

RIDE REPORT: 'THE TOWN THAT TIME FORGOT' MAY 28, 29, 30 2011



We eight ate, then left at 8.

It was Memorial Day so the flag was flying as we achieved our start up goal: kickstands up and wheels rolling at 8 AM and a very interesting crew it was that left early on Saturday morning. Kyle from the Ride For Kids started out on the Norton. His good friend Bruce who works for BMW rode the Harley for the first leg. Doug, my able bodied right hand man and lead rider set out 2-stroking on the Yamaha. Experienced RetroTourer Steve had been dying to try the Bonneville and finally got his wish. John was back in the saddle after some heart surgery, starting on the BMW. John's friend Larry returned and rode out on the Benelli while Eric, Larry's brother-in-law from North Carolina, started on the Kawasaki KZ750. I rode the sidecar rig. We left at 8 after a hearty breakfast kindly prepared by my wife Lynn; delicious as always. Everyone was urged to eat a lot since lunch looked to be pretty far off. I also had 24 granola bars and a case of water in the sidecar along with everyone's luggage, tools and other supplies: there would be no chance of unintentional sidecar wheelies: that thing was LOADED.



As usual, we started out slowly then began to build steam as we headed north. We made a quick stop at the world's smallest church, then continued through state parklands and followed the smallest available roads through covered bridges and over the Appalachian Trail arriving at Bill's Old Bike Barn at 1:30. Judy met us outside and we were ushered into a dining area which included the bar

and fixtures from an old hotel in Italy, having been brought here in the early 1900's by an immigrant and then reclaimed by Bill a few years back when a nearby hotel was slated for destruction. Judy is a bona fide gourmet cook and we feasted on pomegranate fizzy drinks, homemade potato salad and monstrous turkey salad sandwiches, topped off by pears with honey/berry glaze. We could barely move, but somehow made it out to the museum itself which is comprised of hundreds of fascinating old bikes and every imaginable sort of memorabilia. We could have stayed much longer but finally departed at 4:30 to continue our journey north.



This leg took us through vast state forest lands on very beautiful and curvy back roads, culminating in the ascent to Hyner's View: a cliff face 2,000 feet above the mighty Susquehanna. The views from here are fantastic and were made especially enjoyable by the clear skies. We met a family from Afghanistan and chatted and took pictures of one another. I learned how to say 'thank-you' in their native Urdu: Shok-rah. Regardless of our cultural differences we were all able to share appreciation for the beauty of the day as the sun slowly sank into the horizon.





Down from our perch and westward just 10 more miles brought us to Renovo and Yesterday's Hotel where we checked in for two nights. The rooms may be Spartan but the price is right and we immediately took advantage of the well stocked bar just off the main lobby.

A stroll through town capped the day perfectly, allowing us to stretch our legs. The bikes were performing well, the weather was fine, and everyone was getting along splendidly. Could things possibly get any better?



Saturday morning brought hazy warm weather and we breakfasted at the Yesterdays Café then started bikes for a cruise north to famously scenic Route 6.





kids jumped fearlessly off a high bridge into the Susquehanna River; not a bad way to beat back the summer heat and humidity.

With bellies full we explored Wykoff Run: a 12 mile stretch of the crazy curvy stuff that was recommended to us by several local riders. It really *was* a spectacular run of asphalt and I'm sure I scrubbed



one could get used to traveling like this. Finally we turned east and arrived at Yesterdays after covering a bit under 200 miles; a short day for this trip. Dinner at the café was followed by more quality time at the bar before an early retirement in preparation for a big day on Sunday.

Our pre-planned route would take us through more forest lands and past the Bush dam where we talked with a few Canadians who were touring the USA. We headed back south after reaching the town of Coudersport, stopping for a break in the shade of an old camp site. Next we stopped for lunch back at the 'Renovo Road': Route 120. Across the street, local



off a good 2 or 3 mm of rear tire tread pushing the sidecar rig through the turns. The classic bikes managed the swervery a bit more smoothly but with an equally high fun factor. Next stop would be the elk observation area. The elk were all apparently vacationing at the shore but we took good advantage of the break to admire our vintage mounts;



Once again we made an early start having topped up on fuel the night before and began our back roads route home. The weather just stayed with us: little to complain about although it could have been a touch cooler for my taste. We flowed through gorgeous pleasant valleys which afforded interesting views including a herd of buffalo, a local policeman with an



Those brown lumps are buffalo...REALLY!



interesting interpretation of state law regarding daytime headlamp use on motorcycles (I still say he was wrong), and a visit with Blaster, the chain swinging refugee from a Tina Turner movie about recycled pig shit in post apocalyptic America.

After a brief maintenance break and a cold drink in a shady spot we began the last leg, stopping in Ravine, PA for a final feast before reaching home base at 8 PM after 12 hours of absolute vintage riding bliss.



At home, Lynn had a great meal waiting (thanks honey) and we debriefed over dinner before saying our farewells. The bikes had performed admirably with only one real mechanical issue: the RD400 had begun to jump out of 3rd gear. Everyone seemed a bit nervous at first. How would we continue? I got some incredulous stares when I suggested that hey, we should not be so greedy; the transmission has 6 speeds, why can't we make do with 5? In fact, there was no trouble winding out 2nd gear a little bit extra then double shifting up to 4th which barely detracted from the fun of pushing this lightweight giant killer along. The bike made it home easily and I just scored a complete transmission assembly on eBay for under \$50.

As usual, everyone was enthralled with the Harley XLCR and the Triumph Bonneville. The Harley's engine is just incredibly visceral while the Triumph's balance and perfect steering geometry surely define 'roadworthiness'. The Norton challenged some riders with its kick starting drill but always managed to bring a smile to every rider's face once underway. You just have to love that motor and it's perfectly matched buttery transmission. Thankfully the isolastic system tames the beast that lurks within the 750cc vertical twin. The R90/6 used a bit of oil while churning out the miles with typical Teutonic efficiency, it's perfect ergonomics, naturally smooth engine and double disc front brake lulling the rider into a heightened state of moto-zen awareness. The Kawasaki KZ750 was so competent as to be almost boring. Even in the 70's Japanese iron really was *that good*. The Benelli Tornado was less well liked and I admit to being insulted a bit when someone coined the nickname "The Turd". Come on guys, it's not *that* bad, although the color *is* a bit suggestive of the name. I'm thinking of painting it Gallarate Red like an MV Augusta. Surely then it would get some much deserved respect!

Eric still had the long trip home to North Carolina and so was the first to leave. The local guys: Larry, John, Steve, Bruce and Doug headed home a bit later while Kyle hung out until morning, taking advantage of the RetroTours 'Bed & Breakfast'. It was a trip none of us would soon forget!

