

Laguna 2002 Recap by Dan Hytry, *Jim's Ride in Blue*, *Bob's Ride in Red*

The plan is to head to California for the annual WSB races over the second weekend in July. The problem is, most of the group wants to head down the Tuesday prior and ride a couple of days following the races to get home. My vacation plans differ slightly in that I want to take advantage of the 4th of July weekend and ride on those days. So be it – I ride solo for the first couple of days.

Day 1, Thursday, July 4

On the morning of the 4th of July, I head over to Missoula, Montana. I expect it to be boring doing the superslab the whole way, but actually found I-90 east of Coeur d'Alene somewhat entertaining. The rest of the way into Missoula wasn't bad either. Arriving at 3:30 PT, I'm ahead of my planned schedule and was just getting my second wind. I had planned on spending the night in Missoula and doing Lolo Pass through Idaho on my way to Pendleton the next morning, but why wait?

I head west on US-12, and I was pretty tired after riding all day in the heat. It was close to 7pm by the time I finished up this 770 mile-day.

Day 2, Friday, July 5

Today was going to be that much shorter by riding so long yesterday. I took my time to eat a good breakfast. Today's ride will take me through Enterprise after doing Rattlesnake Ridge and then SR-204 out of Elgin, to Pendleton, where I plan on meeting Cary and Bob that night. As I finish this short 200-mile trip, I stalled my bike at a stoplight in Pendleton, and it wouldn't start!

Rule #1 of Road Trips: NEVER do any maintenance on a working motorcycle the day prior to a trip. I violated this and paid the price. The ignition wires on my bike alarm, were corrupted causing my bike NOT to start. I had to bypass the starter cutout circuit to get my bike to go. After taking care of this, I had no further problems with the bike. Just as I was finishing up my repair, Cary and Bob rode into the parking lot of the hotel. It was definitely time for a cold one!

Day 3, Saturday, July 6

Today's route was planned by Bob, using a program called Door-to-Door. When he said something about Little Sheep Creek, I got really turned on. After I looked it up, I saw that it was just another landmark on the map. Bob planned for us to ride east to Hell's Canyon, and then west to the central part of Oregon for the night.

After backtracking my route to Enterprise from the day prior, we went southeast through Joseph, and then to Hell's Canyon. This was one of the best surprises of this trip. A MUST DO if you are in the area, to see the Snake River canyon between Oregon and Idaho. Now we head west along some of our regular roads through Anthony Lakes, Ukiah, Long Creek, Kimberly, Spray, Fossil, and Antelope. I tried to keep up with Cary on the last 2 legs mentioned, but he had previously practiced that stretch and I was no match for him. Revenge has its sweet rewards in that Cary ran out of gas, and I had to run up the road to get him some. This running out of gas thing is becoming all too familiar (see LOLO write-up, last edition.)

Cary, Dan and I had just finished up a 550-mile day starting in Pendleton and ending up in Redmond. Normally, Cary wears long underwear to ease the chaffing from the hot leather, but since it was going to be very hot, he opted to just use bicycle shorts. Hence, Cary's knees were very raw after the long day and we had 8 more days of riding ahead. We proceeded to the local grocery store in search of a remedy. Pantyhose!

Instead of being a bit covert in this endeavor, Cary proceeded to ask one of the Checkers where the pantyhose were located. The Checker, probably thinking it was for Cary's girlfriend/wife directed him to the

appropriate aisle. By this time, I'm already starting to chuckle, but Cary went one up by asking, "Any ideas on pantyhose for me?"

This was asked at full volume with a straight face, and everyone within earshot whipped around to see who this "kinky" guy was. I said, "I'm outta here," and I walked away laughing hysterically. Some guy walked by me and said, "That guy's weird!"

Cary & I then met up in the pantyhose section and had many choices. What size will fit? I suggested to try and match up with the body type on the package. That didn't work so he ended up trying size "Q". Later in the trip, he decided to pick up another pair, this time with a flowery pattern and get control tops (we ate like boars). I'm convinced the town of Redmond, Oregon will be talking about "that weird guy who bought pantyhose" for quite some time.

