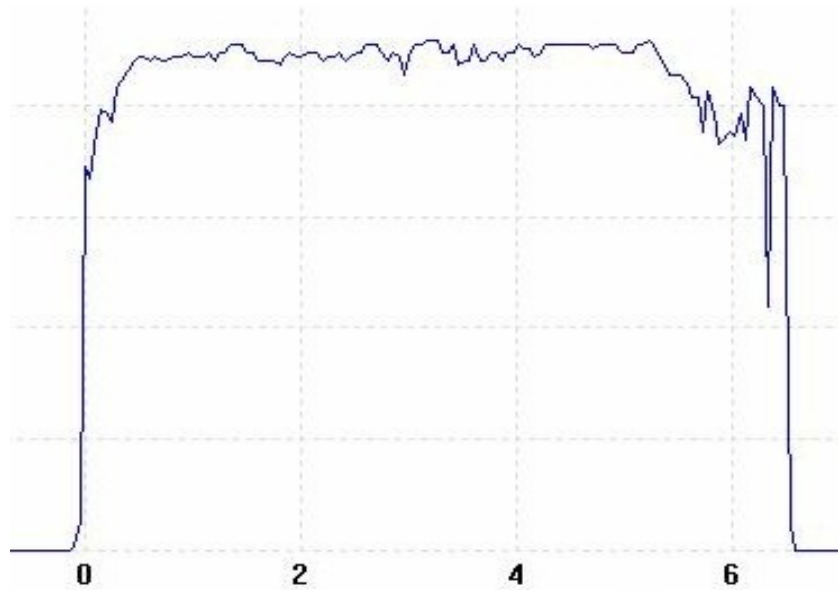


Montana 500 Newsletter

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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

Touring class: \$25.00

Endurance runner: \$35.00

What is that strange picture on the front cover???? It has something to do with the model T. I'll explain more in the next newsletter.

Editor's Message

Rick has picked the Comfort Inn as the base hotel this year. Below is information I have copied from the company's website. It is my understanding that they have RV parking.

Comfort Inn (MT418)450 N. Interchange , Dillon, MT, US, 59725

Phone: (406) 683-6831 Fax: (406) 683-2021

The Comfort Inn® hotel is conveniently located off Interstate 15, just one mile from the **Beaverhead County Museum**. This Dillon hotel is minutes from the **University of Montana-Western**.

Guests of this Dillon hotel will enjoy amenities like the **free expanded continental breakfast, free local calls and free coffee**. After a long day on the road, be sure to take advantage of the **indoor heated pool** with adjoining **sundeck**. This is a **pet-friendly hotel**; a nightly fee applies.

Business travelers will appreciate the **meeting room** that accommodates up to 20 people for most events and business functions. Access to **copy and fax service** is also available.

Kick back and enjoy a movie on HBO, located in all guest rooms. **Pizza, popcorn** and a **few cold deli items** are available in the **hotel's mini-kitchen**. In addition to standard amenities, some rooms include **refrigerators and microwaves**.

Staying a while? The hotel offers laundry facilities for guest convenience. The **hotel's information kiosk** lets guests know what's available in the area. Truck parking is located on the property.

The hotel also offers a **100% Satisfaction Guarantee**. What are you waiting for? Come stay at the Comfort Inn hotel and experience an inn-credible time in Dillon.

Tom Carnegie - newsletter editor

President's Message

(this space reserved for president's message)

That's My Lucky Number
by Dennis Dakan

In the spring of 2003, I was visiting with my great T friend, Bill Brandon, from Fortescue, Missouri, about the possibility of us going on a Model T tour together. Bill suggested, "What about the Montana 500?" Having never been to Montana, I thought it was a great idea, and we immediately started making plans.

Bill took his '24 coupe, and I ran my '13 touring, at Bozeman that year. We ran in the touring class, made new friends and had a great time.

After returning from Bozeman, I knew I had to find an old roadster so I could build a racer and return to the Big Sky State. During the next 14 months or so, I passed up four T's - two were just too rough for my limited body restoration abilities, and two were actually touring bodies cut off to make pick up trucks - not really what I had in mind.

