

**A** "Race to the Clouds" accurately describes the nation's second oldest automotive contest of speed. The 69th running of the Chevrolet/Pike's Peak Auto Hill Climb near Colorado Springs, Colorado, with its 12.5-mile course of unpaved highway, 156 treacherous curves and panic-inducing, unguarded aerial drop-offs proved more challenging to competitors than ever before.

This year, two truck classes assaulted the 14,110-foot summit. Clive Smith's '91 four-wheel-drive Chevy S-10 broke the previous record in the ultra-light truck exhibition class with a quick 12:29:04 time. Rob Peterson, in his '91 GMC Syclone, took second place by less than one second in the Showroom Stock division behind Don Adams. Jack Flannery captured first in the Heavy Truck competition, shattering his own Unlimited Class record by switching from a Ford to a 1500 series half-

## Politics At The Peak

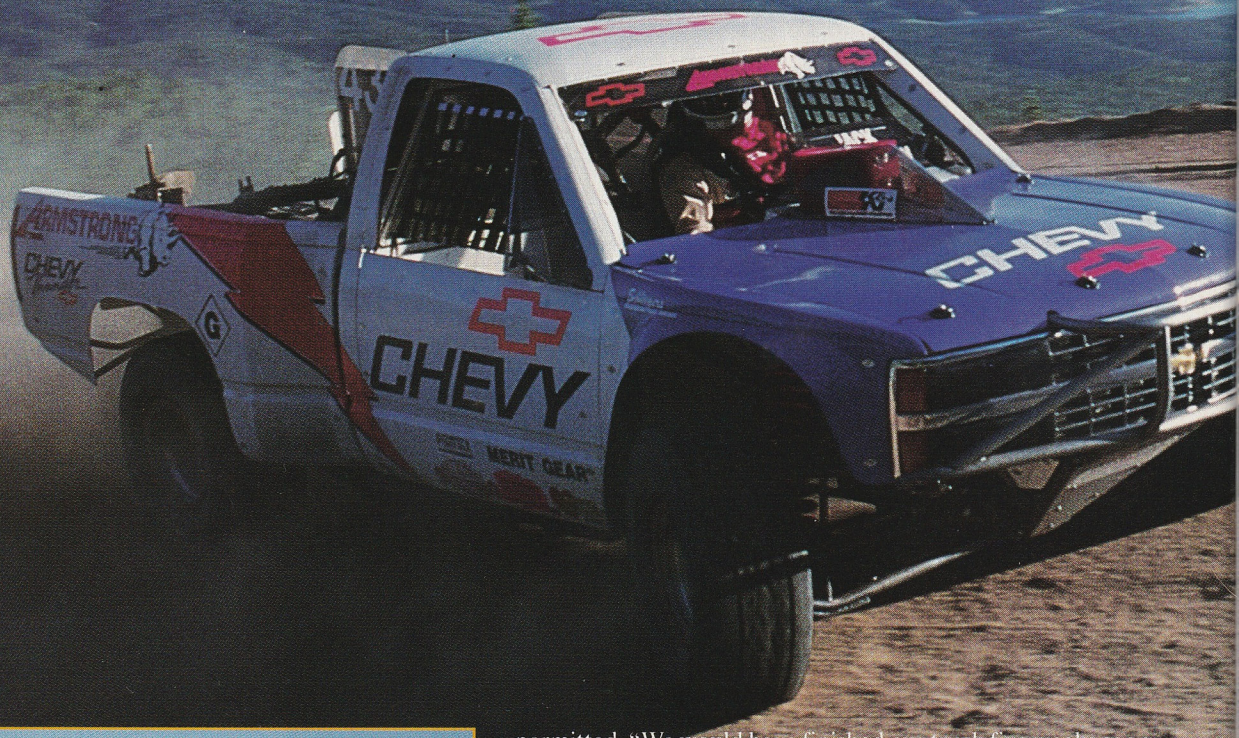
By T.L. Sogioian

ton, ultra-modified Chevy Thunder pickup. There is more to this truck than meets the eye.

In January of 1991, Flannery contacted the technical director of the Pike's Peak Auto Hill Climb Association (PPAHCA) for approval to race the truck he was building. The technical rules at the time stated that all eight-cylinder trucks must retain a stock frame. The construction of his tube frame was approved through photographs seen by the technical director over the next five

months. When the 1991 rulebook was distributed about two months later than usual, however, the stock frame requirement was replaced with the term "stock-appearing."

Brett Peterson, the owner and driver of the '91 GMC Sierra that took third place in the Heavy Truck division, would have also utilized a lighter, more competitive tube frame had he been



permitted. "We would have finished our truck five weeks sooner if we fabricated a frame instead of waiting for the box frame to arrive from the manufacturer," Peterson said. In addition, his vehicle would have been about 300 pounds lighter and much more competitive.

