

DUCENT

RED NECK GYRO III: Saturday 09/21-Monday 09/23, 2013.



There is a very interesting gentleman residing in the hills of West Virginia. In a rustic house on Libby's Ridge Road (named after his late beloved wife) near Berkeley Springs, old and frail but still sharp as a whip, Ed has some stories to tell. Some say he was a spy for the CIA behind the Iron Curtain during the hottest part of the 'Cold War'. People do like to talk and embellish; for all I know he may have been a CPA not in the CIA but for sure, Ed does have some stories to tell.

One story is about The Homestead. This log cabin has a lot of history, having been erected originally in the late 1600's. By the time modern development overtook the historic structure the original logs had been mostly covered in plaster and the old house was slated for demolition. Ed bought it, chiseled away the plaster to reveal the original beams within then dismantled the structure and moved it out of harm's way to a beautiful secluded hillside off the beaten track. Local folks helped Ed update the relocated cabin with heat, plumbing and electricity but it certainly maintains much of its original rustic charm. It is the sort of place where time becomes largely irrelevant and the pressures of everyday life simply evaporate. When you wake up at The Homestead and step outside, your eyes feast on a grand view of the Cacapon Mountain Ridge and you suddenly feel as though gravity has weakened its grasp: elation!

As if this wasn't enough, imagine arriving on strong running, visceral vintage Italian bikes after 200 miles of fantastic back roads. This was our third "Redneck Gyro" and I expect the tradition will continue. On our first two visits, Ed jumped into the sidecar and joined us for dinner, directing us to amazing back woods restaurants and taverns known only to the locals. More recently he has not been mobile enough to travel with us but I always pay him a visit, and he always has a fantastic story to tell me.



THE RIDERS: (last names abbreviated to protect the guilty)



Charles G, Newton, MA



Kyle G, Princeton, MA



Jim B, Potsdam, NY



Richard H, Berkeley Springs, WV



Richard B, Kennett Square, PA



Bob N, Middletown, DE



Doug S, Chadds Ford, PA



Joel S, Kennett Square, PA

THE BIKES:



**1975
Ducati 860 GT**



**1974
BMW R90/6**



**1979
Moto Guzzi V50**



**1972
Laverda
750SF**



**1971
Moto Guzzi
750 Ambassador**



**1979
Moto Morini
500 Strada**



1977 BMW R100S/RS/EML



Moto Guzzi 1000

THE STORY:

Jim was the first to arrive. As I recall he rode down from Pottsdam NY on his old BMW. Not a pristine bike certainly but a strong reliable runner. Like I said: an old BMW. He came in a day early so we got to know one another a bit. An interesting fellow and retired from self employment, Jim's career involved moving houses. Not the furniture and dishes....the entire structure. An historic lighthouse in Virginia was moved ½ miles inland on railroad tracks some years ago to save it from the rising seas. Jim was there. That's the kind of guy he is.

