

January 2018

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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



Memories of Past rides

By Jeff Crabb

This month's ride story from John reminded me of the Skyline Drive/Blueridge Parkway ride that Lee Thompson and I took in 2006. We were headed south from Front Royal, VA. If I'm not mistaken our first night was spent at Peaks of the Otter Lodge. It was just starting to get dark when we arrived, without a reservation, but we were lucky enough to get a room. While Lee was inside checking on that, I notice a peculiar sight outside. There were several people walking around, looking down at their cell phones. I didn't understand

what they were doing until I attempted to call home. There were no cell signals, not on my service or Lee's. We ended up using a pay-phone in the basement of the lodge to check in with home. I'm sure technology has "fixed" this "hole" in coverage, but I'd like to go back and make sure of it in person.

This month we have John Rice's mountain trip and a favorite ride from Benoit Lepage.

Please enjoy and remember, send all of your contributions to apex@bluegrassbeemers.org.

For Sale

1996 BMW R1100RT



85000+ miles

Bike is in good condition.

Replaced the following at approximately 84000 miles:

Tires (Michelin PR3)

Oil change (engine and final drive)

Break fluid change

New air, fuel and oil filters

New starter

New front brake pads

New battery (Odyssey P680)

Recent trip to Blue Ridge Parkway without issues.

Roy Rowlett is familiar with the bike and can verify its condition.

Asking \$2100.00 or reasonable offer. Contact John Harder 859.684.4217

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**



The “Not exactly as planned” Trip

By John Rice

This was meant to be the traditional fall Blue Ridge trip for Brenda and me, one we do nearly every year at the end of the nominal “riding season” and at the time of the fall colors in the mountains. Up until last year, the journey had always been on two wheels, two up, but since the arrival of the third wheel option, it seems that the Sidecar Way will be the way of the future. This year, my recent medical inconveniences had placed any planning in the tenuous column. Thanks to the favors of our son, who drove the young folks to Birmingham Alabama to the Barber Vintage Festival, allowing me to ride there on the F700, I was able to test myself for a return to longer distance riding. It seemed to work pretty well, so the Fall Trip was on. Unfortunately, our tentative planning process pushed the start of the adventure to the end of October, peak leaf season, when approximately half of the population of North America and a few foreign countries had the same agenda.

In our youth, Brenda and I would set out at first daylight and ride a hundred miles before seeking a place for breakfast. Now, in our golden years, we get out a bit later. Our cold start occurred at the crack of 9:30, sending us down Route 15 to Whitesburg, for lunch at Pine Mountain Grille, located at the base of the mountains. We made it as far as Abington, VA the first night, always a good place to stop. The main attractions in Abington are the Virginia Creeper Trail, for hiking and bicycles, the Barter Theater, where plays of near-Broadway quality can be seen and “The Martha” (formerly the Martha Washington Inn), a

resort and spa for the well-heeled. Once, on a whim, I checked pricing there and found that the Senior Citizen rate for the cheapest room was \$259 per night, a bit out of our usual bike-trip range. With more reasonable accommodations secured, we found dinner at the Peppermill, in an old house right in the center of this old historic town, with excellent food in a most pleasant atmosphere.

As was to become the norm, the morning was cold with the sun angled low and in our faces as we started east, through Damascus, the tiny town at the junction of the Appalachian Trail and the Virginia Creeper Trail. Though hardly a wide spot, Damascus offers several adventure gear outfitters and five full-time bicycle shops along with a healthy dose of weird in keeping with the trail-folk clientele that support the place. A right at the fork on 58 takes us down 91 which follows a picture perfect creek for miles of wide, smooth curves, exactly as one visualizes an idyllic mountain motorcycle road. Near Boone, we picked up the Blue Ridge Parkway headed for Blowing Rock with a stop planned for Brenda to peruse the craft and art at the Moses Cone Center, but such was not to be. The parking lot was completely full with cars dribbling down the sides of the access road all the way out to the Parkway, our first inkling that perhaps we weren’t alone on this excursion. We moved on, the new rig showing itself to be marvelous on the Parkway, handling the curves at the speed limit of 45 mph as if it was made for exactly this use. There is no struggling on the long up-

hill sections and, with a bit of care, not much need for brakes on the endless bends.

