

August 2009

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky
MOA #146 RA #4-49 <http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>

Dusk among thousands
of campers at the 37th
BMWMOA
International Rally
in Johnson City, TN,
July 16th, 2009, hours
before the rain resumed.

It's ALIVE!

At 1:20 p.m. on July 21st, I pulled the plugs out of the RT, gave each cylinder a ceremonial squirt of oil, turned on the ignition and pushed the starter button to spin the engine for the first time in 10 months until the oil pressure light extinguished.

I then reinstalled the plugs, and the big twin fired on the first revolution, settling into a fast idle. After 30 seconds with no strange noises, I quickly synched the carbs, mounted and pulled out into the sunlight to do a few laps around the subdivision to check system functions.

The new clutch engaged smoothly and progressively. The fresh transmission shifted quietly without clunks up and down. The new rear drive with its 3:36 ratio felt good and did its thing quietly. (Thank you, Roy for the tranny and rear drive work.)

After a six-mile run, I returned to the garage to see if anything was missing and to check oil seals.

I mention these points because I really don't consider myself a mechanic. I'm at best an assembler of major parts whose more technical innards have been assembled by someone who really knows what they're doing.

So I was elated to find that the engine ran at all, that the oil seals were sealing, that bearings were quiet, turn signals signaled, etc. What really impressed me, however, was how smooth the old engine is and how nicely the transmission shifts.

From having ridden about

200,000 miles on Airheads, I know they are a pleasure to ride, but I wasn't at all sure that what has occupied my time since December actually would be a good Airhead. And it may be too early to declare that it is, in fact, good.

As with any project, several bugs need to be sorted.

- For some reason still unresolved by me after several hours of fiddling, the headlight comes on with the parking light first click of the ignition switch instead of with the second position, and the tail and brake lights do not yet work.
- A-ha! Wrong headlight relay.
- On the second day of life, the old ignition switch ate the key, a terminal move.
- Valve cover and driveshaft oil weeps have been corrected, but
- One pushrod seal weeps. It will swell up and stop leaking after a long ride, right?
- Too much spring preload on the front suspension required removal of too-long spacers.

So, I wait for a new (used) ignition switch and a working clock to replace the one I stomped to death in the driveway. (Long story.)

Having announced the "birth" to local riding buddies, I have an invitation to a high-speed run to New York state and back, which may be a little optimistic a consideration at this point.

At least the basics are in hand. I think.

—Paul Elwyn



Bluegrass Chapter of AMCA to meet

Anyone interested in old bikes is encouraged to attend the August 15th meeting of the Bluegrass Chapter of the Antique Motorcycle Club of America (AMCA) to be held at the Kickstand in Burgin. For further information, contact Ray Montgomery (hesontheroad@gmail.com) or Bluegrass AMCA President Brian Groff at Brian_groff@msn.com.

Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.
Lexington, Kentucky MOA #146 RA #4-49

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Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month.
Back issues of Apex can be accessed at
<http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>

AMA Vintage Days, 2009



Left: Bluegrass Beemers President Steve Little safety wires the R75 prior to the first practice run on Friday.



Track photos are a reach for my camera, but these images are taken from the approach to the start/finish line.

AMA Vintage Days, 2009



AMA Vintage Days, 2009



Vintage Days



Vintage Days



Vintage Days



This infield space in previous years would be packed with motorcycles. We estimated about half the crowd, including racers, although the flea market appeared to be as large as usual, if not as populated with people.



Ducks Delux

By James Street

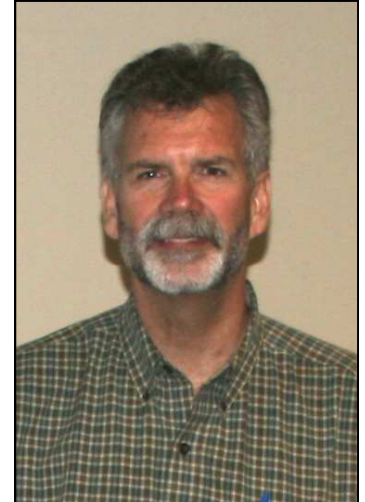
“Just use one finger on the front brake, man. Be careful.”

