



# Western Reserve Section

MERCEDES-BENZ CLUB OF AMERICA

Crier - Winter Issue 2021

## New Regional Director - Ron Harshman



Sue Morrison requested that I introduce myself as the new Regional Director for MBCA. The thought of introducing myself to the Western Reserve Section brought instant memories of good times, enjoyable friends, and a realization that time does pass quickly. The Western Reserve Section sponsored trips around three of the Great Lakes: Erie, Huron, and Ontario, which I led, the last being in 2013, and that ultimately brought me to submit my name to fill the vacant Great Lakes Regional Director's position. The trips were so fun and the people who joined so enjoyable that I wished to promote similar activities for MBCA members in the future.

My experiences with MBCA are all centered around adventures in buying Mercedes automobiles and not knowing when to keep my mouth shut. It all began with buying a car I didn't think I could afford, a 560 SEL, and attending my first Section event in Minneapolis-St Paul. The meeting

involved a desire to meet an Around the World Rally scheduled to stop over in Duluth, Minnesota. The group wanted to meet the rally and follow the cars out of Duluth. I said, "You better make your reservations now because Duluth fills during tourist season." This led to my making the reservations and then planning a trip around Lake Superior for a group I had just met. We ended up doing trips around the big lake four more times, having great fun, developing wonderful relationships, and cementing my relationship with MBCA. I hope as Regional Director I can encourage activities that have similar results. Somebody told me that no one could own just one Mercedes. I scoffed at the statement, but as I have completed 20 years of MBCA membership, I have done my part to prove the statement correct. I reached a high of five before I donated the C230 with 235,000 plus miles. I now justify my pride being a four by bragging that I have no more expended on all four than one would spend on one Toyota Camry or Chevrolet Malibu (I love finding deals on used Mercedes). What I hope I bring to the Regional Director's position is that MBCA membership does not need to be restrictive, it should include all who enjoy their cars for whatever reason. And, it should be a fun and educational experience.

Some members have already expressed some concerns about the lack of engagement between the national board and the membership. It is a concern that I believe is being addressed, but I encourage anyone having specific concerns to forward them and I will, to the best of my ability, bring them to the board's attention. I can be reached by email at rharshman1943@gmail.com. I appreciate this chance to introduce myself and look forward to attending one of your events in the near future. For those who might be interested, and I hope there are some, I am completing a term that was vacated and that term expires in 2022. It would be great to have more people interested in serving.

## President's Letter

*By Rod Tompson*

Now that we are in the holiday season, I am looking forward to our annual holiday party. This year we will be celebrating on Saturday, January 8th, at the Hilton Garden Inn located on the outskirts of the Akron / Canton Airport. Cocktails are at 6:00 pm followed by a buffet dinner at 7:00, and entertainment will be provided.

Our board plans to arrange a luncheon at the upcoming Cleveland Auto Show, which returns to the I.X. Center on Saturday, February 26. We also are scouting a venue for our spring tech session.



If you have a suggestion for a unique event in 2022, please send me a note. We always appreciate new ideas on top of our traditional monthly events.

On behalf of our entire board I wish you a healthy and happy New Year!

# Seasonal Feature ~ Joanne Hovanic



“What a beautiful day the Lord has given us!” This is a typical praise of thankfulness that Joanne Hovanic, of Salem Ohio, says each day to her family. Joy oozes from her. This can be explained easily by both the highs and lows of the life she has been blessed with. Born to immigrant parents from Ikaria, Greece and raised in Warren, Ohio the youngest of 5, Joanne has had a full 82 years. Her childhood was filled with going to Greek school after school to learn reading and writing Greek since she speaks fluent Greek. She and her siblings also worked in her parent’s meat market after school each day, earning a small paycheck which was sometimes enough to pay for a Coke float from the local drug store.

