

June 14, 2010

Hiyadoin'

In a week or so I will be participating in the "Mother of all Motorcycle Rides", the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge from Key West , FL to Homer, AK. This is a one time only ride, it will never be run again. 1000 riders start... who knows how many will finish? The route (which we don't know but will be given to us at each check point, for the next checkpoint) will be over 7000 miles and we are given 14 days to complete. That means BIG party time on the 4th of July in Alaska. The rules state that you must stay with your bike each night (e.g. tent or lean-to... no hotels, no indoor facilities at all) which could mean a whole bunch of pretty "ripe" bikers by the time we finish in the 49th state. They also say no GPSs, no speeding (they are monitoring the bikes with some type of tracker that they attach to each bike), and no shortcuts. No excuses either, you either finish in the allotted time or you go home. No party, no beer.

I'm not sure at this time if I'll have access to the internet in the middle of the wilderness of Canada and Alaska while fending off the bears but I plan to take pictures along the way and describe a little about this experience then send an update by email each day. We'll see what happens. If that's something you might find interesting you don't have to do a thing. If you'd rather not receive any updates please let me know and I'll take you off my list (of course, there's always the delete key. :-)

This is the the website for the ride I'm about to do starting on Jun 20 (<http://www.hokaheychallenge.com/Products/index.html#>). If you happen to have an interest in following my progress from Key West to Homer, AK , I have a GPS tracker on my bike so you can log onto <http://share.findmespot.com/shared/faces/viewspots.jsp?glId=OMTZaxqVsMo82390yKAGYBPVYqpLrIb8I> and follow the dotted line.

Thanks,

Columbus Gene

Jun 19, 2010

Day 1 minus 1



Judy



Gene



Challenge Coin

This ride has as many similarities as differences to the USA Four Corner ride I did in 2008 where Tom Clements and I hit the four extreme corners of the continental United States (with a short jaunt through southern Canada). That had a 21-day limit, this one has a 14-day limit. Mileage is roughly the same (about 7500 miles for the rides). Returning to Phoenix will be about twice as far, in the 3500-mile range. Guaranteed beautiful country to ride through, we just don't know where it is this time. Tom and I planned everything to a tee (routes, hotels, daily riding times, etc). Judy Wagner (my riding partner extraordinaire on this adventure, and senior statesman) and I just know we'll be sleeping in our tents by our bikes along with the 998 other riders. The where's and when's are unknowns at this point.

Judy and I both know that riding a motorcycle isn't for everyone, and riding long distances narrows the field even more. We're not crazy (although I do have paperwork), we just thoroughly enjoy the adventure and all that goes with it. It's like the t-shirt says, "If I have to explain it, you wouldn't understand".

I don't know exactly when I'll find a 'Wi-Fi' connection along the way so the updates may be a bit sporadic in their arrivals. I'll do my best, though, to "have you ride along with us". I have my camera and I'm not afraid to use it. Nice bear.

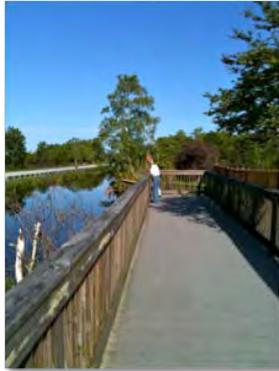
Yesterday we registered and had the bikes inspected. They gave us a Challenge Coin that we need to keep with us at all times as it has our Challenge number on it and will be checked at the Checkpoints along the way.

The countdown has begun...in earnest now. This afternoon we have a mandatory meeting at the Marriott, here in Key West, where we hope to get "the rest of the story". Right now most of us are in the dark about the real rules so it should at least open a window.

Riders are here from all over the world. I was talking with Bubba (Australia) who had his bike shipped to Miami and rode from there. Kiochi (Japan) rented a Harley in San Francisco and rode here to do this. Two Scots from Glasgow (complete with kilts) shipped their bikes to Atlanta and rode down. A very interesting cross-section of the human version of the Missing Link, the biker.

The temperature in Key West is almost pleasant, almost. 85-90°. The humidity, on the other hand approaches torture. I can't walk from my room to the restaurant across the parking lot without my pours slamming open...you can hear them really. I'm soaked in a five-minute walk. I'm in a perpetual state of "perspiratory overload", if there is such an animal. We'll be glad to head north and at least bring the humidity down to double digits.

If you've never traveled to Key West here a few pictures to whet your whistle...



Looking for alligators



GPS view of the Keys



7 Mile Causeway



"Taxi, Taxi, anyone?"



Ernest Hemingway's old haunt in Key West

Day 1 Jun 20, 2010



Judy's ready to get on the road



Starting Line



This doesn't look good. It wasn't!

We lined up in front of the Marriott, got our maps and instructions and were ushered "outa-town" by the KWPD. I'm sure that was a relief for them. I had no idea what the route was going to be so I was studying it all the way up US1.

It was to be 618 miles up to the first checkpoint, which turned out to be Rossmeyer Harley in Ormand Beach (just north of Daytona). It's not anywhere close to 600 miles there (more like 450) except for the way we were routed. If you check the Spot website you'll see we saw quite a bit of the state. Good and bad. The instructions give you turn points only, no distances, no towns, and no landmarks. It's left up to you find these turns. Without the info that you'd really like your head is on a swivel the whole time to make sure you don't miss one. Quite a few of them are of the light blue mini-lines found on the maps as long as your map had enough detail.

Somehow we made it but not before spending more than an hour in the most horrendous rainstorms I've ever ridden in. Judy The Trooper was right behind me the whole time starring at my taillights. When the thunder cracked [seemingly right next to me] I jumped a foot and uttered a single popular word numerous times into my helmet. After we got out of the rain a bee made a beeline for my stomach. Ouch, he won't sting again!

We received our packets for the next checkpoint, ate dinner (apparently we were busy with Thor and forgot to eat lunch) at the Harley place, then found a campsite only a quarter mile up the road. Setting up tents for the first time on the ride in the dark is an exercise in hand/eye coordination and feel. For some reason this was extraordinarily funny to us. The tents, however, sure looked different in the morning than they did the night before. I have discovered that any exertion I do in this very moist heat is somehow connected directly to my sweat glands. Luckily there wasn't a breath of 100% air so we perspired big time all night.



Judy first "real" tent pitching



Finally!

Team Judy

Day 2 Jun 21, 2010

Day 2 of the "Mother Of All Rides" began by breaking camp and getting on the road about 0615. Most of our clothes were partially dry but they quickly dried out as we rode along. We went for an hour or so before we stopped for gas and food. This time Judy got a bee sting just into the hairline above her left eye. No stinger could be found but it hurt like heck all day.



Cyprus trees along a FL road



We seem to be drinking our weight in water



Crossing a GA lake

We had been warned that today's riding would be even more difficult to find turn points. Huh, how? Well, they were. Little tiny back roads that make you think you on someone's property. It really is a game of sorts, trying to not get lost. Some are hopelessly lost even as I type. The next checkpoint is 900 miles up the road, another Harley dealership just south of Memphis but in MS. We did another 600 plus mile day today so we should get to the next point around noon tomorrow. We finished up FL, thoroughly explored GA, and are now in a campground just southeast of Birmingham, AL. We thought we'd get a taste of sleeping in a rain storm but somehow it passed us by. One of the locals loaned us an oscillating fan for the evening so Judy set it up to hit both tents. A welcome relief.

Lots to see along the way mainly because we haven't spent one minute on an Interstate yet. Great roads (once you find them) to travel. For the life of me I can't figure out how the organizers found them all.



Very nice camping ground in AL



Soon to our address for the night

I apologize for this being short. We had no idea that we'd be this busy with no time left at the end of the day. As soon as I get my stuff into a single sock I'll send another update.

Team Judy

Day 3 Jun 22, 2010

Yesterday can be summed up in a single word... frustrating. There were so many turn points, some of which were very obscure, that it took Judy and I ten and a half hours to cover the remaining 325 miles we had to Checkpoint 2. We normally double the first number of miles and that gives us a rough gouge for how long it should take, including fuel, food and bio breaks (e.g. 600 miles=12 hours... this is an average of 50mph). We were so behind (in our minds) that it just grated on us all day. So, in order to be able to make at least 500 miles for the day we had to "high step it" and not waist any more time. We did and logged a total of 525 miles.



A bridge to [seemingly] nowhere



Are we on the right road this time?

We found out part of the frustration of not finding turn points or having to retrace steps was because there had been some "sabotage" going on with some signs removed and others turned 90 degrees to make you turn early. According to some other riders who have competed in long rides similar to this said that's not unusual. WTF! I look at it like playing solitaire, you against the rules of the game. What's the point in cheating? Oh well... at least we have the satisfaction of hitting all the points without skipping any.

That being said the riding, the scenery, the views were nothing but spectacular. The "twisties" (turns that you'd like to do in your 'vette with the top down and going up a windy mountain road) were made for motorcycles. And if "twisties" is your thing, as it is mine, I'm in heaven, I'm in heaven... possible tune forming.

For our camping pleasure we found an unused metal structure that they use for garages (between a Jeep place and a Hair Stylist) and set up camp under with both bikes. Great, except for the mosquitoes. They tried to carry off Judy. We used "OFF" to scare them away but it seemed to attract more. I had to look at the can again to make sure it didn't say "ON".



Judy is never far behind



Motel "Two"

We're looking forward to tomorrow and more mosquito bites lotion.

