

A LOOK AT THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY MODEL T CLUB S

TENTH ANNUAL

# ENDURANCE RUN

June 3, 1979

Photos and Text by Bruce McCalley



Endurance Run indeed! Below is San Jose and a string of Model T Speedsters beginning the climb over Mt. Hamilton. This is just the beginning of the 200-mile event!

June 3 marked the tenth anniversary of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter's Endurance Run and Lowland Tour. Actually, there are two separate events going on at the same time; one, a long "race" for Model T Speedsters and the other a much shorter drive for "spectators" in antique cars of all makes and models.

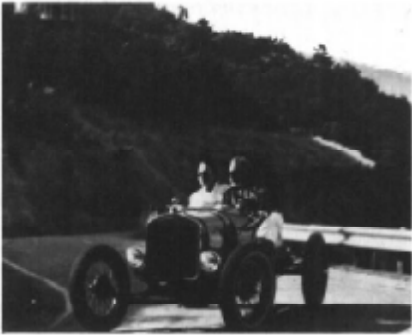
The Lowland Tour begins at the starting line for the speedsters, takes short-cuts to the stopping points on the Endurance Run route, and arrives at the finish line to cheer the arriving speedsters. While the speedster event is limited to Model Trace cars, the Lowland Tour is open to any make of antique car and to members of any club. Participants in the tour add color and support to the big event --the Endurance Run.

The Run covers a distance of about 200 miles, over steep mountain grades, through flat lands, cities and whatever else the planning committee has seen fit to add to the route. There are a number of check points along the route to make sure every car completes the entire route. No short cuts allowed!

The Endurance Run is not actually a "race" although it has every appearance of being one. The winner is not the fastest car, nor the first car across the finish line. Rather, it is that car that comes closest to a pre-determined time for the run. This time is established prior to the event by a single car that runs the route at legal speed limits and with consideration for safety. The time this single car takes is the "winning" time.



They're off! The starting line was in downtown San Jose. The police stopped all cross traffic and escorted the cars to the edge of town.



The cars "bend a curve on the way up Mt. Hamilton. This corner is a 180-degree reversal as well as a steep incline, one of many on the route.



None of the participants know just what this time is, so the winner is determined almost entirely by chance.

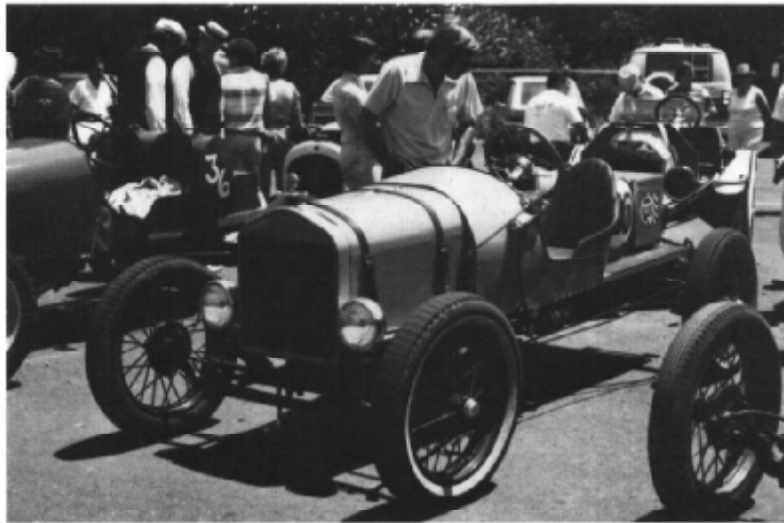
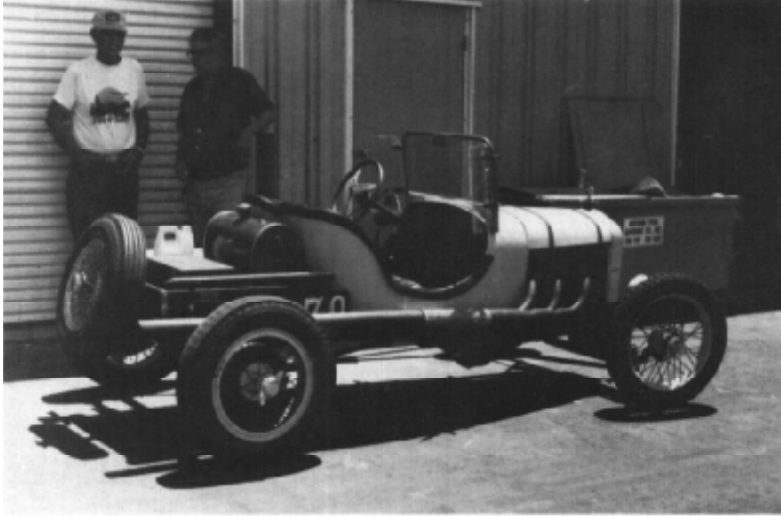
This system does not seem to make the Run any less exciting. There is still a thrill to be the first across the finish line — or even to be able to make it to the finish line, for that matter. The cars are timed at check points and rest stops. The stops allow minor adjustments to be made to the cars, and since the stops are figured in on the overall time, taking a little less time at one stop will allow a driver to make up for overtime (repairs) at another.

