

The Fastest 45 Days

45,000 Miles in 45 Days

**By
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Don't let the title fool you, this write up has nothing to do with speed and everything to do with how quickly time can pass by while planning for and riding a motorcycle on a multi-day trip.

I am a relative newcomer to the long-distance riding community having completed my first 1000-mile day in 2008. After that day my passion for long distance riding was found and since then I have completed longer and more challenging rides, along with participating in some organized group long distance rides. I have also participated in various competitive rallies, to include the 11-day Iron Butt Rally. I also enjoy more leisure riding such as attending various ride to eat type events and the occasional moto camping adventure.

The following write up covers the two plus years of planning, preparation and actual riding for an idea that came to me in 2016. While the write up does not detail everyday leading up to the ride, or the actual ride itself, I hope it does explain some of the thought process regarding the planning and execution of the ride as well as sharing some of the daily experiences and encounters along the way. As you read through this please keep in mind that I'm a "rider" and not a "writer."



“I wonder why no one has ever ridden a 35/35 or a 40/40”? That one simple question came to me during the 2016 Iron Butt Association Pizza Party and has since changed my life forever. It was during the rider recognition segment of the dinner event when Mike Kneebone recognized Dave Zien for riding his Harley Davidson 31,000 miles in 31 days back in July of 2005. Almost as quickly as the question had come to me it was also dismissed by me as I came to the immediate conclusion that a person had to either be retired or self-employed to have that much free time to attempt such a ride. I am neither retired nor self-employed, so for the remainder of the evening I enjoyed the storytelling among some friends and fellow riders, and I didn't give the question any more thought that night.

The next morning, I headed home on my 1000-mile ride back to Dallas and that one simple question kept coming back to me. Why, in the 10 plus years since Dave Zien had done it, has no one ridden more than 31,000 miles in 31 days? Other than the having enough time off issue, could there be some sort of physical or mental limitation for riding that kind of distance in that time frame? I started some hypothetical thinking that if I could take all my vacation at one time, how many consecutive days could I feasibly have available to actually ride? I spent a considerable amount of time on the ride home visualizing calendars and working on different scenarios to figure out the maximum time I could get off to attempt something close to a 35-day ride. Currently I get 4 weeks of vacation every year which equals 20 paid days off. If I started riding on a Saturday and added in weekends, then I could get to 30 consecutive days off. That alone could be a factor as to why no one had ridden more than 31,000 miles in 31 days. About halfway home I remembered that I also have the option to roll 5 vacation days over from the previous year if I don't use them. With an additional 5 days off and another weekend added in the number was now at 37, and if I planned the trip during a holiday weekend with an additional company paid day off, I could get to 38 consecutive days. I was now very intrigued by the idea of seeing if it was physically and logistically possible to ride more than 31,000 miles in 31 days.

At that point the one simple question turned into two more questions. The first being would my company allow me to use all my vacation time at once, and secondly when would I be able to attempt this ride? As it turned out there was no issue with my company's vacation policy or with my Managers approving the time off. I'm fairly certain that they didn't believe I would actually attempt anything so ridiculous when I made the request and they just went ahead and agreed to it. The second part was when would I be able to attempt this ride? 2016 was out of the question since I had already used some vacation for the pizza party and I was committed to riding the George A. Wyman Rendezvous in May, which would require another week of vacation. 2017 was also out of the question as I would be participating in my third Iron Butt Rally (IBR) that summer as well as the Ride around Texas (RAT). 2018 would be the earliest I could expect to be able to make this attempt. This also meant that almost all my vacation time from 2016 to the beginning of 2019 would need to be committed to motorcycle riding endeavors. In just a few days' time the one simple question had started to become a bit of an obsession and I was getting excited at the idea of attempting such a challenge.

When I started looking at the 2018 calendar, I quickly realized that using the Memorial Day holiday as one of the 38 days and starting on Saturday May 26th, I could ride until Monday July 2nd. That was just one vacation day short of bridging the gap from a 38-day ride until the next paid holiday on Wednesday July 4th which would allow this ride to reach the 40-day mark.

How awesome would it be to finish a ride like this with some BBQ and fireworks on the last day of the ride? After some more discussions with my company's HR department I discovered that it was possible to take unpaid time off from work, with various approvals, to be able to achieve 40 consecutive days off.

At this point I had eliminated any work-related excuse or reason to not attempt a ride of this scale, so as far as I could tell the only thing stopping me from making this attempt would be me. And although I had a little over two years before the planned start, I knew that time would go by way faster than I would want it to.

Once the time off questions and the dates for the ride were answered the next logical question, in my opinion, was where would I go on this 40-day ride? What would I want to see and what other certified rides would I want to attempt during this time frame? Did I want to make it one long continuous road trip, maybe venture into Canada and Alaska? The possibilities seemed unlimited given that much time to just go out and ride day after day. However, I believe there may have been another person in my household that thought the next logical question should have been how much will a 40-day motorcycle ride cost? When it comes to motorcycle riding in my house it's rare to have the two residents ask the same questions at the same time with the same concerns.

Eventually in 2017 I did work out a budgetary estimate for her, but it may have fell a little short of capturing the actual cost of the ride. We don't like to talk about it in my house, so I won't go into those details for this writing.

In my garage I have a map of the lower 48 states hanging on a wall. Over the past few years I have placed stick pins in the map for various places I had ridden to. I walked past that map almost every day for several years and most times I didn't really pay attention to it. Now that I was going to try and plan a 40 day ride that map was going to get almost daily attention from me. Most nights after work I would spend time trying to visualize different 1000-mile routes on the map. I knew that I wanted to complete a 48/10 ride during the 40 days but wasn't sure what route I was going to use. I also planned on riding to the four corners of the lower 48 states and doing the Ride around Texas, but I didn't really have a lot of other rides in mind yet. I didn't want to get too committed to trying to do too many things and not allow myself the flexibility of just being able to ride somewhere based on weather issues or other things that may come up.

In May of 2016 I rode out to San Francisco to participate in the George A. Wyman Rendezvous and attempt my first 50CC ride. To this point the only rider I had shared the 40-day idea with was my riding buddy and fellow IBR finisher Kevin Sawatsky. Kevin was also working on a 30-day ride of his own, and we routinely get together and compare ideas and just talk riding in general. Once in San Francisco there were several riders that I knew from previous events and rallies so one day at lunch I decided to socialize the idea of a 40-day ride to a small group of them and see what their thoughts were? For the most part the idea was well received, and everyone agreed it would be a lot of miles for a long time. Howard Entman was one of the riders and asked that I reach out to him before I started the ride to discuss the overall plan. Howard coordinates the verification team for ride certification in the Iron Butt Association, so he along with others would be the ones verifying this ride attempt.

Later in the summer of 2016 I decided that I would use Ron Ayer's 48 state route for part of the 40-day ride. Since Ron had started in Maine and finished the 48 states portion in Washington State, that route would make it more convenient to reach two of the four corners in those states. Retracing Ron's route starting from my home in the Dallas area to Maine and returning home from Washington would take about 14 days of riding in total. I also made the decision that I would not make this trip one long continuous ride. I would plan on spending about half of the nights at my home and the other half out on the road.

At the Big as Texas Party in October of 2016 I was working as a volunteer for the event and was able to discuss the ride more with Howard and briefly mentioned it to Mike Kneebone as well. Another volunteer at the event was the ever present IBA event volunteer, and all-around riding Guru Dave McQueeney. Dave was in on some of these discussions and asked if I was looking at doing the I-40 in 40-hour ride. It was something he had been working on and when I mention 40 in 40, he thought that may be the same thing. In talking with Dave, it seemed like something that would be interesting to try and complete as part of this ride, so I added it to the list of rides to attempt during the 40 days.

Through that winter I continued to research different routes and mileage estimates for what I called my "loops" and "out and backs." These would be rides that originated and ended at my house each day. Loops would consist of a route that went in a circular pattern, such as riding from my house in the Dallas area to Lubbock to Amarillo to Tulsa and back to my house. Out and backs were generally a straight line, such as from my house up I-35 to Belleville Kansas and back to my house. I worked out several of these so as to leave myself options in case the weather was not favorable in any one particular area for that day.

By early 2017 my focus started shifting to the Iron Butt Rally coming up in June, as well as the Ride around Texas event in May. I had completed both the 2013 and 2015 IBR's on two different BMW K1600GTL's, but now I would be riding a 2015 BMW R1200GSA for the 2017 IBR. The RAT would be my shakedown ride before the IBR to work out any last-minute adjustments, although I didn't really expect to need any as the Wyman ride the previous summer had shown that the GSA was a good fit for me and this type of riding. Except for the addition of a 1-gallon water jug mounted above the right passenger foot peg, my bike is normally in rally trim for my everyday commuter activity. I don't have equipment that comes on and off the bike for different types of riding.

The RAT turned out to be a great ride as my riding buddy Kevin and I ended up riding together for the entire time. Although I had already planned to do the RAT as part of the 40/40, I knew that this would be a ride I would want to do again. While it was challenging it did offer a wide variety of riding environments and was a pretty efficient way to make some big miles, even though there wasn't a lot of interstate riding. Since Kevin and I had ridden in the clockwise direction this time, I decided to ride it counter clockwise during the 40/40 ride.

After the 2017 IBR I realized that I was less than a year from attempting the 40-day ride and that time was going to go by faster than I wanted. I decided to start tracing out the possible routes on the map that was hanging in my garage. By doing this it made it easier to visualize the different locations I would be riding to and also gave some added motivation every day I walked by it.



I knew I wouldn't be able to ride all the roads and routes I had traced out, but it was helpful to have plenty of planning options in case I needed to make a last-minute change to the days riding plan. As the weeks passed the planning continued on and although I didn't necessarily do something every day leading up to the May 26th start date, I did give the ride some thought every day.

While I had read Ron's Ayres book documenting his 49 state ride a couple of times over the past few years, I decided to read it again in the fall of 2017. It was during this reading that I noticed the date that Ron had started his ride on, June 7th 1998. I quickly realized that I would be out on my 40-day ride 20 years later on the same days that Ron completed his ride. I immediately decided that I needed to be in Kittery Maine on the evening of June 7th 2018 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Ron's historic ride. This new plan suddenly gave some structure to my 40/40 ride and all the routes I had been working on to this point. Although I had all these different routes worked out and a couple of different rides I wanted to do, I didn't have any particular order I was planning on doing them in. With June 7th now being the one hard date when I was planning to be at a specific location at a specific time, I now knew how many days I could plan on riding prior to heading for Maine and roughly how many days I had to plan for after returning from Washington State.

There was no way I was going to be able to keep the same pace that Ron had during his ride. He was riding to set a record and I would be riding in more of a marathon type pace, but I thought retracing his route on the 20th anniversary would be a good way for me to say thanks to Ron for all he meant to the LD community over the years. The only time I had ever met Ron was at the 2014 Defective Gene Pool gathering where he was inducted into their Hall of Fame, but he made an impression on me and this small gesture would be my thanks to Ron.

