

Coast to Coast to Coast

Craig Moore and myself (Mark Campbell) had just completed two Saddle Sore 1000's (1000 miles within 24 hours) in the fall of 2004. Typical excited rookies, we were eager to meet other long distance riders and learn more about the sport that just overtook our souls. This is when we started surfing the internet and found the Motorcycle Tourer's Forum, or MTF. In late November of 2004, there was a lot of activity on the forum about the upcoming 50cc/100ccc the MTF was planning for April, 2005. What a concept, ride a motorcycle across the United States from one coast to the other coast in 50 hours or less. Now, that would be an awesome ride. Since Craig and I are located in Georgia, we would have to turn around and ride back to Georgia once we rode out to the west coast. Since we don't have a whole lot of vacation time to spare, why not do two 50cc's back to back (also known as a 100ccc).

Well, we soon found out that to qualify for the 100ccc, we would have to complete at least one Bun Burner Gold 1500 (1500 miles within 24 hours) or a SS2000 (2000 miles in 48 hours). Within 2 weeks, we were on the road from Newnan, Georgia to Miami, Florida and back to Newnan. This was our qualifying BBG1500. This ride would be a good test to see if we really wanted to attempt a 50cc or 100ccc. After 22 ½ hours of nearly solid riding, we were even more excited about trying the 100ccc. Once we checked in and were signed off by the local fire department, we didn't go our separate ways and head to the house to make up any lost sleep, we were too excited. Instead, we went to the local Waffle House to discuss the BBG1500 and continue our planning for the 100ccc. This long Distance riding bug had bit us hard!

We have another riding buddy, Tom Fuchs, who was planning on attempting the 100ccc with us. Since our BBG1500 was a last minute decision, Tom didn't get to join us on that ride, so he chose to do a SS2000 as his qualifying ride for the 100ccc. Tom completed his SS2000 by riding from Conyers, Georgia to Houston, Texas and back to Conyers, the long way. Tom was just as excited as Craig and I about the 100ccc. We met to discuss our strategy about 4 weeks prior to the 100ccc. Two weeks later, Tom was involved in an accident on his Gold Wing. A young man in a small sports car cut right in front of Tom. The sports car decided to exit off the freeway at the last minute and cut across two lanes of traffic right into Tom. At 70 mph, Tom ran into the back of the sports car. Fortunately, the only injuries, besides extreme bruising, were two broken hands. Tom broke the same bone in each of his hands. The Doctor attributed the breaks to the handlebars. Upon impact with the back of the car, the force transferred from the handlebars to Tom's hands caused the breaks. We are thankful Tom's injuries were not any worse than they were, but we were disappointed that Tom was not able to make the 100ccc ride with us.

The MTF 50cc/100ccc would have several options. The two target cities were Jacksonville, Florida (JAX) and San Diego, California (SDO). A gas station within 2 blocks of the beach in both cities would be the start and end points. Participants could begin in JAX and complete a 50cc to SDO or turn around and complete a 100ccc back to JAX. Or, you could begin in SDO and complete a 50cc to JAX and likewise turn around

and complete a 100ccc back to SDO. Of course, our plan was to complete the 100ccc JAX - SDO - JAX.

Sunday, April 3, Craig and I were to meet at a local gas station and ride down to JAX together. A day or two before I emailed Craig a reminder of the time change. Evidently, I didn't clearly state in the email, the time would affect our departure time, don't be late. I got to the gas station early, got the camera out ready to take a picture of us before we head out on our big adventure. Craig had told me the night before that he would be early too. Well, after waiting over 35 minutes, I decide that Craig didn't get the hint about the time change affecting our Sunday morning departure. I try to call him on his cell phone with no luck. So, I leave him a message that I will meet him down at JAX.

Craig and I have a mutual agreement, we are both independent and at anytime one of us wants to wave off and go alone, no problems, no questions asked. We'll meet up again at the next destination. This was one of those times.

The solo ride down to JAX was good for me. It was a time to meditate, to clear my mind and prepare for the challenge ahead. A ride like the 100ccc had been a dream of mine for several years. It was one of those dreams that you don't actually know if you will get the opportunity to fulfill it or not. Well, because I have a supportive wife, Karen, and a few days of vacation to spare, I was granted this opportunity of a lifetime. I really wanted to make the most of it.

When I arrived in JAX, I had plenty of time to spare before checking into the host hotel, so I ride down to the Shell station. This Shell station would be the departure point the following morning. There, I met two other riders scoping out the place. Both of these riders were on LT1200 BMW's. Craig and I would be on matching yellow Gold Wings. I want it to be known that I purchased mine 2 years before meeting Craig (LOL). From the Shell station, I rode to the host hotel. Several riders had already arrived and were waiting to check in. The hotel was behind due to the Music festival in town.

