

Ernie & Friends 'Finish The Ride'

Whether you followed the news of the horrific wreck that took place on Carefree Highway when it happened 10 years back, or read [Ernie Lizarraga's recent 6-part series](#) about it in these pages, or both..... Many of us are familiar with the story of the [terrible tragedy back on March 25, 2010](#) that stole the lives of four of our fellow riders ~ and forever changed the lives of the survivors.

Ernie's efforts to keep the memory of these people alive includes a ride that took place this year on March 21. He calls it simply 'Finish the Ride'.

Ernie marks this anniversary each year. Riders were invited to follow the path of that fateful day along with Ernie; all in memory of Clyde Nachand, Daniel Butler, Dayle Veronica Downs-Totonchi, and Stephen James Punch.

The start location for the ride was at the Albertson's parking lot at 18411 N. Cave Creek Rd., on the southeast corner of Union Hills & Cave Creek Roads. Kickstands up was same time as 10 years ago, at 10:40a.

There were about 40 or 50 riders plus a few RZR's & cars. While a larger group had been anticipated, you must recall that this was taking place right after the covid scare had been announced and people were being encouraged to 'shelter in place'. So attendance was limited to those who were willing to defy social pressure and leave their homes.

Channel 12 News hooked up a camera to Ernie's handle bars at the start, in addition to interviewing him & other people. [That video is available to view here.](#)

Ernie led the ride which went north on Cave Creek Road to Carefree Hwy, west on Carefree Hwy to 7th Street, then north to New River Road and the

Roadrunner Restaurant for lunch. Pulled pork sandwiches with chips were served 'take out' style rather than dine-in; again due to the covid 'crisis' restrictions. A group discount had been prearranged for anyone participating in the ride.

After lunch, the ride went west down New River Road to Carefree Hwy then east on Carefree Hwy to 27th Drive for a stop at the crash site to pay respects at the memorial.

Ernie shared, "The Daisy Mountain fire chief Brian Tobin [he was a captain for Phoenix that I had worked for before he retired and became the chief for Daisy Mountain] was waiting for us. The firetruck and firefighters that treated me were there, plus the police officer Brandon Epperson that held a blanket over me to shield me from the fire was there also. I couldn't help it but I fell apart standing over the memorial. It was real hard."

Upon leaving the memorial site the riders headed east on Carefree to Tom Darlington Road, north to Cave Creek Hwy, & east to Bartlett Lake Road to 'finish the ride'. "When we all went to the lake it was very emotional for me pulling up to Bartlett Lake."

Ernie sent along this message, "Hey, I wanna thank you people that came on the 'Finish the Ride' with me. It really meant a lot. Thank you."