The route generally selected for this event is a narrow two lane road which leaves San Jose, California, and takes one through the mountains, around sharp curves, and which often has steep drops off to the side with no guard rails. Few T's are able to make the grade in high gear, even though they have light-weight bodies and in many cases, overhead-valve engines. The view is breath-taking at spots and the drive is a "white-knuckler" at times.

This writer had the pleasure of riding with Clark Roessler in his 1926 T roadster. We were not a part of the "race" but drove right in the middle of it and over the same route for the most part. Clark's car is not a stock Model T, although the body and engine block are Ford. The engine is a flathead T but with an "A" crank, special, reground, T cam and other modifications to the ignition and carburetion. The transmission is a modern three speed with overdrive (with column shift, yet!) coupled to the engine through a Model A clutch. In addition, the car has four-wheel hydraulic brakes. Now I have ridden in any number of "hot T's, but this one really moves! A good number of speedsters were unable to keep up with us on some of the hills and curves. Clark



knows his car and drove the course as if he knew every corner and every pot-hole. During a particularly thrilling section of the route I was holding on with both hands and he said, "If I make you nervous, just say so and we'll slow down. I think it took a few minutes for me to finally mutter, "I'm nervous! What a ride!"



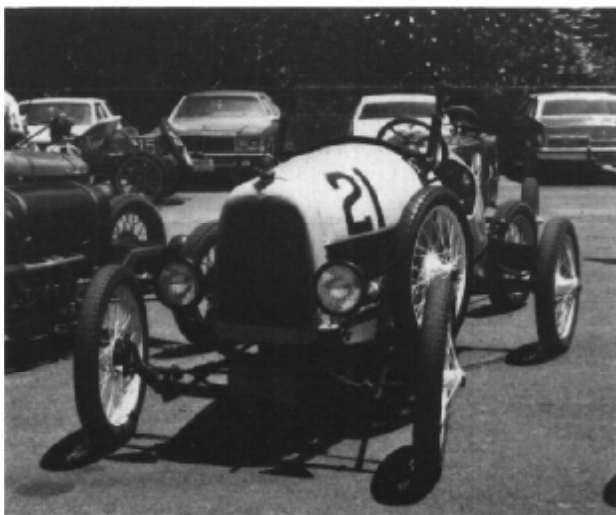
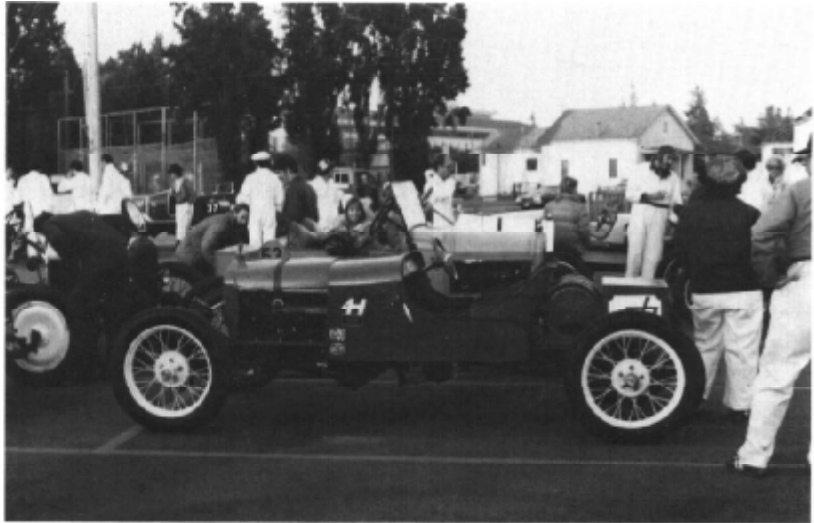
A half-way lunch stop was made at Curt Carter Ford (a Ford dealer) in Martinez. Here lunch was provided for all participants (of both the Run and the Lowland Tour) as well as entertainment. About an hour was allowed here and after eating, bands were adjusted, bolts were tightened, etc., and off they went for the second half.

