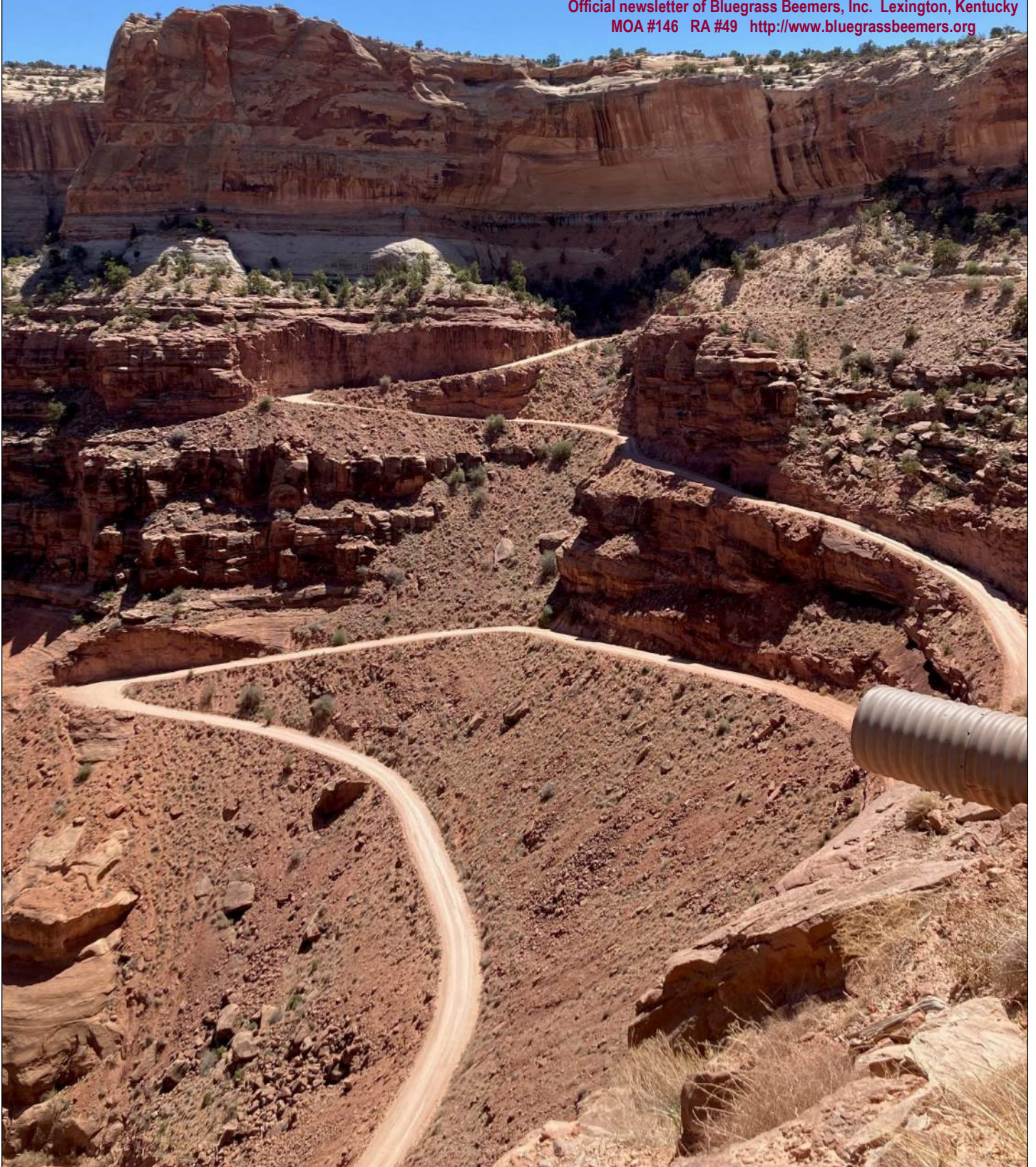


July 2021

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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







