
The race is not to the swift ...



Rallyeists study their "generals" for hidden gimmicks beside checkpoint "ramarL" at rally start.

Confusion, gimmickry and tricks test the wits in the wonderful world of rallying



Dad, Mike Stefanisko, and children Michele, 5, and Nick, 8, of Sunnyvale, sport matching rally jackets. Stefanisko and his wife, Elaine, wrote "Monster Mash," MIRT's upcoming annual Halloween rally.

EACH WEEKEND in California 30 to 75 cars (and some pickup trucks, of course) converge on a predetermined spot, receive a set of instructions and spend the next three hours trying to cover a 15 or 20-mile course.

The sport is auto rallying — one of those unexplainably enjoyable sports, like walking four hours to tap a tiny white ball in a hole, that give a lot of people a lot of pleasure.

There are many types of rallies but most local events are not run for speed and cars average about 15 mph. Says John Bean; a member of the Flying Beavers, "Most people assume rallying means racing, but it's more like a treasure hunt than a race."

The object of the rallye is to figure out the route from the printed instructions, pass all the checkpoints and arrive at the destination with the most points or the least penalty points.

If the rallymaster is benign,

instructions may read:

"Heading toward Alaska on the Kings Highway, point your bonnet east at the arches." Translated: Drive north on El Camino and turn right at McDonald's.

Often there are new instructions to be picked up if the driver is on course. The seasoned rallyist knows to carefully scrutinize all instructions for such tricky qualifiers as "but," "except," "if" and "unless" which make life miserable.

Example: "Turn left at the first intersection after each underpass IF clearance is more than 13 feet EXCEPT when it is an avenue.

There are, of course, some rallies that are run strictly for time, some cars installed with computers and communication devices, some driven over treacherous desert routes and some which take 45 days and cross three continents. But the average Bay Area rally is just a

four of five-hour lark and a good test of wits.

A popular form of rallying in California is Course Marker Gimmick Rally. A course marker is just that — a marker somewhere along the route which the rallyist must see and record on a score sheet to show that a certain area has been reached. Course markers are clearly marked with a letter and number corresponding to the printed instructions. By matching the two the rallyist can decipher where to go next.

Locally a course marker is a paper plate or piece of cardboard attached to a telephone pole. Each is worth points and the highest score wins.

Course marker gimmick rallies are tricky. The terminology on each printed page is mind-boggling for first-timers. But they quickly learn that R means turn right, RL means rule and CM means course marker.

Just follow the paper plates, mostly...

Therefore, "R at Jones" means turn right at Jones Street. Simple. But somewhere in the instructions, called "generals," the rallyist may be told that "Jones does not exist for you tonight." As a result even though a right turn is possible and a course marker is visible, the driver must ignore it and continue straight. In all likelihood he will be rewarded for "catching" a gimmick with the welcome sight of another course marker. Had he turned and recorded the course marker on Jones St., he would have earned a penalty or minus point.

Motoring International Rallye Team (MIRT), a Peninsula club, divides rallyists into five classes - first-timer, beginner, novice, senior and expert.

For obvious reasons, the rallyist may be a first-timer only once then moves up to beginner, according to MIRT president, Dick Grannis of San Mateo. Moves are made to subsequent classes by winning a medal three times.

Running an amateur rally requires no prior experience.

MIRT holds an informal class at the rally start to acquaint participants with terminology and to clarify instructions.

Any car may enter MIRT's rallies. "You see a little of everything," said Grannis, who has written more than 70 rallies. "We've even had a bus and a chauffeur-driven limousine."

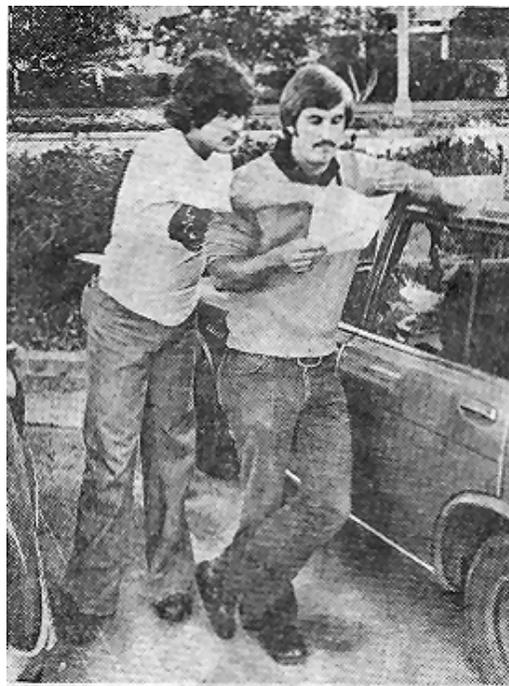
Many say they run rallies because of the mental challenge. Bill Jonesi of Los Gatos, a former philosophy and logic major, is a member of San Jose's

Paradox Club. He doesn't go a week without running in a rally. He estimates that he participates in 65-70 yearly. "Rallies present very logical problems," he said. Al Powell of Sunnyvale has participated in nearly 500 rallies and written about 40 since he got hooked on them as a high school student in 1970. He is a key punch inspector who says he enjoys the challenge. "Basically, they give you a bunch of problems and you have to straighten them out," he

explained. Grannis said nearly half the area's regular rallyists are in some way involved with computers professionally. Fred Parkes of San Jose drives the family Toyota in rallies.

