

December 2016

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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



Barber's turn 9  
Photo by John Rice

# You see some of the strangest things....

By Jeff Crabb

They say it's not always the destination, but the trip itself that inspires a motorcyclist. I've seen quite a few strange things while traveling on two wheels. Things that I wish I would have taken the time to turn around and take a closer look at just to be sure of what I had seen and things that I'm better off not turning around and getting a closer look at.

When John Rice, Lee Thompson and I headed out of Winchester to the RA Rally at the Biltmore Estate, there was what appeared to be a very large fish lying in the emergency lane on some road south of Natural Bridge. Not sure if that was really what it was, because we didn't turn around and investigate it. Was it what I thought it was or just a bad fish story?

John Rice's story about going to Barber this year reminded me of my one and only trip to Barber back in October 2013. Lee and I left Lexington on the Thursday morning before in heated gear, not really knowing what to expect on the ride down and back. We rode mostly back

roads through Tennessee until we were just northwest of Chattanooga. Time was running out and we jumped on the interstate hoping to make it to Birmingham before it was too dark. In October, this was wishful thinking.

Just southwest of Chattanooga, in the last sunlight of the day, I noticed something in the median just to my left. Maybe fifty or sixty yards from the edge of the road. The mostly treed interstate median was wide in sections, but in this area there was a clearing. In the middle of the clearing stood what I believe was quite a surprise. The animal was looking over it's left shoulder back at the south bound lane of the interstate. I immediately looked to my right to see what it was looking at. Luckily, I couldn't see what had gotten it's attention. I glanced back to my left and it was still standing there. I only had a few seconds to take in what I had seen.

It was two hours later when we reached our hotel, checked in, and found a restaurant within walking distance to have dinner.

We were meeting Lee's friends, Don and Don's brother Gary, for the weekend at Barber. Don and Gary had already eaten, but Don accompanied us to dinner. After ordering and some small talk, I put my sanity on the line and asked Lee if he had seen what I had seen. If he had told me no, I probably would have forgotten it by now. He surprised me and said yes.

Both of us had seen that animal in the median of the interstate just south of Chattanooga. In the late light of a long day, I can't say I'm 100% positive, but I'm pretty sure it was a mountain lion. It had all of the characteristics and I'm glad I didn't have a chance to turnaround and confirm.

Please enjoy John's story and pictures and please keep sending in your stories and pictures.

Please send all of your contributions to  
[apex@bluegrassbeemers.org](mailto:apex@bluegrassbeemers.org).

Thanks

**Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.**

**Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #49**

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

Back issues of *Apex* can be accessed on our website

**Join us at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Rd.**

**in Lexington, Kentucky on any Saturday, 7-9:00 a.m.**

**BMW Club**  
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# BARBER VINTAGE FESTIVAL 2016

By John Rice

For the first time, grandson Ian's fall break and the Barber Vintage Festival lined up on the same days, so off we went in the truck on Thursday morning with two bikes loaded in the bed. We would have taken the sidecar rig, but Ian needed to be back by bedtime Sunday night for school Monday, so the truck provided a more expedient transport to accomplish that end. Instead we took Ian's Sherpa and the Yamaha XT, to allow Ian to ride around the park grounds.

Our motel, chosen last year when we expected to return on two wheels, was in Pelham, about 20 miles south of Barber, on a pleasant two lane road that went straight to the park. Jay had already arrived on his bike, having left the previous day for a longer ride.

On Friday morning, Jay saddled up and we boarded the truck and headed for the track. As usual, Barber had the entry system down to a fine science, sending hordes of vehicles into the complex smoothly and without undue delay. Once inside, we found our parking lot and boarded the next shuttle to take Ian and I around the track and back to the museum where Jay was parked. The shuttles are clean, on time, providing an efficient way to see the whole complex and get to any part without hassle. As one cruises along in the shuttle seat, the track is almost always in view and the sound of race bikes at full chat is everywhere.

