

Bun Burner Gold, Utah 1088 Rally

& The long ride home.

Before & After

Or Subtitled : 3,509 miles in 3 days riding

Not to be misleading in the Subtitle but the mileage covered was over a six day period with three actual riding days. Wednesday/Thursday the BBG -1527 miles. Thursday & Friday night sleep. Saturday/Sunday the Utah 1088 rally - 1142 miles. Sunday night rest before the final ride home Monday SLC to home-841 miles. So I guess I'm not a real, real, tough guy.

A passion for long distance riding continues to work under my skin. In addition to many a summers vacation multi day rides through the western USA I've been certified in two of the many Iron Butt Associations certifiable, (yeah that sounds about right! certifiable), rides. Having completed an IBA Saddle Sore 1000 and a Bun Burner 1500, which was two up with my nine year old grandson Michael, my sights were set on another more difficult personal goal, the Bun Burner Gold 1500. Feeling like a hungry trout I lunge at an unknown but alluring glint, a shiny flash hitting the water hard. The LD hook was set jaw deep.

Anticipation and planning for all my rides are a big part of the process. Using Garmin software and one of their newer model gps's the 2610 I was able to plan the trip quickly with the most efficient routing. I had one of the original Street pilot GPS units for a couple of years and it certainly did its job, but the technology of the original was long in the tooth having been passed by with huge improvements in the way of the 2610 series. My BBG1500 plans

started early in the winter with the idea that I'd dovetail my trip to the Utah 1088 rally in with this ride. It just seemed to be a natural fit. Explaining a ride of 1500 miles within a twenty four hours period just to participant in a rally that would take me on a unknown route of over 1100 miles and then ride 850 miles home, proved to be humorous to everyone other than the couple of experienced LD riders I talked to prior to the trip. Perplexed expressions and comments were more the norm than the exception. Asked by a couple of friends why not ride the 1500 miles during the Utah 1088 rally I explained I wanted to enjoy the rally experience in itself and ride a good rally, rather than being focused on two difficult goals at the same time.

A call to Steve Chalmers, Rally Bastard of the Utah 1088 to avail him of my plans and asked if he'd be my finish time witness. He agreed and let me know he'd have plenty of potential second witnesses available for my application. An amassment of many other Utah 1088 rally participants and volunteers were to be descending on the rally hotel that Thursday. Bob and Jean Ward from Bonney Lake, Washington (hey! that's where I live!) also graciously agreed to witness the start. Bob is a long time "Connie" owner with a bevy of rally participation and LD rides under his belt. He's the only one I've met who has over one hundred thousand miles on his Concours.

The route plan was to ride from home, Bonney Lake, Washington to Salt lake City, Utah through Billings, Montana then down through Wyoming via Casper and Rawlins to route 80 west then on to Salt Lake City. With the route gyrations of stops for gas, food, rest breaks, weather and traffic concerns dialed in, it was time to attended to the bike gear, mods and maintenance. My ride is a 2001 Kawasaki Concours, a heavily "Farkled" Connie. Nothing like some of the most recent 2005 IBR rally bikes, still to the uninitiated rider I have a dizzying array of "farkles", or accessories. In keeping with the wisdom of the IBA AOW

(Archive of wisdom) 29 tips, it was prudent to proof out any newer mods well in advance of the ride. Some items had been with me and proven bike worthy for some time, others however, such as the fuel cell and the newer 100 watt Hella driving lights with the 80/100 watt headlamp, plus the cooler setup needed more time in the saddle for acclimation and refinement. But first things first.

Basic maintenance. A general tune up with oil change and a once over tightening to spec all the nuts & bolts. A cleaned K&N air filter, replace the brake, clutch and rear shaft fluids then a quick test drive to make sure all worked fine.

