



THE BEEMER READER

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The group at Gold River

Photo by Klaus Kreye

SUNDAY, AUG. 10, BREAKFAST ON SALT SPRING ISLAND

See page 8 for details

RAMBLINGS**By Brian Radford**

The 36th International BMW Rally at Gillette, Wyoming was memorable for many things, but for me the journey to and from was the main attraction. Marjie & I left Salt Spring Island on the afternoon of Saturday the 12th but only travelled to Chilliwack to stay overnight with our daughter. Up early next morning, we met Marjie's brother John at Hope, after which I had a chance to refine my sidecar driving skills on the curving road to Princeton where John rode off to the north and home because family and work kept him from going to the Rally. We carried on thru Midway, the place where Gretchen broke down last year while en route to the 35th in Wisconsin. She has a new battery now and some repairs to the wiring meant that our son Brock and friend Angie were able to take her to Wyoming, and we met them at Greenwood. Thereafter, we travelled together for the most part, swapping bikes from time to time so that each of our passengers could share the delights of riding in the hack. Crossing the border south of Christina Lake, we camped east of Colville Washington and continued to a motel at Lincoln Montana (too tired to set up camp after a long day at 55 miles per hour), found another motel at Lovell Wyoming and thence over the Big Horn Mountains at 9033 feet elevation to the Rally grounds in mid afternoon of Wednesday the 16th. We found that, true to his word, Bill Wallace had secured a camping area on the lawn far enough from the beer garden that the noise level was acceptable. The Rally was great, featuring lots of interesting seminars, lots of yarns from other enthusiasts, some volunteer time at the registration desk and elsewhere, a few beers and away too many fried and mediocre meals for which I am now making up. One other feature of the Rally was the very violent thunderstorm and deluge of Thursday night with lightening strikes close enough to make me ponder past sins and divine retribution.

Coming home was no less an adventure than the outward journey. As Brock and Angie had never seen Yellowstone Park, they were dispatched in a westerly direction with the ancient but reliable Gretchen to see Old Faithful Geyser and all the other features of that magnificent area. We arranged to meet the next day in Western Montana, using our cell phones to stay in communication (but due to factors beyond my ken or control we found later that the phones were useless).

So it was that Marjie and I set out due north from Gillette on a good but scarce travelled road where the moderate pace of the Ural was less likely to impede traffic. We travelled at length but not very swiftly thru a short but violent sandstorm, past many antelope, two species of deer and even a herd of camels, all under the ever changing but always awesome huge Montana sky. We arrived next day at the appointed rendez-vous in a small town northwest of Great Falls to find no sign of the other members of our party. After an anxious three or four hours, during which we imagined several unpleasant reasons for their failure to show, they rode into town to spot the distinctive white lump of Russian metal alongside the main street and we continued the trip through the Rockies to an overnight camp at Kalispell and next day homewards through deteriorating weather to the border at Oroville-Osoyoos where we split up once more, Brock to go home to Kelowna and ourselves to ride thru the rain to Keremeos and yet another motel. It is remarkable how quickly noble intentions of camping out and saving money seem to vanish on a dark and rainy evening.

Next morning for breakfast we found ourselves at a roadside restaurant on Highway 3 somewhere the other side of Princeton. We were intrigued while waiting to be served by a hand-lettered sign "Good cook, small grill. Have patients" (sic). On leaving that place we saw another sign, different penmanship – "Cook wanted".

The rest of the trip was fairly uneventful but pleasant – what motorcycle trip is not pleasant, at least in retrospect? The worst part was having to dodge to the side of the road to let a string of cars and trucks go by – slowing to 35 Km/h is advised but rarely observed even in challenging spots such as Whipsaw Creek and the tight corners of the downhill grade west of Sunday Summit. People in their cages have very little "patients" with a lonely sidecar outfit doing its best to stay out of the way (or more likely to avoid annihilation).

Total distance according to the Ural's odometer was 4369 Km, about 2700 miles there and back. Our club had 12 members at the Rally, about 20% attendance which didn't qualify for recognition by the judging committee but was pretty darn good in my opinion.

RIDING TO CATCH THE MIDNIGHT SUN

By Geoff Stevenson

This headline is a slight exaggeration, but it got your attention, didn't it?

No, we aren't heading for Alaska this time; this is the story of how two club members braved a few thousand kilometres of boring and bumpy roads to spend the Summer Solstice in Yellowknife.

