

RUN WITH WHAT YOU BRUNG
SEPTEMBER 2 - SEPTEMBER 6, 2009

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

5095 MILES

2006 HONDA ST1300

By Steve Reinig

Introduction

Run With What You Brung qualifies as an Iron Butt Association Saddlesore 5000. Successful completion of the rally qualifies one for the Saddlesore 5000 certificate. “The Saddlesore 5000 may be the toughest of the IBA rides including the 11 day Iron Butt Rally,” so stated Rally master Steve Chalmers at the riders dinner meeting the night before the rally started. What was I getting myself into? I had been pretty anxious about the whole thing for at least two weeks leading up the rally.

So what is Run With What you Brung? It is a five day 5,000 mile motorcycle endurance rally. What makes this one unique is that riders have a month to develop their own routes based on the bonus listing provide by the rally master in early August. Riders can then consult, share, ideas etc until the day of the rally. We all turned in our routes to the rally master at the conclusion of the riders meeting along with having our Drivers Licenses sealed in an envelope. If you brought your license sealed you got 3000 points. If not those points were deducted. The rally master was trying to promote responsible and safe riding.

So during August I toyed with 4 different routes. The first one, I took the sucker punch for Alaska and then realized I couldn't get much more than the one in Alaska. The next option had me coming back to the familiar territory of the West where I knew all the roads and geography. Finally I decided on a competitive route that would take me to parts of the country I had never seen. The first version had me going to Texas, Louisiana and other southern states. Last September's rough hurricane season had me alter my route one last time in order to avoid the winds and rains of the major hurricane that hit during the rally. I essentially rode and saw the Midwest.

The rally was a true test of both physical and mental abilities. Of the approximately 30 that started, only twenty completed. This was a transformational ride in that I took my riding skills and abilities to the next level.

Day One. Salt Lake City Utah to Colby Kansas 940 miles.

The Rally master recorded our mileages one more time and then declared the rally to begin at 7:00 AM. My first day was fairly straightforward with only one bonus in the afternoon. I headed due east out of Salt Lake City and immediately crossed the Continental Divide passing the site of recent Olympics at Park City Utah. The day was sunny, clear and crisp. New snow covered the high peaks. It was a great day to be on the road with little traffic this day after Labor Day. I maintained a brisk pace across Wyoming and entered Colorado about 1:00 PM. I needed to be at the Pueblo Airport Museum by 4:00 PM. It was going to be close. Traffic increased and slowed the closer I got to Denver but was able to sail through with little distraction. The ride to Pueblo turned out to be longer than I thought. It was nearly 90 miles not sixty. I was doubtful

that I would make it but needed the miles so plowed on. I pulled into the museum parking lot at 4:15 just as the last employee was leaving. He announced it was closed and I would need to come back tomorrow. I told him what I was up to and all that I needed was a receipt showing I had been there. He opened the doors, I paid, plus gave a donation and he gave me the receipt. He offered to let me walk through the non-secured area. I declined and stated I needed to get on the road. He was amazed what this rally was and wished me good luck. The first of many good folks I would meet during the ride. The ride to Colby took me to Colorado Springs and then a back road cutting diagonally to I-70. At that junction I made a quick call to the rally master as I forgot to reset my odo and needed my beginning mileage. One of many newbie mistakes to be made during the rally! An uneventful ride brought me to Kansas where it got even darker. They don't believe in lights on the Interstate and I pulled into Colby at would be 1:00 AM. I had a quick sandwich and went to bed for a restless 4 hours of sleep.

Day Two; Colby Kansas to Davenport Iowa, 975 miles

I woke at 5:00 AM, showered and packed quickly. Ate lightly at the motel's continental breakfast and was on the rode by 5:45 AM. For the next few hours I was going to be on two lane back roads. The first stop in Lebanon, Kansas was to take a picture of the sign noting the geographic center of the lower 48 states. A quick trip to Cawker City led to the next bonus that being to secure a picture of one of two of the largest balls of string in the world. More back roads through the farming fields of Kansas brought me to hwy 81 which would turn into Interstate 135. I hadn't been in Kansas that long and I was already bored and wanting more landscape. The next section took me to downtown Wichita to the Carrie Nation park in the heart of downtown. After riding right past it I finally turned around and got there to take my picture. BTW the cheapest gas during the rally was here in Wichita at a price of \$3.75 per gallon. The weather was now changing and I was clearly riding into a storm. As I was to find out the next 24 hours would be riding through the blowback from the recent hurricane and rain, it did. Rode my first toll road in Kansas. By the time I pulled up to Olathe it was raining pretty hard. My goal here was to get a picture of the Garmin headquarters. It was raining so hard an outdoor picture didn't seem like it would work. So I found the main entrance, walked in and there was a big Garmin sign. I asked the receptionist if I could take a picture. When she found out why I need the picture she gladly said yes. She too was impressed by the rally concept. Out of the blue she asked me how I was going to get through Kansas City during rush hour. I told and she said no you will sit for an hour in traffic. She gave me the bypass route and off I went with little or no traffic. The rain continued heavy at times. I noticed a major deterioration in the highways as I entered Iowa. It felt like I was riding in Alaska with all the frost heaves and in fact that was what I was riding on. Very irritating in the dark. Pulled into Des Moines for dinner and plan. My goal was to get to Chicago that night and hit the bonus hot dog stand. I rode on to Davenport Iowa and decided to call it a night. The rain paused but the worst was yet to come.

