

JANUARY 2021

NORCAL NEWS



Ride to Camp

Camp to Ride



BMW Motorcycle Club of Northern California

Presidents Column

It's getting old writing my letter with no club activity but with the current situation there is no way we can hold any kind of events. We are however looking to the future with the hope that by June we can hold our annual election meeting. We are finalizing plans for a great location with an awesome dinner option sure to be a great party. We are also booking out camping sites for the rest of the summer as well assuming the vaccine does its job and we are back in action.

It was great to see two of our members highlighted in the most recent BMW MOA magazine. First up you can't miss Anja Seitze on the cover page during a really exciting adventure with a great group of riders. Then Wynne Benti was highlighted with a great article on her Australian adventure last year. Reading the article really builds my anticipation for what I hope is a great adventure riding to and from the postponed MOA national in Great Falls after our election meeting. I am hoping we can have a big group depart from our election meeting.

We are also ramping up plans for the 49er with Greg Hutchinson already confirming many of last year's speakers. It's not clear if we will be able to hold the 49er this year but can't stop the planning. Lastly, we have booked 18 individual sites for Death Valley in March since the group sites were unavailable. It's not clear if the campsites will be open but stay on the lookout for signup when we get the all clear. Until next month, stay safe and now more than ever wear your mask and keep your distance.

Kevin Coleman

Editors Corner

This month's newsletter is a combination of old and new.

Firstly big thanks to Michael Murphy for writing up his Desert Adventure. A truly great trip that makes me wish I was more capable riding off road. Michael was accompanied by Manny Rubio and they provided me with over 100 photos to select from for the article. Its a pity that page space is so limited in this newsletter and that the photos are so small cos there's a lot of great pictures including this month's front cover.

The second story is by Paul Bosco. Paul participated in a trip organized by Pashnit Tours. I have heard of Pashnit before but never really understood what they were about.

The old part is a result of been contacted by Jill Nephew, the daughter of Bill Nephew who owned Marin BMW in the 70's and 80's. Jill was looking for information on a old bike she owned, but also told me in her email that she participated in many Norcal events in the 1970's. I know how many in the club are interested in the clubs history so I asked if she had any photos. Jill very kindly dug out some old pictures which I placed in the club archive. I selected a few for inclusion in this months newsletter. Maybe some of our Charter Members will recognize events or participants.

I am so grateful when people send me content. Looking ahead to February the cupboard is truly bare. If you have something that would be of interest please please send it to me.

Hopefully in the months ahead with the availability of vaccines thing will improve and we will be able to get back to a more normal 2021.

John Ellis



A Twisted Tale with an Unexpected Ending

On the trip to Alaska a couple of years ago I went down heavily on a steel surfaced bridge covered in oil. I skidded along the road for at least 25 yards. The bike surprisingly held up well and I was able to ride it the 2500 miles home. The crash bars and rear bags took most of the impact. One of the most obvious issues was that the forks which were twisted. I did what I had always done. Held the front wheel between my knees and yanked on the handlebars. It seemed OK and was certainly good enough to get home.

After fixing the bike it seemed to steer OK, and to be honest I didn't really know how to check the forks until Greg Hutchinson told me that he used a flat piece of Plexiglas and held it against the fork legs. If the forks are straight then the Plexiglas does not rock.

Went to Tap Plastics and sorted through their off cuts and found a perfect piece. The size of the piece I purchased was 13 x 4 x 0.5 inches.

Now I knew how to check the forks and had the tool, I found the forks were twisted. I slacked off all the bolts I held the front wheel between my knees and yanked on the bars. All I achieved were bruised knees.

In the end I figured it was close enough and to be honest didn't really notice the fact that the bars were at a slight offset. I then rode it like this for another 15000 miles.

However, in the end I decided to fix the problem. I wasn't certain about which piece was twisted but settled on replacing the lower bracket of the steering head. The steering head is held by two taper roller bearings. Since removing the bottom bearing from a steering head without damaging it is really difficult I purchased a new one.

Installing the tapered inner bearing races on the steering head (without special tools) requires a bit of heavy hammer work. Not wanting to damage the bearing when installing I bought hollow 12-inch length aluminum to use as a drift. I am fortunate enough

to have a lathe so I turned up a spacer that I could use to drive the inner race and use the same spacer to pull the outer bearing into frame.

