

Ride for the Year 2000 (our First "Digital Ride" – thanks Mana!!)

So here we are once again, getting ready for yet another PJ-1K. The group this year includes the typical broad range of motorcyclists, from the "ultra quick" Rick, Mana and Maurice, to the content-at-moderate-speed guys like Bruce and Dave. That leaves Scotty, Chris, and me somewhere mid-pack depending on the twist of the road.

We experienced a light rain shower mid-week, however as the weekend approached temperatures increased. Forecasters warned that it would get really warm by Monday.

The 25th Running of the PJ 1000

PJ Naumchik	1994	Kawasaki	ZX-9R
Dave Sweetman	1994	Honda	ST1100
Bruce Farley	1983	Honda	CX650 <i>Turbo</i>
Rick Allan	2000	Yamaha	YZF-R1
Chris Patterson	1993	BMW	K75RT
Scott Murnan	2000	Yamaha	YZF-R1
Maurice Flores	1999	Yamaha	YZF-R1
Mana Coste	1998	Suzuki	TL1000S

Friday - New First Day Route

The Friday morning sun is bright, in San Jose the temperature is moderate. I stuffed the last couple of items into my tank bag, and lit the fire in the belly of my 6 year old Kawasaki. It responds with it's typical too-fast idle, and array of awakening noises. Sliding out of the garage and pointing North on 680, I accelerate toward our breakfast rendezvous. Entering the first corner on to the freeway I experience my annual attack of butterflies as I contemplate the challenge of 'keeping up' again this year. I've had new Avon-Azuro tires on the bike for just 2 weeks now, but have managed to put 100 miles on them before today. I'm comfortable they are adequately scuffed, and will provide plenty of 'stick,' even in the earliest corners. With fresh oil in the motor, which still seems healthy and strong after last year's tune-up, my only 'mechanical' concern is suspension. It seems to be working less well on bumpy roads. Other than suspension, the only limitations are inside my helmet! Most of the group was already at the coffee shop when I arrived. I passed on breakfast, mainly due to an inefficient waiter.



With breakfast done and a short wait for Scotty to buy a new pair of ear plugs, we were soon carving our way through the moderate traffic traveling North on I-680 & I-80.

Damn good thing we are going North, because the traffic going South is bumper-to-bumper & close to a dead stop all the way to the Benecia Bridge. Surprise! Everybody got a 'free pass' thru the Benecia Bridge Toll (except Bruce). 12 miles further up the road we took the exit to Suisun Valley Road and stopped to let Mana put some gas in his 'short range' Suzuki. Bruce, due to his delay at the Toll Plaza, didn't spot us at the station and continued on Suisun Valley Road per the plan. We finished up, and set out, finding Bruce waiting at the intersection of SR121.

After a short break, we started out on this new 1st day plan in the Napa Lake area. After a few miles out through the flat lands, I waved Rick, Mana, and Maurice ahead. I don't like the pressure of leading those guys, I feel like I'm always holding them up.

The roads Rick and I had 'sighted' in August were just as good as remembered. And, as predicted, traffic on a 'September Friday' was a big improvement when compared with a Saturday in August. A big truck prevented Bruce and Dave from spotting us as we exited at the Chiles Valley Rd. turn-off, but it was just as well. They proceeded straight ahead and used the Silverado Trail and got to Calistoga well ahead of the rest of us.

We had a long gas and rest stop at a station in Calistoga. Following our break there, we rode up SR128 to Middletown. Dave and Bruce left us at Middletown and went ahead on 128 to find a lunch stop. The rest of the group went on to Bottle Rock Road. All of these routes were great choices. On the return loop to Middletown was Big Canyon Road, this was narrow and bumpy, I didn't like it at all, although the "R1's" didn't seem to notice. The trip plan made provision to go back up on Big Canyon Road, but it certainly wasn't on my list to 'do again!'

The lunch stop Bruce and Dave had selected was a modern Foster Freeze with good air conditioning.

We ate and rested a bit (Mana took a nap) before we started the final leg of our Friday tour, 40 uneventful miles on 53-20 & 16 and an unpopular 73 miles on I-5!

