

December 2022

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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



Ian, Stuart & John inside the Museum—Photo by Megan

2022 BARBER VINTAGE FESTIVAL

By John Rice

This was a long-awaited trip, down to the Barber Motorcycle Museum and race track for the annual Vintage Festival. What had been a regular event was scuttled by COVID for us since 2019.

This year, brother-in-law Jay and I would go down by motorcycle on Wednesday, making a two-day excursion on two lanes instead of a 6 hour interstate ordeal. Retirement has its perks. My grandsons Ian and Stuart, with Stuart's partner Megan, would join us via car on Thursday night.

I had a last minute change of mount for me, when I discovered to my embarrassment while cleaning it that the G310GS's chain appeared to be too worn for extended travel. With a quick prep, the Suzuki DR650 is always able to step into the breach.

We began down Rt. 68 through the Palisades, a feel-good experience, and past Shakertown, which sparked a sudden craving for lemon pie.

"Modern" Rt. 68 remains a pleasant two lane for most of our way, interrupted only a bit by

"improvements" (depending on one's perspective) until we turned off at Gravel Switch to pick up the old road. This place always brings back to mind my first ride on the 1970's era Harley Sportster Jay owned in 1980, when we traded briefly my 500cc Suzuki Titan for his HD right here to experience each other's ride. The first sharp bend we came to brought a two word scatological exclamation into my helmet as I realized that the brakes were wooden and the handling was more like moose-wrestling than any motorcycle riding I had ever done. I was immediately respectful of Jay's ability to coerce this thing into turns.

None of that today, though, as these bikes we are on now are far more refined for the purpose of enjoying curvy roads.

"Mom & Pop" local restaurants are a vanishing breed these days, so after scouting a couple of small towns without result, we headed for Burkesville along the creek road, 704, to Alma's House where we had lucked into good food and excellent pie earlier this year on another excursion. Alas, Alma's is closing in December, the victim of the times we live in

**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**



when fast is valued more than good. The meal was still quite fine, but no pie to be had. The place is running on fumes, getting ready to stop and I guess pie was the first thing to go.

From there down into Tennessee, the road flattens out and gets wider, accommodating the big trucks that ply this section. There were some nice wide sweeper turns, but they were pleasant exceptions. We made a fuel stop to experience the World's Most Frustrating Gas Pump (strange instructions in such small print that we could not make out the meaning and a slow, slow drip from the nozzle) and then a cruise into Manchester, Tennessee to find a room.

The Comfort Suites offered us clean beds with a nearby restaurant (O'Charley's, but not bad) and a convenience store that had the fuse Jay needed for his heated gear plug.

Thursday morning, we are out in the cold after "breakfast" at the motel. We found Rt. 16, then immediately had a highway repair detour that took us on a loop out into the countryside for an interesting diversion. The roads down here in southwest Tennessee are mostly flat and rifle-barrel straight, such that encountering a curve is surprising.

The long beeline stretch leading south into Alabama was park-like, a shaded tunnel of asphalt between stands of tall trees that seemed endless. We saw our first armadillo casualty just before we ran out of Tennessee. Cotton fields ("100% cotton t-shirts, some assembly required") started above the border and continued into the southern state.

We crossed the impossibly wide Tennessee River, where it becomes the Guentersville Lake system and spent some nice time riding alongside the shore with the glittering water

peeking in and out of the tree line and between the impressive houses. We cruised through the town of Guentersville and found lunch at the waterfront development. Two of the places are closed, but fortunately it is "Another Broken Egg" Cafe that is open. Our young, multiply-pierced server brings me shrimp and grits that are awfully close to as good as the benchmark Stinky & Coco's were. Jay has heuvos rancheros, which he tells me are fine as well.

From there down to our destination at Pelham is an exercise in avoiding Birmingham's sprawl to stay on two lane country roads. The paper maps get routes tangled at this level near a big city, so at one point I resorted to the GPS, telling it to find us an "adventurous" route avoiding all highways. Lots of turns ensued, but the electronic gizmo did a pretty good job of staying away from urban traffic.

We arrived at the motel at 3 and had an early dinner at 5. Yes, we are getting old, just shy of going for the 4 o'clock "early bird specials".

Stuart, Ian and Megan arrived a little after 9PM, having left Lexington for the 6 hour trip after 2 in the afternoon. Ah, youth!

The group gathered for breakfast at Cracker Barrel next door, then set off to the track in sunshine and cool temperatures. The two lane path up to the event is shaded and as we get nearer, anticipation is high after a three year hiatus.

