

## DOA in FISHKILL, NY

### Pre-rally:

Unlike the 2001 MD20-20 with its 400+ boni, this year's planning was a breeze by comparison, mainly because I decided to run the high-scoring northern route "D" regardless of the weather. In a pre-rally e-mail, Harley Trash suggested I hit the route's "anchor" first (the highest scoring bonus) and then suck up anything left over as time permitted. After calculating the mileages and points accrued for a dash to Eastport, ME versus a vacuum run of CT, MA, RI, and PA, it became clear that a multi-stop rally was the ticket (at least at my pace). I was baffled: Todd couldn't have been trying to mislead me, could he? The game was on.

I prefer to hit more bonus locations than log hours on the superslab, so I plotted my most ambitious run yet: about 1450 miles and 21 bonuses in 35 hours for around 3.7 million points. Based on a standard BunBurner / Presidential Tour photo trip I did last October through the Midwest, the ride was feasible. Holiday traffic was the only unknown. Eleventh-hour, nightmarish posts to the DOA discussion board citing hideous traffic on I-95 made me rethink my plans, which included Provincetown as the anchor. Archived newspaper articles lamenting last year's 15-mile traffic back-up on the Cape scared me into a last-minute MapQuest session. Perhaps a more northerly route was possible? I plotted a new run including Rochester and Fulton, NY and dropping Provincetown. It worked out not only in points, but in average trip speed.

I finalized a trip to the two northern NY boni, everything in VT, Rumney, NH, south to Dayville, CT, east to the RI boni, and then back west through CT and northeastern PA.

### Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>:

My friend Keith Carr and I set out for the 235-mile trip to Cincinnati, OH to stay overnight with Chris Ward, a great rider with whom I have rallied in the past. Unfortunately, Chris could not attend this year's MD20-20 but he and his friend Maia did send us off graciously with pizza, Jameson Irish whisky, and Ohio's own Graeter's ice cream. It strikes me that m/c rallyists cannot be distinguished as athletes based on diet or sleep patterns. The 02:30 bed time foreshadowed nights to come...

### Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>:

470 miles to York, PA on 4 hours rest, but we were surprisingly fresh. We arrived at the Holiday Inn around 16:00 and were greeted warmly as always by Jean, and sent inside for registration. Rick and Lou set us up with the paperwork: an incredibly well-organized team. The conversation hits on Don Arthur's unbelievable 4 Corners ride and his encounter with a deer. He's running the DOA, which besides being inspiring means that the top spot will be hotly contested. Bob Higdon was in the corner, casually reading a paper. For some reason, this made me nervous. Then Harley Trash comes in, sporting a white tank top, flaming Harley boots, and an IBA tattoo. Later, outside in the lot, he began his good-natured ribbing:

"Hey Brad, what are you riding this time?"

"...uh... the K75C, it's all I've..."

"Is that some kind of foreign bike? Never heard of it."

[long pause] "It's a Kawasaki, you know, the 'K' stands for Kawasaki?"

... a polite laugh from Todd as I fail to match wits with the master. I met Todd at the 2000 MidWest Fest in Indiana and gave up then and there trying to keep up with him on the road or with the comebacks.

On to a self-guided odo check and then a much-anticipated stroll around the lot to look at the bikes. Rob Nye's K1100LT was particularly impressive. Keith and I (Canadian ex-pats) spoke with John Atkinson from Ontario, admiring his maple-leaf emblazoned Connie. HT's chopper, confidently planted at the START/FINISH line, was something to behold. The carefully applied strips of friction tape on the rear fender behind the seat are a classic touch (as was the quarter-sized-and-spreading stain of oil on the pavement).

As this was Keith's first rally, I couldn't help but think this was as good an introduction to LDRallying as

you can get. Great people, food, organization, and another great theme this year - "Diners of America." I counted 8 participants who were in the 2001 IBR, and many of them were going to be kicking my arse all over route "D". After the banquet, we retired to the hotel room to finish the prep work. Because the DOA promised no wildcard boni at the start, I wrote out my entire route in advance on a two paper scrolls to be loaded into my Touratech rally roadbook. I was concerned only about getting to Fulton, NY before its 14:30 window closed. MapQuest had me getting there late. The rest of the route had few problems with boni availability. Keith was going for the standard BunBurner (1500/36), and had his notes done before me. Bedtime was 00:00. Alarm for 04:00. Sadly, no Jameson.

