

April 16-22, 2008

Aurora Suzuki came through and changed my rear tire and the 5,000 mile oil. Also dumped my battered bash plate. Had a slice of apple pie at Beth's Cafe down the street and walked across the street to the lake. Next across the city to visit my cousin in Renton and then back up to Everett to position myself for the next day.

Got up what I thought was early but ended up literally rolling onto the San Juan Island ferry without having to wait in line. That is cutting it close. Weather had turned overcast and cold, but still nothing like Alaska. After orientation in Friday Harbor took off on a clockwise circumnavigation of the island. Learned a little history at English Camp and American Camp and enjoyed the sculpture garden, but didn't see any orca at Lime Kiln. Barely got back to the harbor in time to spend a couple of minutes at the Whale Museum. Back to the mainland and another night in Everett, but at the other Motel 6. Great Japanese dinner at a restaurant run by Koreans across the street.

Next morning was a short job to the Flying Heritage Collection. Went to see the very rare Dora D-13. They say it can fly, but they won't buy it since it is so rare. Small but great little aviation museum.

Next across the mountains on I-90 and out to more arid lands. Didn't realize it but all the haze was from the big Oregon forest fires. Freaked out since I started seeing all these signs saying that the 97 bridge over the Hood River was out. There was quite a detour, but they got us across. Instead of following the detour back to the interstate, I took the convenient secondary roads 197 that put me on the Oregon Trail. Fairly scenic ride at sunset. Decided it was getting too dark at Madras, OR. Strange little motel, but it had wifi.

The next day continue on the 97 into Reno, where I stopped at one of their Motel 6s. Didn't bother to go into the city. Visited with my cousin the next day near Carson and made a quick visit to the railroad museum there. Crossed over to Vallejo where I had dinner at an Indian buffet for a change of pace. Visited my cousins in Concord, and then a pretty straightforward trip home on I-5.

The DL-650 never missed a beat. I couldn't turn the key in the ignition after leaving Dawson City, but some WD-40 took care of that. Killed the rear tire with a piece of steel somewhere in the Yukon and wore out a chain I should have changed before I left on the trip. The Saddleman saddle was fine once I got over my saddlesores and the Windstrom windscreen gave me plenty of protection. Gaiters were a really good idea and I don't know how I would have survive the cold without them. My overpriced Marmot Goretex park finally paid for itself and my 20 year old REI goretex rain pants served well. One man tents aren't such a good idea when it's always raining and cold, and my down bag days are probably over due to the danger of getting it wet. Super Clean chain lube makes life a lot easier.

Internet access was vital for finding hotels in some cases, getting the weather, and researching the route. On a motorcycle there are only so many books you can carry. Need something lighter than a 13" MacBook, although it did keep my lower back warm on those cold days in the saddle.

Harley must have sole half of its production in British Columbia, and OR and WA, too for that matter. People up north on motorcycles wave a lot. In Central OR that seemed to be really big. Canadians use different expressions for "for here or to go?" but I can't remember what they were. Food and gas are really expensive in Canada. The Top of the World Highway wasn't as scenic as I had expected, but turned out being an adventure in the weather conditions I had and late in the day. Alaska was just as impressive as it had been 20 years ago, maybe even more so. I connected a little with the experiences of my parents 21 years ago. I learned to welcome the presence of mosquitoes since that meant the big freeze hadn't come yet.

Thanks to the people who helped me out along the way.