

November 2013

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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





I'm not sure why Ted wanted me to stand here for this photo at Rabbit Hash.

***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.**

Road Trip 2013 Retirement has never looked better

By James Street



Winding up Dead Indian Pass on Chief Joseph Scenic Highway brought into clear focus the reason I rode two thousand miles.

If nothing else, it was for the simple visceral thrill of ripping through mountain passes. After passing a mini-van on a long uphill straight, the road just rolled out in an inviting long, twisting, reversing, and undulating ribbon that climbed skyward to a sub-alpine scrub pine overlook where I pulled off to take in the breathtaking view back toward Yellowstone National Park from where I'd just ridden.

Even though Yellowstone was infested with tourists and road construction, I was com-

pletely alone in the isolation offered by the remote Montana mountain landscape. On a more elemental mechanical level, it was satisfying to note that the new rear tire purchased from I-75 Yamaha back home was finally scuffed almost to the shoulder to match the interstate-worn center tread.

We stood and looked at mountain ridges that went from a defined-but softened by haze-brown and green to muted dark blue at the horizon in that stereotypical receding mountain backdrop so often seen in landscape paintings and photos. While taking in the vista I looked down to find a couple of chipmunks, obviously accustomed to being fed, begging at my feet. They were very



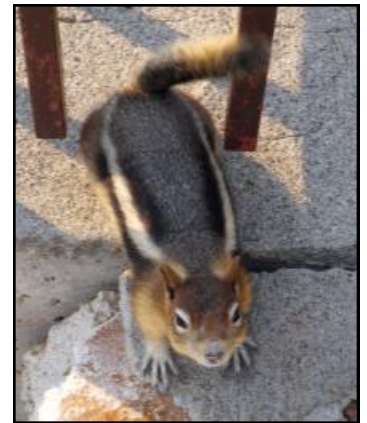
Loaded and ready somewhere in Missouri

friendly to the point of reaching out with their tiny paws to touch my hand to see if I was

hiding food, but they were out of luck because I wasn't the chipmunk chow wagon.



Chief Joseph Pass, otherwise known as "inspiration!"



About that time, my friend and travel companion Bob rolled in and doffed his helmet to enjoy the scenery, and we hung out and simply enjoyed the relative solitude and marvelous view.

A week earlier we'd left Richmond, Kentucky, with the general goal of riding to Glacier National Park, and to get there we wound a northwesterly route through Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota

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and Wyoming before getting to the intended destination in Montana.

The trip was the second paragraph to my retirement story; the first was a couple of weeks on board our boat. I pulled the plug on work at the end of June (2013) and was earnestly trying to check off a few things I'd always wanted to do.

Our first night out was spend at Hannibal, Missouri, hanging out in Samuel Clemens', aka Mark Twain's, old haunts. The town is replete with homage to the riverboat bard, and we did several circles through various monuments to Twain in the historic area before finally deciding to eat at a local pub on the riverfront. I had a pretty decent steak for under \$10, so Hannibal isn't so consumed by tourism that the local businesses are charging stratospheric prices for the mundane.

After rising early the next day, we hit the local Mickey D's and a service station to top up the tanks and took off in a westerly direction across Missouri. Taking US 36, a four lane non-controlled access highway, the rolling hills and relative remoteness of the highway made it a great combination of churning out miles while experiencing rural scenery in a way that is too sanitized on the interstate system.

A posted speed limit of 65 made cruising at 70 a non-nerve wracking pleasant pace, and we passed farms, barns, abandoned service stations and the occasional railroad crossing.

Running parallel to the highway for several miles was an actively used railroad, and sometime around midmorning a train passed carrying wind generator blades with a single

blade taking up an entire rail car. The sun reflecting off of the graceful curve of the wing shape of the blades was a reminder that those things that function well in nature have an inherent beauty.

At St. Joseph we turned northward into Iowa and then traveled westward to Lincoln, Nebraska, where at a lunch stop we struck up a conversation with a local fellow motorcyclist who was interested in our trip. When we got up to leave we asked him the best way to navigate through town, and he said, "I don't have anything to do at the moment, so just follow me." We did and he showed us the quick way out onto the highway. With a quick wave goodbye, he got off at the next exit and went back towards Lincoln.

