

2020 Heart of Texas Rally



Ft. Worth, Texas Stockyards

The Heart of Texas (HoT) Long Distance Rally is a scavenger hunt that, in the past, has been held within the state of Texas. But, Rally Master (AKA Rally Bastard), Paul Tong, would surprise everyone at the Rider's Meeting 5:00 am the day of the event!

We leave after work on Monday and ride to Texarkana, TX for the night. When we arrived, we stopped for dinner. While eating, I was looking at my phone. I had received an email from a friend that said Karen and I could have been exposed to COVID on Thursday (four days prior). This email would not identify the person, only that they had tested positive earlier today and they weren't

seated at our table at the event on Thursday.

Wow! Now, what do we do? I call the rally master, Paul Tong, to let him know what we have just found out. Paul asks "How do you feel?" I tell him that we both feel fine! Paul says "Well, you have 3 choices: get tested, go home, or come on and stay isolated from the group events. We've got zoom meetings for all group events and someone can deliver your rally packet outside your hotel room." At that moment, we didn't know exactly what we were going to do. But, we did tell Paul that we wanted to attend if at all possible.

After I hang up the phone, Karen and I decide to get tested if at all possible. Out of respect for all of our friends that would be the right thing to do. Then, we would know whether to continue down to the event or head home. So, we head on to the hotel. Well, right across the street from our hotel in Texarkana is an 24/7 emergency room! I call them up and explain the situation. They said they have rapid testing available, come on over!

Once we arrive, the security guard takes our temperature with a thermal gun at the entrance. Both of our temperatures were 97 point something degrees. We check in and fill out the paperwork. Within minutes, we were called back to one of the checkup rooms. We waited a short time before a nurse came in. She swabbed both of our noses and left. A few minutes later, a Doctor entered. We told him our story. He said the tests only take about 30 minutes to produce results, he'll be back to talk to us once that's complete.

About 30 minutes later the Doctor returns and says we both tested negative! Yay! He was interested in our motorcycle trip since he rode too! We tell him were on our way to a scavenger hunt. He enjoyed the story and told us to be safe! This was a big load off our shoulders and

allowed us to enjoy the rest of the trip!



Negative COVID Tests

The next morning, we head to rally headquarters in Temple, TX. We arrive around noon. Preliminary activities were scheduled to start in about an hour.

Keep in mind that during this event, the staff followed all local restrictions for safe distancing and wearing of masks due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Since the ride itself wouldn't involve much social activity, riders could participate with minimal social interaction throughout the event. I commend the rally staff for all their hard work to make this happen during a year when all other events have been cancelled!

Karen and I had been looking forward to our first multi-day rally! The HoT offered a 4-day and 30 hour option. We chose the 4-day. This option would be more involved than other events we've ridden in the past. The 4-day option required you to arrive a day early in order complete an odometer check and technical inspection.

The odometer check would verify the accuracy of each bike's odometer, so they could determine everyone's actual mileage during the rally. This was an important part of calculating who rode the most efficient route.

The technical inspection would insure everyone had a street legal motorcycle and any auxiliary items such as extra fuel tanks were within the specifications of the rally rules. Basically, no one could carry more than 11.5 gallons of fuel. A standard for most of the major rallies.



Tech Inspection and Odo Check

Since we don't have an aux tank or other devices, our tech inspection was brief. The staff would then hand us a printed turn-by-turn route to follow for the odo check. They would line us up on a designated starting line, document our odometer start reading and send us off!

At the end of the route, our odometer read exactly 49.0 miles. According to their calculations our odometer was +4.1% off. This figure was documented in our scoresheet. We were now finished

with all of our preliminary requirements.

Later that evening everyone walked across the street for dinner at Rosa's Café.



Pre-Ride Dinner

After the dinner, there was tire-kickin' in the parking lot. Everyone likes to check out the other bikes to see all the different farkles riders can't live without. But, shortly after that it was time for bed. The 5:00 am Rider's meeting would come early!



5:00 am Rider Meeting

The next morning, Paul Tong was right on time! At 5:00 am, the doors were closed and the meeting began with a short clip from the movie "City Slickers".

