

August 2012

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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



Ian Rice creates another replica Café Run, this time including Corvettes and a jet airplane!



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Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #4-49**

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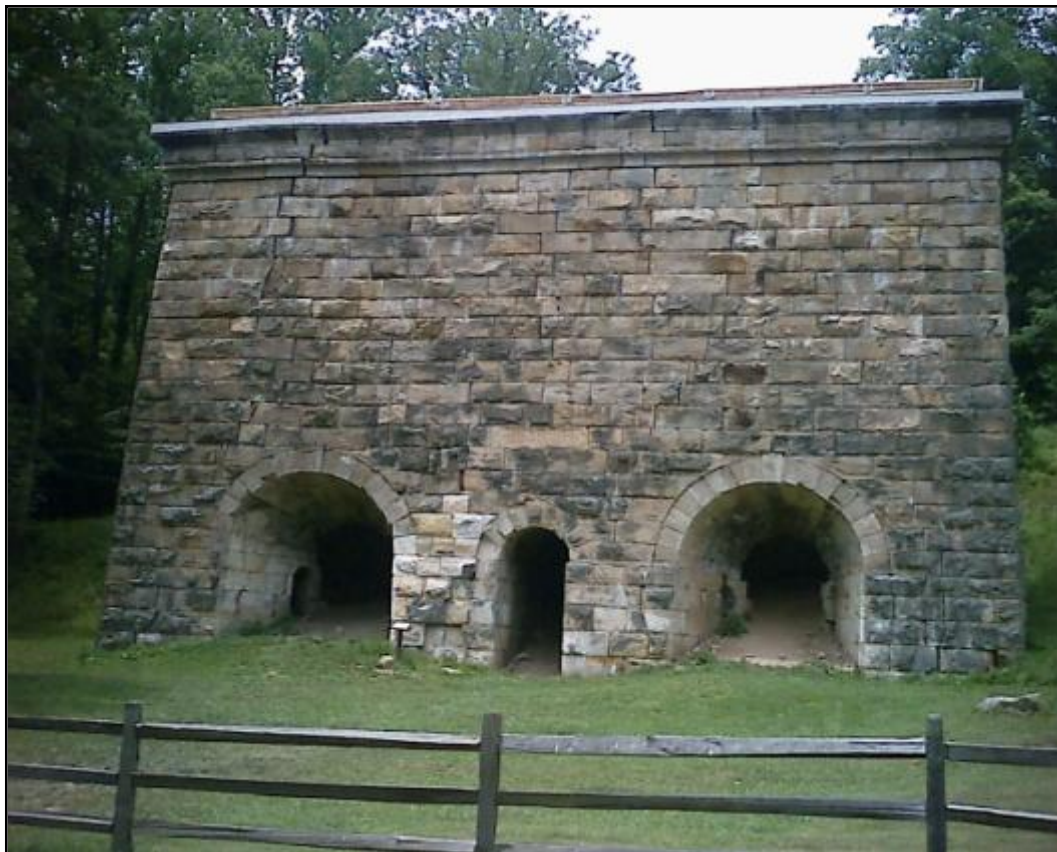
Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.

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.

Father's Day and the Fitchburg Furnace

By Roy Rowlett



Look this one up at http://www.oldindustry.org/KY_HTML/Ky_Fitchburg.html.

Sunday, June 17, 2012, broke cloudy and overcast.

Doug Swiggett and I waited for a small rain shower to pass by before we embarked on a Father's Day ride. We finally got underway around 11:00 am. Our ride from my house to Winchester via the back roads was very uneventful.

We picked up Highway 89 in downtown Winchester and headed for Stanton. Highway 89 offers some very nice roads and a few curves. We picked up Rte 82 and rode to Clay City where we picked up Hwy 15 towards Stanton.

So far the weather was cooperating and the day and ride were great.

