

## **Matt Strus' Five-week Trip**

Monday, April 30, 'twas the night before ... no, doesn't apply. Once upon a time no, too common. Dark clouds were gathering on the horizon, at least that was what the Weather Channel was predicting and I HATE to start any trip dressed in raingear when I first leave. I was going to head out on Sunday the 29th, but I didn't start packing in earnest till that morning so I was busy all day and late into the evening to depart Monday, but HAD to be gone by Tuesday to get to my sisters by the Tuesday evening as that was when I was expected. Finally, leaving at what was soon to be my mantra, "off at the crack of noon", to get a jump on the trip ahead of me. Riding off into the afternoon sun, I headed west onto I84 planning to take the scenic run thru The Delaware Water Gap in PA and run south till 6-8pm or at least to Stroudsburg, PA. The 1st bump in the plan, RT 209 thru the Water Gap is closed to all but local traffic, heavy rains earlier in the season caused flooding that washed out much of the roads along the scenic roadway. A 45-minute detour got you back onto rt209 after leaving Milford, PA, it was still a nice ride thru a different part of the gap. With the threat of rain coming to the area I wanted to get as far south as possible. Made it down to Hershey, PA a little short of Harrisburg before calling it quits for the night. Still dry.

Tuesday, May 1, it wasn't raining, but the air was at 98% humidity and just moving got you wet. I waited as long as I could for the sun to burn off the dampness before I headed into what the Weather Channel, the bikers favorite TV station while traveling, said would clear up. Check out time was rapidly approaching with no burn off in sight, time to leave. I wasn't riding in the rain but I still had to stop and don the raingear as I was getting wet from the droplets just hanging in the air as I barreled thru the countryside. While passing thru Hagerstown, MD, where Phoenix Color's headquarters is and I had worked from time to time filling in for people on vacation, I stopped at my favorite restaurant/truck stop, Sheetz for lunch. It was as good as I remembered and I got to remove the rain suit. I was going to stop in to say

hello at the old shop, but, I hadn't worked there for some 12-13 years and had a lot of miles to cover today even though I had traveled thru 4 states in less than 3 hours I thought I was doing pretty good covering those miles. As I approach Winchester, VA I'm debating as to whether to continue to Front Royal and ride the Skyline Parkway or take the short route across SR 17 to Fredericksburg. Too many miles to go and I've been on the Skyline a 1/2 dozen times, so the scenic ride in VA horse country is the route, besides, I will be ahead of "rush hour" traffic as I traverse Richmond, VA. Rush hour timing in big cities IS VERY important for those on the road! Hartford traffic doesn't rate an honorable mention against NYC, DC's Beltway, Richmond, Chicago and too many others I'll be passing thru or trying to avoid. Into NC now and leaving the Interstate for a more direct route along SR 1, a road similar to rt11 in Colchester/Salem, when the fuel light comes on. Like rt11 in CT, the exits on NC rt1 are far apart as are the services. In a state rest area I ask a maintenance worker where the nearest gas station is, I don't like his reply. 15-20 minutes away, take the next exit; turn right and a few miles down the road on the right. 20 minutes of riding could be a lot of miles. A young couple overheard the conversation and was in need of fuel as well. They offered to stop and pick me up if they came across me stranded on the side of the road out of gas. As it turned out, the gas station was less than 10 minutes and 10 miles away, made it! It's still daytime but the skies are getting dark off in the distance. An overhead highway sign is flashing a "SEVERE WEATHER ALERT" warning travelers of the threat of heavy rain, hail and lightning. The sky is a weird shade of purple ahead of me as well as off to the west, coming east. This does not look good for me, less than 100 miles to go and this alert popping up on each highway sign I ride under. The road way is wet as I pass but I've yet to be rained on. Lucked out, the storm passed by before I got there. I think this is the exit for Helen and Rob's house, off the highway on to back city streets, nope, this isn't it. Damn, how do I get back on the highway, where the h&%% am I? Who says real men don't stop and ask directions especially if their GPS isn't working? Pulled into a local fire station, knock on the door and say "help, I'm lost", a firefighter notices my CT EARLY AMERICAN vanity license plate

“LOST” and chuckles “I guess you are”. After some 30 minutes of tire kicking, tall tales and directions I’m on my way back to the highway and the correct exit that I hope will put me in familiar territory. It’s been years since I’m been there but I do remember the area, only a few miles and done for the night, it’s not even dark yet. Today WAS a long day, I’m glad I left home early as I would NOT have wanted to make this trip in one day, I could have, but would not have wanted to. Settle in with the family, dinner out and relax.

Wednesday, May 2, spent the night at my nephew Derek’s home, more room there than at my sisters. Two extra bedrooms as well as enough space in the oversized garage to keep Derek’s classic 5.0 Mustang as well as Robs 2nd Alfa as well as the family twenty something foot boat as well as all the yard tractors and attachments and most important, me and the K bike. This IS the garage that ALL men dream of owning. Tried to get the GPS unit to work, failed at that, spent time with family. Went out cruising in Rob’s Alfa Romeo, good time, I’ve got a classic TR6 so I enjoyed that. Had a great dinner out with the family after which Derek and I took a run out and got a new GPS unit to replace the one that crapped out. I took the 1-year warrantee protecting the unit against ANYTHING, even falling to the highway at 70 mph as long as I bring the pieces back. On an m/c that warrantee could come in handy. (it did, the warrantee that is)

Thursday, May 3rd, headed to Albemarle, NC to Orv and T’s after breakfast and saying my “good-byes”. Come to find out my NEW GPS unit battery only holds about a two hour charge and the hook up that worked when I left home didn’t, no GPS. Good thing I remembered the EASY directions to their home before the GPS battery petered out. I was best man at their wedding in the early 70’s and don’t get to see them often enough. Those who know me are aware I do Santa so Orv and T convinced their granddaughter, Samantha and Justin’s almost stepson Matthew that Santa was coming to visit. The look in their eyes was great, they believe!! Had supper with the whole family, less Willie, who had to work, visited a bit and went to Justin’s, via my newly

recharged Garmin, to spend the night at his home after Justin's having made a point of being home for the visit. Justin is an interstate trucker and we catch dinner together whenever he is driving thru New England. Took a bit longer to get to Albemarle than I expected.

Friday, May 4th, up at the crack of noon, not really, we went out to a late breakfast and was on my way about noon. Headed south to the Hiawassee Rally, it doesn't look that far on the map, but I'm sure it's further. Everything has been so far and it was. Stopped in a convenience store lot to check out the map, failed to put the side stand down, man, a loaded bike IS VERY heavy to pick up. About 10 miles down the road I remembered I had put my gloves on the back of the bike where it fell over. Gone and I'm not going back. A lot of firsts on this ride, the odometer has been on 0.3 miles for years, now it reads 70.6 miles, either the heat or a bump that I hit or maybe when it fell the odometer was jarred back to life. For the first time I had some real nice twisty roads to ride on and for the first time also, I thought I may be lost. I knew what route/state road I was on, but, the low fuel light came on a LONG time ago. There were few towns, let alone gas stations on the road I was on. Nice riding roads. One of my concerns was that while climbing or descending a STEEP grade in these SC, GA mountains, and there are plenty of those, the fuel would end up on the wrong part of the tank and the K could stall. I was worried for nothing, as I found gas at the outskirts of Clayton, GA just a few miles from the rally site. The rally entrance was at a bend in the roadway and of course I sped by it and had to turn around. It was a beautiful rally site on a lake. I set up the tent about 50 feet from the water under some tall trees offering shelter from the sun from dawn to dusk. It was relatively flat, convenient parking with good neighbors as well.

Saturday, May 5, checked out the vendors and took a run into town. I don't plan on leaving the rally sites much as my butt is starting to wear out all ready and I'm just started. If you have never been to the Georgia Rally your main meal is that you are handed a vacuum packed strip steak and directed to an

elongated fire pit to cook the steak to your liking, plenty of different rubs and sauces are available. When the steak was done grilling you moved on to the line for potatoes, veggies, salad, rolls and desert, which moves along pretty quick. It was an excellent meal. I won a tee shirt as a door prize. There was a nice enclosed pavilion for the awards, and it was great as a place out of the sun and heat to nap, padded benches. Laughter was heard while the rally crew was testing the sound system for the awards coming up that evening when “can you hear us in the back” was spoken and my hand rose up from between the isles in the quiet dark reaches of the room and a voice shouted “yes”. It was a beautiful full moonlit night and they set quite the bonfire that evening. I was beat out as long distance rider award by a fellow from Ontario, Canada, darn.

