

November 2011

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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



Photo
by Bob Walker



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2012 Rally Update

By Lee Thompson

As you recall, in the October issue of *Apex*, Roy Rowlett once again extended his offer to train a new chairman for the Annual Rally.

Since there were no responses, I was asked to get the word out and determine the interest level for continuing the Rally or simply letting it end.

This past Saturday after breakfast, a small group of members held a brief meeting to discuss the Rally's future. I am proud to say that when presenting this question to several members, the overwhelming response was absolutely yes, the Rally should indeed continue. All committed to do what they could to make the 2012 Rally happen.

The purpose of this letter is to inform everyone that we will establish a new format for conducting the activities and responsibilities for the Rally.

In an effort to reduce the work load for the Chairman, we agreed to create a team of Rally Volunteers who will commit to specific tasks and divide the responsibilities. Providing this is a successful format, each year there will be a new Team of Volunteers to handle the

following year's Rally.

Please note, we also agreed to maintain our culture of "un-organization" and to avoid any unnecessary structure.

Roy has already provided a detailed breakout of the Rally tasks and deadlines. He has also agreed to train and advise the 2012 team.

With this letter I am requesting each of you to consider a personal commitment for a part in the 2012 Event. Soon we will schedule a meeting with those willing to make that commitment. The date and time for this meeting will be communicated via email.

I cannot end this letter without thanking Roy for his many years of service as our Rally Chairman. His work and dedication has made this Event a great success and a tradition many Bluegrass Beemers are passionate to continue.

I look forward to seeing you at the 2012 Rally Volunteer meeting.

Thanks,

Lee Thompson , *President*



***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, 7-9:00 a.m.

Bark's Bytes

By Joseph Bark, MD



Like I've said before, I'm no professional (or amateur) instructor, but I've attended a few courses as have many of us, and these occasional articles will just echo some points about riding technique that I find useful, or that enhance riding safety.

Read 'em and laugh or tell me I'm nuts, or just paper the outhouse with them. Some are ridiculously simple or self-evident, but that only means that at some point, when Hubert Burton was showing me how to ride my Honda Helix, I was that naïve, too.

Tingling Hands

Have you ever felt your hands tingling or vibrating after a ride or part of one? Both Reg Prid-

more and Larry Grodsky said, "Handgrips should really be called 'hand-DRAPES,'" because it's the gripping that gives most of the buzz. Relax, and hold 'em gently! DRAPE them over the bars. It's a more sensitive approach, too!

Scan Surroundings

Scan your surroundings constantly!! Remember Grodsky's favorite summation of his riding safety philosophy: The Space Bubble Concept: **YOU CANNOT HIT WHAT YOU ARE NOT NEAR!!** This is his priceless axiom, which has kept many alive to ride again. In short, don't get near ANYTHING!!!

Avoid Blind Spots

And keeping with the theme of the "Space Bubble Concept,"

remember that one of the most dangerous times for you on a two wheeler is during a pass, when you are momentarily in the blind spot of another vehicle.

Tip? Pass as rapidly as safety permits, escaping the other guy's blind spot as quickly as possible. (I once saw the horrendous result of a broken tandem twosome of truck tires on I-64 in downtown Louisville. A car was smashed on the other side of the median with fatalities in the car covered with blood-soaked sheets. You can imagine what this would have done to a passing motorcycle!). Get around the vehicle and don't forget the other riders in your group! They may be following your pass and they need a slot in the right lane in front of the passed vehicle. Go far enough ahead to give them room to slide in!!

Avoid Edge Traps

"Rough Rides Have Ridges!"

-- Edge traps can grab your steering in a New York Minute. Edge traps are linear variations in a road's surface -- sometimes little ruts, sometimes metal mesh bridge surfaces, or sometimes resurfacing marks, or railroad tracks. These irregularities can grab your tires and seriously restrict you steering, sometimes even taking down a good motorcycle and a good rider.

How can you safely navigate these steering bandits? If it's a single linear trap, like a railroad track, try to approach it as perpendicularly as possible. This effectively changes a "steering grabber" into a little bump in the road. Hold the bars steady, but don't try to seriously fight the slight movement of your front wheel, because this can cause you to lose your balance very quickly.

Some of the worst edge traps occur at construction sites, where, for instance, one lane of

pavement might be as much as six inches higher than the other lane. This presents a special problem, because to tackle such an enormous difference would require almost a perpendicular very slow approach -- not an attack you can easily take, say, on an expressway! Tip here is **DONT TRY IT!!!** just suck it up, slow down, and stay in your lane for safety.

Rain

My final point today is about **Rain**. At the track safety courses, Reg Pridmore often starts his "rainy day" talk by holding his right hand in the air while twisting it slowly back and forth. (Pridmore conducts his *Class* courses rain or shine.) "Gentlemen," he says, in a quiet tone, "When you see those very first drops of rain on your shield, remember your future is in your right hand. Back down your speed and live to ride another day!"

Take home message? Rain and high speed do not mix. Slow down in the rain, and if your riding buddies don't want to go slower, just quietly leave the ride!

Impressions upon riding a BMW S1000RR

'This son of a gun is SLICK!'

By Tom Rich

The demo ride from Stillwaters Campground during the Beemers in the Bluegrass Rally was amazing!

I had sat on an S1000RR two or three times and liked it. First, the bike is smaller than I thought it was. It's narrow. The seat is hard. First impression is that the suspension is stiff. The bike is compact, and the rider is close to the front end. The little shield requires a horse jockey riding stance. I'm not as small as I need to be, but I was right down next to the shield. I was comfortable on the S1000RR. I've ridden crotch rockets and a KRS, and I loved the way the S1000RR sat. It's not what I call a crotch rocket position. The pegs are lower than I expected. The bars are low, but they don't seem that low.

Going north from the campground, The road sweeps right, then left. Fourth gear works well through these sweepers. Son of a gun it feels good! When you're riding a two-cycle engine, you've got to wind it up, but this S1000RR son of a gun is ready any time!

That engine will jerk the front wheel off the ground, and I didn't run it up until after 4,000 rpm. But the engine at slow speed also is quite docile. But you better be ready when you open it up!

The engine management has several settings...practice, full race, and OLD MEN. I'm bad to wind one up, and in any gear acceleration is instantaneous. I don't think they had it set for full race. When you get up to 9,500 rpm a light comes on to

tell you to shift. Things happen real quick. It ran wonderful!

It was very smooth. And shifting is amazing! You barely touch the clutch, finger-tip, and you're in another gear before you know it. Shifting is much slicker than anything else I have ridden.

The exhaust is kinda loud, but

that's part of it.

I would love to have one of these for a few months. It's a heck of a good bike, the ultimate café racer. Low bars. You hold on tight under acceleration. My knees were tight against that tank. When I returned from the ride, Jim

Davidson from the dealership

asked me if I had insurance to pay for removal of the two dents in the tank where I was gripping it.

Cool bike. My wife thought it was a cool-looking bike.

