

NEWSLETTER OF



Show Me Your Curves

VOLUME 4, NO. 11

1996 MCA International Convention



Inside...

MoM's Season Finale Dinner

We re-visit the 1996 MCA Convention





In the Rear View Mirror

Season Finale Dinner / Meeting - November 27th

Our Season Finale Dinner / Meeting took place at the R&L Bistro, last' year's location and over twenty members were able to make it out to enjoy a wonderful social evening.

Potential cruises for next year were discussed which the Council will address at their next meeting and Laurel Bauldry explained the exciting new options available for Members re: club merchandise. One notable observation was the large number of "Overnighters" the group wants to participate in, we've come a long way.



SENIOR DRIVING

As a senior citizen was driving down the motorway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, " Vernon , I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on Hwy 11. Please be careful!"

"Hell," said Vernon , "It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"

Blast from the Past

It's funny how simple things lead to much larger things in our life. Last summer during one of our Ice Cream runs we had a visitor from Toronto named Dave Lean & his wife Karen join us for the evening. We often have guests join us for these runs and it is always nice to meet new Miata enthusiasts and get to know them and their cars. Dave's car was a rather unique vehicle, a 2004 Mazdaspeed converted to Corvette V-8 power, a "Mazdaspeedier" was the phased coined.



This is how it started. Karen & Dave Lean stand back and watch admirers of their "Mazdaspeedier"

Naturally the car and Dave got a lot of attention that evening and during the course of some discussion the convention that Trillium hosted for the Miata Club of America came up. I had always been interested in doing an article on this event for our newsletter so asked Dave, having been a long time Trillium member and past President, if he was lucky enough to attend and perhaps could give us an "I was there" viewpoint for the event. Little did I know at the time I had just hit the mother lode.

The simple answer was yes he attended the event. However, he had a much better insight than most as he was in fact the Chairman of the group that actually *organized the convention!*

Okay, now I'm excited and the questions headed in Dave's direction never stopped and over the course of the past eighteen months or so I've been blessed with access to his personal file with pictures and stories of that exciting occasion.

In this issue we will talk a stroll down memory lane with Dave to try and express some of the excitement experienced by those that attended that particular event.



A Look Back



The year is 1996 and to provide the correct perspective we will give you a little background on the year. Here are a few of the fun facts about that year:

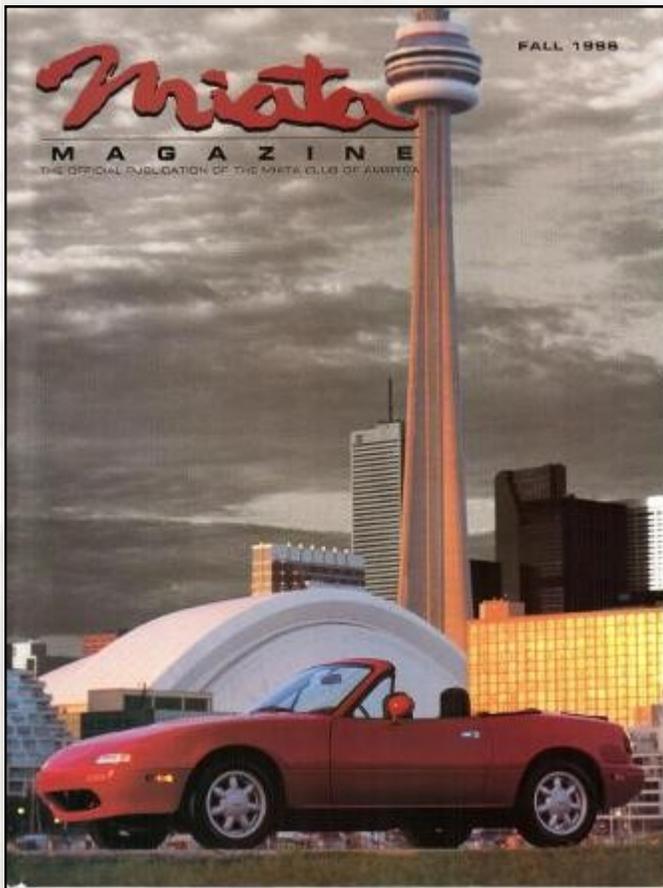
- The Summer Olympics took place in Atlanta, Georgia
- The 68th Academy Awards, awarded *Braveheart* Best Picture.
- Canadian singer Alanis Morissette wins the Grammy's Album of the Year award
- The Spice Girls release their debut single "Wannabe" in the United Kingdom
- Juno award winner for Country Female Vocalist of the Year was a new female artist named Shania Twain
- The "Macarena" became the hottest dance craze of the decade.
- The Nintendo 64 video game system was released in Japan.
- The Colorado Avalanche, after relocating from Quebec City win the Stanley Cup
- Tiger Woods had yet to win a tournament on the PGA tour
- Prince Charles and Diana, Princess of Wales get divorced.
- Independence Day was the summer blockbuster, other notables; Twister & Jerry Maguire
- Most Popular Christmas Gifts: Tickle Me Elmo, Pokemon and Beanie Babies

