

View from the Right

Chapter 7, Doin' the DOO Wop, The Second Year

by

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I had asked my friend Ben Bradley if he could find me a ride for a West Coast rally. About four days before the Doo Wop Divisional Rally was to take place, he sent me a note advising me that Janice Damitio was looking for a codriver for the event. Unfortunately, his address book was out of date, and I couldn't get hold of her until after the event. I called her, and we chatted on the phone for a while, trying to interview each other. Finally, I told her I would fly out to Seattle, and we could talk more comfortably over coffee. So one Saturday morning, I found myself in Seattle, discussing PRO-Rally over coffee. Most people think I am crazy anyway, and all this jetting about seems to implant this idea more firmly in their minds. As a matter of fact, I don't really think it's that big a deal. I just get on an airplane, sit down, open a book, and when I feel the bump at the bottom, close my book and get off.

Janice is running a Toyota Celica All-Trac GTS, which means that it is turbocharged, and very quick. Now ninety percent of the PRO-Rally I have seen is in a Suzuki Sprint, that's a GEO Metro with a real engine. I was somewhat apprehensive about this step up in class. I knew things were going to happen faster, and I wondered if I would be up to the task. Janice was wondering whether I would be willing to run with a woman driver. Well, to make a long story short, she felt I was up to the task, and I had no concerns about her. We ended up agreeing that I would be out for the Doo Wop 3 & 4.

The week of the rally, work was very hectic, and so I didn't get a chance to pump up (*well you might call it worry*) until Thursday. By the time I got home from work and started to pack it was already 11:30 PM. Back at work the next morning, taking care of a few details, and at lunch time, I was on my way to Seattle. *Now I was starting to worry.* Janice picked me up at the airport, and proceeded to drive to Olympia. As we cleared Tacoma, and started away from the city, the background changed. It was a low cloudy day, but as we moved through the river basin, towards the mountains the scenery was very calming. As you move away from the city the country side turns pastoral. Not in the sense that I am used to, which is the great rolling flat lands of the midwest. The mountains here are reminiscent of the Appalachians, but not quite. Beneath the rather green calm, there is a sense of being hard and crisp, of newly broken rock, not weather beaten and worn. Even the Appalachian trees, mostly oak, maple, and birch give a softer contour to the mountains. The prickly spires of pine perhaps accentuate the harder look to the mountains. Still the effect was calming, and my apprehension began to dissipate.

We talked as we drove, about the countryside, the rally, our strategy, a lot of things. It was a special day, not only was it St. Patrick's Day, it was Janice's Birthday as well. We stopped at the

Bristol Restaurant in Olympia for lunch. The food here was excellent, and if you are ever in Olympia, stop in -- you will enjoy it. Janice's husband, Ray joined us for lunch. Ray was the chairman for the event, so I barely saw much of him. But this was the quiet before the storm, and so we had a small chance to relax.

Our car is sponsored by Crazee Espresso, a manufacturer of Espresso Carts, and also a franchise selling espresso. The company logo looks really good on the car in red, using the car as a white background. What I like the best is the rear spoiler, which carries the sponsor's slogan. It reads "Death before Decaf" in purple. I love it, for those that know me, know I live on caffeine. I could not have been happier discovering this. To make things even better, Janice gave me one of our sponsors tee shirts, with the slogan on the back to wear at the awards ceremony.

The car was mostly ready, except that the horn didn't work, which was going to be a problem getting through tech. It also seems that the odometer was not working, this was bothersome. PRO-Rally cars are usually protected on the bottom with a sheet of low density polyurethane. The Toyota's needed to be pinned to the rocker panels so it didn't rattle. I checked that the horn worked, and found when you blew the horn my odometer reset, losing the correction factor as well. It was also discovered, that the odometer wasn't working as well. This was mildly upsetting, but I always figured we could use the trip odometer, if we had to. Well I could see everything but the tenths digit from where I sat. Still we would work it out -- I hope. It was getting late, and like Scarlet O'Hara would say, these details could wait until the morning. The car was pushed onto the trailer, and we headed for Montesano, some forty minutes east of Olympia.