Did I mention that the exhaust was cool as heck?

This son of a gun is SLICK!



2012 MOA Rally Site Tour By Lowell Roark



I wanted to go on a fall ride and noticed that there was going to be a tour of next year's national rally site in Sedalia, Missouri. So I planned to ride out and see what the place looks like.

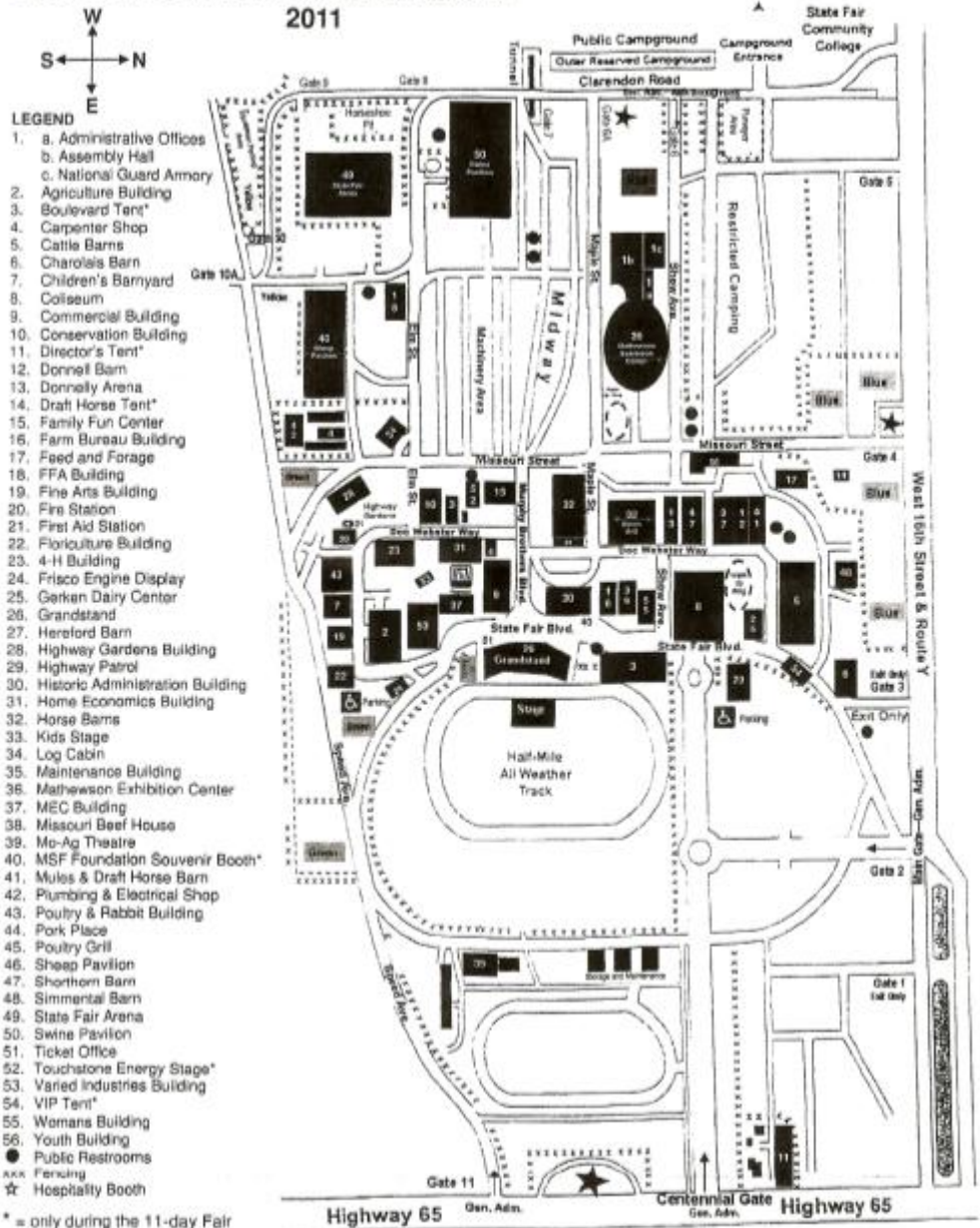
I left home in the rain and hoped it would run out of it soon. It rained until I got to Henderson, Kentucky, then off and on to St. Louis.

It got windy but dry after that. I didn't want to stay in St. Louis, so I rode on to Jefferson City, 545 miles. I found a Motel 6 and a real German restaurant for the evening, a real treat.

On to Sedalia the next morning, 65 easy miles, 610 total. Sedalia is a town of about 23,000 population, and the rally site is the Missouri State Fairgrounds located about one mile south of the intersection of US 50 and US 65 on the right.

I had reservations at the Best Western where all the BMWMOA people were staying. There were already bikes in the parking lot. I met Carol Patzer first thing and several others after checking in. They were going to tour the site about 1pm, and I was made to feel welcome to join in.

MISSOURI STATE FAIRGROUNDS MAP
2011



2012 MOA Rally Site Tour By Lowell Roark

We rode to the fairgrounds, and they had arranged for a trailer pulled by a pickup to take us around the site. It was very well planned and lasted about 2.5 hours.

The Missouri State Fairgrounds is a large place with air conditioned buildings off vendors and other activities. There are several permanent restaurants on site and lots of flat grassy camping space.



The planning seemed to be well thought out. There will be three access gates open after registration at the main gate on US 65 just about a mile south of the center of town. The grounds seem to be reasonably well maintained and clean.

Just two weeks earlier, they had the state fair here, and some of the rally planners attended. They said there were thousands of people on the grounds, and the site handled the crowd well.

Having attended other MOA rallies, I could picture how the place would look with bikes, tents, vendors, etc. Everywhere. The closing ceremonies will not be in the grandstand, but in an air conditioned 5,000-seat arena.

I think the place will work very well for a national rally. If we can avoid the 100 degree plus heat and rain, we will be fine.

—Lowell



Fly, Drive, Ride In event hosted by Bluegrass Beemerphile Alex Boone offers his stunning 1943 Stearman biplane, eclectic mix of cars, and lots of motorcycles!



Alex Boone with his
1943 Stearman

Fly, Drive, Ride In event hosted by Bluegrass Beemer- phile Alex Boone offers his stunning 1943 Stearman biplane, eclectic mix of cars, and lots of motorcycles!

Okay, so this is a motorcycle club magazine and I have used an entire page to display an airplane.

Any motorcyclist who does not understand that decision needs to rethink motorcycling.

I'm one of those unfortunates who becomes unstable when over six feet off the ground. Well, okay, I'm unstable on the ground, too, but that's another dysfunction.

The bottom line is that Bluegrass Beemers member Alex Boone hosted a top-notch event at his home with grass air field that normally would have drawn about 30 planes had the wind not been gusting to over 20 miles per hour.

So we were left with one plane, Alex's 1943 Stearman in Army trainer colors, a stunning example of the iconic biplane that was in production from the late 1930's to the late 1940's.

