

## WSCC 2014 Sunny RallyMaster Letter

Thank you for attending the Westchester Sports Car Club 2014 "Sunny" July rally. If you found the rally to be long, boring, too technical, frustrating, and wanted to kill me at the finish, then please skip to the end of this letter and straight to the results as you'll probably find this letter long and frustrating and I have enough people with me on their kill list already. Also, there will probably be an error three sentences before the end that will leave your eyes rolling around the page in a loop and you might not be able to make to the end of the letter anyway. That's a segway to the elephant in the room: an error in the rally. Although two teams looked me blankly in the face and said "What error??" most of you are aware of the "Left after (No Left Turn) pic SOR and/or after (No Left Turn) pic SOL" should have been AT/AFTER for the SOR and AT for the SOL. This was an instruction that had to be changed days before the rally after the SOR was twisted away from the road and as such was not tested in cold runs and the typo/autocorrect into Excel was not caught. The worst part of the error was you wind up back on 17 north and its very difficult to get back to 72/Sterling Mine Road once the instructions don't work anymore and you realize you're in the wrong place. So I apologize for that. Anyone who asked for a time allowance for a rally error was granted one. There is nothing worse than sitting at a checkpoint biting your nails because there are so many things that can go wrong to ruin a rally, and then you start getting calls that something doesn't work and there might be an error. After countless hours of google maps, countless hours of driving, countless hours of testing roads and coming up with instructions, then the second guessing yourself before the drivers meeting... a rally is a very fragile thing. On one cold run in the middle of Harriman Park suddenly a few miles into the road was a police roadblock. A motorcycle had slid into the trees "so turn around and go back". Twenty miles of driving back to the Palisades and up Seven Lakes Drive got us back "on course", but if that happened during the rally, it would be the end for anyone running it. So as much as I regret the error, I'm glad the weather was good, the rally started on time, no accidents or deer hits, no police, no rally ending acts of God like a fallen tree or me getting a flat tire on the way to a checkpoint or the instructions blowing out my window on the way to a the start .... and now my torment as a rallymaster is over. :)

Some of the current members of WSCC have been writing these rallies throughout the Westchester area for 30 to 40 years. I hear many of them say how on Westchester 70 miles rallies "There wasn't one road on this rally I haven't been on before!". If you need directions to somewhere in Westchester, ask one of them. With that in mind, many of our rallies a few years ago were very polarized: the regulars would all compete for a trophy and 90% of the novices wouldn't finish and then would not come back to a future rally. So in the last few years, the rallymasters have been writing very easy short rallies, hoping to keep the novices in the game. My goal for this rally was to write one that would challenge the regulars while not losing the novices to the point where they give up. Besides the "new" roads in Rockland and NJ previously unseen to Westchester regulars, I wrote new Generals with new instructions. I was hoping different Generals would throw a monkey wrench into the brains of the regulars who've been using the same Generals for years, while to a novice they would be the same as our regular Generals and level the playing field between the vets and newbies. I think that goal was achieved, as many "regulars" threatened to kill me at the checkpoints, while a few novice teams approached me and said they loved the rally. I've learned to never stick my head in a rally car to ask what they thought of it while the navigator was holding her pen clenched in a fist. You know who you are.

Every instruction I thought (and cold runners thought) would be a problem, nobody mentioned when I asked teams what instructions tripped them up. Then instructions I thought were straight forward many said they messed up. I'm chalking that up to the cold runners that when they saw something that looked tricky suggested a helper or change to make it easier. I thought people would be thrown by the road going past the

entrance to Rockland Lake Park (bear right after second "Executive"), but nobody had a problem with it. Many instructions I thought were very obvious were a major stumbling block. The "forced right" at the beginning of the rally, for instance. Many people were flummoxed by it. There is a curve to the left down a hill, and halfway down the hill is a large sign saying "All Traffic =>", then a second sign next to the Stop sign "Right Turn Only", and the painted lines on the ground shows a turn to the right, AAAAAAND I mentioned at the driver's meeting there would be a forced turn within the first 10 miles of the rally. Also when I hung signs, I spent a while standing on the guardrail with big pliers trimming the trees around the All Traffic sign. I decided to hang a Sunny sign on the first sign to help draw your eyes to it. I was afraid navigators might see the Sunny and start drawing and ignore the sign, but I figured the sign on the Stop sign would cover them and anyone likely to miss BOTH signs would have the Sunny help them look at the sign. With all that, I figured it was too easy. See pics of the signs and intersection below:



If you do go straight missing all those clues, you end up at a T in a quarter of a mile. So I figured that if anyone did go straight, it would self correct very quickly. Another big trick was the "left at third 'Speed Limit'" instruction after "left at Nob SOL" near Greenwood Lake. The trick there was the first Speed Limit sign was right at the intersection where you turn and easy to miss. Any navigator not reading ahead, or any driver who just goes before the navi reads off the next direction would be caught by this one. And if you do miss it, there were TWO "Speed Limit" signs a quarter mile past the actual third sign that would be the fourth and fifth sign and there was no road to the left anywhere near them:



I was hoping it would be a mistake that was quick to correct, especially since you knew the road you turned off of was “Nob”. To make the sign stand out so it would be easier to correct, I put a Sunny on it so you knew there was a sign right at the turn. But that again might have put someone’s eyes on the Sunny and they ignored the important sign =>

Everything in the rally before Harriman State Park was written three years ago. And that only happened during a month of “gotta get out of the house and drive my car by myself” to clear mind funk. Near the Palisades Mall is very residential and I took great care to find fun and as least busy as possible roads. If you noticed all the lakes, reservoirs, and state parks you passed that’s because those are the last places in the area not littered with McMansions and strip malls. I wish I could find the reservoir service roads and horse gravel roads like in Westchester, but there was not one non-paved road in this rally. This winter I promised WSCC I would finish my rally and put it on this year if the other members could guaranty me we’d have four rallies this year. We’ll see if that happens. My last Rockland rally, six years ago, also started at the Palisades Mall and went up through West Point and north up 9A, so I wanted to punch through Harriman Park and get to the southern Orange County area and hit those roads. I spent days driving through Harriman trying to find a way through with as little chance of population (and Parks Police) as possible. Unfortunately most of you got to Greenwood Lake when the sun was down “by order of Navigation Law”, but luckily it was a big moon night and I had some roads right at the water’s edge. Many of the regulars said they enjoyed the rally after Harriman, as those roads were faster and spread out compared to the quick technical turns east of Harriman. I asked a few rally teams about the roads and cops and deer. One team said they were miserable through the residential sections because they seemed to pass tons of people walking about, while other teams said they never saw any pedestrians. One team said they saw five law enforcement cars (once while desperately trying to make up time in a 25mph zone, ugh) while I didn’t find another team who saw any. Another team said they lost count of how many deer they passed, but luckily never took out Bambi’s mom. Many teams enjoyed how the rally looped around itself and hit the same Sunny signs over and over. I purposefully had the rally come at those loops from different directions so most people wouldn’t even know they were in the same place until they hit the same Sunny signs in the same sequence. I made sure to put plenty of signs in those loops. I desperately wanted to put a checkpoint in one of the double or triple loops to have a multi-checkpoint rally, but couldn’t find a suitable safe place to have cars pull over. After winding up with no checkpoint workers for the day of the rally anyway, the rally was written to have just the one checkpoint at the end. Then the day of the rally suddenly I had four helpers show up unexpectedly and sat in the car and did a little math and quickly added a checkpoint at The Orchards farm. Luckily it turned out to be a great location.



The best part of writing this rally for me, personally, didn’t happen until one day after the rally and was from a team that did not finish the rally. Unfortunately I got stuck picking up the signs by myself, and was not happy about having to find a place to park to remove each sign. And the fact that I’m super allergic to poison ivy. And the grumbles from rally regulars and threats of pen ink inside my eyeball were still a sore point. I’m on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere when I get a call on my cell. It’s car number 8, and they had a question about the rally. I remember car number 8 because he called me right after I closed checkpoint one an hour and a half after “rally time” had passed. He was lost. He told me where he was, and because I was so anal about writing this rally, I knew exactly where he was, and what he missed. He was one instruction from checkpoint one and couldn’t figure it out. I hold him he missed a “No Outlet” sign and exactly where it was and how to get there. He was impressed I knew exactly what he had been trying to figure out for 15 min, and said he refused to give up and would carry on. When I got to checkpoint two, I

looked up his registration card. I remember a gentleman show up at registration in a non-sporty car who I had never seen before and meant to ask him how he heard of the rally, but never got a chance. That was car number 8. I was sad when checkpoint two closed two hours after the last car should have arrived, and car 8 never made it. He told me he got to Characters Bar around 1am and the bartender told him we had all just left. He finished the rally! Sort of. Then he asked me on the phone if I could answer a rally question he had. I knew exactly where he was talking about. Every time he had a question about a turn or sign, I had an answer. He was impressed, and I impressed myself (then felt a little sad how well I knew these roads because I spent WAY too much time on them). He was going on and on about how much he loved the rally and would be driving it again with his navigator Mary in the daytime to see all the sights he missed. Then he asked if he could text or email me his answer sheet and be scored on Sunny signs alone. Sure! He told me how he used to do rallies in the 70s and some of them were with the Westchester Sports Car Club. Too cool! And I told him how my dad used to do them in the 60s and still had some old trophies in his office. The next thing I know, I've been sitting in the car on the side of the road for almost an hour gabbing about rallies. So thank you navigator Bill Popp and your driver Mary, you made my day.

