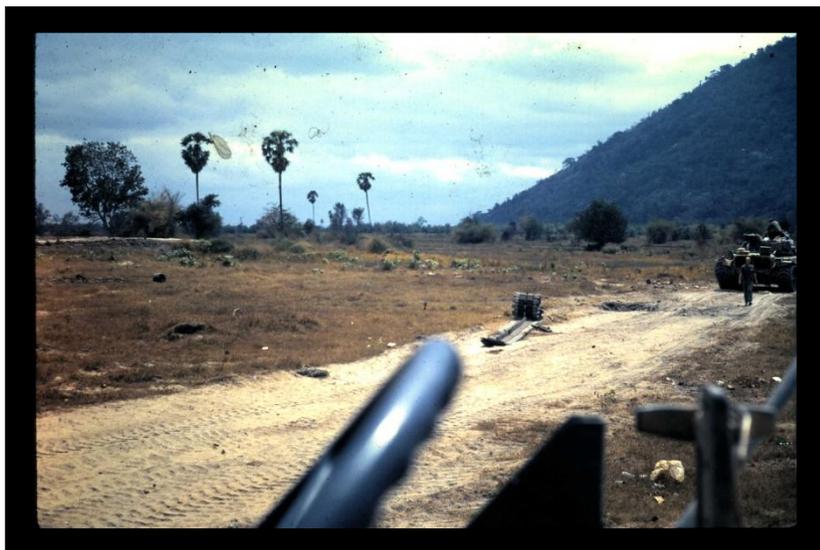


THE WESTERN WANDER TOUR

OR

THE RIDE GOES ON FOREVER

SEPTEMBER 2012



*I know dark clouds will
gather round me
I know my way is rough
and steep*

During a short run up to Denver over Memorial Day Bobbe and I set do discussing what we were going to do for a trip this year. We both decided that we wanted to ride to Newfoundland but it was too late for that this year. After time spent in serious discussions on the patio with toddy in hand it was decided that we would visit California to see the Big Sur Area, the Hearst Castle and objects of opportunity along the way.

With the destination and time decided I returned to OKC to get everything ready. I prepared all of the gear, serviced the bike and waited for the time to ride.

We had decided I would arrive in Denver on September 19th in time to celebrate Darcy's birthday, which I did, no problems (nice time, and Darcy, many more), and then we would leave the next morning, which we did.

We left at our usual, the crack of 8:30 or so and missed most of the traffic. We were in jackets and pants which were not necessary in Denver but we were heading up on the mountain. Our first stop was for a nice breakfast in Idaho Springs.

As you can see in the photo it was a textbook nice mountain day. From Denver to California there are only a few options. Both of us have been down I-70. We had decided to cross Wyoming on I-80 instead, the plus being the ride north to I-80.

We climbed over Berthoud Pass and headed north towards Walden through North Park on Hwy 125. This is a nice ride we have done several times, low traffic and nice scenery. Our Hwy number changed to 230 as we crossed into Wyoming and we stopped for fuel in Encampment where Bobbe learned about an "Open Range". On north, a few miles east of Rawlins we connected with I-80 and headed west.



I-80 was not nearly as uninteresting as I thought it was going to be. First, the scenery is spectacular in a very arid way. There is not much in the way of people but there is a lot of oil and gas production that has been going on for a long time. The weather was warm, not hot, and windy in places, but nothing serious. We stopped for fuel in Green River and rode on towards Salt Lake City. West of Green River the scenery improved as we rode up and through the Wasatch.

One thing very noticeable all day was the haze in the air. Reports were that it was caused by forest fires in neighboring states. At times it was so bad you could actually smell the fire smoke. At all times it affected the distance views and Bobbe's sinus problems.

Without a lot of trouble we found a nice motel south of Greater Salt Lake City unloaded the bike and headed into downtown for a meal at the Blue Iguana. It still exists, we found it without any trouble, we both remembered the location. It is still as good as remembered. After toasting our first days ride we both tucked into the very good Seafood Enchiladas.

The next morning was clear and cool and made for riding. As we headed south on I-15 through the fire haze and smog it came to our attention that very few of the good folks in Utah pay much attention to the speed limit. I paced a school bus, thankfully empty, at 75 and we were both getting passed. Also, the HOV lanes are handled a little differently. Most other places have a pretty stiff fine for not complying with HOV lane rules. In Utah you pay a .25 cent toll and you can use the HOV lane. Presumably you need a



windshield pass of some sort as we never saw a toll booth.

Anyway, lots of people, traffic, industry and smog in the Salt Lake Valley. We cut west on Hwy 6 and very shortly left all of that behind. The road ran straight and climbed as it went. We could see a lot of bright tree color in the mountains ahead. We did not think it was Aspens, and it wasn't. Turns out it was the scrub oaks and they were very spectacular especially with the light behind us as we headed west.

This is mining country. You could see the evidence of that everywhere. One of the more interesting aspects was a railroad that had clearly not been used in quite sometime. In fact, it was paved over where it crossed roads with weeds and trees growing in the tracks. However, at each crossing was a sign stating that the railroad was subject to use at anytime. The idea (I think) is that the mines used the railroad to move in the heavy equipment and want to keep it and the right of way active if and when they need it. Railroads do not easily give up right of way.