We arrived on schedule in Red Bluff, and after two unsuccessful attempts to locate our Motel, we finally found it a couple of miles east of town. It was OK, but not great. Certainly adequate for our purposes, however if I repeat this trip plan again in the future (highly probable) I will try a new accommodation.

Somebody showed up with the beer, and we gathered by the pool for a few cool ones before heading out for dinner across the street at a local steak house. My meal wasn't too bad, but I heard a few complaints from others.

Saturday

We were all up bright and early on Saturday AM. Dave decided to head up I-5 to Redding and travel leisurely west on 299, to meet us in Willow Creek at the SR-96 turn-off. I estimated that we would arrive at Willow Creek about 2PM. The rest of us agreed that breakfast at the Wildwood Store would be an appropriate first stop.



PJ Scotty Chris Rick Bruce

It took some time to get everyone gassed up and ready to ride, but soon we were making the hard left across the railroad tracks that leads us out to one of our most favorite routes, the infamous *Concrete Roller Coaster*. Maurice had said he wanted to stop and take a picture of the road sign that says "Curves Next 143 Miles," but as we approached the area, road construction was apparent, and our sign was missing. A new road is being cut through that first ~5 miles leading out to the rolling hills, looks like sprawl is even hitting Red Bluff! Fortunately, it doesn't seem to threaten our curves, which start a few miles further on. Shortly after we left the construction we swung left up the hill that leads to the first of those twisty atolls. In the cool morning air with a bright September sun at our backs, we repeated the exhilarating rhythm of gas-brake-lean-gas over and over through each of those marvelous twisty segments on this legendary highway. With Rick leading we progressed rapidly to the sweeping climb up and over Goods Mountain.

Motorcycling would be much more fun, I'm thinking, if you never rode with people like Rick. Rick's casual pace up winding mountain roads on his new R1 leaves me panting in my effort to fall behind at a less rapid rate. Even when there's gravel and sand in the corners, Rick seems to neither notice, or care. He uses only the daintiest rations of brakes whilst gracefully laying the bike from side to side. Following along on this powerful but now comparatively 'overweight' Kawasaki, I'm remembering to be smooth and easy on the controls, keeping up the cornering speed, and I'm able to keep Rick and the lead group in sight. It seems that Rick senses this and picks up the pace a notch. Rick was quick and smooth on his GSX-R750 too, but then I was able to use the Kawasaki's power advantage to reel-in some lost distance on the straights between corners. No such luck now! Not only is the Kawi down on BHP, but the combined weight of bike and rider put me at a 100lb disadvantage. So much for getting distance back! Now I'm ringing the 9's neck in a vain attempt to not fall further behind. Wildwood had never seemed to arrive so quickly.



After breakfast, the group gassed up and we continued our ride west. The next major feature on route 36 is "Dirty Mountain" which never bothers Rick & company, but Scotty and I always find the little trails of gravel in the corners disconcerting enough to put serious restrictions on our speed.

Once we finish crossing this obstacle, the road opens up somewhat. This year there was a new gravel and asphalt cover on the road, and try as I might, I couldn't get comfortable with the way it looked. I soon lost the group, and eventually waved Chris past too. The surface appeared loose, even though there was not the slightest evidence of traction problems. I thought if I just hung in with Chris I could "learn to trust it" but to no avail, that didn't work either.



Parked near Mad River

Chris & I caught up with the group at Mad River where we all took another reasonable break. Following our stop the road rises and twists up the new (now, not so new) section that skirts the northern edge of Black Mountain. The miles past quickly and the road soon dropped us down the other side of the mountain. Another new section of road bypassed Bridgeville, and led us into the dark cool redwood groves at Grizzly Creek. Beyond that the air went cold with the foggy breeze that signaled our arrival at the Pacific coast.

The Diesel/Tire Incident

Upon entering Eureka, I spotted a gas station near the south end of town and we stopped to fill up. Rick and I gassed up at the same island. After filling the R1's tank he said; "Hey PJ, is the gas in your tank foamy?" "Nope," I responded, not giving his question much thought. He remained concerned and soon discovered that he had filled the Yamaha's fuel tank with Diesel!!!



