

Subj: **Brian & Gertrude Climb the Rocky Mountains**
 Date: 9/2/2005
 To: [ReanLaine](#), [Ole1975](#), [RachelC246](#), emily.k.thorpe@wamu.net, [XRBen](#), [Majava500](#), [MarkLaine](#),
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Hi All –

Again, this is just a boring trip log – if you want me to take you off the list let me know. Allow 5-7 weeks for processing though.

After going both north and south with Gertrude in the past months, it seemed like time to fit in one more trip this Fall. Since west is out of the question unless the trip is short, we decided to go the only remaining direction, east. That was the original plan of the Canadian adventure, but I got seduced by a northbound road in Canada rather than continuing east.

So we headed out Thursday noon, hoping to beat the Labor Day traffic. Made it to Spokane that evening after a delightful trip on Hwy 2. Unfortunately, the timing was off for “Mule Days” in Creston. That reminds me that Chris and I took in the Evergreen State Fair on Wednesday. I really enjoyed the goats, antique tractors and draft horses, but have say that the Alaskan racing pigs didn’t meet my high expectations. I wouldn’t make a special trip to the fair to see them if that’s what you’re thinking.

Passing by Fairchild Air Force base, I was surprised to see the field full of obstacles, ropes to climb, walls to climb over, etc. Somehow I didn’t think the Air Force took that big of stock for fitness, but I must be wrong. Glad the Navy was happy with push-ups, sit-ups, marching and running.

Everywhere east of the mountains has huge farm equipment running and dust flying as they prepare the fields for the next crop after harvest. I love the huge implements and variety of tractors these days: high-track crawlers with rubber tracks and tractors with equal sized tires front and rear, articulated in the middle seem to be popular variations now.

When I rolled into the hotel in Spokane, I noticed tire rubber all over the front of Gertrude’s fender. Then I found that two of the fender mounting bolts were missing, and the other two loose, so it was riding on the tire. When I got the new tire installed in San Jose, they must have forgotten to tighten it. I found some replacement bolts this morning and got it fixed before something got wrecked or was lost. Nice that BMWs are one of the few bikes that still have tool kits, even though they are probably one of the least likely to need them.

This morning I met a great couple, about my age, from Australia touring in a Miata. He has a BMW GS1100 too, so we had plenty to talk about. I enjoy how enthusiastic those “down under” are about all things mechanical. I think from lack of parts they have learned to be more creative about repairing and fabricating mechanical things.

Today I took a break in Wallace Idaho, a nice old preserved mining town. While I missed “Mule Days,” I didn’t miss the excitement of Wallace’s “Oasis Bordello Museum.” However, I would rate it only slightly better than the racing pigs.

In Idaho and Montana it was refreshing to see the 75 MPH signs, which is Gertrude’s sweet spot for cruising. Not that she complains at speeds below or above that. While I was cruising along at about 80, a government van passed me like I was standing still with a sign on the back: “This vehicle has been modified so it will not exceed 70 MPH.” I’d say somebody learned how to fix it.

As you would suspect, there are plenty of campers and trailers on the road. With gas hovering at about \$3/gallon, I figure I save about \$100/day over an RV for going 400 miles – that covers hotels, eating, and expenses to exotic sites like pig races and bordellos.

The iPod control/charger/amplifier circuit I made is working well, but I should have given the amplifier more power. It’s about 500mw (about four times the iPod), but could be a little more for those of us with less than ideal hearing (Chris might describe it in different terms). If I do a rev-2, it will have a Tim Allen amp!

Tonight, after passing through a 6300 ft pass, I’m in the outskirts of Bozeman Montana. When Dave and I were

on our trip after college, I really liked it here, and even inquired at the University to see if they might have an opening for a fresh graduate. They didn't, which is fortunate since it would have changed my (and some of your) lives. What do you suppose the students in this area are called - the Bozeman Boozers?

I don't know what's next on my journey, I'm thinking south into Wyoming. Maybe Colorado? You will have to wait for the next exciting episode to find out! Hope you all are enjoying the long weekend.

