

Rally News

* **No Alibi 2005, by Steve Richards**

A perfect black ribbon called Peola Road, barely wider than your average driveway, dips and curves over Potter Hill and the Gooseneck on its way to Clarkston. The road stands in stark contrast with the green of the hillsides and the cotton ball clouds floating in a blue sky. This, along with the gravel switchback descent to the Snake River on Silcott Grade, marked the end of day one on the 2005 No Alibi Rally.

My navigator, Gary Reid, and I had, what we thought, was a near perfect day of rallying. Other than my slightly overshooting a speed change from 47 down to 25 and getting caught 3 seconds early at a well placed checkpoint in section 11, we thought our day was very clean. At nearly every checkpoint, at least those we could spot, I showed less than one hundredth error on the Alfa display.

Oh yes, there was that one bit of gravel hill climb at 38mph about 2-1/2 miles into section 4 on which I couldn't get the all-or-nothing automatic trans to shift down. I always run the TSD sections in 3rd gear, which usually works well for about every situation but this time, when I wanted all, it gave me nothing. But no harm done since there weren't any checkpoints on the hill. Wrong. We found out later that evening that we had picked up 12 seconds worth of lateness.

The General Instructions indicated that the rally was measured in thousandths but truncated to hundredths for calculations at the speed changes and checkpoints. Thus, I reasoned, that one should run about 1 hundredth early to compensate for this. But for some unknown reason I failed to comply with my own edict and instead tried to run with null on the display. As it turned out that move cost us about 12 points for the rally. But even 12 fewer points would have only raised us from our eventual 10th place overall with 74 points, to 7th. We picked up more 2s and 3s than you could shake a stick at. I think it's back to the Curta for us unless we can figure out what we are doing wrong with the computer.

No, I'm not blaming the rally organization's measurement, timing or scoring for our inability to get zeros – obviously the top 4 or 5 places had no such troubles and as far as we could tell, the mileage was right on all weekend. Oh well, it doesn't really matter that much in the big scheme of things. We still had a great time. As usual, the No Alibi proved to be an outstanding rally with the most perfect gravel roads on the planet.

I needed new gravel tires so I decided to try some Kumho R700 pro rally tires from Tire Rack. At about \$85 per tire, they are very similar in price to a good snow tire so I thought I might as well give them a try. It goes without saying that having large lugs with wide spacing, they are very noisy on pavement. However, the handling on pavement is surprisingly good, given the real purpose of the tire. On gravel they require a bit more steering input in the straight bits than I would have expected, but once sliding, they really hook up and are very predictable and controllable. Lee Sorenson said that the extremely stiff sidewall encouraged the tire to "hunt" somewhat over road irregularities. This was really only noticeable in the straight sections and was more than made up for in the corners. An additional bonus was, that once warmed up, they seemed to give very consistent mileages as well.

The only roads that might have been considered a little on the rough side were in the Blue Mountain region on Eckler Mountain. There were a few short sections of washboard, especially on the ascents, which caused some teeth gnashing. Additionally there were a few pretty fair sized rocks but nothing that the family Camry couldn't handle.

It was on this section that we were reminded of the 1997 Nor'wester that used some of these very same roads.

While driving along at a fairly brisk average, admiring the beautiful vistas and the topmost branches of 150-foot tall fir trees growing beside the road, Gary had said, "You can look, or you can drive, but don't do both, to stay alive – Burma Shave."

Tall roads. Narrow loose surfaces. No guardrails to obstruct the view. Northwest rallying at its best.

It is difficult to find fault with the No Alibi, but perhaps some thought could be given to the system of time declarations. I fully understand and endorse the need to restrict and control overly aggressive driving in an attempt to make up time. That kind of behavior could conceivably end the rally for good. Having said that, I am not fond of the idea of being able to legislate a high finishing position by taking advantage of the time declaration system.

Given the SCCA, the Canadian winter rules force majeure, and who knows what rule, there must be an equitable compromise between no-fault “design your own score” time decs and the insane blitz to make up 7 minutes due to an off course excursion (although I must admit, years ago the later used to be the name of the game and quite a lot of fun to boot).