I'm about to mount one of the fastest street bikes on the planet and there's no admonishment about a quick roll-on of the throttle jumping the front wheel up like a pubescent teenager willie the instant the Playboy centerfold pops out, nothing said about the top speed it'll reach in a few seconds blurring the white highway center line stripes into one single smeared line, and nothing about the front wheel turning on simply a thought with no perceptible handlebar input.

Nothing.

I got a chance to ride a friend's 1098 Ducati the other day and I've known on some intellectual level what fast is, but I don't really think any experience I've had in my riding resume is quite the same.

Fast is riding an old T-150 race bike down a cobbled lane and passing a horse drawn hay wagon at over a hundred. Fast is splitting lanes going into Amsterdam doing 80 miles per hour and being so unsettled by it that bile comes into your mouth and you finally have to let the idiot you're riding with go on so you don't puke in your new Bell Star. And Fast is riding the Hyabusa down the two lane road with the speedometer flying past 160 the last time you spared the second to look at it before fear and a modicum of common sense and self pres-



ervation kicked in and you rolled the throttle back down.

But Fast in the Past didn't compare to the acceleration the Ducati was capable of. Why Marion let me ride his bike is beyond me but I'm eternally grateful.

The last time he let a friend borrow his bike, a group of his buddies and he had been drinking a few beers and Marion finally submitted and let his recent acquaintance take his almost new CBR1000RR for a



Ducks Delux

little spin during which the friend thought it would be amusing to outrun the policeman who found the friend's 75 mph speed in a residential neighborhood a bit excessive.

The friend, unaware of the stop sign at the terminous of a tee intersection that had on the far side of it a thirty foot drop-off into a creek, managed to catapult the CBR through the stop sign and through the air into the creek below.

Never mind the multiple injuries the friend suffered, the CBR was totaled.

Which brings me back to why Marion let me ride his bike... as I said before, I don't know why but I'm grateful.

After exchanging bikes, he would be riding a 37-year-old antique that I've had nearly a lifetime, we took off down a lane and a half country road replete with loose gravel, potholes, uneven paving of multiple hues of gray and black, and no shoulders.

The Ducati was not happy. Nor was the rider.

For those readers accustomed to the proverbial "monkey humping a football" (pardon the cliché) riding position that produces palm callouses like a hod carrier and forearms like Popeye, the Ducati may make a perfectly wonderful county road explorer.

Not having any of these attributes, I didn't find slow cruising very pleasurable and, as a matter of fact, may have spent more time than at any other point in my life lustfully dreaming of a Harley Davidson.

The driveline has an epileptic seizure chatter if the RPM's slip below two grand, and it just

doesn't feel right revving the engine much above three thousand to go thirty or forty miles per hour, so I spent most of the time running through the gear-box like it was a 50cc tiddler rather than the superbike inspired racer that it is.

Don't get me wrong, it would have miserably chunked along all day at 45, but riding it like that is sort of like taking Cindy Crawford (she still looks pretty damned good at 43, doesn't she?) to an ice cream social when you could have gone to Burning Man.

Then we turned onto a Two Lane Highway, or nirvana, or Woody Allen's orgasmatron. With smooth pavement and winding road the Ducati turns into everything you've dreamed of and some things you've not. It's capable of making a mar-

I kept thinking of the appropriate metaphor to explain what riding something with this kind of performance compares to, and my miserably weak repertoire hasn't produced anything remotely brilliant.

I will say that it is reminiscent of handling a deadly poisonous snake: it gets the attention of everyone, those who are into snake handling are generally respectful, it's thrilling to the handler, and a screw up will get you killed.

Anyway, good pavement allows the Duck to be released into its element. I'm certain that hard roll-ons will launch the aforementioned front wheel skyward in at least three gears as quickly as the aforementioned teenage libido responds to porn. It turns in quickly and with an impressive level of



ginal rider like me look very good if it's ridden with some sanity, but I have the feeling it won't suffer fools.

stability. Riding over a mid-turn whoop-de-do that will turn most bikes into tank slapping ill handling beasts just falls behind

Ducks Delux



the Ducati with no drama whatsoever.

I've ridden three Ducati's—a 900SS, a 916 and this one—and one of my shopworn tricks is to outrun the owner who is riding some relic of the past from my stable, get far enough ahead so the Duck's hapless owner doesn't see me pull off the road far enough to be hidden, and then pull out behind them and roar past in third gear at about a buck-ten.