### **Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup>:**

With the Fulton window an issue, I was anxious to stage my bike close to the START line. As it turned out, I was only the second or third bike there, lined up next to Rob Nye's K11LT. From afar, I saw a list of his targets.... it was long. *Very long.*

One of my favorite moments at any rally is the conclusion of the rider's meeting. Just watching the crowd of riders disperse is fascinating: some shuffle away slowly, staring bleakly at their rallybooks and scratching their heads... some rush to their bike like they're being scrambled to an F-16... others are still sitting on the grass next to the parking lot, enjoying what may be their last unhurried coffee for 36 hours. As I get to my bike, I decide to synchronize the onboard clock with the official rally time. Todd calls it up on the laptop sitting in the back of the "Official Rally Minivan". I have a clear line-of-sight to it from my bike:

*05:56:25* - I take one last walk around the bike to make sure nothing is amiss, plant the earplugs and helmet and start the bike.

*05:56:51* - Rick and Todd chastise the first few rows of riders for starting their bikes so early... hell... I was probably already in first gear and creeping! My bike has nothing but the roadbook in the cockpit to fiddle around with, so I nervously crank through the first set of directions to kill time.

*05:58:00* - Rick or HT, I can't remember who, holds up two fingers... I scan the long line of riders astride all manner of bike, some of whom have already retreated behind their tinted visors, staring across the START line at the lightening sky. Others are wishing their friends a safe ride as they hurry to their mounts. I turn to wish Keith "good luck" but he too seems to be semi-transfixed by the spectacle and doesn't see me.

*05:59:00* - there's nothing like the last 60 seconds before we're released. Someone at the START line raises a single finger, initiating a salvo of starter motors.

*05:59:30* - The anticipation of a long ride filled with new and different locations brings an involuntary smile. And **diners**?! Hot damn. The promise of good food at any hour! For the first 20-24 hours of a rally, I am so riveted and excited to get to the next bonus that the need for rest hardly arises. Visiting historic diners - each one guaranteed to be unique - is about the best theme I can think of (next to a cross-Canada Tim Horton's extravaganza or a Québec provincial défi-poutine!).

**06:00:03!** - The 160,580-point "Declare Your Route" bonus is out of my hands and I'm following Rob Nye and Tom Cotter out of the parking lot. How could it get any better? Tracy is at the Arsenal road light and it's green. Amazing.

### **New York boni:**

During the 2001 MD20-20, I remembered that two laners in PA were fast. US-15N was no exception, and it helped that sections of it are the future I-99 corridor. Going some 250 miles without a bonus is a tad boring, but for my novice brain, rallying demands an almost constant evaluation of the progress of my ride: Am I on time? Do I need to bypass boni? Am I ahead enough to get to Provincetown too?! **Is that a Ural ahead of me?!**

My pace was clearly going to get me to Fulton with no problems. Traffic is light but deer carcasses are ubiquitous. Tonight might be interesting... The Rochester bonus is easy. I make Fulton to find the diner closed well before 14:30, but they've taped the bonus answer to the front door. The cook is still inside and cheerfully points to the newspaper article. The bonus question reads something like: "How many cars were involved in the pile-up?" The article's striking main graphic says "57 vehicles". I jot that down and then think I'd better read on... The text clearly says "50 cars". Almost the victim of a classic brain fade on but the second bonus. Time for some food. I down lunch: a Balance bar, some beef jerky and water and hit the toll road for Brattleboro, VT.

### **Vermont boni - "Attack of the Clones"**

I learn to hate VT-9 with an unbridled passion. Pre-rally planning indicated it would be a scenic road with few small towns. As it turned out, it's Vermont's tourist alley. VT-9 was closed through Bennington for their annual Mayfest. Once through that, I was stuck behind a lean-running, antique F-150 for 30 miles, an Explorer ferrying 4 canoes for a good 10 miles, and an Escort wagon crammed with three girls from Maryland and all their worldly possessions for god knows how long. I was the victim of multiple cast-offs from a Ford Owner's Group rally all the way to Brattleboro! Once there, I missed my turn on Cedar Street and came at Elliot from the east, where a fellow rallyist was parked. She stared blankly at yet another twisted street festival being played out on Elliot Street. I gestured plaintively as if to say:

"Tell me the bonus isn't up the barricaded street full of pagans wearing bells, felt hats, and ambling about on stilts?"

Empathically, she nodded - "Yes."

I ducked down a side street and magically found a parking spot being vacated by a Ford Taurus... All was forgiven instantaneously. I sprinted up the stairs to Elliot Street, momentarily screened by a slow-moving, bell-clad reveler. While I chuckled then, it was not until much later did I think about how ridiculous I must have appeared wearing a wool turtleneck and Thinsulate pants in 80° weather, an electrical plug dangling from my jacket.

