

## "Westward Ho to the Nationals"

*By: Paula Bondarenko with Emma Hansen (as published in the Pinscher Patter, Sept 1997)*

Anyone who works and shows will know about the rush to finish up work matters before leaving for a dog show, especially a National! This time in the far away State of Washington. Details, details, pack the van the dogs, let's go! "Westward Ho" to Emma's house. Oops, I forgot my cart with wheels for crates, oh well, Emma has one. No map, Emma has one. Tina is at Emma's, but we need stuff from Tina's house yet. A TV, VCR and movies for the trip added. We're packed and ready to roll, three gals, four bitches, (one in season) and four males (only one neutered), snacks, cooler with refreshments, gear, dog food, water, show clothes, suitcases, and two X-pens, one for girls and one for boys. It's noon Saturday and we're rolling west. We have until Tuesday to get to Washington.

Less than two hours into trip, the passenger seat belt comes off at the bottom. It's Saturday afternoon, too near closing time in the small towns to fix anything. We stop at Fargo to get it fixed. The first shop looks at it and says they don't have a metric bolt like that, so we are referred to a hardware place. We find a bolt, and beg the guy there to put in it in place. Oops, need a different one. OK, ready to roll again after a two hour delay. The belt works if you keep pulling on it.

We roll across North Dakota and into Montana. After 12 hours we switch drivers and gas up again. This old van sure sucks up the gas. The tank is small for it's size so we have to stop every three to four hours. It's getting on into the early morning hours. We missed the last exit for gas, but according to the map, there's another town coming up. Guess what, the next few exit signs say no services and there are no towns in sight of the them. This is really the middle of nowhere. The gas tank says 1/8 and that's not good. We pull off at an exit with a closed cafe with a house next to it. We sleep a few hours until dawn. At 5 a.m. the guy cleaning the cafe says that the nearest gas station is two miles down the road and it opens at 7:00. At 6:00 we go wait for the station to open.

All day across Montana, the van is bucking like a bronco on the rough road. On we go into Idaho, and finally eastern Washington. Sunday evening comes, and we add more gas, what's that noise? We add oil, it's a little better We lost our road, but we get across the Columbia River and into Oregon, back on the freeway, and rolling into the night again.

About midnight, Emma is sleeping in the back and I'm snoozing in the front,

while Tina is driving. She asks me if we should gas up in Yakima which is eleven miles away. I sleepily answer, "yes" and doze off. When we get in to town, we find a station and then it hits me - - Yakima is in WASHINGTON! I yell, "Emma wake up, we're in Yakima. Yakima, WASHINGTON! We're supposed to be in OREGON!" We're on the wrong freeway! We are about 100 miles off course headed for Seattle! All the motels are full or given up for the night. We chart our course to return to the I-84 in Oregon and end up in Toppenish, Washington, where we find a room for the night. Let's sort it out in the morning.

Monday morning comes with more of the same questions when people see eight Min Pins in Xpens. Are they for sale? Will they bite? Miniature Dobermans how cute! We answer as usual, "No, they're not for sale, these are Miniature Pinschers and we're going to a dog show!"

The van coughs and sputters, but finally starts. It's really starting to sound bad. It takes the gas pedal to the floor to go uphill and our speed sinks to 45. More nuts to the squirrels below! We need more speed and power, but it's still running, let's keep going.

The drive is beautiful through the Lewis and Clark Trail along the Columbia River. I think the sights alone were worth the trip out here. The Dalles and Multnomah Falls, Mount Hood, all beautiful.

We pull in Portland and stop for gas. Maybe some high test gas would help. The van dies at the stop lights. We turn off the air conditioning. It still sputters. I slip it into neutral at the stop light while we wait, then into drive to go. Across the bridge on to Vancouver. What was that exit? Well, let's turn around and try it again. Ok, now the right exit. Oh no! The street the hotel is on is closed. Let's ask the road crew gal. Once more we take the 4 mile loop to get back to a street to take us around to the hotel. The van continues to cough and sputter and dies at the stoplights. Finally, through the back industrial area, into the hotel. What a mess for people coming in!

It's about 1:00 pm on Monday. Not too bad for the distance we came. We see the motor homes and greet the people we know and get checked in. Janice Horne offers to call her brother, a mechanic, about our van and Claudia Clark says her husband could check it tomorrow.

Later Monday afternoon, we go back across the bridge to get something to eat and find a department store's mechanic and tire place. This van isn't getting going to get us home like it is! This place has diagnostics etc. so we make an appointment for the next morning. Driving around is interesting. All we need are

flowered head bands, flames painted on the sides of the van, fur on the dash and dingle fringes on the of the windshield to be driving a hippy van!

After the Futurity I call on the van, not done yet. Later we get Connie Timmerman and her husband to drive us over so we don't have to wait again for the hotel shuttle that goes between the hotels on opposite sides of the river. The van has a more serious problem, and I make arrangements by walking my fingers through the yellow pages. The carburetor is bad and it could take three days to fix! The second garage seems understanding and said that he could put a rush on it. Great! At least we are here at the show site for all week, but what about the weekend shows? Will we get home? I guess we won't be seeing the Pacific Ocean after all.

At the National, we get some placement ribbons and Emma's co-owned bitch wins her class. OK! Tina's dog picks up an obedience leg. OK! We look it over, most of these ribbons go to the co-owners. On to Friday's outdoor show. Nice day a few more placements, again most go to the co-owners. Tina gets another leg. She's doing the best we think she's disappointed with the scores, but hey this is her first Min Pin in obedience. It's not a poodle!

The weekend comes, we have the van back and my credit card is groaning. Oh no, its wet out this morning! My dog and bitch take their classes and Emma's bitch goes reserve, but the rain was too much for the obedience dog. "NQ" on downs.

Sunday morning we need to check out early. Our wake up call did not come, or so we thought! The clock said 6:00 am when I woke up. What a mad dash, we have to exercise dogs, get ready (three gals), pack, check out and be in the ring at 8:00 more than a 45 minutes away! Then the phone rings an hour later. I check my watch. Our clock was set an hour ahead when we tried to set the alarm. Whew!

Raining and blustery again. My other class bitch takes her class and so does Emma's. I nearly forget to go back in for winners until I heard the number being called repeatedly. That's my number! Emma's bitch takes the 5 pt major! We both dash back out to get the specials. My special takes the Best of Opposite. Hey what a way to finish out the week! Not bad!

Let's roll for home! We are happy for a good week From downpour rain, then sun, to frost and 85 degrees in the same day, mountains to plains we're ready to come home. Too bad we didn't have the chance to bring home some pedigree rabbits from breeders in Washington, or some hay for the horse, or 100 lbs of potatoes from Idaho, and we'll be going through Fargo too late to pick up the cat

to take back Since we had the important stuff with us like the Gazette Events calendar, we did have time to plan our next excursion to Waukesha, just a short trip, about 6 hours, and it's within towing distance of home. Licenses plates we saw said it well, "TOO NUTS", "Y ASK Y", and "YEAH RT". We know, we'd do it again. Fort Worth, here we come!

We thank the Pacific Northwest Club for a job well done and the great hospitality. The Min Pin Tribune was a great way to keep everyone updated.

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