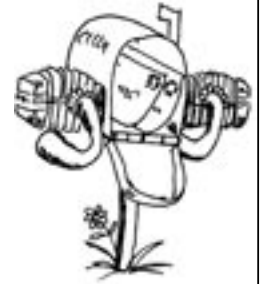


The Mail Boxer

August 2004

BMW MOA #7



The Prez Says...

by Tom Van Horn

Based on the last issue or so, one might think that you are spared the 'Prez Sez' column. Well, no such luck—I'm back...

...We had our 30th GR/3 rally on May 21-23rd; John O.'s financial report was in these pages last month. If you read it, you saw that we ended up in the red by quite a margin. I'll be honest—I hope that the 30th rally goes down as our worst. The weather on the weekend was like most of May—biblical rainstorms, back to back to back... Our usual 225–250 turnout ended up at about 90+... ..aaand, Military Ridge Road was due for paving in May, delayed by said rain. The paving was delayed, but not the preparatory tearing-up of the road; this made getting in and out a true adventure.

We also had an incident Friday involving a club member and a Badger Camp staffer. At this writing, Bert and I are still working with Badger camp management to determine what needs to be done.

Given the fiscal bruising we got from the rally, I invoked a new service from BMWMOA: The 'Rally Disaster Relief Fund'. If a chartered club takes a pounding in its event, it can request some cushion from this fund. The Yankee Beemers in Massachusetts needed it last year after they were washed out, and, at the urging of Ambassadors Brian Manke and Jim Klas, I petitioned Ray Zimmerman at 'MOA on our behalf, supplying records of the weather during the weekend. I've since heard that Brian, Jim and Terry Clark also interceded for us. In any case, 'MOA sent us a check for \$500. I'm asking everyone to send a letter or email to Ray or the BMW/ON magazine, thanking them for this. And while yer at it, thank Brian and Jim and Terry (or any Ambassador, for that matter)!

As I write this, the BMW National Rally in Spokane is just beginning—anyone who was there want to write a piece on how it went? OF COURSE you do!

The first Ride For Kids is in Middleton on the 8th—we had guests at an earlier meeting who are involved, as is John Schroeder. RFK is a great event for a great cause. If you want in, give John a call.

The oldest club event is the Hillsboro Ride—been doing it since '68 or so. This year, how about August 15th? Once again, moi will lead one of his trademark bumbling meanders up to the Country Cookin' eatery...

...So, hmmm, we've had confusion with two PDQs on Mineral Pt. Rd. before, so how about we meet at the Brennan's Market (5533 University Ave) at the corner of U and Capitol Dr? As another guide, there's a stoplight at that intersection... ..let's say we leave at 9:00 *latest*...

Next meeting at Maple Tree August 1st—see yawl there.

Upcoming Events

8/1: 9am Club breakfast at the Maple Tree Restaurant in McFarland.

8/8: Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation's Ride for Kids. 5–6 volunteers needed. Contact John Schroeder at (608)325-4621. Additional information at www.rideforkids.com.

9/19: Cheese Day Ride leaving at 9am from Kwik Trip at 138 and MM in Oregon. For more information contact John Schroeder at (608)325-4621.

11/6: 5:30pm Club banquet at the Imperial Garden-West. Family style dinner served at 6:30pm. Cost to be determined. For more information contact Ben Cimino at (608)831-6714.

Still “Another” Plan B

By Tom Van Horn

Plan ‘B’? Awhile back, I wrote a piece relating J.T.’s and my trip to Mid-Ohio for AMA Vintage Days, in a year when the ‘MOA national was farther than we had time to cover. I called it, “Always Have A Plan ‘B’”...

...So, now what? Not having enough time in July for the slog to Spokane, we conceived a run around Lake Superior in June. The plan was to run up to Bayfield and then clockwise around the big water, doing any road that looked interesting.

Ookay. Have plan. Go now, ya? On Saturday morning, we did -back-riding north and west. County road to town road, hither and yon, Plain, Cazenovia, Germantown, etc, neat roads. The shortest distance between two points is boring, right?

