

May 2010

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky
MOA #146 RA #4-49 <http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>

Top Bun

(check out the luggage rack)

Photo by Lee Thompson

See "Seriousness, and
the Code of Bluegrass Beemers"
Page 4

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Contact Randolph Scott for more details.
randolph@randolphscottinsurance.com

Seriousness, and the Code of Bluegrass Beemers

Feeling a little down?

Ride on Saturday morning to Frisch's on Harrodsburg Road in Lexington for the weekly 7 am breakfast and tire-kicking session among Bluegrass Beemers.

We are an eclectic group of motorcyclists loosely assembled around an interest in, well, all kinds of things, but most of us are serious about our motorcycling. Well, sort of serious.

Actually, one of the benefits of hanging out with Bluegrass Beemers is that you don't have to take much of anything too seriously. In fact, we prefer that you do not take anything too seriously, except honoring the Code of Bluegrass Beemers.

Honoring the Code is especially noteworthy if you must, by the nature of your work or lifestyle, take things seriously all week long.

On Saturday morning, however, at least for a couple of hours, you can toss all that seriousness and focus on stuff such as that captured by Lee Thompson with his iPhone, pictured on the cover and on this page.

"Top Bun," is about as serious as it gets on Saturday.

Not all clubs are this functional, as you may well understand. Some people get it immediately; others just do not get it at all.

People who do not get it are so stiff with life that they have difficulty even getting out of bed.

"You guys meet too early," they say.

Hey, I know guys who are at the restaurant well before it opens, even in the dead of winter. With ice on the pavement. But they get it, and can't wait

to have it.

I recently worked myself into a major constipation over stuff over which I should have some control, but have somehow surrendered to seriousness.

That's not cool for anyone, especially someone like me who doesn't really have to do anything much beyond that which falls into the arena of choice.

I recently violated the Code. I got dark and cloudy, dumping seriousness at the table.

Tablemates were kind in not saying much of anything serious back to me.

So, here we are with a Frisch's Big Boy on the tail of Stan's FJR and on Geoph's Sportster, images that perfectly capture the degree of gravity of a Bluegrass Beemers gathering on Saturday morning.

If this column strikes you as a waste of electronic space and of your time, then you have entered the dreaded Zone of Seriousness.

Do you feel compelled to ask, "What's your point?" when someone utters something incomprehensible or just plain stupid?

Do you weigh everything, as opposed to simply accepting at face value and moving on?

I know, some of us are damaged from too much life. Some of us carry more than our share of acquired seriousness. There's a lot of that to go around, and sometimes we cannot dodge what's coming.

Still, we owe it to ourselves and fellow Beemerphiles (I use that term loosely to encompass all who are among us on Saturday, regardless of the brand of bike ridden, because



Top Bun 2 Photo by Lee Thompson

that acceptance *is part of the Code*, and if that reality bugs you a little, then you need to take a deep breath and "chill" as the "Y" generation says) to work on this aspect of our social code, to resist bringing any seriousness to the table.

In the cases of life's most difficult struggles, we understand and adjust, as anyone who cares about another person will.

Otherwise, the Code of Seriousness must rule.

We are, after all, the club without bylaws, without business meetings, without a Board of Directors, without....rules.

There stands, however, the Code.

So, let us be on with the stuff that doesn't, but really does matter, that which we honor, that which draws us from a cozy bed on a crisp Saturday morning.

—Paul Elwyn

**Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.
Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #4-49**

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Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.

**Back issues of Apex can be accessed at
<http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>**

**Join us at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Rd.
on any Saturday, 7-9:30 a.m.**

Part 2

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa

Hatari it isn't

Early on Sunday morning, February 14th, Darryl and his wife Ann came to the Marloot house in their SUV to guide us to the train station. It's about 35 miles, mostly N-Road ("interstate" to us) and on a Sunday morning, traffic was only slightly chaotic.

Think about going into Cincinnati from northern Kentucky, but more cars, faster and on the left side of the road.

Coming into Johannesburg we see a typical modern city, tall buildings with glass and steel, mixed with the degradation of disuse and vandalism, typical when there is a wide disparity of prosperity.

I recall having the same sensation in a part of Philadelphia several years ago. We arrived at the train station at about 8 AM,

weaving our way through the narrow corridors leading down to the platform. I was amazed at how Darryl could steer the large car through the bollards, leaving barely enough clearance to avoid trading paint. For him, just another day at the office.

Once on the platform, we quickly lined up with the bikes of the other participants and met our guides for the second half of the tour. Johan Badenhorst is the JB of JB Train Tours, and it was quickly obvious that he'd done this before.

With military precision, the group was assembled and the bikes loaded on the boxcar almost before I knew what happened...and I was the one doing the loading.

The group assembled outside



John and Brenda Rice spent 10 days touring South Africa.

On the train car



the car for Johann to give us introductions and the first of what would become familiar briefings on the day's activities. We were the only Americans in the tour so he gave the lectures in English, not Afrikaans which was everyone else's first language. We also were about 10 years older than the next nearest couple to us, Ian and Sunny, and then another 10 years or more separated us from the rest.

The machines were mainly sport-touring, a BMW K 1300GT, a Kawasaki 1200, an older Kawasaki sportbike and two Yamaha sportbikes piloted by the wives of two couples with the husbands on similar rides. Two BMW 800 GS's rounded out the group, with Johan on his F650GS and "sweep" rider Piet deKlerk on an older R1100R with a yellow headlight cover.

We were told that the group would always stay together, with Johan in the front and Piet in the back and that at each place where a turn was to be made from a road, we would

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa *Hatari* it isn't

pull over and stop until Johan could see Piet's yellow light coming. Gas and sightseeing stops would be planned and no stops other than those would be made.

Cruising speed would typically be 120 KmPH (about 74 mph) sometimes higher, and with that instruction, Johan looked specifically at me. I didn't know why until the end of the tour.

The train was running a bit late, as we found out, on what they call "African time" which is their way of saying that they'll get to it when they can. Inside the terminal, it was a beehive of activity with people milling about everywhere, dozens of languages being spoken and nearly every nationality and ethnic group I could imagine hurrying from one place to another on what must have been very important errands.