On August 28, 2004, a retired car dealer in Mound City, Missouri, about 45 miles from my home, auctioned off his car collection, along with a '23 roadster consigned by a family in that community. The car dealer had a very nice '15 roadster in the auction that I would have loved to own, but I wound up the second place bidder. I was, however, able to purchase the '23. Now I had a racer!

I spent the next two months fixing everything on it from the timer to the rear brakes. The previous owner had stated to me before the sale, "It just runs perfect!" After replacing a leaking head gasket, installing a rotor in the timer that did have a spring on it, and replacing all four coils, the old car would start and run fairly well.

I did everything I knew how to do and could only get the '23 to run 54 mph. With the weather getting colder and the nice days becoming fewer, in mid-October, I took the motor out and began the rebuilding process.

Although the motor had been rebabbitted in the early '60's when the car had been restored, it also had been bored .060 and needed to be bored again. Adding to the problem was the crankshaft, which had been ground .040 with no radius on the sides.

I found another block, complete with a freeze crack, in Kansas City, and also picked up a badly pitted crankshaft at the same place. Now I had something to work with.

During the next few months, Lewis Andrews, Savannah, Missouri, did the necessary machine work, and Paul's Rod and Babbitt, Parkville, Missouri, took care of the crank and babbitt. Rick Carnegie fixed me up with a set of super rods, and the Antique Auto Ranch supplied me with a Carnegie race grind cam, as well as technical advice. Bill Brandon helped me retime the camshaft in his wife's kitchen one cold day in February. (No, his wife was not home.)

While waiting for the engine work to be completed, I had plenty of work to do. The old car chased rabbits from one ditch to the other, so the steering was an obvious place to start. I began with the steering column, which had three or four inches of slack, and the front spindles. The front perches were backwards which meant the front axle needed to be turned 180 degrees. Then came the drive shaft, rear end and transmission.

I spent the first week of April fitting the engine back together. With the engine installed in the car, now came the moment of truth. On the third time over, the engine started readily and ran very smoothly. I eagerly jumped in and headed for the highway.

The new engine was given a 400-mile easy break-in and everything seemed fine. The very first time I opened it up, things started going sour.

During the next few weeks, I fought timers, coils and valves. I also removed the motor twice due to transmission trouble. Once was a mysterious noise for which I did not find the cause, and once was for a broken clutch disc. With Frank Fenton's help at Anderson Timers, I finally got the '23 to purr just three days before we were scheduled to leave for Montana. With my limited experience with T's, it had been quite a struggle, but as I loaded the old car into the trailer, I felt confident I could not make the car run any better.

The race car's new license plates that had been ordered for six weeks finally arrived the day before we were to leave. I carried them into the house, showed my wife, Karen, and asked, "Do you think this is a good sign?"

We had a great trip on the way out right up to the point where we ran through 23 miles of loose gravel due to road construction south of Jordan, Montana. We arrived at the Yogo Inn Saturday afternoon unscathed, except for about 1/8-inch of dust on everything that was not inside the pick up cab.

The back lot of the motel was a busy place Sunday. Ron "the Coilman" Patterson had his tent set up, and it was the most popular place to hang out. He super tuned my coils and spent hours replacing points and tuning coils for others. Later that day was pre-race inspection, and the installation of the seal wires on the windshield, pan, carburetor, and head. At the evening meeting, numbers were drawn for starting position, and the first day's route explained. I was one of the last to reach into the hat for a little piece of paper; Karen was looking over my shoulder as I unfolded it to find #4. She quickly exclaimed, "That's my lucky number!"

Day One

I was up early Monday morning, not having slept well Sunday night...too much to think about. I wheeled the old car out of the trailer and checked everything I could think of - then checked most of them again. 7:15 a.m. came very quickly, and it was time for Karen, Marilyn Huson, and Kathleen Ebbert, the flaggers, to get going. I fired up the '23 and headed for the southwest edge of town, eager for the race to begin and as nervous as I can ever remember.

As we all gathered at the John Deere implement dealer for flag-out, several people were taking pictures, and Janet C. was making sure everyone had their number in place. I had to go to the bathroom twice in about 30 minutes...the excitement for me was unbelievable. The 2005 Montana 500 was about to begin and I was going to be a part of it! It was awesome.

