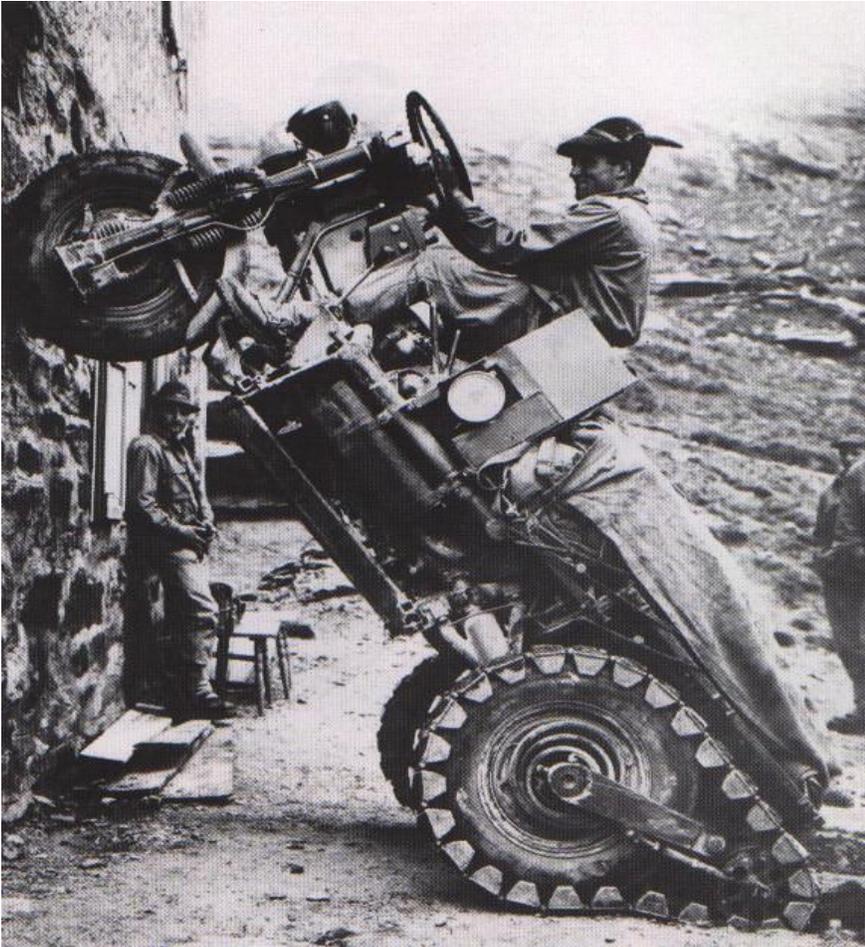


## COUPLES TOUR 2015: MAY 22-24----RIDE REPORT

Couples sign up for scheduled tours from time to time so in 2013 I scheduled a dedicated "Couples Tour" and 3 couples had fun. In 2014 *five* couples enjoyed a 2 day tour through Amish country with lots of interesting "off-bike" activities and a stay-over in a country farm house. I interpreted this as a trend toward growth and optimistically scheduled 2 Couples Tours for 2015 but only one couple signed up for each. In the end, Lynn and I made the first tour with repeat customers John and Laimon Cannon but the second scheduled Couples Tour of 2015 was canceled, with Richard and Lauraine Anderson joining instead on a later ride. No dedicated couples tours are scheduled for 2016 but several couples have already reserved for some of the regular scheduled tours.

We chose to ride 2 across-the-frame V-twins which are about as divergent as two machines with similar engine configurations could ever be. The 1971 Moto Guzzi Ambassador is based



on an engine originally designed for the Italian Army during World War II. The Muleo (The Mule) was a three wheeled jeep that could climb any mountain. It looked somewhat like a motorcycle but had a steering wheel and front wheel drive. It could pull a very heavy trailer loaded with combat troops or a good sized piece of field artillery. Mud and snow were surmounted easily once the removable tracks were installed on the rear wheels. A less likely candidate for sourcing a motorcycle engine could hardly be imagined yet an entire line of touring and even sport machines is still being produced with this motor or it's direct descendant to this day. **AND THEY WORK!**

Un soldato Italiano puts El Muleo through it's paces

The 1978 Honda CX500 on the other hand was, perhaps, way ahead of its time. This transverse shaft driven V-twin is water cooled and uses an electronic ignition. The cylinders and heads are 'twisted' to angle the exhaust ports outwards for improved cooling and the intake ports inwards so the carburetors do not interfere with the rider's legs. The camshaft is located very high within the crankcase so short push rods can be used to actuate the 4 smallish valves per cylinder via forked rocker arms. The resultant light weight of the valve train means that the engine can safely rev to 10,000 rpm. The front disc brake and "Comstar" wheels squarely position this machine as 'modern for the times'. As for the 'headlight-nacelle' styling, well, suffice it say that this model in England was nicknamed "The Plastic Maggot". 'Nuff said.