So now the plan would be to do some local riding and some short-day trips prior to departing for the 48-state ride and picking up two of the four corners in Maine and Washington. After returning home I would need to get to San Ysidro California and Key West Florida to complete the four corners ride prior to June 28th. I would fill in the remaining days with some more local riding and save the RAT for the final three days of this ride.

Early in the planning stages of the ride it became obvious that I would need to do most, if not all, of the motorcycle service work myself. This isn't a big deal as I am a mechanic by trade, but I usually have all my service work done by the North Dallas BMW shop. However, during this ride, I knew it would not be possible to easily coordinate multiple service stops during peak riding hours in the day. I also knew that it wouldn't really be efficient to have tire changes done at various bike shops around the country as my tires wore and new ones would be needed. I normally have a spare rear wheel for whatever motorcycle I am using for rally type riding. That way I can have a fresh tire already mounted and ready to go at a check point and not have to worry about scheduling a tire change while on the clock. Since I already had a spare rear wheel for the GSA, I started searching for a spare front wheel late in 2017. The plan would be to have a spare set of wheels ready to go in the garage and swap them out as needed prior to heading out on longer legs of the ride as to try and avoid needed shop visits while on the road. Once I used up a tire my wife would take the removed wheels to the local BMW shop for new rubber and have it waiting for me at home for the next time a tire change was needed.

I normally don't normally concern myself with oil changes during extended rides such as the Iron Butt Rally. Depending on how far I have to ride to the start of the event I routinely go 12-14 thousand miles between oil changes while participating in an event that has a lot of highway miles over a relatively short period of time. During my normal riding routine at home I do stick to the scheduled maintenance as called out by the manufacturer. For this 40 day ride I would plan on doing the service work about every 10 days, which would amount to three full services during the ride. This would consist of changing the oil and oil filter, final drive fluid, air filter, spark plugs, and brake pads as needed. I did not plan on doing any valve checks during the 40 days unless something became obvious during the ride. In the 40,000 plus miles I have put on the bike since I purchased it, a valve adjustment has never been needed.

As part of the planning for this ride I needed to consider what a normal riding day might consist of. In talking with Howard, the ride did not need to consist of 40 consecutive 1000-mile days, same as a normal 10/10th. Some days would be more than 1000 miles while others, usually service days, would be less. In the past I have ridden a 1000-mile day in as little as 14 hours, but that was all interstate riding with no delays and minimal stops. I knew I would not be able to repeat that kind of a riding pace everyday given the different locations I was planning to go.

Several of the loops I had routed, as well as the 48-state route and the RAT, would involve some non-interstate riding. I would also be traveling through some of the largest cities in the U.S. during this ride and that can always slow the pace depending on the time of day. I estimated that my average travel/riding day would be in the 16-18-hour range. Clearly some days would be longer while others would be much shorter. This would make for the occasional long day but wasn't anything that I thought would be too much of an issue. According to my Fitbit I usually only sleep about 5 ½ to 6 ½ hours a night so if I could get 6-8 hours off the bike each day that would be good.

At the beginning of 2018 I started a countdown calendar leading up to May 26th. It was hard to believe that almost two years had gone by since the Jacksonville event in 2016, but I knew the next few months would go even quicker. I ordered the service items that I would need and also found a spare front wheel early in the year so that was one less thing to worry about. I had already proven that I could get 20,000 miles out of a front tire and around 10-12,000 miles out of each rear tire on the GSA, so my estimate was going to be 2 front tires and 4 rear tires for the 40-day ride. My first set of brake pads on the bike had lasted well over 25,000 miles so I estimated 2 sets for them as well just in case.



Late in March of 2018 I contacted Howard to discuss the ride and sort out some of the documentation requirements for such a long ride. I gave him an overview of the different locations I planned to go to and the different ride certificates I would be trying to complete. When I mentioned that I would be making a trip to Key West Howard asked if I had considered riding the Lap of Florida. I didn't know what that ride was, but after Howard explained the route it seemed like something that could be done by adding a couple of stops while I was in Florida. I would need to do some planning to figure out the best start location for me, which would be either Perdido Key or Amelia Island, and then what direction to go in. At the end of our discussion it was agreed that I would touch base with him again a few days before the start of my ride.

On April 7th, 2018 I attended a local RTE in Celina Texas that had several fellow IBA riders in attendance. One of the riders was Danny Dossman who was looking forward to a big ride of his own at the end May. Danny was one of the riders at the 2016 Wyman rendezvous, so he was aware of my 40-day ride plan and we both got to talking about our upcoming adventures. Shortly into the discussion Danny asked me if I was aware that Steve Diederich out in California had just started his attempt at a 40/40 ride. I couldn't believe it and thought Danny might be messing with me until he showed me the Facebook page. I was totally shocked that someone had come up with the same 40/40 ride idea and now after two plus years of planning someone was going to possibly beat me to the 40-day milestone. That news really kind of shocked me and I was more than a little discouraged for several days after finding this out.

For the next few weeks after the Celina RTE I followed along on Steve's Facebook page and gave a lot of thought to what I would do now with my 40-day plan. Would I stick with the original plan and see if Steve could actually complete his 40-day ride? We clearly had different routes we were going to be riding so if we both stuck to the 40-day ride timeframe the difference between the two would be the mileage total and the different locations we would ride to. If Steve did reach the 40-day mark, did I want to try and do more than that? If I was going to try and ride more than 40 days, I would need to have some additional discussions with my office to see about getting more unpaid time off from work, as well as my wife's buy in to this additional riding time. After another discussion with my manager and our HR department the additional time off was agreed upon if I wanted to use it.

It didn't take long to figure out that Steve was going to reach his 40-day goal so I came to the conclusion that I would try and do more than the 40 days I had originally planned on. 41 days would be more than Steve's ride, but didn't seem like a very sporting thing to do and was kind of an unusual number. So, I decided that 45 days would be my new goal when I set out on May 26th.

I continued to follow Steve's progress through the end of April and into May and kept fine tuning my schedule to add a couple more locations and work out the timing of when I needed to be somewhere. In late May Tim Masterson and Cliff Wall would be leading a group of riders retracing George Wyman's historic 1903 ride across the country. Online they had invited riders to come out and visit with the group at the end of each days riding schedule at pre-determined locations, so I was planning to make one of the stops and have dinner with some fellow Wyman riders.

In May I made a strategic decision to trade in my wonderfully fantastic dream truck for something a little more practical. I was going to get a car that not only I would enjoy, but also something that my wife and daughter would actually be willing to drive if they needed to. My wife didn't really like my truck, which I had bought on a whim, and I didn't really have a need for something like it. A little back story to my thinking here was that in 2013 while riding in the Big Tex Rally I hit a deer and totaled my bike. I also broke a couple of ribs and my collar bone and at the time I didn't have a four wheeled vehicle so I had to shop for something I could drive while I was recovering. I'm not naive to the fact that riding a motorcycle presents a certain level of risk not shared with other motorists and trying to cover this many mile in such a timeframe somewhat adds to the assumed risk we normally ride with. I'm a pretty cognizant rider of things going on around me and I'm rarely surprised by some of the idiotic things I see while riding, but I also know I can't control or react to everything that may be presented to me while traveling. So just in case I were to have another get off and had to recover for a while I wanted to already have the vehicle in the drive that I could easily get in and out of. I can always get another truck after the ride.

The only thing I changed about my daily routine prior to the ride was that I would make time each night to sit on the bike for at least one hour while looking at the map on the garage wall. My daily commute each day is only 28 miles round trip and I hadn't ridden a 1000-mile day since Kevin, and I had ridden up to Nebraska in August of the previous year to see the eclipse. Other than the hour on the bike each night I did no special conditioning or training for this ride.

After getting the bike serviced just before the start the only changes I made, that aren't part of my normal daily riding configuration, was the addition of the 1-gallon water jug on the right passenger foot peg and three bags mounted on top of each pannier and the top case.



These additional bags are where I keep my heated gear as well as the majority of my food and snacks along with extra gloves and some free space for things like extra water. The top hard case is where I keep the receipts and the log book for the ride, along with a couple of check lists on

the lid and a rally flag I got in 2012 at a rookie rally clinic in Denver. The left pannier is where I keep my back pack with clothes and items needed for hotel stays and the right one carries tools and some repair items along with a pair of regular shoes in case I have to travel home without the bike. The only additional item I added to my normal inventory was a small Slime air compressor. I normally carry a small one as well as a micro compressor from Aerostich, but I had never used the micro and the Slime one I carried had been used several times, so I wasn't sure how much life it had left in it. I was now going to be riding with 3 different air compressors' as well as Co2 cartridges and a hand pump. I don't like being stuck with a flat tire.



Mounted in front of me on the bike I have the following equipment available to provide me with some key information while riding. While some may find the layout cluttered, I find it very comforting to have specific information available at a glance when needed. On the left side of the handle bar is a Garmin 665 GPS with a XM subscription for radio, weather and traffic information. This GPS is my secondary navigation source and is mainly used to provide me with trip data regarding speed, heading, elevation, and overall moving average information. Mounted in front of the 665 is a SPOT III satellite tracker which allows for trip following and route storage via the SpotWalla website. Next to the 665 I have my iPhone mounted with various travel type apps loaded on it. In the center of the wind screen is a 7-inch monitor for displaying the images from the FLIR camera which is physically mounted on the left upper crash bar. Below the monitor I have a Valentine V1 radar detector. On the right side of the handle bar I have a BMW NAV V GPS that is my primary navigation source which provides arrival time, distance to turn, engine temperature, and current fuel consumption. This can also display different performance data pages that can be scrolled through using the control wheel on the left-hand grip. Below this unit I also have a dual USB charging outlet that can power my phone as well as charge my helmet intercom unit.



The Monday prior to the start of the ride I contacted Howard again to go over the final details and to send him my SPOT link. He suggested I include Mike Kneebone as well since he was also aware of the ride and would be watching along with Howard. I ended up sending an email to a small group of IBA riders so they could follow the ride as well, but I was pretty specific about not wanting this info to reach too large of an audience. Howard Entman, Mike Kneebone, Tim Masterson, Cliff Wall, Danny Dossman, Bill Thweatt, Werner Levy, Kevin Sawatski, with Bill and Jeanie Cumby would be my limited audience and cheering section of the IBA. I didn't want a lot of distractions while I was riding, and I also wasn't entirely sure I could pull off the ride I had planned so I didn't want too many people to know if I failed for one reason or another. To this point in my IBA riding career I had successfully completed every certified ride I had attempted, but this was going to be a little different.

Shortly before the start of the ride I decided that day one would be a loop I had mapped out that went from Dallas to Lubbock to Amarillo to Tulsa and back to Dallas. There was no forecast for rain in those areas and by following that route it would allow me to have the sun at my back through the morning hours as well as at my back in the afternoon as I traveled east across Oklahoma. My riding buddy Kevin had volunteered to be my witness for the start and his son Austin would also be there. May 26th 0600 was my planned start time and the starting location was a gas station only a half mile from my house. I arrived a little early as I was pretty excited to get the day started. Kevin and Austin both came riding into the gas station on fumes, so I got to watch both of them get fuel before they signed my paperwork and witnessed my fuel stop.



