

Redemption

A Tribute to Eddie James

My Account of Butt Lite IX

By James Owen

Rolling into Lexington on July 4th, several days ahead of the Butt Lite IX start, I experienced a most profound flashback. In 2010 I arrived here in the back of an ambulance, under the influence of morphine.

I was being transported after suffering an open tibia fracture of my right leg in a crash east of Manchester, KY some 90 minutes to the southeast. Seeing the University of Kentucky Hospital brought it all back with a searing clarity. I was riding the Cape Fear Rally, fresh off the '09 IBR win. I was pushing it.....hard. The ride I had planned bit off much more than I could chew. I knew it. Deep down I knew it, but still, I convinced myself it could be done. I was on a fool's errand, made worse by gathering storm clouds.

It was the first day of the rally and I had been staying barely forward of a line of rain all afternoon and evening. Into the midnight hour I was moving through eastern Kentucky when the rain caught up with me. I blamed the crash on diesel oil and coal dust on the road brought to the surface by the fresh rain. Later, in the hospital, I saw the picture of a rear tire showing cords. Yep, that was my '07 RT. I had been running on overconfidence from the previous season's victories. I had grown complacent in a whole host of ways. Yes, this was the period when the Metzler Z6 did not have wear indicators in the center of the tread area but that was no excuse. I had not properly tracked how many miles I had on my rear tire.

When the low side occurred, I was traveling about 40 mph and slid into a guard rail. If I had hit with just about any other part of my body, I would have likely been killed or crippled. I learned a hard lesson that night. Sometimes humility comes at a high price. Complacency on a motorcycle is a death trap. Seeing that hospital and remembering the wonderful care I received there brought a wave of gratitude and the feeling that I was truly blessed to be here, 8 years later, with a chance to be a part of and compete in the 9th running of Butt Lite.

Redemption: correcting a past wrong, to be forgiven, to be made whole, welcomed back into the fold. Redemption comes in many forms. In this case, there was a deep realization of how lucky and blessed I have been.



The very fact that I could compete in a Butt Lite was also a redemption. And to explain that I must tell you about Eddie James.

Eddie was a larger-than-life personality who came into my awareness shortly after I bought a '98 R1100RT in February of that year and joined all the applicable motorcycle clubs. From the AMA to the local BMW riding clubs he was there in print and his presence and feats showed forth. I first met him in person when I ran my first competitive rally out of Cincinnati, the Buckeye 1000, in early summer of 2002. I was registered for the Butt Lite III later that year and I figured I'd better do at least one 24-hour rally before I launched myself on a multi-day. He was there providing support for some other TeamStrangers and just running around being helpful.

When I first met him face to face, I knew this man was someone special. He had that very distinctive shock of unruly bushy grey hair atop an imposing figure. But what struck me the most was the eyes. Eyes that told of a deep river that ran just below the surface. Tamed, for the moment anyway, but powerful. I could tell this was a man who had been to hell and back and was somehow the better for it. It made him genuine and, in a sort of irreverent and snarky way, an empathetic caring sort. He could relate to your hardships because he had been there. You could just sense it. The learning curve for me in those early rallies was very steep. I was schooled by guys like Eddie, Don Arthur, Todd Witte, Rick Miller, Paul Pelland and others.



Eddie James and Adam Wolkoff (left) Butt Lite III in Navasota, TX

What stuck with me was that Eddie James was a cool dude. I distinctly remember a few notable moments from BL III. At the check-in in Navasota, TX he highlighted a couple memorable items. First, how fiercely competitive the top riders were and second how great it was to be at the nudist ranch, where the rally was starting, checking out all the naked co-eds playing volley ball and splashing around in the pool. He was right about the riders. The co-eds must have been studying for finals that week. There was an interesting couple serving hamburgers the next afternoon with some very disturbing piercings. That took the concept of “that which is seen cannot be unseen” to a whole new level. Those images are seared into my brain.

You could tell Eddie was just beside himself anticipating how the riders would handle the rally being laid before them. He was a master at finding the double innuendos that could be understood and overcome only by a very attentive rider scrutinizing the precise meaning of the directions presented in the rally book. There were no “trick questions” but you better be damn sure you read the instructions.

At the end of the first leg where I had battled a leaky rear tire to a third place standing in Monticello, Eddie praised me for a “gutsy” ride and that I had showed “real grit”. Coming from Eddie, those words lifted me out of my fatigued frustrated state and gave me an energy boost for the remainder of the rally. At the finishing banquet there was a moment that was classic Eddie. He was absolutely glowing and grinning from ear to ear, saying, “it doesn’t get any better than this” as he shook a box that held the pieces of Grady Dunham’s broken coffee mug. The points Grady could not claim by bringing an intact mug to final scoring was enough to allow Todd Witte to claim the victory. Eddie was positively ecstatic that one of his quirky bonus requirements had ensnared such an accomplished rider.



I got to know Eddie better and my admiration of him and his talents continued to grow. When he was hospitalized after a deer strike on the last night of the 2003 Iron Butt Rally, one of the regrets of my life was not visiting him in the hospital in Billings after the rally. I learned from that regret. If I hear of a fellow rider who is injured, I pay a visit if there is any way I can swing it.

Eddie was famous for locating remote bonus locations with multiple approaches that a GPS would invariably bring the unsuspecting rider in via the "goat path", a more challenging, often impossible route. Apparently, his TeamStrange mates learned a thing or two because the practice continues to this day, as I was to discover the hard way during the BLIX.

Turns out Eddie had a bit of competitive streak in him as well. Fast forward to the Minnesota 1000 in 2005 where Eddie was competing in the rally. We all got off to a quick start from Betty's Bikes & Buns in downtown Minneapolis and quickly came to a stop light. Even though there was no traffic to be seen anywhere, we all grouped together waiting for the green and watched slack jawed as Eddie came sailing up, took the right-hand turn lane onto the cross street, did the immediate left U-turn followed by an immediate right hander giving us a flash of that playful grin from his open face helmet as he rode off out of sight. Many caught up to him shortly thereafter. Eddie just didn't go that fast, but he sure reveled in that moment he had good naturedly skunked us all.



I made a critical mistake during that rally. I had one of the old, Star system Sky Wave satellite trackers. I had won the rally and afterward, I published the track information for all to see where I had gone. Without being aware, the speed was also available to view and even though I later realized my mistake and took it down, it was too late. Eddie and others had seen it and some of the speeds recorded were deemed excessive. The speeds were not extreme (no triple digits) but they did exceed the posted speed limit and there it had been, available for all to see. Eddie felt he had no choice. I was retroactively disqualified from the rally and banned from all future Team Strange events. I understood his position, but it did not ease the sting. Here I had crossed the line with one of my heroes. I was devastated. In the years since, I have learned you don't really need to go that fast. I have been a big fan of the Iron Butt Association's speed tracking philosophy implemented in the 2015 IBR. It has taken away the need to go fast because you believe others are going fast and you need to as well to be competitive.



Over the years that followed, Eddie and I saw each other at events on a regular basis and became friends. He was always encouraging and positive. He didn't hold a grudge and always expressed joy and congratulations with my successes as they came along. When pictures of him and Lisa Erbes began to appear enjoying a wonderful life it lifted my heart because now those penetrating eyes showed a happiness that had not been there before. It was a true blow to Lisa and the community at large when he died in a motorcycle crash in 2009. The outpouring at his memorial service was remarkable and reflected the impact he had in people's lives. I made sure I was there. His loss has left a huge hole in the Long-Distance Riding community that will never be filled. He truly was one of a kind.

After Eddie had passed away, I helped Lisa do some work as staff for later Butt Lite Rallies. She always said something to the effect that past deeds were forgiven, and I would be welcomed back into a TeamStrange rally. Not only did she say it, but she expressed that it had been Eddie's sentiment as well before he died. I had registered for BL VIII but life got in the way and I was not able to ride. So, here I was, very excited about the opportunity to ride in BLIX!!

Rally Preparation in Lexington

In preparation for the rally, and the subsequent weeks to follow, I had shipped a wheel with a new tire, several items of rider clothing and food supplies to the hotel in Lexington. The idea was to minimize the amount of stuff I needed to carry on the bike from home. I knew I needed to begin the rally with a new rear tire as the mileage I normally expect from a rear tire is around 7 to 8,000 miles. I expected to ride between 6,500- and 7,000-miles during Butt Lite. After BLIX I was continuing to Nevada for the Bad Dog Cognoscente Rally the following weekend and was acutely aware of the need for juggling tire logistics.

The heat and humidity in the Northeast the days prior to my departure for Lexington was brutal. I decided a night ride was in order and departed from home in Easton, PA at 2am on July 4th. I arrived in Lexington just before noon and beat the worst of the afternoon heat. I like arriving at the rally hotel a day or two early. It allows me to accomplish any technical or mechanical tasks before things get busy with rally stuff and helps me to be more relaxed and engaged with people when they start showing up.