Never fails to impress the owner, or me for that matter, and this was no exception. I think the guy in the Nissan Altima was impressed as well, as was the nice policeman that the Alitma guy called.

Just kidding about the policeman.

I had on a half helmet and sunglasses and the roar going past my ears at over a hundred was like standing in the exhaust

of a 767. I won't make that mistake again.

What'd you say?

About the brake: it is sensitive. The T-150 race bike I mentioned earlier had a huge Fontana drum brake and the owner of it had the same advice. In an English accent he said, "Don't use the front brake below 50; it'll get you killed." He was right, as they had the actuating cams eccentrically ground to allow very little handlebar pressure place immense force on the shoes thus locking the front wheel at low speeds.

The Duck's front brake hydraulics are similarly efficient. Brembo had done an impressive job of creating a front brake that will haul it down from unbelievable speeds in a similarly unbelievable rate of deceleration with very little force on the lever.

Getting this far along in a piece about a bike as visually

stunning as the 1098 without waxing on about its beauty is unusual, but the motorcycle mags have dissected the architectural aesthetics of the bike ad infinitum.

It is beautiful.

Period.

But all Ducatis, save a couple, have been beautiful, and the 1098 really doesn't break any new ground with the look of the 1098.

It has that insect-like proportion of headlight/head, tank/thorax, and seat and tail section/abdomen of a very potent wasp.

The example I rode was yellow and they really shouldn't be made in any color besides red (Mario Andretti said Mark Donohue never won anything in the Ferrari because he painted it blue—you have to be over 40 to know either of these racing legends), but the yellow is nice if there has to be some other color to let weird folks have some form of self-expression (sorry, Marion).

I loved the Ducati. I hope I get another chance to ride it.

I hope my wife buys me one for Christmas.

I hope the Bluegrass Beemers get such joy out of reading this article that they go together and buy me one.

Most of all, I hope Marion doesn't beat me up when he reads this.

**I hope the
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URSA Major: *Sharing the trail*

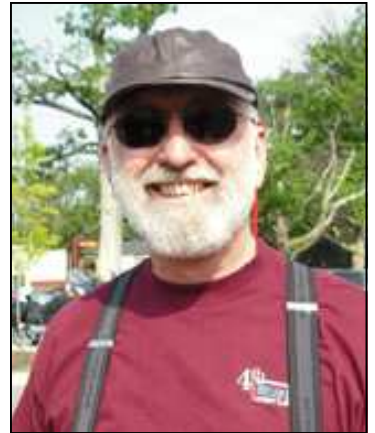
Editor's Note:
URSA Major is a constellation known as "The Great Bear."

By John Rice

On top of Pine Mountain near Whitesburg Kentucky is the Little Shepard Trail, (<http://www.kingdomcome.org/maps/tours/pmrar-hi-fi.jpg>) a 38-mile crooked "road" made from

a hiking path along the top of the mountain range.

About 20 miles of it is paved, though still difficult for most ordinary vehicles due to the ascending and descending switchbacks that would have typical four-wheeled



transport dangling a wheel or two to get around the curvature.

On the way home from the MOA rally in Johnson City, I detoured back up to the top of Pine Mountain on Rt. 119 to take the trail because I'd promised myself on several other occasions to do it "next time I'm down here".

Although it was a sunny summer Sunday, there were no other humans on the trail, something I found both refreshing and appalling.

The views from the top are amazing, stretching at least 50 miles north across the valleys and over to the next range of hills nestling in this mountain's shadow.

I potted along the paved path on the 93 R100 GS/PD, a bike well suited to this environment (but a 250 would have been even better !) working my way around the curves and ducking the overhanging branches. I stopped at a few of the overlooks to stand on the edge of the precipice, something some of us never outgrow.

At one point a wild turkey strolled across the path in front of me, taking flight only at the last possible moment.

**I knew I couldn't
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for longer than it
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to get to me.**

A large deer stood and watched me approach, then bolted into the forest, iconic white tail raised high. I wondered where all the hikers and bicyclists that should be enjoying this view with me had gone to.

Then, looking through the leaves to the next turn ahead of me, I saw what I took to be a hiker's large black dog standing on the surface, looking back at me. I slowed to a crawl, not wanting to scare the dog or its owner.

