

## 2008 Continental Divide Ride – Dual Sport Adventure

CDR Dual Sport adventure posts start!

August 2, 2008, North Fork, California.

Check in for our DAILY updates about the upcoming Continental Divide Ride (CDR). The CDR is a dual-sport, adventure class ride where we will ride our motorcycles from the Canadian border in Montana to the Mexican border in New Mexico over roads and trails of all sorts (most of them unpaved) that parallel the continental divide of the American Rockies.



We'll be riding the route during the last two weeks of August – covering over 2500 off-road miles in about 11 days.

One of our riders, Bob Mueller (right), did the ride in back in 2004 (see <http://www.hackneys.com/travel/CDR/cdr.htm>) and he'll be our trail boss.

### Larry's Big Red XR650L

August 3, 2008, North Fork, California. The CDR event is just starting to fill my reality as I arrive at Larry and Sue Langley's lovely home, just south of Yosemite at the edge of the Sierra National Forest. After several months of preparation our 2008 Continental Divide Ride (CDR) dual sport adventure is just two weeks away. I was recruited to not just ride the event, but to build and prep most of the machines that would be used by the six riders.

Sandra, my motorcycling wife, and I drove several hours from our Corona California headquarters through the cool San Joaquin valley darkness to deliver Larry's CDR-prepped Honda XR650L. Larry, a media-relations guru in the motorcycle industry, has been off-road racing and dual sport riding for nearly half a century. He lays out challenging dual sport rides so no one knows better the potential for adventure that the CDR can present.

The next day, with Sandra in tow on her Suzuki DR200SE Dual Sport, we took Larry's bike out for a shake-down cruise. We had revised the suspension (with springing and damping work from Fineline Suspension out of Utah) and added a

DeVol lowering link to make the ride more supple while allowing the bike to rest at a height that permits easier mounting and dismounting.

We had refreshed the engine with new OE valve train parts and a quality WISECO piston. We mounted EATON's new super-sized tapered handlebars to add strength and reduce vibration. Electric grip heating elements and power sockets for a heated vest and GPS were also added.

Also added was the Sequoia Adventure Rack set up from Turbo City ([www.turbocity.com/default.php?cPath=69\\_74&osCsid=5bc794bc4df664874073567063d2ee31](http://www.turbocity.com/default.php?cPath=69_74&osCsid=5bc794bc4df664874073567063d2ee31)) which holds Tour master's Cortech sport saddle bags ([www.helmethouse.com](http://www.helmethouse.com)). The rack system provides dedicated mounting points for the bag's retaining straps and supports them to prevent wear and damage to the motorcycle. Perfect for use on the CDR because the bags are easily removable for toting into the hotel at trail's end.



After the 40-mile shake down we

found a couple of things to adjust and change (including reducing the side stand length in response to the reduced suspension length) and the big red Honda is ready for it's ride.

TOMORROW – A primer on the CDR ride route, plus a breakdown of the other riders and their bikes.





## What the heck is the “CDR”?

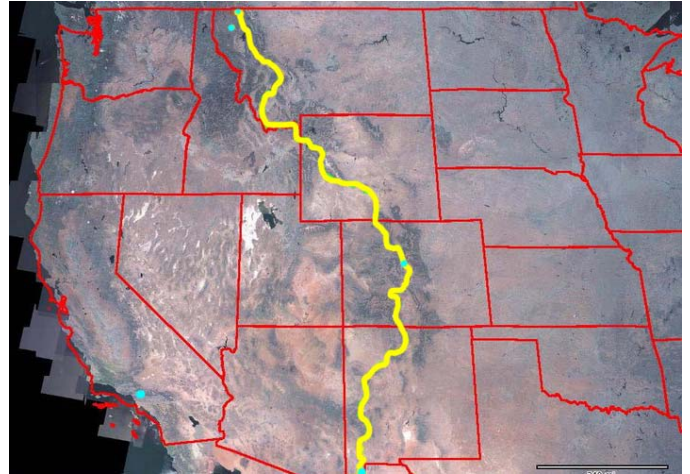
*Corona, California - August 4, 2008.*

DR is the acronym for the Continental Divide Ride. If you're new to this blog, or to dual sport and adventure class motorcycling, the CDR is considered a premier riding challenge in North America. Starting at the Canadian border in Montana, the CDR courses through Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and new Mexico before touching the border of Mexico.

While there are terrain challenges during the 2,700 mile of mostly unpaved rough Forest roads, the true challenge is the amount of saddle time the riders have to face each day. Because of the length of the ride, the ride will take eleven days or more to complete so the rider's physical and mental ability is tested.

Changes in weather compound the changes in terrain. Riders will encounter snow, rain, heat, even sand storms as they move from mountain elevations, down to lower deserts as they criss-cross the continental divide more than 25 times.

Surprisingly, a great deal of the route was scouted and connected by mountain bike riders. Taking this tour on a bicycle would certainly be a challenge, but soon the word got out and dual sport motorcyclist were soon taking the route under power. A fair trade as the world famous Moab, Utah mountain bike trails were originally developed by off-road motorcyclists.



As noted above, the CDR certainly taxes the rider but it tests the equipment as well. The motorcycles used must be in impeccable mechanical condition, capable of being able to go well over 150-miles with the fuel onboard, and must be outfitted for comfort and able to carry the equipment necessary to survive the elements and an emergency. For our CDR we have a selection of motorcycles saddled up by the six riders. Nearly all of them were expressly obtained and prepared for this ride. Here's the break down of the riders and their bikes:

**Bob Mueller (our trail boss):** *BMW F650GS*

**Larry Langley (logistics):** *Honda XR650L*

**Eric Bondy:** *Suzuki DRz440S*

**Jim Baldwin (ride support):** *Suzuki DRz440E*

**Larry Comstock:** *KTM 450 EXC*

**Avery Innis (technical support):** *KTM 950R Super Enduro*

You may have already read a snippet of information about Larry Langley's Honda, but keep coming back as we'll share information about the other bikes, their modifications and prep, not to mention the event itself.

## Brace Me

*August 7th 2008, Corona, CA*

Not a lot of earth-moving news the last couple of days. Larry and Sue are up in Seattle getting ready to release their daughter into the fun and fascinating world of marriage. That weasel Larry is working hard – working hard on his golf swing! While I'm down here trying to earn a honest living Larry is taking the groom and all others out on Washington state's favorite links.



As you may have read in a earlier post, we discovered a couple of minor things to adjust and change on Larry's Honda XR650L after it's break-in ride. We also wanted to add some reinforcement to the bike's sub-frame. While the Honda is a stout machine, as evidenced by several Baja 1000 wins, when you load up a bunch of stuff on aftermarket racks you will tax the stock sub-frame.

Enter Mark Johnson of Riverside, CA's Metal Tech. Mark is a welding and fabricating expert as proven by the Trophy Trucks and Baja Prerunners that roll out of his business. Mark's helped IRS Media for years as we've collaborated on project bikes that included off-road racers and Iron Butt endurance mounts (see some of Mark's work on Bob Mueller's DL1000 here: [www.bobsibradventure.com/bike.htm](http://www.bobsibradventure.com/bike.htm) ).

In this case we wanted to add strength to the Honda's sub-frame but wanted it to be clean and match the frames tubing. Mark did not disappoint as his extra bracing not only mimicked the standard tubing but added strength to the aft-most part of the sub-frame. Now Larry can take his extra underwear and a load of

"Just for Men" hair dye without concern for the integrity of this bike's chassis. Thanks Mark!

## Get Em' Loaded Up

August 15, 2008 - Lone Tree, CO

Welcome back readers to another CDR-Blog update!

Since our last blog entry we've loaded up three motorcycles on truck and trailer in California (Avery's 950R Super Enduro in Corona, with Larry Langley's XR650L and Larry Comstock's 450 EXC) and headed east to Jim Baldwin's ride support base in Colorado.

We elected to do a straight drive through and did the run without stopping. We tallied several million dead bugs, a trio of very unlucky jack-rabbits plus we almost collected two deer with the GMC's grille. Super kudos to Larry Langley, who was filling in for Avery behind the wheel, for missing the deer and prevented a unhappy start to our riding adventure.

Once we got to Lone Tree (a nice Denver burb) we got down to some final prep work. Avery did some additional carburetor adjustments to the Suzuki DRz's to make them operate even better at the altitudes we would encounter on the ride. Jim spun some wrenches as well, replacing a tweaked clutch lever caused by a simple tip over.

After the fuel system calibration adjustments, Avery joined Larry and Jim in mounting the Cortech sport saddle bags ([www.helmethouse.com](http://www.helmethouse.com)), updating our GARMIN GPS's and getting them into their Touratech vibration-proof mounts (<http://www.touratech-usa.co>).

The following day Jim was off to the airport to collect Eric Bondy, who was flying in from south Carolina. Avery and the "Larry's" drove in the other direction to Denver's Performance Cycle ([www.performancecycleco.com](http://www.performancecycleco.com)) to score some extra goodies. Lance at the shop make quick work of our needs list so most of our visit became a bench race session about our upcoming ride.



