

I had gotten behind on my ride reports in the second half of the 2014 season. I only got three accounts up on the web leaving 8 rides unreported and unrecorded. I did however have lots of e-photos to stir the memories and my plan was to use those photo-files as reference while writing reports over the winter. A computer crash caused those photos to become lost. I successfully procrastinated until now but have run out of excuses so I intend to at least briefly summarize what went on in.....

## .....The Rest of 2014

### **May 31<sup>st</sup> & June 1<sup>st</sup>;**

**Danville, PA:** where 'T' rail was first produced at the start of the industrial revolution. Using local coal to stoke hot fires iron was made into steel and extruded into the railroad rails which stitched the continent together. Nowadays so far as I can see it has some cool historic buildings, a short tunnel and several decent restaurants.

There were three of us: Andy, a regular, Mike, a new client and me. We rode the Moto Guzzi Ambassador, the Norton Commando and the 1970 (my favorite year for this model; what's yours?) Triumph Bonneville. We stayed in a slightly rundown camper on the shores of the Susquehanna and headed into "downtown" Danville for dinner. Things were not percolating in Danville that evening so we headed back after dinner for a peaceful night's rest. Smooth sailing all the way home. Probably 350 miles covered in 2 days.

### **June 14<sup>th</sup>; Local Loops #1:**

The 60's were good to me or for some reason I have no records from this ride. By the process of elimination I believe I have correctly deduced that this was the first appearance of the "British and European Motorcycle Interest Group" 'non-club'. I vaguely recollect riding a loop in two groups of 6 or 7 about 10 minutes apart. My co-leader had a splinter in his eye and pretty much rode all day with one eye shut. Did you hear the one about the one eyed motorcycle tour guide? Ian toughed it out and did fine but did not smile much. I seem to recall the Norton throttle cable breaking about 5 minutes into the ride. We pulled into a disused parking lot where I was to able to install the spare while people relaxed in the shade. A great group of riders, most of who were just back here in 2015 for more.

### **June 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>; Burnt Cabins:**

Three on this ride. I love small groups. I love large groups too but I think they may often work better as two smaller related groups. Richard, a dear friend and RetroTour junkie brought his BFF from Long Island, Jeremy. I know we took the CB500T because I remember playing around with it because it wasn't pulling smoothly under load. I think we also took the Laverda and the third was either the T500 Suzuki or the Moto Morini 500. I do remember someone built a fire and we hung around fireside well into the night. It was a good opportunity to get to know Jeremy a bit; an interesting guy. It was easy to see why he and Richard are so close. Plus of course their two kids are a couple; a real item. We rented a clean camper at a campsite located next to an historic Grist Mill. The

ride to and from Burnt Cabins is a good one with an excellent assortment of Pennsylvania Mountain road.

**Want to know where the name came from?** When whites migrated west in the country's earliest days Native Indians kept getting pushed even further west. Finally the Indians negotiated a tract even further to the west which was to be Indian land, protected from the influx of white settlers. When whites tried settling there anyway the US Army physically removed the illegal settlers from their cabins but as soon as the Army left the settlers went directly back. Finally the Army returned, removed the settlers again and **Burnt** down their **Cabins**. Could this have been a rare case of the US government honoring a treaty with the indigenous Indians?

### **August 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>; Couples Tour:**

This was the best couples tour ever; I have memories! Alison and Vernon came all the way from California. Ron and Debbie from upstate New York also arrived the night before and stayed over. Richard had finally talked his wife Lauraine into a RetroTour. They came down from Long Island. Jordan and Hannah also from upstate New York and friends from work with Ron and Debbie rounded out our group of 5 couples. Several other couples were turned away because our accommodations were maxed out at 10 persons..

My wife Lynn rode her CB400F while I took the role of Sherpa and drove BMW/EML side car outfit, packed with everyone's luggage. I think we actually had everyone here in the house sleeping the night before. Couples rode the Moto Guzzi Ambo', the R90/6, the CX500, and the Triumph 650. Lynn made a nice breakfast and by the time we had again broken bread we already felt comfortable with one another. This was to be an action packed weekend without any marathon mileage days.

We left after breakfast and rode under 10 miles to a local mushroom farm where we were walked through the mushroom houses and learned about the process of growing mushrooms. It was a fascinating 30 minutes about Kennett Square's claim to fame as the Mushroom Capital of the World. We were gifted two huge boxes of large fresh picked fungi which were loaded into the sidecar and we proceeded at a mellow pace along our very scenic route to Bird In Hand, PA where we had lunch at an Amish Salad & Everything Bar followed by a short ride to a waiting Amish buggy and driver who took us on a terribly pleasant 10 mile ride through the countryside. It was slightly touristy but still a very pleasant experience. I'm sure everyone loved it.

After lunch we meandered along back roads to Ephrata where we stayed at a wonderful historic farmhouse B&B. The people who owned it were out of town and we basically had the entire house to ourselves. We sat in wicker rockers on the screened in porch and talked and admired the warmth and quietude of the warm summer evening while enjoying fresh mushrooms and red wine. For dinner we rode or walked about 2 miles to the King Ranch where an Amish family had us into their home to share dinner. The food was home made and hot and we were immersed in Amish culture including a serenade by the kids (were there 6 or 8?) lined up in descending height order. Really something special that was.