I have very specific rituals I go through before every rally, even the shorter ones, so I need to get there early to work through my preparations. It helps me get my mind focused on the ride ahead and is very therapeutic. It allows me to leave behind the cares and worries of my life and be totally focused.

I bring in everything off the bike and empty all bags, empty out all pockets, nooks and crannies etc., so literally everything I have with me is in a big pile on the floor of my room. I open the shipped box with the wheel/new tire and other items and add that to the pile. I go through item by item, sorting and making determinations...is this something I really need. Tools in that pile, food and clothing in that pile. Stuff I need for the final preparations but will not take with me, etc. etc. I make lists of everything I still need to do or stuff I need to purchase before the rally begins. For a big multi-day like the BL it's a pretty big pile and I expect it to take all day, maybe longer. I really enjoy doing it and it forms a critical part of my getting ready to rally. For each item, I visualize how I would use it, what its purpose is and, if I can live without it, I set it aside. Tools and the first aid kit go in the left saddle bag. Food, clothing and miscellaneous items go in the right saddlebag. Heated jacket liner and items of clothing I will need if temperatures/weather are expected to change rapidly go in the top case. I also carry the laptop in the top case. I wind up leaving a whole bunch of crap out and for the BL I wound up shipping a bunch of stuff back home. My goal is to have the lowest possible weight with everything I need and nothing more.

One final word about the top case. This is my office. Everything to quickly and efficiently take care of business once the rally is underway. One of my strengths is the evolved process I use for arriving, collecting and departing bonuses. It is literally a choreographed dance. On top of the clothing (which cushions the laptop) I have a clipboard with the bonus claim form. The clipboard has a Velcro strip to which a pen is attached so it is always there. Camera to the right and the flag is tucked down in the front of the top case. I arrange the flag, so it is easily accessed but secure. I take a length of clothesline rope and tie it to the grommets on each upper corner and tie a knot in the middle. That gives me something to hang the flag with. I place a carabiner at each corner and to the knot in the center of the rope. That gives me something to clip with. The carabiners add enough weight which allows me to drape the top of the flag on a ledge with body of the flag showing the number hanging off the edge permitting a photo. I also add small weights to the grommets at each corner on the bottom which helps hold the bottom of the flag in place if there is a breeze. I carry a small roll of duct tape in a pocket in case I need to further secure the flag in place. It almost never comes out. When I place the flag in the top box, I lift the clothing and laptop and slide the carabiners and rope underneath them which holds the top of the flag securely. I then flip the bottom of the flag with the weights attached over the top, so it lays on the clipboard. As I arrive at a bonus, I quickly identify precisely what needs to be photographed. If I can, I position the bike so the object is directly in front of me as I come to a stop. I dismount, move to the back of the bike, open the top box, grab the flag weights and drop them out so the flag and number are displayed. I grab the camera and turn it on as I am positioning for the shot. I take the shot, making sure I have the required items as I step back to the bike. In some cases, I may take two or more shots. I will record the bonus, time and odometer on the bonus claim form on the clipboard, turn off the camera, stow the flag, close the top box and remount. If I can get a good location to stop the bike, all that takes about 30 seconds. If I must remove the flag and place it for the photo that can add another 30 to 40 seconds. My safety check on making sure I don't leave without my flag is the final flip back on top of the clipboard that is part of the choreography of the stop. If that doesn't happen, I have left my flag at the bonus and go get it. Doesn't happen often but it does happen. I turn

the bonus listing to the next bonus, read what needs to be done there, and I'm off. I'm rarely stopped for more than a minute.

The next day, July 5th, other folks begin to arrive and among the first were Terry and Lynda Lahman. I first met Terry at a Waltz Across Texas Rally in 2004. We became fast friends and our friendship has grown since then. He was just beginning to see Lynda at the time. I met her later that year at a Utah 1088 Rally. We enjoyed a very wonderful evening dining in the downtown Lexington area with one of Lynda's longtime friends. As the days progressed and the rally grew closer there were great opportunities to visit and share meals with others in the rally. It is always a joy to meet likeminded riders. One of the wonderful things about going to rallies, and one of the enduring reasons I remain committed to the Long-Distance community is the camaraderie and friendships with truly wonderful people from all walks of life.

I had done most of the prep work on the bike at home before I left. That was just over 600 miles, so I had minimal preparation in Lexington. There was one task, however, and that was to remove and replace the rear wheel with the wheel/tire I had shipped from home. Terry offered to help, and we were finished in about 20 minutes.

At Janet's encouragement I decided to add an additional layer of comm capability and purchased an Iridium Sat Phone. The additional layer of connectivity would serve those times when critical communications were necessary over and beyond the messages I regularly send with my Spot 1 tracking device and phone. I had the choice of renting for a short time, which I did for the 2017 Iron Butt Rally, or buying the Sat Phone. I substantially researched the options with a focus on future adventures and decided to buy the phone outright.

Practice with Basecamp

As more people arrive there is less time to continue preparations due to the opportunities to visit and catch up. With a couple minor exceptions, I was pretty much ready to start the rally and so was able to stay relaxed and visit with people as the opportunities presented. One of the highlights of being ready to go, and not in a last-minute frenzy, is the ability to participate with others in their last-minute preparations.

The BLIX staff had very thoughtfully planned a session on the use of Basecamp, Garmin's computer-based mapping software. The session was specifically for rookies, but all were welcome, and I very much enjoyed attending. Brant Moteelall (3rd place finish 2015 IBR) may have been a bit intimidated at the presence of so many veteran riders (the room was packed) but he did an outstanding job overviewing the complex and nuanced capabilities of Basecamp. I learned some things that helped me be a much more efficient user of the program. Thank you, Brant!!

Leg One

The evening before the rally had us all meeting for the pre-rally banquet and receipt of the rally pack for Leg One. The air is always thick with tension at these banquets. Nervous chatter, forced laughs and shifty eyes abound. Everybody is eager to get the rally pack and start working on a route for the first leg. Most are trying to be relaxed and calm but it's easy to see a river of nervous energy just below the surface. Game-face and that 1000-yard stare is just around the corner. When we finally open the rally

pack, we were to find 146 bonuses that were very evenly spread through the southeast US. Butt Lite traditionally is very straight forward about its bonus selection. All very well thought out, hard to get to, on fantastic roads for riding, with the occasional combos. There were two twists to the first leg. The first was a combo on college football stadiums (acquire any 9 of the 14 listed college football stadiums for an extra 2,000 points). The second was more of a time-based decision of two possible choices.

First, arrive at the Maggie Valley checkpoint before midnight on July 10th and receive the rally pack for Leg Two at 6am on July 11th, gaining an extra two hours with the Leg Two data before the mandatory 8am riders meeting. The second choice would be to arrive between midnight and 6am on July 11th and receive Leg Two info at the 8am riders meeting. Arriving early gave an opportunity for known sleep in addition to the extra two hours of planning. Riders would be free to leave on Leg Two any time after the 8am meeting. For me, the first choice was a no brainer as I expected the Leg Two routing to be more difficult to plan and likely be worth increased point values. The extra sleep and two extra hours of planning would be a luxury I didn't want to pass on.

Back in my room for in depth planning I began to look more closely at the college stadium combo and noticed there was another couple of bonuses that were important to me. There was an Eddie James bonus in Atlanta. For me, this rally was all about honoring Eddie James. It was about what he meant to me personally and the legacy he left the Long-Distance Riding Community. If there was an Eddie James bonus I was going there. Additionally, there was a two-hour window at the Barber Motorsports Museum to visit with Paul Pelland that juiced the points for that bonus.

Doing the rough math in my head, leaving at 8:00am on July 8th, an arrival at Maggie Valley by midnight July 10th, with an 8-hour rest bonus, meant I had 56 hours of riding time. Looking at the type of roads I would likely be on for those 56 hours (not much interstate) I needed to keep the route around 3,000 miles.

I looked at variations of the college stadium combo to see what opportunities were available. The 2,000 points were going to be difficult to replace so the SEC Stadium Combo was part of the route. I chose a route that went counter-clockwise from Lexington, as far southwest as College Station, TX. It had all the pieces I needed including the Eddie James bonus, visiting with Paul Pelland and allowed for an 8-hour rest.

The route was a bit tight for me at just under 3,200 miles so I was going to have to stay very focused and be mindful of bailout strategies near the end. My strategy was to ride through the first night, work hard to stay on schedule and stop for the 8-hour rest bonus sometime after I had acquired the College Station bonus. This allowed me to maximize bonuses I could get between stadiums and set me up for Paul Pelland at Barber Motor Sports the morning of the 10th. I did ruefully note; I would be passing through Atlanta around 4pm to visit the Eddie James memorial bench. The traffic would be horrific. I knew I would have to deal with some delays but that's where Eddie James' bonus is, and I wasn't going to miss that for a traffic jam.

