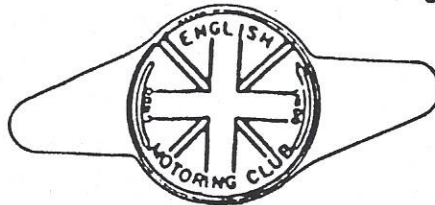


# Off-Side Undo

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## Mercedes-Benz Copperstate 1000 1997

Pat Cashman

Barbara and I decided to jump in and play with the big kids and run in the Copperstate 1000- a four day 1,000 mile tour through Arizona. I had read several articles on it in a number of magazines and thought that we could do it as well as anyone else.

Beautiful scenery, plush hotels, gourmet food and drink, fast cars, twisty roads and a highway patrol escort who would look the other way seemed to be too good to pass up. We filled out the application forms and sent in our deposit and waited for registration.

We were accepted and made plans to take the Gordon Keeble to Arizona. The tour is limited to 85 cars built before 1968.

Saturday, April 26 found us in Margaret Hance Park in downtown Phoenix putting the Keeble along side the 1928 Bentley of Augie Pabst. Pabst has run in the Copperstate with this Bentley several years. It wasn't the oldest car though. A 1912 Oldsmobile that won the Great American race was parked next to it. A Jag XKSS, works D-Type, E-Type, '57 fuelie Corvette, Shelby GT 350, 427 Cobras, 289 Cobras, Arnolt Bristol, Nash Healey, Allard, Porsche 356, and a 1927 Bugatti were among those lined up for the start. Hard to know just where to look!

We were flagged away Sunday morning and drove out into the traffic on the Interstate. We soon left that and moved out into the desert and less crowded conditions

After lunch we started the TSD portion of the rally. Five minutes later we stopped the TSD portion. The alternator light came on, and a lens fell out of Barbara's glasses. It didn't seem to be the best possible start. We decided to press on to the next stop and forget turning in our planned perfect time.

I found a loose wire at the alternator but couldn't get to it under the car so we kept going on the battery to Prescott. There we met the 18 wheeler emergency truck of Harley Ciuxton. Triage was set up in the parking lot. Several cars (most of them British) needed and received the repairs that got us all back on the road.

The second day included a run down the old Route 66, through desert and mountains and in to Laughlin, Nevada. Tacky, tacky, tacky.

We left the next morning and got out of the heat and twisted our way up 7,000 feet to Jerome. We followed a Aston Martin DB-2 cabriolet and led Dennis Siminaitis in his Morgan. Sharp curves and switchbacks galore. This was my favorite part of the tour. Barbara liked the antique clothing shops in Jerome. (I did too.)

The next day we left Sedona and drove to Meteor Crater. Unfortunately, or really fortunately as I pulled off I noticed the brake pedal was a little mushy. We stopped and discovered a brake pipe on the rear axle had been rubbing against the chassis and finally wore through. This was about the best place to have a partial brake failure. We still had front brakes but decided

that with many more mountains to cross our rally was over. We put the Keeble on one of the sweep trailers and rode on in to our last stop back in Phoenix.

In spite of coming home on the hook, we had a wonderful time. We got to drive up and down twisty mountain roads, run "just a Little" over the posted limits and met some enthusiastic car folks.

Barbara says all of this came from a mid life crisis of mine, and if so, I think I see a few more crises looming ahead.

### **A Woman's View**

Some months ago Pat announced to me that there were some things he wished to do before he went to the great car park in the sky. My mind went into overdrive and immediately after ascertaining that he had no strange and incurable disease of which I was unaware, I realized he was merely in the throes of a mid life crisis which had already turned to the advantage of both of us. I mean, it could have taken the form of women instead of cars, but Pat, being the intelligent man I married had undoubtedly already briefly considered that and determined that he did not wish to spend his remaining days poor and a soprano.

So after allowing him to whiz around the track at Bob Bondurant's School of High Performance Driving, I began to decide how to get the most enjoyment out of ten days without the kids and spent totally in the confines of cars and the company of car nuts. Naturally the persona of Lurleen implanted herself in my mind. Actually she kind of evolved in the course of the trip.

Being a basically shy person and not wishing to spend lots of money on clothes to compete with the ladies one finds on most of these larger car circuits, I packed my suitcase with vintage clothing, hats, and jewelry, complete with a pair of cat eye glasses from the sixties.

The first night in Phoenix at the grand kick off reception and dinner at the Art Museum everyone was too polite to even notice Lurleen in her wild orange paisley

mini dress and glasses. Finally though curiosity got the better of Rick Mahrle, the president of the Men's Art Council. He came over, said, "Something tells me you don't dress like this all the time." Rick was a really interesting fun guy. We found that to be the case every night. The truly neat fun people would come over to chat with Lurleen and I'm sure we got to meet some people that plain ole Barbara and Pat never would have. Two nights we ate with Dennis Simanaitis, the tech editor at Road and Track and a truly insane fun person.

By day I wore t-shirts and jeans like the rather nondescript Barbara that I am. Only at night did Lurleen make her appearance. After the first night everyone else joined in the fun and we were asked all during the day what Lurleen would wear or do that night. Naturally we denied all knowledge of her existence. We spent one night with Dennis and lots of wine discussing the finer points of differences between a split personality and an alter ego. With less wine I'm sure it might have passed almost for an intellectual conversation. I even caught the tail end of an exchange in which Ned Curtis, a 70+ year old race driver was asking Pat something risqué about having two women at the same time. (Ned drew an 18 month suspension last year at the Vintage races at Laguna Seca for being overly aggressive in a Frazer-Nash!!!!)

Sure some probably thought we were both, or rather all three, crazy, but we certainly had a great time. The Copperstate 1000 crowd probably won't remember Pat and Barbara next year, but you can bet they will raise a glass to Lurleen.

### **FOR SALE**

1954 MGTF good body, needs wood. Call Peter Brauen, 601-467-0519.

### **TECH SESSION**

More on tech sessions next issue.

Also, pictures from Tops Down which are, uh, misplaced at the moment. Watch for these and more in the July Offside Undo.