

The Beehive State Once Again Welcomes MMOC

Eastbound on US-50 through Nevada, I'm compelled to take issue with Aristotle who some 330 years BC theorized the earth was round. As heat risers drift skyward off the flat barren plains outside Ely I swear I can see the Atlantic Ocean on the eastern seaboard. Is that delirium from the heat or was the Greek philosopher wrong?

Our destination this Tuesday, the 19th of July, 2016, is Utah, North America's 13th largest state at 85,000 square miles, where we'll celebrate MMOC's epoch 23rd Annual July Ride motoring through and crisscrossing the wonderfully scenic southwest edge of the Beehive state over four days; first an overnight respite in Ely at the quaint Jailhouse Hotel.

Several hours after arrival, refreshed, manicured, marcelled and quaffed riders (mostly) of the first order gather at the Jailhouse restaurant; smack is spewed as well as politics. With the exception of our bodacious women (we're just arm candy, donchano), this is a rogue's gallery of kissers deserving of wall space at your local post office, excluding this scribe, of course. Representing 9 jurisdictions in all 4 quadrants of the state and the CHP, we are: my lovely wife and immensely important helper Rhoda, Steve and Irene Armbruster, Terry Blumenthal, Cliff Heanes and wife Mickie Waid, Jeff and Celeste Heanes, Andy Huffman, Mary Ann Mann, Mark Murray, Nicky Nicosia, Dewey Presnell, Mike and Jeanie Roes, Bill and Elaine Scott, Joe Waid, Lynn and Kay Waid, Doug Wayne and Kameron Starr. Then there's the San Francisco contingent of Ed Callejas, Al Luenow, Moose Canedo, Mike Favetti, Steve Glickman, Dave Herman, Al Hom and Mike Puccinelli. In all, this latter motley crew covered every rank from Patrolman to Commander, and we actually got along. Go figure. After a few libations, the more intelligent amongst us ordered the recommended locally raised beef, the I.Q. challenged, fish from their *recently* evaporated deep sea port. My filet mignon: EXCELLENT!

Bright and early Wednesday, we're chomping at the bit to get into Utah and scenery other than nuclear wasteland. We stop 100 miles in at Pioche, Nv., an off the beaten path ghost town with a small mom and pop diner that welcomed my advance phone call. A former silver, copper and gold mining town, it is now almost deserted; upon reflection, our 31 meals probably generated them more well deserved revenue in one hour than they see in a week....and it was a very good breakfast. One hundred fifty miles later we're in Utah visiting Kolob Canyons Viewpoint, one of the lower sections of Zion N.P. that we'll attack tomorrow. A quick sprint back on I-15 N to our base camp hotel and we're greeted by Arizona arrivals Kevin and Robyn (nee Hossfeld) Northam and Baron and Kathy Laetzsch. The Northams properly motored in on 2 wheels from Laveen, taking a circuitous route to higher elevations and escape the heat. Baron and Kathy arrived in a new 4WD Dodge eco-diesel barcalounger. Baron's suspect excuse? "We had monsoon rains in Show Low for days". When reminded police officers are suspicious by nature, at last report the rains fell days earlier, and now the entire southwest is experiencing a heat wave, "The German" got that "egg on his face" sheepish grin, a look he's so famous for. Busted!

Cedar City is a collegiate, performing arts and tourist-centric town with no heavy industry; as a portal to several national parks, it is immaculate, has as many reasonably priced hotels as private residences and is bustling with activity this time of year. We stake our claim poolside; the revelry begins and with 13 first-timers, get-to-know-each-other banter begins. A hot topic of conversation is the 3 full days of riding ahead and projected 650 miles to cover. Sounds like a cake walk, no? Well, no, because Zion, Red Rock, Bryce Canyon and Cedar Breaks can have heavy traffic wending throughout the massive Dixie National Forest and much of that 4 wheel mass will convey uninitiated foreign drivers in rental cars who are clueless to our laws and customs. Go with the flow and expect delays by camera-addled tourists for this ain't Yosemite, this ain't NorCal redwoods and it sure as hell ain't flatland!

