

Well, it's been a while since I got home and I'm as rested as I'll ever be, so thought I'd jot down some notes about the 2011 IBR.

My motivation for entering this Iron Butt Rally, my 6th, was mainly to redeem myself (in my own mind) from my less than stellar performance in 2009. I had been underprepared both mentally and technically for that rally, spent too much time doing data entry and not enough time planning routes, and ended up dropping in position on each leg. Also, my route choices had been based on personal preference and not on scoring the most possible points. This time needed to be different.

Almost immediately after the 2009 rally, Heidi and I sat at the computer poring over Excel, trying to devise a way to quickly analyze large amounts of bonus information (using the 09 rally data). We were unable to get Excel to do what I wanted it to, so Heidi setup an Access database which did perform as desired. That was left alone until this year, when in March and April I started working on it again, adding improvements to speed up the process. Everything was great and I felt as prepared as possible to handle what I expected to be a huge leg 2 rally book, given that we were told the leg would be six days long. At least until the last minute when we were told about the Jacksonville checkpoint.

Then, during the Minuteman weekend a month before the IBR, my laptop died. It would boot up, then shut itself down after a few minutes of use. I took it to the local geek shop where they determined that the motherboard was dead. At least, the hard drive was intact and data could be pulled off of it. I shopped around for a new laptop, got it set up, and had the geeks dump my old hard drive into a folder on the new machine. I was then able to pull rally-critical stuff into use, such as the Access database. I did have to reinstall Mapsource, Streets and Trips, etc.

The only thing left was to get the bike ready. Since we had to buy a new Wing in March to replace the bovine basher, not much had been done to it as far as rally farkles. The old bike had one GPS mount on the dash, front and center, and a second mount on the left handlebar. The V1 was mounted on the right handlebar. I wanted this bike to have everything up front, with a waterproof box for the V1. I had acquired the box but never installed it. So I ordered a new windscreen (Windbender) which offered an optional large shelf on which to mount the toys. It was fairly simple, but time-consuming, to move the toys to the new bike. I did add a second pair of driving lights (piaa 1100) to the Hella FF50 set that managed to survive the cow incident.

Then came the week of June 13. Time to start packing, getting all the rally paraphernalia together (camera, data cards, 3x5 cards, paper maps just in case), and loading the bike. I decided to save a vacation day and leave after work on Wednesday. This forced me into two and a half long days in the saddle to make the 3,000 miles to Seattle. I made it to Ohio on the first night, somewhere in Montana the second night, and Seattle about 9 pm Friday night. I

had an appointment to have a new set of ME880 tires installed on Saturday morning, then did the IBR check-in process in the afternoon. Everything went quick and smoothly.

On Sunday, I just made sure that all the computer to GPS connections were working, attended the mandatory meetings, went to the store to get road food and last minute supplies, and schmoozed. I was invited to lunch with Tobie and Lisa Stevens, and Matt Watkins. We had a nice walk and enjoyed a leisurely lunch and conversation. The tension in my mind was building, not knowing what was to come in the evening. The report was floating around the hotel about all rally locations being distributed at the start; what did that mean?

Finally, it was time for dinner. The excitement in the room was palpable as, after dinner, Bill Watt (who we all assumed was the designer of this rally) got up and asked who would be willing to go to a remote bonus location, presumably for a sizeable number of points, given that it involved a ferry ride that might or might not get you back to the mainland in time to make the first checkpoint. No one stood up. Seeing no takers, Bill left the podium and Tom Austin took over. Tom told us that this rally would be very simple to finish – all you had to do was ride to all 48 states, get receipts to document them, and make the checkpoints and finish on time for which you would score 4800 points. You could increase your point total and guarantee a Gold Medal finish by completing the SCMA Four Corners Tour in addition to the 48 state requirement, for another 4800 points. You could further increase your point total by visiting state capitols and taking a photo. And, to tempt the most crazy of IBR riders, you could visit Hyder Alaska on leg 1 for another 4800 points. A map was included with the rally pack showing a base route from Seattle to Ontario, touching every state, presumably in the least miles possible. On each leg, a list of state capitols would be distributed with each one assigned a point value based on its deviation from the base route. The biggest one on the first leg was Harrisburg, PA for 1000 points. But Harrisburg was way off any route ending in Buffalo, the first checkpoint. It was pointed out that you could acquire a state receipt for any state on any leg, but the capitol photo points could only be claimed on the leg they were assigned to.

