

Sorry for the delay in getting a post-rally report up. Just a ton stuff going on with pack up, travel, getting back to work and life.

All photos, unless otherwise attributed, are by Richard Swim.



Kimberly Walling checking in Craig Phillips at the finish



Chris Hopper checking in some bearded weirdo. Is that Don Drasheff maybe?

We were so fortunate to have outstanding staff. Kimberly Walling and Chris Hopper had perfect execution at odo check on rider return. Lisa Landry herded the cats in scoring and got them through the hassle at the hotel with rooms coming available. We did try to get the hotel to understand our process and how things were going to happen, but they just wouldn't hear it. Well, they learned the hard way that we knew what we were talking about. That will not happen again. Lesson learned for us.



Tara Tong and Lisa Landry ready for some banquet fun!

Annette Ure was simply awesome as a general helper running down whatever needed to be done. We were so fortunate to have her and hope to see her again! Of course, Tara Tong was on hand to assist in many general ways as well. She gets it and is always helpful as well.

I'm sure everyone has seen the results by now. If not, there is a separate file on the website with the full details for each rider. Paul puts together a fun presentation at the finish to go over all the fun of the rally. There are stories from the road and special awards we do every year. The heart award went to Dan Eckert. He helped not one, but 2 riders who needed assistance. We feel very strongly about being good citizens and ambassadors of our sport. Riders are required to assist anyone in distress. This doesn't apply to someone who already has help. But if they come upon anyone, a rider or not, in need, they are to stop. Even if all they can do is call 9-1-1. They must do it. We will provide an extension to their rally penalty/DNF time to compensate them for the time if needed. John Anderson had a lot of tire troubles and finally got to a point that a new tire was needed. Dan looped back around to stop and try to assist, but when it was realized that a tire was needed, there just wasn't anything for him to do but rally on (to a very nice finish, by the way – congratulations Dan!).

Paul was able to reach out directly to Wayne Boyter who came to John's rescue. Wayne left home about 10:30 PM on Friday evening. He picked up John on US 67 between Alvarado and Cleburne about 11PM and brought John and his wheel back to Wayne's shop. So happens that Wayne had an appropriately sized tire and was able to provide equipment for mounting. Quick ride back to John's bike and he was back on the road by about 2:30 AM. Thanks Wayne, you are a true friend. As they say, a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Speaking of rally heroes, Chris Ross was able to contact a friend very close to another rider in need outside Lubbock to get him off the road in some crappy weather until his wife could get to him with a trailer. To say thank you, Paul put Chris's cell # up on the screen and everyone in the room texted him to say thank you at the same time! Chris loved it. Mission accomplished.

Last year's rookie of the year, Chase Eskelsen, made a rookie mistake this time around. He ran out of gas. Dan Eckert was riding by, saw what looked like one of "our" bikes on the side of the road with no rider in sight. Dan thought the bike looked like it was parked kind of strangely for someone just having pulled over for something. We asked him to loop back around and get the tag so we could figure out who it was. Chase. Nancy calls him. Can you imagine Chase's thoughts when he saw Nancy's number come up? How does she know?? "Hi Chase, what's going on?" "Ran out of gas, but a nice gentleman stopped to give me a ride to a nearby gas station, I'll be on the road shortly". Glad that worked out for him. Hopefully, he's learned to not let that happen again. He got lucky this time. Wind can impact fuel economy and riders need to be very aware of this to avoid running out of fuel. Chase is very aware of this now.

Rookie of the year for 2023 went to the super low-maintenance 2-up Michael Fernandes and Claire Ivey from NJ. They were referred to us by IBA legend Bob Lilley who works at Hermy's BMW. We hope to see them again. Nancy is working on getting Claire on her own bike and signed up for the VMR (www.vmrally.com).



Mike Fernandes and Claire Ivey receiving the Rusty Horseshoe award from Tara Tong for being awesome Rookies. Nancy even called the salesman at their home dealership (Hermy's BMW in Port Clinton, PA) to pester him to pester Claire into getting on her own bike.

