

Border 2 Border

A little over a year ago I earned my iron butt membership with a Saddle sore around North Dakota. And earlier this summer I did my first extreme ride a Bun Burner Gold home from Las Vegas in July.

So this summer I get an invitation for a retreat I would like to go to in Texas. I decide this is a good excuse to go for a last ride of the year. I start thinking about the ride and how to extend the ride itself. It is just over a thousand miles to Denton TX which is just north of Dallas. I pull out the map and start looking at options for routes. Hmmm border to border ride sounds interesting. I thought about it some more and was going back and fourth for weeks. Then a few weeks before the event Jodi (my wife) asks are you going to make this an Iron Butt thing? Maybe, I responded. That was pretty much the deciding factor.

I set up my room in Denton a day early, posted on LDRider email list that I needed some help and/or witnesses for my starting and ending points. Then I started programming routes on my Map Quest metro guide for my GPS. As the route formed I tried a few different criteria, fastest avoiding the toll ways and fastest not avoiding tolls. Everything I came up with was 1680 to 1700 miles and just under 24 hours. Hmmm that is going to be more difficult than my BBG home from Vegas since I cannot stop short and get an ending receipt.

So I start getting helpful hints from some of the riders on my email list. Mainly warning me about Nuevo Laredo and how dangerous the city is. But I am not getting any one that can help on that end. After a couple of days I get a response from Mike Hutsal in Winnipeg Manitoba. He was very helpful in getting me lined up for the starting point in Canada eh'. Mike, being the very well decorated rider that he is, had some very good hints and pointers for me before I even left home. So I have a starting witness lined up and my route laid out and bike pretty much ready to go. Gosh it would sure be nice if Ron finished welding up my fuel cell. I already have the bike plumbed for it I just need to mount it and hook it up. I have the plans all laid out for the mount and am just waiting for the cell to be finished.

I get a call on Monday the cell is ready to be picked up. I get all my ducks in a row and GPS is loaded up with all pertinent info and I have two cartridges of maps ready for the trip down and home. At the end of the day after picking up my fuel cell I find that someone put a package on my desk while I was gone. Yahoo! it is my documents for the BBG I did earlier this summer. Well I have to hang this document before I leave right? Since I am leaving on Tuesday this does not leave me a whole lot of extra time. So Monday night I head for home and have all the pieces I need to finish up mounting the fuel cell. Good thing I packed the most of my clothes and other gear on Sunday. So a couple of hours (ok a few hours) and fuel cell is mounted and ready for action. Last minute is normal for me (and plenty of rally riders and racers I believe). Off to bed the Barney Glide is ready and I am also.

So my plan is to ride to Morris Manitoba Canada on Tuesday to meet with Mike and Fergus Hand whom I received an email from on Saturday. Mike and Fergus were nice enough to come down to Morris from their homes in Winnipeg to witness for me on Tuesday night. So they show up and we walk across the street to the café and have some coffee. We had a great conversation and exchanged some of the typical bench rally stories and they tolerated some of my racing stories. We had a good hour or so of that and finally got around to getting my paperwork signed and filled out.

Off to bed around 11:30 alarm set for 7:00. Up before the sun, pack up my overnight stuff and head across the street for breakfast. After breakfast I suited up for the short jaunt to Emerson for my official start receipt. Gas up before I get there because I had found that Duty Free shop has excellent receipts so I bought some water and Gatorade reset my GPS trip computer documented my mileage and headed for the U.S. border checkpoint. I am now officially on my way to Mexico! I get to the U.S. border station and greet the lady there. She then asks me for proof of residency and asks why I was in Canada and for how long so I explain briefly to her, as I am handing her my license, I am going on a certified timed motorcycle ride to Mexico and I came up here to start and met with some friends in Morris last night stayed at the Super 8 there and I am now on my way. She says that's nice but do you have proof of residency...DOH!! I never even thought about it. No copy of Birth cert. or passport. This is not the way to start a ride of this magnitude. She asks a few other questions and then asks if I have any

