

Lost River West Virginia

April 26, 27, 28, 2013.



Eight riders converged on 'RetroTours Central' in preparation for this three day ride. Three local area riders arrived Friday morning to join the rest of us for an early breakfast.

They each chose a bike and completed paperwork. I had prepared an international assortment of machines to choose from. Rob was hot to try the XLCR, Steve loaded his gear onto the Honda CB500T and Dave decided to start out on the Moto Guzzi V50 while I rode out on the BMW R90/6. Thursday afternoon's arrivals included Bob, who had reserved the RD400 well in advance and the "long distance guys", Steve and Mike, who rode clear across the country to join us for this tour. Steve left Washington State on his Concourse and picked up Mike on his Honda Pacific Coast in New Mexico. The two of them then made a beeline for Kennett Square, PA, parked their bikes and loaded their gear onto the Triumph Bonneville and the BSA Lightning. Richard, an Italophilic chain saw sculptor from Long Island (yes, really!) also stayed over Thursday night. His weapon of choice? The Laverda 750SF. Molto Buono! So, our international entourage included two bikes from Japan, two from England, two from Italy, an American and a German.

We ate a big breakfast and took our time leaving so as to allow the mercury to rise a bit. It was on the cool side, but the forecast was for clear skies. After careful consideration Steve even decided that bringing his rain gear would be unnecessarily overly cautious. You know how that usually works out! With no windshields and temperatures in the low 50's we were pretty bundled up and I used my electric vest and lent a spare to Richard. As it turned out, these would be useful but not critical. I switched mine on and off throughout the day. At the 100 mile mark we stopped for gas and switched bikes. I had chosen a very ambitious route and estimated that with frequent stops it would take 11 hours to reach our cabin in the Lost River State Park, located in an undeveloped corner of West Virginia. We actually began by heading *northwest* as I intended to ride some interesting back roads in Pennsylvania, then cut straight south across Maryland into WV.

For lunch we stopped at wonder and ate some cheese Here Rob reported that the before the speedometer pretty sure that the must have failed it need not



The Round Barn which is a wooden architectural and pretzels and whatever else we could find.

Laverda made a bad noise from the front wheel just stopped working and the noise stopped. I was speedometer drive gears in the front hub and decided that while inconvenient, impede our forward progress.





The weather was only slightly cool now and the sun shone brilliantly. We had to share one particularly nice mountain road with a large group of runners. Picking our way around joggers and 20mph support vehicles was.... interesting. We made the cut southwards and at Hancock, MD picked up Old Route 40 which parallels new highway Route 68 but winds up and down several low mountains before cresting at a splendid overlook.

By now it was becoming apparent that the BMW was consuming unusual amounts of oil and the noxious smoke from the left muffler relegated that machine to the end of the line to prevent everyone from having to breathe the smelly fumes. I decided that if we kept an eye on the oil level and added more as needed that this would not be too serious of a problem.

After the snack break at Town Hill Overlook we headed down the mountain and into Green Ridge State Forest. Here the road turned to dirt and we spread out to stay clear of the dust plume from the riders ahead. The twelve miles of graded dirt forest road included several outstanding

views of the Potomac River Valley and brought us into West Virginia at the bridge next to the Paw Paw Tunnel. Now a second mechanical problem became apparent: the V50 electric starter began working only occasionally, necessitating that we push start the thankfully lightweight machine. We were turning into the walking wounded! Again, I decided that while push starting was not the first choice, we nonetheless could maintain our pace.

The day was getting longish as we carved southwards into The Mountain State of West Virginia. We gassed up and switched bikes again in Paw Paw, added oil to the BMW, push started the Guzzi, ignored the Laverda's dead speedometer and headed south. I was leaving well known territory and entering a part of WV that I was not especially familiar with. I had made the trip from my desk via Google Earth and I had my map and route sheet but I was concerned that



we might not easily find food or gas in this remote area. The fact that daylight was getting ready to fade did nothing to relieve my nervousness. You've got to feed the troops! We covered the twenty-five miles to the next turn and I pulled over for a full regroup. Unfortunately only 5 bikes joined me. I asked everyone to wait while I backtracked nearly 15 miles to find Steve on the Triumph and 1 other pulled off the road. The Triumph had been misfiring so badly that Steve wisely thought he should stop and wait for assistance rather than risk damaging something.

