

Danny Liska Adventure Hits North, South Ends of Continent

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Adjectives could probably not describe very well the past year for Danny Liska, columnist for this newspaper. They would include "adventurous", "exciting", "interesting", etc.

And probably they would sound tame when being considered with the next few weeks and months for the Niobrara farmer, commercial club president, cyclist, writer, travelogue artist.

For Danny is in the midst of covering a long stretch of territory by motorcycle, affectionately called "Tumbleweed". Danny has been to the tip of Alaska — the northernmost point of the North American continent — and has traveled south, south, south, and will continue south until he hits the southernmost tip of the South American continent.

Liska will be the first person in history known to make the complete stretch, totaling many thousands of miles, by motorcycle and following a land route (that is, where there is land.)

It was last year when Danny made it to the "End of the Road, Arctic Circle City, Alaska". Right now he has reached the "End of the Pan American Highway — Here Begins the Darien

Gap" in Panama.

So far, as Danny put it, "It had been an adventure packed journey, riding my R69 BMW across the ten countries which separate the signs. The Tumble Weed had carried me across frozen tundra and past creeping glaciers, over quivering muskeg and through tall forests, through blinding snow and parched deserts. We have ridden among coconut groves which bent before the gentle caress of the Caribbean trade winds and besides the roaring surf of the Pacific. The Tumble Weed has crossed rivers alive with salmon, as well as those with fresh water shark, mantee (sea cows) and crocodiles. From the snowy slopes of the Mexican volcano Popocatepetl went in quest of others, such as the mysterious Izalco of El Salvador, the erupting Cerro Negro of Nicaragua and even ventured into the very crater of the restless Irazu of Costa Rica."

Many Different Roads

Road surfaces have been varied, too. As Danny said, "The long road from the Arctic to the southern continent has many faces. From the frozen tundra along the Steese Highway at the northern end of the Yukon border and does not appear until 1200 miles later near Dawson Creek B.C. The magnificent highway of the United States continue into Mexico and then

cease abruptly at the abominable "El Tapon" at the Guatemalan border. The highway in Guatemala is both very good and very bad. The roads in British Honduras, although paved, are but 12 feet wide and too narrow for cars to meet or pass. To further complicate matters, everywhere there drives on the left side of the roads. Salvador has pavement throughout but perhaps is the most hazardous of all because the highways are dominated by hoards of ox carts. Honduras has very little surfaced highway — and fortunately so, as the paved section is in terrible shape. The roads of Nicaragua are mostly paved but the northern half of the road is completely in the possession of the herds of cattle which roam freely along it."

After returning from Alaska, Liska left this past summer for his southern journey. In September, his wife, Ariene, joined him for a portion of the journey, returning only recently to their Niobrara farm.

Mrs. Liska commented on her portion of the journey as follows:

"We journeyed the inter-American highway from San Jose, Costa Rica, viewing decoratively painted oxen drawn carts, to Panama City in the temperal or rain season. One day took us from San Jose to Cartago, Costa Rica, to view the Volcano Irazu, 11,322 feet and active.

To Peak of Death

"Forty-five miles below Cartago, the highway reaches the famous Cerro de la Muerte (called the peak of death by the Indians). Many have been killed in the process of making this mountain crossing. The elevation is about 11,000 feet, above the clouds and very cold. On we go down to San Isidro del General where the unfinished highway section begins for 137 miles to the border of Panama. This portion of the trip was to take five weeks.

"Thirty-nine bridges remain to be built. Most people tell us it is impossible to go any further, but we adventure on. Five of the rivers are crossed by plank or temporary bridges. Arriving at Buenos Aires, the Tumble Weed had a new garage for the evening in the form of the lobby of a hotel. It took three days to arrange the next leg of the journey.

"It covered two small rivers by jeep and the much larger River Platanarous in a scraper pulled by a D-8 caterpillar and pushed by a D-9. On we went

through mountains and jungle to a workers camp. The largest river was crossed in a canoe made from one log hollowed out. A night was spent in an Indian village where an Indian family vacated their home to permit us to spend the night in their bamboo and palm leave house.

People Friendly

"Danny noted, and I also in my portion of the trip, that the people have always tried to cooperate. Many times they could not understand what we wanted, but they'd still try to be helpful. For two days the only food we had was oranges and bananas.

"Further journeys included assistance by helicopter, motor car train, self-propelled three car diesel train and bus."

And then the Liskas came to the most daring portion of their long journey, and because of the danger, Danny "ordered" his wife to return home.

For now, Danny has come to the 350 miles of the Darien Jungle — the gap that joins Columbia, South America, and Panama. It is solely inhabited by two types of Indians — the Cunas on the Atlantic Coast and the Cho Chos on the Pacific. To this day they live as their ancestors lived — in belief and dress.

The Darien Jungle is said to be impassable — that a road may never be able to be built there. But adventuresome as Danny is, he's going to try to make it by cycle.

The weeks or months ahead will probably bring all kinds of adventure, danger, excitement, etc.

And finally, after passing through the Darien Jungle, Danny will more or less "have it made", for the balance of the trip through South America will be through comparatively safe and modern country. However he must reach the tip of South America, Terra Del Fuego, by February, before adverse weather conditions set in.

Rumors here stated that Danny had been to Cuba and was held prisoner there. These were false. He never was in Cuba. His columns, headed "Fancy Free", have been slowed up due to mail mixups. When they arrive again, they will appear in print.

In the meantime, the News columnist has a big goal — from the north north to the south south, by motorcycle and completely by land. We wish luck to Danny and his "Tumble Weed".



FINALLY to the end of the Pan American Highway where the Darien Gap begins. The next 350 miles will bring untold adventure.