

## **Alaska, the Long Way!**



**Tom Fuchs, Ron Ayres and Mark Campbell in Hyder, AK**

In 1998, a man by the name of Ron Ayres shattered the world record for riding to 48 states in 6 days 31 minutes. He continued on to create a new record which included Alaska (or 49 states) in 7 days, 20 minutes. Thus, the ride became known as the 48+ (48 states plus Alaska). Ron wrote a book about this adventure "Against the Clock".

Over the years, the book "Against the Clock" has always been a conversation piece among long distance (LD) riders. The Iron Butt Association (IBA) is the organization that validated Ron Ayres amazing ride. The IBA has a series of long distance rides for anyone to participate in. The IBA encourages new riders' to start with shorter rides before tackling the longer, more demanding rides.

These rides require a lot of seat time. LD riders basically eat on the bike and only stop for necessities such as fuel and restroom breaks. When they do stop, they keep their time off the bike to a minimum. These riders become proficient enough to ride 1,000 miles in 16-18 hours. By completing 1,000 miles in 16-18 hours, they have time to get plenty of sleep for the next 1,000 mile day.

Ron Ayres celebrates his world record ride every year in Hyder, AK by hosting an event known as "Hyder Seek". (Note: Hyder, Alaska is the southern most accessible town by road in Alaska.) Typically, this is when other riders try to tackle this ride and meet Ron Ayres in Hyder for his annual celebration. This year, Hyder Seek was scheduled during Memorial weekend (May 25 & 26, 2007).

Since Ron Ayres record breaking ride, the IBA created a ride named the 48+. The IBA asked Ron Ayres to set the criteria of this ride. Ron put a 10 day limit on this ride to make it one of the IBA's most extreme rides. Riding the 48+ has been a dream of mine since reading Ron Ayres book several years ago.

I had planned this ride for over a year. Several months before I was to start the ride, Tom Fuchs asked if he could join me. This had been a dream of Tom's for many years, too. I'm glad Tom rode with me. He was a great riding partner during the trip.



**Mark Campbell in Hyder, Alaska**

Our plan was to ride over 1,000 miles a day for 7 days. Then, day 8 would be about an 800 mile day and day 9 would be a 444 mile day. This planned worked well for us.

On May 11 - Tom and I rode down to Slidell, LA. This would be our starting point. I had 2 start witnesses lined up, Bob Brockhoff (from the IBA witness list) and Terry Braud (from the Motorcycle Tourer's Forum). Both are IBA members. Bob had evening plans so he met us about 2:00 pm that afternoon. Terry was there at 7:00 pm to sign us off. Tom and I would get a good night's sleep before starting at 3:14 am local time.

May 12 – Tom and I were both up early and out at the bikes preparing for the trip. We left the hotel and rode down the street to the nearest gas station for our start receipt. Both receipts were marked with the time 3:14 am. Now, we're on the clock. We have 10 days, according to the IBA requirements, to ride to the other 48 states.

No problems until we got off of I-65 headed for Florida. I thought I had our route memorized in my head (instead of trusting the GPS). When we arrived in Atmore, AL, I saw on the GPS the FL state line was real close. I could have sworn that Atmore was the town in FL where we were going to get our receipt, so I stopped and fueled up. To my surprise, the receipt said Atmore, AL. Tom asked the lady inside how far FL was from here. She said the state line was just on the other side of town. Stay on this road, there is a gas station in FL not too far from here. We continue on and find the gas station, out in the middle of nowhere. Tom fuels up. My bike is already fueled, so I buy a pack of gum. I look at my cash register receipt. Damn!!! I look at Tom and say "The information we

need is not on the receipt!” The lady immediately said that she was aware of the information that we needed for a special motorcycle ride. So, she printed us a receipt from a different receipt printer. The lady is a savior; this receipt had all the correct information on it (Walnut Hill, FL). We thanked her for the receipt and told her we only had 45 more states to go. She just laughed and shook her head.



**Smithers, BC**

Back onto I-65, we head north. Before we get into GA, we stop for gas in Letohatchee, AL. As I fill up my bike, there's a guy in a 4-wheel drive pickup on the other side of the gas pumps asking me about my destination. I didn't want to waste a lot of time with a lengthy explanation, so I am brief with my answers. I tell him that we're headed to AK. Well, how are you going to get there? He asks. Since I have GA tags on the bike and we are headed north toward GA, he probably thinks we are going somewhere in GA. I say we are going to get to AK by going through Seattle, WA. NO, he says! Where are you going now? I say, we're actually headed to Maine. He just looks at me and gets in his big pickup truck, slams the door and leaves. I guess he thought I was pulling his leg. Tom and I both realize most people don't understand the magnitude of this trip. From now on, I'll just tell someone our destination for the day (that in itself is pretty extreme).

In Asheville, NC, we got sprinkled on. It was just enough to wet the windshield and then the rain was over.

In order to get our KY receipt, we had to get off the interstate and take back roads for about 50 miles to Harlan, KY. The ride was awesome! It was nice to get off the interstate for a while and enjoy some beautiful scenery in this part of the country. There



was a large group of 4-wheelers fueling up at the gas station in Harlan when we arrived. This older group of men and women looked like they had been having a lot of fun that day. Their 4-wheelers were covered in mud. I figured that it must be some kind of 4-wheeler club riding around the area. This area was very hilly/mountainous and looked like the perfect area to play on a 4-wheeler. Once we got our gas receipt, I noticed the time on the receipt was an hour early. I asked the young lady behind the counter to make a note on my receipt and sign it. This note was to verify the time on the receipt was incorrect and the lady would confirm the information. She also wrote down her phone number as a contact in case the IBA had any questions. From Harlan, we had to double back to the interstate and head for VA.