Then the mother bear stepped onto the path to stand beside her cub.

I stopped, then began backpedaling the PD (not a simple task, usually, but surprisingly easy with the right incentive) so that mama would see me retreating in her field of view.

She looked at me, back at her cub, then raised up slightly on her back paws, stamped her front feet back on the ground and made a "woof" sound, not a bark but more of an exhalation that said "I don't think you really want to mess with us over here". Not a terribly articulate sound, but very effective communication.

I knew I couldn't turn the bike around on this narrow trail, which was barely as wide as the bike was long, without being in a position of sitting duck for longer than it would take her to get to me.

She took a sort of step toward me, more like moving her front feet forward without shifting the back.

She was telling me, as near as I could make out, that she didn't really want a confrontation, but if I had any notion of harming this cub I should weigh the potential costs quite carefully. Message received, Ma'm.

I continued backpedaling slowly. She looked at the cub and back at me. The cub, a long-legged skinny thing that did resemble a large dog as much as a bear, watched me with more curiosity than apprehension. Typical adolescent, he felt no particular fear, with mom there by his side, and instead was up for the adventure of this new thing in his world.

Great, I thought, that's all I need now is for him to start this way to see just what motorcycles are like up close.

People have been telling me for nearly half a century now

that I was "going to get killed on that motorcycle", but I doubt that this was exactly what they had in mind.

I had visions of park rangers later finding a young bear wearing a red Darien jacket and a helmet, using my pocketknife to pick shards of plastic fenders from his back teeth.

Finally, after what seemed like forever, Mama gave me one last warning look, "woofed" again and herded her curious cub off into the bushes. I sat there for a few moments to give them time to get where they were going, then started forward slowly, but accelerated hard when I got near the spot they'd vacated. If she was going to catch me now, she was going to have to work at it. I was going to be fast food, in the literal sense. I was a ways down the trail before I slowed down to catch my breath.

I've always loved trail riding alone and the wildlife is an added bonus...but I much prefer the vegetarians when it comes to sharing the trail.



Images from the 37th BMWMOA International Rally

The photo to the right from the 2009 BMWMOA International Rally could be an image from 25 years ago with retired dealer and Airhead expert Joe Katz of Florida sitting comfortably in a stuffed chair studying the 1982 R100RS undergoing service as centerpiece at the AIRHEADS hospitality tent.

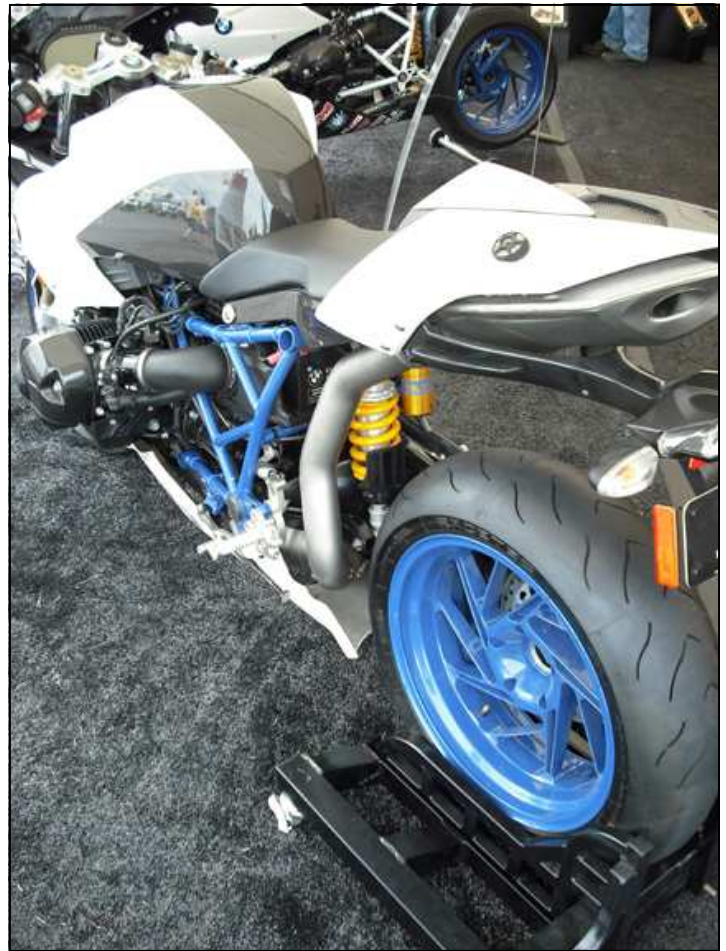
This year's rally drew possibly the largest ever crowd of BMW enthusiasts. Beyond the large attendance and the surface of the latest bikes and vendor offerings, however, the rally was very much the same as MOA rallies always have been, which isn't a bad thing in this rapidly changing world.



