

*In the months following the '95 rally, I have been amazed at the interest in the event. Information is limited and there seems to be an insatiable appetite for additional written material about it. This document, a summary of the log that I developed shortly after the event, is my contribution to the collection of material available on the Iron Butt Home Page.*

**Sunday, August 27, 1995** I departed Dallas at 10:30 for Salt Lake City, the starting location for the 1995 Iron Butt Rally. It was in the 90's, so I didn't wear the new Aerostitch that I had purchased just weeks before. I filled the water pouch, strapped it to my back, and headed for Salt Lake. This was the only portion of the trip that I didn't wear the suit. During the trip, after the first time that I donned the suit to deal with some rain, I became convinced that the appropriate thing to do was to keep the ""Stitch"" on. Any disadvantages associated with the heat were compensated for by the protection from dehydration and from road rash in the event of a spill.

I took a route through Wichita Falls, Memphis (Texas), San Jon, Chama, Durango, Monticello and Price, Utah. There was generally good weather except for some rain in the Chama, New Mexico area.

**Monday, August 28** I arrived in Salt Lake City after a 25 hour, 1,250 mile ride (arrived 10:18 MST). Check-in was to begin at 16:00. I found most other riders already there, tinkering with motorcycles and holding discussions in the parking lot. On check-in, I met Mike Murphy, a neurosurgeon who commented about the fact that he probably was bringing the only ""stock"" motorcycle, referring to the fact that most had auxiliary tanks, long-range lights and other features. I mentioned that my '95 K1100LT was also totally stock.

After checking in, I took a nap for a few hours, then joined other riders in the parking lot. I attended the novice rider meeting and the rider's dinner that evening. Riders were given small, pink towels with numbers on them. These were to be included in photographs of bonus locations as proof that we made the bonus stop.

After dinner, I stopped in the lounge for a few beers with Mike Kneebone, the Chairman of the 1995 Rally and the President of the Iron Butt Association, and Leonard Aron, an attorney from California who was planning to ride an antique Indian Chief. I also met some of the other riders.

**Tuesday, August 29** I had a lot of time available to relax, visit with other riders, and plan for the beginning of the rally at 17:00. Rider packets were not distributed until 16:00, providing only an hour for review and planning prior to departure.

After reviewing the bonuses, I decided to go for the biggest bonuses, which required riding from Salt Lake to southwestern Nebraska, with stops in Rawlins and Cheyenne, Wyoming. Only two other riders took this route.

Shortly before taking off, Mike Kneebone asked where I decided to go and advised me that it was a mistake to ""burn yourself out"" by taking on such a long trip on the first leg. Since I only had five minutes left before the start, I decided that it was too late to plot another route, and decided to ignore Kneebone's advice.

I was the fifth or sixth rider to depart the parking lot. The departure was impressive - one of the highlights of the rally. I recall thinking ""this is what I have waited for about six years to do."" I had already earned a reputation (at least with Mike Kneebone) of being a no-show, since I had paid for and

entered previous rallies, only to cancel at the last minute due to conflicting work pressures. I was awarded the number 1 position (with a big number 1 on my towel) in honor of having finally made the event.

I headed for I80 East and soon was riding with three or four other riders headed in the same direction. I thought ""These guys are riding fast. Real fast. These guys are riding even faster than I normally ride."" I assumed this exuberance would not last long into the rally. I was right.

I took my first fuel stop in Little America, about 160 miles from Salt Lake. I was the first in the group to stop, and the only one in that group that did not have an auxiliary fuel tank.

I refueled again in Rawlins and asked for directions to the first bonus location, the old prison building. After taking a picture of the visitor sign, I proceeded to the statue of Lincoln at one of the exits on I80, near Cheyenne.

I took a shot of the Lincoln statue, then Rick Shrader and Gary Eagan (who ultimately was the first place finisher) showed up. I didn't see Gary again until Spokane, but I met with Rick later at the Chimney Rock area.

**Wednesday, August 30** Chimney Rock. Searching in the woods and fields for the visitor sign, I realized I should have packed a better flashlight. Rick Shrader arrived and we discussed where the visitor entrance might be. He soon took off down a dirt trail, looking for the sign. I finally found it. I blew the horn a few times to alert Rick, but he was already out of range.