Monkeying around at Barber

***Apex* is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.  
Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #49**

**Jeff Crabb, Editor jdcraab@hotmail.com**

**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**



## 2021 Post-COVID Utah Excursion

By John Rice

Saturday morning, a beautiful sunny April day, among the gorgeous vermillion cliffs of the Colorado River valley north of Moab. I'm sitting in the dirt, under the shade of an awning I made out of my rain jacket spread out from bars to bags, the back pad of my riding jacket against the foot peg of the now-disabled XT250, waiting for Jay to return with the trailer, I'm reading a book on my phone's Kindle app while a herd of free range cattle have come over to inspect this newcomer to their home. Pleasant enough, but not exactly how I had planned this day to go.

Back in the COVID Lost Year, Jay and I made a plan to return to Moab, Utah for another shot at the desert and mountain trails we had so much enjoyed in 2015.

When the time arrived, there were frantic preparations, even though I've known this was coming for nearly a year now. I have become so accustomed to not going anywhere that my well-practiced routines for making a motorcycle trip have become rusty and unfamiliar.

Since we were taking the 250cc dual sports, with knobby tires, we opted to use Jay's trailer, rather than ride the long mid-western slog to Utah. We endured the two and a half long days to get across MO and KS. On our first night out, in Columbia, MO, we found dinner at the Sports Zone across from our motel. At the urging of the bartender, we tried samples of Mexican Hot Chocolate beer. It is a brew flavored with chocolate and infused with hot chiles for a taste that is an "interesting" experience but one of which a little seems quite sufficient.

The bartender tells us that this is an example of the new things that her supplier sometimes brings her to try out on customers. She has given out lots of samples, she says, but no one has yet ordered a glass. We did not become the first.

After another day on the road, across the Rockies at Denver, we arrived in Moab about 3, unloaded our bikes and gear at the motel and collapsed ex-





hausted at 4:30 in the afternoon with our bodies still on Eastern Daylight Time.

Six years ago at this same week, Moab was still in the spring awakening of that season's tourism, with places open but not crowded, plenty of parking on the street and only a smattering of other folks out on the trails. This time the place is thronged with (mostly young) people eager to get out again and do something, just anything, after the Lost Year. Our motel is across the street from the Moab Brewery & Restaurant, but we are never to be able to get inside on this trip.

On Tuesday we are up at 2 AM, and out on the bikes at first daylight around 6 to the Love Muffin cafe for breakfast (the only one that says it's open at this hour) but we find that in deference to COVID, they only serve carry out and there is quite a line for that. After a few more tries of other spots, we park up in front of the Jailhouse Cafe and wait until it opens at 7. Inside the small historic building, there is an excellent breakfast but not much social distance. The Ginger Pancake is a definite winner.

Our research had yielded confusing results, suggesting that some or perhaps most of the favorite trails now required permits which were limited in number on a "first come first served" basis. The trails in this area have supervision from both the Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management with the distinction between

the two not always clear. We rode over to the local BLM headquarters where the offices were closed to the public, but very helpful employees came outside and brought us maps. They told us that not many trails needed permits, mainly the White Rim Trail, a 100 mile loop around Canyonlands which we had done in 2015 and didn't feel up to tackling this time anyway. At the Moab Info Center in the middle of town, a very helpful lady gave us some information, sold us some backcountry maps, and suggested a loop she likes to take in her 4wd truck which includes a trail we had in mind.

We set off, following the Colorado River to Potash, marveling along the way at the parties



Long Canyon Trail

of rock climbers setting up for a day of scrambling up the vertical canyon walls, hanging by their fingertips. They probably think we are crazy for taking the risk of riding motorcycles. At the turnoff near a bend in the river we head up the climb of the Long Canyon Trail. We had done this one coming down from the plateau in 2015, but things look different going up. The dusky red canyon stretches out in front as the trail ascends along the wall, the floor getting farther and farther down. When we reached the slanted arch, where we played around in 2015, we got hung up on rocks where traffic and weather has hollowed out the dirt at the base of the arch making the approach from downhill much more difficult.