I was to be a guest of Ray and Janice. Their house which sits on a beautiful piece of land, bordering a river which I am told has the best steelhead fishing in the Northwest. It was now pouring rain. We proceeded to load the truck with the supplies we needed for the rally. The car was rolled off the trailer, and put into the garage. We had to check out the intercom system, the system worked fine. After a cup of tea, I was helping Janice assemble some of the trophies, which are unique, when the phone rang.

Let me digress, the trophies are all compact disks obtained from the local radio stations. The titles are matched for the driver and codriver, and you have to see them together to get the punchline. For example the Driver's trophy would have "Help me make it through the Night" while the Codriver's would feature the song "You never believe me."

We were sorting through the disks looking for humorous matches when the phone rang. It was Janice's brother Larry. He was driving his rally car up from Portland, when his newly rebuilt engine swallowed a valve. Larry was going to end up crewing for us. So with the Toyota unloaded, we packed up the trailer, and drove down to where he had stopped. Picked up the car, and then filled the gas cans for the rally. "Don't forget to fill up the car in the morning," I thought to myself. Back to the house, where we loaded some more, and then everyone went to sleep. For them it was 11 PM. It was 1 AM for me. Someday I will get a good night's sleep before the rally.

I was up at 5 AM, showered, and dressed, and sticking more CD's on trophy plaques when Janice came down. After getting her boys started, we left. Ray had already taken the car in ahead of us. When we arrived at PDE, Ray's business which was also the rally start, I was told the Odometer had been fixed, "Your correction factor is 2050, but don't blow the horn." I wrote the factor down in the route book, and proceeded to registration to do the paperwork. After registration, I took the car through tech. Well we passed all the tech points, and then they said "Oh, the horn -- blow the horn." I pressed the button and watched the display of the TerraTrip Odometer turn to garbage. Outside, I powered off the unit, and then reset the factor in. Onto the driver's meeting and correcting the route

book. Then into my “working clothes,” and now finally a few moments of quiet to collect my thoughts and work on the route book. Didn’t last long.

About two minutes later, we were pulling out of the Main Time Control (MTC). It was here, that both Janice and I remembered our mental note to fill up the car. A quick check of the gas gauge, showed about a quarter of a tank. With a quick calculated risk, we pulled into a gas station along the route, and threw about two minutes of gas into the car.

We were to run the first day in the Shelton Area, which is little used by the rallyists in this area. These roads we were warned were rougher, and composed of broken rock, as opposed to the Cedar Creek Stages and Alpine Stages to be used the next day. We arrived at the first stage Kamilche Ridge with time to spare. After the normal ritual of gloves, on, belts tightened, and helmets on, we plugged each other into the intercom.

We then discovered the surprise of the morning. It didn’t work. Our minute came up, and 15 seconds later we rolled up to the ATC. “Okay, too late to worry about this now,” I shouted, “can you hear me.” Janice nodded. We did our final check, I snugged my belts a little tighter. The last time an intercom did not work for me, was at the Baie Des Challeurs. This was my first crash, and only DNF. I did not communicate this fact to Janice. Fifteen seconds, the starter called, I was shouting with him at Ten....5....4....3.... “Am I sure I want to do this”? I thought. “Well, too late to worry about it now.” 2....1 The car started to accelerate.

Less than one tenth from the start was the first turn...”Stay Right, Sweep 60 Right, Narrowing...” I shouted. Then we hit the water puddle. Remember it had been raining all night, and we were on rock and mud, not sand. We were to experience lots of standing water all day. For our second surprise of the morning, a load of water came inside the car from the floor. It came from Janice’s side, and while I got it in the face, and on the route book, Janice got drenched. “Do I offend (sniff, sniff),” I shouted, “I had my shower this morning.” I yelled. Janice laughed and we got down to serious rallying.

