

## **LOCAL LOOPS II, 2015 & 2016**

We have just finished Local Loops II 2016 and I see that Local Loops II 2015 is the final unwritten ride report from last season which means that if I combine the two I will actually be caught up. A first! In fact, the two rides couldn't have been more different. Just check these out and you'll see what I mean.....

### **LL II 2015, 10-04-15: RIDERS**

Alison Loughran, Baltimore, MD  
Paul Kidd, Baltimore, MD  
Tom Rosenkilde, Morristown, NJ  
Gene Sanderson, West Berlin, NJ  
Dan Engwall, Haddonfield, NJ  
Rich Rossman, Lincoln University, PA  
Ken Walker, Cohoes, NY  
Joel Samick, Kennett Square, PA

### **BIKES**

1971 BSA 650 Lightning  
1976 RD400C  
1977 Harley Davidson XLCR 1000  
1970 Triumph Bonneville 650  
1975 Ducati 860 GT  
1973 Yamaha TX750  
1979 Moto Guzzi V50  
1974 BMW R90/6

Both rides came out on a Sunday. As you can see, the 2015 ride had twice the participation but the 2016 ride was just as large in its own way and included a bit of everything. In fact, it was so large that John coined the name Loco Loops which sort of summed things up. Read on .....

### **LL II 2016, 08-21-16: RIDERS**

Joel Oswald, Red Lion, PA  
Robert Siliani, Center Valley, PA  
John Hearn, Madison, NJ  
Joel Samick, Kennett Square, PA

