



Mass-2 Christmas Party

- Sunday, December 6, 2015
- 1:00 p.m.
- The Glen Caffé
63 Glenallen Street, Winchendon

Come join us for a our catered dinner and our annual Yankee Gift Swap.

Bring a wrapped gift with a value of no more than \$15 for the gift swap, if you would like to participate.

You get to choose ONE from three of the below options.

Baked Haddock - \$23.00 per person

(Includes Garden Salad, Potato, Vegetable, and Dessert)

Baked Stuffed Chicken - \$22.00 per person

(Includes Garden Salad, Potato, Vegetable, and Dessert)

Tour of Italy - \$24.50 per person

(Includes Pasta, Chicken Parmesan, Meatball, and Sweet Sausage, Garden Salad, Fresh Bread, and Dessert)

The chapter is covering the costs of the appetizers prior to our meal. A special thank you goes out to Maury Lizotte for his leg work on this year's party planning.

...hope to see you all there!

We will again be accepting donations for *Sherry's House* at our Christmas party.

Please consider purchasing and donating gift cards for **Wal-Mart, Target, K-Mart, Shaw's, Stop & Shop, CVS, etc. or Gas Cards, Phone Cards, VISA and American Express.** Visit www.whyme.org for more information about Sherry's House. We will be bringing all of those collected to Sherry's House in Worcester to assist them in their mission for the kids this holiday season. Visit www.whyme.org for more info.

As always, thank you for your generosity — the children and families at the home thank you as well.

**We must have a RSVPs and
pre-paid dinners by Sunday, November 22 to give to the caterer.**

Contact Bob Laford with your meal payment as soon as you can.



Red Knights

Mass Chapter 2 — Fall 2015

www.rk-mass2.org

facebook

facebook.com/RKMASS2

Loyal to Our Duty

Hello Riders,

First off I'd like to say thank you once again for re-electing me as your President. It's a pleasure to serve you and keep this chapter moving. You are all the best! I love how we all work together and have a very active chapter.

As we come to a close for our riding season, another thanks goes to all of you for coming and participating and to Treasurer Laforde for coming up front on the few occasions I couldn't make a few of the rides/ But this is what it's all about, stepping up and keep moving.

This year some of us found our way to San Antonio to the International Convention/ A great time and what makes it even better is the brotherhood and sharing of ideas that we can bring back into our respective chapters. What works for some may or may not work for others, but we get the chance to share these ideas and adventures with our chapters. It's amazing how big this thing has grown, it can only get bigger and better as the years roll on, as long as everyone plays together.

Very shortly your officers will be putting together the ride schedule for next year, if there is any place you'd like to adventure off to please get your ideas into us for review and it may just end up on the schedule. Remember if there's a place you've been to or would like to share with the rest of us, bring it up, We took a ride to Ipswich Mass this year and those that came found it really enjoyable. The castle at Crane Estate was amazing. We happened to hear about it in a New England Magazine, so we went and checked it out. We thought the Chapter may enjoy a ride up to the north shore and it turned out to be a very nice trip.

In closing, remember to get your ending mileage into VP Lizotte before Thanksgiving and make sure you go over your ride before putting it away, take care of the necessary items now, and come spring time you'll be glad you did.

Stay Safe, and enjoy the fast approaching holidays.

The Prez



President Martin readies the gavel for his second term as Chapter Exec

Proposed Change in our Chapter Dues Structure

At our annual business meeting held in October, it was voted to have the officers bring forward a proposal to alter our annual dues structure. This proposal will be brought to the membership at our Winter Pot Luck on Sunday, February 14 where we will vote on the proposed change in our Chapter SOGs related to our chapter dues.

The International Red Knights are discussing raising dues charged of the chapter. The last dues increase was in 2004.

Each member will receive a written communication on the details of the proposal in December.

Please join us at the Winter Pot Luck on February 14 when this issue will be discussed and decided.

**We must have a
RSVPs and
pre-paid Christmas
Party dinners by
Sunday, November 22
to give to the caterer.**

Contact Bob Laforde with your meal choice and payment as soon as you can.

P.S. Just a reminder that dues are due to the Treasurer by December 1.

