

March 2017

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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





# Where are my portrait photos....

By Jeff Crabb

Unusual photo for an Apex, but Heather Auman has written about her recent trip to Sri Lanka and I couldn't pass up putting a beautiful beach photo on the March edition. Thoughts of warmer days or just heading to Daytona.

This edition has lots of photos.

It was hard picking which ones to include, so I put in as many as I could.

John Rice continues his story of "favorite" bikes and you knew there would be one focusing on his Green Machine.

Please enjoy Heather's and John's stories 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



Spotted at the 2010 Mid-Ohio Vintage Days. Velocettes were made by Veloce Ltd, in Hall Green Birmingham, England from 1904 to 1971.

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**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**  
**Bluegrass Beemers**





# Motor Biking in Sri Lanka

By Heather Auman

For three weeks ending in 12, January 2017, I had the opportunity to travel Sri Lanka by bus, train, tuk-tuk, and scooter. Sri Lanka is a strategic naval link between West Asia and South East Asia and has been a centre of Buddhist religion and culture from ancient times. Today, Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation, with a fifth of the population following faiths other than Buddhism – notably Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

The island has a pleasant tropical climate and average temperature of the low lands ranges between 75-85 degrees Fahrenheit, great for exploring on the bike. Famous for the production and export of tea, coffee, rubber and coconuts, Sri Lanka boasts a progressive and modern industrial economy. The natural beauty of Sri Lanka's tropical forests, beaches and landscape, as well as its rich cultural heritage make it a world fa-

mous tourist destination. For some reason, I don't know why I didn't encounter many Americans. Maybe you would consider this a future holiday destination?





English is widely spoken in the cities and only had the opportunity to use hand gestures in villages and roadside stands, where all you had to do is point at your desired item and in

Lin, quoted, "Sri Lanka is like India if India ever got it's sh\*t together."

Busses were mainly third class old city busses driven by assertive men who weren't afraid



A beautiful fruit stand in a market on a rainy day

response given a number or were shown one of their colorful Sri Lankan Rupees in return. Bright orange king coconut, bananas, the sweetest pineapple I've ever tasted, mango, papaya, and boiled corn dipped in salt water, all purchased for a low price. Sri Lankans are generally fair and reasonable compared to other Asian countries where they try to increase the rates for being a foreigner.