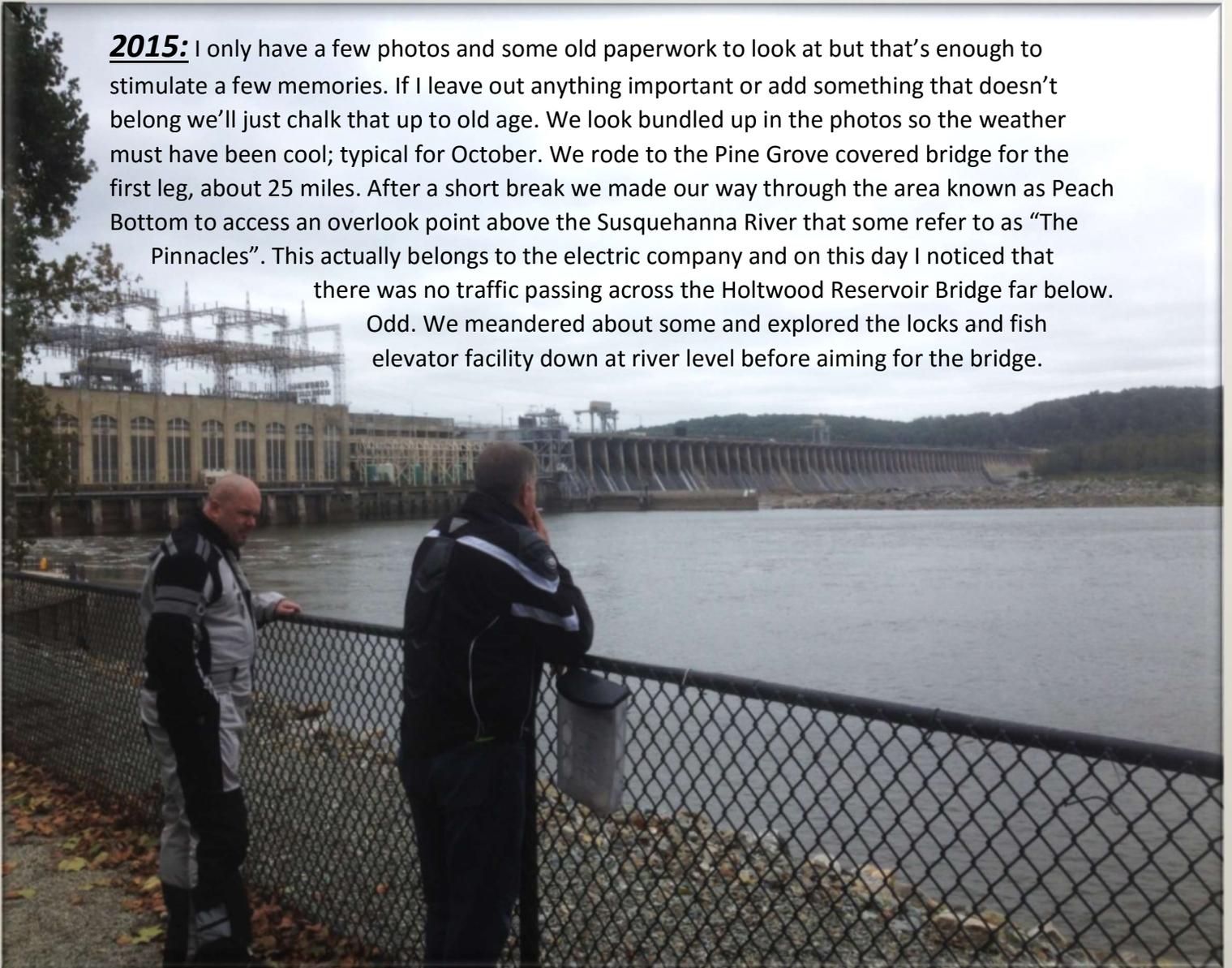
### **BIKES**

1974 BMW R90/6  
1976 Honda CB500T  
1970 Triumph Bonneville 650  
1979 Moto Guzzi V50



The Pine Grove Covered Bridge; October, 2015

**2015:** I only have a few photos and some old paperwork to look at but that's enough to stimulate a few memories. If I leave out anything important or add something that doesn't belong we'll just chalk that up to old age. We look bundled up in the photos so the weather must have been cool; typical for October. We rode to the Pine Grove covered bridge for the first leg, about 25 miles. After a short break we made our way through the area known as Peach Bottom to access an overlook point above the Susquehanna River that some refer to as "The Pinnacles". This actually belongs to the electric company and on this day I noticed that there was no traffic passing across the Holtwood Reservoir Bridge far below. Odd. We meandered about some and explored the locks and fish elevator facility down at river level before aiming for the bridge.



There was a barrier across the near side of the mile-long bridge but we slipped through a convenient gap. Detouring around the bridge would have added thirty miles to our ride so I was keen to get across if at all possible. The far side barrier was more serious: huge piles of gravel from one side of the bridge to the other blocked our way: there was no way around. I thought maybe we could go over and rode up the saddle between two piles. After pausing at the top to check the descent, I signaled for the others to follow and one by one we rode up and down the gravel pile. When Alison on the BMW got to the top of the notch the wide cylinder heads 'augured in' and the bike became thoroughly wedged. She was a strong rider and tried gunning the engine but as the rear wheel spun up the bike became hopelessly high centered: she could have dismounted and it would have stayed upright. I thought of leaving her there (not really) but with a push and a pull from her fellow riders she was soon over the top. How entertaining!

After the 'Alison show' we followed the west bank of the river southwards, crossing into Maryland and eventually popped out onto Route 1, only we were about three bikes short. I doubled back and found the V50 disabled with a broken clutch cable. At least the three riders were not lost and no one had crashed. To keep things moving along I switched bikes and slam shifted the poor old Guzzi for a few miles to our next rest point: Shure's Landing, a small park overlooking the Connewingo Dam. I think I may have earned some Boy Scout credits for being prepared as, luckily, there was a spare clutch cable stashed on the V50 and I was able to install it in about 20 minutes.



*The cable is in, we're ready to roll again*

I was anxious to keep moving since lunch was scheduled all the way back in Kennett Square and my stomach was grumbling already. We re-crossed the river and passed through Rising Sun, heading east until Fair Hill where we turned north and re-entered the Keystone State at Lewisville. Bucolic Route 841 carried us all the way to 926 which we took east to Kennett Square's back door, stopping for much needed nourishment at Taceria La Pena: a piece of Old Mexico. I guarantee that if Donald Trump ever ate there he would not be talking about building walls.

