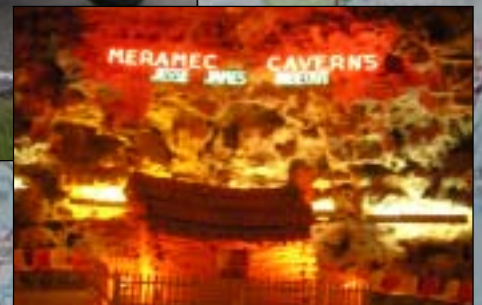


Roadtrip 2003

By: Keith L. Sorrels



Road Trip 2003 – 9.300 Miles - Chico, Milwaukee, Dayton, Nashville, Kitty Hawk, Home
By: Keith L. Sorrels

8/17/2003, Sunday **Chico, Ca. to Macdoel, Ca.**

My day (the day that my trip was supposed to start) was not going well. Just a couple of weeks previous, Kathy and I moved from a house into an apartment, and stored most of our belongings. Most of the moving routine had gone well, but sometimes, when you store a lot of “stuff”, you find that you have buried something you really need. What I really needed was my computer’s original program disks specifically, the printer program. As a last resort, I had decided to download the 172.65 MB program which was taking 20 hours with my slow dial-up service. Now the download was complete and the commutative instructions were being loaded onto my computer. Everything seemed to be going well until, oh, no! the installation process locked up. Well, that was just wonderful. The only thing left to do was to tell Kathy that she would not be able to print for the next month while I was gone. After explaining that sad fact to Kathy, I took care of a few things, said my goodbyes and headed north. Along the way I was thinking about what lay ahead on this trip, the longest motorcycle trip I had ever taken. Just thinking about the upcoming day’s adventure was exciting because I really enjoy riding on unfamiliar roads and seeing new country. Most of the United States particularly, east of the Rocky Mountains, was a mystery to me. I had spent a lot of time studying my route on the map pages in my \$4.97 Rand McNally Road Atlas; trying to figure out the kind of geography that I would be seeing.

Just how did such a long solo motorcycle trip start? I suppose part of the credit goes to the day I picked up a brochure about the Harley Davidson, “The Ride Home”, at my local Harley dealer. The “Ride Home”, was a celebration in Milwaukee, (the home of Harley Davidson), to celebrate the 100th anniversary of HD. Another factor was that after nearly 33 years of working for a living, I retired, and, after retiring, one is compelled to “do something special”. I am involved with the Christian Motorcyclist Ministry (CMA), Oroville Eternal Riders Chapter. This is a fellowship of like minded folks who go to secular motorcycle events to help and serve those in need. Through helping them in areas like providing first aid, giving out water and coffee, or providing activities for their children, we earn the privilege to minister to, or pray for them. Many of these folks are trapped in a culture and lifestyle of drug and alcohol addictions, broken relationships, and other destructive influences. The idea behind CMA is that rarely will “bikers” darken the door of a church in a time of need. We, through our presence at these events, make ourselves available to help and otherwise minister to them. Our CMA back patch tells them clearly who we are and that we are there to help in a positive way. For my trip, I decided to wear my “colors” on the whole trip. It would be interesting to see if God would connect me with any hurting people, who I could encourage. While I am at it, I am hopeful that the reader will consider the story of salvation and eternal life in the Bible. The Gospel of John is a great place to start. If you have any questions about what I believe (or why), feel free to contact me anytime. My studies, investigations, and life itself, has taught me the only reason that we are here on the earth is to choose. You see, there are only 2 ways to go: to accept God’s way, or refuse His way and adopt, some other way. If you have not fully pondered why you are here, and where you fit in to God’s plan, I hope you do.

The concept of the Harley “Ride Home”, was, that there were riders heading toward Milwaukee from four routes across America. The starting points were: Washington DC, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Portland, Oregon, and Las Vegas. My plan was to intercept the Portland group at Kennewick, Washington, and then head east with them. Because the “Ride Home” had a set destination each night, I was able to arrange for accommodation in nearly each city. The way I did this was by finding various pastors and other motorcycle ministries in, or near the various destinations. I contacted them via E-mail asking for a place to “pitch my tent”. As it worked out, I only pitched my tent at one of the prearranged locations. All of the other folks had a room and a bed for me.

As I headed up Interstate 5, I was enjoying the start of the trip. What adventures (or misadventures) were in store for me? It was not long before I would be finding out. About a mile from my planned off-ramp in the town of Weed, I noticed that my bike was cutting out as I powered up to pass a truck. H'mm, I had experienced this before when my voltage regulator went bad on a ride to Mariposa. As I entered the off-ramp the motor died altogether. Well, this is a great way to start a trip! As I coasted to a stop, my mind was already troubleshooting. After I parked, a quick tap on the starter confirmed that my battery was dead. I stepped off the bike and looked in the area of the voltage regulator and viola! The plug that is normally plugged into the case for alternator power was unplugged. Here was at least an obvious problem, but, was it the only problem or was something else damaged. I dug out my small pair of jumper cables and tried to look as helpless as possible as cars and trucks drove by. After a few minutes, a man in a pickup stopped and offered his help. I explained to him in typical man-talk, "I need a jump". Soon the cables were attached to the batteries, and my engine roared to life. Making sure not to let the motor stall, I disconnected the jumpers and looked at my headlight. To my great relief, I saw that my headlight was burning brightly as I revved the motor. I thanked the man for his help, and rode to the gas station for fuel. Since my battery was very low, I choose a station that was on a slight hill just in case I had to "bump" start to get going.



After fueling, the engine started right up and I was on the road again. Riding north of Weed a ways, one is afforded an excellent view of Mt. Shasta. I could not help stopping, and taking a picture. Because of my late start, my destination for today would be the CDF Fire Station at Macdoel. I figured that they would allow me to camp on their lawn. It was dark when I arrived and soon I was talking to Jeff Kinsey, who was the Captain in charge. Many years before, I had met his father Mike; so that was a fun coincidence. Jeff said that it was no problem if I stayed there, and, after pitching camp and a quick shower, I went to sleep. It was a good thing that I had a set of earplugs because all night long there was a lot of train and vehicle traffic.

8/18/2003, Monday **Macdoel, Ca. to Prineville, Or.**

I woke up refreshed from my sleep. The crew invited me to have pancakes and eggs with them. We had a unhurried breakfast, but soon, I said goodbye and traveled north. I rode toward Lapine and enjoyed the scenery. The temperature was just right, but soon the highway paralleled the Upper Klamath Lake and there were vast swarms of fish flies pelting me. Soon my windshield was completely obscured by a solid mass of splattered bugs. Fortunately, when riding, I look just over the top of the windshield. I continued on and arrived in Lapine using my reserve fuel. My fuel tank is about 4.25 gallons. I can usually ride about 150 miles before going on reserve. Being on reserve is something I had not done much of since I have been riding, so, I didn't have a good feel for how far I could go on the reserve fuel. I can say after the trip, that I am no longer nervous about being on reserve, I came to depend on my reserve supply many times. After fueling, I took some time to relax with a large coffee as I looked at my map. Nearby was a water hose, and I washed off most of the bugs and got underway. I arrived in Redmond Oregon and stopped for a bite. While eating, I looked at my map, and figured out a route to Smith Rock Park and also to Prineville, where I would spend the night with my brother-in-law's son and his wife.



Smith Rock Park is an area of massive, impressive rocks. It is a place that begs further exploration on foot, but not today. It was just too hot, and I had places to see and people to meet. Heading toward Prineville, I took the back roads that meandered through lava mesas and alfalfa fields, a very enjoyable route.

Prineville is a pretty town, and I wanted to see the area from a higher vantage point, so I

instinctively road around and found a place where there was an overlook. The main industry in Prineville is Les Schwab tires. Just on the outskirts of town are huge warehouses that are full of tires. While I am sure the town has benefited greatly because of Les Schwab, it seems hard to imagine that they could turn a profit considering that they have to ship all of these tires from this place, which is essentially the middle of nowhere. While up on the overlook, I met a man who lived in the area for a long time, and he told me about some interesting facets of life in Prineville.



After parting company and the interesting conversation, I rode into town to the Wildland Firefighter Memorial. This memorial is dedicated to the 14 firefighters (9 were from Prineville) who died on Storm King Mt. near Glenwood Springs in Colorado on 7/6/1994. Part of the memorial is a meandering walk through a grove of trees; rocks are here and there, bearing plaques of names and etched photos of the ones that died. A walk through this quiet memorial is a very solemn. My own fire experiences provided background information as I considered how awful their last conscience moments must have been. As I was preparing to leave

the park, a couple of local high school senior girls, along with a cameraperson approached me. They said that they were out looking for places to take their senior pictures. One of them had decided that she wanted to have her senior picture taken while astride my Harley, and was it OK with me. I told them that I was honored, so soon, there were poses and the clicking of shutters. Afterward, I found the address of my nephew, Matt and his wife, Amanda. Since they work for a living, I had a little bit of a wait before they would be home. With the help of a ground cloth and my helmet for a pillow, I took a nap. They arrived home in about an hour and soon we were sipping iced tea, and catching up on all of the news. For dinner we went to a local Chinese restaurant and after returning to their apartment, spent the evening hours in conversation until Amanda and me both hit the tiredness wall at 2230, and we turned in.

8/19/2003, Tuesday **Prineville, Or. To Kennewick, Wa.**

I was on the road, and heading east at about 0900 with a stomach full of eggs and coffee. My stay over at Matt's was fun, this was the most time I had spent with them since they were married a few years ago, and it was enjoyable to get to know them better. My overall destination for the day is Kennewick, Washington. On the way, I was going to stop at John Day, Oregon, to say hello to Amanda's mom, Judy. I had met Judy and her husband, Steve, at Matt and Amanda's wedding; I really liked both of them. Steve has recently retired from being a game warden for the State of Oregon, and, obviously, was enjoying his retirement since he was away on an elk hunting trip.

Heading east on Hwy 26, I came to the town of Mitchell, where I stopped at a cafe/bar for a stretch. There were some Harleys parked out front, and I talked to the riders and learned that they were also heading toward Milwaukee for the “Ride Home”. One piece of information startled me, they said that the event in Kennewick was “last night” instead of tonight. Was this true? Had I read the brochure wrong? I



needed confirmation before the floodgates of adrenaline were opened. I fished around in my bag, and caught the brochure on the first cast. To my relief (and amazement), the brochure verified that the event was tonight, and all was well. They were greatly relieved as well, because they didn't have to catch up by riding late into the night. Across from the café was an attraction, a large black bear in a cage. The owner invited us to “pet the bear”, not from the safety of the outside of the cage, but inside. Having a deep, respectful, attitude for an animal that could rip me apart in a few seconds, I choose to watch the proceedings from the safe area outside the cage.

I soon parted company with the other riders, and their “large animal friend”, and headed east toward the town of John Day. The sky had a few thunderstorm-like clouds around, which may be an issue later in the day but for right now, with no rain, they just added to the scenic quality. There was also no traffic, which I always like. Along the way, I ran into a solo bicycle rider heading east. Since there was no traffic, I paced myself next to him, and we talked a bit. He was riding from Florence, Oregon to Vermont. He said he was really having a great ride so far. Before this Harley trip, I had considered taking a coast to coast bicycle ride. This was based on a couple of nearly 500 mile rides I had participated in and enjoyed. After this Harley ride though, I decided that coast to coast was just too far! Still heading east, I soon began to see the outskirts of John Day. To me, John Day has the feel of a frontier town on the edge of civilization. The countryside east of the town seems to be dry and desert like, and the town itself seems to be made of buildings that exude a temporary “mining camp” character. I stopped at the local grocery store to call Judy, and there was no answer, so I asked directions of how to get to the local high school where I knew she worked. As I was preparing to leave the parking lot, a lady in a car came close and asked where I was from, and where was I going? I explained my trip, and upon parting, she said that she would be praying for me, which made me feel good. I found the high school with little difficulty, but Judy was not there. A check of my watch said that she was out to lunch, so I found a bench and grabbed my notepad to catch up on my journal. Before long, Judy arrived and we got caught up on what has been going on since we had last seen each other.

My visit with Judy was a short one because I still had many miles to ride before the day was over. Soon I was on the road heading north toward Pendleton (128 miles) up Hwy 395. I loved this route because the road was in very good condition, and there was very little traffic. The view included forests, streams and small towns as the road cut through part of the Umatilla National Forest. As I got closer to Pendleton, the landscape opened up and became rolling hills that were sowed in winter wheat. After a food stop in Pendleton, I had to get on a stretch of I-84 toward Kennewick. The wind had picked up considerably and now there was dust blowing. The bikes handling was also becoming more difficult in this wind nuisance. After about an hour, I arrived at the Harley dealership in Kennewick. I had figured that since this was a celebration of 100 years of HD, that the company would probably supply some food to help the participants celebrate. I was dead wrong. At this stop, there was not any food, not even anything I could purchase. After checking out some of the bikes and talking to some of the riders, I decided to find my host where I would stay. I had printed out a lot of detailed maps prior to the trip that would help me get to my hosts with as little hassle as possible, and these worked very well. Soon I found my host, and they supplied me with a place for my tent and a Subway sandwich. The place I was staying at was a compound of sorts and a motorcycle ministry.