With two of us working, Jay got through one line and I through another, squeezing into a narrow path between rocks and adding a long scrape down my right saddlebag as a souvenir. At the top, we came out on Route 313 and followed it down to Dead Horse Point. There are several stories about the name, none of them placing humans in a good light nor involving anything beneficial for horses. At the observation point cul-de-sac, we can see

the canyon below and trails by the river that looked familiar. While not as deep or wide as the Grand Canyon, nothing is in this part of the world, the cleft in the earth is certainly impressive and not something that any camera I own could ever do justice to. Asked at the visitor center, a young lady ranger told us that the paths we saw were part of the Schafer Trail which we had done on our first visit

coming from the floor up to the nearby Canyonlands National Park.

At the Canyonlands entrance, there was a long wait to get in, cars and trucks backed up for about a quarter mile. Fortunately the road is downhill, so we could just shut off the XT's and coast to the entry kiosk, not overheating the bikes. Our Golden Age passes get us through again with no payment. Geezerhood has some perks. We had our picnic lunch by the visitors center, watching the car-bound tourists getting out, stretching and walking in.

The gravel road down to the Shafer Trail lasts only a short distance before beginning its



Dead Horse Point

precipitous trail descent with the deep canyon yawning at the edge of the narrow dirt path cut into the wall that switch backs its way down the cliff. This was scary enough going up in 2015 when at least the looking ahead was toward the wall and up to the top. Now, going down, the visual is always of the drop off into the void at the edge of each turn. It is terrifying, with lots of rocks and ruts to keep the



bike and me unsettled. Going steeply downhill, with 1,000 foot drop offs just a few feet away, gravity is not your friend. We met a group of riders from California coming up, guys on big new Adventure bikes and including a woman on a DR650. In my personal opinion, she made the best choice of mount among her companions.

