

Still...Keeping Track

Penton Owners Group Newsletter \$5.00



The POG took over the main area of the museum's 1st floor at "The Penton Day at The AMA"
photo by Alan Buehner (OH)

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STILL ...KEEPING TRACK Newsletter of the PENTON OWNERS GROUP

The Penton Owners Group is a not for profit corporation chartered in the State of Ohio and an AMA chartered club. Our Federal tax I.D. number is 34-1860635.

The Penton Owners Group was formed to preserve and share the memories and the equipment of a very special time in motorcycle history. The first Penton motorcycle was manufactured in 1967 and the last in 1977. This was a time when the enthusiasm, ambition and creativity of the original Penton group helped shape a new industry and a new generation of dirt bike enthusiasts. Sport and competition motorcycles played a significant role in this motorcycle history. Our aim is to make the Penton Owners Group a source of information about the history of the Penton motorcycle, the Penton Company and it's many dealers, riders and extended family.

The mission of the Penton Owners Group is to enjoy and share all the memories from the past and the events of the future, as Penton motorcycle enthusiasts.

Club officer names and contact information
have been removed from this document.



PENTON OWNERS GROUP

Still ...Keeping Track is published quarterly by the Penton Owners Group. Annual membership dues is \$20 per year for US residents (\$25 for foreign membership) and includes a subscription to the newsletter which is not available separately. Manuscripts, photos, drawings, etc. are welcome but no payment is made for material submitted, used, or retained. Please keep duplicates of your submissions, as we cannot be responsible for loss or damage.

Submission of material will be considered as assignment of all rights therein. Check out our web site at: www.PENTONUSA.ORG
Change of address: Give old and new address and notify us as least 6 weeks in advance.

Send address changes to: The PENTON OWNERS GROUP - P.O. Box 756 - Amherst, Ohio 44001

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The assistant editor is Al Born

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Paul Danik

In listening to many of you discuss your Penton experiences, I have become increasingly aware of the fact that many of us started our Penton experiences in different eras. The evolution of the Penton motorcycle happened so quickly that a person who's first Penton was a CMF 125, Jackpiner or later machine may have had little or no knowledge of the steel tanker machines that were its predecessor.

Part of the mission of the POG is to preserve the history of the Penton motorcycle for others to enjoy. In keeping with that mission the POG is embarking on a project that will document the evolution of the steel tank Penton. The end result will be a book that will contain not only the mechanical evolution of the steel tanker, but also a collection of the recollections of the riders, dealers and others involved in this special time of Penton history. The working title of the book is, "Penton, The Steel Tank Era." The title is not that important, but the content is. Be

assured that when I mention riders recollections, I am not just talking of the lucky few who made the race results but, the trail riders who just loved to ride their Penton and the casual racer who had just as important a place in the history as does the serious racers.

The book project is being divided into two separate areas for the gathering of information. The first area is the gathering and organizing of the recollections. Ted Guthrie is heading up this portion and he has already begun his work. Ted would like for anyone who has a story about their steel tanker

experience to send it to him. His e-mail is ducati@localnet.com. His address is Ted Guthrie, 33855 Hoopes Road, Salem, Ohio 44460. Ted can also be contacted evenings between 6-9 pm EST and on weekends at (330) 222-0336 as he is willing to listen and take notes about your steel tanker experience.

The technical evolution portion of the book is also underway. Many of the changes that occurred to the frame, engine and other components of the steel tank Penton are known, but what is not known is when in the production cycle that they occurred. Bill Smith has put together a questionnaire that should help to pinpoint when these changes occurred, but we need your help. We are asking that you fill out a questionnaire for each steel tanker that you own, even that bare rusty frame that is sitting in the back of the shop is very important as it may

narrow the window as to when a change occurred.

Your questionnaire information will be held in STRICK CONFIDENCE, as no one will have access to your information other than the persons recording the data. We want to eliminate any reason that a person may have to not fill out the questionnaire. Very shortly you will be able to download a copy of the questionnaire from the POG website, or call or e-mail Bill and he will send you one. All of the completed questionnaires should be sent to Bill Smith at 38236 N. Richham Ct., Westland, MI 48186. You can also contact Bill directly to request a questionnaire. Bill's phone number is (734) 729-3496. His e-mail is webmaster@pentonusa.org.

I feel that most everyone who fills out the questionnaire will learn a lot about their Penton and will actually enjoy the process. As an incentive to get your questionnaire filled out and returned to Bill, a very collectible item will be raffled off at the AMA Vintage Days event in July. All who fill out and return their questionnaires to Bill Smith will be eligible for a chance to win a beautiful NOS gas tank from a steel tank Penton Berkshire that has been autographed by John Penton. It will be raffled off at VMD, all you need to do to be entered in the drawing is to return your questionnaire to Bill. If you have five bikes and fill out five questionnaires, you'll have five chances of winning.

Thanks in advance for doing your part to help preserve the history of not only the Penton motorcycle, but also of a time that was very special to many of us.

THE WAY IT WAS

By Al Born

45 YEARS AGO – 1960

On New Years night the original Competition Riders Association of Northern Ohio held indoor short track races at the old Cleveland Arena and the Columbus Star showed the following results: Heat winners were Ronnie Rall of Mansfield, Paul Myers of Cleveland and Bobby Worden of Akron. George Roeder of Monroeville won his second straight feature race.

The Jan. 10 issue of the Star showed John Penton on his NSU winning the Toledo Travelers 75 mile "Snow Run", scoring a 978. George Slater of Lorain placed 2nd in the A lightweight class on his NSU and Charles Filbert placed 2nd in the B heavyweight class on a BSA.

The Jan. 30th issue of the Star reported that John Penton had been elected President and Al Born was elected as Referee of the Competition Riders Assn.

35 YEARS AGO – 1970

The Jan. 27th issue of Cycle News showed a letter to the editor from Tom Penton who was inquiring about his subscription, while stationed at George Air Force Base in California. Tom stated that he was right in the middle of these California dudes playground, the Mojave dessert and that he was homesick for some "good old Ohio mud". This paper also carried an article written by Ed Youngblood about Kitty Budris, a Chicago area BSA dealer who was the first woman to carry an AMA Mechanics license.

Cycle News also showed that on Jan. 25th Bo Rhodes and Don Knuelly placed 2nd and 3rd in the 100 class on their Pentons at a Hare Scramble at Galion, Ohio.

The Feb. 8th issue of Cycle News showed that Pentons and Huskys won all 5 classes of the Hare Scramble held at Amherst,

Ohio. Jack Penton and Dave Freeman placed 1st and 2nd in the 100 class, both on Pentons. Ollie Martin, Clyde Wagner and J.D. Slater swept the 125 class on their Pentons. Dale Claridge entered the 200 class on his 125 Penton and won that class. Jeff Penton won the 250 class on a Husky and Dale Wright won the Open class on his Husky. Harry Williams was the overall winner on his Husky. Also on Feb. 8th, Bo Rhodes won the 100 class in a Hare Scramble at Galion, Ohio on a Penton.

On Feb. 15th, Cycle News showed Jeff Penton on a 250 Husky taking the overall at a Hare Scramble at Salem, Ohio and Jack Penton won the 100 class on his Penton and Bob Cross and Gill Gross took 2nd and 3rd in the 125 class, both riding Pentons.

On Feb. 22 Cycle News showed Bo Rhodes 1st and Jim Desoffy 2nd in the 100 class at a Hare Scramble at Galion, Ohio and in the 125 class, Bob Messer and David Wise placed 1st and 2nd, all riding Pentons.

The results of the Alligator on March 12th showed the following: Jesse Thomas was 1st in the B Bantamweight class, John Penton, Ray Kussmaul, Doug Wilford, and Donald Burgess swept the A Lightweight class. The B Lightweight class was also swept by William McInvale, Gerald Bassett, Sherrill Kennedy and Thomas Rossi who were all riding Pentons.

On March 15 at a Salem, Ohio Hare Scramble, Bob Grodzinski switched from his Ossa to a 125 Penton and finished over a full lap over the best of the Huskys and Greeves that were there. Also Bo Rhodes placed 3rd in the 100 class and the 125 class was swept by C.H. Wagner, David Varbanoff and Bill Harp, all riding Pentons.

10 YEARS AGO – 1994

Hank Penton passed away on Christmas morning while golfing near his home in Arizona.

Mailbox

11/28/04

Hi, My son, Penton, is 16 and just starting to ride dirt bikes. His membership and DVD is a birthday gift for him. I included my e-mail on the application form too and hope to get him a Penton when he is skilled and knowledgeable enough to appreciate it. My first bike was a Penton 125 – loved the name. Thanks
Colter Mott,

Colter stopped by the Penton display at Davenport, Iowa and spent about an hour talking to John Penton. That he "loved" the Penton name is putting it mildly in that he named his first born son- "Penton." The POG welcomes the two of you as our newest members.

1/11/05

Gentlemen,
I had a 1972 125, bought new, and it never let me down. I restored one just like it in 1994 and was lucky enough to have it in the Penton display at Sears Point in 2000. I have 3 Pentons, my '72 125, a restored '73 250 and a '74 250 awaiting restoration. I love Pentons and thought it was time I joined POG. Thanks.

Blair Beck, CA

Welcome to the POG Blair. We're happy to finally have you join our ranks. You have missed a lot of great stories and articles in the past 5 years that only appear in this newsletter. Thank you for helping us out with our 2000 Feature Marque display at Sears Point. Your involvement helped to make it a success.

1/28/05

Howdy,

Greetings once again from the land of Oz....

Time to renew my POG yearly subscription and once again to express thanks and appreciation for what you guys and the POG do. It must be very rewarding.

Oh, and you guys would have no chance of knowing it, but Scott Brogan

with the 1947 mini-bike, Briggs & Stratton powered in the issue 25, "is not the only other member to have a motorcycle named after him."

Please see enclosed information supplied on the "Lewis" motorcycles made here in Australia from 1892 thru 1927. The model I have here is a 1913ish 660cc V-twin Precision engined unit. It is similar in looks and profile to the side car outfit pictured of Gerhardt Grauer and his wife, except my engine has square cylinder finning. Also it is interesting to note Lewis cycles were pioneering in many ways like the Pentons, Observe on the 1906 water-cooled single cylinder models, the Australian patent on the water cooling obviously was not kept, or else pretty much every manufacturer worldwide would be paying rights to it!!!

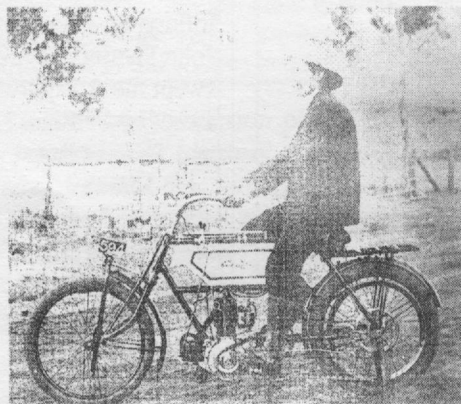
The Lewis factory made cars. Also, I have never, ever heard of any surviving. They also made wheelchairs thru the mid 1970's. I don't have any of them either!!