After high school at Warren G Harding, she attended beauty school, fell in love and married a handsome blue eyed Slovak in 1964. Together they purchased a 132 acre farm; they lovingly named Sleepy Hollow Farm, in Columbiana County in 1970 and restored the 1860 SaltBox style home to create their “Camelot”. It was there that they raised their two daughters. Life was good. In 1992 that handsome Slovak, Jerry, was diagnosed with throat cancer. A battle they would fight together for the next 18 years with regular trips to the Cleveland Clinic. In 2010 he succumbed to the fight, and shortly after the beloved farm was sold. But life continues on.

With a full life with her daughters, son in laws and 4 grandchildren, the Lord blessed her once again by bringing Paul Bailey into her life in 2015. Introducing them was Frank and Mary Alice Cozza, Joanne’s best friends. The two are now living in a lovely condo in Salem and enjoying the contentment of companionship and the Mercedes Club to keep them active. One of her favorite thrills was a trip to Birmingham in their 2016 SL550 to run laps at the Talladega track at speeds of 115 mph. They are now enjoying their 1988 SL and 2018 E300. With a full life like this, there is much to be thankful for.

## 1999 Mercedes-Benz SL500 Top Learning Experience

*By Allan B Pintner*



Earlier this year I had the opportunity to add to my collection a 1999 Mercedes-Benz SL500 with less than 38,000 miles that had been well cared for. Most of the miles on the car had been highway miles traveling between its winter home in Florida and its summer home in Ohio. The car had been professionally detailed prior to its purchase by the second owner from whom I purchased the car. It never sat outside in the elements either in Florida or Ohio and as a result it looked like a brand-new car. The original owner had kept a 3-ring notebook with invoices for service records, which I was given when I purchased the car. Most of the service was done by Mercedes-Benz dealerships in Florida and Ohio utilizing Mercedes-Benz parts.

I was pleased with the new to me 1999 SL500 because it was becoming difficult for me to raise and lower the top on my 1986 560SL due to my strength, or lack thereof, and my need to have a second person to help me with the top on the 1986 560SL. I knew that the 1999 SL500’s top operated using hydraulic fluid and sequenced hydraulic cylinders, because the man that I purchased the car from showed me cylinders replaced in the bow of the windshield during his ownership. Additionally, I have a 1966 Lincoln Continental 4-door Convertible, which also uses hydraulic fluid and a series of electric motors and relays. The 1966 Continental is probably more complicated than the 1999 500SL. My pleasure with the 1999 SL500 top was interrupted the night of our August Meeting of the Western Reserve Section of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America when I tried to put the top down to drive to our meeting.

*Continued on page number 5.*



# National News

At the recent National Board Meeting, The following officers were elected from the Directors at Large:

President—Julie Bruggner  
Vice-President-Doug Geganto  
Treasurer-Charles Woods  
Secretary-Cliff Reyle

Our new Great Lakes Regional Director is Ron Harshman. You will find his introduction below in this edition of the Crier.

Also, a new Governance Committee, chaired by Laura Simonds was formed and has already been hard at work. They set up a board training session at the beginning of the fall meeting. They have also started the search for a new Regional Director for the Western Region. No one had run for that region this year. There was also a by-law change that was approved to go on the next ballot that will make some changes to the election procedures. The idea is to first make sure all members are notified about what positions are open and then seek out specific skills that will enhance the board performance. According to President Julie Bruggner, exciting changes are coming directly from the strategic plan. They are about to start the search for a marketing director.

## Covered Bridge Tour *By Jim Tullis*

Our Western Reserve Section annual Fall Leaf Tour took place on October 17th with a revisit of the famous Covered Bridges of Ashtabua County. Covid, a postponement from Saturday until Sunday because of rain, and conflict with “Sweetest Day”, which kept the vineyard restaurants in Ashtabula County from accommodating us or the scarcity of facilities along our route failed to deter this year’s tour.

The new owner of Brennan’s Fish House in Grand River graciously offered to host our group for a late lunch and serve as the starting point for our tour. Service at Brennan’s was expeditious and after our members enjoyed Brennan’s famous Perch and Seafood and after witnessing several towering pieces of pie disappear, we assembled for our tour.