The grumbling masses are already upset with His Own Self and the day's just begun. Seven AM departures can do that as we set sail for Zion. Established in 1909, Zion, meaning "Heavenly City", is Utah's oldest N.P., however, there is no city or town of Zion. Excuse me! First up is Kolob Terrace Rd. out of the tiny berg of Virgin on the park's western flank. It ascends 6,000 feet over 25 miles to the reservoir at road's end. We tackle the lower 12 miles because ahead the tarmac turns diabolical; featuring 24 plus % up-grades and a dozen 180 degree

plus very tight radius switchbacks, this not our cup-of-tea for 24 touring bikes and 4 four wheelers. The locals use Jeeps, although it is reportedly decent pavement! Our view is spectacular, as are some of the massive ranches on private property within the park. An hour later we're at the pain-in-the-ass stop and crawl park entrance kiosk, then standing in a ¼ mile long line of foreigners waiting in unrelenting sun to board narrated-tour shuttles; this dead end 8 miles of northern park floor is accessed only by eco-friendly propane vehicles. Gazing out windows and roof vents allow a somewhat restricted, yet spectacular view of 5,000 foot sheer sandstone and impermeable shale walls in striking coloration reaching to 11,000 feet above sea level. We are duly impressed, time to ride. Utah 9 E on the eastern flank is similarly spectacular with 6 or more delightful switchbacks, the tarmac climbing 2,000 feet in 2 miles to the ingress portal of mile long Mt. Carmel tunnel leading out of the park. We are up and close, rubbing elbows with striking solid rock jutting thousands of feet above. As forewarned, we've traveled a lowly 107 miles in 6 hours, time to fuel up and chow down @ Mt. Carmel Junction. They're ready for our 35 hungry bodies at my 1300 ETA; with 8 tables in close proximity, banter is the grandeur, magnificence and coloration of Zion's topography as we carved our way to this respite.

Facing 65 miles northwest is base camp, approaching UT-14, do the black clouds west portend of things to come? Nah. Wrong! Six miles in, claps of thunder are deafening and the northern sky dancing with lightning. Then it opens up with 20 miles of drenching rain on a winding highway that had just been chip-sealed. The collective we are a wet and sandy-mud mess....a badge of honor? Poolside I was the recipient of much undeserved and derisive profanity. At least German, ensconced in his barcalounger kept his mouth shut.

Red Canyon, Bryce Canyon and Escalante again necessitate an early departure; hopefully this 315 mile trek will be less impacted with traffic. Wonderfully green and lush UT-20 E is a motorcyclist's nirvana of roller coaster sweepers, and in stark contrast to yesterday, free of other motorists. US-89 S delivers us through Panguitch and soon we're stopped at a roadside pullout for a photo-op in the magnificent, brilliant and aptly named Red Rock area. Have we landed on Mars? Ever try to get 24 motors and 4 chase vehicles properly lined up to frame a group picture? Don't! Vibrant magenta and red hues stain a natural cathedral of 1,000 foot serrated peaks, spires and drive through arches; our tires roll on red tarmac too as we motor to the entrance of Bryce Canyon and our breakfast stop. In stark contrast to our 2011 visit, Ruby's Inn proved less than satisfactory with delays and improper meal service, the latter attributable to foreign speaking summer-help waitresses without command of the English language. Order a waffle, you might get water! Within minutes we're faced with 18 miles of slow-crawl to park's end then beautiful visages of never-ending and massively deep Ektachrome tinted canyons. Designated a N.P. in 1928, Bryce encompasses 56 square miles of staggering geology, mostly visible from numerous vista pull-outs, or by hiking. Don't even think about driving a motorized vehicle into the abysses lest you do more federal time than Bill or Hillary will ever see! As we're capturing our Kodak images, someone begins dialogue on lopping off the Escalante Staircase leg, a 120 mile shortcut this afternoon. It becomes a sentiment shared by all as unanimous we be; set sail for home base. Fifteen minutes outside the park dark clouds loom on the horizon. I can't see him at the back of the pack but I just know German is howling with laughter as the rains fall once again. Rat bastard! At least this go around we're on good asphalt and the road spray might serve to wash off the previous day's road grime. Within an hour we're poolside, and many are grumbling over the constant early afternoon thunder boomers....ha (!) told you so.

