

# The 2011 Iron Butt Rally

**It's that time of year again.....The 2011 Iron Butt Rally**

The 2011 IBR starts June 20 in Seattle, Washington and will end July 1 in Ontario, California.

**A Message from Chris.....**

***"Bee to the Blossom, Moth to the Flame; Each to his Passion; What's in a Name?"***

***-Helen Hunt Jackson***

After my third Iron Butt Rally in 2009, I was exhausted from long distance rallies. Nearly 10 years of competitive rallies had taken their toll. Not so much on the physical side, but the mental wear of riding in the rallies had just become a crushing burden. Which is particularly odd since the 2009 IBR was relatively stress-free. If an Iron Butt Rally can ever be stress free. I had very few problems during the Rally. So much so, that I never did a write up for the Rally. I just didn't think it would be that interesting. There was a whole lot of "sit there" and "twist that". The second leg ride through the desert had been pretty difficult, but how many times can you use the word "hot" and still be interesting.

I did note with great amusement the irony on the first leg. Senator Ted Kennedy had survived (or escaped?) punishment for the incident at the DikeBridge that led to a tragic death 40 years ago. And then, the day after the bridge is used as a large bonus in the IBR, he passes away. Coincidence? I'll leave that to the reader, but I am sure the irony was not lost on any rider that went to the bonus. Fate catches up with us all at some point.

The ride to the Upper Peninsula in Michigan on leg 3 was supposed to be a long, tortuous trek on small two lane roads. As any one that went there knows, it was a pretty pleasant ride. Great weather, very little traffic and pretty easy bonuses.

This was followed by a quick loop through Canada before dropping down to the finish in Spokane. Besides playing leap frog with Jim Owen and Jeff Earls on the last day or so, there was not much to report. I pretty much figured that neither one of them was going to make a huge mistake on the final leg that would open the door for me to pass them, and neither one let me down.

The tragic death of Davo Jones so close to the finish shook all the riders. I had been on the same road just minutes ahead of him, weaving my way through the same deer in the darkest of dark Idaho forests. The weather was cold. So cold, I cannot imagine what led him to remove his helmet. No one will ever know and it means little now. Davo's accident

came as stark reminder of the hazards inherent in the sport. Animal behavior cannot be controlled or predicted and unfortunately we are often riding in unforgiving terrain fraught with such dangers.

After the 2009 IBR, I rode very little until the 2010 Mason Dixon and then the IB5000 later that summer. And by “very little”, I mean not at all. By the time I finished the 5000, I was done, retired. Or so I thought. The 5000 turned out to be somewhat tougher than I had anticipated, made so by horrendous storms chasing me all across the Midwest. A broken windshield 1200 miles from the finish added to my misery. My mistake had been to approach the 5000 much more like a 24 hour Rally (sprint) instead of a multi-day Rally (marathon). As a result, when I returned home, I parked the bike and again rode very little over the next few months. I sent in my application for the 2011 IBR but was conflicted about riding any additional Rally’s.

To make a long story short, I spoke with Nancy a great deal about doing one more IBR, hoping that it would not become the motorcycle equivalent of “a bridge too far”. She knew I wanted to ride one more IBR, but we both thought that would occur in 2013. She simply stated, “Do what you want.” She also pointed out that if I waited for the 2013 IBR, my vision and hearing would be even worse than they are now. With that kind of argument who wouldn’t want to ride!

Besides, I found myself in need of a new toothbrush. Now anyone can go to the store and simply pick up a toothbrush. But that would be too easy. And as anyone in the long distance community knows, LD Riders never do anything the easy way. They ride a thousand miles to have a meal and immediately ride 1000 miles home. When they visit a city, they don’t see any landmarks, they just ride a 1000 miles inside the city limits. Many of us don’t even see what the country has to offer. We just ride from coast to coast. Or in some even crazier rides we ride from coast to coast to coast. I tell my non-riding friends that I have seen the highway exits of the best places in North America.



So with that, I am off on a 15,000 mile ride to get a new toothbrush. Maybe if I am lucky, I can score two of them. My toothbrush from 2009 is getting to be a little shabby. Nancy will be blogging here with regularity. She will be writing whatever she feels like, which may have little to do with the Rally and will simply make fun of me for her own amusement.

*"He's got to be tough enough to do it and he's got to be experienced enough to do it. Plus one more thing. He's got to be dumb enough to do it"*

*-Ryan O'Neal as  
Brigadier General James "Jumpin' Jim" Gavin  
A Bridge Too Far*

Official Iron Butt Rally postings can be found  
at: <http://www.ironbuttrally.com/IBR/2011.cfm>

### **From Nancy's Blog:**

The week prior to the rally start:

Chris' rally planning started with a list of items to pack, and a day spent going over the bike making sure everything was in working order. He left on a Sunday planning to take about 4 days to travel the 2,800 miles to the rally start in Seattle. By day two he called in the

morning complaining that his knee hurt him and he could hardly walk. He had no idea what he had done, other than he woke up in a hotel room and it was swollen. Anyone who knows or read anything by Chris will certainly tell you that he can be very expressive with words. The words he used to describe his knee pain were things such as "horrendous" and "excruciating". He could hardly walk, hardly get on and off the bike, was afraid he would dump the bike over, so on, and so on. By the third day of hearing more descriptions of the pain, I asked if he thought he should come home. I don't recall getting a response but needless to say, he continued west.

