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ON THE ROAD TO INUVIK

by Ron Tolson

This story actually starts several years ago when Jim Warrick of Hurricane, Utah read his first article about someone riding a motorcycle up the Dempster Highway to Inuvik. Inuvik is located in the Northwest Territories and is as far North as you can drive on a public road. The problem is that it is 475 miles of unpaved road. Jim started talking to me about making a trip up this infamous highway. As time went by more articles appeared and he became more serious about making this trip. Finally he set a date and started serious planning but could not find anyone to go with him. Finally he challenged my manhood and I agreed to ride along. Had I not agreed he would have taken off by himself and I didn't think that was a good idea as you will, see later.

Planning a trip of this magnitude is no small task. Much of the trip will be in isolated areas so it is important to try and anticipate your needs and requirements. For sure we needed extra gasoline as one stretch is 237 miles and most Goldwings will not stretch that far. After many letters and phone calls between California and Utah we agreed on who would take what and how much.

We did our best to try and talk Darrell Schultz from San Diego into quitting his job and riding with us. Darrell declined but agreed to ride with us for a couple days. So on the 8th of June Darrell and I rode from Victorville to Hurricane, Utah to start our great adventure.

We decided we would leave Hurricane about 0600. Like little kids going on their first fishing trip we were up early and on the road at 0500. Jim had told us it would be a four layer day as we would be rising quickly to 6000 feet. Darrell and I only put on three layers and we nearly froze riding up I-15. I'm not sure that one more layer would have helped. We camped that night in Lava Hot Springs, Idaho having covered 452 miles. The highlight of the day was a near disaster. We had pulled off for fuel and Jim started to turn left then decided to go right into the path of traffic. Darrell followed, and they were almost run down. Thank goodness for good drivers.

The next day it was my turn to be stupid. Again, we had stopped for fuel and I pulled up to a pump that said diesel so I started to go to another pump with the sun in eyes. All of a sudden I heard someone holler hut I couldn't see anything. The next thing I knew I saw this young lady on my windshield. Fortunately she wasn't injured and didn't even drop her drink and sandwich she was carrying. We made Choteau, Montana that day and celebrated my 59th birthday. Darrell decided that he was as far North as he could go if he was to be back at work on schedule. So he would leave us in the morning.

As Darrell headed South toward San Diego and work, Jim and I headed North on our great adventure to Inuvik. Lots of people have been to Inuvik since they built a road to it

about eight years ago. Most of them travel by car, truck and other recreational conveyances. Some have also made the trip by motorcycle. It has been popular opinion you should not make this trip on a Gold Wing. We were out to prove that you could successfully navigate the terrible Dempster Highway on two Gold Wings. Could we?

Leaving Choteau, Montana that morning the sky was a little dark but not threatening. The further North we drove the worse it got. Our first great decision of the trip was to stop and put on our rain gear. Little did we know that for the next five days we would be in this uniform. As we drive away a bag of clothes Jim had thrown on top of his bike falls off, I stop and pick it up. Jim doesn't even realize I'm not behind him for several miles. Jim has this thing about eating in restaurants, especially breakfast. We stop in St. Mary's so we can eat in this little Cafe Jim has on his list of better places to eat. Their special was eggs, potatoes, bacon, sausage and French toast. For sure we would not have to eat for the rest of the day. We continued on US89 to the border, stopping to chat with some folks in a motor home and pulling two Gold Wings. In Cardston, Alberta we changed our money and continued North toward Calgary on Route 2. The wind and rain got considerably worse but we charged on. It let up for awhile as we rode through Calgary and their super clean highways. Jim is leading and I'm getting worried. I have almost 200 miles on this tank and he doesn't show any signs of stopping. Finally, with 203.7 miles he stops. This was our first stop for gas in Canada so I almost went into cardiac arrest when I had to pay \$9.65 to fill my tank. This was cheap I found out later.

