

September 2021

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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

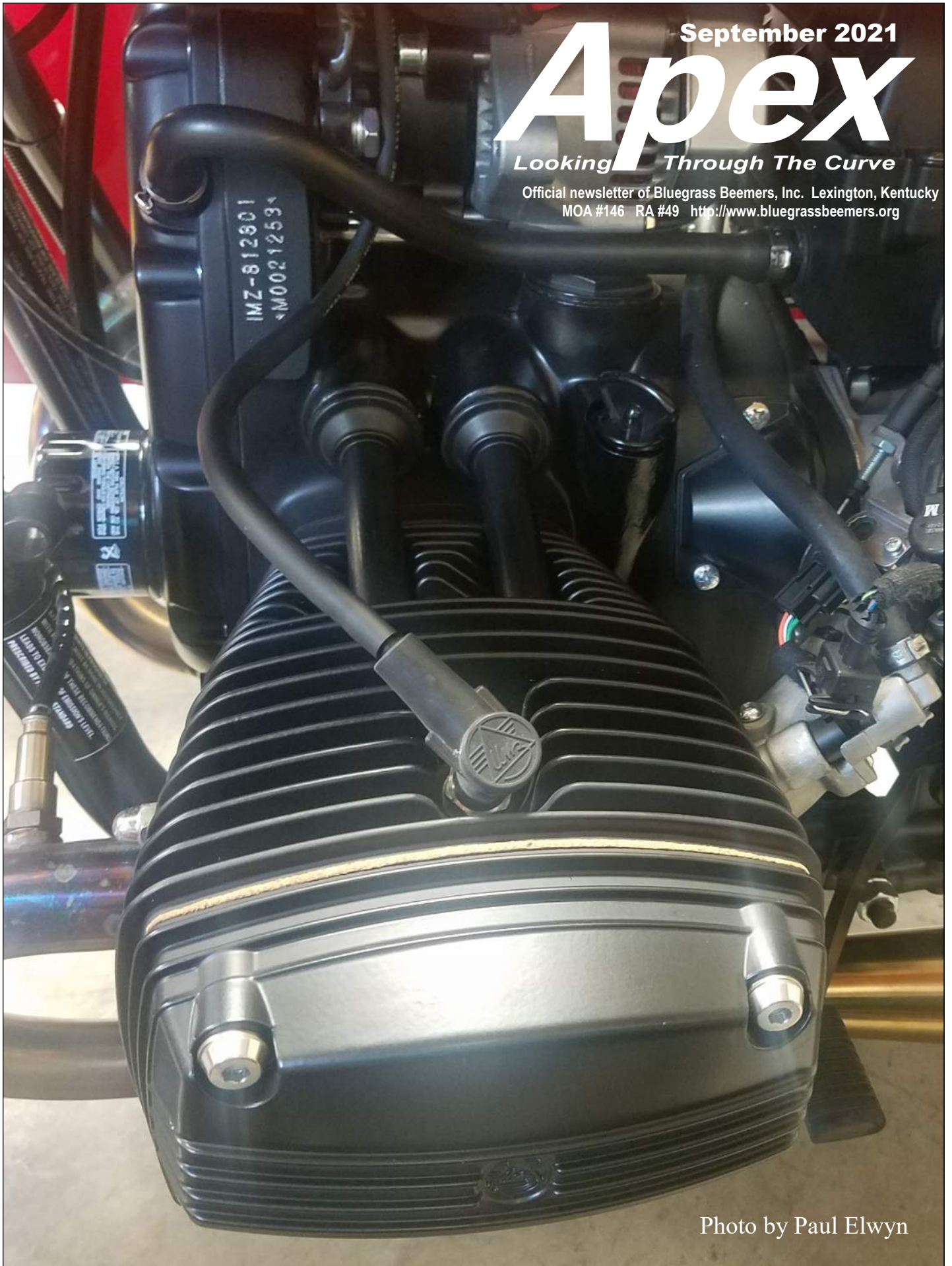


Photo by Paul Elwyn

COVID, New rides and Ice Cream

By Jeff Crabb

Are we on the other side of this “thing” that has changed our lives? I don’t think so. There’s always the next variant. I was diagnosed with the virus in February, got the vaccine in March. Still living the same as I did in 2020. Staying home more. Which is fine, there’s always a movie or two I always wanted to see. I don’t think I’ll run out of movies, but you never know.

