

November 2009

# Apex

*Looking Through The Curve*

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



**Neufchatel**  
in "The Streets in France"  
by James Street



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## What's next? 'R100FS' 'F800RT' ?!

**O**ver the past ten months I have shared contorted reflections of my time with the '79 R100RT. Anyone who has undergone a project such as this one knows that, even when major elements are handled by professionals, assembling all into a complete machine doesn't necessarily guarantee that the finished product will be glitch free.

In the case of the '79 RT, with nearly everything except transmission and rear drive rebuild by Roy Rowlett and upper end machine work by Mike Wells, the work was handled by an unprofessional.

So given that the bike runs and in fact is fun to ride, this project must be considered a success even if not perfect in its current state, which brings me to my point.

This bike likely will never be a finished project.

If for no other reason than I am never content to leave something alone, this bike will never be finished.

I now lay awake at night thinking through what to do next to the RT, such as remove the fairing and install the standard BMW headlight mounts and turn signals, replace the new braided front brake lines with longer hoses designed to run without the fairing, replace the lower fork legs with '81 up Brembo-carrying units with Brembo calipers, replace the under-tank master cylinder with a new OEM handlebar unit, remove everything that's unnecessary, including the rear fender, side covers & brackets, change the handlebar from the RT tiller to a superbike bar (already purchased), repaint tank, front fender and seat cowling, remove airbox and rig

up K&N pods (left over from the Guzzi Le Mans), convert the wheels to tubeless and powdercoat the wheels for easier cleaning and flashier appearance...etc.

These changes actually would result in an Airhead closer to what I envisioned prior to the purchase of the RT, a (relatively) lightweight, simple, naked sporty bike that still could carry Krausers for travel.

OR, I could look for a Suzuki GSX inverted fork with GSX brakes and tubeless 17" wheel, acquire an Oilhead swingarm/rear drive with BMW tubeless 18" rear wheel, brace the frame from head to swingarm pivot, relocate the battery to the top of the transmission where the current airbox resides, mount proper rearset controls....but retain the stock engine, which offers plenty of grunt for this old man.

These modifications likely would raise my investment from \$4,400 to possibly \$7,000 (\$9,000 in real money) and keep me occupied in my HEATED garage for another ten months and make the old Airhead completely useless as a winter bike.

So, then I would have this perfectly solid RT fairing with nothing to do and a nearly naked F800S wondering what its role would be next to the sporty '79 Airhead.

Maybe the RT fairing could be grafted onto the F800S? That would be different. I could glass in the lowers where the boxer cylinders once poked through. How much trouble could that be?

What possibly could go wrong?

Then, I would have a perfectly good F800S fairing/airbox cover that I could somehow mount to my next Airhead to create the first "R100FS"!



**Apex is the official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc.  
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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>**

**Join us at Frisch's on Harrodsburg Rd.  
on any Saturday, 7-9:30 a.m.**



# The Streets in France

By James Street  
With photography  
by James and Stacey Street



**T**his story starts out in a pub on the northeast coast of England.

We'd stopped at the house where we were supposed to spend the night and pick up a borrowed bike, but the owner, Dr. Shirley Spooner, wasn't

home. So we drove to the next little town and found a pub to get a bite to eat and while away some time before going back to see if Shirley had gotten



Home of Dr. Shirley Spooner  
and wayward BMW K100LT

## The Streets in France

**Stacey and I looked at each other and said, "This is why we came here." Only we'd come to pick up a motorcycle; not spend the afternoon getting sloshed with the locals.**

home. She was expecting us, but we were a bit later than we'd thought, so I wasn't too concerned about it.

We walked into the pub and immediately noticed among the dark smoke stained paneling and dim light that some of the patrons were dressed in their Sunday best-it was after all Sunday afternoon-and some were not. Some were old and some were in their teens. Some were inside and others were out on the patio with a few at the bar and many at the many tables arranged throughout. And they all were snookered. Not falling down, mind you, but happily, cheerily singing along with whatever was on TV or the juke box drunk.

Oh, I'm not looking down at them, not at all. Stacey and I looked at each other and said, "This is why we came here." Only we'd come to pick up a motorcycle; not spend the afternoon getting sloshed with the locals. We did, however, spend enough time to see the first round of Karoke which made leaving that much more regretful; it was going to be an entertaining evening.

We made it back to Shirley's without a hitch, found her there and she proceeded to treat us

like royalty, fixed dinner and introduced us to our transportation for the next two weeks: a 1994 K100LS with bags and a small top case.

Shirley's husband was a business partner with a friend of mine and had passed away and left my friend the bike. He'd offered it to me on several occasions, and I finally took him up on it. So there we were, a dream come true thanks to a college friend and the late husband of a wonderful woman who keeps this bike for him.

"Drive left, look right" was the admonishment given by Dr. Spooner as we mounted the K100LS in her driveway the next day and prepared to head across the North York Moors National Park.