This is getting into the area where towns and gas stations can be few and far between so with that in mind we stopped for gas in Delta and then headed out into the great unknown where, a little west of Delta, we ran across this. This is a shoe tree. It consists of pairs of shoes of all types that have been tossed into the tree. Neither of us was quite sure what to make of it, but there is a site. On the internet most of the references are to the shoe tree that you put into the shoe, but here is a link that somewhat explains things. <http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/29064>. Little did we know we were going to see other examples as we traveled on.

After leaving the shoe tree we headed west towards Ely Nevada and into some truly desolate land or so it looked to us. As hard as it is to believe people own this land and make a living from it. How is a good question, but they do. Some of this land is so bad it will not grow sagebrush. For Okies this is like not being able to grow Johnson grass or sunflowers.

Never the less, it is scenic and for a geologist, very interesting. It is known as the basin and range province which consists of a series of mainly north south mountain ranges with basins in between. There are very few rivers, none flowing all of the way through. What water falls in the mountains flows into the valleys and stays there. Over the eons this results in very salty and poor soil. In places they can irrigate from this water and in limited places grow crops, but mostly not



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This is a pretty good view of what a lot of this country looks like. We were both glad we were doing this trip in September. I have done it in the summer, and it can be brutal. This time it was around 80 and not bad at all.

Fairly recently this canyon had been hit by a flash flood and the road was almost washed out. In this type of climate there is very little soil and not

much vegetation. When it rains it rains heavily and little of it can soak in. It runs downhill into the canyons and can be very destructive. I have never seen one of these floods in action but I have seen the remains and the remains are impressive.

Just before this place we were riding over a valley when either a golden eagle or a young bald eagle swooped down and hit a ground squirrel right beside the road. We turned around to get a photo, he was there, but would not pose. He flew off dragging the remains with him.

We pulled into Ely for gas and grub and then headed west on Hwy 6 towards Tonopah. Shortly after leaving Ely we passed a sign that said no services for 165 miles, and they were not kidding. There was not a lot of traffic on the road and the scenery was interesting. It was over one pass into another basin then up the opposite range over another pass into another basin, repeat for 165 miles. We had found something called the Lunar Crater and wanted to see it. Well, with no warning there was the sign for the road. We pulled around and checked it out. It was dirt and according to the map it was 7 miles down which meant 7 miles back. We decided that one was not worth the risk and went on down the road.

When we pulled into Tonopah it was still early but there did not seem to be too many towns for some distance so we called it a day. The Mizpah Hotel (www.mizpahhotel.net/) was built in the early 1900s and until 1929 was the tallest building in Nevada. We wanted to stay there but all of the rooms are small with one bed and that was not going to work. So, we settled for the Best Western down the road and walked to the Mizpah for a couple of nice drinks and a good meal in the saloon and restaurant. According to Bobbe the prime rib was very good, I know it was large and my Italian sausage pasta was very good.

Early (sort of) the next morning it was back on the road, this time with Yosemite as the prime target. Before we got there we had to cross a bunch more of Nevada such as all we had seen before. At Benton Ca. we turned on Hwy 120 for 46 miles of very interesting riding. The first part is very slow, 1st gear curves, climbing ever higher, very interesting rocks, little traffic, and then the road opens up. It is like your own roller coaster for about 20 miles. If I didn't throttle back some the suspension would bottom in the dips, and getting the bike airborne would not be a problem. However, I did that in Canada and don't want to do it again. But, it is a lot of fun and the scenery is great.

Then, you wind up one last 2nd gear grade and you are in a different world. You go from arid sagebrush to this. The change is, literally topping a rise, and there it is. These trees, as I am sure you all know, are



Ridley Pines and this is one of the largest remaining stands. The trees were harvested quite heavily during the mining era providing cross ties and fuel for the railroad and fuel for the mines and people. For, as the historical signs said, this area is around 10,000 feet and it gets very cold in the winter.

The mining houses were constructed with green wood and no insulation and required a lot of wood to keep them heated. I would guess that is a major understatement. The remains of the saw mill are in a creek bed near here. Fortunately for the trees, mines in this area had a short life and when the ore ran out the people left so the trees are still here and growing well.

Right below this forest is Mono Lake. For movie buffs, Mono Lake played an important part in the history behind the movie Chinatown. It seems that the good folks that had bet money on the southern California area were very much aware that place is a desert with no reliable source of water. Without a reliable source of water Southern California (LA) was not going to grow. So, early on, they went around the state buying up (or stealing in some opinions) rights to any water source they could. Mono Lake was one of those sources. So, for years, up until 1980 something I think, they pumped all of the water they could out of the lake with no regard to the effects on the lake. Eventually after many years of lawsuits and lawyers getting rich all agreed to maintain the lake level at a certain elevation. And, that is where things are to this day.

