

## CAV GT in the Cannonball One Lap of America

If the open road calls your name, you love the smell of racing oil and the trumpeting of competition exhausts does it for you, then chances are you will know about the "Cannonball Run". What's more, you will almost certainly have spent at least a while daydreaming of your own campaign to blast across America, crossing the finish line first, narrowly squeezing out your nemesis (a curvaceous foreign babe in a Lamborghini Countach), against all odds, to take first place and win the heart of the pretty girl with the bottle of Champaign in her hands at the finish line! Sound at all familiar ... anyone ..... ??

Back in the 1970's Brock Yates, senior editor for Car & Driver Magazine started the Cannonball run, the first one being held in 1971. He wanted to prove that the interstate highway systems could support faster speeds in the same way the Autobans did in Germany – and have an absolute ball doing it. The rules were simple – New York to California as fast as you could! Those original events were by invitation only and to make the grade you had to be an automotive enthusiast or a seasoned racecar driver. Apparently arbitrary judgments involving driving credentials, type of car, personal stability and general karma, also played a part in making selections. The stories about the events written by Brock Yates are very entertaining and the races in those early days must have been great fun. You



just have to love a race that could see you experiencing everything from being arrested for speeding, (repeatedly), picking up fugitives, having to explain why your ambulance was traveling at inprudant speeds on its way to California, spending some time in jail and sending the "Smokie Bears" on any wild goose chase you could. The awards at the end included: Friends of OPEC Award, The Diehard Award, Tow-Away Award, In The Tank Award, Balls Out Award, Doctor Strangeglove Award (honest), Worst Time Award and The Bandit's Highway Safety Award - you just cant go wrong with a line up like that!



The Cannonball run is unfortunately no longer an all out dash across America. In 1980, politics dictated a change in character of the event. It became a long distance rally event before it evolved it its current format in 1992. The modern event is something quite special too. It is now a gruelling eight night and nine day event with around 5 600 miles and 17 odd racing events called the Cannonball One Lap of America. As no support crews or support vehicles are allowed, reliability and endurance are the name of the game. Making sure your car is well prepared takes on a whole new meaning in this kind of event. Each morning 80 to 100 competitors arrive at a race track and prepare their cars for the mornings events, with a second track event in the afternoon. Each car's times are posted and compared to other cars in its class and to the competition as a whole. By 5 pm, the cars are all on

the road again, with 15 hours to make it to the next track event which will be between 500 and 800 miles away. The theory is that if there are no breakdowns there is time to make it to the next event without breaking any posted speed limits! That's the theory anyway. One dedicated man from Pennsylvania in the USA, decided it would be good idea to enter his CAV GT in this event. Buzz Clarke has campaigned the only GT40 replica in the race for the past two years and is a firm favourite at this event. Auto Futura is going to publish his story in various instalments which will be available for download from our website.

## Buzz Clarke and the Cannonball One Lap of America



Buzz Clarke viewed his CAV GT somewhat differently from the average customer. He wanted to use his car, he wanted to use it hard and he wanted to use it often! He didn't care about it getting dirty, getting it wet, getting stone chips or the breakdowns. That was all part of the thrill of owning such a vehicle. The goal was to develop his CAV GT beyond the original GT40's capabilities. If that meant breaking it and having to upgrade things, then that's what he did. His car is fitted with a fuel injected 500 HP engine and a ZF transaxle, geared for 215 mph. He also fitted 17" wheels with modern tyres for better handling. The silver and black CAV GT was entered into the Cannonball before it was even finished. With two events under his belt Buzz has assured us he will be back again next year. This is

Part 1 if you like, an appetiser, something to re-ignite those forgotten dreams of a cross country trip in fast car...

**A.F.**

### Lap One (2004) – by Buzz Clark

It's the last Thursday in April and registration for the Cannonball One Lap of America race is at the Tire Rack facility in South Bend Indiana. We are still working on the car over 600 miles away in Pennsylvania. We only have a few hundred break in miles on the car and we can't get the fuel delivery up to the injectors sorted out. We ripped out the original low pressure system for carburetors that came with the car, and have been chasing the fuel delivery through three different high pressure designs. We will have to trailer the car the 600 miles tonight so we are there for the first event tomorrow. We had planned to drive the car out, but we don't know if it would make it. A 600 mile run with very little sleep is not a good start. They say this will be the longest Cannonball and that we will be averaging 750 miles per night for the first seven nights!



