

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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COPPERSTATE 1000

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A THOUSAND MILES OF GREAT ROAD

BY PILAR COVARRUBIAS

If you live here, you know, and if you've driven here you'll agree: Arizona's landscape is the West at its most spectacular, whether you're talking about wide open sagebrush valleys ringed by mountains or cactus-filled canyons hemmed in by red rock spires. And the roads that cover the state are as diverse and as fascinating as the landscape itself, from arrow-straight highways with infinite vistas to twisty back roads that carry adventurers into little-known corners of the desert.

Of course, it's always better to explore with friends, and it's better still when you're in a group of car nuts and driving enthusiasts. That's why the Men's Arts Council of the Phoenix Art Museum has been putting on the Copperstate 1000 for 13 years now, and it's why the event continues to be such a success. For four days

and 1000 miles, the Copperstate gives more than 50 vintage cars and their drivers/co-drivers the opportunity to roam Arizona's best roads in cars as compelling—and varied—as the terrain.

The cars this year ranged in age from a 1926 Bentley Le Mans re-creation of Tucson's Earl and Alan Snodgrass, to a pair of 1970 Mercedes 280SE 3.5 convertibles (one driven by Paradise Valley's Robert and Sydney Anderson, the other a visitor from Mary land driven by Lawrence Macks and James Halle), and in rarity from a one-off Ferrari 250 GT TdF Zagato entered by Nevada's Rob Walton and Nance Larson to more-
numerous but no less enjoyable

Corvettes like the all-original '67 roadster brought by Scottsdale's Don and Barbara Kaitz. A bevy of Jaguars, Porsches, Mustangs and Mercedes filled the ranks.



DAY ONE

This year, the Copperstate's organizers picked a route through the southeastern corner of the state that was certain to keep everyone entertained regardless of what kind of car they drove. Starting at the Phoenix Art Museum—where visitors had a chance to check out the cars at close range—the rally meandered through the city's eastern suburbs on its way through Superior and south to the copper mines of Hayden. No matter how many times you've seen it, the open-pit

Hayden mine is spectacular—the depth and the scale both unbelievable, the colors fascinating.

Following the Gila River before turning northward towards Globe, Highway 77 gave Copperstaterers a good look at some of the enormous saguaro cacti that populate the desert. Heading south toward Safford and the first night's stop, rallyers got their first taste of the wide-open valleys that gave cars like the Ferrari 275 GTB—brought by Sidney Allen from Longview, Texas—a chance to really stretch their legs. Those who had come from the opposite coast, like New Hampshire's Peter and Debbie Hosmer, mentioned the big, open spaces of the first day's route as one of the reasons they come West for the Copperstate year after year with their 275 GTB/4.

DAY TWO

Perhaps more intriguing to local drivers are the rock spires and pine forests of the Chiricahua National Monument, an 11,000-acre portion of the Coronado National Forest whose dramatic formations were created over the millennia by wind and water. Sacred to the Apaches, the Chiricahua gave Copperstaterers a chance to meander slowly through an area of exceptional natural beauty, before hitting the open road again to Bisbee. This old mining town is a museum in itself, full of 19th-century architecture and artifacts of Arizona history. Lunching at the historic Copper Queen hotel, many rallyers could be heard saying that they hoped to return to spend more time in this fascinating town, exploring the nearby wildlife reserve as well as the well-kept town itself.

Leaving Bisbee, two-lane route 80 gave

Copperstaterers another chance to blow out the cobwebs, its big sweeping turns testing the stability of the vintage machines as well as horsepower. This is a real Corvette road if one can be said to exist, whose long uphill seemed tailor-made to test big-block acceleration. Plenty of E-type Jags could also be seen enjoying themselves on this road before bringing the day to a close in Benson.

There, the Copperstate crew had opened the bar by the time we arrived, and a Southwest barbecue was also underway to the tune of country swing from a local band. By now, even newcomers to the Copperstate had made plenty of friends en route, and the social scene was in full swing. This, after all, is a big reason that many of the partic-

KEEP RIGHT >>



Photo: Howard Kobay



■ Sunday morning, Phoenix Art Museum: public viewing Monday morning, Safford: dawn's early light reaches divergent entrants. Clean and eager, everything from classic Jaguar to Bondurant track-prepared Corvette to '67 GTO is ready to hit the road.



Photos: Arizona Driver Magazine except as noted.

