

Alaska - Arctic Ocean to Gulf of Alaska

Day 0, Friday, June 28, 1996

On June 28 1996, I went to the sporting goods store after work and bought a new water purifier. After that I went to the airport to catch a plane to Alaska. I arrived 2 hours early, checked my luggage in and then went to the appropriate gate. At the gate, I noticed that the next flight to depart was not to Alaska. Then I looked on the departure terminal and found out that the flight was going to be 3 hours late. In the 5 hours that I spent at the airport I did a lot of walking, some reading on Alaska and also called Packard Bell for information on DRAM for my PC's video. Finally, I boarded the plane for Alaska. (June 28, 1996/ day 1/ miles 0/ day miles 0)

Day 1, Saturday, June 29, 1996

I arrived in Anchorage at 1 AM and picked up my rental car from the airport. Then I drove around downtown Anchorage. Mostly I drove around 4th and 5th street. I went to Alaska in 1981 and I remembered 4th street as the happening street. I think it was still the same, but just seemed like a lot of drunks to me (something that did not seem too appeal to me anymore). After leaving downtown, I started driving towards Portage Glacier. On the way to the Glacier, I took a nap at Potter Canyon rest stop. After about an hour, I woke up and noticed a police officer looking at me. He asked me if everything was OK and I told him I was having a tough time keeping my eyes opened, so I decided to rest. I have the feeling that there may have been a sign saying no camping or overnight parking, because as the trip went on, I noticed that most of the rest stops in Alaska had RV camping. Next, I drove down the road to Portage Glacier and found that it was not opened until 10:00 AM, it was only 8:00 AM and I could not wait, because I had a flight out of Anchorage at 1:00 PM to Deadhorse. After that I went for a hike to Byron Glacier. It was a rainy hike and I did not use my rain gear, because it was packed and ready to go to Deadhorse. Next, I went to the Portage Glaciers' visitor center and found that it did not open until 9:00 AM. It was 8:45 AM, but I did not feel like waiting, so I went back to Anchorage. Before going to the airport, I stopped at the mall to see if they had any cool University of Alaska sweatshirts. All they had were real nice sport coats for \$149. Too expensive, so I went to the airport. While waiting for my flight I read about a guy that was attacked by a brown bear at the San Diego Zoo. Then I boarded the plane and arrived in Deadhorse at 2:45 PM. The first thing I did in Deadhorse was try to find out if I could ride my bike into the restricted zone (the only road to the Arctic Ocean is through oil fields). In order to go to the Arctic Ocean, you need to get permission from the Oil Fields. First, I called ARCO security (659-5634) and found out that I would have had to get permission well in advance, then I tried BP security (659-4435) and the guy said absolutely no bikes. I met some Japanese people that were visiting the oil fields. They asked me where I was going and one of them told me about a man that he had met that

did a lot of riding and always took his dog. He said the guy would even cuddle up with his dog. The guy seemed to think I should get a dog and I said it would probably be better to have a lady. Another one of the Japanese guys said, "Yeah, but a dog doesn't complain." Everyone thought that was funny. Next, I went into the store to find out about tours to the Arctic Ocean and they told me that I could get a tour from the Prudhoe Bay Inn (across from the airport) at 6 PM for \$20.00. I bought some Pepper spray at the store and when I asked the store clerk if it helped with the bears he said yeah and then a guy in line said a gun would be better and laughed. Back at the airport, I was taking a picture of the airport and a man in a truck pulled up and signaled me, to see if I wanted him to take my picture in front of the airport. He was a very friendly Oil Field worker and suggested that I rode from a certain direction so that he could get the sun in my face. When I went to get my tour tickets another guy in the office was asking when they had the day that people went swimming in the Arctic Ocean, in order to join the Polar bear club (that sounds fun!). This guy heard me say that I was from Michigan and proceeded in telling me that he received his bachelors in Electrical Engineering from the University of Michigan- Ann Arbor. Now he was working on his masters at the University of Alaska- Fairbanks (environmental Engineering) and working at a camp (I think it was at Happy Valley, AK) a little south of Deadhorse doing research for his thesis. While I was waiting for the tour bus to the Arctic Ocean a man named John came in after a long day of working in the Oil Field. He was asking me about my camera and told me that he had a \$1500 camera. This man lived in Reno, Nevada and worked on the northern slope of Alaska. People that work in the Oil fields live all over the country, they usually work 12 hours a day for 2 weeks. Then they get 2 weeks off, the companies give them room and board in Prudhoe Bay and also give them a round trip ticket to either Fairbanks or Anchorage every 2 week. I also met a couple that was going on the Arctic tour, these people were from Kentucky and I talked to them about the Dalton Highway. When the tour van arrived at the Arctic Ocean, I had the man from Kentucky take some pictures of me wading in the water. The funny thing about the Arctic Ocean is that I thought it would be all covered with Ice, but it was not (I think we were in a protected Bay). From the tour bus I saw several Caribou and a Loom (duck like bird), we also saw a lot of Oil Rig equipment. I learned some interesting fact on the tour: some of the oil wells are as deep as 10,000 feet, the highest recorded temperature at Prudhoe Bay was 90 Degrees F and the lowest temperature recorded was negative 65 Degrees F (it was about 40 Degrees while I was there). After the Tour, I went to the Inn's restaurant and had an all you can eat dinner for \$20.00, the buffet was for the Oil Field workers and had a lot of good food. After eating I started my ride, it was already 8:45 PM. I ended up sleeping on one of the short pipeline roads (I don't think they like you on those roads). As I was going to sleep, I heard a noise, I opened my eyes and saw an Owl hovering over my head. (Daily bike miles 25.7 miles; Total Miles 25.7)

