



The Crab Pot

*The Strange publication of the mid-Atlantic's most
Familiar moto club*

APRIL 2007

The Motorcycle Club Newsletter of Record

CRABS CHILI FEED

Thanks to all who showed up for our spring event. It was a celebration of St. Patrick's Day, Spring, and the 3rd Anniversary of the founding of the CRABS!! Danny Bishop and Marty Kitner rode, the rest drove, but we all had plenty to eat and the garage was warm. Red even wore his green sweater to honor his Irish heritage. I don't want to know what he wears to honor the Italian side... We had a special guest in Ralph Chappell, Vietnam-vet helo pilot in town for the Gathering of Eagles counter-protest on the Mall on Saturday. Ralph was impressed with "the other side" of motorcycling (the non-outlaw side). 🏍️

Morton's BMW Open House

The Usual Suspects met at Abell's Restaurant in Clements, MD around 0730 on Saturday 14 April 2007 to fuel

up for a ride to Morton's Spring Open House. Randy Black and John Marum joined us for breakfast, but not the ride as the latter had the small matter of a wedding to put on at his house later that day. Where are his priorities – scheduling a wedding for such a day (even Mr. and Mrs. Bishop had the good sense to schedule theirs for the day before the fall open house so they could attend on the way to the honeymoon)? Anyway, several of us went over despite the threatening weather and it was a good time, as usual. I rode the F800S, but didn't get to horse around much as my ride was in the rain. I did get a new set of Metzlers on my RS in preparation for the Morton's Track Day (discussed later). See you at the fall open house! 🏍️

We Still Have Thongs!

And T-shirts, sweatshirts, stickers, buttons, & stuff with Jen Seidel's brilliant CRABS logo aboard, all available at www.cafepress.com/chesriders. So put a thong in your heart and get yours today! 🏍️

Quote of the month

"One-third of everything Burt Rutan does is a total failure."

Dick Rutan, pilot of the round-the-world-flying Voyager aircraft on his "snot-nosed kid brother" (speaking about Voyager and Spaceship 1, winner of the X-prize).

Smoking the track crack

I never rode on a track, but always longed to do so. When I saw that Morton's BMW was holding a track day at Summit Point Motorsports Park near Charles Town, WV on Monday 23 April, I jumped at the chance. At the Open House, Michael Jinks reshod my horse with fresh Metzeler Roadtec Z-6's and fresh brake shoes, gave me some tips on taping up the lights and signals, and told me I was ready (at least mechanically) for the track. That, plus the \$225 entry fee, got me admission to one of the most fun things I've ever done fully clothed.

Monday 23 April arrived swathed in a blue sky with perfect spring temperatures, rocked ever gently by light breezes. I arrived at Summit Point just prior to the 0700 tech inspection, found a spot in the asphalt "paddock" area, and unloaded Mathilde the R1150RS from her prison trailer. Her lights, signals, reflectors, and any other things that could scatter shards were securely taped with blue (of course) duct tape (at the suggestion of a guy at tech, I later taped over the speedo to avoid distracting myself with how fast I was going). I left the tach uncovered, although I would later thank heaven for rev limiters.

Thanks to Stuart and Mike's ministrations, Mathilde flew through tech and she soon wore the (notso)proud sticker of the Team ProMotion Advanced Rider Training Basic Group. My helmet soon wore a tiny adhesive "Med-Dat" pouch full of vital medical information too. I then donned my leathers and boots and headed for the "hospitality tent."

Morton's has a reputation for doing things right and this track day was no exception. At their tent, I found fruit, energy drinks, energy bars, water, helmet shield cleaner, and every new

bike in their lineup (not for riding, unfortunately, unless you're Service Manager and former AMA champ Stuart Beatson in which case you get to burn up tires on an R1200S and F800S). Stuart was kind enough to lend this track-day rookie a tire gauge and to provide a recommended pressure of 30-30. I then sat down to await the rider's meeting.

