

## MARK'S USA ADVENTURES 2017

### **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July, Auckland Airport and flights**

The complimentary visit to the Air NZ Koru lounge at Dorkers was great - esp after I discovered the self service bar. The only whiskey it contained was JW Red, but who was I to complain? Esp when I discovered that the nip pourer was just an un-controlled spout.. Four + fingers later, and repeated as often as I dared, interspersed with several help yourself Green Beret IPA's soon had me in the mood for the long haul. Hic? With departure bang on the All Black v Lions kickoff time at 7.30, a message from Iain B.

suggesting that as we'd just won the haka, victory was thus assured. Apparently not. Followed by the usual 12+ hours flight.

Fortunately with more mind-numbing juice on board. Even if it was just more JW Red. Haven't Air NZ heard of single malt??

Meanwhile the 'McLaren' movie went down a treat, before zizzing off, and awoke sometime later to find my very nimble nubile 12 year old seat row mate stepping over me to escape the nasal noises and head presumably, for the dunnies. Such adroitness was to be much admired, although I did tell her to give me a kick next time she felt compelled to leave..

Shit - Steph appraised me of the drama at Eden Park last night, confirmed by reading the Stuff/Herald guff here today. What a ballsup - sounds like the Loins took the moral victory - well, according to the Pommie press anyway. Looks like Reid is no Ritchie as a captain. Not yet anyway. And Froggie refs aren't to be trusted - bailing the useless pricks out in two World Wars still counts for nowt on the sports field it appears..

Our pilot wouldn't broadcast the result - we were told to ask the crew if we really wanted to know, but our 'trolley trout' was so old she couldn't even remember to clear the dishes from our row, let alone be trusted to impart the correct score... And then the cunning old cow omitted me off the brekka hand-out altogether.. but only briefly - until a loud and highly indignant "**HOY!**" brought her back into line. *"Oh did I forget you dear"* she gushed, completely and thoroughly disingenuously.. Hurrumph.. The old bat should be pensioned off to Wallace's broil down abattoir. But not until she's first exhausted the J Walker supplies from her trolley of course. The usual two hour shuffle through immigration at LAX, during which our luggage had time to be hauled off the relevant carousel which was then also re-used for about the next three following flights, was followed by the days bright spot - a lurch into 'Laredo's Cantina', for several restorative and extremely tasty IPA's.. Still stuck in the main terminal, I couldn't access Terminal 5 where Spirit Airlines reside, until closer to the overnight red eye to Detroit.. Yawn..

Several hours later (Hic?!) and was in the correct terminal and in another bar - how could that possibly happen?? An Absolution IPA this time - darker and much less hoppy, but v pleasant none the less.. At this rate the savings made by going on the late 'red eye' flight will all be re-invested across the bar. What better way to prop up LAX's hospitality industry I say..!!

Next stop, Detroit and the 'thumb' of Michigan with all the d's - Dr Dan and Dunny Diver Dick - look out Michigan NOC, here I come!

### **Day 1. Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July. Detroit -Gaines.**

The Spirit flight was uneventful enough - away a few mins late at 2315, and was delighted to discover myself in an Exit row seat, and with an empty next to me. The seat back still didn't recline though, and after a \$2 cup of tea, the lights were promptly turned off and managed an uncomfortable snooze till dawn as we approached Detroit.

Here Dan was waiting for me enthusiastically waving a Kiwi flag on the footpath right outside the correct carousel - good man that he is, how did he know to pick that particular spot?

After all the airline food, among all the IPA at LAX, I'd only had nibbles, so soon pulled into a diner to refill the severely depleted guts, before completing the 70 mile drive to Gaines, and the Clark hacienda on the outskirts of Flint. So lucky to have Dr Dan to look after Phat Slim, we dragged him out into the sunshine, where Dan filled me in on the recently completed isolastic replacement/head gasket saga. After doing the iso's, he'd spotted a head gasket oil leak and so changed it. However on re-torquing the head, the front lower studs pulled out and he'd had to heli-coil them and then redo the head gasket. Mileage on the bike now reads 13,100 miles. He'd also just imported some LED bulbs from Paul Goff in England, so we fitted those. The headlight "bulb" doesn't even vaguely resemble a traditional glass bulb, but it screwed straight in and worked

ok, although it really needs a night ride to see what the output is like in the dark. The instrument bulbs were similarly changed, as was the tail light - once again not really looking like a bulb, but all combining to reduce the load on the standard alternator.

