

Dusty Turner 1 – Moto Guzzi

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

A motorcyclist rides into town – and then another, and another. It's a motorcycle rally – and not just any rally, but a rally to support a rural community and ultimately, to bring people together. This is today's Kansas Profile.

Dusty Turner is organizer and promoter of special events in Kansas and Oklahoma. He grew up in northeastern Oklahoma where, at an early age, he discovered a passion for motorcycles.

One year he and a teenage friend decided they wanted to take a motorcycle trip. They calculated how far they could go on the gas money that they had, and looked at a roadmap. "We saw the name Cedar Vale on a map and decided to go," Dusty said.

"We were a couple of typical kids who set off totally unprepared," Dusty said with a smile. "We got there and couldn't afford a hotel room. We asked around if there was anyplace we could camp, and they sent us to Hewins Park. People were really nice," Dusty said.

It was a memorable trip. The trip happened to take place around the time of Dusty's birthday in late April. A late spring journey to Cedar Vale became an annual pilgrimage for Dusty as he grew up.

Dusty joined the military. After the service, he worked in the restaurant business and then did painting and contracting work in Oklahoma and Texas before moving back to Muskogee. Through it all, his love of motorcycles remained strong. After riding various kinds of motorcycles throughout his life, Dusty discovered a brand of motorcycles called Moto Guzzi. These motorcycles are produced by a company in Italy, and they have a small but passionate following around the globe.

"Moto Guzzi produces maybe 8,000 motorcycles in a year," Dusty said. (That is in contrast to bigger companies which may produce 60,000 in a single quarter.) But Dusty and others are big fans of Moto Guzzi. "It's a basic twin cylinder motorcycle that's simple to repair," Dusty said. "It can eat up the miles, but also works well on curvy mountain roads."

Dusty got his own Moto Guzzi and then joined an online forum of Moto Guzzi enthusiasts. He eventually became an administrator on the site.

One day Dusty noticed that his birthday was coming up. For old times' sake, he decided to make a motorcycle trip to Cedar Vale. "I announced on the board, 'Does anybody want to meet me?'" Dusty said. "I thought I might get one or two, but we had eight," he said. It was so much fun that it became an annual event. Each year on the first weekend of May, a Moto Guzzi rally is now held in the community of Cedar Vale.

In the years since, the Moto Guzzi rally has attracted as many as 70 people from 30 states, from Seattle to New Jersey and as far away as Holland and Germany. Wow.

Organizers have turned the event into a fundraiser for the city of Cedar Vale, as well as an opportunity for big city visitors to experience life in a rural

community. Part of the registration fees go to the city. Donation jars are put out at all events. Funds are used to support projects like the local museum and the poolhouse at the swimming pool. More than \$2,000 has been raised. The Lions club, chamber, and museum help provide meals for donations.

The gathering takes place primarily at Hewins Park, where Dusty had first camped decades ago. "We interact with the locals," Dusty said. "The city has been great."

Dusty is assisted in this project by a friend from the online forum who knows rural Kansas. That friend is John Peters from the rural community of Walton, population 235 people. Now, that's rural.

It's time to leave this Moto Guzzi rally which is helping raise money for a rural Kansas community as well as sharing small town life. We commend all the Moto Guzzi riders for making a difference with this fun initiative. It makes for a good ride.

And there's more. This event has inspired another gathering in Cedar Vale. We'll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.