

Ron and Margaret's Gypsy Adventure -2007



Sedona at sunset 1

Saturday, May 19, 2007

We started this adventure richer than we expected. Ron and I and Danny Holdsworth did the Valley Comes Alive ride (the 230+ mile Wing Washington version) out of Sunnyside, Washington on Saturday. Ron and I won first and second place, winning \$175! Then I won \$66 on the 50/25/25! I had people rubbing up against me like cats – for luck!

Ron and Joni Gehring and Jim Niswonger and Faye Loran joined us for the beginning of our trip. We left from Sunnyside with a tail wind which turned into a cross wind as we turned south towards Oregon. We called it a day in La Grande and ate next door to the hotel (Ron and I had spent enough time on the bike in the wind – 380 miles for the day – that we wanted to stay put).

Cabbage Hill - we couldn't very well use all lanes because of traffic, but we used our lane very well, enjoying the yellow, red, and blue wildflowers dotting the hillsides.

Sunday, May 20, 2007

Faye and I walked across the street to Starbucks at 6:15 a.m. and when I walked through the door that said it opened at 5 a.m., I said "hallelujah". A young lady working near the door said that was the first time she had heard that from someone coming through the door! I was pretty excited that in a town that small, (1) there was a Starbucks, and (2) it would be open that early on a Sunday. After continental breakfast, we hit the road around 7 a.m. and headed for Winnemucca. Some wind but not nearly as bad as the day before, at least initially.

We stopped for gas in Homedale, Idaho, and grabbed some snacks because we couldn't remember what was down the road. We went through Jordan Valley, which was in the midst of their world-famous rodeo – lots of cowboys, cowgirls, and horses - and horse poop all over the road. We stopped again in Rome, Oregon, and three county sheriffs were there finishing up a meal – no, not donuts. As many of you may or may not know, Oregon has a more conservative speed limit in their wide-open, nobody-around spaces –55-60 MPH. Joni inquired why that was and we didn't get any real answer, but we were "given" the green light to go maybe a little faster – they generally pull people over going 75 MPH or more. And one of them said he raised his bar a little higher for pulling people over. But enough about that...

We pulled into Winnemucca around 3 p.m., after again traveling through strong cross winds. The group had a little excitement just before coming into Winnemucca – a truck passing in the opposite direction blew an outside tire just as Jim and Joni were going by and scared the you-know-what out of them.

We checked in and met again around 6 p.m. to go to the Basque restaurant for their awesome family-style dinner. However, when we got there, we found a note posted on the door that it was closed in memory of someone who had recently passed away. So we settled for the restaurant at the Red Lion.

Monday, May 21, 2007

Well, here's where we lost part of the group. Ron and Joni needed to head back to Seattle, and so Jim and Faye and Ron and I headed east on I-80 toward Elko and Salt Lake City. Once again we have some wind but not too bad. Skies look good, we're cruising at 77 mph, and all is well in the world. We arrive in Elko and went to the Red Lion because it advertised a Starbucks. After our late breakfast, we headed for Salt Lake City.

We stopped in West Wendover, NV, for gas and then we began our exciting journey across the Bonneville Salt Flats. We have been in wind-from-hell before, but this had to rank in the top two or three. We were pretty much leaning into the wind for over 50 miles. We could see the sand storm out on the flats. Our necks were getting stiff and sore and Ron and I were practically screaming to each other to be heard over the noise in and around our helmets. We could see nasty weather in the distance, so we stopped at a rest area and put the rain gear on.

We went around a couple of more mountains and headed into the rain in Salt Lake City. Our timing was perfect – rush hour – so we continued to follow I-80 up and over the Summit, which was 7,190 feet. This section of freeway would have been a motorcyclist's dream for all the curves going to the top, but the weather and traffic put a big kibosh on that! We stopped in Coalville to get gas and spotted a Best Western across the freeway where we hung it up for the day. We had food delivered from the Polar King restaurant so that we didn't have to get on the bikes again. We shared a room, so there were lots of coats, chaps, etc., hanging all over the room to dry out.

We spent some time watching the weather channel and surfing the internet to see what the weather was going to be tomorrow. We may leave a little late so that we can make sure it has warmed up enough to not be icy. Yes, it was that cold.