In the morning we lost ourselves on more tiny scenic roads then popped out at Renninger's Antique Collectible Market. A huge number of vendors populate the seemingly endless line of stalls. If you can't find it here it probably doesn't exist: art,

bottles, furniture, even a few very valuable and interesting motorcycles. Mostly the girls shopped and the guys eventually found themselves hanging out outside waiting for the ladies to finish but for sure there is something for everyone, preferably something small and not fragile as we *are* on motorcycles.

Back on the road we head for the Hershey Highway, no really that's what it's called. It's in Hershey PA where chocolate was invented or at least marketed really, really well. Besides the gigundous amusement park there is the Antique Auto Club of America Museum which includes a display of motorcycles. It's the girls turn to hang around outside while the boys finish up. It was hot but no one complains. We eat a hotdog. They even have the Oscar Myers Weinermobile here. We look at old bikes, scooters and cars. We say goodbye to street lamps shaped like Hershey Kisses and head home for dinner at one big table, passing Amish buggies by the score. Everyone got along perfectly; it was a very amicable group. There could not have been a better way to spend a weekend with your sweetheart and friendly fellow enthusiast couples.

### **September 20, 21, 22<sup>nd</sup> ; Red Neck Gyro IV:**

**WELCOME TO THE NUT HOUSE.** I am very tempted to just forget about this one rather than try to recount it in any way. From a marketing perspective it might be wiser to just say nothing. Things are not always All Good. In the spirit of Full Disclosure.....

This tour has become known as the International RetroTour From **HELL**. Alain from France crashed out on day one which put us way behind schedule. Poor Alain is a fantastic and skilled rider but he had a momentary lapse and wound up U turning right into the path of a car traveling at 40 or 45 mph. It totaled the Moto Guzzi V50 instantly, twisting and cracking the frame at the steering head. Alain's personal frame was also damaged and he spent the rest of the weekend taking pain pills back at home.

Getting Alain in and out of the hospital delayed our arrival at the cabin until 10 o'clock that night. It was at the end of a long dirt road, off of a mountain road to nowhere; tough to find in the dark as I had never been there. We arrived at our cabin in the woods which really *was* called "The Nut House". It was fantastic. We made dinner and drank a bit. Maybe a bit too much but we needed it. There was also a decent hot tub which is a wonderful thing after a long day and half the night. We slept as late as we liked then had breakfast home cooked for us by the better half of a father and son duo from New Jersey. Also along on this one was Craigg from Down Under. His wife Yvonne and he were on an extended vacation of which RetroTours was a small component. Yvonne had been planning to ride with us but had issues and stayed at home with Lynn. They became fast friends and had a fun weekend mostly.

On the second day we rode a very interesting loop which included crossing the Potomac on a tiny private wooden toll bridge, a stop at the Paw Paw Tunnel and a 12 mile high ridge forest road connecting PA to WV, through MD. I stopped to admire the view and shut of the Moto Guzzi Ambassador, put down the kickstand and stepped off. While I was scanning the horizon the bike came off the side stand and took me out at the knee caps, hyper-extending both legs. I would just have to limp my way through the rest of the trip and ride wounded.

It really hurt. It still hurts.

That second night there were more libations. I have come to believe that moderation is the best policy regarding drinking during a RetroTour. There is no question that drinking before riding is strictly prohibited but what's wrong with having a few beers *after* riding is done for the day? My problem is this: the next day's physical demands and required mental sharpness may be taxing. As riders we need to be on our game at all times but especially when traveling far from home on unfamiliar vintage motorcycles.

We were doing fine and making good time on the way home when the second major crash occurred. The Jersey Dad came off in a sharp turn 2 hours from home. Ironically the spot was only 4 miles from where Alain has crashed 2 days earlier. The rider's posture hinted at and the ambulance crew agreed that there was probably a broken collarbone or shoulder but that immobilizing the arm was all that would likely be done short term. Bravely our crash victim decided he would ride pillion on the big Guzzi. Later he would undergo surgery to repair the shoulder. The Ducati and the small Guzzi would both need to be rounded up by truck in the days to come. I had to put the nasty wrecks out of mind as my mission became getting the survivors back home: this group was shrinking fast and threatening to pop right out of existence.

It had been a **HELL** of a weekend.

### **October 5<sup>th</sup>; Local Loops II:**

I have to control my wife. Lynn likes to cook and usually prepares meals for us. It is common for the group to break bread together at breakfast on the departure day and again at dinner on the eve of our return. Lynn seems to feel that she has to surpass her previous effort with every meal. It has been said more than once that the food is the best part of the tour. Thank you Lynn for continuously out doing yourself and feeding us like royalty.

