

UNSCHEDULED LOCAL LOOPS : MAY 16, 2015

If you are in a club or if you just ride with a certain bunch of riders you can contact RetroTours anytime and set up a tour of any duration: ½ day, 1 full day or as many days as you wish. You can choose which bikes to ride, how long to ride in a day and at what pace. One rider or up to 25. I am open to anything and I will entertain any and all ideas.

In this case, a few years back I was contacted by a “non-club” which I like to call the British-European Motorcycle Interest Group (not their real name; non-clubs don’t have names). I’m not sure how many non-members there are in this non-club but my feeling is that they number around 25. As far as I have been able to determine, the non-meetings are actually done on line: this is a group of modern computer savvy riders who keep in touch via the internet and plan group rides and other activities. Some of the non-members are old enough to actually have owned or at least lusted after motorcycles that were built in the 1970’s but many are younger than that and just appreciate interesting bikes of all kinds.

This group booked out a scheduled Local Loops Tour I think in 2013 with 12 riders. We had a very good time and I was quite impressed with their skill level and friendliness. This year a slightly different group from the same non-club wanted to do it again, but their schedules did not mesh with the listed one day vintage rides on the RetroTours 2015 schedule. They contacted me about alternate dates and we came up with May 16th for an unscheduled ride just for this group. I wound up with 10 riders and 2 passengers. Bikes were requested and prepped:

1979 Moto Morini 500 Strada	1976 Yamaha RD400
1977 Harley Davidson XLCR 1000	1977 Ducati 500 Sport Desmo
1974 BMW R90/6	1976 Kawasaki KZ750
1972 Laverda 750SF	1973 Norton Commando 750 Fastback
1970 Triumph Bonneville 650	1970 Triumph T100C

Now *that’s* a very thorough representation of 1970’s motorcycles. The riders were just as sporty and nearly as varied:

Mort Milne	Windsor Tracy
Laura Tracy	George Bicocchi
Chris and Kathleen Jones	Clyde Anders
Steve Higbee	Steve and Jen Murray
Eric Frederick	Bill Carden

Two more riders were signed up but had to cancel. Since I had no co-leader and couldn’t count 10 headlights behind me I asked that riders keep their lights switched off except for the 6th rider who was asked to ride with his light on while checking for four bikes in his mirrors. In PA, bikes manufactured before 1980 are exempted from the headlights on law. In this manner we had no trouble riding as a group of 11. I was in the BMW/EML sidecar rig. I had cold water and snacks in the trunk and I carried Kathleen as a passenger

for much of the day. I must say she was more energetic than most and really seemed to enjoy playing ‘monkey’ in the chair. I enjoyed it too!

We met at the house early and had a delicious and very filling breakfast prepared by my wife, Lynn. I try to get her to keep the meals simple but she just really gets into it, wearing her white chef’s jacket and trying to outdo herself every time. It has been said that the meals are the best part. After breakfast we ferried 2 miles to the commercial garage where RetroTours is based and each rider became familiar with 1 bike. We set out right on time and rode through beautiful Brandywine Valley countryside, stopping at various small preserves every 25 miles or so. During these breaks we socialized, had a granola bar and negotiated for different bikes as desired.

One of the morning stops was at Smith’s Bridge in Chadds Ford: a fetching restored covered bridge. We pulled into a gravel parking lot and began talking about the weather (not raining!), the roads (amazing!) and the interesting bikes.



After several minutes a car pulled up and the driver informed us that there was a young woman just up the road on a motorcycle who needed help. A quick head count confirmed that Laura was MIA and we hadn't even noticed. Laura is a very good rider and especially enjoys the Laverda. This was her second RetroTour and she was riding the Norton on this leg which is a kick start only model. Sorry we didn't notice Laura!

Alas, the art of kick starting a motorcycle has gone the way of contact breaker points and carburetors. Contemporary riders may not have ever used a kick starter. The Norton is not an easy bike to crank in any case and Laura had missed the turn out and pulled onto the shoulder just around the next bend when the bike stalled. She tried but was unable to restart the bike. That's about the time when the second "Norton Challenge" was encountered. To deploy the kickstand you need a 36" inseam. It is very long kickstand and it takes a very long leg to swing it forward to the point where it is secure. Laura had the skill and the desire but she didn't have enough ass to kick the engine fast enough to start it and she didn't have enough leg to put the kick stand down. She was basically stuck but being resourceful she calmly reached into her pocket and pulled out her cell phone to call for help.

Problem number 3: there is a cell phone dead spot in the valley where Laura was sitting. She was now a prisoner on the bike. Not one to give up easily, she managed to wave down a passing car and got them to back up to our little tea party and tell us that—DUH—one of us was missing. I went over to rescue Laura and we all had a good laugh and also resolved to count heads at every stop for the rest of the day.



Lunch in Kennett Square was at an authentic Mexican Tateria: Pena Mexicana. It doesn't get more authentic than this: it helps if you speak some Spanish. We enjoyed a simple and delicious lunch, trying, not very successfully, to go light since Lynn had warned us that dinner would be LARGE. My favorite? Tacos de Lengua: TONGUE@! Seriously good food. You can also get "Mexican Coca Cola": made with real cane sugar, not corn

syrup.

After lunch we did some more riding, winding up at the high school in Unionville where several riders drove the sidecar rig around the parking lot while others tried a few of the bikes they didn't have a chance to ride during the day on a 7 mile self guided loop. We returned to the garage and then the house for a farewell meal. Lynn had prepared a real gourmet feast and no one left early and no one left hungry; that's for sure. It began to rain as we finished dinner; our timing could not have been better! RetroTours tee-shirts were distributed and the group headed home for a very much needed good night's sleep. We had covered 150 miles. Several of the riders would be waking up at the crack of dawn to get to a track day on time Sunday morning. As I said, this is a group of serious motorcyclists.

I was pleased as punch to have this group return and I look forward to seeing them again next year. I would actually love to field 25 bikes if they can bring enough riders. The passengers added an interesting component to this ride. It was especially gratifying to learn that Jen Murray hadn't ridden with her husband for over 20 years and had enjoyed the day: glad to be back in the saddle again. I also had an enjoyable moment early in the day when I was driving the sidecar rig at what I thought was a pretty respectable pace. After all, unlike my clients, I am familiar with these local roads and with the machinery. I looked in my mirrors and I saw a rider keeping right up with me on the XLCR. I was a little nervous for him because there were several blind curves with decreasing radii and a smattering of gravel. Still, he kept right with me and when we stopped I mentioned something and he just said: "I wish we could go faster". It was just great to see someone enjoying bending the big HD around the bends. That bike is just a blast to ride hard.

Actually, come to think of it, they all are!!

Here is a video one of the group made. This is unedited footage that gives you a taste of what we did: