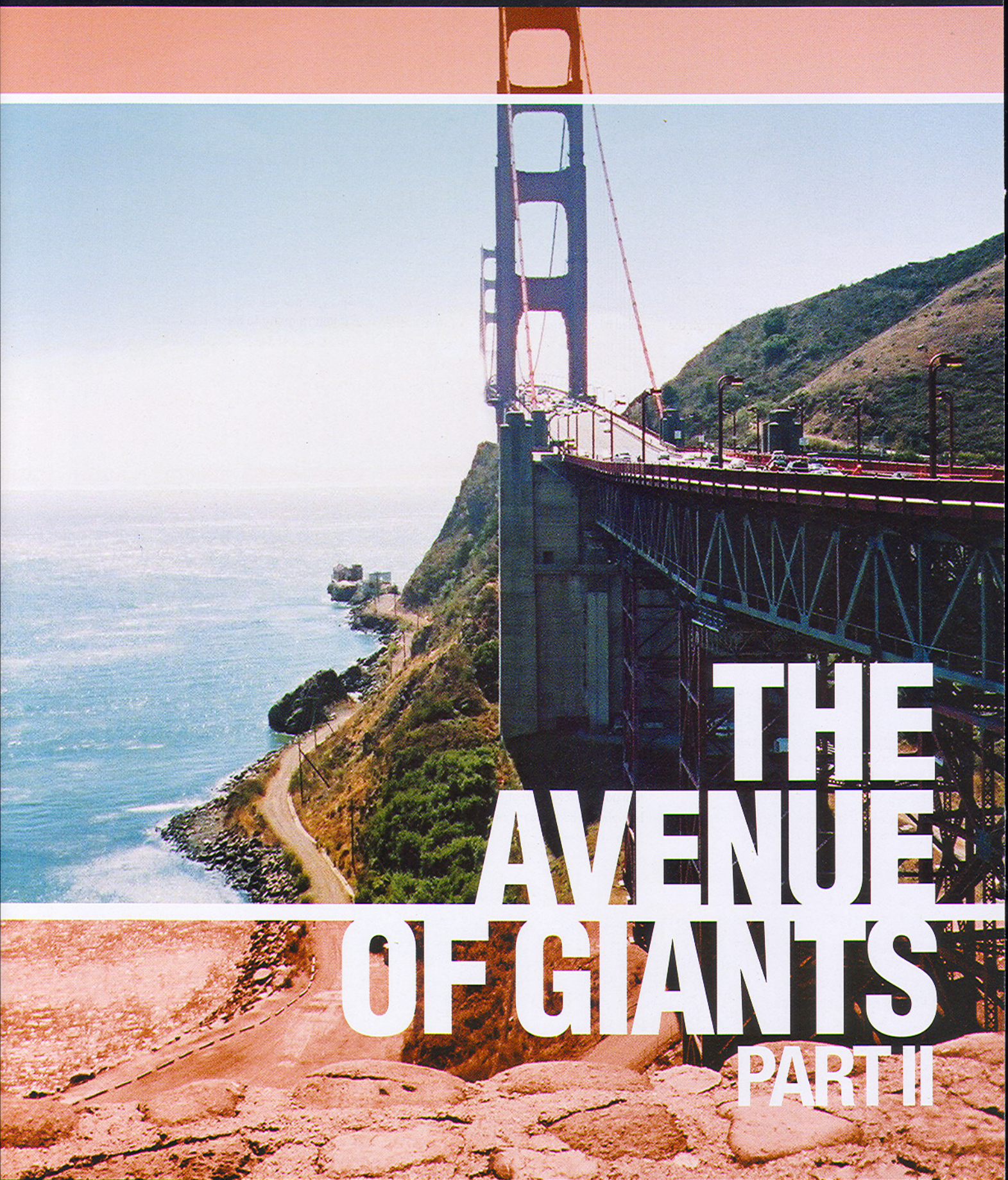


KING OF THE ROAD

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: LIONEL "PAT" JENNINGS



THE AVENUE OF GIANTS PART II

SOME PEOPLE ONLY DREAM OF RIDING A HARLEY-DAVIDSON IN AMERICA. OTHERS ACTUALLY DO IT. LIONEL "PAT" JENNINGS MADE HIS DREAM A REALITY. HERE'S THE CONTINUATION OF HIS JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

Ridgecrest to Three Rivers – a Giants' Forest

I awoke feeling a bit shabby. I think the jet lag finally caught up with me but after a decent breakfast and a big mug of coffee I felt revived and ready for the day.

