

December 2011

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky
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Trinidad, Cuba, a motorcyclist's perspective *photo by James Street*



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***Wishing you and yours
a very Merry Christmas!***

Ray & Lynn

2012 Rally Update

By Lee Thompson

Rally planning meeting Saturday, December 3, following breakfast at Frisch's

Bluegrass Beemers,

As noted in the November issue of *Apex*, we are changing our Annual Rally format for 2012 to a team of volunteers to manage the responsibilities.

With this note I am announcing the first planning meeting for those that can be a part of the 2012 Rally Team.

Please join us after breakfast Saturday December 3rd at Frisch's.

If you cannot make this first meeting but want to be included, please send me a note and I will pass along to the team.

See you there.

—Lee



Bark's Bytes

By Joseph Bark, MD



Cameras and the Ride

[My standard disclaimer applies, which is basically that I am not certified in much of anything, not as an instructor or teacher of motorcycle safety, or not, in this case, photography. But then that's why God made <delete> keys!! Just sharing a few thoughts, that's all.]

I once took a ride in northern Georgia in a show-stopping area of the mountains.

There were waterfalls, creeks, rocks sticking up through mercury-flat water -- all sorts of astounding potential pictures. I thought I could only capture all

these sights with my best camera, so I slung my five-pound Nikon over my head and off I went! I even had my zoom lens mounted on it, which hung nearly down to my crotch! I guess I looked like "The Ancient Mariner" with a damned albatross necklace! All went well as I mounted up, until I rocked the bike off the center stand and almost did my own laryngectomy when the camera hit my throat. So I came up with a list of do's and don'ts which might be helpful to you.

1. It's fine to combine hobbies, but perhaps not simultaneously! Take your camera with your motorcycle,

but don't try to USE them both at the same time! Your job when you swing your leg over that bike is to attend to your ride first and foremost! You cannot effectively scan the roadway, sight your target, find the shutter button, and fire the camera at the same time, let alone trying to do that in the twisties!!! To try this is a recipe for disaster. I even Velcro'd my point-n-shoot to my Aeros-tich once in Norway, but I quickly became aware that no amount of positioning short of a tripod was sufficient. I always found it necessary to pull off the road, turn off the bike (to calm vibration) grab the camera, compose the shot and THEN proceed with the ride!

2. How many times have you started to review a friend's ride pictures and skipped through the rest after seeing the first five or ten? That has certainly happened to me more times than I can count, so I started to tally the reasons for this sense of boredom and that "deer in the headlights look" that inevitably results. Here's what I came up with: a) don't try to show your buds the whole trip as soon as you get back! Pick a few (5-10 ONLY) and bring out a few more after you've gauged the audience's reaction to your first few. (b) I often find that I have six nearly of the same subject identical pix! I've started winnowing out my best single photo of a scene, highlighting the rest and then hitting the <delete> key for the others. (c) I once figured that since we were motorcycling, the best shots would be of people ON their bikes. I thought this was perfectly natural, since, after all, it was a ride, and wasn't that what everybody from spouse to grandkids wants to see? Uh, no, not really. And I even

found hundreds of trip pix of friends with their HELMETS on! Your brother-in-law generally doesn't want to page through eleveny-seven of the same pic so take off the helmet, smile and let folks see your face!

3. Don't just stand near your bike like a big dufus, with 5,100 shots of you and Rhonda standing there in front of the Grand Canyon sign....DO SOMETHING! Go stand near the Canyon (not *too* close!!) and shoot between the two of you LOOKING at it, and maybe just catch the bike tangentially in the shot. Maybe you can even catch the Canyon and you two in the shot and the whole ball-o-wax reflected in the mirror of the bike! Use your imagination!

4. Lastly (and there's a million more tips in the naked city) try to judge what shots you're going to take by asking yourself, "Would I ever PRINT this shot to hang on my wall?". If the answer is "No way!!" then think twice about even taking the picture. It's just gonna be more junk you have to wade through later.

So hey, keep riding safely, and . . . *Hang in there....* I'll be back!!

—Joe

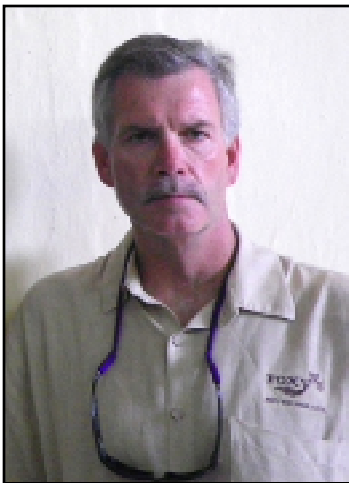


Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street

Above billboard message: "Each day I think pure thoughts as a child and as a man, my friend." — *Commander Che'*
It's a cliché, but stepping out of Havana's airport terminal into the parking lot was like stepping back in time to the mid 1950's: The old cars are there... and there, and over there. Another not-so-subtle difference was found in the billboard that greeted me from across the lot. On it was the classic American pop icon pose of Che' Guevara with a quote about maintaining the purity of thought, and I learned through the 10 days that I was in the country that Che' is far beyond a pop icon in their culture; he's the embodiment of the Cuban people's commitment to the cause, and he's everywhere.

—James Street



James Street

Landing at the Jose Marti International Airport after a forty-five minute flight from Miami was relatively uneventful except that the elderly gentleman sitting next to me was very uncomfortable and apparently hadn't flown many times.

Each noise emanating from the airplane's various functions—flaps, landing gear going down, etc.—caused his entire body to go tense to the point I thought he may rip the row of seats we

were in right off its mounts. He finally relaxed once the plane had slowed to taxiing pace and turned toward the terminal.

