

The Eagle Times

Colorado FreeWheelers

August, 2006

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, August 17, 2006

Fay Myers Motorcycle World

7:00 pm

www.cofreewheelers.org/

Upcoming Rides

22nd Annual 1000-IN-24

Sat-Sun, Aug. 19-20 2:00-4:00am
Leave from: Fay Myers Motorcycle World, 9700 E Arapahoe Rd.
Approx: 1000+ miles (in 24 or less hours)
Ride Organizer: Frank (Freewheelin) Heinzl

After doing this annual club fundraiser for 21 years you'd think we'd have run out of routes that were not duplicates of previous rides, but we still have a few tricks up our collective sleeves. The longest running event of its kind, this years ride promises to leave no one involved disappointed. As in the past discounted IBA SS-1k certification is available upon ride completion in the allotted time. Pre-registration only by Aug. 4. \$50.00 entry fee per motorcycle, includes hat, shirt, & pin. \$90.00 for couples. Extra goodies available to club members at cost, if they volunteer to work the event, and are not entered as riders. Go to the club web site for more information and an entry form.

www.cofreewheelers.org

RMVTA August Dinner Ride

Thursday, August 24 6:30pm
Leave from: Fay Myers Motorcycle World, 9700 E Arapahoe Rd.
Approx: ? miles Ride Leaders: Stan & Janet Stotz

Stan & Janet are keeping this one a secret for now. Call, (303-690-4133) if you'll be 4-wheeling it and you want to meet them there. Bring your appetites, your wallets, your "significant other," and a tank full of gas.

Cameron Pass/Trail Ridge Road

Sunday, August 27 TBD am
Leave from: TBD
Approx: ? miles Ride leader: Bruce Vinson

9 Passes Ride

Saturday, September 2 8:00am
Leave from: Boulevard Grill, 1500 W Littleton Blvd.
Approx: 400 miles Ride Leader: Frank (Freewheelin) Heinzl

This ride will include 4 Continental Divide Passes, Loveland, Tennessee, Freemont, & Hoosier. Plus the 5 lower passes of Vail, Red Hill, Trout Creek, Wilkerson, and Kenosha, for a total of 94,788 cumulative feet in elevation. None of the passes are less than 9,000 feet above sea level. So if you like getting high in Colorado, here's your ride.

Moonlight Ride

Saturday, Sept. 9 6:30pm
Leave from: RPM Motorsports, 13th Ave & Wadsworth Blvd.
Approx: ? miles Ride Leader: Bob (Knight Rider) Norton
This years full moon ride will go over Squaw Pass with dinner at Beau Jo's inn Idaho Springs.

Hare and Hound Chase

Saturday, Sept. 16 9:00am
Leave from: Fay Myers Motorcycle World, 9700 E Arapahoe Rd.
Approx: ? miles Ride Organizers: Bill (Wing Commander) & Becky (Stud Muffin) Gillespie

If you've never been on a Hare & Hound, the Hares (Bill & Becky) will depart early ahead of the Hounds (every one else), leaving clues as to their route. If you successfully follow the clues you'll find them at the end of the run, if not you'll get thoroughly lost. If you get lost you can cheat by calling them on their cell phone to find out where they are, so you can join everyone else. If you are the first to find the Hares, you may win a fabulous prize! If you are the last to arrive, you will absolutely win a prize.

RMVTA September Dinner Ride

Thursday, Sept 28 6:30pm
Leave from: Fay Myers Motorcycle World, 9700 E Arapahoe Rd.
Approx: ? miles Ride Leaders: Bill (Wing Commander) & Becky (Stud Muffin) Gillespie

Bill & Becky are keeping quiet about their destination for this ride, but you can be assured that their will be some great roads and food involved. Bring your appetite.

Food Drive

Please bring canned or other non-parishable food items to the meetings from now through the end of the year. Your donations will be taken to the Community Ministry Food Bank. Items also in need by the food bank are: School Supplies, Children's Clothing, and On-Call and Daily Volunteers.

Meeting Minutes

June 15, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 by Vice-President Frank Heinzl, as Brian could not attend due to a family affair. Visitors were Bill Lindquist and Sam Ashley, both of whom ride GL1800's, and Howard & Robbie Wisner. The Wisners are friends of Bruce Vinson, and recently took Bruce on his first Catholic School Girl's Ride. Ask him about it sometime.

The minutes of the May meeting were read aloud and approved as read. Treasurer, Floyd Thorne gave a report, but the secretary misplaced it somewhere between the meeting and home. But since these minutes were approved before they were written, it doesn't matter.

Memorial services for Elyse Griggs will be in early July. An e-mail will be sent when arrangements are finalized.

Past Rides: There was no official club ride over the Memorial weekend, but some members joined one of two groups. One group went north and froze, some went south and had sandstorms and crashed. No injuries on either ride. Jon Lofstedt's **Figure 8 Ride** featured a great route with lunch at the Golden Burro in Leadville, and ice cream in Frisco. **Foothills Ramble-1** had two bikes and a trike on some very twisty roads. Frank & Alan's **Haunted Places Tour** made stops at the Baldplate Lodge in Estes Park among others. They passed on the \$10 tour of the Stanley in lieu of lunch in Loveland at the Baja Cantina. Some say it is also haunted.

Upcoming Rides: Aluminum Butt Ride (6/17): Cliff has been leading this parade for many years now. **Dinner Ride (6/22):** Richard Bush will lead the group to the Pegasus in Castle Rock. **Oskar Blues Ride (6/24):** A night of food and music with Thumper. **Foothills Ramble-2 (7/1):** Frank will pick up where he left off on FR-1. **Ladies Run of Colorado (7/8-7/9):** The annual ride to Fairplay with the ladies.

Floyd talked about the Ride for Kids. A motion was made by Chuck Janssen and seconded by Pete Chronis to donate \$100 to the Ride for Kids. The motion passed.

The new web site is now pretty functional. The links were copied from the old site, and some are not motorcycle related. Frank will delete those. Links will be made soon to pages for ride reports, Rider of the Year, and possible roster and member profiles. It was motioned and passed to send Brett another \$50.

Safety Committee Chairman, Bob Norton reminded everyone to stay hydrated when riding, especially in high temperatures. Hypothermia can happen before you realize it. If you do catch yourself before it's too late, room temperature is better than a cold room to recover, and drink water or drinks with no caffeine. A good rule of thumb is that if you don't need to urinate at each gas stop, you probably aren't drinking enough.

Frank reported 15 entries in the 1000-IN-24 so far. He will be needing volunteers to staff the event. He also reported on club mileage. Records have been kept from nearly the formation of the club. 2006 miles so far are 87,528. The total for the club's history is 2,364,439!

Tory Brown won the 50/50 for \$31.50. Meeting adjourned at 8:50

Submitted by Secretary, Bill Gillespie

Meeting Minutes

July 20, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 by President, Brian Boberick. The lone visitor was David Burch who rides a Harley. He said he was happy to find a group of folks that like to ride. He has entered the 1000-IN-24.

Bill reported that "Boots" has had quite a summer. He took a long trip on his Harley with his cousin, Helen, has helped out at several motorcycle road races with both staff and Chaplain duties, and has just recently undergone hernia surgery. He is on the mend, and a fruit basket was sent from the club. We all wish him the best and hope to see him at a meeting soon. Some of us are becoming heathens in his absence.

Sunny reported that Chris Janssen has purchased a mobile home with lots of help from FreeWheelers and RMVTA members. The outpouring for Chris has been wonderful, and she is well on her way to at least be self-sufficient. Thumper made a motion to donate \$500. from the club to Chris, and it was seconded by Jon Lofstedt. The motion passed unanimously, and Pat did not get mad.

