the Raz Report:
Almond Festival
Capay Valley
~ 26FEB17 ~

The weeks of constant cold, wind and rain that preceded the weekend slated for the Almond Festival gave me cause to wonder whether any blossoms would be left on the trees, and, if there were, if it would be possible to stay warm and dry while viewing them. But, WHO KNEW??? There was a break in the weather just before the festival, the skies cleared, the sun came out, the blossoms popped, and although there was a slight chance of rain Sunday (I saw nary a drop), at 60o and clear blue skies it is hard to imagine a more pleasant day for the Almond Festival.

Steve and I started the day by packing our wives to breakfast at 10am at the Elkhorn Saloon Country Bar and Grill. Skip is a great cook and Steve and Martha opted for the new menu item, spicy hot smoked jalapeno bacon and eggs and Sharon the smoked bacon and eggs; Rose denied me pancakes (they are not on the menu but I just have to ask anyway) so I had my usual linguisa and eggs - YUM!

Eleven'ish and bellies full, we cross the I-5 Causeway because the River Road is under water and then began the 21-mile ride through Capay Valley starting with Madison, the southernmost town in the valley and the last chance for gas, then some back roads across creeks that are normally dry creek beds but now are bordering on flood plains, and past almond orchards to ride into Esparto from the north where there were great bands that play both kinds of music (country and western), and there is food, shopping and the annual car show. It seemed to me to not have quite as many cars this year, what with all the rain leading up to this weekend - I would not take my classic out with any chance of getting wet - it is hard enough to do all the final prep at a show on a sunny day. Anyway, there were however plenty of cars to see. I am partial to chopped and channeled '32 5-window Fords (used to have one, V-8 flathead powered), and there were street rods there, and, I am partial to '56 Super-88 Olds (used to have one, jet black laquer with red leather interior), and there was a '57 there. And, a car that has never been on my radar before is a 1937 Studebaker coupe... what a cool car... a little like a stretched out '40 ford coupe with lots of cool details, like the itty bitty lights under the headlights, the chrome accents on the sides of the hood, the sexy rear view mirrors on the doors and the tail lights perched on top of the rear fenders, and, it was candy apple burgundy! If I had that car and the dude that showed that car had a feather up his ars then we would both be tickled.

We then began a ride to the northern most town celebrating the Almond Festival. There were bikes everywhere, and, peace officers keeping order. We passed through Capay, home of the Road Trip Bar & Grill with great food and great music, and next, passed Cache Creek Casino (well, there is gas available here). Near Brooks, location of Seka Hills which offers food and a party, we stopped at our favorite photo-op orchard, yup, the almond trees are in full bloom this weekend!

The firemen in Guinda prepare BBQ'd oysters, but, this year we passed on them in order to go up the hill to the Grange Hall seeking almond rocca ice cream... they were sold out... we were *two hours too late*, so, we checked out the booths in the hall of local artisans and out side - the old open water jacket one lunger engines, and rode on with a few clouds beginning to form in the north.

Rumsey is the northern most town in Capay Valley and has great bands - Sweet Home Alabama - and BBQ'd pizza - but we also found Almond Blossom ice cream just in time to buy the last of the helpings for sale - *TASTY STUFF*. Clouds beginning to look threatening, we rode south back to the Road Trip Bar & Grill under mostly clear skys for lunch to the sounds of the Terry Sheets Band. I had not had the smoked brisket sandwich or apple pie before - try it - you'll like it - perfect end for a perfect day.

The band wrapped up, we headed to Woodland then on the river road to Sacratomato - couldn't have asked for a better ride!

KNUCKLEHEADS FOREVER!

Article and photographs by Russell "Raz" Holder

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