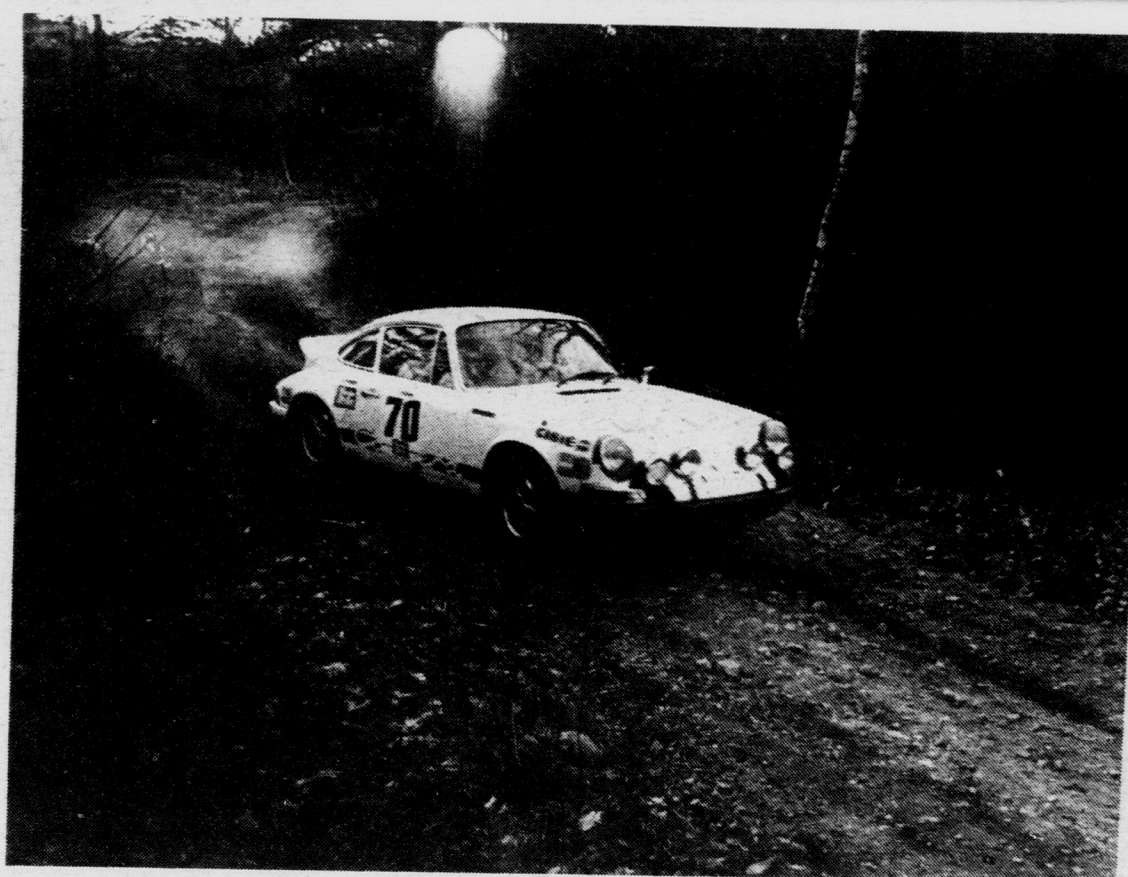


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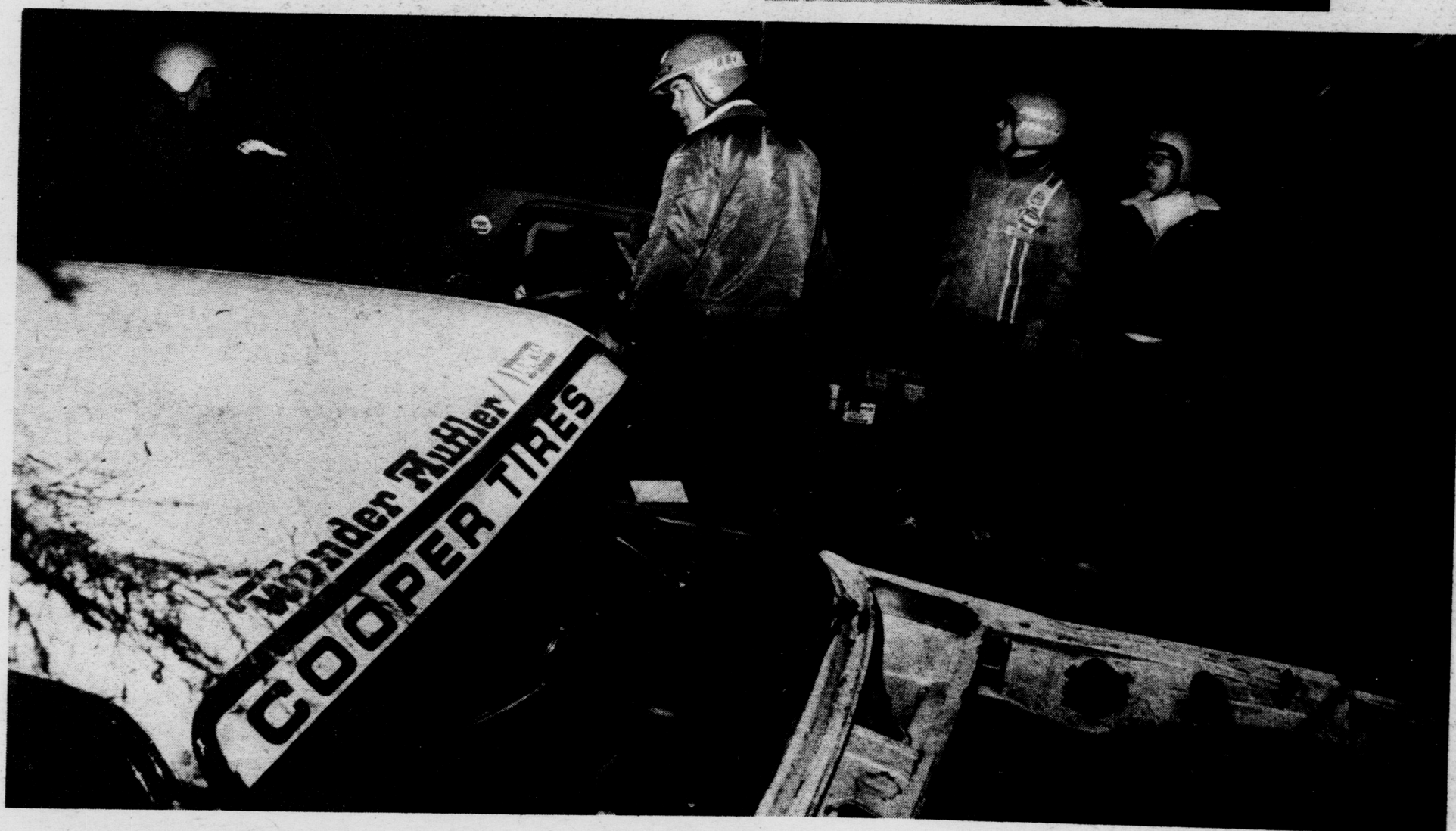
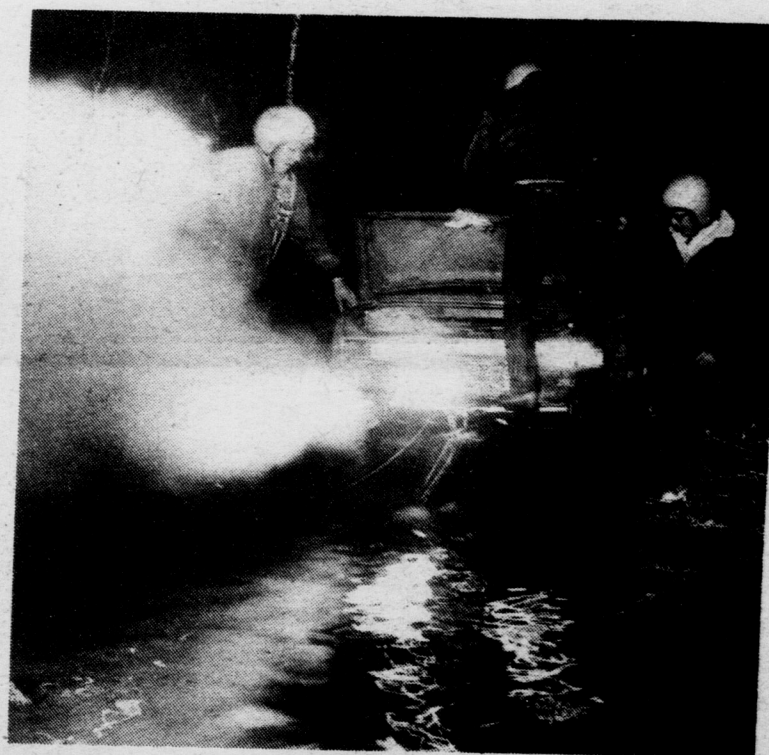
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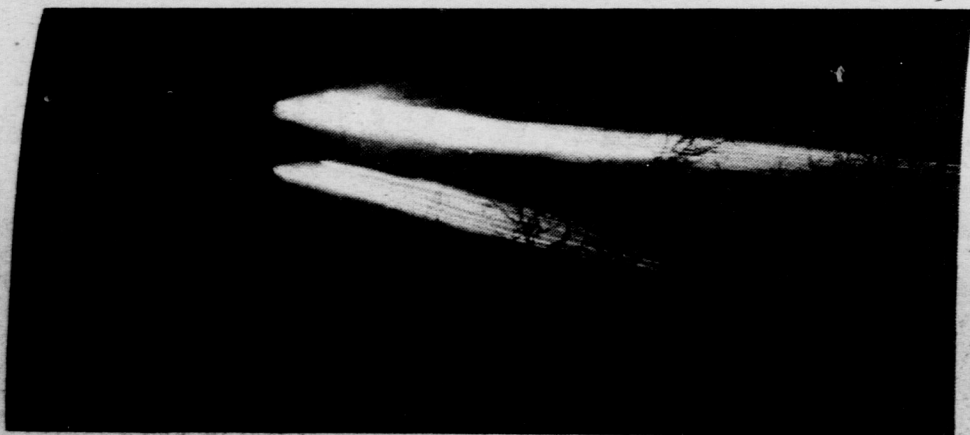