Now, I was starting to get excited. Seeing all the bikes in the parking lot and meeting others with the same passion for long distance riding was really a thrill for me. Several riders had quite an adventure just getting to JAX. They came from as far as Michigan, Massachusetts, Kansas City and Illinois. Several rode through some snow flurries on their way down to JAX. I was also told about a Craig sighting. Alan Leduc and Jason Jonas had seen Craig down at the Shell station. I was glad to hear this. Once I turned on my cell phone, I received a voicemail from Craig stating he was in town. I returned his call and we did finally meet up at the host hotel.

After a lot of tire kicking and story telling in the hotel parking lot, it was time to head to Sneakers Sports Bar for the pre-ride dinner. The MTF did a great job coordinating the ride and setting up dinners. This was a great opportunity to meet other riders and celebrate the feat we were about to attempt. After the dinner, Craig and I went to separate hotels for a good night's sleep. We would meet up the next morning at the Shell station for our 6 o'clock departure.

At 5 o'clock on Monday morning, April 4, 2005, I couldn't believe all the bikes that were parked in the Shell station. The perimeter of the parking lot was surrounded by all brands of bikes. Another rider, Scott Wilson, introduced himself to me. Scott is from Fayetteville, Georgia just a few miles from Newnan. Craig and I are both members of the Gold Wing Chapter in Fayetteville. It's a small world.

Jason Jonas was coordinating this event. Jason would release the 50cc riders first. The 100cc riders would be last. At 5:45, Jason called for me and Craig. We would fuel up and obtain a gas receipt. This receipt would document our start time, 5:47 am. We would have 50 hours to make it to SDO and 100 hours to make it back to JAX. The clock was now ticking.

Craig and I wanted to do a true coast to coast to coast ride. So, once we were on the clock, we rode 2 blocks east to the beach to gather a sand and ocean water sample as a souvenir of our ride. I am so glad that we added this ceremony to our ride. It was a very memorable experience and worth the 10 minutes of time. From the beach, we got back on our bikes and headed out of town. Since we were southeast of JAX, it took quite a while to get out of town and onto I-10. Later, we would realize that we had plenty of time. It was dark when we left the JAX area, so we got to watch the sun rise behind us as we headed west. The weather was ideal.

Our strategy would be to eat on the bikes until we arrived in SDO. I have a leather bag that is strapped between my handlebars. I would fill it with beef jerky and cheese sticks. Later, I would add granola bars in it for breakfast. Craig already had sandwich wraps stored in a soft cooler in a saddlebag. At gas stops, he would grab a sandwich wrap or protein bar and lay it on his dashboard. His dashboard would be known as his dinner plate the rest of the trip. Craig also had a camelback located in the trunk of his bike, he had rigged up a tube from his trunk so he could drink while riding. I carried bottled water in a soft cooler of my saddlebag and would drink a bottle as I fueled the bike. Our strategy at gas stops, we would take care of business and be back on the bike ready to ride as soon as possible. We would keep any conversation to a minimum. Since we both had a CB radio, we could talk while we were on the road. This strategy worked well.

I had read a story posted on the Iron Butt Association website about someone completing a 100cc ride. This person would use 200 miles every 3 hours as a gauge during his ride. This would be a helpful tip that I would use the entire route. Using this gauge would allow us to ride 1200 miles in 18 hours. That would give us 6 hours of down time in the middle of the east-west leg and 8 hours of downtime in SDO. That was exactly what we did.

We arrived at the Days Inn in Junction, Texas around midnight on April 4. Craig and I had talked about pressing on for 300 or 400 more miles. But, we decided that if we stop now, we would stay on our natural body clock by getting some rest and being ready to ride at 6 o'clock (Eastern Time) the next morning. Although 6 hours may seem like a lot of time, it passes by quickly. By the time you fuel up, check in to the hotel, cover the bike, etc., you actually only get 4 to 4 ½ hours of sleep.

Surprisingly, the next morning, I jumped out of bed excited to continue on our adventure to SDO. Throughout the ride, I couldn't believe the high level of enthusiasm I maintained. To me, it was a natural high being on the bike the entire ride. The more I participate in these long distance rides, the more I realize how much I really enjoy them.

Back on the road before sun-up, we see several small deer off to the side of the road. We had heard of these small deer on the MTF message board. These deer were west of Junction, TX.

Shortly after the sun came up, we were cruising along on I-10 at 85 mph. The speed limit was 75 mph. We were riding through some hilly terrain when all of a sudden it was like I grabbed a bull by the horns. This was the strongest wind that I had ever ridden in. I had the cruise control set, but I was so taken back by the strong winds and holding on so tight that it took me a few minutes to disarm the cruise control (or so it seemed). The hills and valleys must have been diverting the wind into different directions since the wind seemed to be attacking us at different angles all around the bike. Once I disconnected the cruise control, I slowed it down to about 70 mph. For the next 30 miles or so, the wind was intense. Passing 18-wheelers was a challenge. This would be the most demanding part of the entire 100ccc ride.

