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Norton Notice

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The Newsletter of the Northern California Norton Owner's Club



P10 Engine, National Motorcycle Museum
photo by Alan Goldwater



THE NORTON NOTICE

is published by the Northern California Norton Owners Club. Its purpose is to inform and entertain the club members. The Norton Notice is a reflection of the readership who are encouraged to submit any article, technical tip, photograph (original or otherwise) as long as it is in good taste so that other Norton enthusiasts will enjoy it. The deadline for items to be submitted for publication is the 18th of the month preceding the issue. The Norton Notice prefers contributions submitted electronically. Articles and high-resolution photos can be sent in almost any format generally common to most computers. Send submissions or comments to LorinGuy@yahoo.com.

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in the Northern California Norton Owners Club is available for \$20 per year and open to all Norton motorcycle enthusiasts. Membership dues are payable to the Club Treasurer (see right). Renewal dues are payable at the end of the individual's membership year, which is designated by the last digit on the mailing label of your Notice, or on your membership card. All changes of address, membership or dues questions should be directed to the Club Treasurer.

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The object of the Northern California Norton Owners Club is to promote, encourage and develop motorcycle activities. The Club's members are owners or enthusiasts of Norton motorcycles and often submit for publication in the Norton Notice technical tips. These tips are reviewed for technical content and are believed to be both correct and workable, but no guarantee is made or implied that these tips or articles will work for your particular application. The Club or membership assumes no liability or responsibility for any issues or problems that may arise, or omissions or deletions in connection with the technical information. The Norton Notice articles or other materials contained express the authors' view only and are not necessarily the official policy of the Northern California Norton Owners Club. The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject, edit or alter all editorial and advertising material submitted. The Editor serves at the discretion of the Club's Board of Directors. Materials may be published both in print and/or electronically on the NCNOC web site at nortonclub.com. ©2006 The Northern California Norton Owners Club. Not to be reprinted without permission.

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Brake caliper (exchange): rebuilt using SST pistons, plug, bleeder & Andover Norton seals. **Assembly:** MCB part **NORTNCAL** MSRP: \$230.00 each
Separate part price: **Pistons:** MCB part **NORPISTN** MSRP: \$26.00 each
Plug: MCB part **NCALPLUG** MSRP: \$32.00 each
Bleeder: MCB part **NORBLEED** MSRP: \$11.00 each
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Rear Mark III master cylinder assembly: new 13mm SST body master cylinder attached to powder coated billet mount. Includes both boots and #10-32 SHCS that attaches master cylinder to mount. Assembly: MCB part **NRMCCASSY** MSRP: \$235.00 each



Separate part price: SST master cylinder: MCB part **NRMCCBODY** (also fits Triumph front and rear) MCB part **TSMCCBODY** MSRP: \$155.00 each; Master cylinder mount: MCB part **BILETMNT** MSRP: \$61.00 each;
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Minutes; AGM and Old Timer's Ride 10/7/07

The meeting was called to order by President Alan Goldwater at 2:05pm.

Alan called for a discussion about next year's rides. Tom Dabel volunteered to be the Rides Coordinator again for next year. Tom called for suggestions about rides for next year. Over-nighters were discussed including possible trips to Mono Hot Springs and Bridgeport-Yosemite.

A Three Peaks ride was proposed by Ray Pallett. Mt. Tam, Mt. Diablo, and Mt. Hamilton all on the same day. This ride will cover about 250 miles.

Approved by the Club was a motion that in order for the ride leader to receive the extra ride points, the ride had to be at least 60 miles long.

A call was put out for suggestions about a new/different East Bay meeting place.

Alan mentioned that there will probably be two joint rides with the Southern California Club; Cambria and Sierra Loop. Details to be given later.

The Northwest Norton Owner's Club has communicated with the NCNOC about having a joint ride in the Lake Selmac area next summer.

The INOA National Rally will be in the Pennsylvania area next year.

Club Treasurer Ray Pallett stated that there is currently \$3,133.00 in the Club coffers. Membership is holding steady at 146 paid up members.

An active discussion was held concerning the publication of the Club newsletter, The Norton Notice. There seems to be a choice of a full color issue every two months or a black and white with color cover every month. Ray Pallett stated that the full color issues cost about double what the black and white issues do. Alan Goldwater suggested that if we do go to a bi-monthly full color Notice that post cards be sent out showing the meeting venues in the intervening months.

Pat Christianson, with help from Leo, has volunteered to be the Notice Editor for the next year. She put out a call for articles that she could use.

Alan stated that the Club's affiliation with the NCC will not change and will probably remain as it is for the near future.

Under New Business, Lorin Guy stated that the Cycle World Show will be held on November 16, 17, 18 this year. He is taking suggestions for some suitable display bikes that can be placed in the show.

