

RIDE REPORT: LOCAL LOOPS 09-17-2022

Local Loops is always a popular choice. It gives riders a chance to sample a wide variety of classic bikes, while not straining anyone's endurance too far. It also offers the maximum opportunity to connect with new friends with shared interests, and all this takes place in just one day. This ride had 13 deposits, but two of those switched to a longer, overnight ride, so eleven were left plus me makes us an even dozen.

All the riders were local: no one flew in, and no one slept over. Some interesting twists: Rodney bought this RetroTour at the local Rotary Club's silent auction fundraiser. Don and James were riding on gift certificates purchased by their thoughtful families. Sam was treating his dad, Fred as a birthday present. Justin and Shaun are riding buddies who rode down from Reading. Nico and Fred S. are local friends that I see on most Tuesdays for lunch. Aaron came from Wilmington, DE and Tri Tran lives in Philly. Three riders showed Delaware licenses, one showed a New Jersey license, and the rest of us hail from PA.

We used a motley international assortment of bikes, chosen according to rider requests and/or according to which bikes were due for a ride. We wound up with 4 Japanese bikes, 3 Italian bikes, 2 British bikes, and 1 each American and German. I rode the R100S/RS/EML sidecar rig, which was manufactured in The Netherlands and assembled in the USA with a German engine.



NOW BOARDING FOR OUR 9:15 AFTER BREAKFAST DEPARTURE

The format for Local Loops involves riding 25 or 20 miles at a time to a preserve or interesting spot where we hang out for 15 minutes, talk with new friends, admire old bike, and maybe switch bikes to sample something different. The first stop, after a tasty breakfast at home, is next to the Smith Covered Bridge, on the banks of the Brandywine River.

I pop the trunk of the EML sidecar making drinks and snacks available as the group begins to socialize and gel.



On the banks of the Brandywine River at The Mason-Dixon Line





The second leg is slightly longer, as we follow the Brandywine River to Stroud's Mill Preserve. A lovely foot bridge leads to a wide open undeveloped area. We stretch our legs, discuss the various motorcycles and some riders opt to switch bikes.

Next, we make our way through a double-tunnel that has a turn in the middle which keeps the 'light at the end of the tunnel' out of view: a little creepy! Then, down a newly re-paved, curvy river-road following a bucolic creek and past a go cart track to park up at a little coffee shop next to the "Smallest Church in the World". Coffee and sweets are followed by a tour of the church, which, in light of its diminutive stature, only takes 5 minutes.



