



Motor City Beemers

Club Newsletter



BMW MOA Club #231

BMW RA Club #209

July 2004

Volume 12, Number 5

August meeting

Our next meeting will be held Saturday August 7th.

September Picnic

Our annual picnic will be held on September 11th at the Lake View pavilion at Stoney Creek. This is the same location as previous years. A map and specifics will be available in the August newsletter.

Monthly Club rides

Ride schedule for the remainder of the 2004 riding season:

Saturday, August 7 - Jeannie Gramlich to South Lyon Hotel, South Lyon

Saturday, September 4 - Rhys Blair to the Pickle Barrel, Rawsonville

Saturday, October 2 - Diane Owen , TBD

Saturday, November 6 - Frank Emmerich to Lafayette Coney Island, Detroit
(probably by automobile)

Saturday, December 4 (wishful thinking)

Motor City Beemer Name Tags

Our Motor City Beemers name tags are available for purchase at Highest Honor, Inc. Highest Honor, Inc is located at 34777 Dequindre Road, Troy, Michigan 48083. Their shop is located on the west side of Dequindre Road, just south of 15 Mile Road. Herb and Jeff have a die set up already with our club logo on it. The cost of one name tag is just \$8.00. The Motor City Beemers picked up the cost of the die set back in August 2003.

The easiest way to get your name tag is send an email to Jeff at www.jeff@highesthonor.biz and spell out exactly what you want on the name tag and when you would like to pick it up.

You can also call the guys at the shop at 248-588-7845 ask for Jeff and give him what you want on the name tag and they'll take care of it for you and let you know when you can pick it up.

So hurry up and get your special name tag engraved with **YOUR** one of a kind moniker. There will be special attention paid to those members that show up to the club meetings with their new name tag displayed proudly on their chests.

If you have any questions concerning any of this call me.

Rhys B. Blair

586-466-6303 - office

586-463-8117 - home

Contest

Our very own Dr. Phil won a contest sponsored by Cloudy Nights Telescope Reviews by submitting the following article about combining two hobbies, motorcycles and astronomy. Thanks to the good doctor for letting me publish his article in our newsletter.

One Thousand Six Hundred And Seventy Miles To Darkness

Dr. Philip Martin [click to email author](#)

I started riding in 1992, buying a BMW K75. Within a year I was off on my first cross country trip; Troy, Michigan, to Banff, in the Canadian Rockies, for a week of backpacking (backpacking was one of my other hobbies). After that first trip, it was off every summer, visiting my kids in Sacramento some years, backpacking in Arches National Park, Yellowstone, or Yosemite, other years. The K75 bit the dust in 1994 in December when a lady pulled out from a side street right in front of me. Blam! Crash! No more bike!

Fortunately, I survived with only minor injuries, and used the insurance money as a down payment on a new 1994 BMW R1100R the very next spring. You can't keep a good biker down too long. While I love the west, I thought in 2001 about taking a trip out east; but where? I'd been up in Vermont and New Hampshire on various trips to scientific meetings (I'm a biophysicist at Wayne State University in Detroit) and loved the ride, but still liked it out west most.

After thinking a bit, I thought, "Why not go see a shuttle launch in Florida!" Then, a ride from there down the Florida Keys to Key West. After a bit of investigation and letter writing, I got a ticket to the STS-105 launch at Cape Kennedy in Florida. As it happened, before 9/11 you could get passes to watch launches right at the Kennedy Space Center. When you see all those pictures of people in grandstands watching shuttle launches, that is right at the space center, but still miles from the launch pad. After all, as safe as they try to make things, you can't have an accident at the launch site take out innocent bystanders!

So I thought, "I need a small telescope to view the launch; something small enough to transport on my bike." Also, I had always been interested in astronomy (I don't know a single scientist who isn't), but every time I borrowed someone's scope I could never find anything and soon got frustrated. I would kill

two birds with one stone. After some web searching I found exactly what I needed; a Meade ETX-60 AT. It is a goto scope with its own computer (I exist on computers; I build my own Linux boxes for work and home). I had no idea astronomy could be so simple! The very first night I took it out was such a breeze. Point the thing north, level it, and go. Center two stars, and you have the whole sky to explore within a few minutes. Wow!

That very night I saw my first globular cluster; M13 (even in the extremely light polluted parking lot of my apartment complex). It was so exciting I can't put it into words. Then throughout that spring, I saw Jupiter and its four large moons, Saturn, M31, Mars (during a dust storm; I was disappointed I couldn't see any planetary features), and many other great sites.

