

POR-67 Silver Anniversary Rally September 26, 1992 by Jim Mickle

Rallymaster Gene Henderson and a large group of people organized under the banner of the Friends of POR joined together with the Detroit Region and Total Petroleum to present an all day TSD rally to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1967 Press-on-Regardless Rally. For those of you who were not active in 1967, the PRO Rally series had not yet been founded and the POR was just a very brisk TSD event. The roads used were almost all unpaved and many of them were two track logging roads. The event started and finished in Alma, the home of the sponsor Leonard Oil. Since 1967, Leonard has been bought by Total, and many of the roads have changed. But...many of the roads still exist, and many of them were used for the memorial rally. Names like Black Louie Bayou, Sterling Truck Trail, and Gozza Hopper brought back many memories to those entrants and workers who had participated 25 years ago. Those new to the sport got a chance to see some of the roads we ran years ago, though at much slower speeds. For example, Gozza Hopper was run at a CAST of 28 in 1967 and was run at 11 for the memorial rally.

The event started with the usual registration and tech inspection on Friday night. In addition to the usual munchies, the 30 entered teams and the workers were able to enjoy some video tapes of past PORs while they traded war stories. Saturday morning saw an early drivers meeting and the first car away at 8:01 from the Total station on the North end of Alma. After a short transit, and a paved and unpaved odometer check, the competitors started the rally in earnest. The first three controls occurred within a little over three miles, serving notice that the action would be fast and furious. By the time the contestants reached the main break in the Houghton Lake they had encountered 10 controls of the planned 12 for this section. Unfortunately, two controls had to be cancelled when a piece of road that had had only a few inches of water a few weeks earlier, suddenly was covered with over two feet due to unseasonable rains combined with some very active beavers who built a large dam in their efforts to get ready for what many people say is going to be a tough winter. A route change was devised late Friday night and provided to all the competitors via both official notices and a written set of revisions. Somehow the team of Dave Parps and Charles Binder didn't revise their instructions. As a result, they made a wrong turn and drove into the water and turned their Saab into a Saabmarine. They went into the water so deep that the water was above the seats in the car. In the typical Press-on-Regardless spirit, they flagged down sweep, got the car pulled out, dried it out, and rejoined the fray at the second time of day restart. Unfortunately, it was all for naught as they broke a front motor mount, allowing the fan to eat the radiator only three legs later. They were the only team that did not finish. At the mid point the eventual winners, Mike and John Puffenburger, had a lead of 10 points over the eventual third place finishers Rod Natho and Ken Osiecki. Another 12 legs changed the order somewhat with Steve Zollar and Robert Bohn moving into second place at the end. The Puffenburgers, who usually run stock class, won the event with 55 points for the 22 scored controls. Not only did they show that a really good \$ team can also run well in E, they also proved that you didn't have to have a super rally car as they ran a 1991 Ford Escort, the equivalent of a typical rental car. No hot prepared car here, just good driving. Steve Zollar and Robert Bohn were second with 78 in their 1987 Dodge Omni. Third place Rod Natho and Ken Osiecki had 87 points. In the Un-equipped class, Loyal Jodar and Jim Shaffer joined together in Loyal's 1988 PRO rally 1991 Production GT champion 88 Mazda 323 GTX to win with 247 points. One interesting bit of trivia. The writer had to teach Loyal and Jim how to use the "B" box installed in the car on the evening before the rally. Second in U were Rich Ehrenberg and Stan Mayer with 300 points. The Vintage Class, for cars at least 15 years old using mechanical odometers, clocks and calculators, was won by Eric Jones and Tom Drake on one Eric's old PRO Rally Datsun 510s. Scott Harvey Jr. and Al Zifilippo brought out one of Scott Harvey's old Dodge Colts to finish second.

Five novice teams from the Alma area joined the twenty-five experienced teams to make up the 30 car field. All finished the event, with Jim Navarre and Gary Downing winning the class with 1582 points. They drove a 1990 Ford Ranger. Al Nelson and John Ferguson in another Ford, a 1988 Bronco, were second with 1829.

The event was run with all passage controls, which allowed the teams to stay in the car, rather than having to go back to the control cars for their times. This format allowed control locations that would not have been practical with conventional controls, because of the narrowness of the roads. Most of the controls were located just around corners or over brows, keeping them well hidden until the cars were on them.

Competitors came from many states, including New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Florida and of course, Michigan. Control workers came from almost as diverse area, with people coming from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Northern Michigan, and the long distance control award went to Russ DeJaiffe who came up all the way from Florida, just as he does every year for POR. Roger and Margo Turpening, who were Chief of Controls for POR in the 60's and 70's were the Massachusetts control team.

As the author was checking in cars at the final Main Time Control, Rallymaster Gene Henderson came roaring in in a panic. He had become lost as he opened the course, and was sure that the whole rally was lost. Much to his surprise, the rally cars were all coming in just when due. Seems that a last minute course change, caused by the road people taking out a bridge, had been put in incorrectly on the rallymaster version of the route instructions. Fortunately, the competitors copy was correct.

Everyone seemed to have a good time. This was evidenced by the good spirits after the event as well as the competitor survey, where almost all the competitors said they would be back next year. In fact, offers were made to pay for next year at the awards ceremony. Gene Henderson, Chuck Fortino, Total Petroleum, and the entire committee should be congratulated on an excellent, fun event. Hope to see you all in Alma next year for the memorial to the 1968 POR.



Jim Muir hustles his GMC Typhoon thru the course.
Photo by Jim Mickle.



Class V winners, Loyal Jodar and Jim Shaffer.
Photo by Jim Mickle.