

## Rolex Monterey 2019

### Race Report

Rick Hayden <racerrick.hayden@gmail.com>

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Hi All -

Sorry we've missed you at church, in the neighborhood and online, but we were again accepted for the "Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion" as it is now called, and what with preps of race car and motorhome - and us, we have been out of touch for a while.

Sitting now in my "Stressless" Swedish (of course) recliner nursing a painful back and recalling events, it has indeed been aging bones, rather than aging vehicles, as the headliner: Trying to do the same things at 78 as one did at 21 is a real challenge. We all know that, but it is so hard to admit.

For the ex-Art Riley 1961 red Volvo P1800 coupe, aiming to get one last race out of the engine built in 1988 for "Ole Blue II," the Volvo 122 sedan that carried us to the 1988 Cal Club / Sports Car Club of America Regional (class) Championship, meant accepting marginal leak-down rates past the valves and piston rings, and a cracked head pushing oil into the cooling system - which itself had barely acceptable temperature excursions.



The 1972 25-ft Superior Motorhome has a new name: "Patti Pattina," for the many positive comments from misguided sweet young ladies who "...just LOVE the patina!" Alberto Varga pinup-inspired "nose art" a' la WWII bombers to follow, of course. Her length JUST allows us to keep her in the Laguna Seca paddock during the 5-day event for both support and sleeping quarters - even Motel Six getting \$280 a night for rooms during the frenetic "Monterey Car Week" of shows and auctions,

the races and the best-in-the-world Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance on Sunday. "Patti" also has a new \$1600 Swedish (of course) ammonia-cycle 6 cu. ft. fridge, in which heat makes things cold; the original fridge died at 46 yrs old last year: RIP.

We had a late leave on Tuesday, Aug 13th due to the exceptional heat in the LA basin melting my old bones, stressed to the limit loading and tying down the Racer on our open single-axle trailer. The back was well out of whack by then.

Only making it to our first gas stop in Santa Maria by midnight - Patti is thirsty at 7mpg - we slept in Pappy's Restaurant parking lot just off the 101, and breakfasted there Wednesday morning. That meant climbing the daunting Cuesta Grade above San Luis Obispo in the morning heat, the run up to it a temperature building climb in itself, forcing a half-hour cool down. The ascent was a nail-biter, floored in second (Patti has a manual shift kit in her Torqueflite - not many overweight ladies do...) watching the temperature climb and the oil pressure drop as the rugged Dodge 413, its two-hundred and sixty-five ghostly, aged horses seemingly strung out in harness ahead, slogged dutifully upward, and upward.

Success! Patted Patti figuratively on the rump as she cooled on the downslope and slid up California's Central Valley - "The Breadbasket of The World" signage modestly proclaimed, though vineyards seemed to have supplanted the Winter Wheat crop - and on to Laguna Seca raceway at the South end of what used to be Fort Ord on the Monterey Peninsula.

Offloading was sweat-filled in uncharacteristic heat, with good friend Alex Curtis dragging the empty trailer with his more-agile Crew-Cab Pickup down to the South Forty pasture (where the trailers graze at night, and tell their stories...) and mutual friend Steve Marx guiding Patti in a contest-winning parallel-park behind his sprawling Home-Away-from-Home ("Tara" ?). Steve must be descended from Wagon-Masters and Trail Bosses of old, as I just sat in Patti's lap and, with the ubiquitous ground squirrels, watched him direct her into place against the North Paddock Fence. Mercedes people, these: Steve having brought a brace of 190SLs for self and son Jeff, from Orange County, and Alex his 300SL Gullwing (without the Flux Capacitor option) from Scottsdale, AZ. Aft of us was Mike Leicester, who loaned us eight ft. of his 25 during the docking demonstration. Mike brought his rare small-block Chevy-engined Victress coupe from out of the past to share with the growing crowd. Registration and Technical Inspection went smoothly, and the Wednesday night marine layer crept in on little marmot feet amidst the growing chatter of the ground squirrels, gamboling in the dusk.

