

September 2012

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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



Finding joy in reallocating resource

By Paul Elwyn

In a perfect world we would have unlimited toys with no compromises.

In reality, some of us must do with limited resource which we reallocate to suit our needs.

This process can be entertaining. The 2009 Yamaha FJR I had been riding for the past two years was an excellent device for warping time/distance, but a four-wheeled toy project requires a little more cash than my monthly flow provides, and having begun this reconstruction in July of 2011, I am eager to get the thing back on the road!

So I sold the FJR, set aside half the cash for the four-wheeled project, and bought this 1999 BMW R1100S, a timely move since I seldom keep anything for more than two years, anyway.

For years I have imagined an R1100S without its plastic, aluminum tank exposed and polished, the round, Bosch headlight, a classic café tail above a seriously modified underseat exhaust. Bright paint-work on the wheels, Telelever,

rocker covers, etc., would provide additional visuals.

So, I found my donor bike in Louisville, featuring Hyperpro shocks, heated grips, ABS, and exceptionally nice paint for 54,000 miles.

Now, having ridden this bike over 1,000 miles, I am reluctant to dismantle this thing. It works so well, that I'm inclined to simply...ride.

Maybe this winter, when the current car project is finished, when ice chills any prospect for riding, maybe then I will begin taking this bike apart to bring my café vision to life.

Maybe not. After all, half the fun is anticipation, right?

At any rate, the R1100S at this time is my perfect motorcycle, light, nimble, full of character and fast enough for a pucker now and then, and comfortable enough to simply enjoy this reminder that we don't need to spend big money to have fun with a motorcycle.

We simply need to welcome timely reallocation of resource and imagine the possibilities.

—Paul



Photo by Ray Brooks

**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.

Saturday @ **Frisch's** 7-9 am



Left: Meet David Berry who attended breakfast on his 2012 K1600 GTL.



Saturday @ **Frisch's** 7-9 am



Meet Jim Hodsdon with his '73 R75.



Rally Committee reviewing preparations for the Beemers in the Bluegrass Rally set for September 7-9 at Stillwaters Campground.

Joe Bark provides these bottom two photos from a Sunday break fast ride. Joe says, "Desperadoes gather yet again still at G-town Crackerbarrel!!! We kinda "flashmob" at Joe's garage on fifth street most Sunday mornings at 7:00 a.m. WeeeeeHaaaaa!"



Beemers in the Bluegrass Rally

**September 7-9
Stillwaters Campground
8 miles north of Frankfort on US 127**

**Join in the fun and lend a hand
as a volunteer.**

Contact Rally Chairman John Rice

riceky@aol.com

President Ray Brooks

rcbrooks44@insightbb.com

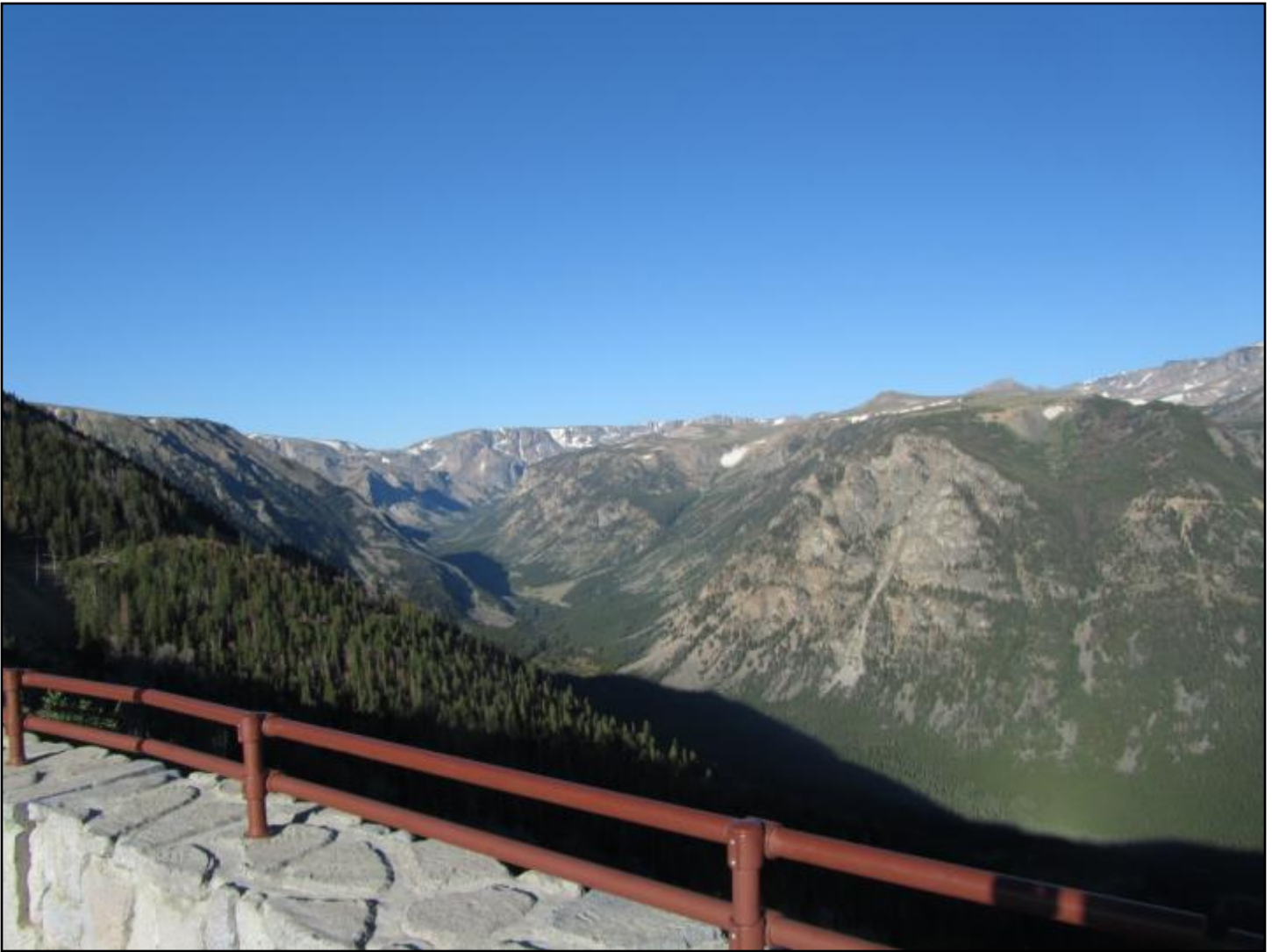
or Rally On-Site Coordinator Steve Little

