

2nd Annual MMOC Southwest Ride Recap

Let's begin our recap of this year's excellent adventure in "beautiful downtown" Westley, Ca. on Monday morning, October 1st at 7:30 am where Mark Murray, Burny Matthews, Rhoda and this esteemed Blovinator met up with Doug Foss and Steve Armbruster who ventured 620 miles south from Salem, Oregon on Sunday to enjoy our annual festivities. Neither looked any worse for the wear considering their first 245 miles were in a torrential downpour! On this cool and crisp morning as we suited up for the ride to Barstow, Foss donned his flamed-out half shell helmet that was all but destroyed. Seems that during the rain ride he looked over the windshield to wash his glasses and the wind ripped the piece of crap chopper style lid of his 3XL bucket head! Armbruster, riding to the rear, stopped to retrieve the tumbling remains. Clear 60 to 70 degree weather delivered us refreshed to Bakersfield, where Armbruster plied his Motor Cop trade until retiring a few years ago and headed north to Silverton, Oregon. It was lunch time and he steered us to a neighborhood Basque restaurant for a delicious feast. Luckily, we had Foss to clean up the leftovers and no one left hungry! Two hours later after strafing the Tehachapi's on 58, we were in Barstow in time for cocktail hour, a couple of hour's pool time and a sideways jaunt to the gourmet Straw Hat Pizza next door.

We had a relaxing ride Tuesday the 2nd with a lunch stop at the Lake Havasu City exit off IS40 and a one hour visit with former OPD Traffic Division Commander Connie Blevins who moved to the warm confines of Lake Havasu to heal his long standing Marine Corp and OPD wounds. He continues to be a chiseled leader of men and one that helped guide me through my career in Traffic Division, although I did give him cause to pull his hair out! Thanks Connie, and it was great seeing you again.

With Wickenburg several hours away, we dropped the hammer and arrived at 1530 to begin the official kick off this year's ride. Jerry and Aillene Swain, Baron and Kathy Laetzsch, C.K. Williams, Kenny and Gwen Williams, Bob and Vi Hossfeld, Phil and Debi Dudley, Dick Studdard, Kevin Northam and Robyn Hossfeld greeted us poolside with refreshments in hand. Beautiful grounds and perfect 80 degree crystal-clear-weather was a further inducement to sack suck, frolic and BS until the sun set on the horizon and reality dictated it was time to crawl next door to the "gourmet" Denny's for vittles. Many of us continued our liquid training exercises after dinner knowing that Hossfeld and Studdard were "guiding" us, via top secret route, to Payson in the morning and Show Low in the afternoon. Liquid courage indeed!

Side stands up at 0800hrs--all the while protecting CK Williams in the primary chase vehicle who had the mobile bar he so generously donated--our intrepid guides led us on some top secret route (apparently Arizonians speak a foreign language and don't use highway numbers; everything is referred to as "valley of the squaw" or "dancing wolves trail" etc., as if we're supposed to find those references on a map!) to Payson where Bill and Christine Herzig opened up their beautiful house and fed us freeloaders a fantastic lunch. Bill is a retired Motor Cop from Tucson and a member of Blue Knights, Chapter AZII. They are truly wonderful and gracious people and we couldn't thank them enough for their hospitality. After lunch, SR 260 through the Apache National Forest to Show Low proved to be a beautiful curvy and scenic roadway that begged us to pick up the pace to our next 3 nights lodging at the Days Inn. Ever mindful of the numerous elk signs

posted roadside, some of us elected to forgo formation riding and sprint to the hotel. You know, it's 5:00 someplace in the world. Cocktails flowed, as did BS at our impromptu parking lot cocktail party as Hossfeld passed out the "route and itinerary" for the next two days rides. More references such as "turn north at the 3rd telephone pole with 3 amber reflectors in a horizontal pattern 6' from the base" had many of us questioning his sanity and CK agreeing; he had to work with him in LA.

Thursday dawned cool, overcast and promised of intermittent rain showers as we suited up for the day's ride. Perhaps this was an omen as Mark Murray turned the key and his Harley was lifeless. Just 3 days earlier at Westley he had bragged about having the original battery in his '99 Harley Davis and how it always started. Not this time Reggie! Relegated to shotgun passenger with CK at the rear, Baron in the lead vehicle led us on a beautiful scenic route via US 60 and 191 to Alpine for breakfast. Just a few miles from the New Mexico border, over hot coffee and home cooked food, we marveled at our 85 mile autumn journey through golden Aspen, Blue Spruce and the world's largest stand of Pinion Pine. While the eastern seaboard may paint a slightly more vivid picture this time of year, we were in awe as the Left Coast has few opportunities to view a canvas as spectacular.

