

The Baie-Des-Chaleurs Race - continued from page 9:

Next come the drivers meetings and so on which are followed by some great food, some liquid refreshment, then an early night as things are set to get moving early in the morning when we have to get the cars through technical inspection prior to the start of the race. Once the cars go through tech. inspection we move the cars to the Park Ferme', where you have no further access to them until the start of the rally, and definitely no alterations to anything prior to the start, not even to top up the fuel. Part of our job is to ensure that we overlook nothing as that could cost us the rally. Now, it is *hurry up and wait* time until the organizers get things underway. It is an opportunity for socialization between the competing crews and drivers, co-drivers, and as usual we get along well with each other. You would think being in Quebec that language would be a problem. But those willing to work around that little obstacle never seem to have a problem. After all, we're there for the cars, not the politics.

The Race Begins

One by one the cars are finally off, leaving at spaced intervals, so when all three in our team are gone, we head back to the pits to begin the wait until the first service stop. Almost immediately, there is word being spread that one car is already out. Then, more reports trickle in, and bit by bit we realize that it is Wim who is on the side of the road. At this point, we have nothing official yet, but some teams are in constant touch with their drivers via closed communication systems. There is very sketchy cell coverage in this area but this is now consistently the news we are hearing. We can do nothing as the car is on a closed section of the rally, and until the section is reopened to the public all we can do is wait.

Finally, both of the other team cars come in, are serviced and back on to the next stage. They have little to report other than they both passed Wim and Bryan at the side of the road but they looked OK, but they were only about 1/2 kilometre into the first stage of the rally. Bad luck that! Not that much later, Wim's car is delivered on the back of a flatbed, and the engine



Above: This shows the typical crowds out on the course as Graham's car passes. Photo by Marjorie Munroe.

teardown began while I was driving to the remote fuel stop. Meanwhile, Evan and I are off into the hills about forty five kilometres down some pretty bad excuses for roads, then even further off onto a bit of a logging road where we find some of the other teams lining-up to fuel their own cars. We are carrying fuel for four cars, one of which is from a different team, which means I have 200 litres of 109 octane racing fuel sloshing around in containers in the back of the truck. Do we have fire extinguishers on hand? You bet we do, and everything is lashed down pretty carefully as well.

Graham comes flying up to the fueling area, gets about forty litres, and is off again. Now the short wait until John gets here, except he does not show up on schedule - and still later he has not shown at all. Now we are beginning to worry. All the other teams are leaving, and soon we are on our own in the middle of nowhere. Still we wait, then the "sweep" finally shows up to give us the news that John is a further ten kilometres up the logging road with a broken tie rod. In short, no steering - as both front wheels were pointing in opposite directions without any way to make them work together. The "sweep", by the way, is a vehicle in which the occupants follow behind each race stage and ensure that each and every car is accounted for, and that those whose vehicle has broken down are ensured that they will inform their team members as to their status and location so that they can be recovered in a timely manner.

We abandoned John there and head back to the service area to make arrangements to rescue him and bring the car back to the service area - where we will be better able to assess the damage and hopefully fix it. There is no way to let John's team know we will rescue them, but having done this before, they will have to have faith in us based on prior experience. There is not much banter in the truck on the way back. See next month's Apsley Voice for the exciting conclusion of this story.

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