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HONDA THUMPER GOODIE GUIDE

DIRT BIKE

MARCH 1979 • \$1.25 UK60p

**THE
TRUE
STORY
OF THE
PHANTOM
DUCK OF THE
DESERT**

**BLUE GOLD:
YAMAHA IT250**

**TIME TRAVELS:
THE ENDURO
WARS**



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32

DIRT BIKE

Volume 9 No. 3
March 1979

TESTS

- 22 HONDA CR 250R**
Changes to the big red rooster
- 46 YAMAHA IT250F**
About a 100-percent improvement
- 56 MAICO 450 MAGNUM E**
"E" stands for enduro

COMPETITION

- 60 ENDURO WRAP**
Burlleson's fifth

TECHNICAL

- 27 AIR LEAKS**
It doesn't leak out, it leaks in
- 38 PROJECT DR**
RM'ing the DR — no way
- 51 SCOTT PRO COVERS**
Warmer and protector both

FEATURES

- 32 PHANTOM DUCK**
Leading the fight for you
- 52 DUEL**
Tennis ball tech
- 54 WHEN YOU BREAK**
Part three for 125s
- 64 HONDA FOUR-STROKE GOODIE GUIDE**
Thumping special

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 FROM THE SADDLE**
Shape up!
- 8 OWENSMOUTH**
Heritages are made, not born
- 10 LAST OVER**
Unplanned obsolescence
- 12 MR. KNOW-IT-ALL**
For you masochists
- 14 NEW PRODUCTS**
Bike stuff
- 16 RIDERS WRITE**
It's your quarter, at this rate
- 18 BITS AND PIECES**
Little big stuff
- 75 CRASH AND BURN**
Up and over

On the cover:

Kenny Zahrt performed unnatural acts on a CR-250 for this month's test. Rick Sieman photo.

Next issue on sale March 20

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One Man's Fight Against The BLM

THE TRUE STORY OF THE PHANTOM DUCK OF THE DESERT

Doing battle with slack-jawed pinheads and
trained circus geeks

By Rick Sieman

November 29, 1978 CYCLE NEWS

THE LATEST POOP BY PAPA WEALEY

BLM, Phantom Duck update

The following is a press release from the California Bureau of Land Management dated Nov. 16 issued by the Riverside District Office, 1695 Spruce St., Riverside, CA 92507.

District Court halts "Phantom Duck" event

The United States Attorney, Los Angeles, CA, today obtained a Temporary Restraining Order from United States District Court Judge Warren J. Ferguson to halt the unauthorized "Phantom Duck of the Desert 4th Annual Barstow to Vegas 'unorganized' trail ride."

The Court order was requested by the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management. Gerald E. Hillier, BLM Riverside District Manager, said the United States is seeking a permanent court order prohibiting the event without compliance with Federal law.

The court ordered the defendants (*Phantom Duck's name withheld... Editor*) and others in active concert or participation with him, in their own names or under the pseudonym "Phantom Duck of the Desert," to refrain from promoting, organizing, sponsoring, or participating in the trail ride during the 1978 Thanksgiving weekend.

Hillier noted the American Motorcyclist Association and its member clubs have not been involved in promoting the unauthorized event.

The proposed trail ride would have followed the route of the old Barstow to Las Vegas motorcycle race held for several years on Thanksgiving weekend in the late 1960's and early 1970's. BLM allowed the last 155-mile race in 1974 after preparation and public review of an environmental impact statement. The post race evaluation showed substantial natural and cultural resource damage. As a result, in order to protect the desert environment, BLM has not allowed off-road vehicle events over the route.

Although this particular race is no longer allowed, BLM still issues approximately 150 approved off-road vehicle permits annually in southern California, involving some 60,000 participants.

BLM has worked with past sponsors, including the American Motorcyclist Association and member clubs, to provide alternative areas for smaller scale races that would not have the major impacts of the Barstow to Vegas race.

While the BLM seems confident that the Phantom Duck and his friends will not ride, the Duck and friends do not agree. As this is being written, Rick Sieman of *Dirt Bike Magazine* is organizing a legal defense fund. The Phantom Duck, by the time you read this newspaper, will have appeared in a Nov. 21 hearing with full legal counsel, thanks to Sieman and a large number of industry people who either individually or through their firms have contributed to the fund. And this, according to Sieman, is only the beginning.

Send a buck, save the Duck

"We have a lawyer with his canines sharpened, and we're giving him a license to kill. The Duck is not going to be shot down! After the hearing, the legal defense fund will be converted to a legal attack fund. They've indicated that the Duck is to be used as an example, and we're not going to let that happen," said Sieman in a Monday telephone call to *Cycle News*.

"We've found a lot of financial support in the industry, and now we're going to see what kind of support the riders are willing to give. We're going to ask anyone who wants to help to send one dollar," he concluded.

Donations to the Phantom Duck of the Desert Legal Defense/Attack Fund should be sent to the Flame, Sanger, Grayson and Ginsburg Client Trust Fund, c/o Rick Sieman, 17619 Los Alamos St., Granada Hills, CA 91344. Make checks payable to F. S. G&G Client Trust Fund.

Judge Bans Desert Cycle Race

U.S. dist. court judge Warren J. Ferguson issued a temporary restraining order Thursday preventing a Barstow-Las Vegas motorcycle race over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Ferguson issued the restraining order at the request of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which said it would seek a permanent injunction to halt the event, billed as the "Phantom Duck of the Desert 4th annual Barstow to Vegas Unorganized Trail Ride."

Gerald E. Hillier, BLM district manager at Riverside, said the American Motorcyclist Assn. and its member clubs have not been involved in the event. Named in the restraining order was Louis H. McKay and others who were not identified.