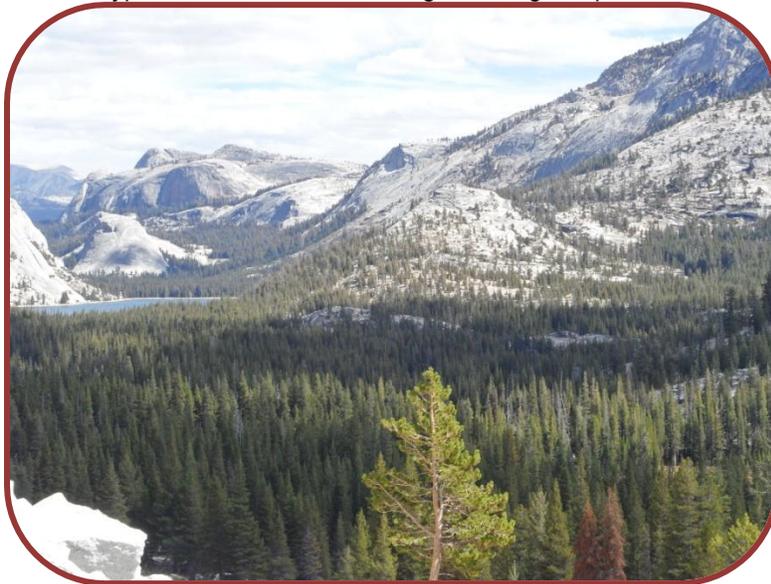
you



It is a very pretty area, we did the visitors center and came into town for gas and there I saw my first \$5.00 gasoline since Canada. I did find a station for less than that, but not much less. Fortunately the station was across the street from a coffee shop so while I filled the bike Bobbe walked across the road and scored some good coffee and muffins.

If you haven't been to Yosemite you need to go and if you go, come in from the east. Great ride into the park, and once again, the best \$10 I ever spent got us in free.

This is a typical view, and even though it is a good picture it doesn't come close to what it actually looks



like. The views are something to behold. We came in on the week end so it was pretty crowded with lots of people hiking all over the place. Also, lots of people like us stopping to take photos and oh and ah and the like.

This area was glaciated and fairly recently. All of the soil was scraped away and is just now reforming. Rocks all over the place have striations on them caused by the moving ice. It is quite impressive to look at the rounded top of a mountain at least 2000 feet above you and realize that at one time, geologically recently, it was under ice. If it had not been under the ice the peak would not be

rounded.

So we moved on, trying to keep out of the way of people who were doing what we were doing. We came down out of the high country and it warmed up quickly. We were riding down the side of the glaciated canyon, similar to the going to the Sun in Glacier, but not as spectacular. We swung into a pull out, there was Half Dome. Interestingly, according to the sign, Half Dome is more correctly 80% dome, but that is not as catchy. It also is only one of several in the park. In this photo you can see the rounded top that shows it was under the ice, also, on the left is the outcrop all of the crazy folks like to try and climb and a bunch of them fall off. Darwin works.