Then it was time to pack the throw-overs he'd kindly dragged out of his shed for me, and head off up country to the tiny settlement of Forester, where Dan has ancestral property- 11 acres of what is left from the original 180, and complete with his parent's house, and a (collapsed) barn, selection of trailers etc, and now mainly reverted to brush. A quick Founders IPA to celebrate the 100 mile ride, before a quick nap, then returning the 2 miles to Forester and the local Inn for a buffet salad and walleye (fish) special. Special in the sense that it was a bit dry and overcooked, but hey - for \$10.99 who's complaining? The bar is adorned with a stuffed cougar/ mountain lion and a black bear, but is otherwise pretty unremarkable, so finished our beer and headed back to the farm to investigate a flooding carb on Phat Slim. After trueing the float bowl surface with a piece of emery cloth and some old glass, under closer scrutiny the real cause was discovered to be badly notched float needle tips - the Viton having deep indents right around them.

Nothing for it then, but more beer, and phone Dick Greenway to see if he can rustle up some new/er needles.



## Day 2. Monday 10th. Forester to Harbour Beach, Port Hope, and return.

About a forty mile ride to meet Dick who has ridden down on his Sunbeam to meet us. The 'Beam was giving him a bit of grief, misfiring and sputtering along, which was due to the dynamo being loose and not generating enough current to keep both plugs firing properly. A decent brekka in the Port Hope diner, where Sharri caught up with us, courtesy of her chauffeurette friend Nancy, who, due to Sharri's recent spinal op. very kindly ubers her around.

Then around to Dunny Divers' workshop to fit the new float needles and admire his very tasty recently restored 1953 Dommie 88. Unfortunately, now saddled with an engine problem caused by the brand new stainless spring clip, washer and gauze filter in the new stainless sump bung being sucked up through the new engine. Bugger. And similar words.

However, there was better news for Phat Slim, when Dick's replacement float needles cured the flooding, although all the carb screws needed new O rings to stop them randomly re-adjusting themselves..

Despite her current physical issues, Sharri insisted on organising lunch for us - still feeling bloated from the huge and very recent brekka, her pulled pork and buns proved irresistible, and we managed to find a hole to tuck some into. Lunch was followed by more bike talk and a close scrutiny of Dick's other projects - another Sunbeam and a Domiracer, and a mezzanine full of motorcycle treasures, before it was time to head back to Forester.

Dan got busy on the ride-on, while I relaxed over an IPA or two..

Too full of tucker to even contemplate another feed, we bilaterally decided to eschew dinner, and settled in to enjoy the lovely 20-25 deg evening. Soon joined by three white tail deer (referred to here as 'high speed beef') on Dan's front lawn - mama deer, her fawn and a juvenile, having also ridden past numerous road kill deer carcasses, we're once again reminded of the perils of US motorcycling.

## Day 3. Tues 11th July. Forester - Gaines

The hind and fawn were still hanging round the house at 7.0am when we got up for coffee, but they soon buggered off when we started moving about - a pity the stupid things don't have the same sense when they are near roads and traffic. Time for some domestics before heading back for Gaines - Dan on the mower again, and me on the central vac, we both soon got a good sweat up in the escalating warmth of the day.

