

*"I can see clearly now the rain is gone
I can see all the obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's Gonna be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiny day
It's Gonna be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiny day"*

Lyrics: Johnny Nash

At the Maine checkpoint Mike Kneebone announced that nine of twenty-two riders in the first wave of Alaska point seekers, nine had already reached Prudhoe Bay. Twenty-two additional riders then elected to go far north from Sunnyside while an additional twenty-eight chose to ride to Hyder, Alaska and then on to Maine. Of the starting field of one hundred twelve, more than half had chosen a ride north to Alaska. An opportunity that was offered to all in the 1999 rally yet selected by none.

Jim Frens claimed both big ride bonuses in a monster fifty-five hundred mile third leg ride aboard a Honda Gold Wing. He was the only rider to travel to Hyder, Alaska then travel on to northern Quebec to claim the big points at Radisson. Twenty-eight riders joined Jim in either Hyder or Radisson and they comprised the first twenty-six positions at checkpoint four in Gorham (Buxton), Maine. The checkpoint was located at Reynolds Motorsports, a long time northeast corner Iron Butt Rally checkpoint for the rally route.

Eighteen riders returning successfully from Hyder included Harley riders Todd Witte, Robert Lyskowski, Homer Krout II, and Dan Stephans. Lyskowski and his FLHT was one of three last minute wait list replacements for the thirteen slots that were vacated by last minute no-shows. Homer Krout's Road Glide is one of two bikes he owns. The other is in Germany, a FatBoy. Homer works for the University of Maryland and his wife is with the US Defense Department of Education.

Ontario farmer John Ferber and fellow Canadian Gerry Golany were both on Triumphs. Golany had been nursing the Triumph 900S Sprint right from the start line in Madison. While it stuttered and spurted east to west, south to north and back east again he was able to still retain his big smile in Maine.

Rick Williams remarked that the ride east across Canada was the ride of his life. Veterans Kerry Willey and Rick Williams are Motorcycle Safety Foundation Instructors and a fixture at Yamaha sponsored ride and drives. Both were aboard their own Yamaha Ventures and had again started the rally together. This year Rick completed the ride to Hyder and the return to Maine while Kerry was headed straight for Madison.

Bill Kramer, Art Holland, Texan David Bankhead, Canadian Thane Silliker were all on Honda ST1100s . Kramer is a bonus hunter, prone to stop along the route if he came upon something else interesting to see. This time Kramer had little time for the luxury as his bike required major brake repairs. The task was completed in Washington at the house of fellow ST owner Darrell Snow. Rear Brakes from Darrell's bike replaced those that had been installed incorrectly and damaged by Kramer's local dealer. Art Holland, a Detroit Edison lineman, enjoyed an electric smooth trouble free big ride on his black ST all along the way from Hyder to Maine.

Land of Enchantment rally master James Hickerson, and Harry Kaplan from New York both piloted Kawasaki Concours along the same route.

BMW riders Al Holtsberry on a new R1150RT, Californian Will Lee and Dan Stephans II piloted K1100LTs and joined Lyndon Murray, an American living in France from Hyder to Maine. Dan Stephans II made a short rest stop at a roadside comfort station. While outside he took off his riding gloves and heard an ominous rolling "pling". The removal of his glove had dislodged his wedding ring, flinging it to the darkened pavement around the tiny structure. He searched in the dark of night while on his hands and knees for that special band of gold. He was unable to find the missing ring but posted a reward on the outhouse door for the wedding band's return.

Roy Collins conferred with veteran Howard Chain while he neared New England regarding the advisability of taking a sleep bonus. Howard wisely assured Roy by phone that the value of the sleep bonus would overcome any penalty points for late arrival as long as he could park his Gold Wing at the checkpoint before it closed. The much-needed rest would also pay a bonus not reflected by points alone.

The Radisson riders joining Frens in northernmost Quebec included Tom Loftus and Leonard Roy on Honda ST1100s, Andrew Duthie on a Kawasaki Concours, Craig Tegeler aboard a K1100RS, Michael and Caroline McDaniel on the Ducati ST4 and Jim Winterer on the Yamaha SR500 thumper.

Frank Brown aboard a ST1100 led the pack of riders who had stayed within the borders of the continental forty-eight states. Frank, a Floridian transplanted from Ohio and a Cleveland Indians fan, was able to keep his perspective by sharing baseball scores while he himself was being scored by rally staff.