Installing the inner bearing on the lower steering bracket was fairly straight forward, as was knocking the old outer race out of the frame. However, I found installing the new outer race in the frame a trickier proposition. In the past I have used a threaded rod with big washers (any hardware store). It was tough to keep the rod centered so it pulled evenly, but in the end the job was done and I was able to reassemble the steering head, and torque everything down to specifications.

The first thing I did was check fork alignment with my precious piece of plastic, and breathed a sigh of relief when found it to be spot on.

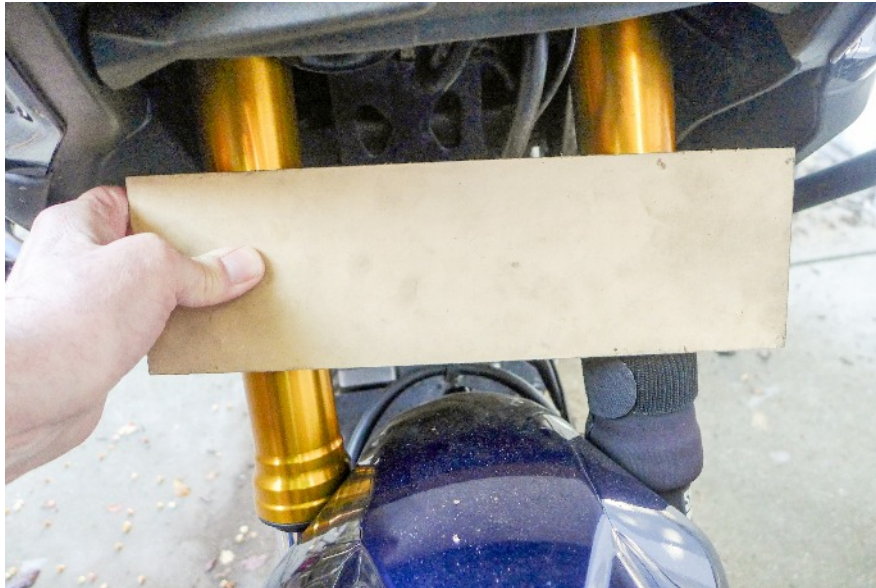
The only question now was whether there was any difference when riding the bike. To be honest I wasn't expecting much of a difference. Well, I took off down the road and for some reason the front wheel seemed to be

running freer. Looking down at the steering head I could see that it was centrally aligned with the bodywork. Everything good.

Then I noticed the feel of the front brakes was different, and the light came on in my tiny brain. The brake calipers are attached to the fork tubes. The twisted forks caused the brakes to rub. Now everything was straight the brakes no longer rubbed. Never an issue with the old drum brakes but a real issue for disks. It was fairly expensive to fix but well worth the money. Definitely transformed the feel of the bike.

So, there you have it. Buy yourself a bit of plastic and check fork alignment before putting down your hard-earned dollars on a second-hand bike.

John Ellis



Just when you thought you had installed all available farkles Wunderlich confounds us yet again with a Side Stand Illumination light. All of us has experienced arriving at a campground late at night looking for somewhere safe to park the bike. Nothing worse than flipping down the side stand only to find it sink into deep mud, or maybe a fresh cow pat. This little light is switched via the CanBus, and automatically turns off with the ignition switch. Buy two and you will be able to inspect the condition of your boots before entering that posh restaurant. Easy installation with plugs – no soldering required.

A Desert Adventure by Michael Murphy

In early November Manny Rubio and I declared a moratorium on covid and politics. We abandoned the San Francisco bay area for a 7 day loop from Bishop, CA into Nevada, down to Death Valley and back to Bishop via Lone Pine. This loop joins portions of two Backcountry Discovery Routes (BDRs) – first, southbound on two segments of the Nevada BDR, then northbound on the California BDR. You can read about the BDRs and download the GPX track files at ridebdr.com. This proved to be an outstanding adventure, combining the best parts of some of the best back country rides in the western United States. We added a couple of days at an ADV rally in Pahrump, organized by Joel NSF on ADVrider.com, for good measure.