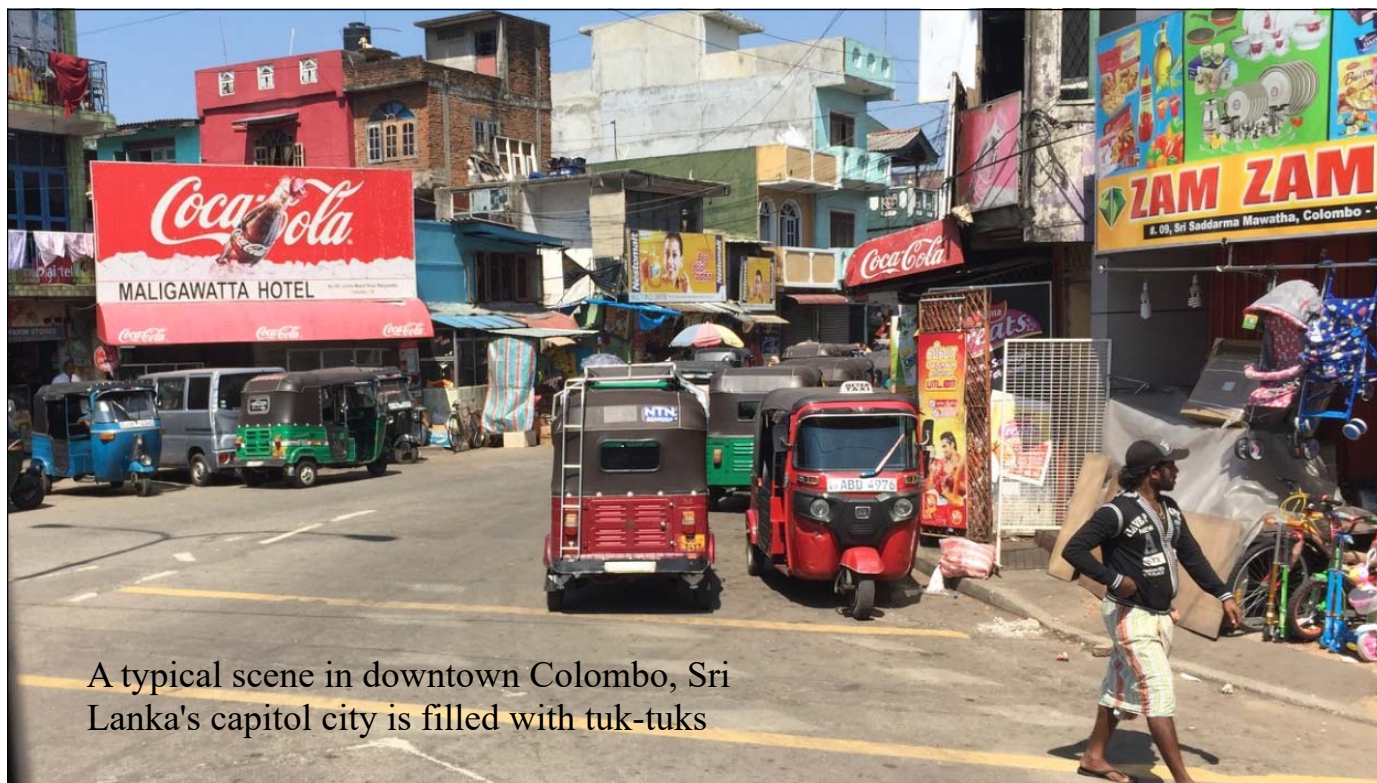
India is only a jump away but they are significantly different with governments, planning, monetary system (India trying to go "cashless"), environmental regulations, environmental awareness and education. Signs for higher education are promoted on nearly every telephone pole. A new American friend, Justin



King coconut was the absolute best thirst quencher!

to overtake a car or tuk-tuk through a narrow, winding curve. A friend dubbed them the "Hindu Disco" busses since they throbbed with such bass intensity and there were no





A typical scene in downtown Colombo, Sri Lanka's capitol city is filled with tuk-tuks



These Harley sounding rigs were found on rice and produce farms

shortage of blinking lights and gold shrines of the Hindu gods inside the front. There weren't many luxurious coach busses except transportation to the resorts. Three wheeled tuk-tuks are the economical taxis to get around the city. About 1/3rd of the vehicles on the road within the city were scooters and motorbikes, but nothing over a 250cc. Cars are heavily taxed, a \$25K Prius here in the USA would be over \$120K there.

Three ancient kingdoms and also UNESCO World Heritage Sites are Sigiriya, Anuradhapura, and Polonnaruwa, each a few hours from each other while staying in the centrally located city of Dambulla. This is perfect for two to three hours on the motorbike to visit each city often white knuckling it from dodging the massive city busses passing slower vehicles on curves. It was often that I found myself on the shoulder to avoid being a flat-nose