There were several residents living in different trailers on the property, and I enjoyed talking to Preacher Mike and hearing about their tent/food/camping ministry at the Sturgis bike rally. It had been a great day but a long one, so without fanfare, I cleaned up and went to bed. My desire to sleep was interrupted about every ½ hour by trains on the nearby track. What was supposed to be rest became sort of a torture “when is this night going to end”, I would say to myself as I looked at my watch. Finally it was 6:00 AM and I quietly packed up and wrote a note to thank them for their hospitality.

8/20/2003, Wednesday

Kennewick, Wash. To Missoula MT.



I was on my way again, and shortly after starting, I came to the bridge that spanned the Columbia River. It was a cool piece of engineering, so I stopped and took a photo. As was my usual habit, I like to ride for an hour or so, and then get some breakfast. The road east was not too heavily traveled and wound its way over the rolling grasslands. I soon arrived at the small town of Waitsburg, and soon found a small café. There were several bikers there who had stopped to eat. Sitting near

me was a local man whose name was Dean. I like to talk to the locals whenever possible to find out a bit of the history of the area, and I enjoyed talking to Dean. Dean was not a man of means by any stretch but, he was sure was proud to tell me about the Honda 950 he had at home, and loved to ride. I said goodbye to Dean and headed toward Lewiston.



Lewiston is a pretty good sized town, and as I entered the town, I was busy trying to get a look at the town while at the same time trying to find the proper highway turnoff. I came around a corner, and there was a sign that said that due to fires in the area, a certain highway was closed 30 miles ahead. The way the sign was positioned, I did not get a good look at which road it was referring to. I could see that there were other bikers on the road ahead of me, “they must know the way” I thought, but after about 10 miles, I saw an another sign which said that the road was closed 20 miles ahead. Well, that narrowed things down somewhat. I pulled over at the first place which happened to be a rest stop, parked, and took a stretch, looked at my map, and used their facility. The facility had no running water, so I strolled down to the river to wash my hands. There was an elderly man parked at the rivers edge, and soon, small talk commenced; he seemed lonely. His name was Steve, and I soon learned that his wife of many years had recently passed away and that he was plagued with back problems. Before I left to head back toward Lewiston, I encouraged and prayed for him.

After parting company with Steve, I headed back to Lewiston. During the return trip I had the thought that my wrong turn was not really a wrong turn, there had been a purpose. The detour took me on back roads and through small towns. I stopped at Craigmont, visited the local store, and bought some yogurt, nuts and an ice cream for lunch. On the road again after topping off with fuel, the road was just great for riding. Soon, the detour was over, and I was on Hwy 12, which follows the Locsha River for many miles. The road and scenery reminded me of the Hwy 70 route through the Feather River Canyon near my home. Because this route was part of the official “Ride Home”, there were numerous bikes on the road, usually in groups. Sometimes the groups of bikes would want to ride a lot faster than me, so I would find a wide spot, and let them go. When I would find a group that was traveling at about the speed that I liked, I would tag along at the back of the pack, which is where I feel the most secure.

After many miles, I was entering Missoula but there was a problem. Many forest fires were burning in the area, and Missoula was shrouded in a thick blanket of smoke. I could see only about ½ a mile through my burning eyes.



Soon, I found the home of Gary, who I would be staying with for the night. Gary works for the US Forest Service on fire chemical research and I met him on a retardant project at the Chico Airport.

When I was still working for a living, my inmate crew and I were utilized to process retardant cups on a retardant dropping project. A large grid of cup holders are placed on the ground and cups, similar to “Cool Whip” cups, are placed in the



holders. After the air tanker being tested makes a drop, the inmates move out and place lids on the containers that contain a drop or more of retardant. The lids are all marked according to their position in the grid and then the samples are collected. The samples cups are weighed on a very sensitive scale and the data is captured into a database. The result of all this work is a map of the shape and spread of the dropped retardant for a particular aircraft's, load and speed. It is useful information for both the manufactures and users of the retardant.

Gary had some time off so he decided that he would ride to Sturgis, SD with me on his old Shovelhead Harley (with the buffalo hide seat). But for tonight, Gary had some of his friends stop by, and together, we rode to the “Ride” festivities for the evening. Because it was such a short ride, I thought I would try riding without a helmet. While I liked the feeling of “wild” rebellion, (at least for me), I found riding with a naked head to be uncomfortable. The feeling was similar to when I forget to buckle up in a car, the nagging feeling is that something is wrong. There were a lot of bikes and people at the event and soon, I found a food vender and bought a Philly steak and cheese sandwich. It was good. After a while, the group decided to head to one of the local watering holes for drinks (which is just not my thing). After such a long days ride, I had two thing on my mind, a shower and sleep. I opted out and said goodbye to the group, and headed to Gary's place. Soon I was in bed and my world faded to black; asleep at 11:00.

8/21/2003, Thursday ***Hells Paradise - Missoula MT. to Great Falls MT.***



Today's ride under normal circumstances would be a beautiful one, but the circumstances were anything but normal. Montana, as well as the surrounding states, was having a very brutal fire season and there were several fires burning along our route. Near the small town of Lincoln, the smoke was so thick in places, that my throat involuntarily gagged a couple of times. I was definitely feeling thankful that I was retired, and would (hopefully) be getting away from the smoke unlike those poor firefighters battling the blazes. This stretch of the trip would take us up over the Rocky Mountains and past the Continental Divide. The final pass was Rogers Pass at an elevation of 5,610 ft. About as soon as we were over the pass, the terrain became more arid and turned from heavy timbered land to mainly grassland.



Before Long, we arrived at Great Falls, Montana, and it was downright hot. We stripped off any excess clothing, and stopped at a convenience store to hydrate ourselves and figure out what to do. Since we arrived fairly early in the day, we decided to see a couple of local attractions. One of the attractions was called, “Big Springs”. This spring is located in Great Falls on the side of the Missouri River. The spring flows 16 million gallons of fresh water per hour into the river. This is definitely the biggest spring I had ever seen. I’m sure that it was a marvel in the eyes of the Lewis and Clark participants, and the pioneers that followed. The other place

we went to was the C.M Russell Museum. Charlie Russell was a famous watercolor artist who lived between 1864 and 1926. Russell’s works, focused on scenes of life during the era with many of his paintings focusing on the life of the Native Americans, which lived in the area. Before his death, he had completed approximately 4,000 works. I must confess that I usually am not all that interested in art, especially Indian art, but Russell’s works captivated me, and I thoroughly enjoyed the museum. If you go to Great Falls, the museum is a must see!

After the museum, we went to a historic downtown restaurant/bar for supper, afterward, Gary and I parted company. It is not as bad as it sounds, it is just that I had arranged to stay with people (mainly local Church pastors) for my accommodations, and since I had not planned on there being 2 of us, I really didn’t feel comfortable imposing further on my hosts. Gary would find a place to camp out for the night, and so, we agreed on a place and time to meet the next morning. Tonight, I would be staying with Mike & Ginger. Mike is the local Pastor of a church and they had a very comfortable extra bedroom in the basement that would be my room. Mike and Ginger are about my age, and we had a lot of things in common that we talked about late into the evening. Every Friday morning, Ginger cooks breakfast for several of the men who attend their fellowship. The breakfast was wonderful, as was the fellowship.



8/22/2003, Friday **Great Falls MT. to Billings MT,**



I said goodbye to the Whitney’s, and met up with Gary at a local restaurant at 7:00 am, as planned. Soon, we are on the road to Billings, and the weather is great (again). We both appreciate that unlike the day before, there is no smoke. Our route today will take us up through part of the Lewis and Clark National Forest. This is not the most direct route, but motorcycle riding is usually not about taking the most direct route. Scenic quality is what dictates our route today, and I rely on Gary (since he is the local) to be the navigator for our route.

Our ride takes us through several small towns: Monarch, Checkerboard, Two Dot, and Cushman. This is mainly open country and along the way, I notice a slight problem. The foot peg on my right side has come loose, and I decided that I had better stop and tighten it off before it falls off. I pulled over and tended to it, but Gary kept going apparently thinking that I was still behind him.

As I finished my repair, I heard a familiar noise, Gary's back. Before long, we are on our way again. While this last mechanical repair was an easy one, I had another problem starting to show its ugly head. I had started noticing that my bike was leaving a quarter sized drop of oil in the ground whenever I parked for a while. I was able to determine that the oil was transmission grease, but, I was not having any luck finding out where it was coming from. I decided to keep a watchful eye on it as we continued. Soon, we could see the town of Billings from our position high up on a bluff.



Compared to the other "Ride Home" host cities, Billings really welcomed us by throwing a block party downtown. As participants on motorcycles, we were waved through the barricades. It was a great assembly of bikes, and it was interesting to see that most every bike had some sort of personalization from its owner. One bike that was great to see, was a 1937 Harley flathead in new-like condition. Since this bike had no rear suspension, this (hard-tail) bike would be a real workout on long rides. Another bike that was fun to look at, was what is termed a Rat Bike. This situation is where a picture is worth a thousand words.



The fellow on this "Shovelhead Rat Bike" is from Coos Bay, Oregon. He has ridden this bike more than 1/2 a million miles! From the looks of his bike, he made a lot of stops. A rolling museum would also be an ample description. It was amazing the things that he had collected over the years. One thing that was neat to see was that, even though I sure that the rider must get weary of all the attention his bike brings, he was very cordial and accommodating to answer



questions, and let people take their photos with him and his bike. It seems that in the towns we stayed at, out of the hundreds of beautiful bikes on the run, guess who's bike was always on the front page? Yep, it was the Rat Bike. My host family for tonight was Dan and Debbie. Dan is the Associate Pastor of a church fellowship in Billings. Dan and Debbie provided their guest room, which had its own private bath. After getting cleaned up, I watched TV with Dan, and he turned me on to a program that I had never seen before. It was called "Monk" It stars Emmy Award winning Tony Shalhoub. Here is the Monk website description of the program.

MONK

THE SHOW OVERVIEW



Monk “was a brilliant was once a rising star with the San Francisco Police Department, legendary for using unconventional means to solve the department's most baffling cases. But after the tragic (and still unsolved) murder of his wife, the devastated Monk became obsessive-compulsive. His psychological disorder has caused him to develop an abnormal fear of virtually everything: germs, heights, crowds... even milk. His condition eventually cost him his job, and continues to pose unique challenges in his daily life”.

This is an accurate description and it is great fun to anticipate how Monk will solve the crime while battling his obsessions. Monk became a favorite for Kathy and me. Take a look, you’ll like it. In the morning, I said farewell to Dan, and headed to the small town of Bridger to meet with Gary, and have breakfast.

8/23/2003, Saturday **Billings MT. to Rapid City, SD.**

Bridger it what is termed a “poke and plum” town. By the time you poke your head out of the window, your plum out of town! I found Gary, and we had breakfast. Although we could have shaved many miles off of our route today, we wanted to take the scenic route. And scenic is what we got, the route took us into Wyoming past the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and up over the Bighorn Mountains. We enjoyed riding through heavy forests, rolling hills and wonderful vistas. Just east of Sheridan, I tried my hand at taking some photos of Gary while we were riding. This is not an easy thing to do but the results were cool. The weather was “Tee shirt weather”, perfect for riding.



As we continued east, we ascended to nearly 10,000 ft. as we crested the Bighorn Mountains, and then descended and rode through miles of grasslands. Out in the middle of nowhere, we came across the Spotted Horse Bar, and we both bellied up to the bar and hydrated. I swilled a few glasses of ice tea while we talked to the proprietor about life in nowhere. Now refreshed, we rolled along toward our next attraction, Devils Tower. This volcanic leftover is the monolith made famous in the movie Close Encounters of a Third Kind, which is one of my favorite movies.

Before long, I could see the tower sticking up, and since we were approaching it from the south, it looked distorted and different than what I expected. We decided to visit the park center, and once we arrived, we were now on the western side and devils tower now looked like what I remembered from the movie. I tried a lame joke on the young female Ranger by asking her to show me the hand signs that accompanied the recurring tune in the movie. She was streetwise above her years, and would not participate. Soon once again, we were on our way.

The most direct route to Sturgis, which was Gary’s destination, was under construction. This meant riding on about 7 miles of gravel road. This was a problem for me because rocks seem to get kicked up onto my drive belt where they punch a hole in the belt. Gary’s older bike has a chain which is better suited to the dirt and gravel roads.



Since I was going to be staying in Rapid City, SD for the night, and with the gravel road in mind, we parted company. Gary would be in Sturgis for a couple of nights, and then return home. It had been really fun to ride with him, and I hope to ride with him again some other time. I proceeded to Rapid City, and grabbed a bite at Taco Johns. After eating, I contacted my next host, Larry, Pastor of the local Calvary Chapel. Soon he met me and led me to his home which had a place for me in the lower story. It had been a long but interesting day, and I was tired. After cleaning up, I hit the hay, sleep came easily.

8/24/2003, Sunday **Rapid City, SD, - Local Attractions**

Today I was going to stay in the greater Rapid City area and visit some of the local attractions, but first, since it was Sunday, I was going to attend Pastor Larry's church. Larry made me a smoothie, and we talked about some of his road racing experiences. Larry road raced motorcycles; his skill was verified by some pictures he had in the hallway, showing him doing front wheel "stoppies". This seemed to be a sport far removed from being a pastor, and I would have enjoyed hearing about how this occurred, but, Larry's father and stepmother were also visiting, and we did not have time. In the church service an attractive woman seated in front of me kept turning around, and looking in my direction. I knew that she was really looking at the door for someone's arrival but she must have felt some pressure to clear up (for me) what she was looking at, she said "I am looking for my niece". Without thinking, I said "Oh, I thought you were looking at me". To that, her face became fire engine red. More of a response than I expected. I enjoyed the service very much, but soon it was over and I had the itch to explore. As I searched for the road that would take me up to Mount Rushmore, I saw a sign that said that there was a mining museum nearby at the University of Mining and Engineering. I found the place, and enjoyed seeing the wonderful and interesting display of rocks, fossils, and other items related to geology.



