



# Squadron News

June 2011

Editor – Gregg Mitchell

## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT!

Saturday, **June 18, 2011**, we will be meeting at **Karl's Cabin** restaurant in Plymouth, MI. Karl's is located on **Gotfredson Road, just north of M-14**. From I-275 / I-96 take M14 West towards Ann Arbor. Gotfredson Road is exit # 15.

**The meeting begins at 8:30 AM**  
*Late arrivers are always welcome!*

## BERT'S BIKE

*By Chuck Martell*

On August 13, 2009 in Prudenville, Michigan, my friend and riding buddy of many years, Bert Sisson was involved in a horrific accident. He was riding his 2003 Harley Electra Glide when he crossed the centerline and hit a car. It appeared that his insulin pump had failed and sent him into a diabetic shock. He was severely injured in the accident, almost lost his right leg, and suffered a dramatic brain concussion. He remains in a wheel chair today and is lucky to be alive.

Bert rode motorcycles for 60 years including brands such as BMW, Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki, Cushman, Harley and others. He has frequently ridden with many of the current members of the MSTA.

The Harley was pretty badly damaged in the accident. As a trained accident investigator, I travelled to northern Michigan, and locked the Harley in a storage unit as evidence. Photographs of the bike showed the extent of the damage to the front, both sides, the fairing, the saddlebags, and much more. The insurance company totaled the

bike indicating that the frame was bent. Bert's wife, Karol, purchased the remains back from the insurance company to hold as evidence in case there was any future legal action. There it sat for the next year and a half.

Bert originally bought the Harley in September of 2003 after he and I returned from the Harley Davidson 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration party in Milwaukee. Bert took a red Suzuki sport bike to the party and was pretty intensely teased by all the Harley riders. In his truck on the way back to Michigan, he began formulating his plan to get a Harley. He called the dealership in Cement City, Michigan from his truck and put in his order for the 2003 Anniversary Edition Electra Glide Standard in vivid black.

In late September, 2003, Bert arrived at the dealership to pick up his new bike. To his surprise he found three of his friends there to "escort" him halfway home to celebrate his new acquisition. The friends included Mike Osmer on his silver and black 03 Electra Glide Ultra Classic, Tom Decker on his black Sportster, and myself on a black 03 Road King Classic. A photograph of the four of us with our bikes that day sat in a special place on the desk in Bert's office at his house.

In August of 2004, the same four friends rode our Harleys 1500 miles through the upper peninsula of Michigan, through Wisconsin, through Minnesota and into Sturgis, South Dakota for the rally there. Bert always had the fixins for his famous "Southern Comfort Manhattans" in the saddlebags of the Harley. Each night after the bikes were wiped down and covered, the fixins came out and he would make four drinks, each with exactly two cherries – no less, no more.

In June of 2005, Bert on his Harley and I on my Road King, and several other friends rode to Lake

George, New York for the Americade rally. Bert knew that I had some pin striping done by the “BMW Boyz” at the vendor show there, and he had them do some striping on the Harley. After the rally was done, Bert and I left our other friends and rode east to another Harley rally in Laconia, New Hampshire. A friend and MSTA member from New Jersey, Joe Naprano, rode up on his Ducati, and my wife, Cindy flew in to ride with us. We spent a wonderful week riding in New Hampshire and Maine, dodging all the moose (or whatever is plural for mooses as we saw several). When Bert and I rode home from that rally through upstate Vermont and New York, crossing into Canada through an island in the St. Lawrence Seaway, it was one of the most memorable rides of my life (Cindy flew home – we didn’t leave her in New Hampshire).

Bert also had a bright yellow Honda Gold Wing which he enjoyed riding, but I like to believe that when he wanted to be “cool”, he always preferred the Harley. The day of the accident, Bert had chosen the Harley to ride with his friend, Joe Yaecisen (sp?) to Roscommon. They stopped for lunch, rode south toward Bert’s home, and then split up with Joe headed to his home. Bert was within 5 miles of his house when the accident happened. A woman who had been driving for 10 miles in a car behind him said he was traveling along fine, when he suddenly just drifted to the left directly into the path of an oncoming car. The car swerved to the left, so the collision was a side swipe destroying the entire passenger side of the Harley, and doing pretty drastic damage to the passenger side of the car. Bert’s right leg, of course was in between, and suffered traumatic injury. The indentation in the car windshield from Bert’s helmet was something to behold.

Bert will never ride a motorcycle again. The loss of him as a riding buddy has been difficult for all of us to assimilate, as he was one of the safest and best riders I have known.

