

Written by Madeleine Velazquez, (aka Missrider). I wrote this blog after I got home July 28....

I am finally home and my heart and mind are still on the road. I am going through some serious riding withdrawal. I arrived in Worcester Massachusetts on Wednesday July 27, 2011 and while I am missing the road, I am happy to be home alive without injury. There were a few moments during the ride that I feared for my safety, will post some of those times in my blog soon as time allows. I also think and say to myself, "I cannot believe I rode my motorcycle alone from Los Angeles California to Worcester Massachusetts". When I left Los Angeles and said good bye to my dear friend/sister Arlene Batishill, President/CEO of GoGoGear, <http://www.gogogearaffiliates.com/119.html>, the reality of what was coming up hit me. I thought, "will I ever see, Tweet or email Arlene again? will I survive my ride?". In other words, "FEAR STARTED TO SET IN MY HEART". However, I fought the fear and thought, "I can do this and I will ride my motorcycle home, no matter what!" There is a female musician who I have been a fan and love her music for years. She is Pink, <http://www.pinkspage.com/us/home> She has a song called, "Glitter in the Air". I love the lyrics to the song because at one point she says, "Have you ever looked fear in the face and said, "I just don't care"? Well my friend, that is what I said to myself many times as I rode through some of the most difficult terrain in America, alone with my Triumph Bonneville. My Marine son also tells me, "Mom, pain is a frame of mind." So, between the song lyrics and my son, I rode my motorcycle 5944 miles to come home.... I would do it again in a heartbeat. So, I followed Arlene's perfect road directions out of Los Angeles and then came upon Interstate 15 heading to Las Vegas and saw the immense vastness of what I had to ride through in order to get home. At that point I felt total isolation as I passed hundreds of cars and trucks because I was cold and all I could do was ride my motorcycle as fast as I could, at times Bonnie registered 110 mph on the speedometer. It is amazing how small a person riding a motorcycle in the vast desert seems to be. By the time I arrived somewhere in the open range on Interstate 15, it was still cool and the elevation continued upwards, only to get colder. I was very happy that I decided to wear protective gear because the fog was intense, cold and windy. I stopped and snapped this picture, however, pictures cannot show how large the place is and how small a girl riding her Triumph motorcycle seems in it all. Every time I would stop on the side of the road, I worried because I was a good target to have a car or truck run me over. The wind draft from the trucks that drove next to me barreling in speeds that felt over 200 mph would shake my bike every time I stopped on the side of the highway to snap photos.



*on the side of the road wondering if I would be able to ride through that huge desert*

The thoughts of some of the riding are still very vivid in my mind. The cramps on my legs stopped since I've had a week to ride my bicycle and stretch the legs. During most of the ride, I would get up multiple times in the middle of the night with horrible leg cramps from riding so many miles per day. I am not missing those nights. It took me around 4 days for my mind to actually feel settled and feeling that I was forcing my body through horrible winds, specifically through the Mojave desert and Kansas on interstate 70. I remember riding through the Mojave desert and seeing hundreds of miles of terrain that I had to ride through and asking myself if I would actually be able to ride through it due to loneliness, heat and exhaustion.

In spite of all that, I still kept riding at high speeds until I started to see signs that said, "Las Vegas, 365 miles, or something like that". I thought, "holy moly, that more miles, if I push myself and do spurts of 120 mile intervals, I should arrive in a few hours." Sure enough, I did, rode Bonnie and pushed that girl as hard as she could ride and she handled it beautiful. Today, I am home and so is she a little sick because she is experiencing something killing the battery. Will take Bonnie to the shop tomorrow and hopefully they can isolate the problem. After all, she is my little traveller, she is going to Buffalo NY next weekend, August 13, 2011.



Take a look at this photo, I took it somewhere between Los Angeles and Las Vegas in an isolated garage, somewhere near the Mojave desert. By this point it was the middle of the day and so hot, I got my expensive gas as it felt like I had no choice but to pay the price of \$5.19 or risk being stuck in the desert without gas. I got my 2 gallons and continued riding to Las Vegas.

Arrived in Vegas to find traffic and heat. I was not pleased with my findings and needed to take off the gear as Arlene had said would occur. At this point I was wearing my leather chaps and was desperate to take them off. I could not find a gas station in the middle of Vegas for about an hour and half going around in circles only to find major casinos and resorts. Well, finally found a place and filled up and back on the interstate to arrive into Utah, still very desert like conditions. By now I was totally exhausted and getting worried because I could not find a hotel. Finally found a nice LaQuinta hotel where the lady greeted me so nice and assured me that my motorcycle and I would be safe. Suddenly through exhaustion, I went into the room and collapsed being very thankful that I managed to get through that horrible first day of riding.

# LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE DURING THE RIDE

Posted July 16th, 2011 by [missrider](#) & filed under [riding](#).

