



2013 Team Strange Team Lyle Rally

So this year marks the third annual running of the Team Lyle Minnesota rally. (I didn't do a ride report last year on this one – it rained a lot and was pretty miserable.)

The Team Lyle rally is an 8 hour scavenger hunt rally where all the proceeds go to benefit Eddie's Road – a great cause to help abused kids, and named for Team Strange founder, the late Eddie James. Lyle was the name of the Teddy Bear that used to ride around on Eddie's motorcycles, and is also featured in the Team Strange logo.

This year's rally had a lot of changes. Most notably though, we had a new rallymaster – Jim Weatherhead. I knew Jim would do a great job, because he's a great rally thinker. Unlike most of us, Jim never uses a GPS or laptop to assist in routing. He can look at a bonus list and a map, and pretty much always put together a very competitive route, often placing among the top riders. That's a very impressive skill, and I expected it would transfer well to the other side of the equation – planning a rally.

All this said, I wasn't planning on riding in this, or any other rallies this year. I skipped the MN1000 this year due to some personal reasons, and we had planned to be at the cabin the weekend of Team Lyle. However, our son Max had a cold, and the weather at the cabin was only supposed to be in the mid 60's, so we decided to stay home. I contacted Jim to see if they needed any volunteer help, and he said that if I wanted, I could still ride! Well, in that case, I was going to ride!

The rally ran out of Leonardo's Basement in St. Paul, which is a workshop for kids off Lexington and Pierce Butler Route. It was great setup, centrally located and plenty of space for bikes and riders, which was good, because there were something like 45 riders signed up this year.

There was a point bonus for running the rally "unplugged," in other words, with no GPS or laptop to help with route planning. Since I'd barely even intended on running the rally at all, and since I'd been dealing with some issues with my GPS interfacing with my new laptop, I chose to run unplugged, as did a majority of the riders.

After talking to a lot of people I don't get to see often enough anymore, and a short rider meeting, we were

free to plan. Jim had posted on the door a map of all the locations, but there was a lot more to it. There were all kinds of combo bonuses of different types and point values. It really was one of the better thought out bonus lists I've ever seen.

There were big points for some combo bonuses around the metro area and I thought the winning route would be something along those lines, along with a series of bonuses for visiting rally sponsors and buying an item. But of course I didn't choose that route.

I don't get out on two wheels as much as I'd like, what with having a son now and all, so given the chance to spend all day on the bike, I wanted to ride somewhere. I can tool around the metro area pretty much anytime. Jim had the bonuses split into regions – NE, NW, SE, SW and Metro. You didn't have to stay in one region – it was just for organizational purposes. I decided that I really wanted to ride in SE Minnesota/SW Wisconsin. There are a lot of nice roads that way, and I don't get down there too often, so I plotted my route using only SE and Metro bonuses. Not using a laptop for routing, I planned what I knew would be a very aggressive ride for an 8 hour rally, but with lots of places to drop off if need be.

When the clock struck 9, I was one of the first bikes out of the lot. I guess since I knew where I wanted to go, there was no sense in screwing around planning any more. My day started at the State Capitol in St. Paul. The bonus was to answer four separate questions about four different statues or monuments on the Capitol Mall. It was just myself and another rider there, but it was a fairly easy bonus for a lot of points, especially because there's literally no traffic around the capitol at 9 am on a Saturday.

As I mentioned before, there were bonuses for making a purchase at some of the rally sponsors. The nearest one was Bob's Cycle Supply. I knew right where Bob's was, as it's across the street from my dad's old office, and I've purchased many things there as well. I ran in and bought a lanyard I didn't need. The teenage girl behind the counter said "just stopping in for a lanyard?" I explained it was a scavenger hunt and thank you very much and I was on my way.

So a big part of rallies is the luck of not encountering the unexpected. This makes things much smoother and saves time. Of course the unexpected stories are the most fun to talk about later. I had my first unexpected incident leaving Bob's. I headed east on highway 36 intending to go north of Stillwater and drop down to Bayport for my next stop. Problem was, 36 didn't exist that day. It was gone – completely torn out just east of 61. So I had to turn around and head back downtown to take 94 east. I probably should have done that anyway, but still, it was a waste of time, and on an 8 hour rally, time is very important.

I picked up the bonus in Bayport (a plaque), seeing Travis and Carissa Waite pull in as I was leaving, and headed east into Wisconsin. My next stop was Beldenville, WI, where there was a set of old Burma-Shave signs on a street by a repair shop. I missed the turn and got some strange looks from some people on the deck of a bar as I was double checking the bonus sheet. When I got to the bonus, I saw Rick Corwine pulling away on his FJR.

The signs read, in order:

Car in Ditch.

Man in Tree.

The Moon was Full.

So was he.

Burma-Shave.

I laughed out loud, and headed back to the main highway.

My next stop was Pepin, WI, and the birthplace of Laura Ingalls Wilder. Sites related to Laura have been a mainstay on Team Strange rallies since the beginning, as Eddie James was a big fan of her books, but I'd never been to this particular site. As I said before however, the unexpected things tend to throw a wrench into things.

