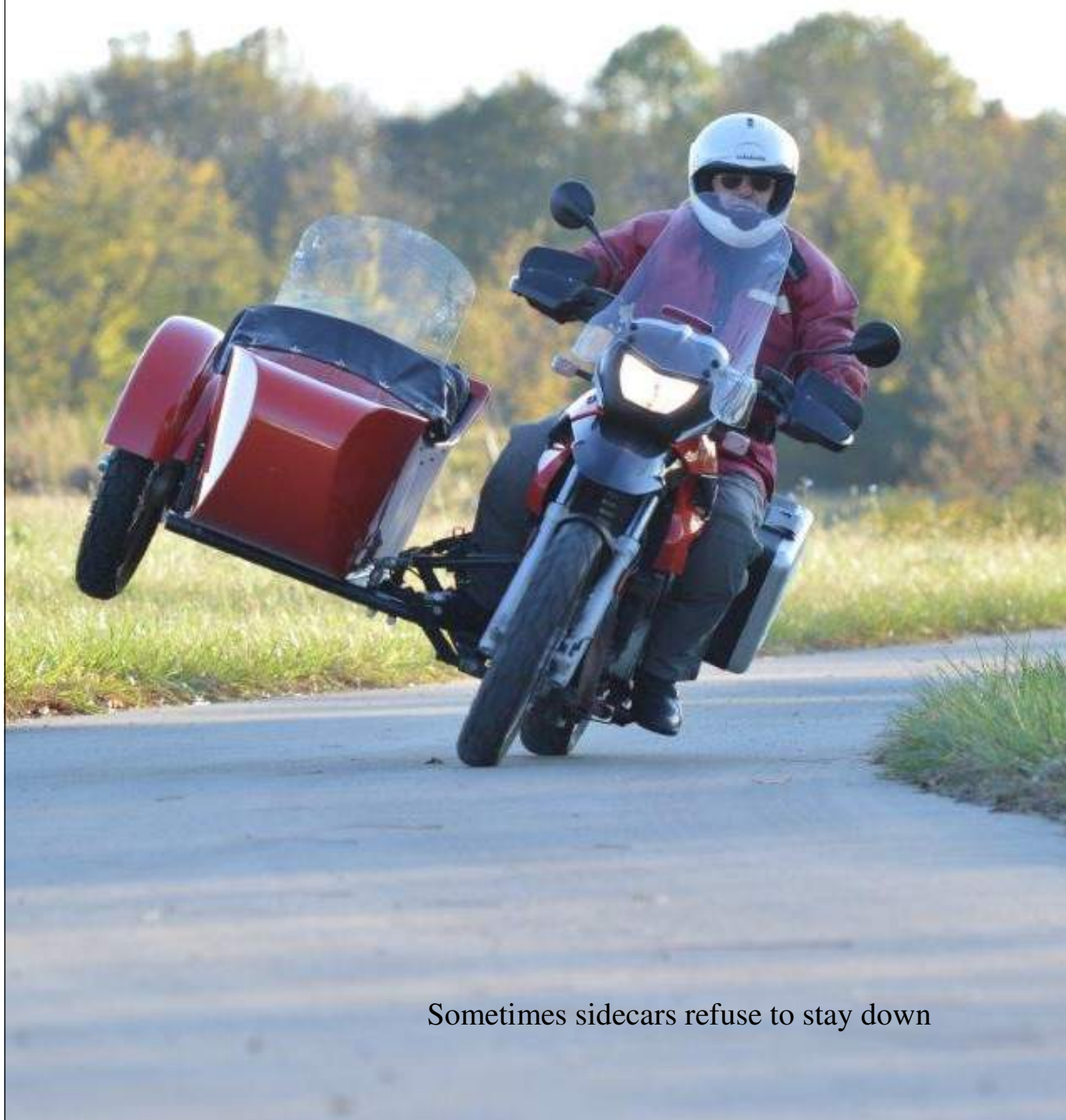


Apex

April 2019

Looking Through The Curve

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



Sometimes sidecars refuse to stay down

National Election and sidecars, what could go wrong??

By Jeff Crabb

No, I'm not going to talk mainstream politics. We all know how dangerous that can be.