Right. It’s, uh, also kinda slow. At one crossroad, J.T. looked at me and pointed at his gauges. Hmm—two hours, 80 miles, are we to Richland Center yet? Ohh, yeah—Bayfield, riiight... ..get on 80 and go northly thusly.

A late breakfast in Necedah, pick up 13 at Pittsville, and on up. It wasn’t exactly a summery day when we left, but curiously, the temperature warmed up just before Chequamegon Bay came into view. Left around the bay, lovely ride up 13 through Washburn, and here’s Bayfield, a New England fishing town sans lobsters and funny accents. On the other hand, the whitefish is fresh, and you can understand the local dialect...

Traveling light, we’d decided to motel it this trip, finding rooms as whim suited. Our one reservation was in Bayfield, no cakewalk on a summer Saturday. But, Gruenke’s had a neat old antique-filled room available, above their historic restaurant. Checked in and did some touring around.

We had a date with Karen A’llerio—she lives outside of Bayfield, teaches motorcycling in Superior and Madison, and was one of the first editors of BMW OWNERS NEWS. She scorched over from teaching in Superior and joined us for dinner at Gruenke’s. One dinner topic was nice roads in the area—we wanted to visit the Aerostitch shop in Duluth on Monday, and so had to use up Sunday between Bayfield and Superior.

Duly informed, we knocked around Bayfield Sunday morning (found a neat used bookstore), and then meanderingly motored: Back down 13 to Hwy ‘C’, through Moquah, and to a crossroad called Ino on U.S. 2. North from Ino runs Forest Road 236, one of Karen’s recommendations. A fine recommendation indeed—good pavement, twists, turns, hills, scenery, and only a couple of bicycles for other traffic. 236 ends at another stretch of ‘C’, whereon we ran back to 13 and north around the Bayfield peninsula, skimming the Red Cliff reservation. A stop on the beach at Cornucopia gave us our first good look at the lake proper.

A closed road shunted us inland at Port Wing, and after a series of west-south west-south legs, we’re back on U.S. 2. Poplar is a tiny, quiet (we saw one person around) village, but we still had to hunt to the back of it to find the Bong memorial. Richard I. Bong scored 40 victories in the Pacific in a P-38, only to be killed testing a P-80 jet after the war. The memorial usually has a P-38 on a pedestal, but it’s been removed for restoration.

Superior came up sooner than planned, but whaddya do? Well, we grabbed a late lunch at Gronks, home of a trademark one-pound hamburger “on a custom bun!” Size not being everything, I hear; I got a regular burger on, I guess, a stock bun...

Gee, this really is a port—Lake freighters with that distinctive forward superstructure, big clustered grain elevators, huge rusty mysterious bridgelike things, gulls wheeling, everything but the salt air. That’s okay—it’s hard on the aluminum parts, anyway.

We wander around town, keeping an eye out for cheap-but-not-too-scuzzy lodging. One crumbling boulevard featured a mix of dumpy bars and ‘gentlemens clubs’ (all full of gentlemen, no doubt). Uh, let’s check somewhere else. A chance turn put us on Hammond Avenue, which straight-shots on to the bridge to Duluth. And, here’s the Superior Inn, a nice-enough place sharing its parking lot with a nice-enough steak house. Nice enough.

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Continued on page

SmartTire Tire Tips

By John Bolegoh, Technical Services Manager, SmartTire Systems Inc.

Some Basics

Every year, thousands of accidents are caused by under-inflated and neglected tires. Whether it's poor handling from a low tire or a serious accident resulting from a sudden blowout, we have all either experienced personally or have had friends who have suffered the consequences of a tire related problem.

Most riders are well aware of the recent Ford Explorer/Firestone situation that caused hundreds of deaths and resulted in the recall of thousands of vehicles and tires. But not many people are aware of the root cause of these accidents. Under-inflated tires.

