

February 2011

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky  
MOA #146 RA #4-49 <http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>



John Rice on a mild, 24-degree morning, 6:55 am





*Commemorative  
ribbons to the first  
100 who register!*

## **The KICKSTAND's ANNUAL POLAR BEAR RUN**

**Saturday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

*(if snow or ice on that date, ride rescheduled for Saturday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011)*

**KICKSTANDS UP AT NOON**

**The group will leave from the store, located at  
500 East Main Street, in Burgin.**

**The route / distance will be dependent upon group size and weather  
conditions. We will end the ride with warm chili and drinks.**

**\$5 per person - to cover cost of food and drinks**

**For more information, or to confirm ride is on, phone 859-748-KICK  
or e-mail [SeeYou@TheKickstandLLC.com](mailto:SeeYou@TheKickstandLLC.com)**

**[www.TheKickstandLLC.com](http://www.TheKickstandLLC.com)**

## Ensuring no regrets

*"As you grow older, you'll find the only things you regret are the things you didn't do."*

—Zachary Scott

**I**'m not an adventure-some type.

Sure, I have ridden over 500,000 miles on motorcycles,

income is drawn from a state pension. I worked with 30 teenagers every hour, every day for 27 years, and then for ten years I worked with media outlets, all sometimes adventuresome business, but not part of the "real world," I have been told by those depending on the stock market and engaged in the marketplace.

So, from that modest back-

and serve as a volunteer communications director for a community foundation. Actually, I was the original advocate in 1999 for the foundation and orchestrated its launch while chairing the Chamber of Commerce, all beyond my job description while serving as a communications director.

In retirement I have remained busy but always in search of something more to do, having grown weary of my unfinished novel, which lacks, I am told by my wife, sexual tension, quite an irony given that I have a long history with tension.

Thankfully, I seem to be accepting the weather-bound pace of garage construction with little tension. In October when I was told that building my garage would take four to six weeks, I conceded that possibility, given that we were getting a late November start.

Ten weeks into the project, now, I have a little more clarity regarding that construction timeline estimate.

When the first truss was raised, I watched optimistically and expected to be under roof by mid-December.

In January we were under roof, but only because everyone on this job has worked hard under less than ideal weather conditions.

We now wait for a couple of 40-degree bricklaying days, and maybe two more 40-ish days for the pouring of the concrete apron, electrical service trenching, and minor exterior trim finishing.

True to my not-so-adventurous nature, I have been concerned with what the neighbors think. Three neighbors stopped by over the past weekend to admire the interior, two of the three separately saying something to the effect that the garage is larger on the inside than it appears on the outside. The third neighbor also seemed to appreciate all of the features.

That's what I wanted to hear. I wanted the building to quietly blend into the neighborhood, and the brown exterior allows the structure to appear to belong alongside the pine trees and adjacent to our house. From the street the garage rests nearly unnoticed.

So, we patiently wait for the weather to allow finish work, and neighbors are nodding approvingly.

Those who matter most understand and have encouraged me during this project, but not everyone understands. At least one acquaintance thinks I am a fool at this stage of life to be spending so much money on a garage. I understand his caution.

At this stage, what the garage brings to my life reaches beyond practical issues such as storage, shelter, or even work space. Nor is it about peer pressure or materialism.

It's about ensuring no regrets. So far I have no regrets. I have not yet received, however, all of the invoices.

—Paul Elwyn



and I have owned six older 911 Porsches through the years, all somewhat adventuresome activity depending on the level of fiscal and mortal risk being weighed, but for the most part I always have lived a fairly low-risk life.

For instance, my retirement

ground when I make a relatively-significant financial decision, especially these days, I give the matter much thought.

The bottom line regarding the garage was not about the money, but about purpose.

I am a bit of a workaholic. I currently edit two newsletters

**Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.  
Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #4-49**

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**Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.**

**Back issues of Apex can be accessed at  
<http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>**

**Join us at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Rd.  
on any Saturday, 7-9:30 a.m.**



# You only turn 60 once

By John Rice

**S**ixty years is a milestone that gives one pause in life to contemplate the road ahead and behind.

For my brother-in-law, Jay Smythe, his 60th was to be January 2nd, 2011.

