

RIDE REPORT: EUROMANIA 06/2021



The Euromaniacs, L to R: John Ritter/PA, Rich Anderson/NY, Russ Mason/DE, Tim Masters/ NC, Joel Samick/PA

Rain gear was required for most of the weekend. I think it was John who said, "The most fun I ever had being miserable". The weather did suck, but everyone had seen the forecast and we were well prepared. The ferry across the Potomac from Maryland to Virginia was a scrub due to the ongoing land use dispute between the ferry boat operator and the farmer who owns the land where the boat lands on the Virginia side. No big deal, we plotted a route around it. The weather and the ferry turned out to be the least of our worries. About an hour short of our motel in Front Royal the Bonneville stopped moving forward. It was running well but lost the connection between the crankshaft and the rear wheel. It acted like the clutch lever was pulled in. We pulled off onto a side road in a light misty rain and considered our options. I did not think that pulling the primary cover off for a look while squatting in the mud in the rain would be very productive. A friendly local offered the use of his tools and garage. This was tempting, but on a two day ride there would be no time to find parts if needed. We began calling U-haul and every other rental agency under the sun, looking for a pick-up truck, box van, or anything that could carry a dead motorcycle. It being Memorial Day weekend, we struck out over and over: there didn't seem to be anything available anywhere. Then, just as I was getting that desperate feeling in the pit of my stomach, someone came up with a short bed pick-up truck at an Enterprise agency about 10

miles away. They were planning to close early for the holiday weekend, but we had enough time to get there. Russ and I rode there 2-up on the big Guzzi while the others hunkered down to wait. I scored the truck and sent Russ back, then I stopped at a Walmart across the street and picked up some tie down straps. We got the Triumph loaded and secured in no time and I resumed the lead, dry in the pick-up truck, while the others followed and we resumed our route, arriving in good time at Front Royal to check in: one of the most complicated and time-consuming check-in procedures ever.

This wasn't so bad. I was out of the rain and everyone else would still get the ride they were hoping for. A romp along Skyline Drive was planned for Sunday, but first we met in the lobby to walk into town for dinner before everything shut down at 8. Front Royal is a cute little town, and we were able to find a delicious meal at one of several downtown restaurants. Early Sunday morning we had a massive breakfast at a tiny diner that was very popular with the local folks, and for good reason: the food was southern style, large portions, lots of great flavor. The weather was still overcast with a very low ceiling and mist or drizzle which meant that Skyline Drive was a no go. In those conditions there would be no views, the curves would be hidden by dense fog, and we would be lucky to see 10 feet ahead. Instead, we opted to parallel Skyline Drive on route 340S staying closer to sea level, or in this case, 'see' level. About 35 miles down we rejoined the planned route where it descended from the Skyline. I was not particularly loving driving the pick-up truck, but at least I was staying dry.



This 70 mile loop took us south then back north to head home, and it touched back into Front Royal on the way. It passed through George Washington National Forest on some very entertaining roads. That's where the overlook picture on page one was taken. About 10 miles shy of Front Royal, I made a turn and pulled over for a short break. Looking back, I noticed Russ pushing the BMW. Hmmm. Weird, but the German machine exhibited the same symptoms as the Bonneville: it was running fine but refused to move forward. I poked at it a bit and noticed that when the rear wheel was turned, the drive shaft was not spinning; NOT GOOD. The Triumph is one thing, but this sort of thing never happens to BMW's, famous for reliability. Again, I could have possibly pulled it apart right there, but we still had 250 miles to go to get home for dinner. Plus, of course, we had no parts to repair a broken drive shaft. What we did have was a pick-up truck with one bike in the bed. We put yesterday's practice to good use and had the BMW next to the Bonneville in short order. We had to be a bit creative to make up for a shortage of tie-down straps. We found some large, downed branches and used them to wedge everything in. Not pretty, but it worked.

Now we would need 2 people in the truck. I suggested that riders could swap in and out, but Tim 'volunteered' to get out of the incessant rain and ride shotgun with me all the way home. He is no fool! In less than 30 minutes we were on our way again and followed the scenic route home, with some minor disorientation and a stop at a unique burger place in Purcellville along the way. Back in Kennett Square, Lynn had a hot meal and adult beverages waiting. So, in the end, I rode $\frac{3}{4}$ of a day in the rain and the rest in the truck. Tim rode $1\frac{1}{4}$ days in the rain and the rest in the truck. Richard, John, and Russ rode 2 full days mostly in the rain. Incidentally, Russ had never really ridden in the rain before. He is now a seasoned expert! His adventure was topped off on the way home by a blazing blue-green ball-of-fire meteor streaking across the night sky. Somehow, everyone had a good time despite the weather and mechanical woes. Nobody crashed, nobody got soaking wet, and we kicked off our riding season with one heck of an adventure. So, what went wrong with those bikes????



The Triumph clutch dis-mounted itself. The clutch hub is retained on the transmission input shaft by a self-locking nut. If that nut is re-used too many times, the self-locking feature basically wears away. My bad for not replacing the (51 year old?) nut several thousand miles earlier when I did a clutch overhaul. It simply backed off. There was some damage to the clutch basket, but it could have been put back together with no parts and made to work. On a longer trip I might have gone for an attempted repair, but there just was not time on a 2 day ride to do a half day repair job, especially not in the rain. The parts for a proper repair were readily available and the bike, which has been very reliable over the decades, has done tours since with no further issues.