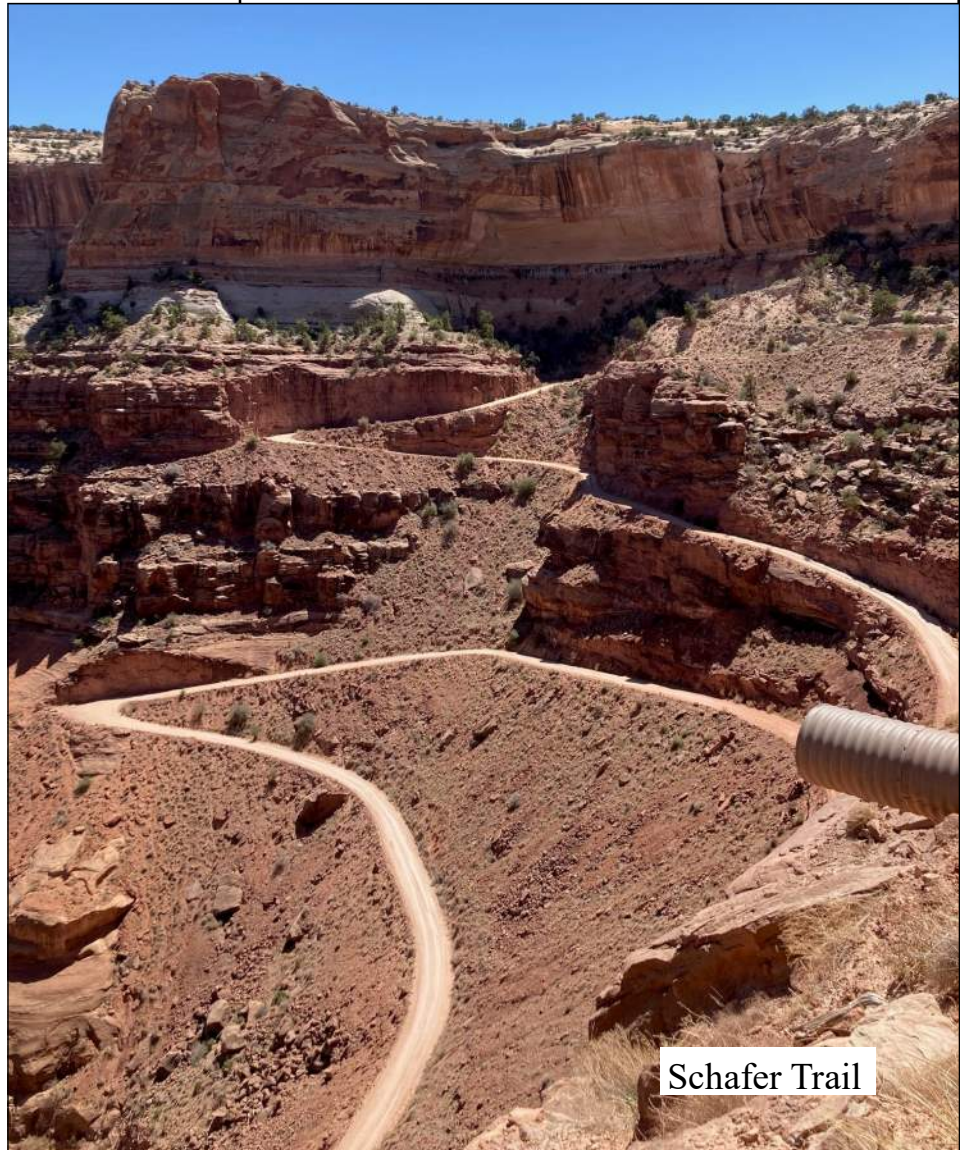
The Schafer Trail levels out at the bottom of the cliff and winds through the canyons formed by the Colorado, though never as close to it as it appeared from the top. It must be a trick of perspective, looking down from such height that makes the trail appear to be much nearer to the river. By the time we got down to Potash, where the trail joins the road to take us back to Moab, we were exhausted but happy just to be out here in this marvelous place on motorcycles.

Bikes serviced in the parking lot, we walked down the street to dinner at Moab Grille, bison cottage pie for me with a very good Russian Imperial stout, Jay had lasagna vegetarian.

Excellent meals, but in our depleted state we could have used someone to feed it to us.

The next day, after crunchy blue corn pancakes, a delicacy not found in eastern KY restaurants, we headed north to Arches National Park. There is a long line to get in once inside, the park is very crowded with tourists with not even room to park the bikes at some overlooks. Obviously the public feels turned loose from the 2020 cage and eager to make

up for lost time. At the Delicate Arch parking area we found a gate open to a dirt road, usually closed, with no obvious proscription for us to take it. We wandered a few miles back into the area behind the iconic Delicate Arch,



the one that is displayed on Utah's license plates, until the "road" became a rather gnarly technical trail. Not our thing now.

Back in the park, we opted to escape the tourist throng and found Salt Valley Road that we had taken in 2015 to get off into the back country. Then it was a narrow dirt road, but now is more graveled and wash boarded than we had six years ago. There are a few folks out here in Jeeps, but mostly we were on our





Delicate Arch, from the back side



Down by the river

own. Near the end we spotted a side road that looked promising but it went up a rocky climb up to a dead end. Going up was fun but I found that I had little confidence coming down. Where once I would have seen only the line through the rocks, now I see places where a broken bone would end the trip for me. The optimism of youth is a fleeting thing. Salt Valley eventually meets up with 191 to take us back to town.