We started a new award this year in honor of our friend, Tim Harkins. Tim's first rally with us was Rawhide in 2020. He made quite the first impression on us with his, um, demeanor. Wayne Boyter was with us for the 2-day rally start and Paul had Wayne stationed next to Tim to make sure he stayed in line. We thought we were going to have a real problem child on our hands. As the meeting unfolded and Tim saw the amount of effort that goes into a Heart of Texas Rally, he was completely shocked, and we saw a whole different Tim that we became extremely fond of. Tim was full of stories and anyone who knew him didn't care whether they were true, he was so entertaining. He was also quite the little prankster playing a dim-witted country bumpkin in a variety of scenarios. He was no dim wit, that's for sure. Rawhide was an atypical HoT with many bonuses outside of Texas. As Tim was looking for a marker related to the cattle drives in a cemetery in Oklahoma, he started feeling like the place was familiar and then seeing family names on grave markers. He realized his Native American forefathers were buried here! He hadn't been to this cemetery in decades. So, he took a few minutes to share some tobacco with

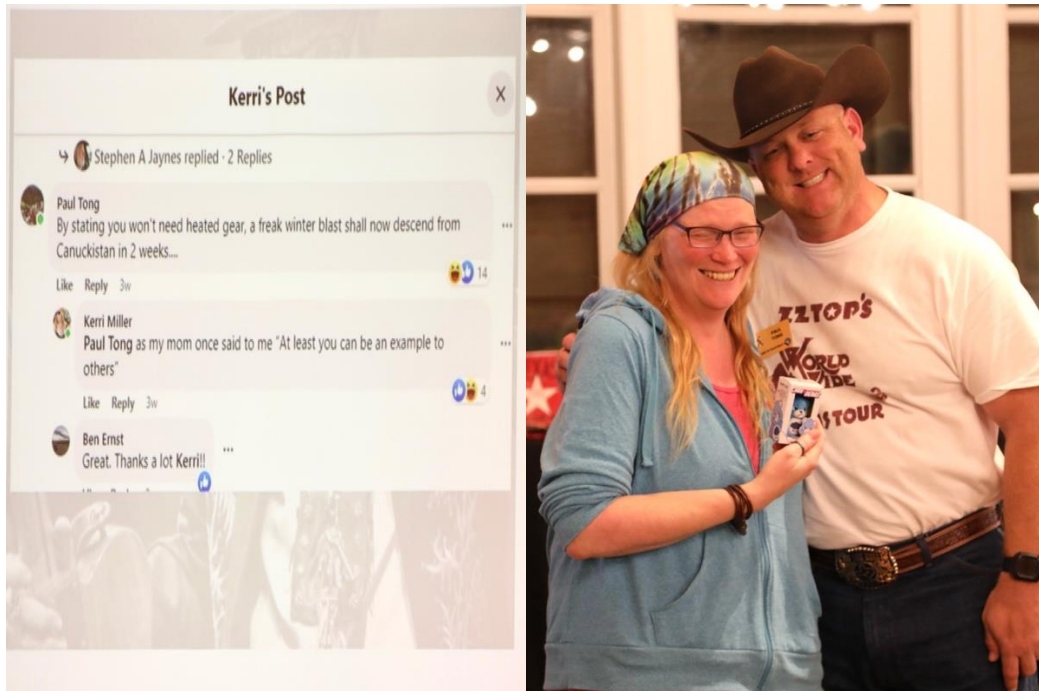
his ancestors. He said it was something of a spiritual experience for him and renewed his determination to move forward with the rally.

Tim joined us again in 2021 for Holy Rollin' and also had a great time. Except by then, cancer was ravaging his body and he needed to limit his riding to take his chemo and deal with the effects of that. He still placed well. That's just the guy Tim was. He lost his battle in April, 2022 and we decided to honor him by creating the "Tim Harkins Tough As Nails Award" and present this to the rider who displayed tenacity and determination to get through the challenges of the ride without quitting or complaining too much. The recipient would receive an authentic replica of a Native American peace pipe and certificate commemorating the award. John Anderson was the recipient this year. He dealt with a lot with that tire and a lot of folks would have quit. Not John. Paul also surprised Nancy by giving her a second Tim Harkins award. Let's just say Nancy has had a lot thrown at her the past few years, not rally or motorcycle related, but it was Paul's way of saying thank you for continuing to show up and work hard. Nancy was very grateful for the beard and sunglasses so that folks only knew Paul was crying here.



