

The Wishbone Alley Gazette
January, 2005 **Rainier Auto Sports Club**

Rally News

* Rally America issued it's 2005 calendar. Some Northwest events made the list. Oregon Trails remains the only NW stop of the National-level tour.

Club News

* The 2005 Annual NWRC Meeting is on Saturday, January 8, 2005. Hopefully, the TSD calendar will be settled.

* The Hines' hosted the December gathering. Lovely time was had by all. The house was wonderfully decorated, and the feast was, well, a genuine feast. Thanks to Jerry and Colleen.

* The 2005 Board is:

Marvin Crippen
Jerry Hines
Eric Horst
Ed Millman
Mark Nolte
Steve Willey (automatic)

OBITUARY: JOHN NAGEL

John Richard Nagel, long-time resident of the Seattle area, died on December 17, 2004, at age 62 of heart failure brought on by complications from diabetes. The son of Richard and Florence Nagel, John is survived by his daughter, Karryn, his step-daughter, Lisa, and step-granddaughter, Heather. He is also survived by his brothers, Jim and David Nagel, and his sisters Chris and Carolee Nagel. Other family members include 3 nieces and 3 nephews.

John's great passion in life was the sport of car rallying. In 1969, he created the Olympus Rally which began as a small, TSD amateur event run on city roads. Over the years, Olympus evolved into a racing event (called a PRO rally) on the national circuit sanctioned by the Sports Car Club of America. It eventually became the American event on the World Rally Championship series from 1985-1987. The event utilized 1,500 volunteers over a 4 day period and brought in competitors, VIPs, press, and spectators from all over the world. During its world championship run, Olympus was sponsored by Toyota and many other sponsors and supported by the City of Olympia, Thurston County, and the State of Washington.

A celebration of the life of John Nagel will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, January 15, at the Northshore Baptist Church, 10301 NE 145th St., Bothell (see www.nsb.org/directions for directions). Guests will be invited to share their memories and stories of John, renew old acquaintances, and enjoy each other's company. Those unable to attend are invited to send their remembrances of John to Jim Nagel (jimn15@yahoo.com) to be read during the service. Refreshments will follow.

Some memories...

In June of 1967, Rainier Auto Sports Club ambitiously presented the Nor'Wester 3-day rally. It was the first many ambitious rallies. Come February 4, a Sunday afternoon tour, "The Tune Up" was presented by Boeing Employees Sports Car Club. The next weekend was the "Undetermined Rally" by the Seattle Volvo Car Club. Followed a week later, February 17/18, 1968, by the Renton Mustangs and their "Olympus Rally". It was a busy time.

The Olympus remains something of a marvel. It was furiously promoted, which resulted in 216 entries. It had door prizes, and maybe cash awards (finishing about 150th, I forget).

It was also the beginning of John Nagel's growth to become the premier organizer of NW rallies, which grew to become the Olympus WRC event, the pinnacle of stage rally.

John loved the forests, even had a degree in Forestry. He spent a summer as a fire lookout. A stint at Boeing led to Watch and jewelry Department Manager at the West Seattle K-Mart. He got one of the first digital watches that appeared in the early '70's.

Says Gary Reid, "Virginia and I first became aware of John Nagel on April 20, 1968, day one of the Treffen Mach VI, an NWRC Championship event put on by the Boeing Employees SCC. Treffen was a brisk, semi-trappy rally, mostly paved, and reputed to be one of the more challenging events of its era. It was about our third rally ever. The Carnation Valley, known as Rally Valley in those days, was not nearly as populated or trafficked, and it was legal and almost safe to have the kind of traps that caused the competitors to conduct high-speed research into the correct route.

"About midway through Saturday morning we were puttering along the road that led to Big Rock Road and thought we were on course, and maybe within our minute, as no other cars were visible ahead or behind. Then my rearview mirror revealed a Silver Bullet rapidly closing on us. Really rapidly.

"It flashed by us and disappeared around the bend. Geez, who was that? we asked each other. We figured he knew something we didn't, so we picked up the pace slightly, just in case. Virginia rifled through the route instructions and tried to determine which notes were in effect - or not in effect. We thought about signs we may not have read completely and bridges and OPPS we may not have counted correctly.

