

more wary. At Contact Creek (where northbound bulldozers met southbound, building the Al-Can) we find our three bikes — station closed. “I’ve gone 30 miles with the reserve light on”... It’s 40 more to Watson Lake. All three made it, all with reserve light on for most of the distance.

Day Four: The brief morning Watson Lake TSD, then options: straight to Whitehorse for R&R, with a time penalty, or the Campbell Highway to Ross River, and the South Canol. Nearly all chose the gravel. In Whitehorse, most wished they’d taken the shortcut — tire shops were busy.

Whitehorse brought more choices. The bikes chose the overnight camp on the North Canol to the North West Territories. Bikes can only get to the NWT with the Sweeps for fuel. Both trucks and one staff car made the trek. Dan Watt’s big BMW Paris-Dakar lost its footing and caught a rock with the valve cover. The bike would get a ride on Sweep 1, for parking lot repairs in Whitehorse: A Coca-Cola can, cut to shape, lots of prep work by John Isenburg, and several layers of epoxy produced a new valve cover. Some super glue rebuilt the taillight lens, and Dan was ready to continue.

Cars, and six of the bikes, chose a TSD in Whitehorse, then 340 miles to overnight in Dawson — a bit more plush than Joe’s elegant elk camp on the North Canol. A brief TSD up to Midnight Dome gave a great view of Dawson, the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers, and the Top of the World Highway, which was closed in Alaska, necessitating our detour back to Whitehorse.

In the two days, the separate routes brought ample wildlife sightings: North Canol — grouse, grizzly, porcupine, wolf, wolverine and caribou; Dawson and sidetrips — bear, bobcat, silver fox and grouse or ptarmigan, which prompted two simultaneous renditions of the origin of Chicken Alaska — they couldn’t spell “ptarmigan”...

Day Seven: Whitehorse to Fairbanks, Alaska, 392 miles to Tok Junction and a 2 p.m. TSD. RM 2,950, electrical repair to one of the bikes, then as briskly as the frost heaves would allow to U.S. Customs “Mile 1,222.8 on the Alaska Highway.” The line was just us, and the interview was about 15 seconds.



Sunbeams break through the Alaskan clouds.

The long waits and the pilot cars for paving are cutting into our arrival in Tok. Sweep 2 catches the last bikes after the TSD, 195 miles to Fairbanks. At Delta Junction four bikes fuel up and stretch. Fatigue and boredom are setting in. This will be eased by the gorgeous hotel and dining facilities tonight. West of Delta we get our first view of the Alaska Pipeline, Prudhoe Bay to Valdez.

Day Eight: South from Fairbanks, the morning’s 12-mile TSD overlooks the city before the 150-mile Parks Highway run to Cantwell, passing spectacular scenery, rushing river canyons, then placid pools. Near the Denali Park and Mount McKinley center, the long excursion train clings to the opposite side of the canyon and traverses long wooden trestles.

Alaska Highway 8, the Denali Highway, is a 135-mile east-west connector between Cantwell and Paxson, 110 miles of gravel. We saw one caribou, numerous swans on the tiny reflection lakes along the way. About 90 miles into the gravel, the Maclaren River Lodge, with fuel, food and repairs, followed after a long climb by Maclaren Summit at 4,086 feet, with a sweeping panorama. At pavement we enter the Tangle Lakes Archaeological District — 455,000 acres, covering 400 recorded sites, believed to have seen human occupation 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, sup-

porting the Siberian Land Bridge theory. Nearing Paxson we see a family picking berries — 15 minutes later it is raining so hard I can’t read the road signs for the DIY TSD. Further south, several crews take a break at Worthington Glacier before cresting Thompson Pass and great glacial views dropping toward a Valdez sunset, and the rally’s last night on the road.

Day Nine: Valdez sunrise, over the peaks, slowly illuminating the harbor. Left out of the hotel, the first of three TSDs for the day, with more mountains and glaciers in much better weather. Glenallen TSD, then grand views of Tazlina and Matanuska glaciers. The final TSD covered 6 miles through hayfields, gardens and orchards — temperature at our checkpoint was 66 degrees.

After 4,065 miles or more, the banquet honored all the winners, the workers, and those who have passed. Congratulations to the Arctic Challengers Team of Glenn Wallace-R.Dale Kraushaar-Jenne Pierce for first overall in the Forester. Jeff Brisendine rode his KTM 950 Adventure to first motorcycle and sixth overall. A new first prize went to Kit Toevs, the first motorcycle sidecar rider to complete the Alcan 5000, with her dad Roger. Alcan scored 87 checkpoints and 10 DIY checkpoints.

Results, photos, blogs and archives found at www.alcan5000.com and now www.alcan5000.net (beta).