We parked up at the museum, where lots of bikes were gathered, mostly older men, but some folks in the younger demographics, which is an encouraging sign. As always, an interesting eclectic selection of machines was arranged around the circle in front of the en-



Museum Parking

trance, including an immaculate Henderson four cylinder and a minibike that looks like a VW Beetle fender on wheels.

The five of us made a quick run through the museum as an appetizer. This is Ian's 4th trip here, but one cannot see it all in one take, no matter how often one visits. While the current generation is being overwhelmed by the plethora of exhibits, I listen in on conversations of men 10 years either side of my 74, memories of things done with these bikes back in the day. Younger folks are impressed by the machines but without the connection to them that came from personal experience in a distant time when these were state of the art sporting transportation, part of a life that no longer exists in this modern world.

Stuart is walking around with his large, old-school professional film cameras, long lenses, taking film shots, using a different kind of past technology here in this museum.

Outside, on the tram, a man about my age with an English accent noticed my Isle of Man t-shirt and asked when I'd been there. When I



Downstairs at the Museum

told him “1994”, he said he had raced at the Isle in the 70’s as a young man and once ran out of gas just a few miles from the finish. The tram stopped and everyone got off before I had a chance to get more information. I might have seen his name in the reports back then when I was young and following such exotic happenings via magazines, dreaming of a time when I could see it first-hand.

The tram takes us out to the swap meet, for the traditional walking of the aisles. I don’t need any projects now and have nothing to look for, so it is a very different experience from past years. I still like seeing the old stuff, bringing back memories, seeing people walking along with big smiles, holding some rusted piece of metal that is just the thing they were seeking here, plans being made in their heads for what this find will add to their project.

I stopped to visit the “Tool Guy” who is always there, buying the little three-inch Vice Grips that fit easily into bike tool kits, and a three foot long “grabber” which i hope will reduce the amount of bending I have to do to pick up stuff I drop in the shop (and which immediately brings out the 12 year old boy in anyone who holds it, compelling one to reach out and snag a friend’s shoelace, t-shirt or hat).

Up on the wooded hill between the swap meet and the race course for a bit, our quintet sits in the shade on rocks that nature put here just for this purpose, watching bikes practice on the track. I tell them about the air show that was here for one of the first years of this event, with WW II fighter aircraft strafing Charlotte the giant spider by the pits. (Charlotte was unfazed)



In the woods overlooking the track.
Nature put these stones here for us to watch the practice



In the “Century Race” bikes have to be at least 100 years old. The pace leaves some time for conversation on the track.

The two senior members of our group were starting to fade by afternoon, and headed out at 4, leaving the young ones there.

As I was getting suited up to ride away, I talked with two guys from Georgia on 70's era Kawasaki 750 triples. They trailered in from their homes and then rode 10 miles to the track. These were literally awesome machines back in the day, with unprecedented power delivery for that time in a street bike. The 500cc triple version had dominated the street racing scene in America for a few years and then someone at Kawasaki said, “let's make it even more powerful and make the power come on all in a big rush! That'll get 'em excited!” It did. I recall the scary experience of riding Rick Keelin's back then, having some difficulty keeping the front wheel on the ground while exploring the bike's performance.

There is a seafood place next to our motel, offering good catfish. We went to bed, too full, listening to the sounds of cheers and shouts from the Pitbull concert at the amphitheater a quarter mile away.

Saturday morning is colder, still clear, as we trek back up to Barber. We perused the manufacturers' test ride center near what had been the Ace Cafe Hill. The Yamaha group had already departed, with only the XT 250 left behind like the kid who doesn't get chosen for playground games. Little do they know of its superpower, so much enjoyment in a small package.....

BMW is still pushing the new R18 model in many guises. (In the infield booth there is one in chopper form). Zero has come a long way from it's “bicycle with an electric motor” beginnings, now full size motorcycles with lug-

gage and all the accoutrements of touring and adventure, but still that eerie silence when the fleet left for the test ride. I like it, but that window probably has closed for me.

the Skyline Drive, who apparently is still traveling all over the country on his red 250 Vespa scooter. He's older than us,, probably 80 at least, and had stopped by this booth ear-



Zeroes Demos

KTM has some nice machines, but again, stuff I cannot make good use of now on or off road. I'm a bit taller than average, but would need a stepladder for some of the "ready to race" dirt versions.

Back in the swap meet, Stuart found his sought-after Ducati front fender, still attached to some forks of undetermined provenance. His cafe racer project 250 is one step closer to completion.

