

THE CRAB POT

September 2005



The Slender Publication of the Mid-
Atlantic's Most Rotund
Motorcycle Organization

In This Issue:

Boxer Racing at VIR

Morton's Fall Open House

Our Clothes Line

CRABS Class(ifieds)

Hypo-What??

Web Sites of the Month

Support Your Local Magazines

A Tale of Joy and Woe

Simple Words for a Complex Man

BOXER RACING AT VIR!

Nathan Kern will be piloting his BMW R1100S around Virginia International Raceway near Danville September 24th and 25th. Sponsored by Mainline BMW, Nathan wears number 12: he contacted Steve Coburn to invite any BMW riders in the area to attend the race and to come by the pit and say hello. If there are any CRABS interested in a road trip to this event, check out www.virclub.com for information on the venue.

MORTON'S BMW FALL OPEN HOUSE

Mark your calendars for **Saturday 15 October** for the Morton's Oktoberfest. Hours will be 9 to 4 and there will be free wurst, door prizes, and demo rides. The "Usual Suspects" will meet at Abell's Restaurant in Clements, MD at **8 AM** for breakfast and depart about 9 for a leisurely ride to Morton's. Abell's is at the intersection of MD Routes 234 and 242, right next to Anderson's Bar (Mapquest if you don't know). One route to Morton's is as follows:

L on MD 234 W at the light by Abell's
L on US 301 S at the White House Motel
PAY \$3 TOLL at the bridge over the Potomac
R on VA 206 at light by WAWA in Dahlgren, VA
R on VA 218
L on Ferry Farm Rd at Ringold's/7-Eleven by water tower
L on VA 3 E at traffic light by McDonald's
GET IN RIGHT LANE IMMEDIATELY
R on VA 3 W bypass, AKA Blue/Gray Parkway
L on Lafayette at 2nd light
R into Morton's at intersection of US 1 and Lafayette/Courthouse Rd.

Reverse for the trip home. I recommend a stop at Tim's Riverhouse II in Fairview Beach, VA on the return. Coming East on VA 218, look on the left for the sign to Fairview Beach, Route 696. Take that left and go all the way to the end and Tim's is on the left. It's a Jimmy-Buffer-esque indoor/outdoor bar/restaurant on the Potomac. Check www.tims2.com.

OUR CLOTHES LINE

Want CRABS in your underwear? Check out all the CRABS goodies at <http://www.cafepress.com/chesriders>. There are T-shirts for you more modest folks.

CRABS CLASSIFIEDS

I have no problem putting things in here to help CRABS buy/sell/trade. I'm not going to write ads for you, but if you have something on which you'd like to give CRABS first dibs, send me the info. You can also just post to the email list (which is a helluva lot more reliable than CRAB Pot publishing dates). I know of one bike that changed hands among CRABS already.

WHAT THE HELL IS HYPONATREMIA?

HIGH-PO-NAAH-TREE-MEE-AAH is a twelve-dollar word that means you're drinking too much: not whiskey, but WATER! "Hypo" equals "not enough" and "Natrium" is the Latin word for salt. So hyponatremia equals "not enough salt." Anyone who watched the movie "The Matrix" knows humans are just one big Duracell: we run on electrical signals. But batteries need juice, a salty mixture called "electrolytes." If you drink too much water, you deplete your electrolytes and run the risk of the ticker...not ticking.

It's a pretty rare occurrence, but people who load up on water can actually kill themselves. There are cases where fellows trying to flush their systems for a drug test have actually gone into coma and/or died for lack of electrolytes. *Washington Post* writers Del Quentin and David Brown reported on a 25-year-old DC police officer who died in August 2005 after drinking too much water while training to be a bicycle cop. Doctors believe hyponatremia was the cause.

In hyponatremia, as blood becomes diluted and loses electrolytes, water moves out of the bloodstream and into the cells, which swell. When this happens in the brain, symptoms of severe hyponatremia occur, including nausea, confusion, seizures, and coma. If the pressure inside the skull increases enough, the base of the brain swells into the area where it connects with the spinal cord, the cerebral cortex, causing death.

