

A ONE DAY RIDE FROM SALT LAKE CITY THE 1996 UTAH 1088

By George Barnes

My wife, Donna, and I arrived at the motel in Salt Lake city around 7:30 p.m. Friday evening on June 28th. The area of parking lot that was roped off for the participants of the Utah 1088 was already full. Although we were a little late, tech inspection was still open. Iron Butt Rally finisher Frank Taylor checked over my bike and sent me out for an odometer check while Donna checked us into our room. After a quick dinner I took a shower and went to bed around ten. Donna, who would be staying in Salt Lake City while I was on the rally, looked through some tourist brochures trying to plan her day.

The alarm went off at 5:45 a.m. Saturday morning and, as usual on these trips, I felt like I hadn't slept at all. I went out and did some checks of the bike, then went over to the coffee shop for breakfast. They didn't open the shop until 6:25 a.m., so there was a line of riders developing. The breakfast buffet was already being served when the doors opened so most of us took advantage of it.

We had a rider's meeting in the parking lot at 7:15 a.m. sharp, Steve Chalmers time. I soon found out that Steve Chalmers time is about 5 minutes faster than everyone else's. I made a note to reset my watch and bike clock. The meeting consisted of an overview of the rally and some useful bits of information. We were told that there would be four manned checkpoints on the route. We could miss one of the checks and still be a "finisher", but only one. We were cautioned about the number of deer we would encounter, and advised to show respect for the Utah Highway Patrol, especially since the rally was put on as a benefit for the Hope Project, the official charity of the Utah Highway Patrol Association.

At 7:45 a.m., Steve Chalmers began handing out the rally packets with the route instructions inside. He started with number 1, so being rider number 59, I had to wait a couple of minutes for my packet. As soon as I had it in my hands I raced

back to my room and began to develop a strategy. I traced the main route on my maps with a yellow highlighter. Then I went through and marked all of the bonus locations that were on the main route with a blue marker. My final markings, this time with pink, were the bonus locations that were not on the main route. These last bonuses were of a much higher point value than the others and had to be considered carefully.

As I looked at my map, I soon realized that the first leg of the route would take me on certain unfamiliar roads east of Salt Lake City. I also realized that the point value of the bonuses along the main route was not very high. However, I quickly discovered that a bonus in Wendover, Nevada paid a very high point value. Wendover was about 112 miles west on Interstate 80. I quickly decided it would be a better bet to head to Wendover on the freeway rather than try to find my way around smaller roads in unfamiliar territory.

I then plotted the course to Boise, Idaho, and back to Checkpoint One. The bonus in Boise was huge. I quickly discovered that I would have to average about 106 miles per hour in order to make Boise and get to the checkpoint before it closed. Since the loss of one check would reduce my score by about 800 points, I knew that I would have to make all of the checks in order to be competitive. Therefore, Boise was out.

I glanced at the remainder of the route and decided I had a pretty good handle on where I was going. I would take a closer look at the bonus sheet later in the morning, after getting a few hundred miles and almost as many points under my belt. Wendover was a piece of cake. I covered the 112 miles in about 80 minutes. I went inside the Peppermill Casino and bought a \$1.00 gaming token, which was required as proof of my visit. Having left Salt Lake City with only 3/4 of a tank of gas, I made sure to gas up before heading back, east on I-80. As I headed back towards Salt Lake City, I noticed on my map that there was a road that dropped south from I-80 down to a town called Tooele. From Tooele there was a road that went up to the Kennicott copper mine, which was one of the bonus locations. I dropped off the interstate and went to Tooele. I couldn't find any signs directing me to the mine, so I pulled into a Honda shop and

asked directions. (And so dispelled the myth that men won't stop and ask for directions!) I was told the road was dirt and "really rough". I asked how far it was to the mine and, hearing that it was 10 to 12 miles of washboard road, I decided to blow it off, and headed back to the interstate. I figured I wasted about 20 minutes on this little side trip.

After turning North on I-15, I picked up a bonus at Hill Air Force Museum in Ogden. We had to find a Globemaster cargo plane and find out its weight. Another rider was walking towards the plane, so I quickly zeroed in on it. I went inside the museum to use the bathroom and discovered it is a really neat place, (the museum, not the bathroom; although it was nice, too). I will try to get back there with my family when I have more time.

