

Apex

July 2020

Looking Through The Curve

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



Pilsen

2020, are we done yet?

Jeff Crabb

A year to remember? I'd rather forget.

I got a late start to riding this year. Sunday morning rides didn't start until mid-May. We usually start before Easter.

Interesting first Sunday breakfast. We went to a favorite restaurant in Frankfort. They were still serving only to-go orders. The owner/waitress/cook, yes-one person, brought two chairs out for us and provided trays for our laps for us to eat off. It wasn't the best accommodations, but it wasn't the worst. It was unique and we probably won't forget it for a while.

For you that like to go off-road, I came across a website you might be interested in. If you haven't already heard of it. Gravelmap.com, it's a tool for finding

and sharing local gravel roads for biking, gravel grinding, exploration and more. Just input your zip code, city or state and it will show you interesting gravel roads in your area. If you click on a marked gravel road, it will give you information on that road.

Another interesting website I've found is bringatrailer.com. It's an auction site for vintage and classic cars for sale online. They also have motorcycles from time to time. Interesting concept.

This month's articles are from John Rice. Documenting a trip from thirty years ago to Czechoslovakia and a sneak ride out during the quarantine.

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

**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, 8-9:00 a.m.**

**BMW Club
Bluegrass Beemers**



The COVID-Breaker 500

By John Rice

(This story breaks one of my “sort of rules” about not detailing routes taken like some sort of Mapquest exercise, but I do it here so that I can remember how we went and because so many of us have been locked down so long, we may have forgotten how maps work)

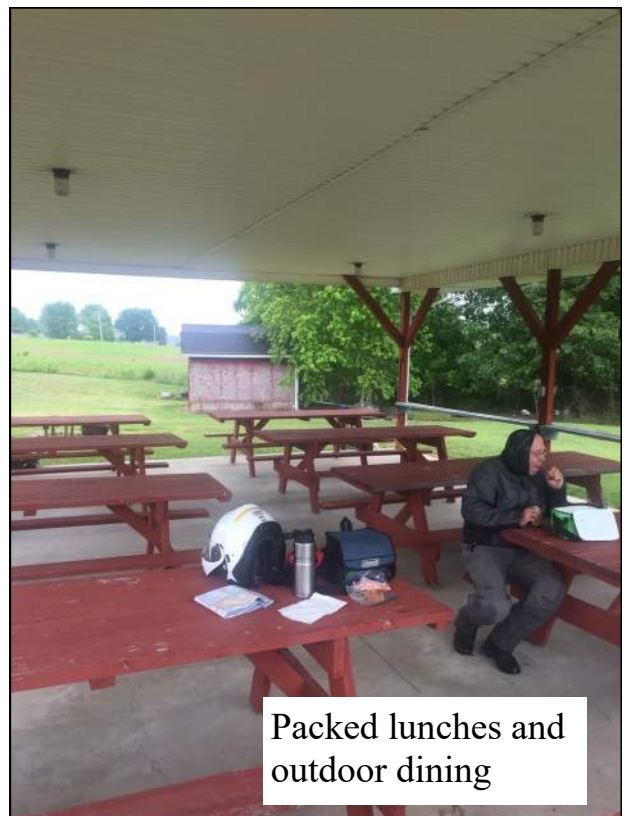
There were lots of good reasons not to do it, and really only one good reason to do it ...we wanted to.

Our spouses encouraged us to leave on this errand, and we probably didn't want to think about exactly why they were eager to be without our lockdown-enforced company for a couple of days.

Sunday morning Jay Smythe and I left our homes in the rain, to meet in Paris and head north. Like most of our trips, this one had not suffered under a great deal of planning. We took Ruddle's Mill to 32, over to Cynthia and the ever-popular 62 up to Mt. Olivet. There we detoured north on 165 to 875, both ridge-line roads with lots of curves, though today, most of them wet. We crossed into Ohio on the “new bridge” at Aberdeen, my first time out of the state in months. 41 took us up to West Union and then 125, my old route from Portsmouth to the Ohio trials events back in the day, over to 348, then to Lucasville where flat track races used to be held. An unmarked road led us to 139 and somewhere in there we



Church Parking lot



Packed lunches and outdoor dining

stopped at a church to borrow their shelter house for our packed lunches in the rain. Routes 348 and 139 were new to me (or just unremembered) and would be excellent riding territory when dry. As it was, I got to see it more slowly, through a wet face shield.