At Grand Island, Nebraska, we departed onto state highway Route 2 through the Sand Hill region of the state. The desolate landscape covered in wild sunflowers was beguilingly beautiful as the two-lane road rolled through low hills and valleys.

This part of the trip was the first of several "aha moments" where it became obvious that we live in an enormous and relatively uninhabited country, and I cannot think of a better way to experience it than on a motorcycle.

At one of our gas stops while still in the Sand Hills of Nebraska, a fellow in a relatively old and beaten up S-10 pulled up to the curb, and I noticed that he had what looked to be a wolf in the back in a homemade wire cage. The guy struck me as being the kind of person who didn't like to chat-he had that loner look- but I took a chance and asked him if the huge menacing dog-looking creature was



Stopped for construction, Bob Riley on his BMW

indeed a wolf, and it turned out that it was a full wolf (160 lbs.) and the guy was actually very approachable and talkative. I asked if the wolf was friendly and the wolf's owner said, "Yes, he loves people." Having no reason to believe the guy was being anything but straight with me, I went over and introduced myself to the Wolf and he was a very friendly guy. At the same time, he was so large and predatory looking that it almost gave me the "willies" to

stick my hand in the cage to pet him.

Once the owner came back out from getting something to eat we talked for several minutes and had a conversation whose theme was repeated several times during the trip. It went something like this: "You guys going to Sturgis?" "No, we're heading out to Montana to see a couple of the national parks." "Where you from?" "Central part of Kentucky."

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George Washington's preternatural profile. Mt. Rushmore

"Never been out east. Would like to go sometime. Bet it's pretty."

We wished each other good luck and headed our separate ways. Later in the afternoon and after running my bike nearly out of gas and thinking that the service station just coming into sight may be the last one for sixty miles and that it may be closed, we pulled up to an outpost on a hill overlooking a broad green valley with a glassy shallow lake interspersed

with marshes separating the hills.

Fortunately, the station turned out to be open. Inside was a short order lunch counter so we ordered a couple of burgers that turned out to be one of the best meals we ate on the trip (the station is at the intersection of Highways 2 and 61 and is roughly 60 miles east of Alliance, NB. The lake is Beem Lake). We talked with several of the locals all of whom were friendly and when asked about

a motel meeting our lofty and demanding requirements of being "clean and cheap" one of the guys followed me out and said to check out the Rainbow Motel in Alliance.

I thanked him and we departed for Alliance, about sixty miles away. Finding the Rainbow Motel proved to be fairly easy and the proprietor was a friendly Hispanic lady who rented us a room for the miserly sum of \$44, which established

the Rainbow as the least expensive motel on the trip.

Out early again the next day we motored up toward South Dakota in what turned out to be a day of amazing visits to places that have been on my bucket list for years. As a sidebar, the last weekend of Sturgis overlapped our first weekend on the road, so all of the descriptions of places in this narrative can be embellished with multitudes of single or group Harley riders. I believe every

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Harley-Davidson made in the last century must have attended Sturgis and sagely knew of our travel plans so they could pass us as they left the Sturgis rally.

We first came to Wind Cave National Park, and our crossing into the park was punctuated by a cattle crossing and signs warning that wild game roamed freely and that buffalo are dangerous and not to be approached. From a rider's perspective, the roads were recently paved with the light colored blacktop that inspires traction confidence; however, the posted speed limits don't really allow you to test it very often. Nonetheless, the roads through Wind Cave were scenic with vistas of alternating dry grass valleys and hills with rock outcroppings and conifer forest. At one point we had to stop for a herd of buffalo to cross the road in front of us, and they

graciously moved slowly enough for a couple of photos to be taken.