Thursday, the blue corn pancakes have become addictive. Full from breakfast, we headed up 128, one of the most scenic roads in a land full of such things, following the curves of the Colorado River, through a valley of salmon colored cliffs with the sun alternately sparkling off the water or disappearing behind the red walls. Following our trail maps, we turned up Onion Creek Road, which was just the sort of unpaved, smooth dirt we wanted today. It quickly winds into the red rock spires and canyons, through lots of water crossings as Onion Creek meanders along the path of least resistance. We go up and down endlessly, with enough difficult bits to keep it interesting but not bad enough to cause concern. As is typical here, I can't adequately describe the scenery on this trail, one of the best finds of the trip. Onion Creek segues into the Kokopeli trail, a mixed mountain bike and motorcycle path, mostly rock, up into the mountains with some climbs and descents that were pushing the old geezer limits a time or two.

On this part we got passed in a blur of speed and noise by groups of young men on new, tall dual sports with the appar-



Onion Creek Trail



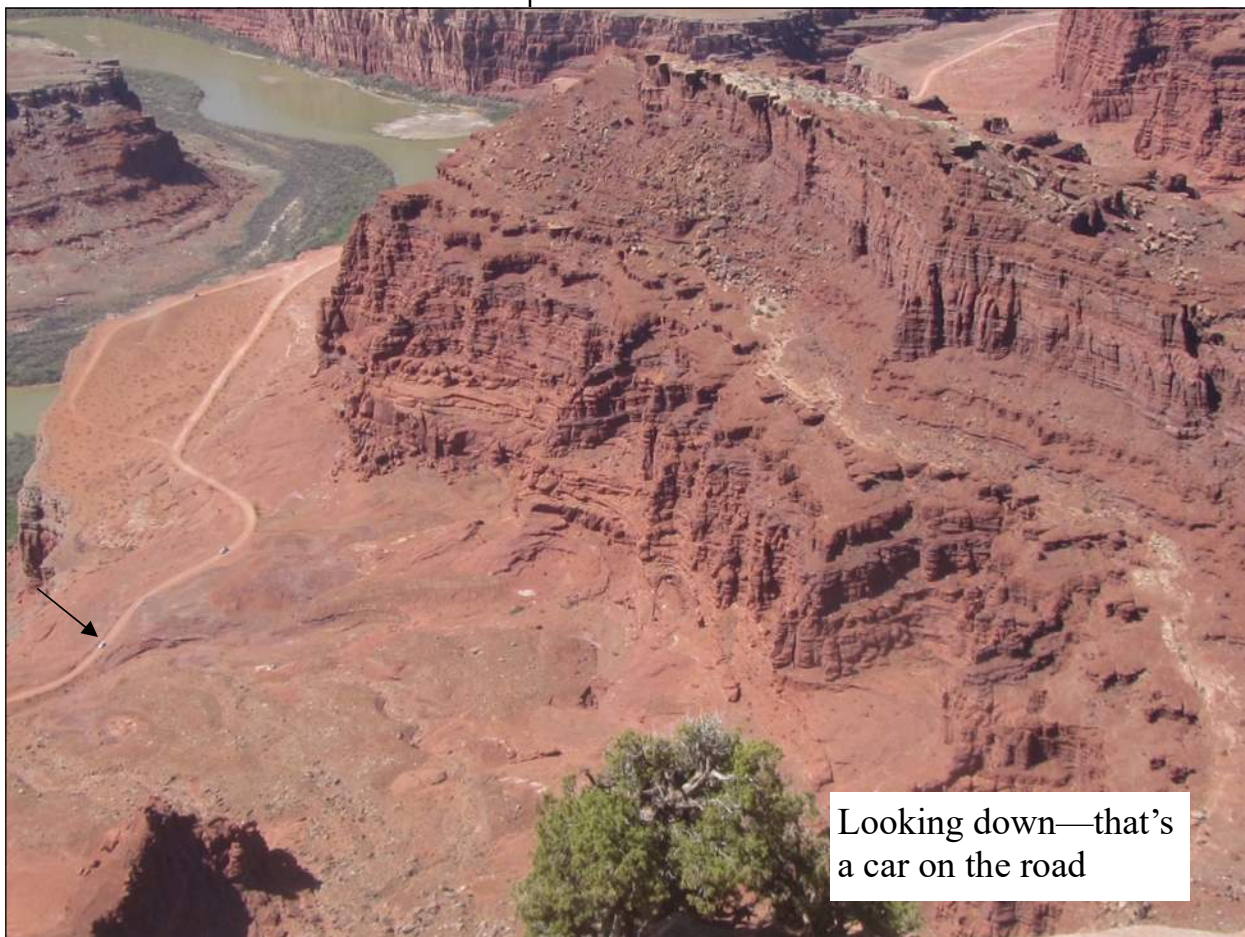
Onion Creek



ently required loud pipes, who haven't done this sort of thing long enough to learn that they are vulnerable. Down the trail we later met up with them at a crossroad where they had stopped to figure out where they were. They had no maps, depending only on their phones which had no service up here. I ended up giving them directions to where they thought they wanted to go from the maps we had with us, after cautioning them that we hadn't been to this trail before either. I had the immediate mental image of them being found months later, one guy still (suspiciously) alive, surrounded by Donner Party style remains, after being lost out in a box canyon. "Some old coot on a Yamaha sent us up here".

The Kocopeli comes down to the Manti La-Sal loop road which then ascends across high snow-lined paved roads in the mountain range.

Near the top we re-connected with the Kokapeli Trail, but this portion was for mountain bikes and hikers only, no motorized vehicles allowed. The pavement winds down the mountain ridges to the floor of what is deemed the



Looking down—that's a car on the road

