

APRIL 2016

# NORCAL NEWS



**BMW NORCAL PRESENTS**  
the **44th Anniversary** of



**ALL BRANDS OF MOTORCYCLE WELCOME**

**MEMORIAL DAY 2016**

**May 26-30 ⚡ Mariposa CA**

**Gateway to Yosemite National Park**



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**FEATURED SPEAKER:** Ted Simon, author of Jupiter's Travels

Doc Wong Street Riding Clinic • Lance Thomas, GS Giants Field Trials • Guided Rides  
Poker Run • GS Rides • Field Trials • Bier Garten • Vintage Motorcycle Show  
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Rally costs \$55 adult / \$25 child under 12 years pre-registered, children under 6 admitted free  
\$65 adult / \$30 child at the gate. Pre-registration ends May 12  
Saturday Dinner with vegetarian option \$18 (pre-registered only).

For information, registration and updates, please email the 49er Rally Chair: Tom Connolly, [49erchair@bmwnorcal.org](mailto:49erchair@bmwnorcal.org)

[bmwnorcal.org/49er](http://bmwnorcal.org/49er)

**Featured Speaker Ted Simon author of Jupiter's Travels**

**GS Giant's Field Trials**

**GS Training by Lance Thomas**

**Seminars by many guest speakers including: Richard Battles, Reg Kittrelle, Sam Manicom, Greg Pert, Bill Stermer, and Doc Wong**

**BMS Custom Motorcycle Seats - Rocky is making seats on site.**

**Vendors: Cycle Specialties, Gregg's A-List, Jesse Luggage Systems, RKA Luggage, and more**

**Historic GS Guided Ride**

**Live Music**

**Beer Garten**

**Daily events and competitions**

**Children's Events**



APRIL 2016

**BMW Motorcycle Club  
of Northern California**



**Ride to Camp  
Camp to Ride**

## Editor's Notes

Big thanks to all contributors to this months newsletter and especially to Ted for organizing the Death Valley camp out and who, together with Ed and Buddy, represented the board at the general meeting. Ed surpassed himself with this month's historians report.

Dan, who right now is a really busy guy, found the time to submit an article describing his track day experience with SuperBike Coach at Thunderhill raceway. Check it out.

I could have easily filled all 16 pages with outstanding photos of the Death Valley ride taken by Buddy Scauzzo, Mini McMahon and Ed Perry.

A new feature this month is Anorak's Corner. I am hoping this can be an occasional column submitted by anonymous contributors. The more obscure the subject the better.

Excellent news regarding the Junction Bar and Grill. I went by to investigate and was surprised to see the same management team that was there previously. Spoke to the new owner (4th April) and he said that apart from the Health and Safety they are ready to open . By the time you read this it may be open - check their web site. Internally it looks a lot different. Don't know much about decoration styles, but would have said the previous style was rural grunge. My take on the new look is more countrified industrial - looks smart, with new tables chairs etc. Gone are the dollar notes on the ceiling, hogs heads on the walls, and 1950's National Geographic. Cant wait.

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**SECOND SUNDAY BREAK-FAST**

Open Position

*\*Board Member*

## Treasurer's Report



It's the calm before the 49'er storm for the Treasurer. All those checks to write, payments to log in QuickBooks and books to balance! It's a lot of work but a learning experience and it feels good to support the club. The bank balance on 3/31/16 was \$17,650. We have 202 paid members with several new folks signing up in the last 30 days.

We are spending some extra money this year on the 49'er to make the event more of everything: fun, educational and filled with experiences. Please help by sharing the good word about the rally this year with every BMW rider you see!

On the webmaster side all is to going well. The move to PayPal for our payment processing was well received by everyone. We need to purchase a few credit card scanners soon and test them with the website for use at the at the 49'er gate, store and rally HQ.

Thanks for your continued support and if you have questions shoot me an email at [treasurer@bmwnorcal.org](mailto:treasurer@bmwnorcal.org). Wherever you ride, think safe!

*John Vashon Treasurer*

## President's Report



Greetings everyone.

T-Minus 60 days until the 49er. I'm excited that so many of our members are participating in the planning and execution of the Rally this year. We've got new speakers and guests lined up and the GS Giants will be coordinating the Field Trials.

Unfortunately, I missed Death Valley this year. I'm sure everyone that went had a great time.