It was hard to believe that we started at the Gulf Coast this morning and now we were riding in the Appalachian Mountains. We could tell this was the beginning of a wonderful adventure. We eventually stop in Salem, VA at 9:30 pm for a warm meal and hotel room.



**Sealaska Inn at Hyder, AK**

May 13 – Tom and I were out at the bikes early again. We knew this was going to be a very challenging day since we were headed thru the New England states.

We head north to WV for our first receipt, then east toward Baltimore. It was still early as we ride around Baltimore to pick up I-95, so traffic was not an issue. From here, we take I-95 north to the New Jersey Turnpike. Wow! The turnpike was 3-4 lanes of solid traffic (on our side) moving at 75-80 mph. We moved right along in this traffic. Luckily, there were no accidents or anything to slow us down. Once we made it up to the George Washington Bridge where we cross into New York City, we slow down to stop and go

traffic. It only took us about 30 minutes to cross the bridge. The rest of NYC was a breeze on this Sunday at noon. We were glad to get through NYC! Back onto I-95 we head toward Boston.

In Boston, we ride over a huge bridge, then under the new tunnel. We remember this tunnel had just collapsed a few months ago. It was a weird feeling riding under the city the size of Boston. We get through Boston with no problems and head toward Maine.

Kittery, ME was our first major milestone. It was a great feeling to know we had reached the northeastern corner of our route. Now, we would be headed west!

Once we left Kittery, ME, we had to get off the interstate again in order to ride through NH and VT. The sun was setting and the roads were curvy and rough in some areas. This part of the ride took a toll on us, especially, since it had been a stressful day riding through several large cities. We were ready to stop as soon as we hit the interstate in Albany, NY. Unfortunately, we rode right onto a toll road. No hotels at this intersection, we're already at the toll booth to enter the toll road. Well, do we turn around or continue moving forward until we find a hotel? We decide to move forward, we don't want to backtrack.

Although we were 90 miles short of our goal for today, we were both ready for a warm meal and a good night's sleep. It had been a long day! We stop at a Super 8 motel in Amsterdam, NY. I ask for a room for the night. The lady behind the counter swipes my credit card. She tells me the machine says to hold it. I said "WHAT?" You're not going to hold my credit card! Well sir, I'll have to call my manager. I could just envision this lady pulling out a pair of scissors and cutting my credit card in two. I didn't foresee this problem since I had called in advance and warned my Credit Union of my travels. Luckily, the lady got off the phone with her manager and it was their policy not to hold someone's card. It was late. This was my only credit card. I did have a debit card, but was afraid it would get flagged too. I thought this was going to be a deal breaker right here on the second day.

We reserve a couple of rooms (I paid with cash) and ask where we can get a warm meal this late at night. She tells us of a McDonald's down the road. As we enter the McDonald's, the manager tells us they are no longer serving food. They close at 11:00 pm (its 10:50 pm). One of the counter girls tells us there's a Taco Bell down the road a little farther. Tom and I head that way. We're in luck, the Taco Bell is open. It didn't matter what they served, we were HUNGRY!

After we eat, I'm concerned about my credit card issue. I had called my credit card company before I started the trip to let them know that I would be traveling all over the USA. Well evidently, that wasn't good enough. I look at the back of my credit card and see an 800 number. Will they take a call at 11:30 pm? They do! I step out into the dark deserted parking lot of the Taco Bell and talk to the Visa fraud protection department! He didn't say it, but I took it there is an automated system that flagged my card. He said that I would have to verify some charges since there were multiple fuel stops in several

states. As the man on the phone started going over a list of fuel charges, I said "STOP!!!" Sir, I would like to make this clear! I am not going to some states! I am not going to many states! I am going to EVERY state! The man on the phone says "you mean all 48 states?" NO! I mean all 49 states in North America! The man says "OH MY!" I'll get this taken care of right away sir, he says. Your card should be good to go in about 20 minutes. If there is still a problem, please call us back tomorrow during normal working hours. That was the end of that problem. No other issues with my credit card during the remainder of the trip.

After solving that issue, we head back to the hotel for a good night's rest.



**Caroline is an end witness (Ron Ayres contact in Hyder, AK)**

May 14 – Today is a great day of riding (for the most part). As we head west, there is some morning fog. As the sun rises, I see several deer alongside the road in upstate NY. This area is very scenic. Life is good!

As we headed west from NY State the sky grew overcast. Near Erie, PA, we ride through a few light showers. The weather forecast today was predicted to be hot weather. The overcast skies helped keep the temperatures down this morning.

As we ride through Toledo, OH, Tom tells me where some of his and Marti's relatives live and, where he and Marti grew up. Karen and I grew up in Indiana, about 130 miles from Toledo.

Sturgis, MI was only a mile from I-80/90 in IN. We got off the toll road and stopped at a gas station in Sturgis, MI. Damn! The receipt doesn't have the information we need, so we ride down a block to a Walgreen Drugstore. I purchase a bottle of water. Yes! All of

the information is on the Walgreen receipt. Now, we head back to I-80/90 then west toward Chicago.

At the Indiana/Illinois state line, the lady in the toll booth told me there had been a report of some kids climbing around the back of a car hauler as it was driving down the road. If I saw this vehicle, I was to call the number on my toll receipt and report it. Some people???