Down in Blowing Rock, we got a tiny second floor room at the Hemlock Inn, just a block off Main Street and set out to wander the streets. The town was packed with tourists, sidewalks full, often requiring stepping out in the street to get around the knots of people at shop entrances. Fortunately there was a table free for lunch at the ever-reliable Six Pence Pub, with Scotch eggs for Brenda and bangers & mash for me (an excellent pairing with an Appala-

chian Brewing Black Bear Stout.). Unless I'm mistaken, these are "real bangers" the slightly mealy, drier sausages found in the British Isles, rather than the greasier, gristly US fare.

As has now become a sort of tradition, we walked up to the Hattery to peruse their enormous selection and bought hats, my fifth Tilley, Brenda's first. As with quality motorcycle gear, it's hard to go back to "regular" hats once you've worn a Tilley. They are, as the label proclaims, "made with Canadian pernickitiness" and guaranteed for life. Since I am one whose dome is more exposed to the elements than most, a good hat is a necessity.

A bright, clear morning beckoned us back up on the Parkway. We made another attempt at the Cone Manor Craft Center and found that many of the other tourists were still sleeping in, allowing us a spot. After a look-around, Brenda confided that she still wanted the necklace & earrings she had spotted on a previous visit over three years ago, so there was no way I'd let her leave without them. Besides, such things are more easily carried on a motorcycle than some of the larger items we have in the past tied to a luggage rack. Later, as we sat on the Manor porch looking out over the expanse of the valley, a fellow came over and asked us about our riding suits. Seems he thinking of getting a waterproof





riding outfit but couldn't decide if he wanted chaps instead, a dichotomy that doesn't seem to be logical, but maybe that's just me. Brenda told him she liked ours because "when other riders are under a bridge struggling into plastic suits or hiding from the rain, we just motor on by". He seemed puzzled by the idea, so I'm not sure we helped with his decision.

The cold began to dissipate as the sun made its way up the mountainside and we headed north, cruising along in the rig, the boxer twin purring smoothly as only they can, taking in the pine scented air, as the shafts of sunlight illuminated the border of needles along the pavements edge. Even here in the south, definite signs of fall were evident, with the reds and golds starting to show in the trees. The ground squirrels, tails high in the air, play

chicken with us and I let them win. For the most part, at this hour we have the road to ourselves. That may be due to our slower pace, since we can't really run up on anyone in front of us.

Nearing lunchtime, we stop for a break and browse at a general store and visitor's center, where the clerk recommends Freebornes' down at highway 18 and we take the suggestion. This intersection is where Jay and I ran into the "crazy lady" and her cohorts many years ago when we were still camping, a story for another time. Freeborne's is a motel and restaurant, catering to the motorcycle trade, as is the place across the street and the little restaurant just down the road, three places in less than 100 yards all dedicated to folks on two (or three) wheels. The food is surprisingly

good and the beer list (though I can't try anything today) is amazing, if they really have all that on offer. The place is full of guys and some women, nearly all dressed in the standard issue "biker" uniform of black or faded blue denim jeans, engineer boots, ball cap or captain's hat and some sort of decorated vest and/or black leather jacket. There is even a threesome at one table consisting of one "American" guy and two Japanese fellows, all in "uniform", speaking easily among themselves in both languages.

The husband assures me that if I'd just try the trike, I'd be converted. He tells us that now after he's got some experience with it, he can corner just as fast as or faster on the trike than he could on his two wheeler. I'm sure there are many reasons why we males have to put everything in such a competitive framework.

