

## 2003 Iron Butt Rally – One Riders Perspective

### Leg 2 Primm, NV to Lake City , FL

August 12<sup>th</sup> I arrived in Primm about 12:30 pm to find some had arrived at 5 am and were still unable to get into their rooms as the hotel/casino had been booked the night before. The management was doing their best to clean the rooms and get us into them as who wants sweaty riders sitting around in front of a hotel.

By about 1:30 I was ensconced in my room with the ac blasting, not my usual modus operandi but hey it was 109 outside! I had until 5 pm before the check-point would officially open for scoring so I headed down to the buffet to see if I could manage to eat in a restaurant alone for the first time ever.

I looked around there were quite a few other riders most were head over plate shoveling food in, so I figured I would take my chances eat as fast as I could and run back to the room. \$6.95 for the buffet, which would mean they would definitely make money off me as I could not eat that much food in this heat.

I put the pedal to the medal and managed two rounds, of course nothing was touching on the plates can't stand that. I headed for protein and veggies as I knew these were staples I would not likely see again the rest of the trip. I treated myself to a little fat too in the form of vanilla pudding, though I would have preferred ice cream I didn't see any.

So this would be one of my first life changing moments I had eaten in a restaurant alone. I am not sure I can or ever will do it again but who knows I may one day be that desperate again.

During this ride I will find myself experiencing some truly significant and some small life changing moments or realizations about myself. I think everyone who does this kind of endeavor, whether on motorcycles or other extreme sport, experiences themselves in different ways and learns perhaps more about who they are then they may desire to know.

I managed to sleep from about 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm before heading up to the scoring table. I was nervous as a newbie I kept double checking all my paperwork. The scoring process is quite strict. It begins when you come to the scoring table after getting your time-in check from the rally master. You are placed in front of a scorer. The scorer asks you if you have checked in with the rally master, if you have brought everything with you that you wish to claim as a bonus, and finally if you are ready to be scored. Saying yes to all these items means you can not leave the scoring table, so if you left something out or didn't fill something in correctly it is too late to back out. Thereby I was really nervous.

I sat in front of a man named Dave, who I proceeded to call sir as we had been drilled by Michael K (president of the IBA) to call out "yes sir" "no sir" when addressing him. Poor Dave told me time and time again to not call him sir but I was so scared I couldn't help it. Dave was so kind and patient he went over everything with me, tallying my score and

double checking it all, before asking me if I agreed and if I had any protests. I could not imagine protesting I was so new at this, I just nodded and signed the line showing I accepted my score. On my way out they handed me a ticket to into the buffet for free, oh well, I turned around and handed it to one of the volunteers as thanks for helping out.

At 5:30 pm I was back in the room trying to sleep. I did manage to nod off one more time and was back up to the scoring area at 10:30 pm looking like I rolled out of bed. Another life changing moment, all these riders and volunteers would see me at my worst in my glasses. Half the men I have dated have never seen me in my glasses, but there is nothing you can do about glasses, hairy legs and pits, and a uni-brow on this ride so you get over it all really fast.

This would be the worst part of the ride for me, I am not an evening person and this checkpoint closed at 11 pm. At 11 pm they called us into a room for a quick riders meeting and to give us our bonus packages, or so we thought.

We were asked to be seated and it was then we were presented with an option “red pill” or “blue pill.” The blue pill meant a typical IBR ride, checkpoint to checkpoint with bonuses in between. The red pill would be completely different from one bonus to the next you may or may not know exactly where you needed to be, and some depending on the bonuses they chose would meet the rest of us in Lake City, FL and others not until we reached Buxton, ME and still others may not meet up with us until Missoula. It was the parting of sea, the true-grit versus the wannabe’s. Michael felt that the winner would not choose the red pill, but would chose the blue (man was he wrong).

I heard 33 chose red and the rest chose blue. I chose blue.

We were not dismissed until almost 1 am, which meant I would get only one more hour of sleep in before looking at my route and going. At 2:30 am August 13<sup>th</sup> I planned my route and hit the road. I would head over the Hoover Dam to I-40 and cut straight across the US toward Amarillo where I would reevaluate what I wanted to do in what I hoped would be a cooler clime.

My ride out of Primm landed me back in Las Vegas, which I had never seen at night. Though I am just awed in daylight by the hugeness of it all, at night it was overwhelming. The steaming den of inequity emerges in full regalia in the dark before the dawn. The money I know people are throwing away in search of instant gratification burns me threw and threw as I think of all the children starving in the world right now, or the men and women who are unemployed because our economy is so bad. I suppose my opinion will never change, but then again what I am doing right now could be frowned upon in the same manner as an utter and complete waste of money, damaging the environment, and on and on. Goodness the thoughts one has on these rides, or maybe it’s just me.