After Ogden, I headed north on I-15. Checkpoint 1 was in Brigham City, only a few miles up the road. It was open until 2:30 p.m., so I had plenty of time to head on up to Malad City, Idaho, to buy a lottery ticket, another bonus. It was around 1:30 p.m. when I arrived in Idaho and my breakfast was wearing off. I grabbed a candy bar and filled my drink bottle. I finished the candy bar as I merged into traffic on I-15 south, heading back to the checkpoint.

As I came back down to Brigham City and the checkpoint, I was feeling really relaxed. I had a few hundred points in the bag and had about ten minutes before the check would close. I pulled into the check trying to be really cool. Mike Kneebone, Mike Heran, Dave McQueeney and Tim Moffitt from Colorado. They started writing down my time and odometer reading, checked my gaming token and were being very friendly and conversational.

Then Kneebone asked if I had gotten the bonus at the Port of Entry a couple of miles down the road. I told him, "No, I'm going down there now.". All of a sudden, it was like the world was coming to an end. Mike said that the officer that needed to sign my route sheet was to go off duty in 8 minutes! It became a mad dash to get finished checking me in and get me out. I pulled out in such a hurry, I stalled my bike. I was thinking, "Damn, here I am in front of some of the best known endurance riders in the world, and I wind up looking like a geek". I managed a re-start

and made it to the Port of Entry with a couple of minutes to spare. Officer Williams was very pleasant as he signed my sheet. So far, all was well!

From Odgen the route took us west on small, two-lane roads. We went out to Promontory Point, where the East and West railroads met over a century ago. The bonus question was to find out what time of day the Golden Spike was driven.

The next bonus was at the Thiokol plant. Here, we had to find out how many pounds of thrust a space shuttle solid rocket booster produces. (It's a bunch!) I had heard of Morton-Thiokol when the Challenger crashed. I knew they made the solid boosters, but was unprepared for all of the other rockets that were on display. This was another place I would like to return to. My hat goes off to Steve Chalmers for finding interesting routes and bonus locations. At this point, the route took us onto I-84 West. I got gas in Snowville and ate a corn dog while I was looking over the route sheet and map. After my snack I headed for check number three in Wendover, Nevada. The fact that the main route went through Wendover accounts for the necessity of showing the gaming token at check 1, the bonus had to be done in the first leg. There was an easy bonus question relating to a plaque in the parking lot of the visitor center in Wendover where the check was at.

From Wendover the route took us south on Alt. 93. This is a straight, two-lane road through mostly barren desert. There was very little traffic, and I increased my speed to nearly 100 mph. Within 10 minutes of leaving Wendover, I saw a bike's headlight in my mirror. The bike went by me at about 110. I let him get a few miles up the road, then increased my speed to match his. I figured if there were any patrol cars coming they would nail him, giving me time to slow down.

As I got gas in Ely, I looked at my map and bonus sheet. I knew there was a big bonus in Tonopah, Nevada. I did the math and determined that I could not make Tonopah and still get to check 3 in Delta, Utah, in time. I also realized that I had about three hours before the check would open and it was only 140 miles. As I left Ely, I slowed my pace a little, taking in the late evening

beauty of the desert.

I arrived in Delta with exactly one hour to spare. I gassed up and headed to a small coffee shop for a bite to eat. As I ate I looked at my map and the route sheet. I knew I needed to get as many bonus points in the last legs of the rally as I could, in case someone had made it to Tonopah and back on time. There was a big bonus in Hanksville that I decided could be done easily. I went over to the park where the checkpoint was and found another bonus answer on a plaque in the park. I laid down on the grass and tried to sleep, but there were too many bikes coming and going. I got up and found a phone booth and called Donna, back in Salt Lake, to let her know everything was going well. About ten minutes before the check opened I began to prepare for night riding, donning my heavy gloves, putting the liner in my leather jacket and taking the covers off my driving lights. I pulled out of the check at 10:30 pm, seconds after Frank Taylor signed my route sheet.

As I pulled out of Delta, Chris White, a former 1088 winner, blew by me at what must have been 130 mph. I know his ST1100 is capable of such speeds, and so is Chris. I passed a few other riders, then turned east towards I-15. There was a bonus in Fillmore a few miles south, so when I got to the freeway, I turned south and went on down. After getting a gas receipt in Fillmore, I headed back up I-15 to Scipio and the US 50 turn-off.