With the rules more or less clear to most people, we adjourned to our rooms to begin planning the first leg. Obviously, spreadsheets and databases would be of no use here. It was simply a matter of finding a route from Seattle to Buffalo, hitting every state in between, as many capitols as possible, and what about Hyder? I created 2 or 3 routes including Hyder and finally dismissed it as being way too much to bite off on the first leg. And who knew whether the 4800 points would be significant, or whether the same could be achieved later on leg 2 or 3 with fewer miles? So, I settled on a pretty easy middle of the road route that would include Blaine, Washington, the first of the Four Corners. It wasn't too far out of the way, and to ignore it would preclude me from going for all four. I would take in a few capitols but not too many.

Monday morning came quickly and soon it was time to line up in the parking lot. I asked several riders, who I knew to be contenders, about Hyder. Answers were not directly forthcoming, even though I began by stating I was not going there. As I spoke to Tom Austin, I was told that three riders were planning to attempt it. Good for them, I thought! I couldn't imagine who they would be.

Leg One

The start of this rally was like previous years - orderly and quick. In a few minutes I was headed north on the interstate toward Blaine. Traffic was moderately heavy; I passed several groups of riders even though I wasn't going unusually fast. After about 30-40 minutes, I was in the right lane, passing slow traffic, when I spotted something in the left shoulder about 1/2 mile ahead. As I got nearer I saw it was a ST1300 police bike and the motor officer was turning around to face the road. In my mirror I saw him enter the highway quickly. Uh oh. Sure enough, he pulled me over. We had the usual conversation and he went back to his bike. After a minute, I walked over to him and asked if he would be inclined to write me a warning instead of a citation. He became agitated, said I was invading his space, and he was already going to give me a warning but if I "kept it up" he'd write a citation. I apologized profusely but he kept going on about his space and how I was keeping him from doing his job. I walked back to my bike and waited. Eventually he came over, handed me a warning, gave me another speech about doing his job, and about how he had a Wing at home. I didn't bother to tell him I had an ST1300 at home. I just wanted to get out of there. Finally, I did.

When I arrived at the Blaine post office, there was quite a crowd of riders and more than a few spectators. I took care of my business and was packing up when I spotted a rider that had just arrived, walked over toward the post office with rally flag, and took a photo. The rider was about to leave when I mentioned that I was pretty sure you had to have your bike in the Four Corners photos. I pulled out my rally instructions and verified it, as much for my own curiosity as for the other rider's. The rider thanked me for saving the bonus which would have been blown. The good karma generated by this simple act would save my own ass a few days later.



Blaine, WA



Olympia, WA



Salem, OR

From Blaine, I rode back through Seattle to Olympia to take a photo of the state capitol, and from there through Portland OR (can you spell TRAFFIC) to Salem OR for another capitol photo. There was another rider there and we chatted for a second. I mentioned I was heading up to Coeur D'Alene ID, he asked why I'd be going up there. Different plan, I said. Apparently he was going for Boise and I wasn't. Unfortunately I had to go back toward Portland although more on the outskirts, but still significant slow traffic, toward The Dalles. The ride up the Hood River valley reminded me of the 2001 rally, when Bob Lyskowski and I rode this way going to the Sunnyside checkpoint. Somewhere in the mountains between Coeur D'Alene and Missoula, I spotted a mom&pop motel just off the highway and pulled in for a good sleep. The room was so cold, I only took off the suit and boots, and slept in my clothes.

My plan was to get a receipt in Coeur D'Alene, then hit Montana for another receipt, then drop down into Wyoming, and up to Bismarck ND. Cross ND, just touch South Dakota for a receipt, then over to St Paul MN for a photo and just cross over the river into Wisconsin for a receipt. Along the way, I decided that my plan didn't have enough points. I had already bypassed Boise, which was medium points, and Cheyenne WY would be way off my route as well, another significant bonus. So, I went into Helena MT instead of just getting a receipt, and picked up Pierre SD as well.