Now, the temperature had risen. It was 93 degrees as we ride into the Chicago traffic 4:30 pm. Bad timing, rush hour was just starting. It took us 3 hours of stop and go traffic to get through Chicago. Tom was leading. There were several lanes of traffic (on our side). Riding together through this mess was going to slow us down, so I broke away and started weaving in and out of traffic to keep moving forward. The temperature gauge on my bike was rising and I didn't want it to overheat. Tom and I could stay in contact with the CB's. Although we would get out of eye contact with each other, we finally made it through Chicago with no problem. Tom said he did have a car almost rear end him in the stop and go mess. About the time they got up to speed, the traffic stopped abruptly and the car behind Tom veered off the road and stopped beside him on the left shoulder. Tom was thankful the driver was thoughtful enough to do this.

We ride up to Madison, WI where we stop for the night. The Cracker Barrel next door to the hotel was a whole lot better than the Taco Bell meal we had eaten the night before.

May 15 – We're both up and ready to roll this morning. We were glad to have the last few days behind us. Other than some heavy traffic in the St. Paul, MN area, there would be little to no traffic on our ride today.

In northern MN, a policeman stopped Tom about his headlight modulator. The LEO (Law Enforcement Officer), said that Tom was impersonating an emergency vehicle. I pulled up behind the police car, shut off my bike and just sit there and watched. I could see the LEO pointing at Tom's headlight, then open and close his hand fast and slow (I could tell he was talking about the modulator). The LEO looked very upset about the modulator. Then, I see Tom open his fairing pocket and give the LEO a piece of paper. I laugh to myself, knowing that was the federal law stating that headlight modulators are legal. The LEO is still not happy. He traipses back to his patrol car and gets on the radio. A few minutes later, he returns to Tom and lets him go. Tom tells me later, he told the LEO that he would turn off the modulator while he was in MN. Tom and I decided later, the modulator might give us too much attention. It would be better if it was off for the rest of this trip.

We did ride through some brutal winds for about 60 miles just before entering ND. These winds were strong. The gusts would blow the bike all over the lane. We were glad to ride out of this white knuckle area and into calm air.

Once we hit Wahpeton, ND and got a receipt, we headed south. For me, this was another major milestone in our journey. Life was good!



The ride down I-29 was relaxing. No traffic (hardly any vehicles at all). It was a time to kick back and enjoy the ride and all the beautiful scenery along the way.

In Sioux City, IA, we cross the river to get a receipt for NE. After getting our receipt, we double back to I-29 and continue on south.

As we ride though Council Bluffs, IA, I chuckle to myself as we pass the Ameristar Casino. A co-worker's sister is employed at the Ameristar. She provides used playing cards from the casino for our euchre games at work for break and lunch times. I laugh as I see a Cargill grain elevator right across the street from the casino. Remember, this is Iowa!

In Kansas City, MO, we get on I-435. This circles Kansas City and will take us to the Kansas side of the city where we stop for the night. A co-worker of Trena Mathis suggested that Harrisonville, MO was not a good stopping point. I told Tom that Kansas City would probably be a better choice. Tom agreed. We stop in Shawnee, KS (a suburb of Kansas City). The Hampton Inn only had one room left. We'll take it. Tom and I didn't feel like shopping around for hotel rooms tonight. It was a good choice. The pillow top beds were a great treat. A Mexican restaurant next door made the perfect place for a warm meal this evening.



**King Edward Hotel in Stewart, BC has snowmobilers when we arrive**

May 16 – As we head out of Kansas City at 4:30 am this morning, there are not many cars on the road at all. We head back to I-29 and continue south.



In order to get a receipt from AR, we have to leave the interstate and ride the back roads. Again, it's a nice change of pace and the scenery is beautiful. In AR, there were some rock overhangs we rode underneath as they jutted out over half of the roadway. I forget what small town it was in AR, where another LEO stopped Tom. Like before, I just pull up behind the police car; turn off my bike and sit and watch. This time, I couldn't figure out why Tom was pulled over. After a brief discussion, I see the LEO let's Tom go without a ticket. As we ride away, Tom said that we were stopped for speeding (44 mph in a 35 mph zone). Sounds good to me, let's head west!

Wow! Another major milestone accomplished! We were heading west again! Every milestone such as this was a great feeling. Our plan seemed to be working.

The rest of the day was pretty uneventful as we rode through OK and TX. We rode most of the way across NM before we could see a major thunderstorm in front of us. It was late at night and the sky in front of us would light up. The lightning would light up the sky from left to right on the horizon. The wind was starting to get stronger also. Just as we rode into the rain, we exited off and got a hotel room at a casino in Acoma, NM. There were several other bikers stopping at this casino, too. These bikers had filled up all empty space under the awning to the casino's hotel. Tom and I just park in the rain, walk into the hotel and get in line behind the other bikers. One of the bikers turn around to me and ask where we rode from today. I said, "Kansas City". He paused for a second to think about what I had said, then shrugged his shoulders and turned back to his buddies as they got their rooms. I guess he didn't have anything else to say to us after that.

We had a good meal at one of the casino buffets. It was nice to have our rooms and cafeteria under the same roof tonight as it rained outside. We asked the doorman about any other covered parking for our bikes. He told us of another awning in front of the casino. We parked right beside the main entrance to the casino. It was nice to have our bikes protected from the weather this evening.

May 17 - Today was going to be the most scenic day of the trip so far. It was a beautiful morning. The rain had moved through during the night. We were ready to ride!

