

Adventurers.... *Rejoice!*

Today (Monday-Oct-8<sup>th</sup>) was final-test-day for a wide range of tuning-mods put into my 450R. The goal was to get the bike running well enough to confidently start the Sierra Safari (this Friday, 300 miles in 3 days, begin/end at the Mammoth ski area, 2 overnights at a casino in Hawthorn, NV). **Success!** Not perfect, but good enough to "proceed with confidence" 😊

Here I am (self-portrait, in "full armor") at the start of my 60-mile test ride up in the Cleveland National Forest...



I immediately headed up to the ridgeline, heading north (instead of the usual "south") and hoping for the discovery of the (so-far) elusive "loop" that would take me back to my start-point of Silverado Canyon. Looking north-east, that's Lake Matthews in the background...



The bike (as all Japanese dirt-bikes seem to do) rides very well in monster-bumps, but was riding poorly in "dirt-washboard". I dialed-in 4-clicks (of 22-maximum) for both fork compression and rebound damping (there is no fork spring-preload adjustment, a disappointment). My goal is "creamy ride at low/medium speeds".

Then I dialed-in 4-clicks of rear-shock "big bump" adjustment and 20% (of 100%-max) "small bump" damping. For shock-spring-preload, I put in 95%-of-max (will go all-the-way tomorrow). Tire air

pressure is 17psi front/rear. While not exactly *Eureka!* this is a huge improvement over the as-delivered settings.

Looking east into the valley, that's I-15 running (left-right) north-south...



Up-up-up I go... And...

If you're noticing (aren't you?) "improved picture quality" it's because I have gone back to an older-generation Canon camera, one that used a **glass** lens as opposed to the newer-tech ("cheaper")

plastic lens. Yes the older camera is also bigger/heavier. But... Can't argue with the results...



In my series of Cleveland NF stories, a recurring question (feedback) is "Where is Corona?".

Well... In the below pic!



Looking back (southwest)...



I climbed up to one of the mini-hilltops for a better view. I had come down the road in the below pic, and I'll go down the trail and hard-right back on to the main road...



The radome I had seen (from a distance) on previous rides turns out to actually be on the main road. I believe this radar to be part of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) network for the Orange County airport and in-fact serves all of SoCal...



The bike was handling very well (not "excellent") and I was now experimenting with "riding technique" to make the most of the current suspension settings. Today was my last test-day, I must "go with what I've got" and because I do not absolutely have to make any more adjustments (I don't) then.. ***It is what it is*** 😊

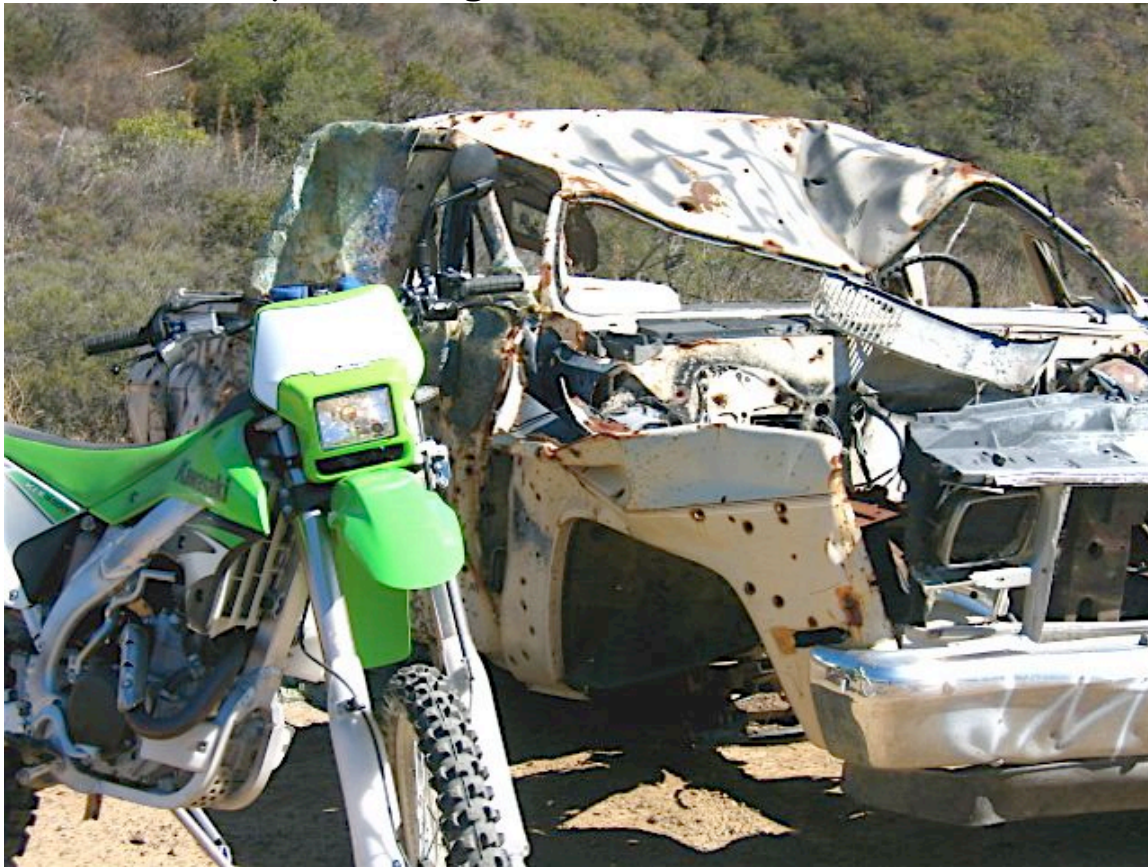
In the Cleveland NF, I continue to be amazed at the sheer amount ("miles") of riding. At the top of every hill/ridge, here's a typical sight...