Press on,
press on,
press on regardless!

Counterpoint

Tuesday, November 25, 1975





Press on...

MARQUETTE, Sunday Nov. 9, 1975 — It's 3 a.m. in the absolute middle of nowhere. Stars hang like crystalline eyes over an evergreen forest in Michigan's upper peninsula.

A steam-like miasma rises silently from a long stretch of water covering at least 50 yards of a rough dirt road that winds its way through the untroubled wilderness.

Temperate weather lingers momentarily over the woods before the final onslaught of winter. The air is crisp, the atmosphere expectant.

Suddenly a blinding wall of light accompanied by a fierce mechanical roar shatters the pristine silence. A blurred form bursts through the darkness like a comet. The knife-like specter halves the water with razor-edged precision and disappears into the somber darkness.

"That must have been the Porsche Carrera," someone mutters. "They didn't even slow down."

A quiet of sorts returns to

the woods. The few spectators who have found their way to this remote and watery point exchange surprised glances and listen for the approach of the next of a series of automobiles that will brave the flooded section of road which the Porsche so effortlessly traversed.

Most of the cars will make it through this hazard on "special stage 16". A few will not. They will flounder in the unexpected depth of the water that covers hidden ditches at either side of the road.

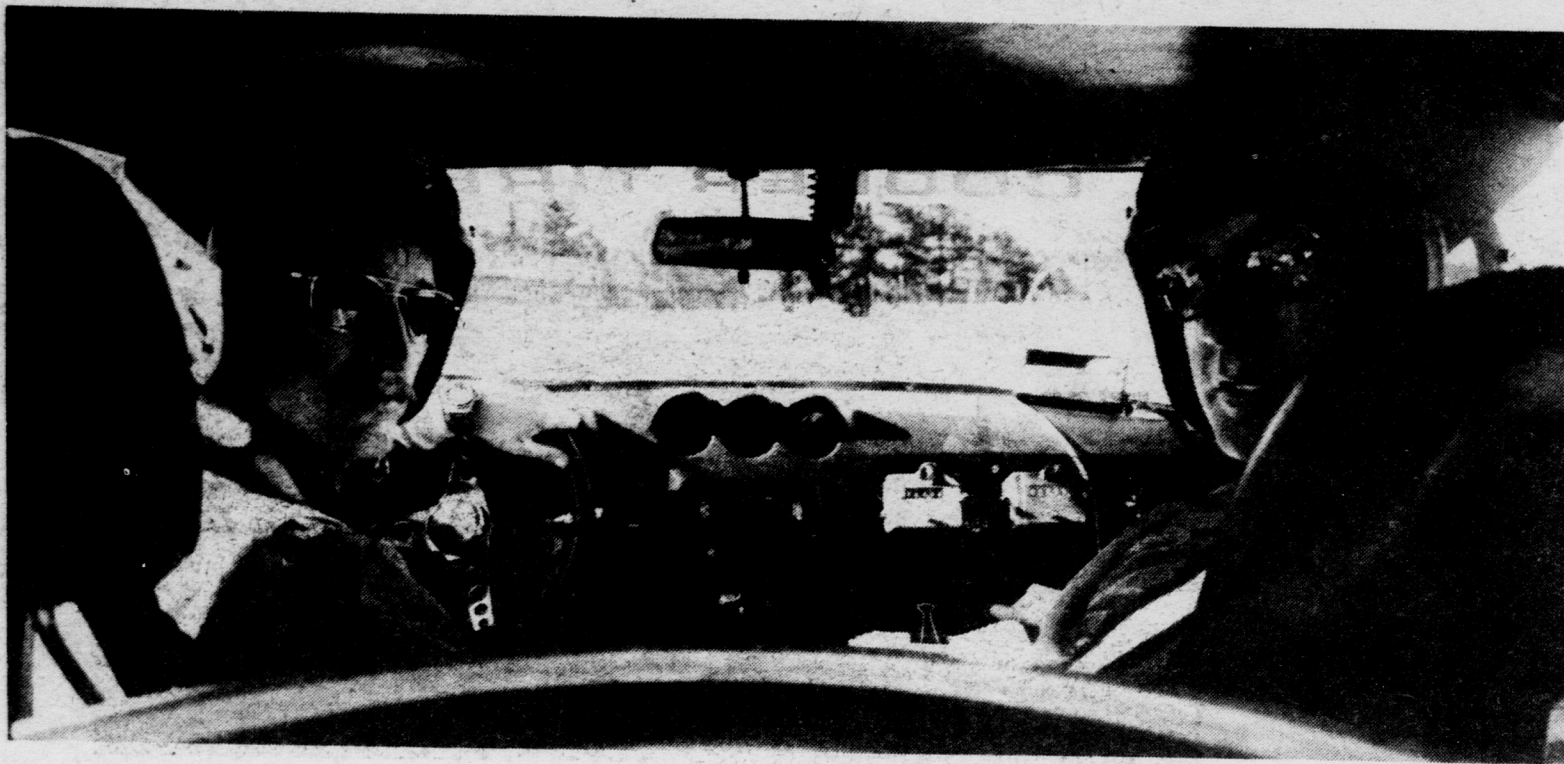
The drivers and navigators of these hapless vehicles will soon ruefully discover that the terrain chosen for the 27th annual Press On Regardless Rally (POR) is as wickedly treacherous as it was reported to have been before the rally began, many hard hours ago.

