



27 August to
26 September 2023

ALASKA TO MEXICO MARATHON THE DAILY DISPATCH



Rally the Globe
VINTAGE AND CLASSIC CAR CLUB

Pre start & scrutineering Anchorage

27 August 2023



Photos: Marcus Rowe - gerardbrown.co.uk

Alaska - Mexico, two names on a map but by the time we've journeyed between them we'll have covered 12,000km and crossed 38 lines of latitude. From the chill fringes of the Arctic Circle to the warm embrace of the Tropic of Cancer.

Today, *Rally the Globe (RtG)* and almost 50 endurance rally crews, assembled in downtown *Los Anchorage* or *The City of Lights and Flowers*, for what is probably their most ambitious rally so far. To indicate what's to come over the next 30 days, this is the first event *RtG* have designated as a *Marathon*. The toughest of all, with long days and significant off-road sections to be enjoyed along the route.

The day before any big rally comes scrutineering occupying that liminal space between the everyday and the epic. Today is when the jet lag vanishes, the nervous tension disappears and the excitement ramps up.

Whilst the party may have just got underway, there is pre-start business to deal with. The cars need to be checked for safety and compliance by the sweep teams and the paperwork with associated rallying issues dealt with by the ever attentive on-event admin team. Naturally, for such a long event, there is a full compliment of both.

As usual, the mechanics are led by Andy Inskip, with Charlie Neale, Jamie Turner, Jack Amies and Russ Smith bringing their own box of tools. There was plenty for them to do as well. Keith Ashworth's Bentley had developed fuel

supply issues during its long sea crossing but, after some judicious tinkering, the car was running well. Neil Smith and Trevor Skillen's Sunbeam Tiger was not roaring and, as well as the sweeps, there was a crew of friendly locals pitching-in to sort what is feared to be a lubrication issue deep within the engine.

Loren Price, Gill Cotton and Ian Tullie took charge of the paperwork. As each crew finished signing-on and left the Rally Office, the navigators were almost lost beneath the huge stack of maps and roadbooks that will be their constant companions over the next month.

Newcomer to the team, David Harris, handed out GPS tracking beacons, instructing the competitors in their operation. Dr John Llewellyn and Sarah Ormerod, the on event medics, were also on hand dispensing sage advice on how to stay well for the duration. Briefings were given by Mark Appleton, the Clerk of the Course, and Fred Gallagher, the Rally Director, who, with help from local girl Sarah Ormerod, has put together much of the route.

"It really is the ultimate rally and to finish it will be a great challenge and an achievement for the competitors and the organising team. We'll see some amazing wildlife, enjoy incredible scenery along some wonderful roads, with of course - lots of gravel.

It's fantastic to see so many old friends and new faces here in Anchorage, a great group of over a hundred like-minded people in fifty cars, all excited to get going on what is sure to be the adventure of a lifetime."



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Day 1 Anchorage to Fairbanks (618.4km)

28 August 2023

It was an early start when Fred Gallagher sounded *Le Réveil* and dispatched the cars with a dignified sweep of his Old Glory, at a very damp and drizzly 7.31am. A Test and a Regularity were on the schedule today, getting the show on the road and some scores on the doors. We'd also reach the most northerly point of the Rally and enjoy spectacular scenery through the Denali State Park alongside the Nenana River.



Graham and Marina Goodwin and their 1927 Bentley 4½ Le Mans



A Raceway start to the adventure, Steve and Jenny Verrall, 1965 Porsche

65km from the start, an easy run down the highway, Jim Smith and Dr John Llewellyn got the first Test of the 2023 *Alaska to Mexico Marathon* underway at the suitably named Alaska Raceway. The crews were able to blow away any cobwebs under a dramatic backdrop of threatening clouds and imposing mountains.

