

RED NECK GYRO VII: 09-16, 17, 18 2017

It's hard to believe that it's been almost a year since this ride. The good news is that I am fully current on ride reports for this year, and just a few left to put up from last year. So here it is...

Only three of us on this one; a much smaller group than usual. This worked out fine, as I secured a tiny cabin in the woods. We would stay in Lost City. How do you find Lost City? It's easy: just follow the Lost River. The two very experienced riders that showed up for this ride included Robb Harman: a local from just across the state line in Delaware. We've been riding together for years out of the family dealership which is close to his home, and he has been on numerous RetroTours, beginning years ago with a Christmas gift from his wife, Kristen. Robb also gave a RetroTour to his dad for a birthday gift (see the ride report from June 26, 2015). It's true: a RetroTour makes a great gift idea--- gift certificates available at www.retro tours.com.

Enough shameful solicitation. The second rider was Chris Haugen, who came north from his home in Alabama for this event. Chris has a bunch of bikes and has done some trials riding and some road racing. I was thinking I would not have to hold anyone's hand on this ride, and I was right. Chris came in the day before and stayed here overnight. Robb rode his modern Yamaha triple to join us for breakfast on Saturday/departure day. The idea of scheduling the ride for Saturday thru Monday is to avoid rush hour traffic on Friday and tourist traffic on Sunday. It worked out.

We headed out on a slightly northern route, taking in the Robert Fulton house and a Susquehanna Panorama before crossing the mighty river via the Holtwood Bridge. We then angled southwest through northern Maryland and the Catoctin Mountain Pass, passing through Boonsboro and Sharpsburg, then following the Potomac River through Harper's Ferry where we finally crossed into West Virginia. From Charles Town, we hit some back roads, passing right by Summit Point Race Track, then dropped back into Virginia for a bit. We made our final entry into 'Almost Heaven' (WV) by crossing the Eastern Continental Divide, dropping down from the mountains into Wardensville. It wasn't far from here; another 25 miles and we turned up a tiny mountain road which led to an even smaller dirt road and finally our cabin.

Our plan for Sunday was to visit the Green Bank Radio Telescope, about 100 miles to the south. There are no bad roads, so we used maps instead of planned out route sheets, picking a path as we travelled, and made our way there by 3 o'clock or so; just in time for a short and interesting orientation lecture and a tour of the facility. Another awesome ride back to our cabin included a stop in Lost City for dinner followed by a good night's sleep.

The ride back on Monday was complicated a bit by the threat of showers. First though, we did some Adventure Riding. Twelve mile-long Squirrel Gap Road began close to the cabin and offered a dirt road through the deep woods. The CX500, Moto Guzzi 850, and BMW 900 are not exactly set up for off road riding, but Chris and Robb were both more than up to the challenge. Deep gravel and banked turns meant that we kept the throttle open and guided our heavy street bikes through the woods in the early morning sunlight, not holding a tight line through the turns, but more or less choosing a general direction and allowing the gravel to have its say. It was all quite amusing; for nearly an hour we plowed along, enjoying the views, and sliding our machines ludicrously. We finally popped out in a big parking lot next to WV Route 55. Once up on the highway for a short stint, the misty morning sunlight made the mountains and valleys seem truly heavenly.

We used a parallel but different route to head back to Kennett Square. This included passing through Civil War battlefields. I felt the presence of the thousands of souls that perished there. The sky began to close in and rain seemed highly likely, just as we pulled into a touristy looking cave. We timed it perfectly, spending time underground exploring the cave while the skies opened up for a short but fierce rain shower. Back at home, we debriefed over a home cooked meal, courtesy of my wife, Lynn. It had been a great three-day ride to remember. I hope you will enjoy the photos...

We stopped at
at The Pinnacles
for this view of
Lake Aldred,
part of the
Susquehanna
River.