steve.little@qx.net

**to see how you can help
make this rally a success.**

Go west Old Man, Redux Part 2

Words and photos by John Rice



View from rest stop on Beartooth Pass

I left Spearfish headed north toward Belle Fourche (apparently, "beautiful fork" in trapper's French) which is both a river and a town.

A spot near the town has recently been declared "the geographic center of the US". I've often been in the middle of nowhere on bike trips, so now I wanted to be in the middle of somewhere.

At the Belle Inn, I found that wonderful apple pie can be had here in middle America.

From the middle, Route 212 begins, taking the traveler northwest across a corner of Wyoming and then into Montana. Once on 212, it's another straight shot across grassland. An older man stopped to comment on my bike as I was leaving the restaurant and he cautioned me to make sure I had enough gas for at least 100 miles, since there wasn't much

of anything for that distance. He was right. It did cause me to think about how large a role motor fuel has to play in everyone's life out here in the west where huge distances are just routine and everything farm related is done on such a large scale that only the biggest machines can handle the jobs.

Almost exactly 100 miles later I found myself in Broadus, MT, a place of 471 residents, that bills itself as "the wavingist town in Montana". I have no

idea what that means. Again I had planned to camp for the night, but the temperature, like my trip odometer, was at 100 and I succumbed to the lure of air conditioning. The Broadus Motel is across the street from the only two restaurants, Hoofers and the bowling alley, and I chose the pink building, Hoofers.

The proprietress was a very friendly lady who, when I asked if she was near closing, said "Don't worry, I'll feed ya"

Go west Old Man, Redux



Indian-owned restaurant and store across the road from the Custer Battlefield Memorial. Excellent Cajun sausage.

and brought me a menu with an enormous selection of choices. I settled on a turkey sandwich, with cranberry sauce on a bagel. She brought the sandwich, then sat down at my table to talk. They get so many travelers through this little town that she tries to keep a variety of things to tempt them in. It apparently works, since she told me she has a lot of repeat business. When I was busy chewing and couldn't keep up my end of the conversation, she picked up the magazine I brought with me and began reading it until I finished.

Out early the next morning to beat the heat, I started west again on 212, with all the other travelers and trucks. In about 25 miles or so, the terrain began to change from prairie to rolling hills with rock outcroppings, more familiar from the old western movies. Recent fires had destroyed much of the pine forest covering the hills, leaving only brown remnants with green tops, bravely trying to survive. The blackened areas covered square miles, broken only by the occasional oasis

with a house where no doubt there had been some anxious times as the flames approached.