Jay is an excellent road rider, veteran of thousands of miles on pavement, but he'd always had a bit of a thing for off-road riding when he could get the chance. He'd gone on a ride or two with me, using my Bultaco Alpina, and it should be noted that usually, he was the only one who didn't fall down !

Since Jay has spent the last many years off in some remote spot that the Army found suitable, his riding, on or off road, has had to take a back seat to other priorities far more often than he'd like.

With so special a birthday looming, Jay's wife Marimac decided to mark this one by the perfect gift...one the recipient really wants but would never buy for himself. A new motorcycle.

Marimac turned to friends and family who had some experience in such things to select just the right item. Mitch Butler, our Bluegrass Beemer Yamaha dealer, ordered the XT 250 that fit the specs exactly. Lightweight, capable of going off road and on with equal aplomb and reasonably priced. Now all that remained was to pull off the surprise.

I drove to Richmond the week before the Big Day and picked up the bike, stashing it in my garage. I made plans with Jay for him to go on the annual "New Year's Ride" off road with me and Paul Rice in Ash-

land on January 2nd. I told him that he could borrow my bike or one of Paul's to participate in the ride. Arrangements were made with the people in Lexington where Jay's party was to be held on New Year's day, for me to bring the new bike over that afternoon and put it in their garage where Jay wouldn't see it until the appropriate time.

That night the party progressed in typical fashion with no one giving the guest of honor any clue that something special lay in wait.

At the pre-appointed time, Jay was taken outside by the host on a pretext, then brought back in through the garage. When the garage door opened, Jay stood there for a moment as he tried to take it all in. The surprise had worked so successfully that he didn't for a



**Marimac Smythe aboard the new Yamaha XT 250 she presented to Jay to celebrate his 60th birthday.**



moment dare to allow himself

to think that what he was seeing was true.

He quickly recovered and hopped on the bike. The next thing we knew, he'd taken it out of the garage and headed down the street. Remember, it's late on January 1st, about 18 degrees, and he's not exactly dressed in proper cold weather riding gear.

Suddenly we heard the little engine and saw the headlight coming through the neighbor's yard. Jay had decided to get immediately into this off-road thing ! He pulled back into the garage, shivering just a bit, but smiling broadly.

I took the bike back home in the truck that night. Early the next morning, Jay arrived at my house in Winchester for the trip to Ashland. Paul met us at the Boyd County Fish and Game club, where there are hundreds of acres of trails and power lines to explore. There had been several days of rain finishing off a snow pack that had lasted





## You only turn 60 once

hose water was just above freezing. We're already talking about doing the Trans-America trail on the 250's.

Ambitious trips get planned in the cold of winter. I hope we can pull it off when warm weather returns.

—John Rice

**The new bike, unsullied as yet, Jay game for the day.**

for over two weeks. The woods were going to be muddy.

It was cold, about 28 degrees, but not any sort of record for the New Year's ride. As usual, the fingers hurt for the first twenty minutes or so, then the effort of trail riding generates enough heat to get the body back into synch. By then, the knees and thighs are protesting sufficiently that complaints from the hands have to take a number and wait.

**A bit later in the day.**

The trails were sloppy,

though up in the higher parts we found some thick sand which afforded good traction when soaked into modeling-clay consistency. Just when it seemed that control was possible in such conditions, the trail would revert to soupy mud and the back end would wave like a flag in a windstorm, leaving the rider hoping that the direction the front was pointed was somewhere he wanted to go.

Jay did "take some soil samples" on this outing, but no serious damage was done to him or his new bike. The Yamaha performed flawlessly all day, falling with grace and without damage, never missing a beat. A leisurely trail ride is the perfect break in procedure, with constantly changing throttle and no occasion for high rpm. The torque available from a quarter-liter engine is amazing and all that was needed out here in the mud.

The hardest part of the day was washing the mud off the bikes back in Winchester, as the sun was going down and the



**Heading back to the truck, muddied but unbowed.**







**Cabin Fever Prescription: Bluegrass Beemers Breakfast, every Saturday,  
Frisch's, Harrodsburg Road, Lexington, 7 am - 9 am**  
Even when road conditions discourage the most committed riders among us,  
a group will assemble on Saturday morning, so climb in the cage,  
if necessary, and join us at Frisch's.

