

Remembrances

Dave Bucher looks back at some little gems of experience from his 45 years of riding and writing.

Dawdy Mountain

It was a beautiful spring Sunday in May 1988. I was somewhere south-east of Charleston, West Virginia.

Bringing my newly painted BMW K100 back from Athens, Ohio, I had decided to take a three-day ride around the Mountain State. I had lodgings for that night and a route laid out, but when I came upon the hand-lettered sign that

read Dawdy Mountain, fate turned me from the main road. It was a narrow blacktop curving upward through forest. But it seemed to be going in the general direction I was headed, so I pressed on. For some reason, as I crested the summit and began my way downward, I was pulled back to a little, ramshackle building I'd passed at the top. "Hilltop" was appropriately emblazoned on its side.

There were so many dimensions to the next few hours that I could probably write a book about them. Suffice it to say as I sat alone at the bar in my Aerotstich riding suit, quietly sipping a Mountain Dew, I must have seemed like an alien presence. Neither the barmaid, who put down her pool cue to get me my soda, nor the other two people in the place paid any attention to me whatsoever. Eventually, there came some commotion outside and one of the guys turned to me and said, "Ya'll stick around, they gonna be playin' soon."

He motioned me outside and we walked behind the building and onto a small ridge. At the end of the path, where the ridge widened, was a crude

enclosure made of scrap wood and clear plastic sheets. The source of the commotion, a group of bluegrass musicians, was setting up. There was a fiddle, a guitar and even a woman playing a real washtub bass. My buddy from the bar and I sat on the tailgate of a rusted wreck of a pickup enjoying this Walton-esque experience until I eventually had to excuse myself and, over his protestations, get on with my journey.

After my West Virginia story was published in *Rider Magazine*, someone wrote in and corrected me. It wasn't "Dawdy" Mountain, they noted, it was...damn if I can remember what they said it was. I've scoured maps and Goggle Earth, trying to remember my route between Charleston and my digs for that night.

I've searched "Hilltop" on the Internet to no avail. Maybe I'm looking in the wrong place. Maybe that mountaintop has been sliced off to get at its coal.

Or maybe I just dreamed all this. No, that can't be, I have pictures. I do know that if I could ever locate that magic place again, I'd get on my bike and head there for a longer stay.

