

RIDE REPORT RENOVO: 09/17-09/19; 2021

Rick and Susan Murray came up from Georgia. They flew into Baltimore/Washington Airport, took a train from there to Wilmington, DE where I picked them up. They spent the nights before and after the tour in our mother-in-law suite which we also rent out on Airbnb. It features a full bathroom, a kitchenette, dedicated entrance, and a hot tub. Rick and Susan rode two-up.

Liam O'Connor came up from Virginia Beach. He stayed over the first night only.

Tri Tran drove down from Philly and arrived in time for 7:30 breakfast Friday morning. He brought exotic fruits for us to sample. YUMM!!

Everyone represented that they were vaccinated.

I had prepared 5 bikes and let everyone choose, first come first choice. We wound up with:

1974 Benelli Tornado 650. 32,500 miles.

1974 BMW R90/6. 39,500 miles. (Since sold, replaced with 1978 R100/7.)

1978 Honda CX500. 35,315 miles.

1970 Triumph Bonneville 650. 42,400 miles.

The 1979 Moto Morini 500 Strada (26,500 miles) was unchosen and stayed in the garage as a spare.



Breakfast/riders' meeting was fine. We ate well and got to know one another a bit. After breakfast, we got off to a bit of a rocky start. Getting suited up and loading the bikes was smooth enough. All the bikes started, and we headed out, a bit wobbly as would be expected on these loaded down, unfamiliar, old bikes. Just ½ mile into our 3 day ride we had a tip over. The roads were damp and the tall-ish, top heavy CX500 was being ridden by the shortest rider. At a stop sign where the road has a high crown, his foot came down but the ground was unfound; gravity won. No big deal, no real damage, and no injury. We headed on, but.....could this be an omen of things to come?

We skirt through the backside of Kennett Square to avoid lights and traffic. Then we follow the Brandywine River for a good 10 miles. The road twists and turns with the river's flow. We are taking it slow and easy as everyone acclimates. A kind of scary, dark, "double tunnel" with a right angle bend in the middle marks the temporary end of our riverside meanderings as we then take to a bypass highway for 2 miles to skip past Downingtown and rejoin the river on scenic route 282. Ten more miles of curves brings us to a rest stop 35 miles out: The Smallest Church in the World. Here we enjoy a potty break, coffee, a sweet bun perhaps, and a tour of the church, which is just large enough to hold the priest and 2 other people.

Do you like small weddings? This church is, in fact, used for wedding ceremonies. Everyone else stands outside and peers in. There is a great story behind the building of this church, and the solo architect and builder's descendants still live on the property. You will have to join a tour to get the full story.

