

Written by Robert Higdon with contributions by Steve Chalmers and Michael Kneebone

August 25: Day Minus Four - The Big Dogs Bark

About 25 riders stood in a semi-circle around Greg Frazier. He was on the steps at the entrance to a beat-up restaurant in Grant, Colorado. They looked attentive. They should have. When Dr. Frazier speaks about the future, it is always best to be attentive.

"You won't be the fastest guy. There will always be someone who is faster than you. In this event there are some ISDT qualifiers. You won't beat them."

I stifled a gasp. International Six-Day Trials qualifiers? Good God. Who were these guys?

"I'm always asked while the ride is in progress, 'Who's winning?'" Frazier continued. "That's easy. More than 120 people sent in applications to run The Big Dog Rally. You're the ones who made the cut. You're all winners."

He let that sink in.

"So just go out and have a nice ride. Our chase van is clean. The lady who's running it gets really pissed off when she has to get it dirty picking someone up. You don't want to have her pissed off at you."

There was a small communal chuckle. The lady to whom Greg referred looked a little irritated anyway at having to be in Grant, sixty miles west of Denver, at 0900 anyway.

"Now I'm going to ask Bob Higdon to give a benediction," Greg said. He provided a nice introduction that exaggerated my modest background by about two orders of magnitude.

I spoke briefly. I remember saying that I was probably the happiest person in the crowd: At the conclusion of my blessing I would be able to ride straight back to Denver and take a nap; those poor guys were going where I wouldn't even want to take a Jeep. I mentioned that on the following Tuesday afternoon I would be giving a benediction at the start of the Iron Butt Rally in Salt Lake City. It wasn't clear to me which event I would least like to participate in. To die by fire or ice? Who cares? It's death either way.

In a sense I know these Big Dogs, the ones who ride across the passes at Cottonwood and Engineer and Imogene. I also know the ones on the Iron Butt Rally, who in a few days will be starting another of the most demanding motorcycle endurance events ever conceived. I know them, can talk to them, tell lies with them over a beer, and can remember many of their names. But I am not one of them.

I'm allowed to participate in such events, if giving a benediction is even considered "participation," because I make it a point to get close to the organizers. I know that I'll never be that close to the participants. To run such rallies you have to earn your stripes with more than bullshit and a smile.

So I gave my usual benediction. It's the facetious one that comments on the fact that priests, ministers, and others of the cloth --- never lawyers --- are normally charged with such functions. I reply to my own argument by noting that priests can promise heaven and happiness; as an attorney, I can promise that by meeting me they will soon encounter only hell. It always gets a laugh.

The Big Dogs then charged off toward hell. I politely declined again Greg's offer to ride one or two of the milder passes. I know my place. I headed back to Denver.

August 26 - Day Minus Three - The Basic Drill

I took a leisurely ride out to Denver from Washington, D.C. last week. My daily miles were 405, 412, 409, and 411. I was pleased with the poetic consistency of averaging 409.25 miles/day with virtually no standard deviation. I arose late each day (0800), stopped for lunch, and quit early (1700). I didn't speed. It was a basic low-rent ride. I've done worse. Much worse. Consider, then, what the Iron Butt contestant is going to face. The minimum checkpoint-to-checkpoint distance to be travelled is 9,052 miles in 11 days. That's 823 miles/day. It contemplates travelling not ten feet out of the most direct route to obtain even a single bonus point. And if on my ride to Denver I had doubled the miles I rode each day, I would have been time-barred before I even made it to the first checkpoint in Spokane.

There are 54 riders entered. Only one-quarter of them have ever successfully finished an Iron Butt. Steve Chalmers, this year's rallymaster, anticipates that the winner will have ridden about 13,250 miles, averaging just over 1,200 miles a day. I note again that such a figure is nearly triple what I recently did.

How many of those riders have a legitimate chance to win? I can count maybe five. In that tiny group I'd put Steve Attwood, the Englishman who won the '93 Iron Butt, and Ron Major, the '91 IBR victor. It's a small club.

And not much larger, in my opinion, will be the number of riders who will successfully make it back to Salt Lake City. I doubt 20 of them will do so. The tolls are terrific on rider, machine, and anything within the psychic aura of that combination.