Ian was impressed. Having been to Mid Ohio Vintage Days twice now, he recognized that the two facilities were different takes on

the "festival at a racetrack" idea, and decided he liked most of Mr. Barber's version better.

While I realize that it's an oversimplification on some levels, I think it is safe to say that the Barber Motorsports Complex represents the vision of one man, George Barber, and as such it has features that no facility designed or managed by a committee would contain. It's hard to tell sometimes if it is a beautiful park with a racetrack and museum inside or a motorsports facility with a park around it. Everywhere there are works of art, motorsports related, in random places to amuse, provoke thought or "just because".

Immediately obvious is the "do it right" ethos displayed in every aspect. Attention to detail shows. Everywhere are employees fixing this, cleaning that, adjusting something else, constantly making sure the facility and the visitor's experience are first rate.

I know this place and the festival must be making a profit of some sort, but even if it isn't, I'm not sure that would be Mr. Barber's first consideration. It reminds me of the scene in the classic movie "Citizen Kane" where Kane's accountant chides him that the beloved newspaper which displays Kane's view of the world, is losing a million dollars per year. Kane roars with laughter and replies, "at that rate, I'll be broke in a hundred years!"

Inside the museum, Ian is at first overwhelmed by the sheer volume of exhibits. He gravitates over to the Lotus race cars off the right of the entry. It is easy to see the progres-





Prototype Lotus car from the 1940s

sion of technology, from the sheet aluminum prototype of the 1940's (which looks sort of like a high school shop class "build a car" project) to the ground-force formula one cars of the 2000's with impossibly wide tires and bodywork that skims the pavement to suck the thing down on the road. While Ian is perusing the four wheelers, Jay strikes up a conversation with one of the docents walking around the place. This fellow is a bit older than us and tells us that back when George Barber was first putting together the motorcycle part of his collection, he turned to some of his high school classmates in a local vintage motorcycle club, including our new acquaintance, for advice and bikes. The docent pointed down to one of the display towers on the next level and said, "See that black and orange Honda 4 in the rack? That's mine."

From the second level, one can see the new bridge constructed over the track, but admission is limited to museum members, so downstairs we go to get signed up. Since they deduct the cost of the weekend pass we already bought, it's only \$30 to upgrade both of us for the membership that allows access to the bridge and other areas.

From the entrance to the bridge, one can see the new waterfall that, the attendant tells us, Mr. Barber wanted there. Just because.

The bridge crosses the track just down from Turn 9 and has a clear view of the turn from the air. As it crosses over, there is a glass bottom that gives a view straight down onto the surface....distracted slightly by the sight of





Just because

what appears to be a young woman in sunglasses hanging patiently by her fingers from the undersurface of the bridge. Just because.