Even though it was an uncharacteristically sunny day, the temperature was hovering around 55 making me glad I'd brought the liner to my jacket and similarly glad for the K100's relatively well enclosed cockpit. It reminded me of a late fall sunny day at home: the kind that I really like, although I consciously struggle to enjoy the moment rather than dread the winter that inevitably follows.

The fact that the first turn we took after driving left and looking right was exactly the wrong one (that resulted in being lost for the first of innumerable times in our first couple of days of travel) didn't portend well but at least I'd stayed on the correct, not "right," side of the road.

Dr. Spooner had given us directions across the moors to Helmsley, a picturesque town from where Stacey's family originates replete with an bewildered and then said something like, abbey, on a lane and a half road without centerlines and along which there were thousands of sheep grazing without the benefit of fences.

A sheep would look up, decide the grass was greener on the other side, and saunter across the road without so much as a second thought, and those of you who regularly ride in deer country will appreciate the complication that throws into the riding experience.

Needless to say, riding was tentative, and I'm not embarrassed to say that I actually pulled over a couple of times in the first thirty or so miles to let folks pass me rather than block the progress of the British public, who, by the way, didn't know I was a Yank until they heard me talk because the bike had British plates. Made for the occasional surprise when someone came up to talk and then were astonished to find that we weren't fellow countrymen/women.

On that note, I genuinely found it easier to try to interpret directions in French later in the trip than North Country English. More than once we'd stop and I'd go in for directions, come out, and have Stacey ask me where do we go only to reply, "I have no clue." I'd like to blame it all on their garbled mouth-full-of-marbles accent, but in fact it is as much my advanced state of deafness that kept me from understanding anything. Our intention was to spend most of the trip on back roads and I'd invested in GPS software for my Garmin only to discover that my unit had enough memory for about a hundredth of the maps that I needed, so I unwisely decided that a map was just as good as a GPS and took off.

We literally spent most of the first two days on the bike completely lost, but that really didn't matter because we had a pretty loose schedule and had about three nights to make what could have been done in a long day if we'd stuck to the motorways.



**On the left in the North York Moors**



## The Streets in France

We made it to Helmsley by midday, had fish and chips from a shop in the central square (what turned out to be the best fish and chips of the trip), and generally enjoyed the scenery.

Helmsley is on the southwestern perimeter of the North Moors (hills in our version of the English language) and is something of an English version of Berea: little shops in buildings that were likely constructed in the 1600's of various forms of masonry with narrow streets.

All the rooftops are slate and are replete with several spindly chimneys that provide relative warmth in what has to be my

sands of British motorcycle riders who come to the moors to ride like madmen and kill themselves in droves. There are signs posted everywhere that remind those who like to turn up the wick just how many of their fellow sportsmen had died in the preceding year, and I recall that it was in the hundreds. It was quite sobering to think about, especially when everything on the road has backward orientation.

From Helmsley we navigated south. Well, navigation is an exaggeration. We rode in a generally southern direction, missed the bypass around York, and ended up with a bonus ride through the medieval section of

on, and my legs began a slow convection oven roasting process. We found a service station, gassed up, drank a couple of bottled waters and asked directions. This time was better as far as understanding goes, and we rode south and actually got on the road we wanted; however, that was only to last for about fifty miles until we hit a little hamlet that apparently didn't like road signs and then we were lost again.

What we had failed to understand is that English road signs are oriented to routes rather than towns, and our Atlas didn't have some of the smaller roads on them, so we weren't able to make the map correspond to the roads we were on. Armed with this discovery, we headed to "B" road and made our way further south to end up at Doncaster for the night.

I had envisioned staying in quaint taverns and hanging with the locals every night we were traveling, but by the time we got through Doncaster, which is a Midlands industrial city, I would have taken a room in an American chain motel.

We found a hotel that catered to business people with the British version of Applebee's attached and got a room to collapse in. After a beer and a meal that Stacey and I split, we went back to the room and plotted our way to the ferry at Dover for our next day's goal.

The next day was what we all think about when someone mentions England: it started cold and then began raining in sheets. We donned rain gear, hit the motorway (interstate), and started to London to get on the "Orbital" which was the only highway to get around the Thames on the east side of the city. Folks in England drive considerably more aggressively than here, and it was challenging to pass a group of trucks with the curtain of spray they



**North York Moors replete with free ranging sheep**

version of hell: long winters and short days with cold, damp temperatures.

An interesting aspect of Helmsley is that its proximity to the Moors park makes it a starting point for literally thou-

the city where pedestrians are in droves and where the streets are narrow, one way (always the wrong way) and nerve wracking to negotiate.

For the first time the Beemer's radiator fan kicked

## The Streets in France

threw up and then checking the rearview mirror and noticing that the seven series BMW was about 6" from my rear tire. Somewhere along the line the fuel light came on and we left the motorway into a town to find fuel.

Unlike the US which has a service station at every exit, the British like to hide them in the most obscure places. This practice of hiding service stations does produce a more picturesque streetscape, but it makes finding the damned things a bit stressful on the hapless traveler.

