

The 16th Annual Ride Recap, Or, How We Conquered The Oregon Caves

Dateline: Williams, California Tuesday, July 14th, 7:30 PM. Thirty two bodies are trying to cram into four chase vehicles to deliver our weary souls to Louie Cairo's excellent Italian restaurant one mile distant. It's been five hours since our merry gang met poolside in 105 degree heat to welcome the old guard and engender new revelers to our wacky system of MMOC road rides. Cairo's is boisterous because of our banter, yet our conference room seating is very cool and the food, in a word, exquisite. No speeches this night, just "mangia" and a return trip to the pool's cool waters, a nightcap and a good night's sleep.

Motor Cops, retired or not, don't like being lectured on road safety, riding formation, route, destination or speed by a bald-headed 66 year old that joined the Over The Hill Gang decades ago. They seem to have poor listening comprehension too, yet here we are at 7:30 am on Wednesday for our daily riders' meeting. It's already 80+ in the shade as Steve Armbruster, Jerry and Robbie Albericci, Jack Blacklock, Jim and Mary Emery, Doug Foss, George and Barbara Firchow, Cliff and Jeff Heanes, Micki Waide, Bob Holland, Al and Barb Knox, Baron Laetzsch, JJ Leonard, Mary Ann Mann, Mark Murray, Chris Norman, Kerry Ray, Mike and Jeanie Rores, Doug and Cathy Wayne and the Williams clan of CK, Buzzy, Kenny, Marilyn and Gwen do their best to ignore me. Rhoda learned to tune me out years ago, so she joined the ranks of the "non believers" as I spewed out my eloquent dissertation. Within 15 minutes, 19 bikes and 4 chase vehicles were headed west on Ca20 to US101 some 80 miles distant.

Tis a beautiful sight to witness a staggered formation of motors, all evenly spaced apart at 3 second intervals, thundering down a ribbon of asphalt to cooler climes on a crystal clear morning. Of course, that structure lasted for about 20 miles, after which we were spread out into 2 or 3 different zip codes and perhaps as many counties! And, so it went for 3 days, starting out joined at the hip in the morning and then turning into "see you at the motel when you get there!"

As we motored north onto US101 and shed *some* of the inland heat, the spectacular coastal mountain range offered verdant views and new undulating topography. We invaded Willits for brunch and were met there by Mel and Tami D'Angelo, joining us for the remainder of the ride. With Eureka 150 miles distant, some of our group elected to detour to Fort Bragg on the coast while we motored to Garberville for a break, then a scenic tour on the Avenue of the Giants. Continuing north, the sun disappeared through Humboldt Redwoods State Park, obliterated by centuries-old giant conifers that gave way to coastal fog and distant views of sand dunes as we approached Fortuna. With 20 miles to this night's motel in Eureka and many of us in shirt sleeves, damp 50 degree temps chill factored out to sub-zero, or so it felt, as we pulled into the No Tell Motel with chattering teeth!

With the late afternoon arrival of Chuck Nicolls, we were now a complete 16th Annual Ride group and time for the obligatory group photos, resplendent in our canary yellow MMOC T-Shirts. Think the morning riders' meetings are mass confusion? It took almost 2 hours to get all 35 of us together for this Kodak moment! And then there were the discussions on where to eat, and "have you seen the indoor pool?", and as one wag put it, "my room doesn't have an air conditioner!". Uh.....the sun last shone on Eureka in the

19th century, it's 50 degrees now and although I hear you fine, I can barely see you through the fog!

Here's your sign!

Seven AM is awful early to preach to 34 bundled up "parishioners", looking for all the world like multiples of the stone-faced Presidents at Mount Rushmore, yet I bellowed, "We have 240 miles to cover today with a 3 hour stay at The Oregon Caves. Breakfast is 10 minutes away at the world famous Samoa Cook House. Follow me out of the parking lot; make a left on the main drag, go 2 blocks to the HUGE overhead sign that says Ca 255-Samoa, make a left. Go 2 miles over the bridge and at the end of the road make another left. Go 200 yards to the first left and turn into the parking lot." Ten minutes later *most* of us arrived, another 15 minutes passed before those that failed listening comprehension 101 set side stands to tarmac!

Here's your sign!

Tummies full with great food and warmed by hot coffee, we head north on US101, following the coast for 85 miles to Crescent City. As we merge onto US 199, we bid adieu to the fog and welcome sunshine peeking through the giant redwoods. Fifty miles later, we arrive at Cave Junction, Oregon, and another 20 miles off the beaten path on steep, ascending corkscrew roadway will have us at the caves' entrance. Twelve miles into this trek, and at a spirited pace, we at the front round a tight right-hand on-camber turn that sends at least 10 bikes sideways as much as 3 feet. SAND! Looking back, all 21 bikes survived, but from her pillion seat, Rhoda bitch-slapped my helmet the last 8 miles, the ringing in my ears precluding comprehension of the four letter words she *uttered*!