Manny and I both own airheads, oil heads and (coincidentally) almost identical Suzuki DRZ400 dual sport motorcycles. We knew that parts of the route would be challenging so we opted for the Suzukis. This was a good choice. Most of the route is unpaved and some sections are quite challenging, although there are easier bypasses. Even with the bypasses this would not be a suitable route for inexperienced riders on big bikes.

We planned to camp out every night. We knew that we would have to travel light to deal with the terrain. My Giant Loop bag was packed solid with camping gear, an extensive emergency repair kit and a minimal supply of clothing. Manny supplemented his Wolfman panniers with a home-made (he prefers “prototype”) luggage system designed so that luggage contents could not fall out.



We began the trip with an overnight stay at Browns Millpond Campground just outside Bishop. This is a delightful campground with a stream flowing between campsites. We slept well with the sound of water masking any noise from surrounding sites. The next morning we primed ourselves with my world famous instant oatmeal and hit the trail. Day 1 followed the California BDR Segment 7 “Alternate hard route” eastwards up the steep



and loose Silver Canyon to White Mountain road, famous for the ancient bristlecone pines nearby. Silver Canyon would be tough on a big bike, but you can go around by following Hwy 168. By the time we reached the ridgeline at 10,000 feet our bikes were gasping for air. The final half mile of the climb required a steady pace in first gear. This was the first of many awe-inspiring views, in this case gazing across the Owens Valley to the eastern Sierra.

After pausing to learn about bristlecones we continued east to the next challenge, a steep descent following Wyman Creek. Even this late in the season there were many small water crossings and in some places the creek became part of the road. Eventually we emerged into open country with soft sandy roads taking us to paved highways 168 and 266. Near Lida we picked up the Nevada BDR southbound for Gold Point. Expecting fast open country, we were surprised to find miles of tight trails winding through hills and trees.





pitching camp we rode in to Beatty for some beers and barbecue. This was a satisfying end to our first day on the trail.

The total mileage for Day 1 was around 160 miles. The best riding was between Bishop and Gold Point. From Gold Point south to Beatty the trail is fast and open, but you need to pay attention.

Day 2 saw us following the Nevada BDR from Beatty to Pahrump. But first, coffee. You might be tempted by the mobile espresso bar in the empty lot, the one with all the wild burros standing around. The burros were not customers. We should have taken their cue. Back on the trail, the first 30 miles or so followed graded roads through rugged hills. A short detour to a communications tower atop Bare Mountain rewarded us with sweeping 360 degree views. Once we left the hills and crossed highway 95 the riding became mundane, as we followed wide graded roads through the Amargosa Valley, Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge (home of the endangered pup fish!) and into Pahrump.

At Pahrump we joined with other riders from the ADV rally for day trips to Wheeler Pass and a loop through Red Rocks Canyon. Wheeler Pass offers superb views in all directions but it's definitely not for big bikes. The Red Rocks loop followed a difficult 4WD track to climb into the hills from the west which, predictably, is not for big bikes with a particularly difficult boulder field in one section. As an alternative easy day ride on a big bike, you can take the highway from Pahrump to Red Rock Canyon NP. In the park the Scenic Road loop offers exceptional views of the mountains and canyons to the west.



Gold Point is touted as an authentic western ghost town. There was a lot of junk lying around but no people and no fuel. The town's centerpiece is a funky old saloon, which was closed. We sat outside eating sandwiches and enjoying the ambiance. As we were preparing to leave a local came by in a golf cart and offered to open the saloon. Because days are short at this time of year we declined the offer, preferring to press on to Rhyolite and Beatty. We arrived in time to find an unglamorous but adequate campsite on BLM land just off the highway. After





After two full days at the Rally it was time to complete the loop back to Bishop. To stay on schedule we rode the highway from Pahrump to Furnace Creek where we fueled, watered and victualled for a dry camp at Saline Hot Springs. Luggage constraints made it difficult for me to carry extra drinking water, so I agreed to take Manny's tent while he stuffed water bags and other essentials in his prototype luggage system. These essential items were secured so that they could not possibly fall out.



We continued the journey northwards with a brief stop at Ubehebe Crater (deep, windy, hot) before tackling the heavily washboarded gravel road to Teakettle Junction and the Racetrack. This road was a real bone shaker. Somewhere on

this road all the essentials fell out of Manny's luggage. Undeterred, we declared this apparent setback as the beginning of a true adventure. We pressed on.