Day Three Davenport, Iowa to Fargo North Dakota, 1007 miles

Since the rally master had us seal our driver's licenses in an envelope I didn't want to open it when asked for ID at motel checks ins. I got some interesting stares but they always took cash without question.

I awoke at 6:00 AM, quickly showered, packed and ate a quick free continental breakfast at the hotel and was on the road by 7. By this time, I am in the Central Time zone so for me it is 5 when I left. Today I set the GPS for the first time in order to navigate Chicago. After riding for about 2 hours I stopped to gas up and make the mandatory phone call check in to the rally master. All riders were required to check in on this day to let him know where you were and how you were doing. Again you received a lot of points if you did or points were deducted if you didn't. About this time the skies were cloudy with light mist. The rains then started and wouldn't stop for the next six hours.

I got onto my first of two toll roads and what a pain having to stop every few miles. I asked one toll booth operator was there another way and he said yes just go through the EZ Pass lane that photographs license plates and passes and make sure to pay within a week. He neglected to tell me there as a 4 booth limit. Well by the time I got to Wisconsin I counted at least 10 I went through and would eventually mail in a check for payment. (As of this writing I have not heard back from the toll authority if was going to be cited!!). The rain intensified as did the morning rush hour traffic. As I approached Chicago I made a decision to forgo the nearly 3000 bonus points at the hot dog stand and to move on to the next ones in Wisconsin. I veered north on I-294 and headed for Milwaukee Wisconsin. On the toll roads they have convenience centers in the middle of the roads that contain gas stations, fast food and rest centers. I stopped at one rather large one to get some coffee, don the rain gear figure out where I was. Again the locals were very friendly and helpful with help and directions. They gave me good advice on how to avoid the Milwaukee downtown which they said would bog me down. Again they were intrigued by the rally and wished me well and good luck. Rather than avoid the locals I tried to talk to them when ever I stopped. It was like a boost of energy. It got a little lonely in that helmet with only my thoughts to ponder and that got boring! Finally about an hour out of Lacrosse Wisconsin on the border with Minnesota the rain stopped. I was able to dry out pretty quickly on the bike in the wind. Another point that was not lost on me was that I was using my electric jacket every day on the rally. No horrific Midwest heat or humidity. In fact everyone commented on how unseasonably cold it was for the first week of September.

In Lacrosse at the Hellman brewery I took a picture of the world largest six pack. Lacrosse is one of the towns I want to go back and spend some time. The downtown had been upgraded and the setting was quite picturesque right on the Mississippi river. I crossed back over the river as I was headed west. Chicago was the furthest East I rode.

Now I rode through the southern part of Minnesota. The vistas were grand with all of the ranches and farms. I noted how houses were all built in large clumps of trees as to protect them from the wind. I would hate to brake down here in winter. Rode onto Blue

Earth and took a picture of the Jolly Green Giant statue, the largest in the world. The last clouds from the rains were dissipating and the sunset was spectacular. The last thunder clouds were red and created quite the backdrop as I rode into the night. I distinctly remember listening to a New Age version of America the Beautiful and tears welled up perhaps from fatigue or maybe just maybe thinking about the scenery and people I had met. I was at peace as I crossed into South Dakota and immediately headed north to Fargo where I would spend the night. I wished I could have seen the scenery as the road at times would swerve and quickly climb over hills and drop back down. Nice to see that Washington isn't the only state with speed traps. In the middle of nowhere my radar detector started going off. I was not concerned as I was at speed limit. To my left behind a rock in the meridian there was the trooper with no lights on. I wanted to wave but rode on. The vistas even in the dark, here on the prairie were interesting as I approached towns that were all lit up. I crossed into North Dakota and stopped at a rest stop for gas and coffee. This stop was a very seedy place where truckers seemed to be looking for some not so legal entertainment.

Off I rode and pulled into Fargo around 1:30 AM. Checked into motel and off to sleep I went. I was amazed at how good I felt.

Day Four, Fargo North Dakota to Sheridan Wyoming, 1052 miles

Started again at around 6:45 with what I thought would be a rainy day. By midmorning it was clear and the skies were a brilliant blue. Rode to Jamestown to get a picture of the world's largest buffalo only to arrive 30 minutes before opening. Knowing that I had a busy day I rode on. I noticed I was weary today. I figured I hadn't eaten or drank enough the day before so I made it a point to snack and eat all day at every gas stop. This condition remedied itself by mid afternoon.

