

by Lady Jewells ...

This year's Run to the Rez was held October 18-20. It was the 15th annual. My roommate, Virginia and I went up to Apache Gold Resort & Casino {outside of Globe} on Thursday.

This is my 3rd time (2009, 2014, and now). Over the years it has grown from being just a handful of hours long, to a satisfying event that lasts 2.5 days; attracting more riders from other states. The reservation scenery and the love that is everywhere is worth a trip. Riders traveled in from Florida, California, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico.

Every year during this time of the year, all I have to do is reflect on the Run for the Rez and instantly I feel the peace and then even more wellness comes as I share my memories with virtually everyone. I love this annual event. It just keeps getting better and better. And please believe me when I tell you, The *Run for the Rez* is the most Spiritual Ride that Honors our Veterans. It just is.

For Virginia, this weekend was full of firsts. Even though she is part Black Foot, San Carlos Apache Reservation was the first reservation she'd ever visited. It was also her first motorcycle Run, first Casino visit, and first Gambling adventure; so we were a delight to watch and listen to. We just loved being there.

The weather for the event was cool and cloudy. The winds were strong on Thursday morning, but had tamed for most of the run. Though Saturday evening was windy and cloudier, it did not rain until Sunday morning.

Early registration started Thursday evening, from 4 to 9pm. There was a beautiful *Meet and Greet* energy! The band Eagleheart from Sacaton, AZ was playing in the Apache Gold sports bar from 8-midnight. As friends made during other rides arrived, everyone hugs and exchanges their life news. I love witnessing love.

Friday registration opened at 8am and lasted all day. The vendors set up outside the Casino included Superstition Harley-Davidson, Patch Works, RideScapes photography, Quail's Nest Crafts (Indian purses, totes, earrings), Rez Riders IMC selling

T-shirts, Welding Caps (bandanas), and Diné Handmade Indian Jewelry, LLC.

The Sacred Mountain Ride started at 10 am. I was amazed at the mass of riders that had gathered. Dr. John let us know the roads we were taking were not well maintained. Expect pot holes. We stopped at Nolina's to fuel, take a group picture, and then headed out. We were the 2nd of 3 chase cars.

The pack took its time, not only for the roads but because the scenery was breathtaking. It was Gorgeous. We were stopped about 1/2 way up by Manuel Cooley, aka Speedy, a Medicine Man. Dr. John asked him to speak some healing to our group. Speedy did not plan to be a Medicine Man, but an early run in with some tribal elders may have steered him that way. He had told them in a fit of anger there was no God! Speedy thinks the Elders spoke behind him to their spirit guides and his medicine journey began. He talked about living life the hard way rather than taking the easy way, and to remember Someone is going to need you in this life. To the sacred people, working the land is life. The Great Spirit is everywhere and is honored in every part of life.

When Speedy dropped out at 13, Dr. John Bush was his school principal. The other kids did great, but not Speedy. Dropping out and working made sense to him, but disappointed his mother. Much later he learned he had Dyslexia. He went to work being a gopher on a ranch, making \$5 a day. The old men on the ranch taught him the older ways.

Speedy talked about taking the hard way and learning new understandings from his life path. As you age, Life changes you. You have to decide what is important. He left ranching and became a cop. Living the right way was important. He believed in making a difference, but a bullet found him and he chose to leave law enforcement. As he healed, his elders asked him why he had to live life the hard way? The people in your life need you. Make a positive difference by healing and teaching others the old ways.

He pointed toward the Nan-Tac Rim to the North of us and told us that when the Indians were running for their lives from all kinds of people, those mountains offered safety; shelter, food, & water. If they

could get there, the Indians could see the whole valley and know where they were and other safer places to go. Mountains are sacred and the Land is life to the people. Speedy did more prayers for our group and we continued to our lunch stop, Point of Pines. Healing lands and healing people, just remember – Somebody is going to need you (children, spouse, family and/or friends).

The meal was Indian Fry Bread Tacos, another first for Virginia. While waiting in line many of us were entertained by Jimbo, an Apache rider also known on the Rez as Grumpy. Grumpy told us he is known for threatening to cut off Useless Ears. If you aren't going to listen – you don't need your ears!!

I love seeing all the riders varied patches. I know what the 1% diamond patch on some vests signifies, but I had no idea what 13-1/2% on a diamond patch of a Redrum - First Nations Rider signified, so I asked. I was told it was a reminder to stay out of trouble < 12 Jurors, 1 Judge and 1/2 a percent chance of being found innocent of whatever the charges were! > I was impressed.

Two \$50 Apache Gold Steakhouse gift cards were raffled. They were won by John Begay from Farmington and Richard from Colorado.

Speedy joined us at the camp and Gave us more Blessings. The Sacred Mountain Ride was majestic and wonderful. As we drove back to the casino, Virginia and I just oohed and ahed at the scenery.

At 2pm the Sweat Ceremony was held. It is a traditional Men-only gathering. This was attended & written about by Gregory Ormson who wrote the 2017 Run to the Rez story.

