

Robert's ride
Photo by Tim Adkins

Apex

September 2016

Looking Through The Curve

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

Busy month....

By Jeff Crabb

It's a busy month, for sure. We start off with Labor Day weekend, our club's rally the following weekend and later in the month is the Hoosier Beemer Rally just over the border in North Vernon, IN.

The club's annual Mini-Rally is September 9th-11th at Stillwaters Campground just north of Frankfort on US127. If you've never been, make a point of getting there this year and hangout with like minded folks for a few hours or a couple of days.

A couple of weeks later, the

Hoosier Beemer Rally will be held on September 23th-25th. A great September ride.

If you're interested in watching a few more wheels, the SCCA Runoffs are returning to the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course for the first time since 2005. The event runs from September 19th-25th. I went to the 2005 event and a few before that and it is something to see so many classes and races each day in the beautiful setting that Mid-Ohio provides (especially in the fall). If you're a race fan, you can't miss it.

This month we have articles from Tim Adkins and John Rice. Tim runs into a New Yorker in Ashland and John tells his story of going "off the grid" in the Quiet Zone in West Virginia.

Please enjoy the stories and the pictures and please keep sending in your stories and pictures.

Please send all of your contributions to
apex@bluegrassbeemers.org.

Thanks

Beemers in the Bluegrass Mini Rally

September 9th—11th

Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.

Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #49

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Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.

Back issues of *Apex* can be accessed on our website

Join us at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Rd.

in Lexington, Kentucky on any Saturday, 7-9:00 a.m.

BMW Club
Bluegrass Beemers



Loud Trains, Large Dishes and the Search for Breakfast in the Quiet Zone

Article & Photos by John Rice

Summer time in ski country. It seems like a good idea, not cold, not crowded, beautiful mountains. And with the use of a cliff-hugging cabin for three days, who could refuse?

Jay and I left on a Monday afternoon in early June, headed east to Snowshoe West Virginia where a friend of his has a ski cabin in the mountains that he would rent to us at less than the seasonal rate. There was a mandatory pie stop at the City Bakery in Morehead, then up Rt. 59 to Vanceburg for no other reason than that we hadn't been that way in a while. Clever readers will notice that Rt. 59 doesn't really go toward West Virginia in any meaningful way, but hey, it's a motorcycle trip. What does logic or expediency have to do with that? Eventually our lack of eastern progress dawned on us and we sought shelter for the night in Lancaster, Ohio at the Shaw's Inn, always a good choice.

Shaw's has a fine restaurant, in the old-school hotel tradition, where we could sit out on the tiny patio enjoying Peg Leg Stout (me) and a German Hefeweizen (Jay) with our meals, listening to the sounds of the local brass band playing for folks lounging on blankets in the town square.

Tuesday morning, seriousness restored, we headed east across Ohio and West Virginia on 33 and found 219 which took us down to Snowshoe. From there, Rt. 66 winds up the mountain-side into the "resort" area where Jack's cabin sits on the edge of a cliff overlooking a lovely valley. The cabin is an octagon with two stories, entry on the second floor. It is set up for use by skiers and so has multiple sleeping options in each room, much along the lines of the old VW camper vans where absolutely no space was wasted. I was in the guest room on the second floor, adjacent the kitchen, with a Murphy bed in the wall. I pulled it down to make my bed for the night and noticed that there was a handle high up on the top of the wall above the cabinet from which my bed emerged. Upon further inspection, I could tell that what looked like shelves next to the cabinet were actually steps and by use of them and the handle (these are athletic skiers, after all) one could swing into another double bed up in the ceiling, just below the umbrella-like rafters. The two floors of the cabin comprise about 1200 square feet, and from casual inspections, could sleep approximately 20 people if they know each other well enough. If they don't know each other well

enough, they will by the time the ski weekend is through.

Jay had been here in the ski season before and then there were restaurants aplenty in the resort complex on top of the mountain and a regular shuttle bus to pick up cabin dwellers and take them to and from. We had assumed, since the place advertised itself as more than a ski resort, open in summer for hiking, mountain biking, etc, that these services would still be available. Wrong. Everything in the resort area was closed up tight and the only people present were construction workers building and repairing for the next ski season.

