

NORTH TO ALASKA

Two by land and finally by boat

Or

THE RIDE GOES ON FOREVER

Summer was a little late in coming this year but I knew it would eventually get here and a ride was in order. I had decided as early as January that I was going to ride to Alaska. I have done the Alaska ride twice, once with Bobbe on the Black Goldwing and once by myself on the GSA. This time I wanted to ride up on the inland ferries and then back through Canada. I had sort of attempted to do this on a couple of occasions but this time I was going to pull it off. As I had learned, even for a motorcycle, reservations are a must. With that in mind I had reservations on the BC and Alaska ferries by the middle of February.

With that done and the route more or less laid out I set about choosing the bike and getting it ready. The GSA was the lucky bike and even though it is a high mileage bike (114k) I had no fear that it would not make the ride. Also, that 8.7-gallon tank is a plus on a ride such as this. Over the course of a couple of months I put it up on the lift, stuck on a new set of tires and checked whatever I could think of checking.

For me parts of this were a little unusual. I had to be in Port Hardy BC on the 12th of June or I would miss the boat. Also, I wanted to keep the sitting around to a minimum. With that in mind I calculated I had to leave OKC no later than the 6th of June. That was not a problem until everyone started graduating and going on vacation. The leaving date was proceeded with a ride to Shreveport for Ashley's graduation, then a ride to Mississippi for a ride with Ryan and then a week end up in Wichita and finally the 6th arrived along with the continuing rain and cool temperatures.



I pulled out of OKC on the 6th in a fairly heavy rain which continued until Woodward. I was going to cut north through Laverne until I saw this cloud in my way. I decided to keep on riding west and I did dodge the bullet on this one and eventually called it good in Garden City.

It is an easy day from Garden City to Denver and I did not hit the road all that early. After yesterday it was a good

riding day, fairly cool, little wind and fair-weather clouds. All of the plains have had cool weather with plenty of rain. Everything that was supposed to be green and growing was and the cows were belly deep in grass. There was also no shortage of bugs of every type. For those who don't know, there are essentially two types of bugs, those that go splat and those that don't. The ones that don't go splat hurt.

I stopped at the Granada relocation camp for a look around. I have been here before and not much has changed. Over all, this camp is much larger than any other I have been in.

I eventually made it to Denver with no problems. Bobbe and I got together down in Golden from a nice dinner with Paul, Barbara, Gary, Darcy and Gannon. Guys, good to see you. After that it was back to the hotel and settle in for a nice sleep.

I counted the next morning as the actual start of the ride. As I left Denver it was fairly warm but I was heading up to the tunnel so I put on the jacket and pants with the idea being I would at least get out of the pants after a bit. Wrong on that, I was in the suit all day and eventually into the electric gear. It was a pleasant but cool ride up to the tunnel. At Dillon I headed north to Kremmling where I took a coffee break then continued over Gore Pass and on to Oak Creek. There I turned onto what is called 27-mile road for a very nice ride in to Hayden. So far, the temps were in the high 50s-low 60s.

At Maybell I turned onto Hwy 318 and here was this sign. I knew this was a dirt road and no services with that in mind I had gassed up at Hayden so with the GSA it was not an issue. At this point the road was paved but after a bit I



turned right onto Hwy 430 and it is dirt. It is dirt, but it is well graded with no deep gravel so it was not a problem.

However, the clouds building up gave me a pause. As I headed through Irish Canyon I was starting to wonder. It did not rain but the temps dropped into the 40s and the wind blew.

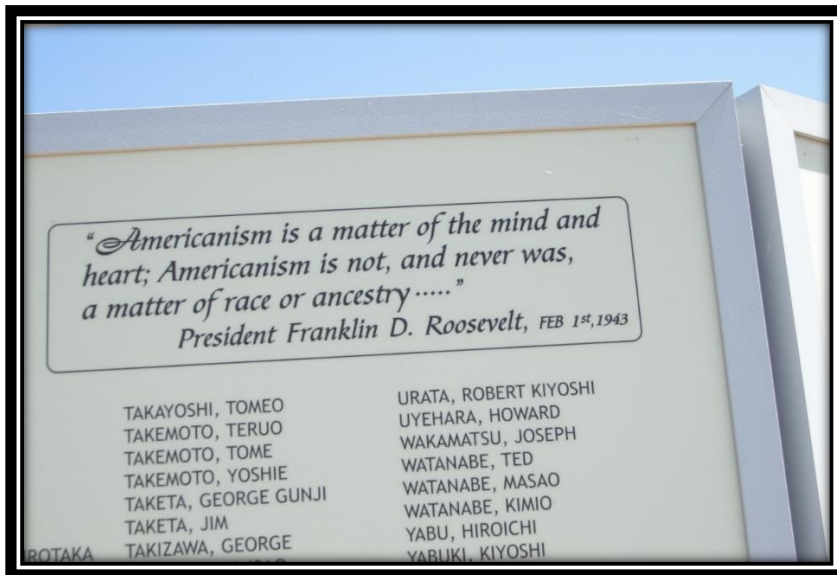
At Rock Springs I hit the big road for a bit and the wind really blew. By the time I made it down Hwy 30 to Fossil Butte I was into the electric gloves and liner and had ridden through sleet.

Fossil Butte was interesting. I had been there back in 1977 and wanted see what had changed. The sediments there are essentially the remains of a large shallow dried lake and there are all sorts of very well-preserved fossils of all types and they get

sent all over the world. This is not that good a photo as it was taken through glass but this is one of the fossils they have found here.

