

MEDIA RELEASE

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FORTY YEARS UP FOR VETERAN

A veteran of Southland motorsport will mark forty years of rally competition when the 2017 Catlins Coast Rally takes place on Saturday 12 August.

Dave Jenkins of Gropers Bush near Riverton will not be competing this year, instead he will be at the wheel of the Zero Car, the lead car in the event to let spectators know the field is on its way and also to alert organisers of any problems on the stage. Zero car duties require a driver who can drive at rally speeds and it is appropriate that Jenkins, known in the local motorsport fraternity as "Farmer" marks forty years leading the field.

The Eastern Southland Car Club organise the Catlins Rally each year and it was one of their events, the 1977 Gore Rally, where Jenkins made his debut in a Datsun 1600. Jenkins had been a member of the Southland Sports Car Club doing sealed events and race meetings at Teretonga in a road car before watching a mate in one of the early Gore Rally's. That sowed the seed and he and mate Barry Pannett brought a written off Datsun 1600 with low miles and went rallying. "There was little to fix up really. We did the work, fitted a roll cage, it was bog standard."

Jenkins doesn't remember too much about that first Gore Rally but does recall making it to the finish – club records show he started at 50 in the 73 car field and finished in 52nd place. "Barry and I took turn about driving in rallies. In 1978 we did several Pall Mall National Rally rounds – we went to Christchurch and Nelson – we drove the car to the events."

In the intervening years there have been only seven different rally cars. "I had three other Datsun 1600's, a Datsun Sunny, a Datsun 200B and the Subaru Legacy I have used for the last eight or nine years. For a few years through the mid 1990's I didn't have a car but I would borrow one to act as Zero Car for the Rally Of Southland. I have been involved in every Rally Of Southland that has been held."

Highlights are many but Jenkins remembers the mid 1980's particularly fondly. "That was when I had my third 1600. It was a 2-litre car and it was the days before the 4-wheel-drive cars. I did really well and won two or three Claytons Rally's and finished in the top ten of the Rally Of Southland when it was part of the National Championship. I won a Gore Club Rally in about 1987 or 88. It was a night rally and was the only Gore Rally I ever won. I did well in the Wyndham Rally too. One year I came so close to winning. I lost time in the first stage and then won every other stage. I didn't win the rally due to the time lost early on."

Another highlight has been having daughter Brodie alongside him in the co-driver seat for many years. "She has become a Mum now so she has stepped aside. Brodie started when she was just thirteen and it was really cool to compete together. In the meantime Brodie's husband Sam has been co-driving for Dave. Dave's wife Gaye also did a few events with him in the early 1980's.

Jenkins has missed just two Catlins Coast Rally's in the entire history of the event, "once because I had fallen and broken my hip." "It is an awesome event. The roads are so cool. The number of entries received for Catlins each year tells the story."

This is the second year that Jenkins has driven the Zero Car. "I am on the Executive of the Club now and I am helping out for a bit. Last year in the Zero Car was amazing. We had frozen snow, there were no wheel marks, man it was slippery. Even at 80 to 90 kilometres an hour we were getting wheelspin in the 4-wheel-drive. We had a job to do and we had to get through." He leaves no doubt he will continue to compete into the future and he also praises the Eastern Southland Car Club. "They run awesome events. They do great work getting young kids and ladies involved."

Looking back on his forty years Jenkins identifies costs as the biggest change. "The cost of entries reflects the increased costs of running events these days." He puts it in perspective with his parting shot. "In one of my first Wyndham Rallies it cost \$20 to enter – and I got a meal at the pub afterwards as part of my entry fee!"



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