In yesterday's briefing Fred Gallagher promised a lot of gravel and, true to his word, a long Regularity section of the loose stuff followed within an hour. It led the cars through the Talkeetna Mountains and over the 1184m Hatcher Pass towards the first Time Control at the Sheep Creek Lodge. The Pass itself is a remote and wild place giving Gill and John Cotton a full sub arctic experience as they chipped and logged each timcard. The Lodge, in contrast, is snug and warm and proved to be just the place for the crews to take on some lunchtime refreshment. Manuel Dubs digestion was not helped by needing to rebuild his carburettor.

Two Passage Controls were strategically placed along the

afternoon's route. The first one was aptly named the Denali View and the second was at the unique premises of the 49th State Brewing Company, the original bus from *Into the Wild* took centre stage in the garden.

Pike's Waterfront Lodge in Fairbanks is our billet tonight. Over dinner it seemed that everyone had a story to tell about what has been a thoroughly impressive first day. It became clear that Manuel and Irene Dubs knew a thing or two about carburettors because, despite (or maybe because of) their lunchtime labours, they finished the day leading the Vintage Category whilst Ean and Alison Lewin took an early lead in the Classics.

Sadly, Neil and Thomas Smith missed the fun today. Despite the best efforts of the sweeps and band of willing locals, their Sunbeam Tiger was unable to make the start. But the never say die crew have arranged for an engine builder to fly out to Anchorage to begin the necessary repairs and they hope to join us again in a few days.



Testing out the gravel, John and Daisy Pyle, 1939 Chevy Coupe



Photos: Marcus Rowe - gerardbrown.co.uk



Danny Day and Matthew Bryson, 1975 Pontiac Trans Am



Leading the Classics at the end of day 1, Ean and Alison Lewin, 1973 Ford Escort RS1600



All part of a Marathon rally, Manuel Dubs works on the 1940 Ford Coupe



Stephen Lambert checks the 1935 Ford Fordor 48 Sedan



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Rally & Globe
VINTAGE AND CLASSIC CAR CLUB

Day 2 Fairbanks to Dawson City (635km)

29 August 2023



Tim Eades and Jim McLaren, 1971 Ford Escort

After the nerves of the first day, today was all about settling into the rally rhythm - albeit one with a border and two Regularities.

However, John and Daisy Pyle's Chevy coupé hadn't read the memo and the crew reported a loss of oil pressure after 40km. Thankfully Andy Inskip and Jack Amies, who arrived on scene soon afterwards, diagnosed nothing more serious than a faulty sensor. They headed off to the Tanana River Passage Control which made sure everyone was on the right track for the Big Delta Regularity. This gravel section ran through thick woodland and featured a series of sharp turns with plenty of loose shale to keep the drivers happy.

Coffee was taken in the Alaskan Steak House where the sweep crew of Russ Smith and Jamie Turner had set up their Time Control. In between watching the clocks and signing the timecards they enjoyed the hearty fayre on offer and dealt with whatever mechanical mishap came their way.

The cool weather, and an early breakfast, meant that the crews were getting hungry and Fast Eddy's Passage Control showed the rally the way to lunch at the Control in the

Chicken Gold Camp & Outpost. This is a small settlement that's big on hospitality and gave us all something to smile about. The gift shop does a roaring trade in all things poultry and there won't be a kitchen amongst us that doesn't sport an "I've been laid in Chicken" fridge magnet or maybe a cheeky chicken tea towel.

The run for the border Regularity was another section of gravel which rose towards the hills and was the beginning of the end of day two. The MTC was only a few kilometres further down the road at the Boundary Airport. From here the rally was free to concentrate on getting to Poker Creek and obtaining the right stamps in their passports. The frontier, which sits at a chilly 1,258m, was straightforward and, with our clocks adjusted by one hour, we arrived in Canada the world's second biggest country by land mass and home to both Mounties and maples.