Here I am sitting in Silverthorne Colorado, it is 3 am and I woke up thinking about the elephants. So, I decided to sit and write about how my life has changed during this ride. I decided to sit and write in case of an unfortunate accident as I travel America on my motorcycle alone and I don't live to share the highlight of my experience throughout this journey. This trip so far has been spectacular, mostly because of Arlene Batishill, founder and CEO of <http://gogogearla.com/>. On July 5th, she and I started our ride up to Yosemite as we rode up the California Highway 395 towards Mammoth Lakes. Prior to that she had told me that she had a surprise for me during the ride. She kept me in suspense, for every stop I kept wondering when the surprise was going to be revealed. To me everywhere she stopped with her little GoGo bike was a surprise.



Totally, totally spectacular ride, I felt like I was riding a dream and did not want to wake up as we rode what I call "riders dream twisty roads".



So, we keep riding, riding and riding some more and all of a sudden, we appear to a gated field. She pulls in front of it and the gate opens and a beautiful woman drives up in a nice car to greet us. I ask myself, "how does Arlene do this?", "how did they know we were at the gate to open it?" it was all perfectly timed. We drive up to the little old house and out comes this amazing little fragile with a raspy voice lady, Pat Derby, Founder, President of PAWS Performing Animal Welfare Society, [http://www.pawsweb.org/officers\\_and\\_directors.html](http://www.pawsweb.org/officers_and_directors.html). Apparently Arlene is a good supporter of the organization and Pat was kind enough to allow me to come meet the animals. Next thing you know, I am sitting in Pat's truck as she drove us around the compound to meet the animals and workers. I was taken into a secret place where we had to clean our boots to enter where the elephants are cared for.

Imagine, here I thought that elephants spend their lives in the dirt, but they are very clean animals. My experience in life is to see elephants tortured as circus people force them to travel cities with chains. It always hurts me when I see the animals treated like that, I am not a zoo/circus lover. I hate both of them. I will allow the PAWS website to tell you all about the animals I met last week, <http://www.pawsweb.org/>. Because of PAWS, the few that are lucky to make it here end up with a wonderful life. PAWS needs our help and I will start to find ways to help the animals too.



Meet a few of the care takers. Who knew that these amazing woman are pushing brooms cleaning and they are the happiest people in the world. They are prediaticians highly educated individuals who could be making a living elsewhere but they choose to helpt them animals in any way they can. I have never met anyone with a broom that happy. Thank you ladies for doing what you do.

Look at this picture of Maggie the African elephant who was rescued by PAWS and is now able to drink water like this. She is an amazing creature that is now in my heart forever. Look how she is enjoying her water and is a free wild loved animal. I am so happy to have Arlene sharing her elephants with me. The animals here are so



happy.



Look closely to the picture, there is a tiger on the right lower side, just relaxing in the shade.



While I was there, I asked myself, "who am I do have this wonderful opportunity and have Pat drive me around the compound and share the animals?" "Who am I to have Arlene plan such a wonderful surprise?" I am just a teacher who loves people and is riding her motorcycle to fill a void in my life. Well my friend, "I have found it", Arlene has shared part of her magical life with me and I am forever grateful. I know that I am surrounded by wonderful people and friends, the surprise of visiting the sanctuary has changed my life.

Yesterday I rode over 400 miles in the Utah desert and let me tell you, it was a very, very, very difficult hard ride. All I could think of was, "will I ever get out of this alive?" Imagine, the elephants in captivity have a harder life. At least as I rode my motorcycle I knew that at some point the horrible ride through the deserts would end. How about the animals in zoos and circuses all over the world? They don't have a way out of their horrible ride. As we drove away in Pat's truck, Maggie followed us. My heart goes out to the people at PAWS and the wonderful work they are doing with the animals. Thank you so much Pat and Arlene for that amazing experience. I will not experience anything better during this ride.





# SCARY 54 MILES ON MY MOTORCYCLE THROUGH THE FOREST

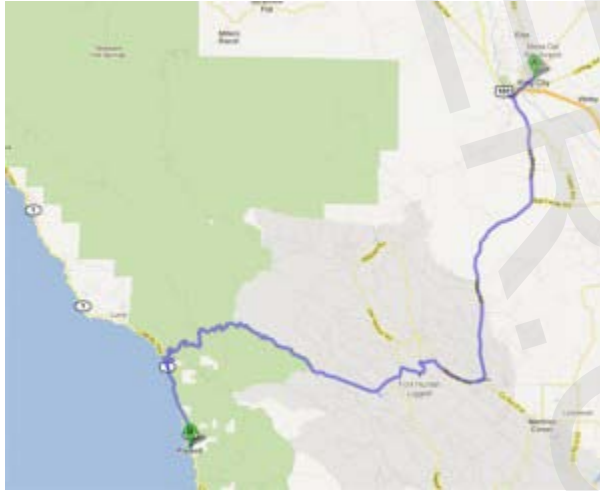
Posted October 31st, 2011 by [missrider](#) & filed under [riding](#).

