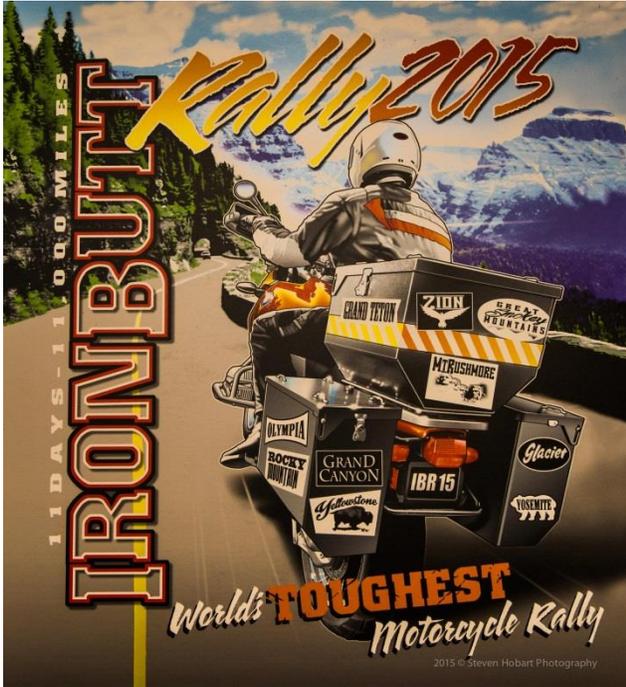


Day 1 Not What Muir Had in Mind - (see Update Addendum as of 7:29 PM)

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity”

– John Muir, *Our National Parks*



At 7:32 PM Sunday evening, a collective silence befell the main conference room at the Sheraton Uptown. Over the preceding 90 minutes, Lisa Landry graciously introduced the 87 riders and 5 pillions in the 2015 Iron Butt Rally. Each walked like graduates to receive their rally pack, flip their tassel and get a private word of encouragement from Dean Kneebone. 79 year old Al Holtsberry, appropriately assigned Rider No. 79, received a warm standing ovation. After Will Barclay received his Rider No. 90 packet, the tone shifted. The architect of this year’s ride, Tom Austin, took to the podium.

For the next few minutes, Tom described the high level approach to an abbreviated, accelerated IBA National Parks Tour (NPT). The IBA NPT ride, itself a variant on the

collection of National Parks Passport Stamps started in 1986, essentially provides for riders to visit at least 50 national parks, historic sites, monuments, battlefields, etc., including provincial parks in Canada, within a year. If the objective of the IBA NPT is to “take some time” to visit these awe inspiring places of preservation and remembrance, Tom’s plan essentially amounts to speed dating for your next vacation. Then the clock struck 7:32 and Tom declared:

“To be a finisher of the 2015 Iron Butt Rally, a rider must visit 50 US national parks in 25 states¹ before 10 AM (MDT), July 10, 2015.”

(cue crickets)

Rookies looked at Big Dogs for reaction. Big Dogs sat poker faced. Tom went on to describe that he, Bob Higdon and Dave McQueeney had meticulously narrowed the population of 407 possible locations to just 347 different US national parks, meeting the criteria of being accessible by motorcycle. In addition, all but 3 parks would be available on all 3 legs. The 3 exclusions represented one park on each leg where the bonus would be earned by appearing in a group photo to be taken at a predetermined time as detailed in the rally packs. For Leg 1, the Group Photo bonus is:

¹ For purposes of this event, the District of Columbia is considered a “state.”

PEFO

Petrified Forest National Park

I-40 Exit 311

Chambers, AZ

Coordinates: 35.0719 -109.7795

June 29, 2:30 pm



Petrified Forest National Park contains the fossilized remains of a forest from the Triassic Period (over 200 million years ago). It is a unique and spectacular landscape.

Have your Rider Number recorded by IBR staff not later than 2:30 pm at the roadside parking area at the specified coordinates. Be in the group picture taken by IBR staff at 2:45 pm. Your flag must be visible in the photo.

Riders were given a beautifully prepared spiral bound reference book containing the name, location and description of each eligible park in each US state, excluding Hawaii. The book itself is really quite stunning, a souvenir of the highest caliber, which I will excerpt over the next 11 days as appropriate.

Following the usual spate of questions, the riders quickly dispersed to their chambers to begin researching what the hell Woodrow Wilson was thinking and why he wasn't more focused on things other than signing the act that established the National Parks, like, you know, World War I. Nineteen rookies stayed behind for the opportunity to seek routing counsel from Tom, Lisa, Mike, Bob and Dave. Several surrounded Tom. They appeared to be sizing him up for a body bag. I couldn't watch.

