

**50-YEARS RUNNING AT SWISS DAYS** | Page 3

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**Workin' on  
the railroad**

page 4



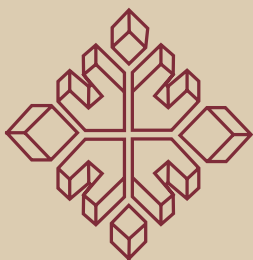
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# Senior Living

Fall 2023

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Senior Living is a quarterly publication of News-Banner Publications, 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton IN 46714. Have a story idea? Send it via mail to above address or email: [seniorliving@adamswells.com](mailto:seniorliving@adamswells.com).



The Bridgeton Mill turns 200. page 12

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# Runners complete 50-year streak at Swiss Days Race

BY TANYA ISCH CAYLOR

In 1974, three young men toed the starting line of the very first Swiss Days Race, eager to relive the thrill of their cross country days.

Doug Bauman, the 27-year-old Bellmont High School cross country coach and record-setting Geneva graduate, won their age group, 26-39, in a time of 17:05.

Jack Shoaf — a 28-year-old former teacher and recent hire at the First Bank of Berne who'd run for John Brown University as well as Adams Central High School — finished second.

Placing third in their division — which amounted to last place, as there were only 15 runners in the entire race and only three in their age group — was Barry Humble, the 26-year-old cross country coach at Adams Central.

The race was Shoaf's idea. He'd converted a co-worker with his enthusiasm for running, and the duo persuaded bank management to sponsor the race. No one knew, that first year, if there would ever be another one. But the race grew in popularity, along with the festival itself, as the mid-'70s running boom took hold.

Now in their 70s, Shoaf, Bauman and Humble have participated in 50 consecutive versions of the second oldest foot-race in Indiana — Bauman and Humble as runners, and Shoaf as the longtime moped rider who paces the leader and escorts the stragglers.

For decades, Bauman was the runner to beat in his age group. At the 40th Swiss Days Race in 2013, a table displaying the former county commissioner's 40 trophies was part of the festivities.

Bauman beat Humble across the finish line 42 years in a row before 2016, when back surgery slowed Bauman down but failed to break his Swiss Days streak.

Humble has prevailed every year since, with the exception of 2020, when Covid canceled Swiss Days. A group of diehards, however, gathered for an un-



Doug Bauman, left, and Barry Humble, have run all 50 Swiss Days Races, beginning with the first one in 1974, when both were rival cross country coaches in Adams County. (Photo by Tanya Isch Caylor)

timed, unofficial version of the race.

That year, wearing T-shirts the First Bank of Berne quietly printed up for the occasion, Bauman, Humble and a few others ran with Shoaf, who has Parkinson's disease.

The runners crossed what would have been the finish line holding hands, with only two spectators in attendance: this writer and my father, race co-founder Charles Isch, the longtime official starter.

Two bouts of cancer and stem cell treatment couldn't break Dad's race streak. But a scheduling conflict with his annual Canada fishing trip eventually got him off track.

At this year's 50th Swiss Days Race on July 29, Shoaf set off on his moped wearing a commemorative race shirt bearing his likeness, leading 265 runners that included several of his grand-



Race Co-Founder Jack Shoaf has participated in all 50 runnings of the Swiss Days Race, originally as a runner but in the last several decades as the moped rider who paces the leaders and encourages the stragglers. This year his image, on his moped, was featured on the 50th anniversary T-shirt. (Photo by Bob Caylor)

children.

Toward the back of the pack, Bauman lurched into motion, accompanied by his son. Running has become increasingly difficult for the 76-year-old. Though he stays active working on his farm, to avoid aggravating his back he only runs a couple of times a year to tune up for the Swiss Days Race.

He finished ninth in his age group, 60-99, with a time of 38:01, nearly 21 minutes slower than what he ran in 1974 — though to be fair, that was a 3-mile race, while today's race is a 5K, or 3.1 miles.

"I don't call it runnin' anymore," he told a friend afterward. "I didn't walk, I'll put it that way."

Humble, 75, finished sixth at 32:59. His times, too, have slowed. "It's all relative," the retired teacher and pastor

Continued on page 21

# Workin' on the railroad

*...with ink in his blood*

BY MARK MILLER

Railroading is definitely in Ed Rahn's DNA. As it turned out, so is printing.

An Ossian resident since 1996, Rahn grew up in his native Huntington, once a major hub for the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad. His father, Dick, was a locomotive engineer and his grandfather was the chief clerk to the road foreman and trainmaster.

"Years later, I often heard from old veterans that dad was Erie's best engineer," he shares. Ed was just six years old when his father let him ride along in the locomotive cab, something that would surely not be allowed in today's world. It was a passenger train run from Huntington to Marion, Ohio and back.

Just three days after turning 18, shortly after graduating from Huntington High School in 1965, he was hired as a printer apprentice at Fort Wayne Newspapers. He would witness and participate in a number of changes in the technology of printing and in the newspaper business itself. He accepted an early retirement option after 36 years at the young age of just 53.

"It was the first time in my life that I didn't have anything to do with newspapers," he says. As far back as he can recall, he had helped deliver newspapers and then had his own delivery routes of the Huntington and Fort Wayne papers through high school.

In retirement, he bought a small AB-Dick printer and did some job printing out of a small shop he built next to his house. He says his most notable regular work was printing Bluffton's American Legion newsletter for years. But technology and the internet eventually made that work obsolete, so he sold that small press in 2015.

It was only fairly recently that he discovered his great grandfather had been a printer as well.

"His name was Edwin F.," he says. "I am Edwin L."

Hence, these days, Ed Rahn's printing DNA seems to have run its course. Railroading? Not so much.

