

DAY ONE ON OUR TRIP WEST .

For those readers unfamiliar with our planned motorcycle trip we are going to Tulsa, OK for the annual Gold Wing Rally. Then Debbie will be returning home and I will be heading to the west coast with a long time friend to tour Northern CA, OR, WA and maybe ID.

Day 1 Date: 6/25/09

The day started pulling out of the driveway at 7 AM. Not bad considering that I planned to leave by 6 AM. But wait a minute, I need to regress a bit. The day really started the previous evening. We had been packing and loading for most of the day and took a break to go visit a long time friend in the hospital who had just had the same knee replaced for the third time. Anyway her surgery was a success, she looked good and by then we were getting hungry. The closest place we were familiar with was a Chili's just a few miles away.

Now I like Chili's and their black bean burger fits my diet requirements just fine so as usual that's what I had. OK, the stage is set now.

Everything seemed to be going along smoothly and by midnight I was in bed and sound asleep. At 2:40 AM I awoke with a sneeze, then another , and on and on for an hour. Couple that with my frequent visits to the bathroom and the rest of my night was sleepless. (*Great way to start a day of riding.*) Debbie didn't sleep good either so we decided to get up at 5:40. And all those sneezes started the sinuses running. I can't say that this was all related to the black bean burger but what followed was.

Now, back to the 7 AM departure. The temperature was 78 F with 2000.0% humidity but as long as you kept moving it wasn't too bad. After an hour we decided to stop for a plumbing check and that's when the #&@% hit the fan, "Montezuma's Revenge." Quick, the Imodium, and hurry. Now what piece of luggage did we put those pills in? What a way to start the day. Good thing those pills are relatively fast acting.

Cautiously we proceeded in our travel and by 10:30 the temperature had risen to 86 F and so far we'd averaged about 43 MPH. The only other trip I averaged such a low speed was when I was riding in the snow. The good news though we gave Montezuma the slip but the runny nose persists. Did you ever try to blow your nose with a full-face helmet on?

There was very little traffic on US19 and I-10 so it was smooth sailing until we stopped for the day. It was around 1:30 PM Central time and the heat was getting up there (95 F) and we had covered 304 miles by now. That's enough for this day. For those of you who went to the Region A Rally with us last year, you'll recall the Sonny's BBQ where we ate on the way to the Rally at exit 142, well that's where we re staying tonight. So, guess what we're having for dinner.

Hopefully we'll both get a good nights sleep for a fresh start tomorrow.

DAY 2 Mileage today: 408 Miles to date: 712

Good morning Mr. Sunshine.

We arose at about 6:30 CT with good intentions of getting an early start . By 8 AM we were moving, across the street to Wal-Mart to fill up with gas. Their price, \$2.54 / gal which was \$0.20 below the worst price we had seen in the area yesterday. By the way, I forgot to mention how active the Florida Highway Patrol was around the Tallahassee area. One trouper had 4 cars pulled over at once. Pretty aggressive, huh?

So, back on I-10 for about 10 miles then turn north on US 231. It was a pretty good road but went through several small towns and you know how that can slow you down. It wasn't long (30 miles or so) before we had to stop at a light, in Dothan, AL, beside the Holiday Inn where the Region A Rally will be come September. From there on I didn't see anything that looked even vaguely familiar. There were several Army helicopters flying along the US 231 corridor. There must be a lot of Army installations along that route.

When we started this morning the temperature was 78 F but by 10 o'clock it was in the high 80's and climbing. It was going to be one hot day. Soon after passing Montgomery, AL the temperature hit 95 F. The humidity, lower that yesterday, could've been higher though. I started thinking that we had been fortunate in not having to deal with any rain, then before I knew it, there was this big dark cloud staring at us. I thought this was it. We'd better get the show on the road or we're going to get wet so I kicked it up a little higher. I not going to incriminate myself by saying how fast we were going but very few vehicles passed us. Fortunately, traffic was fairly light. I kept watching that dark cloud thinking "Oh please hold out just a little longer until we get out from under it". I could smell the rain in the air and we were almost passed it when a few rain drops hit the windshield. "Oh darn," that's not the word I used but it gets the point a crossed. "Just another mile" and "*whew!*, we made it. Thank you Mother Nature." And there was a bonus too, The shade beneath the cloud dropped the temperature down to 89 F. It wasn't too much longer when we picked up I-65. "Now we can make some time".

Near Montgomery, Debbie decided to break out the cool pack vest and frozen inserts, a really good idea because I could see that the heat was getting to her. The temp. had been vacillating back and forth between 95 and 97 since Montgomery but the worst was yet to come.

Somewhere in the Birmingham area we turned onto US 78, a four lane highway which runs from Birmingham to Memphis. All of a sudden, there was a sign announcing " US 78 turn right here." I wasn't the only one surprised by this sign, because there was no early warning and several vehicles missed the turn even pulling off onto the left shoulder .

There was no way we could cut three lanes of traffic to make that turn. Then there was another sign for US 78 straight ahead. What's going on here I wondered. Apparently, most of US 78 has been overhauled to become part of I-22 in the not too distant future, so there are two roads with the same or similar ID. Ultimately the two roads converged into one and the confusion was over but let me assure you, the GPS was thoroughly confused. It couldn't decide whether to go right, left, in, out, up or down and I wasn't any help either. All I knew was that we seemed to be on the correct compass heading, following the sun. We stopped for gas and I inquired about the highway and was assured that we were OK, just keep going.

It was *sooo* hot. I checked the bike read-out and it registered 100 F. **WOW!** And tomorrow is supposed to be at least as bad if not worse.

Up ahead a sign listed Tupelo, MS. I called Deb on the CB suggesting we get a room there because we were very hot and near exhaustion. It should be easy I thought since the Mississippi State Rally will be held there in October. **WRONG!** There were only two motels along the highway, everything else was in town or located on other roads so it took a while to locate them. They were 4 and 5 miles away from US 78. **BUMMER!** Finally, we came across a Hampton Inn and stopped there. It's about 5 PM.

We quizzed the desk clerk about having dinner delivered and got 3 or 4 menu's to choose from. We decided on Chinese, made the call and tried to unwind from the days ride. Dinner arrived around 8 PM and it really hit the spot because we were really hungry.

With hunger satisfied we're calling it a day. Till the next time then

Day 3 6/27/09 Mileage today: 273 Miles to date: 980

HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT

Did I mention that it was hot today? It was up to 95 F before 10 AM CT then for all of the afternoon it was 99 F to 100 F, no rain, not even a few clouds to provide some shade.

Today's travel took us northwest on US 78 to Memphis, then I - 55 to US 63 into the Ozarks.

Debbie had a little misfortune early in today's ride. We gassed up in Byhalia, MS, that's when Debbie discovered the coffee mess. Seems that she set her last cup of breakfast coffee on the passenger floorboard of her trike while she finished with some little detail and forgot all about it. It must have hung on for a while as we got rolling before the turbulence caused it to spill and spatter all over the right side of her bike including her white shirt and jeans. Great way to start her day.

As we reached the intersection of US 63 & I-55, the GPS was telling me to take exit 23B

and the only exit sign I saw said Exit 23. So I looked ahead for 23B when the GPS suddenly told me I was “*off route.*” Oh great and as luck would have it we had to continue for 8 miles to the next exit before we could turn around. Way to go Dennis!

Most of what we saw in Arkansas today was flat farm land along US 63 and the heat was really taking its toll on both of us. As we entered the Ozarks the road had narrowed to a two lane highway. The speed limit dropped to 55 and of course the traffic thickened and slowed too. There were few stretches of road where you could pass so we just had to settle in for a slow ride. The Ozarks did give us a break from the ho-hum monotony of the rest of today’s ride with plenty of curves and hills to enjoy.

