



# Wheels in Motion



September 2022



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**Naples Mazda (not a sponsor): no liaison**

**Website:**

<http://www.miataclubofsouthwestflorida.com/home.html>

**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1221394091665789>

# Upcoming Events

## Lunch at Luigi's Pizzeria & Family Restaurant

September 22nd  
Details will be emailed out soon

## Chilli Cookoff

October 6th  
Details will be emailed soon

## Miata Cruze-In

October 22nd (Saturday)  
Details on page 26

## Peace River Sculpture & Botanical Garden

November 2nd  
Details on page 27

## Cape Coral Veterans Day Parade

November 11th  
Details as they become available

## Key West "Hometown Holiday Parade"

December 3rd (Saturday) 7:00pm  
Details on page 27

## Christmas Dinner & Party

December 15th, (Thursday)  
Olde World Restaurant  
Details on page 28

# Monthly Meeting

## Thurs, September 8th

Golden Corral

1151 Tamiami Trail

Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Monthly meetings are  
the 2nd Thursday of the month

Dinner at 5pm and meeting at 6pm.

Please RSVP to Kathy Engler by September 1st  
at [kathy.engler@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.engler@gmail.com)

## Cover Photo & THE END Back Cover Photo:

This month I just had to over do the front and back covers!  
The photos of my Miata and the Mercedes AMG (front & back)  
were taken by me. The photos of me on track  
were taken by MotorSportsMedia and paid for by me!

## **JUST FOR FUN**

**Breakfast Socializer September 27th**  
**Metro Dinner, 1720 Tamiami Trail Suite 100,**  
**Port Charlotte, FL 33948.**

**RSVP to Judy at [memmx5swf@yahoo.com](mailto:memmx5swf@yahoo.com) by Sept 24th**

# From the Editor's Desk

By Ron Lindensmith

Welcome to the September edition of the Miata Club of Southwest Florida newsletter. **I'll apologize here for my taking up so much space in the newsletter and posting so many photos of my car...** but then if you wrote an article about a trip like this and had a bunch of photos of your car, I probably put it in the newsletter too! Oh, and this trip was to the Miata Reunion where there were hundreds of Miatas, show cars, race cars, and things that started as Miatas and ended up as something else.

My real reason for going was because I've driven (raced or track day) on most of the great road course tracks east of the Mississippi (and a few west as well). But I never had the opportunity



to drive Barber Motorsports Park and it's been a 'Bucket List' desire of mine for a long time. The Reunion let a few other cars in for the track day and I ended up in the paddock next to Brandon Michael and his wife who was driving a

Mercedes AMG V-8 Biturbo (see the 2nd cover and the 'Almost The End' pages). I thought it would be cool to do a side by side photo with his Mercedes and my Miata. That evolved to my thinking it might be the front and back covers of the newsletter!

We ended up in the same group on track and I didn't see him in session one. After the session I found out they had some ECU error codes to deal with. We did session 2 and things got worse for Brandon. So they packed up and headed home. Before they left we joked about the \$40,000 Miata that got the better of a \$150,000 Mercedes AMG. But if Brandon can get it



figured out and make it behave when pushed, it will be one heck of a car!

Just down the row a couple of paddock spots was a car that never went out. Tom Drew brought his 2009 MX-5 on a trailer to show and to try and sell. It's a very rare (only 318 produced) Competition Yellow with lots of 'extras' like a Flyin' Miata Cosworth Supercharger installed 6K miles ago, Koni adjustable struts, Progressive coil springs front & rear, Progressive adjustable swaybars installed 22K miles ago and much, **much** more. The thing that really got my attention was the paint. It looked nearly perfect to me and it just 'glowed' in the sunshine. Tom is the original owner and the car spent it's first 9 years in California before it moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. The car had 42K miles on it when I saw it and it's for sale at \$24,500. If you have any interest in this car, you can contact me and I have a sheet with all (and I mean ALL) the extras along with Tom's contact info.

# Everyone Needs a Little Sunshine

By Sandy Cole

To ALL our Miata Members:

I trust you are all enjoying the summer activities and doing well. No matter where you might be, I understand it feels hot!!! So, hopefully you are finding things to do while staying cool. I am pleased to note that there are several outings coming up, as well. I guess our members have been researching and working hard to come up with new and interesting activities. Please keep your ears and eyes open for things to do in the coming months.

KathyEngler's sister passed away suddenly this past week, so please keep her and Alan in your thoughts and prayers. It seems the Covid virus caught up with Ron Lindensmith and Dana Breda, despite having all their shots and boosters. Unfortunately it interfered with their trip to North Carolina and the Tail of the Dragon experience. THAT is a 'bummer'! Reportedly they are slowly recovering, ENCOURAGED BY POSITIVE ATTITUDES. Also, in the past few months we have mentioned several members undergoing tests and/or struggling with recovery. We can hope they are on the mend and will be able to return to the club's activities soon. Otherwise, it has been quiet. I am not aware of any other Sunshine requests. Does that mean you are all doing well????? HOPE SO!!

September Birthday wishes go to: Ross Clark, Paige Clark, Naomi Cockrum, Marcia Dean, Jess Dunham, Mary Grace, Larry Hammond, Collette Handke, Carolyn Kerlin, Maurice Maertens, Carol McCoy, Jeff Myles-Brunelle, Patricia Roth and, Sandy Rusin. We trust you will each have a special and safe birthday.

Blessings to all, Sunshine Sandy



# Membership Notes

By Dennis Laslo

Greetings all! This is my first month at the new job as Membership Chairperson. But enough about me. Please drop what you are doing and give a round of applause for Judy Western who held the reigns of Membership for years and together with Kathy Engler and Bill Watts kept track of the who's who in the Miata Club of SW FL.

Judy has volunteered to head up the events committee and give us a stream of future fun in the Miata. Kathy is still the senior member of the membership team.

Back to business. This month we have three new members to welcome.

Jim and Sonya Weaver in Port Charlotte with a red Miata  
And

Mary Jo Zweller of Nokomis with a silver Miata

Please be sure to give them a welcome smile when you meet them!



# August Miata Club Meeting



A funny thing happened during the 50/50 drawing at the August meeting. Dick Fischer thought he had the winning ticket, but it turned out to be his raffle ticket, not the 50/50 ticket. Everybody got a bit of a chuckle out of that. So, Dick sat back down and Ed called out the winning number again. It took a bit of time and nobody seemed to have it... then Dick realized he had that number in both his 50/50 ticket and his raffle tickets. So he won anyway!



# Ed Howard Mazda Status

Some of you asked me about what's going on at Ed Howard Mazda?

Well, they're getting a new building.

Completion is estimated this summer.

If you want service, they are temporarily doing business in the Lincoln dealership next door.

Mazda Parts is in the existing Mazda building on the left side

Sales is also in the Lincoln Dealership

and clearly marked to the right of the service drive through.

And an added benefit of your Miata Club of Southwest Florida membership

is you get 10% discounts on service and parts at Ed Howard.

