

Notes on Spokes

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Dalton Sharp on his way to winning the Pee Wee Races at the OMTRA Play Day

TID BITS

OK, I know I am very, very late with this issue. But that's how things go. I am hoping to get the May issue out in a more timely manner.

I just got my May issue of Trail Rider Magazine. Yes, they are getting their magazine out on time. But hey, it's their job. For me, it just keeps me off the streets at night. Anyhow, there was this article about the National Enduro held last May at Park Hills, MO. The author mentioned the real cool trophies. "They are pit boards — you know, the thing your pit man holds out for you to read while you ride by. "Two more laps" or "Faster" or something like that. I'm already using mine for a cheese and cracker tray, but my pit stops are not like most people's." Spud, you've made the big time.

The racing seasons are all in full swing. Five Black Jack Enduros have already taken place. Two Missouri Hare Scramble Championship races have taken place. Four Arkansas Hare Scramble Championship races have been run. As usual, we've had spring rains. It's hit some races harder than others.

As you can read in the article by John Humphrey about the BJEC race at the Zink Ranch, the spring rains make things pretty sloppy. I heard things were also pretty sloppy at the first Missouri race at Lebanon.

In the world according to Spud, we've been in this cycle where we've had a rainy weekend followed by a nice weekend. I don't know how true that is, but it seems like it.

I didn't get to the third BJEC race at Forest Hill, LA, but there was a nice write-up in the April 21st Cycle News. It's a nice big article up toward the front. A two-page spread with lots of pictures.

A big thanks to John Humphrey. John took it upon himself to write race reports for the Black Jack Enduro Circuit to send in to Cycle News. He's also sending them to Notes on Spokes. Thanks again.

On page 11 of this issue is a submitted article from Bill Davis. No, he's no relation to Mike or Cliff. As you'll read in the article, Bill is from California and has family in the Ozarks. He met Shawn while working out at a hotel in Maryland. One thing led to another and he was able to ride with us on our play day at Bull Creek. Bill, thanks for the article.

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LEUDTKE WINS A NAILBITER DOWN ON THE ZINK RANCH

By John Humphrey
 Tulsa, OK, March 7th
 Black Jack Enduro Circuit
 Round 1: Zink Ranch Enduro

Jack Zink and the Zink Foundation welcomed riders back to the site of the 1994 ISDE with a tough race. With trails the top riders in the world rode 10 years ago and 5 inches of rain the previous week, the Black Jack Enduro Circuit was treated to an extra helping of rocks and mud. In fact, only 95 of the 265 riders who started the race would even make it to mile 13!

Steve Leivan, the defending 7-time BJEC champion, was poised to begin the 2004 season in his typical winning ways aboard his SCR/Answer/Dunlop/RaceTech/Silkolene Yamaha WR250. However, the lure of racing at the Zink Ranch brought Walker Leudtke, a multi-time District 22 enduro champion, down from Nebraska to race the A-Vet class with the distinct goal of beating Leivan. With additional talented riders that included 2003 ISDE silver medalist Lars Valin, the Tulsa Trail Riders had all the makings of a great race.

The long course consisted of 3 loops with a total of 85 challenging ground miles and 15 total checkpoints deciding the day's winner. The first points taker, check 4, was a short section with a long and rocky downhill and then a very difficult uphill to ride back up. Chris Tucker, racing the A class in his first enduro, hit the check on his minute. Luedtke and Leivan each dropped 1 point, and the rest of the



Walker Leudtke on his way to winning at Zink

riders dropped 2 or more. With an emergency check at check 8, the search was on again for the faster riders. Jon "Spud" Simons bested everyone in this section with a 3:34, while

(Continued on page 4)

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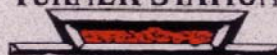
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It was good to see Steve VanZant back chasing points.

Tucker, Leivan, and Luedtke recorded times of 3:37, 3:45 and 4:02, respectively.

