

Bob & Willo's Excellent Adventure

Still known in some circles as *The Salmon Run*

October 11-17 2006

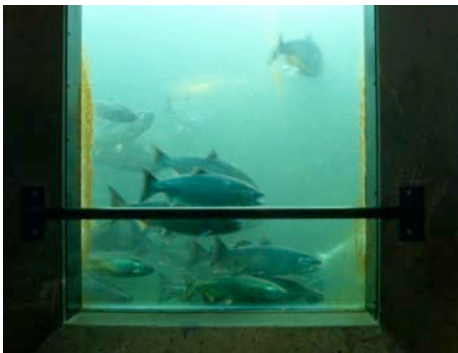
Rides & Riders

BMW K1200 RS	Seattle Bob Meador
BMW K 75	Mark Jarman
BMW R 100	Philip Richter
BMW R1200 RT	Bob & Jean Kirby
HD Ultra Glide Classic	Roger Hansen
Honda Goldwing	JJ and Mary O' Dougherty (rented)
Honda Goldwing	Kevin and Karen Ward (rented)
Yamaha FJR	Steve Larsen (rented)
Honda ST1100	Arthur Einstein (rented)
Kia Sedona Van	Maggie Larsen (rented)

It's a tradition. The most recent American Flyer run is *always* the best ride ever. But no kidding this time folks. The Salmon Run raised the bar. It was simply smashing.

At Monday evening's departure dinner Seattle Bob gave each rider a spiral bound book which contained not only maps but commentary on every day's ride – color coded by

day. While jaws were still dropping, Willo presented each of us with a Salmon Run T shirt, which she'd designed and silk-screened herself. All this was done at Union Bay Café, one of Seattle's finest restaurants unionbaycafe.com. Ordinarily it's closed on Mondays but Bob told them that American Flyers were in town. We had the place to ourselves and might have wrecked it, as there was no baked oatmeal on the menu (Note to newbies: this is an old Flyer legend – ask someone). But when we saw that the menus had American Flyers at the top, all thoughts of rowdiness were forgotten. Clearly the concept of 'low expectations' was out the window.



Real live Salmon swim upstream before your very eyes, via a fish ladder at the Chittenden Locks in Seattle

New faces

Maggie Larsen, Steve's wife, had been persuaded to come along, just to see what all the fuss was about. Maggie's a Grand Girl. She chose not to ride and drove the van, which also carried much luggage, Willo, and Jean Kirby for several days. Maggie brought royal blue scarves for everyone made of prime Arizona mouse fur and emblazoned with "Salmon Run 2006". They turned out to be lifesavers. See weather report below.



Maggie Larsen herownself.

Mark Jarman, a friend of Seattle Bob's is a software big shot from Seattle (www.guestware.com). Not having any idea what fun he'd have as part of a Flyers tour, he'd promised to be back home by Thursday. We shall see more of Mark in the future.



Roger: now a BMW candidate

Roger Hansen shipped his Harley from New Jersey and did first class job of riding it at a Flyer pace. He confided at one point that he was able to do this in part because his GPS gave him a preview of the curves ahead. Roger owns a toll bridge and is thinking of buying an expressway. But Roger is clearly itching for a sportier ride. I imagine we'll see him on future rides, with a new mount. Philip Richter invited Roger

Meg Berte rode to Seattle from San Francisco behind Philip Richter. She's a brave one. It was Meg's first time on a motorcycle and she showed up all smiles. Unfortunately she was unable to call in sick for

the week so she joined us only for Monday's dinner and then took the red eye home. On her return, Meg promptly bought a Suzuki 125cc dirt bike, and has begun to learn the ropes – a good sign she has the AFMC right stuff.

Bob has promised to post the tour book he created on the website (www.americanflyers.org) Go there for day-by-day routes and details. I'll just ramble.