As I ride over the Hoover Dam my heart stops for just a second. I have not seen it since I was a little girl and in the dark with the spotlights shinning on it I cannot conceive of constructing something so huge. The roads before and after are really tight turns and not

much room, so I take it easy. That and the security cameras everywhere forewarn me goofing off is a bad thing. There are even security checkpoints here all too much of a reminder that 9/11 did not happen that long ago.

Just the other side of the dam I catch up with Marsha on her BMW and we trade riding places for a bit before she cuts off alone. I figured she was going after a bonus I had not considered..

As I head toward Texas I run through the nothingness of Arizona with just teasing views of the Grand Canyon. I notice horses are wondering freely here and consider the possibility that they could be mustangs but am not sure. As I head into New Mexico the heat has not subsided and I am beginning to feel its drain.

At a gas station something in me calls out to check the oil in the bike, something I never do on my M750 as she has never burned oil. I am shocked to find the window empty and immediately call Ducati Seattle. Randy the mechanic and I agree car oil it will have to be for now and to get my butt to Tallahassee; there goes any chance of bonuses on this run. The bike eats 2 qts of car oil. When I turn her on there is an error message in the reader so I call again and tell Randy if I need to stop I will but otherwise I am going to run until the bike drops, he says ok. We would decide later that the heat on the first two days compounded with the highway miles had burned off the oil but the bike was a champ and didn't hesitate one moment.

I make it all the way to Amarillo before stopping for the night, paying much to much for a hotel but they were having some sort of gathering and I could not find a room. Ah what you will pay for ac and a bed when you have ridden all day.

I call my buddy and ask him to call some of his buddies to find out if I should stay on I-40 or start south through Dallas. Without a cb, laptop or gps I have no idea where the construction or bad weather is. He confirms my worst fears get off I-40 and head south for Dallas.

August 14<sup>th</sup> I wake and get ready to go. It is now I realize it is not just hot but humid. I will also realize that all the years of riding in Seattle's rain putting on wet gloves and boots day after day would not prepare me for the feel of a sweat drenched helmet. When I arrived at the hotel last night I put my helmet over the ac unit in hopes it would dry by morning, as I had ridden hours in upwards of 90+ degrees the liner was soaked with sweat, no such luck. The feel of a sweat soaked helmet this early in the morning would make any one nauseas.

Ignoring nausea I start out of Amarillo heading south on 287. This is not a major freeway so I have to make my way through small towns before reaching Dallas right at rush hour! I look closely at the map and figure I will skirt around the city. It is here that I learn the Dallas area has even worse signage then Seattle when I try to find 635 East and can't. Just seconds before attempting to get onto 635 West, figuring I could turn around and come back I decide to stay where I was just a little longer, low and behold a small sign

for 635 East directly into the snarl of traffic and construction. 635 East will run into 20 East which I will stay on until Jackson, MS, at which point I head southeast on 49.

As I pass through Texas on my way to Louisiana the scenery changes and I am surprised that Texas is not quite as bad as I remember, or maybe I am just getting delirious. Though I do not wish to add on too many extra miles to this leg going after bonuses there is one worth quite a few points that I will definitely take advantage of tonight, a rest bonus. Michael K will add in rest bonuses throughout the ride and make the points earned high enough to entice even some really hardcore riders into resting the allocated time which will range from 1 to 5 hours.

It is in Louisiana that I start to run into other bikers on their way to the Lake City checkpoint. Not participants but spectators. At one gas stop I was actually not sure if I had crossed a time zone so struck up a conversation with a man gassing up his truck. Turns out he and his wife ride, so we struck up quite the conversation. Another gentleman saw us talking and it turned out he was on the big Goldwing parked near the gas station and was on his way to help out at the checkpoint. All three of us got to talking, and both warned me extensively about deer on 49 and to be careful. I wanted to continue talking to them but I really needed to get going so I handed them my card and off I went.

The ride down 49 was so so as the afternoon traffic picked up and humidity started to get to me. I trudged on. That Bayou heat was really coming in, the air was so thick you could feel it in your lungs, and taste the sweet smells. Still unsure as to where the time zones changed and not wanting to miss out on my rest bonus points I stopped for the night in Hattiesburg, LA.

By now I am so low on food supplies I am eating out of convenience stores for dinner, lets just say cold half frozen bean burritos are not my normal choice of food stuffs but I figured they had enough preservatives that they wouldn't make me sick.

After checking in I look at the map to figure out when I would loose that last hour crossing over my last time zone and checking to see if there might be a bonus or two I could nab before getting to Florida Motorsports for my halfway maintenance. Sure enough the highest point in Florida beckons. Though without a gps I may have a hard time as the directions are at best cryptic, go .2 miles down this road, turn onto an unmarked road, go .8 miles, etc I figured if I left early enough I would have plenty of time to get there and still get to the maintenance before I headed out to Lake City.

