

CUSTOM TOUR/SCHULTES' RIDE: **GERMANIA: -08-20-18**



I got a phone call a few weeks ago from a gentleman with a thick German accent. Turns out that Norbert is actually a Canadian citizen, originally from Germany, presently living in eastern PA where he works. He is an avid motorcyclist,

currently riding an ST`1300, and he told me that he would be turning 60 in a few weeks. To help celebrate this milestone, his brother and sister would be coming over from Germany with spouses and a nephew, and like almost all Germans, they too are motorcyclists. Norbert was hoping we could arrange a custom tour for him and his friends. I was definitely in.

You are wondering, perhaps, why most Germans ride, or at least have ridden motorcycles? It all comes down to their licensing laws. You have to wait until 17 to drive a car with a legal guardian and 18 for unrestricted car driving. BUT... you can drive a moped at 14, a 125cc motorcycle at 15, and larger motorcycles as you gain experience. Many 15, 16 and 17-year-olds who desire personal mobility (and what teenager does not?) begin on a motorcycle.

Naturally, a large percentage keep riding even after completing the strict and expensive training needed to get a car license. This type of tiered licensing makes for a smooth transition from bicycle to motorcycle to car. German people are just logical and efficient that way.

I suggested to Norbert that he meet me in town for "Taco Tuesday": that's when some of the local riders get together for lunch at Julian's Taqueria El Peña, the best, least expensive, and most authentic Mexican food in our town, which boasts a 37% Hispanic population. How authentic? They make their own hot sauce from raw peppers, they make their own tortillas, the menu is in Español, there is large flat screen TV constantly playing TeleNovellas (or soccer), and the cook sings in a loud operatic voice, in Spanish of course, while he works. The building is painted like the Mexican flag. After lunch, I proposed to Norbert that we could head over to my place, stare at old motorcycles and plan his birthday tour.



On Tuesday, we were sitting at our table; I had mentioned to my friends that I was expecting a visitor from Germany to join us for lunch. An SUV pulls into the tiny parking lot, doors open and like Keystone cops, a seemingly endless parade of German-looking people exits the vehicle and enters the restaurant. Seeing our helmets, Norbert opens with "One of you must be Joel".

The birthday boy



The Teutonic entourage included seven people in all, and we pretty much took over the tiny restaurant, getting acquainted over lunch before heading to the house.

I'm guessing that 'der sechzigste Gebrtstag' (60th birthday) is a big milestone in Germany. I tried hard to forget mine, but Norbert surprised me by proposing that his custom tour should include all of his family; so much for the two guys on two bikes that I was envisioning. In the course of our discussions, Norbert also mentioned a book he liked: One Man Caravan by Robert Edison Fulton. I had also enjoyed this account of a lone motorcyclist who circumnavigated the globe on his English bike in the 1930's. Fulton was also an avid photographer and he took thousands of feet of moving picture footage documenting his travels which he later made into a movie. His namesake and assumed ancestor was Robert Fulton of steamboat fame. When I told Norbert that Robert Fulton's birthplace was not far he lit right up, and my ride plan began to gel.

On Monday morning, Norbert and his friends showed up at 9AM, slightly hungover, perhaps, from the previous night's birthday party. After a continental breakfast we headed to the garage for fitting: the folks from Europe needed helmets and gloves. Fortunately, I have a little haberdashery of retired riding gear and was able to accommodate. Outside I had lined up the 1976 Gold Wing, the BMW R90/6, and the Suzuki T500, which Norbert, Heinrich and Henning had chosen. Also, the BMW/EML sidecar rig for me and Florian. We would all be riding two-up.





We departed under cloudy skies. Hopeful that the forecast for no rain was accurate, we left our rain gear behind. We headed west on a convoluted backroads route that kept us well away from any morning traffic. We crossed the Octoraro Reservoir on a long-ish covered bridge, noticing signs of Amish culture all around. Just south of Quarryville, we stopped briefly at the Robert Fulton birthplace, then zipped by the Holtwood Dam to take in the view at The Pinnacles State Park.



A short walk brings us to the obligatory group shot at The Pinnacles.

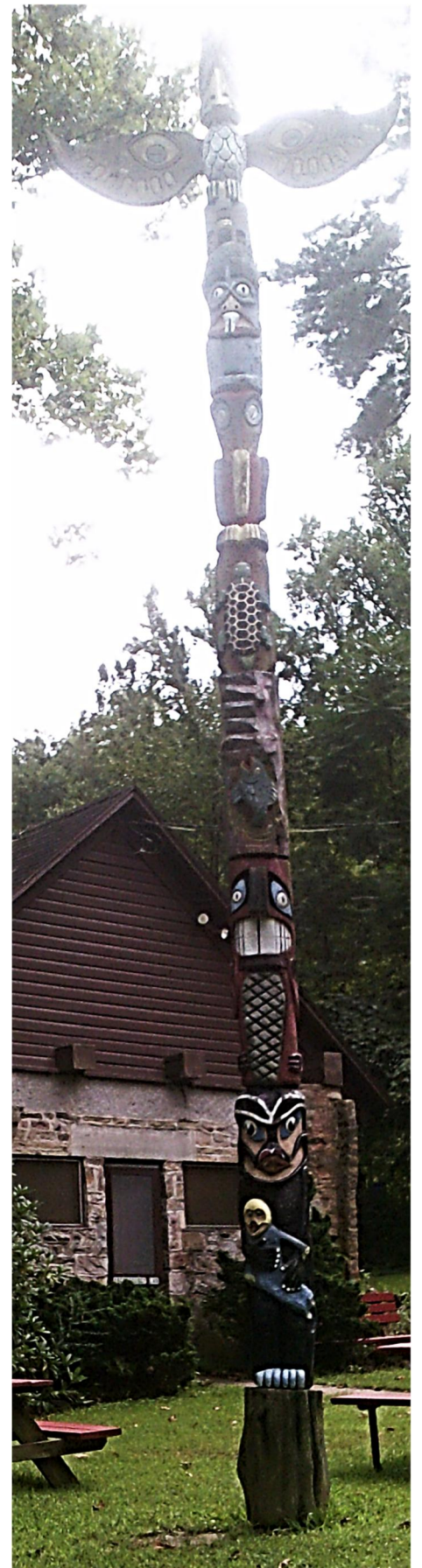
Continuing north along the east bank of the Susquehanna, we reached Columbia, PA, where we crossed the river on the historic Wrightsville Bridge. A fancy lunch was taken at the John Wright Restaurant, on the west bank, at the foot of the bridge; no charge for the view.

The Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge





Just a modest summer cottage.



After a hearty meal, including dessert and coffee, we turned back south, following the west bank. A short detour took us to the Indian Steps Museum, where we were the only visitors. Petroglyphs were found here, created by native Americans who lived and farmed on the river shores. More recently, a wealthy Dutchman built his summer cottage which later was donated to become a museum. It is an understatement to say that it is 'off the beaten track', and the location is as tranquil as it is scenic.

We returned home a 6, a bit tired, and thankful for the cold Yuengling Beer in the fridge. It was an honor and a pleasure for me to help Norbert and his family and friends celebrate his birthday. I enjoyed meeting them all, riding and spending the day together, and sharing our passion for riding. Auf wiedersehen meine Freunde.



Florian, Diane, Norbert (drinking of course), Heinrich, Dorothea, Henning, Anita