

Your Biographies

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Your Biographies Tell us how you became interested in old BMWs

They say you meet the nicest people on a Honda.Â This old sales pitch may have some truth, but I believe you meet True friends on a BMW.Â

My experience with riding BMWâ€™s has been very limited by an old timerâ€™s standard.Â A few years ago, I realized that there was more to life than just work and I needed a hobby.Â I became enamored with the idea of the cycling lifestyle and the fun that it would bring to my commute to work each day.Â For months, I test road dozens of bikes available in the States, but I just couldnâ€™t find what I was looking for.Â After an exhaustive search for the perfect bike, a co-worker suggested I consider a BMW. BMW I questioned curiously? I was familiar with BMW for their quality cars, but hadnâ€™t considered them for their motorcycles. My friend commented that BMWâ€™s were unique machines and that their ownerâ€™s were a different breed of rider.Â He called the machines â€œa thinking manâ€™s bikeâ€ and they would probably appeal to my meticulous nature.

Not long after our conversation I acquired my first R1200cm.Â I appreciated its styling and performance for a cruiser and enjoyed its nostalgic appearance to the older generation BMW bikes. After riding for several years, I began to meet other BMW riders who shared my passion for these bikes.Â This is about the time I met John and Barbara Swift.Â

John and Barbaraâ€™s house was just down the street from my office and I used to walk by it during my afternoon lunch breaks.Â One afternoon, I noticed Johnâ€™s grey and red Montana was parked in front of his house and I had the opportunity to meet his wife, Barbara.Â She politely invited me to Johnâ€™s shop around back where John sat working on a 1953 R51 /3 restoration.Â Amidst the heavy smell of gear oil and gasoline, I made my way through his shop filled wall to wall with antique bikes and parts scattered throughout.Â John was busy putting the finishing adjustment on the valves as we shook hands and began to talk about his treasure of antiques in various phases of restoration. One particular piece of pride was a rare R51/2 dusty and neglected by time. John mustered up a grin behind his burly beard as he reminisced about another treasure, an r60 /2 that he called Brunhilda.Â I was immediately hooked by these vintage treasures and inquired about becoming involved with restoring these antique works of art.

Anyone whoâ€™s ever been around him long understands Johnâ€™s favorite phrase is â€œMisery Loves Companyâ€. So I soon known he was up to something when he invited me on a trip to Boxerworks in Athens, Georgia to pick up a rare 1955 R69.Â Though he was excited about his find, I think John was more excited about introducing me to Nathan and his staff.Â We made haste in our journey to Athens, so there would be time to check out any hidden treasures Nathan was harboring. One surprise was an original â€™52 Steib S501 Luxus that we managed to fit on our trailer.Â It and the R67/2 Nathan sent with us somehow became my first rig.Â

The rig that we now affectionately call Oprah (sheâ€™s very forgiving, has a wide bottom and the side car explains the sudden weight gain) has been shelved to finish another plunger project discovered by Todd Rasmussen; a 1953 R51 /3.Â Todd generously shared his find with John who in turned passed along the opportunity to me.Â Whatâ€™s more rare than these vintage machines are the friendships created by restoring them.Â John, Todd and Richard Sheckler have all been very generous with their time and sharing their expertise.Â Though the bikes are fun to restore and take out onto the open road, the real fun liesâ€™ in the bonds created by the unique friendships created by these vintage machines.Â A member of the club once said that he had lots of acquaintances and had met some of the nicest people over the years, however, most of his lasting friendships were either vintage restorers or guys who had ties to riding bikes.Â

Best Regards,
Steve Foster

(Ed Note: Steve created and currently maintains our club website. Visit www.bmwvmca.org)