Shortly after 8:00 a.m., we began lining up the cars for the start. Mike W. was first, followed by Rick C., Mark H., then "Lucky #4", with Tony rounding out the first five. A very brave and capable Janice Hutchinson would be the driver of the trouble truck and trailer bringing up the rear.

As I sat in line and watched the other three T's disappear over the hill, I wondered if I would see them again before the first fuel stop. I also wondered if I would make it to the first fuel stop.

Finally, it was my turn, and Meghan counted me down, "3-2-1-GO!"... I was off on one of the most fun rides I have ever taken. As soon as I topped the first hill, I could see Mark H. in the distance. I kept adjusting the carb, listening to the engine, re-adjusting the spark, and making sure the throttle was firmly bent into the wide-open position.

As I stayed focused on the small black dot ahead (Mark) I eventually could see that I was gaining on him and grinned with anticipation. This was fun. Before I was able to catch Mark, both of us had caught the #1 car. As I passed Mike W., he gave me a big grin, thumbs up, and waved me on. Mark was now a few hundred yards ahead and having problems of some sort. Once I was past Mark, he was able to hang on to the draft for only a short while before waving me on. I could not yet see Rick C., but I knew he was somewhere ahead.

Eventually, I did catch and pass Rick, and together we had quite a run. As we passed through one of the small villages along the way, the driver of an old brown Ford diesel pick up looked down the road in our direction, and then pulled right on out! He must have looked in his mirror and seen us bearing down on him because the black smoke rolled, and he pulled over all the way off the road so we could pass. The look of disbelief on his face as we roared past was classic! He must surely have thought that the two old cars were fastened together at the radiator and tail pipe. I checked over my shoulder to see Rick grinning and shaking his head. I thought to myself, "That was sort of close - we almost had to slow down!"

We had no more than settled down when up ahead was a little foreign job traveling at a very slow speed with the four-way flashers blinking. With oncoming traffic, and no idea what the driver of the little car was up to, I throttled up and jammed on the brakes. Rick and I followed as the car proceeded up the road at a snail's pace, then eventually turned into a drive on the left side of the highway. When I checked on Rick this time, he shrugged his shoulders, gave me another grin and motioned for me to get going. We cruised on into the fuel station at Raynesford where we shared thoughts and laughs about the events that had taken place.

Starting the second leg, I was first out and headed for King's Hill and White Sulphur Springs. With no one in front of me, I was on my own to find my way up and down the mountains. This leg would contain two long, hard climbs which really tested the T's. I

was able to reach the first summit at a speed of 33 mph and going down the south side was exciting, to say the least. I am sure that it must have been absolutely gorgeous, but that is not the part that I remember.

I vividly recall one turn after another, no guardrails, and no way to see what was coming next. As Mike Wendland would put it, "The pucker factor must have been pretty high right about then. Aye!" What an understatement! I backed off the throttle a little, not wanting to push my luck.

Soon after the steep, twisting, turning descent of the first mountain, the long and even steeper climb of the second began. This one was brutal and the '23 pulled down to 28 mph. After the road reached the top, it was lined by tall pine trees on both sides, with a crystal clear stream flowing parallel to the highway. This part of the road was fairly straight and very scenic.

But something seemed to be wrong with my roadster, as it would only run about 50 mph. Since the stream was right beside the road, I knew I was going down a fairly steep grade, but the old car would not wind on up. I immediately figured that the long hard climb had taken its toll, and that I had nearly seized the engine. I eased up the throttle to about half, patted the old car on the dash, smiled and said, "That's OK, baby. We showed them a tail light for a little while."

I richened up the carb, hoping to relieve as much heat in the cylinders as possible and continued down the mountain enjoying the scenery and running about 35-40 mph. After a couple of miles or so, the road made a sharp right turn and continued on toward the west. Once headed west, I noted that the car immediately started picking up speed - now I was running over 45 mph and I had not changed the throttle!

I jammed the throttle back to wide-open, leaned the carb back out and was soon running close to 60 mph. It was then I realized the reason the car would not go any faster was that the south wind was blowing straight up the highway at the top of the mountain and holding the car back. Live and learn! Trust me. The wind can blow in Montana.

After passing the flag-in ladies, several of us gathered at a pull out north of White Sulphur Springs, then headed on into town for fuel and lunch. The first day was now half over and I kept wonder-

ing, "Will the old Ford be able to go the distance?"

