



# NINES

\$4.95

no. 223

**The SAAB Club Magazine**



The Red Dog BMW and Pigs On Ice 9000 Turbo take a break on the ice of the MacKenzie River.

## In the Arctic with Pigs On Ice

page 14

### *Historic Competition*

**The Longest Day, 1980**

page 21

**Baja 500, 1973**

page 25

### *Technical Talk*

page 28

**Aftermarket Wheels, DIY Tools,  
Performance Tips that don't effect emissions,  
Alternator Upgrade, 99/900 Suspension work**



*Sporty Saabs: A drive in the  
'95 900 Convertible, page 12.*



## GRACE ON GLAZE

Ahh, the lure of the Alcan.

In my previous episode on the Alcan 5000 Rally (NINES #208, Nov 91) I closed by saying I was making plans for the 1992 Winter event. I wasn't able to participate due to commitments to run another couple of long-distance rallies in '92, the Downeast Rally and One Lap of America. Regular calls from Satch Carlson kept my interest up to run the Alcan Rally one more time.

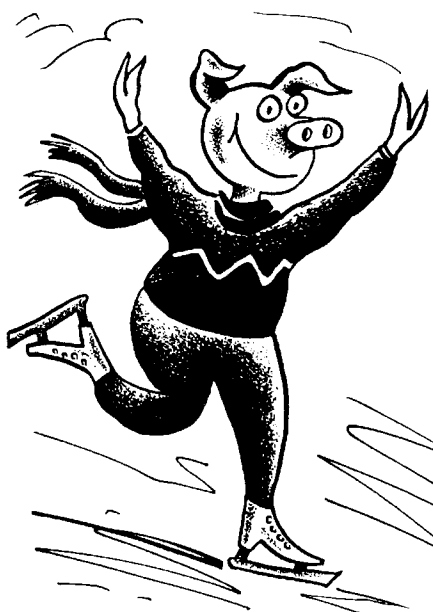
Jerry Hines may be the person who does the legwork to lay out the course and set up the hotels for all the competitors, but Carlson is the unofficial publicity person. Satch's influence accounts for about half the people involved in running the Alcan. This year, Satch signed on to navigate for rookie driver Steve Norman, owner of BMW Seattle, in a BMW 325ix, the all-wheel drive model. Satch's brother, Dennis Gunn, was the third team member for the BMW.

Satch has two cars that are prepared for running the Alcan; a black 1987 Saab 900 SPG - the same car that Satch, Russ Huntoon and I drove to second place in 1991 - and a white Mazda 323GTX. If at all possible, he rents these two cars out so that others who don't have the time, money or desire to dedicate their own vehicle to Alcan prep can still participate. Both cars made the trip this year, the Mazda crewed by the father-son team of R. Dale Kraushaar and Russ Kraushaar with Jules Moritz as third driver, and the Saab covered by the husband-wife

team of Jim and Christy Breazeale and Alcan veteran navigator Adrian Crane.

Sponsor for the Alcan this year was Isuzu, who provided a Rodeo as a sweep vehicle, a couple more Rodeos for filmmaker John Corser, and a Rodeo entered for race car drivers Paul Dallenbach and Johnny Unser. With Carlson's help, Isuzu hired ace navigator Tom Grimshaw for the Rodeo team.