From Wind Cave we headed towards Mt. Rushmore with throngs increasing in density as we neared the carved stone monument. At a pull-off parking area there was a crowd of bikes and cars with people focusing their cameras high to the cliffs on the opposite side of the road, and I couldn't see the attraction until pulling in and stopping at which time the profile of George Washington became apparent high across the road between two promontories. At the main entrance to the monument the full Mt. Rushmore faces stoically face the faithful, but \$11 seemed to be a bit pricey to park among the young families, foreign tourists and Sturgis crowd to get an up close and personal photograph of an iconic image



Luthiers at Gibson's acoustic production facility in Bozeman, Montana, crafting some of the world's great guitars.

I've seen so many times it is indelibly etched in my memory. I got a good look and followed Bob toward Hill City.

After lunch at Hill City and a conversation with the waitress (see above), we headed toward Devil's Tower. Known as the backdrop for the climactic ending of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," the Tower is another icon of the American west that invites all visitors to photograph themselves in front of the park sign with the butte in the background. After waiting a couple of minutes for some of the Sturgis leftovers to take their snapshots, we took turns and did the same.

Bob, who's ridden several times in this area, said, "Wanna see the Little Big Horn?" And off we went. We got to the battlefield about an hour before closing time and walked the course of the carnage until a park ranger told us we had to leave. I've seen the Somme Valley in France where tens of thousands of young men died and was moved and sickened by the magnitude of the loss, and there's a tragedy in the Little Big Horn that is just as sobering and moving.



West side of Continental Divide-Glacier

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Looking over Bob's shoulder at the buffalo that had just crossed the road

Moving further west, we headed to Bozeman, Mt., the next day and looked up the Gibson Guitar acoustic manufacturing facility on Bob's suggestion. It turned out to be a highlight of the trip that was magnified by the hospitality of the staff at Gibson.

Making a total of seventy-five guitars a day, almost every step of the manufacturing of each instrument is performed manually. The only computerized milling is done to rough shape the necks; otherwise it is all cut, sanded, glued and shaped by craftsmen. Again, when leaving the factory one of the workers led us into Bozeman to one

of his favorite restaurants—which had unfortunately recently closed. Just another instance proving the South doesn't have the country's only friendly and accommodating people.

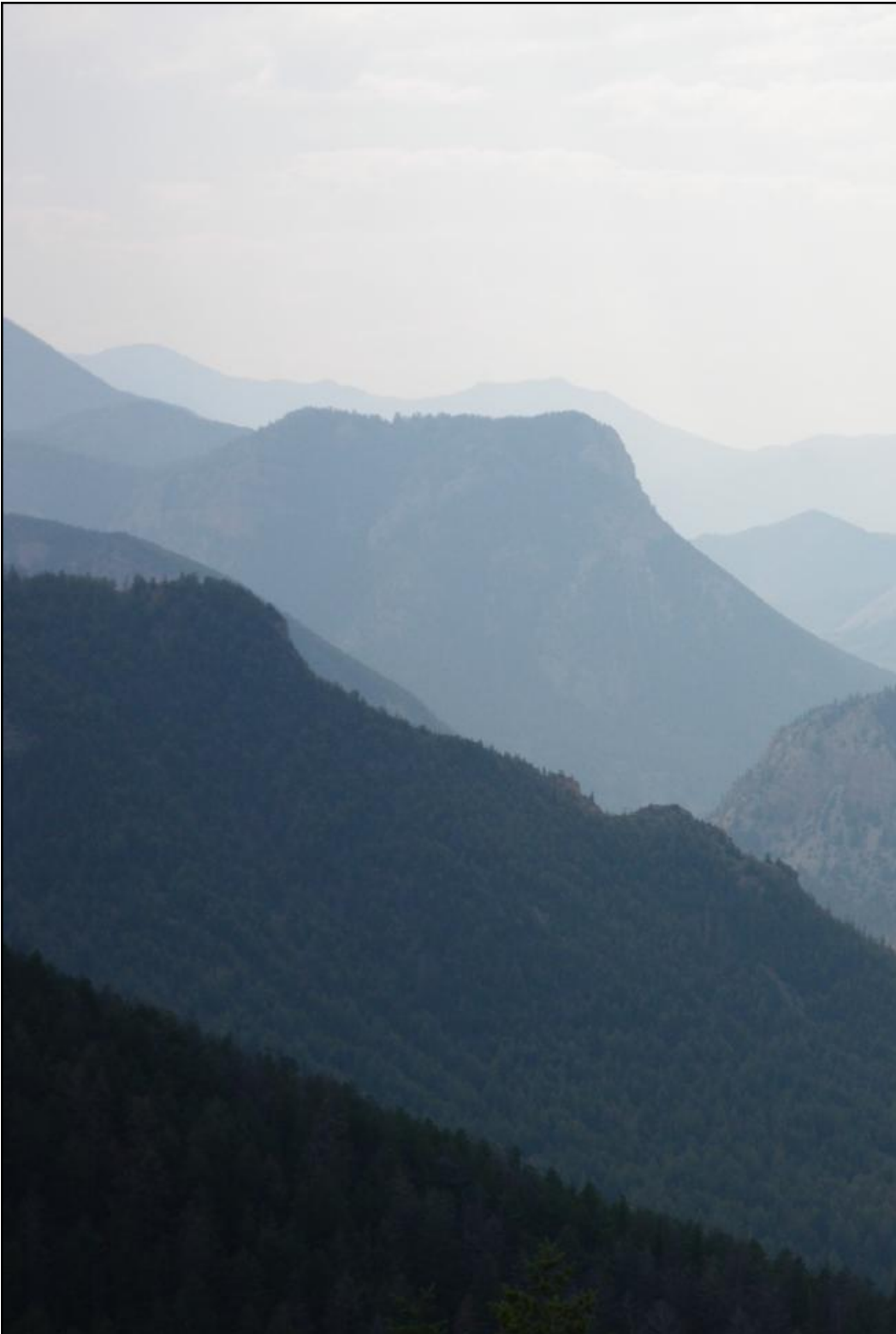
From Bozeman we headed to Helena to get within striking distance of Glacier National Park, and headed into the only significant rain that we experienced on the trip. Significant in that the rain was accompanied by dime-sized hail, and also significant because there was no place to hide or go so we just had to keep riding as though we were negotiating a charge through a paintball tour-



