

KING OF THE ROAD

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THE AVENUE OF GIANTS

IT'S NOT SIMPLY A SLAVISH ADMIRATION FOR HARLEY-DAVIDSON WHICH ATTRACTS SO MANY RIDERS TO THE GOOD OL' US OF A. IT'S THE RICH DIVERSITY OF CULTURE AND WARM HOSPITALITY OF OUR AMERICAN COUSINS. LIONEL "PAT" JENNINGS HAS JUST EXPERIENCED BOTH – AND A LOT MORE BESIDES

AFTER doing a mid-west USA Roadtrip with my brother in August 2002 I decided that this year I would plan a solo itinerary. So, while working for two weeks in California (during February) out came the maps and I started making notes on where I fancied going.

September became my goal, and with time off work arranged, I rang Scott at Roadtrip to see if he had a Harley available in September and discussed my itinerary with him.

After a few emails and phone calls, the planned itinerary was finalised and a 2003 Road King Classic booked. I then waited in anticipation for 1 September so that I could embark on a new adventure.

Lincolnshire to Seattle (Monday 1 September 2003)

It was a short journey to Humberside airport for my flight to Seattle via Amsterdam – an excellent flight – but I was almost in panic when I arrived at Seattle. I had just cleared immigration when I heard an announcement that 40 items of luggage had not been loaded at Schiphol and, of course, mine wasn't on the carousel – I was already thinking of rearranging my itinerary. As I headed towards the information desk I happened to glance at a carousel for a totally different flight and there were my two cases merrily going round. To say I was relieved is an understatement.

Then it was a short flight down to Bend's Redmond airport – surrounded by smoke from the severe forest fires they were suffering – where Scott met me at the airport. After a quick chicken burrito we went to the Phoenix Inn at Bend to sort out the

paperwork for the bike and the motels I had been booked into.

I had a quiet stroll around downtown Bend, to get some fresh mountain air, then packed my luggage and was ready for the off.

Bend to Lake Tahoe – "Born to ride..."

My body had still not adjusted to the jet lag and I was wide awake at 4am – again. So I double-checked that I'd packed everything and had breakfast at six-thirty.

I reached the Harley dealership, Bears and Roses, at 9am and verified the Road King's VIN and starting mileage so I could use the info for my H.O.G. mileage programme. Bears and Roses was very helpful and readjusted the gear selector so that I could use the heel-and-toe facility properly. After a quick coffee, I removed my watch (because I had no need to know the time) and put it in my luggage. Then I set off for the 197 and headed towards Klamath Falls.

It was an absolutely gorgeous ride past Klamath Lake where, after a quick fuel stop, I pressed on towards Tahoe. Eventually, I stopped at Macdoel for lunch. Sharon's Diner had friendly staff and served an awesome meal.

Through the Cascade Range I rode without a care in the world, just enjoying the scenery and realising why I had booked this holiday. Then it all changed.

I had planned to go around Mount Lassen National Park on the 44 but a serious accident meant that all traffic was being directed straight through the park. As I had ridden this part of the route last year I knew that it would be late when I reached Tahoe.

Then, just before Tahoe, all traffic was diverted again because of another road closure. This particular diversion covered 22 miles – oh yeah, I counted them – of pre-graded roads. So, it was down to 15 mph and felt like riding in soft sand. It was also dark, very dark, and I was on an extremely twisty road. Finally, I made it to the hotel, booked in, unloaded the bike, had a quick shower and promptly fell asleep.

With hindsight, I would probably have stayed on the 395 and gone via Reno but I had nothing to rush for except a bed at the end of the day. What the heck.
Mileage – 578 miles.
Running total – 578 miles.

Lake Tahoe to Big Pine –

"Today there will be the odd isolated shower."

I woke up feeling reasonably refreshed, loaded the bike and headed off around the lake, stopping only at a roadside diner for a "quick" breakfast. It was an "eat as much as you want" place, and you do have to set yourself up for the rest of the day – well, that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it. I rode into Carson City and headed for the Harley dealership to get my mileage verification sheet stamped. Then I set off down the 395 for the day's destination of Big Pine – and a juicy steak at Rossis.

When I left Carson City there were lovely clear blue skies and it was pretty warm, although the weather forecast warned of an odd isolated shower or two. Boy, when those storms appear you know about it. If I had been watching it on Discovery or the Weather Channel I would have enjoyed it but stuck in the middle of one I felt totally different.