(We didn't actually check the light at midnight. But on June 21 the sun rose in Yellowknife at 0339 and set at 2339. There was a golf tournament teeing off at midnight, but by then we were fast asleep, resting up for another 500km day to Hay River, NWT, dodging the bison en route – and hoping to catch the Mackenzie River ferry before the mosquitoes devoured us on the north shore of the river near Fort Providence.)

Chris Jones on his new 2007 R1200RT and your reporter on his trusty 1998 Honda ST1100 (which I rebuilt from an insurance wreck six years ago) left June 15 and got home June 27, covering just under 6,000km in the process.

This was all on paved roads, although there was no shortage of gravel patches on the final stretch between Fort Providence, NWT, and Yellowknife. And the last few hundred km of the Mackenzie Highway in Northern Alberta were very rough with major frost heaves in both lanes.

Our longest day was just over 800km from Dawson Creek, BC, to Hay River, and we both found this pretty hard riding (surely we can't be getting older).

Our bikes ran perfectly (my ST has never consumed a drop of oil in 112,000 km), although Chris is investigating a replacement seat, after finding the RT saddle less comfortable than his R1100RT.

Bugs and the far north can be a troublesome combination, but we fared well. There were mosquitoes buzzing around now and then north of the Alberta border, but while Chris got a few bites, I was not troubled by the little critters.

Former member Brian Hudson, on a 1000c.c. V-Strom, joined us for two days and the three of us rode to Nanaimo, having checked ahead to ensure that we'd be on BC Ferries' newest ship en route to Horseshoe Bay. Of course, Murphy's Law was in effect and we got to the terminal to discover that the new ship was out of duty for "a few days." So we crossed the Strait on one of the old ferries and had to settle for photos of the new ship tied up in Departure Bay.

We were ready for wildlife (more on this later) and Chris, in the lead, had to brake for a deer just south of Squamish. He (she?) ambled across the southbound lanes (four lanes here), then bounded over the concrete divider and ran in front of Chris (safely stopped by now).

We'd all ridden the Duffy Lake road to Lillooet many times. I've always found this stretch over-rated – and there seemed to be even more bumps than usual. We spent our first night in Lillooet, where we met Tony Authier (he was born in Quebec) from Alabama, who regaled us with riding stories during Happy Hour, over supper and a beer later.

He was on a tricked-out lime green Kawasaki KLR650 and bound for Alaska, where he'd ridden several times before. The bike was seriously equipped and he'd done some engine work, carburetor re-jetting, new exhaust system, etc.

Tony was polishing his bike as we pulled into the motel parking lot and it looked perfect. No word on how much time he might have spent cleaning his steed after a few miles of Alaska gravel.

Brian has a daughter and son-in-law (and four grandchildren) near Williams Lake and we left him there. Chris and I spent the next two nights in downtown Quesnel.

We tried hard on this trip to arrive in each new destination mid-afternoon, so we'd have some time to explore the town, visit the museum (all the bigger towns seemed to have at least one), and get in some much-needed exercise.

Quesnel has a fairly new casino, built in the shape (more or less) of a riverboat and there was an interesting selection of restaurants within easy walking distance of our room.

A feature of the town is some brightly-painted fire hydrants – at least one of them to honor old Billy Barker. There was a Ford dealership downtown and it was clear we were now into serious truck country. We didn't see many of the half-ton trucks (150s) Victorians use to drive to Safeway; half the vehicles on the lot seemed to be 350s (often with dual rear wheels), with asking prices in the mid-60s.

A mill has just closed in Quesnel and I wondered how many of these trucks would still be on the lot if we returned in, say, six months.

Chris had never been to Barkerville, so we headed east next morning and spent an interesting day imagining we were prospecting for gold with Billy Barker – and, like him, striking it rich.

Alas, the only gold we saw was in a gold-panning demonstration – and it was undoubtedly planted before the show began. I visited Barkerville first in 1969 and every time since, it gets a little better.

We walked both sides of the main street, exploring churches, the blacksmith's forge, a variety of merchants, an operating B&B (which was highly recommended by instant friends from Kamloops we met over lunch) and a Chinese museum, surrounded by various businesses run by the Chinese merchants who played a vital role in the early days of the town.

We took in the early afternoon musical revue and found the singing enthusiastic and the entertainment good value (\$10.75 for seniors). Several of the songs were old standards retro-fitted with lyrics from the Cariboo.

