

# Trike Trip to Alaska

Dick and Mary Reedy 2006

Can you believe it? Four 'senior' citizens (ages 63-68) taking the 'trip of a lifetime' up through Canada, the Yukon and into Alaska and home again, all on a trike. The trip covered 11,100+ miles and five weeks and two days. Dick and myself (Mary), along with our dear friends, Earl and Pat Beckwith, left our homes in Texas on June 16<sup>th</sup> for our long planned adventure.

We spent the first three days of our journey traveling to Denver with stops in Amarillo (Palo Duro Canyon), New Mexico and Southern Colorado (Great Sand Dunes National Park) as we biked up through the Rockies and on into Denver.

Day four found us riding up through Wyoming on the east side of the Big Horn Mountains where the wind almost blew us off the bikes. Once in Teton Park, the wind subsided and we were rewarded with wondrous views. We biked through Yellowstone Park, and then into Montana and Glacier National Park. In Glacier National Park we rode the Sun Highway, a winding ride up through the most outstanding mountains we had seen to date. The weather was cool, damp and plenty of snow was found as we hit the top. The scenery was glorious and we ran out of adjectives to describe what we were seeing. We finally just decided oohs; aahs and wows would handle it.

We crossed into Canada near Cardston, Alberta. By that time the snow-capped mountains had settled into lush rolling hills, the air had cooled and we were finally into another country and, as well, into another layer of clothing. We entered Banff National Park and again, without a doubt, found the scenery to be breathtaking. We were surrounded by what we thought to be the most beautiful mountain we had seen so far. In addition, there were beautiful lakes, including Lake Louise, ice fields and glaciers all around us.

Leaving Banff National Park we found the scenery changing to low green hills and then to a 'hardscrabble' appearance the further north we went. We entered Dawson Creek, the town where the Alaskan Highway begins. We stopped and took pictures under the world-renown sign noting anyone venturing north from that point would be traveling on the famous Alaska Highway. As we traveled north out of Dawson Creek, the scenery improved and we were back to hearing ourselves make those undignified oohs and ahhs.

It was about this time that we developed our first bike problem of the journey. About 75 miles south of Fort Nelson, BC we noticed a strange noise coming from under our bike. Dick figured right away that it sounded like a major problem and was concerned whether it would shut us down immediately, or could we nurse it along until we got to a town. It was the U-joint and we did make it to Fort Nelson. Dick was able to find a used U-Joint from a Lehman dealer in Alberta, BC. and he was kind enough to ship it to us via Greyhound bus. During our breakdown, we met several great people who helped us in many ways. A young Harley rider named Marty was one of them. Marty met up with Dick and Earl when they were checking out our 'repair' options upon arriving in town. Not only was he knowledgeable about what our local options were, he insisted on being a part of the repair team; there wasn't anything he wouldn't do to help.



### **Dick Reedy & Earl and Pat Beckwith – Dawson, Yukon Territory**

Four days later we were on the road again. We left Fort Nelson, BC in the rain and cool of an early morning hoping to make up some lost time. We rode through glorious country watching, and stopping, for black bear, moose, buffalo, mountain sheep, caribou and wild horses. We stayed in the Yukon (Teslin) that night in a log-cabin motel with no phones or TV's. This would become the norm. The following morning we headed for Jakes Corner where we would turn and head into Skagway, Alaska. Being a port town, there were four huge cruise ships in the harbor. The town was busy but we enjoyed walking around and took the White Pass train ride up into the mountains learning the history of the area and wondering how the early adventurers ever made it that far. We left Skagway and headed back to the Yukon stopping in Whitehorse, a fairly modern town, to pick up an extra U-joint Dick had ordered and shipped to the Honda shop there and then rode through Carmacks and on into Dawson, in the Yukon. The scenery did not let us down.

Dawson is quaint town with dirt streets and has a colorful history. We ate at Klondike Kates, lost a few dollars at Diamond Tooth Gerties and walked the streets at 11:30 PM with the sun shining. It was great! Dawson was the host town for a bike rally while we were there. We were advised we would see bikes from all over the world. Could be, but not for sure as we really didn't participate in any activities...by our count, about 24 bikes attended.

We left Dawson via ferry crossing the Yukon River and spent the next day on one of the roughest roads we encountered, or would encounter. The road is referred to as the 'top of the world' highway. We spotted a couple of grizzly bears along side the gravel road but not much else for wildlife. The country had a barren beauty to it, you could see forever.

Being able to see our road out ahead of us a mile or more, wrapping itself around the mountains, much like ribbon, in and out of our sight was outstanding. We rode into Boundary, population 5, where we paid almost \$5.00 per gallon for gas and \$7.00 for two cups of coffee and a packaged roll. Boundary is a one-man show, a father and his four children, a log 'office/gift/coffee shop' and a log cabin to live in. The area is about as remote as I've ever seen, ...and we lived in Wyoming for many years. From there we rode on to Chicken, with a population more than Boundary but it didn't appear to be much more. It was here we discovered our second bike problem. The rough roads had blown the fork seals on our bike's front end and we lost all the fluid on the left side and had barely any fluid left on the right side. We were thankful we could still drive the bike. We had lunch in Chicken at what was their only restaurant / gift store and visited the 'out-door' bathrooms and proceeded on to Tok and down into Valdez, Alaska.