On the way I noticed that there was a seemingly modern cast concrete terminal with jet way protrusions that had been abandoned, and we continued past that edifice to another apparent disembarking point.

Once parked in front of the terminal, a blue metal building typical of third world airports, we deplaned via one of the classic rolling steps and into a

day reminiscent of mid-July in Kentucky: humid, hot, and very green.

Passport control was no problem, and the search of baggage and person wasn't so different from that received when one enters our country. However, the difference in culture was quite evident when I encountered the first female immigration officer wearing a black miniskirt and fishnet hose beneath her very official looking government-issue blouse replete with epaulets, badges and

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street

miscellaneous accoutrements associated with folks in positions requiring our deference.

Our charter flight had been filled with Cubans returning to visit relatives. Even though we were limited to a very strict forty pounds in a single bag, most of them were bringing their isolated Cuban families everything from flat screened televisions to cooking griddles. It served as a vivid reminder that we were arriving in a country where consumable goods are scarce.

What makes this observation pertinent is that the televisions and griddles somehow found their way onto our plane but our luggage didn't, and four hours and two flights from Miami later our stuff finally showed up on the luggage carousel, and we were free to go through the final customs check and enter Cuba.

I've wanted to travel to Cuba since my father and two of his brothers-in-law sat at the breakfast table drinking coffee and lamented that Castro and the revolution had made Cuba off limits for fishing for the foreseeable future, and little did they know at the time just how prophetic the conversation would be. Fifty-two years later Americans can only travel to Cuba under a very restricted set of circumstances, and I was afforded the opportunity through association with a professor at ECU who kindly invited me along on a trip in which he was taking students to learn about the Cuban criminal justice system.

Cuba for many Americans is characterized by old Detroit cars and cigars. It has those things, indeed in quantities that are unimaginable, but there's so

much more. I could talk about the beauty of its people (I spent days looking for an unattractive woman before finally finding one, and for the sake of equal opportunity I'll bet that women will be similarly impressed with the attractiveness of the men), Old Havana's architecture, some things the government is doing very well, things it's not, the natural beauty of the country, how safe it is, how I'd like to see the embargo lifted, and so on but this is an article about motorcycles. So, let's go back to the point in the story where we are walking out of the terminal after collecting our baggage.

It's a cliché, but stepping out of Havana's airport terminal into the parking lot was like stepping back in time to the mid 1950's: the old cars are there... and there, and over there. Another not-so-subtle difference was found in the billboard that greeted me from across the lot. On it was the classic American pop icon pose of Che' Guevara with a quote about maintaining the purity of thought, and I learned through the 10 days that I was in the country that Che' is far beyond a pop icon in their culture; he's the embodiment of the Cuban people's commitment to the cause, and he's everywhere.

We boarded a relatively new VW bus and drove to downtown Havana, and I found that there were so many old cars that my neck began to ache from trying to keep up with them. I finally gave up and tried to be selective and then began to notice motorcycles. Unlike here, the Cuban economy doesn't afford the average family the ability to



This was parked in front of the terminal at Jose Marti International Airport. Russian cars from the sixties and seventies framed the Willys.



The Willys isn't so different from what you see occasionally in the states... although we're not in Kansas.

own a car, so many Cubans use motorcycles as their primary transportation and they're everywhere. Most are from the old Soviet bloc nations: Jawas from Czechoslovakia, MZ's from

East Germany, and Ural side hack outfits from Russia.

Street performers leaving Old Havana on their MZ. Tourism is creating an upper class who can afford goods not available to the average Cuban.

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street



Cubans take very good care of both cars and bikes. In the entire time in the country I only saw one instance of a car pulling away from a traffic light aggressively, and I never saw a motorcycle ridden at a pace even approximating what I witness every day on the college campus where I work.

If one can barely afford to own transportation, one takes care of it.

While our visit was primarily designed to allow our students to talk to Cuban attorneys and

law professors in various locations, we were afforded the opportunity to visit other places of historical importance for both Norte Americanos (us) and Cubans.

Ernest Hemingway is a revered legend in Cuba and the places where he visited regularly, lived and wrote about are enshrined as monuments to his contribution to the Cuban ethos. First in the places memorialized by and for Hemingway and visited by us was Cojimar, east of Havana, where he based

"The Old Man and the Sea." A formal monument commemorates Hemingway's presence in Cojimar, and not one hundred feet away from the monument sat a Ural sidecar outfit which diverted my attention away from the historical significance of the locale.



A formal monument commemorates Hemingway's presence in Cojimar.



Ural outfit parked by the quay in Cojimar, where Hemingway wrote the story "The Old Man and the Sea."



Street performers leaving Old Havana on their MZ. Tourism is creating an upper class who can afford goods not available to the average Cuban.

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

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Our next day started at the Union of Jurists in Havana where we were treated to a dissertation on the evolution of the Cuban Constitution by a panel of three attorneys who also teach law at the University of Havana.

Afterwards we walked onto the street to find that the senior member of the jurist panel was the proud owner of an MZ side-car rig which served as his only transportation. It had rained that morning and he was pulling a tarp off of the entire rig when we approached him, and it was obvious from the smile on his face that he enjoyed our interest in his transportation.

Another stop that ended up being a motorcycle treat was at the museum commemorating Che' Guevara's life, also located in Havana. A glance across the street netted another MZ sighting, this time a more vintage model that had me skittering through traffic to take a photograph.

