

## **RUSSELL'S TRIP OF A LIFE TIME**

Russell's trip started on Feb 13, 2010 with an e-mail from Hans-Ove-Gortz saying that someone nominated me for the OTP, would I accept the nomination. Feb 14 I accepted. Feb 18 I received the questionnaire and sent it back the same day. Feb 25 the voting began with 8 candidates to choose from. March 16 Hans sent me the news "The OTP winner is RUSSELL FLEMING from Maryland". This is the beginning of a lot of planning. Walter Kirchweger from Amstettan, Austria e-mailed me and introduced himself, as the person who was donating his motorcycle for me to ride while in Europe, it was his 1995 Concours. THANK YOU WALTER!!!! I left Washington Dulles Airport on July 28, flew to Ottawa Canada then to Frankfurt, Germany then to Vienna, Austria. Arrived in Austria on July 29 around 9:25 in the morning. The fine gentleman that Walter is picked me up at the airport and took me to his house where his sweet wife Elfi prepared us a very tasty lunch of Snitzel. We set up the motorcycle after lunch for my 2 weeks touring through Europe. Tired that evening I was in bed by 8:30.

JULY 30, 2010 I woke up at 6:00 A.M. and was very rested. Elfi made us a fine breakfast and by 9:00 Walter on a borrowed 750 Kawasaki and me on the connie left for Bernd and Annette's in Laubach-Altenhain Germany where we arrived about 4 P.M. We met Bernd, Wolfram (2009 Traveler) Jenny and Annette. We went to dinner at Gasthofbrauerei Hotel Zun Traube. I had Smoked Pork Chops, mashed potatoes, and Sauerkraut. I slept in the guest room and the bed was firm and I had a good nights sleep. Miles rode 410 for the day.

JULY 31, 2010 I was up early and took a walk around the town. The houses are very well maintained with beautiful flower gardens around them. 9:A.M. Walter headed home, Bernd on his BMW with Jenny, Annette on her Honda, Wolfram on his FJR and me on the connie headed across Germany. Wolfman went with us to the Cathedral of Cologne (one of the most known German buildings at the Rhine). The floors in the Cathedral are so very detailed that I was afraid to walk on them. We walked around the town looking at the beautiful historical buildings. Wolfram had to leave and return home to go to work. We headed over to Ieper (Ypres) Belgium where we met Gie and Marijike (Belgium) Mika and Jaana (Finland) John (Netherlands) and Daan Zeydner (2003 traveler) from Netherlands and Russell's roommate for the night. Dinner in the hotel I had a great steak and a beer. We next went to Menin Gate Memorial to see the members of the Ieper Volunteer fire brigade sound Last Post & Reveille under the arch of the memorial gate at 8:00. The arch contained 54,896 names that did not come back from WWI. We walked around the town and admired the government buildings and churches. Miles rode 340 for the day.

AUGUST 1, 2010 We left Ieper to make our way to Calais, France and the ferry across the English Channel to Dover, England. The ferry ride was enjoyable and relaxing to see the beaches of France and the chalk cliffs of England. The group went in two directions, 1 group to Stonehenge and John, Ad & Russell went to Boomers to put a rocker switch on Walters motorcycle because the fan sensor switch went up. That way I could control the fan manually. We left Boomer's and headed for Montgomery, Wales where the rally was to be held. We stayed at the Dragon Hotel for seven nights. Along with the room we were given breakfast and dinner of our choice. We arrived at 10 P.M. and it was still light out. The last 35 miles was the most enjoyable with no traffic, narrow roads with lots of twists. We met up with the rest of the group for the night and rest of the week. Miles rode 364 for the day.

AUGUST 2, 2010 Walked around town in the morning and with me being a surveyor by trade the streets are very narrow only about 14 feet wide for vehicles to travel in both directions. The town center has a church dating back to the 18 hundreds. During breakfast Hans, Lars and I discussed where I thought I would be more comfortable riding; at home I leads the group so they put me third in line. Mika led the group, Lars was next, and I was third with Hans and the rest of the group behind with in 3 miles I was comfortable with the riding style and pace. I felt like I was at home with my buddies, John Lippy leading, Wayne Tenney second, Me third, and Bobby Winters or Greg Puterbaugh bringing up the tail end. We rode to Elan Valley and went to Long Pryan National Park, which was a beautiful sight to see with all the purple flowers, which reminded me of Maine. On top of the mountain there was a glider airport and hang gliders. The road through the park was narrow (8to 12 feet wide). We went back to Montgomery for the official ceremony of Pickled Herring & schnapps, which smelled worse than it tasted. After eating the fish I was presented with my official OTP Traveler t-shirt. Miles rode 205 for the day.