By this morning, most riders seemed to have settled down and realized this wasn't going to be a picnic. Foolish are they who ever thought it would. But there were signs of confidence and resolve. Surely all have identified Petroglyph National Monument as the closest qualifying national park, just 12.1 miles to the west.

PETR

Petroglyph National Monument

On Western Trail, north of Unser Blvd.

Albuquerque, NM

Coordinates: 35.138 -106.7117

8a-5p



Petroglyph National Monument protects one of the largest petroglyph sites in North America, featuring designs and symbols carved onto volcanic rocks by Native Americans and Spanish settlers 400 to 700 years ago.

Take a picture of the Visitor Center.

A show of hands Sunday night suggested as many as 20% of the riders may not yet have purchased an Annual National Parks Pass. Bob Higdon rode out to the Visitor's Office at Petroglyph on Sunday, sauntered inside with his helmet and was greeted by an attendant with "I'll bet I know why *you're* here." They had sold 51 passes since Friday with just 4 left in stock. The local REI sold out Saturday. Petroglyph is shaping up to be a repeat of the Gateway Arch bonus from the in 2007 IBR, just a few miles from the Start, with the entire field likely to arrive within minutes of each other. We thought about calling the Visitor's Center to warn 'em. Thought about it.

A stroll poll through the staging area suggested most riders had designed reasonable routes for this first leg: 6-10 states; 12-20 parks, 2,700-3,900 anticipated miles. A few Big Dogs pointed towards 4,000-5,000 mile routes, which could be a big bite. Or, just dogs marking territory. 49% hinted at routing to the Group Photo bonus for this afternoon.

The usual pre-shotgun activities were fairly unusual. Warchild explained the staging process. Riders were confused. Warchild yelled. Riders walked in circles. Warchild had a stroke and passed out. Riders applauded and lined up, with the 19 Hair Dye Challenge riders in line first, winner Danny Dawson to lead the parade.



No major last minute repairs although Andy Mackey from yesterday's report asked me to stop writing about him. Seems he was pinged all night by friends concerned for his auxiliary light issue offering to send parts. He didn't get any sleep and now intends to hold be responsible if he has crappy Leg One. Yeah, right. 201,612 miles on a used BMW and it'll be *my* fault if he has a problem.



Kirsten Talken-Spauling, Rider No 2 this year, finished 6th in 2011, her rookie rally. An employee of the National Parks Service herself, she is supremely happy that she purchased her Annual Parks Pass on Friday.

"I know you all love this man. But, the law is the law. He must come with me. Our BMW RTP officers tell me he is a wanted man. I'm sorry."



Tom Loftis started his 10th Iron Butt Rally today. He is a Big Dog by any standard. He has finished 7 and DNF'd twice. In 2013, he finished 5th. He is one of a handful of proven riders who could one day win it all. Sadly, Tom, there are no points for your photo with the police motorcycles.



9:45 AM. Riders gathered around Dale, Lisa and representatives of the Albuquerque Police Department for last minute instructions and well wishes. Then all headed to their bikes, with only Robert Bolger and Chris McGaffin not allowed to leave with the field. Bolger's electrical system blanked during his ODO test. The Connie 14 did eventual fire, but too late to be in the parade. I'm sure it's nothing. I'm sure Robert won't give it another thought. McGaffin failed to present his ID card at the ODO as it was locked safely in his room, along with his incomplete routing for Leg One. While rookie Bolger was bummed, 2009 finisher McGaffin was thankful for the extra time to build his route and recover a little from his sleepless night.

9:55 AM. Eight cruisers and two motor officers from ABQ PD and New Mexico State Patrol took up positions to halt traffic to make way for the imminent parade of bikes.

9:59 AM. Canadian Nahum Sloan protected his falling R1200GSA from damage by selflessly throwing his 71 year old body between it and the tarmac. After all who rushed to help realized the large pool of red on his glove was ink and not blood, over the side he was pushed overboard to make way for departing aircraft and calm his nerves a bit. Sloan started in 2013 only to withdraw after 2400 miles. He knows the Code.





9:59:30 AM. READY... SET...

10:00:00
(AM)
GO!



At 79 years old, 3 time Iron Butt Rally finisher Al Holtsberry becomes the oldest rider to start an Iron Butt Rally.

Jack Cheasty, 67, wanted into the Iron Butt Rally so badly, he offered to ride his 20 year old BW R100GSPD instead of something with, say, modern electronics. Welcome to the Hopeless Class, Mr. Cheasty!