I finally resorted to humbling myself and asking directions in response to my wife's firm and insisting admonishment that I better not run out of gas, and upon learning that a petrol station was only a few blocks away began riding in that direction only to have the bike literally start lurching from fuel starvation just as we pulled into the pump.

We found the Orbital, got on, and proceeded around to the tunnel under the Thames and got a great surprise: unlike every other vehicle going under the river and paying a substantial toll, the Brits understand the merits of motorcycling as it relates to minimizing smog and congestion and allow motorcycles to travel the tunnel for free.

On the other side we turned east to head for Dover and thankfully the rain let up and gave us a bit of respite from the cold drudgery of riding in heavy traffic in a downpour. There really are white cliffs in Dover, and Dr. Spooner told us

that there are a series of tunnels hewn into the soft chalk rock that the British have used for hospitals and military command centers in the world wars.

We found a local ferry broker and paid for a ticket to cross to Calais and then threaded our way through the ferry serpentine routing system, cleared customs, and got in line to await our loading. A few minutes after we parked in line a couple on an ST1300 Pan European rode up behind us, stopped, and began taking off their rain gear. They looked about like us, maybe a year or two older, and I walked up to the guy and said, "Are we having fun yet?" He looked kind of "Ne parle Englaise, moi France." And what happened next portended the next two weeks of our trip: Stacey went up and asked where they were going in French, said we were spending some time in their country and asked for tips on traveling such as where to stay and so on. Before you could sing Frere Jaques, they had given us a listing of hotels, demonstrated their GPS, and generally quelled a lot of my fears about how hard it was going to be to get around in France.

We loaded onto the ferry, and here's another welcome tidbit: bikes load and unload first. The boat had a vee notch that the bike fit in, and the stvedores lash the motorcycle to tie-off rings in the deck: very secure. We made it to the lounge deck, had a croissant and a coffee, and noticed right away that one can actually see France the moment the ferry pulls away from Dover. After a couple of hours of watching the coast loom closer and taking in all of the maritime traffic, we pulled into the dock at Calais and voila, we were in France.

After finding our way through Calais, which wasn't the prettiest of places by the way, we

rode our first section of winding coastal road to a small town called Coquelles and found a chain hotel with local charm: Premier Inn.

Once again Stacey charmed the locals with her French, and once again we were treated congenially. We were directed to park the bike in a locked enclosure and made it to the restaurant after a quick shower.

Even low end French dining is far better than English or American fare and our meals there were no exception. The salad bar had local cheese and foie gras that were wonderful, and my beef and pepper sauce (boeuf au poivre?) was excellent. And it wasn't too expensive.

Went for a walk into town and found that everything was closed... everything, and we discovered that they roll up the streets in rural France at seven o'clock. You best have all of your needs in commerce satisfied by that time or you're in big trouble. Unfortunately, that lesson was not thoroughly imparted to me at that time.

Up early the next day and into the same restaurant for breakfast and made another observation that was a revelation but shouldn't have been: the French know how to make coffee and croissants. I mean they really know how to do it. Again, keep in mind that we're in a cheap

**Vincent complete with fairing and GPS!**  
**Who says you can't tour on the old stuff?**





## The Streets in France



Traveling south along the French coast, English Channel in the Background: It was one of those days I've dreamed of since I got my first mini bike at 11 years old.

chain hotel with a connected restaurant. The croissants were to die for, and with the amount of butter that was in them I may die literally, but they were delicious.

So we headed south on the coastal road, and it was one of those days I've dreamed of since I got my first mini bike at 11 years old. The road undulated from coastal plain and fields of golden crop grasses, through WWII battlements, into towns where the road narrowed through whitewashed masonry houses that were so close you felt like you could stick your elbows out and clip the walls, and up hills where you could see the lush green of inland on your left contrasting with the azure blue of the Channel on the right.

All only to be interrupted by an overweight mid-seventies guy burnt to a red lobster tan standing beside the road in a speedo (minimalistic bathing suit-not really suitable for flattering overweight people) and nothing else.

After the shock of the speedo wore off, we rode maybe a hun-

dred miles of coastline that was simply great.

We ended up in Abbeyville, which is a not-so-picturesque industrial town several miles inland, and got caught up in traffic and decided to go to the motorway to make some time in our effort to get to the Loire Valley where we had reservations a couple of nights later.

Stopped in a McDonald's for a bathroom break and got something of a surprise to find that the bathroom was unisex and used by both sexes at the same time. Had to get Stacey to ask and verify that it really was unisex. Took a bit of getting used to, as the stalls had door on them so there was a modicum of privacy, but everyone used the lavatory at the same time. It was a practical way to do it, I suppose, but it took a great deal of resolve to just sashay in and whiz while some member of the opposite sex was dropping a bomb in the adjacent stall. Oh, well, when in Rome...

Hit the motorway and rode until the late afternoon and saw an exit to Neufchatel and de-



The main square at Neufchatel



## The Streets in France

### The lane to our B&B at Neufchatel



cided that was a good place to spend the night. Went to the center of town and dropped Stacey off at the tourism bureau. They made reservations for us and directed us to a B and B on the outskirts of town. Got there and discovered that the B and B was actually a working farm in which some of the out buildings had been converted to lodging, and there were flowering shrubs that I

can't name, roses, members of the rhododendrum family, and so on planted lushly around buildings that were constructed in the 1600's making for an unbelievably peaceful and enjoyable setting.