■ Day Two brings the clean sweeps of desert and mountain highways through Willcox, Chiricahua, Sunizona and Bisbee, to our next stop in Benson.

» COPPERSTATE 1000 - cont'd

Participants come—there's no attitude or snobbery on display at the Copperstate, no matter how lofty or lowly a person's social status or automobile. This is a rare thing in the world of vintage rallying, and we can only attribute it to the positive and welcoming attitude of the organizers themselves, who make sure the full spectrum of eligible autos is present and therefore ensure a diverse bunch of participants, as well.

DAY THREE

Depending on how much they'd enjoyed themselves the night before, rallyers could leave Benson for breakfast at Kartchner Caverns the next day anytime between 8 and 10am. This was more than just an early-morning picnic, however—the organizers had arranged for private tours of the caverns before they opened to the public that day. Since tours of the caverns are booked well in advance, this gave rallyers a chance to visit a spectacular feature of Arizona's underground landscape that they might

otherwise have missed. From there, the route took an eastward detour to Tombstone—a can't-miss destination for tourists that's perhaps a bit past its prime as a historic site—followed by a meandering drive along highways 82 and 83 through Elgin and lovely Sonoita on the way to Patagonia and Nogales.

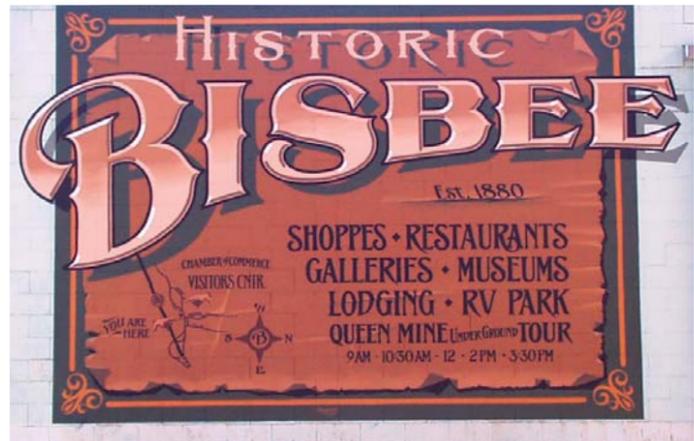
The driving schedule was relaxed enough to allow for a short cross-border hop, but most participants chose to head straight for Arivaca Junction and Arivaca Road, one of the real drivers' roads on the tour. With its constant elevation changes and endless left-right turns, Arivaca Road is more like a smooth motocross course than a public road.

Although it might have been taxing for big cars like the Mercedes 3.5s or the '63 Thunderbird Sports Roadster—brought by T-bird collectors Jim and Karon Eisberg of Prescott—it no doubt delighted drivers of smaller, more nimble cars. You can bet that the effervescent Jess and Eddie Marker were having a ball on Arivaca Road in their 1960 Lotus Type 14 Elite, and so were Ron and Joan Yagoda in their '62Porsche 356 Roadster.

After Arivaca Road, the easygoing route 286 into Tucson almost came as a relief, but it wasn't without its scenic distractions, particularly as it became SR-86 approaching the city. Even though we didn't actually enter the Saguaro National Monument, the giant cacti and spectacular red rock hills were mesmerizingly beautiful, and Copperstaters as a whole slowed down to take in the sight of it all before heading into Tucson and our final evening on the road. Staged at the appropriately grand Westin La Paloma on the edge of the desert, the resort gave us a chance to relax by the pool, get a massage or perhaps do some shopping before sitting down to a fantastic dinner served in the garden, again in the company of new friends and old.

DAY FOUR

On the rally's final day, we said goodbye to Tucson and started on the road back to Phoenix, taking route 77 north past Biosphere II and into the saguaro-peopled desert south of Hayden. Passing again by one of the world's largest mining operations, we pressed on toward the



■ Day Two includes a refreshing mountaintop stop in Chiricahua National Monument and a crowd-drawing lunch stop in Bisbee. Day Three loops from Benson to Kartchner Caverns, Tombstone, Sonoita, lunch at Patagonia Lake State Park, a pass by the Mexican border at Nogales and Tuesday night in Tucson.

Boyce Thomson Southwestern Arboretum and our final lunch stop. Tours of the arboretum enabled Copperstaterers to put names to the fantastic desert vegetation they'd been seeing, and more than a few took the opportunity to bring home new succulents for the garden.