After placing the towel on the sign and taking the picture, I mounted up and began to pull out of the parking lot of the visitor center. From the corner of my eye, I could see that I left the towel on the sign. Each stop for a photo is a bit irritating, since it involves removing helmet and gloves, dismounting, setting up for the shot, replacing camera and towel, replacing helmet and gloves etc. I thought, ""this is only day 1 and I shouldn't be that tired yet. What will happen a week from now when I have done eight or ten thousand miles."" I committed to add this item to my checklist after each stop - ""insure that you have not left the towel behind.""

I found out (several weeks after the rally) that it had been discovered that the ""original"" first place finisher had lost his towel, borrowed and modified one belonging to another rider, and used the bogus towel for the remainder of the rally. This was later discovered and the rider (and his helper) disqualified.

After retrieving my towel, I made a dash for Spokane. I stopped in Scotts Bluff and looked for an all-night gasoline station. There was only one 24 hour station in town and it took some time to find it. I began to appreciate what a difference an auxiliary tank would make.

I nearly ran out of gas coming into Buffalo, Wyoming, practically coasting into the gas station with the tank empty. I had been running very fast, with no sight of troopers. I rode to Spokane via Scotts Bluff, Douglas, Buffalo, Crow Agency (Montana), Big Timber, Butte, Missoula and finally Cour D'Alene (Idaho). While in Montana (in the wee hours of the morning) I was nearly scared to death when a coyote ran across my path. I was doing about 90 and the coyote was running at full speed. I'm sure he was startled also, crossing within a few feet of the motorcycle.

I arrived in Spokane a little over an hour late and suffered a loss of points that put me in third place behind Eagan and Shrader. The three of us did the same bonuses, but I was the latest.

After receiving new rally packets, I went directly to a motel, ordered dinner, looked at options, and decided to again go for the big ones, which involved returning to Montana to the Little Big Horn Battleground, followed by a gas purchase in Buffalo, Wyoming and to San Diego via Salt Lake. I would be rested and I loved the idea of packing on miles in Montana.

**Thursday, August 31** On leaving the hotel at midnight, only my high beam was functional, so I replaced the bulb. I still had only the high beam. I suspected a faulty switch and decided to replace it as soon as possible. I made an adjustment to the headlamp to be between the highest and middle setting, and antagonized drivers (especially truckers) who assumed I refused to lower my high beam. I lost about an hour fussing with the bulb and was underway by about 01:00.

Just as I crossed into Idaho from Washington, the right glove box cover flew off the motorcycle. I parked on the shoulder and walked back to retrieve the lid. As I was approaching it, an 18 wheeler smashed the lid into oblivion. I discovered an unexpected benefit to losing it, and will leave the replacement home for future rallies. I discovered that the compartment, with the cover off, permitted me to store 3 or 4 bottles of spring water. I found it easier to drink from the bottles (thanks to the Duo-Tech Helmet) than to be fussing with the camel back device that I had been using. I could flip the helmet lid and drink directly from the bottled water whenever I wanted.

By the time I reached Missoula, Montana, I was cold and stopped to add another shirt, in addition to the heated vest and long underwear. After collecting bonuses and heading for San Diego, I became tired in Fillmore, Utah and decided to sleep at the "Iron Butt Hotel" - on the motorcycle in the parking lot of a convenience store.

This was the first time I tried to sleep on the motorcycle and it worked well, after I placed ear plugs into my ears. Although I set my watch alarm to wake me in an hour, I slept through it because of the ear plugs.

I slept for about three hours and awoke to find Rick Morrison returning to his motorcycle, which he had parked next to mine. He had been concerned that I was sleeping too late to make the checkpoint in San Diego so he asked the store clerk to search through gas receipts to tell him how long I had been asleep after buying gas. It was necessary for me to take off and burn through some fast tanks to make the checkpoint on time.

**Friday, September 1** I arrived in San Diego only three minutes late, after experiencing fast commuter traffic (90+ MPH) in San Bernardino, east of Los Angeles. Rick Morrison arrived about a half hour later. The Brattin BMW service people changed oil and verified that my dimmer switch wasn't working. They didn't have a replacement available. I called my wife, Barb and asked her to alert George, the Plano BMW mechanic, that I would need a new switch when I passed through on the way to Ft. Lauderdale.