The Bmer had to get a replacement drive shaft. As the rear suspension moves up and down, the effective length of the drive shaft must vary. This is accomplished by an internally splined cup on the tail end of the drive shaft that engages with the externally splined input gear on the front of the rear end unit ('pumpkin'). The cup fits to the swingarm via a taper fit with no keyway or other method of preventing rotational shift other than the perfect fit of the taper and the tightness of the large nut that secures the cup to the shaft. That nut came loose, and the shaft spun within the cup's taper, ruining the shaft and the cup. I was able to obtain good used parts for about \$100 and the repair was done in a few hours. The torque spec for the nut in question is up around 270 foot-pounds: f**king tight! Maybe it was left loose somewhere in the bike's past, who knows? I had to buy a big torque wrench since I had never come across a spec that high before. Then my 4" vice broke into tiny pieces at about 200 foot-pounds, so I had to buy a 6" vice. The repair has proven effective over 3 or 4,000 miles since, and I now have the tools to do the job easily, though I doubt I will see this happen again; it's basically unheard of.

The 'Eurotrash', L to R: 1976 Moto Guzzi 850T3, 1973 Norton Commando 750, 1984 Moto Guzzi V65SP, 1974 BMW R90/6. Not shown: Ford truck and 1970 Triumph Bonneville 650 (see text).



*Smiles,
in spite
of the
rain.*

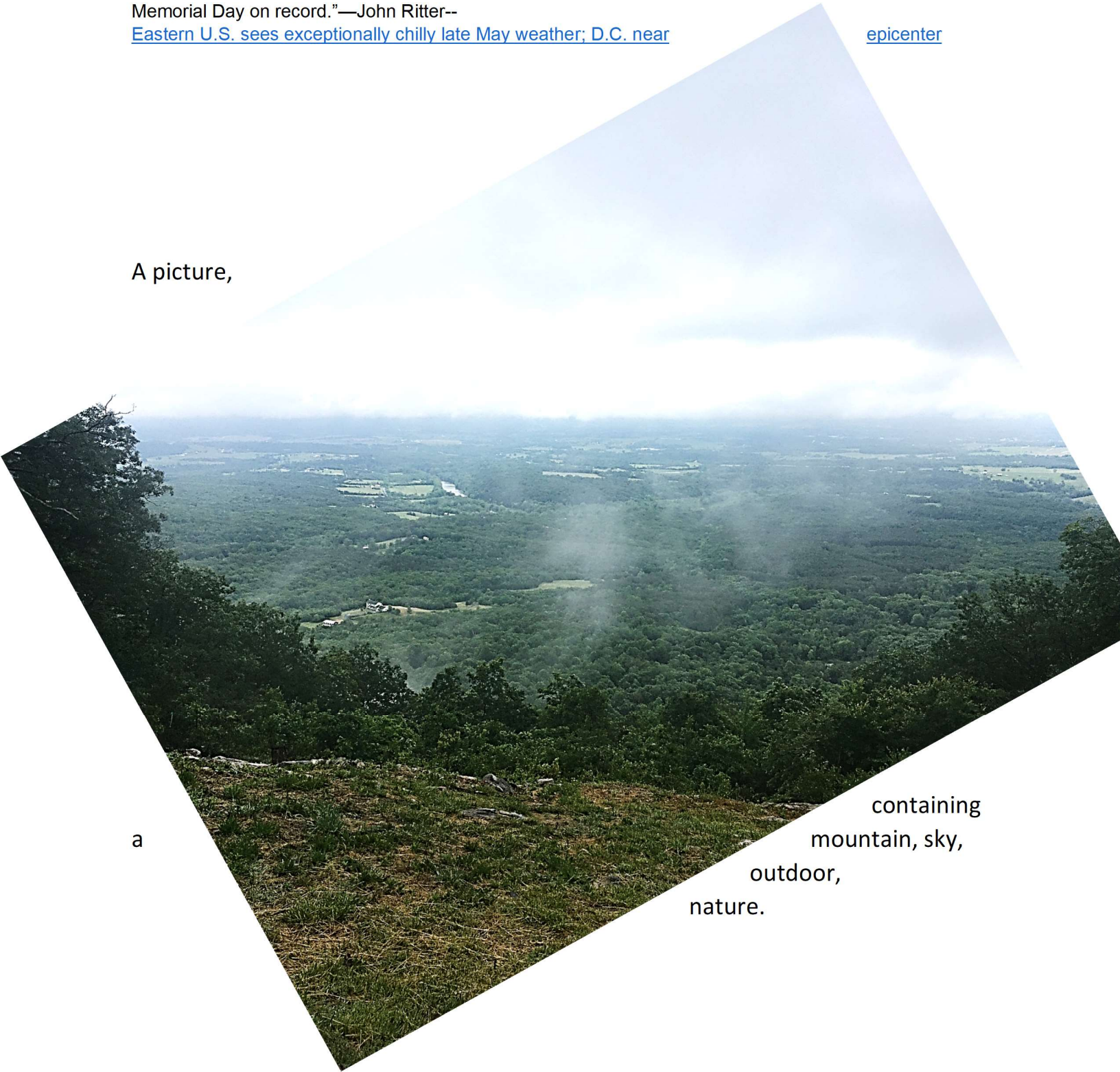


Sometimes, especially on vintage bikes, adversity must be dealt with. We may have had more than our fair share but the five of us put our heads together and found a way to deal with it, and we had a ball in the process. It really was **"THE MOST FUN WE EVER HAD BEING MISERABLE.** It was also the coldest Memorial Day on record."—John Ritter--

[Eastern U.S. sees exceptionally chilly late May weather; D.C. near](#)

[epicenter](#)

A picture,



a

containing
mountain, sky,
outdoor,
nature.