The next challenge was a descent of Lippincott Road. It's quite difficult with steep descents on loose gravel, rocks and big drop-offs. (Big bikes should take the easier detour from Teakettle Junction via Hunter Pass.) We carefully picked our way down the escarpment and then blasted along the Saline Valley floor to the Hot Springs. Upon arrival, we learned that (contrary to posted warnings) there is potable water. Our lost water supplies were no longer a problem. The next day my digestive tract strongly disagreed.

The hot springs oasis was officially closed due to covid, but there is a natural pool three miles up the canyon. We arrived at the pool just before dusk to enjoy a beautiful sunset and other local curiosities. As we sat soaking, dozens of bats swooped to take water from the pool. I could feel the beat of their wings as they skimmed past my face.

Day 6 saw a beautiful red sunrise on the Saline Mountains.



We drank coffee and hit the road, aiming for Hunter Pass about an hour down the trail. As we rested at the Pass I looked down the valley to see an F18 headed directly toward me. He went by close enough to read the warning label on his flight jacket, then rolled the plane on its wingtip in a hard turn. I do enjoy watching those machines fly at close quarters!

Our plan was to visit the Cerro Gordo mine on the way to Lone Pine but we were short on fuel so we detoured to Panamint Springs for a late breakfast. The stretch of highway 190 from

Father Crowley Vista Point to Panamint Springs offers shifting panoramic views that unfold like a moving picture as you drop thousands of feet to the valley floor. This is a million dollar ride but you must be headed towards Panamint Springs to enjoy it.

When we returned to the trail we found the route up to Cerro Gordo from the east side particularly challenging. As an alternative, the road from Hwy 136 up to the mine, from the west side, is easy and offers stupendous views of the Owens Valley on the return descent. Owens Lake appears dry on Google Maps but for us it glistened for miles like an inland sea. If you find yourself in this part of the world you should not miss the short detour to Cerro Gordo from Hwy 136. A young guy bought the whole town a few years ago and is working to turn it into a tourist attraction. It was closed when we went



Sierra rises steeply in the background with Mount Whitney directly to the west. We were treated to a beautiful sunset, a dramatic moonrise and a rosy dawn.

Our final day was a shorter affair as we followed the California BDR to Bishop. Upon repacking the bikes Manny realized more essentials had gone missing. Somewhere near Big Pine our route was blocked. Our attempted route-around passed through someone's front yard, then their back yard, then their dump before petering out in a dry wash. With an eye on the clock we backtracked to Hwy 395 and rode the last 15 miles on pavement to Bishop.

For my money you can't beat the eastern Sierra and Death Valley for unique desert landscapes and geology. Our dirt bikes were the perfect tool for the job, allowing us to relax on the more challenging sections. We rolled through 850 miles of



through, but no matter... the landscape is the main attraction.

That evening we camped in the Alabama Hills outside Lone Pine. Hollywood has filmed westerns there since the 1920s including Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, the Lone Ranger and Bonanza. Many stagecoaches have been ambushed among the rocky outcrops, but all was peaceful at our campsite. The

endlessly changing colors, textures and features. The end of each day left us wanting more. I can't wait to go back.

Michael Murphy

Photos by Michael Murphy and Manny Rubio



Pashnit Tours by Paul Bosco

Well, right around 2008 is when the midlife crisis kicked in. I decided life is short and it's time to get a motorcycle again. I ended up purchasing a used 2004 1150RT with low miles. I already had a M1 license from when I was 18 and knew how to ride so I ended up riding her home right away.

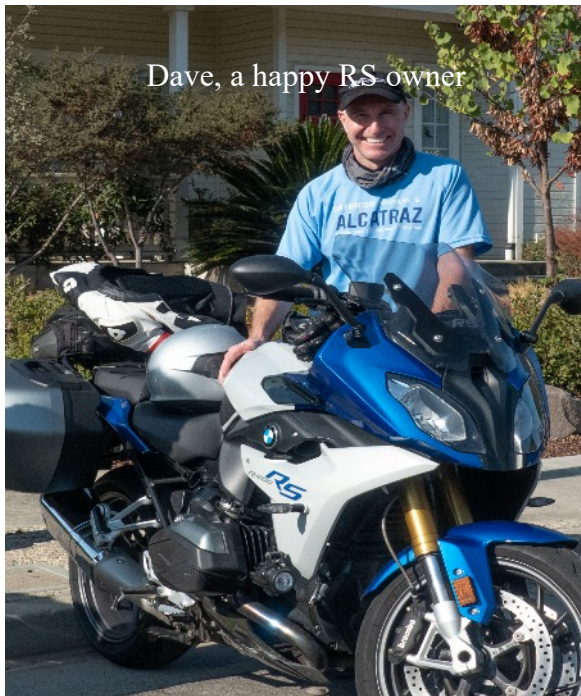
After taking a MSF advanced riding course and doing some solo touring I came across a website called Pashnit California Motorcycle Roads and Tours and decided to try one. Nothing against Norcal BMW but at the time I wasn't familiar with the club!