This tragic incident prompted the US government to create legislation requiring low pressure warning systems on all new passenger cars, vans and light trucks. In fact, the legislation is expected to expand to include commercial trucks, buses, recreational vehicles, and importantly, motorcycles. Other countries around the world are looking at similar legislation.

How often do you check your tires?

Proper tire pressure is critical for both rider safety and motorcycle performance. As maintenance studies and any mechanic will confirm, almost 50% of all motorcycle tires are under-inflated, often to dangerous levels. Yes, that's right, almost 50%. It's almost a certainty that right now, at least one of your tires is under-inflated.

How often do you check your tires? Once a week... once a month... or just before a big ride? Or are you like most riders and wait until your bike starts handling strange? If you're not checking your tires pretty well every time you get on the bike, then it's simply not enough.

I've spoken with mechanics who talk about customers bringing in their bikes for a servicing because the handling is bad, only to find one or both tires are severely under-inflated. Believe me, they love these customers because all they do is inflate the tires and charge big money for the servicing.

But I can tell by looking!

A very dangerous practice is to judge tire pressure by visually gauging the tire's sidewall deflection (how flat the tire looks). However, with the stiff sidewalls of today's tires, you just can't tell by looking. For example, the rear tire of touring bike is likely to appear fully inflated with only 20 PSI (1.4 bar) of tire pressure versus the required 38 PSI (2.2 bar).

Why check while it's cold?

Because recommended tire pressures are always given as cold inflation values, it is always necessary to check tire pressures when the tires are cold. The pressure inside a tire naturally increases as temperature increases so checking a tire when its cold is the only way to get an accurate reading that you can compare to the recommended inflation pressure.

Motorcycle tires heat up quickly so even a short ride to the service station can heat the tires enough to give an improper cold inflation reading. It's always best to check the tires before you ride and to note each tire's pressure and how many psi or bars the tire is under-inflated. When you get to the service station, add the corresponding amount air pressure to the tires.

Consult the owner's manual or the placard for your particular model's recommended cold inflation pressure settings.



Classifieds

For Sale: BMW 1987 R80/RT with Good-One sidecar. 31,000 miles. Completely serviced at Mischler's. New tires and battery, Corbin dropped seat, Parabellum windshield, Koni shock. Always garaged and very clean. The Good-One sidecar was set up by Vern Goodwin, the builder, is color matched to cycle and has electric lean. Quick detach allows removal or connection in about 15 minutes. All maintenance records included. Photos available on web. Asking \$5,250 OBO. Contact Russell Champion by email rchampion3@sbcglobal.net or phone 715-726-0431.

John O'Groats

By P.J. Francis

John De Groot was a Dutchman. For reasons that are unknown to many he left his home in Holland and headed for Scotland. It can now be revealed to an astonished world that the purpose of his sojourn was to become the first Dutch person to own a Shetland pony. On arrival at the top of bonnie Scotland John was dismayed to discover that there was no ferry service to the remote and desolate Shetland Isles.

What to do? He took the only course available. He started his own ferry service. He operated the ferry until his dying day and is buried in the nearby village. I do not believe he ever fulfilled his ambition of owning a little Shetland pony as the ferry business occupied all of his time.

Over the course of time his name became Anglicized to John O'Groats and the place now bears that name.

I have had the pleasure of visiting this delightful place on two occasions. The first was in 1979. I was accompanied by my then girlfriend Helena. We were traveling on my sole means of motorized transportation—a 1978 Honda CX500 motorcycle purchased at Harringtons of Fox's Bow, Limerick. (Yes, one of the early ones with the faulty camchain tensioner. It was modified under warranty.)

I was thrilled at having arrived at the zenith of the trip. Helena was visibly disappointed. This was it? She had endured several days of changeable weather, challenging single-track roads and a rock-hard motorcycle seat to visit a remote hotel and gift-shop. What an anti-climax. What did she expect? Fireworks?

