

Rally hits a high then a low

After buying my first business in January 1962 (a Union 76 station) and almost 39 years as a State Farm Insurance agent I finally took a real vacation. A no plans, stop wherever and whenever the urge hit vacation. No plans for a race, rally or to meet family, just have fun.

It was ordered after my doctor decided 42 heartbeats a minute was too slow. Of course that was followed by the Oregon Trail Rally, the Double National races at Pacific Raceways, the Rose Cup Races and the Rose Cup Champ Car race in Portland. You have already seen the article on the Oregon Trail Rally and I am sure there will be articles about the other races in this newsletter. I can say that I had an interesting time at all of the events (especially when it rained in Portland).

The Olympus Rally

The 2007 Rally America Olympus Rally was the most successful rally organized by the Pacific Rally Group in many years. The addition of the X Games to the Rally America schedule and the fact that the Olympus Rally was a qualifier increased the importance of the rally for competitors. As a result, the size of the field (65 entries) was the largest in years.

Prior to the start, a group of the rally stars went to Ronald McDonald House at Children's Hospital in Seattle. They spent several hours meeting with the kids and their parents. Subaru donated hats and matchbox cars, which the rally drivers autographed. They also signed a lot more for the kids whose health prevented them from leaving their rooms.

The rally start at the beautiful Washington State Capitol grounds was impressive. The governor's husband, Mike Gregoire, started the rally. He said he really had a great time and kept delaying his departure to another obligation to start one more rally car and talk with the teams. The rally weekend went well and I am sure you will find an article giving the details in this newsletter.

The bad news

After the high of a great Olympus Rally weekend, a phone call from a Green Diamond Resource person on

Rally Report

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Tuesday took all of the shine of the weekend away. The rally community has used Green Diamond Resource lands for over 30 years. We have shared the use with other groups including the various hunting groups, the horse folks, the motorcycle and quad groups and other folks who are allowed to use Green Diamond Resources land.

We plan our events so we do not interfere with Green Diamond Resources operations. We have been involved in cleaning up the garbage that uncaring people chose to dump in the landing roads and wherever they feel like it. Volunteers, like Jerry Moon and Bob Grass, have used their equipment to repair damaged roads. The rally group spent days cleaning up blow down from a windstorm.

In recent years, each event that did not lose money has donated to a local charity or good cause that Green Diamond Resources chose. Each event was preceded by a meeting with Green Diamond Resources staff for approval of our schedule and route. In the past, we paid a fee to use the roads. When Green Diamond Resources attorney said to only charge a paperwork fee and have us pay for road damage, we made that change.

After all of these years, and the rally group's efforts to be conscientious users of Green Diamond Resources land, we were notified that we would no longer be allowed to use Green Diamond Resources land for rallies.

Why? We were told that a Green Diamond Resources official had received a derogatory letter about rally from a United States Fish and Wildlife Service official.

The results

The rally community will begin immediately using other available resources to put on rallies. An Eastern Washington community has asked us to put on a rally in their area, so if all is OK we will move the Wild West there.

The financial impact on southwest Washington will be great. We do not

have the final figures for the Olympus Rally yet. Rally America and their promotions group are working on the amount now. I do know that the 1987 Olympus Rally was estimated to have a \$5 million impact on the area's economy. I checked the impact of inflation on that figure and found a chart that showed it takes \$350 today to have the same buying power as \$150 did in 1988. If my calculator is correct that one rally, in 2007 dollars, had an economic impact of almost \$12 million.

The other rallies held in southwest Washington since 1973 have contributed millions of dollars to Shelton and the local area surrounding Shelton. That economic impact is the reason I got involved in organizing these events. States like Nevada and Hawaii understand the importance of people who come and visit, spend money, pay various taxes (that is why they, like Washington, have a sales tax) and then leave.

My opinion

At first the notice shocked me, then I was angry and finally just saddened. The years I and the other folks, who work so hard to make these events happen, seemed to be a waste. The rally group, past and present, and my efforts to bring tourist dollars to the area, were tossed aside without regard to many. The local businesses and their employees are among the biggest losers. Last year, the Wild West Rally supported Toys for Tots and doubled the amount of toys and tripled the amount of money raised. This year we supported the Ronald McDonald House and Shelton Food Bank. These and the other charities we support lose.

Conclusions

The rally community and their supporters do a lot of good for many people. We have been invited to put on events in other areas but have chose to keep our home here. Our relationship with Green Diamond Resources has always been very good. We look forward to the challenge and to a bright future for the Pacific Rally Group and Rally America.

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