At one point I realized as I was making my way carefully down wet curvy roads, rain streaking my vision, every sense alert for a slip or slide, how happy I was to be right here right now doing exactly this. That would be very hard to get across to a non-rider, I think.

At Jackson, we decided to just take the drone on 32 over to Athens. Coming into town, the rain diminished and the temperature went from 56 to 71 in the space of a few miles. We stopped in at the old Holt BMW shop, now stripped of any signage or designation to take off some layers. There are still some indications of use, the immaculate R90S is still in the front room and Kent's Land Rover project car is in the back. I don't know whether I'm sad that this last-of-its-kind motorcycle shop is gone, or glad that such an extraordinary person as Kent Holt now can have greater autonomy and freedom to do the paintwork he is rightfully famous for.

Route 690, by the shop, curves its path up to 550, a wonderful ride all the way to Marietta. We checked in at the historic Lafayette Hotel, in tiny separate rooms to maintain proper social distancing. We are 50% of the entire occupancy of this hotel tonight.

Dinner was in the old riverfront tavern room, not entirely original, I'm sure, but authentic enough to suffice for atmosphere. Relaxing at the end of a day of rain riding has a particularly nice feel to it, one we are quite familiar with from many years experience. Sitting staggered at opposite corners of a table, over-

looking the river and our bikes in the lot, watching the endless barge traffic we speculate on the life of a barge captain plying these waters for a living. Downstream the current is your friend...unless you need to stop. The tavern offers a limited menu, due to the lockdown reduction in traffic, but there is a well prepared blackened catfish with "dirty rice" and a salad for me, vegetarian potato skins and salad for Jay. We are too full for desert.

After dinner we repair to the lobby, taking our socially distant wingback chairs facing the windows looking out on the street and the river. Fueled by alcohol and bonhomie, most of the world's immediate problems are easily solved, but for the pesky existence of other people and their insistence on living lives other than the ones we might prefer. We finish off the evening and the last of the small amount of Elijah Craig I had brought at opposite ends of Jay's room, where the rest of the inconsistencies of human nature were dispatched. Rodney King said it best, "Can't we all just get along?" (Spoiler alert: Probably not.)

Our rooms are, as mentioned, tiny but mostly historically accurate...except for the en suite bathrooms and the air conditioner. The original inhabitants of this old hotel had no such luxuries. But the furniture, such as it is, represents the periods. The desk in my room is small, of necessity, but packed with little drawers and pigeon holes for holding the tools and mementos of a life's business. In the center of the back piece is a central door with a wooden knob. I picture the person sitting here, pulling out the lap drawer on the left to extract the creamy yellow-white writing paper, the smaller drawer on the right to select a pen and then, after smoothing the paper on the desk's surface, finally opening the central cupboard to take out the inkwell for the morning's

correspondence. One was caused to consider one's thoughts before committing them to scarce paper with ink, unlike today's easy keyboard composition.



Lafayette's guest room writing desk

As we often do, the map gave us only the beginnings of our route home, to be modified as we see fit..or get off track...on the way. We crossed the bridge into West Virginia and followed 14 down to Parkersburg, then switched over to 68 to take us farther south. Rt. 2 follows the river through forgotten little towns, past many closed businesses, but the water rolls on more or less as it has done for a century or three. There was some confusion crossing back into Ohio, but somehow we ended up on 141 that wends its way across the southern Ohio hills down into Ironton, across the legendary (at least in my teenage motorcycling days) Kitt's Hill. In my misspent youth I rambled all over this little town across the river from my home, from early teen motorcycle meanderings with friends and then in later teens in and out of some of the seedier nightspots like the Oasis where the sawdust covered shuffleboard table and "fishbowls" took a few evenings out of my life. Now in my dotage much looks vaguely familiar but I don't actually recognize enough to be useful in navigation.

Breakfast is in the "Gun Room" in the morning, with just us and the masked waitress. The room is designed like a ballroom on a stern wheeler, and draws its name from the firearms displayed on the walls. While waiting for our meals, we examine the map and decide where we go from here. It will only be toward home, not further afield, because this is the "trial run" for touring in the new COVID-19 future we now live in.