Before returning to Phoenix proper and our final night together at the Westin Kierland, the Copperstate route took us over the Usery Pass and along the scenic route past Mormon Flat and Horse Mesa dams. The higher elevations brought cooler air as well as a change of scenery, which was welcomed by car and participant alike as a brief



14th Annual Copperstate 1000

Vintage Car Road Rallye

Saturday, April 17 - Wednesday, April 21, 2004

Copperstate 1000 is a celebration of the Arizona landscape and the artful design of the automobile. Over 60 cars from around the world participate in this 4-day vintage car road rallye that travels 1000 miles through Arizona.

If you would like to receive an application packet please call 602.307.2060 or visit copperstate1000.com. Sports, touring, or vintage racing cars manufactured before January 1, 1970 are eligible to apply.



The rallye is a fund raising event for Phoenix Art Museum and is organized by Men's Arts Council, a support organization of the Museum.



■ Tuesday evening ended at the Westin La Paloma in Tucson. A local crowd mingled with the machinery, the DPS officers dusted off their boots and polished up their bikes, and dinner was served in the gardens. Wednesday, Day Four, brought us back to the Valley of the Sun, for an awards banquet at the Westin Kierland. See you next year!

respite before the heat of Phoenix engulfed us on our return. For locals, too, it was a great reminder that it isn't necessary to drive 1,000 miles to find great roads or fascinating scenery—there's plenty of both in Phoenix's back yard.

The rally over, we spent a final evening together that included an awards presentation and a sincere thank-you to both the Phoenix Art Museum crew who'd put the event together and to the officers of the Arizona Department of Public Safety who'd made sure everyone had fun on the roads without letting things get out of hand. The rally had been superbly organized, and thanks to the DPS officers neither accidents nor traffic tickets characterized the event. Those who'd needed mechanical assistance had been promptly taken care of by Arizona AAA, and those whose cars couldn't be fixed en route were provided with shiny new Lexus cars in which to continue. Between the organization, the cars and the people, the Copperstate 1000 was a real success, reminding all who participated that there's more to driving than getting from point A to point B, or worse, sitting in traffic. There's still plenty of fun to be had with a good car, a good road and good friends. Throw in some of the world's most spectacular scenery, and you've got it made. ■

PILAR COVARRUBIAS has been a motoring journalist for over 15 years. She grew up on dirt bikes and later turned to club-racing 125cc grand prix motorcycles. Having survived thus far, she turned her attention to performance and vintage automobiles.