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

Well, sho' nuf it was cold this morning! We picked the ice off the bikes, ate some continental breakfast, and left around 9:30 a.m. when the temperature was 37 degrees and snow flakes were starting to appear. We continued on I-80 east towards Cheyenne and got around the weather and broke into partly cloudy, partly SUNNY skies.

We made a couple of stops for gas and food through some windy sections but not nearly what we'd had over the past few days. Saw antelope all over the place and snow up high on the hills. When we were near Laramie, we saw bad weather on the horizon, but somehow we dodged a bullet when the road took a different direction. After fueling in Laramie, we headed uphill again, climbing to 8,640 feet, the highest point on I-80 in the nation (according to the gas station owner).



As we approached Cheyenne, we were looking at bad weather again, but we couldn't totally avoid this one. But because of the direction the road took, we only caught the edge of this cell and got wet for about 2 minutes. We found another Best Western (with a really big boot), got settled in, and had a wonderful meal at the Cheyenne

Cattle Company located at the hotel. (I had the best pork chop – cooked medium - with mango salsa I've ever had).

Back to the room to watch Dancing With the Stars! And the severe weather alert on local ABC news!!!

And, yeah, Apollo wins!

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

On the road again...I'm shooting for Dodge City, and Ron's probably shooting apples in a barrel! We split company with Jim and Faye at this point. They were headed later in the morning for his brother's place in Monument, CO, so we threw caution to the wind and stopped in down-town Denver at the Milliman office to see Bonnie Shek, who is someone my office works with on a regular basis. She was thrilled to see us and we had a nice visit and a tour of the office. And the GPS got us into town so nice and slick – we went right by Coors Field. And from the Milliman office we could see the Invesco Field at Mile High, home of those dreaded Broncos (by Seahawk fan standards).

We finally headed out with dark clouds looming over our shoulders. As it turned out, we apparently lassoed them and dragged them with us for most of the day.

We stopped in Fowler, CO, for fuel and ice, and a truck driver walked over to talk to us. When he found out where we were from, he said he had relatives in Bellingham and Mt. Vernon, and his family had a cabin on Sinclair Island in the Straits. Another gentleman showed up in a golf cart, and he said he owned the illusion red 1800, and that his wife had better not see our bike – he knew she'd want that color!

He also gave us advice on dodging a tornado as he was a retired state patrolman and had been involved in his share. They generally come from the southwest, so don't try to outrun it, just go back in the direction you came from because they continue in a forward motion. Also, lay face up in a ditch – if there is water and you are face down, the pressure from the tornado will press you down and you could drown. Luckily, we haven't had to test his theory yet.

Along the way in both Colorado and Kansas, we saw feed lots about every five miles, some set within sight of the road and some set further back. And you could tell by the smell when you were near one, and these places were huge!

We were just leaving Garden City, KS, when Ron wanted to take a butt break. A young man was mowing the grass around his business and stopped to come over to talk to us. After a few minutes discussion and disclosing where we were headed (Dodge City was another 50 miles), he suggested we stay put because the weather was bad in Dodge City. He took us to his office so we could look at the Doppler, and we turned tail, went back to Garden City, and found a hotel.

Target and Burger King were next to the hotel, so we stopped at both of them, and got back to our room as quick as possible. The wind was really blowing and the sky was black. We were watching "Lost" and I was doing laundry when the light show started – and what a show it was! The lightening strikes were happening so fast there was no time for thunder. We found out that the wind was blowing at over 60 mph and hail was falling that was about a half inch. Larger hail was recorded further north in Kansas.

After the storm passed, all was quiet and the rest of the night went without incident.

Thursday, May 24, 2007

We headed out early and set our sites on Joplin, Missouri. We headed south from Garden City and dropped down into Oklahoma, took a left at Turpin and followed Hwy 64 across most of the state until Hwy 77 where we headed back north into Kansas, took a turn east at Arkansas City and followed Hwy 166 to Coffeyville where we tied up for the night.

During this trip, we saw the three camels at the zoo in Garden City, two coyotes outside of Garden City, and white cranes all over the place around the Great Salt Plains Lake. And wild yucca plants as far as the eye could see! We also saw so many little dirt roads pointing to a cemetery. We stopped in Buffalo, OK at the Subway for lunch, pulled our chairs out of the trailer and sat down next to the building in the shade to eat our sandwich. We stopped in Medford, OK for Ron to take a power nap, and away we went.