We wandered around a bit and finally followed a car to a sports bar & grille that was open for the evening to feed the construction workers doing the summer maintenance. Since we were on the bikes, we could not avail ourselves of the bar portion and the grille aspect was adequate for a hungry person, but not exactly the stuff of which gastronomic dreams are made. Back to the cabin in time for us to sip a bit of the Woodford Double Oaked that I'd brought with me, sitting on the back porch, watching the red sun go down behind the distant mountains across the green valley.

Wednesday was to be "tour day" when we would visit some of the tourist attractions of the area. We expected rain, which would make the twisted mountain roads a bit less fun, giving us the excuse to have some off the bike time getting educated. Down 219 about 20 miles or so we found the little town of Mar-

linton where, unlike Snowshoe Resort, breakfast could be found. There is a small, somewhat rustic motel and restaurant combination by the river in this town that caters to recreational tourists. Canoeists and tubers can ply the shallow rushing water and Spandex-clad bicyclists can avail themselves of a long "rails-

to-trails" trail that crosses the main street just down from the restaurant. We returned up 219 to the cabin, then followed the rest of old Route 66 that meanders over the mountain to Cass. This is a railroad/pulp mill town, founded in 1901 and constructed from scratch by the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company

that bought the logging rights to these hills back in the day, then built a railroad to haul out the logs.



The Inn and restaurant in Marlinton, West VA



The restaurant and the river



The Cass Railroad. Cover your ears.



Perhaps this is where BMW came up with the shaft drive thing...

The town is now a state-owned tourist site. Westvaco Corporation now owns the timber rights and continues to manage the forest. These trains are no longer used for hauling anything but tourists, eager to see just a bit of the history they represent, along an eleven mile piece of the former line. To give the riders the full experience, the young engineer made enthusiastic use of the steam whistle, deafening all within range. I could feel the vibrations down inside my head as the little bones and nerve endings inside my ears screamed for mercy and then died. I should have left my earplugs in.

The visitors center and museum occupy what's left of the old company store. This was, we are told, in its day the largest company store in the world, selling the residents "everything from jewelry to farm equipment". There was a live-stock operation on site to butcher 25 cows and 25 pigs each week to keep the workers and families fed. A one-stop-shop when Sam Walton was still in very short pants. Much of the building is

gone now, but one can see in the remnants a hint of how it would have dominated the town's architecture. The houses along the few streets are nearly all the same, wooden sided with front porches varying only in height for the slope of the land, all painted white, built from the

same plans by the same workmen when this place was hacked out of the woods and made ready for the needed workers. Here by the tracks the store was a much larger version of the same, multi-story and enormous but still familiar in style. On payday the hard men and their families



That is Jay, in the last few moments with his hearing intact, before the train whistle blows

would come here (there was nowhere else they could go) to get what they had to have, and if there was anything left in the envelope, some things they wanted, then return to the homes to get ready to repeat the week's labor looking forward to the next Friday.

At one end of the store building is the tourist information office, with an old wooden counter more appropriate to a country store, lined with brochures and maps. I saw that the "Ride West Virginia" brochure had on its

cover Aeros-titch clad riders standing next to Ducatis rather than the more typical jeans and no - helmet chop-per dudes that

one usually finds on these things. The lady behind that counter noted our motorcycle gear and began telling us good routes to take from here. Seems that she used to ride on a Harley with her ex-husband and had a fondness for curvy asphalt on two wheels.

She had a wistful faraway look as she told us that the Harley had gone to him in the divorce. I didn't have to ask which one she missed, the husband or the motorcycle. We followed her suggestions for the rest of the day and much of the next, convincing us that she really knew her stuff.

Not far away is the Green Bank Observatory, the center of what we soon learned was "The Quiet Zone". The zone is in concentric circles, with regulation of radio traffic getting ever more strin-

huge radio telescopes arrayed in patterns to form, if needed, the effect of one enormous scope. Since it receives radio waves, rather than visible light (all such waves are just different parts of the same spectrum), they are very, very serious about interference. Electronic devices of all sorts must be switched off prior to entering the facility. They tell us that even wearing a Fitbit inside will ruin some astronomer's day. The gift shop sells cardboard box cameras for photography, since digital cameras are



The Visitor Center at Greenbank. Abandon all electronics, ye who enter here !

gent as it nears the Observatory. That is why, we learn, it is so difficult to get cell phone service and Wi-Fi in this section of the state. The Green Bank facility, which all of us have heard from in the tracking of space vehicles, consists of acres of land with

not allowed inside because of potential electronic emissions. The grounds keeping vehicles are diesel, so that no spark plugs or wires are used. Yes, they are serious.