Normally, just the opposite is true: most motorcycle riders and others outside in the heat suffer from a lack of water. Symptoms of dehydration include nausea, confusion, seizures, and coma too. Since those symptoms mimic hyponatremia, you have to look for an absence of sweating and an elevated body temperature to make sure you're seeing dehydration. In either case, you can't lose by offering an electrolyte-replacement drink like Gatorade. I'm pretty sure one of our CRABS suffered from mild hyponatremia earlier this year after an offroad competition.

Hyponatremia is pretty darn rare, but it can happen to people trying to overcompensate for outdoor activities (like riding a motorcycle in the heat). You need to hydrate, but you also need to replenish your electrolytes. Consider a good old bottle of Gatorade next time you need a drink: it has the potassium and sodium salts our internal batteries need to keep supplying juice to our nervous systems. It beats the hell out of a paramedic supplying the juice with a set of jumper cables called a defibrillator.

Since fall is upon us, next month we'll talk about another hypo: hypothermia.

WEB SITES OF THE MONTH

<http://gasbuddy.com/>

www.utahridered.com/news/uploads/spotsoffline2_hi.mov

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL MAGAZINES

In the electronic world, where everyone has a "blog," good print publications are hard to find. Those dealing with motorcycles are even more rare, but there are two magazines published as labors of love by riding couples that I believe are well worth your while. Please consider them.

BACKROADS

When Betsy and I went to Montana, we met a couple of former New Yorkers who publish the country's largest regional motorcycle touring publication, "BACKROADS." Brian Rathjen and Shira Kamil are the driving force behind this magazine and they publish it from the basement of their beautiful home in the mountains of New Jersey (yes, New Jersey has beautiful mountains).

Brian does the marketing and a good bit of the writing and Shira does the layout. She puts the magazine together on a Mac computer in about a weekend! "BACKROADS" covers the entire Northeast, from Virginia up to Maine and as far West as Pennsylvania and Ohio, but they've had articles on Montana, Morocco, South Africa, New Zealand, Key West, and just about every other point of the compass. Their regular features include restaurants and B&B's in this area, including the Eastern Shore. Recently, they added motorcycling sage Fred Rau to their stable of regular contributors.

I think "BACKROADS" is on a par with the late Christian Neuhauser's "RoadRUNNER" and many other fine publications. It is available for free in limited quantities at Bob's and Morton's BMW shops, or by subscription (\$20 for third-class postage of 12 issues) at www.backroadsusa.com or Backroads, PO Box 317, Branchville, NJ 07826.

THE OIL RAG

In 1993, BMW introduced the "Oilhead" boxer to its line with the R1100RS. That year, Dr. Robert Hellman of the BMW Rider's Association told Steve Coburn he should create a club for owners of the new boxers, much like the "Airheads" had for their air-cooled predecessors. So Steve created the "Oilheads" club and their magazine, the "Oil Rag" in 1994.

For years, Steve published the magazine by himself. Now put together by both Steve and his "executive editor" Kandy Dunn, the "Oil Rag" highlights items of interest for Oilhead Boxer owners, along with touring and general interest articles. The "Oil Rag" is strictly a volunteer effort, with ad sales and club dues covering the costs of publication (four times a year). Literally anyone may contribute, as Steve is a very thorough editor who can make anybody look adept at writing. If you are a budding writer, or just want to see your Oilhead story in print, you should send it to Steve and Kandy. They publish from a small, beautiful log cabin on the outskirts of Charlottesville, VA when they're not working or riding.

The "Oil Rag" is especially in need of technical articles, so if you have any technical acumen and believe your skills/tricks might help other owners of the new boxers, please send them to Steve and Kandy. With the advent of the new two-plug heads and the 1200 CC motors, there will be lots of lessons learned you can impart to your fellow owners. It only costs \$15 to join the Oilheads, too.

