

October 2018

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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

**Lee Thompson at Crested Butte**





2018 Vintage Days @ Mid-Ohio  
Indian Racer hand shifting out of the curve

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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.**

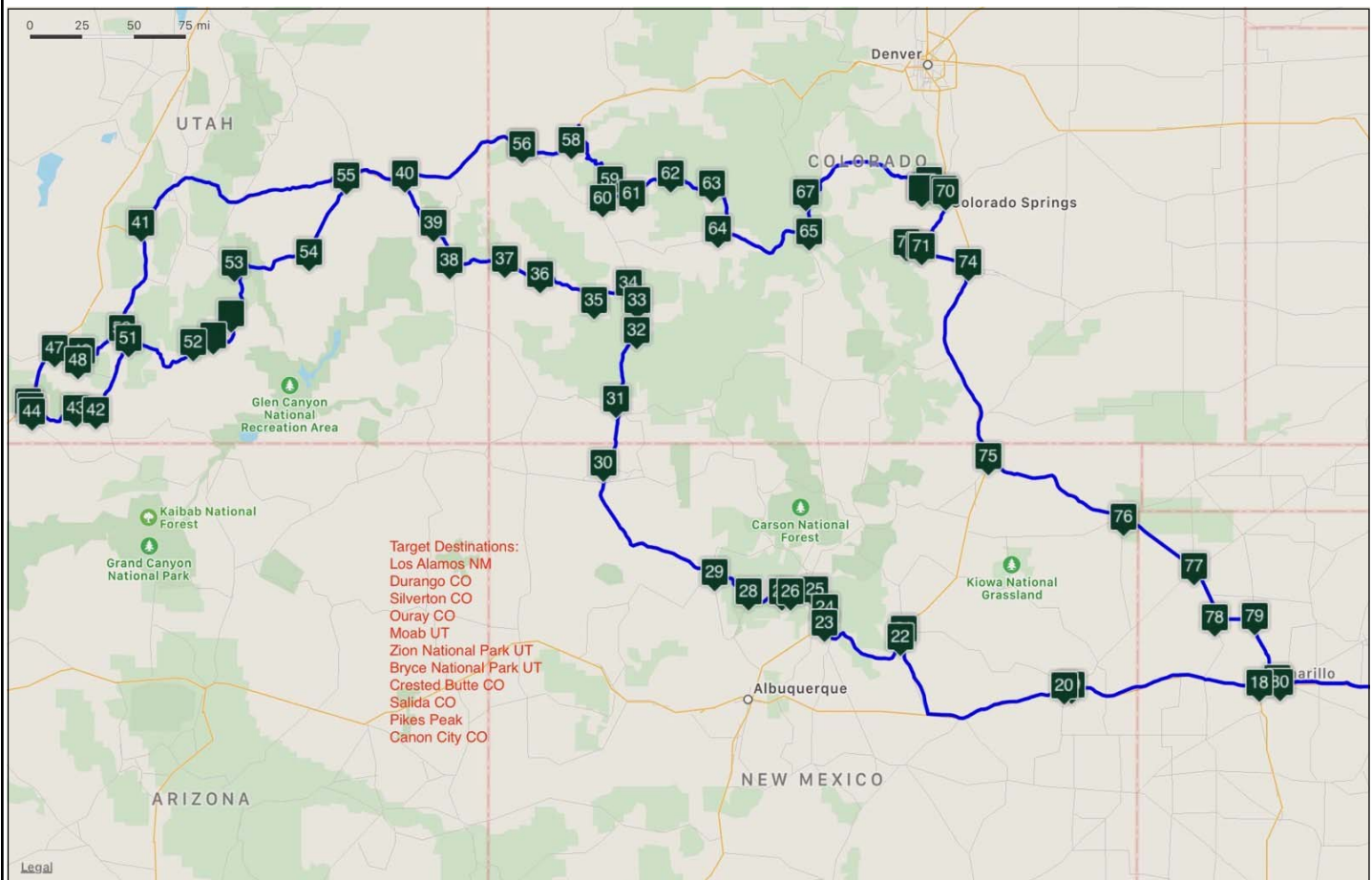
**BMW Club**  
**Bluegrass Beemers**



# Go West

By Lee Thompson

My riding buddy Don Wilson and I made another trip out west in September. The “Go West 2018” version was our best; Nine States, Twelve Days, 4,775 miles, just under 400 miles average per day. This year, we decided to hit the slab and get there so we could spend our time on the good roads. We developed a large loop route for Northern New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. I am sharing a few pictures and our bucket list, maybe I can provide additional details next month. Again, this was by far our best trip and we have ridden together since we were barely teenagers.