The last of the bike prep got finished fast as we had all of the riders at the support base (except for Bob Mueller who was on the road – riding his BMW F650 up from Pomona California – he would join us at the start of the ride in Montana). Jim's 2500HD Duramax pulled our support trailer into place and we soon had the bikes loaded, secured and surrounded by a dozen gear bags and boxes of spares.



That left us to finish the night with a pizza dinner we enjoyed while watching Michael Phelps win his seventh gold medal in swimming. His win, by about 1/1000<sup>th</sup> of a second, kept America's hopes alive as he strives to earn a unprecedented eight medals in a single Olympic meet.

More tomorrow night CDR-fans, as we begin our drive up to Montana and the Canadian border to start our ride. We may not be Olympian's, but we promise to represent our country and sport well!



## Driving the Truck, Driving the Truck

August 17, 2008 – Eureka, MT

We completed our pre-ride prep and left the Denver area yesterday (8/16) morning with five (of the six) CDR riders. Larry L, Larry C, Eric, Jim and Avery.



We all loaded up in Jim's Chevrolet Silverado, crew-cab DuraMax diesel pick-up pulling the 24-foot strato-liner trailer loaded down with the five bikes, tools, extra tires, food, ice chests and who knows what. We have brought everything we could possibly think of in case of "What"?

Jim aimed the DuraMax north through buckets of rain as it poured down hard out of Colorado and all the way to Wyoming. At a fuel stop in Cheyenne we all had the worst breakfasts of our lives. So poor was this fare we're obliged to warn you about the Flyin' J truck stop. All we could do was joke about it for the next 900 miles. The hash browns were particularly singled out to be trash. Basically inedible, these potatoes were not even visually appealing.



Jim's truck was the ideal tow vehicle with the DuraMax diesel pulling the load with ease. The only problem was if you got stuck in the middle of the back seat behind the center console you were rewarded with a tight fit that was tough on the knees. But we maintained a seating rotation that kept the whining and suffering to a minimum. Miles passed quickly, even more quickly as the rain stopped as we headed into western Wyoming. The scenery was great, even on the interstate there was always something of interest.

We occasionally took breaks, five to ten minute stretch-your-legs respites – especially when we saw something of beauty or interest. At one point we pulled off the interstate, over some railroad tracks and pulled up along side the Yellowstone River for a break. A long freight train came by and trapped us along the river for a longer break, but it was worth a few extra minutes along the calming influence of the flowing water.



After nearly a thousand miles we stopped for the evening in Helena, MT and found some reasonably priced lodging at the local Days Inn. A great dinner at the local Outlook Express steak house sent us to sweet dreams of the upcoming ride. We were getting giddy; after a year of planning our "ride of a lifetime" was coming close to reality.

Up and ready to go Sunday, morning and heading north to the ride's starting point in Eureka, MT just a few miles from the Canadian Border. We pulled into the Riverstone Family Lodge in early afternoon and were pleased to discover our lodging was adjacent cabins sleeping four in one and two in the other. Very new and very nice, these small wooden structures were excellent accommodations.



We really had to do some last minute tweaks to the bikes as we got them out of the trailer, adjusted the tire pressures and did the final backing of the gear bags.



While this was underway our sixth and final rider, Bob Mueller showed up from his two day ride up from the LA area. Bob, riding the same BMW F650 he would tool down the CDR trails, had visited friends and family on his ride up. Bob's a two time Iron Butt participant and thinks we are all a bunch of wussies for hauling our bikes to the ride, and he's sorta right but we figure 11 days, 2800 miles is about all we can handle but we admire him for the extra miles he's putting in.



Bob also had a little extra adventure with a failed battery and a broken saddlebag latch on his ride up. He resolved the problems (helps to have a credit card at all times) and did a quick check over before loading his bike in the trailer (as Bob would be our support truck driver the next day).

We were surprised to notice the "No Alcohol Allowed" sign posted inside our cabins, but the new restaurant just a few hundred yards away across a field of barley offered up great hamburgers and a wide selection of micro-brewery beer for the group's lunch. It was so good we came back for dinner and enjoyed delicious smoked ribs and brisket.

After our dinner we trundled back to the lodge to solve a few GPS problems and make sure everyone had the phone numbers to our satellite telephones.

We're planning to be on the trail tomorrow morning at 7:30 am to start our epic journey. Come back and check out how Day One went!



### Finally! Day One

August 18, 2008

Eureka, MT -to- Seeley Lake, MT

258 on and off-road miles

After a year of planning and many thousands of dollars spent by all six participants, we awoke at 6AM, had a quick home-made waffle breakfast at the lodge, did final adjustments to our bikes and gear, and headed off to cover the short distance to the Canadian border.





To make the start of our "border to border" ride official, we had to document we started the ride in Canada (eh?!). We stepped over the border, took our pictures, turned on the GPS and finally started our much anticipated journey. We knew from friends who had already ridden the CDR that it wasn't a particularly technical ride but more of a long endurance trek. Over 2500 miles in 11 days definitely makes it a challenging ride.



The first day's early route took us over mostly paved roads as we left the Eureka valley and headed up into the hills. Finally the route turned to dirt and we were in our element. Temperatures in the morning were cool but we knew that the day was going to warm up so we enjoyed it while we could. The GPS led us slightly north, again skirting Canada, then east near Glacier National Park before turning south towards Columbia Falls, Montana for our mid-day gas and lunch stop.

We strode inside the Blue Moon Café & Casino looking for air conditioning, gallons of water and iced tea and some food. What we discovered was a large selection of stuffed big game. As we were waiting for our food (Larry reports his triple-decker BLT was a more than an acceptable sandwich) we met a Park Ranger who asked us where we were going. She listened intently as we described our CDR plans and route and then cautioned us that the park system had concerns over bear attacks. "Wear bells on your clothing", she said. "Make sure you have pepper spray just in case you encounter a bear who is not spooked away by the bells jingling. You should be able to look at the bear dung

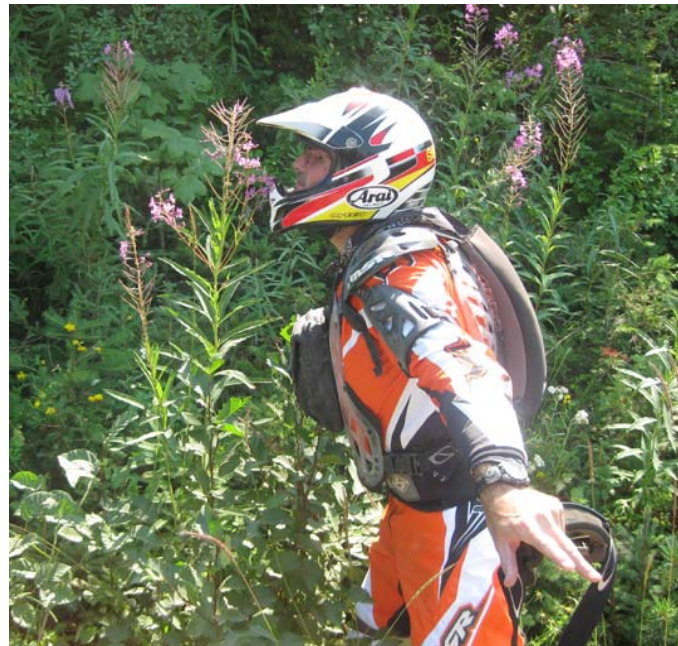
and determine what kind of bear is in the area. A black or brown bear's dung is small and round, usually with berry remnants and squirrel fur."

Then she lowered her voice to really get our attention, "Grizzly bear dung, "she explained, "is larger with bells in it and smells like pepper spray".

Yeah, we'd been had. We were still laughing as we finished lunch and now the temperatures were above 90-degrees so we shed out jackets for jerseys and armor.

The post-lunch route moved us steadily south through some great back roads past numerous lakes and streams allowing us to stop and cool off when needed.

The views were great, the fauna and flowers were as majestic as the views. At times the route even turned more technical than your average fire road and we were having some great fun.



All the bikes were running fine the Turbo City racks combined with the Cortech bags were working out as planned. Using these bags enabled us to eliminate heavy backpacks and fanny packs, taking a big load off of our backs.





After 220 miles, we finished up our first day, tired but very satisfied that our trip was all that we had hoped for. The day's only "crash" was courtesy of Kymco's Eric Bondy who managed to tip over his DRz440S while stopped at a construction zone. A zero mile-an-hour tip over doesn't qualify as a "crash" but you know motorcyclists, we roosted on him anyway. It's a tradition you know.



Our first day support-truck driver Bob Mueller had the truck/trailer combo set up at the hotel so we were able to service the bikes quickly before heading for our celebratory dinner and the requisite bench racing.

As night fell our mounts were tired and dusty but ready for the next day's adventure – come back and find out what happens next!

