

I've been asked to write about my recent trip across the country, which included the 40 to Phoenix ride (I'll call it the "40"). The "40" starts in Wilmington, NC and basically rides Interstate 40 into Phoenix to visit GWRRA Home Office. The ride continues on to San Diego for a truly coast-to-coast ride. This was the 5th year for this ride. Previously the ride went into Mexico, making it an international ride, but this was not advised because getting back into the US had become a long process. The "40" is a fairly aggressive ride requiring about 400 miles each day, so preparation is necessary. The stops are only thing scheduled so how everyone gets there is their choice. I think we started with 38 people and had about 88 people by Phoenix because riders would join in, as the ride progressed across the country. I volunteered to lead a group that started with 4 & ended with 6 bikes. I could not have asked for a better group as everyone was congenial & agreed to do what the group wanted, truly a pleasure to lead. They were even good "sports" about all my bike problems. I followed GWRRA Road Captain protocols, which were universally understood, and I realized the awesome responsibility of a "captain"; every decision has to be about getting everyone there safely. (rider placement within the group, speed, lane selection, unscheduled stops, etc.)

I left Chambersburg on Wednesday morning, March 5th, in 26 degrees with heated grips & seat, regular riding gear, insulated boots & heated insoles. I left later in the day planning to make about 300 miles before calling it a day. I was able to make all 450 miles into Wilmington in one day with light rain toward the end of the day. Thursday, I went out only for meals as it rained all day. We had our kick-off meal/meeting that evening (officially starting the "40"). They did an individual blessing of the bikes. Because it was raining so hard, we rode our bikes onto the covered "sidewalk" in a strip mall for the blessing. Friday morning we pulled out for Conyers, GA at 6:50. I figured everyone else would leave at 7:00 & I wanted to be different so we left earlier. The roads were wet, but it wasn't raining when we left. I think I had my biggest "pucker" of the trip coming out Wilmington when I came up on a wet open-grate bridge with a cross wind. (I'm thinking, "hang on & ride, cupcake"). We got in some light rain in NC then heavy rain in SC, but that was the last rain I saw. Saturday we only rode about 200 miles to Leeds, AL (near Birmingham) to Barber Motorsports Park, which included an excellent motorcycle museum and a "technical" racetrack. The museum was great and we were able to take 5 "parade" laps on the track-something no group had ever been allowed. We were led by their pace bike & the first couple of laps were "parade" then they turned up the pace-I saw a speed of 80+, one of the guys up front said he hit 105 mph. It was a pretty cool experience. The next 4 days were basically unremarkable other than strong winds & tumbleweeds. Along the way, some dinners were with local Chapters, lunch at a Honda dealer (repairs?) & a police escort into town with a dinner to "welcome" us. Thursday we visited Home Office for tours and door prizes, plus we rode to a mountain overlooking the city. Friday was on to Chula Vista, a suburb of San Diego. Saturday the activity was to go see the Blue Angels. I opted not to do that, but instead followed one of the local chapter members to some local sights (and do laundry). Sunday the "40" ended with the local Chapter having a bonfire on the beach/picnic. From there on, I was on my own...no group to lead.

Monday, I went to Wingstuff (outside LA) and got to experience "lane splitting." (a practice the AMA supports & one I'm now convinced is insane). I then went on into Las Vegas, NV so I could tour Hoover Dam the next morning. After my tour Tuesday morning, I started

toward Denver to visit my cousin. I opted to take a southerly route to avoid some harsh weather in the high Rockies. Tuesday evening I stopped in Flagstaff, AZ and Las Vegas, NM on Wed evening. Wednesday night I awoke with an ear infection so I ended up at the ER of the local hospital. Thursday, I was back on the road (a little late), but made Denver after lunch. I had a great visit with my cousin. Looking at the weather, I either needed to cut my visit short & leave Friday or wait until about Wednesday to leave because of incoming snow on Saturday. I left Friday for Longview, TX, which is where I went to college. I hustled so I could attend my old church on Sunday morning. I made Amarillo Friday eve & Longview Saturday eve. I was able to visit the church and caught up with one of my "old" professors. Later Sunday afternoon, I met the Alumni coordinator and caught up on the changes at the school. Monday I visited the school's new Aviation facilities, the Materials Joining (Welding) Lab, attended chapel and went to lunch with the Alum Coordinator all by 1:00. I left Longview for "home" and made Jackson, MS by Monday eve. Tuesday, I stopped at the Unclaimed Baggage, which is where lost airline luggage (that cannot be reunited with its owner) is sold. It's a neat place, like a big Thrift Store. I saw some snow coming into town, but it cleared up and I continued homeward. I was surprised when I entered the Eastern Time zone so I had to get a motel in Chattanooga. This put me 600 miles from home with chilly temps & bad weather coming in a day or 2 so I knew I needed to push on, even with the temps. I made it home Wednesday with temps mostly in the 30's all day and had my wife watching the "snow squall accident" in West Virginia all day to be sure I could get through.

The trip lasted 22 days, covered 7,388.3 miles in a lot of chilly temps (some days started in 20 degrees weather). Saw lots of great stuff and some not so good things about the Honda Goldwing's (I know of 7 blown fork seals by Phoenix), but there were some accommodating repair shops along the way. Highly recommend the ride, but make sure you're prepared for the various conditions to be encountered. Next year the ride will be about 3 weeks later...advice & recommendations are readily available, but talking me into doing it again may not be as easy because I really feel I need to baby my bike so it will last. The Goldwing is certainly not the "bulletproof" bike that I'm used to seeing from Honda so I guess we'll have to keep "maintenance days" on the calendar, even if you cannot ride the "40".