After we checked into a hotel in Coffeyville, we ate next door at the steak/buffet place next to the hotel. I had a filet that melted in my mouth – oh my! We asked our waitress where there was a movie theater within walking distance and she pointed to the family theater one-half block up and over one-half block. So we went and saw “Shrek” with all the other kids!

Friday, May 25, 2007

We left Coffeyville, KS behind and headed for Joplin, MO and points south and east. Weren't real sure how far we would get, but that's OK. We stopped in Joplin to have breakfast, and then we took a back road headed for Branson. We eventually found ourselves on the Ozark Mountain Parkway, and what a sweet ride going to West Branson which wasn't quite where we wanted to be.

After getting turned around in construction traffic, we found our way to Branson (I had clicked on West Branson on the GPS, so we had to work our way back), we checked into the Riverboat Hotel (it really looks like a riverboat and its NOT in the water!), walked up to Ruby Tuesday's and had lunch/dinner at 3 p.m. Ron had a strawberry margarita and I had the margarita sampler – regular, strawberry, and one made with blue Curacao. We stopped and window shopped on the way back to the hotel.

When we got back to the room, we crawled into bed and slept until 6 a.m. the next morning – so much for seeing Branson! But we were overwhelmed by what there was to see and do there, so we decided it was best to have slept and come back when we could spend a week or more.

Saturday, May 26, 2007

This morning was foggy when we left at 7 a.m., so we had to be a little more cautious for a while until the fog burned off. Actually, we finally got above it then we really enjoyed Hwy 160 through the Mark Twain National Forest and points east, all the way to Poplar Bluff. We had 170 miles of curvy roads and roller coaster type roads.



I was WAHOOING a lot! And I had a smile on my face that took a long time to go away. I tried to stop smiling because it started to hurt, but I just couldn't stop!

We saw deer, vultures, dead armadillos, dead possums, dead raccoons playing possum – and turtles! I could not believe how many turtles we saw trying to cross the road!

We stopped for breakfast in the town of Caulfield, MO, at the Hitching Post Café. Quaint. We stopped in Sikeston, MO and tried Sonics for lunch – we see the ads all the time and were curious. Now that that curiosity has been satisfied, we don't need to stop there again.



We hung it up for the day at the Super 8 in Mayfield, KY, and had dinner at Hills Bar-B-Que. Our little waitress was so from the south that I thought I was going to have to call in a translator. My what a southern accent! We stumbled across a flyer at the restaurant that advertised a first annual run sponsored by Hannigan Motortrikes and Sidecars, located in Murray, Kentucky, with a grand prize of a cargo trailer. We were almost within spitting distance! And about two weeks too early!

When we leave tomorrow, I'm not sure which direction we are going in. We are watching the weather channel closely so we can time our return to coincide with not getting too wet on the return trip. We may start back or we may hang out another day or two in the east.

Time and weather will tell...

Sunday, May 27, 2007

We decided to start heading back home. I really didn't want to get too far east with the smoke from the wildfires working their way up into Tennessee and North Carolina. I know from past experience that I have trouble breathing in forest fire air and I didn't want to see those states under a pall of smoke.

We traveled south from Mayfield, through Murray (waved as we passed the closed offices of Hannigan) and into Tennessee. I saw a fox, we saw a couple of deer, and many small town cemeteries decorated for Memorial Day.

We traveled through Memphis, and some of the churches we saw were beyond description – huge and incredibly beautiful. We crossed the Mississippi again and headed for Little Rock, Arkansas. Lots of rice fields in this flat, open stretch of I-40. We stayed in a hotel in North Little Rock and I used the pool – it was very refreshing as the day had gotten long and hot! We had dinner at the Waffle House and that was entertaining between the help and the customers – those Southern accents will get you every time!

