

SHELL 4000

*Over the hill comes Alice,
a hārdy type who smokes cigars.
“Hey, there’s a gas tank
back there,” says she.*

BY BRUCE McCALL
PHOTOS BY DES DOLLERY



*Winning Jones Lalonde Studebaker
traverses British Columbia's Okanagan Valley.*

RIDDLED WITH ALL sorts of topographical goodies, Canada links together her vast, thinly populated and sometimes almost inaccessible reaches by a road network ranging from superhighways to crude dirt paths. Early springtime, depending on the province, brings anything from freezing temperatures and heavy snow to chirping birds and mud. During this transitional season the good roads are often bad and the bad roads terrible. A lousy time of year for tourists, but an ideal venue for a marathon rally such as the Shell 4000.

The Shell 4000, granted FIA status in its second operating year, unabashedly ranked itself alongside the Monte Carlo as the kind of endeavor that makes strong hearts beat a little faster; triflers, it was implied, need not apply. Considerable of the organizing and sponsoring Shell Oil Company of Canada's time, effort and money, plus volunteer assistance from some 30 sports car clubs across Canada, went into streamlining the event.

Under softer entry requirements the 1961 rally had been almost over-subscribed. Over 100 cars had started the trip and all but a dozen or so had made it. No such problem faced rally organizer Jim Gunn this year. Only 42 official starters paid the \$100 entry fee for the privilege of running themselves ragged for a week. Despite a disappointing absence of international rallying talent (attributed to a calendar conflict with the East African Safari), consensus was that the drop came in quantity, not quality. Most of the really good rallyists in Canada signed on, four manufacturers (Volvo, Studebaker, Renault and Hillman) entered teams, various dealers supplied samples of their wares, and guest artists from the U.S. included Denise McCluggage and the esteemed team of Dick Doyen and Clay Gibbs: Denise in a Corvair Spyder and Doyen/Gibbs in a V-8 powered Chevy II, both prepared by Toronto Chev dealer A. D. Gorrie Ltd. Gorrie also furnished the Jarman/Hambly Chevy II.

Peter Ryan, Canada's adopted boy wonder of the racing world, added color with a melodramatic last-minute agreement to make his first rallying start a do-or-die effort for dear old Austin Motor Company of Canada, which provided a Mini-Cooper and Toronto navigator Mike Kerry for the purpose.

This year's expedition followed much the same pattern as the 1961 run: a 4100-odd mile, week-long trek westward from Montreal to Vancouver, sliced into seven cities along the all-Canadian route. Timed to the minute by an elaborate network of Longines equipment specially imported for the job, this rally plainly placed equal burdens on driver and navigator, and to hell with the split-second jazz. In the unlikely event of ties on the road sections, special fun and games—driving skill tests, hill climbs, etc.—appeared here and there on the schedule, to be used in scoring only if needed to break deadlocks.

Prize money amounting to \$500 for the overall winners and various lesser sums for class wins *et al* added to incentive, the organizers felt, without making the rally a blatant treasure hunt.

Three thousand wet Montrealers loyally gathered at the start on Saturday evening. Omen-seekers had a field day; not only had rain drizzled down all night, but somebody had forgotten the traditional starting flag and the loudspeaker system fizzled. But promptly at 8 p.m. the Charters/Worth team Renault descended the starting ramp, beeped its horn and made haste slowly to Vancouver.

On its only overnight haul, a 16-hour ramble to Toronto, the rally tooled northeast of Montreal into the Laurentian foothills over twisty, narrow Quebec roads, then through eastern Ontario. Done in rain and fog at average speeds of 30-40 mph, this section unexpectedly proved crucial—an almost unfair blow to those looking forward to a few hours' grace prior to the first ugly moments.

By midnight Saturday the McCluggage/Stuart Corvair had turned into casualty number one. Barely out of Montreal's



Doyen/Gibbs Chevy II hurdles eastern Ontario hill on first leg of rally.

city limits, the ill-starred Corvair took a chunk of concrete, thrown up by a passing truck, directly in the gas tank. Compounding the consternation, the determined Miss McCluggage shortly thereafter ran smack out of road near a place called Joliette and, as they say in old Quebec, *voilà!*—into the ditch. This same spot also claimed the Bickham/Bickham Mercedes 190-SL. The Bickhams elected to retire but Denise, though now dnf, forged on.