food. All I have is some beef jerky I bought on my way there the day before. Then she asked if it had a USDA sticker or logo on it. ??? I am not sure so I pull the bag out and it has made in the USA on the front. She says thank you and I am on my way. WHEW!! And then UH-OH! What about the other end of this ride. Shit what am I going to do if I need more than that for proof at the Mexican border? No time to go home and get passport. GREAT that is just what I need, something to worry about for the next 24 hours. Then I think to my self, I am from Minnesota ya sur u betcha why would they need proof down there? Guess I will find out tomorrow. Once I am there and have my receipt for my ending point I can figure out how to get back in the US. Now the priority is to finish the ride.

Now headed North West to the Canadian border from home I expected a head wind but I did not expect to be riding in to a head wind going almost perfectly south. Figures guess I am extra thankful I have a fuel cell now! Run straight south on I-29 through Grand Forks, and Fargo the weather is warming up nicely and the sun is up. I had my first stop in Summit SD at the intersection on US 12 and I-29. This stop is at 12:40. Hmmm this looks familiar. Bonzai and Buffalo territory I think to my self, Hi Bob, Lunatic and the rest of the GLMC group. Bucking that headwind I only made 265 miles or so and put in 9.1 gallons. Just less than 30 MPG is not what I would like to get, I want 35 or so. Oh well first stop went well. With a couple of fresh snacks and water I hop back on the Interstate and keep heading south.

The wind changes a little and the mileage goes up a tad as I head the rest of the way through SD and into Iowa. So far I have not caught any traffic or any serious road construction. I get through Sioux City with out any delays and at Missouri Valley IA, it is about 4:20 as I make my second stop at 548 miles. 288 on the trip meter which puts me at almost 32 MPG. That's better although I wish I could get closer to 40 but riding a bagger pushing a lot of wind that is not a very realistic expectation. I grabbed a fresh Gatorade and A couple of nutrigrain bars and back on the road.

As I get into Council Bluffs/ Omaha area it is early in rush hour but not bad, traffic is slow and go for a short time but keeps rolling. South of there I grab a state highway and head west to Nebraska City to catch US-75 south. This is the part of the ride I have to thank Mike Hutsal for. I was planning a different route but he informed me

of his experience in this area that is this way would be more efficient. Just a short jaunt west to US-75 and then I turned south again. By going this way I avoided the KC area and did not add any mileage even though it had some construction there was not a lot of little towns or areas that I need to slow down for so it worked out very well. 75 took me straight south into Kansas and all the way down to Topeka where I grabbed the KS turnpike which without Mike's advice I would have avoided thinking it had toll booths like the toll ways in IL. Thanks again Mike. One stop to grab a ticket at 7:00 and on the road again. The nice thing about toll ways is that you know that there is fuel every so often or at least there is supposed to be. I pass the first Oasis knowing that there is another in about 30miles. In the next few miles the fuel light comes on, one gallon left. No big deal I know that I am good to go for the next Oasis. As I pull in I see chain link fence around the pumps. DOH! I hope it is just some of the pumps...nope I ask a trucker "is there no fuel here?" He responds "nope next fuel is 30miles south to the next Oasis." "Well I hope I will have to make it to that one." And off I go. I did make it to the next one and I guess my fuel light is not always consistent because I put 9.1 gallons in at 855 miles and 312 on the trip meter which gives me about 34 MPG. That is where I like to see it. It is now 8:45 and with a Ham sandwich and a coke I am back on the bike rolling in short order. 49 miles later I reach the end of the KS turnpike and pay my toll and ask the attendant to right down the time that I entered the turnpike off the ticket I turned in. She looked confused so as I am paying with my credit card I explained what I was doing and why I wanted that info off the ticket. She was intrigued by my ride and commented on the "time" I made on the turnpike. With my receipts tucked away and mileage noted on said receipts I head on to Oklahoma. I Left the tollbooth at 9:32 with 903 on the GPS.