Meg Berte, Philip Richter

Getting there early is half the fun

Steve and I arrived on Saturday to take a pre-ride ride. RT Potts, proprietor of Mountain To Sound Motorcycle Adventures (www.mtsma.com) met us at the airport. We rendezvoused with Bob and Willo at MTMS, took a look at Snoqualmie Falls, rode a bit and then went to Camp Meador, Bob & Willo's newly renovated house, on a hilltop overlooking Lake Washington. Later, Steve, Bob and I had the a wonderful meal at Pair (<http://www.pairseattle.com>) a neighborhood restaurant, while Willo stayed at home and watched T shirts dry.

Early Sunday we three Early Riders took a ferryboat to the Olympic peninsula for a ride down and around Hood Canal, which looks more like an inlet than a canal. Riding along the water we passed crab shacks and oyster bars, all tempting. It's real country over on the peninsula just a short hop from the city. Meanwhile back in Seattle riders were arriving. We gathered for supper that evening at an excellent Japanese restaurant downtown. Wasabi Bistro. <http://www.wasabibistro.biz/>

Monday was for sightseeing. Steve and Maggie hit The Space Needle. Philip and Meg saw lots of coastline as they motored in. JJ and Mary hung around town. Bob Kirby had ridden from Park City and I rode with him as he went off for an oil change. Once lubricated, he, Seattle Bob and I had a good lunch – after which we rode over to the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks that connect Lake Washington to the Sound. The locks were built in 1915 and at the far side they incorporate a Salmon ladder to help fish get up river

to spawn. There's an underground viewing window and you can see the salmon swimming by about two feet from your nose. It's quite mesmerizing.

Wheels up

This ride had more ups and downs than many Flyer trips. First, a small loop west into the San Juan Islands at sea level and then a big loop to the east toward Spokane which took us over 5000 ft.

On our first day we took a ferry west, and over-nighted on Orcas, in the San Juans. The view from the top of Mt Constitution is memorable. It's a short ride up the hill but oh, the switchbacks! In one of them, Bob hiccupped and Jean suffered an involuntary dismount. She appeared at the cocktail hour on crutches. But a



Top of Mt Constitution, overlooking the San Juans

couple of Manhattans and a good night's sleep work miracles. Jean kept Maggie company in the van for the balance of the trip. Next day we took the ferry back – then did a short coastline ride north toward Bellingham, and stopped for an excellent lunch (and view of Samish Bay) in our own dining room at The Oyster Bar <http://www.theoysterbaronchuckanutdrive.com/>.

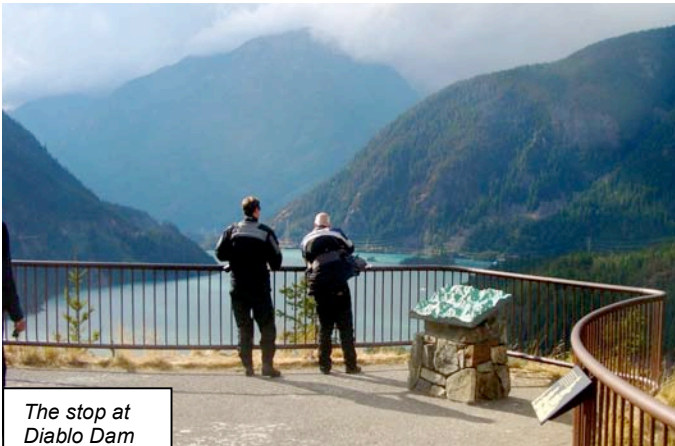
After lunch we headed east for a spectacular ride through the Cascades into the Methow Valley which reminded me of Utah. We stayed the night Sun Mountain Lodge (<http://www.sunmountainlodge.com>) outside Winthrop - and after a long day on the road the luxury of the place was overwhelming. The place is just elegant. Next day the route went south to Grand Coulee and then west. We spent that night in very posh rooms that are part of the Cave B vineyard, (<http://www.cavebdirect.com/>). Best Western was never like this! It was a bit dewy next morning and so, fully waterproofed, we carefully picked our way west again to the Horse Heaven Hills and down along the Columbia River to Skamania Lodge (<http://www.skamania.com/>) a big resort with a brawny buffet, where we ate ourselves circular and spent the night.