Debbie called on the CB saying she was exhausted so lets take the first decent motel we can find. Finally, we entered a little town called Hardy, found a Days Inn, booked a room and crashed. Now we’re less than 150 miles from Branson, MO. Should be an easy day tomorrow.

By the way, did I mention that it was really hot today ?????

Day 4 6/29/09 Mileage today: insignificant Miles to date:

Today is going to be a “local riding day” in and around Branson.

Yeah, though I walk through the valley of death This means I screwed up **AGAIN** I had previously set my cell phone alarm to awaken us at 6 AM . Well that was OK except that I forgot to turn it off and today was supposed to be a sleep-in day. As programmed, the cell alarm went off on schedule. Well, I was already awake but you know who was, and I emphasize was, still asleep. Need I say more. I’m such a lucky guy.

So, we rode up to Silver Dollar City then to Table Rock Lake just sight seeing. I left my bike at the motel, rationalizing that it would be easier to find parking spaces for 2 bikes rather than 3 where ever we stopped. I rode with Debbie and just enjoyed looking around. Our third stop was an outlet mall. Those of you who know me are aware of just how much I like shopping. Gene Henry had nothing in mind to buy so the two of us found a bench, sat down and watched the people go by. Nothing special to report here.

In an hour or so Deb & Barb let us know that they were done and ready to go for lunch. Next stop was the Uptown Café about a block from the motel. This was little more than a fast food place but would you believe that they had live entertainment going when we walked in. It continued for close to a half hour then signed off. It was close to 2 PM then.

Back to the motel till it was time to get ready for dinner. This evening was special because some friends of ours, Sandy & Larry Countryman, whom we met at the Navy reunion we’ve attended for several years. They live about 30 miles from Branson and came down to join us for the evening. Larry was kind enough to transport all of us down

to Branson Landing where we selected the Texas Land & Cattle restaurant for dinner.

We hadn't been down to the water front (Lake Taneycomo) for years. What we remembered was the area was over populated with geese. And with so many geese it was extremely difficult to avoid an accumulation of goose remnants on your shoes. Now, the area has completely grown up with stores, restaurants and condos. I had no idea that goose droppings were so fertile. After dinner we stepped just outside to watch a water show patterned after the "Dancing Waters" in Las Vegas, then back to the motel.

It was kind of awkward not having a place to entertain guests as we just stood around outside our rooms where Debbie showed off our LED lights on the bikes. I think Larry & Sandy headed for home a little after nine o'clock. It was great seeing them again.

With time on our hands we decided to play a game of Mexican Train dominoes which lasted till about 11:30.

When we decided it was time to call it a day.

Day 5 Tuesday 6/30/09 Mileage today: insignificant Miles to date:

The bulk of this day was without excitement. Following the continental breakfast, Gene and I kind of gave the motorcycles some attention. During the wee hours of the night there had been a pretty hard thunderstorm that sort of rinsed the bikes off. We had the half covers on but you know how much exposed motorcycle is left to the elements. So the bikes got a rough wipe down. I hadn't checked the tire pressure since leaving home so it was certainly time to do so. Turns out that all the tires needed a couple of pounds of air to get the tires back up to par, all that is except Debbie's rear tires. They never need any air. They're stable at 26 pounds no matter what.

Debbie took this time as an opportunity to do laundry and some ironing.

Later the four of us took a lunch break at a little BBQ a half block away. That's walking distance and wouldn't you know it, a dark cloud moved in and dropped more rain on Branson. So we somehow managed to have our lunch time last the duration of the shower. We're so clever.

While Gene and Barb waited on our arrival at Branson, they got some tickets to a musical show "NOAH" for the 7 o'clock show. With time to kill till show time, we played a game they brought with them that is similar to Parcheesi. In all we played 5 rounds with the guys winning 3 to 2. Of course how else could it turn out?

After the games we freshened up and went to the show, skipping dinner as our lunch was kind of late. The show was very good with excellent stage sets and costumes. We thoroughly enjoyed it.

Back at the motel we decided that maybe should go somewhere and get a snack. Another

little walk and we found a place with Blue Bell ice cream, sandwiches and pizza. What more could you ask for? It was difficult not to over do it but common sense prevailed. And that concluded our day.

Day 6 Wednesday 7/1/09 Mileage today: 234 Miles to date: 1388

Our day started early to day. We all agreed to be ready to roll by 8AM hopefully getting to Tulsa before it gets too hot. I had set the alarm in my cell phone for 6 AM, had Debbie confirm that I had done it right (our cell phones are identical) the night before, and relaxed knowing that everything was going to work like clock work. **WRONG !** 6 AM came and the alarm didn't go off. What is it about my luck????

The good news about this alarm thing was I had awakened at 6:03, looked at the clock and realized I'd better get us going because that alarm wasn't going to go off. Once the lights were on I checked the cell phone and found that the alarm had changed to the off mode. I had to show that to Debbie to get myself off the hook but it didn't matter I must've done something wrong. I'll agree with that but I did have her check what I'd done. I'm just a lucky guy! I brought the instruction manual for the phone on the trip so the next time it'll be done by the book by both of us together.

Everything after that went OK until we were leaving town. I was leading, took the wrong ramp to get on the highway and therefore took another U-Turn excursion. This one was only about 2 miles. Fortunately it was early and still a cool 77 F.

We headed north toward Springfield to pick up I-44. The GPS had indicated a 240 mile trip to Tulsa. I noticed that the route deviated from I-44 in a couple of places on the GPS map and got to thinking that might be a stretch of toll road so as we neared the first variance I could tell that it was indeed a toll road. Personally, I hate to pay a toll when so many roads are toll free. Since the Interstate was such a good road I put it to a vote as to whether to pay the toll or not. The vote was unanimous "we don't care." I took the toll route. That turned out to be a good choice because as soon as we passed the point where we would've split off the Interstate the distance to destination shown on the GPS dropped 40 miles. WOW! I guess I get lucky once in a while.

As we neared Tulsa, Debbie called on the CB that we had to take exit 240 for our lunch stop. I wondered what was so important about this particular exit. When we got to the end of the off-ramp it became glaringly clear. Now those of you who know Debbie have probably already figured it out you guessed it A casino. I should've known. Anyway, I thought the food was good. Maybe an hour later we managed to tear Debbie away from her passion.

Twelve miles later we arrived at our Best Western motel, checked in and relaxed for a while.

Rally registration was open this afternoon until 6 PM and for those who were pre-registered, GWRRA had arranged for a BBQ dinner starting at 6 PM followed by the full

up show, "Oklahoma." It was put on in a large amphitheater with free ice-cream sundaes and brownies during intermission at a place called "DISCOVERY" roughly 20 miles out of town. The cast numbered in the 20's and they really put on a good show. This is something new for Wing Ding as far as I know. Way to go Phoenix, thank you . I've ambled on enough for now.

Day 7 -10 Thursday - Saturday 7/2/09 - 7/4/09 Mileage today: Local Miles to date:

The doors open Thursday for the vendors. It's always a mad rush for so many people trying to get in first. I don't understand why that is but I've been there , packed in among the crowd like sardines, waiting for those doors to open. I'm not sure how many Wing Dings I've been to but I would estimate 10 and I have no need to get crushed in that scene any more. As I recall there never was an advantage to do that. In all, there were over 150 vendors anxiously ready to sell you their wares, clothing, shoes, rain gear, helmets, trailers, trike kits, side cars, tires, chrome (lots of chrome), decorative LED lights, jewelry, polish, motor oil you name it, it was there.