We were out of NM in a little over an hour. We are headed toward Flagstaff, AZ. We see nothing but beautiful countryside, as we cross AZ. Luckily, we make it to Needles, CA at 10:30 am (before it gets real hot). Another major milestone accomplished! Needles, CA was the southwestern corner on our route. Life is good! We head toward Las Vegas, NV.

As we ride through Las Vegas, NV, I think about all the major cities we have ridden around or through on this trip. It's amazing (Atlanta, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Providence, Boston, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Albuquerque, and now, Las Vegas).



**The pier in Hyder**

Southern Utah was spectacular! The scenery was just breathtaking as we rode through the rock formations in this part of the country. By the time we hit CO, it was dark. Although we didn't see much of CO, I could tell we were climbing up and over a mountain. At times, we were riding on the side of a mountain. As we climbed in elevation, the temperatures dropped. The temperatures warmed up again as we descended on the other side of the mountain.

This was a 1,200 mile plus day. We had been behind schedule a few miles every day since stopping early in upstate NY on our second day. So, today was makeup day. We were beat when we pulled into Vernal, UT.

There were several hotels/motels in Vernal, UT, but they all had their "no vacancy" signs lit up. We stopped at several places for a room, but we were out of luck. One place was questionable. They did have one room. Someone just called and cancelled their reservation. We really weren't interested. I turned it down. We continue to look around town, but nothing available. Finally, I look for lodging on the GPS. The next available lodging was 25 miles away. I call. A lady answers. She says they have no vacancy. Sir, all of the hotels in the area stay full due to the oil field workers. If this was a weekend, we'd have one.

Uh oh, we may have just turned down the only room in the immediate area. Let's go back and see if we can get that room. Luckily, the lady at the Econolodge let us have the room. It was 11:00 pm. What do we do for dinner? Like our experience in upstate NY, everything in this town was closed except for a convenience store. So, tonight's dinner consisted of cold meat sandwiches. The lady at the convenience store asked if we were riding motorcycles. Yes! She told us to be careful of the wildlife in this area. There's an

abundance of deer and elk. I almost hit a moose the other day on my way to Salt Lake City, she said. We bought our lunch and carried it back to the motel to eat. I didn't know a cold meat sandwich could taste so good. After eating, I didn't move a muscle during the 3 ½ hours of sleep we got this evening. But, that was plenty.



**Bear Glacier between Meziadin and Stewart, British Columbia**

May 18 - We were up and ready to ride this morning. We had only been on the road a short time when Tom stopped in front of me. We were on a back road and I wondered what Tom was doing. It was still dark. All of a sudden, I see the silhouette of a moose run across the road in front of Tom. Wow! Luckily, Tom had seen it on the side of the road and was waiting for it to do something. Tom says over the CB, "That was either an elk or a moose!" I could tell by the silhouette and dark color that it was definitely a moose. As we continued on, the sun was rising. In the next 20 miles, we saw over 50 elk and over 50 deer in the road, or right beside the road. I also saw a wolf alongside the road in this area. This was definitely the most wildlife we saw on the entire trip in a short stretch of highway. Shortly after that, I saw over 50 pronghorn antelope.

We ride north to I-80 in WY before heading west again. As we're riding west on I-80, I get a phone call. My work supervisor, Jay Stover, has the crew I work with in a conference room at Delta Air Lines. My co-workers want an update on my progress. I chat with them a while as I ride down the interstate with the Utah Mountains to my left and the Wyoming plains to my right.

Back into UT again, we hit I-15 and head north. We ride alongside the Great Salt Lake. We notice there are no boats or activity on the lake. We find out later from Dennis Ogle the salt level in the lake prevents any recreation from happening there. It sure looks pretty though!

We head north through ID and hit I-90 in MT. We head west again through the finger of ID. East of Coeur D'Alene, our side of the interstate had construction. We were down to one lane. I was leading. As the second lane opened up, 2 cars in front of me took the left lane to pass an 18 wheeler. As those cars moved out from in front of me, a rock/brick (15 inches x 15 inches square, 6 inches thick) was right in front of me. When I hit it, my front tire made a loud pop as my tire pinched the edge of this rock. This flung the rock to the left shoulder (imagine stomping on the side of a pool ball and it sliding out from under your foot). I thought the rock was clear of Tom's path, but evidently I only saw one half of the rock. The other half went to my right (not as fast) and in front of Tom's tire. Tom hit this rock at 45 mph. (It would be like running into a high curb at 45 mph). His Gold Wing jumped over it (not gracefully, I might add). Tom had to stop to inspect his wing. His front tire had a chalk mark straight across it. On both sides of his tire, his rim was bent/creased. Darn! Tom looked at it closely. On one side of his tire, you could stick a flat tip screwdriver in-between the rim and the tire, clear to the bead. Tom said, "I don't think it broke the bead". Tom checked the air pressure. It was a couple lbs low. He said, if it doesn't vibrate or wobble, I think I'll continue on. So, we rode on without any other problems. After talking later on, Tom and I decided that the rock must have been cracked before I hit it. Then, it split apart. We were both glad it wasn't worse than it was.

We continue west into WA. From there, we ride south to Hermiston, OR, where we spend the night and eat a nice warm meal. Another huge milestone accomplished since this was our last 1,000 mile day! We had just ridden ~7,500 miles and completed 48 states in 6 days, 20 hours and 20 minutes! Life is GREAT!

