

Motorcycle Trip

Nova Scotia



Chuck Raines

Vic Williams

September 2003

Table of Contents

Getting anxious

Day 1 - Freeways & Interstates

Day 2 - Capitol Reef

Day 3 - Arches National Park

Day 4 - Rocky Mountain National Park

Day 5 - Eastern Colorado & Nebraska

Day 6 - Iowa

Day 7 - Illinois

Day 8 - Air Force Museum

Day 9 - Ohio

Day 10 - Cleveland

Day 11 - Niagara Falls

Day 12 - Adirondack Mountains

Day 13 - Lake Champlain

Day 14 - Vermont & New Hampshire

Day 15 - Atlantic Ocean

Day 16 - Lighthouse Route

Day 17 - Halifax

Day 18 - The Cabot Trail

Day 19 - Prince Edward Island

Day 20 - New Brunswick

Day 21 - Quebec

Day 22 - Rain!

Day 23 - Western Quebec

Day 24 - Eastern Ontario

Day 25 - Western Ontario

Day 26 - Winnipeg

Day 27 - Saskatchewan

Day 28 - Calgary

Day 29 - The Canadian Rockies

Day 30 - Back in the U.S.A.

Day 31 - Redding

Day 32 - Home!

Vic's Summary

Epilogue

Getting Anxious!

Tomorrow I will depart early—about 4:30 a.m.—to beat the horrendous L.A. freeway traffic the first morning after a holiday. Interstate 15 to Las Vegas is always a zoo, but if I can make it to the "High Desert" by daybreak, I should be in good shape.

The past two days have been spent checking my gear and trying to get everything into the limited space available. The plan was to travel light, but the pile has been getting larger and now I am near max capacity. It would be hard to get another pair of socks into the water-proof duffle I will carry my clothing in. I don't usually take my laptop computer on motorcycle trips and find that it takes up more space than I had thought.



Last night I weighed everything and found the total to be just under 90 lbs. That's not too bad I guess—about like riding 2-up without any luggage.

I checked the air in the tires, 40 psi, then adjusted the suspension and preload for the additional weight. On the way to top off the fuel tank, I found a dark road and checked the headlight alignment. It wasn't as far off as I had feared and only required a couple of turns on the adjustment screw. Unlike many Japanese bikes which have a handy

headlight adjustment on the instrument panel, I must get off my bike and reach behind the handle bars with an allen wrench.

I got up early this morning so I can go to bed early tonight. It was a little cooler than it has been—57 degrees F. There is definitely a touch of Fall in the air. I may need a sweater in the morning until I reach the desert. It is only 487 miles to Cedar City, UT, where I will meet my friend Vic. That should be an easy day.

Vic left Northern California this morning and will overnight in Ely, NV. He wants to check out a motorcycle shop there and then plans to take a look at the Great Basin National Park.



Just a few more chores and I'll be ready...

Day 1 – Freeways & Interstates

I departed Camarillo this morning at 5:00 a.m.–clear skies and 57 degrees. Traffic was light and I made Barstow in record time. Gas and coffee there, then non-stop to Mesquite, Nevada for more gas. Even with a brief detour to check out Red Cliffs State Park, I arrived in Cedar City at 2:30 p.m. 502 miles in eight hours including stops. Not bad. The hottest it got was 100 degrees in Las Vegas, but my Savanna jacket proved its worth again. The more I wear that jacket, the more I like it. With all the vents open, I was never uncomfortable.

This was not a scenic day—just 500 miles of Interstate. Tomorrow the fun begins.



Vic was waiting for me in Cedar City with horror stories of his trip across Northern Nevada—thunderstorms, hail, lightning and strong winds. Not a nice day! Hopefully that will not be soon repeated.



We just discovered there are Mexicans in Utah. Cedar City must have ten Mexican restaurants. I think we may try one tonight.

Mileage today: 502

Day 2 – Capitol Reef

We woke up early this morning in Cedar City to clear skies and a cool 60 degrees. The "continental breakfast" our motel had advertised was the pits, so we passed on that and hit the road about 7:30 a.m. Highway 14 southeast toward Cedar Breaks National Monument began an immediate climb to 9,896' Midway Summit where the temperature had dropped into the low 40's. My heated handlebar grips really felt good.

Descending along Duck Creek, it began to warm a bit and the sun felt good. Breakfast in Hatch, UT really hit the spot. Everyone in Utah is exceptionally friendly.

We didn't spend much time in Bryce Canyon but continued along Highway 12 through Escalante then to Torrey, UT. The roads and scenery were outstanding, the traffic was light and the clouds added a spectacular backdrop to the red cliffs.



We checked into a nice motel in Torrey, dropped some of our load, then took a ride through the western half of Capital Reef National Park. What a fantastic ride! This is as good as motorcycling gets!

At each scenic turnout, we kept running into a French couple on a rented Harley who were absolutely amazed at the beauty and vastness of the American West. I didn't think the French liked us anymore, but this couple seemed to be an exception.

Tomorrow we will continue through Capital Reef National Park, then check out Arches National Park in Eastern Utah. The weather report is good and we are looking forward to another good day of riding.



Mileage today: 221; Total mileage: 723

Day 3 – Arches National Monument

After a good breakfast with three Harley guys we met the night before, we departed tree-lined Torrey, Utah at 8:00 a.m. It was a comfortable 59 degrees. As we retraced our route through Capital Reef, the temp began to increase until it topped 100 degrees near Arches National Park.

The stark contrast of red cliffs and green cottonwood trees soon gave way to colorless mud mountains of the Luna Plateau. I decided against buying retirement property in Hanksville. Green River didn't impress me much either.



Arches National Park was something else however. Of all the national parks I have visited, I would rank Arches among the top two or three. I can't describe the magnificence of the red limestone formations and the precariously balanced rocks. Arches is a "must see" for anyone traveling through the West.

We had an early dinner in Moab, then followed Highway 128 northeast along the Colorado River to Interstate 70. Highway 128 is one of the finest roads I have ever ridden a bike on. Not only is the scenery breathtaking but the road is what every biker dreams of – thanks Fred!



We are spending tonight at the 3-star (in your dreams) Value Lodge Motel in Grand Junction, CO. Fortunately we will only be here a short time. We plan to get an early start in the morning and try to make it to Grand Lake, CO near the entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park.

While gassing up in Moab, fuel splashed onto the inside of Vic's windshield, completely ruining it. Somewhere along the way, we will try to find a replacement. Otherwise, both bikes are running good.

Mileage today: 305; Total mileage: 1028

Day 4 – Rocky Mountain National Park

Today we took I-70 from Grand Junction to Rifle, then turned north on Highway 12 to Meeker and Craig. Something I noticed right away is that in Colorado there is apparently no speed limit for trucks. It is not uncommon to be passed by 18-wheelers traveling in excess of 85 m.p.h. It's downright scary!

The road from Rifle to Craig is a nice road. It is in good repair, has some nice curves and has very little traffic. At Craig, we turned eastbound on Highway 40 where the traffic more than doubled. Hayden is a nice little town with a lot of atmosphere while Steamboat Springs seems to be competing with Aspen to see which can attract the most pretentious yuppies.

Rocky Mountain National Park has always been one of my favorite spots. Simply driving through the park doesn't do it justice, but since we have so far to go, that is what we did. It is only 40 miles from Grand Lake to Estes Park and we did the whole thing in about two hours. Not much time to experience such splendor.



The temperature in Grand Lake was 85 degrees. Shortly after entering the park, Highway 34 begins a climb to 12,183' where the temperature was a chilly 46 degrees. Crossing the summit, a passing shower cooled things down even more, but by the time we reached Estes Park, the temperature was back into the mid 80's.

One of the worst experiences of the trip so far was our ride from Estes Park to Loveland. There is a 30-mile no passing zone where the worst drivers in Colorado go to practice their stupidity. Anyone visiting Colorado should avoid this road at all costs!

We had a good Italian dinner in Estes Park then decided to continue to Loveland before finding a place to stay. It was a good thing we ate when we did because every motel in Loveland was full due to multiple events this weekend. We continued on to Greeley, where we found a convenient and clean Super-8 motel which we grabbed without even asking the price. Fortunately it was reasonable.

Tomorrow we head unto the hinterlands of Eastern Colorado and Western Nebraska with a goal of reaching Lincoln by nightfall.