There is a little story that I have not been able to blog about since completing my coast to coast ride in July, 2011. When I was riding with Arlene in California, I had to separate and ride west to San Francisco to meet up with a friend. On my way down I was travelling south on US1 also known as Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) and at one point there was a fork and somehow I was on highway 101 south in California. Not knowing the area, I continued riding hoping it would connect me back to the PCH highway, it was cold and I was freezing because I did not bring warm gear. It gets very cold in California at



night, wish I had known that.

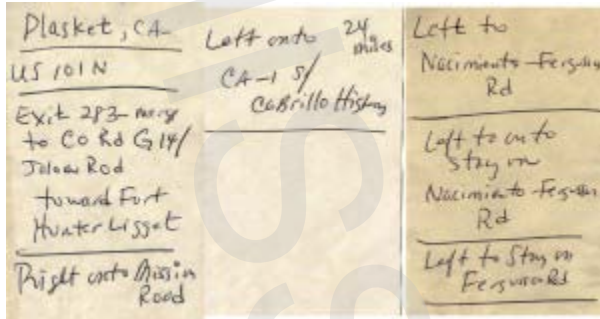
I continued riding until I had to stop because I was shaking from cold and hunger. At this point my motorcycle did not start with a dead battery. My heart sunk with disappointment and fear of not knowing if the motorcycle would make it across the country. Lucky for me that there was a motel next to the gas station, so I asked a stranger to jump start my motorcycle with the jumper cables I had purchased that morning.



I settled down for the night and got very little sleep worried.

In the morning, Arlene tells me to get back onto the PCH highway. I looked at GoogleMaps and the choice was to travel 188 miles south all the way to Los Angeles and miss the beautiful coast line, OR, ride through the forest to get to the ocean. I looked at the map and thought, "oh, that should be fine, it is only 54 miles". Well, I was in for a 54 mile roller coaster for a very scary ride all by myself through a mountain pass that a female should not be alone, especially on a motorcycle. I wrote down the directions because I did not have an address to plug into my GPS and also thinking it was a piece of cake to just ride there. So, I launch into what turns out what the ride the changed my life around with determination of loosing all my fears.....





I will allow the pictures to tell the story. There were some areas that I wanted to take a picture but was afraid for my own safety, it was too dark and scary to stop. Some of the roads were hair pins turns with dirt falling off the cliffs on the side with tons of gravel making it a very slippery slope. Especially with a heavy motorcycle loaded with 3 weeks of gear. Those images of that forest will forever be burned in my mind and I hope to someday return to it riding a smaller motorcycle and not loaded with gear making it heavy. It will also be nice going into it with a motorcycle that has a good battery and with plenty of enough water and a trusted friend. I was very concerned of running out of water.....



*Somewhere in this forest*



*I was brave to stop at this corner for a quick picture*



*Like the sign says, the road was like an old donkey trail, no place for a heavy motorcycle loaded with gear on a dirt road..*

