



Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers  
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# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

## Kentucky Wrecking Crew concludes AHRMA season at Barber; Little joins



**Kentucky Wrecking Crew riders** are (from left) Brian Sawyer, Lexington, BMW 750; Bill Umstead, Lexington, Yamaha XS 750; Jim Lawson, Frenchburg, Triumph 675; Wayne Moore, Lexington, Honda 350; Lon Fields, Morehead, Triumph 675; Chuck Skarsaune, Bowling Green, Triumph 500; Steve Little, Lexington, BMW R75. *Photo by Dave Huntsman*

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**Kentucky Wrecking Crew riders** also include Mike Wells, Versailles, Honda 350; Steve Upchurch, Bowling Green, Honda 350; Dave Huntsman, Versailles, Honda 175; Kenneth Baker, Nicholasville, Ducati 450; Brad Davis, Lexington, Suzuki SV650; Steve Pierratt, Lexington, Yamaha XS 750; and Darrell Woolums, Lexington, Bultaco 250. *Photo by Dave Huntsman*

# AHRMA, Barber Motorsports, Vintage Bikes and Old Guys

By Brian Sawyer

**T**his is about the American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association (AHRMA), Barber Motorsports, Vintage Bikes and old guys.

I and the people I race with are referred to by the questionable reference... "The Kentucky Wrecking Crew." This benevolent title was bestowed upon us one inglorious weekend in Albuquerque, New Mexico by the track announcer. He had seen several Kentuckians go down that weekend, and finding out we were all together, decided we needed a moniker.

We do on occasion travel great distances to acquire particle board plaques with garish decals commemorating our valiant podium finishes.

To the best of my knowledge it all started for the "Wreckers" about 20 years ago with Kenneth Baker who was racing AHRMA in those days on a borrowed Ducati. We would ride up to Mid Ohio for Vintage days and watch Kenneth race, and peruse the flea market for bike parts. We were a small nucleus of hot dog riders racing down to the river on Thursday nights, back before it became the Carney show it has become.

So about eight years ago Steve Pierratt started racing. A couple of years later Bill Umstead and Mike Wells joined Kenneth and Steve in the AHRMA racing circuit. For myself it began five years ago, having survived Lymphoma Cancer, a divorce and the latest female departure, I thought...let's take up racing!

Danny Phillips convinced me that a track day at Putnam Park was the way to go, and the die was cast! My then 20-year-old son and I went down to Talladega, Alabama to the Ed Bargy Racing School, and got our proof of attendance and passing grade. That was all AHRMA needed to let me compete for those decaded particle

board plaques.

I won the Historic Production class that year, and took 2<sup>nd</sup> in Production Singles. The next year Darrell Woolums and Wayne Moore joined us and it has continued growing ever since.

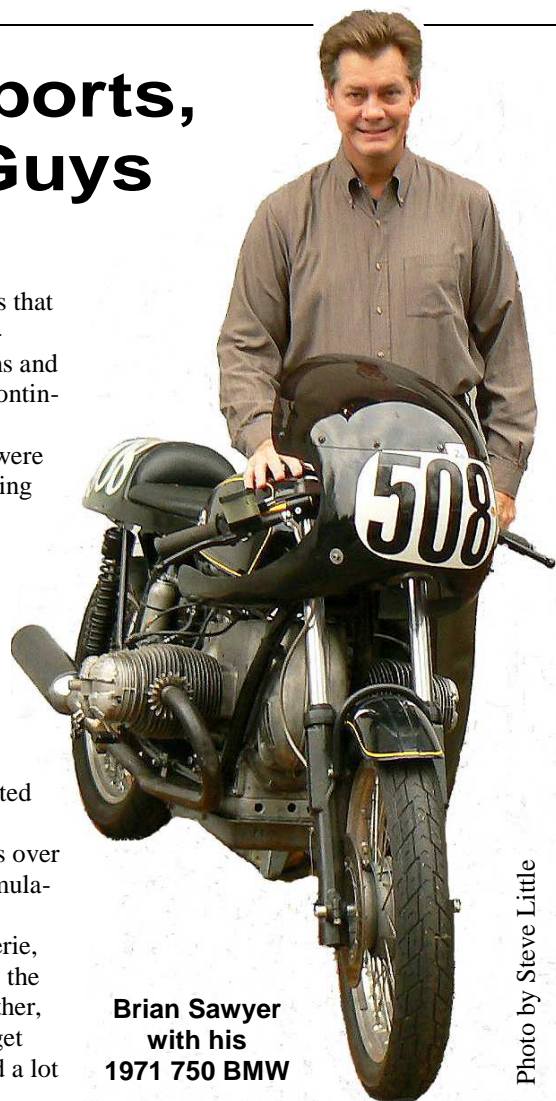
At Barber this last October, there were 14 of us pitted in the same area, trading wrenches, sockets, duct tape, safety wire, and experiences.