Plenty is left to do to before the event. I'm still looking for an Asphalt events Coordinator, so drop either Tom or myself a line. [President@bmwnorcal.org](mailto:President@bmwnorcal.org) or [49erchair@bmwnorcal.org](mailto:49erchair@bmwnorcal.org).

Our next two BoD meetings will focus on the 49er. The website has the updated location and time of the meetings. Come down and be a part of the action.

Elections for Board of Director positions are held each year in June. All positions are elected each year by our membership by ballot at the Membership meeting. Be a driver of the Club's success and future. This year's election will be held at Calaveras Big Trees on June 25th.

*Dan Rowe President*

## Tour Captain's Report



The club's traditional ride to Death Valley has taken different forms over the years. It was once biennial, in February. For a while it was off-calendar with private rides in spring. Since 2011 we've gone every March. This opens the possibility of a conflict with Easter which, making the reservations a year in advance, I overlooked.

That could account for the moderate turnout of 34 riders and 4 non-campers. I had reserved group sites 2 and 5, and individual sites 70 and 71, with the intention that we would fill them all, and use the larger #2 as home base. But pretty #5 (16 shady spots by my count, and paved parking for 16 bikes) attracted the early riders, unfortunately leaving a small group at the distant, dusty #2. #70 and 71 were useless for camping, having no trees, but gave us parking for 5 bikes and the support truck. A few campers dispersed into the back woods. The weather was beautifully cool and clear, but with very strong wind on Friday night.

Historian Ed Perry and I were the only officers to make the ride, so the tour captain was OD, collecting fees and conducting the meeting. The historian's report captured the spirit of Death Valley with stories of old timers, and of lost souls and dead mules. Buddy Scauzzo gave a 49er update and Don Condon kindly took minutes. Four first-time campers rose to be introduced: Darrell Okamoto (R1200GS) who fell in with a ride, and John Stiffler (K1200S), Sachiko Inoue (F650GS) and Hakki Orum (R1200GSA), all from Meetup.

John Ellis showed good form when his riding partner, Fred Montano, suffered a drive failure at Pannamint, without even wire-line phones, by riding ahead to help us plan a truck rescue, then making the long round trip in the morning to

reconnoiter. Happily, Fred had self-rescued. I meant to atone for my bad scheduling by putting plastic eggs, each with a tiny Norcal logo, near each tent on Easter morning. But I didn't expect that each bike would receive more eggs from a second Easter Bunny. What a group!

The April 23 meeting will be at Black Butte Lake, near Orland (not near Lassen.) The June 25 election meeting will be at Calaveras Big Trees, near Arnold, and will be catered. I won't be at that meeting, so please don't try to re-elect me in absentia.

The next tour captain, who could be YOU, will have these spots to use: Sequoia NP, July 30; Green Creek (off hwy 395, with earlybird) Aug 27; Hat Creek, Sept 24; Rancho Seco (O-fest), Oct 29; Death Valley (3-day) Mar 25, 2017.

Enjoy the ride!

*Ted Crum Tour Captain*



The Easter Bunny visited the sleeping NorCal campers in Death Valley, leaving fun filled eggs for everyone.



## Death Valley the 49ers and Shorty Harris



The first explorers to enter Death Valley were two groups of **"49ers"** heading for the California gold fields. The pioneers had departed late from Salt Lake City, a major supply stop on the journey to California, in October 1849. Aware that the **Donner Party** had been stranded in the

Sierra Mountains because of treacherous snow storms, the Death Valley '49ers elected to take an old Spanish trail that circumvented the southern edge of the Sierras and was safe to travel in the winter. The decision would lead to one of the nation's most enduring disaster legends.

The first two weeks of travel on the trail were uneventful, but the going was slower than the pioneers had hoped. Inspired by an intriguing map made by explorer John Fremont that showed a shortcut through Death Valley, many impatient pioneers abandoned the Old Spanish trail and headed across the desert toward Walker Pass, hoping to cut some 500 miles off the journey. The point where these wagons left the trail is near the present day town of Enterprise, Utah, where a monument commemorates the historic mistake. Almost immediately, the pioneers found themselves confronted with the Beaver Dam wash, a gaping canyon on the present day Utah-Nevada state line. Discouraged, most of them turned back to rejoin the Old Spanish trail, but about 20 wagons decided to plunge ahead.