Regards,

Brian/Dad

Cockpit view of Gertrude eating up the miles:



Subj: **Brian and Gertrude climb the Rockies - Part II**
Date: 9/4/2005
To: [ReanLaine](#), [Ole1975](#), [RachelC246](#), emily.k.thorpe@wamu.net, [XRBen](#), [Majava500](#), [MarkLaine](#), [Manningdesign](#), Mike.Dunning@checksum.com, lkind@foxinternet.com, dave_hornbeck@agilent.com, fritz.drach@fredmeyer.com, pdrach@leupold.com, hallmen@foxinternet.net, shelbydoc@sbcglobal.net

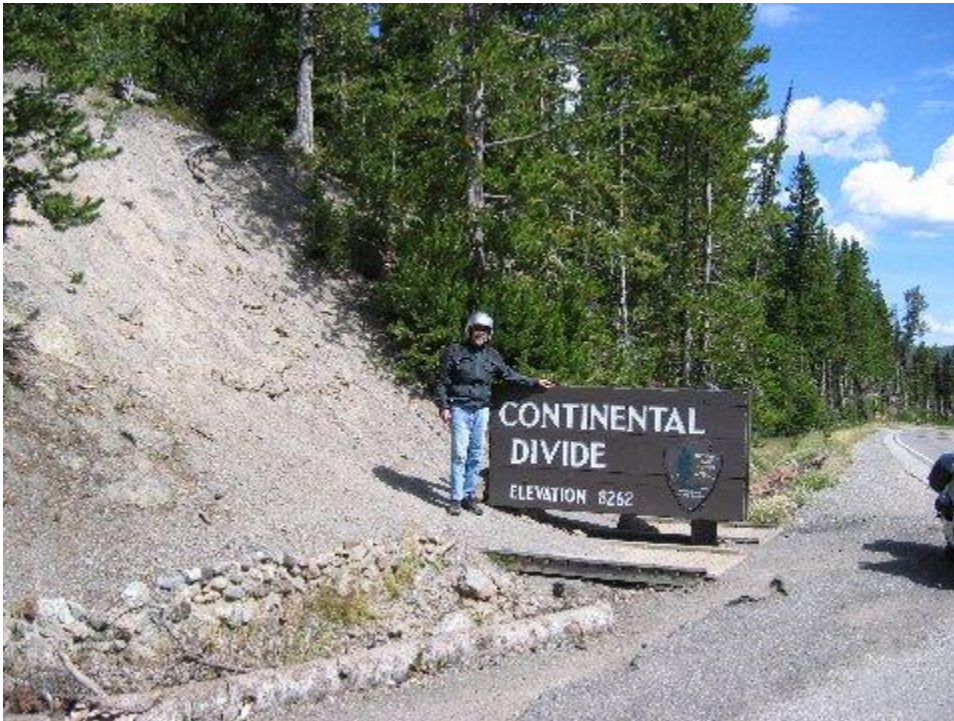
Hi All –

Thought I'd give you another quick trip update in case you're hopelessly bored.

From Bozeman, I headed south into Yellowstone National Park. It's still as beautiful as ever, I had to stop to take a picture of this herd of buffalo right next to the road:



Along the way I came to this continental divide:



With this pond right next to it:



Evidently, it is relatively tough to tell where the continental divides are, but one way is to observe water flow. This particular innocent looking lily pad-filled lake has water leaving in both directions. On one side it flows into a river system that ends with the Columbia River, and on the other side ends up in the Mississippi River. Hard to imagine that something as grand as those two rivers start at places such as this. No crawdads though, should have brought some along to plant, could have enhanced most of the US from right here.

At seeing another continental divide sign which was 9600 feet in elevation, I was thinking to myself how I didn't

even realize I'd been climbing much. Gertrude has enough power that you don't notice much throttle change whether going up or down hills. Just past the peak though, I ran across a guy pedaling up the other side. How different his thoughts must have been.

