

BLACK SWAMP BEEMER

RA Chapter #1273

BMW Riders of Toledo

MOA Chapter #16

PUBLISHER BETH SCHWARTZ Volume No. 10
Date JANUARY 2002

January meeting will be at the banquet

The banquet will be held on January 26th at Maggie's restaurant in Perrysburg, Located on route 25. The address 25481 North Dixie hwy. The banquet will begin at 6:30pm. The cost to attend Banquet will be \$16.00 per person you must RSVP to attend. Please RSVP to Gary Haydel. Make checks payable to BMW Riders Of Toledo. Send to Gary at : 134 Vineyard, Rossford Ohio 43460. You must RSVP. Call Gary at 419-666-3126 Gary requests money be to him by January 20th.

Reminder meetings are held normally the second Tuesday of each month.

Officers For 2002

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NEWSLETTER

BLACK SWAMP BEEMER

BMW RIDERS OF TOLEDO JANUARY 2002

MINUTES for NOVEMBER

Minutes for October were accepted as printed in November newsletter.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Bart described a drive to southern Ohio that he and his wife took. Bart and Bill Rouston were talking about getting more organized for next years rides. Rally's , evening rides. Trying to plan some rides. Getting 3 or more people together to ride. They are asking anyone who would be interested in riding together please put your name on a list at next meeting. Then the person organizing a ride can call the people on the list. They ask for a list of three places to bring to next meeting for anyone interested in riding together. Bart also got letter from BMW MOA club coordinator for us to fill out to continue our charter. This will be completed by secretary and sent in.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Delbert thanked Gary for letting us use his house for the meeting. Delbert brought information on BMWMOA FOUNDATION. If interested in this please contact Delbert. January 12-13th RA Southeastern hotel campin and meeting. It is in Marietta Ohio call Sheila at 800-331-9337 if interested.

SECRETARY REPORT

The newsletter is coming along. Sheits added some things to their add. They have storage in the winter and Eric to service your BMW. Beware there are motorcycle thieves about protect your bike. There are currently seven bikes missing in the Toledo area. Please call me or contact me concerning any e-mail or address and phone corrections.

TREASURER REPORT

We got our deposit back from East Harbor State Park. Disbursements for postage. The report was accepted as given.

ROAD CAPTAIN REPORT

We had decided on January 19th for banquet. That date was taken so banquet is being moved to **January 26th**. The motorcycle expo will be coming up in February it's the first weekend. Anyone interested in car pooling let us know at next meeting.

The dates are February 1st to 3rd.

WEBMASTER

Not present.

OLD BUSINESS

Committee for patch has not met yet. OK we are well organized in this department. T-shirts still some Remaining.

NEW BUSINESS

Nominations for club officers. Guess what we are all the same people. Questions contact any of us . Bart, Delbert, Beth, Don, Gary, Wade.

On the following pages is an article about one of our own that was in the MOA magazine. This is an excellent write up that many of you who do not get MOA may have not seen.

Please enjoy see you at the banquet.

Young Men on Old Men's Machines

By Robert Lardinais #15772

It was with some sadness that I saw the notice of Ambassador Don Arquette's passing. No doubt many in the BMW fraternity knew Don (or "Jack" as his family called him) better than I but I was privileged to know him in the early days. I met Don in 1955. He and I rode many miles together until I moved away from Toledo, Ohio in '59. We continued to keep in contact but as the years passed we gradually lost touch. We bumped into each other at a few BMW MOA National Rallies but the last time I saw him was at the Duquoin Rally in 1992.

Don sold BMWs from 1955 until sometime in the late '60s. He was passionate about BMWs and was instrumental in getting the brand established in northwestern Ohio. (Instrumental? He was practically an entire orchestra!) BMWs were a tough sell in those days. The riders of fast British bikes and the Harley riders (who thought their bikes were fast) were openly contemptuous of those "old men's" machines. It took a while, but when they found out that the Beemers could hold their own in contests of speed, attitudes began to change.

