



DAILY DIARY FROM RIDE DIRECTOR GEOFF KENNEDY

Stage 7

August 14 - Day 147 Perth

A rest day with breakfast with Swan Districts Rotary and it is pouring.

End of Stage 7

August 13 - Day 146 Northam to Perth 95 km

Some hills. Some rain. And a huge down hill on Green Mount but we arrive into Perth safely.

August 12 - Day 145 Wongan Hills to Northam 95 km

Still in the wheat belt and there is a special sprint finish at Commongorring with the winner being Tony Caruana. His collection of \$150.00 to go towards ARH donated by Bill Bynon. Tony was assisted by a generous handicapper. In Northam we spend a restful afternoon with the students of a residential college for dinner and after we are onward to home hosts.

August 11 - Day 144 Moora to Wongan Hills 129 kms

Nothing to report on the Pajama Party - they all went to bed. But the shire of Moora and their be active co-ordinator arranged the meal and was cooked by Rotary. We are transported 30 kms past Walbing for the ride to morning tea at Yerecoin Primary School. Then 20 kms to Calingiri Primary School for a hamburger lunch and another magic reception by the school kids. We then travel 40kms into Wongan Hills. The ride total for today is 91 km.

August 10 - Day 143 Carnamah to Moora 118kms

Patchy rain and strong winds today with more lush cropping country - the best in Australia I'm told. It's Monday and the phone is running hot, tonight we are visiting the Shire Sports Centre for a pajama party.

August 9 - Day 142 Dongara to Carnamah 131kms

Everything is damp this morning, a late start as the support crew has to dry out the tents. Serious riding today - many hills through fertile sheep and cropping country. Brilliant green of wheat and blazing yellow of canola, carpets of wild flowers in abundance - teaming with bird life at the Yarra Yarra Lakes and continued into the quiet town of Carnamah with everything closed for Sunday (even the pub).

August 8 - Day 141 Geraldton to Port Denison 70kms

Flat, sand dunes to the right, foot hills to the left and fertile cropping land between. Luckily there was no wind, as some trees are parallel to the ground.

August 7 - Day 140 Rest Day Geraldton

Great hospitality by Geraldton Rotary members and the community. The highlight was the HMAS Sydney memorial - outstanding project of Geraldton Rotary.

August 6 - Day 139 Galena Bridge to Geraldton 118km

Our New Years Day. The honours list include: Chippy (now known as Sir Robert the Quick) with ceremonial lance presented, an order of Australia to Tony Caruana for services in catering. Tammy; bogg? Great riding mini hills, magnificent farming country and brilliant green wheat fields.

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August 5 - Day 138 Billabong Road House to Galena Bridge 115 km

On the Murchison River there is excellent camping. A huge campfire is built and it's New Years Eve. 8pm is declared as midnight, special awards presented to all and the New Years honours list is keenly awaited.

August 4 - Day 137 Wooramel Road House to Billabong Road House 123 km

Magnificent wild flowers and we are starting to see some more hills. There are favourable winds for the riders.

August 3 - Day 136 Carnarvon to Wooramel Road House 124 km

The support crew is out early picking sweet corn, mandarin, grapefruit and the snapper for dinner. We received banana leaves, basil and lemongrass all from generous Rotarians; dinner of course is magnificent.

August 2 - Day 135 Minylua to Carnarvon 146 km

A one hour drive out of Coral Bay into a blazing morning. Sun, cattle, goats and sheep - all wandering and taking their chances on the road. Rich, red, sandy soil and sparse vegetation. It's Sunday and the message for today is rubbish. The amount along the road is disgraceful - cans, bottles, plastic containers and scrap metal. No matter how remote I doubt that there is any location where you can stand and not see litter. Communities such as Port Hedland have a cash for trash and deposit legislation on bottles and cans which should be considered here. Excellent fruit and vegies grown in Carnarvon and a fishing fleet as well. Again we had great Rotary hosts.