Monday, May 28, 2007

We had a wonderful day today! We traveled southwest on I-30, took exit 111, and headed for Hot Springs, AR and Scenic Byway 7. Pretty drive to Hot Springs, and what a neat town - bathhouses everywhere and lots of historic buildings. We stayed on Hwy 7 and stopped in Hot Springs Village at the Homeplate Café for breakfast. We took off from there and followed this road to our hearts content. What a nice road – lots of twists and turns, not too much traffic (most of it was going the other way headed home from the holiday weekend). We saw lots of bikes and amazingly, most of them were Wings!

We stopped at the first official rest stop created in Arkansas - Rotary Ann - to take a butt and potty break. We met a couple who were riding a Shadow and an ST 1300 back home to Nebraska – they had spent a long weekend in Memphis. He had his Garmin and they both had Nolan helmets just like ours!

We also followed, but only for a short time, a custom chopper that had a back tire the size of a Gravedigger tire! He did real well on the short straight-aways, going about 35-40 mph, but elsewhere, he slowed way down to stay upright through the curves. Sorry, but that bike wasn't



designed for these roads and should have stayed home (or on the showroom floor) so that he didn't slow down the bikes having a great time.

We stopped at the Cliff House near Jasper, AR, had a nice lunch, and some great conversation with an older couple from Fayetteville – they have a daughter who lives in Olympia. Then another couple came and sat down at the table on the other side of us. They had Frogg Toggs on! We asked if we should be worried and they said only if we were going south. Thank goodness we were going north! We chatted with them for a bit, and they were headed back to Branson. He knew where we lived as he had lived and worked in the Seattle-Kent-Bellevue area for a number of years.



One thing I kept finding out during our travels was how small the world really is – we kept finding people who knew people who live or who have lived in our neck of the woods!

And the one thing all these people recommended that we do before we continued west was to go to Eureka Springs. So through a comedy of GPS errors, off we went. We plugged in Eureka Springs, but Hwy 412 led us south before going north. The map in the road atlas showed a road that cut across from Hwy 65 to Eureka Springs (but no road number, probably because it was too small). So let's ignore Gwendolyn Garmin (GG), go north on 65, then hang a left someplace and end where we wanted to. However Hwy 396 ended after two miles of pavement in a farmer's field.

So we turned around and hooked a turn west on Denver Road (or maybe the sign was pointing to Denver). What a great road! Admittedly there was no shoulder and there were times I felt we were driving down a country lane with the trees weeping over the road and vegetation growing tall and wild right to the road. For anyone on that road (playing Deliverance music in the background) who saw a Goldwing pulling a trailer go by, we say unto you – build a road with a beginning and an end and a Goldwing will find it!

We got back on track with GG and headed right into one of those isolated thunderstorms. The wind was blowing and the rain was coming down hard enough to be hail, so when we pulled into Green Forest, AR, Ron spotted a building with a covered walkway and that's where we took shelter for a few minutes. We were already pretty wet (in our MeshTecs), but we decided to stay put for a few minutes and let the storm get ahead of us.

We were almost dry about 25 minutes later when we pulled into Eureka Springs when the rain started in again. We got a room, hung up the wet stuff and got some dinner. Tomorrow we are going to try to make Wichita Falls, TX.

Tuesday, May 29, 2007

We had quite the 477 mile day. We started out having breakfast at the hotel with the couple we met at the rest stop the day before. When we checked in last night, we noticed their bikes, so it was a pleasant surprise when they showed up for breakfast. When we left town, Hwy 23 was right there, so we headed south on it to Hwy 412 to Fayetteville. Hwy 23 was a sweet road with sweeping turns, tight turns, lush vegetation, and lots of wildflowers.

The one thing we passed on this road is something we passed a few times yesterday – chicken/turkey farms, and boy do they smell! Couldn't even imagine living near them.



We got on I-540 headed toward Fort Smith, continued on I-40 to Exit 308, and took Hwy 59 south to Hwy 9 west to Hwy 177 south to Hwy 70 west into Wichita Falls, TX. Some of these roads were nice because they were back roads, but it got kind of boring in some areas because it was so straight for so long. I hope I chart out a more exciting route tomorrow to Artesia, New Mexico. It could be another long day, but not as long as today was. Today was the longest day of our trip. Til tomorrow...

