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The Utah Junket



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BMW OWNERS NEWS



"Delicate Arch" in Arches National Park.

THE VALUE OF PERSEVERANCE IN UTAH

*Making it across the Burr
Trail Road-Together*



BY MOSHE K. LEVY



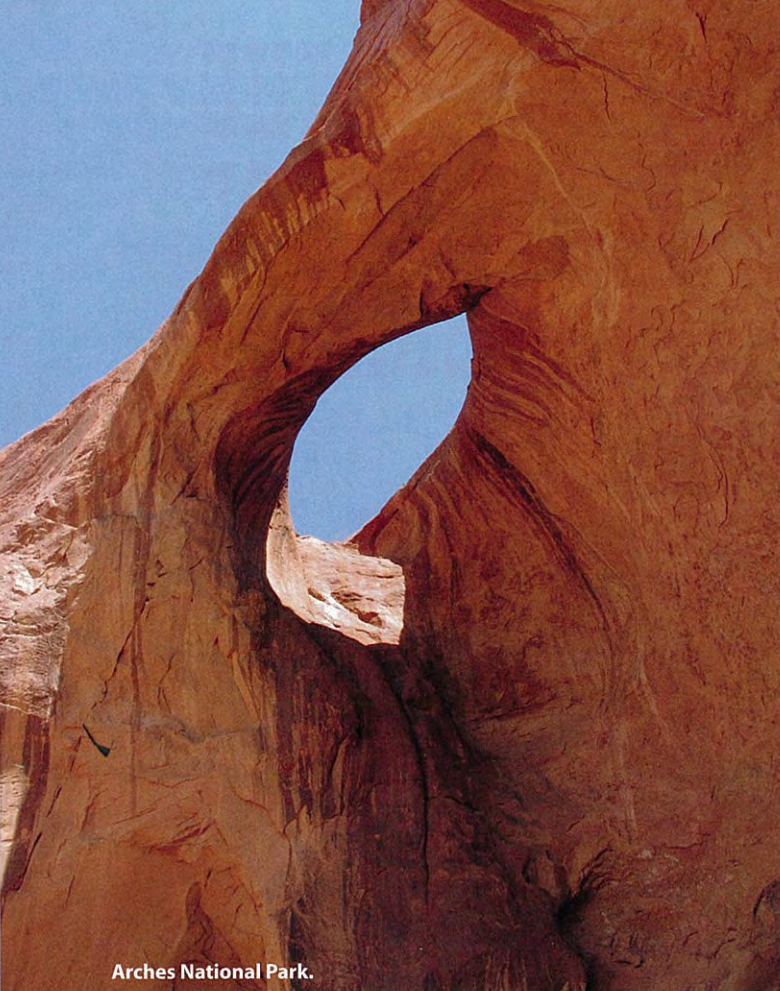
#108259



Terri lowsides her R1150R.

MY MARTIAL ARTS TEACHER'S LESSONS ON ATTITUDE WHEN faced with adversity were fresh in my mind as I plowed the R1150RT through yet another stretch of deep, soft sand. I glanced in my rear view mirror, concerned about my fiancée, a novice motorcyclist now struggling furiously to keep her R1150R upright. What was supposed to be a shortcut had turned into an exigent off-road excursion in the middle of nowhere. We were either having the time of our lives or we were going to die out here.

Terri and I were in Utah, heading towards Bryce Canyon as part of a month-long cross-country tour. We were floating across Lake Powell on a ferry when I punched our destination into the Garmin Zumo, to check if it could offer any alternatives to our original mapped plan. The GPS faithfully suggested a "shortcut" and since we were already behind schedule, we decided to trust it. All we had to do to avoid hours of monotony on the interstate was to cut through



Arches National Park.

Burr Trail Road for about 37 miles. The wonders of technology!

