

Randy Bishop`s 1998 Utah 1088

Almost 4 years ago I saw a motorcycle at the Steamboat Springs races with a license plate frame that said "Utah 1088, The Ultimate 24 Hour Experience". I had been on one 10/24 of my own, and the 1088 really sounded interesting. I left a note on the bike asking for more information and soon received a packet that told all about a 1088 mile, 24 hour ride around Utah to raise money for charity. It still sounded like fun but involved a little more money and time than I could invest. I decided to run my own Colorado 1088 instead.

Fast forward to last fall. I was checking the Iron Butt Rally results each day and saw more mention of the Utah 1088. As soon as the registration opened I sent in my money and within a couple of months the news arrived that I had been accepted to participate in the rally. I planned and gathered up the required flashlights, flares, tire patching kit, and additions to my first aid kit. Finally rally day arrived and I was rolling into Salt Lake City. As I neared the motel I started seeing other bikes and as I turned into the parking lot I knew I was in the right place because of all the motorcycles with Aerostich suits, auxiliary gas tanks, PIAA lights, and Iron Butt Association license plate frames. For some reason the 1976 movie "The Gumball Rally" came to mind. It starts with Michael Sarrazin calling his friends with the one-word message: Gumball. They all dropped whatever they were doing and got together to run the Cannonball Baker Sea-to-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash from New York to Los Angeles.

At the Utah "Cannonball" I soon met Ray Collins who had done the Minnesota 1000 the previous weekend, Brad Hogue (a neighbor from Aurora CO on another Concours) who has finished well in the last two IBRs, and Archie and Irene Bailey who are COG members from California. I also renewed an old acquaintance with Jim Hickerson from Albuquerque who has ridden in the *Ride the Divide*, our 4-day COG rally in Colorado. In all there were 67 starters, about 1/2 with prior Utah 1088 experience, and about 1/2 of us rookies. Included in the group were prior winners of the Utah 1088 and even at least one winner of the Iron Butt Rally. Also among the competitors was

Fran Crane, known for her's and Mike Kneebones' 6 day ride to the 48 states. The motorcycles entered included 31 BMWs, 20 Hondas, 8 Kawasakis, 7 Yamahas, 4 Harleys, and one each Buell, Ducati, Suzuki, and Bozo Buster.

The first official activity was tech inspection where rally master Steve Chalmers and his volunteer staff checked for motorcycle driver's license, proof of registration and insurance, tool kit, flares, and the rest. We then traveled a prescribed route of about 20 miles out to the Great Salt Lake and back to check the accuracy of our odometers. On Friday evening Steve held a riders' meeting for us rally rookies to explain how the event worked and to answer questions. That was followed by another meeting for all the riders, aired live on Pat Widder's web page. We were told that the Utah State Patrol tends to be lenient with the speed limit but that "if you are going 130 mph with your hair on fire, you'll probably go to jail." Message received. The rally instructions were then handed out and we all high tailed it to our rooms so we could plan the next day's riding. Some guys even had laptop computers, for that unfair advantage.

So, what is the Utah 1088? It's a one-day version of the 11-day Iron Butt Rally, starting and ending in Salt Lake City. This year's event had a choice of three routes. Route #1, the base route and the one most riders took, was laid out on roads entirely within the state of Utah. To be a finisher each rider had to cover at least 1192 miles (the length of the route), had to hit two of the three checkpoints along the way, and had to return the start line within 26 hours. Additional bonus points could be earned by stopping at signs along the route and answering questions on the rally notes. Even more points could be gained by taking side trips, like a spur down to Flagstaff AZ for 812 points. Experienced rally competitors planned completely different routes to maximize their points, just making sure to ride the 1192 miles and hit two of the checkpoints.

Route #2, for 5550 points, was a simple one. Purchase gas from any station in Denver CO. Save the receipt. Purchase gas from any station in Santa Fe NM. Save the receipt. Get a \$1 casino token from any of the casinos in Laughlin NV. Return to Salt Lake City within 26 hours. That's about 2006 miles, a route I don't

think anyone took.

Route #3, for 4825 points and taken by most of the top finishers was a little shorter. Purchase gas from any station in Jackson WY. Arrive at checkpoint #2 in Torrey UT, between 7:00-9:15pm. Get a keno ticket in Las Vegas NV. Return to Salt Lake City within 26 hours. A route of about 1480 miles. Additional points could be obtained by stopping at the bonus locations along Route #1.

