



## 2006 Minnesota 1000

It's already June, and time for another Minnesota 1000. This year would be a little (a lot) different from the past three events I've run in. First of all, for the first time, I wouldn't be riding with my friends and neighbors Ron and Carrie Hanson. They were going for their Bentsdahl award (5000 miles in your first four MN1k's). Having broken an odometer cable in the 2004 rally, I needed 2200 miles to get mine, which would have been close to impossible, so I decided to try something different.



Instead of riding my Concours, which is my normal rally bike, I decided to ride the event on my 1980 Suzuki GS1100L, with a stock 4 gallon fuel tank, no fairing, no extra lights, and narrow seat. Different doesn't begin to describe this. I spent the week preparing the bike, with saddlebags from Ron's old sportbike, and hooking up my GPS and XM radio (a comfort I was not willing to go without). By Friday afternoon, I was ready to go. I left at 4:00 to head down to Leo's South in Lakeville, the host site for the rally this year. It was about

92 degrees when I left, and just miserable.

While stuck in traffic on 35W, I realized that my tailbag had broken loose. Uh oh. Holding it down, I exited to shore things up (and get out of the hot rush hour traffic) and took a back way down to Lakeville, arriving just as a storm moved in. Little did I know what this would foreshadow.

The dinner moved inside the dealership as the rain fell and as always it was fun to see everyone's bikes and talk to all the regulars. After an excellent dinner, first-year rallymaster Bart Bakker and his assistant Steffan Fay gave the usual instructions, rules, and the first list of bonuses, as the sky grew darker and darker around 9 pm. Included was a bonus we could get that evening - a stop at Bettys Bikes and Buns in NE Mpls. It seemed that while we just had a bit of rain down in Lakeville, the Twin Cities had been pummeled with a monsoon and thunderstorm. We heard that there were major problems with 35W so I chose to take Cedar Ave. back up. I debated whether

to go to Betty's, but then figured that since it's on the way home, it'd be stupid not to. To quote Forrest Gump, "Stupid is as stupid does." I felt pretty stupid, pretty quickly.

I quickly questioned my decision. As I got into S. Minneapolis, the rain got really heavy, and I noticed several inches of water on the ballfields at Nokomis. With Lunatic and Jim Winterer following in the breadpan sidecar rig (probably wondering where I was going), I took Cedar through Seven Corners and Dinkytown, seeing standing water everywhere and power outages. This was bad. To make things worse, the bike was running terrible, stalling at every stop. I quickly picked up my bonus at Betty's, but didn't stop to chat with the other riders. I needed to get home. To my surprise, the streets around Betty's were underwater. A canoe would have been a better choice of transportation.

I trudged through water that covered the brake rotors on the bike at several underpasses, spraying me with open storm sewer water that left a nice odor burning off the pipes, stalled three times, but finally made it home about 10:30. The news said that manhole covers had been blowing off in Minneapolis - glad I didn't hit an open sewer... At this point me, the bike, and everything I'd packed, was soaked. Rather than plot bonuses and get some sleep, I had to dry my riding clothes, gloves, and everything in the bags. I ended up pulling everything off the bike and replacing it with my large waterproof bag from our Alaska trip. I didn't get to bed until about 1 am, and I had to get up at 4:45 to get down to Lakeville. Ughh.

Made it down to Lakeville on time and read through the sheets. Riders could begin leaving at 8:00. I chose to plot my route until 8:30 or so. I had a route planned that gathered a good number of points, and hopefully would get me 1000 miles within the state of MN, getting me one of the IBA's new state certifications.

My route started in Welch, MN, and then to Mazeppa, MN, which was the site of rallymaster Bart's tragic motorcycle crash several years ago. I then headed for the town of Elba, MN, where there was a bonus involving climbing a firetower. I was easily on schedule at this point. As I pulled into Elba, I saw the tower, WAY up on a cliff. "I bet we can't drive to that" I thought. I was right - before you could even get to the tower, you had to climb almost 800 steps up the hill. Rallymasters are evil people. EVIL. I think I spent about 45-60 minutes there, and this had a big impact on the rest of the rally as I was now way behind schedule.

I decided to try and get as many points as I could, and not worry about miles - the problem was, I didn't have every bonus mapped out, so I missed some easy points in Iowa and Wisconsin because of my original goal of riding in MN. Here's where another problem popped up.