Our destination was Dawson City, a living museum, that holds onto its old-world charm. En-route we were treated to a panoramic extravaganza along the Top of the World Highway before boarding the George Black ferry and crossing the mighty Yukon River. This immense waterway was once the Rubicon of the Klondike Gold Rush, its deep,



John Henderson and Jeff West, 1968 MG BGT

Photos: Marcus Rowe - gearthruvr.co.uk

fast waters presented a formidable obstacle to the '49ers desperate to reach the goldfields of the north.

Whilst our passage was somewhat easier than in yesteryear, this final section threw up a storm of biblical proportions, with rain, hail and lightning filling our windscreens. With everyone safely down from the mountains and across the river, we converged on the Downtown Hotel where the famous Sourtoe ceremony is held. Guests are invited to take a stiff drink containing the amputated toe of a long dead bootlegger, before being presented with a certificate to prove they've met the terms of this ancient rite: *"You can drink it fast, you can drink it slow, but your lips have gotta touch the toe."*

Thankfully dinner, held in the Palace Theatre, was less cannibalistic. Afterwards the crews were free to wander the boardwalks and soak up the unique architecture and ambiance of the one-time capital of the Yukon.



Photos: Marcus Rowe - gerardbrown.co.uk



Jim Gately and Tony Brooks, 1937 Cadillac 60 series



Clint Smith and Martin Jones, 1925 Bentley 3/4



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Day 3 Dawson City to Whitehorse (655km)

30 August 2023

Photos: gerardbrown.co.uk



Dawson had been awesome, but all good things come to an end. Immediately after a *Jack London* style breakfast we tore ourselves away from the dubious pleasures of the Klondike Kate and Flora Dora Hotel and rolled down one of Gordon Lightfoot's Carefree Highways towards Whitehorse.

Yukon Territory is indeed "larger than life". According to some roadside information we are on the eastern edge of Beringia, the geological term for the landmass stretching from eastern Siberia through Alaska to the Yukon. Whatever it's called the scale of this landscape is truly immense and we had two Regularities and some well-placed Time Controls to fill it with.

The first Regularity hit us right out of Dawson. Bear Right section rolled through disused gold mining territory along the Bonanza Creek Road. For over 30km we had it to ourselves to enjoy the countless loose corners and impressive landscape, up and over the hills and down towards the Stewart River. Unfortunately, Jeff Urbina and Chris Pike's Belair didn't get this far. Its rear axle gave up soon after the start and the crew are having the car shipped home. They are hoping to join us later with another vehicle.

Following the fun and games of the once gilded section, it was back onto the highway for the long, fast run into the Time Control at Stewart Crossing. Fred Gallagher and Sarah Ormerod signed the crews out at their correct time to enjoy the run down the Klondike Highway towards the

Pelly River and its famous crossing, before slotting neatly into the Frenchman's Lake Regularity.

This was another gravel section par excellence, running for 32km over mixed terrain, with sandy sections, rocky sections and even some smooth well graded ones. Thanks to sitting on the dry side of a mountain range there were bucketfuls of dust hanging in the trees after we'd passed. This is bear country and whilst confirmed sightings have been few and far between, the sharp eyed Anthony and Sonja Verloop managed to provide photographic proof today of their ursine encounter.

As the day drew to a close, there was a chance for the crews to take on a little refreshment at the Passage Control at the Carmacks Hotel before the final stretch into Whitehorse. It wasn't coffee and cakes for everyone though, Kilian Kozka and Jean Paulo Scorzo's Mercedes had endured a "slow but steady puncture all day". By the time they reached Carmacks they'd had enough of the problem and rang ahead to arrange four new tyres for the end of the day. Jack Amies and Andy Inskip were busy in the car park fitting a new brake pipe to Richard Lee Harman and Winston Conyers Ford Model A. The original had rubbed through and lost its fluid some 258km ago and Lee was left nursing the old car into the parking lot for attention.

This evening we're in Whitehorse, the very cosmopolitan Capital of Yukon. After freshening up in the Gold Rush Inn, the rally headed out to explore the dozens of restaurants, bars and street food stalls which lined the streets alongside the same river we left this morning.



