

Montana 500 Newsletter

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Montana Cross Country T Assn.
1004 Sioux Road
Helena, MT 59602

www.montana500.org

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Membership dues \$10.00
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Cover photo: 2015 flyer.

If you have a photo that you would like to see on the cover of the Montana 500 newsletter, please send it to: montana500@antiqueautoranch.com and I'll see what I can do!



President's Propaganda

Time is short! The excitement builds! Most of us have begun our last-minute preparations. I hope everyone is able to get everything to their liking in plenty of time.

At one of the annual Montana 500 meetings, someone once said something to the effect that it was silly to have a rule that could not be enforced. Rule A9 says: "Drivers must drive at or below posted speed limits." Last year we got a radar gun to help us enforce

this rule. I was a little dubious about how this might work out, but I think, and I think most others involved think, that it worked out well. This year we will have two radar guns at our disposal. What if your T doesn't have a speedometer? Well, I don't believe that you are required to have a speedometer, but you are required to drive under the speed limit. If you can do that without a speedo, great. My advice, however, is to rig up some sort of speedo, such as a bike speedo or even simpler, buy a GPS. They are not too expensive and work well. Most will even power off of six volts.

Between Cuffe and Stormo and me, we have driven all of the roads on this year's run. Stormo and I put 1200 miles into this effort. The route is pretty straight forward I think. I will talk a little more about this later in the newsletter. If I can get enough volunteers, I am going to try something new. I plan to have a rolling flag in and out. Sort of like a caution flag at Indy. We will have timers time you out at the yellow flag, but you continue on without stopping (at the speed limit) until the green flag, where you will be timed back in, and away you go!

Dick Bergan's Block (a case study)

I recently came across the block out of Dick Bergan's 1971 Montana 500 winning car, allowing a rare opportunity to study an artifact from the past. I looked for things that Dick may have done to improve his motor.

First a little history of Dick Bergan's car. Over the years I have talked to Dick, and Grant Lundin, who was his trouble truck driver and to Rick Carnegie, who was Dick's tear down helper. Dick bought a lot of parts from Grant Lundin to build the car. On the day before they were to leave for the 1968 run, (Dick's first year) the car wasn't finished and Dick was ready to throw in the towel. Grant was sure that it could be made ready, and after pulling an all-nighter, the car got finished and off they went. Dick's car was a 1925ish cut-off touring with a turtle deck. It had early straight style fenders. All of the body wood had been replaced with tubing, which was fairly common on Montana 500 cars then. The motor was a 1917 that Dick had gotten from Grant. This early "cranker" engine, as Grant called it, would later be a bone of contention between Grant and Dick. The 1968 run was held out of Dillon, with

the first leg from Dillon to Missoula, which goes up over the Continental Divide. Dick was the sixth car out and had passed everyone. At that time each car would spend the same amount of time at each time-out break, so your lead or lag accumulated as the day went on. By the end of the day the fastest car could be hours ahead of the slowest car. Dick continued to build his lead and somewhere between Missoula and Polson, his head broke. Without telling anyone he loaded up his broken car and headed straight home. I guess after a while the timers and such figured out that he was never going to arrive and the run continued without him.

As it turned out, apparently Dick hadn't read the rules too well. Here is rule 6. from 1968 *"Only model 'T' rear end, axles and standard eleven tooth pinion, and forty tooth ring gear allowed."* Dick had a ten tooth pinion which gave him a huge advantage in the hills.

When Dick got home he went to pay Grant for the motor, and Grant charged him what seemed to Dick to be an exorbitant fee. Dick was over a barrel and paid it, but Grant and Dick's friendship was soured forever. I talked to Dick about it some years later and he thought that Grant was "holding him up". I

asked Grant about this some years later, and he said that Dick took a rare and valuable block and what he charged Dick was a fair price for a “cranker” motor. So, there are two sides to every story.

1969 was held out of Shelby. At the end of the first day Dick was in first place. On the second day, it rained. Dick's coil box got flooded and that cost him a lot of time. The story goes that he borrowed a brace and bit from a railroad section gang and drilled a hole into the bottom of his coil box to let the water out. The time sheet from 1969 shows him taking an hour penalty on the second day. He finished 15th averaging about 41 miles per hour.