Although over 9,000 examples were built, only approximately 800 remain, according to Stearman owner George Smith, and Alex's plane appears to this untrained eye to be a concours example.

Sporting a 220 hp 7-cylinder Continental radial engine, the open seater positions the pilot in the rear seat. A 46-gallon fuel tank resides overhead in the top wing, a fuel gauge extending below.

Alex bought the plane from his neighbor, Art Frances, who bought the plane in 1975.

Art rebuilt the original engine, but was not satisfied, leading him to replace that unit with the current engine which he had rebuilt in Oklahoma.

Art flew to Florida and California in the '43 Stearman, but



noted that the a 300 hp engine would be the preferred setup for crossing the Rockies, high altitude reducing power output.

I talked for a bit with George Smith, owner of a yellow 300 hp Stearman once used as a Navy trainer. He was one of a number of pilots on hand for the event that included a catered BBQ lunch for all attendees, including many Bluegrass Beemers members.

We enjoyed a great lunch, fascinating cars, a great collection of motorcycles, and, of course, the '43 Stearman, and a fascinating collection of personalities.

Alex plans to stage another event in the spring, hopefully with less wind so the pilots will arrive from the air.

I'm placing a Stearman on my wish list (which clarifies another of my many dysfunctions).

—Paul Elwyn



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Another great Saturday with Bluegrass Beemers

One of the appealing aspects of Bluegrass Beemers breakfast at Frisch's on Saturday mornings is that attendees, engaging in their own right, own interesting motorcycles, cars and planes, although we have not had a plane arrive yet at Frisch's. Maybe next week?

When was the last time you could see a '63 Volvo?

On the motorcycle side, Roberto Munoz and Phillip Baugh appeared on their bikes, both machines noteworthy, although separated by 49 years. How about a 2011 Moto Guzzi Griso and a 1962 BMW R60?



Above: Geoff Jones and Roberto Munoz study Ben Prewitt's most recent acquisition, a 1963 Volvo 544 B18 Sport. Does Ben now own 12 cars?

Below Left: Roberto Munoz with his new Moto Guzzi Griso.

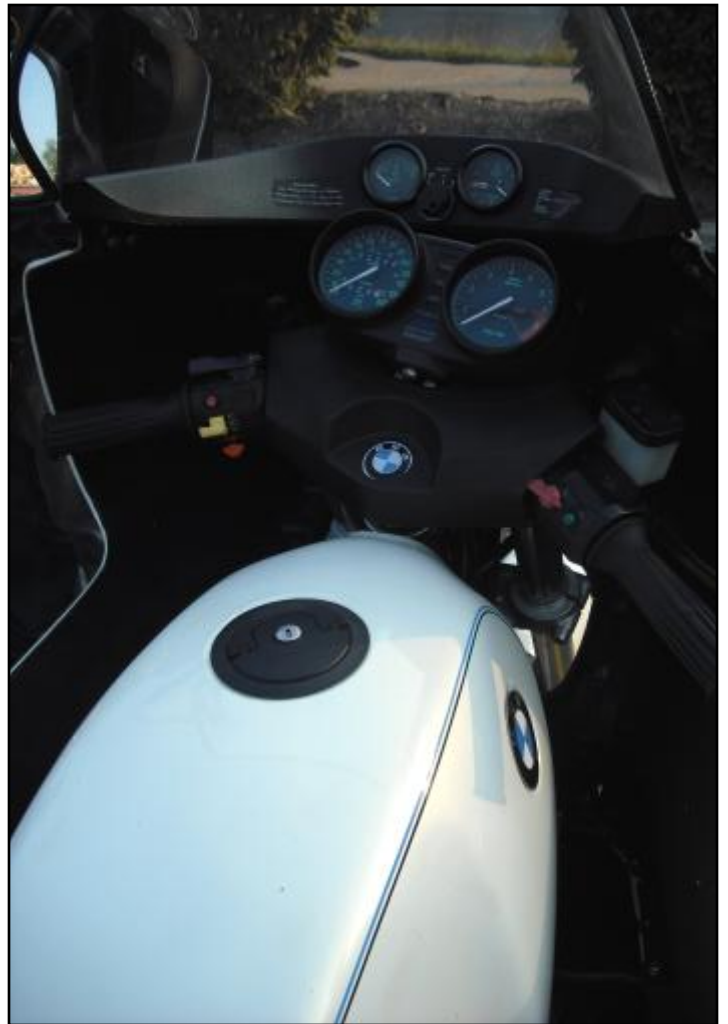
Below Right: Tom Rich, Roy Rowlett, Phillip Baugh, and Jim Brandon discuss Phillip's R60 which Phillips' father bought new in 1962.



Another great Saturday with Bluegrass Beemers



Another great Saturday with Bluegrass Beemers



Above: Cobwebs, Phillip?

Another great Saturday with Bluegrass Beemers



Roger Trent entertained us with his latest blast from the past, a 1978 Yamaha XS1100.

Roger said, "I understand it was the first four cylinder four stroke motorcycle that Yamaha imported into the U.S. It was also the most powerful production motorcycle that money

could buy at the time it was introduced. It is definitely a blast to ride! I've since changed to original stock handlebars, nicer mirrors, grips, and new modern clear lens turn-signal with amber bulbs. The old beast looks a great deal more presentable!"



Another great Saturday with Bluegrass Beemers

Photos and captions on this page by Bob Walker



Right: Too early for some

Below : Debbie Barnes. What a great waitress!



Today's Ride

By Tom Weber



Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 6



By Bob Beard

Uh-oh.

It is 4am-ish, and I think I am in some slight trouble. Out of the dead warm calm of the night my tent just snapped and walloped like someone swatted it with a queen size mattress. Not only did this scare me witless, and at least one word that rhymes with witless, it also served to pop me into an unwanted awakefulness from which I would not likely recover any time soon. And I will now have to go through the rest of my life with a pesky fear of queen size mattresses, great!

Heart thudding from this most recent still-of-the-night fright I scrambled adroitly from the confines of my rip-stop nylon cocoon, and slipped gracefully into the pre-dawn with the grace of a greased otter ninja. Well, not really. In actuality I almost peed on myself as I flopped and searched in desperation for the zipper that would release me from the con-

finer of my mummy bag. Somewhere in the night I had managed to squirm it around to the exact middle of my back. Good thing it is not a grizzly bear attack.

Finally gaining the outside of the tent, and standing in the hazy moonlit night while saving some errant patch of grassland from imminent dehydration it occurs to me to consider that gust of wind which had just bolstered me so rudely from dreamland. It is not windy now, odd. In point of fact the night is close, warm, and slightly humid. The quarter of moon visible in the sky had a marked circular rainbow-hued aura surrounding it. Quiet, as befits the western unpopulated edges of the vast prairie that is middle of the North American continent.