Mike Heran had been suffering from shoulder problems and was favoring his remaining one good side. It's tough to ride a motorcycle this distance in perfect condition and he looked relieved for the opportunity to get off his K100RT for a few hours at Reynolds.

Bill Weyher pulled into the checkpoint running on empty. He had plenty of fuel. Bill had exhausted his supply of extra strength Ibuproferin tablets and carefully planned his route to the nearest pharmacy to be refilled immediately after the last leg bonuses were distributed.

Geoffrey Greene's BMW R-80ST was rally equipped, complete with an oversized Paris-Dakar gas tank. It's age placed it in the near hopeless class. Geoff had been riding with brother-in-law and veteran rider Jim Culp when the airhead's transmission failed near Pasco, Washington. Jim went on while Geoff located nearby member Steve Doctor from the BMW Owner's Association through its "Anonymous" help book. Geoff has a R-80GS back at home in Tennessee and he called his friends Ed Huey and Richard Hilten who removed the transmission and air expressed it to Pasco where Steve and Geoff made the swap. Geoff then rode across the country directly to the Maine checkpoint with out being time barred. The veteran Culp was not as timely and missed the time window. Certainly to become a future Culp family topic of discussion that Jim will find hard to live down.

Michael Spangler, a rally novice, was having the time of his life. The Christian Motorcyclist Association member was somewhat embarrassed for the equipment failure experienced and had hoped his fellow Gold Wing riders would not notice that his right running light bulb had burned out before he changed it. The Gold Wings were however bullet proof and were one of the few models not needing a new transmission or engine!

Jerry McCumby had pulled his R1100RT off the road in the middle of Nevada's Mohave Desert. He was checking his map in this most remote of western locations when Mike Kneebone came across him. The surprising happening upon a rally participant is true serendipity and was repeated throughout the rally.

Ardys Kellerman's arrival in Maine was celebrated with her grandchildren Tara and Elena. "Grandma! Grandma! shrieked the little blonde headed Tara as she leapt into Ardys' outstretched arms. Her daughters Ellen and Sue had driven up to cheer on their motorcycling mom. Ardys has seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She has become a benchmark of performance for other riders.

Ed Farrell, riding a Harley FLHT, is the coordinator for the Northeast 1000 endurance rally. It was tempting for him to go home to his home in Augusta, Maine but his final destination lay south and a bit west.

Bryce Ulrich succumbed to that same temptation and stayed a full two days at his home in Washington State after arriving in Sunnyside. The competitive fire smoldered to mere embers but he stoked his competitive coals and blazed into Maine in time to continue the rally and finish.

Paul Pelland's Siberian Speed Team's URAL putted east now powered by it's third engine. In Rawlings, Wyoming one of the URAL's engine pushrods suddenly began pushing up daisies. Unfortunately Paul was a tad removed from the authorized URAL parts distribution network. After blazing a failed trail in replacement metallurgy encompassing both coat hangers and JBWeld, the resourceful New Hampshire Yankee sourced a replacement. He fabricated a replica pushrod in a full service hardware store from a one-quarter by twelve inch long drill bit. It was clear when pushrod came to shove, Paul was up to the task. One can only wistfully wonder if mother Russia had Pelland whether the Mir space station had to be ditched after all.

Bob Mutchler's BMW R1100RT sidecar rig was experiencing charging problems when he arrived in Maine. The problem was diagnosed as a bad alternator belt. One could be had but it was twenty miles distant. Richard Frost had come to the checkpoint to observe the progress of the field. He learned of Bob's plight and without hesitation made the emergency parts run. This is the same Richard Frost whose crew withdrew the second Indian entry at the rally's start. Richard is being proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize, Mother Theresa memorial mention, and is putting in his bid to challenge Mike Kneebone for the title of "world's nicest guy".

Quebec rider Yvon Gauthier had celebrated his forty-third birthday with the official rider/photography team of Lisa Landry and Dean Tanji. Lisa wished she could collect more bonus points but was being held back because of a suspension problem with Dean's Harley. Later Dean and Lisa would come upon Yvon broken down near the intersection of I-90 and I-95, his alternator fried. A call for assistance made it's way to the Internet and within minutes Ahmet Buharali offered to help. After determining repair efforts would take too long and time-bar Yvon, Ahmet, who did not know Yvon, nevertheless, offered Gauthier his rally prepared R1150GS for the final leg. The GS was ready to go, as Ahmet was himself entered in the 2001 Rally but had to withdraw at the last hour because of illness. Buharali's preparatory work would not be for naught. Even with the 10,000-point penalty for switching motorcycles, Yvon could successfully finish.