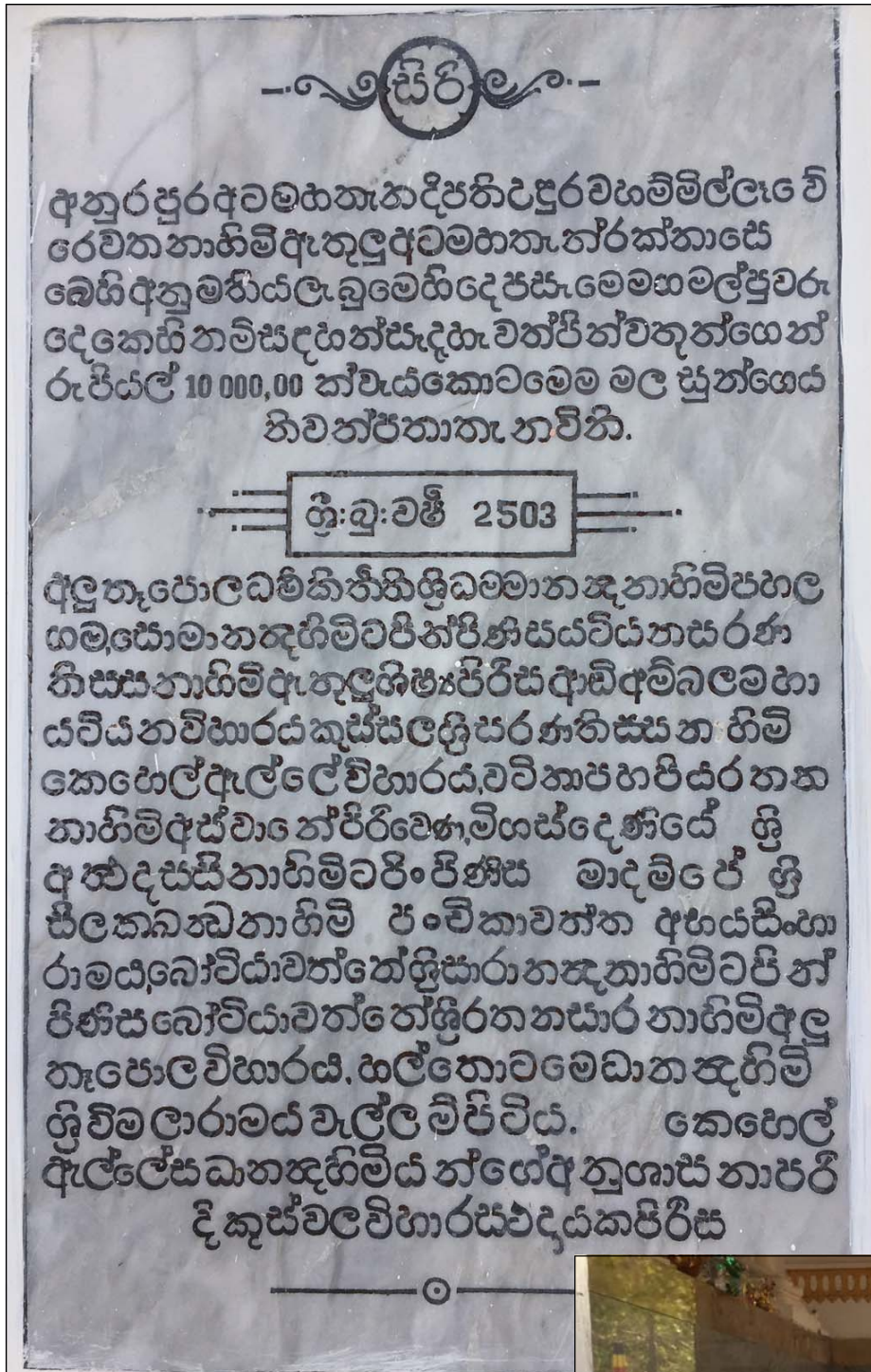


Sigiriya is an ancient rock fortress located near the town of Dambulla in the Central Province, Sri Lanka. The name refers to a site of historical and archaeological significance that is dominated by a massive column of rock nearly 200 meters (660 ft) high. On a small plateau about halfway up the side of this rock there is a gateway in the form of an enormous lion. The name of this place is derived from this structure —Sīhāgiri, the Lion Rock. It is today is a UNESCO listed World Heritage Site. It is one of the best preserved examples of ancient urban planning



A long, winding stretch of a steel pathway leads a narrow path to the top. It's not for the faint of heart!





The Sinhala language is spoken by the Sinhalese people, who constitute approximately 75% of the national population and total about 13 million. The written language using the Sinhala alphabet, a descendent of the Brahmi script, started to appear inscriptions during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. To me looked like a bunch of fruit outlines, cartoon dog faces, butts, and boobs.

One of thousands of Buddhahists praying near the Bodhi Tree. This tree is a frequent destination for pilgrims, where Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment.



bus pancake. There aren't many straight roads in Sri Lanka making it both dangerous and exhilarating.