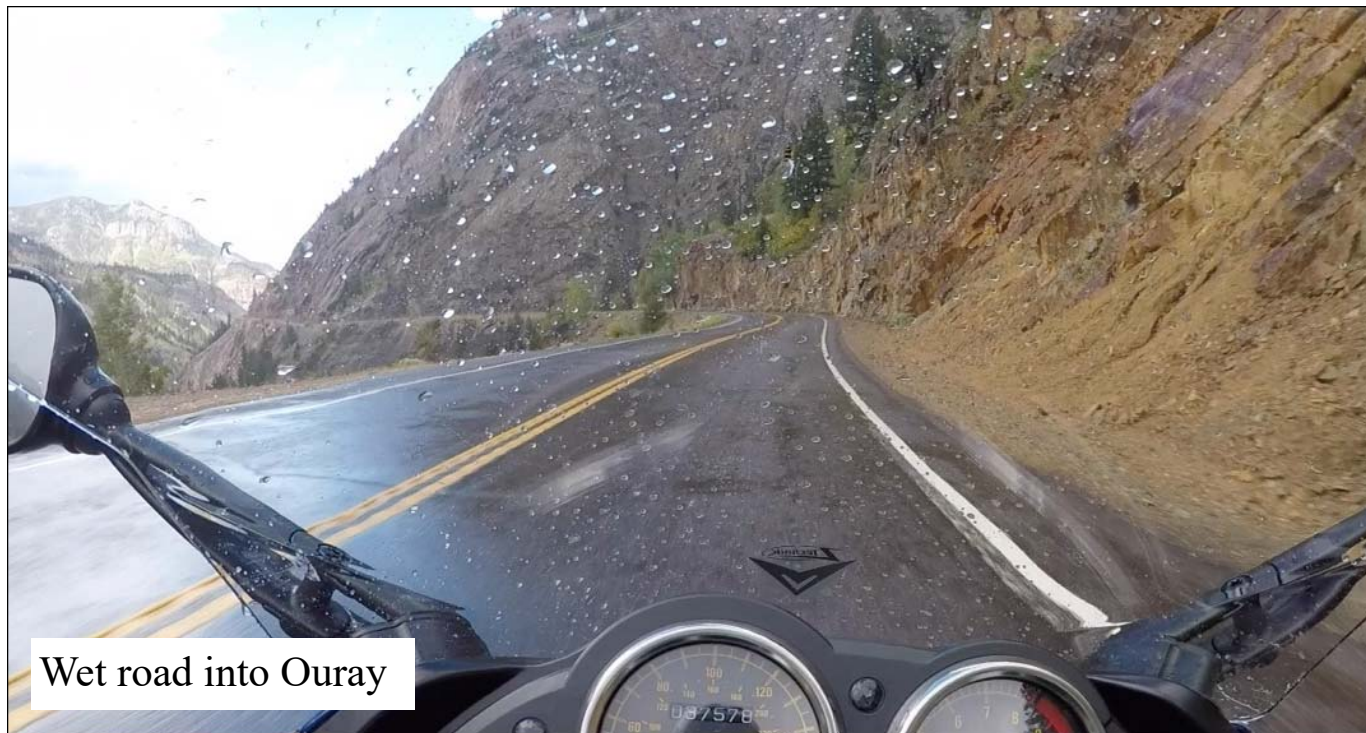


## Here is our bucket list for points of interest:

1. Blue Swallows Motel in Tucumcari, NM. Located on old US Route 66. This was a John Rice recommendation, due to timing we didn't get to actually stay there but stopped and met the owners who lived in Georgetown before buying the motel.



2. Los Alamos, NM. One of the sites selected for the Manhattan Project.
3. Highway 550 from Cuba, New Mexico to Durango, Silverton, Ouray, and Ridgeway, Colorado.



4. San Juan Skyway from Ridgeway, Co. west toward Moab, UT.
5. Zion National Park. Great ride through the tunnel and then an awesome unforgettable exit from the tunnel with the view of the canyon.



6. Cedar Breaks National Monument. What a great start to our day, elevating to



11,000 ft and fall colors just starting.

7. Bryce National Park. Only road through the edge but would do it again and add some.

8. Scenic Utah 12. Most interesting to me through canyons, flatlands, and ridges including Hogback section with no guard rails and drop-offs on both sides!



9. Crested Butte, CO. Really known for skiing, we took the west route in on county road 12. Shortly after our ascent, we discovered it was mostly gravel for 30+ miles. No problem for our street bikes (R1100S Boxercup and R1100RT). We





both grew up in Mississippi and as I have said “didn’t know any better” so rode gravel daily on street bikes. Don actually lived on a gravel road! Also a road with no guard rails, this added a little adventure to our day, especially when meeting speeding SUV’s in the curves.