But.....something there itches and scratches around the edges of my senses. Something is not...quite....right. There, in the distance, whispering like the approach of tomorrow, I hear a susurrant moaning, and it seems to be approaching. A small lick of breeze caresses my cheek, and drifting in the night are the olfactory presences of newly wetted chaparral and long-dry grasses.

Gazing upward again I orient myself with the night sky. Crap! The northwest portion of sky is absolutely star free; blacker than black even. Obviously there is some serious cloud cover in that quadrant. In the east I could see stars glittering brightly behind a light scrim of haze. That moon, with its vaguely multi-colored veil, like it is lying in a puddle of oil-sheened water, and that smell

of wetted grasses riding the wind, the sudden gust and now the sound of another approaching gust herald the arrival of weather I do not want. There, the treetops are moving and the sound of the wind is rising! Oh boy, I do believe it is going to rain some.

Diving back into the tent I pull out the poles and fly for the roof of my shelter and scramble back out to get it fixed in place before the arrival of what can only be a storm front. A new gust shudders my structure again and tries its windy best to tear the fly from my grasp as I hustle to fasten it in place. The first wind-driven fat drops smack around me as I complete the task and dive back into my tent. And not a bare moment too soon either.

The scatter of water droplets are soon joined by a ravaging horde of brethren and had I not placed the roof in place I would surely have been one wet, soggy and unhappy puppy. As it is I am snug, pretty much dry, and staked down. Boots, and jacket and helmet are in here with me. The bike, which has the gathered dust and bugs of the last thousand miles adhering to it, can use a good rinsing. It seems there is nothing to do but get some more sleep while I wait it out. Not one to fight the fates I shut my eyes and try to make patterns of the sound of rain drumming the stretched nylon.

6:30 a.m. I open my eyes. It is quiet again, although breezy. The rain has stopped, for now. A glance outside shows a grey and gusty world that has grown at least 20 degrees cooler. I estimate it to be about 50 de-

grees. It is fairly chilly by my Hawaii standards, but not too bad. The sky is completely obscured north of my position. Taking a quick hike to the apex of the slight rise I am camped on I can see the grey and blurred horizon to the north that signals falling rain. Southwest of me there are some lighter areas and, looky there, a break in the clouds with a 50 cent size piece of blue sky. Guess which direction I am headed? Oh, clever you.

Packing quickly, before that grey morass to the north decides to vacation in Mexico, I slither the 7 miles back to the paved road I ventured in from last night. At least there is no dust cloud following me this time, but throttle applications are applied with a subtlety I reserve for slick conditions. Notching it up a gear also helps to keep that back tire in place.

I take a moment once I hit macadam to call command central. (Mary) She confirms what I have already deduced: That low pressure over the Rockies is huge and having an adolescent growing spurt. It now stretches from Canada to northern New Mexico. Fort Collins and Denver are gathering snow and Denver is expected to get snow accumulation of 2-3" by mid afternoon. WTF? It is still mid May, right?

While I am on the phone with my loved one I take the opportunity to get updates on the weather across the country. Anywhere north of me is heavy rain stretching into frostbite weather should one continue on and on. Straight west is several inches of snow. I can head straight south where it would be

Go West Young Bike

(Or, How Paul's Bike Finds a New Home In Hawaii) Part 6 By Bob Beard

warmer, but everything from Tennessee to the Texas Panhandle is getting torrential rain and flooding. Interstate 10 is supposedly being washed away in places, although the official report is that this cannot be confirmed because of high waters. How funny is that? Shooting somewhat southwest is pretty much my single option. I'll take it.

Mary's parting shot of advice is that some of the passes south of Denver *may* not get snow and *could* be passable. There is no way to tell as the televised and on-line weather gods are pretty well split on this decision. Well, it is not the very first time I have elected myself to be a weather-check dummy.

Saying a warm aloha to my dearest I pull out mappage and aim somewhat souther than I had originally intended. The thought last night had been to try and scoot across near the Denver area, or maybe even a bit north of there if the weather cooperated. The weather did not cooperate.

Now I am looking at shooting south to Kansas hwy 50 and making Coolidge, KS my exit point from the flatland state. Wending in that direction has me going from spray to mist to droplets and back again. I seem to be ahead of the full-on rain (big smile here) for the time being, although the wind is getting more and gustier. Are those gusts directly behind me in tailwind mode? Really, you have to ask? I could just slap you.

Gassing up in Coolidge I treat me to a warm cuppa and get out of the wind for a bit. I was going to ask the lady behind the counter if she had any idea of what the weather in my direc-



tion of travel might be, but she seems surly and gives the appearance of someone who skipped high school to make the try-outs for federal penitentiary. Also dampening my inquisitive mode is the fact that I have to wait behind a harried mother and her demon-child offspring in order to pay. This kid would not be helped by a leash and collar; he is more of a choke-chain candidate. He reminds me of a four year old who lives down the street from Mary and me. The kid can be heard yelling at other neighborhood kids about 18 hours each day. I have not been directly introduced to the little angel, but I gather from hearing his parents speak to him that his name is Aiden...Aiden...Aiden.

Aiden...Aiden...Aiden has never, ever within my experience responded even remotely to anything his parents have ever said to him. EVER! I am thinking that they may as well

shorten his name to just Aiden and save some breath.

Back on the road and I must have passed into Colorado because I cross Colorado state road 89. The road I am currently on, Hwy 50, is supposedly a scenic roadway. For the life of me I cannot quite figure out at least half of that descriptive moniker. It is definitely a roadway though, and it is going in the direction I want.

Breakfast is in La Junta Colorado. It is officially cold and windy. The wind is blasting from the west-northwest and for the last 25 miles I have been scrubbing flat planes on the right sides of my tires.

La Junta is one of those towns that seemingly grew up at the point where someone's horse died and stranded them. Not wanting to be abandoned in the wilderness all on their lonesome the hapless traveler undoubtedly ate his horse while awaiting some other clueless fool to come along. When clueless did appear the original

stranded guy probably conned him into stopping to rest and spend the night. Once asleep he killed the other guy's horse, ate it too, and in the morning there were now two of them stranded. And so on, and so forth, until VOILA! a town is born amid a pile of horse bones. La Junta, by the way, for those of you who opted for French, German, Latin or Italian for your pre-college courses means "The Junction", or "The Joining." It could also be construed to mean "that hot momma I am standing right next to," but we will give them the benefit of the doubt here and suppose that the burgeoning town was named due to its proximity to the confluence of the aforementioned Hwy 50 and Hwy 360.

As a crossroads town La Junta is rife with gas stations lining the roads into town, and being just on the north eastern edge of Comanche National Grasslands means that each of these gas station marts is just chock full of the ticky-tacky crap they tend to sell near National Parks. You want a T-shirt with a stylized representation of a Hopi Kachina (because it is *Comanche* National Grasslands, remember?), well, you got it. *Navajo* (?) blankets (made in the Philippines), they got those too. Hummel-like Native American figurines (made in Japan) are in stock too. How can you go wrong? How about a clock on a dinner plate with a painting of Elvis and Sitting Bull? Got one of those? (The manager is checking for one in the back).

