

My Ten n' Ten Rally report

After sorting out the rally pack and mapping out the boni, I realized where Steve put a lot of points was also where I didn't want to go. I don't really care for cities much. The thought of spending a day in and around DC was just not appealing to me. After emailing Steve to let him know he sucked, ("So don't go there!" was Steve's classic response.), I started assessing other routes to places I did want to go. One of the larger stand alone boni was the Four Corners ride of Blaine, WA / San Ysidro, CA / Key West, FL / Madawaska, ME.

With the CP at the mid rally point of 5 days, and located in Sidney, NE, I realized that I essentially had 98 hours of riding time on each end of the rally w/4 hours of planned sleep each night. And that that would not allow the traditional Four Corners ride of doing an East Coast loop and a West coast loop. Trying to do FL and ME and back to NE was over 7200 miles with a few boni thrown in. However, doing a low loop and a high loop was possible, if still a big ride. It looked like a bit over 12k if I could pull it off. Not a rally winner, points wise, but a hell of a ride and to places I have wanted to go, seeing things I have not seen before in many cases.

Once I had the basic Four Corners route laid out, it became evident that there were just a ton of boni on my first, (lower), leg path or just off of it. The run down I-15 to San Ysidro offered some interesting out and back boni for good points, but even more were in and about San Diego. I realized I could not take the time to go for them all, but really wanted to bag some of them before heading East.

By my nature, I tend to be an aggressive rally rider, but I'm not the best router out there for efficient points gathering. I often err on planning too many boni, then drop some on the fly to maintain my schedule and finish on time. My plan was to try and get all the 'anywhere, anytime' boni out of the way on the first day, as well as snagging boni on the way down to San Ysidro for the first corner.

The open boni of photos of Interstate signs was the

first point of attack, starting out with easy shots of I-80, I-215 and I-15. <http://tinypic.com/r/28bsoqr/7> There would be many more times during the rally I pulled off onto the shoulder just to hang my flag on a interstate marker sign and take a few pictures! Spelling out ANTI with town names via city limits signs or 'welcome to' signs was the second point of attack. American Fork, UT was to have provided me with the first letter, but I couldn't find any signage. Not wasting too much time in the hunt, I returned to the interstate and continued SouthWest on I-15. Nephi, UT, <http://tinypic.com/r/w7km02/7> Temecula, CA & Imperial Beach, CA were my other planned spots. Alpine, CA right on I-8 would later provide the final 'letter' as I headed East.

Heading down I-15 I planned to detour to The Valley of Fire State Park NE of Las Vegas to get a picture of a petroglyph. I had already sussed out that the easier place in the park for a pic was Atlati Rock, rather than going deeper into the park for Mouse's Tank which would have required more of a walk, (though is a great walk if you have the time). As I rode SE, I began to realize that if I wanted to do the Donut Hole bonus in La Puente, I was going to have to cut some other out & back bonus off my list. Valley of Fire was that bonus. I knew it was an easy one to snag, but it was still a 35 mile detour, (if you took the *second* exit for 169 off I-15). I actually needed gas at the first exit for 169 and a fellow rally rider on a Wing turned off with me, then I realized gas was 10 miles down this road, not right at the exit and did a quick u-turn back to I-15 to continue S for the next gas exit.

On to The Donut Hole in La Puente!

<http://tinypic.com/r/288pfll/7> What a cool spot. And not only was this a pleasant evening to be hanging out in SoCal, but the In & Out across the street provided me with another bonus, and probably the best food I had during the entire rally, a double, double, animal style along with some lemonade. Man, did that hit the spot! After a quick scarfing down of the burger, I let Jane route me back to I-15, quickly stoped for a great sunset photo with my rally flag <http://tinypic.com/r/qwzw2q/7> hit I-15, almost immediately exiting for the Temecula sign, <http://tinypic.com/r/20f9895/7> then back down 15 to

start working over to Coronado Island for the curved bridge bonus and hopefully a hot dog, (another open bonus, take a picture of your favorite hot dog).