May 19 – Since today was only going to be an 800 mile day, we decided to take a few minutes in the morning and check our oil and the air pressure in our tires. Tom had his portable air compressor out and aired up his tires. I borrowed it to air up mine. My oil level was good. Tom's was low. I had been carrying a quart of oil and told Tom that he was welcome to it. But, he would be responsible for carrying the remainder of the oil the rest of the route (I would use the remainder of the oil prior to leaving Hyder).

Today's ride would be rainy for the most part. It rained as we rode north through Seattle and into British Columbia. No problems crossing into Canada. We only had 2 vehicles in front of us when we got to the border crossing. The Canadian representative asked us a few questions and then waved us through. The southbound side (heading into the USA) had a line of vehicles at least a mile long! Mental note: Do not return back to the USA through this border crossing.

Although it was rainy and foggy, British Columbia was beautiful! Small mountains protruded straight out of the ground. These mountains were not connected. Imagine a bunch of Dixie cups sitting upside down on a table. This is what the mountains looked like on a much bigger scale. They were a beautiful emerald green. The fog added to the beauty.





**A view on the boardwalk in Stewart, BC**

We eventually ride out of the rain and into a sunny day. We ride on to Prince George, BC for the night. A restaurant across the street from the Best Western in Prince George served us a nice evening meal. Since tomorrow is only a 450 mile day, we decide to give ourselves an 8:00 am departure time.

May 20 – Good thing we have a later departure time, the fog is thick this morning. We ride in the fog for a while until the sun eventually burns it off.

When Tom came over the CB and said we had 100 miles left to Hyder, I knew we were going to complete our goal! As we rode closer to Hyder, we saw several bears along side the road eating. As we would ride up, most of them would turn and run to the tree line until we passed. It was exciting to see 4 bears prior to arriving into Hyder!

Riding into Hyder, Alaska was a great thrill! Over a year of planning had worked out perfectly! Once we arrived in Hyder, we rode directly to the Sealaska Inn (Hyder Seek Headquarters) for our final receipt. The owner of the Sealaska Inn knew we needed a receipt with the location, date and time. He double-checked their credit card receipt printer to insure the time and date were correct. I purchased an Alaskan Amber with my credit card for my final receipt. It's still hard to believe that we rode to all 49 states in 8 days, 14 hours and 18 minutes! Since they only had one receipt printer, Tom's official time is a couple of minutes longer than mine due to the fact his receipt was printed later. What a ride!

Tom and I arrived in Hyder on Sunday. The Hyder Seek event didn't start until the following Thursday. Thanks to some advice from Jason Jonas, we left a few days early in order to ride through New York City on a Sunday. This strategy worked out well.

Now, we had several days to check out the Hyder area, do laundry and just chill out until others would start arriving in town for the event.



**Meziadin Junction** (note: sign is in kilometers)

### **Important Points**

Daily plan - Tom and I had an agreement; we would be at the bikes ready to roll at 4:30 am every morning (local time). Local time gave us an extra hour when we changed time zones (good idea). Both of us were always early and excited to start a new day. When we stopped for a required receipt or fuel, we would limit our talking, do what we had to do and get on the bike ready to ride until the other person was ready. We would also alternate as the lead bike after every fuel stop. We would eat on the bike during the day. Then, when we stopped for the evening, we would eat a hot meal. This would allow us to end our day between 9:00 - 11:00 pm. This type of discipline was the key to our success!

Food on the bike - Tom and I both carried beef jerky and protein bars as our food source on the bikes. The protein bars were a natural source of protein (low carbs) and tasted great. Once I started the ride, I only drank water. This diet did exactly what I intended... I was never sleepy. Actually, the second hour of the second day was most tiring to me. No caffeine, no sugar and little or no carbs are the key (for me anyway).

Riding Gear - I wore my First Gear Kilimanjaro jacket and Joe Rocket protective riding pants the entire trip. Tom wore very similar riding gear. These are Gore Tex all-weather protective riding clothes. When it was cold, I would add my Gerbing electric heated jacket liner. 93 degrees in 3 hours of traffic in Chicago, it did get warm. But, 93 degrees in 3 hours of traffic would be warm in anything. We probably looked like spacemen when we walked into the gas station in Needles, CA with our helmets on in the



sweltering heat to ask for a receipt! But, this attire worked well for all types of weather. I wouldn't have changed a thing.

Weather - Lucky for us, we had ideal weather. The high temperature was 100 degrees just outside of Las Vegas and 28 degrees the morning we left Vernal, UT.

Special Equipment – Tom and I both have the additional option of CB radio on our Gold Wings. This allowed us to talk between ourselves during the ride. We could also communicate with truck drivers, if needed, for additional information concerning weather or traffic.

A few months prior to our trip, Tom and I had the new Garmin 2820 GPS unit installed on our bikes. These GPS units included an MP3 player, XM radio and Bluetooth capability. The Bluetooth feature allowed the GPS to be an interface between us and our cell phones. Plus, it was all integrated into our Gold Wing communication system. This allowed us to answer the phone or dial out and talk while we were on the bikes. This was a great way to keep in touch with our wives, family and friends throughout the ride. It was also a backup system for Tom and I in case we ever got out of CB range of each other.



**Tom Fuchs enjoying life**

Another great piece of advice from a LD rider was to get an EZpass prior to the ride. This is an electronic device that automatically accepts payment to your credit card for

tolls in the New England states and Chicago. This was a timesaver and reduced a lot of the hassle factor.