After the museum, I road up to Mount Rushmore; I wanted to pay my respects to the Presidents faces. When I arrived, I learned that the parking fee was \$8.00, which seemed a bit excessive to me. The attraction was worth the cost because there is a lot to see here if you are interested in how the faces were carved. My overall impression of the faces was that they were not as big as I had imagined. The faces are 50 ft. high, so, I think it is more of a problem of perspective than anything. As I left the park, I caught an interesting view of the side profile, so I doubled



back and took a photo.



From Mt. Rushmore, I headed west to the mining town of Lead. On the way there was a large thunderstorm, and for about 5 miles, it rained lightly. I finally stopped and put on my lightweight raingear which worked well. Lead is where the Homestake Gold Mine is located. The mine is the "Oldest & Longest Continuously Operated Gold Mine in the Western Hemisphere" - Over 124 Years Old! At the visitors center, there is a great view of the colossal open pit mine referred to as the "open cut". After Lead, I descended down the mountain to Sturgis, SD, home of the famous bike rally.

The actual rally was about 3 weeks earlier so technically, I really didn't go to "Sturgis". I usually try to avoid large crowds, so there is really nothing in the Bike Week Rally that appeals to me.

One thing though, the tee shirts sale prices were great so I stocked up. I walked the length of the town, and visited several of the shops which featured everything you could imagine related to HD.

Before leaving, I noticed that one of my mufflers was about to fall off. Looking more closely at the problem, I saw that the weld which held the bracket to the muffler had broken. I decided that some wire would effectively hold the muffler, at least for a while, so I went on a search to find some wire. A coat hanger came to mind as the most probable thing that I could find, so I started visiting several of the shops that bordered the main street. Wow, this is the age of plastic, not even one metal hanger anywhere. I looked, asked, and casually cruised by the dumpsters. Finally, I found a man who thought he might know



where a hanger was, and he trudged upstairs to locate the precious item. Soon he came back with a hanger in his hand, and I insisted on taking a picture of this man who was now my local “hero”. Sadly, I was maxed out on shirts, and couldn’t buy any of his. With the muffler somewhat intact, and with darkness falling, I headed back to Rapid City and found a diner for supper. I had the pot roast, which proved to be an excellent choice. While I ate, I caught up on my journal, lest I forget the events of the day. When I arrived at Pastor Larry’s house, no one was home, so I made myself as comfortable as I could on the bike and tried to sleep. Try as I might, I just could not quite get to sleep. After about an hour, Larry arrived and soon this day was over, I really enjoyed riding in the area south of Rapid City, very scenic.

8/25/2003, Monday **Rapid City, SD, - Sioux Falls, SD**

I was up early this morning, Larry made me a smoothie, “one for the road”, and after saying goodbye, I headed east on Hwy 44, avoiding the interstate. This route would take me through part of the Badlands National Park, and through some very desolate areas. One of the reasons that I could take the back roads with ease of mind about breakdowns is that I have some really good towing insurance. My policy will get me from anywhere, to where my bike can be repaired with no additional costs. Before long the scenery was mostly small rolling hills. I stopped at a small café in a town named, Interior, for some breakfast. This was apparently a family business, and the approximately 15 year old waitress, was a carbon copy of the character, “Cousin Vicki”, from the Chevy Chase movie Vacation. With that fact noted, the breakfast, (an Indian taco), was really very good, earning a fairly fat tip. Hopefully, with the money, “Vicki” can buy some clothes that actually fit her since she had obviously grown out of hers in various places. The road east meandered along with a small stream whose waters supported the alpha fields positioned on both sides of the stream. After a while the road climbed up and away from the stream, and the terrain became the rolling hills of vast grassland. Still further east and what’s this? I see an isolated cornfield, then another and another.



The land is again changing, and soon I am surrounded by dry farming cropland as I enter the vast Corn Belt. Along with the cropland are the scattered farms with their red barns and silos. There are also some really beautiful churches in this area. I stopped to take a snap, and wished that I had the time to look more closely. Continuing, I spotted a farm hardware store, and I stopped to buy a bolt, extra large washers and a stainless steel hose clamp to make a more stable repair on the muffler. The hose clamp that wrapped around the muffler and large supporting bracket seemed like a good idea, but after 2 tries, it always broke from the vibration. I also noticed that the transmission

leak was still leaking, but apparently, not getting any worse, I would continue to keep an eye on it.



When I arrived at Sioux City, I called my next host, Michael, Pastor of a local Church. I explained where I was, and he said that he would “come to my location”. I got the feeling that this was a safe move on his part, to be able to check me out before showing me where he lived. Soon, he drove up and we exchanged greetings. Satisfied that the “biker looked ok”, he instructed me to follow him to his place. Pastor Bangs home was a large condominium. My quarters were very plush, and well decorated by the pastor’s wife, Vicki, (not related to Cousin Vicki). I didn’t meet Vickie because

she was out of town at a conference. What a great evening I had with Pastor Bang, his son and friends. We feasted on barbecued hamburgers and quesadillas topped off by some very good “2 Swans” butter brickle ice cream, which Michael highly recommended. Afterward, Michael played on the baby grand piano and sang me a touching Christian song he wrote. Soon, another day was done, and I settled into my wonderfully plush accommodations.



8/26/2003, Tuesday **Sioux Falls, SD – Winona, MN**

The next morning after saying goodbye, Michael prayed for me and I left and headed east thinking about the wonderful hospitality from complete strangers, I had experienced so far on this ride. The weather today is more humid with some interesting clouds to look at. As I ride, the scenery east of Sioux Falls is rich farmland. I could take Interstate 90, but forget that! I wanted to see small towns and rural scenery. I found this on Hwy. 9, which paralleled the interstate just south of the state line in Iowa. Lots of corn fields here and I enjoyed the ambience of the small towns. I was motoring along at about 60 mph and all of the sudden; I felt something hit my right shoulder. What the heck! My mirror had snapped off and now was lying in the road behind me. After retrieving the mirror, a close examination showed that the ball which attached to the swivel part of the mirror had snapped off. It was an engineering problem because the material holding the somewhat heavy mirror, was just not beefy enough. The mirror was an “after market” mirror, but, I probably would be able to get my money back, (I did), but for now, I was half blind and I didn’t like that. At Estherville, my route was gently veering south from the interstate so I decided to use the interstate for a while and while heading east on the interstate, I felt a bump on my left shoulder. This time I knew what happened as I turned my head and looked to see that the mirror was heading for the roads edge. This one was going to remain road kill. With all of the traffic, reclaiming it was not a good plan. Now I was really riding blind and it was very disconcerting to not know what was behind me. Before long, I saw a HD sign and sure enough, this was one of the resting stops for the “Ride Home”. I was able to buy new (HD) mirrors, and soon I was on the road again. While some very fine motorcycles can be purchased for less than what a Harley costs, one area where HD excels, is in rider mechanical support. There are a lot of HD dealers scattered all over the country, and if you are on the road and have a problem, they have the know-how and parts to get you going. In addition to the regular HD dealers, there are lots of “chopper shops” who may just have the part you need if you breakdown. This is not the case when one is riding a Japanese bike. Fine machines as they are, their dealer support is woefully behind HD. If you take your Honda VTX-1800 into a shop in the Midwest, you might hear “we haven’t seen one of these yet”, which would be discouraging words indeed.

On the interstate again, I dived on for a few hours and came to Winona Minnesota, where my next host family was located. Winona is on the west bank of the Mississippi River, and seemed like a nice place. I looked around for a place to eat and soon found a fast food restaurant named “Culvers”, “home of the “Butterburger”. The burger was served on bread, and it did have a nice buttery flavor. It seems that “frozen custard” is really their main product. I did manage to have one of their “pecan turtles” for desert. Since it was still early in the evening, I road around looking at the local sites. Hopefully the vibrations would help my overloaded stomach settle. I gave my host a phone call, and warned them of my arrival and they said to “come on over”.



Bob and Pam were my hosts for the night. Bob is an accountant, and Pam works at a nursing home. They also belong to a Christian Motorcycle Fellowship. Their daughter had made me a sign to welcome me. After getting my bike parked and gear settled in, we, had a good time spent in conversation about life in Winona, motorcycle ministries, etc. All too soon the time had slipped away and it was time for sleep.



8/27/2003, Wednesday – Winona, MN to West Bend, Wisconsin



My day started early at 5:45 AM when I woke up feeling refreshed and ready to ride. Soon, I was starting the bike, and trying to be as quiet as possible because of the close neighbors. My initial destination was La Crosse, WI, where I would stop for breakfast. After that, I headed to an attraction that my Mom told me about called the, “The House on the Rock”, located about 50 miles west of Madison, the capitol of Wisconsin. For motorcycle riding, I think Wisconsin is the most scenic

state that I have visited. The highway wove its way through rolling hills and valleys, and each new summit provided yet another “Rockwell” type farm scene; with their red barns and silos. Along the route, I saw a small log cabin for sale at the side of the road. It was so cute, I had to stop and take a look. It was very compact with a loft at both ends. The cost was \$12,000 on your lot which seemed pretty reasonable.



The House on the Rock defies description. My Mom had a hard time telling me what it was, and now that I’ve been there, I can understand her problem. About the best I could come up with is to copy the description from their website. ***“The world-famous attraction is home to over 2 ½ miles of one-of-a-kind exhibits and collections featuring the Infinity room, world’s largest carousel, animated music machines and hundreds more!”*** It is a collection of collections that you visit by walking a continuous meandering path. The photo here on the right is a room that is cantilevered over the top of the woods. When you are at the extreme end, there is a noticeable disconcerting sway. This place is a must see if you are in the area.



After touring the “House”, I headed to West Bend, WI, which is about 30 miles north of Milwaukee. I had made reservations to camp at a YMCA camp, which was located on an old farm complete with old barns and a pond. CMA was taking over the camp for the weekend so there were other folks who belong to the same motorcycle ministry that I do. There were about 50 CMA’ers camping here from all over the country. One that I got to know was Tim, who had a remarkable Honda Goldwing, as you can see in the photo. I am sure that his bike is easily seen at night. Tim lives in Milwaukee and I really enjoyed talking to him. I went to bed early tonight. The day had been long and now the night was cool, a good combination for sleep.



8/28/2003, Thursday – West Bend, Wisconsin

After waking and getting cleaned up, I headed over to the large barn where several CMA’ers were gathered to have a cup of coffee and discuss what venues are being presented, and which to attend. Since I usually try to avoid large crowds, my plan was to ride to the EAA Air Museum in Oshkosh, WI. In the meeting, I learned that at a nearby town, there was going to be a free bike wash. With all the miles behind me on this trip, I thought this sounded like a great idea. There were some others who were going to the “wash”, so I made arrangements to follow them and soon, we were there. I parked my bike under the canopy and removed my bags, and met the person who was going to wash my filthy bike. I asked him if he wanted my help and he said, “no thanks”, and that there was coffee and muffins “over yonder”. Since I had not had any breakfast, I headed over toward the food and enjoyed a muffin while talking to some of the other bikers who were also getting a free wash. The free wash was held at a church and this was a way for them to serve, and perhaps have an opportunity to talk to the bikers about the gospel. Their gospel approach was passive with some gospel related reading materials, handy near the food. I know those who had their bikes washed that day really appreciated it. When I was leaving, the man who had washed my bike gave me a clean towel for wiping off the excess water that would appear once I started down the road. Wow! That was really a nice gesture.



The EAA Museum was really great, a lot of familiar aircraft, and loads of unusual ones that I had never seen. I found out that they were giving rides in an ancient Ford Tri-Motor for \$30.00. Wow, I want to do that! Unfortunately, before I could get my ride into history, the wind came up, and the rides were canceled for the day. Bummer! On the way back to camp, I eyed the many fireworks stores along the way. Being raised on the west coast where fireworks were verboten, I really never got my fill. I somehow resisted the need to shop figuring that I did not have room, nor would they be legal in many of the other states that I planned to

visit. I seem just a little old for this stuff anyway, although, I am still curious on what types of fireworks they sold, well, perhaps another time. After eating, I rode back to the camp and being mainly tired, I cleaned up and went to bed.

8/29/2003, Friday – West Bend, Wisconsin



Up at 7:00 AM and we have mostly clear skies today. After the usual morning routine was completed, I road with several other CMA'ers to the HD Motor Assembly Plant in Milwaukee. Among other things to see, there was a pancake breakfast. It seems that there were a few others who decided to do the same thing. There was a Harley traffic jam on the way in. When we were through with breakfast, I decided to part company with the others, and strike out on my own to tour the Milwaukee area, but, there was a slight problem. I was having a difficult time finding my bike. When you have a parking lot with a thousand plus bikes, well, you get the

picture. One thing about finding your Harley though that is different than looking for your car, is that wondering around in a parking lot of Harleys can be disguised as “checking out the other bikes”. As I nonchalantly admired the various mechanical creations, soon I found one I really liked: MINE. It was where I thought it was, but somehow, missed it on the first pass. It was fun to look at the other bikes. I am always trying to find bikes of the same vintage as mine, which is a 1990. I don't know what has happened to all of the bikes built in the late 1980's or early 1990's, because what I find at most gatherings of bikes are new ones. Where are the older ones?



