

Zero Escort + 1 Car = 2 Dead ⁹

The Barela Wreck

As we find ourselves in the month of May ~ annually recognized as Motorcycle Awareness Month, it is so very sad to be writing an article about yet another example of cage drivers failing to safely share the road with motorcyclists

As we departed on the Torch Ride, the annual trek to support Law Enforcement's commitment to Special Olympics, there was no way to know that this run would play out so differently from in previous years.

This has always been billed as a "Police Escorted Ride" enjoyed by many as one of only a few where, for the entire route, bikes are on a continuous roll with 'boots up all the way'....

By Webster's definition, an escort is, "one or more persons, cars, etc accompanying another to protect it or show honor." Dictionary.com offers a similar definition, "a group of persons, or a single person, accompanying another or others for protection, guidance, or courtesy." Well since we can all pretty much be certain that the LEOs weren't there to show honor or courtesy to a bunch of bikers.... It stands to reason that they were there for the PROTECTION part of the definition.

It was a beautiful day for a ride. The route was the same as always..... out 87 to Shea Blvd in Fountain Hills, then north on Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd before making the sweep into WestWorld.

For many years now the Torch Ride has been broken up into groups, no more than 500 bikes or so rolling at a

time; because any more bikes than that would keep intersections closed to cross traffic for too long. Long processions, up to 2000 bikes some years, made it inconvenient to the general motoring public to have to wait so much time to get where they wanted to be. It was a safety concern and a decision made on behalf of the riders and the general public. This method allowed for the wait at any intersection to usually be only about 5-10 minutes....

Traffic control in each territory of roadway was handled by local Law Enforcement; with each segment of the ride transitioning professionally, safely, and smoothly to the next by officers of Mesa, DPS, Fountain Hills That is, until we arrived in Scottsdale.

Bruce recognized a problem immediately. The first intersection we came upon without an officer holding the way was green for us & then cycled to red. He backed off a bit, looking both ways, then accelerated through. That's when he said he got a really bad feeling. His plan was to peel off at the next intersection & return to the unattended crossroad to block traffic, biker-style, the old way. If there was no cop ~ a rider would just position their bike in the road & keep the cars from turning into the parade. We never got back there.

We came upon the next intersection... where Scottsdale's neglect had already taken its toll.... in the name of Al & Samantha Barela. Two sets of circumstances, neither of which should have happened ~ a negligent escort & an impatient cager ... collided with tragic results.

They were killed when the untended cross street allowed for the impatient

driver to attempt a left turn, expecting to get through a gap in the procession. She & her Mercedes impacted with their bike, sending the couple flying. Remember, we're talking an average wait of only about 5-10 minutes..... But *She couldn't wait that long...*

And, in a disturbing article entitled, Records: Light should have been green in fatal Scottsdale Torch Ride reported by Matthew Casey in the April 26, 2015 edition of *The Arizona Republic*, it was shared that, "event-planning documents show that the traffic light at the crash intersection was supposed to be green for the more than 1,000 riders in the March 28 event, which had been dubbed 'Arizona's largest police-escorted ride.'" The report continued, "Scottsdale police staffed about 57 percent of the officers and police assistants they'd originally requested for the event." You get the drift... but there's more in the piece & you should pull it up & read it. Matt has posted additional related articles as well.

Scottsdale PD has understandably taken up an extremely defensive posture. Requests for information are declined under the banner of it being an 'ongoing investigation'. It is undeniable that their department failed to 'Protect & Serve'.

The Law Office of Chuck Franklin is representing the Barela Family in a wrongful death claim against the City of Scottsdale. He is asking for witness statements on behalf of the family. You can read his request for information via our Facebook page or contact his office directly via email at chuck@chuckfranklin.com.

Bruce & Betsy