'Phantom Duck' and 49 Friends Can Stage Protest Cycle Ride

The "Phantom Duck of the Desert" Tuesday won the right to have 49 friends join him in a trail-bike ride from Barstow to Las Vegas to protest U.S. Bureau of Land Management policies regarding the use of off-road vehicles on federal desert lands.

U.S. District Judge Warren J. Ferguson did, however, enjoin Louis H. McKay, who used the pseudonym Phantom Duck of the Desert, from doing anything to encourage more than 50 individuals from partaking in the ride on roads "ostensibly open to the public."

Fearing that large numbers of motorcyclists could turn out for the trail-bike ride Saturday, the Bureau of Land Management sought a preliminary injunction halting the protest ride.

Judge Ferguson was sympathetic to McKay's claims of a First Amendment right to protest the BLM policies, but the judge said the BLM's regulations requiring a permit be granted for more than 50 persons taking part in an event on Federal land is a reasonable restriction to assure protection of the desert environment.

McKay had no such permit for the scheduled trail-bike ride. The American Motorcyclist Assn. has opposed the ride, fearing it would interfere with ongoing negotiations with the Bureau of Land Management over a permanent plan regarding desert use by off-road vehicles.

In 1974, more than 3,000 motorcyclists participated in a race sponsored by the San Gabriel Valley Motorcycle Club of Southern California from Barstow to Las Vegas which reportedly caused extensive damage to the desert terrain.

Giger Leads Bruin Victory

The UCLA women's volleyball team won their 15th consecutive year reign as champions of the National Collegiate Athletic Assn. Tuesday night.

580 TAKE PART

Cyclists Defy Court Ban on Race in Desert

BY MARK FORSTER
Times Staff Writer

The "Phantom Duck of the Desert" Fourth Annual Barstow-to-Las Vegas "Trail Ride" proved more powerful than a federal court order Saturday.

Approximately 580 motorcyclists roared away from the starting point 20 miles east of Barstow at 7:30 a.m. despite an injunction obtained last week by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) aimed at halting the race.

But BLM inspectors, outnumbered by cyclists 60-to-1, were present along the route to court riders and take pictures, and an agency spokesman said it is considering pressing the legal action against the race organizer.

"We gathered quite a bit of data and will submit it to the U.S. attorney for legal determination," said Ken Kleiber, chief ranger for the Barstow Resource Area.

The "Phantom Duck" ride has been staged informally and illegally since the BLM banned the 155-mile Barstow-to-Las Vegas off-road event in 1975 because of its impact on the desert.

In 1974, the last year it was staged legally, the race attracted more than 3,000 motorcyclists and an estimated 1,000 spectators. About 100 to 150 persons made the ride last year.

When advertisements appeared in motorcycle magazines this year for cyclists to join a protest event, the BLM went to a federal court in Los Angeles for a restraining order.

In a hearing Tuesday, Louis H. McKay, identified as the "Phantom Duck of the Desert," was ordered to refrain from participating in, organizing or sponsoring any off-road event such as Saturday's.

McKay was not prohibited by the judge from riding Saturday as long as the group numbered less than 50 and stayed along Highways 468 and 91 and "other roads ostensibly open to the public between Barstow and Las Vegas."

But Kleiber said the agency's legal case against either McKay or the other 580 riders was a "gray area." He said "The Phantom Duck" apparently had not been sighted among the riders.

As for the other cyclists, they seemed to stay on the road when they went past the checkpoints, Kleiber said.

Did you ever sit around and daydream about taking on a big corporation that just wronged you? Or maybe even getting even with a company that just rode herd over common decency and ripped you off?

Or even the ultimate! Taking on the Internal Revenue Service? And winning!!! We'd all like to have the time, money and energy to fight the Battle Royal, but, in the course of earning a living and just getting along, day by day, we somehow never seem to get up the steam to actually realize that dream.

One man has.

He goes by the name of The Phantom Duck of the Desert, and, singlehandedly, has chosen to take on the Mighty Bureau of Land Management. The BLM, as we have come to know them.

If you ride a dirt bike of any kind, on any land other than a park, anywhere, at any time, you are not doing it by the will of the Lord. Nope. You are doing it because the BLM, in their infinite goodness, has not yet closed that land down.

However, we must face up to the rather alarming fact that most of the people who ride, are riding illegally. Most of the time, most of the places.

Why?

Simple. We don't have any other places to ride. Here in the vast Southwest, we have literally millions of acres of wasteland that bears the name "desert." Much of this land is owned by the railroad, more by other private industry, but, by and large, most of the land is owned by us.

That's right. Us. You and me.

Hey, you say, that makes it nice. It's our land. Therefore, we can ride cycles and rec vehicles on it. Right?

Wrong. Dead wrong.

Standing directly between us and the rational use of our land, is the aforementioned BLM. The very name sends spasms of disgust up this writer's spine. The Bureau of Land Management. It smacks of something reeking of post-World War II purges. Stalinist Russia. Control. The government bigger than the people.