The building housing the vendors must have been over 1000 feet long and well air conditioned as the temperature outside was holding around 98 F to 100 F. Outside you don't seem to sweat much. It happens but it evaporates so fast that you just don't notice it.

On the way to Tulsa, Gene's speedometer stopped working as did the cruise control and turn signal canceller. There was a Honda dealer just a block or two from the rally site so Gene went there to get it fixed. Turns out that a plastic gear had failed and the only thing they had was a used gear to help him get home OK. He'll have to have it replaced later. Because of the volume of business at the dealer, it took up most of Gene's day so we were ready to quit for the day.

Friday, Debbie and Barb attended seminars on "Design Your Own Earrings" and Designing with Appliqués while Gene and I roamed through the vendors. We caught up with Curtis, or he caught up with us today. He'd been working the rider driver training course along with Ron & Pam Lance, Ken Stagner and Pam ----- . They told us of a good restaurant close to our motel and we agreed to join them for dinner that evening.

Speaking of food, we decided to go get some lunch. Some of the food and drink prices at the rally were outrageous. For example, a bottle of water was \$3.25. Oh yeah, a pizza pie was ridiculous, \$28.00, you get the picture. That's why we decided to go elsewhere.

But first, Gene and I wanted to take our bikes through the Dunlop tire inspection set-up. Thursday when I was leaving the rally, I decided to I relax my grip on the handle bars to check the bikes stability. I detected a very slight low speed wobble so I wanted to have the tires checked. I suspected that there might be a slight cupping on the rear tire and sure enough, they found it. But I still had 5/32 of an inch of tread left so I'll tolerate the tendency to wobble for a while and keep a firm grip (which I normally do) on the handle

bars. I'll most likely get the tire replaced later in this trip. I asked the Dunlop guys why the rear tire should cup and they said pulling a trailer and down shifting. Well I'm guilty of both.

At dinner time we joined Curtis and party at the Delta Café. Their food was delicious and you couldn't beat the prices. For those of us who were first timers there, they gave us (that's free) the desert of our choice. I ordered a strawberry sundae and when Pam Lance saw it she wanted to come help me get rid of it. I declined of course.

Back at the motel Gene, Barb, Deb and I played another game of GOTCHA and the girls whipped our butts.

Saturday morning! Its raining! And that was a good time to catch up on the laundry and hopefully the skies will clear before too long.

And it did. So we wiped down the bikes with on of those synthetic absorbing sheets. Because of the water restrictions at home, that's the first bath the bikes have had in a couple of months. Then it was back to the vendors to check on some vest that was supposed to keep you cool. Before we knew it was time for dinner. Debbie and I decided after seeing where the viewing place was for the fireworks display that we'd pass it up and stay at the motel this evening.

Day 11 Sunday 7/5/09 Mileage today: Local Miles to date: 1487

I thought I'd get my self started a little earlier than Deb today so I could check the tire pressure while I had plenty of time. So I got out my little air compressor and tire gauge and went to work. The pressure was down about a pound and a half in both tires so I topped them off. I was feeling pretty proud of myself for getting the jump on that and Deb was still sound asleep. Now I thought "do I really need to check the tread? I just went through the Dunlop tire check two days ago."

Well here's where God protects fools and idiots because before I could rotate the rear half way around I found a metal object sticking right in the middle of the tread. "Oh %&#@!" (*It's really hard to pronounce that word.*) The vendors will be open for half a day so I'd better get my butt in gear and get down to the rally site. There's no telling how many bikes are already there or even if the tire folks were still working. I went directly there, did not pass go, did not collect \$200.00, and drove right up to the building entrance for having vendor work done on your bike. It was just now 9 AM (opening time) and I didn't have the required vendor pass to get in and I wasn't sure how that was going to go. I pulled up to the guard, told him my dilemma and he passed my right through. In a couple hundred feet to the left and I was there. They were just starting to work, I told my story and they put me in next.

WHEW ! I couldn't believe how smooth things were going and within 1 hour I was driving out of there. Amazing! Maybe my luck is changing. It wasn't good luck to have the problem but to find it when I did, considering the recent Dunlop tire check, was really

good luck. Why? Because Curtis and I are going to hit the road at 4:30 AM tomorrow morning and that tire could've gone flat in the middle of nowhere.

I've got time to spare so I decided to screen the vendors one last time. I hadn't bought anything except two Cycle Care items yet so I bought a chrome item for Deb and one for me.

Deb called me to let me know that she was at one of the entrances and wanted to take a box of stuff to the UPS booth to ship home. There wasn't enough room in her trike to carry her things so we were letting UPS do it. From then until close to 1 o'clock I sat with Curtis and Pam in one of the rest areas and just BS'd.

Closing ceremonies were due to start at 2 PM so we grabbed a bite at a Mc Donald's then back to the rally site. Closing ceremonies was more streamlined now without the organization staff introductions and it wasn't long before the drawings were done. No, nobody we know won anything. Ho Hum!
Tomorrow will come early so Later.

Day 12 Monday 7/6/09 Mileage today: 480 Miles to date: 1977

Of all times to not be able to sleep, my body or brain picked last night. I knew Curtis would be at my motel door at 4:30 AM and maybe that's why I lay awake for all but two hours through the night. I had put in for a wake-up call at 4 AM. That never happened so I guess it was a good thing that I gave up trying to sleep at 3:45, got up and got my act together.

I was almost ready to go when Curtis pulled up. I finished putting the last few items in the trailer and off we went. It was sort of a zigzag path we took in an effort to minimize the travel distance for the day. Our destination was his sisters house in Elizabeth, Colorado, about 700 miles away. Not that we thought we'd get there in one day mind you. Our first stop was a little town named Enid, OK for breakfast and gas. I decided to have a little regular coffee to help me stay awake and that seemed to work for a while. Another stop for gas was Kinsley, Kansas, then a third stop at Hays for food. Sleep was really trying to overwhelm me and I had to fight hard to stay awake.

Curtis was the leader today and I found the ride for me to be very relaxing just being able to enjoy the scenery. It was still dark when we started and stayed that way for an hour and a half. But then the beauty of the countryside became evident. For several miles there were mesas, relatively flat elevated area with steep sides, bursting through the earths surface along both sides of the road. I was surprised to see them this far east. That soon gave way to rolling hills, cattle country and lots of oil wells. A couple of hours later we were deep into grain country, huge sprawling farms on relatively flat land, the plains.

We continued on to a little town called Oakley, KS. And there is one of many grain elevators throughout the state located here and lots of trucks hauling the grain, wheat I believe. The companies that own the combines harvesting the grain contract out to the

farmers and would you believe they had most of the rooms in the 4 motels booked. One of the motels, our first choice, hadn't opened for business yet so we wound up in a mom & pop unit which was adequate.

I felt like a whipped puppy and couldn't wait to get into a room and get a nap. I must have really slept hard because Debbie had called shortly after I crashed and I didn't hear the phone. I called her back later and she said that she too had traveled about 480 miles in 8 hours and stopped in Tuscan, MS. She had cloud cover for most of the day with no rain. Good for her.

Tomorrow we'll stop at Curtis's sisters house in Elizabeth, CO, take them to lunch then on to Colorado Springs for the night. Since we'll pick up an hour, crossing into the Mountain Time Zone, and only have about 250 miles to cover, we can take our time getting started.

It's time to get some more sleep.

Day 14 Tuesday 7/8/09 Mileage today: 316 Miles to date: 2676

Last night's stay at a Best Western provided a good night's sleep, in spite of the price of the room. Their price was all about location, location, location. It was a nice place though.