After a very forgettable lunch at the DQ in Stanton, we started the best part of our trip. We left Stanton on Hwy 213. If you've never ridden 213, it's a trip you should take. This little country road rivals the best of the motorcycle roads anywhere. It's about a 20-mile ride over to Rte 52. The scenery is great, and the road surface is in pretty good shape. Lots of challenging curves for the twisty lovers. When we got to Rte 52, we hung a left and went about 6 miles east and picked up 975. This is the road to the Fitchburg Furnace.

This is an old iron furnace, starting operation in 1869. It was the largest iron furnace of its day. A whole community was built to support this furnace. It supplied iron to the companies to make the rails and wheels for the train cars. This is a very large and impressive reminder of the way of life in the 1800's.

We left the Furnace and headed back west on Hwy 52. What a ride this turned out to be! Nice road surface, great curves and some beautiful scenery.

Irvine was our next stop. We pulled into a Shell station to gas up, have a cold drink, and wait for a group of noisy motorcyclists

to head on out on Hwy 89 towards McKee. We certainly didn't want to follow this group all the way across 89. The weather was still cooperating and the sun shining and life was good.

We arrived in McKee and picked up 421 for the trip back to Lexington. This is a decent ride, also. Plenty of twists and turns and good road surface. In Richmond, we decided to take Tates Creek road and ride the ferry across the river.

What a way to cap off a great day of riding! The shady ride from Richmond down to the ferry was very refreshing. We got across the river without incident and headed into town on Tates Creek road.

The first couple of miles from the ferry are very twisty and offer a chance to reduce your "Chicken Strips."

Doug and I parted way at Delong Road. I continued into Lexington and picked up Man-O-War Blvd and hung a left for home.

Well, about ¼ mile later, less than two miles from home, my beautiful day of riding turned wet. The first rain of our ride started at Saron Drive and by the time I got home, the windshield and front of the bike were soaked. Thanks to the protection of the LT, I managed to stay pretty dry, except for a bit on my shoulders.

All in all, this was a great day of riding. We covered about 200 miles without incident. Any time you can ride all day, and cover that kind of roads and miles, is a great day.

Being Father's Day, it was a special way to celebrate.

—RR

Riding on the wings of an angel

By Tom Weber



Today started just like any other. The alarm went off, I hit the snooze button, and as I lay there half awake, I wondered, what awaits me? What will cross my path today? Multiple groundhogs, a half dozen cotton tail bunny rabbits, multiple squirrels, a deer or two, maybe even a turkey, (doubtful in this neck of the woods), or something else?

As always, I take one of my many “long way to the office” routes, otherwise, what’s the point. I might as well just get in the car and drive there. What fun would that be? I get up a few minutes later, rustle up some grub, take a shower, put on all my protective motorcycle gear, (not that I own any of it; it is all loaned, borrowed or given, and for that I am, and forever will be eternally grateful. Mom is too).

I decide to take one of my shorter routes to work, because I cannot afford to be late today, because I have too much to do. It is extremely rare that I actually map out a route the night before. I might look at Google Maps and think, “Those roads look interesting.” But today I just rode one of my shorter and more common routes.

It’s just a short jaunt, 25 miles or so, 1974 to 1981, to 169, to 27, to 3375, to 68, with the last turn taking me to 801 Corporate Drive, Lexington, Kentucky, my “final destination” for that morning – I think I’ve seen that movie a time or two.

Just 10-12 minutes into the ride, as I approached a certain set of curves on 1981 that I have ridden down many times since the early ‘80’s, I’ve just become more intimate with these and many other roads

since the start of the new job a little over a year ago.

What happens next, happens within the blink of an eye, the 5 to 8 beats of the heart, and then it is over, becoming a moment in time that will never be forgotten, just like that, no time to think, only time to do what every motorcycle rider must do, stay upright and avoid the oncoming of whatever might be crossing your path that particular day.

It is almost like there is a part of me that must start the day with a ride, or the other part of me will not be able to deal with the trials and tribulations that await me.

What happens next, I wish I had had some kind of “helmet cam” on to capture the moment, because within the blink of an eye, everything could have changed into the worst case scenario, an irrecoverable incident. Words will never do jus-

tice to the experiences that riders face on their everyday battle to get to the office or whatever their planned destination is. Some of us just face that battle more often than others, but it is the same battle, just different “moments in time.”