Day 4, Sunday, July 7

Today's route would take us through Sisters, over McKenzie Pass to see the lava fields, and take a fun little road shown as A-19 to Oakridge. This road is 50 miles long, and there are no signs to identify it except at mileposts 20 and 30 along the road. From the north, it's labeled as Cougar Reservoir so look for THAT sign. We ate lunch at Oakridge, and proceeded east to Chemult, stopping quickly at Salt Creek Falls. Here we met Guido and Nunzio, a couple of self-proclaimed Geezers on a "Youth Recovery Tour". Having just retired, they were on a 6-7 week trek touring the US from the east coast.

Our next stop was Crater Lake. We had been dodging dark clouds from about noon on and it looked like we were about to get doused. Only 5 miles of the wet stuff, and we were dry for the rest of the trip. We took SR-62 to Shady Cove (try 105 degrees in the shade!) and finished up in Grants Pass, or Grassy Pants, as Cary referred to it, with only 300+ miles this day.

Day 5, Monday, July 8

About to embark on the land of *Cal-Trans*, we had to choose a point of entry. Last year, the road from O'Brien to Happy Camp was littered with gravel so we opted to hop over the Siskiyou and pick up SR-96 north of Yreka instead. Fact is, either road would've produced smiles. On my homeward trek, I took the other route and it was just fine. As we were cornering along SR-96, I saw an oncoming SUV with a light bar. I reduced my speed and motioned to Bob and Cary behind me. As the Sheriff drove by, out came the hand, but unexpectedly, he politely waved instead of pointing towards shoulder. He must've been doing 20 over in the opposite direction and we were certainly not on his list of things to do that morning. Gotta love a motorcycle friendly state!

We proceeded to Willow Creek to have pizza for lunch and then through the Redwoods to Garberville for the night, ending a 340-mile day. At the motel, we met some crazy Canadians, eh!? They were an interesting group, to say the least, and wanted to ride south with us in the morning. We got up extra early to avoid them. That night, we also watched CHP bag a notorious juvenile that provided a distraction that allowed US to get away. Let me explain...

We were enjoying a "cold one" in front of the Calico Cat (restaurant) when a CHP pulled up from across the street and was eyeing us. Just then, the above subject drove by with his stereo up, and guard down. The astute officer picked him off post haste. Shortly thereafter, a waitress came out and notified us that we couldn't drink in the patio area of the restaurant, that it was against the law. I suppose that the CHP was just about to tell us the same, just as junior drove by. We left the scene promptly so as not to get an "official" warning.

Day 6, Tuesday, July 9

The day we've all been looking forward to: CA-1 Leggett to Fort Bragg, and Stewarts Point road with goodies in between. Just out of Garberville, we got right into the good stuff. We came up on a construction zone and this provided a good opportunity to take a break so we pulled over. Some of the

previously surpassed cars went by and were once again, ahead of us. When we got going again, we would be soon overtaking the same cars a second time. I found myself being chased down by a small pickup that apparently didn't like to be overtaken by motorcycles. He followed me so close that the only option I had, was to try to pull away, as there was no safe place for him to pass me, or for me to pull over. (Spoken like a true MSF instructor)

After a few turns, I still saw him in my mirrors so I picked up the pace a little more. After about 30 seconds of not looking back, I finally glanced in my mirror and no truck. "He must have finally backed off," I said to myself. I rode up the road a bit and stopped, at which time Cary and Bob also pulled over. Cary said that the guy in the truck had clipped the hillside in a right-hand turn trying to keep up with me. I now expected the truck to come up the road and let me have an earful, so we watched as he drove on by. Luckily, he didn't stop. I wished I would've seen him HIT the hillside. It would've made it that much more satisfying for me!

By now, Bob is ready for new rubber. In Ukiah, Bob had tires mounted up while the three of us walked down the street for lunch. An hour or so later, we were off again, toward the best road in northern California – the road from Cloverdale to Stewards Point! I have to prelude this section to set up the situation to fathom our plight. We're in the middle of a California heat wave. Ukiah was probably at 115+ and was not the hottest area we had ridden. By the time we get to Cloverdale, we're all suffering heat exhaustion and are dehydrated, even though we just had lunch only an hour or two prior. And now, for the Heaven and Hell portion of the trip...