Day 2, Sunday, June 30, 1996

The sun shines 24 hours a day above the Arctic Circle, so it is easy to wake up early. I left camp at 5:00 AM. It looked like a storm might be headed my way from the Brooks Range, it ended up staying sunny all day. The first 60 miles out of Deadhorse are through flat treeless tundra. That portion of the ride is on a very solid dirt road (almost like pavement). The road then turns to lose gravel (35 miles after the real good part is some of the deepest gravel on the entire highway) and more hills (the ride gets tougher). The treeless tundra is a little boring, but there are some neat flowers and birds along the road. The water that I put in my new water container tasted like rubber (it was the first time the water container was used and it had a rubber lining), so I went down to the river and used my new water purifier to filter micro bacteria out of river water. In order to get to the river, I needed to go under one of the pipeline's road blockades. As I was getting my water purifier out a truck pulled up, it was one of the pipeline security people (there seemed to be a lot of people in red trucks that were either guarding or maintaining the pipeline). She took my name and address (she called it a formality and needed my name and address) and asked what I was doing. I told her I was getting water and she asked how the purifier worked. I explained it to her, then I went back to the stream and got some fresh water. As I cycled down the road people (the people from Kentucky) that I had met the previous day stopped and talked to me for a while. Also, a man from Germany that had asked me if I knew how to get to the Dalton Highway from the store in Prudhoe Bay stopped and talked with me for a while. As I biked past Happy Valley a guy in a van stopped and gave me some candy and a cold Dr. Pepper, he said, "I always try and stop for you guys (meaning bicyclist). There are quite a few trucks driving the Dalton Highway and these guys are very courteous to bicyclist. They slow down a lot so they do not dust you out or shoot rocks at you. I think the truckers must be impressed with people that cycle the Dalton Highway (after all it is a 425-mile dirt road with 11% and 12% grades), one trucker even gave me the thumbs up. As I was riding down the highway, I noticed one of the gates on a service road to the pipeline was opened, so I proceeded to the pipeline and took some automatic pictures of myself with the pipeline in the background. A man in a red dump truck (pipeline maintenance), drove through the gate and dump some dirt. I don't think I was supposed to be there and left. When the man in the dump truck left, I noticed that he locked the gate behind him. I met 2 cyclists that had all their camping gear (like me) on their bikes and were both headed for Deadhorse. These guys were both traveling solo; one man was from Germany and the other man, Jeff Coher ((914) 425-****) I believe was from New York. Jeff told me that he had biked from New York to Ohio, Texas, New Mexico California, Idaho and then to Los Angeles (etc.). It sounded like he may have been headed back to New York and went to a bar in Idaho and after talking to someone decided to go to Alaska. He told me at one point he had to go south to avoid the snow. I guess that meant that he started before winter, it was already July. Then he rode from Los Angeles to

Alaska and was on his way to Deadhorse, AK. He gave me his number and said to call if I wanted to do some bike touring with him. He also asked if I thought there was any way that he could ride his bike to the Arctic Ocean. He told me that he had dipped his bike in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans and that he wanted to dip it into the Arctic Ocean. I gave him the numbers for ARCO and BP security. He asked if I thought he could go around the restricted zone, he was determined to go to the Arctic. I told him that I felt it would be very difficult, because he would need to travel through wet lands for several miles (my guess was at least 30 miles). I was already feeling undernourished and was having difficulty finding water. There were mosquitoes by the thousands, every time I stopped biking the mosquitoes formed little mosquito clouds around my body. That night, I slept right next to the road on a hill that was next to one of the Alyeska pipeline camps. I might have been at a pump station, but did not really look or sound like one. As I was sleeping, I heard a car pull up. I figured they were checking to make sure I was alive. I was sleeping less than a foot from a pull off on the road. The car left after I moved a little. (Daily bike miles 101.9 miles; Total Miles 127.6)

Day 3, Monday, July 1, 1996

It seemed very cold in the morning, I could not figure out why the temperature changed so much. The sun never goes down, but yet it is always colder between midnight and 6:00 AM. It gradually increases in temperature until it reaches the high at around 3:00 PM. I also noticed that there were no mosquitoes in the early morning, but that they would start to wake up as I moved through the Tundra. I stopped at a scenic spot and took a picture of my bike with a lake and the Brooks Range in the background. As I was riding one of the guys in the red trucks stopped (pipeline worker) and he gave me a facemask to protect me from the dust clouds that were created whenever a vehicle passed me. Apparently, this guy was some sort of safety inspector, he also offered to give me some safety glasses. I told him I already had glasses and thanked him for the masks. The safety guy said that the road had lime in it and that it was not healthy to breathe in the dust. For the remainder of the Dalton Highway ride, I would put on the facemask after a vehicle passed. The mask was actually on at all times, but I only covered my mouth and nose after a vehicle passed. I stopped at a stream to get water and one of the road maintenance guys stopped to see how I was doing, he thought that I was Jeff and told me that Jeff had stopped at his camp for water a few days earlier. I rode over Atigun pass and it was not as tough as I had anticipated. Atigun is the highest pass that the pipeline goes over and it is only 4739 feet in elevation. I had been gradually increasing in elevation since the first day and the pass only required a 2-mile steep ride (I would guess about 10-12% grade) to the top. On the other side of the pass, I started getting out of the treeless tundra and found my first tree near mile 235 of the Dalton Highway. A sign near the tree said, "Farthest North Spruce Tree on the Alaska pipeline do not cut". I noticed some bear