At 0815, Team ProMotion's (TPM) guys got the rider's meeting going. There were to be four groups on the track in 15-minute sessions, listed by color codes as Red, White, and Blue, followed by those of us in...Basic. I guess that's better than calling us "stupid." We got a short lecture on signals and lineup and so forth before we retired to a nearby classroom for more information on how not to get killed. One great thing TPM does is to put up orange cones for braking markers, a green cone for the turn-in point, and orange cones again at the apex and exit points. For an entry to be taken wide, there's an orange cone on its side by the green cone. Once you learn it, riding the track becomes an exercise in connect-the-cones.

TPM's instructor, Bill Sink, explained to us that the first session on the track would probably be one of the hardest since it would be our introduction to track riding, but that we'd be led by instructors who would show us the "racing line" and that we'd go slowly. He cautioned us against looking back, getting off line, and a host of other track no-no's. He gave us a short "tour" of the track on the map in the classroom and then it was off for final preparations around the hospitality tent to wait for our group to be called.

"ART Basic, first call, 10 minutes" came out of the speakers and it was time to go. I wasn't as amped-up as I expected: I felt sort of invulnerable in

my new leathers, back protector, boots, gloves, and helmet and armed with the knowledge that these would be sighting laps with instructors and a whole group of like-minded Beemer geeks. We gridded in four lines behind TPM's instructors and were called onto the track by "The Gatekeeper," a large African-American male who threatened us with "a stick" in the rider's meeting if we misbehaved.

Somehow, I believed him: during one of the other group's sessions, a rider got the course red-flagged by committing the unpardonable sin of stopping on the track and putting his sidestand down. Between The Gatekeeper and the other riders in the session, I am not sure that guy made it home from the track. Someday they may find his bones beneath the camping area behind the paddock. I know I was less afraid of the track than I was of what would happen to me if I acted in a similarly stupid way.

Then we were off. I was slotted behind this guy in a day-glo Aerostich suit on a Ducati Supersport, so I thought I might have a chance to see the lines and have a good time, even on the sighting laps. Boy, was I wrong. The guy in the neon Stich disgraced the boys from Bologna in a big way. He was so far from the line the instructors were trying to show us, it would have taken light from the line a half day to get to him. What a plumber! Even though passing had not been opened up for us, on the straight I went around the guy to keep myself sane. They say you should never watch another golfer's swing because you'll develop his bad habits and this guy was pulling me off line from watching him. I later apologized to Dave, the instructor who led us, and he told me it was OK and not to worry.

What seemed like an instant later we got the checkered flag telling us our first

15 minutes of fame were over and we headed for the classroom for a debrief. We got a few more pointers and were promised that subsequent laps would be run at a faster pace, and retired to the hospitality tent again to hydrate as the temperatures were climbing into the mid-70's. I made a mental note to stay away from Ducatisti on subsequent lineups.

True to their word, the instructors upped the ante just a little on the subsequent laps. They made a show of pointing out braking markers, turn-in points, apexes, and exit points to emphasize the racing line. On the track, the racing line is the safest place to be because that's where everyone EXPECTS you to be, so even if you're going slowly, at least you're predictable. Abruptly jumping off the racing line is another one of the unpardonable sins that will earn you an early grave at the hands of The Gatekeeper or the guy who stuffs it up your chuff trying to pass. The second session also ended too quickly.

The third session was where we were supposed to get clearance to pass on the straights after getting the appropriate signal from the instructors. I was slotted behind one of the non-Morton's participants, a guy from Pennsylvania on a Honda CBR 600, and I was looking forward to a neat ride. I should have known to stay away from another sportbike guy. I also missed the signal from the instructor that opened up passing in our group. Ruh roh. Just as I would get a nice corner line set up and start rolling on the throttle, the guy on the CBR would start rolling OFF the throttle and I learned a little about trail braking in the corner to keep from biting his taped-up tail light. I kept trying to make a nice line, but every time we got to a corner like the Carousel, the CBR

guy would hamburger it up, roll off the gas, and generally dishonor the memory of Sochiro Honda and all his ancestors, past and present. The instructor kept looking back, trying to get the guy on line, but to no avail. I later learned I could have passed, but having been bad earlier and not having seen an unequivocal sign from the instructor, I decided to stay put.