Enter the Waid family of Lynn and wife Kay, Brother Joe and sister Micki. As an Arkansas born clan, they speak in foreign tongue known only to Ned Beatty. Newly minted MMOC member Kameron Starr is Lynn and Kay's 22 year old English speaking grandson, the 3 who made the 2,000+ mile trek out west from their home state of Ohio where Kam is in his Masters of Engineering program at the University of Ohio. Fellow ride leader Cliff Heanes, another of Kam's Uncles, and I called the cherubic and pink cheeked youngster front and center and read a bogus certificate contrived by Uncle Joe thanking him for becoming an MMOC member, and oh, by the way, "WHAT USED TO BE UNCLE JOE'S AND IS NOW GRANDPA LYNN'S PRISTINE 2002 HARLEY FATBOY, THE ONE YOU'VE BEEN RIDING FOR WEEKS IS NOW YOURS!" Kameron was floored and speechless. Minutes later, he somewhat regained his composure and gave a fairly emotional speech to the resounding applause from everyone. A CLASS ACT, THE WAIDS! This calls for an uproarious pool party, what's new?

Saturday, July 23rd is our final day in Cedar City and with a short 150 mile ride day scheduled, departure is thankfully later. Foregoing heavily trafficked National Parks should provide a great escape and by 9:00 AM we're well onto UT-148 N taking in the beautiful and rolling verdant pasture land leading through Cedar Breaks National Monument, the antithesis to the craggy walls we've shared quarters with for days. Utah 143 E brings a quick reminder to show restraint as Bambi darts out, then another. Several pristine lakes provide these beautiful 4 legged creatures nourishment as 2 more graze @ road's edge, yet the ride is memorable for its diverse scenery. At the Flying M Restaurant in Panguitch our reserved tables are waiting and great food quickly delivered. Doug Wayne is served a massive 3 pound cinnamon bun, perhaps 10X10X2 inches thick that should have been delivered on a fork lift! With a sheepish grin, he magnanimously (ha!) cut it into smaller squares to "share". Our meals were as grandiose. We motor back to Panguitch Lake and take a 15 mile off-the-beaten-path circumnavigation on water's edge. Full time residents coexist with beautiful winter estates on the simply gorgeous rolling hills. During our 2011 ride, I mistakenly found an undulating 15 mile long well paved road over lava beds that was most scenic. We couldn't find that remote outcropping this time, another mistake on my part. No mistake when we headed to Brian Head Ski Resort at the crest of UT-143. On the approach, massive canyons to the left rival those of Bryce requiring a photo stop. At road's summit, Brian Head has doubled in size since our last visit, with numerous multi-million dollar winter homes rivaling the moneyed excess of Vail, Colorado. Downhill on the excellent and diabolically serpentine tarmac with good line-of-sight is an E Ticket ride of 12% grade and nonstop sweeping turns for 10 or more miles, a traffic free dream come true! All too soon we've arrived in Parowan and merge onto I-15 S heading for the hotel.

This final night's pool party wouldn't be complete without a surprise 63rd birthday party for Ed Callejas. Conspired by Rhoda, Baron, Joe, Micki and Glick, we presented him with an inappropriate card signed by all, a box of Depends (that should have been earmarked for my multi-time roomie Commander Puccinelli!) and a rabbit road-kill carcass (you can't make this stuff up!) courtesy of Glickman. We followed that insanity with a delicious cake, pizza for all and hilarity well into the evening before adjourning to pack. With more than 30 of us going off in multiple directions at 6 am to beat the heat, it's time to give thanks to all the participants who were truly great this year. Camaraderie was excellent, particularly so with all the new riders, and personalities really jelled; a class act by all! Special thanks to MMOC President Mark Murray and our longest tenured participant, Mary Ann (I don't do 2 wheels in the heat) Mann. As the primary chase vehicle drivers, they did yeoman's duty keeping us safe and hydrated by day and quenching thirsts by night. We also ate like kings and queens thanks to the aforementioned duo and Baron and Celeste who also ferried many of us to exquisite eateries in the city. What to say about Steve Glickman? He's a modern day MacGyver, fixing Mike Favetti's flat tire roadside and properly diagnosing two dead battery issues traced back to the charging system. Thanks Glick! And I would be remiss if I didn't extend a special shout-out to Andy Huffman whom I met and co-trained on Motors in the early 70's. He was a very good rider and street cop who later moved to the higher climes of Ridgecrest and retired as a Sergeant from their PD. This was his first MMOC ride *AND* he came from his home in the Salt Lake City region to meet us in Fernley and then rode back to Cedar City. Still a Motor Man. Good seeing you again my friend and thanks for 44 years of membership.

The 23rd Annual Ride is in the books and our Greek visionary was correct; the earth is round.....and so is our tight circle of friends!

Dennis M. Brown, His Own Self.