In 1970 Dick returned. There are a couple of write-ups of the 1970 run in *Road and Track* and *Rod and Custom* magazines. These are on the Montana 500 website if you haven't seen them. Dick had trouble with his timer and lost some time early in the run. He wound up in second place. At that time the top three cars were torn down. Apparently the judges had some issues with Dick's car that fell into the “don't bring it back next year” category, but did not penalize him otherwise.

In 1971, everything came together for Dick. He came in first and passed the tear down. There are couple of anecdotes about the tear down that I heard. Dick polished all of the flashings off of his front axle and cut sections out of the I-beam to lighten it. One of the drivers objected to this as not being “stock”. “Oh yes!” says one of the drivers from Montana. “I saw a picture of a stock Torpedo Roadster that had a cut out axle like that.” This testimonial from a Montana driver quelled all opposition to this. Another issue was the fact that Dick had similarly polished the flashings off of the I-beams of his connecting rods. His explanation was that he did that to balance the rods. This got him past the tear down, but caused a rule change the next year.

Over the years I have talked to Dick Bergan about the Montana 500. He usually says a couple of curious things. One is, “Yeah, I milled 3/8” off of my head and 3/8” off of my block. I have measured his block and as near as I can tell it appears to have about .100” milled off of the top. Another thing he would say is: “I got in there with a wire brush on a drill and cleaned all of the carbon out of my ports.” Well, he cleaned a good deal more than carbon. Picture 1 is picture of Dick's ports. Picture 2 is a normal model T motor.



Picture 1.



Picture 2.

In 1971 they didn't have a seat port gauge.
The seat port gauge we use today will pass
into Dick's block. See picture 3.



Picture 3.

The side ports were “ovaled out”. The
gauge wouldn't pass, but as you can see in
picture 4, there is a gap on the edges of the
ports.

Here is the way the rule about ports was
written in 1971:

**“No grinding of the intake or exhaust
manifolds or of the ports allowed. Must
be stock dimension which is 1-1/8 inch”**



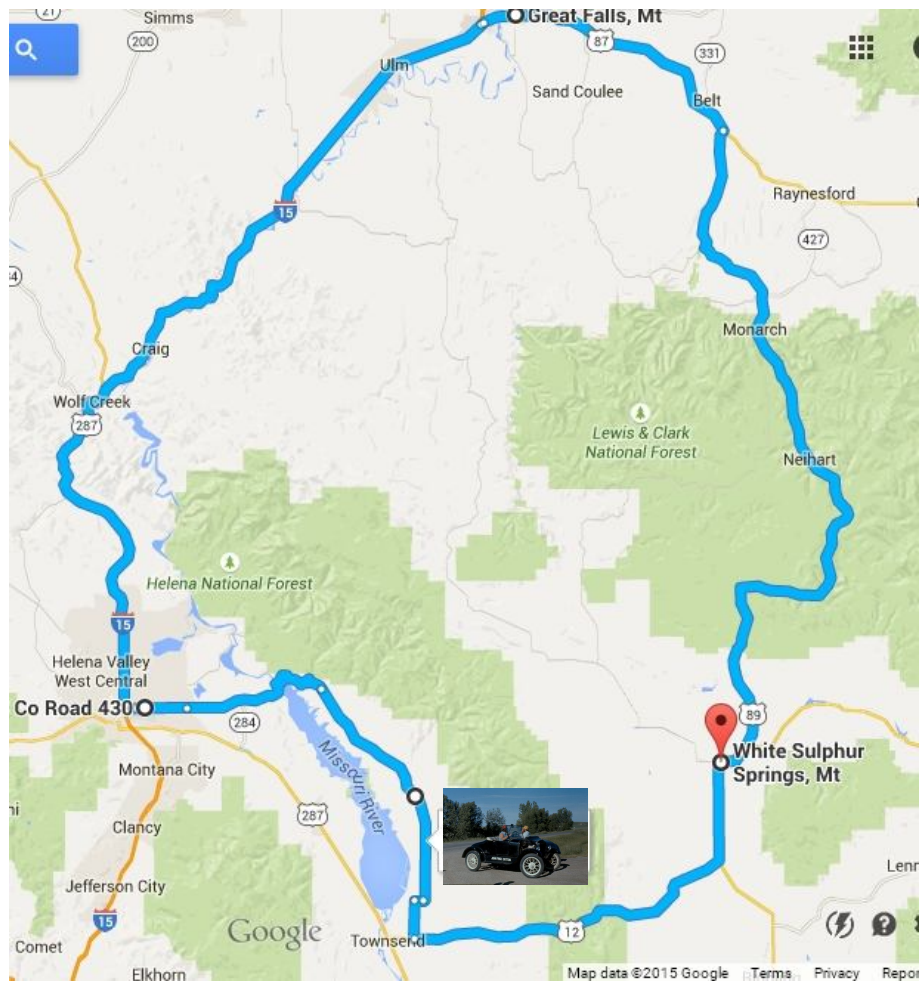
Picture 4.