Some of you all have gotten new rides, send in your photos and share it with others. Everyone likes looking at other’s bikes.

If you find yourself going to the Hoosier rally or just riding around on US 421, plan a stop just south Campbellsburg, where north

US 421 and state route 55 split, for a scoop or two of some fine ice cream or a shake. Rowlett’s Milkhouse Creamery is located just off the road at 63 Commerce Drive. If ice cream isn’t your thing, they also make cheese. They are open six days a week, closed on Mondays. You will not be disappointed.

This month we have two great articles from Paul Elwyn and John Rice. Paul has got a new ride that’s slowed him down a bit and having him re-think riding. John takes a trip to the Blue Ridge Parkway with one of his grandsons.

Please send in your articles and stay safe.



2013 Café Run—Ian Rice

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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, 8-9:00 a.m.

**BMW Club
Bluegrass Beemers**



Life at a slower, intimidating pace with a three-wheeled airhead from the 1930's

Article and Photos by Paul Elwyn

At this writing I have survived 102 miles piloting a 2021 Ural cT sidecar rig. Having spent the winter reading about sidecars, watching Youtube clips and studying the Ural machines in particular, I thought I had a fairly good idea of what it would be like driving a rig, but I underestimated by a long shot just how unlike motorcycling sidecar driving actually is.

I knew, for instance, that right-hand curves would require different approach than left-hand, that the rig would pull to the right on throttle and to the left off throttle, that rear braking would pull the rig to the right, but what I did not realize is that every nuance of the pavement would impact handling.

My Ural rig, essentially, is a WW II era machine with a 1939 BMW R71 engine upgraded with the latest fuel injection and designed to meet Euro 5 emissions with catalytic converters and an engine top end well advanced from that of the original R71 with state-of-the-art materials and flow-tested heads, but even with all of that in place we're talking 41 to 45 bhp to haul a 700 pound machine. A 1940's era leading link front end eliminates dive from the Brembo front brake and lightens steering, yet,



the overall effect still is downright challenging with quite a bit of effort involved as speed increases and bends tighten.

In my first 71 miles on the first day, I spent at least 30 miles in an empty church parking lot basically doing non-stop right turns to intentionally lift the sidecar wheel, to “fly the chair” as they say, an essential skill when entering too hot into right turns. I’m still not fully comfortable on the street, because I don’t want to find myself veering off into oncoming traffic on two wheels, so I am respecting posted limits, especially on right-handers.

At this point you may be wondering why anyone, especially someone 72 years old,

would want to mount a rig that is constantly trying to kill the operator, so it would seem. I never have been a fast rider, but I have been fast enough, and I think good on two wheels, and still am. But at this age I find myself pushing less and relaxing more, enjoying the sights and smells, and savoring the mechanical symphony of motorcycling. The Ural provides not merely entertainment, but an adrenaline rush without hitting even 60 mph. A 35-mph right-hander at the posted speed is intimidating. So what am I doing?



complete with a long, flat and wonderfully comfortable bench seat.

People all over the world have been traveling on Urals for the past 80 years, with passenger and gear strapped to the sidecar nose, fender, and trunk on top of the spare wheel/tire, with 2.5 gallon gas cans front or rear and gear on the motorcycle as well in the knowledge that they may be among the slowest on the road, but at the same time fully engaged in an experience well removed from any other mode of transport.

I seek challenge, adventure at slower speed, and mechanical simplicity. The Ural, after all, is a 1930's BMW that meets today's EPA standards while still providing the airhead music of heavy-throttle, the quick torque from low rpm, and the delightful smoothness of the opposed boxer. Spin-on oil filter, simple valve check, and a satisfying clatter at slow speed, combine with classic, vintage good looks,

So, I hope, once I am skilled sufficiently to invite Maureen to climb into the chair, that we can enjoy sidecar runs to breakfast, lunch and dinner, and possibly across state lines. Who knows? We may still have some miles left in us on an airhead, after all.



The Ural's front end

The two inboard pedals are used to engage reverse.



Blue Ridge Parkway Introduction

Article and Photos by John Rice

Grandsons Ian, now 20, and Stuart, now 23 began riding on dirt bikes at age 3, graduating to street bikes upon obtaining their drivers' license at 16. Both aced their MSF training course and they both have had to endure the admonitions and tips their grandfather has gathered over nearly six decades in the saddle. The time had come for a motorcycle trip to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Older brother Stuart had a work schedule to contend with, so this one would have to be just two of us.