Just show your card.

Dennis Laslo (Ed Howard Liaison)



The Board of Directors has decided that since almost nobody is putting together any trips or events, (thanks to those that have), that we will form a committee to see what can be done to resolve the problem. If you are interested in helping out in any way please let any or all of the following people know: Judy Western (chairperson), Dana Breda, Katrina McIntosh, Dick Fischer or Ron Lindensmith We are looking for answers, not trying to create more work for anybody. If you have ideas, suggestions or just want to attend a meeting, we are open to almost anything

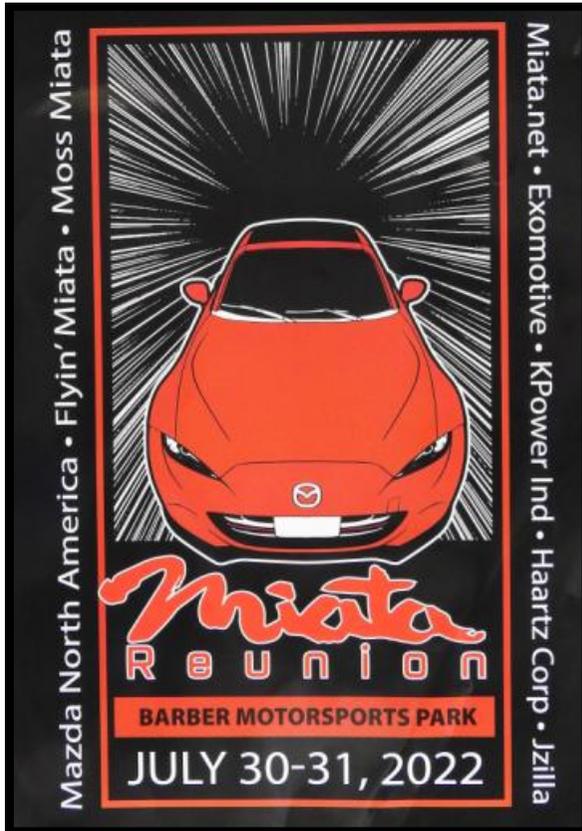
We had our 1st real meeting on Thursday, Aug 25th. We have agreed to try and do 2 events each month, not counting the regular Membership Meeting or the 4th Tuesday Breakfast. A couple of new events have been added to the schedule in September and October. Details are being worked and info will be emailed as soon as possible.

The Events Committee will meet again after the 4th Tuesday Breakfast on November 22nd. We will be working on events for January, February and March. If you have any ideas or comments, you can send them to any of the people listed in the block above.

Dana has been working on a Sunrise/sunset trip that crosses Florida. Details will be worked out, but it will be further south than the last Sunrise/Sunset trip of a few years ago.

# My Miata Reunion

By Ron Lindensmith



OK, this is going to be a long story because I had so much fun getting to the Reunion, at the Reunion, on the race track and on my early return home. Dana Breda and I decided to drive independently to our hotel in Albany, Georgia. Unlike most of the rest of the weekend, the drive up I-75 was the typical painfully boring day. And despite the fact that we had not seen each other on the road, when I showed up at the hotel, Dana was at the front deck just checking in!

We went out and had a nice dinner in Albany and then spent a lot of time swapping stories and getting to know each other better. Stories went well into the evening because Friday's drive to Birmingham,

Alabama was only going to take about 4 hours.

Friday morning was sunny and it seemed it would be a nice day for a drive. Little did I know that it would be so very different from the drive up I-75. There was little traffic on the 4 lane divided highway that was not limited access. I'll just say that I'd be quite happy to drive on roads like this one any day. Not only did it go up and down hills, but it also meandered left and right around foothills, farms & rivers. I'm not going to say that I was speeding, but there were times I found the 55mph speed limit a bit slower than my Miata wanted to go! The morning drive through Georgia

countryside was wonderful. The Afternoon drive on the same highway was a bit less fun in Alabama due to more traffic and some serious road reconstruction.

Then, about 15 miles from our Reunion hotel headquarters, my GPS had me get off the 4 lane highway and turn north on what quickly became a narrow 2 lane road with ditches on each side and trees that arched over the road making it a virtual tunnel. This road was slower than the 4 lane highway with steeper up and down hills and sharper turns. Oh what fun! I could only hope that the Tail of the Dragon would be as much fun a week later on our vacation.

As I arrived at the hotel, there were already quite a few Miatas in the parking lot. Dana arrived and told me that he had already been at Barber Motorsports Park (the official Miata Reunion site) by mistake (probably due to a GPS error). The good news was that it was less than 1/4 mile down the road. At 3pm we went down to sign in at registration and get our wrist bands. There must have been a couple of hundred people waiting in line. But it moved pretty fast and I got my Group 'D' and Sunday



stickers for my car to get on track. Friday night Dana tried on the helmet I brought for my track day to see if he wanted to borrow it for his Saturday Car Control Clinic. He didn't like the fit, but I think his trying it on had fu-

ture effects (read on).

Saturday morning started out as another bright sunny morning. I was going to spend the day at the Reunion enjoying the site (Barber Motorsports Park is by far, very far, the most beautifully landscaped race track in the country), visiting vendors, taking photos, visiting the Miata Car Show, doing the laps on track behind the pace car at lunch and watching Dana doing some of his Car Control Clinic.

I was literally shocked when I drove into the track entrance. Well trimmed, very green grass everywhere. And there were sculptures everywhere, along the road to the paddock, in the pond along side of the road (actually in the water), above a huge artificial waterfall, coming out of



The iconic sculpture in the infield at the Barber Motorsports Track.

manholes, around the track and as I found out later, even hanging from a spectator bridge over the track (more on that later). I've been to a lot of nice parks that don't hold a candle to how well groomed and beautiful this race track is. I fell this bode well for how nice the Barber Museum would be, which was scheduled for Monday.

I parked my car and walked down the hill to the main paddock and track facilities. There were about 10 vendors setting up, including Flying Miata who were giving away nice t-shirts (they were happy to give me a large for me and a small for my wife) and Moss Miata who were giving away Miata Reunion/Barber hats and selling very nice limited edition

(numbered 1 thru 100) billet aluminum Miata Reunion gear shift knobs. The Reunion Information garage was also selling t-shirts, hats, posters and stickers. I got a free t-shirt because I paid some serious money to do a track day.

Although the track is just as well maintained as the rest of the property, it was not open for me to wander around like a spectator and take photos from various vantage points. But at the same time, because I was wearing a drivers wrist band, I was allowed out to the wall between the

track and the pit lane as well as going up in the starters stand. I kind of hate to say it, but I didn't take too many photos of cars on track because all but a few of them were Miatas and most of them were street legal. Besides, I had 2 professional photographers that would be taking photos of my car when I was out on track (and that's the Miata you really want to see... right?). The Miata Car Show was much more fun as a picture taking venue.