I returned in 1993. This time I traveled alone on an '83 Honda Silver Wing 650. Coincidentally, that model was the ultimate development of the CX500 of my previous visit. I purchased my Silver Wing from motorcycle dealer Mike Meskel of Limerick. It had been imported from Utah and still had dust from that beautiful state under the seat.

Little had changed in the intervening years. The gift-shop sold similar souvenirs. They still stamped "John O'Groats" on your postcards to prove you were there. It was as windy as ever. I loved it. I enjoyed a beer with two Englishmen in the bar of John O'Groats' Hotel. They told me of the forthcoming motorcycle trip they were planning to Continental Europe. They were touring Scotland by car due to the likelihood of inclement weather. I discussed turf-cutting with the proprietor of the small museum. (Entrance to the museum is free but one must exit through the gift-shop. A good marketing ploy.) I thought of John De Groot as I watched the modern ferry depart for Shetland.

People have traveled from the most southerly point of Britain, Land's End in Cornwall, to John O'Groats by every means imaginable, I'm sure local residents are no longer impressed when yet another driver, rider, walker, roller-blader or whatever arrives exhausted from having fulfilled his/her personal ambition. The distance is almost 1000 miles. A blind man drove a car under supervision. Impressive. Interestingly most people do the End-to-End by the south to north route. Please do not tell anybody that Dunnet Head, a few miles away, is the actual most northerly point of mainland Britain.

I toyed with the idea of doing the End-to-End by motorcycle for a while. Not now. The beginning and end parts are interesting but the middle bit is a boring procession of congested roads and uninspiring scenery. My time would be better spent touring the wonderful Scottish countryside. Revisiting favorite haunts and discovering new ones.

Next time I may hop on the ferry to the Shetland Isles. I won't buy a miniature pony. I know a farm in South Dakota, an easy day's drive from my present abode, where I can see some beautiful examples anytime.

Monday morning, oover the bridges and into Duh-loot. A few turns, and here's the legendary Aerostitch RiderWearhouse. It's mostly factory and warehouse, with a small afterthought showroom. In said showroom we found a Pennsylvania 'GS rider we'd met in Bayfield—he also had to kill Sunday so he could stop in. Great minds think alike... ..everything that's in their marvelous catalog is available here, with (in our case) the patient assistance of one Judi. I was tempted by a Roadcrafter suit in the sale rack, but my current touring ensemble is barely broken in. I did talk myself into a pair of Combat Touring boots, seeing's how I could make sure they fit... ..and J.T. talked himself into a Nolan N-100 helmet, in an amazing shade of orange. His first flip-chin lid, although face shield swaps will be more involved than his previous Shoeis.

After a brief struggle to pack the new stuff, 'twas back north and east. J.T. led us off the main route and onto the shore road—such scenery! Through Two Harbors, a painless border crossing, and Thunder Bay. The terrain kept getting higher, and the views more amazing. We made several overlook stops—just as well, as the weather socked in, with on-and-off rain and mostly-on fog... ..it's somewhere in here that I discovered my electric vest was not elect'ing. Did I really just leave the home of the Kanetsu electric fleece liner...? ...Mr. Timing, that's me.

We also discovered, as gloomy day wore into gloomy evening, something I'll call North Woods Syndrome, or All Services are Fleeting (sic transit amenities?): On the road, there would be signs, sometimes lit, featuring some motel or eatery or gas station or such. I'd say that over half these places would be boarded up, weeds growing in the lot, when we went by. This pattern followed with the towns—our map used the same size dot for every town between Thunder Bay and Sault, but some would be going concerns, and others were lifeless, boarded-up crossroads. This made finding the nights lodging kind of a crap shoot.