And of course, the most important event of the year was the Miata Club of America convention held just north of Toronto that July. Hosted by the Trillium Car Club, nearly 1000 people (427 cars) from across North America attended the first MCA Convention held outside of the United States. The Trillium Club raised the bar for future conventions with their four day extravaganza. So we'd like to take you back to 1996 and relive that convention through the eyes of Dave Lean, Chairman of "Miata '96" and future President of the Trillium Club.

The convention was held at the Sheraton Parkway Hotel in Richmond Hill. Featured events included a Dinner Dance, a Trade Fair, Tours, Slalom Races, a Concours and Pit Stop events and Dinner Cruise in Toronto Harbour. The crew from Trillium received a lot of support from Mazda in Canada as well as Japan and of course the MCA.



Cover



The cover of the Fall 1996 MCA Magazine Highlighting the convention held near Toronto.

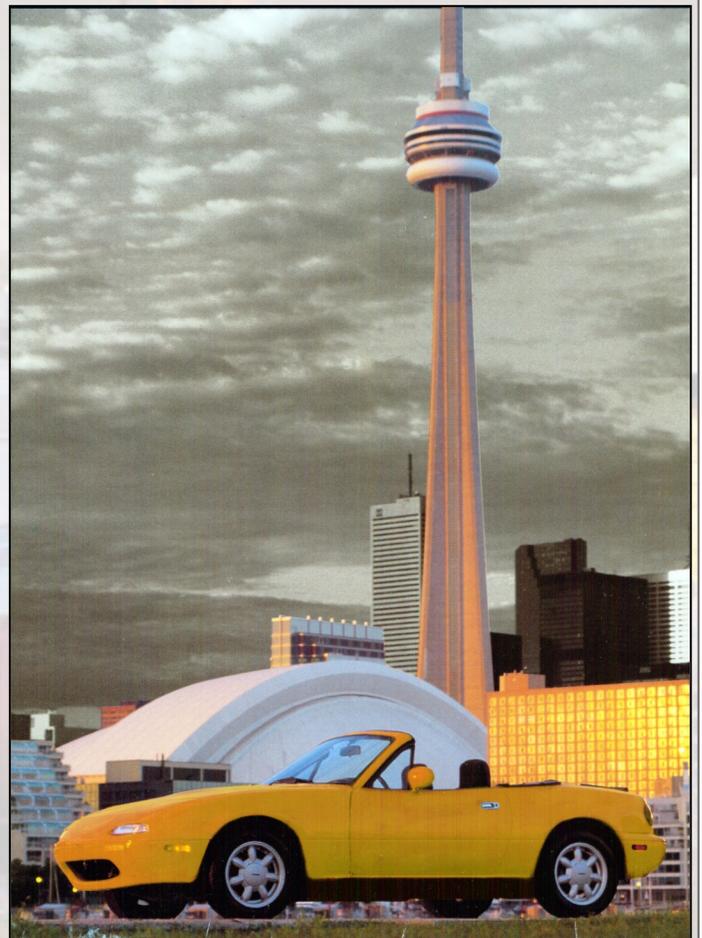
The car displayed here in front of the SkyDome & CN Tower currently belongs to MoM Member Jim Beaulieu.



This is what the picture was originally suppose to look like. The photographer, supplied by the Mazda PR department, to get the picture he wanted, had to get to the location on the spur of the moment.