The first 20 miles of the road to Stewarts Point is beyond accolades that I can think of without a thesaurus (Heaven). The second 20 miles, is a paved goat trail (Hell). As we approached the halfway point, I pull over in a shaded area and expect that the guys will tell me how great they thought the road was. Instead, they're irritable from the heat, and want to get to the coast for water and cooler temperatures. I can't blame them, I felt the same way, but thought the shade wasn't that bad.

When we arrived at the coast, we all hit this quaint little store for about a gallon of water each, which we immediately consumed. By now, I expected to hear some kudos about the first half, but none came. The heat took all the excitement out of it and the second half quickly became a quest for cool air and water. After re-hydrating, we headed north up the coast, back to Fort Bragg for the night. This day was just under 300 miles, but it was ALL curves!

Day 1, Tuesday, July 9

I met the Steensons at the 512/I-5 McDonalds parking lot at 7 AM, already sunny and promising to be a beautiful warm day (actually hot). We headed south to Centralia to meet Larry Yeager and Tom and Wendy Bemenderfer for breakfast at the Country Cousin. After breakfast it was down to Longview across the river and over to Clatskanie where we headed south on OR47 to Vernonia where we picked up a little road (there is now new chip-seal on this section since we rode it) that took us through Timber to Hwy 6 and then out to Tillamook. Twenty miles south of Tillamook we turned inland on 22 and then south through Kings Valley to Philomath where we hopped on 34 (also new chip-seal since this trip) to Waldport. From Waldport we followed the tourist procession down 101 to Reedsport and turned inland again on 38 to Elkton and then the 138 to Sutherlin where we finished off our day by shooting down I-5 to Grants Pass for the night.

Day 7, Wednesday, July 10

After waking up, Bob starts to pull out the map and looking at the options for the day. Cary isn't fully awake yet, rolls over and says, "No more freakin' twisty roads today!" I guess that about summed up how much the heat takes out of you. We were truly abused by the second half of Stewarts Point and the constant high temperatures in full leather.

Bob and Cary would start to head northward for home over the next couple of days. I would have to split from Cary and Bob and backtrack to meet with Jim's gang. My destination was Garberville for the night, and it could've been just a short ride, but I chose to continue to explore. I repeated the previous days ride to Boonville, but headed north on CA-128 instead of south. I continued back through Fort Bragg and on to Garberville. Only 200 miles today, but I got plenty of needed rest once I checked in to the hotel and then waited for Jim's group to meet me there, which they did, at about 6pm.

Jim, Larry, and I went out for pizza, deviating from the usual Calico Cat for dinner. That was a good choice, as the employees looked about as luscious as the food. We all thought of Mark Grabrick at this time and know that he would've appreciated this moment. Too bad Mark, maybe next year!

Day 2, Wednesday, July 10

Larry started the day off by asking if anyone had a 28mm wrench so he could adjust his now loose chain. Alas, no wrench was to be had and closer examination of the (R.I.P.) chain indicated that there was insufficient adjustment range left even if a wrench had been found. Off to the local Suzuki dealer for a new chain which was quickly obtained and mounted- on to Happy Camp. FR48 from O'Brien to Happy Camp was our first taste of a twisty road with no traffic on this trip- tight, twisty and recently swept but it must have been 100 when we got to Happy Camp. From there it was CA-96 south to Willow Creek where it was 115 and then CA-299 out to Arcata on the coast where it was a cool 85. While in a restaurant for lunch our sidestands sunk a good inch into pavement that had never seen 85 on the coast, this was indeed a heat wave. A short ride down the coast and a detour through the Avenue of the Giants brought us to Garberville where we immediately spotted Dan's purple 900RR and met him at the Best Western.

Day 6, Wednesday, July 10

We had a great ride home when we split off. After our day in hell, we just took it easy and went up Hwy 1 to Fortuna...close to Hwy 36.

Day 8, Thursday, July 11

Guess which way we headed? South? Same as two days ago, and by now, I felt pretty good on these roads. We had to do Stewards point again, but my mental state was better, I was well hydrated, and I knew what to expect. Those three factors allowed me to actually enjoy the entire road without any problems. Hell wasn't so bad after all!

