

ABATE Freeze Your Ass Off Poker Run Well the weather gods were nice and did not bother us with rain. They even kept the temperatures well above freezing. So another year and this ride remains misnamed. It has been wet some years, really wet for a few, but dry most years, and never freezing. Some years were even downright spring like warm. But I have not frozen my ass off yet. It's still there, working as usual. Today was a great day to ride. The event is ABATE 17's main fund raiser and it gets better each year. The bad news: The route did not include many twisties at all -- almost all straights and 90 degree turns. And the route instructions were a bit weaker than normal. Now the good stuff. It is just plain cool to do a group ride where the only group is those bikes that are around you for 'this' stretch. They change on the next stretch. And with so many Harleys around, the sonics are nicely covered. My quiet Magna just hums along, unheard.

I got to Miss Darla's in Vacaville around 9:20, signed up and paid for the ride, and re-upped my ABATE enlistment. Then I walked in and found the breakfast. Nice scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, biscuits, gravy, and hot sauce. I ate and talked with folks around me, traded a few lies and jokes.

After disposing of my plate, I got suited up to ride. I timed it perfect and tagged onto the back of a large group forming up. I let them lead...I followed and relaxed. Well this first group I rode out with got lost and 'joined' another lost group. Fun to see twenty to thirty bikes making u-turns, reading maps, and proclaiming "This is the right way". But with only one more stop to check maps and street signs, and a tiny last minute u-turn, we got to the Buckhorn in Dixon and pulled our second card.

The big group was out and rolling before I was ready. Me and another bike got ready at the same time shortly after that. He saw my tank bag with the instructions and allowed me to lead. So I led out from the Buckhorn and correctly followed the route to Stratford Ave (too many stop signs) to Pit School Rd. As we got to Pit School Rd, we passed a lot of our first group at a gas station -- reading maps I guess. We continued on and soon caught up to another bike on the route. It was a couple riding two-up. This rider was slowing for the correct turns, and had his turn signal on, well before any street signs could be read. My guess was he had gps and his passenger was reading the route to him. This proved to be true. I was reading the route from my tank bag and confirming his choices, but soon just let him lead as he was dead on.

Once on Hwy 16, it was just a matter of following the straights and nineties to Capay and the Capay Junction Saloon. I was glad our 'leader' was riding at the speed limit as we came upon a sheriff parked and waiting on the side. The third stop was just a block further up Hwy 16. As suggested by the instructions, I walked the huge distance to the Road Trip Bar and Grill. Good news for me, they had candy bars.

I made it back to the Junction eating my chocolate and checked the route for the next leg. Hey! I knew how to do that stretch without assistance. I looked and saw no one was ready to roll, so I ran back Hwy 16 to Road 89 (such an inventive street name) as a solo, feet up on the front pegs, leaning back a bit, just cruisin'.

This put me right in downtown Winters and right to the doorstep of the community center. I easily found a parking space in the lot and walked on in to find the hall was almost empty. I was one of the early riders to complete the route. I picked my last card and I had a much better hand than usual -- I had a pair of twos. Not bad enough for low hand and way too cruddy for high hand.

Since I was going to be there awhile, I availed myself of the bar and got a beer. Hmmm, nice. I watched the band set up, watched the food getting cooked (huge 6 foot flames wildly lapping at the tri-tips), talked with other folks milling about, and waited for lunch call. My beer got empty so I just had to refill it. While out back talking with friends, I saw a rider with a plate of food. Time to get into the food line. The salad had the dressings on the side for a change and that allowed me to pick which kind I wanted -- a big plus. The beans were just straight out of the cans and needed some 'customizing' to spark 'em up. The tri-tip was glorious. And the bread roll was very tasty. The band (didn't catch their name) was cranking out a wide variety of blues and

rock from many decades. Drums, bass, guitar, and a singer. They filled the air nicely with the tunes. The raffle ticket process was greatly improved over previous years. They just pulled ticket after ticket and wrote the 120 winning numbers on a huge board -- and the 121st on a second, equally large board. I didn't win -- sigh. There were some great prizes as usual. I waited for the 50-50 and hi/lo hands only miss out again. Nuthin' unusual for my poker ride luck.

After that, the group broke up and scattered to the winds. I went out the back side of town on Putah Creek Rd and followed it to Pleasants Valley Rd. -- finally got some twisties. Then the short run on the freeway to home. No frozen ass, but no wet gloves. A nice tradeoff.