This is the third consecutive edition of the Apex that will include a picture of our club's president, Kelly Moore. This time it is to let everyone know



Photo courtesy of the BMW MOA website.

that she is running for a Board position with the national club, BMW MOA. . There are six people running for three positions. A MOA club member

may vote for up to three of the six candidates. The most important thing to remember is the ballot came with the April edition of the MOA magazine and must be postmarked by April 30th. So to make sure you don't lose the ballot and are unable to vote, go ahead and vote now. Let's get as many votes in as we can for our "local" candidate.

Spring is here and the rally season is getting into full swing. Anyone looking at the rally schedule, either in the MOA magazine or on the website can see that one's riding season can fill up pretty quickly. Not only is the National rally just a state away, I don't recall ever seeing so many so close to home.

This month we look at John Rice's fascination with sidecar rigs. All sizes and makes.

Please enjoy and remember, this newsletter is made possible by contributions from those that read it. Send all of your contributions to apex@bluegrassbeemers.org.

**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
Bluegrass Beemers**



Living with Sidecars

By John Rice



2012—the plans begin

After a lifelong fascination with sidecar rigs, as seen from a distance, I got into them in my late 60's because I wanted to learn something new and experience something different in this motorcycle thing that I had done since my early teenage years. Those goals have been met, in spades, though the learning process is still continuing. This asymmetrical combination of motorcycle and third-wheel device provides sensations and experiences nothing else can equal, but it is not a motorcycle and it is not a car, nor is it a "trike". It is, as we used to

say in the legal profession, "sui generis", a creature unto itself.

I've now owned two different rigs and have about 25 or 30,000 miles under my three wheels, and while not an expert by any means, I have formed some impressions.

The takeaway is that they are marvelously stable up to about 50 mph, and increasingly weird after that. Like any good companion, no matter how wonderful they may be, there

The first rig in California



Sidecars know how to find interesting places to stay

Simon isn't too sure about this thing....



are some quirks that must be taken into account.

Consider the different ways the machine encounters its environment.

The motorcycle, when not attached to the sidecar, is designed to experience the world in a particular linear manner, straight up from the contact point. Forces applied through the frame, the tires, the suspension, from the designer's intention, should arrive and be dealt with in that line. The forks and rear suspension rise and fall with the contours of the road surface. Even when in a curve, the bike is leaned over and most of the forces it encounters still are coming up through the suspension and the frame mainly in a straight-through-the-suspension fashion, viewed from the perspective of the machine. Picture in your mind leaning into a bumpy turn and watch as the front and rear suspension reacts to the undulations of the pavement with the front tire, though in a canted position, still rolling over the bump and the forks allowing it to come up to accommodate and then the rear tire doing the same. Yes, there are side forces involved but they are minimal at this point, at real-world speeds.

Now picture the sidecar rig. The motorcycle is locked into a nearly vertical position, perpendicular to the pavement (one expert recommends "a half bubble off plumb" but it is not clear if he means the bike or the operator). Traveling in a straight line, it still encounters the world in a linear fashion, but it is constantly experiencing a side pull from the weight and drag on one side. When it enters the bumpy curve, the wheel still rolls over the uneven parts, but with the added stress of centrifugal force, countered by the traction of the tire pulling the rig to the outside. The forks and steering stem, wheel bearings, rear swing

arm and suspension all are experiencing a substantial side load in addition to the up and down motion for which they were designed. A right turn makes the car want to "fly", placing a tremendous side-load on the motorcycle's wheel bearings that are now carrying the weight of the car and any load it contains, at an angle that the designer never intended. A left turn side loads the front and puts much of the rig's weight on the car's suspension, causing the rear wheel of the bike to rise (particularly if braking is involved) even to the point of digging the nose of the car into the pavement if one lets it get out of hand.

In a well designed rig, driven responsibly, this all works fairly nicely, up to a point. It does remind me of Samuel Johnson's comment, "... like a dog walking upon its hind legs, the wonder is not that it is done well, but that it is done at all".

There are, of course, racing sidecars with specially built frames that become much more like three wheeled automobiles, designed specifically for these side loads, but that is not what most of us (EML drivers notwithstanding) operate on the streets.

