

RIDING TIME

Taking Two-Wheel Opportunities

By Rob Dingman

Each year as the riding season starts to wind down, I never feel like I got as much riding in as I would have liked. Many people assume that as employees of the AMA, all we do is ride all the time. If only that were the case!

Not unlike many office jobs, my job is filled with meetings, emails, contracts, event planning and organization, information technology challenges, human resource and benefits questions, insurance issues, buildings and grounds problems and lots of “other duties as assigned.” Add to that list, maintaining relationships with other organizations and the plethora of government relations issues we face as motorcyclists and as an organization, and it’s a wonder there is any time left for riding at all.

Now don’t get me wrong. I commute to work by motorcycle a fair amount, but even that was somewhat curtailed this year by the rainy spring and early summer. I don’t mind riding in the rain that much, as it is a fact of life for a motorcyclist that you will end up riding in the rain occasionally. I just don’t like starting a ride in the rain, especially on the way to work.

There are also plenty of riding opportunities throughout the year. In fact, I could be somewhere riding at an AMA event every weekend, but that wouldn’t leave much time for family life. Although I don’t always get to choose which opportunities to participate in, any riding opportunity is more enjoyable than mundane office work.

In July, the AMA Board of Directors held a retreat at a ranch in Montana managed by AMA Board Member Russ Ehnes. The ranch is a working cattle ranch, grows crops and offers off-highway vehicle riding opportunities to members of an affiliated riding club. I would like to thank Russ and the owners of the Willo Ranch, for their hospitality and generosity in donating the

use of the ranch for the retreat!

To be honest, I had been dreading this retreat, as I questioned its value and viewed it as more time away from home and the office with an already overbooked 2019 travel schedule. I was, however, badly mistaken and pleasantly surprised with how valuable the retreat was to the AMA Board and the organization. It was the perfect mix of meeting and riding, and it provided an opportunity for board members to interact in a setting that was more casual than a typical AMA Board meeting. The board was able to address a number of issues in this setting more thoroughly than previous board meetings had allowed.

One of our board members, Gary Pontius from Indianapolis, was kind enough to bring my 2010 Husaberg FE450 out to Montana for me since he drove there. Thanks so much, Gary. It was good to have my own bike to ride!

The riding was AMAZing. The only other time I had ridden in Montana was more than 25 years ago. Not only did the ranch offer a tremendous trail system, but the scenery was equally impressive. The wildlife we saw included many deer and coyotes, and I even saw a bear.

The month of August presented another epic riding opportunity at a stop on the KTM AMA National Adventure Riding Series, Presented by Kenda Tires. This round of the series, the Touratech DirtDaze Adventure Rally, emanated from Pomfret, Vt. This event was formerly part of the annual Americade touring rally in Lake George, N.Y., and was split off this year at a different time and location. Although I have attempted to attend Americade most years, I opted this year to attend DirtDaze instead at its new date and location.

AMA Chief Operations Officer Jeff Massey, Vice President for Communications and Marketing James Holter and I traveled from Ohio to participate in the event. James’s 2017 KTM 1090 Adventure R and my 2014



► Do you like rocky singletrack and big views? Montana has it all.

Triumph Tiger 800XC were loaded in Ohio, and we picked up a 2002 Kawasaki KLR 650 for Jeff in Buffalo, N.Y., borrowed from AMA member John Hood. This worked out well as Hood also provided overnight accommodations for us at his place, which was roughly the halfway point on both directions of our trip. Thanks, John Hood!

We participated in two guided rides through Vermont and New Hampshire. Each ride offered a mix of roughly 50/50 dirt to pavement and were about 130 miles each. Both were incredibly scenic and brought us through the Green Mountains and a number of covered bridges. The lunch stops provided the best food I have ever encountered on rides like these. Although I don’t know if this event will remain at this location, I suspect that it will grow, as it presents a rare adventure riding opportunity for riders in the eastern United States. Thanks to Americade and DirtDaze promoters Bill and Christian Dutcher for another great event and for their hospitality!

The riding season isn’t over yet, as I will continue to ride almost until the snow flies. I hope to get some more seat time between now and then. Hopefully, that more seat time will be on a motorcycle rather than on a desk chair.

Rob Dingman, a Charter Life Member, is president and CEO of the AMA.