

Washington State Chapter September, 1997

August 9 - Mt. St. Helens

The curse has been broken! We made it down from Puyallup to Cougar and back without incident!!!

You know, I'm almost getting tired of writing about how nice the weather is on our ride days. Picture perfect at about 80-85 degrees, not a cloud in the sky. I waited 1800 miles (returned Friday night from my trip to Hyder, Alaska) to do the St. Helens trip, and I enjoyed every mile of it! Next year, we will definitely put it in the schedule twice!

Jim Holzberger, Jim Steenson, Mark Grabrick, Kevin and John Jaquith, Larry Dunn, Bill Overson, Stan Kendall, and myself all rode solo over some of the twistiest roads in WA. I've always regarded St. Helens as a very technical road, and doing it twice really gives you an upper body workout.

The route was pretty simple - From Puyallup, head south on SR-161 to Eatonville, and then cut over through La Grande and south to Elbe along SR-7. From there, go south to Morton, east on US-12 to Randle, and then south again on FS-25. After about 20 miles on FS-25, you can head west on FS-99 to get to Windy Ridge lookout. For the first time since I can remember (actually first time ever) it wasn't windy, and was sunny and clear. Most of us hiked (in our leathers) up the wooded stair path to the lookout point to get a better look at the mountain. We could see Mt. Adams, Mt. Hood, Mt. Rainier, and Mt. St. Helens simply by pivoting around. We back-tracked to FS-25 and continued south to FS-90, where we headed west to Cougar (about 18 miles), where we sat and ate lunch.

After filling up, Kevin had mentioned that he would like to take a dip in a lake somewhere to cool off. Why not? We headed back to Swift Creek Reservoir where we stripped off the leathers, and sure enough, made our way into the water. Cold - just a little, Kevin was the only one man enough to dive in, but he got out even faster! It's hard to breath when your genitalia shrink to the size of peanuts! Jim S. and Mark braved the elements, while I stood out in the sun, naked as a jay bird waiting for the courage to enter the water too - it

finally happened, but the loud scream awoke the dead in Randle and Cougar so we left shortly afterwards.

Coming back the same way we went, we discovered what all the signs for "Rough Road" meant. The northbound lane is much rougher than the southbound one. Some corners were blind, and one left-hand turn was especially bad in that after reaching the apex, the pavement shifted and jumbled the bike something fierce. (This is a warning if you didn't pick up on it)

Mileage was 256 RT from Puyallup to Cougar and add 34 if you head up to Windy Ridge (well worth it) So for a good 300 mile day - I would recommend that you try this road, but I warn you - pay close attention.

August 15-17 - Cascade Locks, OR

If you're looking for details - you should've been there. Just kidding - I find it hard to believe that only 2 members of Washington showed up. Elbert and myself had a relaxing time amongst the 20 or so that made it to the camp-out. I took the St. Helens route (FR-25, FR-30) to get there and came home the same way. The 200 mile ride down was uneventful but scenic.

On Saturday, Theresa and I got up fairly early, and I wanted to do some more road scouting in Oregon. We caught some fantastic roads and ended up knocking out a 480 mile day. I was pretty beat at the end of it. The temperature around Hood River got excruciatingly HOT and we were glad that the KOA had a hot tub to relax in.

Sunday, I got up to the surprise that someone had TPed my scooter. I guess they were getting me back for doing it to Elbert and Kirby 2 years ago - see the pictures on the web-site. After cleaning up the bike, we hit the road for home, and about 80 miles into the ride, I lost the rear end coming out of a corner. Mt St Helens strikes again! I hate knowing that I just became a statistic of HSTA.

My leathers did their job, and I came out of it without a scratch. Theresa bore a raspberry on her knee, but was otherwise uninjured. I got lucky in that I didn't seriously injure my passenger, and that I didn't pitch the

bike over a cliff. I was too hot coming out of the corner, and before I could adjust, I was down. It was stupid of me to do what I did with a passenger, but I got my wake-up call. The bike was rideable and we proceeded home after dusting off.

One thing to note, 2 cars drove right by us as we got up off the ground and started to dust off. The bike was still in the ditch, and they didn't even slow down to check if we were hurt. This tells me that when you go down, you're on your own or at the mercy of the first few cars that pass by. Don't count on any help from others. It's a pretty lonely feeling out there.

August 23- Sol Duc

The weather report was calling for piss-pour rain and everyone that I had talked to had said that they wouldn't be attending. So I made other plans, and met up with George Rudchenko and his wife Shelly, and we caught the ferry from Edmonds to Kingston. The four of us rode the peninsula loop (Theresa came too). I had it in the back of my mind about last weekend (see above) so I was determined to gain Theresa's confidence back. FYI - we found the fare for a motorcyclist and rider is cheaper than simply walking on the ferry - go figure!

After a short boat ride, we rode in single file traffic all the way to Port Angeles (about 50 miles). Finally we got to SR-112 and we were on our way. The weather had thus far cooperated and I took off the rain gear that I had put on for the ride. Wouldn't you know - it started to rain. By the time we got to Neah Bay, we were all soaked and were relieved to find a place to eat lunch. The roads would have been phenomenal had they not been wet, and slick as snot. We saw 2 deer along the way (made me think of Chris).