Rally packets were handed out. These packets included a beautiful graphic designed booklet, rally flag,

and thumb drive. The thumb drive included electronic files such as a GPX file for your GPS and an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet listed all bonuses, their location, time availability, and other pertinent information.

Rally flags were awesome! Instead of numbers, each flag had a different brand to represent each rider or team. Your brand HAD to be in each bonus photo to be counted. In the case of two-up teams, the pillion had to be in every photo too. Riders only had to be in the photo if specified within the bonus instructions. Then, the rally was revealed!



Our Rally Flag

Rawhide would consist of four cattle drive trails; The Chisholm Trail, Great Western Trail, Shawnee Trail and the Goodnight-Loving Trail. Along each of these trails would be various locations to

collect cattle. These cattle would have to be sold at their specific markets along the way. Each market would offer a different price for the cattle collected. But, once a market is bagged, it is not added to the next market. Only the highest market attained will count as the price multiplier for that trail. Then, there are heroes along the way, that may increase the price and/or number of cattle for one or multiple cattle trails. There were also other special bonuses that could increase the price and/or the number of cattle for one or multiple trails. There were approximately 300 bonuses. More than you could possibly get in 4 days rallying! Plus, the bonuses went outside of the state of Texas. A first for this rally! Bonuses went to locations throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Illinois, Colorado and New Mexico.



4 Cattle Drive Trails

Two mandatory sleep bonuses required you to take a break for at least 900 minutes total, but you could earn points for up to 1440 minutes in sleep/break time. Four meal bonuses of 45 minutes each were also available. Sleep and meal bonuses would offset your mileage penalty. Each rider or team would have to evaluate if the extra sleep minutes and lunch time was worth it. We would find out later that it was not!

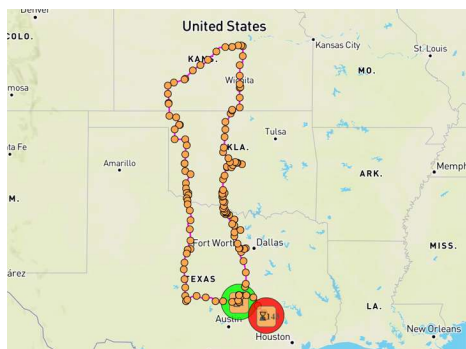
The meeting was over by 6:00 am, but we weren't released yet! We would be held until high noon! That gave us until 11:30 am to plan our routes and strategy.

Karen and I went up to our hotel room. We agreed to take three 8-hour sleep bonuses for the maximum point value, plus the four meal bonuses. This would be a big mistake that cost us 13 hours of travel time! In some rallies it's advantageous to maximize those bonuses. In this rally, it wasn't. But, something that we wouldn't realize until the end.

I decided to follow the Chisholm trail straight north into OK and KS. There was a big Chisholm Trail Market bonus at the trail's terminus granite marker in Abilene, KS that would provide a lot of points. Along the way, we could stop at the Ft Worth Stockyards for the daily cattle drive. That would bag us quite a few points and be fun to boot!

Once we make it to Abilene, we would head west and follow the

Great Western Trail back south to Brady, TX. This seemed like a good plan within the time allotted. Each night, I could tweak the route as needed since we would be on an 8-hour break. This was our strategy for the entire 4-day rally and I routed in Basecamp accordingly. We wouldn't find out until the end if our strategy worked.



Our Route

At 11:30 am, everyone was at their bikes for the start. The rally staff walked from bike to bike documenting all odometer readings. At high noon, we're released one at a time for quick safe start!

We bagged a few bonuses on our way up to the Ft Worth Stockyards. We would have to be up there and ready to take a photo when they drive the cattle down the street. This is a daily occurrence at 11:30 am and 4:00 pm. We would arrive an hour early and take a lunch bonus in time for the later show.

Lunch bonuses required a receipt with café, diner, chuckwagon, Mom, Mom's, Momma or Pop's in the name of the eating establishment! Located right at the beginning of the cattle drive was The Nestle Café! Perfect!

From there, we rode up into Oklahoma where we would bag a lot of Chisholm Trail cattle. But, it was a tough, dusty ride on a lot of gravel/dirt/sand roads. Mostly at night! Chisholm Trail concrete posts serve as markers all along the original trail. Most of these are way off pavement down gravel and dirt roads. Some roads would be nice hard-packed gravel, but by the time you got comfortable, it would turn into deep sand! I was lucky that we didn't have an accident. It could have happened on numerous occasions! Too many to count! That sand was not only hard to control the bike in, but it would wear me out! A lot of hard work for an old man!