Did I mention that it was cheap? After checking in, noticing a drop of oil beneath the bike, and then getting our stuff to our room, we walked the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile back into town and

made our way to a local hotel with a restaurant for dinner. Not feeling too venture-some, I ordered the same beef that I'd had the night before, but this time it came with pre and post dinner cheese entre's that Neufchatel is famous for, and again it was wonderful. Stacey had fish, but the highlight of her meal was a caramel covered crême brulet that was simply unbelievable. Made from fresh cream and caramel, it had a burst of rich flavor that I've never experienced before.

Remember the spot of oil that appeared under our trusty K100LT when we checked in? After breakfast the next morning I went out to the barn where I'd stored the bike for the evening thinking that it may be a good idea to follow up on the drip, and when I strolled into the barn I saw a sickening trail of oil from where I'd pushed it in the day before that terminated in a puddle underneath the bike.

No source was immediately apparent but it did seem to emanate from the rear of the transmission case, so I heaved it up on the center stand, started the engine and began a careful search for the source of said hemorrhage. No leak found begat a false hope of riding away! However, placed the bike in first gear and looked down to discover a pencil sized stream squirting out of the clutch actuator rod opening, and thus began an odyssey that made me regret the mean things I've said about the French people in the past and generally restored my faith in humanity.

I can bore the reader with the minutia of what happened, but the outline form is we got directions to a motorcycle shop in Neufchatel, which is a fairly small town, got lost, got more directions (keep in mind that I know about 20 French words but do understand basic point-



Our B & B at Neufchatel

## The Streets in France

**Bike repair  
with capable  
assistant  
Monsieur Rooster**



**Our erstwhile shop owner takes scheduled work off the lift, puts the BMW on the lift, and finds that the seal has completely deteriorated and broken; furthermore, he finds that the seal is a BMW specific part that he doesn't have.**

ing), got to the shop and again with much gesticulating and pointing was loaded into the shop van by the owner, taken back to our B & B, looked at the bike, disagreed on the severity of the problem (he didn't see the stream of oil), and agreed to take it to his shop.

Our erstwhile shop owner takes scheduled work off the lift, puts the BMW on the lift, and finds that the seal has completely deteriorated and broken; furthermore, he finds that the seal is a BMW specific part that he doesn't have.

After about 15 minutes on the phone he says he's having the part driven in from about 50 kilometers away and that he'll

have me on the road by day's end. I interpret this to mean I'll be on the road and bankrupt by day's end, but the guy seemed to be nice and told us to have a relaxing day in Neufchatel, so we did.

We hiked back to our room and began packing so we could load up as soon as the bike was ready, and we found the hotel chambermaid tidying up our room. One thing about foreign travel that continually catches me off guard is when a local rattles off a series of proclamations, questions or simple banalities in their home language, which should be no surprise, and then stands there with an expectant look on their face like

you're supposed to reply fluently. My problem, I know, but at best I catch about one out of ten words in French, if that, and all I knew was she'd said something about room and day. I assumed she was asking me if we were staying another day because of the bike and held up my index finger and said something like "un jour" which is the best I could do for staying one day.

Here's a lesson, boys and girls: on the continent counting with fingers begins with one's thumb and holding up the index finger means two. I just told our lovely chambermaid that we were actually staying another day. It took about 15



## The Streets in France

minutes and my wife's intervention to straighten that out.

We walked around Neufchatel, which is a quintessential small city built around a stone cathedral that probably dates to the 1300's replete with but-

tresses and stained glass that survived two world wars.

We learned that prisoners in the First World War were exchanged there and that it had been neutral territory. They are known worldwide for heart shaped soft cheeses, and a local museum had a great display in the basement of the process of making it, and the English lady running the museum was an absolute delight.

Later in the afternoon, we stopped at an outdoor café and had coffee and watched the sun come out for the first time that day, and I had a visitor come out and sit in my lap.

You will notice from the photograph that Stacey's camera is very sturdy, as both the dog and myself are certainly painfully ugly enough to break inexpensive photographic equipment.

Anyway, the dog was my best friend for about 10 minutes, then he went inside to snooze for awhile only to awake when I was paying my tab, "la addition," and then try to bite me. Talking about fickle...

So, four-thirty has rolled around and we go to the shop to pick up the bike. Monsieur Owner says it's ready, and I steel myself for the bill. Monsieur Owner tally's up every-

thing and hands me the tab and interrupts my mantra of "pay it, it's worth whatever," and I look to see that the total is 93.5 Euros. I asked him if he's sure that's right, and he replies, "Wee, is there a problem?"

What he did was charge me about \$135 for two or three hours of shop time, a seal plus transportation, transmission fluid, plus his time to drive us to look at the bike.

No, monsieur, there's no problem. No problem at all. Try that at home.

