

# W121 Coupe and Roadster

*A 190 SL "Touring Sports Car"*



Bruce L. Adams  
[www.bruceadams190sl.com](http://www.bruceadams190sl.com)



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*A 190 SL "Touring Sports Car"*

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All factory photos courtesy DBAG archives.

Exhibition Car Photos at Horse Farm by Frank Pierce, **A Southern Studio.**

# Table of Contents

## Ein Anfang

## A Beginning

September 2, 1953 to February 6, 1954	
Five Months to Design and Build the 190 SL Prototype . . . . .	4
The Venue – 1954 New York International Auto Show by Dr. Larry Pappo . . . . .	10
Recreating the 190 SL Exhibition Car by Jim Luikens . . . . .	20
Photos - Factory and Re-creation Comparison . . . . .	26

## Kunden-Führer

## Buyers Guide

The W121 Coupe and Roadster	
A Guide to the 190 SL “Touring Sports Cars” . . . . .	42
Buying Your First Classic	
Asking Yourself and the Seller the Correct Questions . . . . .	50
Selecting the Right Restoration Shop	
Five Common Myths . . . . .	54
Managing the Restoration Project with No Surprises . . . . .	60
Oh, That \$lippery \$lope! . . . . .	64
Every Restoration Has a Story to Tell . . . . .	66
Photos - 190 SLs in Art . . . . .	70

## Sichtänderungen

## Visual Changes

Exterior . . . . .	81
Interior . . . . .	107
Engine Compartment . . . . .	134
Photos - 190 SLs in Marketing Literature. . . . .	158

## Techniques Tips

## Technical Tips

Lift Like a Pro . . . . .	176
The Chroming Process for Your <i>Concours</i> Restoration . . . . .	180

Retro Brake Systems – Making It Stop! . . . . .	186
Fuel Tank Restoration . . . . .	190
Safely Installing Creature Comforts in Your Classic Car . . . . .	192
A Breath of Fresh Air . . . . .	196
Cocomats, an Option by Mercedes-Benz . . . . .	198
Moo, A Look at Classic Leder . . . . .	200
The Roser Family. . . . .	204
Shifting Along . . . . .	206
Vintage Short-Wave . . . . .	210
Electronic Ignitions... As Easy as 1-2-3 . . . . .	212
The Luggage Option – A Desirable Finishing Touch . . . . .	216
You Can Learn a Lot from a Spark Plug . . . . .	218
Classic Tires for Your Mercedes . . . . .	221
The ATE T50 Brake Booster: Fifty Percent Less Pedal Force . . . . .	226
Rebuilding the Recirculating Ball-Type Steering Box . . . . .	230
Water Pump Restoration. . . . .	234
Why We Change our Fluids . . . . .	238
Restoring the Mechanical Fuel Pump . . . . .	242
Photos - 190 SLs and Their Owners. . . . .	245

## Reisen von Ereignissen

## Touring Events

3 <sup>rd</sup> Internationales 190 SL Treffen Chiemgau . . . . .	258
190 SLs in Yellowstone – An Intimate Vacation with 76 Friends . . . . .	264
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon64	
The 2007 Hong Kong to Beijing Rally. . . . .	268
Birds of a Feather Flock Together . . . . .	272
The World’s Greatest Rallye – Classic Adelaide . . . . .	276
Let’s Go Camping . . . . .	282
Photos - 300 SLs and 190 SLs. . . . .	286

# Other Books by Bruce L. Adams



*The SL Experience – Five Decades of the Mercedes-Benz SL* (pp. 2-5 and 52-66)  
John R. Olson.  
Published by SL Market Letter, 2001  
ISBN: 0-9635394-2-6

*Mercedes-Benz 190 SL 1955-1963  
Restoration and Ownership, Volume I.*  
Bruce L. Adams.

Published by the International 190 SL Group, 2003  
ISBN: 0-9729420-0-9

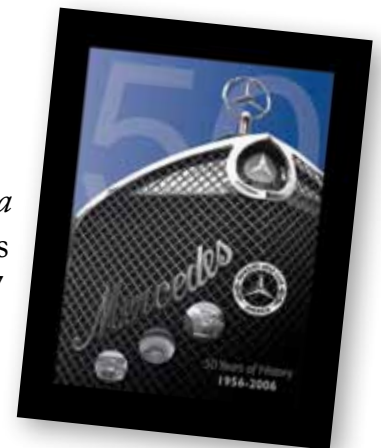


*Mercedes-Benz 190 SL 1955-1963  
Restoration and Ownership, Volume II.*  
Bruce L. Adams

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*Fifty Years of History • Mercedes-Benz Club of America*  
Bruce L. Adams  
Published by Turner Publishing Company, 2007  
ISBN: I-59652-181-3



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Dr. Larry Pappo made the restoration of the exhibition car possible. It was his enthusiasm and dedication to the prototype that resulted in this successful 10,000-hour project. Jim Luikens, auto journalist, covered the unveiling of the exhibition car at the 2010 190 SL Michigan Convention and wrote the follow-up article that appeared in the

November/December 2010 *THE STAR*. Jim's story captures the best of the project and he has given us permission to reprint the article in this book for all to appreciate.