I did not encounter many Americans, but many tourists from Europe and notably Russia in the southern beach town of Unawatuna. It was wonderful to befriend many locals and see the real local activities and hear history of the ending of the civil war of 2009. One story from a new friend, Sriyanjith Tissera, or Leo as he allowed me to call him, talked of the radical suicide bombers and tight control the government had on the people. If a government official were driving, all other cars had to stop, park in the roadway with car keys handed to an official while the people were lined facing the wall until the convoy passed through. That's pretty strict! It's hard to imagine this only happened eight years ago.

Sri Lanka is a wild-life lover's paradise. It's known for it's elephant sanctuaries, leopards, and abundant birdlife. I passed an elephant crossing sign earlier in the day and was planning to get a cute photograph of the bike and sign during the return in the evening. There was something better, an elephant actually crossing the road! A few cars and tuk-tuks were pulled over to watch and busses honking at our road hazard making this seemingly a common occurrence. Watching from about 150', I decided to move along thinking this might be an unpredictable young male which was outcast from the herd and a bike isn't much protection, so zipped away with all the might of 115ccs.

For this three week trip, I chose to travel by

car, motorbike, train, city bus, tuk-tuk, and plenty of walking. If I were to visit again, it would be entirely by motorbike as it gives you so much flexibility and freedom and best of all, not be stuck on a standing room only bus or train. This happened frequently for hours at a time since it was holiday season. Since the tourism industry is in the beginning phases, the ability to find a motorbike rental was difficult. In the larger beach towns, it was common to rent an 115cc for \$1000 Sri Lankan Rupees/day (\$6.50). It seemed to be a flat rate in town and many of the locals would advertise their personal bike on the shoulder of the road since there was no central rental facility.

The most enjoyable part of the trip was being



An Elephant on the side of the road, one of two seen in a short stretch!

able to take the bike to anywhere along the south edge of the island that looked like good snorkeling. Just park, grab the snorkel gear, and have an entire cove to yourself. Beautiful!

I encourage you to look into this country if you have a chance to distance travel! The country is basically just starting up its tourist industry, so hopefully you can see this beautiful country.





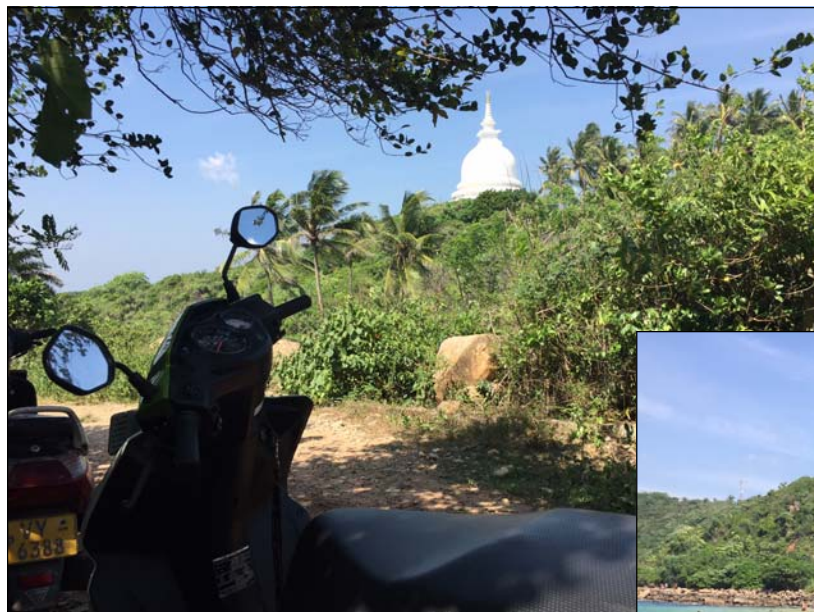
A highway sign indicating what's not allowed on the road

The *Ancient City of Polonnaruwa* has been declared a World Heritage Site. Apparently, it's insulting to Buddha to have your back to him so you have to turn sideways. It's entertaining watching the locals constantly remind the tourists of this.



