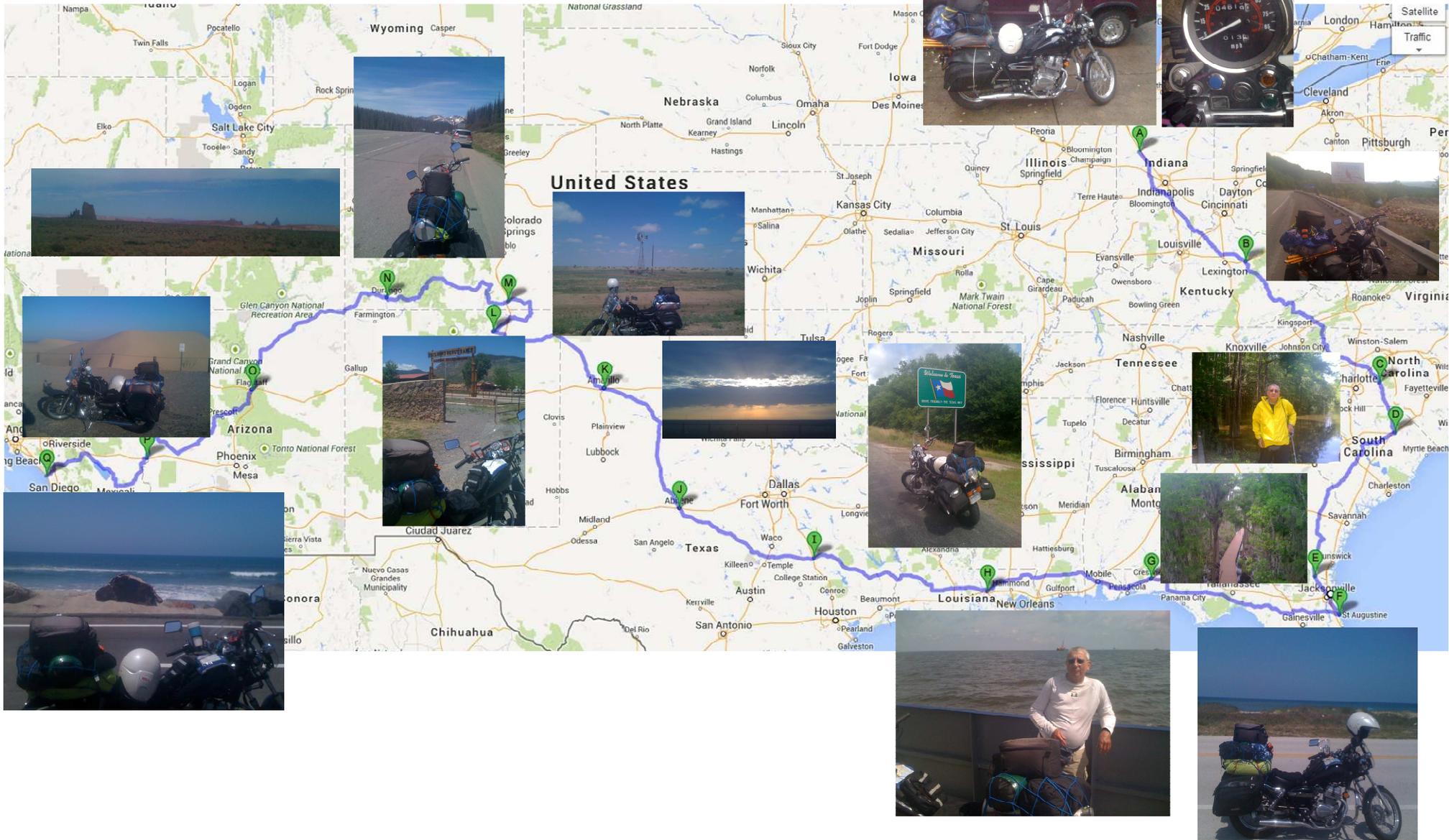


May 15 – June 5, 2014  
West Lafayette, IN to Oceanside, CA  
4576 miles



# Mike's Honda Rebel Motorcycle Tour

May and June 2014



## Tuesday, May 6

One week from today, I plan to leave home on my Rebel motorcycle, and ride back roads (Google Maps – Avoid highways option) to Florence SC to visit Mom. Riding 300-400 miles per day, I'll spend the first night at a state park in eastern KY, and the second camping at a state park in central NC.

