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In The Marbles... by Rick Morris, President

Winter is Finally Over (Hopefully)!

It seems like it has been snowing for at least three years continuously, but it looks like we are finally out of the woods, so to speak. We've gotten a couple good rains to help wash away most of the crud and grime that has accumulated over the past several months and it's looking Spring will be here in full force very soon. I have no doubt that we will get a Spring Surprise snow before we're done completely, but I can live with that.

Sara and I took our first top down drive of the year a couple of weekends ago. We spent the whole afternoon driving in and around Brown County and it seemed like everybody that had a convertible or a motorcycle was out that day. We saw several other Miatas and some Miata wannabes and everybody seemed to be having a great time. On top of everything else, it just felt good to have the open sky over our heads again.

Those of us that have Daily Drivers are getting our summer tires on and taking the hardtops off. I got a new set of Toyo T-1s for summer tires at a great price from onlinetires.com and I have to say that I absolutely love them. Sara has had them on her car for a couple of years and I knew they were good tires, but I had no idea how good they really were until I got my own set. I can't wait for the weather to really warm up so I can drive them the way they were meant to be driven.

Speaking of getting ready for Spring, now is a good time to check all your car cleaning supplies and make sure that you're ready for the first good car cleanup weekend. Make sure you have enough Rain-X, car wash and wax so that when the weather is ready, you will be, too. I got in a real good wash job for both our cars and it was nice to be able to take my time and get them really clean instead of taking them to the coin-op car wash and having to rush through. The rough winter didn't seem to do any lasting damage to the finish (thank goodness for all the wax I have on it), and the shine came right back after a good washing. It's also a real good idea to thoroughly flush out the wheel wells and suspension to make sure all the salt and road grime are cleaned out. That is one task that the coin-op car wash is ideally suited to. A high pressure plain water rinse is just the ticket for flushing out that area of your car.

Our first top-down driving event is coming up! The annual Post Tax Blues rally will be held on Saturday, April 26. We will be holding this event in cooperation with the Lake Effect Miata Club again this year. This event is always a good time and it's a good chance to see everybody and renew acquaintances after the long winter. You can register for the event on the club web site and we like to see a good turnout. We usually have a caravan going from Indy to the event starting place. You can find details for the event in this issue of the Open Road.

Finally, our country is at war and it looks like this is going to last a while. Regardless of how you feel about whether we should be in this conflict or not, it can't hurt to keep a kind thought in mind for our service men and women overseas. We can only hope that they all are able to come return safe and sound to their homes and loved ones. If you know a serviceperson overseas, send them a note to let them know you are thinking about them. It would be nice to give their families a call and let them know that their loved ones are in your thoughts. It's a really tough time for those that stay behind.

Until next time, enjoy the beautiful Spring weather and drive safely.

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Picture This II Rally *or By Any Means Neccessary!*

Ladies and Gentlemen, we're doing it again. Your presence is requested at the Second Annual Picture This Rally. To be held on Sunday, May 4th. For your driving pleasure, you will be given pictures of eight Indianapolis landmarks and you will be challenged to figure out what they are and where they are.

After visiting these sites, you will be able to answer clues to show that you have been to each corresponding site. No directions will be given; the challenge is to visit each site by the most efficient route.

We are be looking forward to you joining us. The meeting place shall be the McDonalds in Broad Ripple (East of the intersection of Westfield Boulevard and Broad Ripple Avenue). Meeting time shall be 1:15, the drivers meeting shall start at 1:45 with the first car off and away at 2:00pm.

Please RSVP by May 1 to Melissa Forbes. The entry fee for the rally is \$7.00 if you pre-register and \$10.00 day of event. You may register on the club web site (<http://www.indymiata.org>), call (317-569-9880), by mail (PO Box 40561, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0561) or by email (devilssnowflake5@aol.com). There is a registration form on Page 7 if you wish to pre-register and mail a check.

This is a rare Sunday rally, so all of you who normally miss the rallies due to working on Saturday, here's your chance to join in the fun!

Viva Mazda! Viva Las Vegas!

Mazda is preparing for an all Mazda National event October 2-5 of 2003. Called "Viva Mazda! Viva Las Vegas!", this event is open to all Mazda owners, but will likely attract many Miata owners. It's Vegas, so pack your Elvis outfit.

Plans call for a kick off party, a car show at Las Vegas Motor Speedway (with possible track events being investigated at this time, such as hot laps, drag strip runs and maybe autocross), a poker run through the Valley of Fire, technical and vendor workshops, an evening concert with Al Jardine (original Beach Boy member), raffles and more. Don't forget to bring your nickels for those slot machines.