Images from the 37th BMWMOA International Rally



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Saturday at Frisch's

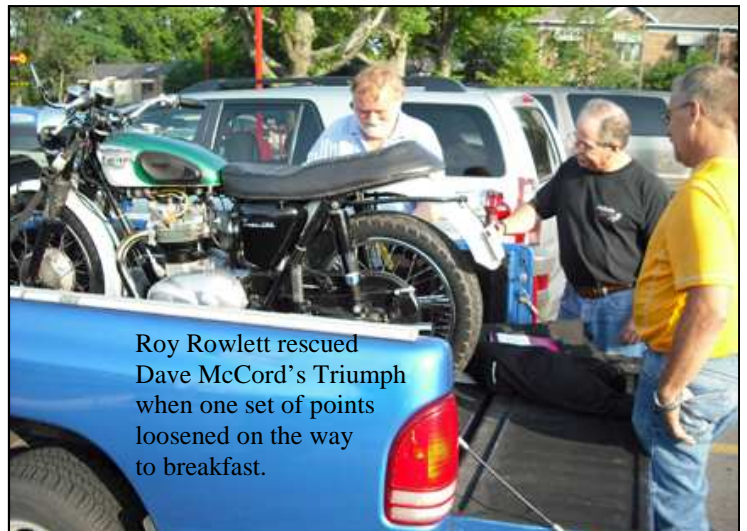
Cost-effective modifications department



Bruce Hutcheson, owner of this clean 1984 Honda Sabre, found these top-loading weatherproof gear boxes for \$19 at Gander Mountain and used Super-Fat straps from Wal-Mart to hold them to mounts he fabricated from square tubing bought at Home Depot. Bruce then added rear LED brake lights and driving lights up front from AutoZone.



James Steet's
new WR250R
Yamaha



Roy Rowlett rescued
Dave McCord's Triumph
when one set of points
loosened on the way
to breakfast.

Saturday at Frisch's



Lee Jarrard's new Ducati 1000S is a knockout! Check the Ohlins suspension. Now, if Lee can figure out how to pack this thing for a cross-country trip.....



Saturday at Frisch's



Paul Huber, 2008 998 Monster S4RS; John Harder, 1996 BMW R1100RT; David Howard, 1983 BMW R80RT



Above: Shock & Awe! In the company of the latest from Ducati, riders stand in stunned silence.

Left: July 11th was Kelly Ramsey's first ride since January when he broke his leg while trimming fallen tree limbs from the ice storm. With a collapsible cane to assist while walking, Kelly managed to ride to Johnson City for the 37th MOA International Rally. He said the ride made his leg feel better.

John Rice examines the amazing image depicting the exotic hardware in Kelly's leg while Jim Brandon watches Kelly limp around the bike.

Looking for cover

Insurance..

Can't find much to like about it, but you've gotta have it.

I've been representing people who have been involved in accidents ("personal injury work") for a long time now and I have learned very few people (including some insurance agents and attorneys) understand what they need or even what they've got.

Here's the bottom line: you need enough insurance to protect what you've got to lose.

I've had on many occasions the very unpleasant task of sitting across from a client and telling them that the person who injured them didn't have enough to cover their losses or that they don't have enough coverage to handle the claim being made against them.

The most common answer to "what coverage do you have?" is "I'm OK, I've got full coverage". However that's just a general description. It's like someone telling you "I've got a motorcycle"...but you still don't know if it's a Harley, a Honda, a sportbike, dirtbike, etc. Full coverage just means you have most, if not all, of the major coverage categories offered to you. Everything depends on the details.

