

David Thompson Bicentennial

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the land and the distances between them. Traveling by canoe and dog sled David came to know the Indians in the region, the French-Canadian voyagers, and the customs and languages of both groups. In 1799 David married Charlotte Small, whose father was an employee of the North West Company and whose mother was a Cree Indian, a tribe that David knew well. David was 29 years old and Charlotte was 13.

Shortly thereafter, David was recruited to seek a route across the Rocky Mountains, and subsequently the route of the Columbia River, by a man named Duncan McGillivray, a relative of head North West Company men. Trails across the Rockies had been made and used by buffalo and other animals for centuries and humans naturally followed those same trails. Over time these routes became well used by the Indian tribes who lived in the region. In general, all people in the region were coming to believe that the only possible route to the Pacific Ocean was via the Columbia River.

In the meantime, David continued his extensive exploration in Canada. His "map of the northern bend of the Missouri and the Mandan villages" was provided to Thomas Jefferson when Jefferson wanted to put together a "small caravan" to explore the country of the Louisiana Purchase; David was unaware of this. When Lewis and Clark compared their observations with David's they determined that his were the correct ones.

David finally was able to devote his exploration to the Rocky Mountains crossing and route of the Columbia River in earnest in 1807. He and his men spent the next few years traveling back and forth across the "Great Divide" and lingered in areas we know as Kootenay Lake and Lake Winnepeg in Canada, Bonner's Ferry, Pend Oreille Lake, and Sandpoint, Idaho, Thompson Falls and Kalispell, Montana. He had hoped that the Pend Oreille River would allow travel to the Columbia River but was told by his guide that Metaline Falls would be too dangerous to portage.

More and more traders began to come into the west and to cross the Rocky Mountains. In addition, there was increased violence between the Crees and the Blackfeet which threatened to disrupt trade in the area. Although David planned to take advantage of going "on rotation" in 1810, meaning he could return to Montreal with his family for the winter, he canceled these plans to deal with potential trouble and competition on the Columbia River.

The North West Company was concerned about a new American business, the Pacific Fur Company, started by John Jacob Astor. Astor had already acquired a substantial fortune in the pelt business and had now decided to enter the western fur trade. He outfitted a ship to sail around the Horn and establish a base at the mouth of the Columbia River. It has been surmised that David was advised to go and complete his explorations of the Columbia and determine whether it was navigable to the ocean.

David experienced many trials during this time due to Indian behavior, weather, terrain and the quality of some of his hired men. The familiar birchbark for making canoes was unavailable in this area, so David and his men experimented with cedar planks as a canoe building material. There were failures and successes.



D.J.'s Motorsports

By Peggy Mandin



D.J.'s Motorsports is all about machines; machines that owner/operator D.J. Olson has loved, ridden, raced and worked on since he was a teenager. He repairs and sells motorcycles, ATV's, UTV's, snowmobiles, dirt and street bikes, and personal watercraft. According to Olson he "basically works on anything that is fun", even Harley Davidson motorcycles, something not everyone in the business can or will do.

Olson truly understands the pride an owner can feel for a personal machine and he takes great care when dismantling or otherwise handling a machine that has been left in his care. He aims to do only quality work and sell only quality merchandise. If a customer inquires

about a machine in his shop he stated that he will give his true opinion of the machine, including the "flaws as well as the good points". His goal is to provide information as much as anything else; customer service is more important to him than sales, and he welcomes questions. When talking to Olson it is apparent that he has acquired a lot of information and experience during his career. If the answer to a question is not already in his head he knows how to get it. Olson's factory training certificates are a testament to his serious pursuit of knowledge in his field.

After graduating from Chewelah High School in 1987 Olson attended Universal Technical Institute (UTI) in Phoenix, Arizona where he completed a diesel mechanic course. He subsequently took a job at Thermal King in Spokane to work on refrigerated trucks, but he hung out at Paul's Yamaha shop in Colville in his spare time. His interest led to a job offer and he worked at Paul's Yamaha for 13 years before deciding to open his own shop in Kettle Falls in 2002. The small and close-knit community of Kettle Falls appeals to Olson and his family.

Before opening his own business Olson

took advantage of factory training offered by Polaris. After taking a series of tests Olson was flown to the main plant in Minnesota and participated in competitions there and in Florida. Because of his performance he was properly wined and dined by Polaris, being treated to limousine rides, tours, dinners, and receiving company clothing. In 2001 and 2002 Olson was chosen as one of the top ten mechanics in North America by Polaris.

Olson's Kettle Falls shop was originally located in the building that now houses Stagecoach Antiques. He then moved to a spot on Highway 395 between Kettle Falls and Colville for just over four years. Now he is back in town in a building between Stagecoach Antiques and the Yellow Pine Chevron station. This new location offers him a large indoor space where he can work on the machines that are brought to him, and the room is full. There is also a modest showroom featuring accessories such as helmets and Skin Industries clothing.

A few things of note:

- Any machine left in Olson's care is securely locked up at night. While machines are sometimes moved to an outside area during the day to allow him more work space or to make it easy for customers to view machines for sale, everything comes in overnight. That fits

with his philosophy of care and attention to detail.

- He does sell motorcycle tires. This is a frequent question.
- He can order just about anything.
- He sells Arctic Cat ATV's and snowmobiles in conjunction with John's Marine in Colville.

Olson has been sought out by the Colville Tribe Environmental Trust, Forest Capital, the USFS Three Rivers Ranger District and the Curlew Border Patrol to work on their machines because of his knowledge and experience.

D.J.'s Motorsports is open Monday 9am-2pm and Tuesday-Friday 9am-5pm. Although Olson gets some pressure from customers to open on Saturdays he is pretty adamant that the weekends are for family. Olson, his wife Ronda, their three sons Austin, Aaron, Talon and their daughter, Tailee like to spend the weekends camping, boating, hunting or doing other activities together.

The address for D.J.'s Motorsports is 9431/2 Lakeview Drive, Kettle Falls, WA 99141 and the phone number is 738-4295.

Editor's note: This business was featured in the Focus based on the recommendation of an impressed customer.

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