

April 2009

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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Dave McCord with world traveler/author Ted Simon who posed on Dave's Triumph T-100, much like the bike Simon rode for four years around the world.



# The ideal is imperfect, a comforting notion for a garage tinkerer

**A**s I inspect my work on the seat of the '79 RT, I consider the extreme contrast between my preoccupation and what must have been the focus for Ted Simon as he struggled once more to stand his Triumph Tiger up after having taken another spill in the deep sand of Africa.

The RT's seat had one small puncture in the rear hump near the rear of the cowl, so, I applied a drop of Permatex Vinyl Repair onto the hole, let it dry overnight, then sanded the repair which had become a mere pimple with 220 then 1500 grit paper until the repair was smooth and nearly undetectable (with eyes squinted). I then applied a bit of black dye to hide the slight grayness of the sanded area so that the repair blended in to the surrounding area. Hole filled and the repair flexible, I now could rest assured that the seat foam would be safe from the weather, as much as any 30-year-old seat can be.

I tell myself (Yes, I'm talking to myself) that the original cover deserved TLC out of respect for its many years of service. But after spending some time in a room with Ted Simon who rode around the world twice, I had to admit that the seat repair and much of everyday life for most of us is relatively inconsequential next to Simon's experiences.

Ted, engaged in the midst of a four-year odyssey around the world, which would translate to 76,000 miles or so on land, redefines the concept of "everyday." Ted considered 50 miles per day progress and to be riding at all a significant accomplishment.

As related in the presentation at Eastern Kentucky University on March 25, the Triumph according to Ted was fairly well the perfect machine for the trip, light at a hair over 300 pounds, simple, and much to the amazement of the audience who listened intently, fairly reliable, falling victim only once to a serious failure, having ingested too much sand into the engine.

Ted admitted to having some routine

struggles with electrical issues, but nothing that prevented him from continuing his journey.

In the comfort of looking back over 30 years, he said that the ideal motorcycle would not be perfect, in fact would require some tinkering, some rider involvement, adding to the adventure.

From today's perspective, that Triumph would have been adventure enough for us without the struggle through vast, primitive regions without any roadway whatsoever, without AAA or roadside assistance, among people, when there were people, who spoke no English and often were their own law.

That Triumph, dropped multiple times by Ted on some days, now exists as a testimonial to the inherently tough nature of the machine. Or was it the tough nature of the rider?

Tear in the seat? "No bother," I imagine Ted would say. "Let's take a closer look at the latest mechanical damage out here 100 miles from the last sight of humanity."

I guess the old RT can be considered some sort of ideal motorcycle, given Ted's perspective, although I don't know that it (Paul) will be able to travel around the world as did the Triumph Tiger.

Out of respect for Ted Simon, I'll try not to worry too much if the repaired seat tears in the heat of back road combat under my not-so-svelte figure. That failure pales next to Ted's tool bag catching on fire from resting on the exhaust headpipe, dumping his tools on the road at night.

A world traveler this RT may not be, not that the machine's nature prohibits world travel. After all, as reported in the May issue of *Motorcyclist*, 55-year-old Austrian policeman Theo Kelz in 2000 toured around the world on his 1977 R100RS to celebrate his successful double hand transplant after having had both hands blown off six years earlier while trying to defuse a bomb.



**Repaired seat, primed cowl and tank** await further tinkering, while engine rests resealed and refinished. Not the stuff of adventure, but given the less-than-ideal state of my work, perhaps the imperfect is ideal. Thank you, Ted, for the insight.

Siberian roads broke the frame of the heavily-laden RS, but Theo claimed his hands never hurt once.

Although I'm a youngster next to Ted who set off on his second world tour at the age of 69 or 70, I somehow don't see myself loading up the F800S for a world tour, much less the RT.

Studying the green and rusty RT pannier mounts, I look for the 2000 grit sandpaper to clean them up, and recall Simon deciding mid-tour to apply green tape to the chrome on his Triumph so he would be less conspicuous among the Arabs.

The thing about Ted and Theo, people who accomplish amazing feats against tremendous odds, is that they redefine for the rest of us what may be considered a challenge.

So, what does one hold onto through these musings? That some people live larger than others, that everyday life for most of us generally doesn't take place *years* from home on a motorcycle, alone and with body parts having been *reattached*, and that people can become exceptional when they set their minds to doing what they feel compelled to do.