You need:

Liability:

Enough so that the person you injure in an accident takes your insurance money and doesn't come after you. If you are "judgment proof", for example have no regular job, no career, no assets, then you may be able to get away with the Kentucky required minimum of \$25,000 per person, \$50,000 per accident. Even then, you're betting

that bankruptcy will save you from a judgment that could follow you for 15 years or more.

If you don't fit that category, then raise your limits to what you feel keeps you safe from a judgment that could attach your house, your vehicles and your paycheck. I usually recommend 100/300 (that means \$100,000 per person and \$300,000 total per accident) as about the least a person of average means should have.

You'll be surprised just how little that raises your premium over the minimum. If you have more to protect, get your limits up higher and consider a personal umbrella policy to raise it to one million. That is a policy that starts where all of your others leave off and usually costs somewhere around \$250 to \$600 per year, depending on your record and your company.

Property damage:

That's the amount that covers the vehicle or other personal property belonging to someone else that you damage. The state required minimum in Kentucky is \$10,000 and it doesn't take much looking around the average parking lot to see that most of the vehicles, two and four wheeled, would cost more than that to replace. With the higher liability limits above, the property damage limits will be higher.

Again, the idea is to have enough insurance so that the person harmed does not have to come after your personal assets to be made whole.

Collision:

That's the coverage that lets your company pay for fixing your bike or car. It can apply regardless of whether you or the other person is at fault.

Un-insured Motorist:

This one usually gets an argument. Why, people say, should I have to buy coverage to cover what somebody else doesn't have? Aren't they supposed to be insured? Yes, but the simple fact is that a lot of them aren't. If you're on your bike and an uninsured car wipes you out, you're SOL (that's Sure Out of Luck for the politically correct among us). If you don't have PIP coverage of your own and un-insured coverage, your medical bills, lost wages and pain & suffering are going to be uncompensated.

Under-insured Motorist:

This means that if the guy who injures you has less coverage than it takes to compensate you for your damages, your own company steps up and covers you for the difference, up to the limits you've purchased if necessary. It typically does not cover property damage to your vehicle.

Un and Under-insured coverage:

You should buy as much as you feel comfortable with. As a rule of thumb, for under-insured, count on the other guy having no more than \$25,000 and for Un-insured, of course, figure on him having nothing.

Personal Injury Protection

("No-Fault" or "Basic Reparation Benefits") This subject is of vital importance to motorcyclists in Kentucky because of a peculiar quirk in the Kentucky Motor Vehicle Reparations Act, KRS 304.39 et seq. as it applies to bikes. The subject can't be covered completely in the space allotted here (there's an article

about it on my website, www.johnricelaw.com) but remember this. You must either purchase Personal Injury Protection (not "pedestrian injury protection"...that's something different) coverage as a separate line item on your policy with a separate premium or you must complete the form to reject it for motorcycles only. If you don't do one or the other, you can have a \$10,000 setoff in what you can recover from the person who injures you in an accident on your bike.

The above is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of a very complicated subject. There are many large volumes of lawbooks dedicated to insurance coverage and its many confusing subtexts. This is only a brief overview, designed to get you thinking about a topic you don't want to have to think about, but must.

All of these recommendations will raise your premium, but probably not as much as you think. Remember that the purpose of insurance is to protect you, not to be as cheap as possible. (You can buy the cheapest tire on the market for your bike, but when your life depends on a contact patch of rubber about the size of two quarters touching the pavement, saving the most money might not be such a good idea.) Like any protection equipment, it bites somewhat to pay for it while hoping you never use it. But when you do have to use it, you really don't want it to be almost good enough.

John G. Rice
www.johnricelaw.com

Another chapter in the life of a Beemer

By John Rice

**I recall sliding
on my back,
like an
Olympian
luge, watching
the RT on its
side sliding
in front of me.**

Not "the rest of the story", but as is common with old Beemers, just another chapter.

The RT that Paul now has was purchased, used, in the early 80's by Chester Martin who rode the bike for several years. Somewhere about 1986 I bought it from Chester as a companion to the R90/6 already in my garage (the early stages of Multiple Bike Disorder).

This bike took me to the MOA rally in Michigan's UP and figured in the so-far all time high on my personal Fear-O-Meter, a trip across the Mackinaw Bridge in a high wind.

A summer or two later, Jay and I took a week's trip to the Ozarks. I met him and his R-65 in Kankakee Illinois (he lived in Chicago at the time) and we headed south west.