The first time I saw or even heard of a BMW was in 1955 at Borer Bros. Triumph & BSA shop in Toledo. Borer Bros. was as much a social club as it was a dealership. Al and Jim Borer kept the refrigerator stocked with pop and beer. The riders would help themselves, feeding the kitty on the honor

system. We younger riders would hang around and listen to the older riders (anyone over 30) dispense their wisdom about motorcycles. Don Arquette had just returned from a tour of duty with the Army in Germany and had brought his 1952 R68 home with him. He would occasionally drop in at the shop for an evening of socializing. One of the regulars had a Sunbeam so I was not unfamiliar with shaft drive machines but I was impressed with BMW whereas I was not with the Sunbeam. I had just bought a new BSA and no one in the area sold BMWs so at that time I didn't seriously consider owning one.

In spring of '56 I was attending a function at the Travelers' Motorcycle

Club when the head gasket on the BSA blew. It was one in a series of problems that the Beezer had succumbed to and I was fed up. Al Borer was tending bar and I approached him about trading for a Triumph.

"See me tomorrow when I'm sober," he told me. "Fair enough," I thought. I'd have to see him the next day to buy a head gasket anyway. Don was aware that the BSA wasn't rideable and offered to take me home. The tiny pillion pad on the rear fender and the plunger suspension didn't look very comfortable but I couldn't be choosy. I climbed on and when Don wound out through the gears and sped down the highway I was impressed. That BMW was fast and smooth. Incredibly smooth! The next day I bought a head gasket but I didn't mention trade. Al didn't sell what I wanted next.

Don had acquired the BMW franchise for northwestern Ohio in early '56. He sold his first bike to Al Siek, one of my riding buddies. Al had been riding a '51 Matchless twin and he took delivery of a new R50. If I needed any further inducement to switch to BMW, riding with Al provided it. The more I saw of the BMW the better I liked it.

Initially, Don sold motorcycles out of his residence. After he went into partnership with Ray Elieff in 1957 they opened a shop in the Point Place district of Toledo. They also sold Benelli for a while and then NSU. Ray had a Zundap KS601 a 600cc shaft



drive flat twin like the BMW. He sold the Zundap and they got an R50 as a demonstrator.

The BSA blew its engine in Yellowstone Park in August '56. I sold it (cheap) in Cody, Wyoming and rode home on the back of my buddy Dave Benore's Triumph T-110. The first thing I did after arriving home was to contact Don and order a new R69.

Don was still working out of his garage at that time. I can still visualize myself helping Don wipe the cosmoline off the gleaming black beauty sitting in his backyard. For a break-in trip, he, Jim Cosgrove (who had a 1956 BSA Road Rocket), and I rode to Springmill State Park in southern Indiana. The R69 proved to be all that I hoped it would—and more.

The Stahl brothers owned one of the two local Harley Davidson sales. The two younger ones were always trying to suck someone into a race against one of their souped-up Harleys. I had just over 600 miles on the R69 when one of the brothers caught me on my BMW one day and pulled me over. With him was one of my neighbors who had recently bought a new Harley "74." Stahl said he was curious about the new German machine—like, was it fast? They wanted to clock me. I knew it was a ploy but I was willing. We rode over the state line into Michigan onto a new stretch of four-lane highway that hadn't been opened to traffic yet. The R69 had a low first gear and the Harleys got the jump on me but I soon caught and passed them. Stahl's bike was souped-up and was 80c.i. Eventually he passed me but couldn't pull on me. We were strung out with me in the middle going an indicated 105mph. Stahl was impressed but I wasn't; Al Siek's R50 was faster. When I complained to Don, he told me to be patient. He said the bike was built to close tolerances and would take a lot more than 600 miles to break in. I was skeptical but he was right; when it finally did break in I was no longer disappointed. The R69 gained a reputation as a bike to be

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respected.

Since Don had the R50 to ride, he started modifying his R68. He had ridden moto-cross on it in Europe and had entered a couple enduros after he returned to the States. Some of us rode up to Windsor, Ontario with him one Sunday and he entered the R68 in an enduro there. He caught the cylinders between two closely spaced trees and sheared the woodruff key in the driveshaft. He got a ride into town and somehow found a hardware open on a Sunday and bought a woodruff key. He repaired the driveshaft and rode the bike back to Toledo.

Don started to set up the R68 as a dragster. The engine had a lot of miles on it and he had bored it out .010". That was the only work done to the engine. He installed megaphone exhausts and made velocity stacks for the pipes which he re-jetted. Then he worked on lightness. Don removed everything that he could. When he was satisfied that it was running right, he asked me to ride along on the R69 and clock him. We turned it on together on a lonely straight road in Michigan and the old R68 just flat ran away from the R69.