10. Pikes Peak. A must ride if you are close or a destination. Last time there I drove up in car and developed altitude sickness. This time better preparation and advice from an experienced climber who ironically was a native Kentuckian and friend of Paul Elwyn's. We met Frank and Sandra Burberry from Danville during a fuel stop shortly before our ride up to the peak. His advice was to use extreme hydration, so I drank four bottles just before our ascent and had no issues this time.



Half way up  
Pike’s Peak



Made it!

Pike’s Peak

# To the Badger and Beyond

By John Rice

Jay went to the BMWMOA rally in Iowa this year and on the way home, decided to pick up the remaining two states of the lower 48 that he hadn't ridden in. After meandering through Nebraska and North Dakota, he called me and asked if I'd like to meet him in Manitowoc Wisconsin for another ride on the Badger ferry across Lake Michigan. How could I not?

I left early the next morning up the excellent curves of Rt. 421 to Madison and then into the increasing heat across the flat prairie of Indiana, ending my day looking for a room in the industrial region south of Chicago. I found one at the Joliet Bar & Grille Inn in the heart of Blues Brothers territory. This motel once had been a major chain place in its youth, but now was on perhaps its third or fourth owner and at the seedy end of its tenure, probably less than ten years from becoming an empty lot along the highway. The rooms had little patios outside the sliding glass doors and I parked the F700 there where I could keep an eye on it. The "Grille" part was in the same building and offered a menu consisting of double cheeseburgers, your choice of with or without bacon. Their beer selection was "both kinds, Bud and Bud Lite" though the bartender did find for me a single warm bottle of Guinness

that someone had inexplicably left behind. She was a tall Amy Schumer look-alike, wearing a t-shirt that proclaimed, "It's My Job to Serve Your Ass, Not To Kiss It @ Joe's Bar". The television over the bar ran a NASCAR race but loud country rock drowned out the cars speeding around the track. I had ordered my cheeseburger "with", but it had arrived "without" and I figured the bartender just hadn't heard me over the din. Then the cook appeared, apologetic that he had failed to see the notation on the order, and presented me with a huge plate of bacon, crispy and delicious, glistening with oil. Heartburn assured, I finished my meal and went to bed.

Since the Grille didn't serve cheeseburger breakfasts, in the morning I went to the next town down the road, Shorewood, and found the Crispy Waffle restaurant. The contrast was amazing, just a mile or two from the decline and industrial noise of Joliet, this town was like the beginning of a movie in which the director wants the audience to know that the characters live lives of privilege and comfort. The perfectly cooked waffles were excellent, as emblematic of this place as the sketchy burgers last night had been of theirs.

Continuing north, I chose a route that took me into farmland far west of the ur-



ban sprawl. I could see the varied skyline of Chicago off to my right as I pottered through one small town after another. Those folks in the concrete canyons to the east have little contact with this life here where much of their food comes from and the residents of these two different worlds each probably think that the others are crazy for living there.

By lunch I had arrived at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, a place Jay and I had visited a few decades ago when he was stationed in Chicago. The lake is beautiful, a postcard of tranquility and The Good Life, with boats costing many times more than my house casually moored at

the docks and automobiles not much less expensive prowling the streets. The shore is lined with restaurants and I selected one with outside seating so I could observe the comings and goings. I had a running narrative supplied by the magazine-ad-looking couple at the next table who critiqued the cars and their occupants that passed by our spot. Their repartee was witty and cutting enough to have been scripted.

I met Jay that evening at the Harbortown Inn in Manitowoc. We walked over to a restaurant where the young bartender, seeing Jay's BMW hat, shared with us that he rode sport bikes and was



Lake Geneva



planning to move to northern California for greater opportunities to ride curvy roads, there not being much of that on offer here in the Midwest. We gave him some road suggestions from our times out there and as we left, he opined that he had enjoyed talking with “real bikers, not costumed posers”. Not sure exactly what he meant, but we took it as a compliment.

In the morning we met a woman in the motel parking lot, packing up her red and white Harley Panhead for the ferry crossing. She and about 120 other members of a Panhead club were on a ride,

called the “Panhead-demonium” to a vintage event in Michigan. Her bike was not garage art, but looked properly oily and well used. She did tell us that while she rode it frequently she couldn’t actually start it herself, not being heavy enough to move the bicycle-style pedal down against compression to turn it over. She traveled with a male companion who provided that service.

Our departure time on the Badger wasn’t until after noon, so we took the opportunity to explore the Maritime Museum and the WW II submarine moored there. During the war, submarines were built here in Manitowoc though this particular one, the USS Cobia, was not. We learned that subs had a high mortality rate in the war and working examples were hard to come by.