At 7:00am Saturday we were free to start riding. The smart guys headed into Salt Lake City to pick up bonus points at a Honda dealer and at a railroad monument. The rest of us on Route #1 headed west on I-80 along the Great Salt Lake. At Rowley Junction I turned south to follow the base route but could have gone on west 76 miles to get a poker chip at Wendover NV worth 151 points. Just off I-80 I stopped to read and record the mileage sign for Dugway, good for about 70 points. One of the experienced guys ahead of me had to double back to the sign. That made me feel like I was doing something right. At Dugway we went east on UT-199, a winding and pretty road over Johnson Pass (6515'). As we neared Clover one of the guys on a BMW had a bit of trouble. Not much earlier in the morning cattle had been driven down the road and left some souvenirs. A car ahead of the BMW hit one of the cow pies and the splash-back just covered the nice red scooter. At UT-36 we went south to milepost 27 looking for a historical sign about the Transcontinental Telegraph, worth 50 some bonus points. The sign had disappeared since the rally was pre-run so there were a lot of us running up and down the road trying to find the correct answer to the question. At Eureka we joined US-6 and traveled east over another range of mountains. The view at the summit was great: a large valley, Utah Lake to the northeast, and more mountains ahead. At I-15 we went south to Nephi, the location of checkpoint #1. I got there at 9:00am and realized that I could have gathered some bonus points back in Salt Lake with the hour I had to wait before the checkpoint would open. Oh well, it was a chance to buy gas, refill the CamelBack with Gatorade and water, eat some Grandma's chocolate chip cookies, relax, and plan the next bit of riding. So far, following the base route seemed fairly easy.

From Nephi the route headed SW on UT-132 to Delta where the city park with its monuments became very popular for quick stopping motorcyclists, all eager to gain 70 points for finding out that Father Escalante came through the area back in 1776. At Delta the base route continued south on UT-257, a long, straight, flat 72 miles through the Black Rock Desert to Milford where more bonus points were gained for noting the year the town was established. Some of the guys missed the sign and did the ol' ride back and forth routine until they found it. Some riders got caught at the railroad crossing for 20 minutes, not something they enjoyed when trying to keep the miles rolling. I stopped in the shade and enjoyed a PowerBar. The route continued south on UT-21 through Minersville where we could jog 6 miles east out of our way to milepost 97 to get bonus points at Minersville State Park. After rejoining the route on UT-130 we went through some big country on the way to Enoch and I-15. At a gas stop there I probably spent too much time refilling my CamelBack and eating another PowerBar. Live and learn.

Next was 34 miles north on I-15 to UT-20, another winding and scenic road that crossed a summit at 7910'. At US-89 we headed south through the motel town of Panguitch, then turned east on UT-12, one of the prettiest roads in all of Utah. (We could have gone on south to Kanab for 119 points, Page AZ for 409, or Flagstaff AZ for 812 points. Some guys did.) We soon entered Red Canyon, a stretch of road with really unique and pretty red rock formations. Way up there on the "look this way and that" meter. Part of my reason for riding the 1088 was to see Utah scenery and I was in the right place. Bryce Canyon National Park was my next stop for bonus points. While paying the \$5 entry fee to the Park I asked the gal if many motorcycles had been entering the park within the previous couple hours. She said there had been a bunch and that Sunrise Viewpoint was only a mile away. She knew the routine. At Sunrise there were four or five cycles lined up and tourists wondering what was going on with all the Aerostich-suited guys running around in the heat. We were finding the sign to Fairyland Trail, worth 188 points! Back on UT-12 and about 8 miles east, bikes were parked by the road again for a half-mile hike up to Mossy Cave, a detour worth 500 some bonus points. In spite of the heat and the climb, overweight guys were not awarded extra points.

At Escalante John Cheney and I stopped at a gas station and bought the last four bottles of water in the cooler. A few miles later I was wanting to take another "here's the road" photo when we came around a corner with a huge view off toward the Capitol Reef area. I pulled off while John continued on down and around the curves. I took a couple of pictures then continued myself. At that point the rally changed a little for me because for almost 12 hours I had been riding with guys off and on, but for the next 50 miles into Torrey (and the 150 miles after Torrey) I saw only three other 1088'ers. A little lonely, but I remembered that long distance rallies are mostly individual efforts with everyone on a slightly different schedule due to fuel, rest, and bonus point stops and detours. UT-12 continued to be great though. At one point it descended into a canyon along a cottonwood shaded creek then climbed right up onto a ridge line where there were big drop offs on both sides of the road for about a half mile. Cool! The highway then climbed into Dixie National Forest and into a pretty ponderosa pine forest. It even got up into aspen forests as the road peaked at 9,200'. All the while there were still great views to Capitol Reef. And plenty of curves. But I was beginning to feel rushed as I had wanted to get to Torrey by the time checkpoint opened at 7:00pm.