Helena, MT



Pierre, SD



St. Paul, MN

Coming out of Pierre I pulled into a motel for the leg 1 rest bonus. After St Paul, I went to Madison WI and then backtracked south/west to Des Moines IA.



Madison, WI



Des Moines, IA



Topeka, KS

Now I had to pick up Nebraska and Kansas. Heidi had called me to let me know that some roads were closed going into Omaha because of flooding. There was a state highway that was open going into Blair, and from there I could ride due south into Kansas. I decided to go all the way to Topeka instead of just a receipt, for more points. It was now around dawn Thursday, more than half way thru the leg. I decided to continue doing as many capitols as possible, so I headed to Jefferson City, MO, Springfield IL, and Indianapolis. As I rode up to the Indiana capitol, there was no place to park off the street. I went around the block and came up a side street facing the capitol. There was a gentleman in a suit jacket waving his arms and yelling "IBR, IBR". I pulled up and stopped to meet this rider from the ST forum. He had been watching Spotwalla to see when riders were approaching (although I was not on the public Spotwalla page). He held my flag while I took my photo.



Jefferson City, MO



Springfield, IL



Indianapolis, IN

From Indianapolis, it was a quick jaunt down to Frankfort KY, up to Columbus OH, and head up to Michigan. This probably wasn't the most efficient route if I had planned the capitols from the start, evidenced by the fact that I kept seeing rally riders going in the opposite direction from myself! The night ride up to Lansing was chilly and wet. I got there at 3:15 a.m. For some reason, sleepiness never came this night, and I left Lansing headed for Buffalo. I wasn't sure Harrisburg PA was doable, but it was sure tempting at 1000 points, the single largest bonus on this leg, with the exception of Hyder. But I didn't have to make that decision

for a while yet.



Frankfort, KY



Columbus, OH



Lansing, MI

As I rode east, using the GPS to calculate arrival in Buffalo via Harrisburg, it seemed there was sufficient time to do it. But I started to think about legs 2 and 3. Specifically, if this rally was more like the older IBR's, the points available on leg 3 would be much greater than on the first two legs. In recent IBRs this was true but not to such an extent as in the 90's. In any case, it would be to a rider's advantage to have as much time as possible for gathering capitol bonuses on leg 3, and that meant not having to do Key West on leg 3. If possible, it needed to be done on leg 2. I envisioned leg 2, including Madawaska ME. You would come out of Maine on I-95, and run I-95 all the way down the east coast. All the leg 2 states could be easily obtained from I-95 except West Virginia. I called Lisa to verify that I could pick up West Virginia on leg 1. Then I found a WV town fairly close to my route to Harrisburg where I could get a receipt. This would take me through Pittsburgh, an unpleasant thought, but would be worth the hassle. Thus my plan for legs 2 and 3 was hatched on the morning of the last day of leg 1, although I had no idea how many miles the leg 2 route would be when including Madawaska and Key West. (Usually, I figure out the correct strategy for a rally after it's too late to adjust; I was really happy that this time was different.)



Harrisburg, PA

The ride through Pittsburgh was painful with traffic, but I got through. Then it was the PA turnpike, one of my least favorite roads anywhere, with the added insult of tolls. Harrisburg was easy, but then it was slow back roads up toward Buffalo. Especially when the 4 lane

ends in Sunbury, PA and you end up slogging through traffic light after traffic light. I started passing in the center turning lane and cutting back in just before intersections. I was seriously doubting I would make the checkpoint without penalties. Finally I got to faster roads and did make the checkpoint in time. Heidi and Liberty were there, as well as many friends from home. Scoring went smoothly, then after tightening a loose driving light and looking at the computer for routes to Madawaska, we went to sleep around 11:30 pm.

4 a.m. came quickly. A brief rider meeting was held, top standings were read (I wasn't in that group), and leg 2 bonuses were handed out. No surprises there - Charleston WV was a significant bonus but I had already made my plan. I didn't even open the computer to calculate my leg 2 route - I would hit Albany NY, Montpelier VT, then Madawaska ME for the second Four Corners, then down thru Maine and the other New England states. The rest would come in turn while riding south. If things went smoothly, Key West should be doable. If not, there were alternatives.

