

My husband, Bob, has ridden motorcycles forever. He boasts that he has ridden some 41 years, and of those 41 years we have been married for over 30. And for almost 30 years I have fought his riding, only because I have been afraid he will be hurt or killed. I, in no way, actually gave any attempt to find out what his love for biking was about.

I was the good little wife for a number of years following him around when he was into Enduros, spending many afternoons playing pit crew at each gas stop point, with fuel, water, orange slices, and of course first aid. The sport may have gotten a little too rough for him as his interest faded. Later his interests changed to street bikes. My fear of bikes became even stronger. Even though I realize he is well experienced in riding, I just don't trust the drivers around him. But, he has pacified me by following a few simple rules; one, to stay off the interstate when ever possible and, two, not to ride to work. Lucky for me I don't see him riding on the Honda F-4 with the club in the winding hills of Missouri.

As the years have passed, and our kids have grown and left home, it has started to become more and more apparent to me that I have been missing out on a very important part of my husband's life. I should have seen it before. He can spend hours and hours in the garage just polishing, tweaking, fine tuning and admiring these pieces of machinery. This man I have dearly loved has an interest in what is really a good and wholesome hobby. And he loves it. But the one thing I never really understood was the love to ride.

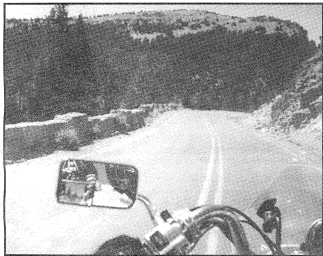
Early last summer, Frank, a friend and colleague of mine at work, began talking about a trip he and his girlfriend planned to take to Seattle. They were having their Harley's shipped to Seattle from where they would pick them up to take a bike trip around Puget Sound. We too had vacation time coming up in August and the whole idea of touring the countryside in such a beautiful part of the country really appealed to me. I then came up with the idea of renting a bike and touring through Oregon. Bob had an Aunt & Uncle living in Bend, Oregon, and we hadn't been to visit them in quite some time.

With the help of the internet, I found a company that rented bikes right in Bend, Roadtrip Motorcycle Rentals & Tours. For the very affordable price of \$88 per day, we were able to rent a Honda 1100. What a better way for me to see what all the excitement was about. Even though I was not quite sure of what I was getting myself into, I suggested it to Bob. And of course he thought it was a great idea. So I did it.

The next thing I knew Bob had chartered out a fantastic trip from Bend to Crater Lake, circling around to the West Coast and back through Oregon to Bend. A whopping 600+ miles in 3 days. Oh my God, what had I gotten myself into?

We left early on a Saturday morning in August on a flight from St. Louis to Portland and then took a commuter flight into Redmond, which is just outside Bend. With helmets in hand Bob had great fun telling the flight attendants to be sure to warn him of any trouble so he could strap it

on. (Remember our trip was a month before 9-11.) We arrived in Bend late in the day Saturday. We put our things up in a hotel in downtown Bend and visited with his Aunt Pat & Uncle Clarence Saturday and Sunday, all the while talking about and planning the trip. Each day, each hour, I became a little more apprehensive. We planned all this travel in only 3 days. Uncle Clarence got great pleasure in giving me more information than I needed. Like, "You'll need to travel non-stop to make it back in three days." "Sounds like a lot of miles." "Are you sure you can make it?" "If you get tired just call and we'll come after you," and so on. But I was determined to



make it work. I wanted to do this thing. I wanted to enjoy this time with Bob; just he and I on the bike for an adventure. I was going to have fun!

On Monday morning, Scott Sargeant, from Roadtrip Motorcycle Rentals & Tours picked us up at our hotel and took us to the bike. Roadtrip also offers a discount package with Phoenix hotel in Bend where the bikes are brought right to you, but we elected to stay in the Best Western not far from the Phoenix (due to a better discount rate offered through Bob's employer).