“Suddenly we were faced with the Silver Bullet, this time approaching from the front, so we got a slightly better look at it and determined it was probably a late 50's Corvette, driven by a big, dark-haired guy and navigated by a skinny blonde guy. Now we were really concerned. What had we missed? Was there going to be a checkpoint just ahead, or worse yet an off-route control that would laugh at us and direct a U-turn and tell us to make up 5 minutes of time? We sped up again, just in case, and started arguing about what trap my navigator may have screwed up. But she was pretty sure that SHE hadn't made a mistake so I just shut up and drove. Faster.

“No more than a minute went by before that Silver Bullet came streaking by again, this time from behind! The guys shouted something to us that we couldn't hear and pulled over into a driveway. We figured that we had better stop and try to learn something from these obviously much more experienced rallyists, so we pulled in behind them. The skinny guy was talking so fast at both his driver and us that we couldn't make heads nor tails of it, but the big guy was a little calmer, and asked us how many checkpoints we had seen. We thought we had seen two so far, and he thanked us and tore off in a cloud of smoke and burning rubber. Who WERE those guys? we asked each other. They sure seemed smart and competitive, so we tore off after them, figuring we could follow them into the next checkpoint.

“Sure enough, there it was, just a mile or so down the road. The Silver Bullet was still sitting there (in those days, you stopped at each control and were assigned a new out-time). Crews and competitors had a chance for a brief chat, and the control crew was obviously highly entertained by the crew of the Silver Bullet, who they seemed to know quite well. We were greatly pleased and honored when the big guy shouted his Thanks to us, as they were clearly Big Time Rallyists, while we were lowly novices.

“We were even more proud when at the lunch break the big guy came up to us and asked us our names and introduced himself as John Nagel. We knew we were in the presence of one of the living legends of Northwest rallying.

“He asked us if we had seen all five checkpoints so far, and of course we had seen only four, as unknown to us then, there had really been only four. Oh, well, don't worry, John reassured us, there's still a lot of rallying left. We later learned what that really meant, and eventually began to use the line in return to one of John's frequent attempts to confuse us. We found that it was all in the spirit of good fun, and John was always friendly and respectful to us after that, thus beginning a friendship that lasted for more than three decades.”

The “skinny blonde guy” was Steve Roberts, who teamed with Nagel to be top contenders at any rally they entered. In the days of Time-Speed-Distance (TSD) rallies, some were tricky-trappy, and some were fast and used gravel roads. The evolution of fast TSD's to become stage rallies as we know them is another story. A confusing one. John learned some of the finer points of “promises made vs. promises delivered” from it.

John got some Corvairs, which were the hot set up in the late '60's. What with all the modifications, when John needed to haul his friends to bowling one evening, he borrowed Steve's GTO. The car was stolen and crashed, totaled.

Which led John and Steve to the auto show, where they literally crawled over the newest crop of 1971 models. They met George Breckenridge of Auburn Mazda there. The new RX2 looked good. George claimed that he sold 23 cars from that chance meeting.

The RX2 became John's excuse to learn all the facets of rally. He was car number one for the '72 Nor'Wester that featured a “yump”. Seeing the photographers, he gunned it. He flew the furthest for a great picture. Subsequent cars landed short, where a buried rock caused some grief, according to Roberts.

They took the car to Michigan for the Press On Regardless. It was a WRC event, and the foreign teams dazzled the local guys. Among other things, the foreigners didn't let anything intercede to keep them from winning. Like speed limits.

John also went to the “Mexican 24 Hours”. He and Phyllis Sheatsley (later, Mrs. Chandler) were instructed in the finer points of foreign driving. Phyllis recounts how a police car pulled in behind with lights flashing on the trip down. She lifted, to which mentor Ken Adams yelled “Are you crazy? Floor it!” The flashing lights receded and that was the end of that.

That rally caught the tail of a hurricane. In a downpour, Phyllis was late calling a bad corner, resulting in crunched front end, and DNF. Lacking any Mazda parts in Mexico, John held the front end together with a come-a-long, and drove 1500 miles home. (Pulled over for speeding on her stint, the CHP officer wrote up John for defective equipment...)

Steve wanted to run a fast British Columbia rally, and borrowed John's car, with Steve Richards navigating. A lapse put the car over the edge. Fearing Nagel's wrath, Steve got home with the wreck. “Its only a car”, was John's response.

The Olympus was revived in 1973. John cranked up the publicity, learning how to deal with media. He contacted TV's “Exploration Northwest” show cover it, which led to a half-hour show. They even arranged for a helicopter, but John was awed when he was showing a road to a cameraman, and the guy leaned waaay out the window to get some tire shots.

