

NEW JERSEY MOTORSPORTS PARK AHRMA RACES AND SWAP MEET
July, 2016



One might say there were some interesting people and machines at the swap meet this year including this one off hand built Corvair bike. The builder spent several years cutting up his Corvair and fashioning this piece. He hand-crafted the frame and body himself as well as the ultra-wide rear wheel. He had a for sale sign that read:

“For sale...\$5,000...wife needs a kidney”

Women are different human beings than men. Not exactly 'better' but certainly more intuitive, empathic and outwardly focused than we are. Consider this: Susan, a motorcyclist, called months ago from South Carolina. Tommy, her husband of three years and also a motorcyclist, loves old bikes. For his birthday Susan arranged a RetroTours gift certificate. More evidence: Judy, who is not a motorcyclist, also called during the off season to arrange a RetroTours gift certificate for husband Ken's birthday. When he converted his gift into a reservation Ken decided to "pay it forward" and arranged for his dad, Ken Sr, to join also as a birthday gift. That's three riders on this RetroTour as birthday gifts. Robb, a local talent and regular RetroTourist signed up as well and a fifth rider had to cancel at the last moment. With me, this made a group of 5 for the 2016 Vintage Motorcycle Road Race and Swap Meet at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

Bikes were chosen weeks in advance. Tommy regularly rides a Harley Electra Glide and picked The XLCR from our fleet of "Big Twins of the 70's". Robb had ridden many of the bikes on previous trips and decided that the RD400 would be perfect for this relatively short weekend ride. Ken Sr. surprised me by requesting the TX750 and I added the Triumph T100C which had not been used in a while. Ken Jr. was up for anything so I added the Guzzi V50 to the mix to round things out. We had 2 Japanese bikes, one American iron, one British mount and an Italian stallion.

Tommy drove up all the way from The Tar Heel State and spent Friday night at our place, getting acclimated and acquainted. He was once a Southern Baptist preacher and his musical drawl and smooth articulation made conversation a pleasure. The two Kens and Robb would arrive for breakfast early Saturday morning. Ken Jr. asked if he and his dad could have their wives join our planned Sunday night farewell dinner. After checking with my wife Lynn (the 'Chef') we agreed and also invited Robb's wife Kristin, herself a veteran of several tours. After several oppressively hot and humid days, the kind of uncomfortable weather the Middle Atlantic is famous for in July or August, we were greeted by misty overcast skies as we loaded our gear and prepared to set off. We all had rain gear but never put it on, enjoying instead the cooling effects of a light mist and intermittent drizzle as we departed Kennett Square and crossed the Delaware River into New Jersey via the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

Once on the Jersey side we abandoned the main roads and picked up Route 49 through tiny



Pennsville and into Salem, a town that has surely seen better times. Shortly thereafter we stopped in Alloway to check out the Hancock House, a preserved historical site that I had ridden past many times without stopping for a look. Sometimes we don't see the diamonds in our own back yard; the Hancock House turned out to be a very interesting diversion. During the American Revolution, when George Washington and his army were holed up for a miserable winter in Valley Forge the huge amount of food needed to feed the troops came from South Jersey across the Alloway Creek Bridge which is exactly where the Hancock House is located. British troops entered the house at 3 AM one night and gruesomely bayoneted 20 people in their sleep, including Judge Hancock. In addition to this massacre the house features some very interesting brick work in its construction and a typical walk in fireplace. Just across the street is the new bridge across the Alloway Creek and miles of scenic grassland.

Note date and initials of W and S Hancock in brickwork.



From Alloway we continued across this undeveloped southeast corner of the state on very small roads that pass through farmlands and tiny old villages where shell fishing once thrived. Many creeks and rivers meander here between Delaware Bay inlets and tranquil inland ponds. Fishing boats and pleasure craft marinas dot the landscape and in places peach orchards stretch as far as the eye can see. In order to cross one of the larger rivers, the Cohansey, we veered into Bridgeton where we stopped for a cup of Duncan Donut's finest and to let the incessant mist finally stop.



Riders bargained and switched bikes at these rest stops as we turned back into the woods, finally reaching NJMP after 80 miles. We gained entry to the track using free passes that were earned a month earlier when Lynn and I had spent a day at the track during a MotoAmerica road race promoting today's AHRMA event. From the ticket booth we made our way to the track's luxury condos where we would be staying. Our condo had 5 beds, with 2 bedrooms on the ground floor and a master bedroom upstairs with a big screen TV and a spacious rear deck which overlooked the racetrack's most interesting corner: a huge carousel that was negotiated by means of a number of different lines, some with two or even three apexes. We settled in and

were a bit surprised to find that Lee, a stranger who had ridden down from Brooklyn on his Honda Shadow, had somehow infiltrated our ranks. No worries though, we're all riders and brothers of a sort.



Next we made our way in dribs and drabs to the swap meet which was set up between the pits and the spectator bleachers. We parked our bikes in a tidy row and put RetroTours business cards on the bikes to create a sort of 'display'. There were plenty of people interested and we were likewise fascinated by the plethora of vintage equipment all around. This included a trike hand built in the

60's from a Corvair, a decent looking, running XLCR that someone had just purchased or \$4500, and of course the pits. The pits at AHRMA races are generally open to the public and are nearly as entertaining as the races themselves. We talked to racers and closely examined much



immaculate exotica including old Matchless and Norton singles, a Vincent Grey Flash, an MV 350 single, desmo Ducatis of all sorts, side shifting Harleys and Indians from the teens and 20's, kneeler sidecar racers, and--- don't ask me why these are present at a vintage event--- Impulse all electric road race machines.

