

Hyder, Alaska - August 3-8, 1997

DAY 1: 380 Miles, 550 Miles for me

The destination was to be Alaska, so why not pick the closest drivable point - Hyder! It's only 1000 miles away, right? Don, Bob, Mark, Andy, and myself had planned the trip for some time now, and finally we hit the road. Not exactly together, but close enough.

The 4 other boys left early Sunday morning and took all day to get to 100 Mile House in British Columbia, which was to be our first stop for the night. I had previous plans to attend a meeting with NSR to get the chance of talking to a WSP officer and to find out about the methods and thinking of WSP when it comes to 'sport bikes'. This was something I couldn't pass up.

Jim and I spent the early part of the day putting on 170 miles on the roads close to the vicinity of the meeting. At 2 PM the meeting was going to start so we headed towards Johnson Creek Winery and arrived to see half a dozen bikes already there. Jim and I were anxious to hear what the WSP had to say. We found out later that Dave Hiatt also had invited his lawyer (Mr. Dismissed) to talk as well. We ate lunch (light snack) and then went straight into the presentations.

The shin-dig ended around 7 PM which made me really concerned about trying to ride all night to get to 100 Mile House. I got home by 8 and decided that I would call Don and see if there was anything to look out for and to see how long it took them to get there. He said that it took them until about 7pm to arrive, and that coming through the Fraser Valley, it felt like it was 100 degrees in the afternoon. This was not something I was looking forward to. I packed slowly, and ate dinner. I had a headache from waiting to eat so long, and at 10 pm when I finally pulled out, I wasn't in the best state of mind for the 7 hour, 380 mile trip (by my calculations).

I crossed the border at about midnight, and was making good time. The radar hadn't made a peep so I felt confident that I wouldn't have any problem. The headache had disappeared, and I was still charged up to go. Upon blowing through Hope, I saw a fellow sport biker on the side of the highway in the opposite direction. I screamed past, and got to thinking - I know I'd want someone to stop for me, so I did the right thing, caught the first exit and headed back. After finding out that the cheesehead ran out of gas, I proceeded to the next gas station, bought a can, and took him some gas. He was so grateful, I think he would've handed me a \$100 for saving his ass. He paid me for the can and the gas, and I was on my way again, this time having a good feeling about myself.

Going through the Fraser Valley along the Cariboo Highway, I felt the temperatures getting warmer. I was still in only my leathers, and getting toasty. I can only imagine what the temp was like only 12 hours prior. By now it was somewhere around 2:30 and I was getting antsy at arriving and taking a nap before the next day of riding. I was taking the same route as the boys did, and making pretty good time.

I had seen signs for Cache Creek the entire way and knew that I had only 60 miles to go once I got there. I think I may have actually seen a RCMP going the other way, but since I was right around 120 mph, I figured the amount of time for him to get turned around and catch up to me was more than enough time to disappear around a few corners and not have to worry about him again. I knew how close 100 Mile House was, and that I would be there in less than 30 minutes.

I arrived, stripped off the leathers, hit the floor, and fell asleep. When I woke, I looked out the window to see if the bike was still in the parking lot, and it was, with no RCMP standing guard.

DAY 2: 320 Miles

Finally with the group, today's ride would take us to a destination that unless you ride a HD, you won't understand. In fact, I still don't. HD riders like to stop and have a cup of coffee at all the HOG dealerships along their route. The part I don't understand is why? The only time I go to the bike shop is when I need parts, and then I hate going because I know it's expensive. HD owners go to all the shops along the way... I think I just figured it out!

We were on our way to Burns Lake, BC and along the way, we would stop at the HOG shop in Prince George. What - they're closed? Oh Darn - it's BC Day, eh!? As we're standing there, in front of a closed shop, Grandma and Junior come riding in like they're on a mission. This lady, at least 70 years old, with her grandson come roaring up to us with a bike packed full of camping gear and explains that she's from Boston, and had put on 8K miles so far on her

bike while traveling on her trip. Wow, I thought 3500 through Montana was a lot! She was on a quest to find a rear tire so that she can get home - probably after another 8-10K miles!

