



The BEEMER READER

Newsletter of the BMW Riders of Vancouver Island

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FROM THE EDITORS

Now *that* was a turnout - over forty members/friends came to the Olympic View Golf Club last month, and 4 new members joined the fold. Among the newcomers were Vernon and Margaret Brownsword, who just bought my old bike (the deerslayer) - I was so happy to see it back on the road and in a good home (sniff). Also new to the club is David Hills from New Hampshire, whom I met working his way back home after buying an R110RSL in San Francisco - he traded me a membership to the Oilheads for one in our club. Gee, members in California, New York, New Hampshire - maybe we'll have to start thinking about changing our name!

I know a lot of people enjoyed the Olympic View Golf Club enough to think of switching to it on a regular basis. The problem, though, is that on Sundays they only serve a brunch, at \$15.95 a crack - a bit rich as a monthly thing. So I think we should consider keeping the Princess Mary as our regular haunt and go to the Olympic View on summer Saturdays, starting in May or June depending on the year. We can do one more Olympic View this year on September 9, but next month (August 6) we'll be back at the Princess Mary.

Stan and Suzanne hosted a fine gathering on the 15th. The driveway was filled with German machinery, prompting one passing fellow to stop in to inquire how to join the club once he finds a bike. The weather was perfect for sitting under a tree and drinking a beer, and the food and the company were lovely. Thanks for the party, guys.

Thanks also to Brian Radford for his charmingly written article on his trip to Alaska. With Kristin running out of time to finish the second part of her article, and

1995 MEETING SCHEDULE

January 7	Saturday
February 5	Sunday
March 4	Saturday
April 2	Sunday
May 6	Saturday
June 4	Sunday
July 8	Saturday
August 6	Sunday
September 9	Saturday
October 1	Sunday
November 4	Saturday
December 3	Sunday

PRINCESS MARY

RESTAURANT

9:30 AM

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my own lack of time (leaving for Leguna Seca and Durango tomorrow!), he definitely saved my butt! See you in Colorado.

Love, Sally

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

July 8, 1995

Dear Sally & Nigel,

Many thanks for the outstanding job with our BMW Newsletter. Our hats are off to you both!

Have just read Kristin Ackerson's 49'er Rally part one. Have we a 'jewel' here or what? This lady with the woolly socks can write! She's interesting, funny, articulate, and observant. Keep it coming, Kristin!

Just a word of caution on the Club seeming to support any one dealer (Shail's tire deal) in the July News. Perhaps it's wiser to suggest support be given to local dealers and shops first, such as our own member, Mike from Sidney Touring. It would be appropriate to print letters of thanks and enthusiasm about any shop the club member has had satisfaction with. We have many other local shops, S&G, Kawasaki, and Kenco MC, all of whom support the Club, or would if asked.

Sincerely,
Bill Miller

Point well taken, Bill. I had a similar response when Al first presented the list to me, and in fact didn't print it then. It was only after he insisted, pointing out that we had an obligation to the membership to inform them of any worthwhile offers, and also that the local dealers would more than likely be willing to match those prices if they knew of the offer, that I agreed it would be a good idea. I do think we should support local dealers wherever possible.

-Sally

DOUBLE BOOKED

by Brian Radford

Retirement means that you have time for all the important things that life has to offer. Not. In fact we end up double booked for protracted periods, particularly in summer when it is prime time for motorcycling.

My recent trip to various off-the-track places in northern B.C. and the Yukon provided a much needed halt to such nonsense, a reversion from double booking to a single track, which is what you'd expect to produce with a motorcycle.

Planning for this expedition has been lengthy but rather fuzzy. Telegraph Creek has been an objective for twenty years and more, ever since I first read about that Shangrilah in the northern wilderness, protected from wet west-erlies by the massive mountain wall along the Alaska panhandle boundary, and from the worst of wintry blasts by the idyllic setting along the Stikine River below the borial forests and taiga of the vast expanse of plateau to the north and east.