Adopt-a-Highway will be held on November 25. This is the Sunday after Thanksgiving and will be a good way to work off that second helping of mashed potatoes and gravy.

A Christmas Party Venue was discussed. Both Jerry Grainger and Lorin Guy volunteered to host it. Keep an eye out for details as they develop. The party is scheduled for Dec. 2.

Alan called for nominations for Club officers for next year. There were a number of nominations for the office of President, but all nominated declined.

Alan stated that he would not serve next year so we have to have someone step forward and assume the responsibility.

- Other nominations:
 — V.P.: Harry Bunting
 — Treasurer: Ray Pallett
 — Secretary: Mike Sullivan
 — Ride Coordinator: Tom Dabel
 — Newsletter Editor: Pat and Leo Christianson

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40pm.

On a personal note I would like to thank all those who helped me set up the lunch, especially Donna and Terry Morrison for their efforts in setting up and serving; and all those who brought the wonderful desserts. Liz Dabel for some truly remarkable baklava(sp?), Maya for her Brownies, and Carolyn Scott for the wonderful low calorie, non-rich chocolate cake. Thanks again for all the help, it made the day go easier for sure.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Sullivan
 Secretary



Alan's Wrench for November/December

Last issue I covered my trip to the Isle of Man, for the NOC International Rally and the Vintage Motorcycle Rally. Here's a final picture of Chris Grimmer's F1 and my 750 parked at dockside in Ramsey. There's a great fish & chips joint right across the street.

After returning to the mainland, I had planned an extra day for a visit to the National Motorcycle Museum ("NMM"). This turned out to be a very good idea. The fully rebuilt museum is packed with hundreds of British motorcycles, spanning the entire 20th century. This awesome collection has perfect examples of most Norton models, and includes many historically significant race bikes and factory prototypes. Here are a few of my favorites.

One of the biggest surprises was to see a complete Norton Nemesis with all the chassis castings in metal. The complete V8 power train is shown in front of the bike, and all of its castings appeared to be real as well.

These pictures are just the 'tip of the iceberg' and only hint at the richness of the collection. For example, here's a 1935 Scott 3 cylinder prototype, over 60 years before the Triumph Rocket 3 appeared with a similar great lump of motor. Such treasures abound, and for anyone who has a chance, the NMM is a must-see.

At our Annual General Meeting in October, I announced that I would not be continuing as NCNOC President next year. Several nominations were made for the job, but so far none has been accepted. Fortunately the other officer's positions have all been filled by experienced club members of long standing. This will make the job easy for our as-yet unnamed incoming President.

Following requests at the AGM for more weekend rides, I've confirmed plans for a Norton Rendezvous with the Northwest Norton owners, June 26th-28th, 2008. The site is Indian Mary Park, on the Rogue River near Grants Pass, Oregon. We've reserved six campsites, with space for 36 people. There are some separate full-hookup sites available, but they will go fast so reserve right away if you need one. www.reserveamerica.com 1-800-452-5687



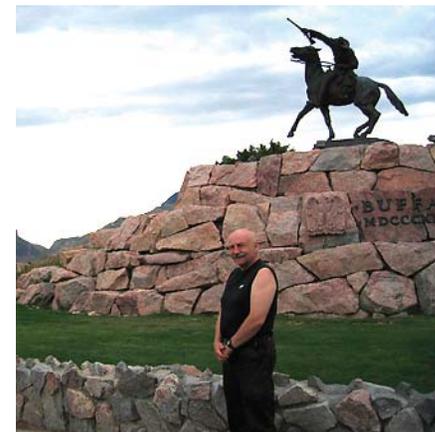
Park, which, interestingly, is the only National Park in Nevada. Lack of time precluded our notching up another park on the pass on this trip so we'll have to go back again one day.

A gas stop and photo call in Eureka followed by food in Austin put us in Fallon way after dark. Fortunately we did manage to raise Steve on his cell phone and were able to find the same motel. We hooked up with them for breakfast and after loading the bikes agreed to meet at the gas station on the way out of town. Didn't happen! That was it - we never saw them again for a couple of weeks. Our ride home from Fallon was just a straight blast along 80, putting us back in the Bay Area in mid afternoon with plenty of time to return the bikes - Ray's with a serious lack of rubber on the rear tyre. The guy who looks after the bikes said if he had known how far we were planning on going he would have replaced it before we left. Ray put 3650 miles on it and it apparently had 5500 on it before we started, so we guess 9000+ miles out of a back tyre on a HD isn't bad going.

We had done 3650 miles in 10 days through absolutely magnificent parts of the US. The high points were the Bear Tooth Highway and the Cody Museum (and Lolo Pass for Ann). Returning to the Bear Tooth next year is definitely on the wish list. Ray thinks he is done with Utah - too hot for the speed restrictions there. They should rename it the 40 mph State.