On Saturday morning, we return to a very crowded Parkway. While the road is clear for the most part at our sidecar pace, many of the other tourists are filling up the scenic pullover spots as we go by, making stopping a bit of a



The motorcycles out front are parked in a parade row, looking to my eyes alike, resplendent in chrome do-dads and what-nots, nearly all with some form of open pipes. Several of the riders are curious about the sidecar, with many of the women asking Brenda the usual question "how do you like riding in that thing?" She tells them she loves it and I can see some of them beginning a thought process that will lead to discussion over their dinner table tonight. One older couple tells us that they've given up riding on two wheels due to the husband's increasing frailty, a situation I can well understand, and have gone to a trike.

problem. When lunchtime approached, we couldn't get in at Mabry Mill, where the hostess told us the wait for a table would be 2 hours or more, or Morrisette Winery, down the road a mile or so where the same wait time was on offer. The parking lots were overflowing, looking more like a mall on Black Friday than a sleepy mountain resting place. By two o'clock, we found an available restaurant in Floyd for lunch and ended up sharing a table and talking with a pleasant couple near our age. They lived nearby, in a home overlooking the Parkway, and had arrived in a nice top-down Miata, but were interested in the sidecar

rig outside. The husband had taken up motor-cycling late in life for a “bucket list” western camping trip with a friend a few years ago. He bought a V-Strom 1000, made the trip and returned with some plans for other adventures, but as things happen, he sold the machine and shelved the plans. He said he had read about people going out to Utah and renting bikes for off road explorations, but opined “We’re not that kind of people”. There is a lot to unpack in that statement. Then the friend that shared the western trip was killed when a mower overturned on him while he was trimming the church lawn. The man’s widow wanted to get rid of the motorcycle the deceased had purchased for the western excursion, so now our lunch companion has a V-Strom 650 he hasn’t ridden since he bought it from the widow a year ago. He and his wife now travel by Airstream trailer, a bit different than motorcycle touring, even by sidecar. She tells us that since the Airstream was her idea, she went to get a vanity plate for it that read “Jane’s AS” but for some reason the clerk wouldn’t let her have it.

We ended the day outside of Roanoke, a bit short of where we thought we’d be by now. Dinner is at the “Old # 611”, next door to the motel, named after a local train, the best I can say about it is that we had a really pleasant waitress.

Sunday morning is chilly again on the Blue Ridge, but with almost no traffic. The further north we go the more vibrant the foliage colors become and the more the trees are shedding their clothing. It is peaceful up here, very quiet, with the outlines of the hills much more defined now by the carpet of fallen leaves that cover the underbrush and give a smooth layer upon which the shadows from the now-naked trees can display the latticework of sunlight. Perhaps because I’m getting hungry, it occurs to me that the fallen leaf carpet is exactly the

color of extra-crispy fried chicken. The reds vary from the deep crimson of a good Cabernet to the shocking bright red of arterial blood and every imaginable shade in between. The greens are faded now, like blanched vegetables, the golds and yellows everything from a newly ripe banana to that burnt orange crayon we all tried to find some good use for when we were kids. Passing vehicles keep most of the leaves off the blacktop, but more come with every moment, some even falling into the sidecar with Brenda. I don’t have to worry much about them as I do on a two-wheeler.

The mid-morning pastry stop was at Peaks of Otter Lodge, an old stone structure that looks inside and out, just as you would want a Blue Ridge lodge to look. Like everything else this time, though, it is crowded with other folks looking for that experience, though that didn’t prevent us from filling our bellies with good things. We stopped in the gift shop on the way out to get some batteries and spotted the t-shirt that some marketing person thought would present this lodge’s image to the world. Perhaps that meeting didn’t last quite long enough, or wasn’t attended by the necessary people. “POO” is in fact the acronym for Peaks of Otter, but perhaps not what its guests want to wear on their chests. The clerk said, with a wry expression, that it wasn’t selling well.

Up the road a few miles from the bustle of tourist activity, we make a stop at a pullover and I walk into the woods. I’m alone in the forest, only about 50 feet from the Parkway, but completely in my own world, devoid of any noise except for the occasional leaf falling down to join its summer comrades.

