

tackled my tires in the late afternoon. As always, he worked quickly with hand tools, using three tire irons and not needing much help from anyone else. He balanced the tires and helped me check fluid levels on the bike.

To wait for a new throttle body to arrive would cost me about three days, and I decided that the shock cord working as return spring would get me home. So Monday morning I started the ride back to Philadelphia. I rode past Tok and was well into Yukon Territory when I stopped for the night.

On Tuesday I met a fascinating lady resting along the side of the Alaska Highway, next to the large wagon she had been pulling. I had seen her the week before on my way north, a striking tall blond in brief jogging shorts, striding around a bend in the road with a wagon in tow. She had a happy smile, oblivious to the rain shower that was just starting. The curve and the weather made it too

dangerous for me to stop then. But now during her morning break on the shoulder we had a nice long chat. She is Rosie Swale Pope, walking around the world for charity. She has completed Europe, Russia and Siberia, where she camped at temperatures of 50F below. She camps practically anywhere along the road and has no fear of the wild animals. She once crossed the Atlantic solo in a small sailboat back in the 70's. Meeting wonderful people like Rosie is another thing that makes the ride memorable.

While riding much later that night I saw a large black bear crossing the road. He stopped near the edge to watch me. What would happen if my engine failed now? How long was that old piece of shock cord going to keep the throttle working? I was glad to find the Coal River café and motel just a few miles later. It was closed for the night but I pitched my tent down by the pond near some other campers, and dove inside the netting just

before the mosquitoes ate me alive.

On Wednesday I took some local advice and visited the Hot Springs at Liard River, just inside British Columbia. I swam for an hour in the clear, almost scalding water. When it gets too hot you can agitate the deeper and cooler water for relief. You get used to the stinky smell of sulphur after a few minutes. A simple wooden deck and stairs give access to the pool, which is about three feet deep. A cloud of steam permeates the lush ferns and shrubs overhanging the bank, giving the scene a tropical or prehistoric atmosphere. The hot springs are reached by a one-kilometer long boardwalk through the woods and swamp. A tragic incident occurred here ten years ago when a bear attacked a couple walking back from the springs. The bear killed both and ate the woman. >>

*Fairbanks and safety are just beyond the rainbow.*

