



2013 USA Miracle Journey Taiwan's Grandriders hitch a ride with NorCal Club

TEN SENIOR TAIWANESE CITIZENS, KNOWN as Grandriders, average age of 87, fulfilled an ongoing dream by riding as pillion passengers behind members of the BMW Motorcycle Club of Northern California. The "2013 USA Miracle Journey" route took them down the California coast on State Route 1 (SR 1), also known as the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), Cabrillo Highway, Shoreline Highway, or Coast Highway.

How did this happen and what did everyone learn from this shared, once-in-a-lifetime experience?

As improbable as it sounds, several years ago, Chia-Chen Lee, a native of Taiwan and the wife of Ed Perry, the third ranking officer in the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department, came across a YouTube bank commercial that featured

Taiwan's Grandriders. That video happened because back in 2007, the Hondao Senior Citizens Welfare Foundation (in Taiwan), which is dedicated to inspiring senior citizens to live fulfilled and active lives, as well as to "reset" the public's perception of aging, decided to help 17 senior Taiwanese "bikers" pursue their dream. Their dream was to ride their motor scooters around Taiwan. It took 13 days and covered 730 miles, and resulted in a 15-minute video that went viral on YouTube. That short video was expanded into what became an award-winning documentary film; *Go Grandriders* went on to become the best-selling documentary film in 2012 in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Ed Perry, now retired from the Sheriff's Department, viewed *Go Grandriders* in April of

2013. Then Ed told his wife, Chia-Chen Lee, how inspired he was by their story, and that he wanted to help their cause. Chia mentioned this to her friend Christine Lee from Taipei, who knew that the Grandriders wanted to come to the U.S. Christine contacted the Hondao Foundation and, as they say, the rest is history. The BMW NorCal Club's involvement became essential because it was determined that the best and safest way to ride down California coast was to ride as passengers behind mature, experienced U.S. riders who were familiar with the roads.

Ed Perry, both a NorCal and MOA member, contacted the NorCal Club's President, Z Ortiz, who was immediately supportive and put out the word, asking for volunteers to contact Ed Perry.

Go Grandriders was turning into a tiger, and became the perfect vehicle to inspire others to live active lifestyles as well as enable the Go Grandriders 2013 USA Miracle Journey, which would be combined with many community activities along the way. Simply put, behind it all was and is the Bu Lao (forever young) spirit.



2013 USA Miracle Journey logo. (Photo by Dan Carter)

The 2013 USA Miracle Journey Grandriders pose for a group photo at the Happy Kids event in Cupertino Memorial Park in Cupertino, California. The first four, from left to right, ZHANG CHEN Ying-mei, ZHANG Hong-dao, KANG Jian-hua, HUANG Cai. (Photo by author)

Of the 10 Grandriders, eight drew keys from a hat, matching up riders with their passenger. Two Grandriders rode on the bus, but they were able to ride in a couple of events where motorcycles with sidecars were available. The two “spare” Nor-Cal riders carried dignitaries and photographers, including the film’s director Hua Tien-hao.

Here’s the matchup of riders, passengers and their year born:

Grandrider	NorCal Rider
WU Jing-Heng (1928)	Andy Anderson
ZHANG CHEN Ying-mei (1936)	Kevin Kelly
KANG Jian-hua (1927)	Dan Rowe
HUANG Ma-Cun (1927)	Chuck Brown
SUN Xiang-cun (1928)	Dan Carter
WANG Zhong-tian (1925)	Russ Drake
ZHANG Hong-dao (1937)	Ed Perry
ZHU Miao-gui (1919)	John Bowen
LAI Xiu-sheng (1924) rode bus	Jack Walshe
HUANG Cai (1933) rode bus	Z Ortiz

The ride from San Jose to Los Angeles took four days in late August 2013. Overnight stops along the way included Monterey, San Luis Obispo and Ventura. There were plenty of planned and unplanned visits and rest stops. The first rest stop was at J & S Surplus & Outdoor in Moss Landing



Grandrider KANG Jian-hua, riding behind Dan Rowe, enjoys ride down the Pacific Coast Highway (Hwy 1) south of Big Sur. (Photo by Dan Rowe)



ZHANG Hong-dao (left) and Ed Perry (right) sharing theories about the proper way for a passenger to lean, while at rest stop at Nepenthe Restaurant in Big Sur, California. (Photo by author)



to pick up some stylish goggles and scarves. It can be cool and foggy along the California coast. Other stops included the San Luis Obispo city council chambers, where the mayor handed out certificates and pins; San Simeon/Hearst Castle; Santa Barbara’s Vista del Monte retirement community; Solvang’s Motorcycle Museum; the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley; and the UCLA Medical Center in (Westwood Plaza) Los Angeles. The meals varied from Chinese to pizza, where the Grandriders hosted a surprise birthday party for one of the NorCal Club members, complete with cake, candles, gifts and hugs.

SUN Xiang-cun, born in 1927 (on left), switches roles with Dan Carter (on right). (Photo by Dan Carter)

So what were the Grandriders like as people? In many ways just like us, but all were also individuals who had unique life experiences and personalities. Everyone got along great and became good friends. Some were in really good shape, dropping down and doing one- and two-arm pushups, whenever and wherever. Others had the same weird sense of humor as we. People are people. Ed Perry, our NorCal leader, put it best: “To a person, we all felt humbled and richer for knowing the Grandriders and the wonderful people that support them. These were overwhelming feelings that we all experienced by having been part of this unique experience from which great personal relationships developed.”

Now some of us can't wait to visit Taiwan and to say hello to our new friends. We've been infected with the Bu Lao (forever young) spirit. ☺



WU Jing-heng doing one-arm pushups at the Vista del Monte retirement community in Santa Barbara, CA. (Combined photos by Dan Carter)



WANG Zhong-tian watching skateboarder at a Santa Barbara park. (Photo by Dan Carter)



SUN Xiang-cun receiving Certificate of Appreciation from San Luis Obispo Mayor Jan Howell Marx. (Photo by Dan Carter)



Group photo of Grandriders and BMW NorCal riders at the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California. (Photo by author)