WSSC is automotive history. The Turkey Tour rally held yearly around Thanksgiving is the longest consecutively run rally in the United States, starting at least in the early 50s. The Bunny/Easter rallies have been going on for 30 years. I've heard the stories of almost 200 cars in a rally some 20 years ago. But now the rallies are more along the lines of Global Warming. It's something that could very likely disappear in the next few years and most people are not aware there's a problem at all. Every year there are less and less people available to write rallies for WSSC. The same people are writing a rally every year and they're burnt out and express how they don't want to write one the next year. From the small group running WSSC it's hard to find anyone to test a rally or work a checkpoint. The only reason I finished this rally that I had toyed with three years ago, was because I wanted to prop up our rally program that's about to implode. We need people to step forward to write rallies and to test rallies. Usually two people or couples write a rally with one in charge (the rallymaster) and a helper person/couple with lesser responsibilities (co-master). If writing a rally seems like too much for you, you could volunteer to co-master a rally someone else is working on and help test it out and come up with instructions for a few days. Or even if that is too much, if there is a rally in the future that you know you won't be able to attend, you could volunteer to do a cold run. That way you will still get to drive a rally you wanted to run in anyway, but this time any time or day you wish. Now you get to give input to the rallymaster in real time and give suggestions while looking for errors and contribute in that way (and less pressure so no pen stabbing should be a worry). I know that personally writing and testing rallies has really improved my ability to drive or navigate future rallies because you really get a feel for how a rallymaster is trying to guide and trick you through a rally. And of course the more cold runs we have the less chance of an error in a rally sneaking by everyone's eyes. Especially when a fix after a cold run creates another problem and nobody else catches it. If you have any interest in helping in any way, before these great rallies no longer exist in our area, please contact me or anyone from the club. Or if you have any questions about this rally or its instructions, contact me and let me know.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the volunteers who did cold runs for me, and the volunteers who worked checkpoints. Most of them are from the Westchester area and came a long way to help out. Without them this rally wouldn't have happened at all. Thank you, and thanks all for a great day!

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## *The Results*

Perfect time from your start (based on car number) to CheckPoint1 was 59min and 41 seconds. Perfect time from CP1 leave to CP2 arrive was one hour, 47min, and 35 seconds (some cars had a delay before leaving CP1). Perfect mileage for rally (at CP2) was 83min 25seconds. You passed 43 Sunny signs hung (including multiple passes), and all were recovered the next day so none were lost/missing.

Seventeen cars ran the rally, five did not finish, but two of the five made it to the bar or otherwise got me their answer sheet. Three cars made it to CP1 within a minute and 22 seconds of perfect time. Three cars made it from CP1 to CP2 within 7 minutes of perfect time. One team only missed one sign, but they had three people in the car. One team finished the rally but had no signs at all, and they also had three people in the car. When I emailed them about it, they said their son put all the signs in his Ipad but at the end when he realized there were 43 of them he didn't feel like drawing them all on the paper. lol

The top three scoring cars were within 350 points/seconds of each other. If you removed the scoring penalty of guessing total mileage, the winning car and second place were within 4 seconds of each other but the winner would not change (they both missed 3 signs).

The registration card of the winning car says the driver's name is "Schnelle Fahrer". Since I'm German I know that means "Drive faster!" in German. They drove the rally in an Audi. I still have not figured out what language or what the navigator's name means "Hayama Kurui". Herzlichen Glückwunsch, Auto Nummer neun!

The rally passed twelve lakes: DeForest, Rockland, Congers, Tiorati, Upper Lake Cohasset, Cohasset, Little Dam, Kloibers, Mombasha, Walton, Greenwood Lake, and the Monkville Reservoir. But you probably only saw one or two.

Days rallymaster suffered poison ivy: thirteen

Number of eyeballs lost to pens (or any writing implement): zero

Numbers of pens lost under navigator's seats: we'll never know