

How to make a BMW K1200LT front tire last 10 days!

Or: doing an IBA 10/10ths!

A few months ago, I had decided to participate in the Motorcycle Tourer's Forum "Poker Run From Hell" (PRFH) May 19th through 23rd, 2003, a 5 day, 1,000 mile per day event, in which one could qualify for an Iron Butt Association (IBA) "Saddle Sore 5000" award. I had previously attempted a CC50 (Coast to Coast in 50 hours), and a CCC100 (Coast to Coast to Coast in 100 hours) that the MTF put on, but for one reason or another I did not finish either one of them successfully. Neither DNF was because of lack of stamina or other physical reasons though, so I thought this event was in the realm of possibility. I had completed a couple of SS1000s, a Bun Burner 1500 (1500 miles in 36 hours), and a Bun Burner Gold, (1500 miles in 24 hours), so I was pretty sure that I could stand up to the 5 1000 mile days.

I had to go 1600 miles from my home in San Diego to get to the hub of the PRFH in Russellville, Arkansas. At first my only intent was to get to Russellville to participate in the PRFH. As the time grew closer, I thought: Why not do an IBA SS2K (2 thousand miles in 2 days) on the way over, then I would only have to complete the first 3 days of the PRFH to qualify for the SS5K. I routed my trip to Russellville through Houston, Dallas, and Little Rock in order to make it a little more than 2000 miles. This part of the trip went very well, stopping in Junction, TX for a few hours rest. I had stayed in Junction previously, as this is a well known stop for IBA Coast to Coast riders, being almost exactly halfway between San Diego and Jacksonville, FL. I got to Russellville after 2210 miles, 38 hours 20 minutes, and had my witness forms signed so that whatever happened, I would have the SS2K under my belt.

On Monday, the first day of the PRFH, the route was first southwest to find the post office at Boles, AR, then northwest to Fort Smith, then straight west from Russellville, through Oklahoma City to Amarillo, TX and straight back on I-40 to Russellville. Should be an easy trip, Interstate 40 nearly the whole way. Well, it almost was. About 100 miles from Amarillo, the wind got it's back up, and started blasting us from the right side, gusting I guess 35-45 MPH. We were riding almost constantly with the bikes leaned to the right, and when passing trucks, we would have a calm couple of seconds when protected, then had to be ready as you approached the front of the truck when the wind blast would return with a vengeance. 100 miles of this was a little tiring, but the worst was knowing we had to turn around and head right back through it. I found that the return was a little easier though, because when passing trucks we were now on the windward side, and kept pretty constant lean angle into the wind the whole time. Fortunately, after about an hour of this, the wind started to let up a little. At one time on the west bound trip though, the dust was really bad. Now I know what the "Oklahoma Dust Bowl" times must have been like. Once, I was following another motorcycle, and the dark brown dust suddenly became so thick I could only see one white line in front of me, and the tail light of the other bike was like a little red LED spot. I had my hand and foot on the brake ready to grab all the stop I could find if that bike hit the brakes worrying even more about what was behind me if I did! Fortunately this brown out lasted only a few seconds (LONG ONES), and we were able to see reasonably well again. This day was 1045 miles for me, in 16 hours, 15 minutes.

Tuesday morning, we headed out East from Russellville, turning north on US62, then US67 to St. Louis, MO. We were supposed to make a mandatory fuel stop in Popular Bluff, MO, but some of us did not find it. It seems there was a difference in the address and what was listed on our Microsoft Streets and Trips maps. I got fuel a little further north on the route so that I would have the required proof of route. At St. Louis, we headed west on I-70 to US 65 south, then to Springfield, MO. Here we went southwest on I-44 to Big Cabin, OK. The last section of this was the Will Rogers Turnpike, a toll road. I made a big mistake here, and after refueling as required at the Big Cabin Truck Plaza I got back on the Turnpike, instead of heading south on US 69 as we were supposed to do. Well, this turnpike has NO exits for a

LONG way! I thought I was going to end up in Tulsa! Fortunately there was finally an exit at Claremore, OK, where I was able to head back east to Pryor, OK and pick up US 69 south again. This cost me about 20 miles of additional time. I then went south through Muskogee, OK and back to I-40, returning to Russellville. Total day, 1048 miles, 17 hours, 50 minutes.