Soon, I was free of the event traffic and set to explore Milwaukee. I was riding along taking in the neighborhoods when I saw a sign that said, “Free Barbeque for Bikers”. Intrigued by seeing two of my favorite words together, I decided to investigate. What was going on was, that on the spur of the moment, a local heating and air conditioner shop owner, had decided to whip up some “brats” for whoever would stop. So while I had a nice conversation with the owner, I filled myself with a couple of brats. I think this outpouring of goodwill was typical of the feeling of the area toward all the bikers attending the Ride Home.

After saying goodbye to my lunch hosts, I headed east to find the shore of Lake Michigan. My plan was to ride along the shore as much as possible. I finally came to a road which paralleled the lake and rode for awhile. Here and there, were small groups of folks gathered along the road watching the bikes motor by. That looked like fun so I found a mom and her kids who were waving at all the bikers, parked, and joined them. I always like to talk to the local people to find out what it is like to live there, and how they get through the winters. There where a lot of bikes going by, and it was fun to hear, see, and wave to them. After a while, it was time to move on so I headed north. I had figured that there would be a road next to the lake, but as I proceeded further, I found that the main highway was away from the lake, and what was next to the lake, was neighborhoods. I went into one of these neighborhoods and this one was pretty exclusive because its access was through a golf course. Soon I was on a great road next to the lake (behind the houses), but shortly, I came to a dead-end. Rats, I always hate going back the same way.

As I turned around, there was a man walking along the road so I said to him that “this is sure a pretty area”. He seemed friendly and soon I had to turn off my motor as our conversation bloomed. The man’s name was Ron, and he invited me to see his place which was right on the shore of the lake.

Soon he was serving me some ice tea and we were enjoying the view. Ron was for many years a professional ice skating coach, and traveled with the Ice Capades for 4 years. While we were sitting, an



elderly man carrying a kayak walked up and asked if he could possibly have a ride to his car in Port Washington, a few miles away. It seemed that while he was out in his kayak, the wind had come up and it was too rough for him to paddle home. Ron said, “sure”, and invited me along. After we dropped off the kayaker, Ron gave me a tour of the town and told me some of the local history. It was really a bonus to meet Ron; I loved the wonderful flowers that he had in his garden, and the view was wow!



After saying goodbye to Ron, I headed back to West Bend. I wanted to get something to eat but I wanted something that the locals like. After filling my fuel tank, I asked the clerk where a good place to eat was and she gave me directions to a local drive in. This was a popular place, and I ask some others diners “what is good to eat here?” I was told that the fish sandwich was a good catch, so that is what I had. It was very good. I had a nice conversation with a couple that lived in the area and finished my meal with a frozen custard concoction called a “dusty road”. Soon I was back at camp and some of the CMA’ers invited me to share their campfire and popcorn with them. It sure is neat to have people that feel like family, so far away from home. One of the people I met at the campfire was Linn. Linn is the President of a CMA chapter in Michigan. I had found out that she was planning on taking the car ferry across Lake Michigan the next day, like me. I was glad someone else was going that way, that meant, that I did not have to worry about how to get to the ferry; I would just follow her. But just before bedtime, I met up with Linn again and learned that she had decided to ride around the northern part of Lake Michigan. On a positive note though, Linn knowing that she would not be using her tie down straps, gave them to me to use, and also gave me some specific directions to the ferry landing. By bedtime, the sky had turned dark and looked threatening. I hoped that it would not rain tonight and it didn’t.



8/30/2003, Saturday – West Bend, Wisconsin to Muskegon



My day started earlier than usual when I woke up at 4:30 AM, and could not get back to sleep. I decided to get up and went to the restrooms, took a shower and did my morning routine. Since it was still dark when I got back to my tent, I went back to sleep. Later, at a more appropriate time, I woke up again for the second time. I got all of my stuff packed up onto the bike, and after saying goodbye, I headed toward Manitowoc, which was located about 25 miles north of Sheboygan (if you know where Sheboygan is). Before embarking, I grabbed some breakfast at McDonalds then headed to the landing.

The ferry I was going to ride on was one of the last two coal burning steam ferries on Lake Michigan. After securing my ticket, I got in line along with several other motorcyclists that were crossing with me. Soon, we all road aboard and our bikes were positioned over some heavy metal grates. The grates were ideal to tie our bikes onto so they could safely ride out the voyage.



Making my way up into the ship, I soon found a couple to sit with for a while. Their names were Rich and Maggie, from Grand Rapids Michigan. I enjoyed talking to them and answering questions they had about my trip and where I was heading. After a while I made my way back to some seating at the rear of the ferry and caught up on my journal. Before long, the 2 hour voyage was over and we were approaching our destination, which was Ludington, Michigan. My eventual destination for the day was Mel's home, near Muskegon Michigan. Mel and his wife were not going to return until the following day, but they said that I could camp on their property. After eating out, I found Mel's place with no problem and was greeted by Mel's son, Mack and his girlfriend. After introducing myself, I found a spot for the tent and started setting it up. I soon got the feeling that there was not much happening in Muskegon that evening because Mack and his friend stood by and watched me get settled in. They seemed to be made for each other, Mack was acting goofy, and his girlfriend was silly. I also noted that they were physically "all over" each other. Now that I was in the center ring and feeling the heat of the limelight, I gave them a show with the quick deployment of my Camel 60 second tent. They were amazed and astounded for at least a couple of minutes. As my show wound down, they said goodnight in their own, "touchy, feely", way and left me to my own devices, one of which was an MP3 music player which lulled me to sleep.

8/31/2003, Sunday – Muskegon, Michigan to Dayton, Ohio

Morning time came at about 6 AM and soon, Mel was out to see me. He and his wife had decided to go ahead and drive home instead of waiting another day and they arrived about midnight unbeknownst to me. After I took a shower, Mel fixed me blueberry pancakes and shared with me the story of his son Mack. It seems that Mack is 17 and recently moved out and tried to make it on his own. He soon lost his job and things went from bad, to worse, when he befriended an 18 year old, abandoned runaway, who hadn't seen her mom since she was 12. The only thing she seemed to have going for her, was her waif-like sex appeal, in which she was using to play Mack. Mel was a father with a breaking heart and was on the verge of "kicking Mack and the waif out". This is a very difficult situation for a father who had tried to raise his son in a responsible manner. Before I left, I prayed with Mel and asked for wisdom for Him in dealing with the situation.



Back on the road again, my route would take me down to Holland, where I would pick up a highway and head to Battle Creek, Michigan, known for being the home of Kellogg's Cereal. Along the way I saw some really neat buildings like an old school that was now a bed and breakfast. When I arrived at Battle Creek, I noticed that for several blocks, that there were many deserted store fronts and the area was blighted. I did not make it into the heart of the city to see what was really going on, but it looked like the area was not doing very well economically. I had not noticed this anywhere else on my trip. Continuing south, I noticed that the sky was getting darker and it

looked like some rain might be in my future.

I stopped at Wal-Mart in a town called Coldwater to get some plastic bags in order to rig my gear for rain. Now carefully prepared for rain, I headed south into Indiana where it started raining. Thankfully, the rain remained very light, even as I rode into my destination, the KOA campground located about 20 miles West of Dayton, Ohio. After setting up camp, I rode east along the Interstate, and found a restaurant; I also called my friend, Chuck Drysdon, and made plans to meet at the Air Force's Dayton Air Museum the next day. Chuck is a medical doctor that I had met and made friends with, on one of my trips to Israel. It was going to be fun to see him again, this time, on his own turf. After eating, I rode back to the KOA in the dark and tucked in for the night.

9/1/2003, Monday – Dayton, Ohio – USFS Air Museum



This morning after I broke camp, I headed into Dayton to the USFS Air Museum. I found it without any problem since I had taken the time to make a Map-Quest map for the occasion. I met Chuck and we took the tour. What a fantastic collection of both old and new aircraft. Meanwhile, the rain showers began and at times were very heavy. At the end of our tour, we decided to go get something to eat and Chuck drove me to the Golden Lamb Hotel and Restaurant located in Lebanon, Ohio. This hotel and tavern is billed as the oldest inn in Ohio, was established in 1803. Before eating, we took a

look around at the rooms. More than a few people of note have stayed at the hotel including, Charles Dickens, William McKinley, John Quincy Adams, Warren G. Harding, and Ulysses S. Grant. The place was so strongly filled with historical ambience, you could almost feel it. The meal consisted of roast duck, which was delicious. After eating, we drove back to the museum to retrieve my bike. By the time we arrived at the museum, not only was it constantly raining with some very heavy showers, we found the gate to the museum parking lot was locked, I could see my bike through the rain, but we were definitely locked out. Next door to the museum is the Air Force Base, and it seemed reasonable that they would probably be able to let us in to get the bike, so we headed over to the guard shack and explained our situation. It took nearly an hour before permission was obtained and personal found that could escort us to the bike.



While we were waiting, darkness fell along with the rain and I pondered the 50 mile ride to Chuck's house. Let's see, unfamiliar roads, heavy rain showers, and its dark. Strike three! I decided that access or not, I wasn't riding tonight. Chuck volunteered his car trailer the following day to retrieve the bike, and that sounded like a good idea. Finally, the Air Force Guard let us in to the bike, and we collected and stored the very soggy gear into the back of Chuck's truck. The bike looked a bit lonely as we pulled away but, at least I felt better. After what seemed to be the endless drive

through some very heavy downpours, we arrived at Chuck's house and I was introduced to Chuck's wife, Trease. Their house was built as a lodge in 1860, with brick walls 18" thick. My room was upstairs and was decorated in an Americana theme, it was really neat and like the Golden Lamb Hotel, it all felt very historical. Who knows the people who had stayed here? I'm sure that the walls contained some interesting stories, but they weren't telling.



8/2/2003, Tuesday – **Chuck’s House**

The next morning I had the grand tour of the house, and we looked at some computer software featuring satellite maps of Israel that would allow the user to do virtual fly-bys. Soon we went to the Air Museum to get the bike, which was a rather uneventful trip. After returning, Chuck and I went to his office and then out for some excellent Chinese food. By the time we arrived home, it was time for a shower and bed



9/1/2003, Wednesday – **Kingston, Ohio to Versailles, Kentucky**

The rain had diminished into occasional light showers today. It looked like a good day to ride, but first, I had some mechanical maintenance to do. It was time for an oil change, so I road the bike to Chuck’s other old house, which has a big barn. After finding the necessary tools, the oil was changed. Soon I was all packed up and ready to roll. By the time I got on the road, it was almost time for lunch. Chuck is one of the most interesting people I know, brilliant and if I started telling of all the unusual adventures he has had in his life, my story of this trip would soon be lost to Chuck’s. So I am not going to do that. Suffice it to say my life has been greatly enriched by knowing him.

Finally, it was time to go. The first leg of today’s ride would take me to Chillicothe via Hwy 50, then to the scenic route of Hwy. 41 to Maysville, KY. The riding scene is very green and beautiful. Occasionally, there a little bit of rain and about the time I am considering stopping and putting on my raingear, the rain stops. There is just enough rain to keep the roadway wet, and it wasn’t before long that I discovered an unusual road hazard. This is Amish country and sure enough like Chuck warned, I came across a couple of heavily laden horse drawn wagons on the roadway, an interesting sight. The Amish method of travel also presents another hazard for motorcyclists especially, fresh road apples on a wet roadway. After feeling my rear tire go a bit sideways, courtesy of a load of these things, I learned to keep a keen eye out for these “manure bombs”. Despite these added hazards, the ride was very nice, and soon I was crossing Ohio River into Maysville, Kentucky. At this time of the day I had a hankering for a pastry and some coffee so I cruised through the old downtown and looked for a bakery.



I really enjoyed looking at the old brick buildings in Maysville. Look at the skinny building just to the left of the bakery; I wonder what use it had? The bakery I found didn’t appear to be especially inviting. I got this feeling because while I parked the



bike, I could see the propitiator sitting inside, staring, if not glaring, at me. What a boring life he must have! His look, made me feel that I had just parked a spaceship from Mars. Perhaps in his mind, I had. I made my way inside and asked if they had coffee. “No”, he replied with no hint of friendliness. I couldn’t help notice the small home type coffee maker on the counter behind him, but, I figured that it had been cleaned for the day, and, from the propitiator’s demeanor, I knew that it would be a lost cause to ask him to brew me some. I had a mind to walk out, but my eyes had another idea as I viewed the bakery goods contained in the class display case.

Some great looking German chocolate brownies caught my attention, so I ordered a couple of them; the proprietors mood remained neutral. Now my plan was to take the brownies to a place that serves coffee. I rode further a couple of miles, and voila, a McDonalds.

After my refreshing snack, I pressed on toward Lexington via Hwy. 68. As I approached Lexington, I passed several horse farms underlining that I was, of course, in the Derby state. Another site was the fields of tobacco and some tobacco drying sheds. I made my way around Lexington and found Versailles and the shopping center where I was supposed to park and call John Boyd. I had met John Boyd when I was a sophomore in high school. During that time, my mom and dad ran a rehabilitation center for drug addicts and alcoholics. We lived in a 22 room, former orange grower's mansion, and had up to 6 "guests" living with us. The method of rehabilitation was Bible based through a changed life, and, although the majority of guests were not total down and outers, John was. He at times was a stumbling drunk whose life and relationships had been irreparably damaged through his addiction.



