

RIDE REPORT: SEVEN SPRINGS; RIDE 'EM DON'T HIDE 'EM WEEKEND GETAWAY. 2019

The third year running, the 2019 Getaway was blessed with fine weather and a full turnout. There was something like 70 bikes in attendance, and 15 of them were from the RetroTours fleet. Rich Anderson came down early in the week and helped me transport 9 bikes 250 miles to the Seven Springs Ski Resort out near Pittsburgh. I had put a new floor onto the massive twin-axle, open landscape trailer the week before and loaded the bikes the day before we did the deed. Richard left his home in Long Island at something like 3AM and arrived here in time for our pre-dawn departure. We got on the Turnpike and cruised the heavily loaded F150 rig non-stop, to arrive well before noon and unloaded all the bikes and parked them in the secure garage at the resort's maintenance facility.

There, they would wait for personnel from Motorcycle Classics Magazine to fetch them up on Thursday to pre-ride the 150-mile route which local riders like Tom McKee (visit McKee's Sky Ranch) had laid out. Half of these 'on-site' bikes were for the use of magazine personnel, while the other half would be used by RetroTours customers who wished to arrive at the resort by modern bike, automobile, or airplane, then use our bikes for the Saturday and Sunday group rides. Immediately after unloading the bikes and stashing the trailer, Richard and I got back on the Turnpike for the 250-mile drive home, which became even longer when, in our sleep deprived stupor, we started driving west on the Turnpike. When we saw signs warning of the imminent approach of the Ohio state line, we woke up enough to realize the error of our ways and came about at the next exit. Eventually, we did get home, and fell into a much-needed deep sleep. I think that was late Wednesday night.

The bikes stashed at the resort included:

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|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1973 Yamaha TX750 | 1979 Moto Morini 500 Strada | 1970 Triumph T100C |
| 1978 Honda CX500 | 1976 Kawasaki KZ750B | |
| 1970 Triumph 650 Bonneville | 1974 BMW R90/6 | |
| 1977 Yamaha XS650 | 19723 Norton 750 Commando Fastback | |

Thursday afternoon, the group of riders who would join us for the motorcycle ride **to** the resort, decidedly NOT on the Turnpike, would begin arriving. Buell Bob, who was scheduled to join us missed his auto-train hook up from Florida and had to cancel. Rick and Susan flew in from Georgia while Mike and Alex flew in from Alabama; I made 2 trips to the airport where I picked them all up. At home, these four joined Richard and were assigned beds, and once everyone settled in a bit, we sat at the big table to get acquainted and enjoy one of Lynn's over-the-top gourmet meals. It is said that "an army marches on its belly" and this surely must also apply to our little vintage motorcycle touring army.

Getting to know each other was a real treat. Meeting folks who share the passion for old bikes is always one of the best parts of these trips. Richard has been on more tours than I remember and over the years, Lynn and I have become good friends with him and his wife Lorraine, as well as some of their extended family. In fact, if memory serves, Richard was on this trip courtesy of a retirement gift from the school where he has taught art to youngsters for decades, a position that he is well qualified for. His art is something special and includes amazing chainsaw wood sculptures. Rick and Sue found RetroTours on the internet and would be riding two-up. You must hand it to Susan; it takes guts to ride pillion for a long distance on these old bikes. She did great, never wavering, and as always, having a woman along truly enhances the experience for all. RetroTours needs more women! Mike and Alex were so entertaining. Mike had a very large, successful Suzuki dealership on his farm back in the day. It burned to the ground one night decades ago. Subsequently, Mike met (Dr.) Alex at his doctor's office and the two bonded over

motorcycling, forming a loose partnership, selling off the remains of the burnt-out dealership, and restoring and riding old bikes. One amusing aspect was Mike's thick Alabama accent. Whenever he introduced himself it sounded like 'Haa, Ahm Mahk'. Many times, he would speak to me and I would just nod, not having understood a word. Even so, his energy and positive spirit were obvious.

After a good night's rest, we reconvened at the table for a light breakfast (thanks again Lynn) and were joined by Ed, another seasoned RetroTourer who lives near Allentown, just 90 minutes north. He and his wife have both been on tours, and he is also a definite part of the 'RetroTours Family'. The bikes were pushed outside, and we prepared for an early departure. What Richard and I had covered in the truck: 250 miles one-way in 4½ hours of Turnpike driving, would translate into 325 miles of back roads riding over 10-12 hours, so our timely departure was essential if we were to arrive in time for the reception dinner at the resort. The bikes we would start out on were as follows, though riders were free to swap around as desired over the course of the weekend:

