

ADVENTURES SUCK WHEN YOU'RE HAVING THEM

Who would want it any other way?

By Moshe Levy #108259

SO SAID NO LESS AN ADVENTURE authority than Neil Peart, Rush drummer and GS rider extraordinaire.

After 15 years in the saddle, I've had my share of adventures; but this latest one stretched the limits of my patience to within a scintilla of snapping like an old rubber band. Some background: After seven long years away, this past weekend found me back under the tutelage of my riding Sifu, Mr. Jim Ford. Ford is, without question, the Mahatma of Mountain Roads – a real Moto-Yoda. His Rider's Workshop courses are legendary in the BMW community, both for the routes themselves and for the incredible improvement Jim is able to coax out of his willing students. I had been away for so long because, as usual, life got in the way; but it would not be exaggerating to say that Jim's courses are truly my favorite riding experiences.

Day One began in Thurmont, Md., and had us meandering through the snaking, twisting "invisible roads" of the northern Appalachians. Breathtaking scenery, technical tarmac and precisely zero traffic – the stuff of moto-dreams. We were groovin' along, channeling what noted psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi dubbed "flow," a mental state in which a person is fully engaged in the moment with total focus. But Day One of the Rider's Workshop is really akin to stretching before the workout. Day Two is when the magic happens, when

Starting off in Thurmont, Md.
Photo by Roy Furchgott





View of West Virginia sky.
Photo by Roy Furchgott

Stopping to take a rest on a West Virginia invisible road. Photo by Moshe Levy





Our October 5–7, 2013, Rider’s Workshop group; (left to right) Matt Dewald, Jim Ford, Klaus Diefenbach, Moshe Levy and Roy Furchgott. Photo by Jim Ford

we’re transformed from cleavers to scalpels, and when things stopped going as planned for me.

We began Day Two in the early morning hours, creeping away from the Canaan Valley Resort Lodge in Davis, W.V. The mountain air was crisp, the foggy mist hung low and the fall foliage was bursting into full bloom – a picturesque, moving meditation. My turn to lead the group had finally arrived. First, through a series of tiny secondary roads that wound through fragrant farmland, bountiful pastures, lofty mountain ridges, and then the route opened up to West Virginia’s absolutely spectacular mid-way arteries, akin to America’s own Swiss Alp passes.

Putting this into perspective: Most of my riding these past few years has been commuting up and down the New Jersey Turnpike, during rush hour. Curves are about as present on that wretched stretch as hard liquor is in a nunnery. So I took one look at



The view at lunch, Day 2. Photo by Moshe Levy

those sensuous West Virginia roads, and just took off with wanton abandon. All guns were blazing, and I felt as though my Arai's shell was going to positively burst as it tried to contain my grin. I'm not a religious man, but my friends, this truly was nirvana!

Fast forward a few hours of similar motobliss, to yet another Stelvio-esque West Virginia mountain pass. Ford's encouraging voice was in our earbuds, guiding us through the finer points of trail braking, which all of us were confident in trying since we all had ABS. Or, at least, I thought I did! Approaching the apex of one particularly gravelly turn, I suddenly felt the horrible sensation of my rear tire locking up and my back end trying to swap positions with my front. Not good. But it was manageable, and I caught it before it was too late. I stared down at the dash, which I had happily ignored up until this point, and naturally, the "brake failure" idiot light was flashing back at me.

Now, anyone who has ridden R-bikes knows that brake failure warnings are rarely brake-related, but in fact are an almost certain sign that the battery or charging system is on the fritz. Just as this thought was repeated in my head another mile down the road, the bike cut out for good. No lights and no power, dead as bipartisan cooperation in Congress. My battery was only a year old and a quality brand, so I suspected the worst. Everyone dismounted, poked around, and soon the cell phones emerged to arrange for help. Because we were in rural West Virginia, the nearest BMW dealer was several gazillion eons away, making a tow only slightly less expensive than a Kardashian divorce. We were on a hill, so we decided to bump start as a Hail Mary. It worked, sort of. For the next few hours – easily the best roads of the trip – the bike cut out at the most inopportune moments, bucking and lurching through the turns, and in general eradicated any remaining trust that I was going to come out of this in one breathing piece.

When time came for lunch, we pulled into a ramshackle roadside gas and convenience store in a forsaken West Virginia town which shall remain nameless. Normally the Rider's Workshop fare at this point is fine Italian, but we had wasted an hour or more while I was stranded, so this place was Plan B. I sputtered to a halt, disquieted by the hornet which had flown into

my helmet and taken up residence in my left ear, as all the while my RT pretended it was a mechanical bull. As they say, when it rains...

We entered the shop and were greeted by a massive wall of rifles and ammo for sale, all overseen by a taxidermist's gruesome rendition of a mauled buck – posh ambience which coupled perfectly with our gas station turkey sandwiches and Doritos. At the table, there was talk of all we had learned, the proficiency we were acquiring, and the Zen-like qualities of life on the road. But my mind was wandering back to my injured RT, and whether it would get me back to the hotel in Thurmont that day.

