

By Rob Beecroft

The great across Canada trip on our Gold Wings, from rock to rock (Victoria to Newfoundland), started on June 15th, when Bob Curiston, John Sawyer, fellow Members in the Victoria Gold Wing Road Rider's Association (GWRRA) Chapter BC-V and myself, left Victoria. The first 4 days were miserable, as we had severe monsoon conditions for nearly 2100 km. It was the first time my "waterproof" Aerostitch-gortex riding gear ever leaked. How hard was it raining -- the Trans Canada HWY actually washed out behind us, as we passed through Lethbridge. We arrived in Ottawa on June 23rd and stayed with Bruce and Irene Morrison, former Members of Chapter BC-V, who now live in Ottawa. Our arrival in Canada's capital city was earthshaking. Literally, as we just got off our bikes, at Morrison's house, Ottawa was hit by a 5.5-Richter scale, earthquake. The antennas on our bikes were shaking back and forth and the house was rattling, like it was next to a passing train. Fortunately, other than a crack in the living room ceiling, no serious damage was done.

We spent 2 days as tourists, visiting all the major landmarks in Ottawa, including the Parliament Buildings, the Rideau Canal and the Canadian War Museum. One of my highlights was visiting the Tower of Victory (Peace Tower) and Peace, which houses the Memorial Chamber with stained glass windows illustrating Canada's war record and the Books of Remembrance. These books list the names of all the soldiers who have died in battle, since the Boer war, 1889-1902. 66 thousand names are listed in the book for WWI. Each day, one page of the book is opened and the names are displayed, so that these soldiers are never forgotten.

Our Co-Rider's: Katherine, Sue and Pauline, flew into Ottawa on June 26th. After attending the Ottawa GWRRA Chapter breakfast meeting, on June 27th, we headed out for Sherbrook, Quebec. The next day, in another monsoon, we headed through Maine, to Woodstock, New Brunswick. The following day we rode to PEI, over the impressive Confederation Bridge and spent 1 day around Charlottetown. At last, we had some dry warm weather and we toured a large portion of the coastline, past many large potato farms, with the ubiquitous red PEI soil. We had a nice lobster dinner at Fisherman's wharf, not far from Anne of Green Gable's farm site/museum.

After leaving PEI, we went to the Bay of Fundy to see the tidal change (38 ft) between low and high tide, at Hopewell Rocks Provincial Park. That was a spectacular sight to see the chocolate colored mud flats when the tide was

out. The next place we visited was the little port town of Annapolis Royal. First settled in 1605, by the French, this is one of the country's oldest permanent European settlements. We spent several hours touring Fort Anne, a coastal Fort and then followed the Nova Scotia coastline all away around to Lunenburg, where we visited the Fisherman's museum and looked at the Bluenose II sailing ship.

The next day we visited Peggy's Cove and then drove to Halifax, where we attended the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo Performance (a show with military bands from many countries, gathered to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Canadian Navy), at the Halifax Metro Centre. It was well worth the \$40 ticket price, as we were thoroughly entertained by some very impressive bands, skits and military displays.

On July 6, we followed the Nova Scotia coastline, along many beautiful coves, with colorful houses and stunning Churches, until we reached a little town called Baddeck. This was where Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the phone, had his summer home. We spent several hours visiting the Alexander Graham Bell Museum and saw examples of the many devices that he invented, such as: metal detectors, the hydrofoil, better wings for planes, a wheat husker, as well as several instruments to help deaf people. Then we headed to Cape Breton, over the Canso Causeway and stayed overnight in Port Hawkesbury. On July 7, we rode to Sydney and spent the day visiting the local sites. One of the interesting attractions, at the Sydney Conference Centre, was a giant fiddle, as Cape Breton is famous for Celtic music.

We caught the Ferry to Newfoundland (NFLD) on July 8th. Much to our consternation, we discovered motorcycles load last on this ferry. Given that it was at least 35 oC out and we didn't have a shelter with air conditioning, it was a long 2 hour wait until boarding. After a relatively smooth 6 hour sailing, we arrived on the 'rock' at 10:30 pm and stayed overnight in Port Aux Basques. The next day it was windy, foggy and wet, as we headed towards the small city of Pasadena, ever wary of hitting a moose. NFLD has the largest moose population in Canada, so driving at dusk and dawn is risky, especially on a motorcycle. The numerous memorial crosses, along side the road, reinforced the need for caution. Fortunately, we never encountered a moose while on NFLD.

On July 10, we visited Gros Morne, a famous NFLD National Park, 697 square miles in size, known for its jagged fiords and rugged mountains.

Unfortunately, it was wet and foggy, so we failed to get a true appreciation of the Park's beauty. After having lunch at Trout River, we headed back to Pasadena, through yet another rainstorm. With rain forecast for the next several days, we decided to leave NFLD 2 days earlier than planned and head back to Nova Scotia.

