

Monday June 17 Day 1 Launch Sequence

For the second IBR in a row, the weather for the start has been excellent. In 2017, Minnesota served up sunny skies and today South Carolina did the same. A bit more warmth and humidity, as this is the southeast, but still a great day to start a motorcycle adventure.



Robert Frost's poetic insight make it seem like he would fit right in with the Iron Butt Rally community, were he still around today. The last stanza of another of his famous poems seems appropriate as the riders experience a range of emotions as they prepare to depart from the Rally Central parking lot in front of the Greenville Marriott, under the stern direction of Dale Wilson.

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

Riders and spouses, family members, significant others, friends, and curious spectators gather in the parking lot as the day of the start dawns to see the spectacle, drool on the farked machines, exchange hugs and goodbyes, share last minute advice and promises of successful rides and safe returns. The riders are facing miles to go before they sleep. Depending on their route choice, they may find those miles taking them to some woods, dark and deep, with twists and turns, as the sun sets this evening on this first day of the 2019 IBR.

A few riders were outside packing their bikes as the moonlight faded into dawn this morning. The Marriott parking lot would not be peaceful and calm for long. Riders were required to be at their bikes at 8:00 a.m. for the odometer checks, number verification, and card punch.

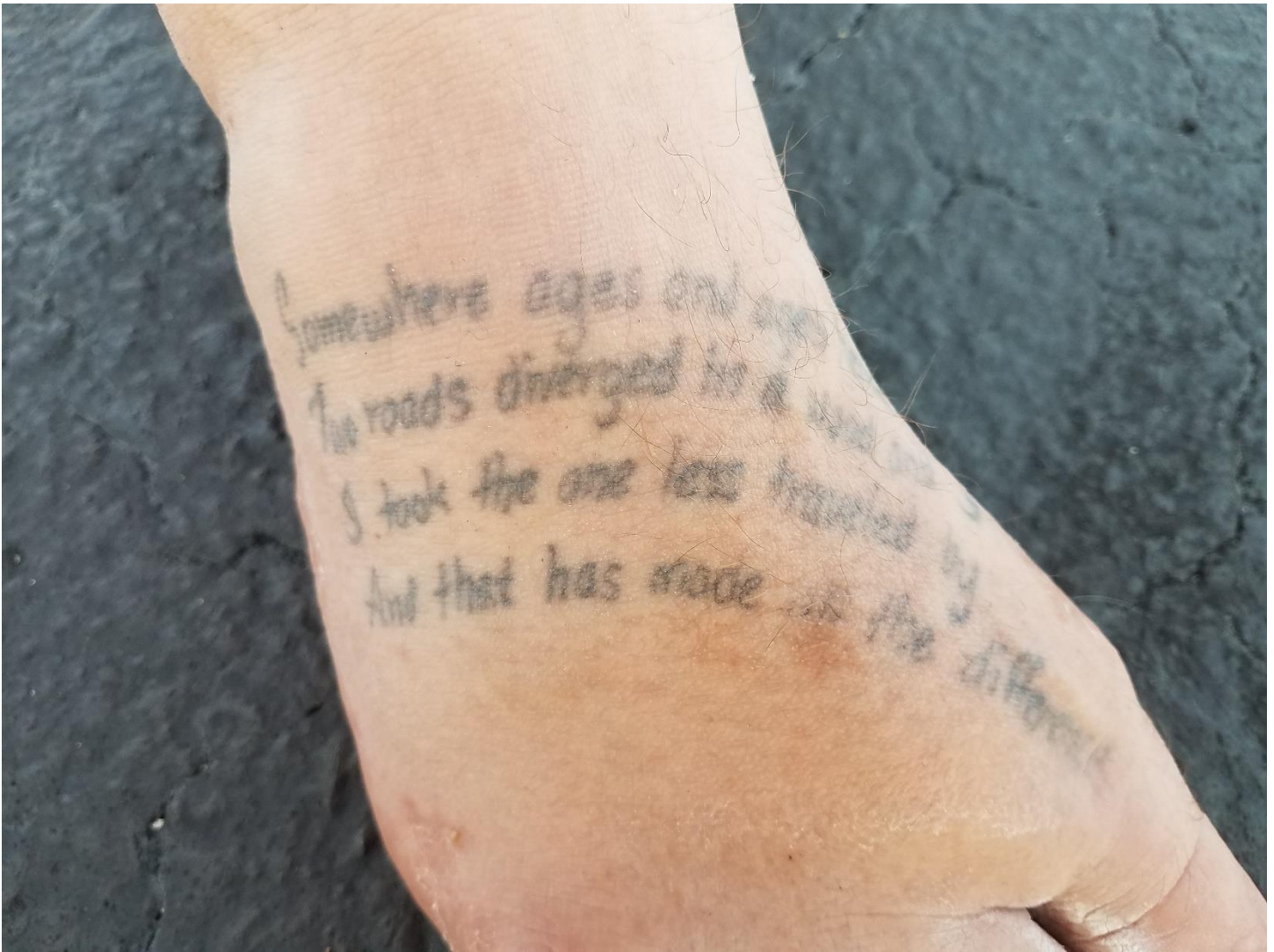


The start time of 10:00 a.m. meant there was plenty of time for riders to handle any last minute packing issues, or bike problems, or begin third (or fourth) guessing the routes they planned. For riders who were organized and ready, it meant they had about an hour and a half to wait...think...anticipate...worry...get antsy...overhear rumors of other rider's plans and start to doubt their own plans...and generally just think about how much they wanted to get on their bikes and get on with the rally. The owners of the bikes which did not have an umbrella mounted spent at least some time searching for shade to attempt to remain cool, calm, and collected, however futile such attempts might prove.

Giel Kerkhof needed a replacement GPS this morning. One of the two on his bike was not working. The request went out for assistance. IBR vet Bob Rippey was at the host hotel with a BMW Nav4 GPS, which he loaned to Giel for the duration of the rally.

Wolfe Bonham is an interesting rider. During the 2017 IBR, his creative and entertaining messages, recorded during his call-in bonuses, were enjoyed by the entire rally staff. At the start today, we learned he had a version of the rally theme poem tattooed on his right foot. Your scribe needed a photo of such a claim of course, so Wolfe was persuaded to remove his boot and sock. No, he did not get a fresh tattoo after the banquet last night. He already had it, simply because of what the poem means to him.

Warning: do not go to the next page, or at least avert your eyes, if seeing a pasty white, Gold Bond powdered, bare foot would be too much for your eyes to handle...



About 3 minutes before the official start time, when all the riders were on their bikes, engines running, about ready to pull in the clutch and engage 1st gear, a call for help was issued. Peter Green's Triumph Trophy would not start. Mark Wood was there in a moment with a portable lithium jump start pack. Peter pulled the battery cover without getting out of the saddle. The cables were attached and the British triple fired just in time for Peter to replace the battery cover and be ready to go without losing his place in the departure order. Kudos again to Mark for assisting IBR riders in need of help.



