

February 2022

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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



Taking a break on VA 16



# 2021 Last Hurrah

By John Rice

We thought we could get in one last trip in late November when a brief respite from the cold appeared on the Weather Channel. Jay had an appointment on Wednesday, so we left on Sunday with three days, two nights at our disposal.

Jay is on his XT250, since the required side-stand parts for his G310R have not yet arrived. (They were “overnighted” last week, but shipped by FED-EX, whose motto is “you’ll get it when you get it.”). I am riding the G310GS, the “Baby GS” that is rapidly becoming a favorite.

The first part of the journey is always the getting out of the familiar home ground, going down Rt. 15 through Clay City and Stanton, with some good curvy bits here and there, like an often ordered appetizer before the main meal. We made sure to stay on “old 15”, now renamed 205, to avoid the 4-lane this road has become in parts.

On a Sunday afternoon in Jackson, there isn’t much on offer for lunch except the usual suspects in the fast food lineup. We choose the

Subway as the lesser of evils and find that the fare is actually pretty good in the overall pantheon of gas station meals. I recommend the “protein bowl” with some added jalapeños.

South of Jackson, we took the elusive 1098, following it on across 80 and into the hills around Hindman.

Using a DeLorme map book, I had loosely put together a mix of numbered routes all over eastern Kentucky with no particular plan to it, other than to stay in the hollers on the twisty bits as much as possible. If plotted on a sheet of paper, I’m sure our path would have resembled the EKG of a man having a heart attack.

Many of these roads are literally paved trails and animal paths, worn into the hills over millennia and then furnished with asphalt when the technology and the collective will to do it became available. Rural electrification made habitation feasible and these hollers filled up with modern housing, much of it the mobile home variety, to replace the cabins of settlers (many of whom were my ancestors). I marvel at the ingenuity and grit that it must have

**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**





Curves to the right  
and left of us.

taken to get some of these large metal boxes into the positions they now occupy way down below or high above the road surface, often seeming to cling to their hillside spots by tenacity more than engineering.

By day's end, we need to find a place to sleep and eat, so wind up in Pikeville at the Landmark hotel. Over the course of two careers I have visited Pikeville periodically for more than 50 years, but the changes wrought by the "Big Dig" have made it largely unrecognizable to me now. It's not often that one sees a city that moved a mountain and a river to accommodate its needs and the places I recall from those early days just aren't where they were before by my old reference points. One exception is the Landmark Hotel, which still occupies its spot, though now surrounded by new highways linking this town to the rest

of the world. I have memories of this hotel in its heyday when it was The Place to stay. Back then, when this was the go-to place for coal operators and businessmen, the fourth floor restaurant was a white-tablecloth place with an eclectic menu of quite good dishes. Now it offers a Mexican bill of fare, still quite good, but not the same ambiance. The main clientele for the lodgings seem to be folks making use of the medical center next door. The hotel is showing its age, but still a nice place to rest for the night and the desk clerk told us to leave our bikes under the reception awning.

The hotel restaurant doesn't serve breakfast now and there isn't anyplace within walking distance, so we are out on the bikes in the morning cold, up to Bob Evans for breakfast. On arrival, the lot was empty, with us the only





Bikes undercover  
at the Landmark

VA16 is a premier road, up one side of a mountain, down the other, rinse and repeat, with hardly a straight stretch to catch one's breath. In other words, motorcycle nirvana.

Perhaps mind-muddled by all the twisting, I missed a turn in North Tazewell, which sent us hungry into the suburbs where we ended up having another Subway lunch, then backtracking a mile or two to find the missed intersection. The correct turn took us into the Tazewell Historic District which had lots of dining places we should have tried. Have to save those for next time.

Rt. 16 continues to go up, down and around

customers at 7. A few sleepy looking stragglers came in as we ate our eggs.

This will be an easy navigation day, with only a few road numbers to worry about. The DeLorme has us going down 460 again, with a short 4-lane section and then back to curves along the river. At Grundy, VA we pick up 83, that wonderfully winds its way up across a mountain, then back into the valleys where we are looking for VA16.

Virginia is split horizontally in this part by a mountain range with few roads other than an interstate to cross it directly north to south.

and around, leaving us with our necks sore from head turning and our minds spinning with the sheer wonder of it all. Going over Mt. Rogers, the highest point in Virginia, we made a brief stop at an overlook in Hungry Mother State Park for a tree inspection and just to get our bearings back after all the curves. We were on a bit of this road with the MABDR in 2018 on the XT 250's and said we would have to come back. As we left the overlook, the low sun was blinding us in some of the corners, but we can't stop going....this is just too much fun.





The view from  
Mt. Rogers



In Hungry Mother  
State Park







In the middle of Virginia

At 603, we take a diagonal that we hope will go across Mt. Rogers, but it is down in the valley instead. Still pretty good and we actually do need a short break from endless curves. The road joins 58 another legendary motorcycle path, right at the point where it turns up the mountain to White Top, the beginning of the Va Creeper Trail. But we are going the other direction on 58, to Abingdon, where we have chosen a room at “The Martha”. The sun is beginning to sink below the mountain ridges as we go through Damascus and continue on, looking into its rays as we come to Abingdon.

So far the XT250, on semi-knobby tires (the same ones it wore on Moab trails earlier this year) and with Jay at the controls, has chewed up all these curves and swallowed them whole. My 310 GS is doing well also, but then it is supposed to be good at this. The little XT is like the bantam weight fighter who

shows up at the heavyweight match and cleans house.

