

Ireland International Bugatti Rally

by Amadea Cesari and Matthew Baran

The 90th Anniversary of the Bugatti Owners' Club was undoubtedly met with no less enthusiasm and joy than the previous eighty-nine. Before journeying to Ireland for the international rally, many participants convened at Prescott to enjoy a hill climb and lunch. With many quick ascents up the hill before the end of the day, even some larger cars like Matt and Amadea's Type 57 (Irene), enjoyed a nice stroll to the top of Prescott.

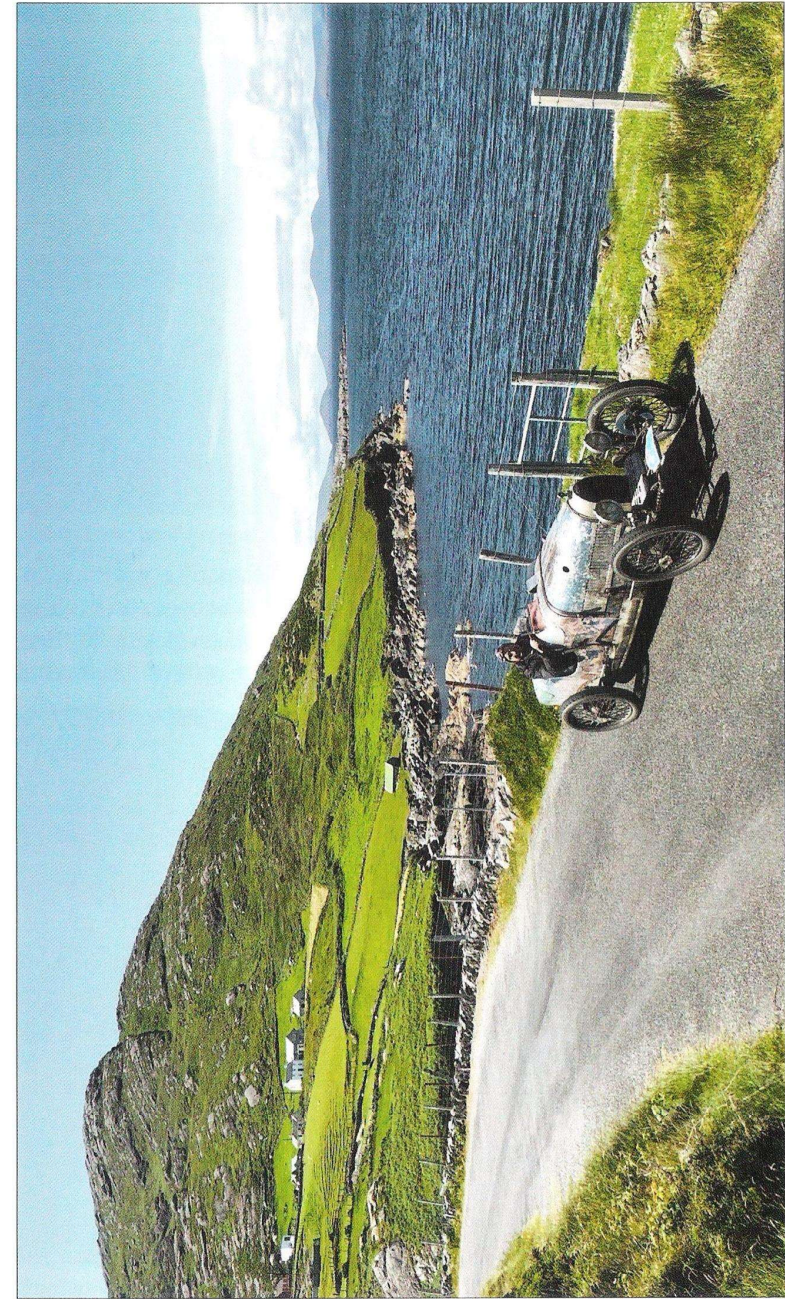
The following day most of the cars boarded a ferry at Pembroke in Wales, and the likely white-knuckled captain brought the marque-laden boat safely to harbor in Rosslare, Ireland. Chasing some small mechanical issues delayed the Cesari/Baran team, and though there were hopes of a Dukes-of-Hazard style boarding, we ended up catching the evening ferry for a surreal nautical experience.

