

The

Checkpoint



Official Publication of the Arrowhead Sports Car Club

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July 2001

Number 6

Skid Marks

----by Bill Taylor



Oh My God, What Have I Done?

It started innocently enough at a small dinner party the other night. The gathering was in honor of a close friend who will soon be moving to Scottsdale, AZ. She has sold her house and must be out by the end of July. As is common these days, her belongings will be carried by rental truck. The only remaining problem was finding someone to drive the truck.

I, who have not driven anything larger than an 20-foot U-Haul in ten years, volunteered to drive a 24-foot van, with dolly and automobile attached, 2000 miles to the sunny Southwest. There should be some interesting material for this column in this adventure somewhere. Stay tuned.

California Trends Sweeping (Oozing) Through Northern Minnesota

Have you noticed the growing numbers of slammed, California-style, customized compacts running around town? Most of them are lowered a couple of inches and come equipped with 17" or 18" chromed wheels and tires no thicker than a rubber-band. Oh, yeah, they also have the requisite 50-hp, 3-pound-coffee can exhaust tip.

Wonder what happens when they hit some of the 6" deep pot holes that have gone unfilled for the last eight months? Is there a repository for broken coffee can exhausts around? How about the snow-plow air

dams? Seems that this could be an expensive hobby with little or no return. Now that the California street racing movie has hit the theaters, watch for more of them to show up before October. Anybody care to open up a wheel-straightening shop? Shortcut to a million dollars. Keep watching for scattered fiberglass shards at a gutter near you.

--nuff sed



The Minnesota Ground Squirrel Massacree

--Al Taylor

Being a frequent reader of assorted popular automotive magazines, I have noticed a certain evolution with regards to unique road tests and vehicle comparison reports. Around 20 years ago, I recall one such comparison test betwixt the Concorde and the Queen Elizabeth II, followed in mere months with a competitors report comparing a 1985 Lamborghini with the Space Shuttle Launch Pad Crawler. Entertainment purposes aside, knowing that the Crawler has a hydraulically-assisted manual transmission with three standard gears ("Go Forward," "Go Backwards" and "Wait Around") has made me incredibly popular with my wife, who has sometimes had to feign death to conceal her intense interest in my wisdom.

(Continued on Page 6)

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None this month.

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Submissions

Submissions to *The Checkpoint* may be typed, handwritten, composed on diskette or transmitted by e-mail. All submissions should be sent to the editor at the above address

Computer disks with text should be in an IBM compatible format. If material is submitted as an attachment to an e-mail message, notify the editor before submitting. No unknown e-mail attachments will be opened. Deadline for submission is the last Thursday of the month for the following month's issue.

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Matters of Record Minutes of Meetings

Thursday, 6-14-01

James Supper Club
4767 W. Arrowhead Road
Hermantown, MN 55811

Board Meeting omitted

General Membership Meeting

Called to order at 8:15 PM

Roll Call omitted

Members Present: Jon Anderson, Randy Jokela, Bill Taylor

Reports

Vice Pres.: Absent

Competition: No Report

Treasurer: No Report

Publicity: No Report

Checkpoint: May issue: 30 copies printed/\$5.60
to mail June issue: 40 copies printed/\$6.40 to mail

Old Business:

Winter Rally Series Trophies: Jon and Jill are working on them.

Randy's Retro Rally: August 5, 2001
Preliminary Information: Start and end at Gordy's Hi-Hat in Cloquet. Will run approximately 100 miles/3 hours and use a '60's format in instructions. Classes will be based on analog vs digital timing and measurement. Entry Fee will be \$15.00; "real" sports cars (arbitrary decision of the rallymaster) will get a \$5.00 discount. *(Check the ASCC website for additional and more detailed information. August 5 is also Jon Anderson's Birthday. --ed)*

Headwaters Club Rally: Beer tapper at the end of the event didn't work. 28 cars started and 21 finished. Masataka Yoshida signed on as a worker, everyone else schlepped around to spectate and shoot pictures.

Use of Lake Superior College Fire Training Center for Rallycross: No additional information available.

Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup: Cancelled due to bad weather. Rescheduled for Saturday, July 7, 10:00 AM, Sunset Lounge.

Jack Pine Sprints: Jon "Rainmeister" Anderson used his Skip Barbour School wet driving training to lap several cars twice. Rain cut the race short.

Spirit Valley Days Parade: Check with Jon Anderson for meeting times and places.