A little less than 12 hours and 750 miles to go, feeling pretty good at this average I should have an hour to spare between here and there. Nightfall and not a whole lot of traffic in Oklahoma should help keep the average speed up... Or should I be more conservative for big brown forest rats and such... As I roll on into OK there is a tad more truck traffic which is just enough to help keep the critters off the road. Keeping a constant eye scan going I don't see nary a thing. I suppose the animals down here get thin blood too and it is not getting any warmer so they are probably bedded down for the night...I hope! Cruise on to my next fuel stop I am now getting tired stiff and cold might

as well stop and stretch and put on the Widder's. Put the Electric vest on as fuel is flowing get done fueling and zip up jacket again grab receipt. Great the receipt has no address or city even. Go inside ask for a reprint the lady there is very helpful and prints me another, with no address or any other info. After asking for an address stamp or a good receipt I realize she is not going to be able to help with this issue. So I write down the address, city, state and zip. What state am I in? Texas I thought and wrote on my receipt. I was at Washita Gaming and C-store in Paoli OK. I realized this when I was filling out my documents to send to IBA. Good thing it wasn't an ending receipt. Back on the bike and feel a little refreshed. It is getting cooler now I actually have to turn on the heated vest.

Roll in to northern Texas headed for the Dallas Fort Worth area. I Get to Denton wow I could be done and have a couple of days to rest since I am damn near driving right past my destination for tomorrow. BAH!!! Let's rock! Take the I-35w loop to avoid as much of the big city as possible. Wow I am starting to fade now its 2:30 and I need to get off the bike for a few minuets the nods are taking over. So off the Freeway at Burleson TX and put in a few gallons do a few stretches and get back on the bike. At 2:37 I put in 5.39 gallons with 1247 miles on the GPS and 1266 according to the odometer. It is now getting to be the sleepest time of the night for me. Cool temperatures a long day and low traffic on the highway along with warm vest and seat are making me very sleepy now. I try to talk, sing, listen to different radio stations nothing is working now I stopped at a close to the road Truck stop got some snacks an energy drink along with a Screaming Meanie and battery. I walk out to the bike and set the alarm for 15 minuets sit down on the sidewalk, lean up against the building and try to snooze. To no avail, after 5 minuets I got back on the bike and rode some. About ½ hour later I can't stay awake. I think to myself I am not going to make it in 24 hours. This thought is depressing but I had presence of mind to think I would rather make it in 36 than not at all. Alright then it is nap time. I pull over and into a Subway parking lot someone is in there baking bread (wow they do make it fresh every day!) Set the alarm for 10 minuets to see how I feel then. Wow did I conk out. I don't remember what I dreamt about but I remember it was a lot and a very busy dream. Then YEE HAW wow that Screaming Meanie is loud! I

snapped awake and felt way better! Put alarm away stretched a bit and got back on the bike. Wow I did not realize what a 10min. power nap could do for a guy. On to Austin!

Somewhere in Texas I strike up a short conversation with a trucker. There are a few out there this time of night but not many. He commented about being cool on that scooter. Of course I had to inform him of my Widder vest and Corbin heated seat. He asked about where I was going and needing to stay awake I briefly told him about my ride. Of course some other trucker had to pipe in and say I was pulling his leg and that it was impossible to do that ride on a motorcycle in 24 hours. I just responded with "Believe what you like, I have all the documents I need to prove my ride." As I get to Austin I realize I should not need to stop for fuel again if I get some now, plus I gotta pee and I am HUNGRY! Make a quick stop at 5:00 with 1420 miles logged so far. The sun is starting to brighten the sky now and that is helping me with some energy. I rail through San Antonio before traffic gets heavy. As I get south of San Antonio I get to see some more country side. The further south I go the more the colors are like what I left at home. Lots of brown, without the cactus of course we have pine trees instead. As the sun comes up I become reenergized and start focusing on miles to go, average speeds, and how much time will I have to find my ending receipt. I keep plugging along I've cleared all major cities and don't foresee any delays and hopefully will not have any at the border crossing. As I get closer I get more and more anxious about riding into Mexico I have never crossed the border with a vehicle before and not knowing is very nerve racking when you are on a time schedule. I roll on and it is getting warmer and the sun is up now I am feeling good but definitely tired. As I roll into Laredo I see a Harley-Davidson Shop there, cool I think to my self, I should be able to get witness's there!

