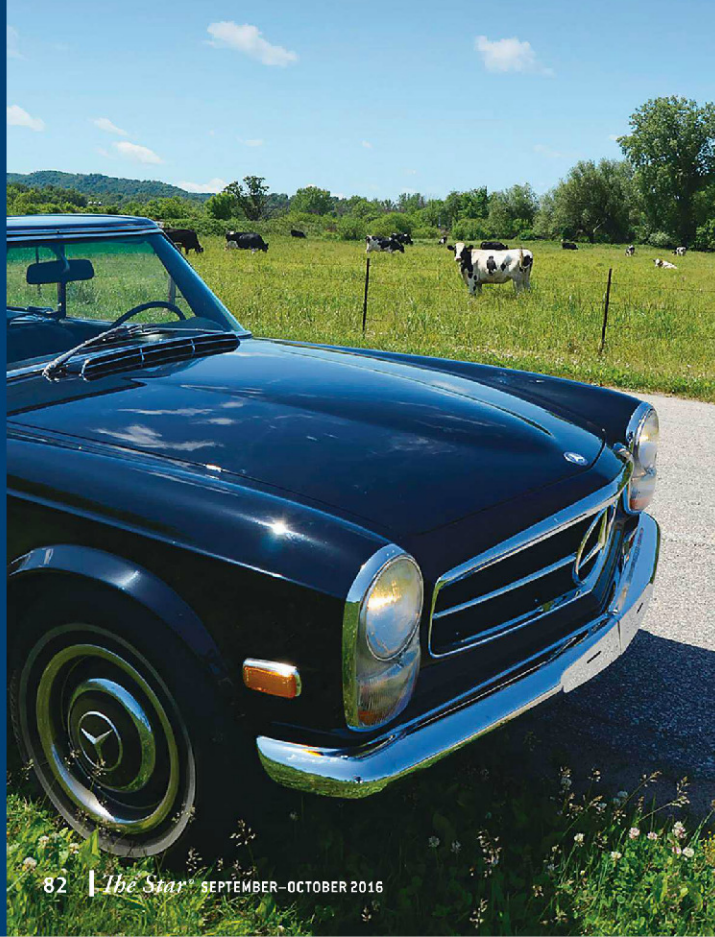


# 2016 Walleye 1000 Vintage Rally

Minnesota's annual Walleye Rally is all about having fun with old cars, driving rural roads and trading tales with friendly vintage-car enthusiasts

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After driving through the six-story deep and 86-feet long Mindoro Cut – hand-carved out of rock in 1908 for the highway linking the railroad station in West Salem, Wisconsin, with a creamery in Mindoro – we descended a steep, tree-lined stretch of winding pavement a little too fast. With my co-driver Terry Kiwala behind the wheel, our 140-series V-12 coupe hit a patch of gravel while rounding a tight switchback.

“Sorry,” Kiwala calmly said after a hair-raising half-second passed as he masterfully coaxed the beast back into submission. It wasn’t the only notable driving moment of the weekend; I had a couple myself.

We were on the Walleye 1000 Vintage Rally, a two-day event covering over 500 miles and traversing some of the most beautiful and challenging back roads in eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Each morning, rally organizer Dave Tobin gave well-organized drivers briefings to help all 65 participants on their way. During the first day’s meeting, held bright and early on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in Hastings, Minnesota, Dave had stressed two goals.

First, don’t get lost. Fortunately, the detailed route instructions compiled by Mark Sabbann, the brains behind the Walleye route, and backed by Michele Tobin’s four pages of 11x17 inch maps, made navigation easy.

Secondly, solve as many as possible of the 58 entertaining trivia questions about sights along the way. We correctly identified the world’s largest six-pack as we cruised by what was once the G. Heileman Brewery, but guessed wrong that the town hall wouldn’t take American money. What we lacked in accuracy we made up for with creativity.

More impressive than our creative answers was the diversity of cars that participated. Open to any vehicle 20 years or older, Mercedes-Benz vehicles accounted for 11 of the 35 cars there, including a 1957 300SL Roadster, multiple R107, W113 and R129 SLs, W126 sedans and C126 coupes (including a very rare 1984 500SEC AMG 6.0 4-cam), and my young timer C140 V-12 coupe. Vintage Porsches, BMWs, Jaguars, a Triumph, Corvair, MG, Citroën – and even a 1963 Maserati – are now vying for spaces in my dream garage.

We were never far from a major city, but the rolling hills, narrow tree-lined roads punctuated by long fast straights and occasional small towns gave the illusion of being in another time and place. Equally impressive were the stops planned along the way: The delicious offerings at the Smiling Pelican Bakeshop in Maiden Rock, Wisconsin; lunch in the historic town of Wabasha, Minnesota; the Pearl Ice Cream Parlor in Lacrosse, Wisconsin, that transported us back to the 1930s as we stepped through its ornately painted wood door; and Buena Vista Park off the Great River Road with magnificent unending views of the lush Wisconsin and Minnesota forests and farmland.

The only mechanical calamity on our antique road show was a slow leak caused by a nail in a tire of Wichita Section member Will and Kathy Tobin’s SL320, quickly resolved with a lightning-fast tire change by Mercedes-Benz Master Tech Andy Nichols and Kiwala. We proved once again that older cars are very robust and don’t need to be cosseted.

MBCA Twin Cities Section President and Walleye 1000 event founder Dave Tobin is already planning the sixth annual Walleye 1000 for next year. This is a weekend well worth enjoying; it was my third and Kiwala’s first. We had such a great time we’re already making plans for next year.



From an immaculate Maserati and a wide range of drop-top and tin-top Mercedes-Benz vehicles – including a gorgeous 300SL Roadster – to Jaguar, Jensen and Citroën 2CV and everything in between, this year’s Walleye Rally brought together an eclectic mix of happy enthusiasts and their favorite cars.



