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MAGAZINE

JUNE

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Shell 4000 Centennial Rally



Rosemary Smith's Imp

Roger Clarke and Jim Peters Cortina

Booker Hawkins on the David Thompson Highway.

1967 SHELL CENTENNIAL 4000 DIARY.

by ED DEAK

The following story is not the impartial, objective report of a rally one may expect to find in a motorsport publication. Don Lamont and I have competed in it, which makes us very much partial. It is the recounting of events as we have seen it, perhaps the worm's eyeview, perhaps biased, perhaps the windshield of car 139 was too muddy to offer a clear view. Nevertheless, dear reader, you are invited to share it.

MAY 3. Off at last. If we forgot anything, it is too late now. The dice has been cast and now we can only sit tight to see which number comes up.

Westwood is the first Closed Section. We look at the demanded lap speed in our Class: 1:36. If the car was in racing trim, with only the driver, it could perhaps do it. With two up, 13 gals. in the tank, snowtires all round, ropes, winch, spareparts etc., etc., we are happy to do around 1:50, which is about the same our team mates are doing. We lose about two mins., six points in a Closed Section, fourteen less than we would have received in an open section. The other Classes are doing equally poorly, so nobody worries.

Mission, across the Fraser and up Sumas Mountain we go in five mins. with ease. The Hondorf-Merriman Isuzu GT rolls here, after the tight section, and is out. John Merriman is doing shorter 4000-s each year.

The planned Closed Section over Coquihalla Pass is cancelled because of deep snow and we take the alternate route over the Hope-Princeton Hwy. The weather

is beautiful and we feel great. But at Princeton disaster strikes. At the Princeton CP I get out of the car like in a daze and conditioned by the reflexes of countless CP-s in local rallies, I check in on arrival 12 mins. early. The great feeling is over and it will never return on this rally. Don is great about it, though with the moving of one finger I manage to ruin the work of days.

The Tulameen road is dusty, but we zero in all the way. A cowboy manages to hold up a lot of cars. We are early and get by him. At one place we take off and jump about 25-30 feet and land with a bone jarring crash. Miles behind us Eppie Wietzes is piloting the huge Tornado towards it's doom over this same jump which shatters the engine mounts.

The dustbanners rise over Douglas Lake, Falkland, Vernon and then to the day's end at Kelowna.

MAY 4. The day is only two hours old as the engines come to life, one after the other and the cars take off over the wet, snowy corkscrew roads to Beavercreek and Carmi. The first, climbing part, is difficult but the rest is paved now and all the cars have time to waste at Greenwood the beginning of the tough Phoenix Mines road. Pat Onions from North Bay sails off ahead of us and burns up a piston of the Triumph 2000 within half a mile. We are doing well . . . "Bear left at 4.10" . . . "Bear right - Caution at 4.68" . . . The mileage comes up, but no bear right! The first thing that comes in mind is that we are on the wrong road. One of the factory VW-s,

Menzel and Smith, go up to the Lookout, but there's nothing there, the Rambler of Siivonen and Jones is also lost. We go back to the previous mileage and retrace our steps. Can't find anything wrong, so we keep on the first road we were on and find our way down. We lose five mins. and swear bitterly, but so many cars have practiced this road and have pace notes and so many are following them that later our screams fall unto deaf ears. (It still was a wrong instruction. When the crews have to rely on their own ingenuity to discern which is the right and which is the wrong instruction, which one to follow and which one to ignore, there's no contest.)

The Cascades Closed Section looms up ahead. The road is good to begin with, but nearing the Santa Rosa Summit we run into deep snow which slows the cars considerably. We overtake a couple of cars and coming around a bend towards the end there's a Lotus Cortina across the road and a pair of female type figures frantically waving. Anita Taylor's car. No time to sympathize. Don scrapes by with about $\frac{1}{4}$ " to spare. At the lunchstop at Kimberley I ask Roger Taylor if he knows what has happened to the girls. All he heard was that they had a flat. "Well", says I, "I wouldn't stop across the road in a Closed Section with only a flat". "Neither would I", says Roger "but then I don't know what a woman would do". It was a flat tire alright. Miss Taylor elected to finish the section on it, the tire came off the rim, jammed up the works and cut the brakeline. The damage is repaired and the girls carry on, but later in Ontario they get lost, mired and out, thereby ending Ford's bid for a second team victory in row.

The weather turns beautiful as we pass Radium Hot Springs, Lake Louise and then cut East on the road to Nordegg. This partially completed road follows the valley of the South Saskatchewan River. The long, dusty gravel sections are detoured around uncompleted bridges over muddy potholed, springbusting tracks. Several cars end the rally here, including the Super Anglia of Don Grey, the dean of the Canadian motorsport journalists, who has covered all Shell 4000-s and took a shot at competing it for the first time. The engine moves forward in a pothole and the fan cuts a neat circle out of the rad.