As the race wore on, numerous mud bogs were strewn along the course, and smart line decision became a necessity for survival. At the end of the second loop, Luedtke had lost his rear brake completely due to conditions described by most riders as "gnarly." "At that point, I decided I was going to rail straight through every bog in loop 3 and go for it," Luedtke said.

Loop 3 would be a 24mph pace throughout, and the next test would be check 12, where the course began to test the durability

and fitness of the riders. Luedtke stood out as the fastest in this section, dropping 3 points while Leivan dropped 4 and Tucker dropped 5. Check 13 continued the trend as a tiebreaker, and again, Luedtke bested everyone with a time of 6:48. Leivan and Tucker recorded 7:12 and 8:27, respectively. The last real test, check 14, gave Leivan the chance to gain a point back on both Luedtke and Tucker, as he dropped a 3 to their pair of 4's.

The points were tallied up and Luedtke and Leivan both dropped 19 points, Tucker dropped 21, and the rest of the field dropped 26 or more. The emergency points were figured, and Luedtke's 650 seconds edged out Leivan's 658 for an exciting finale on the Zink Ranch.

The Moose/Smith/Pirelli/Alpinestars/NVC-sponsored Walker was excited after the race, showing genuine respect for Leivan. "I've raced Steve in hare scrambles, and I've never beat him. Actually, I almost DNF'd in the last loop when I caught a big rock in some water I underestimated the depth of. This race took its toll on me and my bike, but it was worth it."

"Pretty wild to ride that many miles in conditions that tough and finish that close together," Leivan said. "He rode well. My hat's

off to him."

RESULTS

O/A: 1. Walker Leudtke (Yam); 2. Steve Leivan (Yam); 3. Chris Tucker (KTM); 4. Glen Myatt (Hus); 5. Matt Lane (Yam); 6. Lars Valin (Hon); 7. Karl Harris (Yam); 8. Jim Stanfield (KTM); 9. Stephen Vanzant (Hon); 10. Jon Simons (Hus).

AA: 1. Steve Leivan; 2. Glen Myatt; 3. Matt Lane; 4. Lars Valin; 5. Stephen Vanzant.

A: 1. Chris Tucker; 2. Karl Harris; 3. Jim Stanfield; 4. Johnny Rhodes; 5. Shane Roberts.

A VET: 1. Walker Leudtke; 2. Craig Chapman; 3. Aaron Roberts; 4. David Greer; 5. Dan Johnson.

A SR: 1. Steve Underwood; 2. Kreg Simons; 3. John Wade; 4. Rick Owens; 5. John Myrin.

B: 1. Robert Huber; 2. Jeremy Mayes; 3. Jeff Neathery; 4. Zack Little; 5. Shawn Norris.

B VET: 1. Donald Dannar; 2. Mitch Ladd; 3. Kevin Betts; 4. Michael Polley; 5. Deon Bean.

B 0-225: 1. Jordan Dubbs.

C200: 1. Brett Yother; 2. Justin Vieth; 3. Josh McBryde; 4. Evan Meyers; 5. Brent Smith.

C 250: 1. Jack Robertson; 2. Shane Martin; 3. Dustin Beckham; 4. Zacariah Macias; 5. Keith Wright.

C OPEN: 1. Brian Wood; 2. Kody Byrd; 3. Michael Payne; 4. Terry Johnson; 5. Jeremy Cotton.

C VET: 1. Todd York; 2. Keith Beatty; 3. Bret J. Bonnell; 4. Robert Campbell; 5. Mark Shafer.

C SR: 1. Kelly Murray; 2. Phil Ellsworth; 3. Scott Barker; 4. Ray Campbell; 5. Charles Black.

EX SHORT: 1. Stewart Hall; 2. Elston Moore; 3. Tom Franklin; 4. Bob Duffee; 5. Bobby Paschal.

A MSTR: 1. Gary Glidewell; 2. Mike Shown; 3. Jim Holub; 4. Keith Johnson; 5. Jerry Hoffman.

B SR: 1. Paul Pendry; 2. Sam Lorenz; 3. Bob Fuerst; 4. Steve McWhorter; 5. John Branson.