Team Judy

Day 4 Jun 23, 2010

Well, let me tell you about riding through the Ozark Mts. WOW! I can't adequately describe the colors, the clear air, the 'homey' people. Just wonderful. The roads are 100 percent perfect for motorcycling. Similar to the Tail of the Dragon in NC. To quote the Govenator, "I'll be baak."



Looking at the bridge we're about to cross



Typical two-laner. Watch for crossing traffic!

The routing is still taking us past wonderful sights of all kinds like Talledega Speedway, Graceland, Razorback Stadium, Buffalo, OK (Huh?). The second part of the day had us on US60/US64 cutting across the top of AR and OK and right out the Panhandle. For miles and miles there is nothing to see but miles and miles. OK has the flattest mountains I've ever seen (TIC). Short showers (and I emphasize short) are most welcome to cool us off and make the roads steam. Weird sight.



Crossing one of the many lakes we encountered



Stand on a beer can and you see across OK

We keep passing riders who regularly pass us at the speed of heat. We're the tortoises in the book and we like it that way. We keep hearing of riders staying up 36 hours at a time and riding all night. Wrong answer. We want to get there in one piece having enjoyed the experience. Speaking of that, regardless of any "frustrations" or other things that might occur, this is an adventure of a magnitude of 10 on the earthquake scale. Judy and I have laughed and thoroughly enjoyed it all... an attitude we plan to keep all the way to Homer. Not hard to do with her constant smile. The no bathing is getting a little sporty (read that as 'ripening') so we know we're coming before we get there. I'm looking a bit like Santa with these white things sticking out the sides of my face.

Our overnight was spent under another Ramada in Buffalo's City Park. Few mosquitos but we added flying beetles, which when hit properly with the back of your hand will sail a good twenty feet. Best sleep we've had so far... until a diesel truck joined us at 4am and left his motor running.



A ramada in the city park



Judy staying current even when she's away

Tomorrow we're looking at zig-zagging across the northern part of NM with hopes of making Farmington. We'll see.

Stay tuned... and thanks for following along <http://share.findmespot.com/shared/faces/viewspots.jsp?glId=OMTZaxqVsMo82390yKAGYBPVYqpLrIb8I>

Team Judy

Day 5 Jun 24, 2010



Northern NM



Starting some really good twisties



Just north of Taos Ski Area



Judy enjoying Santa Fe

The morning started off with me deftly putting my foot through what I thought was the opening in my tent... well, it is now... totally ripping out the zipper and screening. Good, Gene. Gotta shop now for a new one.

I wasn't wrong about the zigg-ing around New Mexico. We began the ride in the sunshine and within ten minutes we experienced some pretty heavy rain. Rain suits are your friend. When it stopped we were dry again in three minutes. 750 miles later we were in Farmington. There aren't 750 miles in New Mexico, except the way we travelled. From the NE corner, around Taos, Santa FE, then to the south central section (where we found our first map error, really it was the map, that took us 20 miles out of our way before having to turn around [and Judy loves to turn around on the highway]) then back to the NW. Nary a highway, all back roads.

Beautiful country out west. I guess it's all beautiful in its own way. To me a cactus covered hill where I live now is as pretty as the pines around the house I grew up in back east. I feel a poem coming on... NOT! ;-)

When we got to Farmington we found a Wal*Mart (they let you camp in their parking lots at night) I walked over and bought another small tent. Beggars can't be choosers as their smallest tent was a four-man back packing tent. Ten minutes later I was setting it up in the dark (never a good plan). I was tired and all I wanted to do was sleep. At about 130a the sky opened up and I immediately regretted not putting up the rain fly (nor did I cover my bike) because the whole top of the tent is mosquito mesh that does not repel water well. So I lay there while the rains came, and came, and came. The mind's picture of me laying in 3" of water holding my phone and wallet up against the tent wall made me start to laugh. After about fifteen minutes the rain stopped and I waded to the tent front to get out and assess the damage. When I stood up I found that everything, that would be everything, around my tent was completely dry. Even my bike. I had just weathered the eye of the commercial grade sprinkler storm. Judy heard me rattling around

outside, thought it was time to get up and got dressed before she stuck her head out. She has not stopped laughing since she saw me wringing out my sleeping bag, et al. Stupid on my part, but funny. At least the back of me got a makeshift bathing.

Tomorrow is a trek all through AZ. Not exactly sure where or how but we're about to find out.

PS- I had a blowout just before the last checkpoint. A blowout in one of my gloves, that is, so I bought a new pair that would blend in with both my black Harley and my camo. tent. What do you think?



Up in the NM mountains



The new tent, before the storm...



Leaving the Wal*Mart parking lot



Harley fingerless gloves

Team Judy

Day 6 Jun 25

We were up and on the road by 545a. A neighboring Winnebago gentleman was outside our tents at 5a with two cups of coffee to get us going. Nice people those New Yorkers. ;-)

I missed the first turn point (never saw the sign) and had to turnaround. I really hate to do that. Our routing had us doing the world's biggest "S" turn through the whole state of AZ. We rode by the Petrified Forrest, Salt River Canyon, numerous lakes, right near our homes in Phoenix, Sedona, and Oak Creek Canyon. By then it was getting dark and all the campgrounds were filled, so we rode up the hill and camped in Ft. Tuthill (a military retreat for Luke AFB). Temperatures for the day ranged from the triple teens hot to "shrinkage" cold in Flagstaff.

Once in the camping area we again were setting up in the dark, then rolled into very cold tents. Low temp for the night was 39 degrees so the long handles really came into play. The couple in the campsite next to us must have had thirty kids but they settled down pretty quick once the parents heard our tent zippers close.

Unless you take the time to go out and "explore" your own backyard you never know what you've missed. In the case of AZ it has the most varied climates, vegetation, topography, and vistas of any state I ever been to (been to them all). Not too long ago my brother and I left a ski area in the morning and were playing golf in Phoenix in the afternoon. I'd love to see a "tree hugger" walk up and put his arms around a Joshua Tree or a Saguaro Cactus. ;-)

Tomorrow the plan is to get up early (duh) and get a few miles out of the way before we stop. The route takes us through the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, into UT's Valley of the Gods, and then Capital Reef Park. Looking forward to yet another spectacular day.

I've had a couple of inquiries (actually Jeannie has) as to who Judy is. Judy (of Tim and Judy fame) is my riding partner for this ride and a great friend. We've know each other for several years as members of the Black Mountain Motorcycle Club. We've ridden other long rides such as the Three Flags Classic (MEX-USA-CAN) in the past. She is an extraordinary motorcycle rider and a joy to be around.

Thanks again for encouragement and the comments on our mental stability.

Team Judy

Day 7 Jun 26, 2010

Breaking camp, in the dark, in the quiet, in the cold takes more time than usual, but we still got going by 545a. Trying to be mice on Harleys creeping away from the other campers silently is not an easy task. I pushed both bikes down out of the area as far as I could then we started up.

After getting some gas we started up to the Grand Canyon. Chilly ride at first but a gorgeous morning. There's a place enroute that has white buffalos but they hide them behind a fence. However... if you stand up on your bike as you ride by you can see them. I'm just sayin'. More grey than white.

Both of us have "Geezer" passes so we didn't have to spend the \$25 each to get into the park. It's about 60 miles to enter at one end of the park and exit the other, but it's 60 miles of unforgettable beauty. The southern rim is over 7000' high with the Colorado River running a mile below. The northern rim is 1000' higher and gets more snow in the winter than Buffalo, NY. I feel like I'm giving a PA to the passengers.

Most of northern AZ is Indian reservations and we rode through the Navaho and Hopi Indian Nations. Up through Monument Valley will take your breath away with the beauty of the huge mesas that you've seen a million times in Western films and car commercials. As we started through the Capital Reef Park there was a sign that said the road ahead was not recommended for ... I missed the rest but soon found out what it must have said. Three miles of 12-15% up grade of loose gravel along the sheer wall of the canyon. The On top looking back was an amazing hundred mile view. Whew!

725 miles after we started we wound up at our second Wal*Mart parking lot in Price, UT, this time nestled between some pallets of wood chips and fertilizer, and on the asphalt. Fool me once... No "rain" either. Judy still can't look at me with a straight face.

Tomorrow we should make our third check point in Rock Springs, WY at the Flaming Gorge Harley Dealership. Then see how far we can go before we have to stop for the day.



Monument Valley



Monument Valley



Judy riding in the Valley of the Gods



Canyon Lake from atop of THE ROAD



Judy explaining where I've gone wrong

Team Judy

Day 8 Jun 27

Up and at 'um at o'dark hundred to get an early start because we'd heard rumors that the distance for the ride was quite a bit higher (in the 9000 mile range) than the 7000+ we were expecting and planning for. We got to the check point and found that the Hoka Hey people had closed up the previous night to move onto the next checkpoint but left packets for us "stragglers". Hmmm... Can we possibly be that far behind?

After looking at the map and directions we got gas and high stepped it again. The previous days of numerous turn points seems to have taken its toll on some of the participants as many have dropped out. These directions were a little easier to understand but they still had us zigging around the state. We also got our first taste of Interstate on the way to Casper.

WY is a very interesting flatish state. With the rolling terrain there are signs all over the place warning about high wind areas. They must have a problem in the winter, too, because the guy who has the concession for making snow-break fences along the roads must be a gazillionaire. They're everywhere.

Once past Casper (trekking east) we wound up in the thriving metropolis of Lusk, WY, not far from the SD border. Our quarters for the evening were set up in a city park that looked just about perfect, with the tables and grass and access to water. Perfect that is until the track we didn't see earlier started taking trains along it every fifteen minutes... alllllll night long. Fortunately the experienced camper is armed with ear plugs.