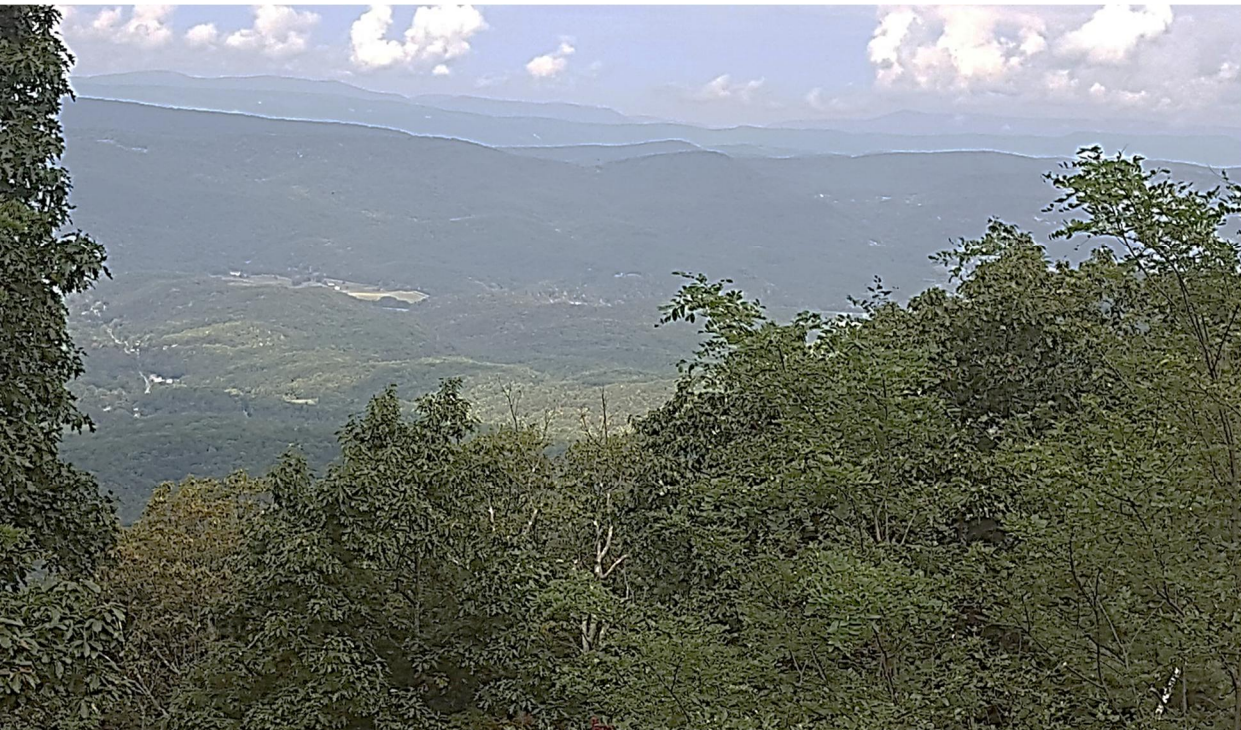


Ready for an early
morning start:

Honda CX500,
Moto Guzzi 850T3,
BMW R90/6.

All shaft drive, with
good range, good
handling, and
comfort. Locked,
loaded and ready to
go! Sun up means
kickstands up;
daylight's burning.





I love West Virginia! Besides fantastic roads and a near total lack of traffic, there are endless views like this one. Locals claim that flattened out, WV would be bigger than Texas. Well, maybe.



The sign says that George Washington stopped here to admire the same Potomac River Valley view.



We made it to the cabin in good time. It was WAY in the woods. Just great!

