

## Travel Newsletter

# Bill and Ralph's 1994 Northwestern States Motorcycle trip

## California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada

After eighteen months of discussing a life long dream of touring the USA on motorcycles, Bill McAllister and Ralph Stevens reduced the scope and visited eight northwestern states in early September. Touring the entire USA is still planned, but detailed analysis corrected the "ballparked 8,000 mile, two month, USA Tour" into 14,000 miles and an undefined time. Eager to do a portion of the trip, a nine day northwest segment was done to satisfy their urge and help prepare them for the longer USA Tour. They traveled approximately 3,600 miles that included beautiful mountain scenery, giant redwood trees, spectacular ocean views, many forests, two national parks, a ferry ride, super highways, fighting cross winds, cruising open plains and navigating curvy mountain roads ---all without a drop of rain! This newsletter contains facts of Bill and Ralph's experiences to share with friends and to remember for future years.

### **Motorcycle Performance**

**Ralph's 1979 Yamaha XS1100** performed well except for one major incident when a severe leak occurred from the vacuum operated gas supply valve. Fortunately, it was discovered early and did not catch fire on the hot engine. Since the valve was a three day special order item, a short piece of hose and a couple of tube elbows allowed Ralph to "short circuit" the leaking valve and complete the tour. Ralph had no AM/FM radio and his CB radio was an automotive type without a head set or push-to-talk button that are very helpful items for such a long trip.

**Bill's 1994 Honda Aspencade** (license # IRBE, San Jose Shark's hockey goalie) was fully equipped and admired by all. Bill enjoyed stereo music and had regular conversations with other CB'ers, but Ralph rarely talked back. Strange events happened to Bill's Aspencade causing Ralph to rapidly close the distance when Bill's cruise control would shut off. It happened several times during the trip and upon his return to San Jose, he found a loose battery cable that was quickly fixed. Bill's dual 100 watt halogen headlights really lit up the highway and were much appreciated. His gas mileage was excellent, but he "intentionally" stretched it too long (260 miles) on the 8th day and ran out of fuel less than a mile from a gas station. Siphon hoses really do work and you shouldn't leave home without one. Ralph's came in handy and the trip continued. Bill said 87 octane fuel doesn't taste any better than 92 octane.

### **Day #1-Saturday, Sept. 3**

**San Jose CA to Brookings OR = 448 miles (11hrs)**

Bill worked late the night before leaving to finish installing his new cornering lights and security system but he was ready to start when Ralph arrived at 6:30am.



Bill and Ralph visited friends and had many exciting experiences during their 8-state, 9-day, 3,600 mile tour.

The route was Highway 280 through San Francisco to Highway 101 to Windsor, California where Ralph's long time dancing friend lived. Phyllis Butler provided a needed rest stop, good conversation, bagels and coffee which were much appreciated. She also presented Ralph with five logo golf balls and score cards to add to Ralph's collection that he trades with a friend in France. Bill and Ralph had "lunch" at the Woodrose Cafe in Garberville (Breakfast Only-closes at 1pm), drove through the "Avenue of the Giants" (Redwood forest) and arrived in Brookings, Oregon at 5:30pm on schedule. Mike and Jean Cosgrove offered their paradise, seaside, ocean-view home and were gracious hosts for the first night. Mike and Ralph worked together at FMC Corporation for many years and reminisced about their experiences together.

### **Day #2-Sunday, Sept. 4**

**Brookings OR to Kelso WA = 369 miles (10hrs)**

At 7:15am Bill and Ralph said "good by" to the Cosgroves twice, once at their house, and again on the CB since Mike is a fisherman and monitors Channel 2. Several stops were made to admire the beautiful Oregon coast and ocean views. The road had some sharp turns and cool winds occurred often requiring more concentration than the first day. The destination was Portland, Oregon to visit Bill's friend. Bill wanted to call ahead but could not find a phone until Penny, an Espresso attendant in Newberg, Oregon, offered Bill her cellular phone at no charge. Unfortunately, Bill's friend was not available and Ralph and Bill drove through Portland in the 4:30pm, 65 mph, commute traffic. The

evening was spent at Motel 6 in Kelso, Washington at the Highway 4 and I-5 intersection. The nearby Highlander Inn restaurant provided mounds of food at low cost.

