



BASKET BOXER BMW

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IN 1993 I FOUND MY FIRST BMW motorcycle from an ad that was on my dealer's bulletin board, "For sale, hi-miles 1983 R100RS, \$1,000.00." It was a high mileage (117,000 miles) bike with a loose bearing in the bottom end. After riding it for a bit, I took it apart to keep me from making things worse. I sent the short block to Capital Cycle to measure the bearing surfaces and provide me with the correct inserts and end play washers. I expected Capital to send back a reassembled short block and was surprised to find all of the parts packed nicely but loose in the box that UPS delivered to my office. I was destined to learn how to put a Boxer engine together, and in 1994 I was not Internet savvy and I did not think that the "Airheads" even existed.

It was an interesting winter in my coal cellar with my kerosene heater and Clymer manual; I kept a clean Haynes book on my night stand for bed time reading. After a winter of slow assembly, I fired up the RS on the Thursday before the Modus, CT, BMW MOA rally; after a 20-minute ride I called a friend so we could ride northeast together. The newly assembled R100RS took me the 560 miles to Connecticut on Friday, as I was excited to attend my very first BMWMOA National Rally. Saturday found me next to my tent torquing the heads and adjusting the valves; with an oil and filter change, I was ready for the 560-mile Sunday ride home. I later sold the 1983 R100RS for \$3000 to buy a garage-bound 1977 R100/7, only to discover that I was hooked by the search for long idle or basket-case boxers.

The /7 had been ignored in a local garage for seven years. The previous owner had purchased a Gold Wing and forgot about this grand German touring motorcycle. I sold its Luftmeister fairing and Shoei trunk for \$100, for a net cost of \$900. Seventeen years and 90K miles later, it is still an active bike in my collection.

A decade later a friend directed me to a garden shed just north of Pittsburgh. With much anticipation I opened the garden shed to find a gold 1978 R100RS propped in the corner. The engine had been disassembled 12 years earlier with a seized bottom end. The owner had either lost interest, forgot how to put it back together or both. Another \$1000 spent and the RS was in the

back of a pickup for the return to my shop.

The fairing sections were removed, and since the engine was in a bad way, I took all of the parts, minus the fiberglass, to Bob Bancroft of Bancroft Motorworks in Kinsman, Ohio for repair. An old high school friend did the paint, and with Bob's help we turned this boxer-basket into a good looking, but not overdone, motorcycle. It is a bike that I am not afraid to ride. Thirty-thousand miles later I still enjoy sitting in my garage following a ride with a beer while looking at that BMW's perfect form.

Six weeks ago I was looking at a duplex when I spied a basket-case BMW sitting, covered with years of grime, through the dirty glass of a run-down garage. I moved the rock holding the door closed to find a 1970 R75/5 sitting alone in the middle of this neglected outbuilding. The cylinder heads, carbs and most of the other parts were sitting in boxes encircling the rough carcass of a motorcycle.

As I was not in the market for another BMW, I offered that seller \$200 for this rude collection of parts. The house owner advised that it belonged to her husband and he was giving it to a friend who liked cycles. I said I was disappointed and left my number. I was semi-relieved, as I did not need another project as space is at a premium in my shop. A month later she called and said that \$200 would put the parts on my trailer.

My first inclination was to part out the bike for a profit, but after organizing all of the loose parts into related piles, I realized that I had a complete machine and a new project for the following year. It is hard for

Left: Sometimes I just sit in my garage enjoying an Iron City Beer with a cigar while admiring these perfect motorcycles. L-R 1970 R75/5 my accidental BMW, 1977 R100/7 fake S/GS and my 1978 R100RS.

Right, Top to Bottom: A 2002 rumor led me to this garden shed south of Butler, PA, where I found this seized 1978 R100RS.

My RS pausing at Manitoulin Island's Gore Bay during a 2009 circumnavigation of Canada's Georgian Bay.

Cleaning the jets between practices at 2008's NASCAR at the Glen, ending a perfect three-week roundtrip from Pittsburgh to Bar Harbor, Maine.





Top: Front and rear of newly acquired 1970 R75/5. As I do not have the patience for a restoration and have an extra set of RS handle bars, this R75 is going to be a café racer. The R75/5 as it was discovered in a shabby garage, an accidental find that fell in my lap.

me to interrupt the being of a complete motorcycle merely for profit. I replaced the stock handle bars with a set of flat RS bars from my shelf and I had an idea of how the finished product would look.

Over the last 15 years I might have put \$6000-7000 total into the purchase, maintenance, tires and repairs on my 1977 R100/7 and 1978 R100RS bikes. The new /5 boxer-basket is a project that will fill some spare time and make for a great third motorbike. I am now reviewing parts diagrams and computer stores for missing pieces and reading the clean Haynes manual that is still next to my bed. \$7000 spent on my three current BMWs gives me more grins per dollar than any other motorcycles that I can imagine, and the rush of discovery keeps me peering into sheds and barns for my next airhead Boxer-basket.

Addendum

During an unsuccessful quest for the neglected BMW motorcycle, a man yelled out of the house as to why I was peeking in his garage door window. I introduced myself and explained that I did not think that anyone was home. He replied that he was and what was my business? I told him of my old BMW Airhead motorcycle problem and he laughed and said that he was similarly afflicted.

He took me into his garage and there sat two motorcycles, an R100RT and an R100S being restored. He was also a seller of used BMW parts; he showed me a short block out of a 1979 R100RS that he wanted to sell to finance the work on his RT and S. He further advised that he hated shipping engines and transmissions because of the packing problem and preferred to sell them locally.

As three of my "basket boxers" were purchased with bottom end problems, I wanted a good short block on my shelf for my next find. He wanted three hundred; I countered with a deuce and we settled for \$225. This soul of an engine has been sitting, wrapped in plastic, on my top shelf for three years. I am waiting for the right R100GS or GSPD and I will begin my next "dogstoration." (A good friend nicknamed my 1977 R100/7 the "DOG" based on its looks and color scheme, old gray paint with a primer "S" fairing.) So the term that I use when fixing up my baskets is dogstoration; they are not showroom or concours, but I will ride them anywhere.