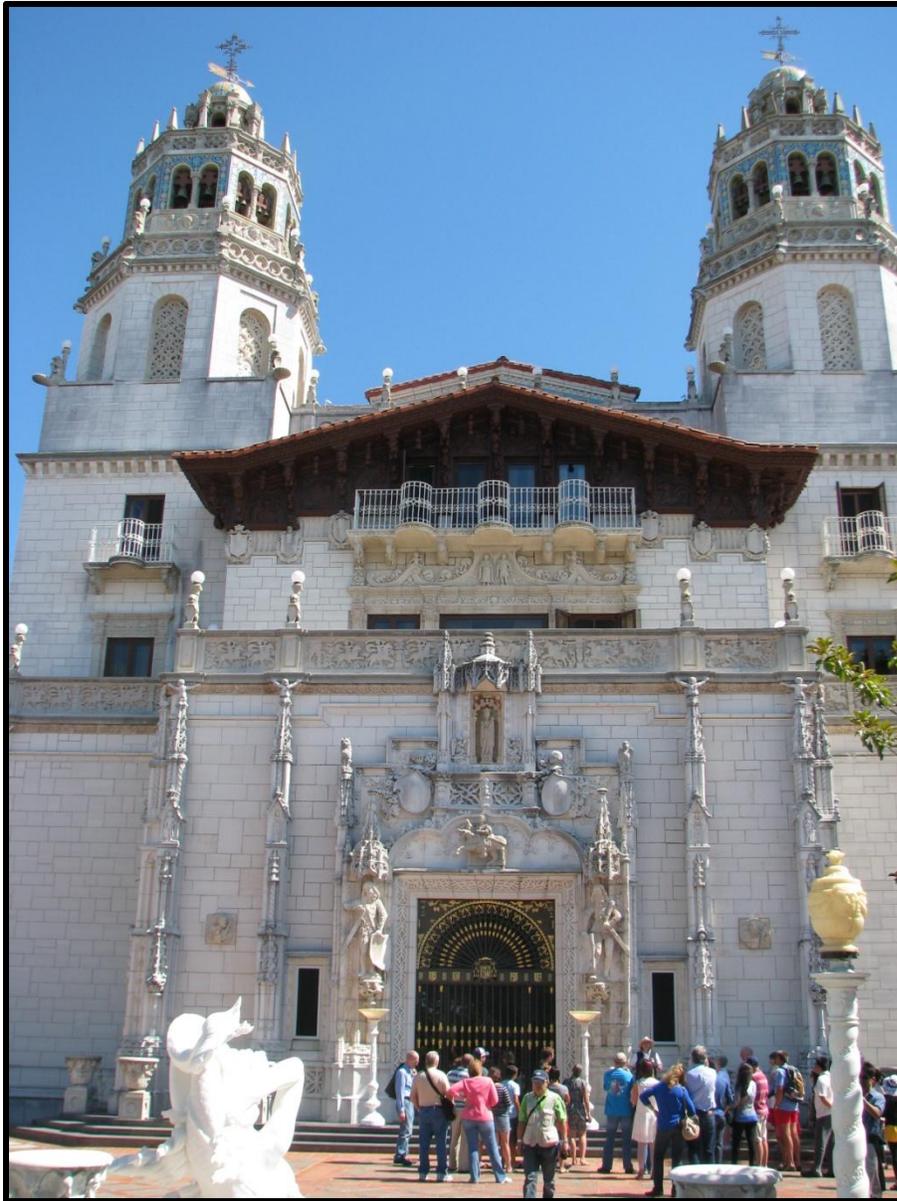


We elected not to ride through the valley and headed south towards Fresno. As we went south we dropped in altitude and the temperature went up. The change in the land is amazing. Look at a map of California and you will see two sets of mountain ranges on the sides with a valley in the center. This is the Central Valley and it is where they grow all of the produce we eat. It is flat. It was flat to begin with and has been further flattened so it can be irrigated. Not with the above ground sprinklers we are used to here but by gravity out of canals. It is very impressive what all they are growing.

Along about Laton the temperature was hitting 97 and Bobbe called a halt. She has a thing that goes around her neck. You soak it with water and the evaporation cools you down. We did that, fueled up and headed off for Paso Robles. After some very flat roads we started climbing into the Coastal Mountains (hills actually) and the land changed to rolling hills and grasslands, but still lots of vineyards. We pulled into Paso Robles and after only a little trouble we checked into a motel and went to a BBQ joint for a nice meal and drink and toasted yet another good day's ride.

After a good night's sleep and a meal at the local Denny's we headed to the castle. We had 11:00 tickets for the castle so there was no hurry as it is only about 30 some miles to the castle from Paso Robles. The road to the coast is lined on both sides by vineyards some fancy, some not. When we topped the last rise we almost saw the Pacific Ocean, almost because it was covered with fog. As we worked on up the coast the fog did not abate but we still got some good views. We found the Castle with no problems, parked and went in to look around.

The Castle, as all castles should, sits on a hill. There is a visitor's center down below with the usual things to be seen in a visitor's center. Interesting to note is that the Hearst Corp. still runs a grass fed cattle ranch and organic vineyard and sells products from both at the visitor's center. Not cheaply I might add. There are several tours available for the Castle. We were signed up for the upstairs tour. When your number is called you get on a bus for the 15 minute ride up to the Castle.



The Castle is impressive, to say the least. In what way, depends on the individual. It was under construction for over 20 years and was never completed. One of the main reasons for that is that Hearst kept changing his mind and when you are using re-enforced concrete for construction changes are not easy. In my opinion, it is tasteless and very poorly done. The rooms are small and dark. They thought nothing of taking medieval masterpieces of various types and cutting them up to put on a ceiling, wall or something. Bobbe does not share my opinion, and says, "It was a different time".

My impression overall, **"It's Good To Be King"**.

After finishing up the tour we rode the bus back to the visitor's center and took in the I-Max show about Hearst and the Castle. The show was actually pretty good. After a

nice meal from the snack bar it was time to load up and see what Big Sur was all about.

When we were at the Castle we were above the fog. Back down at sea level we were still in the fog, sometimes, quite heavy. Highway 1 is meant to be a scenic road, and it is. It is a nice two lane that hugs the coast. The views were nice but would have much more impressive without the fog.

Our target for the next day was Sequoia. If we stayed on Hwy 1 we would have to go quite a bit out of our way. The California map indicated a secondary road running through Ft. Hunter Leggett that would keep us from having to go the long way around. We found the road and when we turned off I was beginning to wonder. About that time an older woman driving a little car came around the corner. I figured if she could make it we could so away we went. This photo is what we saw when we started on the road. That fog was what we were driving in, as little as 50' change in elevation makes a big difference.



This is a photo from along the road. It was paved, sort of, about 1 ½ lanes. At some points it was very steep and guard rails were not in evidence. But, we were not in a hurry and it was interesting. All in all, it was about 30 or so miles and we came out on the correct road. We were taking a small break on the east end of the road and a car pulled up and ask us about the road and seemed pleased to know they could make it in their car.