In January of 2011, I received a call from his wife. Karol told me that Bert wanted me to have the Harley and wanted me to “put it back together again”. She offered to sell me the bike for a very low price on the condition that I would restore it to its original riding shape, and then bring it up to their home to show Bert. How could I say no?

Today, the Harley is in my name. I have learned that trying to assemble a Harley by buying it part by part would cost \$50,000. Also, as the bike is 8 years old, some of the necessary parts are difficult to locate. I have been a frequent visitor to Craig’s List, EBay and numerous other internet sites. I have begun visiting Harley swap meets, something I had never even thought of doing previously.

I began the project in January of 2011 by visiting all of the Harley dealers in the Detroit area, Motor City in Farmington Hills, ABC in Waterford, Wolverine in Mt. Clemens, Biker Bob’s in Taylor and Brighton Harley in Brighton. I quickly learned that a Harley dealer cannot work on a bike which has a “bent” frame as they are required to replace it, no matter how slight the flaw. The dealer will disassemble all of the parts from the frame, cut the VIN number out and send it to Harley. Harley will then manufacture a new frame with the same VIN number and send it back to the dealer. The dealer then re-assembles the parts to the new frame, all at a cost of \$3500.

Not wanting to lay out that much money, I found a place referred by Mike Osmer called Harrison’s Motorcycle Shop in Brighton, Michigan owned by Steve Harrison, a former certified Harley mechanic from American HD in Ann Arbor (now in Brighton). Steve quickly determined that the only thing “bent” on the frame were two small tabs where the engine guards were attached, which could be easily, and safely, straightened. He also determined that the engine, the transmission, the wheels and tires were undamaged and in good condition. This information was an essential ingredient in the decision to proceed further with the project.

Because the Harley was an Anniversary Edition, the tank badges and the striping were unique to that model. This made the search for parts much more difficult than it might have been otherwise. I spent many days searching for the right saddlebags in vivid black. I found several, but they were all in “slightly damaged” condition. On Craigs List, I did find an Anniversary Tour Pack (trunk) in the right color in Warren. When I went to look at it, however, I found that the “pristine” condition was not quite as it had been described. The price was also very high, so I politely passed on the purchase. I did, however, learn of a man in Oak Park, Mark

Zagacki (a/k/a The Harley Parts Whore), who was rumored to have many, many Harley parts.

When I first visited Mark's home, I was amazed to find that his whole house was filled with parts including the kitchen counter, the hallways and even the bathtub. All of the furniture had been removed from the living room and replaced by metal stack shelves, loaded with parts. On the lowest shelf, however, was a bunched up blanket where Mark's dog, Thumper, resided. Thumper did his job as guard dog, barking at me fiercely despite his diminutive size. I'm not sure what brand dog he was, but he was vicious. By the time of my second visit, however, Thumper decided I was OK, and we began to become friends.

Mark began our relationship by bringing parts from all corners of the house, showing me "Look at this awesome blacked out front end", and "here is a black wheel with twisted spokes I put together". When I told Mark of the search for a set of saddlebags, he immediately said, "I can get them for you". When I next returned, Mark displayed a beautiful set of saddlebags with the appropriate Anniversary striping. They were not perfect, but they were in such great condition that I sealed the deal right then. The more we talked, the more I began to understand that Mark was going to be a very important part of my project. He was also able to find a 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Classic front fairing, and found an almost pristine gas tank with the original badges and stripes. Mark's prices were much more reasonable than the prices of the new parts from Harley.

As I began to collect the many parts necessary to put the bike back together, I started a list of each part including the Harley part number, the description, the price, the date purchased and the date delivered to Harrison Motorcycles. As I delivered each piece to Steve's shop, I placed an address label on the box with my name and address,

so it wouldn't get misplaced, or put on someone else's bike. This was not a reflection on anything to do with Steve's sense of organization, but only my awareness of how hard I had to search for each piece. When I delivered the saddlebags, I wrapped each of them in a double layer of bubble wrap.

I took photographs of the Harley in its original condition after the accident, and again when Steve had removed most of the damaged parts. I remember being very worried that we would ever get the bike back to a rideable, and good looking, place. But of course, it is merely a matter of one piece at a time.