Both machines feature ample comfortable seating for two. With large tank bags and luggage racks packed the four of us were ready for our three day adventure.

John and Laimon come upstairs from the mother-in-law suite early on Friday and after breakfast we head out, Lynn and I on the Honda, John and his wife on the Guzzi which has a familiar feel: they have ridden up from the DC area on their big Harley Davidson and both bikes give off a similar relaxed vibe. We head south and west on a convoluted route designed to keep us away from traffic and promising to deliver exceptional scenery and plenty of curves. Following the Mason Dixon Line between PA and MD at first, we soon angle south towards Poolesville, MD where we plan to meet a certain confederate general. First things first though; we pull into Bassett's Restaurant for a much needed lunch. The day is pleasant; the food good.





Parking up at Bassett's where the sun is pleasant and the food is good.



After lunch we ride a few more miles to rendezvous with The General Jubal A Early, a tiny ferry boat that takes us across the Potomac River from Maryland to Virginia. The ferry is guided by a cable and the crossing takes about 10 minutes. An extra 10 or 15 minutes are required to get the CX500 to restart on the Virginia side; the CDI ignition is reluctant to wake up from it's after lunch nap. The Guzzi seems to look down its nose at the modern Honda as its antiquated Italian points, battery and coil ignition system fire the 'spaghetti Harley' right up.

Once in Virginia we meander across farm country and cross the Appalachian Ridge, making our way to Front Royal where we have reserved motel rooms. After a shower, a cup of coffee and a bit of down time we meet with Justin and Meridith who live nearby and ride about 15 miles to dinner at The Griffin Tavern in Flint Hill, VA. The old mansion/restaurant exudes southern charm while serving American cuisine in a British pub-like atmosphere. We are definitely eating well on this trip!



We're up early Saturday morning because we plan to ride some of the Skyline Drive and we want to get up there before the motor homes and camper trailers clog things up. We have breakfast at the motel and meet with Justin who has returned on his...

### ... 1955 Vincent Black Prince.

<b><u>Manufacturer</u></b>	<a href="#">Vincent Motorcycles, Stevenage</a>
<b><u>Production</u></b>	1954-55
<b><u>Predecessor</u></b>	<a href="#">Vincent Black Shadow</a>
<b><u>Engine</u></b>	998 cc (60.9 cu in) V-twin, <a href="#">Amal</a> with added Alton electric starter
<b><u>Horsepower</u></b>	55 bhp (41 kW) @ 5,750 rpm
<b><u>Transmission</u></b>	Four-speed
<b><u>Suspension</u></b>	Front: <i>Girdraulic</i> oil damped Rear: cantilever monoshock
<b><u>Brakes</u></b>	Front: 7 in (180 mm) dual Rear: 7 in (180 mm) single drum upgraded to Yamaha dual disc brake
<b><u>Tires</u></b>	Front: 3.50x19" Rear: 4.00x18"
<b><u>Wheelbase</u></b>	56.5 in (1,440 mm)
<b><u>Weight</u></b>	462 lb (210 kg) ( <a href="#">dry</a> )





*Scenes from Skyline Drive*



After we have come down from the Blue Ridge Justin effects minor repairs on his Vincent by lifting the 'boot'. Notable details: 'mono-shock' rear suspension with traigulated swingarm, reversable rear hub has a different size sprocket on eachside for easy gearing changes. Center stand is deployed by means of a hand operated lever.



The day is intentionally not a long one and we return to the motel early enough to take advantage of the warm, long rays of the afternoon sun after saying goodbye to Justin.



Relaxing by the pool with Valentino Rossi. He's pretty high on Lynn's bucket list.

Look—I made a Selfie!



After some sun and some R & R we take a nice walk through town to explore the historic sections and find a place to eat. Laimon takes advantage of the massive flea market which is practically next door to do a little shopping. Sunday morning finds us rolling out early and heading for the hills of northeastern Virginia. As we zigzag our way north and east it becomes apparent from the opulent estates all around that this is horse country. It's my first time exploring this bump in the North Virginia border and I know immediately that I will return. Lush forests and open horse paddocks alternate with tiny lakes and colonial hamlets. Lovely!



We cross back into Maryland and cross the Catoctin Mountains, passing through Thurmont, Rocky Ridge, Detour and Keymar. We pop into Pennsylvania somewhere near Glenville and pick up 851 east, crossing the Susquehanna at the Holtwood Dam which affords a welcome rest stop at “The Pinnacles”.



John Cannon at The Pinnacles

We are in Amish country now and this late on a Sunday afternoon there are dozens of buggies heading for home after prayer meetings. We arrive at the house before dark and enjoy a glass of wine while dinner is prepared. It has been a wonderful weekend. As always, the presence of the women has added a meaningful dimension to our wonderings.

Laimon Cannon