At lunch time the track day drivers and corner workers take a break and they let me (and about 300+ of my closest Miata friends) do a few laps behind the pace car. I had seen the track map and some in car videos, but that just isn't like being on the track. So even though we were going slow most of the time, I was able to see just how much up and down there actually is... hint... there is a lot! And some of the curves are cresting hills getting the car light, and some are compressing the car as the curve goes through a valley. There is

only one real straightaway and a few short straights with fairly easy chicanes that only slow you down a little. All it did was wet my appetite for doing my track day on Sunday. At the end we all stopped on track and I think some official photos were taken, but half the people out there... including me... were out of their cars and taking photos as well!



After lunch I went up to the next level in the paddock to see the Miata Car Show. I can only guess how many cars took part in the show; maybe 100? I took lots of photos of cars as well as every 'special' license plate I saw. Why? Because I'd like to do a specialty plate for my car... maybe. I didn't enter my car in the show, but after seeing the classes and the cars, I might have had a chance. I have to admit, I got quite a few compliments on how my Miata looked.





That afternoon Dana did the Car Control Clinic on the Barber Proving Grounds. He'll tell you more about that on page 18 in this newsletter. After watching Dana for awhile, I went off to look for more of the cool sculptures around the track. The Lady In The Lake had just been replaced a few day before we arrived.



I think a few of the late Saturday track sessions got cancelled due to heavy rain and lightning. For some strange reason, corner workers don't like being out on their corner waving flags when there is lightning in the area? Seriously though, safety is always the most important thing, given that race track experiences are inherently dangerous. More on that later as well.

Sunday morning was an early start for me as I had a drivers Meeting at the track at 7am, Dana slept in. It had rained a lot the night before and the morning was mostly cloudy but the forecast was for dry all day. On your way from the entrance to the park over to the track, you pass 'The Lady in the Lake'. I was in Group 'D' which was any mostly stock NC or ND Miatas with drivers who have some track experience. So I had an hour to kill after the driver's meeting. That's when I realized I forgot to check my gas... oh crap... it's almost on empty!

So I went to the info garage and asked about getting gas at the track pump. Much to my surprise, it's just like any gas station. Stick in your credit card, pick your flavor and pump. As I was leaving the info garage, a

guy in a polo shirt that had 'MAZDA' embroidered on the breast, was giving my car a serious once over. He told me the car looked really nice and classy. He loved the big racing stripe that fades from black to white as well as the red pinstripe around the bottom aero-skirt. I told him it was completely de-badged because I think it looks better and not because I don't like Mazda. He said that was part of what made it look clean and classy. I thought, "Wow, that's twice this guy used the word classy." Then I went to the gas pump, got my gas and went to the grid and got ready for my first time on track at speed.

Now it's been 5 years since I did a track day at Sebring and Palm Beach, and auto-x makes you a better driver, but it's just not the same as a track day. I very rarely get out of 2nd gear (50+mph) at an auto-x, but here I would only be as low as 2nd gear for one hairpin turn and the rest of the time would be 3rd and 4th gear... getting up very close to 100mph at a couple of points. So this 20 minutes was mostly just to get accustomed to where the track went and develop a basic understanding of how fast each corner can be taken and kind of look for brake points into the tighter turns. I wasn't fast, but then this was my first look. About half of the 15+ cars in my group had already done serious time on this track and I got lapped by a handful of cars. I also identified several corners I needed to give some serious attention to as I was terrible getting through them smoothly and at speed.

When this session ended, I went to the information garage, where they were allowing me to store my camera and cooler. I went in, got my camera and on my way out I saw that the guy who had made the 'classy' comments about my car was

sitting at a table with another guy and they were both signing autographs. They were Norm Garrett and Tom Matano who were both involved with the design of the Miata. Norm was the one who was looking over my car. Norm is an accomplished Automotive Engineer working for major companies such as Mazda, Subaru, Volvo, etc.. He is best known as the Concept Engineer for the original Mazda Miata design, stemming from his work for



the automaker's Southern California Design Studio. You can imagine how proud I felt when I realized who it was that I had been talking to. But then I became very concerned that I might not be able to get my helmet on for the next session with my head so swollen with pride!

My 2nd session was an hour and 20 minutes later. This time I knew where the track went and roughly how fast I could go. So I spent a lot of time working on the corners that were giving me trouble. The corner I was comfortable in got a bit faster and I got more willing to 'lean' on the car and tires as well. There are 2 really long sweeping corners which involve very late apexes and are followed quickly by another corner. I was having some issues with winding the car in slowly enough that I didn't



reach the inside edge of the track too early. Both corners continued to capture my attention as I would screw up one way or another and twice I almost threw the car off the outside edge of the track exiting the corner. The 'Kink' is a tight, downhill chicane in 3rd gear. I'd guess its starts in the high 70mph range and the exit is just above what 2nd gear can do, so high 60mph range. The curbs were quite gentle here compared to other tracks I've raced at. That is probably because this was mostly de-

signed to be a track for motorcycles and they REALLY hate steep, bumpy curbs anywhere! So I found I could straighten out the kink a fair amount by riding over the curbs.

Session 3 was after lunch. I continued to improve and was really starting to enjoy the time on track more than just the adrenaline rush. But this session got cut short due to another ND driver having an issue at the kink. As I went into Turn one I got a black flag which means I need to slow down and go to pit lane. But then I saw that the black flag was out at every corner station and we all were getting called in. Half way around that lap, when I got to the kink, there was the ND off the inside of the second half of the kink and showing quite a bit of front end damage. That was the end of our session. The ND was dropped in the paddock off a rollback truck. It was only a few spots away from me, so I went to look. The word going around was that the driver was OK... but this car was a total.

I went out for session 4 thinking I should roll back my expectations and enthusiasm and just be sure to keep my car on track. After all, I still had a lot of vacation time and a ride at the Tail of the Dragon coming the next weekend. I guess I forgot just how ex-



hilarating the adrenaline rush is when you are in a curve near the limit of adhesion while cresting a hill. You touch the brakes VERY lightly to slow and settle the car just a bit so it's more willing to go where you point it with better traction at the front of the car. The car gets

light as you go over the top and you hope you got the speed and direction right so you stay on the track down the other side. Of course there is also the fact that while going up that hill at close to 100mph, you couldn't see down the other side. **Oh that adrenaline rush is really something!** But you have to put it away quickly because at the bottom of that hill is another turn!

This one is really fast because the car is compressed into the track so the traction is incredible. That makes for a lot of G-force on our body and a totally different feeling from coming over the hill-top just moments

ago. Yes, I was having fun like I haven't felt in a long time. I was coming to grips with the track and only got passed by one car.