Again I can see a thunderstorm off in the distance, dark and ominous but still relatively small in the Big Sky for which this state is famous. Suddenly a brilliant rainbow appears inside the storm cloud, not reaching the ground. I pulled over to take a photo, but as is typical of such things, an image cannot do it justice. At 45 miles from Broadus, I come upon the village of Ashland, MT, actually just a collection of a few houses and some closed convenience stores. Since I'm originally from Ashland, Kentucky, I pull over for a photo of the post office. The local sheriff flips on his lights and pulls in to check on what I'm doing. When I tell him, he smiles and goes on his way. He didn't inquire as to my ethnic origin, probably because there's no box for "old white guy" on his form. Eventually the hills increased and I began seeing pulloffs for "chain up areas" where trucks could install or remove their snow chains in the winter. As

I'd crest a hill and see the wide vista ahead I thought about the cowboys on their horses riding across this vast land. If they dreamed of better transport back in those days, it would have been a stronger, more enduring and faster horse, not this silky smooth machine I was riding at 70 mph across their territory.

Although there were a few "settlements" (too small to be towns) along the way, none offered any accommodations for breakfast on this early Sunday morning. Finally I came to what was billed as an Indian-owned store and restaurant, right across the road from the Custer Battlefield Memorial park. There's a certain irony in that. Breakfast was excellent, including very good Cajun sausage, here nearly two thousand miles from the bayous.

Fed and watered, I went across the road and used my newly acquired "Golden Age Pass" to get into the park and drove slowly through the battlefield. I don't claim to know much about the battle, mostly legend from the cultural soup that we all swim in, but being here I can see why the terrain favored those who lived in it and knew it well.

There are small stone markers scattered throughout the fields showing where cavalry members fell. A concrete obelisk

marks "Last Stand Hill" and I couldn't help thinking that Custer would certainly have appreciated the cover if only it had been there then.

In the parking lot, as I was suiting up to go, I met a lady from Oregon with an 800 ST BMW who was riding with two guys on Harleys. She told me she loved the bike (after she installed an aftermarket seat, that is) but found it nettlesome to travel with the Harleys because of their noise and "in the morning, those guys take forever to get everything ready to go". I asked what seemed like the obvious question, why was she traveling with them? She laughed and said it was her husband and son, so she sorta had to. (Her husband also had an 800ST, but because they were going to Sturgis, he took the Harley.)

Rt. 212 gives up the solo life and joins with the dreaded I-90 just past the Custer memorial and I soldiered on (more successfully than Custer's men) the hot 4-lane down to Billings and Laura, where I pulled off at a coffee shop for iced coffee and air conditioning. From here 212 also separates, finding its way alone down to Red Lodge, the beginning of the Beartooth Pass area. As I approached Red Lodge, I could see a massive storm hanging over the mountains ahead, lightning flashing



Go west Old Man, Redux

down to the peaks. The temperature dropped and rain appeared on my windshield. I parked on the main drag and went into a restaurant for a late lunch and to see if the storm would pass. After nearly an hour, it seemed to be stuck up there, so I opted for a room to wait it out. I'd ridden nearly 2,400 miles to do Beartooth Pass and I didn't want it to be in a driving rain.

I'm staying at the Yodeler Motel, in a basement room with my window looking out at sidewalk level. This is an independent place, a skier's motel with a Bavarian theme, which proclaims itself "proudly corporate free". I walk back into town for exercise and exploration, noting that in this small town (the "area population" is 2,483) there are several fine-looking restaurants, numerous bars and about a zillion t-shirt shops. My legs felt heavy within a few blocks and I remembered that even though I'm at the base of the mountains, I'm still higher here (5,500 feet) than the highest point in Kentucky. Red Lodge has been a traditional Native American gathering place for perhaps thousands of years, but was officially established by the settlers as a town in 1884, soon thereafter becoming a coal mining center. Miners and cowboys have held equal sway here for many years, but it appears that the wranglers of both four-legged and two wheeled transport have won out. The streets are hung with banners proclaiming "Welcome Bikers" to cater to the Sturgis-bound crowds that rumble constantly through the streets this evening.



Another view from Beartooth Pass

Many of the shops have cowboy-themed art as well and in this setting, I can't help but think of Boone Sutherland. I wasn't fortunate enough to have traveled here with him, but I have to believe he'd love it in Red Lodge.

July 30, I awoke and went down the street to "Prindy's Place" for breakfast, apparently the only meal they serve, so I figured they'd do it right. Oatmeal, a waffle & OJ served by Prindy herself, started the day off properly. About 7, I began motoring up the road toward Bear Tooth Pass, the road that's been on my mind for years and I suppose, started me planning this trip. As the road slowly began to rise I was halted temporarily by my first sighting of a moose in the wild. She ambled out of the woods, a tall dark specimen of moosely pulchritude, and when she realized I was there, she just stopped. None of this hurrying out of the way for her, no sir. She insisted that I stop and wait for her to

cross. She stared me down and as I meekly came to a standstill, she tossed her head imperiously and continued her stroll.