"I had a small Lionel set when I was a kid," he says as he surveys one of



Ed and Carolyn Rahn's Ossian home is filled with railroad memorabilia, mostly related to the Erie railroad, at which Ed Rahn's father and grandfather both worked. The large Erie Band artwork — an original drawing based off a photograph which Ed also has, once served as the covering for the bass drum utilized by the band.

ON THE COVER: Ed Rahn is surrounded by his HO-scale layout that consists of five trains and hundreds of buildings and accessories that he has collected over the years. "Maybe I got carried away," he says. (Photos by Mark Miller)

two large, complicated train layouts in his home. The original garage has been transformed into a museum of sorts, dominated by an 8-by-5.5-foot layout that includes five HO-scale trains, one of which is more than 12 cars long. The layout is cluttered with numerous buildings, railroad crossings and light structures.

His old printing shop was enlarged to accommodate a similar-sized Lionel layout that has three levels with a different train on each. The bottom level includes a dozen switches which allow a variety of routes that train can take.

"The switches can get a little complicated sometimes," he admits. "The Lionel takes up much more room, and they're noisier." Which may explain why that layout was moved to the unattached garage/workshop.

"Yes, my wife puts up with it all," he shares. "She lets me have my fun."

He is referring to the former Carolyn Rash who grew up in Decatur. They married in 1996, which is when Ed moved to Ossian where she'd already had a home. Carolyn grew up within a few blocks of where the Erie-Lackawanna went through town. The couple discovered an ironic connection as they

courted.

"Dad was involved in a derailment there on the east side of Decatur," he explains. "Carolyn's father was an Indiana state trooper. I was telling her the story of that derailment and she said she remembers that, because her father investigated it."

— — —

Retirement at age 53 did not mean not working. It was not considered an option. He dabbled in his printing business, took a job as a Walmart greeter and also found work in the railroad industry.

"I basically road along, monitoring over-sized loads," he explains. His job entailed reporting on the payloads' condition, safety and delivery. It was part-time and occasional — whenever a particular load needed a chaperone. The work was mostly on the Union-Pacific Railroad out west, which provided an opportunity to see much of that country.

He also witnessed a number of "incidents" and "too many close calls," he says. Statistics show that every three hours, there is some sort of accident that involves a train and a vehicle.

"You just can't believe what people do to try and beat a train," he says. He

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has witnessed many and heard stories of many more.

“Dad was not a talkative person,” he recalls, “but one day he came to my brother and I and very pointedly told us to stay away from the railroads. I don’t know if he had just had a close call or another accident.”

His father had been involved in quite a few, he says, just as any railroad engineer. “It bothers them deeply,” he says. There are also, unfortunately, many suicide-by-train incidents. But there is rarely anything an engineer can do when a person or vehicle is on the tracks in their path.

“The engine itself weighs 435,000 pounds,” he explains. “A vehicle weighs what? Maybe as much as 3,000 pounds? It’s no contest.” And even at just 10 mph, it takes a considerable distance for a train to stop.

“A lot of bad things can happen” when an engineer is forced to put the train into an “emergency stop” situation, he continues. A derailment can injure or kill people waiting at a crossing or if the train is hauling hazardous materials, it can impact an entire community. “All because someone didn’t want to wait on a train,” he says.

So it was shortly after his retirement that he got involved with “Operation Lifesaver,” an organized effort to educate people about railroad safety. He does not recall exactly how that came about — whether he saw something on the internet or if it was a friend who



When friends have become aware of Ed Rahn’s hobby, they have sometimes brought him gifts they’ve come across, like this antique spitoon embossed with the logo of Union Pacific, for which Rahn worked part time since his retirement from Fort Wayne newspapers in 2001.

## Ed Rahn toots his horn in the Erie Band

Huntington, Ind., was once a “railroad town,” an important hub for the Erie Railroad which would become the Erie-Lackawanna before fading into history in the mid-1970s.

Perhaps the extent of the company’s presence in the community can be demonstrated by the history of “The Erie Band.” It originally consisted totally of Erie employees and family members.

Ossian resident Ed Rahn joined the band in 1961 — his freshman year of high school. He continues to be a part of the group that “now includes anybody,” he says. He drives over for rehearsals once or twice a month, toting his now-well-aged Baritone horn. The group performs at Huntington County fairs and events, at the 4th-of-July fireworks and the annual Forks of the Wabash festival.

The band dates back 105 years, Rahn says. His grandfather, Elmer,



an Erie employee, was the conductor when he began.

The band is one of several volunteer positions that Rahn enjoys in his retirement. In addition to making presentations and working events and trade shows for Operation Lifesaver, he is also a volunteer AARP-certified tax preparer and serves on committees at Ossian’s First Presbyterian Church.

“You just do stuff,” he concludes.

— Mark Miller

was an engineer for Norfolk-Southern and was an Operation Lifesaver volunteer.

Ed has no idea how many presentations he has made over the past 21 years at schools and service clubs on railroad safety. He has also manned booths at community events, fairs and train shows.

“I was working at Walmart one day, not too long after doing a presentation at Norwell High School,” he recalls. Two students walked in and recognized him as “the train guy.” “So maybe I connected, maybe I made a difference.”

— — —

Ed Rahn’s train layouts — all self-designed and constructed — also began after retirement. He has kept some records of the exact date that something was added or other major changes and advances. He can rattle off the years that new layouts were added and when he moved the Lionel set into the old print shop.

While his brother, ironically, has sold HO-scale trains and accessories in Indi-

anapolis for a number of years, most of his purchases have been at train shows, auctions and private sales from other collectors. He has no idea how many total pieces he has, many of which are stored away in boxes or displayed on the shelves and cabinets that line both rooms. He does venture a guess that maybe he has 50 to 60 HO-scale locomotives and a maybe a dozen Lionel O-scale locomotives, which often run north of \$300. Cars and accessories? No clue. Many them are antiques.