OK, so it's the end of the weekend, it's late on Sunday afternoon and it in the mid 90's and sunny. So some of the drivers in my group didn't make this one. Maybe they were local and had done Barber before, so 4 sessions were enough. Or maybe they were from far away and wanted to get an early start on the road home, maybe even make it to work on Monday. Whatever the reason, we only had about 10 cars going out. I was 2nd to last in line, with a silver NC behind me that had been very much faster than me back in the 1st & 2nd sessions. In fact, I think he lapped me in that 1st time out on track. So I quickly pointed



him by and then endeavored to try and keep up with him. A little to my surprise, on a good lap I'd make up ground on him and if I made a mistake somewhere, he'd pull away. At one point about 10 minutes in, I was close enough that he pointed me by. But I held back. I'm much better at chasing the leader than being the leader. Anyway, it was great fun, almost like really racing. I was going about as fast as I could given my level of experience at this track. All I knew about him was he didn't seem to ever make any mistakes and his license plate was from Alabama. So, I figure he had some other seat time here.



Then came the bad news in the form of a text on my phone. Dana had been feeling a bit off on Saturday, so when he got up on Sunday morning he went to a doctor and got tested for COVID and tested positive. Obviously he packed up and headed home. But it was late in the afternoon before I found out, so what should I do? Well, I asked the hotel to give me a new room, just in case I was still OK and made plans to head home. Although I felt fine, I knew the CDC said I should isolate for 5 days after being exposed to somebody who tested positive. That meant that my Monday visit to the best motorcycle Museum in the country was off. It

also meant that our trip over to Fontana, North Carolina and Miatas at the Gap was cancelled as well.

I woke up early on Monday morning, loaded everything into my Miata and headed out at 4:30am. I picked a route that would keep me away from expressways until I got to I-75 down in southwest Georgia. So I went east out of Birmingham for about 45 minutes on a freeway and then turned south onto a two lane road. Much to my surprise, there was virtually no traffic and the road was very hilly with lots and lots of twists and curves... oh, and it was still pitch black out. It was great fun for nearly 2 hours. Eventually I got to the same road I had followed on the way to Birmingham, and with little traffic, it was a fun drive as well. But as we all know, at some point you get to I-75 and the drive turns a lot more boring.

In the end, I made the 10.5 hour GPS estimated trip home in just 9.5 hours. I had a sore throat and I was tired. But it was really good to be home! Tuesday morning I tested for COVID and it was positive and felt like I was getting the flu. Wednesday I was about the same, although I was beginning to feel a bit better by the end of the day. Thursday I was feeling better, but still coughing. But by Friday, although I still tested positive for COVID, I was feeling 99% OK.

So as I write this and I look back over the weekend, I have to admit that I enjoyed the Miata Reunion more than I expected I would. The roads in Georgia and Alabama were so much more fun to drive than roads here in SW Florida. So now I'm even more inclined to get up to Fontana, NC and drive the Tail of the Dragon and some of the other mountain roads in the area. The vendors were nice and the Miata car show was fun given there were so many entries. But for me, the highlight of the weekend was 85 miles (36 laps) on the Barber Motorsports Park track. I'd love to get back to a couple of the other tracks I've raced on that have less straights, more curves and lots of elevation change. But I'll wager that it's unlikely I'll ever drive Mid-Ohio or Road America again. But maybe a track day at Daytona where I get to use the 24 Hour road course which includes the high banked oval.

BTW, David & Janet Keller were going to meet us at Fontana. Since we couldn't make it, and they did, I asked them to write a story about how things went while they were there. It's worth a read (starts on page 21)

# The Other Side of the Coin

By Ron Lindensmith

OK, I'm perfectly willing to admit, there is another side to the coin. Heads is about having the time of your life, going as fast as you want in a car you love to drive and doing all that on a race track ideally suited to a Miata (i.e. my experience on Barber Motorsports Park).

The other side of the coin is tails. What does that mean? Well, it can mean a lot of things. Like the guy who was next to me in the paddock with a used \$100,000 Mercedes AMG Bi-turbo. He didn't exactly have a lot of fun. He came with his car and a Mercedes bi-turbo SUV... another \$100,000+? He had a spare set of wheels and tires prepped just for going out on track and going **FAST!** But that isn't how it worked out for him. His car gave him a number of errors codes and made the car run so poorly, that after just 2 sessions on track, he changed the tires back, loaded everything back into the SUV and headed home. I kind of felt sorry for him... kind of. That day a \$40,000 Miata RF Club was way more fun than a \$100,000 Mercedes AMG!

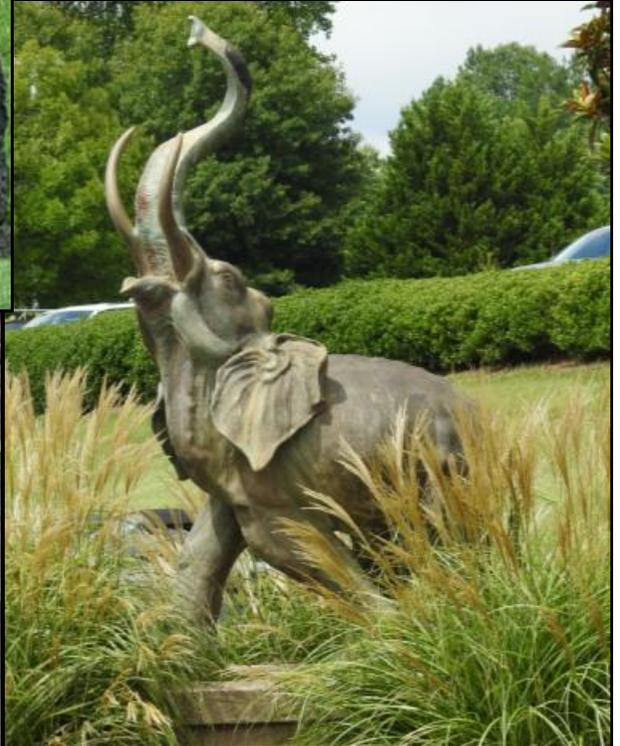
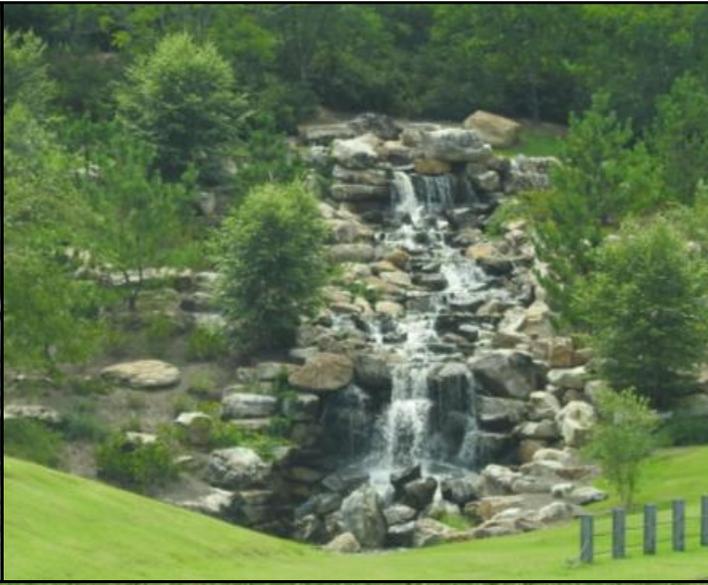
But the real '**other side of the coin**' from having great fun can be really ugly! I really did feel bad for a guy in my group who had catastrophic bad luck. He was driving a light gray ND Miata Club convertible (see photos) with the Brembo Brakes, Recaro seats and BBS wheels. I never got to talk to him, so I know next to nothing about him. His license plate was from Georgia, so not too far away. But he really did find out what the other side of the coin is!