At 4 A.M. Ryan and navigator Kerry dashed into the Ottawa breakfast stop, ordered breakfast, cancelled it, and tore off into the dawn. Under drying skies the balance of Sunday's run over gravel roads in the Rideau Lakes country proved uneventful. Ryan/Kerry, now troubled with an oil leak in the Mini, puttered into the Toronto time control ahead of the pack to finish the first day's run. It had been a rather nasty night; with two cars already well down in points, the Studebaker team's chances were shot, and even the crack Howell/Silvera crew had gone awry to damage the Volvo contingent's hopes. Penalty points were flying about like confetti.

Next section, a 12-hour haul to Sault Ste. Marie, justified its role in the rally with a brief, sump-smashing interlude on seldom-used forest roads near Gravenhurst.

Crash landings punctuated the morning calm as car after car slammed over frost boils or bottomed on boulders sunk in dips invisible to the eye. Crash! went the Lemieux/Wilson Acadian (a slightly Canadianized Chevy II), and rattled to a stop to inspect the damage. Crunch! went the Chenhall/Wilson Acadian, which kept going. Crash! went the Alice Fergusson/Mary Clark Studebaker. Lemieux and Wilson studied a warped wheelrim, then noticed flapping straps and a cavity where the gas tank used to be.

Over the hill comes Alice, a hardy type who smokes cigars. "Hey, there's a gas tank back there!" says she. It is to laugh; there were two, Lemieux/Wilson's corrugated version and the departed Chenhall/Wilson's intact one. Onto the Lemieux/Wilson Acadian goes the Chenhall/Wilson tank, and on with the chase. Much later, thanks to an auxiliary supply, the chagrined Chenhall and Wilson noticed something missing. By then they were in North Bay, where it was simpler just to buy a new tank.

Doyen and Gibbs, those old smoothies who until now had been running clean with no signs of fallibility, wheeled into North Bay to find they had missed a checkpoint, lost 150 points and been thrown back among the also-rans. A harsh blow, but they were in good company; the morning's play sank many fortunes. A bashed radiator ousted the Johnson/Dunsire Hillman Super Minx, hauling down with it the entire Hillman team's chances and leaving the Renaults sitting pretty. A bleak afternoon's drive to Sault Ste. Marie began in driving rain and ended with the first flurries of an approaching blizzard.

Official standings Tuesday morning left 38 cars still in the running, but 12 of these had already been declared dnf for the rally and were continuing solely out of enthusiasm. After a timing mixup had been uninked, Ryan/Kerry were

leading, with the Trant Jarman/Don Hambly Chevy II second and assorted Volvos and a private Citroen close behind.

The rally's worst driving conditions—ice under snow with high winds blasting off Lake Superior—prevailed through Tuesday morning on the bleak run toward Fort William-Port Arthur. Yet except for some minor slides it was an uneventful if fatiguing day's ride, eventually ending in Winnipeg some 18 hours after it began and having covered nearly 900 miles. Ahead lay the long grind over the prairies.

The thousand miles of flat, featureless land from Winnipeg to Calgary lies under broiling sun in summer, heavy snow in winter, and mud under snow in spring. Into this deceptive morass the rally suddenly waded for two meaningful stretches.

Near Brandon, Manitoba, on a sunny Wednesday morning Ryan/Kerry sank up to their hubs in a thick, greasy brand of mud known as gumbo which chokes concession roads each spring. There they floundered for half an hour. Behind and ahead of them, similar disasters had befallen others who had blithely run on over the snow, only to break through the crust into the clinging slop. Jarman/Hambly in the Chevy II, leading now and playing it smart, took one look and a detour in rapid succession—only to find at the next control they hit that they'd missed a checkpoint. Jarman merrily laughed and floored it to retrace his tracks, hitting the elusive control from the wrong direction. Fifty points, please. A further snafu piled on more penalty points and into the lead eased Lou Lalonde and John Jones of Toronto in the Studebaker Lark that was eventually to win.