There is a little section of 1981 from 1974 with a couple of 90 degree curves, smaller curves, a couple more large curves with lots of change in elevation, with only a couple of short lengths of semi-straight stretches in between. There are large trees on the left, and unforgiving black horse fencing on the right. One of the few short straight stretches, in between several back to back little curves, I am quite aware of the blind hilltop curve quickly approaching.

As I looked up past the apex of the curve, I suddenly was faced with a predicament. A very large truck, pulling a very



Riding on the wings of an angel

By Tom Weber

got me, the only plan I had was to stay upright, miss the horse van, miss the fence, and stay on the road, but there was no time to come up with a plan, I just rode it through.

I remember well, that the sides of the horse van were aluminum, and I could see the dust on the horizontal ridges. If I had reached out, my left arm would have been taken off. I am surprised I still have a left mirror.

In a matter of seconds, in the blink of an eye, the entire incident was over.

It almost makes me feel like I beat the “widow maker,” but I know that is not true. She’s always out there, if you don’t cross her path, then she will not cross yours, so stay on your side of the double yellow lines. Even then that is sometimes not enough. Sometimes you’re just riding on a song, a prayer, and on the “wings of an Angel.”

Think about it, a vehicle of that size, pulling a large, long horse trailer against the red BMW. I would have lost that battle. Ten tons of dead weight against me with 650 pounds tops. If any contact between us had been made, I would not be writing this article.

Ride well, ride safe, ride smart.

—whw

large horse van was barreling over that hilltop, right smack dab in the center of the road. The distance between us could only be a few hundred feet, if that. We were each going between 35 to 50 miles an hour. You do the math.

In high school algebra, the teacher would give us these types of problems. I was never any good at figuring out the correct answer. Or was I?

If the oncoming truck is going 50 mph downhill, and you are doing 35 mph up hill, and the distance between the two of

you is 300 feet, who will get to the mid ay point first?

My plan was, instead of trying to get as close to the edge of the road, to ride as close to the truck as I can without contact, knowing all too well how “unforgiving” those horse farm fence posts can be. Okay, you

Go west Old Man, Redux

Words and photos by John Rice



Thursday morning, July 19th. The waiting is over, for this year at least.

Vintage Days begins at the Mid Ohio track tomorrow, but for me it's now when I suit up and start the ride to Ashland to meet Paul Rice. This year will be a bit different, in that I'm not coming home on Monday. I'm leaving from Mansfield to head West, destination unknown...or more accurately, to be determined each day. It's a trip I've wanted to make for an awfully long time and the realization that the window for such things is closing spurred me to do it now.

Our ride from Ashland does not go quite as planned. Paul is, appropriately for a vintage event, on his 1982 R100RT. As we are riding away from our lunch stop in Jackson, Ohio, Paul pulls up beside me to tell me that his shifter return spring

has broken. Fortunately he's not in first, or neutral. Unfortunately, he's stuck in second and we're 60 miles from his house. We try calling a few possible fix-it situations, but no combination of spring and mechanic-with-the-proper-tools can be assembled at or near Jackson. Since it's still early in the day, we ride back to Ashland, somewhat slowly, and pick up Paul's 2005 R1200GS, which was sitting on a dealer's floor, all cleaned up, to be sold. We shuttle the bike back to his house swap loads, and start out again, this time at about 3:30 in the afternoon, so from there it's Route 23 north and the interstate to get us to our motel near Mansfield before dark.

I've attended every Vintage Days since the very first, when it was a small, local thing with big ideas. I watched it grow from a parking lot in Westerville to the abandoned Powell

Motor Speedway to Mid Ohio Race Course, becoming along the way, the largest most significant event of its kind in North America.

