

Cherokee Fall Rally

September 8th thru 10th - Cherokee N.C. the Fall Rally was held on the Cherokee Reservation at the foot of the Smoky Mountains. This is one of the events I enjoy taking the time to relax and having some fun. You know there are days you have to do things for yourself. I knew this was going to be my last chance to get to ride before the cold weather set in.

When I arrived at the reservation I checked into the Pocahontas motel. I like the names given to some of the motels and hotels at these vacation resorts. Everyone knows that Myrtle Beach and Daytona isn't any better at naming their motels. I remember when I vacationed in Cherokee as a young boy. I saw cabins made like Tee pees along the road. I thought the Indians didn't have it too bad with air condition and a nice bed to sleep in at night.

I have been riding bikes of one kind or another for the last forty years. One of the few satisfactions I get in life is being around bikes and bikers. Also something new for me is taking the time to talk with the vendors. Some of the vendors are bikers and other are non-bikers.

I checked in at the ticket booth and got my wrist band and everything I needed to get into the concert that night. When the gate opened at 2:00 p.m. I walked inside and checked out all the vendors. I made my round in no time since this was early in the afternoon. I only found one vendor that I knew. I decided it was time to kill two or three hours before the concert.

Since this was Friday, I did like I always do on the opening day of a rally, I climbed on my bike and headed out. Last April I rode over to Maggie Valley and checked out a rally that was going on at the same time. I always try to ride on a different road when I return to Cherokee or any other place. Most of the winding mountain roads are not new to me. In my younger days before the interstate I made many road trips to Cherokee and Gatlinburg, TN.

I pulled out from the rally grounds but I didn't know which way I wanted to ride. I headed back toward town and when I came to the red light, I decided to take a right turn on Hwy. 19 to Bryson City. This is one of the roads that I have traveled very few times. They keep building motels farther and farther out from Cherokee each year. A few miles out of the motel district I finally came to Hayatt Creek. I crossed the bridge and started riding along the river. Sometimes on a ride just a small section of the road will give you the greatest enjoyment. On this trip there was a five or ten mile stretch of road that ran along the Hayatt Creek before you

reached Bryson City. To ride the road beside this river is the most relaxing part of the journey for me. As I rode I saw other bikers stopped and having meals along the creek. To me this is a very scenic ride that takes me back a few years. This time my road trip took me to Bryson City, N.C. where I stopped for a drink. Since time was running out, I returned to my motel. I was planning on riding to Gatlinburg, TN. on Saturday morning.

I made my way back to the motel expecting to get a nap and something to eat. I ran into Jim from Augusta, Ga. I had met this old biker down at a rally just southwest of Augusta. Jim wanted me to go with him to the casino to play the slots so I skipped my supper and my nap and rode off to the casino with Jim. I hated to tell you what I loss at the casino. It would have been cheaper to go and eat. Well the ole' lady wasn't to happy about it either. Especially when she didn't get to eat. That was the last time I saw Jim around Cherokee. I don't think Jim wanted to hear my wife's opinion about our gambling.

It was beginning to get close to time for Confederate Railroad to start playing. When I arrived the band Toyz was playing on stage. This is one of the bands that I heard play at the Easyriders Custom Bike Tour in Charlotte, N.C. last February. The band is from Burlington, N.C. Toyz was a awesome rock band to hear on stage. I have always been a fan of Confederate Railroad. I have seem them perform at different bike rallies around Georgia. I was surprised to find out that they were David Allen Cole Band for a little while. D.A.C. music has influenced a lot of singers and bands over the years. The third band that played Friday night was Marshall Tucker Band from Spartanburg, South Carolina and has been around with their brand of country music for the last thirty years. When I left the fair ground the band was still playing and I still could hear them as I rode off.

When the next morning came around I over slept and it was almost seven o'clock. This is when I discovered that it was starting to get cold in the mountains. I was lucky enough that I had brought a long sleeve shirt, but I did not find it until later in the day. I decide to put off riding over the mountain for another hour or two just to let it warm-up. I made a fast ride down to the road to the Huddle House for some coffee and eggs.

I waited as long as I could to start my ride to Gatlinburg. The air was still cool as I rode through the middle of Cherokee. I turned right on Hwy.441 to make the trip over the mountain. This ride will always stand out in my mine. If I am in Cherokee, I have to ride over the mountains and back least one time before I go home. I think it is best to take this trip as early

as possible in the morning. I love to ride through the fog and feel the cool, wet air on my face. I would like to make the trip one more time before I get to old to ride. Now it seems that I make my last trip at least twice a year. The road was rough going up the mountain due to the repair of the road. I still enjoyed the ride up the mountain. My first stop was at Clingman's Dome overlook which is the highest point of the Smokys. The condition of the parking lot is some what better this time. Before I started to make the descend to Gatlinburg I took some photos of the mountains. I like riding through the tunnels that are along the way on the Tennessee side of the mountain. I have always liked to blow my horn while going through the tunnels. After taking time for lunch and looking in the different shops in Gatlinburg, I decided to make the return trip back to Cherokee.

When I returned to Cherokee it was almost time to go to the ceremonial ground. I was wanting to find out what was going on with the bike games. When I arrived the bike games were just about over. I was thinking that I might run into Jim again. He always liked to enter the bike games. Sometimes he would win but most of the time he would lose. He didn't mind losing, he just wanted to be in the games. If I don't see him during the games that means he must have found someone to ride on the back of his bike. Before heading out to find something to eat and returning to the Pocahontas, I checked out all the vendors again.

When I returned to the rally I could hear Toyz playing from the outside of the gate. I always pay the five dollars to park outside. It is easier to get out of the rally anytime you want. I still don't see how they pack so many motorcycles into such a small area. The gravel covered fairground makes riding your bike inside very difficult. But this is definitely better than the mud they had a few years before.

Slow Ride came on stage at 8 p.m. after Toyz finished their performance. Someday I may like their music. But most of the audience liked band. The last band to play Saturday night was the Outlaws. Outlaws music is a type of country rock that I like to hear. When the band started playing one of their signature songs, Kansas City Queen, all the bikers started clapping and whooping it up. I would like to see the Outlaws again.

Well, I could tell you about the Ride in bike Show and the Miss Cherokee Survivor Contest. I could tell you about some of cool things that went on between bands. Maybe I could tell you about things I did between beers. But I can tell you that either I wasn't there or I don't remember.

I am finding out that this is one of the rallies that bikers can still half way afford. The price of the ticket is not bad for the number of bands that come on stage during the weekend. One of the benefits that I like is that the price of a meal isn't that high. The gas price per gallon was still high up in the mountains. After returning home it felt like the cool air had followed me. Now I know that winter is not that far away. I hope to see you in the road soon. - Tommy

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