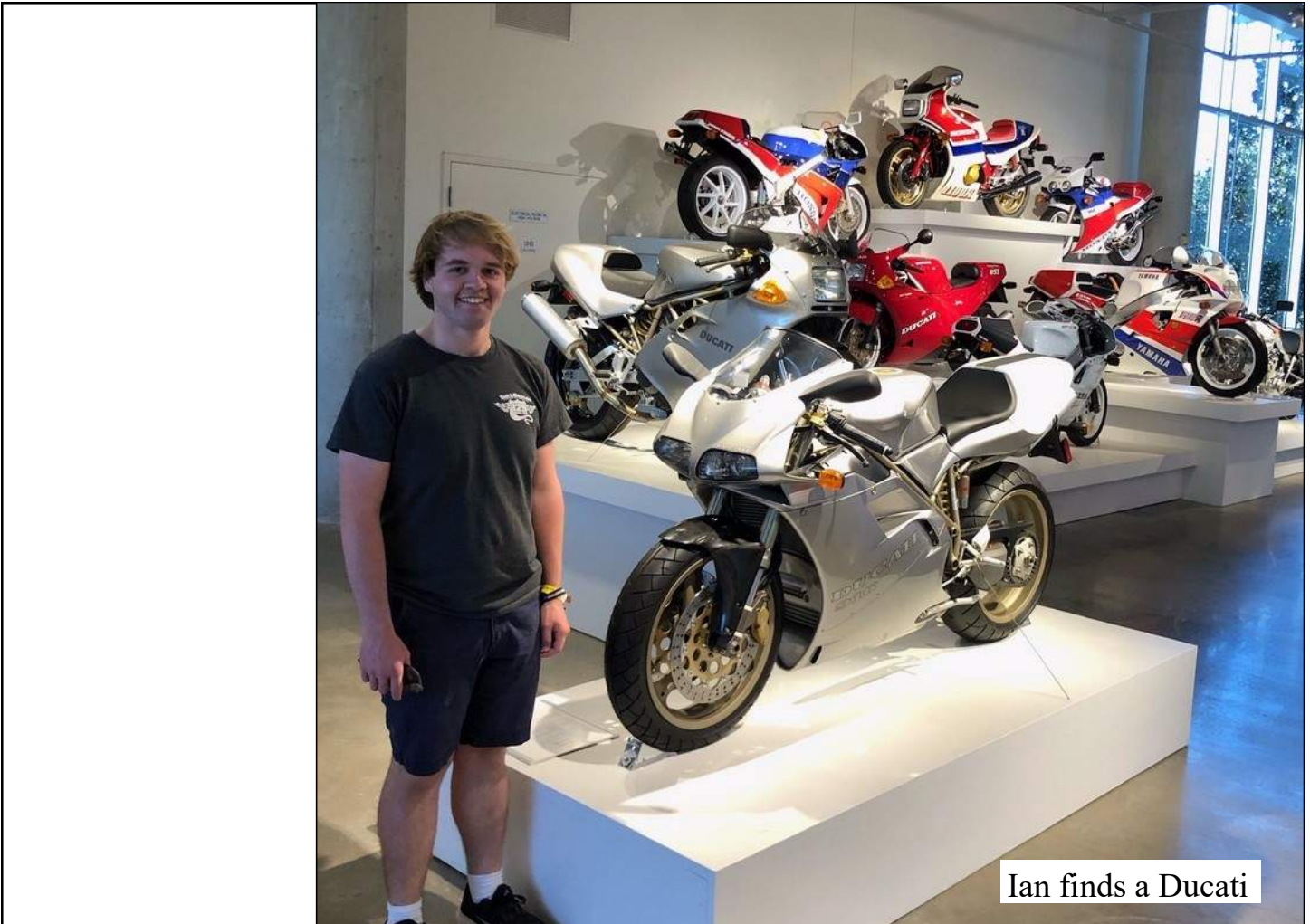
Ian, who has recently acquired a Ducati 748, instantly can spot any iteration of that bike and its brethren from 100 yards away.

At the Vespa booth in the infield, Jay and I talked with the representative about "Captain Gary", the fellow we met a few years ago on

lier in the event. I really like the 300 version, and can see one in my future after swinging a leg over a saddle becomes too far a reach. And yes, I will want the wicker basket on the luggage rack.

Jay and I ate lunch at a food truck near the Wall of Death and the Globe of Death. (Despite the morbid names, there were no fatalities on our watch.) I recall our first trip here, nearly 20 years ago, when Brenda and I had looked up from our meals to see George Barber himself bussing tables. No such luck this time.

