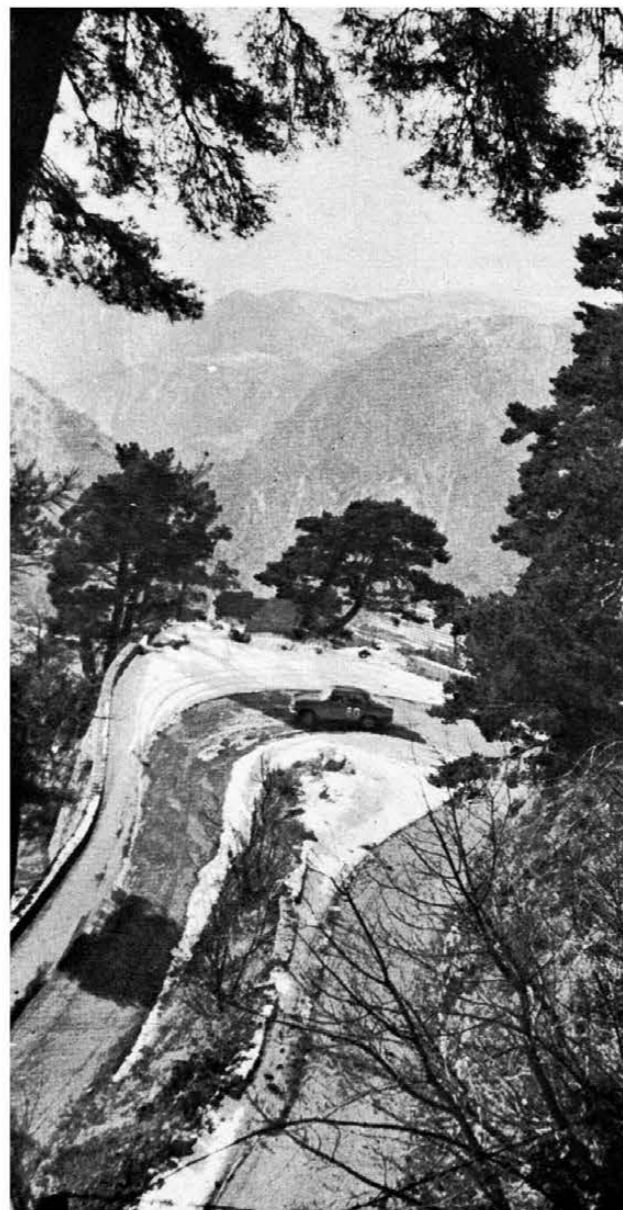


# Mountain Madness

*Trophies were secondary; the trick was to finish*



Author and co-driver, Doug Kennedy, beside badly dented but roadworthy TR3



Scenic roads by day, hazardous at night when snow covered.

"NOW what am I supposed to do?" "Get the hell off of my head and let's try to turn the car right-side up!"

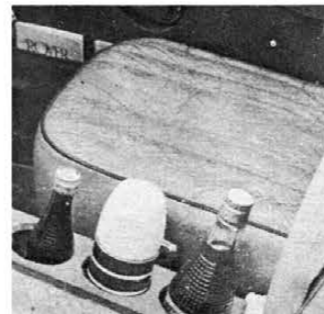
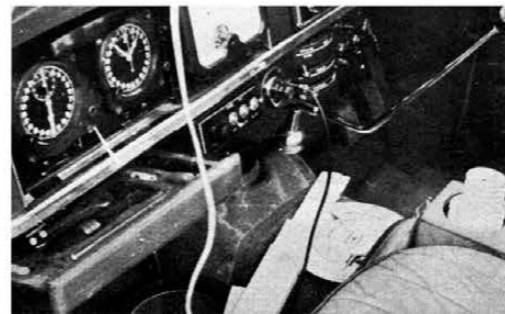
A few minutes before, I thought we'd had it when we bounced off an ice-covered snow bank, flipped the car over, and sped on upside down, like a bobsled. Though it wasn't the end it was surely the climax of our trip from Paris to Monte Carlo in car #305.