Thursday was First Practice, by race group, for the capacity entry of 550 cars. We were scheduled in the afternoon, and spent the unusually hot morning setting out the accoutrements of an entry: display / tools / air compressor / gas / grey-water dump pail / spare tires / table and chairs / clipboards / schedule / punchlist etc etc... The new Rolex Driver's Club, rather than the tents of old, is a knock-downable 2-story glazed aluminum structure with open-fronted viewing mezzanine overlooking

turn 3 and several large TV screens to follow each live-streamed race through about eight cameras. Suzanne did not like the air conditioning: it was TOO COLD in the stultifying heat!

Practice was a time of introspection: looking inward at the gauges more than the track itself - a nice, 2-1/4 mile loop around a natural lakebed, modernized since its 1957 beginnings; Oil temperature rose to about 215 deg F, oil pressure was good at about 50psig, and the water temp cycled between 160 and 212+. H2O settled down to 185 after a few laps of running and showed no sign of leaks; we had a running racer, Praise The Lord! The engine was healthy and happy to 7 grand or so, brakes OK, but the tires were old and not gripping very well in the turns.

The Thursday evening "Welcoming BBQ" was a nice melange of cheeses and crackers and veggies and shrimp and sausages and stuffed mushrooms and craft beers and local wines and...Very Nice Indeed ! We were joined in the shade of The Rolex Club by Ron and Beverly Cressey; Ron runs a solid-axle Corvette and there is a great in-car on youtube of his race with a Ferrari GTO a couple years ago here; I appear briefly as a lapped spear-carrier.

See at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/pcressey>

Not wishing to draw any cards, we stood pat and took qualifying day, Friday, off, just enjoying ourselves in the newly-returned marine layer and - yes, even DRIZZLE in the morning. Jersey friend Jim Weissenborn (CEO, General Pencil in Jersey City; you saw him in the Sunday Supplements a few years ago) has a West Coast house close to the track, races an MG Special and joined us for lunch compliments of Rolex. He assured us that at noon the gloom would lift as is Proper in these environs. He was right; the ground squirrels were pleased, and the White Tablecloth Luncheon was superb ! Expecting to see one another, but not having had "Eyeballs On" in too many years, Dave Nicholas and I ran into each other in the Media Center, somewhat clumsily: "You look familiar - what's your name...?" We are both older and more senile. He had just been talking to his Lady, Rosemary, about me. Dave runs the BARCboys site at <https://www.barcboys.com>

IMSA was featured this year at the historics - the 50th anniversary of the International Motor Sports Assn. - and Dave was shooting the event as he has been doing at races since the late '50s. He, too, raced Art Riley and his Volvos in the 'sixties, became a pro driver with IMSA and proudly showed me his name on the huge "IMSA Race Winners" display in the focus tent in the paddock. He's been to the house to see the Riley cars.

Volvo stalwart and Pro race Fotog Denis Tanney had come by to visit with his wife; Denis has put us on the cover of the Volvo Club magazine with his famous "Lying Lens," which always seems to show us leading a faster, more famous or desirable race car!

Saturday was an off day as well for those of us in "Sunday" groups. 2019 is the famous British marque, Bentley's, 100th birthday, and a glorious gaggle of same were present to parade around the track. Recognizing from the outset that racing sells automobiles, Bentley has competed at - and won several times, the prestigious 24-hr. race in LeMans, France. Many competition cars were among the celebrants. Cloth bodies, cord-wrapped steering wheels, huge headlights to pierce the French darkness, enough instruments to manage a steam locomotive and of course, a proudly-displayed Union Jack typified the competition cars. Morning races set the grid positions for the more serious afternoon events, and friend John Kerr, in his 'thirties Miller Ford dirt track car, unfortunately ran afoul of an English Railton causing some damage, and was excluded from further on-track participation. John was OK with the decision - he'd been shot at in the air over Vietnam, after all - and was seen throughout the weekend in his period-correct helmet/goggles and coveralls, lending set decoration and a sense of sportsmanship to the proceedings.