At first when I looked at Tim Mayhew's site I said to myself this seems like a lot of money to pay to go on a motorcycle ride. Do I really need a guide? By this time I had already rode many miles to Canada and back. Here's what I found.

Tim is considered the "guru" of California motorcycle road riding and has spent years documenting and finding roads that you or I have little to no knowledge of. Next time you look at a BMW MOA magazine and see mileage awards, ask yourself "how many of those miles was riding on boring interstates or secondary straight highways?" Tim's resume consists of over 250 documented roads in California and Oregon and 350,000 miles of TURNS. The kinds of roads you and I dream about riding. Here what I also found. Tim has a loyal following of riders that join his tours 2 to 3 times a year so they can fill up fast. Some are sport bike riders, but he also gets GS/RS/GT riders as well. Then there is the occasional Harley or Goldwing. It is a little intimidating looking at his site as there are photos and videos of riders on high powered sport bikes, but I have found over time that riding with

them will only make you a better road rider. Also, isn't it fun to check out some different bikes once in a while?

A typical riding weekend with Tim goes like this. Show up. Rider meeting. Ride. Break. Where in the hell are we? That road kicks ass! Ride some more. Group Lunch. Ride some more. Break. Awesome road! Head to hotel. Group dinner. Next day, repeat. Many times there will be a small history lesson of certain areas thrown in along the way. For those riders who feel more inclined not to have to keep up behind the leaders and enjoy the scenery no need to worry Tim's partner Mark helps out as sweep. Don't expect silky smooth roads all the time either. Tim always likes to throw in a mountain goat road, short gravel section, or small concrete water crossing to keep you on your game. There is no need to bring maps, waste time on where to stay or eat, or argue with your buddies about where to go next or if you missed a turn. Pashnit has your route and reservations done. It's mainly about showing up, riding, meeting some new or old faces and having a great time. Riders will want to have some experience under their belt most of his tours are not for newbies as mentioned on his site. If you have a friend who is interested and don't mind sharing a hotel room it will save a few bucks. This last tour I was on there was a 78 old gentleman riding a grey and black Yamaha FZ-09. Bless his heart. www.pashnit.com



