

WILD WEST ADVENTURE

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On the morning of July 12th, Pat, Harlan, and I left from BOA on Cantrell around 8:30AM. We followed US 65 through Springfield, MO and cut over on MO 215 to MO 13 through Clinton, and then MO 7 and MO 291 to Lee's Summit. My cousin, Diane, lives in Lee's Summit, MO and provided us dinner, breakfast, and beds the first and last night of our trip. There is nothing like a close first cousin. It is 390 miles from LR to Lee's Summit.



Sunday morning we took MO 10 to Laurence, KS where we traveled through the nice collection of buildings on Massachusetts Street in this college town. Thru Manhattan and beyond, MO 24 provided over 174 miles of pavement through Kansas on the way out and 244 miles on the return. We turned right on US 81 towards Valentine, NE. Keller Park

campground on US 183 did not look too inviting, so after an around about route further north up US 183 and NE 12, which is an old wagon train route that is all pavement now, we spent the night at the Comfort Inn in Valentine. Today we covered 586 miles.

Our third day out took us up US 83 through the Badland National Park via US 18. Once we reached Badland NP, we took the unpaved but improved CR 590 towards Scenic, SD and SD 44 to Rapid City. From there we traveled south on SD 16T and SD 36 to Custer SP. Winding through the Wildlife Loop Road in Custer SP we were eventually greeted with numerous buffalo and parked vehicles. I find that a motorcycle will tend to overheat if the air is not flowing around it, so I successfully negotiated through



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the park and was soon met by Pat. We traveled 293 miles today. We had dinner in town and stayed at a KOA Kabin in Hot Springs, SD. We met a guy with a three dimensional camera setup and he said he would post a picture of us on his website.



The next morning we had our first real breakfast in Hot Springs. We then took US 18 and SD 89 where we passed the site of the Crazy Horse monument that will be the world's largest mountain carving when completed. It may take several generations to complete. We viewed Mt. Rushmore without actually going onto the monument grounds.

There are many sites along the roads around Mt. Rushmore that provide interesting views of the monument. From SD 16 out of Keystone we headed west on CR 753 and SD 87, Needles Hwy., which provided a circular route through the northern section of Custer SP and back around to Hill City. After lunch in Hill City we left on CR 308 towards Fairview, SD and then North on CR 312 to Rochford. Rochford is also known as Irish Gulch. This is an old CCC Ghost town.

The road to Rochford was an interesting dirt road that followed an old train route and creek that included a brief section where we had a six inch wide path between a stretch of piled gravel and the roadside ditch. Workers and equipment were spreading gravel that was still fourteen inches high. We then took CR 205 to Deadwood and spent the night at the Hidden Valley Campground just north of Deadwood. It was a short day with 192 miles covered.



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The next morning we had Gillette, WY as the destination. Out of Lead we took SD 14A through Spearfish Canyon which was one of the nicest sections of the entire trip. The sweepers through this section and the river running along the road were extra special. We had a late breakfast in Spearfish then traveled a short distance on US 85 then WY 34 and

WY 24 towards Devils' Tower NM. WY 24 was our first and only encounter with "tar snakes." Tar snakes grow out of the practice of pouring tar into and over the cracks that invariably occur in pavement. Riding over tar snakes is not a pleasant scenario when on a motorcycle. We all did our best to ride the four to six inch area of the roadway that was void of these little devils. I went up to the base of Devil's Tower and photographed climbers going up and coming down. This was my second trip to Devil's Tower, NM. Just beyond Moorcroft on WY 51 into Gillette I saw a sign that said "Energy capital of America." The railroad is moving coal out of Wyoming continuously. Gillette lived up to its pre-billing as the arm pit of Wyoming. We traveled 181 miles for another short day and were able to register for the rally a day early.

We spent two nights at the Rally and I left with a new 35 degree Backside© sleeping bag, two pair of motorcycle SOKZ© and two tie down straps sold by Kermit, the now ex-Kermit Chair guy. He sold his chair company. I met Kermit later the last night when we were all huddled around the concrete rest room and shower facilities. Around nine o'clock that night the rally organizers were on the PA system letting us know to take cover from an impending thunder storm. However, the initial pass missed us, but later, around two in the morning, we were treated to a terrific thunder and lightning



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storm that moved over and left waterlogged tents and blown over bikes behind. I stayed dry and was hardly disturbed by the storm. By then I had mastered the insertion of foam earplugs that cut out most of the noise.