Finding a small and homey looking café I dismount, employ the center stand to keep the bike from falling over on a curiously slanted street, and

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wend my way to the café entrance picking my way through piles of horse skeletons.

Stepping into the warm, noisy and packed confines of the café I am assaulted by the olfactory equivalent of Valhalla. Jesus-jumped-in-a-creek I am hungry. My ravenous nature may have something to do with my recent steady diet of nuts, grubs and berries. The café floor is narrow wood strips that were last varnished about the time Lincoln was inaugurated.

The counter stools are covered in varying degrees and patterns of duct tape and old glitter-red vinyl. The tables appear to have come from whatever yard sale the proprietor passes along his way to work each day. If there is a pair of matching chairs around any of those tables I will eat your mamma's oldest shoes, but that might just be my grumbling tummy talking for me, so try not to take that so literally.

There are exactly two waitresses attending to about 25 people. And in the Yin and Yang nature of the universe one of them is morose, sullen and plodding, and the other is a human whippet, and calls everyone "Honey," and "Sweetie" and such. The plodding one gives an occasional grunt. Lucky me though, the whippet is manning the counter and that is where my backside is parking. Her arrival happens in a flurry of napkins, forks, knives, platter, cup, condiments, and menu. She is yapping 90 miles a second and I have just enough time to nod in the affirmative for some coffee (maybe something slightly less volatile and caffeine-imbued than what she is drinking) before she is off and yammering about Today's

Specials and what the locals like and the best place to get a tune up for a '47 Packard and some other stuff that I may have missed. I just wrap my hands about the warm mug and tap the menu with a finger as I try to indicate that I might actually look at this handwritten listing of foody items if she is agreeable. She smiles and reveals a row of teeth that would do Sea Biscuit proud, pats my hand and tells me she has some extra biscuits just out of the oven - sweetie and she will get me a couple of honey and go ahead and take my time yak kity-yak kity-yak before she sails away. You think Mary would be disappointed with me if I took a wife in La Junta?

A full hour later, fortified by a fantastic breakfast of huevos rancheros, tortillas, biscuits, and coffee I stagger out of the café and try to mount the bike and get rolling before a food coma sets in. Not only am I thoroughly warm now, I am positively radiating heat from the high calorie intake I have just pummeled myself with. Ahh, such sweet bliss.

Back on the open road and I angle southwest on Hwy 360. This, too, is listed as a scenic road, being part of the old Santa Fe Trail. It may be scenic indeed and in truth, but I am not looking. I am absolutely certain that if I were to remove my attention from the task of piloting two wheels through this windstorm I will wind up tumbling 253 yards off the lee side of the highway during a gust, so for me it is not scenic. And this wind is not of a tropical nature. Ambient temps are about 40 degrees, it is gusting between 35-40 mph, and I am on two

wheels traveling about 50 mph.

What a fantastic idea this is! I am having a great time. Not as much fun as that semi parked on his side, but still. Wind chill, according to the handy little chart I carry, should be about 26 degrees, but that is geared for a person who is standing still in a 35-40 mph wind. You can rest assured I was wearing everything I had AND my raingear in an effort to keep my warm cocoon intact. I stopped in Trinidad, Colorado to re-warm, refuel, re-check my

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maps, re-think the situation, etc. . . . Trinidad, Colorado is fun for me on a couple of counts: (1) Mary and I lived in a town in northern California for many years called Trinidad, and I was even the acting Postmaster there for about a year, and (2) Trinidad, Colorado is the sex-change capital of the U.S. How about that? I bet that does something to alter the singles

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scene in this burg. While I gas up I am covertly checking for transitional types. I do not spy anyone sporting about town with a bandaged groin so maybe it is a slow week in the changeroo business.

Trinidad is at the very south east portion of Colorado and a man working in the gas station tells me that he is hearing reports that the developing storm may not have reached the passes this far south.....yet. He is helpful in the extreme and pulls out a more detailed map than my own showing me a road that will take me westward. About 25 miles along the road meanders up into some foothills of about 5-7,000 feet before it starts to seriously climb into the highest pass in this portion of the state. I am worried about making that pass, but then getting stuck on the

next one that comes along. He points out that if the first pass is clear (Cuchara Pass, elevation 9,941 feet) there is a large valley and close to 100 miles between it and the next pass. Additionally there are some roads within that valley that lead straight south should the second set of passes be in non-pass mode. Well, looks like a plan.

It is not a plan though; it only *looked* like a plan. Heading westish on Hwy 12 I only get to about 6,000 feet before the mist turns into slush followed a mile or so later by snow. The hills rising ahead of me are obscured by falling white flakes. No thanks, not a fan. One careful feet-down U turn gets me going back down the hill to Trinidad. At least I did not get all tied up on some kind of "what-if" scenario regarding which path to take. I am NOT pushing into

snow. Wasn't I just in a record-setting heat wave two days ago?

Back in Trinidad I break my own unwritten rule and put about 48 miles on interstate 25 down to Raton, New Mexico. From there I can turn west again and try for a pass on the north side of Eagle Nest. This is a pretty high pass, and it is actually not far from the ski area of Taos, New Mexico, but everyone is telling me that it is clear down that way.

The Interstate is a continued exercise in wind-driven hell. Those 48 miles takes me over an hour and a half, and this is probably due to the fact that the fastest vehicles on the highway are zipping along at some 30-35 miles an hour. There was one trucker who blazed by like it was business as normal, even though the tail end of his truck

was wagging like a happy pup as he sped along. Fortunately I had spied in him in my rear-view and pulled wa-a-a-y over to let him pass by as he was using pretty much all of both lanes to drive. I then passed him about 8 miles further along. He was bent into a V-shape with the cab of his truck pointing back the way he had just come from, and he was parked precisely at the end of some long and crazy skid marks. There was a friendly black-and-white there with him so I did not stop to say something encouraging like "nyah-nyah-nyah".

I repeated some warming up and planning in Raton, NM. It was like 1 or 2pm and I have to admit I was getting pretty tired of this day. I had been battling cold and gusty winds all day and any warmth generated by

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that high calorie breakfast in La Junta was long since gone. A chill was settling in and needed to have something positive happen for a mental boost if nothing else. Heading southwest on Scenic 64 out of Raton I there was actually a slight lessening of the winds as I once again approached the foothills of the Rockies. Ahead of me things looked maybe possible, maybe not. It was grey as a gathering of dust bunnies, and I could see areas of some kind of precipitation here and there in the hills, but there also seemed to be large gaps between those areas. There was only one sure way to know.

Hwy 64 really is scenic. Beautiful open rolling countryside stretched all about me, and

as I slowly climbed I enjoyed occasional views back to the east as the prairie lands dropped away. Things were looking good as I passed through Cimarron, NM.....right up until they did not look good anymore. I rounded a curve and got a sudden slap in the face by wet slush blowing on the wind. Not three miles later rounded another curve and slowed to a stop by the side of the road. The tarmac from this point on climbed fairly straight up into the white covered hills. Snow again. Screw this! Once again it is down into the lower altitudes and back into some relative warmth.