New Business:

Sidewalk Sale Car Show: Wednesday, July 11, 2001, 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Bill will observe to see if it is worth entering next year. Focus on this first year's show is on old cars and collectible vehicles.

Adjourned: 9:18 PM

The Minnesota Ground Squirrel Massacree

(Continued from Page 1)



(OK, this isn't a thirteen striped ground squirrel; but, it's the only small, hairy rodent picture I had. --ed.)

Obviously, these articles were done with a certain amount of tongue placed firmly in cheek, but editors discovered a dearth of unique vehicles to pass off as fodder for true journalism. After several years of occasional humorous missives, culminating in an in-depth article on the Lawn Mower Grand Prix, magazine editors reverted to standard road tests on the family trucksters and dream wheels that few of us can afford given the average motivation levels. Equilibrium was thus maintained again for a few more years.

In the early-1990's, some ink-stained wretch realized that what was missing was reality. After all, they

reasoned, just how much can you learn about a car given two days at a test track? I can now count on reading a dozen articles annually on two- and three-year old cars (that I might actually be able to afford) that will give me an idea of not what it is like to *drive* a particular car, but what it is like to *own* the thing. Real Life™ may be no substitute for the real thing, but it sure as hell works for when you are thinking about sinking 20 large into your next set of wheels.

Enter my newest idea. Real Life™ incorporating how a vehicle and driver deal with the weirdest sh** imaginable. I am not talking here about everyday sh** like volcanos, hurricanes, earthquakes, and spontaneous human combustion. I am talking about events to truly chill the human soul. I unwittingly stumbled across this flash of insight while engaged in mortal combat with *Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*, better known as the 13-striped ground squirrel.

It should be pointed out that it took several hours for the enormity of the event to sink in, such was the level of adrenaline involved. For the record, I was also worried about the ASPCA, but I have since been informed that the statute of limitations has run out. For purposes of this narrative I shall call my furry nemesis Frank, the actual moniker that I appended to his flea-bitten pelt having slipped my mind for the moment.

Frank had spent several years burrowing around the foundation of my house, scabbling about the walls and scaring the dog. (Tasha the German Shepherd is, sadly, merely ornamental.) Frank coupled this insult with injury by making a four-foot strip of my lawn immediately around my house look like a bunch of holes loosely connected by little tufts of dead grass. Over the years, Frank's home grew larger and more elaborate. In his last year, I was positive that I heard a shower running down there and once discovered an extension cord running out from my garage and down one of his holes. The local paper delivery got to be too much, though, and Frank cancelled it when he realized that I was simply going to swipe the thing anyways.

Frank and I had a daily routine. Each day I would saunter down the driveway to get the mail, turn, and see Frank staring at me from one of his holes, making crude anatomical remarks and occasionally flipping me the bird. (Believe me, after years of listening to ground squirrel, you know what he's saying.) I would pretend to ignore him and lull him into a false sense of

security, walk slowly past as if to re-enter my house, then whirl around with a cleverly disguised spade shovel that I would have concealed in my pants. Frank would zip down the currently occupied hole, giggling and remarking upon the crudity of my aim. Three hours later I would find that he had installed a bay window or a solarium in the area that I had recently excavated with one wild swing.

I was beginning to believe that, after years of Frank's labor and in spite of my efforts to encourage his demise, that Frank's assessed subterranean property value might be exceeding the average home in my neighborhood. I couldn't flood him out as he seemed to have invested in SCUBA equipment; he rapidly dug new holes to replace those filled with dirt, rocks, or cement; he even ignored rat poisons (although he did take an experimental sample of my Esteemed Sire's chili with only minor ill effects). I was rapidly running out of ideas with which to evict this glorified rat, especially considering the fact that Eagan's Finest assured me that they would take a dim view on the use of nerve gas, anthrax, or plastic explosive.

It was while I was pondering this problem and swinging wildly at Frank with a golf club (a 7-iron, I believe) that Frank made a fatal error in judgement. Unbelievably, Frank chose to dart up a loose section of rain gutter pipe instead of the safety of his underground fortress, which would shortly result in a Real Life™ road test of the braking limits of a mid-90's Volvo 960 wagon.

Scarcely believing the turn in the fortunes of war, I dropped the golf club and yanked aluminum pipe from the porch from which it was sort of secured. Frank skittered to and fro inside the pipe, cursing me roundly as I held him and his metal tube aloft like a trophy. Neighbors nervously moved inside their homes at the sight of a sweaty guy in a tank top and covered in yard clippings hopping up and down while wielding an aluminum pipe overhead and gibbering with joy.