Our group of about twenty-five was joined by several new faces, including the Newbold family from Canton, and the Omerza family from Willoughby Hills. Unfortunately, several of our members whom we haven’t seen for a while were unable to make the rain delay switch from Saturday until Sunday.

Although this year’s October could never seem to establish a peak in fall leaf color, we had an enjoyable drive through the Ashtabula County countryside. We were able to experience twelve of the county’s nineteen covered bridges. As promised, our tour included bridges of every length, age, design, and truss structure . Our tour ended at the Harpersfield Bridge just as dusk arrived.

Barb and I hope that all enjoyed the tour!



# 2021 Formula 1 Season

By Jan Pesta

F1 for 2021 proved to be an exciting series. Going into the last race on 12/12/2021 in Abu Dhabi the 2 top drivers, Hamilton (Mercedes) and Verstappen (Red Bull), were tied at exactly 369.5 points each. Verstappen had 9 1st's and Hamilton 8. On the constructor's side, Mercedes had 587.5 points to Red Bulls 559.5 thanks to Bottas' driving for Mercedes. Over the course of the season, tensions rose between the teams and drivers. On track and car controversies were settled by FIA with one team or the other not pleased with the result.

The final race had an exciting if not controversial finish with Verstappen passing Hamilton on the final lap after a safety car allowed the field to bunch up minimizing Hamilton's 11-second lead. When the checked flag fell the driver champion was Verstappen (Red Bull/Honda) with 395.5 points and the constructor title went to Mercedes with 613.5 points.

This continues Mercedes' consecutive championships at 8. Hamilton was magnanimous in his congratulations of Verstappen and acceptance of the result keeping him from a record-setting 8th driver championship.

The 2021 final standings for the top 5 Drivers and Constructors were:

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Position	Driver	Nationality	Team	Points
1	Max Verstappen	NED	Red Bull Racing Honda	395.5
2	Lewis Hamilton	GBR	Mercedes	387.5
3	Baltteri Bottas	FIN	Mercedes	226
4	Sergio Perez	MEX	Red Bull Racing Honda	190
5	Carlos Sainz Jr.	SPAIN	Ferrari	164.5

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Position	Team	Points
1	Mercedes	613.5
2	Red Bull Racing Honda	585.5
3	Ferrari	323.5
4	McClaren Mercedes	275.0
5	Alpine Renault	155.0

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# 1999 Mercedes-Benz SL500 Top Learning Experience

*Continued from page 2*

The top released at the windshield bow, and at the back but quit operating after the tonneau cover went to its vertical position. I fussed with it and tried to get it to close and lock down to no avail. When I was trying to get the top to return to either the top up or down position, I noticed the driveway was covered with hydraulic fluid inside of, and to the front of the passenger side rear tire. So, I moved cars around in my driveway and drove another car to our club meeting knowing someone would know what I should do at the meeting. Other owners of R129 Roadsters were present, but none had experienced what I had. They did help me by suggesting that I search YouTube and read my owner's manual (who would think of doing that). Both suggestions were correct and helpful. Additionally, by the time I got home our club secretary, Jan Pesta, had texted me links to multiple websites with YouTube videos. After many hours reading my owner's manual and looking at YouTube videos, working with a flashlight and the front porch light I was able to get the front connected to the bow, the tonneau cover down and the top back to the tonneau cover with an approximate 2-inch gap, and most importantly to get the windows closed as it was going to rain that night.

Two of the things I eventually learned from the manual were how to close (reset) the windows and how to get the top in position on the windshield bow. To reset the windows either up or down you turn the key in the driver's door either to the front or back and the windows will move to the up or down position while you continue to hold the key. To get the top to connect to the bow you need either the top tool or the proper sized Allen wrench. You need to move the sun visors out of the way and remove the plugs in the bow and use either the top tool or the proper sized Allen key in the holes where the plugs were, dropping the top one click at a time alternating sides from the driver's side to the passenger's side. The YouTube videos were helpful to me to visualize in space what the manual told me to do. The 1999 manual specifically indicates you can't lower the back of the top using the top tool for that model year. Prior to that year you could have.