However, the 120 kilometre road leading to Telegraph Creek from Dease Lake is notorious - steep grades, switchbacks, loose gravel, deep ruts, dust, washboard, potholes, frost heaves and so forth. Abominable conditions are the common thread in the fabric of every tale by travellers of that road, and I had gradually made up my mind that I could not and should not attempt to ride in. I had thought instead to find some place to leave the bike and to use some other means of transport to get to the Holy Grail. Hitchhike? Helicopter? Horseback? Worry, worry, worry.

All trips have a beginning and an end, but a bike trip is essentially a state of mind and it

doesn't always start and finish in one's driveway. This ride was no exception because it started 800 kilometres from home and ended even further away.

My very dear wife Marjorie is not a happy pillion rider over anything but asphalt, preferably very smooth asphalt. The road to Telegraph Creek is anything but smooth and it certainly isn't asphalt. Neither are the roads to Ross River, Fort Liard, Atlin and sundry other places of interest to Yukon travellers. So this trip started in Prince George where I left her with good friends and a one way ticket home via B.C. Rail.

I set out in the midst of a downpour of Biblical proportions, hub deep on the truck in front of me, and met deluges numbers two and three as I rode west. Some of my old landmarks along Highway 16 were barely discernible through the clouds and murky gloom. Sinkut Mountain I glimpsed somewhere out there, and steep-sided China Nose I couldn't see at all but presume that it still presides over the landscape south of Topley. Chinese dinner I did locate, and based on this experience the Green House in Telkwa is right up there with the best. I found a place to put up my tent as the westering sun broke through above the Bulkley River Canyon at Moricetown, where the Wetsuwet'n Nation runs a pretty good campground.

Mid morning on Sunday, 18th June, I'm at Kitwanga, ready to head north to Meziadin Junction and onwards into the Great Unknown. I used to sit, betimes, in the cafe at Kitwanga and watch the mud-stained wretches on their erstwhile but no longer gleaming motorcycles roll in from the north. I'd speculate then as to what they had come through before resuming my own trip west or east along the paved Yellowhead #16 Highway. Now it's my turn to find out.

Not so bad to Bell-Irving #1, with some construction beyond that. I take it as it comes and don't ride beyond my capabilities which are not, after all, that great. Nevertheless, this old BMW seems to be handling it all so far. Lunch at rough-and-ready Bell II as it seems to be called, being the second crossing of that tributary of the Nass River. By Iskut I'm feeling guardedly optimistic. I celebrate with an ice cream bar while eyeballing to the west the impressive jagged mountains surrounding volcanic Mt. Edziza, to the east more subdued but still lofty terrain toward the Spatsizi Plateau, and to the north and very impressive indeed, a great wall of cumulonimbus underneath which passes my road to Dease Lake. Later it all proves to be a piece of cake - only a few pellets of hail, enough rain to streak the dust, and there I was back in the sunshine in downtown Dease Lake at 820 metres above sea level on the divide between the Arctic and Pacific Oceans. Now it is time to worry in earnest about the Terrible Trail to Telegraph Creek.

Nice campsite beside the Tanzilla River. Other occupants all possess motorhomes of varying dimensions but mostly very large (and being so, unfit for Telegraph Creek. They have to stay on Highway 37). The admiral commanding one of these land liners approaches me with tinfoil-wrapped fish in hand - just cooked and surplus to his needs, otherwise destined for his dogs who look too darn fat already. They're fatter than I am so I ate the fish with no fork, no knife, no plate and no couth. Boy, are we tough, or what?

Later, I'm confronted by a fox not more than 3 metres away and right beside the tent. He's unfazed by my shout and I'm vaguely perturbed by thoughts of rabies. Fox left reluctantly when I shied a rock in his general direction. Was he annoyed by my summary disposition of the fish? Maybe so, in light of his

later actions, more of which anon.

Next day - sunshine, no clouds to be seen. Back 10 kilometres to town and ask everyone in sight about the road to Telegraph Creek. Responses range from "don't try it" to "no sweat, pardner". I recall wife's parting injunction which was of the "don't try it" variety.