Wednesday, May 30, 2007

Well we woke up to overcast skies and we ended up stopping 15 minutes out of town to put on the rain coats as it started sprinkling and it didn't look good where we were going. Glad we did that though, as it stopped the rain! I charted a course from Wichita Falls to Artesia from the road atlas and Gwendolyn kept us on course. We took Hwy 82/277 south to Munday, then Hwy 277 to Haskell, then Hwy 380 to Plains, and finally Hwy 82 to Artesia.



We stopped in Rule, TX for breakfast, where they served coffee for 49 cents. The bank and the restaurant were almost the only buildings in Rule. Our next food stop was in Tahoka, TX at the Allsup's gas station/convenience store. We grabbed some junk food, pulled out the chairs, soaked up some rays, repacked and took off. It was a great break.

We got into Artesia about 2:30 p.m. and stopped at a Shell station to fill up and get directions for the police station and the hospital (Tom and Deb Richards). I noticed a State patrolman at the station, so I suggested Ron ask him. He knew Tom, gave us directions, and off we went. Tom was in a training session, so we went to the hospital and surprised Deb – and boy was she surprised and THRILLED! She sent us off packing to their house to unpack and make

ourselves comfortable until she got home. Since Tom gets home later, we went for a walk, ducked down a side street, and came up behind him to surprise him. We went to dinner at a local Mexican place – what else! – and had a nice dinner and a great visit with them.

Their house looks like it was decorated by a professional – they have done a great job and it is absolutely beautiful. Initially we went around in circles until we figured out what door went where, but we had it down pat by the time we left. We offered to house sit for them if they ever wanted to take a couple of weeks off. Yes, we would fly in to take care of that place! It would be a vacation for us too!

One thing we noticed on our way to Artesia was the number of oil wells dotting the landscape clear to the horizon in any direction. And the smell... There is also a refinery in Artesia and that's not too pleasant either. So why is gas still so expensive????

Thursday, May 31, 2007

Deb was off to work and was leaving around noon to head for Lubbock for a meeting on Friday. Tom was off to work via the puppy parlor for their two dogs to get groomed. Tom recommended "Wings" for breakfast and so we had to go! Tom and Deb invited us to stay a few more days so we could PARTY over the weekend, but there were places to go and things to do over the next several days. Next time we will stay longer!

We went north to Roswell to find the Honda store to see if they carried speaker covers. They didn't but we were the second one to ask for it that week.

At breakfast that morning, some locals recommended going to the Inn of the Mountain Gods Casino in Ruidoso, so we headed down Hwy 70/380 through the Hondo Valley. Then 70 branched off toward Ruidoso; it is named the Billy the Kid Scenic Byway. We saw the famous Ruidoso Downs where they run a very rich Quarter horse

race (\$2M!). The Casino was off of Hwy 48, located a couple of miles further into the mountains on a small lake. What a beautiful place it is.

We stopped at the Hubbard Museum and the “Free Spirits at Noisy Water” horse display and I took so many pictures! The metal sculptures were at about twice life-size and all were anatomically correct! We had some lunch in Ruidoso and followed Hwy 48 to Hwy 37.



This whole area will become a destination at a later date. What great motorcycle roads, views, window shopping, and other things to do. Hwy 37 was awesome! We got on Hwy 380 again, and this was scenic in spots (the Valley of Fire, a lava bed), but we were definitely in the high desert – got pretty boring and hot.

We stopped in Los Lunas for the night and we are going to head for Sedona, AZ tomorrow.

Friday, June 1, 2007

We made it to Flagstaff this afternoon around 2 p.m. after an uneventful ride across Hwy 6 from Los Lunas to I-40, then I-40 all the way to Flagstaff. We tried to get a cabin at one of the local KOA campgrounds but they were booked, of course. Gwendolyn Garmin again proved her weight in gold when we were trying to find a hotel that wasn't an arm and a leg. When you bring up hotels, you get the phone number not just the address. So we called around and found a Days Inn, got checked in, and relaxed for a bit. Then we jumped on the bike (leaving the trailer behind) and took off for Sedona.



One thing I kept noticing here and in New Mexico were signs for elk crossings – next 60 miles, next 15 miles, whatever. And all I could think about was ELK? Well the warnings proved true as we were going along on Hwy 89A when I looked down a bank on the right and there was a cow elk. So when we came back later than we planned (dusk then dark) from Sedona, we slowed down through the warning areas and stayed very alert for animals. I did spot a deer on the shoulder, but she stayed put.