Wednesday Morning, we headed out east, up US64 where we had to find the Bald Knob, AR post office, then east on US64 to Memphis, where we picked up I-40 and continued east through Nashville to Monterey, TN, where we turned around and headed back on I-40 to Russellville again. The only event of this day was a bad traffic tie-up coming into Nashville, but another rider I was with, Gregg Burger, had CB radio and between what the trucks were saying and our GPS units he found a way around it that went very well. The tie up on I-40 was an 8 mile stretch of almost totally stopped trucks! We got around it in about 20 minutes. PHEW! Total for the day, 1026 miles, 16 hours, 38 minutes.

Thursday morning I had the option of ending the 1000 mile days and going on some “flower sniffing” rides that many of the MTF group were doing. Only 12 of us started out doing the “Dark Side” 1K days. When I got up at 4:00 though, I felt very good, and thought, “I’ll do just one more and see how I feel.” About two weeks before leaving San Diego for this ride, I came up with the rather far fetched idea that it would be possible, if not very likely, that I could actually complete a very difficult Iron Butt Association ride, the “10/10ths”. That is ten thousand miles in 10 days! It sure seemed unlikely that I could ever do that though. Well, I did the full day on Thursday, which was a trip north on US62 to find the post office at Pocahontas, AR, then on to I-57 north where we continued to Neoga, IL., where we turned around and headed back south to Memphis, and then west back to Russellville. Most of the trips so far had been run at a reasonably safe posted speed limit plus about 10%. Today though, on I-57 in IL, the highway patrol was thick, and we saw many cars stopped on the southbound side, a radar unit being deployed from a bridge, and an airplane in the air. Needless to say, we were really good boys in IL! Ha.

Total for the day, 1043 miles, 17 hours. This was actually my best day, mentally and physically, psyching me up for the rest of the trip.



Gregg and Doug at the Pocahontas, AR post office

Friday morning, I knew that completing this day would give me 7 1000 mile days, and then an extended trip home could complete the 10/10ths. It did not seem so far fetched now! The day was actually quite good. I had ridden off and on during the previous days with a couple of other riders, Gregg Burger from New Jersey on a Harley Ultra, and Doug Woodall from Texas on a GL1800 Gold Wing. Most days I would continue on due to their need to stop for fuel more often than I, so most of the time I

was riding alone. Today however, I started out with Doug, and stopped when he did because I was getting tired, and the extra stops felt good. This is the only day we stayed together for the entire day. He was finishing his SS5K, I still had nearly 3000 miles to complete my ultimate goal. Today’s route was North from Russellville, on a great winding mountain road with some nice scenic views, once daylight arrived. Better than we had been seeing the first days. At Springfield, MO, we turned northeast to St. Louis, then southeast to Metropolis, IL, where we went to Superman Square to see the big Superman statue. There is a Superman museum there, but we could not afford the time to check it out. I had expected this to be some cheesy statue, but it was actually quite nice, and the area around it is well kept and well visited. If you are in the area, check it out.



Me and Superman

From there, we continued southeast to Nashville before returning westward to Russellville. Here it was fortunate for me I had stayed with Doug for the whole day, as I was headed back to Russellville from Nashville, when he motioned me off at an exit. He asked me if I knew where the stop was, and it hit me. We had a mandatory fuel stop in Nashville for route proof. I had forgotten, and my horse was headed for the barn!

We had one little scare on this trip though. Once we were riding along, not even sure what state we were in now, and the road changed to 2 lanes of oncoming traffic on the left and a single lane on the right. In many places these are marked with dotted yellow lines so that if traffic allows you can cross over into the lane to the left to pass. We came up on a farm implement moving slowly taking up the lane we were in, and Doug moved out to pass. As soon as I saw Doug was nearly clear, I started out. As soon as I got even with the farm equipment, I noticed the lane marker had changed to double solid yellow. There was only one car coming though, in the far-left lane, so I did not worry about it. My radar detector blasted my ears, and it was a police car! Wow, that was close. Well, a couple miles later blue flashing lights! We pulled over, and the officer walked up to me and with a smile said: "You put me on the spot back there didn't you?" I sheepishly smiled, and said I sure did. I told him I was just trying to get around the farm equipment and did not notice the lane markers change from dotted to solid until too late. He smiled at me again, and said that as soon as the people we had passed earlier saw that he stopped us, we could go on. Maybe it was my gray hair that told him we were not out to terrorize his state. I shook his hand and thanked him, wishing him a nice holiday weekend, and Doug and I then went to get fuel.

Total for the day, 1026 miles, 17 hours, 5 minutes.