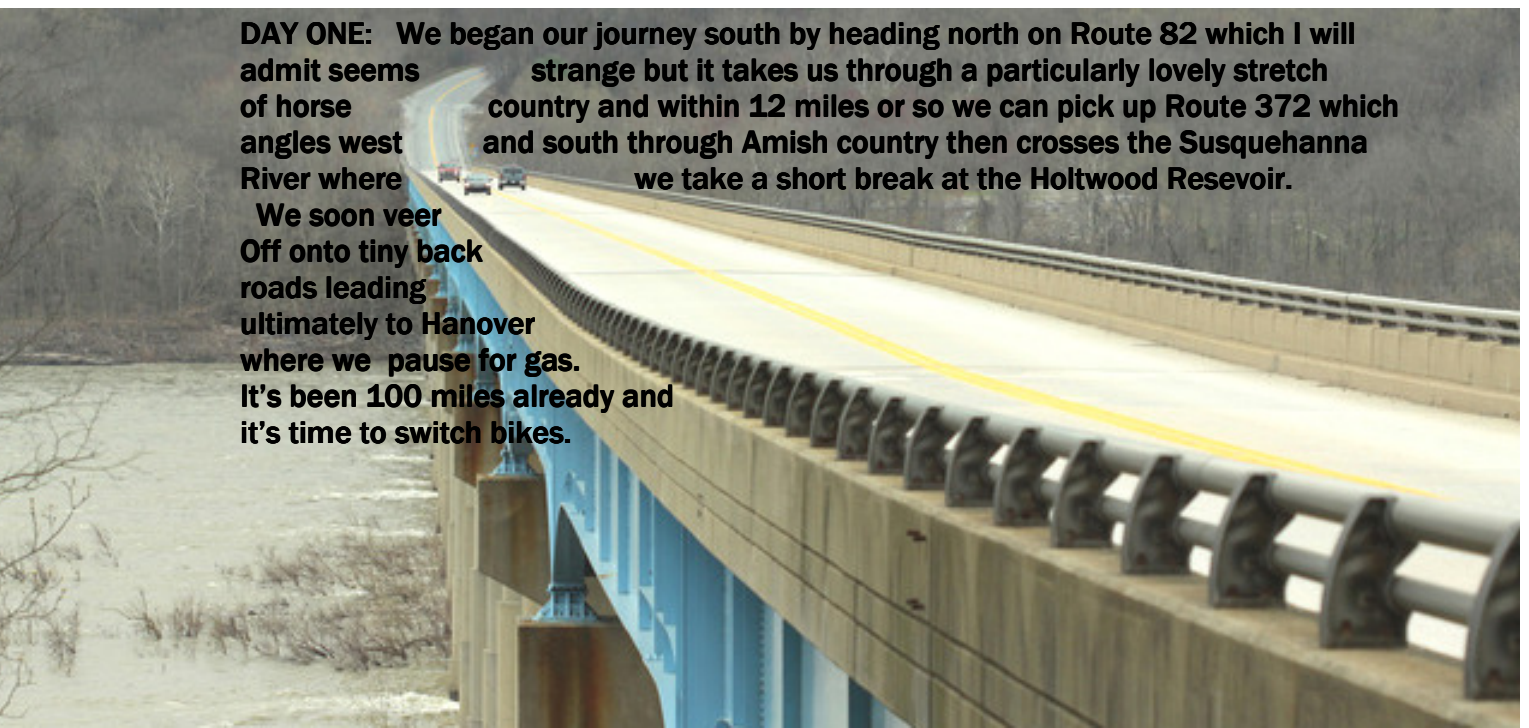
Charles and Kyle flew in from Boston. They have been on RetroTours before. In fact Charles was on the first RetroTour which took place sometime in the last millennium. A successful lawyer whose father was a judge, Charles maintains an incredible collection of Micro-cars including all the usual suspects like Isettas and Messerschmitts but also some very rare examples including Doodle bugs and Amphi-cars. Kyle helps him maintain the fleet when he is not terrorizing sport bike riders on his highly tuned sport mopeds some of which can exceed 80 mph and all of which are capable of maintaining embarrassingly high speeds on tight twisty roads.

Bob, Doug and Rich are all locals and they have all been on several RetroTours in the past. Bob is not so good at waking up early so he spent Friday night here while Doug and Rich showed up early Saturday for breakfast.

The 5 Italian Stallions (and the 2 bmers) were pushed out of the garage early. The majority of the baggage was loaded into the sidecar though a few riders elected to carry a small bag on their bike. We had rain gear and fairly warm riding gear as well. In late September you need to be prepared. We expected to see at least some rain Saturday afternoon. The rest of the weekend looked clear. It was a bit cool at times but never a bother and as for the rain, well, we were prepared. The sun was brilliant at times and while I can't speak for all of the riders, speaking for myself, the riding conditions were challenging but rewarding. Autumn gives us the best riding of the year perhaps and air cooled engines really like cool air.

