

January 2014

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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





**NEXT GENERATION: Barrett Morgan (Jay Smythe's grandson) speed tests a new BMW.**

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



# The Airhead Encore Tour

By John Rice



Along the Delaware River ("Hawk's Nest") near Port Jervis, NY

**T**he Cabot Trail on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, is often found on lists of "Ten Best Motorcycle Roads."

It was from one of those that Brenda and I selected it for a trip in 1996 when we and my '93 PD were all three much younger and more fit for travel. It was a grand trip then and now 17 years later, I was going to do it again with her brother

Jay.... and on the same bike as before.

With Jay on his '95 Mystic and me on the PD, we left in mid August, getting out of the Kentucky heat and headed north where temperatures might be a bit more friendly. Our obligatory "ride two days in constant rain" part of the trip was checked off the list on the way through West Virginia and Pennsylvania allowing us to

enter New York, somewhat dried out, at Port Jervis, near the iconic "Hawks Nest." This stretch of road has been featured in BMW car commercials, with its European looking low stone walls separating the deliciously curvy pavement from the long drop into the rushing river below. It's beautiful, but only lasts for about a mile or so, just long enough for a photo opportunity. The little

town at the end of the stretch did have a movie-scene-perfect Main Street diner waiting for us to have lunch at exactly the time we needed it.

Mid afternoon, we'd reached the Hudson River valley, as close as we wanted to get to the New York City megalopolis. We thought from the map that the road north along the Hudson would provide scenic views of the iconic river, but



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we could see only the occasional glimpse of the water, with no spot available to pull over for a photo. Huge estate homes and grounds sit between the road and the water, as if to protect the shy river from the

prying eyes of the common folk.

By evening we found ourselves in Rhinebeck, New York. While Jay investigated the Beekman Arms, which calls itself the oldest Inn in America,

I stayed by the bikes on the tree-lined street. From an alley next to where I stood emerged an 80's era R65, piloted by a tall young woman in stylish brown leathers and open-face helmet, looking like something from a magazine ad from that bike's era. She pulled up beside me to check out these two fellow-Airhead machines. Not surprisingly she was an artist, originally from Cajun country in Louisiana, who had come up to New York on the train for a friend's wedding several years ago. On her way home, the train made a stop in Rhinebeck, and as she got off to look around, she liked what she saw and just decided to stay.

Her artist's soul connected her with the Airheads community in the area and the R65 exactly met her needs for transportation. After chatting for a

few minutes about the bikes, she motored on her way, leaving me to contemplate a life in which one can get off a train in an unfamiliar town a thousand miles from home and "just decide to stay."

The Beekman was full (and more than a bit out of our price range) but the manager told Jay that the hotel also owned an old-style motel about a mile down the road, next to a small restaurant. Perfect! The Matchbox restaurant, appropriately named, had just enough room for a few tables and offered an interesting selection of local beers with wonderful sausages and fries. This will not be a diet-friendly trip.

Though we couldn't afford to stay at the Beekman Arms, breakfast there was included with our downscale motel room since the same owners had both



Beekman Arms, "the oldest Inn in America"



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places. The old inn had low timbered ceilings and multiple small rooms comprising the downstairs tavern and restaurant. I could imagine the Colonial-times meetings that occurred here, the fireplace smoke rising to hang over the tables in the dim lantern light, the men in breeches and long hair, discussing the politics of the day over foaming mugs of beer with servants hustling back and forth among them.

None of that this morning, however, with a modern buffet set up in the old tavern and our table out in the new glass-fronted porch overlooking the lawn. As we sat among the upscale tourists our motorcycle clothes must have looked as strange to the other guests as their own everyday garb would have looked to the Colonial locals in the tavern's heyday.

Sated from too much good food, we found our best bike road yet, NY 199 from Rhinebeck to the Hudson River. The smooth, new-looking blacktop follows a scenic creek winding through forested low hills in and out of small villages not yet awake as we speed by, all alone this misty morning. It ends, all too soon, and from there we went due north on mostly straight roads, back again at the favored NY speed limit of 45 mph.

This cold weather state wants to make sure that one slows down to take the time to fully enjoy the frost heaves and pot-holes its winters leave behind.

*(to be continued)*



Tavern inside the Beekman Inn



Old motel, more our style, a mile down the road from Beekman Inn.





# A story from the Wayback Machine

By Roy Rowlett



**K**en Perry just dropped off a beautiful 1960 Harley Davidson Super 10, 165cc bike that a friend of his has recently restored. His concerns were with a perceived lack of performance.