Fossil Butte is pretty close to the middle of nowhere and the person at the counter did not have a good handle on how far it was to the next source of fuel. The strong wind had really cut into the mileage so I elected to ride back to Granger before heading on. As advertised, there is not much out there. Eventually I hit Cokesville and there is a unique motel across from an open restaurant so I called it good. I had seen 39 degrees with sleet and snow and the wind had not slacked off.

The next morning, I scrapped frost off of the seat before hitting the road. It was 32 degrees but the front was through, the wind was gone and the sky was full of fluffy clouds. SE Idaho is without a doubt a beautiful area.



This is pretty much typical of the area I was riding through. As the temps headed up, I picked up the big road at McCammon, turned left at Pocatello and headed on to Jerome. The Minidoka Relocation camp is one of two in Idaho, as far as I know. It is a little east of Jerome. I have visited the one in Colorado, two in Arkansas, one in Texas and one in Arizona. There are others and they all have one thing in common, a long way from anywhere. At the Minidoka camp there is an outstanding

example of hypocritical political speech from none other than the person who caused the creation of

the camps, the relocation of people and the theft of all of their property. This is up in the right-hand corner of Honor Role.

You should note that there are no Smiths, Jones or anything similar on this list. Good old FDR, typical politician, no problem talking out of both sides of his mouth. There are a lot of folks in this country who think he is one of the greatest presidents ever.

A few miles on down the road at Ontario Oregon I picked up Hwy 26 and headed west. I had a lot of fun on Hwy 26. It does not carry a lot of traffic (to say the least), winds around all over the place and the scenery is good. Not a good road for making time but great for looking around. This photo was taken in



John Day Oregon. Note, the guy also makes coffins, something you don't see every day.

This is out in eastern Oregon in what is pretty much flyover country. It appears that quite a few of the folks in flyover country are having a little problem drinking all of the kool aid that is being poured. Too bad they won't just shut up and do as they are told.

Eventually I pulled into

Mitchel Oregon which is near nothing and a long way from anything. It has two cafes, one unique motel and that is about it. The food at the café was good and the motel clean and the bed comfortable. What more can you ask.

The next morning was similar to yesterday. Clear, somewhat cool and made for riding, I rode by Mt. Hood a bit SE of Portland. This is in the Cascade Range and most of the mountains around are volcanic, caused by the melting of the Pacific Plate as it dives under the N. American plate. Mt. Hood is one of the largest and Crater Lake is also one. A bit east of Portland I cut north to avoid the traffic, picked up the big road and crossed over into Washington. I did not stay on the interstate any longer than necessary. I was running a bit ahead of schedule and had discovered some back roads that looked interesting, and they were. I took a couple that barely had a number and hooked up with a couple of more through Pe Ell, Raymond and Aberdeen. This area was into farming both animals and timber. This is the area of the large cedar trees and there are a bunch. What I could not figure out was why, when they had harvested the trees, did they not clean up the mess? It was evident that they do not as many had obviously been harvested years ago and were still a mess. Oh well, what do I know?

I rode over to Ocean City and hooked up with Hwy 101, not the one in California although it does run right by the beach. A few years ago this area was probably the beaches of choice but in this day and age it is looking pretty sad.

It was looking like I was going to have to ride for quite a few miles when I saw a sign for the Lowtide Motel in Copalis Beach. I rode over, it was open, and yes, they had a room. In fact, they had lots of room. As near as I could figure, one other guy and myself were all that were there. However, it was clean and dry with a restaurant down the road a bit so all was good. I rode on over for a meal and then took a little walk on the beach. There was a low-lying fog bank hanging around so the views left something to be desired but all was still good.



The next day Ma Nature was trying to make up for the lousy views the night before. This was the view from a roadside pullout. No wind and that is Japan over the horizon, or maybe China, I am not sure.

I was heading to Port Angeles to catch the ferry over to Vancouver Island and while I had the

time, I did not want to miss the ferry. I did not have a reservation on this ferry but they assured me they always had room for a few bikes. With that in mind I gassed up at Queets and enjoyed the ride around and through the Olympic National Park. There are lots and lots of very large trees in there. It is what is called a temperate rain forest. Totally different than what you see in the Rockies. Except for the road construction the ride to Port Angeles was pleasant and I found the ferry with no problems, got a ticket and got in line. We left on schedule and the ride over to Vancouver Island passed smoothly and quickly. I had no problems getting into Canada other than the usual grilling about guns and for some reason bear spray.

I have had this before, why the Canadians are down on bear spray I have no idea. You have no gun so you can't shoot them so what do you use if you have a problem with a bear? Harsh words?



Anyway, I got in and even found the correct road only getting lost once. It was quite a bit warmer than I had expected and also dry which surprised me. As I headed north on Hwy 19 this type of view was common. Once I got north of the Victoria area the traffic slacked off and I just putted along. I was figuring on stopping for the day in Parksville as that would leave me about 200 miles to do to meet the ferry. I figured that even if the weather was lousy, I could easily make the ferry.

I stopped at the visitor's information building and ask about a motel right on the shore, they named one and they were correct. According to the clerk I got the last room and it was not even ready yet. I signed up, tossed my stuff in the room and walked across the street to a (recommended) fairly decent restaurant and then back to the motel.