Carl and Peter Helmetag, 1970 Volvo 131



Stephen Hardwick and Ashley Bennett, 1970 Datsun 240Z



Michael Kershaw and Christopher Mallett, 1981 Land Rover Range Rover



Richard Lee and Thomas Harman, 1931 Ford Model A Victoria



Fritz and Gabriele Kozka, 1978 Porsche 924



Tony Rowe and Mark Delling, 1939 Ford DeLuxe V8 91A Coupe



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Day 4 Whitehorse to Watson Lake (527.5km)

31 August 2023

Whitehorse, the Wilderness City, was a chilly 5°C this morning with clear skies. It was shaping up to be another good day with two Regularities, a Test and miles of the stunning Alaska Highway to enjoy. The action started within 8km of booking out of Andy Inskip's MTC in the hotel lobby at 7.30am.

One team, Nick and Serita Sleep, had an earlier start. They'd needed to find somewhere to have the rear suspension mounts of their Mercedes screwed back together after one of their shock absorbers broke loose some 24 hours earlier. This would delay them for most of the day and they rolled into the night halt just in time for dinner.

The first Regularity, called Where the Fox At, was all gravel when Fred and Sarah drove it on the recce. However, the relentless march of progress meant by the time we got there today almost half of it had been paved. Nonetheless, it was a good way to ease into the day and it dropped us neatly onto the highway and in the right direction for the Carcross Desert Passage Control. This was real bucket and spade territory and, despite the fact that the 2.6km² of sand isn't a real desert, the series of dunes gave a surreal Dakar flavour to the morning.

The second Regularity - confusingly called The First Resort - was the day's star turn. It took the cars deep into a section of ancient woodland along a track barely wide



Photos: gerardbrown.co.uk

Ivan Pusnik and Boris Gruzman, 1973 SAAB 99



James Grayson and Simon Spinks, 1969 Ford Escort Mexico



Phillip and Lyndy Blunden, 1964 Holden EH Special



Four of seven Mercedes with us: Anthony and Sonja Verloop, 1968 280 SE



Otakar Chládek and Jindřiška Žemličková, 350 SL



Gerd Bühler and Janine Franssen, 1979 450 SLC



Andreas Honegger and Peter Kruse, 1973 280 CE

enough for Jim Gately's Cadillac. There were ruts, boulders, and roots aplenty over the 4km and once again the dust of the previous cars hung in the air like a veil. There wasn't much in the way of navigating - this was very much a one-way street - but keeping the car to the correct average speed was quite a challenge.

The mid-morning Time Control at the Southern Lakes Resort was an oasis of calm after the dry and dusty morning. Sat on the terrace overlooking the beautiful Lake Tagish the crews were able to compare notes, enjoy a light buffet and interact with some of the critters who scampered about the grounds looking for stray crumbs. Brian and Catherine Scowcroft's Chevy Fangio damaged a brake drum not long after leaving Southern Lakes. But, thanks to prompt attention from Andy Inskip and Jack Amies, it was able to continue until the night halt where the sweep crews put it all back together.

From here the next task was to get to lunch 145km further along the road at the Yukon Motel on the shores of Lake Teslin. Here the cars were filled with gas, and crews were filled with beef stew and cornbread, to fuel them up ready for the short, sharp, Morley's Test a mere 35km away. Jim Smith and Dr John Llewellyn sent the cars into the fray, whilst Ian Tullie and Chris Mills manned the cones and stopped the clocks. Tim Eades and Jim McLaren's Ford Escort sadly didn't make it this far, having ground to a halt shortly after lunch. It became clear that it needed a new gearbox and car and crew are back in Whitehorse tonight - we're hoping we'll see them again soon.

Watson Lake put on a fine dinner this evening. There were many tales, but none to beat Nick and Serita Sleep's who had managed to find someone in Whitehorse to machine a pair of exquisite suspension mounting brackets for their Mercedes to see them right through to Cabo and beyond.