On film, submarines seem to have enough space inside for the characters’ drama to play out with camera angles allowing for long shots of men gathered over charts or around the periscope searching for the enemy. The reality is quite different. Our guide told us that the ship was designed like a “hot dog in a bun” with the large bun being the water tanks for ballast and the much smaller wiener being the tube in which everything else, including the crew, must fit. In that space, everything is crammed with machinery, so much so that it was



USS Cobia



impossible to focus on any one thing long enough to see where it connected to others. What little room is left is in a narrow corridor, which I had to turn sideways to navigate, ducking my head and Groucho-walking to get through. The doors between compartments would have challenged a flexible Hobbit. In the engine room while the Diesel engines labored to keep this thing moving, the temperatures stayed in the 120 degree range and the noise required the workers there to communicate by sign language. There are two torpedo rooms, one at each end, with the huge deadly “fish” stacked on racks ready to be pushed down rollers to the tubes. Each weighs over 300 pounds and they had to come into the sub down through a hatch barely big enough for their circumference. I could not imagine being the poor sailor at the bottom who had to receive and maneuver them into their perch.

Eighty men occupied this boat when it was at sea and they worked in three shifts, sharing the tiny beds, in serial order. Our guide said that a submariner never got into a bed that wasn't warm from someone else who just left it. Only the captain had his own. The Achilles Heel of these early submarines was air, limiting its dives to only a few hours after which it had to get to the surface so the crew could breathe. That said, there were ashtrays everywhere for the cigarettes that nearly everyone on-board in those days smoked. Now in these modern times, it is hard to believe

that when air was at such a premium, smoking was common. Despite the cramped conditions and high mortality, sailors were attracted to submarine duty by the food, said to be the “best in the service”.

In 1980, Jay and I came to Manitowoc on our first long bike trip together, him on a Harley Sportster and me on the Suzuki 500 two stroke, not really having much of a plan for how it would go, and we boarded this same ferry for the crossing. We were joined then by a few motorcycles, including a “world traveler” on his Moto Guzzi that we helped to push start since the starter had given up long ago in some other country and he just hadn't bothered to fix it. Today, 38 years later, there were about a hundred motorcycles, mostly antique Harleys including three or four sidecar rigs, and the cacophony of open pipes was both deafening and invigorating. The bikes board first, taking their spaces along the walls and tying down as best they can, then as we leave the usual pack of cars and trucks are jammed in like puzzle pieces by the port employees who do this amazing feat every day.

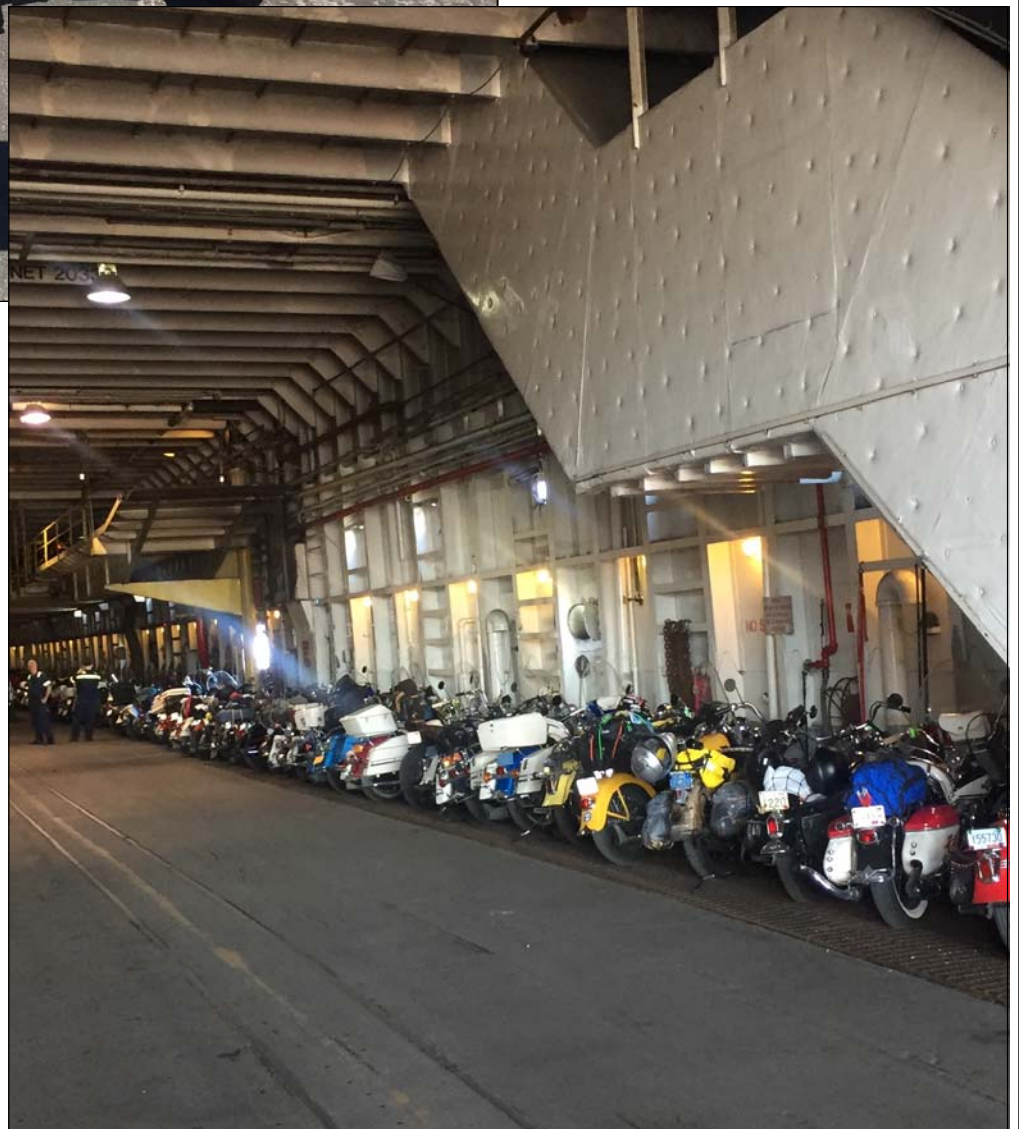
With clear blue skies and unusually warm weather, the decks were crowded with folks looking for some sun exposure, many piling their biker gear beside the lounge chairs and turning their faces up to the glow. Inside we wandered the halls, which on previous journeys we had thought to be narrow. Now after touring the Cobia, it seemed positively