While the Dallenbach, Unser, Grimshaw Rodeo was certainly a favorite, there was



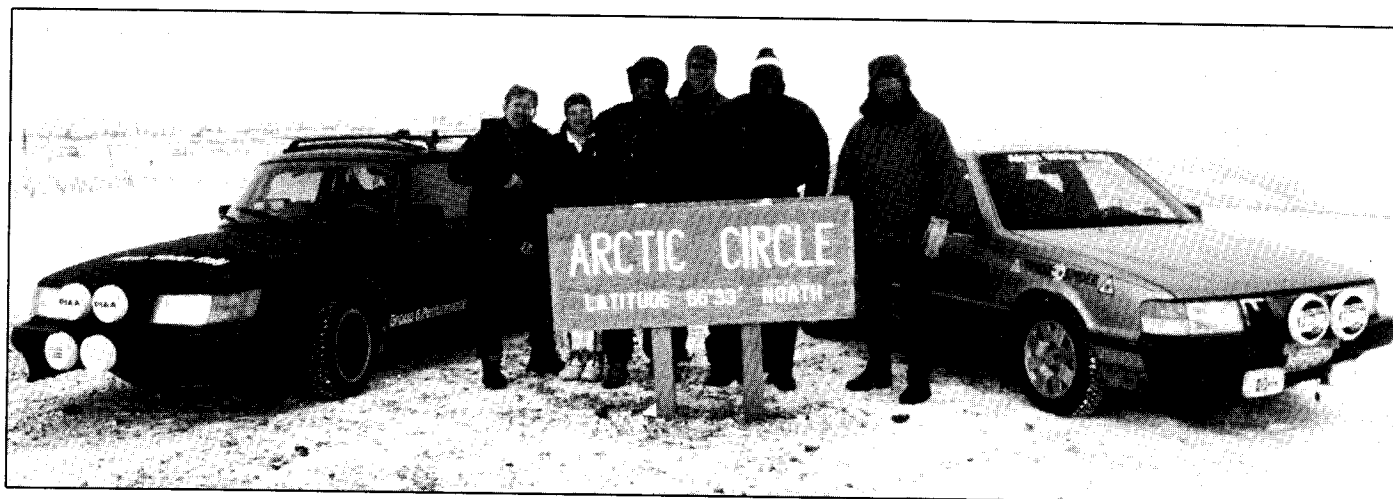
another team that stood an equal, or possibly better, chance of winning the whole thing. That was a factory-backed Ford Explorer with Billy Edwards doing the driving, and Alcan veteran Greg Lester navigating. Along for the ride was Jim Shahin, a writer for American Airlines magazine. Billy is a driving instructor for Track Time Driving Schools and always a front running competitor at events like One Lap of America. (Those who attended the 1992 National Saab Owners Convention in Columbus, Ohio, may remember Billy as the guy who conducted the driving school.)

The early plan for Saab Club involvement was to get Saab's P.R. department to put up a new 900 (or better yet, several new 900s) to demonstrate the capabilities of Saab's Traction Control and anti-lock brakes under poor weather conditions. Russ Huntoon put together a proposal for he and me, with Reno Saab dealer and former Pro Stock drag racer Brad Yuill as third team member, to pilot the Saab.

There was tradition to be upheld, we reasoned in our proposal. When the first Saabs rolled off the assembly line in late 1949, a couple were immediately prepped to run the 1950 Monte Carlo Rally and both finished that famous event. When Saab Motors was established in the U.S. market in 1956, a three car team was entered in the Great American Mountain Rallye, with the Saab 93 driven by Bob Wehman and Louis Braun winning the rally overall. Saab took the GAMR team trophy as well with factory test driver Rolf Melde and Morrow Mishkin finishing 6th, and a third Saab driven by the husband and wife team of Jerry and Doris Jankowitz in 17th despite the handicap of a broken speedometer cable.

The Saab rally tradition should be continued! A new Saab model should participate in a winter rally, and not just any winter rally, but The Alcan! 4,000 miles through the Canadian wilderness and the Arctic! But the Saab PR department said all the cars they use for such promotion were in the hands of journalists for test drives and they couldn't free one up for the length of time required to outfit it and run the rally. Of course if we wanted a car for a golf or tennis tournament, the marketing department could provide one. But an event where humans would actually be driving a Saab? Sorry, that isn't how cars are marketed in the '90s.

Rallymaster Hines called a couple of weeks later with a carrot. A friend of his, Jerry Lietch, had a 1986 9000 Turbo that was outfitted to run the Alcan, but Lietch couldn't



*"We're off on the Road to Inuvik..." The Saab teams pose at the Arctic Circle crossing. Wind chill was about -80°F. L to R: Blackbird 900 - Adrian Crane, Christy and Jim Breazeale; Pigs On Ice 9000 - Brad Yuill, Russ Huntoon & Tim Winker.*

participate because of other commitments. Would we be interested in renting the 9000? A deal was struck, the folks at Saab kicked in some sponsorship money (I take back any disparaging remarks made above), and the team made plane reservations for Seattle.