August 15<sup>th</sup> once again I put on my damp helmet and my now sticky gear, nothing is drying in this humidity. I hit the road toward the highest point in Florida, which actually requires I go back up into Alabama and then down again into Florida. Because the bonuses are not meant to be easy some have time constraints like this one, the picture of the bonus must be taken in daylight, so though I arrive at Florala, AL in plenty of time I am too early. This actually works out well as I have a cell phone signal and can make calls to my family to let them know how I am doing. I even have time to talk to some of

the locals as they go into the little store I am parked in front of to get coffee. As usual they are all surprised to find a small female out alone riding, but even more surprised when I explain what I am doing in the most laypeople terms I can. The good news is they all know exactly where the highest point in FL is and one guy even says he'll take me unfortunately it is not quite light so I explain I must wait a little before heading out. He does not take offense and simply says I will have no trouble finding it, famous last words.

I start out down the road just as the sun starts to dawn. My odometer is off so the first time I pass my turn onto the unmarked road and go back to the crossroads to start again, trying to calculate about where I should turn. The second time is the charm and just down the road there is a huge sign. But when I pull the bonus list out it specifically says granite sign and the sign I am face to face with is metal, uh oh.

The park behind the sign looks terrible like a tornado touched down here all the trees are destroyed and there is mud and sand everywhere. I gaze off through the haze trying to see a granite marker when I notice a grouping of benches about a 100 feet off and figure oh well if it is anywhere that would make the most sense. I park the bike grab camera and flag (the flag must appear in this photo) and tip toe through the debris.

Sure enough there is a granite marker in the cluster of benches. I place my flag down and snap two pictures, one to turn in one to take home, and one more of the metal sign just in case someone doubts it was daylight.

Back down the road, it was a great back road ride out to Florala and an even better one back. That is the fun part about most bonuses you get to meet great people and take off the beaten path roads. I make it to Tallahassee and Florida Motorsports much earlier than expected but Kent the manager immediately welcomes me as does the entire staff. They quickly clean off a bench as they know time is of the essence and get to work on the bike. The package of supplies I sent earlier in the month is a welcome sight though I don't need the clothes I do need the foodstuffs. While they are working on the bike I chat with their sales staff and parts guy as well as some of the customers.

It is here that I will find out my high profile status when a man on a BMW rides in just because he knew I would be here for my maintenance check. I hear from others in Florida that my website had moved up to the number two position right below the IBA website when you searched in Google for information on the IBR. Turns out I developed quite the following on this trip.

Kent and his team did an outstanding job, finishing the bike's maintenance in about an hour and a half. They all wished me well and off I went to see if I could make Jacksonville for one more bonus before crashing for the night in Lake City.

There were storm clouds everywhere around me but I wasn't sure if I would hit them or not. Well I did just about 20 miles outside Jacksonville the rain started to pour down I started to wonder if the points were worth it, so I gave myself until the next exit to decide and lucky me the clouds cleared and off I went.

I grabbed my bonus gas receipt in Jacksonville and looked at the map to see if there was any way I could avoid riding back through that storm, nope. So I geared back up even in all this humidity and headed out back toward Lake City. The storms in FL blow in and out so fast the area I hit the storm in was dry but further west is where the storm was now situated right over Lake City oh what fun.

I hit my last fill up and grabbed a little junk from the convenience store. At this point I have stopped taking my helmet off in public as I look too scary. So when I check in the woman even says do you want to take off your helmet – nope you don't want to see what I look like.

After a shower and change, I try hand washing some clothes before resting, as the checkpoint will not officially open until 5 am tomorrow. I have developed huge blisters on my right hand that are hurting, as the Throttle Meister is not working. At Florida Motorsports I was told it was not the correct one for my handlebars and would never work. At least that explains why I have never been able to use it I thought it was just me.

There are others already here and more will come in over the night and into the morning. Now for a rest before hitting the check-in tomorrow to find out how far behind I have fallen because I did not keep up with my bonus points on this run, and to get the package for our next leg.

I have a few minutes to pause from my hectic thoughts to contemplate the number of hours I am on the road and the weird thoughts that come into my head while I am out there like: where is everyone going at 2:30 in the morning including me, do the truckers talk to each other on their cbs about the crazy girl on the motorcycle, where are the other riders and why am I all alone, this insanity explains why I can't find a boyfriend who would want to date a girl who smells like I do right now and with hairy pits to boot, I really could use some ice cream, am I bored or just hungry who cares, and on and on.