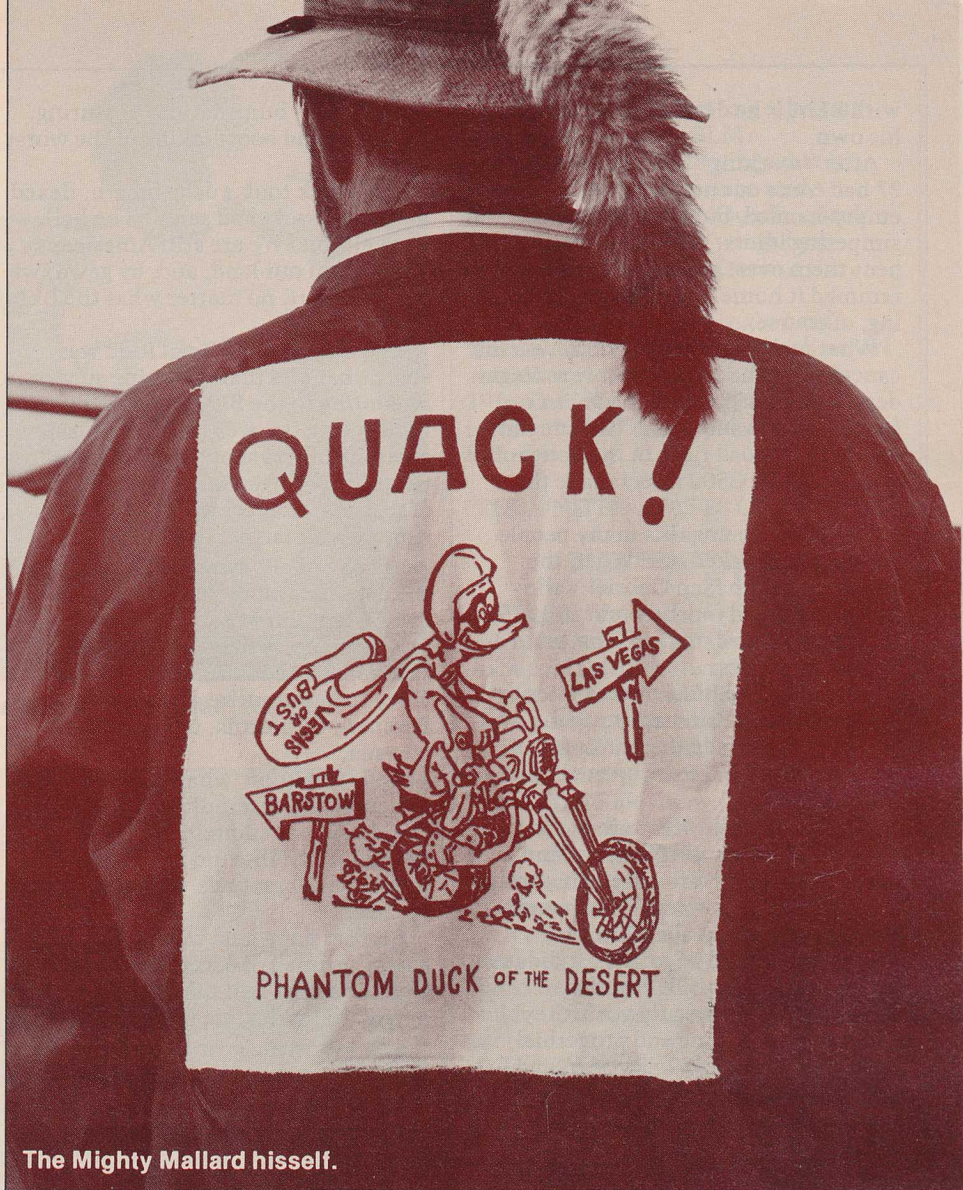
On paper, in front of a committee of white-haired legislators, the ideals of Managing Land for the Good of the People almost sound reasonable.

In practice, they make you want to puke.

Which brings us back to the Phantom Duck. He saw the land slowly and surely being taken away from us. He saw the bikers being herded into a small pocket of desert called Soggy Dry Lake, much like a bunch of diseased cattle.

He wanted to do something.

Naturally, he felt that he should work within the system. Finding that the local branch of the AMA (District 37) was bound and determined to "work



The Mighty Mallard hisself.



Riders showed up from all over the U.S. to protest the policies of the BLM. More than a few trucks and vans sported messages like this.

with BLM," he decided to strike off on his own.

After "working" with BLM, District 37 had come out not only empty-handed, but looking like simpering idiots. The BLM had simply bent them over, greased it up and rammed it home, legislatively speaking, of course.

What really set the Duck off, was the canceling of the 1975 Barstow to Vegas desert classic. This race had been run for eight years and was a "must" run for every off-road rider in the Southwest. In 1974, 3500 riders made the run.

The BLM, seeing this many people having fun, freaked out! When the sponsoring club (San Gabriel Valley M.C.) reapplied for the event in 1975, they were denied on the flimsiest of pretexts.

Strangely, the BLM offered later to let the Barstow Run happen again, or, (now get this) trade the Barstow Run for more new land to be opened up in the near future.

They made this offer to those in charge of District 37. Now, we don't know the district officers all that well, but it seems to us that if they bought the song and dance the BLM gave them, they would be prime candidates for swamp land lots in Florida.

But, as the story sadly goes, they bought it, hook, line and proverbial sinker. It is now 1979. No new land has been opened up. We have effectively lost the Barstow Run and several others of importance.

All of these things must have run through the feathered mind of the Phantom Duck, as he sat there, pondering the status of things.

1978 is not the first time the Duck has quacked. No sir, you can bet your beak on that. When we lost the Barstow Run in 1975, he immediately saw what was happening and decided to do something about the situation.

This was the birth of the First Annual "Unorganized" Barstow to Vegas Trail Ride. To keep things completely legal, our friend the Duck decided to have a trail ride, rather than a race. You see, to have any sort of a race, you must go through the humiliating process of inserting your tongue into the bowels of the BLM cheeks.

Paperwork, endless paperwork, is what they demand. And they want money. Money, *people*, to ride on your own land. They also insist on Impact Studies and reports. And more forms. You must also be very nice to them. You must kiss their bureaucratic butt, or they'll really make things rough for you. They'll lose papers. They make sure that Environmental Impact Studies just don't get done in time. It's

degradation, humiliation, posturing, groveling and boot-licking of the worst sort.