Mileage today: 398; Total mileage: 1,426

Day 5 – Eastern Colorado & Nebraska

Departure from Greeley was delayed somewhat by the excellent breakfast included with our room. Super-8 motels have really come up in the world. No one could have asked for a better place to stay.

It was another beautiful day with a temperature of 58 degrees at 8:00 a.m. when we finally got under way. We picked up Highway 34 just outside our motel and followed it for the rest of the day – first through Eastern Colorado, then 3/4 of the way across Nebraska. Temperatures peaked in the high 80's with nothing more than scattered clouds.

If you like the smell of cows, you will love Eastern Colorado. I had decided to make some more derogatory comments about the State of Colorado until we stopped for coffee in Wray, just west of the Nebraska border. Wray is a little town with a main street more fitting of Mayburry RFD. The two young girls running the "Coffee & Bagel Salon" were exceptionally friendly and happy to explain how Wray produced more corn than any other county in Colorado – or something like that. We left Wray feeling that all was well with the world.



The further east we rode, the more attractive the landscape became. Brown pastures and feed lots gave way to irrigated fields of corn. Unfortunately many of the small towns we passed are in decline.

Our original intent was to overnight in Lincoln, but after noticing the many red University of Nebraska flags in every town we passed, we realized this was Saturday and there was probably a football game in Lincoln. This confirmed, we realized that we would never find a place to stay there. We therefore decided to stop for the night in the small town of Sutton, about 75 miles west of Lincoln.

This proved to be a good plan. The "Mom & Pop" motel we found was excellent and everyone we met went out of their way to be helpful and friendly. We had dinner at the American Legion Hall and that was excellent also. Tomorrow we will leave Nebraska with a favorable impression. Our goal tomorrow is to make Burlington, Iowa.

Mileage today: 394; Total mileage: 1,820

Day 6 – Iowa

We got an early start this morning after a good nights sleep in Sutton, Nebraska. Good weather seems to be following us across the country, however several farmers we talked with complained about a lack of rain. If it wasn't too dry, it would probably be too wet – or the bugs would be eating the corn. Two of my uncles were farmers and I know the drill.

We programed our Garmin V's for the fastest route to Exit 426 on Interstate 80 northeast of Lincoln. It was 56 degrees at 7:30 a.m. as we pulled out of the motel and headed east on Highway 6. It took only about a mile for me to realize that I needed my jacket liner. Not wanting to stop however, I just hunkered down and waited for the sun to do it's work.

We joined I-80 about 30 miles west of Lincoln and fell in line with the other fast moving traffic. It took a little over an hour to reach Exit 426. We worked our way through several twists and turns until we came to an ancient toll bridge across the Missouri River. From the looks of this bridge, it is obvious that little of the toll revenue is used for maintenance. I was glad our bikes didn't weigh very much.

On the east side of the river, we picked up Highway 34 which we would follow across the entire state of Iowa. Iowa grows beautiful corn but their roads are not as good as those in Nebraska. We stopped a couple of times for gas and once for just a rest at the tree shaded town square in Mt. Pleasant.



The original plan was to overnight in Burlington, IA, but at the last minute we decided to press on to Monmouth, Illinois where we found another Super-8 motel.

I'm tired tonight. We didn't have a decent meal all day and I am beginning to wonder if I can keep up the pace we have set for the past six days. I am going to need a rest day soon.

Tomorrow we will shoot for Muncie, Indiana, then the Air Force Museum in Dayton on Tuesday.

Mileage today: 429; Total mileage: 2,249

Day 7 – Illinois

We departed Monmouth, Illinois at 7:15 a.m. under a high overcast, 65 degrees and 100% humidity. The temperature never rose above 80 degrees the whole day but the humidity made it seem hotter than it actually was. We made a fast run to Bloomington, Illinois via Interstate 74, then picked up Highway 9 eastbound to Indiana, where it turned into Highway 28.



Traveling through the "heartland," one can't help but compare one state to another. Illinois has the best looking farms in the Midwest. The fields are perfectly kept and the farm houses even seem to be more affluent. On the same scale, Iowa and Indiana are about equal with Nebraska a distant third. Many of the towns in Nebraska are in decline and a lot of the farms look the same way. The farms in Eastern Colorado aren't even in the running.

Our tentative schedule called for reaching Dayton by nightfall, but after such a hard day yesterday, we decided to go only as far as Muncie, Indiana today. We found a nice 2 3/4 star motel and settled in for the night. It is only 96 miles to the Air Force Museum, which will be an easy run the morning after breakfast.



A few days ago, Vic had an accident while fueling his bike and splashed warm gasoline all over the inside of his windshield. For some reason, this turned the plexiglas almost totally opaque and no amount of cleaning has seemed to help. Vic has arranged to have a new windshield installed at Tri-Cities BMW in Cincinnati on Wednesday, so we will go down there tomorrow after we are finished at the Air Force Museum. It is only 50 miles from Dayton to Cincinnati, so tomorrow should be an easy day. We have decided to make Wednesday a rest day. I'm looking forward to that.

Mileage today: 329; Total mileage: 2,578

Day 8 – Air Force Museum

We left Muncie at 7:15 a.m. this morning, wanting plenty of time to spend at the museum. Visibility was reduced to about three miles in haze and fog. It was a fairly warm 62 degrees and we had an easy trip across eastern Indiana and into Dayton's maze of freeways. Lots of highway construction complicated matters, but nothing that two Southern California freeway veterans couldn't handle.

It had been over 15 years since I had been to the Air Force Museum. It was excellent then and even better today.

Two additional hangars have been added, both large enough to house some of the largest aircraft the Air Force has ever flown – including a B-52, a B-36, a C-133, and a B-29.

Another addition that I found impressive was a memorial park where various Air Force organizations have placed memorials to their fallen comrades.

We spent five hours walking through the exhibits. In my opinion this museum is every bit as good as the Smithsonian Aerospace Museum in Washington, D.C. A bus ride to the other side of the airport would have allowed us to view four presidential airplanes and the XB-70. But since we had both seen these airplanes, we called it quits about 4 p.m.

We wanted to check with the shop that would be installing Vic's new windshield tomorrow, so we jumped on I-75 for the 50 mile trip to Cincinnati.

When we arrived at the BMW shop, we discovered they didn't have the windshield and didn't know for sure when they would. Someone finally admitted that the windshield had not been ordered until the day before. What total incompetence!

After a few telephone calls, we obtained assurance from the BMW dealer in Burlington, Vermont that they would special order a windshield and have it by Friday. We will be there on Monday, so hopefully Vic will soon be able to see where he is going. It is almost time for a minor service on my bike, so I think I will have that done in Burlington also.

Tonight we are staying in the nicest hotel we have stayed in so far. We also joined a frequent traveler club that will give us every 3rd night free. We had a good dinner, did our laundry and surfed the Internet with the free high speed connection the hotel provides. Tomorrow we plan to have a leisurely breakfast, read the newspaper—something I have missed since leaving home—then make a dash up I-71 to Cleveland. We will stay there tomorrow night and visit the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame the following day.

Mileage today: 143; Total mileage: 2,721



Day 9 - Ohio

I slept in this morning and caught up on some much needed rest. Vic was up as usual at the crack of dawn and had finished breakfast and his morning walk before I even removed my ear plugs. We did laundry last night in the spotlessly clean washer and dryer at our motel and today it feels good to have a choice of clean clothes to wear.

We gassed up and hit the Interstate a little after 11:00 a.m. The weather was good-clear skies and temperatures in the low 80's. We made the 243 miles to Cleveland in 4 1/2 hours, including a rest stop at a Windy's near Columbus. There was a lot of road construction and we saw more LEO's today than in all of our previously days combined. We have made a habit of not running more than 10 m.p.h. over the posted speed limit, so we didn't have any problems.



Last night we made a reservation via the Internet at a Comfort Inn in downtown Cleveland. We also enrolled in a program offered by the Choice Hotel chain that gives us every 3rd night free. I wish we had done this sooner.

I had been looking forward to showing Vic Cleveland's renovated lake front, but when we got there we found the whole area cordoned off for the "Gravity Games," a huge bicycle and skate boarding event. Thousands of teenagers with purple spiked hair and body piercings were milling about and we couldn't even see the lake.