I know the country has been hit with a recession of the highest order but it sure seems that the western states, especially the Indian Reservations, are suffering to a greater degree. Jobs are almost nonexistent, fields are not being cultivated, and there are many more people with hands out than I can ever remember. Sad.

Tomorrow we ride into SD and meander around then back out toward MT. Looking forward to it, as always.

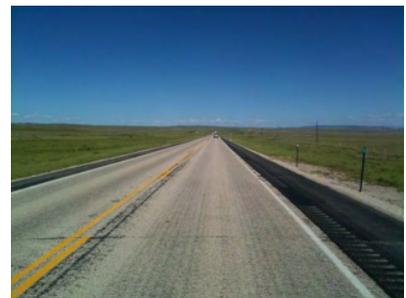
Again, thanks for riding along. If you have any questions or comments, don't hold back.



WY countryside



Flat lands for high winds



Windy road. Two lanes are typical

Team Judy

Day 9 Jun 28, 2010

The trains in Lusk, WY seem to be timed perfectly with our alarm clocks. Any help in these last few mornings is appreciated.

We broke camp and started north for about fifty miles along the WY/SD boarder until we could turn east and start exploring that state. I've been to SD numerous times but always during the Sturgis Bike Week in August so I hadn't ridden at all in the southern half of the state. It's completely different from the central part which is dominated by the Black Hills. In contrast the south is more rolling hills and best suited for cattle and sheep raising.

There was a "trick" today in the directions that we were unaware of. One point to visit was the home of Chief Red Cloud (the grandfather of Jim Red Cloud, the organizer of this ride), who is the 4th generation Sioux Chief. It was quite an honor for me to shake his 91 year old hand. The trick was that the stop was an unannounced Check Point for the ride. Riders who thought that going all the way out to the reservation to stop at the Chief's house was too far out of the way for them automatically disqualified themselves for missing a check point. There must have been a lot disqualified because I was only number 144 to go through. The BIG news for the riders who made the check point were told that we could shower from now on. Of course we were told from a distance. Yes!



Chief Oliver Red Cloud - Sioux



The Chief's house



Rolling hills of southern SD

The return back toward the west was through the Wounded Knee park and the Bad Lands National Park. Put the BLNP on your list and you'll have a pretty good idea of what the moon looks like. Leaving SD had us first do several of my favorite rides in the Black Hills and through Spearfish Canyon.

Sturgis is very near the center west border of SD, about 48 miles west of Rapid City, and is the host city of the largest motorcycle week in the world. Normal crowds are in the 600K range. I was at the 65th anniversary week and there were over a million motorcycles. I was the one on the black Harley.

Our destination for the night was Billings, MT, but not before going through some of the most famous areas of Indian and US Cavalry battlegrounds there is in this country. One of the more notable battles was the Battle of Little Big Horn where Custer had his terminal stand. I've done the tour before and it's well worth the mandatory donation.

Very unscientific note: People were much shorter then (average man was 5'6") so when you look at the displays of uniforms and dress of the day it makes you think everything has been miniaturized to fit in the cases. Not so. Now you know the rest of the story.

We stayed at a KOA in Billings and took advantage of the shower and laundry facilities. My clothes were beginning to look like a fireman's uniform where they stand by themselves and all I had to do was jump into

them (low jump, small tent). Now I can actually fold them.

Tomorrow is our next check point in Missoula, MT then north and into Canada. Can't wait.



Site of the Wounded Knee Battle



A taste of the Badlands



Yellow line fever

Team Judy

Day 10 Jun 29, 2010



Grasslands of MT



Getting into some twisty canyon roads



Flathead Lake

I had asked for a tent site near the KOA exit so we wouldn't wake the neighborhood as we left, and that worked out well. BTW, as we ride further north the amount of daylight per day increases. When we finally got to sleep last night it was still light out at 10p. This morning when we left at 530a it was bright and sunny.

Judy lead us to the HD dealership in Missoula (next check point) though the mountains and gorgeous valleys north of the interstate. You've got to see it to believe why MT is known as the Big Sky state. Unbelievable.

Our packets with directions and map showed the next check point to be Fairbanks, AK, some 2350 miles north. After I bought my "bugs off my windshield" spray stuff from the dealership (did you know there is no sales tax in MT?, but I digress...) Judy aimed us north for Canada. As we were rounding Flathead Lake on the east side by Bigfork this "crazed" woman came running out into the street yelling at me, "Is that Gene Adee, is that Gene Adee?" Turns out that "crazed" woman was Eleanor Bailey, a good friend of mine and Jeannie's from Sun City, AZ. She and her husband Bill were standing there waiving at us as we rode by. What a great treat! I loved it. How they knew when and where we were going to be still amazes me. Thank you, guys.

The border crossing was easy with no problems. The only thing I was asked was how was I going to protect myself? Huh? He wanted to know if I had any guns with me. Ahh. Except for the 20mm Vulcan Canon I usually carry in my saddlebag (TIC) and my tire-thumper bat in the other, I said no and we were off. Now comes the REAL spectacular scenery. We were getting a taste of it in MT, but it was just a sampling. Wow! is the only way to describe the Canadian Rockies. If you remember Sgt. Preston and his dog King, you remember the scenery. It's better in color. ;-)

We made it to Redstreak park in Alberta to settle in for the night. 735 miles for the day. You should have seen Judy's eyes when she read the "You're in bear country" sign near our campsite. I'm not sure how she'll sleep tonight, but I'll bet the ranch she won't be going to the restroom in the dark!

It makes it so nice to ride with a partner who's an excellent rider and a terrific leader. Judy is both and she makes the ride that much better.



Fields of Yellow By-roadias



Readying her tent but thinking "bear"



My camping gear fits in behind me

Tomorrow we're expecting more of the same type scenery as we make our way toward AK. Thanks again for riding along. The next tank of gas in liters is on you. ;-)

Team Judy

Day 11 Jun 30, 2010

No bear paw prints around the tents this morning...always a good thing. Something did go BUMP in the night, though.

Today was a day of adapting. After packing up our campsite and riding for about twenty minutes I started to feel a pain in my right side. No big deal, I thought, I'll just John Wayne through it until it goes away. Within about five minutes I was standing on the side of the road, make that hunching on the side of the road, relieving my stomach of everything I had eaten for the last four days. You could hear the deer discussing the odd sounds. Judy came back when she saw I wasn't with her and asked how I was. Fine. Five minutes later I'm back off my bike. This happened several more times with my side hurting more and more. I looked up the Banff Hospital address and told Judy that I have to get there, now. I'd had that same feeling before and thought I was passing a kidney stone. We made it to the hospital in record time and I stumbled in to the Emergency Room. I was given four doses of morphine before it would help the pain. A few hours later I did indeed pass a tennis ball size stone (OK, maybe smaller) without any additional medical intervention. I was released from the hospital at about 330p, with my VISA card smokin' . Nurse Judy stayed with me the whole time keeping me cheered up.



Highway 93 to Alaska



Nurse Judy, always at the ready



Very unusual shaped mountain

I felt bad because I had just taken up most of our riding day and more than likely taken away any chance of arriving in Homer before the deadline on 3Jul. Why go on then?

Judy knew that not making the deadline and possibly not being able to return in time to her other commitments in Seattle just wasn't going to work for her. She had already proved to herself (and me) that she could do everything required of this Challenge (exceptionally long riding days, thousands of miles in the saddle, camping out every night, experiencing all types of weather, etc., etc., and nary complaint one) but it just wouldn't work. The fact that an additional 1500 miles more than we planned for were tacked on made it impossible for us to make it on time. Judy, saddened and upset about the situation, regretfully decided to turn back.

My outlook was that it's a challenge for me to meet and an adventure that I need to finish. I have a sponsor in Homer that I don't want to disappoint, and, I don't have the prior commitments that would force me to turn back. Even if I do get there late, I still did it, so I continued on after saying good bye at the hospital in Banff.

So much for the 700 mile day we needed. I was feeling a little shaky but was able to complete just over 400 miles and stopped in Hinton, Alberta. Judy made it back to Idaho before calling it a day.

The scenery, as promised was spectacular. If you have the chance to visit that part of the world, don't pass it up. Beautiful as it was I was feeling less than stellar and missed not having that familiar black

helmet in my rear view mirror.

Tomorrow will have to start early if I'm to make up any time.



Lake Louise, CAN



Glacier moving approximately 1.5"/yr



Ram enthralled with the Harley

Team Judy

Day 12 Jul 1, 2010



Just outside Grand Prairie, the start of the AICan Hwy The rolling terrain goes on just short of forever

The frost is definitely on the pumpkin! I had to brush it off my cover before I could repack the bike. 34° starting out but, alas, it soon cooled down to 28°. Way to go. It was a day for the electrics to kick in. I have a jacket liner and gloves that can be heated through a connection to the bike's battery. Excellent idea I might add. Layering your clothing properly will usually keep you warm and comfortable even in low temperatures. I kept my rain suit on all day, too, just in case.

When I pulled out from the KOA where I spent the night I heard a dragging sound like my kickstand was still down. When I stopped I looked down and it was just hanging there, not retracted like it should be. I looked under the bike and somehow, somewhere, between when I started out and 50' later the retracting spring had left the building, never to be heard from again. Oh great! I wound up jerry rigging a bungee cord to hold the stand up while I rode but had to do some gymnastics to coax it down whenever I stopped for fuel.

It's interesting how the terrain changes so dramatically the farther north you go. Sierra type mountains (sharp, ragged peaks), to rounded mountains, to rolling hills to flat lands, then back again. Unique and gorgeous to see.