Leg Two

After refilling my water jug and kissing Heidi and Liberty goodbye, I headed out into the dark at 4:30 a.m. Not surprisingly, there were lots of riders heading east on the New York Thruway. By the time we reached Albany, things were more spread out. That capitol done, I headed up to Montpelier VT. It had been raining all morning. In fact, I had seen significant rain at some point every day so far. There were quite a few riders on this route too. Everyone was leapfrogging, depending on where each one chose to gas up. At Montpelier, there were a half dozen riders taking photos. From there, I punched in Madawaska but didn't follow the route exactly; I took a more direct route to I-91. From there it's not far to the Canadian border at Derby Line, VT. As I got in line for customs, I pulled up next to another rider and we chatted for a bit. We decided to stick together to Madawaska, as we both had been advised to bypass Montreal due to the holiday weekend. The 2-lane route 112 seemed a bit slow but was probably slightly shorter, and it generally moved along except for a detour around Thetford Mines. This is an unusual sight, with huge piles of mine debris and the road winding among them. Finally we got onto Trans Canada 20 and made better time. It's farther than it looked on the map, and then you have to turn south to cross the border back into Maine. At a gas stop, we finally introduced ourselves; my riding partner was Corey Nuehring from Iowa, aboard an FJR. We had to wait about 15 minutes to get into Maine, on an open steel deck bridge (a little tricky to put the sidestand down). While waiting, I pulled out my mini road atlas and we looked at two routes out of Madawaska. One was back into Canada and around the Trans Canada highway; the other was to follow US1 north to Fort Kent, then take Maine route 11 due south. This looked to be more direct, and I had been told it was a good road, so we settled on that. It was about 7:15 pm Saturday when we took our photos at the post office.



Albany, NY



Montpelier, VT



Madawaska, ME

Ten minutes after leaving, I pulled to the side of the road – I had forgotten to fill in my passport book. Corey had also, a strange coincidence. Highway 11 was uneventful, although once the sun set it got chilly and I had to stop again to put my Gerbing jacket on. We continued on toward Augusta ME, but got separated when Corey pulled off for gas and I didn't notice. We met up at the capitol again, but he left a minute before me and I never caught up again.

At Kittery, just before entering New Hampshire, I stopped for a gas receipt just in case the night photo at Augusta was no good. Then I went a mile down the road for a NH receipt. It was a damp, sort of rainy night and I was getting tired. Just inside the Massachusetts border I decided I needed some rest, and pulled into a weigh station on I-95, got out the sleeping pad, set the meanie, and went to sleep. When I got up, I was quite damp from the dew/rain. I hate that feeling of dampness, but the air drove it out as I got going again. Before long I was in Boston taking a photo of the State House, and in another hour or so, the same routine at Providence RI. Hartford CT was too far out of the way for the points, and on back roads from Providence, so I decided to stay on I-95 to New York City and get a CT receipt along the way. New York traffic was surprisingly heavy for a Sunday morning, but I managed to keep a good pace anyway.



Augusta, ME



Boston, MA



Providence, RI

At the second NJ turnpike service area, I pulled in for a couple breakfast sandwiches (bad receipt); I did a balance inquiry at the ATM for a good NJ receipt. Then it was down the rest of the NJ turnpike into Delaware. I skipped the NJ capital as not worth the points (Trenton is

not a fun city to ride around in anyway) and I still had my mind on Key West. But Dover DE and Annapolis MD were significant points, so I went after them. Dover wasn't too bad but Annapolis was another story. First, a road closure and a detour, then some kind of event in the neighborhood of the capitol had drawn lots of cars and pedestrians. This ate up close to an hour all told. Back onto I-95, I was moving again. For a while. Where the beltways join with I-95 south of Washington DC, it was a sea of brake lights. My heart sank, thinking that this was going to kill Key West. I saw another rider way over in the left lane; I was in the far right. I decided to scoot up the breakdown lane for a while, just to get out of the immediate crush and to see how far this traffic jam was going to last. I thought the other rider might follow my lead, but he didn't. It kind of ebbed and flowed, but after a while it opened up to an acceptable speed. A car rollover caused another slowdown, but I eventually found my way to Richmond, the VA capitol. I was nearly out of gas and I couldn't find any gas stations in downtown Richmond. I sweated it out back on I-95 south for a few exits until I saw one with a gas station. The next stop was Raleigh, NC, which was a bit farther off of I-95. I considered skipping it to save time, but figured it was still early enough that I could do it.