So what about the big Harleys? We were reasonably impressed. Not sure we would ever buy one but not a bad machine at all. 96 cu ins is a lot of cubes for the amount of thrust generated. We couldn't get more than 95 mph out of either of them and the top gear roll on acceleration on the Road King wasn't that wonderful. If you wring its neck in the lower gears it goes OK though. We both got around 45 to the gallon although Ann got a lot less until she discovered a couple of extra gears compared to her Sportster! Where they scored were in the comfort levels. A 650+ mile day was easy. Aches and pains were noticeably less than on other bikes we have done the high mileage on. On the downside the weight and rather floppy low speed steering could be testing, especially at the end of a long day when strength and coordination are depleted. In all they are much better machines than the reputation they have in some quarters would lead us to believe.

Try one for yourself.



Friday dawned with Harry Bunting and Alan drumming up trade for their breakfast show. A chat with a few folks and we were ready for the day's entertainment. After a week in the saddle we were all ready for a hike to stretch our legs. It got really hot really quickly so we set off as early as we could (which is not that early for this bunch) and walked up one of the dry riverbeds, which cuts a narrows through the reef. The inactivity of the week and the heat, not to mention the loose gravel of the creek bed, made it hard work. Ann was sure it felt like a forced march to the others, as she was the one who selected this particular trail. After the hike we put the National Park pass to use and rode the scenic road along the west side of the reef. This was about 20 miles long and from the end of the paved road looking back one got a staggering impression of just how massive this geological feature is. Temperatures being what they were we repaired to the old farmhouse that now serves as a store. We bought ice cream and water, which we sat and consumed in the garden next to the orchard. Refreshed, we returned to camp for more chin wagging before our afternoon ride in the "cool" of the day.

On the recommendation of others who'd participated in the Rally ride around Fish Lake, we decided to make the loop — a round trip of something like 80 miles. It was this ride that started Ray thinking that although Utah is a great state for rock and vistas it is perhaps not the ideal place for a motorcycle rally. Riding along the lakeshore area of campgrounds and vacation homes, a sheriff's vehicle with flashing lights brought us to a stop. Apparently we were in a 35 mph zone. Since we thought it was 55 it is not surprising he thought we were speeding. Fortunately he didn't write us up. Enquiring as to how far the 35mph limit ran, the deputy replied that it continued for another 10 miles. What he didn't tell us was that then it dropped to 30! Wonderful roads - that would be great for a ride if you could get moving a little! Strange place Utah — as soon as the roads start to get interesting there is a silly speed limit to spoil the fun!

Once again, by the time we got back to camp dinner was all over so it was back to Subway. This campout was starting to be expensive as so far all we had to show for our entrance fees was a postage stamp sized bit of grass for our tent. That evening, there was a band and dancing laid on, but the gap

between food and music was wide enough for only about 10 people to find their way back to the main tent for the entertainment. Still, those of us that did had a good time. An early start to be made the next day for our homeward leg meant we didn't exactly dance the night away.

We had to be back in Berkeley Sunday afternoon so we planned on 650 miles for the Saturday. We took the spectacular, rally-namesaked "Hell's Backbone" road south to Boulder for breakfast, and then on to Escalante, the edge of Bryce Canyon, and Panguitch so we could see as much as possible on the way out of the state. We managed to all stay in contact as far as Beaver, where we stopped for gas. From Beaver, the route was Utah 21 west to US 50 and we agreed with Steve and Marge to meet up at the next gas stop, which would be about 100 desolate, blazing hot, brutally windy miles on, somewhere near to the Utah/Nevada border. Didn't happen! Ray and Ann arrived at the minuscule town of Baker, gassed up and sat down in a sliver of shade in the dirt to wait for the duo. And waited. And waited. After an hour we decided they must have taken another route and so we set off for US 50 and Ely, Nevada. In Ely we picked up a message on the cell phone, left 20 minutes previously, that they were in Ely and were pressing on to Eureka in an attempt to catch us! What we all didn't realize until the next day was that there is a road that runs straight north from Baker to the town of Border on Hwy 50, and that this junction is a block before the gas station, at which we of course were waiting. Steve and Marge had veered right for Border, which wasn't even on the map that we were using (never use the AAA Western States Map for motorcycle touring). And while we were ignorant of the existence of Border, they were ignorant of the existence of Baker, and neither of us could figure out what had happened to the other.