Tuesday morning saw us caught up with our comrades and driving west for much of the rainy day to reach our hotel, despite Irene's best efforts to shed a wiper blade. Though we felt for our soggy friends in open cars, our greatest sympathies were triggered when we learned that there had been some Bug-on-Bug friction in one of the numerous rotaries in Rosslare; our hearts wept like the skies for them. By the evening all 101 cars and owners were cozily assembled at The Dunloe Hotel & Gardens, a beautiful five-star hotel to be our home for the week. With even the most determined wrenchers eventually persuaded out of the drizzly paddock, the group came together for cocktails, warm reunions and introductions all around, followed by the first of many divine dinners at The Dunloe.

We also took the opportunity to inventory our compatriots. Here are the eight US cars:

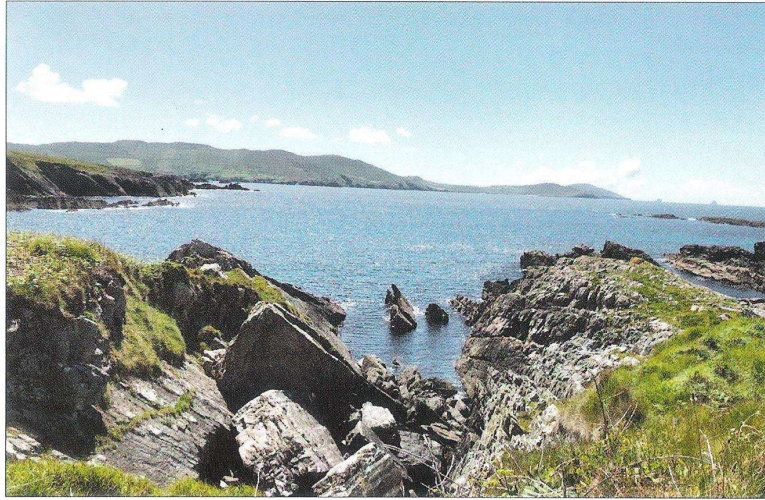
- Matt Baran and Amadea Cesari's 1937 T57-57585
- Cornelia and John Cesari's 1927 T40-40490
- Laura and Mike Cleary's 1926 T38-38191
- Frances and Sandy Greene's 1924 T23-2243
- Tonya and Jim Hull's T57SC/R Torpedo Competition Roadster
- Sarah and Chrisso Rheault's 1929 T40-40793
- Sharon and Jim Stranberg (Luc Slipjen's 1928 T43)
- Meredith and Jan Voboril's 1931 T49-49229

It's no wonder Ireland's southwest has served as muse for countless poems, paintings, songs and films; its striking landscape is as verdant as



Viola Procovio

The dramatic landscape with its barren rocky mountains, green pastures and turquoise waters.



Viola Procovio

The rugged southwest coastline of Ireland.

it is dramatic. Spiny ridges soar directly out of turquoise waters, awesome mountains reach rocky heights and eventually bow to an expanse of rich pasture, as twinkling rivers and lakes bejewel the pewter of stone and explosion of green, pink and yellow calico growth of this fruitful



Chrisso Rheault

The jagged mountain ridges.



Amadea Cesari

The treeless wild ground cover sloping to the ocean.

place. Throughout, moss-encrusted stone walls gently discourage sheep and cattle from wandering, ancient structures herald forgotten memories and living history, and of course, gravity-defying roads hug the edges of cliffs and riverbeds for the traveler who dares take on this imposing otherworld.



Viola Procovio

Winding narrow roads with the moss-encrusted stone guardrails.

Who are these autonauts? Curious, fortunate motorists worldwide come to tour these legendary winding, 1.3-lane roads that make up the “Wild Atlantic Way,” a tourism trail along the western coast. If improvement to this setting were possible, it would have been the soundtrack of one hundred and one Bugattis echoing through in chorus, which we were happy to provide.