“I guess you could say that maybe I got carried away,” he chuckles. But he quickly adds that he knows several other collectors who have “more stuff” and bigger and more detailed layouts.

The Rahn home is also filled with railroad memorabilia, mostly from the Erie history. He is appreciative of Carolyn’s understanding.

“There’s just a lot of stuff,” he says. Part of his DNA.

*Do you have a story to tell or know someone who does? [seniorliving@adamswells.com](mailto:seniorliving@adamswells.com)*



Ed Rahn's extensive model railroad layouts include a five-train complex with inter-twining tracks lined by hundreds of scale-model buildings and railroad accessories (at right). Below, from left: Some additional locomotives in Rahn's Lionel O-scale room, awaiting their turn on the three-train layout that fills a portion of the unattached garage and shop next to the Rahns' Ossian home. • The Lionel layout requires an array of controls, some of which utilize modern technology. • Among the accessories is this antique watchman's shed, from which the metal watchman emerges automatically when a train approaches and passes.



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# They welcomed an unexpected cousin

BY BETH STEURY

“Heritage becomes more important as you get older,” says Berne resident Ruth Yoder, echoing a sentiment that many folks feel deeply. That’s why in February of 2022, she signed up for the annual Ancestry DNA class hosted by the Berne Public Library’s Heritage Room.



## The DNA Sleuth

The library was a convenient walk from her near-downtown home, Tuesdays were “good” for her, and maybe she’d gain the skills to build a family tree. Little did Ruth know that the class’s introduction to Ancestry.com would help to piece together an intriguing puzzle that would enlarge her family circle in ways she could not have imagined.

After I shared my foundling/adoption/search/reunion story during one of the class sessions, putting a real person’s story to the power of DNA testing, an enthusiastic Ruth hugged me and asked if we could talk later about a personal matter. When we met early before the next weekly session, Ruth shared the story that had rested in the back corner of her mind for more than six years.

Late one evening in 2015, just after falling asleep, Ruth’s Aunt Anna (her mother’s sister) had received a telephone call. The stranger on the line, calling from California, introduced herself as the wife of an adoptee placed through The Cradle, an adoption agency in Chicago. They believed his biological mother to be Elizabeth Hochstetler, born in Nappanee, Indiana.

While Anna confirmed she had a sister Elizabeth — known to everyone as Liz — Anna had no knowledge of a baby placed for adoption by her sister. The caller continued, sharing that her husband, who was in failing health and not expected to recover, had a desire to meet the woman who’d given birth to him. Sadly, Anna shared that Liz had passed away in 2008, and added that



Hochstetler cousins gathered at Ruth’s home in August 2022. Front row, from left, Mattie Chupp, daughter of Anna; Susan Schlabach, sister to Ruth; Naomi Yoder, daughter of Anna. Back row, Mary Carpenter, daughter of Anna; Sherry Hochstetler, daughter of Levi; Ruth Yoder, and her cousin Karen Hochstetler. (Photos provided)

she’d had no children that Anna was aware of. Her groggy, startled-awake mind could not fashion questions, and too quickly, the call ended, leaving Anna to realize she couldn’t even remember the name of the caller.

Unfortunately, Anna didn’t subscribe to caller ID, so she couldn’t call the woman back as her now wide-awake mind filled with questions. Later, Anna sat down with family — including siblings, nieces, and nephews — to further ponder the situation. However, no one had any insights or information to of-

fer. She tasked her tech-savvy son with somehow tracking down the telephone number of the late-night caller. The telephone company offered no assistance, stating that a court order would be required to open the telephone records.

Soon, someone voiced what several family members had been silently pondering: *Could Liz* have had a child that she placed for adoption without the family knowing?

Aunt Anna remembered out loud that Liz had left their hometown com-

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munity years back and, for a time, the family did not know her whereabouts. But she'd returned and no questions had been asked. Several of Anna's nieces and nephews applied "good ol' fashioned sleuthing" to the few puzzle pieces they'd collected: a baby born in Chicago and placed via The Cradle.



Anna (Hochstetler) Mast who received the late-night call in 2015.

The timeline seemed to align with then 22-year-old Liz's brief time away from the family, but no confirming details came to light. Eventually the collective Hochstetler clan put to rest the mystery of the late-night-caller's inquiry.

But Ruth never forgot that call and the conversations that followed, and she prayed for her maybe first cousin from time-to-time over the next several years. Upon hearing how DNA and a mix of new-fangled and old-fashioned sleuth-

# BRAIN EXERCISE

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ing had uncovered answers for me, a desire to mount a search for this possible son of her Aunt Liz reignited within her. The years of pondering had firmed up the conviction in Ruth's mind that this searching adoptee had indeed been her favorite aunt's son. Her contagious enthusiasm soon drew her cousins' renewed attention to the search.

I suggested that Ruth test with Ancestry.com — whose test kits would likely be on sale near St. Patrick's Day. I surmised that if this man had been fervently pursuing his birth mother, it's likely that he had also tested. And since he'd been born in Illinois, a state that changed their sealed adoption records policies in 2012, he may well have requested and received his original birth certificate. That document may have been the source of the name his wife had noted in the call years ago to Aunt Anna.

Next, I dug into the fine-print details concerning who could request records from the state of Illinois and learned that a sibling of a deceased birth mother could obtain adoption-related information. By now, only one of Liz's siblings remained, 89-year-old Levi. With his consent, the family rallied to complete the necessary form and to acquire a number of required documents, including Liz's birth and death certificate and Levi's birth certificate. But a backlog of requests delayed the process, and in the meantime, Levi passed away, leaving the family uncertain as to whether the request-in-progress could be completed.

By now Ruth had received her DNA results, so we switched gears, hoping to uncover a link to this possible first cousin. Near the top of Ruth's DNA match list was a gentleman that Ruth didn't recognize, amongst several names of kin that she could identify. He shared the right amount of DNA to be a first cousin. His test results were not linked to a family tree — possibly a clue that he didn't know his genetic roots?