I was nearly overcome with concern that we would be wondering about with empty stomachs and malfunctioning brains trying to find the cabin in the cold and in the dark. I told Steve to get on my bike as I kicked started the Triumph. We headed south to join the others and I was surprised that the Bonneville ran just fine. At least for a few miles. Ultimately it began to misfire very badly and I noticed that if I pushed the horn button it cut out altogether which clued me into the fact that the battery voltage was so low that it was having difficulty running the ignition system. I tried jiggling the ignition key and the headlight switch, and made sure that my electric vest was not plugged in. I think the headlight switch may have been stuck somehow because when I jiggled it the ammeter suddenly went positive and the misfire cleared as the battery recharged.

By the time we got back to the rest of our group I was feeling hungry and fairly certain there would be no place to buy food. Just as we approached and everyone was starting their bikes and putting their helmets on I saw a sign that said "Fresh Grilled Chicken, All you can eat, Church of the Mountains, April 26th". I dashed up to the few bikes that were now in front of me, gave a frantic u-turn signal and rode straight into the church parking lot. I counted bikes as they pulled in, got to 6 and looked up just in time to see two bikes go right past the church driveway. They just kept on going. Never even saw us.

“Oh well, they’ll surely notice that there is no one in front of them and turn around shortly”, I thought, “no sense taking a risk by trying to chase them down.” But Mike had just ridden all the way from New Mexico so you know he had ‘white line fever’. He didn’t stop until the state line, about 30 miles back. Finally cell phone communication was established and we managed to get regrouped and fed very well indeed. The turnout at the church was evidently less than expected so there was A LOT of grilled chicken left over. Contributions to pay for the food were voluntary and we were so grateful to find dinner that we came up with \$100 as a group. I think this may have impressed the church members because we not only ate our fill, but they made us carry away about 40 pieces of very tasty grilled chicken: enough to last us the rest of the weekend! In fact I was still eating that chicken at home days later. Those congregants were like angels to us: just as kind and friendly towards strangers (*really* strange actually) as they could be.



It's getting dark, we're hungry and I only count 6 bikes. WHAT THE @*%!!!!???



We finally got to the State Park just after dark and managed to find our cabin. It was fabulous! Two huge fireplaces, a good hot shower, and several chords of cut stacked firewood. We even caught a tiny convenience store on the way in just as they were closing and bought eggs and food for breakfast. There were plenty of comfortable beds upstairs and on the ground floor. Everyone staked out a spot, we built two blazing fires and proceeded to relax completely. It had been a 360 mile day choked full of adventure: great roads, fun bikes and fine camaraderie.

In the morning we were stunned to awaken to warm sunshine and a daylight view of one of the prettiest forests I have ever seen. This region is lush and pristine and we were set to explore it in great detail. I had come across a dual sport route sheet starting from the State Park. A guy in PA named 'Backroads Bob' had been here a few years back and with help from some local riders had laid out a 115 mile loop that traversed the Lost River area. I had been in touch with Backroads Bob and he assured me that the entire route was passable on lightweight street bikes, so long as we took our time. Honestly I was not sure how much was dirt and how much was pavement. I really had no idea what to expect. This was truly an exploratory mission in virgin territory.



