

## THE INTERNATIONAL SIX DAY TRIAL REUNION RIDE - 2009

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The ISDT Reunion Ride. Woo-ee! I've been wanting to ride one of these events ever since I first heard about them, back around '03, when the event was held in the Berkshires – just like in '73. Besides, it's the only way I'd ever get the chance to ride an event associated with the term ISDT, 'cause my riding skills wouldn't even qualify me for reserve, back-up, last-alternate, dry conditions, we'll-only-take-him-'cause-he's-payin'-his-own- ticket, club-team, chase rider at a full-on Six-Day.

So, long about the time I heard that the '09 event was to be held in my home state of Ohio I started making plans. A look around the garage revealed a 125, which was only a total chassis, suspension, and engine rebuild away from being ready to go, and the event was nearly a year away, so I got started. And apparently, so did a lot of other folks. Talk on the POG forums ran hot with information about the event. Steve Barber, of the hosting Enduro Riders Association, attended the Penton Day at the AMA event in February, and worked everyone into a lather with descriptions of vintage friendly, virgin, single-track trail, laid out in some of the most appealing enduro terrain in the USofA.

Well, the weekend of October 3-4 finally arrived and with high hopes, I loaded up and headed for McArthur, Ohio early on Friday morning. Riding along behind me on the trailer was a bike other than my 125 project. That one never got done, plus my Six-Day is just for lookin' at, and my Berkshire still gives the appearance of having spent 20 years lying at the bottom of a mine shaft. But, even though my mount wasn't a Penton, I was at least going to be riding.

The weather did not appear to be doing us any favors. After an exceptionally dry late summer and early fall, the rain had come on in earnest. And, as I headed South on I-71, the wet conditions continued. In fact, things looked pretty bleak as I turned into the Vinton County Junior Fairgrounds, about 11 a.m. Inside, a few RV's and enclosed trailers were parked about, but there was no activity to be seen. Hmm. It didn't look promising. I wandered over to the sign-up building, but was told that registration didn't open until 1. So, it was back to the truck to wait things out.

Soon, more trucks and trailers began pulling in and things were finally looking up. Plus, the rain had stopped and by golly the sun was trying to come out. Now, everyone was bustling about, unloading bikes, setting up their camps, and performing last minute preparations. I got into the sign-up line, and once I had my rider's packet in hand, ran the 175 I was to campaign through tech inspection. Last thing to do

was to impound the bike in the Parc Ferme. This produced an odd feeling, as I had never before left my machine behind, out in the open, especially the night prior to an event. But, soon the White Bike took its place among the rows of cool, vintage enduro machinery



The bike impound area

present. Many Pentons were to be seen, plus numerous Huskys, as well as a large assembly of Hodakas. Mixed in as well were two Rokons, a Benelli, Speedy's Sachs, Ossas, Bultacos, a Maico, a Jawa, several Can-Ams, plus Kawasaki KDX's, Suzuki PE's, a Yamaha DT3, a few Yamaha IT's, Ted Atkinson's enduroized CR250M Elsinore, a Honda XL350-based sidecar rig, and numerous others, which I cannot remember. Walking among this amazing gathering of classic off-road bikes, all primed for riding was an awesome experience in itself. Then as the day drew to a close we were off to nearby Lake Hope State Park for accommodations in some pretty darn nice cabins, a block of which had been placed in reserve for RR riders by Steve Barber. Thanks, Steve. The cabins worked out great!

Saturday morning was looking fine. We pulled into the fairgrounds around 7 am, and with a 9 am key time had no reason to rush about getting ready. The morning air was quite chilly, but bright sunshine and a clear blue sky promised very favorable riding conditions. As a special treat for everyone present, and in celebration of their participation in the 1969 ISDT, trophy riders John Penton and Bud Green, both mounted on Penton Steel Tankers, were to be the "HONORARY" first riders out.

So, shortly before key time, these two veterans took their places before the minute board and with a large crowd watching and dozens of cameras recording the event, headed out onto the course. The celebratory ride was to last only a few hundred yards, but JP and Bud just kept going. Just as we began to wonder if they might continue down the trail, the

two Steel Tankers came back into view and returned to the pits. For the record, John Penton and Bud Green have now ridden yet another ISDT event.