Tom McCallum, the owner of the Sunburst yellow Miata couldn't make it so Dave's car was substituted at the last minute.

The picture was used in multiple media including, events Calendar, press releases, Souvenir Post cards etc., the cover of MCA magazine and naturally the cover of *Show Me Your Curves*.



Itinerary

In my old days with the Shelby American Automobile Club there was nothing that compared to a national convention and the itinerary for this MIATA event confirmed this event was no different.

Attendees could participate in many activities over the course of three days. The obligatory orientation evening, a wine tour to Niagara on the Lake, self guided tours, multiple seminars, a Concours, model building contest, slalom racing, pit stop competition, Gala Dinner, Dinner Cruise with fireworks etc., it seems mind boggling. They even added an event to the agenda mid-convention!!

During the dinner Friday night someone stood up & asked how many folks would like to go for a driving tour of Toronto at 4:00 a.m.!! Surprisingly, the next morning nearly 50 cars showed up to cruise down the Don Valley Parkway and explore the sights of Toronto without the traffic congestion. How's that for an impromptu cruise? The logistics alone for a cruise like this rates as a major feat.

Some of the activities included:

- Social activities such as the (Orientation) Meet & Greet on the Thursday night
- Wine Tour of Niagara Falls & Niagara on the Lake
- Shuttle Buses to Shopping & Downtown
- Self guided tours
- Multiple dinners over the course of the weekend (Dinner at Rocky Mountain, Dinner Cruise, Mazda Gala Dinner)
- Seminars
- Model Building Contest
- Concours
- Miata Prototypes Display
- Pit Stop Competition
- Vendors Area



The Press

The event stirred up a lot of interest and a number of articles appeared in various print media such as the Toronto Star, Wheels magazine, the Financial Post and the MCA Magazine.



MIATA '96 - TORONTO
 Well, it's happening! July 4-7, 1996. Toronto is hosting Miata '96! We have just sent out literature to all the MCA Clubs in the US and Canada. Miata '96 is coming along just great and we at the Trillium Club are getting pretty excited! Mazda Canada is really putting a big effort forth to help us make this convention one of the best yet. Mazda has agreed to supply us with many exciting goodies that you will have to see to believe.

Though we don't have a track (no roll bars required) we will have a world class Slalom event hosted by Yokohama tires. We have so many "racing nuts" happy. We have so many "racing nuts" happy. We have so many "racing nuts" happy. We have so many "racing nuts" happy.

This event should keep the "racing nuts" happy. We have so many "racing nuts" happy. We have so many "racing nuts" happy. We have so many "racing nuts" happy.

40 Thursday, July 11, 1996 The Financial Post

Autos By Robert English

Miata madness hits Toronto convention

Just when I was beginning to think enthusiasm for the automobile was in danger of becoming terminal, I found myself in the parking lot of a Toronto-area hotel surrounded by 500 rabid fans of a car that is less than a decade old. These crazy-kern types had motored in from all over North America (two even flew over from Hawaii) to attend the Miata '96 International Convention, the annual gathering of the Miata Club North America, held for the first time in Canada, and led by Ontario's Trillium Club.

There were about 250 of us, a sea of little MX5s in hand, and club members Thursday to Sunday, wearing, tearing, and 7 shirts and other Miata merchandise from years ago also spent considerable time at the Karcher center, preparing to compete in the

on the parking lot were certainly odd enough to confuse any alien viewers, not to mention the spectators on hand. I had been asked to take part in a media challenge that incorporated the pitstop contest, in which a Miata was jacked up and two tires changed; the co-conspirator, in which each team washed a Miata, and the slalom, which involved cutting two laps through a maze of orange cones. Our team comprised myself and Gerry Mulloy representing Canquide magazine, the Toronto Sun's Dan Presselot and Rowland Jim Manno, an ecclesiastical character from Lockport, N.Y. We did okay in the pitstop contest, at least after we whined hard enough to be granted a second try.

In the slalom, Malley, who is an old hand at this type of thing, did a neat, tidy and quick two laps, putting us in good shape, we thought. Then it was my turn. Rev-



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 CANADA'S AUTO MAGAZINE \$2.95

NEW GM MINIVANS

IS THIS CHRYSLER?