After a week or so with Mom (90 years old), I'll head south to Key West, probably camping, mostly on the Adventure Cycle Association, ACA, (bicycles) Atlantic Coast Route; then west along the ACA Southern Tier to San Diego, arriving in time to see the start of the solo Race Across America (also bicycles) and then the team start a few days later in Oceanside.

Then, it's north along the ACA Sierra and Cascades Route to Vancouver, and (if the motorcycle and I are holding out) east across Canada, arriving back in Indiana by mid-July.

Well, that's the Plan – God willing. But, He has often had different ideas, so we'll just see how it all goes. You'll never accomplish grand things without grand plans!

Enjoy, laugh with me (or at me), be awed, and decide to do something that excites you and makes you a little uncomfortable. Reach beyond your grasp.

Ride hard.

Be safe.

Mike Jacob

### **Sunday, May 11**

Everything is nearly ready; motorcycle inspected and tuned and tweaked with new tires, gear assembled, tested, packed and repacked, routes designed, Purdue and home work complete. Time to go ? Well, there is a 100% chance of rain Tuesday throughout Indiana. So, I'm delaying my departure until Wednesday, May 14. Though I can ride in the rain, since this is a "vacation" not an event, it's about fun not survival. Wednesday, FindMeSpot will be active to give a trace of my ride.

### **Tuesday, May13**

So, I delayed some final prep until today because of the 100% forecast of rain. That turned into an occasional sprinkle, with lots of black clouds. That's all. Now, the forecast for tomorrow afternoon is for severe thunderstorms, high winds, and maybe hail in SE Indiana, right where I have to cross the Ohio River. So, one more day's delay. I leave home and ride to eastern KY Thursday. That's as long as I'm willing to wait.

### **Thursday, May 15**

West Lafayette (7:30am) to Mt Sterling KY (5:00pm)

I started in light rain and 40 deg. Burr! The rain stopped west of Indy, but it was cold and overcast all day. I rode State Highways, 45-55 mph. The Rebel just purred along. But my right pannier wanted to rub against the tire, so I fretted and messed with it all day. I had planned to camp in the KY foothills, but by 5pm I was still an hour away, cold, stiff, and tired. So it's Budget Inn and Mexican food tonight. Maybe I'll camp in the NC piedmont tomorrow. Not a bad start, lots of little things learned, but the weather stinks.

Still, even a bad day on my bike (and this was *not* bad) is better than the best day in my office!

## Friday, May 16

Mt Sterling, KY to Florence, SC

6:45am to 8:45pm, 14 hours

500 miles

Wow. That was more than enough for one day. The day started in the 40's and cloudy, followed by typical Smokey Mountains fog in the (you guessed it) Smokey Mountains, and ended in the high 60's, mostly clear. But, I was running ahead of another rain storm all afternoon.



All morning, through eastern KY and the western VA, I was riding on 3 or 4 lane good roads, making 45-55 mph. It was pretty easy riding, and I learned about riding on interstate-like roads. No problem, I can do that, even on the little 250 cc Rebel. This is opening up roads I'd never ride on my bicycle.

For the 20 miles just north of Mountain City, VA I was on US421. Going into that section were several *huge* signs warning trucks to take another route because of the switch-backs. Then it was up and over the spine of the mountains; a motorcycle rider's dream – twist and turn and turn and switch back often at 25 mph (going up *and* down). I saw no cars, but was passed by a bunch of kids on sports bikes. On the worst climbs my little Rebel maxed at hauling me and my stuff at 40 mph. Well, on a bicycle I would be down to about 3 mph. ok.