I was riding down the Wisconsin side of Mississippi River – a great ride, but I ran into two big time wasters. In Maiden Rock, there was major road construction and the road was one lane. There was a lot of weekend traffic and I probably sat for 15 minutes waiting as traffic alternated in each direction with a temporary stoplight. Ugh. Nothing like sitting in the summer heat on an air-cooled motorcycle not moving.

Shortly thereafter, I got to Stockholm, WI where there was some huge art fair that day. Another bout of sitting and barely moving while police were directing traffic for art fair patrons who had parked literally a mile or more in each direction of the town. More Ugh.

Finally I made it to Pepin and rode north out of town to the monument on a great twisty road. I was the only one there, but on the way out, I was stuck behind a couple on Harleys going really slow, and with a guy in a Mustang GT riding my ass behind me – as if it was me holding things up. Finally I was able to pass and get back out to the main road.

I headed back south to my next bonus, with plans to stop for gas in Alma, when I passed two motorcycles coming the other way. I'd seen lots of bikes that day – mostly cruisers and some large group rides, but in this case, it was a VFR and an ST1300 who waved to me. I knew them! It was my old rally and trip roommate Paul Sundet and his wife Michelle out for a weekend trip. I sent him an email when I got home, and sure enough, he recognized me as well. What are the odds of that?

I got gas and something to eat quickly in Alma, and headed to my most important bonus, a monument in Arcadia, WI. The reason this was the most important bonus, is that it could be claimed twice. In an interesting twist, there were four bonuses (11, 22, 33, and 44) that could be claimed twice, if you were paying attention. Arcadia was number 33, so I had to get that one.

In addition, there was a bonus for visiting a museum or historical society and getting a receipt that proved

it – this could be done anywhere. (there was also one for an antique store that I didn't get but should have.) As I made the turn to Arcadia, there were a ton of signs that said ELMER'S TOY AND CAR MUSEUM. I figured I should check this out.

I turned off the main road to go to ELMER'S and talk about a weird place. I pulled in and the guy came up and started going on and on about the place. Apparently there were all these barns and sheds and outbuildings full of cars and toys and toy cars and God knows what – like House on the Rock kind of stuff. I paid him eight dollars, and asked about a receipt. Oh, they don't have receipts, but he gave me a brochure. Crap. I walked into one of the buildings to be polite and answered a couple questions about my bike (So, is that German? No – it's a Buell – it was built here in Wisconsin). I realized that I was not going to get any points here, so I kind of slinked out and rode away. I need to get back to ELMER'S though because it looks like there's a lot of really cool stuff there that I might want to see. Still, it was a poor use of rally time.

I realized with all my delays I was going to have to drop some things, but I wasn't quite sure what yet. I rode to Arcadia on one of the best motorcycle roads I've ever been on and got the bonus there, and back out the same way. Lots of fun.

My original plan had me dropping further south, almost to or even into Iowa, but I knew that wasn't going to happen.

My next planned bonus was in Stockton, MN, just outside of Winona. While riding through Winona, I passed by the Winona County Historical Society – a nice modern building downtown. A Ha! I bet they could get me a receipt. I walked in all sweaty in full gear and the lady at the counter looked at me like I was from outer space. I said I'd like to buy a ticket to the museum, but I needed a receipt. I explained that I was on a scavenger hunt and that I needed to prove I'd been to a museum. She was very nice, and I paid the five dollars and got my credit card receipt that said both MUSEUM and HISTORICAL, so I knew it would get me my points. I thanked her and left, while another couple coming in also looked at me like I was some freak. Oh well.

Next stop was Stockton where there was a sign on a picnic shelter. The bonus was to write down the first name of the person on the sign. The name of course was...Lyle.

At this point, I knew time was getting tight. I thought I might be able to make Dodge Center and then head back, but without a GPS to give me an ETA, I had to do the calculations in my head. I knew Rochester was 75 miles from St. Paul so I'd make my decision then.

By the time I got to Rochester and dealt with stoplights, traffic and construction, I knew I had to head straight back to St. Paul. In hindsight, I should have gone back to Winona and rode up 61 and picked up the bonus in Vasa rather than hoping for Dodge Center, which would have been a nicer ride. Instead, I ended up just taking 52 up through Cannon Falls where I made another gas stop, and made it back to St. Paul around 4:45 – 15 minutes before the clock stopped.

I ended up with 334 miles, which was almost spot on what I'd expected to ride (based on a 1000 mile in 24 hour average if I'd have been running a 24 hour rally), but only 3574 points, which wasn't very efficient. I ended in 14th place out of 40 bikes that started. I've generally had the goal in my last few rallies to be in the top half, and I did that, but I'd like to do better.

Still, I had a lot of fun riding some great roads, having dinner that night with a bunch of great people at Gabe's by the Park, and the rally and auction raised \$7500 for Eddie's Road, which is what really matters. I can't say enough about what a great job Jim did on planning this rally – it truly was one of the best rallies I've ridden in terms of making people really think and have fun.