

Savannah Revisited

Winter 2014/15

Or

The Ride Goes On Forever



Two thousand fourteen was a good year for riding. I started the year off with the Relocation Tour then after a little trip to China (no bike) to see Jessica and Nick, Mick and I went to see the Fly Geysers. After that, Bobbe, Paul, Barb, Mick and I checked out parts of Colorado, New Mexico and Texas with a ride to Big Bend and had a very nice dinner and serenade on a patio with a hard to beat view.



Equally hard to beat would be that it had rained fairly recently and cactus were blooming all over the place.

As we were on a roll, after the Big Bend ride Bobbe and I took a week end and



rode over to Mesa Verde to see if the view there was any better. Better I don't know, but Far View Lodge in the park would be hard to beat. We had dinner on the patio and could see Shiprock to the SW.



Then for the summer ride I rode the Trans-Labrador Highway which was an experience. Labrador is a huge place with not much in the way of people. The Trans-Labrador Highway is on the order of 500 or so miles of mostly gravel and endless stunning vistas.

Then in August I stumbled across a deal I could not turn down and

drove to North Carolina and picked up a new (to me) 1988 BMW K100 LT. After spending way too much money on fixing up a 28 year old bike it was time to see if it worked and I rode out to Farmington and points in that general area and found out that, yes, it did work and was a lot of fun to ride.



With all of that traveling both BMWs and the Goldwing had had their workouts. So, with the end of the year approaching the Shadow was the logical one for the year's end ride. This is the bike that I had picked up in Eunice Louisiana after the 94 Yamaha died. Since I have had the Shadow I made a few modifications I thought it needed, and it was ready to roll through the southland.

I rode to Temple first to spend Christmas with DD, Joe and the grandkids which is always a fun thing, but on the 26th I was itching to head SE, so I did. It was cloudy but warm as I left Temple and while it didn't actively start raining it never cleared up. I like for things to be uncomplicated when I travel, so I picked up Hwy 190 and headed east until I came to Eunice La., which is the home of the Shadow and also the home of Ricky's Cajun Restaurant which is where I enjoyed a bowl of crab and shrimp gumbo at the end of my first day on the road.

As I watched the weather forecast it occurred to me that I was probably going to be glad that I had waterproof gear as it was looking rather dampish for the next few days. It was warm and almost raining as I pulled out the next morning. I was heading for Grand Isle which is about as far south as you can ride or drive in Louisiana. The traffic was not heavy nor was the rain. It rained off and on, never heavy but often enough to make getting out of the suit not worth the effort.

This was taken along Hwy 14 and is a common site. Due to the high water table in ground burials do not work. Also, notice the wet pavement and the covers on the bags.



Speaking of high water tables, the land in southern Louisiana is part of a birdsfoot delta deposited by the (mainly) Mississippi and as such it is flat. There are no hills only flat land and swamp. As I got closer to the coast the houses started getting built up on piers. There were mobile, modular and stick built houses all up on piers and it appeared 10 feet was fairly common some even higher.



Further south the land use changed from farming and ranching to industrial. This is where a lot of the offshore industry calls home and there is a lot of construction done. There is also a lot of fishing going on with lots of canals, drawbridges and boats all over the place.

I was following Hwy 1 and just a little north of Leesville there is a toll road. They charge you three dollars to drive to Grand Isle but they don't charge you to drive back, so figure \$1.50 each way. The elevated roadway was interesting but the scenery was a little bleak unless you like swamps. After a bit I came to Grand Isle and here is the sign. Actually there is not all that much to do in Grand Isle. It is mostly vacation homes with a few bars and restaurants and most were shut

down for the season. At the east end of the isle there were a bunch of offshore oil and gas business but other than that, not much. I rode the length of the isle, stopped for a spot of lunch and then headed back.

After re-crossing the, now not, toll road I picked up old Hwy one and followed it north along the canal all the way to Des Allemandes. All along the canal all types of ships were tied up. The canal is not all that wide and I was amazed by the size of some of the ships. Just from looking I did not see how some of them got there or how they could turn them around. At one point there were several Coast Guard ships moored in what appeared to be nothing but lily pads.

At this point all roads led to New Orleans and it was getting late. I did not want to stay in New Orleans but I did want to take the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway. I hit a little traffic going into New Orleans and it was raining at that time but I managed to find the causeway with no problems. The ride across was interesting. A front was blowing through, and it was rather windy on the bridge. The air was cooler than the water and that caused a bunch of fog. However, the fog hung close to the water so when the bridge climbed for an overpass you were above the fog. After a long interesting day I checked in to a motel, had a nice meal and called it good in Covington.