This thing stirred up memories of the first motorcycle in our family. My oldest brother, Don, had a 1955 165. I was too young and small at the time to ride it, so I never got the pleasure. He has related some funny stories of his adventures and near misses on this old bike. I clearly remember when my father brought the bike to Lexington and dropped it off at Papa Gerkins for some transmission work. Unbeknownst to my brother, my father had also contracted him to repaint it to the factory blue color. I can't remember the color when we got it, but I think it was black.

The picture [right] is not our bike but one identical to it, except for the leather bags, handlebar streamers and crash bars. Those old buckhorn bars sure look great.

My father, Donnie, and I arrived at the shop to pick it up, and Donnie couldn't find HIS bike. When dad explained to

him that this blue one was his, he lit up like a Christmas tree. He was ecstatic.

My other brother, Harold, also told of some of his adventures on the bike when he would sneak it out to ride it. He got caught at this when he had a nice slide in some gravel on the road we lived on and did

some pretty extensive damage to the paint. I'm sure this was what prompted dad to have it repainted.

I did my standard tune up checks on this old 2-smoker. that Ken dropped off. The timing appeared correct, so I concentrated on the old Tillotson carburetor. The float had

been badly misadjusted, so I corrected that, then got it started and adjusted the idle and main jets. Yes it has a stationary adjustable main jet.

I test rode the bike around the neighborhood and then called my brother. He confirmed my suspicions that it was running about as good as could be expected. After all, 5.5 horsepower isn't a lot. Third gear is very tall and not much good for anything but flat or downhill runs.

I'm going to suggest he replace the front sprocket with a smaller one to give it a bit more oomph. It may get a bit better as the rings probably aren't completely seated from the recent complete rebuild

I know it's not a BMW, but it sure was fun to tinker with and ride.

—RR





# New Years musings

*Celebrating a 40th Anniversary*

By James Street



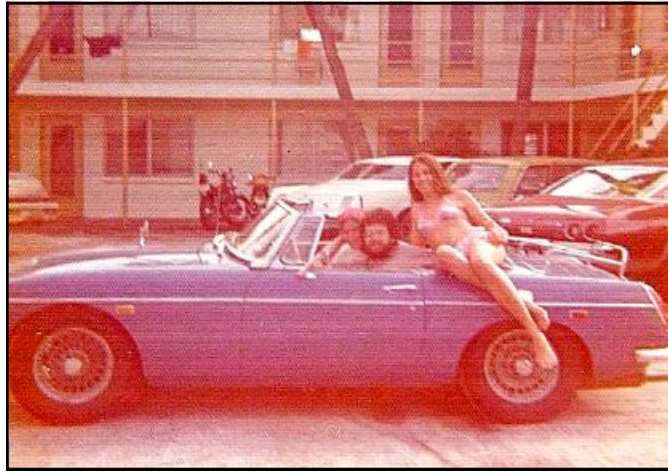
**I**n May of 1974 I wrecked a 1967 MGB GT and have mourned it since.

It was a beautiful, almost concours perfect car that a doctor had traded in at a Porsche dealer in Louisville, and that I immediately fell in love with.

Even at 18 I was an experienced MG aficionado having already owned a 1965 MGB, so the peculiarities and maintenance rigors of the marque didn't put me off. By the time I got the GT, I had already learned the basics of tuning and maintaining the cars, and the GT was lavished with care, was kept under a cover, and lovingly washed and waxed on far too-often intervals. I doubt that I would have given Gina Lollobrigida any more attention had she somehow landed in my possession, which says something of the motorhead sickness under which I was functioning at the time.

But this story doesn't really pertain to the '67 MGB GT, nor do the specifics of running it into a school bus, two trucks and a telephone pole really need to be laid out...

and waking up in the hospital to learn that I had destroyed my most precious possession is almost too painful to type even now. What happens later that year is the story. After buying a VW bug a week or so after getting out of the hospital and realizing that it had very few of the redeeming qualities I found so attractive in my beloved MG, I drove it around for a month or so with a hang-dog look on my face every



**Daytona, 1975—James Street at the wheel of his 1969 MGB with Toni Hill in the passenger seat and Kay Brewer on the trunk.**

time I looked at it or was seen driving it. Oh, it wasn't without a certain level of cache: some of you will remember that the VW bug was the chosen transportation of the counter-culture, surpassed in desirability only by the VW Combi bus. But I wasn't a VW guy, so I spent the summer after wrecking the GT looking for a suitable replacement that could be purchased on the wages earned at a summer construction job.

