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LIFESTYLE

From Alaska to Kirkland in memory of a good friend | ALCAN 5000



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by DEANNA ISAACS, Kirkland Reporter Reporter
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The call of the wild comes when it will and whisks people away for unknown adventures in remote parts of the world, but that adventure rarely kicks off in the center of Kirkland.

The ALCAN 5000, a 4,310 mile road-borne journey from Kirkland to Anchorage, Ak., dropped the checkered flag to finalize the race on Aug. 26 with around 50 participants having made their way east of Lake Washington. Veteran ALCAN driver Gary Webb, and Peter Schneider, driver and navigator of a Subaru Impreza designated 'Car 1' finished first overall, including motorcycles.

"[Webb and Schneider] are incredibly consistent and that's what it takes," said Jerry Hines, ALCAN Rally Master and member of Rainier Auto Sports Club (RASC) who organizes the event.

"Gary ... has said repeatedly, 'You can't come expecting to win - winning is a gift because nothing is guaranteed,'" Hines said. "It just takes one little mistake to lose it."

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While Jan and Tim Burgess, the competitors in the TR4, did not win the ALCAN 5000 race but they did have a glass of champagne and a Havana cigar at the finish line in memory of a recently lost friend. — *Image Credit: Courtesy Photo, Jan Frolic And Tim Burgess*

speed and stay within posted limits (or under them). As a Time-Speed-Distance (TSD) rally, competitors are given route instructions that guide them to and through checkpoints, with either the time or distance given and the navigator calculating when they should cross the checkpoint for optimal points.

If the participant has too quick of a pace points are deducted, too slow and they won't earn any.

The whole ALCAN is not a rally, although there are long drives to enjoy the scenery between TSD rally sections.

“If [Webb] didn't enjoy the trip, he'd never do it,” Hines said. “Even our winner, who is very serious about winning, does this because of the adventure.”

The competition cycle is every other year and the ALCAN has many entrants, though not everyone is there for the competition. Many are there to be along for the ride.

“There's so much excitement, it was fantastic to get to know the people [who] we were rallying with...” said Jan Frolic, navigator for the 1961 Triumph TR4. “It was pretty much endless, it was nine days of adrenaline!”

The route goes along some of the most remote forests in Canada, through the Alcan and Top of the World Highways to Klondike, Denali, and Dalton – with a quick jaunt across the Arctic Circle.

Of course, that's if drivers can get there. With an average of 500 miles a day for the nine-day rally, the trip can have a few unintended events pop up along the way. For Burgess, Frolic and their TR4, that came as a recently installed head gasket gave them issues and they had to call from across Canada and have one flown in and hand delivered.

“It was super emotional [at the finish line], because we had really been motivated by someone who had been on the TR forum and passed away just a few weeks before we left,” Jan said.

“Wherever we ended, we'd have a glass of champagne and a Havana cigar for him – and we did.”

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Burgess and Frolic raised funds via the ALCAN for cancer through Road Hockey to Conquer Cancer.

According to Hines, a motorcycle had a head gasket issue as well, but instead of calling around for spares the motorcyclist purchased a new bike and finished the race.

This year's ALCAN 5000 competed during the summer, however the next ALCAN adventure, two years from now, will be a winter excursion. Planning for the coming winter ALCAN has already concluded and applications are available upon request. The next race will be in February 2016.

As for this year, out of the 11 cars and 41 motorcycles that entered, most made it to the finish line. Many of those vehicles were in the 'tour' category - along for the amazing ride through two countries and more than 4,310 miles, along the Alaskan Canadian Highway.

Competing in the ALCAN 5000 is not about trophies, it's not about winning ... According to most ALCAN participants, going on the ALCAN 5000 is about adventure, the things seen along the way and the company - whether by your side or in your thoughts.

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