Our guide is an eager young woman who lives and breathes

radio astronomy. She "owns" this place in the sense that she knows it inside and out, apparently not wanting to be anywhere but here. It is good to see that passion in a young person for such an esoteric pursuit. We climb on a short bus to go out into the fields where the monster telescope dishes live. They are so large that it is difficult to get a perspective when looking up at them from a distance. The biggest is locked in the "birdbath" horizontal position for painting and maintenance work as we pull up in the parking and observation area. Then I see what appears to be tiny insects, or maybe spiders, hanging from web strands in the works. They are men, on safety lines. We are still a long way from the thing. She tells us that the dish is 100 meters by 110 meters, or roughly a bit longer than a football field in both directions. It is, at 485 feet tall, 60% taller than the Statue of Liberty. It is the largest movable land object anywhere. In other words, it is big. There are several others on this site, widely separated, but this is the big Kahuna of them all.

Later, on the bus tour of this former farmland, we pass a graveyard. Our guide tells us that's where they bury the folks that didn't switch off their phones. We think she's kidding.

One of the large dishes is being rented to the Russians for their experiments. Our guide tells us that all information gathered here is public, even that done by foreign countries. It is an eclec-

tic research facility, or as she puts it, "You don't need a PhD to do research here, just a good idea." Neither Jay or I could come up with one at the moment.

As we are leaving, we run into another motorcyclist in the parking lot, standing next to a new, well-farkled Harley. He is a retired West Virginia state trooper who was injured on the job and used his Worker's Comp settlement to obtain the bike. It has, he tells us, everything that HD offers including some features he hasn't figured out yet. He warns us about the local drivers and recommends a few good roads, which turn out to be the same ones as the Cass lady suggested. (As we're talking, I keep thinking perhaps I've met him before.... I have met a few troopers in their official capacity in my years of riding... and then I close my eyes for a moment and it comes to me, just hearing his voice. He sounds, intonation, phrasing, everything, exactly like Danny Phillips. For those of you who know Danny, or "Whoosh", there's a certain irony in that.)

Out of Green Bank, we follow the Cass lady's suggestions down a loop to the town of Frost. These roads are in valleys, no need for the large deposits of gravel for winter, with wide sweeping turns and no traffic today. There were deer in the tall grass along the sides, but they only watched our progress without interference. A nearly perfect riding day. Then we found

the old route One to return to Snowshoe and quickly learned why Cass Lady told us "No one goes that way anymore". This "road" is the remnants of pavement down in the deep creek valleys, winding and twisting through the shade from very old trees. Jay's GPS gets confused and gives up when numerous branches wander off to the sides, no doubt going to someone's house or where one used to be, without any marking as to which is now the "main" road. We try to guess from the tracks in the mud, the relative conditions of the surface and by instinct which might be the path to take. Gravel is everywhere, though not so much from winter leftovers, but more what happens to asphalt when it begins to return to its component parts. Finally, more by luck than navigation, we come out on 219 near Marlinton just as the rain begins again and make our way back to the same restaurant for supper by the river.

Despite signs telling us that the restaurants in Snowshoe would be open Thursday for the anticipated weekenders, there is no breakfast to be found this morning, so we are off in search of an alternative to going back to Marlinton. It's a good place there, but kind of against our principles to return too often to the same spot. We head north to Elkins, West VA and find sustenance at Harry G's, a newish place in an old building, now converted to an urban mall of small shops. One of the best cinnamon rolls