Getting the wagons across the canyon was such a difficult task that it took several days. Meanwhile, the pioneer who had the map grew impatient and—under the cloak of darkness—abandoned the group. Despite the fact that the remaining pioneers did not have any other map, they once again decided to take their chances, assuming they would find the pass if only they continued moving west. After about a month of slow progress through central Nevada—marked by thirst, hunger and bitter disputes—the pioneers finally reached the borders of Death Valley in December. They traveled along the same route followed by Highway 190 and, on Christmas Eve 1849, arrived at **Travertine Springs**, located near Furnace Creek.

The lost pioneers had now been traveling across the desert for about two months since leaving the Old Spanish trail. Their oxen were weak, their wagons battered, and their spirits low. Worst of all, beyond the valley stood towering mountains, creating a seemingly impenetrable wall in both directions as far as the eye could see. Two families became detached from the main group and spent 26 days in Death Valley waiting for two of the younger men to look for help. After the men returned, this group headed north near present day **Stovepipe Wells**, but discovered it, too, was impassible. They decided to leave their belongings behind and walk to civilization, and used wood from their wagons to cook the meat of several slaughtered oxen to make jerky. The place where they did this is today referred to as **"Burned Wagons Camp"** and is located near the sand dunes of Death Valley.

They continued climbing toward Towne Pass turning south over Emigrant Pass to Wildrose Canyon. After crossing the mountains and dropping down into Panamint Valley, they turned south and climbed a small pass into Searle's Lake Valley before making their way into **Indian Wells Valley** near the present day city of Ridgecrest. It was here that they finally got their first look at the Sierra Mountains, and turning south, followed a trail that brought them to Walker Pass, the place they had set out to look for almost three months earlier.

From Walkers Pass, they entered into what was to become the worst part of their journey, the Mojave Desert Plateau, a flat, featureless land with very few water sources. They survived thanks to puddles of water and ice from a recent storm. They eventually found their way over a pass near Palmdale, California and, following the Santa Clarita River drainage, were finally discovered and rescued by Spanish cowboys from Rancho San Fernando, located near Newhall, California.

### **Shorty Harris 1860 - 1934**

Prospector Shorty Harris said he could "smell gold." He was in on the discovery of both Rhyolite and Harrisburg. Here are two press cuttings I found. The first is from *Rhyolite Herald June 23, 1905* describes how Shorty found four dead men, and the second from *nyo Independent November 16, 1934* his funeral

*Ed Perry Historian*

## REPORTED BY SHORTY HARRIS.

Shorty Harris, well known pioneer prospector, has returned from Death valley and reports the finding of four dead men on the desert. The skeleton of one man was found about twelve miles north of Lone Willow. In the hills about 8 miles away, a horse was found running alone, and it is supposed that the animal belonged to the dead man.

At Furnace Creek ranch, Mr. Harris learned of the finding of three partially decomposed bodies between Lee's camp in Echo canon and the Lida C. [sic] borax mine, at the foot of a low hill on the north side of the Funeral range. The presence of the bodies was first reported at Ash Meadows by an Indian, who was attracted to the spot by a band of coyotes and a multitude of flies that swarmed about the remains. The Indian said that the bodies appeared to have been partially buried as there was considerable loose dirt over them, and it is believed from that that [doubled word] the desert travelers met foul play. The fact that these bodies were found close together indicates that the men were murdered.

Some connect these men with the three dead burros found at Salt Creek 35 miles away, the burros having traveled on another day or so before perishing.

Another horror of the desert is reported from Johnnie, a mining camp in that section, two man, raving maniacs, having been picked up on the plains. The unfortunate men were taken to Johnnie where everything possible is being done to bring them back to sanity. It is one of the stages of death from thirst for men to go crazy. The tongue swells up and becomes black, and very often a man made crazy from thirst will undress and wander about naked.

Daylight Springs, says Mr. Harris, ic [sic] going dry and will be exhausted within two weeks. Hole-in-the-Rock it [sic] now dry. There is a new water hole called Salt Well, 12 miles north of Furnace Creek. The water is somewhat salty but does very well for stock.

