

## OCTOBER 6,7,8,9, 2017 (Friday-Monday): GYPSY FREEDOM TOUR.

Four easy paced, 125-mile days. No particular destination. We'll set out to rediscover America, riding towards the best weather forecast, looking for a motel each day at 125 miles. Celebrate Columbus Day; be ready for anything!

This was the concept. As it turned out, there was a hurricane brewing to the south which threatened to rain on our parade all too literally. The bad weather was coming up from the southeast and looked to impact our ride on the last day or two. Riding away from the nasty weather meant heading northwest. It so happened that I had recently read about an interesting spot way out in that direction called the Kinzua Bridge State Park. I measured out 250 miles on my map and found Kinzua to be a bit further, but still do-able. We decided to head in

that direction and see how far we could get. With no definite route chosen, we would travel by map and pick turns as they came. There would be just the three of us: me, John from New Jersey, and Bruce from Oregon.

The bikes were chosen for comfort and range: the red BMW R90/6, the Moto Guzzi 850T3, and the Kawasaki KZ750 Twin. Bruce flew in from Oregon Thursday. I waited for his flight arrival in the cell phone parking lot. He called when he de-planed and I headed for baggage claim to pick him up. I told him to watch for the grey BMW. I think he might have been horrified!

*Bruce: "This is NOT what I was expecting!"*



I'm going to let Bruce tell the story of this weekend's adventure. He was kind enough to take notes and send them to me. I will add some photos to his notes. We really did toss our fates to the winds that weekend, and it felt liberating! We didn't worry about where we might wind up at the end of the day, or where we would stay, and somehow things worked out. We were threatened by a nearby hurricane, but we survived unscathed. We saw and experienced Amercia as few people ever do. From stunning Hyner's View, to Renovo: "The Town That Time Forgot", to Smethport, where someone crossed out the 'S', so we seemed to be pulling into 'Methport'. We met and bonded with the locals. And then there was the Kinzua Bridge, which stood for 140 years until.....

## **RetroTours, Inc. "Gypsy Tour"** **October 6-10, 2017**

### **Friday, October 6**

Up at 7:30, after a pleasant night's sleep at Joel & Lynn's. After a quick shower, I join John Larcher (from New Jersey) and our hosts for breakfast, a rider's meeting, route overview, paperwork, etc.

Each rider is given (or already has) a waterproof duffel bag for their belongings, which is strapped to a luggage rack behind the seat. In addition, each is provided a tank bag for their exclusive use; mine is secured to a 1976 Kawasaki KZ750, with approx. 36,000 miles. The other bikes for this trip are a 1974 BMW R90/6 with approx. 84,000 miles, and a 1976 Moto Guzzi 850-T3, with only 17,000+ miles.

The BMW is provided at my request, as I've been curious about this machine for many years. I'm surprised by the narrow bars, and long reach to the headlamp-mounted ignition & light switch. However, after 10-15 miles I'm settling into a rhythm, and finding the "sweet spot" in each gear. Love the "ride off" stand!



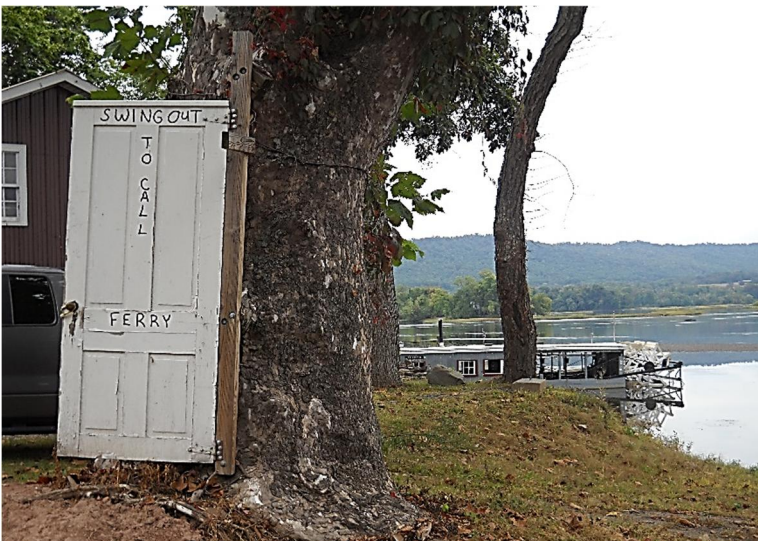
*Joel loading the BMW for Bruce*

Joel leads us by Amish farms and schools on lovely rural roads. With mild temperatures (actually warmer than expected), smooth road surfaces, and moderate traffic, it's an enjoyable first experience on the BMW. These horizontal cylinders seem HUGE.