Photos by John Rice



# In the Beginning...

**Part 5** See the last four issues of Apex for Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4.



**John  
Rice**



**I**n 1974  
I acquired a  
Suzuki RL 250 trials  
bike.

Trials was a fairly popular, though still minority, sport in much of the rest of the world and the Japanese manufacturers had begun showing an interest in challenging the dominance of the Spanish two-strokes that had taken over from the British singles.

The RL was an early effort, developed from the TS 250 engine, with a lighter frame and a lovely aluminum gas tank, quite uncharacteristic of the Japanese bikes of the time.

This RL showed up in the local Suzuki dealership where the staff had no idea what it was or what to do with it. When I expressed an interest in it, the owner of the shop began to tell me how fast it was, which suggested to me that he'd not been told what Observed Trials was about. I tried

to explain it to him, but his context was motocross and fast road bikes and he really couldn't get on board with the idea. All the better for me, since no one else was interested in the odd thing and I ended up with it.

I had made efforts in the past to do "trials like" things on my TS 250, with very little success. The RL was a revelation. I later learned that it was a mediocre trials bike at best, but for me at the time, it was marvelous. I sold the TS 250 and officially ended my street bike riding for the next several years.

I sought out a trials event to enter, not exactly an easy thing to do. Observed Trials had come to America at least twenty years earlier, but was concentrated mostly on the two coasts with little elsewhere and certainly not common in my part of Appalachia. Cycle News had in its "events" section, one or two per month, usually somewhere far away from Ashland, Kentucky. Finally I spotted one in Camden Ohio, near Cincinnati, and set out for my debut.

Two friends, Mike and Gary, had gotten on board with this odd fascination of mine and decided to accompany me to Camden. We loaded the bikes, my RL, Gary's Ossa Pioneer and Mike's red TS250 into an old pickup truck and headed north. The fact that we had only a vague idea of where Camden was, much less where the trials was to be held, didn't bother us much. We showed up, a bit late from our wander-

ings, and entered the event. It was only then that we realized that we had no clue of how a trials was run.

It's not an event where everyone starts at the same place, and there is no "track" that one can see from the start. The rest of that day is a blur in my memory with only a few things standing out sharply from the vague background. It was cold and wet and muddy. I was often confused about where I was supposed to go and what exactly I was to do when I got there. And I was hooked hard, like a trout on a line.

I scoured the Cycle News and any other source I could find looking for another trials event. I found one that was being held near Berea, Kentucky and made plans to go. That event was to set the course for the next phase of my motorcycling life and its effects are still with me today.

It was a cold, gray late November day when we showed up in Berea at the farm where Tom Clark lived. I was later to learn that Tom was the one who had brought trials to Kentucky. There were perhaps twenty trials bikes of various stripes, mostly Spanish, softly buzzing around the area along the road where vans and pickups were parked.

I unloaded the RL 250 and began to get my bearings. A woman came up to me, obviously seeing that I was a new kid and lost, and pointed me to the path down to the creek where most of the riders had gone. This was a new kind of terrain for me. Where my east-

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# In the Beginning... Part 5 By John Rice

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**The young man,  
on a Honda TL 125  
rode easily  
up the steps,  
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and rode back  
down, turned and  
did it again.  
I'd seen such  
things in still  
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in the wild, so to  
speak. He saw me  
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came down  
to greet me.  
"Hi," he said.  
"I'm Eddie  
Rowlett."  
(We later came to  
know him as Roy.)**

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ern Kentucky haunts had been wooded dirt paths and power-line climbs, and Camden mostly muddy dirt hillsides, this was decidedly different.

Central Kentucky limestone lies just beneath the surface and gets exposed quickly by running water, leaving beautiful layered creekbeds and waterfalls, the stuff of calendar photos and perfect for the kind of trials riding I would come to love.

I potted down this picturesque rocky expanse until I saw a tall skinny young lad going up and down a wide waterfall. There were steps formed by the limestone outcroppings, ranging from a few inches to a couple of feet high, with layered rocks jumbled everywhere.