There was also an opportunity to receive an IBA SSXK, (2 or 4) meaning a 4-day rider riding more than 4,000 miles or 2-day riding more than 2,000 miles. No 2-day rider accomplished this, but 4 of the 4-day riders did. Remember we did the odo check at the start? This allowed us to correct the bike's odometer reading and certify that the rider did accomplish this goal. Congratulations to Alex Alpert, Ben Ernst, Lionel Ramos, and Lew Ballard on their SS4K.

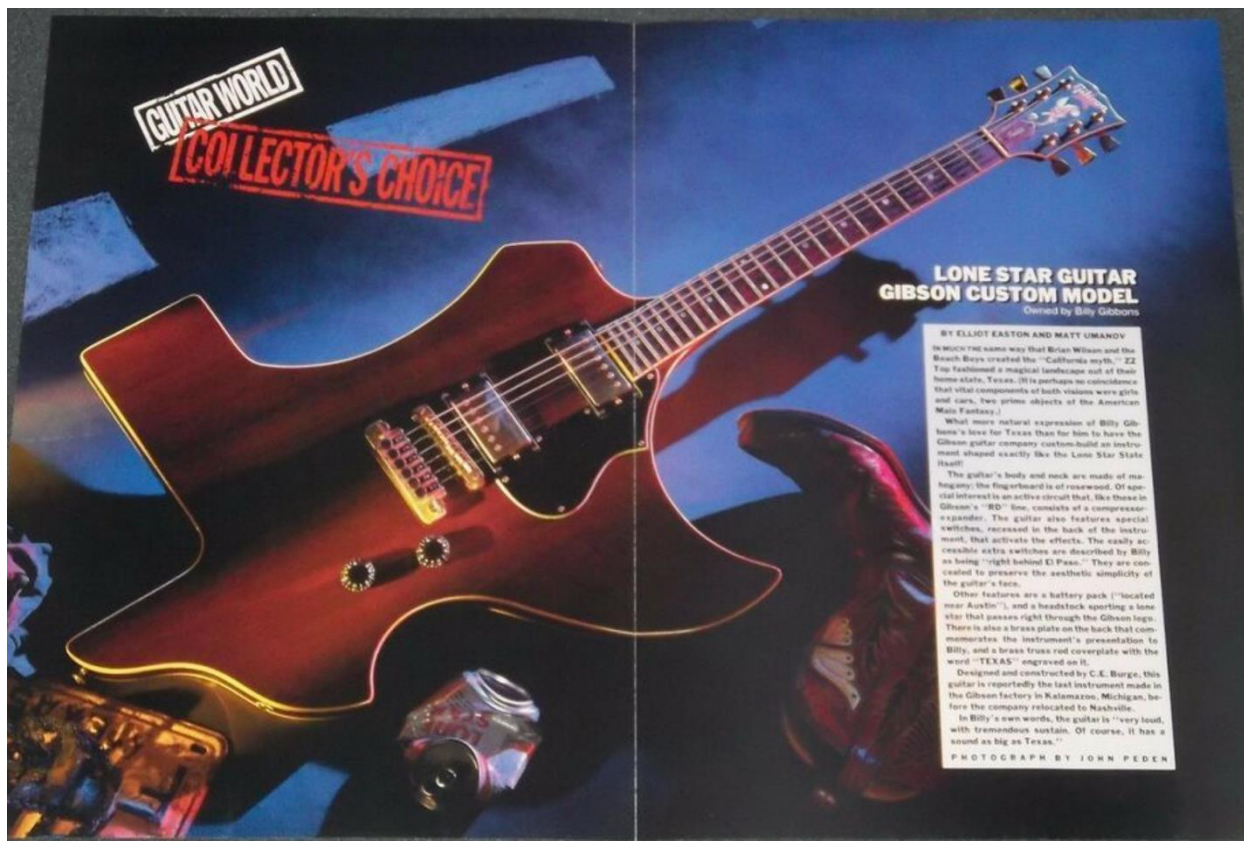
Oh, Kerri. Kerri, Kerri, Kerri. What are we going to do with you? Angering the Texas weather gods before a rally? There is no one to blame but YOU for the cold weather during much of the rally. There were screen shots from Facebook and everything proving your misdeeds and the warnings you were given, but noooo, you just had to go and plow forward. Let's just say, Paul wasn't wrong. So, Tara made sure Kerri was awarded with the grumpy little care bear to always remember to keep her trap SHUT in the future. Everyone knows the minute you run your mouth about these things.... We hope you've learned your lesson, Kerri.