Lunch at the Oyster Bar on Chuckanut Drive

Just a word about the Columbia River. I've ridden along the Hudson and the Ohio, over the Mississippi, Susquehanna, Allegheny, and many others. None of them make a patch on the Columbia. It has a majesty all its own. Woody Guthrie called it the "king Columbia" and now I understand why.

On Saturday we turned north toward Mt St Helen's, which we never reached because of snow above 4500 ft. The ride through Mt Rainier National Park, and over Cayuse Pass at the foot of Mt Rainier went past jagged peaks that looked as though they'd just emerged from the earth. And the road down toward Enumclaw and ultimately, Seattle was breathtaking. See Bob's post for the actual route.



The stop at Diablo Dam on Rte 20, the North Cascade Hwy. The road is closed in winter.

You call this partly cloudy?

Weather? It was a beautiful week in Washington. The sun came out frequently. We only had to get the rain gear out once or twice a day. Temperatures hovered in the mid-seventies, except when they went down to about 34°, which happened more than once. We hardly had any sleet at all – and while Mary O' Dougherty insisted that she saw it bouncing off JJ's helmet, JJ swears it isn't true. Actually they had quite a discussion about it - you had to be there.

Washington is the land of not being able to pronounce where you are or where you're going. Snoqualmie? Enumclaw? Wenatchee? Snohomish? I'm still tongue-tied. But you can trust the roads. With a few exceptions our ride was smoothly paved with curves that were predictable and well marked. I came away with several favorites.

Chuckanut Drive, also known as Rte.11, shimmies for 10 miles along cliffs through a lush, rainforest canopy. We rode it north from Edison to near Bellingham, where we turned around and rode back – stopping on the return for a fabulous lunch at The Oyster Bar. On the west side of Chuckanut you see Samish Bay. The east side is a wall of granite. The road is two lanes of serious fun with virtually no room to pass. It was a nice exciting morning.

The North Cascades Highway is one amazing sweeper after another. You can ride at any speed you choose. I didn't take geology in school, but I read a little John McPhee, http://www.amazon.com/Basin-Range-John-McPhee/dp/0374516901/sr=8-1/qid=1159737974/ref=pd_bbs_1/002-7935337-6615234?ie=UTF8&s=books and these mountains seem relatively new, not jagged but sharply peaked. They're below the tree line so they're a deep, velvety green.

After lunch in Ellensburg on Friday we rode through a gorge carved out by the Yakima River. The smell of sage was in the air. Bob claims to have narrowly missed a bear on this stretch a few years back. And we were warned that though it's only



Stonehenge – an imitation of the

two-lanes it's a prime hunting ground for the kind of bears that carry radar. It seemed to me such a glorious river ride between canyon walls, that going too fast to take in the view would be sinful.

You can't make this stuff up.

Other notable sites: Mary O'Doherty wriggling in and out of the rain suit she'd borrowed from Bob Golant, who stayed in Chicago. All zipped up she looked like Mr Bib, the Michelin man. Or Bozo the clown. Then there was the comfortable-looking blue and tan



Mary
does
rainsuit.

wing chair sitting in the left lane of Rte 5. I mean it was in the *road* folks! The only thing missing was the reading lamp. With the sun out it came into view very quickly as we hurried back to Seattle at about 85 mph on Saturday. Kevin was tempted to stop as he felt it would fit well into their family room. I loved the Washington route signs, too. The route numbers are super-imposed on a silhouette of George Washington which makes the signs look a lot like New Hampshire route signs picturing the late lamented 'old man of the mountain'.

Bob plotted a wonderfully diverse ride. Along the rivers and through the farms, vineyards and forests. Some of the roads he'd never ridden before. But we were never in danger of losing our way. Bob, Phillip and Roger all had GPS units cranked up and Roger told me his not only shows him where he's going, but after

the trip is over it tells him where he's been. It also tells him whether or not he had a good time, according to Seattle Bob. I gotta get me one of those things.