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# Mariners Caravan makes detour

## Interstate closure forces change in plans at start of journey

By Jim Street / MLB.com

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It takes more than a flooded interstate highway to completely derail the Mariners Caravan.

The annual three-week journey through the Northwest started last Wednesday and encountered a road block the following day, when rain and melting snow shut down part of Interstate 5 south of Seattle, canceling the caravan's scheduled visit to Portland.

When the major artery between Seattle and Portland remained closed on Friday, other travel plans had to be made for the show to go on.

The Mariners' community relations department attempted to book a commercial flight out of Seattle to Portland for the five-member traveling party -- players Jamie Burke and Tug Hulett, broadcaster Rick Rizzo, the Mariner Moose and club official Sean Grindley -- but that didn't pan out.

Finally, the small traveling party landed the final five seats on a nine-seat, single-engine SeaPort Airlines flight from Boeing Field to Portland.

"We were scared to death at first," Burke said, laughing, "but it was one of the best flights I've ever had. It was the smallest plane I had been on since I flew in a Cessna one time, but this one was fun."

Burke sat in the back seat, just in front of the luggage, and thoroughly enjoyed the flight.

The cruising altitude was much lower than most flights, which presented a unique perspective.

"We flew pretty close to Mount Rainier, also saw all the floods below us, and then we flew past Mount St. Helens, getting a good view at where the lava went," Burke said of the May 1980 volcanic eruption. "Next thing you know, we were landing in Portland."

"It took about 45 minutes and was really smooth, except for a couple of little bumps along the way," he said. "There was more room on that plane than you have on most 'regular' flights."

A van met the traveling party at the Portland airport and transported them to Longview, where they participated in a fund-raising assembly at Lower Columbia College, which was supposed to be the second event of the day.

A 30-minute early afternoon D.R.E.A.M. Team assembly, scheduled for Butler Acres Elementary School in Kelso, had to be canceled.

"It was good for us to be able to get down there and talk to the people," Burke said. "It was good."

The Mariners Caravan resumed on Monday -- via a bus -- with stops in Yakima, Tri-Cities, Moses Lake, Spokane and Wenatchee scheduled for the week.

Third baseman Matt Tuiasosopo and left-handed pitcher Ryan Feierabend, along with the Mariner Moose, will spend the entire week on the trip while former Mariners third baseman and current TV analyst Mike Blowers will join the group Tuesday through Thursday.

The caravan will conclude next week, leading up to the annual FanFest at Safeco Field on Saturday and Sunday.

*Jim Street is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.*

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