Frank said entries in the 1000-IN-24 are up to 35 with 3 couples. The pre-ride will be August 5th and 6th with the overnight in Gateway. Pins and shirts are in stock, and hats have been ordered. A volunteer signup form was passed around. Frank also discussed the Rider of the Year program, and went through the categories. Tally books are due at the November meeting.

Past Rides: The Aluminum Butt Ride had most riders home by 6:30 or so, and covered some 775 miles. The **Dinner Ride** led by Richard Bush took about 30 people on all the back roads to the Pegasus in Castle Rock. The **Oskar Blues Ride** was cancelled. **Foothills Ramble-2** was well attended, and some in the group found out that Kerr Gulch is now paved from Kittredge all the way to Bergan Park. The **Ladies Run of Colorado** was largely washed out by rain. Only the hearty showed up, but the dance was crowded by locals. Frank was given the title, "Boy Toy." Reports of the **Don Council Memorial Steak Ride** are being kept under tight wrap. Especially tight lipped are Willy Taylor (something to do with underwear), Stan Stotz (He finally found a hat to fit), and the group comprised of Randy Barrett, Brian Graves, Alan Hansher and Sam Ashley (The initiation for rookies can be brutal).

Upcoming Rides: The Hang 'Em High Ride on 7/22 will visit the Prison Museum at the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility in Cañon City. There will be a **Dinner Ride** on 7/27. The **RMVTA Mini-Rally** will be 7/29. The **1000-IN-24 Pre-Ride** will be 8/5 & 8/6. The **Sturgis T-Shirt Run** will be 8/12. For more detail on all rides, see your ride book or the newsletter.

The Mental Meltdown Award was given to yours truly for taking it to the wrong meeting last week, and forgetting to bring it tonight.

Floyd gave a report on the ceremony at Bridal Veil Falls to spread some of Chuck Janssen's ashes. A motion was made to split the proceeds of the October Bake Sale between Chris and the Community Ministry Food Bank. Motion passed.

Pat McCombs proposed another big poker run for 2007 for the Anchor Center like the one we did with Rocky Mountain HOG years ago.

Thumper won the 50/50 for \$26.50. Meeting adjourned.

Submitted by Secretary, Bill Gillespie

Sturgis T-Shirt Run

I would like to thank Frank Heinzl for once again leading our little one day ride to the Black Hills of South Dakota. On Saturday August 12th, the Colorado Freewheelers did their 3rd Annual Sturgis T-Shirt Run to the 66th Black Hills Motorcycle Classic in Sturgis South Dakota. Our little one day ride again saw a nice turn out for the event. Our club thanks to Jon Lofstedt, Rex Young, Pat McCombs, Frank Heinzl, Floyd Thorne, Sean Holland (Soon to be Freewheeler), Brian Boberick, Sam Ashley, Susan Ashley, Mike Finneran, Julie Lang, Dennis Yamaguchi, Mark Bolles, and Bill Nielson and friend, for joining us for a 886 mile one day ride.

It was great riding weather the entire day (Between 70 to 75 degree's) and one of those days we could all have ridden 1500 miles with no problems. Was nice to see twelve bikes and fifteen folks turn out for the event. Was nice to see Mike Finneran join us, as it has been over a year since the last time a number of us had ridden with him. Mike brought a friend on the ride Julie "Jules" Lang who kept a number of us entertained throughout the day. For those of you in the club who remember Crazy Mary, Jules is about two clicks below. So it was a lot of fun to ride with her.

The new folks who made the trip on the ride felt that Sturgis was everything and more of what they had heard over the years, and were glad they had made the one day ride. Everyone got in their "Power Shopping" and we all spent to much, but had a great time doing it.

My hat is off to Colorado Freewheelers member Mark Bolles, who rode from Cheyenne Crossing, South Dakota to Lusk Wyoming at an "elevated" speed to catch the group returning to Denver. And that folks is a story onto itself.

It was a great group to spend the day with, and was fun to watch the first timers to Sturgis do there thing. And yes we did ride Spearfish Canyon both ways. The first run through was what I would term a normal motorcycle ride, and the second was just a little short of going to biker heaven and scraping pegs on both sides every other turn.

I look forward to the 4th Annual Colorado Freewheelers Annual Sturgis T-Shirt Run.

Thumper

Mexico Trip, next part

Bruce Waters

In the last installment of Bruce's trip diary he had made it to Escarcega, on the Yucatan Peninsula. He is now about as deep as he can get into Mexico, less than 100 miles from Guatemala, and not much more to the eastern tip of the peninsula itself. And that's where he is headed, to Cancun. It is raining hard, so he finds a suitable hotel and is pleased to find the Bronco game on TV, in Spanish, of course. After the Broncos beat the Raiders he has a nice supper in the hotel restaurant, and life is good tonight.

Monday, November 14, 2005

I get a good night's sleep and wake just about dawn. Plenty of riding to do today, so I go ahead and get up. The restaurant has decent hours, so I walk over and order pancakes. I'm not extremely hungry, so I order just two. The waitress seems surprised, so I wonder if their pancakes are particularly large or particularly small, but when she brings me a plate with two normal pancakes on it, I'm happy. However, when she brings me a second plate with two pancakes on it, I realize I've ordered two orders, instead of two pancakes. Ah, well, they are good even though I have to remove the top of the honey jar to get more than just a dribble out. Since I've got more pancakes than one glass of OJ can wash down, I order a glass of milk. Ugh! First of all, it's room temperature, and second, it has a funny taste. Not spoiled, just not like any milk I've ever had. I guess it might be goat's milk. Anyway I only drink a few swallows.

I load the bike and head out, stopping for petrol before getting out of town - looks like mostly jungle in front of me today. The road is under construction and it goes on for miles. Plenty of slow truck traffic and a typically Mexican lack of signage, cones, flagmen, etc.

Once I get past this, I've got clear sailing and I'm clipping along about 75 or so when I spot a car parked in the road ahead of me. I've just begun to slow down when it sprouts flashing red and blue lights. Damn! What the hell is a cop doing radarang way out here in the jungle? How much is this going to cost me in time and pesos? I've almost come to a stop when he motions me around. Then I see it - a truck looking somewhat the worse for wear, off in a brand new hole through the jungle. Whew! Not interested in me after all. I pass slowly, accelerate slowly and only after putting at least one significant hill between him and me, do I turn the wick back up.

Pretty soon I start seeing signs for Xpujil, another ruin I've been told not to miss. I don't miss it, but I wish I had. I'm poking around the place marveling at the stonework, and notice a brown ball in a niche of stone. As I get closer to investigate, I realize it's some sort of insect nest just about the time they decide I'm an unwanted intruder. Pow! Pow! They get me twice, quite painfully. I guess they're some sort of wasp, although I don't hang around to investigate further. My finger and jaw hurt for a good hour thereafter, and I can still feel the sting in my finger tonight. Ouch! Definitely an interesting and impressive ruin, although nothing even remotely like Teotihuacan. However, the encounter with the wildlife sort of "ruins" it for me. Ah, well, another learning experience.

Shortly thereafter, I cross over into Quintana Roo, the eastern most Mexican state where Cancun is located, and have to stop for a military checkpoint. This looks a little more serious than what I've been through before. There's a full-blown machine gun in a bunker made of sandbags with a thatched palapa roof over it and the operator is aiming at, and concentrating on, yours truly. These guys are older than the first bunch and act like they couldn't care less what I'm riding or where I'm from - strictly business. They look through everything. No problems though, since I've left all the guns and bombs and drugs at home, and I'm soon on my way.

