

2009 Iron Butt Rally, Day 1
Monday, August 24, 2009

The Rally is off to a relatively smooth start. A few riders forgetting to turn off their many electrical accessories last night resulted in three bikes with dead batteries this morning. Sal Terranova's ST1100 got a push start; my SUV was used to jump start Maura Gatensby's ST1300 and Tom and Rosie Sperry's GL1800.

**International Cooperation at the Iron Butt Rally,
A Jump from a German Vehicle Brings Sperry's Wing Back to Life**



During the final odometer check that began at 8:30 a.m., Rally staff asked each rider where they were headed. Most of the field is heading to Florida. Seven say they intend to ride all of the way to the perennial Key West bonus. About 20 riders are going to try

for the big points on Martha's Vineyard. Tomorrow I will provide some details on the points likely to be available on several of the alternative routes.

The Starting Grid at the Spartanburg Marriott



Within four minutes of 10:00 a.m., 99 motorcycles were on the road. A few minutes later, one of the bikes with a revived battery was also rolling. The last rider out of the lot was George Barnes. George took extra time to make some last minute changes to his route plan.

It was smooth sailing to the Interstate for the riders who left on schedule. The Spartanburg Police Department was kind enough to shut down every intersection and escort the parade of motorcycles out of town.

Bonus Number One

The first bonus for the majority of the riders was at the nearby BMW factory in Greer, South Carolina. At 666 points, a number at least one rider probably associates with BMW (see below), it was too big to ignore given its proximity to the starting line. After a short 18 mile ride to the bonus, the BMW Visitor's Center was a mob scene. The bonus instructions read as follow:

Park in the visitors' lot nearest the coordinates and walk approximately 100 yards to the museum entrance. Once inside, take a photo of Ed Culberson's 1981 R80G/S, Amigo.

Category: Failure to keep making one of the more reliable Iron Butt motorcycles ever built.

In 1985-86 Amigo became the first vehicle to travel the length of the western hemisphere nearly from pole to pole. Ridden by Ed Culberson, a retired Army officer and chief MSF instructor, the motorcycle survived unimaginable hardships during the journey, including a 12-day trek through the Darien gap. That unfinished section of the Pan-American Highway, 67 miles of trackless jungle between Panama and Colombia, had never previously been traversed by anyone except on foot.

Riders Await the 10:30 a.m. Opening of the Window for the BMW Bonus

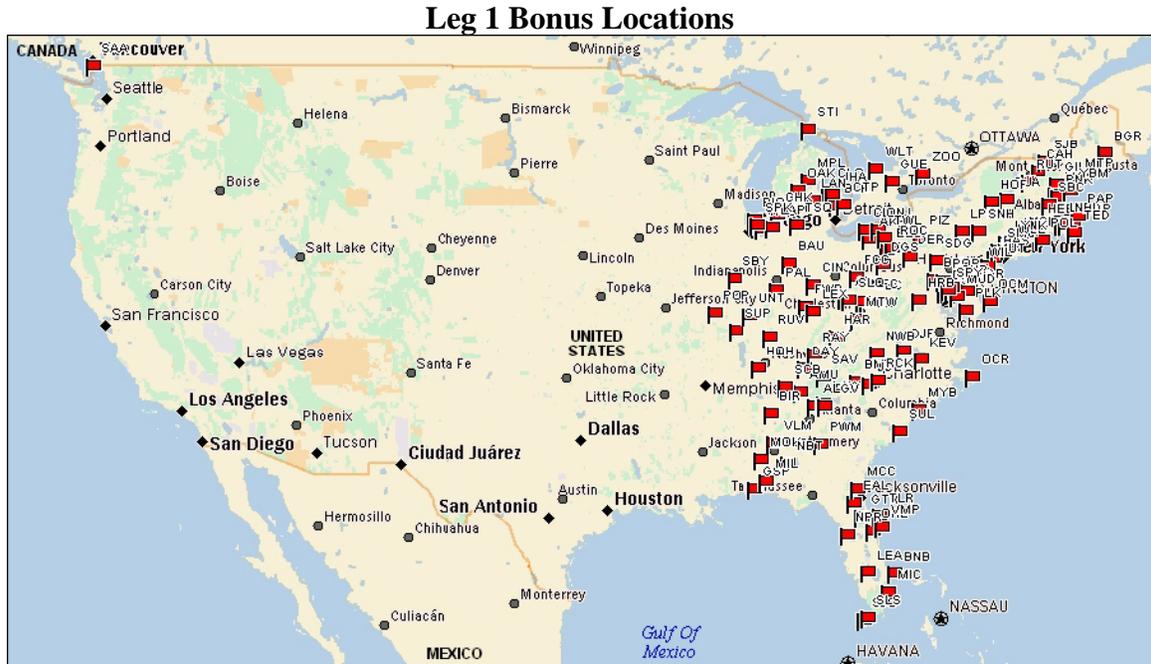


Mark Crane Expresses Satisfaction at Scoring His First Bonus



Bonus Choices

Riders had to choose between 124 separate bonus locations on Leg 1. Except for one impossible bonus in British Columbia, all of the bonuses are located east of the Mississippi, but they range from as far south as Key West, Florida to as far north as the Mackinac Bridge in Michigan. The figure below provides an overview of all of the Leg 1 bonus locations (plus a few extraneous locations thrown in to keep the riders on their toes).



Although the precise locations are not discernable, it is obvious that riders have a lot of options to choose from regardless of which direction they are headed.

Mechanical Failure Number One

Within three hours of the start, Rallymaster Lisa Landry received the first call from a rider with an apparently serious mechanical problem. Jim Bain reports that the clutch in his 2003 BMW K1200LT has started slipping badly. He thinks it might be the notorious “slave cylinder” failure. This is another one of the “isolated” (BMW-speak) problems this particular model has had. Jim has already contacted BMW Atlanta owner and IBR veteran Bob Wooldridge who is going to try to get the bike fixed tomorrow. Whether Jim will be able to make it to St. Charles in time is uncertain, but he’s not out yet. Although his bonus point total for Leg 1 will be light, he is a Rally veteran who is more than capable of scoring enough points on subsequent legs to achieve finisher status.

Brain Fart Number One

At 2:37 p.m. Pacific time today the first call-in bonus was received. The rider had obviously paid attention during the riders' meeting and provided all five required items: name, rider number, current location, last bonus scored, and next bonus headed for. The only problem is that the call-in bonus window doesn't open until noon tomorrow. Too bad we don't give points for entertaining the IBR staff. The Rallymaster was laughing so hard that she actually started crying.

Tomorrow

In addition to providing more detail on route options tomorrow, the locations of individual riders will be available from the first of the call-in bonuses. Tonight, Rally staff is packing up for the trip to Checkpoint 1. We will arrive in St. Charles early tomorrow evening. The Tuesday report probably won't get posted until early Wednesday morning because the call-in bonus window runs from noon tomorrow until midnight Pacific time.

Tom Austin

August 24, 2009

Copyright © 2009, Iron Butt Rally, Inc., Chicago, IL