

WOTSNU4 Fall???

It seems that we are waiting for several announcements just now. The winner of the WCRA logo contest will be announced at the AGM meeting in December. The proposed CARS rule changes are due out any moment. The television broadcasts of PFR and associated DVD (just in time for Christmas!) are pending release. Oh, finally the SA 2005 helmets are certified and available if you've been waiting to replace your crash-hat.

I thought for this issue I might comment instead on something that is not new. Most of us love rallying for similar reasons. It is fun to drive sideways. We enjoy a carefully selected and challenging road, secured against conflicting traffic. We like the attention to detail that comes with the scheduling and time scoring of a rally. The sport is out in the woods and although we grumble about the weather we actually quite enjoy sloshing about in fresh air and mud. And we all get a charge from the atmosphere and camaraderie that accompanies a big event

I was very fortunate to be a competitor at the recent Pacific Forest Rally. The rally ran on time, the route was fantastic, there were more spectators than I've ever seen at a local venue and they were all well organized. Masses of media people from TV and radio through photographers and reporters were on hand.

As we sat at the finish banquet it was nice to slow down and relax. Awards were presented and thank-yous were given. I was pleased that everyone remembered to thank the volunteer workers and organizers for the job they had just done. As I watched the ceremonies I noticed that there was still the odd person scuttling about in the periphery. Some last minute detail being taken care of and I gradually realized that the volunteers had not finished their work, nor would they for at least another 24 hours. I remembered that several volunteers had come by my home on Wednesday to collect equipment stored in my garage. They were already heading up to Merritt to begin set up. Not all of the event workers were able to get away from their daily commitments for 4 days solid, some worked a full day Friday in Vancouver, then drove like mad to Merritt. They donned bibs and set off into the night to marshal rallycars until the last teams had finished. Then they worked past midnight to collapse the stages and return to town. Up earlier than competitors the next morning to be in position for the rally's first teams. These same people would climb into their cars and drive home the same night to return to "normal" life.

An event the size of PFR requires many, many people to run. In fact only half of the people we see are WCRA members. We are very fortunate to draw offers of assistance from outside our

area of enthusiasm. The radio network is one example, staffed as it is year after year by a local HAM club. A 4x4 club provides the machinery and know how to recover stray rallyists in the role of "sweep". Medical trauma expertise is donated by a sympathetic doctor and some interested emergency workers. The local police are on hand to control traffic at road closures and to explain when necessary why we can drive fast on the in-town stages but the residents cannot. Many competitor teams have friends coerced into repeated volunteer duty, individuals that might never otherwise stand in the rain at the side of Helmer road mid October.

From our own ranks there are many familiar faces each rally but there are also members who I swear only come out to work, never as competitors. They come because they like to help, they enjoy hours of planning and attention to detail, friends and fresh air do go together, and a bit of sideways driving is worth watching. All of the volunteers are offered accommodation if they want it, lunch if we can provide it, and a dinner ticket for the banquet. But they pay their own gas and tolls; they buy pens and batteries and raingear, risk their own vehicles or lose income by skipping work. Just so I can enjoy my hobby. It hardly seems adequate... Thank you all very much.

By John McLaren

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Wilkinson's Automobilia
2531 Ontario St
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E-mail: info@eautomobilia.com



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