Dover, DE



Annapolis, MD



Richmond, VA

When I finally got back onto I-95 I started figuring time and distance to Key West. I knew it would be close. I talked to Heidi on the phone for a while, discussing the alternatives. As I crossed into South Carolina and approached the exit where I had to decide whether to go toward Columbia and Atlanta or stay on 95 to Key West, we ended our conversation with me undecided. Heidi just said "you decide, and let me know your decision". The gps told me if I went to Atlanta, I'd be there around midnight. Then what, stay there and get to Jacksonville at 5 am, 12 hours early? Or spend the night in Atlanta, I'd still be at the checkpoint way early, wasting time. That was not my style. The choice was clear – go for Key West and make it work. I checked the numbers again. Several times, in fact. 1300 miles and 20 hours. There would not be a lot of slack here, especially with the 240 miles (round trip) of route 1 through the Keys at 40 miles an hour at best. The only advantage was that most of this would be at night and I should be able to make good time with low traffic interference. I pushed on through the night, stopping to sleep when I had to, which was four different times. I entered the Keys at about 6:30 a.m., and arrived in Key West at 9:00. It takes time to get from the edge of town all the way to downtown, with many traffic lights, each one delaying the eta. At the waypoint given with the rally information, I didn't see anything that looked like a traditional post office. I pulled into the parking lot and looked around – there was a building with an open

door, and people were going in and out with mail and packages, but the building had no identification on it. There were signs in the parking lot indicating it was for postal patrons only, so I knew I was in the right place. I took several photos to document my stop and headed out. At the edge of town, I stopped to take off a few layers of clothing and use the bathroom at a fast food restaurant. It felt good to wash up after such a long time on the road.

The way back through the Keys was actually a little faster than the way in, and I delayed filling up until the last island so I could make it all the way to the checkpoint without stopping for gas again. At this point I knew it was going to be really close. As I got back onto the Florida Turnpike, the gps e.t.a. was 5:30 p.m., a half hour into the penalty period. This meant turning up the wick a little bit to shave as much as possible off the penalty. But, there was still Daytona traffic to contend with, which might set me back even more. Fortunately, that never materialized. However, a late afternoon thunderstorm did materialize and I was in and out of that from Melbourne to St. Augustine. The nearer I got to Jacksonville, the earlier the eta became, and I pulled in to the Ramada at exactly 5 pm. By the time I found Ira to stop the clock, it was 15 seconds past 5 on his clock so I took 15 penalty points, gladly.



Raleigh, NC



Key West, FL



Key West, FL

The karma I mentioned earlier came into play at scoring. I have rarely had issues at any rally, and have never lost points “at the table” but this time I had a problem. My photo of the Key West post office was in question, as it did not contain any sign saying “Key West”. My head nearly fell to the floor, thinking that the long ride to Key West was for naught. I decided if that was the case, I would just head home because there was no way I could vie for a top spot without this bonus. And I sure as hell wasn’t going to go there again on leg 3! But my scorer, Jim Owen, was able to use Google Earth to zoom in to that location and see that the building in my photo was in fact a post office building. Tom Austin initially determined that I should take a penalty for the error, but after further review of the wording in the Four Corners section of the rally instructions, rescinded that decision and I was given full credit for my photo. Yes! Lisa had only one word to say to me: “brilliant!”. Apparently, the rally staff had not considered that this was possible. I had assumed that some other riders would have figured this out the same way I did, although I didn’t see anyone else in the Keys. Tom Austin came over while Jim was reviewing my other photos, and just stared at the Four Corners page for a minute. I asked him what was wrong, but he just said “you were in Madawaska at 7 pm Saturday, and in Key West at 9 am Monday?” Yup. I think he still didn’t believe it. Maybe I didn’t either. But,

it didn't seem like *that* big of a deal. According to the odometer readings in my Passport book, that's 2,275 miles in 38 hours. 59.86 miles per hour, on average. Lisa found me again and told me to go to bed immediately and stay there, I didn't need to be at the rider meeting at 10pm. I said, I'll be there anyway. So, I had about 2 hours of sleep and got up just in time for the meeting.