Before long, I'm taking the exit for Mexico 307, the road that goes to Cancun. I don't think I've got

the time to actually go through the process of crossing over into Belize, although at this point I'm close enough to see the country from the overpass. I decide that this satisfies half of my goals for this bike. I bought it with the idea that it would take me to both Alaska and Belize. I'll bet that this is a helluva lot better place to ride a bike in November than Alaska. Guess I'll do Alaska some summer when I've recovered financially from this little excursion.

So, back on the road headed north. I stop in Felipe Carillo Puerto for more Pemex, and while there decide to attempt to solve a problem I've been thinking about for a while. I keep seeing signs saying "Conceda cambio de luces." A literal translation might be "Concede the road to lights," but a better meaning might be "If someone flashes their lights at you, yield right-of-way." Ever since I've been in Mexico, people have been flashing their lights at me and driving down the road with either their hazard flashers on or with their blinkers going. At first I thought they were simply extraordinarily poor drivers, but eventually, I put two and two together and decided it was me. As you know, in the U.S. engineers don't design motorcycles, politicians do. Since 1977, all motorcycles sold in the U.S. are required to have the lights on whenever the engine is running. No switch to turn them off. Add in a sharp low-beam cutoff, a bumpy Mexican road, and a short wheelbase, and it's not hard to get a look like the motorcyclist is flashing his lights. I locate the part of the headlight that carries the low beam and put a couple of strips of duct tape over that part. Suddenly, everybody's driving improves dramatically. No more flashing headlights, no more 4-way flashers and only one old guy this afternoon driving down the road for mile after mile with his turn signal going. I think I've solved a problem. Now if I could only solve the problem of this Italian taillight which requires virtually daily disassembly and cleaning of contacts to stay in business, I'd be OK. Had to do that at this stop too. Wonder how long I've been riding around with no brake light today?

Along in here, I begin to see evidence of hurricane damage - trees and limbs down, that kind of thing. The further north I ride, the worse it gets. Big billboards toppled, roofs off of houses, although the thatched Mayan huts are either relatively undamaged or already repaired. Interesting.

Still many miles outside of the actual city of Cancun, I pass a resort that has a similar, but slightly different name from the one I'm supposed to stay at. Address is way different though. Rural addresses in Mexico frequently include the kilometer number of the road. My resort is at Km48 Carretera Federal, and the next marker I pass after the resort is Km310. This of course can't be the right resort, so I keep riding, eventually getting all the way into Cancun.

The devastation is terrible. Steel and concrete buildings are piles of rubble. Highway signs and power poles twisted and snapped. Huge trees uprooted. Very few of the trees still standing have any green on them at all - just bare branches. Hundreds of dump trucks hauling this mess off and dumping it into the jungle.

I see a bunch of resort-looking structures way off to my right, about where I think the beach ought to be, and eventually work my way through all the construction traffic and find a road headed in that direction. I'm seeing single-digit kilometer numbers: Do I still have 50 Km to go? Unfortunately, I run out of structures well before I get even close to Km 48, so I stop at a place that is being reconstructed after taking a heavy hit from Wilma and ask the guard for directions. Sure enough I need to go back to Mexico 307 and then about 20 Kms back the way I'd come. I'd passed my resort about an hour ago. Now remember, I've got tape over my headlight and the sun is now only about its own diameter above the horizon.

I fly back the way the guard recommends, finding a shuttle van to use as a rabbit. He's a good one, doing 75 or 80, and he knows just where to

slow down for the topes. I make it to the Mayan Palace before I have to remove my headlight tape.

I check in and all I can say is Wow! This place is way out of my league. I'll look around tomorrow and report. Total mileage 57,350. 438 today, and 3,707 for the trip so far.

Tuesday, November 15, 2005

Seeing this place in the daylight you'd think a hurricane had hit it. There are workmen everywhere, no trees over about 10 ft. tall and many smaller ones uprooted or leaning. The resort is down to only one restaurant, the pool side snack bar, and whole blocks of buildings containing suites are closed for renovation. Many of these are virtually glassless. I'd guess they lost half to all of the glass in this place and there's a lot of glass. The cybercafe is in a building that is just a huge shell - light fixtures and ceiling fans ripped from the ceiling or with blades broken and twisted, hundreds of square feet of glass gone. I'd guess the computers are probably down.

At the same time, an army of workers and machinery must have been here 24 hours a day for the last three weeks making this place as presentable as it is. My room on the ground floor, surely no more than 5 - 10 ft above sea level and just a couple of hundred yards from the beach, is immaculate, as is the whole building. This is probably what the whole place looked like before Wilma. I guess the crews just started on a building and opened them up one by one as they finished. There is no sign of mold or mildew anywhere inside and everything works. If Scotty just beamed you down directly into your room you'd never suspect that the place was hit by a Category 4 hurricane three weeks ago.

And boy! Is it ever de-luxe! My suite is for all practical purposes the same size as my house; has a kitchen, dining room and living room on one side and the single bedroom and bathroom on the other. Two televisions, doorways that would easily accommodate Shaquille O'Neal, first rate fixtures, etc. Even the ugly paintings on the wall are original paintings, not prints. My room faces the golf course, although my view out my patio is mostly bare-branched trees and workmen going to and from the other buildings further down.

After breakfast this morning, I decide that the obvious thing to do is go for a swim. Unfortunately, the pools are quite chilly and unheated, and the sea isn't noticeably warmer. The pools are impressive, though. A quick step-off to measure size tells me the pools (yes, plural) cover about the same area as my yard - roughly two and a half acres.

What to do? What to do? I settle for a massage. Is this getting decadent or what? My massage therapist is a tiny woman, almost certainly Mayan judging from her size and coloring, and does a commendable job. I can almost forget I've been sitting on a motorcycle for the last two weeks. After my massage, I sit in a sauna for a while, although I can hardly see the need for one around here - just go sit outside. Even in November. Maybe it gets more use in February.

Thoroughly relaxed, I find a shady spot by the pool where I can read and check out the scantily-clad females. Most of whom are old and fat like me. Pretty soon a waiter comes by and asks if I want a drink. Sure, why not? I look over the menu and decide on something they call a Pai-ai which sounds good. What they bring me, for about the same price as one of my motel rooms a few nights ago, is an entire pineapple, hollowed out and filled with liquor with pieces of pineapple and cantaloupe and limes and cherries stuck to it with toothpicks to make it look like a human face. Wish they'd warned me. I don't drink much and it takes me a couple of hours to finish this thing. Not to mention all the comments it generates from passers-by. Kids, of course, love it. I am pretty pie-eyed myself by the time I'm done. Zero miles today.

continued...

Mexico, continued...

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

Man, I could really get used to this bed. The best time possible to get the best bed of the trip so far. I'll even go so far as to compare it favorably with my bed at home. Yawn!

I walk over to the breakfast bar and have several plateloads of food. I'm beginning to suspect something is amiss with these buffets. There is plenty of food and it is decent, very well presented, ie. sculpted watermelons this morning, but it's not delicious or great or superlative. It's just O.K. I'm putting it down to the chefs having to work in a kitchen designed for a pool side snack bar. And maybe the lack of a good selection of supplies at this time. I get a flyer today announcing the opening of a second restaurant tomorrow. That might help - I'll give it a try.

After breakfast I go back to my room and take a nap. I don't want to overdo things. Around noon, I decide to go into Cancun and do some shopping. I don't get the right turn, so I go all the way into downtown Cancun to the seashell roundabout, then take off down hotel row. There's a building with a sign in English that says Flea Market, which looks like it's taken a heavy hit, so I stop to see what is available.