Just being here, in this setting, the constant sound of racing motorcycles in the ears everywhere, throngs of people enjoying the same thing I do, is wonderful. There is a sense of



Ian finds a Ducati



Sidecars in
the Cafe



Barber Museum

Stuart, Megan, and a
Silver Shotgun 250



shared community even though, on the bell-shaped curve, folks at the opposite ends are not really getting each other's idea of the thing, but all are within the group that enjoys this place.

Out across the bridge from the museum over the track with Stuart, Megan and Ian for a walk through the woods and for me, a short nap in the folly. At one point I am walking behind, watching the three young ones strolling ahead, talking among themselves, and I am thinking how wonderfully lucky I am to be here with them, sharing this. The four of us are alone in this mini-forest, with its paved path stamped here and there with art work and the occasional whimsical sculpture to catch the eye and bring a smile. Everywhere around us is the obvious result of a man with a vision and the resources to make it happen. This place makes money, I'm sure, at least enough to keep it going, but it is first of all a passion project, an example that the primary idea does not have to be profit. Mr. Barber wanted to make something beautiful and he did. I hope it lasts.

In the late afternoon, Jay and I hung out on some couches on the top floor of the museum for a bit, resting our feet, while the young folks continued to wander through this incredible place. A human cannot take it all in at one session. The mind shuts off discrimination after a while, like trying to listen to a conversation in a roaring crowd or pick out an individual face in Times Square on New Year's Eve.

That evening, the ever resourceful Megan located for us dinner at the Margarita Grille, an excellent Mexican restaurant near our motel, a few cuts above the usual fare. A very good food Burrito Loco for me, with only the too

loud singer right behind our table to stunt our conversations about the day's events.

On Sunday, Jay left at 7:00 heading home for other family obligations. The rest of us went back to the swap meet, just in case we had missed anything. At one booth, we talked with a guy who had a Ducati 250 for sale, and another with an Alpina, reminiscing about experiences with these machines. We watched some races, but had arrived too late for the sidecars, "We'll see them next year!" Sidecar racers are a minority in this country, but a dedicated one, willing to go the trouble and expense to be here, only to be scheduled to race at inconvenient times.

Walking past the booths, hearing the conversations, "I had a buddy who had a 68...." "I remember one time...." "Well, you know back then these were...."

We returned to the museum for a bit, then off to the beautiful chaos of the pits. Wandering among the lanes we talked with a racer, near my age, another Ducati owner who, like me, had been enamored of the 250 engine's design perfection since youth. Who knows what I might have learned in high school if I had listened more instead of drawing this engine in the margins of my notebooks. He also had a Norton race bike there in his pit area. Great minds think alike.

One of the officials, an older guy, let us walk up to the barrier by the pit lane, standing just on the other side of a low concrete wall separating the racing bikes from us. Stu got some excellent photo ops.

Later in the afternoon, there was an excellent pulled pork quesadilla at the food truck with Ian, and then we went to watch races on the hillside with Megan & Stuart.



In the Pits



Shooting the Racers

Finally had to make one last pass through the museum, then left at 3, an hour later than we had planned. Ian, Stuart and Megan will get home after 10PM, then go to work and school the next morning as usual, as I would have done at their age.

Me, now, not so much.

I made it as far as Ft. Payne Alabama, an hour short of Chattanooga, before fatigue brought me to a motel. Not much to choose from for dinner within walking distance, so an Applebee's will have to do. Dessert was a "brownie bite", a small token of a treat, one third of the calories of the other offerings. I've been lucky enough to enjoy a lot of wonderful pastry concoctions in places all over the world, some fancy, some not, but I still am of the opinion that it's hard to beat a good brownie or the simple chocolate chip cookie or of course, apple pie.

Monday, the long trek home. I made my way around Chattanooga's traffic sprawl on the interstate in the chilly, early hours with the sun just showing above the horizon, then headed north up to Rt. 58. It's a two lane, a few curves but nothing exciting. I got to Rt. 27 for the "good part" but a lot of slow cars in front for much of it. The curves are heavily shaded, making for some uncertain entrances and a lot of flipping the helmet sun shield up and down.