The gas station in Baker was just and only that — the most minimalist filling station you could ever imagine. There was an unpaved forecourt with just a small concrete plinth for the pumps. The only structure was a lean-to that served to keep some, but not much, of the sun off the soda vending machine. Nowhere to pee and no shade. Just the place to spend an hour! We did find a sad tree and a sparsely stocked store a few feet down the road into "town," so an ice cream in the shade was possible. Baker is right by Great Basin National



More Riding tips from CHP Officer Bindar Dundat by Lorin Guy

A "wobble" occurs when the front wheel and handlebars suddenly start to shake from side to side at any speed. Most wobbles can be traced to improper loading (Lighten or shift your load, centering the weight forward and lower), insuitable accessories, incorrect tire pressure or suspension defects.

Trying to "accelerate out of a wobble" will only make the motorcycle unstable. Instead grip the handlebars firmly, don't fight the wobble. Close the throttle gradually to slow down, do not apply the brakes. Move your weight as far forward and down as possible. Leave the road as soon as you can to fix the problems.

Oh yeah, pray real fast and hope someone hears you.

Have a great Fall riding season and I hope to see some of you up on Skyline, Highway 35 soon.

Officer Bindar

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Farewell and Hello — Lorin Guy

My years as Norton Notice editor are coming to a close and I want to thanks all the members for such positive feed back, great articles and support, and those who had negative feed back... well at least I tried to do something.

It was started because I wanted to see a vast improvement in what we were putting out, image I guess. The Website and the look and feel of the club were not up to what I envisioned for such a great club with such great people.

I took it as a challenge to show the other clubs and the vintage motorcycle world how involved the NCNOC was and how positive about Norton and British motorcycling this club is.

Sure it was a lot of work and it was tough when I was President of the club too, but the desire was there. After Ian and Fred jumped into the Web team I felt really confident, these guys are so talented. Really as far as the website and yahoo group, I was just the idea man, these guys made it a reality. Same for the Norton Notice, my buddy Llew Kinst helped me the first year until his work schedule got to be way to much and newly married his priorities changed from motorsports. Fred stepped in and saved the day, his talent, attention to detail and insight is so amazing.

As editor I receive club news letters from around the country and not just INOA and NOC, really we can be proud of the level of professionalism our news letter and website present.

Other clubs like BSA Nor-Cal and So-Cal also get Norton Notices in an exchange of newsletters. They have sent letters or told me how great our club is and congratulations for such a great group.

No other INOA club does a newsletter at our level, every month the NCNOC mails to the listed chapters on our mail list and every other month we mail to all the chapters.

Each mailing contains a letter with the Norton Notice, laying out the NCNOC's activities and goings on, the President of INOA gets a personal letter and Norton Notice every month. The Norton Notice even goes so far as having two return mail labels, one having the INOA logo and it goes on all INOA mailing, and the other is the NOC logo and goes to England and NOC branches.

Although the INOA chose to ignore us as a contender for "Best Newsletter" I am still confident that we

are the most improved and the best club newsletter in the INOA.

We have a great club and wonderful people; my efforts, whether it is in club activities and rides, shows and displays or meetings and extra activities were to help the club achieve what I felt was a higher awareness of self. We take a lot for granted, the members, the roads, the benefits of membership, and the bikes. I just hope my efforts have helped someone open their mind, I hope one old timer changed his opinion of the club and came back, or one younger guy now dreams of owning a vintage British bike. Maybe it's because I feel so lucky to have met so many wonderfully talented and enthusiastic people that I worked so hard.

We each owe it to our club to get involved, no matter at what level. Some can do more, and some can't, some should and some should not. As each takes a turn at leading the club, or offering their opinion and efforts to a meeting or an officer's position, the club evolves. Whatever direction it takes it's good for the club to explore different avenues and different ideas. No one is 100% right, right is achieved when everyone puts in 5%.

I'm taking some time now to do the EMS show, the European Motorcycle Show at the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds March 29th 2008. In conjunction with the now infamous BSA Clubman's, and Rod Lakes indoor Flat Track, this show brings Continental European bikes into a show on the same day as the clubman's. A show for riders, ridden bikes, clubs, vendors and enthusiasts.

It has been in idea fostering for about three years, seems like a natural to me, to bring more bikes to the fairgrounds, more to see, more to show and more fun for all.

It's a ton of work and I started before last year's clubman's, still so much more to do. Hans Mellberg is involved, as is the Ducati Vintage Club. We hope to see all of you walk on over and say hey.

I'm still a member and will be active in NCNOC events, just not as a board member for a while. See you all soon

Lorin Guy
Editor
Norton Notice Newsletter

there was a security threat and the car park was closed in response. We were allowed to hang on for the few minutes it took Steve and Marge to arrive.

