

# A Tribute to



## Sam Nordell

On January 8, while preparing for the Monte Carlo Rally, Sam Nordell was killed near Gap, France. Sam and his codriver Thomas Rowland of Manchester, England, were running part of the route when they missed a bend and plunged down into an 80 foot ravine. Rowland was taken to hospital suffering from bruises and broken ribs.

This was to be the second Monte for Sam. Last year Sam and Grant McLean finished 48th, when they were the first competitors from Canada to enter the rally.

Sam lived in Montreal for several years after leaving his native Sweden. He entered many events and was a team driver for Renault for two years.

Sam made many friends in Canada and we are proud to print the following tribute written by one of his friends.

In November, 1962, one of the most colourful characters of Canadian Motor Sport left Montreal with his English fiancée, to marry her in her home town, that Christmas. Their honeymoon was spent practising sections of the Monte Carlo Rally, then Mrs. Nordell returned to England to await Sam after the brilliant performance with Grant McLean in the 1963 "Monte".

British manufacturers were so impressed by this young bearded Swede that soon Sam Nordell was driving for Vauxhall, giving creditable performances against some of the greatest of Europe's rallying elite in such events as the Tulip Rally, the R. A. C. Rally, Rally of the Midnight Sun, Tour de France, etc.

Canadian enthusiasts were not surprised by Sam's recognition, for everyone who ever met this tall, wiry young man was immediately impressed by his infectious enthusiasm for The Sport. Rallying? Racing? Driving Skill Tests? Hill Climbs? Ice Racing? He had competed in every one, and in every one had found success. His devotion to the sport caused a rumour that Sam hadn't entered fifty-two rallies in one year because he could find only fifty to enter.

In 1959, Sam started rallying. His first rally was entered as a navigator, and he placed second. For two years he learned navigation, until he felt confident of his prowess in that half of rallying and turned to his first love - driving. In 1961 he drove his Volvo in all the major - and many minor - events of the area. He competed in the Trans Canada Rally, leading the field for five days, as a private entry. Through this and subsequent Shell 4000 Rallies, he became well known across the country.

By 1962 Renault of Canada had noticed Sam's record, and he was signed as one of the members of the winning Renault Team. As though competing in rallies every weekend were not enough, he helped the formation of the West End Car Club, and organized the first rally for the WECC. He was champion of his own club, Lower Canada Motor Club, and as he continued to claim victory after victory his collection of trophies almost overflowed his tiny apartment.

The Racing Driving School of 1961 saw Sam's entry into the racing world. In his ancient white Volvo, Sam set his instructors back on their heels when he placed fourth in his first novice

race against many faster cars. At his second meeting he was invited to compete in the Invitation Feature Event. The fans loved Sam. His red hair and blue terry-cloth T shirt (worn on the coolest days) were easily spotted usually in the centre of a group in deep discussion about some aspect of the sport - that day's racing, perhaps or that tricky "T" in the rally last weekend. Whatever the topic, he had an opinion, and for the unbeliever, would whip out paper and pencil and, with diagrams, convince where words alone were not enough.

Last year, rallying in Canada, and especially in Quebec, continued without Sam, but many times a conversation would end with "wait until Sam comes back and we tell him about this", or "when Sam comes back, we'll show him a thing or two". We were always waiting, for that extra competition we had come to expect; that extra touch of spice he brought to every event he entered - or organized.

It is very hard to believe there is no more Sam; as long as Motor Sport is practised in Canada, there will be Sam - he was the spirit of the sport, and the legend he left is with us still.

**JEAN BUNCH**