August 1 - Day 134 Rest Day in Coral Bay

A beautiful location; swimming, diving, snorkelling, sailing or just resting

July 31 - Day 133 Minilya Bridge to Coral Bay 100 km

Only the hardy ride today into a strong headwind. Tom, Roberta and Michael do some driving duties, cross the Tropic of Capricorn again and into a busy caravan park at Coral Bay. Tomorrow is a rest day.

July 30 – Day 132 Burkitt Road Minilya Bridge Road House 140 km

It's cold - the wind has dropped. Stoking of the camp fire and sleeping before the 35 km drive to the start. The tail wind has returned as we cross a series of ancient sand dunes with brilliant red sandy soil soon flattening into poor scrub country. Good for kangaroos with road kill taking a heavy toll. Across the Tropic of Capricorn - our last cross – 77 days ago at Rockhampton.

July 29 – Day 131 Nanutarra Road House to Burkitt Road Rest 115 km

Back to some scenic hills – soft colours in the morning sunlight with Mt Alexander at 410 metres. Many riders in fancy dress today, even a Ronald McDonald. Smooth round hills, flat topped hills, escarpments with roads slipping through the gaps and round, rocky outcrops. We had an afternoon tea celebration for Josephine Johanson – 70th Birthday. Camp set up at Bendaburra Rest Area at the 80 km point and riders transported back. Much action in camp as tonight is Christmas in July. The tree found on the side of the ride is up and decorated. Turkey and ham on the campfire, vegetables roasting, damper cooking, Rotary plum pudding is heating and the presents are wrapped ready for Santa.

July 28 – Day 130 Fortescue Road House to Nanutarra Road House 159 km

An early start, snack stops at 30 to 32 km intervals. A small lunch at 100 kms. Camp workers are up early; but there was a serious side to these reports. The radio reports of meetings in the Pilbara on the high numbers of Aboriginal suicides, and what are

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the mental health issues for workers on fly in fly out contracts? The family dislocation must be huge, a problem of many. ARH take note. Very strong winds this morning - lots of broken tent poles. But favourable for riding, easing as the morning progresses and the road is mostly flat. Rotarians everywhere here; Terry and Sue Metcalf from Griffith Avanti Rotary Club riding Australia for Polio Plus awareness; Peter and Anne-Marie Landers from Wandin Rotary and a couple from Pittwater Rotary.

July 27 - Day 129 Karratha to Fortescue Road House 111kms

The day starts with an ABC Karratha radio interview. A strong easterly pushes through Fortescue. Amazing work is happening throughout the town gas plants; pipelines and heavy equipment are constantly working.

July 26 - Day 128 Karratha - Rest Day

Visits to rock art sights, Millstream National Park and to the historic town of Cossack were all wonderful, and then to finish of the day we enjoyed a BBQ with the Rotary Club of Karratha.

July 25 - Day 127 Peawah to Karratha 141kms

An early start as the sun peeks above the hills. Saturday - no phone service so it's the first chance to ride in 9 days; but I only lasted 40km. Amazing wild flowers - some pink and yellow wattles everywhere. Even some desert peas. Hills surrounding flat grazing land, masses of brown rocks tumble down like chocolate icing on a cake. The grass is nice and green. A lone bull stands defiant at the fence as the riders pass by or perhaps gazing wistfully at the heifers on the other side of the road! A farmer with his 4-wheel drive ute stands at his fence and scratches his head. He must have been wondering what these mad men were doing! There has been heavy traffic all day heading towards Roebourne Races.

July 24 - Day 126

Day Missing

July 23 - Day 125 Pardoo Roadhouse Port Hedland 151km

Smoke from roadside fires show the westerly wind blowing the riders across the road rather than along it. Red soil, brilliant white gums and water here in Begrey River and Shelly River. Then back to the rocky escarpments, power lines and rail lines. Into Port Hedland and an industrial landscape; BHP Billiton, iron ore trains, road trains, salt works, export, gas facilities and photos with Toyota vehicles at the local dealer Tilbura Motor Group. An amazing town with wonderful hosts from Rotary and the support of Stan Martin. A call from Main Roads Western Australia reporting an extreme wide load and road works at Port Hedland was greatly appreciated.

