

The First Road Trip

By Steve McCune

The Days Before

It's finally June 27th, and less than twenty four hours till Randy (Spirit), David (Buckshot), Mark Evans, and I (mini-me) depart for the mountains of northern New Mexico, and what would prove to be an extraordinary first "road trip" for most of us.

I've ridden on a number of "day trips". I've also done an overnight ride to Lukenbach (Texas) with the Fort Worth Southern Cruisers Riding Club, and the Blonde. However, I've never road my motorcycle outside of Texas, and I've not yet done what I would consider to be a real "Road trip".

The trip was originally planned to include six days of riding. The ride would begin in Fort Worth, go to and through the mountains of northern New Mexico, and back. Altogether we would ride over sixteen hundred miles.

While the "biker" in me was outwardly excited about the chance to be a part of such a ride, inwardly I'll admit that I was a bit nervous. Was I ready for such a ride? Would the "wing" do OK? All kinds of questions filled my mind as the departure time grew near. The family man in me was also not dealing well with the anxiety of going on vacation without the family. The Blonde (which is how I lovingly refer to my wife Denise) was also not overly fond of the idea of us being apart for nearly six days. So while there was allot of anticipation and excitement, there was also some apprehension about going on the trip.

The Plan

Our ride leader Randy Scoggins had meticulously planned every detail of the trip. He developed a Ride Book that

resembled a brochure like you'd expect to receive from a professional Tour Guide. Just looking at the cover made you want to sign up for the ride. The book included all of the details of the trip; a daily itinerary complete with predetermined gas stops and lunch breaks, hotel accommodations, road maps, information about cities and sites, motorcycle dealers and service centers locations, and even blank pages for ride notes.

There were two ride meetings. The first meeting was on Mothers Day, and the second on Father's Day. The main topics of discussion were "how to prepare" and of course "safety".

The Preparation

As an Eagle Scout, It's only natural that I'd want to "Be Prepared". I made a list of things that needed to be done prior to leaving, and a list of supplies. And just to be sure I wasn't leaving anything off the list, I emailed my list to Randy for his opinion. His comments included words like "kitchen sink" and "trailer". Anyway, I didn't leave anything to chance. I packed it all, every last thing on the list. I was truly prepared for whatever came my way.

The Bikes

Randy and Mark ride Honda Shadows, David a Suzuki Intruder, and I ride a Honda Goldwing.

The First Day (June 28th)

We met at Cracker Barrel at 6:30 AM, and we departed just as Randy had planned at 7:00 AM (Sharp!). The weather was good but the temps were a bit on the chilly side. We hadn't ridden too far before the group

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began adding clothing. I simply turned on the heater.



I quickly learned that three hours of sleep, and the impeccable ride of a Honda Goldwing do not go well together. I had stayed awake till around 2:00 AM getting ready and "messaging around" with the Blonde. Needless to say by lunchtime I was ready to get off the wing and re-group. We stopped in Post, Texas for lunch and fuel.



We arrived in Roswell, New Mexico (City of the most UFO sightings) around 4:00 PM and checked into the Days Inn. We went straight to the pool. After a swim we ordered two pizzas.



Around 8:00 PM I went to my room and telephoned The Blonde. I'd only been gone a few hours and I was already missing her bad. After several attempts we finally connected. It was nice to hear her voice. We'd only been apart for a prolonged period of time once before about ten years earlier when she and our daughter Kerri went to South Padre Island for a week.

My head hit the pillow about 9:00 PM. Mark said it took me about ten seconds to fall asleep. The next morning Mark confirmed that I snore when I'm really tired.

The Second Day (June 29th)

I awoke as usual around 5:00 AM (which is 6:00 AM Central Standard Time). Made coffee and went for a morning walk. After all, I'd never seen Roswell at 5:00 AM. Ran into Randy doing the same thing. We walked down to the Roswell Civic Center and back. By the time we returned, Mark and David were up and ready to get going. We packed the motorcycles, ate breakfast, and headed out.

Our first stop was naturally the Roswell UFO Museum.

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David bought reflector alien head stickers for everyone's helmets (safety first), we all bought T-shirts, and Randy bought a green "bobble-head" alien doll (And they called me weird for collecting Harley Barbie Dolls). Randy and I also purchased Post Cards. We realized later that we had failed to address them (duh).

We left Roswell around 11:00 AM and headed out for Santa Fe. Our first stop was Vaughn for gas and then on to NM14 and the Turquoise Trail. The first stop was the winding road up to Sandia Crest. The Sandia Crest ski lodge is at 9500 feet and have a great view of the Santa Fe valley.



Making our way back down the mountain there were noticeable skid marks and bashed in guard rails which indicated that crotch-rocket riders really enjoyed the scenery. Back on NM14 northward to the unique town of Madrid.



Madrid – WOW! This was a really neat place. As you're entering the town the signs say "Slow for Congested Area". I don't know if this was the New Mexico Highway Department's idea of a joke or what. I do know one thing, it was congested. The road through Madrid was basically a one-lane road lined with extremely primitive dwellings and businesses. In the center of town was the famous Mine Shaft Tavern.

We pulled in and found a space amidst the Harleys. Being extra careful not draw attention to the fact that we were not on Harleys, we dismounted our oriental, not-made in the USA, non-Harley Davidson, motorcycles, and went into the tavern. Once seated, Mark said he heard one "gentleman" say "I don't wave at people riding Honda's" (I'm sure at that very moment David was happy to be riding a Suzuki).