The leg 2 rider standings were read aloud, and to no one's surprise, Ken Meese was still in the lead, followed by the usual suspects. I didn't bother to find out my own standing. Then the leg 3 bonuses were distributed and I headed back to my room. Lisa advised me to get some more sleep, so after doing my route planning and calling home, I went back to bed.

Leg Three

I don't think I ever really fell asleep though. The commotion in the parking lot outside my room as riders headed out was enough to keep me from sleeping. Finally, around midnight, I got up and packed the bike. At 12:30 a.m. I rode across the street to gas up, and headed out toward Tallahassee, the Florida capital. I arrived there at 3:30 a.m., along with Kirsten. She noted that the red and white striped awnings made the capitol look like a barber shop. I added, if you go in there, you'll get clipped for sure!



Tallahassee, FL



Montgomery, AL



Jackson, MS

Continuing west on I-10 I started to get sleepy. I pulled into a rest area to find several other riders sleeping there. I broke out the sleeping pad and pillow; I don't remember how long I stayed there, but it must have been an hour or two. It was getting light when I woke up and hit the road. Montgomery AL was the next stop. Sometime during the morning, Heidi called me and read snips of Tom Austin's daily report, especially about the run to Key West. She had been monitoring my work email as well, and related numerous posts both on ibdone and sent to me personally, with congratulatory messages. She was so excited, apparently many other people were too, and it made me feel the same way. Then Bob St. George called and related much of the same news and feelings. I'm not accustomed to being in the limelight like that, and it was at once exhilarating, humbling, and somewhat embarrassing. Some of the comments were alluding to a supposed competition between Ken Meese and me, but I had never set out to compete head to head with Ken or anyone else. My ride was about doing my best, and I never presumed to be able to compete at the level of Ken, Eric Jewell, Dick Peek,

Chris Sakala, and many other fine rallyists. After several more phone calls, I realized that these were slowing me down. I unconsciously slowed down every time I was on the phone, just so that I could hear better. I also started to calculate points in my head. Bob had told me that I was 2950 points behind Ken as of the leg 2 standings, and that I had dropped from 15th to 20th. I assumed that Ken would be going to Key West, and that would preclude him from making Carson City and Sacramento, two large bonuses worth 3400+ points. Assuming the balance of our routes would be pretty similar, I started to get the idea that it might be possible for me to win this rally. At the very least, I was almost sure to achieve the top ten finish I had been trying for. This was very cool!

After riding through a thunderstorm cell, I reached Montgomery AL. Nashville TN would have been the next logical stop but I decided to skip it because it was several hundred more miles and not that many points. Instead, I headed to Memphis and jumped over the border for a West Memphis Arkansas receipt, then took the interstate down to Jackson MS and get back on the capital thread. After Jackson it was over to Baton Rouge, where we had been in the 2009 rally for a photo of a statue just across the lawn from the capitol building (by far, the ugliest state capitol building I have ever seen). It was 8 pm, and I had wanted to get to Austin TX before stopping for the night. That didn't happen, as I got tired around midnight. I made it to the west side of Houston, so I wouldn't have to face too much traffic in the morning, and stopped at 12:30 to start my rest bonus.



Baton Rouge, LA



Austin, TX



Denver, CO

Just after 4:30 a.m. I was back on the road toward Austin, arriving there before the morning rush. The next stretch was going to be long, hot, and difficult mentally – Texas is so big, in every direction. My next stop was Boise City OK, and it was not interstate highway to get there. It seemed like forever, partly because I was using the bike's built in gps to see the big picture display, and it showed me as being at least 100 miles from the OK border when I crossed it. I logged my stop at 4:39 pm, 9+ hours from Austin. I stayed there for about a half hour, just to cool off from the 100 degree heat. When I went back out to the bike, a construction worker asked me about my riding suit. I told him it was actually cooler than riding without a jacket. He mentioned that he said seen 30-40 other riders that day, similarly dressed. Imagine that in a small town at the far end of the Oklahoma panhandle! From there,

I rode southwest to get a Clayton New Mexico receipt, and from there up to Denver, the capitol of Colorado. Finally, back to interstate highways and better riding. I arrived in Denver at about 9 pm, and stopped again to cool off, take a break, and call home. During the heat of the day, the phone interface to the bike had stopped working. This had happened to us during the ride to the Denver meet in 2010, so it wasn't too much of a surprise. It was annoying not being able to talk to Heidi on the phone, but on the other hand it kept my average speed up.