My wife's father's store, Albemarle, NC

I was at Boone, NC by early afternoon, and into the Piedmont before supper. In fact, I made it to my wife's home town and even stopped in front of her Dad's store (now a day-care center) for a photo and to call her.

So, it was now 6:30 pm (12 hours on the road) and I was stiff, but otherwise felt good. I was only 2 ½ hours from Mom's, so I pushed ahead – rode 25 miles, pulled over, stop, stretched legs and arms and neck, drink, check the map – push on. Gas up every 100 miles – more for the break than for the gas [I have 3.4 gal tank and get 75+ mpg]. It turned dark about 10 miles from home, in territory I really know. So, I was fine finishing up in the dark.

But, navigating and avoiding road hazards and traffic in the dark is something I'm planning to avoid. I can't navigate *and* ride. So, I have to pull over to give the map and my GPS their full attention, then get back on the road. There is none of the "look down at the map, glance at the GPS while I'm riding". Ride *or* navigate, not both. Throughout the day I made three small mistakes, mostly because I'm moving 4 times faster than I'm used to on my bicycle and didn't set-up for a turn soon enough or turned the wrong way. But, each error was fixed within 5 minutes.

I'm off-the-bike for the next week or so, doing honey-do's for my mother, visiting relatives, and fixing my bike to hold my bags without letting them drag against the wheel. So long for now. Talk to you in about a week.

**Thursday, May 22**  
Florence, SC

Well, I'm still in Florence, visiting with Mom (90 years old), running errands, and fixing odds and ends. She wants me to stay until Saturday morning. That's about as much of each other as we can each manage.



Mom's house, Florence, SC

I've taken a couple of day trips 50-100 mi each, around my old stomping grounds in NE South Carolina. And, I changed the oil in my Rebel to 20W50 to better tolerate the heat of the SW deserts. I also fabricated braces to keep my bags off of the wheels. But, it's getting time to go.



SC Plantation, Darlington, SC



Lynches River County Park, SC

Saturday at first light, I'm heading south on US301 to Folkston GA, about 320 miles. That is the gateway to the Okeefanokee Swamp. There, I'll play tourist for a half-day or so. Since I've spent more time in Florence than I originally planned, when I get to Jacksonville, I'll turn West on US 90, rather than continuing South to Key West. Key West is a trip better saved for January and February anyway.

## Saturday, May 24

Florence, SC to Folkston, GA. (Okeefanokee)

6:45am to 4:15 pm

370 miles

Cool and clear to start, but sunny and low 90's at the end. Armoured underwear was almost too hot at the end. The roads were 2 or 4 lane state Highways, with the last 100 miles on US301. The bike ran fine, as did I up until the last 50 miles. Then I was hot and tired and stiff. Most of the navigation was simple, but there were a few connecting county roads that I overshot. I'm really glad I have my GPS with ACA waypoints. There are lots of Spanish moss covered oaks over hanging the road and low country plantation-like homes.

I'm spending the night in a mom and pop motel, and then will play tourist all morning at the swamp. So tomorrow's ride will only be about 100 miles along A1A on the coast to St Augustine, then about another 50 miles west.

## Sunday May 25

Folkston GA to W of St Augustine, FL

This morning I left my gear at the motel and rode the 13 miles out to the Okefenokee Swamp. A mile boardwalk, film, homestead, and 1-1/2 hour boat ride-alligators, owls, hawks, lots of aquatic plants and burned out trees (major fire in 2007 and 2012).



Okefenokee Swamp, GA

Then it was back for my gear, an hour of Highways riding, then 3 hours of beach traffic from Amelia Island, past Jacksonville to St Augustine-bumper to bumper



Amelia Island, FL – inlaw's house



South of Jacksonville FL

Finally I broke *west* for the last hour, heading to the FL panhandle. I'm finished going South. It's now Westward Ho to the Pacific and Oceanside.