I got to Torrey at 7:40pm where there was quite a crowd of 1088'ers. I was somewhat amazed to see Gary Egan (IBR and 1088 winner) who was on his way through from Wyoming to Nevada, following Route #3. The checkpoint was being run by Michael Kneebone ("Are you the famous Michael Kneebone?" "Well, I'm Mike."), a very nice guy who chatted with me for a bit about a common acquaintance and his dual-sport trip with a Venture on the Jeep trails near Ouray CO. I couldn't tarry for long though. Got gasoline, Gatorade, water, and hit the road for Moab. From Torrey the base route went west on UT-24 to Loa, then north on UT-72 which was another pretty, winding road through the forest. At the junction I-70 I headed east for some fairly high speed touring (compared to the cars, but not compared to a BMW that passed me like I was standing still) through some big, wide open spaces. Just past the very scenic drop through San Rafael Reef, I turned south on UT-24 as the sunlight was disappearing and started boring holes through the night. I got to Hanksville at 10:00pm where three or four other

guys were getting gas. I tanked up, then headed for the rest room. Remember the motorcyclist in "The Gumball Rally"? I must admit I looked a little like him with my 15-hour helmet hair and slightly red eyes. A little humor there in the quiet and dark of Hanksville.

The base route then continued south on UT-95 on a clear but moonless night. The only way I could tell I was near Lake Powell was when lights were reflected across the water. Near the intersection of UT-276 I joined a three bike tango in the dark looking for the mileage sign to Fry Canyon that was supposed to be between mileposts 85 and 84. After a couple passes back and forth I finally decided the sign between mileposts 84 and 83 was the one worth the bonus points. A few miles further I turned onto UT-275 to Natural Bridges National Monument. At the end of a narrow, dark road I met Jim Hickerson again who was stopped by a gate barring our way to the bonus location. As it turns out, the answer to the bonus question was also on the bulletin board in front of the visitor center. The stop was a good place to put on the electric vest as the temperature was beginning to drop. Before I got going again the Baileys showed up and told how their Concours had fallen over while they were stopped for lunch. The resulting broken right footpeg cost them over an hour to make an effective fix with bungee cords and DUCT TAPE (don't leave home without it!). Then it was off into the dark again and my close encounter with a deer. I hit the brakes and the horn. The deer ran right down the center line and with each press of the horn it turned and looked back over a different shoulder. Finally it veered left and I took off again. Twice more on down the road I braked for yellow eyes. At Blanding I was back on a fairly straight road and decided to bypass the bonus points at Newspaper Rock in order to get to the checkpoint at Moab by its 3:00am opening. I rolled into Moab at 2:40 along with some other guys, gassed up, went to the checkpoint, and grabbed the bonus points on a nearby sign. The very friendly checkpoint workers provided smiles, orange juice, and cookies for us weary travelers. Much appreciated.

At 3:00am a bunch of us took off on the last leg of the rally. Just ahead was Arches National Park and 1144 bonus points. We had been told at the riders' meeting that the Park would be closed

and we had two choices: 1) hike in to the bonus location (up a long road onto the top of a mesa, fat chance), or 2) ride past the gate and risk a Federal ticket and jail (fat chance). I went on past and noticed a bike riding right on in. As it turns out the gate wasn't closed and some guys got an easy 1144 points. Sometimes it is worth taking risks, and that was one of those times. Anyway, me and several others took a rather quick 98 mile ride to Wellington and an overdue stop for caffeine.

After perking up with Pepsi I was ready for the upcoming curvy roads and bonus point locations. Just north of Helper on US-6 we learned about another of Butch Cassidy's robberies. On up US-191 through a canyon in Ashley National Forest we picked up some more points and also got a little cold at 9,100'. Not long before Duchesne the sun came up, the first time I have ever ridden all the way through the night. Turned left at Duchesne onto US-40 and began to pick up speed. Salt Lake City was looking a ways off and time was starting to run out but I stopped at Heber City anyway for some more quick points. West on I-80, looped around Salt Lake City on I-215, rolled into the motel parking lot at 8:30am. Whew! Swapped stories for a bit, unloaded, slept (not enough), cleaned up.

At 1:30pm we had an awards dinner at the motel with lots of food that was way tastier than PowerBars. Steve Chalmers handed out awards and door prizes; helmets, Avon tires, and Widder gift certificates. You COG folks are probably wondering how the Concours riders did (although in this event the rider is a lot more important than the type of bike). I finished out of the top 10, but that's OK as my goals were just to participate in my first rally and to be an official finisher. Archie and Irene Bailey finished 3rd in the couples class and Brad Hogue finished 4th in the singles class. Gold Wing riders Bill and Becky Gillespie from Littleton CO were first in the couples class.

In summary, the Utah 1088 was a great rally event. I had a lot of fun, enjoyed exploring Utah, and met a bunch of neat motorcyclists. I'm ready to go again.

-- Randy Bishop, Littleton Colorado