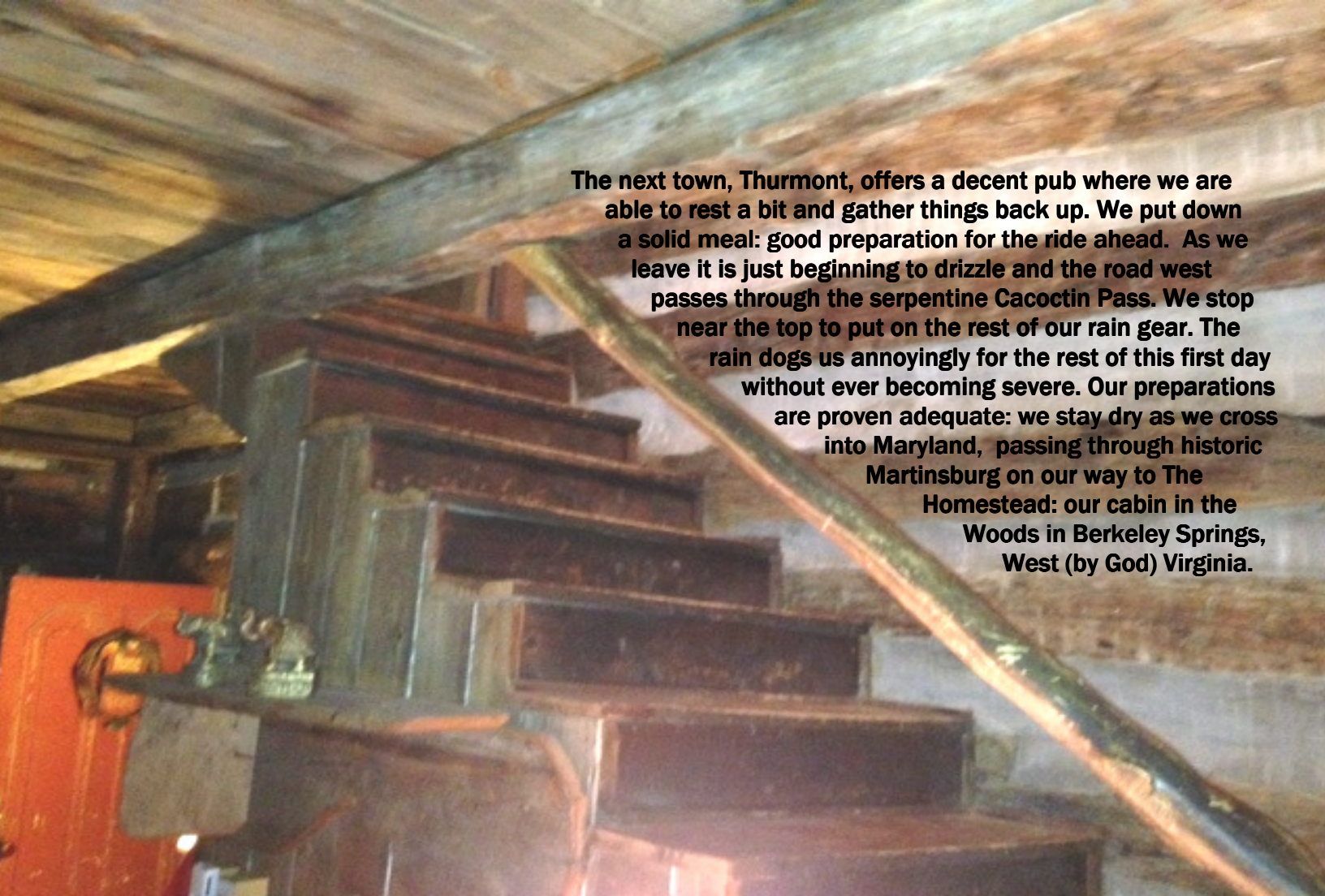
DAY ONE: We began our journey south by heading north on Route 82 which I will admit seems strange but it takes us through a particularly lovely stretch of horse country and within 12 miles or so we can pick up Route 372 which angles west and south through Amish country then crosses the Susquehanna River where we take a short break at the Holtwood Reservoir.

We soon veer Off onto tiny back roads leading ultimately to Hanover where we pause for gas. It's been 100 miles already and it's time to switch bikes.



Hanover has great pretzels but badly timed traffic signals and it always takes a while to sift through the town which is at least pleasant enough to look at. We head south a bit then turn west once more on twisty Route 77. We are feeling a little more frisky now but also a little hungry. As our route crosses a smaller road a car driver misjudges Rich's speed or just doesn't see him on the Laverda. The car pulls away from the stop sign right in front of Richard who is clipping along at a good pace. Richard hits the binders, swerves and just ticks the car's rear bumper with the passenger footrest: no crash but it doesn't get much closer than that. All this I get secondhand: I was riding lead at the time and noticed no one following. I turned around and came back to the situation. The car driver who happened to be a woman stopped as did Richard (he was shaken, not stirred) and she said "Oh my God, are you OK? I didn't even see you (ever heard than before?) Would you like my phone number?" Richard, in his oh so cute British accent never even hesitated and replied, "Well OK but I should tell you that I'm married."