Back on the platform, the train was still idling, so we sat for some people-watching. An older couple, probably late's 60's or thereabouts, arrived on the scene with a flurry of activity and a mountain of assorted luggage. The man, pushed in a wheelchair, was wearing a white suit and hat, looking very much like a character from any of the period piece dramas we'd enjoyed from the BBC. He spoke with a proper British accent and every statement was finished with a broad smile as if he just knew you had been tremendously enlightened by his contribution. His wife was small, slender and exactly as fussy about his welfare as one would expect from watching the aforementioned BBC productions. The husband arose shakily from his wheelchair and

walked stiff-legged with his cane over to greet and regale us, trailed by the wife who was busily brushing at the linen of his suit for imperfections only she could see. I wondered for a moment if we had stumbled onto a film set.

At last the call came for us to board and there was the frantic bundling of our gear onto the car, the finding our sleeper unit and settling in before the train finally began moving. Our group had it's own car, next in line from the dining car, and our berth was right in the middle.



Our cell for the next 24 hours. The seats fold down into bunks.

I hadn't been on an overnight train before, but I'd seen several in the movies, and one thing I recalled was that if you had a double room, it was always the murderer who came to stay in the other bunk. I'd never seen a film about sleeper trains where at least one passenger didn't end up dead and someone else, I hoped not me, ended up chasing or being chased across the top of the moving cars, headed for the inevitable tunnel. Fortunately, we had a single berth, so the only potential for murder was if Brenda decided to off me during the trip, which probably wouldn't happen, at least not

until we finished the riding part.

As the train left the station, we moved through the city and past some township areas. In most places, train tracks don't run through the most affluent suburbs and Africa is no exception. Until we were a few miles out of town, the scenery was mainly industrial settings, apartment blocks with wire barriers and garbage, lots and lots of garbage thrown on the tracks and bordering banks. From the train we could see townships that went on for miles, hundreds of acres of poverty so abysmal that it is completely unimaginable to our privileged selves. There are in places blocks of small apartments with very tiny patios ringed by high fences topped with razor wire. One's first thought is that there couldn't be much in such impoverished places worth protecting with such extreme measures, then the second thought is for the townships and the people we have seen with no apparent means of shelter and support. In poverty that deep, even the contents of a small apartment would be worth stealing.

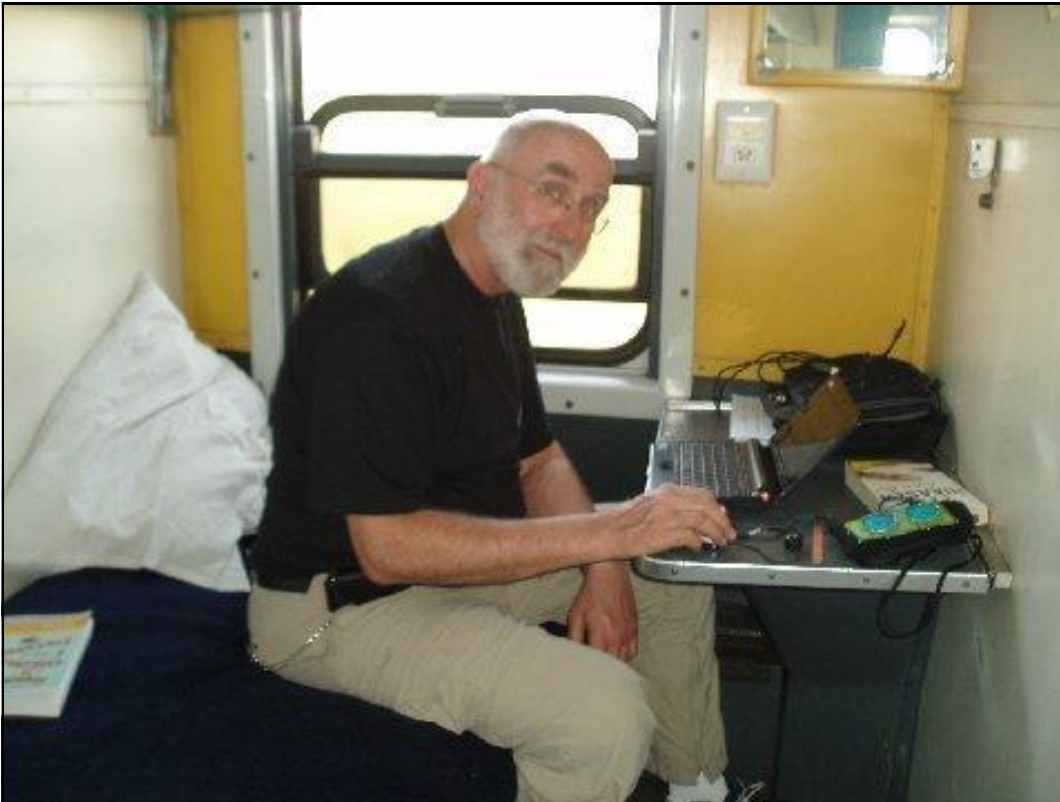
Once out in the countryside, we could stand in the gently swaying corridor outside our room and watch the fields and farms roll by. Herds of cattle grazed in the open, looking quite normal to us, then there would appear herds of Impala, wildebeest with the occasional Kudu. There were occasional fields of grapes, but no "row crops" that we could discern for the most part.

Just outside of Kimberly, the diamond capitol, there is the lake that is reportedly one of the only two breeding grounds for the pink flamingo. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands of the long-legged pink birds, on the water and in the air. One of our group told us

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posed the scheme, stopping it....for now. It seems that everywhere, greed always prowls



Grizzled scribe at work producing drivels

that a developer “gave a backhand” (i.e. bribe) to an official and got the go-ahead to build a development that would have ruined the habitat. Fortunately an investigative reporter got wind of the story and ex-

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look outside to see the tangled wrecks of other train cars, much like ours, with children playing on the metal carcasses. A woman on our train told us that this is the aftermath of a recent derailment. How comforting !