I arrived a couple of days early to do some last minute work on the 9000 and pick up supplies. And as long as I was in Seattle, I wanted to get together with members of the Northwest Saab Owners group to schmooze and share Saab tales between rallyists and other Saab folks. My preference was to meet at one of the popular Seattle brewpubs or micro breweries, Red Hook if it could be arranged. Imagine my surprise to find out that Jim Breazeale, who would be driving the Blackbird 900, is a brewer at Red Hook. Arrangements were easy, and we got the cook's tour of the brewery to boot. Several Northwest Saabers showed for some fine beer and good conversation.

The Alcan has a reputation of being loosely organized. That is, due to rubber mileages and other gray areas, the rally has never achieved the status it probably deserves. Several nationally ranked rallyists have run the Alcan and vowed not to return when they have encountered these problems first-hand. As a result, anyone has a chance to be competitive, including our 9000.

It was raining in Seattle as we left the West Coast Camlin hotel on the morning of February 25. The foul weather turned to snow as we moved into the lower reaches of the Cascade mountains in preparation for the first of many time-speed-distance (TSD) rally sections that make up the bulk of the scoring on the Alcan. By the time we reached the start of the TSD section there were several

inches of heavy, wet snow covering everything, especially the road. Our speed for the first several miles was 48 mph, perfectly legal and just a bit brisk when road conditions were dry. With the snow, the drivers had their hands full trying to keep up.

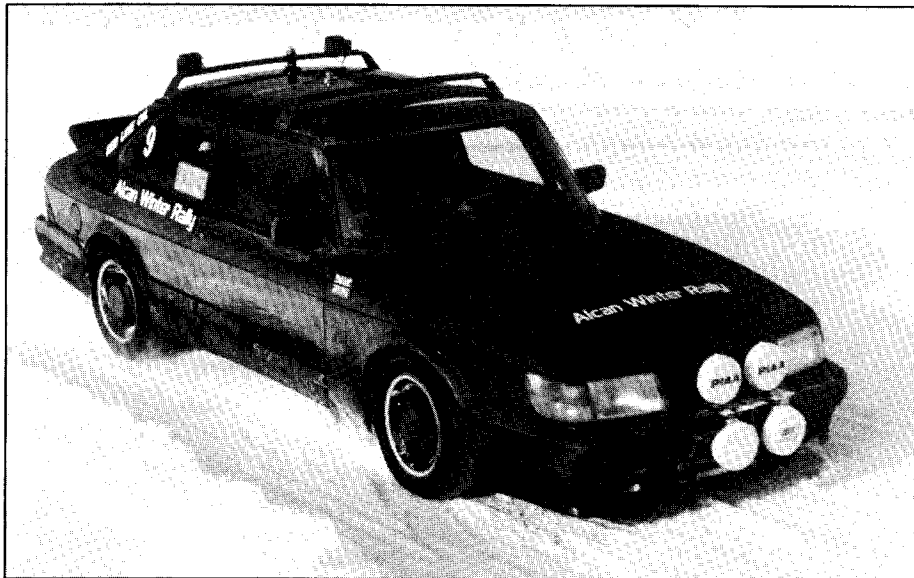
We were car 7, which meant we started six minutes after car 1. Russ was to drive, while I would be flipping the switches on the Timewise rally computer. Car 6 was a Chevy Blazer, unfortunately not well equipped for the rigors of the Alcan. We caught and passed the Blazer in the first mile. Russ was able to stay pretty close to on-time until a steep uphill section later in the rally section. The given speed was only 35, but uphill in a front-wheel drive car on snow is not a

terribly good combination. We found out later that we had actually scored pretty well on the section, but one checkpoint was removed from the scoring, and everyone was allowed to drop their worst first day score, which immediately dropped us from third to sixth place.

