



2005 Minnesota 1000

Introduction:

Another year, another Team Strange Minnesota 1000! This was Team Newbie's third time riding in the rally, and we (Ron, Carrie and myself) were moving up into Expert Class. This caused a dilemma for me, because I didn't have to ride in Expert. Ron and Carrie, by way of winning their respective classes last year, were automatically moved up. Because I did not win last year (stupid odometer cable), I wasn't moved up automatically. The problem was, running a fuel cell automatically puts you in Expert, and since they were in already, they were going to run their cells, which is a big advantage. If I wanted to ride with them and keep up, I too would have to run my cell, and thus move up into the tougher division. In the end, I decided it's more fun to ride this rally with friends, than to worry about what class I'm in, and so I left the fuel cell on the bike and ran in Expert. This was going to be tough!

The night before rally, and all through the house:

This year, the Liar's banquet, the start, and the finish, were all at Betty's Bikes and Buns in NE Minneapolis (a part of town I'm all too familiar with). That made it convenient for us, not having to ride out to Montrose or anything. After we all separately got our mandatory pre-rally bonuses the week before, we headed down to Betty's about 5 pm on Friday. About half the riders were there when we arrived, as well as a lot of curious locals wondering why all these strangely equipped bikes were showing up. A lot of the usual group of distance riders were milling about, as well as a lot of new riders to the Team Strange environment (and some experienced riders on new bikes as well).

Dinner was served, and it was time for the usual rally announcements. You never know if they're going to hand out some, all, or no bonus sheets the night before. In this case, they handed out a LOT. 78 possible locations to visit, ranging from Devils Lake, ND to some places near Omaha, to some near Detroit, MI. Wow. In addition, they handed out some bonuses where the riders could leave Friday night, including ones in Texas, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming. Three people chose to leave Friday night and head for Texas and Wyoming respectively. We did NOT choose to do this, and instead headed home to plan our rally. Planning took longer than usual this year, entering all those points into the computer, and trying to decide where to go. All that planning means of course, less sleep the night before the rally and I don't think I got to bed until almost 2 am. Our tentative route was to take us down towards Niobrara, NE, then about 150

miles SE of Omaha, and then back up I-35 through Des Moines back to Minneapolis - about 1300 miles - no problem!

Gentlemen (and Ladies), start your engines!

We got up Saturday morning and headed down to Betty's, along with Bob 498 Johnson and Bill Rufenacht, who stayed with Ron and Carrie the night before. The day was already starting to get hot, and if we rode our planned route, it was only going to get hotter. They handed out the additional bonus sheet, which included some points for combining some of the previous bonuses, as well as the sleep bonus, which varied in points depending on when you took it, from 1000 to 1500 points. We altered our route slightly, based on taking the 1500 point sleep bonus, because unlike last year, we couldn't make up that many points in the three hours required for the bonus. This cut our route back to about 1100 miles, which is easily doable in 21 hours (including the 3 for the sleep bonus, in which you can't ride).

We headed out for Mankato, to look for a plaque of a Buffalo, and saw Metallic Waste leaving as we arrived. Then it was a quick trip to New Ulm to visit polka legend "Whoopie John's" grave site. After that, we continued southwest to visit the Jeffers Petroglyphs (I should go back there and see what it's all about), and Pipestone National Monument. No problem there. Along the way we picked up our "John 3:16" bonus, collected by spelling out the words. We used a John Deere sign, the "16" from highway 169, and a "3" from another sign. We crossed into South Dakota, to visit the Randy Scott memorial. If you didn't know, Randy Scott was the motorcyclist killed by former S.D. Congressman, Governor, and generally sleazy human being and politician, Bill Janklow. The memorial is at the intersection where he was killed, and it's a very somber place. It was however, the site of the funniest thing I've ever seen on any rally - it's unfortunate it had to be at such a sad place, which takes away some from the humor.