The Duck took a deep breath, flexed his wings back, and said: "The hell with all this. We are still Americans. This is still our land, and, by gawd, we can ride on it, no matter what the BLM says."

The First Annual Trail Ride was somewhat less than a blazing success. According to the BLM (who were monitoring the area like CIA spies), about 25 bikers showed up. They chose to ignore the happening, for a number of reasons, some of which we shall explore a bit farther downstream.

We personally happen to know that the actual number was closer to 75 riders, but that is not important. What is important, is that the Duck and his Feathered Friends *did* ride that day. They rode the entire distance from Barstow, California, to Las Vegas, Nevada.

And, you know what? The earth did not end. The desert did not die. Dust clouds did not encircle the planet. Species of wildlife did not perish. Indian burial grounds were not violated.

All that happened was this: A friendly bunch of bikers got together and had a nice trail ride covering maybe 160 miles, tops.

The following year, the race was relegated to the history books, as Barstow was written off. The Phantom Duck saw fit to hold the Second Annual Trail Ride (of course, unofficial), and a few more riders showed up. Not the thousands who had enjoyed the event in the years past, but the hard-core riders who refused to give up the concept of being allowed to ride on American land that was officially open for riding . . . they rode.

A third year loomed and the Duck responded with yet another trail ride. The BLM, choosing to ignore the existence of any sort of protest, pretended it never happened.

1978 rolled around. By this time, the riders in District 37 were not only fried at the BLM, they were infuriated with their own officers. The Board of Directors of the Legal Defense Fund had done little more than pick their collective noses. Rumbblings were happening.

The Duck was busy, urging riders to join him in a peaceful protest of the BLM sodomy of the land. The officers of District 37 pleaded for the riders to ignore this upstart. Jim Wells even wrote a piece for the Sierra Club newsletter, the *ORV Monitor*, calling the efforts of the Duck destructive and begging riders to ignore his existence.

The Duck stepped up his pace.

Letters and posters were mailed to President Carter, the Governor of California, everyone of importance on the BLM, congressmen, senators, legislators and just about everyone of influence. Sort of a Message to the Leeches, as it were.

At this point, the BLM went absolutely bug-nuts. They flipped out. Eyeballs rolled uncontrollably. They reeled against walls and stumbled into urinals. Reacting like slack-jawed pinheads and trained circus geeks, the BLM redlined.

They did this, largely, because they realized that sooner or later, someone would step up to challenge them. After all, they could only go *so long* and *so far* abusing the process, before *someone* did *something*. They knew it had to come.

And they were ready.

They figured that if someone tried to rebel against their policies, they would squash the individual. Make an example of him. Ruin him. Hold him up to the light and say, "See. See what happens when you mess with the BLM. You get your ass in a sling of the worst sort."

There are only two things they never counted on: the backbone of the Duck and the people who rallied behind him when it came right down to the wire.

First, you have to understand what the Duck was up against. When the paperwork for the 1978 Barstow was distributed, the Duck was contacted by the BLM and threatened.

This was very surprising, as the Duck operated out of a P.O. box number that was placed by his sister from Northern California. Using tactics that were normally reserved for people who sold nuclear secrets to the Enemy, they tracked the Phantom Duck down and proceeded to lean on him.

And lean hard.

A lawyer by the name of Burton Stanley (remember that name, because you pay his salary) told the Duck that if he didn't retract his promotion of the "unauthorized" Trail Ride, he was going to be thrown into jail and fined \$2000. "Of course," said the good lawyer, "because you're a first offender, chances are you'll get off with two years probation and a reduced fine."

"However," went the good barrister, "if you retract everything you've said and issue a statement that what you said was harmful and bad, we'll drop all our plans to prosecute, and let you go on your way."

At this point, most common folk would probably have yielded to the good Mister Stanley and gone quietly



These three outlaw bikers were seen at the B to V "Unofficial" Trail Ride. Scares us just looking at them.



The rangers acted like a herd of drunken James Bonds. Here, one squats behind a truck door taking photos of passing trail riders.

about their way, forgetting all about tackling the Mighty BLM.

The Duck, remembering what his great-grandfather had once said, bristled, and quoted: "Quack, quack. Don't look back. Who wings first overall? The Phantom Duck of the Desert, that's who."

All of this came to an ugly head, when the Duck was served with papers about a week before the scheduled 1978 Trail Ride. The papers were an inch and a half thick and were as follows:

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
vs.
LOUIS HENRY McKEY

Imagine, the entire U.S. of A. against one man! It was at this point that the duck contacted this writer about his plight. We had been in touch with the Duck for some time and were planning to do a small story on the Fourth Annual "Unorganized" Barstow to Vegas Trail Ride. Now, instead of looking forward to a pleasant trail ride, the Duck was looking at a possible prison term and a large fine.

The way the BLM served the Duck with those terrible-looking legal papers was pretty sneaky. In fact, they bent and skirted the law to make sure our buddy the Phantom never had a chance in court.

On a Wednesday evening, the Duck saw the papers for the first time. The BLM was asking for a temporary restraining order against the Duck THE VERY NEXT MORNING! If he wanted to contest the order, he would have to get a lawyer that night, prepare a rebuttal and appear in court at ten the next day, ready to defend himself against a team of lawyers.

It was clearly impossible.

To complicate things even more, the Duck was on jury duty and couldn't even get away if he wanted to. We talked that night, trying desperately to think of something. The only logical thing to do was send a telegram to the judge telling him the situation, and hope for the best.

Fortunately, the judge turned out to be a reasonable human being, and only gave the BLM a five-day temporary restraining order and ordered both parties to appear in court in one week. This was the week right before the Trail Ride. The hearing was scheduled for Tuesday — the ride for Saturday.