Thursday, August 18, 2008  
CDR – How do we do it?  
*EXTRA REPORT*

Trust us – we really enjoy riding motorcycles above anything else, but we also enjoy sharing our adventures with you. So when we decided to launch our WEBLOG we knew that the Continental Divide Ride (CDR) would be perfect to cover.



So far, we're a few days into the two week adventure and it's tough to find the time to do the blog updates each night – but we will get new stories and images up at least within a couple of days (which we know is real important for our family and friends). We also wanted to tell you that when you do an event this epic it requires a lot of pre-planning, preparation and execution during the ride.

Our days start early - we're up around 5:30AM to make breakfast between around 6:30 AM. We're already in gear when we eat, then we unlock the bikes and do any last minute prep so we can be on the trail by 7 to 7:30AM. Since we can ride 100 miles or more before we stop for gas, that stop is usually around 1:30 PM so it will include lunch. The second leg of the day will keep us out until about 5:30 PM, then we arrive at the night's lodging, service the bikes and get to our

rooms to clean up by 6:30PM. By 7:30 PM we try to meet for dinner. Back to the rooms by 8:30 PM where we download the day's digital images, write blog entries and prep the GPS units with the next day's tracks and gas stops. If we do good, we'll be in bed by 11:00PM (we often miss that mark!)

Most of the guys on this ride are motorcycle industry professionals so we know that safety is a primary concern. We all wear quality off-road apparel and helmets, body armor and motocross boots. The bags on our bikes are there for us to carry a wide range of extra clothing for hot, cold and wet conditions. Each bike has full hand-guards, and is wired for GPS's, extra power and heated hand grips.



Plus, the trail boss and the support truck driver both have satellite telephones so we can be in contact regardless of our location. Out on the trail we have some simple and basic rules – here's a few: The trail boss (Bob) follows the GPS track and leads the groups. The sweep rider (Avery) trails all of the riders with extra fuel, tools and the mechanical expertise to help. No one rides a trail alone. While the riders might get spread out, often due to allowing for some space due to dust, each rider waits at turns and intersections for the rider behind him to catch up before he moves on. When ever possible our support truck meets us at gas stops and each night to keep us supplied with water, snack and other needs.

When we conclude the ride we'll summarize our experience – the good and the not so good so you can benefit if you choose the CDR challenge!



## Dusting Off to the Divide - Day Two

August 19, 2008

Seeley Lake, MT –to- Butte, MT

228 on and off-road miles

Often on long, multiple day rides the second morning is tough to get behind you. Your joints may be stiff, your muscles sore – but when you're keen for the new day's adventure you push past those discomforts, mount up and soon you're on the trail having a great time.

We made a quick two mile buzz up the road to gas up and find breakfast. The "Chicken Coop" restaurant opened at 7AM and we were there fifteen minutes early, almost like kids with their noses pressed to the toy store window as Christmas-time approaches.

Larry Langley would be our support truck driver for the day, permitting us to arrange for some service to his bike as it had developed a noisy cam chain, and Bob Mueller assumed his trail boss duties. NOTE- the sign in Bob's picture below was really strange, but we did not go up that trail as we are making sure we respect property and nature during our CDR.

Bob would use both his Garmin 76 and Garmin 2820 GPS units to guide us through the day (and the rest of the ride). You may recall that Bob rode his BMW F650 from Pomona, CA up to Eureka, MT so he was keen to get away from pavement and get back onto the trails – many of them he rode on when he did a CDR back in 2004 ([www.hacknews.com/travel/CDR/index-info.htm](http://www.hacknews.com/travel/CDR/index-info.htm)).

Soon we were winding our way out on twisty paved roads, then onto gravel roads that connected many of the fine ranches that Montana is renowned for. We saw not just cattle, but some magnificent horses and other livestock.



We left the flat lands and quickly began to climb in elevation via some well maintained dirt roads. We spaced out to limit the dust blowing into the following riders. At times the course got rocky, but not too difficult so it allowed us to take in the great scenery of the valleys below us.

This morning we traveled well over one hundred miles through the mountains, passing pine trees, small creeks and dodging the hundreds of chipmunks that seemed to be darting in front of us in some strange National Forest version of "Chicken". Note to all small mammals – even a light dirt bike will win – we'll respect you, but watch out!

A good portion of the area we were riding through had been successfully mined for gold and other ores over one hundred years ago. We came upon several abandoned mines, including one spectacular example built into the side of a mountain. Decades ago the lumber portion of the mine facility that processed the ore had rotted and collapsed causing a large Case steam engine and a large boiler tank to crash down the mountain side to rest near the trail. Here was history just basking and oxidizing through dozens of Montana seasons.

The fun trails and the frequent stops for history and photos took its toll on the clock as we arrived at our second gas and lunch stop in Helena (the state's



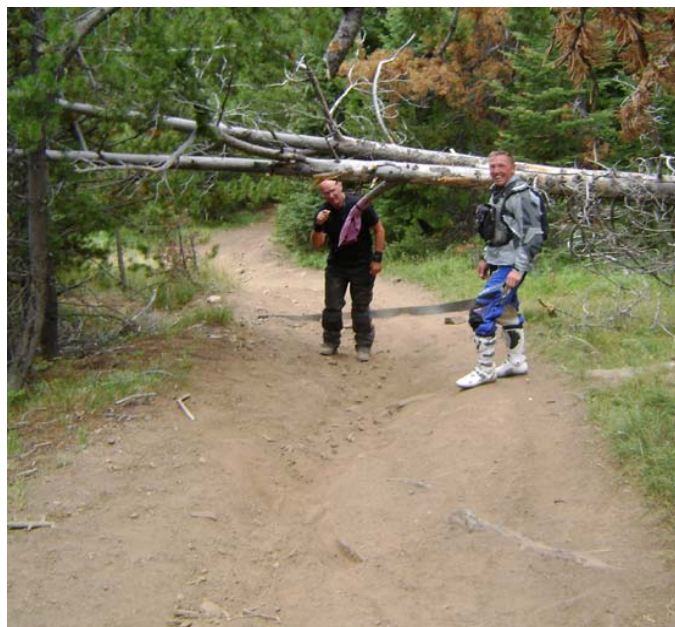


capital). While we enjoyed an alcohol-free lunch at a local micro-brewery a storm front arrived with winds and rain strong enough to cause other restaurant patrons to comment on how our bikes looked as if they were going to tip over in the parking lot.

Not wanting to be caught in the mountains in a possible electrical storm, the group decided to take a pavement option in to our night's stop in Butte. We geared up for rain and headed down the highway only to have the treat of rains subside, even though the strong, gusting winds stayed with us.

Avery and Larry C. decided to soldier on to Butte via a modified route that combines some pavement with dirt roads that ran along the Missouri river and Holden lake gorge. Along this route we found more century-old mine ruins and actually got to the Continental Divide before any of the other riders.

After the requisite posing with the CD sign (nothing says "geek" like posing in front of a sign) we came down the mountain into Butte. Butte was once a major mining town that is just starting to financially recover from a two decade recession that occurred when industrial gold and ore mining left the area. The mining was so expansive that one of the world's largest piles of mine tailings is here – large and tall enough to be classified a mountain.



While Avery and Larry C. got to our night's hotel to help Larry L. check on the big Honda's top end sounds, Bob, Eric and Jim were having their own adventure.

When Bob ran the CDR in 2004, the routes he rode were mainly groomed fire roads and similar trails. As we found with these new CDR tracks, the difficulty level of the certain sections of the ride had increased. Bob, Eric and Jim found themselves on a tight, first and second gear technical trail reminiscent of Southern California's famed Allessandra Trail.



Eric soon found a tree, keeping his bike a perfect two-for-two in days and drops. While the bike found a tree, Eric "Tree Killer" Bondy ending up standing not even touching the ground with any thing but his boots, but he watched in dismay as his bike slid several yards down the difficult trail he just fought to get up.

Bob was doing well, keeping a good pace on the difficult trail while getting his "dirt legs" back as he's had limited off-road riding over the last two years due to his long-distance touring endeavors. Across the trail in front of Bob was a downed tree, parallel to the ground, about five feet above the trail. It looked as if a rider could slow down and duck under the tree's trunk. However, Bob did not immediately recognize the purple towel someone had attached to a limb that jutted out from the tree trunk. As Bob went under the tree the limb caught him in the shoulder and pushed him off the rear of his bike. Thankfully his Aerostich Darren jacket and armor ([www.aerostich.com/catalog/US/index.html](http://www.aerostich.com/catalog/US/index.html)) kept the incident just a fascinating story and there was no serious injury.

After collecting their wits the trio made it down to Butte to join the rest of the team, service the bikes, enjoy a late dinner and get to bed to rest up for the next day's adventure.

### Looping Ride into the Wind - Day Three

*August 20, 2008*

*Butte, MT -to- Island Park, ID*

*336 on and off-road miles*

We started out with a early breakfast again (this one at the hotel we were at) and stepped outside to a brisk, 39-degree morning. That meant an extra layer; some balaclavas and we all had our electric hand grip heaters on as we left the gas station after filling the fuel tanks.

