

## 2011 Four Winds BMW Riders Rally

### The Longest Continuous Running BMW Rally

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**Above:** Registration, the Queen Mum and the rally's nerve center **Below:** Airhead BMWs abound

**I WAS PACKING MY 1978 R100RS WITH A** bit of sadness as I pondered my great/hot three days at the 39th Annual International BMWMOA Rally and this summer's two memorial motorcycle trips. I was looking forward to an overnight stay at the 45th annual Four Winds BMW Riders Rally just north of Pittsburgh.

The Four Winds is a great club which has hosted this fine rally for many years. I am able to visit with lots of friends and admire many vintage BMWs while participating in this wonderful event. Being a mere 55 miles from home, this yearly event completes my summer. A national MOA rally and the Four Winds event, same year, same state makes 2011 a perfect BMW year. My sadness stems from the fact that, for me, the Four Winds Rally is the precursor to the



end of the riding season.

This three-day western Pennsylvanian BMW celebration has been held for many years at the Redbank Valley Municipal Park, just north of New Bethlehem. Two hundred or so riders descend on a perfect park replete with a shaded grassy campground, out buildings, bath houses and a kitchen in the hills west of Redbank Creek along Route 28, just north of Kittanning. It is a perfect, small family BMW celebration to balance the big tent event that I enjoyed in Bloomsburg.

It is a real plus to have the on-site kitchen, which removes wee stoves and utensils from the packing list and precludes cooking beans and weenies next to the tent. The kitchen was staffed by local volunteers fixing meals from seven in the morning until nine at night. The food was great, but more importantly they sold two-dollar bags of ice that were a popular item as everyone returned from their day of two-wheeled exploring.

This year was the club's 45th annual Four Winds Rally—the longest continuous running BMW rally in the country. The rally was started by the BMW Owners Association, a group of Pittsburgh BMW motorcycle enthusiasts who held their first BMW motorcycle rally over a 1967 August

weekend in Carrollton, OH. This Pittsburgh-based group of BMW enthusiasts later adopted the name of "Four Winds BMW Riders," from their popular rally.

Four Winds Club historian and BMW technical guru, Gary Smith, reports on the club's web-site history that "Frank Dietrick, one of the founding officers of the BMW MOA, has written in his history of that organization (BMW MOA) that the very first meeting held to discuss the formation of a national BMW motorcycle organization was at a Four Winds Rally. The origin of both the BMW MOA and the BMW Riders Association can be traced to that meeting."

The current Redbank rally has two meeting places where riders can meet to begin and end their days. One was a large campfire kept blazing in the center of the park. This fire provided morning warmth and a meeting place for participants of a planned ride. In the evening iced beverages were shared around this fire along with various tales of the days riding adventures. Many of these stories rang true, while others raised eyebrows.



This rider's first time on any kind of a machine survived and did a yeoman's job during her first time on a motorbike, computer-bike or real.

The second Redbank rendezvous spot was an open-sided building, where riders could sit on picnic benches and peruse maps, local tourist literature and motorcycle-related reading materials. Some club members kept the coffee pot perking in this shed 24/7; I apologize for not thanking them in person, but I was selfishly enjoying the rally.

My big rally surprise this year was Roger Wiles, the MOA's Rider Education Coordinator, who was in attendance accompanied by the Rider Performance University's SMARTrainer. He set up this computer-aided simulation in the merry-go-round house for all to experience. Roger was also at the BMW MOA International Rally in Bloomsburg, but due to the device's popularity the lines were always too long, keeping me at bay.

I survived my hazard-filled ten minutes on the machine, where everyone is out to kill you, but I guess that is how one is supposed to ride at all times. I was happy with the computer-generated comments and Roger nicely provided insight into a few issues that have become ingrained in my riding over the past 40 years. At first I scoffed at the machine, but afterward I was glad he brought this system to Red Bank. I hope that all who wanted to were able to take advantage of this great learning tool.

Other responsibilities forced me to miss the Saturday night pork BBQ and award ceremony, where the food is always good, corn sweet and the awards announced with a warm knowing sense of humor. I regretted my early departure, but next year I will be riding up again looking forward to old friends, great facilities and the beverages that accompany that evening bag of ice. ☺



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