Sunday, May 6th, surprise the crap outta me, “up at the crack of noon, Matt”, I was up, packed and on the road before 9 am. Time to head for the second of the 11 states I am missing on my travel map, Florida as I’m riding in the 1st missing state, Alabama now. Florida is the objective for me today. As I head south there seems to be a large amount of Harleys traveling north in southern Alabama with raingear on, not a good sign. At a gas stop I talked to some of the travelers going north. There was some big motorcycle event, a new Daytona Bike Week in Panama City the same weekend as Hiawassee and they were on their way home, thru the hail and thunderstorms occurring in the Florida Panhandle right now. The storm clouds were visible ahead as I made my way south. It grew darker as I moved on and realized my target destination of Panama City may be out of reach. As I enter Dothan, Alabama the skies start to spritz and open in earnest. Time to hit a motel and call it quits for the night. I got a room, unpacked and was starting to relax when the sun came out 1/2 hour later. Damn, I just might have made it to Panama City; I was looking forward to a room on the beach and having a drink looking over the Gulf of Mexico. I ate for the first time at a nearby Sonic Drive-In. The Chili Cheese Tater Tots were great; I look forward to enjoying all the good healthy foods at the Sonic in Wallingford, CT.

Monday, May 7, skies are clear and I am headed toward the Gulf Coast. I'm really impressed with just how clean the water is. Following Rte. 98 along the shore I noticed an unobstructed view on the water side with very little development and at least 1 out of every 3 driveways on the right not having a building there. After having spoken to some locals I find the reason for the empty lots was hurricanes and the owners cannot afford to build, insurance costs, or are no longer allowed to build in many of these areas. Short easy day of riding, I didn't want to arrive in New Orleans late in the evening and had been warned that Monday is the quiet day-of-rest there; I poked along stopping often to view the gulf and other sights along the way. I was really surprised just how clean the water and beaches were after the big oil spill that occurred in the area last year. State route 90 along the coast is a scenic road. I spent the night relaxing in Biloxi, MS with an open view of the Gulf and that cocktail in hand.

Tuesday, May 8, mid-morning start along a scenic road to "Naw' Leans" along rt 90. The road I followed went thru the "real bayou" country. Miles of the roadway were less than 12 inches above the swampy waterline; I was waiting for an alligator or something to be in the road around every corner, only turtles and snakes. If an airboat had gone past, the waves would have rolled over the roadway. Hotels and motels in or near the French Quarter were outrageous, \$400 plus a night. I lucked out, Motel 6, about 10 miles outside the "Quarter", but had a tough time trying to find it, too many one way streets and "no left or right turns" kept me going in circles till I asked for directions. I could see the Motel 6 sign, but "I couldn't get there from here". Made the reservations for 2 nights and headed to the "quarter". Turn left out of the motel lot and another left at Elysian Fields Road put you at the South-East corner of the French Quarter when the road ended. The motel location made it easy to find the Quarter and easy to find my way home for the night once I knew where it was. Parking in the quarter for an m/c is tough, you're not allowed in the car lots that have a gate according to the signage, but it did register I was there, opened and gave me a ticket. I had a bite to eat in the

quarter and wandered around for the evening. While there I made reservations for a Grey Line Bus Tour around the city and a trip on the paddle-wheel steamboat Natchez for the next day. Anytime I'm in a strange city for a few days I always take a Grey Line Tour, if available, to see what highlights are available and an idea as to where they are in the city to go back and spend more time later in the trip.

Wednesday, May 9, got in the city an hour or so prior to my boat trip, good thing. The lot where I had parked the day before didn't recognize the m/c today and wouldn't open to let me in. At this point cars are starting to back up behind me trying to get in to park, the gate won't open, it's a one way road, I can't back up or out, so I just go around it, the gate, to park inside without a parking ticket. I walk up to the attendant at the faaaarrrrr end of the narrow lot to explain what was happening, her response, motorcycles are not allowed and I must leave. "Where can I park" I ask, her response, motorcycles are not allowed in any parking lot that have an automatic gate and that's all there is in the area. You can park on the side of some streets or sometimes the Hard Rock Café will let m/c's park on the sidewalk in front of their café. I walked over and asked at the Hard Rock, they answered YES. Keep in mind I have reservations for the steamer that leaves in 20 min, I was told that because I had no ticket, I could not leave via the exit gate of the lot, so I ride between the concrete pillars and jersey barriers across the trolley tracks along the pedestrian walkway across another parking lot around another set of pillars onto the sidewalk, another bike now parked there. I left my helmet clipped to the K and made a mad dash for the steamboat, made it. Upon my return I checked on the K, looks OK, rush back for the Grey Line Tour around the city. Really interesting tour, I even recognized some of the roads I was lost/touring on the day before looking for the Quarter, so near yet so far. An afternoon thundershower came thru as I was in one of the restaurant enjoying the local treats and cleared out before I left. It was an interesting stroll down Bourbon Street. I needed to find some facilities nearby, the closest was in the hotel across the lot, some 12-15 floors up, a doorman opened the doors for me the elevator operator brought

me up to the lobby, awesome facilities and an awesome view from the lobby window overlooking the southern end of the quarter and the Mississippi River waterfront, one of those \$400 a night places. Outside the quarter on the road home there was some serious parties and good music going on in the small local bars, which explains the jeep I saw very wrapped around a tree that a wrecker was having a tough time trying to remove from the roadside that morning.

Thursday, May 10, with all the tornados being reported to be touching down across Texas I decide to take the long way around and head north crossing Texas at the panhandle before going west. I got to do a little touring trying to find the Lake Pontchartrain Bridge to leave New Orleans. Interstate 10 from Baton Rouge to Lafayette, LA is listed as a scenic road, it is. One gets on a bridge to cross the Mississippi River then stays on a bridge or elevated roadway for 40 of the next 50 or so miles over Atchafalaya Basin, Lake Bienville and many other streams, brooks, swamps and more swamps and still more swamps. Headed north, to catch a corner of Arkansas, just in case that was also on the list of missed states then to Oklahoma in order to avoid the many tornadoes that are still cropping up every day in central Texas. It wasn't raining but it might have as well been for the heat and humidity in the air made it feel like riding in a sauna, the air conditioning on the K was doing the best it could to keep up with the heat but when the traffic slowed down it got hot. It is truly amazing just how much tea, water and fluids one can consume in this kind of heat and not be headed for the facilities every ten minutes. Didn't travel very far according to the map, only to Alexandria, LA, but it sure seemed like a long day in the heat.

Friday, May 11, still traveling north thru Louisiana toward Shreveport to avoid both the storms and the local "law enforcement" plaguing parts of Texas. Still hot, but scenic along the Red River. One thing I've noticed is that there are A LOT of undeveloped parts of Louisiana that may never be built up or developed along the waterways of which there are plenty. Crossed a little bit of

Arkansas and now time to head west again. State Road 70 across Oklahoma is a lot like rtes. 6 or 44 across CT only more rural and A LOT further between towns. The road runs a little north of the Red River, the state line between OK and TX and is a nice ride. No rain yet, but I can see it off to the south. With the towns pretty far apart and small Ardmore, OK seemed like my best bet to spend the night at a reasonable hour unless I rode up toward Oklahoma City, a couple hours north. Pulled into the Super 8 still dry and called it a day.