I didn't realize several years ago that I'd seen it peak and start downhill. For the last several years, the crowd of enthusiasts has declined, the vendors in the swap meet are fewer each year and now the new-stuff vendors are all but non-existent. I have heard many explanations for the decline (the most frequent being "the economy", but if that's it, why is the Barber event getting larger each year?) but I think it comes down to management. Management at the AMA and at the track. Someone at the top in both places needs to understand that this thing won't keep going just because it always has.

This year's event still was worth attending and I'm glad I was there. I watched a bit of

racings, pondered various project bikes, always with the same conclusion...that I need to sell some projects, not take on new ones.

Some constants were there, keeping up old traditions. The man with the Bultaco Metralla, bearing the sign "All reasonable offers refused", the swap meet scenes where a man is walking down the row, holding some unidentifiable rusted part, looking as if he's just found The Grail, the flat track races where the combination of rider and bike age often tops 100, both still wailing around the dirt oval sideways. When I left on Monday morning, I had the usual sadness that another one had come and gone and that there was a year to wait until the next one. But if it continues to decline, there will be a time when I won't have that feeling, and I won't come back.

Paul left for home Sunday afternoon. Later that day, Brenda came up from Winchester. It seems that in Saturday's mail, long after I'd departed, we got two letters that created a problem. Bank of America sent us a letter notifying us that its computer system had been "compromised" by hackers and some personal information "may have been" taken. To head off the problem, they were issuing new credit cards with different numbers, security codes, etc, to take effect immediately. The new card was enclosed, and the old one...the one I was carrying in my wallet for the trip...would no longer be active.

To add on to the problem, the other letter was from our local bank, proudly enclosing my new ATM card. The old one...again, the one in my wal-

Go west Old Man, Redux

let...would no longer be effective. So I was starting out on a long trip with two now-useless pieces of plastic in my pocket. We went through a couple of ideas on the phone about places she could mail them to, but her solution was just to load the dog in the car and drive to Mansfield to deliver them personally. Is it any wonder that I love this woman?

So Monday morning, fresh plastic on board, I headed northwest diagonally across Ohio, with a vague destination of somewhere in Minnesota. Once I got there, I'd figure out where I'd be going next.

"Neat" is an overused adjective, but it really fits the farm country of northern Ohio. Not "neat" in the "that's nice" sense, but in the sense of orderly, tidy, everything in its proper place. Farms and roadside houses that look as if the occupants are expecting the photographer from "Perfect Farm" magazine to show up any minute. These examples of the American midwest are everywhere up here in flat glacial plains of Ohio. Of course there are the occasional derelict places, just to prove that every family has its black sheep.

Northern Ohio also reminds me a lot of Kansas. It's hot, very hot, and the straight roads and remarkably similar scenery mile after mile lulls me into a stupor, broken by the occasional bout of terror when I realize that I'm nodding off.

I cross over from Indiana into Illinois with the goal of getting a room around 6pm, somewhere well south of Chicago. With all the consistency of Murphy's Law, (the only law without an exception) there is not a room to be had. There is a softball tournament here and every room for miles is taken. I

decide that the South Side of Chicago (cue "Bad Bad Leroy Brown" and "Don't Mess Around with Jim" and any other similar Jim Croce song here) is not a good place to be after dark, so I hop on the 294 tollway to get north west as soon as possible. I detour onto the 88 tollway to get farther west, figuring that somewhere in the corporate bastions around Aurora and Naperville, there will be plenty of motel rooms. And there are...except that one cannot get to them. The 88 tollway mavens have closed nearly all the exits, what few there were, and the only ones remaining open say "I-Pass Only. No Cash Accepted" Like poor Charlie on the MTA, I can't get off this highway. I follow it all the way to DeKalb before finding a way off, watching the route 47 I'd planned to take up to Lake Geneva disappear in the distance, unattainable as fame and fortune.

DeKalb Illinois, at least the part in which I found an available room, has seen better days. The part I was in reminded me of the beginnings of the movie "RoboCop", except I had no hope of a mechanized hero coming to my rescue.

