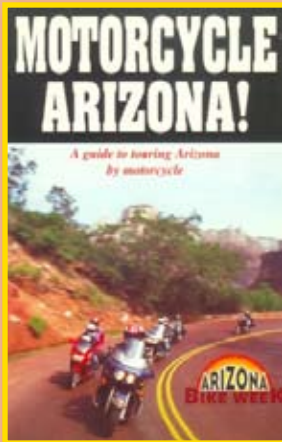


Where to Ride

by Frank Del Monte

Feeling Safe and Protected

My good buddy Mike from back east came-a-visiting and we decided to do some riding. He rented a nice Beemer and I rolled out my 30-year old (but nicely restored) Suzy-Q. On the first day we did the traditional Phoenix, Wickenburg, Prescott, Sedona loop, but did it backwards via I-17 to and through Cornville. By the way, Cornville was supposed to be named Cohnville, but the Post Office Department misread the application, so Cornville it was, and Cornville it is.



Then Mike took a day by himself and rode back north, visiting Skull Valley and riding the back road from Kirkland to Prescott. He still hasn't stopped talking about that road, so if you haven't ridden it in a while take his advice and give 'er another try.



The third day we took 60-East (I hate that road!) to Apache Junction and rode the Apache Trail down to Tortilla Flat. As we arrived at the Flat a huge sense of well-being, and complete personal security washed over me. For there, lined up in a neat row, were fifteen (15!) Phoenix cop-bikes. There was one Harley, one K-wacker, and 13 brand new Honda ST1300's, all dressed out in Phoenix cop trim

and equipment. It was an impressive sight.

We went in and ordered breakfast and I surreptitiously watched the motor-cops as they talked and ate. Now, you know how you can often just look at a biker and tell if he's a low mileage poser? Well let me tell you, this group wasn't! They just radiated the self-assurance of years of riding experience. So in my heart I could tell that this was no training ride. These guys (and at least one lady) just oozed "been there, rode that."

Finally, Mike, who is more personable than I will ever be, simply asked them, "Yo guys! What's up with the group ride?" We got back, "Training Ride", and they all laughed at that, then someone said, "Graduation Ride", and that got a few chuckles also. Finally one

fellow offered that they were transitioning to the new ST1300 bikes and this was simply a familiarization ride to a nice destination, on a nice day, on a nice road, on a nice bike.

We finished our breakfasts and I wanted Mike to see the small museum in the old school house at the far end of the block. (It's really neat!). While he did that I walked over and took a closer look at all those impressive white bikes. On a closer look it turns out some of the cops have a sense of humor. Three of the bikes had license plate frames that said, "So many tickets. So little time", "God made the perfect cop. The rest he put in cars", and my favorite, "I could be behind you!"



When Mike returned from the museum the motor-cops were getting ready to mount up. I decided that we should leave right away and get a few miles ahead of the cop-group so we wouldn't be stuck behind them. Good plan, poor execution. We only got a few miles up the road before I saw fifteen headlights riding in close formation rapidly catching up to us. I had two choices, wick it on and try to stay ahead of them or pull over fast! Yeah, you guessed it. We came to camping area road and I did a quick right-left-left and stopped to watch them as they rode by. They all grinned and waived because they knew exactly what I was thinking. "It is far, far better to have fifteen motor-cops in front of you than fifteen motor-cops behind you!"



We fell in behind them and I will tell you right off that my 50 years riding experience does not bring me even close to the skill level of those guys. They were riding two abreast on that twisty road and their spacing never deviated even a few inches. And frankly, I was using the entire road just trying to keep them in sight.

The rest of the ride to the Junction was probably the safest I've ever experienced. But then, thankfully, the cops turned west, Mike and I turned east, and we went right back to our bad old habits of straightening curves and exceeding speed limits. It was a great day!

Ride On! Ride Safe!

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