With the basics done, time for a new set of tires and brake pads. I spoon and balance my own tires and decided a set of Michelin 100X's would do fine. I've had good luck with Michelins in the past, they wear well and have good traction in the rain. Living near Seattle Washington I ride in the rain a lot. Both tires mounted and balanced a check of the wheel bearings, grease the speedo cable, torque the axial bolts and I'm ready to roll.

Time to work on the fuel cell. Inspiration for a my fuel cell came during my first Utah 1088 rally. As a rally newbie I had an royal mental screw up which forced me, yeah right... forced!, ah, caused me to ride at a "spirited" pace for about two hours straight. During which gas mileage suffered from a 39-42mpg average to an all time low of 33 mpg! I need more fuel! The Connie has a big fuel capacity at 7.5 gallons and as a result few people over the years have employed fuel cells on their Concours therefore there wasn't a lot of information on the subject to garner. Before the Utah 1088 rally in 2004 I had no idea of how to go about an installation or even where to get a cell. At the finish of the rally I was able to study a number of fuel cells on Goldwings, BMW's and FJR's. But more importantly picking the brains of a couple of long time LD

riders about their mounts and cells was all the information I needed. After more research I honed in a plan. The idea was to fabricate a mount which could be quickly removed and exchanged with the Givi E460 trunk using the existing Givi trunk base. The Concours is carbureted so a gravity feed system was best for fuel delivery, besides I can't even break gravity! . I researched the subject with Google, IBA site search, other motorcycle forums/list servers too. Most ready made cells were expensive for this frugal Connie owner and the custom cell makers were asking for blood. It was to be a homegrown effort so off to the drawing board. I found a JAZ fuel cell on Ebay and a damaged Givi trunk which I trimmed with a band saw for the quick on/off base of the set-up. With a little aluminum fabrication and some help from American Hose and Fittings in Tukwila, Washington, I had everything for the install.

I used the base of the damaged Givi trunk, trimmed it down, fastened a homemade aluminum stand to it, then fabricated an aluminum cradle for the cell. Fastened the cradled cell to the frame & base assembly using 10/24 S.S. bolts with nylock nuts. The supply line was made with quick disconnect hydraulic style fuel line fittings and a 1/4 turn shut off valve. A one liter MSR campers fuel bottle was perfect for my overflow tank. I then routed the fuel line to my carburetors with 5/16" fuel hose under the saddle and teed it to my main tank. Lastly I attached a fuel filter to the line. A lanyard was secured to the gas cap fab'd out of a 1/16" S.S. cable with crimped ferrules and for static electricity safety I installed a ground wire to the bike frame from the gas cap ring with a bullet connector. Having rode with the Givi E460 trunk for over three years and fifty thousand miles I was used to dealing with a rear loaded bike. I figured swapping the Givi trunk

with the fuel cell wouldn't affect the ride. It turned out the full cell was lighter than my usually overfilled Givi trunk. On our vacation trips the Givi is usually jammed with all my wife's crap. I'm expected to carry her "essentials" on our extended Summer bike vacations! My wife rides a 2001 Yamaha V-Star 1100 Classic with Leatherlyke hard saddle bags and a "mondo-grosso" T-bag strapped over the sissy bar. Before each trip I hear "Dear? could you fit this in your back trunk?" Geez!

With the cell assembly finished, it was time to put the show on the road. After pounding the Givi locking fuel cell base mechanism with numerous on and offs and cycling the QD a couple of dozen times everything seemed fine. I added a keeper bolt with a wing nut through the cell base and the bikes Givi mount base for added security if the spring loaded Givi locking mechanism decided to release. This slowed up the "quick on/off" aspect of the design, but added extra security should the Givi lock fail. With the cell in place I'm ready for a mileage check. Starting off with both tanks full and a detailed visual check of the system, no leaks, all is good in the world. On the road I go. I ran the main tank down about 4 gallons or 160 miles, before opening up the fuel cell valve. I positioned the valve on the left side of the cell to give me easy access on the operation once on the road. With the cells valve open and the bike purring along I watched in amazement my fuel gauge actually going backwards! The main tank was filling back up! Cool! The cell height is set a couple of inches above the main tank and this being a gravity feed system the fuel cell was draining into the main tank. After a couple more stops for safety and equipment checks and satisfied the design was going to work just fine it was time for a real long test ride. My fuel capacity was now eleven plus gallons so a 450 mile trip without a refill while cruising at a conservative 65 to 70 mph was probable. Fantastic if true, not that I am capable or even willing to ride those distances without a rest or meal stop, it was good to know the bike was at least capable of such feats. My actual mileage turned out to be