S/SR: 1. Ronald Walters; 2. Luther Stem; 3. Arthur Astle; 4. John Boring; 5. Steve Pierce.

S/55: 1. Ronald Less; 2. Dane Marable; 3. Jim Beckham; 4. Dick Lane; 5. Frank Leivan.

S/60: 1. Bob Harris; 2. Henry Polley; 3. Zahn Lewis; 4. Doug Jandebaur; 5. Ted Nollan.

WMN EX: 1. Cheri Sutherland; 2. Lisa Yother; 3. Gina Polley; 4. Ginger Lorenz; 5. Barbara Zehner.

JR EX: 1. Michael Pitts; 2. Evan Williams; 3. Blake Burns; 4. Justin Terry; 5. Clint Woodard.

JR NOV: 1. Tyler Brooks; 2. Sam Davis.

YTH: 1. Kole Henslee; 2. Jacob Zehner; 3. Joseph Sutherland; 4. Trevor Hicks; 5. Jonathon Owens.


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Play Day - Rain Day

The Ozark Mountain Trail Riders scheduled a weekend of fun and frolic on March 27th and 28th. Of course when you decide to do these things, you don't know what the weather is going to be. Being an officer of the club, I thought driving down Friday after work was a good thing. I'd be all set up and ready to go come Saturday morning.

I get there about an hour before dark. And I see the other folks already here and parked in the second field. Not good, you see I am in a 31-foot RV with a 12-foot trailer behind it and there was a small ditch to cross to the parking area. The RV makes it through the small ditch, but the trailer stopped me like I was anchored to the ground. I have to get a jack out to lift the trailer off the hitch and Spud chains me up to his 4WD and pulls me out. And then he goes back and gets the trailer. As soon as I have the RV leveled with Stewart's help, I call Linda, and tell her to bring the 4WD drive truck. I didn't think I'd get the RV out with the trailer.



Little bikes, big riders — a little strange

OMTRA President makes the command decision and put a sign up in the first field saying "Big Rig parking here." Our little camp-out turned out to be a popular place that night. Stewart, Spud and Chili headed home, since they were close by. Brian Sharp and son Dalton showed up to spend the night in Karl's trailer. Then the Henslee family showed up for a visit. James "Trailblazer" Magsaz and a friend came by and shared some tales into the night. You see, Trailblazer lived on this land when he was a kid back in the late 70s and early 80s when his father was caretaker of the property.

Bull Creek Ranch, the site of the Play Week End, is 2,150 acres and this was the first event held on the property. If you had a chance to get there, you couldn't miss the huge house. Originally, I was told, it was built by a German rock band. James cleared that up. It was owned by a German company

of some kind and in all the years he lived there, only one time did someone from the company come for a visit. His father received a call on Thursday saying they would have company that weekend. He informed them, "it doesn't have any furniture in it!" He is given a credit card number and is told to fill it up. Which he does. The big wigs fly in on Saturday afternoon and leave on Sunday afternoon.

Oh well, back to the play weekend. The first thing on the agenda was the Poker Run. A seven mile loop had been cut. Participants were given an index card and at two different spots on the loop, you had to stop and have the card punched. One was at the start of the loop and the other was about five miles into the loop. The idea was to ride the loop twice and then go back to where you signed up. You would then draw five cards from a deck. The person with the best hand won. There were four classes, motorcycle, ATV, youth and women.

Of course, we are talking about the Ozarks here. So if you expected hills and rocks, you'd be right. We used my Kawasaki Prairie to make sure an ATV would fit between the trees. It was

(Continued on page 6)

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(Continued from page 5)



Things started getting really strange during the panty raid race. Here's Elston Moore putting his on

folks thought one loop was enough. That was fine. We let any one who signed up draw for prizes.

After the Poker Run was the Pee Wee race. I think there were two classes. Small-wheeled bikes and bigger bikes, up to 125cc 4-stroke. It was a half-hour long race. I think they all got their money's worth.

