

By Joyce Siegert, TRT Correspondent

We are getting ready for another Republic of Texas (ROT) Rally in Austin. Now in their 17th year, the popular event is held at the Travis County Expo Center Fairgrounds on Decker Street in Austin. It has been voted several years running as one of the top ten events to attend.

ROT HISTORY: The original version actually started as a Texas State HOG (Harley Owner Group) Rally in the mid 1990s. A couple of bikers from the Dallas area (Jerry and Jim) who weren't too crazy about the past HOG (Harley Owner Group) Rallies and wanted to do better. They wanted a title that would make them stand out and represent their love and pride of Texas, thus "Republic of Texas" HOG Rally was born. They put in a bid through their local dealership to host the 1995 Texas State HOG Rally in Austin. They chose Austin primarily due to its central location in this great state of Texas.. This was the first year the HOG rally brought in headliners. These boys drew in over 3,000 bikers and this was the largest state HOG rally in the whole country. It went so well they were asked to head the 1996 rally and drew a slightly larger crowd than the national rally in Tennessee that year.

In 1997 the HOG rally was cancelled due to no bids placed to host it. Jerry and Jim saw a business opportunity. Soon they were meeting with the Banditos Motorcycle Club for permission even prior to permissions from the city. After they received both groups' blessings the all new and better ROT was born.

Jim retired in 2007 but Jerry and Colleen still work the management side of ROT with a staff of approximately five and an army of volunteers. This is the only rally Colleen and Jerry host. I have heard they take off afterwards to regroup and start again in January to get the next rally started. There are several pre-rally off-site parties the week of the rally at various locations around the Austin area. On site, during the rally



Prior to attending Sturgis I have to pay for their guide book if I want to know what goes on at Sturgis. The guide is difficult to print for viewing (no hard copies available nor PDF and you can only print 1-2 pages in flash format at a

there are various events inside the Thunderdome event, including the Big Texas Chop Off, Tattoo

Competition, and MMA fights. Outside are a multitude of vendors, the Paradise Bar with live local (Texas) bands. The large amphitheater hosts the evenings' live entertainment which has seen headliners such as Gallagher, Brett Michaels, Johnny Winter, The Charlie Daniels Band and more.

They also have an outstanding rally book that is second to none in my eyes. I have seen the Daytona booklet and all the it had was ads I was not at all impressed.

time off the website once you get your key). I am not sure if you get any sort of hard copy once you get up there. I love ROTs; it's the best, it has advertising but also money saving coupons, rides, an entertainment schedule with times and locations, plus they have a vendor listing with maps showing where they are located for easy search. These books are well worth keeping as souvenirs and future vendor reference. In the 2010 book they even posted a Hot Spot Poker Run with prizes. You could ride it in as few as one day or stretch it out over three days. One disappointment was the 2010 book had only two rides whereas the 2009 book had six. But you can always check out Thunder Roads Texas for

Continued next page...

rides in the area (<http://ThunderRoadsTexas.com>).

In looking back at the last two rallies, it seems 2010's was not as thought out as it was the previous year. In 2009 (a week prior to ROT) their website consisted of a full list of all the different entertainment venues; musical as well as others. They had a downloadable and

sheer panties the whole rally. Needless to say, these girls got sunburned and possibly one of the largest collection of beads out there. They collected at least two large trash bags of beads; enough for the guys to pass to others, enough to take home and use in 2010, and we still have a small grocery sack full for this year.

During the day lots of drinking, riding the

Saturday night arrived with best of the best -- Bret Michaels. Need I say more? He was the "iffy" headliner after having surgery last year. Trooper that he was though, he did perform. At first I couldn't get anyone to go see him with me but I HAD to go since my daughter wanted me to bring back pictures plus I had been watching Rock of Love with her. Once we all got there they were glad they went. They were not aware until then how many songs he sang that they knew. Most people associate him with is Rock of Love and not a member of Poison. He proved to definitely measure up as THE headliner. He was all over the stage dancing around. Who would have thought he was diabetic and just had surgery? I especially loved one of his shirts he had on; it had his name but then also the Harley Davidson logo.

You know, bikers are a great bunch and not as



printable PDF file of their booklet. You could see the rides they had mapped out in case you wanted to go for a ride off the compound and see if your favorite vendor would be at the rally. The Paradise Bar also had quite a few musical acts that were better known. Most of the 2010 entertainment at the Paradise Bar I have never heard of. Their theme for the year was "Texas Got Talent".

The funny part of all this rallying, you plan to ride but most of the riding is done onsite in the "Parade". There is so much to see while riding it, there is no need to leave. You can see every type of golf cart and motorized vessel imaginable. The people put a lot of thought and imagination into them. If there isn't a contest there should be. Some are quite novel. One I loved was a mobile bathtub then there were several motorized bar stools and coolers on wheels. There was also a golf cart that had a large three-foot slab of ice on the back of it. Females could drop their top and lean against the ice to get a shot of Kahula, Bailey's or Jagermeister shot down a grove for their consumption. Let's also not forget the beads; in 2009 our niece and a friend of hers rode around in her Jeep with nothing on but

grounds, and shopping goes on. There is also the Wall of Death and the Thunderdome also has entertainment which is a great distraction as well as an escape to the air conditioning away from the heat.

Not as many attend the Friday show since a great amount of people go on the ride to the state capitol. One year Robbie Knievel performed a 280' jump over Budweiser trucks parked side by side. During ROT 54 square blocks of downtown is shut down just for the rally and bikers. I hear you can't go very fast (maybe 30 mph if you are lucky) due to all the bikes. In 2010 you could actually pay a bit more when you registered and ride with Dee Snider for the March of Dimes "Bikers for Babies".

bad as the rap they get. I wasn't even wearing my TRT badge but still people parted like the Red Sea when they saw I was taking pictures. My cap off to those ROT guys that let me through!

The last night of ROT was crazy. After the concert everyone poured onto the parade route for the last hoorah. It definitely was like Mardi Gras. There are lots of sights to see, it is the climax of the rally. All through the night bikers were doing burn offs. In 2009 one guy even blew a tire. I am not sure where they were doing it but I could hear it from our campsite. There is no official staging area for burnoffs like Sturgis but you can definitely smell the rubber and fuel in the air.