Saturday, May 12 up at the crack of 9am to be on the road by 10:30 again, it worked. Sticking to back roads across OK headed toward Interstate 40 to cross Texas at its narrowest point. A number of close friends that travel extensively via motorcycle have relayed more than one horror story about traveling thru TX and their dealings with local law enforcement. Perhaps they have outstanding warrants for them now and that's why they avoid TX. I spoke with other riders I met along the way on the trip and was warned of a town where I WOULD get a ticket for having an obscured license plate. I have a frame around my plate it covers the bottom of the letter "Y" at the bottom of the plate where the words "E A Motorcycle" appear, hence, the plate is obscured and in violation of their interpretation of an "obscured" plate thus earning me a ticket. The wing rider I spoke with told me his plate frame covered the bottom of the letters on his plate and that was what they charged him with. It was a nice hot sunny day to cross Texas at the speed limit with cars flying past me poking along at 70 mph in the slow lane. I had passed the exit before I noticed the commotion to the south side of the highway outside Amarillo, TX of the line of cars partially buried in the ground at about a 60\* angle. Maybe TX has a bad rap, maybe not; I'm not waiting to find out. I called it quits some 50 miles over the line in Tucumcari, New Mexico motel where I met 3 couples traveling on new Harleys about to leave for supper in the motel parking lot. They were on vacation going to the Grand Canyon, having left home, Arkansas, the day before. The group was still there when I was about to head to supper at the restaurant they had told me about. One of their bikes would not start. Less than 3,000 miles on it, under warranty (can't bring it to

an aftermarket shop), 6 pm on a Saturday evening (no Harley shops open now OR tomorrow Sunday) and the closest dealer open on Monday is in Amarillo, TX about 125 miles east; I'm glad I have a BMW that's only 22 years old with only 100,000 or so miles on it.

Sunday, May 13, after a great night's sleep and free (?) breakfast at the motel, I was packing up at the crack of noon to keep heading west. The Harley was still in the lot with the seat and side panels off with the owner poking at connections. After tinkering a bit they found no spark at the plug, so the problem is electrical. They were going to rent a U-Haul to carry the Ultra Glide back to Amarillo, TX but only thing available in the area was an overpriced 35' truck. So much for their vacation. Early in the afternoon I was riding under a cloudless sky, a bright sun with a southerly wind getting wet. Off to the north were clouds so dark and ominous that at times they obscured the mountain range being pommelled by lightning and driving rains. The winds associated with the storm is carrying the rains and the weather my direction. After having left the rains behind me and to the north, I stopped to use my "Senior Citizens National Parks Lifetime Pass" for the first time at Petroglyph National Monument. Wow, was I ever disappointed when I found entry to the monument was free. Self-guided tours sent one along paths thru the desert to view a number of pictures carved into the rock faces along the trail. While on one of the loops, I came across what I thought to be a rubber rattle snake lying motionless in the sand just at the edge of the walkway so I took a picture of it then picked up a small piece of debris and lightly tossed it from about 8', missed, it's a rubber snake, I tossed a small rock this time and MUCH to my surprise this head with its tongue hissing out is some foot or two off the ground and some 4' or 8' long, might have been 10' or 12' long with a rattle loud enough to echo off the rock walls in the backdrop. Needless to say, but I will, I gave it a WIDE berth as I went around it to finish my hike in the park. Upon return to the K-bike I found the warm/hot water in the tank bag quite refreshing. No room for a cooler anywhere. That afternoon I crossed the Continental Divide just east of Gallup, NM, now I really feel like I'm really

traveling west. Even with the my little jaunt of a nature walk and a scenic trip thru Petrified Forest the K still covered another 400 miles without missing a beat before stopping in Holbrook, AZ for the night. I keep thinking of those guys on the Harleys. Crossed another time zone, it's tough keeping track of those.

Monday May 14th, what a GREAT day it has been. I left Holbrook, AZ at the crack of 10:30 am heading south on state route 77 with my primary objective of riding the K bike in Mexico to fill in my map. I chose the route only for its direct line to Nogales, Mexico and really didn't notice the dots on the map from Show Low to Globe along Routes 60/77 indicating a scenic route. AWESOME is an understatement. Picture yourself riding down one side of the Grand Canyon and up the other clinging to the sides of the canyon walls with hairpin turns on 6%, 7% and 8% grades up and down along some of the most beautiful scenery you could imagine in the South West. Along the 50 or so miles where routes 60/77 cross the Fort Apache Indian Reservation one could easily compare it to a 30 to 50 MPH Deals Gap ride. DON'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF THE ROAD UNLESS YOU COME TO A STOP. Well worth going a LONG WAY out of your way for. No possibility of rain, temperatures starting in the 70's rising to over 100 degrees, that would explain all the 20 and 30 foot tall Saguaro Cactus along the way as well as many other cactus growing in these arid conditions, many of which were flowering. I was getting tired from the sun, did I mention 104 degrees. I was also thinking it was late in the afternoon, and by the time I crossed the border and returned to Tucson, AZ it would be approaching midnight so I was having second thoughts about going on to Mexico. I stopped in Green Valley, AZ, got a motel room some 65 k's (along Interstate 19, speed is 75MPH, while mile markers are in Kilometers) from the International Boarder so I would have a short ride back to an air conditioned room waiting for me as well as to unload ALL the stuff I was carrying and travel light into Mexico. That proved to be an excellent idea what with trying to hold and balance the bike in the lines at the border. It took longer to get into Nogales than to get out; a bus appeared to be undergoing a

through search blocking one of the 2 lanes entering Mexico at customs. I rode some 5-8 blocks into Nogales, Mexico before almost being sideswiped by someone making a two lane road into three passing me on the right, time to get out. Headed back to a cool shower, did I mention 104\* at the motel. The Harley situation made me think of and look for my Anonymous Book. I COULDN'T FIND IT. I called Ed Mix because now I had a good idea where I was/could be in a couple days. He took a run over to my house and found my 2011 book. Tomorrow I'm off to BMW Motorcycles of Scottsdale to pick up my 2011 BMW MOA Anonymous Book that Ed Mix shipped via UPS OVERNIGHT to them to hold for me to pick up Tuesday. When I unpacked tonight, I found my 2012 Anon Book tucked away in the tank bag, oh well; I still appreciate Ed's effort. The peace of mind was worth the \$40.00 shipping charge when I spoke to him and was told it would arrive before 10:30am Tuesday in AZ. Did I mention what a great ride I had today?? How hot it is or just how badly sunburn my face, nose, ears and hands are?? I look like a raccoon from the sunglasses.

Tuesday, May 15, I really didn't want to leave the motel! "Dry heat" my a##, any way you cut it 105 plus is hot and it's not even 10 am. I can see how news reports come from this area of people dying trying to cross the border into the US. I don't understand how the scrub brush or anything can grow in this barren heat. The route north takes me thru Saguaro National Park, Tucson and up to BMW of Scottsdale to pick up my Anonymous Book. The "of Scottsdale" shops are modern and quite impressive. They include, but are not limited to BMW, Ducati, Honda, Yamaha, Kawasaki, Ural, Aprilia, and Vespa in buildings side by side by side. The "of Scottsdale" shop's fridge full of cold water and soda for customers was a welcome relief from the heat. Did I mention how hot it is here? When I picked up the book they were holding for me they pointed out the \$20 was still in it. I had forgotten I put monies in my MOA Anonymous books for emergency funds. Found another \$20 in my 2012 book as well. After a nice air conditioned visit, and couple bottles of water with one for the road it was time to head back into the energy sapping heat. At this

point I'm riding in sneakers with my boot strapped on the trunk box. I learned that not only are the boots a convenient place to stash a bottle of water or green tea BUT they work as an insulated cooler as well keeping the beverage cool for a little while. Even warm water can be refreshing out here. I continued north thru the Tonto National Forest and the town of Strawberry to Chavez Pass Road. Hot or not these are still wonderful roads with different scenery around every corner or crest or each hill. Off to my West I can see the smoke from a 15,000 acre forest fire reported on the radio and the road brought me pretty close to the action. Some 20 miles outside Winslow, AZ at 70mph I spotted a deer/antelope ahead to my right moving toward the road, so I back off the throttle, now there is another and another (they blend into the background REAL well) about to cross the road ahead of me. The lay of the land is sloped down from right to left so the critters are leaping off a 3 foot embankment onto the road. As they hit the asphalt, their hoofs are losing their footing so one after another of this stampede is STUMBLING and FALLING atop one another in the lane in front of me in a panicked heap. Now I'm on the brakes in earnest to avoid this mass of flailing legs and horns sprawled in front of me. Then, these critters, rather than jump over the barrier on the left side of the road are all scrambling to get thru a small hole UNDER the fence at the same time in more of a panic now because I am upon them now passing in the right lane while they block the left. A couple more animals in that frighten mob and I could have been in serious trouble. After getting a room for the night I headed out for supper and happened upon "THE CORNER" in Winslow made famous by the song and just had to make some phone calls from "the corner". I was wondering why the entrances to the highway had "CLOSED" barriers on them and a local explained about the winds in the area at times are enough to blow a tractor trailer rig onto its side. It has been rather windy out here. Winslow, AZ; has a nice ring to it, good place to send postcards from.