Brattin's did a great job of laying out food for the riders - submarine sandwiches that were six feet or so in length. I bought a helmet liner and a new pair of gloves. My head had been itching in the helmet and I had decided to buy a liner as soon as I could find one.

Spectators consisted of motorcyclists as well as non-cyclists. The Honda Helix driven by Ed Otto drew the most attention at all stops, including San Diego.

I found in San Diego that I was in second place and began for the first time to feel that I might be able to finish in the top ten. I set a goal for being in the top three and identified Gary Eagan as most likely to succeed. Gary not only looked the part, but his motorcycle seemed to be the best equipped for this rally, with auxiliary fuel tank, large water tank, driving lights, thin profile ""city cases"", multiple radar detectors, and radar ""jammer"". Except for Ed's Helix, Gary and his gray '95 K1100LT drew the most attention.

After packets were distributed, spectators watched riders spread maps on the sidewalk to plan the next leg. I planned mine (at least the start of it) working on the back seat of the motorcycle, while a spectator engaged me in conversation. He was interested in what there was to win, why we would be doing it without big prize money, and what happened to all of the entry money if no money was to be awarded. I didn't have time for a lengthy conversation and he wouldn't have understood anyway. I tried to be polite while doing the first part of my analysis.

I took off for the Coronado bridge (along with virtually all other riders) for the first easy (close) bonus opportunity. I then headed north and stopped at a motel in Barstow. I decided to stop for 4 or 5 hours because of very high winds and some rain. I ordered room service from Dominos.

**Saturday, September 2** I left by midnight for Laughlin, Nevada to pick up a casino chip, then to Needles, California, the first bonus gas stop on the way to Ft. Lauderdale. I arrived in Needles at about 03:00.

I stopped for gas in Kingman, Arizona and proceeded to Meteor Crater for a photo of the Apollo spacecraft. I was told by the guard and ticket agent that others ""with their little pink towels"" had been by in the morning to take pictures. The guard told me about riders who had to wait for the place to open, due to a miscalculation regarding time zones.

Ardys Kellerman's motorcycle was parked in the lot. Ardys (a 63 year old grandmother) was just leaving. She informed me there had been word of an accident with one of the riders on the way to the Grand Canyon. At the end of the rally, we learned that Ardys had an accident shortly after my meeting and was in the hospital in Phoenix with some broken bones.

On to Chambers, Arizona and to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Then to Fort Sumpter to photograph the grave of Billy the Kid. The road from the Interstate to Fort Sumpter was great - 2 lanes, straight as an arrow and visibility as far as the eye could see. It was possible to ride very fast relatively safely. There was nowhere for a trooper to hide and you could see oncoming cars (on rare occasions when there were any) for miles. This was an ideal place to open it up with little danger. My kind of place.

The thought kept occurring to me, as desolate as the area was, that there can't be much of a town out here in the middle of nowhere. And there wasn't.

Fort Sumpter is an interesting town, with nothing to brag about except that they (arguably) have the grave site of Billy the Kid. The town seems to have a lot invested in the cost of maintaining a museum but it's hard to imagine that there is enough traffic to justify the cost. I photographed the grave, which was located behind the museum.

From Fort Sumpter, on to Carlsbad for a photo of the visitor sign to Carlsbad Caverns, then to Hobbs and into Texas at about midnight.

**Sunday, September 3** I stopped for gas in Colorado City, Texas at 04:30, then proceeded to Abilene. In Colorado City, I was concerned about an inability to get gas when needed, since the interstate was about as desolate as I have ever seen it, even for this time of night. I found a closed station that had the new automated credit card readers at the pumps. A great innovation. I was able to obtain gas.

At Abilene, I stopped at a Chevron station at about 05:30. On leaving Abilene and before arriving in Fort Worth, my personal tragedy struck, without me even knowing it. I had failed to close the zippers to my tank bag and somewhere before Fort Worth found that my envelope of receipts, gas log, casino chip and photos of bonus locations had blown away. It was as if someone had kicked me in the stomach. I did several searches of the bike and realized that the receipts were really lost.