2015 Miss Mississippi Hannah Roberts wishes Mark Crane a successful ride.

By noon, reports from the Petroglyph Visitor's Center reported 30 some motorcyclists had come through to collect passport park stamps and take pictures. "They were just wonderful," said Ranger Dianne. "Maybe a little overdressed for the heat."

We are watching the Spot tracks to see what discernable routing begins to reveal itself over the riders' first few hundred miles. You can follow the tracks as well with the link on the same www.ironbuttrally.com/2015.cfm page with this report. Rider numbers are scrambled to protect their individual routes. We will upload an additional report this evening with initial analysis.

Chris Cimino

Iron Butt Scribe

Iron Butt Rally©

Day 1 – Addendum – What the Hell Are These People Thinking??

First, a few corrections:

Correction 1: Tom Loftus did not finish 5th in 2013. That was Matt Watkins with his 2nd monster ride after finishing 13th as a rookie in 2009. Tom did not finish 55th either. That was Sam Liles. Tom did not finish at all in 2013 after the fuel pump on his ST1300 croaked. My apologies for not being able to read. No disrespect intended to Mr. Watkins. On the other hand, it was kind of fun to again point out Sam Liles' 55th finish after riding more miles than the 27 riders that finished before him.

Correction 2: Eric Jewell is clearly riding a Honda ST1300, not a Yamaha ST1300. Or a Honda FJR 1300. I got nothin'.

First 8 Hours

Around the staging area this morning, Rally staff visited with riders for their plans and initial routing. The consensus seemed to be a conservative loop through the west, with only a few considering more midwest or even eastern pursuits. Overall, riders talked about maintaining some reserves, checking off some states/parks towards finishing, and waiting until the bonus point value increased in legs 2 and 3 before making more strategic moves. 43 riders said they intended to join the group photo at Petrified Forest National Park in Chambers, Arizona, at 2:30 (MST). The final number turned out to be 32. Based on those who arrived really early there, it appears some riders failed to remember that Arizona does not recognize Daylight Savings Time. I'm sure it was a cool and relaxing hour for those who waited.



Based on early Spotwalla tracking, 83 riders were trending towards western/northern loops, projected to check off 6-7 states with maybe 20 parks before returning on Thursday. Some clockwise, some counter. 4 riders, however, appear well off the reservation as of now.

Josh Mountain, the 2nd place finisher from 2013, may be exercising his Runner Up demons with a blistering ride on Day One deep into Rio Grande country to visit Big Bend National Park and its 4th highest points for this leg. Is it possible he intends to then turn north towards Montana to join the others taking the scenic tour? For this aggressive Stonewall Attack to work, he will need to immediately retreat from the bowels of Texas and position himself by morning. Phil Weston may be the rider without a chair when the music stops tonight. He's been dogging Mr. Mountain since leaving Albuquerque, but may be too far behind to cover the same ground for a daylight only bonus.

Further north, and surprisingly east, are Hoka Hey winner Will Barclay, and 2013 finisher Dave Legnosky. Barclay has been leading Legnosky by 2-3 hours all day, but both seem to be covering the same ground, and going the wrong way. Unlike Mountain and Weston into Texas, where the points may seem enticing enough to maybe tempt a rider, Barclay and Legnosky have been tracking through Oklahoma, effectively the same ground they will have to cover again in Leg 2. Unless they are scouting for the next leg, this push east seems ill-advised. At some point (when?) they have to turn north, but to where? Kansas? Nebraska?

With the sun rapidly setting, tomorrow will tell if the four rebels bet wisely.

For the rest of the field, variations on the rotation aside, all seem to have a circular plan with a northern slant. Terry and Lynda Lahman were heading towards Ft. Collins at last sighting. Craig Brooks, Margaret Peart, Robert Scott and Chris McGaffin all see something in eastern Colorado not so clear, or so attractive, to the others. Clearly, chipping away everything that isn't the elephant.

Late note at 6:56 PM, Sam Liles reported a temporary road closure on Navaho Service RD 59, due to a motorhome fire. Sam reported he and Sydney, and fellow riders Kit Chunchawong, Gerhard Memmen-Krueger and Rob Jaime were sidelined waiting for clearance. Jaime, DNF'd in 2011 after colliding with a mountain lion, is reportedly standing between Kit and Gerhard just in case.



Overheard today in Rally Central

Lisa: "Who the hell is going 97???"

Tom: "Stop looking at kilometers."

Lisa: "Oh."

Bob: "Is it possible Nancy Leffcourt could be riding at 798.86 mph."

Chris: "Not with all her luggage."

That's a full lid. Good night.

Chris Cimino

Iron Butt Scribe

Iron Butt Rally©