The curves on this flatter, northern part of the Parkway are mostly gentle with some less so, but the rig sails along between 40 and 45 mph, not needing brakes, just a bit on and off the throttle in third and fourth gears. The boxer

engine doesn't strain not even a little. It, like us, is perfectly at home here.

The Parkway ends and the Skyway begins, without any real break, at Rockfish Gap, Virginia. We mosey over to Staunton, a few miles west, to visit Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant and to tour a local Museum. Mrs. Rowe's is

famous for its pastries so we stopped in for an afternoon snack. The special was the apple dumpling and the server told me there was only one left. I took it and then probably should have felt guilty as I heard her tell the next table that they were sold out. I didn't. It was excellent, golden brown and flakey on the

outside, hot, sweet, cinnamon, apple and caramel on the inside, with vanilla ice cream on the side.

Just down the road we toured the Museum of Frontier Culture, which includes a large plot of land where old farmhouses and their accoutrements from the 18th and 19th century are preserved. We live in a mid-19th century farmhouse and there is an unrestored example here of an 1850's farmhouse that definitely echoes our own in design and function. In one of the houses a young



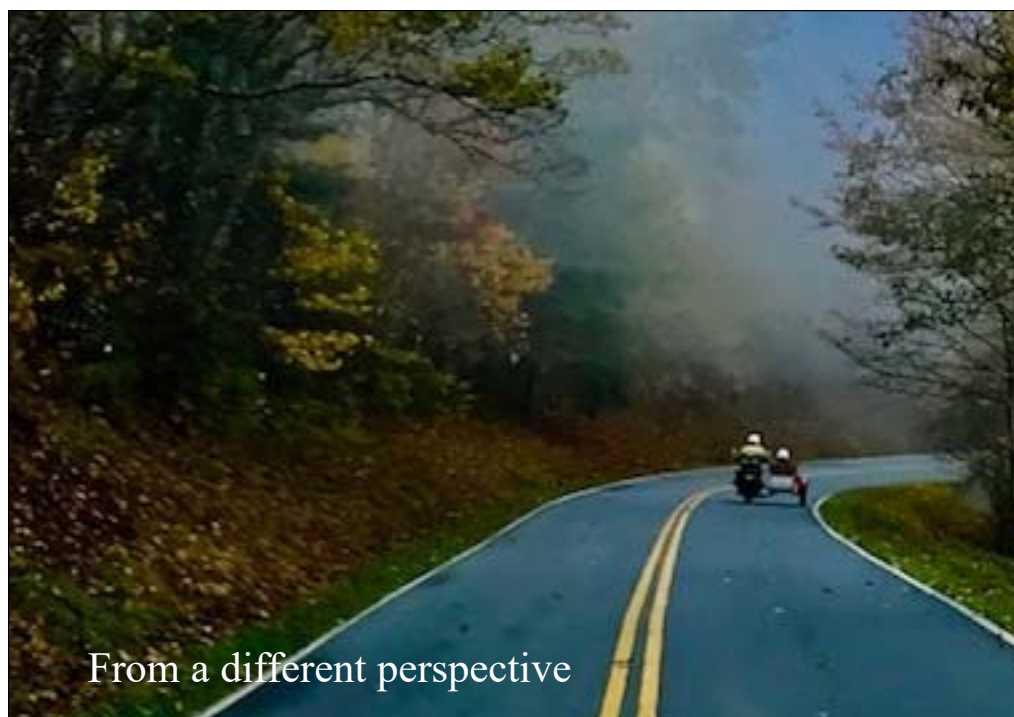


woman who has chosen a career in archeology, was employed answering questions about the architecture and customs of that time.

Brenda had been interested in archeology in her youth, (and now has her very own old fossil for a husband) but such was not really that

much of a viable option for making a living back when we were students. Now that there are places such as this, more opportunities abound.

We stayed the night in Staunton VA, at the Best Western Inn, next to Mrs. Rowe's so that further pastry options could be explored at supper and again for breakfast. The only available room was "on the railroad track side", but the clerk said that trains came by "only occasionally". What she



From a different perspective

didn't say was that it seemed they came through the room.