There's Snow in Them Thar Hills

The only good thing about having turned around is that each time I head down hill I have the wind mostly at my back. I drive slowly and conservatively because I am cold, the road is cold with wet areas, my tires are cold, I am fatigued, etc.... This day is coming to an end quickly. I am now on some country road that loops from Cimarron back to interstate 25 where I am going to head south. This low pressure is apparently moving and building faster than anyone expected and I must find a way around it. South is my only option.

Let me take a moment here to once again regale British Motorcycle Gear (BMG) on their gloves. My hands, despite the weather I have been battling through, are fairly comfy. These gloves are pliant, comfy, have very good tactile feel and are warm. The \$90 spent was well worth it, and considering how much use these gloves will get over the years (Hawaii, remember?) I imagine the only reason I will replace them is if I cannot find them when next they are needed.

Two hours later I am Las Vegas, NM. I did not know there was a Las Vegas, NM but a quick glance around assured me that very few citizens are going to confuse it with its

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more famous Nevada name-sake.

Gassing up I am approached by no less than two separate people trying variations of "Hey-why-don't-you-give-me-some-money". I am just sticking the gas nozzle into my gas tank when the first one comes up. This is a woman who tells me a sad tale of how she is traveling to Texas for a job interview where she is a guaranteed to be hired on as a nurse but she ran out of money cause she sent all her money to her mom who is sick but if I could gas up her car on my credit card she would be really grateful cause her card is tapped out and maybe I could get her something to eat from inside too and as soon as she gets that job in Texas she will send me \$100 for helping her out.

I ask her what kind of nurse she is. She tells me she is the kind who wears the white uniforms and helps doctors. Uh-huh. I do tell her that I can share some food with her but that is as far as our relationship is going to go. She offers that maybe my ancestors had sex with animals. C'mon, is that nice?

The second person steps in front of my bike as I am about to start the motor and pull away and I take the time to remove gloves, helmet and earplugs to hear his tale of woe. Remember, I have been traveling alone for awhile so any conversation is sort of a novelty, plus I am really not that thrilled about getting back on the road.

This character wants some straight up cash in hand cause he lost his job, he lost his house, he lost his car, and he has been staying in a motel but now he owes them two days rent and they are going to kick him out if he does not pay for at least another week in advance.



These British Motorcycle Gear gloves are pliant, comfy, have very good tactile feel and are warm.

Wow! So he wants me to front him something like \$500. What happened to panhandling for spare change? I point out to him that I am traveling in less-than-ideal-conditions on a motorcycle, and have been sleeping in a tent. He does not seem to realize the irony of what I am telling him, in fact he pretty much ignores everything I say and just asks if I am going to give him the f***ing money or not. Subtlety is not his forte. I tell him that I am certainly NOT going to give him "the f***ing money", and as he storms off he too has nothing nice to say about my relatives. How is it that everyone here knows so much of my family's history?

But crazy guy has put the idea of a motel in my head, and I find myself pulling into the next little overnight place I see which lies, most conveniently, just a quarter mile down the road. It is warmer here in Las Vegas than it was up in the hills, but the wind is still blowing, and it is still only about 40 degrees. I am done with it.

Stepping into the motel's Office I am confronted by a dense pall of cigarette odor. No actual smoke at the moment,

but this room has seen its share of butts and the ambiance is ingrained. It is one of those places managed by someone who lives on-premises and is set up more as a living room than an office. The sole nod to business function, a serviceable, albeit unattractive, Formica-covered counter commands one corner of a room that is dominated by a La-Z-Boy, a huge flat screen TV and about 18 tons of little ceramic figurines.

I would not guess that the tinkle of the bell above the doorway would have attracted anyone's attention over the sound of General Hospital, but a wizened dwarf of a woman issues from a back doorway immediately asking if I would like a room for the night. I tell her I think I would, but first inquire if they have non-smoking rooms and what the rates are. She guarantees me that ALL her rooms are non-smoking because she runs a clean place. I bite my tongue, mentally chastise myself for the comment I was about to make, and inquire about rates. She tells me that rooms are \$90 per night, but that as one of the construction crew I get a 40%

discount. I bite my tongue once again before the stupid voice inside my head can get to the outside and ruin this lovely transaction. (If I have to talk to this woman for very much longer I am going to chew my own tongue clean off.) I can only suppose that well-used motorcycle riding gear carries the appearance of whatever outer clothing the construction types wear in these parts. God knows what she makes of the helmet. Maybe non-helmeted construction workers only get a 30% discount.

First order of business upon entering my room, as you can well imagine, is a hot shower. I have checked in early enough to make sure that there are no issues with me running out of hot water. Anyone coming in after me is probably going to get the cold soak, but I am chilled close to danger points and I am getting all the warmth I can. Exiting from the shower some indeterminate time later I am wrinkly, pink and warm. I figure out how to use the TV (despite the instructions mounted on the wall) and find a weather channel that is not in Spanish. It may be English, but the volume control does not work too well, and I can only hear what the weather droids are saying if I stand right next to the set. From anything further than 5 feet away it sounds like chance of rain and scattered marmosets ahead of a cheese front. Oh wait! Close Caption. How friendly is that?

Next, shave. And maybe a bit of a refresher from Mr. Johnny Walker who, once again, has stowed away in my bag. How does he always find me? By the time I am done shaving I have already refilled my glass. Standing in front of the mirror, on your second glass of scotch, on a stomach that has been liv-

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ing on lizards and berries, with no plans and a full evening of nothing to do is a sort of diminished danger one should be aware of. I am warm enough to be comfortable, and lively enough to be slightly bored. I will take a walk around town sometime, but right now I will avoid the cold and occupy my time with scotch and shaving.

Looking at my newly shaved countenance I take an exploratory sip of Mr. Walker and an equally exploratory swipe back from my temple with the razor. Hmmmm.....now how about the other side? Not bad. Maybe an inverse Mohawk? You know, one naked stripe smack down the middle of my head. Sip of scotch, maybe another bit off right there.....and so it goes. The front of the head is easy; you can see it in the mirror. But once that portion of

my noggin is deprived of its hirsute qualities there is still the back of the head to shave. I do not want to be mistaken for the reverend of a new world religion so I WILL find a way to shave back there too. The easy way would be to go out and unscrew a mirror from the BMW and bring it in, but N00000000000.....I is too smart for that. So it is about 2 more ounces of scotch before I am satisfied with the results, and now I *need* to go out and find something to eat before I start swinging from the chandelier. (That is a sort of metaphor; this is not the sort of place with entry ways and chandeliers and by now I am becoming too intoxicated to hang on to a chandelier anyway.)