The road to Sedona was beautiful. You travel through Oak Creek Canyon, then you descend down a 7% grade and 2,000 feet along a very windy, steep road. Then you pop out into the famous rock formations in colors of brown, yellow and the gorgeous red. We parked in North Sedona (the tourist trap area), got something to eat, and then wandered around town window shopping. They have some awesome bronze statues scattered throughout and a trail of painted javelinas (kind of like a warhog). We drove further down into Sedona and discovered more beautiful rock formations, but by then it was getting pretty late and the sun was setting.

Saturday, June 2, 2007

We packed up and left Flagstaff, heading for Sedona again. This time we stopped at the scenic view above Oak Creek Canyon and looked down on the road below. Definitely a different perspective of what we rode on! We had breakfast in Sedona, browsed a bit more, and found out from a local motorcyclist that the route I had planned on taking had a very windy road on it as well, otherwise called Mingus Mountain. In the space of 11.5 miles there are 130 curves.

We headed south on Hwy 89A, went through Cottonwood, then headed for Jerome, Arizona, a town rich in history, art, and altitude. I swear the town was built on a ridge and definitely on the side of the mountain. I believe the streets were laid out in the day of the horse and carriage and they couldn't widen them, so they made them one-way streets. It reminded me of what European streets might look like.



We got caught behind a slower car and the engine started overheating, so we had to pull off on a gravel shoulder to let it cool down a little. That little bit of time helped and we ended up not having anyone in front of us the rest of the way to the top. There were lots of 15 mph curves, with a few 20, 30 and 40 mph curves thrown in for good measure. There were actually cars passing in some very short passing areas that still weren't safe even though it was marked as a passing zone. We saw lots of



crosses and flowers on this stretch of road. The other irony of doing this road was listening to the Beatles, “A Long and Winding Road”...

We traveled through Prescott Valley, then headed north on Hwy 89 to I-40 at Ash Fork. We took a butt break at Ash Fork and got to talking to someone who had a 2001 Wing. We finally got back on the road and headed for Kingman, then Las Vegas. When we pulled into Vegas, the temperature was 102 degrees and we were glad to finally shed the chaps and coat after we found a hotel.

Sunday, June 3, 2007

We left bright and early today to head for Elko, NV, so we can spend two nights there in a small, quiet town. We headed east on I-15 to take Hwy 93 north and I just assumed because it was an intersection for a highway that there would be a gas station, but no there wasn't. So we turned around and went back 10 miles to fill up – thank goodness because it was quite a while before we found gas again. We traveled north on Hwy 93 and veered off to take Hwy 313 which was a more direct way to go north.



We passed through a couple of beautiful valleys nestled in between the arid landscape. They were a breath of fresh air – water, trees, pastures, cattle, horses, homes, and a couple of little towns that had gas. We stopped in Ely to eat, then caught Hwy 93 again which would take us to I-80. We almost took a “short cut” on Hwy 229 that would have taken us into Elko the back way, but Ron was getting pretty tired, the temperature was going up, and the day was getting long. We stopped in Wells for a butt break, a peach-mango smoothie, and Ron had a quick power nap.

We got into Elko where the temperature was 90 degrees, found a hotel, and parked it. We wandered around a little bit, had dinner, played a little in one of the casinos, and finally called it a day.

Monday, June 4, 2007

Our friend Cindy from California called us a 7 a.m. to see where we were and if we were going to be stopping by on our way home. So since we were awake now, we decided to find the Laundromat and get some laundry done. We finished that and got a bite of breakfast.

While we were at the Laundromat, Ron was talking with someone who wanted to talk about motorcycling, Elko, and the area. When he found out the route we were thinking about taking, he cautioned us so well, that we changed our mind on the route home. He said there is a dense population of deer, elk, ground squirrels, badgers, and mormon crickets. It is also open range for cattle and they are frequently on the road. If you hit one, it will be very expensive to replace the cow. And, we would pass through an Indian Reservation where the tribal police like to pull you over and harass you. I guess it is a pretty ride, through a couple of canyons, with lots of turns. But the negative things outweighed the positive.