Day 1 turned out to be the absolute worst most discouraging day of the entire 45-day ride. The very first indication of things to come this day was when the gas pump failed to give me a start receipt. Not the way I wanted to begin a ride like this, but these things happen and it was easily fixed with a walk inside to get a copy and I was soon underway. Just a few hours later I had a heart racing “close call” that repeatedly ran through my head for a long time throughout the day. It had been a long time since I had had an encounter that rattled me quite that much, but an inattentive driver veering into your lane head on at close range can do that. Later in the day I spent a few hours in 100 plus degree weather in west Texas and across Oklahoma, I probably hadn’t eaten correctly throughout the day, and I was likely behind on my water intake for the conditions that day, so I wasn’t feeling quite right coming back into the Dallas area. I was riding in more traffic than I wanted to at the end of a long day and all I wanted was to get off the bike and grab a cold shower and go to bed.

When I got back to the house that evening, I was totally unorganized and in surprisingly unfamiliar territory trying to get ready for the following day. All of the multi-day 1000-mile rides I have ever done in the past were all based on staying in hotels while out on the road. I know what my routine is when I get checked into a hotel and have another 1000-mile day coming the next morning. I had never attempted to do multiple 1000-mile days using my home as the overnight stay and it was not easy to do my “normal” hotel routine at the house. It was way too easy to get distracted from the task of getting ready for the next day of riding. I was hungry, hot, and had some slight heat rash on my leg from the day, so I spent a little time trying to cool down before taking a shower and going to bed. As I laid in bed going over the days riding, I had almost convinced myself that there was no way I could do this 44 more times. I tossed and turned most of the night and repeatedly woke up thinking that I had already failed at my 45-day attempt.

The next morning I woke up feeling more than a little discouraged, but decided to give it another go and see how day two went. Day two also had me riding west on I-20 with the sun at my back for the morning before reaching Midland and then heading east across mid Texas to the Houston area and then north to Dallas. Day 2 was still plenty warm but was much more enjoyable and far less eventful than day one had been. I was feeling much better and was looking forward to day 3 which was going to be a loop from Dallas heading south through Louisiana and back through Houston to Dallas. Day 3 had some minor traffic issues in the Houston area, but was an encouraging day as I was finding my rhythm for the ride.

Day 4 was going to be the day I met up with the Wyman riders in Laramie Wyoming. It was just under 1000 miles from my house and I got an early start so I could be there in time for dinner and socializing with the riders. Except for a bit of wind, I encountered north of Denver due to some local storms crossing I-25 it was a good day of riding to get to Laramie. John and Nadine Huval were riding in the event and are a pair of riders I enjoy catching up with at different gatherings. Robert Rehkopf was also riding and is one of the first people I befriended in the IBA during the 2012 Denver event. As we waited for Tim and Cliff to arrive at the restaurant, I gave the three of them a quick rundown of the ride I was doing. They were enthusiastic about the attempt and for the remainder of the ride Robert would become my personal weather man. No matter where I was or what time of day it may have been Robert was quick to text me with info about the bad weather I was going to encounter. Once Tim and Cliff arrived, they gave a short recap of the day’s events on the Wyman trail and we all enjoyed a bite to eat after some good riding that day.

At dinner Cliff and Tim displayed the two extremes of the various reactions I had been getting from people in the IBA, co-workers and my family members that knew about my ride attempt. On one end of the spectrum was Tim who during a quick photo op asked why I wasn’t just going to try and do 50 days since 45 was so close. On the other end of the spectrum was Cliff who discreetly asked me the most succinct question while he waited for his food to arrive. In a straight face he bluntly asked “what the f**k is wrong with you?” I had an answer for Tim’s question, but Cliff is still waiting for his answer.



The next day's ride had me leaving Laramie and heading west through Salt Lake City then down to Las Vegas before stopping in Phoenix for the night. The ride from SLC to Vegas was spotted with the occasional down pour and lots of wind. My GPS was giving me high wind warnings for much of the area.



I managed to time it just perfect so that after fighting relentless wind most of the day I arrived in Las Vegas at the peak of rush hour traffic so that I could sit and enjoy the 103* temperatures in stop go traffic. After finally getting through the gridlock and construction I reached Lake Mead and saw a nice big area on the side of the road to grab a quick photo.



I share this simple little photo up in the hopes that others will learn from my stupidity at doing something I knew I probably shouldn't have. Since I couldn't be bothered with such a time-consuming thing as shutting the bike off to grab a quick photo, I decided to just leave it running for the photo. However, this particular location has a slight downhill slope leading to the lake so as I pulled over I put the bike in neutral, put the kickstand down and checked to see if the bike was going to roll forward. The bike did not roll forward and it managed to stay in place while I dismounted for the photo. As I quickly snapped the picture my old friend Murphy shoved me from behind in the form of a stiff gust of wind, the very same wind that I had been dealing with earlier in the day. So as I watched the bike now roll forward and pivot over the kickstand and fall to the ground in what seemed like slow motion, I couldn't help but wonder how hard was it going to be to pick the bike back up? I had never had a tip over on the GSA, so this was going to be one of those first-time experiences we all look forward to while out riding. As I rushed to shut the bike off, I was surprised at how loud the horn was on the car hauler in the picture. As he approached up the hill, I can only assume the driver had the perfect vantage point to view the comedy of errors and was probably pointing and laughing as he passed by with his horn blaring away. Luckily the bike wasn't that difficult to get back upright, but the fall did manage to break off the end of the clutch lever. Thankful the BMW engineers take into account idiots like me and have designed in a small break away notch in the lever so that during a tip over it doesn't snap off at the base and ruin your riding day. However, I was now only going to be able to use three fingers when pulling in the clutch instead of four, and every shift for the remaining 40 days would be a constant reminder of my stupidity. For the remainder of the ride every time I shifted now a little voice in my head could be heard saying "dumbass". The voice became particularly enjoyable while sitting in stop and go traffic.



A few hours after the tip over I had the chance to take an interesting picture. I have been riding with a FLIR camera on my different bikes since 2015. I can't tell how many times that little device has shown me something in my path that I may not have seen otherwise. As I was riding through the desert heading to Phoenix a full moon started to rise on the horizon. One question that I am normally asked is what kind of range the camera has to see down the road. So, I pulled over to take a picture and try to show the range that is possible.



The bright spot seen through the windscreen is the moon just above the horizon. It can also be seen as the round dot on the monitor, so that means the camera is able to see the heat of the sun being reflected off the moon and back to the camera mounted on my bike. I'm not sure what the exact range is from my bike to the surface of the moon in this photo, but I know it's farther than my headlights can shine.

The following day was the hottest riding day of the entire trip. Traveling from Phoenix through El Paso then up I-20 to Dallas I encountered temperatures of 112* around the Pecos and Odessa area along with a strong tail wind that created an issue while riding. Due to road construction that was causing some congestion, and a ridiculous amount of oil field traffic in the Pecos to Midland area, I was barely moving faster than the tail wind that was blowing from the south west. Because of this slow pace there was not enough air flowing through the radiator so while my bike normally runs in the 176* temperature range, it was now running in the 214* to 228* range. With that kind of air temperature coming off the radiator and swirling around the fuel tank, I'm fairly certain I could have slow cooked a rack of ribs in my lap while riding from Van Horn to Abilene Texas.

June 1st was day 7 of the ride and the most special of the trip for me. It was my birthday and I was planning to make a short 800-mile ride from the Dallas area back to my home town of Washington Illinois to have dinner with some family that I hadn't seen in several years. It was a good day of riding with even better food for dinner and a fantastic evening with some special folks I don't see very often.

Day 8, 9 and 10 had me riding back to Dallas and doing some local riding before performing my first service at the end of day 10. I would be heading for Maine to start the 48-state ride on day 11 so I needed to do the service a little earlier than planned since I was going to be on the road for the next 14 straight days. The service in my garage went fine and I installed both of the spare wheels I had waiting for me since I knew neither of the current tires would be able to make this entire leg. The front tire was only worn about half way, so I planned to reinstall that wheel after returning home from Washington State.

The next day this simple wheel change, which I had done several times before, started the most frustrating part of the entire 45-day ride. Normally when I mounted a spare wheel all I had to do was ride the bike a couple of miles and it would start reading the newly installed tire pressure sensors and everything was good. However, when I headed out for Maine my bike threw out a caution light telling me that both tire pressures were out of parameter and I had no tire pressure indication, just two dashes on both displays. I had no idea how accustomed I had become to having my tire pressure displayed in front of me and the sense of comfort that it brought to me. Now, not knowing what the actual tire pressure was caused me to constantly wonder what was going on with the tires. After a couple hours of this I decided to take some advice I had received from Robert Rehkopf and stop in the Memphis BMW shop to have them take a look at it. Robert had said that they would treat me like family and get me fixed up quick and he wasn't kidding. Less than an hour after arriving they had re-flashed the system to read the sensors and I was back on the road at no cost. However, this would not be the last of my TPMS issues on this ride.

It seemed fitting that after my tire pressure issues earlier in the day that just a few hours later I would happen upon four riders that did have a real tire pressure issue. As I approached an off ramp on the interstate, I noticed four motorcycles stopped on the side of the road at the beginning of the off ramp. The last bike in line had three of the riders gathered around the rear tire looking at it as if there was a problem. I quickly decided to pull over and see if there was anything I could help with since I myself really don't like being stuck with a flat tire. Along with the three riders at the last bike there were two women talking with each other at the second bike and the

fourth rider was intently cleaning the windscreen of the first bike. As I came to a stop behind the last bike the three riders started to move in my direction. All three were wearing the same long sleeve white t-shirt with some kind of club logo on it and all appeared to be in their late 30's to mid-40's and likely worked in some kind of office environment. The one rider to my left was looking at me and my bike with a great deal of curiosity (I named him George in my mind) and the two riders approaching from the right side were having a discussion of their own while the one rider to the far right was also talking on his phone. The communications expert on his phone was trying to coordinate some kind of recovery effort while also receiving direction from the other rider on my right side who appeared to be the ring leader of the group. As the three gathered on either side of me the ring leader looked at me as if I was going to ask for directions, sort of a curious can I help you with something kind of look. With my helmet flipped up I asked, "bike trouble?" to which the ring leader replied "flat tire" as he turned his focus back to the communications expert. George on my left side was busy studying the equipment mounted on the bike in front of me and asked, "Where are you headed" to which I replied "Maine." I turned back to the ring leader and asked, "can you fix the flat" and he responded with "no, it has a nail in it." George then asked, "Where are you coming from" and I turned back to him and replied "Dallas." I turned back to the ring leader and asked, "Do you want to try and pull the nail out and plug the hole?" He again turned his focus from the communication expert and said "no, we don't have any way to inflate the tire". George then asked, "You have stuff to fix flat tires?" I turned back to him and said "yes." I turned back to the ring leader and said, "I have an air compressor with me if you want to give it a shot?" He didn't really look at me this time as he and the communication expert were trying to sort something out about an arrival time. George quickly asked, "You carry an air compressor with you on the bike?" I turned back to him and said "yes, I have three with me." I somewhat got the impression from the look on his face that he didn't believe me, so it was probably pointless to tell him that I also carried CO2 cartridges and a hand pump as well. I turned back to the ring leader and he informed me that they had a friend with a trailer who would be there in about an hour. George then said to the ring leader "why don't we give it a try and see if *he* can get it fixed?" The ring leader turned to George and said, "I have a road hazard warranty on these tires, I don't want to void that by trying to repair it." The response seemed to make sense to George, but I was dumbfounded by this comment. At this point I was tired of carrying on two different conversations and I realized that the last 60 seconds had been a complete waste of time and I was never going to get that part of my life back. I wished them good luck with the bike and pulled back onto the interstate. I rode on for a few more hours before finishing Day 11 on the northern edge of West Virginia.

