

IBR Leg two: California to Washington

Sometimes you're up.

Other times you're down.

As in any challenging event too often and all too soon you find your place is reversed. The trip from Pomona to Sunnyside left some riders fried, others scrambled, and a few well poached. Mostly this group was sunny side up.

Gerhard Krueger was definitely up. The entrant from Germany with his newly repaired BMW had begun to recover from the late start at Madison and was able to collect bonus points along rally leg two. He jumped up from absolute last place standing in Pomona to the middle of the pack at Sunnyside.

While undergoing a bike check at Brown's in Pomona, Karol Patzer discovered a nail in the rear tire of her BMW K-75. The service manager had initially informed her that he had no tire of that size in stock. She was down. Owner Bob Brown came to the rescue when he double-checked and found some skins that had not yet been entered into inventory. She was back up. Karol was soon on the road with a new tire ready to fight the winds of The Dalles after a visit to the Devil's Postpile.

Devil's Postpile National Monument is the kind of rally bonus location that causes Mike Kneebone to beam with pride. It tests not only the rally entrant's ability to ride efficiently but also their reading comprehension and overall sense of timing. A successful rider would have arrived at these layered lava flows before 7:00 AM. Anytime after that, the access road is closed and transport to the site restricted to a grindingly slow snail-paced bus. Once at the piles, the riders must then take a strenuous hike to the summit for the required bonus picture.

The Mono Lake bonus location was only thirty-five miles from Devil's Postpile, if you walked. However, if you had chosen to take the easy way over and rode you fell into a trap that ensnared IBR veteran Jim Culp, and his brother-in-law Geoff Greene as well as rookie Mark Keicker. Keicker, a veteran of the Butt Lite but a first year IBR rider, was so taken with the wonderfully twisty nastiness of the 330 miles of access road and this fine opportunity to flick his Y2K Honda VFR800 through each and every hairpin turn that, after completing this extremely tedious bonus ride, he placed a very special fawning message of praise on Lord Kneebone's voicemail.

"Kneebone, You Suck!"

Glacier Point in Yosemite was one of those rare IBR bonuses that exist just for the pure wonder of going there and enjoying the marvelous panoramic view. Of course, selecting this most popular gem of our National Park System was done purely for appreciation of its intrinsic beauty. Not for the fact that it is now the labor day weekend and that the unwary rider could hopelessly be grid locked, ensnarled in a massive holiday traffic jam. This year however, tourist traffic was down due to the forest fires raging nearby. Some fires were burning right up to the roadways edge along the rider's path. One way or another, you could have gotten burned.

Dr. Roger Van Saten, a veteran of the 99 rally was more than an Oregon bonus location for BMW rider Bernie Weiss. Riders who stopped by to get their official IBA dental dam only picked up additional bonus points. Bernie who had undergone dental work just weeks before the rally was in need of an emergency

consultation. Doctor Van Saten was happy to oblige. It was evident from Bernie's smile that he was UP upon his arrival in Sunnyside.

Martin Hildebrandt had noticed a slight piston slap from the 1938 R-51s right cylinder on his east to west run. The mechanics at Brown's in Pomona worked throughout the night to fabricate a wrist pin from rebar while they replaced other worn parts. The effort was successful. The following day Martin headed north towards checkpoint two. Hildebrandt made it into Washington State, but as he approached exit 122 on I-84, the crankshaft suddenly cracked rendering the antique boxer engine kaput. Martin, engulfed in gloom, slowly glided the now dead black bike down the ramp to Coffin Road below. The lid had slammed shut on the R-51's effort to conquer America. Martin was down. Yet, while some go down others creep up.

Harry Kaplan, an IBR veteran from both 97 and 99, was very much up at Sunnyside. He excitedly related to others his almost mystical experience. Just outside Eagleview, Washington a bald eagle lifted off from the road directly ahead as he approached on his Kawasaki Concours. The big bird swooped. Harry instinctively ducked, the big bird's talons just grazing the top of his helmet. Harry certainly was touched by an eagle. He zoomed from 40th place to third place in the preliminary checkpoint two standings.