### Day #3-Monday, Sept. 5

*Kelso OR to Issaquah WA = 455 miles (13 hrs)*

Bill met a couple of retired gentlemen at McDonalds during the 7:00am breakfast who were touring America on their Hondas and on their way to Canada. Photos were taken of the only working covered bridge in Washington during the ride on Highway 4 that returned Ralph and Bill back to the coast Highway 101. Several men in camouflage gear were seen walking the highway carrying bows and arrows and the forests were harvested many years ago leaving thousands of acres of stumps and debris visible from the road. The destination was Seattle, Washington via Neah Bay, the most northwest point in the USA and the first of the "4-corners" that Bill and Ralph will eventually visit. They arrived at Neah Bay at 2:30pm after many sharp turns on slow mountain roads. Neah Bay was over-anticipated and somewhat of a disappointment. It was a small fishing village on Indian land but the proprietor (from Wisconsin) of the only souvenir store appeared to like it. Ralph thought that a progressive Chamber of Commerce would do well to have a gathering place for the many motorcycle visitors. The ride east was on Highway 112 through more thousands of acres of harvested forests and very curvy roads with tight 15mph turns. After refueling in Port Angeles, the drive was fast commute traffic to Bainbridge where they boarded the ferry to Seattle. The sundown ferry ride was beautiful and a welcomed rest, but Ralph left his lights on and had to be push-started to exit the ferry. After correcting a wrong turn in the Seattle area, they were eastbound on Interstate 90 and finally stopped at 8:30pm for another peaceful night in the Issaquah Motel 6

### Day #4-Tuesday, Sept. 6

*Issaquah WA to Couer d'Alene ID = 305 miles (11hrs)*  
*Slowest day due to Ralph's engine problems*

Upon arrival at the motel the previous night, gas odors and signs of gas leaks were noticed on Ralph's Yamaha. Starting the bike Tuesday morning confirmed a massive gas leak existed out of the vacuum valve when the engine was running. Various options were explored as the part was not available in the Seattle area for a minimum of three days. Innovative creativity prevailed including assistance from Dan Corrigan (GWRRA Gold Book). The valve was bypassed with a couple of elbows and short pieces of hose. Ralph and Bill finally left Issaquah, Washington bound for Couer d'Alene, Idaho four hours after their planned departure. This stretch of the trip was wide open road in desert like country. There were no trees or green pastures after leaving the Seattle area to Spokane where lots of smoke was obvious. A loose battery cable (determined after the trip) caused Bill's engine to occasionally quit at stop

signs, but fortunately, it *always* restarted. Bill and Ralph arrived at Motel 6 in Couer d'Alene about 6:30pm and found a restaurant named Cosgrove's, the name of their first night host, but it was closed.

### Day #5-Wednesday, Sept. 7

*Couer d'Alene ID to Kalispell Mt = 352 miles (12hrs)*

An early visit to the guard gate of Couer d'Alene's "floating green" golf course to obtain a logo golf ball and score card for Ralph's collection was met with rejection. They were told they could not enter. It was surely due to being on motorcycles, but pleading finally got a free ball and score card from the guard which is something to say about the character of *some* people. Breakfast at Cosgrove's restaurant was the next stop with a goal of obtaining a menu to send to Mike and Jean. This was one of the best breakfast meals so far and a friendly patron shared memories of motorcycle riding. The destination was Kalispell, Montana to visit Bill's friends, Ken and Barbara Bennett and to visit Glacier National Park. Highway 95 north was relatively easy riding with lots of woods. The long bridge over Lake Pend Oreille had trees planted in the extra lanes and many walkers and joggers were getting their exercise in the beautiful scenery. The smell of burning woods was evident around northwestern Montana and helicopter crews were seen practicing rescue and fire fighting. Bill and Ralph arrived in Kalispell at 2:00pm, an hour later than planned, due to the time zone change. Hosts, Ken and Barbara, provided a patio BBQ and huckleberry pie lunch before Ralph and Bill headed for nearby Glacier Park. The park scenery was beyond description as was the narrow, winding, often steep, road to the 6,600 foot summit of Logan Pass. Mountain goats seen standing on the edge of sheer vertical cliffs stopped traffic often. A lone BMW rider (Chris) stopped and said that he was from San Jose---where else? The evening with the Bennetts was very enjoyable as was another piece of huckleberry pie followed much needed sleep. Besides being the huckleberry capital, many llamas were seen in the Kalispell area.

### Day #6-Thursday, Sept. 8

*Kalispell Mt to W.Yellowstone MT=393 miles (9.5hrs)*

A breakfast featuring huckleberry pancakes at the Bennett's house helped start the day. Barbara did her early morning walk and Ken prepared for golf while Bill and Ralph washed their bikes before leaving about 7:30am. Destination was West Yellowstone, Montana through Missoula and Butte. It was more high speed highway until reaching Highway 287 where a large rain cloud caused strong cross winds and scary driving moments. A quick stop was made in McAllister, Montana for Bill to mail a post card officially stamped with his name. The strong winds required extreme concentration and adjustments to stay in the correct lane of the two lane road, especially when large

trucks going in the opposite direction caused opposite wind changes. Most motels were filled in West Yellowstone but one was finally located having three rooms and four beds--but no phone. Priorities after the 5:00pm arrival was laundry, post cards, eating and sleeping. Bill managed to win \$25.00 at slot machine poker while waiting for laundry.