Tomorrow we will visit the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, then head east along Lake Erie toward Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

Mileage today: 243; Total mileage: 2,964

Day 10 – Cleveland

After checking out of our hotel this morning, we stowed our gear in the hotel ball room and walked down to the lake front. The William G. Mather, the iron ore ship we wanted to tour, was only open on the weekend, so we settled for a WW II submarine moored nearby at the Cleveland Coast Guard Station. We had the boat all to ourselves and were able to explore at our leisure. I had never been aboard a submarine before and found this very interesting.



Next we walked the short distance to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Cleveland was the site of the first rock concert in March 1952. I thought the \$14 admission was a bit high but the museum was outstanding. There were six floors of exhibits, all of which were well presented. Every exhibit had the appropriate music playing in the background and numerous theaters offered videos of notable concerts.

For those of us who witnessed the birth of Rock & Roll and have followed its evolution throughout the years, this museum brings back lots of memories. We could easily have spent all day there, but we called it quits about 2:30 p.m. and headed east toward New York. We took the Interstate as far as Erie, PA, then transitioned to Route 5 which runs along the southeastern shore of Lake Erie. This was a good ride through forests, farm land and vineyards.



We reached Dunkirk, New York about 5:30 p.m. and checked into an old but very well maintained lakeside resort run by an Indian family (from India). After unpacking our bikes, we walked about two miles to a recommended restaurant for an excellent meal. I had the best poached salmon I have ever had and Vic even ate "real" food for a change.

There is no telephone in our room, so posting this entry will have to wait until tomorrow. I'm not sure how far we will get, but it will be somewhere east of Buffalo. We have to be in Burlington, VT by Sunday night. We both have appointments Monday morning at the BMW dealer there. Vic will get an oil change and new windshield; I will get a minor service and two new tires. Both bikes are running good and this should see us through the rest of the trip.

Mileage today: 153; Total mileage: 3,117

Day 11 - Niagara Falls

Our motel in Dunkirk, NY was about 100 feet from a major highway and about 100 yards from a major railroad. Between the constant stream of trucks and a train every 30 minutes, I didn't get a whole lot of rest. We are at a much nicer place tonight and I am looking forward to a good nights sleep.

We saw a little bit of New York yesterday and a lot more today. New York is a beautiful state. I think I could live here—at least until winter.



Our short ride to Niagara Falls was quite an event. I don't think we would have made it without our GPS. The weather was perfect—clear skies and about 75 degrees. We spent four hours walking from one view spot to another marveling at one of the natural wonders of the world.



The best view of the falls is from Canada, so we walked across the Rainbow Bridge and spent a while on the west side of the river. I was somewhat apprehensive about being hassled by US Customs on the way back due to the increased security, but everyone was courteous and very professional. The Canadians however charge 50 cents to leave their country. Very strange?!

Leaving the falls, we headed north to Fort Niagara, then along the southern shore of Lake Ontario to Rochester. Traffic through the city of Niagara Falls was awful, but we held our course and made it to the Great Lakes port of Oswego, NY just before sunset.

This part of New York is a major fruit growing region and I have never seen so many beautiful apples, peaches and grapes.



This afternoon we stopped at a small fruit stand and tried to buy two apples. The young lady in charge said that unless we bought a whole basket, the price would be 50 cents each. I wanted to just pick a couple from one of the orchards along the highway but Vic wouldn't let me. He paid for the apples which we had for desert tonight. They were excellent.



Tomorrow we will continue eastward with no particular destination. Our only requirement is to reach Burlington by Sunday night. Rain is forecast but we are pretty well equipped.

Mileage today: 237; Total mileage: 3,354

Day 12 - Adirondack Mountains

We departed Oswego, NY this morning about 9:00 a.m. after a good breakfast at a local eatery. We are living on borrowed time as far as the weather goes. The forecast was for rain today, but we never saw a drop.



We had a scenic ride along Highway 3 north to Watertown, NY, then turned east toward the Adirondack Mountains. Mountains don't have the same meaning in the East as they do in the West. Many people east of Mississippi have never seen a real mountain. Here, any change in elevation over 1,000' is considered a "mountain." Whatever they want to call them, this is beautiful country.

The 1980 winter olympics were held in Lake Placid and Saranac Lake, New York. I would love to see this area in the winter.

Right now, the trees are just starting to change color but the days are still warm enough for summer clothing.

This is definitely motorcycle country. We have seen more bikes today than all our previous days combined—most have been Harleys. It is interesting to note that hardly anyone back here wears a helmet. It would be interesting to compare the number of organ donors here to other parts of the country.



We found a nice motel in Lake Placid within walking distance of the main street. We had an excellent dinner at an overpriced restaurant, then strolled around and looked at motorcycles.

We are only 50 miles from Burlington, VT where we are scheduled to have our bikes serviced on Monday. Since we have some spare time to kill, we may explore some of the historical sites around Lake Champlain tomorrow.

Mileage today: 189; Total Mileage: 3,543.

Day 13 – Lake Champlain

We left Lake Placid about 9:00 a.m. after a real New York bagel breakfast. Tomorrow we are scheduled at the BMW dealer in Burlington, VT at 8:30 a.m. Burlington is only 50 miles away, so today was basically a free day.

The Adirondack Mountains between Lake Placid and the border with Vermont are the most beautiful part of New York State and we had no problem finding small out of the way roads to explore. We rode south along the western shore of Lake Champlain to Fort Ticonderoga, where we refreshed our memory of American history. The history of this area is incredibly interesting.

We finally got our bikes wet. While at the Fort today, a shower drenched everything; but then the sun came out and everything just steamed.



We crossed Lake Champlain into Vermont via the Crown Point bridge and made our way north through moderate to heavy traffic to Burlington. We found the BMW dealer so we wouldn't have to hunt for it tomorrow, then found a clean and quiet (3-star) motel in the Township of Essex Junction.

Our bikes were very dirty, and since having your motorcycle serviced is a lot like going to the doctor, we spent a couple of hours this evening cleaning them up. They look so good, it's a shame to get them dirty.

I'm not sure how long the maintenance will take tomorrow, so it's hard to tell how far east we will get before dark. We will just play it by ear. The White Mountains of New Hampshire are next on our itinerary.

Mileage today: 139; Total mileage: 3,682

Day 14 – Vermont & New Hampshire

We had our bikes at the shop by 8:30 a.m. today and were pleased that all the needed parts were there and ready for us. In addition to a minor service, I had both tires replaced. Just as they were finishing up installing Vic's new windshield, the mechanic noticed a metal rod sticking out of the side of his rear tire. It looked like a piece of welding rod about 3 inches long. I don't see how something like that could have penetrated that tire the way it did. In any case, Vic choose to replace the tire—probably a good idea, considering the miles ahead of us.



We were done and ready to ride at 12:45 p.m. We took I-89 to Montpelier, Vermont then Route 2 to Lancaster, New Hampshire. We had a beautiful ride through Eastern Vermont. Every few miles there was a small village right out of a Robert Frost poem. The maple trees are beginning to turn and in another month, the whole country side should be ablaze in color.



We found a clean but over priced motel on main street right next to the post office and two blocks from a laundromat. We were running out of clean clothes so we did our laundry, then had a fairly good dinner at the only restaurant in town.

Looking at our maps tonight, we realized we are falling behind schedule. We are going to have to pick up the pace if we want to get home before the first snow. We will make Bar Harbor tomorrow and plan to take the ferry to N.S. on Wednesday.

Mileage today: 111; Total mileage: 3,793

Day 15 – Atlantic Ocean

Our motel in Lancaster, New Hampshire was a major rip-off and I was glad to get out there. The "grand continental breakfast" we had been promised turned out to be watered down orange juice, coffee and day-old donuts. We departed at 7:30 a.m. in moderate rain and rode to Hanover where we had a real breakfast.

After riding for a couple of hours with the temperature in the low 60's, I became totally cold soaked and had to put on my Gerbing jacket. My BMW cover pants worked well and so did the water proof liner for my Savanna jacket. My boots however proved to be less waterproof than advertised and my BMW waterproof gloves were a total joke.

Vic fared somewhat better. The only problem he experienced was with his First Gear cover pants. They were nearly useless and his gloves didn't work any better than mine. His First Gear jacket worked very well however.

