

2021: RIDING AS USUAL

the ride goes on forever

Here we are the last few days of 2021. Like 2020, it was far from the best year, but also, far from the worse. Again, neither will make my list of top ten bad years.

Also, like 2020, it was a good year for riding even if I did not get to ride to Alaska like I wanted to. In that line, I did at least get to ride to the Canadian border and back again.

Also, 2020 ended with a little incident over in Missouri. I blew off repeating that this year, managing to keep the wheels where they belonged. That little incident was on the 1988 K100 and it mangled up the fiberglass more than I wanted to deal with, so I sold it. I did replace it in May with a 2002 R1200C which has gotten a fair share of this year's mileage.

Speaking of mileage, over the years I have kept a fairly close track of the mileage I have ridden. This year's total is a little less than 26,000. I started riding in 1964 and as close as I can tell, my total mileage ridden is a bit over 980,000 miles. This coming year I will have to see if I can get past the million-mile mark. Let's hope and let's get started on the 2021 re-cap.

January:

There is no better way to start a new year than with a ride through Big Bend, so that is exactly what I did, on the way to Phoenix.

I checked over and loaded up the RT and led off with a short ride down to Temple to see the folks there. Then, I headed west down roads I have covered many times and still like. I called it good in Alpine. It was a little cool but much warmer than the freezing fog and 17 degrees the last time I was there. There was still a little snow lying around in shaded places, but none on the road. ' From Alpine I headed down to Big Bend, it is one of my favorite places and it did not disappoint,

They were working on the park roads which added a little fun. I took the Old Maverick



Road south to Luna's Jacel and Santa Elana Canyon. The Old Maverick Road is dirt and gravel



and I was on the RT. I took it slow and we made it but the RT made a point of letting me know it is not the GSA.

I stopped at Castalon and found that a fire in 2019 destroyed the old store. Sad, as the old store dated back to the 1800's. With the park seen, I fueled up at Study Butte and headed up Hwy 170 towards Presidio, Marfa, Van Horn and then the big road to El Paso where I called it good.

The next day I headed west on NM Hwy 9 and stopped in Columbus for bite to eat. As a side note, as far as I know, Columbus is the only mainland US city that has a park named after a person who invaded the country.

I turned north at Hachita to pick up I-10 and a bridge under construction had me riding down 7 miles of rough unpaved service road to the next exit. No problem but again, the RT was not pleased.

The rest of the ride to Phoenix had a couple of problems. One, a grand canyon sized pot hole large enough to put a sizable ding in my front rim and two,



getting attacked by a suicidal tumbleweed shortly after Lordsburg.

I took a pause for a day in Phoenix and had different dinners with Stacy and Jessica. In between visits I took in the Commemorative Air Force (once known as the Confederate Air Force) Museum located in Mesa. It is an interesting display so if you are in the area, check it out.

With the visiting done I headed east with some interesting weather. On and off again rain and falling temperature had me in the full riding suit and plugged in. Around Gallup there was no snow on the road, but plenty on the ground. Eventually I pulled into Farmington and had a nice overnight visit with Mick and Kathy.

When I pulled out of Farmington it was around 40 with rain, snow or sleet, depending on where you were. Because of the weather I elected to head south through Cuba and then the big road back to the house. Turned out to be a good idea. I made it through the first front only to pick up another about the time I hit the Oklahoma line. A strong crosswind, 40 degrees, fog, mist, light rain, do not make a fun ride. But, again, the good gear got it done and we pulled into the barn with no problems.



February:

Not a lot of riding got done in February. That was the ice age month and the weather pretty much sucked. I may be crazy but I am not stupid. The bikes sat in the garage as did the VW. The Subaru handled the ice and snow with no difficulty while we waited for

things to thaw.

March:

While sitting around in February Mick sent an email about the highest point in each state. Turns out, the highest point in Kansas is Mt. Sunflower. As we all

know, I have spent a goodly

amount of time in Kansas but had never heard of Mt.

Sunflower. So, after an idle

February I loaded up the

GSA and headed towards

Kansas. Mt. Sunflower is

west and north of Weskan

in a private field. However,

the owners allow visitors so

all was well.