• • •

Friday, Nov. 7, 1975, 6 a.m. Darkness still covers the Marquette Holiday Inn, but already a number of rally cars can be seen in the parking lot of the



POR winners: Driver S. Zasada (top left) and navigator W. Schramm (top right). Also pictured are navigator June McKnight (left) and driver Essie Perkins (below) and driver Wally Wagner (bottom left) and navigator Roger Culbert (bottom right).



But even the methodical pre-

press on, press on regardless!

motel, which serves as POR headquarters.

A few rally crews are across the street having coffee and breakfast at a Big Boy Restaurant while other teams continue to pull in at the Holiday Inn. Though it is more than 24 hours before the start of the rally, Friday will be far from an idle day for the rally teams.

Friday will be a day for final preparations and for official inspection of the rally cars. It will be a day to get acquainted with other POR participants at a welcome party in the evening and a day to speculate on the upcoming weather and its likely effects on the rally.

It will rain Friday evening as the rallyists gather for the party. The hard rainfall will prompt much comment from the driver-navigator crews who will soon be guiding their specially-prepared rally cars through some of the most god-awful backwoods roads the POR officials could find.

The POR is billed as an extremely tough and demanding rally. This year it will cover some 426 miles from late Saturday morning to early Sunday morning. About 185 miles will be over 22 "special stages," stretches of rugged road that will be closed to the public during the passage of the rally. It will be over these special stages that the fastest car and driver combination will be found and the winner determined.

The terrain for this POR will be as vicious as anyone could have hoped for. Despite the skill of the crews and the careful preparation of the vehicles, only 32 of the starting field of 66 cars will finish. The rugged course of forest and mountain, water-covered dirt roads and broken culverts, primitive trails and assorted hazards will take their toll. As the teams traverse Mount Marquette, Perrin Brothers Truck Trail and Triple A Road, or pass the Tin Shack, Skinnies Lake and Dead River, one after another will fall by the wayside.

It is not that the rally cars — mostly Datsuns, Volvos, BMWs, SAABs, Toyotas, Dodge Colts and occasional VWs — have not been carefully prepared for this type of event. The cars have been systematically reworked to withstand the demands of rallying over brutally cruel roads and trails. But they can only be expected to withstand so much abuse.

The rally cars' suspensions have been stiffened to take powerful beatings. "Belly pans," or shields, have been added to protect the engine sump, transmission, brake lines and the exhaust system. Roll bars or cages have been installed to protect the drivers and navigators and powerful quartz iodine racing lights and sophisticated timing equipment form part of the vehicles' "standard" equipment.

But even the methodical pre-

rally preparations given to the cars by highly skilled rally teams and service crews cannot fend off the mechanical breakdowns and on-the-road mishaps brought about by pushing the vehicles past all limits of moderation.

But such is the undeniable charm and challenge of the POR.

The 1975 POR is the 27th running of the event. For the second year in a row, the rally is being hosted by the city of Marquette. The POR, this year, is the 10th of a series of 12 such events included in the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) sanctioned Lancia/Wonder Muffler Pro series. Points from the POR will be included toward a series-end championship which, this year, has already been awarded to the popular Vermont team of driver John Buffum and navigator Vicki Dykema, who have won five of the events prior to the POR.

The teams will be competing for a total POR purse of some \$11,000. The rugged special stages will be the supreme test of each driver-navigator team. Rally officials, or "control teams," will man the start and finish of each special stage to time the cars and safety marshalls will close the special stages to public traffic while the rallyists are passing through. The special stages are connected by "transit stages," which are portions of public road. Rally drivers must observe posted speed limits during the transit stages or risk penalties. A specific time is allotted for each special stage and penalty points are assessed for any time over. A lengthy breakdown can knock a team out of the rally.

But despite the substantial proportion of cars that will not finish the rally, the teams eagerly prepare for the POR. It appears to be a hobby for most, if not all of them. Many invest their money in rallying and get nothing in return except enjoy-

ment. That seems to be reward enough.

"These are all normal people like us. These are not big bucks people," explained John Love, a representative of Cibie Racing Lights.

Roger Culbert, of Jackson, a navigator for one of the rally cars, agreed with Love's assessment.

"You make money to spend it on something, so why not rally cars? You get a lot of personal satisfaction out of it," Culbert said.

Culbert, 31, a designer for an engineering firm, has been rallying since 1973 with 30-year-old Wally Wagner of East Lansing, an employee of Lansing's Fisher Body plant. Both had previous rally experience before teaming up.

Their entry in the POR is a 1973 DATSUN 240Z, a vehicle they have guided through a number of other rallies. Earlier this year, the Datsun traversed a short distance in the "20 Stages" rally on its roof and had to be pulled out of deep snow, causing no small amount of damage. The pair have invested quite a bit of time and effort into reconditioning the car. It seems to be in good shape for the POR.

"If you look at it you can see it's a little wavy in spots," Roger said.

They said they have invested in excess of \$10,000 in their rally car so far, and have finished no higher than 7th in rallies they have entered. In the POR they will finish 17th, which is a much better performance than many of the highly-favored teams will accomplish.

Beside rolling their car in the 20 Stages rally, the pair once had an unfortunate meeting with a tree. Rallying, they explained, has a rather high accident rate.

"POR is not so bad. All you can do is hit a tree or roll over," Wally said. "If you screw up just a little bit, chances are you will hit something."