According to him, a common first-timer mistake is not realizing that gimmicks often are hidden right at the parking lot registration area. Popouts can be gained or lost before the driver even hits the road, he said.

He recalled the mid-September "Bedpan Alley" rally, which was



Photographs accompanying this article were taken at the rally described on Page 5. Mark Landefeld, Mountain View, and John Bean, San Jose, study the rules. Cigar-chomping Dick Grannis of Belmont, right, is MIRT president.

Bill Jonesi is ready with plastic board to hold his "generals." Tracy Kujawski, 4, helps her parents, ray and Barbara, watch for clues. They're members of Pacer Rally Club.



written around a nursing theme. "It instructed rallyists to need the nurse (Parkes) and ask to see his "symbol." Those who didn't failed to see valuable extra instructions taped inside a bedpan Parkes carried.

Most rallyists travel in pairs – a driver and a navigator who reads the instruction and calls out the moves. "But we have a couple in the expert class who prefer to run solos," Parkes said. "We also have families who put the kids in the back seat, high school types and people close to retirement."

He warns husbands and wives of driver-navigator conflicts. "You have to be careful or you may be ex-husband and wives."

Another enthusiast, Doug Pearson of Mountain View, who along with his wife, Shirley, produces the monthly publication, "The Critique," has been rallying 10 years. He estimates he has written several dozen rallies and run a couple of hundred. His VW Rabbit carries the license plate "TSD" (time, speed and distance) (The Critique, a calendar of Bay Area rallies, autocrosses and motor sport news reports, is available for \$3 per year from Box 192, Mountain View, Ca. 94042.)

As a rally writer he said, "Tricky wording is the key to the CM gimmick rally. You usually go to a familiar area and write the route through that area. Of course you're limited to where you can go. If it's too residential, some homeowners won't like it." Local police departments are always appraised of the rally route and participants are told in printed instruction to obey all traffic laws. Rally organization is a huge job

requiring the help of persons to staff the registration, start, each checkpoint, the finish and do the scoring. The sponsoring club's rally committee also must run the rally ahead of time and make changes to iron out bugs.



Patches recall past events

The TSD rallyist may tear his hair if trapped behind a slow truck

Tricks, traps of the rally game

A different type of rally from the CM gimmick contest is the time speed and distance rally (TSD). Driver and navigator follow instructions over a specified distance at a given average speed, Speeds frequently change.

Example: "Increase speed 10% each time you pass a school and decrease it 10% when you cross a railroad track."

The navigator, using the high school math formula, D-RT, must compute elapsed time. The TSD rallyist may tear his hair out while trapped for five miles behind a slow-moving truck on a winding road when he is a minute behind schedule for the next checkpoint. Participants who receive traffic citations are disqualified.

The "Continental" is a TSD rally considered to be one of the easiest to run. Directions are given to a "standoff" or minimum distance point. The driver is told to distance to the checkpoint and must get there at a specified time within a hundredth of a minute. Rallyists receive a map, route instructions, checkpoint locations and mileage between each new instruction. A good watch and odometer are vital.

The "Monte Carlo" is similar to the Continental but a set speed is assigned to travel from the minimum distance point rather than a set time to arrive. The driver is not told checkpoint locations.

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Auto rallying is primarily a European phenomenon and international "performance" rallies are more like a race. Popular ones abroad are the Monte Carlo and the East African Safari. The Press On Regardless (POR) run in Michigan's upper Peninsula is considered one of the few U.S. rallies of near equal European caliber.

"Speed is uncontrolled and you can drive as fast as you want to," Doug Pearson noted. "It's a form of rallying the police don't think too highly of."

In the Bay Area, the Sports Car Club of America's San Francisco branch and the North American Rally Association conduct professional competition.

Pro rallyists must have a pro rally competitive license. Skids, slides, yaws, four-wheel drifts and a lot of down-shifting are the day. Cars often have gian engines, huge skid pans and a mechanic following along.

And, unlike the amateur Bay Area rallyist out for an entertaining Sunday afternoon rally, the pro is more likely to be driving a Renault Gordini or a Lancia than the family Triumph or Chevrolet.

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