

A LATE FALL RIDE

by Bonnie Cousins

It seemed like the perfect combination. The middle of November and sunshine predicted locally for three days..The fall colors were brilliant here in northern Illinois. It just called for a last motorcycle ride before winter temperatures arrived.

It was a beautiful ride to Stockton, about 130 miles, where we ate lunch as we have done many times before. We used to camp at Apple River Canyon State Park, so we made a trip out there to see the changes that had been made. Our plans were to move on to Galena for the night, ride down along the Big River the next day, and eventually return home the third day. So much for plans!

As we returned to Stockton from the park, the weather began to feel strange.....kind of damp but no rain in site and no smell of it either. Yes, I can smell rain when I'm riding. By the time we reached State Rt. 20, we knew we would not make it to Galena that day. The sun was gone and that was fog rolling in from the river. We pulled into Cano's Truck Stop, where the drivers were talking about how thick the fog was in the west. They were pulling over for a while. By now it was too late to head back east into deer country and there was no motels that way either, nothing but farm land.

So there we sat drinking coffee and eating pie and thinking we would just get a room at the Valley View Motel where we had stayed many times before. But then it occurred to us that there was a reason for all the pick-up trucks with gun racks that seemed to be everywhere.....next day was opening day for deer hunting season. (How could I have forgotten: I used to hunt!) Also 'No Vacancy' signs everywhere. One eats a lot of pie & drinks a lot of coffee at times like this.

As we sat there pondering the mess I had gotten us into once again, a strange thing happened. The motel lady called, saying she have a cancellation but for one night only. Too foggy for the hunter to get there! You never saw two riders move

we had reserved a room there, he answered "about 10 minutes ago". We still were not out of the woods so to speak. The weather was still terrible the next morning. Visibility all of 10 feet! We started back east, trying to get as far from the river, as fast as we could. Not the best place to be on a motorcycle when grain is being hauled south. You have not known fear until you know there is a semi truck full of grain coming up behind you, & you hope he can see you because you can't see the bike in front of yourself!. It was a white-knuckle ride to the next town of Forreston, where we were ready for more coffee & pie. We looked like wet rats when we entered the diner. They were gracious but you could feel they thought we must be crazy. When we were ready to leave the waitress asked if there was anything more we wanted..I said, "How about sun, blue sky & maybe 70"? That got a good laugh especially from the farmers there. Lo & Behold, by the time we reached the outskirts of town there it was & we had a beautiful ride back to Lombard. I may not have gotten to Galena on the ride but have been since. I plan to check the weather forecast the next time where ever I'm going.

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