With all sleuthing-gears fully engaged, we delved into who he might be. When we made a connection to California, we forged ahead with renewed vigor, remembering that the mystery caller had noted that her husband grew up and still resided in California. Excitement simmered amid the scribbling of information on paper and the hoping between Googled sites on my cell phone and my computer. Ruth and I



John and Ruth (Mast) Yoder, Berne residents for 2 years after residing in Bluffton for the previous 25 years.

uncovered a hefty pile of evidence to support the theory that DNA match Nathan Martin\* could indeed be Aunt Liz's relinquished son. Even the fact that he had sadly passed in March of 2016 supported the fact that we had identified the correct person referenced in the 2015 call to Aunt Anna. Within an hour,

we'd compiled a loose timeline for Nathan and his family.

Ruth left our meeting with several telephone numbers, hoping to make a connection with either Nathan's wife, sister, or one of his sons. But many of the numbers once connected to the various family members were no longer in service.

So, Ruth handwrote a letter to Pamela, Nathan's wife, detailing the long ago call and our hunch that Pamela had been the late-night caller looking for her husband's biological family. Soon after she received the letter, Pamela called Ruth, confirming we'd pieced the puzzle together correctly.

"She was very open, and we had a wonderful conversation," recalls Ruth. The half-hour exchange revealed highlights about Nathan — a quiet man known for his jokes — and the family who raised him in the Los Angeles area. His father, a radio producer in Hollywood, and his mother, a schoolteacher, had provided a loving home for Nathan and their biological daughter, Sally, five years Nathan's senior. A son ten years older than Nathan had passed away at

Continued on page 24

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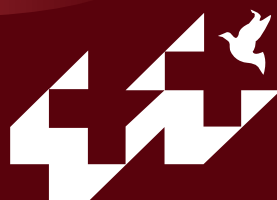


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# Bridgeton Mill marks 200th anniversary

BY ROD KING

The Covered Bridge capitol of the world is right here in Indiana. Parke County has 31 of them and showcases them during its annual Covered Bridge Festival, which is the state's biggest festival. This year, it runs from the second Friday in October (the 13th) through October 22.



They're all unique. Some can be driven through, while others are only for foot traffic. Most of them are red and some are quite long. The fourth longest at 245 feet, the Bridgeton Covered Bridge also has a mill pond, a dam, waterfall and a working mill next door. In fact, Bridgeton Mill, perhaps the most famous of them all, is celebrating its 200th anniversary.

The bridge would probably be celebrating two centuries as well if it hadn't burned, been rebuilt and burned down again. The latest disaster happened in 2005 and was believed to be arson. After that it was bypassed by an open bridge that takes traffic across Big Raccoon Creek right into the center of the town's 26-building historic district. Today the covered bridge is just for walking, strolling, skipping, jogging or bike riding.

The mill utilizes two French buhr grinding stones weighing 2,800 pounds each to turn grain into flour and corn meal. Mike Roe, the present owner, is always on hand to explain the process that concludes with bagging nine finely ground products. He willingly and enthusiastically explains the mill's history. After he took over, that history includes a partial foundation collapse, an explosion and a fire. When he and his wife, Karen, purchased it in 1995 it was a major work in process — one that he's quick to add is still going on. It took him three years just to save the building before he could begin restoration.

Always interested in water power, Roe hopes to reactivate the 200-foot-long mill race that brings water into the turbines to make power to turn the grinding stones as it did back in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

"The dam also needed a lot of work. More water was going through it than over it," he added. "Our plan is to use the falling water to make electricity so we can say 'the old red mill is green.' "Stone grinding is slow and gentle," says Roe, "so the products retain 100 percent of their flavor and nutrition." Now, the mill turns out more than 20,000 pounds of flour and meal a year to meet the growing demand for natural foods.



Probably the most famous of Parke County's 31 covered bridges is the 245-foot-long bridge at Bridgeton (at left in above photo). It burned down twice, the last time in 2005 was believed to be arson. (Photos by Rod King)

Today it's more than just a mill. Roe's wife Karen has turned the first floor into a general store/bakery. The bakery was opened in 2010 to offer visitors cookies, loaves of bread, her special hamburger buns and rolls. One can also order a grilled cheese sandwich, too. If you'd like ice cream, just shout "ice cream!" and then go to the patio at the east end of the building overlooking the dam and










Karen Roe utilizes flour produced by the mill to make bread, hamburger buns, cookies, rolls and brownies. The bakery was opened in 2010. She also serves ice cream and grilled cheese sandwiches.



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At right, Owner/miller Mike Roe explains the milling process to a visitor. The mill produces nine different varieties of finely-ground flour which is slowly produced to retain 100 percent of its flavor and nutrition. Below right, today, the covered bridge is for walking, strolling, jogging, skipping and bike riding only. An open concrete bridge now bypasses it and takes visitors directly into the heart of Bridgeton's 26-building historic center.



bridge and wait for Karen to serve you.

While visiting the mill and learning more about grinding grain than you ever thought you needed to know, be on the lookout for eagles, blue herons, king fishers, kestrels (sparrow hawks), pileated woodpeckers, humming birds and more.

On the way there stop at the visitor's center in Rockville to pick up brochures on the festival and Bridgeton bridge and mill.

*The writer, a Fort Wayne resident, may be reached at cknoll75@yahoo.com*



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# Triumphs' quirks are just part of the fun

BY BOB CAYLOR

Sometimes a collector of these British roadsters savors the quest as much as the Triumph.

Larry Ridgway, who lives south of Bluffton, knows that from a lifetime of experience. When he graduated from Bluffton High School in 1979, his daily drive was a 1975 TR7. That was a tiny, wedge-shaped two-seater imported from Britain and marketed with the slogan, "The Shape of Things to Come."

