

November 2020 *Apex*

Looking Through The Curve

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



John Rice traveling
with his F700GS



2007 Café Run pre-ride meet up in Winchester, KY

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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, 8-9:00 a.m.

**BMW Club
Bluegrass Beemers**



The GS

By John Rice

This is the 40th anniversary of the GS model for BMW, the motorcycle that saved the mar-
quee.

I have owned 8 GS BMW's, one of each iteration of the boxer GS series from the R80, except the 1150, up until the 1250 Wasser-Boxer which was a reach too far for my technology-impervious brain, two F650GS singles and now an 800cc water cooled twin that is called an F700GS for reasons known only in BMW headquarters. By a rough, conservative estimate, I've ridden about 190,000 miles on the GS genre.

The first one, a 1984 R80GS was acquired in the later 80's, perhaps around 88 or so, when we still lived in Lexington. I don't recall who I bought it from, but I was very glad to get it. Here was a lighter version of the boxer twin, with the single sided swing arm that was then an unusual innovation. Coming from an enduro/trials riding background, I loved the upright, dirt bike-like riding position, the flickable maneuverability of the thing. It just fit me.

One afternoon after work, I took it out for a short ride around Lexington. In a subdivision, I came around a corner a bit farther leaned over than I should have been when a car in front of me slammed on his brakes, apparently looking for an address. I braked, still heeled over, lost the front end and slid down, coming off the bike on my left shoulder....and watched the R80 bounce on its crash bar, stand back up

like a horse that had just shook off its rider, and meander slowly off the road where it laid down in a yard, undamaged but looking mildly offended, waiting for me to come over and get it.

I took my first track school, a Reg Pridmore session at Road Atlanta on that bike. Brenda and I rode it down to Flowery Branch, Georgia, checked in at a motel where I removed the bags but inexplicably left on the windshield, and went the next morning to the track. It was a revelatory experience, though I had been riding motorcycles for decades at that point, to take a few laps on the back of a K-bike with Jason Pridmore where I could learn what smooth really felt like. The R80GS acquitted itself admirably among the mostly sport bike crew that populated the class, sort of like a Labrador Retriever that has wandered into a Greyhound kennel, but is still having a great time.

While at the school, I took advantage of the opportunity to demo-ride an R100GS, then a new model, for a few laps of the course. It was shod with the Metzeler Sahara 3 semi-knobby tires that came stock on them at that time and I learned what it felt like to have the front tire "walk" sideways a bit when leaned over hard in a turn at speed. One of those experiences that is scary at first, then draws you in to feel it again, perhaps like a first ride on a roller coaster as a kid. I left the course with a serious case of bike lust for one of the new R100's, though the R80 was still perfectly ser-

viceable for just about anything I cared to do. But lust knoweth not logic. Within a few months I had ordered a new R100GS/PD from Wilbur's BMW in Linton, Indiana.

In my defense, there were some definite advantages, like the new tubeless "outside spoke" rims that eliminated the fear of flat tire changes on the side of the road, a larger seat platform for two-up riding, a bit more torque, and the 9.3 gallon fuel tank which, back then, I could exhaust before needing a stop for tree inspection. I must admit to enjoying the puzzled look on gas station clerks, in those days when we still had to go inside to pay, who saw

ter hands with my nephew Paul Rice. In the beginning, when I was younger, I used it on and off road, even some single track. I recall once ascending a long, steep, rutted powerline hill and being amazed at how well the big bike handled the climb....and then realizing that I had to get it back down again.

In the fall of 1998, Brenda and I made a visit to the new Ashland BMW dealership, which included a "motorcycle cafe". While perusing the various attractions offered, I happened upon a black R1100GS. The dealership owner came over and "made me an offer I couldn't refuse" for a trade in on my PD. I'm not



a guy on a motorcycle getting 8 or more gallons of fuel.

I liked the 1993 R100GSPD so much that I bought it twice. I put over 90,000 miles on it, with only a few glitches, and it is now in bet-

proud of the fact that I so easily was persuaded to give up on what had been one of my favorite motorcycles, seduced by the promise of technological advantages like ABS and fuel injection.

The R1100 GS was fast but vicious. It had the fuel injection glitch that kept it constantly hunting for an RPM to settle on at any steady throttle and frequently let it die at the just off idle position. This shattered my clavicle, the only broken bone I have sustained in a motorcycle accident, despite my numerous opportunities to do so, when it coughed and died as I was in a slow speed turnaround on a slope. But when it wasn't hunting for a mixture it liked, it was so good at speed and at turning and stopping that it constantly whispered in my ear urging me to do stupid things that my ego listened to and believed I was capable of making happen. I took it to a Pridmore school at Mid Ohio and felt what it was like to not get passed by so many of the sport bikes on the back straight and to have my foot trapped against the frame by the footpeg folded up tightly in the curves.

After the broken bone incident, the scales fell from my eyes and I realized that I had been happier with my steady partner, the PD. Like a penitent philanderer, I returned to the dealership and traded the 1100 in for my old PD, still there after a year of patiently waiting for me to come to my senses, and an R100R that needed to come into the deal to make it palatable to the dealer.