The good gent at Buckley's greeted me with a friendly smile. Curiously, he too had perfected the "Sage's Nod", motioning only with his raised chin to point at the business-card bonus by the door.

Extricating myself from Brattleboro was relatively easy, and it was nice to get some air flowing through the vents in my jacket on I-91. I rode by Dean Tanji in Bellows Falls, recognizing him from the Friday night banquet. I had slightly overshot the bonus location and was heading back to it when he gave me a directional head nod to confirm I was on the right track. I thought, "Man, three wordless communications in less than a half hour. And dancing pagans by the boatload? Did I miss the section in the rallybook on an impending harmonic convergence?"

Dean rode past me in the opposite direction at the following Windsor and Quechee boni as well. Not surprisingly, he was making time on me at each encounter.

### **Intermission:**

During any long ride or rally, I invariably think about my wife. Most often, it happens during the long night hours, when the next bonus is over a hundred miles away, or when the wind changes such that all I hear is the hypnotic whir of the engine. During my first BunBurner attempt, it happened when I ran into the fourth curtain of thunderstorms late in the night in Iowa. I turned around. During the DOA, it happened at the I-91 exit to Bellows Falls. As I pulled off the highway, I realized Meghan and I had taken this exact exit a year earlier during our first wedding anniversary when we needed to make a rest stop for lunch. The road ends in a T-intersection, and I recognized the gas station and supermarket on the corner. I remembered everything we bought there that day, the friendly cashier, their surprising wine selection, the low grey sky, the guy with the KLR650 in the parking lot. I almost instantly teared up.

For some unexplainable reason, I miss her the most at these times. It can be almost debilitating or truly inspiring. I'm riding some gorgeous birch-lined two-lane road in Vermont, having a blast and knowing that I have someone at home that I love and that misses me. It tempers me in every way.

### **New Hampshire - "Don't Tread On Me"**

After gassing-up in Quechee, I knew I would make it to Rumney, NH with light to spare. I had been hauling on the slab to make this goal because of the number of deer hits I had seen throughout the day. I wasn't keen on NH-25 at night. However, as it turned out, gamboling ungulates were the least of my worries. I was running north on I-91 when a truck wheel came careering down the slope from the elevated southbound lane and crossed in front of me about 300 metres ahead, doing at least 40 mph. It crashed into the trees at the forest edge. My Pücker Coefficient was instantly recalibrated.

I arrived at Plain Jane's Diner to find it closing up for the night. However, Jane was kind enough to let me in to use the restroom and clean my bug-spattered visor. She also set me up with some decaf, asking in great detail what exactly this rally was about. Apparently, riders had been streaming through all day but not staying long enough for her to get the low down. As I was in need of a break, I told her and some of the staff the story. Two teenage guys were a tad incredulous when I told them where I had been and where I planned to sleep tonight.... Jane was very enthusiastic and asked for a copy of the rallybook (which I will likely provide her with). I reluctantly left the comfort of the diner but was awed by the sight of the near-full moon following me behind the mountain tops, its light streaming down the occasional valley. With night falling, I once again hit the slab in search of fast food and faster lanes on I-93. I'm still ahead of schedule, and cautiously think about hitting Provincetown.

### **Rhode Island boni - "Stop to Go Faster... I wish."**

I-93 from Rumney to Dayville, CT was a dream - not one deer nor even a carcass to report! A beautiful moonlit night with high clouds beginning to move in. The weather had been fantastic all day, especially considering the dim forecasts early in the week. I welcomed the clouds as they would help prevent the formation of fog. A short-lived moon dog flashed in the southern sky and another great rally moment was logged. I hit a sandwich shop outside of Concord for a quick bite and to check progress, marveling at how I remembered to re-install my earplugs after every stop. A first for me. A good omen?

I found the Dayville bonus at 12:16. A standing-room-only Dunkin' Donuts lies next to the closed Zip's Diner and I think about taking the 3-hour rest stop there. But the promise of an open diner in Pawtucket drives me on.

Finding the Pawtucket bonus was easy, but it's closed. I stopped at a Shell station on the highway with a nice big lot (*i.e.* sleeping pad) and filled up a half tank. But the gas receipt came back without a time stamp. "No problem", I thought, "The register inside will have that." It didn't. It's late, I'm tired, and I begin to panic. I run up the street to the nearby Sunoco station, where the attendant is just arriving for the night. Unfortunately, he is troubled by my appearance and ensconces himself behind 5 inches of Lexan. His English is also spotty, so my pleas fail to make headway. I retreat to the Shell and we ply the computer for a proper receipt - nothing doing. 25 minutes later, I'm wide awake and furious. With no other stations nearby, I decide to set out for the other RI boni. A quick calculation finds me less than an hour ahead of my plan. Provincetown is out, and the Fall River boni are unlikely. Where is the time going?!

