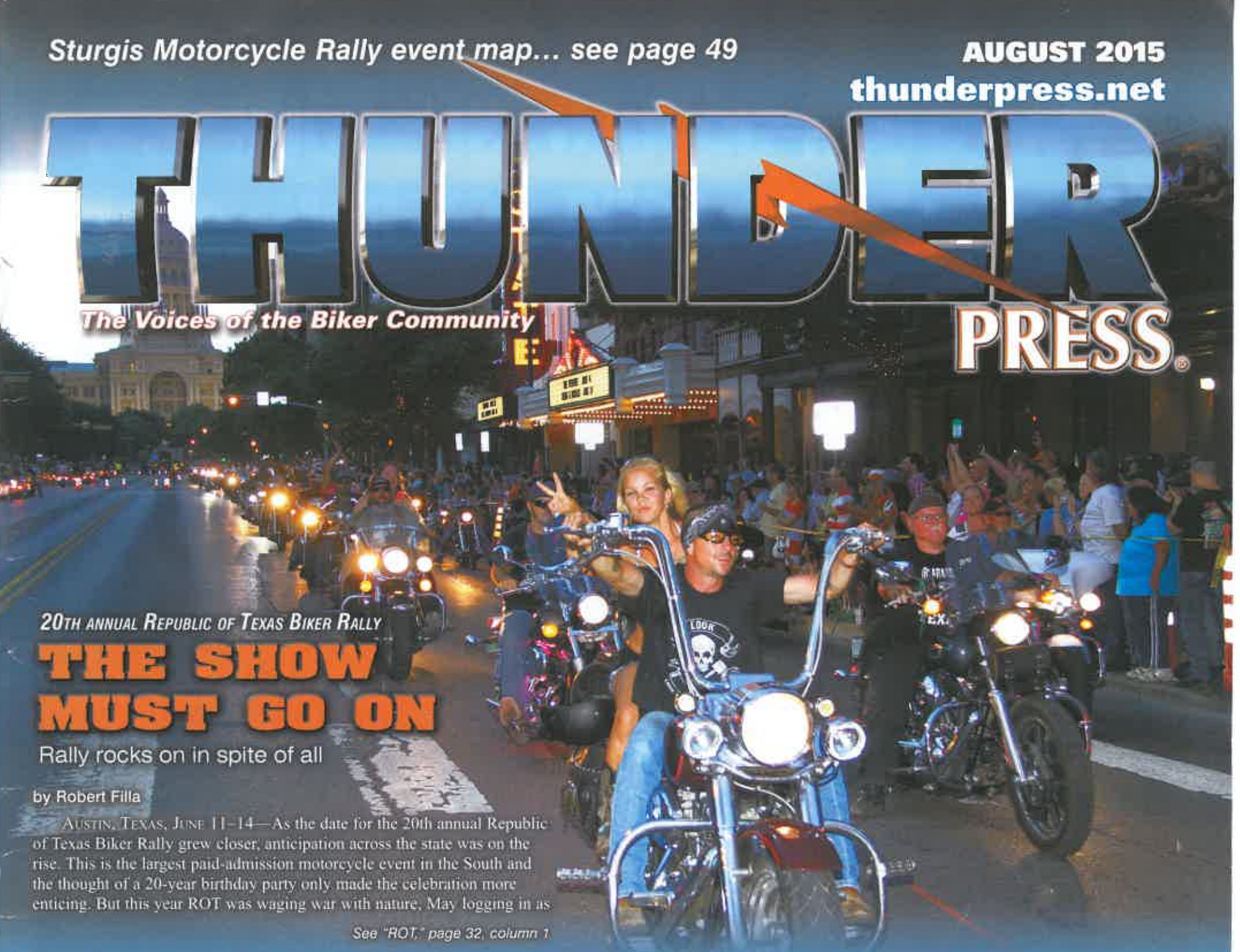


THUNDER PRESS

The Voices of the Biker Community



20TH ANNUAL REPUBLIC OF TEXAS BIKER RALLY

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Rally rocks on in spite of all

by Robert Filla

AUSTIN, TEXAS, JUNE 11-14—As the date for the 20th annual Republic of Texas Biker Rally grew closer, anticipation across the state was on the rise. This is the largest paid-admission motorcycle event in the South and the thought of a 20-year birthday party only made the celebration more enticing. But this year ROT was waging war with nature, May logging in as

See "ROT," page 32, column 1.

92ND LACONIA MOTORCYCLE WEEK

Where riding is king



See page 34

ROLLING THUNDER XXVIII RIDE FOR FREEDOM

REMEMBERING THE LOST

See page 60



One hull of a tour

In the wind, on land and by sea



by Marilyn DeMartini

WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 15–24—Bring a few dozen marine industry executives together on motorcycles for a 2,000-mile trip and you get “One Hull of a Tour—the Freedom Ride.” Wanda Kenton Smith, marine marketer, coined the title for this “Boaterz n Bikerz” Memorial Day experience. Our destination, Rolling Thunder, the “Ride for Freedom” to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, was on a “bucket list” for many of us, so sponsorship by clients Freedom Boat Clubs, Hurricane Boats and Soundings Trade Only made the pairing appropriate. Kenton Smith and road captain Jim Krueger, a seasoned boating navigator, set the scenic route for a nine-day ride from Sarasota, Florida, to include various patriotic and historical points of interest as well as five Freedom Boat Club stops along the way. Having wind in our faces, both on land and water, was alluring, but the anticipation of the pinnacle, reaching Washington for the Ride For the Wall, was brimming in each of us.