Looking at the rest of the bonuses I would visit, I realized these folks are world class bonus pickers. Virtually every one of these bonuses are places I would want to go to even if I was not in a rally. Very meaningful and moving locations/events, many having to do with the Civil War and the history of slavery in the US. Others were just quirky. Almost none of them accessible by interstate. Very nice. This was going to be a fun and very challenging rally. TeamStrange Rocks!!!

A quick side bar on details of the route listing:

I list each bonus in the route I chose with the format of “XXX PG-PTS-Z” where XXX is the Bonus Code, PG is the page number in the bonus pack, PTS is the number of points and Z is the code for availability (A-24 hours, D-Daylight Only, and T-Time Limitation). All times listed are EDT, even though some bonuses were in the Central time zone. The time listed reflects the time the photo was taken. Periodically in the route listing, I state how far behind schedule I am. This reflects how far into the buffer period I am. I use BaseCamp to compute a time for the total leg based upon the speeds I will maintain on the roads I will travel. This time reflects only continuous movement unless I enter a timed stop (a rest stop, for example). This travel time, taken away from the total time available for the leg results in the buffer time I have. The buffer time accommodates all planned stops (fuel, capture a bonus, catnaps, etc.) and unplanned delays (traffic, construction, getting lost, etc.) For Leg One I had a 4-hour 11-minute buffer.

Leg One Route

- 1) SKY 44-1-A 7/8 at 8:13am
University of Kentucky Wildcats, Kroger Field, Lexington, KY. Everyone was going there for the first bonus of the rally. Good thing there was a huge empty parking lot.
- 2) PER 17-194-D 7/8 at 9:02am
Perryville, KY. Civil War Battlefield 10/08/1862. The end of Kentucky occupation of Confederate Forces.
- 3) WFC 40-258-T 7/8 at 10:38am
William Floyd Collin’s Gravesite. Agonizing story of a man trapped in a cave for over a month who, after searchers had reached close enough to provide him food and water, died after another cave-in prevented rescue teams from bringing him out.
- 4) SVB 44-10-A 7/8 at 12:03pm
Vanderbilt Stadium, Nashville, TN.
- 5) JFR 42-202-A 7/8 at 1:09pm
Jefferson Davis Monument, Fairview, KY. The largest unreinforced concrete structure in the world. It’s really big. The only obelisk larger is the Washington Memorial in DC. It used to be lighted at night. No more.
- 6) B29 32-198-A 7/8 at 2:28pm
B29 Super Fortress Crash 07/01/1945 Benton, KY. Crew of 10. One survived when he popped his chute after he was thrown from the aircraft as it plunged to the ground. After the B29 bonus, the GPS had me routed on interstate highway that added almost 50 miles to the route. I elected to take a more direct route on two lane roads and saved almost 30 minutes. It gave me more room to work with as the night progressed and I fought to stay on schedule. A rare example of a shortcut working out.
- 7) PIL 20-413-A 7/8 at 5:09pm

Battle of Pilot Knob 09/27/1864 Fort Davidson, MO. Union forces outnumbered by more than 10 to 1 held off repeated attacks by Rebel forces, effectively preventing St Louis from being captured by the Confederates.

- 8) BGS 7-420-D 7/8 about 6:30pm
Big Spring, Van Buren, MO.

- 9) ALY 36-380-D 7/8 at 7:15pm
Old Red Mill, Alley Spring, MO. Sweet roads in the Ozarks!!



Old Red Mill, Alley Spring, MO

- 10) STO 17-375-A 7/8 at 9:38pm (23 minutes ahead of schedule)
Stone County in the Civil War, Mountain View, AR.
- 11) SAM 25-320-A 7/8 at 11:12pm
Sam's Throne, Mt Judea, AR.
- 12) BVR 37-315-A 7/9 at 12:46am
Beaver Bridge, Beaver, AR.
- 13) SAK 47-50-A 7/9 at 1:48am
University of Arkansas Razorbacks, Fayetteville, AR. Statue of Frank Broyles.
- 14) 14F 23-222-A 7/9 at 3:05am
Judge Faulkner's Cabin, Fourteen Flags Museum, Sallisaw, OK. Challenging riding through tight roads. Very dark at bonus location.
- 15) MLR 37-545-A 7/9 at 4:16am
Old Military Road, Talihina, OK.

16) WSP 29-455-A 7/9 at 4:57am

Indian Head Sculpture, Broken Bow, OK. This was supposed to be a Whispering Giants wooden carved sculpture of an Indian head. It was a group of large vertical wooden posts instead. No carved Indian head to be found. Peter Green was there just ahead of me and was on the phone with Rally Master Lisa Erbes. He said she said (what could go wrong!) it was a mistaken location and to take a photo of the wooden posts. He said she said it was ok for me too and that I didn't need to call. That 455 points was riding on a lot of he said she said.

17) CEN 27-250-A 7/9 at 6:38am

Center Point, AR. Shortly after Center Point the dawn broke. Having made it through the night with a couple catnaps, I was glad to see the light of day and the fresh energy that gave me.

18) MUS 16-275-A 7/9 at 8:21

Music City Texas Mural, Linden, TX. Very cool mural.



19) INT 31-400-A 7/9 at 9:35am

International Boundary, Logansport, LA.

20) LIT 8-309-A 7/9 at 11:16am (9 minutes behind schedule)

Sam "Lightnin" Hopkins, Crockett, TX. Blues guitarist with super-fast fingers who made it from Crockett to Carnegie Hall and influenced musicians world-wide along the way.

21) GRV 19-351-D 7/9 at 12:44pm

Hollie Tatnell, Colored Graveyard, Hearne, TX.

22) STM 48-100-A 7/9 at 1:14pm

Reveille "The First Lady of A&M", College Station, TX. My furthest point west. I knew that most Aggies are a couple standard deviations off center ☺ and this bonus gave me some perspective

on that observation. Back in 1931, a group of Aggies on their way back from Navasota (a visit to the nudist ranch?) hit a dog and took her back to the dorm to care for her. Since no pets were allowed, they kept her under cover. The next morning when the bugler blew “Reveille” to wake the cadets, she went wild barking, blowing her cover and giving her the name. She was adored and quickly became the school’s mascot. She was at all the games and led the team onto the field. When Reveille died, 13 years later, she was buried at the north gate to Kyle Field so she could watch her team. As new Reveilles became mascots and later died, they were also buried there. Some years ago, the north gate was rebuilt with solid walls so the Reveilles could no longer observe what was happening on the field. The solution: Build a miniature score board at the base of their graveyard so the Reveilles of old could see how their team was doing.



The Original Reveille 1931-1944



Current - Reveille IX

23) HAM 27-266-A 7/9 at 1:42

Frank Hamer, Navasota, TX. Texas Ranger extraordinaire. The stuff legends are made of. He’s the guy that caught and killed Bonnie and Clyde. Interestingly, I don’t remember Mr. Hamer from 2002 when I was in Navasota for the BL III. Must have been the eager anticipation of seeing the frolicking coeds.

24) JWH 2-344-A 7/9 at 3:18pm

John Wesley Hardin, Moscow, TX. An interesting contrast to the previous bonus. The kind of juxtaposition that Eddie would have thought was really cool. Frank Hamer was a legendary lawman. John Wesley Hardin was just the opposite. A notorious outlaw who killed over 30 men. Borne of his resistance to Union forces he claimed he only shot in self-defense. He was gunned down in El Paso in 1895.

25) BUR 39-292-A 7/9 at 4:46pm (44 minutes behind schedule)

Burr’s Ferry, Burkeville, TX. When I began the BLIX, little did I know I would be visiting some historical locations of my relatives. My father’s mother was a Burr from the line of Aaron. By my calculations that would make Dr Timothy Burr, founder of the ferry here, a fourth cousin.

From here I was heading into my rest bonus. I was almost 45 minutes behind schedule which was still good enough to visit Paul Pelland on time. It was going to be close though, as the window was only open 10:00am until noon. Never the less, I was ready for a much needed 8 hours of rest. As things often go when at the end of a long hard period of riding, little things can often snowball into time consuming gyrations. I booked a hotel by phone in Leesburg, LA about 30 minutes before I arrived. As I was searching for the hotel, I got all twisted up and couldn’t locate it. The configuration of the main highway through town really threw me for a loop. One-way double lanes in each direction, separated by

a super wide median that prevented convenient U-turns, coupled with a hotel that had an unexpected name on the sign resulted in my going in circles for almost 20 minutes before I dialed it in and finally got to my room. Such times are very frustrating and that's when I need to stop and take some deep breaths. I took a quick shower and was asleep almost right away. I was back on the road very close to the 8-hour point having verified and logged my rest receipts. Having a quality rest stop helped me get refocused and able to maintain my schedule.