Thanks for your cooperation.

On the road with our friends...

- Just before 18 hours of heavy rain arrived a few members snuck out (and kept dry) with a ride to Dummerston for their Strawberry Shortcake Supper. *And you thought Dummerston meant apple pie!*
- The weatherman was doom and gloom for our Crazy Ride with showers and T-storms but the 7 of us *crazy enough* to join Kevin for his planned ride found that there were just a few sprinkles.

By the luck of the draw Kevin, Maury, and Ed each got to take lead... with no idea where we were heading. And to add to the "Crazy" one of the stops had picketers protesting the gas pipeline project!



- A perfect fall Saturday set the stage for our ride to Ipswich and a stop at the Crane Castle where we had a tour given by Jenny the maid.
- What a great autumn day we had for a foliage ride on Columbus Day Weekend. We had fourteen people come out for a 150 mile ride through Mass, NH, and VT with a stop at the "Buzz Chainsaw Carver's Show" in Chester, Vermont. It is amazing the detail that the artists can do with their saws! We think that Shaky may have posed for one of the carvings too!
- It was a cold start to a late October ride to celebrate Halloween, but we had ten members that made it out for a hauntedly good time with lunch at the Country Tavern in Nashua.



Our monthly ice cream rides have drawn to a close—as the ice cream stands have closed for the season. But as has been our history, the monthly ice cream rides were very popular all summer long!

July's ice cream night had us split in two groups with some of our group at the RKMC Memorial to meet an Australian member passing through that afternoon, and the rest of us stopping for an ice cream in Templeton at the Kitchen Garden.

August was a beautiful evening to be out spinning our wheels in search of Ice Cream. We tried Little Lizzie's in Winchendon which will be on the list for ice cream stops in the future!



You could tell that September's ice cream was the end of the season. It was almost dark when we arrived at Lickity-Splits, they were just getting ready to close (at 7:00) and the sign said they were closing for the season that weekend. Oh

well, there will be more ice cream rides next year!



A special thank you to Nancy and Larry Robinson as hosts to our July 4th Weekend BBQ.

We had a great turnout with lots of food (of course) and had groups with Horseshoes and Bocce Balls in their hands.



Even Mother Nature was cooperative with sunshine and near 80 degrees for the 25 members and friends to enjoy!

2016 Dues

We have been sending out electronic reminders about your 2016 dues. If you have not paid them yet, PLEASE get your dues (still a deal at \$20 per person) to our Treasurer.

As with any organization there are expenses that we incur and your dues help us cover those costs. A portion of your dues also goes to the International for our charter dues. (We must have all International dues paid by January or we incur a \$50 penalty).

Please have your dues in to Treasurer Bob Laford before **December 1, 2015**. Thanks.

Red Knights Mass-2
P.O. Box 221
Petersham, MA 01366

If you would like to pay electronically via PAYPAL, contact Bob

Membership News Briefs...

Our condolences to Darlene and Tim Kilhart (and Krystal) on the passing of Darlene's dad.



Congratulations to Rick and Lori Oliver, they finally picked up their new Harley and to Doug & Linda Dupell on their new home in Fitchburg!

I wonder if Yogi Berra rode a motorcycle, because he had a great concept for riding; *"When you come to a fork in the road take it."*

Your chapter officers will be meeting in the early weeks of the New Year to plan the 2016 ride schedule.

If you have an idea of a route, a place to visit, or some other ride idea, please share it with an officer. This is your chapter and your participation is what makes it successful!



Gathered together at the On Site Academy @ Windy Hill for some fun, friendship, support of a great organization, and of course food!

AAA now provides Roadside Service for Motorcycles!

Enjoy the freedom of the open road with AAA at your back. For an additional annual fee of \$30, Plus and Premier members can enjoy the twists and turns of the open road with AAA Motorcycle Service.

Services cover registered and street legal vehicles including:

- Motorcycles (two and three wheeled)
 - Sidecars
 - Mopeds
 - Scooters
 - Motorized bicycles
 - Electric bicycles
- Visit www.aaa.com/motorcycle for more information or to enroll.