Jim travels a lot by himself so he's not used to sharing his thoughts and ideas with someone traveling with him. Shortly after we went through Red Deer he suddenly turns off the freeway on Route 12 and then North again on Route 20. Jim won't put a CB or radio on his bike so I just follow blindly along. We finally stop in the little town of Breton. As we pull up to the curb I ask him what we're doing. He announces that we're going to get a bowl of soup. That wasn't what I meant but we went in anyway. Inside Jim has a bowl of soup and I have coffee. We've been on the road for 12 hours so we inquire about campgrounds in the area. We're told that there's a nice little campground about 30 miles down the road on the Saskatchewan River. We head for the campground, I thought. As we pass the campground entrance I'm honking my horn, waving wildly and Jim keeps on going. It turns out he was going to the next town to gas up so we wouldn't have to wait for them to open the next morning. Finally we enter the campground via a steep gravel road only to find that there is no attendant. We pick a spot but decide that the rain isn't going to quit and there is this nice little cookhouse that we could stay in if someone doesn't run us off. We go for the cookhouse. We never did see anyone and had a good night's rest. I put up my tent inside and Jim slept on a picnic table.

We are moving kinda slow in the morning and don't get away until 0600. The sun peeks at us just to let us know that it's still there. We stop at the junction of 22 and 43 for our breakfast ritual. Jim stops in the middle of the road to ask some locals where to eat..

They tell us and we park our bikes and start to enter the restaurant while engaging in conversation with another local. He tells us that if we really want a good breakfast we should go on down the street to another place. Of course this guy goes in this restaurant, I'm suspicious.. Jim throws his helmet on top of his gear and we ride off to this GOOD

restaurant. At the next intersection Jim's helmet, bangs to the pavement. Of course I stop and pick it up. I accuse him of bringing me along just to pick up his gear as he scatters it along the highway. Breakfast is OK but nothing to shout about.

We continue on Routes 43 and 34 to Grand Prairie then Route 2 to Dawson Creek. The scenery is magnificent. Huge stands of Aspen line both sides of the highway. In the fall it will be flaming with color. The rain has stopped for awhile and our spirits are once again soaring. We enter Dawson Creek and Jim heads for Tubby's Campground. This is the beginning of the Alaska Highway and referred to as Mile Zero. The lady at the campground tells us where to put our tents and also tells us that if we think it's going to rain we can put them up in the cookhouse. Her prediction is that it's not going to rain. So up the tents go outside the cookhouse. We're going to spend two days here to do laundry and check the bikes before heading up the Alaska Highway. We put our gear in the cookhouse and set up our stove etc. things went well until late afternoon. It started to rain and the sky had that "I'm going to be here awhile" look. Now it was cold too. We decided we might have to spend an extra day. The next day it just continued to rain and blow. Tubby let us pull the bikes in his carwash and shut the door against the wind. The bikes were in order so all we had to do was wait. I tried out my new Bakepacker by making some gingerbread and later baked a pizza. It's amazing how this thing works, I'll never be without it. Later we went to town, rain and all, to look around. By evening we decided an extra day would drive us crazy so we would leave in the morning rain or shine. Jim balked the next morning as it was still pouring and he said the road could be treacherous. We already knew of one 3 mile detour. I was a bit upset, I didn't come all this way to be delayed by rain. He finally gave in and we packed to leave. I started the bike to let it warm-up. Jim attempted to start his but it just wouldn't run. He said "See, God doesn't want us to go". So I named his bike "God". After we checked everything to include changing plugs and reading the maintenance manual he called the Honda dealer. Who told him it was just cold out and inferred that Jim just didn't know what he was doing. He came back fuming. After he cooled down a bit he called the guy back and finally persuaded him to send out a mechanic. It turned out that all four carburetors were full of water. Before we left town we went and bought a long screwdriver so we could perform the same magic the mechanic did, just in case we had to.

We were finally on our way about 1300 hours. Jim had convinced me this was going to be a bad road. So I kept looking for it. The rain would come and go and during one bad downpour we stopped for lunch while it passed. We passed through the detour with no problems, it was wet but hardpacked dirt. We saw a black bear and I stopped to take a picture but he decided it was not picture taking time and headed for the woods. We arrived at Fort Nelson that evening with me asking Jim "When are we going to get to the good part of this highway" I got one of those sheepish grins. From Dawson Creek to Fort Nelson the Alaska Highway is as good as any freeway we have. At the campground just on the other side of town I promptly dropped my bike as I was getting off. That 980 pounds was difficult to pick up. Jim told the attendant that we were real good at riding but we had a problem getting on and off. We put up our wet tents and left them to dry while we went to eat. We met a fellow biker from California at the restaurant who announced that the road was too bad up ahead for him to continue. His shiny steed w/trailer was parked outside beside our extremely muddy mounts. He went out to look at our bikes and returned to allow that if he had a bike like ours it wouldn't matter what the roads were

like. I really took exception to this but didn't say anything. Just because it was dirty didn't make it a piece of trash. We ate and left. It wasn't long before the rain started again.