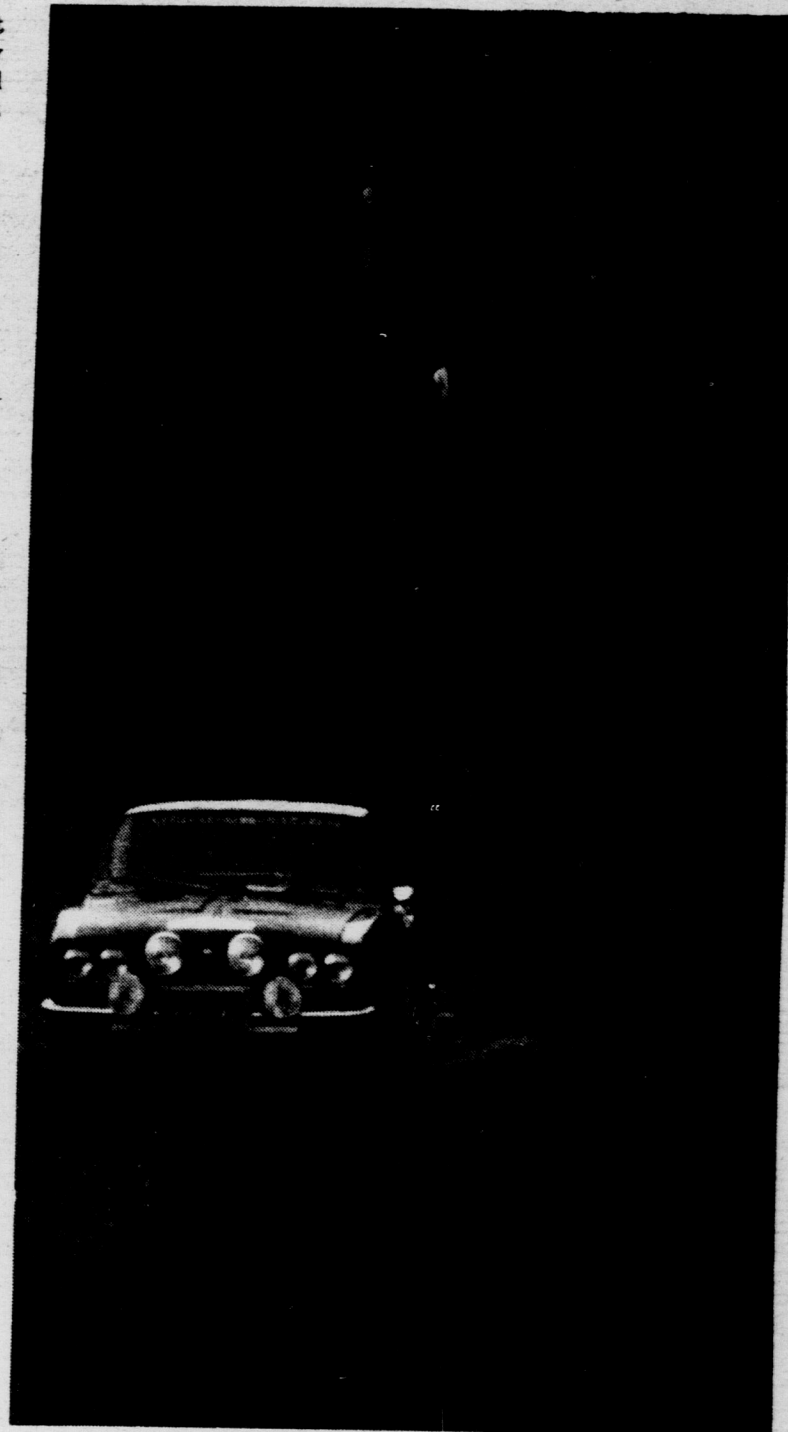
"But the whole time I've been rallying, I've only heard of two injuries and they were minor," he added.

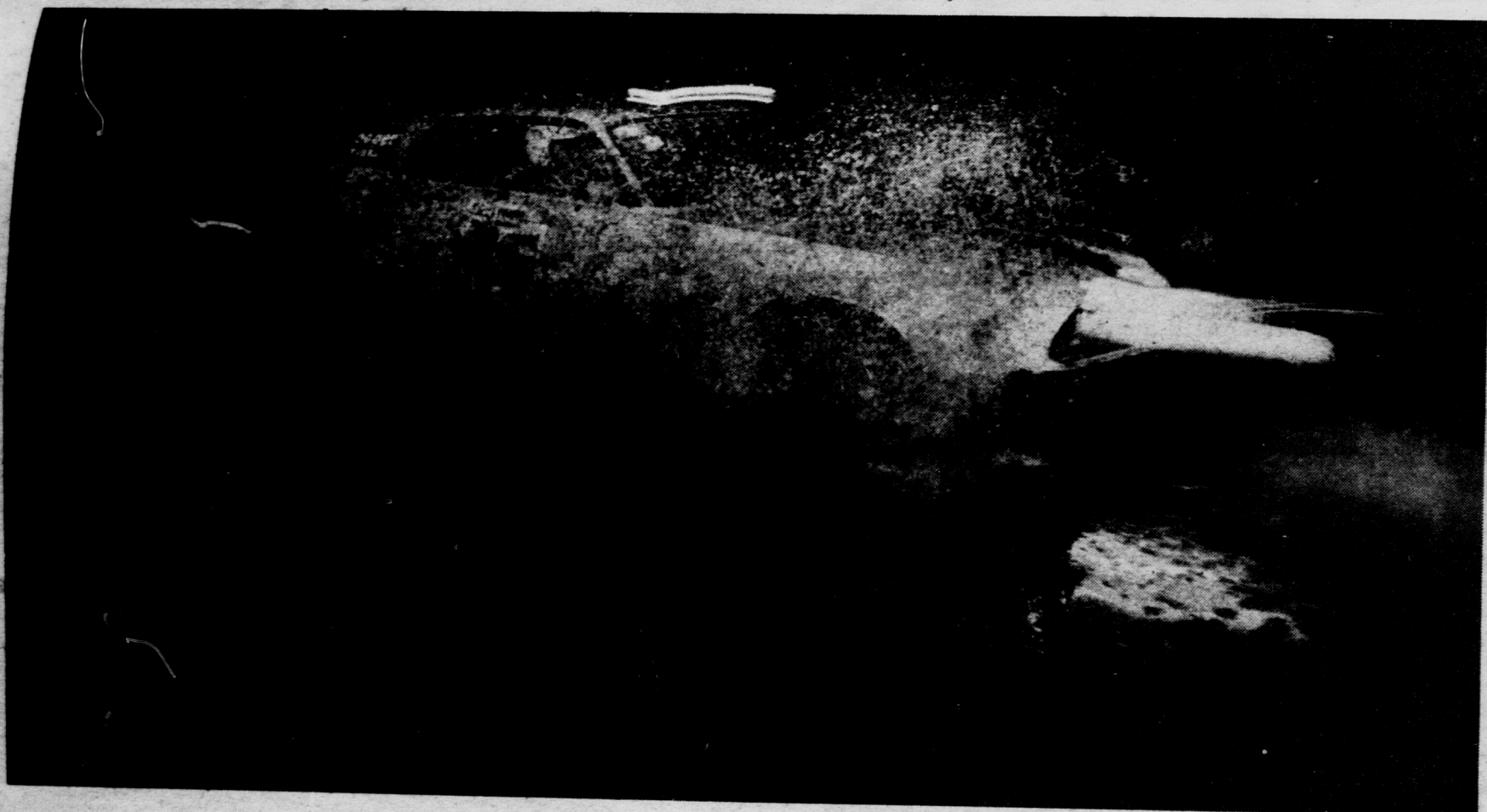
Such mishaps come with the territory and should be expected, they seemed to say.