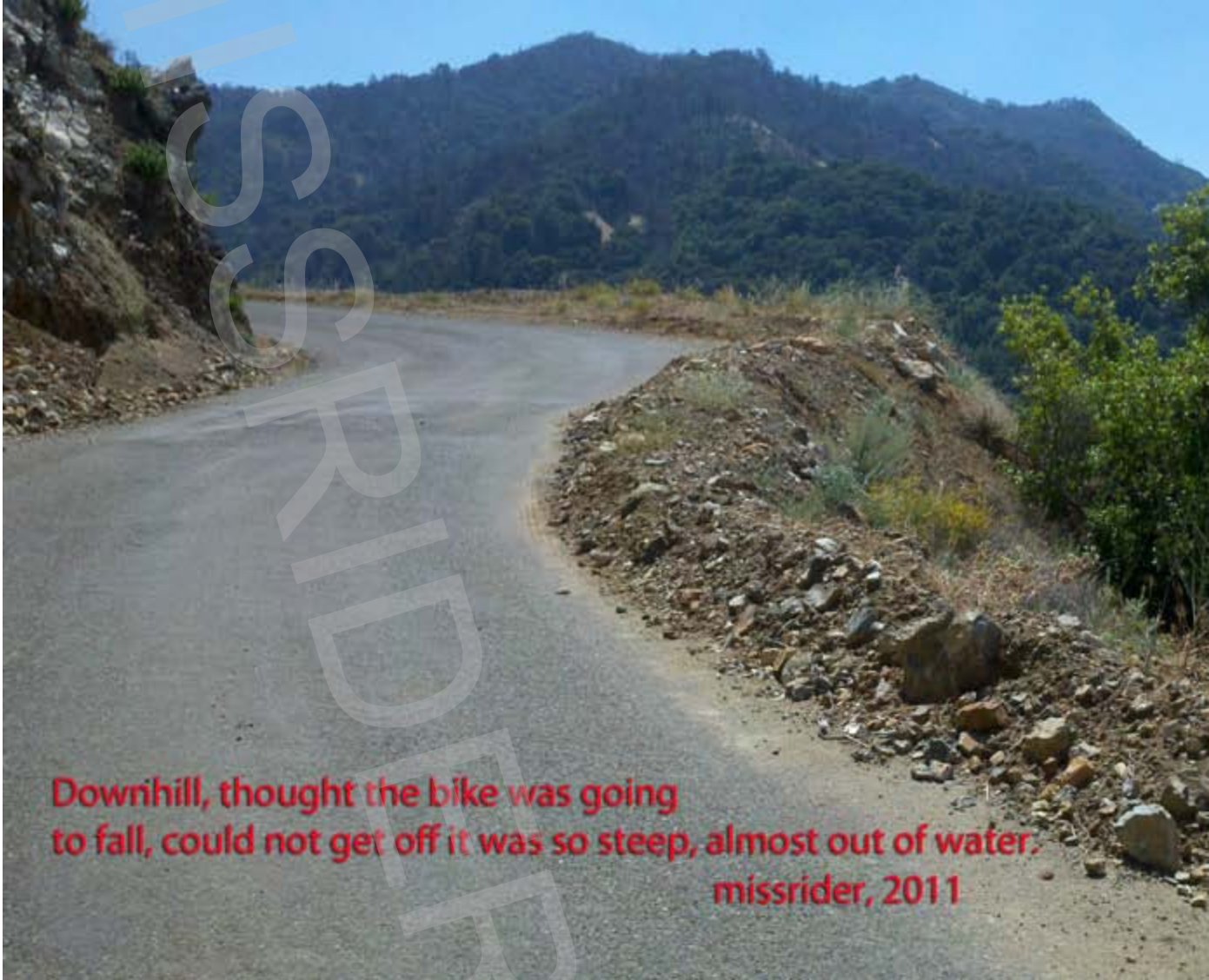




spectacular scenery, look at the big bird ---->

Managed to put the bike on stable ground for a quick picture.  
missrider, 2011





Downhill, thought the bike was going  
to fall, could not get off it was so steep, almost out of water.  
missrider, 2011

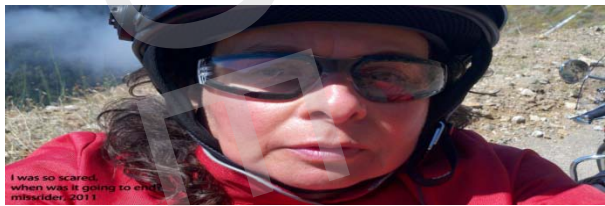


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Very steep cliff, missrider 2011