I spent most of the noon break tinkering with the car and checking things over. I adjusted the low gear and brake bands and tightened the valve cover. The time passed quickly, and soon it was time to crank up and head for the flag-out.

I was first out, then Steve C. I soon realized that he was gaining on me, and all I could do was watch as the little red racer closed the gap. It took about 25 miles, but Steve did indeed catch me and, on a slight uphill grade, blew my door off to take the lead. Not wanting to let him pull away and gain even more time, I got right on his tail and eased up the throttle as he "pulled" me toward Harlowtown. This was my first opportunity to draft, and it took me awhile to get used to keeping the car at the right distance. Hand on the throttle, foot on the brake and puckered to the Nth degree, it was a fun trip and over much too quickly.

I was keeping an eye on the odometer to estimate how many more miles we had to go when I saw a gray van parked beside the road about a half-mile ahead. It was the flag-in van, and now was my chance. I opened up the '23 and headed right at the back of Steve's T. I was getting "pretty close" when I pulled into the left lane and started easing past. As we passed the timers, I was a couple of feet or so in front of Steve and back into the lead. What a finish and what a rush! At the end of this leg, I was wondering, "Will I be able to go the distance?"

The sun was smoking hot, so we spent most of the break time in the shade of the gas station at Harlowtown enjoying cold drinks and ice cream. Soon it was time to go, and we all headed across the road to line up. I was the first out, then Steve, and all I could think about was, "How long will it take him to catch me this time?"

As we flagged out, a very strong southeast crosswind was really slowing us down. About a mile or so up the road, the pavement curved around to the north. Now we had a tailwind and it was truly "off to the races." Cruising 55-60 mph and sometimes even faster, we quickly made our way to Eddie's Corner. I spent a good portion of that time looking back to check on Steve. As nearly as I could tell, we were running about the same; I might even have gained just a whisker on him, but it was too close to say for sure.

I caught a modern car about a half-mile south of Eddie's Corner and was unable to pass due to oncoming traffic. These folks were

evidently enjoying their late afternoon ride and were certainly in no hurry. The driver eased very gently up to the stop sign where he sat for awhile, then slowly made a right turn. An oncoming tractor-trailer was now too close for me to make my turn, so I very impatiently waited for him to pass. Lo and behold, the semi driver decided to pull into Eddie's Corner, which has a small drive with barely enough room for a big truck. As the big rig crept into the drive and precious seconds ticked away, I sat in my T thinking about Murphy's Law.

Once the truck cleared the pavement, it was "hammer down and hang on." I kept looking back, trying to see the red roadster. The traffic was just heavy enough to keep me from seeing Steve. I knew he was there.

The flag-in ladies were a welcome sight after a long, hot day. The '23 had run so well, but I had no idea where we stood. That night at the meeting, Rick read down through the standings, starting with the slower cars. Car after car was read and my heart began to beat faster and faster. When he said, "And in second place, car #4, Dennis Dakan," I could not believe my ears. The #8 car of Steve C. was in first place, 23 seconds ahead of me. What a day, what a race and what a thrill! What would tomorrow bring? Would the car hold together? And would I hold together?

Day Two

Up at 5:00 a.m., (I couldn't sleep anyway!) I knew I had work to do on the racer. I headed up to the carwash to try to remove some of the gravel dust from the road construction on Saturday. I noticed some rust creeping out between the wood felloe and the steel rim so I returned to the Yogo parking lot to change the left rear wheel and hub.

Soon it was time to head out to the northwest edge of town for the flag-out. The cars would be sent out in reverse order of the previous day's finish. Behind me would be the leader, Steve C., and in front of me would be Mike R., Tom C., then Mark H. Susan C. was taking pictures as Carla and Meghan gave us the send-off. Another day of the 500 had begun. The anticipation was again intense.

It was another picture perfect day as we left Lewistown. About 10 miles north of town, we had to make a left turn onto Highway

81. Had it not been for Claudia Heaton directing drivers at the intersection, I might have missed the turn and headed off into the "wild blue yonder."