Tuesday morning I awoke at my customary 4:30 AM to the sound of thunder, followed shortly by torrential rain. My plan to head due west to Anamosa, Iowa for the National Motorcycle Museum was canceled when a quick check of the weather map showed nasty green, red and yellow thunderstorms over that entire area. I knew I was going to start out in the rain, but I really didn't want to head into the part where it was getting worse by the minute. Instead I went straight north, figuring that I could ride in the rain for about an hour on the leading edge of the storm, then be above it when the worst hit. Surprisingly, the plan worked.

By the time I'd cleared the rain, I was ready for breakfast in the little town of Oregon, Illinois. The town is on the Rock River, which suddenly

made sense of the name of nearby Rockford. The Sunrise Cafe, just off the main street, was the perfect choice for breakfast., with all the essentials, eggs, toast, friendly staff and a window where I could see the bike.

Duty called, or more accurately, the office, and I spent some time on the sidewalk outside the cafe handling work matters, while the local police officer cruised by, wondering what this out-of-towner was up to.

From Oregon, the trip across Illinois was the same as the day before....endless rows of corn and fields of soybeans, split by straight flat roads. The flat spaces are mind boggling, the product of millennia of glacial scouring, billions of tons of ice flattening out the high spots. I've read that satellite GPS readings can detect that the land is still rising up slowly, like an old mattress rebounding after a heavy person gets out of bed. I don't think I have enough time to wait here for a hill to reappear.

The rain has stopped, so I detour to follow the Mississippi



Go west Old Man, Redux



The officer gets out of his car and comes up to me, asking for my papers with such exaggerated friendliness that I'm amused to read the name tag on his crisply pressed uniform shirt....Trooper Rude. He smiles as he tells me that "it's no big deal, but the speed limit is 55 and when you came up behind me" ...here he pauses for emphasis..."you weren't doing 55 !"

for a bit. Most of the time, it's out of sight since the vast flood plain keeps the road's path too far away with too many trees between. But occasionally it comes into view with all the majesty that inspired those songs, books and dreams. For me, though, it inspires an endless loop of the Johnny Horton song, "The Battle of New Orleans" which then won't go away for hours.

For a few miles there are actual curves and hills, so unusual by now that I have to remind myself to "look through the curve". I'm having such a good time that I unwittingly come up behind an unmarked Iowa State Trooper vehicle which immediately swerves off onto the shoulder, lets me go by, then falls in behind me with lights flashing.

The officer gets out of his car and comes up to me, asking for my papers with such exaggerated friendliness that I'm amused to read the name tag on his crisply pressed uniform shirt....Trooper Rude. He smiles as he tells me that "it's no big deal, but the speed limit is 55 and when you came up behind me" ...here he pauses for

emphasis..."you weren't doing 55 !" He asks me about the bike and where I'm going, gives me advice on a motel not to select just across the Minnesota border, then hands me my written warning. I do note that the warning form has a block for "Ethnicity" and he's filled in "not of Hispanic origin". For the remaining 9 miles that I'm in Iowa, I adhere strictly to 55 and am passed impatiently by every car that comes up behind me.

By Tuesday night, I'm in Preston MN, on the Root River, with the entrance to the town marked by a large fiberglass trout biting at an imaginary lure. Dinner was at the B&B Olympic Bowl, the town bowling alley and lounge. Everyone here sounds to my ear like Sheriff Marge Gunderson, in "Fargo". I'm not sure what I sound like to them.

Out early on July 25th, but not as early as I'd thought. I find that my preference for leaving at dawn has been superseded by the general inefficiency of age. I wake up, do all the usual getting ready stuff and suddenly it's two hours later

and I don't know where the time went.

Cool this morning out on Highway 16, headed west. It's just corn, for miles and miles. Not a curve, hardly a tree, just corn. It's impossible for a person like me, not a farmer, to comprehend just how much corn there is out here.

Recently I read an article describing the mating habits of corn, the fact that each of those fibers in the tassel on top has to get the male corn pollen from the air to produce one kernel on an ear. It's a process that goes on literally millions of times every day in good weather.