I tear out of Pawtucket, forgetting to put my earplugs in...

The East Greenwich and North Kingstown boni fall easily, but I am starting to make more and more wrong turns, wasting time in residential areas. My roadbook directions are also questionable, probably because I was tired when I wrote them on Friday night. Middletown, RI becomes a real chore and I find it solely because the diner theme makes for easily spotted targets. However, West Kingston's "Great Swamp Massacre" sinks me...a dirt road bonus at 03:40 and behind the eight ball already. I give up the hunting easily, electing to conserve the dregs of my spirit and find a place to rest.

### **Wyoming, RI - "Bring out your dead!"**

I take RI-138 west towards the dreaded I-95, finding a promising rest stop in Wyoming near the on ramp. A perfect gas receipt is obtained and the attendant even suggests a good place to sleep, "Across the road behind the Mobil station. People are always sleeping there." Is this a glowing recommendation, a sarcastic admonition, or another veiled shot at my appearance - I don't know. It's 04:09, for crying out loud. I set my alarm for 06:30, don the wool balaclava and sleep fitfully until 05:30, or so, when the blast from an air horn awakens me instantly. The reptilian brain takes over and I spring to a sitting position with my left hand already making a friendly "thumbs-up" gesture. Two EMT's are howling with laughter from the cab of their ambulance. I pull myself from the pavement to explain. The EMT in the passenger seat says:

"The gas-station attendant called us to say there's a dead motorcyclist behind her shop."

"I'm not dead" (my witty exchange with Todd still haunting me)

"We can see that. What are you up to? Are you OK?"

"Yeah, I'm running this 36-hour rally with a mandatory 3-hour rest stop."

"OK. Well, ride safe. *[laugh]* We'll inform the attendant."

*[EMT to Dispatch, disappointed]:* "Yeah, he's alive."

I fall back to sleep until 06:15 when I wake without the alarm. I grab a decaf and chat with the worried attendant, apologizing for not telling her what I was up to. She turns out to be a rider herself, and was only looking out for me. "I thought you had a heart attack and fell off your bike! Anyway, the coffee is on the house. Next time, drop in. You could've slept in my car!" Another lesson learned...

The sky is low and threatening as I reload the roadbook with Part II of the "master plan". I add three hours to the ETA's and find that I'm getting back to York well after the 17:00 deadline, when penalties really start to rack up! There must be a mistake! But with the clock ticking and 07:09 nigh, I elect to figure it out on the road.

### **Connecticut boni -**

I-95 turns out to be grand, and after only one wrong turn in Groton, I find Rosie's Diner with ease. It's packed with the morning crowd, but there's room at the counter right in front of the bonus clock. "You're late!" says one of the waitresses. "Lotsa people have been here already." I think about my ETA problem and tear out of the diner, my electric vest plug caroming off the stools, heading for Middletown, CT. A light rain starts but doesn't last. Another wrong turn in Middletown and interminable lights start to wear on me, but I am encouraged by the fact that the remaining PA boni are all smaller towns. Meriden turns out to be an easy bonus, and I'm on the Interstate for the last leg! The sky holds off as I scroll through my roadbook. "Oh my god, there's the mistake! I've got lots of time!" Rejuvenated, I wind up the throttle and plan my next gas stop, not realizing the last competitive thoughts were about to meander through my head:

"Ah, Fishkill, NY. Looks like fast on-off access. A Mobil station, so I'll have to go inside for a duplicate receipt, but no problem."

### **Fishkill, NY - "Denny's Revenge"**

I exit onto NY-9N towards Poughkeepsie. Pulling away from the first light at Schuyler Blvd, between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> gears, the bike dies. I disengage the clutch to coast to the right shoulder. This is a first. My fuel warning light was on, but JUST on. I usually have almost 2 gallons left at this point. I rock the tank and try the starter again. No dice. Taking off the side panel, I check the fuses. All good. No obvious electrical connections broken. I roll the bike to the Mobil station on the corner as the sky opens up, wondering why I'm so calm in the face of a major malfunction and looming DNF. I am concerned over an impending dissociative fugue and try to remember the symptoms.