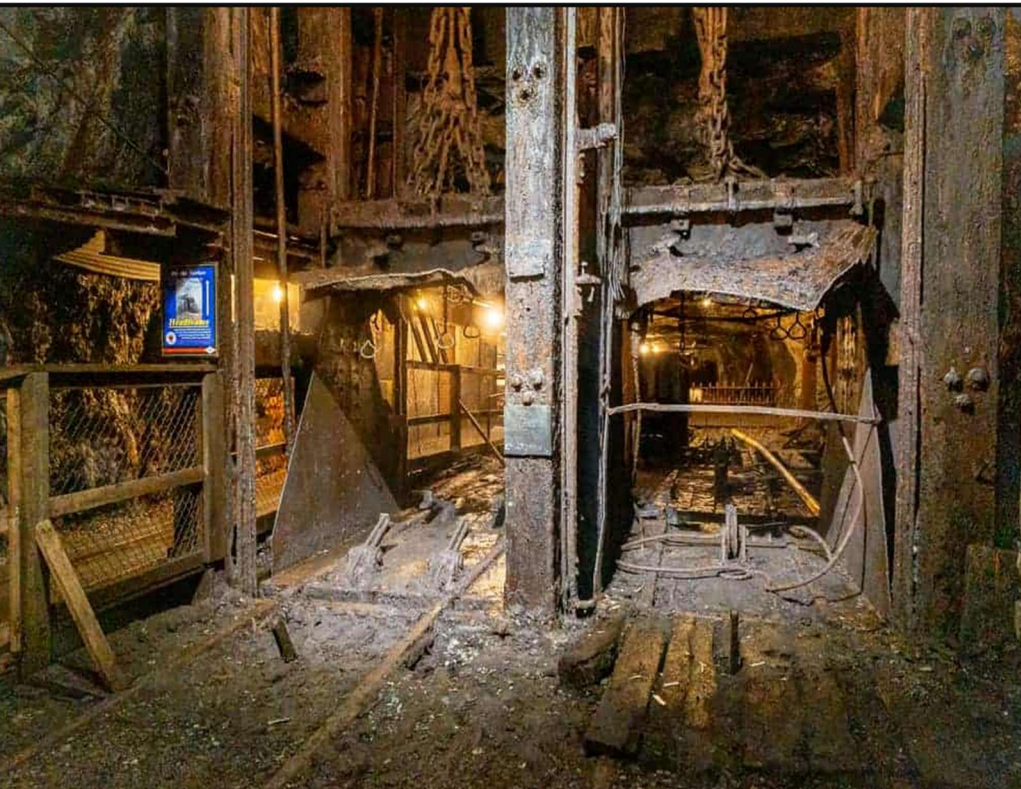


We continue on our way due north. Our route includes the Dreibelbis Station Covered Bridge. It is just at the end of a total rebuild, done in the original style, and it is stunning. This morning, there is a work crew doing finish work on the bridge, and maybe it is *sort of* “closed to traffic”, but there is enough room for our skinny bikes to get by and as we just motor across at a slow pace, the construction guys give us the hairy eyeball, but don’t say a word. In Lynnport we turn off of route 143 and use a tiny snake of a road to ascend the Eastern Continental Divide to about 1,000 feet, then use route 309 to find lunch in Snyders. The Mason Jar Diner next to Lizard Creek has a great atmosphere, decent food and comfortable indoor or outdoor seating. We all have masks, but opt to eat outdoors, where masks are not required. Hot chocolate is a good option.



Tri, Liam, Susan, Rick

With full bellies, we meander through Andreas and Fritz Valley, get a little lost, and wind up finally in Lansford, at the No. 9 Coal Mine. I was sweating it a little after becoming somewhat directionally challenged, but we made it in time for the last tour of the day at 3 o'clock. This is not some highly polished tourist attraction. The No. 9 Coal Mine opened in 1855 and ran continuously until 1972, the longest continuously operating deep Anthracite coal mine in the world. After a 20 year shut down, a non-profit organization intent on



preserving this bit of history took over and began a partial restoration of the mine. We ride down into the cool, dark, wet mine just as the miners did, on a tiny electric train with no suspension system. We have to duck down and stoop to get to the cold, hard, bench seats and our teeth rattle as the car descends into the side of the mountain. The guide educates us about the working of the mine and the conditions endured by the workers. At tour's end we return to daylight with a greater appreciation of what it took to make the industrial revolution happen. A lot of this country's wealth was built on the backs of underpaid

workers, some as young as 8 years old, who worked in the mines under extremely hazardous conditions for meager wages.

It's about 45 more miles to our stopping point for day one. We have been riding since early AM, and after a gas stop, I need to circle back to fetch a rider who is having a bit of trouble kickstarting the Triumph. Foolishly I try to surmount a concrete road divider at a bad angle, get the front wheel edge trapped, and tip over at about 2 mph. I am unhurt (except for my pride) and the Benelli is tough enough to shake it off, but *that's the 2nd drop today*. We continue to Mahanoy City where we pick up 35 miles of route



339, one of my favorites. I pull over for a short break and caution everyone that there are several deceptive decreasing radius curves, and lots of deer ahead, as well as a fantastic riding opportunity and some awe inspiring views. The road follows a valley between two tall ridges. This is a rural area with elevation changes and plenty of curves. As we crest one hill a huge, close windmill pops into view; it seems as though we are riding through the arms of the windmill like modern day Don Quixotes.



