

May 2013

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

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





EIGHTH Annual Ride 'em, Don't Hide 'em Café Run

Not a race, not a rally and definitely not another
poker run!

NEW LOCATION !!!!
GARDEN GIRLS CAFÉ
6109 LEXINGTON ROAD
WINCHESTER, KY

(between Stuffs and the Drive In on Route 60)

Saturday, June 8th, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. for another
gathering with riders of the Right Stuff.

No entry fee, no prizes - just a reason to ride.
Destination this year...The Kickstand and the Village Café !

For more information contact:

John Rice

859-229-4546



Riding opportunities for May and early June

By Lowell Roark, *President*

Here are some riding opportunities for May & early June. *Let's ride!*

- **May 4**, Dedication of a portion of hwy. 460 in Montgomery Co. (Mt. Sterling) for Dustin Gross, a local young soldier who was killed in Afganistan last year.
- **May 11**, Poker Run for Homeless Veterans. Sponsored by Pulaski Veterans, Inc. Starts at 160 VFW Drive, Somerset. Registration 10 am, departure at Noon. \$25. All proceeds to Homeless Veterans in the HUD-VASH program. First 25 registrants get t-shirt. \$250 cash prize. 600-219-0157
- **May 11**, 8th Annual Ride for St. Jude Children's Hospital. Sponsored by Southern Cruisers Riders Club, Richmond. Registration 10am at Kentucky Motorsports and Outdoors, 1618 Northgate Dr., Richmond. Depart at 11:30am . \$10 one play, \$20 three plays. Fee includes door prize and meal ticket. First 100 get t-shirt.
- **May 17-19**, European Riders Rally in Burkesville, Ky.
- **May 23**, Run to the Wall stop over in Owingsville, Ky
- **June 2**, Blessing of the Bikes at The Owingsville First Church of God, arrive about 9:30 - 10 am
- **June 8**, 8th Annual Ride 'em don't hide 'em Café Run. 10am, Garden Girls Café, Winchester. Ride to Kickstand in Burgin, Lunch! See flyer elsewhere in this Apex.



Lowell Roark, 2012
Beemers in the Bluegrass
Rally

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

Paul Elwyn, *Editor* paul.elwyn@gmail.com

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, 7-9:00 a.m.**

Saturday @ Frisch's 7-9 am



Roy Rowlett with grandson Nicholas ready to pull out from a Saturday breakfast.

—Photo by Tom Weber



Volunteers needed to share responsibilities for the 2013 Beemers in the Bluegrass Rally

Contact John Rice, *Rally Chairman*

riceky@aol.com or 859-229-4546

I've made a start on the Rally preparations, but I will need some help.

I'm working on getting the AMA insurance.

I have

I still need someone to

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) confirmed the campground for the Sept. 13-15 weekend2) placed the ads in the MOA and RA magazines3) contacted Billy with the Bopsters to get the food arranged4) received the door prizes from Bob's BMW5) made arrangements for the port-a-potties from Miller, the same folks we had last year | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• take over getting the rest of the door prizes,• get the awards for the rally, and patches if we need them• organize the poker run, if we're going to have one• corral people for the sign up desk, the set up and tear down• Serve as volunteer coordinator• anything else I've forgotten or someone can suggest that we need |
|---|--|

—John Rice





The Hodaka Project

By John Rice

I believe it was sometime in late 1974 when I first saw this Hodaka.

It started life as a simple, rugged little two-stroke dirt bike with the oddly appealing model name of Wombat.

Hodakas were a minor cult machine back then and still are today, with legions of dedicated fans for the quirky little bikes with the funny names and a reputation for durability. In the context of what was available in their day, they were surprisingly good little woods-riding machines.

What they weren't, in stock form, was a trials bike, though this one and its successive owners had for it that peculiar ambition.

If I remember correctly, this one was being ridden when I first laid eyes on it by Tom Clark, the Michigan transplant who was responsible for bringing the sport of Observed Trials to Kentucky. It later was passed down to the legendary McWilliams family whose two sons, John and Jim, were among the best of the National class trials riders.

The father, John McWilliams Sr. was the patriarch, trainer and coach for the boys and often could be found expertly herding the little Hodaka through sections himself. He typically rode a Bultaco Sherpa T, but the underdog nature of the tiny Japanese upstart appealed to him and I recall him being quite competitive on it.

In its evolution, the Wombat lost various bits, had others modified and generally morphed into something its Far East creators hadn't imagined. The frame was cut and bent to change the steering head angle,



Ian Rice at work during teardown of the Hodaka Wombat.

The Hodaka Project

By John Rice

the bottom of the cradle was replaced by sheet aluminum, the footpegs moved rearward and replaced by Bultaco units, the exhaust system completely redesigned, the rear suspension changed by tilting the shocks forward and the air cleaner made into part of the frame.

The signature large chrome gas tank disappeared, replaced by a smaller, narrower Suzuki tank that shows the battle wounds of trials competition.

What was left was a monument to perseverance, ingenuity and the toughness of the Little Bike That Could. The Hodaka never, to my knowledge, won

an event, but it placed high enough in several to make the purebreds perk up their ears and notice. It was as if a Yorkie had shown up at the sheep dog trials and placed third behind the champion border collies.

Years passed and people age much more rapidly than machines. The Hodaka got pushed off into a corner of the McWilliams' shed, along with a TL 125 where it stayed for about 25 years or so.

Sadly, "Pappy" McWilliams died a few years ago after an heroic battle with the ravages of age. His widow, Shirley, called me up and said that she wanted



The inside of the engine looks good, so far.



Ian on the Hodaka the day we brought it home.



Hodaka carb gets its bath.

to give me those forgotten bikes as a possible learning platform for grandson Ian. We went to their farm in Berea, scene of many wonderful weekends from my youth, and picked

them up, as Ian described in his recent article for the *Apex*.

I knew that the TL was salvageable, but the Hodaka looked pretty well used up from its outward appearance.

The Hodaka Project

By John Rice



Ian Rice, peering through the space previously occupied by the engine.

I told Ian that it probably was going to need more work and replacement parts than would be justified by the end product. He was undeterred. My pessimism was backed up by decades of experience with “project bikes” that sucked up resources of time and money with the result never being quite what the imagination had designed. Ian's enthusiasm was fueled simply by being young and in love with motorcycling. I was overmatched and never had a chance.

So the Hodaka Project has begun. I still don't know if it ever will reach a satisfactory result, but we'll enjoy the process. It may turn out to be a “Grandfather's Axe” or “Glacier Girl airplane” in which we replace all the original parts with something else and call the final product by the old one's name. Or it may end on the scrap heap. Stay tuned.

—JR

What a Wombat looks like “before.”



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