**Bud Green and John Penton getting ready to start their ride**

Minutes later, other ISDT vets, such as Jack Penton, Paul Danik, Carl Cranke, Wally Wilson, Jeff Fredette, Dwight Rudder, Don Cutler, Fred Cameron, Ron Bohn, Jake Fischer, Todd Morain, and Mike Rosso, for whom the first minutes were reserved, moved their machines from the Parc Ferme to the starting line. After watching a few of these early minutes depart I made my final preparations to ride and waited for my number to come up. Soon enough, I wheeled my own bike from impound and waited for the ok to fire it up. True to ISDT rules, the bikes were supposed to be started only as the rider's minute came up. As I had ridden the White Bike only once since having purchased it a couple of years prior, I was



**Carl Cranke getting ready to start**

a little apprehensive about how readily it might light after a cold night outdoors. Fortunately, the rotary-intake engine started first kick.



**A small part of the items on display at the banquet hall at Hocking College.**

At nearby Hocking College, we arrived to find the place packed with hundreds of Reliability Run riders, friends, and family. In fact, throughout the weekend I had heard it mentioned repeatedly that this was one of the best-attended ISDT RR's yet. Before dinner, we browsed among the tremendous display of motorcycles and enduro & ISDT-related riding gear and memorabilia, all brought together under the direction of our very own Kent Knudson. A huge hats-off congrats to Kent for assembling an unprecedented collection of fascinating, historical material. The display definitely added to the evening, as well to the entire event. Then, following dinner, an excellent program honoring the ISDT/E veterans in attendance was hosted by Jack Penton. A highlight to this celebration was when Jack called none other than Tommy McDermott, America's first ISDT gold medal winner, to the stage for commentary on his experiences. Regrettably, we eventually left this fine evening to return to our cabin for a well deserved rest.

We were up and about very early Sunday morning, arriving back at the fairgrounds before sunrise. This allowed once again for plenty of time for pre-ride preparation and to just enjoy being present at this awesome event. Breakfast was being served in the signup building, and plenty of riders were taking advantage in order to "fuel up" for the day ahead. Additionally, Teddy Landers had scheduled a worship service, and around 8 am a large crowd gathered outside the signup building to share in faith and fellowship. In addition to some words of inspiration by Teddy and wife Rosemary, Sam Phillips of the Christian Motorcyclist Association spoke to our group, offering a spiritual message, which provided for a fine way to start the day. Many thanks to Sam, Teddy, and Rosemary for sharing the Good Word.

Sunday lo and in a few moments I was through the covered bridge starting area and beginning my first-ever ISDT RR.

After a quick loop around the East end of the fairgrounds, we immediately dropped into the woods, and I knew instantly that this was going to be an excellent ride. True to their word, the Enduro Riders Association folks had laid out some excellent, single-track trail for us. And, although the trail was nicely-established, it was not in any way torn up, rutted, or too rough. In other words, perfect for vintage machinery. There was virtually no mud, but as is typical for Southern Ohio, the soil was slippery, due in no small part to all the rain in the days prior to the event. For unknown reasons there was only myself and one other rider on our minute - Jim (?) Murphy, mounted on a 175 Jackpiner, who let me take the lead. Note, the fact that "Murph" let me lead in these early miles almost certainly had to do with the fact that he was running a helmet-mounted camera and was hoping to get some good crash footage. I very nearly granted his wish on a number of occasions too, as the White Bike was slipping and sliding all over the place, the back end constantly wanting to pass the front. Guess I should have taken Paul Danik's advice and popped for some fresh tires. Too late now though, so I just kept slithering along, trying to keep the wheels under me.

We soon broke out into some big, open fields, with virgin surface beneath us. No existing trails here. Nope, we were riding over flattened tall grass, with nary a quad-footprint in sight. Note here to once again "thank" the Enduro Riders Association for their exceptional efforts. In this case it was



A Jackpiner getting ready run a special test

for the very thoughtfully placed "Danger" arrows at critical points along the course. Without such cautionary markers I surely would have been tossed arse-over-tincups at rough points in some of the high-speed sections. The open fields led to a road section and even as we cranked up the speed, the course arrows continued to be well-placed and easy to spot. After a few miles we turned back into the woods, this time on wider-track, faster trails. The going was easy, but not at all

boring. Really great trails, and just enough water and mud to keep things interesting. As dry as the preceding months had been, we were fortunate that the area had received some recent rain. Otherwise, we might have been riding in choking dust. I had done some trailriding just two weeks prior and that's just what the conditions were. Couldn't even see to ride. Long about this time Murph evidently had tired of waiting for me to provide him with some crash footage and went rocketing by. That's the last I would see of him on the trails, as he is an AHRMA regular and in a whole 'nother league than me. We came down from some higher-elevation trails to next drop into a creek bottom for some excellent water crossing action. I came upon some slower riders at this point and, taking advantage of the White Bike's full street-legal equipment, beeped the horn at them to indicate I was slipping by. Super riding conditions! Really fun going.