When bedtime arrived, Brenda decided she wanted the top bunk because it was smaller, less room for me, and because she didn't want my considerable bulk hanging above her in the night if the hinges failed. However, the distance between the top and bottom bunks proved to be more than she could span and lift herself, so I got the top by default. I could reach it by stepping gingerly on the little foldout table and hoisting myself up backwards onto the deck. Getting down was a bit more precarious, since if I misstepped, I would land on Brenda (go back to the part about murder, above).

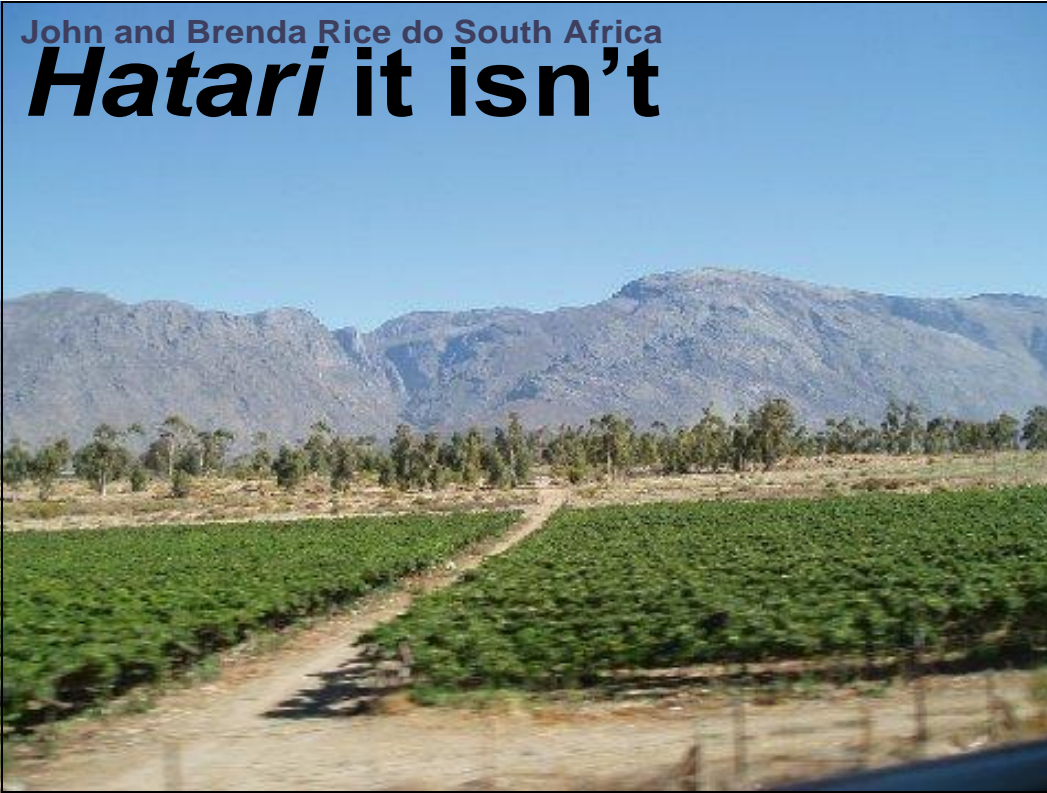
Late in the night, the train stopped out in the Karoo probably to let another go by, and Brenda woke me to look out the window.

I've been in the American desert at night, but even there I've never before been this far away from any source of artificial light. The night sky above us seemed absolutely endless and with more stars than either of us had ever beheld. The foggy smear of the Milky Way was clearly visible spreading across the blackness over our heads. Stars blinked all the way to the horizon as far as we could see in any direction. The Southern Cross was hanging there, just like in the pictures. If we'd seen nothing else on this trip, that view alone would have made it worth the effort. The Great Karoo Desert looks not like the Sahara pictures we've all seen, but instead remarkably like Arizona. There are broad expanses of sandy, rocky soil populated



OK, so train travel isn't always so safe. I'll stick with motorcycles, thank you.

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa *Hatari* it isn't



Grapes being grown in the Karoo, a rare bit of greenery

The tour gathers itself together.

by low scrub brush and pucker-bushes, even the occasional cactus in some parts, rimmed by mountains that would look perfectly at home in any western movie you've seen. Lots of hiding places in the rocks for square-jawed Cowboys (who are always too clean to have been riding the trail for days) and Indians who sometimes have the tan line from a wrist-watch giving away their modern status. Unlike Arizona, the

Karoo is huge, taking nearly 24 hours to cross by train.

About half way to Capetown, I was quite glad we'd chosen the rail route rather than what would have been at least a two-day ride on straight roads in oppressive heat. Monday morning we stopped at the station in Worcester, a small town north of Capetown, to unload. Our gear would go on to the hotel in the big city where we would arrive by bike

that evening.

The bikes were extracted from the car quickly as they had been loaded. There is something about riding a motorcycle down a metal ramp onto a train platform in a foreign country that just makes one feel adventurous. Not in Ted Simon's league, perhaps, but exotic nonetheless.

We gathered in a small lot for another of Johan's lectures before starting out. As would be our usual pattern, we would stop for gas in a few minutes, where everyone would fill up whether they thought they needed to or not. We would proceed through town to Hexriver Pass. We would have today to sort out our position in the group and then we were to keep those positions for the remainder of the tour.

The group started out from the station lot, down a few side streets and immediately pulled into a gas station. In South Africa, one cannot pump one's own gas. Uniformed attendants spring to your aid as soon as you stop, filling your tank with your desired fuel and then taking the cash or debit card off to the office for processing. Gas stations here don't take credit cards. We used cash, but most of our group used the debit cards. This procedure works well, unless there are 14 bikes being done at once, which takes a bit of doing and time.

As we left the station, I tried to fall into the last spot before Piet, to gauge where I should be in the lineup. After initially trying to stay in the back, I realized that some of the riders were less comfortable with the pace, so I moved up behind the young couple on the K1300GT, mainly because she was wearing a yellow helmet that I thought would be easy to keep track of. They rode easily and quickly, as did most of the others at the front of the line. I was impressed by the confi-



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From the top of Gydo Pass

dence and skill of the riders.