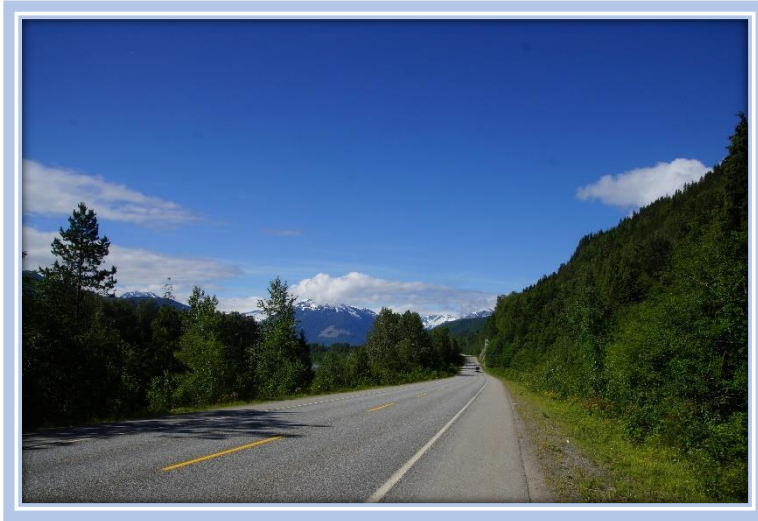


This was the view out the back of my sliding glass doors. The tide was out and folks were out strolling. I ran across two guys and we got to talking. They were from nearby and just came down to watch the tides. Very pleasant actually. By now I was far enough north that sun was still well up at 10 so I closed the curtains and settled

in.

The next day's ride up to Port Hardy was pleasant and uneventful. There are two roads and at a suggestion I followed the coastal road as far as possible. Not quick but a nice ride. The coast road ends at Campbell River and the main road turns inland. Still a pleasant ride. I arrived on time and found the ferry with no problems. I was quite a bit early so I rode into Port Hardy for a look around. That did not take long as it is not that large a town. I did have a nice lunch and then it was back to wait in line for

loading and everyone knows that I really like lines. However, we got it done, the painted ramp was not even wet, and the ferry left on schedule.



It is an overnight trip from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert. Bobbe and I explored sleeping in deck chairs on the trip back from Newfoundland and decided that was not really the hot tip. That decided I had a really nice (for a ferry) cabin with a port hole all my own. Thankfully the passage was smooth and we pulled into Prince Rupert on time. As with Port Hardy it did not take long to check out Prince Rupert. My Alaskan ferry was not leaving until the next day so I elected

to ride inland to Terrace and stay there. It looked like a good road and I had to do something for 24 hours. The sights driving through the coastal range are something else. The traffic was not heavy and I really enjoyed the ride. I checked into a motel, had a nice dinner, looked around a bit and called it good.

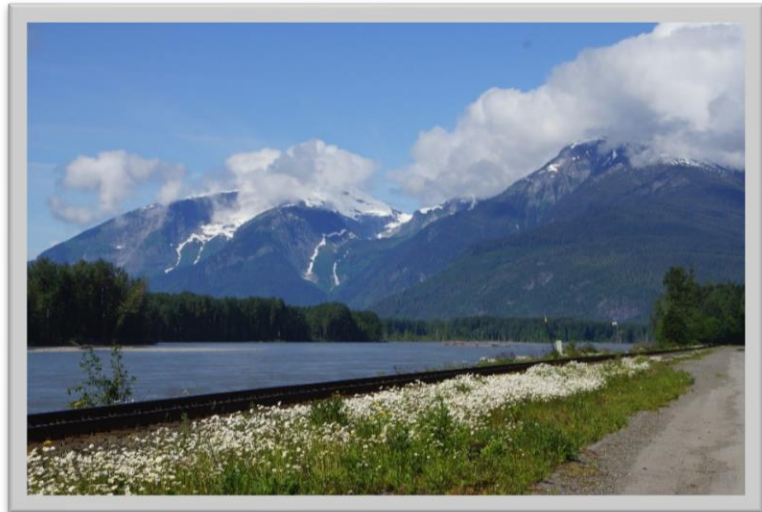
The next day I only had to cover the 60 or so miles back to Prince Rupert and make a late afternoon ferry.

Not a heavy day so I didn't get on the road at the crack of anything. The ride back was also nice. At one point a black bear was sitting on the roadside concrete retaining wall just watching traffic. When I slowed to get a photo, he did not want to pose.

I had a nice lunch in Prince Rupert, walked around a bit, checked out a museum and then went to the ferry. No problems but a long line. Also, the ferry is on Alaska time not British Columbia time. If you are thinking about doing the ferry keep that in mind. On the other end of the country the Newfoundland Ferry is ½ hour ahead of Nova Scotia, finding that out was a first for Bobbe and myself.

Loading the ferry was a bit slow. I was getting on the commuter boat and it was making several stops along the way. They had to load according to who was getting off where. Also, while the boat could load from the rear and each side you did not want to have to back and turn a pickup and trailer around inside the boat if there was any way you could get around it. Eventually we got loaded and pulled out.

Getting to Juneau was a two-day affair so again I had a cabin, but no port hole. The scenery was something else as was the passage in general, but it was not fast. In many places we did not have 50 feet



of clearance on either side of the boat and, as I said, we made a bunch of stops. There were cabins all along the way and lots of fishing boats and a few fishing camps. I took a ton of photos but, as we discovered long ago, after the first million trees you get a little jaded. On the first part we didn't see a lot of aquatic wildlife but eagles were common. Sort of like seeing a sparrow down here.