State News

Congratulations to our friend Bob Binnall on his election as Massachusetts Assistant State Rep and on his nomination and receiving the first **Steve Mickle "Mr. Red Knight" Award**.

And thanks to our own Bob Laford for his time as Assistant State Rep.

Our first *Bug Run* was a success with a turnout of 19 members along for the ride! We were all surprised that the great route our President lead along glade and glen did not garner as many "bug strikes" as we expected for a late day summer ride!

As the photo tells, Cynthia was the bug winner, taking the DD gift card prize home!

But that was not our final "to do" for the ride, as Mary Barclay had arranged a Pampered Chef party to support the On Site Academy at the end of the ride.

We were greeted with home-baked goodies and ice cream (of course) and then some Pampered Chef demos (that means more food) and we all had a chance to purchase some kitchen goods for ourselves or for the On Site Academy's wish list.

At last report over \$650 in sales were made which means On-Site was able to order another \$115 in free products!



Winter Potluck

- **Sunday, February 14**
1:00 pm at the
Templeton Fish and
Game Club
200 Club Road, off
Partridgeville Rd (off 2A)
- Yes, it's Valentine's Day,
so bring your sweetie,
some food to share and
stories to tell, and we have
a grand time as always...
- We will have the **ride
schedule for 2016**
printed and ready for
distribution, and it will help
us all break out of the
winter doldrums!
- We will also be voting on
our change in dues.

Yankee Rally — A gathering of Region 1 Red Knights

Are you planning to head to the Garden State for the 2nd Annual Yankee Rally? New Jersey Chapter 31 is in full swing planning the 2016 Red Knights Yankee Rally in coastal Wildwood, NJ. They are working hard to make this a weekend to remember! For registration info, visit www.rkmcnj31.com.

The 2016 Yankee Rally will be held May 20-22, 2016 at the Bolero Resort & Conference Center.

To make reservations at the Bolero Resort call 609-522-6929. There are several room choices and the Bolero would be happy to guide you to the best room for you. Make sure when you call to let them know that you are with the Red Knights Yankee Rally.



Chapter MSF Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee has recommended that we take a hiatus from awarding rider-ed scholarships for a few years as we seem to have saturated the market. We do have one Experienced Rider Scholarship available that we will award to an interested chapter member. Please submit a letter of interest to the President if interested.

CT-2 picnic — a mini-Northeast Rally!

There was a contingent of 8 Mass-2 people that headed to Portland, CT along the Connecticut River to take part in CT-2's summer picnic and ride.

There were nearly 75 bikes that came out to the party with reps from a number of Mass and CT chapters as well as Red Knights from New York, NJ, and Pennsylvania!



...and of course there was ice cream on the way home!



A hot Saturday in July we found ten of Mass-2 & Mass-4 members meeting up with 11 members from NY 44 & 49 in western Mass and escorting them to the memorial in Boylston, where Mass-1 was waiting to welcome them to Boylston.



U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland, Suzi Levine was a speaker at the opening ceremonies at the RK European Convention.

When she learned there were U.S. citizens in the crowd she met with us privately afterwards. She even posted on her official Facebook page that she was impressed with the Red Knights and excited to meet members that came all the way from Massachusetts.

2015 RKMC Convention! — San Antonio

Eight members of Mass-2 donned their simulated cowboy hats and hit the skies one early August Wednesday for the flight to San Antonio to meet up with several hundred other Red Knights (including our San Antonio transplant—Caitlin) for this year's convention. It was hot and humid here when they left but nothing in comparison to Texas' summer heat!



333 Red Knights were registered for the convention, and while our crew was at their lay-over in Detroit, they met up with some RK members from Vermont who were changing planes as well... and boarding onto the same flight as we were!

Our crew arrived and had to quench their thirst with a stop at Coyote Ugly where the ladies took over (on top of) the bar. Our pre-convention arrival also had a special visit to Sea World with Caitlin leading the group and sharing one of her favorite places with some of her favorite people.



Our Texas hosts had a lot packed into a few days, even for those people that flew into town and were not out on any of the motorcycle rides. Activities included cruises on the River Walk canal, an after hours tour of the Alamo, and all the restaurants and sites along the River Walk, to name a few.

