

5 X 5 X 5 X 2: The Riders

(10/26-10/27 2013)

Bob J.



One group of riders reserved this entire ride and these were some serious and capable motorcyclists. In Boston when people think 'motorcycle safety training' they think of Streetwise, a large and well organized



business offering a variety of Motorcycle Safety Foundation training courses (www.streetwisecycleschool.com). The proprietor, Bob J, organized a small group

including himself, his riding girl friend, and several others associated with the safe riding school. There were four riders and 1 passenger plus me so we ran 5 bikes, all 500 cc models and planned to cover 500 miles in 2 days. Hence **5 X 5 x 5 x 2.**

Kelly C.



Joe H.



Bud H.
Carmen D.



5X5X5X2: THE BIKES

1979 Moto Morini 500 Strada



1979 Moto Guzzi V50



1976 Honda CB500T



1970 Triumph T100C Trophy



1978 Honda CX500



5X5X5X2: THE TRIP

A fully loaded SUV carrying all five participants arrived from Boston late Friday afternoon. A cargo box on the roof held baggage and riding gear and everyone was unloaded and settled into their rooms after initial introductions. We spent a bit of time just getting to know one another and I was not too surprised to learn that we shared mutual friends; Lynn and I are originally from Boston and the motorcycle community there is as tight knit as anywhere.

We hung out in the garage for a spell enjoying the eye candy with special attention to the ½ liter machines which had been prepared for the weekend. We sat on different bikes, discussed their relative merits and pitfalls, waffled back and forth and eventually settled on five: two Italians, two Japanese and one British bike.

From a technical point of view, I thought it was interesting that the two Italian bikes were both 1979 models featuring Heron head combustion chambers: the cylinder heads are basically flat and the combustion chamber is formed by a large depression in the piston crown. This gives the Moto Guzzi V50 and the Moto Morini 500 Strada similar smooth and seamless power delivery. Both V-twins have three disc brakes and sporty suspension systems yet the two are still quite different. The Morini uses an in-line chain driven configuration while the Guzzi uses a transverse V connected to the rear wheel through a drive shaft. Like many Italian bikes these two are all about the sporty handling. **NIMBLE!**

The two Honda 500's are from opposite ends of the decade. The CB500 is based on the CB450 which came out as the 4 speed 'Black Bomber' in 1965, evolved into a disc braked 5 speed through the mid 70's and finally morphed into the 500 at the end of it's production run in 1976. It was ultra modern in '65 with it's double overhead camshafts, torsion bar valve springs and performance to rival 650cc machines but rather long in the tooth by the mid 70's. The CX500 appeared in 1978 and was ahead of it's time perhaps, with Comstar wheels, water cooling, electronic CDI ignition and the comfort and performance of a much larger bike. Very different bikes but both very much Hondas. Reliability and ease of operation are the key words here. **COMPETANT!**

The T100C is the most classic bike in the lot, with roots that go waaaaay back. A 1970 model, the Triumph was also the oldest kid on the block. The only bike requiring kick starting, it was also the lightest and had the lowest seat height. A sweet engine, refined British road manners and seating position, and a sound that soothes made this a terrific offset to the others and it was great to experience the variety of these five bikes as we rotated through over the weekend. Everyone had the opportunity to try every one of the bikes at some point. The Triumph T100C is all about the pure classic feeling. **VINTAGE!**

We enjoyed a delicious dinner thanks to my wife Lynn on Friday night and since the morning was on the cool side, we delayed our start until about 9:30 Saturday morning. The weather was decent, lovely even, but cool enough for electric riding gear. Fortunately all 5 bikes had outlets, we would be using back roads which are perfectly suited to machines of diminutive stature and the lower associated speeds helped to keep the cool temperatures manageable.

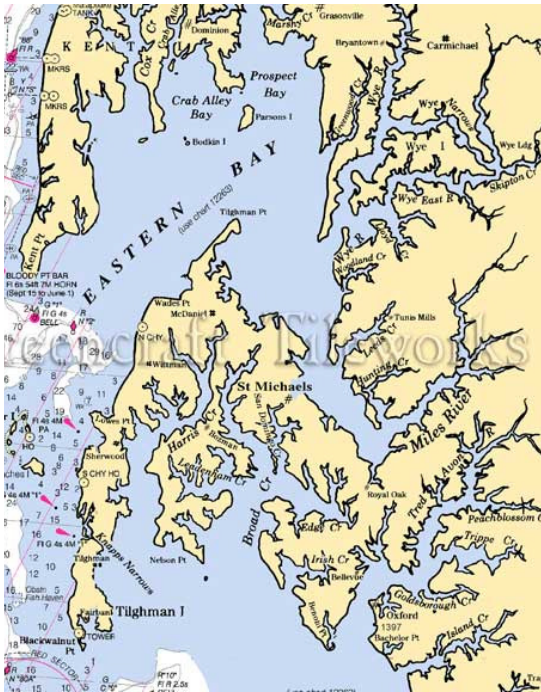
Still, someone needed to supplement their riding gear so we deviated less than ½ mile from the planned route south to visit Powersports East in Bear, Delaware. Following a quick stop to shop, we soon found ourselves on Scenic Route 9. Delaware is divided by the horizontal cut of the C&D Canal which connects the Chesapeake Bay to the Delaware River making Wilmington, Delaware and Philadelphia, PA into inland deep water ports. Route 9 takes us across the canal on the old bridge at Chesapeake City then follows the river through phragmites reed covered wet lands. The road is remarkable primarily for its utter lack of traffic; anything between Dover and Wilmington is on the new highway: Route 1. In addition there are some curvy sections and hump back bridges that often have standing water on the dips at either side: it is an interesting roadway and perfect for motorcycling.