Registration fees for the event are \$120 per person before 4/21 (\$140 per person after that date). Hotel accommodations are separate.

For more information on this event or if you have questions, surf over to the web site at <http://www.mazdaevents.com/vivamazda/>. You may also contact Bob Retzer at: (925) 584-1317 or E-mail bretzer@pacbell.net. The mailing address is 1664 Century Oaks Drive, Brentwood, CA 94513-5817.

Autocross School Offered For All Levels of Competitors

Thinking about trying or improving your autocrossing skills and want to get some serious seat time with an instructor? Evolution Performance Driving Schools offers different levels of instruction for beginners to full time champion drivers. Evolution works with the students individually to build upon their current skill level, improving their confidence and competitiveness. Students and instructors will both ride and drive, enabling instantaneous feedback.

Club member Millard Johnson attended an Evolution school and recounted his experience in the June 2001 issue of the Open Road (page 3). (To read the article, go here: <http://www.2cat.com/openroad/2001/june/june.html>)

Several schools are being offered in the surrounding area, including Peru, IN, Merrillville, IN, Louisville, KY, and St. Louis, MO. More information can be found at <http://autocross.com/cgibin/viewcal.cgi?Active>.

The Open Road is published monthly for the members of the Indy Miata Club. The Indy Miata Club assumes no liability for any information contained herein, or injury or damage resulting from use of this information. The ideas, opinions, maintenance or modification tips expressed are to be used at the reader's discretion. Individual contributors and/or the editors express no approval, authentication, or endorsement.

Membership Profile

Meet The Indy Club Vice President

This month's profile is of Jay Hofacker, IMC's Vice President. He responded to our probing questions with the following replies.

Q. What year and color is your car?

A. I have a 1997 Montego Blue that I purchased in 1999. It's the second car I ever owned, the first was 1990 Honda.

Q. How did you decide to buy a Miata?

A. I got mad at my Honda because of an accident, so I decided I wanted a brand new car. I was very close to buying a Saturn sedan with everything, when I got the notion I wanted more than a sunroof, I wanted a convertible. Before that, I don't think I'd ever even ridden in a convertible, so I have no idea where that notion came from. I happened to spot a little convertible at a used car lot at a price I could afford. I knew nothing about Miatas before that moment. Except for video games and 30 minutes of instruction from my dad (years earlier) I'd never driven a stick shift. A friend gave me a couple lessons of driving a stick, so with a total of 90 minutes of experience, I boldly stepped into the car for a test drive. I managed to get it around the block without incident. Driving the car home for the first time, I stalled it at half the stop lights and squealed the tires at the other half.

Q. Does your car have a nickname?

A. For a long time, my car didn't have a name and I thought people who named cars were a bit odd. Browsing the web one night, I stumbled upon Project Gutenberg (<http://www.promo.net/pg/index.html>) which has the full text of various books now in the public domain, including Peter Pan. I realized my car does have a name. Her name is Tinker Bell, because she doesn't ever want me to grow up.

Q. How did you become interested in autocrossing?

A. I didn't know I'd bought a real sports car until I played the Sony Playstation game Gran Turismo. GT includes many actual cars including the Miata. I had such a blast driving the Miata in the game, I began to look for ways to drive my real car on a race course. In the Spring of 2000, I went to my first Indy region SCCA Solo II competition of the season and was hooked. I went to every event that year and ended up winning the season championship for my class, an accomplishment I repeated in 2001 and 2002. The first two years of autocrossing, I won mainly by being the only person in my class to go to every event. Last year there was some competition, but I still managed to win most of the events. This year I'm in a different class because of modifications I've made to my car.

Q. What modifications have you made to your car?

A. Here's a list: A NEO35 MP3 player with 30GB hard drive, K&N air filter, Hard Dog Hard Core Single Diagonal roll bar, Hawk HP+ brake pads, Rota Sub Zero 15" wheels with Bridgestone S-03 tires (summer), OEM 14" steel wheels with Yokohama snow tires (winter), OEM 14" steel wheels with Kuhmo tires (competition). Fidanza lightened fly-wheel, ACT clutch and pressure plate, Racing Beat Power Pulse muffler, front sway bar kit, and Ultra ignition wires, Ground Control coil over kit with KYB AGX shocks, Eibach sway bars (front and rear), a '94 style oil pressure gauge, and '94 visors.

