

THE CRAB POT

Apr 2005



The Hurried Publication of the Mid-Atlantic's Most Laid-Back Motorcycle Organization

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EASTER ON THE BLUE RIDGE

Was cancelled for the first time in history due to fog!

LACK OF CRABS SPRING CHILI FEED/SWAP MEET

What can we say: the Crabdicator can only do so much and we didn't have one in March this year. We'll just have to overdo the fall thing...

BACKROADS SPRING BREAK

May 6, 7, and 8 will see Mama Crab and I going to *BACKROADS* Magazine's Spring Break in Jim Thorpe, PA. Brian and Shira always put on an outstanding mini-rally. You need to get your reservations at the Inn soon, so if you want more info, check out www.backroadsusa.com or email me and I'll give you the particulars. We're going up Friday and at some point over the weekend, we'll be visiting the Yeungling Shrine...er...brewery in Pottsville, PA. We'd love to have your company.

MORTON'S OPEN HOUSE

The Usual Suspects will meet at Abell's Diner in Clements, MD. I don't know about you, but I'd like to be at Morton's around the time it starts in case there's a test ride or seminar of which I want to partake. So, I'm going to try to be at **Abell's at 0700 on Saturday 16 April** to down some 'cakes and then depart around 0800 for an arrival at Morton's at Open House Opening! I'm probably in it for the day, so there's a good possibility of a stop at **Tim's Riverhouse II on the way back Route 218.**

PICTURE OF THE MONTH



Just like riding a motorcycle my ASS!

THE AMAZING STORY OF "BLOO" LOU HANRATTY AND THE SCREAMING BLUE SPACE ALIEN TORPEDO FROM HELL

This is the amazing story of how "Bloo" Lou Hanratty got his name. You probably know someone like Lou: there's one in every crowd...kinda. Lou is the sort of guy who goes through life pushing on doors marked "PULL." He's in his forties, but heaven knows how he survived to get there. Lou is an accountant, not just professionally, but genetically. Lou attempts to hide his receding hairline with a bad combover that puts his part somewhere South of his left ear. He isn't a fat man, in fact he's pretty scrawny and has no ass to speak of, but he has the little belly that comes standard with middle age. Physically he's about five-four but in his mind he's six feet tall. At 40 he got the "mid-life crisis" and his long-suffering wife took the Pekinese and moved home to mother when Lou bought the first motorcycle he could find.

To say Lou "rides" a motorcycle is being generous with the word "rides." Lou "operates" a motorcycle. His skills are so poor that if the road does anything other than run straight as a Baptist preacher, Lou runs off into the prickly bushes. He has a love/hate relationship with the insurance people: they love to charge him ridiculous sums of money for coverage, but his adjuster hates to see him coming. Lou has a bevy of excuses for arriving way behind the group (if at all): headwinds, deer, elephants, land mines, terrorists, etc. but his favorite excuses center around conjured-up motorcycle faults. After each successive crash, Lou's answer is to purchase: 1) more accessories, or 2) a bigger, faster motorcycle.

You see, Lou is one of those people who can never find fault with himself, but finds many with his ride. If you or I had Lou's riding-skill deficiencies, our brains would scream "RIDING SCHOOL" out of sheer self-preservation. Somewhere in Lou's brain there's a translator that considers his awful riding, then takes rational thoughts like "RIDING SCHOOL" and translates them into things like "TITANIUM BOLT KIT," "BILLET ALUMINUM CHAIN GUARD," or "FLASHING SPARK PLUG WIRES." If Lou crashes, then clearly his highly-accessorized mount must require some sort of amazing new device that will make it the finest-handling, best-looking, fastest machine on the planet. Whoever came up with the expression "A fool and his money are soon parted" must have owned an aftermarket parts business and known Lou.

Lou doesn't stop with the bike where accessories are concerned. His continued longevity despite all his mishaps is the result of owning nearly every piece of riding gear ever manufactured. When he goes for a ride, Lou looks like a middle-aged Power Ranger kitted out with dayglo leathers, gloves, boots and race-replica helmet. He's pitifully slow and inept at getting dressed, however, because he does stupid things like putting on his gloves before his leathers or his helmet. That, coupled with the fact that he probably got there a half hour late, means we're forever waiting for him at restaurants.

