

Ride Report: BARBER & SONS, Sunday, April 28th, 2019

How a young man took a chance and built a family business: Nick started the business over 30 years ago, just as his first son was being born and now he, and his sons Nick (you can call him Nikko; just not Nicky) and Joey run several salons in the Philadelphia area, and they don't just do female clients. In the window at the front of an upscale hair cutting shop on posh Rittenhouse Square, there is a gorgeous Norton Commando with a few discreet yet effective modifications, done in the spirit of Paul Dunstall. While you wait, help yourself to a free beer or two. Like the idea of getting a haircut in a place like this?

This one-day custom RetroTour was a birthday celebration for Nick. He does not look his age, and yes, his haircut is impeccable. I'll tell you what, that man can ride; he had the XLCR sideways-- both ways at once-- on one short stretch of gravel road. All three gentlemen rode beautifully. I scared myself more than they scared me. I remember, I think it was Joey on the Triumph, behind me on the CX500.....In my mirrors, I could see how smoothly he was riding. On some of the back roads, he definitely took advantage of the Bonneville's steady handling, bending the bike around the curves. We rode through Peach Bottom, a fertile crescent along the Susquehanna River. Generally, out of town folks are surprised at the sheer beauty and size of the Mighty Susq-ie. The view from The Pinnacles Lookout, where athletic types might carefully walk out on a rocky escarpment and stand 700 feet above the broad river below, is quite memorable. This is a place where eagles soar; quite literally.

Before departing, we sat down together to break bread. Lynn made us a hearty breakfast and we became acquainted with each other as we ate. We sat down at 9, ate, had a quick rider's meeting, and went downstairs to meet the bikes.



Nick chose the Harley, Nikko the Commando, and Joey the Bonnie. I rode the CX500. I offered to swap bikes with anyone at any time, but I got no offers. Actually, I was OK with that. Love that Honda!

I think we all chose bikes we wanted to experience fully, so no bike swaps occurred all day.

I also think that everyone was feeling good about their choice. Nick especially loved the Harley. He said it reminded him of a huge displacement modern Guzzi that he had. Sometimes too much is not enough! Joey was able to compare the Bonneville to his modern Triumph, while Nikko quickly mastered the mysterious art of kickstarting the Norton.

This custom tour, arranged for this family of three riders, did not appear on the website schedule. We do custom tours for small groups or large, usually 3-5 per year. This family has ridden together since the kids were small and everyone went dirt riding together. Eventually this morphed into street riding, mostly on cool & vintage stuff, modern Ducatis, a Honda Dream, a Norton Commando. How about a pumped-up old-school Vespa scooter? A 200cc motor with bumped up displacement, compression, and especially performance. Expansion chamber? Of course! These guys are the real thing, and I love how they have combined their love of motorcycles with their hair salon/barber shop business.

We enjoyed one another's company after breakfast just long enough for it to start to drizzle. We were confident this was nothing more than a quick shower and foolishly perhaps, we left our rain gear mostly behind. I would have to say that we were lucky *not* to have regretted that decision. We skirted several showers throughout the day but did not catch a single one. We stayed completely dry!

After a quick primer on control location and starting procedures, we got going with nary a stall, but did not yet make for the open road, heading instead, directly to church, this being a Sunday ride and all. Seriously, I had made a commitment for RetroTours to put in its annual appearance at the local Blessing of the Bikes which is held at the amazing Powerplace Church, just a few miles from home. The turnout of bikes was way down on account of the slightly sketchy weather, but I knew that my riders would enjoy checking out the very upbeat church which is built into a flex-space warehouse. The interior décor and atmosphere are fabulous; inspiring even. There are supervised rooms for kids to play in, and a coffee and pastry bar. The young-looking congregation is in the main hall, where, up on a large stage, the guitar playing choir make rock and roll Christian music. After mass, everyone comes outside where there are about 50 bikes of all sorts to look at, and the pastor makes a blessing for the safety

of the riders and the sound mechanical condition of their bikes.