We pulled up to the intersection, to see Team Strange founder Eddie James already there. Eddie was running the rally on a Yamaha XS400, just like my first bike (good luck getting over 65 mph on the freeway without the bike falling apart). When we pulled up, he was at the monument, flailing in the wind trying to attach his rally flag to the pole with a cargo net with no luck at all. (Eddie's run the Iron Butt rally several times - hasn't he heard of duct tape?) When we walked up, he was swearing and screaming "I've been here ten mother***** minutes trying to take a picture of this flag!" He was obviously flustered, his bike was running poorly, and Ron had mercy on him and took the bonus picture for him (but not before taking some shots of the temper tantrum that preceded it). Eddie caught us on the way out to I-29, (resulting in another great photo of him hunched over his tank on the freeway, his riding suit billowing like a big balloon), after which we stopped for gas in Sioux Falls. We saw him again at a gas station down the road, fiddling with his bike, and we headed for Niobrara, NE, home of Arlene Liska.

After a short detour for construction, we arrived at the Two Rivers Saloon to get our photo taken with Arlene, who has traveled around the world by motorcycle, and has stories you wouldn't believe. To our amazement, Eddie had beat us there (does that thing have wings?), and there were already ten or so bikes waiting. The bonus was available from 6-8 pm, and we arrived at 5:50, so we had to wait ten minutes. After another ten waiting to get our photo with Arlene, and a little longer talking to riders (and cooling off from the heat)

we were on our way. It was tempting to just stay there and drink Fat Tire all night, but we resisted and hit the road.

Into the night:

Our next bonus was a long way off, in Climax, IA (don't look for it on a map...). We had a quick gas stop and we rode on through Omaha into the night. I can't believe how many casinos there are in the Omaha area. It looks like a mini-Vegas at night! We headed into Iowa to look for the bonus. We had a good idea from the description and location, that we'd be on a gravel road. For the millionth time, I HATE RIDING ON GRAVEL ROADS. Sure enough, that was the case. It was ugly stuff too - big rocks and stuff. As we neared the church, we came across the local party spot, where a bunch of kids were drinking beer on a bridge. Great I thought, all we need is the local juvenile delinquents causing trouble in the middle of nowhere. Then, to make things worse, a bunch of dogs came running out from behind the church! Well, the dogs were friendly, and the kids were too busy doing whatever to investigate us, so we took our photos, changed into some warmer clothes, and left. As we were leaving, another rider showed up on a BMW with a yellow Aerostich suit - wonder who that is?

We got off the gravel without incident and headed for the town of Villisca, IA, about 20 miles away. When we pulled into town, we had to get a year off a building where an axe murder occurred. Nothing like looking for axe murders at 1 am... At this point, we were paid a visit by the local law enforcement officer, who naturally was wondering what we were doing walking around town at that hour. I told him we were on a scavenger hunt, and that we needed the date a building was built. We found it, and were about to leave, when Ron leaned into his car and said "Is this the craziest thing you've ever seen?" I thought the cop might think we were deranged at that point and haul us in...but he didn't.

We headed northeast again towards the freeway, but we had another stop. This time it was a obelisk marking the spot where some Mormon settlers visited Iowa. We had a feeling it would involve more gravel, but we had no idea what was in store. Sure enough, we turned down the road, and it was the same big rocks we'd had before. I hung further back, as it was so dusty I couldn't see the road from what Ron and Carrie were kicking up behind them. Finally, we came to a fork, where the sign said "Minimum Maintenance Road." Uh oh. We didn't know what to expect, but it looked fairly hard packed, so we started down the road, looking for the monument (or at least some evidence of bikes before us). The going was good at first, until we encountered a bunch of washed out areas. Ron came on the CB with a garbled scream, and nothing else. Had he gone down? Hit a deer? Done a motocross jump off a cliff on the Goldwing? Turns out he'd hit a patch of really soft sand and started to wobble. I was concerned, but compared to the big rocks we were on before, I didn't think it was so bad.

There was no sign of the monument, but we did come to a small park. Figuring that the monument was nearby, we pulled over. There was no monument in sight, but we pulled out the flashlights, and headed down a path into the woods. Sure enough, there it was. We got our information and headed out the opposite way we came in. As we were leaving, we passed the same rider with the yellow 'stich. Was he following us? Of course the way out was much shorter and easier than the way in - why do we always take

the hard way?