It was raining steadily next morning as we rode north to Prince George. Full raingear was the order of the day, but the weather dried north of Prince George. This was the only serious rain we had on the trip; we had a few showers here and there (and even a brief hail storm near Jasper), but generally temperatures were in the low 20s and our rain gear stayed safely stowed in our saddlebags.

We crossed Pine Pass on Highway 97 (only around 3,000 feet) and enjoyed a few curves on the way to Chetwynd for lunch. After this, it seemed, the roads got straighter and bumpier – and we saw no more mountains until the Rockies a week later.

The historic Alaska Hotel on Dawson Creek's main street beckoned and we felt it essential to have a beer there after safely parking the bikes at an affordable motel perhaps a mile away.

Supper was Chinese food at the Orion Restaurant; this was good food at a fair price and we learned a little about the town from our chatty waitress.

We had 800km to ride the next day (we had a room booked in Hay River) and we were on the road at 0530, since we were going to lose an hour going into Mountain Time. The tour director had to buy the beer this night after trying to lead us to Alaska instead of the Northwest Territories, but he eventually figured out the highway signs and we were soon cruising east into Alberta, tucked in behind a pickup truck or two at well over the posted limit.

These were all two-lane roads and the traffic – virtually all pickup trucks and big transports – moved at a steady 115-120km/h. We followed a guy in a mini-van going a good deal faster than that, but on smooth roads with a generous paved shoulder on both sides, these speeds seemed pretty sensible.

In fact, we didn't see a single Mountie on highway patrol in either Alberta or the NWT. But, within an hour or two of returning to BC in Mount Robson Park, we saw four police cars, three of them with flashing lights and apparently about to write tickets.

This was hardly empirical data, but we wondered why BC Mounties don't have more useful things to do.

We spent the night in "new" Hay River. The old town was flooded by an ice jam about 45 years ago. It's on the shores of Great Slave Lake and officials located the new town 6 or 7km upstream (we rode around Old Town when we returned, but there's not much to see – interestingly, they were still building new houses there!)

Now we were set for the last day of the outbound ride. Yellowknife was 486km away and we had to cross the mighty Mackenzie on the way.

It was hard to gauge the current in the river, but I'd guess it was 5 to 7 knots, with the result that the ferry Merv Hardie "crabbed" across the stream at an angle of roughly 45 degrees.

The landing spot on the north shore – no ferry docks up here – was protected by a steel wall and carefully sited to be sheltered from the strongest current. After going sideways for about 10 minutes, the captain straightened the ship out and glided gracefully into the gravel landing.

The steel loading ramp was lowered in seconds and we rode off. The gravel was dry, but rough in places; we were both glad we weren't trying this with any mud around. Swartz Bay this was not.

The last gas for a couple of hundred km. is just north of the ferry landing and we topped off our tanks.

Unsurprisingly, gas prices were all over the map: This fill-up was the most expensive of the trip at \$1.54.9/litre.

In Rocky Mountain House, AB., it was just \$1.26.9.

Both bikes returned a consistent 60-65mpg, although Chris fed his RT premium gas, which cost him more (thank goodness for old-fashioned carburetors and regular gas).

The highway now ran through a bison (buffalo) reserve for the next 80km. The wood bison, taller than its southern cousin, the plains bison, is the largest native land animal in North America; bulls can stand 6 feet at the shoulders and weigh more than 2,000 pounds.

Locals had warned us about them and we probably saw 70 or 80 animals going to and coming from Yellowknife. We had to stop in each direction as a big bull ambled across in front of our bikes. Of course, you can see them well off (unlike, say, a small deer), but they are in no hurry and we treated them with respect. In other locations, we saw black and brown bear, a moose calf and a number of deer, but we're pleased to report there were no close encounters after our Squamish experience.

After the bison preserve, we rode for a couple of hours through stunted trees on both sides of the road. Paving of this highway was completed just a couple of years ago and we'd expected smooth pavement.

But building highways in the Northwest Territories is apparently no easy task because the next sign was one to strike fear in any rider's heart: "Loose gravel patches next 80km."

Fortunately, the sign was worse than the road. There were 20 or 30 stretches of loose gravel, but the gravel was never thick and you could ride in one of the two wheel tracks on your side. After slowing for the first few patches to ensure they weren't hidden traps, we barely slowed for the others.

To be continued (first of two parts. Next: The gateway to diamond country).



The native dancer was performing at Aboriginal Day in Yellowknife on Summer Solstice Day.



