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In The Marbles... by Rick Morris, President

Six months ago I couldn't even spell "President" and now I are one.

What an amazing past couple of years it has been for me. I've gone from wondering why it took Sara three hours to go to the grocery store to being President of the Indy Miata Club almost overnight. I've gone from almost not being able to change a light bulb to being fairly comfortable installing brakes, roll bars and other things on my car without sustaining any major injuries. I've gone from wondering what I will be doing this weekend to thinking nothing of a 435 mile drive to Deal's Gap just to drive eleven more miles.

Along the way, I've been lucky enough to meet a lot of really nice people, see a lot of neat things and do things I never thought I'd do in my wildest dreams. I owe it all to all the people who have been so great. During the first club event I attended, I remember making a pit stop and seeing Chuck and Teresa Wills at the same gas station. We didn't know each other at the time, but I asked Chuck about the roll bar he had in his car and, without me even bringing up the subject, he offered to help me put one in mine. It was the first real example I had of how friendly Miata people are in general. That has been the best part of the whole journey. The overall attitude of Miata owners towards life in general and their cars in particular has been just great. I thank all of you who have been so great over the past couple of years. I'm looking forward to keeping up these friendships as time goes by.

I'm excited about being your club President this year, but I know for a fact I'm going to need, and get, a lot of help from all of you. I'm looking forward to working with Jay, Bob, Melissa and Jim as we try to keep the club moving down the right path. I'm also sure I'll be able to draw on Chuck's experience and I'm just as sure that I will need to at some time during the next year. I'm also sure I can count on the rest of the members of the club to help out when needed. I was really excited to see how many people signed up to host events at the Christmas party. This year's calendar has a lot of events on it and hopefully we will get the remaining slots filled up pretty soon. Those of you who signed up to host events, don't forget that the club officers are ready and willing to help in any way we can. If you need help setting up your event, just drop any or all of us a note and we'll be glad to give you a hand.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Barb Gentry and Pat Metheaux for all their years of service to the club. It takes that kind of long term commitment and effort to get a club off the ground and keep it going and I'm sure that the Indy Miata Club wouldn't be nearly as successful as it has been without their efforts. Thanks again from all of us.

As far as the upcoming year is concerned, I am looking forward to another year filled with interesting driving, good friendship and good times. We are currently working on a way to improve communications between the club and its members, so be sure to watch the Open Road for details on that front.

For those of you that don't know, I have also been cluttering up the newsletter with the Dr. Detail columns over the past year or so. I will continue to do that (there's nothing more dangerous than a frustrated author with a word processor) on a pretty regular basis. What we also need is articles, or even suggestions for articles, from our members. I am pretty sure that almost all of you have an interesting story about how you got your Miata, an interesting trip you made in it or something similar. We'd like to have your stories. Everybody in the club is interested in a good Miata story, so send yours in. We'd all like to hear it.

We will having a January "Meet & Eat" event at the Steak and Ale on the south side of Indianapolis. They did a good job for us last year, and everybody knows where it is now, so it seemed like a good choice. Looking forward to seeing you there.

In February, we will be going to the Auburn Cord Duesenberg museum in Auburn, Indiana. This is a

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world famous car museum and this is a trip that we should all enjoy a lot. The date for this event is February 8th.

In closing, let me say that I am very proud to be the President of such a fine club, but I am even more grateful that you have elected me to be your President. I'm looking forward to serving all of you in any way that I can.

Event Calendar Is Taking Shape

The 2003 event calendar for the Indy Miata Club is filling up! At the Holiday Party. Several members penciled in their names to conduct rallies and other events. We have new Rally Masters with new rallies along with what have turned into annual "don't miss" events.

On January 18th, we'll have our "Winter Dinner" at the Steak and Ale restaurant on the south side of Indy. This is the same location the event was held last January. Miatas are optional, just come to talk cars or other subjects and have a good time. The address for the Steak and Ale is 4302 S. East Street and is located in the Southern Shopping Plaza. For the tool fiends, if you know where Harbor Freight is, you can find the Steak and Ale!

February 8th is the date that Rick Morris has set for a tour to the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum. Over 100 vehicles are housed in the original factory showroom of the Auburn Automobile Company. This tour should be a Duesy!