Further on, I look at my rear view mirror and I see the BMW lying on its side on the middle of the road! SHIT! One unlucky rider has misjudged a tricky curve and gone down. Fortunately, he is uninjured and aside from a scratched valve cover, so is the R90. Rick, Susan, and Liam watch for traffic—there is none—while we get the bike and rider to the shoulder. I am able to straighten the bent handlebars and we make the last 15 miles at a slower pace, a bit more somber; *this is the third little incident* and its only day one of three. The Motel 8 at Mifflinville is a welcome sight. We check in and order out for pizza. It has been a tough day. Sleep comes easy.



The sun greets us on Saturday morning. I do love the sun. It's just ½ mile from the Super 8 to Bill's Old Bike Barn but first we need a serious breakfast. A few miles down the road, in Berwick, we find a breakfast diner that is crowded with locals—a good sign, no? We sit at a great round table and enjoy a hearty meal, then head over to Bill's at around 11. They aren't officially open yet, but we get to enter and have the place to ourselves. There is nothing I can say that would adequately

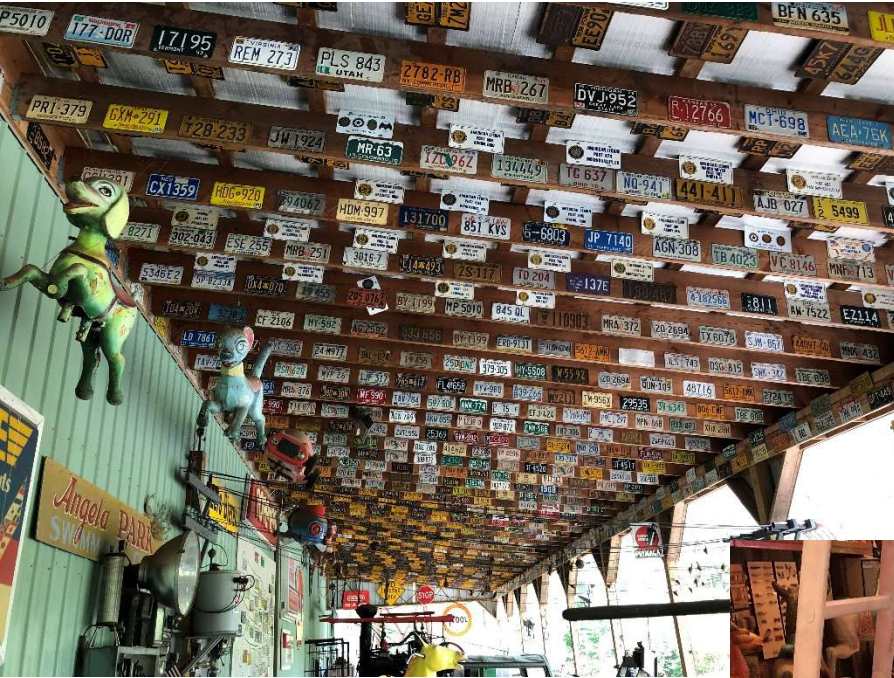


describe what is there to see. I will let the pictures speak for themselves.

ABOVE: *The Kettentrak. Steering occurs when the handlebars are turned, and one track is slowed. Several currently listed on-line in the \$125-\$135,000 range.*

LEFT: *This white police trike is based on a Honda CX500.*





LEFT: Some people collect license plates. WHY???



ABOVE: I'm guessing late 30's HD?

RIGHT: Even if you're not a Harley Geek, you must admit this '49 Hydra-Glide pan head has got that certain... je ne sais quoi.



ABOVE: One is an Indian Chief, the other a Belgian carnival ride.

RIGHT: A pristine Spaghetti-Davidson, AKA Aermacchi.

LEFT: And even a few Japanese machines.



