

July 2022

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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



By Bluestone Lake

2022 West Virginia Nostalgia Tour

By John Rice

When this started, my intention, really more of an excuse for an extended ride somewhere in the first sort-of-nice April days of spring, was to follow the path of my first real over-night motorcycle trip, from 1965.

My memory is no doubt incomplete after more than a half century, but as I recall it, two friends and I set out from Ashland on that trip one early summer day, with no preparation and no real plan other than to ride down to Keystone, West Virginia to visit some relatives of one of our number. He, Billy, was on a 60cc “Allstate” two-cycle “dual sport” (though that term had not yet been coined), George was on a well-worn early 60’s Harley Davidson (really a re-badged Italian Aermacchi) 250cc Sprint and I rode my equally-early 60’s Ducati Monza 250, the one I had purchased for peanuts from a young man who had had his fun with it, but was now preparing for family life. For people exercising good sense, none of these machines, in their current state of preparation and mechanical repair should ever have left the city limits of Ashland. We hadn’t gotten far into the West Virginia hills when the battery box on the side of the Sprint flipped open its door as George leaned over for a turn in front of me and the battery fell out, looking like one of those bombardier scenes in an old war movie. The battery hit the pavement, skidded on its side as I dodged it, and sat there, apparently unharmed. We got it back in the bike, which ran on as if nothing had happened.

Billy’s bike, I remember all 60cc of it, ran flawlessly though being flogged to within an inch of its capacities, just requiring frequent stops to replenish its small gas tank with fuel and oil mixed from the convenient little cup on the underside of the gas cap. In these modern times, internet experts would opine at great lengths upon the only correct oils to use in this two-cycle engine, but we of course put in there whatever was cheapest on the rack at the service station.

My Ducati soldiered on, oblivious to everything I threw at it. My maintenance routines in those teenage years, tended more toward

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Join us at Frisch’s on Harrodsburg Rd.
in Lexington, Kentucky on any Saturday, 8-9:00 a.m.

BMW Club
Bluegrass Beemers





Tree inspection stop in West Virginia

the cosmetic than the mechanical, but except for the troublesome shifter return spring, which remained intact on this errand by the grace of whatever spirits watch out for fools, it gave me no problems that I now recall.

Upon arriving in Keystone, it became apparent, (in adult hindsight, that is, we young boys didn't see that at the time) that Billy's relatives had not been expecting us, much less expecting overnight guests. In that same hindsight, I don't remember that we had given any real thought to the fact that we could not make the trip in one day and would be spending the night somewhere. I don't recall any of us bearing any sort of bag with extra clothing or toiletries. Being Ap-

palachian folks, however, his relatives were accommodating hosts and did find room for us and a meal was prepared. We three shared a small spare room hastily cleared out for the night, sleeping in our clothes across the same bed.

There were some girls there, one a cousin of Billy and a couple of her friends, another development we had not anticipated. Keystone and its neighboring towns being tiny, without much new to offer, the girls found us to be interesting oddities, worth checking out. We, the six of us, walked up road beside the railroad tracks to the city limits, both ways, which took only a few minutes each direction, a chaste errand but exciting I

think to all concerned because of its novelty. At 16, none of us boys had much experience with girls and these girls finally had the company of someone they hadn't known since childhood.

The return trip included me pulling George's bike several miles with mine, using bungee cords, after his chain broke. While in tandem this way, we were stopped in a long line of traffic awaiting the clearing of a landslide that blocked part of the road. An ambulance came rushing up, lights flashing and siren blaring, and the construction crew waved it on through...with us following close behind. Stupid, I know now, but then it seemed like the thing to do. This being mining country, we quickly found a replacement master link at a mine supply shop in Logan and on we went. As the writer G.K. Chesterton put it, "For what is adventure but inconvenience rightly considered?"

For this nostalgia errand, I left on an early April Thursday morning, after the huge rainstorms that had blanketed the Eastern US had moved on. Though the storms had dissipated, the skies were still overcast and the roads thoroughly wet. Instead of a derelict Italian 250cc, coughing its gasoline through a worn out carburetor, inadequate brakes acting on questionable tires, "suspension" in name only, I am today on a marvel of modern technology, a BMW G310GS, with ABS, fuel injection and tires that offer traction we couldn't have dreamed about in 1965. But back then, youth knew no impediment to adventure, now old age needs all the help it can get.

Since I no longer live near our original starting point, I took Rt. 60 to Morehead, al-

ways a pleasant ride, quite familiar but never boring. I turned down Rt. 32 and, unusually, had this motorcycle nirvana road all to myself clear to Louisa. However, the wet pavement kept me from challenging any of the hundreds of delicious curves that ridgeline route has to offer.

From Louisa, I crossed the river bridge (the one with the stoplight and intersection in the middle) over to Ft. Gay, West Virginia, getting me nearer to the initial part of the route we teenagers took, without going to Huntington and down through some urban sprawl and subdivisions that have sprung up over the ensuing half-century-plus. West Virginia 37 winds around, going north and east to get me south, and despite some seriously broken up places, it is a pretty good motorcycle route. By mid-afternoon, I connected with Rt. 10, the path we had taken all those years ago and started down through the hills.

Rt. 10 has been "improved" over the years and now is a four lane part of the way, following a different path on the opposite side of the river. I wandered around a bit, finally finding some remnants of the original, but the one I wanted was closed after only a few miles sometimes reappearing as a short loop connecting a few houses back to the new road. Still, it was a pleasant ride alongside the river.