"We didn't own it very long, because it was problematical, to say the least," Ridgway remembers. Labor trouble at the company when the first

TR7s rolled out was legendary. The cars themselves were the big losers in the brawl between workers and management.

Ridgway said that electrical problems were what put him off the TR7 when he was a teen, and that's a traditional problem area in that model. But he said the Triumphs are prone to leak and burn oil, too.

But when that trouble-prone car was running, it was undeniably fun. It was small and sleek. Its low center of gravity and relatively short wheelbase made it nimble, although its little four-cylinder engine meant it would never be fast.

No, he didn't keep it long, but that "shape of things to come" marketing line proved true for Ridgway. Twenty years later, he bought another TR7. He's always enjoyed working on cars, so the mechanical quirks of Triumphs were never deal-breakers for him. Since then, he's owned many more Triumphs — TR6 and TR3 models, too.

Why come back to a troublesome make of car?

Ridgway offered several reasons. First, the cars are easy to work on. Second, parts are much more easily available than for many decades-old collector cars. Third, there a lot of people who know Triumph quirks and are experts at fixing them.

Ridgway's latest is a 1974 TR6. It's been repainted once, decades ago, in a deep burgundy finish that looks



Larry Ridgway rolls past a field of beans south of Bluffton in his 1974 TR6.

better than most cars right off the assembly line. It's roughly the same size and weight as the TR7, though with a slightly longer wheelbase and a six-cylinder engine with more horsepower, though still no muscle car in anyone's imagination.

He bought it three years ago. The Co-

vid-19 pandemic was in full surge, and Ridgway, like so many others, unexpectedly had time on his hands.

"I needed a project," he remembers. Well, there's always a Triumph somewhere.

He bought this TR6 from a collector in Chicago, a man he's known for many

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years. In fact, he still calls his latest Triumph “Bob’s car,” after his friend.

“The reason I like the cars is I’ve met some tremendously nice people,” he said.

“I’m not big into the shows. I like my car. I don’t care whether anybody else likes it,” he said. “My car is a driver, not a points car. I’m not scared to drive it to Indy or even Chicago.”

But in fact, lots of people do like it.

Ridgway also has a Porsche Boxster, but it’s just not the smile-maker the Triumph is. “You can drive to Indianapolis in the Porsche and see 10 of them,” he said. “You can drive to Indianapolis in this and not see another one.”

He said he’s never had a Triumph strand him, but even if one did, you might look at that as spicing up the hobby a bit.

He puts it this way: “I had a mechanic friend tell me once, ‘You take this car across town, and you may or may not make it. You jump in a Mazda Miata, and you’re going to make it every time. But what fun is that?’”

*Do you have a story to tell or know someone who does? caylor.bob@gmail.com*



At left, two views of Larry Ridgway’s 1974 Triumph TR6; Above top: The two-seat Triumph TR6 is still comfortably roomy, with an appealing interior design. Near above: The vehicle’s straight-six engine.

Photos by Bob Caylor

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# Willey's 'ordeal' from Normandy to the Ardennes

BY KAYLEEN REUSSER

"Wherever the front line or most resistance was, that's where we were," said Richard Willey of Bluffton.

Born in Auburn, Indiana, in 1921, Willey grew up in Bluffton after his family moved there in 1925. His father, Lyle Willey, worked as a coach while teaching agricultural courses at Bluffton High School. Later, he became a principal, then a superintendent in the 1950s.

After graduating in 1939 from Bluffton High School, Richard Willey attended Purdue University where he majored in education. An athlete in high school, he played football for four years and basketball one year before graduating in 1943.

The United States had entered World War II in December 1941 with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. As such, male university students were required to enroll in Army Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) for one semester.

After he was drafted, Willey, as a college graduate, was entitled to enter the Army as an officer. He chose to enter as an enlisted man.

In Spring 1944 Private First Class Willey arrived in Glasgow, Scotland, with the 953rd Army Field Artillery Battalion attached to V Corps.

Following basic training at Fort Meade, Maryland, he had applied for a transfer to the 87th Paratrooper Division but was denied. Willey later viewed the refusal as a blessing. "The 87<sup>th</sup> was almost wiped out at the invasion of Normandy," he said.

A few months earlier, Willey and thousands of other soldiers had boarded the massive ship, *Queen Elizabeth*, to travel from Ellis Island to Europe. During the voyage, soldiers ate meals

in the area where the ship's swimming pool had formerly stood before the luxury liner was converted to a troop ship. Now it was drained. "The food was rotten," said Willey. "It was probably leftover from World War I," he said. He appeased his hunger by eating Powerhouse candy bars items from the ship's PX.



Richard Willey

At Glasgow the troops trained for war on the moors shooting 155-millimeter Howitzers. "We were never officially told what was being planned during the training," said Willey. "We just knew it was some kind of an invasion."

On June 6, 1944, the Allies landed on the 60-mile strip of northwest France. It was the largest amphibious invasion the world had ever

known, eventually involving 150,000 troops. The troops arrived in waves and Willey disembarked at Omaha Beach on June 13. "It was very unpleasant," he said succinctly.

After weeks of fighting, the Allies grabbed hold of the beaches and moved inland. In August Willey was part of a group of Allied soldiers to liberate Paris from German occupation. "Parisians lined the streets and threw flowers everywhere," he said. "They were so glad to see us."

Willey's challenges were not over.

In December 1944 his division fought during some of the coldest temperatures on record in Belgium's

Ardennes Forest. His unit lived in foxholes trying to secure the area. "It was quite an ordeal," he said. The six-week battle, which ended with an Allied victory, resulted in 81,000 Allied casualties and 67,000 German casualties, making it one of the war's biggest battles.

