

BMMC 2016 Petrified Forest Ride

It was a dark and stormy night...

No, wait! Actually, it was a bright and sunny Arizona spring morning on Saturday, April 16, when twelve motorcycles, one Toyota Tacoma, and one Mazda Miata met at the Ft. McDowell Chevron ready to depart on the Petrified Forest ride. Unfortunately, the weather reports and forecasts for the Heber and Holbrook areas were not promising with chilly temperatures and some rain and snow showers possible, even probable.

Thus, from a one-time high of about 28 bikes and 46 people signed up, the list fell like the Times' Square ball on midnight of New Year's eve in the last three days before the ride. Luckily, both the hotel and the restaurant were understanding of the large drop in numbers due to the inclement weather and were gracious about honoring room and lunch reservation cancelations.

The remaining "Stalwart Twenty-Two" formed into one group of the twelve bikes and two "cages," led by ride host Tom Clements and swept by Ride Captain Phip Jensen, accompanied by his "better-half," Leslie.

The Circle K in Star Valley was the first bio/gas stop. Although temps were in the high 40s, the sun was still shining and the wind was light. As the group crested the Mogollon Rim, however, on the way to the next stop in Heber, temperatures went down to the low 40s and light snow flurries caught everyone's attention!

At the Chevron station in Heber/Overgaard, Tom collected the group and allowed everyone to voice their opinions. A large contingent chose to remain in Heber, have lunch at the Red Onion Lounge, check into our reserved motel there early, and forego the planned ride to the National Park. Only six bikes, the Tacoma, and nine hearty souls proceeded onward. Here's a picture of the "Never-Say-Die-Nine" taken at the lunch stop in Holbrook, "Tom and Susie's Diner."



From left to right: Dave Mast, Becky Little, Craig Sanderson, Gary Hedges, Kymble Sanderson, Tom Clements, Barbara Russell, Leslie Jensen, Phil Jensen.

The ride from Heber to Holbrook remained dry, but temps stayed in the mid '40s and a west wind kicked up strongly. Nevertheless, the group remained in high spirits and enjoyed the tasty and ample menu choices at the diner. Tom surprised the group by letting them know that BMMC was picking up the lunch tab. This added to the joyous atmosphere!

Back on the road, there was about twenty-one miles of I-40 East to take to get to the north side Park entrance. Here we encountered rain! Luckily, by this time, everyone was well-prepared with heated and/or rain gear and the moderate rain lasted for less than ten miles. Whew!

The Park's Visitor Center informed us of the happy surprise that the entrance fee had been waived for this particular weekend. Yay! After the short stop at the Visitor Center, Tom led the group on the ride through the park, north-to-south, making three stops along the way at a variety of the scenic and fascinating pull-out spots. If you missed the ride – like, nearly everyone! – keep it on your “To do” list. There's a reason this was just the *second* USA National Monument ever designated back, in 1906. Mother Nature shows off a wide range of interesting phenomena here!

Leaving the Park, exiting onto Hwy 180, the group continued west back to the outskirts of Holbrook, then retraced their route to Heber. After a fuel stop, the “Never-Say-Die-Nine” pulled into the Best Western Sawmill Inn about 4:30.

Special thanks go to Craig and Kymble Sanderson and Becky Little who had planned and purchased a wide variety of beer, wine, mixers, and snacks for the group and transported all of this to the motel via the Tacoma. BMMC again picked up this Happy Hour tab. The Sanderson/Little group set up a table on the covered walkway outside the first-floor rooms where everyone gathered for the evening's festivities. Although temperature was still in the 40s, body heat – or was it the booze? – warmed everyone nicely, plus the rooms were always available to step into for a warm-up. Fun time, getting to know lots of relatively new BMMCs!

The Sawmill Inn was nice enough to offer us shuttle service in their mini-van to and from Casa Ramos, a fine Mexican restaurant about a third of a mile east of the motel. Casa Ramos had set up a large table that accommodated all twenty of us nicely.

The party continued at a couple of the rooms back at the motel after dinner, until each participant found their way to their own rooms and the waiting mattresses. Ah, it was a good day!

Sunday dawned clear and bright...and cold, right at freezing! Folks trickled into the motel's free breakfast room at various times. Another tasty surprise was that the owner of the motel, David, cooked his special homemade patty sausage for those who wanted it. Yummy!

Riders departed either solo or in the small groups they chose, and the weather warmed up quickly as they descended off of the Rim.

Tom wishes to thank Barbara Russell and Wayne Winslow who had accepted Lead and Sweep duties, although their services were not required since the numbers shrank down to the one-group level. Also, again thanks to the Sanderson/Little team for buying and preparing the “bar.”

Spring weather in Arizona, as in most places, can be quite variable and unpredictable. A week earlier, this route would have seen warm temperatures and light winds. But on this particular weekend? 'Twas not to be! We hope all of you are happy with the choices you made and we totally support the decision to avoid the nasty weather. But for the “Never-Say-Die-Nine”...YOU DA RIDERS!