Across a side street was a Kragen's Auto Parts store. There, Rick bought a siphon hose and a plastic 5 gallon gas container and proceeded to drain the Yamaha's tank. Due to the complexity of the tank shape it turned out to be a painfully slow process that took about an hour. Just as he was nearing completion, Mana noticed his rear tire was wearing very quickly and non-uniformly. (Some of these guys still haven't learned the "PJ-1K tire lesson") Across the main street was a Honda Dealer. Mana went over and purchased a new rear tire. To save a few dollars he negotiated to remove and install it himself. The guys in the service department were "good ol' boys" and didn't seem to appreciate the Frenchman's efforts. Later, one of the mechanics did finally help him to finish the install. All of this unscheduled maintenance was consuming gobs of time, so Bruce took off to meet up with Dave, who by now had to be wondering where the hell we were. Mana's tire added at least another hour to our already long gas stop.

I became a bit impatient, as he seemed to find numerous additional reasons to delay our departure. Finally, with Rick's tank flushed, and Mana's fresh tire mounted, we took off (now about 3:30PM!) to catch up with Dave and Bruce at Willow Creek. The ride up 299 over the mountain toward Willow Creek was really different. This is the first time I have ever been on this road when it wasn't dripping with thick fog. It is a really fast road, 4 divided lanes all of the way up the mountain, kind of reminiscent of 168 down south. We were all really flying! Down the other side to the mountain, the road narrows to 2 lanes, and in only a few miles we were parking in front of our favorite Willow Creek coffee stop. Bruce was waiting, but Dave had long ago given up and departed for Yreka before Bruce arrived. Shortly after the rest of us got there, Bruce took off to get a head start. We had only come 50 miles, and I was sure we would find gas not far up the road, so after a short break I encouraged all to head out. Our fast trio, Rick, Mana and Maurice took the lead, with Scotty, me, and Chris, following.

The first time I rode this route in 1985, we traveled Southwest from Yreka. That year, in spite of recovering from a bad wrist sprain and some poor carb calibration, I came home convinced 96 was the best road I had ever discovered. In 1988, I returned with Nick and Mike. That year we left Dave at Willow Creek, and followed the route Northeast, same as this time. For whatever reason, I didn't find the road all that interesting. But today, following Scotty's shiny blue R1 (at, what for me was the perfect pace) I was once again convinced; 96 IS one of the best roads in Northern California. (It must be the speed!)

Continuing at a hot pace, we passed the 2nd gas station, (+Bruce) and I became concerned. I knew that Mana's TL would be getting short of fuel, and there was still no civilization in sight. As Scotty & I rounded sweeping left bend, my tripmeter clicked over: 132 miles! Up the road, on the right the 3 lead bikes were on the shoulder - sure enough Mana's Suzuki was out of fuel.



Unscheduled "Out of Gas Stop" Hwy 96

Fortunately Bruce, now trailing the group, had a big tank, and Rick still had his siphon hose. They were able to transfer enough gas to power the Suzuki to the next fuel stop.

The next civilization was the small town of Happy Camp. Unlike my last 2 visits to this place, there was no longer a gas station in town. On the north edge there was an unattended 'credit-card' station just down off the road on the right. We all needed to fill up.

Dismounting, I found the left foot peg on the Kawasaki to be very loose. The Allen bolt on the inside had nearly backed out, and I was a few screw-turns from dropping the whole shift/footpeg assembly. I didn't have the correct Allen-wrench, but somebody loaned me a set, and I was able to tighten the peg adequately. We were off once again, this time Scotty led the whole group, but he was no longer on the previous sweet pace. Mana or Maurice passed him, and slowed the pace further, the rest of the ride was not nearly as enjoyable as the first 130 miles had been.

At the junction of 263, the group swung to the right and we started a slight ascent up to Yreka. It's a short distance, but with an exceptional view of a snow covered Mt. Shasta in the distance. We found the Klamath Motor Lodge with ease, Dave was already there well settled-in.

I'm a little fuzzy about what we did for dinner Saturday night . . . must have been the beer.