Chrysler Venture

Miata Mania infests Toronto

For the first time in its history the world's largest single-model car club, the 30,000-member Miata Club of America (MCA), held its annual convention outside the US.

One of its regional member clubs, Trillium Miata Club based in Markham (Ontario), hosted the extravaganza in nearby Richmond Hill during July 4-7. With 450 people and 321 Miatas showing up for the festivities it was also the first "sold out" convention in MCA's history. What makes Miata people bind together like this? "A love of convertibles and a love of driving," answered convention chairman and Trillium club member David Leon.

The Sears Craftsman Driftek Hi Stop Challenge (right) was one of several "interactive"



events at Miata '96. With a pit stop that took "about 20 minutes" an all-female crew were the slowest on record. The time may seem slow against the typical IndyCar 15-second stop, but Michael Andretti never receives a shove and blow dry during the stop (above), and none of his crew is likely to stop to repair a broken nail. Other events included the Canadian Tire Grand Concours (witness hammer-on judges, left).

Miata-fest comes to Canada

The first time the brotherhood of North American Miata owners gathered for its annual convention, the hotel staff were not amused. Miata members were seen riding five elevators and using garbage bins filled with hot water. They were in a similar mood on a day when the sun shined on a weekend of the year.

Richmond Hill, Ontario, is actually looking forward to hosting these kinds of conventions at its neighboring Markham has taken 3,000 feet to host the next event.

This is the convention's first appearance in Canada and the Trillium Chapter is putting out all the signs. Convention Chair-

man, Dave Leon, said the chapter has been preparing for this event for almost two years. It has enlisted the help of many sponsors to present events such as the Yorkville Slalom, the Canadian Tire Grand Stop Challenge, and live all important Karcher Carwash.

There will also be numerous vendor and specialty car displays, and guest speakers at Miata's developer, Tom Hattano.

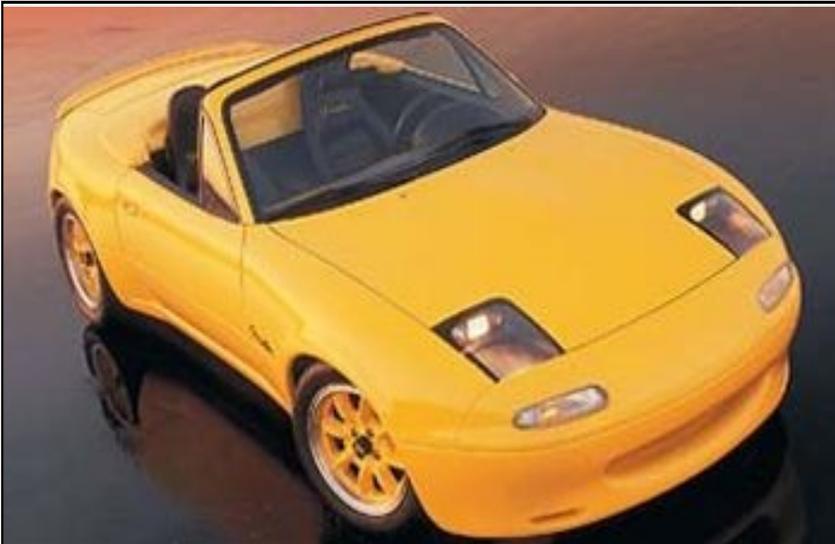
While the convention's social and competitive events are already intensively sold out, Leon says the public is encouraged to check out the displays and watch the competition. The event is held at the Sheraton Parkway North Hotel, far more information call Dave at 905-471-6100 or visit Trillium's web site at www.godolens.ca/~tdh1000/miata.html

Test reports on Hyundai Elantra, Ford F-150, Acura CL and Toyota Paseo.

Exhibits

No convention of this size would be worthwhile without something interesting to view from the Manufacturer. To help celebrate, Mazda Canada arranged for three Miata prototypes to be presented at the convention.

These cars represented all that was and what could be in the Miata world in 1996.



The original Café Racer which debuted at the Miata's introduction at the 1989 Chicago Auto show. This vehicle demonstrated the incredible modifiability of the original Miata as well as defined the future SCCA C Stock Champion's lineage as a road racer. Painted in what became the infamous Sunburst yellow this car featured many modifications aerodynamics, special wheels, exhaust and interior bits.