Wednesday, May 16, easy day ahead, I've got two days to cover less than 75 miles and find the rally site outside Flagstaff in Prescott AZ. Again, I was up

and on the road at the crack of noon and ready to face the heat. Have I mentioned just how hot it is out here? I soon experienced the reason for the “HIGHWAY CLOSED” gates. It may not been enough to blow a truck over today, BUT it sure slowed me down and kept me tucked in behind the fairing for the aerodynamics, depending on the angle the wind hit me. While taking a respite from the wind I met a young man from Wisconsin on his 1st cross country trip atop an older 500cc Kawasaki with aftermarket soft bags and gear stacked up some 12-14 feet above the sissy bar. He was NOT a happy camper; the wind had been playing havoc with the light m/c as well as the 3’ wind sail of gear strapped behind him. We spoke for a bit of our travels and found we were both headed along a route that would take us past “Meteor Crater”. One of the locals told him it was only a 25 mile round trip out of the way to where Jeff Bridges and Karen Allen were trying to get to in the 1984 movie STAR MAN. When it was time to head out, the kid (forgot his name already, I’m REAL bad with names) was thinking to wait for the winds to die down a little, so I left 1/2 expecting to see him at the crater. Quite the impact hole in the ground, one can only imagine the devastation that occurred when it hit the earth. Only some 100 miles to the northwest was The Grand Canyon National Park, get to use my senior permit for real, so I went to see it for the 3rd time in 40 years. Yeah, pretty BIG hole in the ground. While stopped in Grand Canyon Village for a bite, there, not 25’ away was a SUV parked full of kids, in their 20’s, throwing trash out the window. Having raised my voice as to just what kind of slob or upbringing they had as to be willing to litter in a national park when someone else asked if they were from California littering like that. It worked as the young girl, won’t call her young lady, got out and picked up their trash as they drove away with their New Jersey plates glaring dirty looks at me. Did I ever mention how hot it is here, well after sunset it gets pretty darn cold, I had to stop and put on a jacket for the first time on the trip and I was less than 20 minutes from calling it a night in Flagstaff. I ended the day at the Saga Motel on the old Route 66.

Thursday, May 17, another easy day ahead, 7AM wake up call, but still didn't get on the road till 9:45. Alotta a scenic road out here, down state road 89 and 89A thru Sedona and Red Rock Country was today's path. It was cool and comfortable as I left the highlands and got quite a bit warmer as I descended into the valley and then the canyons. Sedona IS beautiful, but then again so is everything else out here. I stopped in the town of West Sedona to purchase, write and send postcards so they would be postmarked from there. Bumped into my young Kawasaki touring friend and we had a bite together, he explained how the wind was getting to him and that he skipped the crater to get into a city and out of the wind. He also mentioned that and he didn't feel comfortable leaving his m/c unattended. I tried to explain to him that it has been my experience that no one messes with a parked motorcycle, must be the biker image of one being hurt if the owner were to see you touching it. After lunch we parted ways. Continuing along the scenic 89A was the town of Jerome. The town is built into the cliffs along the hairpin turns. There are store fronts with VERY minimal parking in front and alongside the buildings cut out of the Cliffside to the left, as one rounds the 180\*hairpin turn, he comes across the 3rd floor of the same store from back down the road. The 1 car garages of the private homes must have been literally blasted out of the mountainside next to the never ending staircase leading to the first floor of the home more than 50 feet above. None of the town is on the flat bottom, it's all built in the STEEP mountain side, with homes, shops, tourist traps, bars, motels and everything needed to be a town. Jerome is just plain amazing! Again these mountain pass roads go along just like Deals Gap except with an 8% grade up and down. Too many turns to look at the scenery, you have to stop and look or you'll drive off a cliff. Had to stop at Dead Horse Ranch State Park, take some pictures and pick up some trinkets. The volunteer staff at the park really enjoyed their first viewing of the Deadhorse M/C web page. The end of the day brings me to the Apache Lodge in Prescott, AZ. Great food, service and prices at JB's Restaurant next door. Come to find out the Roadrunner Rally site is less than 10 minutes from here. Right out of the lot, left at the 2nd light and it's on that road. Real easy ride again tomorrow.

The Roadrunner Rally; May 18, 19 and 20 was literally 15 minutes from the motel run by a group of “hippie type flower people” that really made me feel at home. Upon arrival at the rally site, I rode the bike into the wrong entrance, several to choose from, so I had to do some off road on the K, down a path, across a gully, thru some sand into the lot where 6-10 motorcycles, 6-10 school busses and a handful of charter busses were parked. The rally, held in a private summer camp, started in the evening, so there were several hundreds of children finishing their last day of camp and were scheduled to be gone in the early afternoon. We were instructed to stay away from the kids and they would be kept away from us and the bikes. By 3-4 pm the children were shipped off home on their busses. Having had reserved “bunk space” at the rally I went off in search of my home for the weekend. The front of the cabin was at ground level while the back, facing the action, had a little balcony and a set of stairs to descend to the sand and woodchips below, where the K spent the weekend. It was an interesting few days. A pair of Arizona Highway Patrol Motorcycle Police arrived on their BMW’s and in uniform to answered ALL and ANY questions thrown their direction, from their police m/c training to just how effective a radar detector is and why. It was a VERY interesting afternoon talking with the officers. The state highway patrol sends out a pair of m/c patrolman to the rally each year and seems to go a long way with m/c relations. Arizona Beemers had the MOA motorcycle riding simulator on site with the bike, screen, projector and computer for testing ones abilities on different simulated situations and roads. I wasn’t killed during the test, but it did point out some of my bad riding habits. A lot of good people, good food and great tire kicking occurred over the weekend. At the awards gathering I received the long distance award, a club rally cap with “Long Distance Rider” embroidered on it. I had gone the whole weekend without sunglasses thinking I had lost them, but it turned out I had left them in my helmet and found them as I was about to leave. I’ve spent a lot of time in the saddle and prefer not to leave the grounds; there was after all a lot to see and do onsite.

Sunday, May 20, amazing, 8:45 am and I’m on the road, too much fresh air I guess. The rally site was almost empty as I was among the last to leave. The

objective today is the Skywalk at Grand Canyon West and it's only about 175 miles, easy day. WRONG. The last 70 miles or so is the ONLY road into the park, so you must go up it and then back down the same road. No gas along the way. Did I mention 17 miles of the last 27 mile is a graded, unimproved road? Speed limit on this road is 25 mph. I thought my K Bike was going to rattle and fall apart at 3mph going over the washboard, which was 99% of the roadbed. Imagine how long it takes to traverse 17 miles at between 3 and 15 mph. I won't mention the inches deep dust or the deep loose gravel that "put a pucker in my butt" several times as well as the bruised shin bone from trying to get my leg out from behind the faring too quickly. Had I known this before I was that committed I NEVER would have gone!! Unless you are in a rental car and don't care about the suspension or MAYBE on a GS, DON'T even consider the ride on an RT or RS or your personal auto. The ride was so bad the bolt holding the right side of my visor and lower helmet bar vibrated out and was lost. The Skywalk was OK, but not worth the \$80.70, with senior discount, to see or walk out on. I must acknowledge the meal that came with the ticket was excellent. Until that road is paved, DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME, MONEY OR BEAT UP YOUR BODY OR VEHICLE to view Grand Canyon West or the Skywalk. The views at the Federal Grand Canyon National Park ARE MUCH better anyway, I've been to both. Did I mention just how bad the road was or how hot it was?? By the way, some of the paved roads out there are "open range", and on 2 occasions traffic came to a slow/stop as cattle, the ones with the REALLY big horns, ate grass at the roadside with their bodies blocking a highway lane. There is also the issue of "cattle guards" built into the road bed, they get you to slow down from 70 mph to 30 mph real fast after one bottoms out the first time at 70 mph. The end of the day brought me riding directly into the western sun to Nevada and Lake Meade with the Hoover Dam as my objective for Monday.