26) COL 5-313-A 7/10 at 1:29am

Colfax Riot, Colfax, LA. Some really bad shit happened here. According to the marker erected in 1950, "The Colfax Riot resulted in 3 white men and 150 negroes being killed." After the Civil War, and after the disastrous Johnson (Lincoln's VP) Administration, President Ulysses S Grant struggled to help the freed men of the south. Grant, who very much aligned with Lincoln's philosophy of voting rights for the newly emancipated, faced strong resistance in the former confederacy. There were many instances of black people being slaughtered as they attempted to exercise their new voting rights. The episode in Colfax, not an isolated case by any means, epitomized the struggle, the cost in lives and was a step in the evolution of the Jim Crow south.

27) BEA 26-237-A 7/10 at 2:43am

Fort Beauregard, Harrisonburg, LA. Built by the Confederates to prevent the ascension of Federal gunboats up the Ouachita River.

28) FRK 34-290-A 7/10 at 3:25am

Forks of the Road, Natchez, MS. Slave auction site. You could just feel the sadness here.

29) SLS 48-85-A 7/10 at 4:48am

LSU Tiger Stadium, Baton Rouge, LA. Mike the Tiger.

30) DID 8-233-A 7/10 at 6:15am (27 minutes behind schedule)

Bo Diddley, McComb, MS. Acclaimed as a founder of Rock 'n' Roll.

31) OPR 13-152-A 7/10 at 8:26am

Oprah Winfrey, Kosciusko, MS. A young, pre-school Oprah Winfrey first appeared in front of an audience here at what was once the Buffalo African Methodist Episcopal Church.

32) SMS 45-25-A 7/10 at 9:21am

Davis Wade Stadium, Mississippi State, Starkville, MS. Woof Woof



33) SAL 45-30-A 7/10 at 10:40am

Bryant-Denny Stadium, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL. The legendary Bear Bryant had an astonishing record of 72-2 in this stadium.

34) PPP 42-125-T 7/10 at 11:53am (53 minutes behind schedule)

Paul Pelland, Birmingham, AL. Barber Motor Sports Museum has an incredible collection of motorcycles here as well as a highly regarded race track. Paul was here for a two-hour window, which I made with mere minutes to spare. Paul is an incredible person. After the IBR in 2003 he disappeared from the LD riding scene. He later disclosed he had been diagnosed with MS. He has re-emerged as a force to battle the disease as his life's mission. He has dedicated his life to fund raising for MS research and is on a mission to ride a million miles in doing so. That's his original Cure Chaser in the background of the photo. His story is an inspiration to all. You really need to support Paul. He is a life force like no other. *"I once was told a cure for MS was a million miles away, so I thought I would just go get it and bring it back."* Check out his story, see what his latest crazy idea is and donate to the cause at <https://www.longhaulpaul.com>



The Legend, Paul Pelland and myself with Cure Chaser in the background

35) CUR 12-470-T 7/10 at 11:53am

Cure Chaser, Birmingham, AL. John Harrison, who serves as a docent at the Museum, and famous IBA personality (2017 and 2019 IBR Scribe), was there to sign me in and vouch for my presence.

36) SAU 46-35-A 7/10 at 2:06pm (1 hour 19 minutes behind schedule)

Jordan-Hare Stadium, Auburn University, Auburn, AL. Bust of John Heisman. Construction was out of control around the stadium. A kindly gate keeper allowed me to park next to his shack and told me where to go for the photo. I love it when people go out of their way to help out.

Traffic steadily built all afternoon from Birmingham, through Auburn and into Atlanta. By the time I was navigating Atlanta, it was pretty much stop and go. It not only robbed precious time but also sapped energy needed to complete the route as planned. As time loss accumulated, I knew there would need to be some dropped bonuses to insure an arrival prior to midnight.

37) ECJ 43-225-D 7/10 at 4:00pm (1 hour 36 minutes behind schedule)

Eddie James, Atlanta, GA. Lisa chose this location as a tribute to Eddie. Eddie's bench sits at the highest elevation in Atlanta and has a wonderful view of the city's skyline.



Eddie was a Pepper. I'm a Pepper. Wouldn't you like to be a Pepper too? 🌶️

ROS 21-80-A Roswell, GA (Dropped)

MON 15-226-T Johns Creek, GA (Dropped)

38) NUK 12-159-D 7/10 at 5:14pm (2 hours behind schedule)

Georgia Nuclear Aircraft Laboratory, Dawsonville, GA

CHT 31-265-D Chattahoochee Fish Hatchery, Suches, GA (Dropped)

Several attempts to find a route into CHT resulted in a series of near catastrophic mistakes. The first mistake was the critical one from which others, much more consequential, followed. The rally book

clearly stated the bonus was available with 5 miles of gravel from State Hwy 60. In my rush to make up time after traffic delays in Atlanta I did not pay close enough attention to the information and did not validate the routing when my GPS showed a shorter route from State Hwy 52. The GPS showed a road where there was no road.

Moving along a bit further, I found an entrance into what turned out to be a new residential area entry road. I thought it might be the road I sought. The new road was being paved with the paving crew rolling the day's last fresh asphalt. I stopped briefly to ask the foreman if there was a way through. He said no. It was on a steep downhill slope, so I had no choice but to move forward looking for a place to turn around. I was trapped by the lane of new asphalt with no turns available. I saw no choice but to turn onto the new asphalt as I made my U-turn. I did not anticipate the reaction of the foreman. He came flying off the paving machine he had been sitting on so quickly I did not realize he was on me before he threw his whole body at the front of my motorcycle. I was moving slowly back up the steep road trying to negotiate the gravel and he stopped me dead in my tracks. He hit the windscreen so hard I thought it was busted off. I had my spot tracker on the shelf, and it came flying off its dual-lock mount. The only thing that kept it from flying off into the brush was the zip tie tether I had it on. He was so angry with me he was yelling at me, spit was flying from his mouth and I was certain he was going to beat the crap out of me. I was apologizing profusely. Somehow, he regained enough of his cool not to go to jail for murdering me and told me to get the hell out of there. When he stepped aside, I was off like a shot, adrenalin pegged. I felt like a total ass.

I moved farther to the west and found a road that headed north. I took it and my GPS quickly followed along and gave me a new route. It showed I had three miles until a turn. I was remembering reading about 5 miles but did not note the reference point, so I assumed I was on the track. I was making decent time on a narrow gravel road that was well groomed.

About two miles in I began to notice a strange aroma. I came around a corner and saw a vehicle with a man sitting in front of it, on the road, in a lawn chair. I was a little puzzled at first until I saw more tents, sleeping bags and the aroma began to grow into a stench. I realized I was riding through a homeless encampment. There were signs of at least a hundred people. I picked up my pace. Once I was through the encampment the road narrowed and became more difficult with markedly steeper sections.

As I climbed up the north Georgia mountain, it became so steep with large gravel I had a near death grip on the bike. I was standing on the pegs and fighting to keep moving forward up the steep graveled road without falling over. I knew if I fell, I would have a very difficult time getting the bike upright again. It was extremely tense.

I reached the intersection and made the turn and my GPS now showed 13 miles to go. The road ahead was steeper, and I knew I had blown it. I was now desperate and started looking for a way to extricate myself from the situation in which I found myself. I found a section that was less steep and was able to get the bike turned around on the narrow road after much effort and difficulty. Coming back down was much easier but it was still tense with the large gravel and stones in the road. I hauled ass through the homeless camp and breathed a huge sigh of relief once back upon pavement.

I checked in with the rally staff and they told me they had been watching my spot tracker with a sense of rising concern as they saw me heading in the direction where they had to send a rescue team in to pull out another rider. They were relieved when they saw me turn around. As I moved north on paved road, I was acutely aware of a numbness and neuropathy in my right hand. Apparently, the death grip I had

with my right hand had done some nerve damage and as the evening progressed the discomfort increased. Even to the point I began to consider my ability to continue past the end of the first leg. I could just see Eddie alternatively laughing and agonizing at the ludicrous situation I had placed myself in.

39) BRD 37-128-A 7/10 at 7:19pm
Blue Ridge Dam, Blue Ridge, GA.

NAN 42-100-A Tipton, GA (Dropped)
CHR 22-335-A Cherohala Skyway (Dropped)

40) STN 44-5-A 7/10 at 9:25pm (2 hours 53 minutes behind schedule)
Neyland Stadium, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN. The last of my 9 SEC Stadiums combo.

With the route bailouts after the north Georgia debacle I arrived in Maggie Valley shortly after 11pm, well prior to the midnight deadline. When I first planned the leg, I had a buffer of 4 hours and 11 minutes. This for all bonus stops, fuel stops, cat naps, traffic, construction and getting lost. I had used just over three hours of that time, so I was quite well off from a time perspective, however, I was exhausted. The off-route debacle in North Georgia had taken a heavy toll. I had dropped almost 1,000 points but worse I had unnecessarily exhausted myself. To me, honoring Eddie James meant doing my very best and to score as high as I could. I would have to dig deep to pull this off.