What about gasoline? California was the first state to be hit with the fuel shortage and this event was scheduled in an area where the odd-even plan was in effect. With the cooperation of the Ford dealer and other businessmen in Martinez, gasoline was made available to every participant, without concern for the odd or even plan. Everyone filled up here for the remainder of the run.

The Lowland Tour headed out, again on a shorter route, to the finish line in Santa Clara. The speedsters, of course, had a longer, special route, with more check points to make sure they all followed the course.

We did not have time to follow the second half of the Run since we had to be back in Los Angeles that





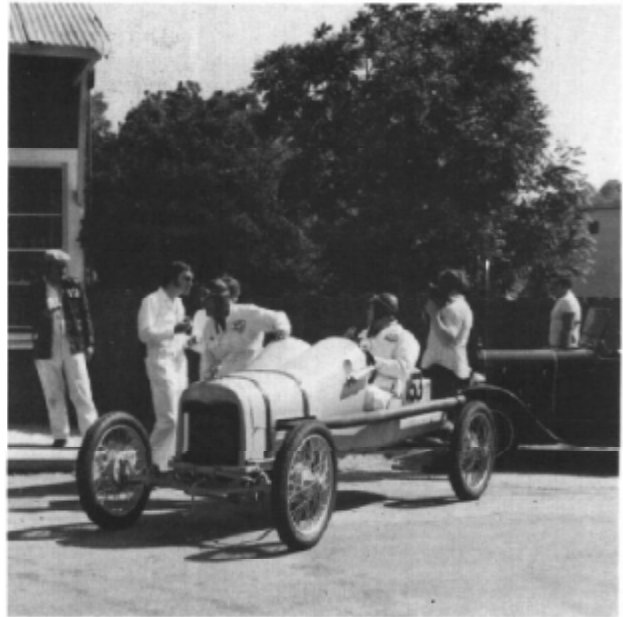
night (it s about an eight-hour drive from Santa Clara to Los Angeles). We have received no word as to who “won the event but in fact the “winning is in the running. To have just made the Run is the challenge!

A number of cars dropped out *enroute* for any number of reasons. It is next to impossible to know what happened to whom but we did see several cars with bands burned out and one that sounded like either the loss of a main bearing or a broken crankshaft. A trouble trailer and service car followed the route so that no one was left stranded (we hope) in the wilds.