"Rallying is an overall challenge," he continued. "It's a

challenge to the crew's preparation of the car over and beyond the obvious mechanical stresses... We've never seen these roads before. The road conditions vary from hour to hour. You really have to be attuned to your car and the type of road conditions you are running

(continued on page 7)





It looked fairly easy. All one had to do to get through the water over the road was to drive straight and fast and sure. It worked for most cars. A few, however, found that prudence might have been a better tactic than iron resolve.

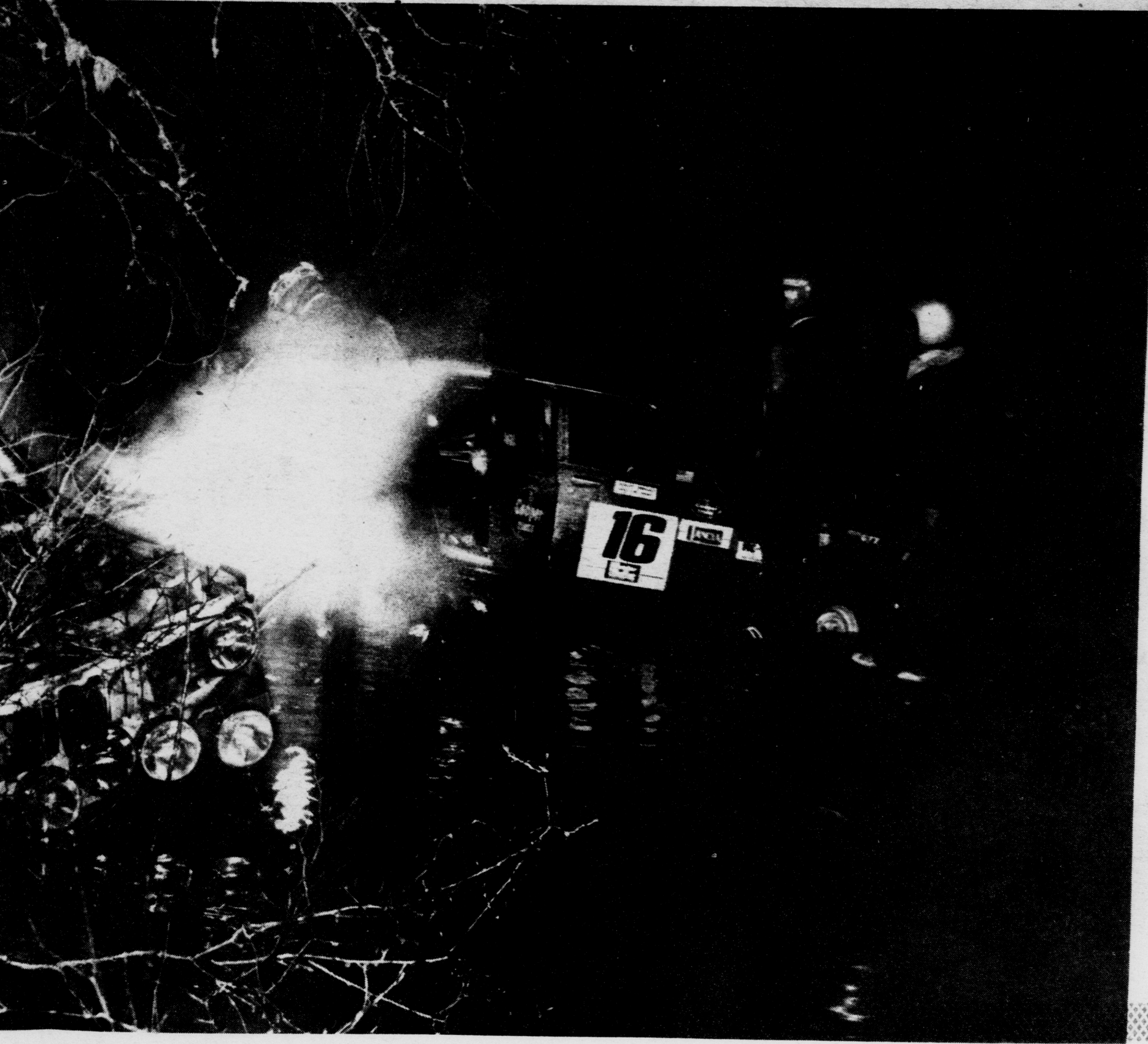
Special Stage 16, Nestoria-Herman Road, became a graveyard of the hopes of at least three POR driver-navigator teams who found the treacherous water-covered road to be more than their vehicles could handle.