Some years ago, I'm told, Rider Magazine did a survey that asked their readers to state the number of miles they would travel during a single day's ride on a bike. The median response was 125 miles.

Next Tuesday at 1700 the rally begins. Most of the riders will have passed 125 miles before 1900. They'll be heading north, into the mountains, and the 98F temperature of late August in the valley of the Great Salt Lake will be a dim memory as the sun dies. Soon it will turn cold. They will keep riding.

Two hours. Not quite one percent of what they need. As they climb higher into the southern end of the Sawtooth Mountains, the temperature will drop some more. On they will ride.

From: C.TREECE1@genie.com Bob,

What chance do you give the fellow who is riding the Helix?

Charlie

Tue Aug 29, 1995 11:50 EDT Charlie:

"What chance do you give the fellow who is riding the Helix?"

Ed Otto, on a 250cc Honda Helix scooter, is a good rider with some solid credentials. I don't think that will be enough. He's not going for a win. He just wants to ride checkpoint to checkpoint.

Eddie's finished the Iron Butt Rally before. It won't happen this time.

Bob Higdon

August 27 - Day Minus Two - Preparation and Murphy's Law

Mike Murphy is a tall, big man with an imposing presence. In an elephant pack he would be one of the older bulls that you have to keep an eye on. Here in Salt Lake City he is just another one of the Iron Butt contestants. In his real life back in Illinois he operates on people's brains and spinal cords. As a neurological surgeon, Murphy knows human frailty in all its forms. He has a frailty of his own: Two weeks ago he underwent knee surgery. The wound is refusing to close. Now he needs a skin graft. But if he did that, he wouldn't be able to sit on a motorcycle for sixteen or more hours a day. For the good doctor, this wasn't a close call. He's carrying extra bandages.

Another Mike, Mr. Kneebone, would have advised against the surgery. Kneebone knows that Rule #9 of the Iron Butt rally is that you never, ever make any substantive changes to motorcycle or self shortly before the rally. Whatever you do is going to go wrong at the worst possible time in the worst possible way with the worst concomitant expense. Dr. Murphy is getting a graphic example of his namesake's law.

Mike, Tim Moffitt, and I had ridden over to Salt Lake City during the weekend. We encountered one of the contestants, a young man gearing up for his first huge ride, at dinner one evening. He and Mike had a chance to talk briefly when Tim and I returned to the motel. Mike showed up a few minutes later.

I'll put him in the 'non-finisher' category," Mike said glumly.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"He's looking for a first aid kit," Mike said. The kit is a requirement for registration. "He's known for two years that he had to have the kit." Mike shook his head.

"When I ran my first Iron Butt, my bike was packed one month before I was scheduled to leave my house," he said. "On the morning that I left, all I did was open the garage, get on the bike, and turn the key."

Most of the time everyone manages to make the preparations. Most of the time the parts that break in the hours before the rally begins can be fixed. A knee can be bandaged and a first aid kit can be found. When the kid finally buys his kit, maybe he can use it on Dr. Murphy. Maybe.

August 28 - Day Minus One - Rogue's Gallery

In the next couple of weeks, if you see any of these people, take pity upon them:

Ron Ayres '95 BMW K1100LT
Bradley Hogue '93 Honda Gold Wing
Garve Nelson '83 Honda Ascot
Leonard Aron '46 Indian Chief
Steve Attwood '83 Moto Guzzi MK III LeMans
Ron Major '94 Honda ST1100
Eric Steven Faires '93 BMW K1100LT
Michael G. Murphy '93 Honda ST1100
Roy Eastwood '94 BMW R1100RS
Jim Culp '94 Honda Gold Wing
Phyliss Lang '94 H-D FXR
Fritz Lang '79 Honda Silver Wing
Brian Bush '88 BMW K100LT (film crew)
Gary Gottfredson '91 K100RS
Bob Honemann '65 BMW R60/2
Rick Morrison '94 BMW R100RT
Gregg Smith '87 Yamaha Venture
Skip Ciccarelli '86 Cal II Moto Guzzi
Charles Elberfeld '94 BMW K75SA
Martin Jones '92 Kawasaki Voyager
Morris Kruecke '89 Honda Gold Wing
Ed Otto '95 Honda Helix
Eddie Metz '85 Honda Gold Wing
Thomas Loegering '95 BMW R1100GS
Thomas Loegering Jr. '85 BMW K100RS
Ken Hatton '91 Kawasaki ZX-11
Robert Fairchild '91 Honda Gold Wing
Martin Hildebrandt '93 Honda ST1100
Rick Shrader '94 BMW R1100RS
Doug Stover '88 Honda Gold Wing
Harold Brooks '84 Honda Gold Wing
Steve Losofsky '86 BMW K100RS
Kevin P. Donovan '94 Honda GL1500A
Ardys Kellerman '94 BMW K75RT