Trail Markers

We were deep into a network of gravel roads when I noticed something ahead of us. At first, I thought it was a deer. It turned around in the side-ditch on our right and started running toward us! It was a wild hog! A large one! Running right at us! But, he dodged us and ran beside us, so close that Karen could have kicked it! Wow! Did you see that! It was mostly white with a big black patch on its side. A feral hog!

Our first night of the rally, we rode 3 ½ hours in the dark on gravel and sand roads for 75 miles. That averages to a speed of about 21 mph. We saw deer, wild pigs and racoons that night! From there, we headed to Duncan, OK for a hotel room and a good night's sleep. On the way through town, we see a coyote trotting across the street. It's around 11:00 pm. The next morning, we would see a skunk walking around the parking lot as we left.

The next day, we continue collecting bonuses as we headed north. By mid-morning, we could feel something abnormal with the tires! I stop at a gas station and place the bike on the center stand to check them out. The rear tire is worn down to the cord! What? I could have sworn these tires were fairly new! We just had a major service performed on the bike in July. I had thought I had the tires replaced then too. But, we did not. This was on me! Now, they needed replaced! And, as soon as possible! I get on the phone and call the nearest Honda Dealer. The Oklahoma City dealership said they could get us in! They are 20 miles away! So, I plug in the address into the GPS. When the GPS calculates, it's 36 miles to the dealership! What? Oh well. 36 miles later, we are on the outskirts of OKC. Nothing here! Oh no! I entered the wrong address, it was Sugarlane Road, not Sugarland Road! 16 miles later, we're at the dealership. I ride up to the service door, they open it and we ride in!

The dealership went above and beyond in helping us out! We told them that we were on a scavenger hunt. We ask them if there's a diner close by. A salesman said yes! The Black Bear Diner is about 3 miles from here! Two ladies, a mother and wife of an employee, offered to take us there AND pick us up! They were headed that way to shop. So, off we went to the Black Bear Diner!



Both Tires Replaced

When we finished eating, the ladies were there to pick us up and return us to the dealership. They were so friendly and helpful!

When we pulled into the dealership, our bike was sitting outside ready to go! Wow! But, while we were here, I wanted to fix Karen's footpeg. The moveable highway peg portion had come loose. The dealership allowed me to use their tools. It took about 30 minutes, but I got it fixed. Everything was good on the bike now. Time to ride!

As I look back, what seemed like a short time turned out to be about 3 hours. Time is points during a rally. The good thing is the dealership got us in and out in a remarkable time! They could have put us on the backburner or had to order tires, etc.

But, they moved us to the front of the line! We thank them for that!

Back on the road, we head to the OKC Stockyards for a bonus, then turn north toward Abilene.



OKC Stockyards

Again, we end up riding down gravel roads to collect Chisholm Trail Markers. This is dusty, dirty, and tiresome! But, the countryside views are awesome! I love the rural areas and the farms and livestock we see along the way!



Gravel Road in OK

We ride into Wichita for some bonuses, then continue north. As we approach Abilene, it's dark. There is one car ahead of us out on this lonely road. When all of a sudden the car stops and we see deer run in front of them across the road! We finally make it to Abilene for our big bonus, CM08, the terminus of

the Chisholm Trail. This Chisholm Market bonus was worth \$40 per head of Chisholm Trail cattle!

We head west. It's dark and getting cold! We stop in Salina, KS for the night. When checking in to the hotel, I ask about someplace to eat within walking distance. The lady tells me there's not anything real close, but you can order delivery to your room from this Italian Restaurant. Awesome! That is even better!

So, we go up to our room and order a nice meal. While we wait, we prepare for the next day. Karen updates our scoresheet, while I tweak our route in Basecamp. Our food arrives in about 20 minutes. We eat, shower and sleep! The next morning, we are raring to go!

As we leave Salina, KS at 6:00 am, it was 44 degrees. We are comfortable with our electric jacket liners as we head southwest toward Dodge City 160 miles away! We bag our bonus there and head south to St. Jacob's Well.