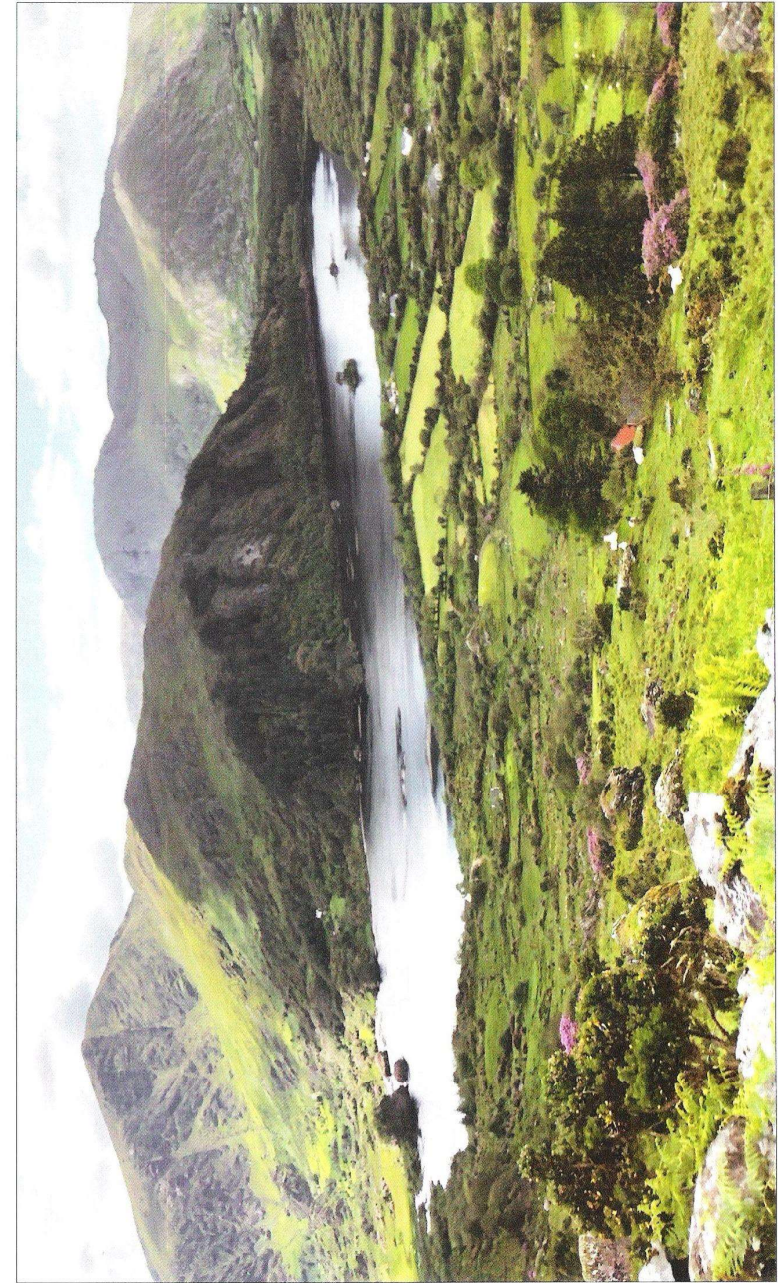
Our group struck out Wednesday morning from Killarney with much excitement and scattered showers, well equipped with our excellent new route books, Bugatti scarves and coats. The Baran/Cesari team was fortunate enough to caravan with Laura and Mike Cleary, who were in the beautiful T38, which he built up years ago as a family car foil to his sprint car, champ car and class H sports car. With Cornelia and John riding with us and playing musical drivers in the T57, the yellow cars united and were underway. Our task for the day was the Ring of Kerry, a loop of about 200 km.

The first roadblock of half a dozen sheep indicated what to expect, and the first tricky but exhilarating notch road set the pace for the week. We enjoyed coffee in the historically tidy town of Sneem, then drove a coastal road for much of the day. A nice lunch and some great pictures were taken in Waterville. The weather cleared up by mid-morning, and we were blessed with a crisp, bright day—a pattern that continued for the rest of our stay. When we went back by way of the irresistible Skelligs Chocolate, we arrived just in time to meet some beautiful, nonchalant owls and get cleaned up for dinner.

*Cornelia Cesari
with a Great
Horned Owl.*



Matt Baran



The rich pastures, majestic lakes and rocky mountains of the Irish countryside.

Viola Procvio



John Cesari

Amadea Cesari in the Baran 1937 Type 57 at the Dunloe gap.

During the day the head of maintenance at The Dunloe had picked up John's manifold and overseen its welding at a local shop; so when we started our day on Thursday, it was sitting neatly repaired next to the car, with a fresh container of gasket sealant. Same day dry cleaning and welding service is what makes The Dunloe a 10-star hotel in our book.