Top tool

*Continued on page number 6.*



# 1999 Mercedes-Benz SL500 Top Learning Experience

*Continued from page 5*

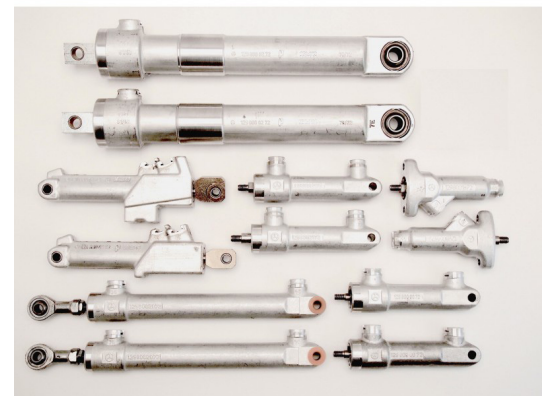
The next morning our section's technical advisor, Ted Gottfried, had researched and called me with information on who might be willing to work on repairing the top and where to get the parts. Ted was able to ascertain from multiple Mercedes-Benz service managers that the hydraulic top cylinders should be replaced as a complete set and the best place to find cylinders that had been serviced/rebuilt with new seals. Ted also had spoken with multiple dealers and repair shops and found repair shops who had been recommended by other owners with my problem. To our surprise many of the dealers were not doing repairs to cars older than 15 years old.

Based on Ted's conversations with those that had been there and done that, I made calls to Dan Braucher. Owner of Dan Braucher's Import Automotive at 4900 Aultman Road, North Canton, Ohio, (1.330.966.3923) and Klaus Witte, owner of Top Hydraulics, Inc. at 3235 Pacific View Drive, Florence, Oregon, (1.541.902.3214). Braucher's Import Automotive is an auto repair shop specializing in the maintenance and repair of European and Asian cars. Top Hydraulics specializes in all things related to convertible top hydraulics. I had the option of sending my cylinders to Top Hydraulics to be rebuilt or to do a core exchange. I elected to do a core exchange, because it simplified the labor and down time for the vehicle. Top Hydraulics advertises that they make the cylinders better than new because they use seals superior to those used by the OEM.

Appointments were required with both businesses. Once I learned of the availability of the parts I was able to make an appointment with Dan Braucher. Top Hydraulics met their projected delivery date by delivering the parts by priority delivery. It was a pleasure working with both companies. They were both professional in the explanation of services offered and gave me confidence in working with them. Both kept to their price estimates and delivery times. Braucher's Import Automotive was clean and well organized. Top Hydraulics uses masks and social distancing. Both businesses are looking for qualified employees to join their staffs. Copyrighted pictures used in this article were used with permission of the owner.