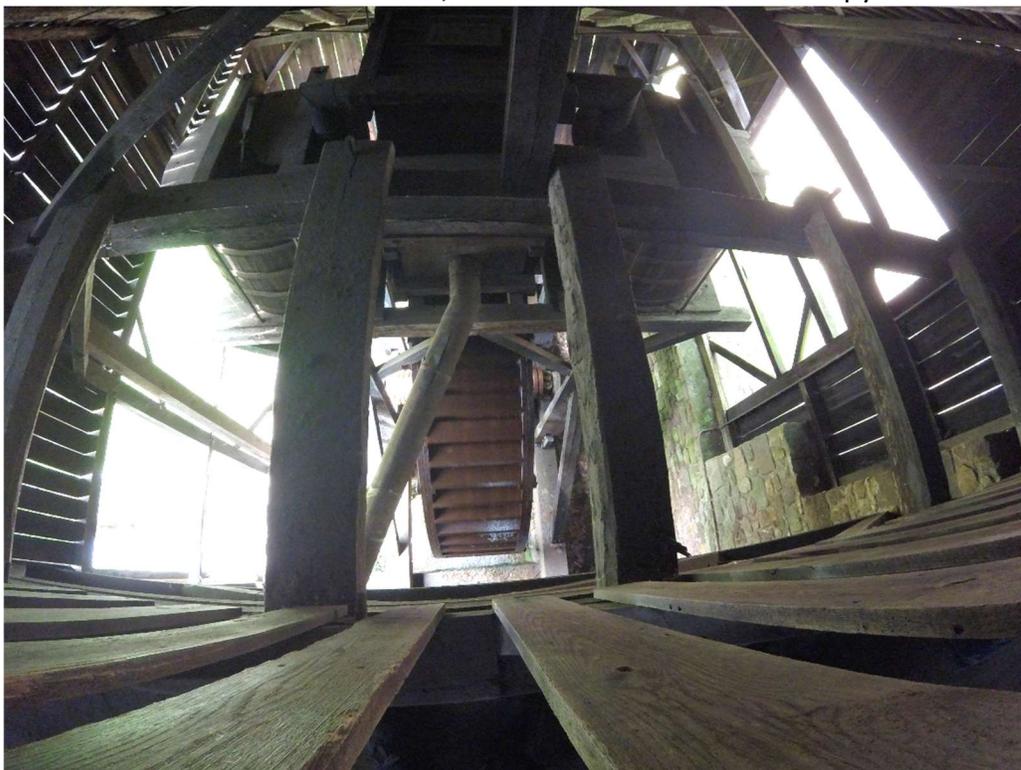
After lunch we did a 30-mile loop which included some sweet back roads along the Brandywine River and several hump back bridges. Care for some air? Late in the afternoon we stopped at the high school parking lot which offered shaded benches and clean porta potties. Here, riders were encouraged to try various bikes at will on a self-guided 7-mile loop. Once everyone was satisfied and had tried all the bikes they wanted to ride we headed back to the house for dinner, beer, wine and extreme bench racing.



2016: The difference between the third week in August and the first week of October was at least 40 degrees. It made me cringe a bit but John rode in his shirt sleeves all day. This was a small group: just four of us, which was fine by me...there are advantages to large groups--more bikes to try, and to small groups--less confusion, more interaction between riders. It was a hot humid summer day to start, with a chance of showers in the PM. We headed towards West Chester following Creek Road along the Brandywine River, stopping for a short break at an elementary school parking lot. We turned north along 282 north of Downingtown: one of my favorite twisty roads, and stopped for a short visit at the world's smallest church in Glenmoore. The little sign for the Little Church is almost as easy to miss as the church itself.



After paying respects to the church we resumed 282, leading to 345 which enters Hopewell Furnace National Park, and with the thick forest canopy's cool air in our faces we carved the



sweepers leading to Hopewell Village. Here we took half an hour to explore the viaduct and waterwheel which drives a huge parallel twin cylinder air pump through a 225 degree "phased" crankshaft to stoke a charcoal fueled fire to 3,000 degrees, forcing iron ore to give up its treasure for the production of iron castings which were used to fashion wood stoves in post-revolutionary America.

Continuing north and west we passed through Stoney Creek Mills and past the Antietam Reservoir. The lovely waterfall is just visible from the road as we pass it and enter parklands



adjacent to the city of Reading. Just outside of the city, perched high on a ridge, sits The Pagoda, where we hope to stop for a view and a cup of hot tea. I try for a normally gated disused road which ascends to Skyline Drive: a high ridge with a shear drop affording spectacular views of the valleys below.

The gate is open today and the top of gnarly Spuhler Rd terminates at the William Penn Memorial Fire Tower, just ½ mile from The Pagoda.

As we cruise through the normally empty parking lot, I am surprised to see a race car, then another and another, all with wide slick-shod wheels and many with nitrous bottles and menacing intake manifolds protruding from their hoods. Is this some sort of car show? It looks for all the world like the pits at a race event. Weird!