Anyway, time once again to say good-bye, things to do, people to see...

Kind regards,

Brad Lewis, Australia

Brad sent us 5 photocopies of his "Lewis" motorcycles that were published in the "A-Z of Australian-Made Motorcycles 1893-1942" book. It shows photos of several different models and also the inside of the factory. Thanks for the info.



A Lewis Minerva motorcycle of about 1907

1/29/05

Hi Al,

As you requested, enclosed is the

song I wrote and sang at the POG "Family Nite" meeting in December to add some entertainment. I hope that all of our members who could not be there will enjoy it. I sang the verses and everyone else sang the chorus.

The Dealers Daughter or Doug And His One Two Five

She first met Doug at a big parade,
A show of the strength that Penton made.
There were Berkshires and all the rest,
But Doug's one two five stood out the best.

CHORUS

*Bikes ahoy, rider boy, don't you take a dive,
The dealer's daughter is much alive,
She's out to get your one two five.*

Now she's built as big as an Adventure,
Doug says he's not for her.
So let her ride with the other guys,
His one two five's too small for a gal that size.

CHORUS

She ruined her first pal I understand,
He wound up with his knobbies spinning in the sand.

Since Doug heard she's coming his way,
He's got a cover on his one two five night and day.

CHORUS

She's made up her mind to have her way,
His one two five has got to make her day,
She won't burn the clutch cause she knows the score,
Oh you can tell she's had a one two five before.

CHORUS

Doug thinks she'll try sabotage,
So he's invented a little camouflage.
Now everyone thinks it's a real cute trick,
He got it painted red and white like a peppermint stick.

CHORUS

Oh I just got word from the Meadowlark's base,
The big maneuver just took place.
She finally caught him down by the gate,
He was running somewhat late.
There was quite a battle, there'll be heck to pay,
'Cause he ruined his one two five singing
POG is here to stay.

A BLACKWATER SAGA

by Ted Guthrie

The following story is my best recollection of a race that took place nearly twenty years ago. I rode the Blackwater 100 several years in a row, throughout the mid to late 1980's, and each one of those rides was filled with unique and memorable experiences. I have done my best to separate my experiences from different years and report in this story only those circumstances corresponding to the 1986 event, in the interest of accuracy, relevant to the facts and to the individuals present on that June day in Davis, West Virginia

- Ted Guthrie

I lay stretched out on my back, staring up at a beautiful blue sky dotted with puffy white clouds. I felt quite comfortable, except that there was an annoying buzzing in my ears that kinda sounded like a bunch of dirt bikes. Then I became aware that I was wearing my motorcycle helmet. Also, there was a bulky lump lodged under my lower back that felt almost like a - well, like a fanny pack.

Gradually my surroundings began to come a bit more into focus. I sat up. Before me, stretched a wide, flat, plain filled with motorcycles, all racing off into the distance. Was this a dream? I looked first to one side, then the other. More bikes swept past, some close by, others farther off.

Finally, my somewhat dazed senses caught back up to real time. I was racing. I was in a race. Yeah, a race. But, where did my motorcycle go? I couldn't have gotten all the way out here without a motorcycle.

I rolled to one side, managed to get to my hands and knees, and looked behind me. There, twenty feet or so astern, sat my bike, bolt upright, buried up to the hubs in a mudhole. At that point, I smiled, because I realized, at that very moment, I was enjoying the best that the BLACKWATER 100 had to offer.

How I came to be in this situation was the result of a natural progression from the local hare scrambles events I had been competing in around my home, in Northeast Ohio. Riding out of "Dirt Works", an excellent race shop in Youngstown, which specialized in KTM's, Husqvarnas, and Can-Ams, I was hanging out with a fast and serious bunch of riders.

My bike was fast and serious too - an '84 KTM 250 EX/C. So, the shop was serious, my team/club/whatever - of fellow riders were serious, and my bike was serious. About the only thing that wasn't serious was me! I was perfectly happy riding our CRA-sanctioned, local

hare scrambles events, but the rest of the "team"? Oh no, they had to go chasing GNCC's and all manner of crazy stuff like that. And, being a lemming-like individual, I went (somewhat) willingly along with them.

Now, considering that the Dirt Works gang was so gung-ho for the Grand National Cross Country series, for them to launch an assault en masse on the famed and feared Blackwater 100 was as inevitable as it was for John Penton's motorcycles to win races. I just happened to get caught up in the whole mad endeavor.

For those of you who may not be particularly familiar with what the Blackwater 100 was all about, or what made it so special, here's the poop. Long about the late 1970's, a race promoter from Morgantown, West Virginia named Dave Coombs, was approached by a preacher, who had the idea that a motorcycle race, held in the small town in which his church was located, would bring some much-needed revenue into the area.

That area was Davis, West Virginia, which is located in the northeastern part of the state, just off the tip of the Maryland panhandle. Well, Dave went down there, checked out the area, and found it to be a virtual off-road paradise, with mountains, deep forests, fast running streams, mud, rocks - everything necessary for a tough and challenging hare scramble.

And, Dave Coombs took every advantage of all that the terrain in and around Davis had to offer, and created just such a tough and challenging event. So tough in fact, that the vast majority of entrants could manage only a portion of the Blackwater races before calling it quits - typically only one of the (usually) four laps that made up the 100 miles. In addition, the Blackwater 100 was unique in that the racers pitted in town, took the green flag right on Davis' main street, and raced through town each lap. Moreover, there was "open" camping throughout the area surrounding Davis, which meant that wide-open partying prevailed.

As a result, stories began to filter out about this unique, challenging, fun, wild event, and the racers, spectators, and partiers came - which included the Dirt Works gang, which in turn included yours truly.

Actually, I first attended the event in 1985, as a spectator only. My more courageous (read that *crazier*) friend, Ken Warrender, soloed the event, completed one lap, and emerged from the boonies more than *eight hours* after taking the green flag, at 9:30 pm! He had experienced a few mechanical problems, as well as running out of fuel twice, but

came away all the more determined to do better the next year.

Well, next year came, and I arrived fully prepared to do my best against whatever the rugged West Virginia countryside had to offer. We had a great setup, with rooms in a nice motel just minutes from the center of town. Actually, *everywhere* in Davis is just minutes from the center of town, as it's a pretty small place. But, we had a great setup, regardless.

The "center of town" was in fact where everything was happening. You see Davis is situated at the intersection of West Virginia routes 93 & 32. Route 93 (remember that reference for later) actually runs north, just outside of town, while 32 runs part way down the main street of Davis, before veering right and passing over the Blackwater River on a newer highway bridge. The remainder of Davis' main street terminates at the old bridge, which at the time, was closed.

The east end of the main street, of which the south side was nothing but open space, became the center of activity. The factory race team's and serious guy's trucks and trailers were all parked there, sign-up and the rider's meetings were held there, it's where the races were started, and so tended to be where everyone congregated.

Also, to the east, across the old bridge, is where much of the "open" camping took place. With the bridge closed to vehicular traffic, the only way into the camping area was through the river (literally the Blackwater course's first water crossing), so only those folks with four wheel drive rigs had access. Well, except for Frank Gallo and Kevin Lavoie, who actually drove an old *school bus*, converted into a bike hauler, through the river, to set up camp.

What overwhelmed me the most when I first hit town, was the sheer scope of the Blackwater 100 event. There were motorcycles and ATV's - everywhere. Bikes in trucks and on trailers, by the hundreds, were everywhere. The little town of Davis was totally overrun by motorcycles and motorcycle riders. Stores, restaurants, and residences, were hastily converted to serve the crowds. Rooms for rent, food, cold drinks, souvenirs, you name it - all were available along the main street. The famous "America's Toughest Race" t-shirts appeared, and were quickly bought up. It was amazing. We had, quite literally, taken over Davis.

As mid-day approached, the ATV's began lining up for their race, which in the standard GNCC fashion, ran on Saturday. Anxious for some indication of what to expect in our own race, we wandered on over to watch the start, and witness how well these fellows were going to make out.

Now remember that this was the mid-80's, so things were not quite as high-falootin' as today. For example, Suzuki's "Quadracers" had just come on the scene, were brand new, and represented the trickiest ATV's going. Not many of these race-ready quads were in evidence, however. Many more riders were still mounted on more basic, four-stroke powered, sport quads. Also, there were plenty of 3-wheelers competing too. I recall that Yamaha "Big Wheel" motorcycles were running in with the ATV's as well.

Just before the start of the ATV's, a group of mountain bike racers came straggling in off the course. Apparently, Dave Coombs had included a mountain bike race in the weekend's events, covering one lap of the course, which had started earlier in the morning.

At this time, mountain bikes were just coming onto the scene, and I for one didn't know quite what to make of them. Although many of us, myself included, soon purchased, and began training on mountain bikes, on that day in Davis, I could not quite get a grip on how anyone could ride a bicycle over the kind of terrain the Blackwater had to offer. This point was driven home by the appearance of the cyclists. Virtually every one of them, as well as their mounts, looked as though they had fallen down a mineshaft. Not a happy bunch. Mountain bikes never again competed at Blackwater, so I guess it was a lesson learned.

Well, several hundred ATV's eventually got all lined up on main street, took the green flag, and went honking down the road for all of a hundred feet or so, made a hard right just before the old bridge, and plunged into the river. Pandemonium followed, as the water crossing immediately bottlenecked into a mass of churning, steaming, half-floating/half-sinking, stalling and drowning ATV's.

Riders urged, pushed, pulled, and/or dragged their machines through the water, and after some time, most of them disappeared down the trail bound for God knows what. A couple dozen or so of them however, were left behind, trying to clean out and restart their drowned machines. I wouldn't doubt that for a number of them, their day ended right there.

We saw a bit more of the quad event, including the infamous "Route 93 River Crossing" (more on that later), and wandered around town, just checking things out. Finally, after getting ourselves acclimated to the spectacle which was the Blackwater event, the wife and I got into the sign up line. This was a big deal, as there easily were a couple hundred riders in the line at any given time. Also, there was a certain amount of nervous

anticipation, as each entrant's starting position was decided at the last moment by drawing a number from a five gallon bucket.

Actually, there were three buckets total – one for the pros, one for pre-entries, and one for post-entries. When we finally arrived at the head of the line, I reached into the pre-entry bucket, having no idea what to expect, and pulled out the number 222. I was not at all displeased, as I knew Sunday's bike race was expected to attract around five hundred starters. Plus, the first 100 positions were reserved for the pros. And, confident that I had myself as ready to go as I was possibly going to get, the wife and I returned to the motel to try to get some rest.