How about this for a photo. This guy was wanting a fish, and that background is not something you will see anywhere close to Oklahoma.



On the ferry, if you don't want to go for a cabin you can, and quite a few do, sleep in the lounges. Many just rolled sleeping bags out between the rows of seats and there they were. If you wanted to, there is a place on the top where you can pitch a tent or hammock and sleep there, and many did that. On this boat they did not

have a bar but the restaurant was pretty good and not all that pricy all things considered. However, they were not open all of the time and if you wanted something when they were closed there were machines. They also had a theater but I have to say, the selection of movies left something to be desired. One nice thing about being on the inland passage the trip was smooth so the Dramamine was not needed.



We sailed on and as you can see, the sights just go on and on. I took a lot of photos and some of them are good. However, the sun was seldom around and while the sights are something else, I would have liked to see what it looked like with the sun shining.

Eventually we arrived in Juneau and with no problems or fanfare I off loaded and found that I was 12 miles outside of Juneau.

While we were coming into the harbor, I used my phone to find a motel and had called ahead

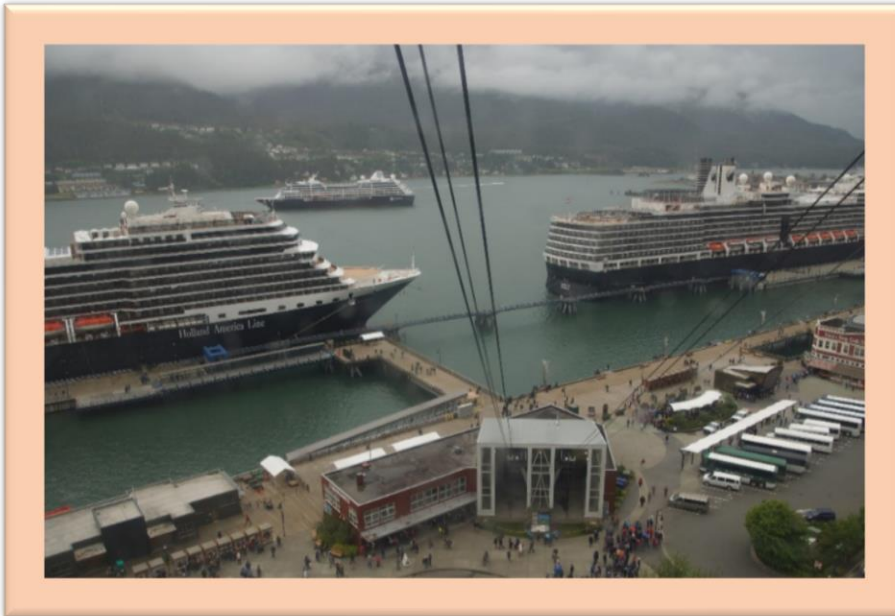
for a reservation. I would be spending two days here and did not want to hop from motel to motel. And speaking of phones, it was and is amazing to me as to where you could or could not get reception. Some of the places where you would have thought there was no reception, there was good coverage. Go figure.

On the way into Juneau I saw a sign about the Mendenhall Glacier so I rode on over to see what that is about, and here it is. To we flatlanders from the south this seems to be a big glacier. It actually is a rather small one, it just happens to be near Juneau and is easy to get to.



And get to it they do. There were tour busses lined up getting into the parking lot with who knows how many languages in the air. It was a preview of what was to come. As I proceeded into Juneau, I wandered around a bit just looking around. That didn't take long as Juneau is not a large town.

What to say about Juneau? It is the capital of the state, situated in a very scenic place and it is the only capital that is only accessible by air or water. Well, technically, Honolulu is also only accessible by air or water but that is a different story.



As it is the state capital, and politicians being the same pretty much everywhere, the main source of revenue has to be graft, corruption and kickbacks. Without a doubt the second, and probably not by far, is tourism.

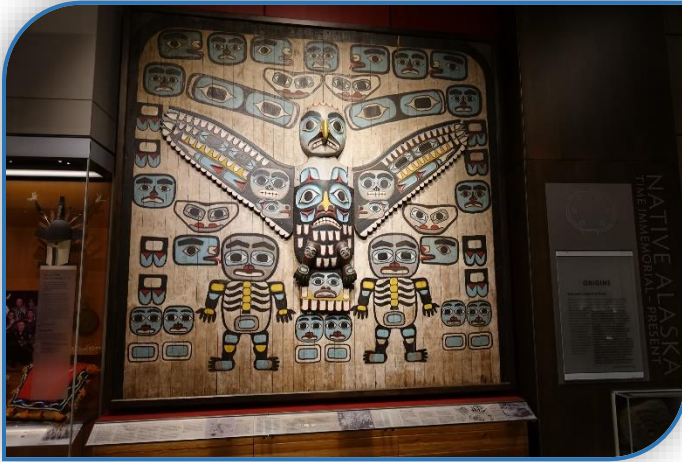
This is the view of the harbor from the Mt. Roberts Tramway. Numerous of these mobile human hives come in every day,

unload lots of folks who run into the town to pick up all of the bargains in the shops, run back to the boat which then leaves to make way for the next boat. Whatever my opinion, it is very obvious that the people leave a lot of money in Juneau, which after all, is the main objective of the city.