After a bit more of the wider trails, interspersed with some road sections, we came upon the first Special Test. Riding pretty much on my row-31 minute relative to the other riders, I arrived to find virtually all the earlier numbers there. It would seem that the speed average was very modest, resulting in plenty of time to cool it and enjoy the company of other participants. Plus, this respite allowed time to service machines so in need, and I did see a couple of bikes on their sides, with repairs being performed by multiple helping hands. The name of the game in this kind of event is participation and fun, rather than outright competition. Thus, any assistance required by bike or rider was met with much support. So early were we to this point on the course that two of the first-row starters (one of them with the initials Carl Cranke) had blown through the checkpoint prior to arrival of the check crew, and had kept right on going. These two super-fast guys eventually arrived, for the second time, laughing about how they had ridden the entire loop then began again in order to catch back up to us.

As our minute approached, I advised Murph to go on ahead of me in the Special Test. Besides the fact that he is running for AHRMA points, my time would likely be on par with that of the guys on the sidecar. Note, no offense intended toward our sidecar-riding buddies, as these guys absolutely ripped in the open. It's just that the tight woods sections had them at a distinct disadvantage. Anyway, me and Murph finally got waved off and he immediately disappeared ahead of me. The trail was indeed hilly, extremely tight, and featured much virgin terrain. Surprisingly, I passed Murph just a couple of minutes into it as he coasted back down an uphill. I thought maybe he had just stalled out, but found later his Jackpiner had fouled a plug. As I continued to negotiate the Special Test, at an incredibly slow pace, I felt very grateful that the rains had ended. Had we been riding this same section in really wet

conditions, it would have been extremely tough. We were on some pretty amazing hills, with little opportunity to build any momentum, and you know what that means: lots of spinning knobbies, paddling with both feet, and one rut up the hill, bisected with roots. Then, one rider gets hung up and it becomes a huge bottleneck. Nope, we were very lucky to have dry conditions and as such enjoy an easier ride.

I eventually completed the special test and wandered back onto the regular course. Murph never came back by, unfortunately. He lost a good bit of time changing that plug, poor guy, but one rider I continued to see all day was Dave McCullough. He started a couple of minutes behind me and kept blazing by on the trail as if he was on a mission. Dave was mounted on a '77 Penton MC5, and that certainly helped, but he is simply a fast guy, period. Plus, I believe he took special delight in zapping me and the White Bike because he kept pulling over to let us back past him, then would come clicking by again soon after, running at least two gears higher than me. Nice guy, but what a showoff. (Just kidding, Dave!)



**A Penton 250 in a special test section**

The second half of the loop had us running the morning's trails backwards, which worked out just fine. Everything was well-marked, with different-color arrows than we had followed in the morning, plus the arrows also featured the word "out" for in the morning and "back" in the afternoon. More kudos to the Enduro Riders Association. These trails eventually led us back to the fairgrounds, where we were routed to another Special Test, this one an Acceleration-Braking Test. And, to make it more fun and challenging, the Enduro Riders Association had laid it out with a turnaround point. So, at the "go" signal, riders accelerated, then braked hard for a 180-degree turn, then blasted back to the starting point. Great fun, and a practical way to conduct the A-B-T in a relatively small area. At this point it was still only mid-afternoon, which left plenty of time for cleanup and assuring the bikes were ready for day two. We had put in approximately 50 ground miles, but I understand that one or

possibly two of the Special Tests had been scrapped from day one due to concerns about trail conditions and hazards.

Eventually I returned the White Bike to impound, headed back to the cabin to get cleaned up, then hooked up with the rest of our gang to attend the evenings banquet. Held in the beautiful and spacious Student Center oked to be a repeat of Saturday weather-wise, which meant just about perfect. We took to the same trail as on day one and if anything our first-day traffic, along with the sunshine, had improved the conditions even more. There was zero dust, and most all of the mud had dried to a perfect, tacky surface. Sunday's route did take us on some trails, which varied from those on Saturday, including a run up a clear-running, mossy, shale-bottomed creek. Steve Barber had cautioned us about this section during the riders meeting, indicating it was extremely slippery, and he wasn't kidding. It was rough, too. By the time we exited the creek bed my hands were numb from a combination of the sharp-edged rocks as well as the White Bike's minimal suspension travel. Awesome!