## **Monday, May 26**

Palate, FL to Crestview, FL  
6:45amEDT to 3:15pmCDT  
350 miles

It was easy riding today, thru Gainesville (nice university town), around Tallahassee, and then along US90. There wasn't much traffic, even in the cities. But, by afternoon it was 95 deg, not too hot at 55mph, but tiring. There were lots of pine forests, and small farms, with rolling hills - not that different from the mid-west

Road-kill by state:

IN & KY- raccoons  
NC, SC & GA - possums  
FL - armadillos. and lots of vultures

Tomorrow, I head along the Gulf then up to Baton Rouge. - Cajun, can't wait!

## **Tuesday, May 27**

Florida to Baton Rouge, LA  
6:15am to 5:15 pm, 11 hours  
320 miles

Today I rode from Pensacola, FL to Baton Rouge, LA, right on the coast. It was town-after- town, beach condos, strip malls one after another. No wonder I didn't even average 35mph. But, there was a ferry ride through the oil platforms, and 2 pop-up rain storms. Just keep rolling west!



Gulf of Mexico ferry ride, AL to MS

My body is starting to deal with the riding, as is my mind, and my traffic instincts (had lots of practice today). Tonight it's Cajun seafood and Al Alligator beer for supper. Tomorrow, it's into TX, so, I guess I'll be swapping shrimp for steak.

### Wednesday, May 28

No riding today; TV, movies, and reading instead. With 100% chance of heavy thunderstorms and flooding across my entire route into eastern TX, I'm staying put here in Baton Rouge. It may not be a lot better tomorrow. We'll see.

### Thursday, May 29

Baton Rouge LA to Centerville TX

6:00am-3:45pm

355 miles

The day started in the Bayou, then thru rolling hills and pine forest, and ended among open pasture land. The day began in the 60s with a light rain, then thru a 15 mile section of massive down pours in which I just tried to stay on the bike and keep the bike on the road, and ended in sun and low 90's. Early on there were lots of herons and egrets, catfish and crawfish ponds, and ended among horses and cattle.

The biggest "issue" is that even the 2 lane roads I'm riding in Texas have a 75 mph speed limit. Though my Rebel may go that fast, 55mph is *my* limit. So I spent much of the day watching behind me as much as in front of me, and pulling over as soon as possible to let the line behind pass-just like riding a bicycle. I can do that.



Into the *wild* west – 75 mph speed limits on two-lane roads!

I had hoped for a steak my first night in TX, but I had to eat at the "gas station". Oh well, tomorrow is a short day into Abilene, so maybe ... .

### **Friday, May 30**

Centerville, TX to Abilene, TX

6:30am-1:30pm

270 miles

It was a short ride today. Good places to stop are limited, so it was here or *much* further along. The terrain was rolling, 75mph 2 lane roads that I rode at 55mph, like yesterday. I constantly watched behind, and often slid over onto the big paved shoulder.

Early today I was riding beside corn and bean fields; but, before long it was cattle and horses, with small farming towns every 15 miles or so. Trees are much shorter, and much sparser. Wildlife and road kill was back to hawks and vultures.

I'm heading a few miles down into town to a local Chicken-fried Steak place on my unloaded bike for an early supper.

### **Saturday, May 31**

Abilene, TX to Amarillo, TX

293 miles

6:15am - 1:45 pm

A most glorious day! It began just before dawn, riding to a 7-11 for coffee and a banana breakfast. All but the last hour was on little traveled roads thru open fields of wheat as big as any field in Kansas, or pastures of cattle, horses and creosote trees with hawks above and prairie dogs scampering across the road. But, there were two serious descents into canyons, each 2 mile per side at 10% grades, with major red-rock formations. Remarkable! Then after the climb out, it was flat-flat-flat fields again.



Between Abilene and Amarillo, TX

Boy, touring on my Rebel is way easier than on my bicycle! The last hour was on an interstate into town. I stuck to the right side of the right lane at 55mph, and everyone went around. Ok, but riding with 75mph semi's is not something I'd chose to do.

I've washed clothes, caught up on messages, and planned tomorrow's 300 mile trip to Philmont Scout Ranch in NM, then over the Raton pass into Trinidad, CO - Rockies here I come.