I was not used to this. In the Suzuki, we have plenty of time. I am able to read all the information blocks, and even editorialize on the turns not covered in the road book. I had watched the in car videos of the faster cars, and noted that all they called was the route book turns. Now I knew why. We just barely completed that turn, and quip when the next arrow was visible and approaching fast. “Left over crest, sweep 60 left,” I called. Louder, Janice yelled back. I repeated it louder, and the apprehension grew. The road surface was rough. There was standing water all around, and we were hurtling down the road, with out an intercom. Great....Just fantastically Great. Tightening up my belts just a little more, I settled in. We were beginning a rhythm. The road came faster. It was rough, but I had seen rougher. We were moving that is for sure.

Kamilche Ridge is 9.91 miles long. After the first mile which has moderately tight corners it opens up for the next two miles. You then encounter a sequence of corners that remain fairly tight. Starting with a 60 degree sweep over a crest, into a 90 flat left. Then a 120 degree off camber hairpin right on a down hill grade. Next you encounter a 75 degree right at tee. This sequence concludes with a 90 degree flat left sweeper, which opens up to the next sequence. This concludes the fast part of Kamilche Ridge, a little over halfway through it.

The remaining five miles contains 14 more instructions with 9 of them noted with at least a single caution. The road surface changed, so the organizers told us, to pea gravel, at the start of this sequence. They must grow big peas in Washington State, because most of the rocks were at least quarter size. About a tenth after that was an interesting right to left ess bend, that was off camber,

and on a loose rocky surface. The road opened up for the next four tenths of a mile, we were in 4th gear and accelerating. Next we encountered a 60 degree right hand sweep, that terminated into a downhill 150 degree hairpin left at a tee intersection. The car, and Janice were pretty stable, even after hitting the water bar at the apex of the hairpin. The road started to open up a little there, and we were pretty much doing over 70 MPH through a set of sweepers when we encountered a 90 left over crest, and then a flat 90 left. With about two and a half miles of stage left it started to get really interesting. First an off camber right hand sweep over the crest of a short straight, then a 90 right sweep into a long left hand sweep that somewhat reminded me of the Carousel of Nurburing. Except that the carousel is not a downhill to uphill turn with a narrowing decreasing radius left just over the crest of a hill. The route book had several notations about rocks all over the place, and ended with BFR. "Huh?" I thought. Then I got it. No Nurburing doesn't have rocks either. Why am I hung up on the Carousel. Because when I saw it in the rout book my first thought was "The Carousel." My last thought on leaving the sequence was "[...expletives deleted...]." It was short lived, however. About 15 seconds later we encountered a flat 90 right at tee, which someone carelessly left a stump near the exit point of the turn. Then into an easy 45 degree flat left. Next is a 45 degree tight right sweep with a stump right where you want to apex. This leads into a downhill sweep across a narrow wooden bridge. If memory serves right, its about an 8 foot drop, and with the rain all night long, the surface would not have been very grippy. Another hairpin left, and then into a flying finish characterized by cautions so numerous it read like War and Peace.

We finished the stage with surprisingly few "Louder Please's." This actually helped build confidence, since I now knew we really didn't need an intercom. Well, all things being equal we did pretty good. Though Janice felt she could drive it a little faster. We proceeded onto the next stage Cloquallum Ridge.

Well everything was pretty much sorting itself out. This stage was relatively short, lasting about three miles. The stage was very tight, and if we were going to stay competitive, it meant that we both would be working on this one. There was a lot of standing water around. The first turn of any note was a right hand 45 degree sweep into a flat 90 degree Tee right. The 45 degree was marked exposure, which I finally figured out to mean "over the edge is a long way down" We don't have many of these in the flat lands I am used to. Everything was going fine, until the standing water which was being splashed up on the engine would turn to steam. This came out of the engine compartment into the air intake, and proceeded to fog the windows. Even with the defroster on, it was hard to see. Janice was looking through a scallop shaped clear spot near the lower center of the windshield, and I couldn't see much at all. Meanwhile, I had switched motion sickness medicine, and it wasn't working very well. I was getting car sick, and we were flying blind, without an intercom.