It all started when Doug Kennedy and I decided that we wanted more than just the American navigational challenge rallies. These were not hairy enough for us. With our superior navigation and our great skill as drivers, we were going over to show them. *Sure* we were.

When we learned that we were to be the only Americans competing, the responsibility of defending the blue and white lay heavy and we made the most careful preparations possible. We selected a new TR 3, and as it turned out this was the wisest choice we could have made. It is a rugged car that can be flogged, yet it will continue as though nothing happened. In our class we were driving against Porsches and Volvos, and the Triumph survived them both. It was of great help that the factory was behind us and the car was specially prepared for the rally. Nor was it the factory's fault that out of seven specially-prepared TR 3s only Gastonides' finished, and he was side-swiped by a snow plow, arriving at the last checkpoint with what looked like half a car. Triumph still took first and third in its class.

The Monte Carlo Rally has a reputation as one of the softer competitions as far as European rallies go, and the outcome is usually decided by gimmicky tests after the road run is finished. This year, the officials decided to make it different. The starting points remained unchanged; Athens, Lisbon, Oslo, Rome, The Hague, Glasgow, Munich and Paris. The routes were planned so that all were about 2,000 miles, or about 49 hours drive to Monaco. After a rest of 6 hours or so at Monte Carlo, there would be another 600 miles (or about 17 hours) of a high speed regularity run on the so-called mountain circuit. Fifty-nine cars out of the 342 starters finished the first road course: out of these, only 21 survived the mountain circuit. Naturally, not to embarrass any of our friends who were in the majority, neither did we.

Now, to show what kind of a run this



Unrecognizable, this is a Monte Carlo Rallye-equipped Rover.

# Monte Carlo 1958

By Robert Halmi

was, and give all sorts of excuses why we let our colors down: we arrived in Paris and checked into the Mercedes Hotel, which was completely taken over by the Triumph drivers among whom were John Waddington, the British rally champion; Paddy Hopkirk, the Irish rally champion; Gastonides, the Monte Carlo champion; and Tiny Lewis, one of the best rally and racing drivers in England. We soon became friendly with the rest of the team, and we spent most of the time in rally talk.

The start from the center of Paris was done in the complete French manner. Champagne was doled out to everyone, and a minute before the start a surprise package was put into each car—a bottle of cognac, presumably for 'happy motoring.' We took a last minute check of our equipment, and set our Halda at 78 kph. Since we had to maintain between 60 kph and 80 kph, we knew we had to maintain a high average speed to reach Monte Carlo unpenalized. Between Paris and Monte Carlo, there would be 15 check points, and in order to shave extra time, we decided on the 78 kph Halda average. This is roughly 47 mph. Averaging this speed through Paris would be difficult at any time, but this was the rush hour and the pedestrians had the great advantage. After the first few numbered cars sped through the Paris streets, the Parisians got into the swing of things. The gendarmes at the intersections stopped all traffic and waved us through, while crowds on the sidewalks shouted words of encouragement. Doug and I were sure we heard the strains of the Marseillaise in the background. All in all, when we reached the outskirts of Paris, we were in high spirits but 14 minutes late. To get back on time I had to test the TR's speed. I got it up to 150 kph (about 100 mph), and held it there until the Halda reading co-ordinated.

It was quite a thrill going through the little French towns. All the gendarmes and villagers lined the road screaming at us to go faster. We sped by quite a few drivers who chose to drive at a lower average speed, and Doug and I smugly exchanged understanding smiles.

Without any exciting incidents, we arrived at our first check point, Chaumont, with enough time for a quick dinner, a glass of wine and a dexidine. As they stamped our road book, the officials gave a mild warning that the fun was just about to begin. The weather reports were not favorable and the condition of the roads

(Continued on page 56)



Whenever possible, local gendarmes gave the Go sign.

Tight turns with steep drop offs made for careful driving even in daylight.

Roads were lined by disabled cars, like this DS19, that didn't make a bend.



