

## **Adventures in Stereo (Methow & Omak)**

Going on Steeple Chase rides with a friend always makes the trip an adventure. When I got to go with my buddy Terry Knowles, I felt like it was Adventure in Stereo, because we share so much in common. Specifically, it sure feels like the Joint Heirs always has a ready target for abuse if either Terry or I are around. So I knew we'd have fun.

Terry and I hatched the idea about going while on a Harborview ministry run to see Pete Nichols from Good News Riders. Terry had the opportunity, and wanted to go. OK, he knew that his bikes' stator wasn't good for more than a day. OK, his tires were just a bit worn. But, come on, it's a ride, and a run for Steeple Chase sites, too!

It was early March, and sometimes you don't really know about snow and ice on the passes. I had been checking the internet, and things were to be clear. Perhaps a smidge chilly on the passes, but it was to be in the 50's in Methow and Omak where we were going. Good enough! But getting them would mean a 500-ish mile trip in one day, and we didn't want to go trying the passes in darkness. By my scheduling (that should have been Terry's first warning), if we left by 6:30 am, we'd be home by 5:30 pm, avoiding darkness while on the passes. Cool. Let's ride.

Terry shows up at my house right on time. (We had gotten Terry's bike from Jeff's house the night before, and brought it to my garage.) We un-hook his bike from the Battery Tender, put the seat back on, and get on our leathers for the ride. We stop for gas, and we're on the road (for real this time) by 6:45. But Terry hasn't eaten breakfast, so we decide to stop for coffee (aka "hands warmer") at the summit. Hmmm. It's below freezing here. With LOTS of snow. The restaurant is quite slow, and our quick stop has taken more like an hour. Uh-oh. First signs that our schedule of getting home before dark might be in trouble.

We head over Blewett Pass, and Terry decides that the frost on the road warrants his caution. He slows way down trying to keep the bike upright over what he thinks is ice (and I had zoomed over thinking was just reflection off the accumulated oils). I get to the bottom of the pass, pull over and wait for Terry. I can occasionally get him on the CB, but scratchy. Then a car goes by. More cars. A truck or two. By now I'm thinking I have to go back and look for him. I call out on the CB, and he says he's still moving, but slowly. I have electric jacket liner and gloves, so I'm not very cold, but I have to figure that Terry is freezing. He says that he's warms his hands on the cylinder head, and it's OK, don't worry. Finally he's visible, and we are together again. Rock 'n Roll.

We pull off early for gas at the corner of Hwy 95 and US 2. Terry says he can't feel his toes. So we get coffee and shuffle around, trying to get warmed up. The good news is that, from here, it should be warmer the rest of the day. The bad news is that it's still rather chilly, probably 40 degrees. Oh well, we get back on the road, knowing that our schedule is quickly eroding.

We head east on US 2, then north on Hwy 97. The ride is simply spectacular. Clear skies, a beautiful Columbia rolling by, and Terry telling stories all the way about how he used to live in Waterville and Wenatchee. Way cool.

At Pateros we jog west 11 miles to Methow on Hwy 153, to our first site, the Methow Community Church. Which, it turns out, is now the Methow Calvary Chapel. While we're getting set up for the pictures, a guy comes out from a house across the street and encourages us about how to get a better picture. We tell him we need the sign, and he agrees with our approach. After my shot, it's time for Terry. Uh-oh. His bike won't start. Hmm. Maybe the battery won't last a whole day after all. Hmm. What can we do? Turns out the guy who came over (Jason) is the Pastor of the church, and he has a battery charger we can use. And he also has an extension cord so we don't have to push Terry's bike too much. Great! We set it up, and wander over to the local diner (Tim's Place), to get lunch while we hope the battery gets enough of a charge.

At lunch we discuss our options. We could just turn around; I tell Terry that that would be fine, because I can come again another day. We could go on to the other side of Omak, and if Terry is still having trouble, we could charge his battery with my Compu-fire-equipped Wing and jumper cables. I also have the idea to take the fuse off of Terry's headlight, so that the battery doesn't drain so much, and Terry agrees that's a good idea. But wait, where are the fuses? The owners manual tell us, and the headlight fuse is easy to get – less than 5 minutes. That all taken care of, we get together with Jason for a quick prayer for him, his church, the community, and our safe return home, and we're off on the road again.

It's only 60 or so miles from Methow to the St. Mary's Mission Church, and we enjoy the warming sun along the way. My GPS doesn't realize there's an easier way to get on Hwy 155, so we take a long-way-around through Omak to get to the road going east. I've been to this place before; it had been a Wing Washington site some years ago. But I didn't have a GPS then, and I was guessing about the address this time. I find a sign, and go to the Church and get an accurate point. It's relatively easy to find, once you know where you're going; still, Terry gets lost, and can't find me. I wave and shout, and he eventually takes the appropriate goat path to get to the front of the church. We get our pictures, say our prayer, take off a few layers, and were on the road again.

It's time for gas, and I let Terry lead, because he wants to find a Shell station. When we can't find one in Okanogan, I convince him to go to the Chevron and I'll fill his tank, and he can fill mine at the next Shell. Also notice that it's 63 degrees! Ya-who!

By now we both know our chances of hitting the Snoqualmie pass before dark are slim-to-none. We get to Cashmere, gas up, put the headlight fuse back in Terry's bike, and re-layer for the ride over Blewett Pass. By now, it's getting darker, and I tend to slow down in the dark. Terry has been so worried about his battery that he's nearly forgotten about his tire condition; I'm going slower than him, so I let him lead over

Blewett. I wonder what he's doing when he dips his head below his windshield, and realize he's warming his hands on his cylinder heads! First one side, then the other.

After Blewett, it's just past twilight, and we can see the herds of deer in the valleys just getting ready to charge across the road in front of unsuspecting motorcyclists. I guess I didn't even see that State trooper we passed going the other way, who turned around with his lights a-blazing to give us an escort. After a nice little chat (more time gone), we got off with a warning, and we're quickly back on I-90 heading for home.

After an exciting day like we had, the pass ride was rather boring. We stayed in the slow lane and let lots of cars pass us (a visit with the state trooper will do that to ya). We actually get back to Jeff's house (where Terry's bike really lives) around 7:15-ish. We get a short visit with Jeff, who is just back from a trip to Florida, taking care of his Dad. Then Terry rides bitch with me to my house (which makes Jeff laugh), where he had parked his car. Sweetness had dinner ready, so we enjoyed supper while telling stories of our adventurous day.

Never a dull moment while Terry and I are out chasing Steeples. A good day I'll long remember!

Jerry Weltner