I would need as much time off the bike resting as I could possibly muster. At that moment, with all the talent that was riding, pulling off a win seemed out of reach. The plan was to get as much sleep as possible and be fresh for the second leg. This turned out to be much more difficult than I anticipated. Preparing for scoring was a nightmare. I was painfully tired from the riding. The pain and numbness in my right hand was turning out to be a true handicap now. I did not have the strength in my thumb and forefinger to hold a pencil. Completing the bonus claim form was truly challenging. Everything took much longer than it should have. I barely made the one-hour allowance to get scored after checking in. I was awarded all the bonus points I had claimed though and went off to the room to try and get some sleep. By then it was after 1am. Sleep was hard coming with the pain in my hand and I was worried about my ability to continue. I estimate I got, at best, two hours of sleep.

Leg One Top Ten:

Position	Rider name	L1 miles	L1 score
1	Jim Owen	3207	14497
2	Eric Bray	2912	14017
3	Billy Connacher	2943	13988
4	Peter Green & Rex LeGalley	3369	13952
5	Brian Nuehring	2969	12975
6	Corey Nuehring	2967	12975
7	Jeffrey Konicek	2871	12971
8	Rick Armour	2827	12731
9	Steve Gallant	3034	12538
10	Scott Thornton	2790	12435

Leg One Route – 3,207 miles



Leg Two

The meeting at 6am to get Leg Two information was well attended. Perhaps 70 to 80% of the riders were there. I was groggy and slamming the coffee to overcome the sleep inertia from so little sleep. There were two primary choices and they both looked viable. The first choice was to head northwest toward Minnesota and the Midwest. The second choice pointed more due north toward Maine and the Northeast. After rough calculations, it appeared I would have more points available from the NE route although I did not have the energy and time available to more closely evaluate and plan the route. I decided to go to the NE and use some initial planning to just get moving. It was very challenging deciding an optimum route with little more than a couple hours sleep. I built a route that got me up toward the north but was unable to put together a quality route after that. I decided I would gather bonuses in the south while working my way up north and plan the last part of the leg after some sleep.

At the 8am meeting I came into a room filled with the cacophony of riders sharing what they had experienced on leg one. I plopped down at a table with John Frick who looked like I felt. I asked him how it was going. He replied, "Please make it stop!! I can't remember when I've spent so much time on the sides of my tires." Yep!! I could definitely relate to that sentiment.

The meeting got underway and opened with an admonition to check routing before we blindly follow our GPS. A message that was very much on point and one that was reinforced by the throbbing in my right hand. That was just the warmup though. I thought David E.B. Smith was a super nice guy, and he is, but I soon discovered he is also capable of delivering a World Class Ass-Chewing. Apparently, some of the riders posted some stuff on social media during the ride. No Bueno. As the scores were announced for the first leg, I discovered I was barely holding onto first place and that it was anyone's rally. Several

fiercely competitive riders were poised and ready, close enough to easily close the gap with a strong second leg.

Here is my Leg Two Route:

MTM 6-355-T Mt Mitchell (Dropped)

On my way out of Maggie Valley and approaching Asheville on I-40 I had the opportunity to look more closely at the early bonus locations I was planning to bag. I realized going for these early bonuses were going to take a tremendous amount of time and energy due to the tight technical nature of the mountain roads. I made the decision to only obtain bonuses that were directly on a path to get me up to I-81 as quickly as possible, with the goal to reach Gettysburg, obtain the Peace Light bonus there and then get a hotel in Gettysburg to rest and plan the remainder of Leg Two. There was one exception though and that was the Coffee Mug bonus. That was an Eddie James inspired bonus and I wasn't going to miss that one either.

WCV 50-333-D Wilson Creek (Dropped)

This bonus was very close to the Coffee Mug bonus but too much gravel (5 miles, one way) too soon after the North Georgia debacle and so I bailed on this one.

- 1) MUG 2-357-D 7/11 at 10:40am (9 minutes behind schedule)
The Mug House, Collettsville, NC. I sure was glad I brought my mug. I learned that from Eddie. Take nothing for granted. If something is given to you or, is to be acquired as part of a bonus, keep it safe and available. My really cool BLIX Mug had to be in the photo. It has become my favorite coffee mug.
- 2) WTF 16-325-A 7/11 at 12:39pm
White Top Folk Festival, Whitetop, VA.

BUF 37-303-A Buffalo Mountain (Dropped)

BTW 10-385-T Booker T Washington (Dropped)

APP 44-539-T Appomattox Courthouse, VA. Mis-plot in rally book, not available (Dropped)

Trying to obtain the Appomattox Courthouse bonus was a delusional attempt of mine to convince myself that something was true when I knew damn good and well that it just wasn't. I have been to Appomattox many times. I know where it is, and for sure it wasn't in the location represented by the plot given in the Rally Pack. But hey, those TeamStrangers are pretty talented people. I wasn't entirely sure they didn't have the wherewithal to pick up the entire site and move it to the location represented. I was so sure they must have something viable there I actually made the turn off I-81 and headed east toward the plotted point. I was about three miles off the interstate when I received a text that alerted me to a mis-plotted bonus. I ignored it. I rode another couple miles not feeling quite right and finally looked at the text. Holy crap!! That was the bonus I was riding toward!! I pulled over and took a closer look. When I finally came to terms with what I was trying to do I felt pretty foolish. Eddie would have loved that one. I realized I just needed to get to Gettysburg and get some sleep.

AOM 38-304-A Apple Orchard Mountain (Dropped)

20M 38-248-A 20 Minute Cliff (Dropped)

- 3) SLV 34-257-A 7/11 at 4:59pm
Slave Auction Block, Luray, VA.

- 4) BYR 14-198-A 7/11 at 6:07pm

Admiral Richard E Byrd and Igloo, Winchester, VA. There were two bonuses associated with Admiral Byrd and his Fox Terrier, Igloo on Leg Two. This first one where Byrd was born had a nice statue of the Admiral with "Igloo humping his leg". Igloo was a stray who found his way onto Admiral Byrd's ship leaving on the North Pole Expedition. Igloo and Admiral Byrd quickly became fast friends. After the expedition Igloo traveled with Byrd on subsequent expeditions and lived at home with his family.



- 5) ELP 44-426-T 7/11 at 7:33pm (4 minutes ahead of schedule)

Eternal Light Peace Memorial, Gettysburg, PA. As I pulled into the parking lot, I saw Ian McPhee. After we spoke for a few minutes and I logged the bonus, I headed into Gettysburg and my hotel to take my 8-hour rest bonus and plan the remainder of the leg. I got some great rest and spent about an hour planning the remainder of the rally. It was too late for me to attempt the big bonuses in eastern Maine and the timing of a big point Mt Washington bonus just didn't work.

There were other big value bonuses on a counter-clockwise circuit that touched western Maine and headed north before proceeding west along the Canadian border and coming back south to West (By God!) Virginia. Rick and Jean Millers' place was a timed bonus that looked like a good anchor for the last night back into Lexington.

The timing of the rest of the rally was much tighter than what I had with Leg One. At the planned departure time from the rest at Gettysburg I had 1 hour and 40 minutes to work with all the way back to Lexington. That was going to make for some very precise riding with no time for getting lost and only about 30 minutes or so for cat naps before contemplating bailout points. Not only that but, if I was going to need bailouts, I needed to figure that out early and execute them as there did not appear to be viable choices toward the end of the leg.

Later, I learned that Ian McPhee had suffered from some mechanical trouble and was subsequently rescued by Bob Lilley and the very fine folks at Hermy's BMW in Port Clinton, PA.

Way to go, Bob!! Hermy's is my dealership and they are always fantastic. Bob is such a great guy to work with, people come from all over the US to buy a bike from Bob and Hermy's.

- 6) GOV 43-297-A 7/12 at 4:50am (26 minutes ahead of schedule)
Governor's Island Cannon, Millersburg, PA. A big heavy cannon forged at the Fort Pitt Foundry.
- 7) MTJ 31-315-A 7/12 at 6:12am
Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, Coaldale, PA.
- 8) ANT 19-283-A 7/12 at 7:34am
Pennsylvania Anthracite Coal Miners' Memorial, Forest City, PA.
- 9) WOO 1-320-A 7/12 at 8:20am
Woodstock, Bethel, NY. I was at Woodstock. It just wasn't in 1969. This was the original site and it was a beautiful bluebird morning with fantastic roads and perfect temperatures. It was hard to reconcile all those historical pictures against what I was seeing as an idyllic setting.