I was planning on calling it a night in Nipigon - right at the 'peak' of the lake, Supposedly a boating/fishing destination. Maybe. At the pay-in-advance gas station (\$1.00CDN per liter), I saw two motels nearby—one boarded and weedy, the other with some real charming-looking chaps lounging in front. I asked the clerk, and she said Marathon, 3–4 hours down the road. Lessee, cloudy, fog/mist, night coming on, and the Roadside Critters du Jour are moose, 700–1200 pounds. Uhhh, great. "Once more, dear friends, into the breach!" Or do I have to ride a Brit bike to say that? Around here, Shakespeare is probably fishing tackle... ..I must say that, despite tired/cold/damp/dark, the roads were consistently nice: Dead straight, flat, bumpy/construction and dull scenery just weren't issues.

So, press on into the gloom. A couple/three towns on, I duck in at Schreiber—a truck stop/gift shop/restaurant/etc. Through sheer chance, I pull in past this busy building, and get a look at a hidden wing of motel rooms, and a sign: "REGISTER IN GIFT SHOP". I point this out to J.T., who lifts his shield, shrugs and says, "We're here..!" Indeed—wherever you go, there you are. Nice room, passable food and bar, and the maids left towels on our bikes to wipe them down!

Next morning, I tried the new Combat Touring boots. Everybody says they're stiff and need a long break-in. Okay, okay, I believe ya - my first upshift of the day took three tries. Yup, stiff.

Still gloomy/hazy and chill, but seems to be getting lighter

as we roll southeast—maybe we're getting ahead of the front we ended up under yesterday. Oh, moose? Saw two: One mid-size, antlerless, expired at roadside (must have been an 18-wheeler—anything smaller would have expired with it...), and one a titch larger, standing in a creek(very moosey pose), showing a regal disregard for the vehicular goings-on.

Of course, one can't have everything—as we get improving weather, we move away from the big water. Past Marathon, the road heads east from the lake, arcing around Pukaskwa Nat'l Park. Still nice north woods scenery, though...

...we get back near the lake at Wawa (my regards to Baba :-)) and Michipicoten River; Blue sky above, lake foggy. Temps better than yesterday, I think—a couple business thermometers said "15C". My personal Celsius conversion scale says this is 'not balmy'... ..given the sic transit amenities situation, some of the fuel stops were spots between rustic and barely-there. Then there was the Beyond-The-Grapes-of-Wrath stop at Montreal River. Ask me or J.T. about it sometime, eh...

Sunny and blue sky now—not toasty, though. Lunch stop at a voyageur-theme place at Batchawana Bay. Getting in toward civilization now, close to Sault St. Marie—encroaching on Ed's Agawa tour turf? Do the left/right/left/right neighborhood tour through Sault North, oover another bridge, stop-&-go creep up to customs, and painlessly through. Use the last Canuck Bucks to gas up, and find a road west into Da Yoop, dere.

As we close in on Whitefish Bay, here comes weather—probably the same stuff we got under yesterday, coming straight across the lake. Mebbe find a more direct road for a bit. The wall of water hits, and I follow J.T.'s turn signal into a motel lot. And we are in? Uh, Newberry, Michigan. Drag our stuff into the room, and come back out to blue skies. Well, we're here. A little joint next door had a good burrito special.

The morning mission, back up to the water. North from Newberry, west at Fourmile Junction, up to Deer Park, and along the shore. Pass Muskellonge Lake Park, and along the shore to Grand Marais. Sounds good. Was, too—marvelous, untrafficked, twisting arcing roads. Kind of Mike Hailwood meets Euell Gibbons... ..through the hamlet of Deer Park, past the park entrance, and let's see how PAVEMENT ENDS we go along—huh? Okay, gravel I could live with—this waterlogged sand looks like fresh oatmeal. We watch a high 4X4 truck approach, flopping from side to side in the flooded ruts. How far's it like this? Driver says, "Oh, 25–30 miles..." KLR or DR or F650GS, okay. 'GS twin, maybe. Loaded 'RS? Well—dammit, I guess no.

So, head back. A ways south, another road west, paved. Maybe this'll PAVEMENT ENDS nope—in half a mile, same soft, gluey story. Next road west, ditto. 35 miles up from Newberry became 35 miles back. Oh, well—at least it wasn't a boring, dead-straight slog there and back. A couple folks I know have become dual-sporters after getting a taste for the U.P., and I see why.