At Nordegg a Shell tanker is waiting and we start on a pair of new Closed Sections through Clearwater Forest and Corkscrew Mountain. Deep snow slows us considerably. The smaller engines don't have the torque to cut through the hard snow, the large cars don't have the traction. A perfect stalemate.

Long, endless stretches take us to Red Deer. The story of the next few days.

MAY 5. Boring Prairie miles, dust, ceremonies at Edmonton, the trusty old Closed Section at Wainwright and then more boring Prairie miles and dust.

MAY 6. In the light of the early dawn the cars sail over the deep sand of Dundurn Closed Section and then take the mainroad to Davidson Racing Circuit for ten laps. The circuit is an abandoned airfield where a few chicane are laid out over a triangle of broken up runways. A bitterly

cold, wet and sad place. The poor marshals are just about frozen stiff.

The procession blows into Regina for food and more ceremonies at the Legislature and then take off East toward the Qu'Appelle Valley. This, over a hundred mile stretch of dirt road, must have been a sea of mud only a few days ago, but by now it is hard as rock until it gives way to the sands of Spy Hill. So up North we go in search of some action to the Closed Section at Riding Mountain Park, another old friend. The Section is dry, but a deep layer of sand has been spread over the second half of it and a couple of metal culverts that jar the bones out of our backs and a few more suspensions go on the blink.

MAY 7. The competing cars push out of the city long before daybreak and work East over a series of easy gravelroads to Winnipeg, breakfast and more ceremonies.

Sandilands Closed Section is next, which is always good for a thrill or two. Unfortunately, extensive flooding prevents the use of the originally planned route and we take the alternate of smooth, straight gravel roads. As one driver describes it later, it was "two fifteen mile straights with a jog in the middle". Great for the big bores, but frustrating for us small 'uns who thrive on curves, and rough roads.

Now comes the scenic drive to Fort William with a few interesting, tough miles just before the city, but car and driver are in good shape and we do it without sweat.



Jean-Claude Ogier in the Riding Mountain section with their Citroen.



Schulz and Manson put up tough competition to winners. Here it looks like they even tried flying in a bid to win. At one place they rolled their Datsun and still ended up at check point on time.

The only casualty is one of the rubber bushings on the bottom of our left front shockabsorber, so while a set of new tires goes on the shock is also changed.

MAY 8. It seems we hardly put our heads on the pillow before our guardian angel, Doug Wilson is ringing to get up. What a miserable hour in the morning. About three dozen brisk miles out of town, a CP and the beginning of what may turn out to be a tough piece of road. We are still way down on account of my Princeton goof and are praying for some solid action. We have about two mins. in hand when a huge pond appears across the road. Don eases the car in, but the thing is deeper than it looks. The water comes over the car and the next moment we are drowned out. Donnie baby jumps out and over the hood to dry the wires. Roar in the distance. The Volvo of the Edmontonians Bartels and Stibbard hits the water, the wave just about floods us, the Volvo coughs and splutters but they pass safely on two cylinders. Silence, then a faint buzz creeps upon us from the dark woods. The mufflerless Saab of Lawrence and Gluck zooms up, hits the water, bzzzz . . . brrr . . . brr . . . br . . . cough . . . pfft . . . she is out cold. The deadly silence is only broken by faint cursing from both cars. The Saab boys get out and start pushing knee deep in the water. Don shouts and I press the starter . . . on the second try the Datsun burps once and stays alive. The exhaust shoots a rooster tail and we are out, going down that road like a bat in hell. We are seven mins. down, but make up four of it before we reach the next CP. A truly magnificent piece of driving.

Rain, snow give way to the Sun as we approach Wawa, where we leave the Trans-Canada Hwy.

Nearing Espanola, just West of Sudbury the drama of the rally really begins. In the grand-daddy of all watersplashes the Alfa of Vancouverites Hunter and Alexander sucks up a load of water into the engine and they are out. Rosemary Smith's Imp also gets stuck, as does the Lotus-Cortina of leaders McLennan and Wilson and the second place Datsun of Schulz and manson. Out comes the winches and the two leading cars are out with only 2-3 mins. lost respectively. Cars are stuck and drowned out at every angle. The Citroen of Ronald and Medwell eases into the water, followed closely by the Cortina GT of Ellnor and Greenfield. The Citroen, on the highest setting of its hydraulic suspension skims over the water, but not fast enough for Tony Ellnor, who decides to pass. Tony's wave hits the tippytoeing Citroen, the engine splutters, groans and with the pressure off the hydraulic pump the car starts to sink underwater like a torpedoed submarine. There it stays, finishing the French team.