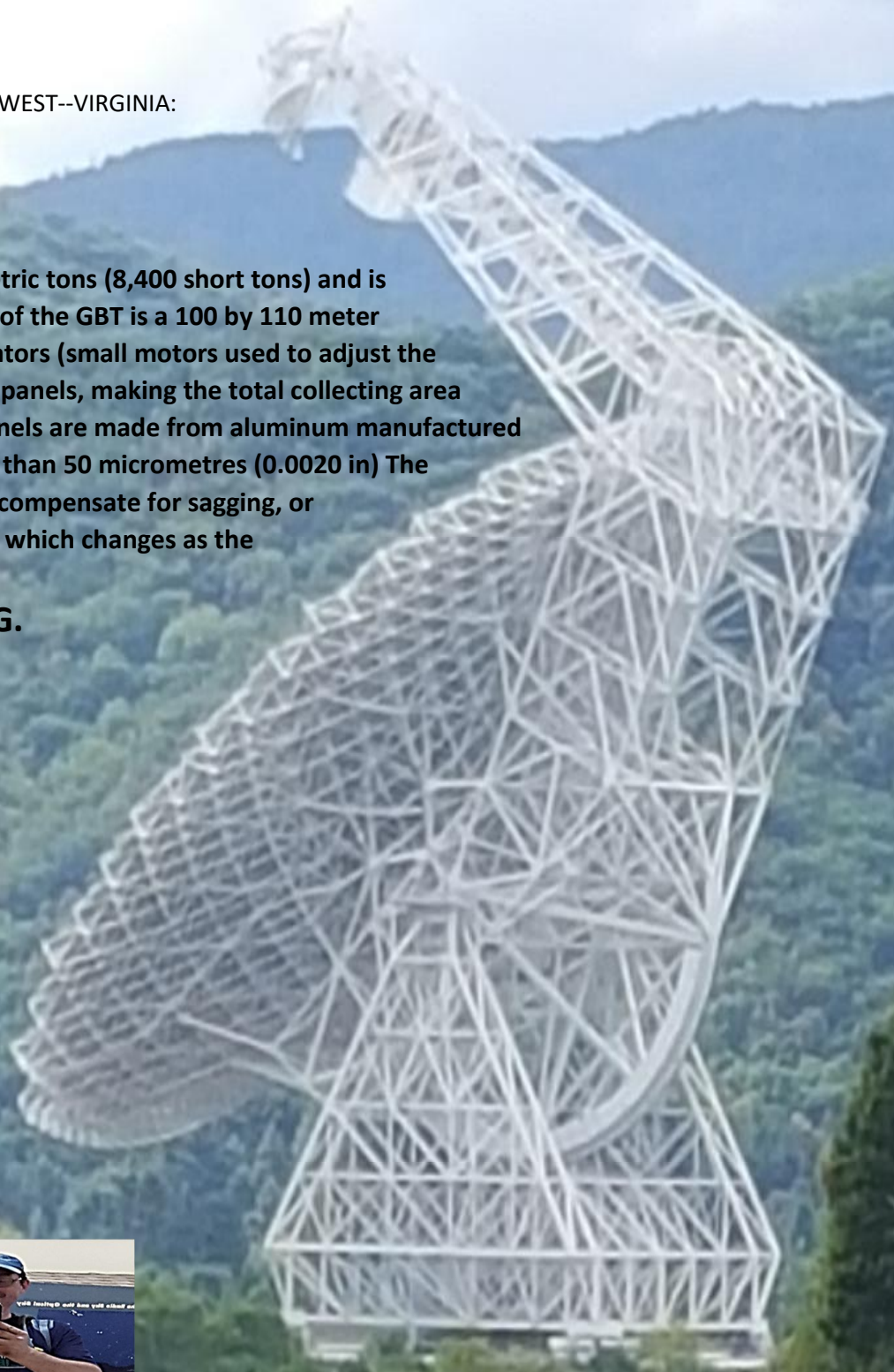


A bit further up the mountain was an isolated park with a quiet lake. Next time I'm bringing a bathing suit.

SEARCHING—FOR—ALIENS—IN—WEST--VIRGINIA:

The structure weighs 7,600 metric tons (8,400 short tons) and is 485-foot tall. The surface area of the GBT is a 100 by 110 meter active surface with 2,209 actuators (small motors used to adjust the position) for the 2,004 surface panels, making the total collecting area of 2.3 acres (9,300 m²). The panels are made from aluminum manufactured to a surface accuracy of better than 50 micrometres (0.0020 in) The actuators adjust the panels to compensate for sagging, or bending under its own weight, which changes as the telescope moves.

Long story short: it's really **BIG**.