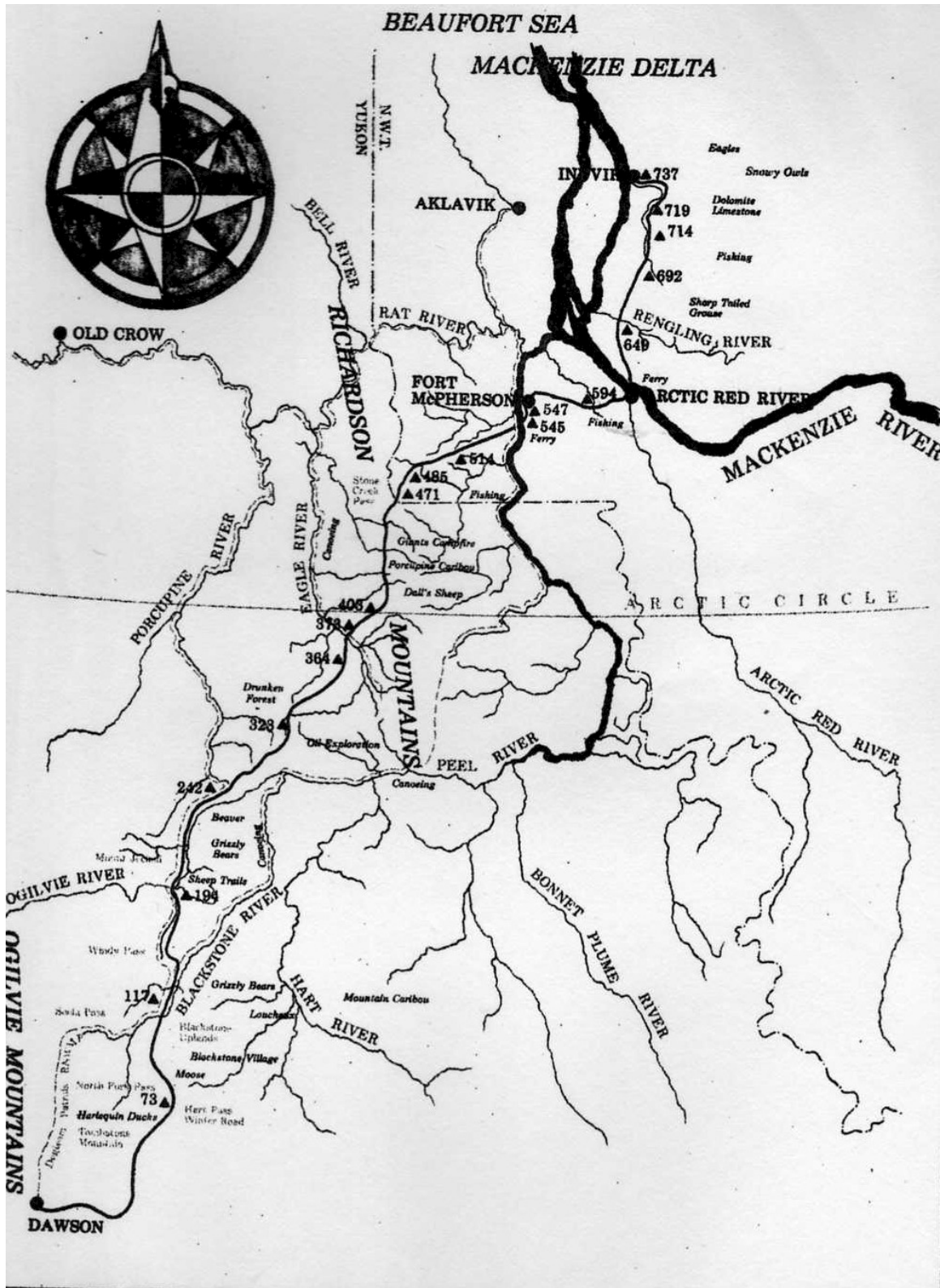
In the morning we packed our wet tents and headed toward Watson Lake and the Yukon. The scenery got better but the roads got worse. We've left most of civilization behind us so you gas up whenever you get the chance. We stopped at Summit Lake Pass for breakfast. It was crowded so we sat down with two truckers. Between them and Jim my