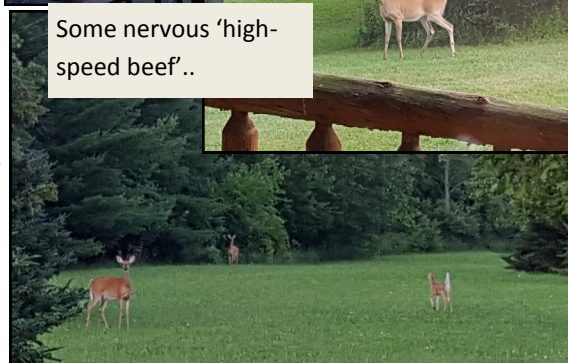
Was a bit over a 100 miles today as we wended our way back down the 'thumb' of Michigan, stopping off at Deckerville to see car/bike painter Chris, attending to his daughter's Corvette. Originally a rather 'fetching' (not Dans' overly blunt and frank assessment..) duck blue, he's covering it completely with the latest craze over here - stick-on vinyl. A lurid pinky/peach colour, so far it had taken him 4 days and he hadn't finished yet, so he could just about have re-painted it in the time he's taken so far mucking around with the big sheets of unwieldy sticky vinyl.

With our appetites suitably suppressed by this rather revolting visage (model **and** colour according to a thoroughly disgusted Dan), we rode on for a bit before pulling in for a feed at a 'BIG BOY' chain 'restaurant' in Sanduski. I was a bit dubious at first, but the \$10 all you can eat salad & soup (weird combo!!) buffet and bottomless iced tea did restore us to full vim and vigour, and we soon once again forged forth for Gaines.

Exhuming Dan's Ford Ranger, we then went on a shopping expedition - the NAPA accessory shop for Commando oil filters and engine breather check valves (only semi successfully), Rocky's Motorcycle Accessory shop for a pair of \$62 Goretex gloves amid a vast shop full of bike treasures - even old bikes scattered about, before Dan got a most unwelcome phone call informing him of his wife Mary Jo's heart attack down in Lafayette. A stent or two later, our plans are now a bit up in the air, as she's a 17 hour drive/ride away down south.



Some nervous 'high-speed beef'..



Dan and a 'BIG BOY' - ooh baby, can't wait..!!



Chev Corvair air cooled flat six powered chopper in Rocky's.





Needing fortification to digest this bad news, we headed for a Mexican for a nice feed and several thirst quenchers - Blue Moon on this occasion. Yet more shopping was needed after tea, this time oil for Phat Slim from Meijers, before more comfort food in the form of a waffle cone of 'Deer Trax' - vanilla ice-cream smeared with liberal quantities of, er, dark brown matter. Thankfully turning out to be nothing more innocuous than chocolate.

Back at base, we pulled the sump bung on Phat Slim and left it to drain while broaching an IPA of unknown provenance called 'Diabolical' - thankfully of simply exquisite flavour, and only 6.66% ABV...

The news of Jo is patchy, and as we won't know more till tomorrow, there was nothing more we could do than keep hydrating Diabolically...

#### Day 4. Wed 12th July. Gaines. A bit drizzly.

Awoke to quite a touch of sinus/hay fever, but didn't plan on riding today anyway.

We spent the morning fettling Phat Slim - completing the oil change, incl. installing the 16-19 mm oil filter adapter to enlarge the choice of filters that would fit, re-torquing the head (using a natty bevel-ended 'wobbly' extn bar), re-setting the tappets, replacing the rocker covers using a fetching little inch-lb torque wrench (20 inch lbs on the exh., 35 on the inlet), installing new O rings on the pilot screws then resetting the carbs using an infrared temp gun on the exhausts, lubing the chain and installing Dan's gift - a little good luck bell.

During all this of course, there were numerous calls re Jo and her impending bypass - anywhere from next Monday to next Friday, causing numerous possible plan changes.

And Norton-owning Patrick dropped off a camp stretcher and self-inflating mattress (unfortunately not of a female shape!) before it was time to pack everything up and have a beer. And dinner -mashed spuds and extremely tender Bambi steaks, courtesy of Patrick's hunting 'prowess'. Well, you just about have to brush the multitudinous deer out of the way, even in the two month shooting season, so not sure how much hunting skill is actually required, but the carcass was certainly nicely prepared, and expertly cooked by Dan, resulting in the nicest, softest venison I've ever eaten.

Cassie and Scottie rolled up about 9.30 pm on their way back from an 8 hour drive from manning a stall at a fair, complete with the hyper Vixen - a small lunatic pointer-shepherd cross, who dashed exhaustingly hither and thither. Time for more beer and bed, while contemplating tomorrow's extremely patchy forecast.

