

BY SCOTT A. WILLIAMS ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR AND CAROLE HELSTROM

Many Roads to Moonshine

2011 Terry Hammond Memorial Moonshine Lunch Run.

RALLIES & CLUBS



This is *the* iconic image of Terry Hammond at Moonshine.

PHOTO BY RICK WINDHAM

Most long-distance riders know the story of the Moonshine Lunch Run, either from personal experience, word-of-mouth, or perhaps reading about it in *Rider* (January 2011).

They also know the tragic twist of fate when Terry Hammond, founder of the Moonshine Lunch Run, died suddenly last November while driving his tractor. A week later, the *Rider* issue including the Moonshine article began reaching newsstands and mailboxes across North America.

In April 2011, the Moonshine Lunch Run became a memorial honoring Terry, but in a manner that even the spotlight-evading gentleman farmer would have found OK. Long-distance riders from all walks of life aboard motorcycles of every description rode from far and near to Moonshine, Illinois, (population 2) for a hamburger, the chance to rekindle existing friendships and the opportunity to ignite new ones.

There are as many roads to Moonshine as there are people who ride there. For Danny DiGiacomo, a retired civil servant from Staten Island, New York, the road extended to Belize and Panama, covered 16,300 miles, and ended back at Moonshine where it started a year earlier. But as he was preparing to leave on this multicountry ride last year, his ST1100 experienced engine problems. The entire trip was cast into doubt.

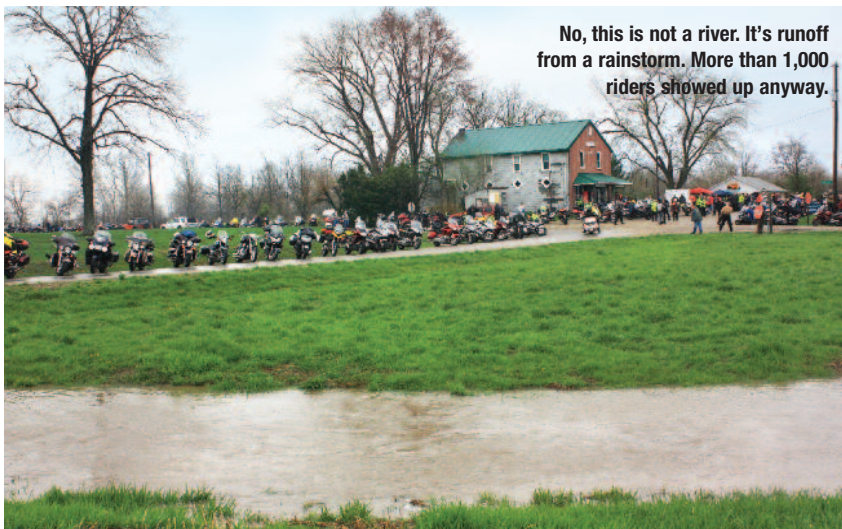
Enter Terry Hammond. "Without having met him before April," DiGiacomo recalled, "Terry peered into my helpless eyes with his

hand on my shoulder and a sincerity that crystallized the space between us. He said, 'Danny, my shop and house are yours for as long as it takes. Thank you for the privilege of having this moon launch of a ride leave from my shop.'"

When a donor engine was located five hours away, Terry offered the keys to his car. After 128 man-hours, DiGiacomo and friends were riding south.

Richard Buber, a retired factory worker from Cocoa, Florida, arrived at his sixth Moonshine Lunch Run on a Triumph Tiger 955i. Buber admired the way Terry united long-distance riders. "No one else brought together Harleys and Hondas, doctors and ditch diggers, like Terry did. Look around here: no one cares what you ride. Terry and I were different people on this earth, that's for sure, and you know what? It doesn't matter. It never did. We're all riders and he brought us all together. I miss Terry Hammond. I do."

Jason Garver, chief of the Casey Volunteer Fire Department (BMW R 1200 RT, fourth Moonshine), recalled



No, this is not a river. It's runoff from a rainstorm. More than 1,000 riders showed up anyway.



By midmorning, the rain finally let up.



It's still early, but the bikes keep rolling in.



Top left: "Relentless," Terry's 2006 Honda ST1300, was ridden by Kreis Weigel of Knoxville, Tennessee, to the Moonshine Store and parked in a spot of honor right in front.

Above: Terry Hammond's sisters Vicki Gee (left) and Carol McMillan, both of Tucson, Arizona, pose onboard their brother's bike.

Terry's boundless generosity. "When Moonshine started to take off, Terry knew he'd have to get people fed, so he arranged with the fire department to put on a fundraising supper. The first year we didn't plan it all that well and when it was clear we weren't going to break even, Terry quietly dropped \$500 of his own money into the donation bucket so the fire department wouldn't lose money."

For Carole Helstrom, a retired consultant on her third Moonshine, and Mac McKechnie, U.S. Navy retired, on his fourth, the road to Moonshine started in San Diego, California. "In Yuma, Arizona, it was 97 degrees," Helstrom said. "In Clovis, New Mexico, we had sideways snow. In Texas and Oklahoma we rode through wind like you couldn't believe."

McKechnie fought that wind. "We were riding east and the

wind was out of the north. It was blowing so hard I was leaning my Gold Wing about 20 degrees left just to keep the bike going straight. I thought the footpeg was going to drag. It was hairy, but part of the reward of Moonshine is the challenge of getting there."

Helstrom and McKechnie shared the longest ride to Moonshine this year—2,347 miles, one-way.

