

Cal Geo Center Run -- 560 miles -- wheeeeeee

It was a dark and stormy night. Well it was a cold, dark morning. Five a.m. comes at an awful time. I was amazed to have a total of 4 bikes on this ride. We had Frank White, Larry Jackson, Charles & Jean McPeck, and myself.

I had all my lights working when I left the house, but shortly after leaving Safeway, my high beam was gone. That left my miserable low beam. Soon after we got onto Hwy 12, we were behind a truck as he drove just under the limit. Hwy 160 gave us some freedom, but the darkness and my headlight limited my speed. I missed the planned turn onto Tyler Island Rd -- just plain could not see the street sign in time. So we went up Isleton Rd instead. Much better in the dark. We soon got onto J11 and were aimed into the lightening skies. The sun popped above the horizon and out of the clouds as we got to Twin Cities. We passed through Ione and through Jackson when I noticed I was getting hungry for breakfast. I did some quick calculations and decided it was safer (for my small tank) to get gas in San Andreas instead of Angels Camp. Turned out to be cheaper anyways.

We left the gas station and all bikes were moving behind me. After a minute or so, I looked back and there were only two bikes! We slowed. Then we turned around to look for Charles and Jean. We spotted them coming our way. A quick conversation ("I had a problem." "OK now?" "Yup.") and we were aimed for breakfast -- where we could not find the planned restaurant. So we backtracked to Rodz Grill. Charles set about trying to solve his problem. His first guess was his dang stator -- a common problem with his bike. But after a quick run through the wires, the problem persisted. They were gonna aim for home via Hwy 4 after eating. Rodz is a good joint with plenty of cool stuff on the walls. The food and service and prices were good. After eating, we three waved goodbye to Charles and Jean. They unfortunately only made it as far as Farmington, just east of Stockton, where they then had to be towed home. Turned out to be a fuse...good news actually.

We three headed down Hwy 49 and enjoyed the smooth, clean, sweet, and mostly gentle twisties. Hwy 49's turns just call you to run them with spirit, but we had a long day, so I held to a mellow pace so we could last. The temperature was at times warming, at others just plain cold. I love my heated handle grips. Larry was very envious -- and cold. We stopped in Mariposa for gas -- a little earlier than I had planned, but only by a few miles. As we neared our goal, my route planned failed me and we relied on Frank's GPS to get us back on course. We were not off course. It was just my instructions were off.

The run along Bass Lake was pretty, but the road was rough with a lot of big metal access plates in the road. Would hate to run that road in the wet. We stopped along the lake to make sure where we were. We even asked a lady walking by and she gave us directions to North Fork with the instructions to just ask one of the locals. So after a bit more meandering on the tiny road, we popped into North Fork. We pulled up to the market and while I was asking inside, Frank and Larry were asking outside. The combined instructions were perfect and easy.

So we rode out along Road 225. It got narrower and rougher and dirtier, but we found the marker pole and plaque. We stopped and took photos. Then leaving North Fork, I missed the planned turn for Road 222 and instead rolled along on Road 200. We did find our way to Hwy 41 and were soon back on course.-- for an 80 mile run of straight, flat, boring road along Hwy 145, 99, 152, and 5. Maybe I won't complain about how long and boring Hwy 12 from Fairfield to Rio Vista and then to Lodi is anymore. Naw, it's still boring.

We diverted up to Santa Nella and had lunch at Anderson's. Larry said goodbye and headed up Hwy 5 to home, chopping a couple of hours off his day's run. After getting gas in Gilroy, we did some interesting diversions care of Frank's GPS, but made it to the right road without too much extra. We were warned of high winds over the pass, but heck, we live in Fairfield. It's got to really blow for us to notice.

We meandered around the back roads of Watsonville (as planned) and were soon on Hwy 1 -- freeway. But eventually we got into downtown San Cruz and shortly after that we were on good ole two lane Hwy 1. Here we ran into 4 or 5 police. The first one was south bound. He spotted us, pulled over, hit his lights, and started to make a u-turn. I slowed (just a little) and matched the speed limit. I watched my mirrors. Nothing. Mile after mile and no cop. But just as I gave up looking, another passed us heading south. Then a ways up the road there was another south bound cop. Shortly before Half Moon Bay, there was yet another cop. He was parked in the little park on the coast side. As soon as he saw us, he pulled out and looked like he was gonna come after us. Again, I was watching my mirrors. No cop ever showed behind us.

It was somewhere along here the sun set. We couldn't be sure as the thick clouds covered our view. We pulled in for gas at Half Moon Bay and I parked on the far side of the pumps, just to give a little camouflage...paranoia runs deep. Frank and I pulled out and quickly pulled into the next mini-mall area so he could get some coffee and me a soda. Well, they had flavored teas instead.

We left after a nice rest and continued heading up Hwy 1. Finally we started hitting traffic and it increased as we got closer to SF. I took the Skyline exit, but again my printed directions failed me. I was looking for Hwy 1 when I should have been looking for Hwy 35. Oh well, we crawled through the city's nasty traffic and made it onto the bridge. Darkness was getting deeper and at times, my paltry headlight and oncoming headlights, did not allow me to see the roadway ahead.

After turning onto Hwy 37, I waved Frank ahead with his double headlight. Much better. Soon we were on Hwy 80 and home was just a few miles ahead. Tired, but happy, I rolled into my garage. Only my right hand palm was sore at the end of a sixteen hour day. Not bad for an old geezer.

Just a side note, we passed quite a few roads with odd names: Road 30 ½, Road 15 ½, one even ended with ¾. Such inventive street names.

I also made changes to the route to either match what we did or to avoid some bad sections.