Without seeming unnecessarily maudlin, I also learned a great deal about myself during the course of this project. I am not known to have the most patient personality, and it was quite difficult to tolerate the slow pace of the project. This pace was governed by two main considerations:

- (1) Availability of the parts
- (2) Funds available to purchase the parts

The most frustrating thing I encountered is the six week delay in obtaining parts designated as "painted" from the Harley factory. Items such as the inner fairing, the outer fairing, and others seemed to arrive at a snail's pace. I kept calling the dealer to learn whether the parts had arrived, and they would patiently report, "Not yet. We'll call you". I guess I was afraid that they might forget to





the “painted” parts, and many of the ordered parts. I have delivered about 60% of the parts to Steve’s shop. People have asked me what my target date is to have the bike ready to ride. I have not decided how to answer that question. I guess the right answer is simply, “We’ll see”. There are so many elements involved which are out of my control. Additionally, I do not know how long it will take Steve to put the bike together once he has all of the parts.

To be continued.....

call when the parts did actually arrive.

My wife, Cindy, was mostly tolerant during the process of both my almost obsessive focus, and the money we spent. She would frequently laugh, good naturedly of course, when she told our friends that “Chuck spent last evening in bed with his dream book”, the Harley parts catalog. I spent many hours leafing through the hundreds of pages in the catalog, trying hard to imagine what the part would look like once it was on the bike. There were soooooo many choices in color, and whether to get chrome or black. In the end, I decided to replace the stock parts with as many in vivid black as I could find. The windshield alone took many hours of trying to decide the size (anywhere from 4 inches to 15 inches tall) and the color (clear, lightly smoked, dark smoked, flames, skulls, and a thousand other choices). In the end, I chose a 10 inch dark smoked windshield, an aftermarket piece which had to be ordered (oh no).

I think I was quite surprised to discover that the parts department at Motor City HD had a large number of parts in stock, and on several visits I was able to negotiate a 10% discount, but only on the parts in stock. There were still a significant number of parts which had to be ordered, and they seemed to arrive at the dealership at the slowest pace possible.

As I write this in April, I have located and purchased most of the parts. I am still waiting for

**A special thanks to Chuck Martell for the article featured this month!**

**REMEMBER .....**

It doesn't pay a reward, but your articles will be appreciated by all your fellow members and your local editor AND you will earn points toward the **2011 SMOTY Award!** If nothing else - you'll get to see your name in print, somewhere other than on the Post Office bulletin board!

**MICHIGAN SQUADRON  
RIDING EVENTS  
2011**

One of the traditions of the Michigan Squadron of the MSTA is to organize a few events each year specifically for our State Squadron. These events are not sanctioned or official events of the MSTA, but are limited to those who are current members of the MSTA.



# BLUE GRASS BOOGIE

Morehead, KY, July 14 – 17, 2011  
Event Organizer – Gregg Mitchell  
[mi\\_msta@earthlink.net](mailto:mi_msta@earthlink.net)

## LAST CALL FOR THIS EVENT

Join us in Morehead, KY for two or three days of exploring great roads in Kentucky. For those who want to arrive on Thursday evening, July 14, we'll have a choice of six routes to ride on Friday the 15th. If you'd like to arrive on Friday -- we'll be doing more riding on Saturday the 16th. I expect everyone will be homeward bound on Sunday.

We'll be staying at the following Motel -  
**Holiday Inn Express**  
**110 Toms Drive**  
**Phone 606-784-5796 for reservations.**

Should they fill up, there are other motels nearby.

There will be a **Mandatory "Rider's Meeting"** held at the hotel at 9:00 PM, where we'll set up the riding groups, review the routes and prepare for the next days ride.

If you want to participate - here's what you do -

1. Make your hotel reservations at the hotel **without delay.**

There is **NOT** a block of rooms being "Held".

### VERY IMPORTANT!

**2. Let me know that you're planning on being there – Maps and directions will be distributed by email ONLY to those whose name I have on record as attending**

You can contact me at the following:

**E-Mail – [mi\\_msta@earthlink.net](mailto:mi_msta@earthlink.net)**  
Phone 248-760-0841 (Cell)  
248-377-8170 (Work)

*There are seven riders signed up for this ride at the present time. One – Hal Kramer from Parkersburg, WV has a room for two and is looking for a room mate – contact me if you're interested in rooming with him.*

# M.O.B. – 2011

Michigan's Ohio Blitz  
July 29 - 31, 2011, SE Ohio  
Event Organizer – Gregg Mitchell  
[mi\\_msta@earthlink.net](mailto:mi_msta@earthlink.net)

## Friday, July 29

**RIDE - from Michigan to Coshocton, OH**  
We'll be staying at the following Hotel -  
**Country Squire Inn and Suites, 275 S Whitewoman St, Phone 740-622-9823**

There will be a **Mandatory "Rider's Meeting"** held at the hotel at 9:00 PM, where we'll set up the riding groups and prepare for the next days ride.