## "TAPS SOUND FOR "SHORTY" HARRIS, AGED PROSPECTOR"

While the sun sank slowly into the purple haze that filters over Death Valley at twilight and taps sounded in the clear air of this mysterious land he knew so well, "Shorty" Harris, miner, Good Samaritan and friend to all who knew him, was laid to rest in a dusty grave on the valley floor last Sunday afternoon.

He was laid beside the grave of his old pal and friend, Jim Dayton, long a respected pioneer prospector of Death Valley region.

### DEAN OF PROSPECTORS

"Shorty" Harris, dean of all desert prospectors, died at the age of 74 years in a cabin at Big Pine, where he had sought rest and health following an illness about a year ago. He passed away in the restful sleep that he had sought.

In deference to his request, he was buried at the "bottom of Death Valley", beside his partner. He had prospected with Jim Dayton many years ago in search for the yellow metal.

The simple service, when the last rights were pronounced, was beautiful in the quiet solitude of the great valley. Chaplain Henry of the C.C.C. camp at Cow Creek, officiated at the open-air burial service. One hundred and fifty C.C.C. boys were present, bowing their heads out of respect to the grand old man of the desert, whose stories of early Death Valley, of burro-prospecting days, have been chronicled far and wide by writers of national repute.

The body was lowered in the grave exactly at sunset and more than 300 people stood quietly at attention as taps sounded.

Arraignments for the funeral ware [sic] made by Wm. Carruthers of Ontario and Supervisor Chas. Brown of Shoshone. The body was taken to Death Valley by Dewy Albright.

Many old timers of the valley were present at the services, including Mr. Zabriskie of Pacific Coast Borax Co. and Bob Montgomery, who originally located Rhyolite and the Shoshone mine, and had not been in the valley for some 30 years.

The burial of "Shorty" Harris went down in history as the first Christian burial in Death Valley, altho there had been many more who were buried there in shallow graves before, without Christian service.





# Thunderhill Track Day by Dan Rowe

I attended SuperBike Coach's first track day at Thunderhill raceway in March. Can Akkaya is the owner and instructor for SuperBike Coach, and had sent a message to me on requesting I post his track day offering at Thunderhill on our Meetup page. I posted the event, and then



decided I should go. The forecast leading for the weekend of my track day called for rain. I was nervous, but committed. Despite threat and actual rain the weekend of the event, I attended the track event at Thunderhill.

Very little preparation was required for Can's event. I used my Dainese textile suit. My tires were fresh, and I didn't have to safety wire anything. I did tape my lights and mirrors once I arrived at the track. After the normal safety inspection, a riders meeting was held. Riders were assigned to one of four groups before arriving, and Can briefed everyone on track rules based on group assignment.

My group was to be third on the track. Groups rotated off and on the track in 15 minute sessions. Even though the sky was overcast, my first session was dry. By the time my second session rolled around, the rain set in. It rained through the next two sessions and during the lunch period. I wasn't deterred, and I was determined to get my track time in despite the wet weather. By the mid afternoon, the sun

was back out and the track dried completely.

During my sessions, I focused on smooth throttle control and cornering lines. I had a game plan before the track day. Having an plan was helpful to me, as Can runs a lean operation. He is really the only representative from his organization on the track.

Can hosted two talks during the day for people to attend. I missed the morning beginner's session, but I attended his lunch talk about different lines around Thunderhill. Can is direct and makes fairly pointed statements. After lunch, I changed my entry point into a series of turns and was pleased with the improvement in line.

Despite the rain, I had a good time at Thunderhill. There were a few mishaps during the day, but no one was injured. One person ran out of fuel, which seems preposterous to me. If I could change anything about the class, I'd have fewer groups. One session per hour builds in quite a bit of waiting time. It is an economics game though. The more riders, the lower the group cost. I'm sure I'll attend another event though from Can, and he has offered to put something together just for the club at his home facility in Stockton.



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suealleytaylor@me.com**

## Anorak's Corner

Most modern engines designs have some form of engine balance mechanism. Pre-R1200 boxer horizontally opposed engines did not have a balance shaft but relied on the inherent balance of a horizontally opposed engine. The big thing to understand here is that no matter how well designed and balanced the engine is, if one cylinder is not firing with exactly the same BANG and timing as the other cylinders then this mismatch can result in engine vibration.