In May 1945, the German military surrendered. Willey's unit reconnoitered at a village in the Czech Republic. "A

German baron owned the land," said Willey. The Americans were given a key to the village brewery by the mayor and were entertained with polka music. "It helped to pass the time," said Willey.

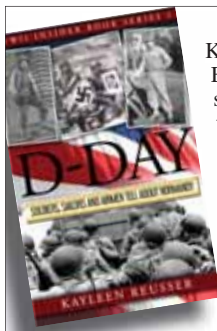
Following Japan's surrender in summer 1945, American GIs awaited turns to go home. To appease their eagerness, they played football. Willey was recruited as a wide receiver at the Prague Exhibition.

In fall 1945 Willey boarded the USS *Washington* at Marseilles, France, to head for home. Part of his souvenirs included a Hitler Youth T-shirt, silver Nazi dress bayonet, black bayonet, Nazi arm band, parachute, and Luftwaffe (German Air Force) cap.

Back in Bluffton, Willey married Carol Harvey and the couple became parents to four daughters. Richard worked 35 years at Franklin Electric.

"Some parts of the military were quite an ordeal," Willey said, "but I'm proud to have been involved."

*Do you have a story to tell or know someone who does? kjreusser@gmail.com*



Kayleen Reusser, of Bluffton, has written a series of books, sharing the stories of area veterans. This is an excerpt from "D-Day: Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen." It is available at The News-Banner office in Bluffton and on Amazon.

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# Good spirits in the ‘Big Woods’

BY TANYA ISCH CAYLOR

We’re careening through a Brown County forest in an ATV when we come upon what appears to be a bootlegger’s camp straight out of the 1930s.

There’s a shack made of hand-hewn logs. A couple of whiskey stills next to a fire pit. A wooden outhouse. Even a jug with a corn-cob stopper.

As we take in our surroundings, our driver pulls out a bottle of Hard Truth sweet mash rye whiskey and pours us each a shot.

“Like what you’d use in an old-fashioned,” says our guide, a friendly and informative college student named Veronica Strange.

What we’re seeing, Veronica informs us, is both real and make-believe. The shack and outhouse are the equivalent of movie-set pieces, constructed by the Hard Truth Distilling Company for the purposes of this tour. The stills, on the other hand, are the real deal.

The large one, a century old, was found abandoned inside Brown County State Park. The smaller copper still produced the very first batches of Hard Truth’s Cinnamon Vodka and Toasted Coconut Rum – the two spirits, she tells us, “that basically paid for this place.”

The Hard Truth campus outside Nashville (Indiana, of course) is one heckuva playground, with a barn-sized restaurant, outdoor amphitheater, tasting room, distillery and two rackhouses, all tastefully nestled into



## Hoosier Fun

325 acres of Big Woods for which the company’s restaurants are named. There are also hiking trails and a two-story rental cabin.

Vacationing in Nashville while the guys in our family went fishing in Canada, us girls had dined at Big Woods Hard Truth Hills the previous day, swooning over the food as well as the cocktails. Four of us — my sister and sisters-in-law — had returned for the “Get Lost” ATV tour.

It didn’t take long for us to get lost in the Big Woods, with Veronica zooming up hills and around bends on a trail not much wider than her five-passenger Kawasaki Mule.

Our first stop was a pond dug in case of a forest fire. Like everything else in the Big Woods universe, it’s in the process of being reimagined as something more interesting — the philosophy that turned the original Big Woods Pizza in downtown Nashville into an empire that now includes a craft brewery in addition to the distilling company and an ever-expanding chain of restaurants.

Plans for the pond include a pontoon-based tiki bar, Veronica told us as she reached into a cooler in the back of the ATV to pour us shots of toasted coconut rum.

“What’s in this?” I asked, as we gushed over its flavor.

She ticked off the ingredients: sea salt, toasted coconut, black pearl molasses, cane sugar and Caribbean yeast. No wonder it tastes so good.

Though Hard Truth is best known for its premium fla-



The tourgoers behind the bar of the gin shack on the Hard Truth “Get Lost” tour. From left: Dawn Isch, Traci Heller, Tanya Isch Caylor and Darcy Isch.

vored spirits, such as peanut butter vodka, the distilling company is also driving efforts to market Indiana as a leading producer of rye whiskey.

The hope is that the Indiana Rye Act, enacted in 2021, will link rye with Indiana in much the same way that people associate bourbon with Kentucky. (Bourbon is made with corn; rye is closely related to wheat.)

The law set standards for Indiana rye whiskey that go beyond federal regulations. It must be made of at least 51 percent rye, stored in charred white oak barrels, distilled at a maximum of 160 proof and put in a barrel at no more than 125 proof. The law also states that Indiana rye whiskey must be mashed, fermented, distilled and then aged for at least two years within the state of Indiana.

The sweet mash rye we sampled at the bootlegger’s shack was 117 proof. It’s sold in bottles so gorgeous you almost hate to open them, and tastes just as fancy, though no one in our group was capable of appreciating its finer points.

For comparison purposes, and to enhance the bootlegger ambience, Veronica poured us a slug of “White Lightning,” straight off the still at 140 proof.

“During the pandemic,” she said, “we sold this as hand sanitizer.”

One sip was more than enough.

Our tour featured four stops, five tastings, and a souvenir Hard Truth moonshine glass.

My favorite site was a rustic shack with a crystal chandelier, where Veronica mixed up gin and tonics. She said



This “Bootlegger Camp” is one of the stops on the Hard Truth Distilling Company’s “Get Lost” tour in Brown County outside Nashville. The smaller copper still on the left is the one used to make the company’s first batches of Toasted Coconut Rum and Cinnamon Vodka. In the center is a century old still found abandoned somewhere inside Brown County State Park.



