

Adventurers! A fabulous journey is about to begin! Hmmm...
Where to begin? Actually the story starts not in the Mojave desert, but on the flight deck of the USS Saratoga, in 1974...



...where I was flying (back seat, "Radar Intercept Officer" or RIO) with my pilot (the infamous) "Pigpen" (front seat). The pic above is our squadron aircraft, an F-4 Phantom of the "Sluggers" of Fighter Squadron 103.

The goal is to ride in the event named the Death Valley Rally, a 3-day, 600-mile ride across the Mojave desert, starting in Ridgecrest CA, heading eastward to Pahrump NV, north to Beatty NV, and back to Ridgecrest ("all-dirt").

But... We are minimally prepared... We have decided to have a "preparation day" on the preceding Friday, to test our gear (GPS, SatPhone, Locator Beacon, and both bikes). Pigpen has thoughtfully brought along his sweet wife Sarah, who will drive

the support car across the desert (paved roads, occasional dirt) and "chase" us on the trip... Here's Pigpen & Sarah...

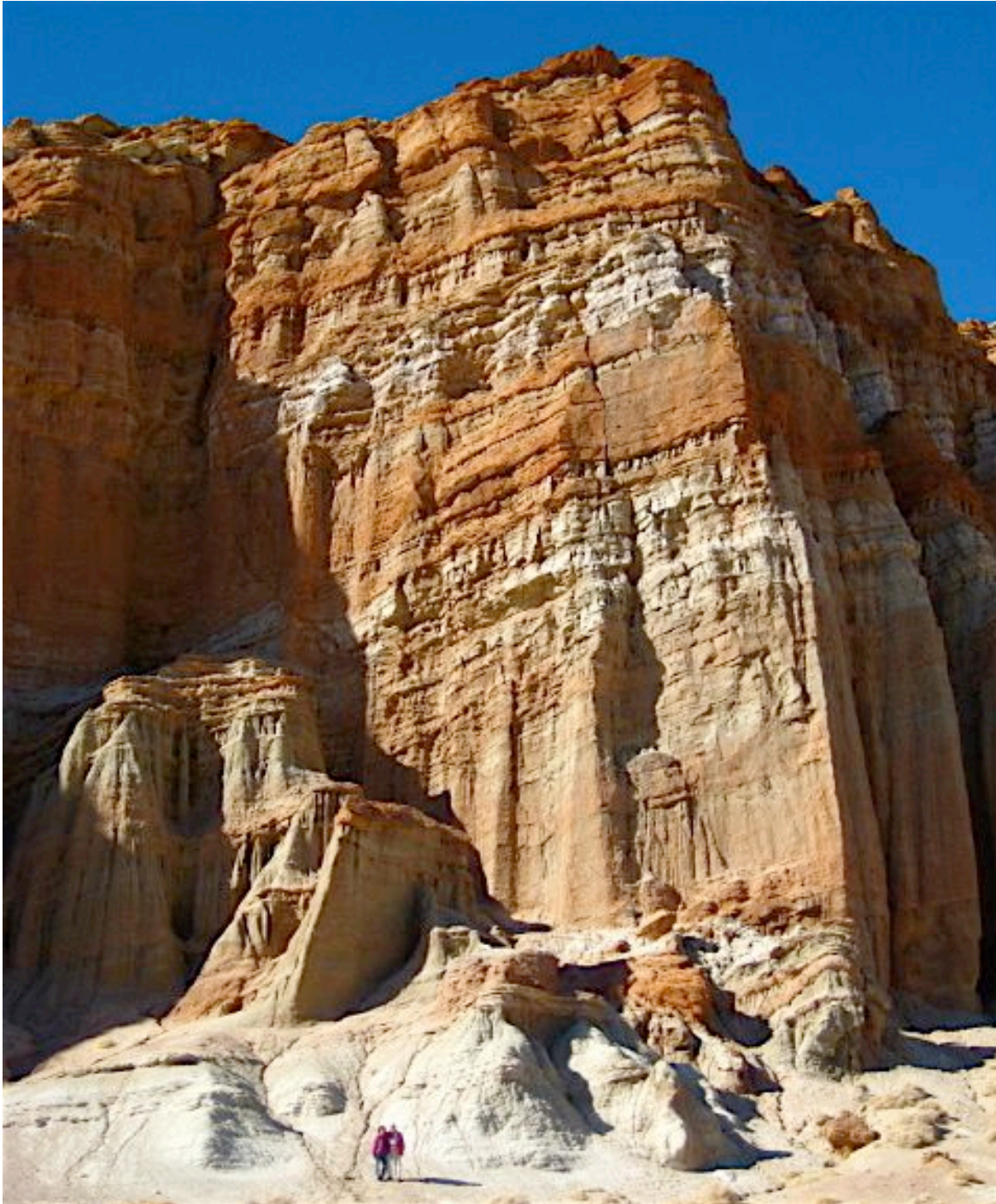


Pigpen, not having ridden a dirt bike for 30 years, will "warm up" on Prep-day. As a retired *American Airlines* captain, surely he can handle a dirt-bike, eh?