Lunch at "Fat Patty's" in Ashland on the main street Winchester Avenue. (Growing up, it never occurred to me to ask why it was called that until I realized that it was also Rt. 60 and would take a traveler to Winchester. Nor did it ever occur to me that one day I might live there.). Though we both lived here, neither of us could recall what this restaurant used to be back then. This is the first on-the-road lunch we have had since the lockdown and it is surprising how anxious one can be now with what once was common: going into an unplanned restaurant for a meal. Fortu-

nately the place isn't crowded, the staff is masked and we find a table in the front far away from the other diners.

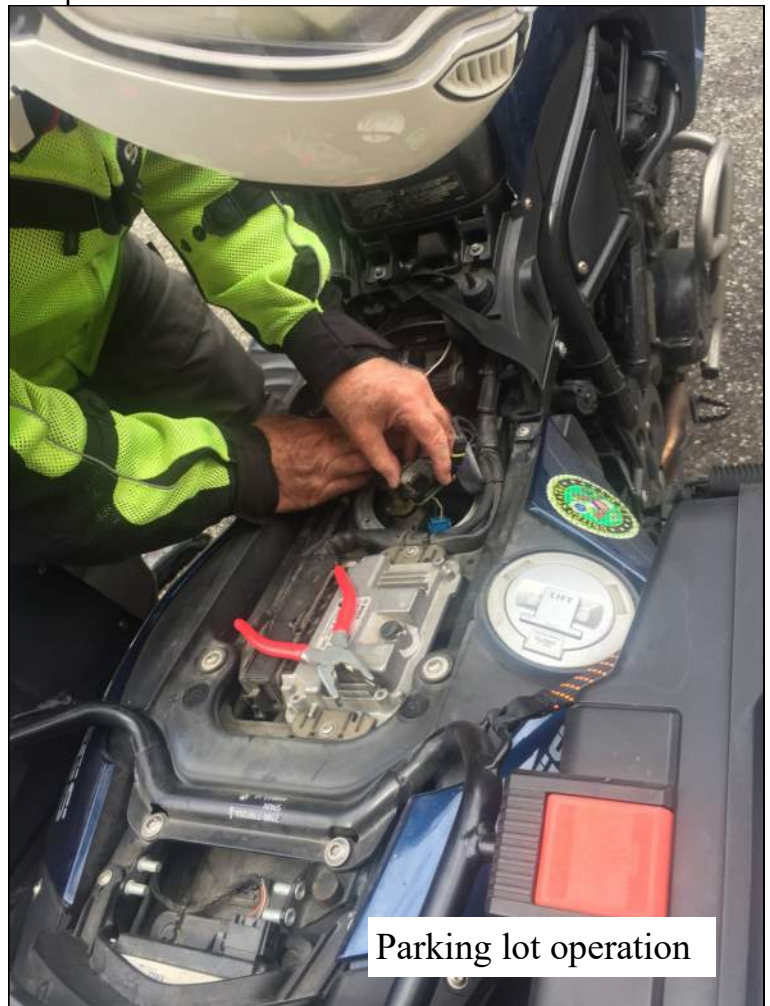
After lunch, Jay's bike refused to start, not because it was enamored of Ashland and wanted to stay, but as it turns out, the gear indicator software deep in its little electronic heart had gone wonky. It couldn't decide what gear it thought the bike was in, but it was sure it wasn't going to start up its engine in any of them. A few calls to Roy, since neither Jay nor I speaks fluent electronics, and the bike became mobile again. We went down to Greenup County to visit with my nephew Paul Rice and, if it became necessary, to borrow a trailer and truck to carry the F650 twin home. It wasn't, but as always, Paul was more than prepared to meet the needs of solving any such problem.

Rt. 1 leads from Greenup over to Grayson, winding its mildly curvy way past W-Hollow, home of author Jesse Stuart and the setting of many of his writings, and by Greenbo Lake State Park, the setting of many of my youthful indiscretions, mostly motorcycle related. (It was there, for example, where a friend...for God knows what reason...got off his motorcycle and chased a skunk into a culvert, with the exact result any rational person would have expected.) By the time we reached Grayson the sun was getting a bit low in the west and the time for getting home on familiar old Rt. 60 had come. Familiarity has not bred contempt however, this is still a good road with some favorite curves dotted here and there for anticipation and reward.

