

THE CRAB POT

September 2004



The Eclectic Publication of the Mid-Atlantic's Most Informal Motorcycle Organization

Notes from the Benevolent Dictator

The following are presented in more detail later this issue, but here's a synopsis so you can decide whether to recycle this right now or wait.

We have a campout on 16 and 17 October at the Wapocoma Campground off US 50 in Romney, WV. Please let me know ASAP if you want to attend: we have 10 people so far.

We enjoyed the company of Phil Ager, editor of BMW Bikers of Metropolitan Washington (BMWBMW) Club's newsletter, "Between the Spokes" at our August CRABS dinner at Tim's Riverhouse. Phil and his riding partner, Elsie Smith, are doing a very interesting ride challenge.

Our guest columnist this month is Jean Copas, first Canadian woman to finish the Iron Butt, who writes about her spring trip in the South.

Betsy and I enjoyed our time at the BMW Rider's Association (BMWRA) National Rally in Canaan Valley. We met some old friends and made quite a few new ones. It was pretty moist, but still a great time.

There is an issue of concern about Kryptonite locks like the ones some of us use to secure our bikes. It came to light with our friends on bicycles, but it may apply to us as well.

A T-shirt order is in the works. If you want one and haven't emailed me, please do so ASAP. Jen Seidel's logo is so popular that her graphic design firm, Design Mason Graphics, has been contacted about designing new shirts for a very large, very personable BMW motorcycle shop... Well done, Jen. I got great comments about the logo at the RA National Rally.

This "Club" is very informal: I don't want folks to feel encumbered by it or by this publication or emails. I had a complaint about an email I sent in a semi-whimsical vein about the bank robbery here in Leonardtown. If you feel I'm sending out excessive or irrelevant information, please tell me.

The other thing I'd encourage you to do is to suggest rides and activities you think the rest of the folks might be interested in doing. Even though I call myself the dictator, I never meant to be the only one contributing ideas to this group. I feel like Red Sciarra's veritable "voice crying in the darkness."

Your despot,
Obi Wan Crabnobi



Carol (L) and Jean (R) at an Overlook on the Dragon at Deal's Gap

The Draggin' Ladies Tour

by Jean Copas

Daytona Bike Week has always been an annual event for my husband and I, but 2004 was different: I didn't go home (at least not right away). This year I retired and instead of heading back to the snow of Ontario, I followed the sun and got a jump on the riding season. My friend Carol is also retired and we decided to do a six-week tour of the sunny states and smell some roses!

I have a BMW R1150RS and Carol rides a BMW R100GS Paris-Dakar. Both made the trip south in my husband Ross's pickup, so he didn't get to bring his bike this year. We spent Bike Week camped at the Holiday Park and took in the races on Saturday, after which everyone left and our adventure began. Just before we were ready to take off, Carol's bike wouldn't start and we discovered the starter was gone. Fortunately, the mobile mechanic hadn't left the rally yet and he pulled a starter out of another bike and popped it into Carol's. We were off again and enjoyed a quiet road heading south when we stopped for lunch at a small café and found gas leaking out of Carol's carbs! Once again, we lucked out

and headed to a friend's place, where the diagnosis was damaged floats. He made arrangements to have a new set installed at the dealer in Daytona and we ended up spending a very pleasant evening at a Mexican restaurant before heading out the next day. Finally we were on the road to the Keys and we'd seen the last of the mechanical problems.

The choice of the Keys was twofold: a motorcycle club called The Pirates has their annual rally on Marathon Key and Grassy Key is home of the Dolphin Research Centre, where we booked a day to swim with the dolphins. Riding in the Keys is somewhat boring, as there is only one straight road the entire length of the Keys and it's difficult because traffic enters and exits the adjoining malls. But the weather was great, the architecture of old Key West was fascinating, the stories on the Ghost Tour were entertaining, and the camping was good. Evenings were spent watching the sunset and blowing conch shells and days were spent sightseeing and lazing around.

The high point of the entire trip was the dolphin swim! Before meeting our new aquatic friends, we had a one-hour orientation to learn what was expected of the trainers, the dolphins, and ourselves. Then we were in their lagoon and the dolphins were shaking hands, giving kisses, and towing us around by their dorsal fins. Carol squealed with delight as they pushed her backwards by her feet and the crowd laughed with her. Our final day in the Keys was spent snorkeling off the reef and coming back into shore under full sail during a breathtaking sunset.