Another vehicle displayed as the Miata Coupe developed on the NA platform (that's all there was in 1996) it was the precursor to the NB production coupe introduced in Japan a few years later. (See Vol. 3 No. 4 of *Show Me Your Curves*)



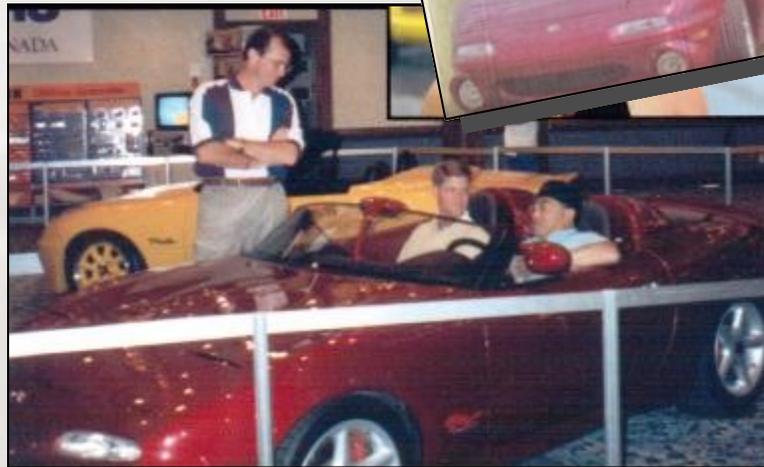
The final vehicle was the M Speedster, presented initially at the Chicago Auto Show the previous year, was a 200 horsepower beauty that many at the time thought would be the next generation Miata.

It even appeared on the cover of *Autoweek* as such but evidently was only used to gauge customer reaction.

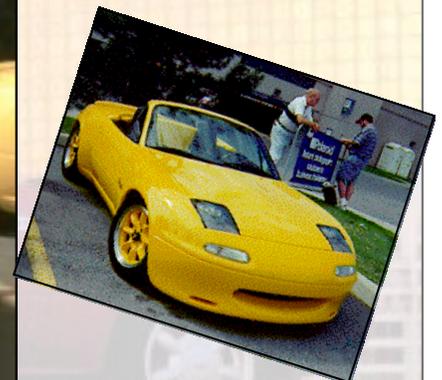
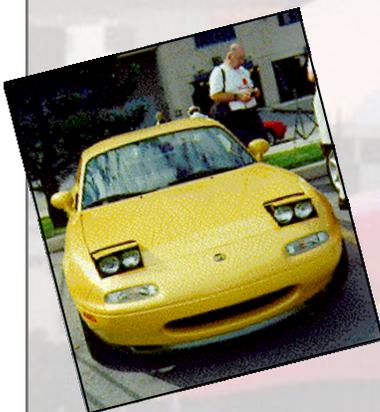


Exhibits

Jim Kenzie, a well known auto expert (and Miata owner, of course) even wrote a test drive article on the concept cars for the Wheels section of the Toronto Star that weekend.



Now just being able to view these rare concepts up close and personal would be enjoyable but how cool would it be to actually drive one? Thanks to Greg Young of Mazda Public Relations these cars were to be displayed over the three days on the convention. They were delivered on the Thursday without any notice and well someone had to put them in place, no? Greg wasn't there so Dave was asked to unload these priceless prototypes and place them in a secure location. The cars were moved from their initial underground parking location to the parking lot for the Media Challenge and finally to the ball room inside the hotel which was accessed via the kitchen, a story in itself. Fortunately all was taken care of without a scratch.



Somebody's gotta do it

Media Challenge

In order to run an event of this size you need money; the more exposure the more money. So the committee solicited a large amount from Mazda Canada and had to reciprocate with some substantial exposure. They accomplished this by holding the Mazda Canada Media Challenge where the various members of print/TV media in the area were invited to drive on the slalom course in five different Miatas supplied by Mazda, followed by lunch of course. This resulted in the convention being featured on the 6:00 p.m. news as well as a host of print media exposure so everyone went home happy.