Original Woodstock Site

- 10) PEP 40-278-A 7/12 at 9:12am (54 minutes ahead of schedule)
Pepacton Reservoir, Andes, NY. No motorboats allowed. This 140-billion-gallon reservoir supplies 25% of New York City's water.
- 11) ZAD 25-285-A 7/12 at 9:55am
Zadock Pratt, Prattsville, NY.
- 12) SAR 11-674-T 7/12 at 11:50am
Boot Monument, Saratoga National Historical Park.
- 13) GRY 16-552-T 7/12 at 1:21pm
Mount Greylock War Memorial, Adams, MA. Tallest mountain in Massachusetts. A large monument to fallen soldiers from Mass is on top of the mountain.
- 14) EXP 47-289-A 7/12 at 1:55pm
Expired Parking Meter Grave Marker, Florida, MA.
- 15) UFM 36-375-D 7/12 at 3:21pm

Thom Reed UFO Monument, Sheffield, MA. The Reed family claimed to have experienced an alien abduction on September 1, 1969 (Perhaps they were on their way back from Woodstock). Thom later passed a polygraph test and the powers that be certified it as a true event.

16) TRT 12-565-T 7/12 at 4:02pm

American Museum of Tort Law, Winsted, CT. This little jewel of a museum has, as its center piece, a monument to Ralph Nader in the form of a 1963 Corvair. I was a bit ahead of schedule, so I took about 20 minutes off the bike washing the grime off my face and generally freshening up with food and water before proceeding on toward Boston. It was very refreshing.

17) ROC 5-250-A 7/12 at 6:12pm (on schedule)

Dr. Robert Goddard Rocket Launch, Auburn, MA.

18) IGL 14-450-T 7/12 at 6:58pm

Igloo's Tombstone, Dedham, MA. The second Igloo bonus. The Admiral was giving a lecture series out of town when he learned of Igloo's illness. He canceled his lectures and hurried home but, alas, Igloo had already died before he arrived.



Igloo's Grave site in the shape of an iceberg with the words, "HE WAS MORE THAN A FRIEND"

19) OTR 26-420-D 7/12 at 7:33pm

Kerouac Family Marker, "The Road is Life"

20) BBG 36-317-A 7/12 at 8:19pm (15 minutes behind schedule)

Betty and Barney Hill Graves, Kingston, NH. The Hills were the first reported alien abduction in the early 1960s. They claimed the aliens said they were from the Zeta Reticuli star system.

21) HWB 30-505-A 7/12 at 9:29pm

George HW Bush, "An Anchor to Windward", Kennebunkport, ME

22) WTS 39-435-A 7/12 at 11:07pm (3 minutes behind schedule)
Signpost, Bethel, ME

As I was moving through a very rural area of northern Maine shortly after midnight, I caught up with a slow-moving car. As I pulled out to pass the car, I saw it had the markings of a sheriff's vehicle. I was committed to the pass and was not being outrageous about it, so I continued forward and gave him a wave as I passed. Once ahead, I put on my full lights in the hopes that he would realize I had passed him for the opportunity to use the lights for safety and not stop me for questioning. It had the desired effect as shortly thereafter he pulled off into a small village.

Sometime later, just after I made the turn westward into New Hampshire, I encountered a moose and bobcat within several minutes of each other. It was for situations like this I made the choice for a lot of high quality (read: expensive) light capability. My philosophy was and continues to be, you can't have too much light. When I chose Clearwater Lights to mount on the RT, I questioned my sanity due to the price. The engineering, integration with the BMW RT CANBUS system and the ability to program the lighting for my specific needs made the decision easier. It turns out they had excellent customer service as well. I installed a set of Sevinas up high as driving lights. They produce a massive amount of LED light, programable in 10% increments for both high beam and low beam settings, in a nice tight 15-degree beam. I also mounted a set of Ericas down low on the Wunderlich engine guards. They produce a more all-purpose, excellent quality of led light in a 35-degree beam.

I was moving at a brisk pace on a very dark two-lane country road. I had the Clearwaters lighting up the way forward in excellent form. It is times like this I am completely in the flow with LD riding. I love these moments and realize that if I were not on some type of rally I would rarely, if ever, have the chance to experience this type of riding. The Butt Lite format provides excellent opportunities to enjoy these moments. Eddie would definitely approve.

As I came over a slight rise, I saw some movement about 100 yards ahead of me. I throttled back a bit and as I came closer, I saw a massive dark form coming out of the ditch on the right side. I throttled back some more and realized it was a humongous moose. I mean it was really huge. It lumbered clumsily across the roadway perhaps 100 feet in front of me and I was just amazed by how big it was. It looked like the head was as large as my motorcycle. The lights had helped me identify a potential threat early enough that it had just become part of the flow instead of a true threat.

I was still reveling in the excitement of the moose sighting and it wasn't more than a few minutes later I caught some movement from my left periphery. I throttled back again and as I did a juvenile bobcat came into full view, moving roughly parallel to me, ears pinned back, running hell bent for leather, trying to get away from whatever it thought I was. Little guy was cruising. I slowed down a bit more to pace him and he took an angle that slowly crossed the road from left to right. I was amazed. It was at least thirty seconds he was 30 feet in front of me, running as fast as he could before he disappeared into the brush on the right side. Incredible sighting.

23) CNH 33-400-A 7/13 at 12:34am

Carl Drega victims, Colebrook, NH. Carl, who had a history of conflict with government officials, turned out to be more into the dying part of "Live Free or Die". Sadly, he took a couple of New Hampshire state troopers, a judge and a county janitor with him, in addition to wounding several more lawmen before being killed.

- 24) V45 3-350-A 7/13 at 2:26am (9 minutes ahead of schedule)
45th Parallel Monument, Richford, VT. Half way between the equator and the north pole.
- 25) AKW 41-453-A 7/13 at 5:04am
Angus Mitchell Memorial Community Center, St Regis, QC. A little spit of Canada on the US side of the St Lawrence river. No passport required.
- 26) O45 3-722-A 7/13 at 5:45am (exactly on schedule)
45th Parallel Latitude marker, Long Sault, ON
- 27) LIF 17-440-A 7/13 at 7:20am
Edward John Noble Life Savers' Monument, Gouverneur, NY

The sun was just coming up and I was hitting the wall on fatigue. I had been riding continuously for about the previous 27 hours and it was time to stop for some rest. I'm a big fan of catnaps because they make such a big difference in cognitive function, judgement and riding ability. I hadn't needed any since having left Gettysburg because of the quality of rest I had there and the excitement of the wildlife sightings earlier in the ride. It was time for a good sleep now. The weather was perfect, dry and cool, and just right for a catnap in a cemetery. I love sleeping in cemeteries because they are places of quiet solitude and it's usually easy to find a spot out of sight of any passing traffic. I found a nice spot just on the south side of Gouverneur and bedded down for a nice sleep. In such cases, I don't set an alarm or otherwise dictate how much sleep I need to take. I let my body take as much as it needs and when I wake up, off I go. This morning I slept for almost 30 minutes, which is long for me. When I awoke, I was feeling quite refreshed and as I moved south toward the next bonus dug into my tank bag for breakfast. This morning it was a Clif Oatmeal and Banana straw pack, followed up with a double espresso Clif Gel Shot.

- 28) OFN 33-532-A 7/13 at 9:37am (43 minutes behind schedule)
Enchanted Forest Water Park, Old Forge, NY

The route down to Rick and Jean Millers' Estate in West Virginia was mostly south. The water park in Old Forge required me to travel back to the east some thirty miles. It was still early enough that there was virtually no traffic and the weather was spectacular. I made good time into Old Forge and found the water park, bagged the bonus and headed back west. Almost as soon as I left town I was greeted with a virtually endless line of traffic, all heading toward Old Forge for a day in the mountains. It made me realize that I had just missed being caught in this traffic. In rallying, sometimes it's timing, sometimes it's luck, sometimes it's both. If my body had needed an hour of sleep back in Gouverneur I would have been caught in the traffic and it would have put me even further behind, likely requiring some modification to my routing to the Millers' Estate.

- 29) IBH 46-298-A 7/13 at 10:59am
International Boxing Hall of Fame, Canastota, NY
- 30) CAR 13-423-A 7/13 at 12:50pm (60 minutes behind schedule)
Start-Finish Line for 1948 Car Race, Watkins Glen, NY.

Coming south toward Watkins Glen the GPS traffic function showed some heavy traffic delays approaching the village. Sometimes these “GPS” delays are phantoms but today they were collaborated by Waze. Seems there were a lot of people heading there for the weekend. I took a risky move and chose some back roads down from the north to avoid the traffic. The result was highly favorable over the original GPS ETA. I dropped into town with a 20-minute delay instead of the original GPS forecast of 90 minutes. Considering I had not much more than 90 minutes buffer on the whole leg from Gettysburg, I was glad not to have to spend it on one bonus. I located the bonus which was not easy, even though it had been a starting bonus for a Cape Fear Rally. I asked a surly looking HOG rider to hold my flag. He was delighted to do so, and with his biker babe, cheered me on! I thanked them profusely and was off. I had to be at “The Estate” by 9pm and it was going to be close.