Glacier National Park

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Classic mountain landscape, looking toward Yellowstone
toward Chief Joseph Pass

nament. The hail popped each time it hit my helmet and stung like being attacked by wasps when it hit the fabric covered parts of my body. Fortunately, it only lasted ten or so minutes and cleared by the time we were in sight of Helena. Helena is a beautiful city, and finding deer grazing in yards in the middle of town in sight of the Montana state capitol building was a reminder that humanity has encroached on wild areas.

From Bozeman we traveled north towards Glacier and stopped in Choteau, Mt., for fuel and had a long conversation with the service station owner and his wife. They also were ranchers, and the conversation rambled from water rights to civil rights to gas prices. Their thoughtful and measured discourse on Native American relations and water rights in Montana that are affected by Mississippi River water needs was a revealing primer on some issues that hadn't occurred to me. After getting some advice about where and how to get to Glacier, we headed that way.

All of the superlative descriptors apply to Glacier National Park: majestic, beautiful, grand, imposing and stunning. Unfortunately the gradual gains in temperatures in the park over the last few years have diminished the glaciers to pockets of snow fields. We rode the "Going to the Sun Highway" from east to west through the park which crests at Logan Pass at 6,646 feet above sea level. While traffic was relatively light, there were several construction zones that stopped us for as much as twenty minutes each time and the stop and start associated with this was tiring and detracted from the ride.

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On the other hand, future visitors will benefit from the road surface and stone guardrail work that was the source of the delays.

After exiting the park on the west side we turned south and rode miles on the eastern shore of Flathead Lake and the late day sun reflecting off of the lake to the west and the Rockies to the east made for one of the most picturesque rides of the trip. We stayed on the west shore of Flathead in a room that looked out over a marina with the lake and Rockies in the background.

The next day took us past Missoula, through Big Sky, and into West Yellowstone, Montana. After riding past motels that didn't meet our requirements-remember "clean and cheap"-we found a place that seemed to meet the stipulated requirements only to find that the nightly rate was over \$100. It turned out that the owner was a MotoGP enthusiast, and we negotiated a night for \$100 including taxes. Funny thing was that it was the most expensive place we stayed, and at the same time was in the most impoverished area we stayed in. Across the street from our room was an area that I was fearful of walking in after dark!