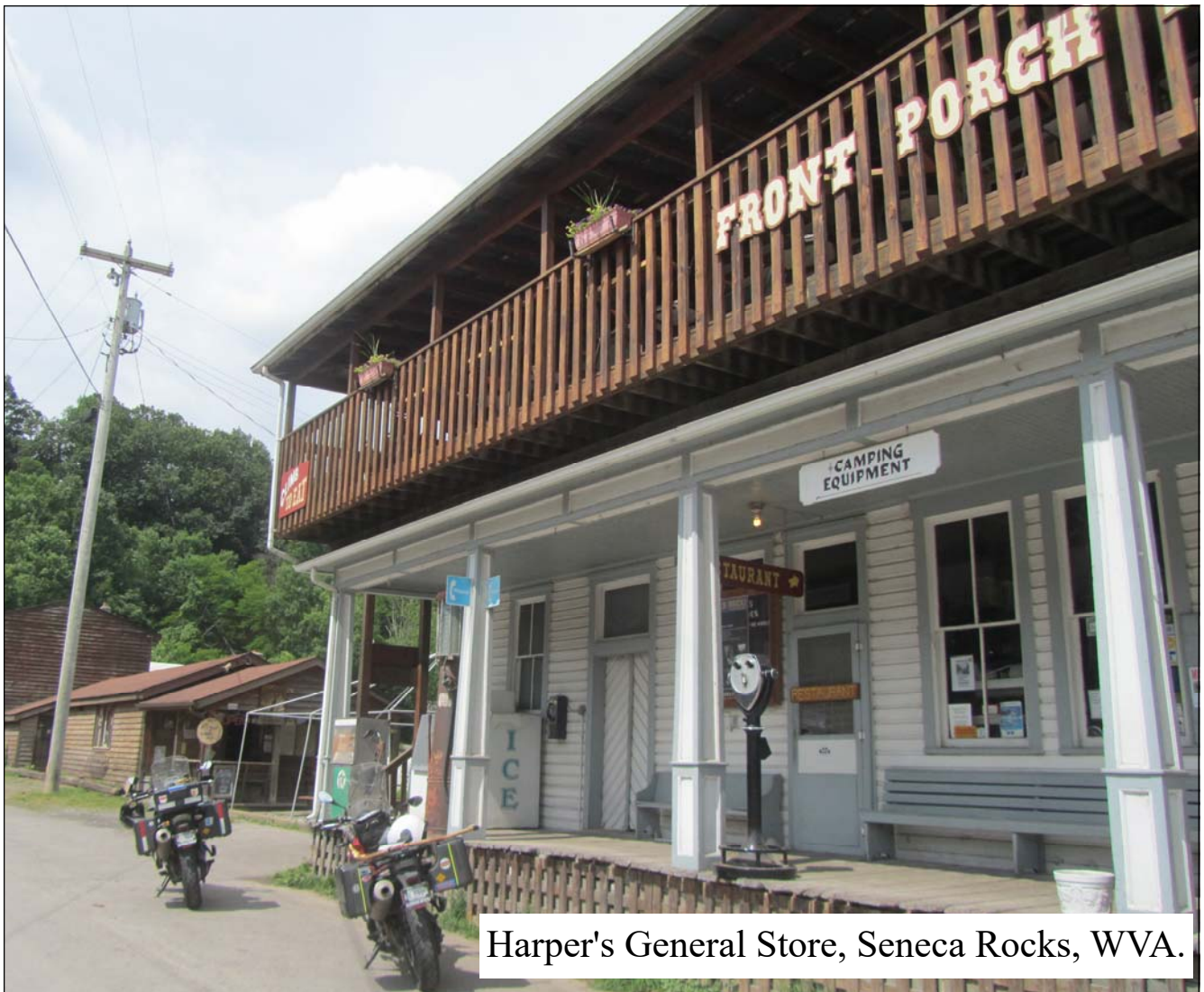
ever, which means by definition that heartburn is only a short time away. But, it's worth it.

From Elkins we take old route 33, to avoid the 4-lane new stretch, over to Seneca Rocks, one of the scenic recommendations from the travel brochures. The rocks are impressive, looking vaguely, rather incongruously, southwestern desert here in green, green, West Virginia. It is a 900 foot high quartzite formation that once was the edge of an ancient ocean, later up-ended by geological activity for the express purpose to sit here and

amaze us. It takes its name from the Seneca Indians who made this area their home in the pre-European era. Nearby there is now a Discovery Center, informing us about archeological digs into the old villages along the river.

Across from the Rocks we find Harper's Store, built in 1902 by the current owner's great grandfather and operated by the same family today. We talk to Mrs. Harper who is celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary today. Inside the store, it is a mix of centuries with the counter and

shelves looking like they haven't changed since it was built, but a modern cafe on the second floor (unfortunately not open yet at this early hour) and the old shelves stocked with products the founder could not have imagined. There is a stuffed black bear watching over the store from the back. Mrs. Harper tells us her husband killed the animal because it wouldn't stop eating their sheep. She had no fear of the bear when it was alive (nor much else, I suspect) but just couldn't have it decimating their flock.