The morning started out at 58 F, chilly but tolerable because of the low humidity. We took US 24 to Leadville, CO, a small town high in the mountains, supposedly the highest town in the US. I think that's true but don't hold me to it. It is said that the headwaters of the Arkansas River originate here which may be true but there is a pretty strong flow of water there.

The route we took was CO 9 to I-70, to US 40, to CO 13, to WY 789 then finally I-80.

WHEW!

We stopped for lunch in Steamboat Springs and took the time to plan the rest of the day's ride. This is really neat, no schedule, no planned destination points and the freedom to go wherever you want. Now who could ask for anything more. Somebody ought to write a song with lyrics like that, don't you think?.

Twice today deer ran across the road in front of us, one of which had a fawn close behind. But that wasn't the most excitement. In Wyoming we encountered some unbelievable crosswinds. It wouldn't have been so bad if the wind were constant but it was charged with gusts that must have been at least 40 MPH. They were coming at us at a 90 degree angle and when it would hit it would snap my head to the right. A couple gusts pushed me over half way across the lane I was in. At times I was going straight while leaning at about 25 degrees. ***SCARY!***

This prairie land is very dusty. You don't see that much of it flying through the air but it's there and the movement of the bikes through the air creates enough static charge to attract

lots and lots dust. A real mess. And there's more than enough bugs as our windshields can attest.

Once on I-80 we looked for an exit with lodging. We'd had enough stress for one day. The first one found was a small settlement called Wamsutter, WY. I don't know what that word means but the town is little more than a pot hole in the road, that I think somehow is related to the natural gas industry, with a truck stop. And the motel leaves a lot to be desired. When you're tired you tend to relax.

And with that I think I'll call it a day.

Day 15 Thursday 7/9/09 Mileage today: 435 Miles to date: 3111

WHAM! Ouch! &#@% ! There's that word again and I still can't pronounce it. It was 5:15 AM and my bladder was calling. The room had no night light and my eyes were practically glued shut from trying to purge yesterdays dust from all that wind. So I was quietly trying to feel my way to the bathroom without waking Curtis. I knew I was close and I bent over to find the foot of the bed when my head came to an abrupt stop against the wall. I knew immediately that the blood was going to flow because of the blood thinner and it did. Then, I couldn't find the QR stuff to make the blood clot. Finally, after much ado I located the stuff and began trying to administer it. The wound was over the corner of my eye and every time I poured the QR on the wound, some would fall into my eye. Then I couldn't find the band aids for a while, (its so early).

Once those issues were under control, I thought That thing is going to swell and it's right where the helmet forehead cushion will be. Ice, what about ice. We have none and the swelling began. I wound up with a dandy knot on my forehead. There was no way to avoid the discomfort of putting on and wearing the helmet so I had to grit my teeth, grin and bare it. As the day wore on the discomfort faded somewhat and now, 15 hours later, I've still got a knot but it's not as sore.

Curtis finally gave up trying to get any more sleep and we got ourselves ready to hit the road ... early that's earlier than we'd planned. The morning was very crisp 48 F BRRRR! So we donned our jackets, I turned on the heated seat and handlebar grips and off we went. We rode for about an hour, stopped in Rock Springs for breakfast looking forward the sun warming things up. Curtis said his hands were freezing. As we arrived we got caught at a light across from the restaurant and it simply wouldn't change to green for us. So we turned right instead and pulled into a McDonalds. Inside were three highway patrol officers so I went right up to them to inform them about the light. They said the bikes probably weren't heavy enough. "Heavy enough, they weigh over 1000 pounds apiece" I said. Yes, it happens sometimes. The sensor for the light senses the weight of the vehicle. I never heard of that one before. Oh well, so much for that.

We took our time so that the sun could warm things up then off again. We worked our way up to Afton, ID then on to Idaho Falls for lunch. On the way we passed a beautiful

large lake on US 26 and many wheat and potato fields. Salads for lunch at McDonalds and back on the road again heading west. Then north on state 93 to Arco, ID where we spent the night.

After dinner we both spent time cleaning the bugs off our bikes. And let me tell you, Florida has no monopoly on bugs. By now we were both whipped and hung it up for the day.

Dennis & Curtis

Day 16 Friday 7/10/09 Mileage today: 296 Miles to date: 3407

The knot on my head has diminished somewhat but is still a little sensitive. I've got to find a better way of using my head.

The morning was brisk but not too cold (67 F.) We decided to go for breakfast at the same place we had dinner yesterday. Looking at the menu, Curtis did the sensible thing while I got carried away, which was going to make things difficult later. I had oatmeal with brown sugar and pancakes with syrup. Way too much sugar.

Proceeding north through the valley there were plenty of mountainous scenery to please the eye and little traffic to restrict your view. US 93 had some great riding for us today. That means lots of curves along two segments of the route. Within an hour and a half we got to the first winding section and here is where breakfast takes its toll. For most of it my high sugar level made me so sleepy that it took all I could do to keep my eyes open. So rather than pleasure, it was just torture. I drank some coffee with breakfast but that wasn't enough.

Later, at lunch, I was more sensible and had more coffee and this time it did the trick. Now I was wired and ready for the next curvy road and boy was it fun. The road was nice and wide and well marked so we really ate that up. Who says you can't have fun on winding roads when you're pulling a trailer.

US 93 then followed along the Salmon River till we got to Bitterroot. I don't know where that name came from but it sure sounds like an Indian name. We stopped early and are staying at a Days Inn here in Missoula (I-90 and US 93) because the route from here didn't look like it had too many opportunities for lodging. Tomorrow's plan will take us to Glacier N.P. By now, hopefully, the roads there will be free of snow. The last time Debbie and I were here the roads were not completely open yet and they would not even let us into the park because of very high winds.

By the way, that town, ARCO, where we stayed last night, is where the first nuclear reactor to generate a usable amount of electricity was developed at the Idaho National Laboratory. Just thought you'd find that interesting.

Day 17 Saturday 7/11/09 Mileage today: 234 Miles to date: 3642

We got our start right at 9 AM heading for Glacier N.P. As you can see from the mileage listed for today that we didn't go very far. There was some road construction on our route to the park, some of which was very tricky . There were some unseen wide groves in the dirt surface and they had watered the surface down which made it very slippery.. When the tires tried to ride the top of the grove they slipped into the deeper part making the bikes swerve violently. Now I can't remember seeing Curtis quickly throw his foot, make that feet, out to catch himself but today, I saw it twice and the same thing happened to me. The next thing we saw was the huge beautiful Flathead Lake whose water was crystal clear. When I say huge, I mean miles long. To go east around the lake would've taken an hour or more so we took the west route a smart move.

We decided to check into a motel in Columbia Falls before going into the park and leave the trailer and Curtis's luggage holder behind for the ride in the park. We picked an attractive Motel 8, registered, un hitched and took off.

US 2 took us along a river right up to the park gate. A ranger was checking all traffic outside the gate. There were two lanes to the gate and when we pulled up to him I told him I had a golden Age Passport and he said show it to me please. I did and he asked if Curtis was with me. I said yes and he told us both to get in the right lane and go on through the gate. That was great we left a long string of cars behind with that little caper.

It wasn't long before we encountered more road construction half way up to Logan Pass (the top) with brief delays for oncoming traffic to pass. The DOT people controlling the traffic were very attractive blonds. Humm, that's different.

Close to the top was another delay. It seems that a mountain goat was wandering around on the road mingling with the cars bringing the show to a halt. In fact, the goat was the show. One women got out of her car to get a closer picture, the goat started moving her way and she beat feet away from it.

Finally, the top, the visitors center and restrooms. Ah, restrooms.