Photos by Geoff Stevensen

ROADS I HAVE RIDDEN Dawson Creek & South Day 14 by Vince Martorino

In the morning, I headed S.W. and Paul headed on to Edmonton.

Still riding conservatively, I enjoy the return trip on down to Prince George and stopped at Williams Lake where I had a new front tire put on. The wear bar was slightly showing but didn't want to take the chance of riding in the rain through Vancouver, or down Fraser Canyon.

When I got to Spences Bridge, I decided to take a little detour through to Merritt, since It had been years since last on that road. The road starts out following tight to the river and the colour of the cliffs start out in beige then to a light green and off into red. It's a twisty road, the kind I enjoy with it's ups to small crests then drops and turns. All the while it weaves along amongst small farms.

Next is Merritt, then the Coquihalla. Vancouver traffic from Hope to the ferry.

I took over 200 pictures, got to live in constant daylight and add 8,611 KM (5000 miles) to the odometer in 14 days. Saw wondrous sites, talked to riders and travelers from everywhere.

As a goal I did it. Would I do it again? Not likely. Why not? I'd rather go where it is warmer.

But now that I have been home a while I sometimes see in my mind's eye the wide open spaces and get the urge to ride it again. So maybe I will do it again some day?



On the road from Spences Bridge to Merritt Photo by Vince Martorino

THIS LIST ENABLES YOU TO: submit articles or ideas for future issues of Beemer Reader, pay your dues of \$15, order club clothing, and borrow books and DVD's.

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CLUB RIDE TO PORT RENFREW

By Peter Juergensen

It was a lovely Saturday morning that we left our meeting place to make our way to Port Renfrew. We started by crossing over to Sooke Road via Humpback road. We had glorious sunshine and few cars most of the way to Sooke which is a rarity.

True to form the other side of Sooke we took on some sea clouds and it cooled off a bit for the ride into and beyond Jordan River to Port Renfrew. We were welcomed at the Coastal Kitchen Cafe with hot coffee as we oriented ourselves for the outside seating under the welcomed warmth of the gas heaters. It was rather pleasant sitting outside next to our bikes.

The food was excellent. We were 16 riders that met for lunch and then departed for home in several groups. I travelled in a group of seven that took the road from Port Renfrew to Honey Moon Bay. How refreshing it was to take a passage that was unfamiliar to me on Vancouver Island. There are some great views and several spots one could pull over to have a dip. The road itself is well signed and is solid for all but 4.5km of gravel stretch that was in pretty good condition.



Photos by Peter Juergensen

FOR SALE

Motorcycle seat *CORBIN* for sale. Fits BMW 1150 RT and includes both sections. A must for any RT and @ half the original cost. Black leather and in excellent condition. A great price @ \$ 450.00
 Call : **Jack Sinclair @ 250-656-5343**



10TH AUGUST BREAKFAST ON SALT SPRING ISLAND 10 AM

At Falconshead Grill being the restaurant at the Golf Course, 805 Lower Ganges Road. You need to catch the 9:00 AM ferry from Swartz Bay or the 8:35 sailing from Crofton. The location is about midway from Ganges to Vesuvius Bay. Once again your editor won't be there as we are heading to a camp-out at Kaslo and thence to Bee Cee Beemer's Hot Springs Rally at Nakusp the following weekend. Maybe we can atone by coordinating a springtime gathering on SSI in 2009.

Brian

BMW RVI Club Ride Schedule 2008

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Date	Event	Location	Type	Organizer
Aug 10 Sunday	Monthly Gathering	Salt Spring Island	Breakfast	Colleen Barnes
Aug 14-17	BeeCee Beemers	Nakusp, BC	Tour	Klaus Kreye
Aug 24 Sunday	Ride up Island Cheese Factory	Qualicum Beach	Road	Volunteer needed
Sept 6 Saturday	Monthly Gathering	Sidecar Café	Breakfast	Volunteer needed
Sept 21 Sunday	Monthly Ride	TBD	Road	Volunteer needed
Oct 5 Sunday	Monthly Gathering	TBD	Breakfast	Volunteer needed
Oct tba Sunday	Annual Meeting	TBD	Meeting	Klaus Kreye
Nov 1 Saturday	Monthly Gathering	Chequered Flag	Breakfast	Klaus Kreye
Dec 7 Sunday	Monthly Gathering	Chequered Flag	Breakfast	Klaus Kreye