We traveled our first significant amount of interstate out of Gillette on I-90 to Story, WY. On the way we stopped in Buffalo where we met up with Dan and Shirley who are friends of Harlan that he had not seen in 15 years. We were able to travel to the end of North Piney Road in Story to see where some new friends have a place along the creek. It sure looked like another slice of heaven on earth. From Story, we took US 87 to Sheridan, WY, another college town. Out of Sheridan, it was WY 14 and WY 14A up and over the Big Horn Mountains which were fabulous. Eventually another thunderstorm threatened but dished out little in the way of rain on us. We had lunch in Bridger, MT then took MT 308 and US 212 over Bear Tooth Pass. Bear Tooth Pass provided enough excitement for the

entire trip. Getting to take a bike through the Big Horn Mountains and over Bear Tooth was definitely worth the trip. After a brief check on the last campground that was open along US 212 and a photo op of the small lake next to it, we decided to keep moving. The mosquitoes were out in mass. We spent the night in Cooke City



where they have a continuously updated video of the town available on the www. We pulled into the Super 8 in darkness and rain that had been with us for ten minutes or so. We were lucky to get the last double room but had to carry our gear up three flights of stairs to get to it. Travel for the day was 352 miles. The manager of the Super 8 told us that two days earlier a camper was mauled by a bear and so numerous camp sites along US 212 had been closed.

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We were less than two miles from the North East entrance to Yellowstone NP. It was at breakfast that we started commenting about how large the portions were that we were seeing on our plates and thinking about excessive eating disorders. Within a mile of Cook City we passed a bison on the side of the road. We took Grand Loop Road and Norris



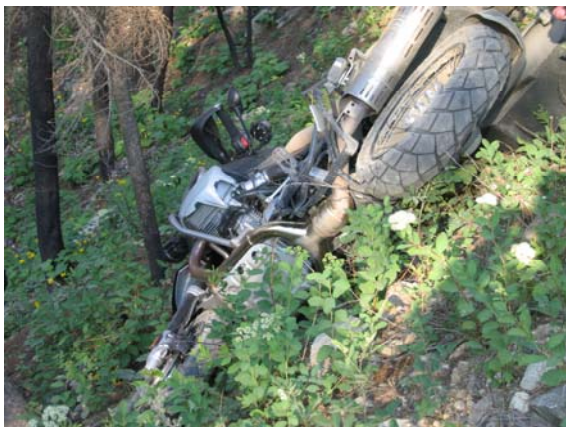
Canyon Road through Yellowstone exiting at West Yellowstone where we had lunch. Our trip through Yellowstone NP provided the usual sighting of buffalo, deer, and pronghorn sheep. This time we saw black bear and a coyote. I have been to Yellowstone once before but on this trip I was able to really take in the sheer magnitude and incredible beauty of this area. We skipped the geysers. If you have never been to YNP, you need to go. US 20 South and Kilgore-Yale road towards Kilgore, ID provided our third section of dirt roadway. We took a paved Red Road South and got a little turned around and passed by the St. Anthony sand dunes near Rexburg. We ended up taking US 20 into Idaho Falls, ID. Turning on US 93, we went near Atomic City and passed by the Three Buttes which was the first real unadventurous blacktop we traveled. This is a desolate region, which makes it a great spot for Atomic Reactor experiments on this continent. Idaho National Laboratories is on this stretch of highway which is, of course, off limits



because of the nuclear experiments being conducted. We made our way through Arco, ID and found a camp site that was within 5 miles of Borah Peak, the highest point in ID. The last site available at the Joseph T. Fallin CG on the Mackay Reservoir was a wonderful spot in ID. We saw the international space station fly over and met the camp BLM hosts, Van and

Denise, who were kind enough to charge my rechargeable batteries. As the moon rose that night it looked like a fire blazing as it began to rise over the horizon. Miles traveled today were 317.

The next day we were headed to Yellow Pine, ID. We continued on US 93 to the Café in Challis which was soon to provide another round of the monster breakfast. Pat ordered bacon and eggs and found nine slices of bacon on his plate. That one was the biggest of all. By then I had decided that we could order two plates and start splitting them. We never did. This had been our fifth breakfast of grand proportions and not the last. We found Garden Creek Road out of town, hoping we could take the dirt Custer Motorway to Sunbeam. It was about fifteen miles in and just beyond a secluded mountain lake where we found a sign reading, "ROAD CLOSED." We turned around and headed back through Challis where we picked up Scenic ID 75 that follows the Salmon River for 80 miles west to Stanley. We then headed North on ID 21 out of Stanley, and turned north on FR 579 travelling through the Salmon River Mountains for 70 miles on the way to Yellow Pine. This was an incredible route that presented us with four inch thick dust, ruts and rugged mountain roads. I was within five miles of Yellow Pine and I had just passed one of the grass airstrips in the area. I had my Sirius satellite radio on with moes' "Crab Eyes" playing and I was caught day dreaming! I suddenly found myself in a curve that I was not ready for. I remember saying, "Oh *?&@! I'm going to have a wreck! And then it was over. Fortunately, I was not going too fast and I hit the first tree closest to the road bed. I should have had my anti lock brakes turned off and then I would most likely have been



inclined to lay the bike down on the roadbed. I got off the bike with no immediate physical concerns and immediately noticed a leaking fuel tank fitting. I knew I would have to have help pulling the bike back to the roadway so I unpacked all my gear and removed the Jesse© bag on the left side. The right side bag helped keep the bike against the tree.

