

NJMP 2018 Ride Report

Don was last on a RetroTour about 12 or 13 years ago and he returned to sign up for this one. Another repeat customer, Andy, had to cancel at the last minute due to unexpected minor surgery, leaving Don and I to ourselves. No worries, I was happy to have some help exercising two bikes from the stable. I had chosen the '76 GL 1000, resplendent with its newly fitted luggage rack. Don had no preference, so the '74 Kawasaki W3 was rolled up to the line. The forecast was for very hot, humid weather, so bikes with racks were desirable: the luggage rack eliminates the need for a tank bag on a simple overnight trip. No tank bag makes for more air flow and a cooler ride.

Don *is* an early riser, or maybe he was just anxious to get into the groove; in any case, he knocked on the door almost an hour early Saturday morning, despite his 90-minute commute from central New Jersey. No problem, we got reacquainted and enjoyed a leisurely cuppa, with an ample breakfast cheerfully prepared by my wife Lynn. Then down to the garage to gawk at some old bikes, and we were off and running to the races.

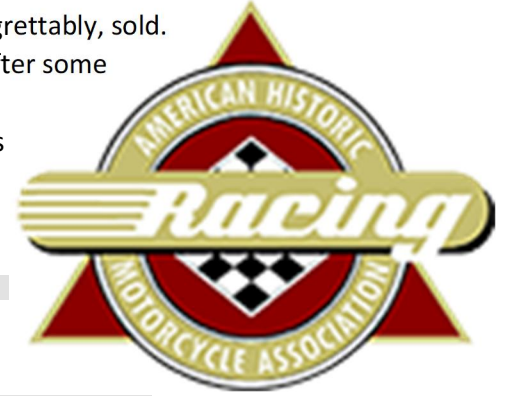
Don exits the Hancock House to find 3 Union soldiers trying to escape (the heat).



A short ride south through the Brandywine River Valley brought us into Delaware and we crossed the mighty river via the Delaware Memorial Bridge, then escaped the highway at the first available exit, making our way through the marshlands to Salem. Just beyond, we pulled into the historic Hancock House where we were greeted by several Civil War Union soldiers wheeling out a big cannon to guard the strategic Alloway River Bridge against a potential rebel attack. One hundred years earlier, the same

house was attacked by British stormtroopers. They aimed to disrupt the flow of food supplies from the nearby New Jersey farmlands to the Revolutionary Army, holed up in Valley Forge, to the north. Barging in at 3 AM, the Redcoats bayoneted everyone inside as they slept, killing 5 or 6 right away. Several more would perish from their wounds in the days to come after the Hancock House Massacre. We were the first to tour the house that day.

Thirty minutes later and we're cooling our heels at the Bridgeton Duncan Donuts. Here, locals chat with us about the old bikes they once had but regrettably, sold. Our 1970's Japanese motorcycles seem to be a draw whenever we stop. After some ice coffee we remount and make our way south, through massive peach orchards, to Millville. The Antique Historic Racing Motorcycle Association is here today at NJMP: the New Jersey Motorsports Park, for the third annual road race and vintage swap meet.



2018 Flagging by Faynisha National Historic Cup Roadrace Series

2/23-25 – Roebing Road Raceway; Bloomingdale, GA

3/30-4/1 – Carolina Motorsports Park; Kershaw, SC

4/20-22 – Hallett Motor Racing Circuit; Jennings, OK

4/27-29 – Willow Springs International Raceway; Rosamond, CA

6/1-3 – Gingerman Raceway; South Haven, MI

6/8-10 – Road America; Elkhart Lake, WI

7/13-15 – New Jersey Motorsports Park; Millville, NJ

8/31-9/2 – Utah Motorsports Campus; Tooele, UT

9/7-9 – Talladega Gran Prix Raceway; Munford, AL

10/4-7 – Barber Motorsports Park; Birmingham, AL



Free entry passes await us at the gates, courtesy of the VJMC: The Vintage Japanese Motorcycle Club. Just by co-incidence, we are on Vintage Japanese Motorcycles, and find our parking spots in the bike show judging area. We spend the next few hours exploring the pits, talking to old friends who still race or spectate, and checking out the bikes, old and new, in the pits and in the swap meet area. Jumbo hot dogs are purchased track side, and we eat a leisurely lunch in the shade while watching the races. As the temperatures of the day peak, we find a shady, breezy vantage point to spectate, finally finding our way back to the judging area for the 3 o'clock showdown. There are some very lovely and interesting bikes entered, 42 in all. I count 31 trophies, so almost everyone gets one, including Don and I. His large trophy for 1st place stock bike was awarded to the GL, a very clean, low mileage example of the model.