So we are going to go back to Winnemucca, going north, but heading towards Burns, John Day, Pendleton, and Walla Walla. We've never gone to Burns or John Day, so that will be our adventure over the next couple of days.

Tuesday, June 5, 2007

Today ended up being the shortest travel day of the trip. We went from Elko to Winnemucca and decided to stay put. Because my laptop boots up particularly slow, I suggested we call Nic and Phyllis and have them look up the weather we were heading for. Sure enough, bad weather was in store for us, so we took shelter at the Quality

Inn/Model T Casino – just in the nick of time as it turned out. It started raining pretty hard as we were parking the bike. So we only did 130 miles today.

Wednesday, June 6, 2007

Today started off on an interesting note – it was pouring rain, low cloud cover, and 37 degrees at 7 a.m. So we decided to have our free breakfast and wait a while to see if the weather broke. Around 9:30 we peaked out the window to see that the rain had quit and that the hills were covered in snow! We left around 10:15, heading north on Hwy 95, and about five miles north of town, we had dry pavement and a glimpse of blue sky.



We continued north to Burns, OR, with the wind blowing us all over the place. One thing I haven't mentioned often enough about this trip is the amount of wind we have endured. Basically, we have had a lot of wind since we left Flagstaff, AZ, on this leg of the journey.

We stopped for a bite to eat in Burns and to fuel up. Since this is Oregon, we had to have the attendant hand us the fuel nozzle (you can't pump your own gas in Oregon, but motorcyclists can after the attendant hands you the nozzle because gas station owners are tired of paying for ruined paint jobs from improper fueling at their hands). The attendant was from Missouri (had the accent to go with it), and he fed us a line of BS that we almost fell for. "There was a foot of snow that fell on Hwy 395 north towards John Day and Pendleton."

Beautiful 70-mile road between Burns and John Day! We stopped in John Day for fuel and got to talking with a couple of gentlemen from Alberta (I could tell they were Canadians from their accents before I saw their plates). They had ridden from Alturas, CA, and were headed home. Their vacation route had also been determined by the weather – they had had great plans for going to the Oregon coast, but saw the weather forecasts and opted to head home in a different direction. They needed a break just as much as us because of the wind from Burns Junction to Burns. They also said that being from Alberta where everything is plains and flat, they have to go to British Columbia or the States to get twisty roads.



All 120 miles of Highway 395 between John Day and Pendleton were FABULOUS. I didn't realize how many summits were on this stretch of road. And of course how many curves... If the wind hadn't been blowing so hard, we might have enjoyed the curves a little more. We could enjoy several of them, but some of them had the wind blowing hard and from several directions so Ron had to use a little more caution. He wants to go back and hope the wind isn't blowing so we could enjoy the ride more. We got pretty tired of the wind trying to rip our helmets off!

We pulled into an Econolodge in Pendleton, and a Harley that we passed a few miles back pulled in a few minutes later. We thought he was going to tie up there, too, but he pulled up along side us and asked if we had been in

Winnemucca the night before and if we had been at the McDonalds in Burns – he thought he recognized the

bike/trailer combo. Yes, to both questions. I asked if he had been on the cell phone at the McDonalds as I remember seeing someone in the parking lot – yes. Did we stop for fuel in John Day – yes. So we had been playing leap frog along the route! He was from Colorado, headed for Walla Walla, WA for a wedding. We cautioned him to check the weather before he headed home through Montana and Yellowstone next week.

We really enjoyed this 440 mile day in 9 hours.

Thursday, June 7, 2007

We left Pendleton this morning and headed the 35 miles to Walla Walla, WA where we began our Wing Washington tour of Eastern Washington as the last leg of our three-week vacation.

We got our site in Walla Walla and headed toward Pataha to get our next site. We stopped in Waitsburg for breakfast and recognized the inn next door as a Wing Washington site from last year. After we did Pataha, which was stagecoach stop in years gone by, we backtracked a few miles to catch the road to Colfax and Steptoe Butte State Park.

Life could have been so much simpler if we had just taken our picture at the State park sign. But nooooo, Vince Ash had said during a previous conversation that if you go to Steptoe Butte you just have to take the road to the top. So off we went to ride to the top. However, I started having a panic attack half way up and insisted that Ron let me off the bike (I really was calm about asking to get off).