After a straight shot out of town we soon were riding a twisty paved road that went into the mountain south of town. Even as the sun arose we did not get much warmer as the increasing elevation negated the warming air.



The pavement ended and we dipped down out of the mountains into a more high-plains type of terrain on which there were ranches with abundant livestock. At one point Larry C. and Bob came around a corner only to find a bear cub, probably two-years old or less, in the middle of the road. Startled, the cub began to run down the trail in the same direction as the bikes were pointed and got into some trees before the guys could pull out a camera.

The open area got even vaster as we reached and crossed over an interstate, leading us up to another mountain range via some fast dirt roads. Soon we were back up in altitude and the day was warming up, albeit slightly.

Once into the area the route took us through the trees, up even more in elevation and out onto open areas with great views of the valleys below. But during this morning the tracks data and the GPS units seemed confusing and we were often stopping and trying alternate routes to see if we could find the proper path out of the area we were in.

After riding for over 100 miles, but really not getting more than 15 miles from Butte, we knew something was certainly wrong. It was conflicting to not be making any headway in our quest, but to enjoy trails that were in good condition and with some technical sections that made for a fun morning of riding.





Most of the livestock we would encounter on this trip was ear tags as the branding of cattle by hot iron is a thing of the past.



Skirting a twisty two-lane along the said river we got to the town with the same name, almost drove past the sole gas pump in front of the general store and found the town's Traven/restaurant .



During one of our breaks we found an area were nature's circle of life was evident. Bones and a ear tag from some lost cow were on the ground.



Most

We then realized that the day's first gas stop was also improperly labeled in the GPS's; we readjusted our route to head down a paved highway to Wise River.





The place was great, very rustic with great people and we enjoyed home-made soup and a great angus cheeseburger lunch.

We also realized that meant Larry L. was at the wrong gas stop with the support truck, but we were unable to reach him via the SAT phone".

So Jim and Avery looked at the map and their GPS's and came up with a route that should combine pavement with trails and get them into the night's stop in Idaho sooner (were we had mechanical work planned). Bob, Larry C. and Eric would take the longer, original route that would be much longer, but put them in danger of coming in near dark.



Bob, Larry C. and Eric did enjoy the trails and roads the led them up and over another CD at Red Rock pass.



Avery and Jim's short-cut adventure was not so excellent (but in retrospect was really fun to overcome) as they got into roads on large ranges and into ranch lands. After another pavement route that added another 33 miles to the "short cut" they found them selves inside a giant ranch with a road that was deteriorating quickly with rocks, ruts and deep water puddles. Once they got back to some pavement via a high-speed gravel road, they found gusting winds that would needle them the last fifty miles to our Island Park summit – there mile total for the day over 300 miles.



While Avery, Larry L. and Jim began working on bikes, the sun was setting and the mosquitoes were out.

Almost two hours after Jim and Avery's arrival, the rest of the gang showed up with stories of almost running out of gas. Their mileage tally was close to 340 miles.

It was close to 9 PM so were we not able to take advantage of the resort's restaurant. A couple guys decided to bed down early as Avery, Eric, Jim and Larry L. drove 11 miles into town to the Island Park Lodge ([www.islandparklodge.org](http://www.islandparklodge.org)). However, they too were closing but volunteered to serve us anyway and the wait was worth it as we had excellent pasta dishes. We

rewarded the establishment with more revenue as we moved to the tavern to enjoy adult-beverages as we had an impromptu eight-ball pool tourney.

We got back to the lodge before midnight, but certainly too late. That would have some affect on the next's day's adventure – so come on back and read about that soon!



## Sand, Mountains and Cows - Day Four

August 21, 2008

Island Park, ID –to- Pinedale, WY

252 on and off-road miles

The windy weather from the prior day was gone when we awoke to start the fourth day of our CDR adventure. Some of the team was running slow from their late night excursion to the local watering hole for their eight-ball pool tourney.

Still, everyone got up and going – The excitement overcame the lack of sleep as this day's ride that would take us to the edge of Yellowstone National Park and offer vistas of the stark, rocky Grand Teton Mountains.

Heading out from our lodge we rode in the brisk Idaho chill and found the first two service stations closed. The third was a charm as the Hungry Bear Market had gas (pumped through incredibly slow pumps) and offered homemade breakfast. "Anything you want!" the clerk said, adding that she would pull anything off the market's shelves or coolers to build our morning meal to order. She did not disappoint, making us great food, with large portions at a reasonable price.



Leaving the Happy Bear we turned off the main highway by the Island Park Lodge, the site of the prior night's festivities. After just a dozen miles we had left the pavement behind and started on a fine trail that was once a railroad right-of-way. This trail, part of Idaho's excellent OHV recreation network started out a little rocky, and then changed to pea gravel and deep sand.

But this dark sand did not end after just a few yards; it went on for over twenty miles. You had to keep your speed up to get the bike's tires to plan above the sand, but the whoops, ruts and tree branches reaching out to the trail keep interfering with our progress. Again, we soldiered on – we had to keep going and we knew eventually the sand would subside.

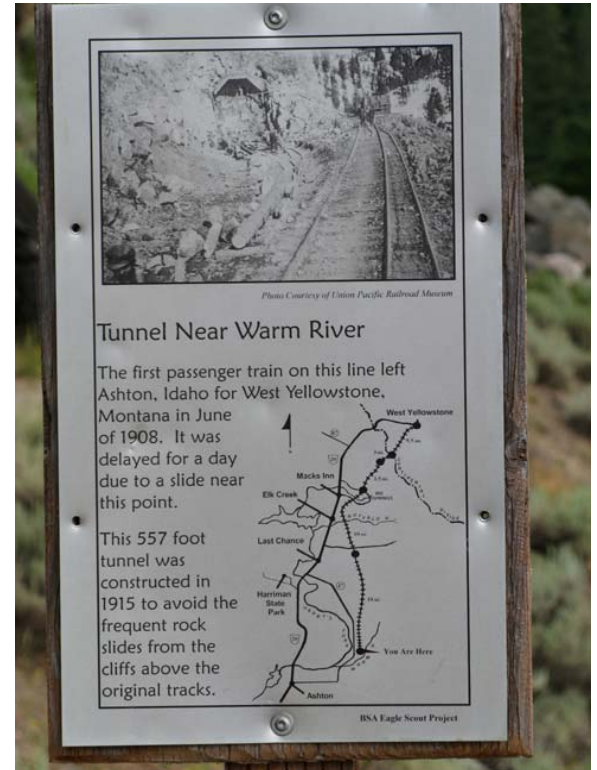
At a stop Jim and Avery wondered aloud why we were on such a difficult trail when they could see another road at times that seemed to be doing in the same direction and it was nicely groomed and smooth. We soon had an answer as the former right-of-way looked was the only route you could take to look down onto the spectacular Warm River and gorge.







This route led us past a timber railroad tunnel (around it as there are concerns about it's strength following rock slides – four years ago Bob was able to ride THROUGH the same tunnel) and along the mountain side following the route of the 19<sup>th</sup> century railroad that ran to west Yellowstone .



At the end of this trail was a well maintained and groomed state-provided campsite. After a chat with the campsite's caretakers we were off again on some tight twisty paved road that would take us to the main dirt road that would run us on the south edge of Yellowstone National Park, past Glacier Lake and into the Grand Teton National Park for our next gas stop.

This wide and smooth dirt road would take us into Wyoming. The road's great condition permitted us to make good time as we wanted to have lunch at the same time we got fuel. As we rode further on the road it changed, getting more rugged, narrow and rocky at times. It also ran us through some areas that were burned during the fire storms that hit Yellowstone back in 1998. Finally we cam to the paved highway leading to the park's gas station and restaurant – only to be slowed by some road construction crews. We were as hungry as our bikes by the time we finally turned off for fuel and food (which included some lean, buffalo meat cheese burgers).

The Grand Teton Mountains were a majestic site as we again turned south after our lunch. These mountains looked to be the most rugged and picturesque of the mountains we had seen on the trip so far. With little to no vegetation and snow-capped year-round, these mountains were an imposing site.







As Larry steered the support truck and trailer down the highway to Pinedale, WY for that night's stop, the riders were enjoying more great scenery and fun dirt roads until Eric had an encounter with one of the thousands of livestock we have seen and rode by on this trip. While we're always trying to give these animals a wide berth, they sometime can react in strange and unexpected ways.

As Eric was approaching a small thicket of trees a large cow (or possibly a steer) darted out of the woods directly in his path. Eric was riding standing up, as many of us do on long distance dirt rides, and since he had nearly no time to react his bike hit the side of the cow, forcing Eric forward where he impacted against the cow's shoulder with his left side.