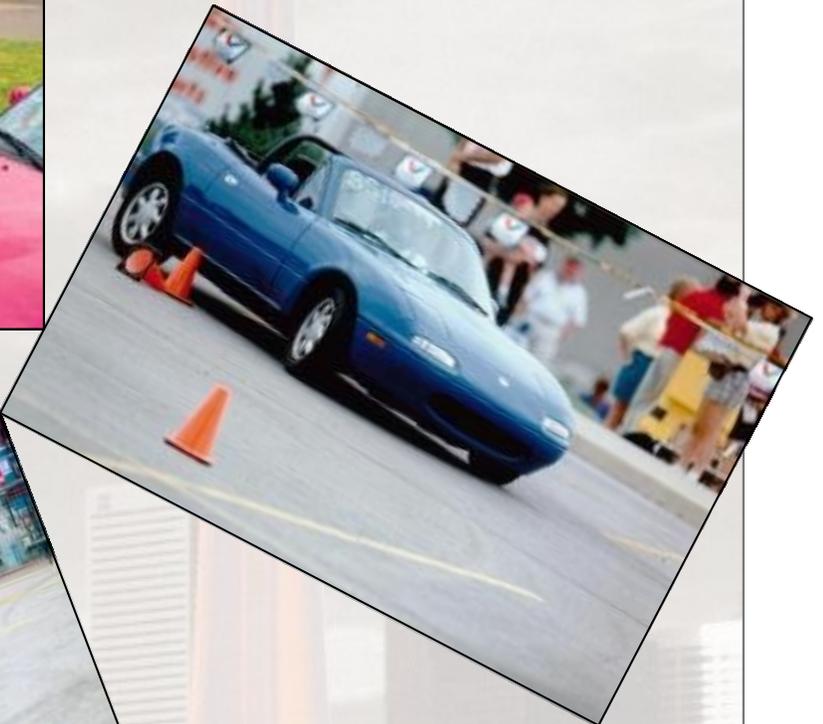
A couple of crash test dummies get into the act

Auto Slalom

Next it was time for the attendees to try their hand at the slalom course and they did, taking over two days to determine a winner and provide limitless photo ops for non participants as well. The lack of access to a professional track did absolutely nothing to dampen the spirits and enthusiasm of all of those involved as the event was a smashing success.



Auto Slalom



Miata Designer, Tom Matano chats with spectators

Pit Stop Competition

A Pit Stop Challenge, what was that all about?



Simply put teams had to drive a Miata through timing lights, stopping in Pit Lane. The driver stopped the car, turned off the ignition, put on the parking brakes and raised the headlights. On a signal from the marshal, the rest of the crew came over the pit wall.

The car was jacked up, and the two wheels on the right side were replaced. The headlights had to be cleaned, and the driver was given a drink - a bottle of water that had to be finished between the two heats.

The tools and tires had to go back in place, and the team went back over the wall. When they all raised their hands, the driver was given the all-clear to start the car and drive through the lights to stop the time.

Team Miata.net1 set a time that was 6 seconds better than anyone else was able to do all day! For their efforts, each member of the team picked up a 105-piece tool set.



One women's team took the challenge to a higher level by providing the driver with a shave.



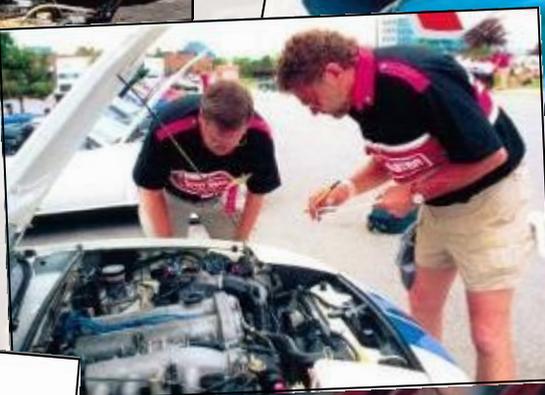
Pit Stop Competition Winners
From left to right: Keith Tanner, Petra van den Berge ,
Ray Glass and Gary Fischman .
Insert: Driver Teri Cardell

Concours

Some of our members like to keep their cars clean but those enthusiasts that participate in a Concours D'élégance are, what shall we say, particular. They take "cleaning" to a whole new level. The convention organizers provided car wash facilities, the Vendors sold any cleaners polishes etc. needed (except toothbrushes!!) and the group was off & running.