Sunday

Sunday morning it was a little cold, but nothing like the first time I was here. We decided to go to Etna for breakfast. The sun was very bright early in the morning, and this north end of Hwy 3 bisects a wide flat valley, with Mountain vista's on both sides. There was little traffic, and the short ride passed quickly. As we entered the small town, I immediately recognized the restaurant, it was the same place we found that cold morning in 1988. Bob's Ranchhouse Cafe, a real Red-Neck resort. We parked the bikes and went in for breakfast. I could sense the crowd of locals wasn't impressed with a bunch of "hot-rod" bikers in their place. We all ate a hearty meal, then Dave and Bruce left early to get a head start on the ride down Hwy 3 toward Weaverville.

Shortly after breakfast we ascended, then descended, via a fairly steep mountain pass. The road was great, but I and several others were still too cold and stiff to "find the grove." Of course, Maurice and Rick had no problems, so they soon disappeared. I think Mana and Scotty finally got it together after that, and that left Chris and me somewhere behind. As I followed Chris, Hwy 3 stretched out ahead long and straight down the center of another valley, then slowly began climb another mountain. Chris was really on the gas! We couldn't see the others ahead, but Chris was apparently determined not to loose any additional ground - jeeze! A hundred and how much!? I had to keep whipping the Kawi to keep the blue Beemer in my sights.

Finally we caught up again as the group pulled off at a road side vista near some lake. There was a historical marker there about the big dredges that operated here in the late 18 and early 1900's.



After the break, Rick kept the group together as we traversed some nice sweepers on our way down the mountain into Weaverville. Bruce and Dave were waiting at a gas station for us, they must have pushed pretty hard too, or we would have caught them at the speed the group had been traveling.

By the time we got to Weaverville it was getting hot, still too early for lunch. After a gas stop and some time out of the saddle, we continued East on 299 toward Redding.

The road from Weaverville East is pretty uneventful, and we soon found ourselves at a familiar fast food stop (Carl's Jr., I think) on the west end of town. A light lunch was in order for me, but the main reason to be in here was the air conditioning!! It's always hot in Redding. During the planning of this trip, I had added a new variation to the route. County Road A16, on the map a squiggly black line angling Southwest from Redding, intersecting with Hwy 36 just west of the Wildwood Store. After lunch, we went looking for way to intersect the new route. I had a heck of a time finding it, finally got directions from a small convenience store owner. He directed us on alternative local roads that eventually connected to A16. I did note that it was Hot! Well, A16 turned out to be another one of my least favorite choices. Tight, bumpy, twisting, narrow, high elevation, steep edges, (I did mention Hot, didn't I?)



I was the last one down, the last 4 or 5 miles weren't fun for me at all. Some of the guys actually liked this road! I don't think I'll include it again. But, once down, we were back to 36 - no complaints here. Back on this familiar road that always gets my adrenaline level up. It was great as usual. Down the big sweepers from the low mountains toward those rolling foothills - then on to the 'coaster' again. Gas - Brakes - Air, this is still my favorite road!!

Again, I didn't keep up with Rick and the boys, but I enjoyed my own pace over the rolling undulations that make this area so unique.

Once back in Red Bluff, we took a break at the same ol' Burger King on 36 @I-5. As we were getting ready to leave, Dave had a minor "tip-over" in the parking lot, his legs now less strong than before, allowed the Big Honda got a little off balance and . . .boom. Fortunately only a little damage.

We helped him get his bike up, and with a few minutes of preparation we were on our least favorite route - 99 South to Chico. For some reason I had an uneasy feeling on this section, I kept expecting CHP. At one point a helicopter flew nearly parallel to us for several miles, and I worried we'd been 'had' by an airborne speed check. Turned out not to be the case, so we made a quick gas stop just north of Chico, then proceeded to the Pentz-Durham turnoff and turned east for the Feather River Canyon. Rick, Maurice, Mana, were really moving. No way I was going to be able to keep that pace. Scotty, Chris and I settled into our own 'zone' which was still plenty quick.