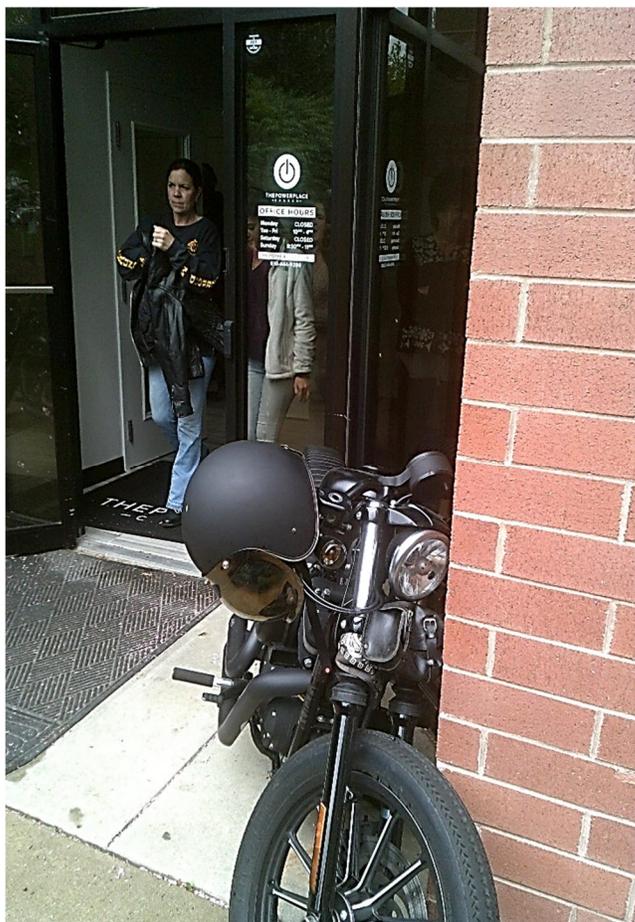
Every little bit helps.

This is right around the time when we leave. Its time to hit the road for real: the rain has let up; maybe there is a God.





The congregation has left the church; we all await The Blessing of the Bikes.



The bikes are all lined up for the mass blessing way in the back, out of sight.

Except for this one, parked in the doorway to welcome everyone to church. This is not your usual church, and this is not your usual door stop.

OK, so that whole church thing was an unusual way to start our tour. But I liked it—I think we all did!

Now we make our way through covered bridges and across rolling farmlands, on 1 and 2 lane roads, some spotted liberally with the vehicular emissions from Amish horse-drawn buggies that passed this way an hour ago-- on the way to church themselves. We make a short stop at the birthplace of Robert Fulton. Its not open to the public until Memorial Day, but I have special permission to stop there and pee on a tree that Robert Fulton himself may very well have peed on back in the 1800's. After this brief history lesson, we pass by the Holtwood Dam and pick up River Road, following the east bank northwards, deviating to stop in at The Pinnacles Scenic Overlook. Here, several Amish families are picnicking "in the sky": the view is beautiful: exciting but calming at the same time. The little Amish kids with pudding bowl haircuts are cute. We take it all in then re-mount, careful as we leave not to spook the well- disciplined Amish horses tied up at one end of the gravel parking area.



Next we resume River Road which snakes along the riverbank, up and down the hills, passing Turkey Hill and Safe Harbor on the way to Columbia. Here, we pass rows of antique shops operating out of recommissioned industrial buildings as we make our way onto the Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge. The broad bridge boulevard crosses the river, over a mile long and 2 very wide lanes wide. On the west bank now, we immediately pull into another old industrial complex, once a silk factory, now the John Wright Restaurant. We enjoy a buffet lunch while marveling at our perfect view of the bridge, its 26 pre-formed concrete archways giving the architecture a distinct Roman flair.



Joseph Triumphs over the Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge, as we suit up after lunch. Still no rain!



Our bodies are fully re-fueled now, and though it is cloudy and a bit cool, everyone is comfortable enough at our relatively low speeds. On these back roads, we are having a blast at 30-50 mph, following the west bank now, heading south towards home. A fork to the left brings us to the Indian Steps Museum, where, as the only visitors, we enjoy a fascinating tour from a committed docent. **“Off the beaten path, and well worth the visit, Indian Steps offers a glimpse into the past history of the indigenous peoples of the Susquehanna River Valley. The beautiful setting, museum, and friendly, knowledgeable staff make for a memorable time.”**



The table inside is made of one giant piece of rock, mined nearby and shaped and polished on-site into a perfect 2-ton tabletop. A wall was taken out to bring in the raw material which was formed in place by hand in the early 1900's. This room is where the boys used to drink whiskey, smoke cigars, and party: quite literally a man-cave.



An original stained-glass work of art, over 100 years old.

From here we continue south along route 623S, through Flintville and into Maryland, then keep the Mason-Dixon Line to our left until re-crossing into PA further east, at Lewisville. Past Landenburg, we make a final gas stop 5 or 6 miles from home and arrive to a warm, glowing fire in the wood stove, cold beers, and wine with snacks, as Lynn lays out a meal fit for a king.



With 3 of us on reserve, we just made it to the penultimate gas stop in Maryland, right after crossing over the Connewingo Dam.

That's Joey left and Nikko, right. They surely represent excellence in men's grooming, as well as in motorcycling.

A real class act.