One observation: motor vehicles have the right of way in Cuba-period. We had a conversation with a fellow who was amazed that we lived in a country where pedestrians had the right-of-way, and I don't think he would have been more incredulous had we told him we were cannibals.

During a later bus ride through the countryside after leaving Havana we ran over a pig and later a dog who were not as aware of the pedestrian right of way issue as were their human counterparts. On a serious note, those two mishaps were the only negatives in ten days spent on the forbidden island that is only ninety miles south of Key West.



EKU Professor Chuck Fields chats about MZ's- he's a vintage MZ owner as well- with his Cuban counterpart.

Trinidad is a city located on the south coast and provided an overnight stay and a look at 18th and 19th century colonial presence in Cuba, and the route there took us through Playa Giron and the adjacent Bahia de

Cochinos, known to us as the Bay of Pigs. First stop was at the Bay of Pigs where we had lunch and where a dive shop caters to tourists from countries other than ours. Parked next to the snack bar I found a beauti-

ful example of an MZ International Six Days Trials commemorative model. Owned by one of the diving instructors, he was very proud of the bike and beamed when a couple of us

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street



Older MZ in Havana located in front of the home occupied by Che' Guevara just prior to his death in Bolivia.

poured over it and then took photos.

Perspective is one of my favorite concepts and in few places that I've been has the concept of perspective more apparent than at the Bay of Pigs

and Playa Giron. Many Americans have forgotten that we trained a group of Cubans ousted by the revolution to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro's army by military action, and their failure is a distant

memory of our misspent foreign policy. Cubans currently celebrate the same action as the defeat of the "Yankee Imperialists in Latin America," and it's considered a major event in their post-revolutionary history. Win or lose is a matter of perspective.

We actually swam in the bay and then went to the museum dedicated to the heroic effort of the Revolutionary Army in defeating the "Imperialismo Yanqui" (their term).

Outside the museum we were treated to another form of Cuban transportation that's very common in the rural areas as well as in the barrios of cities: the pedal taxi.

From Giron we traveled to Trinidad, as mentioned earlier, and an early morning walk found a city awakening with the bustle of activity associated with people going to work, school and simply enjoying the cool of the early hours. Horse drawn wagons abounded, and several deliveries were being

made: construction materials, flour, and other agricultural products. Once again, motorcycles were the prime mover of people, and the numbers of MZ's observed suggested that a substantial portion of the MZ factory's production ended up in Cuba.

Trinidad is a beautiful location, as one could see the Caribbean in the distance from the hotel we stayed in, and the view of the bell tower of a local church is so picturesque that it found its way onto the Cuban .25 peso coin. After my morning stroll took me back to the hotel, I found another MZ with an interesting seat. Across from the parked MZ with the interesting seat was a souvenir shop with a very attractive attendant who was an enthusiastic photographic subject.

As an aside, I took as many photographs of the Cuban people as I did of their transportation and many of the photographs were very close and personal. I asked each person



This rare example of the commemorative ISDT MZ was very well maintained.

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street

in advance if I could take their photograph and I was never turned down. Sometimes my inability to capture the pose I wanted took several takes, and reactions ranged from tolerance to pure pleasure. All of the folks photographed were very pleased when I showed them the results.

From Trinidad we went east to Cinfuego which is a port city on Cuba's south coast. Cinfuego is another colonial town, although not as old as Havana or Trinidad, and while there we were treated to a block party celebration and meetings with their local government and the regional union of jurists.

After lunch we boarded the bus for a trip to Santa Clara which is more centrally located and is of great significance to Cuban post-revolutionary history as the place where Commander Che' outwitted a much larger contingent of Batista's forces (Batista was the president defeated by Castro and Che' in the 1959 revolution) and commandeered a train loaded with weapons and ammunition. In addition to Che's military exploits in Santa Clara, it also

is the place where he now rests and the tomb is a much revered national monument. While cameras were not allowed inside the mausoleum, the physical layout of the grounds, split with a highway, provided several opportunities for photos of passersby and their assorted means of transport.

Che's tomb is reminiscent of monuments to our fallen leaders in some ways and so very different in others. One's eye is drawn to a bronze statue of the Commander in full military regalia complete with bandage on his left arm from a battle wound as he would have been seen during the battle at Santa Clara, and words contained in a letter to Castro that was designed to be opened upon the untimely demise of Che are on a monument adjacent to the statue. Written as a paean to the relationship early in the Revolution between the two leaders, it is displayed partially as a dispute to the popular notion among Cubans and other nationalities that Che and Castro were enemies following the post-Revolutionary establishment of the Cuban government.



Pedal Taxi in Giron



Going to work in Trinidad



Horse drawn delivery-Trinidad.

Beneath the public monument is a mausoleum containing the remains of the Bolivian contingent of Che's revolutionary army that were ambushed and killed in Bolivia while trying to topple that country's government. As stated in the opening scenes of this article, Che is so much more than an icon of the young and rebellious, and he embodies the effort and sacri-

fice required to reclaim Cuba from the various interests in control in 1959. Unlike our revolution which for many has become a distorted, seldom discussed from an ideals perspective, happening in our distant past that separated us from a government that is now one of our closest allies, their revolution is very much on the mind of Cubans on the island and

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street



Ubiquitous MZ -Trinidad



This view from the second floor of an 18th century colonial home is on the .25 convertible peso coin-Trinidad.



Not sure about the Freudian meaning of this seat cover... well, actually, I can probably come up with a pretty good guess.



voted his life's work and death to the under-classes.