Today was Canada Day (their 4th of July) so most business were closed and every small town I rode through was having a parade. One is fine, but seven? I only know this because that was what it said on the sign on the closed door of the Harley dealership I finally found to get my kickstand fixed. It's still bunged as I sit here.

I gained an hour with a time zone change at the exact time that the rains came. Boy, did they come. Relentless. Dark skies, rain, hail, and no windshield wiper finally forced me to call it a day two hours later in Ft. Nelson, BC. 500 miles of beauty and 100 miles of seeing only the white fog line on the right side of the road.

It's against my better judgement but Judy wanted me to mention... the other day while riding in MT toward the check point I had perfectly balanced an open can of Diet Coke on my seat between my thighs as I was leaning a bit forward checking the directions against the map. So far, so good. I was unaware that anything was amiss until, ah, umm, the 'boys' suddenly got real cool. The entire can had emptied in my downunder and my seat was soaked, and sticky. Nothing to do but endure until the next gas station. I was quite the talk of the pumps as I took a change of jeans and underwear into the mens room looking like I'd just wet my pants. Then I had to dry off the sugary stuff from my sheepskins so I could sit down again. Judy started calling me 'Sweet Cheeks'. At the next stop I told here that I hadn't completely gotten the sheepskins dry as I peeled myself off the seat. In a heartbeat I went from 'Sweet Cheeks' to 'Sticky Buns'. Luckily I lived through it and am a better person for it. :-)

Tomorrow, if the weather holds enough to see, I plan to ride dawn to dusk and see if I can make it to, or close to, Fairbanks, our last check point. Then down to Homer, another 500 or so miles. No promises, remember, I'm old.

As always, thanks for the encouragement, and riding my backseat.

PS - Judy, thank you for your wonderful company and I'm sorry that we had so many hurdles put in our way. What a trooper, and what a rider. None better.



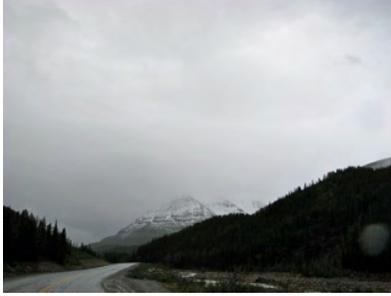
The AlCan. I don't want to be stuck out here at night



See the white line on the right side?

Team Judy

Days 13 and 14 Jul 2 and 3, 2010



Starting to snow on the AlCan Hwy



One of the lakes in the Yukon



Toad River, spawned by the AlCan

I don't mind riding in the rain but I sure hate to start off in it. I had to pull the bike under an overhang to get repacked lest I soak everything in closed quarters for who knows how many hours. As it was, I only had to deal with a wet bike cover plus several items only 'slightly wet'. Good thing I can squeegee off my sheepskin seat covers with the side of my arm.

The word for the day was weather... big time weather. Leaving Ft. Nelson you start up into the higher elevations a few miles out of town. Pretty good slopes both up and down, with 11-15% grade signs, aimed at the truckers and RV drivers, that are actually fun to ride because of the constant turns to hug the mountain sides. Would have been more enjoyable in the dry, but in the wet... As the elevation went up the hail started, then the snow (light, but still snow), then back down into the hail again and finally just rain. This went on for about three hours. Several times the sun threatened to show through but never got up the nerve. The low overcast and poor visibility made it impossible to see the countryside. It also made it cold. Good thing I had on my heated jacket liner and gloves. Plus several other layers.

Coming out of the poor weather (and needing fuel) I came upon the metropolis of Toad River, consisting of a lodge and a single fuel pump. (BTW, Canada apparently has never heard of premium gas, only regular... and the Harley takes premium...ping, ping, ping.) That was the BEST omelet I ever had at the restaurant inside the lodge! Toad River is typical of the AlCan stops and are "the only game in town", roughly 100-125 miles apart. For the motorcyclist you don't want to pass one by. While having breakfast a female rider coming from the north came in to pay for her gas and told me that the road starts to get rough further north with lots of rocks on the road from slides brought on by the rains. "Starts to get rough?", I thought, hmmm. Her riding partner had fallen and was having his bike towed back to Alaska.

Well, she was the master of the understatement as it turns out. The AlCan is not known for its smoothness anyway but the past winter has really taken its toll. The additional roughness started just when I thought it was time for me to find a place to pitch my tent. It was 10p, I had already been on the road 16 hours and was stiff and tired. Unfortunately, it was like noon in Phoenix, light-wise. Why go to sleep in the middle of the day, right? So, I found a gas station, ate a Butterfingers, drank a hot cup of coffee and started out again. About 100 miles short of the AK border the road took a turn for the worse. Rough as a cob, pure dirt and gravel and totally unpredictable. Slow going for sure, but I had an advantage. I was the only sole on the road at that time of night/daylight. I could pick and choose my way easier using both lanes than I could had there been traffic. I almost witnessed a rogue RV'er, who had just passed me like I was standing still, tipping over on its side. After hitting a huge rut the left side of the RV left the ground and I was sure it was all over. But, no. After recovering, the brake lights came on and he slowed to a crawl. I would love to have heard the wife's comments inside.



Chubby finger at the entry into Yukon



Duck -ala-Harley



Midnight in the Yukon

Just after entering the Yukon Territory I had my first ever duck strike. It flew in from my left just above ground level aiming for my front wheel. When it hit it came through the left inside part of my lower fairing and hit my foot by the clutch. Harley-1, duck-0.

Speaking of the Yukon, did anyone else, besides me, buy 'one square inch of the Yukon' off the Kellogg's Corn Flake box with Sgt. Preston on the front? Of course I was only six years old then. Cost me a buck and I got a deed and everything. I wonder where that is?... but I digress.

Official sunset was 1215a and official sunrise was three hours later, yet I could see the sun the whole time. Interesting, because I try never to ride in the dark anymore. It's a combination of oldness and critters on the highway. But it never got dark. At about 40 miles from the border the road turned into a Disneyland ride. The potholes could swallow a full grown Harley, easy. The pavement, what little there is, was so cracked that my tires could fit in one. The frost heaves made the surface so rough that even at 5mph I was bottoming out my struts. I wish I had had a mouth guard in. 40 miles and two hours later I showed my PassCard and ID to the border patrol kid and started up toward Fairbanks for my last check point. The roads were better but a long shot from good.

Hmmm, I had already gone 1100 miles and only had 700 to go to get to Homer. I was beginning to think I might make it there before the fat lady sings. Again, it's still like the middle of the day and I'm wide awake with still a little feeling in my butt. I stopped for breakfast at 1am just inside AK and met a group of other bikers who were from MI on a tour of AK. Nice folks, those MI'eans. SOS was the order (for you militiamen, biscuits and gravy otherwise) that stuck within like glue. Naturally, it started raining once more as I headed northwest. Cats, no dogs.

When you ride through the US and Canadian Rockies you are awestruck by the beauty. You really have to wonder who put this all together. Breathtaking views, phenomenal landscapes and all at no cost. But when I started into Alaska... everything else I had seen and experienced had all been mere child's play. It's not something that can be adequately described by someone who went to Ball State. You have to come and see for yourself. This is the Big Time. Pictures simply don't do it justice. Beautiful.

I arrived at the check point at the Harley dealership at 450a, all closed up, gates locked, lights out (well it was like the afternoon there). No Hoka Hey tent, nada. Great. Then I noticed a small desk near a small gate with two plastic containers, sign-in sheet in one and directions to Homer in the other. I was off again with renewed vigor (and a tinge of hope) for this was the last leg and all the directions fit on a single sheet of paper. 24 hours now and almost 1300 miles. Still 575 to go.

The ride down and around Anchorage and into the Kenai Peninsula was spectacular. They don't believe in straight in the upper 1 (as opposed to the lower 48), there is only curved, tight curved, and tightest curved roads. Although my sense of direction is usually pretty good I was having a hard time mentally "feeling"

which way I was headed. Good thing for the compass on my iPhone. I had to stop a few extra times for coffee because I kept having "indians" jump out in front of me, at least that's what I thought I saw. Interesting what your mind's eye see's with a lack of sleep. But the blood was flowing and I felt great.

The road to Homer goes along the west coast of the peninsula all the way to the tip then follows the shore east and back toward the north. Kind of a backwards "J". At the end of the "J" is Homer, and the spit of land where the finish line is. All the way down along the coast line I was looking across the span of Pacific to the most majestic snow covered mountain bottoms (couldn't see the peaks due to the low overcast and mist) I have ever seen from the ground. Half way down, oops, more indians, stop, more coffee. Rounding the bottom there are numerous places to pull over and take pictures looking over toward Kodiak Island, and I did.

About an hour later (35 hours and 1825 miles) I entered the spit of land off Homer and crossed the finish line. It was 620p. I made it, in time, no pumpkin. YES! I wasn't the first, but I wasn't the last, either. The last count I heard was that I was in the 140 range of more than 180 who made it to Homer.

Whew! Time for a nap.



The coast of the Kenai Peninsula



This little fella wasn't 10' from me



"Indians" scared the pee out of me



The after shot - All done



No mechanical problems at all



HH sticker on my windshield

Thanks again for all your support and encouragement. It's been a terrific ride...so far.

