

The
Protector
 of the
Pud

story:
 kendrearhodes



Photo Courtesy of Bear

Photo Courtesy of Sally McArdle



There usually is some semblance of truth to most Urban Myths and this is no exception. So if for some reason you are asked to become a "protector of the Pud", then I would like to assure you that it is an auspicious and honorable task to undertake. The Pud is no myth at all. It's a simple "Big Sister" self-saucing pudding, that is also 29 years old and has traveled more miles around Australia than any motor vehicle, aircraft, person, animal, disease or virus.

Nobody knows exactly how many protectors it's had, but this perpetual traveler goes to every rally, criss-crossing this vast country, East to West, North to South—it never stops. So when you visit Australia, be sure to ask discretely upon its whereabouts and you may be lucky enough to be within "COOEE" of the Pud.*

It all began in 1976, totally unintentionally, when Russell "Bear" Payne had some visitors from across the border. With them, they brought dessert in their panniers. It wasn't eaten and the visitors left it for Bear. Six months later, Bear thought he'd take it back to them (the whole 1,300 miles) as it was still within its "best before date." For some reason, that Bear claims is alcohol related, they didn't eat it, so he decided he wasn't taking it home again. Eight months later, he met up with his friends in Alice Springs who, of course, brought the Pudding with the intention of finally eating it. This was another 1,300 mile trip for Bear, but only 875 miles for the Pud from Adelaide. They came close to unwrapping it and did start to imagine the sweet taste of the saucy Pudding, when they noticed it was "out of date." So this is the risk you take in this modern world of high tech food processing and litigiousness—do they risk a bout of tummy rumbles to appease the taste buds? A vote was taken and they decided to leave it in its box and keep it traveling. They laughed about it way back in '76 and even created some rules as to how it should travel—

never for a minute imagining that it would still be traveling today!

The rules are quite simple: *Rule One*, It must always travel on two wheels, and *Rule Two*, Before eating the Pudding, you must first eat your pillion passenger and tires and drink all the bike fluids (they're probably healthier anyway).

You wouldn't believe the network of Pudding admirers that cover and connect this country. When I began researching the story, I enlisted the help of the Ulysses Club who bent over backwards to help and eventually confirm its existence. At that very moment, the Pud was traveling in the panniers of Chris McArdle on his 1981 BMW R100RT from the "Ruptured Budgie Rally" in Queensland. Basically it was going from the North of the country to



Photo Courtesy of Russ Daniel

Above: The pudding sitting on the tank of the Mighty Yamaha at Stonehenge (Central QLD) Off Centre Rally. Yamaha ridden by Russ Daniel in 1992.



Left and Below: RFDS Plane, Nurse, Doctor and Pilot.

Right: WIMA at the Pink Ribbon Run. Photos: Kendrea Rhodes



Melbourne in the South, which is a 1,000-mile trip and a typical day of the life of the Pudding. In Melbourne, it attended the 30th Anniversary celebration and Annual General Meeting of the Victorian BMW motorcycling club, where it was fondled, ogled and adored by many. It started as a BMW club tradition, but it's no snob, as long as it's on a bike, Yamaha, Triumph, Harley, sidecar, anything really, it will travel.

You may be wondering how on earth a 29-year-old Pudding smells and stays together. Well, quite a few years ago, after a leak and a rattle, some bright spark decided to encase it in resin. Thanks to them, the Pudding still travels today and would probably even bounce if thrown, heaved or tossed—which comes in handy when you want to shoot a few hoops.

The Pudding is an avid fund raiser and will rally to any worthwhile cause, but its favorite charity is the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). This is an amazing non-profit health service provided to the people of Australia. There was an appalling lack of medical facilities available to the far-flung communities that span an area equivalent to two-thirds of the USA. A difficult pregnancy, tonsillitis, appendicitis, or simple infection could be deadly. It became obvious that communication and transport was the key and in 1928 a small pedal-powered radio was invented that soon became an everyday item within each outback home. Coupled with medicine and the use of aircraft from the Queensland and Northern Territory Air Services (QANTAS), the birth of the RFDS was realized. This service now has 22 Divisions throughout the country and runs a sophisticated communication and medical service 24 hours a day (see www.flyingdoctor.net).

The Pud has also ridden to raise money for Breast Cancer on the WIMA pink ribbon run. The Women's International Motorcycle Association runs these annual events in every state in Australia to raise awareness as well as money for Breast Cancer research. This cancer will affect one in 11 women in Australia, so you can see, our Pud has a great sense of community duty and compassion. Hurrah!

There have been a few near misses for the Pudding. It traveled in a bus once, but it was inside the saddlebags which were still on the Protector's motorcycle. Unfortunately, there had been a smash in the outback of New South Wales and the very next vehicle to come along was a bus, which of course stopped to help. Luckily for the motorcyclist and the Pud, there was plenty of room for the bike to go in the storage compartment in the bottom of the bus. Both pudding and rider are older and wiser now!

Bear has carried the Pud once or twice since it all began in '76 and has an annual date with it at the Border Run in August each year where it's carried across to the West Australian border via the Nullarbour Plains. It's been on some of the most rugged terrain that Australia has to offer, such as the 880 miles of the Gunbarrel Highway, which runs through the center of Western Australia to Yulara (near Ayres Rock) Central Australia. The PUD was the swinger in Bear's sidecar on his BMW R90S over this very sandy (or boggy, depending on the weather) road where you won't see a soul for days. You may, however, race a herd of wild camels to the

waterhole or see a goanna, dingo, countless birdlife, snakes and many rusty old cars. These cars are relics from one of the three RedEX Reliability Car Trials held in the 1950's, covering up to 10,000 miles across Australia. It spawned many a car rally folk hero in Australia including Charlotte "Granny" Hayes who was the only woman to complete the course in 1955 in her Volkswagen 1200. It was considered difficult terrain back in '55 and hasn't changed much since, but luckily the vehicles have!

The Pudding is nothing special and that is exactly why it is special, because the motives have been pure and sincere since its inception. It has no sponsor, nor agenda, just a life of bringing people together. The Pud is a modern day holy grail and if you are the lucky Knight of the Road to be dubbed "Protector of the Pud" then you have truly touched something holy and historical.

I asked Bear how he felt about being the catalyst for such a legend, he said he remembered thinking "HOLY S@#T, we've started something here." 🍷

"COOEE" is Australian slang for "close by". It's the sound you echo with your voice when lost in the bush—someone will answer cooee in return and you know you're close.

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