The highway rose more quickly then, bordered by high cliffs where the rock had fallen away, winding up in a series of switchbacks with the rising sun brilliantly illuminating the east facing sides of the canyon while the other side remained dark. It was cool, but not as cold as I had expected, so I stopped again to remove some layers. I motored on slowly, not wanting to miss any of this legendary road. It occurred to me that my younger self probably would have rushed through this pass, enjoying the curves and missing most of the scenery. Since it was still early, many of

the bends were shaded and my recent mishap has made me extremely suspicious of shaded turns. The "watch for falling rock" signs and the bits of rock debris that I found sprinkled in some of the bends made scenery watching my first priority over curve carving.

About 2/3 of the way to the top was the Rock Creek turnout and rest area. It was a nice touch, but I couldn't help thinking that if this were the Alps, there'd be a Gasthaus here with a restaurant offering marvelous pastry (and probably beer). What there was instead was scrub pine, clinging to life at this harsh altitude as only those trees can, and a form of chipmunk (rock squirrel?) dashing around frantically gathering whatever sustenance they could muster. One popped out of a hole in the rock fence and looked at me hopefully, but only for a moment. The business of making a living up here is too hectic to waste time.



Go west Old Man, Redux

At the summit, I parked the bike and walked down a short trail (breathing hard with that exertion at nearly 11,000 feet) to dip my hands in the snow and take a few photos. A group of riders about my age came in as I was getting ready to depart. Most were on Harleys, but one fellow was riding a 650 V-Strom with the label "Hal fabusa" painted on the tank.

I came down the other side, into Wyoming, as the sun was clearing the mountaintop behind me, throwing a flood of light on the valleys below. The terrain here seems a bit softer, the rocks more rounded as if Nature somehow had more time to work on this side of the mountain. A few miles farther along I came to Cooke City, the little town that borders the national park, where I had lunch at an outdoor cafe, joined by a large black lab. I thought he was the owner's dog, since he went from table to table and finally sat down next to me, but after a few minutes I heard another voice calling for him from up



the sidewalk and he took off. Apparently he was some tourist's dog who just decided to see if anyone at those tables would feed him.

From there Route 212 winds slowly down through the trees to the eastern entrance to Yellowstone National Park. The first few miles inside the park offer views of large herds of bison (though nothing approaching their former numbers) and then suddenly, a wolf. It's carrying something bloody

in its mouth, no doubt some unfortunate rodent who had just transitioned from park resident to lunch. The wolf is walking quickly down the side of the road, about 20 feet down the hill, eyeing carefully over his shoulder a bunch of folks who have stopped their cars to watch. It's so intent on avoiding them that it starts across the road in front of my motorcycle, catching sight of me at the last second and disappearing back into some brush.

Just around the next bend is another gaggle of people with cameras, pointing up the creek at a shape I can barely make out. A man with binoculars tells me that it's another wolf, feeding on a recent kill in the creek. My photo does seem to have captured it, but it's not a pretty sight.

Farther down, another gang of pulled-over cars alerts me to look over to the right. Two elk, with their impossibly huge antlers, are casually munching grass and posing for the cameras

Barronette Peak, something over 10,000 feet high looks like something a sculptor has chiseled out of a slab, just to show that he could. It springs up out of the landscape suddenly, one is looking at rolling hills and then there it is.

There is major road construction going on all over Yellowstone this season and there are huge crowds of tourists, including me, which is not a good combination. There are long delays in the fierce sun while large machines do their thing ahead of us. I'm hot, but at least in 10 or 15 minutes I'll get to move. The flag person has to just stand there, all day with only a hat for shade. I finally reach Tower/Roosevelt intersection and decide against doing the whole loop counterclockwise, since it's already taken me half a day to get this far.

I head south, across Mt. Washburn (again, over 10,000 feet) and through the Dunraven Pass (nearly 9,000 feet) because most of the crowd seems to be



Go west Old Man, Redux

going the other way. The eastern Pine Beetle has been here as well. What should have been thickly forested mountains are instead square miles of naked white shafts, some upright but most scattered across the landscape like the remnants of a child's game. I don't know what can be done, if anything, or if this will be the opportunity for a different kind of beetle-resistant tree to take over in the distant future.

At Canyon Village, I try to stop for a rest, water and snack, but several thousand other people had the same idea. Yellowstone today is a curious mix of amazing wide open spaces juxtaposed with throngs of people which would rival any big city sidewalk. Times Square on New Years Eve comes to mind. There is not a parking space, even big enough for a motorcycle, to be had and there are many SUV's circling the lots like sharks waiting to dive on an unprotected spot. I motor on toward the geyser area, following briefly the canyon of the Yellowstone River which clearly has aspirations to one day rival that other Grand Canyon folks talk about.