On July 11, the 250 km trip back to the Port Aux Basques ferry was wet and foggy, with blustery side winds that tried to rotate the helmets on our heads. The ferry trip back to Sydney, NS, was fairly rough, so we were glad that we'd tied our bikes down securely.

On July 12th, Bob had an appointment at the local Honda Dealer to replace the rear tire on his Gold Wing. While Bob was doing this, John/Sue and Katherine/I left Sydney and rode to see the reconstructed Fort Louisbourg. Which was a former French Fort, built in 1744 and destroyed later by the British Navy. The Fort was very interesting and had lots of artifacts from the 17th and early 18th century. We lunched on traditional food from that era, a soup with beets, turnip and potatoes, with bannock bread. After leaving the Fort, we head towards Ingonish to ride the Cabot Trail. The Cabot trail is a 300 km loop, along the rugged coastline of Northern Cape Breton. The road had some steep, twisty, sections, especially by Smokey Mt., as it meandered along the scenic shoreline. It kind of reminded me of the road along the Oregon Coast. Fortunately, we had a perfect day for riding with warm weather and a bright sunny day.

On July 13th, we finished the last section of Cabot trail and spent the night back in Port Hawkesbury. The next day, in heavy rain, we rode the 270 km back to Halifax. It was raining so hard that we were riding at 60 km/hr in a 100 km/hr speed zone. There was so much water on the road a car several minutes ahead of us, hydroplaned off the road into the ditch. I'm glad that the V-shaped motorcycle tires, cut through the water and don't tend to hydroplane. At one point, with low visibility and a torrent of water falling from the sky, we were forced to pull off the highway and take refuge under the roof of a gas station for over an hour. We arrived at our hotel in Halifax soaked and cold. Not the best summer day for riding.

Later that evening, we had enjoyable dinner with Bruce/Donna Walton, fellow Members in BC-V and Ronnie/Peggy Lopez, GWRRA Members from Ephrata, WA. Both couples had attended Wing Ding, in Des Moines, Iowa and then had ridden to the East Coast.

On July 15th, we spent the day visiting sites in Halifax. This included the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, which was a former British Military Fort, completed in 1856. This Fort and several more around the harbor entrance made up the Halifax Defense Complex. The port of Halifax, with the deep, sheltered harbor, was one of the principal naval stations of the British Empire and played a vital role as a staging base for ship convoys in WWII. We then went to the Halifax museum and looked at all the exhibits from the 1912 sinking of the Titanic and the Halifax explosion in 1917, of a French cargo ship, Mont Blanc, carrying munitions, which leveled most of the wooden buildings in the city. It still remains the largest man made explosion up to the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, in August 1945. We spent a relaxing evening strolling along the Halifax waterfront and took the harbor ferry across the bay to Dartmouth, where our hotel was located. This was the only day of the trip where we didn't ride our Gold Wings.

At 7 am, the next morning, Katherine, Sue and Pauline flew back to Victoria and we left Halifax and headed to Saint John, New Brunswick, to start the long return trip back across the US. On July 17th, we followed the picturesque Maine coastline, with rocky outcrops, with lighthouses on distant promontories, with marinas packed with fishing boats, and beautiful turn of the century white clapboard houses, down to the city of Portland. From there, the States and days just rolled by: New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Washington, as we rode 500-625 km per day. Fortunately, we managed to avoid many afternoon thunderstorms and the weather was perfect for riding.

Of all the States we crossed, my favorite ones were Vermont and South Dakota. Vermont, with its endless rolling hills, covered with a dense canopy of emerald colored trees, small rural farms, sugar maple plantations, winding rivers, was unrivaled in sheer beauty. I'd love to see Vermont in the fall, as the leaves change color.

South Dakota was also very beautiful with many diverse landscapes, ranging from: sandy dunes, prairie with tall grasses, eroded ridges/colorful mud formations of the Badlands, flower dotted meadows with pine forests and rugged mountains. John and I stayed 2 days in Rapid City and visited: the Mount Rushmore Memorial, Crazy Horse Memorial, rode through the Badlands, Custer State Park, the Black Hills and the cities of Deadwood and Sturgis. Since Bob was familiar with South Dakota and didn't want to visit

all the sites again, he left after replacing the front tire on his Gold Wing, plus both trailer tires and took the fast route back to Victoria.

After leaving South Dakota, John and I spent 4 days traveling to the West Coast, via Yellowstone National Park, Hwy 90 to Missoula and then Hwy 12, past Yakima and Mt. Rainer, all the way out to Interstate 5, in Washington State. After spending the night in Olympia, we rode up the scenic Hood Canal, on Hwy 101 and caught the Coho Ferry to Victoria. We arrived back in Victoria on July 30th, 47 days after starting our trip across Canada. We had ridden 19,019 km during that time period. It was a memorable excursion, one that will be cherished by all that participated.