Florida is not famous for its motorcycle roads, but we did enjoy the warm sunshine as we headed across Alligator Alley, which is lined with swamps and whose namesakes are everywhere. We took an airboat tour in the Everglades and had a photo op at the World's Smallest Post Office. Upon reaching Bradenton, Carol's mother's condo was the base for another round of sightseeing, shopping, and dining. After a week of R&R, we were off again heading North around the panhandle to Louisiana for a visit with some retired members of our home club. It was time to give the bikes some attention, so they got a wash, fresh oil and some general TLC. Our host rides a BMW GS and Carol was impressed by the storage capacity of his Aerostitch tank panniers, so the next day a set arrived by FEDEX. The pivot latch on my helmet gave out, so the next day a new one arrived by FEDEX. Carol needed straps to secure the panniers and yup, there's the FEDEX truck again. On our last day, a huge FEDEX semi came down the street and our host asked "What have you girls ordered now?!"

BMW riders love to rally and you can usually find one going on somewhere every weekend. The Mississippi club was hosting their Dogwood Rally near Vicksburg, so that was our next destination. Rallies are great 'cause you're always going to find someone you know and the organizers usually put on a run to ensure you get a taste of the local scenery. The Dogwood is interesting because it's an observation run that takes

place entirely in the Vicksburg National Military Park. There we learned about the siege of Vicksburg during the Civil War and saw an amazing restoration of the Union's ironclad, USS Cairo, the first ship in history to be sunk by an electrically-detonated torpedo. Seeing good friends, eating good food, and winning the long distance award and a conspicuity vest all added up to a great rally. We bid farewell to our friends and headed off to find a very special road.

The Natchez Trace is almost 500 miles long and has a speed limit of 50 MPH, which is reportedly strictly enforced, so we checked our speedos with the GPS and maintained a constant 85 KPH. There are very few cars on the Trace during the week, so we had it virtually to ourselves. The road is in excellent condition with lush forests and fragrant blossoms lining both sides. Along the way, many points of interest explain the history. Traders from the North floated down the Mississippi River, sold their goods and the wood from their rafts, then walked or rode back home because the river current was too strong to boat upstream.

We stopped at various points of interest, like the haunting cypress swamp, the ancient Indian burial mounds, and at scenes of Civil War battles. One of the more interesting stops was an area where a part of the original Trace still exists. It was eerie to walk in the footsteps of those long-ago travelers and realize the hardships they endured from the heat, rough terrain, insects, and bandits. Carol pulled her big PD up close for a photo op, which made it look like she had just come off the Trace.

Back on pavement, we found the road peaceful and serene. At the slower speeds, we could inhale the smell of the forest and feel the warmth of the air as we cruised through the gentle turns. At Kosiusko, we jumped off for some Mexican food and gas (not related to the former) and after practicing some Spanish and stuffing ourselves, we were back on the Trace. The day was getting late by the time we reached Tupalo, Mississippi, (birthplace of Elvis

Presley), so a visit to the homestead was not possible. Instead, we headed East towards our next destination, the Cherohala Skyway, in Tennessee.

The morning dawned bright but quite cool, so it was into the warmer riding gear. Things started to heat up a while later as we rolled onto the forty miles of twisty road leading to the Great Smoky Mountains called the Cherohala Skyway. The road climbed past beautiful homesteads where trees were blossoming and it had lookouts over the valleys below, but who could stop once the rhythm of the ride had taken hold? So, we scooted by, passing rock faces and snow-covered meadows. None were captured on film: they were only filed in our memory banks. Unlike the Trace, there is commercial traffic on the Cherohala that occasionally required passing huge lumber trucks, but that only added to the fun. The Skyway ended too soon, but ahead lay the famous Route 129, also known as "The Dragon."

Route 129 is the Mecca of motorcyclists everywhere because therein sleeps the Dragon, waiting to be slain. The Dragon is also known as Deal's Gap, and is touted to have 318 curves in 11 miles. Before attempting this feat, we stopped at the Crossroads of Time cycle camp for lunch and inspiration from "The Squids." The Squids that day had come from as far away as Michigan and Nova Scotia to test their mettle and it was fun to sit on the porch, eating our subs, and watch as they practiced wheelies and stoppies. To ensure the event was immortalized, one group attired in racing leathers duct-taped a video camera to the helmet of one of their friends (prompting even more showboating). We donned our dull duds and waited for the dust to subside before we headed into the mouth of the Dragon.