The PD became more of a "do everything" bike, taking my wife and I on long trips around the US and Canada and serving as a fine back road explorer on weekends. I took several more track schools on it where it performed admirably, probably much better than its rider.

But things do change, though lessons remain. In late 2009, I got an email from Jeff Cooke, the BMW dealer in Louisville, about a close out deal on an R1200GS, the last one of the old style remaining before the new

"camheads" came in. I emailed back a snarky "only if you're willing to take two old bikes in trade". Snark canceled by his reply, "Sure!" I traded in the R100R and a 1969 Triumph Daytona and went home with the R1200GS. No way was the PD going anywhere this time...at least not just yet. ((Many years later it got passed on to my nephew who is taking much better care of it than I ever did. The bike is, I'm sure, sighing with relief.)

The 2009 R1200GS... the one that got away. This bike was everything I could have dreamed of when I was a kid, noodling around on old used motorcycles that were always problematic in some fashion. This one handled superbly, had more power than I knew what to do with, started every time, stopped like running into a wall, and could carry anything my wife and I needed to go anywhere. Actually it was so competent, it didn't need us....if it had a credit card, it could have traveled on its own. We used it on many trips, including my 5 week solo retirement trip throughout the west and up into Canada. I sold it after that trip for reasons that now seem trivial, one of dozens of bikes that I wish I hadn't parted with.

At the MOA rally in St. Paul MN, I saw an F650 GS attached to a sidecar and fell hopelessly into bike lust again. Several months later, I made the deal with DMC Sidecars, flew out to Tacoma, WA and rode it home, learning how to drive the contraption on the way. The 650cc single was much stronger than I expected, apparently nearly indestructible and a world of fun to drive with its sidecar companion. This particular one was a "Bitsa", having been put together from two salvage bikes by DMC as a tug for a new model sidecar at the show and I later replaced that F650 with another, a year newer. The second one was just as impressive. On trips to the moun-

tains, with Brenda in the sidecar and all our stuff loaded into the trunk, the little rig always returned at least 50 mpg and, though requiring lower gears to make it up the steep hills, never really seemed too bothered. After decades of two-up adventures, Brenda loved the sidecar life and we decided that it would become our permanent way of traveling together into our later years. For that duty, perhaps something more sophisticated was going to be required. I started looking at DMC's website, saw the "Expedition" models mated to R1200GS's and the red mist descended over my eyes again. I bought a 2012 "Camhead" Rallye Edition GS from a friend and shipped it across

was still stout enough to feel confident with its weight and height, I would love to have one on two wheels. I bought it from fellow BB Ray Brooks and only had it unencumbered by sidecar duty for a few winter months before shipping it off for mating. In that time, though, I liked it a lot while realizing that the window for me to make full use of its immense capabilities had closed some time ago. For nearly 30,000 miles it has pulled its load without strain or complaint.

The F700GS. In 2014, I bought this one on the road, at Gina's BMW in Iowa City hundreds of miles from my home on a bike trip,



Current Rig

trading in an Airhead that had become frustratingly problematic. It was an impulse purchase that turned out extremely well. . Not as engaging, not the same kind of "fit" as my airheads (except for one) have been, but just too good a total combination to be replaced by anything I'm currently aware of. It is more like a very good tool, but not really a partner with an emotional attachment. It is light, handles very

the country to DMC, flying out a month later to drive it home.

The 2012 R1200GS, now "married with sidecar". Probably the best one yet, overall, if I was still young enough to make use of what it has to offer. Strong, but with still barely understandable technology I can live with. I can adjust the valves! (Or I can, should they ever actually need it done.) If only, in my 70's, I

well, has all the accoutrements I need for extended travel and so far has been extremely reliable, almost to the point of inviting neglect. I suspect it will turn out to be the last new motorcycle of my life.

If I could have a perfect GS today, it would be an airhead R 80 with tubeless wheels, twin front discs, ABS and the suspension from my F700. That would do it.

Cold, Frosty !
24° F.

11/4/25

HERE'S NOVEMBER, NOT FAR FROM SEPTEMBER
WHEN THE DAYS WERE STILL WARM AND GOLD,
WHEN THE ROADS WERE FRIENDLY RIBBONS,
WHEN SUMMER TALES HAD BEEN TOLD ... 🚲 🚲 .

Here is the group for today:

- * 1). Boone Sutherland
- * 2). Mike Dillense
- 3). Roy Rowlett
- 4). Chris Warner
- 5). Paul Wells & Suzanne
- 6). Mike Gregory
- * 7). John Rice
- * 8). Roberto Muñoz
- * 9). Mike Gill
- * 10). Phil Baugh
- 11). Bob Goss
- 12). Jeff Crabbe
- * 13). Dave Neal
- 14). Pete Galskis

Boone

For Sale

1998 R1100RT

86K+ miles, Givi top case, rear running lights, engine guards

Asking \$3,300

Contact Jeff @ 859-252-5497 or jdcraab@hotmail.com



1984 R80ST

35K+ miles

Asking \$5,200 or best reasonable offer

See more pictures and information on Bluegrass Beemers [website](http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org)



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