Lunch stop was at Tosco's. Joel barely recognizes the recent transformation since it was remodeled.

The day's ride takes us through thick forests, across the Appalachian Trail, to the Susquehanna River . . . and a closed ferry terminal. A 20-mile detour (not our first of the day) takes us to a campground on the opposite bank for a "comfort stop".

*The infamous 'Door to Nowhere' used to call the Millersburg Ferry. River conditions shut down service on this day.*



Lodging at the Holiday Inn Express in Selinsgrove, and dinner at Marzoni's . . . and carefully crossing a multi-lane highway with no pedestrian cross walk.  
Rode approx. 175 miles today.

### **Saturday, October 7**

Up & on the road by around 9:00, although I can't be sure because I don't wear a watch anymore, and these vintage bikes have no clocks. The skies look mixed, but it turns into an absolutely gorgeous day.



Today I get to ride the Moto Guzzi, a marque I've never ridden before. It has more agreeable ergos than the Beemer, a nice power band, smoothing out at about 4,000 rpm's, and odd hand controls. Starting procedure would probably have been easier if I were a left-handed spider monkey . . . but Joel is there to help.

*Odd hand controls & Integrated brakes. Sometimes it took three hands to electric start the Guzzi: 1 to pull in the clutch, 1 to push the starter button and 1 to tap the starter Bendix, due to a faulty internal contact.*

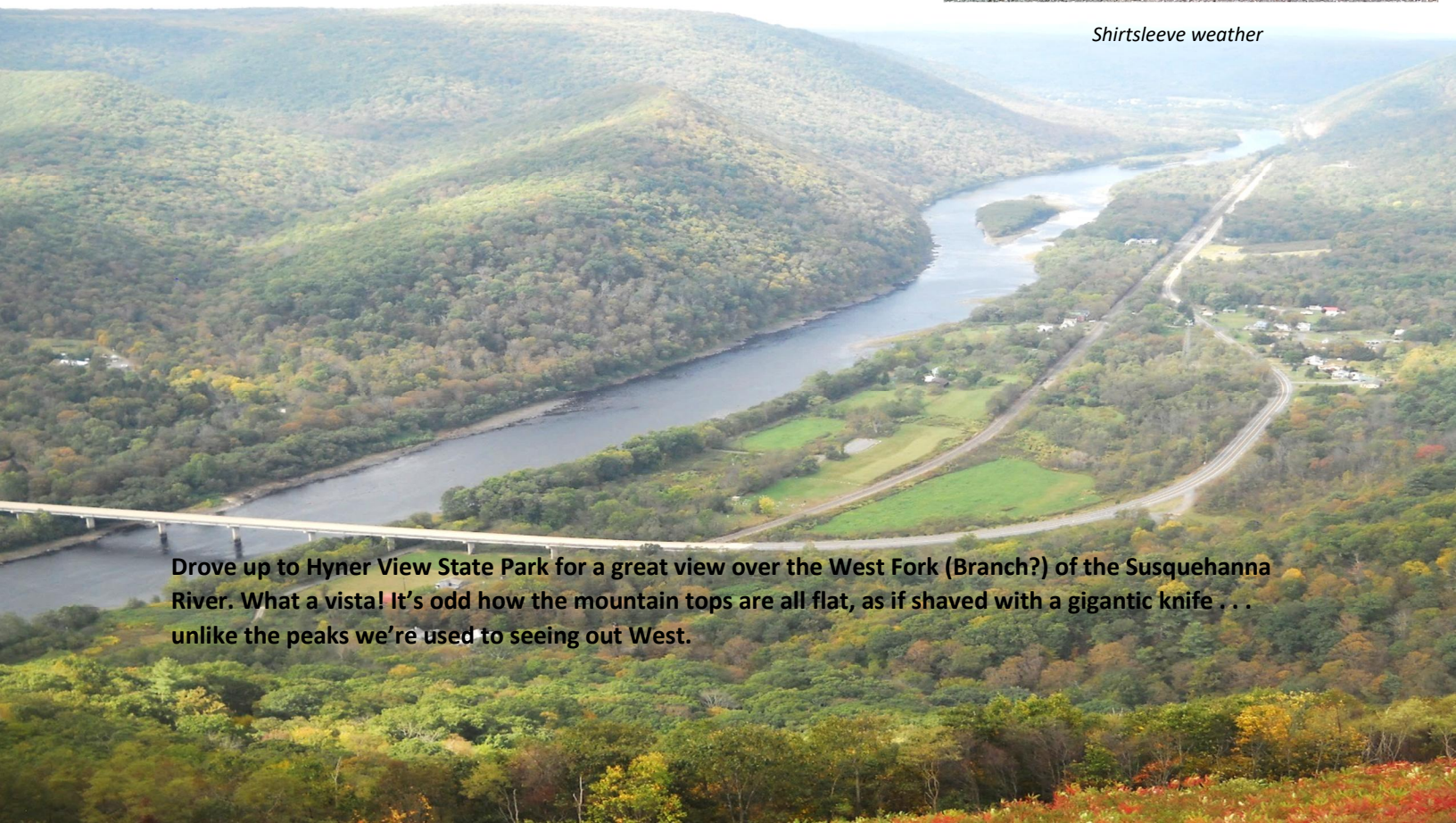
Basically, a great day of riding. At times I have to pinch myself: changing autumn colors, smooth roads, plenty of twisties, moderate traffic, comfortable temperatures, and lovely bikes.