closer to 420 before finally going empty. Heavy on the throttle? maybe. Mountain riding? Hmmm? Actually using a gravity feed with the fuel cell positioned in the rear I could not get a complete drain of the cell, thus benefiting from about 3.8 gallons of fuel. Being prudent, (read no fun), I realized I'd better just to stick to a max of 350 miles at a stretch to be safe. Besides a wise man knows it's good to get off the bike for a stretch from time to time.

With all the maintenance, tires, brakes and fuel cell completed I could now fine tune my route. Loading the route and all my waypoints from the laptop to the gps for the last time, I called Bob Ward to confirm my departure time, then called Steve Chalmers to confirm my estimated arrival time. I planned on a 1:00 pm departure to avoid the usual Seattle traffic jams and late afternoon traffic around Spokane., the only heavy traffic areas which caused concern. Another benefit of a early afternoon start was it afforded a good nights rest and set up the ride so I'd be on unfamiliar roads in Wyoming after sunrise the next day.

Wednesday June 24, 2005 "BBG-day". I stopped by Bob Wards house and had Bob and Jean signed the papers. Then off to the Chevron station for my first timed gas receipt. I had filled up the bike the night before so a couple of dollars for a start receipt was all that was needed. 12:52 pm PST starting time.

First leg: State Route 410 Westbound to State Route 167 I headed North straight into a long line of cages and truckers crawling along. Crap! IBA AOW rule #29 -eliminate all distractions. I focused on the long ride ahead and dismissed this momentary traffic jam as just that, momentary. An early lesson that proved valuable through the next couple of days and my overall LD riding discipline. Oh don't get me wrong here folks. I still routinely get annoyed at idiot caggers and the like, I just get over it faster that's all! A mile or so south of the Highway 18 interchange traffic broke free and I was settling into a comfortable speed. Around the

curves near Maple Valley a WSP car comes up behind me. The next 12 miles or so I'm "Mr. Speed limit", bummer. I had to continue to focus on the bigger picture. With I-90 Eastbound I could get to the 70 mph range and easily maintain this pace until just East of Spokane where the limit changes back to 60 through the city limit. With my fill up for gas at Couer D'alene, Idaho I had completed 325 miles in 4:49.

Second leg: It was now 5:41 pm PST. A quick calculation proved I was on pace and maybe a couple of minutes ahead of schedule. From Couer D'Alene to Kellogg I ran into a long series of construction zones forcing all lanes of travel into one lane. With very light traffic it wasn't a big issue, but it did slow me down. Once on the other side of Couer D'Alene the time zones change from Pacific to Mountain so I was to "lose" an hour. This only meant I was to be in the dark sooner and out of the dark sooner. I-90 was totally uneventful once passed Kellogg ID. No traffic and no major road construction issues. Next gas stop on the hit parade, Butte, Mt. It is 10:31 pm MST pm and another 285 miles under the belt. A hardboiled egg, granola bar, beef jerky and a swig of gatorade to wash it down and I was back on the road.

Third leg: 10:31 pm MST Butte, MT I was going to make my next stop Sheridan, WY but the 351 miles between had me worried about running too low on gas so I decided to gas up Billings, MT instead. You know the story, "see gas, buy gas". It was very uneventful from Butte to Billings. Fast, but uneventful.