John was one of the many successes of the program, and he had been alcohol free for many years and still living a life trusting in God's Word, the Bible. I hadn't seen John for about 30 years. Soon John and his wife, Linda, arrived and they led me to their house, which was just a few blocks away. That evening they took me out for a wonderful catfish dinner and afterward we spent some time on their backyard deck talking and catching up. I thought the fireflies that were occasionally flashing, were cool. John thought I was going to stay for a couple of days, and had made arrangements for me to tour a horse farm. I'm sure that would have been

interesting but not this time. On my bed were some pillowcases that my mother had embroidered and given him as a gift many years ago. John said that I was the first person to sleep on them, which was neat.

9/2/2003, Thursday – Versailles, Kentucky to Dickson Tennessee



This morning, John fixed me a traditional Kentucky breakfast of eggs, biscuits and gravy. I was so impressed with it that I took a picture of John with my plate. It was great to see John and his wife, he would have certainly been dead a long time ago if he would have not had help with his addiction.

My travels today are taking me to Dickson, Tennessee where I would stay with Doug and Linda. Doug and Linda were also guests at the rehab center, although not as addicts or alcoholics; they were both there to develop a better understanding of the Bible. While there, they fell in love and were married many years ago. Since moving to Tennessee, Doug had work in a few different jobs, and then struck out on his own. Though they struggled in the beginning, today, he has a successful corporation that provides contract information technology workers, to other business. They are doing very well.





The ride was very enjoyable although when I reached Dickson, I had a difficult time finding Doug's house. I had to have Linda come to where I was at and lead me in.

To say that Doug and Linda's house is nice is a dreadful understatement. It's a mansion. Linda likes to decorate in an "island" motif, and it is a very relaxing environment. It had also been about 30 years since I had seen them and it was fun to catch up. After a great dinner, they took me to a showing of the western singing group, "Riders in the Sky", at a local playhouse. The "Riders", were the ones who did the singing for the movie, Toy

Story. Their performance was a lot of fun, they are so talented. We finished the evening with some berry pie and conversation. I had a decision to make that I had been thinking about for a few days. Should I turn west and head for home or head east toward the other place that is celebrating a 100 year anniversary, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and the anniversary of the historic first flight by the Wright Brothers.

9/5/2003, Friday – Dickson Tennessee to Lake Norman, A Difficult Day

I awoke to a beautiful day and decided to press on to Kitty Hawk, so after a cereal breakfast, I said goodbye to Dog and Linda, and headed east. I skirted by Nashville on the beltway, and picked my way east on as many side roads as possible. In Crossville, I stopped at a small café and had a sandwich then back on the road. As I approached the Great Smoky Mountains on I-40, my side road options ran out, and I was going to have to stay on the interstate. This was soon becoming a very difficult day for me because the speed limit was 70 for both cars and trucks, and there was a lot of truck traffic today. The Harley Softail bike has great looks, but one of the reasons it has such a great looking low profile is that the engine is bolted directly to the frame. This gives the bike the look of a '54 Panhead Hardtail. Hardtail bikes had no rear suspension. Mine has a suspension hidden underneath, but no vibration canceling rubber motor mounts. This arrangement causes the rider to feel every vibration that the engine makes. In the stock condition, the vibration is so intense, that after riding about 250 miles, you are ready to quit for the day. Now my bike is much smoother than stock because while I did a total rebuild of the engine, I sent one of the flywheels to "Balance Masters" in Southern California. This shop puts the flywheel on a lathe, and they machine a groove into the flywheel. Once this is done, they install a circular tube into the flywheel which is partially filled with mercury. The tube is then sealed into the flywheel with high temperature epoxy. What all this does is when the engine is running; there are dynamic imbalances that the mercury corrects by moving to the point opposite the imbalance, balancing it. This is merely a phenomenon of physics but, the result is that it removes much of the vibration; I estimate as much as 70 percent. If I would have not had this treatment done, there is no way that I would have attempted a road trip such as this one. Up to about 70 mph, the bike is relatively comfortable, but, above 70, the vibration becomes more intense and uncomfortable. So, with many trucks on the interstate today, I am forced to ride between 75 and 80 in order to keep a comfortable distance from them.



Toward the end of the days ride, I was having a difficult time putting up with all the discomfort, both physical and mental. As I pulled into the parking lot of the Cracker Barrel Restaurant, I was feeling down, it had been a rough day. I had even missed my street to the restaurant and had to double back. I parked my bike and walked by a couple who had also just parked a restored 1963 Studebaker. I told them that I liked their car and that I used to have a teacher in high school who was into Studebakers.

The man said he liked the pin on my vest that said “riding for Jesus”, and soon, they invited me to have dinner with them. Their names were Reeves and Shirley from Newark, DE. We had a wonderful conversation, and by the time the dinner was over, I felt restored and pondered the timing of it all. You see, if I wouldn’t have missed my turn, I would have entered the restaurant before the Hawks and would have dined alone. Coincidence or divine guidance? My experience with this sort of thing says it was the latter and I thanked God for bringing me dinner mates to cheer me up when I needed it the most. It was very dark as I rode on toward the campground at Lake Norman where I would spend the night. I had to ask directions a couple of times, but the people were helpful.

9/6/2003, Saturday - **Lake Norman, NC to Raleigh, NC**

I was up early and had a conversation with the campground host Bill, who was intrigued by my trip. Before long, I was on the road again and looking for one of my favorite places for breakfast, the “Waffle House”. These small diners are all over the place in the east, and when you come into the door someone always greets you. The food is prepared right in front of you and the places are very noisy, but, it is a noise I somehow like, its kind of fun. My waitress had a terrific smile. My regular selection at these places is a waffle, scrambled eggs with a scoop of chili on top which some of the Waffle House staff thought was a bit bizarre.



After eating, I talked for a while to a couple of biker ladies, who were eating at the same place. They were interested in where I was going and thought that I was a long way from home. I took their photo, and said that I would send them a picture. I headed toward Raleigh, but soon noticed that the weather seemed to be getting worse and some showers were certainly on the way. Around Greensboro, I saw a Harley dealer, and I stopped and ended up buying some proper rain gear for riding. The set I bought was expensive, but effective. When I arrived in Raleigh, I fueled up and noticed that my, “once and a while”, drip of transmission

grease was now getting much worse. It was apparent that I needed repairs so I got directions to the local Harley dealer, and with only a few minutes left before closing, I made it to the service department and explained the situation. Since it was Saturday, there was nothing they could do until Tuesday, their next business day. They suggested a fairly inexpensive place for me to stay, and said to come in early on Tuesday and they would take care of me. At least I was not stranded without transportation, yes the Harley leaked, but I could still ride as long as I kept an eye on my grease level. So I got something to eat and checked into the hotel and moved all of my stuff into my room to reorganize and dry things out.

9/7/2003, Sunday - **Raleigh, NC**

I slept in since there was no reason for me to get up early. I found that there was a Cracker Barrel Restaurant about 12 miles away and while en-route, shoot, I missed the off ramp! Well, no problem, I’ll just take the next one. The next one ended up being 7 miles further up the road! Oh well, it’s not like I am doing anything valuable with my time today. By the time I arrived at the restaurant, I was really hungry. After I parked, I looked at the newsstands for a local paper and was a bit bummed to see that the local paper was \$1.50.

On one hand, I don't like to dine alone, unless I have something to do like write in my journal or have a paper to read, it just seems very awkward to sit alone with nothing to do after the business of making the selection and ordering is done, just an eternity of staring and feeling conspicuous. On the other hand, I hated to pay so much for my prop. Seeing that USA Today was only fifty cents, the cheapskate in me said that that was the paper to buy. Upon closer examination though, I saw that the USA Today was really USA yesterday, and I made the painful decision to purchase the local, more expensive paper. I proceeded into the restaurant to be seated. While I was waiting for my meal, I looked through the paper and there was a listing saying that there was going to be a Christian Concert in the area. I looked closer and was pleased to see that today was the day, and the location was only about 5 miles from where I was staying. I was familiar with many of the performers that were attending including: 3rd Day, Nicole C. Mullen, Chris Rice and several others; all performers that I like. Now my day was really shaping up! I was thankful for the blessed coincidence of getting the right paper and noticing the small add for the concert.



After breakfast, I rode to the place of the concert to check out where it was, and then I looked around at some of the neighborhoods in the South Raleigh area. The homes here were charming and priced starting at \$150 K, which was quite reasonable by California standards. Another brick faced house I was looking at, sat on a hill overlooking the golf course. The price: was \$297 K, Unbelievable! Soon it was time for the concert, and as I waited in line for parking, I learned from the car next to me that they had a couple of extra tickets. Although they wanted to give me one, I insisted on refunding them. Now with my ticket in

hand, I got in line to go into the venue. I, along with several others, were early and the gates were not opened yet. While I was standing there, I met a young couple, Sue and Brian, who informally adopted me and shared their blanket, provided me snacks, bottled water, and the use of their cell phone. They even offered that if I came back through Raleigh that I could stay the night with them. It was heartwarming that this young newly married (2 years) couple would befriend an older guy that looked like a biker, OK, was a biker.

9/8/2003, Monday - **Raleigh, NC**

After sleeping in again, I road around the downtown Raleigh and generally explored the area. Not too much was going on today. I was glad to get an opportunity to thoroughly dry out all my gear.

9/9/2003, Tuesday - **Raleigh, NC to Nags Head, NC**

The 2 day layover in Raleigh turned out to be a good thing because I was able to get reorganized and even get rid of about 10 lbs of stuff that I had not even used. The people at the Harley dealer were kind enough to ship the stuff home for me. The extra items cluttering up my bags were starting to grate on me. One would think that a lightweight bike cover would be a good thing but, when it gets wet, it then becomes a damp mildew liability. Today was the day that I would get repaired and after delivering my bike to the mechanic, I caught up on my journal. Upstairs at the dealer, was a museum commemorating the owner of the dealership, Ray Price. Ray had raced bikes and had set some drag bike speed records. I have noticed that people here seem very friendly compared to home. Oh, the mechanic came out and said that the problem was a bit more serious than the simple leak that he thought. He said that my drive pulley had come loose and eventually hogged out the oil seal, and if I wouldn't have stopped when I did, I could have had a big failure, and perhaps a sudden lockup of my rear tire. I was glad that a lockup didn't occur, but my main feeling was that I was glad that the problem was something he could repair. Soon I would be heading east again.

I got out of the Harley shop at about 2:00 PM and started heading east in a light rain. Soon, it was pouring rain so hard that the tracks of the car right ahead of me were totally obliterated by the time I got to them. My expensive rain suit was working very well; even my feet were dry and happy. I was pretty well bundled up with a bandanna on my face to keep the raindrops from causing me too much pain. After about 50 miles, the rain let up. I had seen the radar on the weather channel, and knew that I would eventually get out of it. Soon I was riding on a rural highway where it was very flat. This route took me through many small towns some of which appeared to be poverty stricken. One thing that I noticed, however, was that even in the poorest communities they had wonderful “neat as a pin” churches. Soon there appeared a forest of sorts on both sides of the road with tall, but very skinny pines, the kind of trees that grow in a swamp like environment. The sky looked very threatening ahead, but one thing that I had a hard time getting used to, was how warm it was. On the west coast when it looks like rain, it usually is cold. Not here, in fact since warm air holds much more moisture than cold air, the clouds looked deceptively dark.

At one point, I stopped to put on my raingear, but ended up taking it off about 10 miles later when I figured out that I had been fooled. Another thing that was affecting my ride was a very stiff NE wind which on my route resulted in a left cross wind. It made life on the causeways difficult because I would get battered on these exposed bridges. I soon learned to fudge the upwind part of my lane to leave me some maneuvering room on the downwind side of my lane when the trucks passed. I finally made it to Nags Head, and found the park that had the little camping symbol on my map. Oops, the Rangerette said that they did not allow camping any more, and she pointed me to the closest campground which was about 8 miles south. Soon I arrived and was glad to see that they had lots of empty spaces. I set up camp and fortified my tent with some bungee cords to help battle the steady wind which blew all night. Although I was a little bit hungry, I was more tired than anything, so after a shower, I went to bed, shoving in the earplugs that proved themselves invaluable on this night and many others.

9/9/2003, Tuesday – **Nags Head, NC**



Morning came and I woke to find it raining. It was kind of an odd rain, very light showers that would almost evaporate immediately in the warm air. Soon, I was packed up and headed into town for breakfast. The local Ranger recommended a place for breakfast called, “The Grits Grill”. The food and especially the coffee were great and while I was preparing to saddle up to leave, a situation broke out. A man who I perceived to be the manager was washing the windows and the cook came out to let him know that he was doing a terrible job. The words were harsh, but the tenor told me that there was a lot of friendly banter going on as well. At one

point, the managers asked me if I could take her with me, to get her out of his hair. I replied that with such a pretty smile as hers, it was a tempting offer. With that, she came over and gave me a great big hug. I asked a co-worker to take a snap of us. Such fun!