I was so scared, what was it going to end missrider 2011



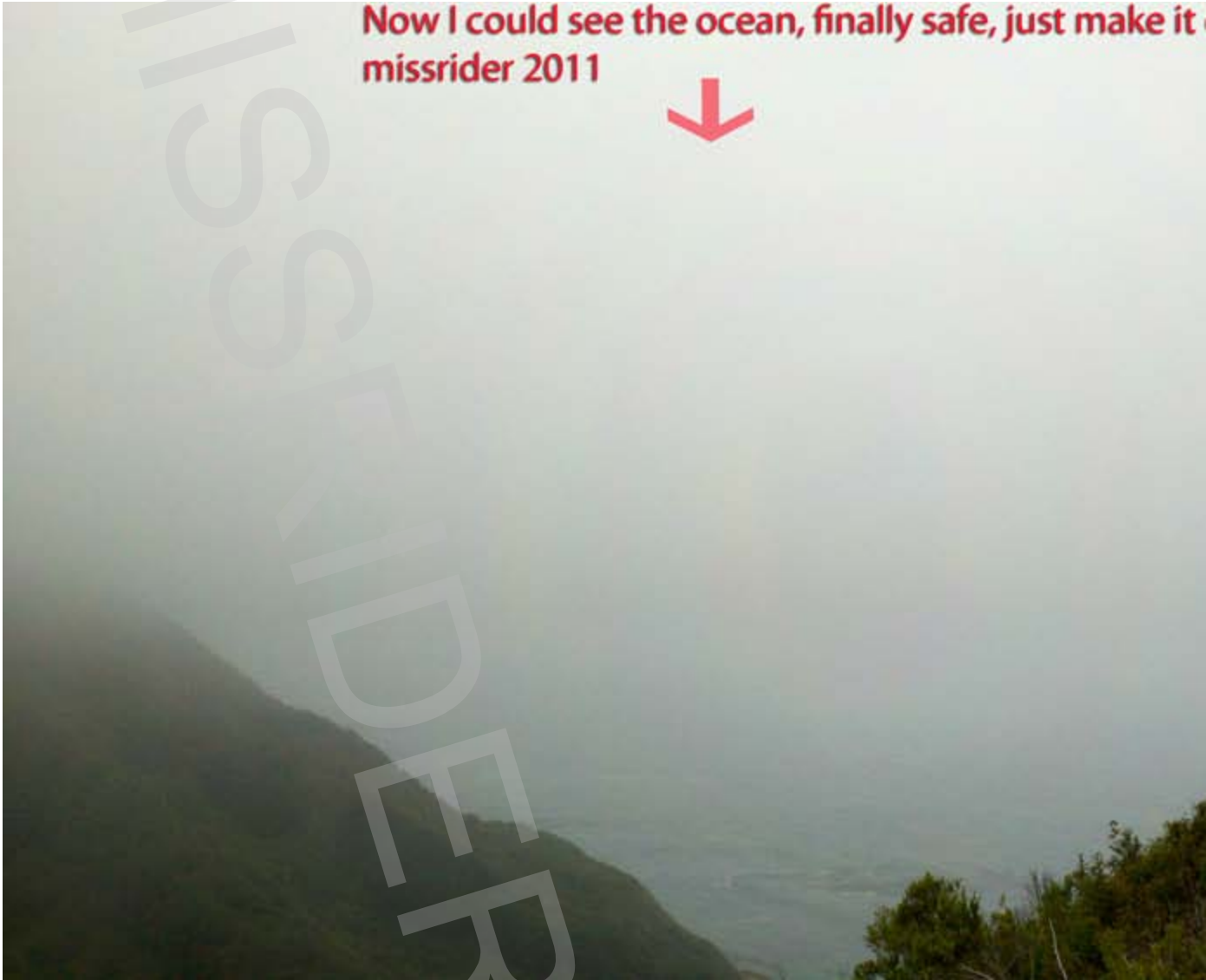


Finally a glimpse of hope that I was nearing the end of the ride,  
had to travel down those little roads, missrider, 2011



Finally the ocean is on the right, I could also see  
missrider 2011

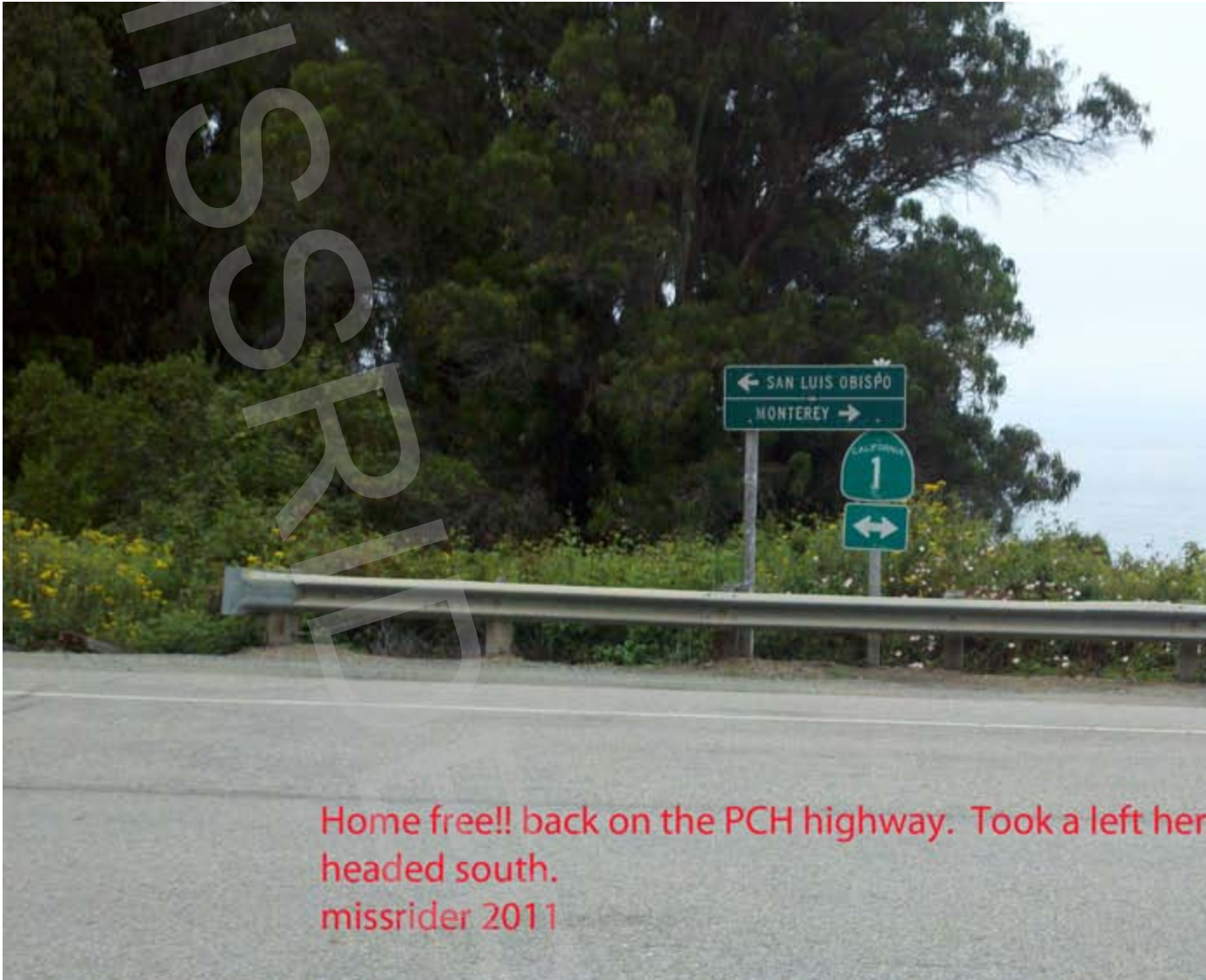
Now I could see the ocean, finally safe, just make it  
missrider 2011