It's been a good time, despite some setbacks. Setbacks that include one totaled pickup truck, four cracked ribs last year at Mid-Ohio, four cracked ribs at Mid-Ohio this year, three broken crankshafts, two broken camshafts, two thrown rods, various other track related asphalt interfaces of lesser proportions. Those are just my experiences over the last four years, not the group cumulative!

It's been a lot of fun, the camaraderie, the victories, the competitive racing, the setbacks, the fried engines, bad weather, good beer, long late night drives to get back home by Monday morning, and a lot of good friends.

At Barber this last October, the weather was horrific on Friday, the traditional practice day. By 9:AM, I had given up trying to get on the track because of the rain, and headed over to the finest collection of Motorcycles I have ever seen assembled in one locale. The exhibit changes a bit every year, so even if you did go thru it last year, it still has plenty to offer the next year. Mr. Barber was circulating in the lobby talking to visitors, as I saw him three or four times over the weekend.

By Saturday the weather had cleared and it was a beautiful day, a fine day for racing. I have been running two bikes this year, the 1971 750 BMW and a converted Yamaha 450 Dirt bike, with an R-1 front end, and fairing from a 1968 TD 350 for a



**Brian Sawyer  
with his  
1971 750 BMW**

Photo by Steve Little

Vintage Look.

AHRMA runs vintage and modern bike classes, and in my first season I ran a 660cc MuZ single cylinder road racer in Super Mono and Production Singles class, and had a ball. I have been a fan of single cylinder thumpers ever since, more torque than a small tractor, and great power out of the turns. So last winter I began the conversion of the '07 Yamaha YZ450f dirt bike into a road racer. It has worked out well.

The Vintage bike nature of the Barber Festival has grown significantly over the last five years with attendance and vendors more than doubling since the initial season in 2003. It's such a beautiful facility, from the clean and spacious bathrooms, groomed landscaping, trackside sculpture, manicured track, and amazing museum, it's something you really don't want to miss, if you have not been.

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**For myself it began five years ago, upon turning 50 years old, having survived Lymphoma Cancer, a divorce and the latest female departure, I thought...let's take up racing!**

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## Steve Little builds a racer, debuts at Barber Vintage Festival

**W**hen asked how he felt about his first experience in vintage motorcycle competition, Steve Little said, "It was better than I could have imagined."

"I thought I was going to have my breakfast twice in one day, once down, once up, but the experience was literally more fun than any recreation action I've done in a

**"I thought I was going to have my breakfast twice in one day, once down, once up."**

long time."

Steve began racing against veteran riders at the 4th Annual Barber Motorsports Park Vintage Festival held October 17-19.

He built his vintage race bike from a \$300 barn-find short wheelbase R75 with a bent frame found in Owensboro.

The bent frame, straightened by Randy Ilg of Frame Crafters in Illinois, remains stock but with removable side braces. Chassis components are fairly standard touring specification including used Koni shocks mounted to a short-wheelbase stock swingarm, a BMW fork with Hyper-Pro fork springs and cartridge emulators, and a unique double bottom BMW fork yoke in addition to the stock fender-mount fork brace and machined alloy top fork clamp by Toaster Tan to strengthen the original BMW front end.

The essentially stock engine, bored by Mike Wells, runs 9.5:1 pistons but with the original 750cc displacement. Upsized 38mm Dell'Orto carburetion mates to flowed heads with oversized valves by Randy Long of Pennsylvania. A lightened flywheel and heavy-duty clutch deliver power in a perfectly streetable package with a superbike-bend handlebar.

With two sets of stock wheels, one set with street tires and the other with Avon track tires, the R75 can be race ready with a wheel/tire swap and removal of a simple one-bolt/two-wire tail/brake light/license plate assembly designed by Steve.

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Story and photos by Paul Elwyn

## AHRMA, Barber, Old Guys *Continued from Page 3*

The races at Barber culminate the season, so if the classes are not previously finalized, there can be some pretty competitive racing at the last date for the season. Points in the different grids are tallied up for who the National AHRMA Champion is for each class.

Lots of folk come by the pit areas and visit, Paul Elwyn has been a regular in past years, and Guenther Wuest and John Rice came by to visit this year.

The Kentucky Wreckers were well represented in the final race of the season for national standing.

Our own **Steve Pierratt** took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Sportsman 750 for the year, even though he took a bad fall at Barber on Sunday,

with numerous cracked and broken ribs, and a broken sternum.

**Bill Umstead** took first place at Barber on Sunday and third in the national standing for Sportsman 750, nudging the previous 2-year winner Mike Dixon.

**Charles Skarsaune** of Kentucky Wrecker fame won the Historic Production Heavyweight class, as well as Historic Production Lightweight class.