We check in at “The Martha” (formerly the Martha Washington Inn) in Abingdon, not our usual lodging but hey, it’s a November trip and we will splurge a little. Turns out that with the included discount for the restaurant, the cost for this fancy place isn’t much more than a chain motel where we would have to suit up and ride to dinner rather than just walking downstairs. As I’m carrying my gear into the lobby, wearing my tattered hi-viz Aerostitch jacket and my helmet, a guest going out the door asks me anxiously, “is there a fire?”

The Martha is across the street from the Barter Theater, a farm-team spot for some of the best actors in the business. Brenda and I have seen two plays here over the years and both were excellent. None of that for Jay and I to-

night, though. After this day, we are ready for food and bed.

Dinner is at the Sisters Restaurant in the lower level of the hotel where our ebullient waitress, who says she just turned 50, can recite through her mask an impressive dessert menu, complete with descriptions of each dish, from memory. I order a spinach salad with salmon just so I'll have room for the made-here apple cobbler and ice cream. In my younger days I might have ordered two of the desserts, but now I'll just have to wait for a return trip.

Tuesday morning, it is cold but clear in the Virginia mountains. Breakfast in these pandemic times is "continental" meaning that everything is prepackaged and served buffet style. Still, because this is "The Martha" it is a bit better than basic so we are sufficiently filled up without having to leave the premises. A family seated over by the wall have a gigantic German Sheppard under their table and I nearly throw my granola and yogurt on the ceiling when the animal decides one sudden loud bark is necessary to announce his presence. Wasn't expecting that down here in the quiet confines of Sisters.

Out by 9, still in the high 30's but warming quickly, as we head east on 11 for 5 miles to get to 80 which will take us through two states. It began as a tortured asphalt line, weaving its way around hills that seemed to be put there just to form the most difficult path for a road to follow. Trying to keep any sort of pace had me head-turning, on the brakes, off the brakes on the throttle and shifting the little 310's transmission like some frantic lab rat hitting the bar for a pleasure stimulus. At one mountain descent the road became a narrow path of fresh asphalt with no shoulder, as in "none whatsoever" like a California canyon

road, meaning that a miscalculation would result in dropping off over a high, very nearly vertical cliff. After that wake-up, Rt 80 finally settled down into a continuous flowing set of bends, the kind we can handle without the seat clenching.

At the KY border the road remains the same number but quickly would have become a four lane thoroughfare, so we chose 197, sign-posted as "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine" from Elkhorn City down to Jenkins. The Trail follows a rocky creek's path, lined no doubt with gloomy conifers pining for company..though there seems to be an awful lot of them. Perhaps they are all introverts, alone in a crowd.

Lunch is at the Pine Mountain Inn at Whitesburg, along with what seemed to be the entire town's population. We stay masked. It is a buffet today, where an older lady in a bright pink sweater, pearls dangling around her neck, is selecting individual pieces of lettuce at the salad bar, holding each one up in the tongs for visual inspection and placing in her bowl only those which pass muster. She continued down the line in this careful deliberate manner at each offering, ending up with what one must assume was the Perfect Salad. I was impressed by the precision, and watching the performance was worth the time it took.

We met Melissa who saw our helmets and stopped by our table to talk bikes and touring. She and her husband are running "Backroads of Appalachia" a touring and promotion group to increase motorcycle tourism in the area. They have obtained permission to name the road over the mountain one of the serpentine monikers given to the twisty bits all over these southern hills to attract riders. She told us she rides a sport bike and really likes the curves. Check out their [Facebook](#) page or [website](#) for



further details.

The day was getting late in this post-time-change situation and the sun would be setting in just a few hours (as Randy Scott would have said, we were “burning daylight”) so we took 15 north just to put some miles behind us in the right direction. It has a few undulations but in this section mostly it’s just a highway. Above Hazard we turned off on 28 to meander on some more bends through the hills going west, passing by the picturesque Buckhorn

Lake state park with a promise to return for lunch sometime.

Eventually, as the sun was getting low in the now-cloudy sky, temperature dropping fast, we rejoined 15 where it starts to get good again and pushed on for home. These last miles are my backyard, but still enjoyable. Tomorrow we will be back in our usual routines, not motorcyclists stealing a last bit of pleasure from the winter. At least until the next brief window opens.

### The Martha—Unique Photography







IN THE WINTERTIME, THE BLUEGRASS BEEMERS,  
TURN INTO "BLUEGRASS DREAMERS",  
THEY MAY SEE A MIRAGE,  
BIKES IN THE GARAGE,  
THEY COULD THEN BECOME "BLUE GRASS SCREAMERS"...



Here's the group for today:

- \* 1). Mitch Butler
- \* 2). John Kue
- 3). Ray Roubett & Eddie
- 4). Jim Brandon
- 5). Tom Sutherland
- 6). Mike Gail
- 7). Joe Barker
- 8). Chester Martin
- 9). Boone Sutherland
- \* 10). Robbie Carter
- \* 11). Ryan King
- 12). Pete Galakis
- 13). Ron Adkins
- 14). Paul Elwyn
- 15). Ron Blackburn
- 16). Chris Warner
- 17). Bill Vase
- 18). Danny Phillipin
- 19). Randy Scott
- 20). Gary Miller (16-0 1972) friend of Ryan (Robbie)
- 21). Biff Buckley (bought Boone R1100RS)
- 22). Bob Gass
- 23). Jeff Crabbe
- 24). Charlie Norton
- 25). David Sparkman
- 26). Bob Etz corn
- 27). Steve Bishop
- 28). Russell Travis
- 29). Darlene Huffman

*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