

WESTWARD TO THE RALLY



San Francisco Region of SCCA Presents the Third Annual Golden West Rally

*They suddenly stopped on a very high hill
With wonder looked down upon old Placerville
She sighed when he said and cast his eyes down
"Sweet Betsy, my darling, we've got to Hangtown."*

*Verse from California Miners' Song
"Sweet Betsy from Pike"—1850's*

It was only a few months after James Wilson Marshall found a few flakes of gold on the banks of the American River that some 100,000

people poured into the state of California to begin the frantic search for gold. Some 112 years later a new band retraced the steps of the '49ers, still searching but on considerably different terms. This latter-day group was the 160 entrants in the San Francisco Region of the SCCA's Golden West Rally. They passed through some of the most colorful country in the history of the opening of the West.

Hangtown, Fair Play, Diamond Springs and Oroville—all are town names that smack of gold hungry '49ers. And indeed these old towns located in the heart of the Sacramento Valley were once invaded by prospectors, card sharps and, surprisingly enough, honest businessmen, during the great gold rush days. Consider Jackson, California, where rallyists met their first checkpoint and rest stop. This had been a favorite stopping place for weary miners, too. Their stops, however, were usually of greater duration. The town was along the "mother lode" vein and miners stopped by for relaxation and refreshment.

Then the rallyists drove through Diamond Springs, where appropriately the town's leading hotel had been named the Golden West. No stop here though; rallyists drove on to one of the most interesting cities in the area, Placerville. It was here that men such as Mark Hopkins, who became a giant in American railroading, got his start as the local grocer. Phillip Armour, the corner butcher, went on to establish a meat packing empire. It is surprising that these pillars of American industry were not the men responsible for Placerville's lasting fame; it was her violent vigilantes. Placerville became known as Hangtown, immortalized in song and story. She managed to live up to her name as far as several 20th century rally contestants were concerned, too. They got "hung up" on alleys and dead-ends that the inhabitants didn't even know about!

Nightfall brought the party into Oroville where lodging and a banquet awaited them at the Prospector's Village Motel. Prizes were awarded to the top ten teams of the first day's run and stories were swapped about the day's



Where it all began



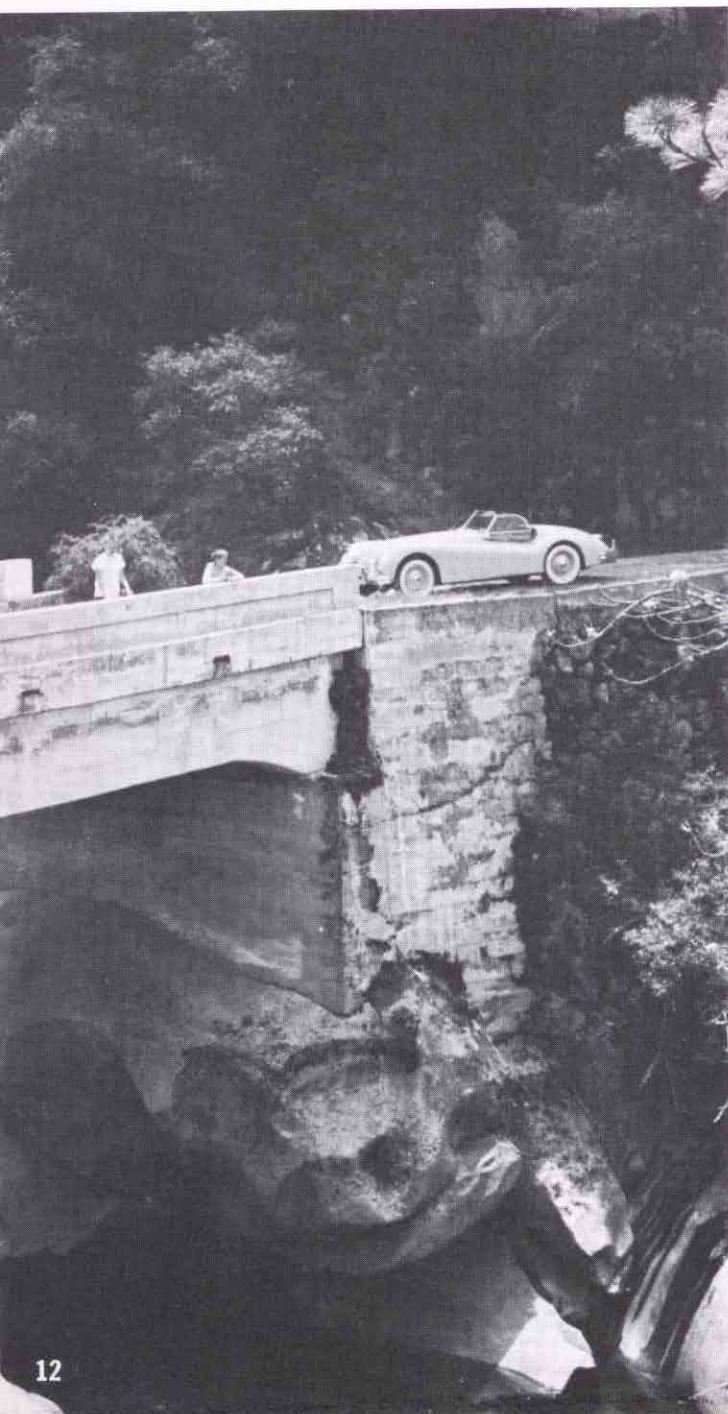
"That's how it was, moving West."



Oroville, dining in the glow of the gold town past



Headin' for the last roundup



adventures, especially the infamous gimmick. The gimmick was that each time a county line sign was passed, the next instruction listed on the four-page guide was to be crossed off. All this was designed to make navigators coordinate visual, as well as computed, information. Some had trouble. The biggest news of all was that the first car wouldn't be off until 8:01 the next morning. Quite a difference from the 6:01 A.M. start of the first day's run.

The driving was deceptively easy Sunday morning, May 22, as major highways led the sportsters winding through the beautiful Napa Valley, home of California's famous vineyards and wineries. After lunch at Calistoga, how-

*"They're reaching
the pass now!"*





*We Indians held
our first big rally
at the Little Big Horn*

ever, the roads became more difficult and isolated. Twisting roads briefly followed the Russian River through part of the Sebastopol apple country and then led into the woods. Narrow asphalt roads compelled one car to pull onto the shoulder when meeting another car on the road. Think of a poor farmer having to pull onto the shoulder eighty times to let the rallyists by! The farmers fought back, however, and on more than one occasion sports car enthusiasts had to yield the right of way to an oncoming herd of cattle. All part of a day's adventure on a Western rally.

Sunday evening saw these Californians right back where they started from, Rickey's Rancho Rafael Motel in Ignacio, just outside of San Francisco. Greeting the teams as they pulled into Rickey's was Gene Hammond, who was the chief organizer and planner of this year's Golden West Rally. The 6,000 miles that Gene and his assistants traveled in laying out the course guaranteed a taxing but varied test of men and machines. Attesting to the skill of the winning driver Homer Richardson and navigator Isobel Blandford was the fact that this team came in from the 600-mile test off the mark by only 49 seconds. Almost equally remarkable was the fact that the winning team's time was closely followed by several other teams. Regardless of scores, all had a fine time at the awards banquet that night and the only complaints heard around the room were that it would be another year until the next Golden West Rally.



The ambush; Checkpoint No. 1



This little respite was not in the instructions



Heroes and Heroines of the Golden West.