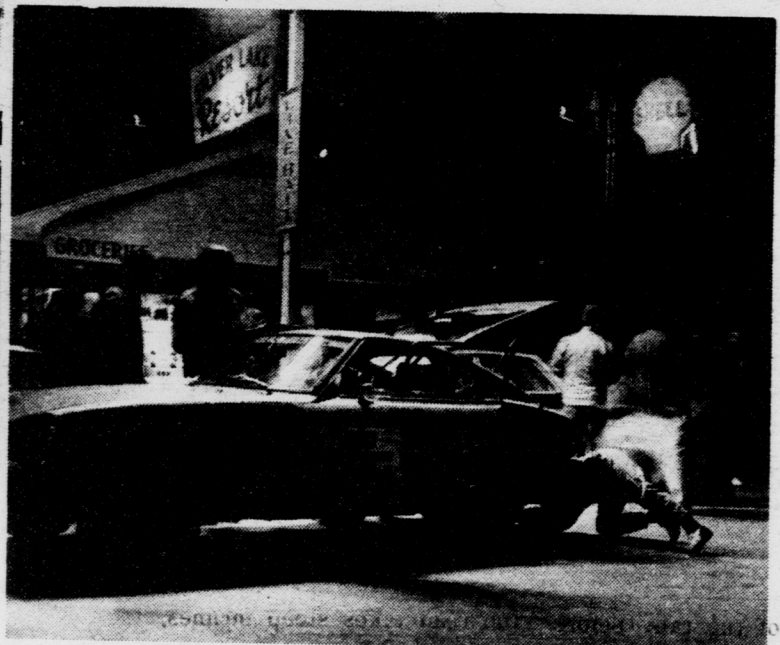
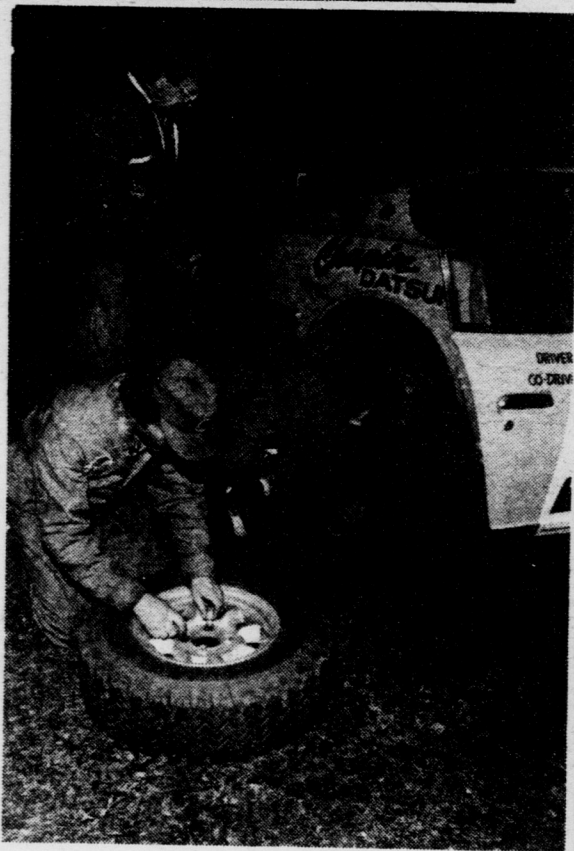
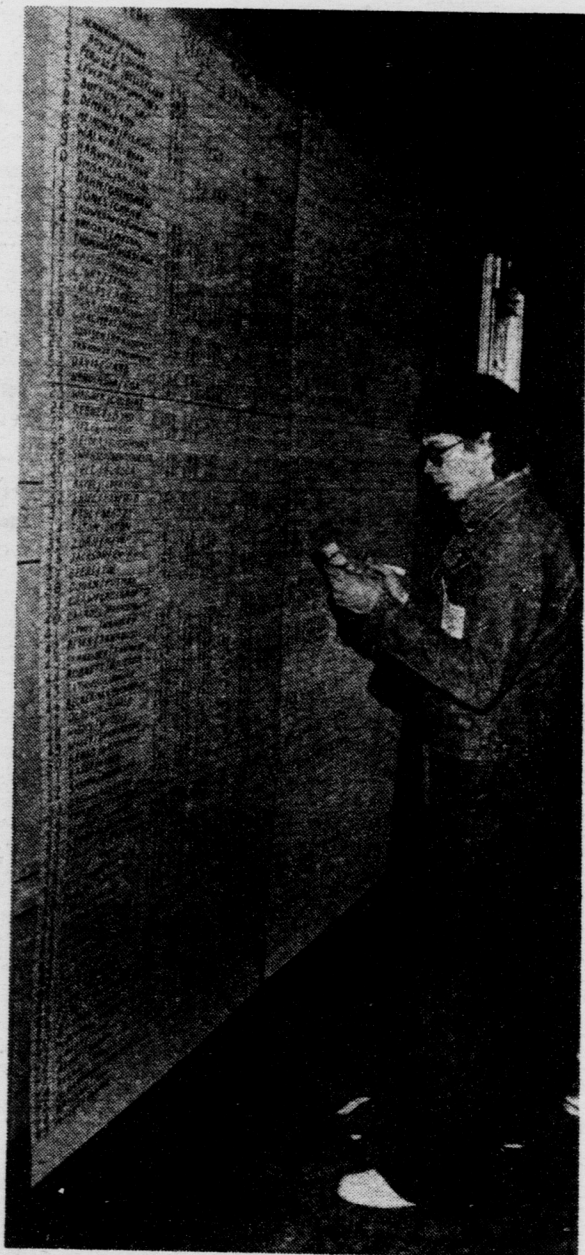
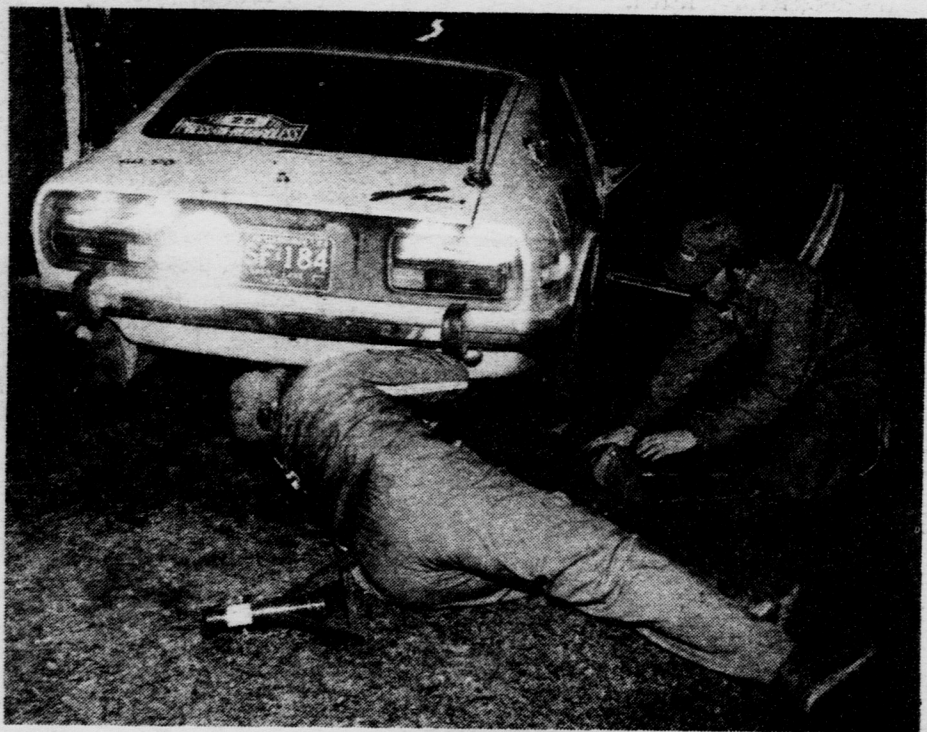
Stage 16 soon became a chaos of dumped autos, crews struggling to free their cars, and spectators slogging through the water to offer assistance — plus the added element of further rally cars driving into the area.

But a rally without supreme challenges such as this would not be a rally.

Photographs by Dale Atkins; story by Frank Fox; layout designed by Joe Lippincott.







ESTABLISHED 1964



(continued from page 3)
under."

But by Friday night, Wagner and Culbert had more on their minds than just road conditions. It was raining and raining hard. If the rain kept up, they said, their car would be at a disadvantage to the trio of four-wheel-drive vehicles entered in the POR.

"If this rain keeps up, we're in trouble. If it rains, the jeeps are going to run away with this unless they crash and blow up," Culbert joked at the party Friday night.

As it turned out, the weather for the rally was beautiful. It did not rain. Only one of the four-wheel-drive vehicles, a Toyota Land Cruiser, finished the rally and it finished several places behind Wagner and Culbert.

The highly publicized Jeep CJ-7, piloted by Gene Henderson and Ken Pogue and the Dodge Ramcharger of Scott Harvey and Wayne Zitkus both dropped out extremely early in the rally due to mechanical difficulties.

While Wagner and Culbert finished the grueling rally, many teams did not. But some teams, like driver Essie Perkins and navigator June McKnight, enjoyed themselves whether they finished or not.

The two Vermont women said they entered the POR without any prior experience in competitive auto racing. Ms. McKnight had purchased her car, a rally-tested 1972 Dodge Colt, through friends. They had driven the car to Marquette from Rochester, Michigan, after picking it up only days before the rally.

