

# Toy and Charity Runs

By Wally Wersching

Every year from before Thanksgiving to just before Christmas, the weekends are full of Toy Runs to bring toys to needy children for Christmas. Charity runs can be anytime of the year to raise money for a family in need.

This year was no different. I went to five Toy Runs and one Charity run. I could have gone to a few



more but the weather got colder and I was just getting tired of going. Usually the first one of the year is Murphey's Toy Run the weekend before Thanksgiving. He's been doing it for eighteen years now. The donations go to the Shriner's Burn Center and the Oxford Orphanage. Murphey does most of the work himself with a small band of volunteers. Live music and good BBQ are frosting on the cake to round out a pleasant day's ride.

Then there's a deluge of Toy Runs every weekend until Christmas. Many are put together by motorcycle clubs with the help of local towns to bring toys, and raise money for a specific charity.

Sometimes the police or the military get involved too. "Toys for Tots" has the US Marines doing most of the logistic work. The "Kops Kids" has the local police involved. Most of the larger runs have a police escort with all the intersections blocked off in order for the long column of motorcycles to run smoothly to the destination.



Toy Runs are always very festive. People who haven't seen each other for some time are renewing old acquaintances, while others meet for the first time to start a life-long friendship. Some people come in costume, and decorate their bikes. There are always a couple Santas for the children. A Toy Run is for the whole family. This year, I have attended Toy Runs with as many as 1,100 bikes and as small as around 100. The size does matter because it reflects on the amount of toys and money that will go to the charity. That's why the weather plays a very important role in the success of the run. Sunny warm days will bring everybody out, where cloudy, cold or rainy days only bring out the die-hard riders.

Toy Runs can be dangerous too. It can be difficult riding in a large group especially when you don't know the bikers around you or their riding habits. It is complicated by the fact that you cannot hear your own motorcycle because of all the bikes with loud pipes. Some bikers who ride in Toy Runs are not that skilled, and may cause others to be in jeopardy. All riders must be very attentive during the run. Any time a large group of people get together, accidents are more likely to happen. Toy and Charity Runs are great ways to raise money and toys for people who need help. It's a win-win situation where the charity gets what it needs while the participants have a good time, and usually a good meal and entertainment to follow. It's hard to find any experience where you can hang with friends and eat good local food along with getting that warm feeling by doing something for others - all for less than twenty bucks.



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