Upon leaving lunch, it was raining and I decided that I would put the rain gear back on, even though I was already wet. We backtracked to SR-113 and headed towards Forks. The minute we pulled out of our lunch stop, it stopped raining and dried up. It looked to be sunny for the rest of the day, so after 30 miles, I took the gear off again. I bet you can guess what happened next! Yep - it rained, and boy did it pour - visibility was down to about 50 feet. By now George and Shelly didn't care that they were getting wet, but rolled up alongside me and laughed in my face, slapping their thighs, for having just taken off the rain suit.

After that short rainstorm, just enough to saturate my leathers, The sun came out, the roads dried off, and we started heading south on US-101. It was getting late in the day, so we picked up the pace and were making good time. Once in Aberdeen, I said I

would take the lead on US-12 towards Shelton, knowing that it is heavily patrolled, and that I had the radar detector. Worked like a charm and we were home in no time. One interesting thing to point out though. We went past one cop going in the other direction. We had already gone by and were now moving away from each other when my detector went off. It was like he was clocking people BEHIND him. Only reason I mention this is that most of us get back on the gas after we think we're clear. Something to keep in mind...

FYI Northwest Sport Riders (NSR) and the WSP

Jim Holzberger and I attended a meeting on August 3rd, set up by NSR to speak frankly to an officer of the WSP. The discussion was geared to explain to us about the techniques of the WSP, what they are looking for, and how they go about their business. The officer is a motor officer, and also rides a sport bike during his off time - so he knows about both sides of the fence! I'm not mentioning names on purpose due to this being on the internet, and I don't want to cause any waves.

1: North Cascades Highway and "Sport Bikes" - using it as a race track on weekends. Okay - maybe we're all a little (very little) guilty - after all, we've done that road as a club ride twice in the last 6 weeks, possibly even exceeding the speed limit momentarily to make a pass, and more of us took SR-20 on our way to the BSR. There is a WSP officer specifically assigned to this area and is looking for any bike that has plastic on it. The sheriff in Newhalem also has a thing for bikes.

We've been lucky in that we have yet to meet these fine gentlemen, but I'm sure their attitudes have been changed for the worse over the years. Please, if you get caught, take it like a man, and don't start into calling the officer a lousy MF and a waste of human flesh. What's the point, you're probably going to get a ticket, and it makes us all look bad. Remember, legal advice is easy to obtain, and tickets are not cast in stone - be polite, answer his questions without admitting guilt, and fight your ticket in court - your odds are better there than on the roadside.

In reality, the biggest problem on the Cascade Highway is that there are residents that have access to telephones and call up WSP to report such activity. Cell phones are another concern when riders pass cars at high speeds and "Yosh" them off the road. These drivers usually have no comprehension of our acceleration and stopping power of our brakes. Suggested technique is to quietly come up on the car to be passed, slowly pass, and pull away slowly, giving them the illusion that you are only traveling slightly faster than they are. Ripping

past at triple digits, even if you are up against the left fog line still leaves the driver with the impression that you don't care.

Also, keep in mind that a cop writing tickets for 10 mph over all day long is going to get awfully excited when he sees big game doing triple digits. His feet won't even touch the ground from the time he leaves his patrol car to the time he's standing next to your bike!

2: "Time and Place" - Carving up SR-20 on a weekend is obviously not the time or place (see above). Recommended times are early in the mornings (5 am, just after first light) and on weekdays, when the WSP is concerned with the rush hour commute. They are mostly watching the interstate and helping people broken down, and taking care of accidents. Soon after the commute, they will be at the coffee shops getting caught up on their paperwork, and probably taking it easy until the evening commute. At 3 pm, the new shift comes on and are fresh, alert, and ready to go. Riding after 3 pm on weekdays also increases your chances of being detained.

3: Laser - this story should make you think twice! WSP officers have to attain 30 hours of laser training in the field. That means that for one full week, they are out practicing pointing and obtaining readings on moving vehicles before they can issue a single ticket. That's a lot of practice if you ask me! Accurate readings at 3200 feet are obtained by the laser gun (which has a 10x scope), and that gives the officer enough time to put the gun away, get in his car, have a cup of coffee (or a donut), and then pull you over, even before you probably see him.

Laser guns are not as scarce as you may think. He mentioned how many the WSP uses by county, and honestly I can't remember which county had how many, but I do remember that south Snohomish stood out as a place where you're a sitting duck.

4: Aircraft patrolled area - ever been in a plane? You could probably see someone moving 1 mph faster than the rest without any doubt in your mind. That's how easy it is for the WSP to pick out speeders from the air. Of course, making the ticket stand up in court when you contest it is a different story.