The annual Post Tax Blues Rally will return on April 18th. Here's your chance to drive away all those taxing frustrations! The rumor mill has heard that it will be a Poker Run. No clues, just cards and cars.

Melissa Forbes will be hosting the second edition of the "Picture This!" rally in May and in June, Dennis and Hazel Moore will be hosting an event down in the Bedford area. There's some twisty, Miata roads down there!

Rick Morris loves his cobbler and brings us another Peach Cobbler rally in July. The Brummetts and Booes are teaming up for an August rally and in September, we once again head for the Huber Winery with Chuck and Teresa Wills.

There are still open dates for events. Remember, there are no rules that say only one rally a month or that an event has to be on a Saturday! Contact Rick or Jay to set a date or with any questions you may have.



Though Gary and Nancy Summers moved to Colorado, they have kept their Indy Miata Club membership. They proudly display their club logo magnet as shown in this photo, taken at a Colorado event last summer.

Miatas Are Top Cars in Solo II and Other Events

Indy Miata Club members were busy running their Miatas in local, regional, and national events. Here's a quick rundown of how they fared.

Miatas made a strong showing in the Indy SCCA region events. Our new Vice President, Jay Hofacker, took first place honors for the year in the CS class. (This follows his first place standing in B stock in 2001.) Following in second place was Matt Reeck, who was trying autocross for the first time this year. Two other Miatas tied for third in this class.

Despite running a limited schedule, Shane Benson finished in second place in the CSP class. Miatas once again showed that they are great handling cars by also taking first and third in this class.

Former club member Dan Stone took second in the ES class. Dan shared his introduction to autocrossing in the June 2001 Open Road.

Over in the Spec Miata road racing series, Shane Benson and his car, Frances the Mule, besides running in the MazdaSpeed Cup event at Laguna Seca, were busy at regional events. He was a podium finisher in all the events he entered in the Midwest except for one. Shane was the Central Division Series winner and also received the prestigious Hergenroether Award, which goes to the top competition driver in the Indy Region SCCA.

Frances saw more duty as Chuck Wills drover her to win his racing license in August. Chuck seems to have been bitten hard by the racing bug and will most likely be running more events in the future.

Congratulations to all of our Miata club members and best of luck in the upcoming autocross and racing seasons!



Jay Hofacker looks ahead and prepares for a hard left turn while in competition last summer.



Matt Reeck looks ahead to the next portion of the course during an autocross run at the old Bush Stadium.



Autocross photos courtesy of Steve Linn

Shane Benson maneuvers Frances through the cones. Besides autocrossing, Shane also drove in Spec Miata events.

Winter Dinner Directions

The Steak and Ale is located at 4302 S. East Street (us 31) in the Southern Shopping Plaza.

If you are on the interstate, take the US31 North exit of I-465 (exit 2) to the Southern Plaza entrance. It will be a left turn into the Plaza if heading north.

See you on January 18th!



Food, Wine and Car Talk, Holiday Party Had It All

A happy and festive crowd showed up for the annual Indy Miata Club Holiday Party at the Fast Times Karting Center. With the Colts driving to victory on the TV's, really fast karts on the two level indoor road course, food, gifts and lots of Miata friends, who wouldn't have had a good time? Lots of mingling, chatter and car talk took place as old acquaintances were renewed and new members were greeted.

The gift exchange was fun as usual with members being allowed to open a gift or "steal" someone else's present. The person who got "ripped off" could then open a new gift or go "steal" another member's present. There was lots of cheering, moaning and laughter as gift changed hands several times. Some of the more popular items were the wine and cheese baskets, an air compressor, goblets, a dancing Santa and our own Eric Drumwright's racing photo. This year's photo was of Juan Montoya on the US Gran Prix course in his Formula 1 car.

Barb Gentry and Pat Metheaux were awarded gift certificates for their many years of service as Membership Director and Treasurer. Chuck Wills was presented a memento for his time in office as well as other gifts. Door prizes, donated by Bob Wiley and Shane Benson, consisted of Miata hats and matchbox Miatas and were won by members in a random draw.