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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1972 Laverda 750SF (Rick and Sue) | 1975 Ducati 860GT (Ed) |
| 1976 Moto Guzzi 850T3 (Richard) | 1983 Suzuki GS550ES (Mahk AKA Mike) |
| 1974 Benelli Tornado 650S (Alex) | 1976 Honda GL1000 (me/Joel). |

Without wind protection, with original seats and suspension systems, sometimes with kickstart only or manly-stiff controls (sometimes on the opposite sides), covering over 300 miles in a day on old bikes like these can be a daunting task; even more so if the rider is not accustomed to doing so. The route that was planned was relatively direct but staying on the smallest back roads and taking frequent breaks means that we often average under 35 mph, so a long ride like this requires 10 hours or more: a very long day on an old bike. Switching bikes every 50 or 100 miles helps to spread the discomfort by varying pressure points and vibration frequencies, but sometimes riders stubbornly insist on staying on one bike. Such was the case with Mike and Alex, who steadfastly refused to budge from the GS550ES and the Benelli. The rest of us rotated amongst the remaining 4 bikes as we headed due west, passing through Amish Quarryville and crossing the Susquehanna River. We rode straight through Hanover, PA and Berlin, stopping in Biglerville for lunch. Adams county features a panorama of orchards, so lunch was punctuated with the obligatory slice of fresh apple pie.



Left to right: Rick, Ed, Susan, Richard, Mike, and Alex at lunch in Biglerville.

Further on, I notice several bikes missing from my rear-view mirror and after backtracking about 5 miles, I come upon Richard, Ed, and Rick & Susan. Nobody has crashed; I am relieved. The Moto Guzzi suddenly went onto one cylinder, and Richard has already diagnosed a broken throttle cable and has found the spare beneath the left sidecover. All I have to do is hook up both ends, and we are ready to continue in about 20 minutes.



Susan and Rick are remounting the Laverda, Ed the Guzzi and Richard the GL, after repairs to the Guzzi throttle cable. Alex on the Benelli and Mike on the Suzuki are stashed five miles ahead, and I am taking my turn on the Ducati 860GT.

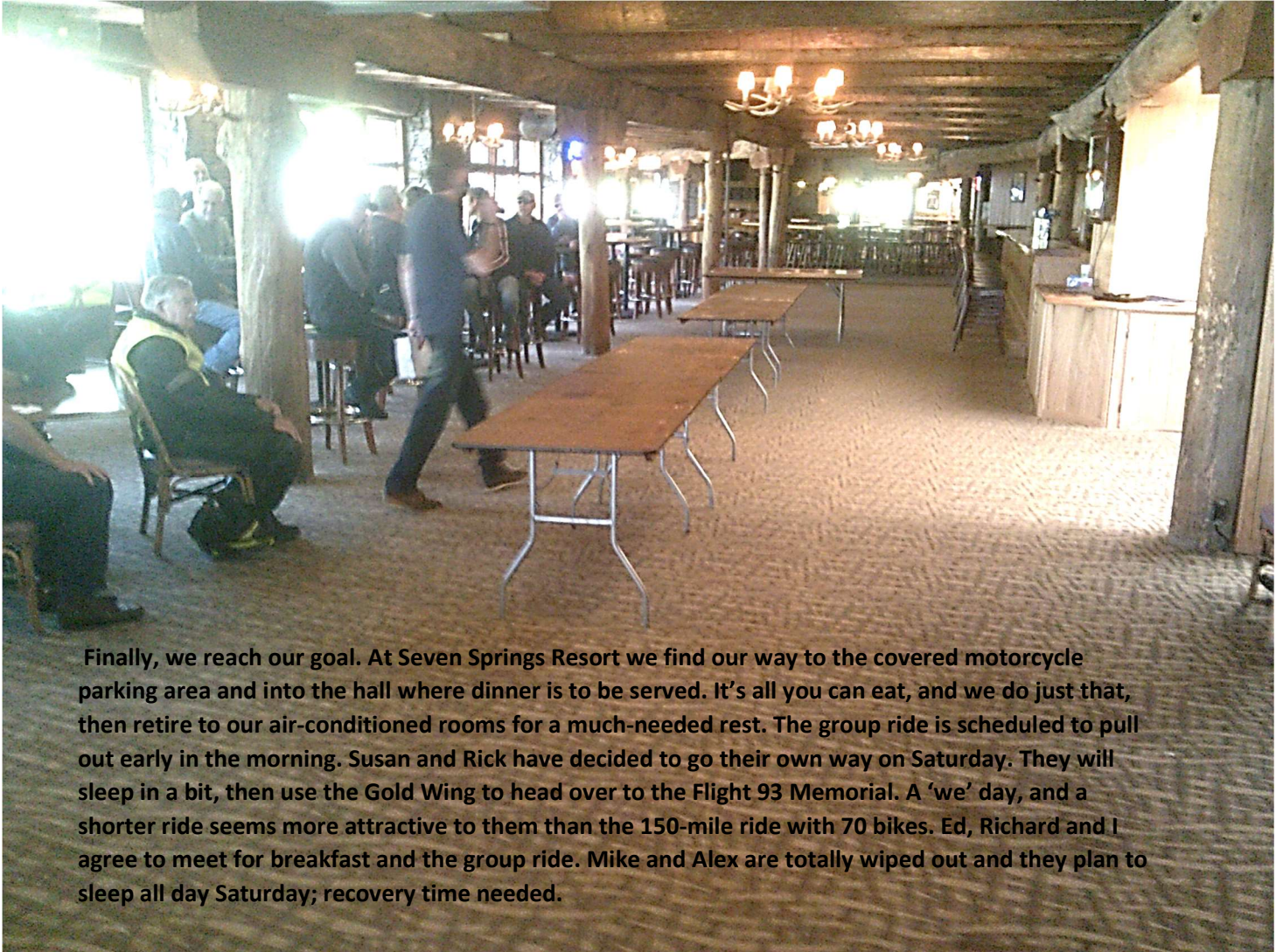
After Shippensburg we started to gain altitude, ascending the Eastern Continental Divide to about 1200 feet above sea level through Fannettsburg. A hairpin left puts on the road that passes through Cowan Gap, where the state has built a lovely secluded beach on a mountain reservoir. The unscheduled stop to replace the Guzzi cable has put us slightly behind our tight schedule. We hope to arrive at the resort before dinner is over. Still, it's a warm-ish day and I would love nothing better than to get in a quick swim. We take a vote and I lose; there just isn't enough time today, so I must make do with taking a short break and taking in the fetching view of this mountain oasis. Once through Cowan Pass, the road takes us to old Route 30. Most traffic uses the thruway these days, leaving the sweeping curves up and down these Alleghenies all to us. Here is where we make some time, cruising the wide-open road at 65 or 70 mph, through Everett and Bedford, to Somerset, the last town before our destination. A gas stop here ensures that we will be ready for Saturday's group ride, and I use the break to phone ahead, making sure dinner will be open for us. We are weary, we are hungry, but we are going to make it.