Watching the scenery change as we headed west was awesome. This is what I ride for. I enjoy seeing what this earth has to offer us. It is amazing to me. A real treat was the mountain range we crossed just east of SDO. What a beautiful sight. We rode through this mountain range as the sun was going down. I was already looking forward to riding through this mountain range again as we would return on the next day.

Once we arrived in SDO, we rode to the beach access area to collect our sand and ocean water sample. From there, we headed for the designated Shell station to obtain our gas receipt as documentation. Our receipt was time stamped 7:57 pm Pacific Time. This would equate to 10:57 pm Eastern Time or a total time of 41 hours and 10 minutes to arrive in SDO. This would give us just under 9 hours of down time here in SDO.

Once we stop for a steak dinner at Hunter's Steakhouse next to the hotel, get our witness form signed off and check-in to the hotel, we have about 6 ½ hours to sleep. Also, during these overnight stops, you have to determine which is more important sleep or a shower, every time; a shower was the well needed priority.

Surprisingly, the next morning, I am awake 30 minutes before the alarm is set to go off. I jump out of bed looking forward to the return trip back to JAX. I can't believe how excited I am. It has been a fantastic trip so far and I look forward to getting back on the bike again.

The parking lot is full of volunteers to witness the beginning of our second leg of the 100ccc and the beginning leg of several riders starting off in SDO. Craig is at his bike tinkering with one of his headlights. After getting frustrated, Craig corrects the problem

and is ready to ride. We get signed off and head back to the designated Shell station obtain our beginning gas receipt. Officially, our second 50 hour time starts when our first 50 hour time limit expired. There is no down time in-between. The current time is 5:00 am Pacific Time or 8:00 am Eastern Time. This early in the morning the streets are pretty bare in SDO, so no traffic problems as we head out of town.

As with our beginning our East-West leg, the weather is perfect. Cool mornings and great afternoon temperatures. The warmest temperature I noticed was 84 degrees near Yuma, Arizona. The coolest temperature that I can remember was 45 degrees in the mountain range east of SDO in the morning hours.

Again, Craig and I would stick to our same strategy. The exception would be that we would reward ourselves with one warm meal a day as long as no problems arise.

That evening, we stopped in Van Horn, Texas and ate at the Sand's restaurant. This was an interesting stop since Karen and I had eaten here on a motorcycle trip to Phoenix, Arizona eighteen months earlier.

Once the sun went down and the traffic thinned out on I-10, Craig and I would ride side by side, each of us in our own lane. This would allow us to light up the road ahead with our bright lights to look for deer. We would ride for hours like this. The weather was perfect, clear skies with the road to ourselves. A few times I would see a shooting star up above. This in itself was a memorable part of the ride.

One time we were riding along with our bright lights on, there was an oncoming car with its bright lights on. We dimmed our lights, but the car across the median did not. When I flashed the car with my bright lights, blue flashing lights suddenly appeared on the top of this rude car. Craig and I pull off to the side of the road to wait for one of Texas finest to turn around and drive back to meet us. This young trooper was really more curious about all of the motorcycles he had been seeing at this time of night. He walked up to us and immediately started asking Craig about all the bikes he had seen ride by. He noticed they were set up very similar to our touring machines. When the trooper asked me what I was doing, I told him that we were riding from SDO to JAX. He was amazed. I didn't mention the fact that we had a time limit or that we had already rode from JAX to SDO. After that, he said that he was just going to give us a verbal warning for riding 76 mph in a 65 mph zone (the nighttime speed limit in this area was 65 mph versus 75 mph during daylight hours). I told the trooper that we were planning on riding to Junction for the night. He thought that was a good idea since it was only 50 miles away. During this stop, we watch two BMW's pass us, we think they are part of the ride and we will probably catch some flack at the other end of the ride. Come to find out it was Leon and Jackie Brunken. This is a husband and wife team that we had passed an hour earlier. They told me when they passed us it came at a good time for them since it refreshed their senses as they passed other coast to coast participants. They were glad to hear that we received no penalties for the speeding offense.

Craig and I made it to the Comfort Inn in Junction, Texas for the night at around 12:30 am Eastern Time. We agreed to meet at the bikes at 6:00 am Eastern Time to complete the final day of our trip. Again, once we put the bikes to bed and get checked into the hotel, our sleeping time has whittled away to a fraction of what we thought it would be.

The next morning, we meet at the bikes ready to roll. We can't believe we only have 1200 miles to go to finish the ride. This became a joke between us as we kept saying it was "only" 1200 miles to JAX. After riding 3600 miles, 1200 seemed like a piece of cake.