All it takes is me buying a pair of earrings, and the word spreads like wildfire - There's a gringo in the place and he's got pesos. Credit cards are practically useless since large blocks of Cancun still are without electricity. Everybody who is open - and they certainly all aren't - want me to take a look. Some of the shops look normal. Some I can see straight through the back wall. Some are doing business on the sidewalk while workmen repair the building. Upstairs are residences or warehouses, and I am invited into both. Within 45 minutes I've done all my Cancun shopping. I probably get taken advantage of a few times, but I think I get a couple of good bargains too.

As I make my last purchase and start back to my motorcycle, a couple of gentlemen in uniform with 'Marina' on the backs and carrying the ubiquitous I2-gauges take an interest in the gringo with pesos. They accompany me back to the bike and inquire about it and my trip. Naturally, I've removed my panniers and don't have my map with me to show them my route, and I begin to get the idea they don't quite believe me. This gets to be quite a conversation, since I discover my taillight/brakelight has once again ceased to function, and I have to go through the disassemble / clean the contacts / reassemble routine while they watch. I get ample time to talk with these folks and practice my Spanish, since I speak more Spanish than they do English. I still get the impression I'm being questioned and my answers checked. They are always courteous, and even interested, but not exactly friendly, much as I've come to expect from these people. They make no effort to detain me when I leave, though.

Continuing down the road, I pass by and decide to stop at the Harley Davidson bar in Cancun. I park out front and walk inside. They don't have the beer I want, but a Bohemia fills the bill adequately.

Better than that though, is the conversation with a man whom I eventually decide is the owner or manager. He had taken a bike trip to New Orleans and had studied and worked all over the U.S. Speaking very passable English, he's quite an interesting conversationalist on a number of subjects. We talk at some length about English and Spanish and learning another language, motorcycles, touring, crazy drivers in both countries. A full beer's worth of fascinating conversation. I'm really energized when I take off again for the Palace.

I ride back to the resort and park again. I believe I'm becoming a celebrity among the auto attendants and bellboys. I don't remember the faces of any of the people who drive me around from one area to another, but everybody seems to know that I'm the crazy gringo who's come to Cancun from Colorado on a motorcycle.

That's about it for today, though. Now I've got 57,422 on the clock. A token 72 miles today - still more than many people ride. 3,779 for the trip.

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Today dawns gray and cloudy, and when I crawl out of the shower, it's raining, the first since Escarcega. It doesn't last long, however, and when it quits, I decide to go to Playa del Carmen. I still haven't shipped my purchases from Teotihuacan home, and the concierge at the Palace has given me directions for finding what I need there.

Unfortunately, the location he showed me is not UPS, DHL, or Fed Ex, it's a car wash. After asking around, first a policeman, then a tourist information kiosk where nobody speaks English, I finally find a DHL store, but they don't sell boxes and can't package it for me. But following their suggestion to a place to buy a box, does finally lead me to a comprehensive shipping and packaging outfit where I get my gifts packed and shipped.

I also find an internet cafe, get my communicating done, and find a pharmacy where I buy tiny little quantities of alcohol, Q-tips and Vaseline for attending to my taillight.

It's taken me so long to track down DHL, though, that I don't think I've got time to see the ruins at Tulum. Instead, I head back to the resort and play motorcycle mechanic. We'll see if this cures the problem. After cleaning up, I walk over to the big festival and show celebrating the opening of the second restaurant at the Mayan Palace since the hurricane. Not bad, not great, and still outdoors in the wind, so I beg off and quit around 10:00 P.M. or so. Total mileage 57,457. Thirty-five for today, and 3,814 for the trip so far.

Friday, November 18, 2005

Gray, cloudy, and breezy this morning. What passes for a weather forecast on Mexican television says rain. Let's see, should I wash clothes today or tomorrow when it's supposed to be sunny? I opt for today. That takes 'til noon at which point I decide I've got time to head for Coba and Tulum, two recommended ruins in the area.

I do, but stopping at an internet cafe to check my email and buy a cheap disposable camera at the Chederai next door, takes longer than I expect. Chederai is a sort of Mexican Wal-Mart from what I see, and it takes me a while to find disposable cameras in electronics. Then, uncharacteristically, I wax eloquent on the Horizon's Unlimited bulletin board, and by the time I'm finished, it's 3:00. I'd better blow off Coba and get my tail to Tulum, quick.

It's so warm, my brain keeps thinking it's summer and I'm subconsciously thinking 8:00 P.M. sunset, but it's not - it's November and sunset is about 5:00. I get to Tulum around 3:30, and head off to get a quick tour before I end up riding home in the dark. So quickly in fact, that I forget the camera back on my bike. AARRGGHH! It starts misting rain the minute I put the kickstand down, and rains or mists the whole way through.

Tulum is really cool, though; quite impressive stonework, very artistic, very accessible. It's easy to see why it's the most photographed Mayan site.

But even with a quick trip around, it's after 4:00 when I get back to my bike. I'm moving pretty well on Mexico 307 except when traffic slows to bypass a construction vehicle. Then I go on reserve. There goes my schedule. I stop in Playa del Carmen for gas and to remove the tape from my headlight. By the time I work my way out of Playa del Carmen, it's fully dark. Not much twilight at these latitudes. The rest of the way home, I'm trying to see by car headlights as well as my own and really hoping nothing bad fell off any of those trucks. Based on my experiences so far, I rate my chances slim to none. Making the turn into the Mayan Palace is a great relief, even though the rain starts in earnest.

I make it to my room only damp, shower, then head off to supper. I take my rain jacket just in case. I also take one of the resort's little carts, since it's raining steadily. Usually I walk everywhere I need to go around the Palace, while watching the other

touristas ride in these things. About the time we arrive at the snack bar, Wilma makes a brief return with wind and heavy rain. Waiters and waitresses are moving tables away from the edges trying to keep patrons dry. I don my raiusit and sit down to enjoy my meal. That elicits comments of approval from some of the nearby guests. It alternates between drizzling and pouring for the rest of my meal. I catch a cart back to my room and call it a night. Final mileage 57,566. Today's mileage 109. Trip mileage 3,923. P.S. The thatched roof snack bar did not leak. In addition, I think what I'm seeing is that these palapa roofs survived Wilma. Not unscathed, mind you, but not simply gone like some of the modern high tech roofs I saw lying around Cancun. And a couple of people can fix one in a day or two with the material they can find in the jungle for free. If I were going to live here, I would definitely want to live in a Mayan style house with one of these thatched roofs.

Saturday, November 19, 2005

Happy birthday, Guy! My grandfather would have been 105 today. I take a few pictures of hurricane damage on my way to breakfast this morning. On my return, I discover that the maid who had cleaned my room had left a copy of the Miami Herald's Cancun edition. Right there on the front page: "Tropical Storm Gamma forms off Central America." Hot Dawg! I get to ride in a hurricane! What fun! A perusal of the article and accompanying map shows it brushing Cancun tomorrow night. No problem. I leave tomorrow morning.

O.K. I'll do my preparation tonight so I can get an early start tomorrow morning. I'm headed first to Chichen Itza, a half day's ride west of Cancun, and away from the path of the storm.

I spend the afternoon riding around Cancun looking at the sights, taking a few pictures. Old Cancun is pretty much like the other Mexican villages I've seen, only without the mountains. I presume this is where many of the workers, who make the Mayan Palace and the other resorts run, live.

Once back at my room I start packing. Clothes are easiest, so I do that side first, then haul it over to my bike on my way to supper. I finish most of the rest after I return from supper, then hit the hay, ready to begin bright and early tomorrow. It's only partly cloudy tonight, but rain is forecast for tomorrow. Ending mileage 57,646. Eighty miles today. 4,003 for the trip. I've come 4,000 miles since November 1. That averages out to just over 200 miles a day for almost three weeks. And I've been sightseeing.