Harper's General Store, Seneca Rocks, WVA.



Mrs. Harper



Inside Harper's

Taking US 250 east out of Seneca Rocks, still following the directions from Cass Lady, we crossed a mountain and found ourselves in Virginia. Over on this side, the valleys are more spread out, the hills softer and the grass a different sort of green. We found lunch at Hull's Hideaway, a place Cass Lady and her bike riding ex husband used to frequent. It is a restaurant on one side and a bar on the other. As we were pulling in, we were joined by a group of several helmetless riders of the loud cruiser persuasion. They went to the bar side, we went to the restaurant.

Down 220 to 84, we crossed more gentle hills, getting the OMG view at the top of each as the next broad valley spread out below. Some were so stunning that it was difficult to maintain focus on the road ahead. There were magazine-perfect farms with everything looking clean and in place, so neatly kept that one could only think that life there must be as idyllic as a 50's TV show. But, since I'm reasonably sure that people lived there, such perfection is unlikely. As if to underscore the intrusion of the real world on this fantasy, a fighter jet flew overhead, very low and very fast, as we were off inspecting some trees by the side of the road. The sudden transition from pastoral quiet to being inside a thunderclap will get one's full attention in a hurry.

Much more awake now, we head back into West Virginia near Minnehaha Springs (don't

you just love to say that?) and on over to the Highland Scenic Highway, part of a loop that is touted in the "Ride West Virginia" brochures. Near the beginning is the Cranberry Mountain visitors center, a pleasant oasis from the heat. There is a small gift shop with cold water, some books and souvenirs, manned by two Rangers and on the other side is a museum of sorts with exhibits explaining the area. One of these exhibits consisted of glass cases full of various species of rattlesnakes. The reptiles followed us as we circumnavigated the enclosures, crawling over each other to maintain eye contact with what they apparently considered to be a large lunch delivery.

It appears that this road was built strictly to attract tourists to the area, since it is relatively new, pretty straight and doesn't go anywhere that isn't served by other roads. It rises quickly from the entrance up to the ridge tops where the feel is almost Blue Ridge-like in that it has lovely pull outs every few miles, overlooking the valleys of trees, apparently unspoiled by human activity. That is, of course, an illusion since we know there are towns down there (no breakfast, but towns) and roads and people, but the tree canopy hides it all from view up here. The Highland Scenic Highway isn't the curvy motorcycle road you would look for, but it is worth seeing. It was hot in the late afternoon down in the valley, but on the ridge top, the temperature

has come down ten degrees, pushing welcome cool air through our jackets. Nearing the end, as the road begins to descend back to the real world, a black bear saunters across the road in front of us, unhurried by our presence.

This Thursday night, some of the restaurants in Snowshoe had opened in anticipation of some weekend traffic, so we were able to get a shuttle bus to take us to the top. As we were wandering around, looking for what was available for our needs, the sky darkened, opened up and disgorged a small ocean on our heads. That made our decision rather easy, taking what was nearest, to sit at a window table and watch as the wind driven rain swept sideways across the terraces. Somehow Mother Nature had arrived late to the party, since usually these storms are meant for us out on the road.

Friday morning, the time to pack up and head home, back down to Marlinton for one last meal at the place where now we were among the regulars. 219 goes south to intersect with Route 60, one of the old roads that used to be the main arteries of the country before the Interstate system relegated them to nostalgia status. It follows the hills in nearly endless curves, but the pavement has begun to deteriorate, leaving "gravel" just exactly where you don't want it in many places. I was last on this road nineteen years ago, headed east, on my way to an accident and a night in a West Virginia

hospital. The older me is much less adventurous today and no such drama awaits. We stop at Hawks Nest state park for a break and to take in the view of the deep chasm and its' chair lift for the tourists. The curves really get serious for the next twenty or so miles from here. In the early 70's, I came this way in a borrowed Jeep Wagoneer, towing a travel trailer with my Suzuki 250 stuffed inside the kitchen, headed for the Woodrow Wilson Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center as part of my graduate degree in Vocational Rehabilitation. I lived in the trailer for six weeks, parked outside the Center while attending classes through Virginia Com-

monwealth University, but that's a whole different set of stories for another time. These mountain bends today are much more fun on a motorcycle, but we are dodging others driving similar outfits to the one I brought here back then.

