

Coolidge Forest Divisional Pro Rally

Plymouth, Vermont June 20—John Colt is either a certified genius or certifiable, I'm not sure which. Consider if you will the following scenario. It's mid winter in Vermont and this guy in full beard and muckluks appears in a Plymouth, Vermont town meeting to ask if he can invite a few hundred strangers into town for a weekend in June for the dubious purpose of running a pro rally in the Coolidge State Forest. Lesser folks would prefer a lobotomy without the benefit of anesthesia and lesser towns would happily perform the surgery. Lucky for the pro rallying community, folks like John Colt and towns like Plymouth exist.

The Coolidge Divisional Pro Rally is the highlight of the New England Region-S.C.C.A. rally calendar and having just returned unscathed from this dandy little community and this grueling rallying experience I am filled with a level of good cheer that borders on delight. John Colt, the fine and understanding people of Plymouth and the myriad of workers at the event have proven to me that pro rallying and the local gentry can peacefully co-exist, albeit, a weekend at a time.

As previous columns have attested, my pro rallying experience has been limited to providing service to my TH, Todd, and Ken Burt at last year's Coolidge and the Sunrider in Ohio. While these were valuable exercises in one's level of stamina (or stupidity) the actual experience of the rally proper was beyond my comprehension or desire. The idea of hauling down a dirt road at Mach One in a severely modified machine being restrained eight different ways and wearing a well padded helmet was not my idea of fun. I was content to look for the non-existent dipstick and wash the windshield. Well, that was last year!

Somewhere along the line this spring I actually heard myself agreeing to co-drive with Todd for Coolidge. While never actually feeling good about this decision, I did harbor a level of curiosity about a pro event. I'm not crazy about high speeds, the potential of crashing into an inanimate object turns my spine into jello. I can't stand hats so the thought of wearing a helmet off and on for 12 hours was met with less than euphoria. So what was it? Having been there, having competed and having finished makes all those inconveniences superfluous. This was, without a doubt, the single most

daring thing I have ever done in my life and it was GREAT!!

The rally proper created eighteen stages separated by transits short and long. Nine stages were run before dinner and the identical nine were run without the glow of natural light. The longest stage, a 4.49 mile ditty aptly called UP AND OVER taught me a valuable lesson entitled "Unnecessary Peeking and a Hundred Good Reasons Not To." I now understand that co-drivers have no business looking up from their route book or their odometer, EVER. If that pine tree really wants to meet you face to face it will, simple as that! The stage that everyone discusses most, GOLD DIGGER, aka "Twin Bridges" is probably the toughest at 2.62 miles but the most exciting. It boasts two excellent spectator points and a couple of bumps that are no less than hemorrhoidal.

Having survived this undergraduate experience with the vehicle and our marriage intact, (I was given stern warnings about the latter) I remain mystified by the level of organization and cooperation that John was able to harness. Stage workers were just plain terrific, local observers were extremely sociable and the Plymouth Volunteer Fire Department provided a dinner and accommodations that were superb.

John took all of this potential and created an atmosphere that spoke of what this sport is supposed to be about - fun, challenge and safety. Equally striking was the high mortality rate among the 39 competitors with 15 cars entering the DNF category at various points along the route. That 15, by the way, included one entry that was disqualified due to an unacceptably high noise level.

The top ten finishers were 1-Mullin/Bell, 2-Frontinan/Pontes, 3-Lyle/Suomo, 4-Stone/Goldfarb, 5-Putzler/Smith, 6-O'Neil/Davis, 7-Harris/Nowak, 8-Burt/Ferretti, 9-Voll/Green and believe it or not 10-Walrich/Walrich!! I'm very pleased! Thanks, John and NER, we had a ball!