### **Pat & Earl Beckwith and Dick Reedy Outside Valdez, Alaska**

Traveling into Valdez is probably one of the most beautiful rides we were on. You ride past Bridal Veil Falls and snow capped mountains and glaciers everywhere. We spent two days there, we walked the wharf and did a little shopping and took time to do laundry and re-organize. We rode out to Worthington Glacier, watched a movie on the 1963 earthquake in Valdez and one on the building of the pipeline. Both were eye-openers! The following day we headed for Anchorage where we spent the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Just imagine watching fireworks at midnight and it not being completely dark! Before heading on, we backtracked to Palmer (about 40 miles) to have the blown fork seals repaired.

The following morning we headed for Seward, Alaska, another port city, and stayed in an old Army Barracks where the officer's quarters were renovated into bedrooms. Leaving Seward we headed for Homer, Alaska hoping that we could time our arrival to take a

ferry to Kodiak Island. We arrived Homer in late afternoon and ventured out on the 'spit' (a piece of land protruding out into the water) and where many businesses and campgrounds are located only to find that the ferry was full for the evening run and schedules for the next day did not work for us because of the timeline of the returning ferry.



### **Dick & Mary Reedy – Homer, Alaska**

The next morning we started the backtracking over some roads already traveled. Alaska has very few roads and it is not uncommon when traveling from point to point to retrace your steps in an effort to reach your new destination. We traveled toward Anchorage, back up to Tok and at that point again picked up Highway 2 and headed south through the Yukon towns of Beaver Creek, Destruction Bay, back through Whitehorse with a stay in Haines Junction. The following morning our journey took us through Teslin and another beautiful ride to Watson Lake. There we stayed at an old Canadian Air Force facility now known as the Air Force Motel. We were met at the door by a German couple that own the motel and operate it much like a dormitory. They asked if we wanted to have a tour prior to registering for the night but the facility was so clean and well maintained, and we had ridden many miles that day, that we passed up the offer in order to get into the 'relax' mode for the evening. As we entered the building, we were instructed that we must remove our shoes. We looked at each other but obeyed. We were shown our rooms in our stocking feet and immediately noticed we did not have a bathroom, much less a TV or phone in the rooms. At that point, we were then given the 'tour' and taken down the hall where the ladies bathrooms were as well as where the ladies showers were located. Of course the men's facilities were nearby as well. We enjoyed the new experience and certainly appreciated the cleanliness.

We headed south on Highway 37, otherwise referred to as the Cassiar Highway. The road in the past had not been in good condition but we found it to be OK, at least relative to the roads we had already traveled, and it was the shortest way to Stewart, BC and Hyder, Alaska, the final Alaska town we would visit before we headed back to the US. Hyder is a sweet 'little' town. I don't know it's population but it has to be fewer than 100. Hyder is the home of Fish Creek, an area where the Salmon come to spawn and the bears come to 'dinner'. This year the Salmon were a couple of weeks late so we did not find any bears. The Salmon Glacier is located here as well and we biked up the mountain to see this glorious glacier. Like so much that we saw on our journey, there is not a camera that can capture the beauty or an adjective that can describe the breathtaking views of what we saw. This would be our last day in Alaska...on this trip.



### **Exit Glacier in Alaska – Dick and Mary Reedy**

The next day we rode back into British Columbia and on down through Prince George, Williams Lake, Whistler (where they are holding some of the events of the next winter Olympics) and on into Squamish for the night. From there we headed on over to Vancouver the next day and boarded the ferry to Vancouver Island. We were all amazed at the number of 18-wheelers loaded with lumber, etc. that can fit on one of those ferries along with numerous RV's, automobiles and bikes. We did not spend much time on the island but did enjoy touring the historic area of Victoria before boarding another ferry to Port Angeles, Washington.

We biked down along the coast of Washington and on into Oregon. The ocean was beautiful and the temperature was cool. We found the coast really congested so we turned inland about half way down the Oregon coast and picked up Highway 5. We rode south along Mt. Shasta and Lake Shasta and what a beautiful sight they were. It was shortly after passing them that the green disappeared and we found ourselves in hot, dry,

desert conditions. Once we reached the San Francisco area our friends split off to visit a granddaughter for a couple of days and we rode on to Clovis to visit our son and his family. A few days later we met up with our friends a little south of Fresno for the trip home. The temperature was over 100 degrees from California to Texas and we found ourselves getting off the road by mid-day and getting back on the road at 2:00 – 3:00 AM for the next couple of mornings as we ran for home through Arizona, New Mexico and into Texas.

I feel as if in telling our story that I have neglected to tell the ‘personal’ side of our trip, and I have. I’m not a good enough storyteller to adequately write about all the experiences we had and make them interesting to you. There were so many times we laughed until our bodies ached. We played cards most nights, we triked in the rain, cold and 100+ temperatures, we picnicked until the weather didn’t cooperate, we ate our meals together (some food was good and some was awful), we stayed in a few motels that ordinarily we’d have driven by, well you can guess why, and we stayed at a few ‘uptown’ motels where we shared a suite. And there was so much more.

Recently, upon reviewing our pictures of this grand trip, we reflected upon the beauty and wilderness of where we had been and then, and only then, did we realize the magnitude of this journey for the four of us. To think at one point we were riding the ‘top of the world’ highway, with grizzlies and miles and miles of lonely road leading us to where we didn’t have a clue. On our final day, as we were congratulating ourselves on the successful completion of a wonderful trip and preparing to head back to our homes, Earl said, ‘Do you realize that we just completed something that many people only talk about?’ Yes, and we’d do it again in a heartbeat!

Submitted by:

Dick and Mary Reedy  
8801 Brierfield Road  
Granbury, TX 76049