

2004 GLMC Bonzai Rally

The Beginning

Well, it's been nine months since I broke my ankle in my last rally of 2003, the GLMC Buffalo Run, so I guess it's time to get back in the rally spirit! Bring on the GLMC Bonzai Rally - an annual Memorial Day weekend tradition in Milbank, SD! The usual Team Newbie crew set of Ron and Carrie Hanson, Paul Sundet and myself set out for our final rally under the Newbie banner (since this years MN 1000 marks the one year anniversary of our group's rally debut).

It was pouring and miserable when the three of us left Brooklyn Park (Paul was meeting us in SD), but it quickly cleared up (and warmed up) as we got west of the cities, picking up some GLMC Grand Tour bonuses along the way in Odessa and Milan, MN. Unfortunately, I was unable to talk on the CB for some reason. I could hear everyone, but they couldn't hear me. How can I be expected to keep quiet! We pulled into the familiar Super 8 in Milbank and a handful of riders were already there, including Paul. We checked in, and were out talking to Critter in the parking lot. Ron had brought another fuel cell (doesn't everyone really need two fuel cells?) to be used for the "Metallic Waste" entry in the MN 1000 (three guys all riding on a sidecar rig - yikes!) so the five of us brought that out to Bob 498's farm. It was there I tried to solder a wire on my headset, but no such luck - I was destined to be silent for the weekend.

We went back and had dinner at the City Limits Steakhouse, where we snagged our same table from the Buffalo Run, and the food was excellent. After that it was off to bed for an early start the next day.

The Ride

We got up Sunday morning, and it was raining and miserable - great rally weather. I think I've ridden more miles and hours in the rain this year than in dry weather, mainly because of the Border to Border. We had to do an odometer check before check in, and at that point, Critter broke off his CB antenna on the tent. Oh well, another silent guy around! Lunatic and Bob passed out the rally packs, and we started marking down waypoints.

I decided at this point that I was going to ride this one alone, abandoning the team for a day. There were a couple of reasons for this. In the 2003 Buffalo Run, the three of us ran the same route, but they use mileage (lower is better as it proves efficiency) for the tiebreaker (unlike Team Strange events where points are the only thing that counts - a tie is a tie there). This resulted in me getting a slightly higher score than Carrie due to odometer error, rather than a real score difference. I didn't want that to happen again, and even if it did, it seemed fairer to let Paul benefit, since it was his first rally. I chose my route, and off I went in the rain. As I pulled out of the parking lot, I got a surprise. There was Lunatic, passing out a supplemental bonus sheet. There's a reason they call them rallybastards!

Go west young man someone once said, and so I did. First stop was the Blue Cloud Abbey, just west of Milbank. That was a quick one, followed by Webster, SD, home of amateur and pro wrestler Brock



Lesnar, as well as the bonus at the Museum of Science, Wildlife and Industry. In case you were wondering, the fee to get in is "donations accepted." I continued west to Bristol, where the store was closed that we were supposed to get potato chips at. I took a photo of the store, and went across the street and bought some chips and got a receipt. I also bought a six-pack of pop for the pop bonus, thinking I would then not have to worry about it at the end. I was mistaken, but more on that later... Included in the transaction was a nice conversation with an elderly man at the store, who was interested in the rider in the crazy gear, and gave me a postcard, and even autographed it for some strange reason...

I turned north, where I thought there would be less rain, but the rain only got worse. Ugh. I stopped at the Vinegar Museum in Roslyn, a regular stop on these rallies, as well as the ballpark in Eden, SD "Home of the Muskrats!" While in Eden I picked up a photo for a Grand Tour bonus at the post office. From there I went north to pick up two more SD stops before crossing into ND. The

first was Kidder, SD - a barely existing town with gravel streets, a few houses and an old bank vault. Since I broke my ankle on gravel last year, I knew I had to get over my skittishness, so this was a good start. The next bonus was even better for that. The bonus sheet said "visit the ghost town of Newark, SD..." It shows up on the official state maps, but not on any other maps, or on the GPS. I spent about 20 minutes riding around trying to find it, when finally I found the right gravel road, and sure enough, a couple miles in, there was the sign for Newark Rd., and not much else. I left quickly, as I'd had enough gravel.