Next on the schedule were big people on little bikes. Again, small wheeled bikes and bigger bikes, up to 125cc 4-stroke. It was a lot of fun watching these guys racing bar to bar.

The final event on Saturday's schedule was the Panty Raid. Riders were divided into teams of two riders. The race started out LeMans style with riders running to their bikes, which were being held by their partners. Jump on the bikes, start the engines and take off, all while wearing a pair of panties outside of their riding gear. They would ride a lap, jump off their bikes and take off the panties. Their

tight, but it fit.

About fifty folks showed up for the fun. There were people of all skill levels participating. Several of the



The winners of the panty raid, father and son John and Bryson Gott

team member would then put the panties on, get on their bikes and they would ride a lap and exchange panties. It was quite a sight. One of the wives was heard saying that she doubted she would be in the mood for anything romantic for at least the next month.



A little suspicious activity from Chili during the "Big Guys on Little Bikes" Race

There was a mega bench racing session held that evening. The weather was perfect. Shane and crew did a fine job of collecting wood for the fire.

Sunday morning dawned cloudy, but no rain. Until about 9 am. Then it started raining. And raining. And raining. We had set up Shawn's trailer as sign up. The computers were dry, being in the trailer. But a pond was forming where riders were signing up, all twelve of them. At eleven o'clock, when the race should have been starting, we cancelled it. Riders were given the opportunity to get their money back. Or they could go out and ride the course for fun. Which most of them did. I got myself outta

there. I heard that by the second lap, the water in the creek was three feet deep.







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LEIVAN ESCAPES THE ROCK WITH A VICTORY



Oops, wrong Leivan

By John Humphrey
Combs, AR
March 21st

Trail conditions and weather were close to perfect for the 30th annual White Rock Enduro. On a day of sunshine and 60 degree temperatures, approximately 236 riders showed up to ride a great course laid out by the Razorback Riders. Three loops, totaling close to 80 miles, would lead the long course riders on rocky, twisting trails through the Boston Mountains of the Ozark National Forest. With only nine checkpoints, there would be little room for error, and more than a few riders would be there to give BJEC champion Steve Leivan a run for the

win. 3 points, while Steve Leivan dropped 2 aboard his SCR/Scott/DHRacing/NGK Yamaha WR450F after slamming into a tree and bending his shift lever into the flywheel cover. "I rode the next seven miles stuck in 3rd gear," Leivan said.

Loop 2 ended with a 4.5 mile section at 24 mph into another tie-breaker. Steve Leivan, Chris Tucker, Matt Lane, and Lars Valin would all zero the check, while Steve Travis and Clint Carr would arrive 4 and 6 seconds out of their minutes, respectively.

While the race thus far had been a bit more wide open and fast than BJEC riders are accustomed to, the club did manage to throw in some additional challenging terrain like Work Hill for the 3rd loop. This loop would consist of 20 miles at 24 mph.

With Steve Leivan and Lars Valin riding on the same row, they



Steve Underwood leads Dave Berry and Aaron Roberts over the bridge after all is done.

(Continued on page 8)

win.

The first loop kicked things off with an 18 mph pace and tested the riders at the first check with an emergency tie-breaker. While many of the top riders would come in on their minute, Chris Tucker, the A-class enduro newcomer, arrived 7 seconds out of his — a close call that would cost him a critical position for the finish. Steve Travis, the BJEC veteran riding AA, bested the field with a time of :34, while Steve Leivan would follow him up with a :39. The loop ended with a very tight section back into camp. However, this final check would be tossed out due to incorrect course mileage.

The next test would take place in a 24 mph section on the 2nd loop. Check 4 saw 4 of the eventual top 5 finishers drop

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Here's the correct Leivan. Steve Leivan won this year's White Rock enduro.



If you haven't been to the White Rock Enduro in a few years, you haven't seen the set up the Razorback Riders have for the White Rock Enduro.