Gary J. Eagan '95 BMW K1100LT
Horst K. Haak '95 BMW K1100RS
Jesse Pereboom '93 H-D FLHT
Dennis Searcy '85 H-D FLT
Frank Taylor '93 Yamaha FJ1200
William Thommes '91 H-D FXRP
Robert Ransbottom '91 BMW K75RT
Chuck Pickett '90 Honda Gold Wing
Ron/Karen McAteer '94 Honda ST1100
Michael Stockton '93 BMW K1100LT
Eugene McKinney '94 R1100RS
Mary Sue Johnson '93 H-D Dyna Wide Glide
Karol Patzer '88 BMW K75C
Keith Keating '94 BMW R1100RS
David Kerslake '94 Suzuki GSXR1100
Ed Fickess '89 Yamaha Venture
Hank Rowland '86 BMW K100RT
Boyd Young '91 BMW K100RS
Jerry Clemmons '84 Honda Gold Wing
Kevin Mello '93 K1100LT
Eddie James '93 BMW K1100RS

August 29 - Day Zero - Lift Off

At 1600 MDT, about 10 minutes ago, the riders were given their route instructions and bonus locations for the first leg of the rally. It will run from the western outskirts of Salt Lake City to Spokane, Washington. They will have 23 hours to travel approximately 723 miles. By Iron Butt standards that is pretty much a walk in the park. But the base mileage does not include obtaining any bonus points for visiting locations that may be somewhat off the most direct route. For example, the biggest bonus of the leg, grabbing a gas receipt in Anchorage, is worth a fat 963 points but would clearly result in the rider's being time-barred in Spokane unless he or she were travelling in a jet plane. As the bonus opportunities become less absurd, their point values decrease proportionately. A gas receipt in Boise, lying on the direct route from Salt Lake to Spokane, is worth a crummy 7 points.

The critical object is to make the Spokane checkpoint tomorrow afternoon. Failure to do so results in a 2000 point deduction, loss of all bonus points on the current leg, and the loss of all bonus points on the following leg. Additionally, missing a second subsequent checkpoint anywhere results in automatic disqualification. Missing a checkpoint by even a minute beyond the outside window is as bad as it gets for a contestant without being admitted to a hospital.

Rallymaster Steve Chalmers has been cranking up the pressure for the last few days. Some of the riders are ready to pop a small vessel right now. One poor fellow stood next to a tree beyond the parking lot yesterday afternoon, relieving his stomach of various biles. He's now had another 24 hours to consider what he has to look forward to. Yes, it sure does sound like a lot of fun.

At 1655 Chalmers will give them a five-minute warning. At 1700 they will take off in a shotgun start. A documentary film crew and a local television station will continue filming until the last bike disappears. I'll pack up my own bike and head back to Colorado. There are some good bonus points there, if I were competing.

The scene in the parking lot at this moment resembles a fighter squadron on the deck of a combat carrier. They study their maps and their bonus sheets the way pilots would consider targets of opportunity on a bombing run over heavily-fortified enemy territory. In less than an hour they will be gone. Radio contact will be lost with them unless one of them flames out before Spokane.

We should know more tomorrow. Stay tuned.

From C.TREECE1@genie.com Bob,

Thanks for your Helix evaluation. We await word of Ed's demise momentarily...

