

Looking for Beaver

By Jim Scott

We all know one. They are the rider who likes the back of the pack. Or maybe the one who goes around curves like they were driving a riding lawn mower. Beaver is like that (A nick-name because he has an uncanny resemblance to Jerry Mathers of Leave it to Beaver fame). On the interstate, the rate of closure from vehicles approaching from the rear far exceeds the rate of speed that Beaver is maintaining. Cornering behind him is an exercise in restraint uncommon to 90% of most cycle riders. Lead riders in a group that included him have been known to pull off the route, turn off their engines, and wait for him to catch up....over and over. And he is a nice guy.

We invited him to ride to Anamosa from south east Wisconsin to attend the J&B Cycle weekend rally and festivities. We had five cycles. The Beve showed up complaining about us being in a hurry when we met at a service station around noon. He had a hard time leaving the office. But he did arrive in full gear (Love that new leather smell!). That oversized hairy seat cover he was sitting on was something to behold. One of the riders expressed a concern about following it in the event it would shed at speed. Another in the group reminded him who was piloting that ride. Oh yeah. Not going to be an issue.

It was a nice ride. We only had to pull over four times to let Beaver catch up. One of the other guys hung back there with him. Said something about his motor seeming to carbon up, but just down-shifted to clear it now and then. Some of us camped in an Iowa State Park, on the Cedar River, south of Mt Vernon, while Beaver and Gary moteled it in Iowa City. We met up to do the J&B thing and hit the National Motorcycle Museum, which was still in its down town location at the time. Other than a raccoon fight over a forgotten bag (The really big size bag) of tortilla chips that Joel left on the picnic table, and the folks at the end of the camp site road who were getting really drunk and thought we all liked the crap music they were blasting (The ranger told them he didn't like it I guess.), it was a pretty good stay.

Sunday morning dawned and it was time to break camp, rendezvous up with Gary and Beaver, and head back, via Savanna, IL. We wanted to get up to the Wisconsin state line and ride highway 78 through the twists and turns of the State's hill country. After a stop for breakfast in a refurbished hotel restaurant, which had a bathroom located right near our dining area, we figured we could make it back without anything but fuel stops. Unfortunately, someone used the bathroom and the exhaust fan was not working. All but Joel were ready to leave much earlier than we would have liked. Joel is a big man (He bought the tortilla chips....the big bag) and his nourishment requirements exceeded the rest of ours.

North of Warren, IL, Gary broke off on highway 11 to head back to Milwaukee. That left Beaver to his favorite spot....the back of the pack. We turned off of 11 to head north on 78. Pat led with JoAnn on the back. Being the good rider he is, he was pretty well ahead of us right out of the turn. While riding up a long hill that came out of a low marsh area, I checked my mirror. There was Joel, but no Beaver. I knew he made the turn. So we pulled off and waited. Nothing. I decided to backtrack. I got all the way back to the intersection. Nothing. I looked in every driveway and farm on the mile long stretch. I turned around and headed back north. When I got to the top of the hill, south above the marsh, I saw Joel's bike on the shoulder, a truck behind him, and a car pulling up to stop. Everyone was in the wheat field. When I pulled up, they were helping Beaver to the road....without the Harley. Evidently, the sharp left-hand curve at the bottom of the hill was more than a lawn-mower driver could handle. Off the road he went, plowing (No pun intended) through about 100 yards of grain, finally succumbing to gravity and ending up under the Harley. The hairy seat cover remained in place.

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