Sunday, November 20, 2005

I've been watching what passes for a weather report on the Mayan Palace TV, so I'm well aware that sunrise is supposed to occur shortly after 5:00 A.M. local time. With that in mind, I decide if I wake up any time after 4:30, to go ahead and get up and start my day. The clock says 4:40 when I check, so I get up and look outside. Sure looks dark for sunrise in about half an hour, but it gets dark quickly after sunset here, too. I shower, do some final packing, then call for a bellboy.

By now, I've figured out the Mexican weather report lied. It's well after 5:00 and it's still quite dark. But by the time I've checked out and finished my preparations, it's light enough to see topees, etc, so I fire it up and head down the road toward Tulum. In the rain.

At Tulum, I turn west on a backcountry road that should take me to Chichen Itza. The rain stops, but I go on reserve sooner than I expect, and so find myself wandering through the small town of Chemax searching for a Pemex at 7:45 on a Sunday morning. Surprisingly, I find one and fill my empty tank with Magna Sin since there's no premium, then motor off toward Valladolid.

November 20 is a holiday in Mexico, the Dia de la Revolucion, and Valladolid is having a parade - right down Main street. I get lost trying to get

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Mexico, continued...

around it, but eventually find Mexico 180 libre, and zip on over to the next town and it's parade, then the one after that and it's parade.

Having by now had enough small-town Mexican parades to last a lifetime, I find Chichen Itza and go in to investigate. Its as good as it's reputation. Well preserved and/or restored, there's a spectacular pyramid and numerous other structures. Several of these are thought to be dedicated to Chac, the Mayan rain god. Since the Yucatan Peninsula is primarily limestone, most of the rain that falls quickly drains away underground. Unable to drill deep wells to tap this water, the Maya were dependent on regular rainfall to provide water for drinking and raising crops. Chac was a pretty important deity around these parts.

Despite all their many accomplishments, the Maya did not invent the elevator. Nor did they invent any sort of safety railing or handrail from what I can tell, and the Mexicans have faithfully preserved the whole works. If you're not comfortable with heights, a Mayan pyramid is not going to be a pleasurable place for you. Mothers of young sons will probably have multiple heart attacks.

After eating lunch at the ruins (and wishing I had waited 'til town) I find the road out to the cuota and bypass any more festivities. I take the highway all the way to Merida, where I refill with premium and head south toward Uxmal. No rain since the coast, so I must have outrun Gamma.

Uxmal is spectacular. Exceptionally well preserved and/or restored, I'd put it right up there with Teotihuacan. And the surrounding facilities are first-rate, even to having handicapped accessible areas and just about all the things you can see in a Mayan city/temple complex.

I want to do it justice, so I get a room at the guidebook recommended Hotel Villa Arqueologica Uxmal even though it is only around 2:30 P.M. I quickly exhaust the camera's film, but continue exploring until dusk. After a shower and a cool down, I go back for the light and sound show. I won't spring for one of those again. Even at only 25 pesos to rent an English headphone translator, I remain unimpressed.

The hotel restaurant is open, although from what I can tell, they have only one patron - me. I rate both a waiter and a waitress on this slow night. The food is good, the wine decent. I'll let you know if drinking the water produces any negative reactions.

I really like this hotel. Beautiful arches and alcoves, wood and stucco, tile floors, of course, and window seats. Proper Mexican light switches control everything from your bedside. Air conditioning could work better, and I've seen a roach or two, but what the hell, this is the tropics. What do you expect?

Ending mileage will be reported tomorrow since the management had locked the place up for the night when I started out to check, but I can report there will be no virgin sacrifices in the near future - Chac is a happy rain god tonight.

Monday, November 21, 2005

There is light in the sky when I awake after a restful night's sleep. The Yucatan is a very humid place and I've felt sticky for the past couple of weeks, so I opt for a second shower before checking out.

Yesterday's final mileage was 57,928. I rode 282 miles yesterday, bringing the trip total to 4,285. The roads I'm riding this morning are good motorcycle roads, not spectacular, but just about what you want: lightly traveled, well-paved rural roads that wind over, around and occasionally through the limestone hills that make up the interior of the Yucatan Peninsula. It was this limestone that the Maya used to build their temples and cities, and there's a lot of it around.

Another ruin in the area that comes guidebook recommended is Edzna. The ruins here appear well preserved and it is a large site, but almost utilitarian in appearance compared to Chichen Itza and Uxmal.

Perhaps it's beautiful designs were looted or carried off to a museum, or perhaps the people here were more craftsmen than artists, but there is almost none of the carved stone art that is seen at many of the other places. The stonework used to build the place is first-rate, just not decorated and carved.

After a couple of hours at Edzna, I climb back on the bike and head south and west. Soon after leaving Edzna, I ride through the town of Hool, a place remarkable for it's lack of topes. Thank you Hool! I ride slowly and carefully anyway.

Mexico 188 or 261 or whatever they're calling it today, spits me out onto Mexico 180 right by the Gulf of Mexico. I avail myself of the opportunity to have a fish dinner in an open-air thatched roof restaurant right on the beach. The wind is blowing hard from a rain shower out over the water, so I place myself just downwind from the kitchen, the only solid wall in the structure. The owners are interested in my bike and my trip and we communicate fairly effectively. They seem very nice and the fish is delicious.

I refuel in Champoton, then start south. It's a decent enough road, but many small villages that don't show on my map make the going slow. I reach Escarcega just at exactly the time I've decided I must stay there if I'm any later, instead of trying to make Palenque tonight. I keep going, but soon realize I'll never make it in daylight. This is the road I rode out on that was full of trucks hauling stuff to rebuild Cancun, as well as tourist-swallowing potholes. I turn around and retrace my path to Escarcega, reaching the same hotel I stayed in on my way out about 4:30 P.M.

After checking in, I go looking for another camera. I find one for about 1/3 the price they were going for at Uxmal, as well as a place I can get on line. Not an internet cafe, a teen game room. It's noisy, but it works. Unfortunately, on my way back to the hotel, I pull stuff out of my pocket and drop my room key. That costs me 20 pesos to replace it. Grrrrrr! The hotel room they gave me this time wasn't as nice. I've started refusing anything that doesn't have a toilet seat. What is it with Mexican hotels not having seats on their toilets? This room has one, but the air conditioner is noisy, and the only plug the TV will reach has something broken off in one side, making it a hit or miss situation whether the TV will stay plugged in or not.

The A/C ceases to condition and just blows air about 30 minutes on, but I'm getting road-tough or something. The bed works and Chac is once again a happy rain god. Ending mileage 58,163. 235 today, 4,520 for the trip.

Tuesday, November 22, 2005

Forty-two years ago today, President Kennedy was assassinated. First thing this morning I go back to the place I think I lost my key, and sure enough, I find it. I take it back to the hotel and ask about a bank. Centro. Right where I just was. Of course.

Back to downtown Escarcega where I've just made a U-turn on what I've discovered is a one way street - the wrong way. One way street signs in Mexico are an arrow about one inch wide and one foot long painted on the side of a building. Or maybe not. A policeman walking on the sidewalk motions me over. We talk...

Do I know what I did wrong?

Si. One way: an arm motion in the direction of traffic.

Si. What am I looking for? "Banco."

Simple, relatively clear instructions. Where am I from? "Colorado, Estados Unidos."

"Ah! Have a nice day!"

No ticket, no lecture, just help. A model for policemen everywhere.

My timing is perfect. The bank has just opened. The line of people waiting for this momentous occurrence fills the lobby. The door will just barely close. Everybody needs to see a teller. Not me: Card in the slot, cash in the hand, outta there. It's good to be an American.

Or maybe not. I've just realized someone has splattered yellow-orange paint on me and the bike.

Not sure when it happened, I simply ride away.