Saturday morning, I got up an hour later than I had for the past many days, and left Russellville at 6:00 AM instead of the usual 5:00 AM, and headed out for home. I wanted to do 22-2300 miles home so that I would not have to do a full 1000 on Monday to complete the 10/10ths. It was a little sad though, as I had really wanted to meet a lot of the MTF people, but the ones of us who opted for the "Dark Side" rides really had little time to do so. The "Flow Sniffers" surely had more "fun" than we did. Each morning when leaving, a couple of us either started out together, or at least spoke for a few moments. One, Bo Griffin from Texas, came from the campground every morning, and stopped in front of my room as he filled his cooler with ice for the day. We spoke nearly every morning, but he had a fuel cell on his bike requiring very few fuel stops, so he always beat us back. One day, I noticed on returning that he had "beaten" me by less than an hour. It was a personal victory! Today, I saw all the bikes parked, all their owners asleep and looking forward to the "banquet" later in the day to have fun and celebrate the end of a good week. I on the other hand was not through yet. It made the first couple of hours on the road a little depressing. I had mapped out a route before leaving San Diego that would take me north at Oklahoma City through Wichita and to I-70, then west to near Denver, and south through Santa Fe, west to Flagstaff, and on into San Diego. I had done the south route along I-10 and I-8 so many times it was boring. Actually it's boring the first time! I wanted to avoid the heat on this route also. Well, the Weather Channel on Friday night looked promising, with severe weather warnings, tornadoes and hail, to be in central Texas headed south east. Great, I will be north of it! Saturday morning though, TWC had a different story. The severe weather was still north of my expected route, and headed right for it. Let's see, I wanted to see new country and things on this trip, so what will it be, tornadoes and hail, or the same old boring heat? I was thinking to myself: If I remember correctly, the heat was pretty bad, but I cannot be sure, so maybe I will check it out again to verify it. I have never seen a tornado, nor experienced hail on a motorcycle, but I guess that will just have to wait for another time.

I had even thought of going all the way to Jacksonville and completing a CC50 (Coast to Coast in 50 hours), but after doing a little calculation saw that that would add over 400 un-needed miles to an already rather grueling trip. I headed east to Memphis, then south to New Orleans, then west on boring I-10 back toward San Diego. Now is where things started to go a bit wrong! I wanted to get to Junction, TX again to get 4 hours sleep. I rolled into Junction around 1:00 AM, and as I was pulling into the hotel parking lot, which is packed gravel, I noticed how tired I was, and that I was a bit wobbly with the bike at

