

the first asphalt truck I hoped it would be the last, but I ended up seeing five more before reaching Petrolia, CA. The lighthouse is gone, but Lighthouse road is the last section leading to the Mattole CG at the northern tip of King Range National Conservation Area. This NCA represents the lost coast area of California. There are black sand beaches, and the surf will take you away. I immediately started dreaming about how incredible it would be to someday come back for a multi-day backpacking trip. This would be a seriously challenging area to explore while cohabitating with the bears. I met two chaps from the UK after one of them pulled up on a KLR that he had purchased in Chicago for \$3,500. He was headed to Baja, CA and would be flying home out of Dallas on August 14th. He was on a 3 month's tour seeing the US. Another freeze dried meal, but with no mosquitoes, lots of wind, low temperatures, and an ocean sunset.

The next day I followed the Mattole Road south through Humboldt Redwoods SP, but not before I passed 10 more asphalt trucks with tandem dump beds. The only fresh asphalt I saw after all of these trucks was on the very last section where the asphalt is poured right up to the trunks of the redwoods. After traveling this first 3,300 miles of roads, I have a whole new respect for the road builder. The Avenue of the Giants led me into Miranda, CA for brunch. I



I then caught US 101 to CA 1 in Leggett and followed CA 1 with all its traffic to CA 128. I cut off through Boonville, which is near the northern edge of where the grape is currently harvested in CA. I made it to Cazadero for a two-night stay with cousins Martha, Sean, and Justine. Sean is an electrician who has assisted in solar installations.

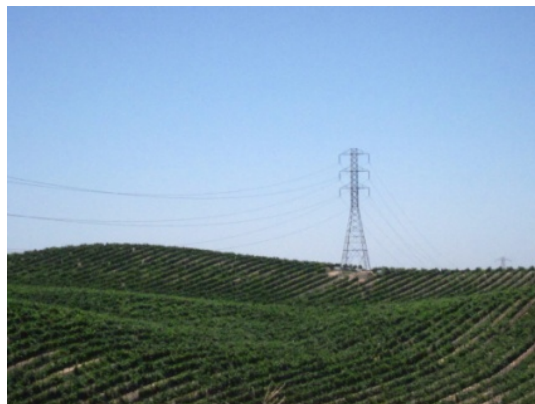


On Wednesday, Sean and I drove our bikes to the 100 acre ranch that Uncle Ed purchased many years ago. The route out towards the ranch took us North on CA 1 and then back east through a maze of paved and dirt roads to the ranch. Once we arrived at the gate I was informed we had a nice little challenging ascent of the road leading up to the top and central area of the ranch. I had been managing this technical riding with my antilock brakes turned off. Sean made it look

easy on his smaller dirt bike. I made it up and down without a mishap. We then took a circular route that included an exciting stretch of King Ridge Road back to Cazadero. We met Martha and Justine on the shore of the Russian River near Guerneville for a few libations, and then had pizza at Main Street Station. It was

back to work for Sean and Martha the next day so we were off to bed with an early start scheduled.

CA 12 out of Sebastopol took me all the way to Lodi, CA and on to CA 126 toward Yosemite. I got a photo of high voltage transmission lines surrounded by grape vines. I'm calling it "Grape Juice." I made it to Yosemite Pines, a private campground that put me at the front door of Yosemite NP. I knocked out some laundry for the first time since Timberline and ate a real backpackers meal consisting of a P. B. Meal Bar and granola with a Squirt and Jack Daniels.

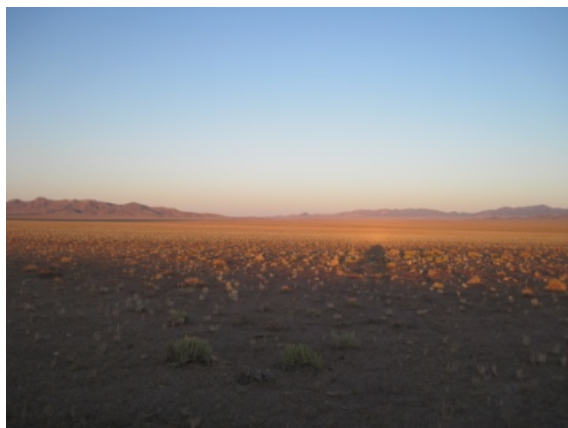


The next day I visited the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir and then on to Yosemite Village for lunch. Hetch Hetchy was a controversial project back in the early 1900's. John