To get to Sequoia we had to finish crossing the coastal range and the central valley, thankfully it was after the hottest part of the day, we hoped, as we headed east.

The first part was a very interesting ride, up, down, and around the hills with little traffic, very good motorcycle road. A little west of Coalinga we discovered, not a shoe tree, but a bra tree. There were bras of all shapes, sizes and colors, and, without looking too close, some thongs. No signs or any other explanation, but, there it is. We rode on ahead and took a nice tea break in Coalinga then moved on.

Shortly after Coalinga we left the hills and were again on the flatlands of the central valley. We stopped for the night in Hanford. After the large late snack at the Castle neither of us was hungry so we settled for watching the late game with a bottle of wine, some chips, and called it a day.

The next morning was clear and promised to be a good riding day. We were about 50 miles from Sequoia by way of a tight twisted road. Again our lifetime pass got us into the park for free.



Shortly after coming into the park there is this view of the so called tunnel rock. I don't remember this from



previous visits, but given the size I would think they would have difficulty in setting this up. So lets just leave at one of the many things I have forgotten. We also got to pace a couple of young deer who didn't seem to want to leave the right of way.

After a few miles road construction stopped us for about 30 minutes and after that we got to ride uphill on a muddy dirt road. Muddy roads are not a lot of fun on the Honda, but we survived and then it was on to the trees.

When you see one of the Sequoias there is no mistaking it for another tree. There are all sorts of other trees about, but even a large one of them is small compared to the Sequoias.

Things have changed since the first time I was there. When I first visited this park back in 1969 I riding on my Norton. I was here again in 1971 or 72 on my 750 Honda. At that time, in the area of the tree above, there was a gas station, motels, gift shops, all of the usual tourist stuff. I have a photo of the Honda setting on a downed tree. Also I have a photo of the road going through another tree.

Well no more of that, it is all gone.

The Sequoias are endangered. They are very slow growing and have to have certain conditions for seeds to sprout and the trees to grow. One of the more important things is the compaction of soil around the base of the trees. By tramping around the trees as we did, the tree couldn't get any water. So, no more, look, but not real close, and don't bother the trees.

The second tree photo is Bobbe in front of the General Sherman tree, as far as is known, the largest living organism on the face of the earth. There are taller Coastal Redwoods, but by mass, this is it.

At the time of my first visit you could, and I did, ride right up close to this tree and stomp all around it. The thing then was to get a bunch of people and see



how many it took to reach around the tree.

Again, there is no more of that.

Now there is handicap parking fairly close below the tree. The rest ride to a parking lot about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile uphill from the tree and follow the path to the tree. Bobbe was willing to walk down but not up.

So, after the seeing the tree, she continued on downhill to the handicap lot and as I could not whistle and get the bike to that lot I had to walk back uphill. If I were going to have a stroke or heart attack anytime soon, I would have had it then. We were up over 6000' so the oxygen was in short supply.

After getting my breathing more or less back to normal I rode back and picked up Bobbe and on we went.



We stopped for a nice lunch in this lodge. This lodge is not near any Sequoias and you can rent rooms. So if you want to stay in the park, as far as we could see, this is it.

Leaving Sequoia we went into Kings Canyon and then started dropping down into the central valley heading for Fresno. We stopped for fuel in Fresno, not one of our favorite stations, and then headed back across the central valley for Gilroy where we found a nice motel and restaurant, toasted the day and repaired to the room for Monday night football.

As a side note, they grow all sorts of things around Gilroy and one of those things is Garlic. Bobbe hit on that when we got close and anytime we went outside you were hit with the smell again. Bobbe found it quite pleasant, me less so.



The next day we were going through San Francisco and across the Golden Gate Bridge for no other reason than to caught the

say we had done it. As we didn't want to get in the rush hour mess we hung around motel to around 9:00 and then pulled out. We guessed right as we only hit a little traffic, none serious. What we didn't know was that you have to get off of the freeway to cross the bridge. City traffic is pretty much the same everywhere so we found the bridge with no problems. We stopped at the park on the south side of the bridge but there was a lot of traffic, foggy cool and windy so we didn't stay long. After



the park we rode across the bridge, no tolls outgoing, unlike NYC. This above view is from the back seat as we went across. Than one thing is the street light. Note the drops of water on the lens. It wasn't raining but it was for sure foggy.

Without even getting lost once we found Highway 1 on the north side of the bridge and headed back to the coast.

The first few miles of the highway were very tight, winding and wet. After a few miles it straightened and dried out and up the coast we went. From here we would ride Hwy1 until in merged with Hwy 101 north of Ft. Bragg. I won't say the road is the most scenic I have seen, but it is close to it. The fog was bad which restricted the photo opts, but on the other hand, how much ocean can you look at?

This is a more or less normal view from the road. We stopped and watched this for a bit. There would be a large wave about every 5th or 6th wave. When that one hit the splash was quite a bit larger. After several tries we got this photo.



We stopped for a nice lunch at a place named Jenner (I think) and found out that the weird trees we had been wondering about are Eucalyptus. They grow to all sizes are sort of red and loose their bark in long strips.

