

FIRST TIME RALLY RAT...

by Eric Brubaker



I started at 6:00 AM on Sunday the 17th of July with the rough plan to take two days to get to Northeast Ohio to spend three nights and two days with my mom and then on to the National Rally in Lima. I had not spent much time in the saddle leading up to this trip so I did not want to adhere to a tight schedule. I wanted to listen to my body and my butt. The early going went remarkably well and I breezed through Waco, Dallas, Texarkana and Little Rock. My initial rough goal was Memphis with an outside goal of Nashville. Memphis came and went so it was 190 more miles to Nashville...no big deal. The country really starts getting nice after Memphis and even though I was making good time I tried to catch the sights at every opportunity. I did not know anyone in Nashville, so I thought of using the Anonymous to find a place to pitch my tent. In order to miss the Monday morning traffic I decided to blow through town and at least be east of the city for starting out on day two. Stopped for a much needed rest and food (30+minutes) and felt quite good so I decided to go for Knoxville where a couple of my high school classmates lived. The countryside got noticeably more rugged and beautiful heading to Knoxville. At one point the interstate crossed a river that look so untouched by man that it was no stretch at all to envision an Indian canoe coming around the bend, or Daniel Boone stepping out of the trees. Very calming. I got to the outskirts of Knoxville and stopped to call my friends. I forgot about the time change which made it about 11:15 local time. They insisted I come straight to their home where we visited for over an hour before I figured it was way after midnight and they had to work on Monday. They have a beautiful home on a nice lake with fine speedboat tied up at their back door. 16 hours and 15 minutes 1105 mile by my odometer, 1070 by my best map reading, but not intending that kind of day, it was undocumented and un-witnessed, so I will get my iron butt certificate another time.

Sore as my butt was I was glad to have a short day on Monday to Ohio, but what a day it was. The trip from Knoxville to Bristol, TN and on through western VA. and to Charleston, WV to Marietta, OH were the best days ridden of my life. This area of the world is what motorcycles were made for. Uphill, downhill, mountains, rain, sun, wind, streams, rivers, cliffs, smooth roads, light traffic, etc. I will spend more time in this area at some point. Just passing through did not do it justice.

Two days with my mom made me glad I did not live close. I have a hard enough time keeping my own home from falling apart. I worked hard for two solid days fixing, painting, moving, organizing etc. Really needed

a couple more days there, but the rally called. I left early on Thursday and got to Lima well before noon. I did not expect the scale of this rally. I registered at about #2600, on the way to a total of over 8000. I thought it was already crowded when I pitched my tent...what about number 8000?

This was my first rally so I just wandered, shopped, talked, attended seminars, and rode the new K1200S for about 45 minutes. Only disappointment was not finding the Austin gang. (I had left all cell numbers at home) It was the only thing I ever figured out I'd left but it sure would have been nice. I can see how people get addicted to these rallies. I always had someone to talk to. It made the time fly. What did not make the time fly was the heat. I grew up Ohio and do not remember this kind of relentless heat, and having lived in Texas for over 20 I did not believe Ohio heat could bother me...boy was I wrong. By the way \$1.00 beer all rally long sure helped. I had more beers in 2 1/2 days than in any similar period since college. I can't wait for New Hampshire next summer. It has to be cooler, or if not, I will find a mountain to ride up.

My original plan was to leave Sunday morning at sun up and arrive home Monday. By 3:00 Saturday afternoon (HEAT) I was wasted, so I loaded up and headed to St. Louis where my best friend lives. It was a fast trip and about 2 hours out I called him (surprise). I only got his voicemail so I gave my ETA and kept going. I messed up the time change thing again and got to his house an hour earlier than he expected me and he was indeed home. A great whirlwind visit. He was gone to catch a flight at 6:30 a.m. when I awoke. I was off about 8:00 and drove the 850 miles home after a very much-needed 45-minute visit in Dallas with one of my sons. I estimate it was at least 100 degrees from about 10:30 a.m. through about 7:30 p.m. The break in Dallas enabled me to make it home by about 9:30. 3200 miles, great trip. I plan a spring trip to Bakersfield, CA. to visit my other son. I am going to try to avoid temperatures over 90.