Spanish Valley and then back to Moab.. Dinner this night is at the Sunset Grille high above the town. The restaurant is the former home of Charlie Steen, an early prospector/engineer who struck it rich finding uranium here in the 1950's. Overnight, he went from eating road kill and camping out in the desert to \$60 million in 1950's dollars. Charlie knew how to enjoy his new found wealth, including buying an airplane so he could fly his family's laundry to Grand Junction, Colorado for washing.

I'm sure it was fantastic as a home. As a restaurant, it has a spectacular view of the Moab Rift Valley and excellent Idaho trout with chocolate mousse for dessert.

On Friday as we searched for a new place to ride, we found the Gemini Bridges trail, a long uphill climb with steep drop offs, that then de-





Jay does some off roading sans motorcycle



Jay's XT on the Manti-LaSal mountain loop



scends into a valley for a while and goes back up on high, rocky flats. There are lots of iterations of four-wheelers up here, side-by-sides, Jeeps and hulking SUV's no doubt glad to be away from suburban shopping duty and out here where they belong. The twin bridges, actually rock arches, can be seen from the top of an overlook, with many tourists milling around. Soon the trail evolves into a long gravel road back to 313 and then to 191 again. Parched, we stopped in at a gas station with picnic tables to have a snack and some water. There we met a guy from Florida with a perfect Ricardo Montalban accent, riding a DR650. He told us of taking the Chicken Corners Trail, which we did in 2015, and dropping his bike near a ledge over the river. We knew the spot he was describing. He was riding alone and had to try to pick up the heavy bike without tipping it and himself over the edge. That makes a much better story coming from him than from someone else saying "and then we found his remains and his bike down at the bottom".

Our trail map showed the Klondike Bluffs trail nearby, but poor marking meant we were in the wrong part of the system and after wandering around a while on some rocks and through a campground, we ended up back on 191. Up a bit on that highway we found the entrance for Willow Springs road, and this time took the shortcut back into Arches rather than the left fork that wore us out six years ago. The "road", more of a trail, actually had an excess of sand this time and a lot less rock than we remembered. A woman at a campground along the way told us that many of the routes had been changed due to traffic and erosion.