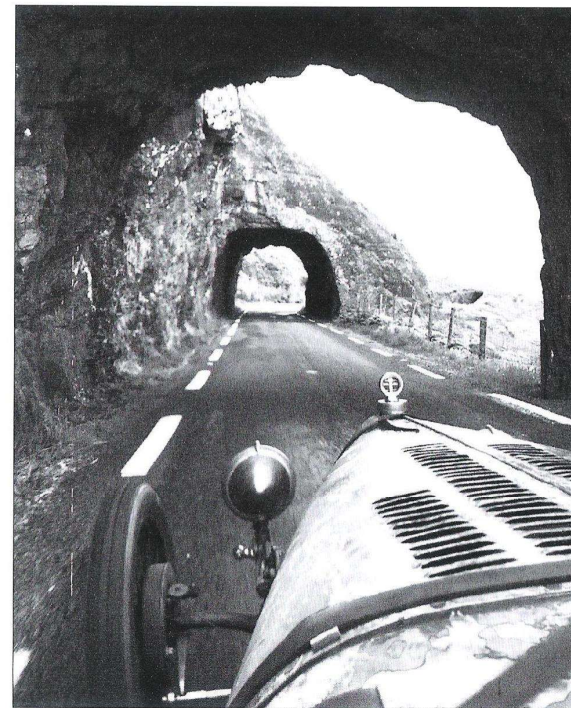
Thursday we drove the Gap of Dunloe and Beara Peninsula and were advised to start early before horses and carts monopolized the narrow path over the nearby mountaintop. We enjoyed a marvelous lunch of lamb stew and trifle at the community center in the village Allihies, put on for us by the local residents, whose hospitality cannot be overstated. It was then time to head "home" to complete some maintenance.

On Friday we spent much of the morning touring the Bantry House, built by an earl in 1739, a fascinating cornerstone of local and national history. We then traveled mountain passes with hairpin turns and striking stone tunnels to the coastal plains of Mizen Head and Sheep's Head. It was a gorgeous sunny day to enjoy a beachy drive and ice cream on the ocean cliff. On the way back our T57 did its best to race Jorgen and Christian in their T35B and other GPs as we all wanted to get back ahead of the rain and attempt to enjoy a hot shower before another fine meal at The Dunloe.



Chrisso Rheault

A rainbow stop along the winding country lane.



Viola Procovio

Driving through the rugged stone tunnels of Mizen Head.



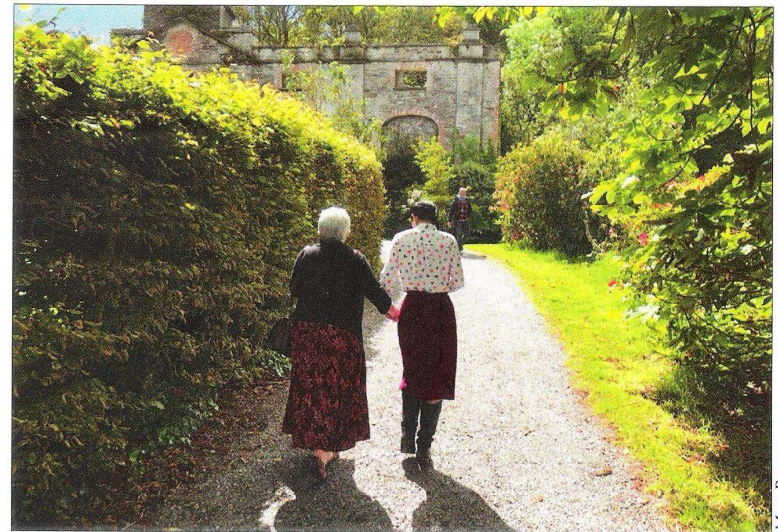
John Cesari

The Cesari 1927 Type 40 after shooting the Dunloe gap.

Saturday was a day of vacation from our vacation. It may seem silly to some, but anyone who has attended a rally will certainly know that a day off of driving does wonders for the body. Viola and Chrisso arranged a private fly-fishing morning for those interested: Italian Viola Procovio (T37), Chrisso Rheault (T40), Germans Walter and Severin Rothlauf (T30), Dutch Ronald Beckers (T35C), Matthew Baran and Amadea Cesari (T57).