We were happy to see Peter and Tim Ryce from B.C. do so well, finishing in 2nd overall to the eventual winners, Carlson and Kraushaar, 42 points to 31. The Ryce’s broke a 42 point tie with Sorensens by having more zeros, 25 to 19. We hope that Peter and Tim will entice more Canadians down to run this wonderful event.

Thanks to Kirk and Terry Simons, Roy Ward, Eric Horst, Steve Willey and the entire 20 person crew for all their hard work in putting on No Alibi and manning a very respectable number, and very hard to spot, 53 checkpoints. The accommodations at the Red Lion and the Saturday night banquet were also excellent. We sat with R. Dale and Francesca and discussed the merits of a shipboard wedding.

The No Alibi is one rally that just has to be experienced to understand how great it is. With the dedicated and hard working crews, outstanding road selection, impeccable instructions and incredible scenery, I put it on my list of things to do every year.

* June 18: Mountain Trials stage rally carried on a successful series in British Columbia. 25 starters, 18 finishers. Ten were from the US, and 8 more from Alberta.

The DNF’s were all mild mechanical woes. This may be because the RI’s are well written, and there is a “slow” run through before rally day.

No Alibi Rally 2005

Ron Sorem © 6/14/2005

June 11 & 12, 2005. Ellensburg, WA. **Rainier Auto Sport Club** presented **No Alibi 2005**, a 600-mile 2-day touring rally through Eastern Washington. No Alibi varies from open wheat field roads, to steep narrow tracks overlooking the Snake River, to smooth pleasant rolling pavement in the “middle of nowhere”.

Day One begins with an odo check due east on I-90 to Ryegrass Summit Rest Area, then CAST 69 down the 10-mile hill to Vantage and the Columbia River. The first checkpoint is on the freeway at the Vantage overpass—what happens if a moving van is on exactly-your-minute in the right lane and you pass the checkpoint in the left lane? I guess you hope for good eyes in the checkpoint car! Apparently this was the case because all cars were scored. We jockeyed for position with the big trailer, just in the event there might be a control, and there it was. The second checkpoint was from the viewpoint across the river, more than a hundred feet above the highway. They had an excellent view of the rally; our only question was where were they timing the cars? Maintaining the CAST uphill with the wind was a little easier for the turbo cars, definitely a chore for the economy models.

We leave the freeway for the very short “Pelican Ranch” transit, skirting the north slope of the Frenchman Hills.

“Frenchman Hills” TSD presents the first checkpoint at the end of pavement, looking at a long dirt hill climb, straight ahead—deceptively steep—and yes, there was a checkpoint at the top. This was the first of many recurring themes for No Alibi: Checkpoint at the top of a hillclimb. We continue on gravel, sweeping left, then right onto paved Beverly Burke Road, past one of the numerous diatom mines (tiny white fossils used for water filters). Left at the irrigation canal to the first of the orchards and the first serious oncoming local with an attitude (and we’re only car 3). There was lots of dust but the wind was blowing it immediately off the road. Returning to pavement, through Royal Slope, and its mint fields, grapes, apples, cherries, and alfalfa.

A brief transit though Royal City ends with a debate between cars 1 and 2 as to the “Road Closed” signs. (Used during the week, open--subject to discussion, for the weekend traffic and for the rally). Advance car had moved the signs off the route, apparently not far enough to satisfy the first two cars.

The next TSD followed Lower Crab Creek. Basalt cliffs to one side and green pastureland to the other. There is a CAST at mileage, with no hard points, and a checkpoint immediately following. This was the second recurring theme for No Alibi: CAST at mileage, then checkpoint.

A brief stop in Othello for gas and snacks, then south to Radar Hill. East on Hendricks past channeled basalt scablands and pothole lakes, past wheat, potatoes, flax, and seed grass, then onward to Connell. Dropping off the plateau into the coulee, we are overlooking one of many potato-processing plants in the area, wafting fresh cooked french fries over the rally. Of course, at the end of the transit a completely different aroma could have wafted from the cattle feedlot—we park upwind...