About halfway up the canyon, I spotted some traffic ahead, and we decreased our speed. In the mix ahead, I could see Maurice amidst the cars, but Rick and Mana were out of view. Traveling opposite the cars, a CHP made a sudden U-Turn, turned on his lights and pulled Maurice over. I guessed he'd spotted him crossing the double yellow, and I figured he would get a ticket and catch up later. Besides, Bruce and Dave were still back in the canyon behind us. What I didn't know, and would learn later - Maurice did not have a valid California Drivers License! Worse yet, his Oregon License had been suspended! There may have even been an issue with his bike's registration. Anyway, the CHP impounded his bike. Dave stopped, and as Maurice was no longer going to be able to ride, he took up second seat on Dave's ST.

We finally all gathered at the Motel. I was very annoyed that he had taken such a chance. At the speeds we ride, there is always a possibility to get caught for speeding or to be spotted in one of the many double yellow passes we make in the course of a four day event. And Maurice - always one of the quickest! I never thought I would need to ask my fellow PJ-1K'ers to see their licenses - maybe I should!! I was annoyed with him, and I think Rick was upset with me for it, but in my mind it was irresponsible.

Anyway, the whole situation put a 'damper' on the rest of the day. We went to our favorite Quincy Chinese restaurant and had dinner. None of the guys liked the new Motel as well as the Ranchito where we normally stay. But they had screwed-up and lost my reservation, so I was forced to choose an alternate. It wasn't bad, but we like the little cabins and the 'outdoorsy' feel of the other place.



After Dinner at the Motel in Quincy

Maurice called his girlfriend and arranged for her to come pick him up the next day. We sat out in front of our rooms for a while, had a few beers and relived some of the past days events.

Monday

The only problem with this route is the last day's good stuff ends way too soon. Maurice hung out at the motel waiting for his ride. The rest of us decided once again to have breakfast in Downieville. We gassed up and headed South, caught Hwy 49 started up the mountain, and I let the fast guys pass.



We stopped for Pics at our favorite overlook.

Then Rick lead a fast charge down the mountain toward Downieville. His pace was fast but comfortable, traffic was light until we neared Sierraville. I got caught behind a garbage truck that was a real bitch to pass, (plus the smell!!) Just as I got up on him looking for a place to pass, his right rear outside tire blew - Bam! Wow! Scared the crap out of me, didn't phase the truck driver at all. He just kept his normal rambling pace.

A big piece of tire came off, but by that time I had given him a lot of room. Anyhow that kind of spoiled the back half of my ride down 49. Downieville breakfast place was a little crowded. I asked the waitress if she would open the patio for us, and with a nod from the lady in charge, we all helped her set up a big table out back. The waitress, (not a young lady) turned out to be on the job for her first day. She got our orders a little mixed up, but we sorted them out and left her a big tip. We were a real fun group that morning and I think we left her with a real positive view of motorcyclists.

We bought gas again, but I miscalculated the miles to the Pleasant Valley Road turn-off told the guys it was about 45 miles, actually it was only 30. So, the fast guys blew right on past the turn. It took me several miles to overtake them and turn them around. We took the Pleasant Valley road to my Sister-in-Law's place in Penn Valley (Lake Wildwood). We took a break with Silvia & Don. We had arrived a little early, and not all the guy's felt it was such a great idea anyway - it was OK, but I wouldn't do it again.

After our break at Lake Wildwood, there was nothing interesting left except for a few corners on Hwy 20 then, we were back to the long freeway grind home. It was very HOT!!

Summary of PJ-1K #25

The route 4 days 1,426 Miles, Average Distance = 357 miles per day

The Days distances: Fri = 350, Sat = 375, Sun = 373, Mon = 328.

The new first day route was an improvement over other 1st day routes, but could use additional improvements.

The last day definitely needs some improvement. From Quincy there just aren't enough good miles left. Need to investigate alternatives. The 96 and 36 combination is awesome. I want to do that again. Will definitely drop A16.

With a few exceptions; Let's see: Rick's Diesel, Mana's Tire, Mana out of gas, Dave topples, Maurice's R1 get Impounded - it'd been a pretty damn good ride.