Elections were held with nominations from the floor followed by a secret ballot. Our 2003 officers are: President Rick Morris, elevated from Vice President. Jay Hofacker was elected as the new Vice President, Melissa Forbes will be our new Membership Director with the Treasurer position filled by Bob Wiley. Jim Nutt will continue his web master duties and Sara McBride will still oversee the publication of the Open Road.

Congratulations to our new officers and many thanks to 2002's President, Chuck Wills, and his pit crew of Rick Morris, Barb Gentry and Pat Metheaux for a year of great and varied events.

After the meeting concluded at 6:00 PM, some of our members decided to try out the high speed racing karts. There were public address announcements which seemed to indicate that "Someone is slowing on the backstretch!"

Don Hill unwraps a gift as Becky looks on during the gift exchange. It's car stuff!



Chuck Wills shows of his 2002 President's award.



New President Rick Morris explains the election procedures before passing out ballots.

The Chases chat with Jim Jones and his guest.





Far Left: Steve unwraps a bottle of wine.

Left: Susan moves in for the "steal".

Above: Steve spots another bottle and heads towards it for another "steal"!



Above: Eric dishes up a salad as Wyatt flashes the international signal for "Peace. Love and Food".

2002 Holiday Party



Pat M. wins a "new car" as a door prize.

Barb Gentry selects a car as her door prize.



Left: The Quicks introduce themselves during the gift exchange. John is obviously thinking, "Oh, Boy! Presents!"



Another "M" Car In the Garage?

by Chuck Wills

For the last month my house has resembled a FEMA disaster site. Someone set off a "stuff bomb" that has scattered remnants of photographs, record albums and out-of-season clothing all over my house. I got the brilliant idea that I would finish our basement, and as is the case with most brilliant ideas, I forgot a few "important details". Things like the fact that when we moved in to our house five years ago, we deposited dozens of boxes in the basement and forgot about them. As boxes of junk often do, they began to multiply and their contents even had the nerve to overflow onto the floor. So, here I am five years later with boxes up to the rafters and a family shouting in chorus "when's the basement going to be done!"

I needed a break, and fortunately for me I was able to take a break at my favorite place, the racetrack. Motorsport Drivers Club was having their season ending event at Putnam Park and it offered me the perfect excuse to slip away and take out my basement aggression on ten corners and one set of tires. In the wee hours of that Saturday morning, while the family lay fast asleep in their beds, I pushed the Miata down the driveway and was off to Putnam Park.

Not only did I get to drive on the track that day, I was also instructing a student in his 1973 Porsche 914. If I had to make a list of things that flip my switches, near the top of the list would be Miata's, track driving and 914's. I was in heaven when I saw that little green box, as it was the nicest 914 I'd ever seen – even better than my often-lamented 914/6. There's just something about a boxer engine planted a few inches behind your hips that makes you feel like you're in an old GTP car, hurtling down the straight at LeMans.

A low center of gravity with a taught suspension and flickable handling, am I describing the Miata or the 914? Well, both actually. I consider both to be pure sports cars, with little of the compromise that you would find in other "sporty" cars. Rear drive, great brakes, suspension tuned for your favorite road and a willing engine. And you can't forget the fact that there's nothing but clouds above your head. I had considered all this before the track event and knew that I was in for a day in sports car heaven.

We were in the pits hanging out before the event, mingling with the other Miata and Porsche drivers when in came an unusual sight. A new MINI Cooper S. I think the MINI is a fine looking car, with equal parts of British heritage and BMW technology. Sort of a modern retro mobile, but the first question across my mind was how would it work on the track? It's not a Miata or a 914, you can tell that from just a passing glance. Front drive, the top doesn't come off, it's a tall car with the center of gravity up around shoulder height. Yikes. Sporty, yes. Sports car? I wasn't convinced.

As a purely scientific study, I decided that I needed to ride in the MINI to see if it felt like a proper sports car. So, in the interest of science I begged a ride and strapped in. It felt decidedly unMiata like. Tall, narrow, with a cavernous cabin, I felt like I was sitting in a shoe box on stilts! The speedometer was stuck in the middle of the dashboard, with the tach right behind the steering wheel. As the driver taxied down the pit lane, I tightened my safety belt and prepared to hang on as we rolled through the corners.

