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Members of the International MR2 Club meet across the country to participate in MR2 events.

The club has a Web site, www.mr2.com, and a message board to discuss issues about the cars they love. The club has several regional chapters in the U.S.

With the club, the Strawberry Kid participates in autocross rallies and driver-improvement contests that help build driving skills. Many of the club's driving activities take place at professional race tracks like Talladega.

Chalfant said he had other interests but gave them up for his cars.

"You can't be in two places at the same time," he said. "When Phil died, I had to make

a decision in life."

Chalfant is difficult to keep up with, since he often gets the urge to go, and when he gets the urge, he's back on the road.

His travels have led to many adventures: some a little hairy, others a lot of fun. He meets many fun people along the way.

One woman he met is from The Netherlands. She is the president of that country's MR2 club. She gave him the European license plate he keeps on the front of Phil.

For fun, she also sent the Strawberry Kid a pair of wooden shoes on the condition that he wear them at the next big meet and that he distribute pictures of the occasion — and he did.

"My wooden shoes are on Web pages all over the world," he said.

Chalfant does more than just

drive his cars all over the country and meet new people. He maintains them and keeps them in working order.

"I always liked to work on cars," he said. "I got my first car at 15."

The Web site offers many technical details on the cars, but Chalfant also is a natural at auto mechanics.

Chalfant said he moved to Gautier when he retired from the Navy and from Raytheon.

He first came to the Coast when sent by the Navy to Pascagoula, and retired to Gautier about 20 years ago.

"Nobody ever wants to go to Pascagoula (at first)," he said. "But after they get here, a huge number of people extend their tour here. It's got a nice, small-town ambiance and it's close to New Orleans and Mobile."

Chalfant



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REAR ENGINE — Savannah Chalfant, 6, is the Strawberry Kid's granddaughter. She is hanging out with "Chase."