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Day 5 Watson Lake to Fort Nelson (515 km)

1 September 2023

photos: gearatdown.co.uk



Claudine Bloom and Andrew Twort, 1965 Volvo Amazon 120



Roy and Rachel Stephenson, 1965 Ford Mustang

Despite the signs proclaiming that Watson Lake is the gateway to the Yukon - north of ordinary - today we're leaving this rugged region, for the delights of Beautiful British Columbia. The self-proclaimed best place on earth.



Not to be outdone by last night's excellent Community Hall dinner, Andrea's Hotel put on a superb breakfast buffet featuring the rarest of northern commodities - platters of fresh fruit - along with grilled bacon and the usual assortment of eggs. It was shaping up to be another beautiful day, but the seasons are definitely changing. Entering September, the atmosphere along the Alaska Highway is transitioning from late summer to early Autumn; the sun sits a little lower in the sky, and the acres of trees are taking on a golden hue. Sadly some pockets of autumnal mist lying across the hills were tinged with wood-smoke thanks to the recent wildfires that have ravaged the area.

There were three Tests today taking the cars off the modern highway and onto some of the older tracks winding their way through this huge interior and the Northern Rockies. The first, The Compromise, comprised a few 90° turns and a pirouette before a full gas blast up a hill. It was breathless stuff, guaranteed to raise a smile. Soon afterwards a windy Coal River service station hosted the morning Time Control complete with welcome coffee and homemade cookies. The second Test - Salt Lick - shot the cars up a narrow track, over a blind summit, with an uphill hairpin finish towards the waiting clocks of John and Gill Cotton.



Christopher and Kathleen Grace, 1938 Chevrolet Fangio Coupe

Another awesome highway section led us to the lunch Time Control at the Northern Rockies Lodge for steaming bowls of goulash and a chance to sit on the porch and drink in the surroundings. Then it was along the banks of the Liard River to Muncho Lake, through the Provincial Park and past the folded Mountain, down to the third and final Test around McDonald Creek. This was undoubtedly the best of the day, with enough changes of direction, loose gravel and chicanes to make everyone feel like a rally champion.

When we finally rejoined the main road warning signs asked us to look out for wildlife. Some of us were lucky enough to see a family of bears ambling through the bushes as we dropped towards Fort Nelson alongside the Tetsa and the Muskwa Rivers.

After a late night yesterday the sweeps had a fairly light day with only a few minor issues. Ivan Pusnik and Boris Gruzman's Saab had a coolant leak that needed plugging, Mike and Lorna Harrison's Volvo had a window needing some attention and the headlamp switch on Philip and Lynda Blunden's Holden wanted soldering back together.

There's a feeling that we're coming out of the wilderness now. The Woodlands Inn and Suites in Fort Nelson, our host this evening, did an excellent job of looking after us with great food, well-stocked bar and a functioning laundromat!



Adrian and Christine Hodgson, 1955 Austin A90 Westminster



Mike and Lorna Harrison 's 1959 Volvo PV544 had a window issue



David and Jo Roberts, 1929 Chrysler 75 Roadster



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Day 6 Fort Nelson to Dawson Creek (565km)

2 September 2023

Like thousands of Canadians over the last few months we woke to a haze of woodsmoke. Yesterday's wind had fanned the embers of a fire in the next valley back to life. Thankfully the authorities had the situation in hand, so we didn't have to reroute the big distances, three Regularities and Test on the schedule today.

First up was the Railway Arrivals Regularity. Having requisitioned a live airfield for a Test during the 2019 *Southern Cross Safari*, Fred Gallagher pushed the envelope again by sending the cars down a railway line. The timetable revealed latecomers would need to give way to the Yukon Mail Express. Richard Lee Harman and Winston Conyers missed the train completely for an appointment with a tyre fitter, whilst the rest of the rally clattered on down the tracks, through the Northern Rockies. After



Tobias and Silvia Koenig, 1972 Porsche 911

Photos: getaradown.co.uk



Keith and Norah Ashworth, 1927 Bentley 4½ Le Mans

having our tickets punched, we ran down the 97 past the Kwadacha provincial park teeming with bears, wolves and lemmings towards the Time Control and lunch at the Buffalo Inn in Pink Mountain.