The day started off with a short jaunt to a secluded lake halfway up a mountainside. We teamed up with a pair of wonderful local fisherman who were prepared to teach us how to fly fish on the windiest day of the rally. Ronald and Chrisso were brave enough to take on the wind with traditional fly fishing rods. The rest of us began fishing with reel rods and flies. Chrisso caught a fish on his first cast into the lake; it was momentous! By the end of the morning everyone had caught at least one fish, keeping our host's record at 100 percent of the people he has taught to fish.

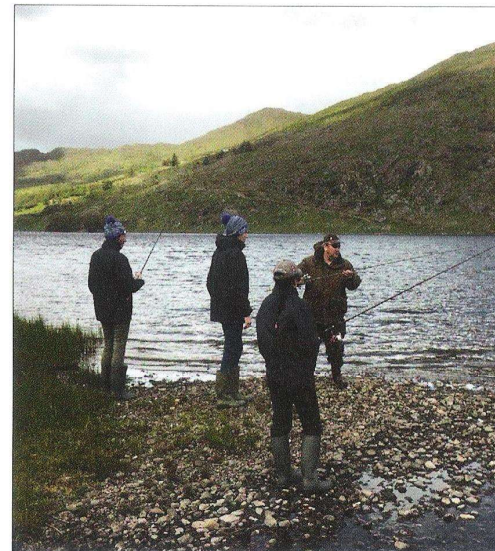
Upon returning to The Dunloe it was time to recharge the drivers' batteries, while the Bugs rested in the paddock. We utilized some of the amenities that the hotel has to offer and sweated it out in the sauna before taking a relaxing swim in the beautiful indoor pool. As the afternoon progressed, we ventured down to the stables for a nice ride around The Dunloe's trails on the magnificent Austrian Haflinger horses kept on the



Matt Baran

The manicured gardens of Bantry House.

hotel grounds. There is not enough space in this publication or words to express justly how beautiful and well taken care of The Dunloe is. Walking around the hotel before we all regrouped for dinner we were able to



Matt Baran

Fly-fishing on the lake.



Chrisso Rheault

The catch.



Chrisso Rheault

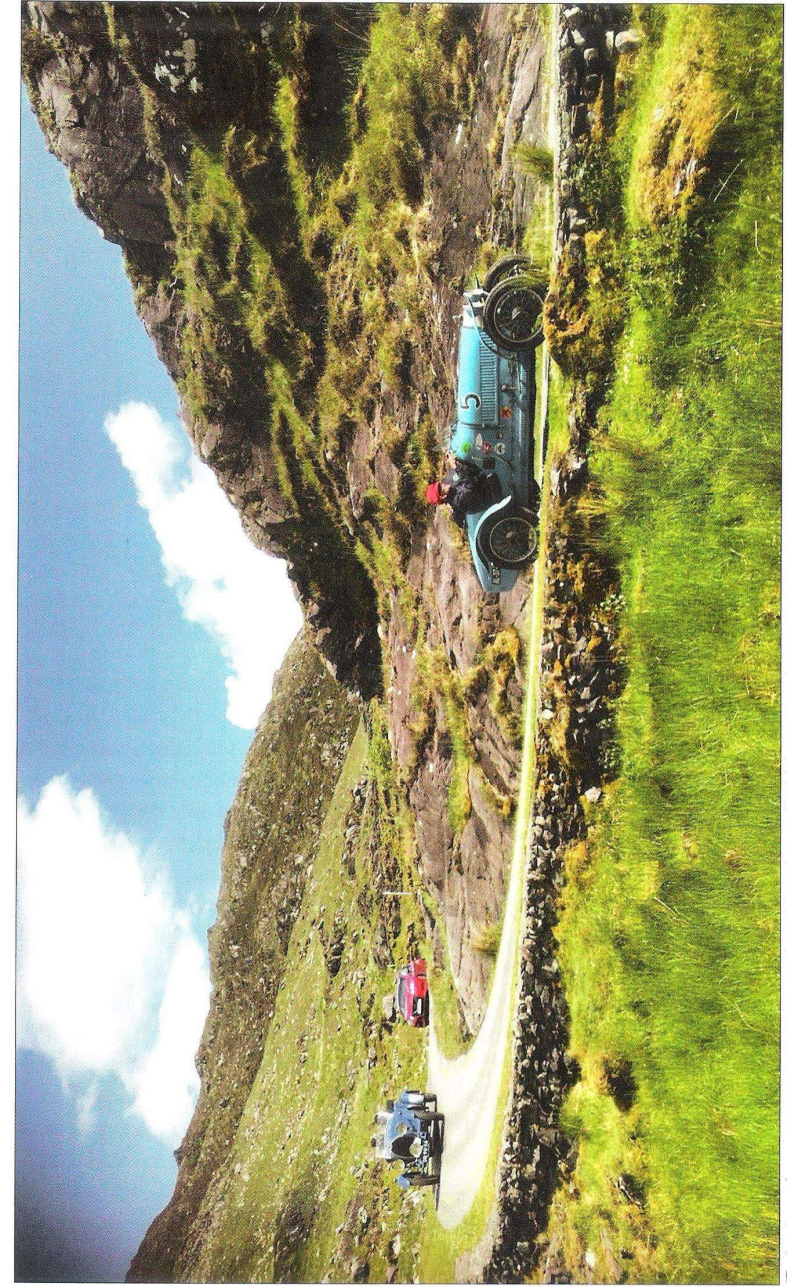
Champagne reception at the 12th-century watch tower in The Dunlop gardens.