As we arrive in the vicinity of the well, we see a pull-off on the left side of the road. St. Jacob's Well is a mile away perpendicular to the road. But, we don't see any access road. What we do see is a large herd of BUFFALO! There must be an access road! I tell Karen, we may have to walk. Oh no we don't! So, we get back on the road and continue on about a half mile. There on the left is an access road and sign pointing to St. Jacob's Well! We

cross a cattle guard as we enter the prairie. This road is actually a path of two tire tracks with gravel in them. We follow this path up some nasty terrain for quite a distance, at least a mile and a half until we come upon the well! Along the way, we did see the big daddy of the buffalo herd off in the distance all alone.



St. Jacob's Well Bonus

We get the bonus and while we're there, I want to take a few more pictures. I really want to get a picture of the big daddy. Maybe if I walk up this hill, I'll be able to see him. As we turn to look, there is big daddy heading over to check us out!



Big Daddy

Karen said, "Get on that bike and let's go!" She was right! It's time to get out of here! So, we head back from where we came! Karen snapped a few pictures as we were

leaving. Big daddy probably got within 50 yards of us. I told Karen, he was keeping an eye out on HIS territory! We didn't threaten him, so he didn't bother us! Whew! What an adventure!

It was a tough ride back to the paved road. We had to climb a few steep hills along the way. We were glad to be back on pavement!



The Herd

Later at the banquet, we heard that Marcus Reynolds had quite the experience with the whole herd! They ran up to greet his Harley Road King! He was surrounded for quite some time with Big Daddy beside him sniffing him out! Marcus sat frozen on his bike until he felt he had safe escape route, then he took off! Close call, but all okay!



Role Reversal at Banquet

They recreated the conversation he had with rally master Paul Tong at the banquet. Marcus called Paul when herd was headed toward him. Paul stayed on the line to console him during this very trying time! At the banquet they did a role reversal re-creation of that phone conversation.

We continued south following the Great Western Trail. Like the Chisholm Trail, many of the concrete markers were off the beaten path down gravel/dirt roads. On one occasion, we were headed 6 1/2 miles down a dirt road, after 2 1/2 miles, we run into deep sand! Real deep! If we can make it through about 50 feet of sand, it looks like hard-packed dirt on the other side. I struggle through it almost dropping the bike several times! Then, not far down the road we come to another patch of sand. It's worse than the last patch! I struggle even more! Again, almost dropping the bike several times! It's hot! I'm wore out! No way, we can ride another 4 miles in this stuff! We must turn around! It's tough, but I do get turned around. Then, the back tire starts spinning in the deep sand! We are slowly moving forward. I don't think we're going to make it! My heart is pounding! We break through and continue to move through at a very slow walking pace. Finally, we make it to some hard-packed dirt! I am wore out! Now, we've got 2 1/2 miles back to the pavement! And, back to tackle that first sand patch! It was all the

energy I had to make it through, but we did! Most importantly, we did it safely! I didn't drop the bike or twist a knee! In these situations, I tell Karen to hold on to the side rails and keep her knees and legs in. If we go down, don't reach out! Let the bike take the blow!



OK Back Road

We continued on toward our next bonus. We pass a paved road that goes in the direction of the bonus we just gave up. We turn around and go back. It takes us about 5 miles toward our goal. Then, it turns to gravel, but manageable gravel for another 2 miles. We find our bonus! Goal achieved! There is more than one way to skin a cat! I knew whoever found this bonus initially didn't go down the first road we tried! Life is good!



More Dirt Road Ridin'

We collect numerous Great Western Trail bonuses as we head south, but the point values are decreasing. It's late afternoon and we're still in OK. Our destination that evening is Brady, TX, known as the actual heart of Texas due to its central location. This would be a good staging area to start tomorrow's route.

With that in mind, we re-evaluate the bonuses we have left and decide to cut bait! Out of about a dozen bonuses, we pick four high point value ones to try for and ignore the rest. We need to pick up the pace to make it to Brady that evening!

Just before dusk as we're riding south, a wild pig is in the right side-ditch running parallel to us! He was one of those ugly, dark brown gnarly wild boars. We blew right by him! A while later after dark, we see a pickup truck in front of us swerve to a stop! It's dark, but I see at least 2 wild boars cross in front of his headlights. We continue to follow that pickup truck for miles until we stop for another bonus. It's dark!