After a long roundabout, way back to the entrance (not "lost" but rather I prefer the term "casual navigation") we got on the Skyline at about 11 the next day, using our Golden Age passes to skip the \$25 fee. We fell in behind a large motor home for a while, but it pulled over and allowed us to pass. A bit farther up, we ducked into an overlook for the scenery and the motor home soon joined us. The smiling older woman behind the wheel, about our age, leaned out and said, "Would you like to see yourselves from my perspective?" She

road winding tunnel-like beneath a canopy of brilliant leaves. From overlooks one can see the Great Valley that extends from Virginia down to Alabama between mountain ranges, a geological feature too large to contemplate except perhaps from up here. Higher up, the fog got thicker and more frequent with the valley now obscured. At one point we were encased in the tree tunnel, headed for what Brenda described as "The Hole in the Universe" looking like the road went into some other dimension through a white curtain at the end of a tube. Lots of cars & trucks without lights came looming out of the mist, scaring me a bit,



Skyline Drive

showed me several photos of us on her iPhone and took my email address to send them to me. Back on the Skyway it was cold with patchy fog, but still picture-perfect with the

since I didn't know when one of those would show up in front of the rig, going our way. We stopped at Skyland Lodge for lunch (excellent salads and a delicious cup of "she crab" soup,



The Great Valley as seen
from Skyline Drive





with one of the best apple pies I can recall having in a restaurant). The storm we were expecting was predicted to arrive after 7 PM, but when we went out to the bike, after lunch, a hard rain was well underway and the fog had settled in for the long haul. We made it about a quarter mile down the Skyline when we decided to turn back. The storm was kicking up wind, driving rain behind the face shield, fog was impenetrable and people trying to get off the mountain were driving too fast in the whiteout, again often without lights. We turned around and got a room at the lodge, in one of the cabins down in the woods. The lodge thoughtfully provided shuttle service back up to the lodge for dinner, where lots of other “stranded” folks were crowding the dining room.

At 4:30 the next morning the sky was clear and the valley far below our room revealed the city lights spread out across the expanse. Though I often like to take a pre-dawn walk, I knew we were in a cabin down in the woods

with bears here getting fattened up for hibernation. Though I very much like and admire bears, I would rather not participate in their preparations. As the light strengthened, I could see that the trees, much to my surprise had leaves remaining. From the violence of the wind and rain last night, I thought they would be bare. After breakfast at the lodge, we headed north for our now- abbreviated Skyline trip, just to get to RT. 211. Previous obligations gave us a schedule for returning home and the storm had taken a day out of the remaining time, so the rest of the Skyline would have to be saved for another trip. The pavement now was covered in places by wet, colored leaves and I could feel the front tire skipping and sliding making me grateful for the third wheel. Fog or clouds, hard to tell which at this altitude, cover the valleys below in some places with others being brilliantly clear, displaying the “bowl of Trix” phenomenon where the entire scene is an undulating

wooly carpet of red, gold, yellow and orange balls.

All too soon we hit 211 and headed down to “civilization “. On past trips on the Blue Ridge, I have referred to this as “returning reluctantly to the real world” but now I think I was wrong (not about the reluctance part). Up there on the ridge top is closer to “real” than anything down here. Up there, except for the so called improvements of blacktop that allow me to travel so easily in this rugged place, life has a more genuine quality. The animals and birds go about their business, that of all creatures of any species, the birthing, feeding, fighting for mates and food and territory and starting it all over again, season by season, not much differently than they have from the beginnings of this very old mountain

selves into their domain. Down here in the Great Valley, the flatlands, all is artifice, the selling of objects and conveniences to each other and the getting on with the same business that the critters in the woods must do, but with many layers of human complication, deception and greed laid thickly on top.