As we rode to commemorate those who gave the ultimate sacrifice to defend freedom, we found evidence in each day’s stop of the impact of the U.S. military on the growth, history and pride of our country. Regardless of one’s political stance, we cannot help but feel proud of the leadership demonstrated by the many heroes

recognized in statues, plaques and memorials, but most of all those for whom recognition remains outstanding—for they have not yet come home. The black POW/MIA flag is a constant reminder, “We will not forget.”

From our start at Sarasota, Florida’s City Marina, an impressive 26’-tall statue, a tribute to the famous Victor Jorgensen photograph of a sailor kissing a nurse, “Unconditional Surrender,” was our first military commemorative as we rode off on our northern route.

In St. Augustine, the oldest city in the U.S. celebrating its 450th anniversary, we took a Freedom Boat Club cruise along its coast, enjoying the ocean air and views of ancient Spanish forts. A private tour and brunch in the President’s Dining Hall of Flagler College, the former 1888 Hotel Ponce de Leon, built by railroad magnate Henry J. Flagler, was a special treat and showcase of the luxury of the country’s first industrialists—the bounty that followed the wars for freedom from the Spanish and the Civil War.

Savannah, Georgia, was our first night’s stay and the food, music and people watching on the city’s riverfront gave us a jovial wrap up of a great day of biking and boating. We proceeded to Charleston, South Carolina, where the charming down-

town streets characterize the essence of “the South.” We headed straight to Patriots Point Park to tour the retired World War II-era aircraft carrier, the Yorktown, a “pig” sub, and re-created Vietnam military camp. The park offers a hefty slice of experiential military history and though technology has outpaced these “survivors,” we marveled at their size, scope and what these vessels and aircraft accomplished in our country’s fight for freedom.

After an overnight in Morehead City, North Carolina, we took the Ocracoke ferry, a two-hour relaxing

boat ride offering time for a nap, and arrived in Kitty Hawk, after another unexpected ferry ride because a bridge was still being replaced after the last hurricane. As a result, we arrived at the “birthplace of flight” and the Wright Brothers’ Monument later than expected; unfortunately we got chased out by the park rangers after snatching some quick photos. An overnight in historic Williamsburg and we were on the road again.

While Annapolis, Maryland, is a sailing capital, we enjoyed a motorboat

See “Boaterz,” page 68, column 2



Taking in the sights at Thomas Jefferson’s impressive estate in Monticello, Virginia

Boaterz

Continued from page 66

ride with the Freedom Boat Club to a graduation exercise of the U.S. Naval Academy. On a gorgeous balmy day, we were treated to a close-up aerobatic performance by the Blue Angels which this year added its first female graduate. The awe-inspiring air show made us rise to attention and cheer—proud to be Americans!

On our trip's only dismal, cold and rainy day, we headed to York, Pennsylvania, to visit the Harley-Davidson factory—a piece of American entrepreneurial history. Brusque treatment of the large tour group by the staff took us all by surprise, but we were quickly shuttled through the impressive and immaculate factory and learned about the anatomy of our rides. We then parked our bikes, opting for a tour bus to a highlight of our trip—historic Gettysburg.

The Cyclorama, a huge, circular 1884-vintage painting depicting the three-day battles that decided the outcome of the Civil War, provided an entertaining education at Gettysburg National Military Park. But our guided tour of the battlefields by the Gettysburg Foundation's Dr. Richard Mancini was a moving experience. On that somber, cloudy day, we could feel the spirits of the thousands who lost their lives fighting for their

beliefs. At the first National Military Cemetery, set with seemingly endless curved curbstone-like grave markers, where soldiers were buried by their states, Dr. Mancini had Kenton-Smith read Lincoln's Gettysburg address. *"...this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."* Not a dry eye in the group.

Dinner at Dobbin House Tavern was a callback to 1776. Don't miss it if you visit Gettysburg, but make a reservation. Next morning we were up with the sun and on the road to Shenandoah National Park—a ride of "50 shades of green;" a two-lane treat of winding, sweeping bends and turns. Hikers do the Appalachian Trail; we like the adjacent Skyline Drive!

Then we were off to Alexandria, Virginia, where a tour of Monticello, the estate of Thomas Jefferson, provided an impressive insight into the life of one of the most brilliant and enterprising men of his time. After writing the Declaration of Independence and statutes for religious freedom, and serving as the third U.S. President, Jefferson escaped from politics and built a self-sustained home, as well as the University of Virginia.

Finally, to Washington D.C.! A brief spin through the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum was a tease, but gave us some insight into the Wright

Brothers' work and accomplishments, as well as the U.S. landing on the moon. The visit got us primed for our next day's summit—the Ride for Freedom.

Rolling Thunder hints at the feeling. Riding into the Pentagon parking lot with 800,000-plus other motorcycles and on to the Vietnam Memorial Wall is breathtaking and tear-jerking. Rolling Thunder is not a motorcycle rally—it is a *demonstration* to raise awareness about the issues of the Prisoners of War (POWs) and Missing in Action (MIAs) that our government and citizens have seemingly forgotten. We were there to let them and their families know that "we will never forget" and to continue efforts to bring home their remains to unite with their memories.

Our visit to Arlington National Cemetery—a testament to our country's commitment to fighting for freedom—created an emotional Memorial Day. Somber, salient and sincere, we watched the silent changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and laid roses on one of the over-400,000 graves of active-duty service members, veterans and their families. The 600-plus acres of white tombstones created an optical illusion of endless gravesites and deepened our sorrow and commitment to honoring those who served. "Some gave all." And to them we give thanks on Memorial Day as we should every day. ↗

Stopping for a stretch at the scenic overlook on the Skyline Drive in the Shenandoah National Park