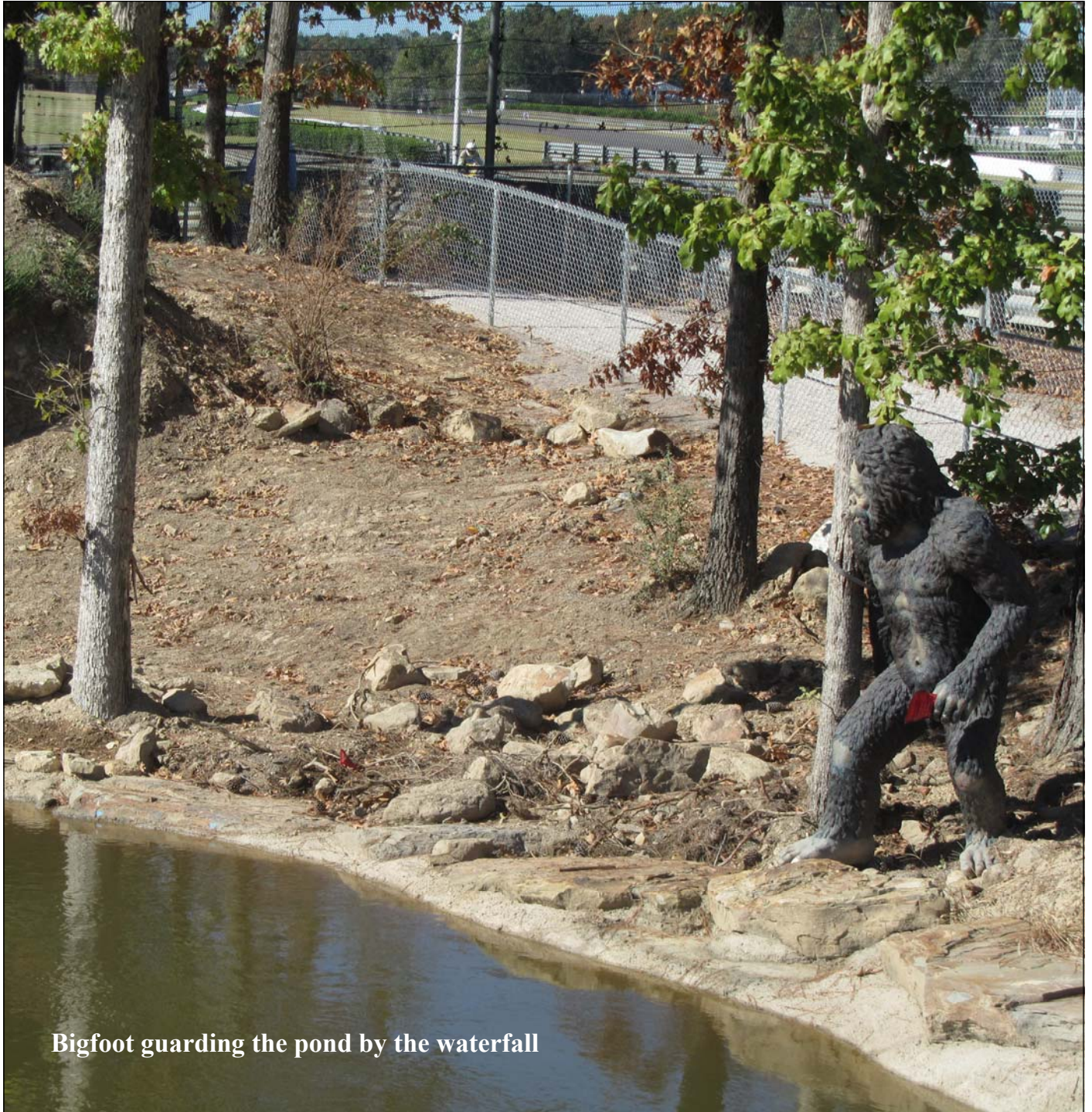
On the other side of the track, the path continues around the small pond, guarded by Big-foot, and then right beside the track as it approaches the next bridge. Up two flights of stairs and then, after another glass bottom, you are out on an observation deck that gives a view of most of the track. Off in the distance, past the pit area, Charlotte the giant spider can be seen menacing the racers. When the wind calms a bit and the racers have passed by this

point, the track announcer can be heard giving a rundown of the action.

Back inside, we head down to the basement where the restoration shops are located, an area only open to the public during events such as this. These shops are to my garage as a NASA clean room is to a landfill. There are more cars and bikes down here, including the "warehouse" portion where, we are told, there are as many machines stored as there are on display in the museum.

The new museum addition, a virtual twin of the existing one, it appears, was to have been





Bigfoot guarding the pond by the waterfall





Far end of new bridge

open in time for this event, but in a development that will surprise no one, the contractor was late in finishing. It will be available for next season.