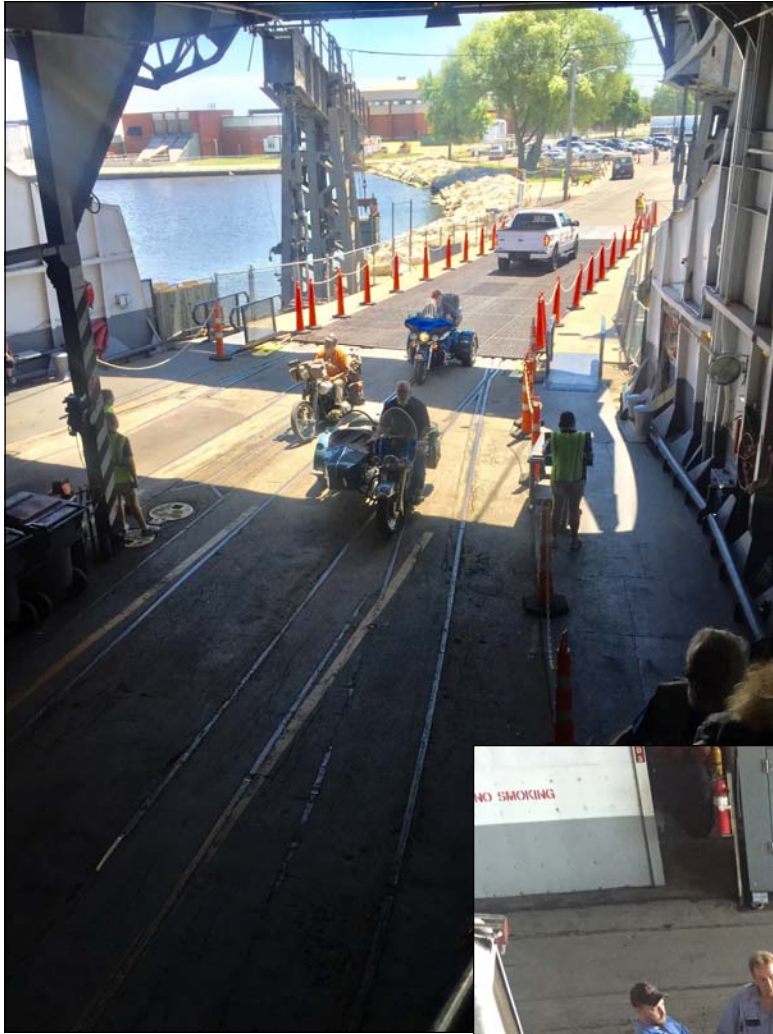


Waiting to Board

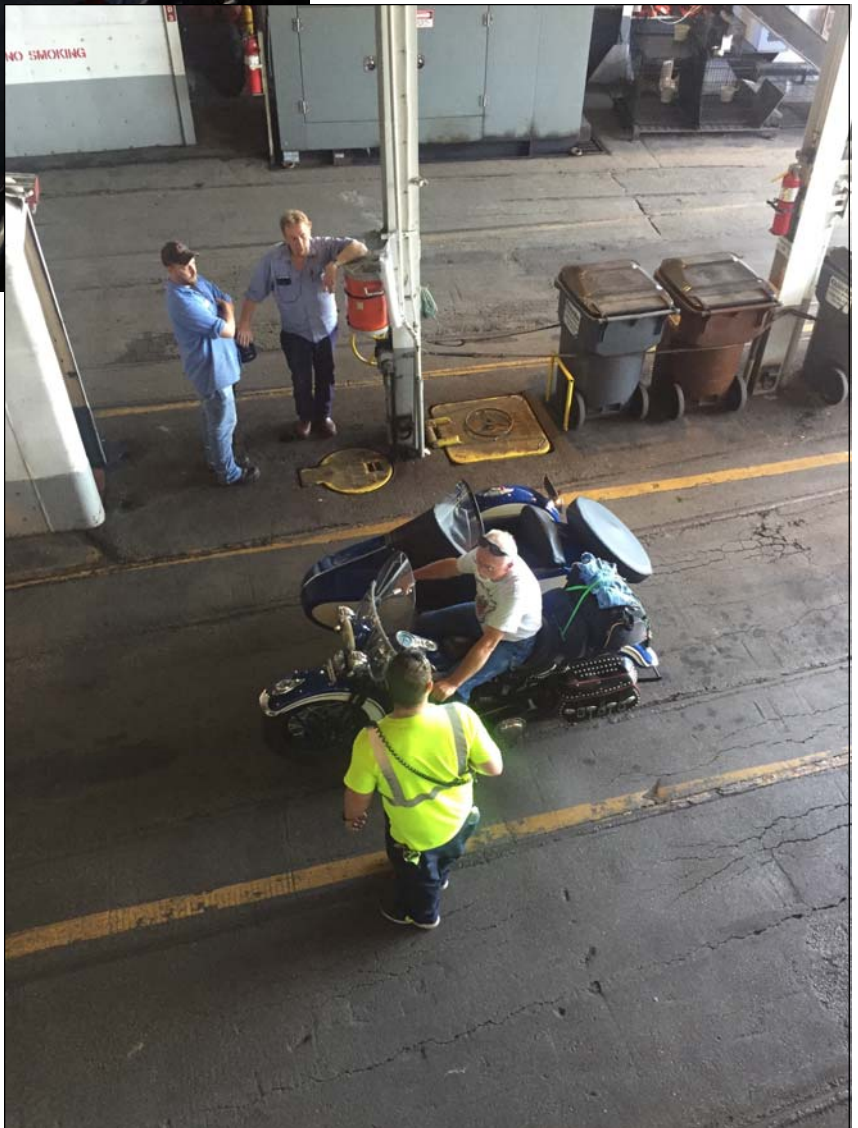
Stacking the  
motorcycles on  
the Badger







Boarding



Sidecar rig



Badger Life!

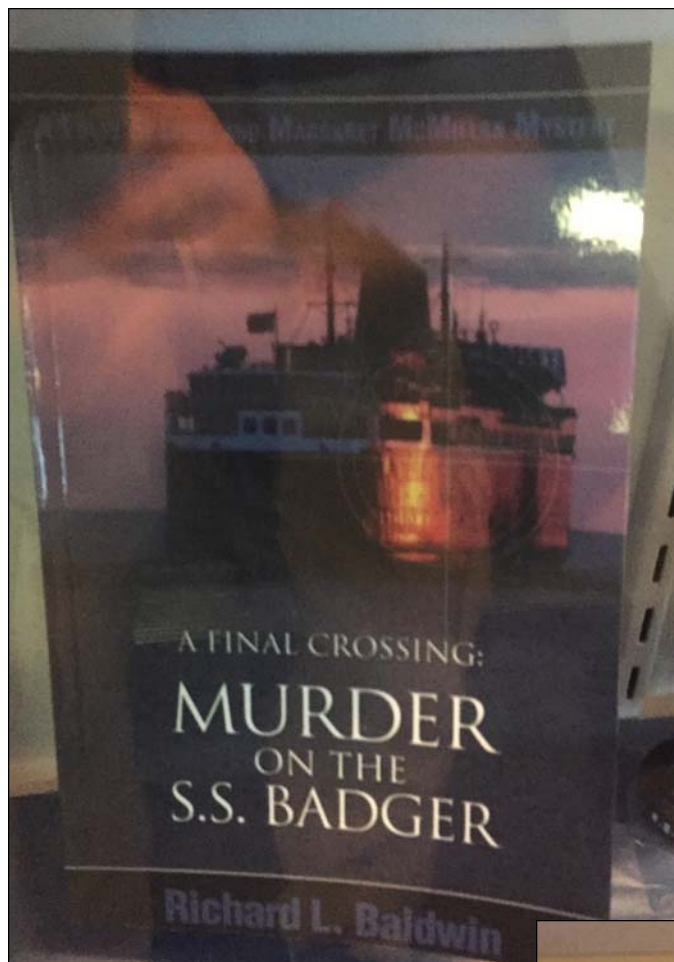


On the Deck





expansive. In the gift shop I learned that the ship had once been the setting for a murder mystery, which I bought to read, hoping that we weren't going to be in the sequel.



