

MUSIC

Motorcycles, movie stars and mellow vibes

Second annual Dennis Hopper Day celebration rolls out in style

By Teresa Dovalpage

How would have Dennis Hopper celebrated his 79th birthday? It's difficult to tell but most likely an "Easy Rider Ride" would have appealed to him.

Over 150 riders and a large crowd of fans participated in the second annual Dennis Hopper Day, on Sunday (May 17), presented and organized by Robby Romero's Eagle Thunder Entertainment.

At 1 p.m., when many riders who had started their journey at Santa Fe-Harley Davidson were still on their way, others had already congregated outside Old Martina's Hall in Ranchos de Taos to receive their complimentary "Dennis Hopper Day Easy Rider Ride" patches, which were available for all registered riders.

Leroy Trujillo was among them.

"I'm here because I want to make the run with Dennis Hopper," Trujillo said. "And my daughter, Tracy Trujillo, will be riding with me."

"Dennis Hopper is one my heroes," said artist Jonathan Shiloka, who had come in his Shiloka Magic Bus. "I moved to Taos five weeks ago ... just in time to be part of this celebration!"

Steven Vigil and Emlyn Olguin had attended the first Annual Dennis Hopper Day in 2014 and were there supporting the second run.

"Though we aren't riding this time, we are cheering for them," Olguin said.

At 3 p.m. the Santa Fe group arrived and all the riders met at the San Francisco de Asís Mission Church, across the street. From there they continued to the Gorge Bridge (passing through Pilar and Río Grande Del Norte National Monument) and finished back at Old Martina's Hall.

"Last year we rode to the Pueblo," said John Van Der Bosch, who also participated in the first celebration. "That was quite special, something that hadn't been done since the movie



Katharine Egli

Dennis Hopper Day revelers stop to pose for a picture at the Río Grande Gorge Bridge west of Taos.

"Easy Rider" was made in 1968. But today is going to be a great event as well."

Suzette and Cecil Berleth had come all the way from Weatherford, Texas, to be part of the ride.

"We are Dennis Hopper's fans," said Suzette Berleth. "We love Easy Rider ... and we love Taos. If we lived here, we would ride our bikes every day!"

Around 6 p.m. all the riders were back at Old Martina's Hall, some of them looking pretty tired.

"We aren't spring chickens anymore," said Ana Lucia Longmire, who had come all the way from Albuquerque. "But, hey, one day is one day. *Un dia es un dia*. This is fun!"

Yet it was more than fun.

"We wanted to commemorate Dennis and his many contributions to Taos," said Robby Romero, a longtime friend of Hopper and the producer of

the event. "Today we had a beautiful day with plenty of sunshine, which made for a wonderful ride. I believe that the spirit of Dennis Hopper was with us and having a great time."

2015 Academy Award Winner Patricia Arquette was among the event's special guests.

"I got to make two movies with Dennis," she said. "He made the first truly independent film that was very successful, 'Easy Rider,' which changed the possibilities for the independent cinema. He was an incredible person and I am happy to be here, to honor him in this town, his home, a place that he loved so much. I wanted to come to Taos and meet some of his friends."

Arquette has a special connection with New Mexico. "It's a great place," she said. "I came to Santa Fe to make a movie, 'The Hi-Lo Country,' after my mom died, and it was very heal-

ing." "The Hi-Lo Country," incidentally, was based on a novel by former Taos author Max Evans.

A screening of "Easy Rider" and a costume contest took place at Old Martina's Hall as part of the Commemoration Celebration, which also featured music by Robby Romero and Robert Mirabal of Iron Horse.

"At any given moment, our iconic historical figures are present here with us, from Mabel Dodge Luhan to Dennis Hopper," said Mirabal. "It's good to celebrate the blessings that they bestowed on us. They represent the intensity of the Wild West and the freedom of who we are."

Mirabal said that when he met Hopper, the actor was "very reserved."

"I would have loved to meet him when he was younger," Mirabal said. "It would have been fun to party with him!"