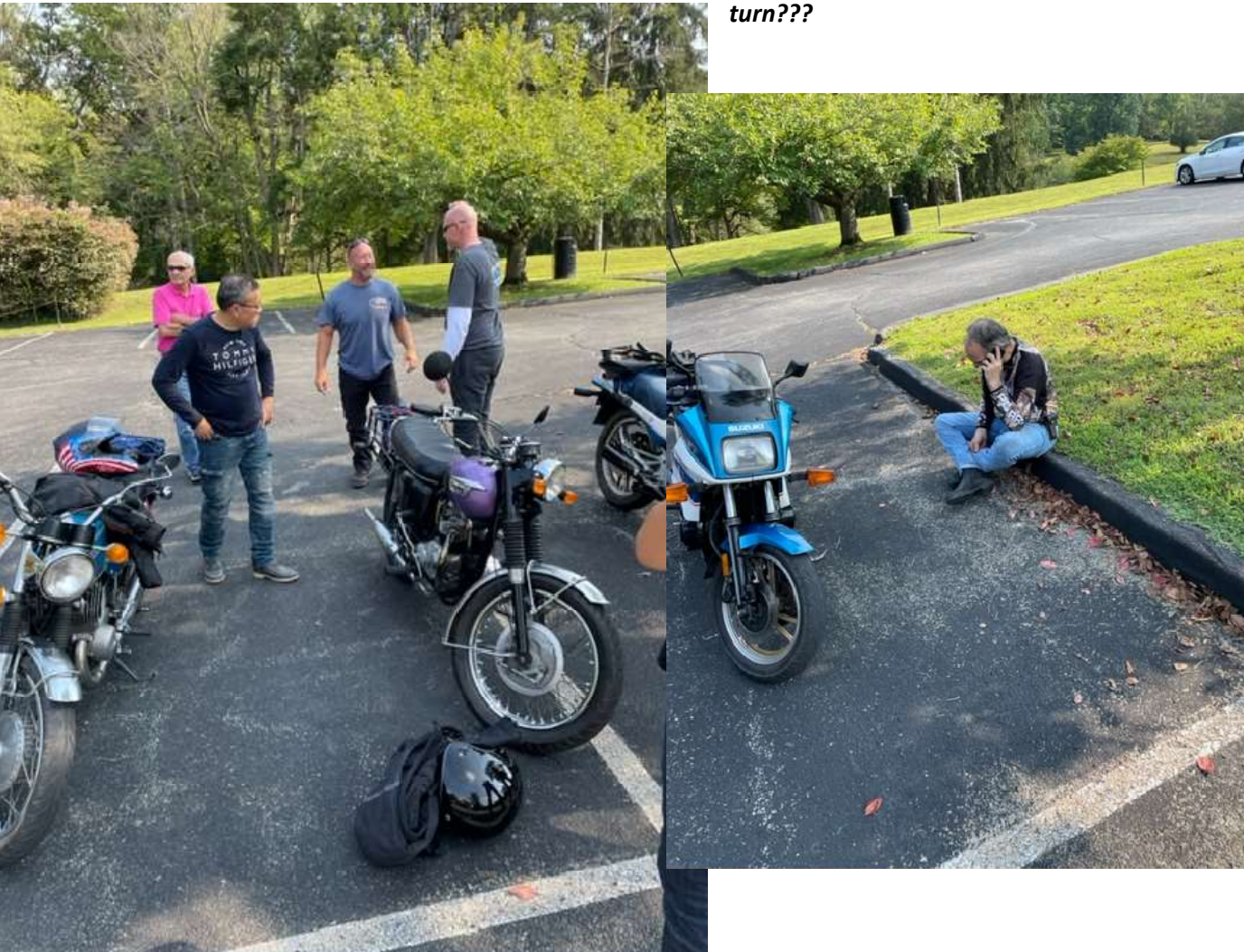
We make our way back to Kennett for lunch at a local Taqueria. Kennett Square is The Mushroom Capital of the World. I know this is so because it says that on the water tower in town.



Commercial mushroom harvesting requires hard manual labor which is provided in large part by picadores: Mexican immigrants whose descendants comprise 37% of the town's population, meaning that the Mexican food here is awesome. Everyone agrees, judging by the chatter at lunch, after which we remount for the next leg on different bikes if so desired. This is starting to look like a lot of fun!

For stop #5, we cross the Mason-Dixon Line into Delaware. Valley Garden Park is next to the scenic Hoops Reservoir which serves the greater Wilmington area. Here we have to wait for a bit as some of the group seems to have become separated. Sometimes that happens! Everyone has a route sheet and a smart phone, so it doesn't take long to regroup. There is a bit of shade here which is appreciated, but not as much, perhaps, as the port-a-potty.

Searching for our lost riders. Who didn't wait at that turn???



We set sail once more along the “Mill Route”. Snuff Mill Rd leads to Center Mill Rd which leads to Burnt Mill Rd. Lots of rivers/lots of old mills. Then around Longwood Gardens to finish the leg at the large, empty parking lot next to the local high school. Here, riders can rest in the shade, take a 7 mile ‘self-guided’ loop on a bike or two that they have yet to try, and/or partake of the ‘Sidecar Experience’ in the safe environment of the parking lot. I foolishly volunteer to serve as human ballast, and from ‘the chair’ I shout coaching tips to the neophyte sidecar-ists. Truthfully, I may need to change my shorts after that.



That's me in the sidecar being scared....very scared.

It all ends well, and we pop over to a gas station with many pumps, where I exercise my VISA card and we fill up all the tanks. From here, it's a short hop back to the house where a gourmet meal prepared by my talented wife Lynn awaits. The food is great, as are the adult beverages, but nothing is as great as the camaraderie that we all feel after spending such a pleasant day together pursuing our favorite pastime.

Many of the participants will sign up for more RetroTours later this year and in the years to come.



The table is set, as Justin checks out the Hors d'oeuvres in the background. It has been said that the gourmet meal at the end is the best part. Riding classic antique motorcycles stimulates the appetite.