

## **Dad (Bob) and four sons motorcycle (and truck) trip September 9<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

The only bad thing was the rain. Larry arrived in Flagstaff, Thursday afternoon, the 8<sup>th</sup> of September. Before we went out to the Harley Davidson dealership to get his rental bike, it rained. On the way home, between Bellemont and Flagstaff, it rained.

I thought that we hadn't packed or prepared for what was needed for this four day trip, but all the boys showed up, and were pretty well equipped with what was needed. Linda didn't think that we were adequately prepared and kept smirking, as she observed what appeared to be total chaos. I kept suggesting that she come with us, but she kept suggesting that this should be kept as a trip for us "boys".

We were up early Friday morning but still in the process of collecting things. Linda, graciously packed our ice cooler with lunch meat, cookies, apples, and bread. Soon we were off-- and it was even before 9:00 a.m. It was raining when we left.

Soon, we were out of the rain and traveling down 89 North, enjoying the smells, the fresh air blowing at our faces, and the sights. We hardly paused on our trip, until we got to Navajo Bridge, near Lees Ferry. We were called over by a couple in their car, who to my surprise, happened to be Patty and Bruce (BuBu) Thomas from the Cave Creek American Legion. Like a dummy, I failed to introduce my sons--but did tell them about this being a father, son(s) trip.

I was concerned about Larry, since this was his first experience with a Harley, and also with mountain switchbacks, but he handled it like a pro. As we climbed the mountain toward Jacobs Lake, {after passing through the Vermillion Cliffs area) it got darker and cooler. At Jacobs Lake we gassed up and then decided to have our lunch, just off a dirt road. It was good to stop, and everyone seemed in good humor. We continued on through Fredonia and then Kanab. We purchased groceries in Kanab, with the idea we would camp within Zion National Park. As we traveled down the road, the sky got darker and darker. Thankfully, it did not rain. It was glorious going through the park, and through it's tunnels, and as we were going down in elevation, it got progressively warmer, The road conditions were not so good, however, as they had a fresh coating of crushed rock over the new asphalt. The evening was boisterous, as we all enjoyed a sample bottle of Jack Daniels, that Mom slipped in our food and drink supply. Oh yes! We had hot dogs served with buns and Bell pepper and onion slices for our evening meal.

The next morning, we had scrambled eggs, with the remaining bell peppers and onion slices. Soon, we were on our way, traveling west, out of the park. The beauty outside the park was just as glorious as within the park. We traveled up I-15, an exciting change of pace, as we were traveling with fast car and truck traffic at 75 mph, (more or less). We turned off on Utah 14 at Cedar City, taking a short detour because of there being a parade in town. We started climbing in elevation, soon after leaving Cedar City and then got into

rain. Those of us on bikes got soaked, because we weren't dressed for rain. We eventually stopped and put on coats, as we were at least at 10,000' elevation, (and it was still raining). Utah 14 finally ended, and we continued on 89 North until we got to the Utah 12 turnoff. Somewhere in that region, we left the rain behind us. Traveling on Utah 12, we got to see the Hoodoos and spirals that Bryce Canyon National Park is known for. We stopped for lunch at a Subway just off the exit to the official Bryce Canyon N.P..

Continuing down Utah 12, we eventually got to Escalante Grand Staircase. It was truly amazing, the change in scenery that we experienced at that point, and it was going through my head that this is about as spectacular a journey as you could make anywhere. There were many "twisties" through Escalante Grand Staircase, and I was again concerned for Larry, but he continued to ride the "twisties" like a pro. All of us expressed concern over the "Devil's Backbone", the area where just off the shoulders on both sides of the road, the surface of land dropped to the vast spectacular canyon land below.

My plan was to get to Torrey and camp there that night. When we got to the little town of Escalante, we stopped for groceries for the evening and morning. The little grocery store had a very limited supply of meat, but we did select frozen chicken drum sticks and potato salad for our evening meal. While there, we were invited by a couple of teenage girls to a free watermelon fest at the local park. We went, and a local couple encouraged us to camp at the nearby state park. It proved to be a great choice, located by a reservoir that also had a scenic trail, (and showers in the bath room) we were quite pleased. Oh yeah! The chicken drum sticks covered with barbeque sauce with potato salad turned out to be quite good. They were accompanied with more sample bottles of Jack Daniels and Arizona bought Coors light. Everyone was in good humor that evening. It rained during the night, and in the morning, we found that water had followed a spillway right under our tent. It's a good thing that we had blow-up mattresses, because none of us got wet, but the tent bottom was good and wet. In the morning, we all squeezed into the truck, drove to town, and had breakfast. The breakfast was good but service was a little slow. Getting back to camp, the "boys" decided to take a hike on the up-slope trail. I chose not to, but rather offered to pick up what I could. When they returned from their hike, the tent was taken down, and the remaining gear was put into the truck. It was around noon by the time we left the park. That was OK except that the storm clouds were gathering, and we had a mountain to travel across ahead of us.