It was fully dark by the time I crossed over the Coronado bridge and I took the first possible exit, which let me out at a very nice park with a great view of the well lit bridge. <http://tinypic.com/r/2nklzd3/7> I still wanted a back up receipt though, and my plan took me through Coronado on my way to Imperial Beach for the 'I' in ANTI. A brief stop at an all night convenience store snagged a receipt and back on the road for Imperial Beach. <http://tinypic.com/r/bhylwx/7> Immediately after leaving Imperial Beach I spot a Wienersnitzle Hot Dog store and make a hard braking right turn into their parking lot, realize that it's 5 minutes before they close the inside store, hop off and walk in with full gear to order a Krout Dog and head back to the bike for photos. <http://tinypic.com/r/zo7pew/7> Good points, not so good a dog though.

On to the first corner of the Four Corners. A quick merge to I-5 and back off at the Dariy Mart Road exit and I quickly find my way to the San Ysidro post office. <http://tinypic.com/r/2lchlye/7> I scribble some first day rally impressions on a card and mail it to myself as part of the documentation for my own Four Corners keepsake later and snag the easy pic of the post office sign, then beat feat back North to I-8 and start the long run East. I had wanted to get at least to AZ, but the heat was really incredible and shortly after midnight I called it at El Centro, CA. A cheap room and I was out for a few hours before hitting the road again pre-dawn and continuing to hammer East to the next bonus on my list.

The bonus for Pima Air Museum says to take a picture of one of the planes visible from the road. When I first read this bonus I was thinking it might be difficult at night. Then I looked it up and looked at the Satellite photos of the location. Holy cow, there are 4 B-52s along the fence line there. Along with some other large cargo planes. Not going to be a problem. Well, actually, it's more difficult to follow the bonus pack instructions than I thought. If you don't go into the museum grounds with an admission ticket, there is

no place to park on the street outside where an easy pic could be taken. I took a pic of the plane at the entrance, then made an illegal stop on the road in front of the museum and took another pic of one of the required planes. <http://tinypic.com/r/nvsec7/7> Not too bad in daylight.

Next on the list was the Titan Missile Silo in Sahuarita, AZ. <http://tinypic.com/r/2s9ex6c/7> What, you expected a pic of the actual Titan missile? This place was actually pretty cool and I will go back and take the long tour. As it was, a quick purchase from the gift shop and I was back on the road. Funny/scary, there is a community right around the corner, literally, from the silo location. I have to wonder if it's newer than the silo by a long ways. Cheap real estate!

Continuing East, I made the short detour to run over to Cochise, AZ for a pic of the hotel in the nearly ghost town there. <http://tinypic.com/r/24oo8l0/7> This was an easy bonus and a quick return to I-10 and East to El Paso, TX to find John Wesley Hardin's grave site and get a picture. Something over three hours later found me in El Paso at the Concordia Cemetery. This is a fairly large place and spread out in sections for different groups in the community. Thankfully, they also have a map with prominent graves marked. This, and my internet research, allowed me to make short work of finding the grave site and snagging my pic. <http://tinypic.com/r/29vjxxv/7>

This second day of the rally ended with a beautiful sunset. <http://tinypic.com/r/30k8v7p/7> Sometime after midnight I again found a hotel room right off the interstate and grabbed another few hours sleep before a pre-dawn launch back East to San Antonio, TX where the bonus at the San Fernando Cathedral beckoned. The combined grave of Davey Crockett, Jim Bowie and William Travis is outside the cathedral proper, along one side and inside a small alcove, but well marked. San Antonio is a nice town, not too large, with a nice feel to it. I'd like to go back and spend some time exploring there some day. I quickly found parking at a pay lot and walked back a few blocks to the cathedral and scored my pic w/o problems. <http://tinypic.com/r/p0s5z/7>

Working my way out of San Antonio I headed for Round Top, TX to get some pie. Royer's Round Top Cafe has a legendary reputation for pie and I was really in the mood for some. I skipped lunch and pushed on over the fun back roads to Round Top hoping to find some peach pie or perhaps something else interesting to add to my lunch order from them. <http://tinypic.com/r/1z213xz/7> Dammit! Closed for most of the rally. Now I'm hungry and in the middle of nowhere. Oh well, back to I-10, grab some rolled taquito thing off the rack at the gas station and head East on I-10 again.

