



MARCH 18

Following Mike's latest breakdown, as reported last month, I went out to the 101 to remove the disrespectful fan (other names suggested by team members simply could not be printed in ANY magazine) and get the 101 ready to tackle the Dempster Highway tomorrow – we started calling it 'Dumpster' highway, as we were beginning to amass a load of parts that were falling off Mike's truck.

Mike went for fuel, and a bit of a shake-down run to the local airport to make sure the 'death-shake' had gone away (or was he really just checking flights?). His report was positive (about the truck, no news on the flights...), so we were ready to roll for the morning. The word on the street was that the highway would be open tomorrow.

MARCH 19

The Dempster Highway was finally open. Due to the unpredictable nature of the road, we left town at 5am and made our way south. Sometimes, the road will only be open for a few hours (even as short as one hour in some

by
Jim Leach

Above left: No, that's not a post card, we were actually there. Above right: Waiting for the fuel pump – those pesky helicopters take forever to fill up. Below: Winding through the wilderness, the Land Rovers adapted to the cold temperatures just fine. Well, for the most part...



THE LONG DRIVE HOME

Time to leave the snowy paradise and head home, but it's an arduous journey for some of the team

cases), based on wind and snow conditions. If the drifted snow doesn't close the road, the high winds waiting to send a giant sail of a 101 off the road, will.

But, we couldn't even get out of town without making one last contribution to the North West Territories 'Tourist Tax' fund. Yes, it actually happened: a speeding ticket in a Land Rover. I honestly couldn't believe it either.

Once we were finally rolling again, we witnessed one of the most beautiful sunrises I'd ever seen. The crisp, clean air, cloudless sky and barren mountains made for an absolutely spectacular view with some of the most amazing colors you could imagine.

Our main goal for the day was to get through the entire Dempster

Highway in one long drive. This was also the plan for the ride up, but Mike's 101 has an uncanny knack for breaking down in close proximity to a bar and/or pub, which does tend to slow our progress. Eagle Plains was no exception, as you may recall from the ride up earlier in our story.

This time, we managed to make it through without any repairs. This was a good thing, because when we arrived at the fuel pumps, we found Mike's repair bay was occupied by a helicopter! The Yukon Department of the Environment was tagging caribou to monitor their migration patterns and used Eagle Plains as a heliport and base for the tagging activities.

We had a nice 'catch' of wildlife for the day as well. An arctic fox was spotted (and nearly hit) as it sprinted across the Dempster between Eric and I in the convoy. A bit later in the day, a small group of caribou was nearly hit by Mike in