It was still daylight when we reached Vernal, Utah, where we had thought of finding a campsite. With a bit of light still available we decided to press on to Duchesne as this would provide a good jumping off point for the next day's ride to the rally. Stopping in a car park for a map check Ray discovered just how heavy a Road King is and how dodgy the steering is at low speed when he lost the plot. Fortunately, although he couldn't get it back up he could hold it from going all the way down until Ann could get off her bike and give him the extra shove it needed to right the bike. Close — but fortunately no cigar that time! Ray returned the favor later when Ann got a bit unbalanced backing into the curb, which turned out to have a ditch in front of it, while attempting to park.

To give us a chance of ending up in the same hotel for a change we put the combination in front. It turned out that there is a Fort Duchesne as well as a town called Duchesne and they are not that close together. Darkness had overtaken us - Steve and Marge saw the sign for Fort Duchesne and turned for it. It took about 10 miles for us to figure out (thanks to the number of dogs in the road) that we had gone awry, and another few miles for Ann to overtake Steve and Marge to alert them to the mistake, so by the time we got out of the Indian Reservation and back on the road to Duchesne we were well behind schedule (if we ever had one that is).

Arriving in Duchesne we discovered that the area is having an oil boom and every motel for miles was booked solid. Persistence on the part of the ladies paid off though as the motel receptionist had heard of a newly opened B&B that might have room for us. The receptionist managed to contact the proprietress who met us there and opened the place up for us. The B&B doubled as an antique store and tearoom during the day and all the furniture and country-style knick-knacks were for sale and had price tags attached. It is a strange sensation kipping in a bed that might get sold out from under you!

The last lap to the INOA rally took us down Utah 10 on the recommendation of the gal who served us breakfast at the Balance Rock Café in Helper.

Helper is an interesting little town that grew up around the railway and the need for "helper engines" to get the trains up the steep incline. Our waitress was an aspiring musician and had written a song about the railroading life there. The town and the café '8e is overlooked by a classic bit of Utah - a big lump of rock perched on a spindly tower of other rock. Strange how after overdosing on the magnificent for a week one become blasé '8e about the wonders of nature.

Highway 10, however, was not so wonderful. It was a very busy road with lots of heavy truck traffic heading from the oil boom to I-70. We also found the views disappointingly unremarkable as it ran down the west flank of the San Rafael Swell. Geologist Ann had been looking forward to viewing the long sweep of massive, cross-bedded sandstone, but the waitress in the restaurant must have misunderstood when she recommended this route. After the junction with I-70 the traffic vanished and we rode through some great countryside to Loa and then to the Rally at Torrey.

We arrived in the mid afternoon and it was hot! Most of the grass in the campground was occupied already but we found a tiny patch big enough for two tents and off loaded the bikes. We hung around until it cooled off a bit and then we took the HDs for a ride into Capitol Reef National Park. We stopped at the petroglyphs, which were well worth a look. Before it became a national park, Mormon settlers had farmed the area and had planted orchards, which are still in existence and bearing lots of fruit. The deer take great advantage of this and many were to be seen amongst the trees. The park runs a PYO scheme where one can pick fruit and pay for it by depositing money in an honesty box. One of us decided that didn't apply if you eat the fruit whilst up the tree and proceeded to enjoy the bounty!

Our walk around the canyon and the ride through it put us on the way back to camp as the sun was setting. The rock faces are stunning in full sun, but sunset added another dimension. We found it impossible to head back until the light had completely gone. The result was two very hungry bikers — dinner was all over by the time we got back. Fortunately there was a gas station in Torrey with a Subway in the store. We dined on Subway salad washed down with cold beer — not a bad end to the day at all.

more of the obligatory bison. The bison herds grazing in the large, lush meadows were only a shadow of the scene that must have existed in the pre-European history of the country but were impressive anyway. The campsite was around 50 miles from the gate so it was completely dark for most of the ride through the park. A shame as Ray had wanted to see Yellowstone Falls. No matter - it gives him a reason for going back again - not that he really needs one.

In 2004, the last time Ray was in Yellowstone, Tom, Liz, Steve and he had intended to visit the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming. They were thwarted by a landslide that had closed the eastern access to Yellowstone. This year the road was open again so Cody was the second planned destination for the trip. It must have been one hell of a landslide because the road works ran for 7 miles and the road was dirt for most of this. Steve and Marge had no trouble, being on three wheels. Our experience of dirt riding is minimal and has included a lot about unplanned get offs. Needless to say it was with some trepidation that we tackled this stretch on the Hardly Dangerous behemoths.