We all got a good laugh out of spunky old grams, but I had the best laugh after everyone but Bob left the lot. Don was demonstrating 'roasties' as he took off (no one could believe that he broke the tire loose), Mark and Andy left right after Don, and as I'm putting on my helmet, I see a summer sausage and cheese brick fly across the street! Bob had cracked the throttle while still in the dirt, and I imagine that once the tire found pavement, the bike launched Bob out of the saddle, and sent his snacks all over the street. After checking to see if Bob was fine, we picked up his bike, and repacked all the food products that had scattered. Bob rubbed his knee in the process but was otherwise unscathed. I told him that I would keep this under my hat, but I think now is a good time to tell.

DAY 3: 300 Miles

Seems like I could hardly get out of bed today. Having stayed up all night and riding the next day finally caught up to me. Our destination was finally Hyder, Alaska so I think that finally motivated me to get up.

Bob, not having learned his lesson from the previous day, got tired of going slow so we decided that we would find out what his bike is capable of. I was the only one that was capable of keeping up with him to verify what speed he was going, since his speedo only indicated 85 mph at all times (makes for a good excuse when you get pulled over.) After pushing as hard as he could, he got up to 115 mph. I think he was surprised at that, I know I was. Not having a windscreen, he was definitely fighting a lot more air than anyone else. It was finally fun for me to crack the throttle and have someone there with me. I also had to find out what my top end was, so shortly after, I took a holeshot down a shallow grade and indicated 165 mph. Took forever to slow down and wait for everyone else to catch up.

Wouldn't you know it, another HOG shop was the next stop! Smithers... "Sorry, but we just sold our last large T-shirts over the long weekend." Too bad Don - why not buy some spare parts instead!?

We headed on to our next stop in hopes of avoiding the rain that looked eminent. Now we're at Kitwanga and taking a pictures of a sign indicating distances of the "North to Alaska" towns. Hyder only 240 km away! We fueled and Don, Mark, and Andy left speedy (I mean Bob) and myself to play catchup to them. They pulled out while we took our time, figuring at our speed, we'd catch them in no time. I figured the same.

Cruising at 90-95 mph for the next 60 miles, Bob and I figured that we would've had to have caught up to them by now, so we figured that the 3 pulled over somewhere and were behind us. We stopped at a small lake and after contemplating the various scenarios that could've happened to the other guys, we decided to take a dip in the lake and wait a while. We swam for about 30 minutes and by now had changed our minds that the other 3 were indeed ahead of us and that we never caught up to them. Sure enough, almost reaching Hyder, we met Don and Mark on their way back to look for us. Finally rejoined, we got to the motel, unloaded, and went to experience getting "Hyderized".

Along the last stretch of about 50 km, we finally saw some scenery to talk about. For the most part, there wasn't a whole lot to look at except for marshes, trees that grew up to the side of the road, and open valleys. Pretty flat, not very mountainous, but wide open roads with ridiculously low speed limits. Now we started to see glaciers and snowpack on the mountains on either side of the road. Pretty awesome, but short lived - they disappeared just as quickly as they had appeared.

Back to being "Hyderized" - the process involves drinking a shot of 190 proof Everclear Vodka and keeping it down. A shot of water for a chaser is provided, but we being REAL men, didn't need it. I thought it was going to come back on me, but Don and Mark didn't seem to have any trouble with their shot. Oh well, I must be a lightweight. The alcohol was VERY cheap in Alaska. We were used to paying \$5 for beer in BC, and now we paid \$10 for a round, and that included the tip! We shot pool for quite a while and headed back to the room shortly thereafter.

DAY 4: 270 Miles

Getting up today was bad for me (must have been the Everclear). I simply didn't want to get on the road again so I took my time. The guys left me and went for breakfast. I arrived at the restaurant at the same time that they had finished, but I figured no problem, I would catch them somewhere along the 400 km that we had to cover that day.