Cuba's economic woes following the withdrawal of Soviet support in 1989 have left the country without capital resources for infrastructure repair and replacement. During the trip back to Havana we were reminded of how the lack of resources extends to the road system. Uneven pavement, potholes, rough bridge approaches, lack of lane lining and little evidence of attention to these

Cuban expatriates in the United States. And here is another situation where the concept of "perspective" is so profoundly obvious. Once inside the mausoleum, a place where I'm guessing very few U.S. citizens have visited, one finds a modest but very somber and dignified wall of crypts in an earth tone wall fitting for a man who de-

items were evident visually and through one's backside.

Many leaders memorialized in statuary are portrayed holding children as a symbol of their contribution to the future. This portrayal of Che has many sub-elements portraying various stages of his life.

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street



Beauty from left to right: Postcards, young woman, Caribbean. This scene emerged across the street from the MZ with the interesting seat cover.

On Che's leg is a representation of him on a motorcycle for the "Motorcycle Diary" years.

Returning to Havana was like returning to visit a new friend who is just different enough to be really intriguing: the architecture, Malecon (seawall walkway along the Gulf), cars, people and tropical plants are beguiling and beautiful. Leaving for Pinas del Rio the next day, a short evening was spent at the Hotel Internationale drinking what was labeled as the best Mojito in Cuba, the birthplace of the Mojito, the Cubalibre and the Daiquiri.

Pinas del Rio is a natural formation of jungle covered buttes that is one of the most inspiring natural areas I've visited. A walk through the nearby town netted some interesting conversations about U.S.-Cuba relations, and an old MZ rig long since fallen into disrepair.

Another interesting aspect of the Cuban economy is that rum is very cheap: about \$3.50 per 750 ml bottle. In contrast, mixers are more costly than rum; therefore, in some locales one gets a virgin drink accompanied with bottle of rum at a very modest price. One drinks what-



Cinfuego side hack. While sidecars are a novelty in our country, they serve as the pickup truck of Cuba.



I love a sense of humor. Note the double row final drive chain!

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

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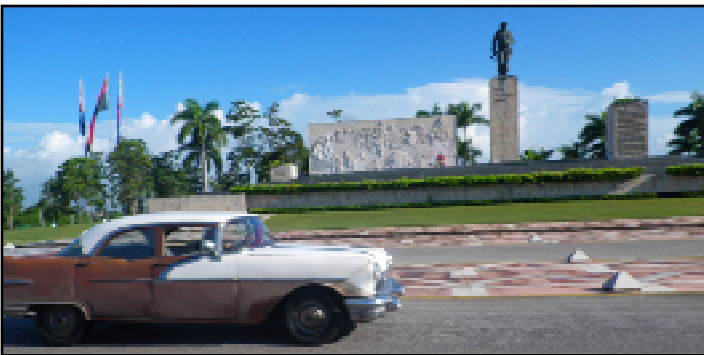
ever amount one wants to from the virgin drink, fills the glass back up with rum and then returns the bottle to the bartender. Novelty incites the uninitiated to go unnecessarily heavy on the rum the first time this is experienced, but after a cheap rum headache or two one is a bit more discrete in the application of rum. Please don't enquire about how the author knows about this.

After an overnight stay at Pinas del Rio, we proceeded to Los Terrazas, where the French attempted to grow coffee after being booted out of Dominica, circa 1782, and toured the remnants of the French coffee plantation. Our tour ended up at Maria's Coffee Shop and we were treated to the arrival of a Cuban family in a beautiful 1955 (I think) Buick.

Los Terrazas was the last stop before our return to Havana to depart for the States the next day. Drinks at the Hotel Nationale were so pleasant earlier



Fidel Castro and the author... Fidel is on the left looking less imperious.



Shrine and Tomb of Che Guevara

in the trip that we returned on the last day to sit on the veranda and enjoy a beautiful view, good friends and Havana's pleasant atmosphere. From the Nationale we took a taxi ride in a lovingly restored 1928 Ford back to the hotel to

collect bags and say goodbye to the hotel staff and other Cuban amigos that had been so good to us.



Main square in Cinfuego

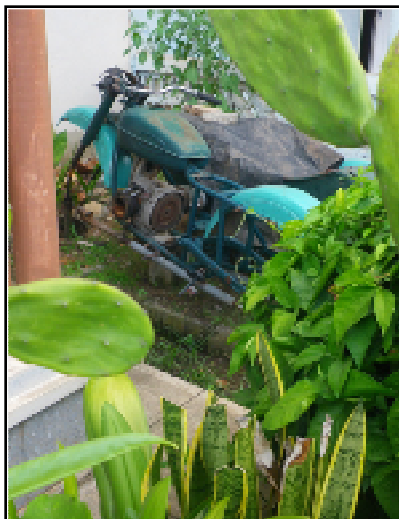
Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

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Che' Statue. Many leaders memorialized in statuary are portrayed holding children as a symbol of their contribution to the future. This portrayal of Che' has many sub-elements portraying various stages of his life.

Right: Remnants
of an MZ rig;
Pinas del Rio.



On Che's leg is a representation of him on a motorcycle for the "Motorcycle Diary" years.



Fifties MZ... back in Havana

Cuba: A motorcyclist's perspective

By James Street



Buick-Los Terrazas



1928 Ford "A" Model Taxi... slightly modified



Looking back; looking forward. Last day in Havana and Cuba

Leaving Cuba paradoxically has added a burden of conflicting emotions that include a great love and respect for its people, an appreciation of the natural beauty of the island, and internal conflicts wrought by the relations between our governments and the results of that discord.