Amazingly, the cow just walked away and appeared to be unhurt. Eric missed serious injury, but still had a large bruise on his arm and was sore all over. As each day passed, the bruise on his arm would darken and become more ominous in appearance, even though the initial swelling subsided and the pain went away as well.

The riders made it to Pinedale Lodge with no other incidents and EVERYONE got to sleep early as the next day would include some high-speed dirt roads across Wyoming and some important motorcycle repairs. Check back to learn about that day's happenings!



### High Speed Oregon Trail & Bike Repair - Day Five

*August 22, 2008*

*Pinedale, WY -to- Rawlins, WY*

*230 on and off-road miles*

As what was beginning to be a pattern, the riders awoke to a cool, but clear morning to start the day's ride. Today's active riders would only be Bob, Eric and Jim as Avery joined the "Larry's" in the support truck.

The support truck would refuel the riders over a hundred miles out where there was no community or

service station. Without the fuel, or the coordination of the rendezvous, the riders would have either a long wait or a long walk. After the refueling, the truck would move forward to Rawlins where parts were being air-shipped in so Avery could repair the cam chain on Larry L's XR650L.



Much of the day's route was hard packed dirt roads which allowed the riders to move at a very fast pace. Some of the roads were part of the "Oregon Trail", the famous route that settlers in covered wagons used as they went out to settle the western United States.



While fast and fun, the ride for Bob, Eric and Jim was uneventful. They actually arrived at the refueling point twenty minutes before the support truck. As we were filling the bikes Jim commented how it seemed that there was a jack rabbit carcass every mile on the road. The unfortunate rabbits were "...like mile markers."

As the riders went back to the route, skirting nice scenery like the Red Rock Canyon, the support truck sped on to Rawlins to set up for bike repair in the parking lot of that night's hotel. During the drive we determined to fix the big Honda we needed only one extra socket in addition to the tools we already had, so we collected the needed socket at the local hardware store.

We were dismayed to find out that the parts had NOT arrived at the hotel as we had requested and paid for. After some phone calls we found out that the delivery was made to a different address and Larry found the package at another hotel over a mile away.



Avery got to work on the bike, removing the engine valve cover, right hand engine cover and other parts to facilitate putting a new cam chain without removing the complete engine. Needless to say we attracted some attention servicing a partly dismantled bike, and the attention grew as the other riders showed up shortly after 2 PM, as they had made excellent time on the good roads.



After a few hours the Honda was back together and running quiet again. We performed maintenance on the other bikes, bent back Eric's damaged saddlebag rack (from the prior day's cow impact) and we all got washed up. A Google search recommended the Aspen Grill in Rawlins as the area's premier fine dining establishment, with steak being a specialty. Google was right as we toasted the repairs and a great meal with a quality merlot and some brut champagne. After dinner we all got to bed early for some rest as the next day we would ride into Colorado.

#### **Prairie to the Mountains & We Lose a Team Member – Day Six**

*August 23, 2008*

*Rawlins, MT -to- Steamboat Springs, Co*

*147 on and off-road miles*

This would be a short day but we were all excited about heading into Colorado. Since this was the half-way point of the ride, we had planned tires and service once we arrived at the hotel in Steamboat Springs, CO. We got an early start from the Super 8 in Rawlins after sampling their miniscule Continental Breakfast.

After replacing the bad cam chain the prior afternoon, Big Red (XR650L) was back on the trail! It's always good to have a genuine motorcycle technician along (thanks Avery!). And thanks to Marty back at Mid-Cities Honda in Paramount, Ca for getting the parts and emergency shipping them to us.



Jim volunteered for support truck duty so Larry L, Larry C, Eric, Bob and Avery hit the wide dirt road leading south out of Rawlins. The many, many miles of wide dirt road were enjoyable due to the mixture of speed and turns.

Finally the road turned to back into pavement then back to gravel as we ticked off the miles towards Colorado. Long gravel up-hills which seemed endless and then we passed a truck towing a boat. We wondered what someone was doing wayyyy out here and then we came to a sign for a reservoir. We figured the guy had the lake all to himself.

Cruising through some more open range and bovine country where many of the cows were grazing right next to the road making us all very alert after Eric's encounter with one the two days prior. We all took a wide berth and slowed way down.



After a couple of hours the terrain changed and finally we were up in the trees. Nice change and very scenic. The land was getting rockier, varied and mountains were growing larger on the horizon. Once again we were surprised how quickly the topography changes when you move from one state to another, or even just go down the road a dozen miles.

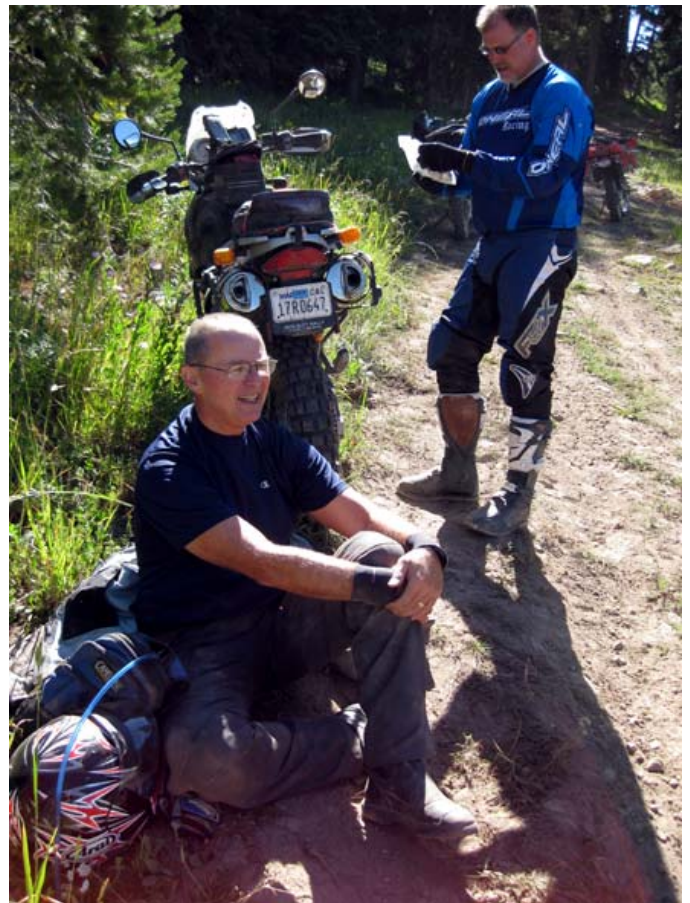
As we were getting within 50 miles of Steamboat Springs, the smooth road began to change into a "two track" jeep road with a challenging, rocky surface. We all made it up one particularly tough hill and were getting ready to address a second when Bob encountered a hidden rock lurking behind some tall grass.

Rock 1, Bob's left foot 0. Bob knew he was hurt – a sprained foot at least, but he had his wits and we bent back the minor tip-over damage so he could ride the bike. Bob rode on into Steamboat Springs where we meet Jim and the support truck at the Rabbit Ear Motel (funny sounding name but a nice place).

After pulling off his boot, the foot did not look happy and we soaked it in a bucket of ice as Jim got the directions to the local hospital. While Jim carted Bob off for X-rays at the local trauma center, the rest of the team grabbed a Mexican lunch, followed by a ice cream cone dessert while walking back on Steamboat's main drag.



Back at the Rabbit Ears we got in just two hours of relaxation before we got out to the support trailer to perform some needed bike maintenance. Some worn tires will be exchanged for fresh rubber as well as oil changes and air filter service.



Bob and Jim came back from the local hospital where the verdict was a slight fracture and now Bob's left foot is in a strap-on soft cast and he's on crutches. We set Bob up in a lawn chair were he got to supervise our work.

Unfortunately this foot injury means the end of the CDR for Bob. Jim arranged for Bob to fly back home to California the next day and we would transport his BMW back home.





We finally finished the service as night fell, eating pizza with grease stained fingers, but we were ready for the next day's ride to Salida, CO. We hear the next day's will be fun and challenging.

*Bob, we're going to miss you pal! He's a good friend and a great leader.*

## Into the Colorado Mountains and then Some – Day Seven

August 24, 2008

Steamboat Springs, CO -to- Salida, CO

258 on and off-road miles

We were still sad that Bob could not be with us on the rest of the ride – not only would we have to divvy up the trail boss duties, but we really had based this ride around having him with us. Larry L would run both of the track-reading GPS units on his bike, while Avery, still riding sweep, would have back-up waypoints on his bike's GPS. Jim would be in the support truck as he had to take Bob to the airport early in the morning for his flight back to California.

After another Continental Breakfast, courtesy of the Rabbit Ears Motel, Eric, Avery and both Larry's got to the gas station to fuel up and began the ride out of town on some twisty paved roads.



As we got out of town it actually began to cool down. We had been worried it might be a hot day, but the temperatures were pleasant. In fact, we had been blessed again with great weather. By this point in the ride we had only encountered scattered rain here and there and some gusty winds in Montana and Idaho.