To each their own.

I found the motel with no problem and checked in. I was going to be waiting for the ferry for a couple of days. I walked down to the main part of town and gave it a look over. I had lunch in the Red Dog Saloon which, according to all the brochures, is where all the folks in the know go for a good meal when in Juneau. Yea, well, maybe, maybe not. It is different from the Red Dog here in OKC as there are no

strippers but the rest was pretty much the same. A line to get in, lots of noise, local entertainment and, at best, mediocre food.



After walking around a bit, I took in the State Museum which was right by the motel. It essentially tells the story of Alaska with a good large portion dedicated to the Native Population. The history here is about the same it was throughout the world at that time, with the native population, as usual, getting a pretty raw deal.

I think one of the things that bother me about most of the stories relating to the native populations is, with the exception of the museum in Prince Rupert, the story lines skip over everything unpleasant that was standard. For instance, we are supposed to believe everything was fun and games with everyone at one with nature. We are

supposed to forget that the natives warred on one another on a regular basis, life expectancy was maybe 40 for men, if you didn't find a hungry bear, much less for women, child mortality was high, winter starvation was common etc. It would be nice if everyone told all of the story.



This is an exhibit in the museum and it is a skin suit for use when butchering a whale. Butchering a whale has to be a hard

and unpleasant job, not to mention catching and killing it in the first place. However, you go with what you have. As far as I know I have never eaten blubber. I wonder how many ways there are to make blubber taste good?

These of course, are fossil mammoth tusks, and according to the sign, are not at all uncommon finds throughout parts of Alaska, Canada and much of Siberia.

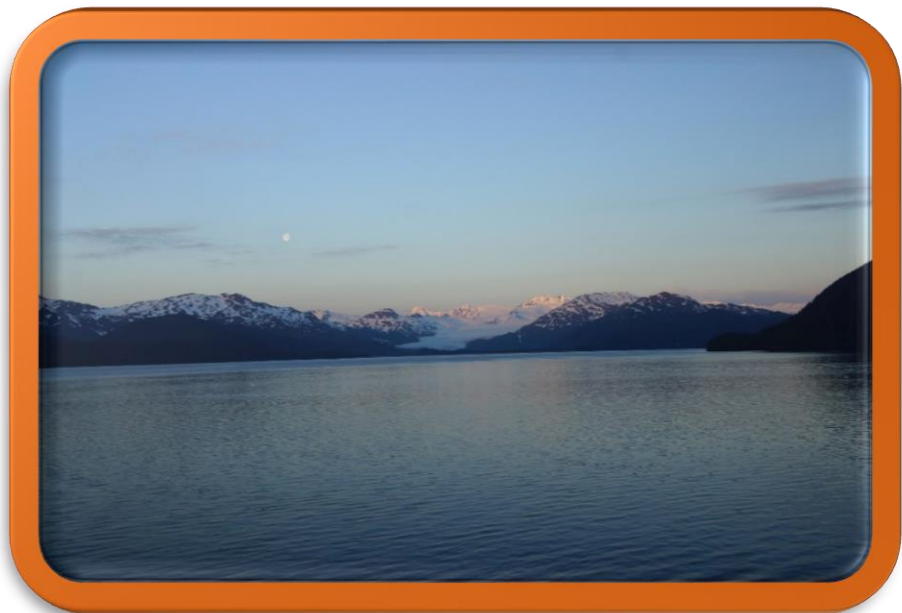
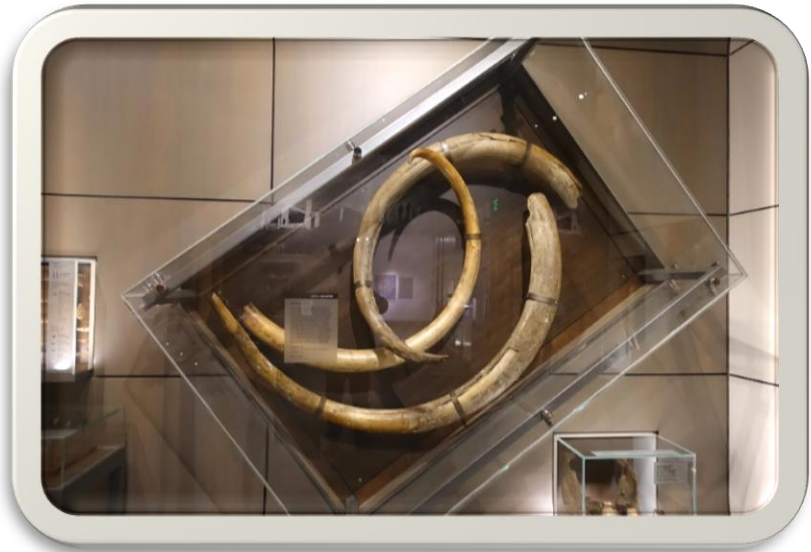
There is a line of thought out and about that the people who crossed to the Americas during the last ice age caused the extinction of the mammoth as well as other large mammals. Myself, I have problems with that line of thought. One, there were not that many humans. But

more to the point. If you were a hunter and had only a spear, knowing that mammoths do not like to be stuck with things, which would you rather hunt, a mammoth or a deer? Further, as is evident by the deposit in Hot Springs Wyoming, mammoths were far from the most intelligent animals around.