There was a winner of each event in the traditional sense of most points. But there was also an award for most tours in both events. 4-day rides were required to complete 16 tours, 2-day riders needed 8. A few folks blew the barn doors off that! In the 2-day, Michael Shell nabbed this award with 15 tours successfully completed. In the 4-day, it was Dan Eckert with 27 tours. Proof that nice guys do not finish last! The trophy for this was really cool!



Mike Shell receiving the trophy for most tours completed in the 2-day event. Dan Eckert was awarded the same trophy in the 4-day event. See photo and caption below for more info on the inspiration for this design.



This photo was located in the lespaulforum.com internet site, posted by user "Norton" on 3/26/22. It appears that this was a 1979 issue of *Guitar World*, I wish my Google foo were better to give more info, but this is the basis for the first place overall and most tours trophies.

On to what everyone came for! All riders were honored for their ride. No, not everyone got a trophy. But everyone accomplished the task, whether first or last in the standings. For the 2-day, Richard Swim finished last, so takes home the rusty horseshoe award. Richard often places last because he is here to take photos. As such, he is one of the very first riders in so that he can get photos of everyone else. Thank you, Richard. We appreciate you so much, we had the hotel give you a charcuterie board. (This isn't true, but they did. We were all confused, maybe it was divine intervention that they knew it was appropriate.) In the 4-day, last place honors went to "Nancy's nemesis," Chuck Weir.

Why did Chuck get that awesome title, you ask? Well, the first day of the rally wasn't very smooth. Riders were doing all the things they were told not to. And not doing the things they were told to do. We try to give folks a little grace in the beginning of an event, especially new folks. Chuck isn't new, but still trying to be nice on the first day. He did something wrong on his meal bonus submission. Nancy texted him to contact her. The evening unfolded and general mayhem and angst flowed in the scoring room. Paul sent an email out to all riders saying staff was done for the night, only call for things that can't get resolved in the morning, here's all the stuff you have been formally warned about and will get no more grace. So a couple hours later, around midnight, Nancy's phone rings. Chuck. "Hello?" nothing. Hang up. Rings again. And

again. And again. Chuck was one call away from getting blocked because Nancy figured it was the endless pocket dial loop. Nope, Chuck either had or didn't have his headset connected and so wasn't hearing Nancy answer. "Oh, hi, just wanted to talk about my meal bonus". That didn't go over well. On a very serious note, riders can call any time, day or night. We do ask that they only call at night when it can't wait.

By the way, the nightly email is probably something that we will keep going forward. Could be any number of things to communicate to riders, but also to let them know staff is going to bed. Call if you need something, but if it can wait, let it wait. Or send an email and we'll call you in the morning when things settle down from the morning business. We take some pride in our contact and communication with riders. Rallying has evolved over the years, and we try to stay on top of modern technology to facilitate open contact. It helps lessen the worry we feel with riders "out there" in the unknown. We also enjoy getting fun texts, photos, emails, etc from the riders. Makes it fun for everyone.

Each rider had a slide with a photo (preferably in beard), finishing place, points gathered, bonuses claimed, bonuses granted, miles ridden and so forth. A fun aspect of the presentation was Chris Hopper asking people what got denied when he noticed claimed did not equal granted. Answers were varied. Wrong item photographed was common. Riders are given an example photo, so this shouldn't happen, but here we are. The most common denial reason was submission outside of the available window for the bonus in this event.