Day 12 consisted of two things that I recall, traffic and tolls. The traffic in New York and up the I-95 corridor was interesting to say the least and there were plenty of toll stops on my way to spend the night in Bangor Maine. For several years now I have ridden with an EZ Pass, SunPass, TxTag, and NTTA toll transponders on the bike. These tend to cover a large portion of the toll roads I encounter, and I also have a small waterproof case mounted on the top left side of the fuel tank that I carry money in for the tolls that don't accept these. Of course, it would stand to reason that the very first toll plaza I came to in New York did not recognize my EZ Pass for some reason. Not sure what the problem was with that toll plaza, but I didn't have any issue after that.

On day 13 I would ride from Bangor to Madawaska Maine to get the first of the four corners before returning to the southern end of Maine and the town of Kittery. Once in Madawaska I stopped for fuel and the required receipt. I was completely caught off guard when I walked inside the gas station, and everyone was speaking French. That is one of those little surprises I wasn't expecting, but it made sense once I thought about it given the geographic location I was in. I imagine someone from this area of the country could also be surprised if they were to walk into a gas station in El Paso Texas and didn't hear French being spoken. This part of the ride also provided me with another new first-time experience as I had never seen a moose in person and was especially thrilled to see one standing on the side of the road as I rounded a corner on my way back from Madawaska. At first, I didn't realize what it was as I came around the corner, but once I did the heart rate picked up fast. Whoever said you can't get a cardio work out while riding a motorcycle never rode past a moose at close range.

According to Ron Ayers book he had started his 49-state ride at 6:07 pm on June 7th and I was going to try and get a receipt as close to that time as I could before starting the 48-state portion of the ride. I arrived in Kittery about an hour before the planned start time and since I had already ridden 600 miles for the day, I took the chance to take a quick nap next to the bike. However, on two separate occasions the kind residents of Kittery couldn't help but check on me to see if I was OK as I lay next to the bike in the parking lot, so the nap never really happened.



My goal for the first day of the 48/10 ride was to get through the New York area and spend the night somewhere in New Jersey after picking up the first 8 states of the ride. I knew I would be falling behind Ron's pace early on, but I was very confident that I would make it to Washington State in less than 10 days.

Day 14 I picked up Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana before spending the night in Lexington Kentucky. The following afternoon I had the first real disagreement between the two GPS's on the bike. Late in the afternoon as I rode south on I-85 towards Montgomery Alabama and the intersecting I-65 the two GPS's were giving different

directions to pick up I-65. The Nav V had me riding directly through Montgomery and intersecting I-65 then heading south. My 665 had me getting on what looked like a bypass loop around the southern edge of Montgomery and picking up Hwy 80 to intersect I-65. The 665 was giving me an arrival time almost 9 minutes faster than the Nav V was so I followed the 665 to pick up Hwy 80. Almost immediately I knew I had made a mistake by getting off the interstate. As I progressed around the southern edge of Montgomery, I was wasting a lot of time with stop lights and slow traffic speeds. My arrival time kept ticking later on the GPS and I concluded that my 665 was suddenly too stupid to account for the stop lights and slower speed limits. Clearly the more efficient route would have been to continue riding on I-85 until it intersected I-65. By the time I reach I-65 I had counted approximately 19 stop lights I had passed through and I was about 15 minutes behind my original arrival time. I was so mad at the 665 that I relegated it to trip data only duties, I would no longer reference it for any kind of navigation information. I also apologized to the Nav V for not following its sound advice in the first place, but that would change in just a few hours.

Later that evening after picking up Century Florida my Nav V had me riding west on Hwy 31 to eventually get back onto I-65. After a few miles the Nav V told me to turn right onto a James Rd then almost immediately it called for a left turn onto a very rural road called Railroad Street. After a couple hundred yards the road turned into a gravel/sand road that was horribly wash boarded which was severely rattling the bike and I. No way was I going to press forward in the dark on a road of this quality, so I made the decision to turn around. There was a small neighborhood on the right side of the road and some residents out enjoying the evening. The sand road was narrow and had no real easy way to turn around so I turned into the neighborhood and tried to find a driveway I could use to make the turnaround easier. I'm not sure what the residents may have been thinking as they watched this idiot wearing what looked like a space suit, on an alien looking bike that was lit up like the starship dumbass, proceed to verbally chastise something on the machine. I'm fairly sure that at one point during the turnaround struggle I could be heard asking "Really? This is the best you can do? You're supposed to be the smart GPS". After getting back to Hwy 31 I eventually found I-65 and finished up the day getting through Mobile Alabama before stopping for the night in Hattiesburg Ms.

The next three days I rode north through the Midwest before crossing the northern states from Wisconsin to Montana and then south to Colorado. There was plenty of rain and wind during this part of the ride, but the temperatures were good, and traffic was light. Around day 18 I decided that the rear tire would not make the remainder of the 48-state trip and the return ride back to Dallas.

At the beginning of day 19 I stopped in the BMW shop in Santa Fe, NM to get a fresh rear tire for the remainder of this leg. The shop was small compared to some, but the staff was friendly and accommodating and they had me back on the road in under an hour. After fighting some stout wind and sporadic rain across Arizona I stopped for a quick break at a truck stop just before reaching Kingman Az. I knew that the stretch of I-40 from Kingman around to Needles California gets progressively hotter as you go, and I was not looking forward to it.

This quick little stop for a break also provided one of those memorable encounters that we all sometimes have while traveling. As I pulled into the truck stop, I noticed a small Winnebago type camper parked at the end of the pumps with someone standing next to it pumping gas. The other pump on that island was empty so I rode around the camper and circled back around to put the empty pump on my left side for fueling. As I circled around the camper, I got a glimpse of the gentleman that was pumping the gas and I noticed he was intently watching me as I passed by. The gentleman was a smaller individual maybe 5' 6" and 140 pounds wearing some kind of hiking sandal with socks and cargo shorts that looked way to large on him. He completed the outfit with a Hawaiian style shirt, a boonie hat that looked very large on him as well, and a pair of big mirrored Top Gun type sunglasses. The most notable thing though was his mustache. It was huge and again was something that looked way too big compared to the rest of him. It was almost as if a floor broom had been neatly trimmed up and attached just below his nose. As I pulled up to the island that we were now sharing I could sense that this was going to be an interesting stop. As I dismounted the bike, I could see him out of the corner of my eye as he leaned around the pump and began to quickly scan me and the bike with his head moving about rather quickly as he tried to take everything in. For some reason the image of an ostrich nervously twitching its head around seemingly confused and curious came to mind. I don't normally take my helmet off for regular fueling stops but since I was going to take a little extra time with this one I did and that usually seems like an invitation for people to strike up a conversation regarding the bike or where I was heading. This was about to become one of those discussions, although this gentleman and I were not going to be on the exact same page regarding most of the questions and answers. As I was beginning to refuel the bike and start documenting the stop, I could see him quickly poke his head around the fuel pump a couple more times thinking that I didn't notice him. After a few moments I heard him ask his first question in a somewhat high pitched nasally voice from the other side of the fuel pump. "Been riding long?" I assumed he was talking to me and that he was inquiring about my trip as both the bike and I appeared to have been on the road for a while. I replied with "19 days now" to which he responded with a long drawn out high pitched "ooohhhhhh..." that tapered off at the end. Almost as if I had provided an answer to a long standing difficult question. I was fairly certain that this would not be the last question he asked, but I was not expecting what followed next. "So, did you just get your license" as if I had just told him that I had been riding for 19 days of my entire life. I said, "No I've had my license for over 30 years now, this trip has been 19 days long so far." He responded with another "ooohhhhhh....." followed by a brief pause and then another question. "Where are you heading that's taking you so long to get there"? He clearly assumed that I was not making good time on this trip, so I simply responded "just out site seeing around the country." He responded with another "ooohhhhhh....." followed by a brief pause then another question. "Did you see the Grand Canyon?" I said "no" and he responded with a shorter "oh." "Did you see Hoover damn?" I said "no" and he responded with another short "oh." "Are you going to check out Las Vegas?" I said "no, but I'm going to pass through there later" and he responded with a short "oh." He then made a comment and I think my response was somewhat unexpected to him. "Not seeing to many sites are you"? I replied to him "I'm seeing all the sites I want to see and those aren't on my list." This time he responded with an "ooohhhhhh....." followed by a brief pause then another question. "So how many more days of site seeing do you have left?" I said "26 based on the current plan." Again, I heard another "ooohhhhhh....." followed by a brief pause. This time he followed the pause with a comment as if to provide some advice or recommendation regarding my current travels.

“You know you might be able to do your special site seeing quicker if you were traveling in a car” he said. I replied to him “I doubt it; so far I’m averaging around 1000 miles of riding each day and plan to keep this pace till I’m done.” This time there was a long pause before I heard him softly mutter in a low-key questioning tone “what” although I don’t believe he was actually asking me a question. At this point I was done with the fuel stop and needed to use the bathroom, so I wished him safe travels as I packed up and headed inside. As I reached the building it occurred to me that we had just had a 3-minute Q and A discussion and never once saw each other face to face. Just a short conversation across a fuel pump, but an amusing one I won’t soon forget.

When I reached Needles California, the temperature was 112*, according to the bike, and the wind was blowing at a pretty good pace. Later I stopped again on the north end of Las Vegas before riding further north to spend the night in Ely Nevada. After leaving the Las Vegas area the temperature began to drop steadily and at one point south of Ely the bike registered a temperature of 43* which was a big change from the 112* in Needles just a few hours earlier. Anytime I am on a long trip I always carry my heated jacket and gloves with me for times like these. However, it is very difficult to make heated gear get hot if you don’t also pack the required controller for the gear. That’s just a small bit of information from a lesson learned on this night. In this same area I also encountered an Elk standing on the shoulder on the opposite side of the road and the FLIR easily highlighted the beast before I could get to him. Strangely the Elk didn’t look as intimidating when I passed by him after having seen a moose in person just a few days earlier.