Awaking next day to almost frost temperatures, we mounted up and stopped at a local pancake house where I met a lady from Shelbyville, Kentucky, who introduced herself when she saw our license plates. She was working during the tourist season so she could spend some time with her daughter who lived there year round.

From the pancake restaurant we went immediately into Yellowstone. The scenery there didn't disappoint: We saw broad valleys with meandering,

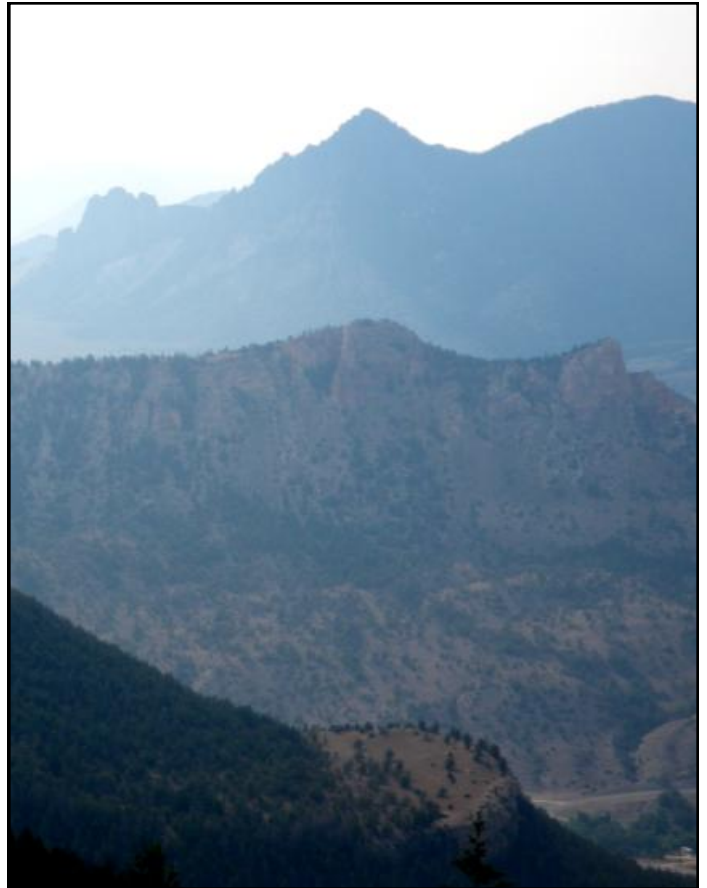
riffled, streams at the lower altitudes and receding mountain portraits as we crossed ridges. Interspersed between the two were buffalo, mule deer, marmots and one view of an osprey nest. Like Glacier National Park, Yellowstone is a natural wonder that's simply inspirational to an outdoor junkie like me.

Exiting Yellowstone at the northeast entrance took us to the Chief Joseph Highway route that was mentioned at the opening of this article. Following the described pass, Cody, Wyoming, beckoned and we made it there in time to motor past the downtown Wild West Show. After an uneventful evening of laundry and TV we turned in early.

The following morning I pushed the starter button on my Triumph 2002 Trophy 1200 and it briefly started and stalled, and it went completely dead the next time I hit the button. Those of you who've been on the road hundreds of miles from home will know what a sick feeling it is to have what seems to be a colossal electrical failure.

After going through some very elemental diagnostics it seemed that the battery had simply suffered an instant and terrible death. And if Lady Luck hadn't already bestowed enough of her grace on me to have such an imminently remediable problem, it turned out that the Walmart a block away had a drop in replacement. To add to the great Karma of the breakdown, the guy that checked me out at Walmart had a BSA Lightning that he'd owned since the fifties!

Two more days separated us from home and we covered them without incident, as the highlights were in the mirror.



For those who are interested, we covered about 4,800 miles in ten days. As the Glacier Park and Yellowstone days were 200 or so miles each, so the bulk of the trip was comprised of 500 mile days. We were tired at the end of every day but awoke each day eager to get back on the bikes.