My appreciation to the guys in our Workshop: KP Leininger for keeping the shop running smoothly; Todd Prevatte, mechanikermeister extraordinaire for his component rebuilds; and Sam Jordon for his excellent metal fabrication and paint.

Most of the articles in this book are reprints from my bimonthly "Restoration Corner" column I write for the Mercedes-Benz Club of America magazine, *THE STAR*. My appreciation to MBCA leadership for providing me this opportunity, and especially to the Editor-in-Chief Gary Anderson for his editorial skills. Enjoy the book.

*Bruce Adams*



*Bruce Adams with David Coulthard, Hockenheim Race Track, April 2010, at the DTM races.*



# Foreword *by Gary Anderson*

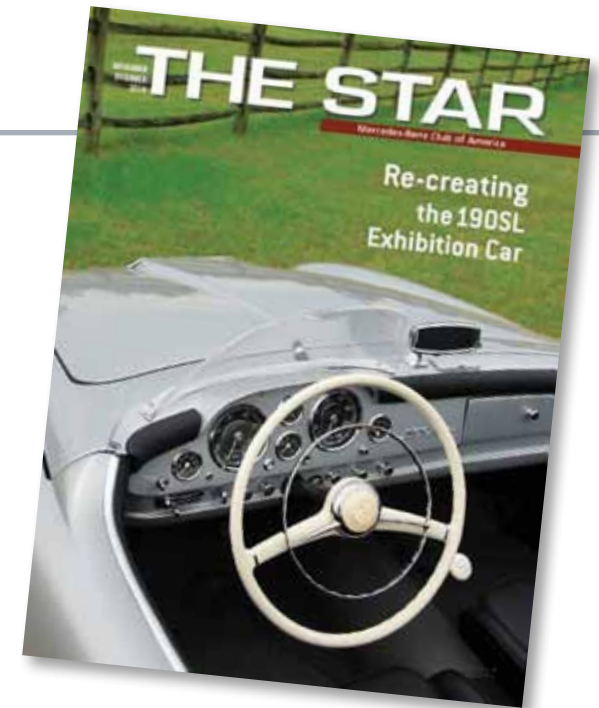
It was only last year that I had the chance to drive a 190 SL for the first time. On a press trip to England, for our drive from Brooklands Hotel to Goodwood in Surrey on a sunny Saturday, we were given the choice of every model of Mercedes produced between 1945 and 1960. I passed on the Gullwings as being too constricting for the lovely weather and too demanding for the leisurely pace we would set, and on the four-seat convertibles as

being too large for the village lanes and country roads we were promised. The 190 SL seemed like a perfect choice for the day, and so it would prove to be.

It was easily capable of staying with traffic on our few A-road transits, but comfortable enough to absorb the cobblestones in some of the villages. With the top down, we could enjoy the sun and the smell of spring-mown clover, and maneuver easily



*Gary Anderson at the wheel of a 190 SL leaving from Brooklands Hotel to Goodwood in Surrey.*



when we got turned the wrong way in one of the little market towns.

This is the charm of the 190 SL. It is not a true sports car, and I believe it was never intended to be. Instead, from the first, it has had the adjective “touring” in its name, as Bruce Adams has noted in the title of this book. But what does that mean?

Everyone acknowledges that the 300 SL Gullwing was instrumental in creating a demand for high-performance sports cars in the 1950s and was the entry point for Mercedes-Benz into this image-creating marketplace.

But what most people miss is the impact that the 190 SL had on the automobile marketplace by creating its own demand. Of course, as we all know, it was Max Hoffman who whispered in the ears of the Daimler-Benz board members that there was a market for a roadster in the United States at a much

lower price point than the 300 SL if they would build one that was small, pretty, and comfortable.

We can only wonder who might have been whispering into Max's ear. The new customer this car would appeal to was the young professional woman who, with the growing prosperity of 1955, was coming into her own as an independent person who would either buy a car for herself or would strongly influence the decision of someone who might buy it with her.

I doubt if there was any accident in the placement of one of the very first production models in the movie *High Society*, to be driven by Grace Kelly, one of the leading trendsetters of the day.

This was Hoffman's genius: to identify a potential market demand where none had existed before, and then define the product that would create its own demand.

Too long the 190 SL has been existing in the shadow of the 300 SL, damned with faint praise as being softer, less-powerful, and horrors, more comfortable than its "big brother." With amenities like roll-up windows, a well-fitted convertible top and an interchangeable hardtop, and a softly sprung suspension, this more clearly was not one of those he-man sports cars that required drivers to endure discomfort in the pursuit of performance.

Only recently have we begun to discover that these attributes make the 190 SL a desirable car in its own right, that one doesn't ask us to make sacrifices. Instead, it rewards us with smooth, pleasurable personal motoring unlike any other automobile of its period.

In addition, it offers a timeless beauty that pleases the eye today and sets it apart, whether it is parked next to a classic of the 1950s or a performance car designed yesterday.

I believe that Bruce has captured all of the charm and charisma of the 190 SL in this book and am sure that it will confirm the affection that enthusiasts already hold for it, while perhaps helping newcomers to understand better the true personality of the car.

Gary Anderson

Editor-in-Chief

*THE STAR* - Mercedes-Benz of America Bimonthly Magazine

*The church is 800-year-old St. Mary's in Chiddingfold, a village of 3,000 people in Surrey.*

