



# The Beemer Reader

Newsletter of the BMW Riders of Vancouver Island

BMWMOA # 237

BMWRA #290

Volume 14, Number 04

April, 2004

## BMW Models

Monthly Draws accounts:

Cost: \$ 255 approx.

Revenue: \$ 361 =profit \$106\*

March winner: Paul Morrow

## THE MECHANIC & THE SURGEON

A mechanic was removing a cylinder head from the motor of a motorcycle when he spotted a well-known heart surgeon in his shop. The surgeon was there waiting for the service manager to come take a look at his bike.

The mechanic shouted across the garage, "Hey Doc, can I ask you a question?"

The surgeon, a bit surprised, walked over to the mechanic working on the motorcycle. The mechanic straightened up, wiped his hands on a rag and asked, "So, Doc, look at this engine. I open its heart, take valves out, fix 'em, put 'em back in and when I finish, it works just like new. So how come I get such a small salary and you get the really big bucks, when you and I are doing basically the same work?"

The surgeon paused, smiled and leaned over and whispered to the mechanic, "Try doing it with the engine running!"

## April showers bring May riding season.

April is a transition month between storing weather & riding weather.

With many members thinking of riding to the MOA National Rally in Spokane, WA, I am pleased to introduce a new segment to the newsletter, "Roads I Have Ridden" on page 2. Here, **Vince Martorino** will share some of his favourite trip destinations. He begins with a trip between Coeur d'Alene and Boise, Idaho. I hope you all get something from this segment. I reminisced about the route described because I used it when I went to the Grand Canyon. If you haven't explored this highway, put it at the top of your list after the National Rally. I want to thank Vince for his willingness to contribute.

Some members are already planning on attending the 49er Rally in Auburn, CA in May. If you're interested in joining them, let someone know at the meeting and make connections for this trip. It's a great ride south at this time of the year, and the rally is well worth while.

## Brigantine Ride – Sunday, April 18, 2004.

We will meet at the Tim Horton's near Save-On-Foods about 9:30 then form groups to ride to Maple Bay, Brigantine Pub. Last year we had great weather and a good turnout... let's make this year even better! See you there.

Happy motorcycling ...

Chris Jones

Contents Book Review.....p. 2, 3  
Roads I've Ridden.....p. 3  
An Aborted Trip.....p.4

Sunday, April 4, 2004  
Meeting is at 9:30 am  
At *The Chequered Flag*

**Book Review** *John Britten*

By Geoff Stevenson

If you're looking for a motorbike book to get you over the winter, consider a 2003 biography of John Britten by New Zealand journalist Tim Hanna.

Britten, the brilliant but complex scion of a wealthy land developer, and an extraordinary team of designers, engineers, machinists, mechanics and riders, produced the fastest two-cylinder race bike in the world during the 90s. (We are talking REAL speed here: A 300-pound bike that made around 165hp and could do top gear wheelies at around 150mph!)

The bikes were timed at close to 190 mph just over ten years ago on a public road in New Zealand - without much fairing and with race gearing. Insiders felt sure they could top 200mph with taller gearing and a better surface.

Tragically, Britten died of cancer in 1995 aged just 45. Only 10 bikes were built (the last two cost \$US100,000 each) and problems with his estate wound down the motorbike construction company shortly after his death. (But you can still buy Britten merchandise on line at [www.britten.co.nz](http://www.britten.co.nz))

The bikes, unmistakable with their carbon fibre backbones and girder forks and painted brilliant blue and pink (with Ming blue headers looking like a coiled cobra under the gas tank) blitzed tracks from New Zealand to Europe, but are probably best known in North America for a series of wins at Daytona.

Hanna's story is a fascinating saga of engineering innovations and their attendant challenges, team members routinely working from 8 a.m. to 3 a.m. next morning (and often more than 24 hours straight as race day approached), all under the inspiration of Britten himself, who worked the same hours, partied with the best of them - and always seemed to have a new project in his mind.

At one stage, Britten fabricated a carbon fibre connecting rod. A normal rod (Britten used titanium rods) might stretch a thousandth of an inch in heavy use; in testing, Britten's carbon fibre rod grew a quarter of an inch! (One of his patents was for carbon fibre motorbike wheels).

When he died, the Britten team was working on a single-cylinder 500cc race bike intended to weigh around 220lb and produce 90hp. (It was never completed, although the engine showed considerable promise in early development).

