



The Bluegrass Star

A Publication of the Bluegrass Stars Section
Mercedes-Benz Club of America

SUMMER/FALL 2020

CORONAVIRUS EDITION

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 24.....
The next event will be something quite a bit different than what we have had in the past - an exotic car show at Mercedes-Benz of Louisville! Ed Keady, Managing Partner and Bluegrass Stars member tells me they will have 24 exotic cars on show, not all Mercedes but certainly all 'eye candy'. I will send blast emails as soon as details become available.

December 5.....
Our Holiday Dinner will be on the first Saturday in December at Claudia Sanders. Venue Chairman, Jim West secured reservations for a private room some months ago and be assured we will work with the restaurant to ensure there is adequate social distancing.

President's Message

In April I wrote that the COVID-19 virus had certainly disrupted our event planning for 2020 and that I was sure it had an even larger disruption for you and your family plans. Like many of you, I thought or, at least I hoped that life would return to normal in a few months and we could again enjoy getting together with our friends for some great events.

John Lennon's famous quote, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans" appropriately describes what happened to us this year. An entire two seasons, Spring and Summer passed between our February dinner at Claudia Sanders and our lunch at General Butler's State Park on September 23, but thankfully, not all is lost—the year isn't over...

I am pleased to announce that we have two new members on our Board of Directors, Nancy Rece and Ken Hays. I believe most everyone in Bluegrass Stars has met Nancy at our events or at least knows of her work as our Web Master. Nancy and husband Bob have been members since May 2003. Ken and wife Ann have been members since April 1995.

Happy Motoring!

Gary Rumrill
Bluegrass Stars President



Welcome

We are always pleased to welcome new members to the Bluegrass Stars Section of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America. The success of our club depends on the participation of all members in our scheduled activities.

MBCA Membership Drive

There have never been as many Mercedes vehicles on the road as there are today, and the sales figures for new Mercedes vehicles are up according to MBUSA. This implies that there are also many new potential MBCA members. MBCA has initiated a membership drive, in which current members can get one month of membership free for every new member enlisted via their referral! Forms and information are at mbca.org; if you are Internet-challenged, call the MBCA at 800-637-2360.

Editor's Notes

By Steve Loboyko

So, hopefully this year will be a bad memory—as soon as possible!

I've been working from home since late March. Many companies have adapted, some easily, some not so easily. Business continues—but now I've had to work remotely, using tools like completely reliable desktop videoconferencing that would have been very expensive science projects 20 years ago. The novelty hasn't worn off yet that I can videoconference with people in Australia from my home office, and it's easier and cheaper than picking up a phone to speak to them.

Unfortunately, that leads to “always on” work, often going far past normal hours. I've been pretty exhausted, and other than buying/gathering parts, I haven't done much with my cars this summer. But there is light at the end of the tunnel; I built myself an Internet-synchronized “retirement clock”, and it's been counting down the number of days till I tentatively retire. It is now at 559. My wife's girlfriend saw it and wanted one for her brother-in-law, so I built another; I accomplished SOMETHING this summer.

Well, it wasn't a complete “wash-out”; I pressure-washed and painted/stained my deck and fence, and refinished the flooring of the deck (which was unpleasant, but well worth it). I bought a pressure washer and a really nice random orbital sander. TIP: NEVER let a home improvement project get started without the purchase of “dual-use” (home/car repair) tools. You will find that there is a nearly “unlimited” budget for such things as approved by the Finance Manager.

I am pleased that only a few people who I know came down with this accursed virus and not one of them became seriously ill. I hope that you can all say the same.

We have a new dog, and he is AFRAID of the convertible, which is a big downer for me because the previous dogs we have had have enjoyed it, including one that may have thought that it was HIS car and that I was just the driver. Driving my 560SL may never be the same...

I'll leave you with a parting thought. Isn't it a shame that gasoline, in real terms, has never been this inexpensive, traffic hasn't been this light in years—and then, there's no place to go! Let's face it, the older you get, the fewer “good” summers you have left, and the pandemic chewed through one of them for me. I just won't let that happen again!