There was very little snow up there this year compared to the last time we were here. The parking lot was full but there was always room for motorcycles and they did come. Lots and lots of Harleys with a few Gold Wings and others here and there.

We hung around for awhile taking in all the beauty nature had provided then headed back to the motel, dinner and a good nights rest.

Day 18 Sunday 7/12/09 Mileage today: 470 Miles to date: 4112

Today was a really good day. We were rolling by about 8:15 and the temperature was in the high 60's. We rode for close to an hour before we decided more clothing was in order

when the temperature dropped into the low 60's. It's time to adjust the thermal dynamics of this bike. Crank up the handle bar grips heat, crank up the seat heat and adjust the wind wings Aahhhh! That's better.

We were cruising along a rather wide valley working our way west, that means sometimes north and sometimes south but generally west. This will happen again, too. As we exited the valley we found just the kind of roads were looking for. **TWISTIES!** So I will try to relate the pleasure we experienced to you the reader.

So here goes, ready? :

We're cruising along and you could see up ahead that a curve was looming. The speed limit is 70 MPH and typically we used it all.

Back off the throttle a little, set up in the right track for this left curve, now push left, roll left, moving to the center line in the center of the curve, now push right, roll right, back to the right track.

Up ahead, a right curve set up in the left track, push right, roll right, moving to the right track in the center of the curve, then push left roll left, straightening up in the right track.

Wasn't that great? Can't you just feel it? And that's not the end, there are more curves, and more, for a couple of miles. Bet that was just enough to wet your appetite, wasn't it !

Are we having fun yet You bet your sweet bippy we are.

Then the "S" curves ... push, roll, push roll, push roll through lots of curves.

Soon we encountered open range cattle and wouldn't you know that one of them was determined to cross the road in front of us. We both had to haul down on the brakes.

Picture this, your riding along and suddenly there is a tall stand of lodge pole pine trees towering high above, lining the highway like sentinels guarding your path. Their foliage was a deep green and their aroma was a pleasure to your senses. It was sad to pass beyond them.

There was one deer that posed a threat along the road. Fortunately, it turned and ran up the bank instead of into our path.

It is raining with hail as I write and the time is 8:15 PM. The good news we're settled down for the night

As we rode along several valleys there were several lakes and rivers to add to the scenery. We crossed the Columbia River and stopped in a little western style town of Republic, WA We made good distance today, as you can see, and I must say that Washington state is indeed a beautiful place.

Day 19 & 20 Monday / Tuesday 7/13 & 14/09 Mileage today: 299+91 Miles to date: 4503

Sorry about the no email day yesterday. Yesterday was laundry day, I should say laundry evening. So now I'm good for another week.

We had some more good riding again yesterday, cool riding too I might add. I've forgotten what the temperature was but jackets were required. And to start, we had to don our rain suits, ugh. No more hail though and within 45 miles we were out of it. Good timing too because that's where we stopped for breakfast, a full up breakfast like eggs, bacon, hash browns, toast and coffee. The owner of last night's motel was a Harley rider who gave us the tip on the restaurant. From there we got into some big sky country, some valleys and then the twisty's again. Once again the winding road was smooth and fast. We stopped for the night in Everett, WA at a Travel Lodge next door to a McDonalds how convenient .

By the time the laundry was done I was ready to crash.

Oh, while I'm thinking about it, we've seen countless little casinos along our path of travel and it is a good thing that Debbie is not here to have to pass up so many gambling opportunities. She'd probably have suffered multiple cardiac arrests.

Tuesday started out as usual. I'm always the first one up and Curtis is always the first to be ready to roll. Poor guy would've liked to sleep in but couldn't because of me, but I just couldn't sleep any longer and I tried for a whole hour. We planned to go the Boeing exhibit and factory tour so that was our first stop.

From the time we parked, we had about 15 minutes before the next factory tour started. They show you a 15 minute film about Boeing then lead you to a bus that takes you to the factory. They also point out that there will be no restroom facilities available for the next hour. So, anyone who might need to go had better do it during the film. We missed the film.

Here are some interesting statistics:

The building is 0.3 miles wide by 0.7 miles long and all under one roof. All movement between major areas was done via tunnels beneath the main floor. Impressive, huh! They sub contract various major parts of an aircraft then final assemble those major components in this building. Boeing even built special 747's to transport the major subassemblies from the vendor to their assembly factory. Now get this, they build an aircraft in 3 days. That's right, I said 3 days. Then they move the aircraft out of the building at 2 AM. Why? Movement during the 1st or 2nd shift would disrupt the normal work activities and because the engines are so large and slung so close to the ground that they have to move things so that the plane will not risk damage in transit to their painting

facility.

There were three types of planes we saw in process, a 747, a 777 and a 787. Let me tell you, that was impressive. The tour took us to the third and fourth level balcony which provided an excellent view of the activity below. Even the women would've enjoyed it. When we finished the tour, they gave each person a DVD of what we had seen which I'll be glad to pass around when I get home.

Mounting our bikes we headed for Seattle proper in the hopes of finding a good seafood restaurant in the waterfront area. Obviously we looked in the wrong places because I only saw one and parking was out of the question. So guess where we settled, you got it ... McDonalds. It was 3 o'clock now so we gave up on any serious riding today and just navigated to position ourselves for a morning departure from the area.

And with that I'm signing off for the day.

Day 21 Wednesday 7/15/09 Mileage today: 234 Miles to date: 4737

Where are we now? Washougal. Can you tell us where that is?

As you can see from today's mileage it doesn't seem like we went very far but it took its toll on our energy level. We are both pooped. There was a convenient restaurant next to the motel that was open for breakfast and lunch that met all our requirements.

The morning was a bit chilly so we donned our jackets before moving. Good thing too because the temperature was in the mid 50's. Off we went toward Mt. St. Helen. Once again we were in lodge pole pine country and when the road narrowed, the trees almost closed a canopy over us. There were a few openings in the trees such that you got a good view of Mt. Rainier so I took a couple of pictures then moved on. It didn't take long to close the gap to our objective. Let me convince you that all the photos we've seen of the mountain and surrounding area do not do justice to the magnitude of the destruction we witnessed today. I took several photos of the mountain, the downed trees and the lake nearly one third full of floating trees. It was truly an impressive sight. Then I noticed that there were at least three spots where the mountain is still venting so I tried to capture that too. And while there we could also see Mt. Adams, Mt. Hood so I tried to capture them too. It's now warming up pretty fast so shedding jackets and sweat shirts was in order.

The road up to the observation points was full of twisties but one thing I didn't pay much attention to was that the road bed was not very stable and many spots showed signs that the road was giving way to gravity. On the way back down, Curtis pointed it out to me, recommending I keep my wheels away from those areas because there were no guard rails and the depressions could throw the bike toward the edge. Not good.

Continuing along taking advantage of the MadMaps with all the good routes laid out, we'd take part of this one and part of that one to keep us moving in a southerly direction.

One road though had an abundance of frost heaves that were hard to see and rather rough but the roads were definitely scenic.

Today's lunch was really late, 3:45 PM to be exact so we didn't want a big supper. Debbie had put some microwave popcorn in the trailer so once we were settled in at a Best Western for the night so Curtis and I each had our own bag full. Washougal is a town along the Columbia River. I know, I never heard it either.

Day 22 Wednesday 7/16/09 Mileage today: 264 Miles to date: 5001

The Best Western had a pretty good continental breakfast, good enough to last several hours. So off we go riding along the Columbia River. The part where we were was very wide, maybe about a ¼ mile or more. At times the view of the river was really good while at others obscured by trees. There were 3 or 4 short tunnels along the way with something I'd never seen before. At the entrance there was a sign with a yellow light saying that if bicycle riders are in the tunnel the light will be flashing and to reduce your speed to 30 MPH. Perhaps some of you have seen this before but it was new to me.

