

# The Smoky Mountains

SUMMER 2009

*Tail of the Dragon & The Cherohala Skyway*



**Smokies here comes the Sand Dollars!**

## The trip into the Smokies Mountains

### The Trip home from Texas

I have been looking forward to this trip for a long time. On May 30th Bob helped me load and tie down my Red and White Aero for the long ride home from San Antonio, TX. The job in Texas turn out bad and had run me thru the mill hard. I was really looking forward to this trip. I was a little bummed about being without my motorcycle for the last week I had left to work. My motorcycle had been the only thing keeping me from going crazy while in San Antonio. The work days were so long that a week seemed like two weeks and I had little time to

think about what I was going to do next. The only thing I knew was I was going home and going to escape this crazy world I was in. To me the trip was going to be very exciting one as, none of my fellow sandies knew I was returning home for good, they just thought I was returning home for a visit. To me the trip was so much more as I needed to unwind from 65 hour work weeks and, get back to some sort of reality. The trip from San Antonio back home to Fort Walton Beach was a very long trip but, I knew I was one step closer to the trip the Smokies so that help a lot. The 11-mile stretch of the Dragon in Tennessee contains 318 curves in 11 miles. Some of the Dragon's sharpest curves have

names like Copperhead Corner, Hog Pen Bend, Wheelie Hell, Killboy (formerly Shade Tree) Corner, Mud Corner, Sunset Corner, Gravity

The stretch bears the street name "Tapoco Road" in North Carolina and "Calderwood Highway" in Tennessee

Cavity, Beginner's End, and Brake or Bust Bend. The road segment earned its name from its curves resembling the shape of the "Dragon".



Two Sandies Make the most of a weekend in the Great Smokies.



### With Keys in hand

We hit the road for the great outdoors and best of all with great friends.



# Calming words

## Three Blind Mice

Two friends of mine Wanda and Bob got to Slay the Dragon for this first time. Wanda tried once before on a separate trip but, dropped her motorcycle after 5 miles and then dropped out. She was very excited and anxious about this trip. I had done this trip before and, was also a

bit anxious since I had seen the curves. Bob was calm as he is about most things and had no clue what to expect.



We were discussing waiting for everyone to get ready to leave Friday morning when, our seasoned road captain George (aka Captain Cupcake) came over to give us some words of wisdom and advise. He told us that we had already experienced every twist and turn that the dragon had to throw at us. He told us not to get psyched out and ride our ride and remember our skills and we would do fine.

## Two Friends

Two friends of mine Wanda and Bob take a smoke break together on top of the spine of the dragon overlooking the beautiful river valley below.



## Remembering Skills

I remembered my skills and was calm and enjoyed my ride a lot more this time. Thanks to all the skills sessions with the Sandies I get a little bit better each time.

# Eleven Sandies Slay the Dragon at Deals Gap.



*Here we stand proud holding our short banner eleven Sandies.*

**It was a Rocky Start** with Maryanne and Chris dropping out on Wednesday night and then Joe Joe dropping out due to his bike not starting Thursday Morning. George had discovered Sam's motorcycle was leaking oil the night before but, somehow thanks to the team at Racetrack Power Sports they fix the problem. Sam's engine quit while going down 331 just outside of Luverne. Turned out that she just hit the kill switch while adjusting her mirror. She said she has never in all her years done that while adjusting that mirror. All in all with all the set backs we pushed onward because despite the rocky start there was just a feeling that things would get better.

**In the scorching 105 degree** heat index we traveled and at the end of the first day all I

felt was toasted. The hotel was not the best and I was a little grossed out due to the hair cuttings that were on the edge of a chair in our hotel room. However, the AC worked and at that point nothing else mattered. I admit I should have drank more water than the evil G2 Gatorade. I remember bearing dinner as I just wanted to stay in the hotel but, after dinner I started to feel better.

## A gorgeous day and ride

It was a gorgeous day to ride the temperature was a little cooler and the vista was amazing. We made our winding way thru the countryside and I took in the scenery like a sponge soaks up water. This my friends was well worth the wait.





# 318 Curves in 11 miles Sandie style.

## Pebbles?

The Sandies made a little stop just before the start of going up the backside of the dragon. Honda Wanda hit her front brake as she came to a stop and managed to drop her ST and smash yet another mirror on the gravel and pebbles. We might just have to give her another nickname "PEBBLES".

## The picture top right

Eleven Sandies look out over Deals Gap and take some photos and get ready to ride down the dragon.

**The World's smallest** motorcycle shop according to Bob is below. At-least the smallest one either of us has seen. Located in the middle of nowhere at one of our lunch stops. If there were more than three people inside then the shop was over maximum people capacity. Believe it or not there were some decent items in there and the prices were not too bad. We bought some motorcycle helmet locks for \$5 for two. However, we had to run so didn't get to look too much.



