



SCMA

Three Flags Classic Tales

Old Stories back to 1976

Part 1 - September 2026





Southern California

Motorcycling Association (SCMA)

Three Flags Classic (TFC)

Origin Story and Other TFC Tales

Part 1 - September 2026



Have we got stories? Yeah, we got stories!

We have been choosing what we want to preserve from our archives and discovering the legacy of the SCMA and the Three Flags Classic that started in 1976. We will summarize the bigger stories, but we wanted to start sharing some choice bits now at the running of the 48th Three Flags Classic.

This booklet starts with the details on exactly how the TFC started and picked up speed in the first year. Then there is a mixture of topics to explain how the TFC heritage was created and reinforced each year.

There are a few stories purely for fun. Watch for more fun later.

From the SCMA Historians:

Karen Butterfield

Barbara Fox



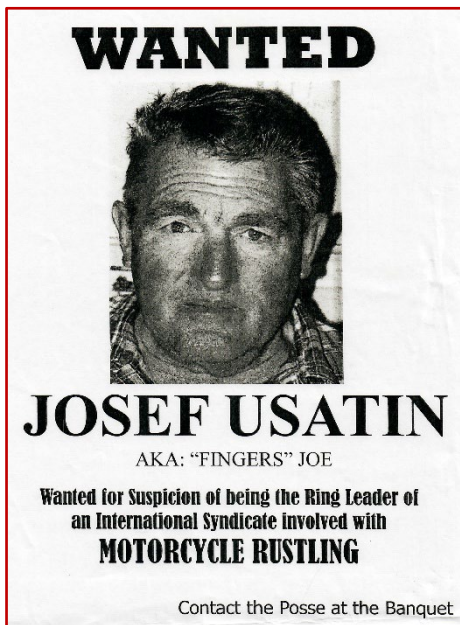
The Big Idea from Joe

In 1975, **Joe Usatin**, who is known as the godfather of the TFC, proposed a border-to-border ride for 1976. He read an article about the record setting ride in 1915 by **Erwin “Cannon Ball” Baker** on an Indian motorcycle.



Search for Baker in the Indiana history records for the best details. It took him 3 days, 9 hours, and fifteen minutes to ride from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada - to Tijuana, Mexico, on poorly paved roads through mountains and forest fires.

Setting the border-to-border record in 1915 encouraged others to try and break the record. They did and Erwin broke it again in 1919 – 59 hours and 47 minutes. An SCMA border to border run would not be a race. The idea was published in the SCMA newsletter in November 1975. Fun was had with this poster in 2005.



First Three Flags Announcement

Southern California Motorcycling Association

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P.O. BOX 54233 TERMINAL ANNEX
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90054

NOVEMBER 1975

"FROM THE CHAIR"

To enhance the future of motorcycling and the SCMA our Association will sponsor and sanction a special event. The tentative name is "The Three Flags Tour". It will be held Labor Day Week-end 1976. The event will leave Tijuana, Mexico and approximately 1450 miles later end in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Years ago persons raced from border to border to set records. This event will not be a race. The tour will be about three days (60 hours maximum from start to finish). There will be a banquet at the finish along with two days of sightseeing tours after you reach Canada. Are you an avid motorcyclist? If so plan on riding the Three Flags Tour. The number of entrants will be limited; more information will be published in the SCMA Newsletter in the near future.

Also in 1976 the SCMA & SRRRA will sponsor & Sanction the United States Motorcycle Jamboree. More details will appear in this paper soon.

Keep 'Em Alive
in '75

Larry Hayworth
Chairman



S.C.M.A.

THREE FLAGS CLASSIC

P. O. BOX 6463 — BURBANK, CALIFORNIA 91510

You are invited to participate in a unique event. It starts in Mexico and ends in Canada.

When: September 4, 5, and 6, 1976. Labor Day Weekend.

Leave Tijuana 12:01 am Saturday, September 4, 1976, and finish over the Canadian border no later than 12:00 noon Monday, September 6, 1976 - a maximum of 60 hours.

Who: The first two hundred (200) persons whose entry fees are received - MAIL-INS ONLY. No entries accepted unless post marked after 12:01 am, January 1, 1976, and no later than 12:00 midnight, March 1, 1976. There will be a waiting list in case of cancellations. Bikes and trikes - no cars.

