

THE VERY BORING RALLY WAS ANYTHING BUT

A Good Time With Friends **By Rob Dingman**

Having missed Aerostich's Very Boring Rally (VBR) the last time it was held five years ago, I was determined to make it this year. The VBR is put on in Duluth, Minn., by Aerostich, which was founded by former AMA Board member Andy Goldfine, to commemorate the anniversary of Aerostich's founding.

When the AMA Board of Directors was looking for an appropriate venue to present this year's recipient with the AMA Dud Perkins Lifetime Achievement Award, the AMA's highest recognition, it made perfect sense to present Andy Goldfine the award at his rally in front of hundreds of his most loyal customers and fans. This would be perfect. Not only would this be a great venue to present Andy his award, but I would get to go to the VBR as well.

The best laid plans, however, never seem to work out. Out of an overabundance of humility, and in typical Andy Goldfine-fashion, Andy didn't want to receive the award at the VBR because, in his words, "the rally isn't about me, it is about Aerostich customers." This attitude is precisely why Andy was so deserving of the Lifetime Achievement Award in the first place.

As it turns out, Andy and his fiancée Shirah, along with a contingent from Aerostich, rode down from Duluth to Ohio for AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days this past July so that he could receive his award. The presentation was made at the AMA Life Member appreciation breakfast and there were several AMA Board members on hand to give their former board colleague his award.

While he was at Vintage Motorcycle Days, I told Andy that I was still going to try to make it to the VBR. Andy started telling me how I could travel from Ohio through the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and given the curvature of the earth, it really wouldn't be that much longer than going through Chicago. It seemed to me that any directions that included a discussion of the curvature of the earth were likely to provide a route for which I was not likely to have enough time.

I was really glad I made the trip. AMA Past President and current International Affairs Director Rob Rasor and I left Columbus on the Thursday morning before the rally and headed out for Duluth. I was riding my Gold Wing, and Rob was on his R1150RT. We decided that, despite Andy's assurances about the curvature of the earth, we would take the route that required us to catch a ferry across Lake Michigan.

We rode the roughly 420 miles from Columbus, Ohio to Ludington, Mich., and caught a late ferry across the lake to Manitowoc, Wisc., where we stopped for the night. Taking the ferry was a great experience. As it turns out, the S.S. Badger that took us across the lake is the only coal-fired steamship in operation in the United States. The 6,650-ton ship is over 410 feet long and nearly 60 feet wide and has capacity for 600 passengers, 180 automobiles, tour buses, RVs, motorcycles, and commercial trucks. Traveling at 15.6 knots (18 mph), the trip took four hours.

We left Manitowoc early Friday morning because we still had roughly 370 miles to go to get to Duluth. We arrived in Duluth in time for a dinner cruise on Lake Superior hosted by Aerostich and Mr. Goldfine.

This was an enjoyable evening and a great opportunity to share



riding stories with fellow motorcyclists. We even got to go under the Aerial Lift Bridge that connects Duluth's Canal Park and Park Point areas. (For being on a motorcycle trip, we spent a lot of time on the water.)

The next morning we rode from where we were staying in downtown Duluth to the rally site at Spirit Mountain ski area. There were some great seminars and a few vendors at the rally. Aerostich had set up a rally store and garment display with customer service associates ready to take orders.

Of course, no motorcycle trip to Duluth would be complete without a visit to the Aerostich factory and showroom.

Among the main attractions, however, were the final two rounds of the AMA/NATC AReS MotoTrials National Championship Series that were held at Spirit Mountain in conjunction with the rally. We got to see some really talented trials riders, and I was able to present the AMA national No. 1 plate to series champion Patrick Smage.

Rob Rasor and I even took a little side trip in search of Betty's Pies that we were told had the best pies in the area. Since my GPS didn't exactly like the address I typed into it, it took us a little longer to get there than we planned, but we finally made it and the place lived up to its billing.

Riding out of the parking lot, we met a couple on an ST1100 that had run out of gas. After going to get some gas for them, I asked the rider if he was an AMA member. When he said he was, I told him that this was part of our roadside assistance program.

Sunday morning found us back on the road headed for Milwaukee, scheduled to catch a 7:00 p.m. ferry back across Lake Michigan. On the return trip, we opted for the faster, more modern Lake Express. This ferry is a 192-foot aluminum hulled catamaran that can accommodate 248 passengers, 46 passenger vehicles and 12 motorcycles and travels at 34 knots (40 mph). The return trip across to Muskegon, Mich., took only two-and-a-half hours.

After spending the night in Muskegon, we were on the road again early Monday morning headed for home with a quick detour to Ann Arbor for lunch with Rob Rasor's son, Rob. The total mileage without the lake crossings was over 1750 miles, including local riding around Duluth and the trip to Betty's Pies. It was a great trip that reminded me why we work so hard to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling.

Rob Dingman is the AMA president and CEO.