31) KNU 46-307-A 7/13 at 2:12pm

Bare Knuckle Boxing Hall of Fame, Belfast, NY.

32) KZU 4-575-T 7/13 at 3:29pm

Kinzua Bridge State Park, Hamlin Twp, PA.

33) MIX 29-393-A 7/13 at 4:45pm (holding steady at 60 minutes behind schedule)

Tom Mix Historical Marker, Driftwood, PA.

As I left the Tom Mix bonus in rural north central Pennsylvania my GPS told me I was going to be about 45 minutes too late for “The Estate” bonus available until 9pm. I couldn’t believe it. What had happened? I calculated I had used an hour of my 1 hour 40 minutes of the buffer time since leaving Gettysburg. Looking closer, the GPS had me tracking out on slightly different route from the road I had approached the bonus on. That was not what I expected, and I immediately went into high alert. I did not have the time available, nor the physical strength in my right hand, to experience a reoccurrence of the Georgia mountain debacle. I also knew, in this area, from past experience, shortcuts that don’t work out can be devastating to route timing, bike and body. My suspicions were confirmed when the GPS route crossed a small stream on a dirt road and switched backed up a steep mountain slope.

I returned to what I believed to be the legitimate way forward and stopped to try to figure it out. This highlights a limitation while working with GPS alone and evaluating routes in rural areas with no main roads to reference. When zoomed in close the context does not exist to make sense of routing options. When zoomed out, even with the map set at the highest detail, visual on smaller roadways drops out of view. It is a dilemma that can only be truly solved with another source of map information. In my case, not wishing to take the time to dig out the computer and make a closer evaluation, I decided to continue on the paved road I had expected and hope the GPS would select a better choice for me somewhere down the road.

After a tense 20-minute period that showed me back tracking and arriving late to “The Estate”, the GPS offered a route that had me arriving with about 30 minutes to spare. I did have the option to bail out on the Ku Klux Klan bonus but that was worth a lot of points I didn’t want to lose. I breathed a sigh of relief as I came out of the rural area onto major roads.

34) KKK 35-446-A 7/13 at 6:49pm

Ku Klux Klan Riot Memorial, Lilly, PA. In April 1924 the Ku Klux Klan was growing north into PA. About 400 clansmen arrived by train to terrorize the local coal mines because they had hired some immigrants and fired some Klan members. They blew up some dynamite and burned

some crosses but while heading back to the train they were attacked by locals who were not cowed by the Klan's actions. Some locals were killed in the subsequent gunfire, but Lilly's resistance marked the beginning of the end to Klan activities in the area.

35) RME 53-700-T 7/13 at 8:21pm (1 hour, 7 minutes behind schedule)
Estate of Rick and Jean Miller, Fort Ashby, WV.

I arrived at "The Estate" 39 minutes before the bonus was no longer available. It was an oasis in the midst of a very grueling finish to a most challenging rally. The focus since leaving Gettysburg had been very intense, attested to the fact that I had only lost 67 minutes on my planned time over 1,954 miles, in a bit over 40 hours while collecting 31 bonuses. That included a 30-minute catnap and several fuel stops all while maintaining a pace that would pass muster during an Iron Butt Rally. In other words, I wasn't going like a bat out of hell. I was ready for some time off the bike.

The requirement was to spend at least 30 minutes enjoying the fine hospitality of the Millers. With the remaining route planned, I would need every minute I could scrape up. I had arrived about as late as I could and still have the expectation of completing the remainder of the plan. The Millers' driveway is quite intimidating for a tired rider on a big road bike. Steep gravel for about 50 feet up to a level parking area. More than one rider elected to leave the bike at the bottom and walk up. Once I arrived at the top and secured the bike, I was greeted by the Millers two dogs, Chili and Taffee. I was so happy to be off the bike for a while and the dogs were so happy to see me. I laid down on the ground and let them crawl all over me and lick my face. It was glorious.



Photos compliments of Rick and Jean Miller

Rick and Jean were wonderful hosts. After providing some yummy sandwiches/wraps with ice-cold water and soda there was an opportunity to splash some water on the face and get a quick cat nap. The thirty minutes went way too quickly, and it was time to bid the Millers goodnight and kiss the dogs goodbye.

I knew I was in for a very grueling night as the next three bonuses were down the spine of the West Virginia mountains followed by 50 miles out to the flatter terrain and interstate back to Lexington. For the next 180 miles it was rare I was over 40 mph and my right hand was feeling the strain of constantly changing speed and gear. I got to where I would snap on the cruise control for a couple seconds whenever I could just to get a moment's relief from gripping the throttle. It seemed never ending.

All the while, moving at a safe speed didn't seem to agree with what my GPS felt I needed to be doing to reach Lexington ahead of the penalty window. It's very frustrating doing the best you can and still lose time on the GPS's ETA. There was only one way forward and that was to just keep moving through it, so I kept my head down, ignored the pain as best I could, and focused on staying safe through the tight twisty WV mountains. I left the Millers about 8:55pm and according to my calculations, I had an hour buffer on a 6:00am arrival in Lexington. I had 500 miles to go with half of it on highly technical roads. Somehow 9 hours didn't seem like it was enough.

36) FLG 22-354-A 7/13 at 10:25pm (5 minutes behind schedule)

Falling Water, Ohiopyle, PA. The torture continues with some very tricky turns and tight roads.

37) IMD 23-270-A 7/13 at 11:46pm (13 minutes behind schedule)

International Mother's Day Shrine, Grafton, WV. Maintaining a forward progress while staying safe is taking a huge toll, especially on my right hand. I stop a couple times for several minutes just to rest my hand.

38) WSH 32-366-A 7/14 at 1:41am (25 minutes behind schedule)

Webster Springs Hotel Fire, Webster Springs, WV.

Webster Springs was my last bonus of the rally. From here I had a straight shot back to the Lexington finish. If I thought that meant I was out of the mountains and could just coast in, I couldn't have been more mistaken. I had another 30 miles of mountainous roads to navigate. By then my right hand felt like hamburger and I just didn't have it in me to make good time. Moving through the WV mountains had been excruciatingly painful. When I arrived in Webster Springs for the final bonus I had been "in the barrel" with my right hand, not knowing when I was going to hit the wall on pain tolerance and must stop for a significant period.

No time to lose, I pointed my wheels to the west and rolled on. I had about 45 minutes of twisties before I hit major roads and Interstate highway. I had lost significant time while claiming those last three bonuses and getting out of the mountains. My ETA to Lexington now showed I was going to arrive at 6:12am, well into the penalty window. That was without any catnaps along the way and barring a miracle, I knew I was going to need at least one, possibly two catnaps.

I hit US19 at Birch River and headed north the few short miles to I-79 where it was interstate the rest of the way in. Being back on the interstate and knowing there was an end in sight, and now being able to use cruise control most of the time made it a bit easier and had an invigorating effect. I had started the leg tired and confused, with a great deal of pain in my right hand and arm. I had worked through that to position myself to have a chance at a good finish and get a great rest. I had then planned and executed, to near perfection, a challenging route of over 2,100 miles in a bit over 46 hours with nothing more than the occasional catnap.

When I hit I-79 I did a simple calculation. I had 230 miles to go. What speed would I need to maintain to arrive at the hotel in Lexington at 6am? The resulting number seemed reasonable in that it would get me there in time (no allowance for catnaps) and it would not attract the attention of the law. I tweaked the cruise control to that speed and then added 1 mph for good measure. My right hand was throbbing hard and I was very grateful for the relief. Frankly, I'm not sure it would have made the remaining distance without cruise control. I knew I was going to have some fatigue issues, so I set to work combating them.

I spent the better part of the first hour eating and drinking. It takes quite a bit of effort and caution to safely eat while traveling on a motorcycle, and so it engages the brain, which holds off the nods. Eating on the bike is best done while on a broad straight road with little traffic so I had ideal conditions. It is very difficult to stay on a proper eating routine while in the twisties and that had been one of the major challenges with this Butt Lite. Very little interstate. I drew the process out as long as possible and when it was finished, I decided it was time for a phone call. Engaging in conversation is also a great way to hold off the nods. I'll never forget the time during the 2005 IBR where I was toast from coming up through NJ and NY in vacation shore traffic and needed to get to the hotel in Portland, ME for a much-needed rest. I had called Bill Wade, my good friend, fellow pilot and motorcycle mentor to help me out. He had talked to me about various things and before I knew it, I was pulling into the Portland hotel parking lot. Bill has always been there for me, at any hour of any day. I called on Bill again to help me get to Lexington. I have no idea what we talked about, but we talked for a half hour or so and it got me safely closer to Lexington.