I headed out of town and followed the northern shore of Lake Isabella towards Kernville where I took a wrong turning. This actually proved fortuitous because it took me through the most stunning scenery and fabulous roads, especially the one from Quaking Aspen to Springville. If you have ever been to Rosedale Chimney, imagine it lasting for thirty-five miles and over 200 bends. Once a steady rhythm was achieved it was thoroughly exhilarating, as in "left footboard down, right footboard down" and so on all the way there.

When I arrived at the motel overlooking Lake Kaweah just after lunch I unloaded the bike and sat talking to some Germans who were about to ride around Kings Canyon and through the Giants Forest – definitely big trees around there. We also met another Brit who was touring on an Electra Glide. As we all headed along the winding roads with the open pipes echoing off the canyon walls people waited for us to pass them so they could wave and take photos. The roads went 22 miles up one side and 37 miles down the other.

I definitely knew about it when I got back to the hotel. But after a big pizza and a couple of Michelob's I fell asleep counting bends instead of sheep.

Daily mileage – 308 miles.

Running total – 2,027 miles

Three Rivers to Gilroy – two Indians and the Grateful Dead

A reasonably early start but the morning news warned of forest fires in the Salinas area, which was the direction I was heading

In Visalia, I called in at the H-D dealers to get my verification sheet stamped and chatted to a local H.O.G. guy who gave me a route, which would take me into the "real" America (as he called it) away from the tourists. So, after a coffee I said my farewells and set off. As I came over a hill to the junction where I would hang a right towards Hollister I could see the forest fires across the valley and loads of flashing blue lights in the valley basin. Luckily it wasn't my road that was closed and I plodded on towards Hollister.

After a quick fuel and food stop, I headed to Gilroy and my hotel for the night. Before I went there I didn't know that Gilroy was home to the Indian Motorcycle Company, so after dumping my luggage at the hotel, I thought I would be cheeky and see if I could get a tour of the factory. Unfortunately, the tour had already started and the next one wasn't until the weekend, so I was out of luck. With hindsight I wish I had grovelled a little more because I read in the press that it may be going under. Although when I called at the dealership it had a couple of one-off factory Indian customs and the original Grateful Dead Harley.

While riding back to the hotel I was stopped by a local police officer just after a four-way stop junction. He told me that even though I had brought the bike to a rolling stop at the junction I had not put my foot down and he had to stop

me. Luckily, he only gave me a warning but said if I did it in San Francisco the police there would automatically penalise me. I made my apologies – you know, a Brit abroad etc. – thanked him and left.

Daily mileage – 236 miles.

Running total – 2,263 miles

Gilroy to Mendocino – "If you're going to San-Fran-cisco..."

I left early and decided to follow the 101 because the day looked a fairly long one and I had San Francisco to reach. So, I set off on the freeway utilizing the car pool lane as much as possible to whiz past the queues.

I then left the freeway and passed Arlen Ness's original shop in Oakland, which is now shut because he has re-located. Two guys on chops took me to Bob Drons dealership. When I was ready to leave I asked for the best route to get me back to the 101 and the guys who had taken me there said they would show me the route and best places to go – places where the tourists don't go – all the way to the Golden Gate Bridge. When we actually left the shop there were around ten bikes, with me in the middle of the pack, and everyone pointing out places to me. They were really impressed with the route I was doing and that I was riding solo. So we all headed over the Oakland bridge but stopped on Treasure Island in the middle of the bay to get a brilliant photo of the Golden Gate, Alcatraz, and the city skyline – all with the sea mist rolling in. Then we crossed San Francisco Bridge into the city in a pack. Brilliant. They definitely knew how to avoid

