

Oct 16-17, 2015 ... We arrived at Apache Gold Casino about 9:45a on Friday Oct 16. The early morning sky was a mix of grey & blue. The sun was gradually burning off the clouds and the temp was perfect.

There'd been a concern about rain Friday (which didn't materialize), but it was unusually windy according to locals. So much so that some vendors packed up early in hopes of calmer weather on Saturday.

There was steady traffic at the registration table, where the Geronimo Riders were signing people in. Registration included your armband and a commemorative tee shirt. On display was the raffle motorcycle to be drawn for on Saturday night. It was a 2015 Indian Scout, purchased from Scottsdale Victory/Indian.

Friday afternoon activities included a poker run. About 20 riders participated. Stops were at Wild Horse Saloon in Miami, and then Globe businesses the Liquor Stable, Drift Inn Saloon, and card turn-in at The Huddle.

That evening there was a bonfire scheduled for dusk. We were curious to see how they'd prep & control the bonfire; as the wind barely died down with sunset. But they got it done. Embers flickered off into the night, but all they found was sand & desert to land upon. This cultural event included a Blessing of the Bikers, Crown Dancers with drumming & singers, and Apache Social Dance.

The Welcome Party afterwards in the Convention Center had a full house; with much dancing, laughter, conversation, & good times going on around the room. We always see such great camaraderie at this event; friends reuniting & catching up. Also, everyone is very welcoming toward newcomers. It was lots of fun.

The music, by Grey Wolf, sounded great. Their playlist includes good tunes to keep people on the floor dancing. During band breaks, Dr John would draw tickets for the raffles.

Part of this Welcome Party is the impressive amount of raffle goods. This year's collection was valued at over \$4000; including Harley-Davidson & Indian items ... jackets, travel bags, & various carrybags. There was a collection of hand-made lamps... military-themed, representing POW/MIA and the military branches; a beautiful quilt, a Grey Wolf CD & tee, & more. There's a tradition of putting money into a wallet or purse if gifting it, for good luck to the recipient. The purses raffled here had cash added to them for 'good luck'... between \$20 - \$60 each! An HD wallet held \$100! The final item of the evening was a large beautifully hand-woven commemorative Run to the Rez Burden Basket.

During Saturday morning's staging of the parade there was a cool breeze & grey sky, with the sun peeking through in time for departure. It was a chilly ride, but DRY. We felt a few drops ~ enough to let us know that Mother Nature was being cooperative & supportive of the day's mission to show love & support for our Veterans.

There were people along the roadside waving. Cars traveling along the route pulled over to the side of the road to pay respect to the parade & wave to the riders. The parade's arrival in town was greeted enthusiastically.

Arriving at Burdett Hall in San Carlos for the Veterans Program, you'll see that all ages attend the ceremony,

from babes in arms to revered Elders. This community has a strong tradition of serving in the Military; with families having multi-generations in service.

The program began with the Posting of Colors by San Carlos Veterans, the National Anthem presented by Hubert Martin, an opening prayer by Henrietta Henry, and Welcome remarks by Dr John Bush.

Guest speaker Carol Slim {US Army 5th Infantry Veteran} is the San Carlos Secondary School Principal. *[photo far right, upper]* She spoke on behalf of enlistment; encouraging youth to join ~ as the Military teaches discipline & respect. She discussed future benefits such as the GI bill & learning marketable skills while serving that can carry over into life after separation. She also encouraged her fellow Veterans to mentor the youth in our communities... high school age & younger.

There were musical presentations and individuals called out for special recognition. An 8-year old San Carlos Princess *[photo far left, upper]* was nervous during her speech, but her presentation was well received ☺

Viet Nam Veteran Olson Nez, US Army, spoke on behalf of Vets who, after separation, are unable to fit in... they're troubled, become panhandlers, experience homelessness, alcoholism, PTSD, & the like. He aptly noted that they are diseased by our Government... It is not their fault.

There was appreciation expressed of all the support that bikers show toward Vets, and recognition of the number of Veterans among the biker community.

Michael 'Buzz' Sneezy USMC Veteran (and Grey Wolf drummer) was emcee of this gathering. He reminded us all that "Vets stand watch at home so that their fellow citizens can sleep, safe & protected." Well said.