We followed the river for 15 or so miles then turned south. There aren't many bridges across this river and the one we picked was a toll bridge (\$0.50) and steel grating from start to finish. I don't know how many readers remember the old Sunshine Skyway bridge but it had a center span of steel grating. Both it and the river bridge steel grating was such that the steel member running parallel to your direction of travel was higher than the steel member running perpendicular to your line of travel. If you don't ride a motorcycle, that means nothing to you but if you do ride, you know how that makes your bike wiggle and sway the entire time you're on the grating. I was the lucky one here because I have radial tires but Curtis has bias ply tires and he was having all kinds of fun keeping his bike under control. A sigh of relief was in order once we got off the bridge and we are now in Oregon.

Next stop, Mt. Hood. The closer we got to the mountain the wider the road was until there was enough space for three lanes of traffic. Another plus, more and more curves, just what I like. It's even better with a wide road just in case you misjudge your path of travel, you've got plenty of space for adjustments.

As the mountain loomed high above I just had to stop for a photo with the bikes in view. It really is a beautiful sight. Eventually we reached the parking area for the Timberline lodge and ski lifts. That's as far as you can go. Looking up the slope you could see skiers and snow boarders at play. I didn't notice them at first because they were so far away that they looked like a flea at ten paces. It was a short walk to the lodge but all up hill. Huff and puff and huff and puff. Tough going for a flatlander. Once inside we just happened upon a park ranger giving a tour talk to a group of visitors so we just kind of eased up to the group and listened in. On the way out, Curtis inquired about the cost of a night's stay at the lodge. You ready for this? \$175 to over \$300. WOW!

With that, we returned to the bikes and continued the rest of the days ride . Down the mountain and into farm land. There were lots of vineyards, Christmas tree, wheat, grass seed and orchard farms along our path. I guess the Christmas tree farms were the most fascinating . Those trees had been so carefully manicured that they looked like they had been molded that way. And who knows, come December, there may be one of them in your living room.

The heat is on now, 86 F and climbing. We stopped for a bite to eat in a town called Sublimity at a place called Billy Joe's Denham Country Cooking. We were greeted at the door by the owner and what a surprise that was. A senior gentleman with a great big Chinese smile. This establishment was a family affair. Oh well you win some and lose some. The food was OK though but I did have a problem with the waiter trying to understand white bread when his "W" sounded like "R" and I didn't want rye bread. Once over that hurdle it was good for a laugh. I had just forgot about the language thing, that's all.

A little further down the road there was some construction around the intersection where we needed to make a turn and before we got squared away we had made two "U" turns.

Another hour and it was time to park these two wheelers for the day. We took the second motel we saw "TruValue. Another surprise We must be in a Chinese settlement.

Day 23 Wednesday 7/17/09 Mileage today: 379 Miles to date: 5380

Today started out in a usual way. Leaving our motel in Albany, OR we headed west to the Pacific Coast Highway, Route 101, stopping along the way for a McDonalds breakfast . As we approached Hwy 101 we could see that there was plenty of sea fog rolling in. It was rather chilly and we gave up and put on our jackets before 101. There weren't many places along the 101 where you could see the beach or ocean because most of the way has been commercialized. What a surprise, it was just like being in Florida.

Turning onto state 38, later 138, following that to Southerlin, OR. And now things begin to go sour. We would normally have stopped at a McDonalds for lunch, and there was one in sight. Suddenly, Curtis said " lets go to this Subway today" over the CB. Since I'm fond of Subway I quickly agreed. We got our sandwiches and sat down to enjoy them. *Not so fast you two* . Suddenly some guy came running into the Subway shouting "There's been an accident!" The two of us looked up, then looked out the window and everything seemed OK. **WRONG** I could see Curtis's bike and I could see my trailer. When we arrived I had parked for the first time on the right side of Curtis's bike so it seemed natural that I couldn't see mine. Well this guy that made the announcement was looking at and moving directly toward us. Then I took a closer look. "*Oh S**T*" I said and beat feet out the door. My bike was down, completely down, not just on the crash bars but all the way onto the right mirror.

The owner of a red Ford pickup truck had backed into my trailer, which in turn had pushed my bike forward and up the curb at which point it just crashed down on its right side. "How to spoil a day and a good lunch in a single second." Well the gentleman was very apologetic and quickly provided all his personal data. The damage was done so what was I to say? I just told him that people just don't go around doing things like that on purpose. At that point it was time to salvage that sub waiting back at our table. What did that do to my bike and trailer? It fractured and punctured the shell of the trailer just above the left tail light . As for the bike, it scratched the following: front fender chrome trim, the ring of fire, the mirror, both crash bars, a wind wing, the right passengers arm rest, the lower spoiler on the right saddle bag, the right exhaust turn down, and bent the radio antenna. I called in a claim to my insurance company after I finished my lunch.

It is possible I may have missed something because the bike is pretty dirty and there's always the possibility that they will find something during the repair We shall see. Back on the road the bike seemed to handle normally and we continued our journey toward Crater Lake. We were traveling through the **UMPQUA NATIONAL FOREST** riding along side the river of the same name. That will only have significance to a few of my readers but let me say that it is a very beautiful place to visit.

I usually wait for Curtis to say something about getting gas and as I watched my gas gauge sink lower and lower I finally called Curt on the CB saying that my gauge needle was almost in the red. "What, didn't you fill up when I did?" he said. "Yes I filled up" and he claimed that his gauge registered almost half full. Well I couldn't understand how we could have such a disparity. Soon there after he called to say that his low fuel light came on. Sounds like a faulty gauge to me. Not knowing where there would be a gas station I thought there was a good chance there'd be some in the park so we continued on watching the needle dip further and further into the red. Looming ahead was the park entrance station. I showed my Golden Age Passport which got us in free and asked where the nearest gas station was. The ranger told me and I asked how far that was. Twenty-two miles was her answer. Oh Lord, I thought how are we going to get that far. So off we went on our merry way. The needle has now dipped below the red mark. I called Curtis and said I was going to keep the RPM's low, around 2,000, to conserve gas and going to clutch the engine and coast whenever I could . This was a nervous ride to say the least. Finally we arrived at the gas pump and I filled her up.

My bike has a 6.5 gal. tank and the pump registered 6.508 gallons. **WHEW! Thank you LORD!** Who says prayers aren't answered.

The day is not over yet. Lodging, we've got to get a place to bed down for the night and get some supper too. Lets do the lodging first. Checking where we got gas drew a "No Vacancy" but there is a place with 5 cottages down the road a piece. It was about 5 PM and in a place where rooms are scarce. So we went there and signed on for a cottage (it was built in the 1930's) for two. The owner would only take cash (hummm) so I paid him the 92 bucks and asked for directions for dinner. We took off and when we got close to

the restaurant we passed several motels that still had vacancies. Oh well, its too late now!
That explains the cash requirement.

So much for today, just another boring day in the lives of two old guys out for a ride.

Day 24 Wednesday 7/18/09 Mileage today: 334 Miles to date: 5714

Today has been a tiring and stressful day.

Things went well until after breakfast. We entered California seeking state highway 3. It was shown on one of the MadMaps as being a good route to take. Well it all depends on your personal interests. For a while it was a great ride through the mountains. The road was wide, the curves well marked with plenty of "S" curves. Then the road narrowed and soon the markings disappeared . There still were plenty of curves but now the road narrowed to little more than one lane At times you had to stop to allow oncoming cars to pass. To make matters worse, there were lots of gravel and rocks in many curves plus an abundance of black top patches that made for rough riding. Our speed was maxed at 30 on the straight sections and frequently 15 to 20. As we progressed along this road, without guard rails you could look straight down perhaps 1500 feet or more into the gorge below.