Leg four: Hitting Billings at 1:43 am MST I found a closed station that still had it's pumps on. Western states seem to do this more so than stations on the East coast. Topped of the tanks and back on the road to Casper, WY this time. From Butte till about Casper Wyoming I was riding through the darkness of night and the concerns of night critters. I-90 is admittedly an easier choice of routes for a BBG1500. In the western states 70 and 75 mph

speed limits are common. You can really pickup the pace on these open roads. However the night brings out an interesting group of issues to deal with. First of all and quite apparently it is dark, really dark. And what comes out in the dark? Hmm. Drunk drivers? well, yes, but not that many on a Wednesday night and early Thursday morning. Animals and truckers! The truckers usually have been good to me. Other than the white line snorting, mile eating deadheading driver with bloodshot eyes and a fixed log book I've had reasonably good luck and respect from the long haulers. Whereas deer, skunk, raccoons, opossums and yes antelope (Wyoming has a couple of crazy antelope!) on the other hand have been a worry on every night ride I've been on. This time the jackrabbits had they're weird way with me. I've never ever seen so many daring death wishing jackrabbits in my life! At first they seemed to be hugging the side of the road. They then ventured into the middle of the road with some standing right on the white lines of the road. They seemed to have no fear whatsoever. Suicide rabbits looking to be on the next lucky rabbits foot key ring hanging on some kids car rear view mirror stem. Right before the intersection of I-90 and I-25 South a really fat raccoon decides to do a "hey lets chase my tail" routine right in the middle of my lane. Traveling at a "spirited" pace at zero dark thirty in the morning after 800 plus miles just to avoid a confused raccoon was more than disconcerting to say the least! But what really had me on edge were the deer and antelope. No the poem is not "après poe". I was not on "home, home on the range" but a dark fast interstate in the early morning dodging 150 pound prairie rats and bouncing pronghorn antelopes bent on death. I've lived on the plains of Colorado and seen more than my share of pronghorn. Graceful, swift and wary animals, except today in the darkness of night, hurling through the vast distances of the Wyoming plains, then they want to play? Geez! If it wasn't for my Hella's with the 100 watt H7's I'd probably ran down one of these critters with certain dire consequences. A couple of oncoming cars and trucks didn't necessarily agree with my choice of night lights, but hey they've

got thousands of pound of steel and plastic between them and "suicide bambi" or "kill me I'm a pronghorn". I only had the "eyes of god" and years of riding skills for my protection. Having worked for years on a second shift while commuting with the bike night riding has been a constant in my life. However morning couldn't have come soon enough. I swear I had to dodge at least a couple dozen jack rabbits, two to three white deer, a couple of heat crazed antelope and one very well fed fat suicidal raccoon. At mornings light the carnage from the night before was apparent. From Casper to Salt Lake there lay no less than 10 dead deer and so many other critters counting was useless, not to say morose. I can only imagine what occurred at each impact. Hopefully the trucker or cagger was a seasoned western driver well versed in the nightly living, now dead obstacles of the road. Perhaps outer space aliens do abducted these animals and once having their evil ways with them it was routine to disperse their lifeless entrails back onto the earth they so painfully departed from. Okay, that was a stretch, sorry.

Leg five: 5:53 am MST I gassed up in Casper, Wyoming. I took in another one of the four hardboiled eggs I started with another swig of gatorade and a couple hunks of a broken up granola bar I had in my tank bag. I was off to Rawlins, WY and westbound interstate 80 for the run into Salt Lake City. Any miles and time I lost in the Seattle or Spokane area where a thing of the past. I calculated I'd be in Salt Lake City almost two hours early. However what I failed to calculate was the fact that I was getting very tired. One symptom of fatigue and riding a motorcycle is start to momentarily lose your awareness and control of your speed. Having had this experience before I quickly recognized it was time for a rest stop. I had to stop for gas anyway so Green River, WY within a couple of miles was to be the next stop. This time an extended stop one with a well needed rest. I couldn't find a "brand name" station for gas so one of the local "cheapo cheaps" had to do.

