

2021 Heart of Texas Rally



Holy Rollin'!

Fifty-three riders and five pillions (passengers) sat in a hotel conference room staring at a blank projector screen as the doors closed at 4:00 o'clock sharp on Tuesday afternoon. They were about find out where they would be riding and what they would be doing for the next 4 days!

The lights dimmed as video clips of the Blues Brothers movie started playing. This classic comedy is about brothers Jake (John Belushi) and Elwood Blues (Dan Aykroyd) getting their band back together to save the Catholic home where they were raised.

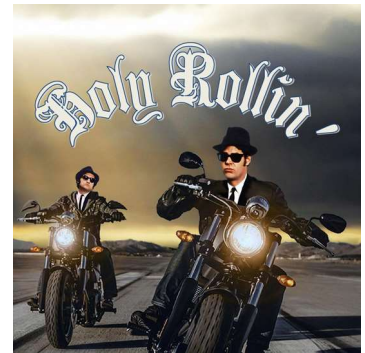


The Blues Brothers



Paul and Nancy Dress the Part

When the video clips were done, Iron Butt Rally veterans and rally masters, Paul Tong and Nancy Oswald, walk out dressed as the Blues Brothers! Paul begins to reveal the details of this long-distance rally.



This year's rally is titled "Holy Rollin'"! The object is to save the church by raising money! Church bonuses would be the focus. Each church bonus had a daytime and nighttime dollar amount. Daytime was worth much more than the nighttime figure. Also, each church had a letter identifier. When a church bonus is captured, the letter identifier goes into a que. When you can spell a band song title from a pre-determined list, you submit the song and that que of letters/bonuses cannot be reused. Then, a new que is started for the next band song title. Each song title combo is worth big money!

There were also three different church combo bonuses that consisted of a) Oldest Churches, in which there were 18, b) Painted

Churches, in which there were 9, c) Missions, in which there were 8. By capturing an entire group of specific churches big points were awarded.

But, you also had expenses to deal with! You get a \$25 penalty for every mile ridden! This can be offset with a rest bonus and a daily lunch break. Paul went over a formula to figure out how to reduce your mileage expense. The lunch breaks compounded exponentially! And, to be considered a finisher, you must end up with at least \$35,000.

Paul gave us all the details in a beautifully designed rally book. This book explained everything! GPS files, spreadsheets and other files were emailed to us for our route planning. We would be released at 6:00 am the following morning.

Karen and I usually come up with a strategy at the beginning of every rally. Our plan was to get the Mission Church combo which consisted of 5 missions in San Antonio and 3 missions in El Paso. Since we wanted to visit south Texas, one of the churches down there had a "G" designator. The only song combo from the list with a "G" was "GALATIANS". So, we would also capture churches with those letter designators. With all this in mind, the route would take us from rally headquarters in College Station, TX to San Antonio, then south to Brownsville over to Laredo up to Big Foot, then west to Big

Bend and El Paso before heading back to central Texas and College Station.

The next morning at 5:00 am, rally staff was out in the parking lot gathering odometer readings, then having us park our bikes in a staging area until we were released.



Riders Staging Area

At 5:30 am sharp, Paul gathered all riders together for a meeting which included any last-minute changes or updates. During this meeting he informed us the sunglasses in our packet could be used to change a nighttime bonus to daytime points! We could use the sunglasses on a maximum of 4 bonuses to receive daytime credit. Awesome!

Since the rider's meeting was over early, we were released at 5:50 am. Time to ride!

The weather is in the low 70's as we rode toward San Antonio. We claim a few bonuses along the way. In San Antonio, there were 5 missions that we needed. Several other riders were there bagging these same bonuses. We figured we would see some of the same riders later in El Paso to complete the mission

combo. From there we head south toward Corpus Christi then on to Brownsville.

The temperature would slowly rise to 100 degrees as we head south. But, it was a dry heat! Although the overcast skies threatened rain, we stayed dry all day. By the time we reached Brownsville, the skies were clear!



Brownsville Church

Now, it was time for a lunch bonus. These bonuses had to be selected from a specific list or you could stop at any Rudy's BBQ or Texas Burger. The restaurant listed for Brownsville was closed! So, I looked in the GPS and found a Rudy's just a couple miles away! Yay!

It was late afternoon and we were ready for some food and a little break. All lunch bonuses required a 45 minute break starting at kickstand down.