Naturally, the newspapers slammed out erroneous headlines that the federal courts had halted the "race." People got furious and said that, order or no order, they were going to ride. The mood of the off-road people was ugly.

(Continued on next page)

PRESS TIME UPDATE

A lot has happened since the U.S. Government tried to crush the Phantom Duck of the Desert.

Since that time, the Phantom Duck has changed the direction of District 37.

Thursday night, December 7th, 1978, District 37 held its regular monthly meeting. At this meeting, it was announced by the Legal Defense Fund committee, that they were officially changing their stance with regard to the Bureau of Land Management.

Up until now, the District has tried to work within the framework of the BLM structure. In four years, this gained them nothing and cost us land.

The officers actually got up and said that they owed a debt to the Duck and they thanked him. Applause from all present showed the feelings of the club members.

Dropping another bombshell, District announced that they have hired the Duck's lawyer to work with them in fighting the BLM and other abusive agencies in court. It was clear that the days of taking it in the ear without a whimper are over. Jim Wells announced that District 37 was also filing for the original Barstow to Vegas *and* the Check Chase. If turned down, Wells said they would sue all the way down the line.

This brought the house down.

The Duck was then invited to address the Sports Committee. In a voice ringing with conviction and strength, the Duck warned the District officers and reps about underestimating the vile and rotten tactics of the BLM. He reminded them that we are dealing with people who will lie, cheat, swindle, steal and threaten to get things their way.

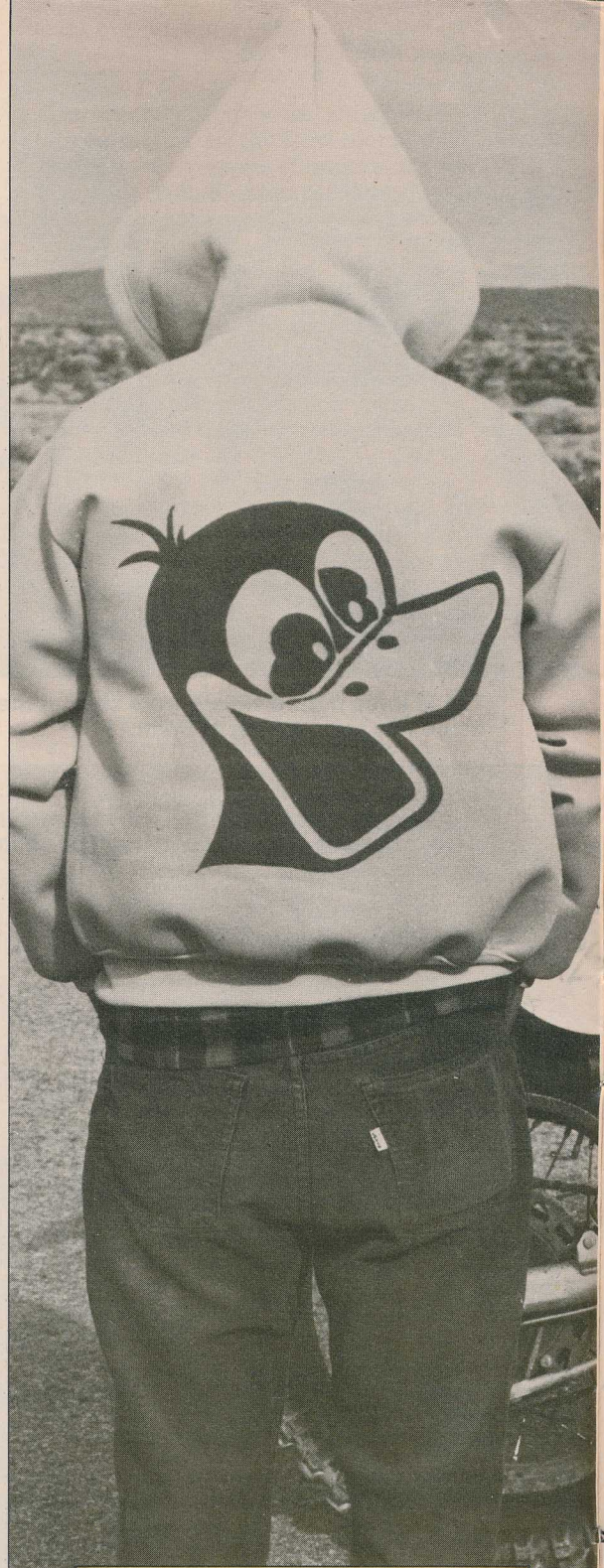
To back up the statements of the Duck, this writer got up and told the District meeting that the power and money of the D.M.A. (Ducks Motorcycle Association) was behind District — as long as they did what they said. In other words, all the awesome power of the Mighty Mallard would be there as a watchdog.

It pleased the Duck Organization mightily to see District 37 make a 180-degree swap in policy. We pointed out loud and clear that the motorcycle rider is not a soft-willed wimp, willing to sit on his can while "negotiations" go on around him.

The D.M.A. has decided to let it all hang out. We are not only going to back District 37 in its fight, we will fight on our own, giving the BLM a double-tongued viper to deal with. We have irons in the fire and evil things planned for the enemy. □



There was a run on rubber ducks in the city of Barstow the night before the trail ride. Many riders chose to put them on their helmets in a gesture of peaceful dissent, like this unidentified gentleman.