**NOTE:** Several riders will meet for breakfast at Bob Evans in Toledo Friday morning.

From there they will form groups for the ride to Coshocton. Details for this will be distributed to those who get their names to me for the event.

## Saturday, July 30

Several routes are planned with a lunch stop at the popular Beallsville Diner. After lunch, lots of entertaining miles of twisty pavement to **New Philadelphia, OH.** Make your reservation at:

**Best Western Dutch Valley Inn**  
**161 Bluebell Dr SW**  
**Phone - 330-339-6500**

Dinner -- tire kicking, and telling lies about the days ride follows our arrival.

## Sunday, July 31

RIDE back home to Michigan

If you want to participate - here's what you do -

1. Make your hotel reservations at both Hotels **without delay**

There is a **NOT** a block of rooms being held

2. Let me know that you're joining in - I need an accurate head count for planning purposes.

**Maps and directions will be distributed by email, ONLY to those whose name I have on record as attending.**

You can contact me at the following:  
E-Mail - [MI\\_MSTA@earthlink.net](mailto:MI_MSTA@earthlink.net)

*There are only 5 members signed up for this thus far!*

# TIP OF THE MITT

September 15 – 18, 2011

Bellaire. MI

Event Organizers:

Peter Stephan --

[pstephan153646MI@comcast.net](mailto:pstephan153646MI@comcast.net)

John Cirner –

[jcirner@comcast.net](mailto:jcirner@comcast.net)

More information regarding this event will be forthcoming soon from the organizers. The event will be posted in the “Just For Fun” Events Calendar on the National Website soon – opening it up to MSTA Members from neighboring Squadrons!



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**June 18, 2011 – Saturday**

**8:30 AM**

Michigan MSTA Monthly Meeting

**Karl's Cabin Restaurant**

Gotfredson Rd, Plymouth, MI

Just north of M14

**June 26 – 29, 2011**

**STAR 2011**, Johnson City, Tennessee

Reservation forms and information for this, our National Meeting Event is available at the STAR page on the National Web Site.

<http://star.sporttouring.us/>

**STAR** – Sport Touring Association Rendezvous, is our club's Annual National Members Meeting, among other things.

This year looks to be the biggest on record as far as turnout goes – over 400 MSTA Members will be in attendance. You've been reading about it in your STARreview Magazine for months –

**DON'T WAIT ANY LONGER TO GET YOURSELF REGISTERED!**

**July 29 – 31**

**MSTA REGIONAL EVENT**

**River City Ride**

**Madison, IN**

Go to the RCR Web Site for more information and Pre-Registration Information

<http://tinyurl.com/428mevl>

Pre-Registration forms for this event are also available at our monthly breakfast meeting!

**August 19 - 21**

**MSTA REGIONAL EVENT**

**Mail Pouch Fly By**

**Marietta, OH**

For more information and to download a Pre-Registration Form, go to

<http://tinyurl.com/3n5mc7m>

Pre-Registration forms for this event are also available at our monthly breakfast meeting!



## MEMBERSHIP INFO

### Welcome to the MSTA

Please join me in welcoming the following new member(s) to the Michigan MSTA Squadron:

**Geoff Blow – Ann Arbor**  
**Max Durling – South Lyon**  
**Jason Odom – Royal Oak**  
**Ron Pruette - Oxford**  
**Rachel Shott – South Lyon**  
**Dave Tasker – Rochester Hills**

**Current Squadron Membership**  
**160**

For the individual(s) listed below - this will be your last Michigan Newsletter if you don't renew within the next 30 days **AND advise me with a call or email**. If you feel this information is in error - call me. If you wish to renew and need a form, let me know and I'll send you one or print out the copy at the MSTA Website. Online renewal is also available at:

<http://sporttouring.us>

**We're going to miss you if you don't renew**

**Randy Shelton – Plymouth**

Our policy regarding "Prospects" is to provide them with a "local" newsletter for 3 months following their introduction to the club. Under those guidelines this will be the last newsletter for the following individual(s):

**John Bowman – Farmington**  
**Mark Hart**

When you have a moment – check out the Michigan Squadron web site for late breaking information

[www.msta.us](http://www.msta.us)

Please patronize the following businesses owned by your fellow MSTA Squadron Members, whenever possible



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**Dave "O"** - State Certified Master Motorcycle Mechanic  
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313-663-2836 • southeastern Michigan



**WILLIAM W. WEBB, PRIVATE ATTORNEY**  
**248-647-9000**  
**Author of the The Traffic Ticket Maze**  
<http://statebar.net/trafficticket.pdf>

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Chip Ashton

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