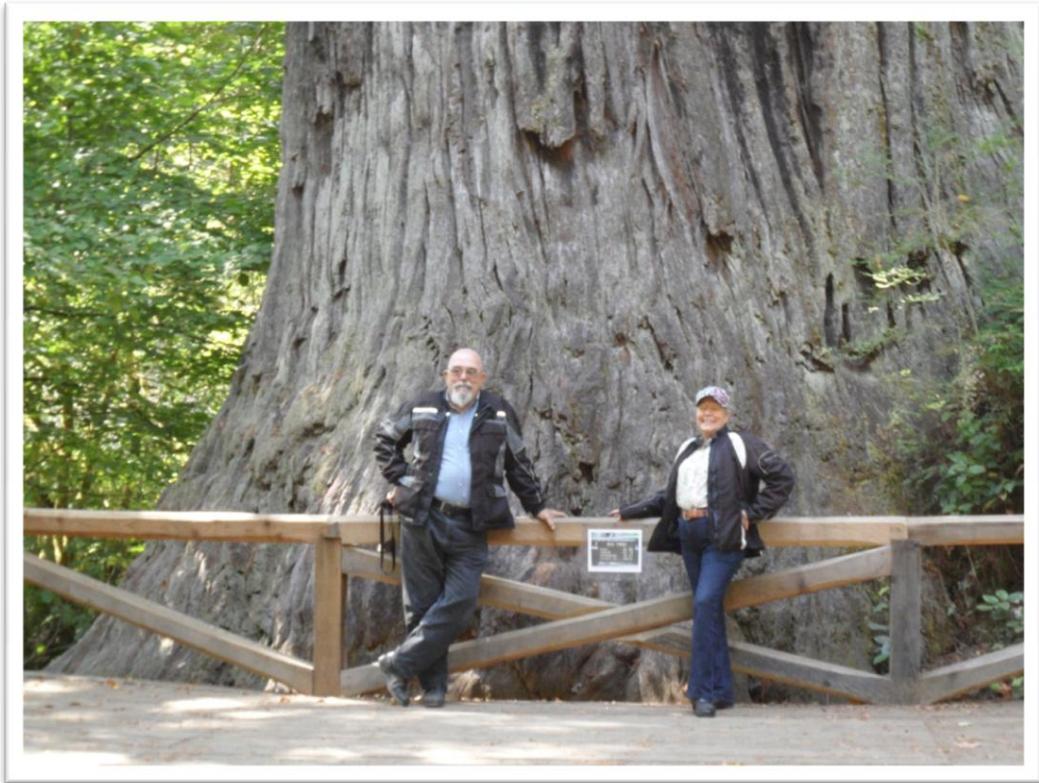
After lunch we continued on up the coast enjoying the ride and view. The fog came and went but never left. We stopped for coffee in Gualala, great view of the ocean and breaking waves, and then up the road a piece we called it good in Ft. Bragg, which I though was in N. Carolina. Following the motel clerks recommendation we went down seaside to The Heron and had a very nice seafood dinner and toasted another great day's ride.

The next morning dawned cool and foggy. We headed north and after a bit, Hwy 1 ended and we were on Hwy 101. At that intersection, don't be fooled by the signs about the free drive through a redwood tree. That is a private park and they charge you \$5.00 to get in. We passed on that and after a bit, stopped for coffee and a snack in Garberville.

While cruising main looking for a coffee shop Bobbe noticed an unusual number of homeless appearing types, both male and female. They were doing what all homeless types do, mainly sitting, sleeping, talking and smoking. It turns out there is one of the more interesting colleges in Garberville and here is the link <http://www.707cannabiscollege.com/> After Bobbe looked it up on the computer we had quite a few miles of straight lines out of that.

We rode on up the road past Eureka with a stop at the visitor's center of the combined state and federal Redwoods Park. Then it was on to the trees.

This is a view of us standing next to what is thought to be the 2nd tallest tree in the world. When Jessica and I were here it was the tallest but since then a taller one has been



found. These trees are not the same as the Sequoias and are not near as endangered. They are taller than the Sequoias, but not as massive or old, but they have been around for awhile. There are a bunch of them and there are numerous trails around if you want to get close and personal with the trees.

We went back to Orick for lunch and noticed a couple of Cannabis College graduates sitting along side the road on the north edge of town. After a fairly harmless lunch we left for a ride on a road we had found and one of those graduates was now asleep (passed out?) on the blacktop hardly out of the main traffic lane. He might get out of his school loan.

At this point we were officially on our way back home. A sad point, sort of, but there were still things to see and do.

We had found a road on the map that would get us towards Redding and Lassen without backtracking to Eureka. It shows as Hwy 169 on the map. The fellow at the visitors center told us that it was paved part of the way but was graded and well traveled. And, he was pretty much right. It was a very nice, if slow ride across the coastal range. Only about 15 or so miles was not paved but it was graded and only a little dusty. Strangest thing, we were getting towards the eastern end of the road, going down a very steep mountain side on an almost two lane blacktop and there was a fairly large construction project. The sign said it was a new National Veteran's Cemetery. Due to the slope of the hill building a cemetery was going to require a lot of work. From there it was about 10 miles down this hill, across a river and into another small town. There can be no reasonable reason to build a cemetery there. Someone is making a ton of money off of this thing.