Muir's 20 year battle to keep the area pristine lost out to the business interests in San Francisco. After the earthquake and fire, San Fran needed an endless supply of water regardless of the sacrifice. The dam was completed in 1920. San Fran received its first water from the project around 1934. The battle continues today as discussions have moved to consider removing the dam. What a project! The entire area was one incredible vista after another. It was a little

on the crowded side getting into and out of Yosemite Village. The unique surroundings of glacially smoothed granite keep the folks coming to Yosemite. CA 120 took me through Tioga Pass and into Nevada, to Tonopah. CA 120 is highly recommended, all the way to Benton, CA. In Tonopah I tried two restaurants that were severely understaffed, and after a walk around town, I ended up driving the bike back to a Subway I remembered seeing on the edge of town. Tonopah is the



home of the stealth fighters. It felt a little like a ghost town.

Knowing the Nevada desert might not be the most pleasant place to be in the middle of a summer day, I started my departure at 5:30 in the morning, taking US 6 to NV 375 along the border of Nellis AFB. This stretch is also known as the Extraterrestrial Highway. Getting this early of a start was a really nice

way to see the sun rise in the Nevada desert. The hares were crisscrossing the highway at regular intervals. I managed to avoid striking any of them. The hares had replaced the chipmunks that I had seen almost every day so far. Most of this is free range country, so there was the occasionally cow crossing the road with glimpses of pronghorn antelope, too. I had an omelet in Caliente, NV. Then it was into Utah on UT 56 and UT 18 through the Dixie National Forest to Hurricane, UT. I was able to get an immediate check-in at 12:00PM with the Comfort Inn on UT 9 south of Hurricane.

The next day I made the Zion NP west gate at 7:30AM. There were no attendants, so I ended up passing through the park without being charged. As I approached Zion Canyon Road the highway turned to dirt, and there was obvious road work underway, complete with ruts. Being Sunday morning, there were no workers present. Zion Canyon Road had a sign reading "Red Pass Required" in order to enter. Since the earlier warnings also included "Single Lane Ahead" and "Expect Long Delays," I opted to continue on, taking in the scenery from UT 9 through the park.



There were two sets of solar-powered traffic lights working to keep the two way traffic flowing on long stretches of one lane road. While I missed the best of Zion, I did not get stuck in a bad situation along with other RV and automobile drivers making their way through the park. I picked up US 89 to Hillsdale, then UT 12 to Bryce Canyon NP. This entire section passes through some really special sections of southern Utah. I found myself thinking that in Arkansas there is a concerted effort to prevent erosion of the soil. In Nevada, Utah, and parts of New Mexico there is nothing but erosion. I'm talking erosion in the grandest sense of the word. I have been a supporter of protecting the Southern Utah Wilderness, and now I got to experience it. I especially like Utah! Shell Oil has relentlessly pursued drilling projects in these pristine areas, and they are not giving up.

When I finally got around to booking Bryce Canyon lodging earlier in the year, all the rooms, cabins, and campgrounds near Ruby's Inn were booked. I ended up with a reservation for a cabin at Bryce Canyon Pines. This was a way overpriced place that would be the worst lodging deal of the trip. It was the epitome of a poorly operated structure. There was a window that would not close, an entry door you could see daylight around, and a door knob that could be operated only with a key. Add the fact that it had yet to be re-lamped, and you had a structure that was highly inefficient. I did take some striking photos in



the park, and the view from the front porch of my cabin offered a relaxing scene of the mountains to the north.

The next day I continued on UT 12 and UT 24 through Capitol Reef NP. I stopped in



Boulder, UT to consider taking the 66 mile unpaved Burr Trail, but a description I read pegged it at 6 hours to navigate, and it would have entailed a ferry ride after that. I know the scenery would have been extraordinary, but the ride on UT 24 was special, too. I had lunch in Hanksville and crossed the Snake River on UT 95 in the Glen Canyon NRA. This is a really nice section of highways through southern Utah, especially UT 12 which has been proclaimed a Great American Road. I then

traveled UT 262 through the Navaho IR where oil and gas wells are prevalent. US 491 took me past Chimney Rock in Colorado and US 64 through Shiprock, NM to Navaho Dam SP. It was quitting time for all the oil service workers, and I saw many trucks with orange flags on fiberglass poles. What got to me was that every work day there are convoys of trucks, men, and equipment heading out to drill new wells and maintain old ones or just let them lie if they have expired.



