

2016 Wing Ding Trip to Billings Montana as written by Len Rovenski

Three members from Chapter E ventured on a 16 day, 5,500 mile, bike ride tour to the Wing Ding in Billings, Montana, and the surrounding areas, they were Larry Coffield, Bill Ruth and myself, Len Rovenski. Bill was the tour guide and did a great job planning and making the most of the venture. First let me say that the pictures you take on a trip like this, with the scenery that we saw, no way justifies the reality of the landscape, you have to be there to see it, as I'm sure many of you already know. The pictures can be seen on the "PHOTOS" tab of the Chapter E website, gwrrapae.com.

Our first day we went from our meeting place in Washington PA and concluded at a stop in Wisconsin over 700 miles later where we bunked for the night. The next day we proceeded to Mitchell, South Dakota home of the infamous Corn Palace. The building has been decorated throughout with corn cobs and various colors to project different panels of illustrations, including Willy Nelson and Elvis Presley among many others which change every year. This Corn Palace was started in 1887 and has endured in various ways since.

The next day we continued on I-90 and detoured our bikes through the Badlands National Park of South Dakota. A very interesting look at eroded landscape through millions of years of erosion by wind and water. The canyons and the colors and textures of the walls made a very unique panoramic experience. At the end of the day we settled in a hotel in Wall, South Dakota which is the hometown a Wall Drug famous for its nickel cups of coffee and free ice water, not to mention making a tourist attraction out of virtually not much. You really couldn't miss it, there were signs 100 miles before you even got there telling you how wonderful Wall Drug is, how could you not stop? The next day Bill Ruth signed up for the Region "E" (Nebraska and South Dakota) rally being held at Wall and entered the evening's light show. Bill spent time that day cleaning up his bike for the parade while I visited Sturgis and Deadwood, South Dakota on side trip, about a four hour ride. Then a storm front came in and the evening's events were canceled due to heavy rains. Oh well.

After two days in Wall we headed to Custer, South Dakota to set up camp and rode around the Black Hills of South Dakota, including Mount Rushmore and the many glorious mountain roads around Custer State Park. There were plenty of buffalo to see there along with antelope and other wildlife. After riding all day Bill Ruth heard that the light parade was going to be reconvene at Wall that evening and decided to double back about 95 miles and participate. Larry went with them as a companion and as you would expect Bill took first place in the light parade of that rally, then they rode back to the hotel at arriving at about 11:30 PM, long day. That same evening I went back to Mount Rushmore in the evening to see the evening light show and its patriotic presentation.

The next day we took a slow start in the morning and went to see the Crazy Horse Monument which is still under construction and had a very interesting Indian culture museum to show the culture of the Indian people as it was in the past before the influx of pioneers. We spent some time walking the streets of Custer and visiting the various tourist attractions. After dinner we went back to the Crazy Horse Monument for an evening laser light show which was very entertaining.

On Sunday, August 28, we took a 4 hour round trip ride to see Devil's Tower National park in Wyoming. Along the way we went through the town of Aladdin, Wyoming, population 15, which interestingly enough is for sale for \$1.5 million, general store, bar, trailer park and post office included.

There was a sign outside the old general store which advertised beer for \$2 but the "fancy" beers were \$3 and bar drinks were \$3 but the "fancy" drinks were \$5. Apparently this watering hole was ready to entertain any city folk passing through. Devil's Tower was a very interesting formation. About 50 million years ago molten magma was forced into sedimentary rocks above it and cooled underground, as it cooled it contracted it fractured into columns and then after millions of years the softer material around it eroded and has become what is now known as the Devil's Tower which rises from it's base 867 feet.

The next morning we packed up and headed off to Sheridan, Wyoming which was the home of the Wyoming District rally at that time and where we accidentally met friends that Larry and Bill had made on the "40 to Phoenix " ride during the spring. We then road on to Billings, Montana but not before we stopped to see the The Little Bighorn Battlefield which was the site of the 1876 defeat of Lieutenant Colonel George Custer's Seventh Calvary. Defeated by Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and other Indian chiefs, where Custer's men were greatly outnumbered. The national parks department puts on a very good tour and thorough explanation of how the battle evolved. Worth the stop for a good history lesson.

We started on Tuesday, August 31, by going to the Wingding convention site at the Metropark grounds in Billings Montana and registered for the event and then looked around Billings. That evening there was a welcome party in the center of downtown Billings for all the members which included a buffet dinner and live entertainment of various sorts. We watched local native Indians performance and ritual dances. Not bad, all included in the price of registration for the four days of the event. Again Bill and Larry met up with other friends from the "40 to Phoenix" ride which are also attending the convention and buffet.

The next day was spent carousing around the convention halls looking at the vendors and different exhibitions and Bill prepared his bike for judging of both the light show and the bike show. He took first place in the light parade that evening, winning over many other very competitive entries. Then the next day Bill took first place for best trike and trailer in the bike show. His next best competition was a bike / trailer setup that had the owner's cute dog on it getting all sorts of fond attention from the viewing members, keeping in mind it was a People's Choice type vote for the winners. He said he'd hate to lose to a dog, but his entry prevailed.

Friday allowed us to take a ride around one of the countryside loop rides, we sort of made our own traveling north from Billings to Roundup then to Grass Range on to the town Jordan back then down south on a very desolate road with rarely any sign of human life for 83 miles to Miles City, and then returning west to Billings . This ride was about 330 miles, we started the ride in mild temperature and we were riding in 97° weather by the end of the trip, so we we're glad to get back to the hotel.

Saturday we decide to leave early for Bear Tooth Pass. This is a very scenic mountain pass which climbs with many switchbacks to 10,947 feet, the top was way above the tree line , very windy and 43°. After seeing all these wonderful views along the 3 hour ride, we stopped at Cook City to have lunch, enjoy the local scenery and then continue on to Cody, Wyoming, by way of a beautiful road called Chief Joseph's Highway, where we settled in for the night.

Sunday morning we headed off to Yellowstone, going through the canyons from Cody to the Yellowstone Park entrance, observing really impressive canyon walls and ranch houses neatly but sparingly, built at the base of the hills. After entering the park and riding for a while, we stopped at the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone, a beautiful sight to see with the big long waterfall and deep bright canyon. We then proceeded on to see some of the various Hot Springs and Sulfur pits and last but not least to see Old Faithful blow its top. We were very lucky, in that we got there five minutes before the

irruption was planned to take place and it was right on time. From there we drove south on to Grand Tetons National Park and overlooked Jackson Lake onto the Grand Tetons Mountains, what a beautiful site. It was getting late in the day so we headed for a hotel over the mountains about 130 miles away, to the town of Riverton Wyoming, with a large dark storm front approaching. At the top of the high mountains we ran into hail, sleet, and rain along with 40° weather it was not something that we were looking forward to, although it was the only significant precipitation we saw during our trip while riding.

From Riverton the next day we started our trip home driving along the vast, desolate and scenic mountains and ranges of the old Pony Express trail route, until we reached Rawlins, Wyoming on interstate 80, from there we headed east to Lincoln Nebraska to spend a night, some 740 miles later. Two and a half days of travel after leaving Riverton Wyoming we arrived home.

Needless to say the Goldwings performed flawlessly, without a burp for the 5,500 miles of the trip. We were blessed with a great experience and had a nice, long, trouble-free trip which we will never forget.