Michael wanted to stop in Boulder, Utah and perhaps have lunch, because he knew the mother of a lady who ran a restaurant in Boulder. The restaurant owner came to the door, and was kind, but told us they weren't serving until 5:00 p.m. Following a cordial conversation, we went on our way, up and over the mountain pass. Again, Larry did a admirable job in handling his motorcycle through the "twisties".

Finally, we got to Torrey. This is the town I planned on staying in for our second night.

We had hamburgers and ice cream in Torrey, and by the time we finished, it was about 5:00 p.m. Dean's suggestion was that we travel east on Utah 24 through Capital Reef National Park, and on to Hanksville, then south on Utah 95 and camp near Hite Crossing, on Lake Powell. We traveled through gorgeous country at Capital Reef N.P. and beyond, as we headed toward Hite Crossing. This area is near the Glen Canyon National Recreational Area, and I had the feeling that we were traveling through the channels of Lake Powell, but without the constant pounding of the choppy waters that are almost a certainty when traveling by boat on the Lake. We arrived at the lake campground as it was approaching dark and had to make some quick decisions whether to stay or not stay, as it was not entirely an inviting place. Remember the TV series, Planet of the Apes? It seemed we were there. As it turned out, it was a great place, and we had a lot of privacy. The downside--as soon as the tent was erected, a strong wind came up, plus a pelting rain, along with thunder and lightning. We had all we could do to hold down the large tent. This storm lasted, maybe an hour. Some of us were inside the tent and some of us were outside the tent trying, (and succeeding ) in holding the tent together. The rain settled in and both wind and lightning finally stopped. Our evening meal consisted mostly of potato chips and Arizona Coors light. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it we had run out of Jack Daniels sample bottles. Another worrisome thing was that none of those with cell phones were able to call our wives. This was due to the fact we were low in elevation with mountain cliffs rising all around us. Michael tried to text a message, but to no avail. Needless to say, our wives spent a night worrying about us.

It rained off and on throughout the night, but between rains we were able to slip out and enjoy the beautiful full moon shining on the waters of Lake Powell, and with the brightness able to see the beautiful landscape surrounding the lake. Our breakfast the following morning consisted of sandwiches, (we still had sandwich meat) as we hadn't picked up breakfast provisions. We left the camp site early, with a sigh of relief because we weren't sure if we had paid the proper amount for our stay. We had purchased a ticket for camping at a machine, with instructions for payment on a bulletin board that left us all questioning whether we got it right. I feel we were justified in not paying any more, due to the primitive condition of the park. It was fine for self-contained Rvs but there were no close bathroom facilities, or grills for cooking, but there was at least a picnic table. The road circling the camp area was loose crushed rock which made it hazardous for the motorcycles.

The ride out the next morning, (our final day) gave us a fresh view of the glorious beauty around us. The landscape changed as we went further. We started climbing in elevation, and passing Fry Canyon trading post, our scenery changed to Cedar trees usually found at the 5,500 to 6,000 ft level. We were finally able to call our wives. Down the road a ways, I turned in to the Natural Bridges National Monument. Going four miles down the road, we finally arrived at the ranger station. Here, I experience the closest thing to a mutiny, which was surprising, because up to now, we all seemed to be in one accord. The result

of this disagreement was that we turn around and return to the main road, (Utah 95). Dean wanted to turn off Utah 95, When we got to Utah 261, despite my warning of the 2.5 mile section of dirt road, with a ten-percent down hill grades, and five mph curves that led us down a cliff side, overlooking Mexican Hat, Utah. I was not convinced it was advisable since Linda and I had driven down this path in 1995 on our return trip from Sturgis, SD. However, Larry asked which was the most scenic way, either Utah 261 or continue on Utah 95 to Blanding. That settled it as to which way we go. We accepted Dean's decision to take Utah 261. Although it was still unpaved, it was a much improved road from the one we had taken in 1995. There were curves that required that we reduce our speed to 5 mph, but the road surface was paved on the curves, and they were widened to make them less threatening. There was an outstanding look-out at the top of the hill that definitely made it the better choice for scenery.