Speeds increase as darkness creeps over the landscape and over the famous Ontario roads most cars are losing precious minutes. The smell of burning wires fills our car. A cable is cut somewhere, shorting out the juice, but there's no time to fix it now. McLennan is still leading and the three mins. in the water allowed the Lotus-Cortina of Clarke - Peters to slip into second place over the Datsun of Schulz. The Smith-Catto Lotus-Cortina is out with mechanical ills.

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MAY 9. Things do not seem too tough, yet the field is thinning out. Only 51 out of the 93 starters are leaving North Bay. Some of the roads are a bit hairy, but not impossible. Several cars, including leader McLennan and ourselves are badly held up by locals, who seem to resent anybody intruding onto roads they consider their own. They creep along at 15 MPH and one village idiot looking character even stops in front of us to block our way. McLennan loses the lead, his clutch and second and top gears as well. Many cars are in a worse shape. Harry Baker's MGB has lost its clutch on the second day. All the Volvo front ends have collapsed. What happened to Volvo THE rally car of yesterday in its days of upturned nosed respectability? Only the memory of a once mighty warrior!

Our throwout bearing is beginning to act up and Don is practicing changing without clutch. We pass the ditched Rambler of Curran and Carney. Their teammate, Diana Carter's Rambler is trying to tow it out. Many points are lost before they succeed and when the day's score is added up the Datsuns are in the lead with about 1100 points over AMC and about 2000 over VW.

A red Pontiac comes out of the bush on our tail and hangs on for many miles, then shoots ahead and sticks behind Rosemary Smith's Imp. The poor little beast is in a poor shape, with wheels hanging out at odd angles and the engine drinks oil by the gallon. Nobody expects it to last the day, but Rosemary is one of the World's

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top professionals and keeps the car together to win another Coupe de Dames and First in Class. Meanwhile the enemy spy is on her tail to see that no repairs are done to the car. The girls are scared stiff, not knowing the purpose of the big red car breathing down their necks.

We do the tank driving course at Camp Borden, where McLennan creams up the front end of his car, and later at Mosport it is our turn to do an involuntary waltz, luckily without any consequences.

As the day wanes our teammates Ross and Bird come up from behind. They have lost a lot of points when they bent a driveshaft on a rock on the third day. From now on we shall be together all the way.

MAY 10. We leave Kingston in the early dawn and cut North to Ottawa. At Chaffey's Locks a flare is still burning on the roadside. Unknown to us Schulz rolled his car here. They landed on the wheels and reached the next CP on time. A small car comes into view, the Felton-Callon Mini-Cooper, the leader in the private category and second in our Class has had enough. Jim Callon swears that he will be back with a Mini next year, after year after year of frustration. The Don Quixote of the Shell 4000 will undoubtedly do it. Now we are second in Class 2 and we just have to hang on to it.

The procession creaks across Ottawa and up North to the St. Jovite Circuit. Never has this honoured track seen slower lap times as today. The cars are circling around with the speed of a kindergarten tricycle race. With Montreal over the horizon nobody wants to cook it now. Alas, on this very last day Diana Carter does meet up with an unsuspecting civilian, and crunching up the Rambler, she chalks up a DNF. One more CP and then it is the Freeway to old Montreal. Did I say FREEway? A mere slip of the tongue. Tollgates at every 10 miles, skinning you for another two bits. If we ever saw highway robbery, brother this was it: \$1.25 for 50 miles.

Final scrutineering and then a wild, 60 MPH ride across the city escorted by a slew of motorcycle police. As we swing along on all sides of the streets, sirens screaming, through red lights, we are laughing our heads off. This ride was worth everything. Can you imagine it in Vancouver? No, it can happen only in a city where people enjoy life and people who life full lives: Montreal!

The small convoys of cars arrive at the Automotive Stadium. Roger Clarke and Jim Peters are the winners. Schulz and Manson are declared second, but later a scrutineering penalty of 50 points for an alternator seal, frayed by vibration, drops them to third, with Scott Harvey and Mike Kerry in the Barracuda jumping into second.

We pull up on the ramp behind Schulz and Ross drives up behind us. Our team of Datsuns is the new Team Champion and also first, second and fourth in Class. Our support boys, bless them, pop open the champagne bottles and we drink a toast to them, to Shell, to Datsun and to this whole beautiful World! It sure is

a good feeling.

The Best Private Entrant prize goes to Hochreuter and Ecker in a VW 1500, the Best Private Team award comes home to B.C. with Ellnor and Greenfield in a Cortina GT, Balfour and Kirk in a Volvo and Spreadbury and Galk in another Cortina. Dunwoodie and O'Dwyer get the Best BC Entrant Trophy in a VW 1500, they are also third in Class 3.

It was a great rally, but is it really over . . . another miserable twelve months to wait till the next one? This is the worst part.

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