The mountains down here in the south were more rugged than those in the first part of the tour up north, not as tamed by time and weather. Brown, not green, was the predominant color in the first few days. The hillsides were craggy and the passes more jagged, reminding me of the Rockies rather than the Blue Ridge. For the first few hours we ascended and descended mountain roads that seemed to have no straight pieces at all, so many that I lost track. I later looked at the map and saw that we hadn't covered much linear distance but had been making ever wider circles through the hills.

As was to become common in this Cape portion, we stopped at overlooks for views that seemed only possible from an airplane, then moments later we were in that valley looking up at the peaks from which we had just come. At each turnoff, as promised, the group pulled over and waited for Piet's yellow light to appear, signaling that

the end of the convoy was approaching, then moved on. Around noon, we went down into a wine-growing val-

ley to the Slanghoek (Afrikaans for "Snake Hook" describing the curves of the river....and the road....in the valley) for lunch.

We crossed the river on a single lane concrete bridge, more a path really, that showed evidence of the water having crossed over it about as often as under it, then up the drive to the resort. Off the bikes, we walked up a leafy path to an outdoor shelter where a buffet was laid out for us, including baboti, my new-found favorite food. It's a Cape Malay dish, a sort of ground-meat casserole with subtle and unusual spicing, topped by an egg batter....it tastes a lot better than it sounds.

After eating, we took a quick stroll through the vines, then with military precision, we were rounded up and back on the bikes for the afternoon. The highlight of this portion of the day was the Bainskloof Pass (many of these passes bear the suffix "kloof" which is, as near as I could tell,

what we in the US would call a canyon in the west and a valley in the east. The word seems to have common roots with our "cleft" and refers to the kind of deep, meandering split usually formed by flowing water.) This pass twisted back on itself following the path of a river that had really, really worked for its passage through rock that was so white it seemed painted. There wasn't a fifty yard stretch without the bike canted sharply to one side or the other. I couldn't see as much of the scenery as Brenda, since too long a look would have us over the side and inspecting the water a bit too closely. The towering sides of the canyon were populated by square-cut rocks ranging from car-size to house-size, only feet apart, looking as if some celestial hand had sprinkled them like seasoning on a mounded plate. (Gathered to take stock after traversing Bainskloof Pass) On the other side of the pass, we emerged on a road cut into the side of a mountain, brown and uncluttered, as if it wasn't related to what we'd just come through, winding down and down into another valley headed into the plains toward Capetown.

Soon we merged onto the N 1, the main "interstate" that is part of the network of such superhighways one would expect leading into any major metropolitan area. Here we first experienced what would become our common end to the days in the Cape. Johan was adamant that the group stay together on the highway and that we not let any cars slip into our convoy. This was fine with me, since I had no idea where we were or where we were headed, certainly not where the hotel was located, so I was not going to lose sight of the leaders, no matter what. As we got nearer to the city, the traffic thickened (it was about 6 PM on a Mon-

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Resort at Slanghoek



Brenda samples the wine grapes at Slanghoek.

day night) and got faster. Cars and trucks were moving in and out of the lanes, seeking advantage. Our group kept speeding

up to match the traffic and not give anyone reason to invade our line. I looked briefly at the speedometer and saw that our 120 KmPH pace had disappeared behind the needle long ago and we were in the 140 to 160 range, (roughly 86 to 100 mph) routinely. Did I mention that lane-splitting is legal in South Africa? Down between the rows of cars we'd go, faster than I'd normally travel when I

have a whole interstate lane all to myself, thank you very much, in the states, eyes glued to the taillights of the bikes in front of me, telling myself they've done this before and they're still alive...or at least these few are. Brenda was squeezing my hips with her legs, arms wrapped tightly around my waist (not an easy task these days) so that if we did come off the bike at this speed, we were going as a unit.

Quickly, in every sense of the word, Capetown came into view with the profile of Table Mountain, that icon of the city, filling the horizon. Mercifully, the city-clog of traffic slowed us down and we turned off a series of exits and found ourselves on the surface streets of the big city, pointed at the tall hotel that would be our home for the next four nights. We turned into the cul-de-sac that lead to the parking garage, our last test, where we zoomed up the steep winding internal drive to our second floor parking spots.

We found our way up to the room, where our luggage awaited and threw ourselves on the bed to let the motion stop for a moment before going down to supper.

Tuesday morning we gathered with the group at 7 am for breakfast in the hotel buffet line, then met at 8 for our day's overview lecture. We departed the hotel promptly at 9 into rain....not much rain, but enough to keep my reputation intact. Sunny told us there's a saying in this country, "The Cape is like a baby, full of wind and wet."

The conga line of bikes wound through the city into the suburbs that line the oceanfront along the Twelve Apostles Road (named for the twelve massive peaks that form the rim of the bay). The magnificent houses here in this part

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are perched on the side of the steep hills overlooking the harbor at such an angle that one wonders how they stay put. Such people who own these houses must have fine cars and such vehicles can't really traverse the hillside, so they have built elaborate decks on the other side of the road, hanging out over the steep drop-off above the water, just for parking space. One of our group who works in finance for a large bank, says they recently did the mortgage for a garage here worth more than seven million Rand, the equivalent of more than \$1 million US dollars.

. We soon pull up at what looks like an old military base....because it is exactly thaton the top of one of the mountains overlooking Simonstown harbor. This facility contains the gravesite of "Just Nuisance" a Great Dane who



became the mascot of the base in WW II.

The story goes that the big animal was the pet of an officer but, with the class-leveling nature of dogs, decided on his own that he was more comfortable with the sailors in the barracks. He rode the train into town with the troops, departing onto the streets of Simonstown and mingling with the sailors as they partied their leave away. He rode back, always on the last train, and had

been known to pull straggling sailors toward the train as it prepared to depart for the base. At some point it was decided, by the powers that were, that only sailors could be on the base, so the men made a successful application for the dog's entry into the South African Navy. Since two names were required for the form, "Nuisance" became "Just Nuisance...Able Seaman". When the dog finally died, he was buried on the base with full military honors with his funeral attended by the Lord Mayor and other such dignitaries.