The swim that wasn't....maybe next time.



The warm weather made for great riding conditions. Here, Richard demonstrates proper hydration technique at our gas stop in Jefferson, PA.



Finally, we reach our goal. At Seven Springs Resort we find our way to the covered motorcycle parking area and into the hall where dinner is to be served. It's all you can eat, and we do just that, then retire to our air-conditioned rooms for a much-needed rest. The group ride is scheduled to pull out early in the morning. Susan and Rick have decided to go their own way on Saturday. They will sleep in a bit, then use the Gold Wing to head over to the Flight 93 Memorial. A 'we' day, and a shorter ride seems more attractive to them than the 150-mile ride with 70 bikes. Ed, Richard and I agree to meet for breakfast and the group ride. Mike and Alex are totally wiped out and they plan to sleep all day Saturday; recovery time needed.



The ride on Saturday is fun. The 70 bikes are divided into 4 staggered groups. We will ride a pre-arranged route on very scenic back roads through the spectacular Laurel Highlands, possibly dipping into West Virginia and meeting in Oakland, Maryland for lunch and a group photo. The pace is very relaxed, and a chase vehicle is provided, with a mechanic and some spares, as well as a tow trailer if needed. It's all very well organized. Oakland has an interesting 'old downtown' section with several restaurants, an old train station, and an antique car museum: perfect for this group! Richard, Ed and I find lunch at the deli counter inside a hardware/variety store that seems to be ripped from the 1960's.



In addition to old cars, the museum has some very interesting water craft, including this very original Surf-jet which was used on nearby Deep Creek Lake. Richard had one just like this on Long Island Sound, back in the day.



Here, Ed tries to sprint out of the frame, while I get a shot of an ancient snowmobile. There is a good amount of snow here in the winter. Skiing, ice fishing, and snowmobiling are popular recreational pastimes.

Gotcha Ed!



Now there's an attractive couple! Former editor-in-chief of Motorcycle Classics Magazine (and current contributing editor) Richard Backus with his good friend Jean Denney, inside the Garrett County Museum of Transportation, in Oakland, Md. Of course, Richard and Jean were riding with us on Saturday. Looks like they're having fun too.

The scenery on Saturday's ride was outstanding, and we arrived back at the resort with enough time to clean up and rest a bit before the banquet dinner. The food was amazing and plentiful. We were entertained by Dain Gingerelli, a former racer and current moto-journalist. He had plenty of stories to tell, and everyone enjoyed the evening immensely. Rick and Susan thought that the Flight 93 Memorial was inspirational. Mike and Alex had slept for most of the day and were wide awake and ready for action after dinner. In this remote ski resort, Saturday night action mostly consists of drinking at the numerous bar venues where there is live music and a party atmosphere. We all agreed to meet for breakfast at 7:30, with a goal of 8:30 departure. The ride home would be a long one, with some very technical (and beautiful) remote sections. I cautioned the riders to get a good night's rest, and admonition that not all would heed.



