

Ride Report: Local Loops, Sunday April 28th, 2024

Local Loops is usually well attended. For this ride, 9 riders + 1 passenger enlisted, then at the last minute, 2 riders cancelled. So, 7 riders plus yours truly makes 8 + one passenger. Eleven bikes were prepped and staged early that morning, so riders were able to choose a bike; some had chosen in advance.



Once the difficult choices are made, the Yamaha XS750, the Moto Morini, and the Laverda are left behind. The 'chosen ones' are:

Mason A.....1976 Honda CB400F Super Sport
 Fred S.....1972 BMW R60/5
 Robert D.....1970 Triumph T120 Bonneville
 Josh F.....1977 HD XLCR
 Ed R.....1977 Yamaha XS650
 Bart B..... 1973 Norton Commando Fastback
 Nico Z..... 1976 Honda CB550K
 Joel S. + Liz R..... 1977 BMW R100S/RS/EML



These are the bikes that the riders choose to start out on.

Bike swapping will be encouraged at each stop, or every 25-40 miles, so most riders will be able to sample many of the bikes. Liz and I will remain in the sidecar rig for the day, and we carry snacks and loose gear for everyone so their luggage racks will stay empty.

LOOP #1 begins with a lovely breakfast prepared by my wife Lynn; we get to know one another a bit then head out for the first loop. The route takes us on some of the really fine riding roads that begin less than a mile from the house. The loop of about 20 miles uses a long stretch of Route 82 which follows the twists and turns of Red Clay Creek and passes by The Old Snuff Mill, newly reconfigured into a beer tasting room and bicycle shop. Then a ride through Mt Cuba Botanical Center & through a small covered bridge to stop at the Ashland Nature Preserve where we smell the roses, kick tires, & make new friends.



THE 2ND LOOP includes a stretch of PA Route 100 past the Andrew Wyeth estate along the historic Brandywine River. This stretch of road was one reason why Lynn and I moved to this area +/- 40 years go. It is a scenic delight and a blast or ride through. A special treat awaits us at the end of this second loop. The Power Place is a modern Christian church in Kennett Square. It is built into an industrial building, and the interior is beautifully decorated with recreational rooms for small children, a coffee bar for adults, and a chapel that includes a stage for the electrified "church band". Here the faithful can rock out and maybe, just maybe, there will be 'speaking in tongues'. More importantly, today is the annual Blessing of the Bikes. RetroTours is usually invited and in past years, we have set up a booth and displayed some old bikes. Most, not all, of the riders come in on Harleys and the pastor blesses the bikes, asking God for a safe riding season for all. It so happened that Local Loops was scheduled for the same day as the blessing, so it was decided to make the blessing our second stop.



AT THE POWER PLACE:

An impressive line-up of iron men and machines, but none perhaps, as impressive as Josh on the RetroTours XLCR.

With his Bar & Shield regalia, he fits right in. Ed, in the background, is obviously impressed.

Bikes of all sorts & sizes.





LOOP #4: A bit of discussion ensues as riders negotiate to try different bikes. Some elect to stay on the same bike while others wobble away on fresh steeds as we leave Peacedale, finding our way through historic Landenburg and a bit of Delaware to end up at our lunch stop by the Yorklyn Bridge which spans the Red Clay Creek. Here, picnic tables under a long pavilion provide welcomed shade. In a cooler in the sidecar trunk are 10 large hoagies (submarine sandwiches) and cold drinks. Lunch is served. Camaraderie prevails. Life is good

The service carried on a bit longer than expected, so this turns into a longer stop than planned. The beautiful weather beckons, and as soon as we are blessed, it is time to get back on the road for...

LOOP #3: After receiving a blessing, and on such a gorgeous day, we all feel at peace, so no better destination for this loop than Peacedale Preserve. Getting there involves a different section of Route 100 and more of Route 82, bringing us through Landenberg to Route 841, another of the innumerable Brandywine Valley Scenic Ways, ending at a quiet preserve where we are very nearly the only visitors.

The heat of the day is upon us now. The trunk of the sidecar is propped open and cold drinks are enjoyed by all.





Nico in the background on the CB550K looks on as Ed parks the XLCR. Judging from the angle, Ed's wife Liz has shot this photo from her seat in the sidecar, looking over the gas tank of the BMW/EML. Behind Nico is the pavilion where we escaped the heat for a pleasant lunch break.

LOOP #5: A slightly longer loop is in order after partaking of lunch. We leave "The Mushroom Capital of the World" and make our way along tiny back roads through Jennersville, the "Tree Nursery of Pennsylvania". At a certain point, several bikes vanish from the pack. Mechanical issue? Crash? Neither of the above; just a missed turn and maybe a bit of range anxiety: someone decided they needed to stop for gas. Contact is reestablished and we are soon reunited. Next, past lush Amish farmlands, we cover about 35 miles, stopping along the Octoraro Creek after passing through the amazingly long Pine Grove Covered Bridge. Bike swaps are again discussed and negotiated. It is time to make tracks towards home.





The Burr Truss style Pine Grove Covered Bridge is unusually long and its lateral plank floor boards make for a very bumpy ride. It sees more than its fair share of Amish buggy traffic. The pump house, visible beyond, has a paved lot where parking is convenient. If one walks along the creek a short ways, then looks back at the view beneath the covered bridge, a lovely waterfall can be seen.



AT THE PUMP HOUSE, LEFT TO RIGHT:

Nico, Mason, Bart, Ed, Joel, and Fred.

PS: Bart set a land speed record on his 1974 Triumph Trident. (Motorcyle Classics Magazine, 02/2012).



LOOP #6 takes us back through the covered bridge and on to Oxford, PA, then we skirt the border of Maryland before turning north at Lewisville. We run curvaceous Route 841 for its length, past The Whip, an old tyme British Pub, and at famous Blow Horn, PA, pick up a straight, relatively high speed section of Routs 82 South that traverses open pastureland. This is horse country, where the King Farm and other luscious estates border the road. The plan is to pull into the Unionville High School parking lot where there is shade, wooden benches, a port-a-potty, and a place where riders can try their hand at piloting the sidecar rig in a controlled environment. Alas, the Harley is having none of that as it backfires and dies, just 8 or 10 miles from home. We pull the gas tank and try to see where all the sparks have gone, but we can't fix the electronic Dynatec ignition by the side of the road. We stash the HD and team two riders onto one bike for the short ride home. After a delicious home cooked meal, we say our goodbyes, except for a couple of the locals who ride with me in the pick truck to retrieve the dead Harley.



Grim faces all around...it sort of looks like a funeral for the dead Harley Davidson. In fact, a simple broken wire caused the issue and was soon repaired at home in the shop, not here by the side of the road. Fortunately, this occurred at the very end of the day and close to home; all part of the adventure inherent in classic touring.

I really can't complain. The weather, if a bit on the warm side, has been close to perfect. All the riders rode very well and I never had a single concern on that score. The bikes performed nicely over the 150 miles, except for the one little glitch at the very end. Lynn always tries to go one better and dinner was no exception. We feasted and socialized for a good hour and a half, then said our goodbyes. What a great way to open the 2024 riding season for Retrotours. Thanks to Liz and everyone for the cool photos.



Ed, a regular rider on RetroTours, says "See y'all next time...that sure was a hoot!"