



Battling the elements for the man in black

By Geoff Stevenson
Last of three parts

Now it was time to head north. So we saddled up and headed for Kansas. Of course, it was raining. And blowing. But in the midst of this crummy weather, there was to be a moment that restored our faith in human nature.

In Joplin, MO., we stopped at a modest little café for breakfast. It was a converted single-wide, with seats for perhaps 20 people. We walked in wearing full (bright yellow) riding regalia – and dripping wet – and were immediately the centre of attention. Ernie struck up a conversation

with a couple about our age while we waited for our bacon and eggs. Like lots of other people we met, they were amazed that we'd ridden motorbikes from Canada to Memphis.

Our food came and the couple left. We felt warmer and more human and asked for our usual separate tickets. "Nothing to pay; that's taken care of," the waitress announced. She offered no further explanation, but it seemed clear that Ernie's talkative couple had paid our bill. We have no idea where they lived. Of course, it's unlikely we'll ever see them again. But, if you're reading this, you

generous and thoughtful people, thanks a bunch.

We pressed on and got to Dodge City, KS., this night. Yes, it rained and blew most of the way. Rural Kansas had countless cattle feed lots, most of which we smelled long before we saw them. And the Cargill and Tyson meat-packing companies had numerous plants beside Highway 400 as we rode off the plains and into Colorado with its Western-Canadian-like mountain scenery.

Now we had some choices to make: How to get through the mountains. Yes, of course, it was going to be cold and snow was forecast at

COORDINATOR:

Klaus Kreye
bmwrvi@shaw.ca

TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP:

Peter Juergensen
motonanny@telus.net

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Roy Sweet
gordsboyroy@gmail.com

MAILING:

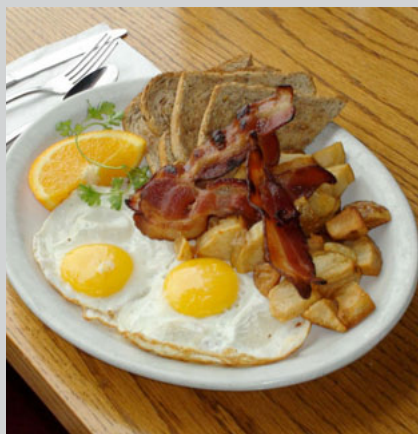
Bob Leitch
bleitch@telus.net

MAILING ADDRESS:

BMW Riders of Vancouver Island
6-310 Goldstream Avenue
Victoria BC V9B 2W3

Next Breakfast/Brunch

Saturday, September 3



WHERE:

Oak & Carriage Pub
3287 Cowichan Lake Road
Duncan

WHEN:

9:30 at the restaurant



Intrepid travellers fearlessly face snow



Visitors admire the handsome architecture of the Buckstaff Baths building.

higher elevations. Our plan had been to tackle Monarch Pass on Highway 50, between Salida and Gunnison. This is 11,312 feet, but the alternative routes were all a similar height.

We asked around and the locals all offered the same advice: It will probably be snowing up there, but

it won't stick to the pavement and you should be okay. Ernie was more confident than me about making it – and we did, although only just.

Salida and Gunnison are both more than 7,000 feet above sea level, so you go up more than 4,000 feet (and then down about the same amount) as you transit the pass.

An orange flashing “snowflake” appears at 3° on my dashboard; it was soon winking away as we rode west from Salida, with the summit still some distance away. We started climbing. It started snowing. But then, there was some encouragement: An R1200GS passed us from the west. I'd been



Playing the grey hair card for the police



The Museum of the Automobile in Petit Jean State Park included this classic late 1940s Chevy pickup.

over the pass years ago and knew the BMW couldn't have ridden by without coming over the top. In a few minutes my thermometer read -1°. But the snow had stopped now and the pavement remained black. Two Harleys came towards us; we smugly assumed that if they could make it, so could we. In the end, there was no slipping or sliding (we both have traction control, anyway)

and we were soon over the top and down the other side. Absolutely no stopping for photos, though!

Next day, we were in Ely, NV. There was no snow to be seen and we'd almost forgotten all about Monarch Pass.

We were still on Highway 50, but this section is known as the loneliest road in America. It's aptly

named - I measured one straight stretch at 44km - but it also includes some wonderful twisties going up and then down five or six passes.

At one stage, a guy in a black BMW 540i, clearly having even more fun than we were, blew by on four wheels at what seemed to me to be well over 100mph. It must have been his lucky day (or



Brothers school population swells



Food for a king – or at least a hungry Canadian looking for America’s best barbecue. The sampler plate at Memphis BBQ in Horn Lake, MS.

perhaps he later slowed down or turned off the highway) because waiting down the road in Eureka was the Nevada State Patrol with a radar gun - aimed right at me. The highway speed limit was 70 mph, but as you descend a hill into Eureka, it drops abruptly to 35mph and then 25 (this was at 0830, with dry pavement and NO traffic). The officer motioned me to pull over. I, of course, complied, parked and got my helmet off ASAP, the better to show him (I hoped) that I was a responsible senior citizen. He wheeled his Ford SUV around, stopped beside me, got out and came right to the point: “You got any weapons on that vehicle?” I assured him that I was unarmed and he took my licence and registration paperwork back to his SUV to check them. Had he ever heard of British Columbia? Who knows? It all ended well. Apparently satisfied with my papers, he handed them back politely, suggested we slow right down for all small towns in the future, and wished me a pleasant day.

After that, we DID pay special attention to speed signs, but were soon in Winnemucca, NV., and then, the next night, in Bend, OR. About 80km east of Bend, we stopped at Brothers, where two 60-something sisters run the Stage Stop (coffee – a bottomless cup for \$1, no tax – and very basic food and the local post office). We were



Author asks who can match mileage

keen to warm up and they were keen to talk, so it was a relaxing stop.

And we got the big news of the district: There are six students at the one-room school this year – but, by golly, next year there will be eight. Bend was wet and windy (well, what else did we expect?). The next day was another blustery one to Chehalis, WA., but our last

day was a mostly sunny ride up I5 and then along the Hood Canal to Port Angeles and the 1245 Coho. (If you take this ferry before the dock work is completed in Victoria, go very carefully as you head towards Canada Customs from the Coho. In at least one lane, you'll be riding on rough gravel.)

Footnote:

Our bikes ran perfectly. They're

getting serious use, too. My Suzuki's been on the road for 16 months now and has clocked over almost 33,000km. Ernie first rode his Triumph in March of this year. His odometer currently reads just over 13,000km. (We each have two other bikes, on which we typically ride 6-8,000km a year), which means we're currently averaging more than 25,000km annually.) Can anyone else in the club match that mileage?



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Club 2016 Event Schedule

Date	Event	Location
Saturday, Sept 3, 2016	Monthly Gathering	Oak & Carriage, Duncan
Sunday, Sept 18, 2016	Monthly Ride	Port Renfrew / Cowichan Loop
October, 2016	BMW RA National Rally	
Sunday, October 2, 2016	Monthly Gathering	The Crooked Goose
Saturday, October 15, 2016	Annual Meeting	TBD