poop in the middle of the road near the tree line. I noticed that my tire was out of true and inspected my spokes. A spoke was broken, I must have broken it on the way down from Atigun Pass. I did not have the tools to remove my rear cluster, so I put my rear panniers on the front, so that most of the weight would be on the front. This was to help prevent any more broken spokes. On that day, I went to sleep on the side of the road several times. Some people passed me going north and then about an hour later they were headed south. They stopped to talk, they had a flat tire and decided not to go all the way to Deadhorse. The people were from Livonia, Michigan and it was a father and his son. The father was a striking newspaper worker (he had been on strike for about a year). As I was riding down the road a sea gull started diving at my head and making a bunch of noise, this is something that I find birds often do. I think they do this when you are in their nesting territory. It was getting awfully close so I decided to spray it with pepper spray. I sprayed it in the air against the wind and the spray blew back into my face. Aw! The bird did not get any of the spray and I quickly started biking again. That night, I camped near a very scenic lake with a rock mountain background. It reminded me of the Grand Teton. I think it was near mile 209 of the Dalton Highway. That night was not cold and I found 2 mosquitoes in my tent. (Daily bike miles 83.2 miles; Total Miles 210.8)

Day 4, Tuesday, July 2, 1996

I left camp at about 7:10 AM and realized that I was almost out of food, I only had 3 power bars and 2 bagels left. I still had about 40 miles to Coldfoot, so I decided to ration my food. I would only eat 1/2 of a power bar and 1/4 of a bagel every 7 miles. As I was traveling, I saw some people parked on the side of the road and went over to talk to them. They were very friendly people from Arkansas (these people I also met several days later near Valdez). These people asked me how everything was going and I told them that everything was great except that I was hungry. It is still 30 miles to Coldfoot! The guy gave me a couple of bananas and then filmed me with his camcorder. Just before Coldfoot, I saw a guy riding a bike. I went over to him and he told me that there was no grocery store in Coldfoot. This guy was working at the forest service in Coldfoot and was from California. He seemed to think that it might be difficult getting food from the restaurant. Next, I stopped at the visitor center, in Coldfoot and talked to them and they told me that there was only a restaurant in Coldfoot, but they thought that I could get groceries from the restaurant. At the restaurant I ate 2 lunch specials (Chicken sandwich and Fries), ordered 2 sack lunches (each lunch had 2 sandwiches, chips, coke, fruit, brownies and a candy bar), a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter. It all cost only \$40.75. I thought that was pretty cheap considering the closest real city, Fairbanks was more than 300 miles away and most of the road was a dirt road. I stopped at South Fork Koyukuk River and talked to a man from Alaska. He was camping with a friend and they were panning for Gold. He was in a no camping area, but told me that he had a permit to camp there. I went and

dunked my hair in the river and water washed my armpits (this was my first cleaning of this vacation). Next, I stopped at Graying Lake, this was a very peaceful lake, when the trucks weren't passing. A couple of guys that worked in pump station 5 (there are several pump stations along the pipeline, these are to keep the oil flowing to Valdez) stopped and said they were looking at all the fish jumping in the lake. These guys were drinking Bud light and offered me one. We talked for a while about the pump station and my bike adventure. Then they offered me another beer, which I cheerfully accepted and then they left. It seemed like there was a lot of traffic on that day, there was a continuous dust cloud. Since there was 24 hours of sun, I decided to continue to ride after midnight. (Daily bike miles 70.2 miles; Total Miles 281.0)

Day 5, Wednesday, July 3, 1996

July 3rd was a continuation of July 2nd. Around 12:30 AM some motorist in army green stopped and asked if I had seen any caribou. These guys were going north to hunt for caribou. The road was good most of the way to Coldfoot, then it seemed to be tough due to hills and gravel. That morning, I biked up the longest, steepest hill yet, Gobblers Knob, it even seemed tougher than Atigun Pass. That night was the first night that the sun actually set, it did not get dark and you could see the sun rise on the other horizon at the same time as you could see the sun set. I finally decided to go to sleep (this day was only 2 hours old, 2 AM) and I setup my tent on a gravel pit road near the bottom of the south side of Gobblers Knob, near mile 129 of Dalton Highway. I left camp at 6:30 AM and noticed a lot of mosquitoes around my tent and bike. I also noticed a lot of old bear tracks near my campsite. That night the sun actually set; this was the first time that the sun set. Above the Arctic Circle there is 24 hours of sun light in the summer. I saw a moose on the side of the road. I stopped at the Arctic Circle and asked a man if he could take a picture of me. We talked for a while and he told me that he was a systems engineer in Houston. This guy was very interested in my biking trip and took a picture of me to show a friend of his back home. I guess his friend was a big bike rider. This guy offered to give me food and water, but I refused because I did not feel that I needed any supplies. Like most days I went to sleep several times on the side of the road. I always wondered what people thought, when they drove past me and saw me sleeping next to the road. While sleeping next to the road I was not hiding and anyone could see me. When I arrived at Fish Creek, I rode down to the river and dipped my hair in the frigid water and attempted to clean my hair with biodegradable soap. This is the closest that I had come to bathing in 6 days. There were lots of mosquitoes near the river. As I was cycling a man in a truck with a camper stopped, it was the systems engineer from Houston that I met at the Arctic Circle. He gave me some Tuna Fish, peaches and bottled water. He would not let me say no, I told him that I did not need the supplies. I did end up eating the stuff and was glad to have it. I rode to the top of one of the steepest hills, Beaver Slide and decided to go to sleep, by one of the gates that were