Sunday morning dawned, as the old saying goes, clear and bright. In fact, no rain was predicted, and the area around Davis had been dry for some time. So dry in fact, that the general consensus around town was that this was going to be a more rideable event than in years past. That was perfectly fine with me, as I had no doubt whatsoever that the Blackwater course held plenty of challenges, regardless of how dry the conditions.

I had done my best to prepare my KTM for the event, but there was not much for me to do besides what was typical for any other hare scramble. Other than taping up the airbox a bit, and squeezing an oil bottle filled with premix into my fanny pack, (remembering that Ken Warrender had run out of fuel the year before) I made no special preparations. Well, I did have a couple of extra spark plugs on board, as well as some tools that I normally would not bother to carry, plus I had concocted a last-minute arrangement to carry a bottle of drinking water with me.

As this was back before the Camelback-style hydration systems had been introduced, there weren't many choices available other than clipping a canteen to one side of your fanny pack. However, I crashed much too frequently to risk landing on a canteen (as if rocks are any softer), so I devised an alternative. By chance, I had discovered that a plastic water bottle would snap right into place between the KTM's headlight/number plate and the handlebar's cross brace. The plastic number plate would give just enough to allow the bottle to slip into place, then held it tight, snug as could be. How slick, I thought. Wonder why no one had thought of this? Oh well, too bad for them – I was ready!

We had a great pit area set up in town, just two blocks back from the finish line, right on the course. Our man Ken Warrender had approached the homeowners of the property the night before, politely asked their permission to

pit out front, and was given the ok. Ken then pulled half a dozen orange traffic cones out of his trailer, and used them to stake out the entire corner. We arrived the next morning and had ourselves all kinds of room to park and pit.

At this point, there was not a whole lot to do except climb into our gear, and wait. The bikes were all set to go. They had to be, in fact, because in consideration for all us riders getting to pit right in town, no bikes were permitted to be ridden, or even started, before twelve noon. One sure way to have your scoring tags pulled, and your entry disqualified, was to fire up the old bike before the allotted mid-day hour. It sure made for quiet race day mornings at the Blackwater.

Those "scoring tags" to which I refer were for assurance against course-cutters, as well as so that the promoters could account for everyone after it was all said and done. They consisted of two 1 ½ inch by six-inch strips of plastic, which riders duct-taped to their bars, sticking forward. Then, prior to the start as well as during the event at unnamed locations out on the course, there would be checkpoints set up where you had to stop and get the tags punched. Turn in your scoring tags at the end of the event without the appropriate number of properly shaped holes, and you would be docked a corresponding numbers of laps.

Also, until all the tags were accounted for, the promoters would consider those entrants "missing in action", and search efforts would be carried out to assure the riders' status and safety. The Blackwater courses covered a lot of ground, and it was a wild, wild area, so no chances were taken. Why, you could easily get yosef et by a bar', for example.

At this 1986 event, our Dirt Works motorcycle shop "team" was still in its infancy, so I was pitted with just a small core group. Besides my KTM250E/XCelf, and previously mentioned Ken Warrender, who was mounted on an '85 Husky WR250, there was also Ritchie DiNardo, riding the same '82 Yamaha YZ250 on which Ken ran out of gas the year previous (I'm not sure if he had a contingency plan, but Ritchie was sure packin' a big fanny pack - he could have had a whole 'nother fuel tank in there.), and finally my old Youngstown, Ohio neighbor and buddy, Steve Chuey.

Steve deserves special mention here, because I consider him to be one of the true "heroes of Blackwater". Oh, he weren't no super fast rider like Frankie Gallo or anything like that. No, Steve was just a trailrider. In fact, the Blackwater races represent the only competition events in which he ever participated, and that is why I consider him a "Blackwater hero".

You see, while many of us kept buying new bikes, and riding and competing and keeping our motorcycling skills sharp even after we had gone and gotten all grow-ed up, Steve gave virtually everything over to his family, career, and continuing education after his teen years. However, he never let go of the last bike he ever bought – a 1979 Yamaha IT400. And, every Fathers Day weekend, after having not ridden the bike since the previous Fathers Day weekend, Steve would drag that old IT out of the shed, load it into his truck, and head for Blackwater. And there, dressed in jeans, sweatshirt, and work boots, he would have at it.

I have been advised by individuals much wiser, and worlds more widely experienced than I about what does and does not constitute hero status, but you just had to see old Steve taking his place on the line to appreciate the title I have afforded him. I just call 'em like I see 'em.

It finally came time for the rider's meeting, so we all walked down the two blocks to the main intersection of town to hear what Dave Coombs had to say. After we had stood around waiting for a short while, Dave climbed up onto the top of a bike trailer and gave us the "what-if's and how-for's". Basically, he told us that the Blackwater challenge we were about to embark upon would be the meanest, nastiest, ugliest, most horriblest experience we would ever have in our entire lives. ('Course, if that were so, what were we doing there?) Actually, it got me to wondering if Dave had ever done any racing in Ohio. Whatever. It was all for fun regardless, so we just enjoyed the propaganda and tried to pay attention to important stuff that would help us to find our way back out of the woods before July and things like that. Then it was back to our pit for more waiting.

Eventually, and long about the time the butterflies in our innards had made about fifty thousand laps, and I had hit the porta-cans for the twentieth time (race day mornings have that effect on me), we finally began pushing the bikes toward Main Street, for the start.

Now, while we actually got to start the Blackwater events right down there on Main Street, they couldn't have us clogging up the main highway beforehand. So, rather than initially lining up out on the road and bringing West Virginia State Route 32 to a standstill for two hours, our "pregrid" was a matter of parking the bikes side by side, against the curb, all down the length of the entire town.

So that we all got lined up in the right order, and far enough apart to leave room for everyone, a piece of twine, every bit of a quarter of a mile long, had been

stretched out in front of the curb, from the starting line, backwards. Every three feet or so, there were strips of tape affixed to the twine, with our ascending starting numbers printed on the strips. It was an ingenious and effective method, as well as one that we could all figger out without too much ponderin'.

How 'bout let's take a moment right now to thank the diligent soul who took the time to print, space, and affix, those 500+ pieces of tape? Wouldn't that be a thankless job? Like many of us, I've spent my share of precious free time performing "behind the scenes", unglamorous work prior to and during, events, so that the trail would be clear and the riders could get through. And so, I recognize important work that no one even notices, because it works – that well. So, here's to our unnamed friend. We do thank you for printing up all those tapes, right here and now.

Ok, so I've got my KTM parked right behind my very own, designated piece of tape, with my number 222 on it. Now what? Well, there's more waiting, of course. At least we weren't standing out in the rain, or in a sunblasted open field. Nosiree, we were standing on someone's front porch, leanin' on the railing. Shucks, the only things missing were a rockin' chair and a spittoon.

Actually, this was just one more example of the incredibly unique Blackwater experience. Davis' Main Street dates back a long ways – back to long before Highway 32 was anywhere near as wide as it is now. And, those old buildings didn't get shoved backwards when the highway widened. No way. The highway just expanded right up to their front porches. It couldn't go no further. So there were the bikes, backed up against the curb, and there we were, standin' right behind 'em, on the porches, all decked out in our riding gear. Quite a sight.

I actually got to rub elbows with a few "celebrities" while at Blackwater too, one of whom was starting on the number right next to mine. Don't know how many of you know the man, but it was Andy Poole, who at the time was a (the?) Metzler tire sales rep, frequently mentioned in Dirt Bike magazine. Andy turned out to be a fine fellow, and an experienced Blackwater competitor, who told me all kinds of scary stories about previous events. Thanks, Andy. You made me feel a whole lot "better" in those final few critical moments before the start.

Finally, an official came down the street to inform us that we could at last fire the bikes, and begin moving out from the curb and into our rows. There was certainly a bit of nervous anticipation at this point, as the no-start rule meant no reassuring warm up/shake down runs since the day previous. It was down to

right now. Any problems would have to be dealt with on the spot. I suppose our friends who are ISDT vets know this feeling all too well, what with their bikes being impounded prior to each day's start. It's not a comforting circumstance, that's for sure.

Fortunately for me, my KTM fired instantly. After tickling the carb, that tiny little stubby kickstarter unique to the model required only one healthy jab to fire the motor. Within moments, the length of the street was awash with sound, the noise echoing off the buildings. And smoke! I have never in my life seen so much two-stroke smoke! (Well there was that one Turkey Run, where we all got stopped at the first uphill, and I was in among the 250 class, which was stuck halfway up – cough, cough. Remember that one, Toni?)

I don't know if we jumped the gun a bit, or if it just took a few minutes for the traffic to filter out once the road had been closed, but as we moved out into the street and began pushing our bikes forward, toward the starting line, a car pulled up alongside of me, trying to work its way past all the bikes. Inside, were an "Uncle Roy and Aunt Judith" type couple, looking totally bewildered. They were moving in the opposite direction as we were, and as they passed by, Aunt Judith says through her open window, to no one rider in particular, "My goodness! What on earth is going on here?" As I was right beside them at that moment, I replied, "Why, this is the Blackwater 100, ma'am!" They don't even write stuff like this for the movies, guys. It was real, and must have been unlike anything Aunt Judith had ever seen, before or since. I know it was freakin' me out.

We actually moved forward very quickly. I started out pushing my bike, so that I could leave it in neutral and not overheat the clutch. However, we were soon rolling along at a pace that prompted me to hop into the saddle and toe 'er into first gear.

The next thing I knew, the guys in front were blasting away amidst smoking tires and clouds of two-stroke smoke. Rows of people lined the street ahead, and the AMA starter, Russ Haines was on our left, holding the green flag in one hand, and peering at his stopwatch, which he held in the other. Many, many skinny black patches covered the road surface, which resulted as the riders, nearly overwhelmed with anticipation and adrenalin, peeled out as Russ waved them off.

I took this all in during the few brief moments before, in the corner of my field of vision, I saw the green flag jerk upward and I nailed the throttle. The KTM accelerated smartly, and in moments I was braking, along with the other riders from my row, to make the right

turn/transition from blacktop surface to dirt. Now there were clouds of dust mixing with the two-stroke smoke, and I strained to see ahead.

Another turn, a left-hander, and we were headed downhill, into the first river crossing. For me, it was another first-in-a-lifetime experience, as there were *hundreds* of spectators lining the crossing. Heck, there were hundreds of people *in* the river. And the bikes – dozens of bikes were spread out, crossing the river at any given time, with hundreds more stacking up behind.

Even in 1986, the Blackwater spectators were already known for "augmenting" the course's natural obstacles. For example, it was a given that each year a dam was constructed downstream of this first water crossing, in order to assure ample depth, just to make sure the crossing was a challenge. Also, there was no certainty that freshly, artificially, recently (last night, before the moon rose) imported, breadbox-sized rocks hadn't found their way beneath the now churning surface.