This shack on the Hard Truth “Get Lost” tour looks abandoned, but inside is a very fancy chandelier and a rustic bar (as seen in nearby photo), where tour guide Veronica Strange mixed gin and tonics.

Hard Truth’s gin is “less piney” than most because it has a lower concentration of juniper berries. Who knew that gin comes from juniper berries?

A rustic swing set above a scenic overlook called Beer Bluff was another fun destination, where we sampled Six Foot Blonde, one of the first craft beers brewed in a spare room above the original Big Woods Pizza. It’s now made at Quaff On Brewery, another part of the empire.

Veronica served us Maple Cream Bourbon “for dessert” at the end of the tour. Though the good-natured

college student answered all our questions and was extremely informative, our hourlong tour didn’t allow enough time for us to fathom the finer details of how these spirits are made.

Luckily there are options to learn more, such as the distillery tour and a beer-making class.

Maybe on a future visit we can book a forthcoming four-hour version of the “Get Lost” Tour that includes a catered meal and a chance to make your own moonshine at the bootlegger’s camp.

*The writer, a Wells County resident, can be reached at [tischcaylor@gmail.com](mailto:tischcaylor@gmail.com).*



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# Runners complete 50-year streak

Continued from page 3

said, noting that his goals have changed as he's aged.

Afterward, as they congratulated each other on completing their 50-year streak, both looked back in amazement that nothing managed to derail them.

"A lot of things could have broken that chain," Humble noted.

He's been lucky; he's never had to contend with anything worse than a pulled muscle come race day. Still, there could've been weddings and other social obligations that might've interfered.

Bauman doesn't know if he'll run again next year. Even running at what he calls "a slow jog" takes a toll on him. Humble, who helps organize the Adams County 5K Challenge that now includes the Swiss Days Race, likely will. He remembers a runner who ran the race into his 80s, and wonders if he might be able to do the same.

Both men agreed it was unlikely any runner could ever break their streak. They're unaware of anyone who's got more than a 25-year streak.

But a few minutes later, as they watched 91 young runners come tearing around the first turn of the 1-mile race, a thought occurred to Humble.

"Hey Doug!" he called out to his one-time rival. "You think any of those kids will make it to 50?"

Bauman laughed. As young as some of those runners were — toddlers, some of them, holding a parent's hand as



It took Doug Bauman more than twice as long to run his 50th Swiss Days Race as he did in 1974. Bauman won his age group for more than 40 years before back surgery slowed him down. (Photo by Tanya Isch Caylor)

they traversed the course — they could potentially obliterate these two runners' achievement.

"Seventy-five!" he called back, issuing a dare to anyone who cares to take it up.

*Do you have a story to tell or know someone who does? [tischcaylor@gmail.com](mailto:tischcaylor@gmail.com)*



In 2020, when Covid canceled Swiss Days, Barry Humble and Doug Bauman ran with race co-founder Jack Shoaf in an unofficial version of the race. Finishing together on July 25, 2020, were, left to right: Floyd Liechty, Rick Sprunger, Shoaf, Doug Bauman and Barry Humble. (Photo by Bob Caylor)

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# Traveling this fall?

*Here's one thing you absolutely must not do*

BY CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

There's one thing Jerry Slaff won't do when he travels to Edinburgh and Dublin this fall: He promises not to complain.

"We're hoping to avoid the big push of summer tourists by going in October," says Slaff, a playwright from Rockville, Md.

But if he doesn't -- if he gets stuck in a long line or has to fight the crowds at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery -- he'll stay quiet. Slaff figures that travelers did plenty of griping this summer and people are tired of it. Also, complaining doesn't change anything. So why bother?

That's not the only thing smart travelers aren't doing this fall. They're avoiding some popular destinations, as well as shying away from ambitious itineraries and last-minute decisions about their trips. But there is one thing everyone must avoid this fall -- and I'll tell you in a second.

## What's the outlook for fall travel?

Travel is still expensive and chaotic but this fall travelers will see a little relief from the summer. A new survey by travel insurance company Faye suggests 68% of American travelers plan to go somewhere during the upcoming fall and winter season, down 3% from last year. And half of them plan to leave the country, which is a continuation of a travel trend that started earlier this year.

One of the top travel concerns: high prices. Of those who said they were traveling, 61% said they were worried about inflated fares and rates. Here's what they can expect: Airfares are mixed for fall travelers. Domestic ticket prices are down 11% for the third quarter, to an average round-trip fare of \$257, according to the airfare app Hopper. If you're flying to Europe, they're down only 2% (\$813 round-trip), but if



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you're headed to Asia, ticket prices are up 4% from last fall (\$1,417).

Hotel rates have slipped but remain higher than last fall. The average room rate is \$183 this fall, up 11% compared to this time in 2022, but down from summer highs of over \$200 per night, says Hopper.

Car rental rates are falling. Preliminary booking data shows a 15% decline in the average car rental rate compared with last fall, says Mark Mannell, CEO of CarRentalSavers.com. Rental rates will average \$45 a day, according to Hopper. But the lines at the counter may stay. "Agencies are still understaffed, and we have seen some long lines at locations that serve a lot of International travelers," warns Mannell.

Overall, that's good news. And there's more: Travelers like Slaff, who are headed to Europe, won't have to worry about paying the \$7 fee to be

charged by the new European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). It's been postponed to early 2024.

So it's a much better time to travel than this hyper-busy summer, as I explain in my free guide to fall travel.

But what should you **NOT** do when you travel this autumn?

## Visit a summer destination

Some travelers try to outsmart the seasonal crowds by booking a traditional summer destination, like a beach, during the fall. Bad idea. "A lot of people go to places like the Greek Islands and Amalfi Coast in October, when the prices reduce significantly," says George Morgan-Grenville, CEO of Red Savannah, a tour operator. "But what they often don't realize is that the tourist infrastructure is being dismantled for the winter. Many or all of the restaurants can be shut, beach clubs have closed,

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and the towns and villages are going on vacation themselves.”