sides were splitting before we left. Canadians have a rare sense of humor. They did tell us that the road up ahead was really bad and to be careful. We had already come through some bad road, could it get worse? You betcha! Jim is a great animal lover so we stop to take pictures. The problem is his glasses are three prescriptions behind his eyes ability to see. We stop to take pictures of what Jim says are mountain goats. But the pictures I got back reveal that they are young caribou. His ability to see things gets better as you will see, later in the trip. Well, as promised, the road got worse. It had been reported that the road would be big boulders that we would have to go through, That wasn't true but what we found was worse. They had dumped tons of dirt on top of these boulders, watered it down' and rolled it and watered it down again. Then a gully washer came that they hadn't planned on. So what you had was very deep mud.

It was up to the brake disks on the hike and we had four miles of this stuff to slip, slide and plough through. How we kept the bikes between our legs I don't know. We had navigated lots of miles of had road that day and I was exhausted mentally and physically. Not so tired though that I didn't wash the mud off the bike after we setup camp at Watson Lake.

Watson Lake is where the famous Signpost Forest is located. Lots of people come through here to nail signs on posts put there for that purpose. It is literally a forest of signs from all over the world. All of them stolen of course. I don't think President Harding requested they mark his burial site up there.. It's 0515 and after taking a few pictures we continue along the Alaska Highway toward Whitehorse. The road doesn't get any better but we are getting better at riding on gravel. We hit a 14 mile stretch of it that is not too bad and we cross it at 40MPH. The scenery is still spectacular, lots of rivers, lakes and snow covered mountains. We arrive in Whitehorse and stop to say hello to the local Honda dealer. But it's Sunday and he is closed. We need to buy oil as it's way past my scheduled oil change. We finally locate something acceptable at \$3.21 a liter. Prices are going up. Somewhere we saw watermelon on sale for \$3.95 per pound and I think of Fay complaining about it being .49 cents a pound in Victorville. After chatting with a few people we head up the Klondike Highway and say goodbye to the Alcan. About 55 miles out of town we stop at a little place along the road that it supposed to be famous for it's cinnamon rolls. We stroll in and announce to the waitress that we would like two cups of coffee and two cinnamon rolls. She laughs and suggests that we split one. OK, we can order another one if it's not enough. What arrived was the biggest cinnamon roll I have ever seen. Jim and I ran outside to get our cameras. We managed to finish it, barely. We stopped in Carmacks for the night at a campground along the Nordinskiold River. The good thing was it was free. The bad thing was there was no potable water. We changed oil and I tried to clean up some of my gear that got oil soaked from a leaky bottle. The days have been getting longer and the sun barely sets before rising again.

We are up and on the road at 0545, Near disaster is not far away. I always clean my windshield the night before but somehow last night I forgot. As we head out of the campground I realize this but decide to wait until our first rest stop. The sun is in our eyes making visibility difficult. Through the dirty windshield it's impossible. At one of those moments of no visibility I hit some deep gravel that 'I had no idea was there. I'm all over the road and completely disoriented. At one point I was sure I was in the other lane at another point I was sure I was about to head into the ditch, Someone with more ability



than I kept that bike from going down or hitting someone headon. Needless to say I stopped at my first opportunity and cleaned the windshield. Just writing about it here gives me the shivers. We stop at Stewarts Crossing for breakfast and talk to a bearded

gentleman from Inuvik. He assures us we can do the famed Dempster Highway with no problem. He also informs us that the road from here to Dawson City is paved. He's almost right. We reach the junction where the Dempster begins. We take some pictures and inquire about what time the gas station opens in the morning and the restaurant of course. It's 25 miles on in to Dawson City where we camp and prepare for the big day tomorrow.

