

Lunch at Pope's Café
2005 BMW RA Rally, Shelbyville TN

Submitted by: Barb Smith

Some characters just can't be invented, and this would certainly be true of the old and grizzled chain-smoking "regular" sitting at the back of this dining anachronism. But in the play of real life, staged at a smoke-hazed town-square diner complete with swiveling counter stools and clear plastic domes covering a sinful assortment of home-made pies, he certainly fit the part. The diner is Pope's Café, famous for its "meat and three sides" lunch specials, and a group of us rode into town to have lunch here and mingle with the locals while in Shelbyville TN for the BMW RA rally last month.

This trip was a circuitous route that took me on a national parks stamp hunt through OK, KS, MO, and eventually brought me into AR to meet up with a distant cousin and his wife, who have been riding two-up for decades. I've corresponded with this cousin for 20 years, but we'd never met until this trip to Hot Springs. Mike joined me in Hot Springs mid-week, in time to head east toward TN and the rally. We hopped off the interstate as soon as we were able, and took scenic SR-64 across the southern tier of TN, through some pretty wooded and rolling country.

As we got closer to our destination, the size and quality of the farms and outbuildings changed noticeably for the better, and we realized we were now in the heart of Tennessee Walking Horse country. Horses and colts were corralled in immaculate paddocks next to opulent horse barns, and Mike commented on how the horses here lived better than do many people.

We spent all day Friday at the rally site, visiting and shopping the vendors, checking out the bikes, meeting new friends, and catching up with old ones. The rally was held at Celebration Horse Park, a perfect venue for the event. Campers were set up on grassy, shaded fields adjacent to the enclosed arena where the vendors and biergarten were located. BMW Motorrad had their demo fleet there, but all rides were quickly booked and I missed my chance at a new K1200R. My friend Kathy and her husband and son were there, a family of BMW riders from nearby Murfreesboro. Her son on his R1100S won "youngest rider" award at the rally. At 18 years of age, he's already a responsible and accomplished rider.

At noon, it was time for us to meet Mike's three friends Bob, Larry, and Gary, members of the Alabama State BMW Club, for lunch at Pope's. The waitress was sassy and the guys flirted shamelessly with her, which made my lunch enormously entertaining. The food didn't disappoint, either, being plentiful and hearty. But those pies kept tempting us from under their see-through covers. We learned that they were homemade by local Amish folk who come into town one day every two weeks to sell them to the local restaurants. We happened to hit Pope's on that one day in fourteen, and I can personally vouch for the chocolate cream pie.