The hospitality room was always full of activity. The hosts made sure there were plenty of cold beverages of every type (including a margarita machine) to help combat the Texas heat and there was always an abundance of laughter on hand. One corner of the room seemed to have a continuous Looping Louie game in play and there were always raised glasses and toasting in foreign tongues that were being made to everyone's health & happiness from our European brothers.

Mass-2 had pooled funds and had rental cars available to explore the area. One day had us visiting some local micro-brewns and taking advantage of wine tastings at a winery. We discovered that Dave Emery (VT-2) is big into roller-coasters, and the crazier the better!

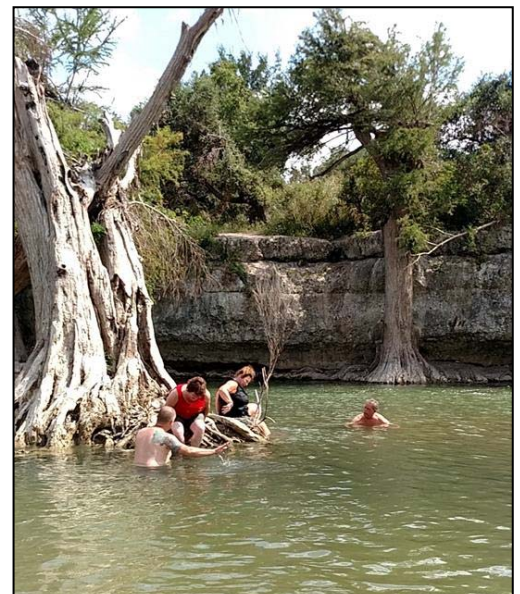
Did we mention it was hot? 105-108 degrees at times. On one four-wheel excursion someone noticed swimmers in the Guadalupe River as we crossed the bridge. Some creative driving got the group from the main road down to "the swimming hole" along side the river so we could cool our feet in the south Texas water.

A lot of business took place during Saturday's meeting including discussion and voting on the proposed bylaw changes that Massachusetts chapters submitted. One of our proposals (that a vacancy on the International Board must be filled by election not just appointed) was successful, and the second proposal (that if you resign a position on the International Board you must have a cooling off period before you can serve on the board again) did not pass.

On Saturday evening everyone was *dressed to the nines* for the dinner dance and had a great time. Our friend Dave Emery was honored with the Perry Carter Award this year and congratulations to Amanda "Smooches" Roun

<i>Future Conventions:</i>	for receiving an
2016 — Wisconsin	"Outstanding
2017 — Syracuse, NY	Contribution for
2018 — Pittsburg, PA	Dedicated
2019 — New Hampshire	Service"
2020 — Europe!	recognition.

Congratulations to our new Region-1 Rep Matt Mattera and thank you to Norm B. for his years of service to our Region!





SUPPORT FOR SHERRY'S HOUSE

It was a small turn out for this year's ride to gather gift cards for Sherry's House but President Martin still lead us on a fun ride that ended at the New Salem General Store for lunch and to find out that Mark Dunbar had the best hand with two Kings and Cliff was #2 with two sixes!

Climbing trees for Sherry's House

From the Worcester Telegram - "Swiss Family Robinson" meets "Pirates of the Caribbean": That's how the executive director of Sherry's House describes the treehouse planned for an oak tree in the backyard of the home at 1152 Pleasant St. that serves children with cancer and their families.

The "Treehouse Guys" from the DIY Network arrive in mid-August to tape the construction project for an episode slated for broadcast next summer, said David Hagan, executive director of Why Me Inc., the Worcester-based nonprofit that operates Sherry's House.

"Part of our mission is to help kids just be kids, to forget about cancer and live in the moment," Mr. Hagan writes in a letter describing the project to the nonprofit's supporters.

"We have long thought that a special treehouse at Sherry's House would be a perfect addition to the house. We see it as an extension of the playground, nestled in a massive oak tree that overlooks the backyard and the brook. The tree that supports it will come right up thru the center of the roof."

The Treehouse Guys' nationally syndicated cable show on the DIY Network plans to tape the project for an episode to air next summer. "We are not only excited about the prospect of an amazing treehouse for our kids but also for the national exposure for the organization and our sponsors," Mr. Hagan writes.