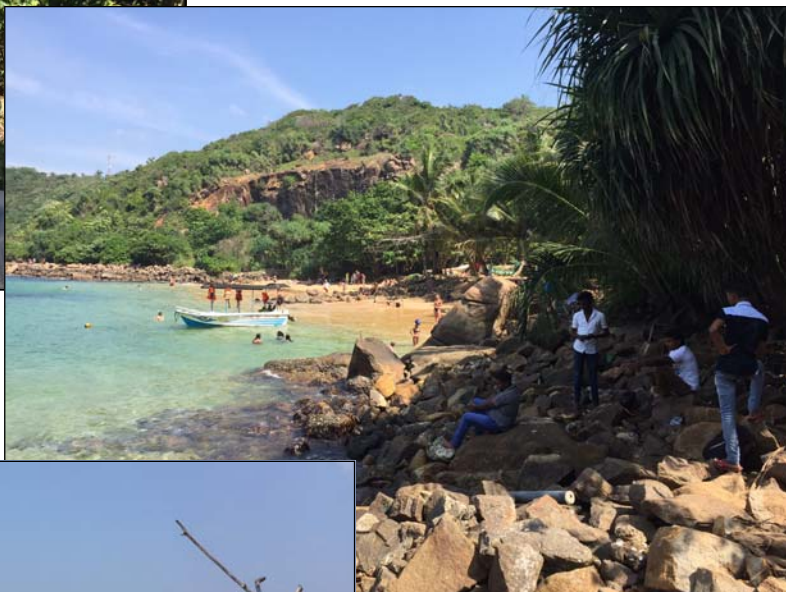
This was their air force museum, this plane.





Parking the bike next to the Japanese Peace Pagoda and hiking to Jungle Beach in Unawatuna.

Jungle Beach was a hike to see, or a \$5 taxi boat ride.



Shrimp Fishermen casting off in the evening to fish all night.

On one of the many sandy beaches ready to snorkel and jump to the next little sandy spot.







These wood panel vehicles were the common delivery trucks. Many of the bumpers were intricately carved wood bumpers.

This four foot wide booth is a car parts store. The only one in this medium sized town. It's packed with parts about three feet deep.



The city flat-nose buses of death

Interesting convenience store product placement.





# The Green Bike

By John Rice



Staying with Jeff Odean's suggestion that we write about "favorite bikes", I thought I'd talk a bit about the one that got me started with this group, the 1975 R90/6, the Green Bike.

From the early 70's through 1980, I had transitioned from a "dual sport" rider to a strictly trials rider, devoting all of my two-wheeled energy to the slow sport of beating a perfectly good motorcycle and its rider against large rocks, trees, deep rocky creeks and mud. Then in 1980, I developed the first of many autoimmune nerve problems, leaving my right arm extremely weak, nearly paralyzed, and therefore pretty useless for trials riding. Eventually I got some of the strength back in most of the

arm, but not enough for serious trials riding and I began to think about returning to riding on the street. "Not riding" just wasn't an option I wanted to consider. I purchased a somewhat derelict 1975 Suzuki 500 Titan two stroke twin and after some restoration, began exploring pavement again. While it was serviceable for the task, it left something to be desired for long distance two-up touring. A friend in Huntington, West Va owned this 1975 BMW R90/6, painted Nurburg Green (or as Boone Sutherland later came to call it, "Look At Me Green") with just 10,000 miles on it. He loaned it to Brenda and me one afternoon for a test ride and when he later of-