Why do we wait for this man? The answer is as simple as Lou: he's a really nice guy. There's more than one person in our riding group who got a fairly nice, cheap bike with very little damage (and a salvage title) after one of Lou's off-road trips. He gives away a fortune in leftover OEM parts after one of his accessorizing sprees and a mountain of barely-scratched riding gear after one of his crashes. Lou isn't cheap and he isn't afraid to share! He sponsors the local race series, the toy run, the poker run, the Ride for Kids, and every other (deductible) charitable effort that can be linked with motorcycling. That's

because Lou is filthy rich. Light-your-cigar-with-money rich. You see, right after his divorce Lou was feeling very un-accountant-like and bought a Mega-Millions ticket (his first and only). His stupid Irish luck resulted in it being a winner, of course.

So there we were, the usual band of Sunday-morning-ride suspects, waiting for Lou to arrive so we could do a group ride to Butler's Orchard for the annual British/European Motorcycle day. We're an eclectic group: "Captain Randy" the pilot on his vintage CB750, "Retired Red" on his BMW K75 sidecar rig, "Daring Danny" on his dual-purpose KLR 650, "Mister Murphy" the principal on his Norton Commando 750 (I still can't bring myself to call a principal by his first name), "Software Steve" the computer engineer on his tech-laden BMW GS, "Pigman Phil" the snowplow driver on his Honda ST1100, and me, "Dangerous Dozer" the narcoleptic freelance writer (hey, it's UNDER CONTROL) on my Suzuki SV 650. We were waiting, not so much to see Lou, but to see what sort of amazing machinery he would be abusing that day.

We were not disappointed. About three cups of coffee into the meal at Cain & Abel's Restaurant, Bar, and Filling Station ("Get ur Lotry Tikets here"), we saw a headlight in the distance and heard the distinctive, tortured screams of an inline-four motor being overrevved by an incompetent rider missing a shift. Ahhhhh, Lou. We pushed aside the dusty blinds to see him wobble up on his latest mount...a Honda CBR 900RR. Now, giving Lou a CBR is like giving your baby a loaded Colt for a pacifier, but not quite as safe. Lou was above the age of consent, however, and had the cash so the dealer was happy to oblige. He turned the bike off using his personal technique...he stalled it...and put the sidestand down so he could waddle off, swathed in the latest color-coordinated leather riding suit with Japanese Kanji matching that of the bike. I secretly suspect the Kanji means "Expensive Deathwish" or "Rich Idiot" but I have yet to be able to confirm that.

"Hi Lou!" we all intoned "Glad you could make it!" And we *were* glad because Lou is a constant source of conversation and entertainment to our group as well as a great source of parts and used riding gear. Unable to wait, Captain Randy inquired "When did you get the CBR?" With a gleam in his eye, Lou replied "Ohhhhhhh, well....you know I had the Ninja, but it didn't handle worth crap and I couldn't get the right Power Commander program and spark plug wires, so right after I hit the Marum's fence, I bought this CBR." "Cool!" I said, mentally calculating the cost of replacing the plastic and buying the thing after Lou's next foray into the outback. "Yeah" said Lou, "it keeps missing shifts and giving me false neutrals, so I'm thinking of getting a solenoid quick-shifter setup I saw in a catalog." See what I mean? Cha-ching!

We quickly escorted Lou inside so he could eat and get going before the weekend was over. It wasn't until another couple cups of coffee, some scrapple, and some hotcakes and syrup went down that Lou was ready to go again. Then, of course, after fifteen minutes of fighting his way into his gear, he had to go back inside to download the coffee... At least our bikes were properly warmed up by the time we finally got on the road. Led by Software Steve and his Tandygarmingellan X10million satellite navigation/communication system and decoder ring, we set off for the Brit/Euro Bike Day. Giddy with anticipation, we had no idea what was about to transpire...

HERE ENDETH PART I FROM LAST MONTH, PART II FOLLOWS

Hazel Looper is a big woman. When she eats at Shane's Belly Buster Barbecue & Buffet, she has to sit across two chairs. The chairs groan in protest, as does the manager, because Hazel literally eats into his profit margin. Hazel is chromosomally challenged, too: she has more facial hair than some men and a voice that sounds like she's gargling gravel. The latter may be from two-packs-a-day of unfiltered camels, but people who know her swear she grew up talking that way. Hazel considers herself well-informed: each week she hits the checkout line for the *Star*, *Enquirer*, *Globe*, and her favorite, *The Weekly World News*. It is from these vessels of journalistic excellence that Hazel gets all the information her enquiring mind requires.