After Yellowstone I skirted around the Grand Teton National Park. Like most guys, I'm a big teton enthusiast, but the weather was looking a little rain-like so I headed southeast on Hwy 289 across Wyoming. I love this area's wide-open spaces and sparse population. I'm sure it has looked the same for hundreds of years.

The site at the base of these mountains is interesting:



Its part of the Oregon trail. At one time there were wild horses in this area (did you know the wild horse has no natural predators?), and at the bottom of this mountain was a Pony Express station. The placard listed some interesting things about the Pony Express. Evidently two or three wealthy guys who saw the opportunity for fast mail service started it. So they hired 80 riders, bought 500 horses, and set up stations every 10-15 miles. Each rider did about 70 miles. At each station, they would switch the mailbags and be off within two minutes. Letters cost between one and five dollars each to send. They made the trip from St. George MO to Sacramento CA (1600 miles) in ten days! The bad news is that shortly after the Pony Express started, the telegraph came into use, so they went out of business within 18 months, losing their shirts in the process.

At a rest stop I saw a van packed with camping gear and a canoe on top, and the kid locked inside, motor running for A/C. I don't know where his parents were, but he was very busy talking on his cell phone and watching a DVD. In my many hours to think along the way, I was pondering the impact of the Internet and other recent technology. As a result of this technology most of the things kids did in the past aren't exciting anymore. There is even less verbal joke telling since so much of it has been emailed around. Do you suppose that over time one-on-one conversation will become less interesting to adults as a result of the same thing?

I made it to Rawlins Wyoming that night, which is in south central Wyoming. Not a very exciting town, but I was tired after a 450-mile day. The previous day was about 410 miles.

Today, I headed south into Colorado, taking as many secondary two-lane roads as I could find. This took me through Meeker, Rifle and then up into the mountains of Mesa Colorado. Really pretty country, which can't be captured by pictures. From there I continued south, ending up in Durango tonight, which is in the SW corner of Colorado. I've always really enjoyed western Colorado.

Being on Gertrude really adds to the fun of this adventure -- in addition to the fun of leaning through corners and

feeling the wonderful power and braking of bikes, you smell everything, and when its cold, you get cold, when its hot, you get hot, and when its wet, well... you can guess. Today there was plenty of this feeling involved. Especially through the mountains near Telluride and Ouray. There were thunderstorms so rain was pouring down, it was dusk, and we were on these narrow little mountain roads on the edge of giant ledges, with signs warning about falling rocks and range animals. It was nice to come inside -- I'll savor my Jack Daniels tonight! We went about 460 miles today.

Speaking of range animals, there's quite a bit of open range country around here. In addition to the standard steel grids, there are a number of areas where they have painted lines on the roads to emulate grids. Do you suppose animals have to first come across a real grid before the painted ones are effective? I can't imagine a cow being fooled by cheap theatrics like the painted lines – maybe horses though :)

During a break, I came across some guys screwing around with little remote-controlled gas-powered monster trucks. Neat! They are about 1/12 scale, four wheel drive, have two-speed transmissions, and hit speeds of up to 65 MPH. They have over 10" of suspension travel! It wasn't a very classy group, but they were fun to chat with:



Then another monster truck enthusiast showed up with his black lab puppy. That dog might die of exhaustion if he keeps up chasing these cars – he went on and on (remember they can go 65!):



It's getting about time to start heading home, so I don't know where I'll go next, but probably not too much further south. I'll let you know if you are foolish enough to not opt out of the mailing list!

Regards,

Brian/Dad

Subj: **Brian and Gertrude in the Rockies - episode 3**
Date: 9/6/2005
To: [ReanLaine](#), [Ole1975](#), [RachelC246](#), [emily.k.thorpe@wamu.net](#), [XRBen](#), [Majava500](#), [MarkLaine](#), [Manningdesign](#), [Mike.Dunning@checksum.com](#), [lkind@foxinternet.com](#), [dave_hornbeck@agilent.com](#), [fritz.drach@fredmeyer.com](#), [pdrach@leupold.com](#), [hallmen@foxinternet.net](#), [shelbydoc@sbcglobal.net](#)

Hello once again –

Here's another tip: you can set your e-mail to recognize "Gertrude" as spam. I think I will.