Mike and Alex were very slow to show on Sunday morning. Mike showed up first, well past our 8:30 scheduled departure hour. He told us that Alex was not feeling well. When Alex finally appeared, his condition was obviously not good. He looked like he had been poisoned. I asked if it was something he ate and he confided, "No, I think it must be something I drank". I think that he and Mike slept in so much on Saturday that they were somewhat wired on Saturday night and wound up staying up late, visiting several of the bars at the resort and maybe pre-medicating themselves for the ride home. Whatever the reason, they were not in top form. As we were pulling out, I immediately noticed that Alex never got the Benelli away from its parking spot. I told everyone to wait in the parking lot while I circled back to see what was up. It turns out that Alex had trouble getting the Benelli started, ran the battery down, then lost his balance and fell over trying to kick start the engine. This bent the clutch handle and broke a blinker lens. Not too serious. These things happen to all of us from time to time. We headed back down towards the exit and found that Mike had tipped the GS in the parking lot and snapped off the clutch handle.

This was a bit more problematic. The break was such that I couldn't just wire the handle back on. Maybe I could ride a bike 300 miles with no clutch if necessary, but Mike was unwilling to ride any of the other bikes. We tried to think of ways to fix the thing, including Richard visiting the on-site bicycle shop but I came up with only one option. The TX750 that had been stashed on site the week before was not being used today. I removed the clutch handle, thinking it might fit the GS. Even if it wasn't perfect, if it allowed the clutch to function, it would get us home. That idea fizzled out quickly: the TX handle was too thick at the pivot to fit into the GS clutch handle perch. Next idea: use the perch from the TX along with the handle. This would surely work, but the perch on the TX is inboard of the left switch assembly, so the switch would need to be removed to get the perch off. No big deal, except that the switch assembly wires run inside the handlebar. I had to remove the gas tank and the headlight to unplug about a dozen wires to get the switch assembly off the handlebar so the perch could be removed. Of course, the sheath on the switch wire harness was so old and disheveled that it jammed up badly inside the handlebar. In the end I had to cut the wires and wound up with a big box of loose TX750 parts, but I got my perch and matching clutch handle which slid right onto the GS handlebar and we were back in business. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and we were only about 2 hours behind schedule. On the bright side, we had all bikes working well, there would be plenty of daylight hours at this time of the year, and the weather was still perfect for riding. Things could have been worse!

The ride home was heavenly. We stopped in the tiny town of Rockwood for gas, then followed 219 through Myersdale, at which point we 'left the grid' and zig-zagged our way through the countryside on a series of dirt roads. We got a wee bit lost at one point, backtracked slightly, and asked some very friendly and helpful locals for directional assistance, soon regaining 'the route'. We crossed into rural Maryland and eventually re-joined civilization at Cumberland. At a certain point our stomachs told us we needed a lunch break. Also, the Benelli, the bike with the shortest range, was deep into reserve. Just before it ran out (good throttle management, Alex!), we came across a Sunoco sign next to a supermarket with a shaded grassy knoll. We decided to gas up and go shopping for lunch. A picnic on the grass would save some time and help us get home at a decent hour after our late departure. After Cumberland we turned north, crossing back into PA. After McConnellsburg and Waynesboro, we surmounted the Divide via Mount Alto, then descended on the east side, through Gettysburg and bypassing Hanover by following Impounding Dam Road past the reservoir. We clipped one more small corner of Maryland to reach Route 851 which carried us east through new Freedom and Railroad on the way to Delta, PA. Here we followed the shoreline of the Conowingo Reservoir to cross the Susquehanna

on Route One. We crossed back into Maryland one final time at Rising Sun, then made our way through Landenberg and back to Kennett Square. Dinner, **Beer, MOTRIN.**

This was an ambitious ride. I think several of the riders were stretched to and a bit beyond their limit. Still, we did it. No injuries, no major damage, and every rider said they would be back for another RetroTour soon. In fact, several of them have already been back for more. We love repeat customers!



A summer day, vintage bikes, new friends, a shady spot, and some food. Life is good!



The RetroTours Benelli and Ducati in line at Seven Springs.



Ed imitating Baby Yoda.

Richard chowin' down.





Mike and Alex flew in from Alabama. Both very good riders.



Rick and Susan started out two-up on the Laverda. Rick always wanted to ride a Laverda, and Susan had game, but I think they may have appreciated the Gold Wing more.