

I have been promising Pavla since April that I'd write a good newsletter input for the ride we just did. The first time was after we did the Stuttgart 4 H-D Dealer in the Rain Railroad Tracks Fall Down Ride, and never got around to it. In May I promised I do a summary of the Super Rally, which included the Bridge Too Far Ride to commemorate US Memorial Day, which did include a lot less rain and no falling down whatsoever. Probably some railroad tracks, I don't recall. But somehow I didn't get around to that, either! In June I promised I would write a summary of the trip Eric and I made to the European HOG Rally in Fuengirola, Spain. My wife had never been away from Eric more than one night at a time, so since Eric and I would be on the road nearly two weeks, I kept a daily journal (and full photo documentation) during the trip. I have the journal right here. Maybe I'll transcribe it when I get around to it. I think that would be better saved for January when the riding season has slowed down a bit!

Then Malmsheim. No newsletter input from me. Then the Alps Run. No newsletter input! I have been unusually swamped at work, and this wasn't making things easier, but I began to realize if I didn't get started soon, the riding season would be over and I'd be forced to summarize for you the entire year in one newsletter! Aaaaaaaa! Some of you won't be able to take that, so I will start somewhere! In the end I will complete this over a few days time.

Well, back to the Spain trip. This was originally planned to be the "Sidecar and Son" Trip. Well, we didn't have any rain to speak of, very few railroad tracks that I recall, and no falling down whatsoever, at least not by me. But darned if the "Sidecar and Son" trip turned into just "Son Trip". That's right, no falling down and also no sidecar! Hmmm. A story, you ask? Yes indeed. I had just spent a bit of money to get the sidecar support arms custom made, something I should have done when I got it the sidecar rig 7 years ago. Any of you contemplating a sidecar, please talk to me, I have 7 years of experience, most of which consisted of lessons learned the hard way! but that's another story) But I finally had the support arms custom made, just in time for Spain. I picked up the rig on Thursday morning and rode it back to work. I had to work late in order to be able to leave on time for Spain (Saturday) so I left the office at about 11 p.m. About 1/2 mile into my ride home, something doesn't feel right. Out of the corner of my eye I see something. I look behind me and I am laying a SMOKE SCREEN down the middle of Vaihingen! I pull over and oil is pouring I SAY POURING out of my air filter. I shut the motor down but before long most of the oil is out! I think to myself, "This completely sucks. I just spent a fortune getting the sidecar remounted, I pack for Spain Friday, and I am supposed to leave Saturday. Manfred will not be able to fix this serious problem in time. This could not suck more!" Well, as soon as I thought that, I hear "Boom" and lightning zings over head, and it starts raining buckets. I am immediately soaked. I think, Okay, maybe it could suck more. Well, the good news is I just bought cigars for the trip, so I may as well have a cigar, in the rain, while I am waiting for the ADAC truck. I rummage in my tour pack. Hmmm, no cigars here. I rummage in the left saddlebag. Hmmm, no cigars here, either. Where are those darn cigars I just bought? I rummage in the right saddle bag. HMMMMMM! I left the damn cigars at the register at the shoppete after I paid for them! Oh, man. How much more is this going to suck before the night is over? Well, lucky for me, not much more. Manfred had a look at my engine in the morning. We took the sidecar off and on twice (a breeze thanks to my newly acquired but highly expensive support arms) and finally determined that the engine is "kaput". Failed cam bearing sent metal shavings everywhere. Lucky for me, even though the bike is 7 years old, it only has 20 thousand miles on it (most of it in the first two years) so Harley is willing to replace all the stock parts. Fingers crossed. I lose my 95 inch

kit but it could suck worse...at least I am getting some parts free from Harley-Davison, thanks to Manfred!

So now how do I get my son to Spain? For those of you who don't know Eric, maybe you should come out and ride with us sometime! Where've you been! Seriously, he is only 5 and I was not sure how long he could go on the back of the Electraglide in his booster seat. The previous mileage record for us was 350 miles in the sidecar (Faak and back last year), but only 120 miles or so on the Eglide, Vegewel to Stuttgart (and no sleeping on his part.) Cancel the trip? Naaaaaaah. The Splinter Group is going to be waiting for me there! I decided to just go for it. It's only 1500 miles to Fuengirola, so if we can manage 300 miles per day, we'll make it down and back in 10 days with 4 days in the middle for the rally. So I put away the cots, the big tent, the chairs, the table, and all the other stuff that fit so well in the sidecar and packed the small tent and our clothes onto the Eglide. Oh, before I left Manfred's I removed the tour pack luggage rack from the Road King (I thought I'd need it) and quickly mounted it to the Eglide, and off we went, Spain or Bust!

