

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Argentina 'Mil Millas Sport' - Part Two



Each of the three days of driving on the Argentinean Mille Miglia stemmed from a different location in Bariloche.

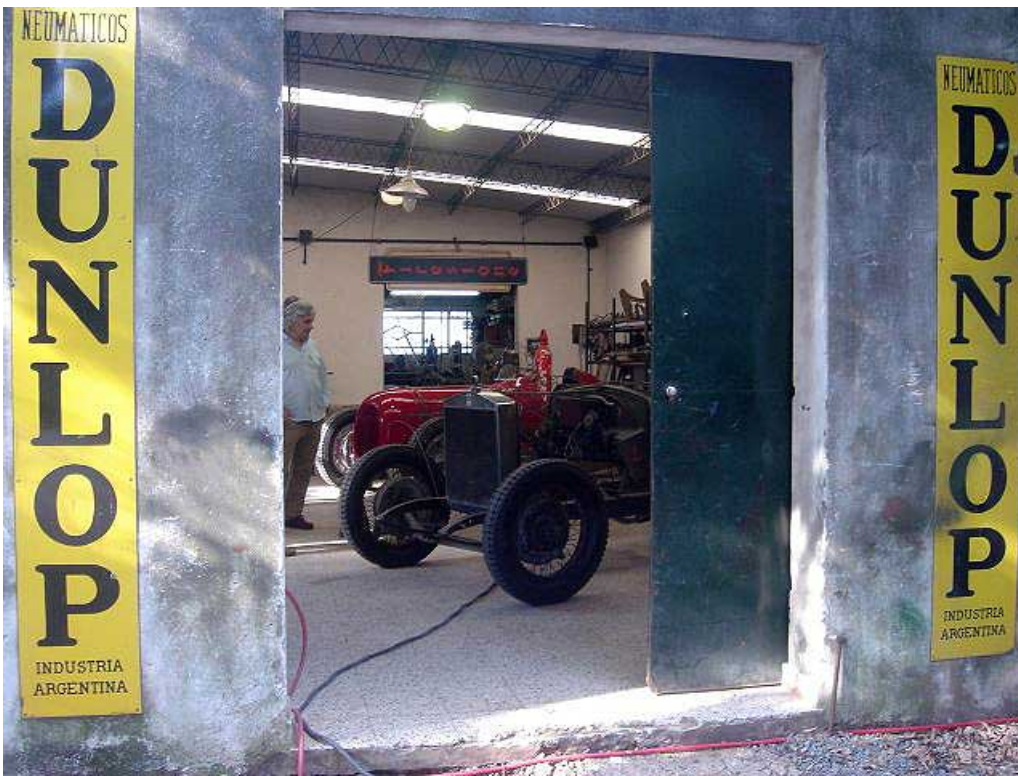
Day One was a trip westward, around deep blue lakes and over the snow-capped Andes into Chile. Following the DB6 up to the startline podium at the Llao Llao entrance, we synchronised our wristwatches to the master clock and waved to the crowd. Then off we went, Bruce driving the first leg.

After a number of *curvas peligrosas*, trying to keep up with the Aston, we crested a hill to discover one of our most beautiful and scary moments, only 15 minutes into the rally. A vast panorama spread out before us, double lakes in front, bright sky surrounded by mountains and green foliage. But at the same time we realised this was a 'scenic lookout', featuring local crafts vendors with roadside tables and – just for good measure – a neat pyramid of rocks in the middle of the road. Bruce handled the downchange nicely but just afterwards, as we were saying 'wasn't that weird?', we were confronted with a hard left-hander during which the passenger door flew open. While still in the turn Bruce grabbed my arm and I managed to stay inside the car and pull the door shut. The first of many sardonic remarks about the seatbelts – or lack thereof – were made.



With fun-seeking being the mother of invention however, we applied a bit of Yankee ingenuity to the situation. No expert on door-latch mechanics, we opted instead for the quick and dirty approach. I unhooked a webbed strap from one of our backpacks and simply tied and knotted the doors together through the top of the windows, around the roof pillar. Rub the Buddha head again...

After some mysterious timekeeping ritual in the centre of Bariloche, it was out into the open road towards the mountains. Up into the Andes we drove, finally cresting in the clouds and snow and then a flurry of stops and starts at the Chilean border crossing. On the Pacific side of the Andean range the environment changes dramatically. The mountains trap the moisture blowing in from the west and it's very damp, creating something of an elevated rain forest with tropical-looking vegetation, whereas the Argentinean side is very dry.



At the Puyehue Hotel in Chile we took the first of our daily 90-minute lunch breaks. The Puyehue is famous for its hot springs but we were content to eat, relax and wander on the lawn. Then amid much chaos about the order of departure (we lost the DB6, dammit) we were off again. After to-ing and fro-ing at the border with different pieces of coloured paper we were back in Argentina, down the mountain (using engine-braking to conserve pads) and then to a scenic rest stop in Villa la Angostura.



Day Two pointed us north to Junín de los Andes. This was the longest day of driving but the fastest roads. Long, smooth stretches of two-lane blacktop abounded, laid out in ribbons as far as the eye could see, much of it following a wide river bloated by the melting of mountain snows.

Here there were long sections of transit stages with some regularity runs thrown in to make us feel more inadequate (Why are we passing everyone all of a sudden? – oops!) Mercifully, in transit participants were free to either dawdle or punch the throttle. We usually opted for the latter as the Jag was purring along, all systems go.

We had lunch at an Army Ski Patrol base, treated to a BBQ cooked by soldiers. This was the only truly bad food of the trip. Not lethal, just what the Argentinean Army mess hall produces for visiting dignitaries. We were served by soldiers too, and serenaded by a military band playing Broadway show tunes, just as out of tune as the food. They made up for the lack of refinement with sweet sincerity so it was a pleasurable respite nonetheless. Then back again at warp speed to Bariloche through the 'Montana of the South'. Terrific.



Day Three, south to Lago Puelo. Gently undulating roads, more mountains, everything glistening. Curves a bit tighter than yesterday but perhaps the best scenery of all, each vista more striking than the last... and we caught up again with the DB6, so all was well.

The morning leg ended in town where the streets were lined with families, everybody waving, the rallyists honking their horns in return. (Except us, of course – no horn – so we just waved back.) Lunch at a campground lodge, then back to review the natural beauty of the morning drive from the opposite direction.



For the final rest stop we were waved into a polo complex where a demonstration match was on view at fantastic grounds. A snack buffet was served along with helicopter rides, presumably to promote sales of club condos. We opted to lounge in the sun and compare notes with all our compadres. Each day concluded with an excellent buffet banquet at the Llao Llao with the last night featuring a black tie (optional) awards dinner.

Although the event has an international flavour it is perhaps 75% Argentinean cars and drivers. They were very welcoming to visitors and expressed hope that word may spread, and that yet more international drivers will bring significant cars in the future.

Part One can be read by clicking [HERE](#)





By Don Rose, East Coast Consignment Specialist, RM Auctions.

Excerpted from the forthcoming article in The Vantage Point, the quarterly journal of the Aston Martin Owners Club, North America.

Photos: Bruce Crocker and Don Rose





Editor's Note: *This was the very last event in which the charismatic Swiss Grand Prix driver Clay Regazzoni participated before his death in a road accident in Italy on 15th December. One of the greats of the sport in the 1970s, Regazzoni was a team mate to Niki Lauda at Ferrari, and won five of his 132 Grands Prix in an 11-year career, which ended when he was paralysed from the waist down in a crash at Long Beach in 1980. He gave the Williams team its first Grand Prix victory, at Silverstone in 1979.*

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