After my conversation with Bill, I noted that the time was looking very good. I called Janet. She had flown in to Lexington for the finish and would be there waiting for me when I got there. We talked for a while and I let her know things were going well and I would be there right at 6. When I ended the call with her I had about 30 miles to go. It was a chip shot to the finish. That in itself is invigorating, and I knew I had overcome any tendency to get the nods and need to take a catnap. The fact that it was starting to get light in the sky behind me was helping as well.

I pulled into the parking lot with a couple minutes to spare. The arrival was quite emotional. Janet was there with a big hug and kiss. Manna from heaven. I was finished. John Pedrow was there to take my final odo and issue my arrival time. I love John. He was there at the BL III in Navasota those many years ago and is a main stay of the Butt Lite Staff. Always willing to go the extra mile with a smile on his face. I think Eddie had something to do with that. The official time of arrival, 5:58am. I was in with no penalty points. What a wonderful relief. I could just hear Eddie saying, "good job, Jim, nice ride". Now for scoring.



John Pedrow checking me in at the finish in Lexington

Scoring is always a high threat environment with plenty of opportunity for the tired rider to “lose points at the table”. These lost points can be as simple as making an entry error on the Bonus Claim Form, or they can be more significant like forgetting to have your bike in the photo, when required. Careful attention must be paid to claiming and recording the bonus. Fortunately, I did not lose any points and scoring was straight forward.

There was the opportunity for a shower and some sleep before the closing festivities began. For the hour or so before the closing banquet begins there is some great opportunity to visit with other riders and share stories. It was a truly great rally and there were plenty of good stories to hear and tell.



Leg 2 Routing – 3,034 miles



Epilogue

The banquet was awesome. The people, simply the best. The stories incredible. There were some fiercely competitive riders in this rally, and they rode incredible rides. In the end I had pulled out the victory. Since that fateful day in 2009, almost 10 years ago; the day Eddie died in that tragic, freakish motorcycle accident, our community has not been able to fill the gaping hole left by his absence. I can just see him with that big ole paw, a huge bear hug and that life giving, infectious grin. He would have told me how proud he was of the ride I rode and what I went through to gain the victory. For those of us who knew him, he still carries on within us. This community of like-minded crazy riders all owe him a wonderful debt of gratitude for the legacy he left behind. That spirit of exuberance and youthful determination, that ability to look beyond the horizon, and yes, his gift for looking beyond his own hardships and adversities. You are gone, Eddie, but not forgotten. Thank you for what you gave to this community and to me personally. I'll miss you as long as I am living. I know you are cruising some incredible roads in the next life and I look forward to riding with you there some day. Thanks to your ability to forgive and seek inclusion, I have truly been redeemed.



Unless otherwise noted, most pictures are credited to Lisa Erbes. Thank you Lisa.

Links to Bonus Lists for each Leg

http://www.teamstrange.com/buttlite_archives.htm





Top Ten

BLIX Final Standings with Miles and Points per Leg

Position	Rider name	Final score	Total miles	L1 miles	L1 score	L2 miles	L2 score
1	Jim Owen	32724	6241	3207	14497	3034	18227
2	Billy Connacher	30644	5883	2943	13988	2940	16656
3	Eric Bray	29842	5966	2912	14017	3054	15825
4	Rick Armour	28254	6104	2827	12731	3277	15523
5	Steve Gallant	27817	6196	3034	12538	3162	15279
6	Scott Thornton	27689	5696	2790	12435	2906	15254
7	Dylan Spink	26326	6022	3046	11926	2976	14400
8	Jeffrey Konicek	25771	5444	2871	12971	2573	12800
9	John & Nadine Huval	25211	5499	2832	12128	2667	13083
10	Kevin Gardner	24194	5728	3187	12308	2541	11886
11	Jay Bolinger	24099	5440	2749	11902	2691	12197
12	Brian Nuehring	23801	5319	2969	12975	2350	10826
13	Corey Nuehring	23801	5323	2967	12975	2356	10826
14	Lyle Monroe	23711	5369	2051	9266	3318	14445
15	Sjef Vanderaa	23640	5512	2496	9399	3016	14241
16	Peter Green & Rex LeGalley	23514	5340	3369	13952	1971	9562
17	Beth Madson	22989	4981	2626	11344	2355	11645
18	Greg Farmer	22953	5045	2643	11783	2402	11170
19	Gregg Lenentine	22884	5341	2888	11854	2453	11030
20	Gary Huff	22831	4880	2500	10761	2380	12070
21	Lynda Lahman	22220	3978	2058	9537	1920	12683

22	Terry Lahman	22220	3962	2049	9537	1913	12683
23	Ryan Rahjes	22156	4759	2563	10366	2196	11790
24	Ian McPhee	22140	5336	2882	12379	2454	9761
25	Steve Snell	22009	4995	2654	9749	2341	12260
26	Ron Messick	21811	5862	2783	11826	3079	9985
27	Jim Winterer	21618	5556	2672	9622	2884	11996
28	Angelo Patacca	21512	4296	2201	10022	2095	11490
29	Kurt Worden	21120	5029	2191	10311	2838	10809
30	Mike Hall	21103	4652	2353	9931	2299	11172
31	Eric Chernin & Shirley Davis	21057	5072	2337	9786	2735	11271
32	Rick Snyder	20577	5239	2657	10178	2582	10399
33	Paul Meyer	20564	5465	3383	10467	2082	10097
34	Eric Edelman	20251	3737	2038	10245	1699	10006
35	John Frick	20246	4845	2459	9847	2386	10399
36	Gerry Arel	20105	4572	2436	9625	2136	10480
37	Mike Hutsal	19902	4231	4231	10733	3056	9169
38	Cary Pettinger	19897	4730	2745	10728	1985	9169
39	Roy Kjendal	19804	4708	2230	10077	2478	9727
40	Freddie Edelman	19587	3831	2089	9935	1742	9652
41	Lisa Hecker	19514	3982	2124	9071	1858	10443
42	Bob Bowman	19478	4990	2822	7988	2168	11490
43	Steven Rufo	19437	4011	2140	8994	1871	10443
44	Mike Riley	19194	4206	2429	9225	1777	9969
45	Martin Cover	19184	3995	2125	9271	1870	9913
46	Karen McCauley & Mariah Thompson	19114	3976	2128	9760	1848	9354
47	Nathan Smurdon	19083	5620	2424	8675	3196	10408
48	Mike Nolan	19031	4234	2270	9846	1964	9185
49	Yancey McCauley	19014	4022	2152	9660	1870	9354
50	Daniel Eckert	18725	3891	1956	8481	1935	10244
51	Don Duck	18718	4335	2342	10601	1993	8117
52	Jim Burriss	18663	3921	1835	8171	2086	10492
53	Barry Myers	18616	4471	2154	10805	2317	7811
54	James Epley	18321	4707	2672	7528	2035	10793
55	Kith Burkingstock	18219	4396	2188	8773	2208	9446
56	George Levar	18146	3307	1878	9104	1429	9042
57	Bill Cumbie	18073	3330	1797	8934	1533	9139
58	Nancy Lefcourt	17903	4456	2520	7917	1936	9986
59	Martin Little & Rebecca McCallum	17699	3320	1728	8440	1592	9259
60	Andy Regnier	17581	4712	2434	7879	2278	9702
61	Doug & Liz Jacobs	17428	3724	1977	7536	1747	9892
62	Trey Nicoud	17043	4287	2384	8427	1903	8616
63	Michael Baker	16833	3907	1872	8596	2035	8237
64	Brent Cornell	16610	4445	2357	7324	2088	9286

65	Jon Good	16470	4240	1934	6927	2306	9543
66	Chuck Lackey	16231	3376	1860	8546	1516	7685
67	Jesse Lucas	16231	3461	1907	8546	1554	7685
68	Raven Park	15941	2767	1898	8747	869	7194
69	Brian North	15442	4292	2328	9378	1964	6064
70	Paul Partin	15441	2932	1745	7321	1187	8120
71	Rob Carlo	15405	5663	2687	6007	2976	9398
72	Todd Lipps	14549	4302	2123	7330	2179	7219
73	Maura Gatensby	14082	3130	2286	9240	844	4842
74	Ken Cook	13898	4985	2229	6433	2756	7465
75	Darryl Doughty	13066	3712	2633	6973	1079	6093
76	Lynne Carey	12590	2203	1176	5665	1027	6925
77	Ken & Linda Schleman	12568	3264	1808	5686	1456	6882
78	Tad & Karen Scott	12437	2656	2656	12437		DNF leg 2
79	JD Smith	11843	3807	2311	4657	1496	7186
80	Adrian Scudella	7520	1813	1813	7520		DNF leg 2
81	Lee Miller	5156	2457	2457	5156		DNF leg 2
82	Bruce Scudella	4830	1833	1833	4830		DNF leg 2