

ON THE ROAD TO BLISS

By your Traveling Club Correspondent, Tom Brazier

While you were on Ron's ride in the land of "Milk and Honey", cruising across the 70 degree Central Valley, the temperature read 27 degrees in Boise. It read 27 on The Weather Channel, the outdoor thermometer and the thermometer on the car. It wasn't changing much and the idea of an early departure on *The Road to Bliss* was not looking good. It was time for Plan B, a delicious breakfast at the Sunrise Café and a reconsideration of an early departure. Homemade blueberry pancakes, biscuits the size of a hamburger and country gravy fueled our sense of adventure again.

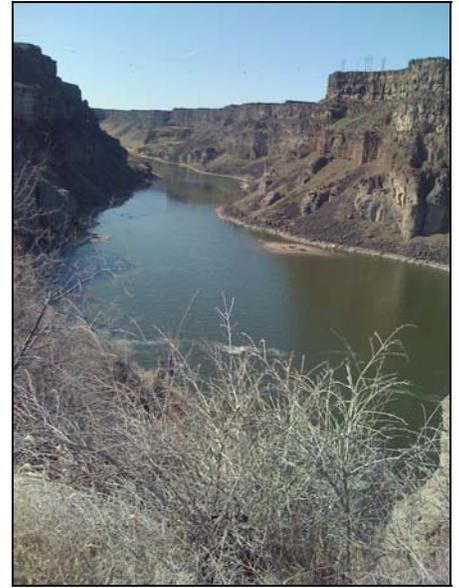
I had come up on Friday to see my old friend, Bob Hoppie, pick up my trusty Kawasaki ZRX1220R at the shop and get in a couple days of Spring riding. There are many differences between Idaho and California and one is the price of service. A full service on the Kawi and all parts including a valve service is \$300. Registration for two years is \$44. Things like that!

At any rate we were talking about *The Road to Bliss*. Now you may know that most of the access to southeastern Idaho from Boise is along Interstate 84. At least in the winter when some of the wonderful side roads are snow covered or where black ice abounds. There are not many other roads to get to Bliss and we all hate the interstate. In fact the interstate is known as 84/20/21/26/30 and there may be more numbers attached to it along the way to Bliss. But the temperature was 27 and when corrected for the 75 mph wind created by the posted speed limit on the interstate, and the 20 mph head-wind, the wind chill was down to 2 degrees. Perfect for a Spring ride! Electrics worked well but darn I wish I had a windshield on that bike. Or even hand warmers. But us IronBrainers thought this was a fine day to Spring ride.

The day's ride called for a trip to Shoshone Falls, which were reputed to be spectacular this time of year. I thought anything covered by ice would be spectacular and surely no liquid water could exist at this temperature. Bliss is located right where Highway 26 departs the interstate, and is about 15 miles east of Paradise, Paradise Valley that is. I suspect that it gets its name from the fact that you can get off the interstate there. It was interesting passing tractors with triples moving at 80 down the interstate. The road from Bliss to Shoshone was 20 miles or so of ideally slow moving two lane country road. There was plenty of time to look at the massive snowpack at Sun Valley off to our left. While everything around us was snow capped with lacy snow remainders, Sun Valley was a massive pack of ice and snow that seem to go up forever. It was spectacularly beautiful.

When we arrived at Shoshone, there were no signs directing us to the Falls. The nice lady at the Gas station explained that was because Shoshone Falls was 20 miles south of us, in Twin Falls. That didn't make a lot of sense but the coffee was hot and we warmed up a bit there while we contemplated our pathetic navigational skills. We met a biker heading for Sun Valley, two-up, on a new Road King, He explained the road was clear and that there were 40 foot snow drifts to see on both sides of the road on the way up into town of Sun Valley. Great for a day ride. We declined to go north with him and headed south in search of Shoshone Falls on Highway 93, and warmth.