Though Ian has an eclectic collection of bikes, most are off-roaders, not really suitable for long distance travel. He had recently acquired a 1995 BMW R1100RS to rehabilitate, but didn't feel it was sufficiently proven to rely on far from home. So his 2005 Yamaha R6 would have to do, though many folks might say that such a dedicated sport bike is not the ideal choice for travel.

With some creative packing, Ian managed to get all of his travel necessities mounted up on the R6 with room enough for him as well. This first day, June 14th, would be mostly a "get there" effort, including as many twisty bits as we could work in, but enough interstate to get us around the urban sprawl efficiently. Route 60 to Ashland is a pleasant enough road, enough to keep one's interest. Just outside of town we detoured off to Boy Scout Road (there are lots of memories for me along this bit, from my Scout days way back when—now the camp for which the road is named is gone, replaced by a subdivision—to teen

years hooning around here on a motorcycle) then 168 to Catlettsburg . I keep looking up at the power line cuts along this road, paths that I once traversed to explore this countryside, with lots of flashbacks of doing things I will never do again. Behind me Ian is making new memories of things I think he will do again in his future. I-64 through Huntington, is still under construction...a permanent situation, it seems. We breezed through Charleston easily, not like the days before interstate. Back then, in the pre-EPA 60's, this was one of the most polluted areas in the nation, a cover story for magazines of the time. The river, now a serene brown ribbon under clear skies, looked back then like a technicolor paint store accident, and the air was a constant grayish-green smog. We left I-64 on the east side of Charleston and returned to two-lane Rt. 60 down to Gauley Bridge. At a gas stop, Ian announced that the 6-hour limit for his wrists had been reached and sat down by the pumps for the 15 minutes that suffices as complete rest when one is 20, then jumped up, ready for another 6 if necessary. . The sun was low, the good curves on. Rt. 16 and 39 were cool in deep shade, and one of us, not the young one, was getting a bit sleepy.

While my usual travel style is to never book ahead, just stopping when the time is right, for this trip in post-COVID times when many venues are closed, I elected to take that uncertainty out of Ian's first motorcycle travel experience. Our stop for the night was a nondescript chain motel in Summersville, WV, with

dinner at the next-door Applebees. Not adventurous, but sufficient on all counts.

Cruising these back roads in Appalachia, we see an endless succession of small towns dotted through these mountains, along the rivers. These built up because there was a reason for people to be here once. They developed along the same plan, the only one available, with the houses and commercial property along the edge of the mountain which rises high and



Ian's bike

sometimes vertical behind, then facing the road which lies alongside the railroad track in most cases and that is beside the river, following the only relatively level path through the wrinkles in the earth left by continental collisions that the early settlers had no way of knowing about. They just knew these hills or mountains as we called them here in the east because we had never been to the west yet.

I think about the life where one's whole world is defined by the narrow path between the obstacles of the river and the mountains. And yet the river and later the railroad track were both boundary and escape. Some of the ones who settled here, or their progeny, took that escape route and ventured away. Some stayed, even as these communities withered away into the faded-photograph version we are passing through.

The commercial properties are all abandoned now, some brick or stone buildings that once were a substantial promise of permanency, a statement of intention to make something lasting here. Not many houses seem occupied, suffering from "deferred maintenance". And as always, a proliferation of churches. Small and ubiquitous, close together in proximity and yet apparently far apart in dogma.

Tuesday, 6/15

Rt. 39 across WV is a gem, lots of curves through the shaded hills, little traffic and cool air to ride in. It takes us across the state in as easterly a way as the rivers allow, following their paths. We go through Marlinton, stopping at the restaurant by the water for a mid-morning snack. In this little motel/restaurant complex, built long before semiconductors ruled our lives, a computer snafu in their register means we can't check out, since no one has any change until the drawer can be opened, so this stop takes a lot longer than we had expected. Things look a bit familiar as we get into the area around Warm Springs, where Jay and I stayed when we did the MABDR several years ago. Our route takes us past Mrs. Rowe's Restaurant in Staunton, home of excellent pies, but we go on by leaving the good stuff to eat in preference for our intentions on getting to the good stuff to ride. Fishersville, where I spent a semester at the huge

Rehabilitation Center during graduate school, is unrecognizable to me now, nearly 50 years later. We skip lunch, since our snack seems to have tided us over, and after gassing up in Waynesboro, hit the Blue Ridge Parkway at 2:30 in the afternoon.