I roll the bike under the protection of the station roof and start stripping off side panels, saddle bags, and clothing. The sidewalk is starting to look like a yard sale. I'm thinking clogged fuel filter. I swap it out. Nothing. I hit the ignition a number of times and then back out a spark plug. Dry. A rider in full leathers on a pristine old Kawasaki KZ1000 pulls up to offer assistance. As I'm beginning to expect the worst, I covet the Kawi's carburetion... I pull the fuel line from the injector rail, place the open end in a gas can, and hit the ignition. Nothing. It's the fuel pump. At \$250 a pop, I don't have a spare one of those in my kit.

The DOA is over at 10:17 in Fishkill, NY.

It's time to use that 100,000-point DOA cell phone card to call Rick Miller. I get in touch with Rick to give him the low down, asking him if there is a K-bike guru kicking around. George Mastovich just happens to be there and he talks me through some possibilities. Unfortunately, he concurs with my assessment. I place a call to Chris Ward, who is a BMW tech at Tri-State in Cincinnati and leave a message - maybe he can overnight a new pump. Despair sets in as I realize I'm in Fishkill for the night. It's too early to call MTS to get the biked towed somewhere as BMW will be closed on Monday. I secure a room at the Wellesley Inn, which is only 400 metres away over level ground - an easy push. But I'm now starving, sweating like a bilge pump, and high as a kite on gas fumes. The closest food is a Denny's. After visiting authentic diners through the last 28 hours, I'm at the mercy of chain restaurant. I drag my busted ass in and sit at the counter directly opposite their faux stainless steel, poor-excuse-for-a-diner-clock. My high-octane body odor keeps the coffee-only locals at bay. In a daze, I think about the Brattleboro pagans and laugh to myself. Leafing through my rallybook, I calculate my points accrued to Fishkill: ~1150 miles, 3.02 million. My finishing score if I had completed the remaining 270 miles, 6 boni, arrived before 17:00, and met all the requirements of the rallybubbas: 3.61 million.

My Reuben arrives. I begin to sob aloud.

#### **Post-rally: K-Bike owners take heed!:**

When Chris returned my call, he told me that fuel pumps are not regularly stocked by BMW dealers, and that it's an overnight item *at best*. When I finally got through to Westchester BMW on Tuesday morning, they confirmed that there was not one pump in the Tri-State area and it would take 2 days to ship from California. I called various truck rental outfits looking for a one-way rental back to Champaign, IL. Penske came in at >\$1000. They probably don't have the time stamped on their receipts, either.

48 hours, 32 phone calls, 6 beers, 2 movies, and 1 lousy Formula 1 race after my break down, I was looking at being towed to White Plains, NY for another 48-hour layover. By checkout time on Tuesday, I was at the end of my tether. However, one option remained: P74095.

That's the part number for a NAPA fuel pump typically used for an 1980's 4-cylinder Mustang. According to Chris and [www.IBMWR.org](http://www.IBMWR.org), it's been used successfully in cases of K-bike fuel pump "sudden death". Keith had already made it back to Champaign (successful in his rally and IBA ride), so I called him up at work for details from the website. The process was trivial. All I had to do was find a NAPA store. Easier said than done... The one in Poughkeepsie wouldn't ship to someone without an account and other stores were simply out of stock. Just as I was thinking about how I could immolate the bike and make it look like an accident, one last call changed everything. Roy at Royco Auto Parts in Fishkill pulled some strings. He contacted a friend at an unlisted Napa store in Newburgh. They had the part! Roy even sent one of his drivers off course to pick up the pump. I had it in two hours and installed by 14:00, with the help of some custom-rigged electrical connections. The bike started on the second crank and sat there idling beautifully.

I wept openly for the second time in 48 hours.

On the way back to Champaign, I was plagued by severe storms through northeast PA. Near Williamsport, I took a break to call home and give my wife Meghan an update. She told me my father was having emergency quadruple by-pass surgery in Hamilton, Ontario the next day. I frantically looked at the

map. Incredibly, I was only 300 miles from Hamilton. I made it to my father's place at 03:30, traversing US-15N for the second time in a week. The Mustang pump worked flawlessly for the remaining 630 miles to Champaign.

Maybe I broke down for a reason? Besides being fortunate enough to see my father before and after surgery, the DNF reminded me that many components of a rally are beyond your control. Patience and a cool head are critical attributes.

**Thanks:**

To Rick & Jean Miller, Harley Trash, Brent Ames, Lou Caplan, their families, and anyone else who helped set up this rally. While I was running, it was the best time I've had at any event. As I later told Rick, I regret missing the closing banquet more than I regret not finishing the rally. Congratulations to the finishers and best wishes for future success to those who DNF'ed or DNShow. There is always next year. I'll be there.

Brad Ketterling  
Champaign, IL  
1988 K75c "Mustang"  
IBA #8037