

I didn't bring my helmetcam this time round so here is an overly wordy ride report instead for my Void 7 rally. I was one of the Allentown starters. My declared route was: CAB, SOV, TAP, FNK, RKC, FAR, MOS, OCA, SWN, CHM, MIN, MAN, MAP, WLU, DIN, ROR, TRN, PEN, HOR, BMM, BTW, FIN.

I already ran into problems before starting as I committed an egregious error in judgment: that of changing something on Senora (my Honda Silverwing scooter) just prior to a big ride. I had fabbed a gadgetbar similar to Doug Shonley's Farklebar ([www.farklebar.com](http://www.farklebar.com)) for all my electronics to make for quick and easy install/removal at rest stops. Well, the bar worked out great, but the power module I rigged up just wouldn't work right. I had power all the time to my 2 Garmin's but not my tablet or phone. Of course, I only found this out on the way TO Allentown. After some messing about, I still could only power both GPSes and either the Tab or Droid but not both. I later also found out that my helmet comms was not charging properly either. All this BEFORE I had even started my ride!

Chris Comly and I shared a room at the Best Western in Bethlehem and we set out for Allentown a bit early to make sure we could get proper start receipts. I ended up having to go to Autozone to get some fuel stabilizer since I stupidly left the gas cap open the night before and there was plenty of condensation that could've gotten into my gas. Ironically, I had intended to put some Seafoam in there the night before but didn't have any and then completely forgot to close the cap. Facepalm!

I left the Allentown Wawa just around 0900 after texting in my start. I headed straight for Cabela's in Hamburg - one of the only locations that I actually knew since that's my local Cabela's. Bumped into Cdog and several others as we took pictures of the canoe sculpture, and then of course was passed by all of them as I went down I-78 and journeyed to York for the Sovereign Bank Stadium. Next up was the Tapeworm Railroad highway historical marker (HHM) followed by the Welcome to Funkstown sign near Hagerstown. Pretty smooth ride up to this point, but unfortunately, my helmet comms died soon after Funkstown. No more music or audio directions for a good long while. Next up was the Road Kill Cafe in Artemas, PA. This was my first little set of twisties for the day, but it was nice since it was bright and warm in the daylight. More on twisties later. The parking lot was pebbles but it was early in the day and I wasn't too worried yet. I took my picture, redid the wiring for my helmet charger and hoped that it would charge a little, but that was a pipe dream as it drained way faster than it would charge. So instead of Queen, I got to hear Senora's little whirs and whees for almost the rest of my ride.

Onward to the Farnham Colossi in Berkeley Springs, WV (truth be told, by this time you could've told me I was in NC - I had NO idea what states I was in anymore!). Now this was mighty cool - a Midas Muffler Man (which was the bonus), a Uniroyal Girl, and a bunch of other big statues including a Santa, a beach bum in shades and a funky crab. I would've totally taken a picture of my bike in front of the statues, but it was all on a gravel patch and my little 13" and 14" wheels and I am allergic to the stuff. Seriously - we seize up at the stuff.

Next up was Mosby's Rangers HHM in Middleburg, VA some miles outside of Manassas. There was a big swath of grey dust and dirt and pebbles that served as the shoulder - remember my gravel allergy? Well, thankfully there wasn't much traffic on my side of 50, and I just whipped out my extendable flagrig (okay, that sounded bad) and snapped away while sitting on my bike and still on the road, and then pulled over in a paved driveway a little further up ahead to document the bonus.

After a brief crawl through traffic along 17, I found my way to Orange County Airport to hunt for a mailbox with a stamp behind the building. Well, that sparked my first call to the rallymaster for the day cos there wasn't any mailbox at the back, and the Base Operations Building was no longer in operation! Salty said to just snap a photo of the sign and so I did, and sped off westwards towards the setting sun. Riding off into the sunset means being blinded by the light! I must've done the sunset salute for about an hour until I got to Swannanoa golf course to snap a photo of the Hole 1 course details sign.

For the next 12 hours, I would regret having scheduled the twistiest and longest section of my route to be run completely in the dark. Twisty 55mph roads that were awesome earlier this year during the daytime were a nightmare for me cos even with my HID's and 10 watt LEDs, I couldn't see far enough down the road to be able to go at speed. I ended up doing 35-45mph for most of these roads and dang near 20mph on the sharper turns as I haven't angled my LED aux lights away as Cdog and some others had advised, leaving me in the dark when leaned over. I snapped the sign for Natural Chimneys and meandered onward on the seemingly endless road to Elkins, WV and my scheduled rest stop at the Econo Lodge there. Second call to Salty as the waypoint for the statue of Minnehaha was not where it was. After about 20 minutes, we finally figured out that the statue was about 1/5 of a mile west. Apparently Minnehaha is NOT a smallish comedian. I got my picture, stopped at the Shell station to start my rest bonus, and then headed for the Econo Lodge where I managed to get 2hrs of blissful sleep after double-checking my rallybook entries.

When I woke up and set back out just before 2am, I was already an hour behind schedule. I didn't adjust for enough extra time up in these mountains, and I would regret it even more as now I had to contend with fog, leaves, and HOLY CRAP WAS THAT A HERD OF DEER?! as I rode painfully slow through the windy turns and switchbacks. To top things off, I had dropped my audio cable at the gas station earlier, so now I could not even hear my GPSes if I wanted to (not that my helmet would've let me do that for more than the 3hrs of power I managed to get out of it). Seemed like forever before I got to the Maple Restaurant in Monterey, VA (I crossed the stateline somewhere only the deer know) where I had to snap a shot of the big fish on top of the building. Darkness plus white flag plus no ability to illuminate something that high up required quite some finagling. Ten minutes later (turn flash off, set focus on fish, then put flag in picture and try not to fall over while snapping away), I was off and riding towards Lexington for the Washington and Lee University HHM. Easily found, then off to take a picture of the Dino Girl next to a minimart somewhere close to Natural Bridge.

