

Couple on a Harley take anything but an easy ride

By DOUG JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

This July, Jeff and Kim Dold of Garden City rode their 1999 Harley-Davidson Electroglide Classic on a little cross-country jaunt that was a classic in its own right.

Eighteen states. Eighteen days. More than 7,200 miles. Four-hour summer downpours in Chicago's Death Valley at the height of the afternoon heat.

You need a lot of sunscreen when the temperature is 126°.

It was all part of their summer vacation and a longtime dream to go cross country on Jeff's Harley.

They started in Michigan, went down to Interstate 80 and across Indiana and Illinois into the Chicago area in search of the legendary Route 66.

The route that John Steinbeck called "The Mother Road" starts outside of Chicago. In many places, it is no longer there, it's simply covered by freeways. In other places, it can be driven on.

The duo went down to St. Louis, across Missouri and Oklahoma.

They stopped at "Cadillac Ranch" in the Texas panhandle.

There really are nearly a dozen Cadillacs upended in the Texas plain west of Amarillo, roughly midway between Chicago and L.A. Two hundred yards south of I-40 six miles west of Amarillo, where old US-66 rejoins the interstate, the rusty hulks of 10 classic Cuddies are front end-down in the dirt.

In August 1997 the Cadillac got another 15 minutes of fame when the artist decided to dig them up and move them a mile west from where they'd been — to escape Amarillo sprawl.

On to New Mexico, where they stayed in Albuquerque, saw the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona and took a side trip north up to Four Corners — where the corners of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado meet. A small monument marks the spot.

Supposedly, if you are limber enough, you can use two feet and



Falling Water: Kim Dold's picture of Shoshone Falls in Idaho reveals one of many spectacular sights the couple saw on their trip west.



Travelers: Kim and Jeff Dold during their cross-country trip stopped at the Grand Canyon.

two hands and have part of yourself in four states.

"We stayed on an Indian reservation that night," Jeff said. That was after a visit to Monument Valley. Then they went into Grand Canyon National Park, stayed in the park at a

lodge and got fogged in.

The next day brought the Arizona weather known as monsoon, a short season of powerful rain and thunderstorms that arrives every summer. "The temperature was about 100," Kim said. Near Seligman, Ariz., they got back on



Electroglide: Jeff Dold and his wife rode to California and back on this Harley.

a part of old Route 66.

From Kingman, on the western edge of Arizona, into Las Vegas is one of the more desolate drives in America.

"That's where we ran out of gas," Jeff Dold said. No one stopped to help, and they sat for several hours, Kim said. Eventually it was the cops at Hoover Dam who came out and rescued them.

It was in Vegas they relied on their only real advanced reservation, for the Mirage. They came in at 11 p.m. and were lucky enough to be upgraded to a penthouse suite for \$76.

On into California they rode, where they visited San Francisco, Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown, and then closed the day at a blues bar.

Turning eastward, they went to Yosemite ("our favorite spot" says Jeff) and then zipped to Mono Lake (directly east of the park) and saw the calcium formations, then drove to Lake Tahoe.

The next day they were off to Idaho to see the spectacular Shoshone Falls at the city of Twin Falls.

"Yellowstone was a quick drive through. We saw snow at the higher elevations, and we went through some of it at night," Jeff said.

They stayed in Cody outside the eastern edge of Yellowstone Park then drove to Gillette and on up to Deadwood, S.D., then made a nostalgic stop at Sturgis, S.D., where bikers meet for a Bikers' Bash every summer.

From there they traveled to Mount Rushmore National Memorial, the Badlands National Park, and famous Wall Drugs whose ubiquitous highway signs advertising the store's many supposed charms make it difficult not to get curious enough to stop. At this point Kim had to fly home to return to work.

Then, it was a dash across southern Minnesota, and summer rainstorm ordeal in Chicago, then back home to Michigan.

Family was not forgotten. They took a paper and a cellular telephone in case Kim's son wanted to call.

The couple have been in 26 states in their travels and hope to see 10 new ones on the next

big ride, this time out East.

Some things are definitely different traveling on a bike. Kim explains:

"You can't pack a lot. You have to do laundry often. You need plenty of sunscreen. There are a lot of stops. The bike gets good mileage, but it has a five-gallon tank. After 120 miles you need gas."

Kim works for McKesson, a pharmaceutical computer systems company; Jeff is a production worker at General Motors' power train plant in Ypsilanti.

Ride-along buddies were another couple on another Harley, Tony and Debbie Knierim of Newport, Mich.

Jeff did all the driving for the Dolds, while Kim concentrated on photography, including pictures of everyone holding up the Garden City Observer.



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