There is a baboon colony inhabiting the now disused base.

Brenda & John at the grave of "Just Nuisance".



Resident baboon ponders evolution and it's apparent misdirection.

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa *Hatari* it isn't



Brenda and large old dog...not the one she's been riding with.

By now the rain was clearing. We rode down the mountain into Simonstown for lunch along the waterfront. Befitting

his status, there is a statue of the sailor-dog prominently displayed on the beachfront promenade.

From Simonstown, we paraded up through Redhill Pass and down to Cape Point. This is the lighthouse site marking the place where ships coming from East or West rounded the end of the African continent either heading into the Indian Ocean, to the Orient or the last contact with "civilization" before heading out into the Atlantic to the New World. (That would be about 7,775 miles or so to New York, as the seagull flies.) When a sailor got to that point out there, he was either headed home or out into the Atlantic for a while.

Leaving Cape Point, the road could be any forested road in the US, except for the many troops of baboons that line the sides like playing children who stop long enough to watch us go by. On what seems like familiar ground, they serve as a reminder that we aren't in our own backyard anymore. We ascended Kommetjie Pass and



Cape Point Lighthouse. Imagine getting up there to change the bulbs.

headed for Chapman's Peak.

The road around Chapman's Peak is the site of a marathon bicycle race which one of our group had ridden. The curves hung on the side of this mountain were tight enough on a motorcycle, with some space between me and the taillights of the next one. I can't imagine making these hairpins in a gaggle of bicycles, jockeying for position with my only protection from road rash being a pair of shorts and a t-shirt. There are low walls made of what looks like small rounded river rocks that would be the only thing between a rider-motorized or not--and a long drop into the bay.

At the bottom of this amazing ride there's a harbor where apparently it is tour tradition to stop for fish & chips and to feed the gulls the leftovers. It would seem that Darwinism has created a breed of seagulls able to thrive on a regular diet of grease and fat without any obvious ill effects. As we neared Capetown on the Twelve Apostles' Road, the group veered off and headed up Signal Mountain, the huge piece of rock



View from above Simonstown

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa
***Hatari* it isn't**



That would be about 7,775 miles or so to New York, as the seagull flies.



Boats required to get fish for frying and feeding to seagulls.



On Helshoogte Pass, Franschoek, below



Those little white things down there are the tall buildings of a huge city. Yes, we're up in the air again. In the background is Robbin Island, Nelson Mandela's prison home for 27 years.

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa *Hatari* it isn't

self that I would "go where I look" so tried mightily to not look at the scenery hundreds of feet below the dropoff edge of

back home, are faint praise indeed.

The ride down was equally as spectacular, though this time I did get to see a bit, but only a bit, as the bike headed toward each outside curve apex that seemed to hang in space over the city. We came back into Capetown by surface streets, and it was just as well. I was on sensory overload today and couldn't have handled the N-1.

On Wednesday, after the usual breakfast ritual, we headed east toward the university town of Stellenbosch. Here the streets look more like any Midwestern college, with leafy trees overhanging the sidewalks which are crowded with students who look like the students everywhere, bustling about doing what college students everywhere do.

We passed on through into the mountains, up Helshoogte Pass to the French winelands area, settled by the Huguenots in the late 1600's. These immigrants, fleeing religious persecution in their own land, brought with them the skills and experience to turn this bit of Africa into a bit of France (hence the Dutch name for the main town, Franschhoek or "French Corner").

There are more than 30 restaurants and cafes in town, offering a variety of cuisine...but we didn't stop at any of those. Maybe next time. At the end of town, there is the Huguenot Monument for a brief photo opportunity before heading north, up into the mountains again, over Franchhoek Pass. Here it's easy to see why the French might have felt at home, since this could easily be in the French Alps with tight winding roads switching back and forth above the deep valleys. The curves are tight, but open enough for some speed, with excellent pavement and few vehicles other than us. We



Obligatory group shot at Cape of Good Hope. Piet's behind the camera.

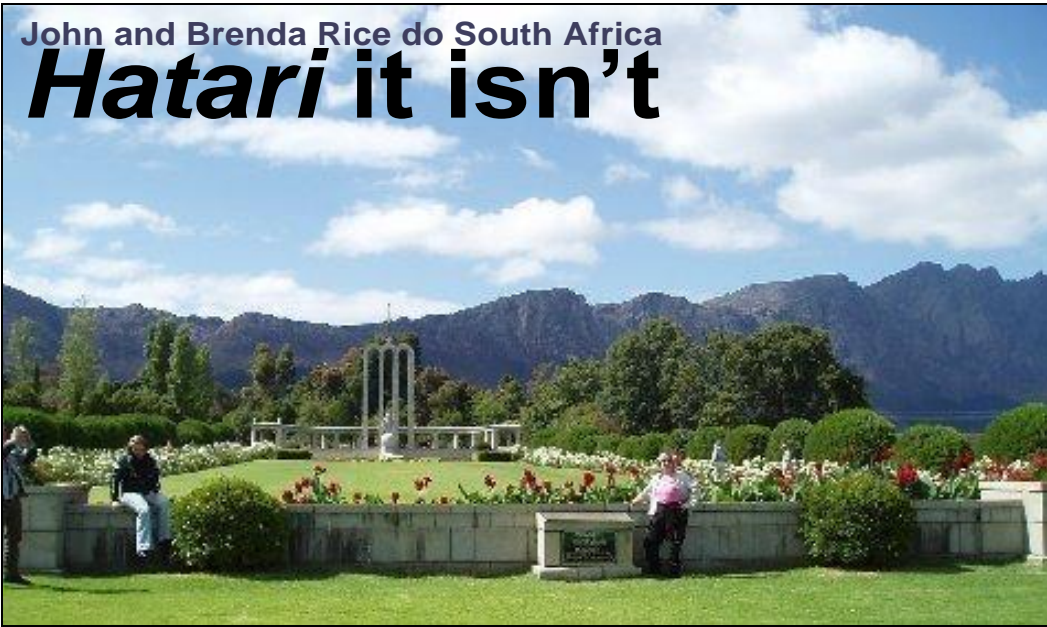
opposite Table Mountain, overlooking the city. We turned off on what seemed to be a residential street, then quickly began climbing on turns that literally were chipped into the side of the mountain. I reminded my-

the road. We climbed high enough that our jackets, too warm for most of the day, were now letting in cold air that made my teeth chatter. At the top we stopped in an overlook parking area and walked along the rim. Below us was spread out the whole of Capetown, cradled in a bowl formed by the solid rock crags of the mountains we'd just been riding on one side and the incredibly blue ocean on the other. I've heard that this is one of the Seven Beautiful Cities of the world and from this vantage point, I can't imagine what the others would have to have to be on the list ahead of it. My poor photography skills won't overcome the limits of my cheap camera, so all I have are shots that, like photos of the Grand Canyon