As a result, I figured it to be in my very best interest to slide out of the saddle and walk the KTM through. The water was about knee deep anyway, but there were also big waves splashing up against the KTM and I, as a result of all the other bikes churning alongside of us, so the wet stuff was getting easily as high as the tank. I was wishing for my old "high-breather" '75 Hare Scrambler, just about the time the E/XC just shut off. Oh no!

We were actually almost across when she shut down, and a couple of spectators quickly jumped in behind and immediately pushed us right up out of the water. I gave the kicker a couple of tentative jabs, just to see what would happen. There was no hydraulic lock, so she hadn't taken a drink, thank goodness, but the engine wasn't refiring, either. The guys who had pushed me out of the water asked if I wanted more help. Since it appeared I was going to have to perform some trailside service, I said yes, and we were about to resume pushing, when I gave her one more kick and she fired up just like there was no problem at all. My new buddies and I gave a collective cheer and I thanked them, toed into gear, and split down the trail.

This was my very first time at all out in the boonies at Blackwater, so I had no idea what to expect. What I first encountered was a smooth, fast trail, littered with small "goonie-sized" rocks. You know, the size that a spinning knobby can fling right up into your face and ruin your whole day. However, the trail before me was fairly clear. Where was everyone? The guys ahead must have taken off like rockets, and the ones behind must all still be swimmin!

Anyway, so I'm just boppin' down this trail, looking to see what the Blackwater has to throw at me. Well, I'll tell you – rocks. Lots and lots and lots and lots of rocks. Man, is that a rocky area, down there. There were my goonie-buddy-sized rocks, all the way up to VW Beetle-sized rocks, and I was slammin' into all of them. Whoowee, the KTM was quickly hatin' this place, as I was hitting every rock in sight. Even the mud had rocks in it. It was no place to do a lot of crashing, that's for sure.

Finally, we get out onto a power line road, which was paved with – you got it – rocks. At least these rocks were of a consistent size and were spread evenly across the surface. The KTM was dancing all over the place, as the surface was so loose – like riding on marbles. But, we just kept her pointed in generally the right direction and followed the arrows.

There still were not a whole lot of other bikes around, and were it not for the course markers, I'd have thought seriously that I had already gotten myself lost. Soon enough though, we started down a long, gradual downhill, which terminated at the second river crossing, and I figured out where all the other riders had gone to. They were all right . . . here.

The river crossing itself was not the problem. It was wide, (too wide to dam up, fortunately) and rocky, but with patience, common sense, and an even throttle hand, the KTM and I chugged right through. Once again, I pushed through, as I was more than happy to trade speed for an H2O-free combustion chamber. Others though, were not so cautious, or fortunate, as plenty of bikes were, or were in the process of, drowning out.

What usually occurred was one of two things. Either the rider would simply lose his (or her) balance, and simply tip over – the force of the water current pushing the bike over, and the rider unable to overcome the drag of the water to get a steady foot in place in time, or the more entertaining, "Hey, look at this big rock I found under the surface" method. In this way, the rider would start out by attempting to remain in the saddle throughout the voyage. However, it aint so easy to see beneath the surface of rivers in the Blackwater River region – where we were coincidentally, competing. And so, our butt-in-the-saddle riders would, by chance, run their front tires right up onto submerged rocks that often turned out to be about basketball-sized. What happened then? Right, their 33" tall-at-the-saddle motorcycle suddenly becomes a 45" tall-at-the-saddle motorcycle, which is being pushed on, *real hard*, from one side, by a fast moving river current. Next, the nose of the bike

goes uuuuuup, said bike then tips over, rider sticks leg out but finds that it's way too short now, and "spaaa-lash"! Highly entertaining, as long as you did not happen to be the splashee.

But, the E/XC and I stumbled our way right across this river, no problem at all. No hidden rocks, no big spa-lash. However, just across the river was a long, winding uphill, with mountain-in-training-sized rocks on one side, dense woods full of a whole catalog of rocks in various sizes on the other, and another marble-loose rock-surfaced trail right up the middle. And, that uphill was bottlenecked – bad. I don't know how many bikes were there – many, that's for sure. I pulled up to the back of the line and stopped, wondering how any of us were going to get up there.

But then, as if by some miracle – a miracle not unlike old Sunday school descriptions of the parting of the Red Sea, a one-bike-wide gap opened in that bottleneck, right in front of me. I couldn't believe it. Nothing like it has happened to me before or since. I just put the KTM in gear and motored right past dozens of stalled riders. They were backed up all the way to the top of that hill, and I just kept cranking along, in the 250's low, low first gear, and passed everybody. It had to be one of my brightest moments, ever.

What followed was a *seriously* rocky trail. Considering what I have described up to this point, it's hard to imagine that the course could have become rockier, but it did. This trail was scary. I remember thinking that if anyone bailed in this area, they would be in serious trouble. It was absolutely ugly.

It was also here that the KTM and I began a bizarre game of "catch". Remember that water bottle-retaining system I was so proud of? Well, along this nasty trail, I was slamming the front end really hard on the bigger rocks. And, just about each time that the forks bottomed out completely, there was apparently enough flex taking place in everything on the bike that could move, that the water bottle started popping out of its little perch. And, amazingly, each time it did so, I was able to catch it!

Yep, I lost track of how many times it happened, but throughout the day, the same scenario kept repeating itself. The KTM's front end would bottom, that water bottle would jump out of its spot behind the number plate just like it was jettisoned, and yet it would either land in my lap, giving me a chance to snag it, or I would simply catch the thing with my clutch hand.

You would think that a sensible person would simply have allowed the thing to fall away, and forgotten about it. I don't know – maybe it was some kind of preservation thing, but I just didn't want to let that bottle of water get away.

Next we rode through an area that was the complete opposite of "The Badlands" trail. No rocks at all, just a smooth two-track, winding along through rolling hills. There were no trees here, and I wonder now if it may have been reclaimed strip mine land. With such a nice, smooth trail, it was an opportunity to just sit back and enjoy the ride. Some guys probably went super-fast along here, but I just cruised.

However, I did come upon, and pass, a KTM 125-mounted rider, and despite the fact that we were obviously in different classes, he began racing with me. This fellow was quite tenacious, and was really hanging on, but I had the horsepower and was able to stay in front.

That is, until we came to a little knot of spectators standing alongside a puddle in the road. Here is another interesting feature of the Blackwater events – no matter where on the course you were – seemingly miles from nowhere – there would here and there be little clumps of spectators. Sometimes there would be bikes or quads parked nearby to indicate their means of having arrived at such a remote spot, sometimes not. I wondered if some of them had arrived via helicopter, or had parachuted in.

Anyway, I knew there had to be a very specific reason why these folks were parked next to that little puddle. I mean, there wasn't another anything around for miles. The area was just all these grassy little hills, with the dirt road we were on running through the middle of it all, and here was this puddle. So, I back off and the guy on the 125 sees his chance and goes for it – right through the middle of the puddle, and after the big "spa-lash" has settled, I see that he has sunk to the seat.

I meanwhile, took dead aim on the spectator's bikes, squeezed between them and the puddle, and was gone down the road before the 125 had been drug out in anticipation of the next "victim". There's an old rule about spectators: don't go where they point, go where they are. Also, multiply this rule by a factor of three if same spectators are pointing with one hand and holding cans of beer in the other. Nuff said.

Beyond this open area, we entered the first woods trails encountered thus far in the event. It was a nice trail, about a quad-and-a-half wide, your typical, slippery, hard packed, never quite dries out, woods trail. I guess I was too busy catching that darned water bottle after every big front-end hit to notice, but apparently the trail was also climbing steadily in altitude.

I finally figured this out, because suddenly we started going seriously downhill. It then took me about 15 minutes of descending before I concluded that this was The Big Blackwater Downhill

everyone had been talking about. It was certainly a big hill, and I supposed it might have been something significant if you went down it faster than the snails pace I maintained, but I honestly cannot remember anything in particular about it. Guess that may be a result of all the "don't-matter-if-you-got-both-ends-locked-up-and-sliding-or-not-cause-gravity's-in-charge-and-you're-going-down-one-way-or-another" Ohio hills that I was so accustomed to. You know, Dave Capretta always used to say that downhill were just angled straightaways. But, Dave also could go as fast on a 1973 Jackpiner as most people can on any modern bike, so take that for what it's worth.

Once down to the bottom of The Big Hill, the trail appeared to be taking us back out into an open area. I could see bright sunshine ahead, as this was truly a beautiful day. However, as I exited the woods and my eyes readjusted to the light, I saw before me an amazing image – one that rates as one of the most amazing, from among my lifetime of off-road motorcycling experiences.

What I saw was an open valley, one that stretched out for miles, flat as a pancake. The landscape was featureless, too. There was nothing on it. It was like one of those dry lakebeds from out west, except that it was covered with coarse grass. There were no trees to be seen, no bushes, no nuthin'.

Well, there was nuthin', except motorcycles, that is. With nothing to obstruct the view, I finally saw all the riders who were ahead of me in the event. You could see them, hundreds of them, in a long, long winding line, reaching off into the hazy distance, demonstrating the true size and scope of The Blackwater event. In the bright sunshine, distinct against the drab green of the valley's grassy floor, the riders' colorful riding gear stood out, and



Ted and his '84 KTM 250 E/XC

provided a never to be repeated, unforgettable image.

This valley was, of course, one of The Blackwater 100's most famous (or infamous) features. It was what became commonly referred to as "the bogs". I really don't know exactly what "the bogs" were, but it was basically a valley of bottomless, mucky mud, covered with that coarse grass, and nothing else.

Still trying to come to grips with the unique and unusual terrain the bogs had to offer, I accelerated out onto the open surface. It was kind of like riding in sand, what with the bike moving around a bit, and with a good bit of drag on the motor. With my big, fat arse in the saddle the KTM could pull fourth gear, but that's it. In fact, I had to finger the clutch a little whenever I hit a soft spot, in order to keep her on the boil.

About those "soft spots", it appeared that the coarse grass surface of the bogs was getting torn all to heck by spinning knobby tires. Everyone was leaving muddy ruts in their wake, and the more we all ran over each other's ruts, the bigger, and wider, those ruts were becoming. Riders were spreading out all over the place, trying to avoid the ruts, too. Plus, it was really hard to see the muddy spots until you were right on top of them.

After a short time of performing this high-speed slalom run, I saw ahead of me another interesting feature of the bogs. Apparently, there were streams bisecting the valley, which brought with them, soils not otherwise present. And, with these soils came vegetation found nowhere else in the bogs. So, I approached the first of these streams, which was lined with trees and bushes, the only such growth for miles around.

Some riders ahead were converging on a particular access point by which to slip past the bushes and drop into the stream, so I followed. Much to my surprise, I found a sandy bank, leading to an equally sandy-bottomed creek. Very odd – in all this mud, here was a nice firm-bottomed stream. Also, as I dropped down the bank and started across, there standing in the middle of the water was none other than Rick Sieman, then editor of Dirt Bike magazine. I stopped alongside Rick and hollered out a hello. He hollered back and took my picture, and then I was on my way again.