We stop in to see the display of computer driven fabricating machines. I have no way of intelligently describing these devices, other than to say they are real magic. A young man with a spiked hairstyle stands in front of one machine watching intently through a glass window that is spattered by water and shards

of aluminum, occasionally making an input on a keyboard attached to the huge machine. Inside, a shiny metal table shakes and moves up, down and sideways as a mandrel comes down from above making similar seemingly random motions, sometimes retreating to have a new or different bit attached by a robot hand, then diving back into the fray. On the moving table, a chunk of aluminum the size of an Oxford Dictionary is becoming a small finned cover plate for an obscure motorcycle. The original sits on a shelf by the machine, so that



Barber's Fabrication shop

we can see what all this chaos will produce. The young man explains to us his extensive training, both classroom and OJT that resulted in him being here, making this magic happen.

In my former career, as a Vocational Rehabilitation specialist trying to find appropriate jobs for disabled people, I trained myself to look at any man-made object I encountered by imagining how it got there and how my people might fit into that process. Who thought of it, who designed it, who tested it, who built it, who designed and built the machine that produced it, who marketed it, delivered it, set it up, repaired it and recycled it into something else. Now looking at this device I could see a

long, long chain of talented and imaginative people leading to here.

Back in the museum, we wandered among the bikes on stands, up on carousels and hanging on walls. There are so many that some get lost in the visual excess. There is the classic Bohmerland motorcycle sidecar combination that I first saw in the Art of the Motorcycle exhibit in Chicago. It is a different take on the concept of motorcycle, built in 1932, without a lot of consideration for the "conventional" idea of such a conveyance. There is the "Cat" custom, what appears to be the love child of a motorcycle and a large excavator. A large piece of an old board track has been replicated over on one side of the museum, in "cutaway"





fashion so that one can see the underpinnings of the construction. There are bikes of the sort that ran these tracks posed in action positions, letting the viewer see just how close these insane men raced on warped and splintered boards at over 100mph on machines with no brakes and tires not much better than rubberized canvas.

Outside, we boarded a tram to take us to the swap meet. Ian had his sights set on some Honda parts and a few Bultaco bits and quickly tired of waiting for the old folks to peruse other items so moved on ahead, a predator seeking his specific prey.

All the while one is ambling about the grounds the sound of race bikes is everywhere.

On the ring road, a constant stream of old motorcycles are going both directions, some piloted by folks my age, some by people whose parents were too young to drive when the bike was made. The machines of my youth and young adulthood, the ones I wanted and the ones I owned and rode, are all here, being restored, being ridden, being raced.

As will happen at events like this, an infusion of cash was needed and of course, Barber had that covered with an ATM machine in a trailer parked in the infield near the swap meet. While standing in line for the machine, I struck up a conversation with some people who turned out to be from Perth, Australia, up here on our side of the world to see this event. Again thinking of everything, Barber had ar-



ranged for a booth giving away free sunscreen to keep us safe in the Alabama sun. The vendor area had an eclectic mix of booths, offering everything from high-end safety gear to the usual t-shirts, and the Triumph tent with couches for the weary spectators to take a load off. We signed up to win the bike being given away, but as of this writing, they seem to have lost my phone number to tell me I've won.

Jay went to the KTM booth to check out the test rides, but in sitting on the 390's was insufficiently impressed to seriously consider a swap for the BMW he has. I try one on for size and find it "compact" in the extreme, with the front wheel seeming to be between my knees. Think I'll stick with what I've got.

While Jay is off on his own errands, Ian and I go up to the Ace Corner, an area set aside as a paean to the Cafe Racer scene, both historical

from the 60's and the modern era. These bikes, with their "less is more" ethos, were the icons of my youth and still form what in my mind is the proper "look" for a sporting street machine. I'm told that a basic tenet of aircraft design is "increase power and add lightness" and these motorcycles follow that guideline exactly. The 60's brought change to every part of society, worldwide, and motorcycles were at the forefront in moving from utilitarian to sporting, limited only by the imagination and resources of the owners. And the designs this movement spawned were so "right" that it continues to this day with modern bikes being shaped into cafe racers of every kind.