As I rode east on 50, two bikes passed me. We rode as group almost to Salina. A BMW K bike with a couple riding it continued into Salina but the other bike and I turned south to head for Route 24 and Hanksville. I lost the other bike when he suddenly headed back towards the freeway. As Route 24 climbed steadily towards a mountain pass, the air began to cool. There was a beautiful full moon out, lighting up the sides of the road. As I approached the summit I began to see deer; I mean lots of deer! I lost count after about 5 miles and 50 deer. There were groups of deer, singles, bucks, does, fawns, you name it. They were everywhere! I slowed down and focused all of my concentration on the road ahead. Surprisingly, and thankfully, there were no close calls. In fact, of the 100 or so I saw, only two were out on the road and they just stood there as I rode by. It's times like

these that my 300 watts of lights pay off, I saw all of the deer in plenty of time to react.

I rode on through Loa, towards Capitol Reef National Park. I have been in Capitol Reef before, but never at one in the morning with a full moon out. The cliffs take on a completely different and awe-inspiring appearance. It really was a beautiful sight. So much so, that I kept slowing down to enjoy the scenery. I had to keep reminding myself that I was in a competitive rally and needed to be at the junction of 24 and I-70 by 2:00 a.m. (my self-imposed deadline), if I was going to make it to checkpoint four in time.

I pulled into Hanksville a little after 1:00 am. I asked the lady at the gas station if any other bikes had been through. She said "No, there haven't been any." I began to wonder if I was the only one coming to Hanksville. Then I began to doubt myself, thinking I had made a miscalculation and maybe I couldn't make it to the final check in time.

I was about 5 miles north of Hanksville when my doubts were put to rest. I met a group of bikes heading South. I recognized the driving light pattern of a few of them, all top contenders in rallies past. I then realized that they had taken the longer, but safer, route; east on I-70 then south on 24. I was ahead of them by about 7 minutes, but I bet they hadn't seen many deer, or Capitol Reef in the moonlight, for that matter!

I pulled into the check in Helper with 40 minutes to spare. I had a cup of coffee and a pack of Hostess cupcakes while exchanging pleasantries with other riders and the rally staff. Again, I topped off my gas tanks and headed out.

The next bonus was to find the date on a monument near a certain mile post. The monument was about 20 feet off of the road, but my driving lights lit it up as I approached. I drove up and down the highway looking for a road over to the concrete pillar, but found none. I parked the bike on the road, killing the motor but leaving the lights on so I could find my way through the sage brush. After writing the answer on my route sheet, along with the required time and odometer reading, I stuffed the

sheet back in my tank bag and headed for the next bonus. Well, almost. Apparently the drain on my bike's electrical system from running my driving lights for about 4 hours, coupled with leaving my lights on as I hiked to the monument and back, was too much. My battery was drained enough to prevent the engine from turning over. I got off, pushed the bike into a downhill direction and started running. After about 15 feet I jumped on, pulled the shifter into second and dropped the clutch. The bike started instantly. I turned around and headed north, continuing on 191, now without the aid of my driving lights. My 100-watt high beam would have to do. I then headed for the next bonus in a cemetery in Duchense. I parked the bike and left it idling as I went searching for a particular headstone. Some people find this sort of activity disturbing, but it really helps to wake you up at 4:00 a.m.! I later heard that Steve knew the sprinklers would be coming on around the time we would be there. I was lucky enough to miss that bit of his humor!

Back on course, I was moving west on US 40. I answered a question at a mile marker, then, a few miles down the road, came on a strange and disturbing scene.

I approached a group of bikes parked on each side of the road, most had their emergency flashers on. As I pulled to a stop I saw a dead deer lying on the shoulder of the road. I put two and two together pretty quickly and knew what had happened. I couldn't figure out, however, why there were people walking along side the road with flashlights.

I got off of my bike and asked the first person I saw if the rider was all right. He said, "Yes, but we can't find his bike". I approached a group of riders and asked who had hit the deer. Mac MacFarland was standing with the group and said he had been the one. I asked if he was all right and he said, "Yeah, but I'd like to find my bike". The statement seemed so strange that I thought he might be in shock.

I joined about 10 other riders in looking for the bike. Finally, about ten minutes after I had stopped, a rider who was now almost 1/4 mile from where the deer was lying, hollered that he had found the bike. I guess it had flipped back up on its wheels

and continued rolling down the road! With that done, the bikes began to pull out. A couple told me they were going to stay with Mac and asked me to let Steve know at the finish. I said OK and headed out.