Day 20 was special for two reasons. I would finish the 48-state ride by picking up Utah, Idaho and Oregon before finishing in Kennewick Washington with a time of 7 days 3 hours and 29 minutes. I then continued on through Washington State to finish the day in Blaine Washington and the second of the four corners locations. This also meant that I had completed my first ever 20/20 ride and would have represented the half way point of the original 40-day ride plan. I was feeling really good at this point in the ride and had no issues to complain about other than the ridiculous amount of wind that I continually seemed to fight each day.

Day 21 and 22 were focused on getting back to Texas in a not so direct route. It was cold and rainy through most of Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota, and I even encountered a winter storm warning which seemed very unusual to me since it was the middle of June.

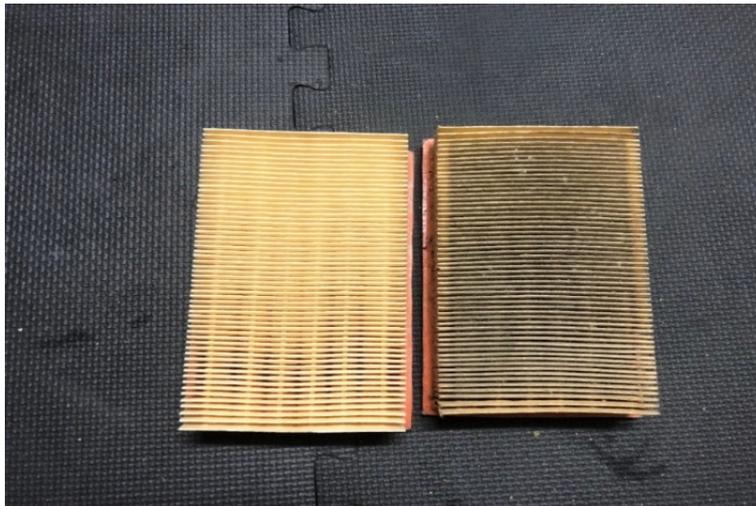


Day 23 was a short riding day from Topeka Kansas to home. It was time for the second service on the bike and I had laundry I needed to do after being on the road for over two weeks. I got home late in the afternoon and decide to relax by the pool for a little bit before getting around to the bike maintenance. A little reflecting time on what I had accomplished to this point and what was still ahead of me. This also marked the day that my riding gear was no longer allowed in the house. It would reside in the garage for the remainder of the trip as it was rapidly fermenting a certain characteristic. While I was enjoying the break by the pool my wife came by and asked a question that kind of surprised me. "Where do you want to have dinner for Father's Day?" I honestly had no idea what day it was, but I'm fairly certain she thought I had come home early on this day to celebrate it. My daughter was home from college so the three of us went out for a relaxing casual dinner together. It was an unusual feeling to be having a family dinner at a restaurant while I was "on the clock" so to speak. The laundry and bike maintenance could wait for a while longer tonight.

The next two days were a couple of out and backs before changing the rear wheel at the end of day 25. The following day was going to be a loop heading east to Memphis then south to Jackson Mississippi before coming back home, but as soon as I headed out I immediately got the same TPMS error message on the rear tire that I had gotten after the last wheel change. This time I decided that I would ride east for a couple hours before returning to the North Dallas BMW shop to have them look at it. I timed it so I could be at the shop when they opened and hopefully get it fixed and be under way quickly. After some discussion with the service manager it turns out that the last time, I had the bike in the shop to be serviced in mid-May, a software update had been completed as part of the service. According to the service manager the new update removed the feature that allowed the TPMS to read multiple sets of wheels on the bike. That meant that now anytime I swapped a wheel out I would need to have the dealer re-program the TPMS to read the previously installed wheel. This really got me upset with BMW as one thing that I truly liked about the bike was my ability to simply swap wheels and have the TPMS work without a visit to the dealer being needed. Even after the bike shop flashed the system, for the remaining 20 days of the ride there were occasions when I had no tire pressure indication from either the front or rear wheel. These were the times during the ride when I was so frustrated about this change that BMW had made that I tried to decide if I wanted an FJR or a new Goldwing for my next bike. I've been a very loyal BMW rider for many years now, but this change has truly tested that.

Day 28 had me riding from Dallas to Yuma Arizona on my way to collect the third of the four corners in San Ysidro California. The ride was warm and windy to say the least. Dust storms were blowing across some stretches of I-10 in Arizona and the temperature was in the 105-110* range for most of the day. After a long hot 1200-mile day I stopped for the night in Yuma Arizona. The following morning, I awoke to a wind warning in the southern California area. As I crossed into California on I-8 I couldn't help but notice the signs warning of possible drifting sand on the highway. I had never seen this kind of sign before and didn't think I would have anything to worry about today since it was a nice, but somewhat windy day. I would be passing back through the area in a few hours so how bad could it get? I also wondered how you remove drifting sand from the road. I grew up in Illinois and when we had drifting snow across the road we had snow plows to remove it. Are there sand plows in southern California?

My ride from Yuma to San Ysidro was much more pleasant than the ride back to Yuma. The wind had picked up considerably and was blowing dust and sand from the south across I-8 and it was getting worse the farther east I rode towards Yuma. It reminded me of some sand storms I had been in during my travels in the Middle East. Visibility was becoming an issue, traffic was slowing, and I could feel the gritty dirt in my eyes and on my teeth. I eventually stopped on a couple different occasions for eye drops and to get a much-needed drink of water. It was too windy and dirty to try and flip the helmet up and take a drink while moving. I eventually made it back to the area with the drifting sand signs I had seen earlier in the morning and they weren't kidding about the drifting sand. It was a little unsettling to go floating through some of the sand covered areas on the interstate and as cars would drive over the drifts there was a large amount of sand kicked up into the air. Eventually the dust started to subside as I got east of Yuma, but the wind did persist and eventually turned into a bit of a tail wind past Tucson. For most of the ride from Tucson to El Paso I was averaging 53 MPG at roughly 80 MPH, which is very good considering the 36 MPG I usually average at that speed. After returning home the next day the first thing I did was change the 6-day old air filter.



I finished day 30 early enough to have dinner with the family, but I was feeling the effects of the heat I had been riding in for the past few days. Earlier in the day I had been stuck in construction traffic around the Temple Texas area heading north to Waco and had run out of drinking water for the last couple of hours riding home. My wife even commented that I didn't look good as we left to go to dinner, but after some rehydrating, some air conditioning and a good dinner I was feeling fine and excited for the next day of riding.

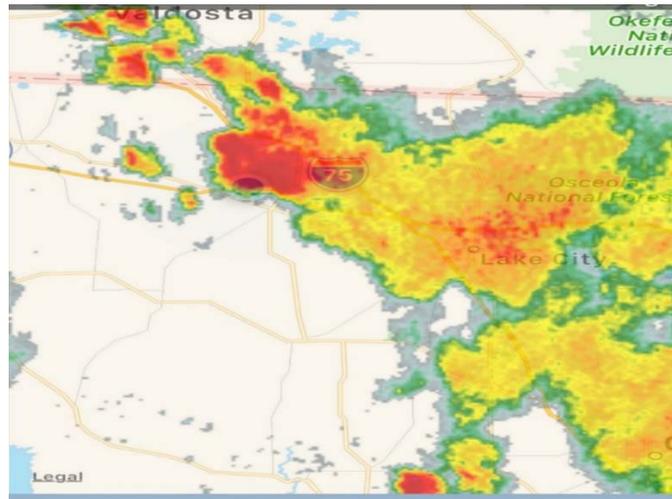
The following morning, I was heading to Florida to pick up Key West for the fourth corner and to attempt the Lap of Florida. From my house to Jacksonville Florida is right at 1000 miles so that was going to be my overnight location before starting the Lap of Florida, but I still hadn't decided if I would ride it in a clockwise or counter clockwise direction. Instead of taking the normal route of riding from Dallas to Mobile Alabama then east on I-10 to Jacksonville, I decided to try and stay a little farther north and ride through Alabama and Georgia on some state highways until intersecting I-95 just north of Jacksonville. Once into Georgia I ran into some spotty showers and eventually a strong line of storms moving in from the north that forced me to ride south on I-75 and finish the day riding into Jacksonville on I-10.

Day 32 began with a check of the weather in Florida and based on some rain over I-95 I decided to ride the lap in a counter clockwise direction. Amelia Island near Jacksonville would be my starting and finishing location for the lap. It was a short ride from Jacksonville to what I thought was Amelia Island according to my GPS and Google Maps. After crossing over the Amelia River and riding past a sign that said welcome to Amelia Island, I pulled into a gas station on the corner of Amelia Island Parkway. To my surprise after filling up and getting my start receipt, I noticed the town location was for some place called Fernandina Beach Florida. I went inside to purchase an item and see if the store receipt showed Amelia Island which it did not. I asked the clerk if I was on Amelia Island and she confirmed that I was, but I decided to ride in the island a little farther and see if I could find a proper receipt. After a short ride I found a McDonald's and purchased a breakfast sandwich and again I got a receipt that said Fernandina Beach. After a few minutes of searching Google Maps on my phone and checking my GPS I was certain I was in the correct location and I could prove it if questioned about the receipt for my ride verification.

My second stop for the Lap of Florida would be Perdido Key on the far west end of the pan handle just past Pensacola. It was a good ride west on I-10 but dotted with a couple of intense but short down pours. The weather to the north in Georgia was getting active and looked like it may be an issue on my return ride back from Perdido to I-75 and the turn south for Marco Island. I had researched gas stations in Garmin's Basecamp to find one that had a Perdido Key street address to make sure I had a good location to obtain the needed receipt. When I arrived at the gas station there was a line at all the pumps and a lot of signs in the area referring to Perdido Bay but not Perdido Key. After finally filling up I saw that Pensacola was the city listed on the receipt. I went into the store and asked the clerk where Perdido Key was. He pointed south and said it was on the other side of the bridge, so I got back on the bike and headed out to find another gas station to stop at. According to both GPS's the next gas station was a few miles down the key near the Alabama state line. Instead of wasting time riding the entire length of the key I decided to stop in one of the hotels and get a receipt from an ATM since I didn't need any fuel. As it turned out someone had left a receipt at the one ATM I came to and it also said Pensacola as the town location. So, I rode all the way to the only gas station on the key and went inside and promptly got another receipt that said Pensacola. I asked the clerk where Perdido key was and she looked at me confused and informed me that I was on Perdido Key. I then looked at her confused and informed her that according to her stores receipt I was still in Pensacola which I had ridden through several miles east of here. So, for the first two stops of the lap I had failed to get a receipt with the correct location names called out in the instructions for the ride. I sent the photos of the two receipts to Howard with a message that said I didn't believe it was possible to get those two receipts. He quickly responded that I was good to go as my SPOT track showed I had been in the correct locations.