I came to this fork in the road...



...and initially went right (north-east), and came to...



...this shot-up dead-end. Oh well. I note that this area is likely no longer in the Cleveland NF, as the Feds would never allow this junk to sit in plain view. Bummer! Another gate! I turned around...



...as this was a suspension-test ride, not an "exploration" ride. By looking at my speedometer, I was aware of averaging 5mph faster than my other (smaller, KDX-200) bike. Better still, I was expending far less energy. 😊 So, "things are clicking".

The gate above was marked with the below sign, as well as the Mountain Lion warning...

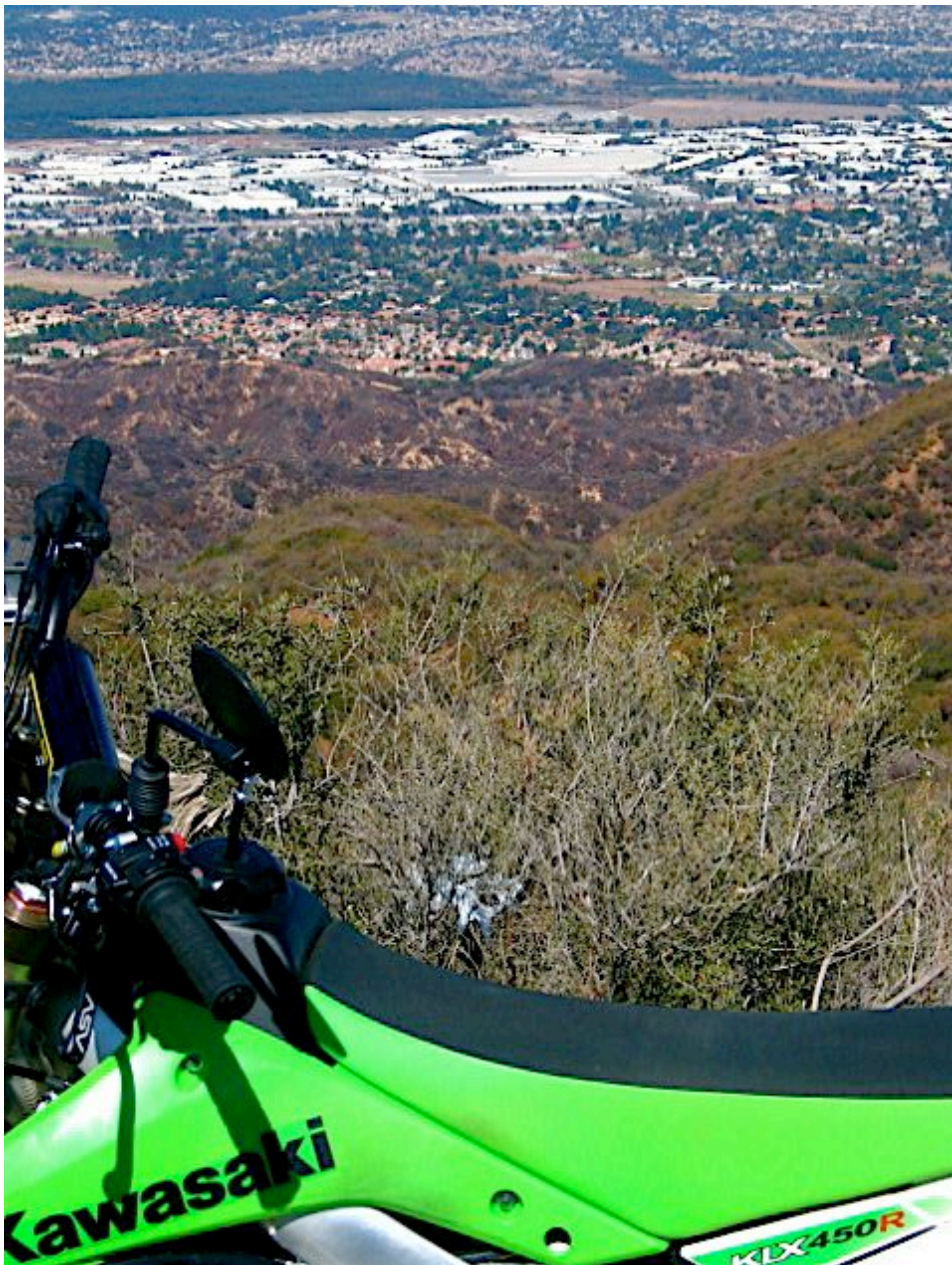


I had the chance to head east down the below hill into Corona (not today!)