Tip from Gary Rumrill

My Mercedes R239 with OEM brakes and AMG wheels look great when cleaned but they look quite bad when built up with black brake dust. The wheels are very difficult to clean in the very small space at the brake caliper and all cleaning tools I've found are way too thick. Pep Boys, Auto Zone, Griots Garage and even Amazon.com had nothing. My solution, one I didn't like, was to clean what I could then roll the car a foot or two to clean the rest.

While grocery shopping at our local Kroger I saw a Libman Microfiber Duster in the household cleaning department, and it looked like it might fit into that tiny space. I've been using a microfiber mop for washing the car and thought why not use one for the wheels? I bought one and tried it for fit, but it was too thick! However, after a small modification using a hacksaw and file it fit perfectly. See the three pictures: Libman model #92 Microfiber Duster as purchased, and after modification, and in use.



Will Mercedes De-Emphasize Lower Cost Cars?

By Steve Loboyko

From a [Jalopnik article](#) of October 7, *Automotive News* reported that Mercedes will probably de-emphasize lower-cost cars in the future and no longer try to cover the entire automobile market, emphasizing profits and not volume. This, combined with European emissions laws, may sharply reduce the number of models MB brings to the market (and the US market) in the future. Compare the number of models Mercedes sold in the US in the 80's compared to today! MB's arch-rival, BMW, is also facing decisions like these.

In my opinion, the real problem for Mercedes is technology and the democratization that it brings. I remember reading in the 70's that Intel, the chip manufacturer, predicted that 1/4 of the cost to build a vehicle in the future would be in its electronics, and I thought that was utterly insane at the time. Well, in fact, it is very close to being true today. None of the automakers actually make a significant effort in electronics (although they once did); they now purchase parts and technologies from others. So, a good number of important safety and convenience features on a \$80,000 Mercedes can also be had on a \$40,000 Hyundai. Mercedes can only justify the higher prices from service, product desirability, and quality—and in the area of product quality, even the lower-priced cars have made great improvements in recent years.

PART II: Mercedes W107 Aftermarket Euro Bumpers

By Steve Loboyko

Note that these bumpers are not original to a US car and may affect the legality/insurability of your car depending on your locale.

I had mentioned (long ago!) that I would be getting reproduction front and rear Euro bumpers from Viet Nam. Incredibly, they arrived two weeks after shipment, well-packed, and with no damage. FINALLY, I started to assemble them in August. There are two rather good videos, made by the supplier, that I advise anyone considering purchasing these to watch them, located at:



<https://youtu.be/qcF4iyEP-Is>
(the front bumper)



<https://youtu.be/1DuQZlY3 Js>
(the rear bumper)

I will be commenting along with these videos throughout this article.

I also think that it is an extremely good idea to do this in warm weather. There are two reasons, painting being the most obvious one (although you COULD bring this to a body shop to do); the other is that rubber really requires warm temperatures to make it installable. Ordinarily, you might heat rubber in hot water, but given that these pieces have metal parts in them and you would NOT want them to pop out, or rust, this is not advisable.

Do NOT take the stainless parts out of their bubble wrap until you need them. Stainless is very nice, but it is NOT as hard as chrome and will sleek (more on that later).

Rear Bumpers:

The first thing that I did with ALL the parts, front and back, was to spray-paint them very well with a two-part epoxy primer. All of these parts including the original chrome bumpers are notorious for rusting, particularly the rear skirting. Many, many people buying used “gray market” Euro or 72-73 US bumpers have discovered that the parts were essentially unusable due to rust. After replacement and rechroming, a project might wind up costing as much or more than just buying them new.

The skirts then needed to be undercoated with paintable undercoating. Do not fool with the junk you can get at an auto parts store. I used a 3M professional body shop material. Doing this takes a certain touch; distance from the object to be painted has a profound effect on the pattern of the undercoating. I did not get that great of a match to the texture of the original, and had my car not been Arctic White, I might have re-done it. Note that I would do this on both sides, given my experience with rust.