Reporter Sue Carpenter had joined the ride in Pomona. She rode after completing a series of calls and meetings with IBA Media relation's coordinator Chris Cimino. Sue writes for the Los Angeles Times specifically for the Southern California Living Section. She has done numerous articles on motorcycles and motorcyclists. Only after flying to Huntsville to meet with Chris was she deemed qualified to ride the leg from California to Washington to gather first hand the Iron Butt Rally experience. Along the way she hooked up with IBR veteran Terry Pipes from Louisiana, novice riders John Harrison and Al Willis both from Alabama. All great ambassadors of IBA goodwill, all examples of the best of what endurance riders are about. On the ride to Washington Sue got into the spirit of the rally and began to search out bonus locations and accumulate points.

The desert heat of the prior leg's travels had claimed both Mary Sue Luetschwager and Richard Smith. They both opted to bow out of the ride after falling ill in California. A family crisis claimed Tom Loegering and he returned home.

Of those twenty-two riders headed north seeking an Alaskan adventure, Kevin Sickles was being towed back to Vancouver with massive mechanical failure to the Triumph Tiger. Near aptly named Destruction Bay, Kerry Church's noble effort was nullified by road construction along the Alaska Highway. He was nursing a broken arm and abrasions. Fellow rider Michael Smeyers bagged his own effort to stay behind to assist his fallen riding partner. His effort would earn the Iron Butt Valor award and a free pass to the next Iron Butt Rally.

UK entrant Steve Eversfield never needed to stop while in Nevada to play jackrabbit roulette. Earlier he had just missed a deer. Later he narrowly avoided a lurking road alligator. Finally he hit one of the infamous Nevada kamikaze rabbits "spot on" at speed.

Head to the left, body to the right Steve put it all on red and motored straight into the night.

Besides Eversfield, the remaining wrong side road riders are Derek Sutton and John McCrindle from Australia. John is a past rally veteran aboard a rental Harley Road Glide. Imagine the dealer's amazement when that bike comes off lease in two weeks. Derek, on the other hand, was enjoying his first circuit on American roads aboard his own Kawasaki ZX6 sportbike. Riding alone, Sutton first realized that he overshot the exit for US 395 just a tad when the world's tallest thermometer arose from the desert floor to the left, the spire announcing the oven like temperature of Baker California. Derek then remembered that the rally organizers had conveniently placed 1,323 bonus points at a Primm, Nevada casino only one hundred miles more distant. He motored east to collect that jackpot.

Steve Chalmers can now claim that he was on a western big game hunt and not just the world's toughest motorcycle competition. First, it was reported that he had been run off the road by a wily coyote. Steve would not let this distraction from a fellow predator deter him. He went on to strike a small deer. Still undaunted, he cleared his limit in Oregon with a second deer strike. Before he decided to then call it quits, Steve was actually attempting to establish a new rally endurance record for heart bypass recipients. Even if he had finished the rally, officials would have challenged that claim, as many veterans of Steve's Utah 1088 know that Steve has no heart.

Greg Roberts is an experienced endurance rallyist. A veteran of many 24-hour events, he has volunteered to assist in past Iron Butt Rallies. This was to be his first Iron Butt ride. Along leg two in Oregon his K1100LT suddenly developed mechanical problems consuming all of its rear drive oil every one hundred miles. After the dealer in Salem Oregon was unable to resolve the BMW's problem, Greg limped on repeatedly stopping to replace the missing oil all along the remaining miles to checkpoint two. Before he arrived, the 7:00PM time window had already been slammed cruelly shut. You would have thought from Greg's pained look of hurt that being time barred was more than mere disappointment. His bonus points gathered along this leg would be forfeited. He could not collect bonuses along the next leg, that is if he would even be able to make the necessary repairs to his bike in time to ride to Maine. For Greg there just was no sunny side to Sunnyside.