Photo: Howard Koby



Photo: Howard Koby

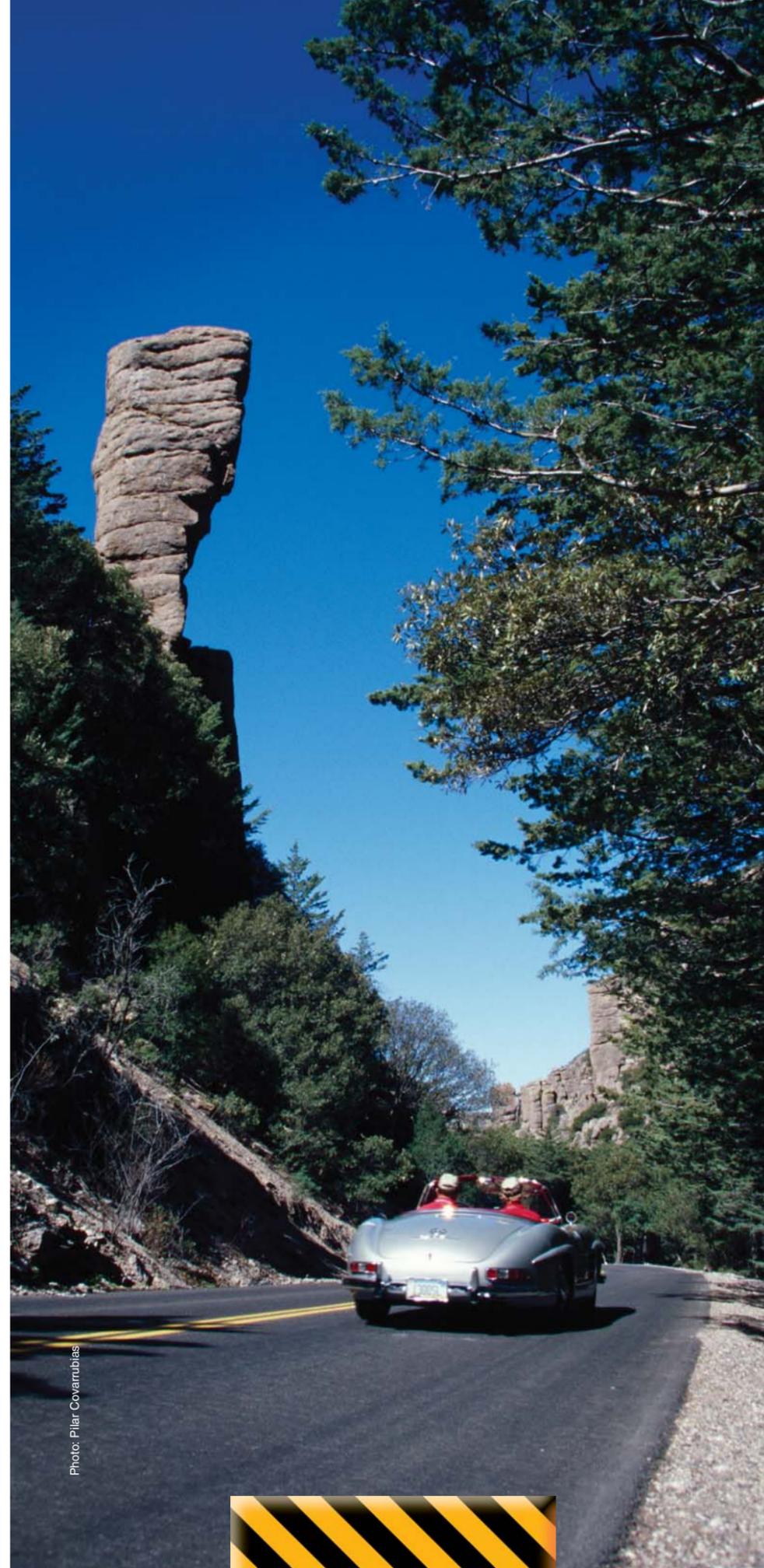
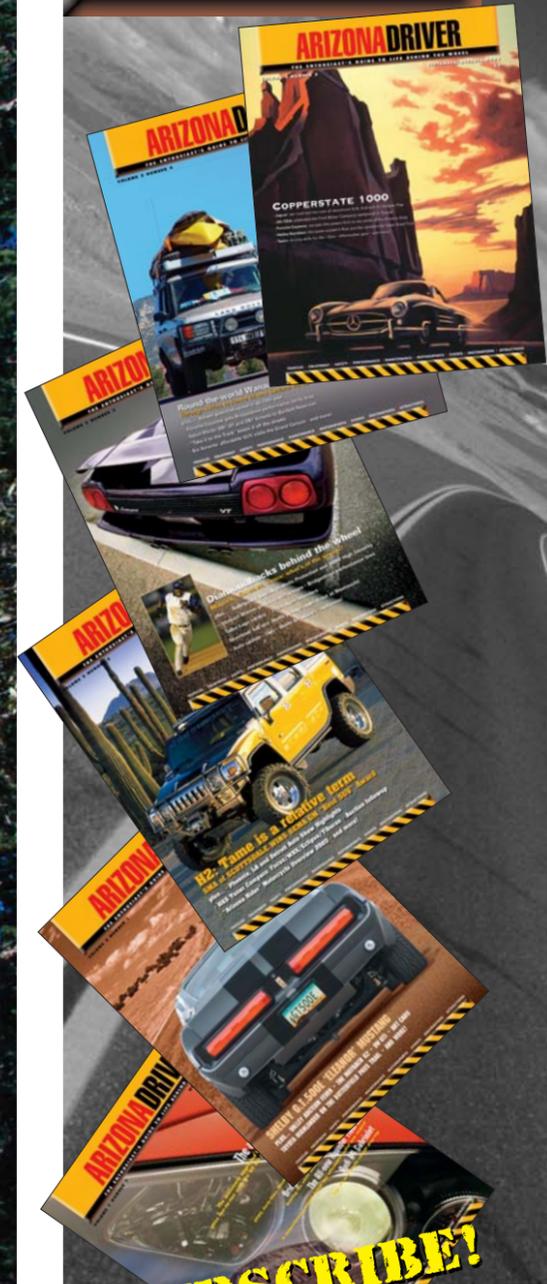


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