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Just as I had finished unloading the bike a family in a van drove up and I caught a ride into town and employed a group of three teenagers with a truck and a hand winch. With Pat's Touratech® straps around my back wheel we pulled the bike back the six feet to the roadbed. It turned out, that among other things I had broken a fuel pressure return line fitting that keeps the fuel pump from working full time. We covered 537 miles this Sunday. Yellow Pine marks the midpoint for our trip.



After making field repairs with Pat's help that night and the next morning, I was able to continue on with doubt about whether I should continue with the original trip plans. Our morning started with 50 miles of unimproved mountain roads out towards McCall. We stopped near the end of FR 48, and I decided that if my bike was still working after all this then I may as well continue on rather than bailing out to catch a part at the BMW dealership in Boise on Tuesday. This was Monday and most motorcycle shops are closed on Monday. We headed north out of McCall with a target of Grangeville. Once we parked the bikes in the motel parking lot in Grangeville I commented, "The West won yesterday and made us pay today." It was one hot route through White Bird on US 95. US 95 follows the Salmon River for over 30 miles. We did decide earlier that the originally planned overnight camp site on the Snake River near Zaza was out. Especially since it would have been another 30 miles of unimproved road to the borders of OR, WA and ID and the same 30 miles out. Maybe I'll make it next time. We only covered 140 miles this day, but they were quite taxing.



We found a little AAA rated motel in downtown Grangeville with a restaurant just a block away. It was perfect. On the

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same day I had my “incident” Harlan had earlier put his foot down during a front tire sway through four inches of dust and as it turned out he broke his ankle. Harlan is one tough guy to keep riding with the injury that he had. These BMW R1200GS Adventure motorcycles are like motorized horses. By now I felt like a cowboy who was strapping down my gear every morning as we moved out to the next destination. Most of the adventure in a trip like this is, of course, the “getting there.” We saw things most tourists do not see and missed a few of those sites that most tourists with more time stop to see.

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The first thing Tuesday morning Pat called LRBMW and talked to Julius who was able to tell us to get the fuel pressure return line fixed soon or risk burning up the fuel pump. We ended up stopping every seventy miles this day to give it a chance to cool down. What a nice day to be riding along the Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers over Lolo Pass and into

Missoula, MT. This stretch of ID 12 was highly rated and definitely lived up to it. We stopped at the Lochsa Lodge and Country Store for a snack just before going over Lolo Pass. It was during this stop that we met a group of bicyclists who had started their trip in San Francisco and were on their way to Minneapolis. So much for our feeling like macho men riding our motorized bikes from LR! Thanks again to Pat who had his “BMW Owners Anonymous” book which showed a BMW dealer in Missoula. I was able to find a “close enough” part to replace the broken fitting. The dealer allowed us to borrow pliers and cutters to aid in the repair which Pat and I completed in the parking lot. It looked like the extent of in stock BMW parts at this dealer filled a large shoe box. Based on our treatment it appeared that carrying the BMW line of motorcycles was an afterthought. Needless to say we did not receive the level of hospitality and helpfulness that true BMW dealers are widely known for providing fellow riders, especially the out-of-state riders. We cleared out of rush hour traffic in busy Missoula and encountered rain on the way to St. Regis. On I-90 from Missoula to St. Regis there must have been at least ten bridges that cross the Clark Fork River. We made it to a family friend’s place right on the Clark



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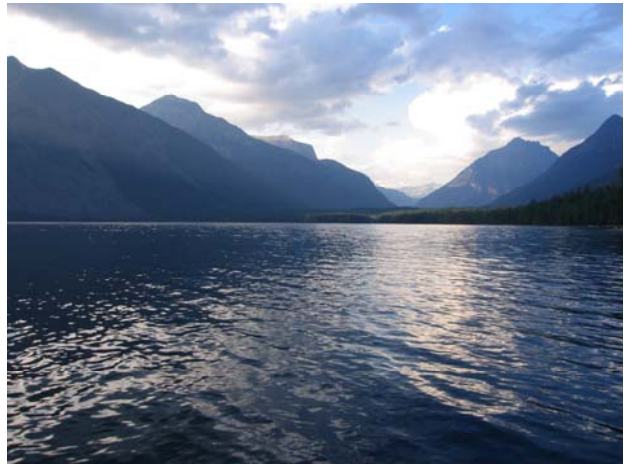
Fork. Vivian greeted us with beer and a delicious rib dinner, beds to sleep in, and breakfast the next morning. Miles covered today were 245.