My initial euphoria passed, and then I realized that I hadn't the foggiest idea what to do with Frank. Frank and I had come to grips that sooner or later, one of us was going to get killed in this epic struggle. (I was somewhat annoyed to find out that the local bookie was giving 3 to 5 in his favor, and I suspected my wife was taking some of that action.) However, dispatching Frank in this manner seemed... cold-

blooded. I didn't mind the idea of a combat fatality, but I just couldn't do an execution. But there was no way in hell that I was just going to let him go.

I eventually concluded that the best thing to do might be to take advantage of the wetland area between my back yard and Lexington Avenue, a busy four-lane county highway that technically butts against my property. It seemed to me that if I stood in my back yard, and swung the pipe in the general direction of the pond I could deposit Frank there, discourage his return, and let him set up housekeeping from a distance. I figured that it would take an easy effort, just like hitting a single between shortstop and second base. I imagined my pitch and swung.

It was immediately evident that I had forgotten one of the most basic precepts of physics. I estimated the tip speed of a 32-inch baseball bat to be around 45 miles per hour, but neglected to factor in the centrifugal force involved when swinging a six-foot hunk of aluminum pipe. My rough guess is that the rodent ejection speeds involved may have exceeded 150 miles per hour, based upon some largely-forgotten algebra and measurements taken on the depth and length of the scratches made by two small sets of squirrel fingernails.

Frank virtually exploded out of the end of the pipe like he had a jet engine embedded in a sensitive portion of his anatomy. The arc imparted to his trajectory was only slightly affected by his attempts to clutch the wind as he gained altitude. Frank passed the intended landing zone while still a hundred feet in the air, continued south along Lexington, crossing the street at a shallow angle, and then descending towards the center of the road some hundred yards away.

In the northbound lane, with a trajectory roughly opposite to that which Frank was embarked, was a mid-90's-ish Volvo 960 Wagon, silver in color, who's driver was incorrectly comfortable in his supposition that ground squirrels would not be dropping from the sky that day. It's just not something you can plan for.

Such are the events that conspire to combine Real Life™ with weird circumstances that simply cannot be re-created (nor would we want to). These things simply must be left to chance and fate, but they MUST be recorded for future research.

I am certain that "Somebody Out There" would be interested in three things:

- First, a Volvo's windshield is fully capable of withstanding a head-on collision with a ground squirrel with a closing speed of 200 miles per hour, although for some reason the wipers came on right away.
- Second, the Volvo's anti-lock braking system will stop the car quickly, but a left-hand emergency swerve while standing on the brakes (presumably a natural reaction to an assault by in-flight squirrels) will force the driver to make a second swerve right to avoid oncoming traffic. Seems like Volvo, with its emphasis on safety, may wish to address the airborne rodent problems and incorporate a surface-to-air radar system with a steering cutout as an option in future models.
- And third, the Olympic committee should consider adding the "Throw the pipe under a bush and point wildly at your neighbor's house" demonstration event to the Summer Games.

I've got a lock on the Bronze. Frank has a brother.

--MAAT

Coming Events

Items forwarded to your humble editor from the internet by Tim Winker:

Porsche 356 Registry Gathering

"Add this to the calendar for 2002...."

Some other local 356 Registry people and I will be hosting a national Holiday in Duluth next year. We should have a **couple hundred 356s in Canal Park on August 22-25, 2002.**

If you know of any other car activities happening at that time, please let me know.

Thanks,

Gordon Maltby"

(continued next page)

Coming Events

(continued)

Around the Lake Tour

The Thunder Bay Vintage Sports Car Club will be making the circle tour of Lake Superior in early August. This is not a rally, but rather a sightseeing tour in vintage sports cars. There is no entry fee, there are no particular routes. Participants need to make their own lodging reservations, and as soon as possible to assure rooms are still available, particularly in Sault Ste. Marie. Since this was primarily set up as a local TBVSCC event, no headquarters hotel was set up in Thunder Bay. Contact Kathy Watt at the phone number below for a recommendation.

Some participants may leave Thunder Bay on Thursday afternoon and drive to Marathon to break up the long drive (over eight hours) to the Soo.

