

□ If anyone ever decides to write a 'Record Book on Canadian Rallying' it will probably read like John Bird's biography.

In eight years of rallying, Bird has chalked up a phenomenal string of victories as a navigator. An assistant professor in the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering at the University of Toronto, Bird has entered 152 rallies, taking first place 78 times. Bird who holds a B.A. Sc. in Engineering Physics and M.A., Ph. D. in Physics at Toronto, entered his first rally in 1957.

In his initial rally, which was organized by the MG Car Club of Toronto, Bird teamed up with Thomas Smith in the latter's MG. The pair finished seventh and then in their very next outing they grabbed off a first place victory.

Bird does not consider himself an avid follower of motorsport, though he enjoys Indianapolis. On the other hand the mathematical accuracy of rallying intrigued him.

"I could hardly believe that a rally could be organized so accurately and when I was asked to enter one, I did so, because of this particular interest," says Bird.

Needless to say Bird enjoyed that first rally and since then he has become almost a permanent figure in the winners' circle. Besides his 78 victories, Bird has placed second on 20 occasions and managed a third in 10 other rallies. In other words he has been among the first three in 108 out of 152 rallies — truly an amazing feat.

At 39-years-old, Bird, father of two girls, enjoys rallying strictly as a hobby. He holds no ambition to enter the Monte Carlo Rally mainly because of the money it would cost, but also his particular talent lies in navigating not driving, an important factor in the Monte Carlo event.

Arithmetic comes easy to Bird

and this is no doubt the reason for his climb to the top. Map-reading is another important phase of being a successful navigator and Bird says he has around \$200 worth of maps.

Other than the maps Bird uses a minimum amount of navigational equipment. He does not use a calculator, although he doesn't frown upon this. "If I thought I needed one, then I would surely use it, but I have been able to win without one," explained Bird.



John Bird

Because of his mathematical abilities Bird has been able to produce victories and while he has no particular advice for anyone going into rallying, he does point out that: "If one is good at arithmetic then he will find navigating comes easier, otherwise he may become discouraged after a few attempts and probably give it up."

Bird says that rallying has to some degree helped him in his work at the University of Toronto. Many

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John Bird

of his students have also adapted a liking for rallying and through this interest they have organized several rallies.

During 1954 to 1959, Bird was the assistant professor of Physics, College of Arts and Science in Baghdad, Iraq. In 1957 he returned to Canada for the summer months and thus entered his first rally.

Rallying fits well into Bird's schedule. He is able to enter between 20 and 25 rallies a year, and with the exception of the Shell 4000, it does not interfere with his work at the University.

Fatigue can be the deciding factor during long rallies but, Bird has apparently adapted himself well. Other than reading maps he does little planning before a rally. A good night's sleep prior to a big rally is usually his only preparation from a physical standpoint.

"Usually one gets a warning when he is becoming tired during a rally," explains Bird. "Stupid mistakes are the biggest signs that fatigue is setting in."

In 1961 Bird won the MGCCT Rally Championship. A year later he tied for the MGGCCT title and won the Ontario Rally Championship.

In 1963 we walked off with the Canadian Winter Rally with Chuck Stockey in a Corvair. That same year he won the National Rally Championship and tied for the Ontario crown with Bruce Simpson.

1964 saw Bird (with driver Klaus Ross in a Volvo) capture the Shell 4000. Bird was also the National Champion. Bird and Ross again took the Shell 4000 this year while Bird became the National Champion for the third consecutive year.

Few people in any sport have written the success story which belongs to John Bird — the "Professor" of Canadian rallying.