#### Day 5. 13th July. Gaines-Stockbridge. Overcast and muggy.

Awoken at 4.30am by an epic electrical storm of biblical proportions - a good time for the thunderstorm so we didn't have to ride through it, the first clap of thunder was so loud it nearly shot everyone out of bed..

Coffee and an extremely healthy sugar-coated muffin to start the day, followed by a visit to Home Depot to purchase a set of 9 'wobble' socket extensions for the princely sum of just \$12.

Packed the bike and my suitcase (which would follow to the rally in Cassie's truck) with the eBay treasures I'd had mailed to Dan's, then he insisted on leading me via a complicated but picturesque back road route to Suzie's.

George Fisher drove up and very kindly took me to Elliot Andrew's workshop in nearby Chelsea, where he and a couple of others are working on 'The Flanders Project'. Originally manufactured in Chelsea around the early 1900's, this 500cc single is not being restored, but merely resuscitated back to working order for an upcoming anniversary. Even just this semi-resto has now taken 2 years, but the end is nearly in sight, as the boys bolt on the Schebler carburettor and magneto. The original factory building still exists, and although the claimed production figures of 50,000 machines a year are obviously rubbish, it's great that a few actually have survived.



Dr Dan, the Diabolical ..

Using an infrared thermometer to set the carbies



George Fisher hard at work on the Flanders





Elliot, who finished 3rd in the 250 race at Daytona in 1971, also has a bunch of restored Jappas - H1 & other Kwakas, two and four stroke etc. Unfortunately now suffering from well advanced prostate cancer, over the past year he'd let most of his collection go.

Previously he'd also had a Cord, which took him 11 years to restore, and a v nice Lambo, the photos of which still grace the workshop wall.



Tearing ourselves away from all this mechanical mayhem, Geo and I stopped at the Shell in Stockbridge for supplies, and headed home to consume the box of Short Breweries Huma Lupa Licious - of unknown ABV, but which must be of reasonable strength, as I woke the next morning with quite a hangover....

**July 14th. Day 6. Stockbridge, MI. Fine and sunny, 25 deg.**

Awaken at 7.0am by the MacFarlane St alarm auto dialler, and phoned Steph to make sure it wasn't a burglar. At this point I discovered I had a helluva headache - last night's Huma Lupa Licious had certainly packed a punch.. Or is it the sinus/allergy problem? Either way, I'd certainly felt better.

After detailed operational instruction on Suzie's new ride-on, had fun as I thrashed up and down mowing her extensive lawns, which was also really good for my streaming sinuses, before we packed her small Dodge HRH (?) van and headed into Stockbridge to set up for the market. A pleasant few hours passed meeting and greeting the locals, before returning home for a few IPA's and a late supper.



Christ, I don't even mow my own lawns at home, what the hell am I doing here??



Suzie's malevolent Deuce awaits an ambush opportunity



Wow—look at the size of her tomatoes!

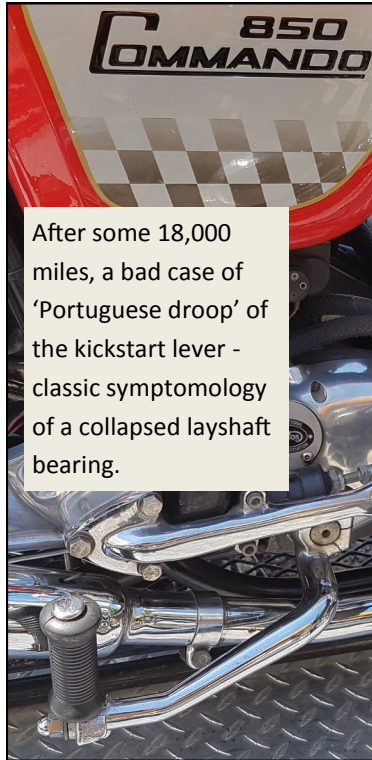


## July 15<sup>th</sup>. Day 7. Stockbridge MI-Clarkesville Virginia.

Greeted by a glorious day, we were away at 7.45am on the start of our next big adventure, with me hired again especially for the trip for the sole reason to act as 'Das Boot' to activate Blackie after each engine shut down. Sonja and Michel had gone to great lengths to plan an interesting route for us, and Suzie had printed them out and stuck them on her arm - no sophisticated VCC route roller nonsense for her, no siree.. The system worked well, and we only went off track slightly once, before getting to Blissfield, calling Michel and meeting him a bit out of town to escort us to the Litalien residence in suburban Sylvania, v close to Toledo.