I zipped up the other bank and was back underway in the bogs, pleased at having come across a fellow Youngstown, Ohio native and feeling rather confident about how I was handling things to this point. However, it was shortly thereafter, and with no warning whatsoever, that the KTM simply disappeared from beneath me. One moment I was straight-arming the bars, trying to keep weight off the front wheel

and traction to the rear, and the next I was staring straight up at that bright, blue sky. That was some kind of mud there in them bogs.

Getting the bike out really wasn't all that bad. I simply pulled the KTM onto its side, and once the wheels were level with the grass surface, turned 'er sideways to the rut and stood it back up. However, I was starting to get pretty tired at this point, as virtually every mile of the course up to this point had been physically taxing. I wasn't sure how many more of these mudhole-extraction exercises I could handle. Oh well, nothing to do but press on.

Actually, I only buried the bike two or three more times throughout the remainder of my Blackwater-bog tour, and none of them were a repeat of the first "missing motorcycle" solo-flight experience. Such was not the case for many of my fellow competitors, however, as riders were flying over the bars and augering into the mud left and right. There were simply bikes and riders all over the place – hundreds of us, and every one with a slightly different plan, and corresponding flight path, for negotiation of the bogs. It was pandemonium, kind of like a free-for-all cavalry charge. Crazy.

Anyway, I negotiated one final boghole trap, turned right onto a Godsend of a dirt road and motored onward and upward, away from the muck and mire. Actually, there were a few more mini-bogs to negotiate, but our next major obstacle was "The Moon Rocks".

Actually, I had never heard of, nor was expecting the so-called Moon Rocks. I was just motoring along a flat trail, when I came upon what appeared to be a thickly wooded hillside. The trail split into a "Y" here, and with no clear-cut indication of which way to go, I paused, took a little break, and pondered my next move. As I sat there, I could hear bikes at high revs, up ahead in the trees. I refired the KTM and moved ahead cautiously, curious to find what all the ruckus was about.

A short distance into the wooded area, the trees thinned out a bit, and I saw up ahead, an enormous rock. Not a rocky area, mind you, just *one* huge rock. How huge? Well, I was looking at a hillside, the edges of which disappeared to my left and right into the woods. Straight ahead, the trees ended, along with the topsoil, leaving just this one, huge, rock.

It did not appear at all possible to ride up and over this thing. I looked around, hoping that the monolith was some kind of giant trail marker, one whose face we were to follow as you might a guidepost, steering us clear of danger and back into open terrain. No

such luck. All around me, riders were attacking the face of the great rock, with greatly mixed results.

After observing a few scary loop-outs, and cringing at the ensuing crunch of man and machine against the shopping plaza-sized rock, I called an informal meeting of the several similarly preservation-minded riders parked nearby. "Hey fellows", I suggested, "doesn't it make more sense for us to help one another over this thing, rather than attempting individual banzai charges at it?" Over the anguished cries of yet another man/machine sacrifice to the rock-god, my new compadres agreed, and with a relative minimum of grunting and heaving, we pushed, lifted, and carried four bikes up that solid rock hillside.

Once topside, the lay of the land, as well as Dave Coombs' truly insidious nature, came to light. The Moon Rocks, were in the shape of a giant wedge, and we had just traversed the tallest, steepest "end". Before us, was a long gradual downhill, terminating where the rock disappeared back into the native soil. Dave had made us climb what was by far the most difficult end of this bizarre obstacle. By comparison, the ride down from the top of the Moon Rocks was as easy as falling off a . . . ah, . . . rock.

Actually, there was still considerable care required to ride off the thing, as the angled descent was lined with huge ruts, carved right into the surface by the runoff of rainfall over many, many moons. Evidently, that big rock has been exposed to the elements of what is now West Virginia for a very, very long time. How Dave found this thing, out in the middle of nowhere, is anyone's guess. I'll bet it made his day, though, thinking of how much fun we were going to have with it. Well, I know I sure did, and after stopping at the bottom for a checkpoint and getting my scoring tags punched, I gratefully left the Moon Rocks in my wake.

The terrain beyond was ridable, but tricky. There were lots of rocks to crash on, the odd mini-bog here and there, and some interesting water crossings. These were just small streams, but they had some serious water flowing through them. There were rocky, raging, whitewater streams, as well as wide, sluggish, mud-bottomed crossings. I have never seen such diverse courses of water in the same area before.

At one of the ragers, I arrived at the bank to find a beautiful waterfall. I don't know if Coombs led us to this point for the view, or if I he actually meant for us to try to cross there. Either way, I wasn't taking any chances, so I began scouting out a less turbulent section of the stream.

After cruising the bank for a couple hundred feet, I came to a spot so narrow, that I could have leapt across to the other side. Whoa, this is it, I thought, and was just about to drop the KTM's front tire in, when I paused to take a closer look. That water sure is dark blue, I thought. Dark blue. Hmmm. Usually, it's all brown from the mud bottom being stirred up, so dark blue must mean, deep!

Just then, my considerations were interrupted by a rider who came flying up from behind, paused not a moment, and plunged right in, precisely where I was looking to cross. His bike immediately disappeared, right up to the back tire! That little stream was so deep at that point that his bike went straight down!

The rider had jumped clear, turned immediately, and virtually *ordered* me to help extract his bike from the abyss. I don't know if this guy mistook me for a traveling pit crew, or was severely myopically handicapped and as a result mistakenly thought the KTM badge on my bike read "AAA", but I informed him that if my waning energy was going to extract any bike from such a predicament, it was going to be my own. I then proceeded further up the bank, found a shallow, waterfallless spot to cross, and was on my way.

Not long after this incident, one of the riders who came past me, very fast, (there were lots of them) had apparently become the victim of some sort of uniquely-Blackwater *creature*, which had attached itself to his back! Now, it had become commonplace for folks to compete at this event with all kinds of bizarre supplements to their riding gear. You would see riders wearing life preservers, or tuxedos, or with stuff taped or strapped to their helmets – like antennae or beer cans or rubber chickens or whatever. However, this was a *creature*, of considerable size, clinging to the guy's back!

This freaked me out, and I began doing a lot of looking over my shoulders, fearing some similar troll or troglodyte or some such thing might come up out of the bogs after me as well. Fortunately, my fears were for naught, because, as I found out later, had I been able to keep the creature-equipped rider in sight for more than a moment or two, I would have observed that it was in fact Geoff Ballard, the Australian off-road champ. Geoff was in the states, riding for Can-Am, and in celebration of his Kiwi heritage, and in keeping with the unconventional attitude surrounding the Blackwater event, competed that day with a Koala bear backpack strapped to his body armor. The Koala even sported a pair of goggles.

Whatever the case, it sure looked like a creature to me.

Still reeling from the creature sighting, I began to notice an odd track in the trail. Everywhere there was a soft area, or a bit of mud, there was this mark to be seen. I paid particular attention to the impression, as I still was concerned about whatever other unique, Big Foot/Sasquach/Boogie-Man thing might be hanging around out here in the wilds of West Virginia.

I continued to ride along, for several miles in fact, and all the time there was this odd mark to be seen. I began to consider more plausible, but still quite unlikely devices, which could be marking the trail. The only thing I could come up with, that could make such an impression, was possibly an old, steel-rimmed wheelbarrow. Of course, this idea was absurd. What would such a device be doing out on the Blackwater trail, for example?

Soon enough though, and just as I was formulating the idea of some crazoid towing a metal-wheeled wheelbarrow behind his bike, I came upon the source of the tracks. Before me, motoring along at a slow, but steady pace, was a fellow competitor with no rear tire on his bike. Yep, somehow, somehow, the guy's rear tire had disappeared completely, and that impression I had been pondering over for the last few miles was from the two edges of his rim, digging into the trail surface as he traveled along, trying to ride back to civilization. You gotta wonder how he came to be in such a predicament. Maybe the poor guy lost a bet or something???

Along about this time, I started to wonder just where in the heck I was, because the KTM & I had covered a *lot* of ground since the start. The Blackwater laps were supposed to be about 25 miles each, but I was not running an odometer, and so had no idea just how far I still had to go.

I did know that there was at least one more major obstacle ahead that I would have to traverse before getting back to town. That was the Route 93 River Crossing. Easily the most famous Blackwater 100 feature, the R93RC was as well known (and difficult) because of the spectators who gathered there, as for any other reason.

The Route 93 River Crossing was really just another stream for us to ford. It was not that deep and it was not that wide. It didn't have either a particularly muddy or rocky bottom, either. There was a ten to fifteen foot high bank on the exit side that had to be negotiated on the way out, but it wasn't so bad. It wasn't even very steep. If you encountered this crossing way out in the

woods, you probably wouldn't even remember it all that much.

Ah, but the Route 93 River Crossing's location was right alongside of West Virginia State Route 93, at a point just about three miles or so north of town. So, where do you think many, many of the thousands of spectators gravitated to after the riders took the green flag back in town? Yup, they loaded up and drove right around the corner and up the road a piece to the river, then parked alongside the road and waited for the riders to show up.

So you are thinking, "So what? There's a nice big crowd of folks on hand to watch you cross this little stream. What's the big deal about that?" Well, to start with, let's consider that the second most popular thing to do at the Blackwater events – after riding – was drinking beer. And, here's all these folks, drinking lots of beer, with nothing to do while waiting at the Rout 93 Crossing for the riders to come through. So, they busy themselves with damming the river, (gotta make sure it's nice and deep), as well as tossing a few (dozen) of those basketball-sized rocks into the murky water (wouldn't want the riders to have it too easy), and finally they actually took buckets and covered the exiting bank with river water – just to make sure it was a slippery as possible. Oh, and did I mention that the exit bank was of a *clay* surface? Ever ridden on wet clay-mud? Let's just say that traction became a major issue.

All these factors combined to make the Route 93 River Crossing a challenge, to say the least. Still not convinced? Well, here's the final circumstance that made it so interesting. The spectators were not satisfied with damming the river and adding the rocks and watering the bank. No sir. They wanted to witness the results of their efforts up close and personal, and weren't about to stay back a safe distance when the riders came through. Nor were they satisfied with watching the riders through a bunch of other spectator's heads.

As a result, those thousands of people at the Route 93 River Crossing spread out *all over the place*. They were on the bridge, all over both sides of the river, on the bank leading up the river, *in* the river, *and* on the exit bank! There was nowhere left for the riders to go!

My personal experience with this phenomenon came just a few miles after I began to wonder if I was ever going to complete my first lap. I was riding across what appeared to be more reclaimed strip mining land, when I saw some trees up ahead. As I drew closer, I saw color, lots of color, mixed in with the trees. Closer yet, and I could see that the colors were

spectators. Lots of spectators. Lots and lots of spectators.

I actually came up to the back of the crowd, and had to stop! There was nowhere to go. The people were standing elbow to elbow, and I thought I might have wandered off the course and was crashing someone's big party. But, I saw lots of knobby tracks on the ground, so I just began easing my way forward, hollering "Coming through, coming through!", and forcing my way through the crowd.