Normally we would have had our choice of several bikes ranging from BMW's to Harleys, but on this day most all the bikes had been rented. Bob chose the Honda 1100cc Shadow, as he thought it would be the most comfortable for me. It came equipped with saddlebags large enough for our gear for the 3 days and 2 nights, plus a backrest with a rack to hold another small bag behind my seat.

It was nearly 11 am by the time we were signed in and packed up, and then we were off. First stop, the Bend Wal-Mart store for a camera. We had left ours at home and I knew we would be encountering some wonderful scenery to record. We picked up a little \$19 camera that ended up taking some great shots (Even while moving on the bike). Now we've got the bike, the gear and the camera, we're ready and on the road once again.

It was a warm day in August for Bend, about 75-80 degrees. We started off in our short sleeves. Since this was really my first trip on a bike, I didn't have any great gear to sport on the bike; I just wore jeans and sneakers. It didn't take long before I could feel the foot pegs coming up through my shoes. But the wonderful warm puffs of air hitting my arms soon took my mind off the pegs.

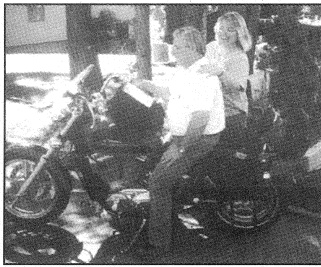
The scenery was just breathtaking from the start. Highway 97 leading toward Crater Lake is mile after mile of tall Juniper trees lining the roadway. We were even lucky enough to spot a family of deer crossing over a field just between a break in the trees. Contrary to the relatives' beliefs back in Bend, we made it to Crater Lake by about 2 that afternoon. There was no need to call them to rescue me. I was loving it and Bob was being very considerate in stopping periodically to recoup my seat.

Crater Lake is about the most beautiful place I had ever seen. What awesome blue water! We traveled completely around the lake, more than 20 miles, and took pictures from every angle. It was so peaceful there. And so very blue. So breathe taking!

Crater Lake is the product of a volcano eruption inside a mountain many years ago, some 7700 years ago. The mountaintop sank leaving a beautiful 1,958 foot deep lake surrounding what looks to be an island in the middle, but is actually the top of the mountain itself, known as Wizard Island. The depth of the lake creates the appearance of the bluest water ever

WARM PUFFS OF AIR

by Sandy Morris



imaginable and the home to Rainbow Trout and Kokanee Salmon. We spent several hours at the Lake just taking in its beauty. I soon came to realize there really was no better way to take in this wonder of wonders than on the bike. We were traveling freely right in the heart of nature. And warm wonderful puffs of air. Just like flying. So relaxing. What have I been missing?

From Crater Lake we began our trek to the West Coast on highway 138, which runs parallel with the Umpqua River, another gorgeous sight. Miles and miles of dark, blue-green water. The water looked to be very cold and clear. Another marvel of Mother Nature, an addition to the scenery we were taking in on our bike trip.

The road winded around just as the river did, making for a fun ride for my driver. The warm puffs of air alternated with the greeting of cool breezes as we drove in and out of the shade of the trees. The Honda kept a good pace, never too fast, just right. Since it doesn't take much to scare me, this bike gave me a secure feeling. By the time the sun was going down, we had made it to a little town called Roseburg where we spent the night. It was good day, I was glad we

went, and I was enjoying what Bob enjoys. And who would have believed we had traveled more than 200 miles.

Tuesday morning came quickly and after breakfast we were off again. Still following highway 138, we headed toward the West Coast. The closer we came to the Coast the cooler it became. With each stop we pulled out more clothes to put on. The weather became more and more damp as we went. And out came the rain gear about the time we got to Elkton. We took time to stop and watch a heard of Elk there, thus the name of the town, Elkton. By the time we got to the coast it was getting very cold, low 40's. We were within yards of the Pacific Ocean but could not see it for the fog. The warm puffs of air had turned into needles of rain and cold misty air. Needless to say our first stop on the coast was a little ocean side Chowder Cafe to warm up. Bob ordered a hot chocolate right away and followed it with another. It really helped to warm him up. After a nice hot lunch we were off again, only to find two bikers in the parking lot as we were leaving. The two young men were on a much more serious trip than us. They were traveling on their sport bikes from Canada heading for California.