take in a 12th century watch tower that guards the Pass of Dunloe, which is surrounded by painstakingly manicured fairy gardens.

Sunday was spent mostly behind the wheel, driving up the coast to Dingle Village and around Sleah Head. We quite enjoyed being joined by Jorgen, Birgitte and Villads Nielsen (T35B) for much of the drive. The drive was close to the ocean and full of amazing scenery. Each day seemed to be the most beautiful, but as the next day passed, one was once again met with the stunning Irish countryside and shore fronts that made it impossible to say any was more breathtaking than the other. It was so captivating that it was hard to keep your eyes on the road; however, the tiny roads and blind turns reminded the driver very quickly that the safest way to see the views was either to pull over or have the navigator explain them to you.

Lunch was preceded by traditional music and Irish dancing overlooking an idyllic cove surrounded by Bugattis. This lunch was amazing because all of the cars arrived, and the entire group ate together. It was quite the sight in the parking lot and nice that we all got to dine together twice this day.

On Monday much of the group explored Inish Beg & Skibbereen, covering dirt roads through lovely shaded glens. The group visited a charming



Enjoying the narrow, twisting roads with a beautiful blue sky above.

Cornelia Cesari



Jim and Tonya Hull's T57SC/R at Muckross House in Killarney.

toy soldier museum and was greeted by a large group of schoolchildren who were greatly enamored with the cars. The Cleary/Baran/Cesari team opted instead to stay closer to the hotel for some maintenance as well as some leisurely driving for Cornelia and Amadea, which ultimately resulted in another run at the legendary Dunloe Gap,

Dinner attire was requested to be “smart with a flash of green,” and our friends did not disappoint with flowing sage gowns with scarves Isadora Duncan would have envied, to brilliant lime wigs and everything in between. Those who had forgotten a garment of the appropriate hue borrowed from friends or were (somewhat forcefully) adorned with vegetation from available bouquets. The fabulously green party came together once more for dinner, which truly felt like a culmination of the fellowship developed over the week.

Following a day of travel back east across the island, a brisk and drizzly Tuesday morning saw all aboard the ferry, cars below deck and people above enjoying a well-earned rest. Mike Preston, who spent years preparing, seemed completely at ease, and Rupert Marks admitted he thought the week had gone all right. And here we enjoyed breakfast and



Angus Knill-Jones getting his wildlife lesson.

one another’s company chatting in small groups throughout the many decks of the ship, trading stories and plans, and some already indulging in daydreams of BOC’s 100th anniversary rally.

At 3 years old young Angus is one of the representatives of the future of the Bugatti family. Like many of us he carries a unique and wonderful legacy bestowed generously by the remarkable men and women who have honored the marque. The work of Ettore brought together technological grace, visual art and human interface with a level of harmony that still increases so many heart rates every time an engine starts. We are blessed to share these machines with one another and unsuspecting corners of the globe.

Though bittersweet that we would soon be parting to scatter back around the world, we shared fond sentiments and gratitude all around. Personally, these writers are profoundly thankful to those who share their knowledge and perspectives so generously; the hundreds of helping hands led by Mike Preston and Rupert Marks, who crafted this adventure, and the magnificent men of Gentry Restorations who approached each car with professionalism, confidence and great humor. The rally began with 101 cars and finished with 100, which was not a matter of luck. □