I guess in a sense he was kind of lucky in that (as far as I know) he was uninjured. Others in the paddock told me he was walking away from the car. Just after he crashed I saw him sitting in the car against the wall on the right hand side of the Kink. Maybe a bit lucky that it happened at a fairly slow spot on the track (like 50+mph).



# The Park Side of Barber Motorsports Park





# Car Control Clinic At The Miata Reunion

By Dana Breda

I spent Saturday morning thrashing around at the Jzilla Car Control Clinic. This consisted of four segments, a maximum braking test, a slalom, a skid pad and an autocross course. These courses are permanent fixtures at Barber Motorsport Park and are in perfect condition.

The Braking test course was a dragstrip-type run to almost 3<sup>rd</sup> gear then stopping as fast as you could. My car would seem to stand on its nose with the 245/40 high performance summer tires. It's good to know how fast you can stop but really good to know you can stop way faster than cars behind you can.

The slalom is going through a line of traffic cones on alternate sides as quickly as possible. It's tricky as you can't see the cones when you are very close to them. I mowed several down on my first attempt, but got much better after a dozen or so tries. Most autocross events have a slalom as part of the course so this was good practice for that.

The skid pad was fairly smooth asphalt and was wetted down with a row of large lawn type sprinklers. The idea was to go as fast as possible while circling three cones set in a triangle with sides of about 15'. The front of the car would be kept close to the cones with the front wheels slipping sideways while the rear of the car is constantly sliding in a larger arc. This is done by getting the car loose in the front then patting the throttle to keep the drift going. It's exactly what we did back in the day with motorcycles on a dirt track and was great fun. We also had time to tear around the pad doing anything we wanted; it's very educational and a bit scary to see what happens to the car when all traction is lost at speed and you're just along for the ride!

The autocross track was the highlight of the day for me. It was about as wide as a normal 2-lane road, had 10-12 turns (depending on how the cones are laid out) and one high-banked, decreasing radius turn. I got at least 25 runs at it. I had the option of doing that many more, but that kind

of driving is very tiring, it was hot out there with a helmet on, and you need a break now and then to think about what you are or aren't doing right. The Miata needs a smaller diameter steering wheel for all that lock-to-lock cranking, too! I learned a lot more about my tires here, which was the main reason for doing this series of events.

After the regular sessions, we were given access to all the courses to do as much as we wanted for another hour or so. I was beat after the morning's activities but have a lot more confidence in what the car is capable of on the road!



Me at 1:10pm on slalom course.

(more photos of Dana on the next page)



This photo is not Dana



# So Many Miatas? Yes, and It's a Big Deal!

By David & Janet Keller

For the 26th year in a row (this year from August 4-7), hundreds of Mazda Miatas, their spirited owners at the helm, converged at Deal's gap in western North Carolina. This gathering, called **Miatas At The Gap**, has as a key mission taking on the gap's legendary "Tail of the Dragon". The Tail, designated as US129, is a road situated just over the Tennessee border with North Carolina. It is the perfect road to test a Miata and driver, thanks to its 318 curves in just 11 miles, with no intersections! And these aren't wimpy 30 mph curves; no they're mostly the 15 mph s-curve variety, guard rails not included, that come one after another for 11 challenging miles!

There is more to Miatas At The Gap than driving the Tail. The meeting place for all things Miatas is Fontana Village, North Carolina. Here, owners of NA, NB, NC and ND models, stock, modified, and highly modified, show off their wares, compare cars, and swap Miata tips, tricks and stories. There are group rides and activities, as well as vendor booths for Miata-related products and services.

On Thursday morning, August 4th, we went on a 67 mile group ride across the scenic Cherohala Skyway to the Iron Works Grille, where we had lunch. We went back a different way, which took us to the Tail of the Dragon. Janet, using her autocross skills, made masterful work of the road, taking the Dragon by the Tail! Towards nightfall, we took a pre-sunset group cruise to watch the sunset from a mile-high vantage point on the Cherohala Skyway. (A couple of people took fantastic drone videos of the sunset gathering, but we couldn't find them anywhere online as of mid-August.) We have never seen so many Miatas all in one place. It was certainly a fun, memorable event!



Miatas lined up for a morning group ride



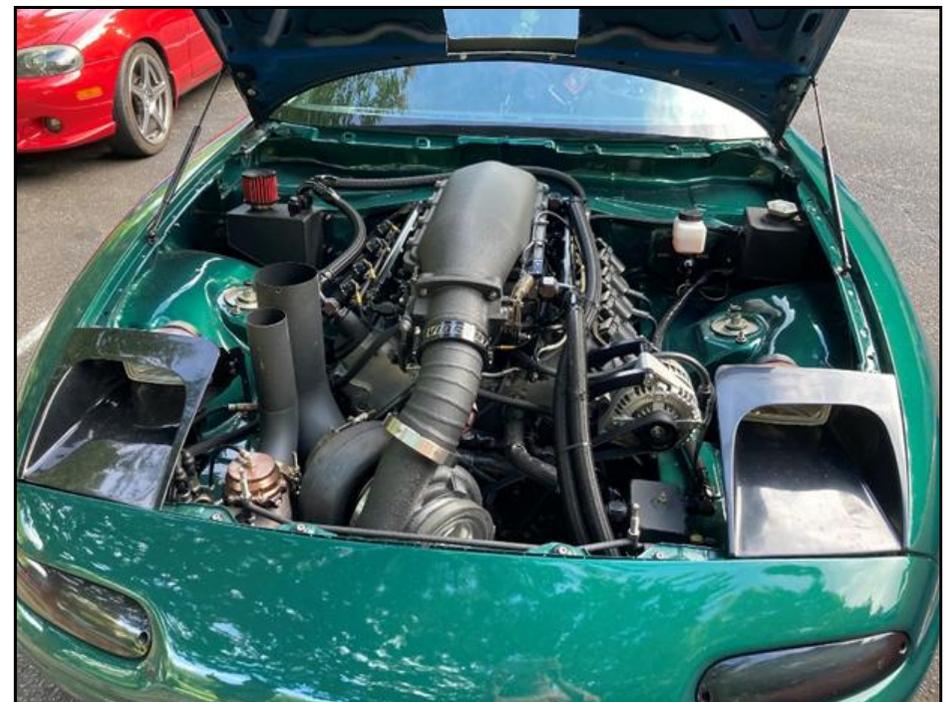
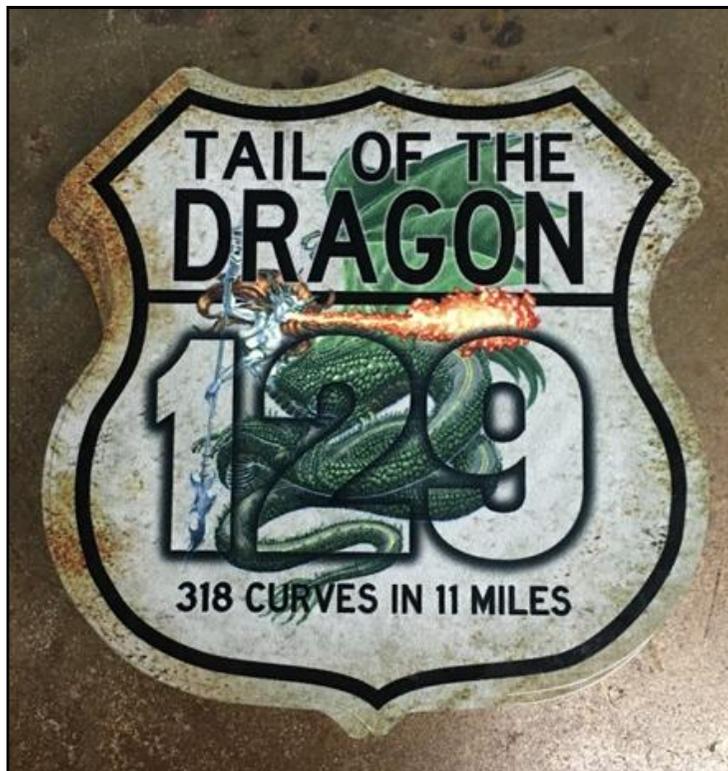
Janet in her Miata – in line for the morning group ride