Here Michel had plenty of alcohol-free gas, and kindly topped us up, before we headed off – Michel in the lead with truck and trailer, then Suzie, Sonja next on her Mk III, and myself. The lead changed several times once out of town, but Michel and Sonja had gone to such a lot of trouble to plot such an interesting back roads route, that it was actually easier for the truck to lead.

Ohio had had so much recent rain that it more closely resembled the Everglades in Florida, with vast swathes of farm and crop land under water, and some of the roads we were on had been closed only a day or so before. No such problems with the weather now though - 25 degrees and glorious bright sun. A real revelation after the sinus-stuffing humidity of Michigan.



After some 18,000 miles, a bad case of 'Portuguese droop' of the kickstart lever - classic symptomology of a collapsed layshaft bearing.

Humming along nicely, everything was going well with the world, when negotiating Martinsville, one of the many small towns our back roads tour necessitated, Sonja's kick start lever suddenly crashed to the ground in a fatal attack of 'Portuguese droop', occasioned by the suspected failure of the Portuguese layshaft bearing. So lucky she wasn't buzzing along at speed, the gearbox lock-up stopped her bike dead in it's tracks, and as the two of us struggled to drag it off the road, Michel and Suzie waited up through the next intersection wondering what the hold up was. Fortunately three other riders stopped to give us a hand to carry/drag the bike onto a belatedly returned Michel's trailer - so Harley riders do have their uses after all! We noticed later that the chain connecting link was right on the rear sprocket, and easily accessible to remove for manoeuvring. Meantime, Michel realised he'd lost the keys to his own bike on the trailer, so had rung Tom Tann back in Michigan, and had him fruitlessly ransacking the Litalien household in an effort to find them. Suddenly located in the truck after all, but enjoying his long-distance manipulation of the hapless hunter, Michel was reluctant to call off the search, exhorting poor Tom to delve deeper and deeper into the inner household sanctum, only releasing him from his burgling activities when it was time to move off. So after 140 miles Sonja's bike was up on the trailer, and her ride was done for the duration. A great pity as this Eastern part of Ohio is full of rolling well treed hills, and the roads were mostly in good condition twisting alongside several rivers, all dark with run off spoil from the recent rains.

One town, Zanesville had a novel bridge over the Muskingum- Licking

River confluence, being built in the shape of a huge Y, such that you need to be in the correct lane or you get sheared off in the wrong direction entirely. That little feature negotiated safely, the next excitement came in the form of a brush with the law, when despite my verbal warning and digital gesticulations to her at some traffic lights, Suzie insisted on riding straight ahead from a 'Right Turn Only' lane. Directly in front of the local traffic cop - who I'd also pointed out to her, as I cowardly took the proper turn and did a 'ewey' behind the cop to get back on track. Meantime lights blazing the nice young cop had her pulled over for a chat about the rules of the road. Let off with a warning, after claiming she didn't understand what I'd said to her back at the lights (or even that she'd seen the cop right under her nose), Suzie's next 'moment' came in the form of some gravel on a slow corner, but fortunately there was nothing coming in the other lane as she puckered her way over the centre line and back.

Now in Virginia, this part of the country is beautiful, as we followed several river valley's then climbed our way up and along the Appalachi-

ans, although it has to be said that a lot of the communities we passed through had obviously seen much better days economically. Apparently with the collapse of the coal industry the entire state has gone dead, so imagine this is now fervent Trump heartland.

