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# **There Are Roads, & There Are Motorcycle Roads**

An Interview with  
Bill Belei, Founder and  
Webmaster of  
[MotorcycleRoads.com](http://MotorcycleRoads.com)

*By Richard J. Atkins #93162*

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For the past 15 years, Bill Belei has dedicated his career to military communications. A Major in the United States Air Force with more than 20 years of service, he is stationed at Malmstrom AFB and lives in Great Falls, Montana. Juggling work and family life (a wife and three sons) leaves little time for his two other passions—motorcycling and *MotorcycleRoads.com*. Nonetheless, he works hard to maintain and update the site regularly. In early May, Bill took some time out of his busy schedule and answered a few questions about *MotorcycleRoads.com* for BMW Owners News.

**RJA** When and why did you start *MotorcycleRoads.com*? What has its history been like? Where do you see it going?

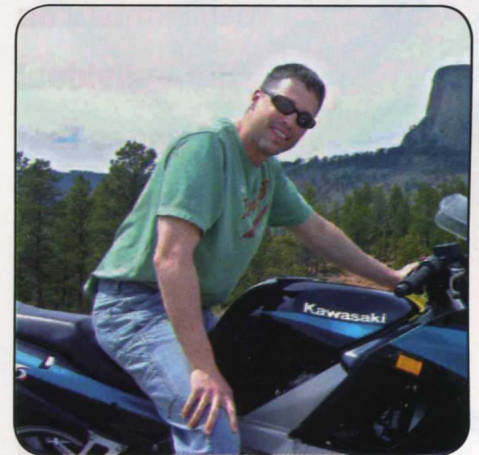
**BB** I've been in the military, the U.S. Air Force, since 1986 and moved 10 times in just my first 20 years! With all those moves, I've lived in a lot of places and put a lot of miles on motorcycles exploring different parts of the country, and have gained a tremendous appreciation for the diversity of our country's roads. What was difficult about those moves was that every time I moved, I was faced with the sometimes challenging task of finding good motorcycle roads in the new area. Making matters worse was that, like many others, I found myself having less time to go out exploring for good roads as family or career responsibilities increased and free time decreased. Yet what I knew to be true was that motorcyclists, more than any other segment of society, really know how to find great roads. They understand that not all roads are created equal and when it comes right down to it, there are roads, and there are motorcycle roads! So way back in 1999, I decided to try to tap into this vast knowledge by inviting other riders to share their knowledge at *MotorcycleRoads.com*. My goal was pretty simple; I wanted to develop an online tool for all of us to quickly and easily find quality motorcycle roads in whatever part of the country we resided.

It has taken nearly 10 years, but I believe *MotorcycleRoads.com* has become the best online tool on the Web to help motorcycle riders find great motorcycle roads. It goes way beyond being just another one of the hollow motorcycle road guide Web sites

that offer maps with highlighted paths but nothing much else to help a rider decide which roads are the kind they enjoy. This is because *MotorcycleRoads.com* has been built from the ground up with the understanding that motorcycle riders are all different and all have different opinions on what makes a road a motorcycle road.

Some riders focus on roads that travel through areas with beautiful scenery. Other riders want roads that challenge their driving skills and allow them to push the capabilities of their motorcycle. Other riders look for roads that offer plenty of things to do off the bike for them and/or a riding partner or passenger. These people enjoy roads that offer access to cultural or historical points, museums, shopping, parks or other forms of entertainment. As a result of this understanding, *MotorcycleRoads.com* goes much further than providing lifeless maps and gives riders as much relevant road information as possible, often including pictures or personal accounts of real people who have ridden these roads/routes. In fact, every one of our road/route descriptions provides visitors with information on a motorcycle road's three most critical attributes: scenery strength, motorcycle road quality, and a roadside amenities assessment. With this information at their fingertips, riders are sure to be able to find roads that match what they are looking for before their motorcycle ever leaves the garage.

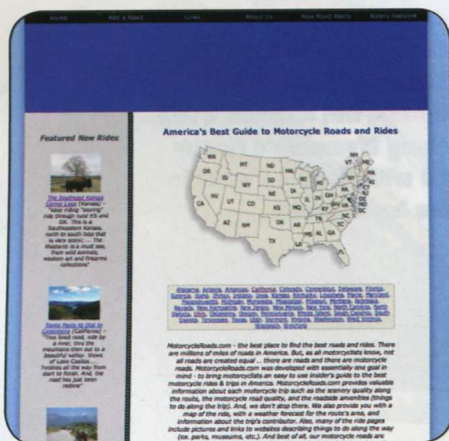
Not only does *MotorcycleRoads.com* describe the route, but we provide vital information including directions to and through the route (written directions and a map), provide the demographics of the contributor such as the contributor's name/



**Top:** Major Belei is pictured with his sons, Brennan and Dean, at a "Welcome Back" celebration at Los Angeles Air Force Base after his deployment to Camp As Sayliyah Qatar.

**Bottom** Bill enjoyed a trip along Wyoming's Route 24 with Devil's Tower in the background.

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**The interface of MotorcycleRoads.com allows people from all over the U.S. to communicate.**

nickname, when the route was contributed, and the type of motorcycle s/he rides. We also provide the length of the route, often give advice about road construction or speed traps, and even provide a link to the route's real-time weather forecast. Unlike some other motorcycle roads web sites that require a paid membership to access some or all of the site's content, MotorcycleRoads.com provides this content to visitors absolutely free. We always have, always will.

**RJA** What do you like most about the site? What do most of your visitors like about it?

**BB** What I like most about the site is that I know it's hitting the mark because of all the enthusiastic, positive feedback I get from visitors who complete a feedback-gathering form on the site.