We departed that evening for Chennonceaux, and in the next installment of our trip story there's a late night gas rescue, great food and wine, castles, jam, and an overnight stay at a house with a Vincent and several vintage Triumph racers in the living room.

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*Part 2 in December's Apex*

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Waiting to have the bike fixed, James made a friend at a café while having a 'café.'

Our rescuer



# When we were young

By John rice

**I**n the late fall of 1965 when I was barely 17, I and my friend George were hanging out one evening at Stewart's Harley Davidson shop, like feral animals skirting the edges of a campfire, absorbing the light and heat of "real bikers," hoping for a scrap of recognition or acceptance while trying to stay out of harm's way in the process.

The proprietor, Jim, was a burly fellow, not tall but making the best use of the height

form for a certain kind of rider then.

The shop area was cluttered with old parts, engines, firewood for the cast iron stove that provided uneven heat in the long winter nights when Jim crouched over Harleys in dire need of resurrection.

Topper, the aging but still formidable 100 pound German Shepard, slept in a corner. I knew Topper all too well, having been chased up onto the roof of a car in the gravel parking lot, inches ahead of his snapping jaws.

He was the guard dog for Jim and the shop and he knew his role well.

There was a pile of spent beer bottles in another corner, many of them added this night by the men in attendance. Not much mechanical work was going on, but stories were being told of feats done, crashes survived and women brought helpless and malleable under the spell of the biker mystique.

One of the men, Willie Burnock I believe, pilot of an unreliable Panhead of dubious provenance, walked unsteadily over to an engine, similar to his own, on the workbench and after a moment's contemplation, lifted the lump a foot off the plywood

surface and set it back down hard.

A brief glance passed between the others and then more objects in the shop, another engine, a drill press, a metal lathe were lifted in turn.

Jim watched this display quietly, a bit wobbly on his own pins by then, and announced that there was something in this shop that he could lift that all three of the others together could not manage.

Catcalls, expressions of disbelief and even a wager or two were exchanged.

Then Jim strode quickly to the corner, hoisted Topper in his arms like an oversized baby and set the startled animal on the wooden workbench where it blinked and surveyed grimly the audience to his unexpected performance.

"There," Jim said with a flourish of his arm, "your turn."



he'd been given by filling in the middle with serious muscle, now going slowly to middle aged spread. With him in the back of the shop were three other men, hard men, with dark slick hair and angular features, faded jeans with oil spots, black t-shirts and scuffed work boots, sort of a uni-







## Rally Report Soggy Leaf

By David Griffiths

**We** had planned some time ago to attend The Falling Leaf Rally in Potosi, MO. It was to be Kelly Ramsey, Steve "High Life" Little, Tim Riddell and me.

Given the weather that was predicted for 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2009 (a strong cold front with a promise of 2 or more inches of rain along our route) enthusiasm waned quickly. I called Kelly Thursday night and he told me Steve and Tim had bailed out (they said not be-

cause of the weather . . . mmm). Kelly and I decided to do it on the grounds that we are intrepid.

Kelly showed up at my place around 08:35 and we were on the road by 08:55. Already there had been two heavy downpours with high winds before dawn in Lexington. We rode to Elizabethtown on the Bluegrass Parkway and encountered little rain. We took the north ring road around Elizabethtown to KY 1600 which led us to US 60. Rain was constant from Elizabethtown to Owensboro where we stopped for lunch at Moonlight Barbecue. Excellent mutton from the buffet and drinks brought to us by an attractive "femme d'un certain age".

Still raining when we emerged. We splashed along the Audubon Parkway to Henderson and then US 60 again until Morganfield. Here we took KY 56 to the bridge over the Ohio River at Shawneetown, IL where the road becomes IL 13. It was here, at a light, that a chap in a pick up yelled, "Give it hell boys". We were certainly making a valiant effort to do so but Mother Nature was giving us all she had. Across the Ohio we saw an ominous solid line of slate-grey sky and noted a temperature drop of 13 degrees in 5 minutes. The rain intensified and we knew that here was the front. And all was not quiet on the western front.

## Rally Report Soggy Leaf

By Carbondale I was ready to stop for a warming, rejuvenating coffee. We stopped at an Egyptian brand gas station that boasted "The Hookah Café". No coffee – or opium. We ploughed through heavy traffic and found a Denny's. We came out feeling much better, put on dry gloves and electric liners. How could we bike without these marvelous gadgets?

We pressed on in ever-falling

We crossed the great river, stopping in Perryville to ask directions – I 55 north to MO 32 west, US 67 north to MO 8 west. We arrived, a little bedraggled but immensely proud of our intrepid achievement, at 21:00, 20:00 local time. I had wisely bought a bottle of Jameson's in Potosi to sip by the campfire with a cup of hot chocolate after we'd pitched our tents. It was a chilly night but warm in the mummy bag.

The next morning, after a mist had cleared, we had spectacular weather but it was bloody cool. I went on a mission to find a hat from a vendor. I found a Russian-style job in black rabbit fur. Richard Tate, President of the Hoosier Beemers, named her Fifi. Many tried to take her back to their tent that night but she came with me.