Retirement never looked better...

—JS

Barber Vintage Festival, 2013

Photography by Jeff Crabb



Barber Vintage Festival sets record with 61,437 attendees

The ninth annual Barber Vintage Festival presented by Triumph Dealers of North

America on October 11, 12, & 13 announced an attendance record of 61,437.

For those who could

not attend, Bluegrass Beemers Webmeister Jeff Crabb shares images from this year's event with BMW as the fea-

tured marque.

Thanks for the photos, Jeff!

—PE

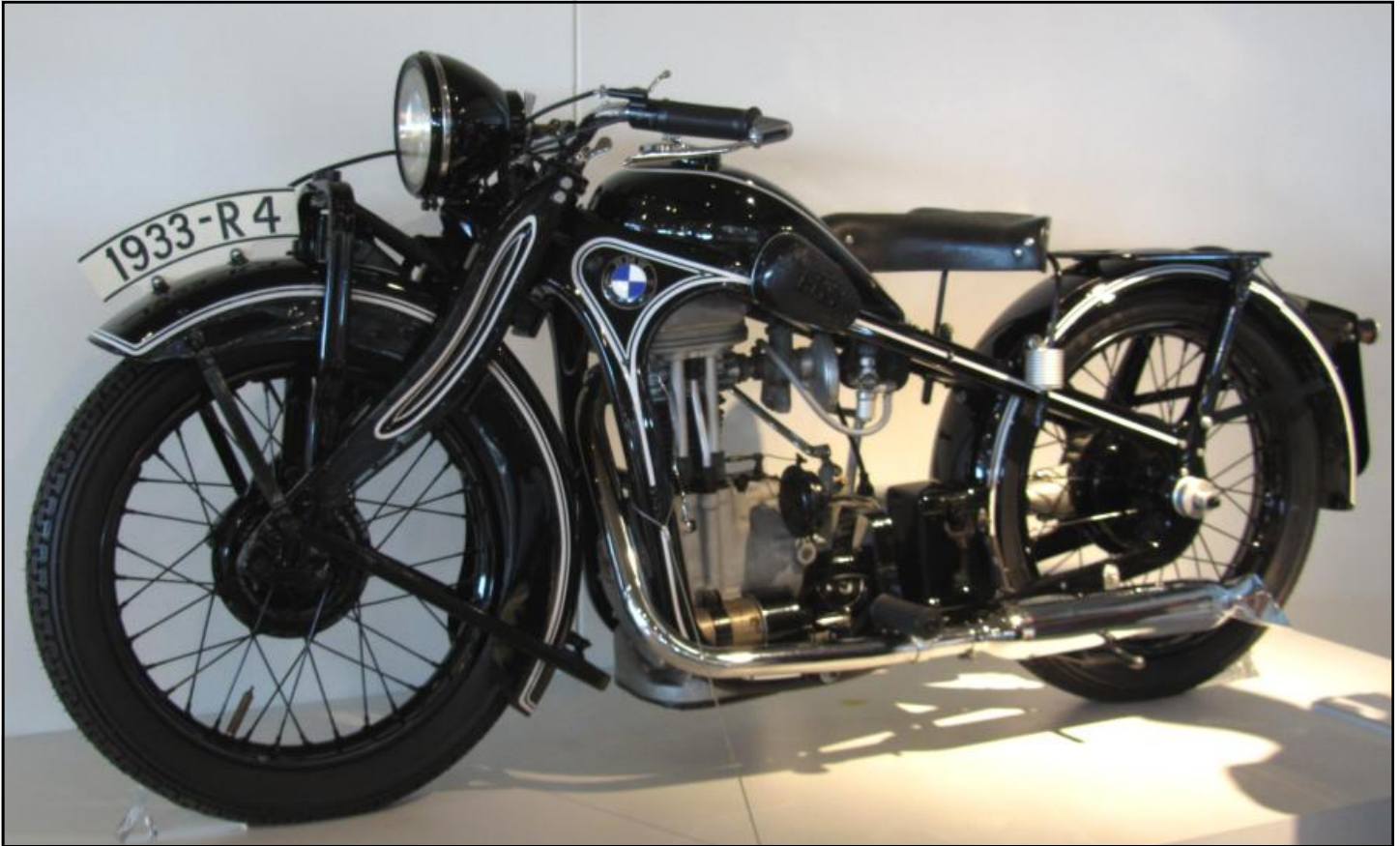
Barber **Vintage** Festival, 2013

Photography by Jeff Crabb



Barber **Vintage** Festival, 2013

Photography by Jeff Crabb



Alex Boone's Fly-In, Ride-In, Drive-In displays vintage planes, motorcycles, cars and... a boat!

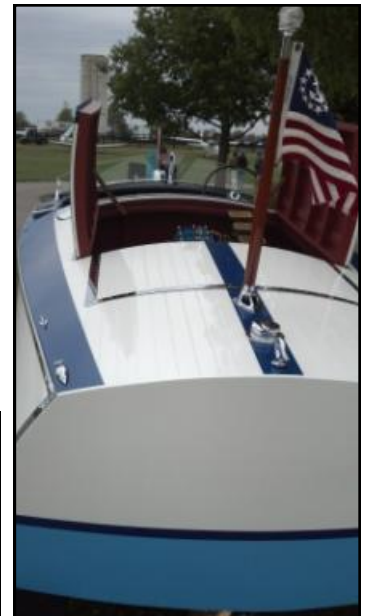


Partly-sunny skies gave way to clouds and an increasingly cool wind that reduced the number of planes flying in to about 11, but those that did land on Alex Boone's grass field presented a fascinating display, joining an interesting mix of cars and motorcycles, and one lovely boat.

Alex treats attendees to a BBQ lunch, adding to the relaxed atmosphere for pilots and other vintage enthusiasts/owners to mingle.

Check out a few of the machines that were on display.

—PE



1929 Chris Craft

Alex Boone's Fly-In, Ride-In, Drive-In displays vintage planes, motorcycles, cars and... a boat!



Ian Rice chose Ben Prewitt's Austin Healey 3000 vintage racer as his favorite car. Photo by John Rice

A family history, continued

By John Rice



Some may recall the story of my progenitor, Lord Percy Gifford-Rhys of Bag-on-Weasel, who introduced the family to motorcycling back in the waning days of the British Empire.

Following that bother with the stock market in October of '29, changes had to be made at the Manor.