Throughout the whole trip we were exceedingly careful to socially distance from everyone and each other. We stayed masked

except when eating or drinking and used copious amounts of hand sanitizer, soap and water. At tables we sat staggered to minimize face to face time. We stayed in separate rooms. Most of our time was spent on the bikes, hoping that the virus couldn't keep up with even our age-reduced pace on the curves. The insidious thing about a virus is that with all those precautions, we still could have encountered it somewhere. But we will never know, if we fall ill, if the contact was on this trip or the other "necessary" outings like groceries, etc.

We covered about 500 miles, leaving me more tired than I can recall in a long time, but elated. I have got to do this again soon.



Parking lot operation

Run for the Border

By John Rice

The Berlin Wall came down in late 1989 and much of what had been closed-off Eastern Europe opened up to traffic from the west.

In September on 1990, my wife Brenda, her brother Jay and I made a motorcycle trip around Western Europe and decided when we were close, that we had to go over into Czechoslovakia to see Pilsen. The three of us are fans of various kinds good beer, of which there is no shortage anywhere in Germany, and legend has it that the origin of Pilsner, “pils” in German, was in this town. We had

the idea that we would go over for the day, stop at a little cafe and have a ceremonial Pilsner with our lunch and head back into Germany for the night.

At the time, though the border was open, there were still many restrictions. We were told that we could not purchase gasoline with currency, only fuel vouchers, and that lodging still had to be approved for western visitors. No problem, we would fill the tanks at the border, go over and back in a day.



German Gasthaus

We spent the night in a little gasthaus at the border and the next morning bright and early we made our way to the crossing station. We got through easily and stopped on the Czech side to exchange a bit of money for food. The equivalent of \$15 American brought us 400 Czech Kroner. (On the wall in the exchange station was a poster advertising what appeared to be a “Bluegrass Music Festival”)

Though the countryside was still much the

we went through, we seldom saw anyone out on the streets. When we did, their clothing was from the 40’s era and they walked with a slow pace as if the act of moving forward was just too difficult. Everything, and this is not exaggeration, was filthy, coated with a patina of dust and grime. Every truck seemed to have a short, open exhaust down at road level belching unfiltered black smoke. As a motorcyclist, I was keenly aware of the coating on the pavement, a mix of diesel fuel, dirt and oil.



same across the border, the towns were shocking. Like the scenes in Wizard of Oz where it switches from color to black and white, everything seemed devoid of color. The architecture of the houses and older buildings was similar to that on the German side, but nothing had been done, no paint, no maintenance, for 40 years or more. The full colorful flower boxes that we saw on nearly every German house were completely absent. In the villages

I did not want to be here if it rained.

We made it into Pilsen, which was not the quaint beer-making village we had pictured, but an industrial town marked by rows of Soviet-era white apartment towers, most of which had at least some portion falling off. On one we could see inside an apartment because the whole outside wall of the unit had tumbled onto the ground several stories below.



On the road to Pilsen

Nevertheless, there was laundry drying on the balconies of the adjoining units, indicating that the place was still occupied.

There seemed to be no restaurants or cafes open in the downtown area, though it is possible that we just didn't recognize them. We stopped briefly at a market in the town center, to ask for directions. Inside it looked like a country store from an old western movie, with wooden plank floor, rough wooden shelves on three sides and at the far end, a low wooden counter behind which sat a single bored looking clerk. All of the shelves were empty, except for one small bag of potatoes sitting forlornly by itself.

We paused at an intersection to look at our maps, and were approached by an animated smiling man who explained that he and his companion realized we were western tourists and wanted to practice their English. Their English was far better than our pronunciation of the Czech place names, which was our

downfall. After greetings and a brief discussion, we told them that we wanted to head toward Klatovy, south of Pilsen, back toward our intended border crossing. Instead, he gave us directions to Karlovy, which must sound in Czech more like whatever it was we said, going north away from the border. The sky was so steel-gray heavily overcast that we could not see any sign of the sun to orient ourselves and the road signs may as well have been in Sanskrit. So we set off, 180 degrees off course.

By late afternoon we were quite hungry and passing through a village we spotted what appeared to be a cafe. Not the pleasant little roadside eatery we had seen everywhere in the west, this was a low building, little sign of paint or care, windows dirty and a small parking area dotted with clumps of grass. It would not have looked terribly out of place as an abandoned storefront on an eastern Kentucky back road, now being used as a weekend flea market stall. Inside, the air was heavy with



Restaurant

acid tobacco smoke. There were several round tables, rough wooden tops with mismatched chairs. Conversation stopped and all eyes turned briefly to us as we walked through the door. A young waitress showed us to a table and stood, soldier-like, to take our order. She spoke no English or German, the two languages we had some use of, and we had no Czech.