Dick said he wanted the inspectors to see stars when they opened up his motor. They did!



2015 Routes

Day one: We will draw numbers for a random flag out. We will leave an hour after the tour cars leave. This should give them time to get out of the way before we get to highway 284. Flag-out from the south of White Sulphur Springs on Highway 89. Then to Highway 12. Take it easy on Highway 12. It is single lane and quite winding. It also has a narrow shoulder. At the flashing light turn right (north) onto Highway 284. If we have enough timers, we will do a rolling time out at the speed zone. We will time back in at the end of the speed zone. We will flag out at the next speed zone on Canyon Ferry road. Proceed to the gas station. For leg two, we will flag out onto the Canyon Ferry I-15 on ramp and head to Great Falls. We will lunch at Great Falls. After lunch we will head out toward Belt to avoid the construction on the edge of Great Falls. We will meet up at the truck stop at the intersection of Highway 87 and 89. We will flag out across the street and head up over King's Hill. Be careful on King's hill. It is very steep and there are no guard rails. We will flag in on Highway 12 about three miles from White Sulphur Springs.

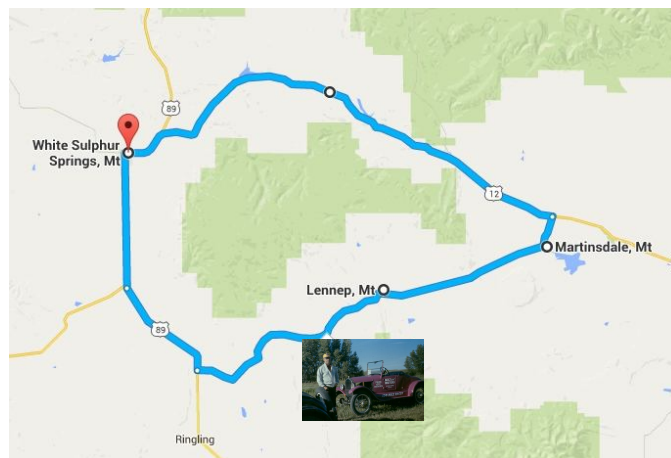


Day two: We will line up in reverse order of day one. Fastest car out last.

We will flag out on Highway 12 and head to Harlowton. Flag in and gas up at Harlowton. Flag out will be on Highway 191. We will head south to Big Timber. Continue right on through Big Timber to I-90 and head toward Livingston. The timers will flag us in at the second Livingston exit. Eat lots and lots of food for lunch. Gas up and head to Highway 191. We will flag out just north of I-90. Back to White Sulphur Springs.



Day three: Fastest car out first. We will do a big loop. We will head south on Highway 89. At Highway 12 stay on 89. About eight miles south of Highway 12 look for Highway 294. Turn left onto 294. When you get to Highway 12 turn left and head back to White Sulphur Springs. We will give instructions at the run as to where to meet for the tear-down.



This should all work out barring construction or some other monkey-wrench. If we get blind-sided, we will improvise! Be prepared to hang loose.

See you at White Sulphur Springs.

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