Later that year I discovered that there were things called "Star Parties"! My god, would my wonder never end! So, in the fall of 2001, I combined two of my hobbies; astronomy and cross country biking. I never did get to STS-105. The launch was postponed, and I had to go to the Advanced Photon Source in Chicago to do some synchrotron experiments by the time it did launch in August. But I did register for my very first star party; the Enchanted Skies Star Party in Socorro, New Mexico, in October of that year.

I packed the ETX-60 and tripod, along with a weeks worth of clothing and gear, on the back of my R1100R, and headed for New Mexico. The fall ride was spectacular. Leaving Michigan, fall colors were already done, and it was cold. But down through Missouri and Oklahoma the trees were spectacular. Not to mention a whole lot warmer! While I needed my heated vest and chaps through Michigan, I was able to shed these things for much lighter clothes the further south, and west, I got.

Now, having ridden it before, I never pass up a chance to ride I-70 through Colorado. To me, it is the most spectacular bike ride in the country while staying on an interstate. You go up into the mountains leaving Denver and through the Eisenhower tunnel at over 11,000 feet (I've been through there on my bike during an absolute white out snow storm in June and November). I stayed with some friends in Montrose, CO, and got my first taste of a truly dark sky. The ETX wanted to go to a star called Fomahault (I had never heard of it before). But the sky was so dark I couldn't pick it out as the brightest star against the background sky. All the stars were really bright! In my light polluted apartment parking lot the only stars visible were the brightest stars.

From Montrose, the 550 south to Durango is a spectacular ride through some of the most beautiful mountains in the country. There are three separate passes and some of the best switch backs and twisties that I've ever ridden. From Durango highway 160 leads west into Cortez, CO, close to Mesa Verde. What a side trip! The Anasazi ruins were incredible. It was late in the year and only some of the ruins were available for tourists. But what I was able to see was unbelievable.

From there, down 666 into New Mexico through Shiprock and Gallup, onto I-40 east to Albuquerque (my favorite city in the US), and south on I-25 to Socorro, and the star party. I met a whole bunch of new friends at the star party, and saw sites I'd never seen before through my own telescope. To my utter surprise everyone I met was happy to let me view the skies through their own telescopes. Wow! To list all the things I saw would be too much, so I will tell you about some of the most memorable experiences.

The daily seminars were all very interesting (held at New Mexico Tech). The second day there (the skies in New Mexico were clear, brilliant, and almost cloudless every day that year) a fellow had an Astro-Physics 130 mm StarFire with a Coronado hydrogen-alpha filter set up outside. Good heavens, I could actually see prominences on the sun! I spent at least an hour observing bright spots appear and disappear. I inquired about eyepieces, which I knew nothing about, and heard over and over again,

Nagler. I went into the dealer tables and found a 16mm Nagler Type 5, bought it (paid more than I paid for the entire scope setup!), and went back outside to use it to get even more spectacular views of the sun through H-alpha.

During the time there I found that the Nagler, even on my small achromatic, gave me absolutely wonderful views (I've heard since that a good eyepiece can make up a lot for marginal scope optics). I saw the Ring nebula, with its central star, through the universities 20" Dob, and saw the computerized Celestron 14 on a Paramount GT-1100 fitted with an SBIG ST-8, in action (I decided then and there that I had to get into CCD photography).

While there, there are great day trips to the VLA, Chaco Canyon, Trinity Site (seldom open to the public), and Mt. Baldy. I met great new friends on the VLA trip, and arranged to get a ride out to the Pound Ranch (my bike is not a good dirt bike, and the Pound Ranch road is kind of dangerous on a bike at night).

On the last night there (actually, you can go to the ranch anytime there, but they have practically no facilities at the site) everyone adjourns to the Pound Ranch from the Etscorn Campus Observatory for a good old fashioned chuck wagon barbeque (and some really dark skies). The food was great (there's even a singing cowboy), and then there are super stories about how the ancient New Mexico Native Americans needed and used astronomical observations to determine things like planting times and the like, as well as their superstitions about such things as are seen in the New Mexico night skies.

As the sun sets, the sky become increasingly dark until it is absolutely pitch black. But the star light is bright enough to see by. Only a very faint, small glow, can be seen in the north from Albuquerque. I set up my ETX-60 near some new friends, and proceeded to enjoy the sites. One of the guys showed me the Orion nebula through my very own Nagler and his Meade 12.5" Schmidt-Cassegrain, and an OIII filter. All I could say was, "Spectacular!".