Monday, May 21, did I mention just how bad the road was to Grand Canyon West yesterday? First thing on the agenda today was Ace Hardware to find bolts and washers to repair my helmet. 75 cents later I'm back on the road.

About 5 miles east of the motel was the Hoover Dam, spent the day wandering about on the tours inside, under and atop the dam. Very interesting, it was. Did a 1 1/2 hour ride on a make believe paddle-boat on Lake Meade. \$9 for a hamburger, chips and a bottle of water. I was hungry and thirsty; strange how one is ALWAYS thirsty out here. During part of the walking tour at the dam I saw a thermometer, it read 111\*, and this was early afternoon. I have no interest in Las Vegas, only 15 miles east, but by the time I left the dam it was too late and too hot to make the objective of Barstow, CA (about 200 miles away) at a reasonable hour, so I went back to the motel where I had spent the night before. Brew pub down the street, walking distance, pretty good. More information than you need, BUT, I'm not doing laundry, brought old clothes tossing them as I travel and buying new. Became a K-Mart shopper today, replacing what I'm running out of. There is a Fed-Ex shipping store across the street from the motel, time to ship some stuff home that I have accumulated and would rather not throw out. This may or not be technically true, BUT one thing I discovered and have come to believe is that chilled fruit, especially pears, really quenches thirst much better than cold water. I sprung for the extra cost tonight to use the in room hot tub, those jets of warm water in an air-conditioned room REALLY felt good.

Tuesday, May 22, refreshed and ready to go, I found the Fed-Ex shipping office in the mall across from the motel so I was able to send home some excess stuff I had acquired. It did lighten the load. That done, I was off to an early start, it was already approaching the 100\* mark and I was just trying to get ahead of the heat, a futile effort. At elevations of less than 4,000 feet the dry heat was still oppressive but it did cool a little as the altitude rose in Sierra Nevada Mountains. First I had to cross the Mojave, as in desert, National Preserve. This route was the lesser of two evils. I was hoping to cross thru Death Valley but after speaking to some of the local m/c riders with stories about bikes as well as riders overheating, excessive tire wear due to overheated tires carrying too heavy a load, I kept to the Southern roads. Bear in mind that every 30 or so minutes one must stop to hydrate, it's amazing just how many

20 oz. Ice Tea's, water or Lemonade you can drink in a short period of time, fruit works best. After having left the desert, one notices several hundreds of wind turbines on the hillsides where you are riding, brace yourself, they are put there for a reason, LOTS of wind and when there are wind warnings flashed on the highway message signs, DON'T let go of the handlebars. It was bad enough the headwind gusts affecting the handling, but it was a rather challenging 50 miles or so when the winds came in from the sides to move you from lane to lane. I paced a tractor trailer truck just behind his turbulence and prepared myself each time his truck was hit by gusts, we were both doing 20-35 under the posted speed limits. Some of those low level mountain passes worked as wind tunnels to the deserts. Passed thru Barstow heading to Bakersfield when the K started to sputter, pulled off the highway in Bakersfield hoping for a BMW shop there, there was and my GPS unit got me there. Only problem was that they were a relatively new dealership, only 8 years, and knew little or nothing about my 22 year old K. It had not sputtered since the highway and suggestion was made, bad gas, a common malady for the area and was sold an "enzyme" gas treatment and told that Fresno, near my objective for tomorrow, has an older, more established BMW shop. It's after 5pm; I'm hot, tired and hungry, time to call it a day. The sunburn on top of my hands is starting to peel while my nose and cheeks are getting tender again, did I mention how hot and sunny it was today in the desert??

Wednesday, May 23, finds me up and on the road early, 9:15, headed towards Fresno by way of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. These are some serious BIG trees. When Ed Mix and I were on our return trip from Alaska we passed thru "The Grove of the Patriarchs" in Washington State and thought that at some 15' diameter those were some BIG trees but these Sequoias are HUMUNGUS. One comes across an overlook where the sign says this was once the second largest stand of Sequoias but due to lumbering at the turn of the century it is now the largest stand. I have a hard time wrapping my mind around just how does one cut something 20, 25, 30, 35 plus feet in diameter? Must have been one serious big saw or alotta chopping and one hell

of a thump or crash when it came down. And then how do you get something as big as a locomotive out of the woods, they did it. After spending so much time in the lower valleys, it felt nice and cool in the higher elevations of the park however after a bit it started to get downright cold in the shadows. There it was, a sign for “The General”, pulled in, “handicap parking only”, another sign “Public Parking Next Right”, pulled out then in again and parked. The footpath to “The General” is .4 miles, well I’ve come this far. The hike to “The General” was like walking “Deals Gap” except it was a steep downhill. My hips hurt walking down, thinking of the hike back, at least they had plenty of “Redwood Benches” to rest these old bones on the way back and boy were they needed. “The General” while still alive, is dead at the top, not growing upward; it is still growing outward getting bigger in diameter every year. The K is running well, no longer sputtering or coughing. Moving along I headed for the BMW shop in Fresno, where they confirmed the K’s problem as the poor fuel that is all too readily available in that part of CA. Fresno is not that big a city as in tall buildings, but, it sure is spread out. I saw a sign for a motel from the highway; couldn’t get there from here. Even after asking for directions I had a hard time finding it, THEN, the clerk wouldn’t budge on the \$129 price for the room. After a bit of riding I found a mom and pop motel for a much more reasonable cost, we’re a couple days from the start of tourist season and in a prime tourist attraction area, hence the high room costs, plus it IS CA.

Thursday, May 24, still a little nervous about whether the diagnosis of the fuel having been the K’s problem as I head off to some pretty desolate roads in the direction of Yosemite National Park. The bike is running good with the additive, but still in the back of my mind I’m concerned, since there are not many services or towns out this way. Comfortable riding weather, this is California after all, with some areas green while others are desolate; up into the green forests and white granite of Yosemite. At one of the intersections in the park with a comfort station and a map of the park with a “you are here” on it, a group of some 10-12 motorcycle riders pulled in for a break. As their helmets come off they wandered over to kick tires and welcome me to the area

then proceeded to tell me about the best riding in the park. The road they just came down had just opened in the last few days for the 1st time this year as it had been snowed in and suggested I check out the views and the vistas overlooking Half Dome and distant waterfalls not to be seen from elsewhere in the park. They were a group of friends; with ages ranging from the 50's to well into their 80's that get together every other week for dinner and a ride. The machines they rode could have been in a museum; MV Agusta, BMW, Ducati, a cream and purple Triumph from the 60's, BSA and a couple Harleys thrown into the mix as I sit upon my beat-up BMW K-bike in this crowd. They invited me to join their ride but having watched them arrive, I passed on the offer, besides I had to go up the road they had just come down. As I watched them leave, I knew I had made the right choice, they had been "carving canyon roads" for MANY years and there was NO way I would be comfortable trying to keep up with them or maybe even able to keep up. As I ride up the dead end Glacier Point Rd, elevation 7,214, for the first time in a long time I'm getting a little chilled, DUHHH, they told me it had been SNOWED IN and that it just opened, wow, look at the snow on the side of the roadway. Haven't seen snow in a while. As I came around one of the corners there was a wolf crossing the road ahead of me. That WAS the biggest and scruffiest dog I had ever seen in my life!! One could see where forest fires had ravaged areas in the park some years earlier and nature was starting to recover from it. Back on the main park roads I found Bridalveil Falls and took the hike up to it. It was so tall that by the time the water reached the bottom of the falls, it was just a mist in the air but still enough to keep the Bridalveil Creek flowing. Yosemite Park should be on everyone's to visit list. I watched some people walking along the top of Half Dome; that is one serious sheer drop. Base jumping? There is NO fuel available in the park and the idiot lite has been on for quite a few miles indicating it may be time to start pushing the bike soon. Just outside the park is fuel, \$5.40point4 per gallon, I'm thankful I'm on a motorcycle and not a motorhome. It doesn't get dark till quite late, 9-10 pm, out here so I opt for the long scenic route rather than the short scenic ride toward Mariposa where I plan to end the day. Route 120 out of Yosemite Park was one of the most