All too soon the curves end as the old highway dumps us into the industrial suburbs of Charleston, the development along the Kanawha River, done when commercial expediency took precedence over aesthetics and environment. It is a drone from there to Huntington which was in our growing-up-years the Big City for us Ashland boys. Nostalgia only goes so far, however, since the town has undergone a

few up and down cycles in the ensuing years and many of the old landmarks of our youth are long gone, replaced by modern buildings or vacant lots. We crossed the river at Kenova, back into Ashland for a quick ride-through, but by then the sifting of memories was replaced by the pull of home in the dwindling daylight. I pulled into my driveway after eleven hours in the saddle, with Jay going on, still another 25 miles from home. Once this would have been an average or even short day, for us, but not now. Brenda and Simon greet me, the bike is unloaded and a cold drink in an easy chair is next on the agenda.



Seneca Rocks

Small World!!!

by Tim Adkins

It really is a small world. After seeing this guy's picture on some Moto Forums I saw him on the street in Ashland, KY. His name is Robert and he is from Long Island, NY. He travels quite a lot as you can imagine. Just about everything he has on his bike was very low cost, homemade, improvised etc. He is a lot more tech savvy than he looks. He has a homemade, very low cost GPS holder /protector/ screen shade that works very well. Power to all his gadgets/ farkles comes from the bike into the suit case and out to the different end uses with a amp meter to keep track of power consumption. The

bike has a homemade safety belt that he claims he would never ride without. I had a great visit with him. Robert is a cool guy doing his own thing in his own way on his own schedule for very little money. How many folks now days

would give anything to live like that? Keep going Robert, the world needs more guys like you.



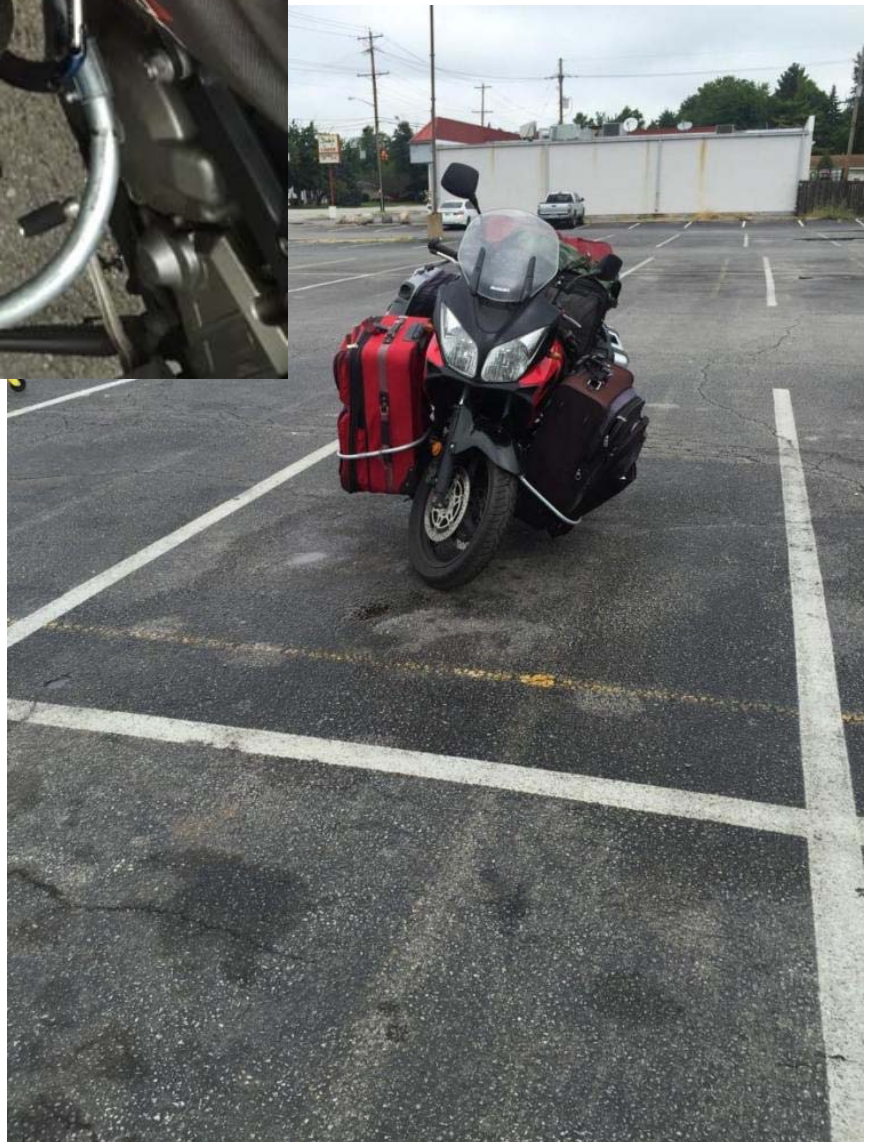
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THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THINGS SEEM TO FALL IN PLACE,
WHEN WE ALL ARE AHEAD IN THE HUMAN RACE,
WE MEET WITH OUR FRIENDS AND GAZE AT OUR "SCOOTS,"
ON SATURDAY MORNINGS WE FIND OUR ROOTS...



