



Hillel's Angels Photos



Ride to Remember – Yom Hashoa, 2005

The well-advertised and media-covered event is now history – and what history it is. The ride started at approximately 11:00 A.M. on the morning of May 6 from its marshalling point in Dumfries , VA. No less than 150 motorcycles, extending over a mile and led by a Virginia State Police escort, traveled the approximate 35 miles along a shut down I-95/I-395 route into the District of Columbia . Hillel’s Angels participated with 27 motorcycles with 3 passengers in tow.



At the DC border, we were “transferred” to the care of the District police to escort us into and through the maze of the DC streets and lead us to a parking area in a park across from the National Holocaust Memorial and Museum. I don’t know if it was intentional or not, but we circled the Washington Monument before we were led to the parking area. As a result, we were made visible to the plethora of the people in DC; inhabitants, workers and tourists alike. Considering there were lots of identifying t-shirts, logos, Israeli flags and the like, they quickly knew that we were Jewish bikers – and we got a lot of waves and cheering. All I can say is you had to be there to feel the emotion.



After we parked our bikes and everyone was “settled in,” there was a reception. A stage and podium, complete with a sound system, had already been set up and playing “our” music for the anticipated arrival of all the bikes. An officer of the Memorial greeted us. This was a first for them, too: Jewish bikers descending on their facility for a memorial. Wow!!



This was followed with presentations to the founding member clubs of the Jewish Motorcyclist’s Alliance (JMA) – the newly formed umbrella group for all Jewish motorcycle clubs and the sponsor for this ride. Hillel’s Angels is, of course, one of the founding clubs. We were given a plaque commemorating our participation not only in the founding of the JMA, but also for the active role we took in the ride itself.* After the formalities, everyone visited the Memorial. It’s hard to go through it without shedding a tear.

* I presented this plaque to the

Temple at services on Friday night, May 20. Hillel’s Angels, by virtue of the Temple ’s sponsorship, is an extension of the Temple . (Note: to the best of my knowledge, Hillel’s Angels is the *only* Temple-sponsored motorcycle club in the U. S. A. , which in and of itself makes Temple Beth Rishon unique in this regard.)

We, the ride and all the other clubs received a lot – and I mean a lot – of media attention. The bulk of this was due to the massive public relations effort that was put forth by Jeff Mustard (yes, that’s his real name), the president and founder of the King David Bikers from Southern Florida . The rest came from the additional promotional activity that came from the individual clubs. Much thanks goes to Jayne Jacobson for her help in getting the Ride to Remember info and Hillel’s Angels name out to the local press. I can’t begin to tell you where and how many times we made the news, but I can tell you that it was all over the U.S, the UK and Israel in addition to the places we do know about: the Bergen Record, 201 Magazine, the Suburban News, the North Jersey Federation News, and the biggest surprise of all, a 20 minute live interview on WNWR, a Philadelphia ethnic radio station – and, this is not even a complete list!

Many publications focused on two aspects: the novelty of Jewish bikers (remember, nice Jewish boys don’t ride motorcycles!), and the significance of the ride itself. Once they got beyond the Jewish biker thing, they generally concentrated on what kind of statement we were trying to make. Universally, they picked up our theme – we ride to remember so the world won’t forget. Bikers have, for better or worse, a stereotypically “bad” image. Well, if a band of Jewish bikers fits that image and the message of “never again” is reinforced by that image, so be it!

What attracted the 150 bikers to this event, some traveling up to 1100 miles to participate? At the reception dinner on the evening we all arrived in Virginia , everyone had a chance to introduce themselves and state their reason for being there. The comments ranged from, “I never knew there were other Jews who rode motorcycles and I wanted to be a part of this event,” to those who commented that they were offspring of holocaust survivors or who had lost family members in the holocaust and participating in this ride was an expression of their personal remembrance to their memories. Many of these comments were deeply personal and heartfelt. Again, you had to be there to feel the emotion.

I must end this post-event report, however, with something that maybe puts this ride, this event, in perspective. Picture this: Jewish bikers – lots of them – getting a police escort into the nation’s capitol to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation from the concentration camps and ending the most horrific genocidal act ever to occur in the history of mankind. And, as this was happening – while we were going through the streets of the capitol – all of sudden, the ride took on a whole new dimension for many of the participants. I can best sum it up in the words of a young woman riding on the back of her father’s motorcycle. These words were written in a letter to her grandmother telling her about this emotional day and shared with me by her father. As we were circling the Washington Monument and being observed by many, she uttered out loud, “See us, hear us!” Approximately 200 people in total made a very loud and publicized message: we are here, we are here to stay, we will never forget, and we will never let the world forget.

I am very proud to have been instrumental in orchestrating Hillel’s Angels participation in what is hoped to be the first of many “A Ride to Remember,” and to be a part of the formation of the JMA. I will most likely continue with the JMA activities from our new home in Florida .

Mel Morris



585 Russell Avenue, Wyckoff, NJ 07481
Telephone: 201-891-4466 Fax 201-891-0508
templeoffice@bethrishon.org
billing@bethrishon.org