Lobbing into Clarksville after 400 miles at 7.0 pm, we were very pleased that Sonja had had the foresight to pre-book a motel, so we didn't have to spend half an hour scrubbing round looking for somewhere to stay. The only downside was that the motel bar was stocked mainly with numerous tasteless Bud/Miller iterations, but an almost acceptable Yeunlings or two washed down a surprisingly nice Italian feed, before nigh-nigh's time.



Suzie managed to talk her way out of this situation, as Blackie waits eagerly for Das Boot to kick him into life. After she'd initially got poor Michel to try and start him with the key off...

"I'm sorry officer, I didn't see you at the intersection back there, nor did I listen/understand my Kiwi riding friend's advice when he pointed out I was in the Right Turn Only lane..."





### July 16th Day 7. Clarksville - Beuna Vista, Virginia.

The day starting out foggy, we brekkered in the local FOP House restaurant - Fraternity of Police, where we got a pretty reasonable feed for about \$7. Meantime the fog cleared, and we were away by 9.0 along more Appalachian back roads, passing through small settlements and villages, most containing at least some empty and or derelict buildings, on one occasion at least, baring an uncanny resemblance to the Munster mansion.

Once again Michel's route finding was first rate, and we stayed off interstates all day, bar the last short stint past Lexington, as we crossed the Appalachians into Virginia. Greeted at the top by a sign proclaiming that speed limits here are enforced aerially, the mind boggled as to how they could strafe us into the ditch when we're actually riding through a thickly tree covered canopy. Pausing for a break at an old abandoned general store/post office, a yellow Interstate flashed by, obviously enjoying the ride too much to consider stopping to say hullo. As the others pointed out, years ago, all the bikes were ridden to rallies, and there were gathering points of Nortons, growing larger and larger as the rally site got closer and closer.

The two hundred miles over by 2.30, we pulled into camp, found Dick G. and selected a shady spot up against the hill to set up camp, and enjoy a celebratory ale. Later, riding the half mile up the narrow steep hill road to the hilltop camp to find the rest of the gear Dr Dan had dropped off on his way through to Lafayette, pedestrians were gesticulating wildly and yelling something incomprehensible at us. Puzzled by all this attention, it transpired that being a state owned camp, helmets are compulsory, and our bare noggins weren't PC or even legal. Initially unfazed by this (*"What's wrong with these overly compliant idiots?"*), we soon changed our minds when the Sherriff and his colleagues were observed regularly criss-crossing the camp between donut breaks. Apparently they frequently get a good earn off new visitors.

Tents up and camp organised, it was time for drinking and pizzas to be delivered from town. And wonder what had happened to Paul Thompson who was supposed to be joining us. Not able to sort the wifi out yet, and without his cell number, unfortunately it was a matter of wait and see. Oh, and yet more drinking..

### July 17th. Day 8. Buena Vista.

Woken early by all the wildlife, esp. the flocking Canadian geese who were very keen to announce their arrival to all and sundry, as they mournfully honked their way in. Was relieved to find Paul T. when he rode in on his hired Harley from a motel about ten miles away. Riding some sort of bobber model, about which he was v unhappy - uncomfortable anyway with high drag bars and a single seat, there was nowhere to stow luggage, and he had to travel with a courier bag thrown over his shoulder. Apparently it was the only bike he could find to hire at the price. After getting him organised, we rode into Lexington to collect his shit from the motel and have lunch in the historic town centre. A nice country ham (ie v salty) quiche and salad, and a very quaffable IPA. Lexington is the burial site of Stonewall Jackson, one of the Confederate army's most successful generals in the Civil War, who was shot and injured by friendly fire, and died of infection shortly thereafter.

Visiting a grog shop for single malt, when the sheila could find it for us - *"No, actually Irish whiskey isn't Scottish single malt"*.., and the supermarket over the road for beer - why can't the same establishment sell them both FFS?!!), then back to Buena Vista to get a photo op. under a Trump-Pence obelisk at the local scrap yard, before collecting Dick and the three of us went for a great ride up the wooded 60 - a twisting swooping smooth black topped two lane road which crosses the Blue Ridge Parkway, and which is motorcycle heaven. Not so heavenly was the town 25 miles out we'd aimed for eagerly anticipating a beer in the afternoon heat. No bar here the locals informed us, so we doubled back to camp, getting strafed by some fighter jets on the way down the valley. Before we got back there they also strafed the camp several times, much to everyone's delight.

