

The Big Dog Ride By Ted "No Floorboards Allowed"

Part 1.

This will be a memorable year for me. Daytona, Radisson, Quebec to the Hydro-Quebec Dam, the National in Midland, MI(had to go in a car because of a wrenched shoulder) and most memorable, The Big Dog Ride... ..

Done up with "The American Motorcycle Adventures", and run by BMW of Denver, with the world traveler, writer and all around great guy, Greg Frazier. This year's cost was \$295 for the "world's highest, toughest, meanest and dirtiest BMW GS motorcycle event". Forty guys, no girls. I thought I was prepared to handle this ride.. I did, well, sort of. My two buddies assured me that we would take some easy passes and take it easy. Nothing strenuous, nothing that would require pitching a bike over the trail into 1000 foot canyons, nothing that would really hurt you or your bike. Besides, there are three groups: the truly insane, somewhat insane, and the third group of riders, chickenshits like me. Choose your poison. We would go out a day early and get acclimated to the elevation and the terrain. OK, I trust you guys!... ..

I paid my money and started stripping my R80ST of all the plastic and parts that would surely get ripped, crushed and bashed in the event of a fall. I bought a shallow oil pan, and stuck a skid plate to the bottom. Outfitted the front with a knobby tire(more on this later) and an Avon Gripster for the rear. Bought a used gas tank that already had been bashed. Carried extra gear such as a diode board, trigger ignitor, rotor, plugs, ropes, tie-downs and anything I thought I would need. Dang, never thought to bring a snake bite kit. Em, waita minute, ain't no snake in this world stupid enough to live at 10,000 feet. Glad I didn't bring it!...

Trailered my bike with Bill Daigle's bike to Ridgefield, CT., to the home of Barry Finch, our transportation to Colorado. Barry has a 22 foot enclosed trailer, and the pull vehicle is a new Suburban with a massive engine and an appetite for fuel to boot. This monster semi will pull five bikes to Colorado. Barry's R100PD, Bill's R100PD, Mark Jensen's F650, my R80ST/GS and Benka's F650... ..

Benka? You haven't heard of Benka? This is a 33 year Slovene girl. Ya, I know, no girls. Well, she was the official staff

photographer. She is Benka Pulko, a dark haired dark eyed beauty that is going around the world on a BMW F650. She is a photographer, skydiver, nurse, massage therapist, writer and world traveler. Go to "Around The World Following The Sun" at www.ardi.si/benka. She will ride her motorcycle on all 7 continents before she is done. She will be going with us to Denver to meet up with our crew of riders...

Barry is a realtor, third generation in his home town. He who Dances with Vipers. He is into bee therapy, and is an official bee therapist. Carries bees around in a jar everywhere he goes. Need a sting, he'll be glad to sting you? He will stand toe to toe with an oppressor of the weak, down trodden and meek. Also does taiji(tie-chee) everyday and is in better shape than most 20 year olds. Also, he can come up with odd health tips that make you wonder how you missed that when you were growing up. Like your own piss is sterile, so if you have athletes foot and you pee on your own foot, the athletes foot will be cured. I just wonder at what point I put my socks on? Is this guy great or what?!! And a liar...

Bill is a salesman. Sells Yellow Page ads for a living. He has a wonderful outlook on life.. "I'm not sure if life is an illusion, but I'm living it" And live it he does.. You ladies out there pay attention. He's good looking, single, 42, owns his own cars, and motorcycles and boats and owns his own home in the better part of town. Great traveling companion. And a liar...

We loaded up the 5 bikes, with room for one more to bring back from Colorado when the ride was over and left the following day.

Three of us drove in shifts to save on motels and there was plenty of room in the Suburban to sleep if we needed to. We hit all the cities just right and very few delays in construction on the interstates all the way out west. Are you getting bored yet? Too bad, it's my story, suffa :-). The first night, deep into the night, I heard Bill(driving) and Benka singing "Silent Night". He in English, she in Slovene. And it was a beautiful night out there, too...

Here I want to say that on the way out, we talked about a lot of the rides these two guys had done on the Big Dog Ride.. These two were vets. They knew all the passes

and what to expect. 10,000 to 14,000 thousand foot passes are fairly easy if you take your time and enjoy yourself. They have ridden them in snow, rain, ice and wind and all the combinations in between.. They have seen guys get sick from the elevation, you know, like gasping for air to tossing their cookies at 12,000 feet. They have seen spectacular crashes, guys breaking ribs, spraining ankles, smashing their helmets and ripping skin off various parts of their bodies, bikes that were torn to up out of canyons and steep drop-off's and rescued bikes that took a dump in a swollen river and continued on their way. They have seen it all. And they take it in stride, it's part of the ride...

So here is this newbie, getting a little concerned and expressing my desire to turn around and take me home. I have had enough and I'm still in one piece, so's my bike. "Oh no, it'll be alright Ted, there are 3 groups, you can take the easy group, that's where we all started out and just ride your own ride," they keep saying. Ok, ok, I'll give 'er a go. Liars!.. As we were approaching Denver, about 50 miles out, with a backdrop of the Rockies in front of you, the most dramatic storm was brewing. To tell you the truth, I was scared shitless. The winds were howling and the sky was getting blacker by the mile, and we were headed into it. Bill was driving again and I suggested, read, pleaded to get the hell off the road and take cover. You could feel all that trailer behind us being pushed around by the wind and it wasn't getting any better. Tractor trailers were pulling off at a remote gas station, so did we. And the wind and the rain howled for about 20 minutes, then it calmed down. One guy came in a car and he was looking for some duct tape in the store where we pulled off to plug a hole in the right window where he had been blown so hard by the force of a truck that he was shoved to the side of the road and hit a metal post and shattered his window. All the glass landed in his wife's lap and he lost his right mirror. No injuries... We entered the interstate after the storm had subsided and not 5 miles down the road was a tractor trailer laying on its side where the wind had blown it off the road into the median strip. The wind was coming from our left forward quarter, his rear right quarter. Toldja so!:-) It was an hour later, 34 hours on the road, we pulled into Greg

Frazier's back alley and parked the rig.