Why Me since 1985 has provided lodging, support and services free of charge to families with children being treated for pediatric cancer at New England hospitals. Sherry's House is named for a 13-year-old cancer patient, Sherry Shepherd, who was the first patient treated in the pediatric oncology department at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, and whose four-year battle against the disease inspired the founding of the nonprofit organization.

An International Conspiracy!



There was an International Conspiracy afoot between our outgoing Reg-1 Rep and our Chapter Officers that were at the Convention in San Antonio.

During the awards portion of the Saturday evening banquet Kevin Martin was called to the front to accept an International Life Member Award that the Board was awarding to our Treasurer Bob Laforde for his years of service to the Red Knights.

In quick discussions with the chapter members present, Norm Beausoleil, and Representatives of the European Association it was decided to keep the award a secret and have it presented to Bob while he was attending the European Convention in Switzerland in September.

Secretary Rick Oliver took control of the plaque and Life Member patch and packed it away when he and Bob headed off to their European Adventure.

Called up in front of the European Members during their convention banquet, Bob became the first Red Knight member to be awarded a Life Membership in Europe— translated in three different languages!

The annual chapter reports were distributed at our Fall business meeting. If you were unable to attend the meeting, but would like to receive a copy, contact Treasurer Laforde.

Thank you to those who came out for our October meeting and election of officers. Congratulations to President Kevin Martin and Secretary Rick Oliver.

Thank you to each of our officers for the time and effort that they all put into making our chapter successful.

Officers for 2016 are:

Kevin Martin, President
978-877-6179

rkma2prez@gmail.com

Maury Lizotte, Vice-president
(978) 410-5553

lizotteme@gmail.com

Rick Oliver, Secretary
978-413-5544

rickoliver3@yahoo.com

Bob Laforde, Treasurer
978-724-3270

rflaford@tiac.net

Bob Shakarian, Road Captain
978-807-0817

Sharkey625@aol.com

Larry Robinson, Assistant
Road Captain
978-724-3321

George Colby, State Rep
(Mass-3)
380 Main St.- Plympton, MA
781-585-8817
gcolby@comcast.net

Bob Binnall,
Assistant State Rep
(Mass-15)
126 Rowe Street
Newton MA 02466
617-908-1680
binnall129@gmail.com

Matt Materra
(NJ 31 & 33)
1309 Fulton Street
Cape May Courthouse, NJ
609-846-3648
region1@redknightsmc.com

Are you contemplating going to Wisconsin for the 2016 RKMC Convention?

Drop President Martin a note that you are thinking about it, so he can keep track of who, what, when, and where for 2016.

Don't forget to get your year-end mileage into VP Maury Lizotte to be included in the 2015 totals!

It was a great Mass-2 turnout for a (cool) ride to Jaffrey FD for their Fire Prevention Week breakfast.



During the past year our chapter gave out over \$2,700 in donations to: RKMC International Boylston Memorial Fund, American Cancer Society, Central Mass. Safety Corp., Fisher Museum, Gordon Ericson Amb. Fund, Hayes Family Fire Fund, On Site Academy, Red Knights of Texas, RKMC Mass-1, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

RK Ideas for Christmas!

Red Knights' apparel and stuff are always a great gift for the rider on your Christmas list!

For RKMC embroidered clothing (shirts, coats, hats, etc.) contact Joe Guarnera at joegua@comcast.net or his home phone at 978-455-1022.



For screened T-shirts and Golf shirts with our new logo, contact President Kevin Martin (978) 877-6179.

Chapter Treasurer **Bob Laford** (978) 724-3270 has a number of items too: Window & Helmet Decals, Thin Red Line Decals, Chapter Patches, Red Knights Shoulder Patches w/rockers, and Red Knights Back Patches & Rockers (for vests).

Decals and patches are available in both traditional Red Knights logo and our new chapter design!

On the International Web Page you can buy merchandise from other chapters ranging from doo-rags to collar brass and license plate frames and everything in between!

Our November Breakfast Club (Saturday, Nov. 21) will be at Marcia and Maury's on Brook Lane at 9:00 am. Bring some breakfast goodies to share!