Since all of the competing vehicles and worker vehicles were equipped with business band and citizens band radios, we were able to stay in contact over many miles, particularly on the business band. As with CB, all of the teams were best known by their radio handles. The black 900 was, of course, the Blackbird; the Mazda was again White Trash; Dallenbach, Unser and Grimshaw in the Rodeo were the Jerky Boys; the red BMW



*The desolation of the Dempster Highway. White and gray are the true colors.*



*Blackbird at the Quesnel Solo. The roof rack carries extra tail and brake lights.*

with Satch, Steve Norman and Satch's brother Dennis Gunn was Red Dog. We were the Pigs On Ice, so named by a friend of Russ's who went so far as to print business cards for the team. The radio not only kept us in communication in case of emergency, but was also a source of amusement as we spent many hours on trivia games and jokes.

After getting out of poor weather conditions of the higher reaches, we soon came to the border crossing into Canada at Sumas. Customs officers requested about every other car to pull over and IDs were checked to make sure there were no undesirable amongst the rally crowd. Must not have been as they sent us all on our way after a short delay. A greater delay presented itself less than a mile down the road, where the highway was closed due to blowing snow that had caused a multi-car accident. Most of the rally teams retired to the local McDonald's to evaluate the alternatives. After losing about an hour in total, we decided to try the frontage road, which was not blockaded against traffic. Sure enough, we were able to skirt the closed highway and get back on the prescribed rally course. But we were now faced with an average speed of 58 mph to reach the next TSD section on time. Since most traffic travels above the speed limit anyway, we figured it could be done if we kept our gas stop time to a minimum. Fate had other plans.

Both Brad and Russ were stopped by the RCMP for speeding, then the rubber intake boot blew off the turbo, rendering the car virtually immobile. Fortunately Brad recognized the turbo problem as it occurred

and was able to make repairs in a matter of minutes. Unfortunately these delays put us well behind the rest of the pack. We were 15 minutes late to the start of the next rally section near Williams Lake and were forced to take the maximum penalty of 200 points.

We arrived at the overnight stop in Quesnel just in time to watch the women's figure skating at the Winter Olympics and see Tonya Harding fall on her butt, too.

Saturday morning began with the first Solo II section at Goldpan Speedway. The Solo, or autocross, is a closed course slalom where the fastest time wins. Fortunately the two Saabs, the only two-wheel drive cars competing, would be in their own class and not scored against the four-wheel drives. The course was on a 3/8ths mile oval track that had been plowed one lane wide, then partially blown over with snow during the night. That meant that for part of the course cars would be wading through deep snow while other parts would be flat out. With three solos in the scoring, each driver would get to race the car twice. We flipped a coin to see who would drive the 9000 in the first solo; Russ was odd man, so Brad and I got first shot. I ran in the first session, trying to stay smooth. I was quicker than Diamond Jim in the Blackbird, but the times of the second drivers would decide the outcome. Brad was about a half second faster than me on his run, but Adrian whipped out a very quick lap in the 900 to set the pace for the 2WD class.

Immediately after the solo there was another TSD. We proved that we had the stuff to be competitive by getting the lowest

score of all the teams on the rally section, a small consolation for the previous day's troubles.

Next stop on the route was Dawson Creek, B.C., where we met the mayor at the visitors center near Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway. Another hour up the road and another TSD section near Fort St. John, this one with a double switchback hillclimb. Again, the Pigs On Ice team scored well, but when a poorly located checkpoint was removed from the total, we lost one of our best scores of the section, a 2 where other teams had collected 4s and more.

Our overnight stop was in Fort Nelson, where the bar was closed before midnight. On a Saturday! There were no competitive sections on Sunday, just the 600 mile transit to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. While refueling in Watson Lake (across the road from the famous Signpost Forest), we heard via the radio that one of the sweep vehicles, a seriously prepared Ford Bronco, had flipped over. Damage was minimal, but one of the passengers was in great pain and was transported to the nearest hospital. The injury turned out to be only a sprain, but the Bronco headed back to Seattle, accompanied by another sweep vehicle.

Somewhere on this stretch, the Blackbird began to exhibit symptoms of poor running, occasionally dropping to three cylinders. A roadside investigation revealed a cracked porcelain on one of their expensive Split Fire spark plugs. A set of NGKs was installed and the problem was cured.