On to Baton Rouge, LA to snag a pic of the house that Kingfish built. Also known as the Louisiana White House. This was pretty strait forward and super easy to get back onto the interstate after. There was a historical event being hosted there, so parking was a challenge, but I got lucky and found a spot right in front of the grounds. <http://tinypic.com/r/23hkell1/7>

Zip back onto I-110 to 10 and East for another 80 miles to New Orleans and I drop into the French Quarter heading for Cafe Du Monde. Getting in is easy, evening is coming on and folks are out in large numbers and lots of good smells, sights and sounds fill this place. I'm close to the cafe when traffic seizes up, and I spot a bike size parking spot just ahead, so I park the bike, pay for the automated parking on the street and grab my flag to walk the last 3 blocks to the cafe. Probably more interesting this way any how. Walk in, grab a small table, one of the lined up against the wall waitresses comes over and I order a sprite and beignet and enjoy a short wait while people watching. <http://tinypic.com/r/2q9b8co/7> & beignet delivered <http://tinypic.com/r/21mwvbt/7>

Back out to I-10 and 75 miles down the road I'm cutting off for another bonus. This time it's "Beauvoir" in Biloxi, MS. This is the last home of Jefferson Davis. It's full night now and I knew from research that there were no simple places to stop for a pic here. It's two divided two lanes with turn locations every few blocks. So I ride past the house, do a U-turn and come back, then repeat this a couple of times looking for likely spots before I just pull into the entrance. No sooner off my bike, with the high beam on to illuminate the

gate sign and the security guy is asking what I'm up to. As soon as I mention the scavenger hunt, he gets it and is friendly. I take a picture of the gate sign and walk down to take a pic of the front of the house too. <http://tinypic.com/r/2hq7bxc/7> & <http://tinypic.com/r/sfyvds/7>

My next bonus is just down the road. This day was just bang, bang, bang with boni collecting and went fast. Aside from missing out on the pie at Royer's Cafe, it was a really good day of rally riding. The USS Alabama was my next bonus and easy to get, even at night with it all lit up and good signage. A quick in, grab the pic and back out and I was on my way East again. <http://tinypic.com/r/icobxw/7> Yeah, it's blurry. Got one of the gate sign too. Long exposure shot with hand held digital camera is tough to keep clear.

Ok, now it's time to just sit there and twist that. I need to get into FL and prepare for the long slog South to Key West. I do have a couple of boni on my list in Ocala and Tampa Bay, but things are far apart and it gets slower once I hit the Keys.

Just after entering FL I hit a Welcome Center/rest stop to use the head. These Welcome Centers are huge areas, way more \$\$ spent than a typical Western state rest stop. A FL LEO walks up behind me and I apparently fail to respond to his question since I'm ATGATT including helmet, so he taps on the back of my helmet. SHIT! That woke me up. "uh, yes?" He just wanted to chat about the bike. I did get him to pose for the 'friendly cop' bonus pic though. <http://tinypic.com/r/dgj5zn/7>

I manage to get about 80 miles West of Tallahassee, FL before getting a room for a few hours. Back on the road before dawn again I make it to I-75 and head South. I pull into the Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing and it's a big empty parking lot. Not sure if this is kinda sad, or just an off day. There is a large beautiful home at the entrance to the grounds, then the parking lot and the museum at the back of the grounds. The required pic is of the A7E Corsair jet fighter in the parking area. <http://tinypic.com/r/9ut4yc/7>

With that boni bagged, it was back to I-75S and then a detour to the Gulf side of FL for the Tampa Bay bridge. This is a very long toll bridge and it hits an island in the middle. There is a big rest area on the very end, but I exited early and wandered around in the heat before remembering that it was a two part bridge and I had gotten off earlier than I should have. I probably lost an hour here. Note to self - "park" on a sign in FL is just part of a sub division name, not a reference to an actual park. Back on the bridge, find the rest area and exit again. Fairly easy pic there.

<http://tinypic.com/r/4q0odw/7>

With these two boni out of the way it was just a run to Key West for my second corner. Of course, "just" still meant over 200 miles of riding, then getting back out of FL with no boni to collect, just slab to slog through in heat and humidity. The run down to US-1 wasn't too bad. But as soon as you hit I, things begin to slow down. 55, then 45, then deep into the keys it goes to 35 at night for Key Deer, then back up to 45 for the final run into Key West. So there I am in Key West, it's dark, I'm on day three of the rally. I find the Jimmy Buffet bar and take that bonus pic.