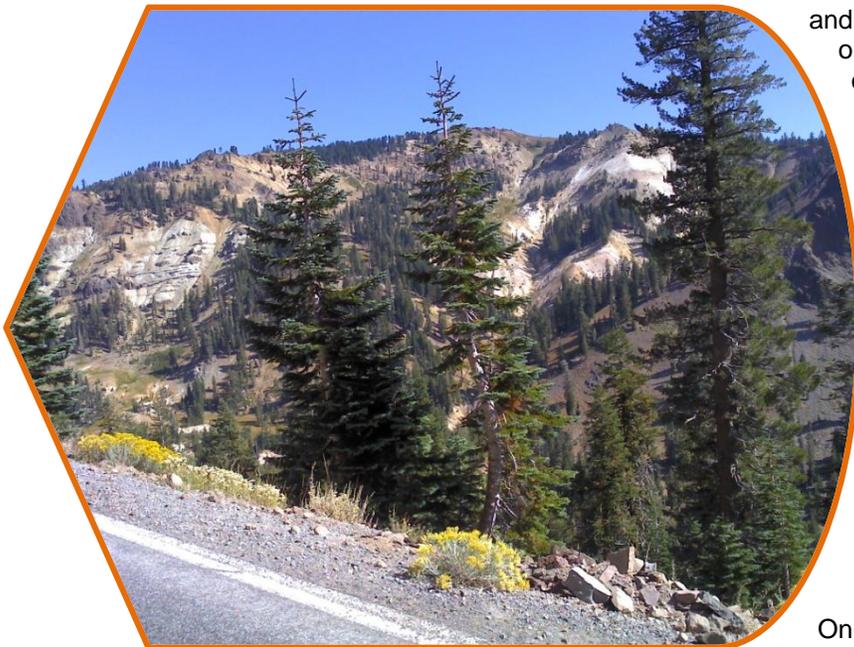
We connected up with Hwy 96 and followed that down a very steep sided canyon to Hwy 299 where we turned left for a scenic ride through the mountains heading for Redding. Northern California is different than Southern California, totally. It was a great ride into Redding, but we were running a little late and it was dark when we pulled in. We pulled into a station and fired up the smart phone. With little problem we had found our route and after checking into a motel we swung into Cattlemen's Restaurant for a nice meal and a toast to another good days ride.

The next morning was clear and cool. It was only a short ride to Lassen Volcanic National Park where once again the lifetime pass did its job. Interesting question: why does it cost only \$10 to get into Lassen while the other National Parks in California are \$20?

For those who do not know. Until St. Helens blew Lassen was the site of the most recent eruption in the continental US. It blew in 1918(?) or around then. There was a fellow in the area who knew (he thought) that the mountain was going to blow so he set up camp and camera in what he thought was a safe location and waited. It turned out he knew what he was talking about and scored a bunch of photos of the eruption.



The photo above is of Mt. Lassen and behind



the trees to the left is what is left. We are standing and the bike is parked on the stuff that blew out. As eruptions go it was rather small but on the human scale it was very impressive. The remains of the eruption are still on going in the park. At several locations there are hot springs and boiling mud pots.

As recently as this August they had some big fires in the park and currently large parts of it are off limits.

Still, Lassen is a pretty place and the ride through is quite pleasant. On the park road you go over 9000 feet in one place with views of all sorts of Alpine lakes and Meadows. However, I would think twice before I hauled a trailer through the park.

On the way out we got hung up with a little road repair but nothing serious. I mean, with no muddy up hills how bad can it be. After leaving the park we turned left on Hwy 36 and rode on over to Susanville for lunch. We were looking for a place to eat and in downtown Susanville there is a restaurant/ale works. It looked interesting so we pulled it. It was an interesting place with pool tables in the back and pretty good food. Most every place has some sort of interesting law or the other. In Susanville, if I read the signs correctly, if you are under 21 you can come into the bar and have a meal, no alcohol, but you cannot go into the area with the pool tables. Now I don't know if shooting pool will corrupt you, but for sure snooker will.

With lunch taken care of we left Susanville for Reno. Along the way on Hwy 395 we passed another shoe tree. As with the other trees there was no sign of any type, just the tree with the shoes.



We really didn't want to ride across Nevada to get back to Denver, but there were not that many options. We had decided to stop early in Reno, have a good meal, and risk the family fortune.

We wound up checking into the Golden Nugget which is actually in Sparks and settled in for another wild evening. It didn't take long to lose the family fortune so we had a decent dinner and watched the game in the sports bar.

The next morning looked like good riding weather and after a good breakfast in the Casino restaurant we headed east. Nevada hasn't changed any since the last time we crossed it. We did have one interesting thing happen. We got stopped by a Sheriff for speeding. He just checked the license and told us to slow down.