In 40 miles we are ‘downstate’ in Slower Lower Delaware where soy beans are big and so are the aircraft. C5 Super Galaxy transports ply the runways at Dover Air Force Base which borders Route 9 at its southern terminus and there is also a free Air Transport Museum where we stop for a break. The museum has many interesting displays but my favorite is the huge wooden glider used to evade enemy radar in WWII. We spend about 45 minutes warming up and admiring all manner of military aircraft then remount and head west for Maryland.



WWII combat glider: it's really made of wood and it's really, really big.



The heart of the DelMarVa Peninsula is farmland but the western shore faces the Chesapeake Bay. One popular attraction is St. Michaels. This colorful town was once known for shipbuilding but more recently has become a shopping destination for tourists. We park on the main drag where our bikes draw considerable interest from the many people out for a walk, enjoying the bright sunshine on a cool day. Lunch is taken at a nearby eatery and we relax and warm up a bit before angling south and east towards Salisbury. We have a date with 'Downstate Kieth' and we are very late. My bad Kieth; I'm really sorry dude.

The plan to zig-zag across the peninsula was overly ambitious as it turned out. With our none-too-early departure, the stop at the dealership and a long lunch break we are several hours behind schedule. RetroTours schedules are flexible out of necessity (we never know what will happen!) but Kieth was waiting at a certain gas station at a certain time and we are 2 hours plus beyond that certain time. Luckily our downstate guide is quite laid back and after introductions are made we follow him for a tour of "The Olde Road" into Virginia. This involves a very complicated route on tiny back roads which can only cross the uncountable rivers and peninsulas (see map) by using three or more very small ferry boats. The trouble is that the last one stops running at 6 PM and we arrive at 6:01.



No amount of begging can convince the captain to take us across and who can blame him? These days the boat's exact position is monitored by on board GPS and the coast guard keeps a close watch on all activity; operating beyond the permitted hours is a serious offense. We have to back track a bit and take a straighter wider road for the last 20 miles or so which, as it turns out is really quite OK because it's getting dark and we're cold and tired. We stop for fuel and to let our eyes adjust to the dark and to check the lights and gather ourselves up for the final sprint to Chincoteague Island.

YOU CAN ALWAYS DO 20 MORE MILES!



Joe

It's cold and dark and we're tired but there's only 20 miles to go.

Bud



A total surprise and a rare treat: at the ferry line the new owner takes delivery of his brand new Morgan three wheeler.



All aboard! Crossing the Tred Avon River in Maryland



We arrive at our cottage exhausted but ecstatic. It has been a glorious day and the heater warms us quickly. We change cloths and head out immediately...Chincoteague Island tends to close up early. Walking quickly we reach a nearby restaurant just in time. A few adult beverages, a roaring fire, a huge portion of delicious Chesapeake Bay cuisine and all is right in the world. AHH, that's more like it. A brisk walk back to the warmth of our bungalow is followed by delicious deep sleep. We are up early and walk to a breakfast diner just down the road. We depart and spend a half hour meandering around the island taking in the sights. Chincoteague is a very picturesque place, with lots of sail boats and fishing craft, and a bridge that leads to the state park at the southern end of Assateague Island, where wild horses roam. A much longer bridge connects us back to the mainland as we pass by the Wallops NASA Launch Facility where missiles loom on their launch pads and where 'Downstate Kieth' works. Yes, he really is a rocket scientist!

Now we cut north, paralleling the eastern shore which is the open Atlantic Ocean on very rural back roads, enjoying the sun as the temperature warms. We hit a 'T' intersection a bit south of Ocean City, Maryland and turn right to access the northern end of Assateague Island which is a Federal Park with an endless sugar white beach.





We take in a few rays of the sun and after a suitable break we turn north again and soon arrive in Ocean City which I dub 'Babylon'; it is such a stark contrast to the natural beauty of the shore. Suddenly we are in the midst of fast moving traffic and wall to wall McDonalds, gas stations high rise apartments and convenience stores. We patiently wade through the city and its traffic lights then as things begin to finally thin

out again we turn west to zig-zag north through Lower Delaware on Route 15 which follows the edges of old farmlands as it makes it's way unhurriedly towards Wilmington in the north. We stop at a cross roads for Italian food and GO BIG. Cool weather riding definitely stimulates the appetite. No one knows this better than my wife Lynn and she has a hot home cooked meal ready for us when we pull in, thankfully well before dark.



'Babylon'



A home cooked meal like this is how every RetroTour ends. We tuned into Moto GP after dinner then retired for the night. In the morning we said our goodbyes and the SUV was loaded up and soon heading north for Boston. It was a great ride! We covered 520 miles in two very full days. All the bikes held up well and the riders all performed like the veterans that they are. I sure hope the Streetwise gang returns for another tour. I have already scheduled a return to Chincoteague in 2014 and I'm looking forward to it. The next time I plan to leave a little earlier and make *all* the ferries and to arrive at the cottage *before* the hot tub is closed for the night. I also promise not to keep 'Downstate Kieth' waiting and to leave time Sunday morning for a stop at the visitors' center at the Wallops Launch Facility. Love to have you along, could you make some time for yourself and join us?