As the program wrapped, all Veterans attending were called out to muster front & center for the playing of the song, "Soldier Boy". After fallout, there was more traditional music and social dancing as riders exited the Hall and prepared to depart on the poker run.

This poker run started at Burdett Hall, and had stops at Apache Burger, Wild Horse Saloon, Liquor Stable, & Drift Inn before the last stop at the Huddle in Globe. It was a fairly short run, so that everyone could have time to visit the Apache Jii (Festival) in Globe.

While the Jii isn't actually a part of Run to the Rez, in recent years this run has been scheduled to coincide with the festival so that riders can spend some time in town and enjoy the activities. The Jii is hosted by the town of Globe. There are talented artisans with jewelry and other hand-made items. Native American dancers and musicians share their history, traditions, and stories.

After visiting the Festival for a while, we made our way back to Apache Gold for more of the Run's activities.

The Bike Show was under way. There were many beautiful entries ~ aka tough choices to make. We're glad we weren't among the judges. \$50 prizes went to Best Metric, owned by Patricia Benally; Vintage, Ignacio Rodriguez; Trike, Patricia Belinte; and Trike (non-v-twin), Ed Mazzetti. Best of Show winner was Sonny Merino, receiving a plaque & \$70 cash. Congratulations to each of you.

Grey Wolf performed on the AGCR stage in front of the Casino, to round out the afternoon. Those who didn't

attend the Los Lobos concert occupied themselves with going to dinner, playing casino games, listening to music under the portico, what have you. Tickets for the Indian Scout drawing were available up to the last minute.

Once the concert let out, everyone gathered again at the AGCR stage for the big event... Tees were being thrown out to the crowd as Grey Wolf played... We met Freida, the winner of Friday's chili cook-off & her ol' man while awaiting the bike drawing. Waiting for 10:30 to strike.

The drawings were done by an Apache Gold Casino Resort representative. The winner did not need to be present to win. Robin Russell of Ft McDowell was the winner, but wasn't there to claim the prize. Congratulations! Additional prizes drawn from the raffle tickets did require the winners to be present, so it took a few tries to give them away. They included a \$100 & a \$200 cash prize. The final drawing was for a second Run to the Rez 2015 Burden Basket. Congratulations to Christian (\$100), Kyle Thompson of Ignacio CO (\$200), and Larry Fuller (basket).

The night wrapped up with more music by Grey Wolf. The evening was very pleasant. The rain continued to cooperate by only coming in overnight.

Organizations represented included ALMA MC, American Legion Riders, Christian Motorcyclists Association, Native Descendants IMC (San Diego), Red Mountain Riders, Rez Riders IMC; plus a lot of Independents. Riders were there from CA, CO (Southern Ute Reservation), NM, NV, and UT. From Dr John we learned that the furthest registered traveler came in from Montreal Canada.

According to Dr John, 489 registered for the event. About 75% of these were returnees. (We met a number of first-time visitors to the event, who spoke very well of their visit.) This year's event crew was made up of 6 Geronimo Riders plus 15 volunteers ~ mainly family... and some of them don't even ride. Dr John noted that this is the only event they do besides cleaning the Veteran's Cemetery before Memorial Day.

He extends thanks to event sponsors Apache Gold Casino, Resolution Copper, Scottsdale Victory Indian, Superstition Harley-Davidson, and Peridot Enterprises. Thank you also to poker run stops Wild Horse Saloon, Liquor Stable, The Huddle, and Drift Inn Saloon. Dr John continued, "I want to thank all our volunteers and our Geronimo group. Thank you everyone who come out and return every year to make Run To The Rez one of the best rides in AZ. It is definitely 'the most spiritual ride in AZ'."

Follow the Run to the Rez via Facebook at /runtotherez and at their website [www.runtotherez.net](http://www.runtotherez.net). View more photos there and at our AZ Vision gallery.

This is a great event. It started out as a gathering of some 20 riders. We enjoy watching it grow over the years as more people become aware of it & come out in support. It is a ride where everyone is welcome ~ all bikes, all riders, all Nations. If you've never attended, you owe it to yourself to check it out. If you've been, it's pretty sure... you'll be back ☺ Either way, we look forward to seeing you there.

Bruce & Betsy