Next, I rode to the Wright Brothers Memorial at Kitty Hawk; the birthplace of aviation, and what would be my northeastern-most destination. The memorial was well done, and I really enjoyed seeing and hearing about the Wright Flyer and what happened on the day that the bounds of earth were broken. On display, was an exact reproduction of the original Wright Flyer. The docent that was on hand obliged me to move the wing-warping controls which was the innovative design that made controlled flight possible.



The amount of movement at the wing tips when the controls were moved was much more subtle than what I thought it would be. The Wright brothers were amazing in how doggedly they pursued the difficult challenge of flight.

After my Wright Brothers visit, I headed over to Fort Raleigh, and learned about the Lost Colony; the tragic story of a 1587 colony that disappeared without a trace. The mystery of what happened to them or why, survives to this day. Soon, I was on the road again

heading south on the Outer Banks toward the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Along the way are large houses built up on pilings. I stopped in one neighborhood, and looked around a bit because I was curious about how they were constructed. I found a homeowner and learned that during the peak tourist season the houses rent for \$1,600.00 a week, and the lot next door was for sale at a mere \$350,000! Another interesting thing that I learned was that the pilings are pressed into the sand utilizing a high pressure water stream.



My next stop was the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse which at more than 200 feet high; is the highest brick lighthouse in the United States. There were lots of steps to the top which seemed a bit dizzying. I heard that the day before I arrived, a newly married man, age 26, chose to jump to his death off the lighthouse. I'm sure this was upsetting to not only the park officials, but to the folks touring, pretty inconsiderate of him I think. In 1999 the whole lighthouse was actually moved from its original location several hundred yards. The move was necessary because beach erosion was threatening the historic lighthouse which was built in 1869. In the photo, you can see a strip where the vegetation has been cleared and

almost at the far end is where the lighthouse originally sat. The lighthouse was moved on some heavy duty rail track, sort of like the space shuttle, upright. In its present location, erosion should not be a problem for the foreseeable future.



Continuing my ride, I soon came to Hatteras Inlet where I would take a short 30 minute ferry ride to Ocracoke Island, which was another part of the chain of narrow sand islands which make up the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. As I waited in line for the ferry, the ferry official told me to stay on the bike while we were in route.



The ferry ride was uneventful even though it was a bit rough. I was thinking ahead of the next ferry ride that would be about 2 hours long. Would they expect me to stay on my bike the whole time? The ride concluded and it was a short 20 miles to the next ferry landing. This ferry would take me from Ocracoke to Cedar Island. While waiting in line to board the ferry, I asked one of the officials if there would be a place to tie down my bike. His answer was a definite “no” and that I would have to stay with the bike. As I waited, the wind which was already brisk, became stronger, and I knew that things ahead were going to be ugly, so I did what I always do when things get ugly, I prayed. I told the Lord that there was no way that I could win a wrestling match with a 700 lb bike, on a pitching deck for 2 hours. I ask Him to provide me a parking place where there would be something that I could tie my bike to. Soon, I was directed onto the ferry and up ahead was the official showing me where he wanted me to park; in fact, he had a wooden chock block on the deck where he wanted my front wheel. These folks have a schedule to keep and a system to get vehicles on and off the ferry quickly, with no time for special problems. When I parked I saw that as the official had indicated, there were no places to tie down, except to a pipe which would have been a very poor anchor. However, on the left side of my bike, where I had parked, dead center was a massive anchor cleat. What can I say? I asked God, He provided. I give Him the credit. As I strapped down my bike to this immovable cleat, I marveled how God, once again, had clearly honored my simple request and I thanked Him.



Soon we were heading out and I stayed on deck to keep an eye on the bike because it appeared that it was going to get rather rough. I joined a lady who was feeding the seagulls crackers. The birds would actually come down and take them from our hands. Before long we were out in open water, and I peered at the bike while shielded behind part of a deck support. The wind and spray coming from the front was unreal. Whenever I would venture out into it, the blast of wind would just about knock me down. Sometimes the waves would hit the side of the ship that my bike was on so violently, that I could feel the entire ship shudder.



Once, while I was looking at my bike from my semi-protected area, there was a crash, and I saw a wall of green water come over the rail, and completely drench my bike. Great! I hope it starts when it is time to go. Once I became convinced that my bike was not going



somewhere by itself, I moved to the upstairs lee side of the ferry, and talked to some of the others and enjoyed the sights, smells, and sounds of the crossing.

It was lightly raining and darkness was descending when the ferry arrived at Cedar Island. The roar of my engine sounded good, I was relieved that it started after its serious bath. From the looks of the clouds in the direction I was heading, I figured that I had better stop and don my serious raingear, so I stopped and suited up. I continued toward Morehead City, where I would be spending the night. During my hour long ride to the city, the rain got serious, and by the time I entered the city, there was so much rain, my night riding glasses were completely obscured. I was having a seriously difficult time seeing; at least most of the salt from the drenching at sea would be washed off my bike.

Almost flying blind, I slowed down and removed my eyewear completely, which helped. With a bit of difficulty, I found a suitable motel and checked in. Wow, it sure felt good to get out of my wet clothes. I pretty much laid out all my stuff (including my tent) in an attempt to dry things out. Knowing that my boots would be damp for days in the humidity of the south, I made a makeshift tent out of plastic bags, and dried my boots with the hairdryer all night. After cleaning up, I walked to a nearby restaurant, and had a meal of stuffed tuna, which was very good. The bed felt wonderful, it had been a long and exciting day.

9/10/2003, Wednesday – **Morehead City, NC to Nebo, NC**

Breakfast was included with my room, so after cleaning up, I walked to the room with the food. I was pleasantly surprised to find a self service Belgian waffle maker like one I had seen at a motel in Oregon. I love these things and made myself 2. After packing up once again, I was on my way, and, although it looked like it was going to rain, it didn't, but, I was having a problem. I had not dressed warmly enough for riding and I was slowly getting chilled. Knowing that the problem was not going away, I stopped and put on my chaps and leather jacket. After another 50 miles, I stopped next to another biker that was dressed in shorts and a tee shirt. Here I am bundled up like I am ready to play in the snow, and this guy is wearing practically nothing. I asked him "aren't you cold"? He said "nope", it was all very puzzling. Before long, the temperature heated up and I was roasting and had to stop and make another adjustment. Some of the things I see along the route include an aggressive type of ivy that climbs the trees and kills them. This is an amazing weed; I saw an abandoned house that was almost completely covered with it. This weed is a real scourge. There are lots of small churches here, as one would expect, being in the Bible belt. Many of the churches have signs with clever captions. One said, "You can't walk with God while holding hands with the Devil", very clever. They have Pigley Wiggley markets here (I remember them from my childhood in So. Cal.). Another thing I didn't expect to see were Taco Bells here and there. Since I like Taco Bell, it was great to see that the taco had invaded the south east.

As I motor by, people on their porches or in their yards, look, and oftentimes wave, I always wave back if possible. Once while I was riding down the interstate, I smelled something wonderful and familiar. Someone ahead was smoking a pipe with Cherry Blend tobacco. Soon I caught up with the smoker, and I pulled alongside and tried to get him to notice me. Since I was keeping a constant pace with him, he finally looked my way. I pointed to my nose, and then gave him the OK sign. He laughed, Ill bet he had not ever had that happen to him before. Another thing I saw a couple of times in NC was inmate crews picking up litter. It was a serious mix, 6 inmates in leg irons, 2 officers with rifles at the ready, like something out of Cool Hand Luke. I wonder what the officials in NC's government would think if they knew that we in California were using 1 unarmed Captain, and 17 felons to do the same job?

Before long my day was ending and I stopped at the Cracker Barrel, for dinner. I spotted a campground on the map near Nebo, named Lake James State Park. I found the exit and wound my way to the lake noticing that I passed 3 different kinds of Baptist churches in three or four miles. It sure is funny how such a small community could support 3 different churches, this seems kind of odd to me. I also noted that one had a large 2 acre lawn, and the midweek service was in session. I arrived at the campground and did not like what I saw. First, I was the only one there and the actual camping area was down the hill from where I was supposed to park. I usually like to stay close to the bike, since Harley theft is a national problem. This is just too "deep woods spooky" for this brave retired firefighter! I did see that they had showers, so I took a quick shower. I decided to head out to the church and see if they would mind if I pitched my tent on their lawn. I arrived and parked my bike. As I walked in the back door of the church and took a seat, the event was very reminiscent of a scene in the movie, Tom Sawyer, when Tom and Huck walked into the back of the church during "their" funeral proceedings.

There were about 25 people present and I had more than a few glances from all of them as I, (leather clad), took a set in the back. They probably figured that I was a lost sheep coming home. When the service was over, the pastor with a couple of other men providing backup, made a beeline to me. Who was this stranger in there midst? I explained my situation and camping permission was granted, and soon I was setting up my tent and getting ready to turn in.

9/11/2003, Thursday – **Nebo, NC to Cornersville, TN**

Eleven hours later, I woke up. Well at least I was now well rested! Lots of dew on the tent, and I had to dry things out in the sun before I could get underway. Not too far away in Ashville, I stopped at yet another Waffle House. Soon I was talking to Fran the waitress. She shared with me the tragic story of her son committing suicide with a 44 mag outside another Waffle House that she worked at. I had told her that on my trip I had enjoyed eating at Waffle Houses. She said she had a customer that loved the place so much that he had instructed his wife to sprinkle his ashes at this Waffle House. I guess that he could be considered one of their “best customers”. Perhaps this is a normal thing to do in this area of the country because, after all, this is Ashville, yuck, yuck, yuck! The ride to Cornersville, TN was uneventful and I enjoyed the back roads that I had taken. My interest in Cornersville was that it is the location of the Ron Wyatt Museum. Ron was an amateur biblical archeologist who traveled to the mid-east at least 100 times looking for places detailed in the Bible. Places like where the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Noah’s Ark. I was privileged to have accompanied Ron on 3 of his trips. Ron has since passed away, but his museum is still open and being cared for by Richard Reeves, who I had met on one of the trips. I found the museum and talked to Richard and met his wife Elizabeth. They were just heading to Nashville for the evening, so I asked them where I could stay. Conveniently, just a block away was a Good Sam RV park, so I rode there and checked in. After getting camp set up, I rode to the small town of Lynnville where I had dinner.

9/12/2003, Friday – **Cornersville, TN to Fredericktown, MO**

I woke up, did the morning routine, and rode to the Wyatt Museum. Richard greeted me and gave me a tour of the museum. Richard had just produced a DVD of a dig in Jerusalem last spring. The dig was in Zedekiah’s Cave, the site of a massive underground quarry where the stones for the temple were quarried. Ron Wyatt had claimed to have found the Ark of the Covenant in a cave several years ago. Ron is the only one who has seen the artifact. Attempts by others to view it, resulted in their deaths by simultaneous massive strokes, before they could even lay eyes on the Ark. There are a lot of twists and turns to the story, and perhaps, some would just blow it off as a tall tail, except for just a few of the following reasons. Ron (a very devout Christian) was given an opportunity to recant the Ark story on his deathbed, he didn’t.

I have seen videos of the extensive excavation in the Garden Tomb and an artifact in the Israel Museum that was intriguing. The artifact, according to the placard was the only known artifact from Solomon’s Temple. Ron pointed out that one of the pieces on top of the small carved pomegranate was broken. He said he had it back at his house. The dig the Wyatt Group conducted in the spring of 2003 had the full support of the Israeli Antiquity Authority. On the surface, it does not make any sense that the Israelis would issue a permit for a group of amateurs from Tennessee to excavate in Zedekiah’s cave, unless of course, they (the Israelis) knew that this group’s founder was the one who really had found the Ark. I was also on three separate trips with Ron to the Mid East and judging by my observation of him during our time together, I believe him. The excavation by the Wyatt group was specifically looking for the original corridor that leads to the Ark chamber. Ground penetrating radar shows a void, and that is what they are looking for.

Ron's access to the Ark was through a very small crawl hole, and would not work at all if the artifact was to be removed. The upshot of Ron's Ark story was that the Ark was stored in the cave 600 years before Christ was crucified, precisely 20 feet below the very spot. When the spear was thrust in Jesus side, His blood ran down through a fracture in the rock and splashed upon the Ark. This made Jesus the literal sacrifice for sin. You can imagine that if the general Jewish population knew for a fact that the ark was found, they would want to immediately seek to build the third temple. There would be an immediate and massive war in Israel. That is why everything is so hush hush with the Israelis. If you would like to know more about this situation here is a link: <http://www.wyattmuseum.com/>



Anyway, with all that background, one can easily see why this small museum in the tiny town of Cornersville was of interest to me. I milled around the exhibits and before long, it was time to head west. I said goodbye to Richard and his wife, and headed toward Missouri. As I headed west, I noticed that the greenness of the countryside seemed to be fading a bit and the houses were not as substantial as what I had been seeing. One drawback with taking the back roads is that they are slow, and today I was spending a lot of time on the bike; my butt was hurting and complaining. At the next fuel stop, I made a great discovery. There was a Baskin

Robbins inside the gas station. Two scoops of peanut butter and chocolate later, I was feeling better and on the road again. The countryside was still changing and, by the time I crossed the Mighty Mississippi, the area had turned into; a rural ghetto. I headed up Hwy 67 toward where I thought I would spend the night, which was in St. Francis State Park. However, well short of my planned destination, I arrived in Fredericktown. Fredericktown is a small, neat town, but I was in no frame of mind to appreciate it. It was dark, I was beat, and soon I was looking around for a place that I could pitch my tent for the night. Nothing looked inviting as I cruised around. I looked at a few churches and finally found one with a large lawn behind which would work for my campsite. I had a quick dinner at the Subway, and engaged a young couple in conversation. I told them of my need for a place to sleep and asked if they had any suggestions. The young man said his dad was a pastor of a church in a town about 40 miles away, and he was sure he would know how to contact the pastor of one of the local churches so I could get permission to camp. He attempted a call on his cell phone but there was no answer. I appreciated his willingness to help and said farewell.