This is working out really well I am glad I stuck with my decision to ride to Laredo as the Freeway dumps me off just a few blocks from the border crossing. Trying to read signs and figure out the fastest way through was easy. I rode up to the toll booth which was a pleasant surprise since I can get receipts for paying the toll. I get my toll receipt and ask if I can turn around here or do I have to go across the bridge. I do not have to go across the bridge but I do have to go back through customs. As I am asking that I realize that the receipt only shows Laredo. DOH! Not good enough chit! Across the bridge I go hoping it doesn't dump me in some nasty area of Nuevo Laredo. I get the

red light at the other end of the bridge and the customs agent for Mexico wants to see me. I wheel over to where he is and asks to look in my bags. Training in retail is helpful here, with a few yes sirs and showing willingness to show what ever is in all my bags made the stop very short. While he was looking at my stuff he asked what my intentions were in Mexico. So I briefly explained my ride, he did not seem nearly as intrigued as the others I had told along the way. After that brief stop I asked how to get back to the toll bridge. "Two blocks east turn left" he replied. "Thank you sir" I replied and on my way. Two blocks and two beggars down and turn left. Back to the bridge and I ask the young lady attendant if I can get a receipt, she said "no you have to pay" well duh I think to myself. This is one time I really wish I would have taken Spanish in high school. I replied "yes I will pay do you have receipts?" "Si" she replies and I pay my toll document my receipt with correct time, date, and location. "Gracias" I say and roll towards U.S. customs. WHEW! I DID IT! Wow what a feeling of satisfaction. 1650 miles on the GPS 23 hours and 30 min. 1702 miles according to the odometer. Then the reality of having to get back into the U.S. sets in. But now I have some time. That gives a sense of relief. It is a long line for customs and it is moving pretty slow. I get my turn at the booth answer the questions. Are you a U.S. citizen, where are you from, what were you doing in Mexico? Again the brief story of my ride is given. He is more intrigued than the Mexican customs agent but much less than the others I have told over the last 24 hours. "Well we'll have to do an inspection" he says. "OK that is fine sir" is my response. I pull in to the inspection area and go through my brief story again. This gentleman is much more intrigued than the last couple. Another off duty agent starts in with our conversation. One of them spent some time in Minnesota so it was a very light hearted conversation and inspection. They looked through my bags. I didn't even have to unload them I pulled open my tour pack and took out my jackets, tool kit and some of the bulky stuff. They asked about my fuel cell, GPS and other gadgets. It was a pleasant experience and I am sure they appreciated the respect shown by me. I am sure that is a fairly thankless job. They couldn't witness for me something about regulations about giving info about people that have gone through customs. But they were nice enough to take my witness form in and get it stamped, CLEARED U.S. CUSTOMS LAREDO TEXAS OCTOBER 23 2003. With a hearty "thank you for the job you guys are doing" I departed customs and headed

for the Laredo Harley-Davidson Shop. After taking a little time to use the rest room and wash up. I talked with the employees there were very intrigued with my ride and also with my bike. I got two of the staffers to witness my mileage and autograph my paperwork. Now with that done I need a real meal. After looking around and talking with some other staffers there I decided to get some breakfast down the road at the IHOP.

So the ride is over or at least the “official” border to border ride, with 1702 miles on the odometer, 1650 on the GPS and 23 ½ hours. I have my witness forms done and everything looks like it should pass the Iron Butt Association criteria for my certification.

