



# THE Ottawa Tri-Star

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## A Great Summer!

I hope you have been enjoying the summer weather. Things have improved since our last newsletter and I hope things will continue to get better.

Vaccination rates are way up and restrictions are slowly being eased so that we can finally get together with friends and family. It also means that at last we are able to hold some club events!

The club held two events so far, one to the St Albert Cheese Store and the other a drive to Brockville for a picnic. These were very successful and you can read about them in this issue.

We hope to hold more events in the coming months and will be sending out info as the dates and details are worked out.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the SL series cars. I've included an article in this issue that talks to the various versions. Note that the ratings are the author's own opinion. Those of us that own SL's may disagree!

I look forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming events.

### Stay Healthy and Safe!



Mike McKinnon  
President &  
Ottawa Tri-Star  
Editor

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<https://ottawa.mbca.org>

# President's Message

By Mike McKinnon



Wow - what a difference a few months can make. I've even updated my photo to one without a mask!

Last time I wrote this column we were still pretty much locked down and vaccinations were just starting to get underway. Canada is now one of the leading countries in the world for having its population vaccinated. Let's hope the trend continues.

Diane and I both have our second shots and are feeling more comfortable engaging in social outings.

Based on the reactions of the folks who attended the two outings we held so far, everyone was very happy to get out of the house, see some new territory, meet friends they hadn't seen for many months and just enjoy being together. We all had lots of Covid stories to share.

We are planning to hold a couple more events in the coming months. Normally we hold a planning meeting in Feb/Mar timeframe to discuss ideas for events and work out potential dates so we can let our members know well in advance when the events will take place.

With Covid restrictions being imposed and the uncertain timing of what and when various restrictions would be lifted, it has been more difficult to define the details of our outings. The two events we held were planned and announcements sent out on relatively short notice. In spite of that we had excellent turn outs. I guess in part because nobody's social calendars are full yet!

We're working on a few ideas for our next event, including possibly of one that has an overnight element. Details will be sent out once we have them finalized.

At MBCA HQ the Board has been working on developing a new marketing strategy for MBCA. This includes:

- Looking at ways to improve value to its members;
- Improving communications;
- Developing strategic partnerships;
- Improving MBCA org structure and leadership.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

I want to extend a warm welcome to our new members who joined the club this year.

Branden Lepage

David Trudel

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# Visit to St Albert Cheese Shop

By Mike McKinnon

Our first event in well over a year was to drive from Orleans to St Albert and visit the famous cheese shop located there.

We were fortunate to have a beautiful sunny day with warm temps that allowed the convertibles to travel top down.

We met in the parking lot at Place d'Orleans before proceeding as a group drive to St Albert. We had 21 participants in 10 cars. The drive took us along the Ottawa River and then followed some back roads through small communities before arriving at the cheese shop.

Directions had been provided just in case someone got lost and apart from a

minor deviation that the whole group took we all arrived safely at St Albert's.

Everyone followed Covid protocols and wore masks as they visited to store to stock up on some of the excellent products available. We held a draw for a few prizes (cheese of course) before heading to a nearby park for a picnic lunch.



It was great opportunity to connect with each other after being apart for such a long time. Everyone had a great time relaxing in the sun and finally getting to socialize.





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# Drive from Smiths Falls to Brockville

By Mike McKinnon

Our second event this year was a drive from Smiths Falls to Brockville.

We had another good turn out with 23 people participating in 11 cars. The weather once again cooperated and made for a great day.

We met at the Visitor Information Centre in Smiths Falls beside the Rideau Canal. We got a chance to check out some of the Le Boat tour boats based in the harbour.

turn. This resulted in some of the cars getting separated from the pack and some general chaos occurred for a few minutes.

In spite of the misadventure on the directions, we all had a great time and enjoyed getting together for the event.



Thankfully everyone managed to find their way to the meeting place in Brockville where we held a picnic lunch. Suffice to say there was some

embarrassment about my poor navigation skills! Everyone said it was all part of the adventure, for which I am grateful.



Directions were handed out and we started on our group drive to Brockville following country roads through several small villages and scenic countryside.



We managed to find a fantastic spot to hold our picnic in a park located along the St Lawrence River. We had some welcome shade and enjoyed watching the boats on the river.