After that it was on to Lisbon, ND, still the hometown of shoot lucy lead singer Dave Berntson, and then a cut back east to pick up I-29 and the casino bonus at Dakota Magic. Throw in bad road construction and 20 minutes of wasted time at a train crossing for good measure in Gwinner and Wyndmere respectively. The rain stopped around this point, but the wind got really bad. I can deal with rain while riding, but I HATE WIND. My bike is top heavy and has a tall windshield, so it's like a sailboat out there. Fortunately, I only needed to be on I-29 for about 15 miles. I got off at the exit to go to Victor and make a return visit to the Victor Supper Club, another regular bonus stop for the GLMC, and then crossed back into MN near Rosholt, SD, one of those towns Lisa and her college friends used to visit to sneak into the bar underage in. Next stop was on the supplemental sheet (good thing I looked) and it was the Legion in Wheaton, MN. That was easy - our Matron of Honor had her wedding reception there, so I remembered right where it was.

After that, I rode down along Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lakes around that weird little bump that sticks out of W. Minnesota. I missed a timed bonus by 20 minutes near Brown's Valley (stupid train came back to haunt me), but I did stop to take a photo of the remains of Ike's Chicken Shack, a local institution that is no more. At this point I also realized that I'd been dragging my headset cord for about ten miles. I picked the plastic out of it and managed to make it work, but that's another piece that'll need to be replaced...oh well.

I stopped north of Ortonville to visit a gravesite bonus that involved riding down 100 yards of what was essentially a cowpath. That wasn't fun, and followed it up with another stretch of gravel near Big Stone City, SD to find a monument.

From there it was back into MN (lots of border crossings) heading out to Dawson to find out that the leader of the gnomes is named "Daws." I guess his son founded the town or something. Weird though, I know people from Dawson, and they don't look like gnomes... Back into SD for a few more stops. One was at a place called Tunerville, which I hadn't marked, and it isn't on the map, but remembered it from the sheet. I had to get a receipt (along with some puzzled looks) from the locals at the store there. Then it was on to Altimont (where I didn't get the points), Clear Lake, and Toronto, where I got to meet Chubby the cat at the gas station. Chubby was the bonus - I had to know his name to get the points and the lady insisted I just HAD to meet him.

It was heading south to Toronto that I passed my first riders since the morning. Hey - it was Ron, Carrie and Paul - what are the odds of THAT? I must have passed them on the way back up as well, because I stumbled upon another gravesite bonus on the way back, and they stopped there too when they saw me. I wouldn't tell them what the grave said though - instead making them go back into the woods themselves (aren't I mean!). After that it was on to Milbank and the end.

The End

I made it with about 15 minutes to spare - not bad. However, I thought I was really smart picking up my six-pack at the beginning. I didn't read the bonus right though - it has to be picked up within 30 minutes of the end. D'oh - there goes 150 points! I lost more points at the scorers table, and ended up with almost 1500 points and 528 miles - I wasn't close to competitive, but then again, I didn't really plan a route - I just sort of left. Surprisingly, nobody in Team Newbie came away with an award. The big dogs of Brett Donahue, Hootis and the Rev. Eddie James swept our class, and Critter, just by driving across the street and back and turning in his fuel log, picked up the efficiency award (I wonder if he knows the difference between the letter of the law, and the spirit of the law - just kidding Critter!). It was all good fun though as it always is, and the GLMC does a great job. Looks like it's time for Team Formerly Newbie (???) to regroup and make a run in the Minnesota 1000 in a few weeks. I better get that microphone fixed by then!