

Hi there - finally

Well that certainly was a week of it !!

For this year's big Targa (Targa 2023) we supplied 2 start crews;

Leiton and crew from Palmerston North (Team 3 start) and Denise and her team 4 Start from Auckland.

Also 2 finish crews

Jesy who drove all the way from Ashburton to do Team 1 finish and my Team 2 finish crew for which Dave (Chief) drove up from Christchurch, Ben who came from Nelson. Lexus and myself (both from Duck Creek ) completed my team.

Our good friend Poko had been allocated to Steve Murray at Team 1 start.

Because of the logistics we really didn't have much cause to see one another (except perhaps when we stayed at the same place - see later).

So this missive will tend to be 'all about us' what a surprise !!!!

Jesy made his way up the islands collected his gear etc and stayed Labour weekend in Auckland, ready willing and able to do SS1 at Hampton Downs on Tues morning.

Meanwhile Ben drove to Blenheim from Nelson (left his car with Lorraine - thanks Lorraine) so Dave - driving up from Christchurch - could collect him and both came north and stayed at Duck Creek for the preceding few days.

On Monday (Labour Day) Leiton set sail from Palmerston North, Denise from Auckland. Dave/Lexus and Ben and me from Duckcreek to our SBT Timing team regroup at Hampton Downs itself.

It was here that the rest of the teams learned that for the 1st major rally we have been involved with there will be NO BEAMS necessary. For years Rallysafe have claimed that they know exactly where each car is at any time and can time accordingly. I have always said YEAH RIGHT, but for this event we did not have flying finish beams to set up. just the FF warning signs and the flags !!! Oh rapture !!!

After collecting all our gear, radios and documentation as necessary my erstwhile friend Darryl arrived and made something of a spectacle of himself. He is, of course, no longer part of any of our teams.

We proceeded to Huntly Hotel (now called Essex Arms). I claimed the double bed and we had Chinese Takeaways for Dinner.

OTG ( our out the gate time) next morning was 0815, which got us to SS2 in plenty of time.

Once cleared we headed to SS6 Kaharoa, where we encountered our first difficult customer, the stage had been shortened to stop before the school (so the kids could not see the cars this year) and also delayed by an hour. But this wasn't enough for at least one parent and of course the school bus who insisted on having the rally stopped so they could drive WD (wrong direction)through the stage.

Once finally cleared we proceeded to The Bull ring at Atiamuri where Jesy and his team were also staying.

Burgers for dinner.

OTG on Wednesday was 0800 heading for Arapuni. BUT nothing is ever as simple is it ???

For some unknown reason Jesy's rallysafe tablet had not been charged overnight - unlike ours (thanks Ben/Lexus). This necessitated our making a massive detour to lend him our inverter. Strange as it may seem we were only 2 mins late to our stage, Jesy about 15 mins to his. Once cleared we proceeded at pace to Hamurana, on the shores of Lake Rotorua.

That night we were supposedly staying at De Bretts in Taupo, more or less confirmed by a call from them at 10.30 am asking if we would be still coming - my answer SHIT YES!

But when we got there they claimed we should have been there the previous night and to stay tonight would now cost \$550 - help!!

I rang and asked Denise if the motel her crew was at could accommodate the 4 of us at such short notice.

They could and would !!!!! So we stayed there for the princely sum of \$80 for 4 adults!!! Once more I claimed the double bunk the others had singles. I can heartily recommend Camelia Court motels - not only did they put us up at VERY short notice but did it with such pleasantness and such a good grace. Our dinner that night was Indian, lovely if a bit expensive - lots of water drunk as you can imagine.

Thursday OTG 10 am.

Only one stage today - oh joy, what rapture !!! YEAH RIGHT.

Whilst stopped for lunch at Waiouru our Fleetlink burst into life asking if we could do the next stage instead of our planned last stage of the day at Manfield Raceway?

It probably took us about 5 seconds to agree (the Targa family is like that) so we instead headed for SS18 at Taihape.

Once cleared from there we had our small regroup at my son's place in Palmerston North where I stayed and the rest of the crew was at Esplanade Motel - our teenagers went to the movies that night.

But wait there's more!!

Ben really needed to get back to Nelson to compete in another rally SAT morning! So Dave/Lexus took him to the railway station 6 a.m Friday morn so he could make it.

That left us with a crew of 3 but also meant that I lost my driver.

We then did SS22 up by Rangiwahai after which we went over Saddle Hill, had lunch at Woodville to our accommodation at Masters Hall at Pahiatua. Lovely place where we have stayed before. A single room each. with a queen size bed EACH.

Dinner that night with James at the local pub.

Sat morning SS26 at Alfredton (OTG 0800)

For this, our last stage. things went somewhat astray. We could not find our FF or FC painted on the road as had been for Every previous stage so we needed the help of a Targa official to make an 'executive decision'!!

We then find that our tablet was not receiving times to display. Base said not to worry as they were getting them time. Pity though= Dave was all set up to do a board with stage times !!!!!

We then headed to Masterton, Dave returned the gear. Lexus and I went straight to Mawley Holiday Park where we also managed to get accommodation for Poko (with us actually).

Fish an chips for dinner.

We watched the disastrous Rugby World Cup final on Sunday morning then 'my lot' headed back to Duck creek, Dave on his own, Lexus with me. From Masterton Rodney (my Navman) chose to take us home via NAPIER.

All back here just after 8.30 p.m. Sunday night.

Dave and I each drove some 700 km on Sunday and our overall distance for the whole week Monday yo Sunday was 1950 kms.

Now just a few extra comments -please bare with me.

CREW

Our crew had 2 eighty somethings and two teenagers - both of which I sincerely hope do stick with it.

Leiton twenty something was part of Dinny's team for some years.

Denise twenty (something?) also part of Dinny's start crew HE WOULD BE SO PROUD !!!!!

Keep up the good work .

FLEETLINK 25W RADIOS

Once more we had coverage(throughout NZ) everywhere even when traveling. Fleetlink is a relatively old system over 20 years old (which is

why it works so well) It was originally a Telecom product with a series of what we would now call access points, using the landlines to connect. They are true radio TELEPHONES that is you dial a number (much like a phone or cellphone) to one person. It is not an area wide radio. It does not use cellular ph technology. Targa own 200 units numbered 200 to 299. Mine is 277. With the improvements in technology its days may well be numbered, but even on this event there were many, many occasions that none of our cell phones worked.

I am given to understand the current providers will 'keep it going as long as it is needed. BRAVO.

## ACCOMMODATION

I made the accommodation bookings for my crew, Jesy's and Denise's. I tend to use Booking.com which allows free cancellation until virtually the day before, sometimes takes a deposit from my visa, sometimes not, sometimes the lot - but not often.

I otherwise book direct with the motel or whatever.

## BUT

There was one place where neither arrangement worked they directed me to Air b'n'b which was an unmitigated disaster. After surviving a 'half hour grilling' they said the property would get back to me shortly. YEAH RIGHT.

Needless to say they didn't and when Jesy checked they simply said we don't want you !!!

How rude!

With a failure rate of 100% I could never recommend such a hopeless organisation.

Hope you have enjoyed this bedtime story