However, as a lifelong motorcyclist and car enthusiast, the most non-conflicted memories and impressions are simply the old cars and bikes and the resourcefulness of the Cuban people in keeping them running.

—James Street

Counting Carbs

By John Rice



The Sherpa will not run, purpose built elegant machine so beautiful in its spare form, capable of magic in others hands and sometimes amusement in my own, so efficient in action, now a silent lump as useless as a styrofoam sledgehammer.

I follow the well-remembered motions to remove the Amal from its perch, marveling again at the difficulty an engineer has left for me in a task so frequently required. Soon in my hand, like so many times before, and the bits are quickly dissected, lying on the blue paper towel spread out before the supervising cat on the cluttered workbench.

Small pieces, brass and gray metal, each the product of an engineer's skill evolved with long trial and error, following basic principles of physics, turned to the task of locomotion.

How many times I've done this, handling these tiny offspring of the marriage of draftsman's lines and machinist's skill, cleaning, polishing that which will not be seen again except by me, trying to spot anything that explains the silence. Almost always, the result is the same : the minuscule

idle jet, with its barely there orifice, is entirely occluded by congealed residue of what these days passes for gasoline. It takes only a short time of inactivity for this energetic liquid to morph into solid in this tiny window refusing to allow the flow, the whisper of fuel mist that is important all out of proportion to its size in the choreography of fuel/air/spark that makes this metal sculpture mobile.

The remedy is simple mindless labor, spinning a thin stiff wire until finally it emerges triumphantly on the other side, then back and forth to clear the Lilliputian tunnel of its plaque without making appreciably larger its bore.

Without really thinking, no more than one analyzes the process of tying shoes or brushing teeth, the Amal is reconstituted and again assumes its place in the frame, completing the artwork that Sr. Bulto perfected nearly four decades before. Forefinger presses the flared metal button until liquid squirts from the side, telling the finger's owner that the requisite flooding of the jets has been accomplished and the left-sided kickstart can be plunged confidently down through its stroke, the drill Sar-



gent that forces the reluctant members of its team into coordinated action, rousing them from indolence to work.

It starts.

—John Rice

Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 7



By Bob Beard

Go West Young Bike (part 7.... Seriously, how long can I drag this out?)

I awake before the dawn. Nothing new on that front. If you remember from last month I left you hanging with me in Las Vegas, New Mexico, safely ensconced within the first and only rented room of the trip.

The room has turned out to be a mixed blessing. While I am grateful for the shower, warmth, and lack of flapping tent walls, I am aware that there are some negatives to staying indoors. Indulge me whilst I list them:

First, I am a little disappointed in my bad self. Staying indoors? Pshaw! I have somewhat sullied my Daniel Boone image. (At least in my own mind) The room is a nod toward comfort that in the past I would never have made when traveling solo. Is it possible that time truly is passing, and in its passing take a toll upon me? I have heard of this aging process, and I am beginning to see

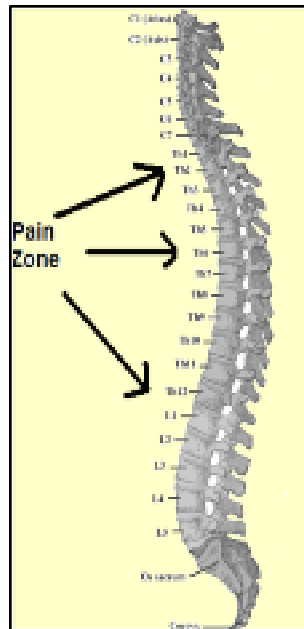
its insidious effects on me. In years past my inherent frugality (cheapness) and all around manly outdoorsiness (cheapness again) would have precluded even the barest thought of staying indoors on a cross country trip. In the future I will ascribe any such weakness to efforts on my part to relieve the suffering economy by spreading my meager fund-age across several states. (And I will try not to be so cheap in the process)

Second, I now feel as though there is some sort of schism in my trip. Not that events were all that homogenously coherent anyway, what with all the bizarre weather I have had to traverse and circumscribe. But this ROOM has stepped into the middle of my trip like a mother-in-law barging into a honeymoon suite. And I will discover that the mere act of blasting off down the byways is not quite enough to erase the negative recollection of the moments spent slumbering here. I feel victimized, somehow. Ambushed by four rental walls, as it were.

Third (And final....I promise) I feel a bit disconnected from the moment. When slumbering in a tent it is a sublime act to be able to keep a finger on the weather pulse. You wake up, roll over, and somewhere during the process those primitive and reptilian corners of the brain pick up enough data to let you know what is going on around you, whether it be sleet, snow, rain, full moon or a falling sky of Meerkats. Here, surrounded by particle board furnishings, hideous green semi-shag carpeting and plaster I am

as removed from my surroundings just as surely as if I were in another country. I cannot help but feel that this is a collection of moments lost; an untasted experience left to forever wander the back aisles of life in search of a blue light special that is not there, or something akin.

Fourth (I lied, get over it), My Back Hurts! Oh, fret not; this is not a new experience for me. I have had a nightly backache since about the tender age of 28. It is a mere matter of a quarter century. It just is. But days spent in a slightly forward-canted riding position ("S" fairing and low bars) with my feet squarely below my butt in combination with extensive stretching at every stop and my nightly sleep regimen of reposing on a Therm-A-Rest pad have relegated that backache to the hinterlands; it is gone. Correction, it was gone, but now, after one night on a squishy motel mattress.....Ooooh.....



Oh.....Eeeeeee.....it seems to have.....urgh.....returned. There is a lesson here somewhere, but I am probably too dense to pick up on it.