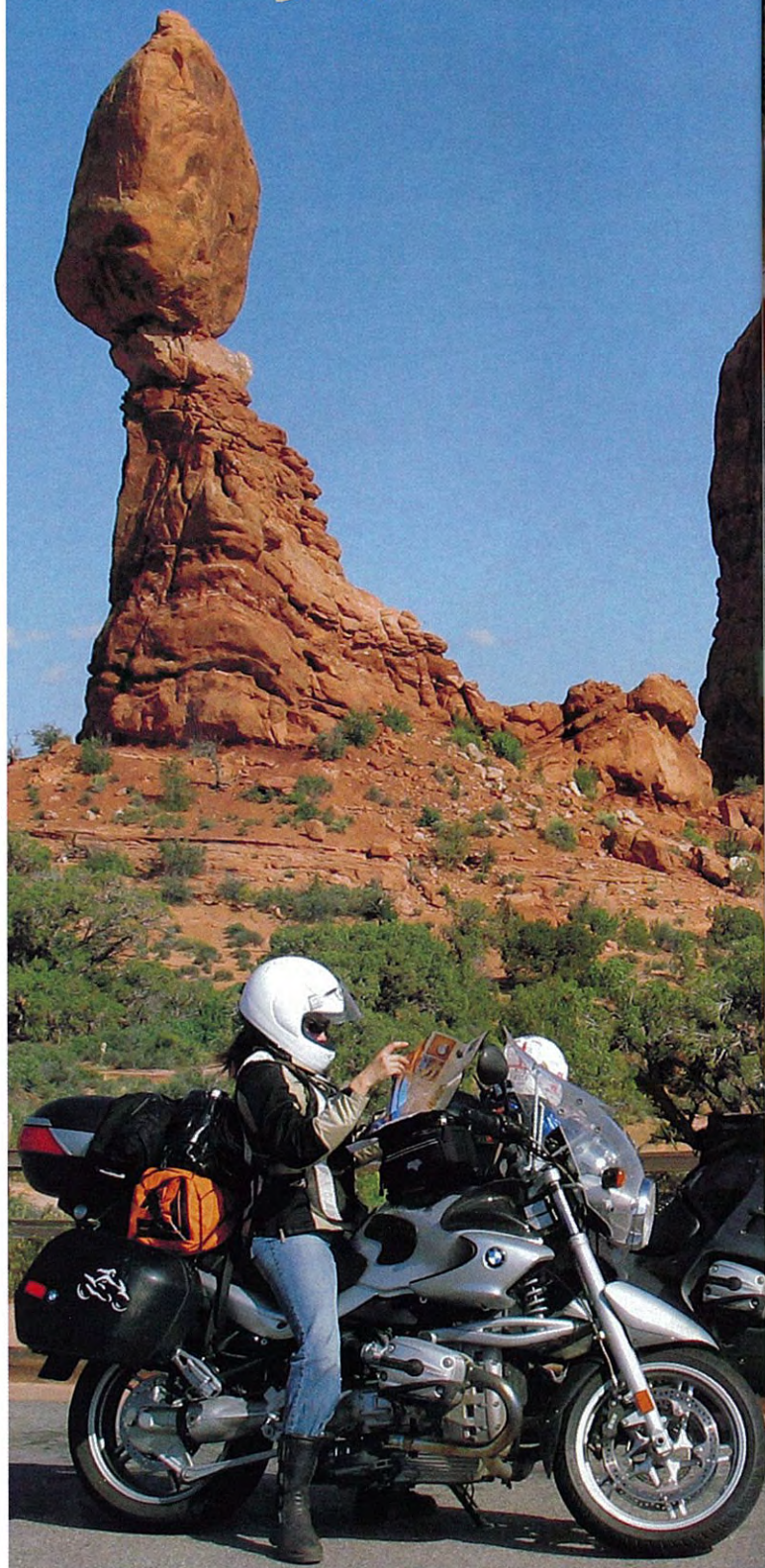
We departed the ferry and turned onto Burr Trail. The asphalt was of poor quality, but we were still managing to make good time. The majestic buttes and vibrant sandstone formations on the perimeter of Capitol Reef National Park were breathtaking, and we barely noticed that the broken asphalt had eventually given way to packed gravel. However, when the packed gravel morphed into 6-8 inches of beach-like sand, progress slowed to a halt.

