

STURGIS 2001

Friday, August 3, 2001: Left Moscow, Idaho at 6:10 a.m. Cool and comfortable in a T-shirt, long-sleeved shirt, leather vest, chaps, and leather coat. Stopped briefly at the rest stop out of Potlatch, ID and viewed Tussock moth infestation. Ate breakfast in Kellogg, ID (118 miles). Gassed at the only open gas station we could find in Kellogg. Shed the vest. Next stop Missoula, MT (135 mi.) for gas and lunch with friends of Dan's.

Made a side trip to Fairmont Hot Springs to gas Dan's bike. So far Dan's bike has a smaller tank than I do; I'm relieved. We shed our chaps as it is really hot now. Road construction narrowed the freeway to one lane! Took an hour plus to get past Butte in bumper-to-bumper traffic. We take the last Butte, exit at 3:00 p.m. Mtn. time (118 miles from Missoula). Gassed, bought post cards, back on the road.

Crosswinds are picking up. Coming into Bozeman (84 miles) gusts are so strong that Paul and Dan have to lean the bikes into the wind to keep from being blown into the other lane. First time I have felt truly nervous! Getting dark now and starting to cool off some. Quick stop to gas in Bozeman, then on to Livingston (27 miles plus 15 miles south to camp ground). Came across a camper shell resting on top of the hood of a car in the grassy medial strip of the freeway. Little further ahead on the right shoulder is a Harley stopped behind a new, silver Dodge 4x4 with the bed wrenched open – the left panel is torqued. A wind gust tore the camper out of the bed like a sail. Glad we were delayed at lunch!

Finally made it to Livingston at 6:30 p.m.; heading south towards the north gate of Yellowstone National Park to Mallards Rest primitive camp ground. Passed a KOA (RUNNING WATER AND A SWIMMING POOL), got stopped 45 minutes for MORE road construction. The pilot car is out of gas and the second car won't start. After 30 minutes our patience is gone and we are yelling offers of taking over his job. Poor guy is calling for crowd control. More attempts to get a pilot car going and Paul slips into obscenities, I agree. Once under way we miss our turn-off, backtrack to a fish sign, Mallards Rest, we brake down a STEEP, gravel, curvy road to camp by Yellowstone River (I'm praying we don't pick up a rock in our drive belt; Dan is in 7th heaven).

I've been on the back of the bike for over 12 hours. I'm hot, sweaty, and tired and the only running water is in the river! After pitching our tent in the fast fading sunlight we head to Pine Creek, another 10 miles away, for dinner. I'm still hot, very tired, trying to be a good sport, and nonchalantly bathe in a tiny, antiquated bathroom sink before we eat a quick hamburger and go back to camp. A small band is playing country music, but I am only mildly interested. At 9:45 p.m. we head back to camp with bottled water and juice.

Dan, takes a dunk in the river before turning in. Our air mattress is flat so we must have a leak. Wind gusts all night long. I'm sure I slept a couple of hours.

Saturday: Roll out of the tent at 6:00 PST. Too tired to change my watch to Mountain Time, but do it anyway. Packed up our gear, took some pictures, and hit the road by 7:30 Mtn. time. Breakfast in Columbus (89 miles) and gassed the bikes. Still windy, but not as gusty as last night. Next city Billings (41 miles), then Crow Agency (62 miles). HOT, HOT, HOT! Stopped for gas, bathroom, and Gatorade. Checked on Highway 212 and was told they are doing some chip coating -- no problem. Drank 32 oz. of Gatorade. It's about 11:30 Mtn. Time. Starting to see more bikes heading our way.

Crow Agency to Broadus (108 miles) – gas and eat lunch at a tiny café (1:30 p.m.). It is in the 100's now and we are riding in our leather vests and a long-sleeve shirt to ward off the sun; no chaps, no coat. At Lame Deer (66 miles) we hit ROAD CONSTRUCTION. Thirteen miles of dirt, mud, and rock. Bumper-to-bumper, 10 m.p.h. Would have to speed to travel 35 mph like the sign advises. Very hot, very tired, awful. Paul takes off his helmet and opts for his leather Harley hat. Paul is cursing the height of the Ultra Classic -- definitely not built with short legs in mind -- I'm doing a rosary. An hour later we arrive in Ashton (gas and bathroom). It is really HOT and my feet are burning. The heat from the motorcycle engine and the sun are more than I bargained for.