Chris had scheduled a tire change in Seattle before starting the rally, which would be done on Thursday. Wednesday morning, he called to say that he realized that the back tire was worn down to the cording in the tire. He was somewhere in Montana, no where close to getting to Seattle. His tire problems totally took his mind off his knee problems (it's amazing how that pain just went away) while riding. Missoula Montana was to be the tire change, not Seattle. Good thing too, after having to call the Seattle dealership to cancel the appointment, he learned that they had ordered the wrong size tires!

So with two days left to the rally start Chris has time to relax, take it easy on his knee, and focus on the upcoming 11 days.

### **Monday June 20, 2011 Day 1**

And they're off.....The rally officially began at 10:00 am pacific time. From what I understand from the brief phone call, in order to be considered as a finisher the rider must visit 48 out of the 50 states and still make it to the check points and finish within the allotted time frames. The theme is State Capitals. If you take a picture of the State Capital its worth more bonus points. There is also something called the 4 Corners, which is described on the official IBA web site.

I really have no clue yet as to what Chris has decided. Ever since we talked this morning the cell phone on the bike it not working very well. All I can hear is "hello". It may be wherever he is located or he has managed to destroy the phone cord already. Whatever the problem, this will be a long rally for both of us.

### **Tuesday June 21, 2011 Day 2**

Well, as I thought, Chris has managed to destroy the microphone on the telephone in one day. His new personal best record. I can't tell you how fun this is to have him call, and I get to talk to nothing but silence. This one way conversation is exhausting! My one actual conversation went something like "I can't talk, but I can hear you, and I have to go". With that it was over.

Can't tell you much. His spot tracker is working so at least I know where in the country he is, but thats about it. If I hear anything I'll be sure to let you know.....

### **Wednesday June 22, 2011 Day 3**

And a voice is heard.....Tuesday night Chris had his 8 hour rest bonus so he called to check in. His newest problem was that his GPS had quit working. I believe he usually does rallies with two GPS's, as most rally riders do, so as far as I know he might still have one working. Don't quote me, but I think one GPS is used for the active route, and the second to pay attention to his timing. No telephone still, and he rode into some rain. So at least we both got a good nights sleep.

This morning he called prior to getting on the bike. "Can I post a request on the LDRider list asking for a Garmin 2730 GPS? And I have to go". OK, I guess I can figure this out. Although I don't usually look at the IBDone list I knew it existed and that I could ask for help. Let me say, that the response was incredible. Within 2 hours of posting a request for help for Chris I had gotten at least 20 return phone calls, and multiple emails. Some people knew Chris, and others who didn't know him were totally willing to send him their GPS. Very comforting to know that the riding community is there to help each other. Thanks to Jerome Byrd for supplying Chris with a GPS at the Buffalo checkpoint.

#### **Thursday June 23, 2011 Day 4**

Its that voice again.....Knock wood, no other problems for the moment. Chris got a few hours rest over night and is off again. He still can't speak over the phone on the bike and hopefully he can resolve that problem at the checkpoint as well. He seems satisfied with his location, timing, and mental attitude. So he is off again today, and again I get to call and read him the news from the internet. He has decided he likes me to read to him, alongs with my sarcastic inserts in what I'm reading. So if you are someone that has his bike cell phone, give him a call, tell him about your day. That way I can take a break!

#### **Friday June 24, 2011 Day 5**

As of last night Chris had checked into a hotel for a few hours rest. He said the hotel from Wednesday night was like sleeping at "Green Acres". Bed was horrible. But when you are in the middle of no where you have to take what you can get. Today he pushes on to the Buffalo NY checkpoint where he can at least spend time talking to other people. He did say last night that not having anyone to talk with for almost 5 days was really hard.

#### **Saturday June 25, 2011 Day 6**

250 points.....the number of points Chris forgot to claim on his documents for the call in bonus. Thats also the difference between 4th and 5th place after the first leg. He got his packages at the checkpoint, but the new microphone did not help. He also found that he somehow managed to get a small pebble in the connectors for the phone cable. So the remaining days of the rally Chris still won't be able to talk to people. We have a new system, I call, ask a yes or no question, and he answers with 1 click=no, 2 clicks=yes. At least I can hear the clicking sound. There are no other problems with the bike from what he's said.