All went well and we got back on the marvelous road that runs through Wyoming (Hwy 14). We arrived at the museum in the early afternoon and found it so good that we decided to spend the night in town so that we could explore the museum till its 8:00 PM closing time. Ann's unerring eye (or is it nose?) for barbeque had noticed a place called Bubba's on the way into town. She and Margery managed to sweet-talk a shuttle driver at the museum into taking the famished travelers there for lunch. Being a Wyomingite, he refused to accept a fare. Afterwards, we managed to find one motel with rooms for less than \$100 that had a vacancy, so we checked in and returned to the museum. The main attraction for Steve and Ray was the best collection of firearms in the western US if not the whole of the USA. A complete wing is given over to it and if you are into this kind of thing it is a "must visit" destination. The rest of the museum is of a very high standard and the Western Art Wing was very impressive. Margery and Ann enjoyed the exhibits and presentations about the ace shot and star of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Annie Oakley. This is another place we shall have to go to again because the time we were able to spend there was completely inadequate and we completely missed one wing.

The extra time in Cody gave us a long day as we set off for the Rally in Utah. It was Wednesday morning as we left and we were booked in at the Rally for Thursday night. Originally the plan was to have a couple of easy days enjoying the route to Capitol Reef, after having got a hundred or more miles on from Cody by end of day on the Tuesday. So much for the plan.

Our first waypoint of the day was Thermopolis, which claims to be the home of the world's largest mineral hot spring. It does have an enormous mound of terraced travertine, which certainly impressed Geologist Ann. It was strange to see snow cats parked in the front drive of some of the homes. Temperatures were in the 90's while we were there but winter is a different story in this part of the world.

Our next major waypoint was to be Rock Springs on the border with Utah. The route there went from Thermopolis to Farson, through Shoshoni, Riverton and Lander via the Wind River Canyon. The high desert scenery was great, especially the section up Red Ridge. We paused at the top to take in the panorama before continuing on to the reason for coming this way.

Ray has a road map of the USA that has the Oregon Trail marked on it and this crosses Wyoming 28 and US 191 near Farson. He had read that the trail is still visible in the earth in many places along it so thought it would be cool to check it out. Fortunately the crossing points are well marked and we were able to find them without too much searching. It is amazing to think that half a million people walked this way around a century and a half ago. It was not the most comfortable of areas to pass through on a motorized steed - it must have been a hell of a challenge on foot. One has to really take one's hat off to those most determined of people who originally settled the west!

We were now well into the afternoon with still over 200 miles to go to anything like a reasonable stopping point for the day. We called an end to the tourist bit and concentrated on munching miles. After Rock Springs we took US 191 along the east side of Flaming Gorge and agreed to meet up at the dam. Once there, we found cones across the entrance to the car park but not really such as to block the entrance, certainly not to bikes. We pulled in to wait for the combination and had the pleasure of a relaxed interview with a Sheriff's officer. Apparently

The Long Way to the INOA Rally
Ray Pallett and Ann Kirkpatrick

A couple of years ago Ray met a bloke from Red Lodge, Montana. He told him about a road called the Bear Tooth Highway. He reckoned it was one of the best motorcycling roads in America and should be on everyone's must-ride list. Well Montana is a bit of a schlep from Mountain View so Ray put the thought on the back burner.

Being a newcomer to this wonderful country Ray had always had a hankering to do the Great American Road Trip on a Harley. OK - for someone with 5 Nortons and a couple of Triumphs you may consider this sad - but what can we say - we all have our foibles! He discovered last year that every Harley dealership does rentals when he flew to Raleigh-Durham, rented one and rode the Blue Ridge Parkway. This set him thinking about going to the rally on one and in turn that going via Montana and the Bear Tooth Highway would make a great trip.

Ray managed to convince Ann Kirkpatrick and Steve and Margery Morse that the idea had merit. Ann wanted to also rent a big Harley as her '86 Sportster isn't exactly set up for long-distance touring. Steve decided to ride his _____ BMW _____ with Margery in the sidecar. We think Tom and Liz were green with envy but Tom was hors de combat after chucking his bike down the road on a BSA club ride in April. We set off on Thursday, July 12th to get to the rally the following Thursday.

Ray skived off work in the afternoon of the 12th and met Ann at Bob Dron's in Oakland to pick up the bikes. We snagged a Road King for him and a Dyna Low Rider for Ann. Steve and Margery left separately from Menlo Park and the plan was to meet up with them in Reno the following morning. We took an inordinate amount of time working out how to carry camping gear and the accoutrements of a 10 daytrip, so our departure for Reno was just in time to catch the rush hour traffic on I-80. We chose not to lane split, being on the unfamiliar behemoths, so we melted in the more-than-100-degree temperature as we took an hour to cover the first 20 miles, and another hour for the next. The rest of the ride on I-80 was generally uneventful although the learning curve for the bikes was a little bumpy at first.