**RJA** What are some of the comments you're seeing there?

**BB** Bill Morris from New Jersey said, "Continue kicking butt!" Hament from New York wrote in and said, "This is a wonderful Web site, well laid out and easy to navigate. Great job! Thanks." Scott from Georgia sent a comment saying, "Excellent site, I plan to use it in the future. I have placed a link on our motorcycle club homepage."

Each motorcycle road description has a comments section where visitors can rate the value of that particular description. I've seen visitors leaving powerful testimonials on the individual road pages that convince me that the roads and routes on MotorcycleRoads.com are really some fantastic motorcycle roads.

**RJA** What are they saying?

**BB** Jordan of California said of *The Palomar Mountain/Highway 76 Loop*: "I live in Southern California and saw this listing on MotorcycleRoads.com and decided to check it out. I was absolutely blown away by this road! Went up and

down the west side of the mountain about four times, and then hung out at Mother's Kitchen for a while. Hooked up with some other riders and headed down the east side to the lake. Incredible! I can't believe I lived only a few hours away from this area/road and never tried it. I'll be doing this one a couple of times a year!"

Brian Webb added that he rode the Tail of the Dragon in Deal's Gap and "I have to say that the Palomar Mountain Road is every bit as technical, if not more so than The Dragon. The change in height is also far greater making for two completely different rides going up and going down. A definite must for those whose goal is to ride America's best motorcycle roads."

"DiamondRed" said of *The Ohio Cousin of the 'Tail of the Dragon' Route 536*: "Sandman is right, hands never left the grips. One turn actually had a *stop sign* on it! I still had to go into the other lane to make the turn. Of course I was going in the other direction (from 78 to the river). On the way back it was still tight, but not as bad. I don't know how they ever paved this road. Take it slow, watch the signs, and allow plenty of room between bikes. Enjoy."

JD of California said of *Route 17 - Mad River Glen in Vermont*: "This is the most fun road in the Northeast, rivaling roads here in my new home, Southern California. Make an epic loop out of Route 17 by heading west and then south on Route 116. Take that to Middlebury and head back east on 125, finally to 100, where you'll take that back up to Waitsfield and the start of Route 17 again. When I left Vermont, these roads were in great shape, and I'm sure the scenery is still as beautiful as ever!"

Other folks contribute some great tips and advice that only someone who experienced the ride could contribute. This advice can really be helpful to the visitors coming to MotorcycleRoads.com looking for the inside scoop on great roads. Gary Savage of Pennsylvania wrote in to offer this comment about the *US 60 - Socorro to Springerville* ride in New Mexico: "*The meals at Pie Town are very good and the pies are fantastic at either the Daily Pie Cafe or the Pie-O-Neer Cafe.*"

**RJA** What needs to be changed/improved?

**BB** Although we have done a great job of providing a platform for riders to tell the world about their favorite motorcycle roads, we haven't done a good job of providing a platform for riders to tell the world about themselves and their motorcycle. We go out of our way to protect the privacy of the folks that submit rides and routes to us, and as a result, we have intentionally held back on posting submitter information such as full name, home state, e-mail address, age, etc. However, in reality, many submitters actually want some of this of information publicly displayed.

Motorcycle riders are generally a social group of people. Many of our contributors not only offer some of their favorite routes, but also ask to have their email address posted. Some even offer to serve as a "route guide" for riders who aren't familiar with the particular area of the country. Because of this, we've had to go out and look for a way to give our visitors a platform for telling about themselves, their motorcycles, and their stories all without infringing on the privacy of those that just want to find and contribute motorcycle road information. As a result, MotorcycleRoads.com has partnered with an up-and-coming social networking site called MotorcycleMyPlace.com.

It's basically a social network like the very popular MySpace or Facebook, but it's customized for the motorcycle-rider community. Riders can create profiles where they can show pictures or videos of themselves, their friends, their motorcycles or even their favorite roads. They can also form online biker clubs where they can advertise meetings, events and fun-runs. In addition, riders can share opinions, advice, and stories with friends and other motorcycle riders, which is why it is referred to as the "Online Biker Bar." The Web site is new and accessible from the "Riders' Network" button on the MotorcycleRoads.com title menu bar.

Many road contributors include pictures with their submissions. MotorcycleRoads.com

will be adding new functionality to the site that will allow other visitors to upload pictures to each of the road description pages. These additional pictures will truly help paint an even clearer picture of the ride and give visitors even more information, which they can use to make their travel plans.

**RJA** There are other sites that are similar to yours. What sets yours apart from the competition?

**BB** The thing that MotorcycleRoads.com does better than any other motorcycle road guide site is to provide high level in terms of both quantity and quality. There are some sites out there that also offer high quality but you have to pay a membership fee to get access to all the information.

**RJA** What can members of the riding community do to make the site better?

**BB** They can help simply by submitting their own favorite routes to MotorcycleRoads.com. Just about every rider has a short list of favorites. Often these secret little gems buried far off the Interstates turn out to be mini-Deal's Gaps. Also, riders should share their favorite roads and routes as well as their favorite stops along the way. First-hand recommendations about great restaurants, eclectic boutiques or antique shops, and interesting historical points of interest along the way are just the kind of tidbits that can really help other riders find rides they will enjoy, based on their particular and perhaps unique preferences. In the end, the more we keep up this exchange of information, the more we are helping everyone get more enjoyment out of motorcycling. ●

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*Bill Belei can be contacted at [webmaster@MotorcycleRoads.com](mailto:webmaster@MotorcycleRoads.com).*

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Richard J. Atkins, Ed.D. is the CEO of Improving Communications in New York and rides an R1150R.