Impassable roads in the Qu'Appelle Valley near Regina forced use of an alternate route through Saskatchewan, and as the rally headed into Alberta toward the distant Rockies the worst of it seemed behind.

But, rerouted again due to clogged roads in the Bow River country, the pack once more churned over isolated ranch roads whipped into muddy pudding. Winter Rally winners Paul MacLennan and Art Dempsey, well up among the leaders in their team Volvo 122-S, lost momentum and mired themselves in for an overnight stay, struggling into Calgary just in time to start the next day's section. The Skoda team of Vaclav Bobek from Czechoslovakia and Montreal navigator Joe Muzuch managed to work themselves out and reach Calgary by nightfall. But when Muzuch bent down to remove his shoes that night he found instead a pair of mud-encrusted socks on his feet; his footwear lay somewhere north of Calgary.

The scene was repeated Friday morning, and once again Ryan and Kerry in the ground-hugging Mini were stranded. The three-car Renault team, sticking close together in a form of mutual protection, merely organized its six crew members and lifted one another out of the mud.

But anon, as the poets say, the Rockies loomed ahead. Through scenery as placid and majestic as the mud had been depressing and harsh, the mud-stained caravan sped to Trail, B.C., and the Friday night stopover.

About the closest the Shell 4000 came to European roads was



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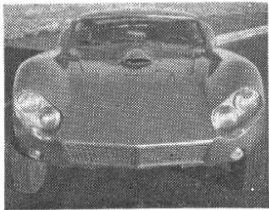
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SHELL 4000 *continued*

Saturday morning, with a 50-mile trip through the Cascades. Natives will detour hundreds of miles to avoid this drive most of the year; it's a gravel trail swirling up a mountainside, corkscrew fashion, high enough to catch snow, ice and fog in bad weather, and in any weather the unfenced roadside overlooks a drop of several thousand feet. Mercifully for acrophobiacs, the Cascades were encountered under cover of early-morning darkness and no incidents were reported.

With straightforward instructions, pleasant weather and smooth, sporting road, about the only concern on Saturday morning was a possible uprising by the Doukhobours, a local religious sect given to spasmodic larks such as toppling hydro towers or burning down buildings. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police seemed to be keeping them under control, however—when not otherwise occupied with nailing speeding rallyists on Mountie-policed western highways.

From Penticton to Princeton on a road that barely qualifies for the map lay the rally's final test; a lumpy, serpentine, rock-studded trail where Ryan and Kerry and the dogged little Mini finally came to grief. Plagued by a balky transmission, Ryan jammed the lever into third as the best all-around choice and shortly blew the clutch.

Twenty-four bent, battered cars hit the final Vancouver control in heavy rain late Saturday afternoon to complete the Shell 4000 Rally. Lalonde and Jones, second in 1961 and running with virtually no more elaborate navigational gear than a Halda and a pencil and paper, were declared overall winners in their Studebaker Lark. Second was one of the surviving Volvo team cars crewed by Jerry Polivka and Charlie Bick, also from back east. Jarman and Hambly had worked their way back up to third.

Manufacturers' prize winners were the well-prepared cagily handled Renault 1093s from Montreal—but not without a last-minute suspenseful touch. With its two teammates home free the Charters/Worth Renault had sagged to a halt 100 miles from Vancouver with engine trouble, a certain dnf. Then, like the U.S. Cavalry in the movies, the factory service truck trundled into view, to the rescue. Inside an hour the traveling mechanic had replaced the car's three main bearings and the car arrived in Vancouver, late but, thankfully, still in the running.

Thus concluded what was generally agreed to be the best rally ever run in Canada. The good word from Shell is that next year's event is already in the works.

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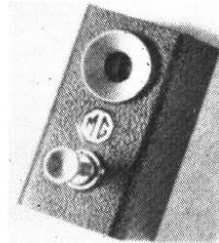
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