In a Concours having a clean car is never enough as judges look for originality in parts, accessories and even paint colours and deduct points for the competition. So that beautiful dual exhaust you added is gonna cost you points in an event like this. Generally, a Concours winner is far superior to a brand new car. Winners were rewarded handsomely at the Gala Dinner.



Vendors

There were nearly twenty vendors displaying their products and services throughout the event. Miata parts, accessories, art, car wash and even coffee (the Tim Horton's booth was a popular spot first thing in the morning) could be had in the parking lot of the event.



waking up Miata '96



Miata.net

Model Contest

You have to have something on the agenda to do if it's raining outside. Solution solved, nearly twenty participants were supplied with complete kits of Miata models and the necessary accoutrements to paint and assembly these miniature babies with prizes awarded at the Gala Dinner.



Seminars

Attendees also had the opportunity to attend several seminars geared specifically to their Miata or experience at the convention. The Trillium Club provided a repeated "Touring Toronto" area seminar. Others included an update on the Miata Club of America by Barbara Beach - MCA; Car Care presented by Meguiar's; Valvoline reps talked about lubricants; Tire-mag reps gave the lowdown on wheels and tires; Shell provided the truth about octane & clean fuels and a local Mazda mechanic was available to discuss Service Maintenance.

Gala Dinner

Attended by the virtual “who’s who” of the Miata world the Gala Dinner/Dance was a huge success. Emceed by the future Trillium President Liz Burns, the group heard from Mazda Canada President Tsuneyuki Sudo; Tom Matano (original design chief) Mazda’s EVP Product Centre (Japan); MCA was represented by co-founders Norm Garrett & Vince Tidwell while Barbara Beach, Editor of MCA’s *Miata Magazine* got a few words in, as well as Trillium President Peter Balfour and others. The dinner was followed by dancing with a live local band. Truly a night to remember.

There was another special treat available before dinner. Polaroid brought their special 8”X10” camera and provided everyone with an instant photograph framed in a Miata ’96 motif.



Mazda and the MCA well represented

Special 8 X 10 Polaroid photos available



Tom Matano and Dave Lean showin' their Miata-tude



Vince Tidwell, President MCA and Tom Matano



Tsuneyuki Sudo and Barbara Beach



Gala Dinner

Peter Balfour, Trillium President, posted this email on Miata.net a few days after the Convention.

During the Convention I was asked to make a speech. Not having a lot of time to prepare, I whipped this speech together at 1:00 am a few nights before the Friday night dinner. During the speech I had my "Top 10 Things You Don't Say At A Miata Convention". Of course stealing this venue from David Letterman. Anyhow, many of you netters out there have been asking me if I would post my Top Ten list for everyone here in cyberspace to see. I personally thought this list to be pretty lame but here it is anyways:

TOP TEN THINGS YOU NEVER SAY AT A MIATA CONVENTION

- 10) Red is an ugly colour. Since the majority of us drive god's Colour Red this would not be a politically correct thing to say.
- 9) So....is this like some sort of club or something? This response shows thatwell you're just plain dumb. My usual response is "no, we just happen to be out for a drive and ran into all these Miata's...go figure?"
- 8) I see you bought the convertible Miata, I bought the coupe version. Do you know what these 2 latches above the visors do? Fairly self explanatory. My usual response is " well, for a mere \$2000.00 I'll make your car a convertible!"
- 7) I leave my top all the time because it messes my hair. Definitely not a proper Miata thing to say.
- 6) I think that people who hug and kiss their cars and tuck it in before going to bed are nuts. These people just don't understand.
- 5) You gotta be pretty stupid to buy all that aftermarket stuff for your car. Some people are sooooo naive!
- 4) Why would anybody buy a Miata when for the same money you could buy a real cool Z28 or something?
- 3) I'd buy a Miata but I don't like them damn gum rotary engines.
- 2) Boy that Miata would look real boss all jacked up & furry dice hanging from the rear view mirror!
- 1) The number one thing you never ever say at a Miata Convention is: " is that there one of those new BMW's?"

There.....I posted it. Hope you all enjoy it!