My own experience from driving two different high-bodied "adventure" sidecar rigs is that up to about 50 mph, the combination is remarkably stable and a joy to experience. There is the relief, at my age, from any fear of falling over, slipping the front or rear wheel in a turn on uncertain surfaces, parking lot maneuvers, etc. Riding in late fall with leaf-covered roads, in winter with the prospect of ice, on back roads where gravel or sand can often be found in curves, all of these concerns are erased for the most part and one can just enjoy the motion and the scenery.



Lake Tahoe

Zion National Park



The new rig, in California,
on its way home

The rig is still all of these things as speeds rise, but then the feeling creeps up on the driver that the forces acting on the three wheels in asymmetrical contact with the road are not always in harmony.

At 65 or 70 mph in a straight line or in gentle bends, the rig feels perfectly comfortable, but I have the understanding that sudden evasive maneuvers can unsettle the beast and set it into motions that may be unpredictable for one such as me. In curves, as speeds rise, one must be always cognizant of the sharpness of the curve, the pitch of the road, whether the curve is ascending or descending and most importantly, is it a right or left on top of all those factors. In all motorcycle riding, we know we must look as far ahead as possible and anticipate conditions. The sidecar makes this doubly important and multiplies the cost of error.

The driver must always be aware of the effect of the sidecar. Power applied, whether by engine or gravity, will try to pivot the combination of bike and car one way or the other. When accelerating the car is a drag so the rig veers right. When decelerating, the car wants to keep going on (that whole Newtonian “a body in motion” bit), if it doesn’t have its own brake, and pulls the rig to the left. The first couple of hours driving a rig are a constant exercise in balancing these forces to keep the thing in a straight line. Soon though, it becomes second nature, receding into the background like all of those other details we had had to learn when first we started riding motorcycles. You learn to use these characteristics to ease your progress through turns, getting the thing oriented toward the desired direction by rolling on or off the throttle or applying a brake.

If the sidecar does have a brake, a lot depends on how the stopper is set up. I like

mine adjusted so that the sidecar wheel is braked just a little bit before the pedal actuates the motorcycle rear brake so I can use it to begin a pivot going into a right turn, setting up the orientation of the rig.

A sidecar rig has three “tip lines”, drawn between the axles of the three wheels forming a triangle. An excess of weight or force or both on the outside of any of those lines can cause the rig to pivot over the axis of that line. Underestimating the sharpness of a right hand turn at speed can result in the car rising and, if not rolling over, the rig with its steering now compromised, going inexorably into the oncoming lane. Overcook a downhill left and brake too hard, the rear wheel rises and the rig can tumble over the front. While not common, too much acceleration on a very powerful bike can cause the front wheel to rise, but instead of a typical wheelie, the rig now wants to pivot around the unpowered sidecar wheel and lurch to the right.

Riding the sidecar on curvy roads becomes a very different experience from the same on two wheels. When I was young on two wheels, the curves were the thing and I was focused only on them, the lean angle and the sensation of the flow, not so much the scenery around me. Now the rig makes me slow down and at its preferred pace, I can feel more, see more (though it can be unforgiving of a lapse of attention to its place on the road) and be more calm.

There are those who tout the speed potential of sidecars, some even saying that they can maintain as quick a back road pace on a rig as they once did on two wheels. (Remember, “The older I get, the faster I used to be”) Those boasts may be true in some isolated cases, but I think it seriously misses the point. Trying to get a rig into a significant speed on a

curvy road seems like teaching a hound dog to sing opera...an awful lot of effort for not much improvement in performance. Sidecars, in my opinion, are not for going fast on the streets and back roads. They are for enjoying the moment, the sensations only they offer including the calm for the driver, the amusement factor for everyone else, and the conversations they start at every encounter with the non-motorcycling public. (SDF, "Sidecar Delay Factor", is a real thing and must be planned into any time line for a trip, long or short.)

A listing of these quirks is not to discourage anyone from experiencing a sidecar. These are, in my experience, the reality of such an unusual device, but if we started listing the analogous characteristics of an automobile, a motorcycle, an airplane, etc, we would see that we take those things for granted because we are accustomed to them. The sidecar rig is different from our "normal" experience, so the new things it brings seem strange and off-putting at first. For me, the unusual nature of the thing is a large part of its charm.