I headed back to Oakley for the night and while there, a front blew through and the next morning it was 36 degrees and raining with a hard north wind. As I was heading south, the wind was not a large problem, but it was not a fun ride. Along about the time I hit Laverne Ok., the temperature went up, the wind shifted out of the south and the rain increased. Oh joy. However, I was dry so I just took it slow and made it to the house with no problems.



April:

In April I loaded up the Honda for a quick trip down to Baton Rouge. I also wanted to ride through Twist

Arkansas. Twist is a nowhere town a

little NW of Memphis where BB King

got the name for his guitars. In times

past there were a couple of historical

markers in the town about that and I like to take photos of my bikes in front of them. Well, surprise. The signs are no more. As a guess, the town is very

small and is mostly owned by a local farm. I am thinking they did not like folks coming by for photos. But actually, who knows.

With that bust I rode over to Memphis and headed south on Hwy 61, AKA The Blues Highway. The ride was pretty much uneventful but I did run across a couple of things. This was in one of the more interesting restaurants along the highway. Also, along the highway was this



little cabin. I did not know that any branch of the family got down into this area. But here it is. There are lots of miles along this road and it is mainly flat. I eventually made it on down to Baton Rouge, checked into a motel and had dinner with Larry and Sherry.

The next day it was just heading back to the house. The weather was threatening but never really did anything. Without any problems it was again, back in the barn.

As a note. According to current standards, the Honda is thought of as a small bike (680 cc) but, it will run as fast as you want to go for as long as you want and is a ball to ride. Double would be a bit crowded but, solo is fine. I am happy that we picked it up.

May:

The big news from May is that I got a new (to me) bike. I picked up a 2002 R1200C with only a little over 45,000 miles on it. According to the person I got it from I am the third owner and until me, it had never been ridden in the rain. It did not take long for me to fix that.



I did not do any long rides in May, but I did take a quick ride out to NE New Mexico and up Capulin Volcano. I have been there many times. I just like the views and I like to take the back roads home. I did not take the new bike as it was up on the rack getting checked out. One of the tires on it was over 7 years old.



Hwy 456 runs from Folsom NM and eventually into Kenton Ok. As you can tell from the photo, it does not carry a lot of traffic. Most of it is dirt, usually graded, but I would not try it on a bike if it had rained recently. I called it a day in Boise City and the next day made it back to OKC with no problems.

June:

I didn't do a lot of bike riding in June, but I did do a fair amount of traveling. Angel and Clancy flew in at the first of the month. We loaded up the Subaru and headed out to Taos and Santa Fe to see the sights. Angel and Clancy like to walk and hike so we did a lot of walking and hiking. I surprised myself in that I did not have a heart attack. I dropped Angel and Clancy at the airport in Albuquerque then drove up I-25 for a bit to Bernalillo where Mick and Kathy were "camping". We had a nice but short visit which included a



very good meal then, for me it was on down the road calling it good in Las Vegas NM. After making it to Denver Bobbe and I hit the road to Salt Lake City and a good meal at the Blue Iguana. Along the way we stopped in Green River to go through the J.W. Powell Museum. It was interesting, and in the process I found out that the Henry Mountain is a laccolith. Who knew? From SLC we headed north and stopped at Promontory Point, the



place where the east and west trains met. From there, it was on to Pocatello and Idaho Falls. In Idaho Falls there is a very interesting Museum across the street from a handmade cheese shop. At the cheese shop we had a very tasty grilled cheese sandwich. Then it was over to Fossil Butte National Monument and eventually Kemmerer Wy. for the night.

The next day I dropped Bobbe of in Denver and stopped for the night in Goodland and the next day, on into OKC.

July:

I stuck mostly around the house for July. I did some short-day rides and generally got the GSA ready to ride to Alaska.

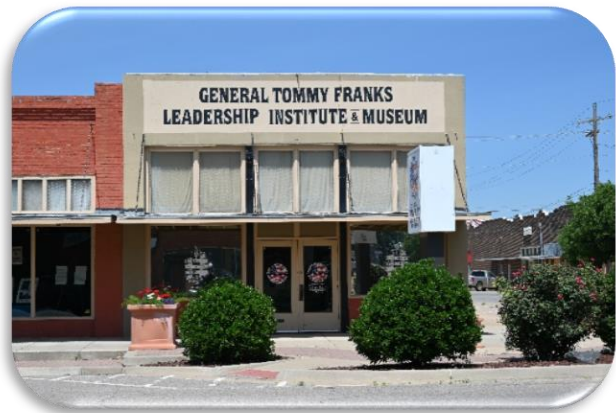
Firstly, the 1200c had been checked out and I took my first longish run up to



Kansas to cash in a \$12 lottery ticket. It was a nice ride and the bike did well. However, it will never be a long-distance tourer in the order of the RT.