A restaurant I'd spotted yesterday is open for daysayuno and I stop there. Very good Huevos Mexicanos scrambled with chilies and tomatoes, perhaps a bit of ham, rice and beans; jugo de naranja. Yum!

My taillight has responded positively to my clean and lube job and still appears to be working. Let's hope it's not just foolin'. I'm still checking every time I think about it, and using my hand signal too when I don't need it on the clutch or handlebar.

I fuel up and go riding. This is the first time on the trip that I've ridden the same road in both directions, other than brief backtracks to get gas or something. I believe I now understand why there's such heavy truck traffic on this road. It's just about the only way to get to Cancun from the rest of Mexico, and there's an incredible amount of building going on in that area right now. This is building supplies, fuel, parts, food - all the stuff that's helping the Yucatan recover. And it's coming by truck over this road. I've seen or heard very few trains in Mexico, and haven't seen that much track.

I turn off Mexico 186 on to Mexico 199 at Catazaja and the ride begins to get better. I can see mountains in front of me. Twenty miles later, Palenque shows up. It's almost noon.

There's a varied assortment of hotels available, so I decide to leave that for later. I buy my wristband and go in. This is one of the places where people try to sell you something. Many young men eagerly show me where to park the bike and offer me a wash.

"Lavado motocicleta?"

"Si! Si! Quanto questa?"

"Thirty pesos, twenty."

"O.K. Motore, mufflo muy caliente, muy calor. Maybe una hora antes agua frio?"

"Si! Si!"

They'll watch my things too. "Excellent! Gracias!"

Palenque was the most crowded city in the New World at it's height, and it shows. There's a lot of stuff to see without having to wander all over creation. However, Palenque is built in hilly terrain, and remember, the Mayans didn't invent the elevator. It's also pretty well preserved/restored and there's plenty to look at. Naturally right when I've decided to hire a guide, none are available who speak English. Palenque has great stonework and is well decorated as well as having really interesting architecture - the roof combs, and that kind of thing. Chac has himself a little snicker while I'm wandering around, but nothing that runs me off. It does make some of those steps that have known the tread of human feet for a dozen centuries just a bit slick, though.

The sun is coming out about the time I walk out, and my bike looks great. A man who speaks quite a bit of English asks me about my trip and my bike. The fellow with the bike wash shows up with my helmet and my 'Stitch. Quanto questa? 50 pesos. I pay it gladly. He's earned it. I started this trip with my Scottoiler set on 8 and it's now down to 3 with, I think, more to go. He's taken care of the excess.

Speaking of said Scottoiler, I'd like to give mine a ringing endorsement. I've had it installed for this entire set of chain and sprockets. Before the trip, I gave my chain a half turn of each adjuster. Haven't touched it since. That's over 8000 miles with only a half turn adjustment, and it doesn't need it now. I'll probably give it another half turn before the end of the trip. I go with my mechanic's recommendation of good quality chain and cheap sprockets so that they both wear out at the same time. This set may never wear out. My last set, pre-Scottoiler, was the same everything and I was adjusting it at least every thousand miles, lubricating it by the manufacturer's directions. I got maybe 20,000 miles out of the set. We'll see what this set gives me. Anyway, I'm heading back toward town when I see a hand lettered sign in

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Mexico, continued...

front of a home set back from the road: Hotel - Pool, TV, Agua caliente. Let's go see. Two hundred pesos later I've got the quietest hotel of the trip, Mayan Palace included, my bike parked right around back on the grass right outside my door. The jungle starts 30 ft. away. Almost feels like home. 58,312 total. 149 today. 4,669 trip.

Wednesday, November 23, 2005

Not a bad night's sleep even if the mattress gives up after a while and my hips sink into a hole. Outta there around 8:00 A.M. when things open. I've given up on trying to do anything before then. Nothing opens before 8:00.

So... fuel for man and beast, and onto the serious motorcycling roads of this trip. Mexico 199 from Palenque to San Christobal de los Casas is a little two lane mountain road that winds its way up and over a mountain range. Whereupon Mexico 190 takes over, and goes over another range on its way to Tuxtla Gutierrez. The Dragon with Topes! And they pile 'em on! Just about the time you get wound out in 3rd gear and reach for 4th, here they come again and it's back to 1st. Plus there are trucks and busses, the occasional place where the road has decided to go sliding down the mountain, unmarked road construction, all the little things that make riding in Mexico such a treat. One place on the whole stretch to pull off, admire the view, and take a picture.

That place is called Agua Azul and it is a really nice waterfall, reached by a toll road that has attendants collecting the tolls at more than one place. Probably 20 pesos to get all the way down. I give a kid a couple of pesos to Owatch my bike for me, O and I wander around for a while taking pictures. Then I ride back up without having to pay any more tolls.

I gas up in Ocosingo and I'm set. The station attendant points out oil under the bike. I explain it's my chain oiler. I thought I'd turned that down enough. Is the bike noisier?

I stop for a picture of Canyon del Simidero and there's oil all over the bottom of my engine. This is new. I just got it washed yesterday. Pull the dipstik. Uh-oh. Way low. I buy a liter just up the road at the first Pemex, but thankfully it doesn't take much. Looks like it might be the transmission output shaft seal. I'll have to keep a close eye on the oil level. Another poor quality, expensive hotel. 360 pesos for a single bed, one of three in the room, complete with Mickey Mouse blankets. My Spanish must be getting better. I am able to understand directions well enough to find a bank and a restaurant. \$! Total: 58,521. 209 today. 4,878 trip.

Thursday, November 24, 2005

Thanksgiving Day. Sometime during the night a dog starts barking close by and won't stop. Then somebody starts ringing the night bell for the hotel. I can hear it just fine, but the hotel clerk sleeps right through the din. The people in the next room decide to make love. Not much rest tonight.

I finally crawl out of bed, shower and leave around 7:00. I find the place where I'd failed to make a turn yesterday afternoon with the sun in my eyes and the sign hidden by branches. I make the turn this morning, and pick up Mexico 190 westbound. I quickly run into thick fog, so I stop at the first restaurant that is open, and have a good breakfast. I also pull off the headlight tape that I'd put on fresh this morning, after pulling the previous tape for last night's jaunt to the bank and the restaurant. Naturally the fog lifts shortly thereafter.

I'm motoring down a pleasant, but not particularly challenging stretch of highway, when I spot three bikes outfitted for touring sitting in front of a restaurant. I hang a quick U-turn, and ride back to check this out. Two Kawasaki KLR 650's and a BMW F650, all with Colorado plates, no less! We have an interesting chat about motorcycle touring in Mexico for 15 minutes or so. I leave dreading the winds of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec even more

than I had from reading the guidebook.

The guidebook spent most of a page warning the reader about the winds of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, citing no less a luminary than Ed Culbertson who had done the transit 22 times and said that it was always windy. My touring acquaintances said they had to slow down or risk being blown off the road. They estimated wind speeds of around 70 miles per hour. I seem perfectly capable of causing all sorts of bizarre weather phenomena by simply swinging a leg over a motorcycle and riding away from home, so I am not looking forward to this. In this instance, however, I'm apparently the exception that proves the rule: You can write it into motorcycling lore, on Thanksgiving Day 2005, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was not windy. Breezy, perhaps, but certainly not like some of the Colorado Front Range winds I've ridden in, or some West Texas winds.

In La Ventosa (The Winds), traffic slows to a crawl and I suspect topes, but it's a motorcycle wreck, the first I've seen so far on this trip. The ambulance is pulling away with lights flashing just as I get close enough to see. Two police cars are bracketing one of the ubiquitous Honda Cargos lying on it's side, and there are five or so other motorcycles parked around. Everyone standing around the scene stares at me as I ride by staring back at them. Bummer.