Everyone seems to like the sidecar, though the big one doesn't seem to be as engaging as the little one was. I don't often see people on the streets pointing and smiling at trikes, they notice the Spyders, but I don't see the smile. A sidecar rig just touches something in most onlookers, some sort of nostalgia, I think. Nearly everyone who sees it going by will react positively, often with a wave. On a recent trip, a lady in an SUV, turning into a grocery store mall, gave Brenda an enthusiastic head-nodding grin and a thumbs up...then went in to get her family's groceries. I can't help but think she had a little moment of travel fantasy while pushing the cart.

And, should I feel the need for the groceries, the sidecar is the perfect vehicle for fetching

them home. There is the puzzled look on the face of the grocery checkout clerk when the guy in motorcycle clothes, carrying a helmet, leaves her cash register with ten brimming bags. (As I used to be amused by the confusion in the gas station clerk, back in those long-ago days when one had to actually go inside to pay for gas, as I would come in with my helmet and pay for the nearly 9 gallons I had put in the PD's large tank.) For all errand running, the sidecar rig becomes the preferred mode, leaving the four-wheeled vehicles languishing in the driveway. Sixty pounds of birdseed, a ten pound bag of dog food, a few bottles of wine and an eight foot piece of trim for the door...no problem.

I haven't touched upon the passenger's experience here, but I'm told by Brenda that it is now her preferred way to travel. Simon, our dog, doesn't seem to be all that interested, but those of you with receptive pets may find that they too want to go along for the ride.

The above is just a small taste of what I have found it is like to live with a sidecar rig. I recommend David Hough's comprehensive book, "Driving a Sidecar Motorcycle" and other instructional materials which can be downloaded for free from the United Sidecar Association website, sidecar.com, for more information.





Nice coordinated rig

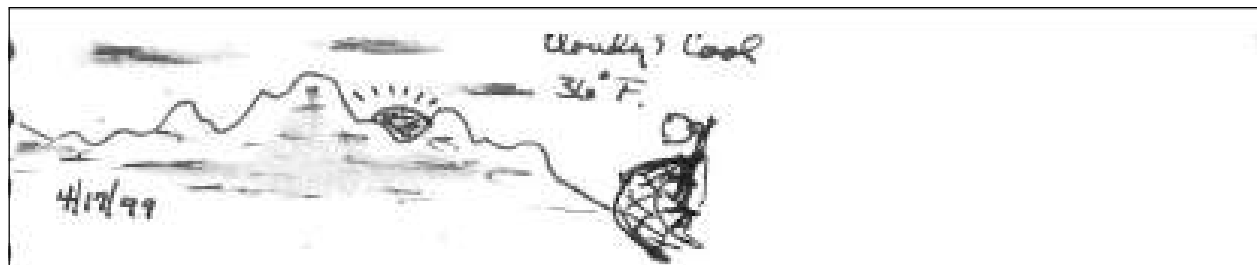


Some Cushman rigs are over-occupied

An English rig, Ariel Square Four
and, I think, a Watsonian car



What?



CHESTER AND JIM HEAD FOR THE RALLY,
WITH A PROMISE OF APRIL RAIN,
JOHN AND JAY ARE GOING THERE TOO,
SO I THINK I SHALL REFRAIN...



Here's the group for today:

- * 1). Jim Brandon
- * 2). Nulant Burton
- * 3). John Rice
- * 4). Larry Wilkerson (KIZOORS from Columbus)
- * 5). Dave McCard
- * 6). Boone Sutherland
- * 7). Wayne Schneidmeyer
- 8). Mike Gull
- 9). Tom Sutherland
- 10). Pete Gullikis
- 11). Chris Warner
- * 12). Chester Martin
- 13). Mary Beard
- 14). Charlie Norton
- 15). Phillip Baugh

Boone



1984 R80ST For Sale
Just over 35K miles

The tank has a dent on the right side
Bike was restored in 2011, but has
only been ridden a few hundred
miles since.

More pictures and information are
posted on our website.

Asking \$5200 or best reasonable of-
fer. Contact Jeff at
jdcraab@hotmail.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



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
Revolutionary Ride By Lois Pryce
How to Drive a Sidecar Rig by David Hough