Apparently too much heat gets corn out of the mood for love, leading to barren cobs out there in the fields. I can't see much of that reproduction going on as I go by at 55 MPH, but I'm sure it is racy stuff if one happens to be a plant.

Fifty five is a ridiculous speed limit for a place like this, in my humble opinion. The roads are, as I mentioned, perfectly straight, without even so much as a rise to hide oncoming traffic. The greatest danger is nodding off, but even that would result only in a vehicle

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interrupting corn sex for a few rows until it got back on the road. Even the interstate is limited to 65 MPH, when a more Autobahn-like 85 wouldn't be amiss.

Breakfast is at a truck stop, since it's the only thing resembling a restaurant for many miles. The pancakes are excellent, the coffee decent, and I'm sitting there reading the Lexington Herald-Leader on my iPad.

Technology is that mixed blessing we all talk about. It allows me to be gone from my office for this extended trip, since I can stay in touch, but it also means that I'm never really gone from my office. I even settled a client's case, talking to the insurance adjuster by phone while standing on the access road to Mid Ohio during Vintage Days.

Technology makes possible the R1200GS that has brought me here, so far flawlessly, in such comfortable (albeit limited by the department of transportation) speed. It also means that if this wonderful machine quits being wonderful, I will just have to call someone smarter than me to come and get it.

I asked some locals about an alternative route across Minnesota, to avoid the interstate experience. The response I got was a blank stare, sort of like what an Eastern Kentuckian would give to an out-of-stater who asked "Don't you have any back roads that aren't hills and curves?"

I-90 across Minnesota is an exercise in patience and endurance, as the heat rises, the scenery never changes and the speed stays at 65MPH. No one else is going any faster, which tells me that the police here, like in Iowa, are serious about it. I see a car pulled over, with

a trooper behind him, lights flashing, on the other side, just in case I needed confirmation. Having already had my dose of official intervention this trip, I am compliant.

When the highway crosses the state line into South Dakota,

and soak down my shirt. The bike's thermometer is reading 99 degrees now and it's just noon. I've found myself getting woozy not thinking clearly, so frequent stops are necessary.

There's a storm coming, I can see it as a dark gray curtain off to my left in the far distance, as one can do only out here in the west. When it hits I don't bother with raingear, instead grateful

that I'm not sure any other town will contest.

The next morning, from Mitchell to the Missouri River is just more interstate with high gusty winds battering from the side. I'm getting some decent lean angle while going straight ahead. As I come down the hill to the wide river, I wonder what were the thoughts of the wagon train survivors who had plodded for months across this long, long dry prairie when they saw that much water. I detoured north to follow the river for a while, rising up into the hills and into a reservation. I stopped along the road to check my map and a small herd of ponies came to the fence to check me out. The loop along the river had to end and soon I was back to the dreaded I-90 to drone on in to Rapid City. I did have to stop at Wall Drug, where the promise, since 1931, of a free glass of ice water for every traveler is still honored.

Following Dave McCord's advice, I headed down to Keystone to avoid another interstate motel. It was getting late in the day and rooms were going fast, so I selected the first place that had a vacancy, the Washington Inn. I got the room for two nights so I could explore at my leisure the next day, without worrying about finding a room here in a tourist Mecca on a Friday night.

Though I left home on July 19th, the 27th is the real beginning with the endless plains behind me and some actual hills in sight. I started with Mt. Rushmore, the traditional tourist thing to do. Like Ludwig's castle, all the photos one sees of the monument are close ups, probably taken from the air. When confronted with the real thing, still a half mile away from the closest vantage point, it looks smaller than imagined. Still, very impressive. The guidebook says that the original idea was that of Doane Robin-



On a South Dakota reservation, Native American ponies ponder their aluminum replacement.



I'm told it's required of all SD visitors that they take a photo of the granite presidents.

the limit goes up to 75 and one can almost hear the sighs of relief in the cars that zoom ahead. I pull into the welcome station to take on more water

for the relief. I stopped early at Mitchell due to heat & rain, opting for safety over progress. Mitchell is the home of the worlds only Corn Palace, a title

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son, the superintendent of the South Dakota State Historical Society, who envisioned a mountain carved with Western heroes, Chief Red Cloud, Buf-falo Bill Cody, Lewis and Clark and others marching across the sky.