<http://tinypic.com/r/25jgxso/7> Then I find the post office and take that pic to document my corner, as well as mailing another card to myself.

<http://tinypic.com/r/10ru9vn/7> Then I start searching for the Southern most point marker. I know it's at the end of Hwy 1, but it's not quite that simple, as Hwy 1 continues on to the East... but the marker is several blocks to the West of the end of Hwy 1. It probably would have been simple to find in the day time, but at night the basics of Gulf to the East and Atlantic to the West were lost to me. Eventually I asked directions and found the marker, along with some drunken Ukrainian tourists. <http://tinypic.com/r/210m22w/7>

The Key West boni collected, I took a moment to assess my situation. Lets see, I'm 800 miles deep into FL, there are no bonus locations left to collect in this state, it's near the end of day three of the rally. I need to be in Sidney, NE in.... Oh crap. it's the end of day *four* of the rally. I got up West of Tallahassee, FL and now I'm in Key West. I need to skip the boni in SC and TN and head directly for Sidney, NE if I'm going to make it to the CheckPoint by Noon on

8/31. I have to cover 2165 miles and I have about 36 hours to do it in. I may have enough time to catch a hotel at the end of the following day, but I don't think so.

I saddle up and head North. Creeping out of Key West I finally hit the FL Turnpike. \$20 or so later, I exit the top of the turnpike and continue up I-75, eventually escaping FL and making a beeline for NE. I ride past boni in some cases. I am pretty sure I was within visual distance of the Waffle House Museum at one point. I have no time for anything but gas and what ever sustenance is available at the gas stations before heading back out. Eventually I enter Nebraska. It's a loooong state and the CP is on the other end. Finally I make it to the Sidney exit. The voices in my head have stopped talking to me. They are frightened. The wind is singing a song that has bad undertones and nothing makes sense. I rant about the I-76/I-80 split that confuses me because it causes me to turn *away* from West to stay on I-80. Or so it appeared at the time. I have been on the bike for over 54 hours when I hit the Sidney exit at 11:15 am. The CP closes at Noon.

There is a bonus at the original Cabella's store in town. Just take a pic of the rutting elk in front of the original store. I quickly find the store and take a picture of the huge rutting elk statue. And then notice that there is a second, smaller statue around the side of the building. I take that picture too, then go find a Cabella's employee and ask where the "original" store is considered to be. This verifies that the smaller statue is the correct one.
<http://tinypic.com/r/2d1lahx/7> I roll into the CP at 11:30 and jump off the bike to head in to scoring. I am the only bike there. I have seen several riders heading back East on 80 while I was still riding in. My friend, DPK passed me over an hour before I made it to Sidney.

I go in and the RM gives me the scoring sheet and explains what I need to do. I hand him my camera card and begin blanking out the boni I didn't get on my leg one plan. There are only 8 of the 40 boni I told him I was after that I didn't get. Most on the return leg from FL. Scoring complete, I attempt to get a room

at the CP hotel. No rooms available. Off I go to the next hotel, nada. The Motel 6 has a room and I get 4 hours sleep before heading back out for leg two of the rally.

I didn't make it very far before hitting the wall again. In Kearney, NE, I got another room at the Motel 6 there. This was only about 10:30 pm, but I was D-O-N-E. Up again after 5 hours, I needed to make some time. At this point in my rally, I had realized that aside from Interstate signs and Motels, no other boni were on my list. My remaining goal was to get the other two corners of the four corner ride and make it back to the finish. This day, 9/1 took me from mid-Nebraska to Woodstock, Ontario. A much better day's ride than the prior day.

Madawaska bound, I was up before dawn on 9/2 and heading NE into the depths of Canada in an attempt to save some time over the US wandering route North. This may not have saved me time, but it sure looked like the way to go on the map. This day took me the rest of the way to Madawaska, ME. I crossed the border about midnight, local time. After a friendly inspection by the trio of ladies at the customs station, and some motel advice, off I went to find a room. Still on rally time, I was tempted to get my post office pic in the dark and head back into Canada and back South. The rain, cold and darkness, along with the many red eyed devils in the woods swayed me to a motel room at Martin's in Madawaska instead. A quick, painless check in, a free cert for arriving at the most NorthEastern city in the lower 48, directions to the post office, the Four Corners Park, and brekkie info and I was off for a shower and some sleep.