The next TSD runs east through Washtucna Coulee, Hardesty Coulee, and turns south to Kahlotus.

The “Kahlotus” transit drops down Devils Canyon along an old railroad grade. Anyone find the rail tunnel? We drove over the top of it, but the entrance must have been well hidden over your right shoulder. We meet the Snake River at Lower Monumental Dam and proceed downstream for lunch at Windust Park. The great little park with picnic, camping and restrooms was appropriately named—on rally day there were near gale force winds. Too much wind for the windsurfers in the campground, but very little dust (probably all blown away, along with any normal picnic insects), and big rolling waves on the impoundment called Lake Sacajawea (behind Ice Harbor Dam, further downstream). A great sandwich lunch was provided by Rainier. The transit continued with a steep climb up the pavement to a left onto yet another primitive road.

The TSD began running through Burr Canyon, along the plateau in the dust, then up McCoy canyon to the orchards and hayfields with a checkpoint casually parked in the shade of the apple trees.

A long transit began on Kahlotus-Pasco road past asparagus fields, then east across the Snake River as it joins the Columbia. A quick break at Dodd Road before Ninemile Canyon, Touchet Road, Highway 124 to Donnelly Road and the narrow blind crests and a sharp dropping hairpin. We apparently encountered some lawn chair checkpoints, because there was no sign of anyone at the checkpoint car parked conspicuously along the route. Right onto Skyrocket Road southbound. A switchback hillclimb up the Skyrocket Hills to the communications towers, then a roller coaster for a couple of miles, with a checkpoint, and the long downhill with great views of Prescott and the Touchet River Valley. East again, we pass through historic Waitsburg, with a wedding in the park, and the rallymaster at a garage sale—no checkpoint—and past the Starr Ranch 1859, past Lewis and Clark State Park, into Dayton. South, to the Eckler Mountain Road and access to winter skiing at Bluewood.

“Eckler Mountain” begins as a wide smooth gravel road, then becomes the narrow twisty Skyline Drive, with local traffic and the hillside scattered with winter cabins. We encounter “School Bus Hill”—officially it is Forest Service Road 4620, or Patrick Grade, but the route book pointed out: “10 MPH, extreme exposures L and R sides of road next 2 miles. The forest service tells us that school busses use this road, even in the winter. You be the Judge.” ...Hence the nickname. This CAST 22 hill drops over 1300 feet in a mile as the crow flies—we took over 3 miles on the twisting corkscrew descent.

A scenic transit runs along the Tucannon River, with numerous campgrounds and fisher folk (Free Fishing Weekend). The transit ends at Last Chance Resort.

“Tatman Gulch” TSD twists up the canyon of Tumatum Creek on Blind Grade Road with split checkpoints again—the wives and car are at the bottom of the hillclimb, the husbands standing at the top, nearly two miles later. The exposure allowed TWO-minute hacks ahead or behind—you couldn’t see the one-minute interval. There was a tricky little straight-through intersection noted as “MBCU end pavement” but several cars avoided the gravel straight ahead and drove until the next instruction didn’t work. They then returned to this x-type crossroads and corrected their mistake, taking a time allowance for unavoidable delay. There is some question if missing an instruction and driving off-course constitutes “unavoidable”—self-inflicted, maybe. We follow Niebel Gulch to Tatman Mtn Rd where the route book warns of a tire-eating dog. He was fairly aggressive for the first few cars, but by mid-pack he’d had enough exercise for one day.

Left on Mountain Road, right on Peola Rd and end transit at 1.68 miles.

“Pleasant Ridge” TSD begins with three miles of gravel, runs two miles on pavement, then gravel again to the Asotin County line where Pleasant Valley Road changes to a 30-foot wide paved twisting scenic wonder—distances are in kilometers, there are fog-lines but no centerline. This is a perfect car commercial road, cruising through the corners with the helicopter overhead, vistas of the Blue Mountains and Asotin Canyon to the south, or the Palouse and Snake River Canyon to the north. The TSD ends with a steep gravel drop down Silcott Grade to the river and into Lewiston.