Q. Stepping away from Miatas and the club, what do you do?



A. I work at SePRO Corporation. SePRO manufactures specialty herbicides and pesticides. I'm the IT department there and keep all the computers and networks running, handle purchasing computer equipment, write any custom software that is needed and maintain the website.

Q. What do you do in your spare time?

A. I'm an internet junkie. In the past, I've played MMORPG's (Massively Multi-Player Online Role Playing Games), but I've gotten away from that as they are such huge time sinks.

Let's Play "What's My VIN"?

Ever wondered if the VIN number of your car meant something? Put away your Space Rangers secret decoder ring, here's the answer. The typical Miata VIN number looks something like this: JM1NA3538S0607810.

JM = Japan Mazda (made at Japan plant)

1 = Vehicle type (1= car, 2=truck/van, etc.)

NA = 1st Generation (NB = 2nd Generation)

35 = Body Style (convertible)

3 = Thought to be engine code

8 = Check digit (to detect fake VIN's)

S = Model Year (L=90, M=91, etc. skip Q & O)

0 = Plant number (0 = Hiroshima)

6 = Year of production (0=89, 1=90, 2=91, etc.)

The final five digits are the vehicle number, reset to 00001 every year. This car was the 7810th car made of that model year.

Dr. Detail is here to help

Making Your Miata Stand Out In A Crowd

Soooooooooo, you've spent tons of time getting your Miata to look its very best. You wax it almost every day and the shine is so deep you can read the reflection of a newspaper from ten feet away. Any rain that has the temerity to fall anywhere close to your car is repelled as soon as it gets within six feet of the finish.

You have a really spiffy set of BBS rims, Toyo tires, Jackson Racing exhaust system and a turbocharger just waiting for the next Muscle Car to pull alongside. At the same time, you just don't feel like members of the general public give your car the notice it so richly deserves. You occasionally get a thumbs up from a fellow driver, but you think, rightly so, that everybody should notice your car, whether they are a fellow Miata owner or not. In this very special edition of Dr. Detail, we are going to give you a list of improvements you can make that are guaranteed to get your the car the attention it deserves. In case you are wondering, each and every one of these improvements has been personally tested and approved by Dr. Detail, so you can rest assured that each and every one of them is completely worthwhile.

Auto Rotating Rims – The special thing about these rims is that the outer decorative trim ring keeps rotating even if the car is stopped. A guaranteed eye-popper, the sight of your rims moving even when the car is standing still will get you noticed each and every time. If you go for the extra-cost neon light inner lighting system, not only do the rims rotate, but the green halo around them is a great touch. These are the first improvement I would make, although the price may be daunting at first glance.

Valve Stem Covers - The factory black cap for the valve stem is boring. You have several choices to make in this area. Go to your local auto parts store and pick up replacement caps with skull heads, dice, etc. Installation is easy, they simply screw onto the valve stem in seconds. For a bigger effect, there is a product called Fire-Flys! Lights for your wheels. These stem caps light up as the car is moving. They turn on automatically when you drive and automatically shut off 12 seconds after the last wheel movement. The impressive comet effects that vary with your speed will have heads turning as you cruise by (available in Blue, Green, Red, and Red/White Blue).

Light Chaser Chassis Lighting – We have all seen the running board under car neon lighting systems. They do add a nice touch, but so many people have them now that they just don't stand out like they used to. A good solution to this glamor dilemma is a complete light-chaser underbody lighting kit. Available in several colors, this system, when professionally installed, puts an outline of your entire car on the ground in a variety of colors and patterns. You will revel in the attention you get at each and every stop light. This particular modification should be done only by professionals.



All-Round Air Suspension – I know the KYB AGX adjustable shocks give great ride and handling, but they don't do much in the publicity department. The ideal solution to this problem is a full-tilt air suspension. You can, with just minor body and chassis modifications, get a whole new view of the world that is ever-changing. You can change the ride height of your Miata from two inches off the ground to

being eye-level with the monster truck in the next lane at the push of a button. I especially recommend the optional suspension lighting package so everybody can see just how cool your suspension really is.

Interior Extras – Now that we've finished with all our exterior modifications, it's time to polish up the interior. After all, the interior is what you see the most, so it should look as good to you as the outside does to everybody else. I decided to go with the full snow leopard skin decorative package. There's nothing quite like the distinctive look that a leopard skin steering wheel, rear view mirror and roll bar cover and the fuzzy dice or eight balls that hang from the rear view mirror gives. These trim items are just the thing to go along with the leopard skin seat covers that you just had installed.