I am not going to bore you with any more blow-by-blow: suffice it to say the next session I got the gridding area early and slotted in behind one of the TPM instructors. Life got real good from there and with passing opened up, life got great. I particularly liked turn 10, which is so wide on the exit to the 2,900-foot straight that you can pin the throttle just past the apex and just keep bouncing off the rev limiter all the way back up the box until you ain't got no more gears. Mathilde acquitted herself nicely, allowing this track-day rookie to do whatever he wanted without tossing his ass in the grass or highsidings into an ambulance ride.

After each session it was back to the classroom for a debrief, followed by a trip to the Morton's tent for great conversation and a little liquid and fruit. Around noon, we took our meal tickets (part of the Morton's deal) and went to the trackside café for lunch. Then it was back at it for 15 minutes every hour until the sun started getting low in the West. I can't tell you how much fun it was and what confidence I gained in the abilities of my bike and tires, if not the rider. I never dreamed I'd see curled-up rubber and an orange-peel surface all the way out to the shoulder of the tires on a 550-lb sport-tourer, but I did.

Don't let anyone tell you the BMW RT isn't a helluva horse either: the other side of the coin from the plumbers on the Duc and the CBR was a guy on a new

RT who was circulating faster than just about anyone except the instructors. If you attend a Morton's track day, line up behind anyone on a boxer, particularly one on an RT: at least he'll probably know how to ride.

I do have one cautionary tale about doing a track day: it will affect you in a big way. Once you smoke the "track crack" the first thing you'll want to do is...do it again. You'll also annoy everyone with whom you come into contact with stories. On the way home I was already planning the pipe, jetting, and suspension mods I am going to make to my SV650 so that when I go to VIR with Morton's in October, I'll have a hot little V-twin to take. Even if that doesn't come to fruition, however, I'll have just as much fun on Mathilde. No matter what bike I take, I gotta get me some more of that track crack! 🏍️



*Picture of the Month
(courtesy of Keith Erb)*

QUOTES OF THE MONTH TAKE TWO

Recently I had the wonderful good fortune to hear a lecture from Dick Rutan, pilot of the first aircraft ever to circumnavigate the world without refueling. This was actually the second time I've been so blessed (the first time I got to enjoy dinner with him as well). What a fantastic guy.

The aviation pioneer, Vietnam fighter pilot (325 missions), and patriot spoke about how this country's aviation and space exploration has all but stopped at the National/Government level because no one, NASA in particular, is willing to take the risks required to advance those two fields except at the private level. He reminded us that it has been nearly FORTY years since man first set foot on the moon (and that Kennedy challenged the nation to do it with 1960's technology in less than seven years even though Alan Shepperd had only gone sub-orbital at the time and a few rockets had blown up on their launch pads).

One of the things Dick said was so profound that I thought I would share it with you. He talked about the following paradoxical situation, saying "If an imminent scientist says something is capable of being done, it almost certainly is. If an imminent scientist says something is not capable of being done, he's almost certainly wrong." His examples were of imminent scientists of the 30's and 40's saying that the "sound barrier" could never be broken. He also alluded to Albert Einstein's declarations that man would never travel faster than the speed of light and hoped aloud that he is similarly wrong, saying **"Limitations or barriers are targets of opportunity for greatness."**

When asked about his brother Burt's plans, he gave the quote cited on the front page, but added: "He's going to space. He's building and certifying a space vehicle for passengers wherein you will have your own seat and window and where you'll be able to experience 10 or 15 minutes of zero gravity. The design will be similar to Spaceship 1 (winner of the X-prize for civilian space travel). He's also going to design an orbiting hotel that will have a side excursion ship where you'll do a low pass over the canyons of the moon and then return." Dick said Burt once asked NASA when HE could go into space and they said "Thirty years." He asked them thirty years later and they said..."Thirty years." Now Burt's tired of waiting.

Here's hoping you and Burt shoot the hell out of all your targets of opportunity, fighter pilot. Here's hoping we all do. 🍀

NEXT MONTH

Bloo Loo (I swear)

Backroads Spring Break Report
More Rants, Drivel, and Nonsense

