

THE MIATA CLUB OF AMERICA CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

BADGERLAND CHAPTER

Wisconsin was created for sports cars, or were sports cars created for Wisconsin? Either way, there are an abundance of great Miata driving roads: from the beautiful forests and lakes of the North to the rugged hills and bluffs of Western Wisconsin that were chiseled out by the glaciers millenniums ago. Eastern Wisconsin offers lovely vistas of Lake Michigan and Door County is renowned as the Cape Cod of the Midwest. Milwaukee lies in the southeast corner and is noted for its summertime ethnic festivals, Circus Parade and a plethora of excellent restaurants.

Paradise, you say? Well, the winters can be cold, gray, and quite long. But ah! Spring, summer and fall can be spectacular!

It's that first warm, sunny day when the car cover comes off, the top goes down and you're treated to the wind in your hair and the symphony of sound coming from the tailpipe.

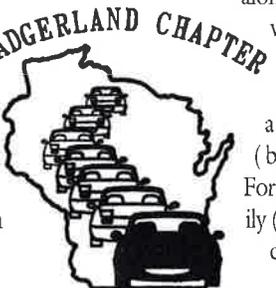
Perhaps this is what causes us to appreciate our Miatas so much!

The Beginnings

It was the fulfillment of a dream! There was my gorgeous, red Miata. What a blast chasing up and down those Wisconsin back roads. There was, however, the feeling that, if others are enjoying this car as much as I, surely there must be some sort of Miata owners club.

After searching all of the newspapers and "car nut" magazines, there it was. The Miata Club of America located in Norcross, Georgia! Hurriedly, I made out my \$25 check and along with it, sent a brief letter outlining my interest in helping form a local chapter. (Note the word "helping," dear reader.) After what seemed like an eternity, it finally came! The official Miata Club of America envelope! Eagerly, I tore it open, like a kid who had sent in umpteen cereal box-tops and finally received his official "Sky King D-coder Ring"! But, what's this? Along with my MCA membership card was a letter instructing me to fill out a Chapter Application Form, including some informa-

tion on my background, proposed chapter name and provide the zip codes of the area we wished to serve. Ohhh-kay! But, that wasn't all. There was another document in that envelope - a computer printout with some 30 MCA member names, two of which were circled. One was the name of a person in Green Bay named Bonnie Corrick with a note indicating that she too was interested in forming a chapter. My name was also circled and



along side of it was the word, "Founder." As I saw it, I had two options: (a) have a nervous breakdown; (b) get to work! Fortunately, for my family (at least, I think so), I chose the latter. As my wife, Louise, is always fond of pointing out, "You always have the habit of 'sticking your foot in it.'"

Back went the chapter application form. After much head scratching, the name "Badgerland"

was chosen. After all, it isn't easy when you're limited as to the number of letters and spaces.

Saturday and Sunday afternoons of early December 1989 were spent on the telephone calling the names on our list. One of the first called was Bonnie, and after at least an hour's conversation, we both knew that we could make this thing go!

Chapter History

The Badgerland Chapter is, we believe, the oldest MCA chapter in the Midwest. By December's end, we had commitments from a handful of enthusiasts. Now, what to do? It was decided to hold our first meeting January 20. The goal was to pool our event ideas and get going. Miataphiles from the Milwaukee area, Racine and, from as far away as Fond Du Lac, agreed to meet at our house. When the 20th arrived, a snow storm was predicted. (This is Wisconsin remember!) By afternoon, it was snowing heavily. Not only were we nervous about opening up our home to total strangers, but, worse yet, maybe we'd have to cancel out altogether. One per-



The beginning of the August 91' tour of Lake Geneva

son from Milwaukee did cancel by late afternoon and I frantically tried to contact Rick from Fond Du Lac. Surely, if a Milwaukeean cancelled due to the weather, he wouldn't brave the roads. Shortly thereafter, the phone rang. It was our Fond Du Lac contingent inquiring if the meeting was still on and looking for final directions.

Our meeting went great and any qualms on our part quickly went away. What great people these Miata owners were. We roughed out some events for the coming year - the first of which was to be a St. Patrick's Day Pot Luck and organizational meeting that coming March 17. Other firm events established, MOMOM (later changed, mercifully to the more mundane "Spring Tour"), a Lotta Miata and The Door Country Trek.

One of the biggest problems facing us was how to handle the large area of Wisconsin we were assigned. A slate of officers had to be developed and some means of communication with the rapidly growing numbers of MCA members that we needed to contact.