Loves ya baby!

Sixteen adventurous souls met up with Ms Rangerette, a humorous and cherubic lass that just got her degree in geology and admittedly volunteered to guide our "biker" group into the bowels of the earth. She provided insight into mineral formations, hieroglyphic etchings and even had spontaneous answers for some of Laetzsch's more "colorful" interpretations. Seems Baron was having XXX rated flash backs to the Rorschach test we all took as a stepping stone to ensure cranium stability during our LEO careers! Ninety minutes of education and laughter led to 45 minutes of lunch and then it was off to Grants Pass and a short 30 mile jaunt to Medford.

This day had dealt us a 55+ degree temperature differential and the Red Lion Hotel's beautiful pool offered a great respite. Adult beverages flowed, as did the BS coming from the Williams brothers Kenny and Buzz; and Baron and Bob Holland, ever the motor-mouths, told lies some of us believed to be true. After a late dinner, many frolicked poolside until management elected to enforce closing time. 'Nite all.

Friday morning came too early, and at our riders meeting we said a sad goodbye to CK, Buzzy, Marilyn, Kenny and Gwen Williams who were headed north-east to Bend, Oregon to visit more family, and likewise Bob Holland who steered north on business. We also bid adieu to JJ, Kerry and Jack who were Reno bound for a Choir Boys convention. Chris Norman, who mysteriously contracted the *touristas* overnight, would spend an additional night or two in Medford sack-sucking Pepto Bismol before venturing home.

Our ranks reduced ten-fold, it was time to challenge the beautiful and scenic Ca 96. This serpentine ribbon of asphalt follows the Klamath River for 130 miles and then after the confluence with the Trinity River, another 25 miles along that waterway before dumping

us onto road's end at Willow Creek and Ca 299. Fifty five miles into this corkscrew journey, we stopped at Seiad Valley; population 20(!), for a fantastic MMOC sponsored outdoor breakfast pre-arranged by Mike Rores. Hyped on caffeine and pacified with bacon, eggs, sausage, pancakes, orange juice and fruit; we again drop the hammer and listen to the purr of internal combustion. There are few roads in the U.S. as long and convoluted as Ca 96 that simultaneously offer mesmerizing scenery and lush topography from beginning to end, yet we all came away with different sensory overloads. For myself and a few others, it was the high G-load "E" ticket ride; for some the aural staccato of multiple V twins in relaxed low RPM cadence; and others, the lush valleys, towering tree lines and verdant views. Following Ca 299 east alongside the Trinity River for 55 miles into Weaverville is scenic and entertaining too, but as the temperature rises dramatically to 105 near journey's end, everyone's mind is on the Victorian Inn's ice cold swimming pool. Registration is almost chaotic as we muscle and elbow our way to the desk, secure room keys and beat-feet for air conditioned rooms. Three hours into our pool party, it's time to be ushered to Marino's Italian Restaurant a mile distant by Micki Waide (Heanes) and Chuck Nicolls for our 7:30 seating. Chuck gets all the accolades for setting up this night's feast and it was exquisite, perhaps the best meal on the trip, and not to be forgotten. Seated in the back room around a loooong table, it was time to reflect on this 3 day, 4 night, and 750 mile adventure:

We had fantastic weather, albeit with a couple temperature extremes, few road construction delays, gorgeous and varied scenery, including an interesting tour of century's old caves and ate like Kings and Queens. As a first, we had 4 chase vehicles (!) and owe a HUGE debt of thanks to George and Barbara Firchow, Mickie Waide, Marilyn Williams and her grumpy shotgun-partner father-in-law, CK, and Mark Murray and Bob Holland who too were teamed up in a 4-wheeler due to recent road rash incidents. They all chipped in and greatly contributed to the comfort and success of our ride. And, with representatives from the San Leandro, Oakland, Los Angeles, Bakersfield, San Francisco, Campbell, San Jose, Broadmore, Modesto and Federal Way Washington PD's, Alameda County and Sonoma County SO's and the CHP, we had umbrella coverage of this state and more. If you read carefully, you noticed that one out-of-state foreigner—literally—above. That would be new Associate Member Chris Norman, who holds dual citizenship and began his law enforcement career at age 18 in London, England; migrated to Bakersfield PD 4 years later, picked up roots after 10 years in search of a better quality of life for his children and is now a Commander with Federal Way, Washington. An interesting and friendly chap, Chris is one hell of a good rider; attributable, I feel, to the British tiered licensing system. And if you think he traveled far for this ride, consider George and Barbara Firchow's trek from Lincoln, *Nebraska* (!) and Baron Laetzsch from Show Low, Arizona, about 50 miles from the New Mexico border!

With due thanks to one and all, and long after sunset, it's time for pool side stargazing in comfortable 90 degree weather, the wind rustling through the pines as several wolves and I howl at the moon.

I remain;

Dennis M. Brown