The young man, on a Honda TL 125 rode easily up the steps, turned at the top and rode back down, turned and did it again. I'd seen such things in still photos, but never in the wild, so to speak. He saw me watching and came down to greet me.

"Hi," he said. "I'm Eddie Rowlett." (We later came to know him as Roy.)

He took me on a general tour of the farm, showing me the loop for the event, then I found my way back to the house where the signup would be. There I met the McWilliams family.

Shirley, the woman who had pointed the way for me earlier, was the mom, the glue that held the whole works together. John "Pappy" McWilliams was the dad. As I write this, I recall



how we thought he was the older man of the whole trials apparatus, and I now realize that at the time, he was 41, the same age then as my son is now.

They had two sons, John II and Jimmy, young teenagers then, who were to become riders in the very top ranks of National trials competition.

I don't recall much of the actual event, only that I'm sure I finished near the bottom of the pack. Nevertheless, this trials thing was to be my primary focus in motorcycling for the next 10 years or so. Even today, the spare profile of a trials bike just seems right to me, a primary shape in the art of the motorcycle.



1/14/2011

## Lunch at Mordecai's

By Linore Dudik Jones

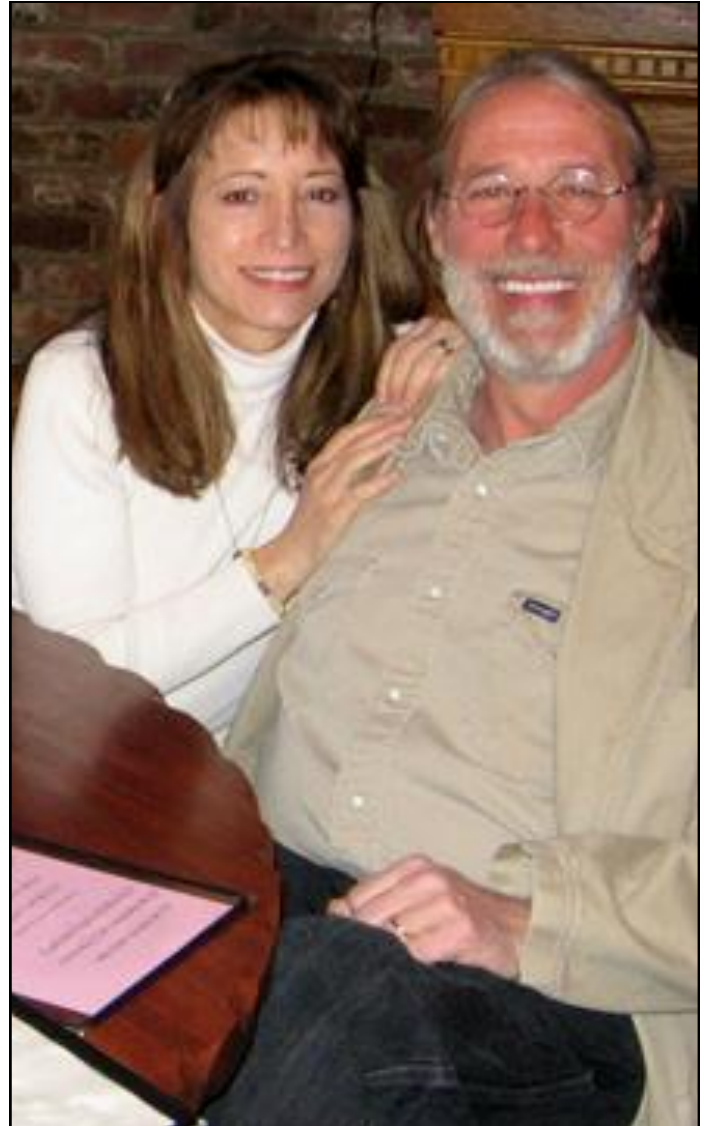
**B**efore I married, one unsolicited advice I received from a “veteran” of this venerated institution was to “spend time alone, spend time together and spend time with friends and family.”

This advice has been one of the true “lasting truths” of a long marriage (dare I say 30 years is long when some of the club members have many more years on us...).