Two last minute cancellations meant that this would be a group of 7 counting me on the sidecar machine. By request of the riders, we took the Norton and the big Guzzi, the BMW, the Triumph, the XLCR and the T500 along with the sidecar outfit. Our loop included several secret 'mystery roadways' and frequent stops at many local Public Land Preserves. Lunch was at a very authentic Mexican Taceria. Before dinner at home we stopped in a big parking lot where people did a 7 mile 'self guided' route using the supplied route sheets while several riders tried their hand at driving a sidecar outfit while I sat in the chair and yelled encouragement (not disparagement, really).

No major problems that I can remember, this was an easy one; the first of three in a row.

### **October 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>; Unscheduled tour to Bill's Old Bike Barn:**

A group of riders from new New England formed the core for this ride. Most of them are involved in motorcycle rider training and with their tight in season schedule they had asked for a custom ride NOT on the regular posted RetroTours schedule. We rode 5 bikes: the RD400, the Laverda 750, the Harley XLCR, the BMW R90/6 and the BSA 650 Lightning. Bob and his significant other Kelly each rode their own bikes as did Peg, an electrician from the Boston area and a dear old friend. Al and his Mrs. would ride two-up for the weekend. The morning was misty. Ok that's spun a bit optimistically; I admit that it was raining. We delayed leaving until it let up a bit but as we rode north the mist returned. We weren't getting soaked but the moisture made us chilly and tense; the roads were slick and visibility was quite poor as our face shields kept fogging up. We slogged along knowing or at least hoping that we would ride out of it sooner or later.

Kelly had never kick started a bike before her first RetroTour. She was on the BSA which kept stalling; maybe it didn't like the weather. Eventually Kelly began to tire and become frustrated from all the kicking. Bob came to her rescue, swapping bikes, putting her on the electric start Harley. Cold, tired, unable to see clearly, on a strange, heavy, slow turning bike and on slick curvy forest roads Kelly ran off the road, landing fortunately unhurt in a soft culvert without actually tipping over. By the time I circled back the bike was back on the road and people were searching for the broken shift lever which is still out there somewhere I suppose. A pair of vice grips was zip tied shut tight onto the remaining nub of the shift pedal for the rest of the weekend. Somewhat surprisingly, the vice grip may have been more comfortable to operate than the stock lever which requires "shifting-from-the-hip" due to its awkward positioning. Fortunately the big Harley can pretty much be shifted into 4<sup>th</sup> and left there.

The weather did eventually clear and after a glorious day of riding we had a decent steak dinner then retired to our modern luxury cabins just outside of Shickshinny, PA. On Sunday morning we visited the local breakfast diner on the way to Bill's Old Bike Barn which Bill and Judy opened early just for us! We had the complete run of the place for about 2 hours and left as the first regular visitors were arriving.

As daylight began to fade so did the battery on the BSA. It will run with a flat battery but not very well and it will not support the headlight. I rode the BSA the last 75 miles to home after disconnecting the brake light and I refrained from using the horn or blinkers which would have killed the engine. Eventually it became dark enough to require lights so I had Peg ride in my "vest pocket" while I used her headlight to illuminate the way. In this manner we managed to make it home a little later than usual but no worse for wear. A new battery and regulator has since sorted the BSA and a few beers and a hot meal at home soon had us sorted as well and feeling 'Boston Strong'.

### **October 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>; Chincoteague Island:**

Rich Anderson, Joel Oswald, Charles Gould, Kyle Grendell. This late in the season electric vests are a must on these unfaired bikes. We were well prepared with warm clothing and each bike had an outlet for electrically heated gear. I honestly cannot remember which bikes we were on but I still have the route sheets which show that we rode south on Delaware route 15 south which zig zags through the soy bean fields. We crossed small rivers on tiny ferry boats and met up with my friend Keith in Salisbury, MD. Keith led us on some of his favorite back roads which included a stop for farm fresh homemade ice cream. We arrived in good shape on the island after visiting the Wallops NASA Launch facility, checked into our cute cabin, had seafood steak and rinks for dinner and visited the indoor hot tub and pool. Now that's the way to wind up a great day of riding!

On Sunday we stopped briefly at Assateague National Seashore to admire the wild ponies free ranging about the beach then passed through Ocean City, a massive summer resort. The crowds were long gone but I thought I heard a ghostlike calliope whispering in the ocean breeze. DE route 9 follows the Delaware River and took us north, just missing the Dover Air Force Base Museum of Transportation as it closed art 4. Everyone rode very well and the weekend was a most enjoyable way to bring the 2014 season to a close.

**Lots of great riding, some unfortunate mishaps and plenty of real adventure.....**



..... pretty much sums up the second half of 2014. Both the Moto Guzzi V50 and the Ducati 860GT have been **repaired** and returned to service. Truthfully, both bikes are in better shape now than before. Both riders have healed and are hopefully enjoying the 2015 riding season at this time.

I returned to Chincoteague several times in the weeks following the last ride. First to view the space shuttle re-supply rocket launch. This was cancelled so I returned again to see the rocket finally launch only to blow up after 10 seconds. Any misfortune experienced on RetroTours Pales in comparison to that calamity.

I am trying very hard to keep up with ride reports this year and apologize for any gaps or inaccuracies in the summaries above