Here's the Group for today:

- * 1). Chris Warner
- * 2). Roy Rowlett
- * 3). Paul Elwyn
- * 4). Jim Brandon
- 5). PHILLIP BARNETT ?
- * 6). James Street
- * 7). Boone Sutherland
- * 8). Hubert Burton
- * 9). Chester Martin
- * 10). Mike Gregory
- * 11). Tom Keller
- * 12). Bill Voss & Jennifer
- * 13). Ben Pruitt
- 14). Steve Bishop
- * 15). Duff Neal
- * 16). Chris Atkensi
- * 17). Jim Gentry
- * 18). Darlene Huffman
- * 19). Gary Huffman
- * 20). Dave Norris
- * 21). Ian Rowberry

Boone

Books available on loan

The following books are available on loan. Email me when you want to borrow one, and I will bring it to breakfast (or whatever other arrangements need to be made...I can deliver within reason) and I'll put your name beside it on my list.

I don't mind if people keep them a while (it takes me forever to read a book now....I keep falling asleep and then have to re-read the last 10 pages or so) but I don't want to give them away for good. At least not yet.

John Rice
Rickey@aol.com



Bahnstormer By LJK Setwright
Streetwise By Malcolm Newell
The Bart Markel Story By Joe Scalzo
Mann of his Time By Ed Youngblood
Yesterday's Motorcycles By Karolevitz
The Scottish By Tommy Sandham
This Old Harley By Michael Dregni
Racer: the story of Gary Nixon By Joe Scalzo
All But My Life: Bio of Stirling Moss By Ken Purdy (OK, not a motorcycle book, but who doesn't like and respect Stirling Moss?)
Investment Biker By Jim Rogers
Obsessions Die Hard By Ed Culbertson
BMW Twins & Singles By Roy Bacon
Bitten by the Bullet By Steve Krzystyniak & Karen Goa
Cafe Racers of the 1960's By Mick Walker
More Proficient Motorcycling By David Hough
Tales of Triumph Motorcycles & the Meriden Factory:
By Hancox
Sport Riding Techniques By Nick Ienatasch
Total Control By Lee Parks

Smooth Riding By Reg Pridmore.
A Twist of The Wrist (Vol 1 & 2) By Keith Code
Triumph Tiger 100 and Daytona By J. R. Nelson
This Old Harley (anthology) By Dregni
Side Glances By Peter Egan
Mondo Enduro By Austin Vince
Big Sid's Vincati By Matthew Bieberman
101 Road Tales By Clement Salvadori
Riding with Rilke By Ted Bishop
Legendary Motorcycles By Luigi Corbetta
Red Tape and White Knuckles By Lois Pryce
A Man Called Mike By Hilton (bio of Mike Hailwood)
The Perfect Vehicle By Melissa Pierson
One Man Caravan By Robert Fulton (first known circumnavigation of the world by motorcycle)
Monkey Butt By Rick Sieman
Ariel: The postwar models By Roy Bacon
Short Way Up By Steve Wilson
Endless Horizon By Dan Walsh
Leanings (1 & 2) By Peter Egan
Into the Heart of Africa By Jerry Smith
The Last Hurrah By Des Molloy
(Autographed copy, with DVD of the trip)
Whatever Happened to the British Motorcycle Industry
By Bert Hopwood
Down the Road By Steve Wilson
Motorcycling Excellence
By Motorcycle Safety Foundation
Leanings 3 By Peter Egan
Ghost Rider By Neal Peart