I ate, and pulled out about 10-15 minutes behind. No sooner did I get outside of Stewart, just 3 miles inside of BC, and I got pulled over for speeding. Stupid me, ignored all the warning signs that I should've picked up on and was

clocked at 155 km/h in a 90 km/h zone. Oops - translated: 95 in a 55 zone. I expected the RCMP to pull out handcuffs but he simply asked for the papers and informed me that at 65 km/h over, no one would give me a break. The \$173CDN fine didn't hurt as much as now being about 20 minutes behind the other guys.

Again in Kitwanga, I met the guys and relayed the story, while they informed me that Don was having trouble with his battery and that we would stop at a shop between there and Prince Rupert to have it checked out. (I think this was just another way of visiting a HOG shop)

We got to the shop and took care of the battery and everything checked out fine with the new cell in place. We had talked to other HD tourers that had broke down with bad front wheel bearings in their Fat Boy. I admired how all HD owners have similar experiences to talk about. Honda owners tell where they've been and at what speed, HD owners talk about where the last shop was that they broke down at - good stories and a lot of them, too! Great people those Harley owners - they're all VERY experienced mechanics!

Finally - we got to Prince Rupert and enjoyed a fine dinner at Smile's Cafe on the waterfront. Well, okay, maybe not FINE, but it didn't suck. Don, Mark, and I all went out for some nightlife, and found a club where the women danced naked on stage - I suggested that we leave, but Don twisted my arm into staying. I succumbed to peer pressure. Actually, It was I that wanted to go and dragged, literally dragged, the other men there, but didn't get any complaints once there. In fact, Mark wanted a souvenir so I took some pictures with his camera. C'mon Mark, I want dupes too!!! We shot pool between dances and when it came time for the girls to dance again, Don ran the table like I hadn't seen before! Something to be said for motivation!

DAY 5: 450 Miles by boat (not included in total mileage)

Today the day consisted of a ferry ride from Prince Rupert to Port Hardy at the northern tip of Vancouver Island. Fifteen hours on the boat provided lots of time to sleep, play cards, and eat a buffet style dinner which was sorely overpriced for the quality of food. We couldn't keep Bob from trying to get his money worth though.

Scenery wasn't as impressive as I had heard; partly overcast conditions provided limited visibility in the morning hours, but improved as the day went on. We passed by some wildlife that the captain was usually late to inform us, and people reacted anxiously every time the captain told them to look out the window. Ever try to sleep when 30 people, all of the sudden, are standing over you asking, "Where IS the whale?" I think it was the captain's way of having fun on an otherwise boring boat trip.

DAY 6: 270 Miles

Destination: HOME!

Mission: To ride the length of Vancouver Island, catch another boat from Nanaimo to Tsawwassen, and ride south to points homeward.

Easier said than done. After a little confusion about where the lunch stop was going to be, I ran ahead of the group and waited for them in the wrong location. I take blame for getting myself lost, but the communication lines got crossed at the ferry terminal and we were each told that the other was already on the boat. Turns out, Don, Mark, Bob, and Andy caught the 12:45 boat, and I caught the 3:15. I was glad to hear that they made the early boat, and really hoped that they would not wait at the terminal in Tsawwassen to make sure that I made it. I felt bad that they left me, but I'd feel worse if they had waited for me.

Once home, I found out why our paths missed each other and everything ended up fine and everyone made it home safely - which was the important thing.

Checking the odometer at the end of the trip - 1800 miles RT for me, which differs from the sum of the daily mileage for whatever reason (side trips, stops at HOG shops, etc...). Andy packed on a trip from Idaho and back in addition so his total was closer to 2500.

On this trip, I found that it's not how fast you get there, but the company you're with makes a trip great. This was the case on this trip. The guys were fun, provided great memories, and if I had to do it all over again, I would. Just not to Alaska - over to Montana, or Oregon any day!