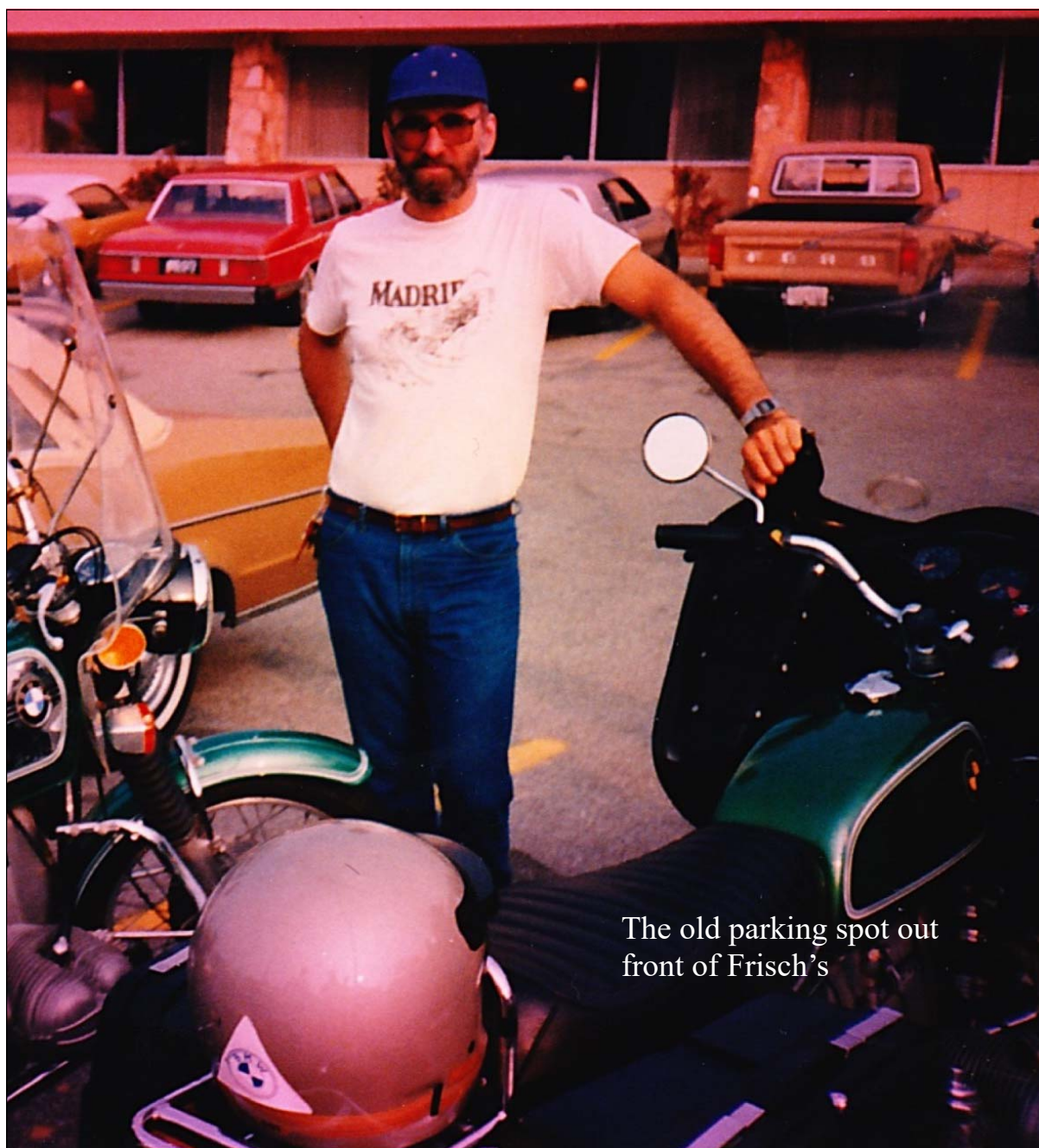


ferred it for sale, Brenda was quick to take him up on it. Better seat, better shocks, almost no vibration and, perhaps most important, no chain lube stripe up the back of her clothes.

I bought the bike in the spring of 1981, as best I recall, and proceeded to ride it everywhere I went. To work, on evening "hamburger runs" with my son (we lived in Frankfort then and the burger of choice was in Madison, Indiana) and weekend trips. The gentle thrum of the boxer engine just suited me, fit some receptor in my body that made

everything seem complete. Sometime that summer, I stopped in the motorcycle shop on Industry Road to pick up my copy of Classic Bike magazine and ran into a guy with another BMW. Ronnie Day was a Lexington firefighter and one of the early members of what would later become the Bluegrass Beemers. Ronnie told me about this group of motorcyclists, mostly BMW riders, who met for breakfast at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Road every Saturday morning. I showed up one bright morning and met Tom and Boone Sutherland,

Monty Steckler, Randy Scott, Bob Buckley and a half dozen others. The restaurant was different then, the area where we now meet was not yet added and the group met not around tables dragged together, but in adjoining booths back in the main part of the dining room. Our bikes were parked directly in front, where the handicapped spaces now are located,



The old parking spot out front of Frisch's



because the parking lot we now use was still a Pizza Hut restaurant.