By all accounts the countryside around Potosi is rather lovely. There were regular and GS-style organized rides but we did not participate – too knackered.

Right before the awards ceremony there was a double anvil blast (a unique occurrence in memory of one of Gateway BMW's revered members). For those of you not familiar with an anvil blast, it consists in placing an anvil on the ground, making it perfectly level, and putting explosive in a depression in the flat top; another anvil is placed over the first and a blue fuse lit; the explosion flings the second anvil hundreds of feet into the air with the hope that it will land on the first; in this case one of them landed within 3 feet, pounding into the turf such that there were six inches of earth above the entire anvil.

Then came the awards and you won't believe this but I won the split-the-pot again (I won it at our Rally this year too). I won 25% or \$181. This was followed by – another anvil

blast. We then repaired to the camp fire where we spent the evening with a couple of chaps from the north and our very own Roger Trent of Danville.

We left at an earlyish hour the next morning, the three of us. There would have been four, including Jim Hibberd (?) (former president of Louisville BMW Club) but a misunderstanding 10 miles out of Potosi involving his not trusting his GPS led to him turning off. We were using the map and his GPS was correct. Mysterious.

I picked up breakfast just before the Chester bridge (I was the big winner, after all) and we headed over to Central Illinois where we got on I 64 for a fast ride home.

I must say we had a great time at what will almost certainly be the last rally of the year for us. A total of about 870 miles ridden.

I'd like to exhort my fellow members to come to more rallies. When I go to them I often notice that some clubs have enclaves of a dozen or more members. Could we do the same at a few select rallies? Kelly and I plan on attending the Chicken Rally in Huntsville, AL next May so I'd like to ask you to make plans to be there. What's really cool is that you get a plastic model of a dead chicken to hang off the back of your bike. We don't have to ride there in a parade but we can camp together. And that would be a club group activity other than the breakfast meetings and our own rally – something I think we need to have. I now know Paul Elwyn and Brian Sawyer far better for having camped with them at the National in Tennessee; and of course dear Roger Trent who has committed to The Chicken Rally.

And you really don't know President Steve until you've rallied with him. High Life – it's how we should live.



temperatures and the rain finally stopped near the Mississippi River. We were to cross it at Chester, IL which required turning north onto IL 3. I made the turn and glanced in my mirror – no Kelly! I circled back and saw him coming. He had stopped to pick up a Shamwile that had slipped out from a Rokstrap on my bike. He saw it on the ground, reached out to pick it up and over went his bike. No damage but he got a funny look from a passing truck driver.





# Things change

By John Rice

“

**A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” or words to that effect, are often attributed to my wife’s ancestor, Ralph Waldo Emerson.**

While I am the possessor of a little mind and have often been foolish, one of the few areas in which I am reasonably consistent has been in my adherence

to simplicity in bikes, particularly old bikes. I’m not at all sure that is what Ralph had in his (much larger) mind.

I’m a Luddite at heart, forced by circumstances of profession to adapt to at least some modernity (such as the computer I’m writing this on) but in motorcycle-world, I’ve been, for the most part, consistent. My “stable” (or junkyard) consisted of airhead BMW’s, old Brit

Iron and some 70’s era Spanish 2-stroke dirt bikes, for the most part. Simplicity rules.

**So there I was**, sitting in my office one day, perfectly content with my lot in life, at least as far as motorcycles were concerned, when this e-mail from Jeff Cooke, the BMW dealer, arrives in my mailbox. He’s offering a special deal on remaining 09 R1200GS’s, the

motorcycle that many in the press have called “the best motorcycle in the world”, but one which bristles with technology that goes cross-grain to everything I hold dear in my paradigm of two-wheels-with a motor and not much else.

**“The only thing that separates us from the other animals** is the capacity for self deception”...that quote comes not from so lofty a philosopher as Emerson, but instead from the decidedly unlofty author of this piece....me. You’d think then that I’d be able to see through such things in myself. And, here’s the rub, I can. I am deluding myself while fully aware that I’m doing so.

**The new GS is a wonderful piece of engineering**, but it’s not a motorcycle in the sense that I’ve been used to for the last half-century or so of riding the things. It is a device, utilizing the experience of many disciplines, decades of refinement, relying on an integrated system of devices far beyond my understanding to reliably convey one or two people nearly anywhere in the world that a rubber tired single track vehicle can reasonably be expected to go, in comfort, and safety. Who, I would ask my techno-impaired self, would want that? The answer, my limbic system shot back, was me. Deep in our brains, below thought but just above the bits that only serve to keep us breathing, is that part where primitive emotions delight in pouring gasoline on the fires our logical centers are trying oh so calmly to put out with reason. And sometimes, the arsonists win.

**Knowing what I was starting**, seeing the course in my mind’s eye but powerless to resist, “sleepwalking into disaster”, I replied to Jeff, humorously I

# Things Change



The first of many pie stops I hope to make on this one

told myself, “would you be interested in trading for some old bikes?” Joke’s on me...he was.