Below is a great shot of Corona, and at the top of the pic (running left-right) is the Corona airport. This is a pretty neat memory, as my last flight as a powerplane pilot (I now fly only gliders) was in a Cessna-182 to Las Vegas (1986), and on the way we had to make a stop into the Corona airport. I recall that Mike-D (my webmaster) and his wife Susan were aboard.

😊 😊 😊 Ah, the good old days! 😊 😊 😊



By now (including picture-time) I'd been riding 3 hours, and (finally!) the sun had moved so as to provide some much-appreciated shade. I couldn't resist a rest stop and a nice drink. It was 90F up there, and perfectly clear, and I could literally feel the sun "burning me".

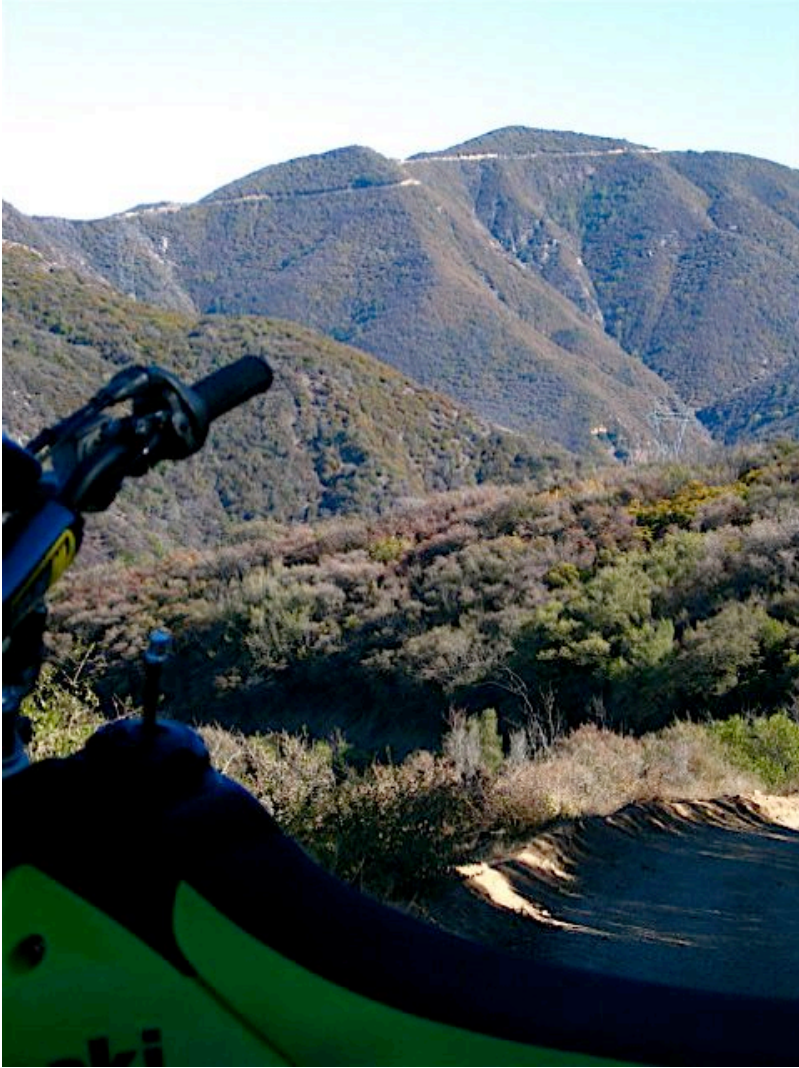
Nice road eh? The 450R can maintain 34mph here in complete confidence...



