

STARLITE 1982

The 12th annual Starlite rallye took place on December 3-5. This is the 12-13 hour pan-am running from Santa Barbara to Las Vegas. Entries this year climbed to over 160 cars. Starlite is usually written by two SBSCC veterans, Mike and Mike. This time the task was delegated to two relative newcomers, Dave and Dave. The result was a rallye that was a bit too easy and a route that looked a lot like last year's. There were several interesting features, not all of which were intended.

Cars left SB every minute from 10pm to almost 1am Friday night. The rallye started South on 101, East on 150, then North on 33. The easy first leg was convenient for working on any rough edges on driver-navigator communication. We had a few. Leg 2 continued on a very icy and sometimes foggy highway 33 then East on Lockwood Valley towards Interstate 5. Lockwood must have had at least 4 river crossings among the black ice on the road and other hazards. A BMW managed to find a rock capable of slicing open both its oil pan and gas tank. A 914 lost a clutch cable on a river crossing but had a spare. Leg 3 included a 15 minute gas break - sort of. We took maybe 10 minutes at the break and arrived at standoff with 6 minutes left and were horrified to see about 9 miles left to the checkpoint. We went for it and were three minutes late. A Maserati was creeping as we flew by. This is a cumulative time rallye meaning if you're late for one, you will probably be late on the next. We figured this is one fast rallye and that we were already three minutes down on leg 4. Switching on the warp drive, we got to standoff 4 with 30 minutes remaining and only a mile or so to go. While waiting, some simple arithmetic showed leg 3 had an average speed of over 70. They can't do that! Creeping up a steep hill to checkpoint 4 with the clutch halfway engaged may have been a mistake. My throwout bearing has been complaining ever since.

It was a very long icy and foggy way to Lake Isabella on the road to checkpoint 5. The standoff and checkpoint roads made a sharp V intersection. Anyone taking a dirt shortcut that rounded the V would end up missing the checkpoint. We were warned to stay off the dirt. Next was the long awaited breakfast break in Ridgecrest. A Carl's Junior was the only thing in town open at 5am. Onward towards Death Valley. A separate contest was to estimate the distance between standoff and checkpoint 6. A bottle of wine awaited the closest guess. The last three checkpoints were straightforward and in daylight. As we crept into checkpoint 9, two cops come speeding in and start yelling at the checkpoint workers. Workers still managed to time in every car. On to Vegas and a nap. We turned in our scoresheet along with a request to throw leg 3. Several hours later, the party began. Rumors that 3 was thrown were not confirmed until after dinner. Good dinner! It seems they added the gas break to the wrong leg. Let's see, without leg 3, we had a total error of ZERO. Endless longwinded stories and doorprizes preceded the important stuff. Tenth place had a .04 minute. We were the only zero though and took home 28 pounds of trophies to be exact.

We were a bit concerned that one friend never made it to Vegas. Someone who ran out of gas a couple times got the Hard Luck award, but if anyone knew at the time, this friend Brian Hamilton would have won it hands down. It started with electrical problems on the way to Santa Barbara. He fixed it but left his tool box on the freeway shoulder. On leg 5, near Lake Isabella, his differential blew up. The next 18 hours were spent hitching a ride to Ridgecrest, renting a car, driving to LA, finding a differential at a junkyard, rounding up enough cash for it, driving back to Ridgecrest, getting his car towed to a U-Haul yard and helping install the new differential. He could have done it alone with his tool box. Epilog: 36 hours later the tool box was still there, run over but still intact and a week after the rallye, the differential is acting up.

SBSCC will sponsor The Great San Francisco Rallye on Memorial Day weekend, 1983. It is a Starlite style rallye running from SB to SF. The package will include two nights at the San Franciscan and a fancy dinner-dance. For info on the rallye, call Mike Pariseau at 805-964-1345. Interested in a TRC team? Call me at 408-730-4923.

David Graubart