I left for home the next day; I had been bitten by the astronomy bug as hard as by the motorcycle bug. I soon got a Meade 8" LX200 and began experimenting with web cam photography. This was followed by an equatorial wedge and an SBIG ST-7 CCD, and I started learning how to use that (the first three months I thought it was broken because I couldn't get any decent pictures!). You can see my stuff at <http://home.comcast.net/~pmartin173187//>. I went back to Socorro the following year, unfortunately, not on my bike. I now have too much "stuff" to haul around. This was followed by the Texas Star Party, where I developed aperture fever; I bought a CGE1100 and am just now learning how to get decent images with that. Then the Winter Star Party in Florida this year (2004). I also piggybacked a Takahashi FS-78 on the CGE1100 for wide shots. At times, the views I get through the little Tak are better and crisper than through the big CGE1100. I thought I was in telescope pig heaven until I went to Florida. Then I saw (and observed through) a couple of big Ritchey-Chretien reflectors, and through some big Taks and StarFires. I realized I'm just small potatoes compared to some.

Now ,I'd like to get a big, big trailer to haul both my bike and my "astronomy stuff" around the country, but that's more money than I have to spend. So, I still pop my ETX-60 on my bike whenever I go on long bike trips. And I leave my Chevy Blazer packed with the CGE1100, and all the associated paraphernalia, all summer, in case we get a clear weekend in Michigan (this year? Good luck my friend!). Being bitten by the motorcycle and astronomy bugs have left me with a great number of incredible memories " and pictures. I couldn't be happier with the two hobbies.

Annual Blair Color Tour

It's never too soon to mark your calendar for a bike ride. So mark your calendar for Saturday, October 16 and Sunday, October 17, 2004. Yes, you guessed it! It's the Blair's Annual Color Tour along M119 and Legs Inn at Cross Village, Michigan. We promise everyone that comes along, a lot of riding, great food, the best Michigan riding road in the entire state and good company.

It's a mere 240 miles from the dealership to the Blair's cottage. Then 50 miles to Legs Inn for dinner. A free nights lodging and some kind of entertainment at the cottage. Sunday it's anybody's guess, but we manage at least another 300 miles to get home so you are guaranteed at least 600 miles of great riding from one side of the state to the other and from the bottom to the top.

As usual we leave the dealership at 8:00 a.m. sharp and brunch in Standish. By 2:00 p.m. we have reached the cottage and settle in for a short while. Then by 6:00 p.m. we are usually up at Leggs for dinner. Sometime around 10:00 p.m. we are back at the cottage playing cards, watching a John Wayne movie or getting ready for bed. Sunday morning we're on the road by 10-11:00 a.m. making a breakfast stop somewhere on the road home. One year we had as many as 14 folks on the ride and other years as few as 5. So if you are inclined to join us mark your calendar and let Rhys or Ryan know your intent.

The ride is open to both singles and couples. Usually Jill rides along with me and it's not unusual to have one or two couples ride along too. So mark your calendars and plan on joining us this year in October. It may be your last big mileage ride before the end of the riding season!

See ya at the dealership.
Rhys and Ryan Blair

"The Heavenly Hills of Ohio" by Rhys Blair

The weekend bike trip had been scheduled on Jill's calendar for months. In fact it was to be a 3 day trip somewhere. The trip was to be our second annual bike trip with Jill's cousin Kelly and her husband Robert. Last year was Robert's first year back into motorcycle touring and we four went to our cabin and then along M119 for a total of 700 miles in two days. Not bad for just getting back into the sport.

This year Robert and Kelly have a new bike to them, a wine colored 1500 Honda Aspencade with only 20k on the meter. As is the plan yours truly does

the real planning of these trips. It's half the fun for me! One monkey wrench in the works was the change in plans from 3 days to just a weekend...adjust was all my Better Half had to say when I started whining. Where do I go for two days with two women and get lots of quality riding in and some quality sightseeing aka shopping? I had some great ideas but the one that won the prize was a trip down to mid Ohio and Amish country...I know, some of you thought mid-Ohio and the vintage days right, well not quite so fast. Remember I was taking two women who enjoy motorcycling, but it has it's limits. They like to ride on them for 5-6 hours a day as long as there is a destination with redeeming value. Not more motorcycles, cold food and the possibility of no room service.

My plan was to go to Amish country via Millersburg, Berlin and Walnut Creek and end up at the Carlyle Inn. We started out at 8:00 a.m. Saturday morning and took the freeways to Toledo where we stopped for breakfast at the City Diner. Some of you have joined me at the City Diner for breakfast and know that not only is the food served hot, so are the serving staff. And in true form we enjoyed our breakfast and are wives only chuckled at what might have been going through Robert's and my minds.

From breakfast we headed for I-80 east to catch U.S.250 south down to Wooster and then on to State Road 83 to Millersburg. During this stretch we caught a little rain on each one of the roads we turned on to. Not enough rain to get wet, just enough to get the bikes dirty, you know what I'm talking about? Once we turned on to 83 the road started getting interesting. A few hills, a couple more curves and then some slow moving red reflective triangles attached to horse-drawn buggies start popping up.

