

Remarkable Tour of a Legless Motorcyclist

ALFRED LEROY'S OWN STORY

(Reprinted by Jerry Hooker, Motorcycle Memories, 2010)

This is the story of my trip in a Minneapolis side car from Los Angeles to San Francisco, along the Pacific Coast for about 500 miles, taken last August in three successive days.

Along the coast road known as EL Camino Real, being the old Mission road laid out by the padres over 100 years ago to connect the string of 22 Catholic missions along the California coast for 700 miles. As California is mountainous, there are many mountain passes on this route, some of which like the Casitas, have very sharp turns and steep grades.

As I have but one arm and no legs, I had a four-horse-power "Minnie" fitted up so I could work levers with my good right arm and steer with the stump of my left arm, and was able to hit the road at good speed.

I left Los Angeles for San Francisco on a Tuesday morning at about six O'clock with my Minneapolis geared about 5 to 1 on the high, as I had no way to get through sand or up the steep grades except on the power of the machine alone. I started the engine by putting the rear wheel off the ground, by aid of the regular stand, then with high gear in I would turn the crank with my right hand, which is all right, of course my right arm is naturally stronger than the average right arm on account of being my only "weapon".

About seven miles out I fouled a spark plug and changed it and then the next plug got dirty too, and I had to change that. From that time on, Over Cahuenga, Calabasas and for the passes and the country between, I made good time and was in the little mission city of Ventura (Santa Buena Ventura) 73 miles out, at 9:10 A.M. Here I stopped long enough to replenish my gasoline and oil supply, and then started on for Santa Barbara, the next mission city, 36 miles farther including the 18 miles of mountain roads in the two-summit Casitas Pass. Each of the summits has a three mile climb and there is altogether about nine miles of up hill work averaging from 10 to 25 per cent. No single cylinder motorcycle has ever climbed these grades without the aid of pedaling, unless it was a two-speed machine, while lots of 7 horsepower machines do not get up without pedaling and even two-speed machines stall on some of the sharp turns.

I made the run between Ventura and Santa Barbara in an hour and 50 minutes, which is faster than most automobiles make it. I had to have some repair work done in Santa Barbara, and while Fred Lowe, the Excelsior agent, was doing this for me I got lunch; then after putting in more gasoline and oil, I beat it out of town towards Gaviota Pass, some 30 odd miles up the coast.

This run along the Pacific from Santa Barbara to Gaviota Pass is strenuous, as there are over 60 small canyons to cross. The railroad along here has high steel trestles over these canyons, but the highway winds through the canyons, some requiring a half mile of travel to cross. And at most of them are steep grades, where low speed work was necessary.

In the Gaviota Pass where I got stalled one place, I for got to mention that I broke the stand and thereafter had to start by coasting on a down grade to get my engine going. This stand was repaired at Santa Barbara.

In the Gaviota Pass I took the new road through the great San Julian Spanish grant and came out at Lompoo, instead of at the old Santa Ynez Mission, near town

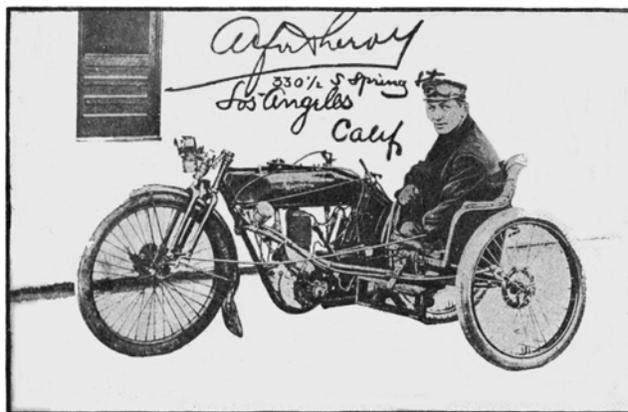
of that same. The new road was very fine most of the way. In the Gaviota I had to use low speed for miles at one time, high speed being out of the question.

Reaching Lompoo, a small interior town, I had covered..... miles and concluded to stay over night there. Here I was a curiosity, and the boys at the garage took me into their care and kept me going till midnight, having a good time. They fixed my goggles, which I had broken, filled my tanks, and would take nothing.

On the second day I did not get started until about eight O'clock, and got out of town on the wrong road, but reached Santa Maria, the next big town by one of the shortest routes, though with steepest grades, having gone over the new Gloriosa grade to Orcutt. There were three miles of low speed work, and then down so steep a grade that I had to stop and cool brakes.

It was about 10 O'clock when I rode into Santa Maria over good roads. I only stopped here for gasoline and oil and then went on without delay to the mission city of San Luis Obispo, where I got noonday lunch. At the Emblem and Excelsior agency, where I stopped for supplies and some slight repair work and adjustment, the agent would not take any money from me.

A few miles out from San Luis Obispo is the long climb up the south side of Cuesta Pass, where I had plenty of low speed work, but a glorious coast down the north side from the old watering trough most of the way into the little village of Santa Margarita. Without stopping, I flew over the fine road through the natural park of the long Pass of the Oaks (Pasa del Robles) and was soon in Templeton, another small town, where I paused to get some soda water, as it was warm and at times a little dusty. The rest of the beautiful road into the little city of Paso Robles, famous for its wonderful baths, was soon covered, and here



ALFRED LEROY, OF LOS ANGELES, CAL.
Who, although legless, and with but one good arm, made 1,000-mile trip to San Francisco and return.

