

THE ENTRANTS

The race began at the Red Ball Garage shortly after midnight on November 15. While the competitors could leave at any time they chose during the 24 hours of the 15th, most chose to depart New York in the dead of night, primarily to avoid the Manhattan and New Jersey normal cheek-to-jowl traffic and to permit them to run the Los Angeles freeways at roughly mid-day, 36-38 hours later—if all went well. While an Indy-type flying start through the Lincoln Tunnel would have been ideal, practical considerations dictated the staggered start with the entrants leaving the Red Ball at informal intervals. The competitors are listed in the order in which they departed: *Chevrolet Sportvan: Polish Racing Drivers of America—Drivers, Oscar Koveleski, Tony Adamowicz and Brad Niemcek.* This team requested to leave first, based on its obvious claim to the "pole" position. This request was not contested by the other teams, so the PRDA rolled away from the Red Ball at 12:11 a.m. with a small cluster of photographers, *Car and Driver* staffers and baffled pedestrians witnessing their departure. The plan was to run non-stop, thanks to a special setup using five 55-gallon fuel drums, and a myriad of hoses, lines and pumps, which gave them a total on-board capacity of 298 gallons. (Note: others knew they would have to stop. The original Cannonball Baker, run last May by Moon Trash II, an infamous Dodge Van, in 40 hours and 51 minutes, had consumed 315 gallons of gas. With nearly an extra ton of gas on board, giving their PRDA van a gross weight approaching 7000 lbs., mileage *had* to slump to a point where a stop would be necessary.) Briggs Chevrolet, the New Jersey dealer that entered the van for the PRDA, had also modified the dipstick and filler setup so oil could be added without stopping. A special 3.07-to-one final drive, Corvette dual ignition, heavy-duty Goodyear tires, tachometer, bunk and modified air cleaner completed the improvements.

Professional racer Adamowicz, one of the two FIA graded American drivers, was teamed with Oscar Koveleski, a perennial Can-Am competitor, SCCA champion, and racing public relations expert, and club racer Brad Niemcek. They left a substantial tide of publicity (which some of their more paranoid rivals thought the police might have read), claiming that with the aid of multitudes of PRDA members across the country and their non-stop capacity, they would win by maintaining legal speed limits. Decked out in fancy fireproof racing uniforms, they accelerated their wildly decorated van into the night as Steve Smith, Cannonball pioneer and sage of cross-country racing, commented, "They'll need more than Nomex to protect them if they so much as cough. If that thing lets go, it'll make Amchitka look like a wet match."

1971 Cadillac Sedan deVille: Driveaway Special—Drivers, Larry Opert, Nate Pritzker, Ron Herisko, all of Cambridge, Massachusetts. As this trio rolled away at 12:14 a.m., they had to be strong candidates for the Style Award (if there could be such a thing in an event of this nature). Lawyer Opert, brother of racing car dealer Fred Opert and himself a club racer, plus his law partner Herisko and engineer friend Pritzker had no car that suited the demands of the Cannonball so they found one in the stygian pages of *The New York Times*. They answered an ad from a stuffy New York businessman who wanted his new Caddy transported to California. Our three heroes got the job, *provided* they did not drive the nearly new (2500 miles) sedan before eight o'clock in the morning, did not stay on the road after nine in the evening, and under no circumstances exceeded 75 mph. Putting the owner's mind at rest, the Cambridge team snatched up the car, stuffed some extra fuel cans in the trunk, a radar detector on the sun

visor, a set of binoculars in the glove compartment and screeched off toward the Red Ball.

1970 MGB/GT—Drivers, Bob Perlow, Baldwin, Long Island and Wes Dawn, Venice, California. Perlow and Dawn left at 12:15 in a car they hadn't expected to be driving. Perlow's original entry, a Volvo P1800, had been stolen at the United States Grand Prix (and recovered, although the local authorities never bothered to notify him), so he bought the MGB used with 10,000 miles on the clock. A student at Hofstra University, Perlow met up with Dawn, a West Coast television worker and club racer, a few days before the race. Aside from adding driving lights and cans of fuel and water, their car was dead stock.

1971 Dodge Van, Modified—Drivers, Tom Marbut, Randy Waters and Becky Poston, all of Little Rock, Arkansas. Everyone called them the "Little Rock Tankers," because they'd mounted 190-gallon aluminum gas tanks in the back of their dazzling, new Dodge van. Operators of the *Sound 'N Sirloin* restaurant in Little Rock, Marbut and Waters, plus Tom's girl-



Fred Opert (center) counseled caution, was ignored.

friend, Becky Poston, had put together their van after reading the exploits of Moon Trash II in *C/D*. Aside from its special paint and fuel system, the van was equipped with a 2.94 final drive, an outside exhaust system, a radar detector (which sounded an alarm at every airport, but never made a peep in the vicinity of the police) and a thickly rugged interior. Its 360 cu. in. engine had been fitted with a Holley 750 CFM carburetor. "Snoopy II" as they called the van, had made a reconnaissance run from Little Rock to New York and back the week previous to the race. The "Little Rock Tankers" departed the Red Ball Garage at 12:22.

1971 Ferrari 275 GTB/4 Daytona coupe—Drivers, Dan Gurney, Santa Ana, California, and Brock Yates. This team left at 12:32. Their Ferrari was entered by exotic car impresario Kirk F. White, of Philadelphia. It was utterly stock (what could be modified?) and aside from a couple of sacks full of bread and cheese, peanuts, chocolate bars, Vitamin C tablets, Gatorade, a thermos of coffee and some extra spark plugs, etc., no extra equipment was carried. A dazzling blue paint job, complete with exquisite pin-striping, plus a patch-

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