The next morning it was not actively raining, but as it was warm with about 300% humidity so it might as well have been pouring. You can only get so wet. I headed north on some nice lightly traveled back roads stopping to gas up in Bogalusa. The more I rode the more I liked the auxiliary tank I had put on the Shadow. With it I could easily figure on 200 miles between stops.



At Bogalusa I headed east into Mississippi through Poplarville and Wiggins. It was a nice ride with temperatures in the mid 50s and rain from time to time. Overall there was not much to see beyond trees and as I have said before, you can only take so many photos of trees. After a bit I crossed over into Alabama and it looked pretty much like Mississippi with one difference.

Alabama puts up more historical signs than Mississippi and Georgia for that matter.

As a side note it seems that the Alabama folks don't feel it is necessary to give advance notice of the historical signs nor to clear the brush around the signs. With few exceptions I saw there would be a sign pointing to the marker and then you would have to find the marker. This marker was stuck over on a corner of an intersection behind a bunch of brush.

It was still overcast with rain from time to time but it wasn't cold and it was a mostly pleasant ride. Along about dark the rain picked up as I pulled into Evergreen and I decided that was a good place to stop. I found a motel close to a good restaurant, checked into both and tuned in the Sunday game.

The next morning it looked quite a bit like the morning before, overcast with sporadic rain and it was somewhat cooler. Highway 84 across the south was going more or less the direction I wanted to go and it was mostly two lane without a lot of traffic. I just putted along, no big hurry with a stop for a site every now and then. Shortly after Enterprise I crossed into Georgia and not much changed. I took a pause for the cause in Dothan, gassed up and kept on riding. As evening approached the rain picked up as I pulled into Waycross which seemed a good place to stop. I found a decent motel next to a Mexican Restaurant and pulled in. Turned out, the food wasn't bad at all.

The next morning had a possibility of being a good day with possibly some sunshine. I was headed for Savannah via Jekyll Island and other points. They don't get a lot of snow in this area, but it



seems they do like snowmen. The tire one was at Waynesville. The other one is from Hooker Okla. I took this it years ago while I was working for the state. They don't get a lot of snow in Hooker either but they do have a lot of tumbleweeds.

don't get



After a bit I came to the sign for Jekyll Island. It is a state park and the state must be quite proud of it as they take very good care of it.

That done I headed towards Savannah. I had an antifreeze leak that had been getting worse and wanted to see if I could get the problem addressed at the Honda shop.

While traveling, I will work on a bike if it is necessary and I have no choice. But without knowing whether or not you can find the parts to fix the problem that is a risky business.

Anyway, shortly after heading north from Jekyll Island I ran into something that had been rare this trip, sunshine. As I was pulling into Darien the sun actually came out and shown for a period of time. Short period, but it did actually shine.

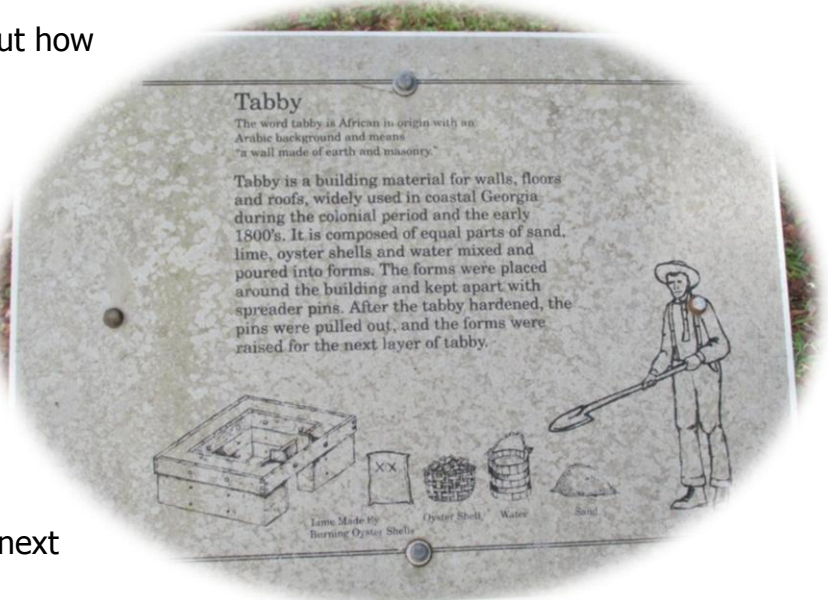
Also while pulling into Darien I saw the signs directing me to Old Fort King George so I rode on over. A short ride down a Spanish-Moss covered street led me to a State Park. Bummer, my lifetime pass was not going to do me any good here. However the guy manning the desk was a bike rider and we talked for a bit then I paid up and went in. Actually the story was interesting. The site of the old fort has been used for hundreds of years by and for different things. Of course the Native Americans were here first and then came the Spanish then the English who built Old Fort King George.