The evening’s festivities included an excellent banquet. Guest speaker, R. Dale Kraushaar, with forty years of all types of rallying under his backside, recounted tales of his experiences. R. Dale gave an interesting, albeit morose talk about recent “permanent retirees” from rallying. This may have been touching for those who knew each of the departed, but was surely fairly gloomy for the rest of the room.

Day Two begins with “Steptoe Canyon” TSD; paved Hwy 193 along the river, then at “Not Recommended For Cars” this state highway becomes a narrow dirt track twisting its steep climb out of the canyon. We accounted for all the checkpoints except the first. The big white pickup looked so “at home” in the farm yard with several other pickups that it went un-noticed by most of the rally. We continued toward Colton, then more gravel along Rimrock and Wawawai roads before the transit up Hwy 195 through Colfax and west on Hwy 26 to Airport Road, and Duncan Springs to end the section.

We began the 33-mile “Palouse” TSD, the longest TSD of the weekend, with kids on an ATV and dirt bikes trying to drag race at 25 mph past the farm house. Four miles of paved including a checkpoint, then gravel. Looking into the sun, we can see the checkpoint car but can’t see if anyone is in it. One occupant has a hidden checkpoint in the grass quite some distance before the car—no one recalled seeing either of the workers. There are bits of pavement separated by miles of gravel, twisting through wheat fields on the rolling hills, including passing a Father-Daughter checkpoint crew, from Oregon, laying in a tractor path alongside the route, barely visible through the gently flowing grain, after we’d been timed. Back to pavement, to Hwy 26, west to Dusty (another appropriately named town), south on Hwy 127 to Zaring Cutoff Rd and back to Hwy 26 again.

The transit takes the rally west on 26 to Washtucna, south on 261, and right on Palmer. Did you recognize one of last year’s tunnels off to the south just before Palmer? Sadly missing from 2005, tunnels have been a No Alibi “on-the-course tiebreaker” in the past.

The “Sand Hills” TSD covers Palmer, Suko and Hatton roads with several checkpoints, then Left at T for Hampton, CAST 49, uphill, loose. Half the checkpoint crew is just past the turn, the other half, of course, at the top of the hill. Then there is the white WRX checkpoint above Sand Hills Coulee. It is visible for maybe three miles—everyone should have zeroed his checkpoint—we didn’t. Three late. It’s possible we added mileage instead of subtracted for wheelspin in the gravel.

The next transit is 30 miles of nearly straight road to Othello for gas and snacks.

“Frenchman Hills” TSD begins north from Othello into the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, and the Seep Lakes Wildlife Area, in the scablands just south of Potholes Recreation Area. Nearly every piece of water has a fisherman attached. Their cars are parked such that many are mistaken for checkpoints... The route turns right, into Grant County, then left to parallel a canal into the Frenchman Hills again. Fields of hay, mint, and corn, and orchards of apples, and cherries at CAST 48, then down to 44. Skirting the south side of the ridge, overlooking the green checkerboard above Royal City, we are following a pickup truck along the canal, twisting, dusty; he is exactly on our minute. We fall back 2, then 3, then take a 30 second time allowance for “safety” and visibility. I didn’t see any checkpoints in the dust. We must have done it right, but then again, I only saw two checkpoints and one photographer. We were told there were five spots, including one lawn chair so well hidden that his partner drove past him while closing the controls. The last four-mile drop into Sand Hollow begged for a checkpoint behind every fence and every haystack, but we didn’t see any.

The finish transit west was un-eventful; down Hwy 26 to the Columbia, through the new interchange construction onto I-90 west, and the traffic to Ellensburg.

Rainier scored 30 checkpoints on Saturday and another 23 on Sunday utilizing some creative positioning of 12 crews.