After wandering aimlessly for an hour and rejecting every café and restaurant I come upon I

finally find a place that makes deli sandwiches right there in front of you and has a big old pot of barley beef soup that you can spoon from. Heaven on a Kaiser roll.

Post dinner wandering reveals an obviously small town that has somehow found itself in the path of an interstate off ramp. Just off the main drag are wide streets lined with giant cottonwoods. Yards are Midwest huge and there are no cars parked on the streets as each driveway can easily accommodate four vehicles in 2x2 arrangement. The yards and vehicles reveal the identities of the occupants easily. There is a house with small children, that one obviously has teenagers discovering the joys of hip-hop. Over there is someone who is seriously into four wheeling madness, and this appears to be

the property of a retired couple who enjoys gardening.

It is quiet, peaceful, and becoming colder by the minute. I am reminded of the cold when I remove my beanie for a moment to scratch a tickle above my right ear. Wow! I had somewhat forgotten that I now sport a shaved head. There is a lot of air moving around up there.

As I meander back to my first, and what will ultimately be my only, paid-for room of the entire trip I wonder if that Mr. Walker guy is still hanging around?



To Pike's Peak or.... Battery Row

Part 2 By John Rice



This is what Rt.550 looked like in 1984 through the windshield of a green R90/6)

We last left our intrepid super-annuated adventurers on Main Street in Silverton Colorado.

From Silverton, we began the descent into Durango, following the downhill slope climbed by the railroad.

I had last been on this road 27 years ago when I spent a summer in Albuquerque NM and wandered around the west on the old R90/6 (aka The Green Bike).

Route 550 twists and turns down the mountain until it begins to level out near Durango where all those years ago Brenda and I were part of a bovine traffic jam.

Now that two lane blacktop has four lanes and the wide plains full of roaming cattle have morphed into subdivisions, probably named after the tribes and ranches that once were here.. Downtown Durango, the “old city” hasn’t changed a great deal however.

We parked our bikes on the main drag that looked quite familiar and went into the same outfitter store where I’d purchased my first and only ThermaRest camping mattress more than a quarter century before. They still sold camping gear, but not the kind of modern layering that Jay was looking for, so we tried next door, in a new mall composed of several

downtown buildings gutted and connected, much like Victorian Square in Lexington. In an outfitter there we found what we needed and had a long talk with the salesman, a former Harley rider converted to the KTM brand by the mountain roads in Colorado.

Properly attired now for the cold, we wandered up the street in search of sustenance and found an old drugstore now reborn as a restaurant. The yard out back, once used for the parking of delivery drays, now was a brick patio full of diners, a mix of tourists like us and local residents.

We hadn’t planned our itinerary very well (read “not at all”)

so left Durango without really knowing where we were headed. A quick stoplight con-fab yielded “Pagosa Springs” and that was enough direction for our needs.

For me we were now on a “nostalgia route”, though without any such prior intention. In 1984 Brenda and I had come this way on a long weekend away from my work in New Mexico and I was curious now to see what had changed. The answer, we were to discover, was Not Much and Everything.

Pagosa Springs is a small town on the western slope of the continental divide in the San Juan mountains, on the banks of the San Juan River, about 35 miles north of the New Mexico border. We stopped at a roadside café for rest and pastry, two traveling essentials, and faced the decision that had been hanging over our heads for several days....whether to camp.

Jay and I spent much of our early trips, when we were in our 30's, 40's and even into our 50's camping most of our nights on the road. Such pastoral pastimes had become less and less frequent as our old bones began to protest more and more upon arising from the cold ground and finally several years ago we’d given up any pretense, opting for the dubious luxuries of cheap old-style “Mom & Pop” motels.. Since this trip had been on our minds from those earlier days, we had decided we’d go back to basics and try camping again. Each of us had brought a large duffle of camping gear, some of our old

To Pike's Peak or... Battery Row



Jay in front of "The Old Timers Cafe" while an old timer takes his picture.

stuff and some new things to replace what had worn out, mildewed or simply disappeared over the years. We'd been carrying this load from the beginning, but each night had opted, just one more time, for the comforts of the roadside room with AC and a shower.. Now here in Pagosa Springs, we had to face the dilemma....either we were camping on this journey, or not. In the old days, we just looked until we found a campground, or on occasion, simply pulled up into the woods and found a clearing. In these modern times,

we pulled out our cell phones and looked up "campgrounds" on the Google map. There were several listed in close proximity to our café, so the die was cast and off we went.

We found the first one, on the road that paralleled the San Juan River and pulled in down the long gravel drive. As the camp came into view, I had the feeling I'd been here before and suddenly realized that this was the same spot where Brenda and I had camped in Pagosa Springs in July of 84. The layout was still the same, down to the phone booth on the side

of the office that we had used in those pre-cell-phone days to call our son who was spending that summer with his grandparents. Jay and I selected our campsite by the pond and began the once familiar ritual of setting up camp.

We made a quick trip into town for dinner, on a patio by the river, (sharing part of our fish with the feral cats who had set up shop there) then back to camp to watch the sun set behind the mountain, sipping a libation and reminiscing over camping trips past. Why didn't we do this more often?

Then to bed and the answer to that question became more clear. Both of us were using our old Thermarests (mine, the one I had purchased here in Colorado all those years ago) and both of those devices had decided that this was a trip too far. An hour after retiring to our respective tents, the pads had deflated and our old bodies were firmly on the cold, cold ground.

About 2 AM, I exited the tent for the Old Man's Ritual, and was greeted with the reason that camping is worth, at least some of the time, the discomfort. The sky had cleared completely and the million or so stars, impossibly bright in the blackness,

were reflected perfectly in the surface of the pond in front of me. Such beauty would be described as "surreal" if only it weren't the exact opposite...the absolutely real splendor of the universe in which we who try to name such things are such a very small part.

The next morning we broke camp in the first rays of dawn and began the second phase of the trip that we would later call "Battery Row". Jay's Mystic wouldn't start, producing only that frustrating rapid clicking that tells one the starter isn't going anywhere without some additional juice. We pushed the bike to the top of the drive and got it going, thinking that it just needed some riding time to recharge.

Headed south toward Taos, the road winds through the foothills of the San Juans until it rises up onto a ridge looking over the surrounding hills and valleys. We had this one all to ourselves in the early morning and the long sweeping curves were perfect for some leg-stretching, battery-charging, somewhat-above-the-limit riding. The usual technique of accelerating out of a turn is supposed to be followed by leveling off the speed until the next one, but this road seemed



The rough life of camping

To Pike's Peak or... Battery Row

accumulating bend by bend. We kept up the pattern until a quick glance at the speedometer needle in the far right regions of its travel made us both realize that discretion really is the better part of valor and that telling a New Mexico trooper that "the road made us do it" probably wasn't going to work.

All too soon that hooligan highway descended into the valley, became straight and level and eventually brought us to Taos.