At the top of the hill is the temporary Ace Cafe, with food and beer, but in what I consider to be a major faux pas for a supposedly British establishment, no Guinness. Down in the meadow below the cafe is the bandstand,





Ace Cafe



Royal Enfield Booth— New Himalayan model



should one want to waste motorcycle time dancing, and rows of vendors for modern cafe racer stuff. One booth is operated by the Royal Enfield Company, showcasing their Continental GT single cylinder cafe machine, but also including a few examples of the new Himalayan model. I like its concept, but I think they have a bit more development yet to do.

At 5 PM, Ian went to take part in a trials school, run by AHRMA in the woods where the trials event would be held the next day.

McWilliams brothers ever got (other than each other). Neither he nor I are the skinny young fellows we were back then anymore, but he says he remembers me from those days. He is from the South, however and could just be southern polite. I follow Ian's group down into the woods on my XT250. After months of drought, I didn't expect the deep woods trails to be muddy, but that was just naïveté on my part. The instructor, on a later model Sherpa, had the class do a simple turn on a trail, marked out by ribbons and a rock as the turning point. Ian managed it well, but I was



Ian participating in a trials school

The groups were broken up into rough skill levels, with the "experts" being taught by Curt Comer, former national champion. I recall Curt as a skinny teenager who would come up to our Kentucky trials events in the early 70's to provide the only real competition the

impressed by the difficulty some folks had with the concept of looking where you want to go instead of at the front wheel, and with the idea of turning within prescribed boundaries. A bit later, he had them in an actual section, with an uphill turn and a hole in the easiest



line. We expected some dabbling to occur, particularly with the wet leaves in the section, but I was a bit surprised at the number of people who came completely off the bike, dropping it on the side, in their attempts to make the turn. I think a lot of it was "audience factor", paying too much attention to the fact that people were watching. Hey, it is called "Observed Trials."

On Saturday we returned to the track, cruising right in thanks to the efficient traffic control system. We had decided that we would spend the morning in the outside venues, Swap Meet and infield and then go into the air-conditioned museum again after lunch when the heat ramped up in the afternoon.

There were still some rows of the swap meet we hadn't yet perused. Jay and I bought some items from a tall fellow in a white straw hat at one booth and only as we were paying did I notice that he was wearing a name tag that said "Somer Hooker", one of the leading purveyors of concours level vintage bike restorations in the country and one of the regular judges at the high end shows like Quail. Some of the Ducati singles he has on offer in his magazine ads are more properly artwork than riding machines.

As we were walking down one row, I heard the unmistakable sound of a Bultaco Sherpa coming up behind us, but I wasn't expecting to see what passed us by. It was a Sherpa attached to a trials sidecar. I instantly recognized the rig. We followed it to its parking spot a little farther down. I asked the rider if this was Chuck West's bike. He looked at me strangely, not expecting I suppose to have it recognized, but confirmed that it was one of two such rigs that Art Sanders had built for Chuck back in the 70's. He shows me where Sanders had spelled his name in the holes

drilled for lightness in the floor. Chuck was a prominent figure in the 70's trials scene and the operator of "The Tryals Shoppe" in Cookeville, Tennessee, where many of the specialist bits and bobs we trials riders needed were to be found. I was a competitor then and also a Montesa Motorcycle dealer and when I sold out my shop in 1977, Chuck traded my left-over inventory for a 1976 Bultaco Sherpa T. This fellow told us that, oddly enough, the other one built by Sanders was also here, now hitched to a different bike, over in the pits. He hadn't talked to the owner, but had seen the machine and like me with his, recognized it immediately.

We wandered into the indoor swap meet area where more goodies were to be seen, including the completely trashed four cylinder Suzuki engine for sale for \$25. Ian pondered taking it home as an educational tool. He certainly was correct that it would have taught him things as he disassembled it, but my aged back was relieved that he changed his mind. I hadn't relished the thought of wrestling the 200 pound lump into and out of the truck.

The vendor trucks were all busy, with long lines of hungry visitors, so we took the tram back around to the museum and got lunch at the cafe on the second floor. There we ran into Paul and Maureen Elwyn who had come down in their Porsche to spend the day.