Sheesh. Three Yamahas, two Kawasakis, and one Suzuki. Is this strictly a BMW/Honda/Harley thing, or what?

Charlie

From: J.KLUG1@genie.com Bob,

The iron butt posts are great. I found it interesting to look at the list of bikes you entered. I was surprised to see some of the older ones. ('46 Indian Chief, '65 BMW, etc.) I don't know if I would want to try that ride on these old bikes. Even if the rider is a certified motorcycle machanic, that just means he might get there. The trick is being able to wrench it real quick so you can make that next checkpoint on time. I wish all the riders good luck, but I wouldn't put my money on a bike over 10 years old to win.

GA.JOE

From: J.GORMAN1@genie.com Bob

I've been toying with the idea of heading up to Maine next Wednesday to watch the remaining contestants come through the last Checkpoint. Your posts have pretty much convinced me that I have to go just to see the looks on the survivor's faces.

Jon

August 30 - Day One - Salt Lake City to Spokane, But How?

Here is the problem: You have to ride from Salt Lake City to Spokane. You leave Salt Lake at 1700 on Tuesday. You must be in Spokane by 1500 on Wednesday. There are two straight-line routes, each about 720 miles: I-15 to I-90, or interstates to Boise, then state routes north. The bonuses are on the latter course. They're not much, but they're better than sticking to the slab. If that was all you had to worry about, the answer would lie in how lucky you feel. If you're a crap shooter, you head to Boise and bet that when you ride through the Sawtooth mountains after midnight you won't hit any of the 136.9 million deer that want to find out what it's like to commit suicide by eating your headlight. If you're careful, you take the easy interstate route, minimize the chances of a close encounter of the cloven-footed kind, and get a good rest in Spokane. You may be in next-to-last place, but at least you're alive.

But that really isn't all that you have to worry about, because there is a bonus in Helper, Utah that is worth a tidy 86 points and adds only a couple of hundred miles to your route. And as long as you're heading away from Spokane toward Helper, you might as well visit the territorial prison in Rawlins, Wyoming and pick up a very hefty 199 points. You'll do an 1,100+ mile day but you should clearly be in first place, even if you're beaten purple.

Then again, if you're a true hero of the Lawrence of Arabia mold, you might consider the 315 point bonus at Chimney Rock, Nebraska, but no one in his right mind would do such a thing. Ride 1,400+ miles on the first day of an 11-day butt-breaker? Spare me.

No, spare Gary Eagan, Rick ("Swamp Thing") Shrader, and Ron Ayres. They not only made the ridiculously out-of-the-way trip, but they made it to the Spokane checkpoint before the window closed. It is a story for the Iron Butt ages. It is also the story of three guys who, I predict, will have almost certainly depleted their reserves to the point that no recovery is possible. Ardys Kellerman and Morris Kruemeke rode to Los Angeles from Fort Worth on the first leg of the '93 Butt by way of Louisiana and, while they were heroes for a day, both were time-barred at the next checkpoint and subsequently disappeared so far down the drain that not even the Roto-Rooter man could find them.

Still, those big bonuses do have a fascinating lure, and it would be wonderful to pick one up --- say the Wyoming prison --- without having to ride all those pesky miles to find the answer. Why not let your fingers do the riding? Maybe use AT&T to save a few gallons of precious fossil resources? Ah! Could this possibly be legal, to call someone to track down an answer? Of course not. The contestants are repeatedly told that they must ride to the bonus location, not beam themselves to it. In Iron Butt history only one contestant ever tried.

The bonus was a poker chip. Richard Frost, a New Jersey cop, decided to avoid a 200-mile round-trip, sat at an immigration checkpoint at the California border, and offered \$20 to any incoming motorist who might have a \$5 poker chip from a Las Vegas casino. He eventually got one and, like the petty crooks he nailed every day of his working life, was himself snared in Mike Kneebone's net. Mike has devised a

computer program to cross-check odometer readings based upon a contestant's recorded checkpoint mileage, referenced to a correction factor that is established before the rally begins. If a rider claims that he went to Armpit, Indiana, Kneebone will know it, plus or minus a few miles. He promptly hung Frost, a friend of his, out to twist slowly in the wind.