We needed to make up some time so we kept on the road, stopping only for fuel and to use the rest room. The weather was so bad that sightseeing was out of the question. As a result, we reached Bar Harbor about 3:00 p.m. There was a lot around here we would have liked to have seen, but visibility was less than 1/2 mile in rain and fog. We were also wet and cold.

We stopped at the ferry terminal to make reservations our trip to Nova Scotia in the morning and found the CAT was about to load for its 4:00 p.m. crossing. We decided to press on to N.S. tonight and hopefully escape this lousy weather. We quickly bought out tickets and made reservations for a place to stay upon reaching Yarmouth.

There was a special place on the CAT for motorcycles, with tie-down rings in the floor. Tie-downs were also provided, although we had also brought our own. We secured our bikes, then went upstairs to the large and comfortable seating area.

The CAT is a unique and most impressive vessel. It is a large tri-hulled catamaran made in Australia. It is powered by four 9,500 h.p. diesel engines and propelled by four water jets. Fully loaded, it is capable of carrying 900 passengers, 250 cars and 14 tour buses at a cruising speed of 50 m.p.h. Sailing time to Yarmouth, N.S. is less than three hours.





As we sit in the grand salon, all we can see out the windows are the waves rushing by. Visibility is nil and the sensation reminds me of flying through clouds.

The CAT is very quiet and smooth. Standing on the squared off stern, one can get a real sense of how fast we are moving. Once up to speed, there are two huge "rooster tails" extending several hundred feet out behind the ship. This thing really moves!



I'm not sure what our schedule will be tomorrow. A lot depends on the weather. We would like to spend tomorrow night in Halifax.

Mileage today: 223; Total mileage; 4,016

Day 16 – Lighthouse Route

The CAT from Bar Harbor arrived in Yarmouth at 8:30 p.m. Atlantic Time. Clearing Canadian customs was quick and painless and we were soon tucked into the clean and comfortable motel we had reserved before our departure.

We were up early this morning and after a trip to a local ATM, we had a good breakfast, then began following Highway 3 to the northeast toward Halifax.

Our first stop was the historic fishing village of Lunenburg. This area is a photographer's paradise. For lunch, Vic had ice cream and a can of Sprite. I had some of the best seafood chowder I have ever eaten.



Continuing northeast, we rode through one quaint seaside village after another, each with its own charm. Most of the houses in the countryside are painted either white or gray, while city houses are painted in brighter colors. I am impressed with the neatness of everything in Nova Scotia.



Because I was taking so many pictures, we were falling behind schedule and it didn't look like we would be able to reach Halifax by nightfall. We decided to spend the night in Peggy's Cove.

This picturesque fishing village is surrounded by bare granite rocks and is famous for its lighthouse. It is also the site of the 1998 Swissair crash.



We reached Peggy's Cove just before sunset but found all the accommodations full. I took a few pictures, then we pressed on to Halifax.



We were able to find a decent motel on the outskirts of the city and finished unpacking our bikes a little after 9:00 p.m. I'm glad I had that bowl of chowder earlier in the day because we were too tired to go anywhere to eat. Vic had another Sprite.

Tomorrow we will tour Halifax and then head north toward Cape Breton Island.

Mileage today: 271; Total mileage: 4,287

Day 17 – Halifax

We were rushed last night trying to find a place to stay and as a result, settled on a not-to-pleasant (2 3/4 star) motel on the outskirts of the city. This morning dawned clear and cool and we wasted no time getting packed and heading for town.

Halifax is a difficult city to navigate, with many dead end and one-way streets. To make things worst, our GPS V's are practically useless in Canada. Garmin sells a Canada map set but fails to mention that many of the unit's features don't work in Canada. The unit will not follow roads and is so sluggish that we were often well past an intersection before the GPS would tell us that we should have turned. As a result, we saw a lot of Halifax that was not on our itinerary.

The most predominate landmark in Halifax is the Citadel, located on high ground in the center of the city. Since the city's founding in 1749, Citadel Hill has been the site of four forts. The last, finished in 1856, was built to deter an overland assault on the city in the event of war with the United States. As expected, the Citadel provides an excellent view of the city and harbor. We spent several hours exploring this well restored landmark.



Leaving the Citadel, we were able to find a good parking spot adjacent to the harbor. Parking is at a premium in Halifax and is priced accordingly. You must initially pay for eight hours, then if you spend less than three, some of your money is refunded.

Halifax has a board walk extended over a mile from the cruise ship terminal to the main business district. With a temperature of 80 degrees and a gentle breeze off the ocean, this was a perfect day to view the many ships which are part of the Halifax Marine Museum. There was also a constant stream of vessels entering and leaving the harbor which proved interesting.



A little after 2:00 p.m. we tired of sight seeing and decided to head toward Cape Breton. I didn't expect to make it all the way before nightfall; but we were making such good time on I-102 and I-104, we decided to go for Baddeck. We stopped along the way and called the Nova Scotia Tourist Bureau for help in making reservations for the night. This is an excellent service unlike anything we have in the U.S.

We arrived in Baddeck at 6:30 p.m. and found our motel to be one of the best we have had so far.



We had an excellent dinner of fresh haddock, which unfortunately didn't agree with Vic's sensitive stomach. I personally think it was the beer and rhubarb pie, but Vic blamed the fish.

I'm looking forward to a good nights rest. Tomorrow we will do the Cabot Trail.

Mileage today: 232; Total mileage: 4,519

Day 18 – The Cabot Trail

The Cabot Trail, named for the famed British explorer who discovered Cape Breton in 1497, comprises a 185 mile circular route around the northern tip of the Island. To avid bikers, riding the Cabot Trail is a MDBYD (must do before you die) event. IMHO (in my humble opinion) it is over rated. There are many spots much closer to home that offer better scenery and much better roads. Nova Scotia is a beautiful province and the people are among the friendliest in the world, but the Cabot Trail was disappointing.

We departed our motel and 9:00 a.m. after a hearty breakfast of porridge and brand muffins. There is considerable disagreement on the best direction to ride the Trail. Some bikers take two days and ride both directions. Following the recommendation of our innkeeper who had been advising bikers for the past 25 years, we decided to ride clockwise.

From a photographer's standpoint, counter clockwise would have been better for a morning departure. As it turned out, almost everything on the west coast remained in shadows until late morning.

We joined the well marked route a few miles south of our motel and bounced our way along an extremely rough road to the western coast of Cape Breton. We then turned right and followed the coast north to the Acadian village of Cheticamp. With the Gulf of Saint Lawrence on our left, we began a climb to Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

The roads improved somewhat inside the park. We still had to spend much of our time watching the road in order to avoid the numerous cracks and bumps in the pavement, many which could easily send a bike careening out of control.

I was impressed with how blue the water was. No photograph can do it justice. From the numerous viewing spots, we had hoped to see some whales, which were supposed to be abundant in these waters. As hard as we looked, we never saw anything which we could even imagine might be a whale. Neither did we see any wildlife. There were warning signs everywhere admonishing visitors to



beware of moose and deer. Throughout the whole day, we saw nothing larger than a field mouse. Earlier in the summer, a biker had been killed hitting a moose, so I guess there are a few about.

After rounding the north side of the park, we started down the east coast with the Atlantic Ocean on our left. Leaving the park, the roads became rough again and the scenery became less impressive. By this time, I had seen enough of the Cabot Trail and was glad to reach Baddeck.



Baddeck is an attractive village located on one of the tributaries of Bras d' Or Lake. This was the summer home of Alexander Graham Bell who did much of his research here. In 1909, Bell designed and built the first airplane to fly from a point within the British Empire. Tomorrow we plan to visit the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site, then start our trek westward.

I would like to return to Nova Scotia some day.



Mileage today: 183; Total mileage: 4,702

Day 19 – Prince Edward Island

Before departing Baddeck, we took a tour of the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site which was most interesting. Bell spent much of his later life on Cape Breton Island because it reminded him of his native Scotland. Many of his inventions were tested at his home on the east shore of Bras d' Or Lake.

Leaving Baddeck, we took Trans Canadian 105 to New Glasgow, then took the ferry across the Northumberland Strait to Prince Edward Island.



Once on P.I.E., it took only an hour to reach the capital city of Charlottetown. The rolling hills and farms looked much like Iowa, except there were still some forests left. Corn, hay and potatoes seem to be the main crops. Like everywhere in Canada, the farm houses are exceptionally neat and well kept.