As previously discussed, Paul rewards riders for sleeping and eating. If a rider did not take advantage of every single point (or at least exponent) offered for sleeping and eating, there was virtually no chance of a podium finish (top 3 for HoT). As an example, in the 4-day event, the first 4 finishers were the only 4 of that group to get every single "freebie" point. A full 24 hours (1,440 minutes) of rest (or really close as in John Anderson's case) and an exponent of 9 on their multiplier. The 5th place finisher was 65,000 points behind on sleep/meals alone. Look at the standings and do the math. Paul tells riders this every time. Now, many riders are just out here to have fun and for them, fine. But for anyone looking to place well, don't listen to what the rallymaster says at your own risk. An exponent of 8.25 instead of 9 cost 65,000 points. The situation was the same in the 2-day event regarding rewarding riders who maximized the exponents.

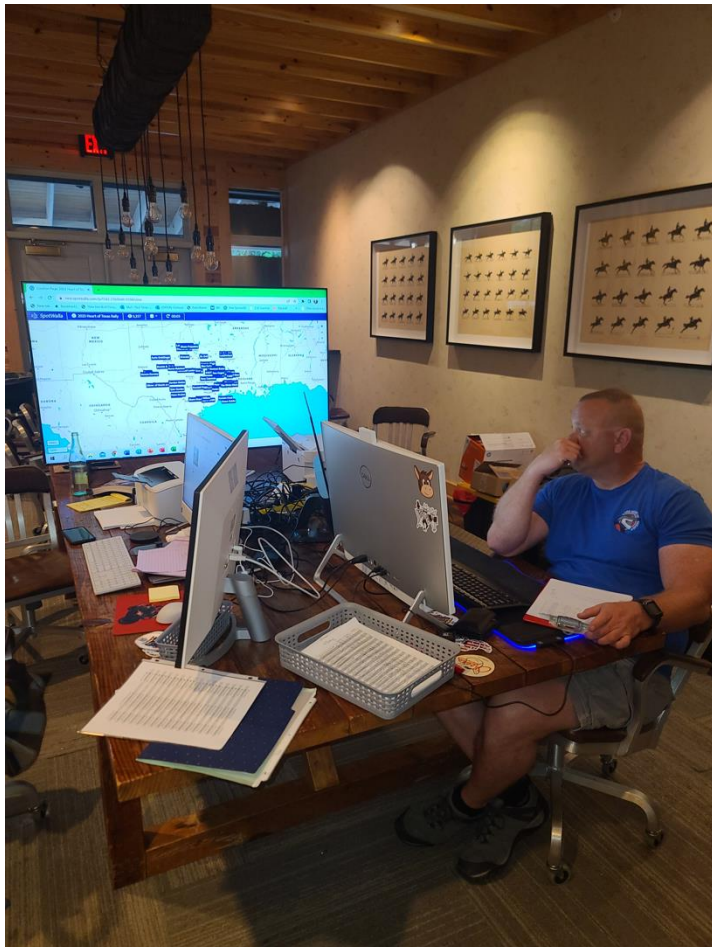
In the 2-day event, staff favorite (because he's also staff, but in the IBR this year so wanted to ride!) Jeff Konicek clearly rode a great ride. He collected 14 tours, only one less than tour champion Mike Shell. He also had the 2nd highest mileage and collected a whopping 52 individual bonuses! That's more than most of the 4-day riders gathered. But he did not take the exponent advice to heart. He was neck and neck with the first-place finisher on single locations and tours. But Jay Bolinger gathered about 120,000 more rest/meal points and took advantage of the planetary combo to seal the deal on his stellar first place finish.

Second place in the 2-day event went to IBR-veteran, Alex Harper. He clearly understood the value of the rest and meal exponents, tying Jay Bolinger on points there. Alex did not gather near

as many bonus locations or tours, though he did see the value in the planetary combo and his effort there brought him to a solid 2nd place in the standings.