From here, we head over to McAllen, then up to Laredo where we rode right up to the International bridge to Mexico. I told Karen that we would ride over it just before taking a side street beside it. A

church bonus was only a few blocks from there!



Laredo Nighttime Bonus

We decide to reserve a hotel room in Pearsall one hundred miles away. It was a good thing as they were full by the time we arrived.

The hotel was full due to a tornado that just hit an hour before we arrived. The tornado damaged homes about 30 miles north of Pearsall. Although we did get into some rain as we approached the area, we were fortunate enough to avoid any severe weather.



Flooded Road

The next morning, we would see tornado damage and flooding as we collected bonuses in the nearby area. One church on our list could not be accessed due to the road being flooded. For this bonus, we called our rally scorer and explained

the situation. Nancy Oswald told us to take a picture of the road closed barricade and include all pertinent bonus requirements. This meant that for this particular bonus, Karen, our rally flag and the bike were required.



Alternate Bonus Photo

From here, we headed west toward Del Rio, then on to the ghost town of Terlingua near Big Bend. The weather started off damp with some rain, but soon after sunrise the skies cleared up and the weather was perfect!

This would be our third time visiting Terlingua. It's a beautiful ride down there! We love it! But, once we arrive at the church bonus, there was a gravel road which I thought led to the church. A steep gravel road! I gunned the Gold Wing and rode it half way up until I realized it was not the road we needed. I stopped the bike, but the gravel road was so steep, the bike began sliding backward! With my hand on the front brake and both feet down, I managed to stop the bike. But, I could feel it slowly sliding backward. Karen managed to get off the bike and would walk back down the gravel road as I

carefully turned the bike around without dropping it! Whew! I made it down okay. At the bottom of the hill, Karen got back on the bike and we figured out how to get to the church for a picture.



Terlingua Church

Thirteen miles away in the border town of Lajitas was another bonus. From there, we returned to Terlingua for fuel before heading north to Alpine for another bonus.

At one point, we were riding down a back road when all of a sudden a roadrunner ran in front of us! He was stretching his legs out to get across the road. He looked just like the roadrunner in cartoons! Luckily, Karen got to see him too!

Now, the plan was to eat in Marfa at the Jett Diner. Marfa is where the movie "Giant" was filmed back in the 50's starring James Dean. His name in the movie was Jett. Since James Dean grew up in my hometown, I thought that would be a great place to eat. Unfortunately, we arrived at 3:00 pm and the restaurant wouldn't open until 5:00 pm. Oh well, let's head on to El Paso, I'm sure there's a Rudy's BBQ there!

As we rode through one small town to get a church bonus, a jackrabbit jumped out of the side ditch and started running beside the front wheel of our Gold Wing! He was big! I could almost reach down and touch him. He eventually ran back off the road to safety!

On our way to El Paso, we ride through the mountain range near Ft. Davis. As we ride through these beautiful mountains, Karen sees a herd of mountain goats. She asks, "What looks like a big horn sheep, but with horns that don't curl as much?" When she said that I knew exactly what she was talking about! I had read about these sheep years ago when planning a trip through the area in 2003. The Ft. Davis mountains had Auodads (Barbary Sheep) imported in from North Africa after World War II. These sheep thrived in this area while becoming almost extinct in their native area of Africa.

I was so excited that Karen got to see these sheep but figured they had run off with no chance of me seeing them. Karen said "Let's turn around so you can see them!" OK, let's do it! We turned the bike around and I saw the small herd running up the rocks! They were awesome! We go down the road a little way and do a U-turn. I mentioned to Karen that a picture of these sheep would really be cool! Karen got her phone ready as we rode by them again. The small herd was running around the large boulders and steep mountainside. Then, one of the big males stopped on top of a huge boulder to watch

us. Karen said it was luck that she got a couple of photos! We were both so excited she got a picture! I told Karen seeing these sheep was worth the trip!



Auodad (Barbary Sheep)

From here, we rode north to I-10, then west to El Paso. There were 3 churches located here that we needed to complete the mission combo. These missions were located outside of El Paso and were easy to locate.



One of the El Paso Missions

After that, I look for a Rudy's in the GPS. Bingo! One is just a few miles away! And, we were hungry! During lunch, I reserve a room at a local hotel since I figure there are few, if any, on the remote route that we will be riding east from El Paso.

The next morning, we are up early and back on the road. The

temperature was cool in El Paso. A lot cooler than we expected! We left in the dark and the sun rose as we entered the Guadalupe Mountain range to the east. These mountains with the sun behind them were beautiful! I'm sure most people don't realize the mountain ranges in the different areas of Texas.