Eventually, I came to the riverbank, and paused to take in the scene. There were other riders dropping into the river both to my left and to my right, more of them in the water, and yet more negotiating the exiting bank at various points. The river was also filled with spectators - dozens of them, spread out all over the place, and the top of the exiting bank was lined with a solid mass of people, several rows deep.

There was frantic activity everywhere. Riders attempting to cross the river were throwing up big rooster tails of muddy water, and every few seconds, one of them would exit the water and attempt to climb the bank. A successful climb was met with a cheer from the spectators, along with a miraculous parting of the scores of people at the top of the bank. Everyone wanted to see what was going on, and they would not get out of the way until the last second.

Unsuccessful attempts to climb the clay bank were met with even louder cheering, as the rider, as often as not, parted from his machine in a rather spectacular fashion. Huge loop-outs were common, as well as being the most popular acrobatic display. Other times, riders would realize their effort was not going to result in bike and body both achieving the summit simultaneously, so they would do the big "push-off" move, which often resulted in the unburdened bike successfully completing the ascent, solo, *and* going pilot-less, and out of control, into the crowd.

Despite all that they had done to contribute to this scene of pandemonium, the beer-enriched crowd nonetheless still apparently fostered empathy for the riders, because they did not simply stand idly by and observe the carnage. On the contrary, any and all riders who made any kind of valiant attempt at all on the river's clay bank were rewarded not only with cheers of congratulation for success, but also an outpouring of assistance following failure.

The crowd lifted, carried, rescued, and salvaged rider after rider and bike after bike. And, considering that everything and anything anywhere near the river was a mass of mud, the assisting spectators soon became

thoroughly and totally coated with it. Considering their heroic efforts, and their appearance, this crazed group were even awarded their own nickname: They became known far and wide as The Blackwater 100 Mud Fleas.

Much of this was reported to me later by my wife, who had courageously placed herself right in among the lunacy, right on the entrance bank, and was snapping pictures left and right. She reported seeing many, many crashes, often involving the crowd. Spectators were knocked down into the water by out of control bikes, some actually going completely under the brown surface, only to emerge a moment or so later, coughing and spluttering. Bikes, some of them being the ones "pushed off" were knocking people down up on top of the bank, too. There were just too many people there for everyone to get out of the way each time a bike came careening into the crowd.

Once, the wife watched as an XR rider successfully crested the bank. The crowd parted before him – all except one gal, who actually got scooped up from behind by the Honda. As the rider kept the throttle on in his attempt to assure he had cleared the bank, the bike's front tire and fender went right between the girl's legs, and carried her along for a moment or two. As quickly as he could, the rider then got out of the throttle and slammed on his brakes. This, of course, freed the girl from her precarious perch aboard the XR's front end, but she then shot forward and plopped face first in the mud. In a moment, she was back up and laughing about it, and preparing to dodge the next bike. Insane!

Amazingly, considering the size of the crowd, my wife actually managed to spot me as I paused on the bank, preparing myself for my assault on the river and the clay bank. Finally, there was nothing left to do but drop into the water and take a shot at it. It didn't matter where you entered the river or what line you took. Success or failure resulted from luck at the R39RC, as much as anything else. For example, Reb told me later that some guys who dropped into the river right next to where I did, ended up going right over the bars into the water, as there was a big hole at that spot, hidden by all the stirred up mud.

All I remember is that I could see a small rain rut on the exit bank, leading from the crest, all the way down into the water. With some small hope that the rut might afford a bit of extra traction, and figuring that falling out of a rut is a lot less likely than falling into one, I took aim on it and started splashing in that direction.

With great good fortune, I encountered no big rocks in my line, and in a few moments, had forded the river and reached the bank. I didn't hit my rut quite dead on, but with a finger on the clutch, and in second gear, and with just one foot-dab to correct my line in the rut, the KTM pulled me up that clay bank lickity-split. In an instant, the crowd was parting before me and then I was clear. Considering all the problems experienced by so many other riders, it seemed too easy. I can only say that I simply was lucky. Reb even snapped a picture of me in my moment of triumph.

So, with Route 93 and the Mud Fleas behind me, the final few miles back to town were a cruise. There was this beautiful little run through a pine forest, easily the best trail of the event. Coombs must have figured to take pity on the fortunate souls who made it this far and give us something enjoyable. And then the trail terminated onto a residential street, and I was in town. What a thrill! I was so pleased with myself and with my old KTM. It had worked so hard to help me get this one lap in.

I rounded a corner and a couple of blocks ahead, at the bottom of the hill, I could see our trucks and trailers. Our pits! My family and friends! Yahoo! As I approached them, I started yelling to get their attention, and as we rounded that corner, I clutched the KTM and pitched the bike sideways in mud-slinging powerslide.

We had been given strict instructions at the rider's meeting that the speed limit in town would be an enforced 5 mph. Also, we were to obey all traffic laws, including stop signs. In fact, at the end of the block, past our pits, there was actually an official standing in the middle of the road, holding a sign to make sure that everyone stopped.

At this point however, it was impossible to hold back entirely, and I could not help but gas it a little bit following that stop, down the last hill, covering the last block, before rolling into the scoring barrels at Davis' main intersection.

I had my lap entered into the books, got my scoring tags punched, then turned around and headed back to our pits. They were waiting for me, of course, and I remember Ken Warrender's mom saying, "Oh, thank goodness our first rider is in!" so apparently I was the fastest and/or luckiest of our little group. I was also very relieved and happy, because the event had turned out to be everything it was advertised to be – and much, much more.

Now, obviously I had completed only *one* lap of the four, which made up the event. Do I feel badly about quitting? Well, there is always regret over not having done better, but I can say that I had given it my all and was so tired that there is no way I could have completed even a portion of another lap. Any rider who completed any one of the Blackwater events in its entirety is a tough, tough soul in my book, and a heck of lot better rider than I'll ever be.

Just such a rider is Mark Hyde, who won that day, piloting a Husky 430 Automatic. Mark in fact tallied a total of four Blackwater overalls during his career. Truly an incredible record. One of our Dirt Works crew, Flip Jendre, came in an impressive 4th in the 250B class. Flip is an awesome rider, but even for him the Blackwater was incredibly tough. Also, my 220-starting-row partner, Andy Poole came away with 4th in the Senior B class. Another great ride. I am able to start alongside these guys, but I just cannot seem to *finish* with them. That finishing part is tough!

My own little group also came through well. We each got one lap in, including Steve Chuey, with that old IT Yamaha. Just goes to show that with the right attitude, a lot can be accomplished. More so though, we each had a fantastic time, filled with memorable experiences. And, that's what these rides are supposed to be all about, especially for us guys who are just out there for the fun and experience. Hey, we never kidded ourselves about going for a top spot in our classes, or even finishing the entire event – as was the case with the Blackwater races.

No, the main thing for us was simply to be a part of the event, and to enjoy the amazing experiences, which the Blackwater 100 had to offer. It was a great time for me each year I rode Dave Coombs' special event there in Davis, West Virginia. The Blackwater 100 is long gone now, unfortunately, the victim of land use issues, as well as having become more and more difficult to control in later years. The Big Party, which was such a large part of the Blackwater events, brought its own challenges and difficulties and contributed to the race's demise.

However, for a few years, there were few if any off-road races in the entire world, which were more famous, more notorious, or attracted more riders, pro and amateur alike, than the late, great Blackwater 100 – America's Toughest Race.



Make your plans to attend this year's AMA Vintage Days event at Mid-Ohio – July 15-17, 2005
More information about this event and our Penton Display and activities will be in the next newsletter

Tech Tips

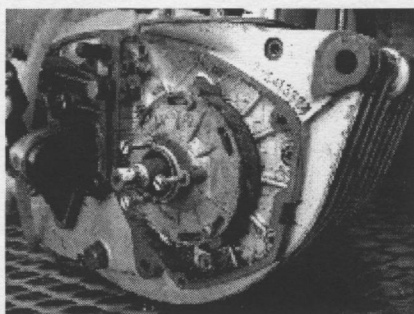
Keeping your Ignition going

by Alan Buehner

At the Penton Day at the AMA meeting on Feb. 5th, Dane Leimbach talked about the Motoplat ignitions and some of the problems that can be expected from them. He gave some pointers on them and I thought it would be a good idea to share them with all of our POG members who could not make it to the meeting. This information pertains not only to the Motoplat Ignitions, but also the new PVL and MZ-B ignitions.

KEEP THEM DRY

You know that old saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of trouble"? Well, water and moisture do not get along with ignition systems even if you have a sealed ignition cover. A hot motor and cold water will cause condensation to build up in the water tight compartment unless it is vented. Condensation causes corrosion to aluminum and magnesium and steel to rust. The best way to prevent corrosion after a day of muddy riding or after having just washed your bike is to remove the ignition cover and leave it off until the next time you go riding. This will allow any moisture to dry out.

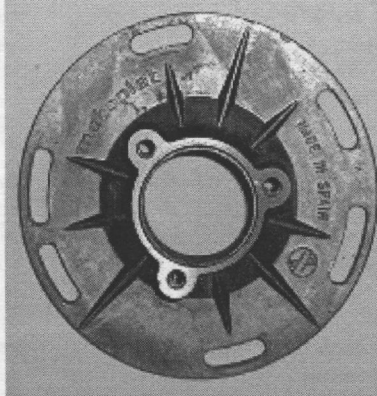


KTM motor with Motoplat stator and flywheel removed showing mounting plates and screws.

KEEP THEM GROUNDED

From time to time I get calls from people trying to get their newly acquired Penton to light up. I have

shared information that I have learned from other people's stories. Such as, after painting the frame, remove the paint from the engine mounting tabs so the the motor will have good metal to metal contact with the frame. Make sure that the coil mount also has good metal to metal contact. Dane also shared this logical peice of information. All of the mounting points of the Motoplat Ignitions carry a ground and should be rust and corrosion free.



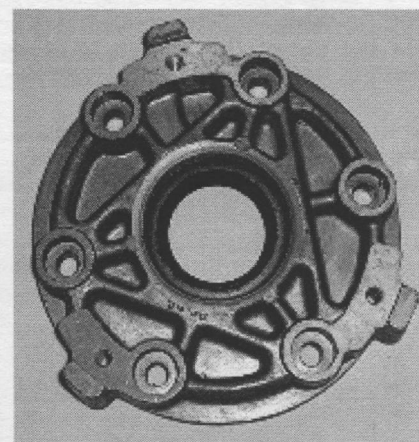
Standard Motoplat mounting plate for stator unit used in the Penton Sachs and KTM motors. It is attached to the motor with 3 Phillips head screws. The Stator is then attached to the mounting plate with 3 pan head screws.

