

The 34th International 1000 Road Rally and the Law of Incredible Truths

Among the various laws of nature, Murphy's included, the most telling when it comes to describing this year's running of the *International 1000 Road Rally* is something I call the Law of Incredible Truths. It works something like this. A well known green Saab Turbo blows a radiator drain plug 14 feet before Checkpoint #1 of Day #1. The equally well known (and tall) driver does everything short of getting out and pushing the car over the timing line - manages a 1. The car then blows the head gasket and warps the head. For the remainder of the day this team completes two separate tows to Williamsport's Swedish Underground where the head is milled, the radiator repaired, new gasket is installed. These guys show up in Niagara Falls on Day #3 ready for bear. Incredible but true, and a class act.

Here's another. The defending champs are tooling down the road on Day #1 attempting to duplicate last year's impressive run when the waste gate to their turbo gets stuck in the open position. They turn around and head to the Rochester area at 30 mph, get the navigator's Supra, return to Wellsboro and are on the starting line for Day #2 without missing a beat. They went on to tie Car #1 for best day's run on Day #5. Equally incredible, true and classy.

Not convinced? This year's METRO champs ripped the exhaust system out of their Rabbit GTI, had it replaced and continued in true championship fashion. Team Rallycats Class C entry replaced a blown tire with a space saver on Day #4 and managed some impressively low scores despite a 25% factor. MGCC/LIC's chairman and her hubby were competing in Class B, blew a gear in the Halda on Day #5 and went on to finish SOP. The absolute novices in Car #34 had nothing but trouble in the Camaro but they met the event in Niagara Falls after some heavy duty repairs and FINISHED! And then there was Car #8 and those guys from Delaware who were in heavy contention until the fateful Day #5 afternoon run when they managed a full gainer down about 40 feet of mountain, crawled out and up unharmed and arrived at the banquet full of stories and good will. All events incredible, all true and all the mark of the real spirit of the International 1000: that no matter what the odds or chances of taking home some hardware there is a personal victory in just plain finishing this event!

And then we have that entry in Car #15. You know them, the well sponsored national champs in the Toyota SR5 pick-up. Well these poor guys blew out a couple tires on Day #4, turned around and LEFT! Incredible, true and from this writer's vantage point and

amazingly unimaginative response to a comparatively small bit of rally luck.

Winning or placing well at the International 1000 does little for you in terms of commanding a higher salary at work, is a dubious entry on your resume and is generally meaningless to the vast majority of the general population. The event is not covered by ESPN, is barely mentioned in AUTOWEEK or any of the popular rags that we all subscribe to and is one week a year that puts a major dent in our cash flow. So why do we do it and why does the MG Car Club - Long Island spend months on end organizing it? Well, for one thing it fills a major gap in amateur rallying, for another it provides a level of competition that is both healthy and challenging and, most of all, it gives rallyists from all over the country a chance, once a year, to compare notes, brag a little and just plain have fun. The event is not perfect but it is damn good.

This year the mileages were occasionally a little weird; there was some chatter that some of the checkpoint locations were too easy. Others offered the opinion that the speeds were much too slow and at least one person was overheard calling the event monotonous. Given the wide range of competitive experience among this year's list of entrants, these evaluations are all valid but there was another evaluation when it was all over that told me something equally important. The banquet was in full swing, the Wellsboro Men's chorus had filled the room with song, the appetizers were being served and the McCanns made their entrance. To a person the response was immediate, a long and joyful standing ovation for a couple who had spent the past eight months putting together what can only be considered an incredible effort and a class act.

The International 1000 is more than five days of competitive rallying in the US and Canada, it is also a forum provided for the contestants and workers to fill out the off hours as creatively as possible in small and large group activities. To the credit of everyone, this year's workers were treated to dinner, drinks and friendship that far surpassed any previous year that I know of. That guy from Maine organized an evening of Go-Kart competition and reported its results at the banquet with one of the funniest monologues ever made, culminating in the long-awaited presentation of THE inflatable truck to the veteran from Glen Cove. Competitors helped each other with erratic timing equipment, broken vehicles, spare tires, directions to the car wash, etc. Workers went out of their way to help

anyone in distress - intestinal or otherwise, and the rallymasters provided a calm wisdom and sense of fair play that is so necessary on an event of this magnitude. One only has to stop and analyze the Day #4 reroute that was accomplished with an ease that only a master course marshal could negotiate to appreciate the feat that these rallymasters pulled off in glorious style.

The people of Wellsboro and their officials made us feel welcome and we added considerably to the profit margin in return. There aren't many towns that would tolerate the "1000" as graciously as Wellsboro did and an event of this nature needs that kind of symbiotic relationship if it has a ghost of a chance of succeeding. The public relations savvy and political acumen demonstrated by the Executive Director must be applauded by all.

The debate on the quality of this year's running will go on long after this issue of AutoSport EXPRESS is a memory - another Incredible Truth. From this writer's vantage point, criticism, opinion and kudo's are what make the International 1000 happen year after year - and it's a pretty sure bet that the MG Car Club - Long Island Center will keep at it for as long as amateur rallyists nationwide show up for the annual rites of August and for as long as rallymasters are willing to put it all on the line. The 34th *International 1000* has been duly recorded in the books - the winners have taken their bows, those trailing have five days worth of terrific memories and, hopefully, our intrepid leaders are catching up on a few weeks worth of lost sleep.