Though Percy's mechanical experimentation had on occasion reduced the servant staff temporarily, there had always been enough to keep life on an acceptable keel until now. Financial times being what they were, cuts had to be made. In the heyday, Percy had, like all of his ilk, a retinue of personal staff to meet his basic needs. For example, when the new-fangled "toothbrush" became popular, Percy learned that it was expected in his circles that the butler would lay out the brush already prepared with "paste" for his use. He had decided to go that one even better, and soon had the butler doing the brushing for him, finishing off each individual tooth with a monogrammed polishing cloth.

Following the unpleasantness of the Crash and reduction of staff, this routine was dropped, but being unaccustomed to doing it themselves, Percy and his American-born wife Eula took to brushing each other's teeth, leading to the occasional need for the underbutler to extract the instrument from the master's throat.

Other necessary tasks, such as shoe polishing and the ironing of the daily newspaper were now taken down the servant chain from the footmen to the stable staff, a multitasking ef-

fort that occasionally resulted in unsightly stains on the paper and shoes polished with a substance similar in appearance to Shinola, but not nearly as effective.

Motorcycles were for Percy, as for his descendant, an absolute necessity and he wanted his bride to enjoy them as well.

Despite her husband's best efforts to instruct her in his motorcycling methods, Eula became quite an excellent rider and soon was zooming about the estate and surrounding villages on her own motorcycle, an Ariel Red Hunter. Though supremely confident in his own abilities (some might even suggest unwarrantedly so) Percy couldn't help but feel a bit envious when it became painfully obvious that on the

twisting country roads, Eula could show him her heels whenever she chose.