If you didn't know, General Tommy Franks, of Gulf War Fame, is from Hobart and has

a farm SE of Roosevelt. Mick brought that up and he and I got to talking about it and that resulted in a ride to Hobart. And, here is what is in Hobart. I don't know who attends the Leadership Institute but they had better bring a tent or a trailer as there is only one motel in Hobart and it is far from a 4 star.



August:

Finally, Canada up was opened and I could ride to Alaska. At least, that was the plan. I would ride up, Jessica would fly up, we would get together with Jennifer and Corbin and have a good time. Sounds good.

I got online and I thought, found out all I would need to do and got it done.

I pulled out of OKC, first heading to Denver down roads I have ridden many times.



After a short visit I pulled out of Denver early to miss the traffic. I ran up I-25 to Ft. Collins and then west on Hwy 14. This is a barbed wire moose at a Park Visitor's center. Lots of work went into this thing.

At Walden I headed north. This is a real nice road, not a lot of traffic and scenic. Eventually, I called it good at

Worland Wy.

After a good night's sleep, I headed over to look at the Red Gulch Dino tracks. This is a fairly new display, and while interesting, not nearly as good as some I have seen. It is 5 or so miles down a dirt road pretty much in the middle of nowhere. Out there, the view goes on for



was the miles.

After back tracking to Greybull, I headed north. I found this display at a closed burger joint in Rockvale Montana.

Shortly after Rockvale I picked up the big road and started making the miles. And, there are a lot of miles out here to make. Fires were a big problem about this time and at one point visibility got down to about ¼ mile or so. Really a bummer as this is a very scenic area. Eventually I pulled into Kalispell and called it good.



The next day started good with a nice visit with Larry and Marilyn and it went downhill from there. I rode over 300 miles and at the end of the day was again in Kalispell.

After the visit I headed over to do the Going to the Sun Highway in Glacier. Nope, not going to happen, you need to go online and get a ticket. Then, it was a ride up to Roosvile Canada. Nice ride up and no line, but guess what? Back in Oklahoma I took the wrong type of test and did not correctly fill out all the

forms on the APP. And, as it was Friday, even if I could get the correct type of test, I could not get the results until Monday.

So, I was back in Kalispell and that was that. Sort of. For some reason, the Park Service said you had to have a ticket to get into the park unless it was after 5 then you didn't need a ticket. So, I rode over to Glacier and without a problem rode up and down the Going to The Sun Highway. The views, while fantastic, were quite a bit hampered by the smoke from all the fires.



That done I was heading to OKC. I

was still going to Alaska but would be flying up with Jessica.

With that, I headed SE across Montana picking roads I had not been on. I did have some miles to make but I still looked around and took some photos. This, I think it was in Lewiston, but don't remember for sure. I made good time and finally checked into a motel in Hardin.



The next day it was not hard to notice a lot more smoke in the air than the day before. I was going to ride over to the Little Big Horn Battlefield and then past Devil's Tower, but that highway was closed due to fires. There are not a lot of roads out in this area so it was back on the big road. This was the day that Sturgis ended so there were a lot of bikes on the road. As I headed south, it warmed up. It was not until I was about 50 miles into Nebraska that it started clearing up.

When I stopped in McCook, the horizon was still smoky but the overhead was clear. Then, it was just knock off the miles to OKC. I almost got rained on but did manage to miss that. I had a nice ride up to Canada and back.

Bummer about not getting to ride to Alaska. My bad about



the wrong test, but trying to hit a moving target is always difficult. Maybe next year.

Jessica and I flew up to Alaska and had a great time with Corbin and Jennifer. The visiting and sightseeing were great. We did some gold panning and actually found some. Lots of fun, but that would be a very difficult way to make a living.

The visit was fun but too short. I am not a fan of flying and with all the virus mess going on flying is even less fun, if that is possible. However, both up and back flights went off on schedule and we did not even have any long layovers. For that I am grateful.