**Descending down, kept wondering what those markers on the road  
to rescue those that fell off the cliff?**



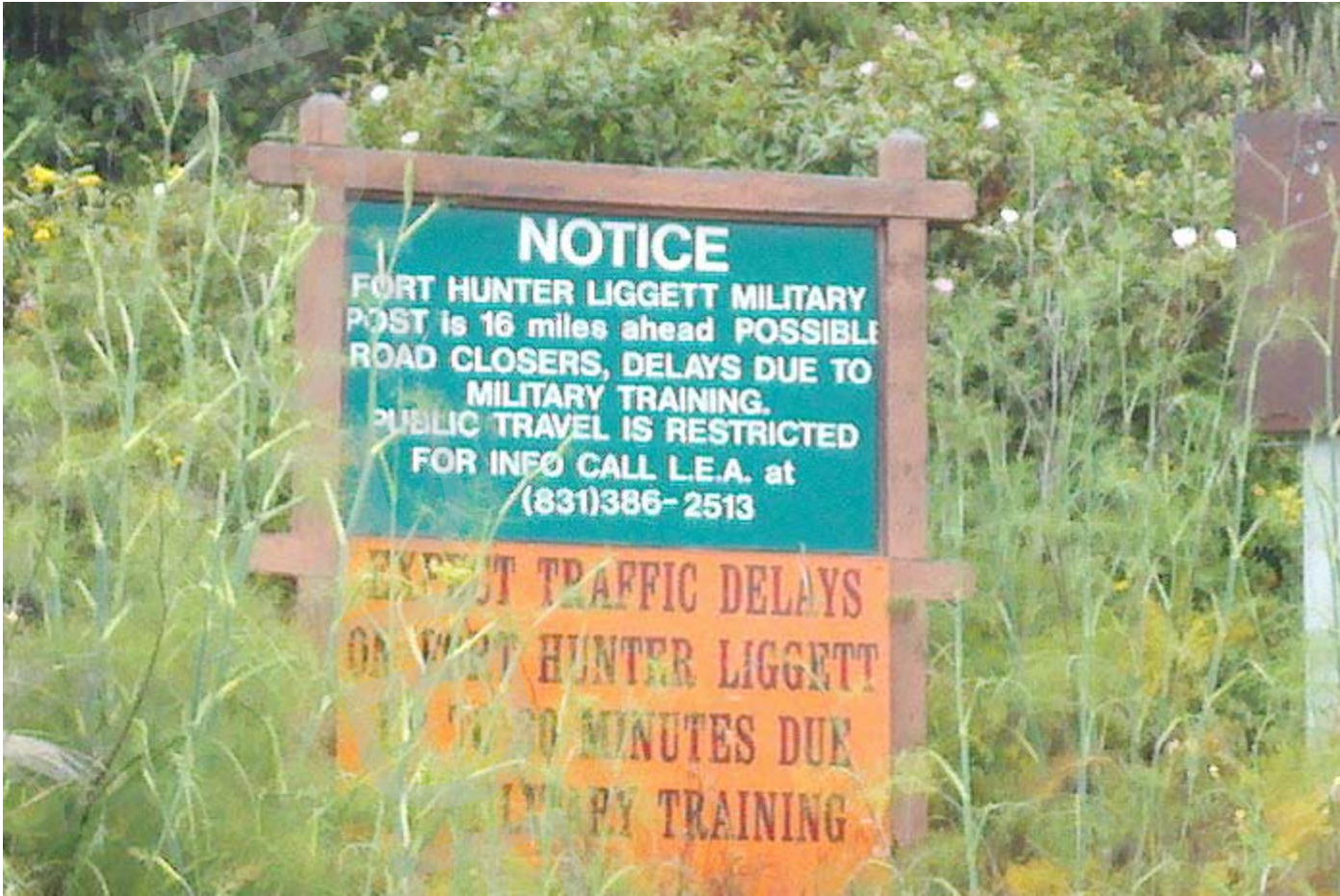


Home free!! back on the PCH highway. Took a left here  
headed south.  
missrider 2011









I created a little video and will fix it with my students as we learn now to use Adobe Premiere Pro CS4.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCpGRGsC7Hc&feature=youtu.be>

# SO CLOSE TO HOME, YET SO FAR.

Posted July 26th, 2011 by [missrider](#) & filed under [riding](#).

As soon as I started riding this morning from Woodstock Virginia it poured rain. I kept riding because I wanted to get home tonight through thunder, lightning and more rain. I rode my motorcycle in the rain 397 miles until it got dark and very dangerous on major interstates. After 397 miles, I got caught in this a major storm in Danbury Connecticut. Granted, I had been riding through the same storm that kept following me

through Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York State.



