

Stewarts Pt 2011

What a great day it was. Well, it wasn't perfect. It was windy, especially at the coast. And it was a touch cool at the coast – or cold depending on who you talked to. But dang I liked it a lot. The clouds were thin enough to allow light and thick enough to reduce glare.

We had 12 bikes show up. The regulars were Meredith Lawler, Steve Wright (who joined us mid flight), George Schjelderup, Skip Moffatt, Kory Rivera, Ken Pollett, Tom & Lisa Kelch, Vanessa Kelch, Charlie Myatt, and me with my granddaughter Trinity. New to the group were Cheryl & John Dodson. And someone did not sign in, so I am at a loss.

On the route to the coast and once off Hwy 80, the 2-lane roads of 12 to 121 to 116 were nice and mellow. The traffic was moving at or near the speed limit. We got a brief separation because of the signal light in Pengrove, but we didn't even have to completely stop and they were green and rolling.

Our first stop was at the Chevron near Hwy 101 in Santa Rosa. This was to allow those of us with smaller tank ranges to make it all the way to Healdsburg. Leaving there we got onto Stony Pt Rd to get to Pepper Rd. Here the fun got a gentle start. No traffic and mild back roads. OK, they were mostly straight, but still nice. We quickly got to Hwy 1 and had brief spells of no traffic interrupted by some seriously slow traffic...as expected.

Making the turn off Hwy 1 onto Hwy 116, we (well we front folks) opened up and had a blast on the newly and sweetly paved road. Let me wax (badly) poetical here.

Oh such sweet pavement.

You let us lean with controlled abandonment.

Glorious and giving of joy to our need.

Fantastically splendid. Oh boy the speed.

Once at Duncan Mills we made our way into the Cape Fear restaurant. They sat us outside in the breeze. If you were in sun, it was comfortable. If in the shade, it was a bit cool. The food came in waves, but was very tasty and filling. I had one big complaint. Their fish and chips was only on the dinner menu. I mean gee whiz! I am near the ocean. I want fish and chips! Oh well, the meatball sandwich was good. Everyone said the food was good and tasty. We took group photos in front of a logging truck. And as I count folks now, some were missing. Alas.

The ride back to Hwy 1 was still sweet even if we had to behave. There was a police car that fell in behind us as we left the restaurant and that drastically slowed our speeds. Meredith had gone around me to enjoy the road 'en-solo' as was lost to sight quickly. Our long snake kept the officer from seeing her departure. Once at Hwy 1, Kory and Vanessa cut their ride short and they headed home. The officer passed as we made sure we had everyone and - dang - he headed north. We caught up with him all too quickly, even going the speed limit. But nicely, he pulled off at Meyers Grade Rd allowing us to resume more sparky speeds.

We did hit the one lane signal light on Hwy 1 and had a 5 minute wait or so. As the last cars coming the other way passed, I rolled up and asked the lead car in our lane to allow us bikes to roll through. He nodded. Thank you, fella.

After getting through the road work, we came upon a sad sight. A bike had gone down. Meredith, being the first in our group to arrive, got the story. An oncoming car was wide and in the bike's way and the bike had to take a dive to the embankment to avoid a head on. The result was a broken foot. I did not catch if the offend-

ing car stopped or not. They said they had things under control so we rolled on by.

We continued up Hwy 1 with little to no traffic. That is so much fun. The group took a good rest at Stewarts Pt. Before taking off, I advised them of the technically challenging road ahead. With wisdom a forefront, we had at the mini-dragon with various degrees of gusto. We in front stormed the road and rode the roller coaster with glee. Those in the back chose wisely and sanely to enjoy the fantastic scenery. The hills were still showing a lot of green and some of the long-views were almost breath taking. I pulled the group over often to allow us to rest and more importantly, to breathe. It also allowed me to know that all were doing fine and staying upright.

Once beyond the narrow, tight, rough goat trail section, the wide, smooth pavement of the park is a joy. I observed many a sport bike coming our way – and they were at speed. So I had a good clue we could run at a good sparky pace. At the last stop and gather point before the park, a ranger vehicle passed us. I waited until he was out of sight...then yell ‘Safe!’ Perfect timing.

From here it was at the speed limit all the way to the Dry Creek General Store and Deli. What was a mild and nice ride seemed almost deadly boring compared to the nearly full spark in the hills. Oh how quickly we become jaded.

Leaving there after a good rest, we headed into Healdsburg for our last gas stop of the day. Then we took the circuitous route out Alexander Valley Rd to get to Hwy 128. From here it was a little above, then a little below the speed limit all the way until we got just south of St Helena. Five of us made the left to stay on Hwy 128, while others kept straight making a long day a bit shorter.

We five took another break at Lake Hennessey before the nonstop ride home. After making sure we had everyone at the last turn to stay on Hwy 128, Meredith, Skip, and I rolled along at a good, but sparky pace. Ken and Charlie (I think it was) dropped behind and were lost to our sight.

I followed Meredith up Hwy 128, while Skip took the turn on Hwy 121. I wanted to see if the glory hole was taking water. It wasn't. Oh well, that means I had to continue on and take Pleasants Valley Rd. What a burden, more twisties.

Alas this took Trinity and me to Hwy 80 and thick freeway traffic, strong head winds, rough buffeting wakes off the many SUV's, and Mr Sunshine smiling in my face with glare. We made it home near 6:30. A long, nice day.