Team Judy

PS - I'm not finished with the updates, so please stay tuned. I still have another 3500 miles to go to get home. ;-)

Jul 5, 2010



Limo in Key West



A motorcycle with a hammock attached



Judy has my six o'clock

On the 4th the Hoka Hey group put on a party for the participants and locals who wanted to join in. It was held in a large clearing near the water at the east end of Homer. It was a party where we had to pay for everything, the food, beer, sodas, whatever. I've never been invited to a party where I had to fund it, too. Interesting. The winner of the HHMC was supposed to be announced at the party but it is still not been finalized. However the winner will receive his/her gold on 11 August at the Broken Spoke Saloon in Sturgis, SD. I was hoping to just wear the nugget home from here.

Apparently, there has been a lot of controversy surrounding the HHMC, much of which brought about by people who didn't really understand what a true challenge was. Complaints about the routes, the directions, the race type atmosphere abound. Most of the riders, me included, had no idea of any of this (other than a few unsubstantiated rumors) as we rode on. I have to admit it was sometimes exasperating trying to find turn points and roads, but that's all part of the challenge. The first three days of riding sure separated the wheat from the chaff because that is when the majority of non-finishers just gave up. Those who raced made it into a race themselves, and by doing so (that is, not following the Challenge rules) wound up disqualifying themselves. From what I can see, most of the discontent is self-generated. I also think that maybe greed - the prize money - got in the way of good sense. Interesting that I never heard one complaint from a finisher.

Today is a day relaxing and reorganizing things on the bike. I have been staying with Clint and Simyra Hiebechuk, owners/operators of the Hallo Bay Bear Camp (http://www.hallobay.com/Site_Index.html) here in Homer, AK and my sponsors for the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. They are wonderful folks who have opened their home to me while I'm here. I've been resting, washing, sleeping in a bed and showering... it doesn't get any better than that. ;-) I'd gotten so used to it that I almost set up my tent in the bedroom.

So, what's next? I'm still over 4000 miles from home. Dunno? Just kidding, I do have a plan but it's carved in soap at the moment. Many riders are shipping their bikes back to the lower 48 and flying home out of Anchorage. Some are taking a ferry down to Vancouver and riding home from there. I'll be riding home from here. I plan to leave Homer on Wednesday morning, stop half way up the peninsula at the Harley dealership (mine needs new shoes, fresh fluids and some TLC) then continue on, stopping where I stop. I may even treat myself to a motel occasionally, possibly a hot meal now and then.

The routing is simple with so few roads in AK and CAN. I'll have to retrace my steps on the AlCan Highway about three fourths of the way back then head south toward Vancouver. That's as far as my plan has gotten. I'll have plenty of time for the rest, later. The only part I'm not looking forward to is that 100 miles or so surrounding the AK/CAN border because it's so tough on the bike.

Jeannie has asked me to keep my SPOT on while traveling so I'll again be leaving a foot print on that same

page (<http://share.findmespot.com/shared/faces/viewspots.jsp?glId=OMTZaxqVsMo82390yKAGYBPVYq-pLrIb8I>), if you'd like to ride along. I'll also be doing updates. The pace will be a bit slower because I missed smelling some of the roses on the way up.

The pictures are others from the ride.



Preparing for a good tentnight sleep



Not sure - a veil and a phone?



Just prior to the sprinkler storm



AZ wildlife



The one on the left won the butting



Inside the Toad River Lodge



Buffalo in Alberta, CAN



Funny shaped cows, no?



A close up of the non-rev

That's it for now.

Gene

Jul 6, 2010

Oh, you're not gonna believe this!

As I mentioned before, Clint and Simyra (my sponsors and hosts) run the Hallo Bay Bear Camp located 120 air miles southeast of Homer in the Katmai National Park. The camp is just back into the grassland about 100 yards in from the Pacific Ocean.

When I first talked to Clint many months ago he mentioned that he'd like to get me out to the camp to see brown bears, BIG brown bears, in the wild, up close and personal. I have to admit that with my limited bear IQ and Discovery Channel bear episodes running through my mind, I was less than enthusiastic. However, when I got here to Homer and saw the operation and learned a great deal more about the bears' habitat, I was enthusiastic to go...almost. I figured, in for a penny, in for a pound.



Our Cessna 206 chariot awaits



Left turn toward the Homer spit



Cruise ship at the deep water port

To get to the Bear Camp requires an hour flight in a C-206 with huge tires for landing on beaches. No problem there, I've done that. What has been a problem, though, the last few days has been the weather out at the Park. Not quite zero:zero, but almost. All flights were grounded. When the weather broke this morning Clint had a couple of cancellations, which opened up a seat for me. Ever the non-rev be me.

The flight was smooth and the vis under the high overcast was excellent. Simyra was our guide (she will stay at the camp for another two weeks) as we started walking along the beach to the break in the waist-high grass, which was a path made by the bears themselves, then through a wooded area that looked and felt like something out of Jurassic Park. When we got to the meadow on the interior we could see three bears right away, two sub-adults together (7-8 years old) and an adult female off about a quarter mile away. Eventually we saw another adult male and a female adult with a pair of two-year-old cubs.



Looking from the air for bears



Tally-Ho! Picture center on the beach



Bear Camp overnight huts



Accommodations for 1, 2 and more



Inside the galley and main dining room



Sandy paw print



Day trippers (vs overnight guests)



Jurassic Park trail



Simyra, hostess, sponsor, and guide

Bears communicate mostly by the reading body language of other bears. For example, if bear-A is grazing in the meadow and bear-B is about to enter the same meadow, bear-A might sit down to indicate that everything is OK and you can come in. Or, bear-A may turn and face bear-B indicating that it's not welcome. Very subtle and very interesting.



Sub-adult brown bear



They can smell the different grasses



They don't eat the real tall grass



I feel better and lighter already



Rear and front paw marks



Female with an itchy winter coat

We strolled around the grassy meadow in a single file, presenting to the bears a much smaller and less offensive cross-section view than a line abreast view would. They knew we were there, but they treated us

like just another piece of driftwood. I spent about two hours in total fascination at what I was experiencing. I lost my timidness almost immediately and felt very comfortable even in close proximity to these huge animals. Talk about a vertical learning curve...



Working our way closer



She looks motley losing her winter coat



Enjoying the experience

Right now they are trying to get rid of their winter coats (by scratching or rubbing up against trees) in preparation for their much shorter summer hair coat, and the onset of salmon season a few weeks away. They just ate various types of grasses the whole time I watched. They're ravenously hungry.

I was a bit disappointed when we had to turn back to catch the plane back to Homer. My amazement square wasn't quite full, yet. Several times I turned myself into a mouth-breather with it wide open. The flight back was just as good and I got some good pictures of the spit and Homer from the air. What a great way to spend the day.



After a hard day of play, just relaxing



Adult female with two cubs



Off we go... back to Homer

I'll be leaving in the morning to start my way back to the lower 48. But first the Harley service stop up the road.

You really need to get up and see what AK has to offer.

Gene

Jul 7, 2010

Woke up to the smell of coffee... and the sound of rain. Coffee-good, rain-bad. Rain-bad because I had to ride up to the Soldotna Harley shop for some needed maintenance before I make my way to Anchorage, and I hate to start out in the rain, as you know. As it turned out by the time I actually left Homer it was just a light mist and I never even put on my rain suit. The temp was 48° so I broke out the electrics again. Unless you have worn heated clothing you have no idea how good that warmth feels as it makes its way down your back and arms and around your torso, down to your fingertips... Almost sensual. Oh, Jeannie?

It completely dried up by the time the continuous right turn finally headed me north on the peninsula. I was treated to a quick slow down as a BullaWinkle and her CalfWinkle hurried across the road in front of me. I saw them at the edge before they ventured out but I couldn't get to my camera quick enough. Moose are a lot bigger than you think, especially when they're only a few feet in front of you. The calf was $\frac{3}{4}$ leg and $\frac{1}{4}$ body. Cute.

Facts: a. AK is $2\frac{1}{2}$ times larger than Texas with only a population of 700,000.
b. Each resident receives about \$1300/yr from the state as their share of the oil revenues produced by the pipeline. So, families with 8-10 children are not unusual.
c. AK has 95% of all the glaciers in the world.

Well, I spent $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours in the Harley shop having several things done and left \$MCXVI lighter. They also did a minimal washing so I could at least tell it was black. When I departed it was pouring again and didn't let up at all all the way to Anchorage. With the sitting around and doing nothing, I was bushed so when I saw a sign for Elmendorf AFB I turned in. Fortunately there was room at the inn and I hit the bed running.

Unfortunately, due to the weather, I was unable to take any pictures. I think by now you know what rain looks like. It was a beautiful ride, I think. I'll try and do better mañana.

A question that I have received several times concerns TB... tired butt. "How can you stay in the saddle for so long and not just ache at the end of the day?" Actually, there's a very simple answer. Get a seat that is wide enough so that you don't create any pressure points with your cheek bones (read that as at least as wide as your butt, no hangover) and narrow enough in the neck so your thighs are not pushed outward and creating other pressure points. When your weight is distributed properly on the seat then the only thing left to take care of is your blood circulation. Ever sit in one of those conforming plastic chairs that feels comfortable at first. Soon, though, you'll find yourself moving around to get comfortable again. The problem is that there is no cushioning between your butt and the hard surface, thus you start cutting off the circulation. Once you put cushioning in between you and the chair your circulation returns to normal and you could sit there for extended periods and not get too uncomfortable. Same thing with the m/c seat. My solution is a set of sheepskin seat covers that are about 1" thick offering me plenty of cushioning. My seat is the standard Harley seat that comes with the bike. It just so happens that it fits my sweet cheeks just fine.