A gas, lunch, and souvenir stop in Munising, and on west along the shore. Stiff wind, clouds hammering in, and it's not getting warmer—quite the contrary, in fact. It seems that our old friend The Ontario Weather Front missed us, and has come looking. If it socks in much more and we run out of pavement again, this might become Way Too Much Fun for these two old farts.

So, alas, west on 28 from Marquette. Busier roads, but the temp rose shortly after we left the lake behind. The U.P. map showed some intriguing roads south, but PAVEMENT ENDS

I was starting to get either a complex or some kind of PAVEMENT ENDS visual flicker. And, the weather looked like the Yoop was going to get hammered by whatever nudged us up on the north shore. I suppoose it's time to meander south...

So, west and then south through Watersmeet, planned stop Rhinelander. Another problem was starting to show itself: I'd changed the headlight bulb in the 'RS just before GR/3, and now, once in awhile, I'd start up and have no headlight, high or low beam, and the blue high indicator stayed lit. Hmm. I'd go awhile, over a bump maybe, and lights came back.

Anyway, on to Rhinelander, neat old north woods town. Isn't it? I couldn't say—WI 17 shot us in from the north, and onto a new spur lined with half-finished strip malls. And right out the other side. Maybe it's like a railroad switching system they use on undesirables, like biker types.

Well, @#%&*\$ this—south on 17 to Merrill, unless something comes up sooner. Nothing did, unless you count the ubiquitous boarded-up places. The weather's getting cloudier, I smell water, and some oncoming vehicles have their wipers on. Here we go again...

But no—under Hwy 51, and here's Merrill, and here's a motel. Pile in, lug in stuff, and go back out to cover the bikes, and NOW it's pouring. Could'a been worse. This was the north edge of the system that dumped tornadoes on Madison, Waupun, and a few other places. We sat in a supper club and watched the drama on the bar TV.

The next morning, dark and gloomy. Got on the lobby computer—Intellicast shows green masses over the U.P. and rolling across the southern half of WI. I told J.T., yeah, you'll want the rain cover on the tank bag.

Start the bike, no headlights. Gas up across the street, deliberately hit a few bumps, no lights. Shut off, restart, no lights. Sigh...

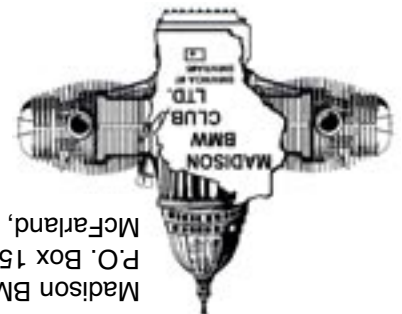
South on I-39, lurking in J.T.s headlit shadow. Grey turned to drizzle turned to full blown rain near Coloma. On a final gas stop in Portage, 'MOA Ambassador Terry Clark pulled up and chatted "I wondered why you were running without lights..."

The rain tapered off barely a mile from my driveway, which J.T. and his headlight led me just about up to—friends do stuff like this. The synthetic gear earned its keep: The Motoport Riva jacket kept me dry, barring a small neck trickle, and it was just in the last mile or so that I got Common Crotch Blot in the Tour Master pants (J.T.s idea: would a beaded seat cover give water somewhere to go during a long rain ride?).

Epilogue? Well, okay, I can hear you—"You didn't do a complete circle!" (a) You're right. (b) I don't care. Maybe another time.. ...would I like to revisit Da Yoop with a proper dubious-surface-compatible machine? You betcha, dere—someday...

Swapped out the headlight bulb(again), cleaned the hi-lo switch contacts, and everything works fine.

I had almost forgotten, in my rushed-schedule routine, how great it is to just ride, without frantically trying to fill a reservation, or otherwise fretting about where and when you end up. Nice tour feature—I will include it again.



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