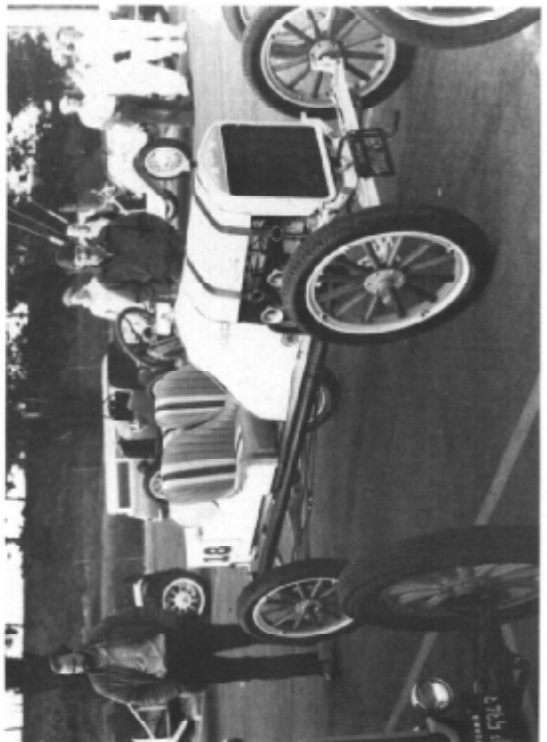
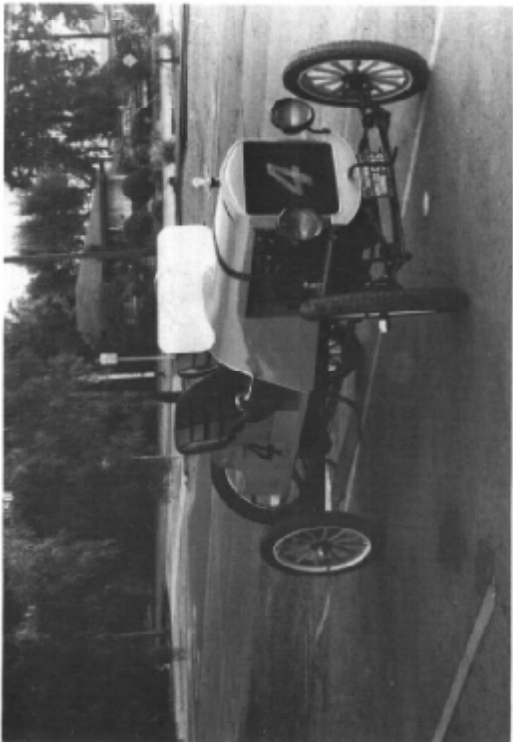
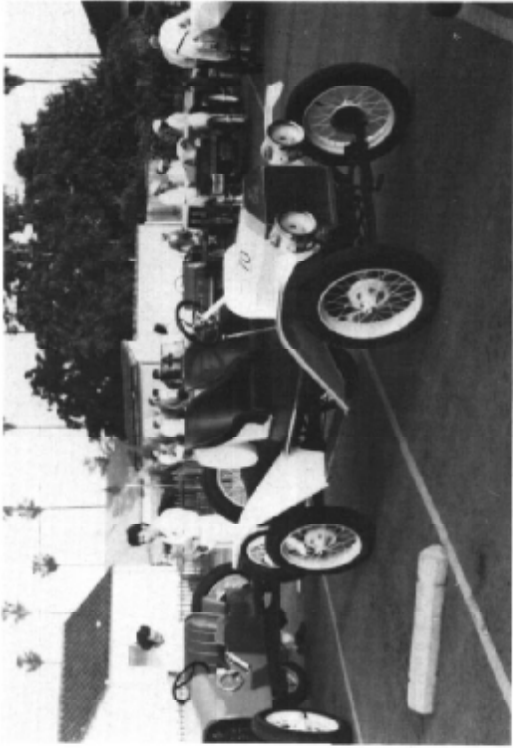
The Endurance Run and Lowland Tour is a fun event for a vast number of old car enthusiasts. In its tenth year the support was seemingly greater than ever. About sixty speedsters were entered in the run, coming from as far south as San Diego and as far north as Seattle, Washington. The number of cars and people on the Lowland Tour is unknown but there was quite a crowd.

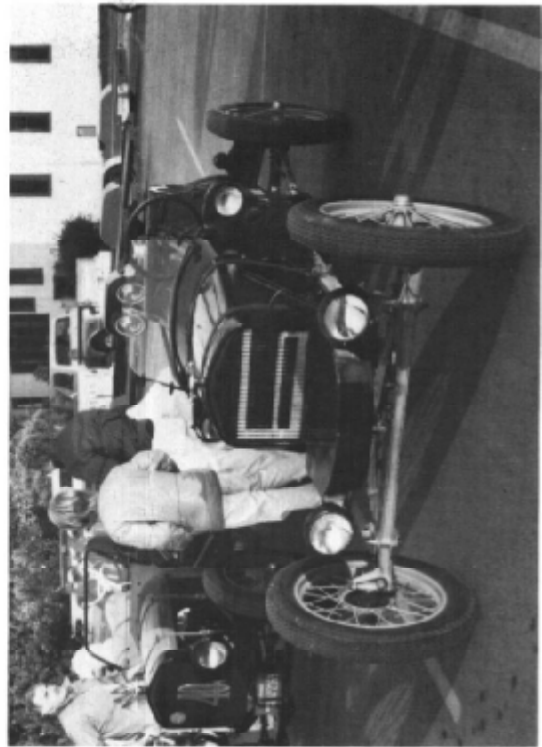
It is next to impossible to photograph all cars on such an event, and difficult to even cover a few cars in detail. The number of innovations and modifications boggle the mind and if it were possible to feature even the most interesting cars, we could fill several issues of this magazine. The owners and drivers are interested in the Run, not in posing for pictures. The ever-present spectators block whatever chance you can find to get pictures. However, we did manage to take about a hundred or so during the day and some of these are presented here.

