

RALLY RUMBLINGS - by Mike Hogben, N.A.S.C.C.  
(Edmonton)

The Alberta Rally Championship '67 has begun and already, the considerable effort involved in setting it up is being paid back in the form of good organization, popular events and more competition. The success of this venture can only reflect the nearly 100% turnout among serious rallyists at the Calgary meeting last November. It is always heartening to see the benefits of government instead of its dictatorial autonomy.

The SHELL 4000 is not long off. We can not give Shell enough credit for making this the biggest and, more important, the best rally event in Canada. As sports car enthusiasts, we all benefit from the publicity given to the event. As participants, we are treated to mile after mile of choice rally roads across Canada, and it also gives us the only chance to compete against all of Canada and some of the best international competitors. The fantastic work involved in coordination and planning the rally done by Jim Gunn and Peter Bone throughout the year and the tremendous financial backing and effort by Shell of Canada deserve all the credit, publicity and support they can get.

While not wanting to retract one iota from the above paragraph, I am now going to voice objection to certain facets of the SHELL 4000. The success of an international event in the world's eyes does depend upon factory team participation. No doubt, Shell have and will encourage the entry of such well-known teams as Volvo and Ford. However, when encouragement yields to a direct favoring of a factory team, such tactics are unsportsmanlike and leave a bad taste. We already have had a distressing situation in last year's event when one of the factory navigators made a mistake. There appeared to be an arrangement made whereby the crew lost only half of their error penalties and therefore retained their second overall position. Thank goodness the organizers reconsidered their judgement by allowing an appeal against this before the results became final.

And this year, it would seem that Shell have arranged a class solely for Ford. How many cars outside the Lotus Cortinas will fit into the ridiculously small cc category 1300 to 1600? The next class, 1600 to 2500 cc, covers three times the range and will include Volvo, Triumph 2000 and TR 4, MGB, Rover 2000, and who knows what else. Not only that, but Shell now introduces a different system for closed sections whereby the bigger cars have been given impossible set times. The special sections determine the first five positions. I have been told that if the new system had been used last year, the Volvo of Graham and Acteson would have finished fourth and not second as they did. The grape-vine says Graham and Acteson have not entered this year. I don't blame them. I will not be surprised if quite a few of the veteran Shell crews who usually drive cars over 1600 cc will not compete this year. If you put all that money and effort into your car, it is cruel to be beaten by a slide rule.

There will be some who say I protest too much, that I am biting the hand that feeds me. I am proud of Canada's SHELL 4000--Shell have every reason to hold their heads up high. If it were not such a good idea, I would not be concerned over its image. For make no doubt about it, my remarks in print have been gossip around the country for the last few months.

In the meantime, I look forward, Messrs. Gunn and Bone, to another very successful rally and will support your event to the best of my ability.