I decided to camp at the church I had seen earlier, permission or not, and when I arrived, I was surprised to see that some of the lights were on inside. I ventured into the lower floor and I could hear a vacuum working upstairs. I proceeded up the stairs, and found the vacuum cleaner with a young lady attached. After explaining my situation, she said that there was no problem if I camped out back. I soon had my camp set up and closed my eyes for the night, noisy crickets and a lot of barking neighborhood dogs made earplugs a must. It had been another long but mostly an enjoyable riding day.

9/13/2003, Friday – **Fredericktown, MO to Sullivan, MO**

The church ended up being a great place to rest. I woke at 6:00 and noticed that the sun was not up, so I was not getting up either. I woke for the second time at 7:00, and got up.

I rode about 20 miles and found a restaurant called the Huddle House, a kind of a knockoff of the Waffle House because it had the same basic setup as a Waffle House, but a bit more sophisticated. The Huddle House somehow lacked the noisy, homey charm, of the authentic Waffle House. The food, however, proved to be just as good. The weather today is cloudy with occasional rain showers. Considering how close I am to where I am going to be spending the night, I ponder how much fun it would be for me to sit in my tent all day listening to the rain. With that in mind, I pulled out my map and saw that Saint Louis was within striking distance so I plotted a route to the city known as the “Gateway to the West”.



I finally found the arch after asking directions a couple of times and parked on the shore of the Mighty Mississippi, next to one of the huge riverboats moored nearby. On this trip, I had seen Devils Tower and Mt. Rushmore. I am not sure exactly what I was expecting, but, I was a bit disappointed in their size. This was definitely not the case with the St. Louis Arch, it is massive.



The Arch has a great museum and lots of displays, which detail how the arch was built. I decided that a trip to the top was in order, so I got tickets and waited until my number was called. The trip to the top is interesting. You climb into, what is for all practical purposes, a contraption that looks a lot like an oversize laundry, drier tub. The tub holds 5 people, a set of 4 facing each other with knees almost touching, and one at the far wall who faces the door. The arrangement is very

compact and “friendly”. I shared my laundry tub with some nice folks from India. The ride to the top only takes a few minutes, a fact that no doubt is a great relief to those who have claustrophobic tendencies. The view from the top really gives one a feel of how high you really are. A great view of downtown and east, across the river are afforded. After I had seen all there is to see, I lined up for a descending tub ride.



An extensive Louis and Clark Exhibits was also playing at the arch underground and after seeing it and viewing an IMAX movie on the Arch, it was time to go. It took a couple of laps around the downtown area before I found the way to I-44, there is lots of traffic today. Before long I saw a sign for the Cracker Barrel and because there are off and on, heavy rain showers, as well as a backup on the Interstate due to an accident, it seems like a good time to eat. Today I am having pulled BBQ pork, turnip greens, green beans, biscuits, and berry cobbler for desert. These folks know how to eat! Soon I was back on my bike heading toward the Meramec Caverns and Campground, which was my destination for the evening. It was not hard to find the place because they had so many of their blasted signs along the interstate.

I arrived at the large, somewhat muddy, mostly unoccupied campground. I scanned for the showers and did not see any. A man in a Khaki uniform was at the check in area, he seemed to be the local authority “guarding the entrance”, to the campground. This pudgy fellow, who lacked both demeanor and probably an education, was nevertheless wearing the uniform of authority, his overstressed utility belt, with super-sized flashlight, confirmed it. With some trepidation, I asked the officer if he could direct me to the state park that my map showed was nearby. He obliged, and after detailing the route, he added, “they charge a lot more there, ah, someone told me that they charge a lot more”.

I asked him how much it was to stay at the Caverns campground; he said “twelve bucks”. I told him that perhaps I would be back, and motored off in search of better quarters.

The road to the state park was part of old Route -66, and the whole time I was on it, I couldn’t get that song out of my mind. You know the song “you get your kicks on route 66”. About the time I was going completely nuts over the repeating stanza, I arrived. The state park was really nice, and had paved roads and paved camping places. The place was very clean, and I spotted a large shower house, but, how much would it cost? To my wallet’s delight, the camping fee was \$5.00, (the least expensive on the trip). I

surmised who the “someone” was, that told “Officer Khaki” that the state park charged “a lot more”, it was probably his boss, so much for a Khaki uniform confirming credibility.



Soon, I launched into my well choreographed tent dance, and with as little wasted effort as possible, my quarters were quickly set up. I availed myself to a shower and settled into bed for some reading and music. Boy, there sure are a lot of crickets here. I find it remarkable that the hearing loss in my left ear, due to years of siren noise exposure, has rendered me not capable of hearing the crickets with my damaged ear. The crickets here are making quite a racket, but when I cover my right ear with my hand, no cricket noise at all, it is just plain weird. Soon, the day’s adventure fades away as sleep overtakes me.

9/14/2003, Saturday – Sullivan, MO to Mexico, MO



Morning comes along with a lot of clouds, it looks rainy, but so far, no rain. I am going to be staying here tonight, so there is no gear shuffle this morning. I rode out toward the Interstate and found a Denny’s and had a big breakfast, so big, that I would forgo lunch. My reason for staying here today was that I was going to tour the Meramec Caverns, also known as the Jessie James Hideout. I could remember touring the cave in 1957 when I was 6 years old. I couldn’t remember much about the place, but I did recall that inside the cave was a small log cabin. Had I remembered correctly?

I rode to the caves entrance, parked, and headed up to the main entrance and bought a ticket for the tour. Even before the tour started, I could see that I was in a huge underground room and across the way, was a small log cabin, the one I had remembered. A question formed on my brow, why would a 6 year old kid remember something as uninteresting as a small log cabin? Once we were granted access for the tour, I gave the cabin a closer look and viola! Inside the cabin was a manikin of an old man, a moonshiner replica actually. I think I understood why I had remembered, my young mind was probably freaked out by the man in the cabin, the mystery was solved.

The tour was sort of like most all of the other cave tours that I have been on, and I have seen many in my lifetime. The commonality of features and terminology emerge. At one time in my life, cave tours were one of my favorite things to do. But now, I find them kind of boring. Since the caves are still the same, it’s probably me who is getting more and more boring. The tour was nice and covered only a small fraction of the 26 miles of known passages in this cave. For the grand finale, we sat in a room that resembled a large theatre complete with a large formation that looked like the curtains on a stage.

The lights were dimmed, and, a well-worn recording of Kate Smith singing "God Bless America" was played. While Kate was belting it out, the tour guide manually threw several colored light switches on and off, in time with the music. The show climaxed with a slide of a waving American flag, projected in the middle of the flashing blues and reds and greens. It was corny, but fun.



Soon my nostalgia trip to Meramec Caverns was over, and I headed back to camp. The weather had improved a lot since morning, and since it was still fairly early in the day, I thought I would head to my next stop which was Mexico, Missouri. The reason that Mexico was on my itinerary, was that this is where a particular kind of aircraft is manufactured. It is called a Zenith 701. The ride to Mexico was one of the most beautiful on the trip. The sky was as "clear as a bell" and adorned with large puffy white clouds. The landscape was a palette of green, and because there are no mountains, the horizon goes all the way down to the ground. It feels and looks like I am riding on top of the world. As was my custom, I took a series of rural roads, one of which took me past a sprawling ammunition plant and lots of farm country. In the distance I could see a neat looking town. The town was Hermann, with a rich German heritage, on the south bank of the Missouri River. I stopped to admire the interesting bridge and some of the buildings. After about another hour of riding, I arrived at Mexico.



Mexico was a neat town but it looked a bit depressed. I found out later that they once had 2 firebrick plants. The firebrick was mainly used in America's steel plants, but since there had been a rash of steel plant closures, the need for bricks disappeared. The loss of stable jobs to the community must have caused a lot of sleepless nights for not only those who lost their jobs, but the local community officials who probably spent countless hours scrambling to find replacement businesses. Since I had a 10 am appointment at Zenith Aircraft to tour the place, I thought I would find the place, so it would not be a hassle in the morning. I found the shop, which of course was at the local airport. Afterward, I turned my attention to finding a place to camp. I had noticed a small sign that said, "camping", so I rode back to investigate. The sign led me to a local city park next to a small lake. There were about 6 RV's already parked and it looked like a nice safe camping area. I found the host and paid the \$5.00 fee for the night and had a nice conversation with the host and his wife. The host's brother had been a casualty on the Battleship Arizona on the day of the surprise attack. Even though the host seemed like a nice person, his seething anger toward the Japanese, just below the surface, was apparent. I asked him if he had ever visited the Arizona Memorial, and he said that his wife and he were planning on going, but he had heard stories of the "Japs" pushing and shoving at the memorial, and he feared that he would become violent if some "Jap" pushed him, so they canceled. After our conversation wound down, I bid them adieu, soon it was shower and bed time; the end of another day.



9/15/2003, Saturday – **Mexico, MO to Caldwell KS**

I was up early packed up and hit Mickey D's for breakfast. "There is a stranger in town, pass it along". It's funny, all the attention I get from the "locals". All the attention reminded me of my hand crew days.

No matter what I was doing, it seemed like someone was always watching me. Dressing for a fire, retrieving my lunch from the compartment, it didn't matter. Inmate eyes were always upon me, the feeling seemed the same as this morning's experience.

Soon, it was time to head to the airport to take a look at the CH-701. I am fascinated with this aircraft for several reasons. First, this rather ungainly aircraft is made of aluminum, and it is manufactured as a kit so it is something that I could build. Second, the 701 features folding wings, for compact storage. Thirdly, this aircraft has a very unusual ability; it can take off in 50 feet. Yes, this is not a misprint, fifty feet. The reason that this can be done is that the wings are fully slotted so the air, even at extremely high angles of attack, still creates lift. One thing I



feared was that the airplane would just be too small for me. At 6' 3", I have experienced that unhappy event once before. The airplane was a vintage Taylorcraft and I was unable to place my feet on the rudder controls which almost broke my fledgling heart. This time, I somewhat expected it.

I made it to the factory at the prescribed time, and was greeted by the secretary who also served as the tour guide. She showed me around the large hangar which served as the manufacturing plant, I was impressed on how well organized it all was. Finally, our attention focused on the actual aircraft. The first one I climbed into was a CH-801, which has most of the same relative components but is much larger and does not have folding wings. Now it was time to climb into the CH-701, the reason for my stop. It was obvious as I approached the aircraft, that, I would have to be content to merely peer into the cockpit. There was just no way that I could get in, I didn't even try. It was sad, but a sadness tempered by my previous encounter with the Taylorcraft. Oh well, that is how life goes! With my fitting completed, there was not too much left to do so I bid farewell to my tour guide, and headed southwest.



My route from Mexico, would take me down Hwy 54 through Jefferson City, past the Lake of the Ozarks and into Kansas to the town of Fort Scott. My destination for the day was Wellington Kansas, where my friend, Stan lives. On the way, one attraction that my brother Jerry told me about, was a huge



mining machine named, "Big Brutus", which is on display near the southeast corner of Kansas. I enjoyed the ride and noticed that the landform was getting flatter and flatter as I headed into Kansas. I found Big Brutus with no problem, but I arrived only about 1/2 an hour before closing, so I didn't have as much time to explore it as I would have liked. The machine was massive; its work of reclaiming the land after the coal had been removed had long since been accomplished. It now sits idle, attracting visitors from all over. The self guided tour took me into the bowels of the machine and up, up, up, to the very top. To get a perspective of how large this machine really is, look at the top of the tracks. If I were standing next to them, the top of the tracks would be higher than the top of my head. The top of the boom is 160 ft high and the bucket held a whopping 90 yards of material.

I hurried through the machine, took a few pictures, and then headed toward Wellington.

Because I had no idea where Stan lived, I began calling him and leaving messages while I was still in route. The ride grinded on and on, and along the way, I learned about a new rode hazard, turtles. I was alarmed to see these solid moving rocks here and there on the road. I would hate to hit one of those! After what seemed like an eternity, I arrived in Wellington and stopped to get something to eat as darkness fell. There was still no answer on Stan's phone. After eating, I tried to get directions to Stan's road, even though he might not be home, I was certain that he would not mind me camping out at his place. The directions could have been better. After riding about 30 miles in the dark I made it to Caldwell, Kansas, a mere 2 miles from the Oklahoma State line. Finding Stan's place was now out of the question, now exhausted, I had only one thing on my mind, finding a place to sleep. Caldwell is a small, but nice town with a roving police officer. I cruised the streets looking for a church that I could camp at, and finally found one. I approached via the ally and parked in the shadow of a large tree. All seemed OK, except there was an annoying dog that kept barking from inside the closest house. I carefully placed my vest on the windshield so that a patrolling police officer could clearly see that I was a Christian biker. With as little fuss as possible, I got the tent up (wow I love these 60 second tents) and blew up my air mattress and hit the hay.