"We practiced all the way from Rochester to here," explained Perkins, who raises and trains thoroughbred horses in Vermont.

"We went off on a couple of dirt roads on the way up. That wasn't very successful. The second dirt road we went on, I turned around and immediately got stuck," she said. "But that was good because we got a chance to learn how to use the come-along" (a hand-operated winch-like device with cable for pulling cars out of jams).

Though the pair finished only about half of the rally before

engine trouble ended it for them, they still turned in a respectable effort for first-time rallyists.

"We had a little trouble navigating," Perkins said after the rally. "Things either came up slower than we thought or we missed them completely... But I think this is a fantastic sport," she said.

Other teams were perhaps less pleased with their ultimate performance in the POR.

The pre-rally favorites seemed to be driver John Buffum and his navigator (and ex-wife) Vicki Dykema. In 1975, the pair had enjoyed what was termed the best record ever compiled in a single season of SCCA Pro rallying. Their five Pro series victories this year had already assured them the series championship before the POR even began. And despite rolling their red, white and blue Ford Escort on the early Mount Marquette special stage, the Vermont pair were doing very well until motor mount problems knocked them out a little more than halfway through the rally.

But three-time European Rally Champion Sobieslaw Zasada and navigator Wojtek Schramm would have nothing but good fortune on the POR. Sunday morning would see them bringing their Polish LOT Airlines - sponsored Porsche Carrera into the finish at the Holiday Inn some 10 minutes ahead of their nearest competition, Tom Tolles and Virginia Reese, of Ann Arbor, in a Volvo 122S.

But Friday evening, the finish is hundreds of miles distant.

• • •
Saturday, Nov. 8, 1975, about 5 p.m. From the top of Mount Marquette one has an absolutely magnificent view of Marquette and its Lake Superior harbor. It is a beautiful spot.

Whether the drivers who must fight the winding dirt trail up and down the mountain will appreciate the scenic majesty of the place is another matter.

The dirt road that snakes up to the peak of the mountain and then back down again is awful to walk up and probably worse to drive upon. Through the forest covering the mountain, the road takes steep inclines,

sharp turns and surprising changes that only a mule could love.

The mountain stage is only the third special stage but already a few of the cars appear to be out of the rally.

The slopes of the mountain are littered with spectators. Some are drinking. Some are tossing a football back and forth across the road where the cars will soon struggle and groan. Some have brought their dogs. Some have brought their small children. Some have even come to appreciate the rally.

As the time for the first car approaches, the steep inclines and the rock-strewn dirt road are lined with small groups of spectators. As many of the cars pass, people quickly trot up and down the road to get a better vantage point. As the rallying intensifies, more and more people use the road to move about the mountain. A number of them must quickly leap out of the way as a car comes hurtling up the road. It is a wonder that the drivers are not impeded by careless oafs. Perhaps, farther up the mountain, they are.

As each of the cars fights its way up the mountain, it digs deeper and deeper ruts into the road, making passage all the more difficult for succeeding

vehicles. The curves are especially bad and there are many curves. After awhile, one begins to listen for cars to bottom out as they encounter the deep ruts on the curves. One quickly sees the reason for the belly shields with which the cars are fitted.

Spinning their tires, throwing clouds of red dirt and large rocks in their wake, the cars press on up the unyielding slopes through an increasingly foolhardy crowd of onlookers who swarm over the road like so many inconsiderate ants after the passage of most of the cars.

It is surprising, but the spectators pick up their empty beer cans as they leave.

The stage ends as darkness descends upon the mountain. Now, only the dinner halt from around 9 p.m. to midnight at the Holiday Inn and an occasional gas halt will break the desperate pace of the event as the drivers begin to explore the depths of the Northern Michigan forests in earnest.

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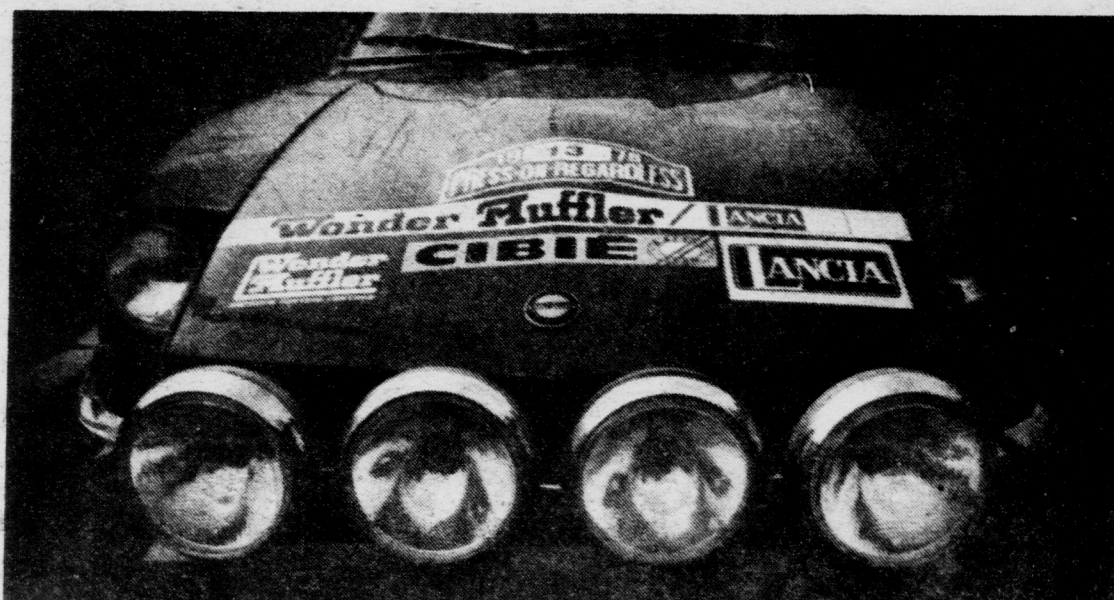
Saturday, Nov. 8, 8:00 p.m. A neon star flashes on and off in the darkness above the Silver Lake Resort, many miles southwest of Marquette. Spectators huddle together on the porch of

the long, low building and watch the rally cars pull in, one after another. The rally teams quickly check in with the control personnel, gas up at the pumps in front of the combination store and restaurant and rush to the far side of the building where their service crews are waiting.

The rally cars pull into a clearing surrounded by trees and the forest night. Service crews are ready with small trucks and vans laden with tools and equipment. Working, as always, against a deadline, they must make any needed repairs quickly before the rally teams depart for more special stages and a dinner break back at the Holiday Inn which will precede the night-long remainder of the rally.

People crowd around John Buffum and Vicki in their battered Ford Escort and gaze at the damaged front fender and roof that the vehicle sustained when it rolled over on Mount Marquette. The pair lost almost 10 minutes on that stage and their car had to be righted by several spectators before it could proceed. Now, Buffum is again pressed for time and he hurries off into the night, leaving the hangers-on still speculating upon his fortunes in

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the race. He will be out of action after a few more special stages.