As luck, or planning had it, Chris route took him right by his house last night. So he made his rest stop his own bed. I'm actually surprised he got back up to continue the rally. I kinda thought that finally being able to sleep in your own bed would win over getting back on the bike. But he is gone again, heading for the checkpoint in Jacksonville FL.

### **Sunday June 26, 2011 Day 7**

Chris left the house this morning pretty well rested and renourished from food. He said he's feeling pretty good overall. He had even managed to grab some clean clothes to take with him in favor of the dirty clothes that he's been wearing for several days now.

He will be trekking south to Jacksonville FL along with the rest of the pack. Looking at the Spotwalla page at <http://spotwalla.com/locationViewer.php?id=67&showHome=y&showInfo=y> a large portion of the riders seem to be travelling the same route, at the same time. Chris commented earlier in the week that it does take some of the intrigue out of the rally knowing where everyone is travelling.

Overall the weather along the east coast between DC and FL is not looking too bad. There are some pockets of rain, but Chris is used to rain. When I started to ride with him it rained 9 out of the 10 times we even sat on the bikes.

### **Monday June 27, 2011 Day 8**

I learned a new morse code, or should I say Chris code. Ever since Sunday he has added multiple clicks. And when I say multiple he clicks at least six times in a row. You have no idea how distressing it is to hear the clicking and not be able to figure out what he wants. He finally explained it after getting to the checkpoint today in Jacksonville, FL.

He was tired but feeling pretty good. Got to the checkpoint early enough to get 5-6 hours of sleep. He would be heading out late tonight for the final leg of the rally.

Oh, and six clicks means that he either missed what I said, or wants it repeated.

### **Tuesday June 28, 2011 Day 9**

Chris, like the majority of the ralliers are headed across the lower states with CA on their minds. Some went to Key West as part of the Four Corners Tour option, and some that missed other states on leg 2 had to ride through them on leg 3. That will certainly add miles to their bikes and take away rest time.

He's back to that 6 clicks thing again today, but what's left for me to say. I read the news, tell him whats going on at work, talk about family. I'm actually tired of talking after nine days and just want quiet, but if it helps him get through to the finish, then thats the priority. At least for two more days.

As of 6:00 pm today Chris has encountered intermittent bike problems. He can't tell if its a case of bad gas, electrical, or just plain heat. His laptop quit working was well. He's not positive that he can even make the finish at this point, but he will continue to try and move forward to CA.

### **Wednesday June 29, 2011 Day 10**

Chris' bike problems caused him to fall several hours behind in the scheduled route that he wanted to take. Additionally, he had to bypass at least one of the state capitals because of the problems, so those points will be lost. Between the bike problems and the fatigue he finally decided "enough for one day" and checked into a Motel 6 early last night.

From his track today, and the 1 click, 2 click conversation, it appears that the bike is running better and he has decided to keep moving forward as long as he can. Perhaps it was the heat after all.

### **Thursday June 30, 2011 and Friday July 1, 2011**

Chris' bike problems continued into Thursday, topped with a shredded flat tire in the New Mexico desert. Much of the problem started somewhere in the Texas desert when the bike started cutting out on him. It would run fine for a while, then cut out. He had to abandon the state capital of Austin because it was just too far and the bike was not running well. Points lost. He continued into Oklahoma with the problem continuing, and then into New Mexico. After leaving Albuquerque is when the tire shredded. In the middle of a second desert. As luck had it, a motorist with a motorcycle on a trailer happened along just after the flat occurred and drove Chris 200 miles back into Albuquerque with Chris' bike on the trailer. After getting the flat replaced Chris once again started out into 106 degree heat and blowing winds.

It was not long after starting back out that he decided, enough was enough, and checked into a motel. He called to give me an update of his problems, and we discussed his options. With the bike still having what he now believes to be electrical problems he made the decision to finish obtaining the receipts for the remaining states, and let go of the bonus point state capitals. The bike would not be able to handle that much more riding.

Chris arrived at the finish, as he says "just barely made it, 18 hours early". He will be a finisher of the rally, not the winner, and not in the top 10. But he is satisfied with what he could accomplish given the last two days of mechanical problems with the bike.

To be in the Iron Butt Rally and ride amongst the top long distance riders is an honor by itself. This rally takes alot of concentration, planning, stamina, patience, and plain old luck. To those that have participated, and to those that support from home, congratulations and remember to ride safely.

Chris will eventually write up his story for all to read. He says he has some very memorable stories from this rally that he wants to share.

After the rally ended, Chris received the below picture from a friend of Chris' sister.



The friend's daughter, Sarah, was tracking Chris rally through the states and the capitals. She had a great time following and even learned her capitals. Sarah is 8 years old and her mom enjoys riding as well. Just not so many miles in a day! They both thought Chris had an amazing ride and were truly impressed with his accomplishment!