As it turned out, the answer was a resounding nein! She was dead again. Feeling extreme guilt for having my Rider's Workshop classmates waste their time (and money) sitting around a desolate parking lot with me, I implored them to leave, and go on with the rest of the course. I reckoned I would deal with my own problem somehow. So, after much pleading on my part, my moto-brothers left me to fend for myself. Cell phone reception was nil, so I was at the mercy of the local population for help.

Now, for better or worse (usually worse,) I am a Jersey boy, suburban born and bred. Take a good look at my name and my



The author with Jim Ford. Photo by Roy Furchgott



Complete Your BMW

More Information:
www.w-bmwparts.com



1.831.761.1070
125 Hangar Way #160, Watsonville, CA 95076
www.wunderlichamerica.com

Restoration & Maintenance

Web Store



Hard to Find Parts
for BMW Motorcycles
/5 to K75

bmw2valve.com
1.831.761.1070

Brought to you by
**Wunderlich
AMERICA**

appearance. If only for the sake of PC diplomacy, we shall say that at this point, I was well out of my cultural element. At first glance I'll admit, the infamous Deliverance banjo duel began twanging in my head as I began to unload the tools. A small but growing crowd of colorful onlookers began to gather around the immobilized RT to watch me toil, lamenting modern electronics and theorizing as to what the root cause of the trouble could be. For hours I tried jump starting using a variety of battery cables and different cars as donors, all while being peppered with probing questions from the crowd, with no luck on any front. The nearest auto parts store was some 30 miles away, the closest motorcycle dealer

more than twice that distance, and nothing was open until tomorrow morning anyway. I was truly stuck, and the sun was now sinking, along with my spirits.

At last, one of the young gentlemen on the scene, named "Jumbo," suggested the use of his trailer in exchange for gas money and payment for his time. He didn't have to offer twice. The nearest wrench open on Monday was Anton Lagiader's shop, Virginia Motorrad, about 150 miles away in Charlottesville. So I reached out to Anton, who was incredibly gracious with his time, offering me suggestions on where to stay, where to eat, and opening up Monday morning's first slot to my bike.

By 8 p.m. we had the RT loaded up on



Home at last – wild, wet and weary! Photo by Moshe Levy

Jumbo's rickety trailer, and set off due east. Within about 15 miles, now on a pitch-black West Virginia highway, I heard a sickening "thwack," and turned around to discover that one of the tiedown straps had broken. The RT had fallen on its right side, though luckily all the impact was absorbed by the Wunderlich Rear Protection Bar (reviewed: BMW ON, June 2013) with barely a blemish. Lucky.

We limped toward the next exit, and I stayed behind with the RT and trailer while Jumbo went in search of more tie-downs. In rural West Virginia. At 10 p.m., on Sunday. I never really knew the kind of "wild and wonderful" characters that hang out in gas station lots on Sunday nights in rural West Virginia before. I do now.

Two hours later, with four of Walmart's finest new straps installed, we were back on the road, where we proceeded without incident for 135 miles until arrival in Charlottesville. But the Gods were not done laughing at me, yet. After the straps were undone, I began to back the RT off the trailer and down the ramp, when the entire front end of the trailer suddenly shot upward. It seems the trailer's coupler wasn't secured at all to the tow ball, and hence was only held by gravity. Jumbo found it amusing, while I frankly was past the point of caring about the bike, myself, or anyone else, for that matter. I was asleep before my head hit the pillow at the Red Carpet Inn at close to 3 a.m.

The next morning, Anton called to deliver the good news: It was just a prematurely dead battery. Murphy's Law being what it is, I would have only sustained a major electrical problem had I elected not to tow to a mechanic. Nevertheless, I was grateful for the excellent emergency service Anton provided. Once the battery was replaced and the charging system was double checked, the RT was given a clean bill of health and I was on my way. Just in time for a treacherous storm that was barreling up the east coast, which I proceeded to ride through for all 305 miles, until I finally rolled into my driveway back home in New Jersey Monday evening.

Peart was right. Adventures really do suck when you're having them! But that's all part of the experience – and really, who would want it any other way? 😊

Beemerboneyard.com

Used Oil-Head, K-Bike & Hex-Head Parts – 50% of New or Less

New Maintenance Parts & Tools – WAY BELOW Retail Prices

NO BACKORDERS – ORDERS SHIP IN 24 HOURS

10% BMW MOA Discount

■ **Online Orders Only** ■

Enter code **BMWMOA** in source code box @ checkout & click "apply"

Liqui-Molyoil - oil, fuel & air filters – 12/24K maintenance kits – brake pads & rotors – fuel pumps – Hall sensors – repair manuals & dvds-tools – fuel line disconnect sets – fuel injection controllers – exhausts – batteries & chargers – master cylinders & rebuild kits – starters – spark plugs & wires – cables – radiator fans – alt belts – fender extenders – Carbtune carb/TB synchronizers

ORDER ONLINE 24/7 – M/C, Visa, Discover, Paypal 973.775.3495 M-F 12-5PM

I am the MOA

Adventurer,
HVAC Installer,
USA Tourer,
Continuing the Journey
that Started in 1923

Adam Stewart
is the MOA

Adam Stewart, MOA #191508

BMW Motorcycle Owners of America
www.bmwmoa.org

Be the MOA