In June of the same summer I drove by a car lot on the fringes of town, a lot that had a couple of ancient oak trees framing the entrance, and saw a robin's egg blue MGB parked between two behemoth American sedans and immediately did a U-turn in my VW—a tight turning radius was one of its positive qualities—and pulled into the lot. As I recall (keep in mind that my recollection is subject to some question), they were asking \$1,800

for the car and I immediately began bargaining to trade the VW for it. One advantage the VW had in the bargaining negotiations was that it was better known by auto dealers in the town where I lived and thus was more desirable as a potentially profitable commodity than the MG. Long story short, I negotiated a deal for the MG and took it home.

It was a 1969 model with leather seats and wire wheels and had been purchased by a local guy whose brother was in my high school class. It was used as transportation to and from both the east and west coast to deliver him to his service in the Navy. I think the speedometer had rolled over a 100,000 miles, and those of you familiar with MGs will understand what that meant: the engine was a little past its prime.

It careened with me through college and all of the misadventures therein. I dated in it, traveled in it, worked on it, partied in it, and so on. It was driven to Algonquin National Park in Ontario, Canada, and then from

there to Daytona Beach, Florida. Spring Break in Florida was one of the high points in recollection of the travels in it, and the stories of other trips and adventures are fodder for other stories.

In a nutshell, I had fun in the car. It was an icon of my youth and even though the original engine went through a quart of oil every four or five hundred miles, it never laid down



**One of James' prized possessions, a framed sketch of the MGB by Phil Johnson**



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*Celebrating a 40th Anniversary*

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**The '69 MGB today following "rudimentary restoration to 30-30 condition: at thirty miles per hour and thirty feet away she looks pretty good."**

on me... never. Oh, it quit a few times and had to be resurrected, but it always came back from the dead with a new set of points or a wiring connection cleaned.

Upon getting out of school I decided that I had moved up in life and should be driving a Porsche, so I sold the MG to a cousin with the agreement that I had the right of first refusal should he ever decide to sell it. This decision was, and remains,

one of the worst decisions I have ever made.

I bought the Porsche and loved the power, sophistication, and all of the attributes associated with Stuttgart manufacturing, but there was one slightly significant problem: I couldn't begin to afford it. Parts that were tens of dollars for the MG were hundreds for the Porsche. Were it not for the largesse of my mom who continually loaned me her car, I wouldn't

have been able to commute to work or simply drive anywhere. I spent a little more than a year in sputtering starts and stops trying to accumulate enough money to keep the damnable thing running and finally declared "uncle" and sold it to a guy in Cincinnati. I hope he was happy with his purchase, because I was at that time miserable. A friend of mine has a saying that goes something like, "It is better to want something

you can't have than to have something you don't want." A slight modification to the last two words by substituting "can't afford" makes this perfectly applicable to my Porsche experience.

After the debacle with the Porsche, I bought a ratted-out MGB-GT that was so rust infested that the doors were difficult to open because of rust inspired body flex. After driving it for a year or so I sold it



and bought a pickup truck and began a dark ages period without any sort of enthusiast car.

Fast forward about eight years through marriage, homeownership and children, and the cousin to whom I'd sold the MGB tragically passed away at a very young age. The MG was relegated to a barn for a year or so at which time my cousin's widow called and asked if I wanted the car back. I eagerly said yes and equally eagerly agreed to pay the asking price. Arriving to pick it up it was bittersweet: the car had suffered from a good bit of neglect, but it was there and it was a compendium of wonderful memories.

I took her home and began a rudimentary restoration, as the body has enough Bondo in it to build a Corvette. Getting it to concours condition would have entailed purchasing every body panel Moss Motors lists in their catalog (Moss stocks every panel for the MGB; one can virtually build a car from their parts). She was returned to what I call a 30-30 condition: at thirty miles per hour and thirty feet away she looks pretty good.

The coming of 2014 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my relationship with the MG, and she now sits in the garage, much to the chagrin of my wife who can't park her car there. I drive her intermittently and driving her on the same roads of my youth paints a host of mostly really good memories. While Thomas Wolfe was right in some respects about not being able to go home, getting in the MG almost immediately returns me to a mental place I was a long time ago. And that's a Really Good Thing.

*Happy New Year, and happy 40th anniversary to my dear MG!*

—JS

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