Lots of Miatas at Fontana Village



Janet and David - after Janet drove the Tail of the Dragon



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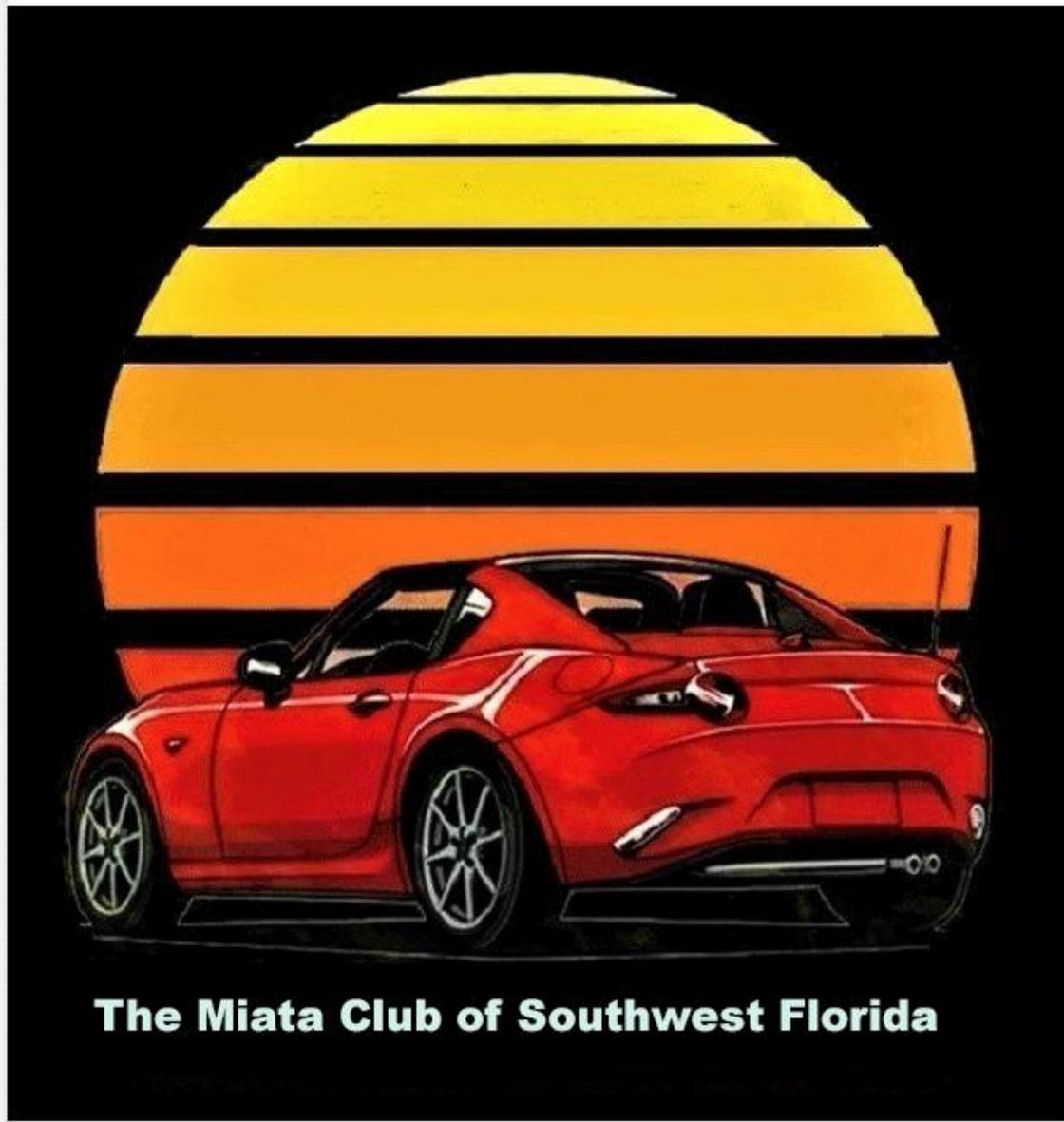
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# Mazda confirms next-gen MX-5 will be electrified

**At least there's a future for the iconic sports car**

June 24, 2021 By Christopher Smith

**Update:** Mazda confirmed to Motor1.com that the next MX-5 will be electrified, but the extent is still unknown. Here is the official statement.

*"Mazda is seeking to electrify the MX-5 Miata in an effort to have all models feature a form of electrification by 2030. We will work hard to make it a lightweight, affordable, open two-seater sports car in order to meet the needs of customers."*

The future is electric, and if Mazda wants to exist in the years to come, that means shifting away from internal combustion power. The Japanese brand hasn't been as aggressive in the electric arena as others, but Mazda's recently unveiled electric strategy shows that will soon change. A lingering question for enthusiasts is how this strategy will affect the much-loved MX-5.

That question still isn't answered definitively, but a recent report from Kuruma-news in Japan sheds a bit of light on the roadster's future. Mazda's electric announcement included a plan to have global electrification by 2030, but that doesn't automatically mean a lineup of purely electric vehicles. Mazda is aiming for an EV portfolio of 25 percent, with the remaining 75 percent being hybrids utilising a combination of electric and internal combustion power. As such, if the MX-5 lives beyond 2030, per Mazda's own word it will be either a hybrid or

an EV.

