

Renovo: The Town that Time Forgot. June 23-25, 2017

Small groups rule! Just three of us on this one. We were able to get to know each other very well over three days, and we each fully experienced all three bikes. My pre-ride prep sheets show the red R90/6 (since sold) starting out with just over 82,500 miles on the clock. The Moto Guzzi V50 with 27,400 and the 1970 Bonneville with a bit more than 6,000. Of course, the pleasant pulsations of the Triumph engine are tough on instruments; this is at least the third speedometer on the 650, so real mileage is over 30,000. I had also prepped the 25,000-mile BSA 650 as a backup bike but it was not needed.

Dwight and Nolan are both experienced riders, repeat customers, and very easy to get along with, 50 somethings, making me the old timer of our little group. Oh well, I guess it's better to be the old timer than to be dead, isn't it? Funny, I don't feel that old. It's true you know: motorcycles keep you feelin' young.

At breakfast we go over the usual details, emphasizing that everyone must ride at their own comfortable pace and stay within safe limits. Then, we're on the road early, heading north, with a quick stop after 35 miles to check out the restrooms at Hopewell Furnace, a restored village



Parked up at Hopewell Furnace Village

and iron casting facility from Colonial times. Here, a massive charcoal fired blast furnace melts iron ore to cast parts used to make wood burning stoves. This was an important product. Besides being a good source of heat for the home, it made cooking safe for housewives who previously used walk-in fireplaces to prepare meals. Colonial women wore voluminous dresses which were extremely flammable, and many of these women went up in flames as a result. Seriously! Back then, if someone said your wife was hot, it might be taken quite literally.

After a short break we continue north, crossing the Schuylkill River at Douglasville, then passing through Oley (where the AMCA has an annual meet) and Moseley Springs. Each town has a historically interesting story to tell, as does the stunning Dreibelis Covered Bridge (1869)



which we ride across before Wanamakers and Lynnport, where we turn left, following a torturous, twisty, steep, up-hill grade, which delivers us to the Eastern Continental Divide at Route 309. It's just a few more miles to Snyders, where we grab lunch at the local diner before continuing north through Centralia. Only two families remain of the once thriving city. The local dump set a coal vein on fire in the 60's and it still burns, releasing noxious gas. The original roadway has melted and smoke spews from volcanic like fissures. The ruined tarmac is covered with graffiti, giving the place a post-apocalyptic atmosphere.

Mahanoy City is the gateway to Zion Valley. This economically challenged former coal producing town has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. The residents are grateful that Donald Trump will soon make coal Great Again, along with the rest of the country. Just beyond the closed mines we ride close to a series of massive windmills perched on windy ridges, their giant turbine blades chuffing as we pass. The road is technical, and the 'Quixotic' scenery conspires with the Armco bordered curves (not to mention the rain) to demand that we respect the laws of physics, keeping our pace safe as well as exhilarating. The earth's surface undulates into lush, forested ridges and farmlands on both sides of the road as we reach our destination for the first day: The Comfort Inn at Mifflinville. It's Friday late afternoon, but here in Mifflinville, there is no rush hour. Gear is hung to dry. Pizza is ordered, delivered and eaten.



It may look like a little truck, but.....

We enjoy a hearty breakfast on Saturday morning, then arrive at nearby Bill's Old Bike Barn before opening hour. Bill and Judy are expecting us, and our early entry means we have the place totally to ourselves. The seemingly endless display of fascinating motorcycles, cameras, telephones, 1938 World's Fair memorabilia and well, pretty much everything that can be imagined and/or collected, holds our attention for an hour or two, but the persistent call of the road cannot be ignored.

....Open the door and you can see its actually a Moto Guzzi 500 single with the ultimate bolt on utilitarian accessory.