As expected, it is nearly perfect, always a respite from the “real world” as much as one can have in these COVID times. The curves are wonderful, the pavement mostly clean and except for a few deer and squirrels, the woods critters stay out of our way. It is late afternoon, so the deep shade is in many of the curves, making us slow down until we can see where it goes, but none of that can dampen the pleasure of being up here on these mountain ridges on a summer’s day. At the first overlook we stop at, Ian looks out across the valley far below and says it looks like a painting. It does, the soft afternoon light making the distant farms and fields appear to be an impressionist canvas, impossibly large, fit for a fine museum’s walls. My heart swells as I see that he really gets it.

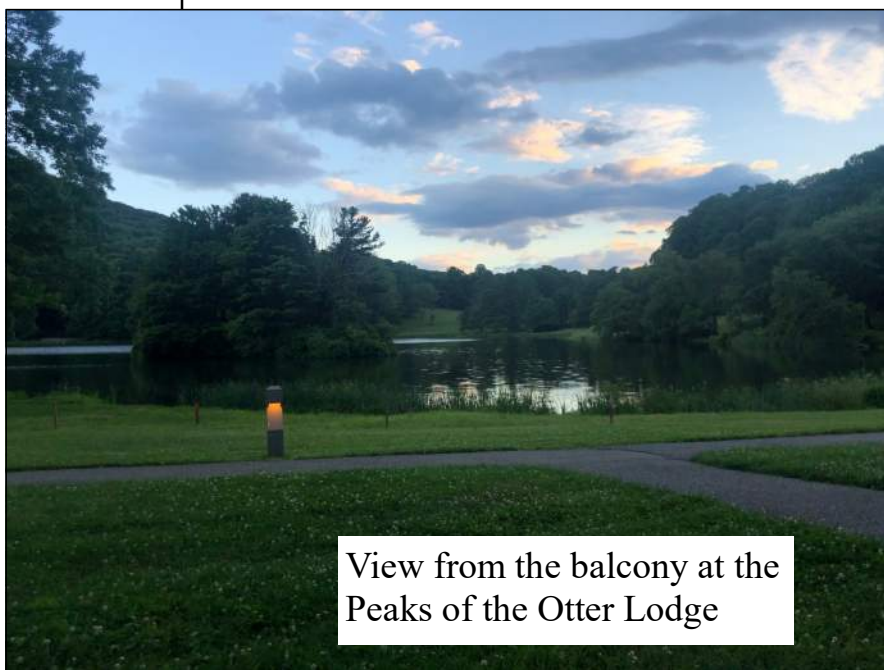
We get to the Peaks Of Otter Lodge at 5, ready to unload and have a splendid dinner overlooking the lake. Not so. When I booked the room, wary of pandemic changes, I specifically asked if the restaurant would be open and when that was affirmed, made sure that we were talking about full service. “Oh, no problem”, the reservation lady said, “we are back in business for the season.” She lied. The restaurant is closed on Monday and Tuesday with only “grab and go” sandwiches available. Several other guests are arriving, including some on BMW

motorcycles, with the same understanding as I had and all are, needless to say, not amused.

Still, this is a beautiful place to stay. Ian and I walk over to the lodge from our room, trying to get enough signal to let family know we’re still upright. The path around the lake is nice, the water shining; a wedding party is having photos made on the little pedestrian bridge near the water. Later we sit talking on our balcony as the sun goes behind the conical mountain and flashlights appear in the forest here and there. Ian and I decide these may be campers from the campground up in the hills but more likely are people from this lodge who expected dinner and are now foraging in the woods for food.