The stage continued, with a pair of 90 flat right to left corners. The second having a "bit of a drop" maybe 50-100 feet. Then a downhill 90 right into a 120 open hairpin right. Next was a series of left and right sweeps culminating in a flat 90 left into an off camber left 90 sweep. This section was very rough, and culminated in a flying finish that was bone jarring to say the least.

After we crossed the finish, our windshield began to clear. Fuel was going to be a problem, since the needle was approaching "E." Fortunately a friend of Ray and Janice's was manning a service crew. I began calling them Hugh and crew. We stopped by, and borrowed some gas from them. Our tank now full, we continued onto the Taylor Hill Stage.

We were really moving, and I knew our times were good, but what else could happen? Well at Taylor ridge, we were to find out. This was about a ten mile stage. As we rolled up to the ATC, I

put the defroster on full heat, and full fan. If Cloquallum Ridge was considered wet, Taylor hill was an ocean.

The stage started out fairly fast. Mostly flat sweep turns. The road surface was somewhat rutted which bounced us around a bit, but not too badly. About two miles into stage was a difficult section. Within the space of about four tenths of a mile we executed an exposed off camber left into a closed 160 degree hairpin left, then into an exposed 90 degree fast right sweep, and then into a closed 170 degree hairpin left. Just after passing this section the road opened up, with about eight miles to go. About the same time, the windows started to fog heavily. I lost all visual contact with the road, and Janice was forced to drive through a 2 inch by 4 inch slot at the bottom of the window in between us. Most of the time we were wiping the window clear, but to no avail.

I was on instruments at this point, using only the route book, and my interval odometer. I could not reach the windshield to wipe it clear without loosening my belts. We were bouncing around, so badly, I was a bit reticent to do this. Well I slacked my shoulder harness, and started wiping the windshield with the back of my hand. Bouncing around a bunch, trying to keep Janice's side clear. I was on instruments, cause I could not see outside at all, except for my side window. Nothing I did would clear the situation. In addition to flying blind, I was getting violently motion sick. Whatever was trying to come up, I was forcing back down. The car was like an oven. Roaring into a set of esses into a 90 tee right we then came to an open hairpin 120 degree right, which was the spectator area. Then more sweeps, and some downhill bumps and grinds. We were rocking, and I was rolling. Five miles to go, "Off Camber 90 left," I yelled. Remember we are also sans intercom. After a hidden right over crest, a flat 90 right at tee, and a 80 left open sweep. Three miles to go, and into a 180 degree closed hairpin right. It may have been a spectator area, I couldn't tell. So here I am fighting the car, the windshield, and my stomach, and I am still yelling GO!! Two miles to go and a 90 tee left. Some fast sweeps, and the we begin to win the battle of the windshield. About a quarter of the windscreen is now clear. One mile to go, an open 160 hairpin left, and then flat out GO!Go! Go!.

After the time control, we pull over. I take two or three minutes to be sick, although I was able to hold my breakfast in. We pulled a good time too. After a short drive to the service area, I take my "proper" motion sick medicine. I get out and try to fix the intercom. It wasn't getting power, but I found a loose connector a wire going to the battery. I cut it off, and put a new connector on it. Sure enough I turned on the intercom, and the power light came on. It works!!!!

I am feeling better after a little rest, and I actually eat something. Now I am feeling at least human. The rally restarts and we re-run Kamilche Ridge. As we pull up to the ATC, we check out the intercom, and it is dead. We started the defroster at this point, and I kept my window open a crack. The stage was the same, and we ran it pretty well.

Next was Coloquallum Ridge for the second time. This time the windshield did not fog up badly, and we were flying. Janice almost lost it at one point. I was calmly looking out the front windshield at the trees that are usually on Janice's side of the car. To see the road, I had to look out my side window. Janice's corrects a bit too much and we put one wheel into the ditch. Janice, has the wheel turned to pull us out of the ditch, but the horizon has about a 45 degree tilt to it, and getting steeper. I start to remind my self to put my hand on the roof to lower me down when I unhook my belts, "...'cause we are going over Jack!" Just as I start my "Oh", we hit this small clump of trees, which changes to "Oh-Ugh!" in response to the bump. One of them being a "friendly tree" not only holds us from going over, but kicks us back onto the road surface. I am going to have to find that tree, and give it a fertilizer stake or something. I say it here, "Thanks tree!" With the ditch

behind us, and the windshield relatively clear, we are running reasonably well. The minor crunch in the fender can be hammered out, no problem.