The trek back home has begun and the SPOT is back in place should you want to try and figure where I am. Let ME know so I can find myself. <http://share.findmespot.com/shared/faces/viewspots.jsp?glId=OMTZaxqVsMo82390yKAGYBPVYqpLrIb8I>

Thanks.

Gene

Jul 8, 2010

It wasn't raining as I left the AFB but the skies out to the east (my way) were the color of a charcoal brickette so I was bundled and electrified.

The routing from Anchorage to the Canadian border is not the reverse of the one I came in on. That route took me to Fairbanks (300 miles north of Anchorage) then south. The road was fairly decent in the grand scheme of things but not smooth. I guess it was just warming me up for the AlCan that I would be hitting in a couple of hundred miles. Construction on roads and bridges seems to be the norm with such a short season when the work can be done. Lots of stops, lots of mud this time with the recent rains, and lots of gravel. There were a couple of slippery times today when I was calling for my Mommy. And that's all before getting to the bad part of the AlCan.



Getting close to the Canadian border One of the numerous glaciers New bridge construction on the left

When I stopped at Customs the agent told me that there are pictures of the first two HHMC finishers putting their bikes onto pickup trucks to be moved while they slept. How she knew that I haven't a clue. I have no idea if it's true but it sure explains a lot (timing, milage, routing, etc.) if it is. Sheesh.

The AlCan Hwy, although a POS, allows you to see the most amazing sights. The permanently snow covered peaks, more glaciers, rivers running at speeds I've never seen in the US, are just stunning. The rivers, BTW, are the glacial runoff type where there is that greenish grey cloudy mixture from all the dirt and minerals being carried down these steep mountain sides. The stark differences between the different kinds of pines makes you wonder whether or not a mistake was made a lonng time ago. And there is never a flat length of road. Because the AlCan is cut into the sides of the mountains that the rivers cut between, you are constantly going up and down at fairly brisk angles. Not for the Harley, of course, but it sure slows down traffic as the big trucks play, "I think I can". Did I mention the AlCan is TWO lanes only the whole length!



Any idea what do these poles do?



Weird pines



Humble pie

OK, time to eat humble pie... Remember I told you about the long distances between small towns/burgs and

gas? I average 42MPG on the bike, and with a 5 gallon tank that make 210 miles my drop dead milage. I passed a station when I had only gone 30 miles and figured even if the next one was 150 miles away I would be good. Wrong. The tank went dry at 210 miles, followed by no more "potata, potata" sounds from the engine. When I finally got the cushion off my butt I went about trying to flag someone down. A good samaritan finally did stop and just so happened to have a gallon of gas. He said the next station about a mile ahead, just around the bend. Figures. Now I stop and get gas every 30 miles. JK



Very slick mud



I didn't get the memo about metrics



Quite a bundle on the back

Just taking my time, stopping to take a few pics and even once to have a real breakfast, I still rode 612 miles before I stopped in Haines Junction to call it a day. My tent is pitched and the mosquitoes don't get the message that they are not welcome.

I'm about on a schedule, which I don't have, so I'm enjoying the roses. Tomorrow is supposed to be nice and a bit warmer... I'll believe it when I see it.

Gene

Jul 9, 2010

While I was breaking camp this morning I heard a noise I didn't recognize. Uh, oh! I looked around at the picnic table and saw the world's biggest seagull eyeing my half eaten pop tart. It had to be the size of a small Boeing. Seagull?... in the middle of the forrest..., in the middle of nowhere Canada..., on MY picnic table. Huh? When I got back to my feet after jumping back a quarter mile, I shooed him/her away. That wasn't taken kindly and he/she flew right at me (I ducked) as it shat upon my still covered Harley. Good bombing technique. Now I was really awake.



Seagull Haven



Two miles out from the last window cleaning

If you are having trouble following the SPOT I think I have at least part of the solution. When I shut it down last night the tracking light was blinking red. I changed the batteries and everything checked out normal. Hopefully it will track properly now.

When I went to bed last night I didn't realize that I had lost an hour (now back to Pacific time) so when I set my alarm it was off by an hour. "I have no excuse, sir" but I started the day later than I planned.

The weather was pretty nice most of the day but I still wore my electrics and rain suit. There was a chill in the air and I could see some gray in the clouds in my direction. As it turned out I never got rained on until I finished the day, while pitching my tent.

Instead of taking the "easy" route down to Prince George, I decided I'd like to take the road less traveled, Route 37. Now I know why it's less travelled. It was like the AlCan Hwy on steroids. Most of the day's travels were on unpaved roads (i.e. hard packed gravel, loose gravel, scary mud, and dried ruts). There were hours at a time when I never saw another vehicle. The first gas was 100 miles down the road. The next gas was 150 miles beyond that, so I always had one eye on the gas gauge. I swear, with some of the bottoming out potholes I've had the pleasure to experience, I don't know how I still have a tour pack attached.

I find it interesting that every time, that's every time, I stop to refuel I have to clean my windshield. I'm not talking just a few bug splatters, I'm talking about bugs so thick I have to look around the windshield to see.

As usual, the scenery was spectacular, even nicer when you can see the tops of the mountains, too. In addition, I was able to fill several wild life squares. Foxes, black bears, wild horses, caribou, and that pterodactyl seagull made the day even better.



I've seen more lakes than I've ever seen in my life



Wild horses just wonder on the roads

590 miles later I found a campground that had some rain sprinkles above it. It was closed when I tried to check-in so I just found a grassy spot and set up camp. I'll check-in and pay tomorrow morning.

I'm really enjoying this.

That's all I know. ;-)

Gene

Jul 10, 2010

Last in, last out. I was the only tenter in the place. Everyone else cheated and were in RVs. I never even heard them leave the campgrounds. I woke to total low overcast skies that looked like the sky would just open up any minute. I paid my fee and was off to look for more gas (a never ending job in the bush, as we bush travelers like to call it). Not too far down the road I found a station to fill up, and purchased a 1.2 gallon gas can. Yes! Now I feel a little better when I'm feeling a bit short of fuel.



Clouds are LOW out here



Takes a beatin' but keeps on tickin'

The rains never came, but I was prepared. Actually, over prepared. At the next station (155 miles yonder) I started shedding some underthings, although I kept the rain suit on. Ever the pessimist when it comes to getting wet.

The roads started off the same as yesterday but slowly they started to improve. By that I mean the rough patches were still there, they were just farther apart. One pothole (that was "hidden" in a shadow) literally lifted me up and out of my seat and I thought the bike would be totaled. I pulled to the side to check and found absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. I have a new-found respect for Harley manufacturing. I was the only casualty, actually, "the twins" were.

By the time I got to Route 16 the roads were almost rideable. They even started having painted lines and everything. I stopped at the gas station at the junction of Route 37 and Route 16 and asked about ferry schedules at Prince Rupert, three hours down to the right. Not a soul knew a thing. They acted like they never heard of it (it's the only thing at the end of the road). I had contemplated taking a ferry from Prince Rupert down to Vancouver, a fifteen hour journey. Wrong, I wasn't about to ride three hours out of my way to find out the ferry only operates once a week and I'd already missed it, so I went left and continued to Prince George, three hundred more miles.



Trees ready for the grim reaper



Grim reaped

It's quite obvious that one of the main industries in Canada is lumber. The trees are so thick that you can't see more than a few feet into the forests as you ride by. You can see where they have cut down and

replanted trees everywhere. I'll bet I've seen more than a hundred double-lengthed trucks hauling giant trees to slaughter. I went by a sawmill today that had two very large quanset (sp) hut shaped buildings brimming over with just saw dust. Uncut and cut lumber piles seemed to stretch for miles.

I arrived in Prince George with only 550 slow going miles. Motel for me. Time to hit the hay.

I'll be riding to a small island called Salt Springs, a ferry ride from Vancouver, to visit a good friend from high school. More on that tomorrow.

Thanks for riding along. You'll soon dry out. Hopefully it will a smoother ride from now on. ;-)

Gene

Jul 11, 2010

I got on the road about 630a sans long handles and rain gear. The weather guesser on TV said that I could expect some cloudiness and higher temperatures. I have zero confidence in all of them since I saw a bumper sticker in Base Ops at Davis Monthan AFB many moons ago that said, "Weathermen do it with crystal balls". That was it for me being the visual kind of guy that I am.

At my first gas stop I decided to have a little breakfast. Where better to fill up but at Tim Hortan's Donuts. My calorie intake for the day sure tasted good. It had definitely gotten warmer so I took off my heated jacket liner. It's the first time I had seen over 55 degrees since Banff on the way up, and it felt good. I even went for my glow-in-the-dark fingerless gloves.



The calm before the storm



Log cabin factory



Waiting and waiting and waiting

From Prince George (the town I stayed in) south the topography makes a slow transition to smaller, rounder mountains, and great expanses of grasslands. Lots of cattle and sheep could be seen around most turns. Speaking of animals, I was lucky to see a deer up close, unknowingly, as she walked right past me while I was stopped at one of the construction sites. I swear she said, "Is that you Gene Adee, is that you Gene Adee?" I named her Eleanor. ;-) I also saw several mountain sheep and one Dodge Ram.

Today's ride was mostly following rivers and taking in as much as I could. Beautiful sights until we came to a halt along the side of a mountain with a sign in front saying, "Accident Scene". Not good. We didn't move for over an hour. Later when we passed the scene it appeared that a vehicle had gone through the cement barrier to a 2000' drop, and was no more. That made me taste my fritter again.