Saturday, the day that didn't turn out as planned. We started up 128 again, in perfect weather, enjoying the beautiful curves through

the red sandstone valley, headed for a trail that would take us northeast into the hills. A few miles past Dewey Bridges, my bike lost power, felt like it was running out of gas and then began making a clanking noise that I knew was bad. I coasted into a small graveled turnout and started the bike again, briefly. It idled smoothly, but with what sounded like a deep clunk inside the crankcase, so I shut it down immediately, knowing it wasn't going any farther today. I felt like a cowboy who just shot his horse.

Later at home I would find the drained oil with a few bronze-looking flakes but the oil filter and its cavity full of magnet-responsive metal fragments like a handful of shiny sand, indicating that something came apart pretty seriously. I had always considered, upon the evidence of my experience with it, that the XT was indestructible. Apparently I am better at destruction than I thought.

Back at the motel, we decided to walk into town for perusal of the shops and some people-watching among the other tourists wandering around, blinking in the unaccustomed sunshine after a year in confinement. We had intended to leave Moab on Sunday for two or three days riding trails and back roads in Arkansas but that won't happen now.

Instead we left Sunday and went across Utah and New Mexico to spend the night in the iconic Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari. It's my third time here, having stopped over on both sidecar-return trips. I have visited several of the remaining mom & pop motels on the western side of the Mother Road over the years and this may be the most authentically maintained Old Route 66 motel. Great care has been taken in preservation, right down to the heavy Bakelite telephones (which do work) at the bedside. Each room has its own



dirt-floored garage next door. The first time I stayed here, in 2015, I wrote a review on their website that went something like this: “I can see Bogart & Bacall coming here, getting out of the LA bustle, hot and tired from the road as they pull in for the night. The drop-top Caddy sits in the little garage next to the room, ticking slowly as the cool desert air draws the heat from its big engine. Just inside, Bacall turns around to face Bogie and drops her suitcase on the floor, giving him That Look, the one only she can do.....wait, I’ve got to stop typing. My keyboard is smol-

dering and this is a non-smoking room.” The feeling is still there. This is a special place.

The next two days were a blur of interstate, an unremarkable stay at a big box motel and one incredible meal, with pie, at the Overlook Restaurant in Corydon, Indiana high above the bend in the river. All the while, I am pondering what went wrong with the XT, was it my fault somehow, and can it reasonably be fixed. As of this writing, I still don’t have the answers to those questions.



Willow Springs Road





THE JULY SUN IS KIND THIS WEEK - AMERICAN BIRTHDAY  
 WAS AUTUMN LIKE AND BEAUTIFUL THE BMW NATIONAL RALLY  
 BEING THIS WEEK ... TRIPS ARE PLANNED, BIKES ARE PACKED...  
 WE WILL LEAVE FOR THE 31<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL BIKE JOURNEY ON  
 FRIDAY ...

Never the ground for today:

- \* 1) Chris Warner
- \* 2) Roy Roubelt
- \* 3) Jim Brandon
- \* 4) Hubert Burton
- \* 5) Mitch Butler
- \* 6) Terry Farley
- \* 7) Boone Sutherland
- \* 8) Bill Voss
- \* 9) Paul Elwyn
- \* 10) John Rice
- \* 11) Jay Smythe
- \* 12) Lowell Kovich
- \* 13) Paul Wells & Suzanne
- 14) Terry McLary (Back for the Bluegrass 1000 but didn't)
- \* 15) Derek Neal
- 16) Pete Galabin
- \* 17) Chester Martin
- \* 18) Mike Gail
- 19) Phillip Baugh
- \* 20) Steve Bishop
- \* 21) Joe Bank

\* NEW ALL TIME ATTENDING  
 HIGH FOR BREAKFAST !!  
 (32)

- \* 22) Wayne Griffin
- \* 23) Jeff Sauer
- \* 24) Ben Russell (Horton)
- \* 25) Ron Blackburn
- \* 26) Nancy Russell (Krook)
- \* 27) Randy Scott
- \* 28) David Sparkman
- \* 29) Gary Huffman
- \* 30) Jeff Grubb
- \* 31) Jeff Grubb
- \* 32) Danny Phillips

*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