By fall of that year, I had decided that a career change was in order and I took the LSAT exam for entry into law school. Of course I rode the green bike to the test that morning and parked it across the street from the test center. When I stuck the key in the fork lock, it snapped off inside. Not exactly the stress free beginning I had in mind for the test.

When school started in the fall of 1982, I rode the green bike there from Frankfort almost every day, barring ice or deep snow. There is a long covered porch across the front of the law school building where I parked the bike each day. I think some of the professors didn't like it, but no one ever told me to move it. The ride to and from school each day on Old Frankfort Pike made a pleasant break from the pressures of learning a new profession. Since I was there, either in class or studying, 6 or 7 days per week, at 50 miles per day round trip, the miles began piling up.

In the summer between my first and second years in school, I got a job with the Lexington office of Mapother & Mapother. (Mapother is a Louisville law firm, the senior partner of which was Tom Cruise's

grandfather. On one occasion when the senior was in the library with us clerks, I heard him comment about his young grandson who was trying to become an actor. "I just wish he'd settle down and make something of himself and give up this actor foolishness" was the gist of the comment.). My job included running real estate titles, mostly in surrounding counties, the perfect job for a motorcyclist. Brenda bought me an Eclipse motorcycle briefcase that clipped on to the same three point harness as my tank bag and off I went each day to remote county courthouses all around central Kentucky.

By this time, Jay had moved to Georgia with the beginnings of his military career and there were a few trips to visit him there. On one of these, his wife Marimac gave me a large slice of chocolate cake for the trip home, which I placed in the top box. Later when I stopped to enjoy the treat, I found that the oscillation of







Brenda and the R90/6

Somewhere near Abiquiu  
NM in the summer of  
1984

I saw a lot of these signs  
that summer...



On the Enchanted Circle

A rainy morning some-  
where above Taos, NM  
in 1984



the top box had disintegrated the cake into its individual component molecules inside. Still good, nonetheless and a lesson in proper packing procedure.

By my second year, my class standing had been high enough to qualify attending a job fair in Atlanta where students could get summer clerkships with firms all around the nation. I settled upon one in Albuquerque NM. In May of 1984, I loaded the Green Bike in the back of my tiny, rusting, Chevy LUV truck

all of my time, except for eating and sleeping, to those tasks 5 days per week and spend my weekends, starting Friday night, traveling as far as I could on the bike, getting home on Sunday night in time for sleep. I had my son's "backyard" tent and my old Boy Scout sleeping bag for camping. The R90 covered a lot of New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado that summer, spending a fair amount of time on dirt and gravel roads as well as pavement. Over the 4th of July holiday long weekend, Brenda



In the mountains, 1984, somewhere in New Mexico

flew out to join me and we toured the southwest for four days, camping in the desert, listening to the coyotes howl in the distance.

Back home, I continued riding to and from school until graduation in 1985. The bike

and headed west for a two and a half month job. Once there, I found a one room "studio" apartment with a pull out couch for a bed, across the road from the office, and set about figuring out how to maximize motorcycle time while getting my work done.

Law clerks are "interns" who are expected to work all the hours in the day and half the night to get done the tasks assigned, which are basically the things the lawyers don't want to do. Reading lengthy contracts looking for problem language, researching the law and writing memos, etc. Weekend work often is expected to get the volume done. I decided that since I was alone out there in the west, I could devote

made a post-bar exam trip into the eastern US, and down the Blue Ridge while I tried to get back to some semblance of normal thinking after the long summer of study for the test. There were a couple of trips to visit my parents in Florida. Jay and I continued our habit of one long trip every year, often without a destination selected until the morning we left. On one such trip, we took the Blue Ridge from bottom to top, then, not having anything better in view, turned around and did it again the other way. Once we visited Atlantic City on a wandering trip in the northeast, and left our bikes at the end of the pier in the care of some young boys who promised, for a small fee, to



watch out for them while we went off to win our fortune at the casinos. They did their part of that assignment, we didn't.

I think it was 1987 when I bought the 1979 R100RT from Chester Martin and the Green Bike went into semi-retirement for a while.