Well, all the worry about Eric was for nothing. On the first day we rode 350 miles on back roads to Geneva, 350 miles. It started pouring at dusk as we searched for gas. My credit card would not work but eventually we got gas, but our fun meter was in the red, so we got a hotel. The next day, sunshine, but Eric was asking "Daddy, where is the beach?" so I decided to haul ass directly for water. When we hit the Med 300 miles later, it was still early and we were having fun, so I hung a right and headed for Barcelona. Just before dark I saw a familiar sign: Lhorett De Mar. Hmmm, close enough. 550 miles! I rewarded Eric, who was jumping up and down when he saw the beach, with a day off so we could have some fun. He kept saying "Daddy, you found the beach! GOOD JOB!" We stayed in the same campground where the HOG rally was in 1999. (The Jethro goes to Spain Trip) The campground is a lot nicer now, but basically the same. New reception area and new restaurants. Two days later we headed out, and I thought we'd have to split up the remaining journey into 2 days, but darned if we didn't actually start having more fun at the end of the day, when the temperature cooled off and the scenery started to change in southern Spain. We made in the whole way, 700 miles in one day. Not bad for a 5 year old! Oh, and that was his birthday! Happy Birthday, Son! Be proud, as there are many adults who have never ridden that far. (some of you NRBs???)

I had mixed feelings about going to the HOG Rally. I had thought I'd just show up and not buy a ticket, just hang out with my friends. Well, I'm glad I got a ticket in the end because the entertainment was great, the Harley-village had some impressive displays, including 4 of the local dealers who set up some showrooms that were nicer than some permanent dealers I have visited. The best part was running into an American couple who happened to be from Poland. I asked them if they happened to work at the embassy, and if so, did they know a friend of mine who now works there. They did! As we were standing there laughing at what a small world it is, up walks a woman who looks very familiar. Come to find out, it is Collete and John from Zurich, and also Lynda from Salzburg, long lost members of the Stuttgart Clan who I had not seen in 8 years! What a coincidence. My friends Steve and Mary from Sheffield walked up, along with Rolf from Norway, the "Splinter Group" from 1998. I started to introduce everyone and they were all interrupting me, hugging and high fiving! They had all met 2002! What a great reunion, and the main reason I like going to the big events in Europe. You never know who you'll run into! Rhinehart and Tuk from Heidelberg surprised us, yelling down from the balcony of a hotel! What a great time. As I get older, I find it is more about the "Who" than the "where", and the Who on this rally really made it special for me!

Well, on the way home we broke our mileage record for the 3rd time this trip with a home leg of 750 miles in one day, just in time to get back to Malmsheim in time to host Johnny Label's 3rd Annual Breakfast. Small turnout this year but the quality was higher (haha) and a good thing too as I had a hard time with the bacon this year, nearly catching the kitchen on fire! Unfortunately that was not the worst thing that happened as a good weekend turned tragic on Saturday night when a friend of ours, Uschi, from Köln, was struck by a motorcycle and killed while walking across the street back to her hotel. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her husband Fred and to those who knew her well.

So that pretty much covers June. Oops, I left out my crazy ride to Prague. I had to work late and also had my daughter Madeleine's tournament softball game to attend on Saturday, but I had said I would ride to Prague for Ron Johnson, who as you all know was killed in Iraq this year. Ron had been planning to come with us. Despite all the things on my mind, I knew I had to go to Prague, so I rode there on Friday evening with Dallas and Matt the Biker Sherpa. My GPS quit at the border as I forgot I didn't have Czech maps. We had to use DPS, Dallas Positioning System. That is not quite as reliable as GPS but it did eventually get us there! Thanks Dallas! I woke up in the morning at 6 a.m. Despite the headache from all the Jack Derryl kept "forcing" us to drink, I had no choice but to head for Heidelberg to see my daughter's game. They won! So it was all worth it.

So, I hoped to tell you about the Fucking Ride, which of course is the ride to Fucking, Austria, which is a place, not a profanity in this case! But work interfered at the last minute, so no Friggin' Fucking Ride for me, anyway. I am still waiting for the Fucking pictures. I was able to make it to Hanau, and what a great party Robert Gray and the Hanau Rod & Gun Crew threw. And to make it special for me, my wife attended (and actually was seen outside of the tent!). This party reminded me of "the old days". Thanks to Robert for inviting us. This was a good event to start to bring everybody closer together again!

