spontaneous events where people may

be notified by e-mail of an up-coming day and time.

Our objective is to develop a calendar of events so that people can come to any or all they choose. We understand that in today's world, everyone can not come to all activities. Ideally, however, we would like to have Sun Riders become your activity of choice.

Our desire is for this to be a community of people with the commonality of owning and/or driving a Miata, an active community that will grow. The key, however, is everyone getting involved. This is not a one person, two person, or even a five person show. This is your Sun Riders Club. To survive and grow will take everyone working together, all taking responsibility for the club.

We need your ideas and input. I listed our e-mail addresses and phone numbers above. Please use them to let us hear from you or leave a message on our event line, 225-4240.

Wishing you many topless days of safe driving...

Malibu, continued from page 3...

one we idled up to the starting line, waiting for the green light. The light goes to green, you floor the gas pedal and immediately throw the car into the first few turns. The course is very tight, and you have to hit each apex just right to carry more speed out of each turn. Through a big sweeper, a couple right angles, a hairpin, and every other combination of turns brings you around the track in about 55 to 60 seconds. Once at the end, you slow down, proceed down the front straight at "walking speed", and get ready for the next lap. Posted on the timing board is the track record, about 49 seconds and change...that's everyone's goal, but with most times falling in the 55 to 56 second range, it is hard to imagine where one can find an additional 6 or 7 seconds out on the track.. Drenched with sweat, we finished up our laps and made our way to a nearby McDonalds for a cold drink.

Kevin Morrison

A note from the new newsletter editor:

Hi folks, I just wanted to take a moment and introduce myself to those of you who may not know me. I was asked about a year ago, on the second club event I attended, to develop a new web page for the club. I accepted the challenge and now am proud to say that we have the best web site of any Miata club in the country, and almost all of them have a page of some sort. Our web site gets over 500 hits per month from people all over the world. Now I have been asked to take on the task of publishing the newsletter every two months. This is a much more difficult job to do better than it was done before. Nico Pavan always did a great job on the newsletter. I enjoy a challenge, though, and will strive to make "Horizons" the best newsletter of any Miata club in the world. Nonetheless, I hope to be able to improve it more with every issue, and to



have it continue to be a source of Miata-related information and entertainment. I welcome any and all suggestions and advice toward improving this publication, and I hope that many of you will get involved and submit articles for publication. I can be reached at 222-0509. Please call me or email me at Kevin@sunriders.com if you have any needs or concerns I can help you with. It is my job to communicate with everyone in the club and I want to make sure that the communication goes both ways. Thanks for giving me the chance.

Kevin Morrison

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We'd like to thank QUICKSILVER PRINTING
For their services and help in producing this newsletter



The SunRiders Autocross Series...

One of our favorite events in the club is the autocross. It's a great way to have a LOT of fun and, at the same time, learn how to be a better driver.

Anyone can participate, and there are no special requirements for your car, just sound mechanical condition.



If you've never been to an autocross, you might not know that it is a simple timed event where one car at a time runs on a short course laid out with rubber cones. Typically, you get three or four timed runs, of which your best is counted. Of course we're not really keeping track of who wins (yet), but it is fun to see how you do compared to the other drivers. Speeds rarely exceed 35 or 40 miles per hour, but the twists and turns of the course can be quite challenging.

Since we recently have found an inexpensive, well-equipped, and convenient location to host autocross events, we have decided to undertake several of these fun and instructional events each year. In order to encourage more participation, and to make things easier for those autocrossing for the first time, we thought it might be a good idea to present a little primer on how to participate in an autocross. We won't try to tell you how to win Fastest Time of Day (FTD). That's for you to figure out yourself, but we can tell you a few things you need to know before you show up.

First, you should understand that an autocross takes a lot of coordination, planning and volunteer effort to implement. In that light, you should expect to spend a short time during the day working as a volunteer in some capacity. This usually involves being a **course worker**. A course worker stands out in the blistering sun and waits for a car to knock down a cone. When that happens, the course worker RUNS to the cone and sets it upright. He or she then signals to the timing steward how many cones were knocked down so that a penalty can be assessed to the lucky driver's time.



You may be asked to help move cones around either before or after the autocross. Mostly we'll need people to help put the cones back the way they were before we arrived. The course we use is utilized during the week as a police training course, and they expect us to return it to their configuration before we leave.