Mid morning. Enough of this pusillanimous vacillation! It is time for decision. We are going to do it, one kilometre at a time. Having decided, I feel A-one, right on top of the world. White knuckles eventually relax despite the odd patch of loose deep stuff. I stand on the pegs and roll along at up to 85 km per hour. It's not too bad over the level to gently dipping plateau, exercising due caution, with occasional bunches of horses grazing along the way. Soon enough I come to the sign "Steep grades up to 18%, mountainous road etc., etc." and I start the descent at considerably less than 85 Km/hr.

Beautiful country, big grassy slopes, Stikine River in its lava canyon, snowy mountains on the horizon all under a cloudless blue vault. I am so glad I didn't talk myself out of this. It took me three hours plus to get there but I'm in no hurry. For 20 odd years I've anticipated this day, so " don't have to cram it into 20 odd minutes.

Lunch at what seems to be the one and only restaurant, called the Riversong Lodge, being the former Hudson Bay Company post and now an official heritage building. The town is a picturesque old place dozing in the sun on the north bank of the Stikine. Some of the old buildings are remainders of a gold rush predating the Klondike rush of 1898, and some of the Klondike trekkers came through this place, up the coast to Wrangell Alaska and then by river boat to here, and by trail over the mountains to Atlin and thence to the

Yukon. As the name would indicate, this is also the route of the historic Yukon Telegraph line. Both of the waitresses came here from down south in the Kootenays. "Too many people now, Everyone in Alberta goes there for holidays so we like it here, where the only thing moving in town is the river. We're never going back." This is also Tahltan country, as is the area surrounding Ishut and Dease Lake, but this part of the Stikine Valley is their heartland, which they've defended vigorously against all comers.

I toured the town a bit, looked inside and outside St. Aiden's Church (built 1924), and went down to the river shore. I'm reluctant to leave but a change in the weather could make the road impassable.

As I ascended the steepest of the hills on the way out, I met Tommy Reiser and his son riding on their olive-drab GS. We know him from various places such as Cascade County Rendezvous, Honest John Bee Cee Beemers Rally at Oliver and first met him in 1991 on the way to the National at Flagstaff. Glad greetings all around, and arrangements were made to meet later back at the Tanzilla River camp site. So we split a six-pack and exchanged stories under the midnight (almost) sun while his son fed most of Tommy's dinner to the previously mentioned fox.

That fox came back in the short hours of darkness and made off with my sock which being odoriferous could not share tent space with me. Why didn't he take them both? What does a fox want with one sock? What would he/she want with two socks? Imponderable questions indeed.

Goodbye to Tommy and Nick in the morning They are southbound to return to work and school, and I'm northbound to further fun and games in the Yukon.

Nearly midnight on Tuesday, 20th June. My tent is set up at Morley River, right on the 60th degree of north latitude. I'm sharing some fortified coffee and a million mosquitoes with a lady from the Okanagan Valley who is returning to her Whitehorse roots for a holiday visit. Long days and short nights equal very little sleep.

Next morning at Johnson's Crossing. Here is the south end of the Canal Road built at horrendous cost in 1942 by the U.S. Army along with a pipeline to bring crude oil down from Morman Wells, N.W.T. to the Alaska Highway. I'm told the pipeline was never used and the entire project was allegedly abandoned overnight. Cookhouses were left with dirty dishes on the table and the people just walked away. Anyway the legacy includes the road that is now Yukon's Highway #6 leading 224 kilometres north to Ross River and another 245 km north of there to the MacMillan Pass in the MacKenzie Mountains on the NWT border. The sign at the junction read "Not being maintained, use at your own risk". Emboldened by the Telegraph Creek experience I struck out for Ross River through a vast and lonely country, some of it around the timberline and of wild and wonderful appearance. Almost 200 km covered before meeting the second car of the day, and somewhere in here I turned up 300,000 BMW miles (85,000 on my old bike and the rest on this one).

There is another road to Ross River and it is better than the Canal but it involves 371 km from Watson Lake with no petrol. I don't like to pack the stuff bungee'd to the bike in plastic containers, and I have negative feelings about pushing the machine an estimated 30 km after the tank is empty.

