

Time Machines

By Daniel Pace #98766



My grandfather was a fireman on a steam locomotive, born in 1906. He used to say to me when I brought up the subject of motorcycles, “I had a motorcycle; I took a spill every day!” To an eight-year-old motorcycle nut like me, I could only wonder why he didn’t have a motorcycle now and why he took a spill everyday. All I heard was that it was a great big four-cylinder Indian. Also something about barbed wire, chickens in the road and you could not stop it. The story he most liked to tell was how he would push his motorcycle down the street for blocks so that he wouldn’t disturb my grandma’s parents.

I was too young then to understand the glory days and romance back then or how a motorcycle could take you back in time. Now it’s like paying an outrageous price for a vintage bottle of wine; it’s a passageway to good old times.

But this story is really about Bruce Davidson, BMW MOA #1074, a mechanic for anyone that ever needs help with a BMW Airhead or time machine. Bruce is an expert in repairing and restoring classic and vintage BMW motorcycles. He has a shop in Pantego, Texas, a little east of Fort Worth.

I first met Bruce while looking for a battery for my 2002 R1150R. Finding all the dealers closed on a Monday, at last I called Bruce’s shop, Boxers by Bruce and, although he was closed also, he said

***Facing Page:** Bruce Davidson test rides one of his latest restorations, a 1966 R69S that originally belonged to Mike Randall, BMW MOA #14. The 1966 R69S looks “showroom new” now. Bruce powder-coated the frame and had the the bolts and nuts electroplated. He called in other specialists to paint and do the pin stripping. A new seat, turn signals, mufflers and speedometer were added.*



Bruce Davidson at his shop, Boxers by Bruce, in Texas.

he had one and would wait around the shop doing paperwork until I rode the 60 miles to get there. When I arrived, Bruce took me on a tour of his shop and we spent the rest of the day drinking coffee and talking. I went to get a battery and I bought my first Airhead, a 1976 R75/6.

Bruce had just rebuilt the motor and transmission spent hours telling me how to take care of my new bike. The summer passed and I visited his shop occasionally watching the restoration progress of a 1966 R69S that originally belonged to Mike Randall, BMW MOA #14. Mike and some other people started the club known as BMW MOA we now all belong to. Bruce powder-coated the frame and had the correct type of electroplating done to the bolts and nuts. He called in other specialists to paint the tank and fenders, and another to do the pin stripping. A new seat, turn signals, mufflers and speedometer were added. Another expert was called in to make up the wiring harness. The bike is now finished and looks “showroom new.” Just like it was when Mike Randall was riding it.

Whenever I go to Bruce’s shop, I fall into some kind of time warp, hours pass and you think it’s been a few minutes. I know it’s time to go when my jaw hurts from grinning too hard and I can no

longer talk. I wanted to share some of Bruce’s history with the rest of the members and asked him to fill us in. This is how it went.

***Daniel:** When did you first get into motorcycles and why BMW?*

Bruce: My first bike was a Yamaha twin jet 100cc. I was 17 years old. But there was this BMW ad campaign in a magazine featuring a Nebraska farmer named Danny Liska. The ad showed Danny taking a trip to Alaska in 1958 on a BMW motorcycle. Later I saw where he went down to Tierra del Fuego and another ad showing Danny with this African tribesman wanting to trade 12 goats and several wives for his R60 on another trip. I wanted to travel like Danny did and those ads really appealed to me. Later, I got to meet Danny at a BMW MOA rally in Rapid City, South Dakota. He was selling a book he had written about his travels. He was pulling the R60 that he wrote about on a trailer behind a 1957 Cadillac. The Cadillac’s battery went dead and I remember helping him get it started with jumper cables. I still have an autographed copy of his book.

Another big impression was made the time my Yamaha broke down on the side of the road in Connecticut. I was trying

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to clean a fouled spark plug with some sand and my toothbrush, when a stranger on an old plunger BMW stopped to give me some help.

When did you buy your first BMW motorcycle?

It was in 1971; a 1962 R69S from Brattin BMW in San Diego. I joined the BMW MOA in 1973 or 1974. Back then, the club newsletter, now *BMW ON*, was only three or four pages long!

How did you get started working on BMW motorcycles?

There was a mechanic at Brattin BMW named Dan Cooley who took me under his wing. He would loan me his drain pan and I would change the oil on my bike on the street in back of his shop. Later he showed my how to balance the carburetors.

When did you go to work for a BMW dealer?

I worked for my first BMW shop in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, in 1985 for a man named Stan Meyers. His dealership was out back of a farmhouse, behind a chicken coup. The showroom was about 10' x 12'. Later, the factory made him sell it as he didn't want to move to a better location. That's where I bought my first new BMW. It was a 1973 green R75/5 toaster that I made a good deal on because that color green wasn't selling and it was a leftover from the previous year. The price was \$2,400.

Where do you like to ride these days?

The Texas hill country is good. I like to go to local rallies and see my friends. I also belong to the BMW DFW (Dallas Fort Worth) local club #26.

What are your goals for the future?

I'm restoring a /5 that will be a "99 pointer." That means that in a show it will be judged almost 100-percent original as it came from the factory. I would like to do only restoration work but right now that's not enough to keep the shop going.

Like I've said, I think Bruce and his work is fascinating. If you're in the area, stop by his shop: *Boxers by Bruce*, 3620-4 Graves Boulevard, Pantego, TX 76013; 817-265-8065.



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