Having only 4 gallons of gas, meant my range before I was concerned about running out was only about 150 miles. That's a lot of stops over a 24 hour period, and a lot of time wasted, even with quick stops. Combined with scrapping my original plan and missing a bunch of bonuses, this killed my finish in the standings. I filled up in St. Charles, and headed to the far S.E.

corner of the state to pick up several bonuses and ride some of the prettiest and most fun roads I'd ever been on.

Then I headed west. The Spam museum in Austin was a bonus, but when I pulled in there were literally thousands of people there. In another bit of trickery, the Spam Jam was going on that weekend - one of the biggest events of the year in Austin. I turned around and left - I didn't want to deal with it (this was a mistake to haunt me later). I continued west, picking up a bonus in Blue Earth, and then headed for Slayton. The weather started to get nasty at this point, and I debated changing course again. I chose to go on, but going to Slayton was a mistake. I rode through steady rain for about 60 miles, only to get fewer points than I would have had I taken the few extra minutes to get the points in Austin. More bad planning.

Then I headed back east, out of the rain, to Godahl, which I was familiar with as my dad grew up a few miles away. It was there I ran into Bob "498" Johnson. We talked for a few minutes and he said he was heading to Morton. I had planned on going back towards St. Peter and Mankato to pick up a few bonuses, but I changed my mind and headed north to Morton, where more points were available. After taking a wrong turn into someone's driveway, and getting chased by a very large, angry dog, (I wonder if Aerostich suits are made to withstand dog attacks...)

I met up with Bob again at the next bonus, and we decided to look for the Renville bonus together. When doing my planning, I had Renville listed, but I could not find the bonus location on the map or the GPS. It wasn't really in Renville, but a monument on a county road in the middle of nowhere in the river valley. The road did show up on Bob's map (note to self - get official state issue maps), and so we headed down the road. It was 6.5 miles of wet gravel and mud to the marker, with bits of pavement only in front of people's houses. Keeps dust down I guess. Had I been riding the Concours, I doubt I'd have had the guts to ride that road - my dislike of gravel is well-documented. On the old Suzuki though, it's no problem. The bike is low and light and takes gravel roads like big mini-bike - it's actually pretty fun. My concern was lack of fuel at this point - I was running really low. We found the monument at sunset, and the area was really beautiful - one of my best rally memories. I'll have to go back when I'm not in such a hurry.

We took what we thought would be a shorter way out. It may have been, but it seemed to take forever, driving on unmarked dirt roads through farm fields, finally coming out on 212. After I got more gas, Bob and I rode together to Montevideo, Cosmos, Belgrade and Kingston, where we searched for a Finnish monument in one of the most bug-infested places ever.

At that point, Bob headed south to Buffalo to sleep, and I headed home, extremely cold from the rain and fog. The thermometers read 69 degrees, but it felt like about 40. My house wasn't out of the way, so I took my rest bonus there, pulling in at 3:40 am.

I used my time to unload some things from the bike, shower, change, and eat some breakfast. I didn't want to sleep, because my window then to get to the finish at Lakeville was fairly narrow. I even folded laundry for something to do. (yes, I folded laundry during rally time - how sad is that?).

When I got the starting receipt for the rest bonus, I noticed that the pump was exactly synched with GPS time, so my ending receipt read 6:41 - three hours and one minute. Nearly perfect. I headed down to Lakeville with plenty of time to spare and to watch the riders come in. No DNF for me and 870 hard miles on an old bike.

Ron and Carrie did get their Bentsdahl award, Paul Sundet placed in Expert, and John Coons, running my old fuel cell for the first time, won first overall. Very cool. When awards were passed out, I didn't place in standard class (1-3 received plaques, I came in 4th). That was kind of disappointing, because my point total was only about 400 less than the 3rd place finisher. Had I skipped Slayton and picked up the Spam bonus and either Decorah, IA or Alma, WI, I would have easily placed. Still, I was competing against BMW GS1200's, which are big time rally bikes, and I came within one or two easy bonuses of second place, despite riding nearly 500 less miles. That's a very efficient ride, and testament to good route planning (and why you should try and follow your route and not screw around with it too much). Even better, I finished the rally on an old bike that I mostly restored myself with no mechanical issues or problems. That was pretty cool.

I can't say I'd do it again on that bike, because I was sore for days afterwards, but I had a lot of fun. Congrats to those who finished in the wood, and an excellent job by Bart, Steffan, all the volunteers, and the nice people at Leo's who opened their dealership to us. I can't wait for next year.