Immediately after making the turn toward Denton, I saw a T on the side of the road. As I approached, the driver pulled back onto the road and was underway again. When I finally caught him, I realized it was Tom C. I squeezed past, and we headed on up the highway. Tom was having a problem of some sort, but was managing to hang on. We soon went by Jill C. who was working under the hood of her beautiful pink car, tending to whatever was amiss. Somewhere in this leg, we passed Gary Ebbert, who also was working on his car.

Tom stayed with me until we came to a long steep grade. His car was missing badly on the hard pull, and he waved me on as he pulled off the road.

Mike R.'s car was not 100 percent, but running very strongly, and still a long way ahead. After several miles, I finally came up behind Mike and was able to inch past. We stayed together the remainder of the leg and had a good side by side run at the finish line. I won, but only by about a wheel, as the timers flagged us in.

At the rest stop, I shared with Doug L. that Mike and I had stopped to read the historic marker a few miles outside of town and that it was very interesting. Doug chuckled, and in his distinctive deep, quiet voice replied, "I bet you did!"

After the brief stop in Denton, it was back on the road and on to Fort Benton. The '23 was at its best on the first leg and was breathing fire as we started the second. After several miles, I was able to pass B.J. and Casey, and then a few more miles down the road, we caught and passed Rick C. Now we had three cars hooked together and were hoping we would be lucky enough to catch Mark H.

The three of us were burning up the highway, bearing down on Mark, and having a great old time - for a while. We popped over a small hill and just ahead on the shoulder of the road was a sheriff's car with a guy in a smoky hat sitting in the driver's seat. The pucker factor skyrocketed. Things happened so quickly during the next few seconds that I am not absolutely sure of the turn of events. I think B.J. and Rick backed off slightly, and Mark was just ahead of me. When the smoke cleared, Mark was on my tail, B.J. and

Rick had lost our draft and I think the sheriff was still asleep!

On toward Fort Benton our T's roared. The rolling hills, gentle curves and tail winds made this leg fast and fun. After passing the flag-in ladies, Mark and I pulled off the side of the road to join others who were already there. We shared comments about the sheriff, and then headed on into Fort Benton for a long lunch break and sight-seeing.

This would be the hottest day of the 2005 Montana 500. With the temperature in the mid-90's, we headed back out of town to line up for the flag-out. I was eagerly awaiting my turn to start, as there were several fast cars ahead of me, and I could not wait to see if I could catch them. "Come on, old Ford. Don't fail me now," I thought as Meghan sent me on my way.

Ron M. headed out just ahead of me. We had a short visit just prior to flag-out and he had assured me that he would wait for me a mile or so up the road so we could run together. As I topped each hill and rounded each corner, I expected to see him waiting - this did not happen. Oh, I could see him all right...way up in the distance going like the Montana wind.

When I finally caught Ron, he pulled to the right to let me pass. The two of us were now after the #19 car, Doug L. and Trent Boggess. Further down the road, we caught and passed Doug and Trent. Now we had three, and we could see Jim Heaton in Tweetie Bird up ahead.

It took a while, but we reeled in and passed Jim - now there were four. This was awesome! Five grown men in four T's going 55 mph, with only a few feet between fenders. Whenever I looked back, all I could see was teeth.

This continued for some distance. The next car ahead was none other than the Green Machine of Garrett G. He was running very well in spite of all the trouble he had incurred earlier in the race.

As we caught Garrett and his nephew, things went all to thunder. A sharp 90-degree turn in the road caused us to be separated too far for drafting, and when I looked back, only Ron was hanging on.

As I passed Garrett, I looked up ahead to see the long hill and a quarter-mile or so of road construction that we had come through

on our way to Fort Benton. I looked over my shoulder to see Ron waving me on and grinning. I also saw that the other three T's had gotten together and were hot on our trail. Not wanting to be a sissy, I gripped the wheel with both hands and headed for the washboard-like construction area. Once at the top of the hill and safely on the other side, Ron and I had an uneventful ride down the road to Stanford.

As we approached the small town and flag-in ladies, another 90-degree turn was in our path. With my wood wheels in mind, I throttled down and hit the brakes. Ron came on around and took the flag just ahead of me. I followed him down the main drag of town to the gas station where we fueled and took a break. This was almost more fun than I could stand!