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We seated ourselves at the only available table. Not only was the table next to stage, it was also next to the end of the bar where the craziest person I've ever seen (that wasn't locked up) was sitting. This crazy "lady" was dressed in a patriotic ensemble, complete with a stars and stripes top hat. Sitting on her left arm was a similarly dressed "Uncle Sam" puppet. Once seated, she advised us of the facts that the restrooms were out of order and the water tasted like s__t. She continued to inform everyone that walked by, and anyone within earshot of the these adverse conditions.

We ordered lunch, "Buffalo" burgers and "chicken", and listened to the band. The band was quite entertaining - really.

Oh and by the way, did I mention that once the band cranked up that Uncle Sam and his nutty puppeteer started dancing? They danced to every single song, without either of them missing a beat. This lady provided new meaning to the old saying "dance like no one is watching". She finally either tired, or needed to go to the restroom. Either way, she departed before any of us had a chance to ask for a dance (and I not sure she would have heard us anyway - she was in her own world). We left as quietly as we had arrived, vowing to return one day on Harleys, and of course with attitudes.



Seriously, I'd like to return to Madrid one day with the Blonde. It struck me as the kind of place she would enjoy too.

From Madrid we went on to Santa Fe where we checked into the Days Inn Hotel. I immediately showered (getting in my daily workout - running from one end of shower to the other - thanks to the automatic temperature feature of the shower).

After showering (and running), I telephone my sweetie to let her know we were there safely, and that I had met someone that

was almost a crazy as her (not really). Randy, Mark, and I ate dinner at a quaint little Mexican restaurant that was attached to the Days Inn. The Menu had Mexican and Sandinistan dishes listed. I had pork and beef tacos (as did Randy), and Mark had Chicken Quesedias (sp). The Televisions hanging in the corners of the dining area we tuned to a Mexican Talk Show that was pretty "funny", I guess. The food was pretty good.

Turned in around 10:00 PM .

Third Day (June 30th)



Today we went on an enchanted ride on the "Enchanted Circle" and oh it was sweet. All together we traveled about 8,000 feet (4000 up and 4000 down) vertically, and

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around 350 miles horizontally. And the view from virtually every angle was spectacular. Today I felt as though God lent me his eyes to view the world through, and it was indeed excellent.



We began our Enchanted Ride by riding from Santa Fe to Chimayo (I had previously been there with the family on vacation). From there we continued up to Taos, then on up to Eagles Nest, to Red River, and back down to Santa Fe.



Without a second thought, this is the most beautiful part of the US I've even seen from the back of a motorcycle. The only thing that would have made the time better would have been to have been sharing it with The Blonde. Maybe next time.



Once back to Santa Fe we cleaned up and sat down to a real nice dinner at a Mexican food restaurant just down from the hotel. Afterwards we went back to the hotel, where we sat by the pool and reminisced about the day's ride. WOW – this was a good day!



Forth Day (July 1st)



We packed the bikes and started the long journey home.

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While sitting around the pool the evening before, we decided to change things up a bit. Instead of going to Tucumcari we decided to “toss fate to the wind” and ride in that direction, planning our next move as we went. I could tell this really made Randy nervous, but he went along with the idea.



We headed south from Santa Fe and ended up back in Madrid. We arrived early, before the shops, or the tavern were open. Mark and I took in the Coal Mine Museum, which was really cool, while Mark and Randy did a little sight seeing and managed to find a shop open. After about 1-1/2 hours we were back on the road.



Our next stop was Fort Sumner, the supposed resting place of the famous outlaw Billy the Kids. We went to the Museum, and of course to the Kid’s gravesite. It was here that we learned that

Mark’s great-great Grandfather was Pat Garrett, the man credited for killing the kid.



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After a couple of hours in Fort Sumner we headed for the border. We ended up in Clovis, NM., where we decided to check into the Holiday Inn. We asked around, and discovered a Steakhouse. After cleaning up, we rode to the steakhouse and had a really fine meal. Afterwards we returned to our hotel where we sat around the pool and again recalled the day's ride, and discussed plans for the next day.

We decided that we would ride all the way back to Fort Worth the following day. This would cut a day off of our trip, but I got the feeling everyone was ready to be home.

Fifth Day (July 2nd)



To beat the heat, we left Clovis (which is approximately 8 miles from the Texas border), about 7:30 AM. It did not take long for temperatures to reach the nineties.

The ride home was long and hot, and we were all tired. Randy's original idea to spend a day just sitting around the pool in Tucumcari began to make perfectly good sense. I was however excited about spending the night in my own bed with The Blonde.



We arrived home around 7:00 PM. Made a brief stop at Randy's Parent's home in Willow Park, near Weatherford, then headed on to Fort Worth. It was windy and it was indeed very HOT! But it was even better to be home.

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I will never forget this ride. It was my first real "road trip". I want to make it a special point to thank Randy for the time he spent planning the trip. His efforts were without a doubt a big reason for the trips success.



At one point in the ride, I road up next to each rider and snapped a photo. I've since had the photos developed and it's crystal clear that each was at that moment content with where he was, and having a good time.



There's something about the freedom of riding down a long uninterrupted stretch of road on a motorcycle. Your look ahead at the upcoming mountains, you see the animals, the open sky above, your buddies, and your bike. It's a really good feeling, not like being in an automobile. You're really out there. I'm not sure I'm qualified to describe the feeling, but I know one thing, I'm qualified now to say that it's a feeling I'll never forget, and one I'm sure glad I was privileged to experience. □



Join us next time.