The rest of the day is a blur of machines, perfect examples of every aspect of motorcycle history and current events. On the wall on one floor is a "monowheel", a contraption seeking to take the idea of simplicity to its perhaps illogical end, by eliminating the second wheel, the frame and indeed nearly everything. One sits in the center of the huge wheel, grasping the bars and resting the feet on flared bits of



the bodywork. Controls look motorcycle-ish with a conventional throttle and clutch setup, but I'm still puzzled by just how one stops the thing. I think it would be a real hoot to be in the center, leaning this way and that, controlling the direction by body weight (since there is no "countersteering" with only one large wheel) but physics will come abruptly into play when one applies braking to the only thing in contact with the ground. I imagine

that some Fred Flintstone action will be required to keep the whole thing gathered up.

As the day was winding down, we went out to the bridge over the track again. As we neared the end point, the security person was climbing down from the final platform, bringing his chair and obviously closing up for the session. When he saw us coming, he asked Ian if he wanted to go back up and then es-



corted us up the stairs. Ian walked out to the end, looked as long as he wanted and finally we descended to walk back with the young man. I was impressed that this fellow, at the end of his shift when he could have been heading home, took the time to let a young fan have a bit of time out on the bridge.

On Sunday, Jay prepared to head home, tak-

out onto the bridge to watch the races. On the first lap of one race, a rider swept into the turn just below our perch and lost the front end, sliding into the gravel trap. I watched as he and a track worker pushed his bike to the outside, behind the bales, where he stood, holding his arm, to be a spectator for the race in which he started as a participant. I could almost hear the inner dialogue as he chastised himself for



Wall climbing in the museum

ing his bike on a more circuitous route with time undetermined, while Ian and I returned to the track. Not surprisingly, Ian had not yet had his fill and wanted to see more. We returned to the museum and made another foray

whatever he did wrong. Been there, done that.

Back inside, I could see as Ian meandered through the exhibits inside that he was overwhelmed by the visual cacophony of the metal



shapes and colors, all forming the kind of machine, a motorcycle, that he loves, but in so many forms that it all gets lost in the whole, like trying to follow an individual line of paint in a Jackson Pollock. It takes several run-throughs and learning a bit of history to make sense out of it. I've been here many times now

accompanied by his son and two grandchildren, suggesting that this will go on for another generation or two. Down the row from them we found the other Sanderson-West trials sidecar rig. The owner didn't know the history, having just bought it because it was so unusual. I told him it was more unusual than he thought,



Ian with an Alabama garter snake

and I still can find things I've walked past without seeing.

Our last bit for the day was a visit to the pits for a quick walk around. We did run into Mike Wells and Steve Pieratt as they were preparing for the last day's racing. Steve was ac-

being one of two in existence.

I had planned to get on the road from here at 10 AM, knowing that we'd lose an hour going east and I had to get Ian home for school on Monday. But an event like Barber has its own gravity, a pull difficult to break, so our depar-





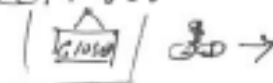
Swap Meet

ture was more like noon-ish. From there it's just a long interstate slog back to Lexington, arriving long past the time when I was ready for bed. Bikes can be left in the truck for retrieval tomorrow. Ian is already planning next year's trip.



WE HAVE A NEW DEALER NAMED JEFF,  
 WHO, WITH NUMBERS, WILL NEED TO BE DEFT,  
 LET'S GIVE HIM SUPPORT,  
 OR WE'LL GET A REPORT,

THAT OUR NEW BEEMER DEALER HAS LEFT...

