

So you're thinking of going cross country, aye?

by Stu Segal

I've been riding a lonnnnng time - so long that when I began there was no such thing as motorcycle inspection or helmet laws, that people went to Daytona to see the races, and motorcycles were prohibited on the Garden State Parkway.

I've probably logged 150-200,000 miles on my bikes, but I've never been on a bike trip of more than 5 days. I'm sure you know all the reasons - don't have the bread, can't get away, bike not dependable, wife will divorce you, can only tie so much stuff on the bike, do it next year, etc., etc.

I've also got some good friends, who will remain nameless, (but if you happen to live in NJ, PA or MD and you know the owners of a custom cycle shop in Landisville, NJ, then you know who I'm talking about) who go cross country every year. They manage to do this regardless that they could easily come up with a similar list of why they can't go. In the 12 years I've known them they've never done less than Sturgis, and they've done as much as coast-to-coast with their daughter (in a sidecar) when she was 10.

So over the years I've heard a lot of stories about these trips, and how they're done. Although I've never had the right set of circumstances to do an extended bike trip, I've always listened in rapt attention and hoped someday I'd get the chance. Well, this year I knew I could get the time off, had decided it was time to update my trusty '86 Lowrider, so I got an FL type bike with the intention of going *somewhere* for 2-3 weeks.

Then I started thinking about all my friends had told me over the years, which amounted to:

- F** *We're gonna get up every day at 7 o'clock.*
- F** *We'll be on our bikes at 8.*
- F** *We'll ride 150 miles before breakfast.*
- F** *Then we'll stop every 150 miles for gas.*
- F** *After we've gone 500 miles we'll start to look for a place to pitch our tents.*
- F** *Then we'll get up in the morning and do it again.*
- F** *Of course if it rains the plan is unchanged cause we've gotta do 500 miles a day.*
- F** *By the way, you should be prepared for your bike to break down in Bumfuck, which will be at least 50 miles from the nearest Harley dealer, who will sell you overpriced "Genuine" replacement parts, and will be glad to schedule you for repair a week from Tuesday; don't even try to explain that your bike is broken down in east Bumfuck and your old lady is sitting on the bike with a .45 keeping the locals from removing your luggage.*
- F** *Of course, don't worry too much about the old lady, cause most first timers stop talking after about day three, and if she makes it all the way there's a good chance that when you get home she'll kick you, kick your bike, and tell you that she never wants to see you or your friggin bike again.*

So with this inviting picture in mind, I decided that a short ride (Atlantic Ocean to Grand Canyon) with my spouse and friends would be the ticket for this summer. So off we go, and -

We're gonna get up every day at 7 o'clock. - OK, so **I** got up at 7 every day, and watched as everyone else wandered out of their rooms at 8, 9,

We'll be on our bikes at 8 - In 2 1/2 weeks it happened twice.

We'll ride 150 miles before breakfast - Do the donuts and muffins and coffee and toast in the motel lobby really count?

Then we'll stop every 150 miles for gas - or maybe every 100 (or 75, or 50)?

After we've gone 500 miles - I haven't figured this one out; we actually went 5,000 miles in 11 riding days, so we must have been doing about 500 daily, but it always seemed that as soon as we pulled out we were looking for a motel to bed down again.

pitch our tents??? - Well they didn't get me on this one, but check with the poor also nameless biker (ex Pleasantville NJ cop) who actually bought a tent last year, and was practicing setting it up in the dark til the day before the trip, when he learned that the camping never gets any more rugged than a Motel 6.

Then we'll get up in the morning and do it again - True.

Of course if it rains - We took every conceivable piece of rain gear, totes, booties, chaps, waterproof boots, faceshields - we got lucky and probably didn't spend 6 hours in the rain.

By the way, you should be prepared for your bike to break down - I guess I'm *really* lucky, cause my local H-D dealer (Electric City HD, Scranton, PA) did one hell of a job preparing my bike for the trek, and it never burped in 5,000 miles (so I never got the chance to see whether the Rapid City, SD dealer really does have armed guards to keep you in line during Sturgis bike week).

Of course, don't worry too much about the old lady. . . . tell you that she never wants to see you or your friggin bike again - OK so I'm *really, really*, lucky, cause not only didn't she complain, but halfway through the trip she started wondering how we could do an even longer one next year.

So here we are, 5,000 miles later, no longer cross-country virgins. We *know* where Wall Drug is, and how to get to the Soo, aye?

If you've been thinking about doing a major trip, I'd give you four pieces of advice.

1. Be prepared.
2. Don't think of it as a 20-day trip, think of it as four 5-day trips in a row (great advice from my friends).
3. Don't worry about the rest of it - a bad day on the road still beats a good day at work.
4. Do it now, don't wait - nobody's ever going to be able to really describe what you're missing if you don't.