I rode on to Mobridge North Dakota the site of the Crazy Horse monument. I took what seemed forever to find it (I learned from other riders they too had problems finding the right road to the monument.) Mobridge is a small town, the center of commerce here on the Missouri River. After finding the monument and taking a picture I rode off to my next stop in Sturgis South Dakota to get points by securing a gas receipt in town. The ride was picturesque and long I could tell I was getting close Sturgis when the Black Hills came into view with their typical afternoon thunder clouds building. In Sturgis I gassed up, secured the receipt and ran into another rally rider. We chatted for about 15 minutes recounting our experiences and where we were going next. At the end of the rally both of us agreed that meeting happened at the right time as it gave us both an emotional jolt of energy. I was now on my way to Billings Montana and then double back to Sheridan for the night. I had to route it this way so that I could secure the miles and hopefully get a bonus at the Little Big Horn. When I pulled up there it was closed so I could not get a photo. Off to Billings for dinner and then ride back to Sheridan for the night. I mentioned earlier how some motel workers did not like the fact that I could not show my ID. I thought I was going to be refused at this particular Comfort Inn and then the receptionist relented, took my cash and rather abruptly gave me my key.

Day Five, Sheridan Wyoming to Salt Lake City Utah 1,121 miles

Coming up to the last day it was important that I get on the road early and quickly as I had a busy day coming. I either slept through the wakeup call or the receptionist didn't set it. Will never know. So off I went for Douglas Wyoming and the Jackalope. Not reading the map closely I lost 30 minutes by taking a slow two lane hwy instead of interstate. Finally got to Douglas and like others got confused finding the Jackalope. Found it and it was off to Alliance Nebraska for a picture of the Carhedge (It's like Stonehedge only it is real cars set standing up in a circle). That particular road in Nebraska was busier than I expected and it seemed to take longer to get there. When I finally got to Carhedge there was another rally rider there taking a picture. He offered to take mine. We went back into Alliance, gassed up and had lunch together and then agreed to start riding together to Cheyenne. This particular rider had nearly bald tires when he started the rally and I was amazed he was still riding and had tread. We hit a rain squall and I lost him. Later he said he was keeping the speed down to save tread and safety reasons in the rain. I recall I was riding briskly because I had a lot of miles to go before I would end. As it turned out we met up again at Cheyenne at the same gas station. Probably because of fatigue I let myself get distracted talking to other folks who came up to me and asked about the bike and the ride I was on. After I gassed up I did not secure the upper pocket on the tank bag where I kept all of my required photos and receipts. I was back on I-80 with all of its interstate truck traffic. I noted it was very windy climbing up to cross the continental divide. All of a sudden a big gust of wind hit me and blew all of my photos and receipts out of tank bag. All I could see in the rear view mirror was my documentation of my ride and bonus that I had achieved. These were important because they were used to score the points at the end. No proof no points. I wanted to scream, to cry to lash out. I figured the rally was now over for me. I would DNF (Do not Finish) because of the loss. I figured I would get a motel, sleep real good and then go home. Before I made that rash decision I figured I had better check in with the Rally master. When I called him he assured me I could still be a finisher if I completed the 5000 miles. I could still get my Saddlesore 5000 Certificate. I was relieved because at this point I was riding for that certificate more than getting bonus points and finishing higher than I would.

So into the setting sun I rode. Because of my last minute re-routing due to the hurricane I had to pick up about 250 miles. I had routed a circular route from Rawlins Wyoming to Rock Springs not on the interstate but via hwy 287, 28 and 191. This route took me into the foothills of the Wind River Range in an area notorious for antelope and deer. On previous driving trips I have seen herds grazing right next to the highway. I was so glad I had the PIAA driving lights. They sent 100 watts of light down the road and into the brush and trees next to the highway. It was highly likely if they were there I would see them in advance. I took it easy and worked my way through this section in a very methodical focused manner. In the end I pulled into Rock Springs and I had not seen one deer or antelope over that 200 miles. I was now back to the Interstate. It was probably 1:00 AM. I could smell the finish line and felt quite giddy knowing that if nothing bad happened not only would I finish I would arrive back at the motel before the official check in. I gassed up had a snack and started off into the night. It was brisk but I felt

good. Knowing that I was probably OK with my mileage I decided to make on last loop to ensure I would get the 5,000 miles and not finish just under. I rode I 80 west and took I-84 to Brigham City north of Ogden where I gassed up and rode the final 40miles back to the hotel. As I pulled in I noticed other riders had already arrived. I recall pulling in at around 4:00, tired but very satisfied with what I had personally accomplished.

I qualified as a finisher though I came in last due to lack of gas receipts and pictures.