In the mid-90s, Britten was negotiating with two partners to revive the famous Indian marque.

Drawings were produced and hours of international negotiations led to tentative agreements, but the project never got onto the road, in part because of numerous U.S. legal challenges. (Indian was eventually reborn in the U.S., but that company ceased operations late last year).

One can only imagine what competition an Britten-engined Indian with something like 130hp for street use and weighing, say, 475 pounds, might have given Harley-Davidson.

Early Britten bikes were suspended on conventional telescopic forks. But Britten was convinced that girder forks would be better (we probably know them best on Vincents). This system, with its upper and lower wishbones, never really lived up to its potential and the book is full of accounts of riders wrestling their Britten bikes around the track to victory with the front end chattering all the way. Tough guys, those riders.

The darkest pages are about the death of Mark Farmer, a Britten rider, at the Isle of Man in 1994. Death and this course go hand in hand, alas (around 200 riders have been killed there), but with a small team, the pain and suffering are intense. Complicating this crash were rumors that (a) the bike had seized or (b) a structural failure had caused the crash. (Subsequent investigations showed no mechanical failure and blamed rider error for the mishap).

In the early days, people with amazing talent worked for little or no money. For a while, the suspension guru, who had an engineering PhD, was paid \$9NZ (about \$6 Canadian at the time) an hour! Weeks of 80 or more hours were Overtime was almost non-existent.

Britten's father died in 1990, leaving his land development company (a "substantial inheritance," the author tells us) to John. This often meant that John Britten worked conventional hours at the office, dashed home for a hour or so to see his wife and children, then headed over to the motorbike factory, often until the sun came up next morning.

The book includes some excellent photos, some of which show in detail the brilliant simplicity of the Britten bikes. With the engine as a stressed member, the bikes featured a front end and steering head sub-frame which bolted to the top of the engine.

The nose fairing, gas tank and seat assembly attached to the top of the rear cylinder of the 1000 cc V-twin and the rear end was suspended off the back of the Suzuki five-speed gearbox in BMW style (but with a double-sided carbon fibre swingarm). The rear spring/shock ran vertically down the front of the engine, attached by a

linkage that ran under the crankcase. The radiator was under the seat. A technical tour de force indeed. common.

Hanna writes honestly but compassion about Britten. A mechanical genius, he tended to flit from project to project and was not an easy man to work with. Hanna details two rather chilling episodes that made Britten awfully human for me: A kinked gas line (fitted by the boss) on a race bike that took hours to track down when the bike wouldn't run properly and a missing valve cap (left off by Britten) that had the rider complain about his vague front end (this at 150 mph plus) when he came into the pits, where a pressure gauge showed 10 psi in the tire!

Bolen Books tells me the book is not available in Canada. However, you can buy it through the publisher ([www.craigpotton.co.nz](http://www.craigpotton.co.nz)) or from the North American agents by e-mailing [motorcyclebrokers@hotmail.com](mailto:motorcyclebrokers@hotmail.com). It's \$NZ49.95 (about \$40Can). ☺

### Roads I have Ridden by Vince Martorino

*(Having ridden since I was 17, with many trips, I thought some may find them of interest.)*

#### Coeur d'Alene to Boise, Idaho. (8 – 10 hours)

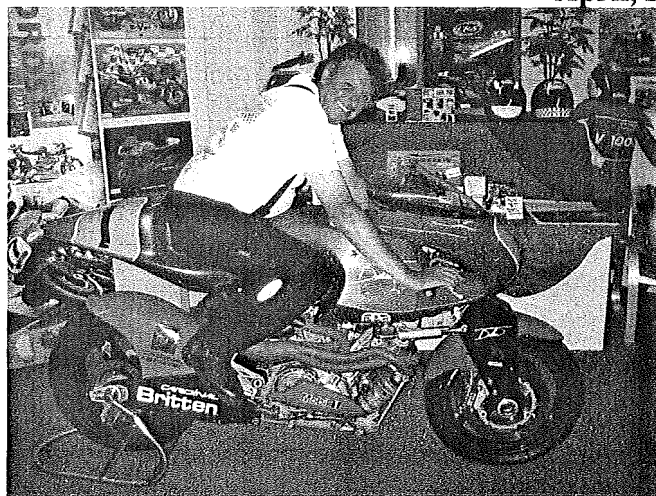
Once when I was on a trip to Reno, I rode from Coeur d'Alene to Boise, Idaho. This was a most enjoyable day. Leaving Coeur d'Alene on Highway 95, with an elevation of 2,157ft., you follow Coeur d'Alene Lake around which leads you into the river valleys with plenty of twisties. Suddenly, you just rise onto an open flat area and ride across farmlands. Just when you get used to that, the road begins a sharp descent through hard S curves down into the river valley ending in Lewiston pop. 28,000 & elevation of 738ft. where the Clearwater & Snake Rivers meet.