Bill's Old Bike Barn is amazing, but we still have miles to cover. We tear ourselves away after a bit over one hour and immediately head over Knob Mountain, into the rural environs north of Bloomsburg. Before leaving these one lane back roads we pause to check out the restored Padon Twin Covered Bridges.

The new bridge at right carries traffic these days, while the old twin bridges below are now a peaceful picnic site straddling Huntington Creek.

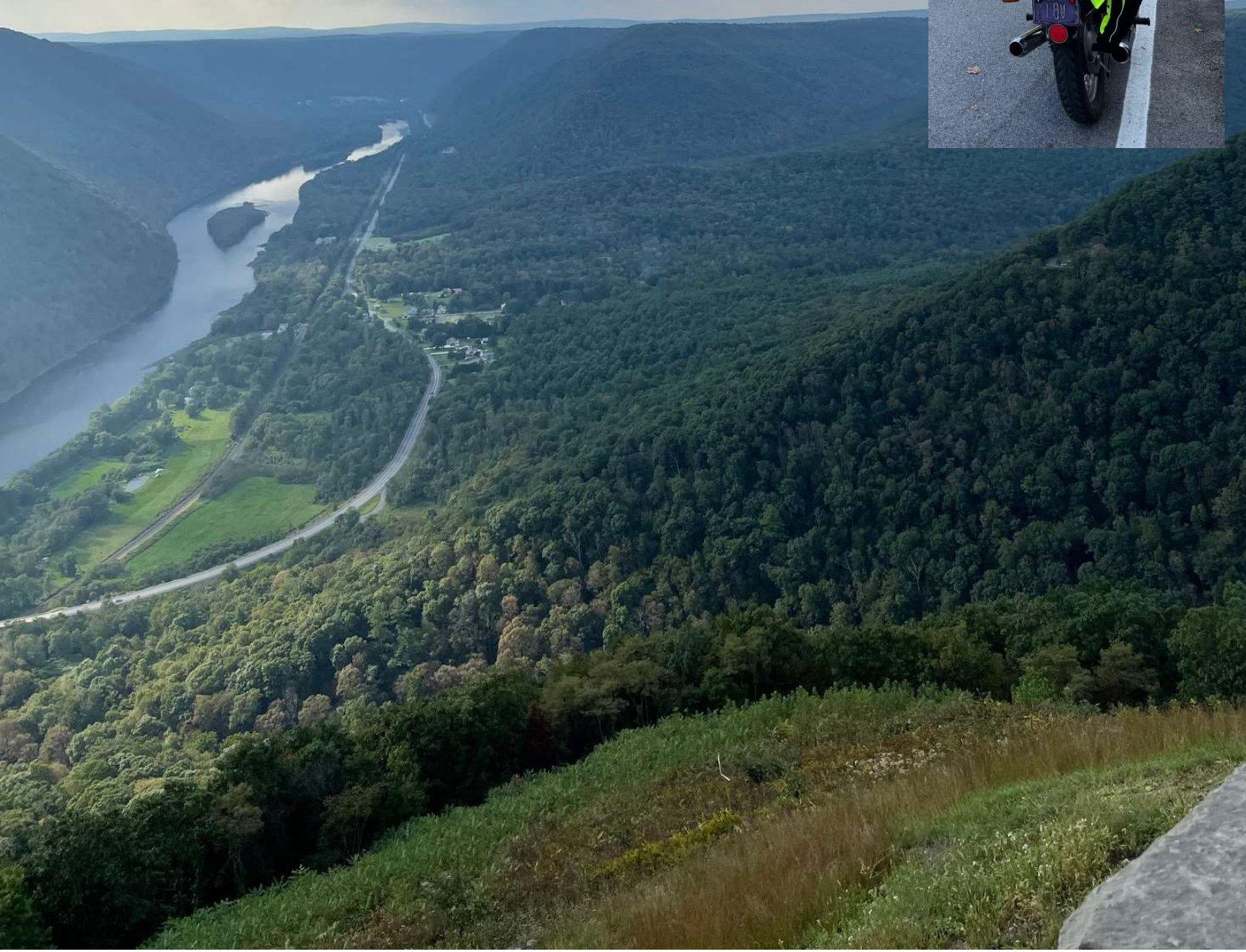


Just a quick look is all we need, then it's north on 487. We are crossing expansive PA State Parklands, an ascending into the Endless Mountains. We find lunch at a crossroads, then, after aptly named Picture Rocks we stop for dessert in tiny Salladasburg.



