

The Thrill of the Hunt

By Howard "Butch" Kleeb #87663

I t had been more than 10 years since I had ridden a motorcycle, when my good friend, John, gave me the opportunity to ride again. I had always coveted a BMW and his R100GS, aka, Bumble Bee was love at first sight. When John decided to move to an HD, I jumped at the chance to own a classic BMW.

Initially, closing in on age 60, I expected to be a casual rider, but riding the "Bee" was infectious. Within three years I had logged as many miles as John had in eight years. The Bee always evoked curious looks and conversation and was an absolute joy to ride. A thirst for a little more power and comfort had me test riding every 1150cc BMW on the market.

I finally decided the R1150R was a great compromise, devoid of all the plastic but the same power plant as all the other models. I wanted a black one and I really didn't care about ABS. Well, welcome to the 21st Century. With a simple click of the mouse on eBay at 3 a.m. and I was the high bidder on a 2002 black R1150R. This did not go sit with my wife, since the R100GS was still in the garage.

Selling the Bee was a difficult decision. If I could have afforded two bikes, it would still be in the garage. Fortunately, the next day the Bee sold. More importantly it was bought by a former GS rider who knew exactly what he wanted....a "Bumble Bee." The fact that the new owner was a former stunt rider

and featured in the first 20 seconds of the movie "Black Rain" gave the transaction a bit of spice and greatly relieved some of my guilt for letting her go to just anyone.

After months of riding and logging a quick 5,000 miles, I was well, sort of still hunting. I couldn't put my finger on it. Was it all that new 1200cc technology, power and less weight BMW was selling? Nothing gave me that warm fuzzy feeling. So I started trying to make my R1150R a little more appealing. Bar backs, lower foot pegs, a Sergeant seat and I felt I had a naked RT. I was almost there. Then a four-car back up on a two lane stretch of highway caused me to hit the left turn signal, roll it on in 5th gear, pop into 6th and in a blink of an eye I was alone. A quick glance at the speedometer and I was amazed to see the needle dropping back below 100+mph. Yep, I had all the power I needed as well.

So, I'm leaning back in my chair smiling at the attached photo, which is now my computer background. I realized, while the Bee was gone I had found a Wasp to replace her and that warm fuzzy feeling was back.

The hunt is over! (For now!) ●



Butch Kleeb is 63 years old and married with three daughters and two grandsons. After 34 years in the airline business, Butch retired and began a school bus driving career. His other love is sailing a 30-foot Pearson sailboat on the Chesapeake Bay. Both are eerily close in their sensation of being on the edge and flying free as a bird.