After that logging was the big thing. The locals clear cut a whole bunch of the native Pine and Cypress. One of the more interesting parts of the story was that back in the early 1800s they used tidal flow to power a water wheel to saw the lumber. And here we thought using the tides for power was a new idea.

This photo gives some information about how they built things a long time ago. After a pleasant stroll around Old Fort King George I headed on into Savannah as the sun disappeared.

I found the Honda shop with little problem as I had stopped in when Angel and I were here. They were very understanding and helpful. They pulled the bike in and found and fixed the leaking water line while I shot the bull with a salesman from Mexico and had lunch at the Pizza Hut next door.



Another purpose for coming to Savannah was for a little shopping. To do that I rode down onto Riverfront Drive, which in retrospect was not a good idea. The Drive is narrow, made of cobblestones and has trolley car tracks down it. So, it is narrow, rough and as it was sprinkling, very slick. However by the time I had discovered this I was committed and it is a one way street so I proceeded slowly and carefully.

With the shopping taken care of and Riverfront Drive survived I gassed up and headed out, west this time. I did a little bit of 4 lane then pulled off on a very nice two lane and with the sun going down ended the day in Vidalia, of the sweet onion fame.

The next morning it was cold and damp so I was in full electrics as I pulled out. Once again the right gear made it a pleasant ride. Mostly it was an uneventful day, just putting along at a leisurely pace. I did go through Abbeville as the photo shows. The wild hog festival is on Mother's Day week end. It must be a Georgia thing. Somehow I cannot see too many Mothers thinking that would be a good way to spend Mother's day. Different strokes for different folks I guess.



As the day wore on it warmed up and I turned the electrics off and the sun made a couple of half-hearted tries that didn't amount to much so it was still cool when I pulled into Columbus Mississippi and called it a day.

At this point I was debating potential routes back home up until I caught the weather forecast. It seems there was a rather large, wet, cold front coming in and the next few days were not going to be nice riding weather. It looked as if I cut north to Memphis and hurried along I might just miss most of it or at least I hoped so.

The next morning it was 31 degrees and I was on the road at 7:00. It was only 200 or so miles to Memphis and the sun was still shining as I stopped for fuel. However, as I headed west the sun went away and the rain started. It was not real heavy and came and went. As I went through Little Rock it cleared up somewhat but by Conway the clearing proved to be wishful thinking on my part.

It is approximately 200 miles from Ft. Smith to OKC. Doing the calculations I realized I could not make it in to OKC until well after sundown. I was concerned about possible icing and decided to stop in Roland, just inside Oklahoma.

As I watched the weather forecast is appeared there would be a very narrow window in which I could make it to OKC before it really got nasty. There is not an awful lot going on in Roland and the idea of sitting there for another day or so was not appealing so the next morning I was up and on the road before 7:00 in the rain. As predicted I more or less ran out of the rain and the temperature stayed above freezing. As I pulled off of I-40 in OKC I passed a sign that said the temperature was 31 degrees. I pulled into the house shortly after and rolled the Shadow in with its stable mates.



For the past few years I have taken an end of the year ride and as with all rides winter or summer weather is always a factor. Ask Bobbe and Jessica about 105+ degrees across Oklahoma and Kansas. And let us not forget 50+ mph winds and dust as well as

the occasional hail storm, not to mention thunderstorms and tornados. No matter when you ride you will run into weather, good and bad.

So the weather this year was not all that great but all in all I enjoyed the ride and saw some interesting places. With the exception of a small fluid leak I had no mechanical problems. As I have invested in good gear, think Gerbing, Tourmaster, rain-off, I was not all that uncomfortable.



All things considered it was a good year's end ride that capped a good riding year. As always, that leaves me getting ready for the upcoming year. The last part of February I am meeting Nick and Jessica in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and we will take the better part of two weeks to ride north to Hanoi. Maybe we can find this place, it is along the way.

I am looking forward to the riding year to come.

All rides are great, some are just better than others.