We stop at this little rest area along side the road where a trail marker is located. As we pull into this park, deer run everywhere! A lot of them! We park the bike. We have the bike's headlights facing Karen for lighting while I take her picture. This whole time we're there, deer are running around! I don't know if there were 12 or 50, it was unbelievable! We could see them in

the distant beam of the headlight running everywhere!



Deer Everywhere

We continue down the dark lonely road with a lot of deer sightings along the way! We get three out of the four remaining bonuses on our list. The fourth bonus was down another dirt road. Not tonight we said! We finally make it to Brady, find a hotel and order a pizza delivered to our room. Same routine as the previous night.

Tomorrow is the final day! There are two high point value bonuses that you must be there at specific times. The first one is a group photo. You must be there in position with your face and flag showing at exactly 11:30 when they take the picture to receive points for this bonus!

We were at the photo shoot staging area early along with other riders. It gave us a chance to visit and talk

about each of our adventures. At 11:30 am, the camera clicked, and we were on our way to the next bonus location, the Fiddler's Green covered wagon at Parsons Mounted Calvary.

This second bonus required you to take a picture of your flag with the covered wagon in the background on Saturday between 2:00 – 3:00 pm. This bonus was 90 miles from the group photo. From here, the rally headquarters were only a couple minutes away where you had to check in by 3:00 sharp! Or, get penalized!

We have plenty of time to make it to the covered wagon, but not enough time for any other bonuses. A lot of riders used this time as a meal bonus.

From here, we head to the hotel to check in and stop the clock!

Once we park our bikes, we go to scoring. We wait in line for a little while, but it goes fast once they call us in to be scored. Our scorer printed out our scoresheet and await the results! It would be a few hours until the banquet, so we go to our room to chill out.

The banquet was awesome! Paul Tong put on a first-class event! The meal was excellent! Rally swag was handed out the final standings were announced.

The top riders rode over 3,000 miles. We rode 1,951 miles

(corrected). Time is miles! It takes miles to accumulate points. Afterward, we figure we wasted at least 15 or 16 hours by taking the extra time for sleep and meal bonuses and time replacing our tires. Plus, those gravel roads really slowed us down too. But, hindsight is 20-20, right!

With all we went through, we were glad to come in 30th place out of the 46 bikes that finished. A couple bikes didn't finish due to accidents. One bike hit black ice in Nebraska!

The most important thing is we had a great time, saw some great places and spent some time with some great people! Not only that, we made it through the rally and back home safe and healthy. What more could we ask for!



Heart of Texas Group Photo Bonus

HEART OF TEXAS - 4 DAY RALLY

By Karen Campbell

2020 HAS BEEN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER.

EVENTS CANCELLED OR POSTPONED BUT, OH BROTHER!

OCTOBER FOUND IT'S A GO FOR THE RALLY "RAWHIDE".

WHEN TRAIL BOSS, PAUL TONG SAID "LET'S RIDE!"

RIDERS CAME FROM THEIR RANCHES WITH PRIDE,

ON IRON HORSES RARING TO RIDE.

ROUNDUP THE CATTLE AND TO MARKET THEY GO.

THEY ALL NEED A PROFIT WITH LOTS OF DOUGH!

TRAILS ARE MANY SO LET'S DECIDE.

OR, JUST TAKE IT ALL IN STRIDE.

RIDERS PICKED CAREFULLY SO THEIR PROFIT'S NOT SCRAWNY.

ON THE GREAT WESTERN, CHISHOLM, GOODNIGHT-LOVING OR SHAWNEE.

RIDERS WERE RESTLESS,

IN THE HEART OF TEXAS.

SOME HEAD NORTH TO THE COLD AND WIND.

OTHERS HEAD SOUTH TO THE HEAT OF BIG BEND.

THERE ARE LEGENDS AND HEROES LIKE DOC HOLLIDAY.

BUT, THE MOST FAMOUS TO THESE RIDERS SOME SAY,

WOULD BE MARCUS REYNOLDS GOING THROUGH HELL,

WHEN BUFFALO STAMPEDED AT ST. JACOB'S WELL!