As we head east from the Guadalupe mountains, we ride through some remote desert areas where there was a lot of oil worker activity. This remote area had numerous temporary housing villages. Acres of temporary homes and acres of fifth-wheel villages. The fifth-wheel villages would have hundreds of metal carports lined up with long camping trailers underneath. Some of these villages included temporary convenience stores and gas stations. Wow! We had never seen anything like this before. All out in the middle of the desert. We would pass one village, then see another one a few miles down the road. This was between the towns of Orla, Mentone and Pecos.

We continue to ride east collecting bonuses along the way. At one church, we run into Iron Butt Rally and Hoka Hey veteran, Ken Andrews. He told us about the storm and baseball size hail that trashed his bike the night before. Luckily, he made it into a café, but his bike sat out in it! Although badly beaten up, his bike was still rideable. His mirrors were attached with nylon straps. He would have everything

repaired with insurance once he arrived home.



Ken Andrews

As we continue, the weather starts to get bad. Karen's brother, Floyd, texts her to let her know there is severe weather in the area where we were headed. We decide to find a room in Fredericksburg where 3 bonuses are located. We would worry about the bonuses in the morning!

Good thing we stopped! While I was looking at our plan for the next day, I realized we were going to capture a bonus we collected on the first day! This would be a waste of time and the song combo we were going for would not count. After catching that error, I routed us to collect a different song combo.

The next morning, we collect all 3 bonuses in Fredericksburg before sunrise. Good thing we had 3 sunglass wildcards left to use! This allowed these bonuses to be counted as daytime points!

This was the final day. We have until 3:00 pm to collect bonuses and return to rally headquarters in College Station. I had a route of 378 miles planned. Hopefully, this

would give us time for our 45-minute lunch break once we arrive in College Station and before our 3:00 pm deadline.



Daytime Points with Sunglasses

At 1:41, we arrived at a Rudy's BBQ 2.3 miles from Rally HQ. We had a great lunch and back on the bike at 2:26! We had 34 minutes to ride 2.3 miles. No problem. Wrong! It was graduation weekend for Texas A&M. Traffic was terrible. Those 2.3 miles took 20 minutes! We arrived 15 minutes under the wire! Whew!

Once we checked in with the rally staff, they told us they would send us an email when they were ready to score us. We would have 30 minutes to report after that email.

By the time we checked into the hotel and carried our bags to the room, we received the email about scoring. Check in with the penguin!

If you remember from the Blues Brothers movie, the penguin was the head nun at the Catholic home where Jake and Elwood grew up! They were always in trouble with the penguin!



Karen and the Penguin

We looked over our score sheet. Everything looked good! We would report back at 7:00 pm for the banquet and party!

By banquet time, all riders had returned safe and sound! We enjoyed a great meal! Everyone had several stories to tell of the challenges they had endured over the past 4 days! It was a great time!



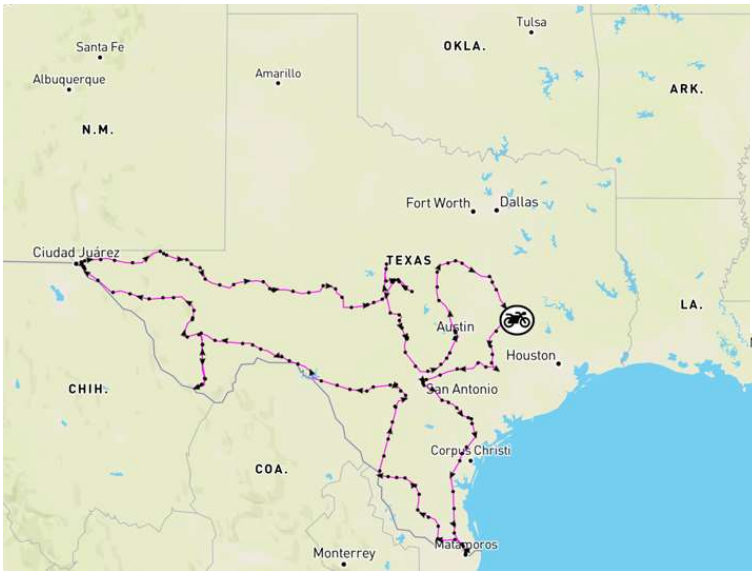
And, the Winners Are...