That first night we camped

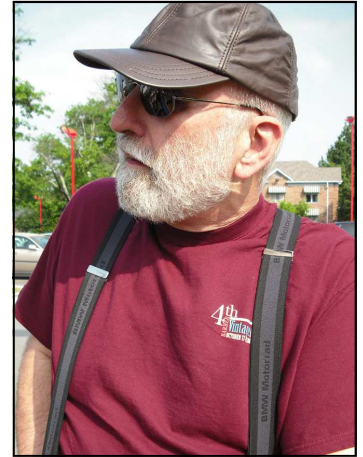
somewhere in southern Illinois and, of course, the rain set in.

We broke camp at daylight, piled our sodden gear on our bikes and headed west on the two lane in the storm. We'd been on the road about 30 minutes or so when it happened.

I was riding along a straight stretch, about 55 mph when suddenly the bike tilted to the left and before I could finish the sentence "What the..." I was down and sliding.

Jay, behind me, saw my bike sway and thought "why's John doing...." and then he was down and following me in the slide.

I recall sliding on my back, like an Olympian Luge, watching the RT on its side sliding in front of me. I could see it heading toward a traffic island up ahead, a raised asphalt triangle with a stop sign mounted on a 4x4 post in the middle. I seemed to have all the time in the world to watch the unfolding events as I was zipping



along on my shoulder blades and rear end.

The bike started veering toward the island and I thought "Don't do that, don't do that, don't do that....Oh Shoot (or words to that effect)" as the crash bar and cylinder hit the asphalt shoulder of the island.

The impact somehow caused the bike to stand up momentarily which allowed it to hit the post and then flop over on the other side. I stopped sliding, or at least slowed down enough to sit up, and then tried to get myself to my feet.

Behind me, Jay was similarly indisposed with his bike on its side in the middle of the road.

Whatever was on the road was greenish with an oily film on top of the water from the rain still coming down. The surface was slippery enough that it took both of us quite some time to get the bikes upright. Our efforts looked more like participants in a greased pig wrestling contest than motorcyclists retrieving our mounts.

We pushed them to the shoulder to examine the damage. Jay's was mostly unscathed, a tribute to the lubrication on the highway. Our rain suits weren't even torn from the sliding.

The RT had fared somewhat worse from its encounter with the island and post. The left crash bar had come back into the valve cover, cracking the



cover. The forks were out of line and the fairing now sat crooked as a drunk's hat on the frame. There were some abrasion marks on the fairing and a few cracks here and there, but nothing terribly serious.

Oil was leaking from the valve cover, but otherwise the engine was fine. With some duct-tape first aid, we got the oil leak down to manageable proportions and started out again, very slowly at first, now looking for a dealer. The Anonymous book told us that one was nearby....but it was, after all, Sunday morning.

We found the dealership and called the number, waking up the owner. He listened to our tale of woe and, true to the BMW right attitude, said he'd be right there. A few minutes later a car pulled up and a tall,

bearded young man in jeans and a pajama top got out and sleepily opened the shop doors. He loaned us tools (the first was a sledge hammer to move the crash bar back so I could get the valve cover off) and started a pot of coffee while we worked in his shop.

In about an hour we had the worst damage corrected to the point where we could go on. He didn't have a spare valve cover in stock, so he took one off a bike in the used inventory and sold it to me at a discount, as it was in fact a "used" part. Then he rustled up a box and packed our damaged parts to mail back to my house.

For all of this, he refused any payment beyond the price of the parts we used. We were back on the road, into the trip, before noon. I wish I could

recall the name of the dealer, but I do know that he's no longer there...a victim of BMW's purge of small shops.

We put another 1000 or so miles on the bikes that week and when I returned home I took the machine to the Cincinnati dealer for an insurance estimate.

The cracks in the fairing were enough to "total" the RT, even though it was still quite serviceable. I took the insurance company check and sold the bike to Dave Sparkman for the difference between that check and the retail fair market value.

Dave continued to use the bike, without repair of the damage, for many years.

He didn't have a spare valve cover in stock, so he took one off a bike in the used inventory and sold it to me at a discount, as it was in fact a "used" part.



John Rice: "It's fitting to remember that Paul's RT, which has been through Hell, was once in Paradise."



1987 MOA National
Escanaba, Michigan