By mime and pointing, we managed to order meals, though we had no idea what. Brenda was able to sample a local beer, since she was not driving, but Jay and I made do with what we thought was a soft drink but turned out to be more like a Kool-aid from our youth. When the plates arrived, there was a large amount of food, fried meat and limp vegetables, for each of us and as we looked at it and around the restaurant, we could see that we were the only ones that had such large portions. The waitress helped us with our map,

showing us by firmly pointing her finger on Karlovy, after we had showed her Klatovy as our destination, convincing us that we were far away from where we intended to be.

When the bill came, Jay looked at it for a moment then smiled and said "I'll get this one" and paid the entire check with a generous tip for the waitress, with a stack of the Kroner bills we had received at the border, still leaving us with the majority.

Outside, a group of children had gathered around our bikes, holding out their hands as we mounted up. At Brenda's suggestion, we opened our tank bags and began handing out the German chocolate treats that we often picked up at gas stations, wonderful stuff that would have been premium in the US but in Western Europe as common and inexpensive as Hershey bars.



Bluegrass Music Festival

Back on the road, we could see that the sun was getting lower and we were a long way from a border crossing we could use. We had no fuel vouchers and had been told that we could not have overnight accommodations without prior approved reservations. We picked up the pace, rushing through the forests and small villages headed west as fast as we dared in the fading light. Though there was no real danger, other than wandering wildlife, it took on the image of a film in which the protagonists must flee to the border just in time. I still recall passing a roadside refuse dump

where the remains of one of the ubiquitous East German Trabant automobiles had been hoisted into a dumpster.

As the sun dropped behind the horizon, we made it back into Germany. At the crossing station, we exchanged our Kroner back for Deutschmarks, receiving after the exchange fees both ways, about \$10 worth for our \$15 investment. Jay's largesse in buying our meals and tipping the waitress magnanimously had cost him about \$3.

Bluegrass Beemers Email List

To Subscribe: bgbeemers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To Post a message (once subscribed): bgbeemers@yahoogroups.com

Saturday Breakfast Poll

Beemer friends. Please note that Frisch's restaurant is now opening @ 8am only and they intend to keep it that way. This has a direct impact on our traditional 7am breakfast. We wonder where do you stand on this?

1. I am ok with 8am
2. I prefer the 8am
3. I would like to ask Frisch's for 7am accommodation
4. I have no preference
5. I would like to consider another restaurant

Please send your preference and comment to [Benoit Lepage](#).

We are not in a big rush since many of us are not dining-in yet but hopefully, the good old days will be back soon. Thanks!



Picture taken at our rally in 2008



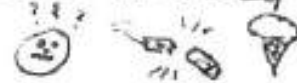
10 years ago, at a Cafe Run by John's office, Ian sits on Uncle Jay's R100RT. In June of 2020, he rides it home as an owner.

Stuart and Ian with the R100 from their Uncle Jay





SOME JUST LAUGH, OTHERS CRY,
SOME JUST SIT AND WONDER WHY,
WHY WE RIDE OR WHY WE FLY,
OR EAT ICE CREAM ON THE FOURTH OF JULY...



Here's the group for today:

- * 1). Mike DeWeese
- * 2). Roy Rowlett
- * 3). Chris Warner
- * 4). Chester Martin
- * 5). Boone Sutherland
- * 6). Mike Gregory
- * 7). Tom Sutherland
- * 8). Hubert Benton
- 9). Pete Galski
- + 10). Mike Gail
- * 11). David Sprachman
- * 12). Paul Elwyn
- * 13). Jim Brandon
- * 14). Ben Pruitt
- + 15). Bob Riley
- 16). Bob Boss
- * 17). Randy Scott
- * 18). Chris ~~Adkins~~ ^{Adkins}
- * 19). Drey Neal
- * 20). Danny Phillips
- * 21). Charlie Norton (LPLD) + Tim's + Blaine

Boone

For Sale

1998 R1100RT

86K+ miles, Givi top case, rear running lights, engine guards

Asking \$3,300

Contact Jeff @ 859-252-5497 or jdcraabb@hotmail.com



1984 R80ST

35K+ miles

Asking \$5,200 or best reasonable offer

See more pictures and information on Bluegrass Beemers [website](http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org)



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