Back on a real road again we stop at Stoneville Saloon in Alzada (123 miles from Lame Deer and 3 miles from the Wyoming border – hurrah!) for ice water and pop. Found a stool in front of a large fan and refused to move for at least half an hour. Saloon is full of bikers and beer and drinks are flowing. By the looks of it many have settled in for a long stay. Met a very nice couple from Missoula, and shared my barstool briefly with another heat escapee. Laughed and joked about house building experiences with Missoula couple. Paul remarked on the length of the wood stovepipe (12 feet to the ceiling and 24 horizontal foot run to exit the building -- creosote nightmare). We head out about 3:30; we are anxious to get to Spearfish (only 38 miles away) campground and set up our tents.

Drove through Belle Fourche to Spearfish (12 miles). Arrived at the city campground at 5:30 p.m. (a total of 928 miles from Moscow). I am dripping sweat, literally. Our first priority is set up our tent and then shower. The tent is easy to assemble. I sit down on the edge of our tarp to remove my boots and socks and am promptly stung by a bee in two places. Paul finds a small towel that he uses to wipe off the bike and I grab it and head to the nearby river mumbling dejectedly. The fast moving water is icy cold and feels wonderful. My temperature drops instantly and the icy water makes the sting feel a lot better. While I'm dousing my face, neck, and arms Paul is inflating our air mattress in anticipation of a restful night's sleep. Dan wiggles into his swim trunks and flops whole body into the icy creek, hooting with shock. I'm wishing I had brought a pair of shorts with me. Dan's ecstatic, I'm ready for a real shower! At the campground office we buy a 5-night sticker for the tent and 2 dollars in quarters for the shower. Even Dan is ready for a real shower.

Gathering up my travel size toiletries in zip lock bags and some clean clothes we head for the shower building. I have four quarters in my jeans pocket in anticipation of a nice long soak. The shower cubicles have café style doors and a tiny dressing area outside the shower stall. The cement floor is soaking wet. First thing I do is hook my towel on the door hook. I unroll my clean shirt and my clean underwear falls on the wet slightly muddy floor. I snap it up and continue undressing. I shed my jeans, congratulating myself on not getting the cuffs too wet, throw them over the door. Plink, plink, plink, plink. All four quarters hit the floor rolling in four different directions. Clutching my sweaty shirt I give chase in my underwear. Who knew taking a shower could be so technical?

At last I am ready. I jump in, insert my quarter, and scrub up as fast as I can. Twenty-five cents later I am feeling more like a person again. We decide a nice dinner in Spearfish is in order. Dan takes us to his favorite restaurant in town and we eat lavishly. A quick trip to Safeway and back to the campsite. Our air mattress is flat again. We crawl into the tent and sleep anyway.

Sunday: We are up and ready to go by 7:30 a.m. Munched on an energy bar from Safeway for breakfast. Today is our sightseeing day. Dan leads us down Spearfish Canyon. Our first stop is Roughlock Falls out of Savoy. Dan pointed out the local flora and fauna on our trek to the falls. Picture time. Very pretty area -- green and lush. Next stop is Cheyenne Crossing. Bathroom stop and buy post cards. Everyone seems friendly enough. About 150 bikes parked, hundreds more on the road. Head up to Lead and stop at the Homestake Mine. Try to get a picture of the huge pit, but know I can't capture the breadth and depth of the mine in a 2 dimensional picture. Heat is climbing steadily and we shed our chaps.

From Lead we go south on Hwy 385 to Pactola Lake. It reminds me of Coeur d'Alene Lake. Stop for some pictures and a short rest. Trade cameras with another group and take each other's pictures. Laugh over just seeing each other at Homestake Mine. We are definitely in biker's country as crowds are getting thicker and parking places harder to find. I cry over an inscription in a granite bench. Family has obviously lost a 17-year-old son around graduation time. I think of our son, Luke, and the time our other son, Jean-Paul, was in a car wreck. I say a prayer for the family and the son they have lost.

