

Competitor Report

Nor'Wester 2005

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Totem Lake WA, to Williams Lake, Bella Coola, and Victoria BC. August 15-18, 2005. Rainier Auto Sports Club presented a 4-day TSD Tour in preparation for the 40th Anniversary **Nor'Wester** running in 2007, and as an Alcan5000 Rally School for prospective 2006 Summer Alcan entries.

Day One began with a quick 65-mile odo-calibration run, north from the Seattle suburb on I-405 and I-5, for the **Mosquito Lake TSD**. The "best laid plans" as they say... The first four checkpoints were placed and ready to receive competitors. However, a quarter mile north of CP4 a paving crew was stopping traffic. NOT a good sign. If that wasn't enough of a frustration, two instructions further along the course, Mosquito Lake Road was closed—bridge out—so after a brief discussion of alternatives between the control crew assigned beyond the bridge (former Alcan winner, Peter Schneider), and the course opening crew, the solution was to ignore the closure, turn the rally around after CP5 (saving a nice little twisty section), draft a solution, and complete the section as a transit. All this was accomplished with less than five minutes before first car. Nor'Wester instructions have no provision for a Route Control, or checkpoint handouts (cars are timed as they pass hidden controls, without stopping), and the improvisation was to place the club president, Marvin Crippen, in a safety-orange vest in the middle of the road as a roadblock, to stop cars, turn them around and send them off to receive "emergency instructions" from me in the course opening car. Relatively seamless for the competitors, but a wee bit tense for the staff.

The remaining miles of Mosquito Lake TSD now became part of the **Transit Though Customs**. The crossing was uneventful for most, however Ken Westfall's BMW R100GS wouldn't restart after clearing the booth and received a welcomed push by other competitors. The rally continued east on Trans-Canada Highway 1, through Hope, and the scenic Fraser Canyon, passed Hells Gate to

Lytton where BC12 turns north, rising and falling along the twisting canyon walls of the Fraser, at a brisk pace to Pavillion. The ONLY retirement of the rally occurred leaving downtown Lytton as Glyn Trafford and Bart Vogelzang's Toyota Corolla GTS disintegrated a clutch. Their trip back to Vancouver Island courtesy of a U-Haul and trailer.

Pavillion Mountain TSD climbed steeply from Pavillion Village through three miles of gravel switchbacks to top out at the Diamond S Ranch ("Public Road over Private Property"), with great woodland views contrasted by open plains of grasslands against massive rock faces covered with conifers. Ten miles into the section the route drops quickly through two miles of tight hairpins, some covered by ankle-deep dust, to the pavement near Kelly Lake and a short transit to Clinton for gas and snacks. All of the motorcycles elected to bypass the dusty hairpins (spooky enough on four wheels by the way) and regroup at Clinton, taking a minor time penalty but remaining upright!

Dog Creek TSD started ten miles north of Clinton on BC97. Meadow Lake Road took the competitors westward over wide, smooth, rolling, gravel roads. The route passed scenic woodland lakes, scattered cabins, and a spectacular log-home manufacturer, before a gradual descent through Canoe Creek valley. Hard Right, Exposures! Dropping steeply to Hairpin Left, then dropping further to Hairpin Right. The route skirted the upper edge of a gently sloping bench above a sheer drop-off into the river. Several switchbacks and cattle guards later, the TSD section ends with an overlook of the Fraser River Suspension Bridge to Gang Ranch (whose roads were a bit too rough to rally this summer).

A Transit to Williams Lake began with three miles of hairpins and exposures climbing out of the canyon, and another two miles twisting down to the village of Dog Creek. A wide smooth gravel track twisted west into a blazing sun, then north passed Alkali Lake to pavement and Springhouse, where several lightning shows finally resulted in a major downpour. Dropping down the paved slalom into Williams Lake, the sky cleared

and Day One finished in bright sunlight after 434 miles in 11 hours.

Day Two began with the **Soda Creek TSD**, immediately out of the hotel parking lot, winding north on city streets and BC97 to Soda Creek and west toward the Fraser Canyon and gravel. Soda Creek Road hugs the edge of the Quesnel Highlands, first above Williams Lake River, then turning north, far above the Fraser. At 12.9 miles the route crosses a railroad and drops through hairpin left, long hairpin right, hairpin left, and a long 90-right into the single lane Fraser River Bridge. CP crew, Ken and Sue Lingbloom, at the west end of the bridge commented on the humorous antics of nearly every competitor trying in vain to "zero" at the CP car, only to find later that they'd been timed at a sign before the bridge. One mile further along, another hidden CP caught several off the pace, with no workers in sight. Bear Left, Keep Left, and Left, were instructions on the early drafts, however, part-time CP crew and part-time Sweep, Joe and Shirley Gardner were the first on the scene of a missing final version "Left". Again, the alert Rainier staff had one person direct traffic and another continue on, to work a nearby control. Arriving at the end of the TSD, everyone had survived the freshly graded mud, and both graders, in between the trees. Most were able to maintain the 36-mph average, including the Mustang of Frank McKinnon and nephew John Putnam, from Oregon, who are more adept at the 100-plus averages in Nevada's Open Road Racing series.

A meeting of competitors and staff decided upon the next break location, and everyone was released to either drive straight to lunch, or to explore wildlife viewing or pictographs at Farwell Canyon and Bull Canyon. Wildlife viewing was not limited to the off-highway adventurers, as Peter and Joanne Schneider found a bear and three cubs at a Hwy 20 Rest Area.

After lunch, the rally again split into groups to explore, complete survey work for Alcan, or just enjoy the scenic beauty of Hwy 20 to Anahim Lake. This small resort town was to be the informal regroup point before leaving pavement behind for the gravel across "**The Hill**".