I don't recall specifics of a lot of the details of our original route, (teenagers aren't usually big on scenery) but frequently a particular sight, a curve, a building, an approach into a small town, triggers a sudden memory and I can see it again across the handlebars of that old Ducati.

I did manage to locate “Rita” West Virginia, even though the signs for it have been removed or fallen apart. My GPS (I don’t think we even carried a map on the original trip) still showed it as my location when I came upon the railroad track crossing. Now, as then, I came to a fairly sharp bend where the road suddenly turns to cross the tracks at an almost perpendicular angle, then proceeds along the river bank for a short distance and then makes a similar crossing again. Back in the 60’s, there was a sign at both of those crossings proclaiming this to be Rita, but I never saw any indication of habitation between them. Just the steep bank going down to the river on one side and an equally steep hill ascending above the tracks on the other. I smiled back then to think that I had passed through the smallest possible town, population apparently zero, and I did so again today.

Finally in late afternoon I reached Keystone, or what is left of it. I made a couple of passes through the Main Street alongside the railroad track and down the lane on the other side of the tracks, but I could not locate the house where Billy’s relatives lived. There is a vague sense of what I recall, suggesting that my memory is incomplete and/or the area has changed. There are few open businesses in today’s Keystone, just closed and boarded up buildings with signs in faded paint to tell what used to be.

Unlike our first trip, I found a room all my own at a small motel in Princeton with dinner, not perhaps as authentic and home-cooked as before, at the Applebee’s, less than a hundred yards away.

The weather channel folks now were predicting another massive storm, moving in tonight to blanket West Virginia. Funny, that wasn’t in the predictions when I left. So I aborted the second leg of this trip that was going to take me deeper into the state and then back across it to get home Saturday. Instead I will pick up Rt. 3, north of here, and take its diagonal across to Huntington and then, tail between my legs, skedaddle home before the rain hits. I don’t mind riding in rain when necessary, but this wasn’t that trip.

Rt. 20 up to 3 is a pleasant road, fairly smooth by West Virginia standards, and for a time it follows a former river, now Bluestone Lake, until it finally splits off, away from the water and back up into the hills.

From its diversion with 20, Rt. 3 makes a sort of direct line across the state, following the paths of water and railroads where it can, meandering up switchbacks to cross a mountain when it must...which here in the Mountain State, is often.

The rest of the day becomes a blurred montage of curves, trees and small clusters of houses and former businesses now defunct, one after another. Before interstates made it too easy to get to the bigger cities, each of these communities was self-contained, offering residents most of what they needed on a daily basis.

Since “mom & pop” restaurants now seem to be an endangered species down in this part of the country, lunch is only a brief stop at a Subway inside a gas station where the eager young man behind the counter obviously is trying to figure out what my unusual outfit of bright yellow jacket and battered gray pants with sagging knee armor on a be-



Nap Stop

draggled senior citizen might signify. When I leave, he is outside smoking a cigarette and looks up, surprised, as he sees me mount the motorcycle. Half an hour later, I'm getting sleepy and spend twenty minutes napping on a picnic table at a roadside park that shows up exactly when it is needed.

I reached Huntington about 3pm and, hanging my head in curvy-road-loving-motorcyclist shame, I select the 6 or so miles of interstate to get around it and into Catlettsburg, Kentucky from which I could pick up Rt. 168 and head for home. Rt. 60, where I began this journey, becomes a familiar route there, including some of my favorite curves that never get old no matter how often I enjoy them.

In the five decades since that first overnighter, I have managed to motorcycle in the 49 continental US states, and in 16 foreign

countries, above and below the equator and in both the eastern and western hemispheres. I have seen the sunrise over the Tasman Sea from a bike's saddle, ridden two-up with my wife on a rough, red-dirt road from South Africa into Swaziland, taken a motorcycle through a hurricane in Nova Scotia, shared tiny back roads with flocks of brightly painted Scottish sheep and traveled down the fabled California coast on two-wheeled motorcycles and on sidecar rigs. Those travels and the many bikes that have served them could not have been on my teenage radar back then when the future was just a murky unformed concept. But I know that first trip irrevocably changed my direction, informed me that exploration by motorcycle was "a thing" that one could actually do and that it was the thing I must do. I have been following that seductive call ever since.



was 3 Garglous ☺
55° F

7/5/97

THERE'S FIRE IN THE SKY, IT'S THE FOURTH OF JULY,
IT'S AMERICA'S CELEBRATION,
PUT ON YOUR BOOTS, TAKE A RIDE ON YOUR SCOOTERS,
BEWARE OF MISINFORMATION...?



Here's the group for today:

- * 1). Herbert Burton
- * 2). Chester Martin
- * 3). Jim Brandon
- * 4). Paul Elmyer
- * 5). Bill Voss †
- * 6). Joe Bork
- * 7). John Rice
- * 8). Randy Seath
- * 9). Boone Sutherland
- * 10). Richard Smith
- * 11). Alan Pinderexter
- 12). Pete Galskis
- 13). Tom Sutherland
- * 14). Pat Patterson
- * 15). Charlie Norton
- * 16). Ben Prewitt
- * 17). Phillip Baugh †
- * 18). Jeff Crabbe
- * 19). Steve Bishop
- * 20). Tom Keller
- * 21). Darlene Huffman

Boone

22). Gary Huffman

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