Hazel's husband Larry has a better mind: Larry runs a septic and sanitation business whose slogan is "Looper's Loos: We're #1 in #2!" Larry serves the tri-state with the finest, cleanest, best-smelling porta-potties you can imagine and thanks to human necessity (and scant competition), he makes a fair living. As Larry is fond of saying, he really knows his shit. The only thing keeping Larry from being the undisputed septic king of the tri-state is a chronically bad lumbar spine that frequently puts him flat on his back for days at a time.

It was during one of Larry's spinal spasms that he reluctantly asked Hazel to take the flatbed trailer full of Looper's Sooper Loos (extra capacity models) upstate to a new construction site. Hazel agreed because she knew the money from the Sooper Loos put food on the table and food was very close to her heart. About the time our Sunday morning ride gang was hitting Cain & Abel's Restaurant, Bar, and Filling Station ("Get ur Lotry Tikets here"), Hazel got underway in the big GMC pulling a flatbed chock full of Sooper Loos.

Hazel had an ulterior motive, however. She knew the route to the construction site would take her past Shane's Belly Buster Barbecue & Buffet and she also knew it was "Bacon Week," when they serve both regular AND Canadian bacon. That was a treat too special to pass up and soon the flatbed full of Sooper Loos was moored in Shane's parking lot while Hazel tested the structural capacity of two chairs inside. Hazel shoveled down an immense quantity of eggs and cheese grits with both kinds of bacon and a half dozen each of link and patty sausages. All that was washed down with a half dozen cups of industrial-strength coffee. Thus fortified, Hazel waddled back out to the GMC and headed upstate for her delivery.

Meanwhile, the Sunday morning ride gang was cutting up a few back roads. Software Steve was leading the way, using his navigation system to keep us on the twisties as much as possible. Pigman Phil, Captain Randy, Retired Red, Mister Murphy, Daring Danny, and I were right in line. As usual, Lou Hanratty was bringing up the rear. Lou started losing ground right away in the tight stuff and he'd pin the throttle down the straights to keep us in view before doing a hair-raising, near-highside braking maneuver at the next bend. We all knew what was going on, but we'd waited so long for Lou to get going after breakfast that we were way behind schedule. His Irish luck always kept him relatively safe and he usually made it to our destination, so we weren't giving his tribulations much thought. We wanted to get to Butler's Orchard before all the good parking was gone, so we kept going while I kept a weather eye in my mirrors for Lou's headlight.

Despite Software Steve's best efforts, we couldn't get to Butler's without a short stint on the Beltway. By the time we hit "The Eight-Lane Circle of Death," Lou was several

minutes in arrears, but we figured if we took it easy, he'd catch us. For his part, Lou was riding pretty well, narrowly avoiding several forays into the foliage. When Lou hit the Beltway, the wide-open spaces and lack of any real turns emboldened him and he wrung the right grip on the CBR, mis-shifting up through the box until he was hurtling along. Not knowing we were loafing so he could catch us, Lou pushed his skills right to their meager limit, dicing in and out of cars. As time passed, he started to feel like a boy racer overtaking all those poor Sunday drivers in cages.

Ahead, we'd come to a complete stop in traffic as some idiot decided to take his yacht down the Potomac and they raised the damn drawbridge! So while we sat and baked in the hot sun, some pot-bellied, cigar-smoking, lobbyist lawyer got to take his big, gas-guzzling Carver yacht (named "Legal Fee\$") through the bridge span. He was not only oblivious to our pain, but to the chain of events he was unwittingly about to unleash.

As we sat in the traffic waiting for Yacht-boy to pass, a sickly-sweet smell wafted over us. I turned to the right and saw a flatbed trailer full of blue porta-potties inch to a stop on the shoulder. A very large and obviously distressed woman emerged from the cab of the truck fairly rapidly for a woman of her girth. With a *Weekly World News* under her arm, she headed for the trailer and squeezed her ample hips inside the first potty. It's a good thing it's one of those super-capacity jobs, I thought. Way off in the distance, I could just hear the sound of a sportbike being thrashed.

You see, at about the time the bridge went up, all that grease from the breakfast at Shane's Belly Buster Barbecue & Buffet reacted with the six cups of strong coffee to create a gastro-intestinal brew that even Hazel Looper's iron insides couldn't handle. Hazel drove along in growing distress, but as the traffic ground to a halt, she realized her hopes of getting to anything porcelain and flushable were gone. Being the wife of a septic king has its advantages, however, and as dumb as Hazel was, she realized she had a couple dozen plastic solutions to her problem right behind her. Hazel pulled the flatbed over on the shoulder, grabbed her *Weekly World News*, and headed for the first porta-potty.