I wish I had been there to see the look on the woman's face but this certainly broke the ice and after inspecting both vehicles and giving the passenger peg a solid kick everyone decided to just continue on. No harm no foul. It's fortunate that the Laverda did not collide with the car broadside: those Italian bikes are built as tough as the tractors from the same factory in Breganze. The car would have been very badly damaged. I felt a little guilty after this. Perhaps my pace had been too quick or maybe I ran too far without eating.



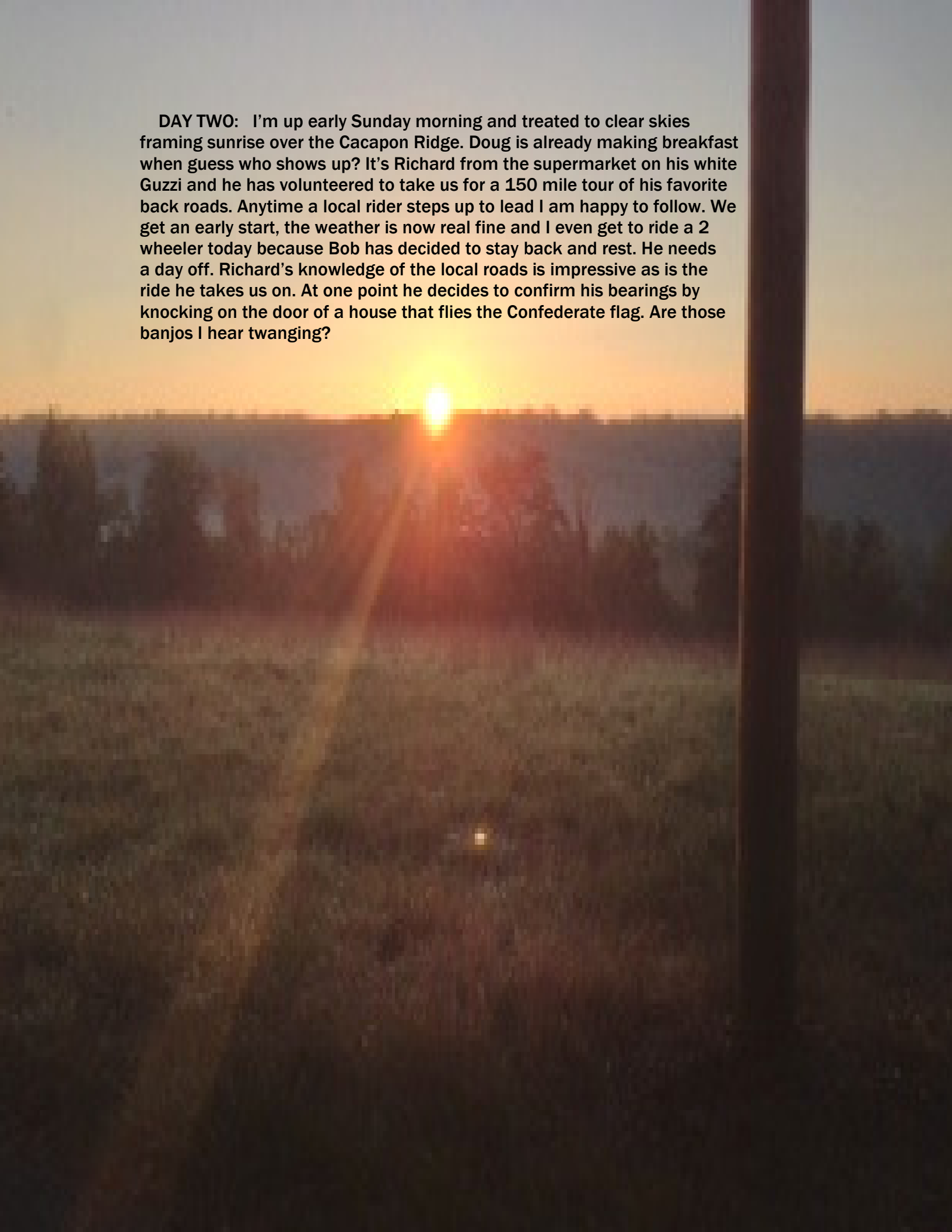
The next town, Thurmont, offers a decent pub where we are able to rest a bit and gather things back up. We put down a solid meal: good preparation for the ride ahead. As we leave it is just beginning to drizzle and the road west passes through the serpentine Cacoctin Pass. We stop near the top to put on the rest of our rain gear. The rain dogs us annoyingly for the rest of this first day without ever becoming severe. Our preparations are proven adequate: we stay dry as we cross into Maryland, passing through historic Martinsburg on our way to The Homestead: our cabin in the Woods in Berkeley Springs, West (by God) Virginia.