I proceeded to get gas at Fort Worth. Another bonus, but ""big deal"" after losing hundreds of points. During the ride to Ft. Worth I considered options, and decided that I would have to retrace my ride while the bike was being serviced in Dallas. I called Barb to report the tragedy. She agreed we should leave the motorcycle in Dallas for the scheduled tire change and service with George, who had agreed to come in on Sunday, and go back and look for the envelope of receipts lying along the road. This seemed like a good idea at the time, although in retrospect (now knowing we wouldn't find the stuff) it would have been better to do the Waco bonus and get some sleep before continuing on to Ft. Lauderdale. I met Barb at the BMW dealer, left the motorcycle for service, and began the eight hour search in vain. I did get a chance to sleep a little in the car.

After picking up the bike, I went to South Fork for a bonus shot before proceeding to Ft. Lauderdale with new oil and tires.

**Monday, September 4** I stopped in Jackson, Mississippi (another gas bonus) at 01:30, then to Norwood, Mississippi. I reached Pensacola (another gas bonus) at 08:44. I made Cottondale, Florida by 10:30, Madison by noon, and Wildwood by 14:30.

I knew it would be close getting to Ft. Lauderdale on time, and was driving very fast. I decided to take the west coast route in order to pick up the sizable bonus for crossing ""Alligator Alley"".

By the time I pulled into the lot at Burger King, riders were beginning to gather around Kneebone, who was preparing to distribute the new rally packets. My fuel pump was screaming and I wondered if there was something wrong with the motorcycle. One of the rally workers ran to my motorcycle and showed me the time at 6:59. When the crowd recognized that I was one of the contestants a cheer went up. I had arrived in Ft. Lauderdale with only 1 minute left on the clock - 1 minute between me and being time barred.

I had already written off the checkpoint and thought that the best I would be able to do would be to qualify as a finisher (assuming I did O.K. with the rest of the rally). What a pleasant surprise to find that all I had to worry about was the tremendous loss of points (from the tank bag) and the severe penalty for being so late in Ft. Lauderdale. With the time penalty and loss of points, I dropped from 2nd place to 7th.

I checked in to the hotel where Kneebone and crew were staying and walked to a nearby McDonalds for dinner before retiring. Kneebone and I discussed the next set of bonuses and he offered advice that I once again decided to ignore. Mike suggested doing the ""big bonus"" checkpoint at Ft. Kent Maine and getting to Gorham in time to get a good 8 hours of sleep before starting the final ""big opportunity"" leg from Gorham back to Salt Lake City. As tired as I was, it didn't take long for me to determine that his suggestion was not doable. No other rider tried to accomplish this feat either. Instead, I planned on doing the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel and to New England via Dover.

During my conversation with Kneebone, I mentioned that a bolt had vibrated loose on the luggage assembly and that I would have to figure out how to fix it. He exposed me to one of the important lessons that I learned during this rally, which was ""duct tape can fix almost anything on a motorcycle until proper repairs can be performed"". This reminded me of the story I had heard in the last few days about some of the early Iron Butt rallies, in which tire changes were accompanied by penalties (great safety policy, right?). During one of the early rallies, several riders wrapped duct tape around their tires for the last several hundred (or thousand) miles. I noted that another checklist item for future Iron Butts would be duct tape.

**Tuesday, September 5** At about 02:00 I made it down the street to get gas in Ft. Lauderdale before heading back across Alligator Alley, same bonus, different leg. At a truck stop I bought a roll of duct tape and another flashlight to supplement what I discovered was an anemic one that I had packed. I used some of the duct tape to try a temporary repair of the luggage rack. This wasn't totally successful, so I used additional bungee cords that I had brought (great checklist item) to take some pressure off the weak luggage rack.

I encountered heavy rain in Jacksonville, Florida. While on I95 in heavy traffic, and while passing an 18 wheeler, the motorcycle stopped running, making for a very dicey exit across traffic in the rain to the right shoulder of the highway. I decided that this was the end of the rally for me and that I would surely have to have the motorcycle picked up and taken to a shop for repair.

Thank God for cellular phones. It was about 16:00 Dallas time, so I called George at the shop on the off chance he would have an idea. He said ""before doing anything else, put the side stand up and down a few times"". I did this while keeping him on the phone. The motorcycle started immediately. The ""safety switch"" designed to cut off the engine with the side stand down sometimes shorts in heavy rain. I resolved to have George disconnect this ""safety feature"" when he gets his hands on the motorcycle again, and also resolved to do something nice for George. I think he appreciated the Iron Butt T-Shirt and \$100 tip when I returned. (After all, he did come in on Sunday to service my bike, including removing a switch assembly from a new motorcycle so that he could fix my headlamp).