5: Robocop - Most WSP officers are reasonable - the road was clear, 4 lanes wide, no driveways, 10-mile visibility, etc... but there are those that will go for the "Most tickets written in a day" record. Most judges already know who these officers are and usually don't take them seriously when you contest your tickets. These officers will usually not write a report, or will use the form letter as their affidavit. The detailed reports written by hand are usually held in high regard when the judge reads them, and you are probably dealing with a conscientious cop who was sincere when he stopped you and cited you with a ticket. Robocops are NOT ones that

you stand a chance with when you take your helmet off and try to explain the circumstances. Keep your mouth shut.

Most often, the officer has made up his mind if he will lecture, or write before he gets out of his car. You'll know as soon as he gets to you. Robocop is straight forward business, writes the ticket, and gets in position to nail the next minor infraction. There are good cops, and bad cops, but treat all of them with respect because you'll improve your chances down the line, either in the form of a lecture, or in court.

Oh DEER! - By Chris Harnish

On August 4th, I was cruising east bound along SR-112, a scenic, twisty road through wooded terrain on the Olympic Peninsula. It was a Monday morning with very little traffic. As I rounded a corner and began to accelerate onto a long straight-away, I noticed some movement ahead in the brush at the left side of the road. As I began to roll off the throttle three deer came bounding onto the highway, directly across my path. I got on the brake and cranked the bike hard to the left hoping to slide behind them. Unfortunately, I clipped the last of the three deer. I went down hard on my right side at 50+ mph. As I tumbled along the roadway, the bike slid along ahead of me, red plastic flying every which way. The result of my crash was a broken right arm, multiple bruises and a VFR with extensive right side damage. The deer ran off into the brush with what I hope was a very sore right ass cheek.

What advice I would give to others hoping to avoid a similar situation? Take up deer hunting on the Olympic Peninsula. The bigger the gun the better! But seriously, this was a reminder for me that rural roads with little or no shoulder and heavy brush near the roadside can hide potential dangers like deer, aliens, or Elvis. Deer are very unpredictable and as I found out can cause a serious situation to develop within seconds. Slow down and enjoy the scenery. Periodically practicing evasive maneuvers is another good idea. Go find any empty parking lot and practice hard stops and swerving maneuvers from varying speeds. Hopefully you won't need to use these skills, but if you do, you'll be prepared.

When buying safety gear DON'T BE CHEAP! You'll be glad you bought the best if you ever go down. I truly believe that my \$400 Arai Quantum/e helmet saved my life. Twice during the tumble/slide the back of my head smashed violently into the pavement. The outer shell was cracked, the laminate was deeply gouged and the face shield was torn off, yet I escaped without any

serious head injury. Without my leather gloves, jacket and pants I would have been a walking scab. Most of the heavy road rash was on the elbows, shoulders and back of my jacket. The hips and knees were another impact point. If you are considering purchasing leathers get something that incorporates body armor. I was glad I had it.

My arm will be in a cast for 6-12 weeks and hopefully I won't need any surgery. My riding for the summer is over but I may see you at breakfast sometime in the weeks to come. Ride safe and watch out for Bambi!

Editor's Comments:

Unfortunately, August has been quite the eventful month. Chris learned (the hard and painful way) that deer are unpredictable. Poor guy... as I see the score now - VFR=2, Chris=0. State Farm must love him.

In addition, Dave Hiatt of NSR was also involved in a deer incident on August 10th. His results were not as good. No broken limbs, but no skin either. Not having worn his leathers for the first time in 20 years, he was tooling around and cut a deer in half at 50 mph. Dave said that the deer simply materialized 5 feet in front of him. He ended up going down in jeans and a T-shirt on a newly chip-sealed road. I'm not going to get graphic, but when I saw him, he looked like a mummy with dressing at every joint. Now he's being treated as a 3rd degree burn victim and pays daily visits to the hospital to have his wounds scrubbed and re-wrapped.

Moral of the story: Deer are UNPREDICTABLE! They also seldom travel alone, so where you see one, immediately slow WAY down. Deer seem to spook

more the closer you get to them. Late in the year is breeding time - you'll see a lot more deer on the road, and smaller, faster-moving targets are harder to hit (I mean avoid.) Be aware of your surroundings, especially when the trees come right up to the roadside, and when antlered obstacles appear, brake hard - there are probably ancestors in tow. Also - carry FULL insurance. Not just liability. For the extra \$/year for Comp. and Collision, Chris has now gone through 2 VFR's in the last 2 months and both have been covered.

And finally - buy leathers! Preferably with body armor for extra protection. Keep in mind, getting good equipment doesn't mean having to spend a fortune. Mail order can save you as much as 30% off retail. Full leathers range anywhere from \$400 to \$1500 depending on size, style, and built-in features. Make the investment - it's the only thing between you and lifelong scars!

To Chris and Dave - get healthy soon! We look forward to riding with you again... ;-)

Upcoming Events

Sept 6 - Mitzel's in North Bend - 9 am
Ride to Leavenworth

Sept 13 - Denny's in Renton (Kennydale) - 8 am
Ride to be determined

Sept 19-21 - Packwood Inn, Packwood WA - 9/19 eve.
Chinook / Cayuse / White Passes

October 11 - Cafe Veloce in Totem Lake - 7 pm
Dinner Meeting / Ski Trip Planning