A quick trip to Ashland to borrow my nephew Paul’s 05 GS to see if Brenda would like traveling on such a contraption. She did. I could see my minimalist principles sliding down the slippery slope past the point of no return. I watched myself writing Jeff the confirmation that yes, indeed, I would buy this thing he had proposed, divesting myself of two perfectly good examples of two-wheeled conveyance from the previous century and bringing home a bike that, as far as my mechanical skills are concerned, might as well be powered by a nuclear reactor or Dilithium Crystals (“I canna keep ‘er together Cap’n, ....She’s breakin’ oop” Scotty cries from the distant engine room while I stare grimly into space at the approaching Klingons.).

**The appointed hour for the transfer arrived.** I loaded up my truck & trailer with the two trade ins, my 93 R100R and my 1969 Triumph 500 (and the remnants of two Montesa 348’s, going to a shipper for transfer to a new owner in Maine, but that’s another story) and my son and I headed for Louisville. He dropped me and my bikes in Jeff’s parking lot and headed back home. Jeff’s shop was closed on Monday, but he came in to accommodate my schedule so the place was empty. I stood there with the two bikes, both of which had served me well and were, in my humble opinion, beautiful to behold. Then I turned my back on them and walked inside, like those scenes in the movies where the philandering husband looks at the horizon, one last chance to avoid the whole mess, then goes into the motel

where the Other Woman awaits. Think Glenn Close and boiling bunnies.

**Paperwork done** (it’s always the paper, isn’t it?), the new bike was wheeled out. It sat there in the parking lot, next to the spurned ones, confident of its place, barely deigning to look at them. I can do anything you can do, better, faster and longer, it said. The others weren’t speaking to me now, metaphorical noses in the air, going to their fate with their dignity intact. I stood there, numb in mind and heart, knowing that I was going to Luddite Hell, but strangely looking forward to the trip. I put on my gear, threw my old arthritic leg somewhat awkwardly over the tall saddle and turned on the key. A touch, just a touch, of the starter brought the thing to life and it sat there idling flawlessly. No fiddling with this or that, no cough-and-die-and-restart....just running like it should. Hal 2000 telling me that “everything’s going to be all right, John” in that soothing voice.

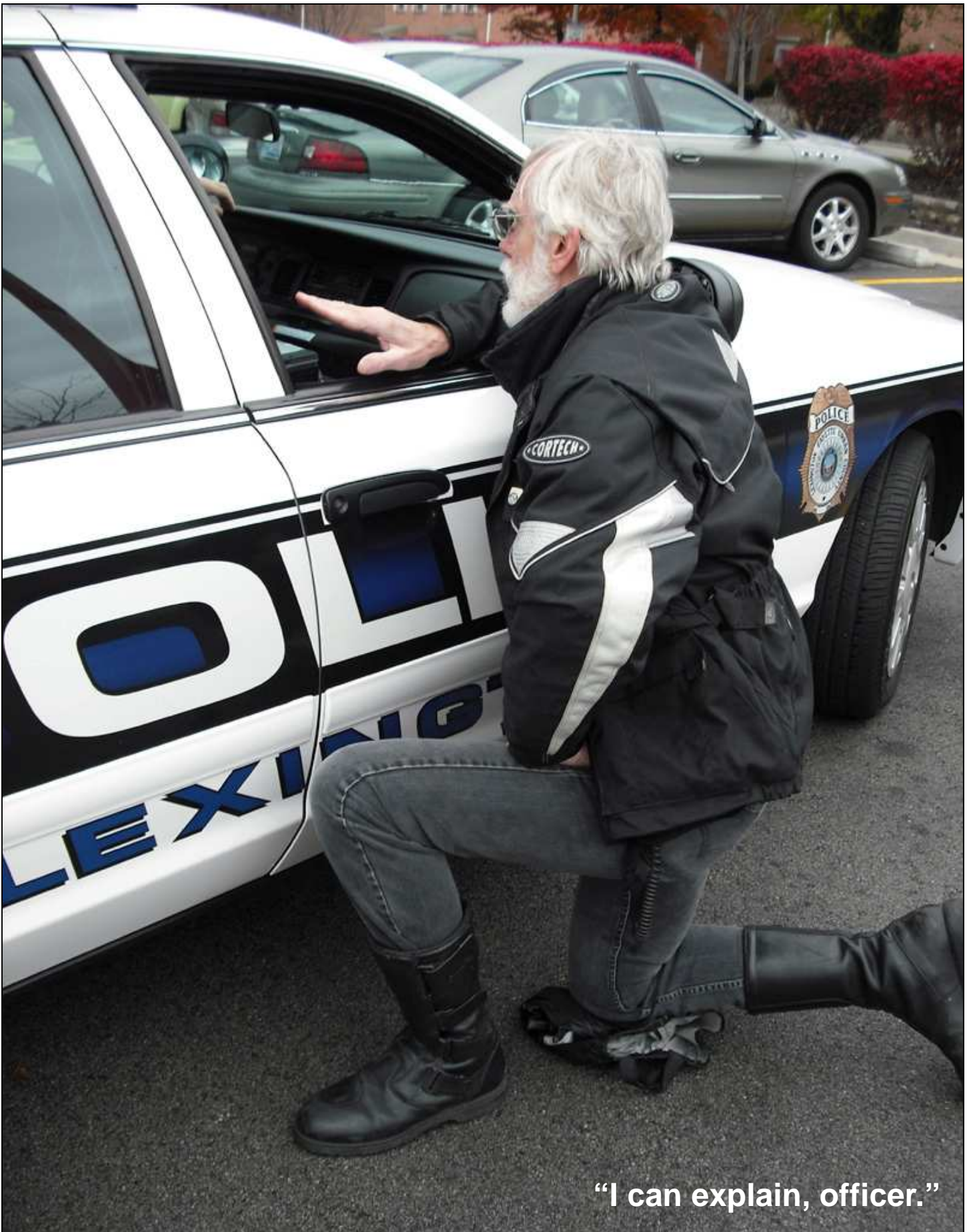
**I pulled out of the lot, into Louisville traffic,** with no drama at all. The GS seemed familiar, everything working just like it always had, but easier somehow. Power, even at the gentle break-in limits, is linear, no surging, and apparently limitless. Clutch in, out, smoothly and with no real effort. Brakes...well that’s the real difference. Coming from an airhead with a single disc, these brakes are from another world. Two fingers on the lever, a handshake-with-a-child squeeze and the thing just stops. Now.