The skirts were then painted with two-part (basecoat /clearcoat) urethane paint in the original MB color. For most people, I would advise bringing this to a professional body shop. The paints are not just annoying but are genuinely toxic, and a simple “filter” mask is NOT sufficient protection. I have a “remote air” system, a Tyvek® hood, a Tyvek® suit, and thick nitrile gloves. the dangerous chemicals in the clear can also be absorbed through the skin, and are dangerous from mixing to fully dried. Some people are extremely sensitive to this and there is no way to predict that sensitivity. Don't find out. And, on top of that, the exposure may be cumulative. When I am using my system, I don't even smell a whiff of paint.

At this point, I needed to be more careful with the skirts than the man in the video, who was working with “from the factory” unpainted parts! Work on a quilt or a sheet over a carpet.

I first assembled the back and sides of the skirts. The provided (supposedly stainless) bolts seemed a bit loose in the threads so I used a liberal amount of Loctite® (MEDIUM) on all of the bolts. This is strongly advised.

Then, the three under-brace pieces as shown in the video were assembled. I did not find the fit on these to be wonderful, particularly on the driver's side (see photos here). Nonetheless, they did come together and the stamping errors did not affect the final fit or finish.

Then, I attached the bumper brace assembly to the skirts with the “self-tapping” countersunk screws.



I wonder exactly why countersunk screws were provided; they look odd (but you will not see them, ultimately). Also, the holes provided in the sheetmetal were not exactly the right diameter for the “self-tapping” aspect to work. Although I had a lithium-ion drill at my disposal (VERY strongly recommended for this project), the screws would “clock out” and ruin the screwdriver bit and the screw head (both were Philips, and I was definitely using the right size of Philips bit). You want to use the minimum possible drill bit size for you to successfully install the screws, otherwise the threads will wind up weak or even worse, nonexistent! By the way, I strongly suspect that the person demonstrating in this video is using bumpers where the bumpers had been previously assembled and threaded, which is why it looks easy! You also should pre-thread all holes.

It is very important that you put one in each side and one in the middle of the back FIRST in order to get the holes concentric and even between the sheet metal of the skirts and the sheet metal of the braces. THEN, do the rest. Now comes the “shiny” parts. At THIS point, I unwrapped them.

These also connect to the bumper bracing metal with the “self tapping” screws and the holes will need careful enlargement as before. Bolts are used to connect the pieces together. Strapping covers cover the seams. This went fairly well. Needless to say, do NOT slip the screwdriver and damage the bumper finish. Remember my previous comment about pre-threading the screws into the brace holes.

The last step on the rear bumper is to install the rubber strip at the edge. This did not go well at all.

I caution you to look carefully at the video as to how the technician is “unrolling” it onto the bumper assembly. This is crucial, and this has driven some people to tears. You must “catch” the inside of the rubber strip at each part of the bracing. You do NOT want to finish and find out you missed something. Note how the technician is using his hand to check for this as he goes along.

There were two problems that I discovered while doing this:

1. The rear rubber strip provided is, to be charitable, not good or really even usable. The mold is a bit sloppy, the surface finish is not that great, and worst of all, it simply will not go around the corners without buckling and will not seal to the metal. I knew that the rubber was iffy going into this project after reading comments about it on the Internet, but I didn't expect it to be this inferior.

So, I purchased a German-sourced replacement from [K&K Manufacturing](#) for about \$160 shipped (they have rather high shipping costs). This is less than half of the last OEM price that saw from Mercedes before the part was NLA (no longer available). I found this part to be absolutely acceptable at this price and it went around the corners much, much better.

1. The rubber strip is BARELY, BARELY long enough to do this, from one bolt to the other. It is important to keep the rubber TAUT and continually stretch it a bit throughout assembly. You may have to do this TWICE at least to get it right. Fortunately, is not a big deal to make a mistake.