On the last leg of the day, the first out was Janet C. and Tony, then Ron M., then me. As we lined up, I walked over, shook hands with Steve and wished him luck. I knew he would be thinking about me, and I certainly would be thinking about him.

This leg was a tough pull directly into the wind most of the time. Janet C. pulled over to let me go by. She and Tony both smiled and waved. It was great to see them still smiling after all that had happened.

I could see Ron up ahead, but was having very little luck catching the '15. We were nearly to Eddie's Corner when I finally got around him, and we both cruised on into Lewistown. The '23 had somehow stayed ahead of Steve's little red rocket. I had no idea how we had done. All I could do now was hope for the best and wait.

I tinkered with the T for a while, showered, and anxiously awaited the evening meeting. With 9:00 p.m. approaching, Karen and I headed for the courtyard of the Yogo Inn. Tom and Carla had been entertaining everyone with music, and we had missed the entire show. Hope to have a chance to hear them another time.

Rick showed up with the first two days' results in hand and quickly got everyone's attention. Again, he read through the list, starting with the slowest cars first. I was trying to write down the names of the drivers and the total times so I could get a better idea of how everyone stood.

I remember Rick saying "And now for the two cars no one else

can catch. In second place, the #8 car, Steve...." From then on, I did not hear much for a little while. I could not believe what I had just heard, but I remember that I liked it a lot. Car #4, the black '23 roadster with the wooden wheels, was leading the Montana 500.

Rick C. smiled as he handed me the piece of paper that he had just read. I was pretty much numb as I looked at the totals. Next on the agenda, Rick discussed Wednesday's route and starting time, the meeting adjourned, and everyone parted ways.

Day Three

It was a long night for me so I was quite ready to get up at first light. I checked the car from end to end and found nothing that I thought needed to be worked on. I had the feeling that I was overlooking something and kept telling myself, "Don't blow it now."

With 8:30 a.m. approaching, Karen started toward the flaggers' van, as I fired up the T and headed for the Pamida store at the northeast edge of town. It was another picture perfect day with a few clouds in the sky and a slight south breeze.

This time the order would be me, Steve, and Mike R., followed by Tom and Mark. About 9:00 a.m., Meghan and Carla motioned for us to get fired up and come to the parking lot entrance. I kept telling myself to remain calm. We still had over a hundred miles to go. As the traffic cleared, Meghan said, "GO!" and I was on my way. The '23 felt strong as I headed east out of town, but I wondered if it would be strong enough.

Mile after mile fell behind us as we raced toward Winnett. Too anxious to enjoy the morning drive, the scenery, or the way the T was running, I tried not to think about all the things that could go wrong. I breathed a sigh of relief as I passed the flaggers...I needed a break!

I checked the timer, added some oil, filled the radiator, checked the wheels, then joined the others in the shade on the east side of the main drag as the temperature now must have been approaching the 90-degree mark.

Eventually, someone said that it was time to go so everyone cranked up and headed back out of town toward the starting point.

It was now down to the final and deciding 54 miles. I was wondering if all the hours spent on the old Ford during the last nine months would be enough. We would soon find out.

The return trip was pretty much uneventful. I kept an eye on Steve who seemed to be pacing me mile for mile. Most of this route was flat or gently rolling hills, and I felt the two cars were closely matched on this type of terrain. I became more excited as we neared Lewistown.

Finally, I could see the van and the flaggers in the distance. Somehow the '23 had stayed together and held its own. Once past the finish line, I eased up the throttle and turned into a parking lot to watch the others arrive. It was not over yet. The times had to be computed, and then came the tear down.

Mike R., Steve and I had captured the first three positions. We all headed for the tire shop and tear down area. After much discussion, checking, measuring, looking, feeling, and debating, the inspectors and drivers very graciously decided to allow the #4 car to be declared the winner. Steve would be second and Mike would be third.

I wish to thank the inspectors and the drivers for their support as well as the officers and directors of the Montana Cross Country T Association for making this a great event. The race of 2005 took many turns and although the opportunity did not present itself to allow me to run with Dave H., Dave W., Stan H., Lee B. and Gene K., everyone made contributions to its success.

Mike R. asked me if I would come back in '06...you bet! I am sure his car will be even faster, and it will be my turn to draft him!