used to maintain the pipeline. As I was sleeping, a tour bus pulled up and the tourist got out looking at the pipeline. I decided to join the group to see what the tour lady was telling the tourist. She dug a hole about 12 inches deep in the tundra and had the tourist feel the permafrost. I felt the permafrost and it felt like a solid block of ice in the ground. As the bus was leaving, some of the tourist took my picture and I took their picture. Also, the tour bus people gave me 2 sodas and some candy bars. Another tour bus came up and offered me a sprite, I told them that I did not need it. If they had offered me a Dr. Pepper, I would have taken it. I stopped at the "Old Man Lodge", it was a trailer next to the pipeline that had a sign out front that said cold pops. This shop was 300 miles from the nearest town of any size and was occupied by a small family; Husband, wife and a daughter. These people were very friendly and seemed to be the real hard core Alaskan type. I bought some pops, cookies and candy bars. I only spent about \$4.00 and would have liked to spend more (help the family), but they just did not seem to have anything that I needed (well maybe I could have used one of the \$5.00 showers). I arrived at Finger Mountain, a place that has a rock that looks like a finger pointing up in the sky. On the hill a tour bus driver offered me a pop and I told him I did not need one, he said he would stop again on his way back if he saw me. I also met a guy from Texas that had been living in Alaska for the past year and was planning on going to the University of New Mexico. I went to sleep a couple more times on the side of the road, but the bugs kept waking me up. Finally, I made it to mile 60 of the Dalton Highway and setup camp at the campground near the artesian well. The well was a place that the people from the "Old Mans Lodge" had recommended. Some people from Minnesota also camped near the well. That day, I could really feel the blisters on the bottom of my feet. I had been traveling over steep rolling hills all day, some of the hills had grades of 11% and 12%. I ended up walking the bike up a lot of these hills. (Daily bike miles 79.9 miles; Total Miles 360.7)

Day 6, Thursday, July 4, 1996

On the 4th of July, I left camp at 8:08 AM and arrived at the Yukon River at 9:30 AM. I stopped at the visitor center and I was telling the people that ran the visitor center how many people gave me food and pops as I was riding down the Dalton Highway. This one guy heard me and offered me pops and peanut butter cookies. I told him I really did not need them, but he pushed them on me. He also, offered me a beer and I cheerfully accepted it. This guy was at the visitor center looking for a phone, so that he could call home and see if his wife had found his dog. I guess his dog got lost while he was on vacation. I thought about taking a tour on the Yukon River, but the next boat did not leave until 6:00 PM. Also, I found out that there was a better boat tour that left Fairbanks, Alaska. I went for a swim in the Yukon River. Then I went to the restaurant at the Yukon River. When I came out of the restaurant, I met a man in a truck that was the support vehicle for a guy that was about a half day behind me, riding the Dalton highway. At the restaurant I ate 2 eggs, hash browns,

toast, 3 pancakes and coffee and bought 3 sandwiches, 6 candy bars, chips and a pop for \$33.00+ some change. I found out that Jeff had bought 75 Sneakers at the restaurant. As I was riding along the Dalton Highway one of my pops fell out of my grocery sack and started leaking, so I ended up drinking it on the spot. There were lots of hills between the Yukon River and mile 0 of the Dalton. All the rivers had brown water. At one point I ended up drinking some of the water. Near mile 4 of the Dalton, I saw a Lynx on the side of the road. Near mile zero, I saw a man in a van that broke down and asked him for some water. He was from Indiana and was waiting for his son to return. His son went to get help. I arrived at mile 0 of the Dalton highway at 10:48 PM and my bike odometer read 423.3 miles. (Daily bike miles 71.1 miles; Total Miles 431.8)

Day 7, Friday, July 5, 1996

July 5th was a continuation of July 4th. Even south of the Arctic Circle you can ride all night, because even though the sun goes down for a few hours it never gets dark. I was very thirsty. I drank all my water and all the rivers had brown water. I even decided to stop motorists in search of water. I stopped one man by holding up my water bottles. He said, "He had no water." After that I kept chickening out on stopping cars and just stayed thirsty. I decided to setup camp and found a nice spot down a dirt road. There were ruins of a very old bridge right near where I camped. Finally, I made it to the paved roads after 463.4 miles of dirt road. I also found a clear water stream and filled my water bottles. I stopped at 11-mile store, which is located at mile 11 of the Elliot Highway (11 miles north of Fairbanks, AK). I talked to the lady that ran the store for a while. She recommended some places for me to check out in Fairbanks; her 1st choice was the museum at the University of Alaska and she also told me about Alaskaland. Of the 2 places, Alaskaland sounded more interesting, because I am more of an outdoor person than a museum person. She also told me about the northern lights and a video on them that she recommended. As I continued, I felt very tired and almost fell asleep at the wheel. I ended up stopping my bike and went to sleep for a while standing in place. I stopped at the first store in Fairbanks and called the local bike shops. After talking to the guys at "All Weather Sports", I decided to go there for my spokes and spoke tool. They sounded more confident than the other bike shop. It was a great bike shop. The guy was very friendly and showed me how to use the spoke tool (a| Put in low gear; b| take off tire; c| put tool on chain ring; d| Put tire back on with tool between bars on rear frame. e| Then back pedal; f| take off tire and chain ring; g| Replace broken spokes// Put chain ring back on a| screw on chain ring; b| put tool on ring; c| Put tire back on with tool under lower frame bar; d| turn tire forward and when it grabs continue to turn for about 2.5 revolutions). The guy at the bike shop also gave me some great information on a February bike ride that rides 150 miles of the Iditarod. After that I rode to the museum at the University of Alaska and it was closed. Then I went to Alaskaland and it was sort of like a Greenfields village, several