So today when Keith Keating ---another cop --- came up with an answer for the Wyoming prison question when he rolled in to Spokane, it wasn't long before a significant problem arose. The answer that Keating turned in was wrong. Say what?

Jim Plunkett, the owner of the BMW dealership/checkpoint, questioned Keating about the answer, stating that he was prepared to deny the bonus claim. A contestant has a right to protest the checkpoint's decision. Keating muttered that he wouldn't protest. And for good reason. He'd called the prison, not ridden to it. And when he'd called, his fellow law enforcement officers had given him the wrong answer. Talk about your basic poetic justice.

Rallymaster Steve Chalmers was reportedly so furious at the cheating that he was ready to throw Keating out of the rally before the sun went down. But since the rider had not compounded his felony by writing down his odometer reading and time of arrival on the bonus sheet, as the rules require, Chalmers relented. Apparently the Miranda warnings that he had issued prior to the rally hadn't been absorbed by Officer Keating, who protects and serves in Connecticut and visits prisons in Wyoming mostly by credit card calls.

On another note of equally low humor, extraordinary interest has surrounded the progress of the Honda Helix scooter, piloted by Ed Otto of Chicago and sponsored by Motorcycle Consumer News magazine. I am happy to report that the Helix is running well and that Eddie made it to Spokane in time to sleep about ten hours.

At day's end I had completed my own Velvet Butt ride. Tim Moffitt and I hurtled back yesterday from Salt Lake City, after the real riders had left the motel, to his home in Denver --- a vicious 530 mile ride with an eight-hour layover at the recently redecorated Motel 6 in Grand Junction, CO. I then hopped the flight back to Dulles this evening. It had taken four days to ride from D.C. to Denver last week; the same trip back home took four hours tonight.

That's _my_ kind of cross-country travel. And the in-flight movie was pretty good too.

THE TOP TEN AT CHECKPOINT #1:

Name	Motorcycle	Points
1 Eagan, Gary	BMW K1100LT '95	2,936
2 Shrader, Rick	BMW R1100RS '94	2,874
3 Ayres, Ron	BMW K1100LT '95	2,870
4 Losofsky, Steve	BMW K100RS '86	2,639
5 Hatton, Ken	Kawasaki ZX-11 '91	2,621
6 Kruemeke, Morris	Honda Gold Wing '89	2,621
7 Metz, Eddie	Honda Gold Wing '85	2,621

8	Taylor, Frank	Yamaha FJ1200 '93	2,621
9	Jones, Martin	Kawasaki Voyager '92	2,446
10	Young, Boyd	BMW K100RS '91	2,436

Others of note:

14	Major, Ron	Honda ST1100 '94	2,276 ('91 IBR winner)
17	Keating, Keith	BMW R1100RS '94	2,257 (AT&T's entrant)
20	Attwood, Steve	Moto Guzzi '83	2,242 ('93 IBR winner)
49	Otto, Ed	Honda Helix '95	2,175 (MCN's entrant)
55	Cicarelli, Skip	Moto Guzzi Cal II	0 (deer - repairable)

Bob Higdon

August 31 - Day Two - Notes from the Firing Range

The Iron Butt Rally field is poorer this year for the absence of Dave McQueeney, a former participant and the holder of one of the most grueling endurance records in the books. When he decided to take on the Four Corners Tour some years ago, he asked for an exemption to the "one bike" rule. He explained to the incredulous organizers what he wanted to do within the three-week time limit. He would start with a bike at his home in Los Angeles and ride down the road to San Ysidro for the first corner. Then he'd ride home, pick up a different bike, and ride up to Blaine, Washington for corner #2. Then he would come back home, get yet another bike, and ride to Madawaska, Maine. Go back home. Grab fourth bike. Ride to Key West. Ride home.

They didn't believe he could do it; they obviously didn't know Dave well. He proceeded to ride 16 consecutive thousand-mile days and crushed the four corners with time to spare. It was in my view an endurance feat second only to Fran Crane's and Mike Kneebone's tour of the 48 contiguous states in 6.6 days on nine hours' sleep.