It is 8:00am Friday morning. We got a couple of hours sleep, and we are headed for U-haul, hoping they will be open by 8:30 am. We added a trailer hitch to the CAV GT so we can carry our stuff. There isn't enough room inside the car for even one race helmet. U-haul doesn't open till 10am.

The car is a sensation at the Tire Rack (tyre wholesaler and principle sponsor). The CAV GT is beautiful – it will never be so new again. The stainless steel monocoque is a work of art and the whole car a rolling sculpture. If only the fuel system were sorted out. A few things are apparent. If there was a "Peoples Choice" Award, it would go to the CAV GT, if the ninety competitors voted for who was least likely to complete the event, the CAV GT would win. Nobody believes that a barely broken-in car of this type can survive all of the seventeen track events and the road miles that lie ahead. We agree.



My co-driver is Joel Lipperini. We met five days ago. My original co-driver had mechanical experience on the CAV GT and he was an experienced track driver. He sprained his back and spent a few days in hospital. I called Brock Yates, Jr, (Brock) to tell him I'd probably have to cancel. He said he knew someone he had been trying to get into the Cannonball for years and my GT40 might just be the ticket. We agreed to split the fuel and motels and to feed ourselves. We didn't know motels would not be an issue at this stage. Brock said Joel wouldn't bend the car and was a good mechanic who would keep it running. He also said Joel was 5 seconds faster than he was on any racetrack, even driving Brock's own race car. They had successfully co-driven together in a number of endurance events. Joel is a two time national champion. In the next nine days we would not have one

argument.

Joel finished the first event, the wet skid pan. We had a problem, something wrong with the suspension. He couldn't hold the car going around to the right – it always wanted to spin. Left was OK, but right was a handful (this turned out to be a suspension set-up problem). We really didn't have a chance to do well here. It wasn't the 600 HP supercharged corvettes, the twin turbo Porsches, or the works Vipers that were the opposition. It was all wheel drive Audis, Subarus and Mitsubishis with stability and traction control – on a wet skid pan at 40 mph computers rule!



We have a 675 mile run to Heartland Park Raceway near Topeka Kansas. Extremely severe thunderstorms are reported for our run south. It should be a twelve hour run with gas stops and we should get three hours of sleep. As we pass the crowd at Tire Rack on the way out of the lot, Joel says pull over. His voice says, PULL OVER NOW! He smells gas. I have a bad nose, but I get there eventually. We pull the rear deck and can see a thin stream of gas shooting from a fuel regulator. It can't be fixed. Fortunately in our last desperation aimed at a working fuel system, we separated the two fuel cells into two separate systems. We can run on one tank for about 100 miles between refills. Not a good start, but off to Topeka

About 7:30 pm we pull off the highway to find gas. Fortunately we find gas and a PEP Boys (Automotive spares shop). It is really pouring. Joel has me call my engine builder (and friend of thirty years) at home to explain our fuel regulator problem. Over the next two and a half hours, until PEP Boys closes, we trade out high pressure fuel components for low pressure units (the only thing PEP Boys has). I hold an umbrella over Joel as he works on the changeover. It is raining hard. Ten trips in and out of PEP Boys, soaked to our shorts, we are back on the road.



This is the kind of rain where a GT 40 pulling a trailer should pull off on the shoulder like some other cars are doing – but we don't. Something happens to the lights. A few on the dash are out and the headlights



seem dimmer. I have to press on because we aren't going to get any sleep after our time in the PEP Boys parking lot. We are now running on both fuel tanks but the lights are worthless in this rain. Later we will learn that when I hooked the trailer up I wound the excess wiring around the trailer tongue so it would not drag on the highway. There was also one braided ground wire with the insulated wire. With the exhaust pipes just above the trailer tongue, the bare ground wire got hot and melted into the insulated wires, taking out all of the trailer lights, lights on the rear of the car, a few dash lights and blistered the headlight bulbs. It would be the fourth night before another team would help fix our wiring at a 2:30 am fuel stop.

We hope you have enjoyed "Lap One" of Buzz's story. Buzz, Joel and the CAV GT went on to finish all the events, were placed in a very credible 11<sup>th</sup> and they were awarded the "Best Rookie Finish 2004". Please look out for the rest of the 2004 story and this year's story on our Web page.

**BEST ROOKIE FINISH 2004**