On June 27, four drivers from the Heavy Truck division told the technical director that Flannery's Chevy pickup should not be permitted to run in the class since its design and construction violated the published 1991 PPAHCA Technical Regulations and Special Rules. The drivers contended that Flannery's truck did not conform to the rules pertaining to stock-appearance. Its chrome moly tube chassis had tires that extended beyond the fender wells. They also questioned his weight to cubic-inch ratio and wheelbase dimensions.

Their concerns were justified when Flannery posted the fastest qualifying time at 5:37:78, nearly 27 seconds faster than Brett Peterson's second-place time of 6:04:06. On July 2, almost 44 hours before the start of the race, a class protest was submit-



# DIKE'S PEAK

## HILL CLIMB







Light Truck class winner Clive Smith.



Heavy Truck class winner Jack Flannery.

ted to the PPAHCA against Flannery's truck No. 435. The protest participants claimed that it would be unfair to allow a truck so heavily modified to compete in a limited class. "We're not trying to stop him from running the race," said one of the protesters. "It's just that we think he should run in an exhibition or unlimited class."

Only one of the participants of the protest, Don Adams, received an answer from the Hill Climb Association. It came on race day just minutes before the start. The protest was disallowed. It was ruled that Flannery's truck met the criteria in the 1991 PPAHC rules.

Adam's first thought was to file an appeal, but according to the rulebook the appeal must be made in writing, accompanied by a fee of \$500 in cash and submitted to the president within two hours of the announcement of the association's decision. He would have to roundup the other protesters, write an appeal, run to the bank and locate the president. It could be done, but he wouldn't have time to race that day. Adams decided against it and raced instead.

On his first climb, Adams won the Showroom Stock 4-Wheel Drive division in a '91 Paul Rossi Eagle Talon. Once the race begins, the course is closed to downhill traffic and the only means down is via helicopter.

After his flight down, the Heavy Trucks were released a few minutes later. Adams, Peterson, Bill Armstrong, Dean Burling and Flannery made ascents to the summit. Upon the completion of the course the drivers remained at their vehicles until receiving notification of their start, finish and elapsed times as stated in the rules. The timing steward notified everyone except Peterson. Steadfast, by-the-book, he waited.

Meanwhile, down at the starting line where the official times are calculated and posted, there seemed to be some



Robby Peterson and his '91 GMC Syclone took home the Second place trophy in the Showroom Stock class.

confusion as to who was driving which truck and how long it took them to finish. Apparently the calculations for the Heavy Truck division had been lost, mixed-up or something had happened in the database. The times were not released until five divisions of motorcycles had completed the course.

Unfortunately, the wrong drivers were listed with the wrong truck numbers and the wrong times. Officials corrected the misinformation and posted Peterson's time as 12:52.12. A short while later Peterson's time was again changed to 13:58.20 and the 12:52.12 run was posted as Flannery's time. The winning time. Or was it?

Peterson could have protested this incident in writing with \$500 in cash to the timing steward at the summit. This type of protest must be filed within 30 minutes of the steward's decision. When the time limit expired, Brett was still waiting for notification of his elapsed time, unaware of the confusion 12 miles below.

Assuming that the final times posted were correct, and had truck No. 435 been designated to another division, the First,

Second and Third place awards in the Heavy Truck division would have gone to Adams, Peterson and Burling. This would also have given Adams the distinction of being the first driver in Pike's Peak history to win two divisions in the same race.

In the 1990 race, Adams also drove two vehicles in two divisions. His first run was in the Pike's Peak Production class. After receiving his winning time of 13:50:46, Adams hastily boarded the helicopter that was to transport him back to the starting line for his second attack. He was to share the flight down with the event's Grand Marshall who was not ready to board. Adams had to wait.

When he finally arrived at the starting line for the Class F Truck division he had missed his scheduled order and was penalized 40 seconds; 10 seconds for each car that preceded him. He posted the fastest time, but the penalty dropped him back to Second place and 30 seconds behind...guess who? Jack Flannery.

Adams would have made history by winning two divisions in the same race. It didn't go into the books because of someone else's circumvention. "I felt gut shot for six months over that ruling," Adams said. "It was the most devastating blow I've had in more than 35 years of racing." Only a year later he received a similar blow.

There doesn't seem to be any hard feelings aimed at Jack Flannery. Nearly everyone agrees that is a good driver and a nice guy and that he raced in the division where he was authorized to compete with a hot truck. However, the discontent lies with the ambiguity of the technical rules, the protest rules, the inaccurate timing system and the Machiavellian attitude of the officials toward competitors who voice their opinions. At the awards banquet, drivers were informed that only first-place winners would be permitted to speak. It wasn't surprising. ■