You'd think that having driven the route several times to plan the drive I'd have the directions correct, but unfortunately that was not the case! In Athens there was a turn missed which ended up causing 11 cars to do a U



### Generation Gap: Ranking each and every Mercedes-Benz SL-Class

*The super-light little roadster has a half-century-plus history—here's how it shakes out*

*From Driving.ca by Benjamin Hunting*

The Mercedes-Benz SL-Class has served as the German brand's flagship roadster for almost 70 years. From its first incarnation as the street-legal version of its famous "gullwing" race car; to its later evolution into a super-powerful AMG-tuned road-rocket, the SL-Class has played a key role in the company's history, both at home and overseas.



the Silver Star's designs to this day.

#### 1989-2001 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class R129

Which versions of this popular convertible are our favourites? We dusted off the wayback machine and dove deep into the past to bring you our ranking of the best, and worst, generations of the Mercedes-Benz SL-Class.

metal.



Mercedes-Benz 300 SL racing sports car (W 194) from 1952 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

Mercedes-Benz SL 600 (R 129) manufactured in 1995 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ



Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Roadster (W 198) manufactured in 1960 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

Based on the W194 race car (pictured below) the 300 SL featured a tube space frame (thus necessitating the unique door openings) as well as between 220 and 240 horsepower from its fuel-injected 3.0-litre inline-six-cylinder engine. The car was electrifying to drive, and significantly more advanced than almost anything from Detroit during the same period.

It took Mercedes-Benz nearly 30 years to make a similarly striking second visual statement with its SL-Class. The R129 wasn't as exotic-looking as its ancestor, but it broke with a long string of boring roadsters that had retreated into a comfortably anonymous sliver of the Mercedes-Benz portfolio. It also brought the convertible into the modern era in terms of handling thanks to a multi-link rear suspension and available adaptive shocks.

#### 1955-1957 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class W198/W121

The Mercedes-Benz 300SL W198 is one of the few automotive icons that needs no introduction. This gullwing-doored coupe arrived in 1954 and immediately made waves around the world as one of the sleekest and most modern designs every to have been committed to sheet

Two years later the W198 would get the roadster twin pictured in blue above; it offered the most powerful iteration of the SL's engine to deal with the extra weight it brought to the table, and would last all the way to 1963. Three short model years were all the gullwing SL-Class coupe got on the market, but it was enough to send ripple effects through time that are still being felt in

The R129, like its predecessors, was available with both a removable hardtop and a soft top, and its clean profile and smoothed-out looks were a distinct departure from the '80s styling cues that had dominated the brand's designs (and gave a clear preview of what the '90s would hold).

Continued on next page.....



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*The super-light little roadster has a half-century-plus history—here's how it shakes out*

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Mercedes-Benz SL 600 (R 129) manufactured in 1995 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

It also featured (briefly) the last manual transmission the SL-Class would ever receive in North America (for the six-cylinder 300SL) as well as introduced a near-400-horsepower V12 (in the 600SL) and the completely bonkers 7.3-litre SL 73 AMG (which shared its 12-cylinder engine with the Pagani Zonda). Most versions of the standard R129, however, were motivated a 5.0-litre V8 good for just over 300 horses, with the 349-horsepower SL 55 being the most common AMG model.



**1963-1971 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class W113**  
Mercedes-Benz 280 SL (W 113) "Pagoda" manufactured in 1970 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

The W113 merged together Mercedes-Benz's two-seat coupe and convertible offerings onto a single platform. Dubbed the 'Pagoda' due to the shape of its roof and greenhouse, this generation SL-Class

continues to enjoy strong support from collectors enamoured of its elegant design.

Mercedes-Benz didn't turn to its racing program to develop the W113, but instead combined the body and platform details of several different sedans in order to create a car that was fun to drive, but not intended for hardcore performance. A six-cylinder engine was retained, and both the 230 SL and 250 SL that followed produced 150 horsepower, matched with the choice of manual or automatic transmissions. The 280 SL that arrived in 1967 to close out the series added a small power bump, although EPA-mandated emissions controls choked out any real gains.