AUGUST 3, 2010 We had rain showers on and off in the morning. Today we broke up into two groups and were making our way to Conway Castle. We stopped at Trofarth Restaurant & Pub. Walking in we were greeted by a couple sitting at a table and we were told to take a seat and the girl would be with us for our drink order. We thought these two people owned the place but they just come here to get something to eat. The lady started telling us about when she was younger her brother owned a Norton and took her for a rides, which she enjoyed a lot. She said that some people think she is bossy and her husband responded by saying that was an understatement she is very bossy. If Wales had a gun law like the USA she would shoot everybody that doesn't agree with her and her husband spoke up and said he would have been the first one shot 48 years ago but her cane keeps him in line. We got to Conway Castle; it is amazing to see all the work that goes into making a castle to defend the city. We left to go back to Montgomery but stopped at the Ponderosa Café & Gift Shop at Clouds In the Mountain. This was pretty amazing for a

first time visitor. We went across a pass, which had very little traffic on it. We got off the mountain and onto narrow country roads where we followed a tour bus for about 5 miles and the hedges along the road touched the bus on both sides and this a two way road. That evening at dinner I had lamb chops for dinner. The day concluded with a greeter to tell us the history of Montgomery at the start of dinner. Conversation turned to what I have done to my 95 connie and telling what little work I have done, the wives told their husbands that they wouldn't need a new motorcycle if it were that dependable. Miles rode 175 for the day.

AUGUST 4, 2010 Drizzly, rainy morning high about 60 degrees. The group went to Dolaucothi Coal Mines. The Romans first mined the area and later Welch mined the area. We were fitted with hard hats and lights to have our tour through the gold mine and we actually saw one piece of gold. It takes 10 ton of slag/1ton of quartz to refine ½ ounce of gold. We left the gold mine and went through the National Park where we saw lots of free-range sheep, which reminded me of Acadia National Park in Maine with the landscape, and mountains of Montana, West Virginia, and North Carolina. I had beef stroganoff for supper. Miles rode 210 for the day.

AUGUST 5, 2010 I took a walk around Montgomery. Mika and Jaana were the first to go to breakfast and I asked Jaana if it was okay to sit beside her. She told me she would be proud to let me and this made me feel welcomed with everybody on the trip. The group went to Portmeirion, which is along the NE coast in Wales. This reminded me of sand dunes in Maryland, Virginia and Florida. The group went through another national park where they saw more sheep and this reminded me of valleys and mountains of West Virginia, North Carolina, and Maine and out west in the Rockies from previous trips, I have taken. Portmeirion reminded me of Disney World in Florida from my honeymoon 29 years ago with my little redheaded wife, but is now salt and pepper. Next we went back to Montgomery and checked out the castle with breath taking views from atop of the hill and castle. I had chicken for supper. Hans, Simon and I were talking about Northern Lights and the possibility to see them from the castle so around 11:00 we went to the castle but no luck it was a cloud cover. I saw a road kill of a badger, which I wished it, would have been alive. Miles rode 205 for the day.

AUGUST 6, 2010 The roads are narrow with hedges on both sides and this is where I laid across the road to let people know how wide the road was only 7 feet from arm spread to bottom of feet which makes the road about 9 feet wide. There was a road that has a series of bumps on it and I thought about Martha if she would have been with me by the third bump she would have smacked me on the helmet to slow down but on the 4<sup>th</sup> bump Jaana smacked Mika on the helmet to slow down, JUST LIKE AT HOME. The caves were neat to go through, a self guided tour with the signs in the cave meaning the same in the

U.S. but worded differently in Europe. Miles rode 180 for the day.

AUGUST 7, 2010 The group ride was to Penrhyn Castle. There is a spiral staircase from the original property, which can be seen, and a vaulted basement and other masonry are incorporated in the new structure. The Dawkins-Pennant family who made their fortune from Jamaican sugar and local slate quarries owned the house. The castle is a picturesque composition that stretches over 600 feet from a tall onjon containing family rooms, through the main block built around the earlier house to the service wing and the stables. Thomas Hopper designed all the principle interiors in a rich but restrained Norman style, with much fine plasterwork and wood and stone carving. The castle has some specially designed Norman style furniture, including a ton slate bed made for Queen Victoria when she visited in 1859. The castle now belongs to the National Trust and is open to the public. Penrhyn's attractions include a formal walled garden, extensive informal gardens, a dolls museum, an industrial railway museum, and an adventure playground. There were only 19 people in attendance, unlike the rally's we have in the USA with over 400 people in attendance.

Hans picked out the meal, which consisted of soup, shiskebab's and cheesecake, and it was a very delicious meal THANKS HANS!!! He also had everybody that attended to say something in his or her native language. Ad & John (Netherlands), Bernd, Annette & Jenny (Germany), Gie & Marijke (Belgium), Hans and Lars (Sweden), Bruno, Hans-Peter and Rita (Switzerland), Mika & Jaana (Finland), Paul & Jill (Great Britain), Simon (UK) and Russell (USA). Miles rode 180 for the day.

AUGUST 8, 2010 A very hard time saying goodbye to my long distant close friends which I will keep in touch with and hope to get back to see. Ad, Bruno and Russell left to ride back to the ferry at Dover and that was the end of his left side of the road experience, which really wasn't hard to do it just took practice. The others took a ride to Scotland. After leaving the ferry Ad headed to the Netherlands and Bruno and I rode to Billeul, Belgium and spent the night at a hotel F1.com and had a good night's sleep. Miles rode 335 for the day.