People are shaking their heads at us as we slowly pick our way around the tents and pop-ups that pepper the pit area and at the outlet to Skyline Drive there is a barrier but with a gap, so we cruise past and turn towards The Pagoda but something is definitely amiss. There is no traffic on the road, we spot an unusual temporary communications antenna set-up and now people with high-vis vests are moving towards us, hands outstretched, motioning us to **STOP!**

As it turns out the road is closed for the annual Duryea Drive Race. Dedicated race machines queue up at the bottom then one by one then race against the clock, ascending Mount Penn through 7 hairpin turns followed by a lengthy straightaway leading past The Pagoda and Penn Tower, reaching speeds in excess of 110 miles per hour. I had heard of this event but had no idea it was today. It could have been ugly but luckily we wandered onto the track during lunch break and the corner workers were all over us in an instant: disaster narrowly avoided. We were directed back to the fire tower parking lot, AKA the pits, and told that the only way out was the way we came in until the road re-opens at 6 PM.



Preferring not to pit our vintage bikes head on against 100 mph fuel injected race cars, we decide to make the best of things and walk downgrade ½ mile to a decent spectating point. The cars fly by at 90 second intervals once lunch break is over but then the clouds roll in and rain begins to fall. The weather takes a sharp turn

for the worse and the racers begin to load up and leave. Clearly, racing is done for the day. We walk up seven flights of stairs to the top of the fire tower. The view is of clouds and mist only but at least we are out of the downpour. John has never ridden in the rain and is understandably a bit apprehensive as we don rain gear and prepare to descend, backtracking to the nearest restaurant for lunch. John is a relatively high tech kind of guy: someone with electronic gadgets who also knows how to use them and very handy to have on a ride. He uses his expertise to monitor the weather and predicts accurately that the rain will end in about an hour and a half. We dry out and hang out at an Italian restaurant where we order lots of hot beverage and way too much food: I have to carry an entire calzone home, which with me, never happens; I generally view leftovers as unfortunate tragedies. Punctually, as predicted, the rain ends in 90 minutes and the sun comes out, vaporizing standing water on the road.



Waiting out the rain...it's seven flights, straight up.



We were somewhat off route now and I adlibbed my way through Reading, the “murder capital of Pennsylvania”, zigzagging back and forth until we were finally able to cross the Schuylkill River and pick up Route 10 to get back on track, but not before getting mired in a back alley maze where a mad, radioactive, mutant pit bull attacked poor John on the BMW at Full Ramming Speed. Luckily John lifted his leg at just the right moment and the would be attacker took a good knock on the noggin, letting out a yelp as he smacked into the hot cylinder head and header pipe. Boxer motors rule!

After a quick stop to refuel we continued south on 10, diverting into Joanna Furnace, a restored village with a wood mill and lots of antique machinery. This day we had the place to ourselves and explored a bit before meandering around, heading in the right direction but on hitherto unknown roads.

We eventually resurfaced on Route 82 South, which has some deceptively sharp curves as it closes in on Coatesville. Sure enough, on one of these, late in the day, when we were getting a little ragged, Joel (the OTHER Joel) had a momentary lapse, caught a rut in a weird way and dropped the Bonneville at low speed. The Triumph is a 46-year-old grizzled veteran "Road Warrior and has been through far worse. It was barely fazed. Joel was mainly embarrassed and would develop quite an impressive bruise on his lower leg but otherwise was OK. We soldiered on. Between being marooned at the racetrack, waiting for the rain to stop at the restaurant and collecting ourselves after this little mishap, we were now noticeably behind schedule. The day was growing long. It would grow longer still.

Just south of Coatesville, as we were passing through the industrial area around the giant steel mills I counted one headlight too few in my rear views. Doubling back a short way I was relieved to see John and the BMW upright and unscathed but with a very flat rear tire. John had wrestled the bike to the shoulder of the road after experiencing a near instantaneous deflation. Another first experience for John who may no longer be considered to be a 'newbie'. The sky was a bit dusky and the turkey vultures were congregating on the roof of the building across the street, optimistically hoping one of us might die right there. Luckily the BMW, being shaft driven, allows for a relatively simple removal and reinstallation of the rear wheel. With plenty of useful help from Robert, the wheel was off and apart in no time. The cause of the flat tire could not have been more obvious:

Seriously?  
YES. This massive spike tore a massive gash in the inner tube. After causing our flat tire it could easily have been used as a deadly weapon. Fortunately, we were