As the day progressed so did the temperature, and as the temperature began to rise so did the fog. There really was an Ocean to see. We traveled on the winding highway 101 along the Ocean and took in some great sights there too. A visit to see Devil's Punch Bowl is always a must, a huge washed out area in the rock from the rushing in of the tide. The tide was out as we stopped so we missed the great explosion of water coming into the bowl. We promised that we would have to come back again some day to take it in.

We put-putted along the coast for about 30 miles, stopping wherever something caught our eye and views that just had to be gazed upon. Even though time spent on the coast was minimal, as Bob likes to keep moving (after all he was in for it for the riding experience), seeing the Ocean and all it had to offer from the bike was great fun. The roads were pretty much a biker's dream.

By mid afternoon on Tuesday, we were well on our way headed back East on Rt 18, which took us through Grand Ronde and on to Dallas (not Texas) to pay a visit to another Aunt and Uncle of Bob's. At the end of the day and after a nice visit with Aunt Virginia & Uncle Leo we calculated the trip total to be just less than 500 miles. And yes I was still alive, still ready to continue on.

The seat on the Honda was now becoming more than uncomfortable and sneakers felt as if I were riding with no shoes at all. The hard metal pegs were becoming more and more unbearable. But I didn't give in; I was determined to make the rest of the trip. (What choice did I have?) We spent the night in Dallas. I was dealt a bit of a reprieve the next morning as we took a little side trip (in a enclosed four wheeled vehicle type) with Uncle Leo to McMinville about 30 miles north of Dallas to visit the Spruce Goose. Bob's family having a long history of interest in aviation made the trip very much worthwhile.

As noon approached we were back in Dallas and on the road again riding the Honda due East on Rt 22 heading back toward Bend. The weather was once again in the mid 70's and we were able to ride without jackets. The warm puffs of air were back, now relieving the wind burned skin of my arms. Traveling in the open, on roads between the grandeur of acres and acres of cascading tall Juniper trees up and down the sides of the mountains was almost more splendor than one could imagine. The winding roads took us along the Santiam River and on to the Great Detroit Dam. Bob's father helped build the Detroit Dam in his youth back in the 40's, and he'll tell you he was the best Dam worker they had. (Great little play on words that have worked for as long as I've known him.) The beauty of Santiam was spoiled by the drought like conditions just past the Dam. Boat docks were abandoned 100 feet or more from what was once a thriving river marina. The rushing river was now not much more than a trickling stream. As we continued on, we came to the Santiam Pass where the lush greenery returned and I was able to snap some great pictures from the bike, viewing the awe-inspiring sights on the road ahead.

By about 4 o'clock we were back in Bend with a grand total of about 660 miles for the 3 days. Unbelievable! I did it. I made it through without much more than good wind burn and buns of steel. All kidding aside, I truly enjoyed myself. Biking is in fact a lot of fun. I was able to take in so much more beauty of the surroundings, the fresh air and gorgeous sky. Freedom from our hectic day to day lives. And much to their surprise, Aunt Pat & Uncle Clarence were very glad to have us back safe and sound.

So, yes, my opinion has changed about bike riding. I am still cautious of Bob riding on the interstate and in the rush hour traffic, but riding for relaxation, I'm sold on it. On our flight home we started talking about getting another bike just for the two of us to ride. By October we found a great deal on 6 month old, 2001 Yamaha Road Star with a beautiful paint scheme called "Wine & Root Beer." And weather permitting, we ride whenever possible.

Bob calls it my bike since he has the Honda F-4 for real riding. He thinks he has me fooled; I know he is a like a little kid in a candy shop with two bikes to spend hours upon hours polishing and tweaking in the garage. He doesn't know how much it means to me to now be apart of his "bike world". Besides being husband and wife, we are best friends and this gives us even more to enjoy in our lives together.

For more information renting a bike on the West Coast or Canada, visit Roadtrip's websight, (www.roadtrip-usa.com)



Crater Lake, Oregon Sandy Morris photo