**Lon Fields** of Morehead took 5<sup>th</sup> overall in Sound of Thunder class, and Brad Davis took 2<sup>nd</sup> in Battle of Twins Formula 2 and 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Battle of Twins Formula 3 on his SV 650 for the National Championship.

Myself? I broke the crankshaft right after

Turn 1 on Sunday on the BMW.

Yep...that's racing!

One of our newest Wrecker members is a Saturday Morning Beemer regular Steve Little, attending his first AHRMA race at Barber on his beautiful BMW R75.

The season is over now. We repair the damages, repaint the wounded parts, lie about what might have been, rebuild the broken, order and wait for parts. But come late February, we're off to Daytona and it starts all over again.

Finally, we all appreciate the help, wisdom, encouragement, and knowledge Mike Wells contributes to our efforts. Mike is one of the finest and most honest mechanics I have ever known. Mike Wells Racing is ground zero for all we do," said Brian.

## Become a newsletter contributor!

For the past several years Roy Rowlett produced the *Apex* as he also provided leadership for our rally, handled awards for our annual banquet and administered other club business. That's quite a bit for one volunteer member to shoulder. Be sure to thank Roy when you see him for all he has done and continues to do for the club!

Starting with this issue, I will edit *Apex*, and I invite your help.

As always, success depends on member contributions, whether news, features, photos, opinions, poetry, art, tech tips, or For Sale items related to motorcycling.

We're off to a great start with the Brian Sawyer article in this issue. I look forward to upcoming newsletters with more terrific work from Bluegrass Beemers!

### Apex Guidelines

- We welcome your *original* writing, photos and artwork.
- Deadline will be the last day of each month for the next month's issue.
- Include photos of items for sale.
- Because this newsletter is distributed

through email, our work may be forwarded from one list to another, so contribute with that broad potential audience in mind.

- If you have an idea for a story, check with me before writing so we don't have two versions of the same article submitted.

Paul Elwyn, *Editor*

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Email to [paul.elwyn@gmail.com](mailto:paul.elwyn@gmail.com).

Save text in Rich Text Format.

Submit photos in jpeg format.

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## Steve builds a racer, debuts at Barber from Page 3



Steve Little (left) and Hubert Burton examine the 1972 R75 that Steve raced at Barber Motorsports Park in October.

One feature in particular, the ultra-clean Oilhead tachometer set in a custom alloy frame crafted by James Sudduth in the R75 headlight bucket, captures the simple appeal of Steve Little's airhead racer.

The stock toaster tank is finished in the original factory color, Curry, applied by Ray Atwood. All black parts appear to be professionally painted but in fact were painted by Steve with rattle cans. Wet sanding and polishing yielded the deep finish evident in the reflections in the headlight bucket.

With required safety-wired fasteners and

mixture.

The stock mufflers sound surprisingly authoritative as Steve winds the flat twin up to speed.

Following a shake-down run at Putnam Park to become familiar with the bike at race pace, Steve declared the home-built boxer smooth, stable at top speed and reliable with no oil consumption and no adjustments necessary to play at the Barber Vintage Festival.

YM Racing provided rider training on Friday for novice racers to learn flags, protocol, and procedure. Each rider received

an engine drip pan (a cooking pan from Wal-Mart), the boxer meets AHRMA Production Heavyweight class specification to compete against other similar displacement/age twins such as Triumph 650-750's and Yamaha SX650's and non-Desmo Ducatis.

A dyno run at Bell's Suzuki revealed merely the need for a one-notch needle adjustment in the carbs to enrich the

five 20-minute track sessions.

"We were the only people on the track on Friday because of heavy rain," said Steve. "Because of the rain, we did not get to practice a start.

"Saturday was significantly different. That was my first start."

Steve completed two races, one Saturday and one Sunday, finishing "one or two places from the bottom," said Steve. "That was the icing on the cake, to finish ahead of anybody."

"Racing was fun, not stressful," said Steve. "Distractions are gone. In the heat of the moment, you are focused on passing. A lot of people don't take a good line, and you must correct, but you don't worry about that when racing. All you think about is catching and passing the rider in front of you. Where can I get around him?"

It all began with a simple question to Mike Wells, "What would it take to race?"

"Get a bike. It's a lot of fun," said Mike.

Steve also talked with Brian Sawyer

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**"That was the icing on the cake, to finish ahead of anybody."**

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about the experience and what it takes.

Steve now looks forward to the next season, possibly starting at Daytona in February.

"I'll race as many races as I can work out," said Steve.

Steve echoes Brian Sawyer's praise of Mike Wells, recognizing Mike as well as Brian for having encouraged and helped him to become an AHRMA competitor.

"Mike Wells Racing is the hub for the racing community," said Steve.