The size and timing of the BANG in the cylinder can be impacted by a number of factors; fuel and the fuel injection, the spark and its timing, the valves opening and closing.

For this article I would like to consider how valve clearances (or gaps) effects valve opening and closing.

The primary purpose of valve clearances are to insure the valve always fully close under all operating temperatures. If the engine is run and the valve is not fully closed because of lack of clearance, then the valve can burn out, and a hole will occur on the sealing surface. Exhaust valve clearances as larger than inlet valve clearances because exhaust valves run hotter.

Up to a few years ago I thought that was all that was needed was a gap large enough to prevent burn out. One of my other bikes is an old single cylinder British bike. On this bike I experimented with using a larger clearance (4 thou greater) than the manufacturer recommended. The bike is pretty noisy so a little extra tappet rattle made little difference. On my first ride after making the change I was surprised by a change in performance. There seemed to pull much better at low revs. At the time I was astonished that this relatively small change to valve clearance would make a easily perceived change to the way in which the engine ran. I am definitely no expert in cams and their design, but do know they are typically designed with quietening ramps to reduce noise and wear. The 4 thou increase may have resulted in a reduction of valve overlap which would account for the change in low rev pulling power.

## Anorak Definition

(from Wikipedia)

In British slang an **anorak** is a person who has a very strong interest, perhaps obsessive, in niche subjects. This interest may be unacknowledged or not understood by the general public. The term is sometimes used synonymously with geek or nerd, or the Japanese term otaku, albeit referring to different niches.

In 1984 the Observer newspaper used the term as an alternative term for the prototype group interested in detailed trivia, the trainspotters, as members of this group often wore unfashionable but warm coats called anoraks when standing for hours on station platforms or along railway tracks, noting down details of passing trains.



I am not suggesting anyone should use anything except BMW's recommended clearances, but what the experiment showed is the critical importance of accurate valve clearances, making sure all cylinders produce exactly the same BANG at exactly the right time. I realize it easy to take the lazy way out and say "the clearance is only a thou out, so I will leave it". I have done this myself. However it is my theory that in order to get the engine running in an optimal fashion it is critical that all valve clearances should be set so all inlet and exhaust valves are set identically in all cylinders .

To do this yourself you will need at least one set of feeler gauges and wrenches or shims needed to set the clearances. Explaining how to use to use a feeler gauge to set the correct clearance is difficult to describe in words. Here goes ....when the gap is set correctly, the feeler must be able to move freely and smoothly but not too loose. If there is a valve rocker (or cam follower), then no movement should be perceived when pressing on the rocker when the correct feeler size is in place. Testing the "correct" gap with a feeler one thou larger should still allow the feeler to move but it will be tight and will "jump" as pressure is

exerted to make it move. If a feeler one thou less the correct one will move very easily, and in this case movement will be felt by applying finger pressure on the end of the rocker with the feeler in place.

Some instructions for 4 valve heads with linked rockers arms recommend the use two feeler gauges, one under each of the valve pair. If the use of two feelers makes a perceivable difference, then there is a problem of excessive wear in the rocker bearing.

It is also critical to make sure the measurement is made at the correct point in the flywheel cycle. On my r1150 with just two cylinders there is a single mark on the flywheel. (The BANG occurs in one of the two cylinders with every rotation of the flywheel). I make sure the mark on the flywheel is in exactly the same place in the crankcase viewing window before making setting clearances.

BMW recommends checking valve clearances every 6,000 miles. Setting your own valves is a very satisfying exercise, particularly with the knowledge it is just right.

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BMW Motorcycle Club  
of Northern California



BMW Club of Northern California, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2472  
Santa Clara,  
CA 95055

## April Anniversaries

Alan Hom 30 years

## Upcoming Events

06 Apr 2016 6:00 PM (PDT) Board of Directors meeting  
Location The Old Spaghetti Factory 2107 Broadway Redwood City, CA, 94063

10 Apr 2016 8:00 AM (PDT) Second Sunday Breakfast Ride  
TBD

23-24 April Camp Out will be at Black Butte Lake, near Orland

27-30 May 2016 49'er Rally in Mariposa, California

16-19 June 2016 Chief Joseph Rally in John Day, Oregon

16-19 June 2016 Red Rock Rendezvous, Panguitch, UT



[www.bmwnorcal.org](http://www.bmwnorcal.org)