Enter Lou. Anxious to catch up, Lou had been weaving in and out of traffic at an alarming rate for someone with questionable riding skills. Lou had just reached a relatively open space between groups of cars and wrenched the throttle open when he crested a rise and saw brake lights: dozens of brake lights attached to cars and trucks completely stopped all across his path. If you or I were hurtling toward a road full of stopped traffic at over 100 MPH, our brains would scream "BRAKE!" at us, but the mental short-circuit that refuses to let Lou improve his riding skills kicked in and shouted "HIT THE SHOULDER," so that's what he did.

With surprising agility, Lou steered his bike onto the paved shoulder and looked up at what he thought was salvation, only to find salvation occupied by a flatbed trailer full of large blue plastic Sooper Loos. The little part of Lou's mind responsible for reflexes took over and did what it usually does in these situations: it ordered him to freeze. So there he was, hurtling toward "The Flatbed of Certain Death," frozen like a Purdue Oven Roaster. Just before he hit the flatbed, another neuron in Lou's brain fired and he began to emit an otherworldly scream with a timbre somewhere between a terrified woman and a Stuka dive bomber at terminal velocity.

Alerted by the awful sound, I watched in horror as something resembling Lou and his CBR approached the back of the flatbed at warp speed. The CBR's front wheel hit the

back of the flatbed, stopped, and then began to fold up along with the rest of the bike into an accordion-shaped pile of metal. Lou kept going. If you have ever seen a car hit one of those water-filled highway barriers, you have an appreciation for what happened when Lou went helmet-first into that first Sooper Loo. There was a giant "SCHPLORTSCH" accompanied by a huge explosion of Looper's Patented Sooper Dooper Bloo Loo Goo. The last thing I saw was Lou's color-coordinated Dianese boots disappearing through a man-size hole in the side of that first Sooper Loo.

As Lou continued his screaming, destructive path through the Sooper Loos, the kinetic energy with which he'd arrived was slowly dissipated by his passage through their plastic sides and the subsequent explosion of Bloo Loo Goo. So much energy was dissipated that a nearly-uninjured, still-screaming, leather-clad, helmeted Lou came to a stop in the tank of the Super Loo directly beneath Hazel's gigantic bomb bay. My mind shuts down when I try to imagine the horror of that sight.

Lou needn't have worried, however. Hazel was halfway through a story on a woman abducted, ravaged, and impregnated by aliens when she first heard the screams. When the howling, helmeted, blue torpedo entered the tank of the porta potty beneath Hazel's ample backside, she naturally assumed it was an alien hell-bent on violation, experimentation, and impregnation, so her butt slammed shut like a bank vault at closing time and she bolted from the Sooper Loo with surprising alacrity for a woman her size. I was astounded to see Hazel's ample form emerge from the Sooper Loo at a high rate of speed, leaving stretch marks in the plastic doorframe where her hips went through. She ran like hell for a woman coated in Bloo Loo Goo and encumbered by enormous panties around her ankles. Hazel disappeared into the brush of the bridge approach, still clutching her *Weekly World News*.

I quickly dismounted and hurried over to check on Lou. The CBR looked like a smoking, steaming slinky that had been run over by a truck. No salvage title this time. There was a Lou-sized hole in the aft Sooper Loo and by looking into the cavity, I could see a long string of holes in subsequent Sooper Loos. Like a light at the end of a tunnel, I could see the soles of a man's boots. By this time, the screams had been replaced by a low moaning sound coming from somewhere above the boots. I jumped on the flatbed and ran to the forward Sooper Loo, shouting for Software Steve to call 911 on his Bluepalmpodcellberry. I found Lou inside the tank of the forward Sooper Loo, coated in Looper's Patented Sooper Dooper Bloo Loo Goo, moaning, dazed, but largely unhurt! Ahhh, the luck of the Irish.

Shortly, the scene looked like a full-scale Pentagon terror alert: firefighters were dousing the still-smoking CBR, rescue workers were using various tools to extract Lou from the tank of the Sooper Loo, a helicopter was circling to land, and a Hazardous Materials crew was trying to figure out how to sop up a couple thousand gallons of Looper's Patented Sooper Dooper Bloo Loo Goo before it made its way into the Potomac. The Beltway was shut down for hours and I heard a woman had a baby in her minivan because she couldn't get out of the gridlock. Lou survived with a broken collarbone and herniated pride. During his recuperation, he is reportedly shopping for a Hayabusa...with stainless steel brake lines, of course. So that's how "Bloo" Lou Hanratty got his name! Hazel's whereabouts are still unknown....