The Gap is quite tight in many places but by executing our turns carefully, we gradually overcame our apprehension. Coming out at the end, we found the Squids parked at the overlook of a beautiful reservoir and dam, discussing their ride and

preparing for the backwards assault. While waiting for them to depart, we captured the beauty of the area on film and made our own preparations. Going back was fun! We had a mental picture of the road, so we were prepared for the camber and angles. Now we were leaning into the delayed apexes and flipping the bikes over to get ready for the next bend, all the while feeling in complete control of our machines. Back at the camp, we rewarded ourselves with decals and pins to commemorate the ride. We headed off on Route 28 and found it almost as much fun as the more famous roads we'd just ridden. We enjoyed another set of curves almost all the way to Maggie Valley, North Carolina.

We had been steered to Maggie Valley by the promise of a quaint small town and a most interesting motorcycle museum. Both proved to be true. A lead from the local gas station attendant results in a great hotel for \$30 right next to the museum and across from the best restaurant in town, J. Arthur's.

We quickly registered and hopped over to see the Wheels Through Time museum. This turned out to be the private collection of a 51-year-old Illinois Harley dealer who sold his dealership and put his treasures on display for everyone to enjoy. The owner greeted us personally and delighted in starting up old Harleys and Hendersons to prove his claim that everything in the museum runs. Vintage buffs would have a ball looking at the bikes, posters and memorabilia donated by famous riders from the past. Many of Steve McQueen's bikes are also part of the collection. Carol and I were more interested in the million-dollar Duesenberg and what it's horn sounded like!

It was a brisk morning when we set off for our final adventure: the Blue Ridge Parkway. Every Easter, a group of Canadians heads South to ride the Ridge before the tourists arrive. The leaves on the trees are not yet out, so you can see through the corners and the early rain has washed away the winter salt and sand. The road surface is excellent and we enjoyed a spirited ride through the beautiful twists and turns. Glancing to the side, we could see the

panorama of miles of lush valley and the hazy outline of far-off mountains. It was a great place to practice our curves, as it's easy to see the apex and power through.

Occasionally we stopped at a lookout or beside a lake to meet fellow riders and kick a few tires. We started at Verona, Virginia, so it was an easy day's ride to our destination at the Meadows of Dan, where we camped at Willville and partook of the local cuisine and entertainment. It's

amazing what you find when you're not looking: we dropped into a local pizza parlor to find a full seven-piece Bluegrass band in full swing and joined the locals on the floor for a lively step dance. After one more night sleeping under the stars, it was time to go home.

After six weeks of sunshine every day, even the gods were saddened by the end of our adventure and they cried rain all the way home to Ontario.

Editor's Note: We met Jean and Ross Copas and Carol at Easter on the Blue Ridge and Betsy and I found them to be warm, wonderful folks. We enjoyed their company again at the BMWRA National Rally in Canaan Valley, WV and hope to see them many more times. Hopefully we can entice them down for some crabby activities here in the Mid Atlantic.

Web Site of the Month:

<http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/0922042speed1.html>

For those of you who haven't seen this yet, a motorcyclist in Minnesota was clocked via stopwatch from an aircraft doing 205 MPH! The 20-year-old rider was on a liter-class Honda sportbike. The methodology in question could have been in error by quite a bit considering human reaction times in clicking the watch, but even if they erred by 25%, this guy was still cooking! It is believed to be the highest speed for which a ticket has ever been written (140 MPH over the speed limit).

CRABS Fall Foliage Campout, 16&17 October 2004

Please join Betsy and I at the Wapocoma Campground off US 50 in Romney, WV the weekend of 16&17 October. This is as close to a rally as we're going to have. The campground is on the beautiful South Branch of the Potomac River and is downstream of the gorge known as "The Trough." The Potomac Eagle scenic railroad runs through the gorge at least twice a day. US 50 is an outstanding riding road if that's your thing. Finally, the Trough General Store will rent us canoes for the 12-mile trip through this beautiful gorge. Some folks I know are going to float the river that weekend. I am reserving a section of the campground for us that will be close to both the river and the bath house. Please let me know ASAP if you'd like to come. Email me for details or do some Googling.

BMWRA National Rally, Canaan Valley, WV

The weather was heavy on the minds of the entire East Coast on 15 September as I departed for the BMW Rider's Association (BMWRA) National Rally in Canaan Valley, WV. A low-pressure system was pushing in from the West while the remnants of a hurricane were pushing up from the South. A light rain fell on me as I departed and continued until I reached Strasburg, VA. The nearer I got to my native land, however, the brighter it became and when I hit Rte 55 West, the sun was out and the mountains never looked better. The trip through Moorefield and Petersburg, WV was a glorious combination of well-maintained twisty roads past beautiful parks and scenery with a little mountain superslab mixed in. I arrived in twilight, cruising past the deer who call Canaan Valley their home (creatures that left one rider in critical condition at the hospital in Morgantown with broken ribs, collarbone, and cranial bleeding).