TTYL

Peter Balfour
A.K.A. Prez Pete
Trillium Miata Club Inc.

Dinner Cruise

Okay so how do you top a great couple of days full of Miatatude?

You take everyone on a dinner cruise through the Toronto Islands stopping afterward out on the lake to have front row seats to the finals of the Benson & Hedges Symphony of Fire. No wonder this convention was considered to be the new Standard for others to live up to.

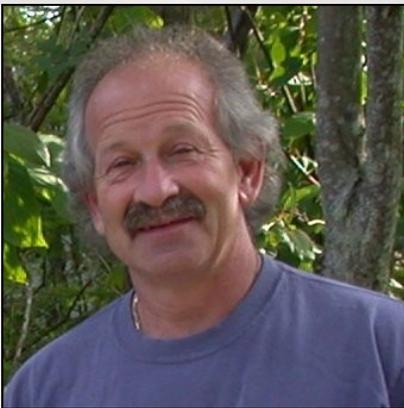


Get Away Breakfast

The final day consisted of a Going Away Breakfast on Sunday that was attended by all. The group had arranged to have photographers take pictures (Slides) of all the events throughout the four days up to and including the Saturday night cruise dinner. They spent the whole night developing and putting the pictures to music so the slideshow could be shown at the breakfast send off. According to Dave, there was not a dry eye in the house, it was the recap of a great 4 days and now it was over.

In Dave's Own Words

It's been nearly twenty years since that marvellous weekend and through this process Dave has re-visited some wonderful memories and had this to say.....



The Success of a convention of this size (1000 people over 4 days) took about 1½ years to plan and over 60 dedicated Trillium Miata members to pull it off. We had no idea how much time and effort it would take, we started off with monthly meetings and then when we got to 8 months before the date we switched to weekly meetings, as the days approached the executive of Miata '96 moved into the Hotel to set up This was a total takeover of the Sheraton Parkway Hotel, the Hotel staff were great and really helped us out a lot with last minute issues. The Trillium members pulled together with little to no sleep and made Miata '96 the best convention ever hosted!

I would again like to thank all the members of Trillium Miata Club for the hard work !

And Finally....

Personally, I wanted to write this article for a long time. My intention was to present MoM Members with a little history so perhaps they could in some way enjoy the experience and hopefully a little insight into what makes up an event of this size. I now feel as if I actually attended this event and enjoyed the camaraderie that comes with being a Miata lover.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dave for allowing access to his personal "stash" of memorabilia for this event and answering all of my questions. He has been extremely gracious.

Now, if you are ever interested in selling your *MazdaSpeedier*.....

What might have been

I find the whole concept and execution of such a large dynamic event to be fascinating and so many people enjoyed the hard work the Trillium Club put into it. There were over 450 cars in attendance from enthusiasts as far away as British Columbia, California and even Europe. The convention was literally booked solid and could not except any more people as the hotel was full with Miata people and the ball room could not hold any more people neither could the boat cruise. There was even a waiting list!! It's been mentioned many times this convention set a new standard for those to follow and depending on who you talk to may never have been repeated....but it could have.

A few years later Dave Lean had assumed the role of President with the Trillium Club and soon preparations were being made for another convention to be hosted. This time in the SkyDome in Toronto for 2001. Can you just imagine 500+ cars on the floor of the SkyDome with the roof OPEN?

The thinking behind the concept was easy enough, the first time is always the hardest so the second time should be easier and both the MCA and the short lived Miata Owners Club were dissolved at this point so there hadn't been a National convention recently.

So where should the event be held? It had to be some place close to Toronto and provide some facilities for operating an event of this size rain or shine. The SkyDome proved to be the ideal solution and arrangements were made, dates selected, hotels booked and preparations for the itinerary began to come together. The roof would be open if weather permitted and on the floor of the SkyDome plans were made for a go cart track, the obligatory Concours and one evening set aside to create the world's largest Drive-In !! Imagine watching Monsters, Inc. (introduced in 2001) on the Jumbotron from the seat of your Miata.

However, it was not to be as the initial enthusiasm did not translate into the necessary commitment from Club Members (and it's a major commitment required) so the idea was dropped and the best Miata Convention ever joined the ranks of "What might have been".



Miata
2001
SKYDOME