I still kept riding through the rain because it is easier during the daylight hours. I also encountered a man riding a Harley while he was wearing shorts and his little beany cap with sunglasses as he got caught in another one of those downpours. Check out this little video I created while following that man. [Video](#).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJXmVzHqP6k>

120 miles from home, it got dark, lightning and hail. I pull over off highway 84 in Connecticut looking for shelter for the night, called a few places and all booked for the night.

Then I found a hotel called Hampton Inn a mile from where I was and they wanted to charge me \$125 for the night with no security for my motorcycle. Who would charge that much money and have no surveillance cameras. The guy says, "You can put your motorcycle in the fire lane but it will get towed". What a bunch of jerks!! I decided to keep riding looking for another place. Back on highway 84 and the rain got worse with lightning. Once, again, I pull to the next exit and take my phone ready to call hotels or anyone in the area. I find a missed call with Arlene's <http://scooter-girls.com/> message telling me to call Scooter Diva who is willing to host me for the night. I am delighted and call Ellen and come to her house. Amazing, Scooter Girls came to the rescue one more time by providing me Scooter Diva, <http://www.scooterdiva.com/> a safe place for the night.

Here I am blogging about this and decide to check out the reviews of that Hampton Inn only to read they have bed bugs. Incredible, how things happen in life. That opportunity allowed me to meet Scooter Diva for a safe place. Life has amazing ways to get people together when in need. The lesson here is that you must be surrounded with good friends that are willing to help you when you need it the most. Thank you both Arlene and Ellen for the help.





# THROUGH UTAH

Posted August 9th, 2011 by [missrider](#) & filed under [riding](#).

The second day of my ride was even harder. After having a good breakfast and getting tons of advice from travelers at the hotel, I decide to select my own route from the map.



This couple was loaded with advice as to which roads were best. My goal this day was to visit at least 2 national parks and the closest one was Zion. I could see my Bonnie from the hotel room and I was so happy nothing bad happened to her. After all, my main fear during the entire trip was that something horrible would happen to my bike, ie, like someone knocking it down or worse having someone steal it, then what!!



From the hotel I headed east on Route 9 and enjoyed the smaller roads to arrive at the main Zion entrance. I arrive at the entrance and they ask me for money, I thought, oh great, more cash and I am running low. I thought, should I really spend money going into this park, so I did. As soon as I enter, there is a traffic jam. My heart was racing because I was sad entering a national park without my buddy Arlene. There were hundreds of people, but the solitude settled in and I was almost in tears.

So, I sent Arlene a text message sharing my feelings and she responds, "you better get over it girl because you have another 3000 miles to travel alone". Her response made me laugh, she always has a wonderful response to everything, so I got over the solitude and sad feelings that started to enjoy the beautiful scenery.



I continued riding through the winding roads and long tunnels enjoying the beautiful colors and red rocks. Zion is a small park, you can ride through it in a few hours. Then I started feeling lonely again and as I did, I saw this motorcycle rider trying to take pictures of herself, just like I had been doing. So, I pull over and introduced myself and there is Anna. She was travelling in the same direction doing the same thing I was doing, solo riding enjoying America on a motorcycle.



So, it was like a miracle, I was feeling sad from separating from wonderful friends, then all of a sudden, Anna appears. At that point I realized that I was not alone, America is full of amazing wonderful people. So Anna and I ride through Zion and head up to Bryce Canyon. Right before we were riding, she asked me to lead. I told her that I ride fast and she said it was cool, she could keep up. I said that to her because my experience with female riders has been that they don't like to ride fast. Turns out, the girl can ride. She had been on the road alone since June and had traveled more miles that I had planned to do. You Go Girl, I am very proud of you.



*Heading into Bryce canyon from Zion in Utah*

In the roads we were travelling, it made sense to open the throttle a bit and just get there, mostly because of the winds. In my case I was wearing an open face helmet and the sand and winds were not something I was enjoying, thus the speed to get through it as we passed from Zion to Bryce. Look at the picture to get a sense of my point, notice the mountains in the far distance, quite a few miles to travel to see Bryce canyon. We arrive in Bryce canyon to see the most spectacular rocks. We continue taking pictures and rode through Bryce and back out, had the most amazing day.



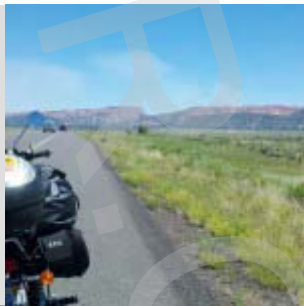


*An amazing fun filled day*

We continued riding, Ann was leading this time, and all of a sudden, she stops very fast. There was a truck on the left lane that almost hit a horse. There was a farm on the right with about 4 horse that somehow escaped. The truck driver stops and manages to scare the horse away back from the middle of the road and let me allow the pictures tell you the story.







