

Ride Report: Bill's Old Bike Barn, May 27 & 28, 2017

BIKES:

1972 Laverda 750
1974 BMW R90/6
1971 Moto Guzzi Ambassador 750
1975 Ducati 860GT
1970 Triumph Bonneville 650
1975 Suzuki T500

RIDERS:

Bruce Luckman, PA
Patrick McDowell, PA
Chris Bennett, NJ
Alex Jeyschune, NJ
Ray Johnson, PA
Joel Samick, PA



Two additional riders had signed up but cancelled at the last moment due to a family emergency. Bruce's thoughtful wife had purchased this adventure for him as a birthday present. The group was diversified, including a lawyer, a retiree, A chimney sweep and a school teacher. There were two 60-year olds, two 30-year olds, and a 47-year old in the middle.

All of us were experienced riders and looking forward to this ride; the weather was promising, and the bikes from Italy, England, Germany, and Japan stood ready to serve. As I recall, we got an early start under brilliant sunshine. Ahhh.... the sun.



The route took us north, through Amish country, and up, heading for the Eastern Continental Divide, where we would cross the Appalachian Trail. Just before the ultimate ascent, in Myerstown, there was a detour sign, directing us away from a closed bridge. As is my (weird) habit, I ignored the detour signs. I like to see what sort of construction is going on, and frequently, on weekends when there are no workers around, we can sneak around the barriers. When this works I feel like I got away with something, and when it doesn't, I just turn around and follow the detour like normal people. On this day, it worked, but it didn't.

It wasn't too difficult to get across the bridge. There were some barriers, but not very serious ones. One rider stalled momentarily but got restarted right away. About two blocks beyond our illicit bridge crossing is where disaster struck, at an intersection with a 4-way stop. The road we were on was not being used by normal traffic due to the detour, and a massive overgrown bush totally obscured the stop sign facing us. The local cross traffic may have been ignoring their own stop sign due to the detour, or maybe someone was texting or whatever. Patrick, a very strong rider on the Ducati, had no chance. He never saw his stop sign and the speeding pickup truck on

the cross road didn't even slow down for *his* stop sign. Luckily, Pat realized what was unfolding at the last possible moment and grabbed a big handful of front brake. The Ducati 860 is equipped with the optional double disc front brake. It cost an extra \$200 in 1975 and turned the wooden single disc into a powerful stopper. A bit too powerful in this case perhaps. When the front wheel locked up, the bike went down. The pickup truck never even slowed or stopped. Luckily, Pat was using decent protective gear and was relatively unhurt: just bruised a bit. A collision was narrowly avoided, and the bike was easily repaired.

We re-grouped at a convenience store/gas station and gave our luckless, downed rider a chance to calm down and fully assess potential injuries. Meanwhile, another rider was sent out to locate some turn signal bulbs and electrical tape at an auto parts store and the rest of us had a granola bar and set about beating the bike back into shape. Vice grips were clamped to the stump of the shift pedal, then secured with zip ties. The broken blinkers were taped together and restored to operational condition with new bulbs. The front end was twisted back into alignment and we were ready to continue.

Pat, of course, was totally bummed out and racked with guilt. This was just one of those incidents that can happen to anyone at any time. If only I hadn't ignored the detour signs. If only the stop-sign-obscuring bush had been trimmed, if only the pickup had stopped for the intersection. If only the queen had balls... she'd be king. I told Pat my trick for mentally dealing with these unpleasant situations when they occur during a trip. I open an imaginary box. I put my bad feelings in the box and seal it up. Then I put the box way back on the highest shelf in my emotional closet and concentrate on continuing. Later, when the trip is over, I can take the box out of the closet and examine all those bad feelings to my heart's content. It took a little while, but Pat's gloom eventually subsided and we all were able to enjoy the rest of the weekend.

The rest of the day's route included a run down Route 125, one of PA's finest curvy roads. We made our way to Bill's Old Bike Barn and, as always, thoroughly enjoyed exploring the massive collection of motorcycles and other eclectic esoterica. We overnighted at a nearby Comfort Inn, where sleep came easily. In the morning, fully refreshed, we took a 25-mile loop past several covered bridges and treated ourselves to a big breakfast at the local diner.





The ride home on Sunday was relaxed, featuring more great weather and smooth roads. We stopped at the oldest coal mine in the USA where, in addition to a fascinating mine tour, a vintage car meet was happening: our bikes fit right in! There were several long lines of classic cars to explore. We chatted up some of the locals, chowed down on Polish food cooked on site, and continued south to arrive home for a hot cooked meal. The bikes performed well, the riders rode well, and the weather co-operated. All in all, a weekend to remember.