- A VET:** 1. Dan Johnson; 2. Slade Morlang; 3. Carlos Mayo; 4. Aaron Roberts; 5. John Humphrey.
A SR: 1. Kreg Simons; 2. Steve Underwood; 3. John Myrin; 4. Dave Berry; 5. John Wade.
B: 1. Ben Alexander; 2. Jeff Neathery; 3. Kenneth Byrd; 4. Nick Manwarren; 5. Max Ellison.
B VET: 1. Donald Dannar; 2. Lance Gold; 3. Michael Polley; 4. Kevin Betts; 5. David Schrum.
C 200: 1. Brent Smith; 2. Brett Yother; 3. Joseph Alston; 4. Ryan Southard; 5. Ryan Rohledes.
C 250: 1. Zacariah Macias; 2. Eli Patterson; 3. Jack Robertson; 4. JD Reeves; 5. Tyler Tolliver.
C OPEN: 1. Jeremy Estes; 2. Kody Byrd; 3. John Moore; 4. Derek Varvil; 5. Joseph Cooksey.
C VET: 1. Brad Henry; 2. Brad Hilker; 3. Brian Wood; 4. Woody Hearn; 5. Bret J. Bonnell.
C SR: 1. Doug Smith; 2. Britt Fogg; 3. Tom Sutlick; 4. Tim Hawkins; 5. Kimball Stone.
EX SHORT: 1. Stewart Hall; 2. Greg Sims; 3. Elston Moore; 4. Rick Southard; 5. Tom Franklin.
A MSTRS: 1. Jim Willis; 2. Michael Ward; 3. Tom Eidam; 4. Kenny Williams; 5. Phil Norman.
B SR: 1. Bobby Meek; 2. Curtis White; 3. Andy Carrier; 4. Chuck Howard; 5. Danie Hurlbert.
S/SR: 1. Ronald Walters; 2. Earl Schnell; 3. Randy Harmon; 4. Wayne Crosby; 5. John Boreing.
S/55: 1. Dwain Marple; 2. Terry Brumley; 3. Jim Beckham; 4. Dick Lane; 5. Martin Willems.
S/60: 1. Henry Polley; 2. Charlie Burk; 3. Clarence Bonifacics; 4. Tom Barr; 5. Ted Del Solar.
WMN EX: 1. Gina Polley; 2. Lisa Yother; 3. Debbie Howeth; 4. Deborah Mofatt; 5. Hattie White.
JR EX: 1. Justin Riley; 2. Evan Williams; 3. Michael Pitts; 4. Shelby Gragg; 5. Clint Woodard.
JR NOV: 1. Bill Eddy; 2. Sam Davis; 3. Ty Morlang.
YTH: 1. Jacob Zehner; 2. Kole Henslee; 3. Ethan Otis; 4. Matt Hoffman; 5. Joseph Sutherland.

(Continued from page 7)

treated loop 3 like a hare scrambles and turned in times of 3:04 and 3:11 at the final check, respectively. However, the best time in this test came from fast Oklahoma rider Chris Tucker on his KTM 520 with a very impressive 2:18. Matt Lane scored a 3:12 on his Dick Lane's of Grand Lake KTM 300EXC, while Steve Travis again demonstrated his experience level with a 3:45.

The points were tallied up and first place went to Steve Leivan with a score of 5, thus giving him his first victory of the season. Chris Tucker, Matt Lane, and Lars Valin all dropped 6's, with their tiebreaker points adding up to 157, 206, and 211, respectively. Steve Travis rode impressive and dropped 7, rounding out the top 5.

RESULTS

O/A: 1. Steve Leivan (Yam); 2. Chris Tucker (KTM); 3. Matt Lane (Yam); 4. Lars Valin (Hon); 5. Steve Travis (Hon); 6. Clint Carr (Yam); 7. Jon Simons (Hus); 8. Robbie Johnson (KTM); 9. Brickley Owen (Yam); 10. Drew Chandler (Hon).

AA: 1. Steve Leivan; 2. Matt Lane; 3. Lars Valin; 4. Steve Travis; 5. Clint Carr.

A: 1. Chris Tucker; 2. Robbie Johnson; 3. Brickley Owen; 4. Pat Schmidt; 5. Mark Alston.