Ray is by nature a bit tight when it comes to hotel rates and found a cheap deal at the Sands Regency

in Reno, which seemed OK on the Internet. Finding the place was a bit of challenge especially as he forgot the name of the place and drove into the parking garage of the Silver Legacy instead. Back on the streets of downtown Reno, the Reno-ite he asked for directions didn't speak his brand of English. Fortunately he had an American-speaking partner on hand who took over and got us there. It took an hour to check in and the room was as far from the car park as one could get. It took three trips to unload the bikes and Ray was ready for the three beers that he somehow managed to get comp'ed on.

Reno was really the starting point of the trip proper. The plan to hook up with Steve and Marge didn't work out as a late night getting in meant a late morning getting out - especially with over an hour needed to lug the gear back to the bikes and reload. They set off for our destination for day one of the Oregon-Idaho border a couple of hours before us, aiming that we should catch them up 300 miles north in Riley, Oregon. They were planning on gentler speeds in their sidecar combination and we thought we should be able to make up the time.

US 395 north from Reno we found to be an interesting road, especially once we got beyond Alturas. We started on the overdose of spectacular geology that was to be a feature of the trip. The large alkali lakes and the white pelicans they attracted made for some interesting miles. There were several enormous fires blazing in the way distance judging by the cloudscape. Two were dead ahead of us for hours and we eventually passed through the smoke from them after Riley. The planned connection there with the sidecar duo didn't happen. What looked like a town on the map turned out to be a gas station so after an hour of waiting for us Steve and Margery had continued on their way. We think we were only a few minutes behind them when they left but we spent an hour trying to get through to their cell phones. Not having yet shed our city ways completely, we never thought to check in the gas station store where they had left a message for us.

The road from Riley to Ontario, Oregon, where we ended up spending the night, was an adventure. First were the fires. One was raging over the hills not far from the road and helicopters were dumping water on the nearby flames. Not many miles further on we felt spots of rain. Stopping to consider our

options Ray voted against donning waterproofs. This was the first of many wrong calls over the next 10 days. A few more bends and the heavens opened making it impossible to see ahead. After several miles Ann finally found a turnout and we stopped, well soaked, threw a tarp over the two bikes and got under it. The good thing about all this was that it was the first time we had been cool all day. The other thing was the sky — we had never seen one like it - boiling clouds, with the low sun's rays, filtered by the smoke, hitting some of the lower levels. Very "close encounters"!

As with all thunderstorms it was soon gone and we dried out quite quickly as we continued to Ontario. We looked for a motel as it was too late and dark to camp by the time we got there. We passed the one Steve and Margery had picked, somehow missing their sidecar rig parked out near the street, and ended up in a small place where the young locals in the office welcomed us to the methamphetamine capital of Oregon. Fortunately pizza deliveries were still operating so we did get some supper.

Next day we headed across Idaho and towards Missoula, Montana. The route was US 95 to Grangeville, 13 to Kooskia, and US 12 over the famous Lolo Pass. After leaving Ontario we went over the Snake River and through small towns such as Weiser, Idaho. It was great to ride through farmland again after a day of solid desert. Mind you we were to get used to desert scenery as the trip progressed. A brief stop for a team photo was called as we crossed the 45th Parallel.

As we traveled north, the road ran predominantly through mountains and river valleys. This area has some seriously big rivers that are the Mecca of rafters and kayakers. Ann has rafted many of the main whitewater rivers in the US and had been in this area about a month before rafting the Selway River, a tributary of the Clearwater along which we were traveling for much of this leg. At a gas stop in Riggins she showed the others an interesting piece of machinery that ecologically disposes of the contents of the thunder boxes the river people take with them.

A bit before Hwy 12 we stopped at the Nez Perce War Monument where an ill advised, ill equipped and seemingly poorly lead contingent of US troops and local militia were soundly beaten by a band of Nez Perce warriors. Sadly, the Nez Perce won the battle but not the war, as they were hounded across

more than a thousand miles of inhospitable terrain before their ultimate ignominious capitulation. An interesting stopover for history buffs, with some cool rocks close by for our tame geophysicist (Ann) to drool over.

Hwy 12 is also known as the North West Passage Scenic Byway. It is one of the many beautiful areas we passed through on the trip. It runs for many miles along the Clearwater River before rising to the Lolo Pass — the route Lewis and Clark took out of Montana. The only possible drawback to the road being a 50mph speed limit on the upper reaches, which are apparently, policed by an ardent zero tolerance constable. A gentleman in a café'8e warned us, where we stopped to cool off with ice cream, to be on the lookout for the law on this stretch. We didn't see any so can't say if this was just a local winding up a bunch of grockles or not. As it happened a 50 mph limit was rather rewarding for Ray, as the views were so splendid that any faster would have reduced the rewards of the ride for him. Ann however, was not to be denied and sped off at 70 mph up the beautiful long perfectly sweeping turns to the top.