Traveling Extras – Let's not forget about accessorizing your luggage! We all know that sometimes traveling more than 24 hours in your car can pose packing problems. Several companies offer soft side luggage sets for your car. I've noticed that most of these are only offered in black or white color options, but my personal favorites are the Glad Drawstring Lawn & Leaf 39 Gallon bags. They conform to those odd spaces and resist tearing. You can carry extra bags that take up hardly any space for dirty clothes or for all the things you might pick up at the outlet mall! For those small personal items, I recommend the food storage bags with that handy ziplock top!



Tool Time with Chuck

There's No Time Like Hammer Time!

At first when my Brother-in-law called me a tool, I thought it was a compliment of my mechanical prowess and vast array of power tools. As it turns out, that comment wasn't meant to reflect my handiness with a wrench. Who would 'a thought!

In response to his remarks, I have decided to help him "fix" his car, with my new favorite tool, The 10# Sledge Hammer. Actually, I started testing with some smaller hammers, which you will also find reviewed in this article.

Tack Hammer: When you want to really "fix" someone or something, the Tack Hammer is a goldfish in a world of barracuda. Worthless. The Tack Hammer is very small and light weight, allowing you to swing it easily and at a great rate of speed. Unfortunately, due to its low mass, it really doesn't "fix" very much beyond driving a nail into drywall. When used against my Brother-in-law's fender, it would just bounce off, barely making a mark. If I had an unlimited amount of time for "fixing", the Tack Hammer might work, but it doesn't provide much "bang for the buck" and is generally unsatisfying to wield. Pass this one by.

Ball Peen Hammer: This is at least two steps up the food chain from the tiny Tack Hammer. The Ball Peen Hammer has a decent sized iron head that is rounded on one end. It's perfect for shaping metal panels and generally "fixing" the crap out of things. If I were in a big hurry, this would be the hammer for me, due to the speed at which you can deliver repeated blows. That speed can be attributed to the compact, aerodynamic head that slices through the air with ease. The down side is that it is relatively small, so each blow doesn't offer as much "fixing" as you may wish for.

5# Sledge Hammer: The 5# sledge may be considered the "SUV" of hammers. It goes about anywhere, but isn't particularly well suited for anything. When you look at a 5# Sledge, it looks like it means business - a big chunk of iron at the end of a big 3 foot stick. The problem is, for small "fixing" jobs, it's way too big and it doesn't quite have the heft for a big "fixing" job. Also, if you need to move fast, the 5 Pounder is a little too massive to be carried easily.

10# Sledge Hammer: The Grand-daddy of fixing equipment. Short of a D9 Caterpillar or hydraulic jack hammer, this hammer will fix what ails you. It doesn't have the speed and agility of a Ball Peen or even the 5# Sledge, but that deficiency is overwhelmed by sheer fixing power. When you swing a 10# Sledge over your shoulder, you can feel the gravity of the entire earth helping you make an impression on your target. It's a thing of beauty to behold. Each swing of a 10 Pounder will give you the satisfying thud of crushed metal and broken glass. The only down side of a 10# Sledge is its massive size and weight. Don't use this hammer when you are in a hurry - it's just not as portable as the smaller hammers.

If I have flexibility in choosing "fixing" gear, I carry a Ball Peen and a 10# Sledge together. The Ball Peen is perfect for a "quick fix" where speed is of the essence, with the 10 Pounder as a back-up in case you get into a spot where you need high "fixing power". Don't bother with the Tack Hammer, as it just doesn't have the mass to do anything useful in the fixing department. I really don't like the 5# Sledge because it's an awkward in-between size.

On the Chuck's Tool Approval Scale, I give the 10# Sledge Hammer a score of "10". Its massive force and pure fixing ability overwhelm its bulkiness. Given a choice of just one hammer to fix a problem, it's the 10 Pounder every time.



Chuck tests two different hammers on a vehicle. (Note previous test results.)



April Brings Spring Rains, Income Tax Forms, and the Annual Post Tax Blues Rally

Circle Saturday, April 26th on your calendar as the date for the Post Tax Blues Rally (PTBR). The PTBR has turned into an annual event with the Lake Effect Miata Club. This is the first driving event of the season and your Rally Masters are working on setting up a Poker Run with a route that will you be able to drive your blues away. George and Jane Bali and Sara McBride have been busy scouting in three counties to find the Miata roads. The rally will take approximately two hours and will end at Marty's Pub in Converse IN where you will get your last card for your poker hand, grab a bite to eat, and award prizes.