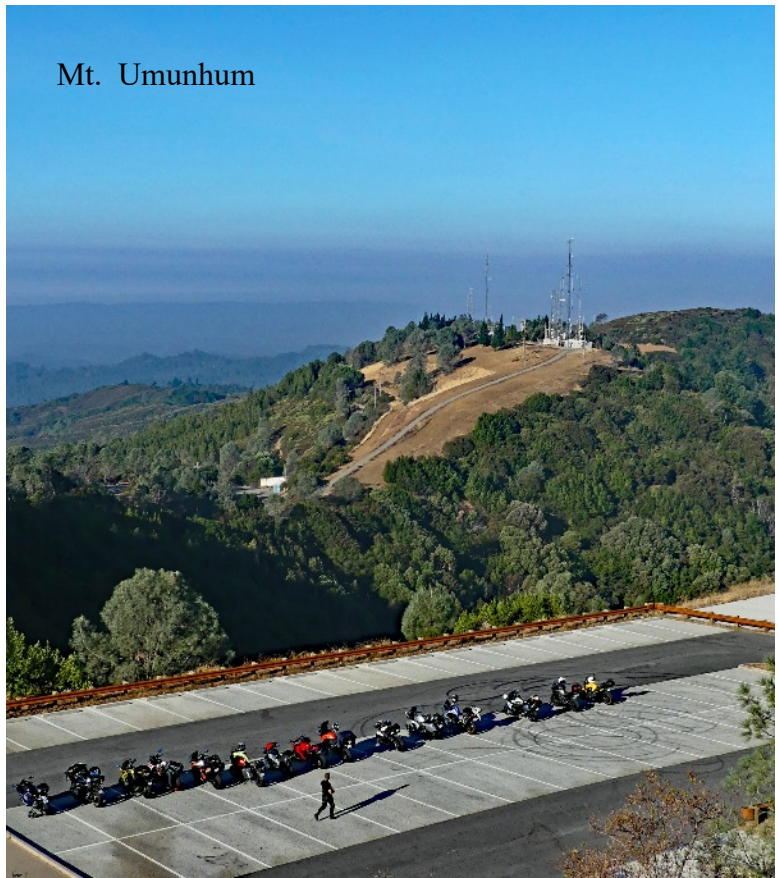
Dave, a happy RS owner



Tim Mayhew

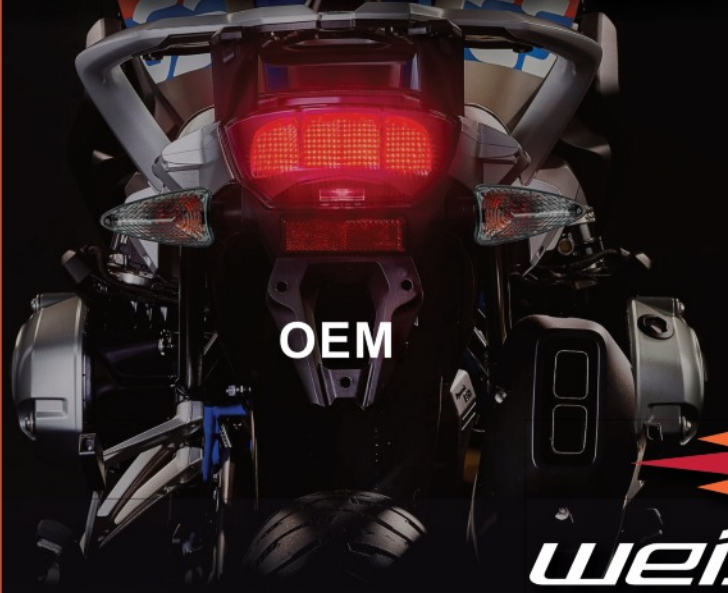


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NorCal Club Photos from the 1970's

Sometime being editor of the newsletter has some unexpected benefits.

A month or so back I was contacted by Jill Nephew, who needed some help with a vintage BMW that she inherited from her father Bill Nephew who owned BMW of Marin in the 1970's and 1980's. Jill revealed that she accompanied her father and brother on many of the rallies and rides that were taking place during this time. Checking the membership directory, Bill Nephew was the 49'er Rally Chairman in 1974.

There is a lot of interest within the club regarding Norcal history, and I suggested to Jill that if she had photographs from the 70's then it would be much appreciated. Jill took the time to dig through her old photos, and you can see them all in a folder of club archive here.

<https://norcalhistorian.smugmug.com/BMW-Norcal-History/Bill-Nephews-photos/n-sPkopc>

The photos are excellent quality and have included a selection here. .Is it just me or do these bikes look shinier than today.