In keeping with the intent of this long-held advice, I asked my husband to take me to Mordecai's Restaurant for lunch on one of the rare sunny days that snuck in the midst of this bitter cold, dreary winter. (No, we didn't ride – still too much ice & snow still patching up the roads.)

Those in the Big Boy Motorcycle Club subgroup of the Bluegrass BMW Club would be familiar with Mordecai's, as it is the gathering point at the end of the 68-152 ride to Springfield in Washington County, a gorgeous rolling, turning ride through farmland, pastures, palisades and in the distance to the south and west, a good view of the Knobs.

Through the bare trees of winter one can spy all kinds of Kentucky wonders unseen in more “motorcycle friendly” seasons. There were lots of hunting birds (I'm always especially thrilled to see a heron or peregrine falcon), unveiled houses on the palisades and bottom of the river you usually don't see and big long valley-views that open up the sky. I got excited when an old, old springhouse revealed itself in a



**Linore and Geoff Jones at last year's Bluegrass Beemers Awards Banquet**

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densely wooded area and was saddened at so many abandoned/falling down ancient houses and barns. Some still with signs of living-curtains, rusty tractors, toys in the yard... Hoping a preservationist will collect the precious planks of wood for some use - wondering if the huge ones came from rare virgin timber... the mind tends to wonder in this lovely country.

Now for those who have eaten at Mordecai's, you'll recall their luncheon buffet – reasonably priced, plenty of food – good food with a

“country” flair. Of course, the buffet is only served from 11am -2:30pm. Well, I had actually taken off from work on this Friday for my physical and dental appointments, sooo... getting to Springfield for the buffet posed a time challenge. We decided to go anyway, even if we had to miss the buffet and order off the menu!

(Broadening our expectations of the spontaneous “date” recalled earlier “dating” when doing ANYTHING together was absolutely great!) We decided to take the Bluegrass down and the 152-68 route

1/14/2011

## Lunch at Mordecai's

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back. Left about 1:20 and arrived in Springfield @ 2:20! Did not miss the famous buffet!

Being a "meatless Friday" adherent, I was pleased to see LOTS of fish on the buffet – fried catfish, clams & shrimp. Geoph dove into the roast beef and Southern-Italian green beans. Great salad and soup bar (homemade house dressing was similar to a peppercorn ranch) – although none of the soups were meatless today (country beef, German cabbage with ham, and chicken noodle – all homemade). They had several cakes for dessert, as well as two kinds of cobbler. I passed on the cherry and had the peach, which was definitely home-

made. Wished they'd had cream (even canned) or ice cream for the hot cobbler, but it was still great. Service was great – hardly anyone in the restaurant that late.

Mordecai's is a pretty big place – large enough for most parties and even a smallish wedding. It's in an old building on Main Street that once housed The Lincoln Hospital. It's right across from the renovated Opera House. They've done a great job refurbishing Mordecai's - hardwood floors (loooong planked!), walnut tables and both large wrap-around and small two-seat booths – a very attractive place decorated mainly with old-time

photos, mostly of local places, in respect of its past history.

They have a full bar and several rooms, including the meeting/party room with a stage and dance floor and an outdoor patio area in the front close to the street. On weekends they have live music. The place had a friendly, cheerful feel that harkens you to return.

Geoph & I were stuffed and didn't need a dinner later on. Geoph shared a lot about how he enjoyed his rides down there with his club members and wondered out loud if I was the

'first wife' of the group to share this experience. He thought that "the wives" would like the place, which I generally agree, if one likes "old-timey" places and country food – which, I think, most women I know do. We like most any food that's cooked by someone other than us, at least on occasion.

I was truly glad and felt blessed that Geoph shared his "motorcycle club life" with me. We had a great time, and I'd encourage all to try Mordecai's (no, I don't get a kick-back for my plug!).

Check it out: <http://www.mordecaisonmain.com/> It's always great to get out of the city and experience "the country", especially in the "dead of winter," when hope of spring tickles our fancy.

—Linore Dudik Jones

**Steve Little  
with his trusty  
BMW R1150 GS  
at 6:56 am  
on a 24-degree morning  
at Frisch's  
on Harrodsburg Road,  
ready for motorcycle talk  
with Bluegrass Beemers.**

Photo by John Rice

