



Sometimes people come into your life for a long time. Other times, it's just briefly. But in that time, for some reason, they become the most important & complete focus of your time and energy. Such was the case with Al & Samantha Barela.

We never met them. Many of us in Arizona's motorcycling community didn't. But that didn't factor in when their family was in need. Al & Samantha Barela were killed on March 28, due to a breakdown in the escort system during the annual LE Torch Ride. You'll read more about that elsewhere in these pages.

A lot of angry energy has been generated by this senseless and COMPLETELY avoidable wreck. Many channeled that energy into positive action.

Al [52] & Samantha [37] were in town for Bike Week from New Mexico. They needed to be cared for and taken home to their devastated family... including 4 children, 10 grandchildren, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, & more.... Theirs is a large & loving family.

With a logistical & financial burden facing the family ~ AZ's bikers knew this is how they could help and could show their respect & caring for the family and what they are going through. Christina, owner of At Season's End Mortuary stepped up immediately to take charge of Al & Samantha's bodies, to prepare them for their trip Home; to their Family and to their Maker. Donations were collected at Westgate's Bike Night, at Motorcycles on Main in Mesa, & directly at At Season's End. Bikers took time from their lives to pay respects to the family and to ride with them. The family had requested caskets. As a tribute, custom painter Mark Brodie, of Mark Brodie Motorsport Design, came in and beautifully pinstriped the caskets. *{These photos above were shared on Christina's FB page.}*

Saturday morning April 4, riders gathered at 'At Season's End Mortuary', 861 W. Superstition Blvd Apache Junction, AZ. Their son Josh, along with his wife Miranda, came down from Farmington to receive his parents and accompany the hearses back to their hometown of Farmington, NM.

Christina shared, via Facebook, "A special thank you John Insalaco, the Mayor of Apache Junction for



coming to the send off to express his condolences to the family." Thank you also to Mayor Insalaco for his assistance in ensuring a smooth departure with complete traffic control by AJ's PD from At Season's End to the Freeway ramp; so that the Barela Family escort had a safe start to their long journey home.

The 2 hearses from Cope Memorial Chapel in NM were loaded with their precious cargo. About 15 bikes departed from ASE. Some riders would make the whole trip [~405 miles]; while others would join in and peel off along the way. In Show Low, some riders pulled off, while another 25 or so fell into line to continue the ride. Our friend Yukon Rick in Show Low who helped organize the White Mountain riders, stated, "Everyone was proud to help by seeing fellow riders off to their final resting place." We're told that another 150 bikes, with their son Joe, other family members, friends, & loved ones, met the procession at the AZ/NM border. Many more waited at the ride's end, Cope Memorial Chapel.

The grapevine and other networking had kicked into high gear. By the time Al & Samantha were laid to rest, donations had covered all expenses of getting them there... Mortuary services at both ends of the ride, caskets, cemetery

plots, headstone, transportation, and so on. Christina posted, "Please know that all funding goals have been met and exceeded! All excess funds will be deposited into the family's Wells Fargo fund account." This is how that angry energy was channeled, by doing what could be done for the family.

There are TOO many people who played a part in this wonderful effort on behalf of the Barela Family to make a list here. Chances are that there would be those left out, and that would be unfortunate. Christina made a lovely statement that expresses it so well, "A very special thank you to everyone that made the Barela family fully understand the true impact of how close a community can be. There are so many people that stepped up that I would be unable to name you all but please know the love was felt! I am so proud of my friends, family, community, and biker community for such compassionate efforts!"

Amen to that {:o)

With Respect,

Betsy & Bruce

*{Photo top center is Christina, with Josh & Miranda.}*



## Zero Escort + 1 Car = 2 Dead

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### The Barela Wreck

As we find ourselves in the month of May ~ annually recognized as Motorcycle Awareness Month, it is so very sad to be writing an article about yet another example of cage drivers failing to safely share the road with motorcyclists

As we departed on the Torch Ride, the annual trek to support Law Enforcement's commitment to Special Olympics, there was no way to know that this run would play out so differently from in previous years.

This has always been billed as a "Police Escorted Ride" enjoyed by many as one of only a few where, for the entire route, bikes are on a continuous roll with 'boots up all the way'....

By Webster's definition, an escort is, "one or more persons, cars, etc accompanying another to protect it or show honor." Dictionary.com offers a similar definition, "a group of persons, or a single person, accompanying another or others for protection, guidance, or courtesy." Well since we can all pretty much be certain that the LEOs weren't there to show honor or courtesy to a bunch of bikers.... It stands to reason that they were there for the PROTECTION part of the definition.

It was a beautiful day for a ride. The route was the same as always..... out 87 to Shea Blvd in Fountain Hills, then north on Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd before making the sweep into WestWorld.

For many years now the Torch Ride has been broken up into groups, no more than 500 bikes or so rolling at a

time; because any more bikes than that would keep intersections closed to cross traffic for too long. Long processions, up to 2000 bikes some years, made it inconvenient to the general motoring public to have to wait so much time to get where they wanted to be. It was a safety concern and a decision made on behalf of the riders and the general public. This method allowed for the wait at any intersection to usually be only about 5-10 minutes....

Traffic control in each territory of roadway was handled by local Law Enforcement; with each segment of the ride transitioning professionally, safely, and smoothly to the next by officers of Mesa, DPS, Fountain Hills .... That is, until we arrived in Scottsdale.

Bruce recognized a problem immediately. The first intersection we came upon without an officer holding the way was green for us & then cycled to red. He backed off a bit, looking both ways, then accelerated through. That's when he said he got a really bad feeling. His plan was to peel off at the next intersection & return to the unattended crossroad to block traffic, biker-style, the old way. If there was no cop ~ a rider would just position their bike in the road & keep the cars from turning into the parade. We never got back there.

We came upon the next intersection... where Scottsdale's neglect had already taken its toll.... in the name of Al & Samantha Barela. Two sets of circumstances, neither of which should have happened ~ a negligent escort & an impatient cager ... collided with tragic results.

They were killed when the untended cross street allowed for the impatient driver to attempt a left turn, expect-

ing to get through a gap in the procession. She & her Mercedes impacted with their bike, sending the couple flying. Remember, we're talking an average wait of only about 5-10 minutes..... But She couldn't wait that long...

And, in a disturbing article entitled, Records: Light should have been green in fatal Scottsdale Torch Ride reported by Matthew Casey in the April 26, 2015 edition of The Arizona Republic, it was shared that, "event-planning documents show that the traffic light at the crash intersection was supposed to be green for the more than 1,000 riders in the March 28 event, which had been dubbed 'Arizona's largest police-escorted ride.'" The report continued, "Scottsdale police staffed about 57 percent of the officers and police assistants they'd originally requested for the event." You get the drift... but there's more in the piece & you should pull it up & read it. Matt has posted additional related articles as well.

Scottsdale PD has understandably taken up an extremely defensive posture. Requests for information are declined under the banner of it being an 'ongoing investigation'. It is undeniable that their department failed to 'Protect & Serve'.

The Law Office of Chuck Franklin is representing the Barela Family in a wrongful death claim against the City of Scottsdale. He is asking for witness statements on behalf of the family. You can read his request for information via our Facebook page or contact his office directly via email at [chuck@chuckfranklin.com](mailto:chuck@chuckfranklin.com).

Bruce & Betsy