When he, with the help of Senator Peter Norbeck, con-tacted famous artist Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor accepted the job, but said he wasn't go-ing to have the capstone of his career being regional figures. He wanted presidents. Bor-glum selected the mountain, one of the highest around, and said "Here is the place. Ameri-can history shall march across that skyline".

The guidebook also tells me that 90% of the granite was removed using dynamite, with actual hand tools doing only the final finish. The workers, who started out thinking it was just a job in that depression era time, got into the vision and became as passionate about the work as the sculptor. "Dynamite" and "precision" aren't typically in the same sentence, for most of us lay people, but clearly it works.

I thought of the potential for mistake, getting almost finished and having Washington's nose drop off from just a bit too much explosive. Using one of

the telescopes available, I can see the repair work that has been done to keep the faces looking good, no doubt using technology that would have seemed like magic back in the time the project was initiated.

In the sculptor's studio on site, there is a working model made by Borglum showing what he had planned. The fig-ures in the model have nearly full torsos with arms and a prominent hand from Jefferson pointing out into the future.

Although Borglum's son (named after the Great Emanci-pator) oversaw the completion of the faces, the rest of the model remains unfinished.

Leaving the granite Presi-dents, I headed down 16 A to the Iron Mountain road with its hairpin turns and two 360 de-gree switchbacks. Ahead of me were two minivans from Min-nesota, where I can vouch that there are no curves to be found, and this road obviously terrified them. As they started into each curve, they would slow to a crawl, sometimes even stop dead, then proceed around slowly with brake lights shin-ing, as if something was going to jump out and bite them. I pulled over, took some pictures, drank water and still caught up with them in less than a mile.



In the sculptor's studio on site, there is a working model made by Borglum showing what he had planned.

At the end of the Iron Moun-tain Road is Custer state park. I paid my entry fee and went in, first stopping to allow a bison herd to cross the road. I say

"allow" but it's really not accu-rate. The huge herbivores paid not the slightest attention to the cars and my motorcycle, as if they weren't even there.



Along Spearfish creek in Spearfish canyon



When these guys want to walk across the road, they do.

Go west Old Man, Redux



Along the Needles Highway, so named because of the granite spires jutting skyward

When they wanted to walk, they walked, wherever they wanted to go.

Having seen a video of a bull bison effortlessly batting a fully loaded dresser Harley across a highway (he was offended by the pipes, apparently), I didn't contest the herd's right to primacy. I soon stopped at the park lodge for lunch, then back on the road, this time following the Wildlife Loop. It is there that the park's bison herd gets to roam, as in the song. Several more times I and the other traffic stopped to let them do their thing. Also in evidence were antelope, though I didn't see any of them playing

with deer. Maybe that song isn't so accurate after all.

Further down the loop, the "begging burros" have set up shop. Despite all the "do not feed the wildlife" signs, the burros have learned that people are soft touches and just wander up to car windows, sticking their heads in for whatever treat the occupants can offer. They also have learned that motorcycles don't usually have open bags of snacks handy, so they, like the the bison, ignored me.

I made another detour to go up to the Coolidge Observation Point at a bit over 6,000 feet in elevation. It's a one mile rutted dirt and gravel road to get up



Coolidge Observation Point

Go west Old Man, Redux



Belle Fourche SD is now designated as the geographical center of the US. I can't vouch for that, but I can say this restaurant there has truly excellent apple pie!

there, much easier to ride going up than coming down. At the end of the Wildlife loop, Rt 87 splits north to hook up with the Needles Highway, so named because of all the granite spires jutting skyward. It's sobering to think that all of the strata from which these impressive monoliths came was once horizontal solid rock until some continental collision folded it up like pushing wrinkles into a

rug. This road also offers several narrow tunnels, cut through the stone. I followed a 4x4 truck through one, watching the few inches of clearance he had on either side.

