



This Bears Mention

By Tom Malone

Sporting Life

A gaggle of seagulls resting on the turf of the old Du Pont Airport was enough to provoke Tom McBride into exclaiming, "It's going to be a great night for a rallye."

McBride pronounces "rallye" the same way everyone else pronounces "rally" but he's an enthusiast and when he pronounces it you are sure that he wants the final "e" included anytime he's being quoted.

On McBride's word, the Brandywine Motorsport Club held its "Harvest Moon Rallye" last night, which could be subtitled, "Or how to get to Chadds Ford from Wilmington in two hours and 32.61 minutes."

Everyone is aware of the growth in popularity of the sports car since World War II. Brandywine and Dover are the only two clubs in the state, staging rallies and races periodically to stir the imagination of the membership. A race is never held on a public road, but rallies are and McBride was the man in charge of laying out the route for the Harvest Moon junket last night.

Married, the father of three boys, a technical writer for the All American Engineering Co., McBride has all the looks of a solid citizen . . . yet he was looking forward to being accused of sadism in different forms of violent language by the participants in last night's rally.

Yesterday afternoon, in a downpour heavy enough to ground the seagulls, McBride made a final tour of the course he had laid out, driving in his TR-3, which shares the leadership in numbers with the MG in the sports car set. Apparently the cars are so small, they have to be designated by initials instead of full names.

It was suggested to him that the grounded gulls were an ominous sign; that if the route were treacherous in dim daylight it might be impossible at night, forcing the cancellation of the rally.

"Not a chance," he laughed. "We had one once where the fog reduced visibility to 20 feet, but we still held it."

To explain what a sports car rally is isn't simple.

It is, first of all a competition best compared to a scavenger hunt. McBride had a directional sheet printed for the contestants giving them 72 clues to reaching the Chadds Ford Inn his way. Each driver is accompanied by a "navigator" who looks for these clues.

There were three checkpoints on the route.

"That means we have people out in this mess," said McBride.

Each car is given a time to check in at each point. Those who are a minute behind or a minute ahead of the time McBride figured lose 100 points, penalties which go to a maximum of 1,000 points.

To show you that these rallies are subject to some conduct other than sportsmanlike there is a 500 point penalty for misconduct at a checkpoint, with abusive language listed under this heading.

Time between checkpoints called for an average of 27 miles an hour between two of them, 23 miles an hour between two others. The lost points at each of the checkpoints and the finish are totaled and the low man is the winner. McBride figured that 50 points might be enough to win.

To the why of it McBride had no simple answer.

He talked about it while driving his TR-3 over what must have been every back road in northwestern Delaware, interrupting himself every once in a while when he found a clue missing. ("Halloweeners" was his explanation for missing clues.)

"It's competition," he shrugged. "Explain any competition—baseball, for instance—and it sounds silly doesn't it? Our first aim is to have fun, with safety. Stress that safety, will you? We're still a bit worried about our image. Everybody sees somebody in a sports car and they immediately figure they're looking at a speeder."

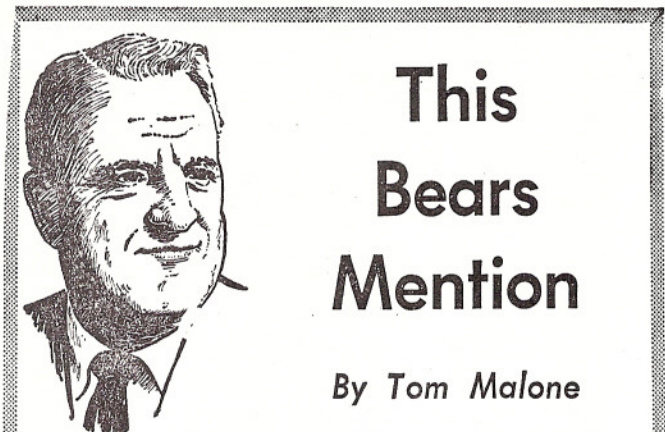
Slowing down to see if the Morning News tube were still in place for Clue 33 which read "L after second 'Morning News' facing you," he said he thought the "four shift box is the main reason we like sports cars. It makes you feel more a part of the car. There is the handling, the performance, the satisfaction the Detroit car doesn't give you."

