

Utah 1088, June 27-28, 2009

The Utah 1088 in 1998 was my first endurance rally. I followed that up with some Thin Air TT's, and then put on the Two-Bits Rally in recent years. This year it was time to again invest some motorcycling vacation and miles into competing in the Utah 1088. So I sent in my entry form, improved the lighting on the classic ZG1000, and replaced the front tire the day before leaving for Salt Lake City.

The trip west included the scenery over Vail Pass with blue skies, green forests, red cliffs, and rushing mountain streams. The walls of Glenwood Canyon were nicely lit by the morning sunshine, calling for constant sweeps of vision from the top of one rugged canyon wall, down to the railroad, across the wild Colorado River, and up to the top of the other wall. East of Palisade I practiced a rally stop for a bonus, quickly getting photos of a historical marker for my "collection" of those bits of history. West of Green River I turned north for Price where long, straight roads through the 100-degree desert were replaced by winding mountain roads in the 75-degree Uinta and Manti-La Sal National Forests. At Soldier Summit I stopped for photos to "bag" another pass for the Colorado Beemer's Pass Bagger 50 award, even though passes outside of Colorado don't count. Before long I was checking into the rally hotel, and then headed over to Chalmers' for the BBQ and tall tales.

On Friday morning Karl Z and I rode up to the Golden Spike National Historical Site at Promontory to see a reenactment of the 1869 meeting of the old steam locomotives. Having learned about the golden spike back in history classes, it was very interesting to see the place in person. And of course I was able to add another stamp in my National Park Passport book. On our way back to Salt Lake we stopped at the Hill Air Force Base Museum, a first class place that has a great collection of aircraft. Favorites included a B-29, B-1, SR-71, some F-4 Phantoms, and a P-38. This USAF veteran also enjoyed the "sound of freedom" as F-16s flew overhead.

Back at the rally hotel everyone was busy riding the odometer check, a route of about 15 miles up the Interstates and back. And for some reason folks were using tape and markers to put their rally number on the sides of their bikes. Some were subtle. Some were more in the "please arrest me for looking like a race car" size. After dinner time we gathered in the parking lot for the mandatory riders' meeting, general craziness, and plenty of laughs. The skies just to the west were full of dark storm clouds and lightning. After standing in some light rain and being told we were "the world's toughest motorcycle riders" and should ignore the lightning, we adjourned to the hotel meeting room for the remainder of the meeting.

On Saturday morning at 0630 we met again in the parking lot for last minute instructions and to get the rally packs. There was a fair amount of bonii scattered from Idaho to Dugway to Nephi, the site of the first checkpoint where we would get another pack of bonii for the rest of the rally. We couldn't leave until 0700, so everyone rushed off to plan their routes.

Using a AAA map of Utah and a Scalex MapWheel, I quickly decided where to go and left about 0710. My strategy was to get to Nephi at 1000 when the checkpoint was to open, gathering as many bonii as possible on the way. I bypassed the "slow ride" because I didn't want to wait in line for some points that I might not get anyway, so the first stop was right down the street where we could photograph a nearby hotel or simply write down the street address. When given the choice, which is the better way to go? Either can be fouled up. I chose to write the answers rather than taking time to get the camera out. My second stop was two blocks away when my Garmin StreetPilot 2720's display was nothing but colored horizontal lines. But I still had my much less capable GPS V and my trusty AAA map.

My next destination was downtown. Some folks have mentioned all the construction and one-way streets. I got overheated and frustrated by all the red traffic lights, lots of red traffic lights. After arriving at the Capitol, along with a bunch of other guys, I hurried across the lawn and wrote down the answer to the question about the memorial honoring law enforcement officers. Then more red lights on the way to a statue where I got the photo, holding my 1088 hat at arm's length so it would be included in the photo too. Actually I wasn't sure which of two statues was supposed to be in the photo, so I got both of them in the frame. Good thing this bonus didn't require a written answer.

Along I-15 on my way to the Hill AFB museum (see above) for two bonii, I passed one of the rally riders on a Hayabusa (America's favorite LD and rally mount) who was visiting with a state trooper, and it sure didn't look like he was there just for the bonus photo of a LEO. As I continued up the highway I reviewed the bonii list (easily seen in the 8x10 MotoFizz map pocket) and realized I was going to get to the air museum too early for the bonus that was "available from 9am". Oops. Knowing the exit and way to the museum, I was quickly parked, went right over to the bonus aircraft parked outside, put my 1088 hat on the landing gear door, got it greasy, snapped the photo in which the hat could barely be seen, and snapped another photo with the hat held out in front of me. Out of curiosity I tried the nearby door to the museum and found it locked, and then checked the door around the corner which was open. I tentatively walked in, saw a janitor, and asked if I could go on in for a quick photo. He didn't care. Remember the P-38 mentioned above? I went straight to it, got the bonus photo, and headed out. The gal at the information desk didn't seem to care that a bunch of geared-up riders were wandering around before the museum was officially open and asked if I had signed the guest book. I stopped to sign in, and then asked if she would write on the bonus list that the museum had opened for us at 0840. She did. It turns out that Steve gives credit for such creativity.