## Sunday, June 1

Amarillo, TX to Trinidad, CO

6:30am CDT -2:00pm MDT

325 miles

This was the best day yet. I started riding 50 mi on an interstate-like road out of Amarillo, 55 mph watching for traffic coming up behind.



Sunrise west of Amarillo, TX

I could see horizon-to-horizon, prairie all around. Out of Clayton NM, it was 80 miles to Springer NM - remote - with the Rockies growing. Then it was along a very back road right up to the southern boundary of Philmont Scout Ranch. I stopped at Camping Headquarters for a short walk around- oh the memories! As a camper(14 years old), as a ranger(19 & 21 ), and as an advisor(40's).



Philmont Scout Ranch, Camping Headquarters, Cimarron, NM

It was in the mid-90s degrees and I was getting tired. So I rode 55 miles across the prairie and up over Raton Pass (7700ft). The Rebel was down to 25 mph on I40 at the top. But we made it!

I'm changing oil in the Rebel, having a few beers, and then going to Sonic for supper. Tomorrow, it's mountains all day to Durango. I'll be (more or less) on the RAAM route from here to Oceanside.

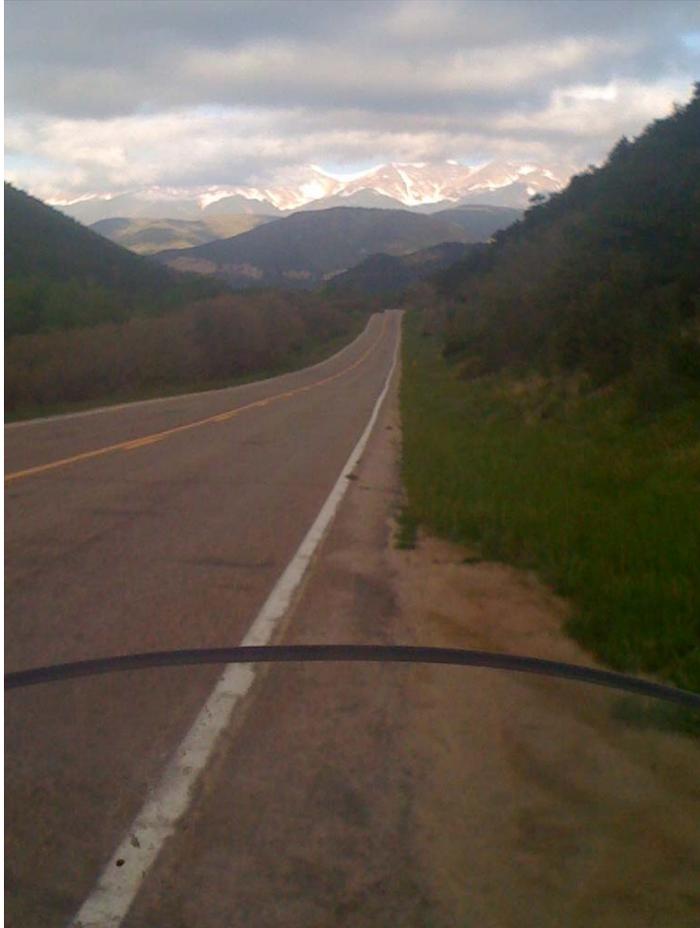
## Monday, June 2

Trinidad, CO to Durango, Co

6:00am - 2:45pm

275 miles

Right off, the data makes the day seem short and easy. But, .... , it was *full* of climbing and descending three mountain passes; Chuchara on CO12, and La Veta and Wolf Creek (over 10,000 ft) on US160. At each of the passes, we were down to 25mph in 3rd gear (out of 5). But the Rebel just growled on. On the way up to the first pass, I stopped twice to layer up, and stayed in my full cold weather kit until noon.



Chuchara Pass, CO



Wolf Creek Pass, CO

Early riding was remote with *no* traffic. But traffic built all day. By the end, it was nearly bumper-to-bumper as I came into Durango (quite the tourist town). I was edgy and delighted to stop. I passed several Pot Shops, riding across the state. But, I did *not* stop. I'm a marijuana virgin ( that's my story and I'm sticking to it).