Wednesday, 6/16

Another day that didn’t go as expected, but a good day nonetheless. I think our old system of not making any firm plans is best, since then the plans are never thwarted. We got away from the lodge at 10, after shooting for



View from the balcony at the Peaks of the Otter Lodge

8. There was a short trip before breakfast over to Bedford for gas, and then breakfast took a



On the Parkway



long time to arrive, after which the waitress lost my credit card (it had slipped inside the little black vinyl sleeve they bring the check in.) By the time we got to the detour where the Parkway is closed due to a large landslide, sending us down to Roanoke, I knew we weren't going to make it to our room at Little Switzerland unless it was at a forced march. So instead we went by the BMW/Triumph/Ducati dealer at Ian's suggestion and spent a pleasant hour there. Ian found several bikes he has to have and fortunately, at his age he has time to make all that happen. Part of the display included some classic airhead BMW's, an R90/6 and an R100/7, mirroring the models currently found in Ian's and Stuart's collection, handed down from his grandfather and his great-uncle Jay. I called to cancel the Switzerland room and got one at the Ridgeway in Blowing Rock instead, allowing us to relax a bit. Rt. 221 back up to the Parkway was, as always, fabulous with little traffic and lots of lean angle achieved. Ian said he could just keep going back to the bottom and doing it over and over again. Heading south on the Parkway we were pretty much alone except for a couple of deer in different places to give us a bit of a scare. Mid afternoon munchies required a stop at Mabry Mill for Ian to get late lunch and me to have blackberry cobbler with ice cream.

By 6 PM we were up on the weaving ridges above Blowing Rock, by the Moses Cone House and dropped down the two mile road to our motel room. After stashing our stuff, we made a walking tour of the town and selected the Six Pence Pub for supper, followed by their exemplary apple pie for me and chocolate mousse cake for Ian.

Thursday, 6/16

Our least-favorite virus had closed "The Famous Toastery" breakfast spot, so our morning meal came at the Mexican place around the corner. Fortunately Rincon has good waffles and generous servings of scrambled eggs to keep us going for a while.

We ascended back to the Parkway, under clear blue skies, perfectly cool air blowing through our jackets and only some deer around here and there for company, seeming untroubled by our presence. Soon we came to the engineering marvel that is the Lynn Cove Viaduct, bringing back the recollection of a long ago motorcycle trip here with Ian's dad, then a teenager and Tom Sutherland with his daughter Laura. The viaduct was yet to be constructed in the mid-1980's when Tom and I took our children to the end of the road and watched as they walked on to peer over the edge of the void Ian and I are now crossing.

By midday we stopped at Little Switzerland, to peruse the little row of shops. I had a nice



Little Switzerland

conversation with the Swiss Army Knife lady, and after helping her open some samples, bought another souvenir knife for this trip. It's my new favorite. (My habit is to buy a SAK on significant motorcycle trips and then engrave the date and place on the handle. That kind of souvenir gets used frequently and doesn't need dusting.) More than a decade in the past Brenda and I had brought Ian and Stuart here on a car trip, so we stroll around the grounds to see what Ian remembers. He says his memories are from a perspective about two feet shorter. He had kept some photos from our previous trip here eleven years earlier and re-created the scenes for comparison. As tradition requires, we had lunch at the iconic Cafe around the corner where Ian tries some of their incomparable apple pie. As usual there are several motorcycles there, an eclectic grouping of sport bikes, BMW's, V-twin cruisers and a guy with a Ural rig complete with a big black dog wearing goggles.

From here, the Parkway is high, and the ridgelines are wonderful riding, challenging enough to keep one's attention after lunch.

We take the detour up to Mt. Mitchell where Ian and I recreated the walk he took with me up to the summit when he was 9. Somehow it was a lot easier, for me 11 years ago. Among the tourists on the observation deck at the top is a guy with

big aging Labrador Retriever. We comment to him that his is the highest dog in the eastern US right now and he smiles, though the Lab seems unimpressed by his status. The rustic cafe a short distance down from the top, the one that offered great peach cobbler with an unmatched view, is now COVID-closed, so we head back to the Parkway.

The southern end of the BRP is among the best riding anywhere with endless curves and deep broad valleys to glance across just for a second while looking for the next apex. There are elevation changes from the lowest by the river to the highest spot on the whole length, over 6,000 feet. Of course we had to stop there for the required photo of Ian and his touring sport bike with the sign. From there more ups and downs and lots of arounds until finally the long downhill begins that will take one back to the "real world" which is always something of a letdown.

We got to end of parkway about 6, then turned around and reversed the last 14 miles to get over to 19 to Waynesboro through the old-

school vacation area of Maggie Valley. After dropping our bags at the Oak Park Inn, we walked downtown for another superb meal at Frog's Leap. It's just a small place in a small town, but some of the best restaurant meals I have enjoyed have been at the Frog's Leap and to-



On top of Mt Mitchell

night's was one of those. Typically we arrive a bit earlier and have our pick of tables, but at this later hour, we had to sit at the bar. Only a small inconvenience for such a fine meal.