At one point we made our way up several flights of stairs to the observation deck on top of the control tower by start/finish. From here we had a view of the entire track. We watched an event which was a bit confusing as several classes are often run at once. There were ultra-modern electric bikes mixed in with antique internal combustion engine powered bikes, including a Harley/Aermacchi 350 single. This old single was being ridden well by a tall, wiry, black leather clad racer whose greying reddish beard and locks overflowed his full face helmet. I thought he looked familiar and as the race progressed and he diced with then disposed of the leaders I realized that this must be Dave Roper, an old friend and the first American to win a race at the Isle of Man. We watched as he made a short stop at the winner's circle then headed for his van in the pits. We walked to the van to say hello and I invited Dave to dinner, knowing that he would entertain us all with endless stories about racing around the world throughout the decades. As it turned out, Dave would also be celebrating a birthday in a few days.



Dinner at the trackside bar/ restaurant was as entertaining as expected and I was pleased to also meet Ed Fisher who, earlier in the day, had raced his Triumph 200 Cub in 3 events, all the more remarkable considering that Ed is 92 years old. After several adult beverages and some



great food, we made our way back to the condo where the 7 of us (5 RetroTourists, Dave Roper, Lee from Brooklyn) relaxed, smoked excellent cigars generously supplied by Robb, and admired the stars from the back deck. The sky had cleared completely by now and everyone was looking forward to a Sunday full of great weather: blue skies and intense sunshine. Dave decided to stay over with us; it sure beats sleeping in the van while Lee refused our offer to stay over and bravely (foolishly after a couple of drinks?) set off for Brooklyn in the dark. He texted the next morning that he had made it home safely.

Left to right: Ken Jr, Tommy, Ken Sr, Dave Roper, Lee,, Robb & me.

We had all agreed to kick stands up at 9 so our 9:15 departure was not unacceptable. We barely made it to the first gas station which came 100 miles from home but were able to fill up with ultra-high test without incident and continued south, through a small amount of shore traffic and on to the Cape May Ferry Terminal where we pulled up the ticket booth at 10:45. When I asked "What ferry can we get on please" the attendant replied "we have reservations available for the 5 PM boat". My heart dropped into my boots until she added: "but you can go on standby and probably get onto the 11 AM boat".



We paid, got into the standby line and 20 minutes later we were the last ones to be loaded. We ate brunch and admired the serene ocean views and dolphins plying our wake for 90 relaxing minutes, then waited out a bit more shore traffic as we rode north on Route 1 almost to Dover. We diverted to Magnolia, escaping the traffic and made a rest stop at the biker friendly Magnolia Cafe: vanilla ice cream and black coffee works for me. A quick visit to the local "Happy Gas" station and we crossed Route 1 to pick up nearly deserted Route 9: the 'old road' where we stopped again for a one-hour tour of the Dover Air Force Base Air Transport Command Museum. Here we paid close attention as Chuck, USAF retired, regaled us with stories about his 4,000+ hours flying C5 super transports, large enough to carry 6 Greyhound busses with all their passengers and baggage. The tour of this amazing aircraft was all the more fascinating for being narrated by the very guy who flew it when, in the early



70's, a 65,000-pound ICBM missile was shoved out the back door, stabilized with drogue chutes and 'launched' from mid-air into the upper atmosphere. Significantly, the Russians, who at the time were resisting pressure to limit strategic arms, realized that they would never be able to neutralize 50 missile launching C5's cruising randomly at 45,000 feet. Soon after the demonstration launch the SALT talks were finalized, making Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) somewhat less likely.



From the museum we five headed north, each at his own pace, with instructions to regroup 35 miles later at Augustine Beach. No one uses Route 9 anymore; the hordes of beach goers returning home from a weekend of fun in the sun at the shore confine themselves to super-slab Route 1, leaving the old road to a small number of motorcyclists who revel in the curves, dips and turns through the grasslands and reeds. We had fun on that stretch of road! At our rendezvous I noticed that the old biker bar across the street has been re-opened and was populated with

Augustine Beach: a man (Tommy of North Carolina), his Harley and a nuclear reactor.

a few dozen Harleys, just as in days of yore. We continued north on Route 9 and came up on a huge group of riders on modern sport bikes traveling in tight formation at the speed limit. I think I recognized some of them as members of a local club called the Thunderguards. They are good people who live to ride.

We reached home at 6:15 and parked bikes for a few minutes until the wives showed up right on time. Lynn had really outdone herself this time with a fantastic meal set up on the back deck. The weather was absolutely glorious as were the roasted peppers stuffed with quinoa and grilled flank steak. Yuengling beer for the guys, red or white wine for the ladies and dessert was baked by Judy: fresh blueberry pie. It just doesn't get any better than that!

Over the weekend we had covered 245 miles on a variety of great classic bikes, visited historic Revolutionary War sites, watched some exciting vintage road racing, stayed in a luxury trackside condo, hobnobbed with some classic racing celebrities, made some new friends, enjoyed a 90-minute ocean cruise, explored a fascinating collection of old aircraft and bonded with several like-minded individuals while celebrating the birthdays of four of our group. Truly a weekend to remember.



As usual, Lynn really took care of us at the end of the tour.