Russ Smith and Jamie Turner had arrived earlier to set up the clocks and checksheets. They had just enough time to finish a bowl of beef and barley stew before Roy and Rachel Stephenson arrived looking for help for their Mustang's steering wheel that had recently detached. Roy had lashed things together sufficiently to get them into the car park before quite literally handing things over to the sweeps, leading some to comment that, whilst it's a lovely car, the nut behind the wheel needed sorting out.

The second Regularity, along a 30km chunk of Gundy Road, managed to be both slightly muddy and bone dry. Choking dust made it a difficult section and loose gravel made sticking to the average speed tricky. However, the third Regularity alongside Inga Lake was slightly less demanding, nonetheless the crews needed to be on their mettle as the dirt road rose and fell through the thick woodland.

Once out of the trees there was a quick blast down the highway to the Northern Lights Raceway. Part airfield, part dragstrip, according to TJ the facilities manager, *"the coolest event ever just happened here"*. More used to jet aircraft and drag cars, the *"RtG run what you brung rallycross"* test gave them something to add to their social-media pages.



Thomas Stern and Frank Bertram, 1972 Porsche 924

From here it was straight down the 97 to the night halt and first rest day. Other than the loose steering wheel over lunch, today's mechanical issues seemed to be confined to fluid management. Steve and Ruth Lambert's Ford is leaking oil but the feeling is that as long as he keeps an eye on it, all will be fine. Jim Gately's Cadillac is losing a lot of water but again, with regular top ups, it should be OK. Ivan Pusnik and Boris Gruzman's Saab's turbo mysteriously lost its cooling fluid late last night so, just as the rest of us were tucking into our beds, Jamie Turner and Russ Smith were tackling a complicated plumbing job. Their efforts meant the car made it through today without further incident.

Tonight, we're in Dawson Creek at Mile Zero of the Alaska Highway. A significant point at the end of our first week of rallying which, unofficially at least, ends the northern chapter of the *Alaska to Mexico Marathon*.



Brian and Catherine Scowcroft, 1936 Chevrolet Fangio Coupe



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Rally & Globe
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Day 7 Dawson Creek Rest Day

3 September 2023

There's nothing like retreating to an air-conditioned hotel after a day in the dust. The Pomeroy Suites in Downtown Dawson Creek proved to be just the ticket.



Rest days are traditionally a day for sorting and fixing. Today was no different save for the fact that the sweep teams had requisitioned a local garage to deal with some of the more pressing repair jobs. Adrian Hodgson and Christopher Grace's Austin and Chevy had rubbed against each other a little too closely. The former was having its bodywork buffed a little, whilst the latter was lashing together the manifold to get them over the border where an obliging friend will deliver the necessary spares. The Chevy itself is a seasoned campaigner so the crew are confident that it will see them right. Steven and Midori Hitchins' Ford Mustang Shelby needed its tracking sorted. Many needed to blow out their air filters and scoop out as much dust as possible from every nook and cranny.

This afternoon a BBQ was arranged by Richard Lee Harman, Winston Conyers and the Rotary Club at the Pioneer Village in Dawson Creek. In this living history museum crews took the opportunity to get to know the community better and enjoy the displays of vintage farm machinery, classic cars and early domestic paraphernalia. As with most rest days the crews were also free to sort out their own dining arrangements but, after such a good midday feed, many opted for an early night.



Crumpled, but here: Adrian and Christine Hodgson's Austin A90



Tracking sorted: Steven and Midori Hitchins' Ford Mustang Shelby GT 350

Photos: gerardbrown.co.uk