Out in the middle of nowhere, with sunset merely three hours away, we decided to proceed forward cautiously. The bikes were loaded down with oversized luggage and balancing them was much more difficult than usual, as we labored intensely to advance a few feet at a time. Our anxiety was rising at the thought of being stranded in these desolate conditions at night, perhaps serving as a gourmet treat for the local wildlife.

We crept on and things were only getting worse. The spongy sand suddenly turned into thick, gooey mud. I knew that if I dropped my heavy RT, I wouldn't have any firm footing from which to pick it back up. Both bikes were very close to overheating, as the walking pace we were maintaining did not provide adequate cooling airflow over the engines. I kept checking on Terri behind me in my mirrors, and watched with horror as she fishtailed in the muck and low-sided face first by the side of the road.

I placed a rock under the RT's kickstand and rushed over to help her. We were thankful that she wasn't hurt. We toiled together to pick her R-bike up in the slippery mire, and kept going. Another mile later, Terri went down once more, harder this time. Again, we

"Under all this plastic bodywork lives a S&S," I joked to myself...



Exploring Arches National Park.



The RT at Canyonlands National Park.

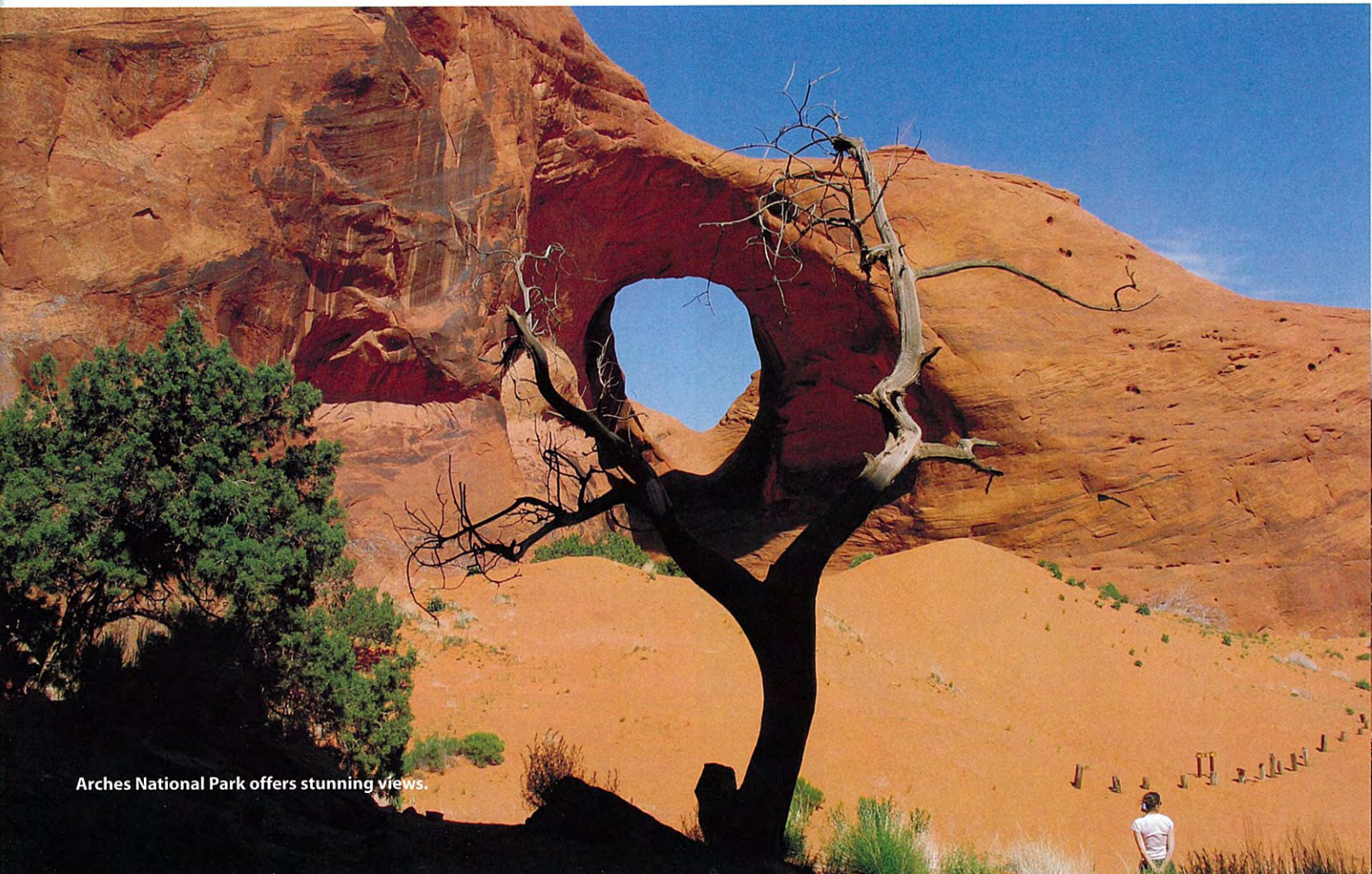


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went through the same process to lift the motorcycle up, but she was shaken from the experience and began to panic. Neither one of us had any off-road experience, there was no end in sight to the mud, it was getting dark, the motor temperature gauges were right under the red zone and we were completely isolated from any civilization. "In other words," I soothed her, "we're having a real adventure!"

Her eyes lit up at this revelation and we got back on the bikes, creeping forward yard by yard. By now, with our luck, we were fully expecting the mud to turn into lava or some other insurmountable surface around the next bend. I calmed my mind by paying attention to my breathing, inhaling deeply into my lungs and exhaling slowly through my nose. As the weighty RT squirmed violently underneath me, my eyes stayed level with the horizon and my weight was low on the footpegs.

"Under all this plastic bodywork lives a GS," I joked to myself, attempting to keep my cool. Eventually, the mud gave way to sand and finally back to gravel, but the challenges weren't over. As we