Congratulations to: First Overall (Unlimited) Satch Carlson and Russ Kraushaar and “Kelly”, accumulating 31 points; Second Overall, Peter and Timothy Ryce from BC with 42, tied with Californians Lee and Rod Sorenson for points, but the tie broken by the Ryce’s 25 zeroes versus the Sorenson’s 19; First Equipped and 13th Overall were Esko and Peter Mannisto; First SOP to Vasco de Pinna and Kevin Mullins; First Novice to Roger Greene and Trevor Hitch; and First Vintage to William McRae and Dave Harms.

Full detailed results, graphs, satellite views, and photos at www.rainierautosports.com

Worker stories:

Ken and Sue Lingbloom invited their British friends, Dave and Dot Robinson, to experience Washington State. It worked out that Ken and Dave would be dropped off at an extremely lonely spot, and watch the girls drive off. They’d time cars, and usually the Subaru Forester would reappear and they’d go on to work another CP or two.

Kevin Barrows and Joe Gardner did sweep duty, which fortunately amounted to collecting CP logs.

Richard Fuhrman once again joined us from Moscow, Idaho. This time, he was on a motorcycle. You can hide one of those just about anywhere.

Club News

* Nor'Wester: Jerry is contemplating some minor changes to the format. (*I'm not sure, but the entrants actually may just want to see more of Canada, so the grueling "rally" aspect may be toned down-MN*) More to be announced.

Trivia:

* Mike Jones is mending just fine. He just has to take it easy, but isn't restricted to an ice cream diet or anything like that.

*Vince Plancich is back from a trip to the ancestral digs in Croatia, by way of Italy.

* Tom Grimshaw passed away quietly in the early hours of June 26. He had been ill and failing for the last three years, maybe more though it merely slowed him down.

Tom was welcomed at just about every rally venue in the last three decades and was a contender to win each and every contest.

Tom was one of very few who will be quoted in the future. He made the phrase "rally whore" respectable when he could be found in a variety of right seats, searching for an elusive "edge". When the rally "lawyers" gathered after an event to decide who had the best reasons to be the winner, his case often prevailed. He had no problem with being known as a "character", and handed out that accolade to others without hesitating. And he wrote a damn fine letter.

- He was quick to take advantage of every opportunity. When it was discovered that he was rallying in a state (Oklahoma?) would hand out a driver's license with little fuss, he soon had two.

- He leaned forward and adjusted the rally computer. The surprised driver looked over and said "Why?". Tom replied, "Because it was time." -MN

FOR SALE / Wanted:

* 88 F250 XLT 4x4 Extended cab, bedliner, canopy, A/C, etc. 10k miles on remanufactured 460 V8 w/ warranty. \$4600.00

* Mazda 323 GTX- Fuel injection "issue", so it's \$1500 OBO. E-mail Jerry, since he's not the seller, but wants rallyists to get first crack. He'll forward.

* '02 white Chevy Tahoe, 32K miles, \$20K is below "book", and it may be on its way to the auction if you don't move fast.

*'99 Town & Country, 110K mi., loaded. Jerry's current ride is one-too-many for the driveway. Jerry or Colleen, 425-823-6343

*** STILL For Sale: 12-volt car battery, brand new, side terminal style, fits most new GM cars. Purchased in haste for no good reason, never installed in a car. Cost \$92.65, make offer. Roy Ward, roy.ward@verizon.net.**

Calendar

June 25- July 9 - Great Race 2005, Washington, DC to Tacoma, WA

Puget Sound-area TSD

Jul 8- Friday Nighter, ORCA, Bellevue, WA

Jul 23-24- Golden West 2005, Northern Calif www.sfrscca.org

Jul 24- Ketchum Again, Puget Sound Rally Club

Aug 12- Friday Nighter, PSRC, Bellevue

Aug 15-18 - Nor'Wester 2005, RASC, to Bella Coola BC, then ferry to Vancouver Isle and Finish in Victoria.