We headed south on Route 42, a gently winding two lane that traverses a long valley through Virginia down to intersect with Rt. 60, one of the old roads in this area and one I have travelled many times. It, like everything that ages, has changed over time and in fact it has disappeared in places, merged kicking and screaming with the ubiquitous interstate system that makes every exit the same across the country.

We stopped on Rt. 60 at Clifton Forge, VA, a

town that both of us have some memory of being significant, but neither can recall why. There is a local artist's outlet here worth visiting if one enjoys



A rare photo of Brenda without a helmet on

range. They adapt to the presence of we strange creatures, but don't really pay us too much attention except when we force our-

the expressive side of life. Lunch was at a nice downtown deli, with dessert a few steps down the street at “the Tiny Italian” bakery, where

Brenda found a gluten free muffin she really liked and I found pie. The proprietors of the bakery are not Italian, nor particularly tiny. She is South African, from the big city of Durban, with a prominent accent of that region and he is a local boy who successfully wooed her to this small rural town when she was in this country for a work experience. The name of the shop comes from her nickname as a child. Both of her grandfathers were Italian and she was the shortest in the family, hence the title.

Route 60 turns out to be a difficult road to stay in a relationship with, as it frequently morphs into I-64 without warning. We try to get off the four lane but find ourselves lost

quickly and headed north. A return to town reveals that 60 has, unannounced, slipped back into Interstate mode with no escape for two-lane preferring sidecarists. It finally makes an irrevocable split and heads west, twisting around the hills that the interstate didn't have the fortitude to buck. We stop at Hawk's Nest state park for a pastry break, only to find that the lodge restaurant is on reduced hours due to some much needed maintenance and no pie is available. The view down the gorge to the river makes up for it ...but only a little.

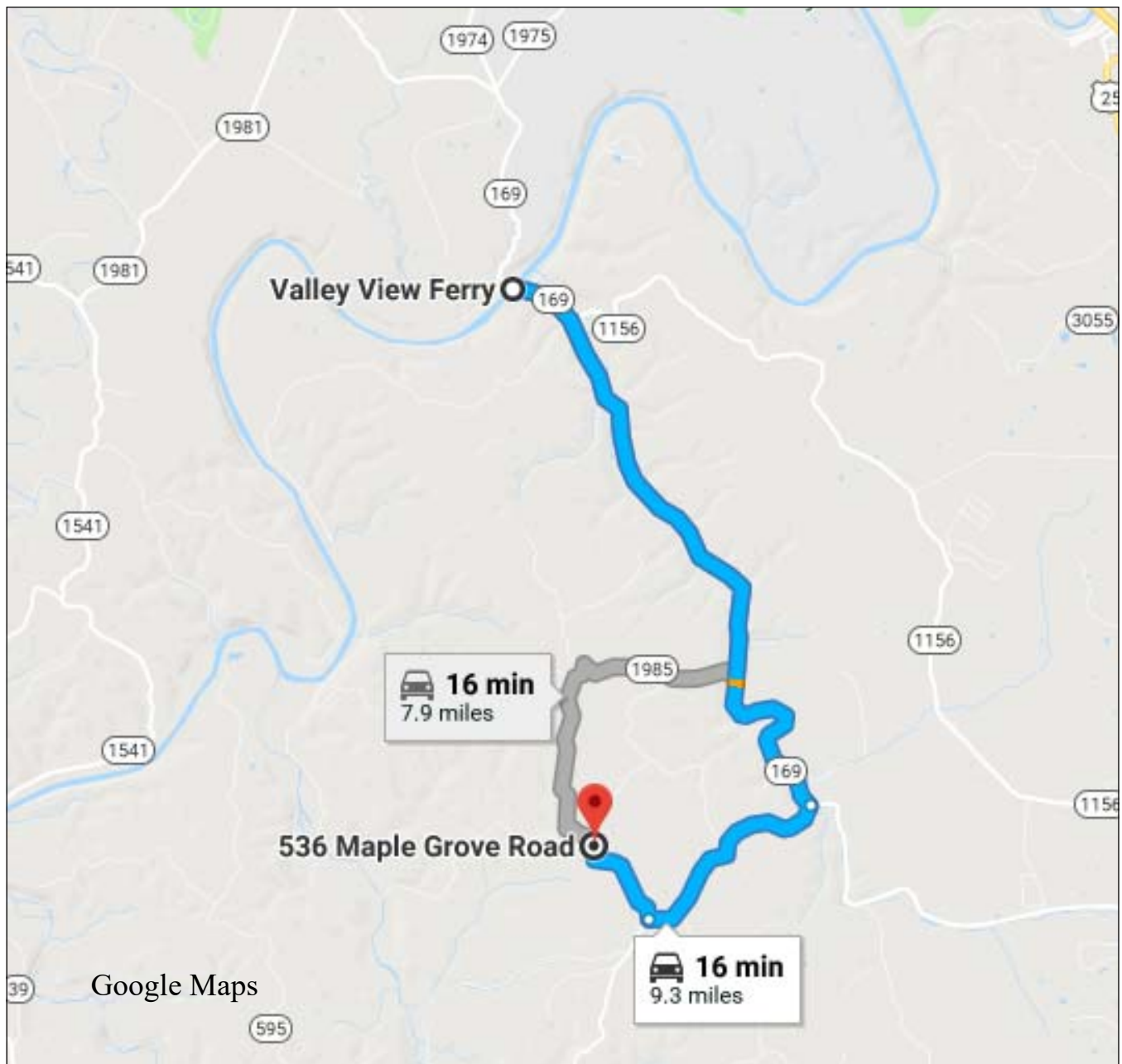
We find lodging at Lewisburg, WV, which bills itself as the "coolest little town in America" for the evening. As old folks, we can't verify hipness, but it definitely is cold.