Wow. So it's July, someone told me the other day? Darn near the end of July as I work on closing out this instalment. Well, I have to go back and recap some of the Super Rally and the Bridge Too Far Ride. Many of you may have seen the movie or read the book "A Bridge Too Far" which is about Operation Market Garden in World War II. It was the largest Airborne operation in history. It took place in September 1944. The allies advance had stalled following the invasion of Normandy, with the allied forces outrunning their logistics. In a bold move to attempt to end the war by Christmas, the allies planned to drop American, British, and Allied paratroops in and around Eindhoven, Nijmegen, and Arnhem to seize a series of bridges. British 1st Armoured Corps would then streak over these bridges, cross the Rhein, and into the heart of Germany. Well, the Germans had Panzer forces in Arnhem, and put up fierce resistance, and ultimately the operation failed since the last bridge, in Arnhem, was never taken. (hence the "Bridge too Far") I had been assigned to an airborne unit at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and you can't help but become aware of the significance of this battle in the history of the Airborne. The streets, buildings, and drop zones are all named after famous places and heroes from the battle. So I had always wanted to visit these areas, which are only a few hours away from Germany! When the Super Rally location was announced, Bussloo, Netherlands, I soon realized two things: the Super Rally was on Memorial Day, which was going to interfere with our little party we "normal" have combined with the wreath ceremony in Wiesbaden. I also realized Bussloo was only 20 miles or so from Arnhem. Knowing full well any attempt to have a party in Germany when the Super Rally was so close was doomed to mediocrity if not failure, I suggested to have a Memorial Day ride

visiting the sites of the battle. After exhaustive planning, I decided to begin in Arnhem with a visit to the Hartenstein Hotel, which is now the British Airborne Museum and have lunch (and RVLC meeting) at the Schoonoord Hotel. The Hartenstein was the HQ for the British Airborne forces while the Schoonoord had been used as a field hospital during the battle. After the lunch we headed south to Neerpelt Belgium which was the jump off point for the armored forces, the beginning of what became known as "Hell's Highway". There we retraced the route the tanks took, linking together all of the bridges and as many of the drop zones as we could identify.

Well, I had warned everyone to remain flexible, as none of us had visited the area before and our recon attempts the day before had only focused in Arnhem. As a result, we had to search quite hard for some of the bridges! I also learned that TomTom maps of the Netherlands are not very accurate, and TomTom sent me in all sorts of crazy directions. I didn't mind, I was riding my motorcycle, but some of the others had begun to grumble! Eventually as the day grew longer and longer, we decided to jump on the autobahn to make it to the last bridge. I made a wrong turn and went the wrong way, and pulled over to tell everyone what was happening. I knew some people were getting tired, it was nearly 8 p.m. and we had been riding since 10. We were pointed toward the campground so I said those that wanted to go back should go straight, those who wanted to find the last bridge in Arnhem, could follow me. A couple peeled off and headed for the Super Rally site, while the rest of us turned back to Arnhem.

We found the Arnhem bridge no problem. We rode across to the southern side, and turned around to come back across in the direction the British tanks were supposed to have come, but never made it. Thousands of British, Polish, and German soldiers had died right in and around this bridge, not to mention hundreds of Dutch civilians. With us on the ride were Americans, Brits, Germans. If only we'd had a Polish biker we'd have all the soldiers' nations represented. Well, we rolled slowly across the bridge in very tight formation. We had flags flying on the bikes, and I had the bagpipes version of "Amazing Grace" blaring as we slowly came across the bridge, paying our respects to those who had fought and died here. Despite the challenges of the day, that moment made it worth it for all of us. I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one that had goosebumps! (we had come across the bridge at Nijmegen the same way). Ironically, for those who had headed to the campsite, once again the Arnhem bridge had proved "A Bridge Too Far".