We headed towards the Williams Fork Reservoir, passing a huge triathlon that was underway – it seemed like four-hundred bicycles were staged for the event. Once past the reservoir we hit dirt roads again and began to climb up in elevation.

On the way up in altitude we also encountered our first significant water crossing. We hit other small streams in the week before, but this was a wide creek, almost a river, that has a deep hole in the bed right at the center crossing line.

Since the water was deep, we all got some water in our boot. Avery and Larry C got it pretty good as they did not have their top boot latches cinched as tight as they should have been (Larry L cheated, sitting down and holding his feet, spread eagle above the water).







Continuing up twisty, but fast dirt roads into the forests we could see the large percentage of brown dead trees that are prevalent in Colorado and other western states. A beetle infestation has killed many of these majestic pine trees. The trees, which are more susceptible to damage from the beetles due to the recent year's dry conditions, die because the beetle bores into the bark and damages the thin layer below that transports the tree's fluids and nutrients up from the root system.



What is very troublesome is the fact that in some areas more than half of the trees are dead and very dry. Due to misguided pressure from conservation groups the forestry service has not cleared these dead trees out. This creates an immense fire hazard that could burn the state quickly. Since more forest fires are caused by lightning, even controlling arson or other man-made causes won't protect the trees. These forests need to be cleaned of the dead trees as soon as possible before a massive tragedy occurs.



After enjoying over 125 miles of mountain roads we got into Silverthorne, CO for fuel and then proceeded to nearby Dillion to have lunch at the Dillion Dam Brewery. Again we had a non-alcoholic lunch at a micro0brewery, but the food was awesome with Eric and Larry C having some Mexican fare, while Larry L and Avery enjoyed some vegetable soup and some very lean buffalo cheeseburgers.

Remounting after lunch we rode over the dam that secures the Dillion Reservoir. This reservoir is so large that 12-meter sailboats can be used on it.



The route continued up via the un-paved CR-15 road which was converted from a old railroad right-of-way the offered great vistas of rivers below and mountains on the horizon.

Eventually the route went down to the high altitude plains roads (again unpaved) that went through Whithome and Turret. The roads were pretty straight and smooth so we were able to make good time – which was pretty important as we had already accumulated over 200 miles and still had over 50 miles to go.

Climbing up, through and down another mountain range we came down a rocky road into Salida. During the entire ride we had seen thousands of range cattle (mysteriously attracted to Eric for some unknown, possibly alien-influenced reason), hundreds of ground squirrels and gophers, dozens of deer, and countless birds. However on this day Avery saw a mountain lion cross the trail in front of him, just eight miles from town. The big cat slinked into the trees before Avery could stop, let alone pull out his camera.





Once into town, and at our hotel, we changed the rear tire on Avery's KTM 950 and went next door to the Country Kitchen restaurant. This place was a true, special find as everything there was homemade and very good. As we were off to bed we all agreed to meet the next morning at the restaurant, passing up the free breakfast at the hotel.

Little did we know, the next day would take every calorie of breakfast we'd enjoy in the morning. Come back to find out what happened!

## Mountains, Detours, Weather & Passes – Day Eight

*August 25, 2008*

*Salida, CO -to- Chama, NM*

*285 on and off-road miles*

Like the night before, we started our day with a great meal at the Country Kitchen restaurant that was next to our hotel. Listed as a buffet, their breakfast special really was made-to-order as the cook prepared omelets or eggs anyway you wanted. We were all geared up, ready to go, except for Larry C. who had drawn support truck duty. Plus, it was the second day we'd be without Bob who had flown home with his broken foot (so Larry L would head the group with the tracking GPS).

With full tummies we rode out of Salida on pavement that soon got twisty and started up in altitude near Mears Junction. Salida is at about 7,000 feet, so we knew that most of our day would be spent at altitudes closer to 10,000 feet.

The weather again gave us brisk temperatures, but clear skies.

As we got into dirt, the stillness of the morning air and the brightness of the rising sun made the views spectacular.

We encountered more livestock, saw lots of deer and other small animals – most of them seemed unimpressed that we were there (many animals have no fear of motorcyclists as compared to a walking human who could be a hunter).

Suddenly we were at another continental divide point – this one was Marshall Pass at 10,842 feet.



Just a few miles after we went through Marshall Pass we came to Cochetopa Pass at 10,032 feet which was first surveyed as a possible railroad route in 1853, and became a toll road years later.



We rode down out of the mountains into a plains area and gassed up at a small trading post in Long Branch.

After another few miles of pavement we connected with another dirt road that moved us into an area with neat rock formations and mesas on either side of the road, which ran along side a small river.



That road came out into a high plains area that was quite sandy. Avery and Jim commented how much it reminded them of Baja, and it got even more so as the route ran us through some two track with whoops and a sand wash.



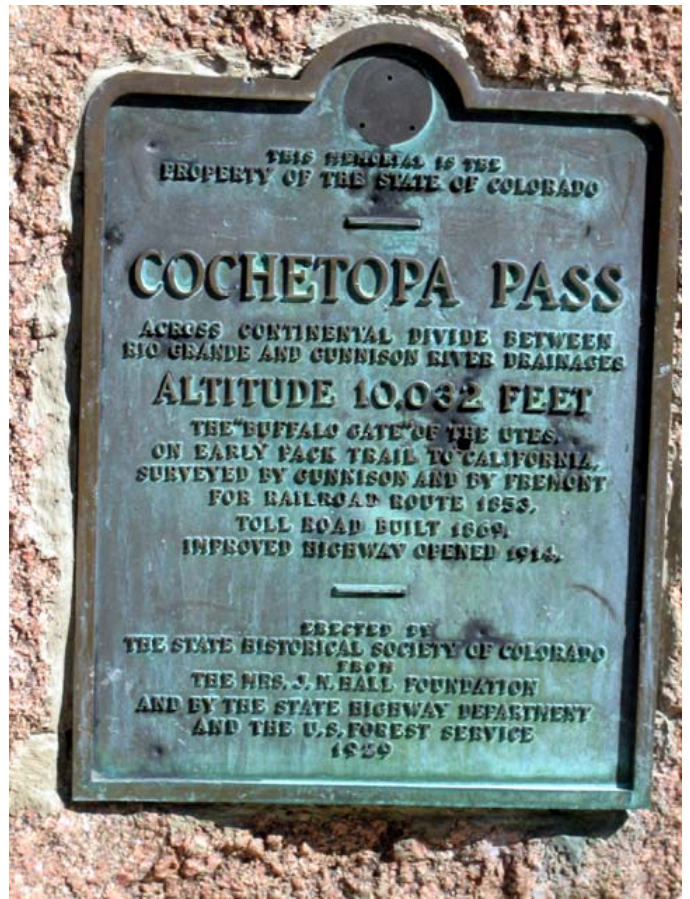
Thankfully after nearly ten miles of technical riding we came to the town of Del Norte for our gas and lunch stop. We enjoyed a great meal at Boogie's Restaurant. At first the name of the place kind of scared us, but we followed Sue Langley's rule of "if there's a lot of cars in the parking lot it must be good!" It was and we soon got moving towards the mountain range that separated Colorado from New Mexico.



Some dark clouds were beginning to form in the sky and the temperature was dropping as we rode up into the mountains via the Pinos Road that would take us over the range through the Iron and Park Creek areas.

As we were getting higher in altitude, over 11,000 feet, we were running into patches of snow and it was getting colder and darker.

Starting first with small drops the rain began to come down. Then pea-sized hail began to pelt us, sounding like rocks hitting our helmets.





At the same time when the weather turned, we came to the end of the road – literally. The road was closed. A massive repair and construction project prevented any chance of continuing on the route – we had to turn around, get some rain gear on, and find another way to New Mexico.



Now we were up in the mountains, in the rain, in the cold and our GPS's and maps were giving us conflicting information on how to get over the range and onto the road that would lead to Chama. After some twists and turns we were on a rocky road that was climbing in elevation – and we noticed the trees were getting thin as we were getting waaaaay up there. The trail came out at small open area, a genuine high-altitude mountain pass.

At the pass were two guys on some large ATV's. We spoke to them and found they were up from Oklahoma visiting their hunting cabin and we were at Blowout Pass – a pass at 12,492 feet next to Bennett Peak (13,203 feet). The hunters told us that the trail went down the mountain into Jasper, CO.



The catch was the rocky trail we just rode up got rougher on the way DOWN into Jasper. We had little choice, we started down the trail.

About three quarters of the way down, Avery had to stop because he got the rear brakes on his KTM 950 so hot that the fluid boiled and he lost pedal pressure. He was able to nurse the bike down in first gear using just the front brake. Once at the bottom he released the air from the bleeder and the brake came back.

We got into Jasper which was next to a dirt road that had just been freshly bull-dozed so we set the GPS's destination to Chama, stripped off our rain gear, and headed down the road. To our left was a gorgeous river and to our right was the spectacular Red Mountains.