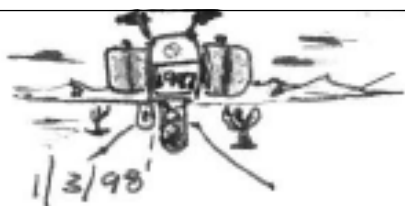
One last stop at Root a Bakers bakery on the way home and we arrive in our driveway at the same time as Rebecca, the marvelous pet-carer who makes these trips possible, has come to tend to Diana. She is accompanied by her young son and he has to try out the rig. He is perhaps a bit short of reaching the controls at this point, but we may have made a convert.



Favorite Rides—Benoit Lepage

This is one of my favorite 1 gallon ride in Madison county. The detour that makes me back from work 25 Miles. For your convenience, I joined the directions from Valley View ferry. When you get at destination, you can stop (*moderate slope*) & look at the scenery on your left.





BREEZY & MILD

* AVERAGE ATTENDANCE
FOR BREAKFAST IN 199720.2AVERAGE RIDING = 9.1

GIVE US A CHEER, IT'S A BRAND NEW YEAR,
GET OUT YOUR CASH AND STOP BROWSIN',
YOU'VE JUST GOT ONE MORE TO SETTLE THE SCORE,
THE COMPUTERS ALL QUIT IN TWO-THOUSAND...



Here's the group for today:

- * 1). Jim Brandon
- * 2). Phillip Baugh
- * 3). Gary "Jose" Hedger
- * 4). Ryan King
- * 5). Rablin Carter
- * 6). Randy Klineet
- * 7). James Street
- * 8). Boone Sutherland
- * 9). Chris Warner
- * 10). Joe Bark
- 11). Chester Martin
- 12). Mike Gill
- 13). Roy Rowlett
- * 14). John Rice
- * 15). Ben Pruitt (on the "new" R100RT-F192)
- * 16). Mary Beard
- * 17). Mitch Butler
- 18). Mike DeWeese
- 19). Bill Vass
- * 20). Paul Elwyn
- * 21). Mark Rense

Boone

- 22). Steve Bishop
- 23). Randy Scott
- * 24). Bob Goes
- 25). Russell Travis

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



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
Revolutionary Ride By Lois Pryce
How to Drive a Sidecar Rig by David Hough