exhausting roads I had ever been on. Mile after mile after mile after mile, about 35 of them, of a Deals Gap type road hugging the hillsides thru the valleys, around the mountains with switchbacks and hairpin turns along the way with NO guardrail and I am riding into the sun going down in the western sky. This may be sacrilegious for a motorcyclist to say, but I REALLY wished this road would end. Exhausted, I rolled into Mariposa and stopped in a small local plaza where some 1/2 dozen BMW's were parked, some loaded others traveling light and was told the rally site was just down the road 2-3 miles and was open for early arrivals to set up camp. Motel rates had tripled because it was Memorial Day Weekend so off I went to set up a tent as home for the next 4 days and nights. Registration was closed so the private security provided by the fairgrounds let me in on the promise to sign-in tomorrow. Some 50 or so tents were set up around the fair grounds and I found a home under the roof of the cattle and oxen shelter. The ground was as hard as cement but once the rocks were brushed away it was home. What more could you ask for, shelter from the weather, sheltered bike parking, electricity, 100' or so from showers and flush toilets, running water and best of all, GREAT NEIGHBORS. Wandered around the site for a bit and found the folks there to be very friendly and outgoing. Overheard some talk about the motorcycle with a Connecticut plate that showed up.

The 49er's Rally, May 25, 26 and 27, like the other rallies I've attended on this trip the only time I left the site was for a store or restaurant run. I'm getting pretty tired of being on the move constantly and do enjoy sitting by the fire ring or just walking about meeting many of these really laid back riders attending the event. Lot'sa tales, both tall and short, start flowing around the fire pit when they learned I was the rider from CT; much new information is garnered from this collection of enthusiasts. Local roads, distant roads, parks, coast line rides as well as off road trails available to the motorcycle enthusiast was the topic of most conversations. Many sites were suggested to me to see along my route to and after Yellowstone on my way home; when I left here that was to be my general direction, HOME. All types

of folks make up the CA riding devotee; the canyon carving RS rider, the GS trail and desert rider, the long distance RT rider as well as hill climb and trials rider, California has it to offer to all of them. Most of the rally goers were in their late 40's and up. A retired LA cop was in the tent next to mine with a computer type across the way. This made for great company during my stay in Mariposa. Friday night it rained at the fairgrounds, elevation just under 1900' while in Yosemite the road I was on yesterday closed again. Many of the roads in Yosemite, over 6,500', were closed over the weekend due to snows that fell at the higher elevations as well as Tioga Pass, at 9,945', but were reopened by Sunday night. I was grateful the pitter-patter of rain was on the corrugated metal roof rather than the nylon of my tent as we sat around the picnic table that was delivered to our homes for the weekend. The rest of my time there was quite comfortable weather wise, it is CA after all. Sunday afternoon closing ceremony I was called up to receive an engraved SOG Multi tool as my award for long distance attendee to the 2012 rally. Up until this point I had been planning to go north toward the Tetons and Yellowstone for my route to Bin and Johnny's and then home, BUT, one of the speakers at the ceremony plugged his local club's rally coming up the next weekend with the statement "if you leave tomorrow, you can be at the Land of Oz Rally easily by Friday". This got the gears grinding, I'm tired of being on the road, I miss my own cooking, sleeping in my own bed and have I ever run up one BIG motel/hotel charge bill coming my way with still at least a couple weeks to go before I get home. Time to make a decision, travel to Yellowstone, I really DO want to get back there again and be home in 12-16 days or more or catch a 4th rally and be home in 7-10 days. Decisions, decisions.

Monday, May 28th, Memorial Day, thank you Frank Podgwaite, I'll explain that later, the rally is over, time to pack up and head East. It's been a month to the day since I left home. Many riders had left the day before but enough were there to make the noise necessary to get my lazy butt up at 6:30 or so to start packing up for an early start home. The decision had been made and the route laid out to head to "The Land of Oz Rally" just south of Kansas City, KS rather

than Yellowstone. Reason being I'm tired, anxious to get home and by heading to the 4th rally in a month I could knock off quite a few travel days by heading east rather than north to Wyoming. Colorado has a number of parks I haven't been to so I can stop there along the way to Kansas. The tough part was I had to go thru Yosemite Park again (tongue in cheek) to get to the pass. Traffic was light with most of it going the other way toward California. I should have put on my long johns, as it started to get pretty chilly over 8,000'. The lakes, scenery, snow were just awesome even though I did have to follow and occasionally pass the campers and motorhomes. To view the scenery, you must stop, park and enjoy. There is the road, a white line, MAYBE 3 inches more road then 18 to 24 inches of dirt and grass, then a drop of hundreds if not thousands of feet along much of the roadway. You tend to go where you look. My speedometer doesn't always work, so I really don't know what kind of gas mileage I'm getting and some parts of Nevada the towns are few and far between and not all towns have services, meaning gas, fuel etc. While fueling up in Tonopah, NV the road atlas showed such a situation coming up between there and Ely; the attendant in Tonopah confirmed that there were about 180 or so miles to the next gas stop and said MANY motorcycles had been stranded along state road 6 out of gas. A local Harley guy came in and confirmed he stages extra gas along the road if is headed that way. Having been quite nervous in Georgia, Arizona and in Yosemite (no gas is available in the park itself) for running with the reserve light as long as I had to before coming across a filling station. As I said earlier, I cannot count on my speedometer to be correct nor do I know what my gas mileage is. Once upon a time Frank had explained about removing the "flapper" part under the gas tank lid to be able to carry a 1/2 gallon gas or more in the tank. I filled that tank to within 1 inch of the lid and had to leave immediately for fear of expansion of gas in the tank. I'm not sure I didn't force some fuel out the overflow line when I did close the tank lid. I watched the odometer closely figuring "as long as the reserve light comes on after I've traveled 150 miles" that means I'll only have to travel 30 or so miles on the reserve fuel. I'm keeping the RPM's at 5,000 for a speed of 65-75 mph, did I mention the headwind blowing across the mesas

or the 3 mountain ranges I have to cross with the steep grades. 145, 146, 150, (phew) 155, 163, 170, 180, I'm in Ely and I haven't hit reserve yet. Thank you Frank! Guess I'm getting better mileage than I thought as well. I'm spending the night on the 5th floor of "The Historic Hotel Nevada and Gambling Hall". The motorcycle is parked right at the entrance of the hotel for the night as I walk around the city deciding on where to eat and what to do next. It's now 1:44 am, good night!

Tuesday, May 29th, knock at the door, 9am, "housekeeping", it woke me up, running late already, no wait, I gotta be out by noon. I was on the road by 10:15. The road out of Ely, NV was marked as a "Scenic Route" and it was. A little short of crossing the state line into Utah, it become route 50, "the loneliest road in America" and it sure lives up to that name. There was a fuel station, restaurant and general store at the state line. The gas pumps were in Utah while everything else was in Nevada. Picked up another time zone, cool, I was thinking, it's not noon, it's 11am. WRONG, it's NOT noon, it's 1pm. The next 87 miles had NOTHING, not even turns in the road until you reached the mountain where the ribbon of road faded into the horizon. Usually one sees farms or ranches off in the distance, nothing for a very long time. Came across a little road construction with a lead vehicle to bring you thru on the 1/2 lane plus shoulder open thru an intersection for about 1 mile, they were oiling the road surface. It did have an aroma those with rolled up windows didn't get to enjoy as I did. A mile or so, after I passed everyone, it was like it never happened. Just as I was about to get on Interstate 70 in Salina I saw a sign, "no services next 89 miles on I70 E", time to turn around and fill up. The I70 between Salina, UT and Green River, UT is marked as a Scenic Route" in my Atlas as well. AWESOME, almost 100 miles of interstate thru some of the most beautiful areas one could imagine. At 75 mph I pulled my camera from the tank bag and took some pictures over the windshield. Temperature was warm, but comfortable, the sunburn index was off the charts, Aloe on the nose and cheeks again. I guess this could be called "high desert". Beautiful!! I

doubt a more picturesque route could have been laid out for the traveler to enjoy, I know I certainly did enjoy the vistas.