July 22 - Day 124 Sandfire Road house to Pardoo Roadhouse 138km

A flat treeless landscape of small scrub and spinifex. Strong but mostly favourable winds, salt pans and sand dunes with the Indian Ocean in the distance. This ride is like the human body. If you stand and look down at your toes (which Tony Caruana can now do) you will see that we started on March 21 at about your left big toe. We have ridden all the way up the left side of the body over the head and now we are sitting on the right hand shoulder. ...well you have to think about something when chugging along in the rear. Met some interesting people; a mountain bike rider riding from Cape York all the way to Perth mostly on dirt, often without food or water. Since Hall's Creek we have regularly met a couple from Perth. He has been riding since September all the way around on a Mountain Bike and has ridden 15000 km's including 300 km in 24 hours just yesterday. His wife is in the car and caravan as support.

July 21 - Day 123

Day missing

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July 20 – Day 122 Rest day at 80 Mile Beach Caravan Park.

A restful spot on the beach. Car washing (must keep the sponsors vehicles looking good), cleaning, repairs and refills of water containers.

July 19 – Day 121 150km to Sand Fire Roadhouse

Back out on the dusty corrugated road. Storm clouds on the horizon and more flat scrub country. It's 10.30 and it's raining, but it's soon gone. Our first rain since Townsville on 25th May - almost 2 months. After 130km we emerge on to the flat treeless plain with rain showers in the distance. The last group was very slow due to the rough finish on the road and head winds. Then we drive 45km's and 10 km's further on dirt for an extra rest day at 80 Mile Beach.

July 18 – Day 120 Robuck Road house to 30km passed Port Smith

Flat country. Allen & Pauline Wiltshire from Montrose and District Rotary ride out with us. Grass land as far as you can see, mobs of cattle, mini stampedes as we pass by and great clouds of dust. There must be thousands of cattle around us. We then enter into flat scrub country. 23km of road into Port Smith with a scenic lagoon popular for fishing.

July 17 – Day 119 60 km past Willare Bridge to Broome 110km

A harder days riding with lots of undulations always up hill, even though we finish at sea level in Broome. Wonderful hosts in Broome with membership swollen by southern visitors. Parties on the beach at sunset and an evening with Rotary at the Hovercraft Base.

July 16 – Day 118 Derby to 60 km past Willare Brdige 110km

South through 10km of road works, scrub, open grassland and wandering stock. We had very generous hosts at Willare Bridge Road house.

July 15 – Day 117 Rest Day in Derby

Much resting after a big day. Visits to the wharf which has piled up to 11 metres and to the Boab prison tree; A1500 year old tree that has had many uses. We had barbecued barramundi for dinner.

July 14 – Day 116 Fitzroy Crossing towards Derby 146km

We drive out 70km to ride the 146 km to the T intersection. Then we drive 42km into Derby for another rest day created by the extra day riding. Before and after Fitzroy Crossing there are flat grassland, strong tailwinds in a mostly featureless landscape. Huge Boabs break the monotony. Passed the RAAF base in Curtin. Some riders seeking personal bests for extra distances today; Tony Caruana – 151km, Gonny Rundell – 193km, Malcolm Nicholson – 205km. This is now the inaugural entry in the Nicholson book of records.

July 13 – Day 115 Rest Day in Fitzroy Crossing

July 12 - Day 114 Somewhere to Somewhere 120km

We drive back the 50 km and ride into Fitzroy Crossing. Morning tea is pikelets and fruit. We then ride 70km beyond. Back to Fitzroy Crossing for toasted sandwiches and a restful afternoon. 32 Degrees but the open fireplace is alight for constant refills of tea and coffee. The tour of Fitzroy Crossing highlights are the burnt out supermarket; but there is a modern school and hospital. The Shell and BP service stations are now stocked as general stores with ice creams. We had pie, fishcakes and baked slice for dinner.