From Canyon Village, the road work takes on a sinister

aspect, at least for the two-wheeled tourist. For no reason that I can immediately discern, the paved road has been covered shoulder to shoulder with fine gravel, not deep, but certainly enough to make a single-track vehicle uncertain and its operator nervous. There are lots of signs urging motorcycles to use "extreme caution". The speed limit also has been reduced from the usual 45 down to 25, which will factor into my fate later.

From the Norris Geyser Basin, with its numerous fumeroles steaming their sulfurous smoke, the road follows the Gibbon River. It's wide for a creek but narrow for a river, with shining rapids everywhere. There are fisherpersons casting flies and whole families happily wading with their pants rolled up. Soon the road feeds into the various geyser basins, where the white flats, streaming with hot water runoff, pour into the river. The colors are what an eastern country boy would consider unreal, but of course they are exactly real and right for this place. All of this leads me to Old Faithful. I know it's a tourist cliché, but I can't have come this far, to this place, and not see it. But because of the



various delays, I arrive just after the eruption. True to its name, another will occur in about an hour, so I wait. It is impressive, looking of course just like all the videos and photos we've all seen, but I'm glad I was there for it.

By the time I left, it was after 5pm. I ran into a fellow in the parking lot, with a Kentucky plate on his Goldwing/trailer rig. He was from Bowling Green, having moved there years ago after selling his Southern California motorcycle towing business. He said he was a big supporter of the NRA and having decided that his state's gun control laws were too restrictive, picked his new home by using a chart prepared by the NRA showing that Kentucky ranked #1 in lax firearm regulation. His trailer was cylindrical, about 6 or more feet long. I didn't ask what he had in it.

Getting on the road out at 5 pm was not my best choice for the day. I had come into Yellowstone with the intention of camping there for the night, but found that every single campground in the park was full. I chose the south exit, toward the Teton's, because it seemed from a review of the map, to offer the best chance of a spot. It's 49 miles from Old Faithful to the south exit and then two more into the Teton's. I was

getting uncomfortable as I passed place after place with "full" signs out front. Finally I reached Flagg Ranch, just outside Teton, with a vacancy sign. I pulled in, just ahead of another group of folks, and grabbed one of the last spots.

The good news was that I had a place for the night and didn't have to keep riding until morning. The bad news was that the available spot was next to the office, where someone held bingo until about 10:30. I lay in my tent, listening to the numbers being called. When that finally stopped, the traffic in and out of the campground continued with the lights of incoming cars sweeping across my tent like searchlights at a prison break. At 4 AM, when the traffic had died down, two critters, probably chipmunk type rodents, got into a territorial squabble right outside my tent.

Morning came, long awaited since I wasn't sleeping, I showered in a bathhouse that would have been more accurately named a toxic waste site, and packed up my gear to go. I put on my helmet, gloves, put the key in the ignition and turned....to nothing. The information display flickered briefly then died. Nada, zip, zilch.

I found a maintenance person and got a jump start. The bike took a long time to respond, but finally did start. As the manual



Go west Old Man, Redux



suggests, we left them connected for a minute or so. The bike ran until I got everything loaded back on it, made it as far as the exit to the campground and as soon as I touched the brake, it quit again. Another jump failed to get anything but a solenoid click. The park maintenance supervisor came by with a voltmeter and pronounced the battery dead. Not just discharged, but dead. Internally shorted. As wonderful as the R1200GS is when it's running, it all depends on the battery, that small, black, technological Achilles Heel.

Did I mention that this place in the valley has no cell service, no internet service and at the campground at least, no working pay phones. I was on a post-modern machine in a pre-industrial revolution communication zone.

Were this an old faithful airhead, I could hitch a ride to the nearest auto parts emporium or even Walmart to pick up a \$20 lawn tractor battery and be on my way. But it's not. The battery is, or at least I suppose that it is, peculiar to the brand and in any event, not available nearby this remote spot. If I had phone service I might be able to find an Anonymous member who could come to my aid, but I don't have one I can use in that fashion. I do have the Roadside Assistance service that came with the bike, but it too assumes the rider will have access to a phone and/or internet. But Murphy's Law strikes again and the bad thing that could happen has and if not at the worst possible time, at least in a highly inconvenient place. I walk from the campground to the nearby camp store and lodge and convince the clerk

there to allow me the use of her phone for a toll free number. I reach Roadside Assistance, after a long decision tree session, to Christie who says she'll find me a service site. She then puts me on hold for, no exaggeration, 15 minutes, much to the clerk's chagrin. When Christie comes back, she tells me that she's having trouble finding any provider near where I am, which is smack in between two very remote national parks and not close to any good-sized city. Before I can say anything, she puts me on hold for another 15 minutes. I can see the dilemma this is causing for the clerk, but I really don't want to disconnect what seems to be my only link to the outside world. When Christie finally returns, she tells me that she has dispatched a tow truck from Salt Lake City, nearly 400 miles away. Like a

man who steps out of a perfectly good airplane, I've now been committed to a course of action. I however just wanted someone to tell me what my options might be for getting to the ground, not to select only this irreversible one.