Since the last report, we've been getting around. From Durango (not the place to find a cheap hotel room on Labor Day weekend), we headed south to Farmington, New Mexico, then over through the corner of Arizona, and up into Utah. Harleys everywhere, both ridden and on trailers. I finally found that there was a big bike ride to four-corners that weekend, and people were coming from all over. I have to say, it got a little tiring to see so many – they all look about the same, with the riders all in the same uniform too. The Harley uniform here, however, doesn't necessitate helmets, so few wear them. I'll bet they thought twice about the uniform of the day when it was pouring down rain in the mountains. A bandana and sun glasses only go so far for protection. However, Harley sure knows how to build bikes that American's want - I've never seen such a bike following as is this.

I tried to take secondary roads through Utah, but all converged in Salt Lake City. The scenery in Utah is, of course, magnificent. Miles and miles of scenes such as this.



Along the way, traffic was stopped in the dessert for about an hour from a traffic jam:



We didn't know what was going on at the time, but a Dodge truck with a trailer had a head-on with a Neon, and the Neon lost big time. One of the locals said he was glad it wasn't like last week when a truck with explosives had a wreck in the same area. He said it blew the whole road out. It was really hot, and I was glad that Gertrude didn't overheat, even when idling along in the heat for so long.

After the desert heat of the afternoon, it started to cool down making for really enjoyable riding so we kept going, and ended up in Molad City, Idaho. We had been in five states that day, doing 625 miles. Now that I look at the map, Gertrude has taken me to every western state and province except Nevada. I can see a Reno trip coming up.

This morning, I headed north to Pocatello for breakfast. I ate right across the street from Idaho State University, which has a beautiful campus. Then we headed west through Twin Falls and to Boise. Gertrude was way overdue for her 12,000 mile service, and while the Boise BMW dealer couldn't fit in a full service, they did change her oil. I need to make sure I'm eligible for the remainder of the warranty, and that should do it.

From Boise, I picked a back road headed north, and picked a beauty – Hwy 55. It goes through beautiful canyons along a river, then up to a plateau with some gorgeous lakes. I had never heard of McCall before, but it rivals any of the fancy resort places I've seen. Going to have to come back to investigate this area more.

Tonight I made it to Riggins Idaho, which is near Hells Canyon National Park. There are lots of fire fighters in town, although they are just keeping an eye the nearby blazes rather than being proactive.

Earlier in the day, I went through Donnelly Idaho (population 138) where President Bush visited. There are still welcome signs for him in town. It is a small and remote town.

I also came across this cool little rig today beside the road:



It's four-wheel drive, and tiny. You're lucky, Chris, that I didn't have the tow truck along! At least you can read the phone number on it, so we can come back.

I think I'll try to make it home tomorrow unless I see an irresistible road I have to take. I'm still about 500 miles from home, so we will see. I'll be out of clean shorts the day after, unless I use the packing strategy LeeRoy gave Ben: you can use a pair of shorts four days - forward, backward, then the same inside out. LeeRoy - don't get near me!!!!

Just a couple of subjective observations:

1. Vehicle most often seen driving really fast - Dodge trucks
2. Person most often driving really fast - young women. The person and vehicle aren't the same since few women drive Dodge trucks, their favorite choice of speeding vehicles are small Japanese cars and SUVs.

Too bad that these young women don't know that speeding and being aggressive on the road is a "man-thing." Let's see, who else can I offend?

About the RC monster trucks I ran into a few days ago - they are 1/8 scale, not 1/12. Also, as some of you know, even battery-powered RC cars are dang hard to control. Takes quick thinking and reflexes. However, that didn't stop these guys from drinking a lot of beer while they were out there. By the time I left, one of them almost ran himself over with his own car. He had to jump out of the way. Fun to watch!

Hope all is well with you -

Brian/Dad