Since the Motoplat Ignition is mounted on a plate which is also screwed to the seal retaining plate (on the KTM motors) removing and cleaning the mounting screws of the Motoplat will re-establish a good ground between the motor and the stator unit. This is especially important for all KTM motors. The magnesium motors corrode very easily. Over time the mounting screws will corrode and since the seal retaining plates have a gasket between it and the motor, it is the screws that are doing the grounding. This can be a big problem especially if the motor has been sitting for 20 years. In most cases, just removing the screws and retightening them is enough to re-establish the ground.

DON'T KILL YOUR IGNITION

Never kick over a motor without the spark plug connected. Every time an electronic ignition is spun, it builds up a charge in the internal capacitor that gets discharged when the spark plug fires. If the capacitor is not able to discharge it could overload to the point when it does finally discharge, it will burn out.

Examples of this given by "Speedy" Clasen (Canada) were: Removing the spark plug from the head and not having it plugged into the coil lead and resting against the cylinder while kicking the bike over, or drowning your bike in a river crossing, turning the bike upside down after removing the spark plug and turning the rear wheel to pump the water out of the cylinder. "Speedy" recommends keeping a peice of inner tube (rubber band) in your tool kit. If you should run into a situation where you need to pump water out of your motor, put the rubber band around the cylinder to hold the removed spark plug (connected to the coil) to the cyclinder so that the capacitor can be discharged while the motor is being turned over. He has personally witnessed riders at river crossings unknowingly burn out their ignitions without realizing what they had done wrong.



Crank seal mounting plate used on the KTM motors only. It is held in place by six Allen Head screws. The Motoplat mounting plate attaches to this plate with three Phillips head screws.

Penton Day At The AMA by Ted Guthrie

"Two thousand and five will be the Year of the Jackpiner." So decreed the newly elected POG president, Paul Danik, at the beginning of the New Year. And, in keeping with this declaration, the Jackpiners turned out in force for the 2005 edition of Penton Day At The AMA.

In unseasonably warm temperatures, and under a crystal clear blue sky, the Jackpiners did indeed turn out, and were lined up right in front of the main entrance to the Motorcycle Heritage Museum, at the AMA headquarters, in Pickerington, Ohio, this last February 5th.

In all, nearly 30 Pentons were brought out for display by their owners. While there were other models in evidence, by far the main body of bikes represented, were Jackpiners. Numerous models, ranging from Ollie Martin's pristine '68 'Piner, through a series of gorgeous CMF bikes, up to and including Ted Del Solar's "Davie" and Greg Troyan's 1979 KTM 250, featuring Fox forks and shocks, which purportedly may be an ex-factory bike, were all lined up for inspection and admiration.

While the moderate weather and variety of bikes on display tempted everyone to linger outside, eventually we were all herded indoors so that the day's festivities could commence. However, it still took some time before everyone was seated, as the museum, while still in the construction stage of the new Heroes Of Motocross display, regardless had numerous bikes to check out.

Eventually though, the capacity crowd settled down and a brief but informative edition of the monthly POG meeting was conducted. In addition to the scheduled reports of membership, website data, e-bay, etc, Paul Danik described the club's intention to write and publish a new book, devoted entirely to the creation, production, performance, and legacy, of the Steel-Tank Pentons.

As part of the process for assembling specification data for the book, Bill Smith reviewed the importance of the POG website's Production Years and Bike Register sections. Owners of Steel-Tankers, as well as all Penton owners, contribute considerably to the club's information base, by submitting details of their machines. Paul Danik also reminded everyone that a big

part of the Steel-Tanker book is going to be personal stories and recollections, by the riders of these bikes. Hence, anyone who is interested in sharing their experiences of owning, riding, and racing Steel-Tankers are encouraged to contact the club.

Next came the introduction of a new piece of Penton merchandise, to be offered through the club, courtesy of POG member John Harden. John has produced a very handsome, lightweight jacket, featuring the Penton crest on the back, and has pledged that all profits from the sale of the jackets will go to the Penton Owners Group. John, who was not present, also wished that this very first jacket be presented to Mr. Penton, as a gift.

To the applause of all in attendance, Mr. Penton tried on the jacket, and announced that it is a perfect fit, now that he has lost his "front". Look for ordering information on the jacket, as well as a Year Of The Jackpiner t-shirt, which has been created by Scott Brogan, both on the Penton Owners Group website.

Dane Leimbach next reported on some exciting archival photographs he recently received from the Farioli family, who are currently in possession of many historical Pentons, originally from the KTM museum. Included in these photos are images of what Dane believes may have been the first KTM-engined Penton. This bike displaced 388cc, and featured a non-starburst head. Dane & Bill Smith currently are working with the photos, trying to extract more details from them.

Jack Penton spoke next, and revealed that this year's KTM dealer meeting, which will be held in Columbus, Ohio, may very well include participation by the Penton Owners Group. While specific details are yet to be worked out, Jack is looking into it, and will report soon on what we may expect.

Mr. Penton was a guest of last year's KTM dealer meeting, held in Las Vegas, and related the story of a special gift he received while there, in celebration of his 79th birthday. That gift was in the form of a giant KTM banner, which was signed by all the dealers in attendance – a true testament to all that Mr. Penton has played a great role in creating.

Jack added, that at one point during the meeting, he was asked what was to be done should Mr. Penton see the banner as the signatures were being applied. "No

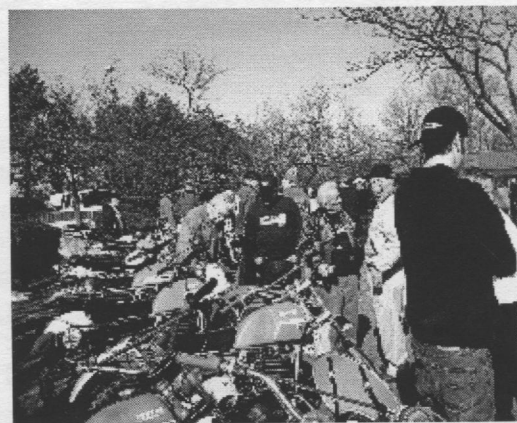
problem!" he had said, "Just have my father sign it, too!" All in attendance got a good chuckle from the story.

Ted del Solar spoke next, and described how certain individuals within the club should be recognized for "a good job, and good work". He followed this up by presenting to Al Born, the gift of a custom-made, engraved harmonica holder/plaque. By now, many have heard the story of how Al's skills with the harmonica were brought to light during a trip to the AMCA meet in Iowa last year. Apparently, throughout the trip, he serenaded, or as the case may be, kept awake, his fellow POG members, by playing tunes. And so, in tribute to his contributions via the harmonica, Al received his special plaque.

It was also noted that Al Born has recently taken his retirement, after 50 years on the job with the Ford Motor Company. On Al's retirement, Mr. Penton made the comment that Al is known as a friend by virtually everyone he has ever worked with. Congratulations on a well earned retirement, Al.

Next on the agenda, Kent Knudson displayed a group of t-shirts he had acquired from John Ayers, commemorating last year's Millfield, Ohio GNCC race, which is named in honor of Mr. Penton. These shirts, which Paul was selling at an even exchange for his cost, were quickly snapped up, and following which Mr. Penton was immediately put to work autographing virtually every one of them.

At this point, the group took time out for a lunch break, browsed around the museum, and enjoyed pizza, provided courtesy of Buehner's Office Supplies. Additionally, many folks wandered back outside to spend some more time looking over all the Pentons on display. It should be noted that at this time, several otherwise *mature* individuals engaged in some impromptu snowball tossing.



Some of the Penton bikes on display outside the AMA Museum

Following the lunch break/snowball fight, Dane Leimbach spoke once again, and shared some fascinating stories of his early experiences with Penton motorcycles, as well as an insiders report on the technical side of the Penton story. Dane is the son of one of Mr. Penton's sisters, but did not really become

involved with the motorcycle side of the family – his uncles and cousins, until he went to work for John's brother Ted, at the Penton family machine shop.

Dane explained that much of the Penton family's mechanical skills, which were eventually applied to the engineering and development of the motorcycles, came about as the result of "just trying to make things work". It came down to simple, practical application, and of making existing things, better.

An example of this kind of work followed, as Dane displayed the exhaust pipe from the Penton he rode in the 1976 ISDT, held that year in Austria. The pipe, an 11th hour fabrication job, was assembled by Dane and Carl Cranke, literally hours before the bikes were to be loaded into a container, and shipped to Europe. Dane and Carl cut and pieced a stock pipe, along with sections of others, and ended up with a creation which, Dane reports, resulted in his '76 175 Penton providing the best and most usable power of any bike he had ever ridden, right up to the most modern, power-valve equipped models.

Dane also demonstrated some components, quite often taken for granted, which came about as the result once again of simply solving problems. One such component involved creating one-piece, rear axle, chain adjuster/spacer combinations. These of course, simplified tire-changing procedures, by reducing the number of individual components, which potentially could be dropped or lost during time-critical ISDT tire changes.

Even more fascinating, was Dane's explanation of how folding shift levers came to be. Such a device was first employed by Tom Penton, during the time he was enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. It seems Tom was stationed in Southern Florida, and found that while trail riding, the ground-hugging and unyielding Palmetto bushes native to Florida to be quite hard on conventional shift levers.

Tom's first version of a folding lever did not employ a return spring, but rather made use of a rubber band, stretched forward, from the tip of the lever, and connected to the frame. As development continued and more people caught on to the idea, the Japanese manufacturers became involved, and Dane actually found himself in the position of providing documentation to verify Penton's early introduction of the design. The data was needed to

settle patent infringement contentions.

Finally, Dane explained how he came to find out, just this last year, how he was actually the top placing American rider at the 1971 ISDT, held on the Isle of Man. Dane was provided this fact at last year's ISDT Reunion Ride, by Ron Carbaugh. It seems Ron had done some research on the '71 event, and by comparing the class-winning rider's overall scores with the American Trophy Team rider's scores, determined that Dane had placed the highest of any American in the event.

What is even more amazing about Dane's accomplishment, is that he was only 20 years old at the time, was competing in his first-ever ISDT, and was riding in the 100cc class. Additionally, Dane's scores at the end of the week placed him 6th overall in class. A tremendous performance, particularly when considering the world class level of competition at the ISDT events.

Next up was Rod Gorzny, who graciously shared with the group, his knowledge of motorcycle restoration techniques. Rod advised that for a successful restoration effort, a few basics should always be followed, which included purchasing a manual, identifying and labeling all parts, as the bike is disassembled. Much additional information was shared, with numerous other members offering suggestions. Look for reports covering this accumulated knowledge in future copies of Still Keeping Track.

Speaking of keeping your Penton running properly, Dane Leimbach spoke once again, this time on the maintenance requirements of ignition systems. He explained that corrosion and the resulting lack of an effective ground are the primary sources of problems with these systems. Dane also used his "wind chime" display of coils to graphically demonstrate the differences in the various units offered over the years. For more information on your Penton's ignition system, contact Dane, at Penton Imports Co. Look for them on the POG website's Supplier Page.