Charlottetown is a thriving city with an old but well maintained center with modern shopping centers on the outskirts. I had occasion to go into a local supermarket and was very impressed. The meat, produce and bakery items were better than most large supermarkets in the U.S.



The weather today was perfect for riding—clear, calm and 75 degrees. The forecast for tomorrow is a bit uncertain. There is a large area of rain to the west which we are going to have to go through eventually—if not tomorrow, then certainly on Monday. Our boots and gloves got so wet during our ride in the rain last week, we are going to dress a little differently this time.

Tomorrow we will take the 14-mile causeway to New Brunswick, then head north toward the Saint Lawrence River and Quebec.

Mileage today: 190; Total mileage: 4,892

Day 20 – New Brunswick

We awoke this morning to a low overcast and a temperature in the mid 50's. It had obviously rained during the night because our bike covers were wet.

Last night we had major problems with our room and this morning, the manager said there would be no charge for the room and breakfast. I thought that was a very nice gesture.

We were on the road by 9:00 a.m. and followed Trans Canada 1 to the Confederation Bridge. There are only two routes across the Northumberland Straits to Prince Edward Island. Both routes are free northbound but it costs a considerable amount to leave the island. Automobiles are C\$38.00 and motorcycles are C\$15.25. That is quite a bit for a 12-minute ride. The Confederation Bridge is an engineering marvel built on pilings across a body of water subject to extremely rough conditions. It is a beautiful bridge and was a memorable ride.



Reaching New Brunswick, we turned north and followed the coast toward Quebec. Eastern New Brunswick is mostly farm land interspersed with forests and lakes. It is a very peaceful landscape. In the northern part, the leaves have started to change color. It will not be long before the forests are ablaze with the colors of Autumn.



I had been told that the roads in New Brunswick were extremely poor but my observation was just the opposite. The roads were excellent, traffic was light and we made exceptionally good time. We crossed into Quebec at 3:00 p.m. and followed Highway 132 across the Gaspé Peninsula to the Saint Lawrence River. This is beautiful country.

Highway 132 is obviously a popular weekend ride for local bikers. We saw more motorcycles today than in all of our other days combined.

Tomorrow we should be in Quebec City and have reservations at a small guesthouse close to the Old City. Rain is still expected but unfortunately, we can't find an English speaking weather report on the TV. We'll just have to take what comes.

Mileage today: 397; Total mileage: 5,289

Day 21 – Quebec City

We spent last night in Rimouski, a medium size town on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River. We awoke this morning to overcast skies and a chilly 54 degrees. For the past three days, the forecast has been for rain and today was no exception. We debated whether to put on our rain gear but decided against it.

Rimouski is about 200 miles from Quebec City. The route follows the Saint Lawrence through one small town after another. Each town presents a different atmosphere. I enjoyed the different smells as we passed from town to town. Most of the countryside is farm land growing corn and grain crops. There are also a lot of dairies. Unlike the rest of Canada, Quebec is "totally" French. None of the road signs or anything else is in English, and the vast majority of the people speak only French.



The Saint Lawrence River is probably five miles across at Rimouski. It looked cold and gray as we followed it toward Quebec City. The Saint Lawrence is the major access from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, yet we saw only a few ships. The farther west we traveled, the darker the sky became and we expected it to begin raining any minute.

Reaching Quebec City, we crossed the river on a ferry which docked at the foot of the "old city." We had directions for reaching our hotel on Rue des Rampart. The instructions sounded easy but we got hopelessly lost trying to read the French names on the small streets and alleys. We finally had to call the hotel for help. That was an experience in itself.



The hotel turned out to be an excellent choice. The French/Cambodian couple who run it were very friendly and helpful. The hotel even provided free high speed wireless Internet service. That is good because it costs an arm and a leg to use the telephone.

The weather cleared up about noon and we spent the afternoon walking around the old city. Quebec is the only walled city in North America

and we walked the entire parameter. Quebec is also the only city in Canada ever to be attacked by the United States (we lost). The original fortifications are mostly intact, as are many of homes and buildings.

Vic's bike has developed an oil leak which needs to be looked at. There is a BMW dealer in Quebec City and we will try to get that taken care of tomorrow. We plan to spend a second night here, then depart early Wednesday morning.

Mileage today: 194; Total mileage: 5,483

Quebec City



Day 22 – Rain!

Yesterday afternoon was perfect weather for touring. We spent several hours walking around the "old city," had a good dinner, then retired to our hotel where we surfed the Internet and caught up with our correspondence.

I would recommend this hotel to anyone visiting Quebec. It is reasonably priced, extremely clean and the young Cambodian couple who run it are excellent hosts. The high speed wireless Internet service is great for anyone with a laptop. For those traveling without a computer, there is a free terminal in the lobby for guests to use. For more information, contact:

Manoir des Remparts. 3 1/2, rue des Remparts, Vieux-Quebec, Quebec, Canada G1R3R4
(418) 692-1125 www.manoirdesremparts.com



We awoke this morning to moderate rain on the window of our second floor room. It was a steady, soaking rain that lasted all day. It was not cold however.



Vic called the BMW shop first thing this morning and confirmed that they could work on his bike. We spent some time plotting the most direct route through the maze of Quebec's alleys and narrow streets. Complicating the matter is the fact that motorcycles are not allowed within the walled city. Fortunately, the BMW dealer was only 4.5 km from our hotel. I decided to stay behind and write post cards.

I admit I was a little concerned for Vic's well-being. To be perfectly honest, Vic is not the best navigator in the world and this was about the worst day one could pick to be riding a motorcycle. The wet, hilly, cobblestone streets of Quebec are an accident waiting to happen. Vic DID get lost, but he kept his cool, stayed vertical and eventually found the BMW shop, having traveled only 25 km. Well done, Vic!

The BMW dealer in Quebec was first rate. They knew exactly what the problem was and how to fix it and charged a fair price for their work. What a difference from the BMW dealer in Burlington, VT.



The Chateau Frontenac dominates the skyline of Quebec City. Built in 1893 by the Canadian Railroad, it stands majestically on a bluff overlooking the Saint Lawrence River and appears in most of the photographs of the city. This is the hotel where the more successful travelers to Quebec stay. Last night we had an ice cream cone in the hotel bistro. Today we went back for a bowl of soup. We can now say we ate at the Frontenac.



Our hotel serves an excellent breakfast each morning between 8 and 10 a.m. We plan to get up early tomorrow and be ready to go as soon as we finish eating. The weather is forecast to improve and we hope to put a lot of miles behind us by night fall.

Mileage today: 0; Total mileage: 5,483

Day 23 – Western Quebec

We awoke early to clear skies and a cool 50 degrees. We were packed and ready to ride well before breakfast time, so we sat in the lobby and read the newspaper until 8:00 a.m.

Departing Quebec City, we followed the north shore of the Saint Lawrence for the first two hours. Our GPS suggested a shortcut that would bypass Montreal, so we left the interstate at Highway 31 and proceeded more or less direct to St. Jerome. This "short cut" cost us at least an hour but we saw some nice scenery.



Western Quebec is mostly farm land separated by forests. The barns are large and the farm houses are attractive and well kept. Each town is dominated by a huge church with a steeple that towers over every other building. Almost everyone in Quebec appears to be Catholic.



We rejoined the Trans Canada Highway at St. Jerome and made it to Val d' Or before nightfall. We were so tired, we grabbed the first motel we came to, which turned out to be excellent. We had a good meal in the hotel dining room and later paid a price for our over indulgence.

We made good progress today and would like to do the same tomorrow. The forecast is for rain in the morning but we plan an early departure anyway.

Mileage today: 477; Total mileage: 5,960

Day 24 - Eastern Ontario

When we looked outside this morning, we were pleased to find clear skies. It was cold however—38 degrees—so we put on our cold weather gear and were on our way before 8:00 a.m.

Our first stop was Kirkland Lake, Ontario. After about an hour, it began to rain lightly and the wind began to increase. At times, it became so dark, we expected it to start snowing.

We had planned to follow the Trans Canada Highway, but during our first rest stop, a local biker recommended a more southerly route along Highway 101 to Wawa. Because of the weather, we decided to follow his suggestion.