"The Cars Are The Stars" have been the watchwords of this event for some forty years now, and walking the paddock is the high point for many, stumbling across the rare and exotic, sometimes dimly-remembered cars only seen in the Roto Gravure section of a '30s newspaper or obscure magazine. Owners are invariably open to answering questions and enlightening interested spectators - the paddock is open to all - as to the attributes and individual histories of their charges.

Sunday dawned gloomily as is its wont in these climes, and we skipped the morning race to ensure "Starting Money" (if you will) in the afternoon. I studied the other cars and drivers in my group - GT cars from 1955 to 1961 - during the morning to watch for anything of note. There were the Corvettes and a Ferrari or two up at the fast end of the grid, as expected, but the pole position was to be taken by an early Porsche 356 coupe from Australia: wicked fast, it had arrived in a trans-oceanic cargo container on a flatbed semi-trailer, and dumped in the paddock by an accompanying truck-mounted crane! It then was unpacked and transformed into the forecourt of an Australian Porsche agency by the gaggle of a uniformed crew from New South Wales. Ron Goodman would conduct - and drive.

For the afternoon race, we would start from 36th position, next to last - which was the Victress, Mike Leicester having had some problems with both the engine and tires. Suited up and ready to leave for the false grid, the Volvo would not start! On the charger the previous night and showing over 12.5 Volts in the morning, it was at 6V and useless. Quickly in with the spare, we made it with no time left, the grid already on the 3-minute board; PHEW! At the green Mike lit the Roman candle of that Victress Chevy V8 and stormed away up the grid in search of bigger fish to fry, while The Volvo was setting in to what it could handle. The tires, over ten years old as Goodyear no longer makes them, just would not stick, so we had to tiptoe through the corners; but the engine was fine and the brakes as well, although the tires limited the braking force that could be transmitted to the asphalt. We had a nice time

keeping ahead of a '59 silver Porsche 356 coupe, a local and friend of Jim Weissenborn (who DNS - Did Not Start - due to not being fully recovered from a recent bug). The Porsche driver later complained to Jim about "...that Volvo's torque..." which he could not match, but he did come close in the turns several times. We finished 25th; respectable, considering. Mike and the Victress were only two places ahead at the finish.

Back at the motorhome, a goat-rope was unfolding: water from the new Fridge indicated the freezer...well, was not. Wouldn't run on propane, wouldn't run on the Genny. And Patti's gas gauge told me to call Crew Chief Rick jr back to take two of Steve's borrowed gas cans to find 10 gallons of gas in the growing peninsula darkness. Which he did. Thank The Lord for Good Sons. And Friends. Then the RV would not start! Two dead batteries in the same day. Camping World had wired the new fridge's minimal control circuit to the chassis battery instead of the coach battery, and for some reason - short? - it had been drained flat.

Monday morning dawned drizzly/dreary and Faithful Alex brought up the trailer from the pasture; Push the Volvo on (Thank you Alex and Corina and all who helped) and tie her down, "Borrow" the racer's battery to swap into Patti's chassis position...SHE STARTS! Ahhh. and the gas gauge swings to over 1/2 full - 30 gallons? So the battery last night did not even have enough juice to accurately swing the gas gauge, and Rick jr's gas run was not really imperative.

Home late Monday night, delayed as a Semi burned to the ground beside the 101 in Atascadero, without but one incident: couple of cop cars passed by on the way down, but only entering the 405 S from the 101 in The Valley did one guy blink his lights and honk his horn to warn me (I was to realize after getting home) that I had no tail or stop lights. I hope the trucker's reflector strip across the back of the trailer gave adequate warning to those following. Fault Tracing ongoing: Appropriate fuse blown on Patti's Panel....

Sports Car Digest has just posted over a hundred great shots of the event and a report:

[https://www.sportscardigest.com › monterey-motorsports-reunion-2019-report and Photos](https://www.sportscardigest.com › monterey-motorsports-reunion-2019-report-and-Photos)

Snapshots Attached - Are we getting too old for this ? The mind boggles...  
Rick and Suzanne