I set up in the twilight at a site reserved for the CRABS by rally camping czar Steve Coburn. After a quick burger at the lodge snack bar, I checked out the lounge. Seeing no one I knew, I was about to turn around when a booming female voice said "Get your ass over here, there's BMW riders RIGHT HERE!" This was my first experience with "Helen Twowheels" of "Helen Twowheels Packing System" fame. Soon I was having a drink with some new friends, one of whom was the author of "Proficient Motorcycling" and regular contributor to "Motorcycle Consumer News" and the BMWMOA magazine, David Hough. I wasn't long out of the tent, though, as it had been a long day.

Thursday dawned misty, but the sky above was clear and promised a great day once the fog burned off. A quick walk around the campground with the camera netted some great photos. The group camping area consisted of 280 surveyed campsites separated by stakes and orange tape! There was a porta-potty every 75 yards and there were 3 huge campfire rings complete with wood. From this meadow, we could look up and see "Rally Central" at the Canaan Lodge on the hill above. A shuttle bus made regular runs from the campground to registration and the lodge. Campers at the top of the meadow had a beautiful view of the 18-hole golf course that was literally just behind their tents. Three deer eyed me warily as I circled the area. While I walked, crews were setting up two tractor-trailer rigs containing 32 hot shower stalls! Outside the trucks were 12 sinks complete with running water and power outlets for shavers and hair dryers. It was clear the State Park was pulling out all the stops to make us welcome.

Weather predictions were still dire, however, and when the lady at rally registration told me there were a bunch of cancellations at the lodge, I made a beeline for the front desk and snapped up a room. It was heaven: straight out the front was the vendor area and a covered walkway led to the main lodge, where the inside vendors, symposia, and food were located. Ahhhhhhh. Call me a wimp if you want to, but with Betsy due to arrive simultaneously with a low pressure system and a hurricane, I wasn't about to turn down a room! The Charleston paper was predicting 9 to 11 inches of rain over the next 48 hours. I surfed the vendors, meeting Kermit Easterling, designer of the famous Kermit's Touring Chairs. After 7,500 chairs, Kermit sold the chair business to Tom and started making Kermit's Touring Bags, a variation on a dry duffle bag. Stand by for a product report on both the chairs and the bags.

I was about to return to the campground when I noticed a custom-painted BMW GS and Rockster in front of registration. The "BACKROADS" logo on the GS was ample evidence that the publisher of that fine magazine, Brian Rathjen, had arrived with his squeeze Shira (on her "Shirakster"). A hearty reunion followed. Later that day, I helped register folks at the campground. The resort provided a map of the surveyed sites, so all we had to do was write a group's or person's name next to one. Folks who came in

looking for a friend or a group just had to look at the map to see where they were. It was brilliant. I met a lot of neat folks, but the best story is this one: a guy named David rode up on a nice GS. He told me he was heading for a road race at Virginia International Raceway, but found out the race was cancelled due to the impending weather. At a service station that Thursday morning, he ran into some rallyers and decided to "spend the night." He was still at the Rally Sunday with a big smile on his face...

The rain started Thursday evening, but didn't stop us from riding to Coyote's place on Rte 32 for dinner. I had a great grilled rainbow trout and after seeing Airhead guru Joe Katz's chocolate dessert, I had to have one of my own. It was too much for me to finish, but I needn't have worried: I turned my head to talk to Joe and the next thing I know, David Hough was finishing my dessert! It was a great evening despite the rain. We retired to the "Backroads Clubhouse," otherwise known as the Lounge, for a couple glasses of wine before bed. A fine first day.

Friday was really ugly. First, I missed the breakfast with David Hough and Fred Rau of Motorcycle Consumer News (damn that Cabernet). It rained...it rained a lot. I began to think of it as the BMWRAIN National Rally. But the rain forced me to attend symposia I might not have seen otherwise. Betsy arrived around noon and we started visiting with old friends like Steve Coburn and Kandy Dunn of the Oilheads, Ross and Jean Copas of Ontario, Backroads Brian and Shira, etc. I don't think I ever got the "rally mentality" before: Steve told me there were folks who would park their bikes and never get on them the whole weekend. I thought that was strange as hell, but now that I've gone to a few rallies and gotten to know the people who do them, I realize that the personal relationships are more interesting than the riding at times. Rte 72 would be there next week, but the folks from Ontario would not. We made a quick ride to Blackwater Falls in the rain, but the main trail was closed for repair and an overlook view was all we could muster. We returned in time for dinner with David Hough, a very engaging guy indeed.