On Chapman's Peak Drive



John and Brenda Rice do South Africa *Hatari* it isn't



The Huguenot Memorial

made a snack stop at a winery which could have been anywhere in France. We ate our goodies, far too many in my case, at outdoor tables by a flowing creek with the low buildings of the winery behind us. Had we been traveling on our own, we might just have stayed here an extra day.

But we weren't on our own, so down through du Toitskloof Pass we traveled into the wine making town of Paarl for a stop at the Nederburg winery, home

of the annual South African Wine Auction where something other than our usual \$3 bottles are sold.

After the usual, by now, frantic N 1 run into Capetown (I think I'm getting the hang of this now) we decided to get a cab down to the Victoria & Alfred ("V&A") Waterfront for an evening out. Alfred was the son of Queen Victoria and in 1860 he initiated the construction of a breakwater in the stormy waters of Table Bay,

where gales had often in the past foundered ships. This resulted in increase shipping volume which later required the building of the Victoria Basin for added capacity. By the 1960's the basin and harbor area was getting a bit worn and shabby, so the late 80's, the Waterfront Company began a process of modernization to combine a working harbor with a tourist-friendly shopping and eating area. One can wander in and out of the branching pathways winding along the waterfront poking into shops offering exotic (well, to us from the West, anyway) items along with the usual souvenirs sold everywhere in the world, stop at a restaurant or bar and meanwhile try to imagine what these passageways were like in the heyday of the tall ships that stopped here on their way to everywhere else in the world. This was the crossroads where literally everyone met no matter where else on the seas they were going. There were no peglegged and be-hooked seafaring men in evidence this night and not a single parrot to be found.. however, but we were still amazed by the poly-

Brenda, once again among the grapes



She's holding the wine list. The Menu is separate.

John and Brenda Rice do South Africa *Hatari* it isn't



Francois, sans helmet, explains the fine features of the R1200GS to fellow rider.

glot of languages, the different styles of dress (though there is everywhere a standard-issue tourist costume of ball cap, Nikes, shorts and funny-saying t-shirt with camera hung in front of the punchline).

Dinner was in a restaurant along the strand where we could sip South African wine, watching the sun go down as the lights of the ships winked on in the darkening harbor. I think I could do more of this.

Thursday morning dawned bright and clear with the temperature still rising. My Darien jacket was getting near the top of its comfort range and I'd taken to wearing it with the sleeves rolled up to mid-wrist and all the vent and sleeve zip-pers open as far as they'd go to get some air inside. This day we'd be riding through the mountains east of the Cape,

heading south toward Cape Agulhas. We began by climbing up Sir Lowry's Pass, down still more switchbacks, then up Houhoek Pass to the town of Caledon, where our guide, Johan's father was born.

From there to Napier is the road touted as "the best motorcycling road in South Africa" though I was to learn that this appellation was bestowed not so much for scenic value but for the combination of curves and sparse law enforcement! Some members of our group decided here to leave the official convoy and take advantage of the chance to go even faster than we'd been traveling.

One of our group, Francois, a large strapping young man who had been expertly piloting a Kawasaki 1200cc sportbike, had apparently taken a shine to

the R1200GS and had, the night before, left his bike at the Cape-town BMW dealer and rented a GS like the one I was riding. He joined the speedsters who rocketed off in the distance in this open high-desert-like setting. Brenda and I stayed with the rest of the group, not wanting to engage in a race 10,000 miles from home on someone else's bike. The road was quite good, with wide sweeping turns affording full view of the apex and exit, offering about as good a venue for speed and handling as I've seen this trip. As we got into the town of Napier, where we were to regroup and stop for gas, there was Francois and the new Beemer, on the side of the road, seat off the bike, helmet thrown on the ground and a very disgruntled rider staring deeply into the abyss that is the nest of electronics that make this most sophisticated machine go...or stop.

It had cut out at the rev limiter somewhere on one of the straight stretches and from then on began refusing to take much throttle and then, just as the gas station was in sight, quit altogether. I suppose one can't ask for a more accommodating failure, but Francois wasn't really looking at it that way. There were tight-lipped phone calls to the dealer, ending with whatever is the Afrikaans equivalent of "come get the blankety-blank thing" and he climbed on double with his friend on an F-650 for the rest of the day. Not exactly what he'd had in mind the night before.

Johan had given us the option of skipping the usual lunch stop and making on down to Cape Agulhas so that we could visit the southernmost point on the African continent, the place where the official divide occurs between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The vote was quick and unanimous so off we went,

The land became flat and arid

and empty with little sign of habitation on either side of the road. As we neared the end of land, the pavement veered toward the Indian Ocean side and we encountered a few fishing villages.

We stopped in Struis Bay so that those who wanted could put their toes in the Indian Ocean. Brenda, never one to do things half way, strode on out into the water, raising her arms in triumph.

Mounting up again, we rode on to the point, ending up on dirt road in a village that looked like it hadn't changed much in the last 100 years, isolated in both time and space from the turmoil and politics of the "real" world. And so it was here that we got lost. Johan had told us that only bikes and riders comfortable with bad dirt road should go on to the furthest point, so several of the group on sportsbikes opted out, staying at the lighthouse. We headed down the path along the water looking for a sign to the tip of the continent, figuring it would be prominent. I was standing on the pegs, following the dust trail of a bike ahead of me when they pulled over to take a photo of a shipwreck lying in the shallow water just off the shore. I continued on, with Piet, our sweep rider, behind me, thinking that the dirt road would eventually end at the point. After all, when you get to the southernmost place, there's nowhere else to go, right?