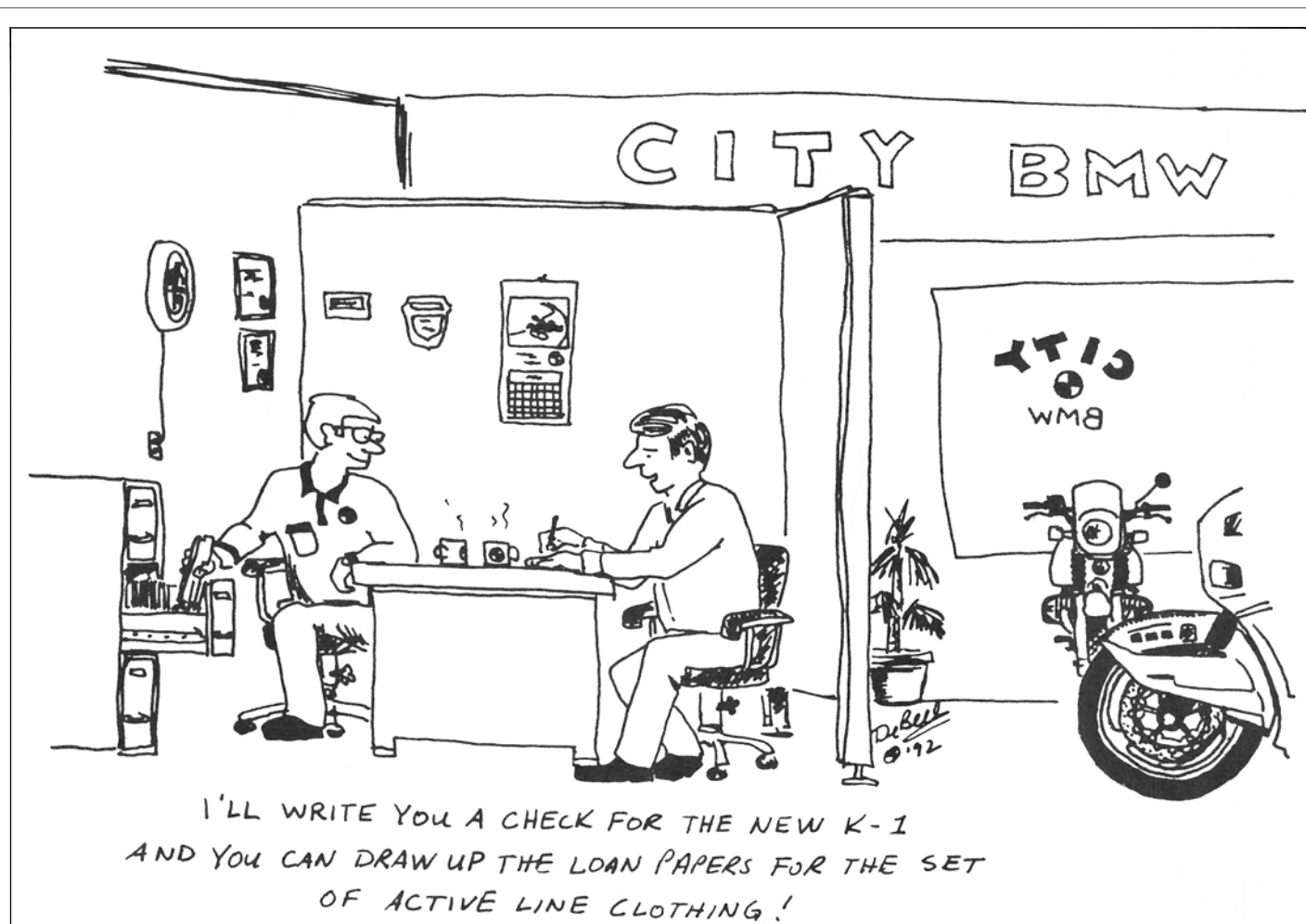


Here's the group for today:

- \*1). Mary Beards (RESSOR) - MATH TEACHER LCC - FROM L.A.
- \*2). Jim Brandon
- \*3). Boone Smithland
- 4). Chester Martin
- 5). Pete Golski
- 6). Phillip Raugh
- \*7). Ryan King
- \*8). Robbie Carter
- \*9). Bill Voss
- \*10). John Rice
- 11). Joe Burk
- \*12). Paul Elzyer
- 13). Daniel Spackman
- 14). Chris Warner
- 15). Robert "Red" McClelland
- 16). Greg Quinn & "Snow"
- 17). Mike Gill
- \*18). Randy Scott
- 19). Russell Travis
- 20). "Julio" (Mike's friend who makes jewelry!)