Wednesday, May 30, on the road at 9:45, goal is to get to Kansas or as close as possible. The interstate was not quite as scenic as Utah but the buttes were still something to behold. While taking a break at a virgin 191 mile marker there not 75 feet away, was an antelope deciding whether to cross the highway or not. As I was being buffeted by the winds in some of the canyons I decided to "lighten the load". I got off the highway at Grand Junction, CO to look for a Fed-Ex or UPS store. A gentleman at a RV Park directed me to one less than a mile away, better yet straight, turn right, look to the left across the street from Wal-Mart and there. You gotta love easy directions. Got rid of some 50 pounds, but now I must motel it at "Land of Oz Rally", that's OK, I'm traveling light! Headed down the road there is an overhead sign with the message "Seek Alternate Route-I70 closed at Exit 176 - next 4 hours". 1/2 hour later I see the same warning, key part of the message is "4 hours", I see the message again. Roll off the highway to stop at an information rest area to gather better info. I'm told "hazardous waste spill closed the interstate about 10:15 this morning and they have been saying "about 4 hours" since then" I'm also informed that the detour reroute is 163 miles long. Not too many East-West roads thru the mountains. Did I mention previously how tired I am? 1:15 in the afternoon and I'm calling it quits for the day, I could use a nap. The Old Cannon Motel just the street in Rifle, CO and I'm done. I must have been tired; I unloaded the K, lay down and awoke up at 6:20 pm. Next door is a Subway, salad sounds good, had to make up for the chili cheese tater tots. Not traveling during the middle of the day leaves me time to take care of some phone calls that are difficult to do because of time zone differences and some computer stuff, then back to bed to finish my nap. It's hot out here, is my mind wandering?? I'm tired. I saw on the 6:30 news that they just reopened the highway. This delay is going to make getting to the OZ rally and seeing some Colorado parks difficult. The Weather Channel forecast a 50% chance of tornados today, Wednesday, with clearing on Thursday thru the weekend in

Kansas. Weather Channel certainly helps in planning days in advance as to where to be or not to be while traveling. Time will tell if tornadoes pop up or if I make the rally or not.

Thursday, May 31, feeling rested and a bit chilly, but still a nice day for a ride thru the Rockies. Plenty of snow in pockets and shadows along the highway and even looked like one of the “basic” bunny slopes still had enough coverage for people to ski down it near mile 200. The area where the hazardous spill happened was pretty obvious; the roadway was almost bleached white from the cleaning. Not much room for a highway thru the mountains; while heading east, there ABOVE you to the left was the westbound lanes, to the right below you was the Colorado River and from time to time you could see the paved bicycle path that runs along the pass next to the river. It was a great day to cross the 2 passes on I70 and traverse the 2 tunnels along the route. Coming down the mountain grades was a hoot as well. The corners were not that sharp, but you still had to slow down to 60 or so on a lot of the turns. Finally came out into the high plains of Colorado then the plains of Kansas. The two states blended together with herds of cattle, herds of deer, herds of antelope, herds of buffalo, herds of horses, fields of amber waves of grain, fields of grasslands, fields of oil derricks as well as some really green fields of whatever that crop was. Cannabis? Even with beautiful blue skies with some white fluffy clouds scattered about the sun didn't warm up the temps very much, I turned the heated vest off, but didn't remove it. Stopped at a Welcome Center at the Kansas line for a break and got a weather update for the next few days in the areas where I expected to be, looks' good. With less than 300 miles to “The Land of Oz” it looks like I'm going to make the 4th rally this trip.

Friday, June 1, the Weather Channel lied. The report called for a 20% chance of rain and clearing to the East, the direction I was headed. Even though I hate to start the day in raingear, t figured it would be easier to put it on in the comfort of the motel room, it wasn't raining, but it sure looked like I

was going to get wet. To add insult to injury, not only 50\* and threatening but the fresh aroma of skunk permeated the chilled air of rural Kansas. After a few hours I rode out of it to the East and pulled into a rest area to call Bin's Johnny to have a new rear tire waiting for me at his shop when I get to Ohio on Tues/Wed next week. This was a new rear tire when I left home but will need replacement before I get back. As I think about it, I have worn more sidewall off this pair of tires than ANY tire that has ever been worn out by me. The bottom is barely flat. Anyway, when I came out of the restroom to make the call, the rain caught up to me again. Time to try and get ahead of the rain again, 20 miles later, dry, pretty much. Must say the raingear sure helped keep me warm. Kansas surprised me, rolling hills, not flat as I expected, and a beautiful shade of green after so many days of barren mountain scenery, scrub brush or nothing at all growing in the desert. Toured for a little bit, got onto state road 169 rather than state road 69 and figured it out too far down the road to turn around and retrace my tracks. Route 69 was to my East so I just started to use any road going east till I crossed it 20-30 min later, touring. Found the rally site midafternoon, now I need somewhere to stay, I had shipped my tent, sleeping bag etc. home already. At the registration site I was told cabins might be available just outside the park and if no one was there to stop at the restaurant behind the cabins, they help out the owner at times, there was one available thru the restaurant. Gotta love these trusting people, I was given the key to the cabin I was renting for a couple days from a waitress and told I would be contacted as to when to stop back to pay for the room or I could just leave the monies for the room on the bed while I was at the rally and someone would stop by, pick it up and leave me a receipt. When the owners called the next day I was at the rally i just gave them a card number and found a receipt in the room upon my return. There was a covered porch to park the K under to keep it from the weather as well as to load it as rain threatened when I was leaving.

The rally, June 1, 2 and 3, to kick tires and exchange stories with Don Hamlin (spelling? Past MOA pres.) was worth the trip. Nice winding road into

the site inside a beautiful park. Saw 4 deer on the way out and it's not even dusk. Slept till 9:30 and got to the rally near 1 pm to watch field events. Spent a couple hours then back for a nap, did I ever mention how tired I've been? Barbeque chicken and some kind of pork roast, very tender, excellent supper with homemade pies and brownies for dessert. I learned it was 1369 miles home from here, which was the mileage they used for long distance rather than the 1,700 plus miles from Mariposa, CA where I had come from. It still got me the long distance award, a gold trimmed red, white and blue ribbon with engraved medallion. Nice award, easy to pack, carry and display at home. There was a blues band for entertainment. Great conversations with good folks kept me there till well after dark. I said my good-byes, and left the rally site. For the first time this year I noticed fireflies in the fields as I passed by returning to the cabin. Time to look at the atlas and get an idea for tomorrow' ride.

Sunday, June 3, awoke to a light spritz of rain in the air with a promise of more rain all day. At least it's not the serious type of weather they tend to get here in the mid-west. I got lost, toured, on a detour on one of the roads I expected to take. Rain or not it was a nice ride thru the back roads and rolling hills of Missouri. Something's are just too strange to make up, I passed thru the city of Tightwad, MO with a population of 69 and State Road "PP" bisected route 7 in town. I learned today that Garmin, the GPS people, have their headquarters in the Kansas City area when I met someone who worked there and showed me the GPS unit on his m/c complete with weather map radar showing where the rain clouds in the area were in relation to the roads and where we were. For as many hours as I spent on the road today, I didn't get very far east, guess I went too far south into the Ozarks before I started to cut east. There is a whole lotta fishing going on down here with all these lakes about. Found a nice Chinese Buffet near the motel with an excellent "Black Pepper Chicken" for supper at quitting time.