Heated underground parking was available at the hotel in Whitehorse, so we were able to dry out the cars.

Monday began with two competitive sections within the city limits of Whitehorse, a hillclimb rally and a Solo II on the Yukon River. Brad took over the driving chores for the rally. In trying to make up time, he bumped the speed up to near 40 mph on a 30 mph section, only to lose all confidence after a crest when the road suddenly made a downhill decreasing radius turn. We were going a little too fast and he went for the brakes. The 9000 skidded toward the snowbank on the outside of the curve and stuck fast. No damage, but another max penalty for the section.

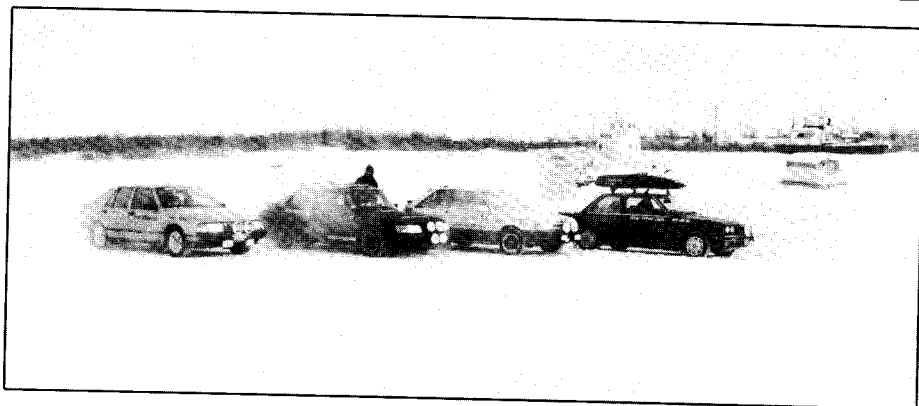
The autocross section went better, as yours truly was able to put together a smooth enough run to top the 2WD class. Satch surprised everyone, including himself, by setting fastest time overall in the BMW.

Three and a half days into the Alcan, and most of the competitive sections were

already run. There were only the rally near Wasilla, Alaska, and the Big Lake Solo left, and both would be on the final day.

On to Dawson via the Yukon Highway, and a night-o-rest at the Downtown Hotel. Along the way the teams were kept entertained by a flood of trivia questions from Satch. Some of us even knew the correct answers. It was during this stretch that the radio handles were modified. The Red Dog became the Puce Poodle, the Magenta Malmute, the Crimson Cocker, the Russet Retriever, and the Blood Hound. Pigs On Ice became Polar Porkers and Glazed Ham.

Part of the reason for the trivia questions was to get rallyists primed for another form of competition, the trivia contest broadcast on the National Trivia Network. NTN broadcasts 15 multiple-choice questions per game; scoring is based on how quickly you answer each question. The primary competition is among the local patrons, but once the local scores are tallied, the network posts the rankings of everyone who participated. Alcaners (Alcanists?) raised the scores of the Downtown Hotel for that evening, and several finished in the top rankings. Your humble editor bested the bar and ended up 13th overall on one game. Tom Grimshaw wrapped up the evening by setting the best