*Boone*





A few weeks ago, I was going through and recycling some old magazines. I came across a couple of years worth of the "On The Level" (OTL) magazine that the BMW RA club puts out. The above cartoon was published in the September 1992 edition. The "new" K-1 is no longer around, but the intended humor still has a place some twenty-four years later.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!!

Club E-mail Group  
Have you joined?

To subscribe send an e-mail to  
[Bgbeemers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Bgbeemers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

# Books available on loan

The following books are available on loan. Email me when you want to borrow one, and I will bring it to breakfast (or whatever other arrangements need to be made...I can deliver within reason) and I'll put your name beside it on my list.

I don't mind if people keep them a while (it takes me forever to read a book now....I keep falling asleep and then have to re-read the last 10 pages or so) but I don't want to give them away for good. At least not yet.

John Rice  
Rickey@aol.com



***Bahnstormer*** By LJK Setwright  
***Streetwise*** By Malcolm Newell  
***The Bart Markel Story*** By Joe Scalzo  
***Mann of his Time*** By Ed Youngblood  
***Yesterday's Motorcycles*** By Karolevitz  
***The Scottish*** By Tommy Sandham  
***This Old Harley*** By Michael Dregni  
***Racer: the story of Gary Nixon*** By Joe Scalzo  
***All But My Life: Bio of Stirling Moss*** By Ken Purdy (OK, not a motorcycle book, but who doesn't like and respect Stirling Moss?)  
***Investment Biker*** By Jim Rogers  
***Obsessions Die Hard*** By Ed Culbertson  
***BMW Twins & Singles*** By Roy Bacon  
***Bitten by the Bullet*** By Steve Krzystyniak & Karen Goa  
***Cafe Racers of the 1960's*** By Mick Walker  
***More Proficient Motorcycling*** By David Hough  
***Tales of Triumph Motorcycles & the Meriden Factory:***  
By Hancox  
***Sport Riding Techniques*** By Nick Ienatasch  
***Total Control*** By Lee Parks

***Smooth Riding*** By Reg Pridmore.  
***A Twist of The Wrist ( Vol 1 & 2)*** By Keith Code  
***Triumph Tiger 100 and Daytona*** By J. R. Nelson  
***This Old Harley (anthology)*** By Dregni  
***Side Glances*** By Peter Egan  
***Mondo Enduro*** By Austin Vince  
***Big Sid's Vincati*** By Matthew Bieberman  
***101 Road Tales*** By Clement Salvadori  
***Riding with Rilke*** By Ted Bishop  
***Legendary Motorcycles*** By Luigi Corbetta  
***Red Tape and White Knuckles*** By Lois Pryce  
***A Man Called Mike*** By Hilton (bio of Mike Hailwood)  
***The Perfect Vehicle*** By Melissa Pierson  
***One Man Caravan*** By Robert Fulton (first known circumnavigation of the world by motorcycle)  
***Monkey Butt*** By Rick Sieman  
***Ariel: The postwar models*** By Roy Bacon  
***Short Way Up*** By Steve Wilson  
***Endless Horizon*** By Dan Walsh  
***Leanings (1 & 2)*** By Peter Egan  
***Into the Heart of Africa*** By Jerry Smith  
***The Last Hurrah*** By Des Molloy  
(Autographed copy, with DVD of the trip)  
***Whatever Happened to the British Motorcycle Industry***  
By Bert Hopwood  
***Down the Road*** By Steve Wilson  
***Motorcycling Excellence***  
By Motorcycle Safety Foundation  
***Leanings 3*** By Peter Egan  
***Ghost Rider*** By Neal Peart

