

Letter 177
No, Really! I Had It All To Myself!
Part 1
2013-04-04

Dear Dan,

My Dad loved his family, his work, his cars, airplanes, and motorcycles. His sons inherited much of that love. In fact our family held the record for purchasing the most number of new street motorcycles from the Suzuki shop that we frequented.

And while I inherited that same love for bikes, I mainly loved to go on rides and feel the rushing wind flow around my body.

In 1984 I had a 1983 Suzuki GS 1000 shaft drive with a Pacifico Aero frame mount fairing and matching saddlebags and trunk, and a sliding back rest. My youngest brother was in the Army stationed at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky. I was planning a trip to visit him, but then decided I didn't want to go that far.

So, I made plans for a two week ride down through central Oregon and on to the California coast and back again. I had some friends that lived in Eugene, so that became one of my stops along the way. Otherwise I was just going to ride south and stay in whatever campground or motel that presented itself, using a AAA travel book as a resource.

But I also really wanted to see Crater Lake.

I began the ride on Saturday of the Labor day holiday, first heading east to Ellensburg, then south to Goldendale. I spent the first night at a campground outside of Antelope, Oregon called Wildcat.

Then I rode to Redmond, Oregon and stayed in a motel, then on to Bend and stayed at another motel to plan my route to Crater Lake. I saw in the AAA guide a place that had Lava Caves. This was on the route, so I stopped there and looked around, but I really didn't have time to explore. So it was onward to my next destination.

Now, I discovered a really long, straight road that goes up to Crater Lake. These are what bikers love, because you can go really fast if you want to, since it is easy to see any oncoming traffic from either direction.

Words cannot describe what I felt the first time I saw Crater Lake. I got off of my bike and walked up to the fence at the edge of the look-out parking lot and thought to myself; "this must be the Drinking Cup of The Almighty God".

I rode around the circumference of the volcano and then down the connecting road to I-5. It was getting late in the day and I begin to look for a place to pitch my tent since this was a wilderness area. As I rode I saw a sign for a State Park up ahead. I slowed and stopped in the driveway, seeing that it was blocked by a gate. This was Monday evening a little after 6:00PM. I knew then that the park had just closed after the Labor Day rush. I remained stopped about ten feet in front of the gate wondering what to do next.

Then I saw something. To the right of the gate was a tree. But between the tree and the gate there was a gap. And, you guessed it, there was just enough room for me to squeeze my bike through.

So, I rode my bike around the very trashed but very vacant State Park, thinking; “well, if it’s closed and there’s no one here, I’ll be perfectly safe”.

I found a nice little campsite, pitched my tent, got out my cook stove, and made dinner and coffee.

There was enough daylight left that allowed me to look around. I discovered the headwaters of the Rogue River flow through the park, and over the centuries had carved quite a narrow chute through the lava bed that it flows through. The water travels at a great velocity there. It is unlikely that one would survive if one should fall in to the river at that point.

The next morning I woke up, packed up my things and went over to the restrooms (which I had discovered earlier were left unlocked) to get cleaned up. As I walked out, I saw a Park Ranger picking up trash. I said “good morning”, and was greeted in return with “the park is closed”.

“OK,” I said. “I’m just leaving”.

I got on my bike and rode out for the next adventure the Lord had waiting for me.

But for that one Labor Day Monday night, I had that entire Rogue River State Park campground all to myself. What a gift from my Father in Heaven.

Blessings...

R. C. Theophilus