

LOCAL LOOPS # II, OCTOBER 5TH, 2013

We ran two local Loops rides this year due to the event's immense popularity. To be perfectly truthful, there is a part of me that prefers overnight rides of two, three, four or more days. I love seeing strangers come together over the course of a multi-day trip. Everyone brings something special to the group and the challenge of unsupported long range travel on vintage bikes truly adds to the adventure, bringing out the best in us all.

For the slightly less adventurous, or riders who just want to sample old bikes without committing several days, Local Loops seems to fit the bill. Previously Local Loops had riders make one 5 mile loop for familiarization with procedures, the bikes and the immediate surroundings, followed by loops of 15, 30 and 60 miles. However, back in June, while we were eating lunch after the 30 mile loop some of the riders suggested that they might prefer to take repeated 5 mile loops for the afternoon, switching bikes after each loop, so that everyone could try as many bikes as possible. Think of a bunch of kids in a candy store with an open account. Without thinking things through, I allowed this which resulted in a continuous stream of motorcycles and riders moving through our quiet rural development for several hours. This was a serious judgmental error on my part and the outcome was predictable.

Some neighbors were sitting on their front porch enjoying a peaceful afternoon but soon became distraught due to the unusual traffic. To make a long story short the township has decided that I should not base my business at my house despite the fact that there had been no other complaints in 15 years. My apologies and assurances that this will never happen again have fallen on deaf ears. The result is that while I may still be able to conduct tours essentially as I have in the past, some procedural changes are being made which are at best a bit of a nuisance.

One interesting offshoot of all of this is that Local Loops has been restructured a bit. We now leave once in the morning and return once in the late afternoon out of respect for the neighbors. The ironic thing is that this has actually made Local Loops a more interesting and enjoyable one day event. This is how we did it.



The ride was sold out well in advance. Five riders were native to Pennsylvania, four riders crossed the Delaware River from New Jersey, and there was one rider from each of sunny California, frigid Ontario and Harlem in the Big Apple. Riders ranged from seasoned veterans to relative 'newbies' and from early twenties to early seventies. They arrived by car, by bus, by motorcycle and by airplane. Some arrived Friday afternoon or evening, had dinner and/or stayed over for free, while others rolled in early on Saturday morning. We shared a nice continental breakfast in the morning, not too early, and started riding at 10. Thankfully, co-guide Doug S. was available to help with this large group; a motley crew indeed:



Paul R, West Grove, PA
Colin H, Langhorne, PA
Patrick H, Langhorne, PA
Cliff L, Yardley, PA
John W, Wilburton, PA

Paul M, Caledon, Ontario
Kevin H, Cerritos, CA
Mike K, New York, NY

Josh K, Browns Mill, NJ
Brian G, Titusville, NJ
Michael A, Hamilton, NJ
Jacek S, Ewings, NJ

I had 20 or more bikes prepped and ready and had each rider choose one. Doug, my co-guide, chose a bike too and I drove the sidecar rig with plenty of cold water and some snacks. In all, there were thirteen bikes plus the rig. We rode in two groups of seven on identical routes about 10 minutes apart. We rode:

Moto Morini 500 Strada
Ducati 500 Desmo Sport
Benelli 650 Tornado
Laverda 750SF
Ducati 860GT

Norton 750 Commando Fastback
Rickman Royal Enfield 750
Yamaha RD400
Kawasaki 6560 W3
Honda CX500

BMW R90/6
BMW R100S/RS/EML
Harley Davidson XLCR 1000
BSA 650 Lightning

Each rider performed a safety checklist on the bike he had chosen to start out on and we all suited up. Start procedures were explained, engines were fired up and without a warm-up we eased down our long private drive towards public roads. We visited two or three small parks in the area, squeezing about 25 miles into the distance between each. The route covered many of my favorite local back roads and they are SWEET! We stopped at these public areas to chat, use the facilities, swap bikes and drink or snack. At 1 o'clock we did a similar stop at one of Kennett Square's best and most authentic taterias to enjoy lunch. Another park or two, all connected by fabulous Brandywine Valley roads and colorful autumn scenery and we ended up at a large High School parking lot with picnic tables and port-o-potties.

At the high school, riders took a break and relaxed on the lawn or rode the bike(s) of their choice on a preplanned 7 mile loop using provided route sheets. This way everyone could try as many of the bikes as desired without crowding the private roads in my development. Some riders just rested and a few tried operating the sidecar rig in the big parking lot with me in the chair shouting "Move to the left, you almost hit the corner of that parked car@!!!~" and such; it was just a bit scary. Finally towards 5 o'clock we regrouped and rode the short distance back to the house where a great sit down meal was waiting thanks to the efforts of my incredibly tolerant wife Lynn who fortunately loves to cook.

Not everyone got to ride every bike but most riders sampled at least half a dozen and hopefully if they want to try more, they will return for another slice of the pie. As it turns out this format was nearly perfect. The temperature was warm-ish, autumn was just getting colorful-ish, lunch and especially dinner was delicious. La Pena Mexicana is a great authentic Mexican Taco joint where the help No Hablan Englaise. The food is amazing, the prices are great and the ambience is very entertaining. Lunch and dinner were both included in the tour fee. We were back home around 5 after covering about 150 miles. Judging by the comments from the riders, and the fact that the 2014 version of this ride sold out within days of being posted at www.retrotours.com the revised format was quite successful and this general format will probably be repeated in 2014.