Bill Nephew and son 1971



1977-49er Rally Bill and Jill Nephew



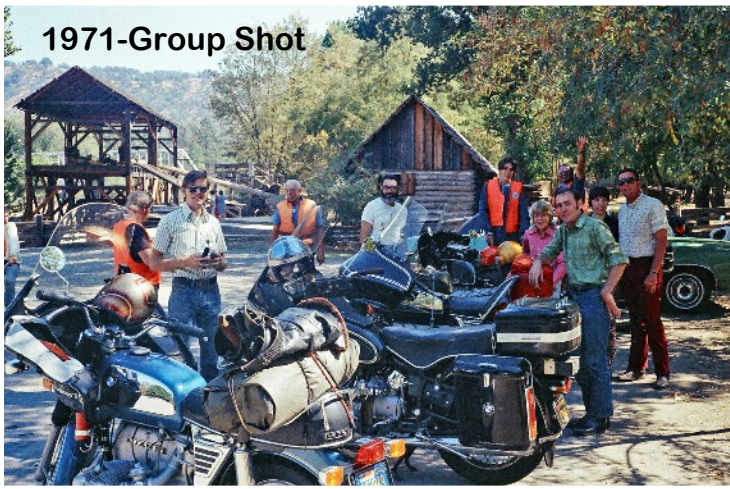
1971-Campout



1976-Weekend Ride



1976-BMW Marin Restoration



1971-Group Shot



1977-BMW Marin



1974-Weekend Ride



1977-Weekend Ride



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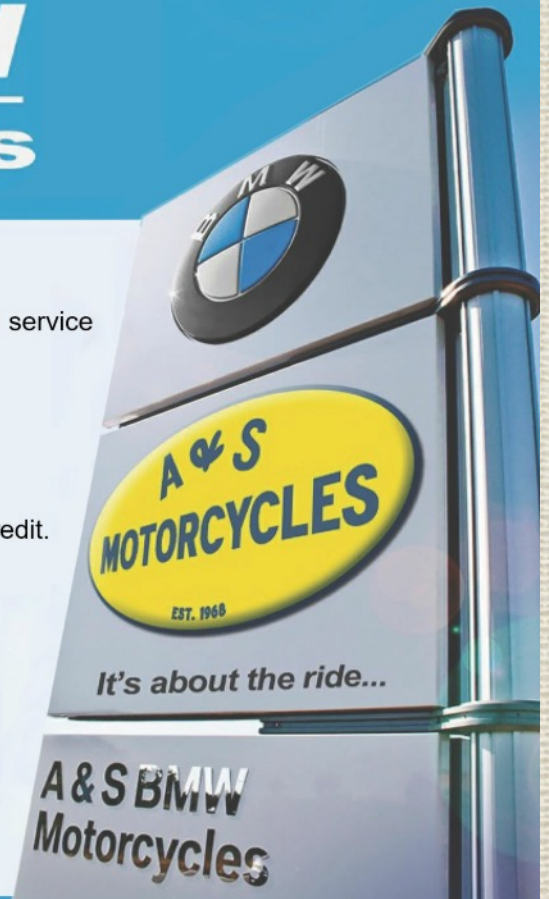
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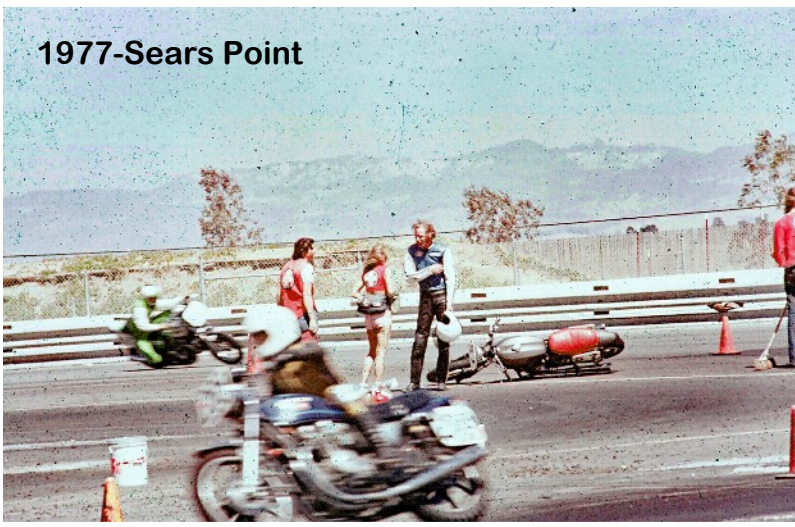
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1977-Sears Point



1977-BMW Marin Bike



1971-Group Camp



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and we will keep you informed as of when the goal is reached.

We have all heard stories from riders who used the Helite Airbags and can attest the to the product performance. From slow falls to high speed crashes, riders claim that if they hadn't used the Helite Airbag, they would have been in much worse shape.

The holidays are upon us, and what better way to treat yourself - you deserve it.

Regards

Jorgen Larsen



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Anniversaries

January	Prasad Gottam	5
	Jim Lucas	10
	Mary-Anna Rae	10
	Lars Swartz	30
	Allan Williams	30
February	Craig Reppe	5
March	Dave Brakebill	10
	Barth Campbell	5
	Martin Cazares	5
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