Piet passed me, which I thought odd, then pulled into a parking area near a beach. He got out his cell phone and began making a call. We then learned that he hadn't been here in so many years, that he didn't know where he was and had been following us with the same assumption that the road would end at our destination. Seems that we'd passed the Point a few miles back and

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Not Boorman & McGregor, but two senior citizens from Winchester, Kentucky

were now heading west around the tip. We hurried back to the Point, where Johan was waiting for us, the rest of the group now gathered at the lighthouse a mile or so back on the paved portion. Johan didn't want us to miss the Point or the photo opportunity, so he quickly guided us down a path of sand filled with large rocks to the monument marking the tip.

If you've seen "The Long Way Down", there's the shot of McGregor and Boorman at this same place, in the obligatory triumphant pose.

We hustled back to the lighthouse to take our ribbing from the group for straying off course, though most of them

seemed glad for the extra time to explore the lighthouse grounds and restaurant.

We backtracked rather quickly through Napier (passing the dealer truck carrying Francois's disabled mount) and turned south toward the coast and the whale-watching town of Hermanus.

We parked in a circle around the town's central fountain and walked along the seafront but no whales were to be found this time of year. Hermanus is a very European village, yet another example of the variety to be found in South Africa.

There was an impromptu band playing on the lawn overlooking the bay and a warren of

mountains on the right and pristine blue Atlantic Ocean on the left, looking much like the shots we've all seen of the California coastline, but with more turns, higher mountains and we're on the left side of the road.

We soon make the turn around a point and the water to our left is now False Bay, the huge body of water that often fooled sailors into thinking they'd rounded the Horn and were now in the Atlantic. It wouldn't be until they got to about where Strand now is that they'd figure out they had to backtrack to Cape Point and utter what was I'm sure the original name for this body, the Dutch or Indian version of a



Piet keeping an eye on our bike at the fountain



Brenda looks like she's happy, standing in the Indian Ocean.

little shops and tea rooms surrounding the main square. The town sits at the base of a mountain ridge, which we ascended on the bikes for a view, and I'm told that when the whales are "in town for the season," these ridges and the seafront are packed with tourists wielding binoculars and cameras.

No leviathans for us today, so we moved on up the coast.

From here back to Capetown the road is two lane with moun-

two-word phrase beginning with "Oh". That wouldn't do for a map however, so False Bay it is.

By the time we got to Strand, the sun was getting low and so were we, with the heat and the long day. We breezed through this town, which looked for all the world like the rococo original part of Miami Beach, and then soon joined the N 2 for our last run into Capetown. Like horses heading for the barn at

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Overlooking False Bay

feeding time, the group picked up speed with deliberation and purpose. We were weaving through crowded interstate-going-into-a -big-city traffic like water flowing down rocks, following the path of least resistance, seldom below 80 mph, flicking up over 100 as if it was the most normal thing to do.

At the very end, as we got into the worst of the traffic, the sun was right in my eyes, meaning the only way I could see the bikes I was to be following was to use my left hand as an eyeshade, steering the bike with only the right. When we reached the spot where we left the highway for the city streets, it felt like the air being let suddenly out of a balloon, much like I feel at the end of a

jury trial when the door closes behind the jury and I can sit down at the table to take stock of what just happened.

The line of bikes turned into the cul-de-sac and headed up the ramp to our parking spots. Just like that it was over. Tomorrow we'd board the train for the return trip across the Great karoo, then only a short ride from the station to Pretoria to turn in the bike.

Johan told us to meet at the Chinese bar just outside the hotel entrance for a wrap-up and farewell drink together.

As Brenda and I walked in, Francois, who had been talking with some others in a corner, came over to me and extended his hand. He said he wanted to

congratulate me on being the first American who had ever kept up with their group.

My first thought was "Now you tell me it was optional!", but I didn't say that. It became clear now why they were a bit cool with us at first and why Johan's comments about cruising speed had been so pointedly directed at me.

We were at least two decades older than most of the group and ten years older than the nearest to our age, and we were from the land where speed limits were taken seriously. They had thought we'd hold them up.

I have to admit that I'd thought an organized tour would be so slow and confining that I'd have more than my

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The whale-watching bay at Hermanus

usual trouble staying awake.

Here in a country where prejudice had been, until the last twenty years, official policy, both of us had pre-judged the other and we'd both been wrong.

There's an old saying to the effect of "Spend two weeks in a country and be an expert. Spend a year there and learn that you understand nothing."

We covered 1,900 miles in South Africa and Swaziland. We were in three of the major cities, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Capetown, and were in the countryside where we went for miles without seeing any sign of human activity other than the blacktop we were riding on.

There were places that looked like home and places that looked like nowhere else on Earth. I don't consider myself an African expert, but I feel that I have a much better idea of its character than I ever would have had without this experience. Before I went I had the

usual stereotypes that we all hear from media influence and some of them were useful, most were not.

South Africa and Africans are no better described by simple cliché than are we.

All travel is enlightening and for me the need to know is addictive. If I were younger, I'd go back to Africa to explore the mountains and the small towns at leisure. As Brenda pointed out, the other tour participants in this second portion were not there for the cultural experience, but to ride the mountain roads and that's what this half of the tour delivered. On the first part, Darryl had promised "adventure tourism" and he, too, gave us just what he said he would. We got what was advertised and plenty of it and what we got was different than our usual self-guided, relatively unstructured trips.

If you want to see South Africa and Swaziland, to experience the maximum amount

of sights and the roads, then this tour, this type of tour is the best you can get.

If you want to immerse yourself in the culture, interact with the people and go where you will whenever you want (meaning you'll miss out on other things because of limited time), then go on your own. There is no right or wrong answer to the question.



Heather Auman on the Saturday prior to selling her F650.



Photo of Heather by Ray Brooks.
Photo of Brian's Vespa by Lee Thompson.