Dawson City is right out of the old west. Boardwalks dirt streets and the gas pumps really look out of place. This was the site of the great goldrush and at one time had a population of 40,000. Currently the population is 3,000. We setup camp and do laundry. It's \$2.00 a load and .25 for 4 minutes drying time, 2 of which are cooling. The shower is a buck for 5 minutes. The campground is the center for story swapping and information gathering. Everyone just came from somewhere so the guy heading in that direction wants to know what he can expect. The problem is everything is relative to the prior experience of the traveler you're talking to. Jim and I were concerned about two destinations. The Dempster and Top of the World highway which we hoped to take after we returned from Inuvik. I guess the best way to determine who to believe is to select the story that makes you feel the best. We heard stories about both roads that ranged from "It's almost a paved road" to "It's barely passable". So much for information gathering. It bears note that none of these people were on motorcycles.

Sleep will not come easy tonight. We are both up at midnight to take pictures to show everyone how bright it is. How will they know it is really midnight? We finally get a few hours sleep.

Today is the day. We're up early of course and can't wait. The gas station doesn't open until 7am but we leave at 6:15 to cover 25 miles on a real paved road. The restaurant opens first so we'll eat before gassing up. We chat with a couple who just came down the Dempster. He says he used to race motorcycles and the Dempster will be a piece of cake for us. Good news, I hope he's right. We gas up and fill our extra container as it will be 236.6 miles to the next available fuel. We head up to the road with a little hesitation. Then we're on it and across the bridge to the real beginning. We drop immediately into deep gravel. I recall thinking "There is no way I can make 475 miles in this stuff". Just about the time you are ready to give up the surface changes and you get a little break. It's kinda like the old joke that ends "Ok everybody, breaks over, back on your heads". The scenery is breathtaking. We stop and take pictures of the road winding through the mountains and the ice fields. When you stop there is not a sound and you are really part of nature. Jim is better at this gravel than me, at least he goes faster. At mile 117 he slows to a wobbly stop. He has a flat tire. I laugh and get out my tape recorder which Jim calls the White Rat. What else are you to do? Here we are 117 miles from civilization in one direction and 120 miles in the other direction. He couldn't have picked a better place to have a flat. We're also on a curve along a creek which is flowing rusty red. Do you know what happens to a bike when you put it on the center stand in gravel? It sinks. So, I grunt and groan and try to pick up the rearend while Jim tries to rotate the tire to find the leak. Success. It's a cut in the center of the tire. We both get out our tire repair kits which neither one of us has ever used. I bought mine back in 82. The price tag is still dangling from the zipper. We look through both kits and decide to use mine. It has written directions! Jim plugs the tire. Now here's an important tip for all you folks that want to

make this trip. If you have an Aspencade you can probably go alone if you carry a jack. If you have an Interstate you had better take an Aspencade along with you because he has an onboard air compressor. At this point I offer to sell Jim air for his tire. He tells me he has a bicycle pump. Not wanting to spend the next week here I give him his air free. We stop a few miles down the road at a deserted campground and check the tire. It seems to be holding. In fact he never lost a pound for the next 1215 miles when he was able to replace it.

We arrive at Eagle Plains about 7pm. We'd been on the road about 11 hours and covered 236.6 miles. We filled our tanks and Jim went in the Motel to see about camping. He came out and announced that we could get a room for \$110.00 or camp for \$6.00. We decided to get a cup of coffee before setting up camp. It wasn't going to get dark so we had plenty of time. I went in the wash room to wash my hands and couldn't believe how dirty I was. When I took off my helmet and my glasses I looked like a raccoon. My clothes were even worse. Jim had been leading all day so he was not as bad. It took some extra coins that night to get me clean.

During the night it rained and we're sure the roads will be slippery. We were wrong, the roadway was dusty as usual. We arrive at the Arctic Circle about 25 miles beyond Eagle Plains and take our usual pictures and Jim tells me to turn on the White Rat. Jim is retired from the Navy (submarine service) and crossing the Arctic Circle for the first time calls for an initiation into The Royal Order of the Blue Nose. Unbeknownst to me he has obtained this certificate and permission to initiate me into this Order. Can you picture me in a crusty Navy hat holding a sign that says GO NAVY and singing Anchors Away? I was honored but still felt a bit stupid out here in the middle of nowhere going through this initiation. Jim took pictures and it is all recorded on the White Rat. During all this a motorhome arrives but we pay little attention to it. Later, out pops this guy in coat and tails a silver tipped cane and a champagne glass. He's also wearing a top hat, Had we entered the world of crazies? Maybe it was King Neptune ready for a party, or had he come to tell Jim he had not given his permission for him to represent him. It turned out he was the official greeter for the Arctic Circle and he had certificates of his own to present to us. His name was Harry and he was retired from the Canadian Air Force (that figures). He had started this as a joke but someone took him serious and he now gets paid by the Canadian government. His official title is Keeper of the Arctic Circle. Come on Jim let's get out of here before Alice shows up.