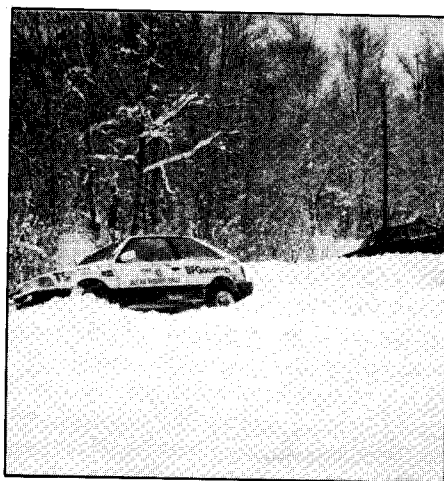
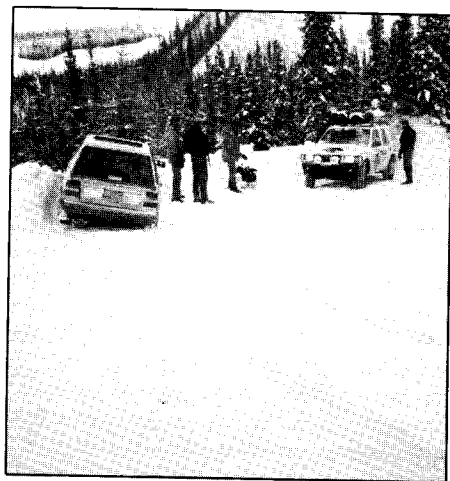
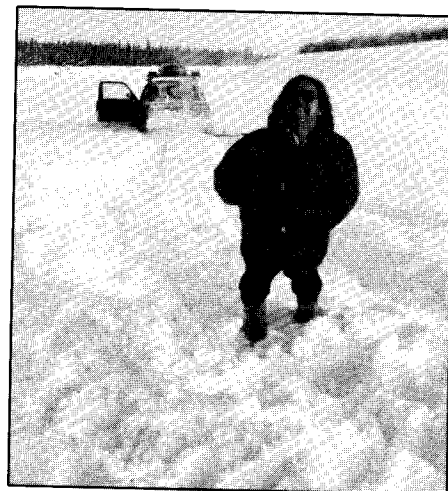


*The Alaska Rally Team lines up for a portrait on the MacKenzie River at Inuvik. L to R: Pigs On Ice 9000, Blackbird 900, White Trash Mazda, Red Dog BMW.*

score for the bar, and for the entire network!

The drive to Inuvik on the Dempster Highway was a bit controversial. It was nearly 600 miles one way, but there were no competition sections. The general feeling was for the teams to drive as far as the Arctic Circle about 20 miles north of Eagle Plains just to say we'd been there, then head back to Dawson for another night of trivia. The weather tried its best to discourage us; as we made the turn north onto the Dempster Highway, the temperature was about 10 degrees Fahrenheit, but within the hour it was -10F. The temperature continued to drop to an indicated -29F on the 9000's dashboard readout (the BMW's on board thermometer quit at -22F), accompanied by high winds which created snow drifts across the road that could catch a car and toss it off the road... and several did. The Subaru 4WD Wagon of Justin and Colin Brost and Susi Fouse, the White Trash Mazda, and one of the film crew Rodeos all went off the road with minor damage, but most were able to continue to Inuvik. The Ford Explorer rolled over enroute to Eagle Plains when Billy hit a

snowdrift while trying to avoid the remains of the Blackbird's front spoiler. Billy told me later that it was his first ever auto accident. Team navigator Greg Lester related that the rest of the drive to Inuvik was pretty silent, but as they neared their destination, Jim Shahin offered, "Speaking as a person, this has been a terrible day. Speaking as a





writer, it could hardly have been better."

The Dempster Highway is particularly desolate. When we arrived at Eagle Plains, the road was closed due to the drifting snow, but plows were on duty and it was cleared within a few hours. The next habitation of any size was Fort McPherson, then it was another 150 miles to Inuvik.

Inuvik, with a population of 3,400, has the distinction of being the largest Canadian city north of the Arctic Circle. It is the end of the Dempster Highway, at least in summer. During the winter months, the MacKenzie River is plowed so vehicles can make it another 110 miles to Tuktoyuktuk.

While preparing to leave Inuvik, we discovered that the ice road also extends to the south on the MacKenzie River, though it hadn't been plowed recently and there were a couple inches of new snow covering the ice. The four Alaska Rally Team crews decided to see where it went. Twenty miles of driving at unregulated speed down a winding river later, it came to a dead end at a resort on the riverbank. The only thing to do was to drive the twenty miles back up the river. Damn, the bad luck! We switched drivers so that more of us could have fun. Huntoon got behind the wheel of the BMW and promptly took off. I followed in the Polar Pork Chop, tossing it into the curves as best I could what with the snow and the overly neutral tendencies of the 9000. Since we had lots of time to look at maps on the way to our next overnight stop, we came up with the "possibility that if that road were plowed all the way to where the Dempster crosses the Arctic Red River, we could have a sixty mile stage on the frozen river!"

