

Jackson Alt 2011

We finally had another ride after the ride in March to Middletown was cancelled due to rain. Boy did I need it. We had a good turn out with 15 bikes at the Roadhouse parking lot and one that joined us in Jackson.

The regulars included Stan Hitchcock, Frank White, Skip Moffatt, Bruce & Darlene Campbell, Jeff Williams, John Bourassa, Kory Rivera, Mathew Barrett, Matthew Takeda, and myself. New to the group were David Cherniss, Tom & Lisa Kelch, Vanessa Kelch, and Charlie Myatt.

The day was just a bit on the cool side to start with, but it warmed up to perfect by the end of the day. Steve and Stan had their radios so Stan offered to ride tail gunner with Steve alongside me. That made my day so much easier and less worrisome. I didn't have to count bikes nor squint through the headlights to see if I can recognize the tail gunner's bike. Just nice. Thank you.

We got a slightly late start because a couple of riders came just as we were about to go. They were not there for the ride, but to hand out flyers for drags races. This late start is why Matthew Takeda 'missed' us at Walters Rd. He was a bit late himself and got to Walters Rd, waited, then decided that we had already passed this point (we hadn't). He then played 'catch the group'. He got to Jackson about 45 minutes ahead of us. That shows what one rider vrs a long snake does to travel time.

Anyways, we got ourselves onto Hwy 12 and settled in. I did my usual mind fade on Hwy 12. Holding a steady speed at 55-ish, keeping my line, watching for road debris, keep back from traffic in front of us, as well as all the other internal things that go on in my brain (no, you don't want to know). Then I woke up. Did I miss Shilo Rd? Oh fudge! What mile are we now? What do the directions say is the mile for Shilo Rd? Whew! Safe! It was just a mile plus ahead. Good. I didn't look like an idiot – again.

Turning onto Shilo, I twisted the throttle and got up to 65. I felt much better. Some of the many goats in the fields freaked out as we passed. Others looked up from eating, said so what, and bent back down. A cat on the side of the road just sat and watched as we rolled by. I stopped and gathered the group back up at Birds Landing before we headed the short distance to Montezuma Hills Rd. Few windmills were turning, but we didn't care as the fields were green and lush. A few weeks from now and all will be golden brown -- sigh. We took a short break as we got into the back side of Rio Vista. Letting the smokers smoke and allowing me to check to see if everyone was doing ok, and to especially check with Vanessa who had very few miles on a bike.

We slowly meandered through Rio Vista, got on Hwy 12, and crossed the bridge. The ride up Hwy 160 was mellow and, care of traffic, was at the speed limit. That was good as it allowed everyone to stay together and make the proper turns. Once through Walnut Grove, we made the turn onto Hwy E13 and I tried to gesture to everyone that the on ramp to the bridge could cause them to get air. Of course, I sped up so that WOULD happen for me. Everyone else behaved. I slowed up and allowed the group to roll back up. The creek was at its max and was showing overflow into the nearby fields. Now began 60 miles of bucolic countryside riding. Green trees, lush green fields, mild turns, and cows and horses in the fields. As much as I love the twisties and generally despise the straights, this is a bit of mellow bliss that I like.

At Galt and Hwy 99, the group got separated by the silly sets of lights. I decided to give everyone a short butt break. Face shields and windshields got the accumulation of bugs cleaned off and others made a break for the nearby restrooms of a fast food joint. Finally we were back rolling along the mostly straight roads. Then slowly off in the distance, the towers of Rancho Seco Park grew. From here the road gets just a bit more curvy as it leads to Ione (pronounced Eye-Own for those who want to know). We took a modestly short gas break before heading for Jackson and FOOD. Just before Mel and Faves Diner the group got split by a light again, but it was easy to guide the back half up into the parking lot.

Here is where Matthew Takeda walks up and my first thought was ‘He is one of our group.’ Then I thought ‘Wait! He wasn’t at the roadhouse. Was he?’ He related his story and said he enjoyed his more vibrant ride.

Most folks went inside while others used the take-out window and enjoyed the gentle breezes. The food was good old fashion burger joint food -- nothing flashy, nothing too much could be bad. Just good basic greasy spoon food. The hot dog Skip ordered did look puny, though. The staff was pleasant and the food came fast enough. I do enjoy that they have a sign up welcoming bikers. It’s so rare that a joint is that up front for us riders. After eating we took group photos and I gave Vanessa a warning as to the more technical road we were about to go on up by Lake Pardee.

This road owns me. I am uncomfortable with it. Every time I ride it I know I am capable of better. It is a nice, fun road – almost designed for bikes to ride. Yes, a lot of the turns do not have line of sight around curves and there are hints of debris, but gees, I do better on many roads with similar conditions! I felt I was over braking at the front of many turns before throttling out. One day, I may ride this road smoothly and with confidence.

As I gathered the group at Hwy 88, Steve said he and a five others were going to split off and head for Hwy 12 and Lockeford – to get sausages. We were now just ten bikes and no more radios. Shucks, I had to go back to my usual methods. No more Mr Lazy Butt. Mark offered to take over the roll of tail gunner. Thank you. We rode back to Ione (Now how do you pronounce that town’s name?) and got gas for those that needed it. While milling about after filling up, I saw Steve and the others. Not sure how they got there. I looked at the map when I got home and just scratched my head.

Again we got on Hwy 106/E13 aimed at Walnut Grove. And again, as we neared Walnut Grove I sped up to take a little flight off the bridge. Wheeee. I pulled the group over in Walnut Grove for another butt break. The day was nice, I was mellow, so I got engrossed in talking and the stop was getting extended. So the group told me it was time to suit up and roll. I take hints.

We rolled out of Walnut Grove and onto Hwy 160 before making the turn onto Hwy 220. Calling this road a highway is a disservice to highways everywhere. This is not to say it isn’t a fun road. It has a good half dozen of nice turns along with some whoops that want to eject you from your seat. I let loose a little and enjoyed myself. I only touched my boots gently a couple of times. I was not real wild, though I got a few grinning comments to the contrary. A short jog and we were at the first ferry. I figured it would take us more than one pass to move everyone over. I was wrong. Along with four cars, all ten of us fit...tightly, but we fit. Getting off the ferry and up onto the levee is a bit of a trick. And the sharp turns to continue on Hwy 220 made this interesting. Next time, I will exit us to the right, then juke left. Hey first times always have a few kinks. Another short jog down Hwy 84 got us to the other ferry. Again we all fit – along with three other bikes.

We had a final stop in Rio Vista for gas, sodas, and restrooms. While there, Larry Jackson rolled in with a different group. Neat. Most of the group headed straight on Hwy 12 to home, while Skip and me took to the windmills again. Now I really let it out in the turns.

A great day was had riding through the beautiful green vistas. We avoided squirrels and wild turkeys (both gray and white), but did not avoid the many bugs. My bike that was clean at the start was now filthy again.