Sure glad I signed up for this . . .

Got stuck behind a semi for several miles on a narrow, twisting road. Turns were so tight that the semi would block the other lane, forcing oncoming traffic to screeching halts. Dunno know what this guy was thinking, but this was definitely NOT the right road for an 18-wheeler.



*Shirtsleeve weather*



Drove up to Hyner View State Park for a great view over the West Fork (Branch?) of the Susquehanna River. What a vista! It's odd how the mountain tops are all flat, as if shaved with a gigantic knife . . . unlike the peaks we're used to seeing out West.

Despite a recent economic boom from Fracking, Renovo is still economically depressed.  
Note the name of the live band.



Lunch at Yesterday's, in Renovo ("the town that time forgot", says Joel).

More Amish farms, and carriages. Really fascinating.

Arrived in Smethport, PA in late afternoon, needing lodging. Nice downtown, with a grandiose courthouse, and several mansions. So how did this town get so much money??

The only motel in town was full, as were the local B&B's, so we're told to see

"Misty" at a nearby bowling alley; she may have some rooms to rent above the bar. She shows us a room with a queen bed, and shared bath, for \$50. Desperate times call for desperate measures. We tell her to hold this room while we ride out to Kinzua Bridge.

Made several calls to local area hotels, to no avail. Everything within 100 miles is booked. I call Misty to let her know we definitely want the room, and we head back to town, stopping first at the bar, Joel buys a round for everyone (all 6 customers, including ourselves), in the interest of boosting their business. I play pool with Tommy, the son of Misty's boyfriend.

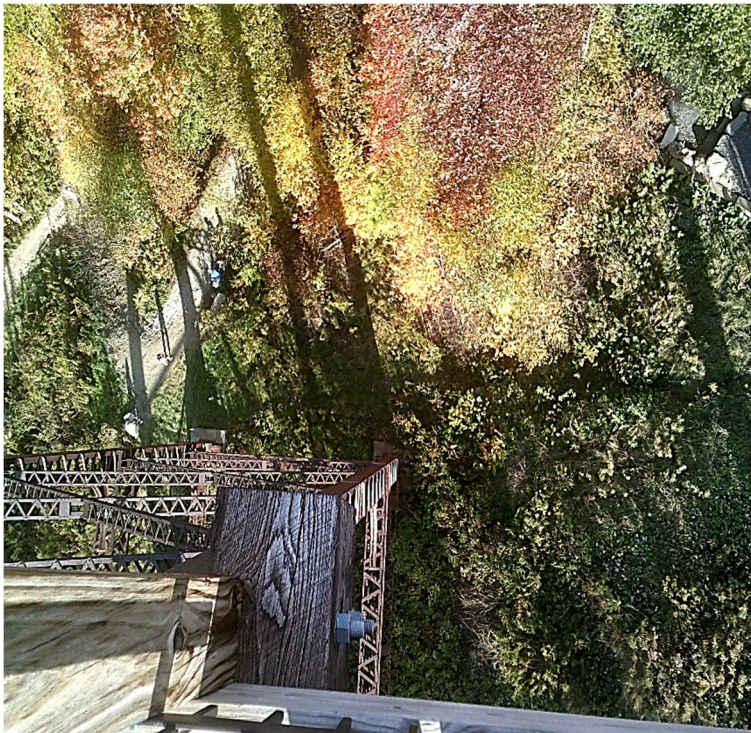
The bowling alley is defunct, as is the restaurant (the cook is "out", we're told). It's a pretty sad little business, with no customers on a Saturday night.