Front Bumper:

These are conceptually simpler, and work much like the rear bumper. I used the supplied rubber for these. I would not say that the quality is great and I hope that they “settle in” and conform to the bumper perfectly eventually, but I would say that they are “good enough” for now. Replacements for each of these three pieces of rubber (apparently genuine MB) are about \$100 each.

(I have a tip to use on “imperfect” rubber. Don't laugh, but get some Kiwi “heel dye” meant for the heels of shoes. This is a quick-drying, flexible paint that will cover up imperfections and dullness in rubber and it is amazingly durable. I have used this on standard US bumper caps with great success - but that's another story...)

Final Thoughts:

I managed to assemble these with no damage but I did “sleek” the stainless on an edge or two. Had this been chrome, which is harder, this might not have happened, but consider that if you do damage chrome, there is almost nothing you can really do about it short of rechroming. With stainless, it is possible to polish and even sand out (1500+ grit and then buff) surprisingly bad scratches in order to make stainless as good as new. I won't address this until the bumpers are on the car.

So, my impressions so far are, on the whole, favorable. I can forgive the flaws considering that the OEM alternatives would cost at least \$4500 and at least one part is, at this time, NLA from MB. But I wouldn't have minded paying more and getting better rubber. A US supplier of these bumpers, [MACARBON](#), probably uses the Viet Nam hardware and supplies “better” rubber (not sure if it is OEM or from the German source). For people that don't want to risk overseas shipment or otherwise fool around with iffy rubber, their higher price might be worth it.

Theoretically, at this point, the bumpers would be ready to install on a “grey market” or 72/73 W107. On a later US car, not so much. In part three, we will get to the “exciting” part - removing the US bumpers and installing the Euro bumpers.

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The Trading Post: Cars, Parts, and Accessories

If you have a Mercedes-Benz or significant M-B part that you would like to buy, sell, or trade, just submit your ad to the Editor, *The Bluegrass Star*. All ads must follow the submission rules and the suggested format as found in the back of *The Star* magazine. They will be listed at no charge to a section member; no commercial ads will be accepted without prior arrangement for payment. Your ad will appear in the next issue of *The Bluegrass Star*.

Engine stand with storage box

The legs fold up for easy storage and the entire stand fits in a custom-made storage box. Almost new condition.

Engine hoist with aluminum track

The hoist is rated for 1/2 ton and is ideal for garages with low ceilings.

The aluminum track is 7 feet long and the mounting holes are drilled on 16 inch centers for 3/8 inch lag bolts.

Price is \$200 OBO for everything. Photos on request.

Contact Gary Rumrill, (502) 592-7736 cell

Polished valve covers for 116/117 engines, old and new styles, with or without caps. \$80 or best offer.

Contact Steve Loboyko, 560mbsl@gmail.com

Discounted Parts

The following dealerships and shops have agreed to reduce by ten percent (10%) the total price of parts purchased by a Mercedes-Benz Club member with a current MBCA membership card. Restrictions apply; call for details.

MERCEDES BENZ OF LOUISVILLE

2520 Terra Crossing Blvd
Louisville, KY 40245
(502) 565-4410

AUTOBAHN MOTORS LLC

1403 Hugh Ave
Louisville, KY 40213
(502) 473-7858, See Don

JAMES MOTOR COMPANY

2440 Richmond Road
Lexington, KY 40502-1301
(859) 268-1150

Website

Don't forget to check our website for late-breaking news:

bluegrassstars.mbca.org

Facebook



Special thanks to Nancy Rece for keeping our Internet presence up to date!

Be sure to *Like* us on Facebook!

NOTE: If you would prefer to receive the newsletter/event reminders via email instead of snail mail, contact Carol Rumrill (carum@twc.com) to opt out of the mailings. Of course, check that your email address is up to date on the MBCA national website first! (www.mbca.org)

<https://bluegrassstars.mbca.org>

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