L to R: The 1974 Kawasaki W3 650, the trophy girl & me.

At the conclusion of judging, we set off on a 25-mile ride to our motel. I was prepared to sleep on the floor, as only rooms with one bed were available; the luxury trackside condo where we stayed in previous years having been sold at the last minute. Fortunately, the desk gives us a room with 2 beds which is more than comfortable. After freshening up we walk across the street to Mam Maria's restaurant: great décor, in the old Italian style. The manager comes out to greet us in Ital-English and we are treated to complimentary wine up front and a sweet liquor for dessert to go with the cannoli that we ordered. We turn in early, enjoying the air-conditioned comfort, and get an early start Sunday morning. Our 90-minute early morning ride takes us through Tuckahoe, NJ, and the pastoral ambiance of the Jersey farmlands, the cool air, and the total lack of traffic soothes us. We stop at a busy, old time country diner for breakfast, where peach encrusted French Toast was featured. Cruising through the Jersey backcountry is like a blast from the past. I feel like I have surfaced in another place, in an earlier time, where computers, cell phones, and electronic election tapering do not exist, and it feels very good.



Before long we reach the extreme southern point of the Jersey Shore: Cape May, and get on standby for the ferry. Don has put in his time on the kickstart only Kawasaki by now and is not averse to getting back on the electric start Honda. We make the 10 o'clock ferry by skin of our teeth; I don't think there is room for 1 more motorcycle, let alone a car. We assume a position on the middle deck, enjoying the pleasant bow breezes, and watching the sea gulls and

dolphins play. Ninety minutes later and we are negotiating the homeward bound beach traffic on the Delaware side of the bay. The threat of afternoon showers has the hordes of beachgoers driving north several hours early. We endure the congestion for 25 miles then escape at the route 9 turn off, stopping for an hour to check out the Dover Air Force Base Air Mobility Command Museum. Don is a pilot, and he tells me that 3 or 4 of his Cessna's could easily fit into the humongous C5A Galaxy. In fact, it can hold 6 Greyhound busses.



The weather is starting to fall apart now; Lynn reports that it is raining back home as we leave the museum and the beach traffic behind, turning north on Old Route 9. This two-lane Scenic Byway snakes through the wetlands along the Delaware River for 35 miles, past the Salem Nuclear Power Station on the far bank, across the C&D Canal, and to our rest stop at Fort Delaware, just outside historic Delaware City, on the old canal. We have left our rain gear at home, we were so sure that it wouldn't rain. No matter, we enjoy riding through one brief shower. We get wet, then blow dried. From here, it is a short ride home, and as soon as we cross the border into PA, Don comments that the roads instantly turn curvy, hilly, and lush. It's true: there's no place like home. Especially when Lynn has our late lunch on the table: baked salmon, with ice cream and chocolate cake for dessert.

Don's wife Carole bought his first RetroTour for him 12 years ago as a birthday present. Don reciprocated by buying Carole a sky-diving experience for her birthday. Twelve years later, Carole must have run out of gift ideas, or maybe she was responding to Don's difficulty finding friends to ride with, by re-gifting a RetroTour. I suppose Don should send her sky-diving again, provided her life insurance is fully paid up. In any case, it was great to see Don again, and to spend some time riding together. I hope he doesn't wait 12 more years to do it again.

Don and the (kick start only), 1974 Kawasaki W3 650, in the early morning light, ready to rock n' roll.





Don on his favorite bike of the weekend, the (electric start) 1976 Honda GL1000, on line at the ferry.