Back in the pit area, visitors are confronted with a frenetic scene of hurried, very purposeful activity. The sounds of hacksaws cutting metal, cars being jacked up and men and women talking to one another in loud, determined voices compete with the sputter of engines as cars hurry in and out. People prudently skip out of their way.

Through the bustle of activity a rally driver hurriedly strides up to the control crew to deliver a bit of information:

"There's a blue SAAB that looks like it rolled twice back there in the last stage," he says. "They're both all right."

His message delivered, he trots back to his own car.

News of the drivers' progress in the race spreads rapidly through the pits. Henderson and Pogue in their highly touted CJ-7 are out already — distributor problems, word has it. Prospects improve and depreciate for the rally teams. Situations are reassessed and tires changed. Drivers and mechanics crawl under cars and emerge to cry out for needed parts.

"What's your tire problem?" someone shouts. "You just ate one tire. Where is it?"

Another figure emerges to caution an overanxious crew member:

"You've got time, you've got time," he soothes. "I'm not going anywhere yet."

Seconds tick away like the heartbeat of a dying man. By and large, the rally teams and service crews maintain an admirable cool as they work in the face of dwindling moments. But the scene is not without a certain humor. One of the rally cars has a bumper sticker that seems to have been put on upside down. But it makes quite a bit of sense when one makes an effort to decipher it:

"If you can read this, please turn me over," it says.

And the drivers leave and hurry back to the demands of the rally. In a while, they will have a final extended rest at the Holiday Inn before the hellish special stages that await them after midnight.

• • •
Saturday, Nov. 8, 10:30 p.m. It is the middle of the dinner halt at the Holiday Inn. At midnight the rally will begin again and continue until about 8 a.m. Sunday.

The lobby of the motel is bustling with activity as drivers, crews, navigators and spectators rush in and out on a thousand errands.

Ten of the special stages are finished. They have taken their toll. On the blackboard in the press room, nine or ten car numbers are listed as being out of the rally. The reasons read like a mechanic's dream. One car is down from an engine seizure. Another has a hole in the radiator. Another is out of commission from "body damage," another from a lost wheel. A couple have serious transmission problems. The list goes on.

When the rally resumes, more cars will be added to a list

of the "didn't finish."

The dangers of the pitch-dark forest await while the rally crews finish final cups of coffee.

• • •
Sunday, Nov. 9, about 3 a.m. The rally teams are about to enter special stage 16, which is laughingly called Nestoria-Herman Road. It hardly deserves to be called a "road." The field of competing cars has dwindled significantly by this point and the treacherous waters covering sections of this stage will add to the list of casualties.

A beaver's dam is said to be responsible for the unpredictable areas of water covering parts of this narrow dirt road that winds through a dense forest. Whatever the reason for the water, special stage 16 is probably one of the roughest of the stages. It is the type of merciless place that gives the POR its justly deserved reputation.

Deep into the woods, near a lengthy water hazard, a few spectators have ventured into the forbidding terrain. They struggle along the thickly overgrown edges of the road and find small dry spots to wait for the cars.

Suddenly the Porsche roars through the water as if it were an inch-deep puddle and just as suddenly it is gone. No one can quite believe what they have just seen, or rather, what they haven't seen, for Zasada and Schramm are streaking through the woods as if they are pursued by demons. They are here to win. That much is obvious.

A few more cars pass through the water, though not with the speed or confidence of the Porsche. Unseen hazards await the unwary.

Then it happens. Car number 16, a Datsun 510 driven by Jim Callon of Sault Ste. Marie and navigated by Roger Dooley, flies into the water and promptly careens over to the left side of the road and gets very, very stuck. Callon and Dooley are in trouble and they know it.

They inspect their predicament and produce flares to warn other teams. All of their efforts to rescue their vehicles will be hampered by the other autos trying to veer around them.

Time sneers at its victims. They are aware that they are rapidly being eliminated. They have come this far, only to swamp their car in a god-forsaken wilderness. There is little dignity to their fate.

Dooley stands on what passes for dry ground across the drowned road from his immobile Datsun. Callon looks at the car and then across to his partner.

"We're going to be over our maximum late minutes soon, Roger," he says.

"There's nothing we can do about it, Jim," Roger replies.

Then, as they must, they continue their efforts despite the odds.

By now they are trying to extricate their car with the help of a come-along, the thick cable of which they attach to a tree on the opposite side of the road and to the rear bumper of their car.

It seems that whenever they almost get the cable tightened, another car appears in the night, its brace of racing lights illuminating the scene with a hellish intensity, and the cable must be loosened.

Spectators approach to offer assistance and advice. Much is said and little is done. Then, to make matters even worse, another car drops into the ditch across the road from the first — trying to get around the Datsun too fast, car number 59, a BMW 2002 driven by Ray Foulkrod of Detroit and navigated by James Shortt, loses its grip on the road and slides gracelessly into the right-hand ditch.

The right side of the BMW soon fills with water as its occupants, now standing in a semi-dry spot in the road, watch their hopes sink.

Now things are really out of hand. Four rallyists and several spectators survey the disaster. Flares light up the area with an unreal red glow and the fog rising from the water is augmented by clouds of exhaust fumes that the Datsun spits out as efforts continue to winch it free...while the cable from the come-along eats an ever-deepening ring into the tree around which it has been placed.

Suddenly, too suddenly, another car comes through and the cable must be loosened.

Shouts from drunken spectators up the road warn of its approach. The newly-arrived auto creeps between the two downed cars and the flare-lit figures that wave it on. By some miracle, just enough room has been left between the disabled pair of vehicles to allow the other cars to pass by.

No one can really believe what is happening. The lights from the flares and the racing lights of the cars that squeeze through are too intense, the clouds of exhaust fumes rising from the Datsun as it struggles to free itself are too thick and the time and place too improbable for anyone to totally accept.

But they are all there, stuck in the middle of the woods. And they are all there by choice. They paid to be there.

"Well, we really bought the biscuit," someone mutters.

As if two cars knocked out of the race at this point were not enough, a third is soon added. Apparently heedless of the mute warning offered by the pair of stranded autos, car 67, a Toyota Celica driven by James Emig of Baltimore, Md. and navigated by George Dorner Jr., passes the desperate scene and promptly deposits itself into the left ditch, perhaps 20 yards down the road.

The left side of the Celica rapidly takes on water. An-

other rally team quickly realizes that they are out of luck.

Amazingly, but too late, the Datsun is finally pulled free and continues down the road — though by now its race is over. The BMW and Celica seem beyond help.

All the cars have passed through now. The woods are silent except for the obscene noises emanating from the exhaust pipe of the Celica which spews its fumes out into the water with a suggestive blub, blub, blubbing. It is a futile attempt. The Celica is going nowhere.

Near the BMW, Foulkrod and Shortt stand on a tiny island and ponder the circumstances which have removed them from the rally. Their flare goes out and they stand quietly in the dark.

"Well I learned something tonight," Shortt says softly.

"What's that?"

"Celica and BMW both make pretty good marine engines."

And down the road, the Celica sits with its left side listing in the ditch. Its crew stands nearby. Water reaches the driver's seat and covers the floor pedals while on the navigator's side a digital clock continues to click off meaningless one-hundredths of seconds silently in the forest gloom.