Accident scene



Wood carving at a park



The 100K milestone passed today

Now I was running behind because I was trying to make a certain ferry to Salt Springs Island off Vancouver. The 575 miles was going pretty slow especially when I got onto Route 1 and Route 10 going west

into Vancouver. Max speed for more than an hour was 15mph. The temperature was 85, nice, but a little warm for my uniform of the day. I was in both a hot sweat and a cold sweat trying to make what was fast becoming the last ferry of the night. Great. I was ready to set up camp in the parking lot if I didn't make it. But I did make it with ten minutes to spare, and was the last vehicle to board. The ferry fee would make a round trip to Vancouver for groceries a tad sporty.

It was a nice relaxing ride of about an hour fifteen and I had a chance to catch up on a little on my reading. From the dock it took me twenty minutes to locate Brenda Ringwald's cabin in the woods. I've known Brenda since 5th grade at Sands Point School in New York. We're high school classmates and she now lives in Phoenix, too. She's been telling Jeannie and me about her cabin for years so I was glad to have the opportunity to finally see it. Now, I want it. ;-)



Beautiful islands with mega-\$\$ homes Just resting aboard the ferry

Brenda at her cabin

All things considered it was a terrific day. I love seeing and experiencing things I haven't done before and this trip has certainly done that for me. I don't think I'm quite through with Canada or Alaska, just yet.

Tomorrow'll be another ferry ride or two down to Port Angeles, WA and from there points south.

Again, thanks for having my back door.

Gene

PS-I understand the SPOT isn't tracking like it should. Maybe it's that bump-along ride it had down the asphalt at 50 mph. I just thought the chips in the plastic was an added feature I hadn't noticed before. I'll call the SPOT peeps and see what's going on.

Jul 12, 2010

It's been a long time since I slept in a window. At least that's what I call it and it was great. I woke to a view that included a momma deer and her fawn eating breakfast. If I ever build a cabin in the woods I'm calling Brenda to design it. Lots of glass and skylights so you don't miss a thing. She shoed me out early so I wouldn't miss my ferry boat ride off her Salt Springs Is, with coffee in hand. I made it, so TYVM. ;-) What a great Hostess.

After disembarking on Vancouver Island, I rode down to Victoria (about thirty minutes) and went directly to the Ferry Dock to purchase another ticket to Port Angeles City in WA. I got inspected and customs-sized along with about thirty other bikes. If you aren't aware, the motorcycles load first and move to the front of the ferry, along the side (usually the left side). They have ropes hanging from the walls to tie to your bike so that it won't fall should we experience some bumps in the road. They use the left side because the bike leans left when it's on the kickstand making it very sturdy due to the three point stance. The chance of it falling into the kickstand side are remote so tying it to the wall while the bike leans into it creates the safest position. It wouldn't work on the right side of the boat. Substitute port for left and starboard for right in the above (I was Air Force, not Navy).



Vancouver ferry



Approaching Port Angeles, WA



Facing aft inside the ferry

Both trips were smooth and I was able to get some work done when I wasn't starrng out the window. It was also nice to see the northern shore of WA in the distance. If you're like me, and I know I am, no matter how long it's been since you were there it's always good to get home (this time home was the USA).

Once off the ferry I went looking for gas (what else is new) and something to eat. I was holding off until the US because of the prices. It seems everything costs so much more in CAN. Gas, for instance, is about \$5/gal versus the \$3 I paid in Port Angeles. A reasonable sandwich price of \$7 would have cost me \$10 just across the sea. (Also nice to read signs in miles vs kilometers and speeds in mph rather than km/h.)

The ride along the coast was beautiful with great views of the coves. The road seems to have been built to conform with the shoreline and makes for a fun ride, too. I had spoken with Judy, of Team Judy fame, earlier and met her for lunch in Gig Harbor. Let me tell you about the clam chowder in Gig Harbor! Yes, very. Excellent! It was funny because there was a gentleman sitting across from us who had on an Alaskan shirt with every third thing on it saying Homer. Had to get a picture.



Judy pointing to Halibut catch



Mt. Rainer in all its glory



The snow was totally unexpected

After I left Judy, I rode east toward Mt. Rainer and the national park that surrounds it. It's like someone sticking a finger up under a pure white sheet (the old pup tent routine...). The majority of the mountain remains covered with snow and is a spectacular sight the first time you get a glimpse of it through the tall pines of the park. I've seen it numerous times from the air but you don't get the same perspective of its size from five miles up.

Finally, rolling into Packwood, WA, and a little bit chilly, I decided the Inn was calling me. I almost felt like I was backing up to the pay window today with as little riding as I did (200 miles) but it was a relaxing and a fun way to spend the day.

Tomorrow, I have to find a new pad for my seat. My current one has somehow developed a permanent wrinkle right across the middle, which is a pain in the..., well, you know. Then off to Portland and to see my good friends, Bob and Lori Kollas.

Maybe tomorrow you can steer and I'll sit in the back?

Gene

July 13

Just to be clear Packwood, WA is not known for its sleeping accommodations. Trust me, I'm your pilot.

Back in 1980 I was flying into Seattle when approach control told us that Mount St. Helens had just blown its top and was in a full scale eruption. What? I had just flown right over it on my way up from San Francisco. I spent the next week in a motel because all flights in that part of the world were grounded. Volcanic dust will ruin a jet engine in a New York minute. The reason I mention this is because today I had the opportunity to ride up into the volcano park and actually see what Mother Nature can do when irritated. I was dumfounded to find complete devastation, even thirty years later. Of course you can see that vegetation is again growing within but the areas of instant death to millions of trees and thousands of animals will never again see life. You've got to make the trek if you can. It'll make a believer out of you.



Mt. St. Helens first view



Valley/exit created by the initial blast



Deadwood logs in Lake Spirit



Logs still in place for decades



Dead dirt, unable to support growth



This used to be the mountain top

I did something today that I haven't done in a long time. I actually had my fill of twisties. I know, I know... but eighty miles of the Tail of The Dragon? I was tired of having too much fun. Not an easy task. The road I'm talking about is the one that runs through the Volcanic National Monument Park, including the road that goes to the top of Mt. St. Helens. If you are a true twistie-holic, this is the place to strut your stuff.



Weird trees along the twisties



Weirder



A no-kidding real land slide

As I made my way to Portland I stopped at one of the overlooks of the Columbia River, got off the bike and walked up to the railing. I took a few pics then turned back to leave when I noticed that my BRAND NEW gas can was missing. Then I saw some guy at the other end of the parking lot pouring MY gas into HIS Gremlin (believe it or not). When I yelled at him he threw down the can and drove away before I could get to him. The only bumner thing of the whole trip. If he'd of just asked I would have given him the gas and a few bucks.



"Wild" llamas along the Columbia River



Lunch for all four



New seat pad... finally

I went to Columbia Harley in Vancouver, WA and bought a gel Pro Pad for my seat. Sitting on what feels like a broom stick shaped wrinkle for the last couple of days, I couldn't wait to find relief. It's not a sheepskin but it'll work.

Bob and Lori Kollas welcomed me into their home in Portland, OR, showered me, talked Hoka Hey, stuffed me, walked me, and sent me to bed. Very nice. ;-)

Tomorrow it looks like a ride to Lake Tahoe, NV is in order. I'm lovin' it. I feel a commercial coming on.

Gene

Jul 14, 2010

After a wonderful breakfast and coffee from a bowl (the decanter met its maker the night before) I bid Bob and Lori goodbye and got out "on the road again", going south out of Lake Oswego, OR. Traffic was light, temp was a perfect 65, and the sky was clear. A great start to the day.

Pretty much the only way to get aimed toward No. Lake Tahoe (my destination for today) is to head out on I-5 for a while before any easterly movement at all is possible. Once on the secondary roads I felt back in my element. I don't mind the super slabs but I'd rather get off them and get back to the Ma and Pa restaurant environment. More like what I remember as a kid riding in my parents '54 Packard. It makes for slower travel but, to me, its safer and much more enjoyable. I love the smells and sounds that you miss in a closed-up air conditioned car. I love the real americana people you meet in the little po-dunk towns who are actually happy that you stopped in and would be glad to help push your motorcycle if you got stuck. It saddens me a bit that most people younger than I have never given the "smell the roses," off the Interstates, no franchise burger shops in sight, no stoplights in town, people who wave to you, real home cooked meals, etc., etc. a thought to experience. Being caught up in the rush, rush life, Interstates and instant gratification is not all its cracked up to be. Missing some of these "off the main road" things is missing a slice of life that is (for lack of a better phrase) truly back to the basics. Simple pleasures ARE all they are cracked up to be. I just wish more would take the time to experience something different because at this rate small towns will soon be a thing of the past. That would be a shame. This all from a New Yawka. :-)



One of the tunnels in the OR highlands Not all the snow is gone yet Beyond this farm is a cattle ranch

My ride today took me diagonally across OR toward Klamath Falls and Lakeland, then skirted the eastern edge of CA, then south to where it was time to turn east into Reno, NV. From there it was just another forty minutes to Incline Village, NV and on to the home of one of my Sig Ep fraternity bros, Jim Ellis and his lovely bride, Karen. Dick Medland (another brother) and his lovely wife Patty were there to meet me also, with an ice cold adult 'Big Orange'. I'm in heaven...

The terrain differences between OR, CA, and NV on this route could not be more varied. OR, with its lush forests and huge lakes couldn't have been more beautiful. CA, with its wetlands, rolling hills and giant farms and ranches couldn't have been more serene. And NV, with its sierra type mountains, spectacular views and deep lakes couldn't have been more majestic. Everything is beautiful, in its own way. 580 miles of enjoyment for me and the guy who followed me on his bike for about three quarters of the ride. I guess he thought I knew where I was going. Fat chance.