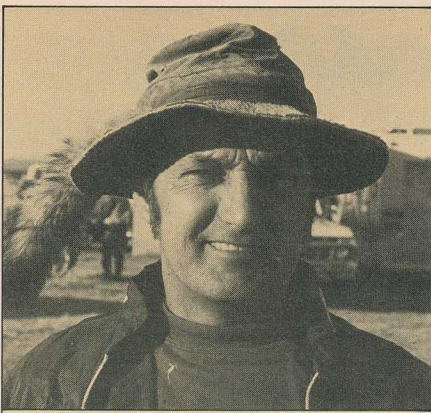
THE PHANTOM DUCK LEGAL ATTACK FUND

If you want to get behind what we're doing, we welcome your help, no matter where you might live. The battle is just starting. So, send a buck to save the Duck . . . and hold your head a bit higher with pride.

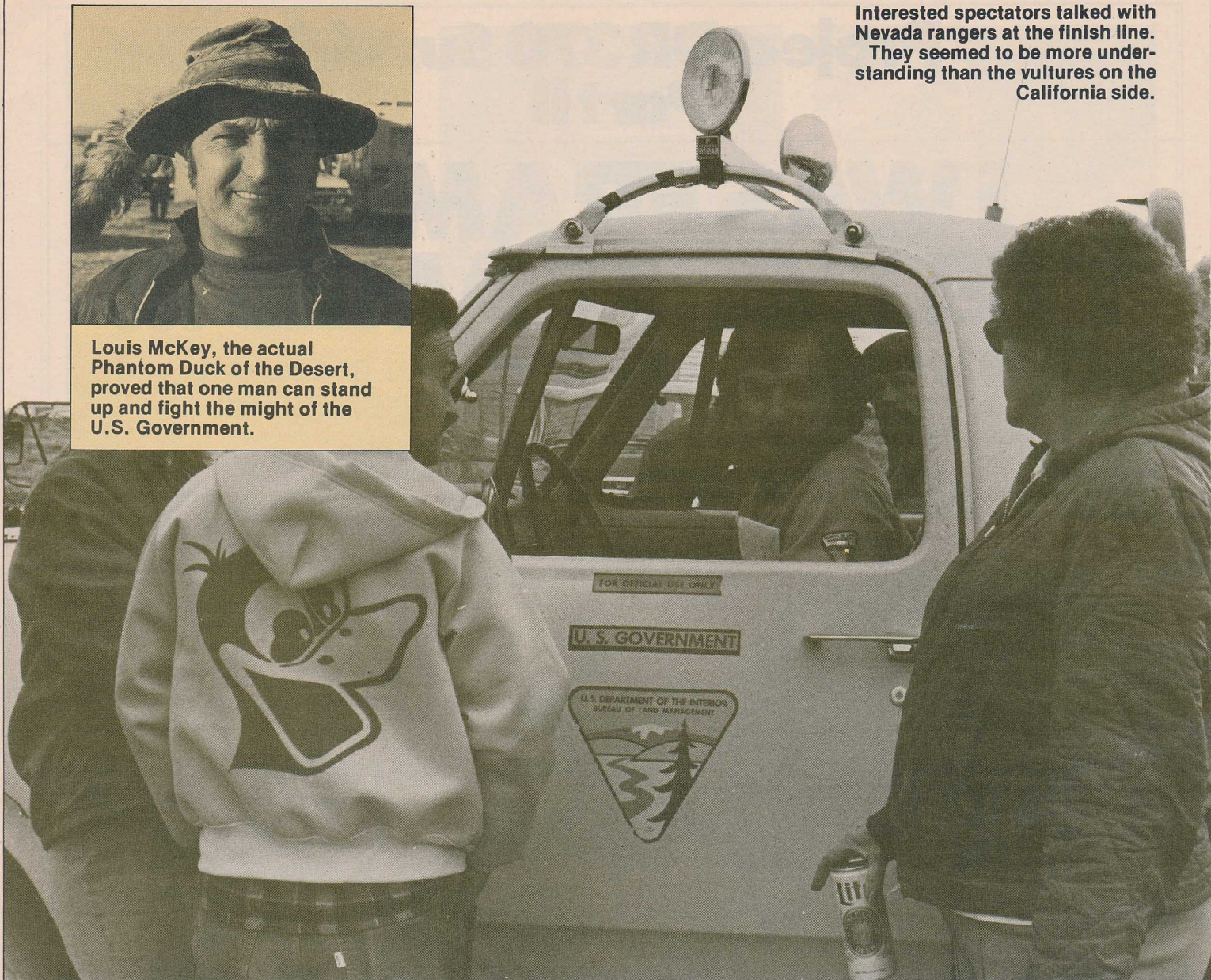
Checks should be made out to:

**The Phantom Duck Of
The Desert**
7896 Kempster Ave.
Fontana, Calif. 92335

Interested spectators talked with Nevada rangers at the finish line. They seemed to be more understanding than the vultures on the California side.



Louis McKey, the actual Phantom Duck of the Desert, proved that one man can stand up and fight the might of the U.S. Government.



We got busy.

A lawyer was contacted, and arrangements were made to defend the Duck with only three days to go before the Tuesday hearing. We sent word to *Cycle News* that all was not lost yet, and for riders to not give up hope. We also started the Legal Defense/Attack Fund at that point and asked the riders to Send a Buck to Save The Duck. They responded. Money started to come in almost immediately, which says a lot for the influence and circulation of *Cycle News*.

Our lawyer, George Stephan, worked night and day, and had his office staff cranking out the necessary papers at flank speed. Somehow, some way, when Tuesday morning rolled around, he had prepared a beautiful defense, based on the First Amendment to the Constitution — the right of Free Speech.

At 20 minutes to ten on Tuesday morning, in the Federal Courthouse, six lawyers for the U.S. and the BLM sat around in a waiting room, chuckling and smiling, waiting to get in court and crucify the Duck. They assumed he wouldn't have a lawyer. Or maybe he wouldn't even show up. Then, they'd win by default.