Murray was anxious to return to Show Low and find a battery for his bike, so he, Baron, Armbruster, Foss and I departed under very threatening skies while the others elected to sight-see on this gloomy day. We experienced about 10 miles of light rain enroute. Quoting Herr Hossfeld leading the "others": "...The gallant legion consisting of Phil, Debi, Kevin, Robyn, Kenny, Gwen, Burny, Vi and yours truly followed by CK and Rhoda in the other chase vehicle headed north in search of the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest. During the first 90 miles we experienced intermittent rain showers as we approached IS 40. There, the wrath of God spoke in the form of thunder, lightening and heavy rain. With a stroke of luck we spotted a self service car wash with 3 covered bays where we huddled in terror for more than a half hour as the heavens dumped on us and the lightening show dissuaded further travel. During a respite, with the storm moving east and our group west, we headed toward our destination and away from the storm, or so we thought! (In police jargon Bob, we call black ominous clouds and the clap of thunder and lightening overhead a clue-HOS) Five miles down the road we headed into another cell with heavy rain cutting our visibility to 50 feet. This lasted for 10 to 15 minutes then we broke into the clear and welcome sunshine as we viewed the sights we braved the elements for."

Back in Show Low, Baron and Mark were busy procuring and charging the new battery as I tested the warm waters of the pool and mysterious built-in spa that offered jets but no heated water. Cocktails helped numb the chill until we all conspired to install the new 12volt device. Houston, we have ignition! More cocktails and the intrepid sightseers arrived with war stories of bravery and tenacity as they conquered the elements to view dead trees and a landscape of brown rocks interspersed amongst the sand! The parking lot on this evening was a noisy and boisterous affair, interrupted often by the sound of CK's car alarm on his new Ford Fusion. He had mastered the driving elements of the car, but, command of the remote key fob continued to present a serious challenge 'til Kenny took it away from him! The inhabitants of surrounding rooms unanimously thanked number two son. Two excellent restaurants across the street again provided the needed sustenance to see us through more libations later, and then lights out.

Friday morning, we awoke to cloud cover and very strong northerly winds. Again breaking into two groups, Foss, Armbruster, Matthews and I headed for the Grand Canyon while Hossfeld's "Gallant Legion" reformed for a scenic ride to the much more minuscule and "girly" Salt River Canyon. As we Macho Men motored north, tail winds all but blew us to IS 40 where our westerly trek was met with constant 50 MPH cross winds and the requisite 30 degree lean into the wind. We made good time to Flagstaff where new off ramp construction for the scenic US 180 route to the Canyon thoroughly confused all 3 GPS units and left us going in circles for an hour. Finally Steve found one 4" by 12" sign in a residential district pointing us in the right direction. 80 miles later we were at a scenic overlook marveling at this giant crevasse in the earth and laughing, for, no sooner did we get there but it was time to turn back. We took pictures, glad-handed and high-fived each other, then immediately beat feet on the 235 mile return leg as head and cross winds pummeled us to Show Low. It proved to be a long ride in less than ideal conditions; however, no rain. How did Herr Hossfeld's Gallant Legion do? ".....We headed south to the canyon (remember, this is a play canyon, a minuscule fissure compared to what we visited-HOS) losing the winds and gaining sunshine. Not only was the scenery great, the road provided great twisties to the delight of all, especially Ken and Gwen. After lunch, we visited Fort Apache and a brief history lesson is in order.... Fort Apache was established in 1870 and remained in continuous service as the last active Cavalry Post until 1923. That same year, the Teddy Roosevelt Indian School was established at the site and is still in operation today. While standing on the parade grounds, I had the feeling John Wayne was at the head of his Troops, passing in review."

This was to be our last night in town and the Laetzsches opened up their GINORMUS house to the collective we. They have more square footage in their garages (6 or 7 at last count) than most people do in their entire lot! Kathy prepared a feast of German brats and Italian sausage ensuring we ate like kings. Baron, Kathy and Gwen ferried our liquid selves the short distance to and from the hotel, so you could say there was an inducement to partake of their hospitality and that we did till the late hours when it was time to say our goodbyes until next year.

The 2nd Annual Southwestern Ride is now in the history books as a fun-filled event; great scenery, company, levity, food and camaraderie. Old and new riders alike, everyone had a blast and I thank you all for your commitment to MMOC. And a special thanks to CK Williams and Baron and Kathy Laetzsch for providing the chase vehicles. We couldn't have done it without your generosity.

Next year we're off to the Hoover Dam at Boulder City and then 3 days of sight seeing at Death Valley.

Until then, I remain Dennis M. Brown, His Own Self, Touring Executive Ride Director.