Greg Williams took third in the 2-day event. Fun story here. Greg needed to hightail it home for a work commitment and didn't even stay for the banquet, arguably the best part of any rally! Greg was sort of middle of the pack in single bonus location points, minimal in tour points, but he clearly got the exponent memo and nearly maxed out points there. He also saw the value of the planetary combo and did well there. Now, as I said, Greg wasn't at the banquet. Paul decided Greg needed to get a big smile at his accomplishment though, so his phone number was also posted on screen for everyone to text him at once congratulating him on his amazing ride! Now, this was Greg's very first rally of any kind! He took a 38-year hiatus from motorcycles and only got his 2021 Road Glide Special in August of 2021. Y'all better watch out for this one, looks like a new face might be on the podium. Greg really enjoyed getting all those texts from the banquet. He doesn't mess with his phone while riding (smart guy, no wonder he placed 3rd in his first rally!) but he was aware of the furious pinging, so remained confused until his next stop when he saw what was up. We look forward to seeing Greg again in future events.

Onto the 4-day, this was fun for Nancy and Paul to watch from HQ. We used the big screen for a variety of things – sometimes it was on the current Spotwalla map, or maybe we had something



up there to look at together from our respective workstations. Or, we might have a split screen with the standings and Spotwalla map side by side. We could watch as someone rode right past something that, from our perspective, they really should have gotten. This happened a handful of times. If only folks could see what we saw!

Please note that we had new organizational techniques in place that were highly effective. It didn't completely eliminate being unable to find things but greatly reduced the frustration looking for stuff. Except for Paul's work bike key. Oh boy, that was many days of frustration for Paul. Luckily, he did recognize that there wasn't much to be done other than ordering a new one and waiting for it. Teeth-gnashing wasn't going to make a key appear. But when Nancy was straightening up for the 2-day rider

meeting in the office, guess what she found? Crisis averted! And lesson learned.

As has been stated numerous times, riders are rewarded for sleeping and eating. They are especially rewarded for eating at select restaurants. It is important to us that riders stay reasonably healthy during an event. We can't force anyone to do anything, but when we make these things so attractive with points that you simply cannot do well without them, we hope riders will understand that there is no reason to NOT take full advantage of these points. Keep in mind that this then limits the amount of time that riders have available for actual bonus collection during the 96-hours of the event. But the field is level for all, so this is not any kind of unfair situation. If a rider chooses to ride for 96 hours with no rest, he or she could do that. And probably get far more bonus points than other riders, but when the sleep/meal points are factored in, their finishing place will be severely impacted. Not to mention that they'd DNF for not meeting the minimum sleep requirements. If someone doesn't like this structure, they are welcome to organize their own event. This is what do and how we like it done. We looked at bonus points only – in other words, we deducted the points riders got for sleeping and eating. It's interesting for a lot of reasons.

Lionel Ramos would have blown the doors off everyone if he only actually claimed a single bonus, Fresno, Texas. This was part of the "Ultimate Tour Bonus" which hasn't been discussed previously. This is listed on page 11 of the rally book (available on the Heart of Texas website). If a rider successfully claims all 27 locations, an additional 75,000 points would be awarded. These locations are actual sites where ZZ-Top performed during their 1976-77 extravagant tour. Honestly, we didn't think it was even possible to accomplish this in the 4-day event with the day-of-week restrictions. Maybe with use of the beard and sunglasses in the last 10 hours of the rally, but riders could have done better with some of the juicier tours and taking advantage of the very attractive planetary combo (on page 10). We require use of the app for bonus submission. However, we do know that things happen, electrons get lost, whatever might occur that a bonus doesn't make it to us. As such, if a rider finds that his or her staff-generated score sheet doesn't match what was logged during the rally, the rider may come sit with staff to resolve the discrepancy. However, in these cases, the rider MUST have completed the claim form during the rally and present it to staff to have any standing in this discussion. The rider may not sit in a corner and frantically attempt to complete the claim form at the finish, it must be completed during the event as each bonus is collected.