Hence our chapter newsletter, "Miata Trails" was born right after the January meeting. As for officer positions, we chose to use the usual titles: President, Vice President, Treasurer, etc., but decided to divide our territory into three areas with two additional vice presidents - one for Green Bay/Eastern/Central Wisconsin, the other would be responsible for Madison/Southwestern/Western Wisconsin.

Twenty-one people arrived for our St. Patrick's Day get-together. Officers were elected and additional events were decided upon. Chairpersons for all planned events were selected in addition to those chosen in January. We found our rallymaster and lovely rallymistress when Pete and Debbie agreed to plan our first "Killer" Rally.

As the headline in the second edition of "Miata Trails" proclaimed, "We're Off!"

Our First Year

It was interesting, to say the least. For our May event, we had four cars from the Milwaukee area including one 1970s vintage Chevrolet hardtop, in mint condition, dubbed "Experimental Miata," driven by Don McCarthy; later to be called the "Silver Fox." His silver Miata, from which he derived that name, hadn't arrived yet. We were joined by two Miatas from Madison and continued our

journey to Devil's Lake State Park, including a trip on a car ferry across the Wisconsin River.

It was after lunch that three of us - Mike Dale, Jim Longo, and I - decided to explore some of the twisting roads through the park, accompanied by unsuspecting wives, Evie, Judy and Louise. What a time we had!

Other event highlights included a track tour of Road America during A Lotta Miata and the Door County Trek hosted by Roger and Dori Butz.

We learned a lot that first year. For one thing, we found out that "rolling car" events are the ones that work best. You can have your picnics, dinners, etc., but first you gotta drive, drive, drive!

Memorable Moments

Looking in the mirror and seeing a string of Miatas behind you. How great this car looks on the road!

The Track Tour at Road America, at speed, with your friends and fellow Badgerland members.

Twenty Miatas traversing the roads of Door County.

Impromptu (some promptu) get-togethers; enjoying our cars and each other.

The Key...People!

If someone asked me to sum up, in one word, the Badgerland Chapter, I'd have to say, "People." Our Miatas brought us together, but it's the friendships that evolve that have been the most important factor in our success.

We believe in having fun. No politics, no back stabbing, just plain, old-fashioned fun.

It's taken us until 1992 to set up by-laws. We operate under the "kiss" principle (Keep It Short Stupid). We don't even have monthly business meetings. When we get together, it's for one reason - to have fun.

Another thing, if we don't have fun at an event, it gets changed the next year. Even if an event is popular, we might change it anyway. For example, our Door Country Trek has been immensely popular. This year, however, we are going to give it a rest. We are touring Western Wisconsin instead. There are some excellent Miata roads over there, along with some spectacular scenery. For those of you with a copy of America's Best Touring Roads, check out Wisconsin Route 35. You will get

a hint of what's in store for us.

Boredom can be a chapter's downfall. We keep what works (with changes, perhaps) and we change what doesn't.

We try to get as many members involved as we can. All of us make a conscious effort to greet new faces at our events. One sure-fire way to kill a newcomer's enthusiasm is to ignore them. All of us have attended meetings where no one makes an effort to introduce themselves. How many times would you want to go back?

The Badgerland Chapter puts people first, our Miatas second, and, we believe, everything else will fall into place.

Who We Are

Our youngest is 19; our oldest is 77+. We're students, teachers, lawyers, machine tool designers, manufacturer's reps, bankers, and computer engineers, and we're retired.

Frankly, what we do isn't as important as who we are. I am continually amazed and gratified to see the friendships that have developed. Seeing the smiles, handshakes, and hugs at events tell me that. One of the most well-thought out and designed cars ever, has brought people together. Without our Miatas, we probably would never have met. This has truly been one of life's finer experiences.

We're drivers, but most of all, we're friends.

The Future

Who knows? We must continue to grow, both numerically and functionally. New faces and ideas must be entertained and accepted. Our leadership must evolve. New candidates for leadership must be found and nurtured. Our newsletter must become even better at communicating with our membership.

We have the people who can do it. Nancy and Dan, Bill and Amy, Mike and Evie, Marilyn and Dick, Bonnie and Dick, Jim and Judy, and more too numerous to mention, have been instrumental in the chapter's success, and will continue to do so in the years to come.

We're 80+ members and we look forward to the challenges the future brings! □

Dave Fogelstrom, Founder