I feel compelled right now to have a cup of tea and ponder my attempt to address the next cosmetic or mechanical challenge on the RT, comforted by the notion that imperfection will do just fine.



# President's Ponderings 08APR09 (Ponderings from the President??)

By President Steve Little

**N**ow that I have had ample time to get my administration in place, and compile the beginnings of a "watch list"—Hubert, I haven't forgotten that comment during my acceptance speech—I thought it would be prudent to send out a quick message to the group, some ponderings, if you will.

(Well, that and the fact that Paul Elwyn gave me a gentle nudge to do so as well.) I would like to try and make these ponderings a monthly occurrence, trying to recap the previous month's assumedly monumental events, as well as adding some thoughts and such relevant to the goings on at any particular time of the year. With that, here is the first of what I hope to be many more ponderings to come.

One would almost think that the riding season is again upon us in this first week of April, were it not for the snow showers that fell on 07APR09... (Yes, I know for some of us there is no season that is not good for riding!!)

None the less, I think it is safe to say that the season is just around the corner, so we should all prepare accordingly. With that, take a quick inventory of your machine(s) and make sure everything is up to snuff, in particular those tires that have been aging and loosing pressure, regardless of your riding or not. Perhaps take the opportunity of some intermittently nice weather for a short shake-down cruise, and go ahead and

swap the fluids out for your machine if you neglected to do so at the end of last season.

And, above all, watch out for the drivers out there that have forgotten motorcycles exist over the winter, because I can assure you they are NOT watching out for you.

Whilst some of us do not follow a typical riding season, there is no choice but to recognize that there is clearly a rally season. Like a lot of you, I am putting dates on the calendar and looking forward to those tried and true rallies, the friends we'll start seeing again, and riding mixed in between.

On that note, given that the MOA national rally is in such close proximity, I have been thinking that it might be a good idea to erect some sort of identifying marker for the club such that folks could gather together and camp, or just visit during the rally. I mentioned the idea of a flag on Saturday, 04APR09, at breakfast to some folks, which is about all I could come up with that would be small enough to carry on a motorcycle, and still have the ability to be displayed in a manner that folks could see it.

I would like to get any suggestions that folks might have, and also feedback on whether this is even a good idea or not.

Speaking of Saturdays, 04APR09 was also the day we welcomed our world traveler John Rice back unscathed from New Zealand. Glad to have you back across the table John, and I'm especially glad you and Brenda made it back without major issue.

If you have not spoken to John or Lowell Roark yet about their adventures in New Zealand, I strongly suggest you do



so; it truly sounds like a rider's paradise. (Just as an FYI for those that don't know, Lowell made the journey across the pond a couple of years ago.)

In closing, I would again like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to represent the club as the current President.

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# Jupiter lands in Richmond

By James Street

**Jupiter landed in Richmond** on March 25 for an evening of film and discussion about round the world adventures and experiences.

Ted Simon, author of *Jupiter's Travels*, *Dreaming of Jupiter*, and other musings about travel and politics showed two films that chronicled his travels from England through Africa on two round-the-world trips that were separated by almost thirty years.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Ted or his work, he rode a Triumph T-100 motorcycle around the world in 1973 and penned the experience into a worldwide best-selling book entitled *Jupiter's Travels*, then did the route again in 2001 at the age of 70 on a BMW R80GS and produced a complimentary volume called *Dreaming of Jupiter*. While both works are travelogues, Ted goes far beyond just capturing the images of place as he rides through.

*Jupiter's Travels* reveals a world not yet twisted by globalization and global communication, and *Dreaming of Jupiter* is an insightful look at how those phenomena have changed everything-sometimes not for the better.

Ted was bequeathed the moniker "Jupiter" by a high priest in India on the first round, and the nom de plume has stuck with him for nearly four decades. The films shown by Mr. Simon are intrigu-



**Bluegrass Beemers member James Street** arranged the Ted Simon event held March 25 at Eastern Kentucky University where Simon entertained the audience with slideshows of his travels, answered questions, and autographed copies of his books. Simon sits aboard the Triumph T-100 owned by Bluegrass Beemer member Dave McCord.



**Ted Simon autographs a book** for Bluegrass Beemer member Marrea Mathews at the March 25 event held at ECU.

ing, interesting and insightful, and they follow the first legs of his two adventures as written in the Jupiter series.