We had six members that came out in the cool October temperatures for breakfast and a cool ride around the Connecticut River Valley for our October breakfast. VP Lizotte took the lead and we enjoyed the fall colors on a sunny and cool Saturday!

Beginning in November we will be at member homes for breakfasts if you would like to host one. (November will be at Marcia and Maury's in Gardner)

More history uncovered in Lake George August 2015

An archaeological dig at an 18th-century military site in the southern Adirondacks has uncovered large sections of stone walls that are believed to have been constructed within a larger British fortification that more than 250 years ago.

The excavations at the Lake George Battlefield Park [finished up] with some work being done to protect exposed walls by lining them with sandbags. During the six-week summer field school sponsored by the State University of New York, about four dozen volunteers dug numerous pits in an area that was occupied by thousands of British and Colonial American soldiers during the French and Indian War.

Musket balls, gun flints and pottery pieces were among the artifacts found amid a 35-acre park that gets few visitors despite being located in the middle of a busy summer tourist town.

David Starbuck, the archaeologist who led the dig, said the most significant find was the intact stone walls buried in a bastion of Fort George, which the British never finished building.

In 1759, the commander of British forces in North America, Jeffery Amherst, ordered the construction of a large fort on rising ground near the lake's southern end, the site of two previous battles.

With the British capture of the French fort at Ticonderoga in the summer of 1759, Amherst halted the work on Fort George. The interior structure may have been part of an underground casemate, a chamber usually constructed underneath a fort's rampart. A casemate could serve as a barracks or a place to store supplies such as gunpowder, and burying it would make it less likely to blow up during a bombardment.

The fort fell into disrepair after the war ended in 1763, but the bastion was used by the Americans when the Revolutionary War started. The British captured Fort George in 1777, only to lose it again after their defeat at Saratoga that year. The redcoats recaptured the bastion in 1780. What remains is a U-shaped, 20-foot-high grass-covered ruin of the bastion, with the interior sloping upward from the U's open end.

"We're looking at something that was used and rebuilt and improved upon for 20 years or more. I think that prompted them to build it more strongly," National Park Service archaeologist David Orr said. "It's not something we expected."

2016 Motorcycle Show dates and locations are:

Boston, MA - January 9-10 Salem, NH - January 30-31

Wilmington, MA - February 20-21

Check out www.kevmarv.com for more information

The International Motorcycle Show in New York City is the weekend of December 11-13, 2015

The

**Wisconsin
Association of
Red Knights
and Illinois 9**

are proud to host the 2016 Red Knights International Firefighters MC Annual Convention at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells, Besides being a fantastic convention center the Kalahari is home to one of the largest indoor and outdoor water parks in the US. You're going to love staying at the Kalahari for the food, for the hospitality, and for the fun!

The WI Red Knights are unbelievably excited to welcome you all to their home state.

Information about hotel reservations can be found on our Host Hotel Reservations page. Visit the RKMC International page for the convention link and related webpages.

Registering for convention will be live later in early November.

2016 is the 15th anniversary of September 11, 2001 and we will be gathering just a few weeks prior to the anniversary. The convention hosts have some special ways planned to honor the 343 brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice that day.

If anyone is heading back east after the 2016 Sturgis Rally the convention is right on your way home. Keep up to date on convention plans at

<http://www.rkmconvention2016.com/convention-registration/>

Currently Kalahari Resorts does not offer the ability to make on-line reservations. We don't like it either, but they are rebuilding their reservation website. To make your reservations you **MUST** call: Kalahari Reservations Toll Free 877-254-5466. The Red Knight discounted block of rooms is under Booking ID 25323. Using this information is the only way to ensure that they can find our specific block of rooms.

2016 RKMC Convention

August 18-21

Kalahari Resorts

(Wisconsin Dells, WI)

...that's just a short 1,200 miles, 18 road hours away!

Convention rate.

16th and 17th - \$149/night

18th and 19th - \$169/night

20th - \$179

The per night rate includes a pass to the waterpark and parking



RKMC European Convention

Ed and Peg Brouillet, Rick Oliver and Bob Laford traveled to Europe to attend the European Red Knight convention in September. The event was held at a military compound in Switzerland.