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OMTRA Stuff

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Usually the minutes from the OMTRA meeting appear in this spot. The OMTRA meeting was held on March 18th at Fudruckers in Springfield. The main topic of conversation was the then upcoming OMTRA Fun Weekend/Hare Scramble. It doesn't make much sense to discuss our plans for the weekend, when by this time the weekend has already passed and I can write about the actual event.

So, instead, I'm running a letter from Dr. Charles McKenzie. Dr. McKenzie has formed a new ATV club.

Ozark Trails ATV Club

ATV riders from the Ozarks gathered on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2004, at Harmony Baptist Church 5 miles east of Springfield, MO to organize the Ozark Trails ATV Club. Plans were made for the coming year's activities and committees were formed to draft a constitution and by-laws. Plans were discussed for club rides and social activities. The club was formed to provide safe and enjoyable riding opportunities, while encouraging good conservation practices, community service, and rider education.

Since its first meeting, club members have performed over 100 man hours of volunteer trail maintenance work at Chadwick, and established a sound working relationship with Kale Horton, the ranger who has assumed the duties of Jim Voyles at the US Forest Service, Ava District. The volunteer hours are currently going toward the matching portion of a grant that funded the purchase of a new mini excavator to be used in trail construction and maintenance.

Officers for the 2004 are: Charles McKenzie, President; Jeff Wehling, Vice President; Doris Gibson, Secretary; Hal McAnally, Treasurer; and Larry Gibson, At Large Board Member.

Plans are being made for a poker run this spring and a trip to Utah in the fall. Anyone interested in helping with this family oriented riding club is encouraged to attend our monthly meetings held at Harmony Baptist Church 5 miles east of Springfield, on Hwy 125 just south of US 60. If you would like further information, or have questions please call (417) 753-3281, visit our web site at OzarktrailsATV.com or e-mail us at OzarktrailsATV@aol.com.

OMTRA Meeting
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Mark Your Calendar

OMTRA meeting—7 p.m. May 21, 2004

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- 6/20/04— Marshfield
- 6/26/04— Park Hills
- 7/27/04— Florence
- 8/10/04— Polo
- 8/22/04— Newark
- 9/5/04— Kahoka
- 9/19/04— Eugene
- 10/2/04— Park Hills
- 10/17/04— Smithville

2004 BJEC Schedule

www.BlackJackEnduro.com

- 5/23/04— Park Hills, MO
- 6/13/04— Bismark, AR
- 6/27/04— Stillwater, OK
- 9/12/04— Northwest, AR
- 10/10/04— Oklahoma City, OK
- 10/24/04— Chadwick, MO
- 11/7/04— Red River, TX

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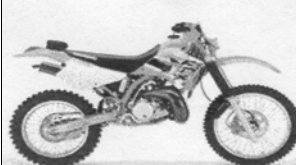
- 05/16/04: Sturkie - Salem
- 05/30/04: Pine Ridge - near Atkins
- 06/06/04: Gorman's Race - TBA
- 06/20/04: Crossroads - Durham
- 07/18/04: River Ridge Classic - Texarkana
- 09/05/04: Highway 89 - Mayflower
- 09/18/04: Saulsbury/MMC - Saulsbury, TN
- 09/26/04: Old Crow - Russellville
- 10/17/04: Possum Trot - near Harrison
- 11/27/04: Riverfront GP - Ft. Smith

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An Ozark Dream Come True

By Bill Davis

Vacationing in the Ozarks as a teenager possessed by the obsession of every off-road rider, I was consumed with the desire to know what it would be like to ride single track through the remote, rocky, tight tree terrain surrounding the area. With my father's family from Kissee Mills, Mo, and 10 siblings living in the Forsyth area, I have spent more than my share of time at family BBQ's, drinking, and fishing in the Ozarks. But through it all I could not help but wonder how blasting through the Ozarks would compare to the trails I frequent in Northern California. Well, thanks to both good fortune and great people, this lifelong fantasy became a reality at the Ozark Mountain Trailriders' March Poker Run!