The ride from Denver to Salt Lake City went through Cheyenne, but Cheyenne was a bonus on leg 1, not leg 3. Heading west on I-80 it got cold and started to rain. I stopped once to put a fleece jacket on, and another time to swap the Gerbing for the fleece. Somewhere along the way I stopped to sleep for a few hours, and by the time I got to Salt Lake it was 8:30 Thursday morning. There were just over 24 hours left in this rally and I had a long way to go, longer than I realized. I entered Carson City NV into the gps, and it was over 500 miles away. It had been a while since I ran I-80 all that way, so this was a bit of a shock. I knew Sacramento wasn't too far from Carson City, but Sacramento to San Diego was pretty far also. And then I had to run out to Yuma AZ and back up to Ontario for the finish. (I had originally planned to try for Phoenix but that was obviously out of the question.) It was a bit daunting to contemplate the whole thing, so I just focused on one stop at a time. At least that would be mentally manageable.

Traffic was moving normally across the salt flats, which for Utah means quick. I stopped quickly for gas and food in Wendover and kept going. Somewhere after Winnemucca I took a drink from my water jug, and minutes later felt something that didn't feel right. Shortly after that I needed to make an unscheduled bathroom stop. And not too long after that, another. Clearly something had gotten into my system or into my water. So I didn't eat any solid food for a while. I exited the highway at Fernley and headed south to Carson City. This was another spot where you had to stop on the street, in traffic, to get a picture. I was there a couple of minutes when a woman officer came out of the building across from the capitol and asked if my bike had died. I explained that I was just taking a photo and would be out of there shortly. She looked around and said in a friendly manner "looks like this is your chance", and so it was. From there I decided not to follow the gps, which wanted me to take US 50 through Lake Tahoe and over the mountains to Sacramento. From earlier conversations with Bob St. George I knew that this could be a time-eater, so I headed up 395 toward Reno and I-80. It was a few more miles but probably quicker. It was surprising to see so much snow on the ground in Donner Pass.



Salt Lake City, UT



Carson City, NV



Sacramento, CA

I arrived in Sacramento at 7:40 pm; about an hour later than I thought I should have been there as of a couple days ago. There was another rider there on a V-Strom, he was ecstatic to be capturing his last bonus photo and needed only to get to Ontario. We chatted for a minute, he told me something about Ken (not about the accident) but at this point I didn't care about my position relative to anyone else, I just wanted to get to my next stop. I located the waypoint for San Ysidro and routed there. Damn, another 500 mile ride!! The 2820 had me go east toward CA highway 99, and then south on 99. It wasn't a bad road; although, when I zoomed out, I could see that I-5 ran in the same direction. But by this time it was a bit to the west and I wasn't inclined to detour over there.

In the late evening, it started to get chilly and I was getting tired. I don't remember which happened first, but at one point I stopped to put the Gerbing jacket on. My phone rang, but I didn't answer it as I was wrestling with my jacket and suit. When I did check the phone, I saw that Lisa had called. I called her back, thinking something must be wrong. I should mention here that the day before, Lisa had contacted Heidi and asked for the link to my private Spot page. Heidi checked with me and I said okay. Now, Lisa just said "please be careful!". I happened to mention that I was on highway 99; she knew that but wondered why I was on that road and not the interstate. All I could say was that the gps routed me this way.

So, through the night I kept on riding. I did stop at one point when I got too tired to continue safely. In the wee hours of the morning going thru Los Angeles, I missed a turn and got on I-10 instead of staying on I-5. I took the first exit and fortunately, got back to the correct route with just a few minutes delay. Heading toward San Diego it got really foggy, something I hadn't expected in southern California. Also, I noticed that the bike did not seem to like the rain grooved road surfaces. They made me ride tentatively.

