

MY FLORIDA

# Father's Day

TRIP





# When you ride Beemers, it's all relative!

By Rick Gzesh #84162

WITH FATHER'S DAY QUICKLY APPROACHING, I WAS GETTING THIS OVERWHELMING urge to spend some quality time with my dad. The problem was, Dad moved with his wife to Boca Raton, Florida 20 years ago to escape the harsh Pittsburgh winters. Did you know that it is a Jewish law to make the pilgrimage to Holy Southern Florida at age 65 to buy a condo and white Cadillac with matching white shoes?

Since his move, he has expected his children to spend our hard earned money and vacation time to visit them. The trouble is that I loathe Florida. It is too hot and flat, and there are too many seniors and tourists. Other than the beach, I can't think of a single reason to travel there, except to see Dad. I hadn't done it in more than three years. Yes, I am a bad son!

After gaining approval from my lovely significant other, Cheri, I quickly planned a route, leaving early on Thursday June 12th from my home in Euclid, Ohio. I took the interstate through Ohio and West Virginia to make some time, but planned to take back roads from there on. My destination that night was to meet a friend near Hickory, North Carolina. I had met Don through ADVrider.com, and he graciously invited me to spend a night in his log home, even though we only knew each other from spending too much time online.

He suggested that I run Route 16 south from Tazewell, Virginia if I like twisty roads. I do and so I did. I had a blast finally getting off the slab to have some two-lane fun. Route 16 took me to within a couple of miles from his home and I arrived right on time at 6:30 p.m. having covered 500 miles.

That evening, I treated Don to dinner at his favorite local barbecue joint and then we mingled with some of his friends and other bikers at a local bike night. Don, who

owns several bikes, rode a really cool R 90/6 Café Racer.

I was on the road early heading south keeping to the two-lane roads that were now mostly straight with occasional sweepers. Before I knew it I was through both North and South Carolina and into Georgia. Not long after, I crossed into Florida. I kept to the interior of the state, easily slipping past the congestion of Jacksonville and other population centers. I was letting the Garmin lead the way, which sometimes took me down some rather remote roads.

**Left: A full horizon-to-horizon rainbow! Probably the most beautiful that I had ever seen! Below: Don built his log home by himself. It looks kind of rustic from the outside, but inside is a beautiful and modern log home.**





This page Top: One last picture of the Beach in Daytona before hitting the road.

This page Below: The Castillo De San Marcos National Monument in St. Augustine.

Opposite page Left: Coming down the mountain on Route 16 into Tazewell, I snapped this picture.



I stopped for dinner at a little diner called Grandma's Home Cookin'. To be blunt, Granny needs some culinary lessons! I finally stopped for the night just south of Ocala in a perfectly average Ho Jo's having put just more than 600 miles on the odometer.

With only 200 miles to go, I figured I would get to Dad's at around 12:30 p.m. just in time for lunch. What I did not take into consideration was the increasing tourist traffic and road construction as I tried to sneak past Orlando. Then the rain came and delayed things further. It was the first storm on my trip, but not the last. At first I thought I could ride it out without my rain suit on, but the deluge increased in intensity as did the wind. I ducked under an underpass that magically appeared just as I was getting concerned. Another biker was already seeking shelter.

He was a Harley-Davidson rider who gave me a friendly, "Hey there, some storm, eh?" We were a study in contrasts. He had his old school American cruiser and was wearing only jeans, a T-shirt and boots. I was on my high-tech German wonder bike, and wearing the latest in warm weather protective riding gear including fancy flip up full face helmet. We were two bikers on even ground seeking the same thing—a little shelter from a nasty storm. We chatted away while I did the rain suit jig, and as



soon as the rain let up a bit I was gone. My gearless new friend would wait a while longer for the rain to cease before riding.

I finally arrived at Dad's house at around 2 o'clock, about 1½ hours behind schedule. Dad was doing his worry dance pacing around his condo waiting for me to arrive. After a quick hug we sat down for lunch. Corned beef on rye with a big pickle certainly hit the spot! I expected no less.