historical buildings were relocated in one area for free viewing (gift shops). Most of the buildings were closed. At the avionics museum, the guy was closing the building, he was talking to this Australian guy about planes and then he let us in to see the museum for free (Should cost \$1.00). I talked to the guy that was closing down the museum too and he told me that he lived in Mount Clemens, Michigan for a while. As I was leaving Alaskaland a German guy came over and started telling me bear stories. He told me that one time he was chased by a bear and just barely made it into his bus. I wanted to stay in a motel that night. The motel 6 was full and the next motel that I checked out cost \$138.00 per night. I decided the motels were too expensive and stayed at the Norlite campground for \$8.50 per night. When I arrived at the campground, the camp host was not there and some girls that were doing laundry told me to find a campsite and pay in the morning. They also told me where the showers were located. I really wanted to take a shower I had not had one in over a week. I ended up taking a long shower and it felt good to be clean again (my hair was getting very itchy). After my shower I did my laundry. (Daily bike miles 90.7 miles; Total Miles 522.5)

Day 8, Saturday, July 6, 1996

The previous day I had unpacked all my gear, so I needed to repack in the morning. I had a list of where to put everything and put everything in its correct place. I did not leave camp until 10:30 AM. I guess that people really trust each other in Alaska, because no one came to collect for camping, I could have left without paying. I was camped in a car campsite and the lady was going to charge me for the electric outlet, this made it an \$18.00 campsite. I told her I arrived late and the site was not occupied and that I thought I would only get charged for tent camping. She decided to charge me for a tent only site, \$8.50. I went into downtown Fairbanks to send my postcards. I ate at Kentucky Fried Chicken and left town at about 12:30 PM. I stopped at a mall in North Pole and bought some pepper spray. Then I bought a University of Alaska sweatshirt and some postcards. I talked to the guy from the sweat shirt shop and told him about my bike ride and then he gave me a bumper sticker that said "I drove the Alaskan Highway and survived" for free (\$1.50 value). After that I went to Santa's house and saw the reindeer. There was a miniature train ride near Santa's house and I asked the guy that was operating it what else there was to see in North Pole and said "That I was looking at everything." I told this guy about my bike ride and he told me that he had seen me in Prudhoe Bay the previous Saturday. He was working at the Deadhorse Airport when I was getting ready to depart. I stopped at Salcha Fair and when I was leaving a couple of men on Harley Davison motorcycles started talking to me, one of them looked at my hat (Tahquamenon Falls hat) and asked if Tahquamenon falls was in Michigan or Wisconsin. He told me that he lived in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for a few years. As I was continuing down the Highway, I saw a man on a horse and he told me that he was riding to El Paso and he expected

that it would take him 6 months. He was raising money for missions in the Bahamas. My ride followed the river and I could see the snow-covered Alaska mountain range to the south. I camped at the river near a gravel pit about 30 miles before reaching Delta Junction. (Daily bike miles 76.0 miles; Total Miles 598.5)

Day 9, Sunday, July 7, 1996

First stop of the day was at Shaw creek snack shop. A beautiful blonde lady operated the shop; her husband and child were in the house. The snack shop looked like a storage shed that the lady used as a snake shop for a little extra income. It seems like a lot of people in Alaska make a little shop out of part of their house. She asked me if it was tough riding in all the heat, it was about 85 Degrees Fahrenheit. I told her I was used to it, I lived most of my life in New Mexico. She told me that the news was reporting real hot temperatures in New Mexico, 110 Degrees Fahrenheit. As I was riding down the highway, I could see a real impressive bridge ahead of me. I thought it was either the Highway Bridge or a train bridge, it ended up being the 6-million-dollar pipeline bridge. Next, I stopped at the Rika roadside house, it was a nice free tourist attraction. It looked like the forest service operated it, there were some old cabins, an old log motel, an old outhouse, barn, truck and lots of interesting historical information. A tourist at the Rika house was telling me that a bear in Paxon (This is a place I ended up passing through) attacked a camper. As I continued, I found a neat abandon log cabin that I walked in and went down to the basement. As I was riding down the highway, I noticed some cars on the side of the road and people were taking pictures. They were taking pictures of a moose and I started talking to one of the guys, he was from Minnesota. He told me he drove from Dawson City on the "Top of the World Highway" and asked me about the Dalton Highway. I told him it was a tough road and as he was leaving, he gave me some lemon drops. About 6 miles before arriving in Delta Junction a couple of people (Tim and Mary) invited me over for coffee. I went to their house it was a very small house and next to the house was a small trailer where another lady lived. Tim told me that he stole Mary's car and now she wanted to marry him. It seemed like Tim did a lot of cussing directed to the 2 females. The lady from the trailer asked Tim why he had a patch on his arm. Tim said it was his morphine patch. I guess he was on drugs! After about a half-hour and a couple of glasses of Kool-Aid I decide to start riding again. Tim invited me to stay for dinner, but I told him I was on a tight schedule and needed to continue. It seems like people are very friendly, I probably could have stayed at Tim's house with the 2 ladies for a couple of days. In Delta Junction, I stopped at the visitor center at the end of the Alaska Highway. Then I followed the Richardson Highway south and saw 3 little birds following a mother bird crossing the road. I took some pictures of the big bird, it was making a lot of noise trying to protect its young, so I ended up leaving. Next, I came across a moose on the side of the road. I tried to get a little closer for a good picture, but then a car came around the corner and the moose darted into the woods. I

