

Tall Montanans Savor Victory...Out Duel Bueling RAJO

“Two for the Road” is a Fun Run despite
“Threat Level Yellow”

Under a cloud of uncertainty, as far as our nations security, and the threat of thickening rain clouds, “Rattler and Friday” Olsen from Plain, Montana left behind all the cares and concerns of a major home move to find their way west to victory lane! Fairy tale endings don’t get any better than this. This Northwest Vintage Speedster event will be remembered for the finish and just how close to “perfect” a driver and navigator can get. Event organizers Jim and Patty Cunningham and Walt and Mary Berdan literally “penciled in” the Olsens at the last minute into the 32nd starting position for this late spring classic. They started last in their Fronty powered #2T, but finished 1st a mere 5 seconds off the paced finish time of 4:08pm after 208 miles of speedster nirvana. Challenging roads, “special” maps and tricky checkpoints highlighted this year’s 2nd biggest event.



Reed and Carol Olsen celebrate the moment after winning the 2003 NWVS Memorial Day 200-mile Speedster Run “Two for the Road”

Memorial Weekend came early this year and may have come too quickly for some. There were four DNF's and fourteen teams that missed checkpoints. However, the top three finishers were all close to perfection, and had their "A" game scoring less than 100 penalty points. The top three cars were all Model T Ford Speedsters garnering the splendidly finished trophy's built by Walt Berdan and fashioned eerily similar to his new speedster body design. The rest of the top ten were all Fords except for the 1928 Chev powered #880 owned and driven by Kevin Rose. He and his navigator "smoked" victory cigars on their way to a 6th place finish. Finishing 2nd was Gary Bueling with ace navigator John Millan in Gary's 1915 hot RAJO powered #97. They finished one minute and fifteen seconds later than the preset time amassing only 75 points. 3rd place finisher, in only his second timed event, was Morris "Cool Cat" James and daughter navigator Kristina Horner in car #323. They came in five seconds after the Bueling RAJO, proving that a stock powered Flathead Model T can run with the OHV's.



Nifty Win, Show & Place Trophies designed and built by Walt Berdan are 1/16 scale models of his "new" speedster body

Seven drivers placed their right feet squarely on the gas pedal, missed no checkpoints, but finished early doubling their penalty points. Only the teams of Paul Murray in car #94 and Jack Stoll in his newly acquired car #8 finished in the top ten despite their heavy leadfoots. Three drivers exercised care and safety, missed no checkpoints, but finished somewhat later and still managed to finish in the top eleven. A missed checkpoint was worth 2000 points, but the teams of Beale and Little sped to a 9th and 10th place finish despite missing one. Had they not missed it they would have moved up to tie for 4th and a 5th place finish respectively. Gene Kicha and his navigator finished one half-hour later than the preset time and finished 8th overall in car #223.



On the left is your 2nd place finishing team of Gary Bueling and John Millan and on the right Morris “Cool Cat” James is holding high the 3rd place trophy with daughter Kritina Horner while Walt Berdan looks on

Our route makers, Jim and Walt, are veterans of many runs, and vowed to make this run more “technical” requiring the navigator to think and read the map. No follow the leader here or you might get burned. Yours truly was victimized by their deceptions!! During an ever so slight lapse of judgment, at a crucial juncture near the town of Curtis, we didn’t follow the map exactly but came upon a checkpoint anyway. OK...no harm here, we found our way, and got a stamp from the nice checkpoint man. Turns out that we should have “zigged” instead of “zagged” at Lake Creek Rd and saw the wrong checkpoint worker. Upon further review by this driver and his navigator, it was determined that we did not follow the map, but instead followed the car in front which was on the correct route for them, but not for us. We should have turned right at Lake Creek Rd instead of following the gravel and mud infested King Road to its end. There were two such sections during the morning route, but all participants managed to negotiate the first one without incident. Perhaps the excellent array of treats and drinks at Stan Hedwall Park for the morning break near Chehalis was the mental distracter.

The “Curtis Divide” is perhaps the section that proved most fatal to most whom missed a checkpoint, but it came just before the Ceres Hill Climb which quickly became the most fun of the day and the most talked about after the event. A kewl gravel hairpin turn overlooking the Chehalis river valley became a super “Kodak Moment” for photo hound Jeff Richardson. He caught on film all drivers “gravel-blasting” the guardrail as they roared and rounded the turn usually in a four-wheel drift. All participants got two copies of that photo compliments of the event organizers. Neat stuff !!



#133 negotiates the Ceres Hill climb at the hairpin with a happy navigator grinning with glee or is that a bad word coming out !!

The most confusing part of the route also occurred during the morning in the town of Napavine. Road construction had everyone turned around scratching their noggins and asking the locals for directions. Several cars darted in one direction only to find a dead-end. Some started down Highway 603 looking for the elusive Rush Rd. Locals were no better help at finding it either. The main intersection had speedsters at all corners with looks of panic and heads spinning like Charlie McCarthy. We made two charges down a couple of roads before settling on 2nd Avenue heading north on gut instincts. Reassurance came as we passed Sommerville Rd and my eagle-eyed navigator spotted a Rush Rd sign going our way. Mass quantities of calories were lost sweating out that jumbled up mess.