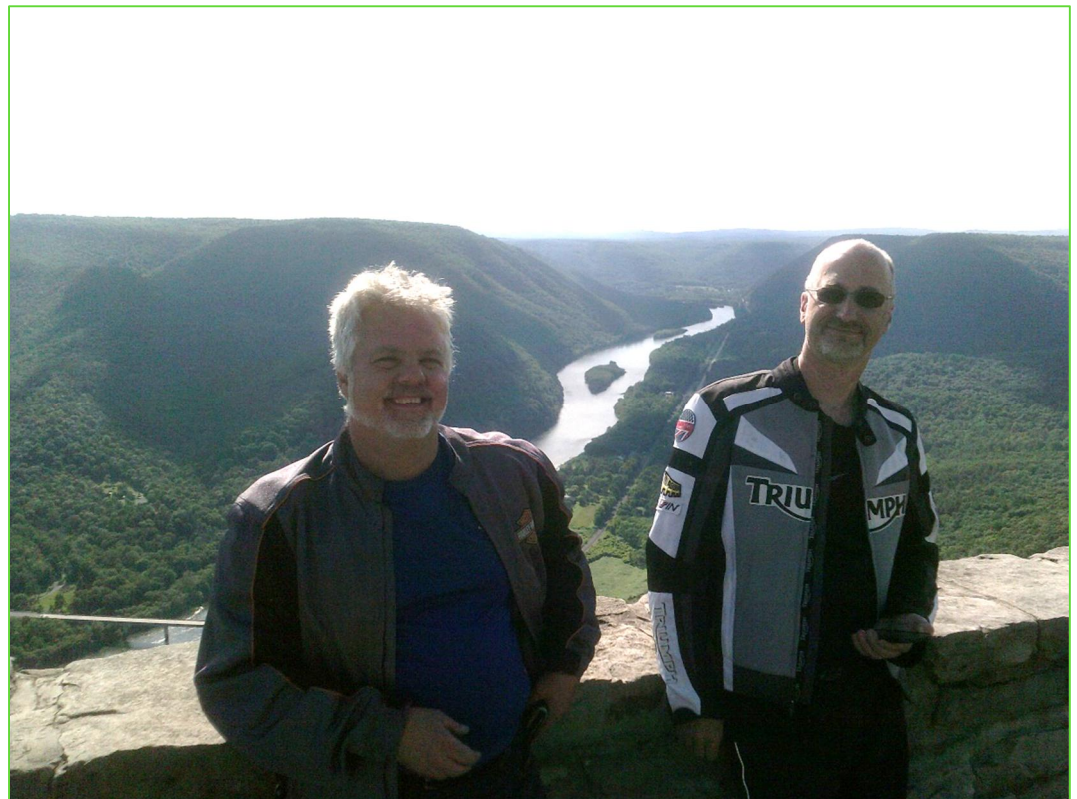




On the way out, we zigzag into the surrounding mountains, taking in 2 or 3 somewhat obscure covered bridges, including a short stop at the unique Twin Bridges of Paden. Regaining the main road at Route 487, we press on to the north, entering then vast State Forests and Gamelands of central PA, appropriately named The Endless Mountains.

That's Nolan on the left, Dwight on the right, and the Endless Mountains behind them.

Onward through Huntersville and Warrentsville to a homemade ice cream stop in Salladasville. After Waterville we hang a left on an especially fetching mountain road which leads to Hyner's View, where hang gliding is popular for obvious reasons. A sheer cliff, 1,000 feet above the Susquehanna River, treats us to an unparalleled view of the valley below and the river splits the mountains until forever, or at least until the horizon. This late in the day the sun gets into the act too; longish rays lending a heavenly glow to it all. After admiring the view for a good long while we whisk down to the river bed, following it into Renovo for a cold beer, a hearty if basic meal, and a well-earned rest at Yesterday's Hotel, a repurposed YMCA built in 1925. Not so luxurious perhaps, but totally characterful and definitely very 'Retro'.





Early morning mist on the mountains, Yesterdays Hotel across the street, the BMW is loaded and ready to rock and roll.



First you open this door to summon the oldest continuously operating ferry boat in the country.

Then you wait for the ferry to cross back to you.



I can assure you that the name on the life preserver refers to the boat, NOT to Nolan.





Sunday is HUGE. Immediately upon exiting Renovo, we pick up 35 miles of Route 144. The road is sinuous as a snake and lined with mountain laurel flowers in full bloom; pink, purple, white and thick for the entire length. It traverses an undeveloped swath of regrowth forest. Green trees as far as the eye can see, but 100 years ago, not one tree remained: the greedy forestry industry had totally denuded the countryside. Ironically, this rape of the planet was so severe that it sparked the conservation movement that put the land aside for future

generations which are us. The ride through Bloody Skillet is serene. Aside from the natural splendor, we spy nary another human, save a single motorcyclist on a Victory cruiser who joins us for a spell. After Snow Shoe, Nittany, and McAlisterville, we bottom out at Route 15, a heavily travelled main road paralleling the river. We cross the highway to escape the traffic by entering the Millersburg Ferry Campground, where we open the 'door to nowhere' to summon the tiny paddle wheel ferry which takes us on a leisurely cruise across the wide expanse of river. From the east bank we make our way through Tower City to Gold Mine Road which literally shoots us up and over the continental divide to Route 443. This is the end game now; we wave to Amish buggy drivers and meander back towards Kennett Square, where Lynn has a splendid feast waiting. We have enjoyed good weather, fine camaraderie and three great bikes. Life is good.





We don't need no stinking GPS. GETTING LOST IS GOOD!

RETROTOURS

I seem to have forgotten about the biblical rain storm we rode through on the first day, but Dwight wrote about this ride and remembered that & other details. Check this link:

<http://advrider.com/index.php?threads/a-trifecta-of-contrast-3-retro-tours-bikes.1236059/>