Good timing, it transpired as it was time to drive the half mile up the steep hill to the organised 'weeny roast' - long skinny snags in buns. The tuck truck was in a great spot right up at the top of the camp, with 360 deg views all round from a double story deck pavilion, and with music supplied by a dj using a supply of good old fashioned vinyl.



Abandoned Virginian general store



Glamping house for the week

Four Speed Paul





Back down at camp, newlyweds Candice and Harley-riding Andy cut the wedding cake, then after a few beers and numerous Glenmorangies, the evening descended into drinking. Just for a change. Around about this juncture, Andy also discovered that Paul's Harley was actually a 6 speed, and after a lot of analysis and head scratching it transpired that he'd ridden all 300-odd miles on Sunday to the rally site in 4th gear. Whoops. So Paul's now re-named 'Four Speed Thompson', or 'Two Cogs Short of a Box'..

#### **Tues July 18<sup>th</sup>, Day 9. Buena Vista and surrounds.**

Paul fell out of Brenda and Jim's bike trailer in time for a feed over at the bottom pavilion behind the Paxton homestead - the same family as the recently deceased 'Alien' actor, and on whose estate we're currently glamping. Brekka is the usual 'biscuits n gravy', scrambled eggs etc, then out of annual leave, Paul rode off on his 'new' 6 speed Harley to post his bag back home then follow on the hire bike, and the MI gang saddled up for a split ride - Dick and I up the Blue Ridge Parkway via the e-free servo up HW60, but unfortunately Wayne and the rest only got as far as the servo itself, before Suzie dropped Blackie exiting the servo. A truck she hadn't noticed appeared at speed and she pulled back in, lost her footing in the drop between the tarmac and the gravel apron, and dived over the top of the bike as it toppled over. Damaged the mirror and broke a winker, but thankfully the new pea shooters and the tank survived unscathed. Hurt her ankle and ribs a bit, but not thought enough for specialist treatment - back at camp Nurse Candice successfully performing her RICE therapy.

Meanwhile, not knowing all this, Dick and I had gone north up the 45 mph B.R. Parkway. Another beautiful hot day, it was gloriously cool under the trees, and there wasn't another vehicle in our way. The Parkway is almost completely facility free, so aiming for a pub off piste so to speak, an Exit announcing 'Steele Tavern' had us salivating slavishly in anticipation. Eleven miles of the tightest nadgery steep downhill track later, we emerged in the tiny village of Vesuvius. Hurrumph, no tavernacle here, so on a couple more miles to the intersection with HW11. No tavern here either, but then we spotted the settlement name - Steele Tavern. FFS, done like a dinner on that one, we rode off another 10 miles to the nearest roadside tavern and tuck shop. Only it was a tavern you have when you're not having a tavern, as due to some wanky licence restriction, any beer we purchased there couldn't be consumed on the premises. Eschewing drinking in the middle of the busy road, instead we settled on some water and tacos, and left only mildly disappointed.

Back at camp it was time for joyous reunifications with Walt, who after flying in to Detroit from Germany at 1.0pm on Sunday, had jumped straight in to his pre-loaded new bus and trailer and driven heroically for the next day and a half to get to the rally. The boys then found Walt's trailer tongue to be useful as a makeshift press to straighten some of the bent bits on Suzie's Blackie, while in the sticky heat I luxuriated in a lovely cold shower. So our campsite now contained Chris Grimmett from England, the Murray clan—Jim and Brenda, and Andy and Candice, Wayne and Cathy, Suzie, Marie Deebach from Seattle, Dick G., the various Comstocks, and on-site were also Eric Lundquist, Walt and Don Kuwik, and off-site Michel and Sonja, so the Michigan Norton Owners Chapter was now very well represented.