Leg six: 9:35 am MST. With both tanks full and receipt in hand from Green River I got back on a local road and pulled over at a small park area for a rest. By this time I was too "amped" for a real rest, so about a fifteen minute jump, stretch and yawn plus a large star bucks frappachino I was back in full force. Only 175 miles to go I hit the interstate with a new sense of urgency. On westbound I-80 I sped up to overtake an oncoming truck from an entrance ramp when the bike stumbled and sputtered. Oh crap! cheap gas had gotten me! Letting off the throttle I pulled into the right lane with the tandem semi truck gliding by. My bike was spitting and coughing. Crap! time to pull off the road. On second thought no! keep riding until it dies damn it! My second thought to get down the road as far as humanly possible and if necessary coast downhill the rest of the way turned out to be the right choice. The negative thoughts came pouring in. I was so damn close to my goal too! Months of planning the trip flashing before my eyes. A triple "A" tow truck was envisioned in my immediate future. "Hey buddy" this thing don't look good" comments coming out of the rude tow truck operators Neanderthals mouth. Shit, Shit, Shit! And Shit! I stayed hard on the throttle with the bike kicking along for what seemed to be an eternity but it was really only three or four miles. Then almost magically and thankfully the engine started to purr. It smoothed right out, power was back, no more shutter, sputter and cough! Back up to speed. "We've restored power captain"! Aye Scotty! (whatever that means??) Anyway I was back on top of the world and heading into Salt Lake City before the twenty four hours deadline.

I was on the down hill run. Salt Lake was within striking distance. I could smell the finish. Then it hit me, the proverbial "brick wall". Only twenty miles or so to the hotel and fatigue was setting in hard. Traffic around Salt Lake area can be heavy and today was no exception. I fought off the fog and focused on the finish. Once passed the airport exit on Westbound I-80 I was within three miles of my finish. Three miles from the last gas receipt, three miles

from my finish line witness and three miles from a bed. Pulling into the Phillips 76 gas station adjacent to the Holiday Inn hotel, in Salt Lake City I got my last gas receipt. 12:15 pm MST. I called Steve Chalmers at home as he was setting up for the Utah 1088 "pre-rally barbecue" at his place. He seemed to be relieved by my call and timely arrival. He noted the time of the call, asked that I check in then hotel and get some needed rest before coming over to his house for the barbecue, I didn't argue. With the finally gas receipt in hand I checked into the hotel, thankfully they had a room ready. In then lobby I met a couple of rally participants who looked at me with a bit of concern. Perhaps this BBG1500 ride was showing on me? I don't know, but those who saw me arrive commented on what they perceived me to be, not what I felt I was at the time. If this makes sense to anyone. With my gear off the bike and in the room, a shower and bed.

Done. Unceremoniously done. What an anti-climatic close to this intense ride of a BBG1500. No fanfare. No pomp and circumstance. No parades. And certainly no warm welcome to me the "victorious hero" of all the above. No, just a clean hotel room. A warm shower and bed. Done. Four hours of sleep and I awoke to the sound of my "screaming meanie". Time to go to Steve's Barbecue. As any frugal Connie owner would agree, a free meal is a good meal, besides Steve was expecting me and I did need his signature to witness the finish form. With the BBG1500 in the bag my two next immediate challenges lay ahead. Participation in the Utah 1088 and ride home. It was a terrific week for me. I had three great rides completed. The rally was great, although I forgot to turn in a bonus worth over 3300 points I still finished, I won't do that again. And the ride home on Monday was uneventful if not almost routine. Now my sights are set on a 50CC or a 48 states ride. I don't know just yet, but I do know there's a lot of riding left to do. Thanks for taking the time to read this and I hope everyone enjoys their rides. No matter the attempt best of luck in your journeys. Bob