Eventually it was time to board the ferry to Whittier. When making the reservations I had been told to bring my own tie downs as they were not furnished, so I did. It turns out that was not necessary but I used them anyway as I had been told the gulf crossing can get rough. I ran the front wheel into a solid corner and used three straps for good measure. The bike was not going anywhere.

On the way out from the gulf we passed some Orca's and some otters as well as the usual birds. The ferry made a stop in Yakutat and then we headed across the Gulf of Alaska. Once you clear land, it is pretty much just ocean. On this ferry I also had a cabin although not with its own restroom or shower. The ferry also had a restaurant which was pretty good, a theater, and lots of books lying around for use. On this boat they didn't have an open bar but you could get a beer or other beverage pretty much anytime. Thankfully the crossing was smooth and eventually around 6 in the morning we pulled into Whittier.

As a confirmed landlubber I have not pulled into that many harbors but the ride into Whittier was something to see. The sun was just coming up behind us and hitting the tops of



the mountains. As this one shows, it was spectacular to say the least. And, that is a full moon. An hour so two later and this would be an even better photo, although you have to admit, this one is not bad. Talk about a view.



We pulled into Whittier with no problems. I unstrapped the bike and was one of the first off. Whittier is small and finding Corbin was no problem. We rode over to a restaurant for a decent breakfast and chat. Then loaded up for the ride to Anchorage.

Whittier only exists because during

WWII the government wanted a way to get supplies to Alaska. Whittier has a good harbor but it has a large mountain range blocking access to anywhere and no roads leading into it. So, in true government form, they blasted a two-mile-long tunnel through the mountains, laid a railroad track, and presto, we are in business.

To this day the only way into Whittier by land, besides walking, is through that tunnel. It is a one-way tunnel with travel alternating every half hour. They have laid pavement between the tracks so riding a bike through the tunnel is not difficult but you do need to be careful. Catch a front wheel in the gap between the rail and the pavement and the results will not be pleasant. I found this out the hard way in Mexico City in 1975. Also, the pavement is wet pretty much the whole way. It was not a problem for us but I would not want to try it in the winter.



It was a short but scenic ride into Anchorage to the Rowe Compound. The rest of the day was spent generally shooting the bull and catching up on things. Jennifer had to work (boo) but when she got home, we went out for a nice meal, shot some more bull and called it good.

Both Jennifer and Corbin were off for the next couple of days. The first day we took the bikes and just rode around the area looking at everything we could see. Bad scenery is in seriously short supply in the area.

We rode the Old Glen Highway over to Palmer and Wasilla but the highlight was when we rode up to the Independence Mine area which is right at the start of Hatcher Pass. There are not too many places in the world where you will see a sight like this.

The Glaciers have not been gone from this area very long at all, in geological time, about 5 minutes.

Hatcher Pass is a dirt road, and according to Corbin I could take it west, turn right on the first paved road and that would lead me to Fairbanks. So, here I was on the GSA with a dirt road in my sights, this was sounding good.



By now, darkness was getting rare. We eventually pulled back into Anchorage around 8 with plenty of light left. So much so that we took a little spin over by the float plane airport just for a look around. By the time I finally went to bed around 11 the sun was still shining.

The next day started slowly and we opted for the quadracycle. First, I scored a new face shield then we went on up to Palmer for a go at the transportation museum and a metal casting show. We pretty much missed the metal casting but the museum was full of old things that were fun to look at.



After that we went over to exercise our second amendment rights. Lots of folks in Alaska like to do that. Then heading back to the house with a side trip, we went for a walk at this place which is Eklutna Lake which is the water supply for Anchorage. As I said, not a bad view to be seen.

After the lake we made it on back to the house and like all good things this visit was ending. I had been pondering which route to take when I left. There are not that many roads in Alaska and I had already been on the two main roads, the

one to Tok and the one to Fairbanks. However, when Corbin mentioned the road over Hatcher pass and how it tied into the road to Fairbanks, I had my route.



So, after a good night's sleep I said goodbye to Corbin and Jennifer and headed north to up and over Hatcher Pass and eventually back to OKC. It turns out that while the road is not paved it is a well-maintained road and the GSA was not even remotely stressed.

If you are ever in the area and if at all possible, I recommend a ride over Hatcher Pass even if you have to do it in a quadracycle.

As these photos show, the views are something else. If these photos were taken in Colorado one would guess that you were really high. Not so here, the elevation is only 3800' and change but remember, you are so far north it makes up the difference.

This guy is trying to hang glide and not having much luck. There was no wind and he could only get about 5-10 feet off of the ground. Win some loose some.



There are several active mines along the pass road, and as I came down off of the pass there was a lot more camping. I did not hurry and after a bit I hit the highway to Fairbanks and turned right. Bobbe and I rode this highway after spending the night in Fairbanks. That trip the weather on this leg of the ride sucked, cold, rain and fog. We didn't see much. This time the weather was great, clear, cool and made for riding. As I neared Denali my weather stayed good but the mountain was hiding, so again, I took a pass and continued on. As a note, there are a lot of folks out there who want to see Denali so there was a lot of traffic, also, it is as much if not more of a tourist trap as Juneau. So, I filled up the bike and myself and rode on north.

