



BLACK W IDOWS POKER RUN 2001

“Come into our parlor!”

Delta ride boosts Shriners Children’s Hospital



Over 400 bikers answered the Widows’ call

by Lucky Dan

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., OCT. 6— Quiz time. What is the *best* answer to the question, “What are biker Black Widows?” Some options: (1) a band of jet-black arachnids with red tattoos on their bellies, a big bite, bad attitude and, for the females of the species, a nasty habit of devouring their mating partners; (2) a fictional biker bunch spoofed in the Clint Eastwood movie “Every Which Way but Loose;” or (3) a charity-minded group of riders from California’s capital city.

OK, so it is a trick question. All three answers *could* be correct. Spiders are fun but, with all those extra legs, they don’t ride too well. Not enough footpegs maybe. As to the after-sex part, why can’t they just smoke? Sure, the movie misfits in number two were good for a few guffaws, but only in a 1980s film where an orangutan named “Clyde” stole the show. But option three, the friendly Golden State bikers, is the *best* answer. Oh yeah, it turns out the real Black Widows Motorcycle Club has a self-effacing sense of humor, having taken its name from the goofy group in the monkey movie.

Since 1997, the Black Widows have held an annual poker run to benefit the Northern California Shriners Children’s Hospital. The fifth installment was held Saturday, October 6 in Sacramento, the club’s hometown. This year, some 400 riders traveled a beautiful course down the Sacramento River and, once again, the young patients at the Shriners facility were the big winners.

Sounding a theme like that of another famous film group, Sinatra’s “Robin and the Seven Hoods,” Black Widows member Byron Leman explains, “I’m not sure you can call us a motorcycle club in the traditional use of the term. We’re really

just a bunch of guys who like to ride bikes and we like to do good in our community as well.”

Better than home

Standing in front of the group’s clubhouse, located in one of the more, well, “colorful” parts of town, Leman explained that the Widows have no patch or colors and, although small in number, they do not solicit new members. The club now has an American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) charter. Additionally, behind an intentionally nondescript street façade, the Black Widows also have a very cool clubhouse. Replete with a full-scale bar, pool table, TV room, shower, and other amenities—like plenty of space to park their bikes indoors—the clubhouse could be home. Come to think of it, better than home.

Exactly how much the Widows have been able to put in the Shriners’ coffers is a figure that is a little hard to come by, but judging by the plaques, “thank you” letters, and multiple check-presentation pictures that line the group’s clubhouse walls, it has been a substantial amount.

This year, bikes lining the street for blocks as riders registered for the run were testimony to the fact that the Widows event has a growing reputation for excellence and an increasing number of participants. For about the cost of an entrée in a good restaurant, riders received a poker hand, a shot at some upscale raffle prizes, a huge steak barbecue dinner, and a hard-to-come-by Black Widows T-shirt (replete with creepy black-spider motif so right for the spooky season).

The club has also recruited some 40 other sponsors to help support the run. These include Allstate Insurance, the Harley dealers in Sacramento and Rocklin, Merchants

National Bank, the Cycle Sorcery shop, Rod Transportation, Ramos Oil Company and many others. For that reason every nickel taken in from the run’s entry fees, food sales, and raffle tickets goes straight to the kids at the Shriners Hospital, located a few miles from the Widows clubhouse.

“The run has about doubled in size each year,” explained Leman who, together with his wife Linda, works feverishly during the run alongside the other Widows, their mates, and associates. “It’s the kind of thing where everybody who does

watched by hundreds of unblinking glassy eyes, the Black Widows save the best for last. A few miles down Highway 160, the run winds up with a big barbecue and street party in the historic town of Locke. Founded in the 1800s by Chinese who had worked on the railroads and in the gold fields, Locke remains much as it has for over a hundred years with narrow streets lined with great old store fronts and residences. In the past, the whole town has been owned lock, stock and barrel by a succession of individual owners.

Today, smack dab in the middle of town is “Al the Wops” restaurant, famous far and wide for its lively bar and great steak sandwiches. Al’s is also a sponsor in the Black Widows run and puts on a steak feed that had participants lined up this year down the street and past the live band.

As the sun set this year on another successful Black Widows Poker Run, it was pretty easy to imagine most riders making up a list of friends to bring back next year. As for the weary but happy Black Widows, mates and friends, they just may have been thinking about having a smoke. At least nobody looked hungry. ♦



How did you say you ride this thing?

the run comes back the next year and they bring a friend or two.”

Weird natural history

The run route follows great, winding two-lane levee roads in the beautiful Sacramento River delta region. There are stops at places like the Goose Club, Rosie’s, and Fosters Big Horn in Rio Vista. Fosters itself may be worth the ride. An old-timey bar that serves great drinks, the decor is early “Me Tarzan, you Jane,” with mounted heads and shoulders—and sometimes other parts—of nearly every creature you care to think of (or not) hanging from the high walls. Imagine a weird museum of natural history that serves highballs and that comes close to the Fosters Big Horn experience.

However much fun it is to sip beer



The Black Widow Poker Run ended with a barbecue in the historic river delta town of Locke