The drive from Inuvik to Glennallen, Alaska, was the only overnight driving for this year's event. Nature cooperated with a brilliant display of Aurora Borealis. Most teams pulled off the road several times to witness the grand spectacle as the lights changed from green to red in their dance across the Yukon skies.

With virtually no other traffic on the



road and ultra bright driving lights to show the way, those team members who were in charge of the steering wheel tended to ignore the posted speed limit in favor of pushing a little harder to make it to Glenallen earlier. As we neared the Alaska border, Russ misjudged a corner and the 9000 slid up and over the snowbank alongside the road, coming to rest at about a 45 degree angle, stopped from going completely over by a couple feet of soft snow on the opposite side of the bank. I was pretty well wedged in the back seat at the time and decided to remain there since I figured it would take more than human effort to extricate the car. Several competitors worked at digging the Saab out, but even a towing attempt by one of the Isuzu Rodeos failed to budge the car. After a couple of hours, a very large tow truck arrived and with minimal effort the 9000 was plopped back on the road. Breakfast in Tok Junction, a few hours up the road, was a bit grumpy, but we got over it later.

It was in Glennallen where we had our "Northern Exposure" experience. The fictional town of Cicely on the TV show is just that, nothing but a place dreamed up by a bunch of Hollywood writers. But while walking out to the car in the middle of the afternoon, I encountered a moose sauntering through the parking lot. As if that weren't enough, at the local bar/restaurant later in the evening the strains of Edith Piaf singing "La Vie En Rose" came from the loudspeakers of the jukebox. I had to pinch myself to make sure this wasn't some weird dream.

Two more competitive events were held on the final day. And standings changed due to a couple of minor mishaps. Two of the top running teams slid off the road early in the rally section and were forced to take maximum points. It began when the White Trash Mazda misjudged a sharp corner and skidded off on the outside of the turn. A few minutes later, the driver of the Blackbird 900 didn't see the Mazda in time and decided the options were straight into the snowbank or hit the Mazda. Snowbank it was. The photos

*Far Left: The winning Isuzu Rodeo.*

*Left: The winning drivers, Paul Dallenbach and Johnny Unser.*

show both of the cars belonging to Satch buried in snow side-by-side on the outside of a curve. As Satch put it, "It's nice to see all of my assets in one bank." Billy Edwards missed a poorly marked turn in the Explorer and picked up a big score at one checkpoint, while our scores got continually larger over the rally because my teammates had kindly raised the tire pressures, thereby throwing off our correction factor by a couple of percentage points. Still, we did better than most teams.

The final competitive event was another Solo, this time on Big Lake, using part of a course maintained by the sports car club in Anchorage. Not much changed on this event since there were very few points that could be added to scores. Russ Huntoon did get a chance to drive the AWD BMW 325 in a timed run to celebrate his 50th birthday. It was the first time in all the years he's known Satch that he was able to compete against his old buddy head-to-head in equal conditions. You'll have to ask them who won.

We tallied up final scores on the way to Anchorage and, to no one's surprise, the factory Isuzu team was the winner.

The awards banquet was filled with frivolity and speeches and thanks to all for a wonderful time. Unfortunately we were too tired to stay up late and finish the keg of Red Hook ESB arranged by Jim Breazeale and Ron Clyborne.

The Alcan Rally is run as a summer event in odd years and a winter event in even years, so the next Alcan will be in September, 1995. In the meantime, however, Satch has decided to put on his own winter rally with a similar format, to be called, "The Rally of the Lost Patrol." We had a chance to learn more about the Lost Patrol, a legend of the Klondike, when we were in Eagle Plains waiting for the road to be cleared. This rally will be similar to the Alcan in the roads and locations it uses, but will use a little different scoring system in an attempt to clear up scoring problems with the Alcan.

The turbo version of the new 900 is available now. Equipped with a set of Nokia snow tires and driving lights, it would make a great ride for the Alcan. How about it?

*Tim Winker*

**Drawings by Andrey Feldshteyn.**

**Photos by Satch Carlson, Russ Huntoon, Brad Yuill, Christy Breazeale and Tim Winker.**