*We stayed above the bar, next to the shuttered bowling alley, in one room of Misty's apartment. Thanks for bailing us out Misty. You were kind.*





*Imagine crawling across this 250' deep gorge on a steam locomotive at 5 mph*



*Yes, it is a long way down.*

*John is naturally gregarious. He volunteers to photograph everyone.*





*The center part of the trestle was knocked down by massive tornado. The ruins contrast with fall's finest foliage.*

Dinner at the Corner Bistro, which is actually pretty busy.

Fortunately, Misty lets me sleep on the living room couch, so John takes the bed, and Joel sleeps on the floor.

Rode approx. 215 miles today.

### **Sunday, October 8**

Slept pretty well on the couch. Took a shower and slipped out the door.

“Nothing says ‘love’ like a burnout in the morning” . . . as Misty’s boyfriend exits the parking lot in his Mustang GT350. Here we were, trying to quietly load the bikes, considering how best to depart with minimal noise . . . and Tom takes off like he’s running from the law . . . just to go get a cup of coffee.

I ride the Kawasaki KZ750 today, a UJM that’s instantly familiar, having owned several Japanese bikes in the past. We decide to go for a “50-mile breakfast” ride, given the limited options in “Methport”, so we ride to Emporium for our first meal of the day. We finally get out of there around 10:45, a bit later than we were hoping. But no rain today! Joel manages to read the weather radar and choose dry roads, which is a big psychological boost to John & me.

Back thru Renovo, enjoying thick forests and winding roads, at a nice, brisk pace. No lunch stop, but a couple of “comfort stops” and fuel re-fills . . . always following Joel’s protocol of pulling the bikes up perpendicular to the pumps for easier fueling. Another nice day of riding. The KZ750 is a bit buzzy, and feels like it wants a 6<sup>th</sup> gear, but is otherwise perfectly suitable.

Arrived in York, PA around 5:30, staying at La Quinta . . . a nice room for \$100, and an oasis after last night. The ride today was great, due in part to the lack of rain. It was all good today . . . the hilltops, the views, forests. Dinner at Quaker Steak & Lube, with a mute waiter.

*Brittney (John's daughter): How was the ride today, Dad?*

*John: Long & hard . . . like second grade for a poor student!!*

Rode approx. 275 miles today.

### **Monday October 9**

Awoke around 6 a.m., and then slept fitfully until 7:45 or so. Probably anxious about the torrential rain (and wind) outside. We watch the local TV weather radar, deciding to let the worst of the storm pass before departing.



*We just beat the rain into York & stayed 1 mile from the Harley factory.*

Slowly packing up, and getting into our rain gear, we finally take off around 10:00 or so. Joel has let me use his rubber rain boots, which keep me totally dry. Only my gloves & hands get wet today. Given the warm temperatures, I unzipped my jacket shell, using only the mesh layer, then the Frog Togs jacket & pants.

Rode only 85 miles today, mostly back roads, but some sections of highway. Stopped for a vista at The Pinnacles, overlooking Lake Aldred.