Between Millersburg and Walnut Creek is a little town called Berlin. This town takes tourist trap to the next level. I managed to ride through the town and get to our hotel in Walnut Creek without stopping, but I knew in my heart we were going back, there was no way to avoid it. We checked into our hotel...Inn, the Carlyle Inn where everything was very prim and proper and they let me park my Beemer on the front porch in case it rained overnight. Things were getting better already. We freshened up and then left for some more riding. We rode 39 east to 93 south to U.S. 36 west. These roads had lots of twisties in them and some of the turns were just as you cleared the top of the hill. The scenery was gorgeous with fertile fields, and wooded hills, bright flowery gardens in all the yards of the well kept homes. Just about around every bend there was a post card type view. We took 36 west to 83 north and followed it back up until we hit 62 again and headed for Berlin.

In Berlin we parked the bikes in a church parking lot and stowed our riding gear and made like tourists. We hit a couple of fudge and ice cream stores and a kitchen gadget store. Next to a hardware store a kitchen gadget store is hog heaven to me. The girls checked out the stores up down the street and Robert and I sat dutifully outside each one and talked motorcycles and the day's ride. Robert is looking to purchase a new touring bike and I'm attempting to sway him toward an LT but I think he's leaning toward the 1800A that that other company makes. Anyway, by 5:30 -6:00 it's time to head back to the hotel for dinner, besides there was another big thunder cloud headed our way. We freshened up again and walked next door to the restaurant where they served family style meals just like the places in Frankenmuth. After dinner we gathered on our balcony on the 3rd floor and watched the sun fade away and the quiet darkness envelope the valley below. It was actually very soothing and refreshing. The air was fresh from a recent rain, the temperature was down a bit and there were no lights to mention out across the valley. This was Amish country and not many homes had electricity. In fact Jill pointed out this slow moving red light on a road below us in the valley and it was a horse and buggy with a red battery powered taillight heading for home from a day out somewhere. We joked it must have been one of the Yoder boys out with his girlfriend, another Yoder from a different Yoder family. Everyone is named Yoder in this part of the country. We sat on the balcony and relaxed for over an hour or more.

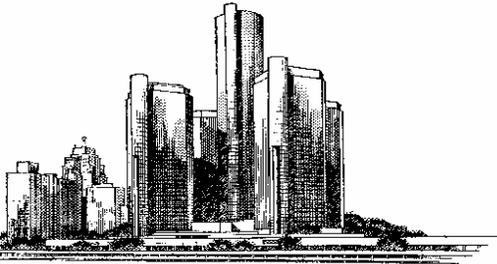
Sunday morning we were up by the time the sun peaked it's shiny face over the hills in the east. Contrary to the weather forecasters the night before the day looked like it was made for riding. Blue skies with big white cotton balls for clouds were high above us. We ate a good breakfast, packed up and checked out and were on the road by 9:30. We headed south again on 62 to 36 and worked our way over to Mount Vernon and then north east on 13 to 95. Just before Marion we picked up 100 and headed to Bucyrus and then to Tiffin. At Tiffin we decided to amend our route and go west to avoid this big black and blue cloud that seemed to appear out of no where. We went west on 224 to 18 and headed for Fostoria to U. S. 23. At U.S. 6 we had to make a detour west of a couple of miles before going north to U. S. 20 and 420. We took 420 up to I-280 to Front Street and Tony Pacos where I introduced Robert and Kelly to Corporal Klinger's favorite Hungary restaurant. After a late lunch and watching Hamilton win the 4 hole playoff we headed for home on our last leg of the trip. We pulled into the driveway at 4:00 p.m. and had clocked 604 miles since we left Saturday morning. And wouldn't you know it, it tried to rain on us in the driveway as we were unloading and putting the bike away. There's not too many good things I

like to say about Ohio, but this weekend's ride was very enjoyable and truly a lot of fun. Mid-Ohio showed us a very good time both on and off the road. So if you are ever looking for a short, fun ride check out Ohio's Amish Country and enjoy.

Rhys and Jill

A country yarn from West Virginia:

A guy walked into a bar in West Virginia and ordered a 'mudslide". The bartender looks at the man and says, "You ain't from here are ya?" "No," replies the man, "I'm from Pennsylvania." The bartender looks at him and says, "Well, what do ya do in Pennsylvania?" "I'm a taxidermist," said the man. The bartender looking very bewildered now, asks, "What in the world is a tax-i-derm-ist?" The man says, "I mount animals". The bartender stands back and hollers to the whole bar..."Its okay boys, he's one of us!"



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