Second, you should make sure before you arrive that your car is in the proper condition. Cars must pass a basic tech inspection, which will include checking the torque on your lug nuts, brake fluid, tire condition and pressure, and there must be **NO loose items** in the cabin or trunk of the car. Time constraints prevent a more thorough tech inspection, so it is **your responsibility** to ensure that your car is in top condition.

Third, **helmets** are required. This can be any DOT or Snell approved helmet, either closed-face or open. For autocrosses, roll bars are not required. The club will try to have a few helmets (three or four) on hand that can be rented for \$10. This cost can be split between two or more drivers since there will only be one driver on the course at one time.

Finally, spend some time educating yourself about autocrossing. On the Internet, a good place to start is WWW.AUTOCROSS.COM. The next club autocross is November 14. SEE YOUTHERE!

Upcoming Events

Sunday, September 27 - Miata Picnic- Enjoy a lazy Sunday afternoon in the great Florida outdoors with food, fun and games.

Meet at the Clearwater Visitor's center, located at the end of the Courtney Campbell Causeway at 11:30 AM. We'll caravan from there to the picnic site at Philippe Park in Safety Harbor at 12:00. The park is at 2525 Philippe Parkway if you want to meet us there. We should arrive at the park by about 12:30 at the latest. The club will provide charcoal, chips and drinks. Bring your own burgers, hot dogs or whatever to grill.

Saturday, October 10 - A trip to the Space Coast. The NASA visitor's center has added a lot of new stuff to their attraction, so if you haven't been there in a while, this is your chance. We'll meet at the J. Alexander's restaurant parking lot at 9 am. After visiting NASA we may go into Cocoa Beach and have a late lunch and drinks at Marlin's on the Pier followed by a quick stop for shopping at Ron Jon's surf shop. Check the web page for more info, or call Kevin Morrison at 222-0509.

Tuesday October 13, 6:00 PM - Monthly meeting at J. Alexander's, at 913 N. Dale Mabry Hwy. in Tampa, between Kennedy and I-275. There will be no formal agenda, just a chance to meet new members, brainstorm ideas for events and activities, and enjoy some good food and conversation.

Sunday, October 18 - Semi-Famous Sunday Breakfast Run. Enjoy an early-morning drive through the backroads of Hernando and Citrus counties to The Country Diner for a good old-fashioned breakfast. Meet at the McDonalds at SR54 and US41 in Lutz at 8:00. This event has become very popular lately, join in the fun! We return to Tampa by around noon. Bring a CB radio if you have one. We tune to channel 34 on club outings. Note: excessive speed on the Sunday Run is neither expected nor condoned by the club. Don't be afraid that you can't keep up. It's a nice drive through the country. Call Kevin Morrison at 813-222-0509 for more information.

Saturday, October 31 - 7:00 pm- Halloween Party : Dress up in a costume and dress up your Miata for the costume contest. Details in the October event-postcard mailing, on the event hotline, and on the web site.

Tuesday, November 10, 6:00 PM - Monthly meeting at J Alexander's.

Saturday, November 14 - 8:30 am - Autocross: We are planning our third autocross of the year at the St. Petersburg Junior College Allstate Campus. Registration will start at 8:30 in the morning. First car out will be at 10:00. Cost will be \$25 per driver and that will include a lunch of grilled burgers and sausages! Spectators can eat with us for \$7. Call Jonathan Skinner at 727-784-5529 for more details. See the article in this issue about what to expect at the autocross. Return the registration form enclosed with this newsletter to preregister and reserve your spot. The event will be limited to 50 drivers. Beginners will be able to take a basic instruction course before getting on the track.

Saturday, December 12 - Holiday Party- Celebrate the end of another year and the holidays with your Miata friends. Location and times to be announced.

Events continued

Also on October 9-11... The Southwest Florida Chapter is planning a weekend getaway to Clairmont, Florida to visit the Lakeridge Winery and Vineyards.

Staying at the Comfort Inn, 3600 Hwy. 441, Mt. Dora, FL 1-800-500-7788 (ask for Shirley and mention the Miata Club) \$55 per night.

For any further information and maybe just to let us know who all is coming...contact Pat Fatz at (941) 697-5677.

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 accross 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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