His recorded narration includes sounds recorded on the first trip that heretofore have not been public. Bluegrass Beemers in attendance were among the first to hear and see this new pres-

entation which Ted distilled from earlier slide shows and lectures.

Ted spoke from 7:30 until 10:00 in the evening and held everybody's rapt attention (pardon the cliché, but he really did have everyone's focused interest) until the end when his obligations forced him to leave.

To say that Ted Simon is the father of adventure motorcycling is not a terrible exaggeration, but Ted proved to be a very friendly, humble and accommodating guy. Before, during and after the films he spent a good bit of time talking individually with members of the audience, and he signed books that were sold during the evening. Most members of the audience walked out with more than one autographed volume.

Another treat for the evening surrounded

*Jupiter* continued on page 4



## Jupiter lands in Richmond continued from page 3

a surprise that one of the Bluegrass Beemers had for Ted: Dave McCord brought his beautifully restored Triumph T100 as a backdrop for the presentation, and Ted signed the gas tank at Dave's request.

Simon commented, when questioned about the differences between the bike he rode around the world and Dave's, that, "Other than the seat, which on mine was a police model, I'd be hard pressed to tell any difference."

Ted did comment that contrary to popular belief about the unreliability of Triumph, his functioned beautifully and served him reliably. Both trips were temporarily interrupted by mechanical issues, and the resourcefulness exhibited by both Ted and the folks who helped him along the way are interesting subplots in both

Jupiter books.

What Ted didn't talk about was his life before his first round-the-world trip, and Ted would have been considered very successful had his journalistic career ended when he left England in 1973 on the first trip. Early in his writing career Ted founded a magazine for England's Royal Air Force called "Scramble," and his writing on that publication caught the attention of the "Daily Express." Ted then transitioned to civilian life and spent ten years as a writing for the "Express and other publications on Fleet Street in London. He then left the employ of Fleet Street's publications and founded a men's magazine entitled "King" which lasted for three years.

Following that, he freelanced for several years while living in France, and he then

penned an account of the 1970 Formula One season in a book entitled *The Chequered Year*. This has become something of a collector item that now fetches something in the neighborhood of \$200 for a used copy on Amazon.

For the 35 or so folks in attendance the evening with Ted Simon couldn't have been better, and everyone seemed to leave with their own dreams of re-creating some version of Jupiter's travels.

Even though the weather was non cooperative and poured the cold gray dismal mist that's usually served up in Sherlock Holmes' novels, there were several bikes ridden from an appreciable distance.

All in all, it was a great evening for everyone.

# DOT Approved birdhouses made easy

By John Rice

**I** saw in a magazine once a photo showing a bird that had built a nest in a guy's helmet in his garage.

My first thought, of course, was that the guy really isn't riding enough ! But my second thought was that it made a perfect birdhouse. It's weatherproof, insulated, cat

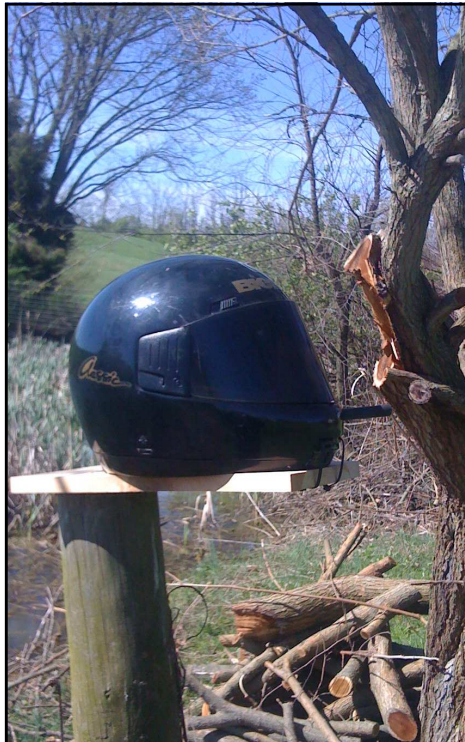
-impervious and easy to clean out at the end of a season (just raise the faceshield, or for the System Two, the whole mandible.)

The process was very simple, just fastening the helmet to a board with cable ties, painting the face shield for bird privacy, and drilling a hole for a perch (a bolt with the threads covered by fuel line.)

To me, it beats just throwing them out

when they're past their use-by date. The black helmet is Heather's, donated to the cause, and the white System 2 is mine.