Aug 21- "Western Whatcom Wobble", Monte Carlo, Chuckanut Sports Car Club

Sep 9- Friday Nighter, NWRC, Bellevue

Oct 1- Night on Bald Mountain, ORCA

Oct 14- Friday Nighter, RASC, Bellevue

Nov 5- Armageddon XXIV, Bellingham WA

Nov 11- Friday Nighter, NWRC, Bellevue

NW Stage events

Jul 17- Flaming Geyser, NWR Rally Cross, Covington, WA www.nwr-scca.org

Jul 23-24- Rally Café (Solo National Tour Event) Pacific Rally Group, Packwood, WA

Jul 31- Brooklyn Bash, NWR SCCA Rally Cross, Brooklyn, WA www.nwr-scca.org

Aug 7 ORG SCCA Rally Cross #4 Hood River, OR

Aug 1-3 Rally Round PIR, ORG
Aug 13- Ray's Rambler, Rally Sprint & Party Montesano, WA www.nwr-scca.org
Aug 14- Janice's Jaunt, Rally Sprint & Party Montesano, WA www.nwr-scca.org
Aug 28- NWR Rally Cross #2 NWR SCCA Rally Cross (tentative), Brooklyn, WA
Sep 10-11- Wild West International Rally, Shelton
Sep 25- ORG SCCA Rally Cross #5
Oct 22- Mt Hood, Reg'l Stage Rally, Odell OR
Oct 23- Hood River, Regal Stage Rally, Odell, OR
Nov 6- ORG SCCA Rally Cross #6

Canada TSD events

Aug 6- WCRA Novice Workshop #3, Hope
Jul 23- Gold Digger, BC Regional TSD, Pemberton
Aug 14- Novice TSD #3, Campbell River BC
Aug 27- Tsunami, Vanc. Is. Series #3
Sep 24- WCRA Rally-X
Oct ??- WCRA Novice TSD Rally Workshop
Oct 29- Midnight, BC Regional TSD, Nanaimo
Nov 19-20- Totem, BC Regional TSD PCC

Portland, Oregon, TSD

Jul 15-Friday Nighter, Cascade, Portland OR www.cascadescc.com
Jul 16- The Scenic View, SCCA National Road Rally (Course) Portland OR www.leftrightonline.com
Jul 17- The Beaver Cleaver, SCCA National Road Rally (Course) Portland OR www.leftrightonline.com
Aug 13- Rally round Portland Int'l Raceway (PIR) Reg likely open at 11ish, first lap of PIR noonish (or whenever the track is cold and we can get on), 3+ hour tour looping back to PIR for another lap at the end of racing day.
Aug 20- Mountains to Sea, All-day touring rally from Portland to the beach. Start at Eastport G.I. Joe's parking lot, Eastport Plaza, 3900 SE 82nd, Portland, Oregon.

Rainier Auto Sports Club will meet this coming Monday, July 11 at 7:30 PM at Café Veloce at the Totem Lake shopping center. Best way I can think of to get there is north on I-405, take the "NE 124th" exit, then keep right under NE 124th and straight at the signal. This puts you on Totem Lake Blvd, not whatever the frontage road is next to I-405. Then right first poss, with the Café on your right at that point.

Monthly meetings are the second Monday of each month. Past Members, visitors, and spectators are welcomed.

Agenda: Nor'Wester plans, maybe with some course survey stories. Vince always has good news about the Alfa Club rally (Potlatch). The Club Treasurer was seen in the pits during his group's SOVREN race, so he has drained the coffers and left for Texas.

2005 Board Members:

President: Marvin Crippen –(206)365-5915; Vice-President:; Steve Willey – (206) 417-8517

Secretary: Eric Horst (206)363-9752; Treasurer: Ed Millman (206)361-7389

Members at Large:; Mark Nolte (425) 226-3155, Jerry Hines (425) 823-6343

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**The editor is Mark Nolte, ph. (425)652-3578. View back issues at
<http://www.rainierautosports.com/wag/default.htm>
Contributions and paid/unpaid ad eagerly received at
2108 NE 12Th. St., Renton, WA 98056 or e-mail: mnolte@blarg.net**

Rainier Auto Sports Club, P.O. Box 852, Kirkland, WA 98134