I'll decide when to shut the engine down from here on, thank you. This is a great example of letting the engineers provide a safety feature that has the potential for causing a more serious problem than it was intended to prevent. The single most dangerous thing that happened to me for these 12,000 miles was caused by a new ""safety feature"" not available on earlier bikes.

I made Charleston, South Carolina at 14:25 for a bonus gas stop. I later realized I also should have stopped in nearby Savannah, but thought it was too much out of the way (I didn't even consult the atlas). Another example of how fatigue can result in strategic errors.

I developed a love/hate relationship with my Shoei ""Duo-Tech"" helmet. The only redeeming feature of this helmet (and the reason I paid big bucks for it) is that the entire front opens so that you can eat or drink without removing the helmet, which meant I could eat and drink while riding. I loved this feature.

The negatives are that the helmet is noisy, heavy (I blamed it for a recurring muscle pain in the neck and back of the shoulders) and rain sometimes comes inside the face shield. I had a problem insuring a good fit. But the ability to eat and drink without stopping the motorcycle probably insures I'll use the helmet on the next Iron Butt.

By Florida, I had become adept at eating while on the move, usually slowing down to about 70. Accustomed to higher speeds, 70 seemed like a crawl, and eating on the motorcycle seemed safe. I had purchased a bag of hot peanuts and was trying to eat them on the move. Since I was running with the windshield all the way down I was dealing with more wind directly in my face (and on the helmet) than usual.

In order to extract peanuts from the bag, I had to toss my head back. The wind caught the open face shield and the force ripped the front assembly all the way to the back of the helmet, and ripped out the screw securing the right side of the shield to the helmet. This gave my neck a pretty good jerk and startled the heck out of me. I stopped to figure out what to do and realized that the duct tape could be used to secure things, although it meant the end of eating on the move. I could no longer open the face shield. Thank God for the duct tape.

I crossed the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel complex before 23:00 and parked for sleep at a rest area within sight of the toll booths on the north side, in Virginia.

**Wednesday, September 6** I stopped next for gas in Massawadox, Va. at 03:17, then Dover (bonus gas) at 05:32. Even at this early hour, commuter traffic into Philadelphia/New Jersey/New York was starting.

I arrived in East Brunswick, New Jersey by 09:00 and in West Haven (and New Haven) Connecticut by about 11:30. I made the mistake of stopping for gas in West Haven. The bonus was for New Haven, a few blocks further. I caught the mistake before the tank was full, and bought gas twice in 10 minutes. Steve Chalmers, the '95 Rallymaster, had warned us that if the bonus specified gas in a particular city, an address in the suburbs would not be satisfactory.

I stopped again in Walpole, Massachusetts for gas before continuing on to Maine. On the way, I opted for the bonus at Beaver Tail Park on Conanicut island in Rhode Island. This was one of the few times I met another rider. Jesse Pereboom had pulled up on his blue Electraglide. We chatted for a minute or two before I took off for Gorham.

Ordinarily, I would have felt rude for not offering to ride together, but it was made clear at our orientation session that this was not expected or encouraged. A veteran counseled against riding together, since it gives you too much to worry about. These have always been my sentiments anyway and one of the reasons I have enjoyed riding solo so much more than in a group, even a group of two.

I arrived in Gorham on time for the checkpoint without losing points. The guy working the parts department was able to repair my helmet (no charge) and the service area changed the oil and repaired

my broken luggage rack. What a relief to know I could once again eat and drink without having to remove my helmet. Great folks.

I was pleased to find that, considering loss of my bonus credits in Texas and severe penalty for being late to Ft. Lauderdale, I was in 5th place overall after points were tallied in Maine. This gave me the feeling I still had an opportunity to finish in the top three. I would live to hear Kneebone's ""I told you so"" regarding my fade during the last, and most important leg of the rally.

Rider packets were distributed promptly. Since I hadn't been to a motel since the 4 hours in Ft. Lauderdale, and since the last and most potentially important leg was coming up, I had already decided to check into a motel before continuing.

The route selected for the final leg was Mackinaw City, followed by the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward, Wisconsin. These were very big bonuses, but the intention was to also pick up others in Montana and the Dakotas, not using another motel until Salt Lake City.