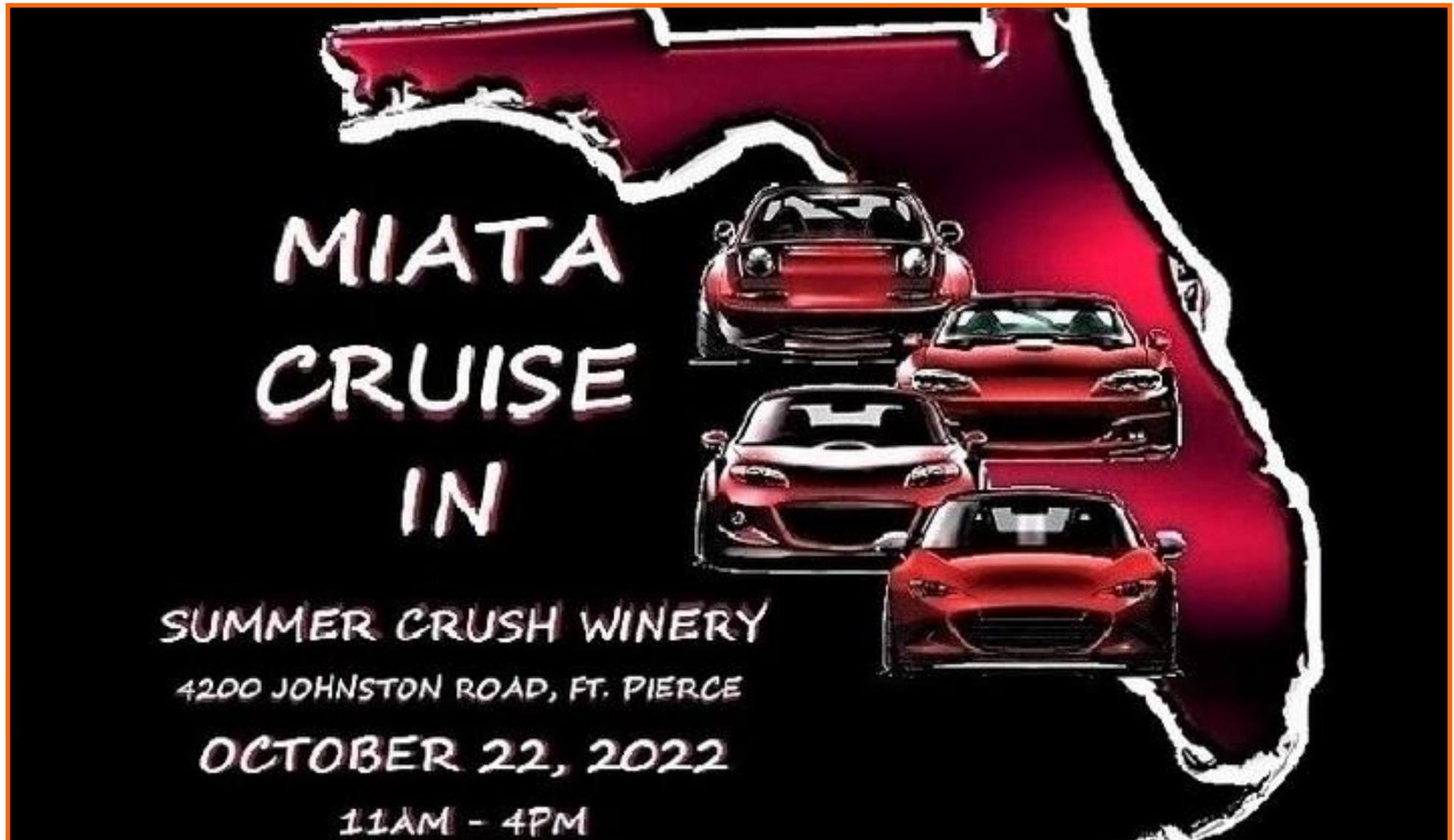
According to the report, Mazda executives were asked point-blank about this, but the response was predictably cagey. There was confirmation the MX-5 was in the scope of Mazda's electrification plan, but the nature of the electrification was left open-ended. There are certainly electric roadsters on the streets today, but the MX-5's lightweight nature has been its claim to fame. Batteries add weight, so whether the future is hybrid or all-electric, a heavier MX-5 seems all but inevitable.

## **More on the MX-5:**

If we simply play the odds, a hybrid MX-5 seems the likely choice versus a dedicated EV. 75 percent of Mazda's 2030 lineup will offer hy-



brid power, and while a combo powertrain adds weight, it wouldn't be nearly as much as going fully electric. It also leaves Mazda with some wiggle room to thoroughly create a new electric roadster to take the MX-5 further into the future. Then again, with the MX-5 accounting for such a small portion of Mazda's overall sales, an electric version might be a better fit for the 25 percent group.



Currently I know we have 4 or 5 Miatas going to the Miata Cruise In and we are all staying over night on Saturday at the Holiday Inn Express in Ft Pierce. They offer a discount if you tell them you are going to the "Miata Cruise In at the Summer Crush Winery".

**Currently I am planning to do a 'caravan' to this event. If you are interested in going and would like to drive over together, let me know. My email is [mrhandyrs1@hotmail.com](mailto:mrhandyrs1@hotmail.com).**

# Key West

## "Hometown Holiday Parade"

By Dana Breda

Hi all,

I'm getting an early start organizing a trip to Key West for the 2022 Christmas parade!

The Miata Club has been participating in the Key West Christmas Parade for 26 years (they cancelled the parade in 2020) and it has always been a fun time! We drive to Key West together on Friday morning, stop several places along our way for sightseeing and lunch, and arrive about 4:00 pm. Saturday is yours to explore the area, and there are many fun ways to spend your day. We usually meet for an early dinner on Saturday before we decorate our Miatas for the 7 pm parade. After the parade, you can do the Duval crawl, or head out for cocktails and conversation. Sunday, most of us head for home.

If you haven't seen them, check out the videos of the parade on the gallery page of our website at [miataclubofsouthwestflorida.com](http://miataclubofsouthwestflorida.com).

I've been leading the parade weekend for the last few years and we've typically had between 8 and 12 Cars. In 2019 several members of the Music City (Nashville) Miata Club joined us and they had 3 cars attending last year. I've sent them an invitation for this year also but don't know if any will attend.

**I need to know if you are interested in going!** I know it's very early, but please let me know if you think you can make it. I also need to know if you would make your own room reservation or if I should try to find a hotel for the group. Room rates went high after Covid and have not come down. Average room rates at the time of this writing are around \$300 per night. Hotels fill up fast for the parade weekend. Those with a military ID card are eligible to stay at the Navy MWR facilities in Key West.

**Call, text or email me if you have any questions!**

Dana Breda

[dbreda@earthlink.net](mailto:dbreda@earthlink.net)

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Times and group meeting spots TBD.