Self-portrait (below) at the above rest-stop...



Below shows the way home, all the way "up there" and left-right across the ridgeline...



Then... I met a group of riders. Note-to-Honda: Do not use this guy in your ad-campaigns...

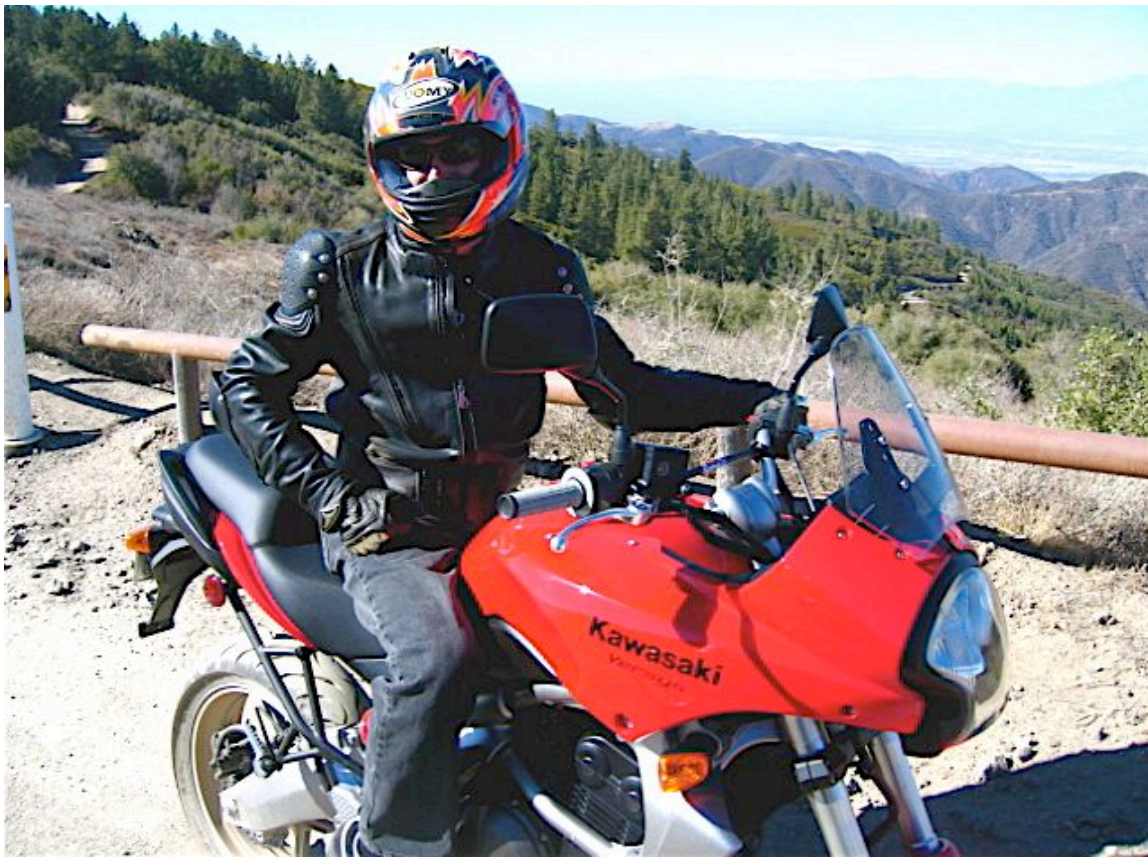


The below Yamaha rider seemed in a better mood...



...and the Kawasaki rider ("Jeff" from Team Green Kawasaki USA) was downright pleasurable. Note-to-Jeff...

**GREEN GREEN paint-it-GREEN!**



10 miles later, back at the Silverado entrance...



...I savored my UT plate, as there is no-way this bike (Kawasaki KLX-450R) can be street-plated in CA...



Hmmm... No doubt I've got lots of planning/adjusting to do. My plan is to depart on Wednesday to Mammoth Lakes, giving me another 24 hours to acclimatize to the 7,000' altitude.

Right now, "little details" are maddening. My trailer tail-lights are problematical. There is simply no time to "fix it right". Ugh I hate band-aid fixes this late in the game but "gotta do it".

The bike is better than I am. The new higher/pullback bars and rubber grips are a noticeable improvement over stock (at least for me).