Lunch found us at the Lucky Eagle Casino run by the Chehalis Indian Tribe, where we found a delectable choice of sandwiches, soup and liquid refreshments that were in plentiful supply. Jim had said at the drivers meeting, that we had an hour for lunch. It goes by quickly when ones adrenaline is pumped up to ten. But, some still had enough time to drop a few coins into the slots. Gas was available nearby and most took advantage of it. Good thing as the route went decidedly northward towards McCleary, WA home of the annual Bear Festival. The route passed appropriately within spittin' distance of Harbor Speedway, a 3/10-mile clay oval near Elma, that would have accommodated these race cars of yesterday nicely. A detour just south of McCleary while crossing Highway 8 had us guessing temporarily if we hadn't meandered off course again. Turning south towards the finish line, or so we thought, the route turned east again and into the Black Hills of the Capitol Forest. Careful navigating of the "D" line and "E" line roads took us along a spiffy one-lane road through a dense forest with enough twisties to wear out Arnold Schwarzenegger's arms.

Still heading east we crossed I-5 and just skirted the small town of Tenino and then turned south again to Bucoda. The Bucoda-Tono Rd loop was interesting as we passed by, and under, a “Coal-Fired” energy producing plant. It was here that we completed all the map pages and had to go back to page two. This is possibly the point at which several teams lost another checkpoint. On Little Hanaford Rd there is a tiny...and I mean tiny...Loop Rd cut-off that was barely visible without magnification. Our event organizers carefully placed a checkpoint at the top of Loop Rd, not visible from Little Hanaford Rd. Go too fast, or not pay attention to the map, or not turn back to page two you might miss it. Once you completed your second shot at page two you had to turn back to page one again to eventually find your way back into Centralia and the finish line.

Saturday’s fun stuff started with a terrific Hospitality Room and Registration at the host hotel. Rae Ann Murray, Jill Howie and their Puget Sound Chapter MTFCA friends provided a wide assortment of edible calories to stave off any hunger pangs those weary travelers may have had. Patty Cunningham and Mary Berdan managed the registration desk and passed out the very clever and unique event patches designed by Patty. A private back parking lot was the gathering place for tire kicking and viewing of “new” cars that made their endurance run debuts. Frank and Barbara Baker of Kennewick, WA brought their 1928 Chev powered #120 speedster out for it’s inaugural run and finished a respectable 15th overall missing only one checkpoint. Tim Good and Tara McConnell brought their Model T Speedster #721 over the Washington border from Oregon, and DNF’d, but earned the coveted “Trouble Trophy” for some ignition problems. Seems they battled a dead battery only to find out that they had a bad switch. A pile of broken rusty “T” parts in a bucket was their reward.



Minimalist speedstering and a good laugh shared amongst friends is what this is sport is all about. Tim Good and Tara McConnell receive the “Trouble Trophy” at the NWVS speedster event “Two for the Road” from event organizers Jim Cunningham (L) and Walt Berdan in the background.

Veterans Jack and Jeff Stoll introduced a hot Flathead powered Model A formerly owned by Ward Sanford but renumbered it #8 finishing 7th overall. The “Green Hornet” has a deep rumble when all the ponies are kicked into underdrive.

Kerry and Jenel Thew, son-in-law and daughter of Ed and Joanne Jepperson drove Ed's #98 Model T speedster to a very respectable finish time of just eight minutes off the pace time, however in Jeppersonian fashion, they missed two checkpoints finishing in 21st. Ed would have been proud of their accomplishment. He was missed by all, and it will forever be so, but it was great to see Joanne supporting the kids and grinning from ear to ear at the Loop Rd checkpoint.



Jenel & Kerry Thew dusted off #98 “The Seal Fast Special” and brought along with them the good memories of Ed Jepperson

The Saturday mini-tour to a local airplane and auto collector was definitely an event highlight. The exhibit is twenty-two miles west of Centralia in the Garrard Creek Valley nestled among the Doty Hills and in the shadow of Bucks Knob. This valley resides in Lewis County but borders Pacific County to the West and Grays Harbor County to the North. The owner is a retired airline pilot, who plays daily with old airplanes, old cars, old tractors and home built aircraft. His son treated us to an aerobatics demonstration in a Little Great Lakes Biplane. We toured a working Douglas DC-3, a Russian transport Biplane, and saw a flight demonstration of a 30's era deHavilland commercial transport Biplane that required hand starting the massive prop engines. Pretty neat !!



A “FUN RUN” requires “FUN” things to see like vintage airplanes

Monday's, of a three-day holiday weekend, are usually reserved for the return trip home, but Walt and Jim had an extra "no stress" tour planned. The plan was to either follow your map or follow the leader to the Cowlitz River salmon hatchery. This time following the leader was a good thing and was much less stressful. Walt's cousin gave an excellent tour of the facility and was able to answer most questions. After a little snack, of the leftovers from the hospitality room, fully one-third of those that lined up on Sunday, returned to the hotel to load up after the additional 100-mile jaunt. The weather was absolutely perfect and added a nice finishing touch to a most excellent weekend. Our thanks to Jim, Patty, Walt and Mary for putting on "2 4 D Rd."



Walt & Mary Berdan (L) and Patty & Jim Cunningham (R) stop long enough to have a group photo at the final banquet during the Memorial Day Speedster Run



President 'Paco' Bill Hills exhorts the gathering to attend the next 200-mile Speedster Run over Labor Day Weekend in Grants Pass Oregon