Highway 93 crosses the Snake River at a beautiful suspension bridge as you enter Twin Falls. The view from the lot at the side of the bridge is spectacular as you look down the Snake River Canyon to the west. A retired truck driver was showing us the area, including the jump ramp located just north of the bridge that Evel Knievel used to try to jump the Snake River Canyon, when a parachute floated by heading for the River below. That caught our attention! It seems like this is one of the few legal places to do base jumping off a bridge. We watched people who appeared reasonably sane jumping off the bridge and popping their chutes to land on the ledge beside the river below. They then climbed up the vertical wall of the canyon and calmly went to a little park area to repack the chutes and do it again. I thought about doing that. Then I figured if the shock from jumping off the bridge did not kill me, the climb up the canyons wall would certainly finish me off. Hunger set in about that point and a little fifties style diner in Twin Falls took care of that. Steak sandwiches with a mound of French fries and more hot coffee were the order of the day.



We then shivered our way to the falls, which are rather spectacular. Seems water does not freeze in Idaho. They are, at 212 feet, higher than Niagara. They were well attended that day including a group of what appeared to be young Mennonite folks. We later learned they were part of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a division of the Mormon faith. They looked straight out of the 18th Century and gave Bob and me in our leathers a wide berth. By now the temp was way up to about 40, with a freezing wind off the mountains to the north of us. God save the electricians and what about electric gloves? Or a nice neck warmer for that matter. Next time.



Then it was off to see Hollister . . . Hollister, Idaho that is. It is located about 25 miles south of Twin Falls and was not a bustling community. We went through it several times looking for a good photo op sign or for that matter even a town. In fact, the only sign we could find with the "Hollister" name on it was the one seen here. Bob asked why we went there. I explained that it is mandatory when you live in Hollister to visit any place called Hollister if it is within a day's ride. He seemed skeptical. As we headed north out of Hollister, one of the mileages signs was interesting. It indicated that Sun Valley was 102 miles north of us. Yet, we could clearly see that massive mountain to the north over a hundred miles ahead. And we could see similar brilliant white peaks in any other direction we looked. Cool.



With a fond farewell to Hollister, we started north again into the wind which had now maliciously switched from the southeast to the north so we had a headwind both ways. Backtracking on Highway 93 we came to Highway 30, another perfect two lane country road that this time took us up the beautiful Hagerman Valley. The trip was along the south side of the Snake and crossed it half a dozen times. There were hot springs bubbling steam up into the frigid air, fishing camps and parks for

camping and to swim in, probably for warmer weather. Or Polar Bears. Then it was 120 miles or so beating it back to Boise on the interstate where we got in just after 8:00. The sun was just going down and it had been a great day.

The next day we were thawed out pretty well, and temps were up to 33, so we decided to cycle Highway 55 up toward McCall and stopped at Horseshoe Bend. That takes you over a little summit at about 6,000 feet with snow on both sides of a dry road. We stopped for pictures at the Horseshoe Bend sign, when another “only in Idaho” moment occurred. An Idaho State Police cruiser stopped on the road by us and an officer asked if we would like pictures of both of us in front of the sign. He parked, came down and introduced himself as “Justin”, and chatted for a while. We posed; he took pictures, then gave us some road advice and wished us a great day. Can you see the CHP doing that? Coffee at the Standard Station got us moving again down the Emmet loop trail. It was a spectacular ride with snow capped mountains to the east and the Black Canyon road down to Emmett. It parallels a beautiful reservoir on the left and the mountains to the north and west.



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In Emmett we came upon another relic, a full service drive-in restaurant, complete with carhops on roller skates. She couldn't attach the trays to our bikes so we had a chance to sit and visit at the picnic tables. She explained that they were trying to get all the servers to go to roller skates to bring back the ambiance of the good old days. A foot long chili cheese dog and more scalding coffee got us moving toward Boise. (Note to self – no chili cheese dogs with onions on a freezing day when you need to keep the face mask on a full face helmet completely closed so your eyes don't freeze over.)



Total mileage was about 525 and the ride was an awesome experience. The spectacular scenery overcame the cold and the friendship with Bob made the ride spirit warm and friendly. The last fun of the ride was coming home Sunday on Horizon Air to a wonderful Easter dinner with family. The flight attendants were in the spirit, as you can see. Microbrew anyone?

Can't wait until next time. Cheers all!