Bob Cox, a retired Air Force Colonel, piloted his BMW K1200RS from Gorham intent upon achieving silver medal status in the final leg. Colonel Bob was going to make a strafing run to take out all available east coast bonus targets on his flight to Alabama.

During the Maine break it was interesting to note that two other Kawasaki riders shared the same table as Dickerson, Main and Duthie enjoyed the giant Subway sandwiches provided at the checkpoint. Later Bryan Main and Andrew Duthie decided to harvest some last minute bonus points in Manhattan, New York. A picture of the Wall Street bull in the financial district in downtown and another in front of the Apollo Theater in uptown Harlem. These pictures to be taken in the middle of the night.

Keith Keiting left Maine with the Suzuki 125 engine still intact. He carried no aux fuel reasoning that this allowed his engine to cool down during the frequent refilling. The small continuous operational interval limited the tiny engine's duty cycle and prevented thermal runaway. The bike remained completely stock except for the re-gear front sprocket. Paul Meredith on the other 125 quickly followed Keith south to Alabama. The Cagiva was now running on its second complete engine.

Tom Loftus and Leonard Roy were having a great ride on their ST1100s. Both had planned to ride to Radisson, Quebec and collect that big bonus. Leonard's wife had actually encouraged him to participate in this year's rally. Roy competes on the track in the 250CC class. Earlier this year, a high-speed get-off caused a concussion that would leave him disoriented for a week. His wife figured that a nice calming Iron Butt ride of eleven thousand miles would be less of a threat than Leonard's already demonstrated short track prowess.

Outside of Duluth the pair noticed flashing blue and red lights gaining behind them and pulled quickly to the roadside. After routinely running their license and registration the patrolman suddenly told Leonard to assume the position. After a standard frisking and thorough pat down Roy was relieved of his pocketknife and placed in the cruise's rear-seat of dishonor. Roy pondered his predicament while observing the lack of door handles in the back of the Minnesota patrol car. A further check of CIC came back with no wants or warrants. It was later relayed that the dispatcher had misunderstood the Maryland DMV code for NOT Suspended. Roy had earned the dubious distinction of being apprehended and detained while driving on an unsuspended license. The officer apologized as he let Leonard "outlaw" Roy free to continue, rearmed with both pocket knife and pride but only after receiving a written warning from the red-faced lawman.

Leonard Aron was faced with a real dilemma. After Leonard discovered that he had misplaced his wallet at a Boise, Idaho Chevron, Aron quickly put a plan of action into place. His leg three Iron Butt Ride temporarily morphed into The Leonard Aron Charity Fund Raiser. Friends and sponsors along the route came to Leonard's aid providing him food, shelter and funds. If Leonard showed up on your driveway with that oozing Indian you'd probably pay him to move on too. Quick thinking and smooth talking resulted in Leonard arriving in Maine with thirty-five hundred dollars more than when he left Sunnyside. The Indian and it's bearded Kimosabe continued south upon their finisher's quest now running once again a bit richer.

Shane Smith had returned from Prudhoe Bay and decided to continue on to Key West. Along I-95 he encountered thundershowers and before he could seek shelter he was dealt a glancing bolt out of the blue. Shane took immediate shelter under the next bridge while he pondered a new moniker, Shane "Lightning" Smith. Lightning continued to Key West and decided that he still had not struck enough gold.

He proceeded to IBR veteran Jerry Clemmon's home in North Carolina. Shane planned to rest at Jerry's before sweeping north through the Blue Ridge Parkway to suck up all remaining bonus points scattered there before arriving in Madison. Lightning was cleaning up.

Sean Gallagher was the first to return from the first wave run from Denali, Alaska to Alabama. If he were the first to check in at the finish he would be the top dog in this pack of mileage hounds.

It would stand perhaps for but a few fleeting moments.

The other riders were now bearing down on the finish line in Madison, Alabama.

*"Oh yes I can I make it now,
All of the pain is gone
All of the bad feelings have disappeared
Here is that rainbow I've been waiting for
It's gonna be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiny day
It's gonna be a bright, bright, bright sun-shiny day"*

Lyrics: Johnny Nash

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