It was indeed beautiful and the river was crystal clear with occasional rapids. So if the beautiful scene was your bag, it couldn't get any better than that. For us though the morning temperature started in the mid 60's and by this time had advanced to 98 to 100, depending when you checked it. I guess we spent at least 2 hours traversing that undesirable stretch of road in the heat. Too bad we couldn't tell what kind of road it was from the map. We talked to a local that told us the alternate route was much worse. I suppose we should consider ourselves lucky.

Eventually we came to an intersection and state route 299 that brought us back to civilization . Stopping for the day in Eureka, CA very close to the coast. We'll probably be fogged in with sea fog tomorrow so there's no reason to hurry our morning ritual.

Day 25 Sunday 7/19/09 Mileage today: 250 Miles to date: 5964

We really drug ourselves around today, anticipating sea fog to make our morning ride rather poor. As luck would have it the fog didn't settle low at all. Oh well, we've got no schedule. Seems like I've said that before.

There were numerous homeless (bums I guess) in almost any direction you look. Most looked dirty and were just loitering around or sitting on a curb somewhere. There was one couple that were pilfering a trash can , looking for something to eat maybe, I don't know.

What I did know was that I just wanted to keep clear of them.

It was jacket weather when we started, in the low 60's again. We took off heading south on the 101 just cruising along until we saw a sign indicating a right turn to the Avenue of the Giants. By now the temperature had warmed to 91 F and I wasn't sure what that sign meant but I suspected it was in reference to big trees. **BIG TREES!** That was an understatement. This road was lined with a dense grove of redwood trees 300 feet tall or higher. You get a sore neck looking up at the top of those things. They were magnificent. Within minutes the temperature plummeted to 63 F. And through most of the grove the trees almost shut the days light, I mean completely. Believe me, headlights were required. And my GPS kept repeating "*lost satellite signal.*" This went on for a couple miles, chilly miles without sunlight.

Back on the 101 the hopped up and stayed in the high 80's until we took the Pacific Coast Highway (CA 1.) Then comes the ocean wind, and a cold wind it was. We stopped at a scenic observation point and snapped a few pictures, enjoyed the view and searched for seals on the rocks below. Unfortunately there were no seals in sight. But the water was a gorgeous turquoise in close to shore with breakers crashing against gigantic protruding rocks and the shoreline. This went on for miles.

We stopped in a little town (don't remember the name) at a Denny's for lunch then searched for a route back to the 101. When you're traveling between the coast and the 101 you're going to have twisties and twisties we did have.

So we left the shoreline and temperatures in the mid 60's , to 108 F along the 101. Can you imagine that? The scenery along the way was eye pleasing. Golden grasses and green trees spotted throughout these foothills. So in spite of the heat there was a pleasant side.

I know that there are only so many ways to describe the riding and I have risked boredom with so many references to it. But that is what this trip is all about. The scenery is secondary. Please accept my apologies.

Day 26 Monday 7/20/09 Mileage today: 250 Miles to date: 6214

Another chilly morning. Surely it will get hot again I thought, and it did. Before the day was over it hit 100 F again. On to the 101 till we found 128. Once again we had an abundance of twisties through the Napa Valley until we dropped down into the farm valley where the flat and went as far as you could see.

By lunch time we were in Sacramento, circled the Capital Building and stopped at a restaurant named COCO's.

The morning continental breakfast at the motel was a farce so lunch was our big meal of the day.

We both needed an oil change, called around and found a dealer in Reno that would take care of us. All we had to do was hop on I-80 and get there today so we could get service first thing in the morning. Well getting there was an unexpected challenge. Let me tell you that I-80 is the worst interstate either of us have been on. The road was concrete but it

was worn out. There were deep ruts where truck tires with snow chains had literally worn the cement and the gravel away plus jagged cracks running throughout. California tax dollars at work??? The cracks became a real hazard later when a construction zone brought traffic to a walking pace and you know how hard it is to keep the bike upright in those conditions.

Finally, we arrived in Reno, checked in with the Honda service department to confirm our appointment then booked a room for the night. Both of us were at wits end because the bikes were so dirty and felt embarrassed when people looked at us. So we pooled our quarters and headed for the pressure car wash. It was a team effort in that we did both bikes at the same time. When finished, we were two wet riders because we kind of kept getting in each others way. You dry fast out here in this low humidity, you know.

And with that I will call it a full and tiring day.

Day 27 Tuesday 7/21/09 Mileage today: 261 Miles to date: 6475

Last nights motel was Travel Lodge about 4 blocks from the Honda shop. This served two purposes: 1) we won't have to go far to get to the dealer and 2) The engine won't warm up all the way and the tech won't have to wait for it to cool down to change the oil. They opened at 9AM and we were out of there by 10:45. Lucky us!

Taking I-80 out of town we soon picked up US50 and followed that to Eureka, NV for our night stop. That was a lot of desert riding, very boring, and there wasn't anything you could do except set the cruise control and sit back and watch the scenery go by and count dust devils. Once a west bound semi loaded with straw or hay came went by us causing so much turbulence that it was like hitting a wall with a loud bang. Then, after several hours of desert riding, Curtis and I agreed that we couldn't understand why anyone would want to live in the desert.

We really had no idea what lodging opportunities existed out there in the middle of nowhere so on recommendation of a fellow rider at the Honda shop we called ahead and made a reservation in Eureka. That turned out to be a good move because it appears that this town is on a down hill slide. Half the business establishments have closed. We had a nice room though at a Best Western. There was a Laundromat next door. Thank heavens for that because Curtis said he didn't have a clean change of clothes left. This should be the last time we'll have to do laundry, we think.

Where to next? Looks like we're heading toward Colorado maybe by Friday. Maybe it'll be a little cooler there.

Day 28 Wednesday 7/22/09 Mileage today: 450 Miles to date: 6925

The day started out as another ho hum day but it got better.

Curtis has been scrutinizing the weather reports and playing that against our general path

toward home. This has had significant affect on our decisions as to which routes to take. If you too have been watching the same then you can see that rain, thunder storms and high temperatures are abundant in possible zones of travel. I think that the high temperatures have taken their toll on our stamina.. So today we've taken evasive action and selected a route to improve our odds with the climate.

Leaving Eureka on US 50 east it was back in the desert with little change in scenery. Even the dust devils were almost non existent. But off in the distance we could see clouds building into potential storms to our south and east. But we're smart and will try to circumvent them. US 93 south got us far enough to get in between threatening clouds.

NV 319 gave us enough rain drops to spatter the windshield. We won't count that. UT 56 started to wet the road such that I saw a brief spray for maybe a 1000 feet from Curtis's rear tire then it was all over. As far as I am concerned, we beat the odds. Looking in the rear view mirror though I could see how lucky we were. All hell was breaking loose back there.

At Cedar City, UT 14 gave us the first decent scenery for the day. The road wound through a beautiful canyon with road signs forbidding 18 wheelers. Suddenly I saw a cliff that reminded me of Bryce Canyon and I called Curt who said this road passed by the south side of that park. Then the road took us past Mount Zion NP, Glen Canyon and Lake Powell, all three unique and beautiful parks but we didn't stop. Why? We both have seen these places at least once and we are still trying to thread the needle with the weather. When we start tomorrow we'll be traveling a long ways in the desert which will be plenty hot so we want an early start to try to beat the heat. Wish us luck!