Sarah driving, we headed out into the desert...



...stopping at the awesome Red Rocks state park (the little-dots are Pigpen & Sarah)...



The size of Red Rocks is staggering, and it is located right off Rt.14 east of the town of Mojave...

Pigpen & Sarah...



We decided to trailer over to RedRocks/Inyokern road, a 20-mile graded dirt road, to re-introduce Pigpen to the sport...



Sarah met her first for-real bobcat...



...at the Jawbone (riding area) exhibit. Below is our ride-road...



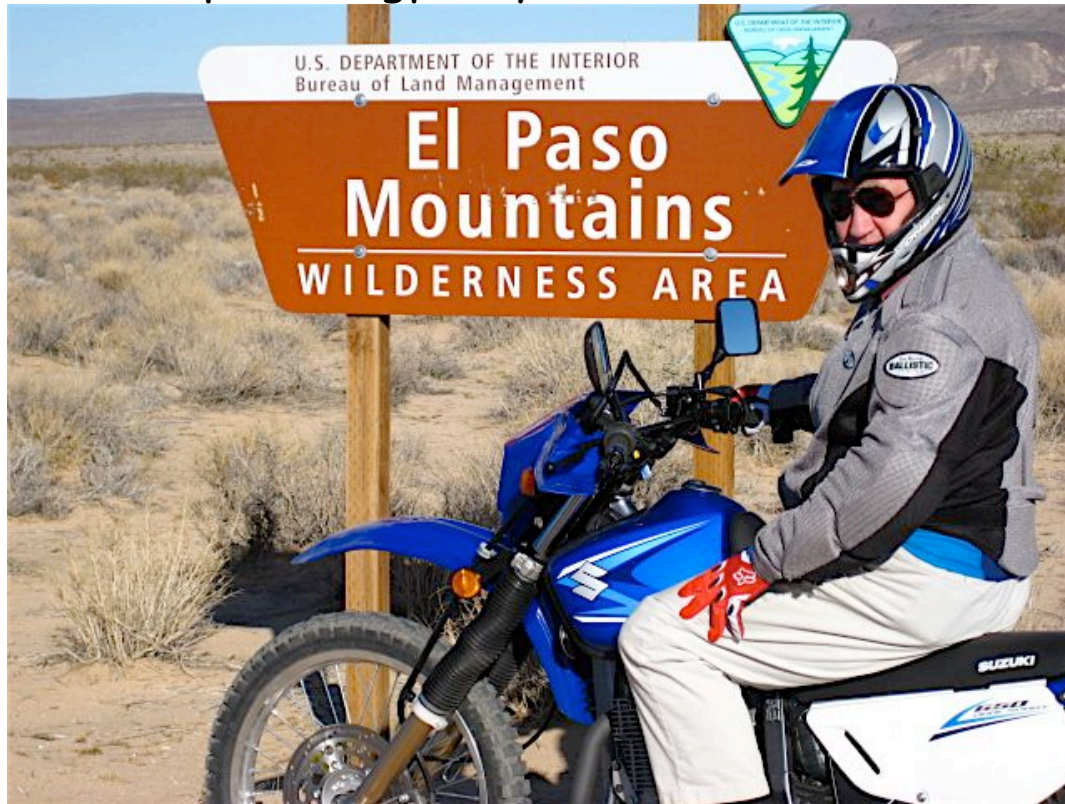
Now, let me remind you that Pigpen & Sarah are "city people" (NYC) and so anything having to do with a "dirt road" is alien. Here we are, ready to launch!



Pigpen (below) awaiting the "go" signal...



Terrific pic of Pigpen, your tax-dollars at work!



Pigpen and I would leap-frog down the road, Sarah would trailer-along...



...pass me, and I'd take the pic (that's my bike) then zoom past her for another photo-op. The long and winding road!



Pigpen, flogging the throttle, is long-gone.



Mission complete! A smiling Sarah picked us up, and we trailer'd into downtown Ridgecrest. Tomorrow (Saturday) we begin our 600-mile Death Valley Rally. Stay tuned! **Paul P.**