### Day #7-Friday, Sept. 9

#### W.Yellowstone MT to Logan UT=398 miles(13hrs)

At 6:45am, a light rain was falling but stopped during breakfast. The biscuits and gravy breakfast at the Silver Spur restaurant were the best of the trip. The scenery in Yellowstone National Park's west entrance was burned forests for many miles although bison, pelicans, Canadian geese and an occasional elk were seen along with the various geological heated mud ponds and small geysers. After a rest stop that included picture taking, Bill forgot to properly stow his 35mm camera and it made several high bounces off of the asphalt roadway. Fortunately, it was a well built Nikon camera and the unbelievable minor damage was repaired upon return to San Jose. The Old Faithful geyser provided quite a spectacular show for the several hundred visitors attending the hourly event. By a cursory count of vehicles in the parking lot, about half of the visitors appeared to arrive by motorcycle. Evanston, Wyoming was the planned destination as Ralph wanted to visit a friend at FMC's Green River mine, but time was short and the map indicated less favorable roads. Logan, Utah was the new destination, via Highway 89 through Jackson, Wyoming and Montpelier, Idaho. The afternoon trip was calm and beautiful with great views of the Teton mountains, Bear Lake and many small towns. One town had a beautiful new Mormon church that was large enough to hold several times the population of the area. Cowboys on horseback stopped traffic in St. Charles, Idaho to allow their cattle to cross the road. Riding the twisting roadways while crossing the mountain range into Logan, Utah was one of Bill's favorite rides although the "open range" and darkness required more attention for motorcyclists. Ralph was a bit apprehensive of high speed driving on the dark mountain roads, but Logan was finally reached without incident at 8:30pm. Friday night in Logan is a town from the 50's with many young people cruising and gathering on corners and parks or in front of old theaters with tiled fronts. The best dinner of the trip (chicken chardonnay) was at the Coppermill Restaurant and the "best value motel" was at Logan's Westin Inn.

### Day #8-Saturday, Sept. 10

#### Logan UT to Winnemucca NV=446 miles (9.5hrs)

After the usual 100-125 mile early morning ride, today's breakfast was at McDonald's in Clearfield, Utah. This was absolutely the worst service of any restaurant as the many people behind the counter were clearly not there to serve the public. Interstate 80 allowed Ralph and Bill to move

quickly around Salt Lake City to their next stop at Saltair, a rebuilt landmark pavilion where dining, dancing, concerts and swimming occurred for many years. Another stop was made at Delle, Utah for gas and the FOR SALE sign indicated the price of the town was probably negotiable. Bonneville Salt Flat racing area was the next stop. It was also over-anticipated, uneventful and uncommercialized with merely a dead-end asphalt road with a small plaque about the internationally famous land speed events that still occur there annually during the early summer. Winnemucca, Nevada was reached about 4:15pm, the earliest arrival of the trip. Lodging was upgraded from Motel 6 to the Red Lion Inn. A cool six pack helped Ralph write a dozen more post cards while Bill visited a casino.