A perfect mid-afternoon snack stop appeared at the Blue Bell lodge, where cinnamon apple crisp was on offer, with ice cream on top. Despite my best intentions to eat healthily, I cleaned the bowl

Not too far down the road, a picnic table beckoned for an afternoon nap and I obeyed. It's hard to ask a riding companion to twiddle his or her thumbs for 20 minutes while I snore, but when traveling alone, such indulgences are easy to arrange.

The Needles route finally spit me out 89, which led me off to my final stop of the day the Crazy Horse memorial. The sculptor had worked on the Rushmore faces and when given the opportunity to immortalize the Indian hero with a much larger edifice, he rose to the challenge. Unfortunately, he died well short of completion, but his family, including his now 86 year old widow is still working on it. While Mt. Rushmore took 14 years to complete, this project is 63 years in progress (I think I've got some old bikes with the same sort of history) with a lot yet to do to get a recognizable image. They do seem to have completed a very impressive visitor center and gift shop, well ahead of the statue.

While there, the rain returned with a vengeance, so I motored carefully back to the room for the night.

I Left Keystone Saturday morning headed north toward

Sturgis. It's still a week or more before the rally, so I should be safe. I took back roads going up RimRock canyon and through Nemo, a road not well marked but worth finding. The canyon road is excellent with wide sweeping turns between high rock walls and the remnants of the old growth pines. The pine forests all over the Black Hills are dying off, the victim of the same pine beetle that is decimating Eastern Ky forests.

Sturgis is a larger place than I expected and the first thing I see there is an old style motorcycle shop with a row of vintage Japanese bikes out front, not at all what I associate with this city. It turned out that this is the reincarnation, in the original location, of the Gypsy shop of Pappy Hoel, the father of the Sturgis rally. The current owner, a guy about my age, said that he'd tried dealing in older Harleys, but the expense of restoration made them difficult to sell. When he switched to vintage oriental machines, the demographic of his market changed to all the guys of our generation who had one of those (or wanted one) when they were a kid. Now he sells about 50 per year. He's also a



Old style motorcycle business in Sturgis with a row of vintage Japanese bikes out front



Gypsy Motorcycle Shop in Sturgis

Go west Old Man, Redux



Owner of the Sturgis Coffee Company owns the yellow R1200GS parked under the awning.



Royal Enfield dealer, with a couple nice examples on the floor. He let me wander back through the shop to check out some of his projects, which included a Honda TL 250 and a TL 125. He said it was good that I'd come this week...during the rally we couldn't have had a conversation because of the noise. From there I went through town where the t-shirt



Where apple crisp can be found on the Custer Wildlife Loop.

and leather vendors were already setting up and a fair sized crowd of early birds were checking through the merchandise. All of them were on HD's and all were vigorously saving lives.

At the end of Main Street is the Sturgis Coffee Company. As I pulled in to get a cup and a snack, I noticed a yellow R1200GS parked under the awning. It was the owner's bike and he had various bits of BMW identifying items around the counter, including a damaged valve cover with the emblazoned message "oil spills suck".

I also stopped at the Sturgis BMW shop, another unexpected find here in Big (V) Twin country. It's no surprise however in this land of dirt and gravel roads, to see that the showroom is filled with the various iterations of the GS.

I tried to get to Spearfish Canyon by going through Deadwood, but ran into a 2 1/2 hour delay for a parade, all vehicles banned from town and diverted to other routes. Rather than go around via the interstate, I opted to go up to the nearby casino for a late breakfast and wait it out. After all that, the town was interesting to

see, imagining it in its heyday, but mostly dedicated now to modern casinos. The speed limit is 35 mph, a very slow pace for such beautiful curves following the Spearfish creek, but still well worth the wait.

(to be continued)



BMW motorcycle dealership in Sturgis, probably a very lonely place to be the first two weeks in August.

Check it out!



Photo by Bob Walker



Photo by Bill Voss





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