## All the Sandies

**All the Sandies Slayed the Dragon Proudly** and had a great time doing it. All 318 curves were a blast. The forest temperature was perfect, the air was amazingly crisp with little whiffs of oil and gasoline mixed in which, just made one smile even more. I was so proud to have done this trip as this was really my first long overnight trip with the Sandies since I joined. The day trips we do are great but, the long trips are amazing. To be in these Smoky Mountains with such great friends make you feel great to be alive.

**My new J&M CB** worked like a charm and it was a very different experience being able to know what is going on. Nice to know that everyone has made it thru a turn or some bit of a group has stopped at a light. I also liked being able to have my music on board piped thru the CB. Although is a little annoying when a favorite piece of your music comes on and there is a lot of chit chat so, it is a mixed experience having a CB.



*Here I sit proud and tall on iron steed. I slayed the Dragon once again at Deals Gap.*



# Cherohala Skyway



## Staying in Robbinsville

Bob and I stayed at the Dragon's Rest Cabins in Robbinsville, NC. Right now there are only 6 cabins and are biker friendly. The view was just remarkable. We got in a little early since check in time was a few hours away



we headed to a pizza place in town and had lunch it was nothing special but it was a place to keep cool and figure out what to do next. We then headed for the Cherohala Skyway and started our climb but only went up to the second outlook cropping then head back into town due wanting to checking in and it was getting close to supper time now. On our way back we went up what I believe is the steepest hill in town called Snider Hill.



Bob thought we were heading into the sky as we climbed it.

That street must have been at least a 50 - 60 degree incline We went to Phillips Family Restaurant for dinner and all I can say is WOW.

**Worlds Smallest** Bass Pro Shop I have ever seen is located in Robbinsville, NC. The town sports a Combo McDonalds / Gas Station / Convenience Store / Bass Pro Shop / Deals Gap Outlet. The McDonalds takes up about 3 quarters of the building and the Convenience Store fits in 1 quarter with, an 8 foot section inside the store for Bass Pro Stuff and of course the gas pumps in front.



**The First Stop** was Thunder Mountain General Store & Deli also the last place to gas before running the Cherohala Skyway. There was a lot of stuff packed into that store. We took our time that day stopping at every little outlook cropping and saw and amazing amount of stuff. We had decided we would travel the Cherohala Skyway then highway 360 and then a short distance on highway 411 back to 72 and then back up highway 129 to do the dragon again.



**BIG JUNCTION**  
ELEVATION: 5235 FT

Cherohala Skyway  
highest elevation is 5235  
FT.



### Thunder Mountain

Last Place to get fuel before ascending the Cherohala Skyway





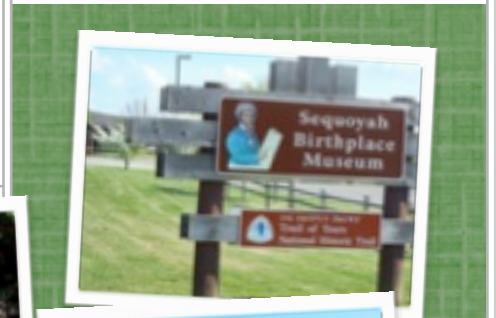
# ...Cherohala Skyway trip continued.

## Sequoyah Birthplace Museum

What can I say beautiful ride off of highway 360. Sequoyah was the inventor of the Cherokee Indian Syllabus. This was also the start of the Trail of Tears where the Cherokee Indians were forced to leave the Tennessee and North Carolina Mountains.

**Bald Falls** is a nice little side trip off of the Cherohala Skyway that winds 6 miles into the countryside along a river and the road is narrow and filled with a lot of curves. We are glad we made this side trip.

**Lunch in Tallico Plains** was just a hotdog and hamburger stand on the side of the road but had covered motorcycle parking and one fantastic Banana split. It was hot by this point and Chocolate, Vanilla, Strawberry ice cream with really strawberries, three types of toppings hit the spot. There were just too many pictures to fit into this story. To say the least it will be hard to go to Tennessee without hit the Cherohala Skyway what a Gem of a ride and not as crowded.





# ONE AMAZING RIDE

Well we ended up right where we started this trip and road the dragon again. I learned, as we asked repeatedly from many locals what was best roads to ride around those parts, was the Cherochala Skyway. The road home was also amazing as we took highway 129 back down thru the national forest and stopped to see the Ocoee River where the 1996 Olympics held the rafting events. There happen to be two whitewater river rafting groups going down that day and we walked across the suspension bridge and watched and took a few pictures. There are so many places to go and things to see you could probably spend a month up in those parts and not see everything.

## CHEROHALA SKYWAY = AMAZING RIDE