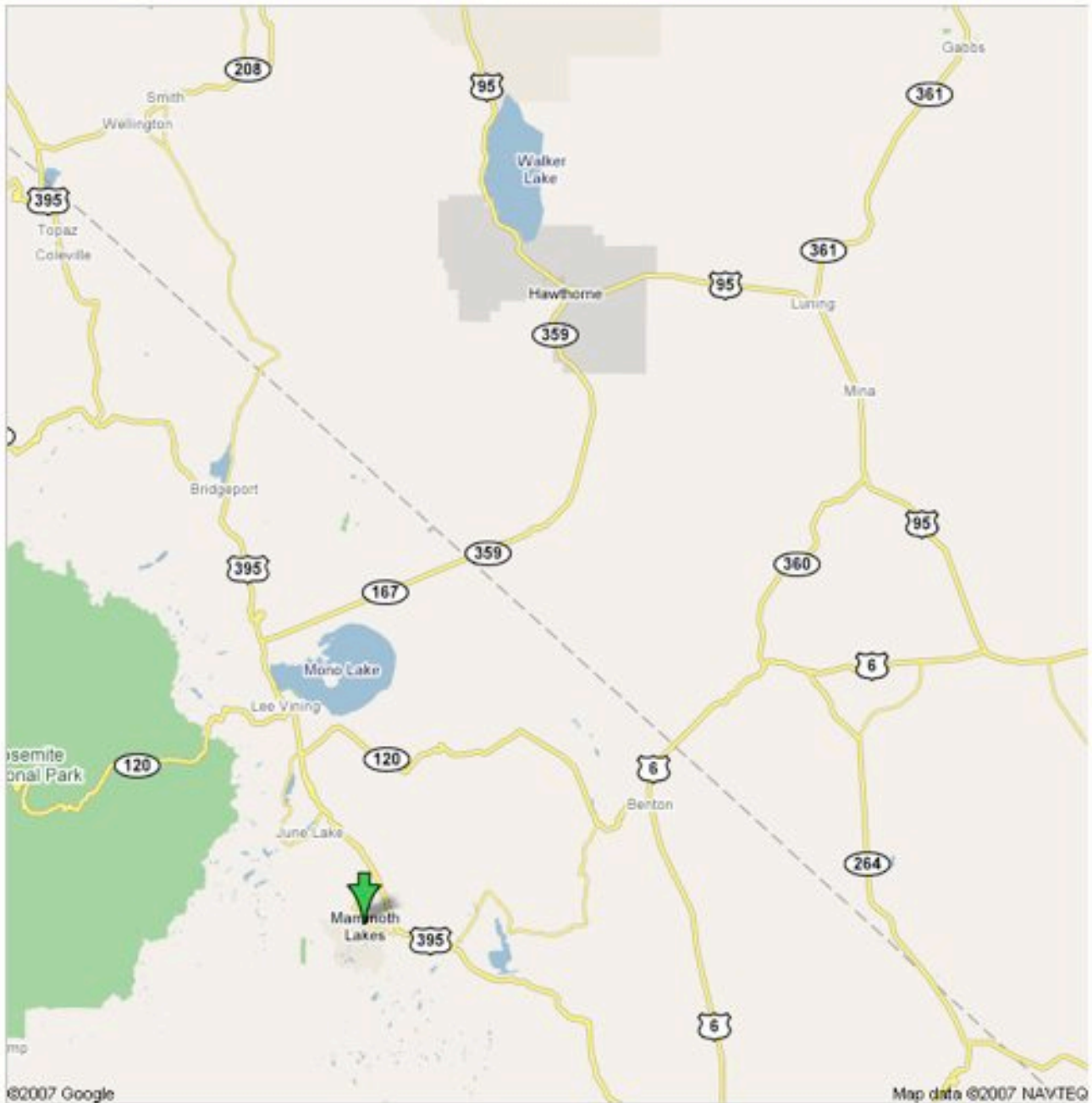
The map showing Mammoth Lakes CA (green arrow) to Hawthorne NV (northward from Mammoth, south of Walker Lake) is below...



Address **Mammoth Lakes, CA**

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This route is all-dirt across Federal land, 100+ miles/day. We will overnight (2 nights) at a casino in Hawthorne, returning to Mammoth Lakes on Sunday.

Note the NV *El Capitan Resort & Casino* "normal room rate" is **\$38/night** so I'm not expecting much.

Also of note, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) limits the number of dirt-bikes across the desert to **150** and the event sells out quickly.

This run is quite expensive, \$825 gets me a single room for 3 nights lunch/dinner twice, "coupons in NV", and of course 300-miles of marked-route (with a "clean-up crew" to pick up the stragglers/bodies ☹). Hmmm...

In closing, I did 60 miles (all-dirt) today, "learned a lot" 😊

Am I ready? Well, for age-60, as ready as I'll ever be...

*Thanks for your support!*

*Paul P.* 😊