September:

September was another attempt to see the Aspens along Aspen Alley in Wyoming. Several times I have said catching the Aspens at the height of color is always iffy, as it was last year. Again, I got the number for the local ranger station from the state website and after several calls to Ranger Roy, it was time to go. I loaded up the RT and headed out.



I more or less headed north up through Kansas and Nebraska. A little west of Norton Ks., I ran across Prairie Dog State Park. Another thing I never knew about Kansas. A front came through the night before I pulled out so, like last year, I again had a strong headwind. I called it good in Kimball Ne. which, according to a sign at the edge of town is the highest point in Nebraska.

But, my personal factchecker in Farmington informed me that the highest point in Nebraska is in fact 33 miles NE of Kimball at Panorama Point.



I then headed west into Wyoming and picked up Hwy 130, AKA Aspen Alley. This is a very nice motorcycle road at any time, but, again, the Aspens were mostly a bust. But, as this photo shows, the scenery was fantastic.

That is snow on the ground. At over 10,000' and the time of year, snow is no surprise. The road was clear and

dry so it isn't a problem. I had on the full suit but did not need the electrics so all was well.

A little problem with the bike that most likely resulted from the repair of the January ding in the rim. Nothing serious or very dangerous but it convinced me to head back to the house. That decided I headed south and east through Craig, Hayden, Oak Creek and into Denver for the night. Then, it was down very familiar roads with a stop at the lava squeeze up associated with the Spanish Peaks volcanic event.

Also, along I-25 is the Ludlow Massacre Site which sounds like something associated with Native Americans but isn't. Look it up and then next time you think trusting the government to do the right thing, think about it.

I had delayed leaving Denver to miss the traffic. As a result, if I kept riding, I would get to OKC after dark. With no reason to ride in the dark I called it for the day in Pampa and easily made it to the house in the morning. Again, I didn't catch the Aspen's but still a good ride.



October:

One of my favorite roads is Hwy 82 that runs from Artesia to Cloudcroft NM. Nothing real special, just a lot of fun. Originally, I was going to take the 1200C and I did get to Lone Wolf on it. While pulling in for fuel I heard the unmistakable sound of metal to metal from the rear. So, it was back to the house.

A week later I pulled out on the Honda for the same ride. It was around 40 when I left so I had on all the gear and was plugged in. I headed SW through



Clinton, Hobart, Altus, and hit Texas a little west of Hollis. Nothing special, but a good ride. I got out of most of the gear by Texas and rolled on. Just a little east of Artesia I ran across Goat Roper Road. Over the years and miles, I have run into a few oddly names roads.

I called it good in Artesia. I am familiar with this area and rode over to a good steak house for dinner.

Cloudcroft is right at 9000', so from Artesia, it is a climb. Along the way there are signs warning, primarily, truckers of that climb. On the bike it is no problem and a lot of fun. However, it was early so I had a sharp eye for woodland critters. The road down to Alamogordo is also a lot of fun and drops off very quickly. I did find out that Alamogordo claims to have the world's largest Pistachio, and I saw it. It is large and appears to be made of concrete. This is similar to Durant claiming to have the world's largest peanut, which I have also seen.

I turned west at Carrizozo, past the Valley of Fire State Park and the Trinity site and at I-25 I headed north, turned left on Hwy 550 and after another couple of hundred miles I arrived in Farmington.

The next day Mick and Kathy had business in Durango so I did a day trip over to get some photos of Shiprock and the cottonwoods. In Oklahoma the cottonwoods are not known for their color. Out here they turn a brilliant golden yellow. I was about a week or so early, but still, they were trying. I have been here when they are in full color mode and it is impressive.

Shiprock, is an eroded volcano. Everything except the main vent some dikes and secondary vents have been eroded away. It is very impressive. It is especially impressive (to me) when seen from Buffalo Pass on BIA Hwy 13 in Arizona. Over the years I have



taken many shots from there and I got a few new ones this year. Photos taken, it was back to Farmington for a good meal and a better visit.

The next morning, I headed back to OKC and it was an interesting ride. It rained off and on and eventually around Chama I got into the electrics. There was no snow on the road but east of Tierra Amarilla there was plenty in the trees. The fun part was the wind. It was from the west and blowing hard. From Las Vegas east it was a tail wind. The Honda usually gets very good fuel mileage. But with the tail wind, even running past 80 I was getting 55+ mpg. I called it good in Amarillo and went over to the Big Texan, of the 72oz. steak fame. I didn't have the steak but I did have a good meal. This guy was in the parking lot.