Wednesday morning we left St. Regis on MT 135 to the National Bison Range. From the NBR we followed Vivian into Ronan to see her home and view of The Missions Range. The rest of our day we spent traveling up the East side of



Flathead Lake on MT 35 and into Glacier NP. It was a short mileage day of only 159 miles. After checking in at Lake McDonald Motor Lodge and getting our electronic keys, I opened the door to our room and found that the room appeared to be occupied. I quickly shut the door knowing we had a problem. An older woman soon walked up and tried her key in the same door and found that her key

no longer worked. I was able to let her in to her room with my key! There were a couple of NP workers nearby who took my keys back to the registration desk and replaced them. Having never fully switched over mentally from CST, we had a nice and early dinner and ended up avoiding the forty-five minute wait that patrons were enduring when we finished. After dinner we saw a presentation on the past and present plight of the Grizzly Bear in the nearby auditorium. This photo is right outside the lake McDonald lodge.



Riding the Going to the Sun Highway out of Glacier NP was another enjoyable experience despite the fact that there was a mile of activity being conducted along the way. There was a long stretch of workers, equipment and material needed to rebuild part of the road and the twenty-four inch tall retaining wall that wraps the outside band of the road up to Logan Pass. At both Logan Pass and

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way back at Bear Tooth Pass the temperature dropped to forty-five degrees at these two spots. We were twelve miles from Canada when we went South on US 89 through Great Falls to US 12 North of White Sulphur Springs and then to US 191 south at Harlowton on our way to Big Timber. We then headed East on I-90 to Columbus where we

picked up MT 78. We covered over 479 miles this day and spent the night in Red Lodge. The last thirteen miles of travel was in the dark, and I was reminded again that I should not be driving at night due to a misdirected headlight. This was only the second night of the trip that we arrived after dark. However, this night there were deer everywhere!

From Red Lodge we took MT 308 to WY 120 through Cody and the Wind River Canyon to Thermopolis. This is another place where the river flows north and the canyon drops southward. From Thermopolis it was US 20 to Casper and then South on I-25 to US 26 near Guernsey. It was an unexpectedly nice ride scenery wise on US 26 into Ogallala, NE. The rolling hills, sunset and the far off thunderstorms with clouds provided quite a glimpse of awe inspiring mother nature. However, it must be really tough living near one of the numerous feed lots we passed. The downwind aroma from these feed lots is just as offensive as the ammonia breeze from chicken houses, both of which will temporarily spoil a nice ride in the countryside. Miles today were 660, the longest travel day of the trip.



We had a terrible dinner, the only one of the entire trip, at the Mexican Restaurant connected to the motel in Ogallala. After dinner I reported to Pat

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that it was nine hundred miles to LR. He said he was going to bed, and I suspected that he would be getting a much earlier start than Harlan and me. We had a small rainstorm overnight, and when I checked the parking lot at 7:15, Pat's bike was gone. I estimated that he would get into LR around midnight. He ended up arriving in LR around 9:30PM via I-40 out of Oklahoma.

Harlan and I were on the road by nine and took 30 miles of I-80 to US 83 near North Platte. We turned south on US 36 to Phillipsburg, KS where we shortly connected with US 24 for 244 miles to Laurence. Not long after leaving Laurence we encountered the worst and longest patch of rain while on the trip. We successfully negotiated our way in the thunder, lightning, and rain along KS 10, I-435 and I-470 back to Diane's house. We were soaking wet having opted not to don the rain gear. Diane greeted us with smiles, beer and a wonderful barbeque dinner, and a nice breakfast the next morning. Total miles for this Saturday were 535.

The last day's drive was a leisurely drive on US 65 through Springfield, Branson, and the Ozarks back to LR. For the most part we purposely avoided the interstate highways as much as possible, which led to mostly un-crowded highways and spectacular scenery that included rivers running along well over half of the roads we traveled. Despite the twenty feet of loss of control near YP, ID it does not diminish the other five thousand miles that we experienced. Taking two wheels the way we did is just an incredible experience and one that I would recommend to anyone with the time and attitude. I always heard that even though I had never had an incident on a motorcycle, it was only a matter of when, not if. I know that I am lucky and feel fortunate to be able to share my experiences with family and friends. Pat Bowen and Harlan Brown took all the included pictures. I spent \$500 on gas. Harlan and I traveled less than 500 miles on Interstate Highways. Thank you to Harlan and Pat who make GREAT traveling buddies. The BMW 37th MOA International Rally is in Johnson City, TN next year. Who wants to ride the Appalachians?