This may be the first time we have seen a couple of riders depart the start of an IBR in a t-shirt and fingerless gloves; a bit of an anomaly in a community of riders whose tradition of safety is the leading example in the motorcycling community, whose mantra tends to be ATGATT (all the gear all the time), and are traditionally on the leading edge of protection from the environmental risks encountered when riding long distances in heavy traffic, roads in need of repair, and through all kinds of weather conditions.

However unwise it might be to presume a lady's weight, there is no way Cathy Davies is more than 100 pounds. She is riding a yellow Wing weighing close to 900 pounds. Cathy had the honor...and the pressure...of leading the pack out of the parking lot. As one would expect of a rider who completed her first Saddlesore 1000 mile day in 1988, she handled it like a pro.

Dale directed the riders one at a time to depart the parking lot. It took all of 4 minutes and 46 seconds for the riders to pilot 97 motorcycles out of the parking lot.

























Jerald Anderson was not the last to leave. After the other riders were clear of the parking lot, Jeff Earls went over the pertinent explanation of critical information which Jerald would have received if not for being late for the mandatory rider meeting. He was no doubt relieved to be able to depart not long after the other riders. John Coons was the last to leave the parking lot, but the delay was not caused by any mechanical issues with his 202,532 mile 1994 BMW R1100RSL, it was just a need to lighten the load before departure.

LATE UPDATES

Wolf Bonham called Rally Central this afternoon to let us know the sign at Max Patch, the target of the required the bonus photo, had been stolen. His understanding of the method of verification was confirmed. He noted there were several other riders at the location with him.

Stephen and Tamara Vook reported being bitten by the Dragon in Tennessee. A claimed 318 turns in 11 miles attempted to claim another victim. The low side resulted in a broken mirror on their BMW K16GTL, but no injuries. They are continuing to chase bonuses. No word on whether the broken mirror was added to the other broken bike bits on the tree of shame at the Deal's Gap Motorcycle Resort.

Bruce Edwards called asking for a tow service for another rider with a flat tire. Of course, excepting extremely extenuating circumstances, fixing flat tires or calling tow services are the rider's responsibility.

We would be remiss if we did not give props to Jeff Earls' wife, Kathy Engholm. Your scribe brought two laptops to the rally, an older one and a brand new one. Sort of a belt and suspenders thing. The possibility of the older unit failing was the motivation. However, the new laptop locked up in the middle of the creation of the Day -1 report. It was necessary to recreate the report on the old laptop, hence the near midnight upload.

Kathy spent about an hour this morning working on various solutions to the problem with the new laptop. She was successful in resolving the problem and this report was produced on the now functional unit. Huge thanks to Kathy!

Photos by Steve Hobart and John Harrison (the really good ones are from Steve)

*John Harrison
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