The contact information is www.oilheadsclub.org or by mail at Oilheads, c/o Steve Coburn, PO Box 8081, Charlottesville, VA 22906

A TALE OF JOY AND WOE (or WHO WIMPED OUT WHEN WET)

We started out on Friday, 18 August at 0600 hours on the dot: the sun had not yet risen and the sky was overcast. Our group included John Marum on his solo BMW R1100RT, John's son Tim and his "significant other" Sheryl on Tim's R1100GS/EML sidecar combo, and me on my K75S with Hannigan "gespanne." The weather guesser said "showers," but we ran into a deluge on Interstate 70 West near Hancock, MD. John suggested the Cracker Barrel for Breakfast (I wonder how they can stay in business after all those FBI raids?). We put in for eats and "comfort stops."

Tim and Sheryl (the two youngsters) bailed after the meal, but John and I continued onward into the gloom. We hit fog and rain on the PA Turnpike: UUUUGLY!!! But the weather got much better and as we approached Altoona, PA on slab #99, it became party sunny and warmed up to 85 deg F.

We reached our destination at 1530 hours: the Super Eight at Clarion, PA. Later we treated ourselves to a steak and linguini dinner at a nice eatery downtown. We congratulated ourselves for carrying on in the face of adversity and remembering our friend Mark, we enjoyed a few lagers too!

On Saturday, 19 August, we stopped in at the Keystone Sidecar Group Kampout and John chatted with some Ural owners on the virtues and faults of the Russian-made rigs. I bought a sweatshirt and we departed for New Bethlehem, PA and the 39th Four Winds BMW Rally, 26 miles to the South. I saw Sylvia again: she is 65 years old and won an award with her ride on the K75/Hannigan SS with leading-link forks. Very nice! She claims 45 MPG. No rain fell until later in the evening, after all the awards and prizes were given out: John and I didn't win any.

The shower was local and we ran out of it on the way back to the motel. John remarked that the ride had been superb and he enjoyed the rally meal and the steak dinner on Friday (and the lagers too). On Sunday, John headed off to Michigan and his granddaughters while I headed home with a cruddy bike.

At one point on the way back, I dumped 1 gallon from my carry-on can and ran 50 miles on it! I was pleased to say the least. I finished writing this story after a second attempt to remove the PA crud from my rig. It was a very joyous trip for us: the woe will come when John returns to tell Tim and Sheryl what a great trip we had.

A tome by a sometime story-teller, Red Sciarra

PS: From Clarion, PA to Hollywood, MD, 0720 hours to 1520 hours, 8 total hours with 1 30-minute lunch and 3 each 15-minute rest and gas stops. 379 miles: not bad for an old guy!

[Not bad at all, Red, old guy or not: two rallies in one weekend, complete with adverse weather and the PA Turnpike. As for the "sometime story-teller" part, those of us who know what a raconteur you are have a hard time believing THAT. I hope you continue to share them electronically so those who can't hear them in person can still enjoy them. Bravo on the lagers: Yeungling, right? Mark]

SIMPLE WORDS FOR A COMPLEX MAN

When I started the CRABS, I envisioned it as a casual motorcycle club for people in the Southern Maryland area. Before long, however, my circle of motorcycling friends outgrew the local area and there were folks on the mailing list from all over the country. One fellow saw an article I wrote in the *Oil Rag* magazine and sent me an email in April 2004. He said, "It occurs to me that I would enjoy exchanging notes with you from time to time about the joys of motorcycling and any other subjects of mutual interest." His name was Jim Hickey.

His initial email was so well written that I immediately knew the man was extremely intelligent. He revealed quite a bit about himself in that first post, as if we had been friends for a long time, even though he only knew me from the article. He became my long-distance pen-CRAB and we shared quite a few emails over the next 11 months. As a measure of his openness, here's what I learned in that first correspondence:

Jim was born in 1916 and bought his first motorcycle in 1934, owning 3 Harley-Davidsons before World War II. He then took a 26-year hiatus from motorcycling to complete a military career in the Air Force, retiring as a full Colonel. During a 10-year stay at the RAND Corporation (a highly-respected "think tank"), Jim found a 1973 BMW R75 with 1,000 miles on the clock that had been in a wreck "with serious results to the rider, but only cosmetic damage to the bike." He bought it for \$1,000 and his journey back into motorcycling began.