Through all this the road has not improved. We bounce and churn along arriving at the border of the Northwest Territories. We had been warned that the road from here on got worse. They had certainly built more bumps in it. We cross the Peel river via ferry and head for Fort McPherson for fuel and food. Fort McPherson is an Indian town and not too well kept. We stop and chat with the folks at the tent and canvas shop. Back on the highway it gets our undivided attention. We take our second ferry ride at Arctic Red River where we cross the Mackenzie. Even though you can see the town you have to take the ferry to get there as there are no roads leading to it. Just 85 miles to go. As the day wears on we take more and more breaks. We ride for miles in freshly graded road that you kinda sink into then it turns into a washboard. Somewhere along here one at the vents on my bike bounces to the road. Both of the rails on Jim's bike have now broken

and are taped together. Suddenly, we're on blacktop and just 11 miles from Inuvik. We accelerate but doing fifty seems like a hundred and it's hard to go beyond the 50 mark. We made it!

Inuvik (place of man) is a friendly town and we draw a crowd everywhere we stop. Our first stop is to take pictures of the Catholic church nicknamed The Igloo because that's what it looks like. The campground in town is run by Fleming Erikson and Trudie.

Friendlier folks you will not meet anywhere. They attempt to care for your every need and advise you where to eat etc. Since a meal can easily cost \$50.00 up here getting one for \$5.50 is a bargain. Trudie arranged for us to fly to Tuktoyuktut so I could stick my foot in the Beaufort Sea. Jim is not a big fan of airplanes so I don't tell him all the things I found wrong with this Cessna before we took off on the rutted dirt runway. He doesn't understand what that horn means when the pilot tries to get airborne before reaching the proper airspeed. I save all this until we get back. Our guide in Tuktoyuktut fills us in on the local culture and answers all our questions. Every house has a dog sled parked beside it. In the winter they hunt and trap. Tuktoyuktut means "place where man stabs caribou". When the caribou migrate they swim from one point of land to another. That is when the locals get in their boats and stab them, killing only what they need for food.

The flight back was uneventful and I fall asleep. Jim wakes me up as he is afraid that I will knock the pilot out of his seat, It must have been a great compliment to the pilot because he is suddenly full of information and is pointing things out to me as we fly along. The weather in Inuvik is hot. We assumed before our trip that the further North we got the cooler it would become. The opposite was true. The temperature was 91 degrees. The sun up here never sets during June and most of July.

We head back down the Dempster on 21 June, the longest day of the year, How it can be any longer than 24 hours of sunshine I don't know. It's a time of celebration for everyone in the North country and is called Midnight Madness. We figure that since we came up this road we have it all figured out and we know where we can make time and where we can't. Not true. They are constantly working on the roads so what we found was that the surface was totally different than what we experienced on the way up. When I say they work on the roads that doesn't mean they make them better to drive on. It just means they've graded them and poured more gravel on top. This of course makes it even more difficult to traverse. At one point we followed a grader for a while and when we had an opportunity Jim passed him on the right and I passed him on the left. This left me on the wrong side of a pile of gravel in the middle. All I needed was for some motorhome or 18 wheeler to come along and meet me headon. Just for information the Dempster is a one lane road with room for two vehicles to pass. Nothing came but a water truck who politely allowed me to pass.

As I said earlier Jim's eyes are behind the prescription of his glasses or perhaps it's the strain of riding the Dempster. Anyway, on this beautiful morning we are making fair progress and suddenly he stops. I pull up beside him and ask what the problem is. Jim says, 'Look up ahead there's a Grizzly bear in the road'. Well, I saw something up ahead but my eyes weren't good enough to identify it. Jim is certain it's a Grizzly. We get our cameras out and cautiously ride toward the Grizzly. As we approach I start to laugh

uncontrolled and Jim accelerates on up the road. Our Grizzily turned out to be an abandoned brown Buick. I stop and take a picture of this prize but in my haste I forgot to open the lens cover. So now it's my word against his. Later, Jim stops again. This time he says it's an animal with her young one nursing. I said, "Jim that's a man". Jim is indignant he readies his camera. About the time he is ready the man stands up, he had been picking wild flowers. I've got to get him out of the sun.