Thursday morning I was up early, to be ready for the 200 mile run into the metropolis, and at six O'clock I was on the road and by eight O'clock was in Johon, the little old town in the San Antonio hills, four miles from the old mission of San Antonio de Padua, having averaged about 20 miles an hour. As I had been having my gasoline feed pipe leak, I had it soldered up here.

Before reaching Gonzales, where the highway and railroad

run side by side through the Salinas Valley, a train overtook me and I had a race with it that lasted most of the way to the city of Salinas, where the train got away from me. Between Solidad, where there is a mission ruins, and Salinas I had a row with a teamster driving a six-horse team. I did not want to shut off engine there in the sand and have a time starting again, while he insisted that I stop my engine, and was going to beat me up if I did not. I got out my little old "gatling gun" and he decided to let me alone.

It was about 11 A.M. when I reached Salinas, making about 90 miles for the five hours I had been on the road, with considerable sand work. The much dreaded San Juan grade, which is as steep as 25 per cent in places, and often 20 per cent, for long stretches, delayed me some, as I had to stop to cool the engine, and on the down grade had to stop several times to let the brake cool off.

It was at San Juan Bautiste Mission at 2:30 and had two punctures here to fix. The chain had been too loose and had climbed the sprocket on the counter shaft coming down the grade and thus broken a lot of the teeth, but I tightened the chain as much as I could and finished that way.

The next stop I made was at San Jose for gasoline and oil, and then I went along the shores of the great San Francisco Bay and reached Oakland, which is the Brooklyn of "Frisco". AT 6:30 I was at the Oakland ferry, which is out on the mole, and about seven P.M. of this third day I was in San Francisco, having covered 496 miles in three riding days, which was not bad for a man without legs and with but one arm, and as I had not been over any part of the road north of Gaviota Pass.

On the trip I averaged about 60 miles to the gallon of gasoline, having used about eight gallons, and about two gallons of oil.

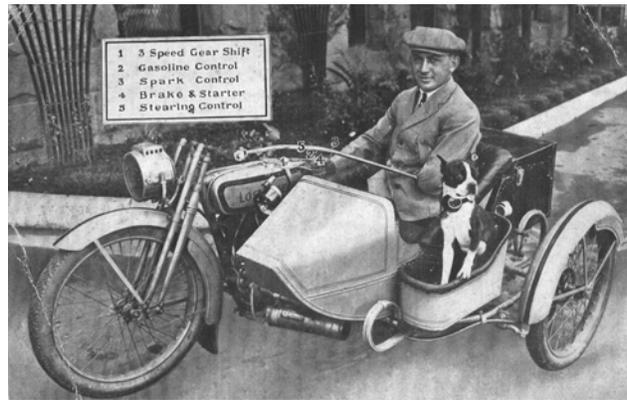
On the return trip, Friday at three P.M. I left San Francisco, figuring on the moonlight, and riding all night. All went well and I was in San Miguel, the old mission town, at six O'clock the next morning, having covered 211 miles in the 15 hours elapsed time. Here I took a short sleep, and by eight O'clock was on the road again, reaching Pasa Robles in 45 minutes, where I stopped only for gasoline and oil, and was en route for San Luis Obispo, which I reached at noon.

San Luis Obispo was left Saturday at 12:30 P.M. and the 32 miles on to San Maria was covered by 2:45, as I was now taking it easy after the long all-night ride.

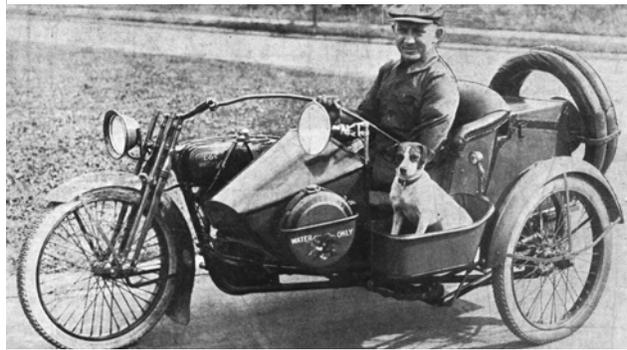
Leaving the oil city of Santa Maria, I followed the Foxin canyon pass route to Los Olivos and then by Santa Ynes Misson into the Gaviota Pass by the regular route, and was at Gaviota railroad station, on the ocean shore, at 6:30, and into Santa Barbara at Nine P.M. where I put up for the night.

Sunday morning I left Santa Barbara at five O'clock, and about 10:30 O'clock Had covered the 109 miles into Los Angeles, including the five mountain passes on that section of the coast road. Thus between Tuesday and Sunday mid-afternoon I had covered about 1,000 miles.

Further exploits of Alfred Leroy as seen through later postcards.



Legless, one-arm driver. Now on 50,000 mile tour of the United States. Machine constructed and furnished by Mr. Barney Oldfield, world famous auto speed king.



Legless, one-arm driver. Now on 50,000 mile tour of the United States. Total mileage traveled up to August 20th 1918, 24,316, or on fifth trip across North America.



Legless, one-arm driver on tour of U. S. A. Total miles covered up to July 4th, 1919 51,117. Using Harley-Davidson motorcycle and sidecar.



Alfred Leroy, one-armed traveler, legless wonder