Day 29 Thursday 7/23/09 Mileage today: 417 Miles to date: 7342

Well, we had good intentions about an early start but we both over slept, especially me. Curt was dressed and ready to go and the only reason I woke up was Curt blowing his nose. Then in the continental breakfast room my toast didn't pop up and began to fill the room with burnt toast smoke. Way to go Dennis. In spite of all this we pulled out at 8 AM.

As we headed south US 98 the morning sun shone brilliantly on the canyon walls of Glen Canyon as they faded away in the distance behind us. Up next, US 64 and the very south end of Monument Valley NP and we could only see two of the majestic rock formations in the distance. The next turn was south on US 550. In the distance, powder puff clouds were forming in our general direction of travel. No big deal here. We were hoping to get under the clouds for a little shade. ***Be careful what you wish for!*** All those little powder puff clouds began to accumulate into bigger and bigger clouds until we had one great big cloud overhead. There was a little town called Cuba just a few miles ahead so that was our immediate target. There were a few rain drops but nothing serious. We stopped for gas then took off again. Looming around the next curve all hell broke lose. It

was a real downpour just like Florida, except the storm was dumping larger than pea sized hail too. Before leaving the gas station we put our rain jackets on but that wasn't enough. I can't speak for Curt but those hail stones hurt when they hit you and my fingers, hands and thighs were getting pelted. Had that started we would've waited it out. We should've expected hail because the elevation at road level was 6,400 feet. Out of town now there was nowhere to go but to try to get out from under it. The temperature dropped to 57 F and to add to our misery there were very gusty winds tossing us around. The rain drops were plenty cold and I became very aware of that when the runoff from my rain jacket found its way down to the seat between my legs. Need I say more? We got away from the storm in about 5 minutes and had about 70 miles to get to Albuquerque, our destination, but not long enough to dry out completely. Turning south on I-25 we started looking for a motel and selected one about a block from a Cracker Barrel.

Mama Nature finally caught us with us today and with that we'll call it a day.

Day 30 Friday 7/24/09 Mileage today:606 Miles to date: 7948

Once again we anticipated a hot day and that is just what we got. We hoped to get across New Mexico and the pan handle of Texas and things were going just fine and dandy Until we at the Oklahoma state line, gassed up and took off on I-40 again. Little did we know what lay in store for us. The Oklahoma Welcome Station was just about a mile from the gas station and as we passed it Curt's bike died, I mean instantly and completely. He coasted to a stop on the speed up ramp exiting the Welcome Station.

Was Curt frustrated? That is an understatement. The engine would crank OK, the lights were working and everything seemed OK but it just would not run. A check of the fuses proved nothing. Curtis called Fletcher Warner a couple of times to get some guiding help to troubleshoot the problem but that didn't locate the problem. We checked the Gold Book for a phone number for Tow Busters and they had trouble identifying our location. Checked the Gold Book again trying to identify Oklahoma state GWRRA officers but there are not identified so he called Ron Lance for info and got a number for the National Rider ED Director who gave us the number for the Oklahoma State Rider ED. Director Harry Dollarhide. Harry was a key player in solving our problem as he was familiar with the area and gave us very good guidance. There were several calls between Harry and us until things were coming under control. He told us that the Shawnee Honda was **THE** place to go and he called the dealer and greased the skids for us. All we had to do was get the bike there, a mere 160 + miles away. We really cannot say how much we appreciated Harry's help.

Tow Busters showed up but they were programmed to go only as far as Ely, 22 miles away, for no charge. If Curt wanted to go to Shawnee the charge would be higher. The risk to taking the Ely option was there might not be a tech. thoroughly familiar with Gold Wings and we knew from Harry's experience that Shawnee had a real sharp tech. So, the

bike was loaded and Curt rode in the truck and away we went. We were tooling along on the Interstate and it wasn't long before road signs indicated Ely and I'm watching for a sign that it was time to exit the interstate but it didn't happen.????

Suddenly I realized we were going to Shawnee, another 120 miles farther. Curt decided that Shawnee was the best option. Now it's beginning to get dark so I have to keep the roll-back in sight. I tried following close but the turbulence there was too much. Backing off was a problem too as other vehicles kept filling the space and construction zones added more challenges. Then we entered the Oklahoma City area and let me tell you, they have some blue ribbon prize winning frost heaves there.

35 miles later we arrive at the Honda dealer. The time 11 PM. Parking the bike by the service door in full view of the security system we went next door to the Hampton Inn and secured a room then went to the neighboring IHOP for something to eat. We hadn't eaten since lunch so with full stomachs we turned in for the night. It was 12:30 AM, we'd covered over 600 miles and I was just too tired to do any email.

Day 31 Saturday 7/25/09 Mileage today: 359 Miles to date: 8330

Curtis was up early today so he could be at the service dept. at opening. I didn't wake up until he was almost ready to leave. I leisurely got myself together, had the continental breakfast and was going to do an email when Curtis popped back into the room saying it's all fixed and we're good to go. We had visions of being stuck there for two or three days awaiting replacement parts to arrive. Turns out the tech made a temporary modification to the faulty part, the engine stop switch, so that we could continue home. The rest of today was uneventful, boring interstate travel except for one incident. About a half hour before we quit for the day, the left turn-down on Curt's bike fell off and went rolling down the road in front of me, then suddenly bounced up in the air. I had just moved over to the right when it started to happen. As I passed the flying object it was at head height and a foot and a half to my left. Good thing I started evasive action when I did. Then I began to wonder has Curt traded his bike for a Harley?

Fortunately, today brought cloud cover but the temperature still reached 95 F. ***THE HUMIDITY RISES***. Tonight we're bunked about 60 miles from Memphis. The GPS says we've got 800 + miles to go. Too much for me to do in one day.

Day 32 Sunday 7/26/09 Mileage today: 462 Miles to date: 8792

We stopped for the night in Troy, AL. at about 5:30 PM CT. Tired and hot we decided to treat ourselves to a night at the Hampton Inn.

So how did the day start? Continental breakfast at the Super 8 and that leaves a lot to be desired but it's included in the price so we made do. Then we were on the road by 8:15 and soon turned south I-55, US 240, US 78, I-65, US 82 and then US 231 just in case anyone cares. And I hate to say it but that is the limit of excitement for today. We didn't

even get any of that heavy weather in Mississippi and Alabama that the weather channel was reporting. We did suit up in the rain gear once but other than a few drops and some left over wet pavement it was a dry day. However, cloud cover lowered the temperature to the low 70's for a while. Nobody complained about that.

Curt had his work cut out for him on this trip, keeping an eye on me and my forgetfulness. His next big chore was finding places for my restroom needs, of which there were many. Then, reminding me to drink enough water because I don't realize how dehydrated I get until it's too late. I know that Debbie got Curt aside and maybe bribed him to mother over me because he deserves a great big thank you for all his efforts. He also selected all the routes and was the lead bike from start to finish.

In my opinion, if your riding habits are anything near to Curt's, you can't find a better partner to take a motorcycle trip with. His patients and leading skills were limitless.

Tomorrow, barring any unforeseen circumstances, we will make it home as there are less than 400 miles left to go.

What do I think about the trip?

For me, the trip was a resounding success and a great pleasure. We've seen places and things that we may never have seen if it weren't for the trip. Some might say that we didn't pay much attention or time to the many scenic areas through which we passed around our country but this was a riding trip, over 9,000 miles in 33 days, and in that respect we wouldn't change a thing.

For the readers, I can only hope that there was something of interest for everyone and I thank you for your time and attention.

Dennis & Curtis