We had one more stop before our planned sleep bonus - a town called Cumming, IA (there were a lot of sexual innuendos on the bonus list this year...) where we had to find the American Legion hall. Cumming was a really small town near Des Moines - you'd think in a town that small, it'd be easy to find something, but after driving through twice, we still didn't see it. Finally, I rode around the corner to what must have been the only street we hadn't ridden down, and there it was. We wrote down the post number, and got back on the freeway. We decided to take the sleep bonus in Ames, IA, and we pulled in around 2:20 am. After filling with gas and getting a start receipt for the sleep bonus, we checked into a motel for three hours. Boy, between this and the Alaska trip, we'd rented a lot of hotel rooms for less than four hours each. You always hear jokes about motels with "hourly rates" but I never thought I'd be involved in that sort of situation!

Heading for home:

After eating some fine convenience store food and sleeping for two hours, we got our end receipt and headed for home. We realized that we were going to have to skip some planned bonuses for time reasons, but we did stop at the grave of Alice Cooper's original guitarist Glen Buxton, where there were a number of small items left by loyal fans. After getting the inscription from the grave, we left for Minneapolis, skipping any further bonuses in Iowa. Who should be riding up with us but the man in the yellow suit, who turned out to be Conrad Eggen. Was he doing the EXACT same ride as us?

We had to make a quick pit stop when one of us (not saying who, but it wasn't me) had a nasty reaction to his Deli Express food from the night before and had to stop and use the WC at a gas station - didn't this happen two years ago - no more spicy food for you! It was there we saw Iron Butt Rally veterans Tim Conway and Marty Leir fueling up. We got back on the road and it wasn't long before they passed us on the freeway. We'd hoped to ride behind them, but their speed was a little much for us.

At a rest stop near Owatonna, Carrie came on the CB and yelled "BIG BIRD!" Thinking she was hallucinating from lack of sleep and seeing Sesame Street characters, we asked her to clarify. "Big Bird" is the name of fellow rider "Hootis'" new yellow Harley, and he was in the ditch near a rest stop. He was up and walking around, but we were concerned. The problem was, because it was a rest stop, and not an exit, we had no way to easily turn around and get back, since rest stops only exit to one side of the freeway. A driver was helping him, but we sent a text message to the rallymasters to let them know what we saw anyway. It later turned out to be a minor incident where he misjudged the ramp and was just going to drive across the grass, not knowing that there was a big hole hidden by the weeds. It busted up his bike a bit, but he was okay (and he still beat us back to Betty's and won Touring Class!)

We pulled into Minneapolis with 50 minutes to spare. We headed for Lakewood Cemetery in S. Minneapolis to find Tiny Tim's crypt (I'm not kidding). The mausoleum was locked, so we just took a photo of the building and left. Our last stop was Sexworld - an "adult" store downtown, where we picked up our 69 points (real funny guys...) and headed into Betty's accompanied by two weirdos in an orange scooter with a sidecar carrying a sign that said "Hanson's Suck!" Glad my name isn't Hanson...

We checked in with about 20 minutes to spare, and tallied up our info. We were among the last to go through the scoring table, and with that many riders and bonuses, it took a long time to get done. After eating breakfast and listening to other rider's stories, we awaited the results of the judging. We didn't think we'd placed, since we misjudged a point total in Iowa by 1000 points and had to drop several bonuses we'd planned on getting.

Paul Ptak took fifth in standard class after running his early 70's Norton Commando for 1010 miles, including a breakdown that cost him several hours, and Hootis, despite his crash, won the Touring Class (great, now we have to compete with him next year!). Finally it came to us. Fifth place was won by Conrad Eggen - the guy we kept seeing on the ride. It seems that he missed the very first bonus we got in Mankato - the only difference between his score and ours! That gave us a tie for fourth in Expert - pretty good for our first time out riding with the heavy hitters! Leir and Conway took second and third respectively (might want to get all your mandatories Tim!), and Steffan Fay and John McDermott took first in Expert with an amazing 1600 mile ride to Michigan and back!

We celebrated the win with the usual beers on the deck when we got home, talking about all the crazy things that went on and how much fun it was. As always, thanks to Team Strange for a top notch effort with the rally! Now it's time to prepare for the next challenge that awaits...