At noon on Tuesday, five hours before the IBR began, I heard a familiar voice in the motel room next door to mine. It belonged to Mr. McQueeney. I greeted him happily. He had been at the Chicago Region rally the day before. A lot of folks have trouble making rallies in their own state; Dave will ride 2,500 miles one-way to attend the ones he likes. We caught up on old times and traded Iron Butt predictions. I mentioned at one point that the BMW contingent was populated solely with K and R1100 engines.

"Don't forget Bob Honemann's R60," Dave corrected me.

True enough. It is a classic unfaired, unwindshielded, retro bike, suitable for a slow morning ride in third gear down a county road in June, 1965. Honemann would be riding with Ed Otto's Honda scooter, an improbable combination.

"We'll be a good team," Eddie explained with a grin. "He can pull me up the hills. And I can provide the lights."

Dave and I went down to the parking lot. Eddie James blurred past us, a man who looks fast even when he's walking.

"Did you hear what happened to him this morning?" I asked Dave.

James had changed the radio in his bike the week before, blatantly violating Kneebone's Rule #9 (don't change anything before the event). He had not checked the wiring job that a friend had done. Earlier that morning he'd turned the radio on. Instead of the melodies of Snoop Doggy Dog, he received a blast of smoke and fire.

Somehow he had managed to repair the wiring. No one knew why the main harness had not been fried. No one knows why James wants to listen to Snoop Doggy Dog.

Dave and I walked over to the R60. It might not be a powerful bike, I thought, but it's a rock. Keep oil in it and the bottom end will _outlast_ a rock. Honemann, the owner of a motorcycle shop in Chicago, had taken good care of it. It should go the distance, I thought.

t didn't. This morning Bob's girlfriend received the telephone call she didn't want. Honemann told her that a crankshaft bearing had come apart. He and Ed Otto had worked on it for several hours near Butte, Montana. Bob finally made Eddie leave; the old R60 was going home in a truck.

One bike down; many more wait in the wings.

Checkpoint #2: Brattin Motors (619-286-1971), San Diego. Arrive not later than 1000 PDT, Friday. Depart at noon. The only way out is east. The only thing to the east is the Mojave Desert. They'll hit it in mid-afternoon, if they can survive the Labor Day Weekend exodus. The desert heat won't melt a motorcycle, but not for want of trying.

Later tonight we shall see which of the Leg #2 bonuses is most attractive to those contestants who are bent on suicide. Some will try. Bet on it.

August 31 - Day Two - The Valley of the Shadow of Death

The country from Spokane to San Diego is some of the prettiest and most varied you can find anywhere on earth. If you're an Iron Butt contestant, you're not looking at it. You're looking at the stripe down the middle of the highway, concentrating on staying on one side of that line. It is good form to keep to the right side of it. Sometimes I wonder how Steve Attwood, the Englishman who won the '93 Butt, manages to remember which side of the road is which. Forgetting the bozo bonus at the White House, the next highest bonus (413) on the second leg is the Custer Battlefield in southeast Montana. It would require riding 1,900 miles in 41 hours, but at a brisk speed, you might manage eight hours sleep during the stretch.

If, in addition, you could squeeze in a visit to Death Valley, you'd pick up another 283 points and add 200 miles to the first 1,900. By my calculations you will have time for no more than 200 _minutes_ of sleep on the leg.

Even that, the eastern bonuses look a trifle grim. Is there anything to the west? There sure is, a bundle of bonus stops, topped off with 268 points at the Golden Gate Bridge. Now this surely is more like it, right? It's the shortest line from Spokane and apparently worthwhile.

The operative word there is "apparently." If the contestant decides to take the western ride, he or she will soon find out why so many depressed people use the bridge as their launch pad into the hereafter. The bridge is a poison pill dressed up as a friendly bonus. Take that pill or just jump off the bridge. It doesn't matter. You almost certainly will not make San Diego on time and you very easily could be time-barred.

The problem is that Chalmers won't let the contestant hit that bridge before 0200 PDT Friday morning. If the bridge receipt is dated any earlier than that, it doesn't count. The checkpoint in San Diego opens eight hours later. That requires nearly a 65 mph average down I-5, one of the ugliest roads on earth.