The next day was an easy ride back to OKC and was made with no problems.

November:

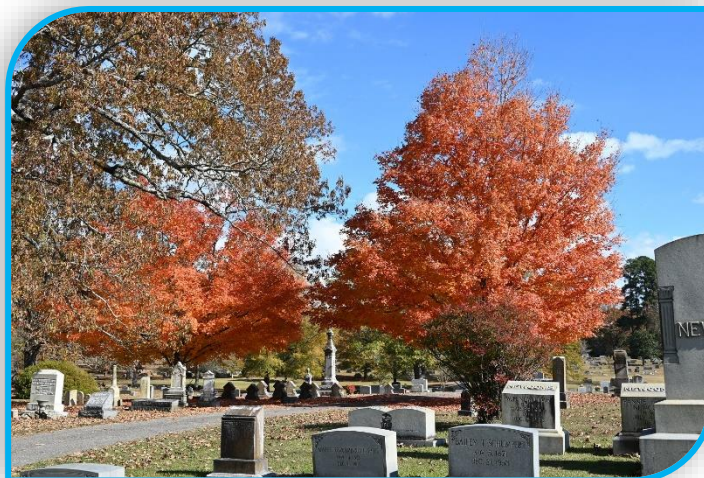
Now it was the new bikes turn to travel. In its previous life it had been a garage queen. Since May it had been shown otherwise. I had replaced the brake pads and added a tank bag and it was ready to go. I was heading for Baton Rouge and started by heading north up I-35. I turned right on Hwy 60, left at Pawhuska, right at Sedan Ks. And called it good in Baxter Springs. It was a pleasant ride, clear sky, little wind and mild temperatures.



The next day I headed east across Missouri headed for the Dorena/Hickman ferry. When I head across the Mississippi, if possible, I like to do it on this ferry. No particular reason other than I like ferries. The ride across Missouri was nice but the weather was a little weird. I started out in the heavy gear, got out of it and then back in. I timed my arrival at the port pretty well

as the ferry was just pulling in. I was the only fare so we loaded and unloaded quickly. After unloading I headed SE through a mostly wooded area. As the spots on the road indicated there is a fair amount of wildlife in the area. With that in mind, I found a deer bumper and followed it to Paris.

In the morning, the weather was mild as I headed south. I stuck to the back roads and just putted along. The trees were turning and some looking good. They do it different here. No hillsides turning. It is a very mixed forest and they don't get a lot of wind so when the trees turn the leaves just drop straight down. These two were in a cemetery in



Corinth.

Heading on south, I stopped for a bit at the Shiloh Battlefield. I called it a day in Hattiesburg.

I left Hattiesburg around 8 in just jacket and light gloves with an interesting looking sky. Along the way I took a wrong turn and got a little lost and it started lightly raining off and on. By the time I picked up I-12 at

Hammond the rain was gone and I was shedding gear.

I found Larry and Sherry's and we went for a nice lunch and visit. While we were at lunch, a front came through. It was not raining, but it was cooling quickly. I was only a short while down the road before I was climbing into pants, liner and heavier gloves. Later, it was into the electrics for the rest of the day. Dark caught up with me at DeRidder and that is where I called it for the day.

The next day was just knocking out the miles back to OKC. I wound up riding through Dallas which surprisingly was not too bad. Most of the construction is finished for now and I went through before the rush home so it was fairly painless. And so it was that after a little over 500 miles I pulled into the barn and parked the 1200C with its stablemates. For its first longish ride, it had done well. A little over 2000 miles in 4 days with no problems. It is fitting right in.

December:



One thing led to another and I am not getting to do a long ride for this month. It happens, what can you say. I did get in a little short jaunt down to the Wichita Mountains and that is always good.

As I write this it is the 29th and it will be a few weeks before I can get back on the road. However, all 4 bikes are working and ready to go when the time is right.

All in all, 2021 was a good riding year, I went a lot of places, didn't have a wreck, and had a very good time.

Visiting with all the folks is always good. Other than the airplane, the trip to Alaska was great.

I am looking forward to see what 2022 offers up.

THE RIDE GOES ON FOREVER