By this time I was really tired of all the twisties in the foggy darkness. My next stop had me going up Route 43 towards Eagle Rock. When I saw the sign that essentially might as well have read "Abandon all hope if you're using a GPS", I knew it was gonna be trouble. I kept praying for the sun to hurry up and rise and burn off all the mist so I could actually see and thus ride faster. Dawn finally broke just as I reached my waypoint for Roaring Run Furnace. At least, that's what Google Navigation said. I looked around and didn't see anything resembling a gate supported by brick columns. All I saw was a little gravel path leading into the woods and... oh, you've gotta be kidding me!!! Mini-meltdown time as the last thing I wanted to do after 12hrs of twisty, foggy, deer- and leaf-infested darkness was to ride in the gravel! One rider came out and I asked him how long of a ride in and he said about 1/3 of a mile. I started off on foot but after about 100 yards, my brain slapped me and reminded me that I drive my car to my post office across the street and that this body isn't built to walk or hike anywhere! I got back on Senora, gritted my teeth, and rode/crawled/prayed my way through the gravel, went right into the big puddly pothole in the middle of the path, and finally reached the gate to take the picture. I'm really glad I hadn't gotten there in the dark or I would have totally tossed it.

Zoomed down 220 as the rising sun blasted away all the fog and mist and it felt FANTASTIC to be alive and able to run through the twisties at normal speeds. Long highway stretch along 81 towards Roanoke, and I stopped near the historical information signs for the 3 trains. I was supposed to total their combined weights. Thank goodness for calculator apps! Checked and rechecked my numbers and then sped back towards 81 for another long stretch down to Wytheville where I took a picture of the big pencil at the office supply store. I knew I had lost too much time in the mountains already and even with what time I saved roaring down 81, I was too far behind and decided to toss the 14pt Patriotic Horse bonus in NC (this was my contingency bonus anyway), and headed towards my home stretch instead.

I was really glad I tossed HOR as I watched my clock tick away while stuck behind tractor trailers going 25mph on the twisties towards Fairystone Park. Stress means mistakes and I was determined not to make any. I got to Billy's Mountain Music at the same time as Robert Reid, exchanged friendly greetings, then I snapped a picture of the giant banjo, and sped off towards my last bonus: Booker T. Washington National Monument. Of course, even though I left BMM several minutes before him, Robert passed me very shortly thereafter - I must be one of the slowest rallyriders around! I pulled into BTW and got a picture of the bust outside the visitor's center, and that was it. OFF TO THE BARN!

I knew I had made the right decision to toss HOR as Google routed me onto Business 29 several miles away from Rally HQ in Lynchburg. Took me almost 20 minutes to get through the downtown traffic - I would've been really stressed out if I had gone to HOR instead which would have tacked on an extra hour of ride-time. I finally pulled in to the Quality Inn and Verne handed me my Finisher's Envelope with the arrival time of 1313 or something like that (here's some spooky trivia: I rode 1313 uncorrected miles and got

13th place in last year's Void!). Whew! That meant I had almost 45 minutes to check my rallybook and gather everything together and I would be able to get the full 63pt FIN bonus for turning in my envelope before 1400. After losing points at my last 3 rallies (never the same mistake each time), I really wanted to ensure no more point losses. Thank goodness I had enough time to check thoroughly as in my still-groggy state, I had penned in the wrong 1st digit on my ending rest bonus receipt! Changed the 4 to a 5 (would've been the most amazing rest bonus in rally history where I would've traveled back 10,000 miles in 3hrs), tallied my total possible score (546pts), put my flag and rallybook and SD card into the envelope, sealed and signed it and dropped it off right around 1353.

The wonderful Rena Miller scored me and chuckled as I breathed a sigh of relief with each scored bonus without any mistakes. When it was all said and done, I managed to get my 546pts and did not drop a single points for the first time ever! That alone was my main goal for the rally with the overall objective of enjoying myself instead of becoming overly stressed like I had been before. Mission accomplished!

After some obligatory nekkidness (in my own room of course), I went downstairs for drinks and dinner. I got to hang out and swap stories with Jim Hatch, Rachael Kim aka Fuzzygalore, Jeff Wilson, Mike "Grizz" Newton, Jim Stine, Chris Comly, Octavia's nephew Allen Hatcher, Lisa Hecker and her dad Marty Cover, Wallace French, Josh Mountain, Tony Hudson (who also rescued me when I got my finger stuck in a beer bottle), Eric Bray, Sal Terranova, Ron Perlik, Keith Nusbaum, Bill Dunlap, Michael Jordan, Master Rick Miller, Nancy Oswald, Cdog David Riley, Salty Dog Scott La Shier and the Tall Silent One Gary Stipe, etc. The dinner banquets are always awesome, and both Salty and Sal should totally have their own comedy routine (hey, Salty and Sal has a nice ring to it too).

Scores are posted up here: [www.rallythevoid.org/Void 7 Results.pdf](http://www.rallythevoid.org/Void%207%20Results.pdf) I managed to tie with Jeff Wilson for 6th place amongst the Allentown starters! Yay! I actually thought I did worse cos by the time I had had one beer before eating dinner, I had developed dyslexia and thought I had 456 instead of 546. A very happy surprise.

Thanks again to the rallymasters and all the volunteers and all my fellow participants for making this yet another wonderful experience. Congratulations to all the winners (that would be all of us) and those who placed in the top 3 for each contingent. I am one very happy and contented Hamster.

Hammy  
Rider 107