Avery and Jim got out in front and decided to turn up the pace as we were getting tired, hungry and cold. Worse yet, the sun was setting so we got Avery's big KTM Super Enduro out front with its 55/100 watt headlamp.

But our challenge was not over, after 30 fast dirt-road miles we got to the pavement, still over 30 miles from our hotel in Chama. On the pavement we had to climb another pass, navigate S-turns, and dodge even more cattle as the sun was now below the horizon.

The weather was not done with us – it began to rain. It was a cold stinging rain that hurt your face, your lips and just made us miserable. But none of us thought to stop and put our rain gear back on – we were just minutes from the hotel and we pressed on.

The neon sign of the Branding Iron Lodge was a welcome sight. Shivering and tired we got our room keys so we could peel off our wet gear and get into hot showers. We had

ridden over 280 miles of really rugged roads and trails, overcame a huge detour, pressed on against terrible weather and survived. No one crashed and nothing broke, a real accomplishment considering the day's challenges.

As we turned in after a steak and seafood dinner, we listened as the rain pelted the hotel's roof. The next day in New Mexico would certainly be interesting – come back and read about it!



## We lose a Larry, but guess which one? – Day Nine

August 26, 2008

Chama, NM -to- Grants, NM

312 on and off-road miles

Three riders gassed up for the day: Larry L (XR650L), Eric (DRZ440S) and Larry C. (KTM 450 EXC) with Avery and Jim manning the support truck. Lot's of rain overnight made us wary of the conditions as we knew from friends who had ridden the CDR before that extra moisture caused their riders to run into massive mud problems in this section. Avery was not too keen to subject his 400-pound KTM 950R and his sore throttle hand to a day of mud as it was his turn to be in the support truck anyway.

The potential long mileage of the day (over 300 miles) caused us to put optional routes into the GPS's and it was a good thing we did as we got to the first turnoff and realized that the rain had created a mud bog so we decided to ride down the highway to Cuba and bypass the troublesome section. This turned out to be a safe move, but the 90 miles of highway was extremely boring. It was so boring it was difficult for us to stay awake!



While the riders were fighting boredom, Avery and Jim were sightseeing in the support truck. They had driven south out of Chama (after a great breakfast at Fina's Diner – trust us – that's the place in town for the first meal of the day) and had stopped at the Echo Amphitheater. Jim's buddy, John Lautenschlager was a New Mexico native and he said we could not miss this great rock formation. John had met us in Salida a couple of day's earlier to drop off a inner tube and some other modest supplies, but we knew it was just an excuse to ride his Suzuki V-Strom out from Colorado Springs.

The Echo Amphitheater is a rock formation that is shaped like the Hollywood Bowl. Its unique shape creates a reflector that is very effective and the echo is not only very clear but is actually amplified. There is a "sweet spot" about 50-yards away where the echo is best and it causes visitors to make all sorts of strange sounds to test the echo's extraordinary properties. Thanks John for making us aware of this neat formation – and for bring us out supplies!



The riders finally pulled into gas station in Cuba where the support truck was waiting and we gassed up the bikes and grabbed a quick snack. Avery worked with Larry L. and Eric to update their GPS's from his laptop. People were staring at us as we had cords connecting the bikes to the laptop as if we were uploading some engine performance software.

After leaving the gas stop we rode through high plains country and it began to lightly rain, but it was easy to dodge the really problematic mud-holes. The rest of the route had good traction with minimal dust. One long section took us over terrain best described as "Cowboy and Indian" territory. The dirt road became more like a trail and meandered like a snake through gulley's, washes, and ravines for many miles. Our shoulders and arms actually got sore from all the turning, but again it was an interesting and scenic route. What caught our attention (not just on this day but the entire ride) was that someone was maintaining the road just enough to keep it open. There must have been lot's of drain pipes under the road to keep the road from washing out.







we're reunited. No harm, no foul. At dinner we modify our methods to absolutely make sure the trailing rider sees the next rider to avoid being separated.

In Grant, we find a restaurant that ends up just being good, but nothing special. Most of our meals in strange towns have been exceptional but a few were not up to our expectations but no one complained. We are down to two days to go and are getting excited about having our pictures taken at the Mexican border completing the CDR ride.

By now we've realized that Eric is the only rider to ride every mile so we again adjust the support truck schedule so he will "Ironman" the entire ride.

He has also acquired the nickname of "Cow-Boy" due to his run-in with the Bovine earlier in the ride. He said "You guys aren't going to ever let up are you?" Nope. We saw literally thousands of cows on the route and at one point Larry L would stop and motion Eric up to him. "Stay right behind me, I'll get you through!" he'd joke. He'd crack up and followed Larry through. We even started making up stories that the cow who collided with him was a "hit cow" and since he didn't finish the job, the word had passed to finish the job. So each and every cow that looked at Eric was a "sleeper" hit cow. Don't worry Eric, sometime in the next few years we'll lay off. But for now it's still funny.

With the gang still chuckling about the "hit cows" we made it to bed to get ready for the next day in New Mexico, which was to include a trip to the infamous "Pie Town". Swing back to the blog to find out about that stop as Jim collects a special trophy.

Finally we came out onto a highway and thought we were home free heading for Grant until the GPS's track turned us off onto a dirt road which again led us up into the pine forest mountains North of Grant. Near by was a large area being strip mines, complete with large explosions and demolition warning signs. But on the horizon, dark clouds got our attention with a new threat of heavy rain.

Then we "lost" a guy. During the CDR our method of insuring we would all keep together is at each turn the lead rider (Larry L or Bob) waits for the next rider (Eric) who in turn waits for the next rider (who on this day was Larry C, who was the only rider without a GPS) followed by the sweep rider (this was Avery, who was not riding this day, who has a GPS loaded with waypoints as a directional back-up).

As the route turned high up in a forest, Eric waited for Larry C and then headed up the trail where Larry L was waiting at the next turn. But this time Larry C. doesn't show up. So we wait 10 or 15 minutes and head back to the last turn to find him, but no Larry C. We figure he somehow didn't see Eric and kept on riding straight, rather than making the turn. So Eric rides the road we figure Larry C went and comes back with no Larry C sightings. We wait another half hour and with the signs pointing to our next overnight stop (Grant) we head on in but now it's really raining.

Between the rain drops, some of them BIG, we find our hotel and still there is no Larry C. Eric, who's feeling guilty as heck, jumps in the support truck with a GPS (that has the waypoint of the turn Larry C missed) to head back up to look for him.

Larry L figures that Larry C, who he rides with often in the forests near their homes, is a intelligent rider and will find his way in (if he isn't hurt). Sure enough before Eric can head up into the hills they see Larry C. on his orange KTM and





## Two for Pie(town) & Engines Full Ahead – Day Ten

August 27, 2008

Grants, NM -to- Silver City, NM

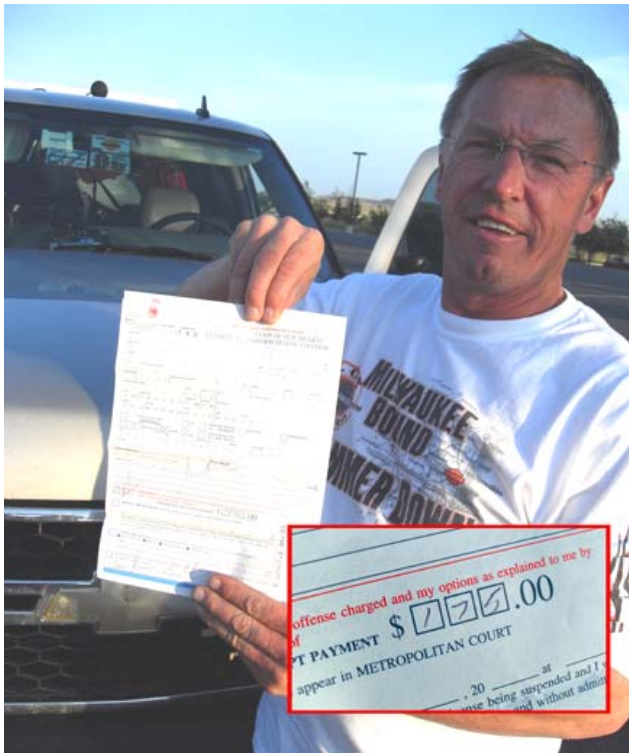
287 on and off-road miles

Following his "I got lost" adventure of the prior day Larry C opted out for a rest day joining Avery and Jim in the support truck. That left Larry L to ride with Eric (in his quest to "Ironman" the entire CDR) for a long day in the saddle.

Avery and Eric had studied the GPS routes the night before and knew that fuel range was critical as the day's first section was nearly 170 miles to where the support truck was to meet the riders, as there no gas station in the middle of thousands of acres of ranch land. Even with the 4 gallon IMS tank on Eric's DRz440S it was going to be close to running out of fuel on that leg. And Larry's Big Red XR650L was running rich at altitude and had gearing that helped performance, but not mileage, so he would run dry even before the DRz. So a decision was made to have the support truck meet the riders early in Pie Town, and then top them off about 40 miles later as they crossed the pavement again so they would have enough fuel to get to Silver City.