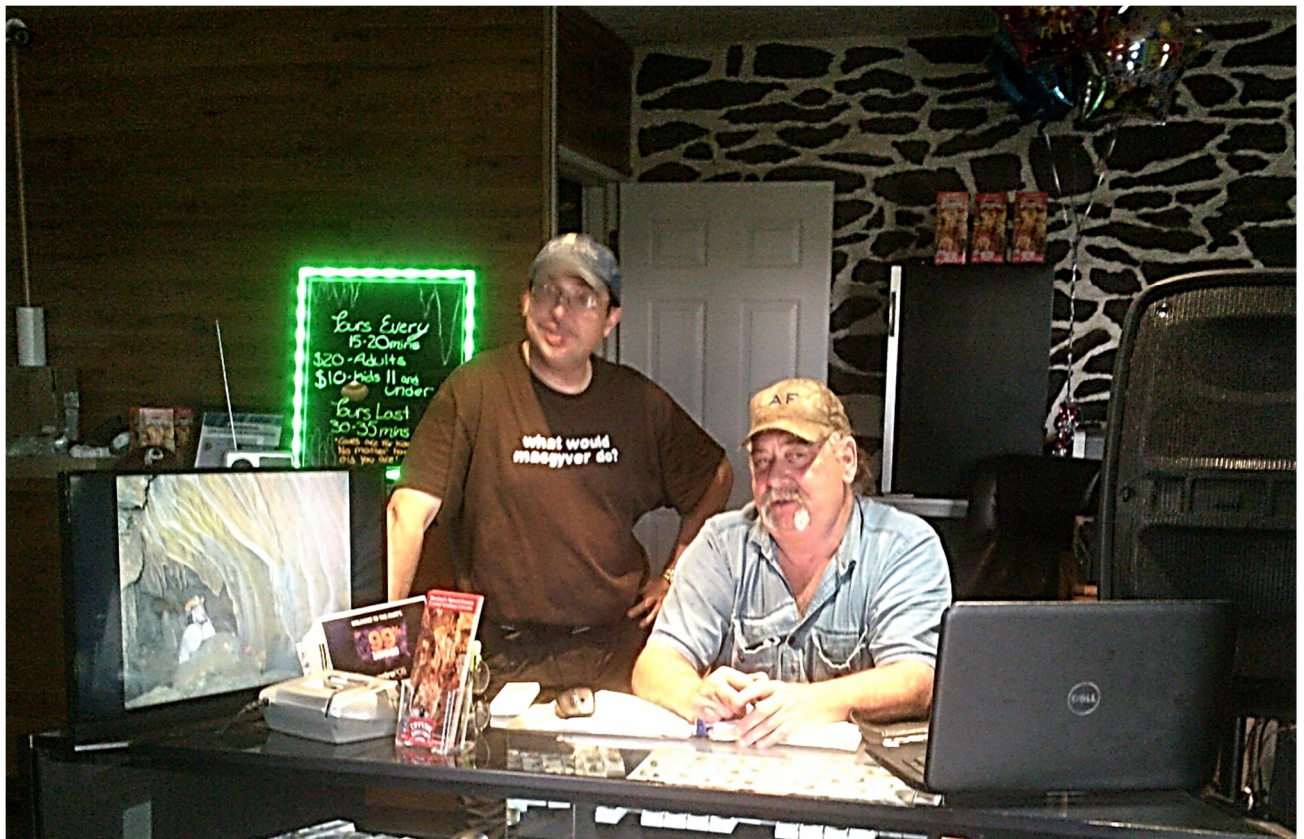
LEFT: An example of alien life forms

On the way home we stopped to explore a cave, hiding underground to escape a brief downpour.

Stalactites. Or is the picture upside down?

The guide was cute, and the cave was interesting, but no more so than the owner/proprietor: a real rebel character, and quite an entrepreneur.

That's Chris on left. 'Caveman' on the right.





The morning light creates an eerie glow in the mountain air after our Adventure Ride through the woods



Closer to home: a much-needed break.



An incredible three days of riding with Robb (left) and Chris (right), great guys and great riders both.

Robb has since moved to Colorado to follow his career. I'm sure he is enjoying the riding out there, if not the forest fires. I miss him, Kristen, and Mason.

I got to see Chris again a month or so after this ride when I was in Atlanta for Yamaha technical training. He even took me to dinner!