From Pactola Lake we head to Crazy Horse Monument, passing Hill City and Custer. We wait for a green arrow at the light and when one doesn't come Paul goes anyway and we zoom up a steep hill to go through the park gates. Dan catches up and we are lucky to find a place to park in the lower lot. Our first glimpse of Crazy Horse is amazing! Its size is breathtaking. We shed our gear and go inside the visitor's center. I wolf down my last energy bar, sharing bites with Paul and Dan. We are treated to a 20-minute film in an air-conditioned theater! I want to sit through it again, but am out voted. The sculptor, Korczak Ziolkowski, began the mountain carving over 50 years ago with a vision and a commitment to Chief Henry Standing Bear. It is anticipated that it will take another 75 years to finish. Since Ziolkowski's death in 1982 seven of his ten children have continued the project. It is being build with private funds as Ziolkowski and family refused bureaucratic strings and demands. It is so large that all four heads from Mt. Rushmore could fit on Crazy Horse's outstretched arm. Crazy Horse never surrendered, never lived on a reservation, and never signed a treaty. At the base of the monument will be the inscription, "My lands are where my dead lie buried," a quote from Crazy Horse when asked, "Where are your lands now?" His spirit lives on in this massive mountain carving.

We traveled the short distance to Mount Rushmore where we ogled the famous carvings of Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln. It is small in comparison to Crazy Horse, but I am still glad I finally got to see it in real life. It is 105 degrees now and I am ready to eat and call it a day. We head to Rapid City and the Harley Davidson dealership. On the way into town we pass Perkins on our left and keep going. I get my first close-up view of a Boss Hogg with a 350 ci engine. They are huge! We do the rounds of the various vendor stalls and Paul buys me a \$4 glass of lemonade. I am able to buy a couple of souvenir T-shirts for gifts and wander over to a picnic table in the shade. Paul wanders around a little more, but Dan is really into the displays and demonstrations. After an hour even my ice is gone because I ate it waiting for Dan to tire of the sun and fun. My smile is turning into a scowl and I ask Paul if he can lure Dan away from here. Inside the dealership we try to find out the route for the 100th Anniversary ride, but we are told to go to the Convention Center and ask there. Paul wants me to look at leather coats and it is all I can do not to snarl and snap at him. We reached the Convention Center about 4:30 p.m. and it is air-conditioned. Nothing is set up yet so we leave the cool indoors and go looking for a place to eat that Dan can't find. Eventually we stop at Hardees and have a chicken sandwich.

Dan asks if we want to stop in Sturgis and I tell him to just point to it as we drive by on the freeway I'll see it tomorrow.

Before going to the campground we stop at Wal-Mart and buy a new air mattress, then over to Safeway for some nibblies. By the time we get back to Spearfish we have traveled about 150 miles. This time I take a two-quarter shower and I don't drop anything! Dinner is chicken from KFC which Dan brings back to camp. Paul blows up our air mattress and we get a great night's sleep. I can't get over how quiet the campground is at night.

Monday: Up early, nibble on dry bagels, and head for Sturgis (12 miles) where we stand in line for about 90 minutes, waiting to sign up to ride a 2002 Harley. The temperature quickly passes the 100 degree mark and the Harley people are trying to get the line in the shade so they don't lose anyone to heat stroke. All the company people rode to Sturgis from Milwaukee, and are very nice. The V-Rod is strictly controlled in numbers and rides. Paul and I ride a new Heritage and already he's exclaiming he can touch the ground flat footed. I'm asking if you can put the Ultra Classic seat on the bike. The teal green Heritage rides smooth and the ride is quiet (Paul assures me that would have to change). Rode the Heritage to Whitewood, then jumped on the freeway and rode back to Sturgis. It was a nice test run. From here we climbed back on our own bikes and headed for Rapid City about 35 miles away. We eat a late lunch at Perkins and down several large glasses of ice tea. I'm ready for a nap.