Arrived at Joel & Lynn's around 1:30 or so, to a big home cooked meal of pasta, shepherd's pie, spinach salad . . . and a well-deserved beer

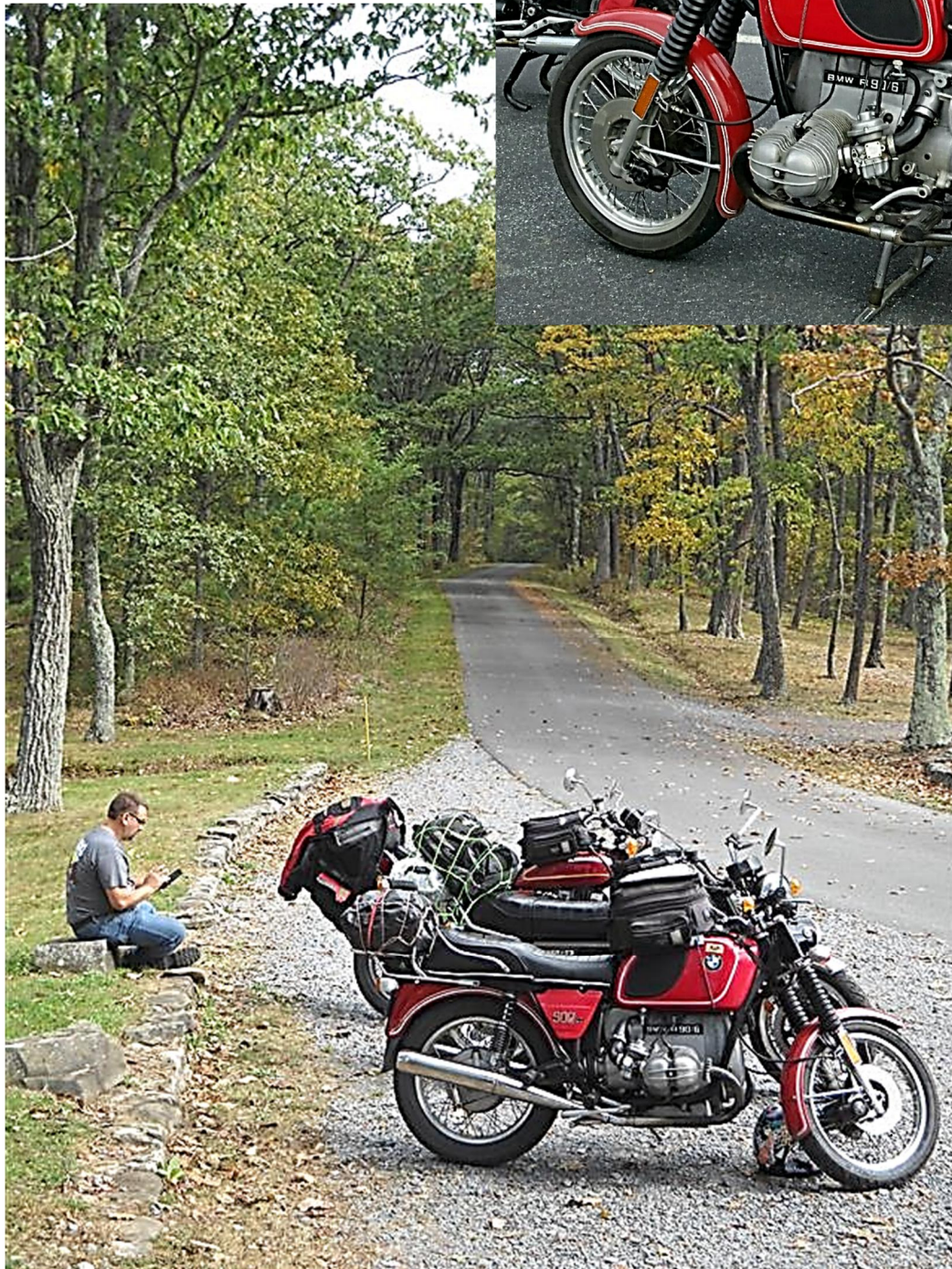
Decompressed for a while, re-packed, took a nap, then showered & shaved.

Total trip distance is right around 750 miles.

Throughout, Joel makes this easy, as he loads & unloads the bikes each day, cleans our helmet shields, check fluid levels & chain tension, tosses granola bars & water bottles in our tank bags, and is patient & understanding with stupid questions and bike starting "challenges".

***Really glad I did this—thanks Joel & Lynn!***

*Oregon's Bruce Kerr got a total immersion, vintage BMW experience. Jawohl !*



### HAIKU

*Jersey John Larcher,  
deep in his meditation.  
Or, is he texting?*

*Joel performing routine roadside  
maintenance: another form of  
meditation? The bikes all ran well,  
with no serious problems.*