Web Blog/Message Board – I created a special interactive web page on the South Atlanta Touring Group website where family and friends could keep abreast of our progress during the ride. Since Tom and I could talk on our cell phones while we were riding, we could update Marti (Tom's wife), Karen (Mark's wife) or other friends on our progress. Marti, Karen and friends (Luann Harp, Dennis Ogle, etc...) would post our progress on the message board for others to read. This message board received over 3,000 hits by the time we returned home. The support that we received from this message board meant a lot to both Tom and I. We have some very special friends!

### **Time spent in Alaska**

Tom and I stayed in the King Edward Hotel in Stewart, BC which was about 2 miles from Hyder, AK. Stewart, BC had a population of approximately 400 people, while Hyder's population was closer to 100.

The King Edward Hotel was the main hub of the local area. A lot of the locals would congregate here for breakfast, lunch, dinner or drinks since they had a restaurant and bar. It was a busy place!



**The King Edward Hotel is the main hub of the Hyder, AK/Stewart, BC area**



The first morning we were in Stewart, I was walking around the hotel parking lot looking at the snowmobiles on pickup trucks and in trailers. I asked a young man about snowmobiling in the area. He said it was a 3 day weekend in Canada and they had come up from Terrace, BC since the snow down there was already gone.

I also started a conversation with a traveling Electrical Contractor. This man asked if one of those 2 motorcycles were mine. I told him the silver one was mine. He said I've got something for you. I follow him to his van. He opens the back door of his van and says that he has some bear repellent that he wants to give to me. He no longer needs it since he now carries a shotgun. I see the pump shotgun mounted to his rear door. After about 10 minutes of digging through the shelves in his van, I tell him not to go to any trouble for me. No trouble, you will need this, he replies. As he continues to look, I tell him that I will go to my room to get a copy of our 49 state route. When I return, he is holding this fancy nylon holster with a can of bear repellent in it. The holster looked like a high dollar pistol holster made for a small fire extinguisher. This was some contraption! He insisted that I not only take it, but that I wear it any time that I leave town on the motorcycle. There are a lot of bears in the area, BE CAREFUL!

Inside the hotel, I asked the lady behind the counter where the town library was. She said it was in the school on the other side of town. The library charged us \$2 to use their computer with internet access. Here, I could see the message board on the South Atlanta Touring Group website. I could also access my email and check the weather.

The school was a very nice school building, something that you would expect several hundred children to attend. I asked the Librarian how many students attended this school. She told me there were 76 students this year (K-12).

Our riding buddy, Craig Moore from Newnan, GA, rode into town on Thursday. Craig had a couple weeks of vacation, so he did some flower sniffin' on the way up to Hyder. It was good to see Craig make it up to Alaska. Craig and I had talked about meeting up here for some time. Our original plan was to meet up at Hyder Seek and then all 3 of us (Tom, Craig, and I) ride back together through Glacier National Park. Unfortunately, the roads through Glacier NP were closed until July, so we cancelled those plans. Tom, Craig and I would end up taking 3 different routes back to GA. Most LD riders are very independent and would just as soon ride alone as with someone else.

### **Hyder Seek**

Hyder Seek is hosted every year by Ron Ayres to celebrate his world record ride to all 49 states. There were a total of 156 people ride up to Hyder for this year's event. These are people that have completed the 49 state ride (present and past) or just needed a reason to venture up to Alaska for the Halibut. This year, 12 people completed the 49 state ride (including myself and Tom). The other 10 riders started from various parts of the USA. We are known as "The Hyder Seek Class of 2007". To date, there are less than 100 people that have documented this ride thru the IBA since its inception less than 10 years ago. It was great to meet friends (old and new) and spend a couple of days talking about traveling experiences such as this!

Hyder Seek consisted of a nice fish dinner on Friday evening (Halibut and Salmon) and time to talk to other motorcyclist about their adventures. Saturday's dinner was hamburgers and hot dogs. Plus, it was picture taking time and nice door prizes were given away (motorcycle tour in Brazil, a complete riding suit from Road Gear and other nice prizes).

### **Heading Home**

The morning following Hyder Seek, Tom and I rode to Prince George to spend the night. This would allow us the next day to ride through the Canadian Rockies together. The Canadian Rockies were awesome! We spent the night in Cochrane, Alberta (near Calgary) before parting ways the next morning.

Tom headed south to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Tom said the weather conditions in the Yellowstone area were rainy and cold, so he continued east from there.



**Hyder Seek 49ers Class of 2007** (Picture by Ron Ayres)

(left to right) Thomas Kidwell, Robert Ransford, Chris White, John Barrow, Johnny Frazier, Mike Tomsu, Tom Fuchs, Darrell Herron, Mike Schwartz, Michael Boge, Mark Campbell, Carl Stark

I left the hotel in Cochrane early and headed east. By the time I rode through Calgary, I ran into rain. I didn't ride out of the rain and wind for another 400 miles. Temperatures in the low 40's with wind and rain make for a cold dreary ride. Thank you, Gerbing, for making the electric jacket liner! It kept me warm and toasty through this nasty morning. The rain didn't dampen my spirits at all since I felt like this was payback for all the great weather we had during the 48+. The sun did eventually come out and blue skies

prevailed. Another 200 miles later, I was at the USA/Canada border crossing into Portal, ND.