Part 2.

The Denver Museum

Arriving late at night, beat and whipped, we sorted out where to sleep for the night at Greg's house. It was real hot, so Bill, being the gentleman that he is, had me sleep in the top bunk of the bunk room. He strategically positioned a small fan at his head on the bottom bunk and I inwardly laughed. I had my head right next to the window and the breeze from the fan drifted up to me all night. I fell asleep face down in the pillow, and snored loudly just to annoy Bill. It did! The next morning we did laundry and Bill decided to tear down the front of his PD and put in a new fork seal. It was then that Greg showed up. He was in Germany at a conference and giving a slide show. He moved a few of his motorcycles out of the way so Bill could get to work and gave me the tour. He has a small museum of motorcycles. Mostly BMW's, but there was a rare Honda, a Harley and an even rarer Indian Scout. He calls it his retirement investments. If you ever get a chance to peek over his front yard wall, you'll get to see a very rare motorcycle. Yard Art at its finest! When he was younger, he raced successfully and has trophies and ribbons all throughout his home. A true bikers house. I helped Bill the best that I could, offering a clean rag once in a while and holding slippery stuff when needed. Little did I know that we done good. The hammering the bikes were gonna take in the next 3 days would surely display any weak places on a bike. Bill left before Barry and I for Leadville on his bike. We took the Suburban and trailer and left right behind him, hauling 4 of the bikes to the Silver King Motel in Leadville. Barry booked us into the motel for an extra night before the Big Dog Ride was to begin. These two guys are veterans of the ride, and they wanted to do some leisure rides and take in some sights before the real ride began. After checking in and finding a suitable Mexican restaurant (stuffed soupapillas, number 8 on the menu thank you), we bedded down for the night. Next morning, I suggested we go over to Alma, elevation 11,532 feet, highest town in the state, to see my brother and sister-in-

law. Taylor and Cathy have a very successful real estate business and I hadn't seen them in a few years. Now, these two guys are poking around in the foothills of Leadville, taking pictures of the old mines in the area, and slowly working up the hill to the only road that seems to go up to the top of Mosquito Pass, 13,186 feet above sea level. Now I was thinking that we would go a little of the way up the hill, these two liars, I did mention that didn't I? and turn around and go around the mountain and see my family. They had other thoughts. Yep, you guessed it. Oh shit, says I about half way up the mountain, just stand on the pegs and pick a line and go. The throttle is your friend. Wait until I get to the top, I'm gonna kill these guys. Well, you know what, it wasn't all that bad. Hey, I can do this, I am doing this! I mellowed out by the time I got to the top and it was so beautiful up there. Besides, my two great buddies were praising me for doing the one of the toughest passes on the first day. Ya, that's me, what a great rider I am. Shoot, lets hammer down the other side and see family. Arrrrrgh!.... About a third of the way down on the east side, the road?? turned into a goat path and the boulders were as big as a motorcycle, and the holes were just as big. The drop-off is a wholesome 45 degrees. Now I'm considering death to my friends. This was hell coming down the other side. It was work, not fun. Here I am with my prize BMWST/GS, slamming and hammering and goosing and hurting my beloved bike and well, beginning to like it. Well, no, loving it. Ya, this is a gas. Alma, here I come!!!! We visited Taylor and Cathy, stop in and say howdy if you're in the neighborhood, JTR Real Estate, and be careful of the cop in town, he means business and it is a business to speeders in that burg! We then rode up to Bristlecone Park. These are some of the oldest trees in the world, like 2,500 years old. They look pretty chipper to me for being that old:-)

and generally had a relaxing time before the actual ride began. We were out most of the afternoon, and when we came back to the motel for the evening, Leadville was transformed into a dirt bike haven. Oh no, look at these guys. Body armor, gladiator shin guards, gauntlet type gloves with steel spikes, wild tricked-out R bikes with some real nasty looking tires and shocks and god knows what else. I began to feel sorta small. I was all puffy from the last two days of riding, butt after seeing these guys roll in, fear crept into. These fellers looked pretty serious. Introductions were made, a few names fell into place, like the famous Ron Spicer, test rider and crasher that was featured in Greg Frazier's book, BMW GSing Around The World, Arrowstar Publishing \$24.95. Paul Taylor, Iron Butt crazy, famed Gordy Pairman (AZ), 65 year old quadruple by-pass survivor, Jim Griffiths from Idaho that can drink a beer, smoke a cigarette and ride over Taylor Pass with no hands standing on the pegs, guys that cut their teeth riding dirt bikes when they were three, world traveler Bradford Duval and friend Scott Cocking that ride so fast they get there before they have left, then they leave for the Burning Man Hoedown and party for a week. You get the picture, I am among some of the toughest riders in the country. And I'm scared shitless!

The Night Before the Big Dog Ride

We rode around the mountains for the first few days, taking it easy and I'm coming up to speed with Bill and Barry. We did a few passes, ate good food in the local eateries,