Just after dawn local time I was back on the bike. A quick stop at the Four Corners Park for a pic, <http://tinypic.com/r/alsx3b/7> Then off to the post office to mail myself a letter and take a quick pic for rally points. <http://tinypic.com/r/1z2pxzn/7>

Now for the slog back SW through the wonderful Province of Quebec. If you haven't been to Quebec, allow me to elaborate. You know how *everywhere* in Canada they have dual language signs? Even on condiments. This is by law, all done for the Quebec'ers where French

is the dominant language. However, in Quebec, everything is in French. *Only* French. They all speak English. It's taught in the schools. They don't wish to speak it to you though. And sometimes they get a bit of an attitude when you make them resort to speaking English. Even in the Mickey D's when all you want is a #2 with some OJ.

I should mention here that while my name is of French origin, I do not speak French. Merci, Bonjour and Oui are about it. Perhaps someday I will take the advice of the Border guard/Customs agent as I entered Quebec from Maine and learn French.

I was very happy to leave Quebec and enter the very friendly province of Ontario again. I pushed on to Michigan before getting a room in Imlay City, MI. At this point I realized that getting to Blaine, WA and back to Salt Lake City, UT was simply not going to happen on rally time. Well crap. Ok, it's about 1600 miles back to SLC, what's on the way for boni? Hmm, Hell. No, really, Hell, MI is pretty close to where I am. Easy. What else? Well Chicago is right there, I could swing in and get the Victory Gardens (at the Biograph) theater, then just wander over to the Field of Dreams house next to the ball field used in that film. All good points too. Then just drop the hammer and head for SLC.

Somewhere in here I seem to have forgotten that I was 1600 miles from SLC and there was one day and the morning of a second before the end of the rally. I'm not sure why. Maybe it was because I did planning at the end of the day instead of at the beginning? Regardless, plan made, I slept a few hours, got up and rode the plan.

Hell, MI <http://tinypic.com/r/14mxidu/7>

Victory Gardens <http://tinypic.com/r/169p3s8/7>

The house at the Field of Dreams set.
<http://tinypic.com/r/4t99o2/7>

So, there I am in the middle of 10,000 cornfields, just outside Dyersville, Iowa looking at this house with a baseball diamond next to it on a very pleasant

September evening at about 6 pm. It's absolutely gorgeous out. Warm, comfortable, quiet and very peaceful. A car pulls up and the driver asks me if I work here. I tell him no, I'm just playing tourist like he is. Despite the sign saying don't park in the driveway, we do anyway. The house is for sale and no one appears to be home.

We chat briefly and he asks where I'm headed. After I tell him, his response is, "well, I won't keep you then." Hmm, I change pages on Jane and look at the distance remaining to SLC... Aww, crap. 1200 miles to ride in... 16 hours. That's gonna be tight. And I'm no where near a major Interstate yet. That's an average of 75 mph on roads that have a 65 mph limit for a while before hitting I-80 which has a 75 or 70 mph limit, depending on the state, and it's a holiday weekend.

Off I go, making my way out to US-20 which runs up to 380, then South on that to I-80 where I should be able to make some time if I'm careful. Soon its dark and I'm still on 20. Opps, disco party lights. A quick glance at the speedo shows that while I've had the deer goggles on HIGH, I should have spared some time for a gauge check too. 80 in a 65. A friendly chat later, and after "press hard, three copies", I am back on the road, still not on a major Interstate. Now it looks even worse for the time Vs miles graph.

By the time I get to I-80, I need to average 90 mph to make the finish on time. On a holiday weekend. This is NOT going to happen. I ride on, knowing at this point that I am a DNF. Well, if you don't push it now and then, you're not riding hard enough.

Gratuitous Sunset pic - <http://tinypic.com/r/2hqfqzo/7>

Around midnight I hit the wall. I start looking for a place to get a room. Nothing. Every motel is fully booked due to the holiday or a local event. I experience a micro sleep event and immediately pull over to the shoulder, pull off the road as far as I can and lay down in the grass for 20-30 minutes of sleep, ATGATT style. Back on the road I come upon a rest area and pull off for another 2 hours of sleep on a picnic table and later inside the heated welcome center when

the cold wakes me. Still tired, I hit the road again and continue to look for a hotel. Eventually, at about 7 am local time, I find a La Quinta w/o a "no vacancy" sign. I pull up and stagger in to the desk.