July 11 - Day 113 Mary Poole to Somewhere 130 km

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Change of plan aiming to reach Fitzroy Crossing a day early. Flat plateau country until we reach Ngumpun Bliss Lookout. Meant to stay here, but bare, exposed and no facilities. At this point we come off the plateau. Down between towering escarpments. Rich etched rock to the left. Coarse grey boulders to the right. Back to the flat land with distant, flat, soft hills. Finish riding 50km out of Fitzroy Crossing and into a great caravan park - Fitzroy River Lodge.

July 10 - Day 112 Halls Creek to Mary Pool 108 km

Flatter country the surrounding hills have become open grassland of Spinifex and prickly grasses. The halfway point is a rock strewn mass, some suggest a giant stock pile or rubble from medieval castle. Quite amazing shapes. The ant hills have changed again to huge hulking masses of imaginary shapes of elephant, rhinoceros, bison, ant eaters - great pendulous lumps. The CD is cranked up. Barely a feature is evident on the distant horizon. Cattle are being mustered into yards. It's so quiet on the road you wave to the grey nomads from the rear vehicle position. I have radioed through one truck to David Brown, up with the lead group. Later we scrounged some firewood; the chicken curry will hot tonight in more ways than one. Surprising what you can scavenge on the road. Steel posts, a bit of pipe, some reinforcing mesh - they'll come in handy somewhere.

July 9 - Day 111 Turkey Creek to Somewhere ???km

The plan was to ride 117km to Little Panton River Rest Area. Quite hilly, even one hill 5km long. On arrival there is no suitable place to stop so the forward crew is at Hall's Creek and the riders are now riding an extra 50 km's. So tomorrow was meant to be 151 km, but will now be much shorter. And Tammy, he backed in to a post...

July 8 – Day 110 Doon Doon road House to Turkey Creek 95km

Hot, hard and hilly. Coming south from Kununurra is a hot head wind. The scenery today is fantastic the hills are now crowding in on us. Hills of every shape and size, rounded steep, rocky pyramid like, rolling flat tops. Steep sided, huge rock buttresses. Even hills that resemble a mass of bubbles. The colours vary even to deep purple. Rocks of every shape and size some standing sentinel. Rows of Boab trees, we slip quietly past the Argyle diamond mine without the ladies even noticing. Into Turkey Creek, a little crowded green oasis that has to wait for a fuel delivery before topping up. The drama for today is the news that the store at Fitzroy crossing has burnt down. We have to re-appraise our food stocks.

July 7 – Day 109 Kununurra to Doon Doon Road House 105km

Crossed the diversion van, water everywhere. Some hills to climb, the Garmin GPS cyclo computers tell us we have climbed almost 400 metres in the day before some imperceptible down hills to Doon Doon. Vast open valleys surrounded by steep rocky hills. We seem to ride up to these high powering escarpments then slip through a gap into another open valley with surrounding hills. A hot hard day, for me anyway. Camping at a little green oasis with excellent facilities. A special beef and corned beef curry courtesy of our celebrity chef John Farrugia. Chippy got lost, finished up in Wyndham, take note Tammy.

July 6 - Day 108 Rest in Kununurra

Some great places to visit in this vast irrigation area. The hot topic is sandalwood plantations replacing traditional fruit crops. Some incidents that can be reported; David and Karen Brown falling out of bed, chippy running out of petrol. Tammy can I send him home? Chippy vanished to the tip as punishment. Looking for something we need. A visit to Kimberley Diamonds, top priced pink diamonds sell for \$611,000.00. A pleasant dinner with the members of Kununurra Rotary and a wonderful donation. Kununurra membership increase – 15 to 45 in three months.