started looking for a camp spot, I found a good road and went about 50 feet and saw a sign that said "Black Bear Bait Station", I decided that it might not be a good place to camp. Continuing, I saw a dead moose on the side of the road, as I was looking at it a live moose came out of the woods down the road about 100 feet away. It looked at me and I took a couple of pictures and then it started coming in my direction. Finally, the moose decided to go back in the woods. I understand that sometimes moose will charge people. I came to a national forest campground, Donnelly Creek campground. I did not see anything that made me want to pay the \$8.00 to stay there, no showers and no place to put my food to keep it from the bears. Since it is really easy to find free camping in Alaska, I cycled down a dirt road that ran parallel to the highway and found a nice spot to setup my tent in the woods. (Daily bike miles 60.9 miles; Total Miles 659.4)

Day 10, Monday, July 8, 1996

I left camp at 6:50 AM and the ride was a gradual uphill until 6 miles from Paxon. I saw a red and white animal that stood about 3' on its hind leg, but I could not tell what kind of animal it was. I also saw a large bird. I believe it was an owl. At Summit Lake, I stopped and talked to some people in an RV with Michigan license plates. I told them that I was from Detroit. They said that they drove up from Ann Arbor. At Summit Lake, I stopped at a lodge that had a sign that advertised cold pops, when I asked the guy for a pop, he said that he did not think he had any left. He told me that I could see Salmon spanning down the river about a mile. I stopped at the river and saw a lot of red salmon spanning and could also see a lot of dead fish on the rocks. I guess they just jumped out of the water and died. It rained pretty hard for a while. Overall, I had great weather it had only rained 2 time so far. I ate at the restaurant in Paxon; a cup of soup for \$2.50 and French dip for \$7.50. Outside the restaurant I talked to a teacher from Anchorage about mountain bike riding. As I was riding, I saw 2 people riding incumbent bicycles loaded with camping gear going in the opposite direction. Standard procedures are to always talk to other people that are riding bikes loaded with camping gear, so I stopped and talked with them. It was a man and his son. They were on their 3rd Alaskan bike tour and they lived in Hawaii. These guys had really nice incumbent bikes equipped with XTR components. I stopped at a bar for a pop and met a lady that was from Gladstone Michigan (a town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan near Escanaba). I continued and stopped at a store 17 miles north of Gulkana (Tok Cut Off highway). At the store I met some motorcyclist that were headed north (I was going south), they told me that they saw a group of cyclists going south, they were staying at a motel in copper center. I think the bikers they were talking about were part of the Bicycle Alaska tour. This group will carry your camping gear, provide support, lodging and meals for \$2195.00 (they ride 62 miles that I did not ride and I rode 530 miles that they did not ride). And we both rode from Fairbanks to Valdez, about 360 miles. I decided that I wanted to try and catch up to

these riders. I rode really hard until I came to Gulkana, then I continued until I came to the Gakona River. At the river you could see several fishermen, lots of RVs camped and when you looked in the river from the highway bridge you could see hundreds of large red and king salmon. It was getting late and it looked like a good place to camp. I asked a man if there were bears and he laughed at me and told me yeah, but it should be safe with all the other campers, so I set up camp. (Daily bike miles 109.6 miles; Total Miles 769.0)

Day 11, Tuesday, July 9, 1996

I left camp at 7:40 AM and went to Glenallen for breakfast. I ate Rain Deer Sausage, eggs and hash browns for \$6.25. I met a man from Washington State and he said that he once lived in Ironwood, Michigan. He said, "That he was a biker and that he was old, 70, to go touring and I told him he could still do it. I told him about a group of men that I had heard about that rode cross-country and the youngest man in that group was in his Seventies. Then I stopped at a store that was on top of a hill. The man had a great view of the valley and I noticed that he even had a telescope set up. He was a very friendly man and gave me some information on Valdez. In Copper Center, I stopped at the forest service visitor center. The ranger told me about the -72 Degrees Fahrenheit winter temperatures, how expensive electricity was and how tough it was to keep your car operating in the winter. Then I stopped in town and ate lunch at the outdoor restaurant. This restaurant was a converted school bus and I ate a French dip sandwich. I stopped at the lodge where the Alaskan bikers were staying and found out that they were going all the way to Valdez on that day. I figured I could not make it on that day. On the way, out of town I noticed that I had a broken spoke. I went to fix it and I found out that I had the wrong sized spokes. I let the air out of my tires in order to try and fix the broken spoke. When I went to put air back in my tire, I broke my pump. Luckily, I had an extra pump and was able to fill my tire with it. I rode to the next place where I thought there was a restaurant and it turned out to be closed. I was still 60 miles from Valdez and it was starting to get late, so I decided to start looking for a place to camp. I would have continued, but I did not think I would make it to Valdez and it was looking stormy ahead. I rode down a dirt road and it turned into the old Richardson Highway. It was a nice paved road without any cars. I found a dirt road off the old Richardson Highway and went a little way down the road and setup camp. (Daily bike miles 76.3 miles; Total Miles 845.3)