Sunday was Father's Day and I took my folks to see *Don't Mess with the Zohan*, Adam Sandler's movie about an Israeli James Bond who faked his death to run away to New York to be a hairdresser. It was a surreal experience as I approached the ticket counter. Everyone in line was hunched over in walkers or in wheel chairs carrying mini oxygen tanks like you and I carry water bottles. They were dressed in the most outlandish brightly colored clothes I had ever seen in truly weird combinations. The ladies had their faces painted up like clowns and sported hair colors that do not exist in nature. To top it off, their sense of smell had diminished to the point that they insisted on wearing enough perfume to require a hazmat team to clean it up. I could hear several complaining loudly about the heat and humidity. I thought I was in a *Seinfeld* horror episode. I turned to Diane, my father's wonderful wife of 30 years, kissed her gently on her cheek and whispered a big thank you for not becoming one of them! I was in South Florida, where everyone escaped the Northeast's cold winters to dress poorly and complain about how hot and humid it is in Florida.

The movie was hilarious and I even saw my Dad break a smile and laugh a couple of times. He will never admit to liking the movie, calling it too raunchy for his tastes. That evening we had a Chinese dinner and then a stroll along the beach in Deerfield, the first I had seen the ocean since arriving.

Tuesday was departure day, but I needed to get a new rear tire installed, as the one I had was looking pretty thin. I made the mistake of casually mentioning to Dad upon arrival that my rear tire might not make it home. The result was two days of



being hounded about that dangerous tire. To put his mind at ease, I arranged for a new tire to be installed early Tuesday at a local shop. I was back at Dad's by noon for one last corn beef sandwich and a hug before hitting the road.

Daytona was my destination for the night as I had never been there before. On the way, I wanted to stop by the Kennedy Space Center, but got there too late to go in. Then I had my second Florida storm. It was one of those Florida late afternoon 15-minute storms with a heavy downpour followed by the sun as if it had never rained followed by a majestic rainbow. I finally pulled into Daytona at 7 p.m. and snagged a motel room right on the beach for \$69. Not too shabby!

I had a nice seafood dinner and a moonlit stroll down the beach to the boardwalk for an ice cream cone. I briefly entertained thought of staying an extra night, but after walking around a bit I came to realize that Daytona has only two types of visitors; really good-looking MTV co-ed types and homely rednecks, chewing tobacco and dragging their unruly offspring from one souvenir shop to the next. Somehow I did not quite fit in, so I packed the bike and was gone in the morning.

I followed old Route A1A up the coast into St. Augustine where I visited a 15th century Spanish fort that is now a national monument. It was one of the few times I allowed myself to be a tourist during this trip. I spent that night in Augusta, Georgia.

The next morning I made short work of South Carolina but as I neared Boone, North Carolina, I encountered a delay due to some road construction. Using my Garmin, I followed a suggested detour that took me on a dirt road for about 15 miles and then right back to where I had attempted to avoid the construction. Gee, thanks Mr. Garmin! This time I bit the bullet and crawled my way through the construction zone and headed for Damascus, Virginia to ride Route 58, aka the "Crooked Road," and to Route 16. I eventually stopped for the night in Tazewell, Virginia. By the way, both of these roads are highly recommended, but only if you like



extremely narrow and twisty mountain roads with blind curves, elevation changes and very little margin for error. Yes, these roads require your attention, but the rewards and exhilaration are well worth it!

As Friday was my last day of travel, I made the most of it by riding the back roads north through West Virginia passing through a few towns where I once had customers when I was a sales rep in the clothing industry calling on mom-and-pop clothing, department and sporting goods stores. Now my customers are gone and those towns are mostly empty. It is a sad commentary on our economy. Occasionally I rode past something that would remind me of the good old days and brighten my spirits.

The rest of my trip was quite uneventful (a good thing) as I worked my way north to Parkersburg, West Virginia where I crossed over the river into my new home state of Ohio, and then on to our little lake front home in Euclid just east of Cleveland. I traveled 2,900 miles over a week of riding and three days of relaxation in Florida, my longest bike trip to date. Next year I hope to take an even farther journey. I want to do a cross country bike trip with Seattle as my destination. Coincidentally, that is also the home of my baby brother. So Steve, you had better make some room in your garage for my Beemer when I arrive! ●

**BOTH OF THESE  
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RECOMMENDED,  
BUT ONLY IF YOU  
LIKE EXTREMELY  
NARROW AND  
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CURVES, ELEVATION  
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FOR ERROR.**