

Local Loops 2020: RIDE REPORT

Due to the pandemic, participation has been a bit lower than usual this year. Still, there are those among us who feel that 2 months of hunkering down is enough. It *is* risky to get out, but so is riding. Humans require recreation and exercise, both of which can be provided by motorcycling, and just as we mitigate the risk of riding by using PPE: helmet, gloves, eye protection, sturdy boots, etc. so too can we strive to minimize the risks associated with the virus by using masks, eating outdoors, distancing, and avoiding crowds. And so, it came to pass on July 26, 2020 that 6 intrepid souls came together here in Kennett Square, determined to *SAFELY* ride motorcycles despite Covid 19 and to enjoy the summer day. After the past 2 months, we all felt deserving of a respite: *“a short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant”*.

Ed and his wife Liz are dedicated RetroTourers. Besides motorcycling, they also enjoy flying, skiing, and dancing. It was through the latter that they met Diane and they convinced her to try Local Loops. Liz planned to ride pillion behind Ed while Diane signed up to be sidecar ballast. I mean to be the monkey. I mean to ride as a passenger in the chair. Little did she suspect what was in store.

Lou is a neighbor and has been riding since a teenager. He recounts frequently the days of yore when he and his now wife, Joan terrorized most of New Jersey with their wild escapades upon his Suzuki X6 Hustler. Lou prevailed upon his son-in-law Travis to join us. As I understand it, Travis rode until he and Lou's daughter started a family. Now his familial responsibilities (i.e. his wife) preclude him from riding very much, so he was happy to get a chance to be 'in the wind', courtesy of his father-in-law.

Rider number 6? That would be yours truly. I would drive the EML/R100S sidecar machine. It's easy to follow, comfortable for a passenger (or two), and easily carries plenty of snacks and water for tailgating at stops. Ed chose the BSA 650 Lightning. This is a 1971 model equipped with the 'home market' 4 gallon fuel tank. The oil-in-frame design represents the final version of this typically British twin cylinder bike, and also creates a tall saddle height. Ed never (well, almost never) seems to have any trouble with tall bikes, even with a passenger on board. I'll bet he is also a decent dancer. And pilot. The kickstart only feature also failed to faze him, and he took the right side shifter in stride. Lou opted in to the Benelli 650. I'm not sure why; morbid curiosity perhaps. At least the clutch pull was not as horrendous as his last year's choice which left his left hand decimated for months. Then again, maybe it was the cortisone shots. I thought it best to get Travis on the KZ750 since-- young-un that he is—he might be slow to acclimate to reversed controls. The KZ is very user friendly and Travis quickly demonstrated that he could handle any of these bikes with ease. He is a solid rider. Diane was ready to rumble, this gal's got game. Every time I checked out her image in the right hand mirror, she wore a broad smile.

We convened here at the house for breakfast at 8:30. My wife Lynn had us covered with a hearty send off meal and we had stands up by 9:30. Instead of the normal sequence of five 25 miles loops in the immediate area, this time we would be heading north towards Reading, PA. We used back roads to head north through Embreeville and Marshalton, then through the locally well-known 'double tunnel'. It takes Creek Rd under a railroad bed and is not very long, but it has an unusual 50° kink in the middle which means you can't see the other end. Popping into it

from bright sunlight ensures that you can't see a thing and it's "riding by Braille" for 10 yards or so: just enough to get the adrenal glands pumping. In the dead of winter, there is the added thrill of icicles hanging from the ceiling, stalactites big enough to touch your helmet if you're not careful. No ice on this hot, humid, July day though, just a momentary blast of pleasant cool air as we plunge into the darkness.

We pop out next to a huge quarry in Downingtown, then ride one mile on Bypass 30 to pick up scenic Route 282N. This 2-lane follows the twists and turns of the east branch of the Brandywine Creek past campgrounds and anglers, hip deep in the cool, fast running water, casting for trout one supposes. Just past the go Kart track there is a small coffee shop. It's closed this Sunday, but we relax a bit at the outdoor tables and chairs, enjoying cold water, sharing some with and chatting with a passing bicyclist, and then crossing the street to visit the 'Smallest Church in the World'. I tell my version of its origin which may not be entirely accurate, by hey, at least it's interesting. Why spoil a good story with the truth?



LEFT TO RIGHT: Travis, The Church, Diane and me

We continue along 282. The creek terminates at Marsh Creek State Park and just beyond is a small National Park and our next stopping point: Hopewell Village. The restored iron forge is only partially accessible due to Covid, but we do the short version of the tour and are happy to get rolling again quickly, since the wind is the only way to beat the heat of the day which continues to build.