We saw this on the hill as we pulled into Austin. It was built by some rich person back in the late 1800s when one of the several mining booms was in process. According to the sign it was quite fancy and had "adequate" plumbing whatever that means.

Jessica and I came through here on our Crater Lake trip and wound up staying in a converted mobile home. I didn't mind it but Jessica was less than pleased. The motel is still there and is still using the mobile home. Bobbe was wondering what the problems was and I explained that Austin was Jessica's Toad River and then she had no problem understanding.



We stopped for fuel and a short break in Ely and then headed for Delta. This was the only stretch of road we would travel on twice. As before the land is wide open with little traffic. We pulled into Delta, found a nice motel and had a fairly decent dinner and toasted another good day's ride.

Next day was clear and more than a little cool. Dressed accordingly we followed Hwy 50 until it became I-70 and then we headed east, now for sure on the last leg. But, that doesn't mean we ignored sites along the way. The ride across the San Rafael Swell was very scenic and interesting.

Stark it is, but interesting. We pulled out at a couple of stops and the views are interesting. Also, if you are



interested you can usually buy jewelry and other art works from the local Indian folks.

We stopped for lunch in Grand Junction and moved on. For an interstate I-70 is not all that bad. The Glenwood Canyon part is interesting as is the Vail Pass part. As this was Saturday the traffic was not a problem. We gassed up at Dillon, went through the tunnel and pulled into Littleton about 3:30. It was a noisy greeting with the dogs, the house needed a little cleaning but all in all things were fine. We had a nice dinner and drinks on the patio and enjoyed winding down.

From Littleton to Littleton Bobbe and I had covered a little less than 4000 mostly enjoyable miles. We had seen a lot of interesting sites and created some coveted memories. As with all of our trips it had both high and low points but overall was a great trip.

The next day, Sunday was dedicated to a few necessary jobs around Bobbe's house and watching the games. I had decided that I was going to get up early on Monday and ride to OKC

For any who didn't get all of the updates, the ride back did not work all that well. An elk and I disputed a part of the highway about 5 in the morning a little north of Monument. Considering what could have happened I was very lucky. I sustained 3 broken ribs and some abrasions. The poor Honda did not fair well. It is totaled and I am sorry for that. It was a good bike and had carried me many happy miles. I rested until Wednesday and then rented a car and drove back to OKC without too much problem. At the time this is being written I am healing well and there is no reason to think I will not heal completely.

On the plus side, I get a new (to me) bike to ride to Newfoundland next May or June. We are going up to see where Leif and the boys landed after they got kicked out of Iceland. How bad do you have to be to get kicked out of a bunch of warring Vikings?

Late May or early June 2013, who is up for a ride to Newfoundland?

Footnote 1: FYI Bobbe took most of the photos in the write up. She does a good job I should have mentioned it sooner.

Footnotes 2: Regards the photo and the two lines on the first page.

The lines are from the song Wayfaring Stranger, one of my all time favorite songs.

As for the photo it was take in the fall of 1967 just north of an eroded volcanic spine (not unlike Shiprock) named, we were told, the Black Virgin, located a little NE of Tay Ninh City. At the time I took that photo I was less than 21 years old and I already had almost been killed 4 times, this is not counting near misses. I had been hit with shrapnel twice once in the back and once in the head. I had been blown up twice with anti-tank land mines, both times after watching the mine sweeper go over both mines and give an all clear. In the photo you can see both of the places where the mines were. In the left of the photo, the little rounded tree, we were parked beside that tree. We had missed running over a mine by about two feet. I was sleeping beside the tank on a cot. A truck behind us hit a mine and our loader jumped off of the tank and landed right on that mine. I was maybe 10' or so from the mine when it went off. I had to fill out a form saying that all of the parts we gathered up were the loader. The sad part is he had only been in country and on the tank a short time. I don't even remember his name.

The second time is in the center of the photo. The track is from the tank I was on. I was riding loader as we moved into position. The mine went off directly under me, I was blown upwards. The track broke and swung around and knocked me out of the air. I bounced off the turret, the fender, and landed in the hole you see. The set of road wheels to the left are from the tank. Collectively they probably weigh over 500 lbs. As I landed in the hole I saw them flying through the air.

Any surprise that I am hard of hearing?

Now we have this problem with the elk.

I mention these war stories, and there are many others, to point out that at an early age I came to the conclusion that when your time is up, you are gone. Now, I don't play in the traffic or other things that are just dumb. I try to take care of myself, wear safety gear and be very careful, but, in the end you cannot live in fear that bad things will happen for rest assured, bad things will happen.

Some time ago Bobbe sent me a saying and Barb and Paul sent the same thing at a later time, and it seems to make the point quite well. The one Barb and Paul sent is currently hanging on my wall.

The object in life is not to arrive at the grave in a well preserved body
But rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out shouting
Holy Shit
What a ride

Another way of putting it is:

Remember
Live, laugh, love, play, have fun
Enjoy your kids, grandkids, family and friends
This is not a dress rehearsal
This is all you get
There are no do-overs

