

My Trip to Sturgis 2020

As June rolls around, ABATE of AZ's Too Broke for Sturgis is always quite an event. Well, at least usually – this year's cancellation was appalling!!!

June also seems to kick off by hearing from who of my friends are willing to ride up to the biggest motorcycle event of the summer in Sturgis, South Dakota. I start getting the texts and phone calls. They go kinda like this, "When are you leaving?" "Which way are you going?" "How many days on the road?" So let me take ya back to my first ride in 1987.

I had just gotten a great job and was given two weeks of vacation in August. I had just purchased a brand new Harley Heritage softail. The farthest I had ever been was to a HOG rally in Breckenridge Colorado. Now I was going to do a solo to the rally. Back then it was a sleeping bag and a tent with very few items; all wrapped up in a bag, with bungee cords everywhere. No GPS. I was a terrible map reader but off I went. Since then I've gotten pretty good at it.

You hear this all the time as you travel, "Are you going to Sturgis?" Every gas stop people thought I had a sign on my head "ask me where I am going" and they did! As you get closer to the event

the bikes just seem to pour out of every off-ramp and freeway and back road. I stopped in Lusk Wyoming for a beer and a burger at the Silver Dollar Saloon, and this stop has become a tradition ever since. Sitting in the bar I met up with a group of guys and gals who asked me to join their group for the last part of the ride. It was the best thing I did. When we pulled into town the sights of thousands of bikes and people will never be captured in pictures or stories from magazines. 'Unbelievable' is the only word that came to mind. My first beer in the Dungeon Bar opened my eyes to see everyone looked kinda like me! There were sunburned faces with white around the eyes and the smell of leather, suntan lotion, cigarettes, and body odor. I was there!

Now fast forward to 2020, the 80th Annual Rally.

I read in the *Rapid City Journal* that, according to the Dept of Transportation, attendance was a little over 365k ... that's down just 7.5% for the week from last year. Based on my visits to the event, attendance felt like about the same as the 75th. We went to the 50th and the 75th which were both packed.

No one could care less about the covid media frenzy. We saw no one wearing

masks at all!!! We were normal for a week!!!

There are so many things to see and do while you are there; demo rides, shopping, bike shows the hill climb & drag races, and tons of great concerts too. But Harley did not have demo rides. *Boo!!!* There were many 'celebrity impersonators' there, including two Elvis guys posing with a 'painted lady'. We did see a few vendors spots open here & there.

I have done this ride over 15 times and it is never ever a bad ride. It's an adventure that you have to put on your summer list and get out of this darn heat. Only once have I ever done only the freeway to get there and never again. The backroads through the twisties of Colorado can be cold and wet; but we have learned to stop and let the storm pass and move on with no issues. Campgrounds are good deals and I always recommend staying at the Buffalo Chip at least once, to see what it's about. Now I have moved down to a little quieter place.

Going to Sturgis next year? You bet! Life is about adventure. It's your turn to go! Ride safe and I'll see you on Main Street!

Jim Silk

