

Jaguar XK Commemorative 1951 Darwin to Alice Springs - 1996

Four SS Register members and their wives drove their S.S.I., Jaguar MK IV and MK V cars from Adelaide to Darwin and return.

- Jan & Ross Rasmus (SS1),
- Margaret & the Late Don Evans (Mk4 DHC),
- Graham & Dorothy Butler (MK4),
- Lorraine & Jim Temby (Mk5)

Tales of the Trip

The trip began with a request from Victorian Jaguar Drivers Club. They were planning a 45th Commemorative run to celebrate Jaguar's 1951 Darwin to Alice Springs XK120 1,000-mile journey with an average speed of 100 mph. To test the logistics of organising the run for the 50th, we were invited to join.

We decided that we would drive our cars and camp with tents. A trailer was required to transport all equipment including food necessary to camp on the side of the road.

Jim was unable to commence the trip with us, but put his car on the train and joined us in Alice Springs.

We toasted the beginning of the journey 13th July 1996 with champagne at Gawler with other SS Register members.

End of each day we would set up camp, light the fire ready for cooking and warmth when the sun went down.

Unbeknownst to others, The Rasmus's set their table with a green tablecloth embroidered with "Jaguar logo, Adelaide to Darwin" and our names embroidered on the table napkins, a three-candle candelabra made the setting.



Ross dressed in a brightly coloured waist coat and matching bow tie, Jan a scarf and hat. Not your usual attire for camping on the side of the road, and a surprise for all.

We all felt comfortable with the late Don, his good mechanical knowledge and having driven this route many times.

Late in the day he would select a suitable campsite, usually in the bush, miles from any town. Don, being a bush truckie, a wash in the bowl was good enough. By day 3 the girls ganged up on him and it was changed so we had hot showers every other day.

Coober Pedy then Uluru, magic memory of early Jaguars with Uluru in the background as the sun is setting.

Had to replace fuel pump (SS1) with a spare we carried with us on way to Alice Springs, where we spent 2 days sightseeing.

You might think it would be boring covering these distances at 90 kph, but with CB's, there was much banter, never a dull moment. I could imagine the comments of the other travellers that had their CB's switched on. CB's were used as we were kilometres apart to communicate between cars and to advise of approaching vehicles.





Another Jaguar photo shoot was at the Devil Marbles, impressive display of large rocks.

The Old Noise in the Engine Trick

On breaking camp at Renner Springs, the Jaguars went to fill up, but when I started the S.S.I., it made a loud knocking noise, not a good feeling! So I advised others that the S.S.I. was not going anywhere.

Discussions were had;

- send the car back home on a trailer,
- arrange for spare engine from Adelaide
- or fix it.

Don said "we came as a group we'll fix it." The car's front wheels were up on a couple of large rocks and for the next two days heads under the bonnet, legs protruding from under the body, head, sump off and gearbox out. The problem was a bolt had become loose on the pressure plate causing the noise.

To Daly Waters to view the extensive Bra display. A swim in the pool at Mataranka which was a relief as the weather was really heating up, no air conditioners in these cars. We attracted a lot of attention along the track, the bush telegraph

worked really well as towns knew we were coming.

We reached Darwin with a couple of days to spare, with upmarket accommodation with running water at the caravan park, made the girls happy!

To celebrate arriving safely in Darwin we dressed up in our formal clothes,

Graham in his Butlers outfit with top hat, I had a special appliquéd jacket with SS and all others visited the op shop.

At MGM Grand Casino, we had Registration and drivers briefing, where we socialised with other entrants from all states except Canberra which wasn't represented.

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Darwin to Alice Springs - 1996 (cont)

The Commemorative Run

The Official start: 2nd August 1996 at 9.00am

The actual Rally included night stopovers, at Katherine where we toured the magnificent Gorge, Mataranka, then Tennant Creek.

The journey from Darwin to Alice Springs took 4 days and 1,000 miles of driving.

There were approx 50 Jaguars, mostly XK's.

For us driving the older cars we would be one of the last to arrive at each night stop, at times we did envy the faster cars, but we had more time to admire the ever-changing scenery of the Australian landscape.

The journey Adelaide to Darwin and return approx. 4000 miles. Four weeks travelling (a different outfit each night).

Interesting my driving vision is only about 20-30 metres either side of the

road, but Don would spot kangaroos and emus 200-300 metres away and use the CB's to advise us.

Having no real door seals, we enjoyed the aroma of the bush, but a deep breath was required when passing "road kill".

It was very cold and several times the tea towel that we had hung out to dry was frozen stiff in the morning.

There were many who acknowledged us in our old cars, lights flashing, horns tooting, thumbs up.

Graham's car was the only car that kept getting punctures, and on the second to last day he got another. Graham said "not a problem" and proceeded to change it. Dorothy who is normally quiet and reserved could be heard saying "Graham how many punctures does it take before it becomes a problem".

This was about his twelfth!!!

We males knew each other through Register meetings, with the girls having

had little contact with each other and to spend 4 weeks together was a marvellous achievement!

The S.S.I. made in 1934, at the time was 62 years old, an excellent achievement, the others were older than 48 years. MK IV DHC 1948; MK IV saloon 1948; MK V 1950 saloon.

We all felt that we enjoyed the trip so much it was mentioned we should consider the Concours in Perth in a couple of year's time.

Ross Rasmus

Editor- Thank you very much Ross. I was living in Alice Springs at the time and went to see the cars on display at the Alice Casino. Cannot wait for your next story - The Trip to Perth.



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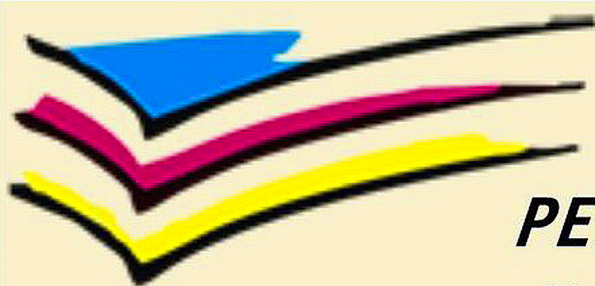
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