McBride used "Detroit" the way many use a swear word, the voice hardening on it.

He wanted the man in the navigator's seat to repeat the ride last night with one of the contestants, to listen to the language which he was sure was going to be colorful.

"I'll call you tomorrow to see how everybody made out," he was told.

The roads he picked are hard enough to find on sunny day. McBride needn't have worried about any driver telling him off last night. Any driver who finished that course would have been stricken mum.



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Sporting Life-II

Tom Nale figured he had missed something somewhere when he wound up at Naaman's, near the Philadelphia Pike.

M. C. Wardle found the wagon wheel easily enough, but he had to drive slowly along a lonely stretch of road examining names on mail boxes before he came to "Zickefoose" which was a clue.

Nale and Wardle were two of the 60 contestants in the Brandywine Motorsports Club rally Wednesday night. There was space developed in yesterday's epic to the preparations for the rally, involving a 58-mile trip to take the normal 10 miles from Wilmington to the Chadds Ford Inn. This is merely a sequel, to report that it was held, that 30 cars took part and 85 men and women whose stations in life certify them as sane took part.

With 85 sports car fanatics finessing, cornering, faves-tanning (this, at least, sounds like sports car language) around the Delaware and Pennsylvania countryside in the driving rain of Wednesday night their rally might be called the greatest boost to the common cold in these parts since the last time Mayor John E. Babiarz met Lt. Gov. Eugene Lammot.

To hear Nale, Wardle and other drivers talk about it, the rally was as much an exercise in spongeability as driving skills.

"Of course the cars leak, but we didn't get too wet from that," said Nale. "It was getting out of the car for directions and at check points that made us a trifle soggy."

In spite of that miscalculation which brought him to Naaman's, a difference of 28 miles in the course, Nale and his navigator, Joe Ferrell, finished first in the novice class, fourth in the over-all competition, and Nale drove his Spitfire the whole distance with his left arm.

He lost his right arm above the elbow a few years back in a crash of a Delaware Air National Guard plane he was piloting.

"How do you do it?" seemed a normal question. "Don't shift gears on turning corners," he shrugged.

Brandywine Motorsports Club counts 250 members. Dover has a sports car club, its numbers unknown to the Brandywine men. There are a number of other sports car owners in the state who do not belong to either club.

There are reasonable types of the BMC, confirmed by the dropouts in Wednesday's rally. Of the 30 cars which started, 18 finished, with the majority dropping out in the first 10 miles, although Wardle pointed out that one of the contestants had somehow wound up in Avondale, Pa.

The over-all winner of the rally was the car driven by Brech Kauffman, with Carl Langkammerer Jr. as the navigator. Their car was in the unequipped class, which possibly means that this class of car was not carrying any radar. Terry and Joyce McGowan (it's true, females did take part in this excursion) finished second in the unequipped class and the over-all competition as well. Jim Tate and Knox Harrison finished third in the unequipped class.

The top scorer in the equipped class was the car operated by Roy Boucher and Helen Carson, which finished third in the over-all, followed by Bill King and Joe Adams, eighth among all finishers. Any comment about what this order of finish does to the relative merits of unequipped vs. equipped will have to come from BMC members.

Finishing second to Nale and Ferrell in the novice class were Charles Pagano and George Menshon (they drove from Chester to take part in this self-torture) with Frances Langkammerer and Audrey Andrus finishing third.

Wardle, who drives a Daimler (the firm which turns out cars for Britain's Royal Family) was asked how he made out.

"17th," he said . . . distantly.

Wardle and Nale backed up the opinions on sports car travel voiced Wednesday by Tom McBride, who set up the tortuous course to Chadds Ford. Their argument: Driving, once done for pleasure, is now mostly for transit from home to supermarket or turnpike grinds. The sports car puts the fun back in driving.

McBride, who had devised the trip over narrow, muddy roads, won the honors as the wettest one of all.

He had picked out a stretch of fluorescent fence as one of the 70-odd clues and, on checking, found that the rain had washed out all the fluorescence. So he stood in the rain for two hours directing the rallyists past this spot.

"My feet are a deep red from the dye on my socks," he said. "I still think it was a great rally."