There is, even for those of us not inclined to be sailors, something hypnotic about watching from the high deck as this huge ferry moves inexorably through open water, out of sight of land. Standing at the rail near the back watching the prop wake and seeing the dark plume of smoke and ash pouring from the stack of this, the last surviving coal fired ferry on the Great Lakes,

one can begin to imagine the experience of a transatlantic crossing on one of the grand ships "back in the day".

Land appears as a thin gray line on the horizon and soon we are coming in to the dock in Ludington. We can see the immense sand dunes along the shore, sand that once was rock, worn down by water and wind to particles, eventually to be dust spread by the wind to become sediment somewhere else, eventually back to rock and start over. We passed endless fields of corn and soy, on glacially flattened land, still rising slowly from the weight of mile-thick ice sheets ten thousand years ago. The retreating glaciers left behind this lake and its Great companions. Different time scales, the seasonal plants, growing and dying in a short summer, the lake here for all recorded time, the rocks ground down to sand over millennia and we hu-



mans here for less than 100 years each, thinking we are all that matters.

Off the boat at 7, into Ludington, like we did in 1980. Then we were green travelers not knowing where to go or what to do, cruising through town in the fading light and heading on out of town, looking for a campsite, settling on one up in a field with a million mosquitoes. We have been here a few times since, so tonight we found a room at a nice little motel near downtown and we knew where to locate good food and beer. We walked down to the Mitten Pub, which had a fine nitro stout on draft and excellent salads for dinner, served by the tall skinny bartender, with a ring in her nose and several tattoos. She was too busy for much conversation.

Tuesday morning we got out early to breakfast at Brenda's Harbor Cafe. We met our waitress's father who had arrived for a visit on his 48 Panhead, having hooked up with our Panhead-demoniam ferry companions the night before. He had purchased this bike on his return from Vietnam in the late 60's and it has been his only ride. He talked about rebuilding the engine and transmission multiple times like a parent discussing life stages of a child. He is a year younger than me, but looks, I hope, much older. We watched him crank it up and leave, bouncing on the sprung seat, springer front end and hardtail. A very busy rider. He was headed across the state to visit his other daughter, wearing only a T-shirt, skull cap helmet,

jeans and engineer boots. It was 70 degrees, but he had to be cold at speed.

We rode across the wooded prairie of Michigan, passing an endless series of bars and convenience stores. In the small fishing town of Baldwin, there was a banner strung across the main street advertising the coming Troutarama Festival. There were lots of fishing camps and yards decorated with iron and ceramic deer but no evidence of real deer. I imagine that road kill doesn't stay long. "Yep, I hunted down this 12 pointer myself. Never you mind them tire tracks".

By afternoon we had made it into Indiana and stopped for a snack and a bit of air conditioning at a Main Street cafe where we met a guy with a 1975 Honda 750 four, customized into a semi cafe racer. Obviously proud of his work, he gave us the whole, long story, seemingly in real time, of how he acquired it, who had owned it before and each iteration it had become over his term of ownership. He intends to donate it to a museum eventually, not being able to bear the thought of some subsequent owner undoing his handiwork. It was a very nicely done machine and his pride was justified. We heard it run, smooth and growly, but not obnoxious.

There were no rooms left in Bowling Green, Ohio, so on up to Perrysburg near Toledo. Our forgettable motel there was near a Frickers restaurant, with lots of Frickin, items on the menu. It did have Edmund Fitzgerald Porter on draft,



which is a good thing except for getting that song stuck in my head again.

The next day we put together a long series of midwestern straight roads, weaving together a diagonal route across northern Ohio. By lunchtime we had reached the beginning of the Good Stuff, the foothills that populate that southeastern quadrant where the glaciers didn't reach. In Mt. Vernon we found Ferrari's bakery with deli sandwiches and a wonderful cinnamon cream pastry and then a flaky golden cream horn to finish off the sugar rush. I will have to come back to this place. We set our sights on

know that the dealership would be closed before we could make another visit. By then the sun was getting low, so we found a place at Knight's Inn in Athens, and after a long search for a glove which went AWOL between the parking lot and our room, (it had crawled under one of the beds to hide) walked out for dinner at the nearby Shades. Our young waitress was in her last year at Ohio U, studying hospital administration, an excellent prospect for a future in our rapidly aging society. We hope she has a high tolerance for bureaucracy and frustration, but dealing

with customers at a restaurant is good training.