AT LEFT: The via duct that carries water from a reservoir to turn the giant water wheel just visible on the left side of the photo. Atop the water wheel are two wooden cylinders. Connecting rods on either side of the wheel pump pistons sealed with leather rings to force air into a plenum chamber from whence it is piped to the base of the fire to stoke it hot enough to melt iron ore. Franklin stoves made from sand castings were used to heat cabins and to cook. and they revolutionized colonial life.

Bypassing Birdsboro and Douglasville, we soon meander our way to the Antietam Reservoir and the back door to Reading, PA. AT RIGHT: The falls at Antietam Reservoir which supplies water to the city of Reading.

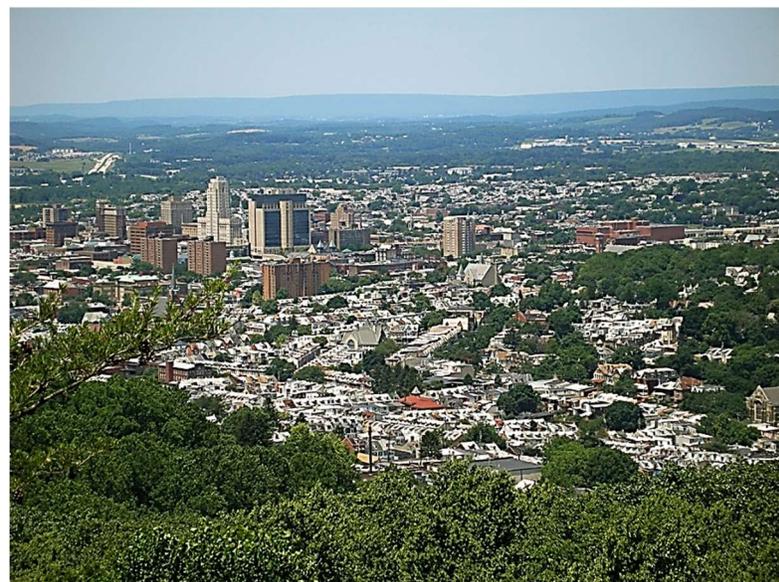




A series of small roads helps us ascend Mount Penn and we soon top out on Skyline Drive which leads us to the next stop: The Reading Pagoda. Normally we would walk up a winding staircase to check out the view from the top, but today the pagoda is closed. Even so, there are dozens of locals who

drive up here to enjoy the view and to catch a breeze on a hot day. Today we are joined by the local "Tokyo Drift Club": young men and women who are imported-car performance-enthusiasts. They park all in a row and open their hoods so we may all admire the weird orange thingies in there all around the engine bay. It's like the pits at a big car race, except there is no race, just profiling. There are superchargers, intercoolers, ECUs, and a bunch of other things I don't

understand. After admiring the view for a while (of the countryside, not the cars) we head down through a series of bends to the city itself and get a small taste of congested city life before crossing the Schuylkill River and parking up at the Queen City restaurant, our lunch stop today. Our waitress seems particularly happy to be serving a party of six, business has been understandably slow lately. We eat, drink and bond.



After a light lunch we remount and track southwards on Route 10. Before reaching Morgantown, we stop at Joanna Furnace, another restored colonial iron forge and lumber mill. These stops allow us to swap bikes, to stretch a bit and to socialize. As usual, we are the only ones here and spend 20 minutes learning some of the history of the place.





Then its onward towards home. From Morgantown we take back roads that follow several of the area's numerous creeks and rivers. Sneaking back into Kennett Square the back way, we soon arrive at home. It's been a hot day; we've covered 150 miles, but it feels like more. Apart from a few minor glitches, the bikes have performed well in adverse conditions. There are cold beverages and appetizers waiting; These are followed by a gourmet meal. Lynn has been busy.

Life is good, even during Covid, when like-minded individuals can venture out cautiously to enjoy a day in the sun and in the wind, riding vintage iron, visiting new places, learning new things, and basking in the company of fellow humans, somewhat afflicted though we may all be.

Thanks to all the participants for taking these photos and sharing them.



***Lou and the Beloved
Benelli 650 Tornado***



***Travis and the
Kovid Kawasaki.***

Ed and Liz on the Beastly BSA



Diane in the EML, eagerly awaiting whatever lies ahead.



Father and son-in-law.

BFFs