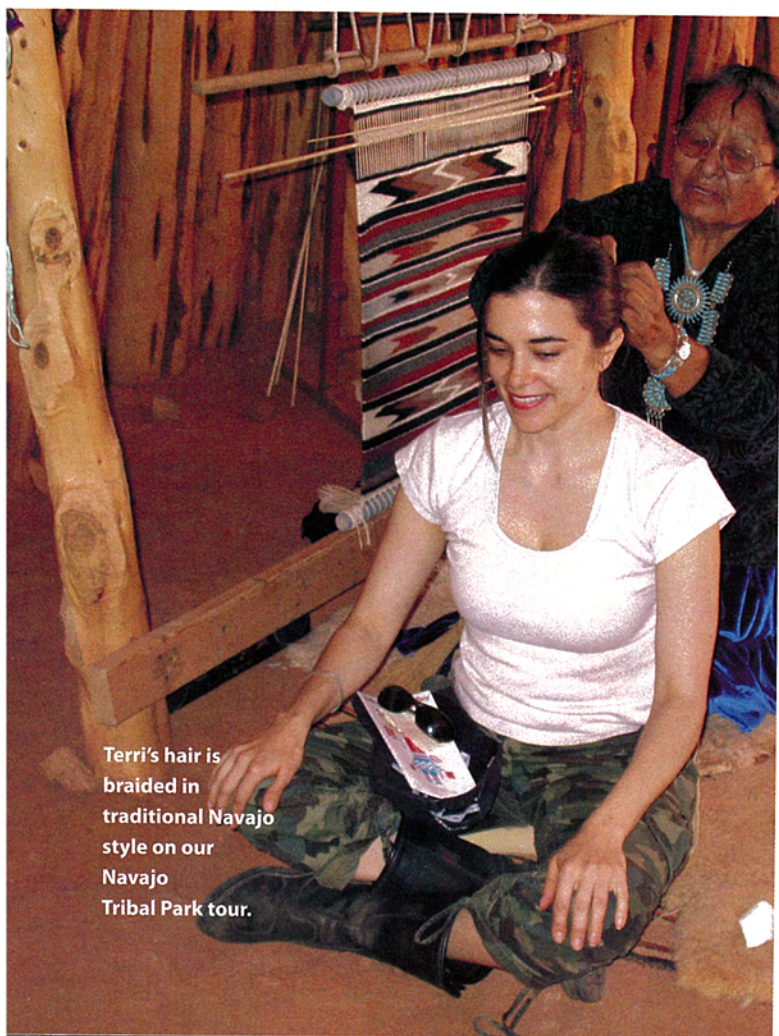


Arches National Park offers stunning views.

The area is rich in Native American history, not to mention roads that were seemingly designed for the sole purpose of delighting motorcyclists.



We made it! Monument Valley.



Terri's hair is braided in traditional Navajo style on our Navajo Tribal Park tour.

approached Waterpocket Fold, we were faced with full lock-to-lock switchbacks climbing more than 800 feet within less than a half-mile; all on very loose gravel no less. I heard a rider coach from years past screaming in my ear, "Look where you want to go!" It worked, though an off-road climb up a double-digit grade on a fully loaded road bike is definitely not for the faint of heart!

By now it was dark and the road surface was finally paved again. We carefully dodged the jackrabbits darting in and out of our path. Upon exiting Capitol Reef, we came across a restaurant that was about to close. The proprietor took one look at us and said, "You didn't just try crossing Burr Trail on road bikes, did you?" Before we could answer, he surveyed our grimy BMWs and realized that we didn't just try it, we actually did it! With a sympathetic look, he was nice enough to reopen the kitchen for us, and to point us towards the nearest hotel with vacancy.

It was 40 miles away in the dead of night, over a snow-dusted 8,500 foot high mountain summit. There were stern warnings that herds of elk were out in force on the road. "Eastern tourists..." he chuckled as he saw our cheerless expressions. With our bellies refilled, we got back in our saddles and pressed on over the mountain, eventually reaching the hotel at 2 a.m. As we dismounted, Terri and I looked at each other with our sooty faces, soiled clothes, and muddy boots. We burst out laughing in the middle of the parking lot, nearly delirious that we had finally made it to safety!

The next few days were spent exploring some of the most post-card perfect sceneries either one of us had ever seen! Utah is home to Moab, Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, and Monument Valley, just to name a few attractions. The area is rich in



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Native American history, not to mention roads that were seemingly designed for the sole purpose of delighting motorcyclists. The experience was only heightened by our “shortcut” days earlier.

Drummer extraordinaire and BMW motorcyclist Neil Peart said it best: “Adventures suck when you’re having them.” Indeed, but they sure make great memories! Pulling into that nameless roadside hotel at 2 a.m. after the Burr Trail Road experience was definitely the most unforgettable part of our entire 9,200 mile journey. We had persevered, and only by going too far did we discover just how far we could go. ●

When he’s not riding motorcycles, Moshe K. Levy works for Electronics Integration Technology, Inc., MIL-Spec contract manufacturer, as well as Nova Electric, a manufacturer of rugged AC power conversion equipment. He received his MBA from New York University in 2005. Moshe is the proud father of two girls and lives in Central NJ.

So, uh, what is this thing exactly?



Monument Valley.