Other than major traffic congestion in the vicinity of Timmins, this route took us through an isolated area of forests and lakes. This was like riding in a trench with thick forest on both sides and a low overcast above. The terrain was fairly flat, so one couldn't see anything but straight ahead and straight behind. This became very boring after a few hours. Again I was surprised that we never saw any wildlife. I don't recall even seeing a squirrel. There were signs everywhere warning of moose, but apparently they only come out at night.



It never did rain hard, just continuous showers with occasional patches of clear sky. It was cold however and without my Gerbing electric jacket, I could not have survived.



Toward the end of the day, the forests began to thin and the scenery became more interesting. Large lakes were visible on both sides of the highway and the color of the trees became more varied. We reached Wawa about 5:00 p.m. and wasted no time in finding a place to stay. After a good dinner at the only restaurant in town, we cleaned our bikes and turned in. Hopefully, Vic will have a quiet night and I will be able to catch up on the sleep I didn't get last night.

Tomorrow we will head for Manitoba.

Mileage today: 419; Total mileage: 6,379

Day 25 – Western Ontario

Today Vic rose to the rank of "Master Navigator" and I humbly recant the remarks I made about his getting lost in Quebec City.

Departing Wawa this morning, I took the wrong road. I will not dwell on the mitigating circumstances (which were numerous) but will admit that if Vic had not caught the error, we would have ended up in Sault Ste. Marie about noon. Thanks Vic!

Today was not a nice day! It was cold, wet and windy; but we were dressed properly, our bikes were running good and we made it all the way to Ignace, Ontario before we decided to call it a day.

From Wawa, we followed the Trans Canada Highway to the port of Marathon, Ontario. We then followed the north shore of Lake Superior to Thunder Bay. Rain was continuous and the wind was strong and gusty off the lake. The temperature remained between 45 and 50 degrees.

I didn't realize that Thunder Bay was such a large City. The sign at the city limits said 117,000. It is a clean and modern city. I would have liked to have had the time to see more of it. The forests along Lake Superior are much more scenic than those in Eastern Ontario. The trees are taller and a lot more varied. This would have been a good day for sight seeing had the weather been better.

From Thunder Bay, we continued on TC-17 to the small town of Ignace. It is quite isolated and I'm not sure how the 1,000 residents make a living. Across the highway from the gas station, the aircraft which supplied the community for many years is on display. Winnipeg is 280 miles to the west and once we get there, the weather should start to improve. This is turning into quite an adventure.



Mileage today: 450; Total mileage: 6,829

Day 26 – Winnipeg

We awoke this morning to low clouds and a steady, cold rain. Canada has an excellent TV weather channel and the map showed clearing conditions west of Winnipeg.

We had a good breakfast at the only restaurant in town, which happened to be at the gas station right next to our motel. We put on every piece of warm clothing we had and packed our bikes in the rain. We rejoined the Trans Canada Highway and headed northwest toward Vermillion Bay.

After about two hours of miserable riding conditions, we stopped at Kenora, Ontario for gas and something warm to drink. There is a chain of coffee shops across Canada called Tim Hortons. They bake excellent fresh pastries. Not exactly in keeping with my diet, but that went out the window in Quebec. I wish they had something like this in the U.S.

Once we reached Manitoba, the rain began to decrease and the landscape started to open up a bit. I was getting tired of the thick, dark forests of Ontario. Winnipeg is a clean, modern city with lots of tree lined streets and stately public buildings.



I was running low on engine oil and was hoping to find some at the BMW dealer in Winnipeg. I had been looking for some BMW synthetic oil since Quebec and have come to the conclusion that this oil is not available in Canada. Fortunately my bike doesn't use much oil but I will definitely need some before reaching the U.S.

We went directly through the center of Winnipeg, following TC-1 westbound. The temperature was still only 45 degrees as we left the protection of the tall buildings and headed into the open countryside. There must have been a 40 m.p.h. wind directly out of the north. Riding like this was very tiring. Reaching the small farming town of Portage la Prairie, we decided to stop for the night.

We found a new Super 8 motel which advertised high speed Internet service in each room. Because we have been staying in small motels in the hinterlands of Ontario, I have been unable to post blog entries for the past few days. The motel also has a washer and dryer, so after dinner tonight we both plan to do a load of wash.

We have decided to modify our route again and go to Calgary instead of Edmonton. Since we have both seen Jasper and Lake Louise, and because we are falling further behind schedule, we will save a few days by following TC-1 all the way to British Columbia. Vancouver is still over 1,400 miles away. Canada seems wider than the U.S.

Mileage today: 340; Total mileage: 7,169

Day 27 – Saskatchewan

It was 9:15 when we finally pulled out of the motel parking lot. The weather was perfect—clear skies, calm wind and a cool 35 degrees. The sun was at our backs, the road was smooth and our electric clothing was keeping us warm. All was well with the world.

One thing we have both noticed is that our bikes run better on Canadian gasoline. I don't know what it is, but it is not our imagination. Vic commented on this after the first tank full in Nova Scotia. Once I started paying attention, I noticed it also. Maybe it is the additives—or lack there of—but our engines are definitely running better than they did on U.S. gas.

There is an excellent 4-lane spanning the width of Manitoba. The posted speed limit is 110 km/hr but almost everyone drives 10 km above that. Canadian law enforcement is much less aggressive than in the lower 48. There are no speed traps or patrol cars hiding in obscured locations trying to catch violators. What few patrol cars we have seen have been positioned in conspicuous places, apparently as a reminder to slow down, rather than a means of producing revenue. Canadian drivers seem to react well to this type of enforcement. Except for Quebec, Canadian drivers are among the best I have seen.

Western Manitoba is mostly flat farm land with a few patches of small, golden colored trees. The main crops appear to be wheat and hay. Clouds began to appear on the horizon and by the time we reached Saskatchewan, we were encountering scattered showers.



We made our first stop of the day in Moosomin, Saskatchewan. Because of our speed and a constant head wind, our fuel mileage was the lowest of our trip. I only got 36.7 mpg and Vic did even worse at 35.5. At this altitude, I would normally expect about 42 mpg and Vic should have done better than that. (My average for the trip so far has been 43.8 mpg.)

We made another stop in Regina, then stopped for the day in Moose Jaw. We should have continued for another hour or so, but we didn't realize that Saskatchewan was on mountain time and that we had gained an hour of daylight. We are going to bed early tonight and get an early start in the morning. The weather is expected to be good and we need to make Calgary tomorrow.

Mileage today: 345; Total mileage: 7,514

Day 28 - Calgary

For some reason, the Province of Saskatchewan has decided it should be in the mountain time zone. As a result, sunrise is not until 7:30 a.m. We were on the road and headed west by 6:30 a.m. It was COLD! The thermometer said 34 degrees and the few flakes of snow illuminated by our head lights confirmed it. Fortunately, the snow didn't last long and we were treated to a beautiful sunrise in our rear view mirrors.



At this temperature, there are a few weak spots in my clothing. After about an hour, my feet became numb and I couldn't feel my chin any more. If I was to do much riding like this, I would have to make some adjustments. Heated socks would be a welcome addition.

We continued to follow TC-1 westbound. After two hours, we were so cold, we made a premature warm up stop at Tim Harton's in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. I love these city names. By mid morning, the temperature had risen into the mid 60's and the riding became more pleasant.

Our next stop was in Medicine Hat. We were making good time, holding a constant 75 m.p.h. across the gentle rolling hills of Canada's great plains. Western Saskatchewan is predominantly farm land. Crossing into Alberta, the farms gave way to grazing land with an occasional oil well.

The skyline of Calgary came into view about 3:00 p.m. We had made reservations at another Super-8 motel which advertised high speed Internet service. This proved incorrect and the motel turned out to be at the lower end of what we had expected. Calgary was warm and sunny and the forecast is for more of the same for the next several days. Hopefully we can put away our winter clothes.

We had met a young couple from Victoria, B.C. about three weeks ago in Utah. They were doing the same trip we were, only in reverse. Today I got an Email message from them. Based on their recommendations, we are revising our route once again. Tomorrow we will climb the eastern slope of the Canadian Rockies to Banff, then turn south on Highway 93 until joining Highway 3. We will follow Highway 3 westbound through the mountains to Hope, B.C., then rejoin TC-1 and continue to Abbotsford. This will take a little longer, but the weather is expected to be good and the scenery should be worth it.