**Thursday, September 7** I left Gorham about midnight and headed south on I95. I had briefly considered going to Mackinaw City via Canada (a shorter route) but discounted the idea. I assumed I would have to show proof that the motorcycle was insured in Canada and I didn't think it was. I didn't want to take the time to call Barb to investigate this. Also, I believed (apparently mistakenly) that radar detectors were illegal in all of Canada and perhaps I wouldn't make it through the border checkpoint with mine. Finally, not familiar with the penalty for speeding in Canada (lock up or long delay?) I opted for the long way around, staying in the US. I thought I had prepared well for the rally, but being prepared to enter Canada had been overlooked.

I made my way to Detroit via Framingham, Albany, Warner's, Angola and Westlake Ohio. At a gas stop on the New York Turnpike, the attendant expressed interest in my trip, and seemed knowledgeable about the bridge crossing at Mackinaw City. He gave me cause for concern when he informed me that motorcycles aren't always allowed to cross (particularly unescorted) because of the danger associated with the high winds that are sometimes encountered there. When asked specifically what might be the problem, he said ""being blown over the side"". He also said that 18 wheelers were often prohibited from crossing without a police escort. I might have totally discounted his warning, but he seemed credible. It gave me something new to think about while continuing with the trip.

What if I invested all those miles in getting to the bridge and found that I wouldn't be permitted to cross? What if there were high winds and they simply said ""cross at your own risk?"" Surely there are guard rails to keep you and the motorcycle from being blown into the water. What if they aren't high enough, how could I survive being blown into the water (not to mention the long fall) with helmet, riding suit, heavy boots and all that clothing. This stuff is difficult enough to get out of above water.

I found out several months later, from one of my cyber-biking friends who lives in the area, that a Yugo was once blown over the side and that the danger during high winds is real.

The kinds of thoughts I began to have represent what fatigue and a lot of miles can do to your thinking. I began to have thoughts that seemed reasonable then, but in retrospect were ludicrous. I'm a strong swimmer and began to plan that if the thing looked tough, I would proceed but would first undo the



strap to my helmet until I got to the other side. I would also undo the zippers to my riding boots so that I could get rid of them easily if I wound up in the water. Then I would only have to work my way out of the suit and work my way to the surface.

My passage through Detroit was not pleasant. I needed gas and had no idea what kind of neighborhood I was exiting into. It was not good. The station had no rest room facility and the clerk was inside the convenience store in a bulletproof cage. The neighborhood and clientele looked as if it was necessary. I got the gas and got back on I75 ASAP, looking over my shoulder the entire time.

It was raining and cold in the Detroit area. The main disappointment about the lack of a rest room at the gas stop was I wanted to put on my long underwear and additional clothes. Although I carried these extra clothes inside to change, I was happy that I didn't wind up having to leave the motorcycle outside unattended. This was the only time during the trip that I was concerned about it being left unattended, or about my personal safety, save a motorcycle-related incident.

I proceeded north on I75 in heavy rain and cold until leaving the Detroit and Pontiac areas. I located what appeared to be the first rest stop in the boondocks. I had noticed while in Florida that the rest stops had signs that said ""on-site security after dark"". This was obviously what the Florida tourist folks felt was necessary to counteract the negative publicity associated with the murder of foreign tourists at rest stops. The solution in Virginia was to close all the rest stops after dark.

While exiting the interstate to stop at the rest area, I wondered what the policy was here and how safe it was to stop, given that I was still within about an hours drive from Detroit. It takes a while to enter the men's room and undress in order to start with the bottom layer (the underwear) and build back up. All this with the motorcycle out of sight. There was nothing, except some parked 18 wheelers. I never count on the presence of the trucks to provide security. I assume that when they are parked, the driver is asleep.

One of the first things I noticed on entering the dark parking area was that mercury vapor lamps were equipped with motion detectors, so that any area where motion was taking place became brightly lit. This was comforting. I parked the motorcycle, took my clothes and walked into the men's room to change. I saved putting on the Aerostitch until I returned to the parking lot to minimize time spent out of sight of the motorcycle.