Their mutual back-slapping and jollies came to an end when Stephan walked into the room and slapped a stack of papers in front of them an inch thick and announced that he was the attorney for the defense. Jaws went slack and a great deal of muttering and stumbling speech ensued. All the laughter ceased.

The fact that Stephan was also a member of a very respected Encino bucks-up law firm (Flame, Sanger, Grayson and Ginsburg) didn't hurt either.

The Duck, some members of the press and a few friends made up our party. The BLM had their team of lawyers, a gaggle of official sorts from their various offices and a pair of zombie-like rangers standing around looking as official as they possibly could.

We spent the entire day in that foreboding courtroom. And a lot of things came out. The judge, Warren Ferguson, seemed like a fair and honest sort, and said right up front that he encouraged peaceful dissent.

The BLM got up and argued. Then George got up and argued. Back and forth and back and forth. Then, a large map was produced and the BLM attempted to show that the proposed ride of the Duck would go over a "highly sensitive" area. George then got the BLM rep (Gerald Hillier) to
(Continued on page 68)



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PHANTOM DUCK

(Continued from page 37)

admit that a mining company had gone into that "sensitive area" and had bulldozed a road over the tentative course. In the process, they had taken once-beautiful Coliseum Gorge and removed it from the face of the earth.

By the end of the day, the BLM as much as admitted that they gave away thousands of acres to mining companies and grazing interests, but they pleaded that "their hands were tied by the Mining Act of 1872, and there was nothing they could do about it."

Finally, after a grueling, long day, the judge made a decision. While he encouraged peaceful protest, he still could not condone breaking the law. So, he gave the BLM a restraining order, but changed the wording to allow the Duck to ride, with 50 of his friends for this year only. In effect, the judge over-rode the BLM and gave the Duck a permit.

The BLM attorney, a pudgy sort named Arnold, went bananas. He got all red in the face and stammered out a plea to the judge to not allow *any* bikers to ride. The judge refused to change his stance, saying the citizens had the right to ride on open public land, as long as it was not an organized event with over 50 people. With more than 50, said the judge, a permit from the BLM was needed.

Near hysterical at this point, the BLM attorney asked the judge what they should do if hundreds of people showed up.

The judge calmly replied, "That's your problem. You work it out. I can't do your job for you."

The judge then asked the Duck to use his head and not promote the non-event any more. And to do all he could to ride with only 50 people. The Duck agreed.

However, the word got out that the run was still on. Newspapers ran big stories on the Duck. And, on November 25, 1978, history was made.

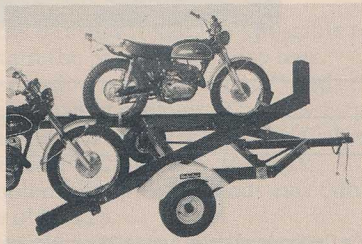
Hundreds of people showed up to ride. Thousands more came as support crews, or just to be part of a massive peaceful protest. In desperation, the BLM rangers spent all of the day before the "non-event" trying to discourage people from riding.

They handed out incomplete copies of the court order and said that if more than 50 people rode with the Duck, they might (get that word "might") be arrested.

The riders responded by playing the game with the rangers: "What Duck? Why, we're just out here for a trail ride with some friends. Who's this Duck fellow?"

By Saturday morning, a small city had sprung up near the Harvard road off-ramp. Everywhere you looked,

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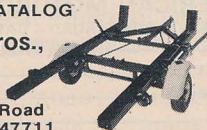
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riders were sporting the signs of protest: plastic ducks taped to helmets, number plates lettered "quack, quack," even large plastic decoy ducks wired to handlebars.

The spirit of the crowd was more than obvious. They were making a display of strength and unity against the BLM. For the first time, a group of dirt bikers were jointly thumbing their noses at the arrogant policies and attitudes of the BLM.

People were happy and smiling. Lots of joking was going on. Banter in the pits went something like this: "Hey, you out here for the Phantom Duck Trail Ride?"

"Not me. I never heard of it. I'm merely out here as a free citizen of this country riding on our public land. How's about you?"

"Oh, same thing here. I just thought this might be a nice place to start a casual trail ride. I'm going to Vegas. How about you?"

"Why, isn't that a coincidence? Why don't we ride together?"

"Of course. But let's not ride in groups of more than 50. OK?"

Giggle.

And so it went.

The trail ride was a blazing success. According to the BLM, 580 riders actually rode and several thousand additional people were in the pits.

Of course, they only counted up until nine o'clock. We had some friends count, as riders were leaving as late as noon, and their estimate was slightly over 1200 riders.

But, no matter what set of numbers you go by, the point was made. Just like the newscaster in *Network*, the riders spoke out and said, "We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore!"

The actual course, wandering from Barstow, California, to Las Vegas, Nevada, was great. While too much fast fireroad was included in the layout to suit the hard-core desert riders, much of the terrain was beautiful enough to take your breath away. Nearly 160 miles of public land was ridden that day.

Between the second check and Stateline, the riders had to climb up to the highest part of the course and ran into snow. Yup. Good old white and fluffy stuff. Some of it was two feet deep. We had the distinct pleasure of seeing a snowball fight between nearly a dozen bikers at the highest part of the snow area. Spirits were, indeed, high.

Doing their best to mar the spirits of the riders, the rangers were busy all along the course, taking photos of the passing trail riders and jotting down license plate numbers of pit vehicles.