Heading back east on I-10 I was now about an hour behind where I wanted to be for the day and that was rapidly becoming an issue as dark clouds moved in from the north. I was hoping to make it back to the I-75 cross over before the storms moved in from Georgia, but that didn't work out for me. The storm beat me to the intersection and the driving wind and rain with the leading edge of the storm forced me to seek shelter under an overpass and try and keep the bike upright.

The overpass offered no protection from the wind and very little from the rain as it was blowing in a mostly horizontal direction.



I was quickly joined by a couple of cars on the side of the road and I began to curse all that time I had wasted looking for phantom receipts at the first two stops. I was now looking at riding in a lot of heavy rain on I-75 as the storm was moving in the southern direction I needed to go. If I was an hour further down the road, I would be in front this rain. As I got under way again and started moving south on I-75 I was riding in moderate rain with a good bit of traffic moving at a slightly slower than normal pace. Just south of the Gainesville area the rain started to let up and I could see some stars starting to break through the clouds. The evening was improving, and I began to think that I might be able to get to the south side of Tampa before stopping for the night.

I share this next story as an example of how some decisions that may seem perfectly logical at the time may be viewed differently after the fact.

Just as the evening was starting to improve, I was suddenly presented with a situation I have never encountered before. With no warning the monitor for my FLIR camera began to flicker on and off very rapidly. At almost the exact same time every light on my radar detector, to include the remote flasher mounted above my Nav V, lit up like it had just been turned on. My iPhone also lit up like it had just been unplugged from the USB charger I have mounted on the handle bar. As all of this was happening in front of me, I tried to quickly understand what was going on and what to do about it. All of this happened in just a couple of seconds and as I tried to figure out what was going on, I could then smell a very distinct electrical/plastic burning odor. My immediate reaction was to turn off the radar detector which I was able to do quickly. I then grabbed the cord that was charging my iPhone and yanked it out of the USB port. After that I was going to try and turn off the FLIR monitor, but I couldn't find the off button in the dark. I could still smell the electrical/plastic burning odor and immediately began scanning my mirrors to see if there was any smoke trailing from my bike. Since it was dark, and it had been raining, all I could see in the mirrors was the water mist being kicked up by all the vehicles around me. Strangely enough the water vapor I could see in the mirrors looked a lot like smoke at first glance. As I focused back on what was happening in front of me, I noticed that things had

calmed down considerably, and nothing was flashing at me or was lit up for no good reason. At this point I think I may have been in a little bit of denial as I still wasn't convinced the smell was coming from my bike. I held out hope that another vehicle around me was responsible for the electrical/plastic burning odor. I decided to see if I could smell the odor in clean air, so I leaned my head out to the left side to get out from behind the windscreen and I took a big sniff of the air and smelled nothing. I then settled in behind the windscreen and could smell the odor again. I decided to check the right side and leaned my head in that direction and took another big sniff of clean air and smelled nothing. After this scientific research I reluctantly concluded that the smell must be coming from my bike and was somehow related to all the different items that had been flashing in front of me just a few moments earlier. Even though the initial problem was clearly with my bike, the thought of slowing down or pulling over to the side of the road had never crossed my mind. The cruise control was still engaged, and I was moving at a good pace with traffic. Now that I knew the bike was running with no noticeable issue, and all of the activity with my accessories was over, I made two critical judgment decisions. Since I could still smell the electrical/plastic odor I decided that if the smell started to subside, I would continue on with the days ride and try and get south of Tampa. The second decision was that if my seat started to get hot then I would pull over to investigate further. All my accessories are powered from a PDM 60 mounted under my seat and that was the most likely location of the odor, so I figured if the problem persisted eventually the seat would start to get hot from whatever was burning and that would be my signal to pull over. At the time these two decisions seemed like the best possible means of determining whether to press on or not, a simple go no/go criteria. Smell goes away continue on, or if the seat gets hot pull over. I continued riding for several more miles, so proud of the speedy actions I had taken to deal with an "emergency" type of situation and the sound decision making that I had made while under duress. The smell was dissipating rapidly, and my seat wasn't getting hot, so my focus returned to getting south of Tampa for the night.

Just past Ocala the rain returned again, nothing dramatic but enough for me to decide it was time to call it a day. It was still fairly early in the evening so I pulled into the first hotel I saw and decided that I could get a few hours of sleep and be back on the road very early the next day to try and get through Tampa before the morning rush hour. As I came to a stop under the covered check in parking area of a Hampton Inn, I could see the hotel had an outdoor pool in front of the building just in front of me. There were several people sitting at the tables around the pool under large patio umbrellas enjoying some cocktails as the light rain fell. Everyone seemed to be focused on me as my lights shined in their direction. I quickly assumed they were judging me for riding in the rain and likely thinking that I was kind of fool dressed in my space suit with all kinds of lights emanating from this weird looking machine. As I shut the bike off and began to dismount, I could begin to smell the residual burning odor as the bike was now stationary. In my mind I quickly visualized that the people sitting around the pool could see me get off the bike as a cloud of smoke wafted from my crotch and the seat area of the bike as I dismounted in a plume of smoke. I somewhat laughed out loud as that would have been a hilarious sight if it had actually happened. After checking in I moved the bike to an empty parking spot in front of the pool area. The rain was picking up as I grabbed my overnight bag off the bike and began to put the bike cover on. I decided that I would have a look under the seat before leaving the next morning to see if I noticed anything unusual. That was assuming that the bike wouldn't burn to the ground overnight because of some lingering issue that was still present. As I secured the bike cover, I quickly recapped the recent events in my head and suddenly started to rethink the sound

logical decision making I was so proud of just a short time ago. If I had simply been riding to the store and not on the proverbial clock would I have done the same or immediately pulled over to the side of the road to investigate? After a few seconds of thinking I'm fairly certain the people sitting around the pool could hear me ask the question out loud "Really, seat get hot pull over?" After a good, but short night of sleep I found the source of the burning odor under the seat. The power module for the V1 radar detector had somehow gotten very hot inside and kind of erupted like a small volcano so I disconnected the unit from the PDM 60 and headed for Marco Island.



The ride to Marco Island and on to Key West was slow and uneventful. In the 2013 IBR I was one of the five genius's that went to Key West on leg one, so I knew the slow-moving frustration that I was in store for today and was expecting the worse. Once in Key West it was very crowded, with the expected heat and humidity. As I relaxed for a moment before heading back to my starting point in Amelia Island, I realized that I would likely be reaching the Miami area at the peak of rush hour. The ride back up the keys seemed to go much quicker than the ride down, but I still manage to hit the south side of the Miami area at almost 5:00 P.M. Traffic was moving rather slow due to various car wrecks on the turnpike and the stop and go riding along with the heat and humidity was becoming somewhat fatiguing. Added to that was the ever-present little voice in my head cursing the lost time from the previous day that may have allowed me to beat the storm at I-75. Or that may have allowed me to avoid some of the torrential rain that I believe contributed to the electrical issue the night before. And now if I had gotten to Miami an hour earlier I most likely would not be stuck in this frustrating traffic enjoying the sounds of "Dumbass, Dumbass, Dumbass" as I progressed through the gears only to come to another stop.

I eventually made it through the Miami area and rode north on I-95, dealing with the occasional rain shower as I tried to get back to Amelia Island and finish the lap. As I approached the Jacksonville area that night, I could see a considerable amount of lightning on the horizon in front of me. Another storm was moving south from Georgia and was looking to reach the Amelia Island area before I could get there. Once I arrived on the south side of Jacksonville, I knew the storm would reach me before I could get to my finishing point. There isn't much in the way of weather that I stop riding for, but lightning is not something I am eager to go charging into if I can avoid it. About 40 miles from Amelia Island I decided to grab a hotel for the night before the storm reached me. Although I would fail to complete the Lap of Florida in the prescribed time, I still had the SPOT track to show where I had been and that was just as important to me for the 45-day ride as completing the Lap of Florida itself. I sent Howard an email to let him know I would come up a little short for this particular ride and he promptly responded with some

encouragement regarding my good decision making after so many days on the road and reminded me to stay focused on the main goal of the ride. This evening also marked the first time I had ever failed to finish an IBA certified ride that I had attempted to complete in a specified timeframe. Even with this failed attempt fresh in my mind I discovered that the world did not come to an end because of it, and by the next morning that failed attempt was a distant memory as I still had a few more challenging days ahead of me to focus on.

Day 34 I would continue north on I-95 into the Carolina's before reaching Wilmington N.C. and picking up I-40 to ride west across North Carolina. Part of my original ride planning had included Dave McQueeney's I-40 in 40-hour ride concept. Early on in the 45-day ride I had decided to forgo that attempt as part of this ride. I was a little concerned about the amount of traffic on I-40 in the Tennessee and North Carolina areas that could possibly slow the ride pace and my concerns were well founded as I tried to ride west through the Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, and the Winston-Salem areas. After encountering some more storms in the Knoxville area and sporadic fog in the hills south of Chattanooga, I stopped for the night in North West Georgia.

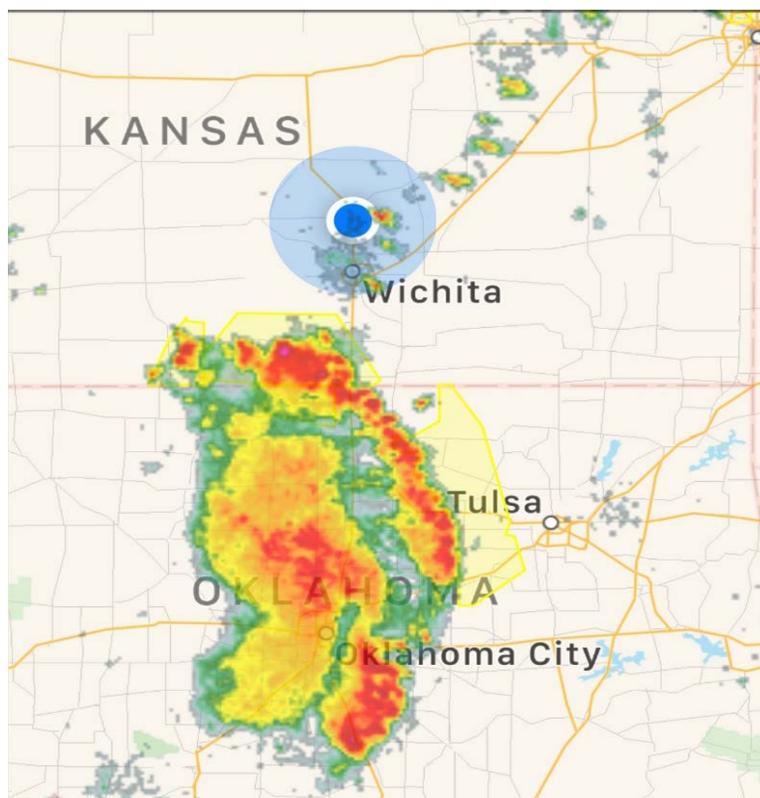
Day 35 I would ride back to Dallas and perform the last service on the bike for the final 10 days of the ride. It had been a long hot day of riding to get back home and the service work seemed a little more taxing than the previous ones had been. On my motorcycle I have Machineart Moto valve cover guards installed so I have to partially remove them to be able to access the spark plugs. After completing the entire service on the bike and while torqueing the final valve cover bolt to reinstall the valve cover guard I managed to break off the bolt in the head of the engine. With the fatigue of the riding day and the heat in my garage I may have failed to reset the torque wrench after torqueing the spark plug and might have displayed a bit of haste and managed to over torque the aft valve cover bolt which caused it to break off inside the head of the engine. Unlike the previous versions that had four bolts, the water-cooled boxer engine only has three bolts that hold the valve cover in place. My right cover now only had the top and the forward bolt to hold it in place. Given this arrangement I was convinced that the valve cover would leak oil from the bottom half of the cover once the bike was running.