What: Successful finishers will receive pins, patches, decals, and surprises. There will be a banquet for all participants included in the entry fee. Awards will be presented at the banquet. There will be tours of the Vancouver area Tuesday and Wednesday, September 7 and 8. Persons not finishing or finishing after the deadline, 12 noon Monday, will be entitled to the free banquet and tours only. Shop facilities: Special welcome and attention to three flags participants from Pennell's famous motorcycle shop.

Fees: \$25 for driver and \$13 for passenger.

Joe's Enthusiastic Report of the 1st TFC

OCTOBER 1976

The 1976 Three Flags Classic of the S.C.M.A. is history. The members of the Three Flags Committee hope you feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in having participated in the event. Your S.C.M.A., its members and non-members alike made many friends where only skeptics existed before.

The newsletter editor and his staff kindly consented to give us this space to give a very brief recap of the event, as we just caught this issue prior to its going to press. More detailed information and letters from entrants (if we get any) on the event should be in coming issues of the S.C.M.A. newsletter.

Out of 196 paid entrants approximately 176 left Tijuana, Mexico after photos were taken for a souvenir album. The album when completed will be mailed to all drivers and persons who made a significant contribution to the event. The sign-in was efficiently organized and carried out by Sharon Potter and Carol Boldt with the help of their husbands Jerry Potter and Don Boldt all members of the Murphy Canyon M/C. The Potters and Boldts also did a fantastic job in rounding up donation items to be given to the trade school that was used as the sign-in. Sr. Leyva, in charge of the school was very impressed and grateful. A send off by Tijuana dignitaries including Mayor Fernando Marques Arce's representative and representatives of the Mexican Tourist Council, a parade of all entrants through beautiful downtown Tijuana led by Tijuana's finest with sirens wailing right to the U.S. border. Almost everyone was waved through the border without a question this courtesy was by prior arrangement with the U.S. border people, and we thank them. Rain from about Portland, Oregon to about the Canadian border... BUT three days of clear blue skies and sunshine in the Vancouver area.

A fantastic finish layout with Canadian, U.S. and Mexican flying everywhere, banners, maps information boards, special roped off bike parking area and best of all 24 hour security provided during the entire event. All of this and more was arranged for and staffed by our hosts in British Columbia, the British Columbia Road Riders Assoc., Peter Dickinson-Starkey, Coordinator.

A long to be remembered banquet with the head table guests, and dignitaries including the U.S. Consul General Mr. Luppi and the British Columbia representative for the Delta area, Mr. Walter K. Davidson, being piped into and around the hall by 80 year old bag piper Mr. Sandy Stewart in full regalia. Gift presentations and a 50/50 of \$260. going to George and Melody Gaskill who also got an award for riding up with the smallest bike, a 360 T Honda and... they are on their honeymoon too. The Committee was also proud to have among the entrants in the hall, riding all the way, S.C.M.A.'s co-founder and cardholder #1, Dale Stoddard. Also there was "747" (thats not cc's) Bob Lipkin of Biker Magazine and Scott Simpson of Road Rider Magazine along with local dealers and Mr. Hudson of the Canadian Motorcycle Assoc. who graciously made an award to the S.C.M.A.

Tuesday and Wednesday were Tour Days led by members of B.C.R.R. and escorted by motorcycles of the Vancouver Police Dept. The Tours went through the beautiful British Columbia countryside. Wednesday, those who bought tickets, went on the Royal Hudson Steam Train ride to Squamish and back. The Three Flags event was explained over the trains PA system and all entrants aboard were greeted. A 4,000 foot tunnel was dedicated to the S.C.M.A. for the day.

Presentations of letters of greetings from various Southern California Mayors to the Mayors of Delta and Vancouver was made, with the Mayor of Delta, Mr Tom Goode insisting we return in the evening so that the presentation could take place before the entire city council. The Mayors gave gifts for the California Mayors and the persons that promoted the letters and hand carried them up to B.C.

Again the Three Flags Committee would like to thank all those persons that made the Three Flags Classic the success we think it was. A decision on next year will be forthcoming shortly

On behalf of the entire Committee, THANKYOU
Josef E. Usatin, Chairman

Thinking about maybe running again in 1977.