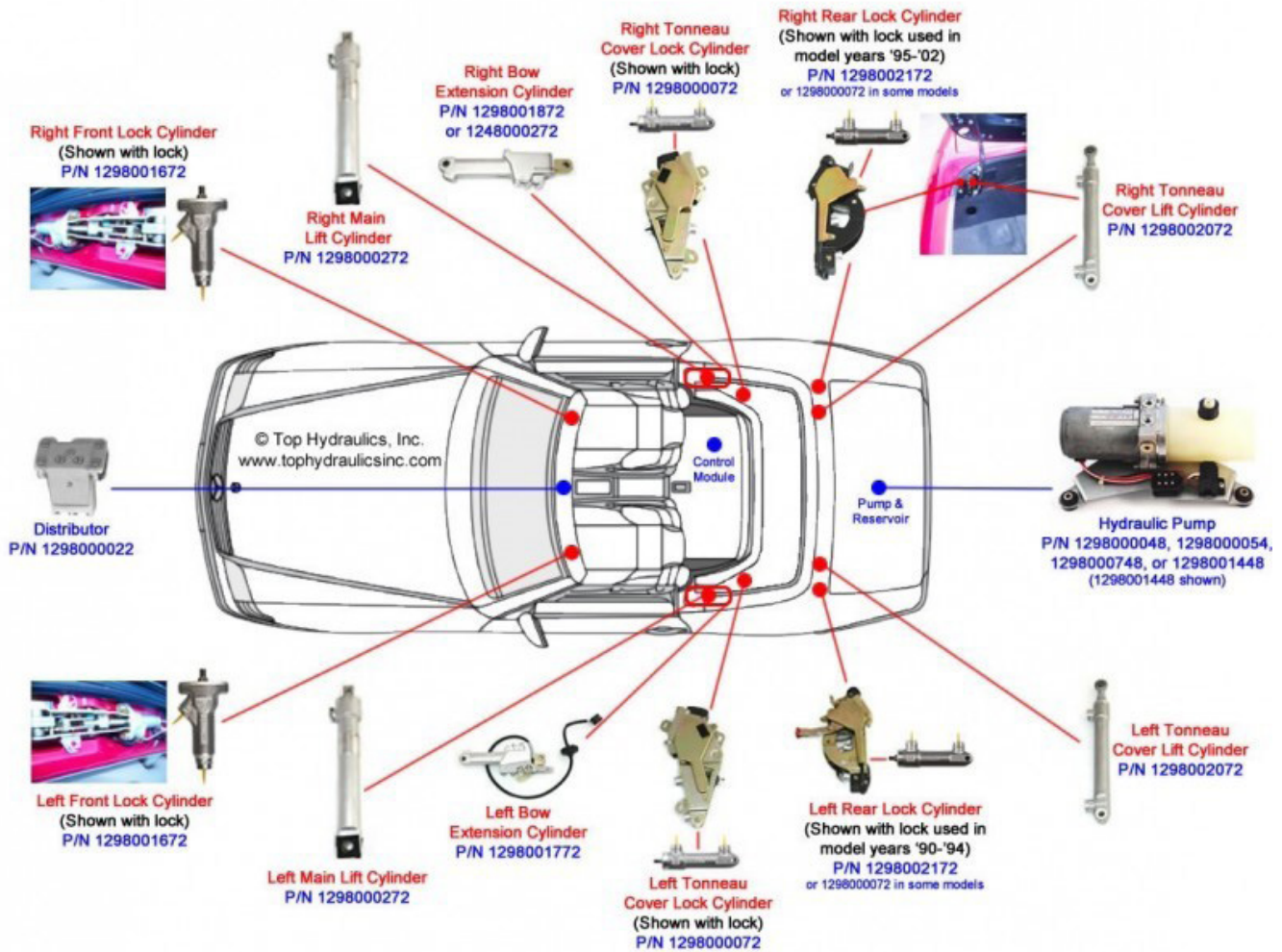
The Top Hydraulics website has do it yourself video's and PDF documents available on their website for those inclined to do it themselves. If you are inclined to do it yourself, you must understand that you can't damage the cylinder, because it will not be excepted as a core exchange. Most of the YouTube videos and the mechanics Ted spoke with advised to do the complete set, because if one seal has gone bad the others are soon to follow. My car was an example of that.

The R129 SL-Class was made from 1990 to 2002. Years 1990-1996 have 12 hydraulic cylinders in the top system and years 1997-2002 have 11 hydraulic cylinders in the top system. The left tonneau cover lock cylinder was omitted into the 1997-2002 model years. Both have a front distributor.



*Continued on next page*

## Mercedes-Benz R129 SL-Class Hydraulic Component Locations



Left Tonneau Cover Lock Cylinder omitted in model years 1997-2002, except for some early production versions of model year 1997

Ted Gottfried picked me up at Braucher's the day I delivered my car and Section President Rod Thompson picked me up at my home the day I picked up my car. I thank Ted, Jan Pesta and Rod for their help in bringing me through my learning experience. Their efforts, help and concern are examples of why one wants to be a member of a car club. Owners like Dan Braucher and Klaus Witte are true professionals enabling me to enjoy my 1999 Mercedes-Benz SL500.