Day 12, Wednesday, July 10, 1996

I left camp at 7:00 AM, my ride started with a slight downhill and then I started the gradual incline to Thompson Pass. I stopped near one of the glaciers and asked some people to take my picture. I told the man that I had biked from Deadhorse and he said, "I thought you looked familiar" and then he told me that he was a man that gave me 2 bananas near Coldfoot. We exchanged address (Rick (and his wife) Weidner; 19216

Eagle Pt.; Garfield, Arkansas 72732) and took pictures of each other. Then as he was leaving, he gave me some nuts and raisins. The ride up to Thompson pass was gradual. I stopped at a lodge and bought a couple of pops. I asked the lady that ran the shop if she stayed up there all winter. She replied, "of course the winter is my favorite time." Then she said, "That was when the skiing was the best." In the winter, people drive their cars up Thompson Pass and ski down (no chair lifts). The ride down Thompson Pass was a nice downhill incline for about 30 miles. It was probably the most scenic ride of my trip. There were a lot of very tall waterfalls and glaciers all along the highway. I stopped at the forest service information center outside Valdez. I found out that the next ferry out of Valdez did not leave until Friday (it was Wednesday). I also found out that I could get a shower at the Harbormasters for \$3.00. At the Harbormaster, I asked the guy for soap and he said that there was some in the Ladies restroom and went and got it for me. I went to the museum and I was talking to the lady in the gift shop and she told me that if I was planning on taking the ferry that a glacier boat cruise might be a waste of time. I went to the ferry terminal to see if I could find someone to tell me how they felt the ferry ride compare to a boat cruise. No one was there, I ended up talking to a girl that was from Washington State and came to Valdez with 6 friends to work in canneries. She told me that she just quit the cannery job and that I could probably get a job if I wanted one. She also told me that a good place to camp would be at Mineral Creek Road. I went into town and ate dinner at Mike's restaurant. Then I found Charlie, a friend of Gene Peter's from Royal Oak, Michigan. He seemed really busy and told me a few things that I could do in Valdez (hike to end of Mineral Creek Road and take an oil field tour). I went looking for Mineral Creek Road. I took a wrong turn and ended up working my way up the streambed. I finally, found the road and noticed that a lot of people were camping by the first bridge. This was probably only about 1/4 miles from one of Valdez's neighborhoods. I went a little further up the canyon and setup camp on a hill. (Daily bike miles 71.2 miles; Total Miles 916.5)

Day 13, Thursday, July 11, 1996

It was raining all morning, I wanted to wait until it stopped before getting out of my tent. It just continued to rain, so I woke up and packed my camping gear in the rain. I left camp at 8:40 AM and started riding up Mineral Creek Road. The ride followed a canyon that had step walls with several waterfalls flowing down the canyon walls, it was a spectacular ride (a little tough though). I did not plan on going very far, if I would have known I was going to ride 7 miles (each way) I would have left my camp setup, so that I would not need to carry all the excess gear. After about 6 miles the road was blockaded and I decided to unload my gear a little way past the blockade. I continued riding for about a mile and then the road went through a river. I decided that was far enough and explored a side road near the river. There I found some sort of old mining ruins. I had no idea it was up there and it was probably about 2 stories high

with well-preserved machinery inside (some pulleys and a stamping machine). When I rode back to Valdez, I asked the girl at the visitor center about the mine ruins. She told me that it was a stamping mill. It was used to crush rocks, so that the miners could get the gold out of the rock. Then I rode back to town and took the boring pipeline tour, I actually fell asleep during the movie. It seemed like there was some neat stuff at the airport, so after the tour I rode my bike back to the airport. I started talking to a man at the airport, I asked him if he knew how old the stamp mill was (I forgot to ask the girl at the visitor center how old the mine was) and he told me he thought that it was from 1908. At the airport, I asked the Avis rental car lady if I could reserve a car in Anchorage for Friday through Saturday. She said, "That the cars have all been rented out well in advance." I calling Payless rental (they rented me a car on my first day in Alaska) and they had a car that I reserved. On the way back from the airport it was raining very hard, I noticed that not many people were out in the rain. I asked the man at the campground how much it was for camping and he told me \$10.00 or I could dig holes to pay for camping. It seemed like there were a lot of jobs, 2 times I was told that I could get a job at a cannery. I ended up paying the \$10.00 for camping at Bear Paw campground. When I went to the campground a lady commented on how wet I was, I said it does not bother me I have gortex. (Daily bike miles 29.4 miles; Total Miles 945.9)