Watch for more info by email.

Gene McCoy in Englewood  
gene@RealMcCoys.org  
Attached are pix of NC 2/3 Progress springs.  
Free to any club member.  
The rears fit NC 1/2/3, fronts fit NC 2/3,  
fronts will be 3/4 inch lower on NC 1.  
Pictures show ride height installed on NC.



# Annual Miata Club Christmas Party

It may seem early but Christmas is less than 20 weeks away! We don't want you to miss out on this annual event and the chance to share holiday wishes with club members.

Here are the details:

Date - Thursday, December 15

Location - The Olde World Restaurant, 14415 Tamiami Trail #2728,  
North Port, FL 34287

Happy Hour/Cocktails 5 – 6 pm (cash bar)

Non-alcoholic beverages

Hors D'oeuvres - Cheese plate and fruit.

Dinner 6 pm

Caesar Salad with rolls, Twice Baked Potato, Vegetable,

Entrée - Choice of one of four:

Salmon w/dill

Chicken Cordon Bleu

Prime Rib

Alfredo Pasta

Dessert - Strawberry cheesecake

\$52.64 per person includes tax and gratuity.

RSVP including payment and choice of entrée to:

Judy Western by December 1.

No cancelations after December 1.

No refunds after December 1.

You can give your check or cash to Judy at an upcoming meeting

or you can mail it to her at:

3006 Caring Way, Unit 306

Port Charlotte FL 33952.

Any questions or comments, please contact:  
Judy Western at justducky1414@comcast.net

# Review: Why Every Car Enthusi- ast Should Drive the 2022 Mazda MX-5 Miata

Or better yet,

buy one before the roadster recedes into memory

Vehicles | July 12, 2022 6:04 am By Benjamin Hunting



The Miata is "a magnificent modern echo of an era of motoring that has vanished almost completely from America's roads."

It's almost time to pour one out for the affordable roadster. While there will always be top-dollar topless exotics catering to the two-seat crowd, and despite the continued presence of sub-six-figure choices from Chevrolet (the Corvette), Jaguar (the F-Type), Porsche (the Boxster), BMW (the Z4) and Audi (the TT), those seeking to score sporty open-air fun for less than \$50K have exactly one option available to them.

The 2022 Mazda MX-5 Miata is the very last of its breed, a magnificent modern echo of an era of motoring that has vanished almost completely from America's roads. Whereas hordes of relatively cheap European and Japanese drop-tops once flitted back and forth across the country's most engaging secondary map squiggles, the attrition caused

by SUVs and the shift towards larger and more luxurious automobiles has almost entirely wiped them off the map.

The Miata stands as the lone survivor. It's a car with 30 years of history propelling it at right angles to current sales trends. Not only does Mazda's roadster survive, it thrives, with the latest edition giving up nearly nothing in its career-long quest to aim a perfectly balanced attack at the nearest apex. Realistically, it couldn't have happened any other way. The Miata manages to succeed where so many of its would-be rivals have failed precisely because it stays true to its original playbook in a world that has seemingly passed it by

## The Miata's Winning Formula

It can sometimes feel like the automotive market only has room for a single anachronistic exception in any given segment. By raising a dedicated army of followers less concerned by the march of time than they are by the pleasures proffered behind the wheel, models like the Jeep Wrangler, the Mercedes-Benz G-Class and the Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat carved out unlikely niches. By leveraging new technologies to enhance old-school driving experiences, each easily outlasted more recent efforts to dethrone them.

So it goes with Mazda's MX-5 Miata, a model that has resisted the temptation to push upmarket and instead cling to the initial vision that has made it so compelling for so many years.

Prizing lightweight design and a simple chassis free of high-tech trickery, the modestly powered Miata (which starts at just \$27,650) simply

has no direct competitors. While the Toyota GR86 and its Subaru BRZ sibling are similarly priced, they are hundreds of pounds heavier (and feature a fixed roof), and Porsche's mightier Boxster is equal parts more ponderous and more expensive.



## Near-Nirvana in a Mazda

Being different solely for the sake of novelty rarely results in accolades for anyone, and as such each of the Miata's counter-car-culture choices serves a very specific goal.

Mazda has avoided succumbing to turbo temptation in order to keep the vehicle's 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine feeling frisky, and while its output might not impress on paper, on the road its 181 horsepower and 151 lb-ft of torque scream up to its 7,500 rpm redline with a smile-plastering swing of the tach. The MX-5's standard manual transmission offers up its six forward ratios at precisely the right point to maintain momentum, regardless of whether the car is hurtling forward at full throttle or downshifting to set up corner exit.

The Miata can easily get away with delivering fewer than 200 horses thanks in large part to its startlingly emaciated 2,400 pounds of curb weight. It's here again that Mazda's engineers have employed the latest techniques and materials to ensure that the car tips the scales at nearly the same mass it enjoyed when it first debuted three decades previous, a claim that few of its drivers could ever make good on.



The Miata hasn't drastically changed for 2022, it's simply further refining its original vision.

Finally, there are no complex all-wheel drive systems to sap front-end feel, nor does the Miata benefit from an array of drive modes or software controls to quantize the content of its character. The only barriers between the road below and the cockpit above the MX-5's chassis are an electric power steering system (not quite as chatty as its original hydraulic or even unassisted rack options) and a new-for-2022 braking system that gently tugs the inside rear suspension into a more pronounced pivot in sharper corners.

The end result is near-nirvana. With the right foot flat, the Mazda Miata feels fun but remains well within the limits imposed by the local constabulary. This allows for the exploration of its chassis at speeds that are real-world accessible, a stark contrast to the terrifying Le Mans-level limits imposed by more expensive two-seat convertibles.

Its tiny size and well-distributed proportions also encourage a virtual Vulcan mind-meld between driver and the driven wheels, a bond that's all too often missing in more insulated performance machines, where every forward inch is dutifully doled out by computerized controls. There's no need for digitized interpretation when even the use of language is obsoleted by the Mazda's direct connection to the road and joy becomes the common currency for anyone lucky enough to be along for the ride.

## A Must-Drive for All Enthusiasts

It's hard to say what the horizon holds for the MX-5 Miata. Mazda is facing the same pressures as any other automaker to boost overall fleet fuel economy while maintaining a healthy profit margin. Given the company's relatively small size, it's certain that these demands exert themselves more acutely, making any future sports car strategy contingent on reading the room.

The Miata has never been a strong seller, but given its importance to the brand's image, that has never been an insurmountable problem. As the sports car pool continues to shrink, however, and the temptation to flirt with electrification or forced induction muscularization becomes harder to resist, one is forced to consider a world where the MX-5 deviates from tradition just enough to launder its charms through the mainstream.

Before that can happen, any and all automotive enthusiasts owe it to themselves to spend at least a moment behind the wheel of what might be the final verse in Mazda's understated ode to driving pleasure.



**ALMOST THE END...**

# THE END