Years ago, this store was the local hardware store that also sold home made cheese, pastries, and Cohick's Ice Cream. These days the hardware is gone, and the food selection has grown, but clearly, in the heat of this day, we are here for the ice cream.

Continuing on, we reach Haneyville, then turn onto challenging Hyner Run Rd. One final cut-off puts us onto a moss covered one lane road that soars upwards through a series of hairpins, terminating at Hiners View. A sheer drop of 1300 feet to the Susquehanna River makes this a popular hang gliding spot. For us, simply a view to die for.



The sun is getting low in the sky, but we're close now. We coast down the mountain to route 120, then it's just a few miles west to Renovo: "the town that time forgot". The old YMCA that was converted into a hotel has closed down so accommodations are sparse, but we have reservations at a tiny, privately owned, mountain motel in Kettle Creek which features a 5 table attached diner. We settle into our rooms here, grab a



bite just before the diner closes up at 8, and just hang, watching the light traffic, the sunset, the mountains, (and the insects). It's pretty quiet hereabouts and once again, after a long day, sleep comes easy. The best part? No motorcycles tipped over today! I feel that we are beginning to coalesce into a cohesive group and have acclimated to the old bikes and back roads, finally, thankfully, finding a comfortable, SAFE pace.

Sunday is our last day, and we have one day to get home after ranging outwards for two days. Our route therefore is comprised of more open roads, still scenic, and still very little traffic. Route 144 takes us south, through a 35 mile stretch that crosses through a massive new growth forest. There is not a traffic light or a cross road, and nary another vehicle the whole way. The road is perfect motorcycle picture postcard. As far as the eye can see, for thousands of acres, there is nothing but green wooded hillsides. The incredible fact is that not one single tree was left standing after uncontrolled logging totally stripped the earth of its covering. This land was one huge mud pit before the PA Conservation movement replanted the area and brought the logging barons under control. The story of these State Lands is a rare ecological reclamation win, and we are privileged to be cruising through it on a beautiful morning like this. We are seeking the 'Fifty-Mile Café'. About 55 miles out, after Snow Shoe, we cross route 80 and approach at a Sheets gas station and variety store that looks like the 50-mile café to me. We are able to sit outside next to our bikes and enjoy a quick, inexpensive, light breakfast with a nice hot cup of Joe.

With our tummies and our bikes gassed up, we head south on route 235, which carves up and down 2 good size mountains before descending to the Susquehanna River at Liverpool. Here we hope to cross the river on the oldest continuously operating ferry service in North America. The ferry is approaching from the other side and a big group of Harley riders has just pulled up. This should be interesting. The entire boat is crowded, filled with motorcycles: BEDLAM! OK, the boat is not very large, but we are all crunched together and enjoying the 20 minute cruise. One of the Harley guys opens his top box and out come the brewskies; none for me thanks. The atmosphere is 'Main Street Daytona-esque'.



The primitive Millersburg Ferry consists of a flat barge lashed to a paddle wheel tug. It can hold maybe 5 cars or 20 motorcycles.

Party time on the Susquehanna!



From Millersburg we pass through 'coal country'. At Tower City we stop for gas and a snack, then climb a high ridge on Gold Mine Road, crossing the Appalachian Trail, and continuing on through 'Amish country', finally reaching home base at the end of a long, crash-free, incredible day of really great classic motorcycling. *We have survived.* Dinner is served.



Thanks Lynn, as always, your culinary experiments are a highlight.