So, out of the room and back to the road I go for the start of day 5. It is cold, but mostly clear. Temps are about 38 degrees F. The skies are clearing to the south and that is where I am headed. The wind, which has been a mostly constant and just as constantly unwanted companion, is feeling nearly absent today. But it is early yet, let us just give it some time, shall we?

My first gas stop reveals some sadness. What I initially thought was a brake line leak turned out to be the left fork slider weeping and casting an occasional drop onto the brake rotor. I tried a bit of roadside grief therapy but it remained inconsolable and continued to weep for the rest of the journey. This may be part of the reason for that lack of front end rebound damping I had noted earlier. Still, were I given the choice I would certainly rather retain the front brake than the extra dampening. Not that I have a choice here, but you understand.

Also, I was somewhat gratified to find that one of the pushrod tubes was similarly afflicted. I had been continuing to put oil in at a daily rate of about 1-2 oz per day, and now I had an idea of where at least some of that oil is going. To be sure, an oil leak is an odd thing to be smiled upon, but I am more a fan of leaks than I am of internal oil usage. Gaskets, grease and time are cheap, whereas crankshafts and cylin-

Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 7 By Bob Beard

ders are not. If I look at the leak with my rosier glasses on, it is like a constant oil change. That's what optimism can do for you.

Just after gassing and diagnosing I head out on my chosen path, and do one of those things that I like best about traveling cross country along back roads; I turned onto a road for no other reason than it was going in approximately the correct direction. New Mexico Hwy 3 headed straight south toward the bluest part of the atmosphere and off I went. Good choice on my part. The road was little used and even though the maps I looked at later showed it as mostly straight it was lightly hilly with sections of cutbacks and curvies. The small (very small) towns of Villanueva and Aurora were a delight of modest houses nestled amongst hills and trees. The houses, in direct opposition to tract-home philosophy, were placed among the scenery as though flung by some gigantic hand upon the earth. Some traditional adobe dwellings were mixed in also. Outside of the scarce towns there was naught but road, one lone motorcyclist (that's me) and an increasing lack of grey skies. The extra sunshine was welcome as were the slight rise in temps.

Dropping past the town of Aurora, NM I began losing elevation. Rounding a turn in the road the hills stopped as suddenly as if someone had drawn a border. Ahead of me the road eased down to lower flatlands mainly covered in chaparral, mesquite and cactus-covered. Not sure why that particular moment caused a thought to pop into my head, but it did. I suddenly realized that I had made a decision. Not

a conscious decision (Sometimes you are the last to know) but a decision nonetheless. I had abandoned my goal of reaching southern Oregon and Northern California coastal areas on this trip. The concept was more in the nature of a revelation than an idea, somewhat like receiving a message. But now that my conscious nugget was aware that of what was going on I took a moment's roadside rest to contemplate the impact. I just hoped this was not going to lead to one of those embarrassing arguments with myself.

Instead of pulling over to the roadside to take a break I just coasted down to a stop right smack in the middle of the

road. The country ahead of me was dropping out of the hills and stretching away to flatness at the horizon. Thus far the wind had stayed down and the rising sun was quartering from behind on my left. It was still only about 8:00 am and was just beginning to warm slightly. I had not seen any traffic for the last 25 minutes, and that had been a school bus heading in the opposite direction. During an approximately 30 minute stop I left the bike on its centerstand right smack in the middle of the road while I snacked, drank water, soaked up some sun and strained my ears for some sounds. While I did pick up the occasional chirp of an unseen bird there was mostly

only a great silence pressing in on me. You know that feeling where the silence is so huge it seems to be a presence? Where it is so quiet that the very lack of noise seems almost like a sub-audible hum?

I contemplated my new revelation, that of *Not* pressing on to Southern Oregon and Northern California. *Could* I make it in the time remaining? Yes, I *could* but it would mean that the rest of my trip was necessarily full of mandatory 700 mile days and even then I would have but minimal time spent to visit with all the sundry folks I wanted to see. No, that way seemed too rushed, too forced, too.....much. And now, when it seemed as though



Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 7 By Bob Beard



I had finally escaped the weather gods, I was loathe to tempt them again by braving northward around the western side of the Rockies. Here, in the southwest territories, it was sunny, cloud-free, quiet and warm(er). I have friends, relatives and good memories within this area of country and by staying down in this region I got to explore more, move at a more relaxed pace and wander where I would without the specter of time weighing so heavily on me. So, just like that, my entire agenda changed. Once again, this is a good thing about traveling alone. The entire decision process was done without casting one vote, without an ounce of discussion, and without once having to kill a recalcitrant companion and burying their body in an un-

marked grave in the desert. What is not to love about that? I celebrated my new-found free schedule by taking a perfectly needless 80 mile detour down near the town of Carrizozo, N.M. There was a route that wound back into some sandstone hills along a river, and then looped up into some timbered area before bringing me right back to where I started. No better way to celebrate some extra vacation and riding time than to use it vacationing and riding. Once I embarked along my chosen detour I started seeing random motorcyclists. These singles and occasional groups of fellow two-wheelers were a welcome sight because their very presence bespoke to me that (A) I was on what was probably a good motorcycling road, and (B) the weather was indeed staying

clear down here. I suddenly realized that I had only seen maybe two other motorcyclists since leaving Kentucky, and one of those was a guy on a Gold Wing heeling in the opposite direction from the way I was headed. Sometimes it is good to have the idea that you are not the only idiot in the universe.