I fill up shortly thereafter at a convenient Pemex since it looks like a long way to the next one. Turns out not to be so. I just forget how to read a map for a while.

Anyway, I turn off onto Mexico 185 at Tehuantepec and head toward Salina Cruz. I miss my turn onto Mexico 200 since there isn't a sign, and I wind up down by the port and naval station. Headed back, I find the directional sign I need, and get onto a road that basically climbs into the mountains and stays there all the way to Puerto Angel.

Just outside of town, though, I catch my first good view of the Pacific Ocean and what looks like as good a place to take a picture of it as I'm likely to find by a Mexican roadside. I'm trying to balance the bike and reach for a rock to put under the kickstand, when I hear a bike go by and twisting my head, note that it's outfitted for touring. The rider swivels to look at me, but keeps going. I've finished parking the bike and taken my picture when I hear him coming back. We exchange pleasantries in Spanish then he asks if I speak English. I answer "Much better than Spanish." We talk a bit. His name is Ted Phillips and he's headed for Panama. I may back off riding through Copper Canyon. He claimed to have dropped his bike 8 times, as well as riding 12 hours straight to get through there. Doesn't sound much like my cup of tea.

Back on the road to Puerto Angel, I'm reveling in the sensation of riding. This is a great motorcycle road. A few trucks, a few places to pass, a few villages with topes, but mostly just curve after curve after curve. Up and downhill, over bridges, through rock cuts. My map shows it as fairly straight and close to the ocean, but not so. It's just far enough inland to only give you two or three glimpses of the ocean the whole way, and it is a curvy mountain road. Maybe the best of the trip so far. Two straight days working on the sides of my tires rather than the centers. \$!

I get the hotel recommended by my guidebook in Puerto Angel, and it is as promised, although prices have risen slightly. Still, muy bueno! I check the new noise and discover that an exhaust gasket upstream from the junction of the two pipes has let go. Hopefully it hasn't done any valve damage yet. I think it's far enough from the valve that it shouldn't. I'll cross my fingers and see what the chances are of getting it fixed nearby. 58,845 showing. That translates into 324 today and 5,202 for the trip. This is the farthest south I've ever been in my life.

Friday, November 25, 2005

I basically waste a day, but I do enjoy the break. I put in a call to Skip Mascorro of Motodiscovery

asking for information. He calls back while I'm next door at the internet shop, so I miss that one. I call back, again getting the machine. I then hang around the hotel the rest of the day except for meals, hoping for another call, but no luck.

I like this hotel, despite it being quite warm both day and night, and there being no obvious rooster shortage in Puerto Angel, or for that matter, anywhere in Mexico.

There are at least two decent restaurants right across the street, although they are both sand-floored palapas with the ubiquitous thatched roofs. Waiting for my meal to be brought out, I study the underside of the roof trying to work out how these roofs are constructed. It's a good opportunity to try to figure out how it's done. I think there's some sort of natural loop in the palm frond, or it is cut in such a way that the workmen can easily attach it firmly to the thin (3"-4") horizontal beams of the structure. It doesn't appear to be lashed in any way.

Good fresh seafood here. Pulpo (octopus) is very common, although I don't care for it much. I don't like the texture, and I have a hard time eating something that intelligent. I prefer my food at least as stupid as a cow.

I'm sitting on the roof of the hotel tonight trying to catch a breeze, when a man comes up and asks in English if he can join me. His name is George something-heim, which means Mountain-home, and he is Norwegian. He also speaks French and German. Was an engineer for a while who quit and started driving a taxi, and is now traveling around Central and South America with his girlfriend. Interesting man. He plays trombone in a big band, and is quite interested when I drag out my flute.

It rains during the night, but I don't notice that cooling things off any. Not sure whether Chac handles rain duties this far west. Some of these gods apparently served a wider population than others. No mileage today.

Saturday, November 26, 2005

After breakfast at Susy, one of the restaurants nearby, and a session on the computer, I ride up to the muffler shop my hotel owner has recommended. Unfortunately, they say they need the gasket to repair my exhaust problem. So I'm just going to be noisy for a while. Hope I'm not doing any permanent damage.

I'm able to find internet information that leads me to believe I might find service in Guadalajara, Acapulco or possibly Puebla. Checking the map and guidebook, neither Guadalajara nor Acapulco seem to have roads as interesting as the ones going to Puebla, where I was originally headed, so I think I'll stick with going that way. I'll get on the computer again and see what I can dig up about a BMW place in the area or at least on the way home.

I decide to try snorkeling this afternoon. This bay that Puerto Angel sits on seems to have a fairly steep beach, meaning the bay is calm and placid, while the beaches have strong waves that break right on the shore. In addition, it's a rocky coastline and there are rocks underwater too. Not to mention the fishing village aspect with small boats anchored throughout the bay. Big ropes and cables tie boats to anchors on the bottom. I stay away from those. The strong surf means there's sediment in the water which dims it's clarity somewhat. I don't think Puerto Angel will ever be mistaken for a spectacular snorkeling hot spot, but I see several schools of fish and the bottom down 10-15 feet or so. Boat bottoms, cables and anchors. Ocean temperature is perfect.

Something else I like about Mexico: Reasonable round number prices. Buy a meal and it's 35 pesos or 90 pesos. They don't tack on 7.31 pesos in tax and require you to handle boatloads of change. Other than the government, what exactly is it that keeps America from doing this?

A Mexican fishing village is life in the raw. When I finish breakfast this morning there is the day's catch lying on the ground out in front of the

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Mexico, continued...

restaurant. Half a dozen small fish, maybe a foot, foot-and-a-half long, and a couple that have already been headed and gutted and the tail cut off that are fully four or five feet long. Big fish. Yesterday, when I walked downtown to use the telephone, townfolk were carrying fish all over. A man had one by the tail, just walking along carrying a fish. An old lady had three or four in a cloth shopping bag.

There are a lot more people at the beach today and I wonder why until I realize - Saturday! It's the weekend and everybody has headed for the beach.

Puerto Angel as a Mexican Pacific Coast resort is a little like Monarch as a Colorado ski resort - Sort of homey and laid back, no glitz and glitter, but it gets the job done if you take it on its own terms. And its lots cheaper than Acapulco or Mazatlan or Cancun, just as Monarch is lots cheaper than Vail or Aspen or Steamboat. I've had a good time here - maybe better than at Cancun. And the water is warmer. Of course, the day time temperature reminds me of Louisiana in the summertime: hot and humid. That's been the story since about Cosamaloapan a couple of weeks ago.

Very little mileage today - just up to the muffler shop and back. Say 15 miles give or take a few.

Sunday, November 27, 2005

I pack up and leave Puerto Angel, then decide to see if I can find a beach nearby that is mentioned in my guidebook. Called Playa Zipolite, I find it after about an hour or so of riding, and almost immediately start calling it Playa Zippo Lighter. Better surf than the bay at Puerto Angel and there are a few people taking advantage of it, surfing in the waves. Playa Zipolite is also a nude beach, but there really aren't many people taking advantage of this.

I eat a good seafood lunch, then decide to lie out on the beach and soak up some sun for a while. When I've finished my nap, I take a walk down the beach. It is a nice enough place, and I've used up enough time, that I get a room and stay another night on the Pacific Coast. Bike gets parked right outside my room. I can see it from my bed.

I feel inspired by the sunset and get my flute out and play for a while as night falls. After supper, I go back to my room and hit the hay. The bed is equipped with a mosquito net, but since I let a couple in while entering myself, I'm not sure it does me a whole lot of good. It rains during the night. Final mileage 58,891. Forty-six miles over the last 3 days. 5,248 for the trip.