Jim owned 9 BMW motorcycles along the way. His last BMW was a 1995 R1100RS, but the nearest dealer to him was 130 miles away, while the Honda/Yamaha place was only 20 miles. It is the same story that has been repeated all over the country, unfortunately, and Jim smartly switched to the Asian stuff. When he first wrote, he'd sold his Yamaha V-Star in favor of an FJR 1300 (at 88 years of age).

Jim wasn't the only rider in the family: Jim's wife, Ruth Ann, put 100,000 passenger miles in with Jim! That wasn't enough, so when they moved from Malibu to the mountains of New Mexico, Ruth Ann became a solo rider and went through 7 street bikes, ending up with a 1999 Yamaha Virago 1100. Jim wrote me that Ruth Ann, even at her age (which decorum prevents me from revealing) swore she'd "never have anything less than a liter bike again." As I said, it was quite a bit of information for a first correspondence.

Jim and Ruth Ann lived a happily-retired life in an enclave of the Carson National Forest in Northern New Mexico (Vadito). Jim and a riding buddy developed a way of taking trips together that was as revolutionary as it was egalitarian. Each day, one man would be leader and one the follower. The leader was responsible for absolutely everything that day, from the route to the hotel to paying all the bills. The next day, they'd switch roles. At the end of their trips, they'd tally up the money spent and find they came out within a dollar or so of each other. They called themselves "The Ancient Road Warriors."

Jim and I carried on an email pen-pal relationship for almost a year. No subject was off limits: politics, religion, people, family, and of course, motorcycling. He was a very multidimensional, complex man but his writing

came through as gentlemanly and clear as a statesman's. I fear mine were a little more passionate and opinionated, as younger men's seem to be, but he never seemed to take offense and always had a level-headed view of the world. I guess that comes with nearly nine decades of life.

Then the emails just stopped. We didn't correspond that frequently, but enough so that after a few weeks, I began to wonder what was happening. With people in their 80's, you hate to ask certain questions because you genuinely fear the answers. Unfortunately, I got the one I didn't want to hear: Ruth Ann finally wrote that Jim had suffered a stroke. Jim kept his ability to walk, but tragically lost his ability to read, write, and speak.

That hit me hard. The erudite, witty, wise man with whom I'd shared so many great electronic letters had been hit right where it hurt the most: his communication room. Jim retained the ability to move around and restlessly did chores around the house, but words, written or spoken, failed him. Ruth Ann put a good face on it and told me that they'd been married so long, they didn't need words with which to communicate. I believed her: what I knew about Jim told me that he was probably more articulate nonverbally than most people who can talk. I followed his condition with my new pen-pal, Ruth Ann.

The news didn't get any better: soon I learned that what they thought was a stroke was actually a brain tumor. An inoperable one. I tried to keep correspondence to a minimum at Ruth Ann's request, to keep their dialup connection free for family calls, but much to my regret I forgot to take her off the CRABS mailing list. Ruth Ann graciously sent me a gentle reminder, then I didn't hear from her for a while.

Then it came. "On behalf of my mother, Ruth Ann Hickey, I would like you to know that her husband of 28 years and two days, James Ezra Hickey, passed away on Friday March 18th, 2005 at 01:22 AM. He had battled brain cancer beyond science's ability to heal for three months before surrendering. He was 88 years old and was motorcycling into his last year. God bless you all. Akram W. Moore for Ruth Ann Hickey."

I never met the man, but I felt like we'd been friends for a long time. We shared so many thoughts over the ether that I felt a strong connection to him, as if there were more than phone lines and modems linking us. He humanized this inhuman connection with which people now communicate: he was a man of letters who adapted to the email age. Jim was one of those people in your life who represents a singularity, a prime number, someone absolutely unique, the likes of whom you'll never meet again. He was a member of "The Greatest Generation." He was a motorcycling pioneer. I never met him, but I miss him. Godspeed, Jim.

*James Ezra Hickey
1916-2005*

*"Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings"*

JG McGee