342 starters; 59 finishers; of these, an additional 38 were knocked out by the treacherous Mountain Circuit.



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**Monte Carlo**

(Continued from page 25)

ahead could not be determined, but light snow had begun to fall. The townspeople, gathered around to greet us laden with bread, cheeses and wine, and tried to help by describing some of the bad spots that we would be encountering in the next hundred miles. We took none of this too seriously. So a little snow was falling; that's what we expected on this rally, and we were well prepared for it!

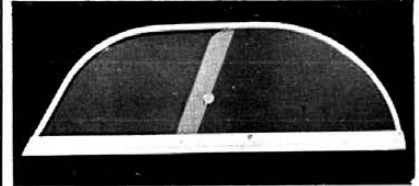
As we started getting higher in the mountains, the snow began falling harder and we found ourselves in the middle of a winter wonderland. We didn't realize it, but at this altitude, snow had been packing for weeks and most of the roads never saw a snow plow. Doug kept asking about my capability and experience as a snow-driver, and I kept assuring him that in my younger days I did nothing else but practice on the mountain roads of Tarta in Hungary in preparation for just such an event as this. Nevertheless, he kept giving pointers. I was certain that if we survived this night together we would be friends forever.

In some places the snow was falling so hard that we needed extra defrosting units to keep the windshield wipers working. We were passing cars stuck in ditches or snow banks pretty regularly now, but we were still within our time. I had been following a red Porsche, when suddenly I saw him spin, pull out and continue at about 10 mph. This warning saved me. I had enough time to slow down before hitting the next section of the road. Without any exaggeration, it was as slick as an ice rink and was a slow downgrade where you had to control the car with the tips of your fingers and the tips of your toes. At least four cars before us went out in this section, and it was a relief to see snow again.

There was about 6 inches of freshly fallen snow over the older packed stuff, and everyone followed in the tracks of the preceding cars. Snow covered all the road signs, and our odometer was off because of so much wheel spin. We didn't have the slightest idea as to where we were and could only hope the tracks were leading in the right direction. Our Halda showed that timewise we were still okay, but we were afraid at this point to trust it and decided to make as much time as possible. This was a mistake, for I went into a curve too fast, spun around at least three times and wound up tail-end in a snow drift blocking half the road. We knew there was a Porsche coming up fast behind us, so we were out of the car in a flash, got the tail out, pointed the car ahead and sped on. I was cursing because there was a dent in the left fender that would mean 40 demerits when we reached Monte Carlo. In the next half hour I lost tally of the demerits!

There was no let up in the snow, and visibility was about 2 or 3 feet. Trying to maintain a 47 mph average was not only idiotic, but impossible. I came up on a Mark VII Jaguar, driven by two British military-type gentlemen, and had to pass them. Needing their cooperation, I gave a

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beep on the horn. The car moved over to the right and *disappeared*. They obviously hadn't determined the width of the road, and because of their courtesy, drove into a gorge. We stopped to see if they were dead, and two hundred feet below we saw their lights. We called, "Are you all right?" A faint reply: "Yes. Did you pass okay?"

The whole night was full of incidents. There were three cars that we passed over and over, and we couldn't figure it out until later when we were told the story. The first car spun out; the second car, coming up close and fast, went into it; then the four drivers calmly waited for a third car to hit them. They needed six men to work at one car to get on the road again. When all the cars were freed, they sped like mad until the whole process was repeated. This must have been done a dozen times before the game was broken up by the first car, a Ford Anglia, which went so deep into a snow drift that only a Spring thaw would get him out. Tiny Lewis, who was in the second car, was confident that another car would join them to make up a trio again, so he went by.