From Lewiston you wend your way back up to 3323 ft. to Grangeville. From here you follow along the Salmon R. with all its turns and slope down to Riggins pop. 400 & elevation of 1,800ft.

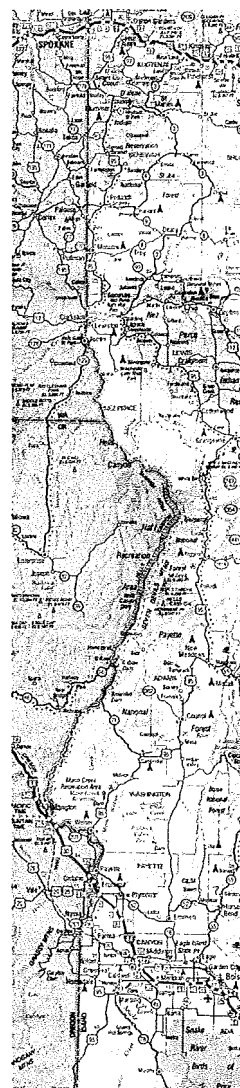
South of Riggins you turn left on Hwy 55 and cruise through forest areas of Patette National Forest which takes you to McCall at 5,025ft. Here it flattens out to a high plateau with grazing areas of large ranches.

You continue around the east side of the Cascade Reservoir and just about the time you get used to the flats, the road continuously and endlessly falls until Boise appears at 2739 ft.

The best part of this route is that it is not busy.



Here's Al Malone on a "Britten". Thanks for the photo taken while Al was visiting family in NZ.



## An Aborted Trip by Brian Hudson

Well, here is a funny? story! I had planned to spend a few days in the sunny south around Palm Springs & Phoenix, visiting friends. The idea was to accompany a friend who wanted to ride down, and carrying on into Mexico with a group of riders from Victoria. They are flying to Tucson and having their motorcycles trailered there.

The gods, in their wisdom, have intervened in my plans.

We crossed the border at Sumas at 1 PM on Sat. the 28th of Feb. fully expecting the weather to improve the farther south we went. Well, why not? Last year, in mid Feb., as I took my new 2002 KLR 650 to Cabo san Lucas, the weather DID improve as we transited Washington and Oregon. But by 5 we had had enough. It had rained off and on the whole time, and was quite cold. And little did we know what was in store for us.

We were up and away by 8 the next morning, heading for Grants Pass in southern Oregon, and the cold and rain increased throughout the day.

The electric vest worked marvelously, but the heated grips were not up to the wind chill factor, and, as I could have only one system on at a time, due to the constraints of the Kawasaki's electrical system, warming my body core had to take a back seat to trying to keep my hands warm, or risk being unable to control the motorcycle. The speed, (averaging 120 km's) the rain, and my poor circulation caused extreme pain and numbness in my right fingers, and to a lesser extent in my left, only alleviated by crossing my left hand over to the right handlebar, and controlling the speed and direction of the motorcycle in that somewhat precarious manner while I banged my right hand on my knee to return the circulation and some feeling to my right hand. Doug shook his head at this tactic, as he peered at me from behind the fairing of his BMW K100 RT, but he was used to seeing me do that, as that was the drill last year on our way to the Baja.

By the time we reached Grants Pass, though, I was getting my second wind, and suggested that we press on to Medford. That was vetoed, so to local Motel 6.

After a long hot shower to warm the outside, and a hot dinner for the inside, a look at the weather channel revealed an intense weather track (jet stream) originating up in the North Pacific, and extending down the coast of North America to LA and then heading east through southern Arizona and on into Texas. The 7 day forecast seemed to suggest that if I

continued south, I would be in rain and cold weather for a week. It was decision time.

Monday morning dawned to reveal rain and cold once more. The weather channel showed a one day window of opportunity in the northwest, so I bid Doug farewell and headed for home.