Some two hours later, and I was back at Carrizozo and put some lunch in me before turning my headlight to the west along route 380. This would take me to Socorro and then, by way of hwy 60 I would travel on toward Pie Town and the Continental Divide. Truth-be-known I was a bit apprehensive about crossing the Divide. Sure, I was well south and *should* be out of the weather, but I was getting used to being disappointed by the weather gods

and would be chagrined, but not overtly surprised were they to throw something new in my direction.

The rest of the afternoon passed in two-wheel bliss. Still chilly at speed, but we knew the job was dangerous when we took it, right? Somewhere after Carrizozo the wind had returned. And, of course, it was from the north which put it at pretty much 90 degrees to my chosen path. Isn't it ever thus? Still, it was tons warmer than yesterday and certainly the wind was not the brute it had been then. I think the hill country to my north was absorbing quite a bit of the brunt of it, plus I was much further south now; much more removed from the mass of that gigantic low pressure engulfing the Rockies. I was still enjoying that latent sense of release that my new itinerary gave me. How is it

that I am able to drone on endlessly when I do not have a destination, but motoring under the weight of a self-imposed schedule makes me want to stop and sleep? This felt good, this felt right! Now I was out motoring just for the pure pleasure of it all. Where I ended up and when I arrived there were immaterial matters.

Finally, somewhere in the afternoon, at that point when the sinking sun was becoming a glaring irritant upon exiting certain corners, I came upon Pie Town, N.M. The sun, which had been in danger of going behind some not-very-distant hills was suddenly removed to a patch of sky quite a few degrees above the horizon. Odd what a few miles of western travel can do to the length of a day. Instead of being in the shadow of the Rockies I was

Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 7 By Bob Beard

suddenly at the apex and had thereby delayed the setting of the sun by a few hours. Aha, beware my mighty power! Copernicus would be proud, no doubt.

I circled around to get a photo of me with the Continental Divide sign (located most curiously only on the east-bound side of the road) but neglected to think about how the photo would make it appear as though I were traveling eastward. Dang!

Now, if you have never been to Pie Town try not to do what every living person does upon their arrival, and that is to get too excited about having some pie in Pie Town. Sure, you can get pie there, probably in July when the two buildings in town are actually open, but the rest of the time it is pretty much you, the gas station attendant (a very friendly gal, by the way) and whoever is leaning on their truck in front of the post office. Catron county New Mexico, where Pie Town is located, has a population of about 2,900 people spread out over something like 7,000 square miles of land. The people who live here do not reside because they like to be all clumped up in town.

Gassing up (a prohibitively costly venture in Pie Town for anyone not used to Hawaii gas prices) I shared a pump with some Forestry Service guys who were down from Wyoming to stay for the summer fire season. I had been looking at an

obscure little lake about 10 miles outside of "town" called Quemoda Lake and they admitted it was a fantastic place; all scenic and woodsy and isolated and unspoiled and such, but that I might not like it because there was no one out there except for the campground host and his wife. What? You kidding me? They also informed me that I was fortunate to be able to stay there because even though it was not typical fire danger season yet, and would not be for another 45 days, they had just that afternoon made a determination to keep that particular area open to the public. Seems it had been an extremely dry winter/spring so far and it was almost literally a toss of the coin that kept them from

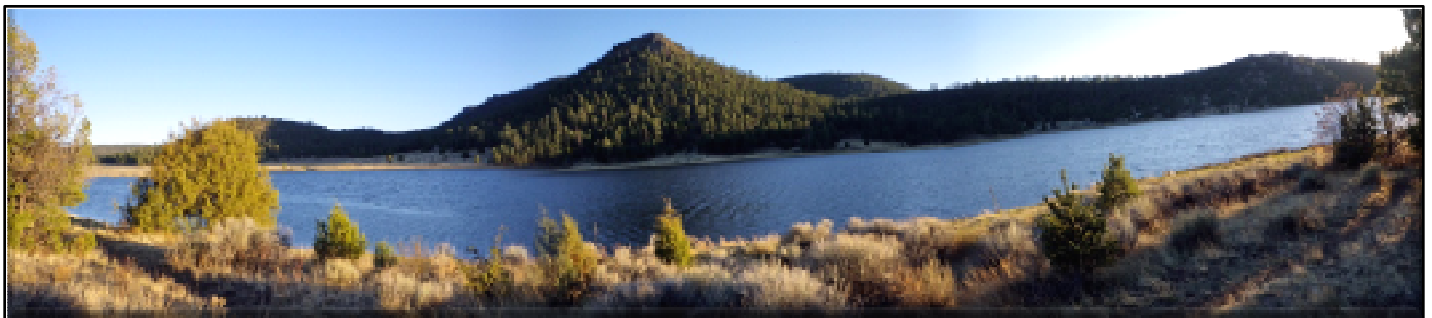
closing the road out to Quemoda Lake.

The road to Quemoda, once you leave the pavement, and get past the compacted and oiled dirt area where the RV campers and summertime boaters gather, is a barely-cared-for series of whoop-de-dooos, gravel-filled pot holes, and blind off-camber corners full of ruts. In general it has all the attributes of a severely crowned and long-forsaken goat trail. How the campground host got his RV back to that area remains a wonder.

But, once within the campground itself I was fairly stunned with what lay before me.