After the infamous "green slime" wreck in Illinois, a few years later, the RT was totaled (for insurance purposes...it lived on, passing through two more members of this group and now resides somewhere in Hawaii ) and the R90/6 returned to full time duty for a while.

It got a set of tubeless Lester Mag wheels after an incident when Brenda and I, at about 60

Though I carried a patch kit in those days, the tube was completely shredded requiring us to wait until Tom Sutherland could bring me a spare tube. I vowed at that time to go with tubeless forevermore.

Other BMW's came and went over the years, including one of each iteration of the GS series from the R80 to the "camhead", (except, for some reason, the 1150), several other airheads and now even a sidecar rig. But the Green R90/6 has been a constant.

The odometer quit, as was common for VDO brand instruments, several times. I took it apart and fixed it two or three times, but finally it was beyond help at about 89,000 miles sometime in 1989 or 90.

Since then the bike has seen enough use that I'm confident that it has well over 100,000 miles on it. I have sent off the instruments for professional repair and expect them back soon.

In all those miles, it has been extraordinarily reliable, never leaving me stranded anywhere.

That doesn't mean it hasn't had its quirks and required some maintenance and a few minor roadside fixes. Regular services and my own curiosity about how things work and could possibly be improved, meant that over the years the engine has been out of the frame, the heads and pistons removed and cleaned several times, and nearly every part of



mph, picked up a large nail in the rear tire. The resulting sudden deflation caused the tire to come off both sides of the stock rim, leaving me trying to control the bike with the back end now skating inside the no longer attached tire. I used up both lanes of the thankfully empty back road and a bit of the shoulder bringing the thing to a halt still upright.



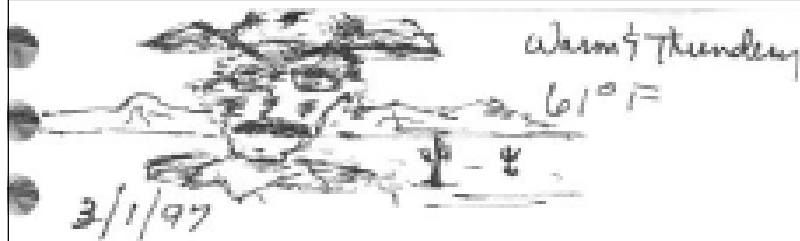
the frame and suspension have been disassembled, poked and prodded by my own inexperienced hands. The timing chain and rings have been replaced once, not because of any failure, but out of guilt. The transmission was replaced after I found a metal chunk stuck to the magnetic drain plug, that proved to be a shift dog that had broken off the central gear shaft. I'd never experienced any shifting problems, but would have if I'd left it alone. Other than those things, it is pretty much as it came to me in 1981. Now a sedate and settled middle age, in it's early 40's, has gone through several phases of "finding itself". It has been a tourer

with large Luftmeister fairing, Krauser bags and a top box, it's been a naked bike and a sort of cafe racer on several occasions, even for a while having rearset pegs and controls. For now it is established with a sporty but practical look, lower bars but not really "cafe", no fairing and just the saddlebags for touring cred. I have been told by my son and grandsons that I cannot part with it, an unnecessary admonition given my long history with the bike, and that someday it will be passed down among them and their progeny. I hope so, and I hope they will all ride it and enjoy it as much as I have.




Old airheads make excellent pie-fetching machines







THE CLAN IS OUT, BUT THERE'S THUNDER ABOUT,  
THE SCOTERS REMAIN INSIDE.

THE GROUP IS TWIN, THE CATS WILL WIN,  
BUT TODAY IS NO DAY TO RIDE ...   

Here's the group for today:

- 1). James Street
- 2). Boone Sutherland
- 3). Chester Martin
- 4). Philby Baugh
- 5). Roy Rowlett
- 6). Hubert Burton
- 7). Jim Brandon
- 8). Mike Ball
- 9). Ben Prescott
- 10). Danny Philby
- 11). Randy Scott
- 12). Bob Etzorn
- 13). Ed Bearllosson
- 14). Bob Goes

*Boone*

- \* 15). Joe Bark → FREE BREAKFAST!  
16). Russell Traver



# 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