Mileage today: 429; Total mileage: 7,943

Day 29 – The Canadian Rockies

Last night we decided to change our proposed route and take Highway 3 westbound through the Canadian Rockies. This turned out to be an excellent decision. The Trans Canada Highway would have been faster, but would not have been nearly as scenic. Thanks, Allan and Tracy!

The "included breakfast" at our motel turned out to be day-old muffins and coffee. We passed on this and headed for a nearby Tim Hortons for a "real" breakfast. Our motel was located just a block away from Calgary University and Tim Hortons was filled with students apparently cramming for exams. This brought back memories which I really wouldn't care to repeat. I'd much rather be on a motorcycle riding through the Canadian Rockies.

After breakfast, we left the congested traffic of Calgary and started a gradual climb into the foothills of the Rockies. Wow, it was cold! It took all the electricity my bike could generate to power my heated grips and jacket. The sky was absolutely clear and the sun at out backs provided a breathtaking panorama of the approaching mountains. Parts of Colorado are impressive, but nothing surpasses the beauty of the Canadian Rockies.



We stopped at Starbucks in Banff for a warm-up latté, then headed west to intercept Highway 93 southbound toward Cranbrook. I have never seen more spectacular scenery. The small resort town of Radium Hot Springs looked interesting. I wish we had not been so far behind schedule. I would have liked to have explored that area and checked out the spa.



At Cranbrook, we turned west on Highway 3. There were a lot of twists and turns on this road with many chances to take the wrong turn. This happened shortly after leaving Salmo and we found ourselves in the center of the copper mining town of Trail. Definitely not recommended!

I am disappointed in the poor performance of our Garmin GPS V's in Canada compared to its excellent operation in the U.S. Garmin should hire some competent programmers and fix this problem. Our northern neighbors deserve better service from this company.

We finally rejoined our intended route. I expected to run out of the excellent scenery but it just kept getting better. I am going to return to southern B.C. in the summer and explore this beautiful area.



We stopped for the night in Grand Forks, B.C. where we had one of the best dinners of our trip at the Station Pub. We ate later than normal which often proves troublesome for Vic. I was expecting a noisy night but was pleasantly surprised when we both slept like logs.



Tomorrow we will head for Abbotsford and then do battle with U.S. Customs to reenter our homeland. I hope there is not some new security threat; I don't feel like going through the hassle which seems to be the norm these days.

Mileage today: 470; Total mileage: 8,413

Day 30 – Back In The U.S.A.

It was clear and cold this morning in Grand Forks, B.C. where we had spent the night. The thermometer said 35 degrees. While I finished yesterday's blog, Vic walked across the street for coffee at the Chevron gas station. The R.C.M.P. were investigating a holdup which had occurred during the night. This surprised me. Grand Forks didn't seem like a place where things like that ever happened.



We decided to ride the short distance to Greenwood where a local restaurant had been recommended. Greenwood is a small village that time seems to have forgotten. We had no problem finding the Welcome Home Tea Room, where the grandmotherly owner personally prepared one of the best breakfasts we have had.

While we ate, the town philosopher explained in detail what made Greenwood the best place in the world to live. We were told that the town's motto is "Don't stay long; or you will stay forever." There might be something to this.

From Greenwood, we continued westbound on Highway 3 to the resort city of Osoyoos. The alpine forests begin to give way to more arid conditions similar to those found in the U.S. southwest.



Further to the west, the small town of Keremeos is nestled in a valley where all kinds of fruit is grown. During a rest stop at one of the many fruit stands, we met a young German who had been riding a bicycle around Canada for most of the summer. For the past several weeks, he had been picking fruit to earn enough money for his trip home. Listening to his story, our adventure seemed a little tame by comparison. I wonder whatever happened to him.

At Princeton, we turned south and dipped through Manning Provincial Park. Every time I expected the spectacular scenery to end, we would go around a curve and something better would appear.

Just before reaching Hope, B.C., we were able to observe the results of the massive landslide which occurred in 1965, burring an entire valley. After Hope, we joined the 4-lane Trans Canada highway and made a high speed run to Abbotsford. We treated ourselves one last time to a warm pastry at Tim Hortons, then crossed into the U.S. at the Sumas, WA Crossing.

I was surprised at how smoothly our crossing went. As it turned out, Vic and the Customs Agent had a mutual friend in Murphys, CA. This definitely smoothed our reentry.

There was still some daylight left and we decided to ride for another hour or so. We joined I-5 at Bellingham and followed the fast moving traffic through Seattle and Tacoma to Olympia, WA. We found a very nice Comfort Inn, thinking we had accumulated enough points for a free room. It turned out we were 1,000 points short, but decided to stay anyway. We had an excellent Italian dinner tonight.

Tomorrow we will see how far south we can go.

Mileage today: 470; Total mileage: 8,883



Day 31 – Redding, CA

After a good nights sleep in one of the nicest motels of our trip, we departed Olympia, Washington just after 8:00 a.m. It was overcast with temperatures in the mid 60's. We rejoined I-5 and made good time southbound through Portland, Salem and Eugene. The sun broke through the clouds shortly after noon and we were able to shed a few layers of clothing. Traffic was light as we continued past Medford to the California border.

As Mt. Shasta came into view, we were surprised at the small amount of snow. Lake Shasta was also very low. California is going to need a lot of rain this winter to prevent serious water problems next summer.



We had planned to stop for the night in Redding, CA. I decided that it would be best to fuel our bikes before we got into the city. I knew there was a Chevron station at the Shasta Dam off-ramp, not far from the factory where my Russell seat was made.

I slowed down and signaled for the turn off, but when I looked in my rear view mirror, Vic was nowhere in sight. He had been there just a few minutes before, so I stopped short of the off-ramp so he wouldn't pass it by. Vic soon came into view, but at a much reduced speed and followed me to the gas station.

As soon as he rode past, I could tell that something was wrong with his engine. Vic confirmed that it apparently was running on only one cylinder. Vic knows a lot about engines and quickly checked all the obvious causes. Nothing was apparent.

We fueled our bikes and Vic thought he could make it to the motel which was less than ten miles away. I followed him the rest of the way and upon reaching the motel, Vic checked everything he could in the parking lot by the light of a flashlight. Nothing could be found. The engine would idle well enough but any application of power would cause it to cough and shake—as one might expect of a two cylinder engine running on only one cylinder.

Not much could be done tonight, so we cleaned up and had a good dinner at a nearby Applebees. Considering our situation over dinner, we realized that things could have been a lot worse. We could be stranded in the woods of Northern Ontario, in the cold rain, with nothing but wolves and moose within a hundred miles. Tomorrow we will give more thought to our options.

Mileage today: 540; Total mileage: 9,423

Day 32 – Home!

I slept like a log in the free room we got with the points we had accumulated from previous stays in this motel chain. Vic doesn't sleep very much and is usually awake "hours" before I am. When I opened my eyes this morning, he was already on the phone arranging for a tow truck to transport his bike to the BMW dealer in Chico, CA.

We both belong to the BMW Motorcycle Roadside Assistance Plan, an excellent organization which I had occasion to use several years ago. While Vic waited on the phone, the helpful young lady in Boston contacted a local towing service with a tilt bed truck who said they would be at the hotel no later than 7:30 a.m. With the \$100 towing allowance, Vic would only have to pay \$150 out of his own pocket. Not a bad deal considering the other options.

We quickly packed our things and while eating our complimentary breakfast, the tow truck drove into the parking lot. The driver had experience transporting motorcycles, saying that he had picked up a lot of Harley's in the past but this would be his first BMW. It didn't take long before Vic's bike was loaded and secured for the 70 mile trip to Chico.

We said our good-byes and Vic was on his way. I finished packing and departed soon thereafter for my southbound run to Southern California.



I have always liked ships and stopped in Vallejo long enough to take a picture of my bike with some of the Naval reserve fleet in the background.

I followed I-5 to a point just west of Sacramento, then cut through the Bay Area to intercept Highway 101. Spending the past month away from California, I had almost forgotten what congestion is really like. The freeways in the Bay Area are nearly as rough as the roads in Nova Scotia, every third vehicle is an SUV driving at twice the posted speed limit, and the aggressive discourtesy of the drivers raise the question of why I choose to live in a place like this. Throughout our trip of almost 10,000 miles, I did not have a really "close" call while riding my bike. I had two today.



I drove into my driveway in Camarillo at 6:30 p.m. Home never looked so good.

