

Mason Dixon 20-20 My First Rally (My First DNF)

My first rally was quite an education. The learning experience was worth the price of admission. I did a few things right and a lot of things wrong but that should make the next one a more successful experience.

The most important thing I learned was that although my bike, an 800cc Kawasaki Vulcan Classic, can get me by on the lower level Ironbutt rides, it is not going to work on the harder IBA rides and rallies. Comfort-wise, alternator-wise and feature-wise it is seriously lacking. When Rick Miller, Rally Master of the Mason Dixon told me he found someone to fabricate a 10 gallon tank for the Concours (for only \$200.00), my next bike was decided on.

I got to York early in the afternoon on Friday, in time to see some of the 48 hour riders off, including Vicki Johnston, who sold me the auxiliary fuel cell I'm now going to have to sell to pay for the repairs to my bike.

After that I took a quick shower and I was ready to check in. Unfortunately, they weren't ready for me to check in. It was only 2:45 and check in wasn't until 3:00. I went back to my room and looked over maps again.

At 3:00 I checked in, got my hat and did the odometer check. I was cocked, locked and ready to rock and roll. I also got the news that Lori Kobiyoshi hit, or was hit by, a truck. She was hoping to be at the dinner Sunday night so luckily it wasn't as bad as it might have been. I'm sorry not to have met her from all I've heard about her. (If you're reading this Lori, I hope your recovery is quick.)

During the after dinner talk, two guys needed to be excused. They were repairing a radiator that started leaking on the way to the rally. They ran home to get a spare (how many of us have a spare radiator at home? Now that's preparedness) they found it was a little too large, so they went back to trying to repair the one that had begun leaking. They were still working on it the next morning I believe.

During Don Arthur's talk for beginners, at which even the veterans stayed, I decided not to go with his group. He had a large number of people and without Lori's help it was going to be much more difficult for him. Besides, I figured I could get a lot more points and place higher going on my own. After all, one of the boni was in my hometown, and several others were on roads I ride all the time. I did, however, decide to change my previously picked out route a little, adding two boni on the PA/WV border.

After getting the rally packet I looked through it quickly and picked one more stop, Gerrardstown, WV. I decided to head over route 30 to I-81 and then south to 51. It was, of course, raining hard most of the morning and I got the strap of my helmet in the collar of my TourMaster allowing the rain to seep in.

After coming to a complete stop on I-81 for awhile, and then taking 40 minutes to go 2 miles I finally had an opportunity to get off the interstate and take 40 across Maryland/West Virginia, skipping Gerrardstown. After almost passing my first boni at Hancock because it was a last minute add and I didn't have any maps of it, I eased up a little and started paying attention. The roads down there are so great for riding I was lost in the pleasure of it, especially since it had stopped raining.

I met another rider there and even though I shared a table with him at dinner the night before the rally, at breakfast before leaving, and asked him his name again before separating with him, I still can't tell you his name. Oddly enough I can tell you he was riding an ST1100. I always seem able to remember the bikes people ride even if I can't remember them. If he's reading this hopefully he'll email me and let me know. My lousy memory for names makes me wonder if I'll be a good teacher when I finally get my degree in 10 years or so. He said he was going to Flintstone next and since he had maps of the area I decided to follow him.

After leaving Flintstone he said he was going to try for Three Churches, WV. I had planned on heading straight to New Vrindaban from there and then to East Finley, but asked him if I could tag along, getting a few extra points. He said he didn't mind so in quick succession I got Three Churches, WV and Aurora, WV. After that I suggested working our way to I-79 and on the New Vrindaban, WV and East Finley, PA. He seemed sure that 250 was the way to go and since I hadn't planned on coming from that direction figured he knew better. I should have remembered the advice I'd gotten time and time again: "Ride your own ride." It took several hours to get to New Vrindaban and we missed East Finley by a few minutes. I felt bad that after he helped me get the two WV boni that I didn't insist on looking at a map at Aurora. I feel like I let him down.

He was going for the Pittsburgh boni next but I didn't want to deal with the traffic on Saturday night. I figured I'd do Erie, PA and after getting some sleep at home I'd go down and hit route 666, Punxsutawney, Pottersdale and whatever I could near York, definitely hitting Annville to pay my respects on the way back

At the 67 mile marker I lost all power in my bike even though the engine was revving fine. I pulled over and saw a puddle of oil under the bike and a long line of it trailing behind me. My rally was over.

After calling AMA's MOTOW and trying to understand the accent English of the lady who answered (it might not have been so hard if I didn't have traffic passing 10 feet away at 70 mile per hour) I finally got a tow truck on the way. I had been so focused on trying to find the oil leak I didn't even notice the fact that my chain was missing. Apparently the chain came off and ripped a hole in the case somewhere. I'll know more when we get a chance to take a look at it. (Addendum: it wasn't the case and the part that was broke only cost \$90.00)

I called Rick and let him know that I was going to DNF and that I'd hopefully see him at the next one. He told me that he'd mail my shirt to me and after hanging up, it started to

rain, of course. It was a miserable night all around and after a \$140.00 tow and a two hour drive I was home. It could have been worse I guess, I could have been a lot further from home, I could have not had my cell phone, it could have happened on a much busier section of highway, but it still sucks. My only real goal was to not DNF and I failed at that.

If I can sell my fuel cell soon enough I might be able to get to the Fear-Less Cap. I'd like to hit that one as a tribute to Larry, whom I've read quite a bit about. If not, then I'll almost certainly be at the Keystone in July.

See ya all there.