We've covered a second hundred miles by now so a gas stop is made in town just before we reach the cabin. The rain is getting serious; good thing we're so close. Doug, the cook and kitchen master has packed pre-made pasta sauce and other bulk items into the sidecar but to feed seven hungry riders 2 dinners and 2 breakfasts requires a major supermarket run. Since I have the sidecar I get the shopping list; Doug will lead everyone to the warm dry cabin while I shop and load the sidecar.

It's a long list and I am a very slow shopper. I eventually manage to find everything and in the process I run into a fellow classic bike enthusiast in the market, Richard, who has what sounds like a fabulous Guzzi. We hit it off pretty good and I invite him to stop by the cabin in the morning to share breakfast and maybe ride with us. I rearrange some of the luggage in the sidecar to make room for all the groceries and slog on up to the cabin where I lay out my soggy gear on the back porch which will serve as my bedroom. As always, Doug delivers an awesome meal. There is a fire and we have beer. Life is good.



DAY TWO: I'm up early Sunday morning and treated to clear skies framing sunrise over the Cacapon Ridge. Doug is already making breakfast when guess who shows up? It's Richard from the supermarket on his white Guzzi and he has volunteered to take us for a 150 mile tour of his favorite back roads. Anytime a local rider steps up to lead I am happy to follow. We get an early start, the weather is now real fine and I even get to ride a 2 wheeler today because Bob has decided to stay back and rest. He needs a day off. Richard's knowledge of the local roads is impressive as is the ride he takes us on. At one point he decides to confirm his bearings by knocking on the door of a house that flies the Confederate flag. Are those banjos I hear twanging?





**Richard's loop takes us briefly into Maryland.
We cross the Potomac on a wooden water
level bridge that is privately owned.
A 50 cent toll is collected by the honor system.**



**Small towns that we pass through have churches
which evoke Godliness
when framed against the puffy clouds and sharp blue sky.**

We re-cross into West Virginia at the Paw Paw Tunnel after experiencing some very remote, very twisted back roads. We catch lunch somewhere along the way and follow a scenic river before returning to our cabin for another of Doug's delicious dinners. Richard, thanks so much for an amazing tour of the area. Be ready for my phone call whenever we're in town. Finding a willing local guide by pure serendipity is one of the greater joys of RetroTouring.



Maryland is only 12 miles wide at this point and we easily cross briefly into Pennsylvania where we crest Town Hill to enjoy a view of Sideling Mountain.



DAY THREE: The Saturday, Sunday, Monday scheduling of this ride was meant to reduce traffic by eliminating Friday afternoon. This seems to have worked well and now on Monday, as we begin the journey home, the traffic is also light and the weather is fine. We use Route 522 to make miles northwards and at Burnt Cabins turn east on wonderful Fannettsburg Road. In addition to some tasty curves, this road features roller coaster like dips and rises that can launch a bike into the air. Take care! We make our way down the mountain to a gas stop and bike change then cross our own path at Hanover. We find Route 851 which takes us due east just north of and paralleling the MD/PA border, AKA the Mason Dixon Line. After Deep Creek and Delta we hit Route One for another Susquehanna River crossing. From here it's just 50 miles to home where Lynn has a hot meal waiting for us. We eat and celebrate. The third Red Neck Gyro is in the books.