We'll be meeting at 10:00 at the McDonalds in Peru, IN (intersection of Business US31 and Main) so you can get a late breakfast and coffee and chat with everyone. Driver's Meeting will begin at 10:30.

Indy club members can meet at 8:15 at the Meijer's parking lot at US31 on the north side of Indy to caravan to Peru. We will depart at 8:30 am. Indy members can call Sara at 317-291-8993 or email her at saraj@dustbunny.com with any questions. Lake Effect Members can contact George or Jane for information on caravanning down to the starting point.

Entry fee is \$7.00 for those who pre-register and \$10.00 day of event. (If you register on the club web site, you will only pay \$7.00 on the day of the event. You will be asked to sign a registration form at the event.) You can mail your registration form and check (made out to Indy Miata Club) to:

Sara J McBride
4249 Springwood Ct.
Indianapolis, IN
46228-3122

Don't miss the first drive of the year, don't miss your chance to win the poker rally, and don't miss meeting old and new friends. See you on April 26th at the PTBR....Top Down!



Driver: _____

Please Print

Navigator: _____

Please Print

I understand that this is not a speed contest and I agree to participate at my own risk. I agree to hold the Indy Miata Club, Lake Effect Miata Club, their officers, and event organizers harmless from any claim arising from my participation in this event.

Driver: _____ Date: _____

All entries must be signed and dated to participate in this event.

Picture This Rally Registration Form

Do you want to register and send a check so you don't have to deal with it on Rally Day? Great! Mail your check for \$7.00 (made out to Indy Miata Club) to Melissa Forbes, PO Box 40561, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0561

Driver: _____

Please Print

Navigator: _____

I understand that this is not a speed contest and I agree to participate at my own risk. I agree to hold the Indy Miata Club, Lake Effect Miata Club, their officers, and event organizers harmless from any claim arising from my participation in this event.

Driver: _____

Date: _____

All entries must be signed and dated to participate in this event.

Classifieds

For Sale: Don't pay OEM prices for a replacement transmission. This working tranny is an extra that I have on hand. Contact Don Weiler at 862-2473 or use the email contact button on the club website.

For Sale: Miata hubcaps from my 1994. One is cracked but it stays on the wheel and looks ok. The others are in good shape. \$20 for all four. Mike Gamage 317-257-0450 or use the email contact button on the club website.

For Sale: Size R195/60 x 14. On wheels, with hub caps. These are lightly used just two winters, on a seldom driven in winter Miata. When these are on all four corners, there is a significant improvement of traction and turning. Pick up all four for just \$200.00. Contact Don Weiler at 862-2473 or use the email contact button on the club website.

For Sale: We have spare parts available from Spec Miata conversions. Contact Shane at 317-381-0898 or info@aimtuning.com if you're interested in anything! 1) Two soft tops for sale, both in excellent condition. The tops are OEM Mazda and were removed from our Spec Miata racers, come complete with framework and rain rail, brackets, but without the rear window. \$100 ea. 2) Two complete air conditioning systems less dash control unit. 3) Two complete power steering systems, less P/S rack. 4) Miscellaneous interior trim pieces, carpets, etc. 5) Stock Miata exhaust systems in good shape, no leaks, exh tip intact. 6) Factory steering wheel airbag.

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that thing parked next
to your Miata? Call us!**

April 26th - Post Tax Blues Rally

April 26 - Post Tax Blues -
Rally Masters: Sara J McBride
and George and Jane Bali

May 4 - Picture This II -
Rally Master: Melissa Forbes
(Note: This rally is on a Sunday)

May 24 - 26 - Indy and Cincy
clubs go to the Gap
May Mingle: 500 Mingle?

June 21 - The Longest Day
Rally - Hosts: The Moores
June Mingle: Open

July 12 - Fussin' & Cussin' X
- Rally Masters: Bob Wiley
and Jim Nutt
July Mingle: Open

August 23 - Late Summer
Mardi Gras Rally -
Hosts: The Booes and the
Brummetts

August Mingle: Brickyard
400 Mingle?

September - The Huber
Winery Tour - Hosts:
Chuck & Teresa Wills
Sept. Mingle: Formula 1

October - Open dates

November - Open dates

December - Holiday Party

May 4th - Picture This!



Chuck and Sara J test “big, pouncy things” on a volunteer vehicle. (see page 5)