Ed Youngblood was the last to speak, and provided all in attendance with a preview of what to expect from the upcoming Heroes Of Motocross exhibit. From his descriptions it is certain that Ed's planning and hard work will result in a display, which should not be missed.

The meeting then concluded with a raffle of some fine Penton merchandise, donated by the group, including some t-shirts, posters, programs, dvds, and an outstanding, vintage metal trash can emblazoned with a classic Penton sticker, which Dane had brought in from the Penton Bros. Machine shop.



The POG meeting in the AMA Museum

There was, however, one more very special event, which took place before the day ended. The Penton Owners Group, as well as the Motorcycle Heritage Museum, played host to a wedding, as Mr. Gary Roach and Ms. Toni Proffer exchanged vows at the foot of the facility's grand staircase.

Dressed in matching, vintage Penton jerseys, as were many of the similarly attired guests the couple were joined in marriage, before returning to the museum's upper level for a reception. Wedding cake (decorated with the image of a Penton Jackpiner) was served, and the newlyweds posed for pictures with family, friends, and of course, Mr. John Penton himself.

It was a first for the Penton Owners Group as well as for the museum, and a truly unique way to bring the day's activities to a close. All in all, this year's Penton Day Event was a great success. Our thanks to Mr. Ed Youngblood and the Heritage Museum for once again hosting the Penton Owners Group, and to Mr. and Mrs. Roach for sharing their wedding day.



Mr. & Mrs. Gary Roach showing their wedding cake after the wedding ceremony.

LATEST NEWS

POG member, Don Rosene of Alaska, received mention in the February 2005 issue of the American Motorcyclist magazine. There was a ride guide special section on Alaska and Don's "The Motorcycle Shop" in Anchorage was the starting point for the writers who had their bikes shipped there. A nice side bar article appears in the guide talking about Don, his past (racing and working for John Penton), and how he came to Alaska, his buying the shop, and his current involvement with the Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum.

On the cover of the January 2005 issue of Vintage Views is a color photo of an "unidentified" Penton rider on a Mint 400. The photo was taken by Matt Benson, the editor of "Vintage Views", and he was unable to identify the rider at last year's cross country national in Portland, MI because the number plates were covered with mud. POG members who received the magazine had no problem identifying the rider as one of our POG members, Bob Wardlow of Michigan. It was a nice photo of Bob on his Penton riding the course and Matt Benson graciously e-mailed a copy of it which was placed on the Penton Web Site.

Interview with John Penton

by Ted Guthrie

This last December, Mr. Penton underwent surgery to have an existing artificial joint in his left knee replaced, with an updated prosthesis. During the Penton Day at the AMA event, we got him to slow down long enough to answer a few questions about his newest "trick part".

SKT: What made you decide to have your existing artificial knee joint replaced?

JP: I've had the old joint in for going on 13 years, and it never had enough bend to it. Also, I had damaged it with the butt of a chain saw - broke the kneecap. Plus, during a survey, the doctors had found some bone deterioration in there. Also, the newest prosthetics are 75% better now

The Antique Motorcycle Club of America - Oley, PA meet is being held this year on April 29, 30 and May 1st. Lee Buffenmyer (PA) will be bringing some bikes and setting up our POG display there this year. If you plan on attending and can volunteer some time to help out, call Lee at 717-626-0005, or E-mail leebuff98@yahoo.com.

At the Penton Day at the AMA meeting in February, Jack Penton made an exciting announcement. KTM will be holding their annual dealer meeting at the AMA museum this year in August. Rod Bush has extended an invitation for the POG to submit a proposal for a "Penton Display" during the event. This will allow us to show the Penton involvement in the history of KTM to it's dealers who attend. The board members of POG are excited about this opportunity to work with KTM. It will be discussed at the March meeting and more information about it will be placed on the web site and in the next newsletter when the details are worked out.

TRAIL RIDING IN MICHIGAN APRIL 23 & 24, 2005

Ted del Solar is inviting you to go trail riding with him in April along part of the Michigan Cross Country

than 13 years ago. Why, with this new one, I could jump over the moon, right now.

SKT: How is your recovery coming along?

JP: After they finished it, in recuperating, I just got going too fast. Two weeks after I got out, I thought to myself, I'll get back in shape by walking half a mile. But that is not the way! I know now that you've got to take it easy for the first three or four weeks.

SKT: Will you be able to climb ladders now, run the tractors, and do all the things you are used to doing?

JP: I'm already doing well, climbing staircases, and doing moderate exercise therapy. To help rehabilitate the knee,

Cycle Trail that he wrote about and was published in issue 21 & 22 of this newsletter.

The area involved is 15 to 25 miles from Muskegon in the Manistee National Forest on trails known as Cedar Creek, Holton and Horseshoe Lake. These loops offer wide, easy old trails to tight new ones with the longest about 30 miles. Bike requirements are spark arrestor and ORV sticker. The sticker cost is \$16.25, and is good for the year. It is available on line and at Meijers and WalMart stores. Not having a sticker could cost you \$140 if checked by a conservation officer. For those that want to do the maximum riding, we will start with Cedar Creek at 9 AM on Saturday, go to Holton for the afternoon, start Horseshoe Lake Sunday morning and do Holton the reverse way in the afternoon. This schedule is a starting point and can be adjusted according to the desires of those riding.

Further details will be posted on the Penton Owners Group site at the end of March and can be had by contacting Ted del Solar at 1-630-325-1859 or incaktm@yahoo.com.

you must both bend and pull the muscles. What I was doing, getting on my tractors and stuff like that, I got this thing all out of shape. But, there's hope for me now that I'm going a little easier with the therapy.

SKT: So, you would say that the operation was beneficial?

JP: Oh, totally beneficial. I had to have it. Otherwise the Osteoporosis would have gone down my shin, and that gets - messy.

SKT: Did the folks at the hospital take good care of you?

JP: Oh yes. The surgeon, a neat little girl at the Cleveland Clinic, who I know - she's really tops. It's really ironic though,

that I had my surgery done on the 10th of December, and then on the 11th of January, she was having a knee done, too.

SKT: So, you would recommend this procedure for anyone who is in need of replacement surgery?

JP: Yes. Today, if a person is healthy, and doesn't have problems with diabetes or something like that, definitely get it done. A knee replacement is much more complicated than a hip – by far, but they have it down to a science now.

SKT: Did the doctor offer to give you the old knee joint as a souvenir?

JP: (Laughs) Well, I did ask for it, but the Cleveland Clinic is a big operation and, . . . it's complicated. I didn't want to bother the doctor too much for it.

SKT: Do you expect this new joint to hold up well for you?

JP: The old story was that an artificial knee joint would last you ten years. But today, the new ones, if you are a healthy and active person, will last you the rest of your life. They are in some ways better than your natural joint.

SKT: Well, we're just glad that this worked out well for you.

JP: Oh, I thank God for all the stuff I've been able to heal up from. I've busted my spleen out, have broken every rib in my body, broke my back of course, and then there's the time they had to repair my heart. It came at a time when I got mad at the Cleveland Clinic, so I got into my truck and drove up to the Mayo Clinic. Once there, some doctor buddies that I know got me checked in, and on Friday

they took my heart out, patched it up, and the following Tuesday I drove myself home. So, my advice is to keep yourself healthy and stay active. If you can stay healthy, that's the key.

SKT: Thank you, Mr. Penton. Everyone will be glad to know that you are doing so well.

JP: Oh, I'll be fine. As long as I'm healthy, I'll do ok. I'm just looking forward to getting past this (rehabilitation) and getting on with things. But, I'm getting there. Why, I was already working out on a bicycle. I was bikin'!

SKT: That's great! Well, take care of yourself, sir.

JP: Thank you. It was my pleasure.



PENTON CLASSIFIED ADS For members by members

Ads are for POG members to buy or sell Penton related parts, items, and services only. Members are allowed up to 3 items per newsletter (max. 30 words per item) at no charge. Ads must be received 2 weeks before publication of the newsletter. Please type or print clearly, and include your name, address, and phone number. Ads must be mailed or faxed to: Alan Buehner

5818 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio, 44102

Fax: 1-216-651-1620

FOR SALE

POG windbreaker jacket, dk green with yellow POG lettering on front & back. Avail. L,XL,XXL - \$43 + S & H. John Hardin (IL) 309-647-4579

Coming Soon! 2005 "Year of the Jackpiner" T-Shirts by Scott Brogan. Check the POG website for more info.

Husqvarna "vintage" 450 frame #MJ03014, motor #20210393 has comp. & turns free. Trans runs through gears, needs ignition. \$950 – Paul (OH) 440-988-7160 cbusic@bright.net

PENTON 2005 CALENDAR

only \$15 including postage. Mail to P.O. Box 191, White Cottage, OH 43791
Randy Kirkbride (OH) 740-819-4481

Children's T-Shirts, printed with "My Grandpa Rides a Penton". Available in children's large size. \$5 each
Ted del Solar (IL) 1-630-325-1859

Reproduction Penton & KTM decals for tanks and side panels.
MC5 "world champion" decals.
Skip Miller (TX) 817-798-KTM1

POG NAME BADGES, round 2-1/4" diam. pin style. Each badge personalized with your name. \$3 ea.
Ted del Solar (IL) 1-630-325-1859

Repro Stencils & Stickers, "Made in Austria" stickers - "Penton/KTM" seat stencils - "Penton" black name tags for Sachs engines - "Special KTM Tuning" Sachs engine stickers.
Randy Kirkbride (OH) 740-819-4481

SERVICES

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100cc & 125cc
Doug Wilford (OH) 440-988-2605

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Crank Repairs for Sachs & KTM
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Rod Gorzny (IL) 815-778-3768
E-MAIL: RGORZNY@ESSEX1.COM

MOTOPLAT testing
PVL - Penton Imports (OH)

Dane Leimbach 440-988-4474

KTM & Sachs Motor Rebuilding
Complete bike rebuilding
Kip Kern (IN) 765-668-8038

PARTS

NOS and Reproduction parts for Pentons – www.pentonpartsusa.com
Alan Buehner (OH) 216-651-6559

NOS Penton parts
Jake Fischer (PA) 412-781-6309

KTM DEALERS

Dale Barris - (440) 282-5108
On The Edge - Amherst, OH

Denny Laidig - (330) 253-7455
Holeshot KTM - Akron, OH

Jim Koenig - (913) 334-2410
Letko Competition - Kansas City, KS

Mike Lewis - (580) 355-2636
Mike Lewis Inc. - Lawton, OK

Richard Sanders - (281) 353-1705
Cycle Shack North - Conroe, TX

Frank Reaves - (281) 392-8850
Wild West KTM - Katy, TX

Ted Grabowski - (315) 736-6207
T & T Sport Cycles - Whitesboro, NY

Meeting minutes have been removed from this document.



PENTON OWNERS GROUP