At 4 pm, between Olympia and Tacoma, in heavy rush hour traffic, the back end of the bike started to bounce up and down, as though I was on a washboard road. It seemed to quiet down as I slowed, but then increased forcing me to pull off to the side. Happily, it wasn't raining at the time. I discovered a rear tire almost flat. I could see no nails or other reason for the sudden deflation. What to do? The traffic was intense. Wind and debris swirled around. I started waving my hat to try and attract a good Samaritan, and eventually, a fellow biker stopped. He said that there was a motorcycle dealer back some three miles, but he didn't have a cell phone.

Then a semi trailer stopped. I ran up to his rig and climbed up to the cab. It revealed a large black man and his somewhat apprehensive wife? girlfriend? peering out from the sleeper section. He started to phone the AAA just as the police showed up, in the form of a young female officer. I thanked the trucker, and he left. After employing her array of electronic aids, the policewoman assured me that help was on the way. She left, and shortly thereafter, a tow truck arrived. Bob, the driver, tried his air bottle, but the tire lost air almost immediately, so he hoisted the bike up with straps and tie-downs, and off we went to the Cycle Mart.

As it turned out, this was the first Monday of the season that they were open, and yes, they could fix me up. The gods were smiling. At 6 pm, with a glorious sunset off to my left I hightailed it north to a motel in south Tacoma.

Tuesday dawned cold once more. No rain, but dense fog! Oh well, nothing to do but wait a while, as the TV was showing slowdowns and rear enders on I 5 heading north.

I was away by 9 am, and settled in for a fast ride, with a cold sun at my back.

A short delay at the border at Blain, and I squeaked onto the 1 pm ferry, one of the last vehicles to board. My luck was holding.

And here I am, home safe and sound. And really disappointed that my plans for some warm sun were thwarted.

## Buy, Sell, or Trade

**For Sale:** 1974 R90S- silver smoke. Completely disassembled for a frame off restoration including engine. Frame and swingarm stiffened and powder coated. Bike needs re-assembly. Asking \$2500.00  
R75/5 frame w/drive shaft, final drive good condition. \$300.  
Graham Sanh- 250-248-6934 or [sanhshine@shaw.ca](mailto:sanhshine@shaw.ca)

**For Sale:** 2002 BMW R1150RT Excellent Condition, No damage, Blue, 13,250 Km EVO brakes with full ABS, 6spd, heated grips, BMW hard saddle bags with top case, & professionally installed Pioneer Premier DEH-P440 AM/FM/CD/XM ready sound system with remote. Asking \$19,000 Dan Duchesne 478-6086

**For Sale:** 1980 R100T, with Hepco-Becker luggage, Reynolds rear rack, original BMW windshield and fog lights, and engine guards. 68,000 kms. Lots of recent new parts, service, restoring and cleaning. Engine and driveline oils just renewed, and output splines lubed 400 kms ago. All old parts kept, including original shocks. Also have extra "bean can" (points). The bike is a solid, no-issues airhead. The bike will qualify for a BC "collector" plate in a year. I am asking \$4500. Bike is in Port McNeill, BC  
Picture at <http://www3.telus.net/langplum/BMW1.jpg>  
Alan Langrish, (250) 956-3494

### BRIGANTINE PUB RIDE – SUNDAY APRIL 18.

**Tim Horton's – Vernon 9:30 am.**

*Notice: Any ads placed in the newsletter will run for two issues unless otherwise requested.*

#### \* Talbot's Unspeakable Law

If anything on your bike is working well, and you mention it, it will either break, or no longer work. Example: If you go up to a friend and say, "Gee, my bike is running clean today," sure enough, it'll probably seize later in that day.

#### \* Talbot's Unspeakable Law, Part II

If you say anything bad about your bike, it will happen. Example: "Those fork seals of mine always blow, especially when I'm doing well." This sort of comment just about assures a set of blown seals, usually when you're leading the pack on the steep downhill with the blind drop-away jump.

From the above two laws, one can see that it's best not to ever say anything about your bike.

### Calendar of Events

## Sun. Apr 4, 2004

Sat. May 1, 2004

Sun. June 6, 2004

Sat. July 3, 2004

Sun. August 8, 2004

Sat. September 11, 2004

Sun. October 3, 2004

Sat. November 6, 2004

Sun. December 5, 2004

Meeting at 9:30 am  
The Chequered Flag

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