Back on I-15 I headed south for a bonus at exit 279. Some folks guessed that it should have been listed as exit 297 and went straight to a motorcycle shop for 4333 points, a biggie. I went to 279 and drove straight onto what was soon to be a parade route in Lodi. Lots of traffic, folks setting up their lawn chairs, and all that. Very funny. But no 7200 South, no 700 West, no motorcycle shop. But for 4333 points I wandered around thinking I had misunderstood the directions or something. After too much time, I abandoned the search and headed south on I-15 again. At Thanksgiving Point I exited, didn't see the dinosaur museum a ways off the highway (other s found it ok), and quickly got back on the highway. At Santaquin I found the post office I had located earlier with the StreetPilot. A quick 3012 point photo and I was on my way to the first checkpoint.

I had hoped to get there right at 1000 so I would have plenty of time to plan the rest of the rally, but didn't get there until 1100. I settled down in the shade behind the gas station along with a bunch of serious riders who were already concentrating on their bonus lists, maps, and laptops. We must have looked rather strange to the normal tourists who stopped there too. I quickly located the bonii on the AAA map, disregarded the big points in Las Vegas because I had already decided I wouldn't go there (too hot and wouldn't include enough riding around scenic Utah), ran my MapWheel around some possibilities, and decided on the strategy of grabbing points and racking up some miles on the way to the next checkpoint at Torrey, planning to get there at its opening time of 1630, and leaving immediately to get some big timed bonii around Arches National Park. That meant I didn't have time to go clear down to Colorado City or to take the hike to Mossy Cave along UT-12, but that is the way rallies work.

I lit out southbound on I-15 and stopped for another trooper memorial and later for a photo of Cove Fort. With no more bonii nearby and to make the most of the time before the checkpoint, I rode some scenic, winding mountain roads to rack up some miles toward the total needed to be a finisher. Not far from Torrey, a stop in Bicknell for some pinto bean pie garnered some more bonus points and a time for a quick review of my plan. I tipped the waitress well and told her more overdressed rally riders would soon be arriving, and that she should tell them the first guy tipped well, and that they should too. It's not fair to remove bolts from bonus highway signs, but it is fair to mess with other riders' concentration. Maybe.

Right down the road I buzzed past the checkpoint in Torrey and rode a ways down UT-12 for more miles and smiles. Back at Torrey I briefly talked to Dave M (rides an older BMW GS with license KXON66, a cool vanity plate) until the checkpoint officially opened at 1630, got my bonus list signed, and headed for Arches National Park, hoping to get there while a bonus was available between 0700 and 1900. Just a few miles away UT-24 enters Capitol Reef National Park where there were blue skies, red, white, and brown jumbled rock formations, and green pinon pine and sage. At the park visitor center down in the canyon there were large orchards left over from the old pioneer days. Like an oasis in the desert. The road continued to weave through the canyon with colorful rock walls on either side and lots of green cottonwoods along the creek. It was a perfect road to dial back a little, enjoy the scenery, and gracefully lean back and forth through all the curves. It was a great reason for not riding to Las Vegas.

About 60 miles away I was hoping to find the I-70 rest area that was "about 8 miles" west of the US-6 intersection, which should have been right at the intersection of US-24 and I-70. I rode up onto the westbound overpass and couldn't spot the rest area, could only remember the rest area about 7 miles away up on San Rafael Reef which has no easy way to return to the east, decided I needed to be hurrying to Arches, and thought I might look again on the way back. I made a quick fuel stop in Green River and made it to the Arches entrance station with 5 minutes to spare. But the rangers were already gone for the day. But there are now coin/bill operated machines to handle everything. I didn't have to hurry to get there after all. (Later Steve just laughed when I told him about the automated entry station.) Motorcycles can get in for \$5 so I put in the smallest bill I had, a \$20, and enjoyed the sounds of Las Vegas as fifteen one-dollar coins noisily clanged into the metal change tray. I grabbed a park map and found out that the 2859-point bonus at the Devils Garden trailhead was clear at the north end of the park. But at 7 PM there wasn't much traffic and the late-day lighting made all the red rock formations just spectacular. (Concentrate, concentrate; no time for non-rally photos.) It took an hour of 35 and 45 mph riding to get to the bonus location and back, but it was well worth it for the awesome scenery and for the points (2859 points per hour times 24 hours = 68,616, very close to a winning strategy).