Back to Spearfish -- 108 degrees. (Ever try to slither into a lycra one-piece suit when you are hot and sweaty and lying down on an air mattress?) We dunk in the creek (I think Dan is related to the porpoise), shower, and relax before going to KFC for dinner. It is so warm we head to Sturgis in just our T-shirts, leather vest, and jeans. Dan takes us to main street which is blocked off to cars. A row of bikes, parked perpendicular, line both sides of the street, and a double row of bikes line the center. I know Paul is not anxious to drive down this mass of milling people and bikes, but here we go. Stop and go all the way and I am taking pictures from the back of the bike as we are heading through the crowds. The noise has risen many decibels and my eyes are wide as saucers trying to take it all in. The feeling of excitement is hard to describe: sheer numbers of bikes and people in various styles of dress, tattoos everywhere I look, fancy custom choppers, an occasional Gold Wing, a girl with a Indian chief head dress is posing for all to see. We park several blocks down against the curb and Dan cautions us to make note of where we are. We head down main street on foot and know that we simply cannot take it all in in one night.

At one stop we are oohing over Jesse James' custom bikes and I spot him in the milieu. Paul quickly goes over to him and he is nice enough to put his arm around Paul's shoulders. I quickly snap a picture, wishing I had enough time to take two. The band is somewhat deafening here so we slowly move on. I find a T-shirt for D'andre and a headband for me to wear when I am not wearing my helmet. Paul finds a biker's wallet, and Dan tries to talk Paul into going in for a barbed wire tattoo. Paul calls Luke on the cell phone and holds out the phone so he can hear the bikes. Don't know if the answering machine will do it justice. Will try again tomorrow. At midnight we drive home and we are glad Paul brought along his clear goggles. With the band to hold back my hair I find I can enjoy the freedom of riding without my helmet. We are still in our leather vests and marvel over how warm it is. When we get back to the campground we take a one quarter shower and sleep on top of our sleeping bags. I am glad we were able to move our campsite back in between two trees. When we return from Sturgis we are greeted with many new comers at the campsite.

Tuesday: We rose about 7:00 today and ate a leisurely, delicious breakfast at the Masonic Hall in Spearfish. We head back to Sturgis and bought a second set of pegs for me. These have 3 positions and enable me to get my feet up higher and pop my floorboards out of Paul's way. In stop-and-go traffic he was hitting the back of his legs on my floorboards. It is only 105 degrees today. Haven't had deodorant since Sunday when mine melted. Can't find my perfume. My feet Hurt!

Noon Mtn. Time. We've been shopping for hours. It is so hot my make-up is gone and my hair is a disaster. LOTS of bikes still in Sturgis. It is quieter in the day time and all the girls have their tops on. Paul called Luke from Main Street so he could get a taste of the sounds. Luke definitely wants to come next year. The misting machine on main street is a welcome relief. Can't find a copy of the biker's prayer so I will have to send copies back to Christian Bikers Association.

Off to Rapid City and lunch at Perkins. The main street is mobbed with bikes and traffic. Have a yummy lunch and head for the Convention Center to watch the extreme jumping at 3:00 p.m. Inside the Convention Center we get a close look at all the new 2002 bikes. Still can't find the 2003 Anniversary ride route. Paul has me get on a Sportster to see if I can stand it up on my own. No luck. After a couple hours milling around we head back to Spearfish and have dinner at Dairy Queen – we crave ice cream. Back at the campground Paul puts on my new pegs.

Tonight is Tequila Tuesday and the goal is to drink 18 bottles of tequila. When we get back to camp the Tequila Gang has already started to celebrate and there is much laughter as they hold up a T-shirt that says "Show me your tits." Harlow said he has set up a police trap and baited it with donuts. Rick from Grand Forks coordinates the annual Tequila Tuesday. He has been coming to Sturgis since the late '70's. Bill, the motorcycle cop, told Paul he transports people he arrests by, "handcuffing them to the luggage rack and putting some roller skates on them." About midnight someone lights off an M80 and then all is quiet until morning.