Mercedes-Benz 280 SL (W 113) "Pagoda" manufactured in 1970 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

The Pagoda was a boon to Mercedes-Benz in terms of making in-roads in the American market. A favourite of the moneyed class, a third of worldwide production was sent state-side, helping the company grow in a market that hadn't yet accepted European brands as part of the luxury mainstream.



**1955-1963 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class W121**  
Mercedes-Benz 190 SL (W 121) manufactured in 1961 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

Although it was produced at roughly the same time as the 300SL, the 190 SL W121 differed from the gullwing in a number of key ways. Its unibody design was borrowed from the W121 sedan, it was smaller than the gullwing, and it featured none of the icon's race-oriented chassis details. It also offered a four-cylinder engine that was good for 120 horsepower, keeping it well back from the 300SL's six-cylinder.

That being said, in terms of styling it was a clear lift from its showroom-mate, albeit spread across more modest proportions. Despite its classy compartment, the W121 paled in comparison to the W198, and it didn't help that it was overshadowed by the 300SL when launched at the same auto show in New York City in 1954. Missing the performance pedigree of its contemporary, the W121 is an overlooked member of the SL-Class family.

Continued on next page....

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### 2001-2011 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class R230



Mercedes-Benz SL 55 AMG (R 230) manufactured in 2005 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

The replacement for the R129 went in a much more overstated direction in terms of both design and performance. At this point Mercedes-Benz was gung-ho for AMG models, which meant that for the first time since the original race car the SL-Class played a major role in the brand's performance plans.

Front and center was the 12-cylinder 6.0-litre twin-turbocharged SL 65 AMG, which developed an obscene 604 horsepower and 728 lb-ft of torque. This was the pinnacle of SL-Class grunt, rising above the (up to) 510-horsepower SL55 AMG and the (also-)510-horsepower twin-turbo 5.5-litre V12 SL 600. V6 and 'base' V8 models were included in the mix, too. Eventually, a refresh of the SL-Class added a third AMG option, the SL 63 AMG's naturally-aspirated, 518 horsepower V8.

Mercedes-Benz SL 55 AMG (R 230) manufactured



in 2005 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

Not only was the R230 over-muscled, it also came with the roadster's very first retractable hardtop, giving Mercedes-Benz further ammunition in convincing the coupe crowd to try out its convertible. Unfortunately, reliability and build quality from this particular era of the automaker's production is slipshod, which explains the 2001-2011 model's low spot in our rankings.

### 1971-1989 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class R107



Mercedes-Benz 350 SL (R 107) manufactured in 1971 from Mercedes-Benz Classic. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

The R107 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class takes the second-to-last position among its siblings thanks largely to the ultra-low effort that was put into keeping the car relevant in a changing market. The platform was sold for nearly 20 years as the SL-Class (with the SLC-Class fixed-roof coupe, or C107 body style, lasting until 1981) because Mercedes-Benz seemingly couldn't make enough of them. Americans gobbled up nearly 70 per cent of production as the brand soared in status and became a must-have for young urban professionals and old money alike.

The R107 isn't a bad-looking car, but it barely changed with the times, and after the first 10 years on the market it had begun to get a little stale. With no other similarly-sized European luxury competitor, however, Mercedes-Benz was content to simply replace the vehicle's engine options every few years, moving from a 4.5-litre V8; to a 5.0-litre model

(the 500 SL and 560 SL), with the other side of the Atlantic benefiting from a series of six-cylinder choices as well.

### 2012-2020 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class R231



Mercedes-Benz SL (R 231). Production period for the model series was 2012 to 2020. PHOTO BY MERCEDES-BENZ

Is there anything wrong with the current-generation SL-Class? Not at all. In a world where personal luxury coupes, roadsters, and retractable hardtops have become relatively commonplace, does the R231 really separate itself out from the rest of the pack? Sadly, the answer is also 'no.'

Quick, comfortable, and inoffensively styled, the R231 took the AMG onslaught begun by the R230 and cranked it up to 11, and although it lost the non-AMG V12 on the order sheet it's hard to argue that this car is anything other than lightning-quick in almost every configuration. And yet, its evolutionary design and increasingly insulated driving feel don't do much to recommend it over any of its Porsche, BMW, or Jaguar rivals. Competent, certainly, but increasingly hard to differentiate from the sea of similarly-gifted six-figure luxury two-doors.





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