The first Special Test of the day took us down into some excellent creek-bottom trails. At my urging, Murph led us in once again and, unhampered by a fouled plug this time, was long gone in moments. I was left to fuddle along, trying hard to keep the White Bike between the trees and headed in the right direction. I had lowered the air pressure in both tires that morning, and what with the drier trail conditions we weren't slithering around quite as much, but I still had to work hard to keep the tires under us. Al Born had asked me Saturday night how many times I crashed on the first day. When I said "None," he shot back, "Then you must not be going fast enough!" So, with Al's words ringing in my ears I continued to twist the White Bike's throttle backwards until the front end washed out on an off-camber downhill. I stepped off, stuck my nose in the foliage, and rolled to my feet in time to see that pesky Dave McCullough coming down the trail. I gave him the big, frantic, "don't-run-over-my-bike-and-crash-'cause-then-you'll-forever-blame-me" waving motion. Dave indeed missed the White Bike and in fact cruised by so effortlessly that I do believe he regarded us as just another static obstacle, like a rock or a log. I picked myself and the bike up, bump-started down the hill and was soon back into my "groove" none the less for the experience.

The crash did ring my bell a bit regardless, so I may have the following recollection out of sequence, but here goes anyway. At one point we participated in a Special Test consisting of a hillclimb. This was great fun, as we were in one of those grassy fields and upon taking the flag went wailing up a nice, smooth slope with plenty of traction. The White Bike does actually develop some horsepower and I managed to get it up into third gear as the initial slope leveled off. We ended the test by turning left on an off-camber slope

and passing between the transponder gates. Some more road riding followed these first two Special Tests, then we arrived at a checkpoint, which once again gave us considerable layover time.



**At the start of a special test section**

Ahead of us was another Special Test, consisting once again of some awesome, virgin trail. And, as a special treat, the test ended back in the open field where we started, where the arrows had us weaving first one way and then another in a classic grass-track layout. Towards the end of this run a Yamaha IT came tearing by on the inside and the rider actually had the temerity to look back and sneer at mine and the White Bike's attempts at grass-tracking. Turns out the IT's rider was in fact Bob McCullough, Dave's brother, and he was just giving me a little howdy-do on the way by. Note on both these McCullough brothers – they may come across as mild-mannered and all that, but make no mistake – these guys are fast! Anyway, I made it out of this Special Test after being passed only by some ten or twelve riders. Oh, and one of them was Paul Stannard, riding a 250 Hodaka Road Dog (or Top Dog, or Big Dog, or whatever those things are called), and he was going really fast, too. You know, I had a good time all weekend except for all you guys making me feel like a slug! For a while I tried blaming it all on the White Bike, but I finally came to the conclusion that I was simply in the company of a lot of good riders. Congrats all, guys. You are all class acts. Entering into the last segment of the weekend's ride, we ran pavement back to the fairgrounds, arriving there early in the afternoon. That left only the Grass Track Motocross.

Excitement was high as riders donned numbered bibs and moved their bikes to the pre-stage area. The course was laid out in a beautiful, open field, featuring rolling hills. Virtually the entire track was visible from the spectator area, especially the start, which was set up in a small hollow. One of the first races to take place included POG president, Paul Danik, as

one of the competitors. And, demonstrating that he has lost none of the speed which won him recognition by John Penton and a place on the U.S Trophy Team, Paul promptly ran off with the win.

The race for the White Bike and I soon came up and we took our place on the line with a large field – some 17 riders. Included in those down the line from me was Chad Danik, Paul's son. Well, I wouldn't be running up front, that's for sure. At the drop of the flag we tried mixing it up with the field, but by gosh in a couple of turns those guys were gone! I didn't even have anyone to race with! I genuinely thought that the White Bike and I were going around there pretty good, but quite simply – we got smoked! Ah, well. When you run in fast company . . .

So, the remaining races went off without a hitch and soon the awards were handed out.



**Paul Danik, Dane Ieimbach, Carl Cranke and Jack Penton handed out the awards as they were presented.**

**In this photo, Toni Roach took advantage of situation to also get a hug from Carl.**

Not long after, Vinton Fairgrounds emptied out and the 2009 ISDT Reunion Ride was history. What a great event. We were blessed with excellent planning and execution by Steve Barber and the Enduro Riders Association. Also, the great weather definitely contributed to making the event extremely pleasant and enjoyable. Lots of good folks put in tons of their free time to make this event happen. Let's not forget the fantastic job that Kent Knudson did in creating an amazing display at the banquet. Also, Teddy Landers' efforts to coordinate AHRMA scoring and processing resulted in clockwork-like execution of the event schedule, as well as providing LIVE displays of rider's scores. Teddy's work provides a truly amazing demonstration of modern technology applied to our sport. Thanks also to all those behind-the-scenes folks who made it possible for us to enjoy this event. It was great. Unforgettable. Marvelous. See you all next year.