I called Vic and was happy to hear that the problem with his bike had been minor. The needle in his left carburetor had actually broken off. The repair had taken less than an hour at a cost of only \$30. From Chico, it was only 185 miles to Murphys, CA and Vic was relaxing in his hot tub—no doubt also glad be home.

Mileage today: 575: Total mileage: 9,998

Vic's Summary

We met a lot of nice people during our trip—with exception of Lester, the BMW dealer in Burlington, VT.

I always enjoy Utah; the changing seasons give it a different beauty every time I go there. It is too bad we could not have spent more time there. Canyonlands is something we definitely should have done. We really didn't have our pacing down and thought we needed to move on.

The Rocky Mountain National Park was a must see during our trip. Nebraska was sad, with all the little towns drying up. The Iowa attitude is unfortunate, when Illinois and Indiana have so much pride.

I enjoyed seeing how the locks on the Mississippi worked. Revisiting the Air Force Museum was fun.

It was a real bummer going off route to Cincinnati for the windshield replacement and it not being there. Cincinnati was a waste of time, although our stay at the Sleep Inn was one of our best lodgings during the trip.

I really enjoyed upstate New York, the ride along Lake Erie, Niagara Falls and Lake Placid. VT., NH, and ME were places to log into your mind. It is too bad it was raining so hard at Bar Harbor. I think we would have enjoyed spending more time there.

The Cat ferry was a once in a lifetime experience. The little towns and the ride along the Lighthouse Route in Nova Scotia was more fun than the Cabot Trail. I thought the visit to Peggy's Cove was one of the highlights of Nova Scotia. I enjoyed our visit to Halifax and the Citadel. I regret not having seen the Halifax Maritime Museum.

Prince Edward Island was interesting. The bridge ride across the Northumberland Straits was a once in a lifetime experience. We now know what New Brunswick is like.

I really enjoyed our visit to the walled City of Quebec and the whole province. I have been chided and feel sort of dumb about getting lost trying to find the BMW dealer in Vanier. That was not easy to find with it raining so hard, and not being able to understand the road signs. I don't know what else I could have done. The dealer couldn't believe somebody would be out riding in weather like that. I will always remember the good French cuisine and desserts in Quebec.

The ride across the prairie provinces was interesting. I now know what the country was like where my mother was born and spent her early years. Andrew and Traci gave us good advice on our route through B.C., as it was a fun ride and the scenery was beautiful.

If I ever need serious BMW service, Ozzies in Chico will be the place to go. It is not a super store like A&S with all their fancy service writers, which is dialed into their pricing. It is a real world shop, where they know their stuff. It is equal to the shop in Vanier, Quebec.

All in all, it was a good trip, but a person always tries to cram in too much to see, in too short a time. Been there, done that.....

Vic

Epilogue

I have traveled across this country hundreds of times, usually in five or six hours at altitudes above 30,000 feet. For many years I have circled spots on maps which I thought some day I would like to see from the ground. A motorcycle is the ideal mount from which to explore. On a motorcycle, one not only experiences the sights, but also the sounds, smells and the "feeling" of the country passing by. I would not have wanted to have made this trip any other way.

This trip was also an adventure in another respect. I am used to riding alone, which I normally prefer. Taking a trip like this with a friend—even a good friend—can be an adventure in itself. Thanks to Vic's good nature, positive attitude and easy going personality, we were able to survive thirty-three days on the road together. Thanks's, Vic.

This trip was also a test of both our bikes and the clothing we had selected. BMW's are great road bikes. For a trip like this, I can't think of another bike that I would rather have had. We experienced about every road and weather condition one could expect and made it through. Our bikes never failed to start, their weather protection was superb and they handled well over a wide range of speeds while carrying heavy loads.

A few statistics:

Total miles: 9,998 (Vic 9,758)
Total fuel used: 230 US gal (Vic 214)
Average fuel price: \$2.20/gal
Average fuel mileage: 43.94 m.p.g. (Vic 45.60)
Total oil consumption: 1.5 qts (BMW Synthetic 15w50)
Tires: Bridgestone BT020 (10K miles, front & rear)

One clear distinction between Vic's R100RT and my R1100RT is that the older bike provides significantly better weather protection. In updating the RT, style took president over function.

On the other hand, the suspension of the 1100 is much improved over the 100. The higher capacity alternator is also an improvement, allowing continuous use of both heated grips and electric clothing without the worry of discharging the battery. The additional fuel capacity was also nice and the ABS is worth the price of this bike. All in all however, the two bikes well matched.

During the year we spent planning this trip, we gave a lot of thought to our clothing and equipment. This effort paid off.

Our SealLine waterproof duffles proved invaluable. Even during heavy rain, they never leaked a drop. I considered installing a BMW top case, but I think I prefer the SealLine. It is lighter, it holds more, is more streamlined, easier to remove and costs considerably less.

Not until this trip had I worn my Savanna-2 jacket through extended periods of rain. The results were somewhat mixed. The Savanna-2 is not intended to be an all-weather winter jacket. Due to it's breathable design, all rain protection is provided by a gortex liner.

I found this liner best worn as a separate layer of clothing—not zipped into the jacket. The liner worked well in keeping me dry, however after several hours, the Savanna became so saturated, that it gained about ten pounds in weight. It was also embarrassing to enter a restaurant or gas station because of the huge puddle of water I would leave everywhere I went. Also, when riding in cold weather, the wind flowing through the water soaked fabric would become extremely cold.

I found a much better solution was to eliminate the liner and instead, wear a standard rain jacket over the Savanna. Once I tried this combination, I had no further problems.

I should add that my BMW over pants worked exceptionally well, as did the Gerbing electric jacket liner. I would consider these two items essential for anyone riding in cold weather.

Another problem was that my Frank Thomas boots proved not as waterproof as advertised. Once my socks get wet, there is no way to keep my feet warm. Next time, I will revert to the "low-tech" rubber over boots which I previously used with good results.

Another disappointment was my BMW Rain Gloves. They turned out to be a total joke! After several hours in the rain, the gloves would become totally saturated and simply making a fist would squeeze several ounces of water out of each glove. Once they were removed, they were almost impossible to get back on and it took several days for them to dry out. Next time, I am going to try the "lobster gloves" sold by Aerostitch which slip over and provide water protection to standard gloves.

The most important aspect of riding safely in cold, wet weather is to stay warm. There is nothing more distracting than to be cold, and dry hands and feet are absolutely essential to this end. Heated clothing relates directly to safety because it allows one to wear fewer layers of lighter clothing which does not restrict one's freedom of movement. My Gerbing jacket liner worked exceptionally well. Vic's Wedder vest worked well also, however the optional electric sleeves proved more trouble than they were worth.

As for my impressions gained during the trip, I share Vic's observations completely. In addition, I was impressed with Southern Ontario. The area around Thunder Bay would have been beautiful had we not been in the midst of a storm. I am going back to that area some day.

I was awed by the vast forests of Northwest Ontario. Throughout our trip, I was disappointed not to see more wildlife. It was not until reaching British Columbia that we saw anything larger than a ground squirrel.

I was also disappointed in the Cabot Trail. I had heard so much about this area that perhaps I expected too much. The roads in Cape Breton are some of the worst in Canada and the scenery in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park is nothing compared to that in British Columbia. I enjoyed the Southeast Coast of N.S. and the Bras d' Or Lakes region of Cape Breton more than the Cabot Trail. For anyone considering a trip to N.S. just to ride the Cabot Trail, my recommendation is to find somewhere closer to home.

I agree with Vic's comment about the friendly people we met throughout our trip. From the fat girl in the bagel shop in Nebraska, to the farmer in Illinois who got off his tractor to answer a question about soy beans, to the French speaking auto mechanic in Quebec who gave Vic directions—everyone we met (Lester excluded) was genuinely friendly and went out of their way to be helpful.

Canada is a great country and Canadians are good people. In many ways, both remind me of the U.S. when I was growing up. The pace is more relaxed and the people actually take time to talk with one another. Canada is also one of the few countries left that seems to like Americans. At least that is the impression I got. I enjoyed Canada very much and now have a much better feeling for its geography.

I hope those of you who have been following our travels have enjoyed sharing our experiences as much as I have writing about them. This was truly a grand adventure which neither Vic nor I will soon forget.

END



Near Capitol Reef, Utah Sep 4, 2003