I'd made several trips up here in that wonderful summer long past and was looking forward to the return to the little town with the vaguely magical aura. Much as my waistline has expanded greatly in the ensuing years, so had Taos. It was now a city, not a town, and the tiny square of little local shops and a restaurant is now just a part of what is called "the old town", surrounded by new buildings trying to look old, and lots of traffic.

The restaurant where we had eaten back in 84 is long gone, now another shop selling New Mexico souvenirs made in

China. We ate lunch at Doc Martin's Restaurant attached to one of the newer hotels which tries to blend in to the stucco ambience of the old town. The food was good, a Mexican breakfast burrito, but still something seemed less than authentic. I guess it is true what Thomas Wolfe said many years ago that "You can't go home again", even to a place that wasn't home, but just a pleasant memory.

From Taos, we headed out on the loop called the "Enchanted Circle" that rings the mountains above the city. At the top of this circle, at Bobcat Pass, (about 8,500 ft) is the town of Red River where I had visited several times and camped long ago.

I had fondly remembered the little place, high in the mountains, because it seemed then like a refuge. There were only a few buildings, old wooden structures from the late 1800's and early 1900's mining boom, with lots of vacant spaces in which the locals had parked old vehicles of every sort, ATV's (the three-wheeled kind that



What Taos looks like now

were common then), ancient pickup trucks, tractors etc., either for sale or in some state of repair or abandonment. The people on the one street through town, bordered in part by wooden sidewalks like in the old Western movies, seemed to be stuck in a time warp from the late 60's...some in the 1860's and some in the 1960's....with what could have been Gold Rush miners shoulder to shoulder with Haight-Ashbury hippies. It was a fine place to be and I remembered it well.

That town is gone, just as if some alien tractor-beam had picked it up for transport to Tralfamador as an exhibit, and replaced it instead with a ski resort. The wooden walks are gone, now wide concrete sidewalks border a wide paved street lined with mostly new establishments dedicated to city folk coming to the mountains in SUV's to strap themselves to sticks and fling their bodies down manicured slopes of snow. It's all very nice, but it's not Red River to me.

We found a room at one of the resorts, where the off-season price was still nearly double our usual frugal down-market motel experience. As we walked back from dinner we

encountered a mule deer contentedly munching grass in front of our room. Apparently all of the animals haven't made the switch to modernization.

The next morning, the Mystic again refused to start, requiring a couple of pushes to the top of the hill to get it going. In the town of Questa, we found an auto parts store and purchased yet another battery. (If you're keeping score, that's three so far). In the parking lot we changed out the battery and, for good measure, replaced the voltage regulator. The "old" battery, purchased just a few days before, seemed lighter and there was a discoloration on the bike's swingarm as if a mist of acid had been discharged. Since this saga had begun with a charging problem, we thought perhaps the charging system was "cooking" the batteries and that the new regulator would fix the situation. Newly electrified, the bike started right up and we took off with the problem solved.

With our usual lack of planning and direction, we headed north again from Questa on 522, crossing again into Colorado at Costilla Creek, then skirted east of Blanca Peak (elevation 14,345 ft) and over North La Veta Pass (9,413 feet)



(Brenda and the R90 in Taos, July 1984. She looks even better now...the bike and Taos don't)

To Pike's Peak or... Battery Row



JGR in the middle of, and in all of, Cuchara, Colorado.

on Rt 160. That brought us too near to The Dreaded Interstate, so we zagged back onto Rt. 12 to go over Cucharas Pass.

Rt. 12 eventually dumped us out unceremoniously onto Rt 160 again at Trinidad, the site of an earthquake the week before. Though it made national news, we'd not noticed it at the time and the town seemed, to be unaffected.

Trinidad is a good sized city for this part of the west, with a main street that has retained its old buildings giving it a 1950's kind of vibe. We passed through once, looking for a restaurant that would meet our non-fast-food local eatery standards and nearly missed the one we chose.

The sign out front indicated it was a clothing store of the old "haberdashery" type, but as we passed by we noticed a table out front and what appeared to be a sign with menu items.



"Danielson Dry Goods" No clothing or dry goods on offer, but truly marvelous pie!

From here, 160 wound its way through low hills and out into the vast plains that would become the flat Kansas prairie. Most the times the thermometer on the bike indicated 100 degrees with the wind blowing up from the South sometimes shoving us into the opposing lane. No harm done by these excursions though, since we didn't see but perhaps one car per hour. Gas was running low and none of the "towns" on the map existed as physical entities, at least not apparent from the road, until we found the Outpost in Kim Colorado.

The Outpost is the entire town of Kim, and has one gas pump of the old "crank the handle to set the mechanical numbers back to zero" type. The lady and her husband who run the place moved there years ago from Dallas because they didn't want to raise their children in that urban environment, trading a huge metropolis for one building and a lot of empty

space on all sides. She said their children however have moved off now as adults and live in big cities. I guess there's only so much "empty" a young person can stand.

Our resolve ran low by the time we reached Springfield, Co. late in the day and we called it done. Springfield, like many we've seen out here, appears to be the shell of a former town once prosperous but now just hanging on. There is a wide main street perhaps ½ mile long but nearly all of the buildings are boarded up and closed. There are four motels here but only one, the Starlite Inn, that met even our extremely minimal standards. We walked the length of the town, selecting, the only open restaurant, the appropriately named Trails End Café, for dinner.

(The food was good, but the bonus was finding that the owner brews his own dark beer and we were fortunate enough to get the last two glasses.)

To Pike's Peak or...Battery Row



The town of Kim, Colorado

Friday, just before daylight we walked down to the only place in Springfield open for breakfast, The Longhorn Steakhouse where we arrived before its business hours, to find one man in a late 70's Chevy pickup truck waiting . . . A small compact fellow with a mustache, as he spoke he had that habit of looking over my left shoulder most of the time making only occasional eye contact. It reminded me of Garrison Kieller's description that in the Midwest an extrovert is someone who looks at your shoes instead of his own while he is talking.

In the cab of the truck sat an elderly Weimaraner dog, named Elli and she kept her eyes focused on her owner across the parking lot. He told

us that Elli was a rescue whose previous owner had died and that he had picked up when she was about eight. . Elli had been with him for several years now and had undergone a variety of medical procedures including orthopaedic surgery, diabetes and various other medical problems. As he spoke it was clear that he was dedicated to the dog, that must have taken most if not all of his resources. Both of them seemed to feel that the deal was worth it.

Soon his truck was joined by another and another and a small crowd developed, old men in cowboy hats, jeans, and work shirts standing around talking in what obviously was an every morning routine, not unlike our Saturday mornings at Frisch's.

The Steakhouse finally

opened and we all filed in with Jay & I being careful to look where everyone sat first so we wouldn't take anyone's "assigned table". The lone café worker hustled about silently and efficiently seldom having to ask anyone for their order. The talk at the tables were mainly about farming, the weather and the health of those not present.

We walked back to the Starlite Inn, loaded up our gear and held our breath while Jay pushed the starter button. The engine came to life, just like a normal day and off we went into the rising sun.

TO BE CONTINUED