Klaus Witte working in his shop



Customer Mike Brewer with Klaus Witte

# Membership 12-11-2021

New Members  
10-10-21 to 12-11-21  
Welcome!

MF Zupon  
Joe Dazey  
Paul O'Connor

Renewed  
10-10-21 to 12-11-21  
Welcome back!

Dean Babbaro  
Tim Conway  
Andre Burke  
Albert Jackson  
Lewis Sawitzke  
Robert Henkin  
James Bergstrom  
David Gentzler  
R. Black  
Judith Caruso  
Karen Carson

James Tullis  
Frank Huemmer  
Jeremy Hoban  
Tom Danko  
Blane Bafus  
Gary Goodman  
DB Zimmerman  
Michael Spena  
Anneliese Nefos  
Raymond Hensel  
Richard Bird  
Joe Oberle  
Richard Self  
Patrick Price



## Hybrid Cars

*By Dr. William  
P. Mulhausen*

I purchased this car solely on the review and recommendation of Consumer Reports. Their overall rating was 84%. This put the 2015 Toyota Camry LE Hybrid Sedan as the top sedan on the market 2015. Since I've always had good luck with Consumer Reports and their recommendations about buying anything, I went ahead with the purchase of this car without even looking at or test-driving any other car. This car features excellent fuel economy, comfortable seating, a roomy interior, a wealth of standard safety aids, and a reputation for reliability (5 out of 5) and builds quality. It also features good resale value and is one of the most comfortable cars I have ever driven or ridden in.

Hybrid engines last a long time and as I plan on keeping this car for a long time, I purchased the \$2000 extended warranty, which covers battery replacement if it should be needed. It is around 180,000 miles the battery begins to wear. Battery replacement is around \$2000 as opposed to \$200 for a gasoline-powered car. This is really the only negative about a hybrid or electric car.

The Camry runs on electric motor power when driving 40 mph or under and switches to gas power automatically when over 40 mph. By driving a hybrid car, you are not only saving gas but being environmentally conscious.

The battery is being charged whenever you drive so there is no need to plug in the car to charge the battery - a GREAT feature. If desired you can override the switchover feature and run electric-only but the battery can be drained quickly and completely. I have never felt the need to do this. And with standard driving at 40 mph or under, I have never drained the battery or had to worry about it.

It is interesting to note that we are going from gas-powered cars to hybrid and electric-powered cars (the government is promoting an all-electric fleet by 2035), to a "blue gas" (look it up) fleet in the very distant future. This car would be powered by cheaper and more environmentally friendly hydrogen with a special hydrogen engine. There are cons to this new technology so further study is required.

I could not be more pleased with my Camry LE Hybrid (69,152 mi.) and have recommended it to others who have been equally satisfied and pleased. If this car would still be available whenever I hit the 200,000 mark I would definitely consider purchasing another.

SPECS on 2015 TOYOTA CAMRY LE HYBRID SEDAN:

Wheels 17x17' Front Wheel Drive HP200 @ 5700 RPM 2.5 liter 4 cylinders DOCH hybrid gas/electric 17.5 gal tank nickel-metal 1+4 drive traction battery \$33,113 (\$26790 base price) 3.29 axel ratio base curb wt. 3,485 pounds front and rear disc brakes automatic transmission mileage: hwy 43mpg city 39mpg cruising range hwy 663.0 mi. cruising range city 731.0 mi. 190.9 in length 57.9 in height



# EV Driving

*By Gary Goodman*



With the recent launch of the Mercedes-Benz EQS 450 and the arrival next year of the EQB and EQE models, our editors suggested that I share some my EV experiences and address some common questions. Over the last 2-1/2 years I've driven 40,000 miles traveling by EV throughout Ohio, Michigan, and Kentucky. My situation is not typical, but I have gained a lot of experience during my travels.