So I sit and wait. It could be worse, there at least is food here and a bathroom where I can change out of the riding gear I won't be needing for a while. I have something to read.

Favorite places:

- Bear Tooth Pass, hands down.
- Walla Walla / Malheur National Forest passes near John Day Oregon
- Pelican brewpub on Kiwanda Bay at Pacific City Oregon
- Oregon highway 101 up the coast from Florence to Pacific City. Ocean. Views on one side, mountains on the other.
- Salmon River Canyon from Stanley ID to Challis and back again
- Route 21 down from Stanley to Rt 52 above Boise
- Needles highway and the wildlife loop trail in the Black Hills

Least Favorite:

- Flagg Ranch campground
- The front seat of a rollback truck
- I-90, anywhere

To be Continued



Following U.S. 60 East to . . .

By Joe Bark

It's Sunday at five, and I'm barely alive,
The ride starts at six; I'm teased by the pillow and all of its tricks.
But I streak through Winchester and on to "Mount S.,"
Where the night demon clips me, I must, yes confess,
So I wheel into Buster's good ol' boy cafe,
To down some "ol' Joe," as we used to say.

The K75 sits outside, big and black,
While the old men inside are just taken aback,
For they see a leather-dad rider dismount,
"This guy's a strange one, on this we can count."

So I place my small order of coffee and pie
While the Beemer, outside, draws onlookers' eyes.
"Windy riding?" asks one slight, graying old man,
As the fall trees sway back-and-forth in the wind.

"Up on the ridges it's startin' to blow,"
I tell them, while gathering, starting to go.
"So I'll ride on to Grayson, home of an old friend,
Who long moved away and started again."

The G-forces grab me and push into the seat,
While the sweepers race by right under my feet,
And Thom's home flashed by as I head Ashland way,
There is just one more thing that I hasten to add,
The server at Buster's said I'd run into so danger,
To go curve-a-huntin' dressed up like a Ranger,
With only my leathers, no bulletproof vest,
Saying this was the time of the biggest harvest!
"I'm sorry," I said, but to the hills I'm a gonna,"
"Go ahead, man, get shot! They're pickin' marijuana!!"
So I jumped on the K-bike, took the big slab back home,
The hills in the fall, boys . . . are NO place to roam!!

Mark and Toby's *EXCELLENT* Alpine Adventure

By Mark Rense



I had a rare opportunity to scratch a major item off the Bucket List this past June when my brother Toby invited me to spend a week riding the Alps.

My brother is a retired mining engineer so has spent considerable time living in both civilized and desolate places around the world. He retired from Kerr-McGee a few years ago and decided to stay in Oklahoma, but many years ago he had bought a condo in Montreux while stationed there and decided to keep it, as our family comes from Switzerland. The condo is usually leased out but this past June it was vacant so we planned a vacation around that time period. I and my two daughters would meet my brother and his wife Betty in Montreux for two weeks.

We spent countless hours on the phone and Skype scheming and plotting, pouring over maps

and tour information. One of the best references was the John Hermann book, *Motorcycle Journeys Through The Alps*. We followed a lot of his suggestions and they turned out to be spot on. Our riding time was somewhat limited as I was also taking my daughters, so we had to pack a lot into a week. The girls agreed to stay with my sister-in-law there in Montreux while us men-folks were out mountain pass snaggin', not a big stretch as their Aunt Betty would spoil them rotten..

After we had a game plan, the next challenge was to rent the bikes. Of course, they HAD to be BMWs, but which ones and from whom do you rent? We settled on AdMo-Tours because their rates were good and they had a dealer in Thun that was easy to get to by train from Montreux. The weekly prices were also about 200 Francs less there than in Geneva.

Toby's choice was easy. He wanted an R1200RT just like the one he has in OK. I knew I wanted a GS, but the

R1200GS's were already sold out for June and July (this was in March)! We checked other dealers in Geneva and as far north as Munich but it was the same story. The dealership in Geneva explained, in excellent English, that the GS is the most popular big bike sold in Europe and by far the most popular rental.

So, what is the alternative? After some thought and a test ride at my dealer, I decided to reserve the "little" GS, an F800GS. This, as it turned out, was serendipity in disguise, the F800 is a blast!