I arrived at the San Ysidro post office at about 5 a.m. There were two or three other riders there, and we all commented on the fact that the building did not have any 'post office' (remember Key West?) sign on it. One of the riders noted that it was possible to put the bike near the sign at the roadside and get a picture of the sign and the bike with the building in the background. I tried that, then moved my rally flag from the bike to the sign for the clearest of several attempts.



San Ysidro, CA

Now, just one more stop and then the finish! Yuma was just 180 miles away, but I would need gas before that. I stopped at a station down the street from the San Ysidro post office, but it was a kiosk type station where there's only one credit card terminal. I rode away, thinking there would be a 'normal' station nearby. Nope. I got on the highway and eventually onto I-8 headed east. I had enough gas for a while but I knew it wasn't enough to get over the mountains. At Alpine Village there was a sign for gas but having been there before (in 2000 on my first 50CC) I knew it was just a country store, and I assumed it wouldn't be open this early. So I kept going. I was getting a bit nervous, thinking I had really screwed up and was going to run out of gas. I took one exit that had a 'gas' sign, but a local told me there was no gas station open. He did say that the next exit, Jacumba, had gas. Yes! I'm saved! And it did have gas.

At Yuma, I took the first exit in Arizona, which was the 'downtown' exit. Many of the storefronts were closed, and I didn't see anything that looked like a good prospect for a receipt. No gas stations or ATMs. After spending 5-10 minutes looking, I came around a corner and looked down the street to see two gas stations. I quickly gassed up and checked the receipt twice, logged my stop, and punched Ontario CA into the gps. I was almost shocked when it showed over 200 miles to go. I was thinking it was more like 100 or 150 miles. It was almost 8 a.m. pacific time. The final checkpoint window opened in two hours. In four hours, I would be DNF. Clearly, I was going to be late to the finish. The only question was how much. There was nothing to do but do my best. I was already hot as the morning sun was warming things up, but I didn't take the time to remove the layers I had put on during the cold night. I hit the road with nothing more to do, no more stops, until the Doubletree Ontario Airport.

There wasn't too much to slow me down except a border check and an agricultural inspection station. The route to Ontario took me past the Salton Sea, a bonus I had bypassed in 2009. After a long stretch of US highway, I was on I-10 headed almost due west toward LA. But instead of making better time on the interstate, the traffic was just heavy enough to be annoying. In addition, at one on ramp two motorcycle CHP officers got on the highway just in front of me and although they were keeping a good pace, I had to stay behind them for about 20 miles. It was a relief for me to crest a hill and see the LA basin in front of me. This was

only the second time I had been here; the first time was in the 2001 rally, but as I recall it was dark then. Even from there, it seemed like an eternity before finally reaching the exit for the hotel. Down the street, around the corner, and there was Lisa Stevens at the street waving me in. It was finally over; my clock showed 11:10 a.m.

I ran in to find Ira and officially stop the clock at 11:11 or 11:12, not sure which. My friend Andy Kirby had been dispatched to expedite my getting into scoring. I asked him to call Heidi first, which he tried but got the wrong number. My brother David had ridden out from Maryland, so he had already contacted Heidi. Andy also told me about Ken's accident, which I couldn't believe.

Scoring was completed pretty quickly with no issues. I didn't know what impact the 1420 penalty points would have; I assumed that I was among the top finishers, maybe even the top of the top. As it turned out, Peter Behm and Eric Jewell had gathered an amazing number of points on their third legs, and my hat is off to both of them. I'd sure like to know how they did it! I am proud to be in their company.

Twelve and a half years after my first documented Saddlesore 1000, almost ten years after my first Iron Butt Rally, I feel I have accomplished my highest, most difficult goal ever – an Iron Butt Rally trophy. It's a feeling I can't describe, and I thank everyone I have ever ridden a mile with for their inspiration, and for all the encouraging words over the years but especially during this rally. But most especially, I thank Heidi for her support and understanding of my need to do this ride. I could not have done it otherwise.