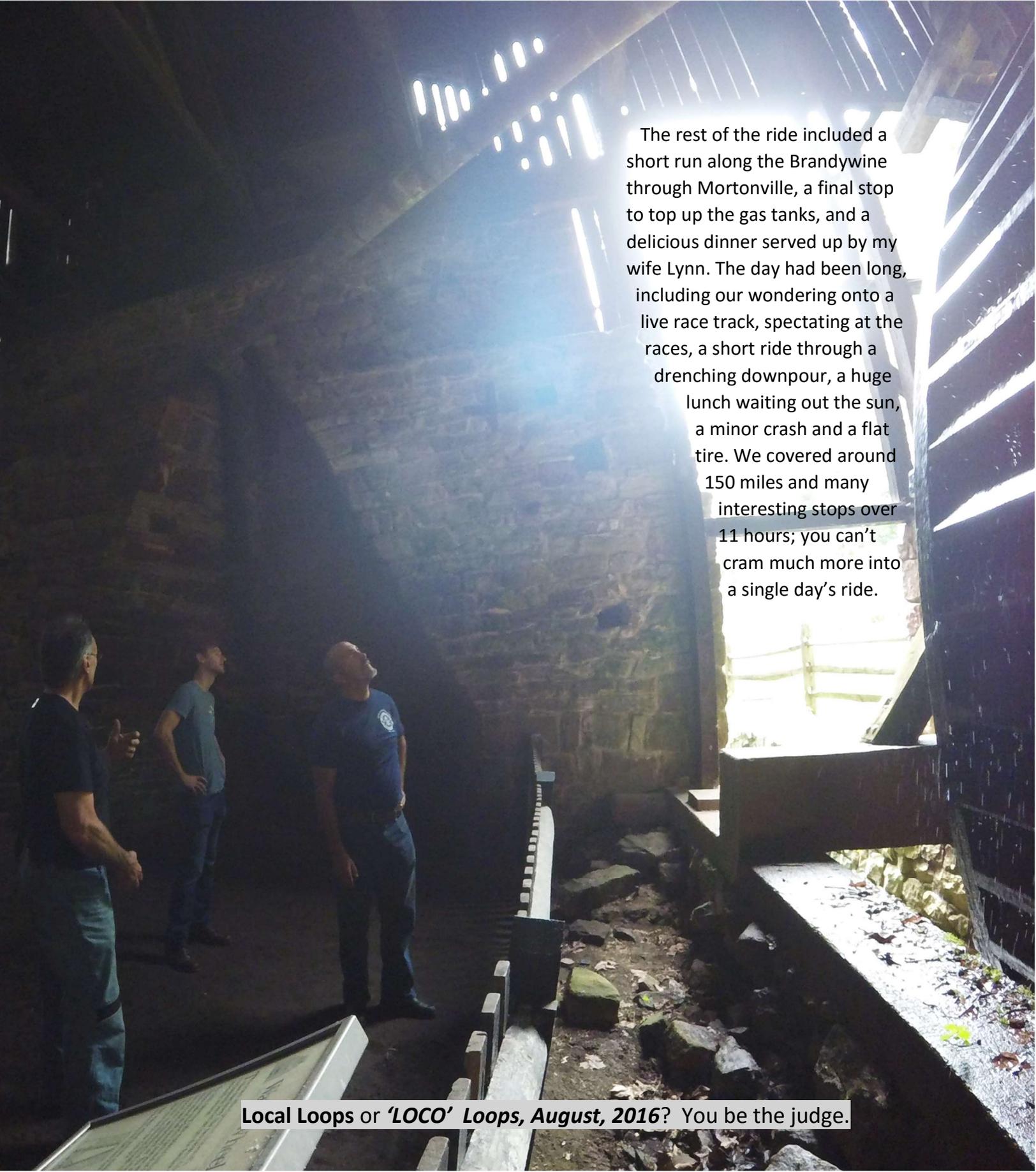
prepared with a spare tube, tire irons, the excellent BMW tool kit and a hand pump. We had everything back together in about 45 minutes, during which time an old friend stopped to offer assistance and even the use of his nearby garage. It was gratifying to have his offer of help even if it was not needed this time around.



While the vultures across the street lick their chops...

....Joel and Robert work on the flat tire repair.





The rest of the ride included a short run along the Brandywine through Mortonville, a final stop to top up the gas tanks, and a delicious dinner served up by my wife Lynn. The day had been long, including our wondering onto a live race track, spectating at the races, a short ride through a drenching downpour, a huge lunch waiting out the sun, a minor crash and a flat tire. We covered around 150 miles and many interesting stops over 11 hours; you can't cram much more into a single day's ride.

**Local Loops or 'LOCO' Loops, August, 2016? You be the judge.**



Local Loops, October, 2015