Rider Feedback

Southern California Motorcycling Association

NOVEMBER 1976

NEWS FROM THE SORE BUTTS

Wow, did we ever have a good trip. Never did we realize a 1,450-mile trip could be so much fun and as well planned as this one. **It will be a trip we ourselves along with the others that participated will never forget.** We have such a sense of accomplishment of being a part of a trip from border to border and being welcomed so warmly as we entered our final destination at the Town and Country Motel in Delta Canada. **We wish to thank also the Canadian Motorcycle Association for giving us all such good security on our bikes plus planning two days of beautiful and exciting tours of the Vancouver countryside.** Also, we thank the Canadian dignitaries for making us feel so welcome and honored bikers. The banquet will be a time in our memory we'll never forget. **How we also listened to the music played on the bagpipes by Mr. Sandy Stewart who was also in full regalia.** We are so filled with pride and delight on receiving our award, it truly is beautiful for riding our faithful Honda 350T.

THANK YOU EVERYONE
George and Melodie Gaskill

In November of 1976 the motion to continue the Three Flags Classic carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

3 Flags - Gene Schorneborn, Dusty Johnson, Marti Neumann and Joe Usatin told of the wonderful reception recieved by all participants of this event both in T.J. and Canada. Also about the nice letters recieved from the Mayor of T.J. and the hotel manager in Delta, Mr. Mulharne wanting us back next year.

The British Columbia Road Riders Assoc. was highly spoken of for their organization of the banquet, tours, security, and numerous little touches. Discussion.

Perry moved that on the reccomendation of the 3- Flags committee the 3- Flags be held in 1977 and that the B.C.R.R be included as equal co-sopnsers. Vote 100% for. Motion carried.

TFC riders of early runs have commented that in the first few years they weren't sure if the ride would continue year after year.

Funny Awards

Roger Nieto was determined to ride his scooter and finish a Three Flags Classic.

In 1977 Roger started out on his Vespa 200 but it had oil problems and he had to nurse the bike to Sacramento. He vowed to return on the Vespa in the future and complete the ride.

From the November 1980 newsletter:

“We had to present two awards for the smallest bike as we had a tie. Roger Nieto on his Vespa, and the Lady (sorry I didn’t get her last name) (*noted in the 1980 album as **Kay Nichols***) that also received the award for Long Distance Female Rider. She rode the event on a 200cc Kawasaki - no windshield-no saddlebags.

Roger crashed a couple of times; luckily, only his pride and his windshield were hurt. On one of his crashes his goose down vest tore open and filled the air with feathers. A Harley rider coming from the opposite direction saw him go down. He turned around and went to Roger’s aid. His first words - **“Hey man, what’d ya do? Hit a CHICKEN?”**

Sometimes riders would get a special award straight out of someone’s imagination – next page.

(Funny Awards Cont.)

PLAQUE READS:

The 1987 3 Flags Classic Motorcycle Tour Balls Award '87 is being presented to DANA DABNEY on this 8th day of September 1987. You have the balls to ride a 150cc scooter on the 3 FLAGS CLASSIC. TIJUANA B.C. MEXICO TO PENTICTON B.C. CANADA – 1990 MI – 3200KM



This 1978 letter to the editor sums up the Three Flags Classic riders and what makes the TFC ride unique.

THREE FLAGS CLASSIC – VIEWPOINT FROM SECURITY

Not having been involved in an event of this type before (except as a participant) I never came to the full realization of the work involved. Now that the event is happening, I also can appreciate the quality of the people riding and manning these types of events. **In short, these are nice people and above all friends to the people they meet. After meeting some of these folks, I feel as though I know them and have ridden with them. Try that on a bus tour or in a campground full of RV's.**

From an active viewpoint, I now understand the full amount of planning and work involved in these types of events, and I personally will never complain about another's performance unless I feel I can do it better. **The riders have made this whole event worthwhile, and I can honestly say it has been worth the effort.**

LEROY FAGUE (BCRR) SECURITY HEAD, THREE FLAGS CLASSIC

PS – Next year I ride!

See you next time!

The 50th is

Coming!

sc-ma.com