I was the second in line to enter the USA. I rode up to the border crossing booth and handed the officer my passport. He asked me a few questions and then told me to pull up a few feet so he could look through my bags. I pull up and shut off the bike. The Officer asks me to open my T-bag. I unzip one opening as he unzips another. He takes a quick glance and then asks me to open my right saddlebag. Again, he takes a quick glance and asks me to open my trunk. I tell him the trunk won't open very far with the T-bag on the back seat. He says no problem. He'll do the best he can. He sticks his hand into my trunk area and moves some items around (including my bear repellent holster), he notices several bags of beef jerky. He asks "What are in the bags?" I tell him beef jerky. He says that is a no-no! I tell him that I had the beef jerky before I entered Canada. He didn't seem too concerned and had seen all he wanted to see. He did ask me how my ride was. I told him that I had ridden through about 400 miles of rain. He asked where I was headed to today. I told him Fargo, ND (which was another 400 miles away). He said, you're riding 800 miles today. That's quite a distance on the motorcycle! I chuckle to myself. I didn't tell him of the other 200 miles of nice weather I had ridden in as this was actually going to be a 1,000 mile day.

Riding through ND, I saw quite a few antelope. I also noticed a pheasant fly from the side of the road over my head. I looked up as the bird flew overhead, then when I looked back down towards the road I had to duck as another pheasant just missed the top of my helmet. I thought to myself that could have done some serious damage at 80 mph!

To me, Fargo, ND, just seems to be a town located far from everywhere, so I wanted to check it out. I don't know what I was expecting, maybe a little dirt street town in the middle of the prairie. Fargo was just like any other city, only it was located out in some serious farm country. I could see thunderstorms all around me as I entered into town. My GPS has a weather feature that was warning me of a flash flood watch. It was getting late and I was concerned of the threat of serious weather the next morning. I find a hotel, eat next door at a Chinese restaurant then back to the hotel room to chill out and watch the weather. I wake up the next morning expecting it to be raining. Fortunately, it was not!

As I cross into MN, I remember the brutal winds we encountered on the 48+. I was hoping the wind would not be a problem today. Lucky for me, it was not. I had a great ride through MN down through WI and into IL. After our ordeal in Chicago on the 48+, I decided to go straight down the middle of IL and avoid Chicago all together. This was a good choice. Once I was directly west of my destination, I turned and headed east. I rode the next 150 miles on back roads through the farmland and small towns in IL and IN. I enjoyed riding through these farming communities as I headed toward Fairmount, IN. I finally arrive at my parent's house about 8:30 that night.



**The Canadian Rockies**

It was nice to spend the following day, Thursday, visiting with my parents before heading south to Georgia on Friday. I was up and on the road by 4:30 am that Friday. I enjoy getting out on the road early and watching the sun rise. It's a chance to watch the world wake up. By 10:00 am that morning, I was in TN.

As I was closing in on Chattanooga, TN, Tom calls on the cell phone. He is about 60 miles on the other side of Chattanooga in GA. Tom was just checking on my progress. He had spent the night at his daughter's house near Ft. Campbell, KY. I told Tom that I had spoke to Craig a couple days ago. Craig was to stop and visit his brother in Chicago for a day. Craig planned on being home in Newnan, GA on Friday, too. Tom was currently in stop and go traffic on I-75 due to an accident. I was glad to hear that Tom was close to home with no problems along the way. Since there was a traffic issue, I decided to stop in Dalton, GA to eat lunch. This ought to allow enough time for the accident to clear up and the traffic flow to resume. My plan worked well as I didn't have any traffic issues after I ate.

Instead of going straight home, I decide to ride by Karen's workplace to surprise her. She was excited to see me. Karen had been telling her co-workers of my trip. It was a nice welcome home to see her and receive congratulations from her co-workers.

This was an experience of a lifetime. Every area of the United States is beautiful in its own way. I would think that most Americans would be interested in visiting every state



in our nation (maybe not in 10 days or less). I've talked Karen into returning to Hyder, AK for a reunion next year. Of course, that trip will be a more direct route. British Columbia and the Hyder, AK areas are well worth the trip!

Total mileage for Mark was 12,800 miles in a 22 day period.

### **How does the IBA verify that we have traveled to all 49 states?**

The IBA requires participants to have 2 witnesses to verify the odometer reading at the beginning of the ride and 2 witnesses to verify the odometer reading at the end of the ride. Once the witnesses are signed off, receipts are required documentation during the rest of the ride, most commonly gas receipts. The receipts must have the following information: location, date and time. The next time you fill up your car at a major gas station, look at the receipt. Today, all of this information is usually there. If not, we needed to get a receipt from another gas station, store, ATM, etc. with the proper information.