So damned if it isn't the end of July, nearly. I just returned from the RVLC 2nd Annual Pavla's Alps Run, which has kept the string of RVLC Alps Runs going now for what, 9 years? I'll have to check my t-shirt from Dave's "last" one...and then add 2 years... The weather started out very bad, many folks were having a COW when we were delayed until midnight by floods and mudslides which closed most of the roads into Interlaken. For the rest of you who were not in the MOOOOOD for the Alps run, I am UDDERLY shocked that anyone would want would miss it. We rode down through floods, mudslides, and blocked roads. Everyone was having a COW not knowing where we were. Anyone who has BEEF with the high prices in Switzerland should take it out of HIDE and go. Pavla's runs are always WELL DONE and luckily the times when she falls over are RARE. Fortunately she just GRAZED the bus before she wound up on her RIBS. After the run we were MILKING our beers at Hooters since we still had to ride. Complaints about the weather just BULL as we managed STEER to the green PASTURE of the hotel without have to HIDE from the rain. What's up with all the cow puns (Thanks Moo Woman) you wonder? Well, ironically, it doesn't really have anything to do with Switzerland at all, but with an infamous trip to Corsica. Terry "Moo Man" was hit by a cow in Corsica last year. It is a great story,

the best "I fell off my bike" story I have ever heard. I'd love to tell it, but we made a new rule this year. Last year Teri arrived at the Alps run and his bike had clearly had an encounter with some sort of stationary object! The fairing had no paint on one side, one blinker and passing lamp was broken and dangling, the fender looked like the front of an abused paper airplane, and the gas tank was badly scratched. Luckily, Terry was not pretty good shape! Everyone was running up, "Oh my God, what happened!!!!!" He said "Get me a beer and get everyone around the table, I'm only going to tell this story one time." So we got him a beer, assembled the crowd. By the end of the story, we were all laughing so hard were crying and rolling on the floor. I was laughing so hard, no sound was coming out and my stomach was actually sore the next day. This story is that good. Naturally, this story started 3 day period of non-stop cow jokes. I told Moo Man, "Embrace the Cow". It is the only "bike fell down" story I have ever heard that doesn't involved a mistake or stupidity on the bikers part!. Embrace the Cow!

So fast forward a year. The cow jokes had died out long ago, and other than the new road name "Moo Man", everyone had forgotten all about the Corsican Cow Attack of 2006. Moo Man's bike had been put back together, although without my helpful suggestion to get a cow paint job...All of a sudden, an email came out that announced not only Moo Man's birthday, but also the 1st anniversary of the Corsican Cow Attack! Naturally, the cow jokes kicked in again, and this time to a whole new level. The crowning moment came when Moo Man's girlfriend Anne (Moo Woman??? Milk Maid???) realized that (I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP) that Saturday, 21 July, the actual day of the Alps Run, was also National Cow Appreciation Day! The cow jokes kept on coming and everyone asked Terry to tell the story, but he would not tell those who had not heard. He insisted, as a new "tradition" that the story be told just one time, to everyone, at dinner at the hotel, just like last year.

Now last year I don't remember seeing this, but this year, every time we came around a corner there was a "Beware of Cow" sign. At one point we saw a portable sign, one that was similar to a warning triangle. Needless to say, that sign wound up in someone's saddlebag. At dinner, we presented Teri a home made cow t-shirt (white t-shirt and black spots made with a black sharpie magic marker) and Switzerland Cow Pin, to commemorate both the cow and the location of the story. It is ironic, of course, that we associate the cow with Switzerland instead of Corsica, but that was where the story was told for the first time. We also presented the sign, which all of us had signed and presented to Moo Man, after which he told the story (with assistance). And then we declared an official end of the cow jokes until next year!

What about the ride, you ask? Well, as usual Pavla did a great job planning the ride. The weather had been absolute crap the night before, and more bad weather was forecast for Saturday, but the Road God was gracious that day and we made the whole ride in the sunshine. We ended the ride at the Interlaken Hooters for late lunch, and as we returned to the hotel for either power nap or power drinking, it was just beginning to rain. It rained all night but just as we left in the morning, all of us sweating in our rain gear, the sun poked through and we rode all the way back to Germany without a single drop of rain! In fact at the gas stop we looked like we had been attacked by a swarm of bees, all of us flailing about wildly trying to get our of our raingear before we had heat stroke!

Geez, so here I have a "short" newsletter input again. I will have to publish separate chapters later for each of these paragraphs, as I only touched the surface of all the great experiences and stories we all shared during each of these rides. And of course the best news is the summer is still not over! Next week is the Stuttgart Clan/RVLC/Nutz party, the weekend after that the American Legion Riders Poker

Run and a cook little rally in Homburg. And then my return to Aviemore (who wants to come with me!) or for something more close to home the traditional ride to the Black Forrest Bulldog Traktor and Bike Rally in Birkendorf. (where I have my own "fell off the bike story" which does not have any cows at all)

Hope to see you all in Stuttgart next weekend. By the time you read this, it will have been decided who is an NRB and who is not!

Get out there and ride and don't be an NRB!

JB