Me: "I need a single, non-smoking room"

Desk Clerk: "We only have one room."

Me: "I don't care"

DC: "It's a Family Suite"

Me: "I don't care"

DC: "It's \$156 Plus Tax"

Me: "I don't care"

DC: "Check out is 11 am"

Me: "Fine, I'll be gone by then. Just give me the room."

Finally she gets it and starts the paperwork. After having some trouble registering me to check in and depart the same day, which the computer didn't like, she logs me in for a late check out, allowing me to stay until 1pm. I don't bother to tell her I'll be long gone by then.

Once in the room I call the RM. "I'm a DNF. I'm somewhere in the middle of Nebraska, I really don't know exactly where. No, I won't make it back for the banquet. Yes, I will make it back for the bar. A quick shower and fang brushing and sleep comes immediately. Four hours later I am up and gearing up in my stinky, stanky, nasty gear for one more ride to the Rally Motel in SLC. It's still a long ride from North Platte, NE where I turned out to be, to the bar in SLC.

It was about 11 am rally time when I hit the road again. I rarely broke 80 mph, often running at the speed limit of 75. 9 hours later I arrived in SLC and parked the bike outside the Holiday Inn Express. I pull the tank bag off, grab my saddle bag liner and

helmet and shuffle on in to the desk. While trying to check in to a room they say I already checked in to earlier, (my room mate checked in under my name, (better discount)), someone hugs me from behind. I have no idea who it is... until they cop a feel. THEN I knew it was Reno John. No one else would go the extra mile to welcome a fellow rider back to the hotel like that except RJ.

After RJ determines that I WILL go to the bar before going up to the room, he returns to the bar. I manage to get a room key and the room number, (which promptly departed my brain), and I drag my gear over to the hotel bar and dump it in a pile, then do my best to saunter into the bar area where the Rally Master and several riders are drinking and having a great time sharing stories from the rally. As I approach, RJ starts up the chant, ERIC, ERIC, ERIC... and all the riders join in. That was pretty damn good to hear after ten long days on the road alone. Thanks John.

I ask Steve to verify my odo for a 10/10ths cert, knowing that I have waaay more miles than necessary for the cert, even with the clock stopped that morning in NE. Steve makes sure I get a drink from the bar first, before we head out to the bike. Two fingers of Sauza Commemorativo, neat, is poured by our well tipped bar tender, Kevin. The odo verified, we return to the bar to share stories and wind down from a fantastic rally. Somehow I break away to drag my crap to the room where I find my room mate, the rally winner, lounging on one of the beds. He and his visiting friend Ted, who came to see him finish, come back down to the bar for more fun. My drink order is repeated several times before I finally head for the room around 1 am.

About 6 hours later I'm back up and after a breakfast at the hotel restaurant, it's ATGATT for another 800 mile ride home. Thank god I bought a Tee shirt in Hell, the rest of my gear stinks to high heaven. Ken & I plan to take it easy on the way home, but Ken is worried about his chain on the Wee. He fiddles with the tension at a gas stop, but it makes the vibration worse and he pulls over shortly after. He wants to try and find a chain, possibly limp back to SLC to wait for a bike shop to open on Tuesday. Urged on, and with a dentist appointment waiting for me on the following

day, I continue on home alone, getting in just after dark with out any stress or events. It feels good to be home and know I don't have to ride anywhere the next day.

Later I learn that for the purposes of the rally I have covered 11,008 corrected miles, more than any other 10 n' 10 rider during the rally. Over the 14 days I was gone from home I rode slightly over 12,500 miles. The front PR2 is still viable, the rear Car Tire looks no worse for wear than it did at the start. One finger on my left hand has some numbness, (still does a week later), spots on my feet are numb as well. I've lost some grip strength in my left hand too. It's been quite an experience. The only thing left is to pay the Visa bill for it.

Thanks for reading along, hope you enjoyed it.

<http://tinypic.com/r/soxp8z/7>

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Eric Vaillancourt