Friday, 6/18

In the AM, I get out to load up the bike and talk to some of the other riders at the motel. One guy had constructed some nice saddlebag racks for his Kawasaki sport tourer. Ian says they look like music stands. He's my age, has a DR 650 as well as the one he's on here and we spent some time comparing our histories. finding them quite similar, going from small bikes in our youth up the scale to large ones and then as age advances, back to small bikes again. We agree: Lighter is better.

We leave Waynesville on Rt209 AKA, in these days when roads must have serpentine names, "the Rattler". We make a stop at the Trusty market at the 63/209 junction just for a break, I have been making this trip in one direction or the other for many years, since the Sutherland brothers introduced me to it as the "back way" to Asheville, with lots of memories of this route on the old Green Bike with Ian's dad as pillion. The very tight section at the top, just before going down into Hot Springs, keeps us on our toes, heads swiveling to the next bend. Not so much lean angle up here, since the Parkway Elves that keep that road cleaned of debris don't work outside the park. There often is gravel just where you really don't want it.

By the time we get on to US 25 in Tennessee, we are close enough to home that the pull begins to be felt. There are slow cars here and there, but most of the nice wide sweeper curves are ours to enjoy. Up on top of Clinch Mountain, the traditional vinegar pie stop is closed, and looks a bit derelict so we move on.

Enjoy what you can when you can, because nothing stays the same. Dropping down the long hill into Tazewell, we are now on four lane, and can't even see the old meandering two lane down in the valley along the river. It's Ian's first trip through the long tunnel at Harrogate, which replaces the tight switchbacks over Cumberland Gap, and then on to Pine Mountain state park for a much needed (for the old guy, anyway) lunch break .

Out of Pineville we take Rt. 66 over the hills and into the shady lanes of the Redbird Forest. At Oneida, the day is getting late and we are hot, so we take 11 to 421 which is a good bike road still, not yet "improved" to remove all the curves. At Boonesboro, Ian splits off to go home, but later he rides the RS over to drop off the borrowed bag and, I think, just to prolong the trip a bit.

If this were a Hallmark movie, there would be some dramatic ending with lessons learned and a happy-ever-after fade to black and the commercial. But this is real life, so we just return to our everyday routines and contemplate when the next trip may happen while dealing with the stuff that has to fill our days when we aren't riding. Still, I am changed by the experience of having shared this time with a grandson, knitting up a sort of closure from my young days, Ian's dad's formative years, and now another generation going into a future that includes the love of motorcycling on these wonderful roads. Ian will make his own way into the future, find what he loves and what he doesn't and have experiences that may have similarities with mine but are his alone. Perhaps one day he will be telling this story to his grandchildren, sitting on a balcony overlooking a mountain while machines I can't even imagine await their next morning's ride.



Snack time at Marlinton, WV



The required "highest point" photo

FOR SALE

2012 BMW F650gs Twin (800cc Rotax Engine) 62K Miles

\$5,300 Always Garaged; New Battery 2021

ACCESSORIES;

BMW Side Cases, Top Case

BMW Engine Guard and Hand Guards

BMW Center Stand and Side Stand foot extender

Factory Heated Grips

Tire Pressure Monitor

Denali LED Lights with additional clear/yellow lens

Corbin Seat and Original Seat

Magura Hymec Hydraulic Clutch (and original clutch cable)

Auxiliary LED Tail/Brake Lights
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ROX Bar Risers

AeroFlow Faring and AeroFlow Headlight lens protector

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AntiGravity starting harness

Booster Plug Fuel Management

NOTE: New, never mounted Conti Trail Attack 2 and new D.I.D. Pro Street 525VX3 chain and new sprockets offered at significant price reduction to buyer.

Contact: Jay Smythe Email:
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THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THINGS SEEM TO FALL IN PLACE
 WHEN WE ALL ARE ARE AHEAD IN THE HUMAN RACE,
 WE MEET WITH OUR FRIENDS AND GAZE AT OUR SCOTTS,
 ON SATURDAY MORNINGS WE FIND OUR ROOTS...



Here's the Group for today:

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

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