After we made it around San Antonio, we stopped to fuel up. We would take a few minutes longer at this stop for a few phone calls and to eat something out of our saddlebags. We knew that we had plenty of time to complete the ride, so the intensity level had relaxed a notch or two. Once we were back on the road cruising at 10 mph over the speed limit, I see another one of Texas' finest on the shoulder of the road with his radar gun pointing right at me. As I get closer to his car, he stands up and waves for us to pull over to the shoulder of the road. Once we stop, he pulls up behind us, gets out of his car and walks up to the bikes. He immediately states his intention by saying that he is going to give us a written warning for traveling faster than the 70 mph posted speed limit. I was feeling fortunate the officer that stopped us just a few hours earlier only gave us a verbal warning. That probably saved us from a definite ticket if the first warning would have been documented. After stating his intention, the young policeman asked me on a personal note "How fast have I had my bike?" Being truthful, I told him that I've had it up to 100 mph, but there was plenty of throttle left. He acknowledged my comment with a smile and a nod.

As we were leaving Texas, we thought the 880 mile marker was worthy of a picture. Texas is one wide state. Taking a picture of the bikes and the mile marker was well worth the few minutes of time it chewed up.

Baton Rouge was definitely the worse traffic conditions we ran into on the whole trip. We ran into several miles of stop and go traffic. After getting through that mess, we decided to make it as close as we could to Mobile, Alabama before we stop for our hot meal for the day. We stop at a Cracker Barrel between Biloxi, Mississippi and Mobile. Now, I was back into familiar territory since The Mississippi District Gold Wing Rally in Biloxi is an annual event for Karen and myself.

Back on the road, I guesstimate we should be in JAX around 2:00 or 3:00 am. Wow, that seems like a long time, we only have to cross the state of Florida. Evidently, I forgot just how wide Florida is when you include the panhandle. My GPS showed that it was over 380 miles from the state line to the Shell station in JAX. We actually didn't make it to the Shell station until 4:16 am, April 8. That included the extra few minutes it took to ride down to the beach to collect our sand and water sample before getting our ending gas receipt. Total time: 94 hours and 29 minutes. We did it! What a feeling! A few days before we were wondering if we could really do it, now it was a done deal. Yes, we were

exhausted, but never to the point of feeling unsafe. The problem now was to ride 15 miles to the hotel where we have reservations.

We have problems finding the hotel. It was right off of I-95, but not in plain sight. It took several minutes to find the elusive La Quinta Inn. We even stop and ask someone who didn't know. These people were employed at another hotel chain one block away. Finally, I dig into my travel bag to get out the directions that I had printed off the internet, just in case. After we get checked in it's after 5:00 am. We need to be back at the Shell station at 8:00 am to get our witness form signed off. Great, that will give us less than 3 hours to get some rest. Count time for a hot shower and load and unload the bike and we're down to 2 ½ hours of sleep.

That was the only time during the ride, I did not jump up out of bed ready to go. It took me a while to get my senses, then back into the shower to wake up. I finally make my way out to the bike. Craig is out there all happy faced, ready to roll. Once I wake up, I'm excited again. I still can't believe it, we finished! We ride back to the Shell station to meet with the MTF coordinator, Jason Jonas. Of course, Jason had already heard the stories of the twin yellow Gold Wings sitting along side of the road with blue lights parked behind them. We enjoy the attention, but we are also ready to head back to Newnan. After some back slapping and some hand shaking, we head back to the hotel for a few more hours of sleep. We decide that we will head home once we check out. By riding home, we would also qualify for the Iron Butt SS5000 (5000 miles in 5 days).

On the entire 100ccc, the only rain we rode through was a sprinkle when we returned back to JAX. But, the return trip from JAX to Newnan, Georgia included riding through several rain showers. Those showers were very refreshing. Plus, the rain cleaned off some of the thick layer of bugs that accumulated during our cross-country trip.

In closing, there are three products that I would highly recommend: an Airhawk seat cushion, an Alaska Leather sheepskin seat cover and Anti-Monkey Butt powder. After the first day of riding, the bones in my butt were sore. Luckily, Craig had an Airhawk seat cushion and a sheepskin seat cover that we would swap out at every fuel stop starting the second day of our ride. That Airhawk seat cushion was a great relief to my butt bones. I ordered one as soon as I returned home. I'll never leave home without it. Also, I used the Anti-Monkey Butt powder religiously. No problems at all in that area, if you know what I mean.

Since completing the 100ccc ride, I've been asked by several friends if I would do it again. My answer is "Why? There are so many other rides just as challenging and just as exciting."

Finally, I want to thank the MTF for hosting such a great event. Even though I could have qualified for a 100ccc on my own, the MTF event added an extra touch to the whole experience. Plus, I got to enjoy it with several new friends. This is something we will have in common the rest of our lives.