Out of 53 bikes, 44 bikes were considered finishers. The other 9 were DNF (Did Not Finish). They either didn't capture enough points, disqualified for being late, or some other issue. Karen and I were glad to be a finisher! We came in 41 out of 53. Not the top of the heap, but you have to realize these riders came from all over the U.S. to play this game. These aren't your average riders, these are seasoned Iron Butt

Rally veterans that we are proud to call friends!

We were in top three of the high mileage riders with 2,978 miles. Top mileage was 3,131. But it's not miles that earns you points.

Four days of solid riding, the friends, the wildlife, the scenery that we saw and all the challenges we overcame made this all worthwhile! Another awesome experience we will never forget! Thank you, Paul Tong, for another great rally!



Our 4-Day Route During the Rally



**2021 Heart of Texas Rally: Holy Rollin' (FINAL STANDINGS)
Day Rally**

Standings	Rider #	Rider	Miles	Bonuses Claimed	Bonuses Granted	Final Profit
CHAMPION	51	Michael Best	2780	69	66	\$126,282.66
2nd Place	62	Ryan Nardo	2835	68	68	\$123,113.00
3rd Place	52	Michael Brooke	2922	78	78	\$121,026.52
4	12	Ben Ernst	3131	86	85	\$112,944.43
5	46	Lewis Ballard	2631	57	57	\$112,688.64
6	70	Angelo Patacca	2582	50	50	\$108,923.63
7	42	Kenneth Andrews	2857	88	85	\$104,502.11
8	29	Eric Markus	2253	66	66	\$102,969.00
9	34	James & Karen Handley	2824	59	59	\$100,691.70
10	53	Mike Hall	2684	52	52	\$100,430.42
11	18	Cliff Wall	1572	64	64	\$100,046.00
12	11	Art Garvin	2338	54	53	\$96,414.00
13	41	Jon Kerr	2541	54	53	\$94,844.58
14	37	Jeff Carroll	2613	66	66	\$94,828.97
15	21	Daniel Duval	2594	44	44	\$93,817.86
16	63	Ryan & Viki Rahjes	2698	61	61	\$93,759.00
17	25	David Gillihan	2570	55	55	\$90,193.00
18	32	Heather Gillihan	2564	55	55	\$89,924.85
19	59	Peter Green & Dannelle Sifford	2478	63	63	\$89,207.00
20	54	Morris Cox	2214	56	56	\$89,027.00
21	26	David Lihl	2703	61	60	\$88,095.00
22	35	James Owen	2606	85	85	\$85,758.33
23	40	John Anderson	3052	95	94	\$83,998.16
24	23	Danny Dossman	1811	55	51	\$79,466.00
25	67	Stephen & Tamara Vook	2443	39	39	\$76,855.00
26	55	Nick Byrnes	2476	35	34	\$74,568.00
27	39	Ilim McCrain	2784	56	56	\$70,018.53
28	69	Tim Harkins	1489	41	41	\$62,929.71
29	20	Dan Lessert	2959	55	54	\$62,665.23
30	31	Glenn Royal	2686	50	50	\$61,720.29
31	30	George Levar	1823	39	39	\$56,943.00
32	13	Bill Karitis	1814	32	32	\$55,989.00
33	44	Kimberly Walling	1929	63	63	\$53,688.70
34	27	Doug Vance	2623	60	60	\$53,457.00
35	73	Michael Kozicki	1799	31	30	\$53,382.00
36	36	James Stovall Jr	2553	58	57	\$53,069.32
37	68	Thomas Southwood	2867	45	44	\$51,870.99
38	66	Marc Beauflac	2198	74	72	\$47,846.28
39	56	Paul Brown	2259	32	32	\$46,115.00
40	57	Paul Meyer	2307	42	42	\$43,996.00
41	49	Mark & Karen Campbell	2978	56	56	\$43,717.67
42	15	Chris Hopper	2761	57	54	\$40,557.00
43	47	Lionel Ramos	2738	52	52	\$40,355.71
44	45	Lance Corley	2268	37	36	\$36,761.44
45						
46	72	Walter Osswald				DNF
47	24	Dave Benoit				DNF
48	22	Daniel Simmonds				DNF
49	60	Rob Carlo				DNF
50	48	Lynn Behrens				DNF
51	14	Bruce Edwards				DNF
52	61	Roy Kjendal				DNF
53	43	Kenneth Trass				DNF
54	28	Eric Buskell				DNF