Then my eyes started playing tricks on me. Even my glasses didn't seem to ease the strain that resulted from so many hours of steady concentration on the patterned snow. I don't know how many miles I drove with almost complete blindness when suddenly my eyes registered a red light flashing a few hundred yards ahead. To touch the brakes would have been disastrous. The contour of the road was a complete blank until I found myself in a left-hand curve with a three car smash-up almost dead center. I knew there was someone injured. But there was no stopping so I told Doug to hang on and with a "Here we go," we went. We bounced off the banks so hard that the car did a right side flip and we landed roof-side down. We slid down the road upside down until we hit another snow bank, providing a fairly gentle stop. Doug got off my head and we crawled out. With the help of two Frenchmen, we turned the car over and continued with a loss of some photo gear, 4 minutes, and 3 quarts of oil.

Doug had had enough of my snow driving. He reminded me that he drove his Ford Station Wagon to Mt. Snow each weekend to ski, and that he was more up-to-date on this stuff. I felt there was something wrong with this theory, but since he endured my tribulations, I turned the wheel over to him. A few minutes later we went into a curve too fast.

We went through the outside snow bank. The car came to a peaceful stop with its frame on the shoulder of the road, front wheels a foot below in the snow and rear wheels in the air. We checked the watches before we got out: we were 10 minutes late. We tried jacking up the front, only to have the jack sink into three feet of snow. We tried our handy-dandy pulley from Abercrombie & Fitch, but the rope was a few yards short of reaching the nearby tree. We tried digging under the frame but the earth was frozen solid and our aluminum shovel wouldn't penetrate. We pulled it, sat on it, shoved it and I'm sure I kicked it, but nothing would give. Meanwhile, other cars that were still in working condition fishtailed by us. In the best Monte manner, we waved and urged them on.

(Continued on page 58)



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## Monte Carlo

(Continued from page 57)

After an hour of futile struggling, we saw car lights coming from the other direction. The little 2CV came to a stop without as much as a slide, and two giant gendarmes unfolded themselves from it. They soon realized what our trouble was, so they went to our car, picked it up, and put it back on the road. It took them two minutes, and it all looked so simple. Why couldn't they have come by an hour ago? We tried to reimburse them but they shook their heads.

After losing our way a few times because there were no tracks to follow, we finally came upon a check point. We were told that we were 15 minutes over the allotted time, which meant disqualification! But we were in the majority. Only 3 cars out of the 91 starters from Paris got through this point, and these never finished.

We found the big room of a nearby restaurant filled with many drivers and many mixed emotions. Some were happy; others were frantically making arrangements to have their cars picked up; Doug and I decided to go on to see what the rest of the rally was like.

As we approached Monte Carlo, crowds cheered us on towards the finish. Embarrassed, we sped by as fast as we could. We watched the 59 cars still competing arrive: none from Paris; one or two from The Hague; 1 out of 28 from Munich; 9 out of 92 from Glasgow; the remainder from Lisbon, Rome, Athens and Oslo.

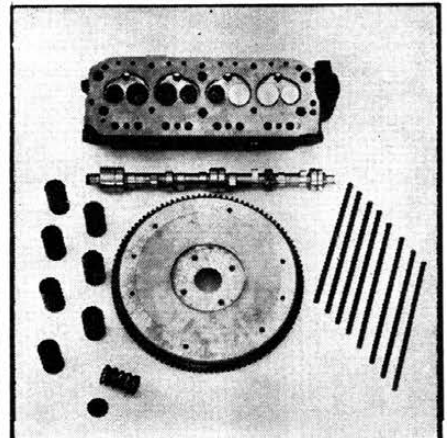
That night we went up to the mountain circuit to watch these cars give a hair-raising performance on snow covered, twisting, narrow roads up some 12,000 feet with average speeds sometimes as high as 50 mph. All of this after the initial 40 hours of hazardous driving! We felt pangs of regret not to be competing but they were eased after learning only 21 cars were able to finish. Every year the awards to the winners are spectacular, but this year they took second place to the little *jeep* badges handed out to those who *finished!*

When we got back to our hotel, we met the British gentleman who took the dive with his Mark VII. He was happy and smiling and with a poke to my ribs said, "Jolly good rally. Eh what?" I wondered what a bad one would be like.

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—Robert Halmi



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