Brian Sawyer's Vespa. Who says Bluegrass Beemers is an arrogant, single-marque, uppity, unfriendly group of BMW snobs? We are NOT a single-marque club. There, I feel better having set the record straight.

—Editor



BMW MOTORCYCLE OWNERS OF AMERICA

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November 23, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ted Moyer
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BMW MOA Set to Give Away \$1000RR Superpackage in the BMW MOA Superbike Superstakes!

ELLISVILLE, Missouri – The BMW Motorcycle Owners of America (BMW MOA) announced today the grand prize in the BMW MOA Superbike Superstakes will be a BMW \$1000RR "Superpackage" that includes a 2010 BMW \$1000RR Superbike, VIP access for 4 to the 2010 World Superbike race at Miller Motorsports Park, BMW World Superbike race team pit access, an autograph session with the BMW World Superbike race team riders and a full BMW apparel package including boots, gloves, jackets and pants.

In addition to the Superbike Superpackage, 2 first place prize winners will receive a guided motorcycle tour of Europe on either the BMW MOA Andalucía Tour presented by Iberian Moto Tours or the BMW MOA European Rally Tour presented by Edelweiss Bike Travel. The BMW MOA Andalucía Tour spends 7 riding days in Southern Spain, making stops in Acros de la Frontera, Ronda, Granada, Jaen and Sevilla, while the BMW MOA European Rally Tour features 7 riding days in the Alps region of Southern Germany, Switzerland and northern Italy with stops at the BMW Motorrad Days in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the BMW Museum. Both trips include motorcycle rental, first class lodging accommodations, breakfast and dinner for the winners, as well as a complete BMW apparel package for the trip!

And the BMW MOA isn't stopping there. Over 50 prizes in all will be awarded during the BMW MOA Superbike Superstakes. 2 second place prize winners will be receive training at the Keith Code California Superbike School aboard a BMW \$1000RR and 50 third place winners are set to receive \$100 in motorcycle merchandise.

Chances to win the BMW MOA Superbike Superstakes will be available beginning February 1, 2010. Tickets will be free with any new membership or renewal in the BMW Motorcycle Owners of America or can be purchased separately for \$10 each by current members. BMW MOA membership is available to anyone, but you must be a member to win. Ticket sales will be limited to only 10,000 tickets to better the odds for the winners and you must request the Superstakes ticket with your membership purchase. Tickets and membership packages will be available online or by calling the BMW MOA at 636-394-7277.

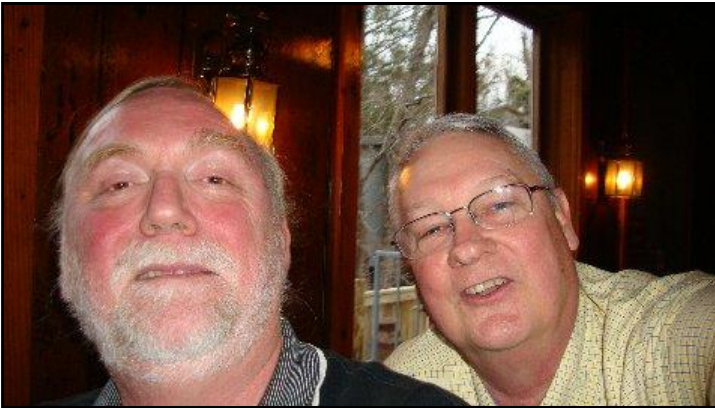


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More Awards Banquet Photos,

By John Keeling



Left to Right, top down:
Roy Rowlett,
John Keeling,
Paul Elwyn,
Karla Barns,
John Barns,
Gail Prewitt,
Carol Keeling,
Ben Prewitt,
Ray Montgomery,
Lynn Montgomery,
Maureen Elwyn



2010 LAP OF KENTUCKY Lapping The State of Kentucky by Motorcycle

- WHEN:** The Lap begins 9 am, Thursday, June 17th, and ends 5 pm, Sunday, June 20th.
- WHERE:** The Lap begins and ends at BMW Motorcycles of Louisville, 116 West Breckinridge St., Louisville, KY 40203 (Downtown Louisville at the corner of 1st and Breckinridge Streets just off I-65)
- HOW:** Circumnavigate the state by first riding east out of Louisville on a designated route consisting mainly of secondary roads. The route is approximately 1400 miles and can be completed comfortably in the time allotted. **THIS IS NOT A RACE.** You will be provided with suggested lodging points along the way.
- HOW MUCH:** Your \$50 entry fee gets you a souvenir t-shirt, and a prize for finishing at the 5 pm Sunday finish/awards ceremony. Proceeds to benefit the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) at Ft. Knox.
- AWARDS?:** We will present awards to the oldest finishing rider, the youngest finishing rider, the oldest finishing motorcycle and the smallest displacement finishing motorcycle. Since **THIS IS NOT A RACE** there will be no award for the quickest finishing time.
- WHAT ELSE:** This event will be limited to one hundred (100) riders so get your entry in as soon as possible.
- WHY:** Why not?

2010 LAP OF KENTUCKY ENTRY FORM AND RELEASE

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Bike Year and Make: _____ Model _____ Displacement _____

Cellular Phone (if any): _____ Emergency Phone: _____

Passenger Name: _____ Age: _____

I understand that BMW Motorcycles of Louisville (BMWLOU) and the Louisville BMW Riders (LBMWR) cannot and do not assume responsibility for any aspect of my safety in this event and that I participate in this event voluntarily, assuming all risks and after my own assessment of my own abilities, the condition of my motorcycle, the routes involved and any and all other conditions and facilities likely to be encountered during this event. I release and hold harmless BMWLOU, the LBMWR and their respective officers and members for any injury and/or loss to my person or property which may result from my participation in this event. I also certify that I am in compliance with my state's financial responsibility laws regarding the carrying of proper insurance and that I hold an appropriate license for operating a motorcycle.

Rider Signature _____ Date _____

Passenger Signature _____ Date _____

Return completed registration and \$50 (payable to BMW Motorcycles of Louisville) to:

Jeff Cooke, **BMW Motorcycles of Louisville**, 116 West Breckinridge Street, Louisville, KY 40203, (502) 568-6311



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