

Middletown

It was the best of times. It was the...well not the worst of times by any means.

The weather gods had played with us for a week. Was it gonna rain or not? Finally at 7:30 that morning there was a strong shower over my house, and I assumed all of the Solano county area. No ride – sigh. Well I was going to have to go to the start point and tell folks there was no ride. But by the time I was ready to go, the rain had stopped, the sidewalks were nearly dry, and even the road was showing signs of drying. Maybe...? I got my gear on and rode out.

Only Skip Moffat was at the parking lot. I was also expecting Greg Leopold at the Corners – rain or shine. We two brave fools left and were soon headed along Mankas Corner Rd. It was slippery, but not bad. Smooth was our watchword: Smooth braking, turning, and acceleration. Alas, as soon as we got onto Suisun Valley/Wooden Valley Rd, the surface got wetter and schlimier (my word for worse than slime). In a word, it was treacherous. At times, especially under the trees, I felt I was coming to complete stops to make turns. Other times, where the road was drying out, I was able to roll at a gentle speed through the sweet turns. It continued to be real bad all the way to the Corners where we took a break and met with Greg. All of us had tales of tires slipping, even Greg who likes this kind of sloppy road.

We stepped out of the Corners and found the parking lot was dry. Wow! We mounted up and rolled onto roads that had very little moisture on them and even less traffic. I had feared the downhill run from Turtle Rock to the lake, but was overjoyed with dry road. A sheriff heading south passed us along the lake. As expected, he turned around and caught up with us. We were over the speed limit, but not enough for him to stop us. We pulled into the rest stop and waved at him as he passed us.

After a good rest, we headed up the hill, expecting to find our sheriff friend. Never saw him. Just before Pope Valley Cross Rd (such a long name for a short road) Skip opened up his throttle and flew by me. Not like I have ever used that wide open stretch of road like that. Oh no, never me. The run up Pope Valley Rd/Butts Canyon Rd was sweet, dry, and little or no traffic. The smell in the air of the juniper trees was sweet and clean.

Rather than eat at the deli, we stopped at Beulah's Kitchen and had breakfast outside. This building is a traditional hole-in-the-wall joint that has seen better days. The food was tasty, the service was friendly but a bit uneven, and the prices quite cheap. As we sat after eating, I thought I felt a few light drops of rain.

After paying and taking some more photos, it was confirmed, there was a very light, very sparse rain. We saddled up and headed for the gas station – where only I had to get gas. These smug guys with large gas tanks make me envious. We quickly left and were back on Butts Canyon Rd. The light mist was coating my windshield and sending the occasional drops onto my face shield. We did encounter traffic this time, but we were able to pass them quickly and safely.

Just south of Pope Valley, we were hit by a good downpour and our pace slowed down considerably. But the rain let up by the time we got to Chiles Valley. The plan had us going down to Lake Hennessey and up Soda Canyon Rd, but I felt we should cut the ride short to avoid any more rain, so we headed onto the sweet, narrow, and (as Skip will attest) rough road of Lower Chiles Valley Rd (another big name for a short road). I had a blast zigging and zagging (Which is left? Which is right?), shifting up and down, braking, and twisting the throttle. Whee!

We got back on 128 and smooth road again. We took another break at the Corners – I must have my post-lunch candy bar -- before heading towards Wooden Valley Rd. Here we unfortunately encountered slow, rude traffic. The jerk finally pulled over just before Wooden Valley Rd after passing two marked turnouts and many other

good, wide, safe places. It may have been a good thing as the road did have a few damp places that might have given us grief if we were running at speed. So I apologize to the miserable piece of...uh...gentleman.

At Rockville, Skip went straight while Greg and I made the right to Green Valley Rd. Now here I am a bit confused. I got on the freeway and Greg went straight. OK so far. He had other ideas or plans. I was almost to the Gold Hill exit when he passed me. Huh? How? I was not being overly aggressive through the thick traffic, but I was taking the opportunities to slide pass the cars and trucks. Again...how the heck?

I got home and left the bike on the driveway. It was a grimy mess. Everywhere there were tracks of the road slime and muddy rain. I got the power washer out and gave the bike the first round of cleaning. Monday it will get the hours of hand work with the Honda Spray.