This was obviously a not-very-well-used camp area despite the designated and numbered

camp sites. This was confirmed by the host and his wife who admitted they were surprised to be seeing *anyone* at this time of year, much less some nut case on a motorcycle. Despite their surprise they managed to gather their wits long enough to collect some money from me and give me an extended lecture on fire safety. When I say "extended lecture" I am not just waxing metaphorically here. I got a rundown of everything from costs to rejuvenate a forest, to loss of habitat statistics and gray tailed squirrel mortality statistics. This was a retired couple, obviously responsible to a fault, knowledgeable about their duties, and By-God they were well-and-truly going to make sure they did not shirk those duties. They were on the



Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 7 By Bob Beard



verge of making me raise my right hand and swear on the Thomas Tiddly Woodsman GuideBook that I would not, under any circumstances, use and/or employ or cause to be used ANY flame while I was at any area near Quemoda Lake (no fires, no stoves, no cigarettes or pipes or joints or fireworks, etc....)

Things were getting a bit uncomfortable (for me) when I decided to put a stop to the proceedings and make my escape. Pleading exhaustion, dehydration, an advanced case of St. Vitus Dance disease and hoof-and-mouth I made my exit, but not before offering an invite to the couple to stop by later on

and have a bit of scotch with me as I sat around my roaring bonfire.

Deadpan. Nothing. Not a twitch of a smile. Tough crowd these two.

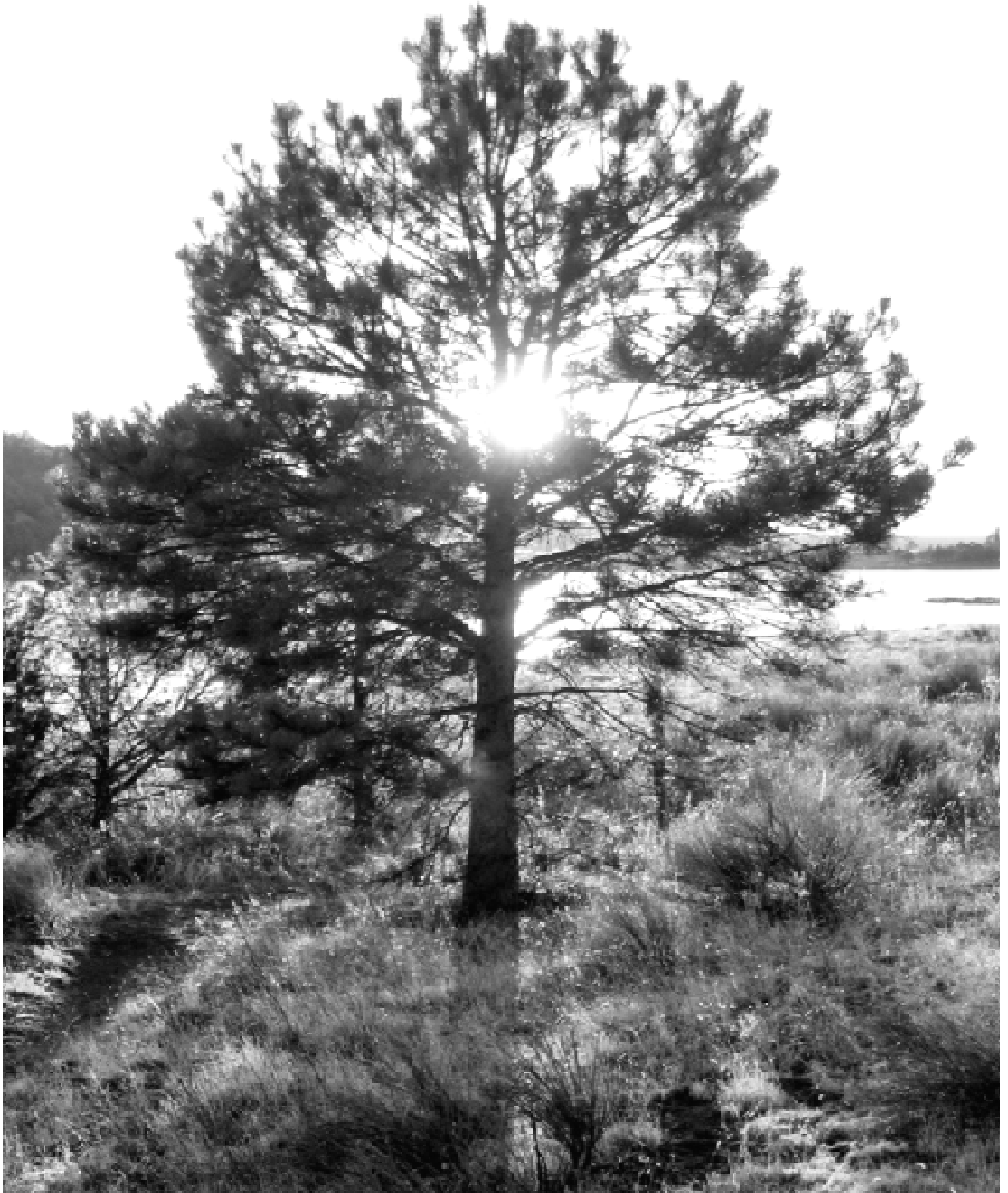
This is one of those moments when I was glad my wife was not with me because she never fails to scold me when I act all anti-social and such.

To be continued



Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 7 By Bob Beard



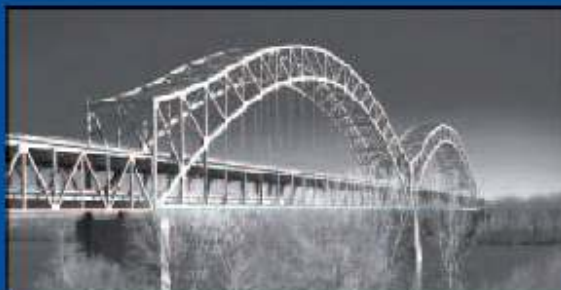
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