I had seen that all the riders were competent in the dirt by observing them on the Green Ridge dirt section the day before so I was not worried on that score. We could always bail at any time and we had all day to explore. As we headed out it soon became obvious that the terrain would present less of a challenge than actually following the route sheet correctly. Many roads had several names and we became confused more than once. I must admit to feeling badly about all my beautiful old bikes getting covered in dust and dirt but we were committed. In the end we got to see some beautiful country. The conditions were challenging but doable. We made mistakes but pretty much followed the route about 2/3 of the way. As it began getting late and we starting feeling hungry it was agreed that we really didn't want to return to the cabin in the dark so from the town of Broadway we abandoned the route and took paved roads back to Lost River. Miraculously we found a country restaurant called the N&S which was just a mile south of the park entrance. Here we ate a huge southern style meal and were serenaded by a bunch of local boys playing blue grass music with guitars, banjos and vocals. They were awesome! **(SEE LAST PAGE FOR MORE ABOUT MUSIC AND VIDEO)** It was the perfect cap to a great day. Everyone agreed that our exploratory mission was a huge success. The bikes were dirty but we were well fed, tired and happy.

After a second restful night in our cabin we left under very cloudy skies and the threat of rain. I knew Steve should have brought his rain gear! I had a route planned but on the way out of the park I noticed a sign which seduced me: "Paved mountain road, no services next 17 miles". I abandoned our original route and instead, followed that single lane asphalt strip which twisted and turned over two mountains on the way to the town of Moorefield. There was no traffic whatsoever; the road was all ours. Some of the houses up there had views to die for which we shared but for me the best part was just riding that road: lots of curves, lots of panorama and no traffic whatsoever. Can there be a better way to spend a Sunday morning?

The route home was fortunately more direct than Friday's marathon and we arrived well before sundown, having endured a few brief sprinkles but nothing bad enough to require rain gear. The bikes were filthy but managed to keep running well enough. The Moto Guzzi starter worked now and then and the BMW consumed 3 quarts of oil. The Guzzi has since been repaired and the Bmer awaits its turn on a lift. We had our final mission debriefing session at the dinner table over a fantastic meal with beers and wine, thanks to my wife Lynn who always impresses with her culinary skills. Let's see, three great riding days, a beautiful cabin in the woods, good friends and classic motorcycles topped off by a gourmet meal. The only way it could get any better? RetroTours' next trip in just 2 weeks!



This is a video Steve made on his iphone of them local boys playing in the restaurant on April 27, 2013. You might have to sign up for Sky Drive. It just takes a second and it's free. Pause the sound and give it a few minutes to load.

Do you recognize the song? At the end it's us applauding in the adjoining room.

<https://skydrive.live.com/?cid=462062b1254994e3&id=462062B1254994E3%21152&Bsrc=SkyMail&Bpub=SDX.SkyDrive&authkey=!AMGSF61VvW4pJp4>

OK, here are the lyrics (and chords, if you play) which might be tough to get what with them ole boys' accents and all.

OLE SLEW-FOOT

Recorded by Johnny Horton

Words and music by Jay Webb

[A] High on the mountain, tell me what you see
 Bear tracks, bear tracks [D] lookin' back at [A] me
 Better get your rifle boys, 'fore it's too late
 'Cause a bear's got a little pig and [D] headed thru the [A] gate.

CHORUS

He's [E] big around the middle and he's [A] broad across the rump
 Runnin' [E] ninety miles an hour takin' [A] thirty feet a jump
 Ain't never been caught, he ain't never been tree'd
 Some folks say he looks a [D] lot like [A] me.

I saved up my mon' and I bought me some bees
 And they started makin' honey way up in the trees
 Cut down the tree but my honey's all gone
 Ole Slew-Foot's done made himself at home.

CHORUS

Winter's comin' on and it's twenty below
 And the river's froze over so where can he go
 We'll chase him up the gulley then we'll run him in the well
 We'll shoot him in the bottom just to listen to him yell.

WAIT JUST ANOTHER MINUTE: BEFORE YOU GO BACK TO YOUR LIFE,

CLLCK ON THIS LINK AND SELECT THE FIRST SONG. It's the Grateful Dead doing the same song, entitled 'Slewfoot' in San Francisco on June 27, 1969---two months shy of 44 years earlier. Ole Slewfoot had been around for a long while!

<http://archive.org/details/gd69-06-27.sbd.samaritano.20547.sbeok.shnf>