I rode on through Fairbanks but I was not thinking of stopping. Now I was officially on the way back to OKC and I had a long way to go. I was considering going by Chicken and over the Top Of The World Highway into Dawson. The problem with that was, one, I had already done that and two, I would add considerable mileage and wind up in Whitehorse. I have also done the south route, but at least I would not be backtracking which is something I do not like to do. That decided I called it good in Delta Junction. The motel owner gave me directions to a nice bar/restaurant out in the middle of nowhere

about 15 miles from town. I gave it a shot and it was pretty good. I hit the rack at around 11:00 with the sun shining away.

The road for most of the next day was not too thrilling, consisting mostly of flat land with scrubby forests and frost heaves. Thankfully it wasn't that way all day. A little north of Kluane Lake I pulled into a pullout and according to the sign I was looking at the youngest mountain range in Canada caused by the Pacific Plate bumping into the North American Plate. I hate when that happens. I took some photos but they are not all that good.

A little past that I passed through Burwash Landing and rode by this memorial. It was just by the side of



the road, no signs, no road leading it, just pull off and drive down the ditch, and I did. It is a memorial to Douglas Twiss II who was 23 when he died. It did not say exactly what he had done but given the size of the memorial he must have been a heck of a guy. There is some fine art work here both in wood and stone. The wood is spruce and the

stone is igneous and metamorphic, hard as hell and difficult to work. But, work it someone did and they did a good job.

From Burwash Landing the road continued around Kluane Lake, Haines Junction and then into Whitehorse. I gassed up in Whitehorse and was going to head out south. However, the clouds I had been dodging all day got together south of town and it was looking wet.



As I had no compelling reason to push on, I elected to stop in Whitehorse. I checked in to a motel and rode over to the Mexican Restaurant which Bobbe and I had tried years ago. It is closed on Mondays so that was that. The motel folks recommended a Chinese place nearby and it was good. Interestingly, the, very much Chinese lady, thought my accent was cute.

The next morning was clear and cool as I headed south. This was the leg where I found most of the road construction. What they do here is rip up the asphalt and spread gravel all over and let the traffic pack it

down. Supposedly, at some point in the future they apply the asphalt but I never saw them doing it. At one place on a long uphill they, for reasons unknown, decided to spray water all over the gravel. As if the bike wasn't dirty enough.



There were lots of critters out on that section of road. Thankfully the DOT trims the foliage back from the road for a good distance so there were no surprises. First, we had herds of bison, no photos of those as they are not rare in Oklahoma. Then we did the bears with mom and a cub grazing by the road. Just north of Muncho Lake we had several

herds of goats licking the salt from the road.

Thankfully all of the critters were not jumpers and seemed to be accustomed to traffic so caused no problems. South of Muncho Lake, on a very nice curvy section there was a moose just grazing in a pond. No antlers but still a full-grown moose.

Even though I didn't need any gas I stopped and filled up at Toad River, Bobbe's favorite motel/gas station/restaurant/gift and general all around everything. Oh, also the only anything between Muncho Lake and Ft. Nelson. I also had a soft ice cream cone which was quite good.

A little past Toad River I ran into a rather lengthy section of road construction that, except for the dust, was no



problem. When Bobbe and I first came through here that section was under construction then and was just as dusty.

It was a full day and Ft. Nelson was a welcome site. I checked into a Motel 8 and walked across the street to a nice restaurant. The next day I got a notice from Capital One that I had put \$151.00 worth of gas in my bike at someplace in Ft. Nelson. How I did that I have no idea. Canadian gas is high, but not that high. A phone call later got that taken care of thankfully.

After a good night's sleep, I was headed south. Initially I was headed for Ft. St. John where I would pick up the road to Chetwynd then south to Prince George. The road was mostly good, the weather also and with the exception of a couple of bears and a few deer the wildlife was absent. I was getting back into farming area and obviously more people. A few miles north of Ft. St. John I started seeing signs of a booming oil and gas business complete with large trucks everywhere.

I turned off on Hwy 29 a little outside Ft. St. John and it turned out to be a very good motorcycle road. Lots of curves and ups and down, not a lot of traffic but a lot of deer so I took it easy. The government is working on building another dam in this area and judging from the signs the locals are not too happy about that.

I made it through Chetwynd and Prince George with no problems. As I was passing through Prince George, I was giving some thought to washing the bike. The layers of bugs were getting a bit thick. I didn't wash it and that turned out ok. I started playing tag with a couple of rain clouds and eventually lost and the rain took care of the bug build up. Williams Lake is a fair-sized town with a pretty view so I called it good there. I found out that there was a big rodeo (in Canadian speak a Stampede) on for the week end so accommodations were getting thin but I eventually settled in for the night.

In the morning I left Williams Lake with temps in the mid-50s, overcast and not looking good. In about 50 miles I was in full gear, including electric, in the rain and fog and about everything else. Eventually I ran out of that and from there played tag with several squall fronts. I mostly stayed dry, sort of, but it stayed cool. That is until I headed south from Vernon which has to be the longest city in the world. Had I known it was going to be that congested I would have gone a different way. There is a string of cities along Hwy 97. They are down in a valley beside a lake and there are no bypasses. Considering that the surrounding mountains are igneous and very hard the bypass thing would be difficult. Eventually we got through that and got into the fruit growing area, and they grow a bunch, one of the cities is named Peachville. They also grow a bunch of cherries and wine grapes and who knows what all else.

The border crossing was not a problem and after a bit I picked up Hwy 20 and (except for the rain and cold) turned out to be a very good road. Lots of fun, I would like to do it with dry roads. As a note, there was recent snow at the top and temps in the 40s.