Man, I was wrong about that car. When the crew gave the signal to pull out on the track, the driver hit the gas and we blasted down the straightaway. The wheels spun all the way through first gear and laid rubber in second, too. The muted scream of the supercharger was barely audible over the growl of the tuned exhaust as we hurtled down the straight towards turn one. As the driver

shifted into fifth gear at 105 mph, I thought "OK, this thing has power, lots of power, but it'll be all over in turn 1, right?" Wrong. Even though the MINI felt tall and boxy to me, we flew through turn one like an F16 banking over Baghdad. Smooth, fast and flat. This is all wrong. Front drive cars do not handle like this. I've ridden in a lot of cars, but I can't think of any from the factory that carve the corners as flat and controllable as this MINI did. The driver flew around the track, passing other "real" sports cars with relative ease.

I'll say it again. I was wrong about this car. I had a ball during my 20 minutes in the passenger seat. We slid around corners and blasted down that straight and the car never missed a beat. It felt like it was built to bang against the rev limiter and slide around corners all day long. Hmm, just like a Miata. I admit it, the MINI is a sports car. It's a different formula than a Miata or 914, but that sports car soul is in there. MINI got this little car right on the very first try. It looks good and has the sport car guts to back it up. I don't think I could ever trade the Miata for a MINI, as I'm still a little partial to my rear-drive roadster. But, I might be willing to make a little extra space in the garage.

Classifieds

For Sale: 1) *Hardtop* - 1995 Miata OEM Brilliant Black with defroster and rain gutter. Is like new. OEM sells for at least \$2,000. Will sell for \$1,200 to club member. (Very Firm)

2) *Kevlar High Performance Clutch* - from Dealer Alternative. New in the box. This is NOT an ACT clutch. It is a genuine Kevlar clutch with unlimited holding power. Similar clutches are sold new from \$800 to \$1,000. Sell to club member for \$485. (Very Firm).

3) *1999 Ford F150 Pickup* - Full Size Bed and Cab. AT / PS / AC / Tilt Wheel / Cruise Control / 5000 lb. Trailer capability with 4.2 Liter V6. Only 19,000 miles. Bought new, well maintained, garaged. No dings or dents. Edmonds average retail in the Indy area is \$10,775. Will sell to club member only for \$9,200 (Very Firm). Call Jim Barrick @ 765-342-6352.

It's Renewal Time For Your IMC Membership!

Check your label for renewal information and if you haven't renewed, now's the time! Please send this form and your check for \$20.00 to : Indy Miata Club, PO Box 40561, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0561.

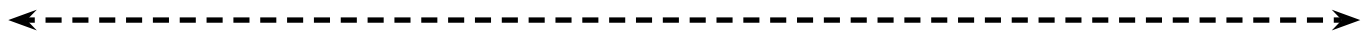
Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Address: _____ E-mail: _____

City, State: _____ Yes _____ No _____

Zip Code: _____ Yes _____ No _____

Car Year and Color: _____



This is a reminder that membership renewals are now due. Renew today to be sure you continue to receive The Open Road and to be notified of all the upcoming events that you don't want to miss! We have a fun year planned, so don't miss out on any of it. To verify if you have renewed or not, check the expiration date on your mailing label. Please note that dues are now \$20.

Send your renewal form and \$20 check to:
vIndy Miata Club, PO Box 40561, Indianapolis, IN 46240-0561

Don't want to cut up your copy of the Open Road? The renewal form is available for download in an Acrobat pdf file from the internet at: <http://www.2cat.com/renewal.html>

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January 18th - Winter Dinner

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February 8 - Tour to Auburn
- Host: Rick Morris

March - Lose the Winter
Blues at the Slippery Noodle

April 19 - Post Tax Blues
Rally -Rally Master: Sara J
mcBride
Mingle: Open

May - Picture This II - Rally
Master: Melissa Forbes
Mingle: Open

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

July - Fussin' and Cussin!-
Rally Master: Bob Wiley
Mingle: Open

August - Rally - Hosts:
The Booes and Brummetts
Mingle: Open

September - Huber Winery
Tour - Hosts: The Wills
Mingle: Fromula 1

October - Michigan Light-
house Tour - Hosts: The
Serwatkas

December - Holiday Party