No matter what horror stories you have heard about airline travel, trust me, its worse! We wound up missing our connection at Dulles due to mechanical issues and spent the night

waiting for the next international flight. I won't mention any names but we were all pretty United in our disgust. The one bright note is that the next day we got to tour the new Smithsonian Air and Space Museum next to Dulles. They have moved a lot of the bigger planes there from the DC site and had just set up the shuttle Discovery for display. A great way to spend an afternoon, even my teenagers stopped rolling their eyes for a couple hours.

I decided to pack a second suitcase with all my riding gear. It's a \$100 cost each way now. I pretty much brought all the essentials I could think of, as the June alpine weather could be anything from snow to tropics. This long list included a ¾



length enduro jacket with liner, heated vest, leather riding pants with BMW galluses (ask Randy what those are), waterproof BMW tour boots, Shoe full face with two shields, three weights of gloves, a balaclava, a Wrist Rest, a tire kit, a small tool kit, a tail bag with bungee net, and a can of Monkey Butt powder. Since we were not camping, I left all that stuff in the garage. I'm glad, as I just squeaked under the airline's maximum weight limit.

FIRST DAY

We got through Customs (totally painless in Switzerland) in Geneva and were at the condo by 9:30AM. Since we had lost a day, Toby and I had no recovery time to get over the jet lag so we unpacked, re-packed and got to the train station by 12:30.

The Europeans pride themselves on their public transportation and the Swiss version did not disappoint. We changed trains three times between Montreux and Thun, and never waited more than five minutes between them.

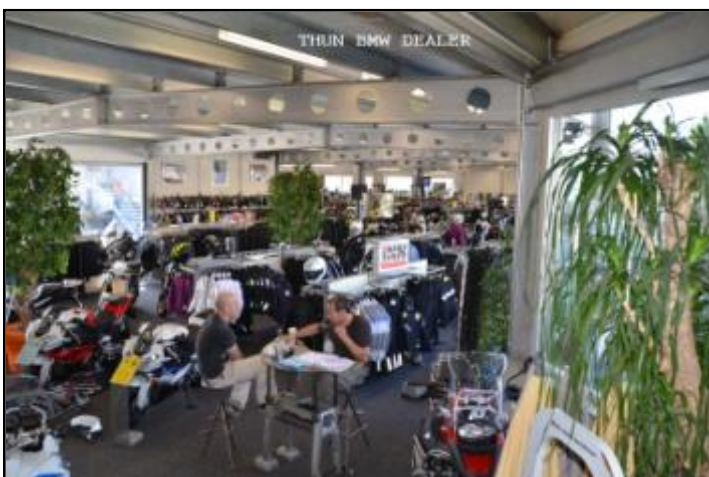
We got to the BMW dealership about 3:30 PM and after checking out the bikes we were ready to leave by 4:30. Toby's

RT was, well, an RT, it had ESA and all the goodies including a radio. When they wheeled my bike out I knew I was in for some fun.

It was an F800GS Triple Black, and it looked rather sinister just sitting there. It had a set of the expandable bags so all my stuff fit under cover and the rack was perfect for my tail bag. I didn't realize that it had

an aftermarket pipe until I started it, that little vertical twin (funny how 800cc seems "little" today) sounded an awful lot like one of my Nortons, but with a very health rasp to it. It was equipped with Pirelli Scorpion Trail tires, considered the stickiest of dual-sport tires for the street. After a good luck coffee, we bid adio and headed off to our first night's stop at Hotel Schützen in Lauterbrunnen.

The town of Lauterbrunnen, a short hour-long ride from the dealership in Thun, is in the Lauterbrunnen Valley south of Interlaken. This valley is called the Yosemite of Switzerland and deserves its name, with steep mountainsides rising on both sides. This area is the gateway to the cog railway that takes you up to the Jungfrau-joch, the "Top of Europe". We would bring the family back the next week to do that climb, so



after a good supper and a much-needed night's rest to shake off the jet lag, we headed out after a hearty breakfast to our first set of mountain passes.

Left: Toby and Mark Rense pose with the F800GS.



Riding in Europe is so different than back in the States. For one thing, motorcycles rule the roads! Drivers move over for you to pass, you get to go to the front of the line at red lights, bikes get the best parking spots and are charged less on toll roads. Drivers all seem to take responsibility for their own actions, there are no distracted drivers, no cell phone use or texting of any kind. It was quite refreshing, but it took me a couple days to get used to this attitude.

SECOND DAY

Our first full day of riding found us climbing the Grimsel, the Neufenen, the St. Gotthard and the Furka passes. As I soon learned, each mountain pass is unique and presents its own set of challenges. Some are steep with hairpins that even on a GS are clutch-feathering tight, and

some rise slowly from the valley floor with broad sweepers and long stretches in between. One thing they all have in common is the incredible beauty and dramatic vistas that are around every corner.