Cottonwood CG is well below the dam and had attracted trout fisherman to this part of the San Juan River. I had an early dinner and escaped to the tent early due to the mosquitoes. My plan was to get up later and put things away for the night. I left one mesh bag with assorted food in my daypack along with powdered Gatorade drink mix. About 10:30 I woke up to the sound of the aluminum wind shield for the cook stove scraping across the concrete bench of the

picnic table. I immediately knew I had critter issues, so I bolted out of the tent with a low wattage amber flashlight and not a stitch of clothes. By then the raccoon had departed with my mesh bag of food he had found after opening the zipper on the day pack. It was too dark to see so I retreated back to the tent for a better flashlight, shoes, and shorts. I ended up convincing the coon to give it up, and he dropped the bag a few yards away.

Before leaving the next day I spent a few minutes picking up some of the miscellaneous trash left by earlier occupants of site 26. Leave No Trace principals

promote leaving your campsite in better shape than you found it and doing no more harm. For some this is a major inconvenience.

Tuesday represented the last of the twisty roads and special scenery that this trip had offered so far. I followed US 64 through Taos, but not before passing the Earth Ship residential housing development and crossing the Rio Grande River. I missed the fact that I would be crossing the Rio Grande, so I stopped and walked the bridge like so many other of the tourists in the area were doing. Taos was way overcrowded, so after seeing the parking lot full at Rolando's, I continued downtown to find bumper to bumper traffic. It was lunchtime and near gas time, but I continued on US 64 and stopped in Angel Fire.

Moving on to within four miles of the Philmont Training Center near Cimarron, NM, I took the short run up NM 58 to see more of this incredible 127,000 acre Scout Ranch given to the BSA back in the late 30's and early 40's by Oklahoma oilman, Waite Phillips. What an incredible enterprise. Every Scout that has the opportunity to experience Philmont comes back a changed person. The city sign in Cimarron proclaimed that Cimarron represented, "Where the Rockies meet the Plains." Things sure flattened out after that. My destination today was Clayton Lake SP north of Clayton, NM. This was like a forgotten state park that was constructed back in the 50's. The amenities were up to date and featured concrete bases covered with a nice steel roof shelter. The picnic structure turned out to be the only place to pitch a tent, and it worked out beautifully. I was a little concerned for the lake due to the amount of algae growing in it. As I was walking around the rugged shoreline I spotted a black mass of something moving randomly along the shallowest water of the shore. As I got closer I realized it was a tightly packed school of fish. After reviewing the photographs I took of it, the silhouette of baby catfish emerged. I had the last of my freeze dried meals in the comfort of mosquito netting and once again spent a night out under the stars with no need for a rain fly.



Wednesday was one of the longest traveling days of the entire trip. I traveled 457 miles to Tulsa with the majority of those miles on US 412. There is nothing too remarkable about the straight line stretches across Oklahoma. As with all the highways I traveled, reducing my speed through each town presented the opportunity to stand on the foot pegs and stretch a little or get fuel when needed. I

reached the Nichols around 4:00. We had dinner out and I met more of the extended family.

Thursday was more of US 412 to Siloam Springs, then AR 59 to Gentry where I cut through Bella Vista and made a visit to Bentonville BMW for a new rear tire. My last rear tire was installed in Virginia the year before. I had traveled over seven thousand miles on this tire, which is good, considering the weight of the gear I carry on these trips. I will forever be a fan of Metzler tires. The service was great, and I was on my way in a little over an hour. I had lunch in Pea Ridge and took US 62 to Harrison, US 65 to Conway, and then I 40 home.



This was without a doubt the most interesting, exhilarating and challenging trip of my life. The pre-planning resulted in traveling a route westward and back that I would recommend to anyone driving an automobile or otherwise. I had to resign myself to the fact that I could not see everything, but know the roads I chose allowed me to see the countryside that one just cannot see traveling the interstate. I drove over 6,200 miles, and less than 450 of that was considered interstate. My first night in UT I found myself overcome by a little shock. What have I gotten myself into? Will I be able to do this? I have never had feelings quite like these before. I just decided to take one day at a time and let the roads rule the reactions. I'm not sure I can work in a 22 day adventure in 2011. The BMWMOA rally is in Bloomsburg, PA next year and I know they have great roads there, too. Be safe, keep it between the ditches and get off that couch!