While finishing my dressing in the parking lot, what turned out to be a very friendly female Michigan State Trooper pulled up beside the motorcycle, rolled down the window and engaged me in conversation, beginning with ""getting suited up for winter?"" Conversation included where are you from, where are you going, and so on. She seemed very interested in what I was doing. When I told her I was headed for the Upper Peninsula (UP), she joked that they probably have last winter's ice cleared from the river by now. Given the remarks made at the gas stop about problems in crossing the bridge, I was about to ask if she was aware of any potential problems with the intended route, but decided it wouldn't help what I perceived to have been my macho image with her (after all, she was a State Trooper). Besides, I had given her the opportunity, without having to express concern, to say ""surely you aren't planning to cross the bridge up there on a motorcycle?"" She didn't, so I didn't bring the subject up. She hung around for 10 minutes or so until I was ready to take off and wished me well.

Another concern that occurred to me was that I might have trouble finding gas in the middle of the night in the UP. The clerk at the next gas stop put my mind at ease, saying that all of the Shell stations in the UP are open 24 hours, and that when you are about to enter an area where gas isn't available for 100 miles or so, there is a sign warning you about it. I wasn't concerned about it again, but also don't recall seeing such signs. I tried to make it a point to mention to all gas attendants that I was heading for the bridge at Mackinaw City, giving all of them the opportunity to offer a warning. No one else did.

**Friday, September 8** On arriving at Mackinaw City I was out of gas and looked for an open station, a bit past midnight. To qualify for the bonus, you need a gas receipt or photo of the city limit sign. Since I only had one flash left, I still wanted to preserve it if possible. All stations seemed closed, so I stopped at a motel and asked a clerk, who informed me that all stations were closed and that the next gas available was across the bridge.

I returned a few miles to the city limit sign to take the shot for the big bonus. I was careful to insure that the shot took. Chalmers had warned us that shots not including the towel or in which things weren't legible would be disqualified. The picture took, and I headed for the bridge.

I again became concerned when I saw signs as I approached the bridge announcing that trucks had to stop to determine if escorts were necessary. My last hope at this point was that if the trip across the bridge was really not safe, the agent at the toll booth wouldn't let me proceed.

No comment from the toll agent. I commented, ""looks a bit windy up there"" (it really looked up there) but all I got back was ""yes, be real careful"".

By this time, I realized that previous thoughts about a plan for surviving being blown off the bridge were nonsense. If I was blown off, it would be all over. The impact of hitting the water from such a long fall would surely render me unconscious and it was stupid to think about surviving the freezing water. The correct plan was to not be blown off.

This was a strange bridge, different from any that I remember crossing. The side railing looked shorter than others - I would have said only a bit over knee-high. An optical illusion? I decided to stay in the center of the bridge.

The center lanes were steel grating, not unlike what is encountered on draw bridges. As experienced motorcyclists know, these gratings (along with parallel railroad tracks) are hazards to a motorcycle. The gratings are especially dangerous when wet or icy. After realizing that the center lanes were like this the entire way across, I decided to move to the lanes closer to the rail, which were concrete. Some rain now, lots of wind, but at least no ice. I concentrated on being relaxed, not wanting to make abrupt movements. I was very relieved when on the other side.

Although thousands of motorcyclists safely cross this bridge every year, I believe that my concerns and fantasies about the bridge is typical of what can occur after 10 consecutive 1,000 mile days on the road.

The next several hours were spent along the northern shore of Lake Superior. I didn't get to see much. These were some of the coldest hours that I spent on the rally. There was soon a clear sky with the moon and stars reflecting off the water. I know that this would have been spectacular if I could have

seen it better. The trip was through Saint Ignace, Manistique, Crystal Falls and Ironwood Michigan, before entering Wisconsin and reaching Shell Lake by about noon.

The roads getting to Hayward (and back out) were very slow. The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame was worth a ton of bonus points, and it was easy to see why, given the trouble to get to it.

I finally found the sign to the Hall of Fame, took the picture, and headed off toward Salt Lake City. At this time I still planned to pick up several more bonuses before Salt Lake. I didn't realize at the time just how unreasonable it was to expect to handle more stops.

I headed through Fairbault, Minnesota and Williams, Iowa. Up until this point, I did not feel that I was being careless or had been driving dangerously due to lack of sleep or fatigue. I was feeling proud for not experiencing a close call. Whenever I began feeling excessively tired, I would pull over to a rest stop or convenience store and get a few hours of sleep on the motorcycle. It was amazing how easily rest came.