July 5 - Day 107 Saddle Creek to Kununurra 118km

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A cooler morning but a beautiful day. We move from the weather stained rock escarpment through to flat grasslands, then rolling hills and gorges and finally into Kununurra with its rocky outcrops and sheer rock faces. It is lush and greener due to the Ord River and we finish at White Gum Park. Local riders have joined us from the border and we are home hosted by the Rotary Club of Kununurra.

July 4 – Day 106 Timber Creek to Saddle Creek 120km

Fresh water crocodiles at Timber Creek, up to two meters long. It's now Saturday and with no phone service I can ride. I have a rear tyre puncture after 4 km's and Malcolm Nicholson's wheel buckles with a broken spoke. But Bill Shore from Shimano has us both back on the road in minutes. Perfect riding conditions; warm with a gentle breeze. Flat road and open grass lands with distant purple escarpments. Nearing Saddle Creek the fractured rock escarpments tower above us as we ride into a dusty camp ground. Another amazing meal with all the fruit and vegies to be cooked before we reach quarantine at the Western Australian border. We even had apple crumble and custard.

July 3 – Day 105 Victoria river to Timber Creek 92km

A brilliant sunrise on the escarpment of Gregory National Park. Amazing colours, even Boab trees. A slow start at dawn for the riders as they stop to take photos, soon out of the escarpment and into the fat grass lands. The only sounds are the whistle of the never ending scything through the tall grass and the birds overhead. Into rolling hills and rocky country. The grey nomads are active with their caravans, but very few trucks. From the tail vehicle position I only called through two road trains for the whole morning. I busied myself with wood collection for the super duper fire box constructed by Chippy in Darwin. ie half a 44 gallon drum (200 litre drum). A lovely shaded camp area for ourselves tonight. The total distance ridden so far is almost 8500 km.

July 2 – Day 104 62 Mile Camp to Victoria River 95 km

Another early start, cooler after a hot night. Many compliments to Tony Caruana for the chicken curry, even some ice cream left over from the previous night. Magnificent scenery, ever changing vegetation, great colours of green, orange, red and purple. Hills all around us, rocky escarpments, riven of rock through the hills. Even some down hills as we come down 130 metres during the day. More cattle wandering on the road; lone bulls or in pairs. Huge grey Brahman bulls, black humps all floppy dewlaps and scrotums, glaring threateningly as riders pass. Young cattle jumping the railing startled by the silent approach of the riders. Huge escarpments as we near Victoria River and we wait for the grey nomads to vacate the caravan park. The riders are not happy with the morning briefing – I said 88 km to go but it was 95. My response: Stiff. We provided the down hills, what more could they want?

July 1 – Day 103 Katherine to 62 Mile Camp 106km

Ready to ride before sunrise; good roads and flat. Earlier I referred to Townsville as beyond becoming remote, this is more remote. 80km before evidence of human activity - a 4WD bumping through a dusty paddock. Vast changes along the way, why is there a dull grey ant hill next to a brilliant chocolate brown one? Wattles in flower, many different trees, foliage of different colour and shape. Some with pink arc, some brilliant white, some smooth and some textured. Flat country then rounded hills. Rocky escarpments and never ending, but never boring, landscape. Nearing 62 Mile Camp I day dream; will it be a lush green oasis or a rocky dusty horror? Well it's not green but at least there is a toilet we did not expect. Even fireworks for Northern Territory Day.

June 30 – Day 102 Pine Creek to Katherine 95km

After last night's dinner of fish, an early start and a glorious sunrise. The humidity has gone and it's beautiful riding conditions. Into Katherine before lunch and now it's time

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for all the shopping. We now head west towards Kununurra. Today is a half way point.

June 29 - Day 101 Adelaide River to Pine Creek 120km

An early start again. It's hot with lots of road trains but all arrive safely in to Pine Creek with my fish for dinner.

June 28 - Day 100 Darwin to Adelaide River 120 km

An early breakfast at McDonalds. Of the 4 new riders only one of them fell off. Great accommodation at Adelaide River Inn.