

ABATE Freeze Your Ass Off 2009

It was a dark and stormy night...well it was a cloudy, rainy, wet day. The 21st annual ABATE Freeze Your Ass Off Poker Run was off to a wet start. I hauled my rain gear out of the garage the night before, to allow it to get to at least room temperature before I had to put the plastic and rubber gear on. As I don't use the rain gear that often, it took me longer than expected, remembering what goes on, in what order, and how. That stuff is slippery and awkward. I have over-boots, over-pants, and over-jacket. I had over-gloves, but they got damaged when I used them to clean my gutters last year -- need to get replacements. I had sprayed my gloves a couple of times, the preceding weeks, with Scotch Guard in an attempt to have dry hands -- get the over-gloves. Anyways, I get on the bike and back it out of the garage and I hit a snag. My garage door closer is in my normal coat's left pocket...under my over coat. So I have to take off my gloves, un-zip the over coat completely. I quickly realize that I have to shut the bike off and put it in gear to keep it from rolling down the driveway to struggle the remote out. The rain keeps falling, as I un-gear and fight. I finally get it and close the garage door. Now I have to get this now wet gear back in working order. With that accomplished, I fire the engine back up and roll down the driveway only to have the neighbor's cat flit right behind me and startle me. Finally rolling down the road, I realized that I forgot to fasten the waist belt for the overcoat -- it is slapping me in the breeze. I pull over and try to deal with it while wearing my gloves -- nope. I take them off getting my hands wet again, click the offending belt in place, struggle to 'slip' my rain dampened hands into the gloves -- not easy. Now I can finally get rolling to Miss Darla's. As expected, there are only a few foolish riders braving the elements at Miss Darla's. Plenty of cars and trucks, but few bikes. I register for the ride and talk with folks. I hear that there are more bikes that have come and rolled out...more fools...whoopee. The first stop was over in Napa and the planned route was by WoodenValley Rd. The sign-in crew suggested that riders just take Hwy 80 to 12 to avoid the dangerous, wet, muddy, leaf covered back roads. The first stop was at Napa Valley Classics on Third St. Parking was limited which made the lower number of riders and cars workable. I have trouble thinking what would have happened if it had been dry and a few hundred bikes were trying to stop there. They had doughnuts and coffee available -- thank you. By now, my gloves were soaking through and getting them back on was getting harder. Then on to the next stop at A.C.s by Travis AFB. I followed the directions onto Air Base Pkwy and read (while riding) "turn right onto Peabody". Well I am no dummy! It only goes to the left. I had skipped ahead in my reading of the directions to the next stop. So I rolled on stupidly thinking I was doing the route correctly. I did have a nice run at speed on Fry Rd as the rain had mostly let off. I rolled into Dixon and pulled my next card at Dawson's. The folks there noticed I was missing a punch out. And we figured out I missed A.C.'s. They allowed me to pull another card. Again fighting the soppy gloves on was very difficult. Then onto Winters, the final stop. But I had to get gas. For some reason people gawk at foolish motorcycle riders on a rainy day. I suffered their amazed stares, fought to get the rain filled gloves on, before rolling to Hwy 80 to 505. I rolled into Winters and found a nice parking spot. I opened my new, sleek, nice looking trunk to store my gloves and skull cap only to find out it is not totally water prove (my old Givi trunk was). And as the new trunk is smaller than my old Givi, my helmet won't fit. I just place my helmet on my mirror -- the water will roll right off. I found a out of the way corner by the stage to place my jacket. The hall was mostly empty and I know quite a few had rolled out in front of me (I only missed one stop). Where were they? The crew there were waiting for 'the crowd' before starting the activities. That allowed me to sample a Bud, knowing I had time before getting back on the bike. When they did start, the band Jump Wagon cranked out good rock and country. The food as usual was tasty beef, salad, beans, and rolls. I did not win any of the raffles prizes, nor the high hand (by a large margin), nor the low hand (I was close), nor the 50/50. I had to make my exit around 3:30 and got my coat on -- it was cold but dry on the inside. Then out to the bike where I found my helmet had wicked up the rain...ucky cold helmet. Got my gloves on -- squish squish. And rolled for home. The rain was heavier and traffic was thicker. So I really practiced my rain safety skills: find the void by speeding up or slowing down, use the left then use the right side of the lane, watch for road debris and pot holes, blink the brights, honk the horn -- anything to keep visible and safe. Got home and found places to hang my damp gear. Other than wet hands and head, I only had a little dampness around the top of my t-shirt. It took my gloves a full week to dry out.