

## Harley “Hotties” for the Day October, 2005

By Barb Smith

I called my good friend and fellow BMW club member Keith Andersen to see where in the world he'd been traveling to these days, and we got to talking about my son's upcoming wedding. I said, "I've got business in San Francisco the first part of that week, and I'll rent a car and drive down to Monterey for the wedding at the end of the week." "What week is that?" Keith asked. "October 17. The wedding is on the 22<sup>nd</sup>," I replied. "Well," he said, "I think I'm going to be in Oakland on business that week, myself."

So that's how it started. I needed a "date" for the wedding, Keith was going to be in the Bay area that week anyway and furthermore, I would have a day to play before the obligatory dinners and parties started to crank up on Thursday night. To make up for the fact that he would need to wear a tuxedo if he was to be escorting the mother of the groom down the aisle, I suggested we "kill" that free Thursday by renting a couple of Harley Davidsons from Bob Dron H-D in Oakland. The weather was going to be perfect for riding!

We picked the bikes up Wednesday night – Keith on a Road King, me on a Heritage Classic – and we "potato-potato'd" our way back to the hotel so that we could get an early start in the morning. Our destination: The Marin Headlands, Muir Woods, and Point Reyes Lighthouse. This route would put us on some of those breathtaking West Coast twisties.

Too early is not early enough to beat the rush hour traffic headed in both directions on 880 in Oakland. We fired up those Harleys (dang, but they're loud so early in the morning!) and headed north, into the thick of it on the freeway. We skirted the Bay and crossed the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge to reach the Marin peninsula. This is a toll bridge and we crept our way up to the toll booth only to learn, too late, that motorcycles cross all of the area bridges for free through the EZ-Pass lanes during rush hour. We had dozens of cars lined up behind us as we fumbled our \$3.00 toll. "Rookie tax," I muttered under my breath as we pulled away.

The roads were great and I'm sure the views are spectacular, but a solid wall of fog clung tenaciously to the coastline everywhere we went. We turned off 101 to enter Marin Headlands (Golden Gate National Recreation Area) and were rewarded by a brief glimpse of the Golden Gate Bridge through the fog and a ride through a neat one-way tunnel carved right into the hillside.

After riding the relatively sedate roads through the Marin Headlands, I wanted something torturous and twisty, and soon enough we had it as we rode Muir Woods Road over Mount Tamalpais and down into the forest. Muir Woods National Monument gave us a chance to get off the bikes, walk amidst towering Redwoods, and enjoy their rich fragrance. We also enjoyed a light lunch at the café in the park.

SR-1 between Muir Beach and Stinson Beach features some tight hairpin turns and there are no guard rails, so it's just as well that I could see nothing off to my left but a grey wall. A side trip to one of the vista points rewarded us with...nothing. Too foggy to see out over the bluffs where we knew the Pacific Ocean was lurking.

After a brief stop at the Point Reyes Visitor Center, we took the road out to the lighthouse, a 45-minute ride on high rugged hills dotted with dairy cattle. This road passes through several historic dairy ranches still in operation today. The occasional cattle guards and roadway caked with cow droppings reminded us that this is open range. It began looking like the wild moors of Scotland when we finally arrived at the lighthouse access point. We passed on the ¼ mile walk to the structure since we knew there'd be no view, and instead marveled at how different it was out here on this strip of land.

It was time to start heading back to Oakland, knowing we had to contend with afternoon rush hour and a deadline to return the bikes. We were pleasantly surprised by the scenic pass through Samuel P. Taylor State Park, with towering redwoods and twisty roads creating a spooky and shadowy darkness in mid-afternoon.

After a coffee break in self-consciously cute San Anselmo, we headed back over the San Rafael Bridge toward Berkeley. We paid more rookie tax as we got onto I-80 and helplessly watched the sport bikes lane-split with ease on the very congested freeway. Nope, no way was I doing that! To make matters worse, we crept along in clutch-burning traffic, wondering if motorcycles are allowed in the HOV lane. No one on a bike seemed to be using it, choosing to lane-split instead. But then, finally, we saw a bike whiz by in the car-pool lane so we fought our way across two lanes of traffic to get to it, but I lost Keith in the process, knowing only that he was somewhere in front of me.

We got the bikes back to the dealer with just minutes to spare. We picked up our rental car and, as we headed down to Monterey, we both felt good about the day, the ride, and that we had been Harley "hotties" for a day. For a couple of Beemer riders, I thought we looked mighty fine on those hogs!