We used to cross over into Michigan to do high-speed runs, not only because of the straight flat roads, but because Ohio had a speed limit of only 50mph whereas Michigan's was whatever was deemed "safe and proper." (The problem was that your notion of what was safe and proper might not coincide with the arresting officer's.)

Don rode the R68 up to the drag strip in Tecumseh, Michigan that was run by the local hot rod club. A few purpose-built dragsters ran there but most of the competitors ran streetrods. There were enough cars to run different classes but the bikes were too few to have separate classes. The riders had to sort themselves out and try not to pair a 1000cc Vincent against a 125cc Allstate. An exception was the dragster

class. Don competed in that class. And won! It wasn't a fluke; he won more than one trophy. (A photo hung on his shop wall showing the R68 towing a Harley with a blown engine back to the start line.)

The Stahls got wind of Don's modified BMW and whichever one had "clocked" me came calling. He had done additional work to his bike since then and challenged Don to a race. He reminded Don that there is no substitute for cubic inches and offered to put on his sidecar as a handicap. Don accepted the challenge but told him to leave off the sidecar. That day, Stahl

John was a rider's
rider; he wore real
leathers and thought
nothing of starting
out in a storm. And
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found out that quality is an acceptable substitute for cubic inches. Jim Miller, the only Harley rider in our group, told us that Stahl was so devastated that he took his bike back to the shop where he tore it down to try to figure out what had gone wrong. (Miller later switched to BMW. In fact, it was he who introduced me to BMW MOA.)

Cosgrove traded his BSA for an R60 in 1957. Although the R60 wasn't as fast as the R69, considering the difference in price, most people found them fast enough.

In August 1957, Don, Jim, and I rode to Phoenix to visit Jim's family. I had a windshield and leather saddlebags. Jim had a windshield and a pair of ammunition boxes. (One box held clean underwear and the other carried cigarettes.) Don had neither windshield nor saddlebags. He strapped a huge trunk on the back in which he carried enough tools to overhaul a BMW.

Jim's stepbrother Ralph owned part of a mountain north of Phoenix, so one day, with Jim's brother Bob riding passenger to guide us, we explored Ralph's mountain. We rode over Jeep and horse trails to an abandoned mine. It was here that Don had to dig out his tools for the only time on the trip. He needed tire irons to repair a flat on the R50. Our bikes carried us for endless miles across the plains, over mountains, through desert heat and night time cold, and never missed a beat.

Don worked days at the Jeep plant and worked evenings and Saturdays at the shop. When Don and Ray opened Quality Cycle Sales, I began to spend my time there instead of Borer Bros. Don patiently tutored me in basic BMW maintenance and minor repair. I credit him with whatever ability I have to work on my bikes. Of course, I wasn't the only one to hang around the shop. In way of recognition of another longtime BMW rider and MOA member, I would like to include an excerpt from one of my journals:

"Even during the winter, we would sit around the shop, huddled near the too-small stove. More than one evening after the less hardy had arrived by car (myself included), we would hear the roar of a barely-muffled BMW as the rider geared down for the curve then wound it out as he approached the shop. The door would burst open, and accompanied by howling wind and possibly rain or snow, John Szabo would walk in. John was a rider's rider; he wore real leathers and thought nothing of starting out in a storm. And he rode a pink BMW. But let me digress.

"Before he went into the U.S. Army, John rode an old Harley and took the corners sitting straight up. When he was sent to Germany, he bought a 250cc two-stroke Puch and a 1952 R68, both of which he brought back with him. He learned to really ride by riding with the Germans. The first time I saw him after he returned, he was on the Puch. The Puch was a good bike but it was a slug. Nevertheless, when I tried to follow John through traffic on my R69 I could barely keep

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up. He could handle that bike!

"But what about the pink BMW?" you ask. Well, we called it pink to tease John but it was more like lavender. John had it painted purple and it faded. In those days, BMWs were like Henry's Fords: any color you wanted as long as it was black. John took his bike and the page from a calendar to a paint shop in Germany and asked the painter to paint it 'that color.' The painter flat-out refused. He adamantly insisted that the only color for a BMW was black. John had to offer him way too much money before the man sold out his principles and grudgingly agreed to paint it purple. As he left the shop, John heard the painter mutter something about 'crazy Americans.'"