We then do Taylor Hill again, and this time I get to see the road. One last run at Kamilche, and we are done. We didn't know how we placed, but we knew we were fast. It did feel good. Many of the competitors thought the roads were really rough, but they were not half as bad as the Rallye Des Voyageurs I ran in 1994. I didn't think they were that bad.

The end of the first day, we end at the DooWop Diner, where the rally gets its name. After a bite to eat, good hamburgers, we drive the car back to PDE. The garage is being used by some of the rally folk, and we start swapping lies about the day. Greg Lund is working on Janice's old 510, which he is borrowing for the rally. When he hears about the intercom, he dives in. After a few minutes, they find the problem. It seems that whoever installed the intercom used the ground from the dome light. In Japanese cars like the Toyota, it is the ground not the power that is switched by the door switch. The intercom would always work with at least one door open. This problem fixed, and the fender hammered out, and we put the car away for the evening.

The next day, there were only four stages. The first stage was Alpine. This stage runs around the side of a mountain. The end of the stage is on the backside in a little valley about halfway between the start and the highest part reached on the road. We ran a good time, but Janice wasn't very happy with it. The stage started out slightly further in and higher up than it usually did according to Janice. In the beginning its mostly sweeps, of a fairly quick nature, but then tightens down to mostly 90 degree or more turns. You do many of elevation changes, and many turns are hidden over crests. There are open sweeps, with nothing but air to catch you if you go to wide, and a long way down 50 to 100 feet, I would guess. When you cross over to the back side of the mountain and begin down, the road begins to open up a bit. At the end, turn around, and wait for the stage to turn. Everybody gets out of their cars, and we stand around and chat, and watch the others come in. Mike Whitman and Kevin Linville provided entertainment to the assembled masses by changing a left rear tire. We put a watch on them, and they did it in okay time. Sorry guys, no offers from NASCAR have yet surfaced.

The stage turned and we roared the other way. Janice was cooking. We finished about 9 Seconds down from the leaders, and according to interim results had a good shot at the top five on the national.

Cedar Creek is the next stage, and Janice is not too happy with it. She has had bad luck on Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek is about 10 miles of stage. Compared to the previous day, it is flat, fast and dry. Right out of the starting gate we have an open 85 right. Then a fairly fast section and about a mile long straight. We crested the hill at about 100-110, when the 90 flat right turned a little quicker than the car did. So there we were in the ditch about 2.5 miles into the stage. I tried to push us out, we were stuck well and truly. So we waited about 26 minutes into our run for sweep to pull us out. Like Willie Neslon sings, "On the Road Again" the car was making funny noises on turns to the right. We were not alone on that stage. About three other cars were sitting in various positions of rest. We medium drove the stage, and went looking for our crew. Couldn't find them, they were looking for us. So we stopped again at Hugh and Crew. The left front and rear quarter panels were crunched. The left front wheel rim was bent, and the tire was low. I barely got out of the car when the front end was up, and someone was straightening the wheel with a hammer. Air in the tire, good as new. The back end went up, tire off, pounding out the sheet metal where it was rubbing. All before you could blink. In less than 5 minutes we were in service and on the road to Oakville, though town, and back to the stage. This last one we ran to finish. Our time was about 30-45 seconds down what it should have been.

Well, dead last, but we finished, and as Paul Henshall used to say, to finish first, first you must finish. We still ended up 2nd in class so that is a consolation. At the award ceremony which was also a fund-raiser for the food shelf in Oakland, Janice told the group, "This was Barry's first ride with me, and he told me he crashed more with me than in his own career. He also told me he has won more trophies with me than he has in his whole career." Its true, not bad for the first time out. Not bad for the start of my second year. It was a great time, and I do want to thank Janice and Ray Damitio, Greg Lund, and of course Hugh and Crew.

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