From the pass, we descended into Missoula and eventually got through the maze of the pleasant college town to I-90. A high-speed blast down the virtually empty 90 got us to Deer Lodge at twilight where we spent the night. Again we failed to pick the same motel as Steve and Margery but did bump into them later that night when we took a walk to explore the town. Deer Lodge has the original Montana Territory and State Prison, a most forbidding castle-like fortress built by inmate labor in 1871. Seven executions took place before it ceased to be an active prison in the 1970's. It is now an interesting place to visit.

We had campsite bookings in Yellowstone for the next two nights, and on the way our geologist wanted to visit the Berkeley Pit in Butte, Montana. What an incredible hole in the ground! Defunct since 1980, the 1500-ft deep abandoned open-pit copper mine has progressively filled with water since the pumps were turned off. The water is highly toxic, containing all manner of nasty metal salts. The engineers have worked out that the level needs to be kept down below 5400 feet above sea level to prevent leakage into the surrounding water table, so a major water treatment plant now operates to clean the water before it is pumped out and allowed

to drain away. Next door to the Berkeley Pit is the Continental Pit of similar proportions, which is still active.

The town of Butte is a fascinating example of industrial dereliction. Downtown has some wonderful examples of elaborate 19th century architecture but the town itself has an abandoned air. It must have been an incredibly prosperous place once upon a time.

From Butte we headed south to Yellowstone via Nevada City and Virginia City, following Montana State Route 287 and then US 287. We had the misfortune to get stuck behind a mobile roadblock of some 40+ Harley riders "hogging" the road and were glad to stop and visit Nevada City while they cleared off.

These were lively places in gold rush times but apart from visiting Harley riders are quiet now. Nevada City sits on a creek that was massively dredged and the surroundings are very similar to some of the rivers in California that are now mostly piles of boulders. A small steam railway runs between the two towns and the whole area is quite a tourist attraction. A museum of fairground organs and other mechanical music machines was a particular hit with all of us.

From there we dug in and focused on getting to Yellowstone so that we could get the tents up and dinner cooked before nightfall. Geologist Ann, however, could not pass by the Hebgen Lake Earthquake site just west of the park entrance without showing Ray the massive landslide deposit that was a result of the 1959, magnitude 7.5 quake. The landslide immediately dammed the Madison River, creating a new lake, aptly named Earthquake Lake, and causing the deaths of 28 people. Entering via West Yellowstone we managed to get the two of us in on Ray's one National Parks Pass just by adding a signature. The passes have gone up to \$80 now but the card Ray bought for \$50 last year has really paid off. He thought it cool that the bald eagles he had seen nesting on the side of the road in 2004 were still there.

Yellowstone is magnificent but you do have to be prepared to follow RVs at low speeds for quite long distances. This has to be factored in because it is a big place and getting to the various attractions takes longer than one anticipates. Especially when a bison decides to cross the road. Our campground didn't have showers and the nearest ones were about 30

miles away and in any event, were closed by the time we got there. In the temperatures we were experiencing this was unfortunate, as Ray was becoming a tad antisocial due to a prolonged absence from hot water. One would have thought in a place with the tourist volume of Yellowstone, not to mention such high campground fees, they could have put a shower or two on all the sites.

The next day Steve and Margery explored the park and Ann and Ray set off for the Bear Tooth Highway. Ann had proven to be an excellent navigator on the journey so far so Ray had become complacent and willing to follow, especially as she had been to Yellowstone many times before. She must have been having an off day as a wrong turn had us doing a 40 mile detour — still, we got to see some more of the park (and RVs).

As we said at the beginning this was for Ray the first of the reasons for doing this ride. After exiting Yellowstone via the North East exit he did wonder if we were doing the right thing because the road was really rough for a few miles. No worries though as it soon got better and ran with a great surface all the way to Red Lodge, Montana. The guy that put Ray on to this road definitely had it right. It is fantastic. No traffic, spectacular views, places to stop and look and bends — lots of bends. Both of us agreed it should be a national park, but were glad it isn't because it would then be overrun with people and RVs the pass peaks out at 11,000 feet. The views from there are incredible. The area is a vast expanse of mostly above-timberline terrain, with many small alpine tarns dotted about. As you descend on the Montana side and are just thinking that you have seen it all, you come into the most dramatic glaciated valley. Not quite Yosemite but stunning nevertheless.

We gassed up in Red Lodge, along with the legions of Harley riders, and stoked up for the ride back with some great fajitas at Bogarts Café'8e. It was then that we were glad that we were staying in Yellowstone because it meant we got to go back the way we had come and ride the Bear Tooth Highway again. If anything it was better the second time around. Ann even saw a shaggy White Mountain goat grazing along the road. We have decided we must go back and spend a week camping and riding around the area. It was days end by the time we got back into Yellowstone and the road was much quieter. Ray even saw a pack of wolves as well as