

Time to unwind from a busy rally season

After the Wild West Rally was finished, I took some time and traveled with my son Raymond to Crater Lake, Ore., and Reno, Nev. And, of course we had to make our usual visit to Virginia City and the Bucket of Blood Saloon. It was fun as usual with some bargains purchased and the bartender at the Bucket of Blood remembering she owed Raymond five dollars from a bet she lost several years ago. The following weekends were rally, rally, rallycross and rally.

The Rally America Hood River Rally Oregon Rally Group (ORG) put on their second performance event of the year. Simon Levear and the group, once again, did an excellent job of organizing a fun one-day event. Rally America head cheese, J.B. Niday, was one of the stewards. I spent most of the weekend with him helping out when needed. I had a good time and the rally ran smoothly. Paul Eklund and Jeff Price won again.

The Pacific Forest Rally

The Pacific Forest Rally is part of the CARS (the Canadian rally sanctioning group) national championship. While driving toward Merritt, B.C., the weather appeared to be getting bad. As I climbed the pass from Hope to Merritt, I started to see snow on the mountains. The higher I went, the worse it looked and I hoped the snow level was above the pass summit. It was not.

Shortly before I arrived at the toll booth for the highway, the road was covered with snow and ice. My rally tire equipped Subaru 2.5 RS had no problems. Finally I got below the snow level and arrived in Merritt. The organizers were trying to decide how to rearrange the rally. The snow had made some stages impassable. There were two cars, which had been on the roads making pace notes, stuck on the snowed-in stages. The rally was rerouted.

Friday night I was assigned the job of training three 20-year-olds and an 18-year-old guy from Vancouver. We had the flying finish and stop control for the spectator stage that ran three times. The young guys were fast learners. After running the radios batteries dead by talking too much on the first running of the stage, they talked less. The batteries failed again, so I went to town to try and find replacements. They were an odd size and none were to be found. Fortunately, our HAM loaned some radios for

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the last running of the stage.

The next stage, I helped check cars in and out of service. I saw the guys from Vancouver at the end of the day and asked how their day went. They said it was boring. They were stuck at the spectator area. I told them that was the best job at a rally. They replied that working with me, talking with the rally co-drivers and hearing my rally stories was a lot more fun. The rally ended with a banquet at a local pub where I had a chance to talk with some of my Canadian rallyist friends.

The Rallycross

The rallycross was held at the Grays Harbor County Straddleline ORV park. There were around 25 entrants and everyone had a good time. The mud in the park from previous rain had made the course slick in spots and wet in other places. The rallycross group did a good job of designing a course that avoided the really bad areas. The day ended with awards and great food sponsored by Jon Bodwell from Delta Camshafts.

Laughlin

I usually go with Matt Sweeney and Lulu Strub to sweep the Laughlin Rally. This year I co-drove in the 0 (pace) car. Lee Sorenson sent me an e-mail on Tuesday prior to the event weekend saying he needed a co-driver. I changed my plans, checked on flights (spendy) and decided to drive to Nevada. I headed south and ended up in Las Vegas at a longtime friend's house. I met her new boyfriend and talked with her dad. Then on the road again to Laughlin.

I arrived, checked into Harrah's and then found my driver. We went over the usual stuff and found out we were going off the route book because they had ran out of notes. We did our Friday night stages. Due to a shortage of workers, we ended up doing the flying finish on the last stage and returned to Laughlin very late.

The next day we went our bright and early to drive the 102 miles to the first stage called Black Canyon. For those who have been to Laughlin, it is the tight

and twisty part of the old stage that went to the airport. We went through the stage and lined up for the turn around. We completed the stage and headed for my favorite stage in the rally. It starts at the rim altitude and goes to the bottom of the canyon. The stage stopped several miles from the Colorado River but, since we had time, Lee drove to the river on a very rough road. We parked at the river's edge, took some photos and admired the beauty around us. Then it was back to work and we drove the up version of the stage.

Sunday was the Super Special Stage in Laughlin. Lee had to be home in the afternoon so he left early. I checked out of Harrah's and got a room at the Tropicana Express so I could walk to the awards party at the new Aquarius. I watched the side-by-side runs and had a relaxing day. The Aquarius party was fun and a chance to meet with Lon Peterson and his beautiful wife to catch up on the latest rally news.

On the trip home I detoured to visit Matt and Lulu, who just started working on Fast and Furious 4. They were working hard getting things started for the new movie, which brings back most of the original cast. We had our usual refreshments at the house and I took them out for dinner. I will go back in early March to help out.

Other News

I was cited by a state trooper for illegal exhaust recently. Effective June 7, 2006, a law sponsored by Rep. John Lovick, a Mill Creek Democrat and former state trooper, was passed eliminating the section of RCW 46.37.390 that allowed exhaust to be changed to a custom exhaust so long as it met the 95-decibel limit using the SAE test procedure. The current law states any replacement exhaust must be as quiet as the original equipment.

I contacted Subaru, since the exhaust was an option in 2003. I received an e-mail from John Hubach in which a reply to my question came from Subaru's legal staff. He stated that the way the law is written, that if the exhaust was installed prior to June 7, 2006, it did not apply. I am obtaining the receipts to show that the exhaust was installed in 2003. I will let you know what happens.

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