Later, this proved to be a genuine source of trouble for them, as newly elected Assemblyman Bob Hayes filed

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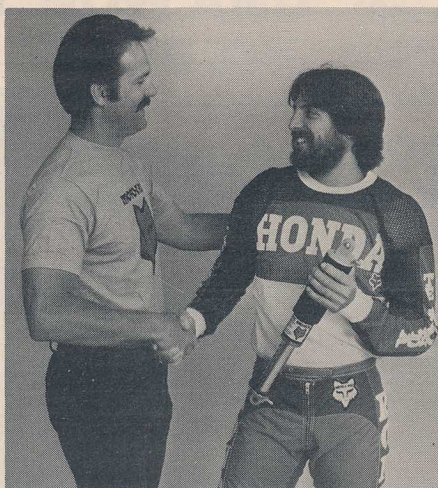
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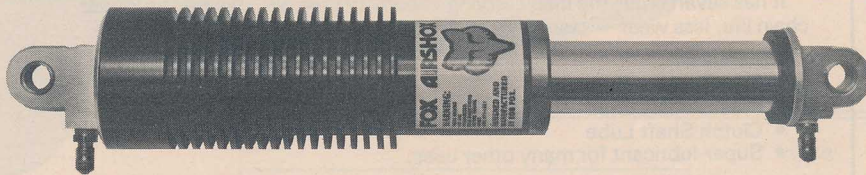
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criminal charges against them for violating our civil rights. You just can't go around gathering data like that unless a crime has been committed. Apparently, the BLM already made its mind up that we committed a crime and were gathering evidence. What a bunch of fun-loving cut-ups!

Still, the bikers showed great restraint and no incidents were reported. We found out later that three riders, total, had been injured during the trail ride, none seriously. Bones heal. It was reported to us that one of the injuries could have been avoided. Rumor has it that some ribbon was removed by rangers in an attempt to discourage riders from continuing, and a rider got way off the course and into very rough terrain.

Riders trickled into the finish line area with big grins on their faces. It was a fun ride with no hassles. And the best part of it was that not one thin dime was paid to the almighty Big Brother for the privilege of riding on our land.

It was said that the Duck made the ride with no problems, on his ancient Honda XL125. We can't comment on that for legal reasons, but we did get reports from many riders saying that they saw the Mighty Mallard winging his way to Vegas.

The happening in the Mojave Desert that day was more than a successful protest ride. Off-road riders got genuinely behind the Duck. After paying off the initial legal fees, the Legal Defense Fund was turned into a Legal Attack Fund.

Right now, the loosely knit Phantom Duck of the Desert organization is going to take on the almost awesome power of the Bureau of Land Management. The Duck plans to file for the original Barstow Run, and if his request is turned down, subpoena the records of the BLM and have them made public.

For once and for all, the dirty laundry of the BLM's tactics will be subjected to the hard, cold eye of a very mad public.

What happens here in the fight for the California desert, will affect dirt bikers across the nation. If the BLM can be made to account for its actions and its arrogance, then bikers everywhere will benefit.

Remember this: There are untold millions of acres of public land in this great country that should be open to the people for recreational uses. And the only reason that this land is not open, is because a bureaucrat decided — without asking anyone — that he should play God.

People live on this planet. People who need to have a place to go and play. To get away from the pressures of making a living and coping with the ever-increasing complexities of a

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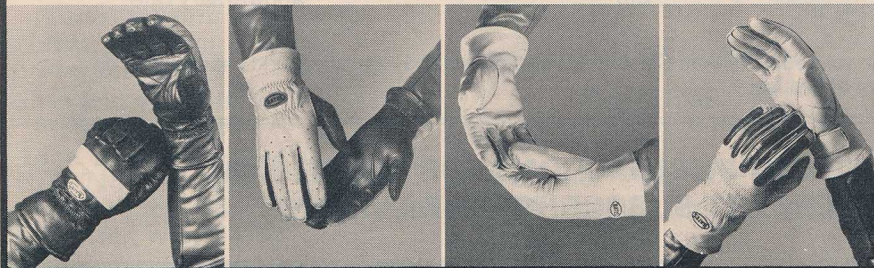
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government-controlled society.

Yet, starry-eyed conservationists tell you that a lizard is more important than a human being. They tell you that potential damage to a cactus is more critical than people having fun.

Listen to this: No plant — present or past — is worth taking away our freedoms. No archaeological site is worth more than the joy on the face of a kid on a mini-bike, trail riding across the desert for the first time.

We, the people, are more important than any pile of rocks, or any stretch of sand. If it brings happiness and pure pleasure to people, then let it be used. We did not say abused. We said used.

The BLM is always saying that we destroy the desert. They conveniently ignore the fact that the great Mojave Desert has died and been reborn a half-dozen times in the last million years.

And it'll die and be reborn another time in the future.

Nothing we can do will alter that fact. In the millions of years that have gone by, the Mojave has been under water, under glaciers and — now — under sand. What makes the BLM think that the puny efforts of man can have even an iota of effect over the powers of nature?

One sandstorm in the Mojave can move millions of tons of sand and dirt over hundreds of miles. One flash flood can tear away the base of a mountain.

How can this compare with a set of tire tracks over shifting sands?

If all the dirt bikers in America got together and rode around in a circle for a month at a spot in the Mojave, one sandstorm could wipe out every evidence of them having been there. Overnight.

How can the BLM tell a family that the existence or non-existence of a plant is more important than that family enjoying themselves together? What in the hell is more important? People or lizards?

Must happiness and joy be sacrificed for crackpot theories about the importance of the Crucifixion Thorn Plant? Should a forest be closed to the public for recreation because the presence of humans might upset the mating habits of the Blunt-Nosed Lizard?

People, ordinary people like you and me, are more important. But, fumbling elitists are trying to tell you that the past and the future are more important than you are.

You only live once, to the best of my knowledge. And *that* life should be as filled with quality, happiness and pure pleasure as possible. If riding on sand, rocks and dirt is what it takes to make you happy, then who is to tell us we should not pursue this brand of happiness?