I decided to take the bike for a ride around the neighborhood to see just how bad the leaking might be. I was surprised to see that nothing leaked during the short ride, but I was skeptical that it would hold for the remainder of the trip. Since I had swapped out the rear wheel with a fresh tire installed as part of the service, I fully expected the TPMS to give me the same error I had seen with the previous wheel swaps. So the next morning I planned to swing by the bike shop for another re-flash, and to maybe address the broken valve cover bolt.

Since the bike shop didn't open until 10 A.M. I decided to get up early and do as much riding as I could beforehand. As I started my local ride, I was thrilled to see that after a few miles the TPMS started to show the rear tire pressure. I quickly stuck out my right leg to see if there was any indication that the valve cover was leaking oil on my boot or pant leg and there was none to be seen. With no oil leaks detected there was no reason to stop at the bike shop, so I promptly decided to change the ride plan for the day and head north on I-35 for a turnaround point in York Nebraska. My house to York is a 1200-mile round trip so it was going to be a long day, but I wanted to add to my mileage total as the Florida trip had cut into a good bit of the cushion I had accumulated up to this point. I had planned to make a few round trips from my house to either Belleville Kansas or York Nebraska to fill in the extra five days I had added right before the start so the next few days would now be very repetitive.

The ride to York was great with a very strong tail wind pushing me north, unfortunately that would later become a very strong head wind for the return ride home. As I made my way south through Kansas, I could see storms forming to the south in Oklahoma. I had hoped to reach Wichita and turn west to try and get on the back side of them, but the storms were moving in my direction too fast.



I turned around just north of Wichita and rode back to Salina Kansas to have dinner and form a new plan for the remainder of the evening. To the west it was looking clear with only spotty showers so I would now ride west on I-70, fighting a strong crosswind from the south, and spend the evening somewhere in eastern Colorado. I didn't want to get to far from Wichita as I was planning to have lunch there the next day with one of the IBA folks who was following my ride.

It didn't take long to realize that the weather was not going to cooperate and as I reached Ellis Kansas another line of storms was starting to form, this time moving east towards me. Once again, I turned around and for the fourth time on this day I would ride through the I-135 and I-70 intersection in Salina Kansas. My new plan was to ride north from Salina and spend the night in Concordia so that the next day I could ride to York Nebraska again then return to Wichita in time for lunch. As I checked into the hotel in Concordia the weather was fast approaching and developed quickly so I was glad to be off the road for the night.



The storm passed in the night and the next morning was a nice cool clear day for riding. The rain had knocked all the dust out of the atmosphere and all the colors seemed to be in HD that morning. After getting to York and turning around I headed south to Wichita for my lunch date.

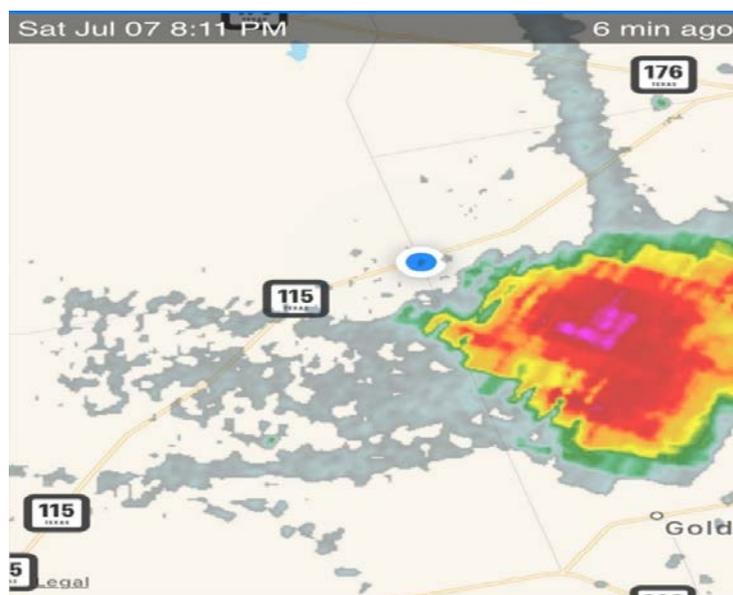
Werner Levy is my former manager, an avid motorcyclist, a fellow IBA member, and is the man most responsible for me getting back into motorcycle riding after a nearly twenty-year hiatus. When I went to work for Werner, he was riding an older GS and a gorgeous RT that I was fascinated with. He not only reintroduced me to BMW motorcycles, but he also enlightened me to the Iron Butt Association. After only a few months of working with him and hearing his stories about various riding adventures he had taken, I purchased my first GS and was suddenly back to riding with a renewed enthusiasm I hadn't had for many years. The Iron Butt Association was something that really peaked my curiosity and the Saddle Sore 1000 was something I was very excited to try. In 2008 I rode my first SS1000 and from then on, I had a new passion and ever bigger challenges in front of me. It has been several years since I worked for Werner, but we routinely keep in touch to discuss motorcycles and riding. If it weren't for the time I spent working with Werner I might not have been attempting this 45-day ride and I wanted to make sure that I took some time to have lunch with him so he could be a part of the ride and we could share our latest riding adventures.



Day 40 would be another out and back trip up I-35 into Kansas. When I went to leave that morning, I noticed that my wife had not yet gotten up to go to work, so I gently woke her to ask if she was planning on going to work today. As she looked at me rather upset she informed me that since it was the Fourth of July, and was a federal holiday, she had the day off and would not be going into work. Other than knowing that it was day 40 of my ride I had totally lost track of what day it was, and it struck me as to just how oblivious I had become to the events going on around me. I had no idea what was happening in the world as I hadn't watched the news or listened to a regular radio station for several weeks. That exchange really got me wondering what I had missed while being solely focused on just riding each day. It was also somehow comforting and relaxing to know that I was so disconnected from the normal everyday reality and had been for quite some time.

Day 41 and 42 would consist of a couple more local riding days to Arkansas and then New Mexico with more sporadic rain to deal with. My wife and daughter also left for their vacation to Paris and Barcelona. Since I was originally planning to be finished with my ride on July 4th, they had booked their travel plans to depart on July 6th after I was done with my “vacation.” With them leaving I would now be finishing this ride coming home to an empty house with no BBQ and no fireworks as had been the original 40-day plan.

Day 43 was the start of the Ride around Texas and my final 3 days before finishing the 45-day ride. Since I would not be starting at one of the 13 required stops along the RAT route, I would not be doing the ride for another certificate. I was doing the route because I liked the variety it offered and wanted my SPOT track to reflect the Texas outline as part of the 45-day ride. This day would also be one of the highest mileage days of the ride. The goal was to ride from Dallas to Sherman Texas then to Childress, Follett, Texline, Kermit and stop for the night in Anthony Texas, just over 1200 miles for the day. The riding was good until I started the southbound leg of the ride towards Kermit. A few small pop up storms surrounded the route I was on and I ended up encountering some storm fronts that may have been a little stronger than I expected. As I approached the Seminole Texas area from the north there was a strong gust front that was moving west towards me and it was closing fast. The front was kicking up a lot of dirt and was one long brown cloud moving along the ground from the east to the west in a straight line. There was no way I was going to make it to Andrews Texas and the Hwy 115 intersection that led into Kermit before the storm overtook me. I decided to pick up a very small road in Seminole and ride southwest for a few miles before turning south to pick up Hwy 115 just west of Andrews. I was risking getting caught out in the open with no cover to be seen for miles around if the front reached me before I could ride west on Hwy 115. The gust front was strong enough that I could see it on the radar picture as an intense gray line moving towards me on the map. As if the rolling brown cloud was not enough to contend with there was also a fairly intense rain cell moving directly towards the small intersection I was trying to reach. Fortunately, with some spirited riding I was able to make the intersection just before the rain and the gust front arrived, but it was much closer than I would have liked.





Once into Kermit for fuel and a short break my final stop for the day would be another 245 miles west in Anthony. When I rode this stretch of the RAT in 2016 there were no gas station or real civilization available anywhere along the route. This time I would be riding it at night with plenty of oil field traffic and construction on Hwy 285 leading up to Orla. I was also over 1000 miles for the day and I was starting to feel the effects of fighting the wind all afternoon, plus the fact that I had been riding for 43 consecutive days now. I was really looking forward to reaching Anthony. A nice surprise was that in Orla there is now a brand-new Pilot truck stop that does offer a nice break in this long section of the RAT. I finally made it to Anthony and promptly pulled into my usual Love's truck stop and found six charter buses in the parking lot filled with soldiers going somewhere. After filling up I opted not to go inside and try to use the bathroom as I could see that the building was rather crowded. Instead I rode across the street to the hotel I had planned to stay at for the night and for the first time during this entire 43 days of riding I was told that the hotel was sold out. I usually have pretty good luck with hotels as I don't call ahead or try and pre-schedule them, but not on this particular night. Figures that this would be the night for that to happen since I had just ridden over 1200 miles and a third of the way around Texas. Not a huge deal as it's all part of the adventure I tell myself. I simply rode across I-10 to the west side of the interstate and found another hotel that had a room available.

Day 44 would be another long riding day as I would make my way southeast from Anthony to the South Padre Island area on the gulf coast. From Van Horn Texas the route heads south to Presidio on the Rio Grande River then east following the river road to Lajitas, Terlingua and into Big Bend National Park.