The mandatory breakfast stop in Athens is the Village Bakery, a wonderful local place with interesting and always tasty baked goods. Their granola and yogurt bowl is more than enough to hold one until lunch, but I added a cinnamon twist just to make sure. A short distance from town is



Athens and stopped in at Holts, the exemplary BMW dealership and passed a pleasant hour or so talking with Marvin about all things motorcycle. We didn't

the beginning of Route 555, the "Triple Nickel", a road once named by Road & Track magazine as one of the top 10 driving roads in the US. We had taken

this route a few times in the past and wanted to hit it again while we were here. It does have endless curves, many of which are just over the crest of a blind hill with no reliable indicators as to what direction they might go on the other side. “Exciting” is one description, “occasionally terrifying” is another.

Whether the cause is too many powerful sports cars, bad winters, lack of highway funding or all of the above, the Triple Nickel has deteriorated quite a bit in the last few years leaving long stretches of badly broken up pavement and a lot of gravel in places you really, really don’t want it to be. We were glad to have done it again, and just as glad it was over. At one uphill curve, Bambi and I scared each other out of our respective wits. I saw him just as he broke cover right beside the road, and came across in front of me, small antlers, big eyes, trying desperately to pick up speed, looking at me and realizing in his panic that this may have been a mistake. I was on the brakes, doing the same survival calculations as he was and somehow it all worked out with him making it to the other side and me still upright, both of us with heart rates at redline. A bit later, as we were passing a field, an Amish girl suddenly stood up from behind her crops to watch us pass. The unexpected movement in my peripheral vision caused another stab at the binders and a swerve, which I’m sure, left her wondering what the heck these strange folks on these machines were doing.

Marvin had recommended that we stop in at the Lafayette Hotel in Marietta for lunch, so we took his advice. It is an impressive old place, a turn of the last century hotel on the Ohio River with much of its grandeur still intact. The “Gun Room” restaurant didn’t open until dinner so we ate in the period-correct bar overlooking the river. Seeing our helmets and gear, our young waiter says he is a biker too, having now a Softtail Classic, then advises us to take Rt 7 back to Athens and “just roll”. Stay away from route 550, he says, it has “too many curves”. Different strokes, I suppose. Rt 550 entertained us for an hour, good pavement, following ridge-lines, broad sweepers that gave us some lean angle without much drama. And no deer. Rt. 56 offered more of the same into Chillicothe, where we found a room just a short distance from where Brenda and Jay lived for a few years in their youth.

Friday morning the rain was moving in fast. Under threatening skies we made it to Peebles, and then the threats became real. As quickly as a scene changes in a movie, the sky went dark and we were in high winds scooting our bikes across the road, with rain so torrential that vision was down to a few feet. At one point I lost sight of Jay’s light in my mirror and turned around, fearing that he had been blown into a ditch. As I backtracked, I realized that in the downpour I probably couldn’t see him if he was. Fortunately he had just pulled over to reposition his



wallet into what he hoped was a dryer pocket (it wasn't). Proceeding slowly, hands light on the bars, toes on pegs, we wended our way south, in and out of storm until it abated somewhat at the river. (One of the many wonderful things about motorcycling, counterintuitive though it may be to the uninitiated, is the opportunity it offers to be uncomfortable, out of the cocoon of safety in which we usually exist in modern society. It isn't a "death wish" or in any way "bravery", but merely the chance to experience the other side of comfort so that one more fully can appreciate the nice bits when they come. Churchill is said to have noted, after his time as a soldier, "Nothing is quite so exhilarating as being shot at without result". Riding in a powerful storm is as close to that as I want to get. )

We were at our respective homes before lunch, spreading out gear to dry and pondering where to go next. Wherever that turns out to be, it will be a good time....and there will be rain.



On the Muskingham River, an old hotel in an old mill building



SPOOKS AND GOBLINS EMERGE TONIGHT,  
IT'S A NIGHT MADE FOR THOSE WHO ARE WIERD,  
SO THROW YOUR GOOD LEG O'ER YOUR FAVORITE SCOOT,  
AND GIVE 'EM GOOD CAUSE TO BE SKEERED . . .



Here's the group for today:

- \* 1). James Street
- \* 2). Boone Sutherland
- 3). Chester Martin
- 4). Royal Bouletle
- \* 5). Ryan King
- \* 6). Robbie Carter
- \* 7). Paul Elwyn
- \* 8). Ray Montgomery
- \* 9). John Rice ( on the Norton )
- \* 10). Hubert Burton
- \* 11). Chris Warner
- \* 12). Bill Voss
- 13). Pete Galskis
- \* 14). Ben Pruitt
- \* 15). Joe Bark
- \* 16). Jim Kous
- \* 17). Charlie Norton & Blaine & Travis
- \* 18). Randy Scott
- \* 19). Denise Norton
- 20). Sean Quinn
- \* 21). Jim Grimes (pt 0)

*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



***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