Percy determined that the logical answer to this state of affairs was that his own machine lacked sufficient power. He launched an immediate program to remedy the situation. Following the American maxim of "there's no replacement for displacement," he constructed an 1800cc single cylinder machine, using bits from a steam

tractor, a Norton Manx and a locomotive left over from his brief unsuccessful foray into the railroad business. Unfortunately, the resulting engine was over four feet tall and weighed 780 pounds.

When he mounted the device, with help from a stable hand and a ladder, he found it difficult to swing

the kickstarter through it's necessary arc, since the operation required him to have both feet on the lever. Just as well, for when the beast lighted off, the resulting backfire launched Percy over the stable roof, much like a mortar shell from the Great War. Later attempts did manage to start the bike, but the vibration of the enormous piston passing through it's rotation caused the machine to

leap several feet off the ground with each revolution, making it somewhat difficult to control. He returned to the drawing board.

His second attempt used a radial six cylinder engine, borrowed from an aircraft manufacturer owned by a former classmate of Percy's from his boarding school days. At least "borrowed" was the term Percy used, when challenged by the local sheriff as Percy carted the

device back to the Manor under wraps.

Unfortunately, while producing plenty of power, the engine had a deleterious effect on handling. Since Percy's typical riding style hadn't given him much experience with serious lean angles, he hadn't accounted for the radial profile of the engine. At the first corner, he rolled the bike over into the turn.....and just kept rolling.

Frustrated now beyond reason (a faculty with which he had only a passing acquaintance to begin with), Percy turned to the burgeoning new science of rocketry. British technicians were experimenting with what we would now call solid fuel rockets, with the idea of harnessing such amazing power for military and eventually, civilian use, though perhaps not exactly the use my ancestor had in mind.

Percy appropriated a selection of such fireworks and, after long nights in his workshop, rolled out his greatest creation, the rocket powered motorcycle. This would shoot him past Eula and any challenger with ease. Just after dawn, he hauled the device to the road in front of the Manor, with servants arranged to appreciate the brilliance of the master.

Brilliant it was, "like the Sun," one awed footman explained to the press, as Percy accelerated up to speed in a second, elevated and disappeared over the horizon.

Transportation being what it was in those days, it took him two weeks to return home.

—John Rice



Saturday @ Frisch's 7-9 am



Above: Meet two riders who have recently joined us at Frisch's on Saturday mornings. Jonathan McKeown (left) stands with his R1100R, and Darren Bowers stands with his R100S.

Right: Check out the nail in the rear tire of Mark Michaels' BMW.



Saturday @ Frisch's 7-9 am



First Wiseco Piston Vintage Show held in Cleveland, Ohio

Photos by Mark Rense



We had our first annual vintage bike show at Wiseco Piston last Sunday [Sep. 22]. It was cold and blustery but a few interesting bikes were displayed. I brought my Suzi GS1000S. The Norton was too far in the back of the garage.

—Mark Rense

Greg's Shoe Repair in Lancaster offers quality repair at reasonable rates



Greg's Shoe Repair, 859-792-3064, in Lancaster, Kentucky, offers quality repair at reasonable rates.

I dropped off my 15-year-old Sidi On Road boots with over 200,000 miles on them. For some reason, the soles were nearly shot.

One week later, Greg presented my boots with new soles and velcro straps re-glued, along with a fresh re-dye.

Greg requires payment up front. In this case, the fee was \$68, and my boots, if not I, appear to be ready for another 200,000 miles.

Greg can repair nearly any gear made of leather. His shop is located at 101 Danville Street, which is immediately on the left after turning off U.S. 27 onto KY 52.

—Paul Elwyn



For Sale

2003 R1100S
Boxer Cup Replica
20,657 miles



I purchased this bike in 2007 from Louisville BMW with only 3,500 miles registered. It was a BMW lease bike. I added BMW system cases and Suburban handlebar risers, and tank bag; everything else is stock. 1,500 miles on Metzler tires. This bike is always maintained according to book, garaged kept, in excellent condition and ready to ride.

\$8,400

Lee Thompson
leetlex92@gmail.com
859-475-7029



1995 R100 Mystic
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