The good fortune involved an unlikely encounter with a guy wearing a "Missouri Enduro" shirt. It happened in a Baltimore hotel gym where I was trying to get my "Senior" (by racing standards only) body in shape and Shawn Hall was beginning to rehab his severe leg break. As you might expect, the bench racing began immediately as we contrasted our Ozark and California riding experiences. Meanwhile, my dad waiting in the upstairs hotel room was growing impressed with my conditioning as the minutes rolled on. He was even more impressed (albeit only momentarily) to see that I had hardly broken a sweat from such an extended "workout." I came clean with him and shared my acquaintance with Shawn, the hour of moto-rap, and my now more heightened interest in getting my bike back to an OMTRA event.

The great people come from the fact that concerns for my father's health changed my planned May 4 motorhome/KTM Ozark vacation to a last minute plane trip in March. This meant no bike, no Ozark ride again...that is until the good-hearted and generous nature that seems so rampant in that part of the country created the opportunity of a lifetime. Between Bob Fuerst, Shawn and Aaron Roberts, it seemed as though it was raining bikes and riding opportunities. I adjusted my schedule to make the Poker Run weekend and came with great excitement to ride the fresh-cut trail the club had created for the event.

Arriving Saturday morning, I found that both Bob and Shawn had brought bikes prepared for the event and available to me. Electing to ride Shawn's EXC 300, I felt right at home on another KTM. Anxiously awaiting the 11:00 start, I tried on my borrowed boots and all the gear I could fit in my carry-on bag. (I wouldn't risk checking my gear!) I hit loop one with great enthusiasm to "blast" through the long-awaited Ozark single-track. While the enthusiasm never waned, I quickly realized that the concept of "blasting" was maybe best left in California. The Ozark way appeared to be more of "negotiating" than "blasting." Within the first couple miles I encountered mud ruts, rock steps, off-camber, tight trees on a near virgin trail. It was obvious that the approach to riding these trails was going to have to be different than the faster more established trails I frequent in California. I got my mind off of speed (at least for the time being), prepared for obstacles, and began looking for arrows, not the well-worn paths I am accustomed to.

By the end of loop one I was growing more comfortable with the bike, lightened up my death-grip and began to appreciate the unique terrain the Ozarks had to offer. The anticipation of what I would find around the next turn put a smile on my face. The loop ended

and if not for fear of validating suspicions of Californians, I would have jumped off the bike and given Shawn a hoot, holler and hug. Instead it was a big smile, thumbs up and out for another loop.

For loop two I was bound and determined to re-introduce speed into the mix. It was then that I began to understand why they call the western enduros "wide-open." With the recall of Spud labeling the trail as "moderate" and my lack of need for anything higher than second gear, I then realized that "tight sections" in California were few and far between. The idea of an entire event filled with this "moderate" or even more technical terrain made me laugh at my naivety.

A flat tire half-way through the loop also taught me that the sharp, well-grounded Ozark rock was something you had better respect. Disappointed in the thought that my ride had ended short, the Ozark hospitality had yet another surprise, this time in the form of an inner tube, thick enough to raft on, and the mechanical talents of club member Elston. Elston provided me with a tire change set-up and I began to fumble my way through the tire change. Elston would provide occasional direction to improve my obvious lack of technique and progress, until finally deciding that if he was ever going to get me out of his pit he best just change it himself...needless to say, within a couple minutes of Elston taking over, I was on my way for my third and most enjoyable loop.

The third and final loop was everything I had ever imagined it to be. I was able to hook up with Elston and others, maintain a reasonable pace, and truly enjoy the opportunity that Shawn, Bob, Elston and the Ozarks had given me.

My father is losing his battle with cancer and the likelihood of that family/moto vacation to the Ozarks will grow even more unlikely. But thanks to the OMTRA I will have a memory of riding those hills as long as I live. I sincerely hope that I get a call someday asking me to pull my spare bike out and show one of you Ozark riders around in the Sierras!

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