**Wait to book**

Travelers assume that because it’s the off-season, they’ll be able to wait until the last minute to book. But with demand still high, this is not the fall to try that, say experts like Duncan Greenfield-Turk, chief travel designer Global Travel Moments. “Don’t procrastinate,” he says. “Availability may be limited during this vibrant travel season.” That’s particularly true of some of the more popular tourist destinations in France, Greece, Italy and Portugal.

**Schedule a tight connection**

Think all of our summer air travel troubles are over? Not so, says Bob Bachelor, the managing director of Flying Angels, a medical transport company. Airlines are not out of the woods, and with the holiday travel season approaching, it’s better to play it safe. Bachelor points out that on average, a quarter of flights experience a delay. So there’s a reasonably good chance you’ll get delayed if you’re flying. “Any connection with less than one hour is asking for trouble,” he says.

Vacation in a popular tourist attractions

I know, I know. You put off your summer vacations because you wanted to see the Coliseum in Rome or climb to the top of the Eiffel Tower. But you



Illustration by Christopher Elliott

might want to wait a little bit longer, says Nathan Heinrich host of the I’m Moving To Italy! Podcast. “Areas that usually only fill to capacity during the summer months are expected to be overbooked this fall as well,” he says. He’s telling his listeners to head for less crowded places like Piemonte or the Prosecco Hills of northern Italy.

**Here’s the one thing you absolutely must not do when you travel this fall** Most importantly, don’t overlook your paperwork. Yeah, it sounds boring, but believe me, it is anything but that when you have a paperwork problem.

Just last week, my sons and I were almost were denied entry into Vietnam. My son had filled out his visa incorrectly -- he said his port of entry was Ho Ch Minh City instead of Da Nang -- and they nearly turned us away at the border.

Truth is, no one wants to think about paperwork until they have to. And by then it’s often too late. Whether it’s COVID test requirements on a cruise or your passport renewal, paperwork has never been more important. The State

Department currently takes 10 to 13 weeks to process a new passport. That means if you don’t have a valid passport now, your fall trip just became a winter trip.

*Christopher Elliott has authored a number of travel books. His columns appear weekly in USA Today and the Washington Post. email him at [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).*

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### Solution to puzzle on page 9

5	7	2	6	1	4	3	9	8
3	1	4	9	8	5	2	7	6
6	8	9	3	7	2	1	5	4
2	4	1	7	5	6	9	8	3
7	6	8	1	9	3	4	2	5
9	5	3	2	4	8	7	6	1
1	3	7	5	6	9	8	4	2
4	9	6	8	2	1	5	3	7
8	2	5	4	3	7	6	1	9

## The DNA Sleuth

Continued from page 10

the age of five.

Another handwritten letter connected Ruth to Sally which led to a second friendly chat. Sally confirmed the loving, close-knit family and shared that she remembered when her parents flew to Chicago to pick up her new baby brother. They gave her a Siamese kitten to keep her company while they were gone. She expressed joy for the opportunity to connect with Nathan's biological family, and she also confided that she'd recently received an unexpected diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

News of these two incredible phone calls spread quickly via the WhatsApp group Ruth and her cousins had formed to keep everyone in the loop about the unfolding saga. Together, they marveled over pictures of Nathan, exclaiming over particularly poignant resemblances to several in the family. As I studied these same pictures, Ruth nodded convincingly, "He would fit right in the Hochstetler side."

Even though Nathan had passed, the family opened their hearts and arms to both Pamela and Sally. They flooded Sally with encouraging messages, cards, prayers, and care packages as she battled cancer. Cousin Becky, whose husband had recently lost his battle with cancer, bonded closely to Sally. When someone suggested they might assist their newfound family with medical and travel expenses, as Pamela had journeyed from California to New Mexico to help care for her sister-in-law, the Hochstetler clan sent money to both women.

Pamela shared Nathan's great disappointment at learning that his birth mother had passed and noted, "He would have been so very happy to have met all of you wonderful cousins. If his health would have permitted, he no doubt would have gone to meet each and every one of you."

Ruth's hope that a side trip to visit Sally could be added to an already

planned trip to Arizona this past April came too late as Sally was already too ill to meet her new extended family. A call from a friend of Sally's on June 16 of this year notified the family that Sally had passed early that morning. Looking back, the Hochstetler cousins marvel at the amount of getting to know one another and bonding they packed into the 10 months after DNA connected them with Nathan's wife and sister.

Although I felt certain of the answer, I asked Ruth if the family's opinion of Aunt Liz had changed. Ruth assured me it had not, stating that Liz had been a

favorite aunt to many of the cousins and those feelings hadn't been negatively impacted. "We're sad for what she experienced with no one to support her and that she carried the situation alone for all of her life." Sadness for the secret Aunt Liz felt she must shoulder alone, but thankful for the joy the experience



afforded them.

"This has brought us together and been a blessing for all of us," Ruth concluded. They assured Pamela and Sally — in both words and deeds — that the Hochstetler family circle would forever include Nathan, Pamela, their two sons, and Sally.

I so appreciated the passion and compassion Ruth demonstrated throughout the unraveling of this mystery. Her determination and enthusiasm spurred the family to be "all in." Their incredibly welcoming attitude toward this very unexpected turn of events brought answers and closure to folks, once strangers, but whom they now call kin.

As happens so often, we discovered another mystery within Ruth's DNA matches. And as you might expect, the Hochstetler clan opened their hearts and arms without judgement, once more widening the family circle.

What a wonderful, inspiring example of how DNA surprises should be handled.

\* Although they agreed without reservation to the telling of this story, per their request, the names of Ruth's DNA match and his family have been changed.

*Do you have a mystery or question for The DNA Sleuth? bethsteury@gmail.com*

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