

LET'S RALLY...A RALLY EXPERIENCE

by Paul Young

The Porsche Club of America and its various regions, offer many ways to have fun with your Porsche. Although the performance driving events are the most popular, there are other great ways to enjoy driving your car. You can choose from an assortment of TSD rallies, Monte Carlo rallies, gimmick rallies, fun tours, observation tours, and a number of other similar events. These all involve driving your car on public roads, at legal speeds, following a set of directions. There may or may not be a competition involved, but for now let's collectively call these events 'rallies'.

My first direct exposure to the sport was a gimmick rally written by an amateur hypnotist who was also not very good at writing rallies. I was 16 at the time, as was my navigator, Chris Vitas, a violinist friend. We were driving in the '67 VW Beetle we had picked up in Germany a couple of years before. The instructions were in riddles, which needed to be solved in order to figure out where to drive to next. It involved a good deal of familiarity with the area (which I had), puzzle solving skills (which Chris and I both had), and a just bit of luck. The problem was that although we had more than a just bit of luck that day, it was all bad luck. We were going back and forth through Jamul looking for what we thought would help decipher the next clue. Besides more than just a bit of luck, I also had all the coordination, driving skill, wisdom, and judgment you would expect of a 16 year old California male wearing ill-fitting sunglasses for the first time, and driving a rear engine car on a dirt road, trying to make up time. So I did a handbrake turn (a rally maneuver) while making one of our frequent U-turns, and this telephone pole jumps out right in front of us. We had an accident (another rally maneuver). We were fine other than Chris' broken wrist watch, and the dents in my forehead from those wretched sunglasses. The VW however was not really drivable, having been modified to have about 7 inches of toe-out (the right front pointed East while the left was closer to North).

Having soundly demonstrated my driving and rallying skills, I retired from the rally scene for about 15 years. I had owned my second Porsche for five years when my friend Steve Popko convinced me to join PCA and go to a rally. Our first rally was on a hot August day, and we had no idea what to expect. I was navigating for Steve in his 924 (thankfully, he was a vastly better driver than I was at 16). Despite our diving into this event (and the club) cold-turkey (we had not even gone to the rally school), we ended up second or third in our class, and brought home a trophy. We met some great new friends in PCA, saw some neat roads in the county, and got introduced to TSD rallying.

Since then, I have been competing in rallies regularly at the region, zone and Parade levels. I have also written many rallies while serving as rallymaster for the San Diego Region, as well as the '92 Parade that we hosted. Having served as Zone 8 rally chairman for the last several years, I haven't had the opportunity to compete in the

Zone 8 series. But this year, I turned that job over, so now I can be a participant again!

A TSD (Time-Speed-Distance) rally is a driving event for a driver and navigator where you are given instructions that will tell you the course (and hence the distance), with assigned speeds (all legal and safe). From these two, you can figure out the third (time), and hopefully stay on time. This is the main type of rally we have in PCA. The object is to drive the rally course and arrive at checkpoints, neither early nor late, but on time. If one were to drive the exact course at the exact speeds, one will indeed arrive at the checkpoints exactly on time. The rally is separated into legs, which are sections between successive checkpoints. Your score for each leg is usually 100 points for each minute early or late. Being early is as bad as being late (one minute early is 100 points, and one minute late is 100 points). Each leg is scored separately, with the total of all the legs being your final score. If you are one minute early on one leg, and one minute late on the next, they don't cancel; your total score is 200, not 0. The lower the better, and in fact, if you are perfect on a leg, your score will be zero (you are said to have 'zeroed' that leg). There is a limit or maximum score for each leg (usually 500 or five minutes), so if you are totally goofed up, it won't completely ruin your final score. I have won rallies even with a 'maxed' (500 points) leg.

The instructions give you the speed that you should be traveling at, and the route directions with some form of reference points, like "Left after MAIN ST", or "Right at third SIGNAL". It is not unlike the directions to your house you would give someone over the 'phone. Nearly all rallies are 'looped' which means that if you make a mistake, you will wind up back on course (early or late at the next checkpoint, but at least not lost).

Generally, there are three classes of competition in a TSD rally; Equipped, Navigational, and SOP (Seat Of Pants). SOP allows only pencil, paper, and normal watches or clocks for equipment. Navigational allows charts, tables, slide rules, simple calculators and a non-stock odometer (reading to 0.01 or even 0.001 mile for accuracy). Equipped allows any equipment, and that usually means a computer connected to the car's odometer to automatically calculate what the 'true time' should be. These rallyists frequently 'zero' several legs (assuming they stay on course). Navigational competitors can manually calculate what the true time should be, and try to arrive at checkpoints at that time. SOP rallyists can also try to calculate, but they must use the stock odometer and calculate by hand. Most SOP entrants try to keep the speeds constant and use little tricks to quickly estimate if they are early or late.

I already described a gimmick rally where the instructions were in riddles. There can be other 'gimmicks' to base a rally on, like collecting items along the way (food receipts, or poker playing cards for example), trying to match photographs with the actual scene (photo rally), looking for special clues on the route (eyeball rally), etc. A Monte Carlo rally is one where you are given the true time (either implicitly or

explicitly), and must use driving skill to arrive at the checkpoint on time. The Starlight rally held every December from Santa Barbara to Las Vegas is just such an event.

PCA also has tours of various sorts to offer throughout the year. Sometimes there will be a wine tour where we follow simple instructions through the countryside to a local winery or two. We have had Fall Fun Tours that may take us up through the mountains of San Diego County to see that we really do have trees that change colors. Tours can be competitive, like an observation tour where you try to recognize (and maybe remember) key landmarks and signs along the way. Competitive or not, with tours the emphasis is always on having a relaxed, fun time with your Porsche and PCA friends. Sometimes a rally will also have a tour associated with it; traveling on the same course, but with simpler instructions and no assigned speeds.

If you're looking for another excuse to drive your Porsche with some PCA friends, try a rally, rally school, or tour. Although the track events are great, I love a drive through the countryside with a dozen or two other Porsche enthusiasts. What could be finer?