Monday, November 28, 2005

All the roosters in Playa Zipolite are far away, and I sleep until almost sunrise. Breakfast on the beach with the sun over my left shoulder and the air clear from last night's rain. Freakin' gorgeous. The young lady taking her morning walk sans top doesn't hurt either.

I leave headed east along the coast toward Puerto Angel, and within a couple of miles, recognize where I am. I'd only moved a few miles up the beach and could have practically walked over from my hotel in P.A. I've really liked the road that twists and climbs it's way from Puerto Angel up to Pochutla. This gives me the opportunity to ride it yet again, and I take full advantage of the guidance provided by a taxi driver, who is determined to show me the fast way up this great motorcycle road. This time I keep going north, stopping for gas in Pochutla once I realize it's going to be a long way to anywhere else. Then into the Sierra Madre del Sur mountain range.

These are some serious mountains. Sort of like the Rockies with plants from south Louisiana. Mexico probably doesn't have much money to devote to a road that carries a car every 15 minutes, and it shows. Washouts, landslides, all the things that can happen when water and soil mix on steep slopes. I think about stopping to take a picture of a rock maybe 10' x 10' x 15' that has fallen and blocked most of my lane, but I've just passed two slow, heavily loaded trucks, and I don't want to do it again.

I find other similar situations further up the road, and once I know the trucks can't catch me in the time it takes to stop and photograph these things, I stop and get some pictures of them.

There are almost no warning signs in use in Mexico, particularly on rural roads. "What? You can't see a dump truck size rock in the middle of the road so you expect us to put up a sign telling you about it?" Mexican drivers don't need no stinking signs!

I think I'm catching a cold. Sneezing inside a full coverage helmet is no fun.

Around mid-afternoon, I begin to get into the city of Oaxaca. I'm doing fine following the guidebook's instructions, until the local authorities block off the road and force me in the opposite direction from where I want to go. I wander around in downtown Oaxaca while my bike and I both overheat trying to find the recommended hotel, then settle on another one that is easier to find. It is clean, has secure parking after 9:00 P.M., a reasonable price, and seems quite cool after riding a motorcycle in Mexican big-city traffic.

After a shower, I take my dirty clothes to the front desk for delivery to the laundry, then walk over to the zocalo. I locate where I got off track and start trying to find the original destination hotel. The whole jardin is being turned into a pedestrian mall, and streets leading into it are parking lots. I finally figure it out, but the guidebook author will need to rework his instructions.

The entire plaza is walkways and flowerbeds with big trees shading the whole thing, and all the flowerbeds are planted with poinsettias. There's a concert going on in the plaza, so I stop to listen. The words are in Spanish, and I only catch one here and there, but music is universal and these musicians are good. I listen until it starts getting dark, then I walk back to my hotel to ensure that I can find my way.

Wouldn't you know it, the hotel restaurant is closed, so I walk back to the square and have supper at the restaurant right on the plaza. The place is still full of people. Final time back to the hotel; it's after 9:00, so I ask about secure parking. The bellboy leads me to a huge lot in the interior of the next block. Mine is the only vehicle in it. I forget to get the mileage, but I remember turning over 59,000 today. Will I see 60,000 on this trip? That's about 9,000 on the chain and sprockets and about 8,000 on the tires. Decent wear for a rear tire, but I do believe I'm going to need one before this trip is over.

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

Tough night at first - I've definitely got some kind of cold - but my immune system does its usual marvelous job, and toward morning I can breathe again. At least I get a few hours of sleep. I go and get my bike first thing - around 7:00 A.M. here. The mileage that I didn't get last night turns out to be 59,057 total, 166 yesterday, 5,414 trip. I park across the street behind the bus which is hogging the hotel load/unload spaces. Turns out later it's O.K. It's a charter bus for a bunch of tourists staying at the hotel. I eat a typical Mexican breakfast of fried egg and crunchy tortillas with a red sauce on it, and to drink, Jugo de Naranja - orange juice. My staple answer for a breakfast beverage and every last one so far has been fresh squeezed and large. For about a buck and a half. I finish breakfast, load the bike, get gas and money and head for Veracruz.

As soon as I leave town, the road starts to curve and it never once lets up for longer than a few hundred feet. Many of these (well, most of them) are sharp. Second gear most of the time, third the rest. An occasional drop down to first or shift up to fourth on the rare downgrade among mostly up. Very few topes, and those mostly in something I recognize as a village. Very few trucks also, but since there is virtually no place to pass, they hold me up for a long time when I do come up behind one.

The torque of my big thumper gets me around every one, although loaded like I am, and with my exhaust leak, I need to be well into the power band to make a go of it. Sky begins to get gray and cloudy. Sometimes a local plays rabbit for me and I get to

really scoot for a while until I lose him. I invariably lose them.

As I get higher and higher, I run into the occasional patch of fog. Mexico doesn't put a sign at the Continental Divide crossing with a pullout like Colorado does, you just have to guess. This road is more like the Peak to Peak highway northwest of Denver than a through-the-pass-and-back-down road like I-70. It gets up into the mountains and stays there, connecting most of these little mountain communities with the outside world. Anyway, it doesn't take me long to figure out that I have crossed the Continental Divide when I ride into a continuous bank of fog. Pea soup is putting it mildly. Many times I can't see 50 feet ahead. Instead of 35 or 40 mph on the fast stretches, it's about 20 or 25.

Mexico seems to promise greatness, then snatch it away. I'm riding on a road that most American motorcyclists would kill to have available nearby, and it's wet and slick and you can't see what's coming up ahead. There are plenty of those places I've come to expect in Mexico where the road has simply fallen off the mountain. Or the mountain has fallen onto the road. If you're lucky, someone has whitewashed a bunch of stones and used them to outline the problem. Usually not. I bet this road is a nightmare to maintain.

I continue slow and easy and the lower I go, the more the fog turns to rain. Unlike in Colorado, it's not cold, but it is just as wet, and I'm getting an up close and personal experience of just what it means to ride through a rain forest.

To get the full effect of this luscious international dish, I recommend you try it with a side order of Mexican highway department chip seal, very fresh before the cars and trucks and busses have a chance to wear ruts into it. Top it off with a rear tire just about due for replacement. Magnifique!

I now understand why Oaxaca is in a dry desert environment, even though it is less than a couple hundred miles from both the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. These mountains cut Oaxaca off from Gulf moisture, and the mountains I crossed on my way there from Puerto Angel cuts it off from Pacific moisture.

Eventually - say about 75 miles worth - I ride out from under this mess and the sun actually comes out for a bit. I've been worrying about gas since I've been riding in lower gears for so long, but when I see a station and fill up, it's only about 150 miles from the last time, and the amount of gas I've used is about the same as if I rode that far on the cuota in fifth gear at 75 mph. For some reason I'm getting better than expected mileage in my lower gears.

However, riding around at 30 mph doesn't get me anywhere very fast. By the time I hit Cosamaloapan and cross over my outward bound route, I know I won't make Veracruz tonight. The sky gets blacker and blacker the further north I go and it soon starts raining. I end up staying in Alvarado.

No sleepy fishing village, this. Fishing town with seriously large (and seriously rusty) fishing boats. And a cruising scene right under my hotel window. Alvarado is a fair sized town on what, from the map and what I've seen, is a very protected bay. The arms of land protecting the bay from the Gulf of Mexico are sizable hills. No fish available at the little taco stand across the street, so I settle for goat. Not bad.

After supper I walk around town and find a motorcycle shop open. I didn't know Mexico made motorcycles, but they do. According to the ad on the wall, the Dinamo is made here. They make a 150 single and a 250 twin as well as several scooters from what I see. Final mileage 59,288. 231 today despite riding solid from about 9:30 to 5:00. That's about a 30 mph average. 5,645 for the trip.

Bruce's trip report will conclude next month.