

Mike's at full throttle

■ *Twisting Throttle: America*
by Mike Hyde
HarperCollins, \$36.99
Reviewer: Roger Moroney

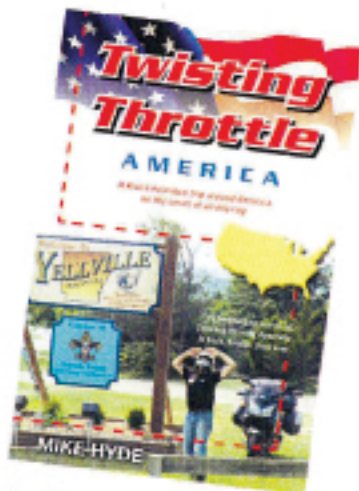
On the front of this wildly colourful travelogue involving two wheels across the US, it is noted that Mr Throttle (aka Mike Hyde) carried out his 32,000km across 50 states in 60 days on "the smell of an oily rag".

Which, when you read of Mr T's occasional meal and accommodation choices, you have to agree.

But on the very final page Mike rolls out the financial statistics.

The bill was \$24,000. Of that \$3800 was fuel alone, and another \$3050 was for servicing (the hike of course). And he had to ship his faithful Suzuki V-Strom (which saw him circumnavigate Australia in 35 days a couple of years back) and that cost \$4600.

Food, ferries, fans, fridge



magnets

... it all stacked up.

Which is why I think Mike is such a fine fellow and a credit to we of the motorcycling fraternity ... for he's saved us all a fortune.

He's done it and done it well, and written it exceptionally well.

Alongside the often remarkable facts and figures of the people and places he rides through, he unleashes the Hyde humour upon Americans. You thought some of the Aussies got it tough? Just read his translations of American dialects from Texas to Arkansas.

And the observations and tales of his trek are such that you'll find yourself covering nine or 10 states easily during an entertaining sitting.

Like in Iowa, where he discovered a monument in a town called Riverside which (due to Star Trek's creator Gene Roddenberry's insistence that James T Kirk was born there in 2228) states that very fact. There are T-shirts, vials of 'Kirk Dirt' for \$3 and photo opportunities with the monument of course.

"The town has just over 200

years to work out how to get a couple called Kirk to conceive a son," the author points out, adding "there is apparently one woman there called Kirk, but reports are that's where no man has boldly gone before."

Then there's the collection of colourful people he meets along the way. Other bikers, gnarled truckers, coffee servers, fellow campers, traffic cops, kids, old folks ... the good, the bad and the ugly. All daubed with the author's humorous brush.

And the supernatural ... his brushes with a phantom passenger as well as things called "spook lights" which are said to emerge and light up one, and only one, rural highway intersection in Missouri. They dart about in the sky and no one has ever explained them apparently and yes ... they

are on the internet.

The author saw them and photographed them, although you never know with old Mike ... because he's also got a photo of his rear view mirror and in it there's a Bigfoot crossing the road.

It's all part of the fun. Given the quicksilver nature of his journey his observations and asides, woven in with great little historical sidelines, are entertaining and illuminating.

You don't have to be a dyed-in-the-wool motorcyclist to get a charge out of this excellent follow-up to the Aussie journey.

It's obvious that as well as taking all the appropriate riding equipment, he also took an open mind, a grin, and a desire to tell a superb story.

I'm a bit strapped for cash Mike ... where ya taking me next?