As a plus there were few bugs. I called it good in Colville Washington and noted that the sun was now going down a little before 9. A first in several days.

Is summer ever going to get here? For sure it has not made it to Washington, Idaho and this part of Montana. I stopped in Lolo Montana and basically had a fantastic, but cool, ride getting here. It was clear and 50 when I left Colville this morning. I stopped for a cup of coffee in Spokane and got to watch a homeless guy take a bath while sitting at a table in McDonalds. Good way to ruin a meal.

At that point the temperature was in the mid-60s and that is about as good as it got.

Heading south from Spokane is a great ride. It goes through what they call the Palouse country. Essentially it is a bunch of hills on top of a very large thickness of lava flows. It is very fertile soil with a high-water table and it grows a bunch of stuff. One of the counties claims to produce more wheat than any other in the country. Maybe, I don't know but for sure they grow a bunch. The hills are so steep that they have combines that use hydraulic cylinders to lean so they can cut on the hills. My combine experience was many years ago but I can see that it would be very difficult to keep the header out of the ground.



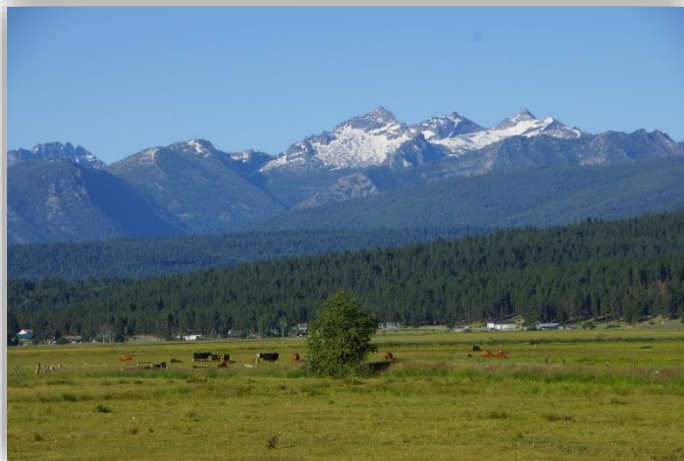
I was aware of the Codger pole in Colfax. Jessica and I stopped here on our way back from Canada in 2000 (?) or so. I wanted some fresh photos.

That done I stopped at a KOA and did a load of laundry then proceeded up one of the best rides in the country, Lolo Pass.

It turned out that stopping to do the laundry was a good idea. While I was there

the rain blew through and all I had to deal with was the wet roads, well that and the temps that got into the mid-50s.

Lolo was as usual, great. Jessica and I first rode this coming back from Canada. Then Bobbe and I did it on the way back from Alaska and this is the second time I have done it solo. Any way you do it, it is a great ride. Riders hung up on the Tail of the Dragon need to expand their horizons. Then again maybe not, there are some roads I don't want to get crowded.



When I left Lolo it was 50 degrees with a clear sky and looking good. And good it was, as I climbed higher the temps fell into the mid-40s. Near the Idaho border I was up over 7000 feet and it was somewhat cold. After that it gradually warmed up. I have ridden the road south of Lolo to Salmon a couple of times and it is a very nice scenic ride. This was a typical scene along the way. The cows are grinning from ear to ear.

It is also easy to make in time as both Montana and Idaho believe in moving the traffic and few seem to pay much attention to the posted limit. A little north of Idaho Falls I picked up the Big Road and really got to moving. I stopped and took off the jacket in Pocatello, the first time in a long time. By the time I made it to Salt Lake City it was 93. Maybe summer is finally here although there is still quite a bit of snow up in the Wasatch.

No much in the way of photos today. How many mountains can you look at? The old cabin was cool.

I checked in to a motel only about two blocks from the Blue Iguana, which was not an accident. After settling in and cooling off I strolled on over for a nice dinner. I had thought about trying something different, but not wanting to pass on a good thing I went with the seafood enchiladas and as always it was very good. So overall for today a nice ride, nothing extreme and it ended in a very nice meal.



In the morning left bright and early heading for Farmington. It was only a little over 400 miles and I wanted to get there early. It was warm and overcast as I headed south, spitting an occasional raindrop. I turned SE at Spanish Forks and the road started climbing. Before long it was around 50 and the rain was coming down. Not a frog strangler, but enough.

Thankfully it didn't last too long and before long I was riding in shirt sleeves. I have done these roads and they have not changed. I made it through Moab, stopped for gas in Cortez and made it to Farmington in good time. Mick Kathy and I spent the rest of the day solving the world's problems, went out for a good dinner and eventually called it good.

There is not much to say about the next day. I may have made that run a few times less than the Denver run but I have lots of experience with it. From the garage in Farmington to the garage in OKC is 750



miles. This was in Tucumcari and as far as I know it is a fairly new addition. It is on old route 66 so the next time you go through Tucumcari, check it out. Also, as I rode through, it was 102 degrees and as I went through Amarillo it had dropped to a comfortable 94.

After 13 or so uneventful hours on the road I pulled in to OKC and rolled the GSA in with its stablemates. Overall mileage was a little less than 8000 miles. If you take into

account the time on the boat it was about right. I had a great time, saw a lot of sights, had a nice visit with Corbin and Jennifer, had no serious weather problems and no mechanical problems. So, where to next?

THE RIDE GOES ON FOREVER