When we reached the Arctic Circle we stop to say Hi to Harry and he informed us that there was going to be a big party there tonight. They would be serving barbecued caribou. We were not going to backtrack on the Dempster for any party but Harry informed us that the hotel would bring us back via van. We continued on to Eagle Plains. We did go back for the BBQ and It was great. We didn't stay long as we had another long day ahead of us.

We were up at 0330 and on the road at 0500. I was tired as I didn't get to bed until after midnight. The day is uneventful except I have to constantly fight sleep. We stop to take of some fox. Real ones this time. Later my mirror is about to fall off so I stop to tighten it and rest. I'm sure that Jim is a bit perturbed as I can't keep up. We stop to rest and eat along the road. I feel like a zombie. At one point I realize that we've covered 20 miles per my odometer that I don't remember. Then I guess the adrenaline kicked in as I suddenly was. wide awake and on Jim's tail. He said later he looked to see if he had slowed down since he had been riding almost out of sight all day. The deep gravel that signaled the start of this trip didn't seem so deep now. Jim waved me up along side and we rode across the bridge, our arms waving and horns blowing. We were triumphant, we had beat the Dempster.

After a celebration of Strawberry-Rhubarb pie and ice-cream we headed for the campground in Dawson City. We'll stay two nights here to clean and check the bikes and our gear. Laundry is a must. Our plans are to take the Top of the World highway to Tetlin Junction and then on up to Fairbanks on the Alaska highway. We decide to cancel this part as the Top of the World would be another 189 miles of gravel. We had no doubts that we could make it but we weren't sure that the plug in Jim's tire would accept that much more punishment. We decided it would be more prudent to head back down the Klondike to Whitehorse and get a new tire. We are told that after we had left Eagle Plains a bear had tried to get in the tent of two girls camping next to us. Jim had missed a real photo opportunity Monday morning we sleep in and don't get up until 0440 but we're on the road at 0530. We stop at Stewart Crossing for fuel and breakfast. I'm still fighting sleep so I tell Jim to go on and I'll catch him in Whitehorse. Ten minute naps do wonders for me except I seem to need more of them. I arrive at the Honda shop about 15 minutes after Jim. The fuel carrier on the back of my bike had lost a bolt so I had the bracket taped. When the mechanic noticed this he wouldn't let me leave until he replaced the bolt and removed the tape. Nice people these Honda folks. Finally we were on the road again headed for Skagway, Alaska and the ferry. This 100 miles is one of the more scenic routes and I highly recommend It after they

get it paved. It had been reported to me that it was already paved but that was not true. They are working on it though. We finally cross into Alaska at White Pass. It's literally

down hill from here. on. We stop for some pictures of a beautiful waterfall and we can see the narrow gauge tracks that we'll ride tomorrow.

Skagway is a bit touristy but it has that Old West look and well it should. This is where thousands started their trek up the mountain to search for gold. We head immediately for the dock to see when we can get the ferry. We're in luck. There is one leaving tomorrow night at 0030. We buy tickets and head for a campground. The campground near the dock does not have tent camping. The campground on the edge of town has tent camping but no showers. It's time for diplomacy. We get a nice grassy spot next to the showers and we can walk to town.

Sometimes I think Jim's whole goal in life is locating all the good places in the world to eat. He does this by talking to the locals and finding out where they eat. He finds a place that opens at 0600. This will give us time to eat and be at the ticket office at 0730 to get seats on the narrow gauge. Everything went like clock work. At 0845 we were headed up the mountain. It's really a scenic trip with lots of photo opportunities. I'm so glad Jim took such good pictures because I slept most of the trip. I think I was awake for all the really good parts. Jim disagrees. After we return we pack and put the bikes in line on the dock. It's only 9 or 10 hours til we sail.

We spend the time walking to town and talking to folks. Later two couples we met many days ago when we crossed into Canada found us and wanted to know how the trip had been going. If you don't want to know don't ask! An hour or so later I think they thought they had just come off the Dempster. Finally, we load and rush up to the solarium and claim a lounge chair to sleep on for the next two and a half days. This is what I call living. The ferry has all the amenities you would expect. I can sleep and eat anytime I want. We spend the time doing just that plus watching whales, lots of whales, eagles and people. People are funny creatures and bear alot of watching. But that's another story for another time. The scenery from Skagway to Prince Rupert is _____ (fill in your own best adjective as I find it indescribable. It's easy to see why many people move up here to what we call the wilderness. I have always wondered and now I know.