The little GS proved to be a perfect mount for these tight twisty switchbacks. My brother and I fell into a routine, he would lead up to the base of the pass, then my old road racing instincts would kick in and I'd fly up the pass, stopping frequently to shoot pictures. Every pass I climbed, and we did 18 of them between Switzerland and Italy, had a restaurant and/or hostel at the summit. There was always an interesting gathering of bikes and cars at each one, with a diverse collection of countries represented as well.

We had decided to use the town of Andermatt as a home base for a couple days, it is located in the epicenter of many

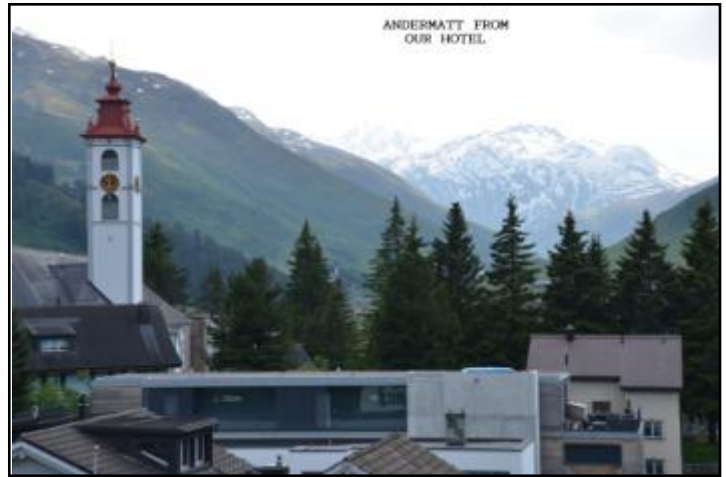




great mountain passes. We stayed in a nice hotel in the center of town, several restaurants and beer stubes were within easy walking distance. After an exhilarating first day we settled into the hotel then walked around until we found a suitable restaurant with an outdoor patio on the river. We then proceeded to eat a hearty, fat-

filled meal and drink more wine than we should have, but what the hell, I'm on vacation, right?

Unlike other countries, Switzerland is not a united culture. There are 26 cantons (counties) in the country, each one is autonomous and each one has its own unique flavor. The country has four languages: German, French, Italian and



English, all of them spoken with a Swiss dialect that can change from one side of a valley to another. The prominent language spoken depends on how close the canton is to a neighboring country, as does the type of food and beverage available.

My family is from northern Switzerland (Zurich, Schaffhausen, Winterthur) so they speak German-Swiss. My brother's apartment is in southern Switzerland (Montreux, Geneva), so they speak French. In the north, you drink beer and eat sausages, in the south, you drink white wine and eat foods with rich sauces and in the east you drink dry red wine and eat pasta.

Food, like most things in Switzerland, is expensive. We spent 50 to 60 Francs apiece (about \$70) for evening meals, and these were not four-star places. Our mid-day stops were less but not by much. The fare was always fresh, well prepared and diverse and we never had a bad meal even in the little villages. Every canton has its local breweries and vineyards, all were different and enjoyable. We enjoyed traditional Swiss Fondue, made with four types of cheese and the liqueur Kirschwasser, several times during the trip. Also, many meals are based around Swiss rösti, the potato-based national dish, which is served along side a

large helping of leberkässe (Swiss meatloaf) or cervelat (Swiss sausage). Many places serve *viande chevaline* as a lower cost meal, but I wasn't brave (or drunk) enough to try a Mr. Ed steak (Aw gee, Wilbur). Maybe some of you would. As you may suspect, all the desserts are wonderful and either chocolate or crème-based. I'm glad I worked hard riding that GS up and down those mountains, otherwise I would have exceeded the airline weight limit on the return flight!

To be Continued





Saturday
September 15th
2012

EVENT T-SHIRTS \$10

Poker Run / Toy Run

- Registration begins at 10:00
- Ride leaves at 1:00
- \$10 per rider / \$5 per passenger / \$5 each additional hand
- Feel free to bring a toy to kick-off the Community Christmas Toy Drive
- 50/50
- Trophies for 1st Place, 2nd Place, 3rd Place, Worst Hand, Club with Most in Attendance, Long Distance Rider, Oldest Rider, Youngest Rider, Newest Rider, Bike with Highest Mileage, Oldest Bike, Bike with Fewest CCs

five below band

- Playing 10:00 – 1:00
- Classic Rock * Southern Rock * Blues
- www.reverbnation.com/fivebelowband



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- Entrée, 2 sides, chips and drink for \$6
- Dine inside or eat out on the deck

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