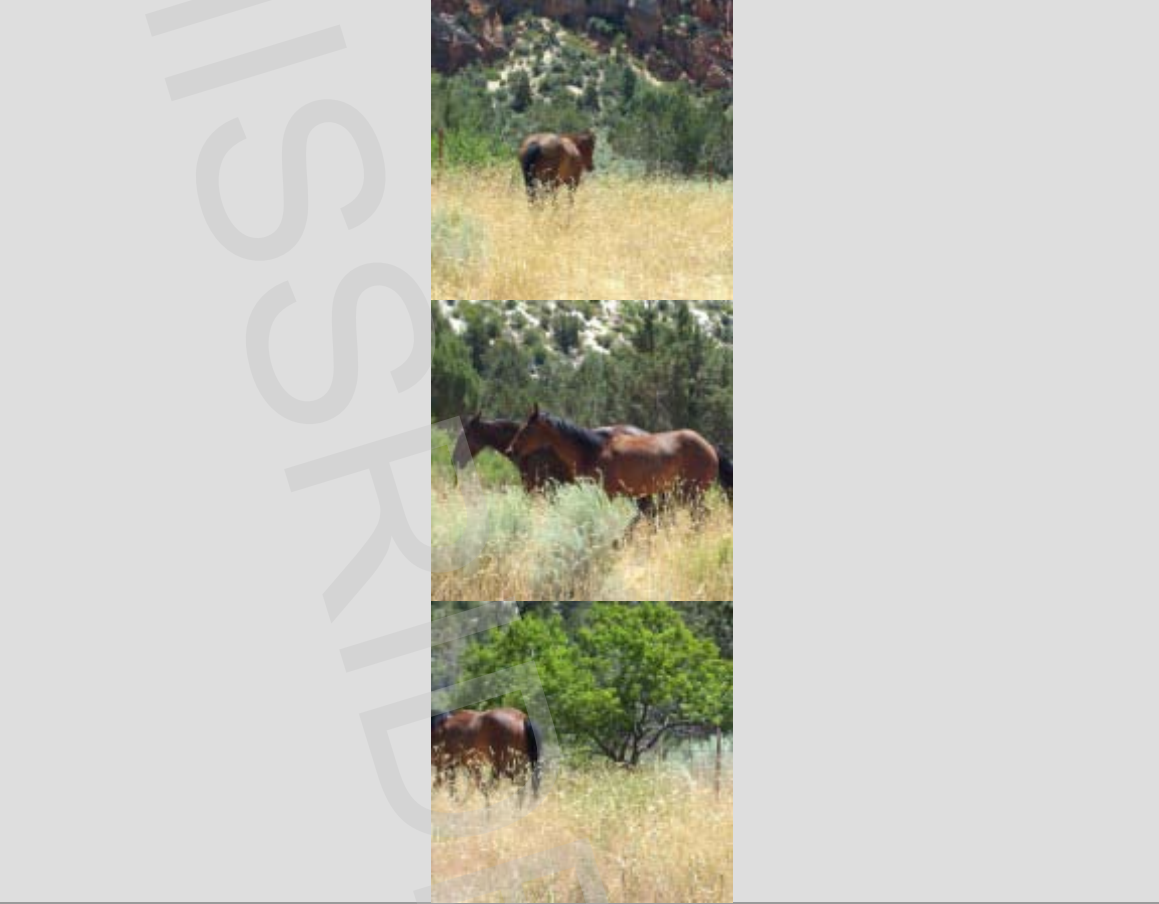
*Heading into Bryce canyon from Zion in Utah*





*An amazing fun filled day*







# WEEK 1

Posted July 11th, 2011 by [missrider](#) & filed under [riding](#).



















## Water Solutions: Mono Lake's Story

On September 28, 1994, a significant victory was achieved in the long struggle over Mono Lake's water. The California State Water Resources Control Board issued an order to protect Mono Lake and its tributary streams.



### In Making Them

The struggle for solutions...

### The Future

The future...

WELCOME TO  
SOUTH TUFA

PLEASE  
STAY  
ON TRAILS





Status so far, let the pictures tell the story.











# WEEK 2

Posted July 15th, 2011 by [missrider](#) & filed under [riding](#).

So much has happened this past week, I have not had any downtime to blog. I have been uploading pictures to facebook, so follow me there.

Today, July 15, 2011, we rode over 400 miles from Richfield Utah to Silverthorne Colorado. The ride was horrible and extremely hard through the desert. However, the country is absolutely stunning. It is just so hard to ride it on a motorcycle. The winds were fierce and the heat started to get to me. Around 300 miles into the ride, I stopped for gas and food and a man on a horse showed up. I asked if we could take a picture and Don Del Monte was very happy to pose with Rico for the picture.



So Don and Rico are riding to Los Angeles from Nebraska. I hope Don does not take Rico into the desert I had just been. It is not a place for a horse. Anyways, this is their link, <http://saddleupforsuicideprevention.webs.com/>.

Rico was interested in my bike. He kept smelling it. It was after that I remembered I had an apple and nuts in the truck. I wish I had remembered that, I think horses like apples. All I could do was give Dan a \$5 bill since I am running low on cash.