One thing we can say for sure is that it was a lot of fun. We are giving serious consideration to converting our '23 touring into a speedster.



Little attempt is made here to identify individual cars. The listing of cars and owners is incomplete and in many cases lacks any information other than the driver's name. Notes such as "high performance engine and driver," "home brew distributor," "accident pedals and the like don't give us much to go on. A number of the cars were apparently late registrations and are not even listed in the program. Under the circumstances we feel we will be safer to say nothing because we know we'll hear about it if we caption something wrong!

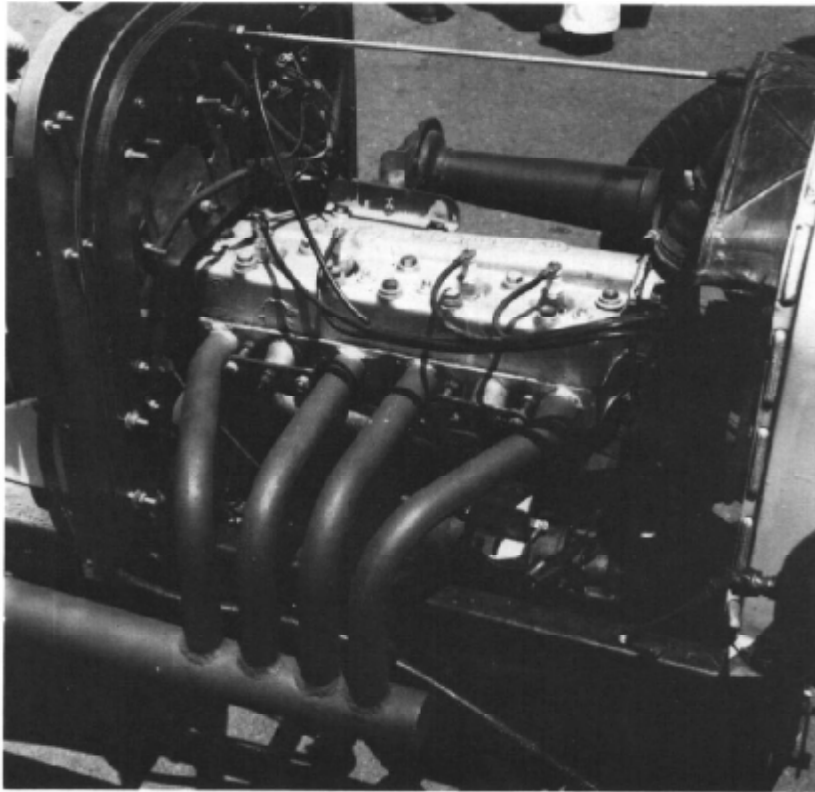








Few cars with original or original-like accessory bodies are seen these days. This "Faultless bodied speedster is owned by George Azcvedo. The car also has a Ruckstell axle, magneto ignition and dual carburetors – and Buffalo wire wheels.



While there were a number of overhead valve engines in the run, including one which used a Studebaker V-8 head (!), most entries were flatheads of one type or another. Almost every car had exhaust headers running into a straight exhaust pipe, with no muffler. Few cars used standard Ford carburetion; everything from Winfields to Model A to Stromberg 97 s were adapted to the engines.

Ignition systems were mostly of the distributor type although some stock coils and timers were seen, as well as various magneto systems. One car had a distributor driven by a Gilmer belt from the front crank pulley.

At least one flathead was a homemade affair, not cast but milled from two pieces of heavy aluminum sandwiched together.

The Studebaker conversion was done by Clark Roessler by using a one-inch adapter plate between the head and the block. The cylinder bores of the block did not match the head (the cylinders of the V-8 were evenly spaced while those of the T are paired) but the adapter compensated for this and the assembly seemed to run quite well.



One car had this permanently attached vacuum gauge on the intake manifold. Great for adjustments at the pit stops but somewhat difficult to read while driving.