Day 14, Friday, July 12, 1996

I woke up at 5:00 AM and it was only drizzling, that's good weather for Valdez. It was very cloudy with lots of low fog. While waiting for the ferry, I started talking to this kid that was a medical student in Maryland. He came to Alaska to work in the cannery for the summer. He said, "That he just quit his job and was planning on touring around Alaska for 3 weeks before returning to Maryland." He also told me that he saw sea lions at the dock by the ferry. I went to look for sea lions and they were gone. While I was waiting for the boat, I decided to take one last ride into town. When I returned to the boat, the medical student told me that the sea lions came back. We went over to the dock and he saw another one, it was a long way off and I needed to use his Binoculars to see it. The ferry went by Columbia glacier you could not see it, because it was very cloudy and rainy. The forest service guide said that the glacier was up to 3000' deep and covered an area the size of Rhode Island. The boat ride ended at Wittier and I went for a ride in the pouring rain. Then I called Payless car rental to change my car rental reservation time. Next, I boarded a train for Portage. The previous night, I had reserved a spot on the shuttle to Anchorage from Portage. Good thing I reserved a spot, the lady brought a trailer specifically for my bike. It seemed like a good deal, I only needed to pay an extra \$5.00 for the bike. On the shuttle to Anchorage, I told one of the guys about my ride and he seemed very amused. This man was a gill net fisherman from Valdez. After I picked up my car at the airport I went to downtown Anchorage and walked around for a while. Then I

drove to Denali. On the way to Denali, I stopped the car at several rest areas and took naps. (Daily bike miles 7.4 miles; Total Miles 953.3)

Day 15, Saturday, July 13, 1996

I arrived at Denali around 9:00 AM and went to the visitor center. I found out that all the campgrounds were full and that several of the buses were sold out. It seemed like the park had changed for the worst, when I went to the park in 1981 it was easy to find camping and the buses were free and plentiful. Another change that I found was the buses only stopped at designated stops and in 1981 they would stop the bus anywhere to let you out or pick you up. I ended up taking the camper bus with my bike, it was cheaper than the regular tourist bus (camper bus \$15.00 and tourist bus \$26.00). The guy that was driving the bus was named Dick and he was very friendly. He had a good sense of humor. It was funny he kept putting down the people in the tourist buses and kept saying the campers were the best people. I was planning on going to Wonder Lake and riding back, but the bus ride was a lot slower than I anticipated. On the bus ride, I saw several Grizzly bears, some Dall sheep, a couple Caribou and a Golden Eagle. I decided to get off at Eielson Visitor center. I ended up leaving Eielson at 3:00 PM and started the 65-mile ride back to my car. The first 50 miles was a very hilly dirt road. Then the last 15 miles were an easy steep paved downhill. On the 65-mile ride, I saw 9 grizzlies (3 mother bear each with 2 cubs), I hiked up to a Caribou and saw a Golden Eagle soaring overhead at Polychrome Rest Area. When I was looking at one of the grizzlies near 2 buses, a kid in one of the busses said, "hey biker dud turn around." I turned around and saw a fox walking about 5 feet behind me with a dead animal in his mouth. As I continued it was getting late and there were no more tour buses passing me on the road. That was good, because one of the biking rules was that you had to pull over and wait for the buses and there were a lot of buses, so the ride was taking a long time. I saw a fox on the side of the road and took a picture. It looked at me and I tried getting closer and then it started walking towards me. I stopped and it walked right by me, I ended up getting some great pictures. It even took a dump for me. It started getting cold, it was about 11:30 PM and a motorist stopped to tell me that several people had seen bear along the road and that I should be careful. I continued and did not see any more wildlife. I arrived at Riley Creek campground a little after midnight and went to my rental car. It does not get dark in the summer at Denali Park, it just turns to dusk for a couple of hours. I started packing up my bike and noticed some people in the car next to my rental car sleeping in their car. (Daily bike miles 67.2 miles; Total Miles 1020.5)

Day 16, Sunday, July 14, 1996

As I was driving on the Parks highway on my way back to Anchorage, I saw a black bear on the side of the road. I stopped about 30 feet in front of it and could not find my camera. I could have gotten some great pictures. It turned around and got on its

hind legs and lifted a paw at me. Then I guess that it noticed how big the car was and got down on all four and ran across the highway. There were 2 cubs following it. The previous Friday, I had found a bicycle box (it cost \$5.00 at a bike shop), but no box for the rest of my gear. Therefore, when I arrived in Anchorage, I started looking for a box (this should have been the easy box) I went to 2 grocery stores and a liquor store. I finally, found a wet box in a dumpster. Then I found 2 more boxes at Wall-Mart. After finding the boxes (I still did not pack yet) I drove to Portage Glacier. The weather was great (unlike the first time I went, 2 weeks earlier) and I was able to get some great Glacier pictures. On the way back to Anchorage, I stopped and went hiking up one of the hills looking for Dall sheep, no luck (I was wishing that I had more time). When I made it back to Anchorage, I called to see if my flight was on time, I found out that it actually left earlier than I thought (I miss read my ticket). I wanted to go to the museum, but did not have time. On the way to the airport, I found a post office to mail my postcards. Next, I went to the airport parking lot and packed my gear. It was tough figuring out which box to use. I returned the car and checked in my language. By that time, I only had 50 minutes until my flight left. I felt bad, because I had not had a shower for 3 days and did not like getting on an airplane like that. Oh well, it was too late. I did however find time to comb my hair (get the bugs out), put on clean clothes and some deodorant. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total Miles 1020.5)

Day 17, Monday, July 15, 1996

I arrived back in Detroit at 5:30 AM, picked up my language and went to my car. I loaded my car and left the airport parking lot by about 6:30 AM. I then drove home took a shower, unloaded my car and drove to work. I started work at about 8:30 AM. Due to the lack of sleep I thought it would be a tough day of work, but it turned out OK.