Before we go on to Lionel, Kerri Miller is a good example of sleepy electrons. She looked at the printout handed to her at the finish and saw that the last bonus she submitted wasn't on there. She immediately opened her app to see what happened. BING! The bonus was just then submitted, Nancy got it, added it to Kerri's total, done. Problem resolved. But Lionel. When he looked at his score sheet and saw that he did not receive the very juicy Ultimate Tour Bonus, he asked to speak to staff. This was so disappointing for everyone. Lionel was there, we see the photo in his phone. However, he never submitted it through the app, nor did he log it on his claim form. This cannot be overlooked and just given to him because he's a nice guy, but of course he is an extraordinarily nice guy. Had Lionel claimed Fresno, his points total (other than sleep/meal) would have been over 127,000. Next highest was Ben Ernst with about 114,000.

Ben finished 5th because he did not maximize the meal exponents. Something tells us he won't make that mistake again. Jeff Carroll had a very respectable 94,000 bonus only points and Lew Ballard successfully claimed 92,000. But neither gentleman took full advantage of sleep and meals to make those hard-fought points pay off in the standings. Here's a peek at the top 5 finishers with breakouts of their points:

	Actual Finish Total	Single Bonus Total	Rest/Meal	Basic Tours	Planet Tours	Finish less rest/meal
Paul Meyer	256,191	32,684	170,767	2740	50,000	85,424
Kerri Miller	244,008	37,918	170,767	6823	28,500	73,241
John Anderson	239,850	43,815	157,129	10,406	28,500	82,721
Daniel Eckert	226,906	23,282	160,568	4556	38,500	66,338
Ben Ernst	220,109	43,846	105,780	20,483	50,000	114,329

It's not quite as straight forward as it might seem from what's been written. In order to get all of those delicious sleep and meal points, riders needed to plan. The sleep points are easy. It's a traditional rest bonus. Made even easier now with the app. No more receipts needed. The meals are a little more of a challenge. There was one 3 exponent site and 4 sites with an exponent of 2. This means the 3 exponent was a must, Heart of Texas Grill in San Augustine discussed previously. Of the remaining 4 restaurants, a rider must successfully claim a meal stop at 3 of them. This means the rider needed to be there when the restaurant was open. One of these valuable restaurants is Mookie's Mesquite Patch BBQ in Coolidge. Mookie only opens his doors Wednesday through Sunday from 11AM to 3PM. Most of the top riders went to Mookie's. But Kerri Miller was concerned about the limited hours so she went all the way down to El Jalisiene in Alice, which is open 7 days, 5AM to 10PM. But it was 2 hours south of her location in Victoria, only to turn and head 300 miles north to her next location in Eden. We can all see it was worth it in the end. Could she have done something else? Of course she could. She did pretty darn awesome, so let's not armchair throttle her too much, m'kay?

Paul Meyer was steady among the top riders as we watched the rally unfold. There were times that other folks were at the top because they were earlier in a window of submitted sleep or a meal, but it quickly changed as others caught up during the day. This demonstrates that he was consistent throughout in making smart choices. Clearly, he saw the value in the meals/sleep, but also the planetary combo. Smart move, Paul. Congratulations on your win and a pretty cool trophy.

John Anderson was also a consistent presence on the list of top placing riders. We were really pulling for him with his tire issues and the concern that other top riders had for his ability to finish is a testament to the sportsmanship in this community. Folks might be super competitive and want to win, or place really well, but not at the expense of the well-being of a competitor, least

of all one as genuinely nice as John Anderson. Despite all of his issues and lost rallying time with that dang tire, John managed to pull out a 3rd place finish. Dan Eckert, who finished 4th, was one of the riders who took time to try and help John. That character trait is something we value above pretty much anything. Thank you, Dan.

We hope the amount of effort that goes into a Heart of Texas rally is evident and that the riders enjoy the puzzle Paul's mind creates for them. Paul puts a great deal of effort into finding interesting locations and putting together a meaningful rally, heavy on the theme. Riders sure seem to have a good time and this makes us very happy. It's why we do it. Without the riders, there is no event. But also true that without Paul's mind and talent at creating rallies, as well as the support of staff, there is no event. We take great pride in the smiles and stories that evolve from a Heart of Texas Rally. As they say in the south, we say, "It's our pleasure," in response to thanks from riders. We hope you have enjoyed following along and will come ride with us in the future.