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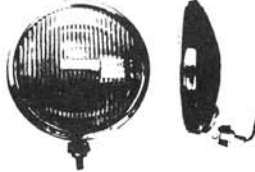
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BITS & PIECES

by

Ed Deak

THE 1968 SHELL 4000 CAR RALLY

Halifax, N.S. June 8, 1968

The Shell 4000, the rally that started from Calgary six nights ago with the roar of the lion has ended here last night with stunned silence.

It is said that it was torpedoed by the sunshine of the early Summer which has dried the roads, and the graders of the various highway departments which have smoothed them. But the Sun has been doing similar tricks in early June for many centuries and the highway graders are not exactly yesterday's children. So why the the great surprise that the rally has turned into a grand tour of the country with lots of time for picture taking and little for action.

Day after day the more experienced participants said: "Wait till we get to Ontario. There the rally will really begin!" Ontario came and was gone so we said it will be Quebec, then it was the Maritimes, but on the last two days we all knew that it was too late.

Some 4200 miles we have travelled but the decision for top positions was made over the 150 miles total of the 8 Closed Sections, less than 3% of the whole route. The pattern was set on the first night and hasn't changed much since. The first four cars have cleaned all the road sections, many more have picked up points only by error or accident.

What difference does all this make to the "4000"?

In 1966 the winner had lost 32 points, tenth placer 648. In 1967 it was 45 and 636. This year the winner lost 8 points over 4200 miles, a total of approx. 1 min 20 secs. of Closed Section time, and tenth placer had lost 97 points, approx. 9 min. 30 secs. of mixed open and Closed Section time. About 35 finishers have been squeezed into the point total of previous years' tenth placers.

So it was an easy run, why bawl over it? Rallyists are funny people. They demand tough conditions, or they'll scream. The only smiling faces I could detect in the Hotel lobby this morning were those of the winners, who have been praying for smooth roads for days to preserve the status quo without problem. But let's not be too smug about this. Scott Harvey, Ralph Beckman and the assorted placers have been carrying the burden of knowing that the slightest mistake, or even a flat tire can put them out of the lead, and believe me this is quite a strain to bear for days and days. My hat is off

and sincere congratulations go out to all of them.

There have been incidents and anecdotes in the papers every day, sweated out by writers in search of drama. I'm not going to repeat them here, or attempt to write a day by day account of what has not happened.

To be very frank, I don't really feel like telling funny stories right now as these are very sad times for me, the probable end of a memorable period of my life. This was my 5th Shell 4000, twice as an official and three times as a competitor. For these five years almost my whole life was built around these yearly adventures and I doubt that there was one single day when I didn't have at least one thought on the "4000". But now I think it is all over. Shell have said that this was their last contribution. This may be so, or they may change their minds, or there may be a successor to the Shell 4000. But when I took my helmet off after the Gagetown, N.B. Closed Section, 20 odd miles through an Army camp, I knew that it would take some very drastic change of heart to induce me to put it on again.

I never want to compete in another rally that uses closed sections.

These things are completely crazy. The cars are expected to average in the neighbourhood of 70 MPH over roads "closed to the public". In the Kananaskis area just out of Calgary we met up with a car loaded with children. In the Cypress Hills of Alberta we had a herd of cattle walk across our path. At Gagetown several cars met up head on with tanks and assorted military hardware. All these while doing a hundred plus. I may be a sourpuss spoilsport, but I'd like to believe that life has a little more purpose than to be wasted on something that's supposed to be a game.

I know that many others feel the same way. A few weeks ago a short article of mine has appeared in another publication on the subject of Closed Sections. The reaction to my criticism was almost unanimously favourable. Many people, from competitors to CP marshalls have come up to me and expressed agreement with my anti Closed Section sentiments. Some have said that I shouldn't talk about these things openly as they're not the business of the general public, some have promised to fight in their Regions to have Closed Sections outlawed. Very few have hinted that they could see any merit in the further use of Closed Sections and none of those was willing to argue the point. At least not in a logical manner. Well, if motorsport publications are not the place to discuss motorsport problems I don't know where one should go? Behind bushes? To date I have done about 26 Closed Sections in competition and drove and observed another 10 or so as a reporter. Rallying is not just a sport for me, but almost a way of life. If I've come to these sentiments after all these experiences, there are pretty good reasons for it. If anybody has some good arguments against mine on this subject I'd be more than willing to publish it on these pages.

Meanwhile there's a plane waiting and I want to be on it.

Provisional results, subject to appeals and counter appeals:

1. Harvey - Beckman	Barracuda	8 points
2. MacLennan - Peters	Rambler	16 points
3. Jones - Medwell	Rambler	18 points
4. VanBergen - Manson	Datsun	25 points
5. Floyd - Ecker	Rambler	51 points
6. Potts - Wilson	Renault	56 points
7. Gozzard - Gozzard (Mrs.)	Renault	59 points
8. Fall - Johnson	BMC 1800	64 points
9. Hochreuter - Carney	Porsche	65 points
10. Smith - Catto	Toyota	97 points

Manufacturers' Teams: Rambler
Toyota
Datsun

Private entries:

1. Potts - Wilson	Renault
2. Gozzard - Gozzard	Renault
3. Hochreuter - Carney	Porsche
4. Henderson - Pogue	Barracuda
5. VanLouie - Galk	Datsun.

Class Winners:

Class 1: Power - Lapp	Sunbeam Imp.	1755 points
Class 2: Potts - Wilson	Renault	56 points
Class 3: VanLouie - Galk	Datsun	119 points
Class 4: VanBergen - Manson	Datsun	25 points
Class 5: Harvey - Beckman	Barracuda	8 points
Class 6: Henderson - Pogue	Barracuda	110 points

Couples award:

Gozzard - Gozzard Renault



"Funny, my husband was just saying how most accidents happen within the home!"