Route 261 came to an end near Mexican Hat, where we turned on Utah 163, which eventually led us to Monument Valley, the state of Arizona, and the end of Utah 163 at the junction of U.S. 160 in Kayenta, Arizona. We stopped and had lunch at the San Juan Inn, which is located at the bridge that crossed the San Juan river. There, they offered Navajo Tacos, Navajo Stew, plus other American traditional dishes. The meal was good, and so was the service. Mexican Hat is surrounded by Indian reservation, so it seemed unique, and hard to pass up, the privilege to order a beer with our lunch, as Dean and I felt obligated to do.

Monument Valley seemed almost plain compared to where we had been on our journey. However, there was a dramatic display of dark clouds looming in the direction we were going. We managed to get to Kayenta and on to the old site of Cow Springs, AZ without getting drenched. At Cow Springs, Dean suddenly pulled off onto a sandy trail. Why he did, I do not know, but it was fortunate that he did, because Larry had a bee in his helmet that was alive and well, and stopping gave Larry an opportunity to turn the bee loose. Jim and Mike decided to go ahead on this sandy, saturated with water path in the truck, which ended at a decent road nearly a 100 yards ahead. I tried the same thing with my bike, and came close to burying it in the washed out gullies that I encountered in the sand. I was able to get through, however, by using the same technique that sometimes works in snow. That is, giving very little throttle to the engine and simply coaxing it out of the rut.

After leaving Cow Springs, we encountered rain. This rain was not a pleasant rain but a wind blown rain accompanied with blowing sand, that made it feel that we were being sand-blasted. Larry wore a full-faced helmet, and with the exception of having a bee in his bonnet, (helmet) that was disconcerting until he released it, felt no discomfort by the sand-blast. Both Dean and I wore half-helmets, however, and I found myself only getting partial relief by protecting the right side of my face with my left hand, as my right hand was needed to steer the bike and to control the throttle located on the right side of the handle bar. We suffered with this discomfort from Cow Springs till we finally reached the U.S. 89 South junction. Turning south put the wind at our back, which relieved us of

the pelting rain to our face.

We stopped at Cameron Trading Post so we could do a little shopping while still in Indian Country. The rest of the trip went without incident, except that first Dean stopped, and then I stopped and we ended up losing each other.

Mike, Jim, and Dean returned to work on Tuesday, but Larry had an extra day, so we kept the rental bike. After riding 875 miles on our Utah trip, however, Larry and I didn't feel compelled to do any riding, except to return the bike, later in the day. Instead, we rode by car through the Timberline area, where the flash-flooding occurred in 2010 following the Shultz fire. The fire burned approximately 12,000 acres of forest in the San Francisco peaks area. The burning of forest and vegetation in the mountain area allowed water to erode the landscape and rush down the side of the mountain in newly formed gullies that have caused major flash-flooding in the residential area of Timberline, causing much damage.

Larry and I were also able to hike back to "Sewer Canyon", (now named Picture Rock Canyon). The sky was so black as we were hiking that Larry compared it to a sky that precedes a tornado. We continued on, however, until we found the cave that we remembered that was in the canyon. We found the cave just in time before the rain struck. We stayed inside the cave feeling secure from the danger of lightning, or the discomfort from being exposed to the rain and hail. The rain stopped, so we started back. Realizing that we were running out of time to return the bike on Tuesday, we called Linda and asked her to drive to where the paved road ends and the trail begins, so she could get us home sooner.

This was a great trip, and I am sure it will be remembered by all. Mike and Jim were not riding motorcycles, so they took turns driving Dean's truck. Mike also furnished his five man tent, which with all the other items we carried for camping, (ice chests, mattresses, sleeping bags, stoves, water container, etc.) we could not have brought along without the use of Dean's truck. Mike was also appointed photographer. With his talent in graphic art, we are confident that he will be producing a documentary of our trip soon.

Hopefully, we can do a trip similar to this one at a future date. Perhaps we can arrange it with additional members of our family.