Maybe that's possible, but one other problem remains: How is the rider going to get through the morning rush-hour traffic in Los Angeles? If you haven't seen it, you can't believe it. I've seen it. I still can't believe it.

With world-class riders on the loose, I am hesitant to say it can't be done, but I sure don't see how. Even given nosebleed speed, lane-splitting, and blind luck, I see in the most favorable case a late arrival of at least an hour, a 60 point deduction. If the contestant can't make the checkpoint by noon, it's classified as a score-trashing miss.

So, as Sherlock Holmes once observed, when you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be true. But the truth in this case is as vicious as it gets. I think there's only one way to run this leg; I'm just glad I don't have to do it.

It requires steaming right down the middle of the desert from Spokane for the bonuses in Reno and Tonopah, averaging 55 mph all night and all the next day. If you can average more than 55, you might be able to grab an hour's sleep. If you average less, you're sunk.

It is critical that you reach the Death Valley visitor center before it closes at 1700 on Thursday. For this bonus you need an actual park stamp from that building; a picture of the park's sign, normally acceptable evidence, here is insufficient. Now, at last, you can sleep for ten hours (if you can find a motel room), arise at 0300 on Friday, and slog the last 350 miles to arrive in San Diego by 1000.

Steve Chalmers has been thinking about these problems for two years. It took me three hours with a 486/33 desktop computer, Automap Pro, and a 16-ounce Dr. Pepper to work through it. The riders, dazed from the first day's ride to Spokane, will have somewhat less time to make their decisions.

Somewhat.

Bob Higdon

September 1 --- Day Three --- The Inside Line

As was demonstrated with mathematical clarity by your esteemed scribe in the last post, taking the western route through San Francisco from Spokane to San Diego amounted to a suicidal snare. Only one rider, Brian Bush, did it, and, as predicted, was time-barred at the second checkpoint. Not that it mattered to him. Brian is the Iron Butt's official film documentarian and was planning on riding only the first two legs of the event anyway. At least now he has an appreciation of what the competitive riders have to consider when they are handed their bonus sheets for the upcoming leg. An early poor decision always has costly consequences.

Five riders --- Ron Ayres, Frank Taylor, Eddie Metz, Ken Hatton, and Rick Morrison --- each took the alluring eastern arc to the Custer Battlefield in Montana, averaged 3,000 bonus points, and added 2,000 miles to their bikes' odometers over the course of 41 hours. It is reported that in San Diego they looked like Chernobyl refugees.

Contrast their experience with that of Gary Eagan, the leader of the pack at Spokane, who took the inside route straight to Death Valley as your scribe suggested. He too rang up 3,015 points on the second leg, though riding 350 fewer miles and catching seven hours sleep near San Diego before the checkpoint opened. With an entire continent to cross in the next 75 hours, should we bet on Eagan or AyresTaylorMetzHattonMorrison? What to do? What to do? I only wish roulette were this easy.

Morris Kruemeke and Eddie James visited the Valley, took their points, and are well-positioned (7th and 8th) for the next stretch. James rides with a teddy bear --- his official entry is under the name of "Lyle the Bear" --- and can run long days with anyone. Kruemke, a legend in Texas where legendary status is hard to come by, steers a monster Gold Wing. When not competing on the IBR where fuel capacity is limited, he sticks 39 gallons of gasoline on the bike and has run for over 1,200 miles without putting his feet down. Yes, I have seen the drainage tube, but I didn't touch it.

Notes from the battlefield: Steve Attwood, the '93 IBR winner, is missing in action. He failed to show up in San Diego. For those of us who were betting heavily on this truly remarkable fellow's chances of a repeat victory, it is indeed some of the saddest news of the day. In a field of first-rank riders, no one ever recovers from a missed checkpoint.

Rick "Swamp Thing" Shrader, as usual, followed his own muse. It lied. He came in 43 minutes late and dropped from second place to fifth. He is the most dedicated of the 54 starters, as the Iron Butt tattoo on his arm attests, and his friends are hoping that after DNFs in the last two Butts, he can finally complete this event in one piece.