He talked the Fort Lewis commander into use of some Army roads for 1976. The Centennial Year event used fewer tank roads than he liked, but it wasn't for trying. Working on the route, he just passed the “Yield to Cross Traffic” sign when a tank crossed his path...without slowing down...

John became the sales representative for various manufacturers, finding outlets for Hella, Safety devices (roll bars), and even his own line of products under the name “Victory Driving Products”. His associates agree that he could have made a lot of money if he didn't get distracted with the rally stuff.

In 1984 he devoted all his time to making the Olympus into the best rally in the world. He and Claudia Chittim moved to Olympia (and eventually married) to be close to his base.

With Toyota as the name sponsor, the qualifying event was in December '85 as a driver's points-only rally. The subsequent '86, '87, and '88 rallies put the US on the world map.

Unfortunately, the financial aspects couldn't be resolved and 1988 was John's last Olympus.

A 1984 car accident resulted in fusing the vertebrae in his neck, and then he lost a leg to diabetes in 1995. His death was attributed to a heart attack.

Generous, perhaps to a fault, I recall getting ready to take a date and her daughter to "Nutcracker" in 1975. My current ride was a ratty Datsun. Without hesitating, John offered his nice RX4 wagon for the afternoon. I was grateful. –MN

There was a time in late 1968, when I was invited to help with the 1969 " Rallye des Nieve".

John Nagel and Bob Bryant were involved laying out this weekend long, mostly nighttime, Western Washington event; and asked me if I was interested in helping. I didn't quite know what 'Interested in helping' meant in those days, but I jumped at the chance to see how the masters worked.

Several long weekends and many, many miles later, packing John and Bob through the hills and back roads of southwest Washington in my little Volkswagen, I began to understand what it meant.

I learned a lot about how much more ground clearance I usually had when they were not in the car with me. I learned a lot about replacing muffler parts between the weekend outings. But most of all, I learned a lot about the organizational effort and details of putting on a major event, and the respect for all their efforts.

John convinced me to go on the 1969 Thunderbird rally in B.C. I had never been on a major winter event, and my car was certainly not prepared for such an event, but he found a crazy New Jersey rally driver who needed a co-driver and off we went into the frozen north. I was 'hooked' from that point on.

Also, for those of you who are of the older generation and might remember Wayne Cody, the KIRO sportscaster... well Wayne and John actually rode together in John's Mazda RX-2 on one occasion. I think John retired the car soon after that, something about suspension failure maybe...

Thanks John, for all you did for the sport.

- Rod Johnson

FOR SALE / Wanted:

* blue Volvo forces sale: '99 Audi A6 Avant Quattro (wagon), 86K, loaded, \$12,500. Jerry or Colleen, 425-823-6343

* For Sale: 4 studded snow tires, 205/60R15 BFGoodrich T/A WR. Great shape, \$100.

* 4 snow tires, 245/75R16 Bridgestone Blizzak Winter Dueler. New, \$300.

* 4 BMW 6 1/2" x 15" steel wheels, 5 on 120mm pattern. \$90

Wanted:

* Four 15" wheels to fit 1990 Subaru Legacy, or 4 14" wheels with snow tires. (Lucas has a new ski car...).

Call Jerry, 206-227-6343 cell or 425-823-6343.

RASC Calendar

TSD -----

• Call the NWRC Hotline (206) 256-9627 for latest info on Puget Sound TSD events.

The Friday Niter series resumes on February 11.

Feb 19-20- Thunderbird, TBA, British Columbia

June 11-12- No Alibi by RASC, eastern Washington

Stage -----

Feb 26- Club Rally Awards Banquet/ Workers party, Ft. Lewis Golf Clubhouse

March 5/6 – NWR-SCCA stage rallies (sanction TBA)

Rainier Auto Sports Club

will meet this coming Monday, January 10 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 pass, 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: The 2005 Board will be introduced by the outgoing Board (sigh). Kirk can tell us about his new house ? and the NWRC scheduling meeting.

The treasurer will start collecting dues for 2005- \$20 family, \$17 individual. Discussion of 2005 membership card format may be contentious.

2004 Board Members:

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

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

Members at Large: Mike Jones- (425)823-8329, Jerry Hines (425) 823-6343

The Wishbone Alley Gazette is published for the members and friends of Rainier Auto Sports Club. Subscription price is \$10 per year.

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