The longest *total* distance commenced when hotelier Les Bishop departed his home in Dunoon, Scotland, flew to Nashville, borrowed a Honda ST1100 (thanks, Uncle Phil), and rode to his first Moonshine Lunch Run. "I had to come," Bishop explained. "As Terry would say, I get it."

Jody Lutker, a Honda ST1300 rider and IT specialist from Peoria, Illinois, has attended six Moonshine Lunch Runs. "Early on, people saw Terry's generous heart and started to throw money in a donation bucket," Lutker said, "but that was a byproduct, not part of the design. Whatever people gave, Terry gave away—to the food pantry, crisis center, volunteer fire department, whoever needed it." (Lutker maintains



Above: Mac McKechnie and Carole Helstrom of San Diego, California, rode 2,347 miles one way to Moonshine.



Above: Lexie, the Yorkshire terrier, rode all the way to Moonshine from Yorktown Heights, New York, with Larry Jensen as moto-chauffeur.

www.moonshine-run.com.)

Tim Yow, an entrepreneur from Charleston, Illinois, arrived at his sixth Moonshine riding a Kawasaki KLR650. "The thing that stands out the most to me about Terry," Yow explained, "is how he brought people together who shared his passion for riding motorcycles long distances. They came from different walks of life and rode different bikes but Terry made us all a family. There are folks here today who rode across the nation for someone they never knew."

Not surprisingly, those riders had more

stories to tell than there is space to print them. With apologies if your comment isn't here, please consider these thoughts, shared with your humble scribe, during Moonshine 2011:

"We ride to Moonshine for the people we meet."

Pat O'Bryant with daughter Breann; Chillicothe, Ohio; IT administrator; fourth Moonshine.

"I love the fellowship. I also love the stories, like the guy who rode from Pennsylvania

and it started snowing so he tucked in behind a truck to ride in the wheel tracks so he could keep going."

Ross Hovind; Groveland, Illinois; retired 5th grade teacher; second Moonshine.

"For us in the frozen north, Moonshine kicks off the riding season. Terry knew to have the best event of the year first."

Curt Gran; Pewaukee, Wisconsin; IT systems engineer; sixth Moonshine.

"I love to ride. Moonshine is just something I have to do."

Bobby Robinson; Bowling Green, Kentucky; tool and die maker; second Moonshine.

Below: Last year Richard Buber of Cocoa, Florida, rode 10,000 miles on 10 bikes over 10 days, but last April he rode this Triumph Tiger 955i to Moonshine.




Above: Kreis Weigel (left) of Knoxville, Tennessee, admires a plate of Moonburgers that Mac McKechnie of San Diego, California, just might share with him.

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"I saw an article about Moonshine in *Rider* magazine and thought that's something I'd like to be part of. So here I am."

Roger Day; Wheaton, Illinois;
retired private detective; first Moonshine.

"It used to be for charity, but this one was for Terry."

Patrick Charlton; Franklinville,
New Jersey; shipyard supervisor;
second Moonshine.

"When you finally realize that Moonshine was never really about the burger, then you get it."

Steve Schwan; Kewaskum, Wisconsin;
plumber; sixth Moonshine.

"You make special bonds with the people you ride with. The first time I talked to Terry on the phone I knew I wanted to meet him."

Tim Keel; Lawrenceville, Georgia;
motorcycle tire merchant; second Moonshine.



Left: Moonshine newbie Robert Fortuna, an orthopaedic surgeon from East Greenwich, Rhode Island, picks up his first Moonburger, a double with cheese and bacon. (Don't tell his cardiologist!) Above: Terry Hammond was a member of several online motorcycling communities. As members of ST-owners.com gathered for a group photo around his bike, the sun came out.

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"I've been dreaming about a long-distance ride for years. First I was too busy, and then I got sick and couldn't do it. I met Terry when he came to New England to visit us and that compelled me to come this year. Moonshine was like a second chance for me."

Robert Fortuna;
East Greenwich, Rhode Island;
orthopaedic surgeon; first Moonshine.

Even without Terry's physical presence, the spirit that enlivened everything he did was evident throughout Moonshine 2011. Though his family and friends still hurt, they came together to celebrate his selfless generosity, infectious optimism and childlike sense of fun.

Terry always insisted that the Moonshine Lunch Run wasn't about him, but it surely happened because of him. There will always be many roads to Moonshine and riders will keep coming year after year for one simple reason: *because they get it*, thanks to Terry Hammond.

Moonshine 2011 Official Tally

- 1,004 riders
- 917 motorcycles
- 43 states and provinces
- 3 countries
- 740,000 combined miles round trip
- 2,068 Moonburgers (a new record)
- 1 amazing time had by all! **37**

Terry Hammond, 1957-2010

Terry Hammond was a friend to everyone he met, but especially other long-distance motorcyclists. Even those he never met in person he counted among his friends, and his willingness to open his home and heart to any rider was truly epic.



Terry was a Midwestern gentleman, an eighth-generation farmer, a family man, a committed Christian, a skilled tinkerer, a community benefactor and a funny, funny guy. He could sing, cry, laugh and ride, and did them all with relentless enthusiasm.

The Moonshine Lunch Run was Terry's concept and it meant the world to him, but it was never about him. All the work, all the effort, and all the love he put into this unique event was for the riders. As anyone who's ridden to Moonshine can attest, it's not about the ride, it's not about the burger, it's about the experience. For that experience, and so much more, riders everywhere thank Terry Hammond. **37**



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