Just the reverse was true for rider Paul Pelland. Paul and the Siberian Speed Team Ural Solo had not made the earlier Pomona checkpoint. Most had assumed that the Russian built bike was deadski when the URAL went missing at Pomona. Many assumed that Paul might now be sipping Vodka somewhere in the southeast, mourning the loss of this flower of mother Russia's mechanical manufacturing might and his chance at an Iron Butt finish. But Nyet!

Paul had traveled about one hundred miles from Madison when the URAL's engine seized. This was surprising as many URAL's have been known to travel many hundreds of miles without experiencing serious engine problems. Paul was able to locate a URAL dealer and was towed east for repair. Since the large 750CC engine is new to the 2001 model year, the only option open to Paul was a swap for an older 650CC engine. The swap would leave Paul without the advanced state-of-art 750CC engine features like electric start. Paul resumed his stalled rally and headed west. He got as far as Arkansas when again he almost ran out of Hope.

The URAL's stolid suspension was quickly compressed by a road depression resulting in a medium speed wobble. The precision handlebar mounted steering dampener could not overcome this vicious assault of Arkansas roadway. A tank slapper ensued and the Siberian Speed Team was once again sadly grounded. After a copious application of duct tape, the injection of two tubes of JBWeld and the artful manipulation of the URAL multipurpose tool (a two pound hammer) Paul continued his westward

assault to collect a gas receipt in lieu of the missed checkpoint. After arriving in Pomona he putted north. Along his route he was able to enjoy nine additional unscheduled rest breaks. Miraculously these breaks coincided perfectly with the occurrence of connector failures and mismatched wiring harness anomalies resulting from the earlier engine swap.

At Sunnyside Paul took advantage of the crack URAL field warranty repair service provided in the parking lot of the adjacent Travelodge. A sparkling new 750CC engine, the only other in North America, replaced the JBWeld encrusted 650cc workhorse. Its scars now covered, its cracks concealed, its power plant reloaded, the Airhead was now ready. As was the URAL.

The Siberian Speed Team was now Team Lazarus.

Spirits were equally high for other members of what has been termed the "hopeless class". Keith Keiting received a high visibility yellow vest bringing his night visibility up to the high Amish buggy standard set earlier by Bobb Todd. The hanger from the vest was given to Paul Pelland if in the remote chance he would again require spare parts. Paul Meredith was all smiles as the spare piston for the Cagiva Mito was all snug in its cylinder ready for the trip east.

The stately old Indian had arrived the night before. It now was proudly parked next to the main entrance to HIPY Motorsports. With a slow dignity, the old Vee twin marked the territory beneath it with thirty weight. Leonard Aron was up even though some oil was down.

As 7:00PM approached the riders nervously gathered outside that same entrance to HIPY Motorsports, the gracious and helpful IBR checkpoint two hosts.

Gary Eagan had arrived from Salt Lake City with but one simple task. It was to deliver a message that only he could give with pure sternness of conviction. Before the start of each rally leg and just prior to the dispersal of bonus locations and values, there is a brief rider meeting. Gary came forward and exhorted his fellow riders not to follow his poor example but instead ride smart. A brief indiscretion, a moments lapse had cost Gary his ride to glory and instead garnered him embarrassment, bandages and a cast. Gary had gone down.

After thanks to the rally volunteers and local Boy Scouts, Mike announced the news that six riders had already reached Prudhoe Bay. They were among the twenty-two on their way to collect the bonus announced at the start and coded "Mightwin". Soon an opportunity would be presented to these riders present for a bonus that was equally as remote and worth even more points than Mightwin. Its bonus code: "Winner".

The Diaspora of IBR riders had been sprinkled from the Mohave Desert north to Prudhoe Bay. From the most densely populated metropolitan areas IBR entrants fought traffic jams and congestion while thousands of miles distant other riders for all appearances were the only humans on Earth. It was amazing to consider that for that brief moment in time even though all were riding alone, all were riding together.

One by one, the rider's turned in their planned routes. Soon bikes ranging from the two remaining 125CC entries to the Honda Goldwing of Morris Kruemcke with an engine fourteen times larger buzzed, purred and roared into the night.

Even though the sun had long ago gone down, the riders departed, all feeling Sunnyside up.

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