Wednesday: We have 1370 miles on the trip odometer. It is only 74 degrees this morning! I borrowed a piece of Paul's deodorant before dressing. Found my perfume rolled up in my socks. Can't find my hairspray. Breakfast at Masonic hall – love my new pegs. We head to Hulett, WY (52 miles). By 9:00 a.m. it is already 90 degrees. LOTS of people milling around the small town and thousands of bikes lining the streets, parking areas, school grounds, everywhere. Twelve miles of road construction coming to Hulett. We browse the vendors and shops and stand under the misting machine soaking up the cool air. Paul buys leather gloves for him, a leather fanny pack for me, and a small belt purse. In the middle of the intersection I spot a biker's vest that announces he's from Honolulu, HI. When I show it to Paul he calls out to the biker and they launch into Pigeon English. At one end of town is a Christian band and they are very good. I visit with a minister from Conn. who said he was called to come to Hulett this day. I promise to e-mail him the biker's prayer. Dan thinks there are 150,000 bikes here. The mercury tops out at 107 degrees. We leave before lunch time and go to Devil's Tower where I snap pictures from the back of the bike. There is no place to park and the heat and crowds are a bit overwhelming.

Near Sundance we leave Dan to watch the drag races. Paul and I head back to Dairy Queen for a crispy chicken salad, hot fudge Sunday, and ice cold lemonade. I am dripping sweat and this is only day two in these pants. We will pack when we get back to the campground. Tomorrow we start home. By 4:00 p.m. clouds are moving in. Dan returns and said the drag races were great

fun. They had misting machines so the heat wasn't bad. Paul and I stuff all our dirty clothes in the side carriers and have one duffle of clean clothes which he will roll up in our sleeping bags and tent and store on top of the luggage carrier. We go to the Spearfish park for a pot luck dinner that the city puts on. The food is delicious and the people are wonderful. We sit and listen to an excellent Christian band and then walk back to our campsite where we say good-bye to some of our new friends.

Pam, a journalist from Austin, TX. This is her first trip to Sturgis too. She is 42 and discovered what a precious gift motherhood is at the age of 38. Alan, a farmer from Iowa. Discussed farm debt, risk, corn, irrigation, and distressed auctions with him. He said Roundup cuts labor time way down so have to decide do I buy more land and plant or keep what I have. Neighbor's land is up for sale if he doesn't buy it he risks it going to seed and being inundated by weeds. Bob, a AA member who has been sober for 13 years and is now a successful business man. He said one night he drank so much Tequila that he passed out in the campground river. He sobered up in jail and went on the wagon. Said his alcohol level was .37. Now he and members of AA enjoy Sturgis sober. Mary and Bill from Illinois, also on an Ultra Classic.

Thursday: Up at 5:50 a.m. Pack up the tent, sleeping bags, and few things in the tent. Only 70 degrees – what a break! 1428 miles on the odometer. On the road by 7:00 a.m., gassed and headed for Gillette, WY. Stopped and had brunch with a friend of Dan's. Pushed on through Sheridan, gassed, and I called Luke from a pay phone to tell him we were on our way home. Haven't seen the cell phone since Hulett on Wed. Stopped for gas and lunch in Billings, MT. Still cool – about 2:00 p.m. Mtn. time. We press on to Livingston where we stop for gas and bathroom break. I buy Gatorade and tell Paul I need a break before we press on. Found the cell phone and lost Dan. Stop outside Livingston but still don't see Dan so go on solo to Butte. We take the first exit and stop at the Red Lion Inn (11 hours from take-off time this morning). We are hot, tired, and Paul said he is selling the Ultra Classic when we get home and buying a shorter bike! Our few remaining clean clothes are folded up inside the tent and Paul announces they are going to stay there. I take a 3-quarter shower and go downstairs to get the cell phone from the luggage carrier. Paul starts phoning home in an effort to find out what happened to Dan.

Finally get in touch with Dan and he meets us at the Red Lion (7:30 p.m.). We walk over to Denny's for dinner. Our Lady of the Rockies is glowing from on top of the Great Divide. It is a beautiful night and I am looking forward to sleeping in a bed. Dan is at the KOA just one off ramp past us. We drove 570 miles on Thursday.

Friday: Left Butte at 7:45 a.m. Gassed, bought a muffin, and hopped on the bike for our last day's ride. Stopped at Paul's Pancake Pantry in Missoula, MT for lunch. Stopped at the rest stop before St. Regis where we shed some gear in the heat of the day. Still cooler than when we started. Next stop Coeur d'Alene where we gassed, called Luke and Jean-Paul. Jean-Paul is only a few blocks away so we wait in the shade and regale him with stories of our big bike adventure. Next stop is home. 2,400 miles traveled! Can't wait until next year – I'm packing a pair of shorts!!!