After moving to Marion, Ohio in November 1959 I still tried to keep in touch with the old gang. Don began running an NSU in road races and I rode to Mosport, Ontario to watch him race. I don't think he did all that well but he had fun.

Sometime in the '60s Don bought out Ray Elicff's share of the business and moved Quality Cycle Sales to a new modern shop near his home.

The Borer brothers sold their Triumph/BSA dealership and retired sometime in the 1960s. They promptly bought BMWs.

Don sold the BMW dealership in (I think) the late '60s. After that, we kind of lost touch.

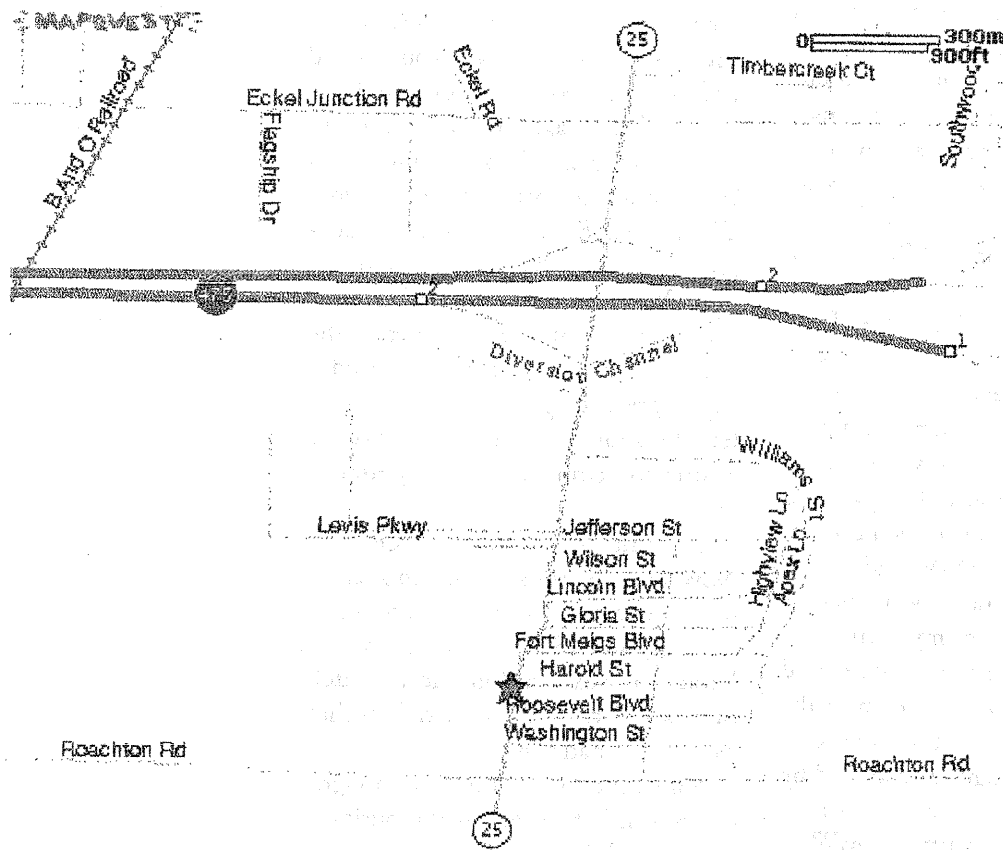
With the ascendance of the Japanese bikes the world changed. The Brits went out of business and Harley almost did. BMW also struggled to hang on. Those of us who hung on along with it saw the company recover and prosper. Perhaps I would have eventually gravitated to BMW on my own, but Don Arquette played a major role in bringing me and many others into that fraternity sooner instead of later. For that, I am exceedingly grateful. Thanks, Don. ●

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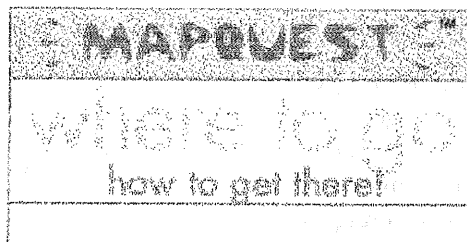
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