I could use three more if anyone has an old one gathering dust in the garage.







**Bluegrass Beemers** members Lowell Roark (left) and Ron Blackburn were among the BMW riders attending.



## Kickstand's 3rd Polar Bear Run draws largest crowd

Over 200 riders enjoyed friendly weather and good company at the Polar Bear Run sponsored by The Kickstand in Burgin on March 7th.

With freezing rain and 15 degree temperature on February 28, the third annual Polar Bear Run was postponed for one week for a spectacular 72-degree weather gift for riders.

The 85-mile run drew riders of motorcycles from all segments of the sport.

The ride ended in Harrodsburg at the Olde Bus Station, a new motorcycle-friendly restaurant featuring outdoor dining space and a special welcome for riders. The Olde Bus Station sponsors Bike Day from 2-6 p.m. on the second Saturday of

each month.

Bluegrass Beemers member Lynn Montgomery of The Kickstand said, "The Olde



Bus Station provided a perfect place for riders to congregate following the ride."

"We organized the Polar Bear Run into two groups, and, as far as we know, everybody had a great time and made it home safely. We enjoyed seeing everyone and look forward to next year's Polar Bear Run," said Lynn.

The next event for The Kickstand will take place May 15-17 at the European Riders Rally in Burkesville sponsored by the BMW Motorcycle Club of Nashville.

The Kickstand's recently-completed Rally Van featuring nitrogen supply as well as a wide range of products for rally attendees will be at this year's rally.





## 'Lectric Leg Assist' on the way from TOURATECH ???

**Serious Business** takes place in the Frisch's parking lot on Harrodsburg Road in Lexington every Saturday morning.

Dr. Joe Bark (left) provides insights into the world of TOURATECH bolted to his R1200GS Adventure. Note Roy Rowlett (third from left) with jaw agape as he studies the collection of gear appended to the GS.

Joe's only regret is that an "lectric leg assist" has not yet been offered to enable more graceful mounting of the imposing GS. We fully anticipate that product on Joe's GS within the year.

The "Bluegrass Beemers Parking Only" sign (below) finally has been installed following intense negotiations with Frisch's Corp.





## Ray Brooks retires, plans to do more riding

On April 11th, Ray Brooks for the first time rode his new R1200GS to Bluegrass Beemers breakfast as a retiree.

Not since he was 14 years old has he been without a job. The Thursday prior to Saturday breakfast was his last day as Secretary-Treasurer for the W. Rogers Company, a position he held for the past 24 years. W. Rogers Company is a regional municipal utilities construction company specializing in the water and wastewater treatment plant industry.

Ray says, "I joined Bluegrass Beemers four or five years ago and very much enjoy the fellowship and tremendous knowledge and experience of the members.

"I have owned four BMW's, an F650GS, an R1150RTP that I rode home from Florida, a K1200LT and an R1200GS. I currently have the latter two. At one time I

also had a Honda 1100 Shadow and a Triumph Bonneville.

"I was a late starter as a rider. I never sat on a bike until I was 60. For my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday I gave myself the MSF Basic training course to see if it were something I wanted to pursue. I immediately fell in love. The next year I took the MSF experienced rider course.

"To me, riding my motorcycle is pure enjoyment. Now that I am retired, I plan to ride much more. I hope to go on rides with other BGB riders as well," said Ray.

As the broad smile in the photo suggests, Ray looks forward to more time for motorcycling travel and family with his wife of 45 years, Linda. They have two daughters, three grandsons and one granddaughter.

Travel plans for Ray and Linda include a trip aboard their BMW K1200LT to the Curve Cowboy Reunion rally in Rapid



**Ray Brooks, two days retired.**

City, SD, sponsored by the BMW Luxury Touring Community.

Congratulations, Ray!

## Just another laid back Saturday morning at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Road



**Why don't you GET OUT OF BED ON SATURDAY MORNING AND JOIN US FOR BREAKFAST at 7 a.m.** You can catch a nap later in the day if necessary. Some day when you're flat on your back with family hovering around you, you'll wish you had made a few more Saturday breakfasts when you were able. **And while you're at it, ensure another Apex by sending Apex photos and articles to paul.elwyn@gmail.com. You can do this. Carry a camera. Think about sharing motorcycle stuff with friends. Reflect. Ponder, as Steve does. Pass along wisdom...or lack of wisdom. Spread the word. Leave a mark. Make fun.**