Even when one arrives at the pump, procuring petrol at Ross River is a complicated procedure. The pump is locked and the station

is unattended. A passer-by directs me to the hotel. Customers therein refer me to the lady waiting on their table. The lady refers me to a man whom I will find painting a yellow door in a building a block or two distant. The man in question is found and seems pleased to cease wielding the paint brush. Finally fuel is dispensed. (Why would a door be coloured bright yellow? Possibly there's a sale on centre line paint which wouldn't be need in the absence of pavement).

Tank is filled but bike won't start, is turned around so that it no longer is confronted by sign "NWT border 45 km". Thereupon it starts readily enough and I'm westbound to Faro.

At Faro I'm set up in the town's campground, which is well supervised and maintained. This is the longest day and at 11:30 I'm reading a book from the Salt Spring library inside the tent (some mosquitoes were here) with no artificial light.

This is an interesting area if you like mines. This one produces lead and zinc but there seems little activity at present, I didn't hang around the next day, went westerly past Little Salmon Lake, very photogenic with flat calm and terrific reflection, past viewpoint over the Yukon River at Eagle Rock where in 1906 some unfortunate deckhand blew up himself and his mates by inadvertently discharging a pistol into a boatload of gunpowder. Finally I arrive at Carmacks on the Klondike Highway, which would lead you to Dawson City and also Klondike, the beginning of the Dempster Highway which I'll save for another trip that would take me to the Arctic Circle and the MacKenzie River delta.

Meanwhile, today's trip leads me up the Klondike Highway through Minto and a forest fire burning on either side of the road and covering an area twice the size of Salt Spring

Island (the smoke can be seen and smelled hundreds of miles away). Beyond the fire I go through Pelly Crossing and turn at Stewart Crossing onto the Silver Trail to Mayo, the end of pavement and on to the mountains and silver mines, Elsa (lots of houses and mine buildings but the people all went away about 35 years ago), and finally Keno City (fewer buildings but more people here, said to be 25, maybe even 35 residents). The Mining Museum here is well worth the trip, and the proprietor of the snack shop across the road is friendly and informative. I wish I could remember his name. Anyway in winter he comes out, and lives in Nanaimo so Keno is down to 24, maybe 34 people in the off season. In summer he's the mayor here.

Raining. Road is slippery, lots of clay in the soil. Careful retreat to Mayo and Mrs. Lindstrom's Bed and Breakfast at \$50, which certainly beats \$70 for a single and no breakfast at the snazzy new motel. Besides Mr. Lindstrom has many tales of his nearly 50 years in Mayo and vicinity.

Next morning is cool and smoky and I'm headed down the road, basically homeward bound. Soon after setting forth I am stung by an unidentified but mean-spirited insect. He nailed me alongside the good eye (left one is better than the other for some reason). For the next tow days my head is swollen fatter than usual and I don't see so well but it is good enough if moose, bears and other creatures stay on one side or the other. Through Whitehorse stopping only to do my laundry. I've nothing against the town but after all the big empty country there are too many people there. Dinner at Jake's Corner Mile 866 and the turn-off to Atlin which Marjorie and I visited in 1992. I would have gone there again but the front tire is anaemic rather than pneumatic. There's magnificent scenery with huge glaciers and mountains and the biggest

natural lake in B.C. The town has a history rivalling that of Telegraph Creek and the people are very hospitable. Mount Minto at the north end of the lake beckoned on the southern horizon, but I felt compelled to press on to Johnson's Crossing and a campsite. More friendly fellow campers are there, a young couple from Edmonton, and we share some more fortified coffee. This is threatening to become a habit.

It is time to go home, the front tire is definitely shot - good enough I hope for proceeding carefully straight down the highway but not for the rigours of the road to Fort Simpson and Nahanni Butte, N.W.T. This too will be saved for another day.

I search everywhere for a Metzler ME 33. The nearest is in Edmonton and very unwillingly I gradually gravitate thereto. The tire is purchased and installed but in my mind this trip is now history. As the poet T.S. Eliot puts it, it ends (thanks to Metzler and by the grace of God) "not with a bang but a whimper".



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