After inadvertently running the motorcycle onto the shoulder of the road, I looked for the first available motel and checked in, knowing that this would cost me dearly, but also thinking that it isn't worth dying over, especially given that my original goal was to finish my first Iron Butt without embarrassing myself too badly, rather than be a DNF. I checked into a motel in Walnut, Iowa around midnight and put in a wake up call for 04:00, which I felt was the latest I could sleep while still having a chance to at least pick up the Denver bonus.

**Saturday, September 9** With the benefit of sleep and a new look at the atlas, I realized I was in big trouble in terms of accomplishing anything more with bonuses. After getting on the road, I realized the challenge would be to make it back to Salt Lake in time to not lose too many points already accumulated. I was nearly 1,000 miles from Salt Lake and had about 13 hours before the checkpoint would officially open, and 15 before I would be time barred for missing the checkpoint. Although I didn't bother to calculate it at the time, I would have had to average about 77 MPH to make it on time (pretty tough with gas stops, etc.)

Given the time of day (or morning) and the territory I was in, I was able to burn three consecutive "high speed" tanks of gas, through Waco, Nebraska and Lexington, Nebraska. I continued through Big Springs, Nebraska and through Cheyenne, Rawlins and Green River Wyoming.

While approaching Green River, I passed a Honda Shadow and waved. I headed for gas in Green River. By the time I was finished fueling, the Shadow pulled up and the rider got off, looking at my motorcycle while I went inside to pay for gas. When I returned, the rider wanted to engage me in conversation, and although I was late, I didn't want to be impolite. He noticed my Iron Butt license frame and expressed interest, then incredulity when he realized what I was doing. "Hell, I like riding too, but after 350 miles I want to be home to sit down with a drink and relax". He mumbled to himself, at least three or four times "11,000 miles in 11 days"? Also, "how old are you anyway". Turns out he's at least 10 years older. Finally I said "look, I really have to get going" but still felt rude.

By this time I knew I would be late to Salt Lake but had two concerns. First, would I be less than 2 hours late (so I'd be a qualified "dignified" finisher), and second, I knew Barb was there waiting for me and would probably begin to worry, but I couldn't take the time to try to call anyone. Later I found that she

was less worried than other folks. She was more concerned about the points I was losing for being late (10 points for each minute). I finally arrived 77 minutes late, once again running a totally empty tank.

When the score was tallied, I placed 2nd for distance driven, and 8th overall, even with the loss of bonuses and late arrivals in Ft. Lauderdale and Salt Lake City. A month later, after ""improprieties"" were discovered by the first and second place finishers, all of the riders moved up two places, putting me in 6th place overall, rather than 8th.

The banquet and festivities were almost as much fun as the rally. Mike Murphy, a neurosurgeon, donned a tuxedo and delivered a champagne toast in honor of the finishers. He had ordered enough Dom Perignon Champagne to serve the tables, with his compliments.

**Sunday, September 10** After sleeping late and having breakfast with Barb, I left for home about 11:30. The route included Wellington, Utah and Grand Junction, Colorado. I went on to Gunnison, then spent the night in Poncha Springs.

**Monday, September 11** I made it home via Crow Junction, Clayton, Amarillo, Quanah and Decatur. At a rest stop in Colorado, I talked with two riders. The riders were on a Venture and Gold Wing and one of them noticed my license frame, asking if I had ever participated in an Iron Butt Rally. These guys were real impressed to find that I was just returning from one.

I arrived home about 23:30. The total trip (by odometer) was 14,530 miles in 16 days, or an average of over 900 miles per day.

**Epilogue** At the risk of being over-dramatic, I'll repeat something that Chalmers stated during an introductory speech at the dinner meeting the evening before the rally. Chalmers said, ""This rally will change your life"". Although I was fully expecting this to be a memorable event, I wasn't expecting anything so dramatic as a life change.

There are two changes that I am aware of. One is a great feeling of personal satisfaction for having completed something that for most people is inconceivable, and for experienced riders is demanding and difficult.

But the most significant change is the development of a feeling of camaraderie and bonding that takes place between riders. A deep feeling of respect develops toward each other for having been able to competently compete. It's the kind of thing that resulted in 60 riders showing up in Daytona last March, some driving well over 2,000 miles for an annual pizza party.

I'm looking forward to doing this again in '97. With an auxiliary fuel tank and a fully zippered tank bag.

Ron Ayres