I'm at a high-end motel and going to Applebee's for supper. They help with recovery - honest. Tomorrow, it's thru the 4 corners and Monument Valley to Flagstaff.

## Tuesday, June 3

Durango, CO to Flagstaff, AZ

6:00amMDT-1:00pmPDT

311 miles

It was barely 50 deg to start, so I was in full winter garb, with the heated hand grips on. The day altered between overcast and clear, and ended in the 90s just before I made the 1500ft climb up to Flagstaff, where it was barely 80.

Riding began with a climb out of Durango. But shortly, the terrain opened wide, and barren, nearly desert. I stopped at the Four Corners for a photo, and then the tourist traffic spiked, with tour busses and RVs. It seems this is the gateway to the Grand Canyon.



Four Corners, CO, UT, NM, AZ



Looking into Monument Valley, AZ

At about 10am I found I couldn't get over 45 mph, even on the level. Then I turned, and the wind nearly tipped me over. The rest of the ride was hard; wind, rising temps, and tourists. I was relieved to make it in.

Tomorrow; I ride to Sedona, Red Rock, Yarnell (forest fire fighters tragedy), and then a descent into the southern California desert.

### **Wednesday, June 4**

Flagstaff AZ to Blythe CA

5:30am-1:30pm

274 miles

This was a day of extremes. It started on Interstate 17 for 50 miles of mountains as a detour around a fire on 89A thru Sedona and Red Rock. The middle of the day was twisting climbing and descending on tight 2-lane US89. It ended across the desert on I10. It started with all my warm gear on and 45 degrees, and ended in 100deg, wearing my sun shirt and nylon pants only.

This was the day I was worried about when I planned the trip. But the Rebel ran as well as usual. Once I dropped down the Yarnell incline to the desert, I rode 30-50 miles, stopped, got an icy drink, and moved on. It worked fine. All of the drivers on the interstate were great, moving over to the left well before getting close.

Tomorrow-Oceanside, and about a week off-the-bike, helping two sets of racers get ready for RAAM, and catching up with several graduates.

### **Thursday, June 5**

Blythe CA to Oceanside CA

5:30am-12:30pm

270 miles

I was out at first light, running across the desert, trying to get to the coastal mountain range before things heated up. Man, how can anyone choose to live here? On the way to Brawley, I stopped at the Imperial Sand Dunes for a photo, a little bit of the Sahara right here on America.



Imperial Sand Dunes, southeastern CA

All around Brawley, the desert was growing a variety of crops, irrigated by the Colorado River. And the cattle feed lots were below solar panels, ingenious! I was getting hot and tired by the time I started climbing the Coastal Range. So, I was edgy and impatient with the traffic both in the mountains, and on the freeway going into Oceanside.



Pacific Ocean, Oceanside, CA

But, I got the beach photo, and am now going to cool it for a couple of days before the RAAM crews arrive. Beer and beach. I'll probably head out again about June 12.

### **Monday, June 9**

My mother's doctor and nurse called to say I should fly home. So, I am putting my motorcycle and gear in storage here in Oceanside and flying east tomorrow. I will *eventually* fly back to retrieve everything and finish the tour. But for now I'm needed elsewhere.

### **July 25**

Mom has proven much more resilient than anyone expected. For most of June she and I completed all of the end-of-life details we hadn't got to, enjoyed each other's company, and said goodbye. As the cancer advanced, she lost her ability to get out of bed, and then became confused about where she was, who I was, and what was happening to her. Through it all, we've had good Hospice help.

My job has gone from errands and company, to cooking and cleaning and feeding and lifting her, to just answering the door and the phone, and watching.

Over these months, I have been right here, in the house. So, my fitness level has dropped at the same rate as my waist has expanded. Even if I had the time (which I now don't) I'm no longer fit enough to duke-it-out with Southern CA traffic or to ride through the Sierras and Cascades and Rockies and across the Great Plains (again). So, a friend is having my motorcycle and gear shipped back to Indiana. I should be driving a U-Haul, with my inheritance, home after the funeral in a few weeks.