### Day #9-Sunday, Sept. 11

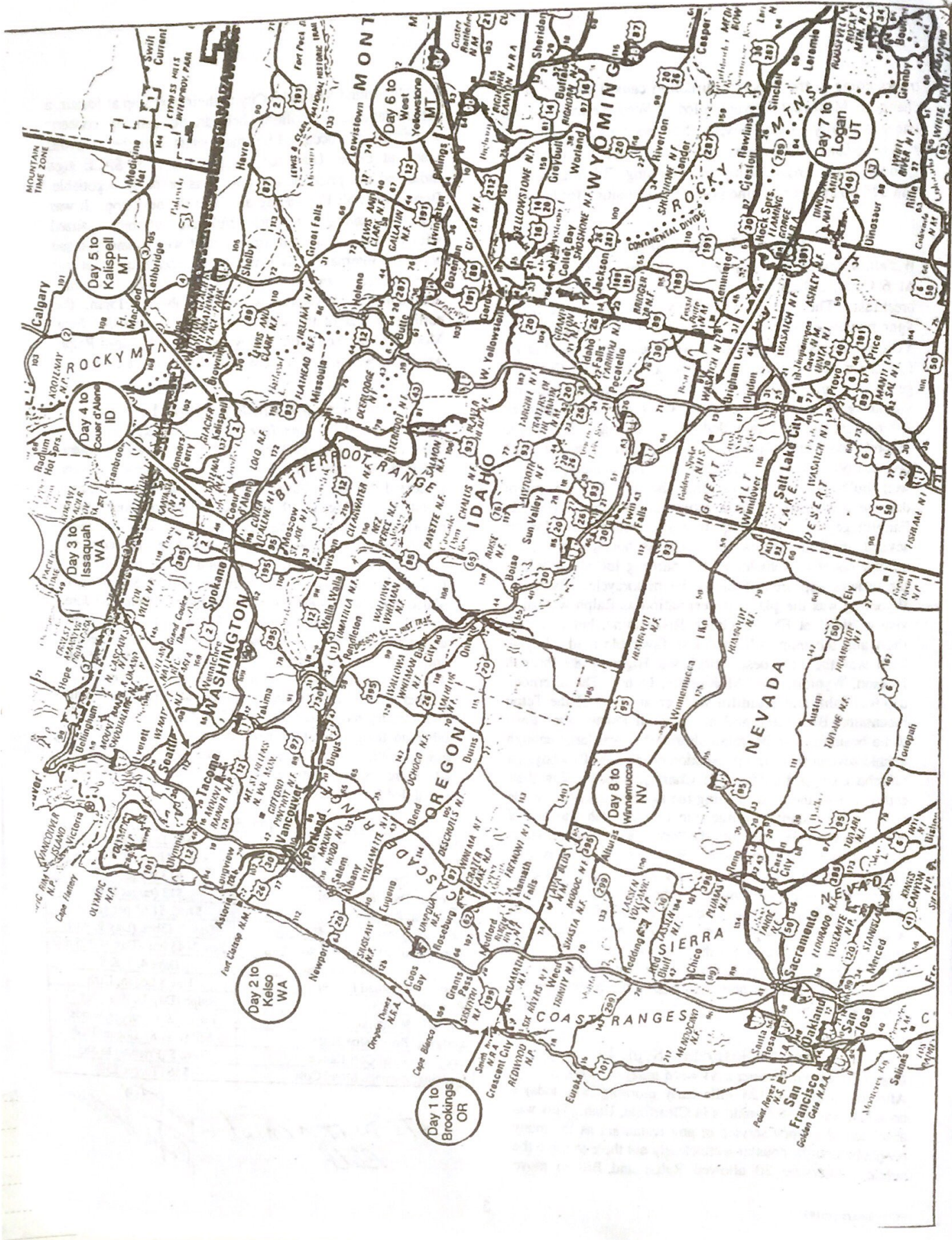
#### Winnemucca NV to San Jose CA = 424 miles(9hrs)

Take caution when parking under trees, especially where hundreds of birds like to nest. The motorcycle covers protected the bikes, but extra time was spent in 26 degree weather cleaning up their mess. A video should have recorded the handclapping that rid the birds from the trees. Today's destination was home to San Jose via Reno and Sacramento. It was typical fast and crowded California freeway with wheel to wheel traffic west of Sacramento. Video and photos were taken during their 4:00pm San Jose arrival. As much as he tried to follow Bill's instructions and many examples, Ralph never did learn how to get on and off his motorcycle gracefully and the final disembarkment is captured on film for ever. Sleeping bags packed in the rider's seat required an extra high and awkward leg movement. Bill and Ralph congratulated each other on their accomplishment and many experiences. A quick, southwestern states trip this fall may be their next adventure before the "USA Tour" that is tentatively scheduled for the early fall of 1995.

#### Additional Facts

|                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Average Total Cost per Day           | \$55.15 (Target \$58)        |
| Total Gas Milage (Total 3,600 miles) | Ralph 41.1, Bill 43.2 mpg    |
| Average Daily Gas Cost               | \$13 (target \$13)           |
| Average Daily Food Cost              | \$13 (target \$16)           |
| Gas Cost: Range                      | \$1.15-\$1.65 per gallon     |
| Longest/(Shortest) Ride Day Hours    | Day 7: 13hrs, (Day 9: 9hrs)  |
| Longest/(Shortest) Ride Day Miles    | Day 3- 455mi, (Day 4-305 mi) |
| Best On-the-Road Breakfast           | Days 4, 7, & 9               |
| Best On-the-Road Dinner              | Day 8 Logan, Utah            |
| Best Ride Day(s)                     | Ralph (Day 1), Bill (Day 7)  |
| Worst Ride Day(s)                    | Days 3 & 6 (curves, winds)   |
| Lodging: Best Value Motel            | \$52 (Day 8) Logan, Utah     |
| Lodging: Total Cost Range            | Zero \$ (Friends) to \$85    |
| Lodging: Average Motel Cost          | \$56 (Target \$50)           |

LET'S DO IT AGAIN! a great trip  
Bill  
Ralph



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