At 5pm, the traditional bike blessings, Ceremonial Song and Dance and traditional prayers were conducted. Navajo, Southern California Native Descendants sang and danced; wearing ceremonial costumes, chanting and playing their rhythmic gourds. Following those dancers were the Apache Crown Dancers. I saw them for the first time in 2009. The stroke I had, in that same year, had done a lot of damage - but in hearing and watching the Crown Dancers, the music and prayers helped heal a chunk of my brain. Every time I see them dance, I heal some more. Virginia and I received the sacred

continues on page 9



AZ Rider

continued from page 8

RUN TO THE REZ #15

9



healings offered by these spiritual dancers.

Many people are unaware that it was the late 1980s before an amendment was passed by the US Congress that allowed the Native descendants on reservations across the USA to perform their traditional healing and sacred ceremonies in public again. For years, sacred ceremonies were held in secret rather than risk being arrested and jailed. To witness these dances and feel the blessings is just awesome. The Crown Dancers were taught by Sacred Mountain Spirits to perform this dance as a curing. The dancer's identities are kept secret. 3 of the 4 dancers wear black head coverings and 1 wears a white head covering. Eagle feathers are attached to the head crowns, because that spirit flew the highest into the heavens. Other symbols of weather, like lightning and clouds adorn the crowns, too. The dancers wear bells as they dance and the rhythmic sounds, chants, and music soothes all in attendance.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, everyone had an hour to go eat, gamble or freshen up. Virginia and I took a stab at gambling with \$15. We walked away with \$10, feeling good. We headed to the seafood buffet. Mmmm CRAB... and then rolled our stuffed bodies into the convention center for the band 'Chaka & Friends', dancing, and the drawing of oodles of raffle prizes. There were more than \$6000 worth (leather coats & vests, handmade quilts, wood carvings, wallets & purses w/\$, handmade Indian baskets, Harley blankets - everything a biker needs and then some). Pre-Christmas in October, just come to the Run to the Rez. All in all, Friday was a Very satisfying day. The farthest Rider prize went to a rider from Florida.

Saturday is the Veteran's Tribute at Burdette Hall in the town of San Carlos. The lineup of some

600+ riders outside the casino awaiting departure of the parade was impressive. Ray "Bulldog" Stevens, a Veteran of Korea, was selected to be this year's parade Grand Marshal. The townspeople come out along the route and wave at the riders and it is awesome. Welcome Home. It is an emotional ride to Burdette Hall because of the respect you feel. Warriors are honored by the Navajo and the Apache and you feel their love.

The speakers included: Dr. John Bush ~ event coordinator and community leader; emcee Steve Titla, US Marine Corps & the Tribal Attorney; Davis Dustin, San Carlos Apache Veterans Association, Viet Nam Veteran, & Purple Heart Recipient; and Olson Nez, Viet Nam Veteran, Navajo Nation. While each speaker offered strong messages, moving & from the heart... the Message I walked away with came from Olson Nez. He referred to the Warriors as Guardians of the people. Warriors honor the sacred ways and take care of the people. In turn, the people honor the Warriors. It is part of their sacred ways. Chaka, the singer from Friday night's band, sang several beautiful tribute songs.

Following the Burdette Hall presentations, was a poker run. The 5 stops were at San Carlos Lake, Apache Burger Store, The Liquor Stable in Claypool, Jammerz Bar in downtown Globe [allowing time to also visit the Apache Jii Festival in Globe], and the Apache Gold Steakhouse. Congratulations to the winners: 1) Trent Tellman Flush KQ, (2) Gary Cook - Flush KJ, (3) Marek Alvarez Low hand and (4) Louis McIntosh - worst hand.

We grabbed a bite to eat, rested, and went to view the bike show. 'Chaka & Friends' played

music out front of the casino and people danced. The Bike Show Winners are:

Best of Show: #12 Everett Light Cap 1952 Indian Bagger: 1st #8 Joe Brown, 2nd #3 Anthony Montolla Custom: 1st #4 Fester Forester, 2nd #2 Chris Sweeney Metric: 1st #11 Mr. E, 2nd #18 Hugh Trike: 1st #7 Native Man, 2nd #5 Snake Vintage: 1st #1 Susie Nader, 2nd #6 Jerry Garlinghouse Congratulations to the winners!

At 5pm, a biker cook out was held at the Pavilion. We moseyed over and were awed by the spread of good eats offered. There were dinner rolls, sliced roast beef or grilled chicken, brown gravy, a mixed greens salad w/ 3 types of dressing selections, and 3 different kinds of sheet cake and a choice of drinks. YUMMY!

Then we rolled our [again] stuffed bodies back to the casino to find some bikers asleep in the grass. I opted for our camp chairs. It was a cold night so we huddled under our blankets. The band Aravaipa [based in San Carlos] opened the show and their music kept the Dance floor full.

The night's headliner, a CCR tribute out of California named Credence Relived, followed.

After the night's music concluded, it was time for the announcement everyone was waiting for. The motorcycle for this year's grand drawing was a 2018 Harley Davidson XL1200 which came from Superstition Harley Davidson in Apache Junction. The winner was Varela Kayo Contreras from New Mexico. Congratulations!

Once the drawing was done & the party was dispersing, we headed to our pillows. It had been a long day!

Virginia and I had a great time. Thank you for an amazing weekend!

I am ~ Lady Jewells