The most common EV question involves range. You will find that most premium EVs have a real-world range of 200-300 miles, which will work very well for the average driver. Range anxiety is very common in the beginning of EV driving—how far can I go, and will I make it to my destination? This very quickly becomes range awareness—I'm familiar with what my vehicle can do and how to plan accordingly. In a way this is similar to what many of us who have owned Mercedes-Benz diesels had to get comfortable with. The difference with the diesel was that we knew where to find diesel on the road at truck stops, but local stations were a concern. We didn't realize how available diesel fuel was because we didn't need it. The same thing is true today with EVs—we are driving past the charging stations at Wal-Marts and other businesses and don't notice them because we don't need them. With an EV, charging on the road is the primary concern. Take a look at [plugshare.com](http://plugshare.com)—you will probably be “shocked” at how many charging locations there are in northeast Ohio.

A few things to consider—

--most Americans drive under 40 miles per day, and the long trips that drivers are concerned about are only 1% of our total driving. When you think about how you actually use your vehicle, an EV can make sense in many cases.

--if you are very comfortable with a 12,000 mi/year lease, that is driving 33 miles per day.

--everything you do in an EV affects the range, and it can be a positive or a negative effect. Driving style, driving conditions, terrain, speed, weather, use of recuperation, and a lead foot are all factors that influence range.

Driving an EV requires a change in mindset, and that revolves around charging your EV. On average, 80% of EV charging is done at home. What if you never had to go to a gas station again? Or pump gas in the snow or heat? Or leave early for work, because you didn't buy gas last night? With an EV none of those are a concern, because you are charging your car overnight in your garage and can start with a fully charged battery every morning. Home charging really is a game-changer—it's like having a gas station in your garage.

What do I need to charge my EV? Charging at home is very easy using a charging cable that is included when you purchase an EV. For overnight charging all you need is a dedicated 240V outlet to plug into. When traveling, finding a DC fast charger is a must. The infrastructure has improved dramatically over the last 12 months. The gold standard for fast charging is Electrify America, a Volkswagen Group company that also is the charging partner for Mercedes-Benz owners. When traveling, charging speed can be more important than vehicle range. Lithium-ion batteries charge more slowly once they are at 80% capacity, which is why EV charging time estimates are based on the time needed to go from 10-80%. Depending on the vehicle, that typically takes 20-30 minutes. Getting that last 20% can take as long as it did to get to 80%. If the trip distances make sense, it is faster to stop the charging process at 80% and to make a later stop and charge to 80% again.

An EV saves you a tremendous amount of time not spent at the gas station during the course of a year, but your road trips will take a bit longer that it would with an internal combustion drive train. In my case, a trip to central Michigan or southern Ohio takes about 20-40 minutes longer than it would using gasoline. Over-the road charging is the only real negative that I have found in living with an EV.

What are the pros of driving an EV? They are smooth, quiet, fast, cheaper to operate, and will require less overall maintenance. The fuel costs are dramatically lower with a minimal change in your electric bill. Not everyone is ready for an EV, but I encourage you to take a test drive to see if one works for you.

## Western Reserve Section

*Crier*

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## Schedule of Events

January 8	Holiday Party, Hilton Garden Inn	Akron Canton Airport
February 1	Membership & Board Meeting @ 7 PM	Brewster's Twinsburg
February 26	Cleveland Auto Show & Lunch	IX Center
March 1	Membership & Board Meeting @ 7 PM	Brewster's Twinsburg

We are in the process of planning events for the year and hope to add some tech sessions during the spring. Please watch the website for new additions. Fliers will also be sent.

Our section's website will be updated as things change. [www.benzclub.org](http://www.benzclub.org) Please check it often. As mentioned before, we are hoping to do as much as possible electronically. You will learn upcoming events quicker by checking for updates and watching your inbox.

Please join us at the meetings in Twinsburg usually the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00. Your input is important to us. Check the web page for updates and address. Or contact any board member for info. Guests are welcomed, too.