walking speed. I hit the front brake a little hard and the front tire skittered a couple of inches on loose gravel. I put my right foot down, and hit more loose gravel. **DOWN I WENT!** Now, here I am, after 1:00 AM in the morning, with a 840 pound whale on it's side, and no one around. I could not budge it. I had picked up the LT before, but I was just too tired to accomplish it now. I walked up to the office of the hotel, and saw a terrible sign. **NO VACANCY!** I was pretty tired, and getting even more so with the circumstances. Fortunately, a BMW RT rider and his SO rode by, and as soon as he saw me he whipped into the parking lot to help. I heard him say, **OOPS, GRAVEL!** He carefully stopped, and he and his wife/girlfriend helped me right the beast. Then we started talking about sleeping options. He thought that the hotel they were at had rooms, so I followed him the couple blocks there, only to find a sign on the door of the blackened office: "**NO VACANCY, nearest rooms in Menard**". He knew the area a little, and told me that I did not want to go to Menard at night because it was back roads and the "critters" were extremely dangerous at night, meaning deer. My LT riding friends in the San Antonio area had always reminded us of the deer problem in the Texas Hill Country, but on my several trips through there had never seen one. Anyway, after weighing my options, which were to return toward San Antonio, 90 plus miles back east, brave the deer on back roads to Menard, or continue on West on I-10, not knowing where accommodations could be found. I was talking to my wife on the phone, and I finally decided to head on west. I thought I would just stop at a rest stop if absolutely necessary, although for safety reasons this is a rather undesirable thing to do. I rode a little while, when all of a sudden the bike started running a little ragged. Being in a slightly reduced state of consciousness, it took me a while to realize **OUT OF GAS!!** I had planned to get gas in Junction for the dated and timed receipt needed to end the day, but the events took my mind off the need for fuel. Oh Boy! Here I am, miles from civilization, and out of fuel. I had thought to carry a 1 quart MSR bottle of fuel just for emergency use, and this was one! I came up on an exit, pulled in the clutch, and coasted down the ramp. **TWO DEER** jumped out in front of me!! Wow, they were right, there **ARE** deer here! I coasted down to the end of the ramp, shut off the lights, and with my flashlight got the MSR bottle and poured my precious quart of fuel into the tank. While doing this, I heard the "click, click, click" of deer hooves on the road near me. I started up, and turned under the bridge, only to see another deer, then on the ramp back up the other side, at least two more in the edge of the bushes along the ramp. I rode slowly, about 45 MPH to conserve fuel, back east on I-10, wondering how far I would have to walk to get fuel when it quit. I was also thinking the slow speed would lessen the impact with the impending deer! My wife called the Junction Police Department to see if there was any way to get fuel delivered if I ran out. They were very nice, and told her that if I did, they could get someone to deliver fuel from the truck stop if necessary, but it would be costly, like I would care. I tried to figure how far I could go on a quart, and saw a sign: Junction, 18 miles. I looked at my trip computer, and it said I was getting 40.2 MPG. That surprised me, I certainly should be doing better than that at this speed. I was having a tough time even thinking at this point, and thought: I gotta get one more brain cell working here. Strain to concentrate, and click, one more cell working! Great, now with three of them working, I can accomplish something! I soon realized that the MPG readout is a running average from the last time it was reset, several weeks back. I reached down and pressed the reset button, then watched the display blank, then 59 MPG, 59.7 MPG, 60 MPG, finally 60.2 MPG. Great! Now I will only have to walk 3 or 4 miles! I continued east, asking the LT to please keep going, just a little longer. Finally I could see the lights of the truck stop about a mile ahead, and felt pretty good. It kept running a little longer, then started sputtering. I pulled in the clutch, coasted to the exit ramp, and thankfully it was down hill. Coasted down the ramp feeling really good, since all I would have to do would be to walk ¼ mile or so because the truck stop was on the other side of the freeway. As I was reaching the bottom of the ramp, I noticed there was a closed Exxon station on the right, but the pump display lights were still on! Hopefully I just coasted around the corner, and right up to the pump, putting my foot down and not even using the brake. **THE PUMP WORKED!** Hooray! I filled the tank, and my trusty MSR bottle, and took off back west. 55 miles later, I pulled into a motel parking lot in Sonora, TX, and saw the prettiest sight, a **VACANCY** sign! Rang the night bell, and an angel in a nightgown unlocked the door and let me in. Layed down at 4:00 AM, set my Screaming Meany for 4 hours, and slept like the proverbial log. Left at 8:30 AM Sunday headed home. That was a pretty fatigued riding day, did not get my second wind until around 4:30 PM that afternoon, after that I felt pretty good. Finally got home at midnight.

Monday morning, I woke up around 7:30, feeling pretty good. I got out my maps, added up the mileage I had done, and determined I needed 400 more miles for the 10/10ths. I quickly determined that Dateland, AZ, east on I-10 (AGAIN!) would fit the bill. I had to go there for a Date Shake anyway, so why not? Ha. After a very uneventful, but HOT trip to Dateland and back home, I had the required 10,000 miles. I never thought I could do it, but other than the early Sunday Morning trials and a pretty hard day on Sunday, the rest was not all that bad. I had been talking to my wife on the phone Friday night, and said

that I felt it was a little easier than I had expected. I immediately started laughing, and when my wife asked what was funny, I said that I could not imagine using any conotation of the word easy in this conversation, and was changing my statement to “a little less difficult” than I had imagined.



Anyway, it's done now, and the absolute best thing I can say about it is: "I don't EVER have to do that again!"

Now, I have an even greater respect for anyone who does these miles in the Iron Butt Rally. I had a fairly difficult time just pumping out the miles, on fixed routes with only a few easy mandatory stops required. To do these miles, and still keep thinking, planning, and changing plans, with a new list of strange and difficult to find bonus locations to choose from every 2-3 days, to me is almost inconcievable. I can "almost" say for a certainty that the IBR is safe from me!

Oh, the tire? I have always gotten 8-9000 miles wear from a Bridgestone BT-020 front tire on theLT, and was worried when starting out that if I did try for the 10/10ths, the front tire may not make it. This worried me toward the end, and I kept watching it. Surprisingly, after over 10,000 miles I still have a little life left in it! So, If you want to make your front LT tire last 10 days, avoid the California rain grooved concrete "cheese grater" highways. Most of the roads in all the other 11 states I visited on this trip were very nice and smooth in comparison. Maybe slicker in the rain, but fortunately I only saw an hour or two of rain on the whole trip.

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Black 2001 BMW K1200LT
BAT BYKE
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