I grab my papers and head into the IHOP sit down order some breakfast. Fill in some of the documents. Have some coffee eat breakfast and just before I am finished the power goes out. Thank god I already have my food. Of course I want to pay with the credit card so I am SOL for a little while. Oh well I sit back in the booth and take a short nap. A little refreshed and 500 miles to ride today I should get rolling. Head back north I planned to stop and see a friend and fellow dealer in San Antonio. A relaxing ride north to Alamo City I haven't driven to the dealer ship here before and I know about where it is. So just north of the 410/35 interchange on the north end of San Antonio I pulled off the freeway and into a convenience store. UH- OH what is up with the clutch? I ask for directions to the dealership there and find out it is just across the freeway. So I ride over to the dealership. Go inside and ask if Hal is around since he is the one I wanted to visit while passing through. He is gone racing. Oh well so I go talk to service to see if they can help me out. They were very accommodating got it in right away and even found a couch for me to nap on. They started with the simple things, clutch throw out bearing, nope. Then the Clutch Hub bearing, no luck there either. So into the transmission they go. Find out that the main shaft support bearing in the trap door has crapped out the cage and is trying to disintegrate. So they had to disassemble the whole transmission and replace the bearing with what we thought was a stock H-D bearing. Turns out it is not and they had to send a runner to the bearing house to get the correct bearing. I had to call the motel I had lined up in Dallas area and get one in San Antonio which was alright because I was tired anyway and the Super 8 is right next door. Haul my stuff over there and clean up. Get some food delivered and plenty of rest. I knew it would be at least 10 or 11 am before it would be buttoned up. So I slept in, checked out hauled my bags back

over to the dealership. They were nice enough to loan me a bike to go get some breakfast. (And keep me out of there hair for a little while longer.) 11:00 rolls around and it does not look like it will be ready. SUCK! Oh well call rental car place and head for my retreat in Dallas. Now renting a car when you are not at the airport is a whole story in and of its self and I won't go there now. Just to say that they could all use some customer service skills. So to keep this related to motorcycling I will fast forward to picking up my bike on Sunday. They have 24/7 security there and were nice enough to have my bike ready and clean pointed out the door. I just had to load my bags, suit up and leave. So I am now on my way back to Minnesota and it is 1:00 and I am 5 hours further away than what I had planned for my trip home.

So the trip home was uneventful the first day. Ran to Wichita KS that evening called it a day fairly early so I could ride in day light the rest of the way home, I hope. In the room by 9:30 fed and in bed by 10:30. Up and on the road by 8:30 which wasted an hour of daylight. Suck it is going to be cold after dark close to home. Oh well at least I will be close to home. Other than running out of gas in Iowa it was a leisurely trip home. So I am riding through Iowa getting close to Des Moines listening to the NASCAR race on the radio that was rained out on Sunday when I realize I need fuel. Nothing around UH-OH! Oh well keep rolling thinking I've got to get to something soon I am not that far away from Des Moines. Then sput sput Barney dies just as a fuel station comes into site. Coast down the ramp and park at the bottom lean the bike on the side stand for a minuet. So what little bit of fuel is left will run to the left side of the tank where the pick up for the fuel pump is. Just enough fuel to get to the station I then fueled up and put in 9.35 gallons in theory there should be .65 gallons somewhere in there.

Then as I get into Minnesota the drizzle started as I get closer to the metro area the more it rained. It's getting dark early with being overcast and daylight savings time ending. Then I got to Minneapolis and the 494 loop. Now this is the first rain/drizzle with cold temps in a year and just about everyone forgets how to drive. On the radio I hear about several accidents on the thoroughfares I want to take to get home to St. Cloud. And it is rush hour in the dark and raining. What a way to spend the last two hours of this trip. The nice thing about my Barney Glide is plenty of lights and with the HID headlights I hardly ever have anyone cut me off.

So this was definitely the most challenging trip/IBA ride I have done to date and I can hardly wait to ride again come spring. Maybe a 50cc/100cc next year...For those that don't know 50cc is 50 hours coast to coast or 100cc insanity is 100 hours coast to coast and back. ☺

Peace and Good Riding

Brett Donahue