Back at the park entrance I got the photo bonus of the sign, figured I no longer had time to go further south for the points at Newspaper Rock State Park, but could compensate by riding to Dead Horse Point State Park. The winding road off US-191 took me to the high point, where right at sunset, I had a terrific view of miles and miles of the Colorado River canyon, lined by green cottonwoods and mesquite, and row after row of red and purple buttes that seemed to reach to the far distant horizon. The view was worth far more than the 512 bonus points. During the short hike from the parking lot to the overlook I even had time for some rally nourishment, a can of vanilla Slim-Fast, something Gary Egan once recommended during a talk at a local Ducati shop.

Then it was time to ride back down the twisties to US-191 and head for the checkpoint in Price. At Green River (for the third time on this trip) I thought about getting a score card at the golf course, but changed

my mind about bashing around in the dark after seeing a town cop parked along the street not far away. By the time I got to the US-6 turn-off I decided to skip the I-70 rest area bonus off to the west and headed on north. At checkpoint 3, worth another big 5000 points, I fueled the bike, quickly reviewed my plan, added another layer of clothing, and headed out.

Northwest of Price I turned north on US-191 and realized that miles back down the highway I had gone right past the bonus at mile marker 177, thinking it was north of the checkpoint just because that was where it was ordered in the bonus list. Rookie mistake, which also got a laugh from Steve. The road was dark and curvy, making me glad to have the new fog lights whose broad beams lit the way around the corners when leaned way over.

At Duchesne I stopped to add another layer of gear and continued west on US-40. Along the way toward another trooper memorial I realized that my speedometer showed I was going 0 miles per hour and that my odometer wasn't moving either. Turns out that by ignoring the IBA rule about changing things right before a big ride I suffered the consequences of the speedo drive not being properly aligned in the front hub during the tire changing process and it finally quit working out there during the rally. I stopped at the bonus, pondered how I could maybe use my GPS to verify mileage from there on and admitted to myself that there was no such option in the rally rules or bonii list. I considered trying to fix the problem with the well-equipped tool pack I was carrying, but it was very, very dark and only 35 degrees. So with the bonus only 50 yards away, I started the bike and headed to Salt Lake, arriving at the hotel around 3 AM, four hours earlier than necessary.

On the final score sheet I'm listed as 23rd of 45. Since "the rallymaster is always right" I will gladly accept the corrected mileage Steve plugged in for me and wish I wouldn't have quit out there on US-40. I should have bagged the nearby trooper bonus, followed the rest of my planned route up I-80 to the trooper bonus near the state line, and bought the 6-pack bonus around the corner from the hotel. And if my 2720 wouldn't have gone kaput, or if I had known how to navigate through the GPS V's cumbersome waypoint process, I could have found the bonus back at the State Capitol. Those easily gathered bonii would have moved me up near the top 10. But of course everyone else's "woulda, shoulda"s might have even moved me down the list. Oh well, live and learn. And accept the fact that the 1088 is a lot of fun no matter where you place in the results.

After some rest and the hilarious awards banquet, I headed home on US-40, which looked much different in the light of day. Blue skies, mountains, trees, lakes, high desert scenery and interesting small towns made for a relaxing non-rally-mode afternoon. I even stopped to "bag" Daniel's Pass on the way to an overnight in Vernal. Early the next morning, I crossed back into Colorado and stopped in Dinosaur and Rangely for photos of historical markers. On the way to Meeker on CO-64 I enjoyed the increasing curvy road along the river, remembering the quick ride Jeff F and I took on that same road during one of the Thin Air TTs. More stops for historical markers in Meeker, Rifle, and Glenwood Springs resulted in quite a haul of "bonii". Riding through Glenwood Canyon, over Vail Pass, and down along Clear Creek toward Denver, once again made me glad to live and ride in Colorado!

In spite of the problem with the speedometer, the winding roads, mountain and desert scenery, classic historic markers, and being around other crazy motorcyclists at the 1088, made for a great trip.

Thanks to Steve Chalmers and all his volunteers for another super Utah 1088.

-- Randy Bishop, Highlands Ranch, Colorado