Time for a 'root beer float' from the camp ice cream shop - sounding mildly exotic to this naïve Kiwi, it turned out to be nothing more than a blob of ice cream in a large cup of root beer, before it was time to drive up to the top pavilion for a tech session from Chris, a retired Norton workshop owner. Covering gear boxes and primary drives, he had some interesting points to make, incl. the ridiculous factory torque figure of 70lbs for the clutch centre nut which he Loktites at a much lower value to avoid crushing the split ring off the main shaft. Roller bearing conversions etc etc, plus some special homemade tools were passed around before the tuck truck turned up, and another feed loomed. Pulled pork and turkey buns this time with salad, before yet more ice cream - if there was a gap left.



Candice and Andy cut the wedding cake



Steele Tavern be buggared—it's a small town, not a pub..



Phat Slim in good company—Blackie, the Litalien assemblage, and Wayne's World



The evening's entertainment was a presentation on the moonshine and liquor haulin' industry, and was a real hoot. Historically Virginia was the moonshine capital of the country, and at one point Franklin County imported 364 lbs of sugar for every man woman and child in the county - quite difficult to justify on a per capita basis one would imagine. Surviving long after prohibition ended, even up to today, where the object is to avoid the tax on liquor, the performance mods to the cars were often installed by NASCAR workshops and sometimes driven by the race drivers themselves. Fuel was stored along the routes used, and the whole industry was tacitly endorsed by the community at large as just another occupation, whether the Feds liked it or not.

Then just for another change the evening descended into drinking, and passed blissfully by until eventually the bloody aerial honkers heralded the dawn of another day..

### **Wed 19th. Day 10. The Moment of Thunder, Group Ride and Picnic Lunch.**

Not wishing to get tangled up in the group ride, Dick and I snuck away half an hour early, so also missed the 'moment of thunder', when they do an orchestrated group rev up to impress the locals. By then we were half way up the Parkway on gloriously empty roads, great weather and terrific views from up to nearly 4000 ft crests. Murdering plenty of kamikaze black swallow tail butterflies as we did so - quite large beasts they hit our helmets with quite a crunch. After about 40 miles we turned off to the designated picnic spot alongside a stream - all extremely picturesque, and as the first arrivals, able to select a good shady table by the creek. The next rider in was sporting a very inflamed throat, he'd been hit by a 'yellow jacket' and stung multiple times in the one spot. Described as hornets on steroids, the way he told it they're about the size of a small sparrow, and with the disposition of an angry jackal. Note to self - check the antihistamine in my jacket pocket. Found to be MIA, so must remember to replace it promptly. Lunch was a selection of breads, tasty cheeses (so something other than plastic cheddar is available over here after all..), meats and salads, with plenty of ice cold H2O to sluice it down.

Dick and I joined up with a small departing group when our sensitive antenna picked up they were heading for a brewery - we'd have time for a quick one we reasoned, before returning to camp for the afternoon tech session. A fond hope that one, as we eventually rolled back into camp about seven o'clock. Hic??!! Meanwhile we'd been all over the county, grimly hanging on to the coat tails of a fast disappearing group of locals, determined to show us their favourite back roads. Soon completely disoriented and hopelessly lost, we had to keep riding with the rapidly diminishing group, or we'd need emergency locator beacons to have any chance of survival. Losing other riders at nearly every intersection, by the time we found the new Ballast Point brewery our numbers had fallen from nearly two dozen to just eight. Talk about devil takes the hindmost - he certainly had a feast today.!!

## THESE CARS HAULED ILLEGALLY DISTILLED LIQUOR

### TERMINOLOGY:

- ▶ "Moonshine" - because distilling and hauling were frequently done by the light of the moon
- ▶ "Corn liquor" - when corn is the main ingredient; superior to "Sugar Liquor" (which is cheaper and easier to make.)
- ▶ "Stump Water"
- ▶ "White Lightening"
- ▶ "Boot legger" - pints could be hidden in boots
- ▶ "Coffee lace" - coffee with a kick



Blue Ridge Parkway scene, 3700' up



Another picturesque Parkway scene



Tucker time just off the Parkway