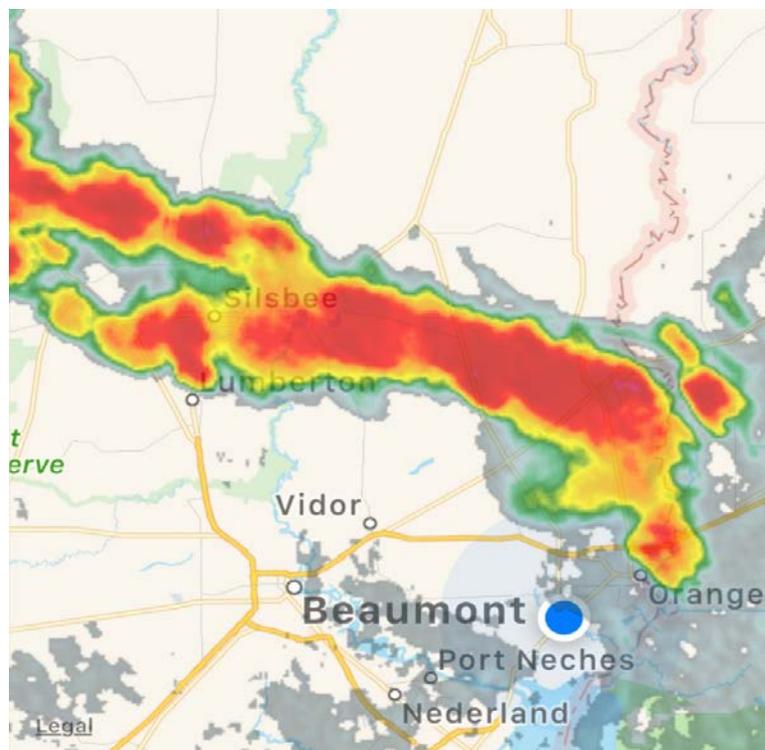
The River Road along the border is one of my favorite rides with Mexico on the right side of this picture and the U.S. on the left side of the Rio Grande. Although the riding can be slow at times, and the road does flood easily with the occasional storms in the area, it is worth the effort to experience it.

After reaching Lajitas I could see some storm clouds in the Big Bend area and managed to arrive at the park entrance as the edge of a small but intense down pour passed.



As I neared Marathon Texas more storms developed, and these were getting bigger and seemed to be strengthening. I turned east once in Marathon and headed for Del Rio and Laredo. Once in Laredo the goal was to follow along the river to Zapata and into McAllen before arriving in South Padre. Unfortunately, another storm developed over Zapata and I was forced to ride east from Laredo until I could pick up Hwy 77 and turn south for South Padre Island. The original plan was to spend the night somewhere near South Padre Island, but it was now 1 a.m. and I did not want to be dealing with the Monday morning traffic in the area so I decided to continue on from South Padre and start riding back north on Hwy 77 until I was clear of the area and could find a hotel for the night. Around 2:30 a.m. I stopped for the night and after two consecutive long riding days I was in need of a little extra sleep before starting the final day of the ride.

Day 45 started around 0800, which was a little earlier than I wanted, but it gave me 22 hours of riding time until the clock ran out on the 45-day ride. As I made my way north to Victoria, I could see that it was going to be a wet day in the Houston area. The rain started to move in just past Victoria and would be persistent, and very heavy at times, until getting on Hwy 6 and riding south to I-45 and then into Galveston. Part of the RAT involves taking a ferry from Galveston to Port Bolivar or vice versa depending on the direction you are heading. Once at the ferry landing in Galveston it was rather crowded, and I did have to wait for quite a while to get on the boat and cross over to Port Bolivar. From there it was on to Port Arthur where there were some storms developing to the north of I-10. This particular storm was a very distinct red line on the radar and just happened to be moving to the north in the exact direction I needed to go to reach Texarkana. It was almost like a road block had been created to thwart my ride attempt. I stopped for a while and waited to see how fast the storm was moving and to see if it was going to die out quickly.



While I was waiting, I couldn't help but wonder if this may be some kind of a sign to me. I had been rained on to some extent for each of the past 13 days and had been forced to avoid some storms as they moved towards me, as if they were coming after me during the ride. Now I had a storm that was moving away from me and was slowing my pace considerably. I decided to ride north and get as close as I could to see how fast it was progressing and test to see how intense the rain fall was. The storm was moving at a decent pace, but it was dropping a lot of rain. I had ridden into the center of the rain area but could not get through to the other side because of the amount of water on the roads. I could keep pace with the storm but could not get ahead of it. As the storm progressed north, I could see blue skies and sunshine to the south and west of me in my mirrors, but I was still riding in intense rain and had nothing but dark skies in front of me. It was a little strange to look forward at the rain in front of me then glance in the mirrors to see what looked like a nice day behind me. I eventually reached Jasper Texas and encountered some flooded roads and that was enough for me to decide it was time to call it a day. There was no point in trying to continue on to Texarkana in this persistent rain, especially since I wasn't trying to complete a certificated ride for the RAT, plus I had already surpassed my goal of 45,000 miles in 45 days. At this point I just needed to get back to the house safely and be done with this marathon ride. Once in Jasper I stopped for a while to assess my options and texted my ever-present weather man Robert Rehkopf. He offered some sound reassurance that heading for the house was the smart decision at this point of my adventure.

I also texted my riding buddy, and start witness, Kevin to see if he was available the next morning to sign my finish paperwork. As I left Jasper riding northwest I immediately rode into clear skies and was having a wonderful ride to Lufkin and I was now thrilled with my decision to head home. However, once in Lufkin I started looking at the radar again to see if maybe I could get to Texarkana now with minimal rain encounters. It was starting to look good and by the time I reached Henderson I decided to head northeast for Hwy 59 which led into Texarkana. This decision was met with multiple issues in a very short time frame. From Henderson I immediately rode into a lite rain that was not showing on my radar screen. I also had two close encounters with the nuisance woodland creatures that my FLIR could not identify because of everything being wet. When everything is wet the FLIR has trouble discerning surface temperature, so most things all look the same, basically a black screen. It didn't take long for me to realize that for whatever reason I was not meant to ride to Texarkana on this final day. After only a few miles I said enough was enough and I turned left again and headed for I-20 near Longview Texas. Once on I-20 and heading for home Kevin sent a text and volunteered to meet me at the final stop tonight to be my witness. After a couple more minor showers and a quick lap around the Dallas area I return to my starting location around 1230 a.m. I pulled into the gas station by my house for the last time on this ride and I could see Kevin out of the corner of my eye parked on the side of the store. As I rode around the pumps on the end of the station and turned around to park at a pump that I knew would give me a good receipt I could see Kevin walking towards me. I wasn't really paying attention to what he was doing but I flashed my lights to let him know I saw him. Once I shut the bike off and Kevin walked up next to me, I could see he was shooting a video of my arrival on his phone. With a smile on my face the first thing I said to him was "has it been 45 days already"?



It was over, I had done it and the only thing left was for Kevin to sign the paperwork and for me to ride the half mile back to my empty house. After talking with Kevin for almost 30 minutes about the ride he left to go home as he had to work in the morning and I made my way home.



1074.5 hours on the clock, 45425 miles, 1228 gallons of fuel, 23 hotel stays, 0 flat tires, and 0 road side law enforcement discussions. My moving average for the trip was 71 MPH with an overall traveling average speed of 65 MPH and the average speed for the entire 1074.5 hours was 42.28 MPH.

It was an unusual feeling to be home and to not be on the clock trying to do something or prepare for the next day of riding. I was almost lost with not having some destination in my mind that I needed to get to tomorrow.

I spent a few hours that night sitting in my garage staring at the bike and the map on my wall. I started thinking about all the places I had ridden to over the past six weeks. I couldn't believe how quickly the time had passed. At the time, and even to this day, I am convinced that those had been the fastest 45 days of my life. I felt great and for now didn't have any physical issues to speak of that made me want to stop riding. I was still mentally in the game and if I had needed to ride the next morning I easily could have.

In the first couple of months after finishing the ride I had some time to reflect on a few things and rethink a couple of decisions made prior to, and during, the ride. The first is that I truly regret not having a GoPro camera to capture some of the amazing sights I saw during the trip, as well as the ridiculous things I encountered on the road. It would have been really nice to be able to share those images with my friends and family. I also sort of regret not extending the ride to reach the 50-day mark. During the final week of riding I did give it a lot of consideration since I was feeling so good and didn't have any reason to stop. Plus, the fact that my wife was in Europe would have made it easier to continue on with the ride and just ask for forgiveness after the fact.

Although I was feeling good at the end of the ride that doesn't mean that I didn't have aches and pains to deal with along the way and afterwards. In the beginning I had a nagging catch in my back directly between my shoulder blades that took several days to get past. Towards the end of the ride I could start to notice issues with the base of each palm where my hands meet my wrist. About half way through each day that area would become a bit tingly. Even several weeks after the ride my palms were still a little sensitive, especially on those rare occasions when I'm back on the bike. My left shoulder was also an issue after the ride, and I am certain it is related to the deer encounter I had in the 2013 Big Tex Rally. My collar bone didn't exactly set correctly after the wreck and I think that after 45 days I may have aggravated my shoulder socket. It is getting better with time, but it has been fairly uncomfortable since I finished the ride.

The original plan had been to ride during the closest two holidays of the summer to minimize the amount of unpaid time I would have to take off from work. Since that changed just prior to the start, which required even more time off, there was no reason to have the ride start in May. Given the amount of oppressive heat and humidity I endured in May, June, and July I would have much preferred to have ridden the 45 days in September and the first part of October. However, it was nice to celebrate my birthday with family during the ride, as well as retracing Ron Ayer's route on the 20th anniversary of his ride.

While some days were better than others, everyday offered some sense of joy and amusement that made it worth the effort. There were however some occasions that had me rethinking events from certain days. Such as the day one encounter, the smoking tire that departed a mobile home trailer and crossed the median into my lane of traffic, the moving truck that I was able to reach out and actually touch as he moved into my lane, or the thunderstorm in Salina that I had no business riding in. But, there were so many more enjoyable moments that I haven't shared in this write up.

The amazing Asian couple that I met in Anthony Texas, the diesel fuel delay I had in Guthrie Oklahoma, the gas station clerk that assumed I worked for BMW. These, and many other, brief encounters during the ride made for some unforgettable interactions with people and are a big part of what I look forward to on longer rides. Obviously, some encounters are more memorable than others, but even the simple question of “where ya headed” can boost my spirit after a long stretch on the bike.

I have been asked several times over the past few months if I would try and do it again or go for a longer ride and my answer has always been maybe. I could see myself trying it again, and possibly going for a longer ride, but not anytime soon. I think most of my riding for the near future will be a bit more relaxed on not “on the clock.”

Finally, I would like to share that this was a fantastic ride for me that I truly did enjoy. I’m so thankful that I was able to have enough things work out for me, and go my way, that allowed me to finish it almost as planned. The support of my wife to let me attempt such a ride and my fellow IBA support group that offered some much-needed encouragement at times along the way. Also thanks to my new friend Steve for proving that it could be done and congratulations to him on being the first to reach the 40/40 milestone.



The Big as Texas party October 2018.



This is to Certify that between the 26th of May 2018 and the 10th of July 2018, Matt Wise rode a 2015 BMW R1200GSA a total of 45,425 grueling miles in forty-five days riding through each of the 48 contiguous states of the United States of America. Mr. Wise's stellar performance riding over 45,000 miles in 45 days earned him entry into the Iron Butt Association's 45/45 Challenge record book.

The 45/45 Challenge, an extreme ride designed for an extreme rider, was conducted under very strict guidelines set forth by the Iron Butt Association. Matt Wise is the first rider to solve the equation of time, distance and endurance to ride a motorcycle more than 45,000 miles in 45 days!

Michael J. Kneebone

Michael J. Kneebone
President, Iron Butt Association