Bob and Rick were lucky enough to spend a number of days riding with Red Knights from Swiss-1 in Germany and Switzerland (in the Alps) as well as touring Belgium and Luxembourg as guests of Belgium-1.

It was an honor that the four of us were able to participate in the convention. All those who we have met while they were in the states the last few years were very excited to have us visit them. We were all treated as celebrities during our time there and the hospitality was unmatched!

During the convention there was a "Ride Out" to a fire department for lunch. Arrangements were in place that Ed and Peg were whisked away via a fire department vehicle to take part in the ride and lunch.

During the European business meeting and election of officers Bob and Rick were used as "impartial members" with one member of the European Contingent and counted the ballots for the election of officers. Each piece of business they conducted was translated into English, French, and German. Bob was elected as spokesman for the election results but only had to speak in English, and members of the board translated. It was joked afterwards that Bob will take the podium whenever he has the chance, even if in another country!

One exiting event at the convention was when the U.S. ambassador to Switzerland, Suzi Levine arrived (via motorcade on the back of Daniel's bike) to speak at the opening ceremonies (which were on Sept. 11).



In the picture above, Rick is giving her one of our chapter patches.

It was a great time with a super bunch of RK family. There are a lot of stories to share one-on-one about touring (and riding) in the area and all the fun we had while overseas.

Three Amigos Travel to Sturgis by Fred Leblanc

After several months of discussing a trip to the 75th Annual Black Hills Moto Classic in Sturgis South Dakota, the journey began on July 29th for a few members of Redknights MA-2 and GWRRA NH Chapter E. Pat "The Ratman" Brems, Armand "The Hammer" Guilmette, and Fred "The Chief" LeBlanc would make this journey together. The three dubbed these names as the trip began to unfold. All endearing in their meaning. Pat got the name because he had everything but the kitchen sink in his tent/trailer, Armand because he could drop the hammer and move us out when needed, and Fred, well because that's what he was. The quest for Sturgis began with the MassPike . 672 miles on day 1 along I-90 in MA, NY, PA, and Ohio.

Up early and on the road Day 2 would be a long hot 777 miles. Making it to Loveland, Iowa just past Des Moines. This night would be at the Desoto Inn being the only place with a vacancy since bike traffic was now picking up. Again up early the next day with breakfast at Penny's Diner. This was the old style diner offering great food and hospitality. Apparently Penny is the server, cook, and head bottle washer. A great breakfast prior to 559 miles for day 3 and our destination in Belle Fourche SD. This is the geographical center of the United States. Along the way we kept seeing many miles of signs for Wall Drug Store. We found Wall South Dakota and low and behold in the center is Wall Drug Store established in 1939. It had a little of everything. Pat even found a statue that had a striking resemblance of him. We continued on to what would be home for the next 7 days at Wyatt's Hideaway Campground. Supper would be at the Branding Iron where the owner and server gave us great information about the roads and places to see.

Day 4 is our first official day being in the Sturgis area. We took in Devil's Tower in Hulett Wyoming, Spearfish Canyon, Deadwood, and a Buffalo Jump all in South Dakota. The Buffalo Jump was an archeological dig where bones of buffalo had been uncovered. It was a giant sink hole that the natives herded the Buffalo to then over the edge so they could collect the hides, meat, and bones for winter survival. They figure it was done this way from the 1500's to early 1800.

Day 5 was "Welcome to Sturgis" time. We walked the famous LaSalle and Main Streets checking out vendors, Indian dealership, Bushtec dealer, T-shirts, and motorcycles by the hundreds. Great stunt shows at the Harley and Indian dealerships. Burnouts, wheelies, and more. Lunched at the Easy Rider Saloon. Found a traveling museum of the FDNY tribute to 9-11. Spoke with the FDNY jakes of whom one was a Fire Rider. An amazing tribute.

Our day 6 saw us heading to Mt. Rushmore, Custer State Park, Needles Highway, and the wildlife loop. Lots of Buffalo. Ask Armand what he was standing in. Mt. Rushmore was simply

breathtaking. We spent a fair amount of time at the exhibits to learn how they created this monument. 14 years to build it.