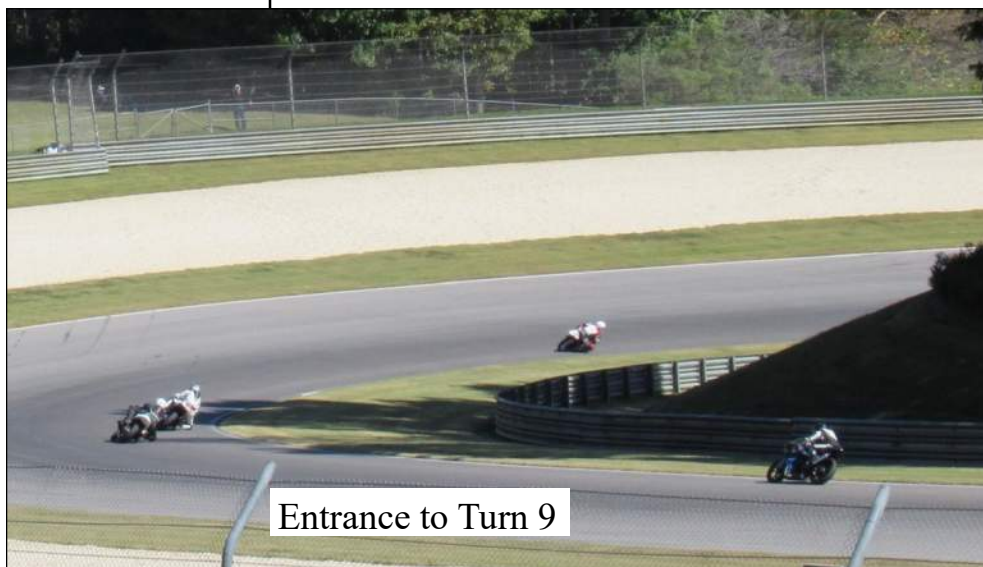
At one point I was following a gravel truck when suddenly it braked hard, sliding to the right, back tires skipping, throwing gravel up in a spray. A deer had run across the road in front of the truck. The doe made it to the right

hand shoulder as the truck went by, then she turned and ran back across in front of me, close enough for me to see her frightened eyes, but no danger...to me anyway. She then scrambled up what would have seemed to be an impossible slope on the other side of the road, making it up about 15 vertical feet in just a couple of leaps, getting traction where there seemed to be none available. Amazing animals.

The trip is essentially over now, just getting home. Rt. 25 north is familiar territory, but that is a good thing now as tiredness is sinking in. I have to watch myself at the end of a trip, when the fatigue starts to act almost like intoxication, letting me think I can do things that I really can't pull off safely.

As always, the DR650 came through for me, accepting its new role as a touring bike without complaint. It really is a "do everything" motorcycle.

I cannot adequately describe the pleasure of being here with my grandsons and Megan and seeing them enjoy their experience in this place. They may return through the coming years, if the interest in such things continues. I hope to be there as well.



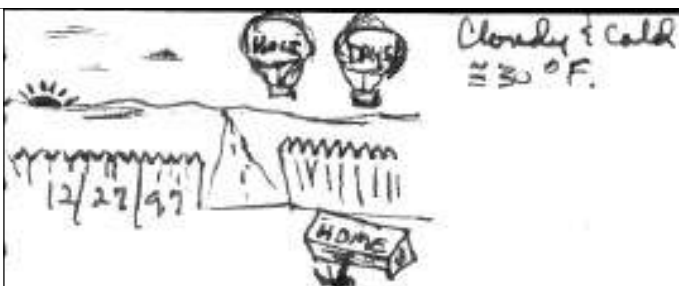
Announcements



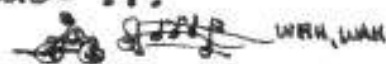
Club Christmas Party
December 10, 2022
10am

Smyles Motorcycle Museum
(Steve Pieratt's Place)
1279 Eastland Drive
Lexington, KY 40505

The Louisville BMW motorcycle club, Derby City Beemers, has updated their [website](#) and re-launched their [Facebook](#) page. When you have a moment, check them out.



THERE'S LOTS OF TOYS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS,
IF THEY'VE MINDED THEIR P'S AND Q'S,
BUT A CYCLE JOCK WITH AN EMPTY SOCK,
GETS THE LOW DOWN 'BIKER BLUES'...



Here's the group for today:

- * 1). Joe Bark (free breakfast! Ryan's Holbein not BB's)
- * 2). Ryan King
- * 3). Robbie Carter
- 4). Chester Martin
- 5). Tom Sutherland
- 6). Dave McCord
- 7). Boone Sutherland
- 8). Jim Brendon
- 9). Chris Warner
- 10). Tim Koury
- 11). Ron Athens
- 12). Hubert Burton
- 13). Pete Galsbie
- 14). Bill Voss
- 15). Mike Gill
- 16). Mary Beard
- 17). Paul Elwyn
- 18). Phillip Daugh & Pat
- 19). Randy Scott
- 20). Darryl 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