Once back on the coast, we headed south on CA-1, towards of San Francisco. We ran across a biker that had stuffed his Ducati 900SS under a guardrail, so we assisted where we could and then left promptly so as not to be in the way of the medics. (The following Monday, on my way home, I ran into one of his buddies at a gas station who said he got out of the hospital on Sunday, was doing fine with a few broken bones, but his bike was totaled.)

We had dinner in Petaluma where I overheard someone refer to Jim H. as the Master Navigator. I would have to agree. His years of experience definitely paid off in picking the best roads. We continued through San Fran and on to San Jose for the night. It was dark now and we achieved our goal, to be within 2 hours of the track so that we could make the 12:30 Superstock race. This day was 370 miles.

Day 3, Thursday, July 11

South it was, after 11 years and countless times past Leggett, we stopped for the first time to see the famous drive-through Chandelier Tree. We arrived before they opened so didn't have to pay the \$3 each fee. (This bargain would be made up paying toll by crossing the Golden Gate in San Francisco later.) What a tree! The branches (or sisters as they're called) were bigger than old

growth firs. Now for the 22 miles of twistiness that takes us over the coast range from Leggett to Ft. Bragg and then CA-20 to Willits, south on 101 to Ukiah where we got on 253 to Boonville and then east on 128 to Cloverdale and then out to Stewarts Point. Stewarts Point road was in better condition than I've ever seen it and the first 20 miles are the Holy Grail of roads.

Day 7, Thursday, July 11

The next day we went east on Hwy 36 and it was still pretty cool from the coastal air so we made it all the way to Weaverville before heading back to the coast on 299. Hwy 36 out of Fortuna is a little sketchy for about 5 miles or so, then it turns into one of those great CA roads! We made it to Brookings that evening and we visited with my Aunt who lives there.

Day 9, Friday, July 12

Ride to Monterey, check-in to our rooms, change out of our leathers, and head to the track! We're at the corkscrew in time for the first race and taking plenty of pictures of the start! What a RUSH!

Day 4, Friday, July 12

Dan's pretty excited, this being his first time at a big race. As we get near Monterey we see packs of sportbikes everywhere, on the road, at gas stations, at restaurants, the whole area taken over by two-wheeled exotica. At the track I showed Dan all the spots to view action and then where to get the best views in order to actually follow the racing. We hiked the entire track and took in racing and qualifying from all vantage places. Vendor row is another must do, all those ads for stuff you see in the magazines- it's there and available to be inspected or bought, sometimes at bargain prices.

Day 8, Friday, July 12

The next day we ended up in Florence via hwy 42s (which short but sweet). We took some other back roads going through Umpquah, Crow, Vernela...pretty good stuff.

Day 10 & 11, AMA/WSBK Weekend

We watched races, got sunburned, drank a LOT of water, and witnessed a guy wad his bike on the parade lap.

During he lunch break, all motorcyclists can pay to ride a lap of Laguna. If you time everything just right, you can actually build up some speed. This guy went through the hairpin (turn 2) and got a tank-slapper on the exit and was bucked over the bars. He rode into the gravel, hanging on for dear life, and laid the bike down. It caught on one side, then flipped. Yes, he rashed BOTH sides of what looked like a new bike. We overheard someone saying, "Tickets for the races = \$70.00. Wadding your bike on the parade lap = PRICELESS!" How true!

Saturday night, Jim and I headed to Cannery Row to see all the custom / exotic bikes. We met Tye Aldana and Greg Dohm, a couple of other HSTAers from Oregon and California for dinner. Later that night, as we were looking at bikes, ran into Chris Harnish, Dean Girard, Dean's friend Chris, and his new wife.

Day 5 & 6, AMA/WSBK Weekend

Lots of great racing, and at Cannery Row every kind of bike you can imagine. Some of the bikes had many thousands of dollars of customizing, stuff you usually only see in the magazines.

Sunday was actually a little cooler and my hydration regimen had me looking for the restrooms often, as I was no longer sweating a couple liters an hour.