Monday, June 4, the best laid plans for a ride often go kaplooie, as the driving rain sent me down the interstate rather than the looonnnng way into Ohio via the scenic river route along the Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio state lines. With the looks of some of the clouds, they are different than the rain clouds in CT; I was reluctant to follow any road near where flooding could occur. Finally rode out of the rain in the early afternoon and into a 6 mile traffic jam where a trailer truck hit another one that had broken down in the travel lane just over the crest of a hill. The police directed us off the highway to state road 40 which paralleled the interstate to 1 exit beyond the wreck to get around it. I ended up in a stimulating conversation with a group of retirees at lunch while waiting for some of the detour traffic to thin out. I heard about their motorcycles and travels in their day as well as local detour routes to get around the current mess. While sitting there one of the trucks involved, the hitter, was towed passed, WOW, and there were no serious injuries. Staying in the night in Springfield, Ohio, is this Homer Simpson's home town or is that in Mass?

Tuesday, June 5, sun was shining when I awoke, clouds were rolling in as I left and the rain held off till I was in the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum in Pinkerington, OH only some 75 miles from the motel. What better way to spend a day avoiding the rain than to be among and reading about all these old Triumph's, Penton's, Ossa's, Indian's, Whizzer's, and other two wheeled modes of transportation. They even had an m/c built in Stamford, CT in the teens. Wandering thru the museum took a couple hours and it was time to head out, it was however still raining so rather than leave the staff turned on a DVD Player and "On Any Sunday" came up on the big screen TV. Eventually I did have to leave, it had stopped raining, and I had less than 100 miles to cover to get to Bin and Johnny's home in Wadsworth, OH where I was going to spend a couple nights. Johnny had ordered a tire for the K bike to replace the new one worn out on this trip, the rear. We'll get it mounted on Wed. The battery in my GPS died and the plug in adapter on the K doesn't seem to work so it was just dumb luck and not being afraid to ask for

directions that explain my only having traveled about 500 feet in the wrong direction looking for their home. When the battery crapped out, the GPS said I was only some 8 minutes away, so I took the next exit, turned left toward Wadsworth at the end of the ramp and there not 250 feet away was a sign indicating Greenwich Rd, where I was headed, to the left, which brought me to a “T” in the road. I went right, WRONG, traffic got backed up, so rather than spend time in a long line going the wrong way, I stopped and asked at a Lawn mower repair shop, “Yeah, this is the street, at the top of the hill is the number you’re looking for”. So here I sit waiting for Bin or Johnny to get home from work updating my travel log. I was told to look for a log home when I got in the area, but this, WOW.

Wednesday, June 6, great night’s sleep in a large airy room, I can smell the coffee and hear the pitter patter of life going on without me from downstairs. As always I’m the last one up. After greeting their guest Johnny is off to his shop while Bin is left to entertain me. First things first, new tire for the K, 4 bolts and the wheel is off as are Bin and I to Johnny’s Vintage Motorcycle Company. Row upon row and racks of classic restored and unrestored bikes, mostly Kawasaki, as well as frames, fenders, fuel tanks, and an almost unlimited collection of nuts bolts and miscellaneous parts to complete most any restoration of an antique or classic Kawasaki fill the shop. Take a virtual tour of his shop at <http://www.johnnysvintagemotorcycle.com/Company/Virtual-Tour.aspx> , look to the left side of the picture with the Meriden M/C jacket to see Bin’s “biker mom” on the cover of a motorcycle parts booklet. After a pretty impressive tour of the shop we head out for an excellent lunch at a local pub and spend the day checking out the area highlights. We ended up spending most of the day at Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens in Akron. At first I’m thinking “Oh-Man” but much to my surprise I/we had a GREAT time wandering the “Hall” on our self-guided tour that led us to chat with the volunteers working in the building that day who in turn brought us into hallways and rooms most tourists never have access to. Wandering thru the

foot paths on the grounds was a treat as well which led us to the gardens. I had never till now seen such unusual plants and trees. Some of the plants I did recognize, but I had never seen that big. As I said it was a great day, I guess the company makes a BIG difference too. Heading back to the shop to pick up the K Bike wheel, I was grateful we didn't make the turn to drive down "River Styxx Road". Excellent workmanship on mounting the tire as no weight was needed to balance the new rubber on the rim. After a fine dinner out we returned home, I put the wheel back on then we sat back for a little "chit and chat" before looking at the maps. The subject of that "chit-chat" brought up the word "dawdle" (v., -dled, -dling,. Spend time idly; linger. dler, n.). I had been planning on a 2 day ride home from Mansfield, but Bin explained about "daawwdle" and "daawwdaling" and that I could make it in one day. She does it all the time.

Thursday, June 7, again the last one up, a quick bite, some coffee, finish packing, load it on the m/c and I'm ready to head out so Bin and Johnny can get to work, late because of my "daawwdaling". Again Robin explains that "if you don't dawdle, you can be home before dark", after all she has made the trip in one day many times on her motorcycle to visit family and hers is a 30 min longer ride home than mine. "Stop, facilitate, get gas, have a quick bite next to the bike, back on the road, repeat and you will be home before dark" she assured me. Beautiful sunny warm pleasant day as I leave Mansfield, OH. after morning rush hour. I'm not out of Ohio yet and I come across a detour that sends me off where I should be heading east while the road I'm on is going north. Good thing I'm not really in a hurry. After MANY miles headed the wrong direction, thinking I'm touring and dawdling, I see another detour sign getting me back to where I should be so I'm feel better now. Off in the distance I can see some clouds going north to south while I'm headed east, rain, am I going into it, will it move before I get there, time will tell, it is getting chillier. I'm making real good time crossing Pennsylvania, not dawdling really helps. As I reach Bellefonte, PA, home of the Party Rider 4th of July campout, I'm thinking "I'm almost home, just 300 miles to go and it's

not even noon, I WILL be home today”. As I reach the I80 and I81 intersection near Hazleton, PA I need to stop in a rest area to don my raingear as I’m in a driving thunder and lightning storm. A little damp under the raingear at this point I question proceeding in the lightning storm, it’s moving south, I’m moving north, I’ll ride out of it, NO DAAWWDALING. I do, it’s sunny in the next valley, back into the rain after cresting the next hilltop along I81. After a while it appears I’m out of the rain, remove the raingear and poof, it’s raining again. Sky is cleared up as I approach the Hudson River, but I won’t dawdle anymore to remove it, besides, if I do, it will start to rain again. Passing the long lines of traffic at the toll booths I realize just how good an investment EZ Pass has been over the years. As I cross into CT, I’m thinking “less than 75 miles to go so I can dawdle now, and it’s hot in this gear”. Taking a break at the rest area at exit 2, I enjoy an Ice Cream sandwich before starting the last leg of the journey and head into rush hour Danbury traffic. At least it’s moving, unlike stop and go rush hour in Waterbury. The first time in over 10,000 miles and over a month some driver doesn’t see me as he starts to change lanes. We were only moving some 30 mph and he did put on his signal lights as he drifted into my space. The blinker on the end of his rearview mirror gave me time to react, move over and lay into the horn. The K-Bike DOES have a VERY loud horn. He very quickly swerved back into his original lane and mouthed an apology as we made eye contact. Traffic was surprisingly light as I passed thru Waterbury and am thinking; I don’t want to cook tonight besides I don’t have anything to cook when I get home and I’m coming up on Blackie’s in a couple miles. Really looking forward to a treat from home; Birch Beer, chips and hot dogs, they did hit the spot, gotta make up for the salads I ate on the road. As I leave I’m less than 20 minutes from the comfort of my own home, my own bed and familiar surroundings. Home at last, over 10,000 miles, 27 states, 40 days, 1 tire and gratefully very few events that got my heart racing. Unloaded the gear strapped to the motorcycle and took a long nap; it wasn’t till the weekend that I started to unpack anything and another week or two before I put everything away from the adventure. Having thought I had finally motorcycled thru ALL of North America, except

Northwest Territories and Nunavut, I was feeling rather full of myself. Then it dawned on me, I've never ridden in Quebec, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island. Maybe next summer, I can take a ride up around the Gaspé and fix that oversight in a loooong weekend.

Remember, "Life is a Collection of Memories"; family, friends, good times, travel and more also remember to keep the greasy side down.