9/16/2003, Saturday – **Caldwell, KS to Wellington, KS**

I woke up, looked out my tent, and noticed that the sky looked cloudy, but because the sun was not quite up, it was difficult to see just whether the clouds were friendly or threatening. As it grew lighter, I saw that rain was not in the immediate forecast. I packed up and answered questions from two young girls who were curious about the "stranger" who camped out behind them. Ready to roll, I explored the town which had quite an historic history as one of the major railheads of the Chisholm Trail.



As I looked around town, I discovered that the Oklahoma state line was only a couple of miles away, so what the heck, I rode down into Oklahoma far enough to say I did. Before long, I ran out of things to look at in this town of 1,351, so I headed back toward Wellington. Hopefully, I would be able to hook up with my friend. Somewhere along the way, I ran into Dury Rd., the road that I had been looking for the night before. I made a turn to the left and started looking for address numbers. After about 7 miles, I finally found Stan's ranch. I learned from Stan's ranch hand that Stan's mother was real ill and in the hospital. Well, at least I knew why Stan wasn't home. I had

met Stan on one of the trips I took to Israel; we had kept in touch since. Stan owns a 2,000 acre wheat farm and that keeps him real busy. I left my cell number with Rick, and headed to town to get something to eat. After breakfast, I had a call from Stan and we got together. I ended up staying at Stan's for the night and we got caught up on all the news.

9/17/2003, Saturday – **Wellington, KS to Garden City, KS**

he next morning, I said goodbye to Stan and headed west toward Dodge City. In the small town of Greensburg, Kansas, I stopped and toured what is billed as the World's Largest Hand Dug Well.

When the well was completed in 1888, it was 109 feet deep and 32 feet in diameter. It was an interesting stop. While I was in the Well's gift shop, a man came in and passed out a flyer. His 32 year old son had been missing for three weeks and was last seen in this area. This man and his wife were missionaries from Mexico and had driven up to find their son. Now, they were giving up and heading back. What a heartbreaking situation, I told them that I would "keep an eye out for him". It was a pretty morning with unlimited visibility and some interesting cumulus clouds, but, as I continued west, the wind came up alarmingly. This wind was the worse kind you can have while riding a motorcycle; a left hand crosswind. On the 2 lane highway, every time a truck would pass in the opposite direction, it just about would knock me over; controlling the bike was getting difficult. By about 2:00 pm, I arrived at Garden City, Kansas, and since the wind showed no sign of changing, I checked into a motel. The local news said the wind was 33mph, gusting to 42, no wonder I was having such a difficult time. It felt good to relax away from the buffeting of the wind. After a nap, I explored the town and found a Chinese restaurant, and had some Kung-Pow Chicken. Afterward, I found a Baskin Robbins for some ice cream. Soon I was back at the motel while the wind still raged. The local weather said that a cold front was going to move through the area before morning, and I wondered what effect the cold front would have on the wind.



9/18/2003, Saturday – Garden City, KS to Montrose, CO

Ah, it's morning. Looking outside my motel window I see that the wind has changed; now blowing 180 degrees to the previous day. The weather channel said that the winds were 20, gusting to 33. Since my wind was now a, right cross wind, it was going to be more manageable. I got packed up and headed out. Besides changing the direction of the wind, the cold front also lowered the temperature about 20 degrees, so I am pretty well bundled up. On my torso, I have 5 layers, any less and I would soon be too cold. In fact, I could be warmer but I have exhausted my gear. Soon I am underway, but noticed that my right ear is tired of the chilly blast so I stop to make an adjustment. I put my bandana on to cover my ears and face and find that it works pretty well. As I head west, the landscape is getting drier, and it is getting warmer. Shortly after passing into Colorado, I spotted a sign that said, "Apache Internment Camp". I decided to take look around this place where U.S. Japanese citizens were held during WWII. I spent about a ½ an hour exploring the camp, which consisted of foundations for the most part. It is sad to consider the families that lives were turned completely upside down by the events in this place. Heading west again and there is a site, cows in an unfenced field, feasting on leftover watermelons. I wondered if they enjoyed the sweetness of the melons, or really care at all.



After motoring along for awhile, I can see the Rocky Mountains and the area of Pike's Peak. Soon I am in Pueblo, Colorado, and I stopped for fuel and something to eat. Heading west once again, my route followed the Arkansas River. The road is climbing, and soon, I noticed that the Harley is running about as well as an emphysema patient heading up a long flight of stairs, "not enough air". Continuing west from Salida, I soon crested the Continental Divide at Monarch Pass at an elevation of 11,312 ft. Thinking that it would be cool to get a picture of the sign I stopped, or should say, I tried to stop. I applied both brakes and discovered that the rear brake had taken a holiday.



After slowing down, thanks to generous help from the front brake, I turned around and made my way to the sign. There where a couple of bikers from Victorville, Ca. parked at the sign and I volunteered to take their pictures, and they obliged me to take mine. I told them what had happened to my rear brake and one of them flashed out a small crescent wrench that was on his keychain. We took the cover off of the master cylinder reservoir to see what the level of my fluid was. The level was actually fine, but, I thought that what had happened was that there was some air in my brake caliper, and at this higher altitude, the normally small bubble

was now large enough to interfere. I used the wrench to loosen the bleed port, and sure enough, I got a burp of air out as we depressed the pedal. Once the air was out and the bleed port tightened up, the rear brake was back on the job. I am glad that I found the brake problem before needing to make some sort of emergency stop.



Soon, I was heading west again and enjoying the groves of aspen trees scattered around; their bright yellow colors were hinting that fall was soon to come upon the high country. The descending road toward Montrose is full of interesting rock formations. I would really like to come back to do some focused exploring here someday. The sun is going down and it is going down in the direction that I am heading, this makes for an uncomfortable ride, not only is it cold, I can't see. Soon, I arrive at Montrose and due to the late hour, and what will be probably a cold night here in the high country, I get a motel for the 4th and final time of my trip.

After a hot shower to warm up, I walked over to Arby's for a sandwich, which was very good. It had been a very long riding day, and once again, Vaseline saved the day. Oh, I had better explain, sitting for hours on a vibrating, minimally-padded motorcycle seat, can cause a severe chaffing problem. Fully bloomed, this condition is referred to "baboon" or "monkey butt". A generous application of Vaseline on the "hinter parts", is a good preventive measure.

9/19/2003, Sunday – Montrose, CO to Lehman Caves Campground



Morning arrived and I got cleaned up and went next-door to Arby's for breakfast. While Arby's may seem a weird place for breakfast, the cinnamon rolls were quiet good, and the biscuits and gravy were not bad either. The road toward Grand Junction was through mesa country. I enjoy the interesting landforms as I ride by. My motorcycle is sort of like a comfortable chair (well most of the time) that I sit in as an ever-changing 360 degree view goes by. West of Grand Junction, I saw a sign that said there was a place where dinosaur bones had been discovered. I stopped and hiked the informative trail that took me through the dig. On one of the

marked rocks, I could see the fossilized bones of some sort of dinosaur.

Soon, I was on the road again and I passed through part of the Capitol Reef National Park. I was impressed with the many rugged and reddish ridges. This was too much fun! With so many scenic vista turnouts on this route, my progress is delayed as I take a swing through most of them. Eventually, I got to the small town of Salina, Utah, which had a café that was sort of a local attraction. It was called Mom's. I tried the apple pie (alamode of course), and coffee, it hit the spot.



Soon, I was heading west again humming along down Hwy 50. As I neared the town of Delta, there were several trucks hauling something mineral, I asked some locals what they were hauling, but they said they didn't know. Just north of the town is some sort of large plant spewing a lot of pollution from its smokestack. I think this is where the trucks were going. Later, on the internet, I learned that the plant processed beryllium ore. A few miles west of Delta, I noticed a rather large dry lake. I thought that it would be fun to ride to the middle of the dry lake, and take some pictures so, I looked for an access road from the highway to the lake. Before long, I found one, and soon I was heading out toward the lake. Before long though, I noticed that the surface I was riding on was damp and muddy. On no! This would be no place to get stuck. Cautiously, I backed up using my feet which were slipping and sliding, until I could maneuver a turnaround. I finally made it, and I was thankful, that I hadn't flopped the 700 pound bike down in the slippery process. I made my way back to the highway noting that my tires now had a healthy coating of gray mud on them. So much for that idea! Happy to be on solid asphalt, I continued west on what is billed as the "loneliest highway in the USA". Occasionally, there would be signs to punctuate that fact, signs like, "No Services Next 111 Miles".



As I proceeded west, I enjoyed the rough and dry scenery and because the sun was about to go down, I stopped at the Borderline Café, which was located near the state line between Nevada and Utah. I was seated at a bar (the kind you eat on) and noticed that the bar was really high in relation to my body. I immediately felt like a 10 year old. I ordered a hot roast beef sandwich, which is not what I really wanted. For the last several days, I have had a hankering for a hot turkey sandwich, and every place that I had been to, didn't offer one, this place included. The woman doing the food prep and waiting tables seemed to be the local hotty. It is not that she was "hot" it was merely that her co-workers comparatively, made her seem that way. I was soon to discover that the Borderline Café was not the classy place that I thought it was when I witnessed Ms. Hotty, coughing into her left hand, then, 2 seconds later, tossing a salad with her same virus-laden hand. And people wonder why we ask a blessing on the food! Thankfully, salad was not on my menu tonight. Soon my meal was done, and I was heading to the Lehman Caverns camping area. The first campground I visited was full, and I was wondering if the second one would be full as well, but, was relieved to find that there were a few open spaces. I pitched my tent in record time, and went to sleep lulled by a nearby cascading stream.

9/20/2003, Monday – Lehman Caves Campground to Frenchman's Reservoir

I woke up and was underway at about 8:00, the road was good and the traffic light. I figured that I would ride to Ely and get something to eat. My pleasant ride soon turned stressful when I saw a sign that said that Ely was 49 miles. Forty Nine Miles! I thought it was only about 29 miles. Somehow, I had misread my map and I now realized that I should have fueled back at the Borderline Café. I still had not gone switched to my reserve fuel, which was generally good for at least 20 miles. But soon, the motor faltered and I switched to reserve. My odometer said that I had a bit more than 30 miles left to go to get to Ely, Nevada. I decided to slow way down and let each stroke of the pistons propel me closer to Ely rather than getting me there *faster*.

Slowing down, would also raise my economy by lower my aerodynamic drag. I slowed to 40 mph, and used as high a gear that the engine would tolerate, I also prayed.

Would it work? I didn't know what else to do. I'm sure some of the folks who passed me, wondered what the heck I was doing, riding so slow. Although it took me awhile, I finally made it to Ely and a fuel stop. I was greatly relieved. After some breakfast, I continued west through a series of mountain ranges and scattered mining towns. After a short lunch stop of junk food, I continued to Fallon, NV, where I found a Taco Bell. I had already ridden 350 miles, but still had about 90 to go to where I would spend my last night on the road. The place I decided to stay at was Frenchman's Reservoir, near Beckworth Pass on Hwy 70. I pressed on and when I finally arrived at the campground, it was about 80 percent full. I motored around as quietly as I could, looking for a spot. As I passed the other campers, their looks gave me the feeling that they were saying to themselves, "please, not here next to us", its funny the assumptions that people make, I should probably learn myself not to make as many assumptions as I do. I found a place sort of by myself, away from the droves of kids and set up camp. So close, yet so far away from home, tomorrow, I would sleep in my own bed.

9/21/2003, Monday – **Frenchman's Reservoir to Home**

I woke up about 7:30 and broke camp in record time. After eating breakfast, the ride to Chico was familiar and uneventful. Finally I arrived home and what a good feeling it was. My ride had spanned 36 days, 21 states, and 9,300 miles. I fueled about 64 times and stayed in motel rooms only 4 nights.

Concluding Thoughts

I think this was a great opener to my retirement. I really enjoyed most aspects of the trip. Sure, there is a degree of discomfort in motorcycle riding, but, the enjoyment far exceeds the discomfort. It is like something that my mom once said. She said that life is like riding in a car during a vacation trip, that Invariability, the windshield will soon be decorated with bug splatters; marring the view. One riding in the front seat can do either of two things; focus on the bugs, or on the beautiful scenery beyond. In life, there are definitely many bugs that splatter our lives, some bigger than others. I think focusing on the big picture leads to the best of what life offers.

In addition to seeing all the unfamiliar places on the trip, and riding on new roads, I enjoyed meeting new people and seeing old friends. This is certainly a country blessed by God with the rich natural resources, and wonderful landscapes. I feel very blessed to have been able to take a trip such as this and I thank God for the health, skill, and resources required for this trip and the interesting encounters, as well as protection. If you dear reader, have an adventure that you have been thinking about for awhile, start planning, jot a date down on a calendar, do it. I also encourage you to spend some time thinking about the biggest adventure we will all experience, our death, and what lies beyond. Consider that God has communicated with mankind throughout history through people, (the prophets), a nation, (Israel) and His Son, (Jesus). All revealed in His Word (the Bible). For more information on some of the evidence of why I believe this, visit the following web address: <http://www.oro-ville-eternal-riders.org/keith.htm> Select "Expanded Gospel Section". I am also always available for feedback or questions.

Thanks to Kathy, my sweet wife, for her help in this journal, and E.J and Tino who by their interest in my writings, compelled me to take this journal from crude notes to finished manuscript.

Enjoy your blessings,

Keith