Day 9 & 10, Weekend, July 13-14

From Florence the next day, headed north the Waldport then went east on 18 (very crowded, but ok). Now hwy 22 is a fricken hoot! That road rocks. Made our way to 229, another good road and out of Tillamook is a surprise by the name of Miami River Road. That is about 15 miles of mid speed sweepers leading into Hwy 53. Now I had been on 53 before, but Cary hadn't. He was blown away. We encountered two pickups at the top, but they pulled over to let us by. We only encountered a small amount of gravel on probably 3 turns the whole time. That road matches anything out there! From 53, went east on 26 to 202, then got stuck behind a sheriff heading into Astoria (our final night).

From there, we slept in and made a bee line home on Sunday. Finis Bob and Cary's ride

Day 12, Monday, July 15

I really missed Dawn, so I decided that I was going to make it home in one day and not spend another night on the road. I suppose that my eyes were bigger than my butt, but I got up at 4am, and made a beeline for the freeway. After filling a couple of gas tanks (300+ miles), I looked at the wear on my rear tire and start to wonder if I'd have enough tread to make it home. By now it's 10am and my body is telling me to take a nap. I pulled off and had breakfast, hoping to get a second wind to continue. I did so I mounted my steed and rolled on.

To save the tire, I chose to stop droning and got off at Red Bluff on CA-36 to ride some twisty roads northward. This was working, except as I ride west, I'm putting myself right back in the middle of the heat that I was trying to avoid. Once again, I'm starting get tired and begin to doubt if I can make it home, but I pushed on. I work my way through Weaverville, Willow Creek, Happy Camp, O'Brien, and finally make Grants Pass at about 5pm. Having given California a "good-bye kiss", it's time to superslab the rest and be home in 6 hours. I've been on the road for 13 hours, through the heat, and need a break. I stopped for dinner and took off my leathers to unwind. Once again, thinking of Dawn, I get dressed and hit the road.

When I get to Portland, I have one last obstacle to overcome. It's after 9pm and I am sporting a tinted shield without a clear spare. I knew this was coming up and figured that if I was on the freeway, that I could just find a rabbit to follow and all would be fine. That mostly worked except that the rabbit I picked was doing about 100+ and I was uncomfortable at that speed, at night, and not seeing where WSP might be hiding. The last thing I wanted was a ticket so close to home, after a 4400-mile road trip. I had to back off and slow down.

I pulled in my driveway at 11:30pm, after 19 ½ hours and 1150 miles on the road! It's good to be home again. Only 11 ½ months until the next time, I can't wait! Finis Dan's Ride

Day 7, Monday, July 15

After 3 days of rest it was time to hit the road again, temperatures were down 10 or 15 degrees so we only had to deal with 95 to 105 heat. So across the Central Valley to Mariposa and Sonora where we asked some firemen about the wildfires that we had heard about on the news, "Oh, all the roads are open- maybe a little smoke" was the response. We crossed 9600 ft Sonora Pass and when we got to US-395 there was a detour sign, we decided to go to Walker for the night and see what was up in the morning. We found Walker to be without power due to the lines having burnt down and there was no expectation that the fire on Monitor Pass would be under control anytime soon, with no rooms, food, or gas available we detoured southeast to Bridgeport where we spent the night.

Day 8, Tuesday, July 16

Our detour took us into Nevada where someone was nice enough to flash his headlights to warn us of a Nevada trooper ahead, said trooper rolled his lights for us and gave us a two handed slowdown sign, good thing we followed his advice. The next several towns were crawling with law enforcement, and then we on our way back over the Sierras via Carson Pass and then to Placerville for lunch. Our route took us north on 49 through Cool and then out 20 to Williams. After that it was a 1 hour blast up the 5 to Redding then west on 299 to Weaverville to pick up 3 north over Scott Mountain to Yreka for the night. After I passed someone aggressively driving his Honda car up a twisty bit of 299 he decided to take chase and probably destroyed his tires shortly before his engine or radiator blew. A man's got to know his limitations.

Day 9, Wednesday, July 17

Having had enough heat during the past week we decided to take 101 up the Oregon coast to Tillamook and then some twisties back to Longview where we'd slab it home. With all the crappy little tourist towns along the coast it was hard to average even 30mph, at least it wasn't hot. Our last good road was a paved logging road from Vernonia to Rainier, this one's a little gem. I got home to a message that Jim Masterman has bought a place in Moore, ID- sounds like a base camp for some riding. 11 ½ months to go! Finis Jim's Ride