Day 7 was a low mileage day of 60 miles but a great day just the same. We headed out early to get to the famous Full Throttle Saloon for T-shirts. I guess we got ours just in time since it burned to the ground just recently. It's only 3 miles from the center of town but took over 1 hour to travel that distance. Breakfast this day was at the Sturgis VFW. Military Veteran or non-Veteran the respect was there from everyone. Shared some great conversations. Stayed in the downtown area for the day as storms were predicated in the area. We managed to stay dry the whole day. While having a buffet lunch at a local Chinese restaurant a B-2 bomber did a flyover and we thought the roof was coming in. Spent the rest of the day people watching and buying more stuff for our machines.

Another hot day for Day 8. This day we ventured to Rapid City. First we stopped at the Black Hills National Cemetery. Very inspiring. As we dismounted from the bikes in the cemetery we were looking at a headstone of a Medal of Honor recipient from the Indian Wars. Can't imagine the story that goes with that one. On to Rapid City and the Harley dealership that had more vendors than Americade and Laconia combined. I tried two trikes while there. An Indian and a Goldwing. The Goldwing for me was the most comfortable. Stopped at Rice Honda for free hotdogs and a look at the inventory. Back to Sturgis late in the day where we test rode a Can Am. Thumbs down from me and Pat but Armand seemed to like them. Back to Belle Fourche and the Branding Iron for the famous steak buffet. This day was 101 miles.

Day 9 saw us split into two directions. Pat and Armand headed for the Lakota Reservation and the Badlands while Fred explored more of Rapid City. Found the Firehouse Brewery downtown. Along the way found statues of all the Presidents on various street corners. Pat and Armand had much to tell about their travels. Including where the massacre at Wounded Knee took place. We rejoined forces at Sturgis and spent the remainder of the evening in downtown. Place was jammed packed but fun. We figured this would be our last night in Sturgis and wanted to see all the humanity we could since the next day we decided to start packing up and heading east. The weather forecast was our motivation and proved to be the right one.

Day 10 we took the morning to break camp and get everything back into the bikes. We started our trek east at around noontime. Our route home would be the northern route since storms were brewing south. We actually outran a severe thunderstorm for a few hours and made it to Mitchell South Dakota staying. Supper was at Marlin's Family Restaurant and was fabulous. All you

can eat buffet. We managed to put in 325 miles that afternoon.

Again up early on Day 11 and headed into Minnesota and Wisconsin dropping down into Illinois by supertime making our stop in Rockford Ill. One thing about Minnesota was they have hundreds of windmills.

Day 12 started out foggy but cleared after we made Indiana and Ohio. Cleveland was a challenge with major construction and the only place I know of that an interstate highway makes a 90 degree turn. Got through PA and into NY State finding a Best Western in Jamestown NY. An older couple overheard us talking about finding a place to eat when they stepped forward and said come with us and we'll all go out together. So we rode in their car to an Olive Garden and enjoyed a nice meal with great conversation. They were Roy & Bev Parsons from western PA. Wonderful couple married 60 years they said. 580 miles was what we put on this day.

Day 13 was our final day of the adventure. Made it through NY State and into MA by midafternoon and got off the Pike at Ludlow and took Route 21 to 202 and 2 and then split off to our own homes. As I approached my final turn off of Route 2 at 31 my mileage for the whole trip hit 5,000. At 5:30 I rolled into the driveway just as my wife Lisa pulled in from work.

To say this was a great trip would be an understatement. There was not one negative moment during the entire trip and the three of us basically agreed on whatever we were going to do. There were lots of laughs, great conversations, and a new respect for how great this country is. From rolling green hills, to prairie, lakes, mountains, and more, we saw some fantastic views and scenery. This had been on my bucket list for some time and I am grateful that the opportunity presented itself. We all keyed off of each other and lent each other a hand whenever needed. I will have these memories for a lifetime.

We never lost sight of the journey as well as the destination. We had fun together, kept it safe for each other, and gained knowledge of the country, ourselves, and each other. Guess it really doesn't get better than that.



Armand, Fred, and Pat