California attorney Leonard Aron on the '46 Indian limped in with just 18 minutes to spare. The bike's clutch is slipping badly. According to the last four living sources who are knowledgeable about Indian clutches, the chances of a finish are non-existent. Despite that, Aron, who could have been an extra at Woodstock in 1969 and should be in mourning for Jerry Garcia, is reported to be in a superlative mood.

Steve Losofsky, co-owner of Reno BMW, was victimized by a freak accident. Westbound on the most deserted road imaginable, U.S. 50 west of Delta, UT, an oncoming truck threw a rock at him. It shot

through the lower fairing of his K100, broke his leg, and rendered him hors de combat. Too bad. He coulda been a contendah.

Forget the radar detectors. Leave the police scanners at home. Notebook computers with Automap are for geeks with pencil protectors. What Kevin Mello and Rob Ransbottom need is a decent alarm clock. They overslept in San Diego and came in 50 minutes late.

In the "I-hear-what-you're-saying-but-I-still-don't-believe-it" category, all of the Harleys are still up and running with the youngish (26) --- I mention that only because the average age of the top three riders is 51.3 --- Jesse Pereboom leading the Milwaukee contingent. Mary Sue Johnson, who is old enough to know better, is currently in 16th place (and the top woman) on her H-D Wide-Glide. Four years ago rallymaster Jan Cutler wouldn't even accept her IBR application. Mary Sue, you've come a long way, baby.

Speaking of the distaff group, Ardys Kellerman, the second oldest rider in the rally at the tender age of 63, moved up a notch to 22nd position. If you're looking for someone to admire and root for, Ardys is your lady. I believe she has a grandchild older than Jesse Pereboom.

Senior citizen --- and when he was introduced at the rider's meeting was the only person to receive a standing ovation --- Garve Nelson (71), is running steadily on his 500cc Honda, the second smallest bike in the rally.

Skip Ciccarelli's deer hunting expedition proved to be fatal to his Guzzi. Time-barred at Spokane, he could not find parts in time to make San Diego. Two missed checkpoints and you're out.

Tom Loegering, the heartbreak kid of '93, moved up from 19th to 15th on his R1100GS, a bike that not even Tom will be able to ruin. His son, however, on a K100, has become a retiree from Iron Butt competition in 1995. Give him another 25 years and he can probably run with the old man.

Then there is the Honda Helix scooter, aimed here and there by BMW veteran Ed Otto. Can it still be running? It can indeed, and it managed to haul Eddie's not inconsiderable weight to 2,518 bonus points on the second leg. Horst Haak, a former BMW Motorcycle Owners of America mileage champion on a '95 K1100RT, outran the Helix on the San Diego leg by a thumping 18 points.

THE TOP TEN AT CHECKPOINT #2:

Name	Motorcycle	Age	Total
1 Eagan, Gary	BMW K1100LT '95	46	5,951
2 Ayres, Ron	BMW K1100LT '95	52	5,866
3 Taylor, Frank	Yamaha FJ1200 '93	56	5,751
4 Metz, Eddie	Honda Gold Wing '85	36	5,688
5 Shrader, Rick	BMW R1100RS '94	49	5,573
6 Hatton, Ken	Kawasaki ZX-11 '91	46	5,484
7 Kruemeke, Morris	Honda Gold Wing '89	52	5,439
8 James, Eddie	BMW K1100RS '93	32	5,398

9 Jones, Martin Kawasaki Voyager '92 34 5,329
10 Morrison, Rick BMW R100RT '94 40 5,191

Others of note:

20 Major, Ron Honda ST1100 '94 54 4,894 ('91 IBR winner)
22 Kellerman, Ardys BMW K75RT '94 63 4,817 (oldest female)
36 Otto, Ed Honda Helix '95 43 4,693 (smallest bike)
39 Aron, Leonard Indian Chief '46 49 4,688 (oldest bike)
47 Nelson, Garve Honda Ascot '83 71 4,550 (oldest male)
51 Attwood, Steve Moto Guzzi '83 38 2,242 ('93 IBR winner)