Saturday night the rain really fell, accompanied by wind. We were oblivious to it in the room, but several tents, including those of Steve and Kandy, were ruined. I had left mine in place and a quick inspection revealed only a bent pole for damage. I was lucky. Saturday afternoon, the weather began to clear and by about one o'clock, the sky was blue and the temperature was cool. Looking around, we noticed the fall color had begun to arrive. Around noon, fellow CRAB Marty Kitner showed up. He'd done an EBAY deal with a guy from Tennessee: a nice, first-year, low-serial-number Honda CB-750 Four with a sandcast motor is now Marty's. We enjoyed the park in the afternoon sunshine, letting our dog Angus run amok around the closed ice rink. We didn't win anything at the closing ceremonies, which was fine: our trip was made by the great rally in our native state. We went back to Coyote's, where Betsy had their crabcake dinner and pronounced it the second-best crabcake she'd ever had! In West Virginia no less!

We dragged our feet Sunday, not wanting to leave. It was such a good time, even with the rain. How fortunate we have been to have both National Rallies (RA and MOA) in the Mountain State the past two years. More importantly, we made a bunch of new friends and cemented ties with current ones. We had lunch in the old logging camp of Thomas, WV before making our way back to Maryland. Neither of us wanted to return, though. The riding, the food, the setting, but most of all, the people made this the best rally we have ever attended. Even those stuck in tents in the rain seemed to have smiles on their faces. I have to say I liked the intimacy of the RA rally over the MOA rally (about 1,000 folks versus 7,000 for the MOA). I will be seriously considering next year's RA gathering in Selbyville, TN the first weekend of October. So should you.

PROBLEMS WITH KRYPTONITE LOCKS

KRYPTONITE OFFERING FREE UPGRADE WORLDWIDE FOR CONSUMERS' HIGH END TUBULAR CYLINDER LOCKS

Unprecedented Offer Intended to Address the Needs of Loyal Consumers

Canton, MA September 17, 2004 - Kryptonite announced it will provide free product upgrades for certain locks purchased since September 2002 in response to consumer concerns about tubular cylinder lock technology. Consumers can visit the company's Website (www.kryptonitelock.com) on Wednesday, September 22, 2004, to learn how they can participate in the security upgrade program.

Consumers who purchased an Evolution lock, KryptoLok lock, New York Chain, New York Noose, Evolution Disc Lock, KryptoDisco or DFS Disc Lock in the last two years are eligible for a product upgrade free of charge from Kryptonite. Customers will need to have either registered their key number, registered for the Kryptonite anti-theft protection offer, or have proof of purchase to qualify.

Kryptonite will provide free crossbars featuring the company's new disc-style cylinder lock technology to consumers who have purchased Evolution and KryptoLok series products. In addition, the company will replace recently purchased Evolution Disc Locks on New York Chain and New York Noose with its 'Molly Lock', a heavy-duty solid steel padlock. Kryptonite will also upgrade recently purchased disc locks.

Consumers who have had one of the Kryptonite locks mentioned with a tubular cylinder for longer than two years will be eligible for a sizeable rebate on the upgraded products. This program will be administered through Kryptonite dealers and distributors. A distributor and dealer swap program will be rolled out through direct communication from Kryptonite to all its partners.

Full details about this unprecedented program will be available on Kryptonite's website by afternoon Eastern Standard Time, Wednesday, September 22, 2004, at www.kryptonite.com.

Editor's Note: I found this info on a bicycling forum. If you think tubular-keyed disk locks you've been using to immobilize your motorcycle are secure, think again. Thieves figured out that the barrel of a simple Bic pen can be placed into the hole for the cylindrical key and the lock can be picked. I frequently use the disk lock with a Kryptonite cable to secure my bike to poles and so on for added security, or at least I did.

CRABS at Tim's Riverhouse in Fairview Beach

We had a great time and some great food. Tim's is on VA 696, off Rte 218 on the way to/from Morton's in Fairview Beach. Check it out. More photos/text next month or in Backroads' Great All-American Diner Run.