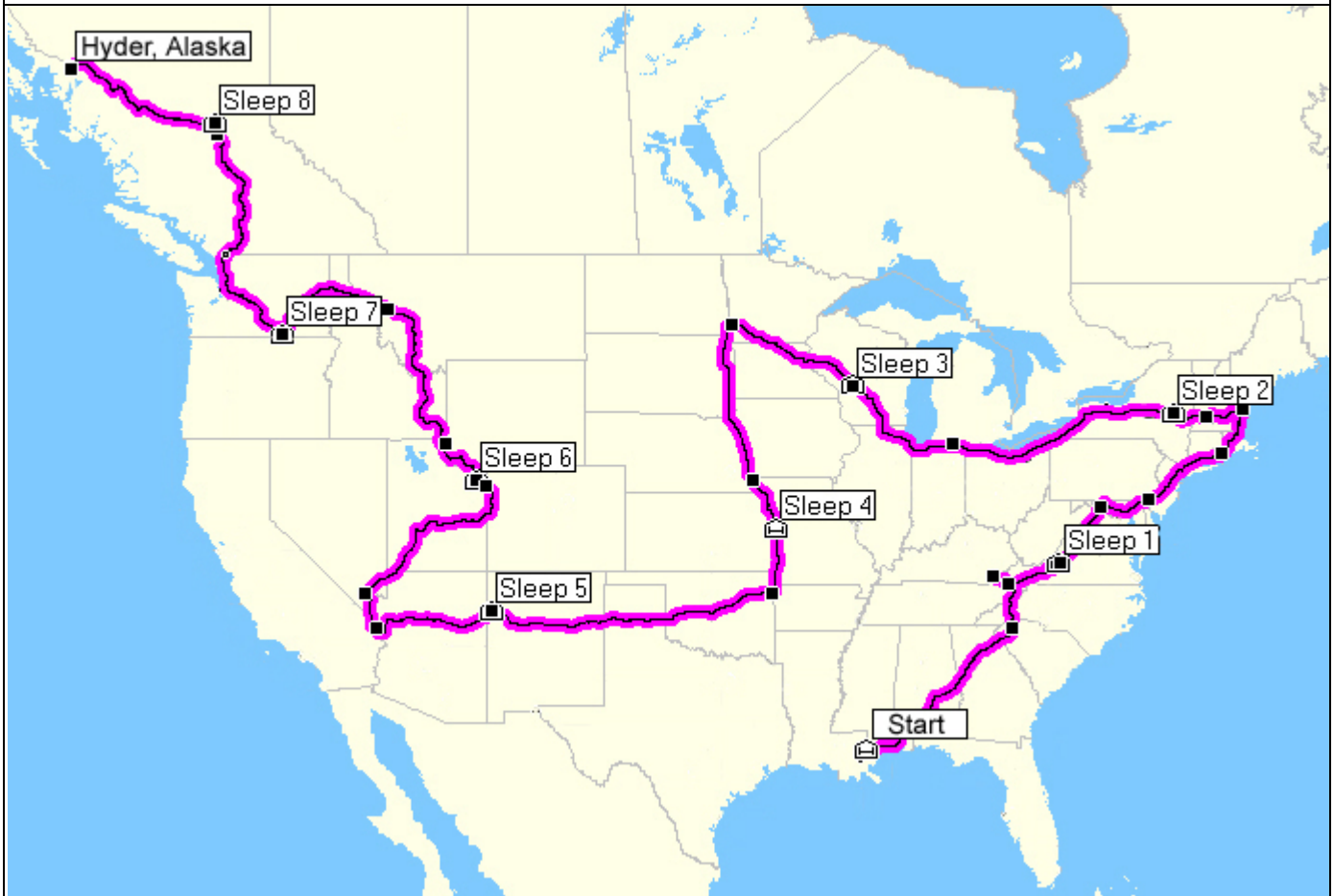
**Big Horn Sheep in the Canadian Rockies**

The first receipt will show the start time and location. Then, we were required to obtain receipts with this information in every state. The final receipt in Hyder, Alaska was our official stop time. A ride log is also required by the IBA. Every time we stopped, we logged the time in/time out, location and our odometer reading.

Once we have completed the ride, we submit all of this documentation to the IBA for review and official validation. The IBA will enter all of our receipt locations into a

mapping program and compare the mileage to our odometer mileage for official validation (remember, between the start odometer reading and the end odometer reading were verify by witnesses). Note: If someone was to attempt a new world record for the 48+, the IBA criteria is more stringent.

## Mark & Tom's 48+ Route (8 Days, 14 hrs, 18 min)



8,639 miles starting in Slidell, LA, ending in Hyder, AK

### The Daily Itinerary

May 11 - Day 0 - Rode to Slidell, LA to spend the night in preparation for trip.

May 12 - Day 1 - Rode to Salem, VA (~1,035 miles). States completed: LA, MS, FL, AL, GA, SC, NC, TN, KY, VA.

May 13 - Day 2 - Rode to Amsterdam, NY (~1,000 miles). States completed: WV, MD, DE, NJ, CT, RI, MA, ME, NH, VT, NY.
May 14 - Day 3 - Rode to Madison, WI (~1,000 miles). States completed: PA, OH, MI, IN, IL, WI.
May 15 - Day 4 - Rode to Shawnee, KS (~1,000 miles). States completed: MN, ND, SD, IA, NE, MO, KS.
May 16 - Day 5 - Rode to Acoma, NM (~1,040 miles). States completed: AR, OK, TX, NM.
May 17 - Day 6 - Rode to Vernal, UT (~1,210 miles). States completed: AZ, CA, NV, UT, CO.
May 18 - Day 7 - Rode to Hermiston, OR (~1,090 miles) . States completed: WY, ID, MT, OR, WA.
May 19 - Day 8 - Rode to Prince George (~820 miles), BC
May 20 - Day 9 - Rode to Hyder, AK (~444 miles). States completed: AK

## Mark's Route Home



3,477 Miles starting in Hyder, AK, ending in Newnan, GA

Sunday, May 27 - Hyder to Prince George, BC (444 Miles)

Monday, May 28 - Through Jasper National Park and Banff National Park (Canadian Rockies) to Cochrane, AB (489 miles)

Tuesday, May 29 - to Fargo, ND (1,024 miles)

Wednesday, May 30 - to Fairmount, IN (890 Miles)

Thursday, May 31 - Visit with parents



Friday, June 1 - to Newnan, GA (630 miles)