**Heading out River Road,** I wander along some two-lanes, not really knowing where I am or where I’m going except to head vaguely east. Traffic thins

and I can find a curve or two....or at least I think so. The bike doesn’t seem to notice such things. Leaned over or upright, it’s all the same to this one. I’ve read that the Telelever front end lacks “feel” and I guess that’s one way of putting it, but I’d have to say it’s just that the bike doesn’t care. Short of grease or leaves or some other lubricant, the front end is just going to go wherever I point it and the rest, including me, will follow. There’s no sensation of working the bike, nothing like on an airhead twin where I can feel the chassis flex and the suspension react to input from me and the road.

**I will be the limiting factor, not the bike.** And that is the difference. That’s why I’m still keeping my 93 R100PD and the infamous Green Bike and some other old crows that need me to make them work. They’re willing partners in a transportation and sporting enterprise. This new one is not a partner, it’s capable of doing everything itself, much better than I am and if it only had a credit card for gas it could go on its own. But it is what Brenda and I need for traveling in the current century, something that makes up for my decreasing skills and adds the sense of capability and reliability that makes a long trip at our age more workable and less of a gamble. It’s the right thing to do, and I think that’s consistent.





"I can explain, officer."



# Saturday at Frisch's



Soggy weather doesn't inhibit important parking lot conversation. We admired the beautiful rear wheel of Roger's K1200RS, and the recent updates to Jesse's F800S: cool LED red running lights inside clear lenses with turn signals retaining the yellow flashers, BMW expandable side cases and an exotic exhaust canister.



## New Norton to premier at Long Beach motorcycle show!

11/4/2009 10:44:05 AM

by Richard Backus

**L**ook for the new 961 Commando SE at the Long Beach International Motorcycle Show, Dec. 4-6, 2009.

Norton Motorcycles in England, which has re-launched the Norton brand with the new 961 Commando SE, is bringing three new Norton Commandos to display at the International Motorcycle Show in Long, Beach, Calif., Dec. 4-6, 2009, and *Motorcycle Classics* will be there with them, welcoming the return of one of the most storied names in motorcycling!

Ian Kerr reported on the new venture in our September/October 2009 issue, and since then Norton, under the direction and ownership of British entrepreneur Stuart Garner, has been busy putting bikes together. The first bikes started rolling off the production line October 29, and activity at the new Norton facility in Donnington Park, northeast of Birmingham in central England, is picking up.

Garner initially promised 200 bikes for 2010, but with the U.K. allocation of 150 bikes already sold out Garner is now



planning on building 500 of the first series Nortons.

Fifty of the first 200 machines are earmarked for the U.S. market, and South Bay Norton in Lomita, Calif., has been appointed Norton's exclusive dealer/distributor in the U.S. South Bay is owned and operated by Matt Capri, who also runs South Bay Triumph and is well known as the founder of BMW Luftmeister, a BMW accessory company.

Capri has a long history in racing, working closely with BMW in the mid-1970s when the Superbike series was launched (BMW won the first-ever Superbike race with an R90S in 1976) and regularly running his own specials at the drag strips and Salt Flats. Capri currently holds a land speed record for a 162.472mph two-

way average at Bonneville on a prototype turbo-charged 2005 Triumph Bonneville.

Capri tells us Norton plans on shipping three machines for the Long Beach show – a black SE, a red SE and a yellow SE with a bikini fairing – all first-production SEs with carbon fiber wheels and adjustable suspension. Only 50 SEs (for "Special Edition") will come stateside; subsequent 961 Commandos will have spoke wheels and non-adjustable suspension.

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