Unfortunately for him, he had to go to the top to get turned around. Even if we hadn't had the trailer, he still would have had to go to the top as the road was 1-1/2 car lengths wide, no shoulder, no guardrail – and just wildflowers to stop you if you went over the edge! So I took pictures of the flowers and the deer I spotted and waited for Ron to return. He got to the top with his butt puckered in several places and his nerves of steel fusing together as they melted after going through an even narrower place in the construction that was going on near the top. He did find out that he was at 3,600' before turning around and coming back down. Luckily he stopped and picked me up, we continued to the bottom of the road, I hit the bathroom, and then we took our picture at the sign which we should have done 45 minutes ago! And, yes, this site was Vince's idea, but he said only the park sign – yeah, sure!



We headed for Latah on Hwy 27, got that site, then headed for Spokane Valley to eat lunch at Rancho Viejo (a Wing Washington site). After lunch, we headed for Colville, got the howitzer at the VFW hall, and parked it for the night. We'll catch a couple of more sites tomorrow before heading for home.

Friday, June 8, 2007

Ah, the final leg of this wonderful journey. We're anxious to go home, but boy we wish we could just keep traveling. But jobs and responsibilities are calling our names – and hopefully Katie, Gabby and Olivia are hoping we come home soon!

We left Colville and headed west on Hwy 20 to get the site at Sherman Pass (the high point site for this area). Along the

way, we spotted a few deer as it was early in the day. We ran into road construction and were glad we were coming through now – next Monday they start grinding and paving operations through the summer. Just before getting into Republic, a herd of deer were on the shoulder of the road. I was hoping for a photo op, but a car coming from the other direction got even closer and flashed his brights at them which made them turn around and get lost in the trees again.

We stopped at a little organic bakery which served some awesome breakfast burritos on Fridays. We then headed toward the Keller ferry. We saw even more deer on this road and a black bear as well. He was pretty funny – he'd run a few steps, stop and turn to look at us, then run a few more steps, etc. We weren't very close, but he finally got off the road and we continued on.

We caught the Keller ferry and took the 10 minute ride across Lake Roosevelt. We had to ask – “Do you ever cancel a run due to weather?” Apparently not. They have had swells so high that they wash over the third car on the ferry. This ferry can only take about 9 or 10 cars – or a logging truck down the middle and a couple of cars on each side. And they have had to bring the ferry into the dock by timing it so that they dive under the ramp to be able to offload/load cars. Pretty talented crew!

We climbed the hills steeply and quickly via a series of switchbacks from the ferry, headed for Coulee City, found our way to Pinto Ridge Road, which took us to Ephrata. We had lunch at Basaltz, a relatively new place in Ephrata, and I had a pasta dish that had enough garlic in it to ward off vampires for at least a month! We caught the site at the Mexican restaurant (which we have eaten at before), and then headed out on a road that we thought would take us to Hwy 281 where we could catch the Palisades Road. After two attempts on roads that ended in gravel, we turned for home and called it a vacation.

Happy Birthday, Mom! We made it home in one piece – uninjured, well-traveled, happy and still married! You have to really like each other to spend three weeks on one motorcycle!

In Summary

We really had a good time on this vacation – yes it was a lot of time on the motorcycle and not too much time for stopping and sightseeing. But we saw lots of beautiful country, we traveled on some totally awesome back roads, we met lots of people who were fascinated with the bike and our travels, we saw many cemeteries decorated to the max for Memorial Day, we dodged lots of weather bullets but not the wind, and we came home without shopping! And I discovered that I really need to get my husband out of town more often – something about all that time on the motorcycle and fresh air does something for – well, you know...

We discovered places we would go back to visit and stay a while – the Ozarks, Sedona and the surrounding area, southern New Mexico, northern Nevada, and Kentucky and Tennessee. And we have to say that there are a lot of mighty fine roads in the Northwest.

We are glad we had the opportunity to do this trip by ourselves, but we sure missed having travel companions to share the sights with. And I'm sure travel companions would have reined us in on miles traveled each day, but that is the advantage of traveling by yourselves – we went where the wind and our souls took us – a real gypsy adventure!

Margaret Silverman
June 12, 2007