I stopped at the intersection of 40 and 189 to answer a question. It was then that I realized I had missed a bonus question about 30 miles back, somewhere near the accident. Since I had seen a number of deer on the road in the last stretch, and there would be bikes coming at me, I decided not to go back and get the answer.

I started down Provo Canyon towards I-15 as the sun was rising behind me. It was a little after 5:00 p.m.. I had about 150 miles to go to the finish and three hours in which to do it. I knew then that I had it made. I had survived the night, with all of the deer, and had not begun to doze off at all, as sometimes happens to me in the early hours of the morning.

I picked up two more bonus answers along the west side of Utah Lake, then followed the route onto Interstate 15 & 80 to the Finish. I pulled off at the exit before the one where the Finish was. I have made it a habit on rides of this nature to keep track of my own points. It's not that I don't trust the rally staff, I just like to know. Plus, when they start to read the results at the awards ceremony I kind of know where I stand. I went through my rally sheets and made sure all of my entries were legible and everything was in proper order.

I pulled into the Finish at 7:30 a.m., with 30 minutes to spare. I turned in my receipts and my route sheet. Mike Kneebone and Frank Taylor asked how I thought I did. I told them I thought I did pretty well, but didn't know, adding that if someone had made it to Tonopah I might not be in too good of shape. I went to my room and was barely able to say Hi to my wife. After riding 1,480 miles in 23 hours, it was about all I was able to get out. I took a shower and got into bed for a three hour nap. The awards ceremony was great! The food was good, and hearing all of the stories of the riders was really fun. Steve gave away a lot of really nice door prizes, including about 6 sets of tires and several pair of deluxe BMW Gore-Tex boots donated by

BMW of North America, Salt Lake BMW and Reno BMW. Donna and I were sitting at a table with some friends from Denver, Bill & Becky Gillespie. Becky really wanted to win something. As Steve was getting ready to call a number for a pair of the BMW boots, Becky said to everyone at the table "Think 35", thirty-five being her number. I said "What's wrong with 59". Just then Steve called out number 59! Becky and I laughed as I went up and got my pair of boots!

By my calculations, I had earned 3,579 points. Steve started announcing the finishing order, starting with number ten at 3,107 points. He worked his way up the list, alternating announcing the couples positions (they competed in a separate class from the solo riders) and awards for people bringing in the most donations.

As Steve got to the top five I had deja vue. It was only a few weeks earlier in California, at the awards ceremony for the California 1+1, that my name hadn't been announced by the time they got to the top five. Steve announced the second place name, with 3,378 points, but it wasn't mine. I couldn't believe that I had won! In fact, when he announced the first place finisher, he said he had earned 3,584 points, five more than I had figured for myself. I thought I had made a mistake and wasn't even in the top ten. Then he said my name! Again, I had a hard time believing I had won.

The Utah Highway Patrol Association gave Steve a Special Edition belt buckle that had the current and past Highway Patrol badges engraved in gold and silver. It was to be given to the first place rider. It is a beautiful buckle, one that I will treasure forever. My trophy is a large number 1, made of walnut. It will be a constant reminder of a great event!

The 1996 Utah 1088 raised almost \$15,000.00 for the Hope Project. Gary Eagan, last year's 1088 and Iron Butt winner, was unable to ride the event this year due to a broken arm and leg received in a collision with a deer shortly before the rally. He did, however, bring in the most donations to the Hope Project, earning him the Edleweiss trip to Europe. Gary also received a nice plaque from Steve and Mike Kneebone certifying his win in

the 1995 Iron Butt.

Overall it was a great weekend. The only accident was Mac's encounter with the deer. I believe Steve said 69 riders started the rally and 59 finished. Three riders received speeding tickets, the one with the highest speed being given a model of a Utah Patrol car by which to remember his achievement!

It turned out that the biggest challenge of the weekend was trying to fit everything on the bike for the trip home. Donna had visited the factory outlet stores. A couple of packages of clothes that she bought, my new pair of boots, my trophy and Finishers plaque were almost more than the old Beemer could handle! I want to thank Steve Chalmers and his crew for putting on a great event, and I am already looking forward to next year's Utah 1088!