



SIERA News



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The recent tragedy during the “California 200” off-road race brings forth consideration of potential for a similar result during the “Best in the Desert” race from Vegas to Reno. The 2010 version of BITD was just completed, once again without any major mishap.

BITD relies heavily on amateur radio for health and welfare information. The radio requirement doesn't differ a lot from our typical bike rides although, to my perspective at least, it's much looser and with less structure. If a spot or two isn't covered some years, it doesn't seem to make much difference. And, if you volunteer, the basic information is how to get to your assignment and when you should be there. Oh, yes, you are advised about the frequency usage at your spot, but it's up to you to figure out how to get it to

all come together. If you have difficulties, nobody on a white horse will be galloping up to assist. Actually, this operating way just adds to the challenge and makes the whole process very interesting. And fun.

BITD is billed as “Vegas to Reno”. It actually starts in Beatty and ends in Dayton (an empty pasture behind the school) and is 534 miles of dirt, dust, rocks, hills and gullies. The entrants are motorcycles (mountain bikes), well tricked out pick-ups and rails. The finish times run in the 12 – 17 hour framework. Much of the run is at night in the northern portion of the course.

Being assigned to a corral (officially a “Checkpoint” and a 90 degree turn on the course) located somewhere between Sand Mountain and Rawhide, I

was advised the best access was from Schurz highway.

This turned out to be a true four wheel drive experience. There had to be a better way. Sure enough, a bit more experimenting and it became obvious that coming in from Sand Mountain was much easier and shorter. Being advised to be on site not later than 1000 hours left me with about a 6 hour wait for the first race vehicle. Those two large inaccuracies of advice cemented my idea that Vegas people have no clue and even less concern.

Contacting net control on 146.61 was accomplished by moving my location a couple of times and adding some height to the Cubex. On first contact I was asked to also act as a relay for the Rawhide station since they couldn't make it directly to

Dayton. This unexpected turn of events took a bit of research, but we finally settled on simplex and a second radio. Being sequestered at the top of a small rise was a good location. When the first racers arrived they "took off" right in front of my station, making for an exciting viewpoint. Perhaps enjoying greater comfort down at the corral would have been first choice but being where the action is greatest offers a superior location.

Four hours to get on site, six hours early and seventeen hours of reporting on the race adds up to a rather lengthy experience. Some catnaps between vehicles helps some but, still! BITD is a fun time and another example of how amateur radio can lead you into activities that you otherwise might not even know about.

There were no spectators. Maybe at the Beatty end, but certainly nobody around the OK corral. Being a communicator brings with it the opportunity to view an event

few others get to see.

Some August, when you desire to escape the heat of the Carson Valley, sign up for some communications work on BITD. Enjoy the heat of midstate Nevada with a lot of dust thrown in for good measure. It may not be the ride and it may not be as well organized as the bike rides but this is August and nothing else is out there.

Amateur Radio Offers opportunity.

2010 SIERA CALENDAR

- Sept 4 – Meeting 1pm
- Sept 12 – Tour de Tahoe**
- Sept 25 – Social Bkfst