After a group breakfast Larry and Eric pulled out of Grants early as it looked to be a close to 300-mile day. They headed south into an area called Zuni Canyon with spectacular rock formations lining the canyon providing great photo opportunities. Again, the riders were surprised as they didn't expect New Mexico pine forests and high altitude, they had expected deserts. Rains the previous day had the riders edgy because of the possibility of mud but the timing was perfect. While it had rained, it dried out enough not to be a problem, in fact providing mostly dust free riding with "sticky" traction conditions.

The road into Pie Town was a bit boring, a straight, wide dirt road past numerous "ranches" with plots for sale. But it was over rolling terrain so it wasn't total boredom. Meanwhile, in the support truck Jim had the big Chevy Duramax on boil. As would happen often on the CDR, the bikes could get to a certain point a lot faster than the truck as they could travel a more direct route and, on a lot of dirt roads, could run at a pretty good clip. Plus Jim was concerned about getting to Pie Town early be ready for the riders (and the pie!).



Just miles shy of Pie Town a New Mexico State Trooper's SUV pulled over and swung around as we approached and passed him. "Daddy's getting a ticket..." mumbled Jim as soon thereafter the flashing red and blue lights in the mirrors confirmed his statement. The "performance award" was a cool \$175 for supposedly exceeding 80 MPH. Those of us in the truck knew Jim had the truck under warp speed, but we also knew the actual speed was less than the "claimed speed" so we silently disputed the trooper's claim at Jim's direction.

Soon we were done with the trooper's paperwork and condescending manner and back on our way to the Pie Town gas rendezvous.



As Eric and Larry pulled into Pie Town the support truck was there and the crew was waiting inside the Pie Town Restaurant already eating, what else, pie! Avery had gone with a peanut butter piece as Jim and Larry C tapped into apple with jalapeño spices (Yee-how!) slices. Eric also selected the spicy "New Mexico" apple while Larry L sampled the blackberry. The place lived up to it's billing, the pies were excellent! As the riders cleared their plates, the crew fueled the bikes.





dried Mangos which went over good with Tina as she was a vegetarian. Regrettably they had to say goodbye to the courageous ladies and they headed out.

The terrain turned to a very rocky road though the forest and pretty challenging. Larry hit a squared out hole and the Colorado GPS launched out of its holder and augured into the road hard enough to screw up its antenna so it wouldn't acquire satellite coverage anymore. Thankfully there was the back up GPS 76CSX. The route stayed on the main road we were on all the way to the highway leading into the overnight at Silver City.

We finally hit the main highway and turned right instead of left but the route took us to Silver City anyway just a bit longer way but more scenic as it turned out. The last little town we rode through before Silver City was a historic place called Pinos Alto which we ended up coming back too for dinner at the Buckhorn Saloon (very old) which at one time was the Opera House back in the day (now it's fine dining with great steaks).

The riders overcame some GPS track errors that initially pointed them at the wrong lodging when they came into town, but soon the full gang was together at the hotel. With day 10 in the memory bank that only left one day left; day 11's ride to the Mexican border. For the first time it seemed like the days had breezed by and we couldn't believe only one day remained of our dream ride. Come back again to see if we make it to the border and what surprises we'd encounter on that day!

### Racing the Rain to the Border - Day 11

*Silver City, NM –to- Antelope Wells, NM (Mexican Border)*

*August 28, 2008 - 142 on and off-road miles*

We're finally coming to the end of our continental divide journey. After ten days of adventure, long days in the saddle, searching out great meals, daily maintenance and trying to get a good night's sleep in unfamiliar locations, the Mexican border seems like a "stone's throw" away.

As we previewed the route and the shaky weather (impending monsoon-type thunderstorms) the route it looked like half dirt and half pavement. The first portion would be on high desert roads and trails with the last 65 miles shooting down the paved road to the border at Antelope Wells, NM. More because of the weather, we decided that instead of riding to the border and then BACK to Silver City Larry L would take the support truck to meet the rest of us at the border where we'd load the bikes into the trailer instead of riding them back. Since the bikes would be loaded, saving more return trip time, we also thought about starting back to Denver but we decided to spend the night in Silver City, find a good dinner, spend the night, and then head for Denver the next morning.

So as Avery, Eric, Jim and Larry C headed out after a light continental breakfast (how appropriate) while Larry L loaded his XR650L into the trailer and aimed the Duramax for our meeting at the border. Avery had mounted the tracking GPS on his KTM 950SE and would lead the riders today.

The riders got back to dirt that would again meet the truck where we'd topped off the tanks and we added an extra gallon of gas in Larry's Cortech side bag to make sure he had enough to make it the remaining miles to the overnight stop at Silver City. Using the dual GPS system of the Garmin Colorado and Garmin 76CSX on Larry's Honda, plus Eric using Avery's with back-up waypoints the riders had a clear idea of where they were headed – at least at first.

Riding through the New Mexico high country and traversing a wide variety of terrain through the Cibola, Apache and Gila National Forests the riders kept seeing what looked like mountain bike tracks and, sure enough, in the Gila National Forest they finally caught up with two riders who turned out to be a pair of young ladies grinding it out up a hill. The guys stopped and talked to them and learned that Tina and Cricket had been on the CDR for seven weeks! Pretty impressive since we were only on day 10. They asked if our riders had any extra food and they gave them their supply of beef jerky and Larry's supply of





After a brief section of highway to get out of town the route turned onto a sandy dirt road that, at first, crossed several sand washes. Certainly if we had gone through there when water was flowing it would have been a real challenge (like our friend Steve encountered back in 2006 were the water had washed the road out with five-foot drop-offs into the wash). The riding was similar to what some of us had encountered in Baja and we moved along at a pretty good pace – about 55 MPH – until we had a piece of nature remind us to take a break. Avery had a desert tortoise once as a pet and he recognized a tortoise in the middle of the road and stopped to get him out of harm's way. After all, as Brian Brown said in *On Any Sunday* when a rider moves a tortoise off the trail, "*Desert racers are good people*".



If you ever get the chance to ride in the high desert, or the wilds of Baja, you quickly understand that these areas are teeming with life. Mammals, reptiles and insects join all type of wild and interesting plants in a pretty unique environment.

During our break Larry C noticed some very LARGE locusts in the sage brushes just off the trail. During the entire ride we had encountered grasshoppers and locusts, but these guys were pretty big – easily over a couple inches long.

As the riders were having fun with the ride's final dirt portion, gassing it up over the rises in the road, Larry was driving the support truck down to Mexico and the last 65 miles on Hwy 9 was desolate and narrow. Larry L could see a thunderstorm off in the distance (as could the riders) but he got to the border crossing before the riders (but not by much) and he found a place to park just outside the "Restricted Area" which contained the US Customs office and the Border Patrol Office. Just beyond the truck and trailer was the actual border with the Mexican offices on the other side. Antelope Wells is a one of the smallest port of entries in the US and is only open to non-commercial traffic, so it was a good place to end our journey.



While Larry L was waiting in the truck for the others the previously mentioned thunderstorm swept through and drenched the area thoroughly. As it was letting up the five CDR riders rode in but all were prepared for foul weather and no one got drenched.

With the bikes and riders staged at the Mexican border, we took our confirmation pictures. In fact, we asked one of the Border Patrol agents to come over to take the entire group picture.



We got Bob's helmet out to be included (if you've been reading the blog, Bob dropped out of the ride on day 5 with a fractured foot). We joked about burying his helmet at the border, but we decided Bob might not see the humor in losing an expensive Arai to our hair-brain gesture.

Almost two weeks earlier we had touched Canada, rode the Rockies south and touched Mexico and we laughed as Larry C assumed the position as if he was sneaking into the country!

Back at the hotel we were cleaning up and packing for the truck ride home when the heavens opened up with a strong, pounding rain. It seemed that the rain drops were the size of quarters and visibility across the parking lot was gone. Again, fortune favored the foolish as our choice to trailer the bikes back from the border kept us from having to endure a wet ride back and we would have been on the dirt road when water would have been spilling through the washes.

Google came through again and located a great steakhouse near Silver City in the historic town of Pinos Alto which was born in 1860 when three 49ers, Thomas Birch, Colonel Snively and another guy named Hicks, stopped to take a drink in Bear Creek and discovered gold. Birchville, later Pino Alto, later renamed Pinos Altos, was born. The Buckhorn Saloon now has a fine dining room in what was originally the opera house built in the 1800's. Great character and great steaks, and good drinks too (yes, we had a designated driver). We celebrated our journey and adventure and we were a little sad too as our year long planning and execution was coming to an end.

We still had to get back to Denver, and other parts of the country, so we turned in with full stomachs and satisfied feelings. Swing back again to the blog to read about the trip back home, our post-ride observations and a review of the riders and their bikes.