The Schedule:

Saturday 04 Aug Leave Thunder Bay - 435 mi.
Overnight at Sault Ste Marie, Mich.
Comfort Inn on I-75. 906-635-1118

Sunday 05 Aug Sault to Marquette, Mich. - 165 mi.
Visit Pictured Rocks near Munising and Old Marquette
Ramada Inn, Washington Street.
906-228-6000

Monday 06 Aug Marquette to Copper Harbor, MI. - 160 mi.
Visit lighthouses and Brockway Mtn.
Fanny Hooe Resort. 906-289-4451

Tuesday 07 Aug Copper Harbor to Bayfield, WI. - 230 mi.
Porcupine Mtns., Lake of the Clouds
Winfield Inn. 715-779-3252

Wednesday 08 Aug Bayfield to Thunder Bay - 260 mi.
North Shore of Minnesota.

Already entered are an MG, a Porsche, a Saab Sonett III, and Triumphs TR3, TR6 and Spitfire.

Since this is a loosely organized event, you may wish to join the tour for a day or two or three instead of making the entire Circle Tour.

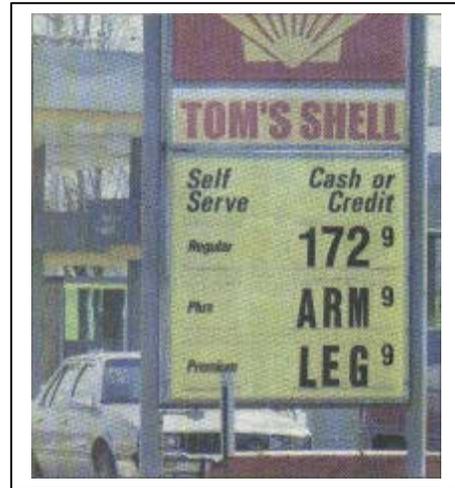
For details, contact Kathy Watt, TBVSCC, 807-577-5469.

Items forwarded courtesy of:
Tim Winker, publisher

VintageRally.com

The Source for Vintage and Historic Rally Information

<http://www.vintagerally.com/>



Truth in Gas Pricing, based on recent trends?



Response to recent trends in gas prices?

Ill-Gotten Gains--
Shamelessly Stolen From the
Car & Driver Magazine
Website

10Best list of Tough Guys

1. Frank Williams--

Paralyzed from the neck down after crashing his rental car in France, Formula 1 team owner Frank Williams announced: "So, I'm in a wheelchair. Tough shit."

2. Jochen Rindt--

Eddie Cheever, recalling Jochen Rindt's fiery Turn One crash at Indianapolis: "Jesus, when they took him for a checkup at the hospital, Rindt went in the front of the ambulance with the driver and offered him a cigarette."

3. Curtis Turner--

Hauling moonshine, Curtis Turner outran one state trooper 39 times. "Thirty-nine times sure's a lot," remarked Turner. "Later, that ol' boy committed suicide."

4. Fred Lorenzen--

"The glory doesn't mean garbage to me. I'm only interested in the money." -- Fred Lorenzen.

5. Bill Muncey--

"Anything other than death is a minor injury." -- Bill Muncey, after his hydroplane, traveling at 150 mph, center-punched a 15-ton Coast Guard cutter in 1958, sinking the U.S. craft in 11 seconds.

6. Allen Heath--

Sprint-car driver Allen Heath, following a 1953 crash in which he would lose a hand: "They could have used a shovel to get me on the stretcher."

When Heath returned to racing, he employed a hook that he once failed to tighten securely. "I had to drive back to the corner and crawl around in the dirt to find it," he said.

And later, when a crash bent his gleaming prosthesis, he commented, "I'm probably the only guy who had to straighten his left hand with a sledgehammer before he could finish a race."

7. Craig Breedlove--

After setting a land speed record of 526 mph, Craig Breedlove, driving the Spirit of America at Bonneville in 1964, lost two parachutes, sliced through a telephone pole, hopped a hill, then plunged nose-first into a brine pond. When medics reached him, he said, "For my next act, I will set myself on fire."

8. Danny Ongais--

"It's not good to think too much, you know what I mean?" -- Danny Ongais.

9. Gilles Villeneuve--

"Gilles Villeneuve was probably the maddest bastard I ever met." -- Keke Rosberg, who, when asked his impression of Las Vegas during the first U.S. GP there, said, "The beaches are not so good."

10. Jean Behra--

Frenchman Jean Behra lost his right ear in a 1955 accident and thereafter always raced with a spare plastic replacement.

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(Thanks for the tip, MAAT.)