Wetlands with new arrivals



Female buffalo or a gay guy Buff?



Flat lands to the rolling hills

Q&A: I have had several people ask me about my butt. What!? That is, how do I keep from getting sore riding all day. The answer to that has plagued the motorcycle community for thousands of years. People who get sore are usually talking about their skin being sore, not the bun muscles getting sore (that's a comfort issue). What happens is if you perspire (and everyone does) and keep that dampness next to your skin via the material in your underwear, mix in a little movement, you will chafe (think about a newborn left in wet cloth diapers developing a rash). Chafing is not comfortable (way big understatement). The secret to not getting sore is to prevent Monkey Butt (the motorcycle euphemism for chafing) in the first place. To do that you need to keep your skin dry. In a sweating environment you must draw the moisture away from the skin. Most folks wear cotton underwear... big mistake here because cotton absorbs moisture and retains it, next to your skin. Cotton underwear is not your friend. You need to get the moisture away from you and the only way to do that is by wearing underwear that will wick away the moisture. Wicking meaning taking the moisture from you, moving it through the underwear material into the next layer (e.g. your jeans, long underwear, Depends, whatever). Now think about that newborn in a Huggies type diaper, one made with a wicking material and leaving no rash. I use UnderArmor brand biking underwear that is designed to do just that. Staying dry equals no chafe and you look forward to riding the next day. Develop Monkey Butt and you'd rather sit on a pillow in the hotel.

Tomorrow I'll be hooking up with Bob Tomlin, a good friend of mine from Scottsdale, just south of Lake Tahoe and riding back to the Phoenix area together. Bob just happened to be in the area attending a BMW motorcycle rally. One day or two to get home? We'll know more tomorrow.

Getting short.

Gene

Jul 15, 2010

After saying goodbye to Jim and Karen this morning I started down around the east side of Lake Tahoe from Incline Village. The sky was clear and the air was crisp, perfect for me. The views from the road of the lake are amazing. With no wind at all the lake looked like a mirror, reflecting the snow covered mountains on the other shore. Beautiful.



Lake Tahoe, looking west Sierra Nevadas with Lake Tahoe just over The terrain changes quickly

I met Bob Tomlin about fifty miles later. Bob had some routes planned and we did them all. The first one had so many ups and downs (remember whoop-de-dooos and kiss-me-quicks?... maybe I'm sharing too much with you) that we looked like pistons from an engine going down the road. Great fun. The routing across NV is one loong road, part of which is named Extraterrestrial Highway, with no turns. Sheesh. We did stop along the stretch north of Groom Lake, the once secret base out of Nellis AFB that, apparently, has close ties with ET. As we moved from NV into UT and gained more altitude you could see green appear. The brown we had been in for several hours was pretty but I kept looking up because there were numerous signs indicating Low Flying Aircraft. Low is a relative term but in this case we're talking in the 100' range above the ground, and close to the speed of sound for military fighters. OMG, that was fun, not the watching, the doing, many moons ago for me, but I digress...



CA Mono Lake on the left Carelessness burned the forrest down Bob with miles of straight ahead



Anyone need a date for the Prom? I'm going to get type rated in this Cedar Breaks National Park, UT

Not much animal activity in the desert but going over the mountains we could see deer and elk. I even saw a small herd of what looked like reindeer that were fenced in near a farm. The closer we got to Kanab, UT (our home for the night) the more spectacular the colors became on the mountain sides. If you've ever visited Zion Park you might recall the brilliant red and orange colors of the surroundings. It's definitely a visual thing and very hard to describe.



The outskirts of Zion National Park



Volcanic rubble



Cecil B. DeAdee's mirror shot

It was getting late by the time we passed Zion Park and the temperature was dropping. It actually felt good having just spent the entire desert ride in 100+ temperatures. The sun was setting behind us so I attempted to take a picture backwards, over my head. That didn't work. Then I saw the sun setting in my mirror, so I tried that. Whalla!

We got in in time to get a bite to eat but not in time for the pool. Coulda used that pool. I understand there is a severe weather advisory for the Phoenix area tomorrow for temperatures. It's supposed to hit 116 degrees. We plan to leave early in the morning and avoid the hottest part of the day. The hottest part of the day occurs around 4pm. (Most folks guess in the noon to 1pm timeframe.)

Tomorrow, Home to Momma! ;-) I should roll in about noon.

Oh, Jeannie?!

Gene

Jul 16, 2010

The Shilo Inn in Kanab, UT (close to both Zion and Bryce National Parks) is one of those places that caters to bus tours destined for the Parks. It's extra popular because of the excellent Continental breakfast served. The usual older crowd had finished their eating as Bob and I entered the dining room. I would say, conservatively speaking, that the average age of the bus people was 'deceased', although I did see some movement as I reached for a banana. Whoa, close one.

Kanab is only about 12 miles north of the AZ boarder so it didn't take us long to regain the hour we lost yesterday. We were on the road by 7a and decided on the southern of the two routes available to us. Both run east-west with the northern one running above the canyon floor and the southern one running along the floor. Perfect day for riding. Actually, any day is a perfect day for riding. The visibility in AZ normally will allow you to see as far as you can see. Maximum clear. No change today.



The N entrance to the Grand Canyon Vermillion Cliffs in northern AZ

Vermillion Cliffs a bit closer

Once into AZ the road starts to climb up until you've left the desert and are up in pine country. We rode past Jacob Lake, which is the entrance to the north rim of the Grand Canyon.

Side bar: The markedly different contrasts between the north Rim and South Rim are numerous... north is a thousand feet higher than the south, north receives more snow in the winter than Minneapolis, north is sparsely populated, south is the famous side, the north has the more spectacular views (believe it or not), I could go on but I'm feeling another PA to the passengers coming on.

Once past the entrance you start right back down in elevation through some of the prettiest forested views possible (including a bit of stubborn snow along the roadside). Ten minutes later you are treated to a view of the Vermillion Cliffs that you won't soon forget. It's interesting to me that AZ has so many different terrain types, climates, and sights. For example, you could be riding through a moonscape, peering into the Grand Canyon, snow skiing and within an hour playing golf.



Layers of the Vermillion Cliffs Colorado R. prior to the Grand Canyon Indian stand to sell jewelry

As we headed down (literally from eight thousand feet to a bit over a thousand) the HEAT made itself known. A hundred miles out of Phoenix it was 78°, fifty out it was 98°. By the time I reached home it was 115° and I was burning my fingers on the clutch and brake levers. Ahh, home-sweet-home... with my pool water temp of 95°. It's not for the faint of heart.

Home. What a lovely concept. Haven't been here in almost two months. I've been busy. Jeannie said I hadn't been gone that long since my tours in SEA. I believe her.



Moonscape terrain



The highway is cut through a moonscape Elk country south of Flagstaff



My accounting firm hasn't released the final figures yet but the total mileage from garage to garage was roughly 19,200 miles. Not all of that was Hoka Hey, it includes Phoenix to Los Angeles to Washington, DC to Huntington, NY, to Jacksonville, FL, to Sarasota, FL, to Key West, FL, to Homer, AK, to Home! My firm will have a better breakout shortly.

A shower with an adult size bar of soap was a nice touch. Now I'm going to nap until August.

Mas mañana.

Gene

Jul 17, 2010



The Official Logo



Final route-circles are the check points



Finish Line in Homer, AK, Whew!

I just want to thank you for your support on my 19,200 mile odyssey. Riding to Alaska was something I've always wanted to do but never thought would happen. There were ups and there were downs, but nothing unhandleable. I'm a firm believer in, "The only thing that separates an ordeal from an adventure is attitude." And, WOW, what an adventure this was! You just have to remember to practice what you mentally preach, z'all.

For a supposed 7000 mile ride it took me 9115 miles to do the Hoka Hey Motorcycle Challenge. They must have used a globe and an abacus in their figuring. ;-) Except for Mother Nature slowing me for a short time in Banff I was still able to come in under the wire. Believe it when I say I'd do it all again in a heartbeat. Maybe even next year.

It really meant a lot to me to receive your encouragement and well wishes. I'm glad you were able to "ride along" and maybe get an idea of some of what the USA and Canada have to offer, at least through my eyes. I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed the experience. The sights/sounds/smells, the wildlife, the other than paved roads, the challenge of following non-maps and non-instructions, camping, electric warmth, not shaving or bathing, rain/hail/snow, duck strike, milestones and kidney stones, deserts to snow covered mountains, 28° to 116°, sprinkler storm, ma and pa restaurants, living in a rain suit, small towns, secondary roads, bears up close and personal, indians (both real and imagined), welcomes and good-byes, women yelling my name in the streets ;-), and especially riding with Team Judy, all made it memorable, and worthwhile. And I thank you for that.

It'll take me awhile to get my bike cleaned up (to my anal satisfaction) but I think I'm up to the task. I've been through it with a big wrench and tightened everything back up. Surprisingly, I've only found two things I have to replace, the louvered door on my lower fairing from a duck passing through and a leaking right rear shock. Quite a welcome surprise considering all the surfaces I travelled. Unbelievable. I tell'ya Harley's rule!

I have two more longish rides this summer before I start looking for a 2011 Ultra Classic Limited, the Sturgis Rally and the Three Flags Classic over the Labor Day weekend with Team Judy. Yeah!

I have to replace my SPOT tracker. With over 200,000 miles (and however many hours that is) of facing into the sun, and not tracking properly anymore, it's time for the pasture.

Once again, thank you.

Gene