It's Friday morning when we dock in Prince Rupert. We are through customs and on the road by 0800. It's cool and overcast, good riding weather. We head out on the Yellowhead Highway (Route 16) toward Prince George. Little do I know that this is going to be a day full of excitement. I'm listening to a local radio station when they report there has been a 6.0 earthquake in Southern California. I flag Jim down and tell him I'm going to stop at the next phone I see and call Fay. She's Ok and I give her an update on our trip. About 47 miles past Houston, BC we stop to put on our raingear. Jim's bike won't start. He pushes it down the hill and we ride to the next rest

area and check his stator. You guessed it. The stator is dead. We switch batteries and push my bike to get it started. We figure that if we switch batteries at gas stops we can go on forever or at least until my stator quits. I take the lead since we have pulled all the light fuses out of Jim's bike. As we approach Vanderhoof, our next gas stop, I see a dog on the side of the road. When he sees the bike he bristles up and I'm sure he's going to attack. He does. At 60 mph you have no time to make alot of decisions. I had practiced this in my mind for years. Lean forward and roll the throttle. It worked. The dog hit the

front wheel and I wobbled abit but maintained control. Jim said the backend came off the ground at least a foot and cars were scattering everywhere to stay out of my way. Jim of course was trying to miss the dead dog and find a place to go if I went down, which he was sure was inevitable. I didn't even slow down until we were in Vanderhoof. Had I shut it down and tried to brake I wouldn't be here writing this.

We camped that night along the shore of Purden Lake. We were on the road about 0530 the next morning. More breathtaking scenery. We stop to watch a young buck prance around and decide whether or not he wants to run across the road. He doesn't. Soon we are in Jasper National Park and some real scenic wonders. Lots of mountain goats. Finally, up ahead, a real live bear. Jim finally gets his picture. We also go through Banff National Park and start looking for a place to camp. It's a Canadian holiday so things are pretty full. As we head toward Calgary the skies are black. We put on our raingear. It was only a matter of time until we caught the storm. It hit with avengance. Lightning, rain and thunder. We learned later that it really did alot of damage to Calgary. Storm drains so full it popped manhole covers. We opted for a motel that night. In fact we stopped at the first one we came to.

Sunday was cloudy and cool in the a.m. as we headed toward the border. We were getting anxious now having made another route change since the stator went out. We were headed for I-15. Once we hit Montana our speed would increase. The miles whizzed by and before we knew it we had covered 568 miles. We were in Dillon, MT. This is the site where I had that girl draped over my windshield. I told Jim that maybe this wasn't a good idea, maybe they're looking for me. We stayed at the KOA. I changed oil and insisted that Jim do at least one load of laundry. The reason is another story.

Monday we are up and on the road at 0500. Today we cover 661 miles in 13 hours. Nothing exciting today except we left Dillon in warm weather but as we crossed Monida Pass the temperature dipped to 30 degrees and we almost froze. We arrived in Hurricane, UT at 1800 hrs. Toni, Jim's wife had spaghetti waiting for us and a delicious cherry pie.

Now I wasn't anxious to get home but I was on the road at 0230 and I hate driving in the dark. I arrived in Victorville at 0900 gassed up and ready for the next trip. Right after this next dance.

The trip covered 7400 miles in 25 days. The cost was \$1400 and that covered all gas, lodging, airfare, trainfare and a boat trip. The bike did well and suffered no major damage. The dog caused two cracks in the cover that protects the front of the bike. Brake pads on both front brakes were down to the metal. It took Fay and me one long day to tear the bike down and clean it. Would I do it again? Well, sure I would. But once you've been up the Dempster there's really no reason to go back. It's your turn!

For those of you that really like to tour you'll be happy to know that the Alaska highway should be paved all the way by next year. It's a great trip and I highly recommend it. The scenery is spectacular and the people are friendly. One note of caution. Don't stop for gas in Fireside. They won't serve motorcycles. They claim we don't buy enough fuel for them to bother.