AUGUST 9, 2010 7:15 A.M. on the road, but had fog for the first 75 miles then clearing. We rode through Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany and Austria. I saw lots of windmill farms in Germany. On route A93 Southwest of Munich about 6:00 I saw my first glimpse of the German Alps. Route 311 in Austria was my next glimpse of the Austrian Alps. We went through a 3-½ mile tunnel on our way to St. John's to Walter's flat. Arrived at Walter's at about 8:30 P.M. Miles rode 720 for the day.

AUGUST 10, 2010 My neck was stiff and I couldn't turn my head that made it a bit uncomfortable to enjoy anything. Walter and I left his flat around 7:30 and headed for the

Hinterthal. First Mountain was Honchoing (High King). Walter and I made it over Dienter Sattel (Saddle of Dienter), then over Filzen Sattel (Saddle of Filzen). Second mountain called "Wilder Kaiser" or (Wild Emperor). There is a sight seeing point "Edelweib Spitz" at the Grossglockner Hochalpenstrasse, named after Austria's highest mountain. The Grossglockner road begins in the town center of Bruck and this road curves through meadows with the Fuscher Ache River. Bikers Point is a meeting place with information and reserve parking for motorcycles at the Edelweiss Peak 2,571 meters. There are seven hairpin bends and cobblestone pavement that date back to 1935. We had lunch at Iselberg Pass at a restaurant where the owner rides an Ural motorcycle with sidecar. Then went through Staller Sattel. Saddle of Stall and Febertauren Pass tunnel on their way back to Walter's flat. Miles rode 257 for the day.

AUGUST 11, 2010 Walter and I left around 7:15 where we saw a girl driving her cows down the mountain. Hyd Dam and Zillertal was their next stop where they saw Kimmler Wasserfalle. The Gerlos Alpine is a natural experience on the Gerlos Pass and the Krimml Waterfalls. Experience nature---become aware of the landscape on the connecting road between Salzburg and Tyrol. Winding roads, marvelous views, and moments of rich experience. Enjoy the landscape of the high moors (nature-conservation area) on top of the pass. Admire the interesting display boards at the bridged slope and the grandiose view of the Krimml Waterfalls and into the Krimml Achen Valley. Lunch stop was at Zillertalen Hohenstrasse, a one-lane road providing a wonderful panorama of the mountains and valleys around. For lunch I had hot dogs, Pork and Chicken with French Fries. Had my picture taken with some cows. Passed by Kitzbuehel, the famous location of winter sports and made it over Fitzen Sattel back to St.Johann/Salzburg. Time to start packing. Miles rode 262 for the day.

AUGUST 12, 2010 Walter and I traveled to Hohen Tauern Pass and the Hoen Tauern National Park that is the biggest protected area of middle Europe. This covers an area of 180 km and contains some beautiful mountains to climb. The park also offers a place where a unique flora and fauna is preserved. There was a road that went through a door in a low tower where I took a picture. Solk Pass was where we met two Spanyards with their KTM bikes that had been on the road for 2 months. Puergg is where Walter took pictures from frescos in the chapel. Arrived back at Walter's house in Amstetten that afternoon where Hans Dressler (2003 Traveler) picked me up and took me to the airport and checked my luggage in so I would be ready to go in the morning. We then stopped at Hans town in and picked up his wife and then went to Bratislava (Capital of Slovakia). Hans and his wife Ursala showed me around the town had supper and got Russell a room to sleep in for the night. Miles rode 187 for the day.

August 13, 2010 Hans picked me up in the morning at 5 am and took me to the airport

for my trip back home. I left Vienna, Austria and traveled to London Heathrow; from London I went to Ottawa, Canada then home to Dulles Airport. Martha, Ronnie, and Brenda picked me up at 9:00 pm and we got home around 11:00 and I was in my own bed by 11:15 sound asleep.

All the countries that I rode the motorcycle in Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, England, Wales, Luxemburg, Italy and France. For a total of 4,000 miles in 14 days.

It was very interesting to see the different types of police vehicles. There were Mercades Benz, BMW, Volvos, Land Rovers, Ford Escorts, Audi, Fiats and Peugeotts.

I would like to thank the OTP team (Hans, Ted, Spenser and Harry) for running such a lifetime of memory event. Guy Young for nominating me for the OTP. Walter for picking me up in Vienna, Austria, for the use of his motorcycle and also for letting me stay with him for 4 nights. Gie for making my arrangements for the ferry across the English Channel. Mika for planning such a fantastic arrangement of rides at the rally and letting me ride behind him for 6 days. Bruno for the night lodging in Billeul, Belgium. Hans Dressler for taking me to Slovakia and also for taking me to the airport the next day to come home. Laura Martz for helping me with my airline reservations.

Here is the link to my pictures. <http://www.cog599.smugmug.com/>  
Here is the link to GCE Rally. <https://sites.google.com/site/gcerally2010/>

Thanks to everyone who helped make this a trip of a lifetime.

Russell W Fleming

OPT Traveler 2010

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