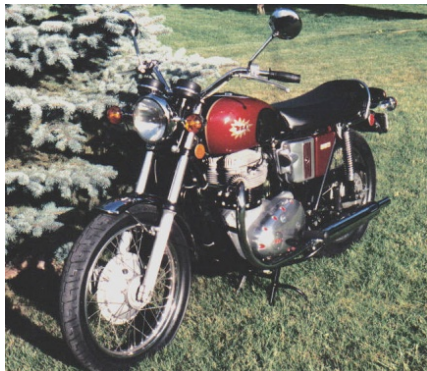


16. “Old Junky Bike” Told Again - By: Joe Taminski

As the story goes, I was standing in the garage with my friends and my grandpa was getting ready to fire it up. I was three years old at the time, and the occasion was the starting of the “Old Junky Bike.” Well, that is what I called it, but it is really a 1971 BSA Thunderbolt. I will never forget that sound, and as I was hypnotized, all of my friends ran away because of the noise. It was the sound of backfiring caused by a poorly tuned carburetor. Since I was three I cannot remember everything, but grandpa told me that I was the only spectator to give him moral support while he made the necessary adjustments so it will run right. At the time, though, I was more interested in his other motorcycle. I really did not understand what the whole British bike thing was all about. Grandpa also had a Honda CBX, and I really liked it. I did not get into the classic motorcycles until my early teens, but I will get to that later. It took my grandpa a couple of years to restore the old beast, and he likes to call it a budget restoration but really and truly he was **cheap** because he didn't really have any money on him to spend on it. If someone were to tell him this, he will never admit or even use the word cheap.



Not restored, all of the defective parts are removed. Notice the original mufflers.



Original Restoration notice the mufflers, the Triumph gas tank, and the red accent marks on all of the engine parts.

notice. Even though it was small, it really improved the look of the bike. Since the stock bike came with just a speedometer, it looked unbalanced so grandpa customized the mounting system and added a tachometer. This is how the motorcycle looked for the majority of its life. The motorcycle was shown at the 1993 Battle of the Brits show at Freedom Hill for the first time. Sadly, however, he had to sell it a couple of years later. Luckily, he sold it to a close friend of his so it was not gone forever.

His friend did pass away and his estate went up for sale. Grandpa got wind of this and jumped at the opportunity to buy the BSA back. It took him a while and a fight but he succeeded. When I turned thirteen, I started to like the BSA a lot better than the Honda. I hit that stage where I got into the old muscle cars, and of course, the motorcycles went with it since they were from the same time period. It was about this time that I got possession of my uncle's freshly built Triumph which I liked a lot better. It was a west coast style motorcycle, and it handled a lot like a dirt bike. This was great because I only rode dirt bikes, so I was very comfortable. Grandpa did something that I cannot still believe; he traded the Honda for the Triumph for me. I still cannot live this one down. Well, I was learning to ride on the Triumph and I still made fun of his BSA. I always said, “Pop you can't polish a

Before I jump into the rest of my story, I will set aside a paragraph for my grandpa. When he bought the bike, he knew that it was the ugliest motorcycle BSA had ever made. His plan was to change the stock version and make it more appealing to the eye. The first thing to go was the original mufflers, and they were replaced with the 1968 Lightening peashooter style. His dream muffler was to fit the Gold Stars, but they did not make a matching pair for the Gold Star had only one cylinder. Plus, these mufflers were very expensive. He replaced the stock BSA gas tank with its Triumph counterpart from the Bonneville. West Coast style bars were also fitted because that is all he could find at the time. He really wanted to find original European style bars, but they were scarce and expensive. Everything else was original, or refurbished.

Actually the exhaust pipes are original, and they were not re-chromed or anything. Grandpa also highlighted accent parts, in red, around the engine cases and front brake. This is one of those little changes that people do not



Helena (my girlfriend) and I on the Triumph.

tyrd.” Therefore, I rode the Triumph for a couple of years and took it to the Battle of the Brits. When I was 15, I took it to the Battle of the Brits and won first place in the daily rider’s class. After I hit 16 I started getting bigger and taller, and I made the bike look small. It still was comfortable to ride, but it just looked too small for me.

The big change was when I met my girlfriend, and I took her to the Battle of the Brits, a couple of years after I won first place. I rode her around the park. With the two of us on it, there was no bike to be seen. We just buried it. The BSA made a big change at this time as well; the bike got a fresh new tank and paint job because the old tank broke a weld. Before he bought a new Triumph tank, Grandpa installed the original 1971 BSA gas tank for a period of time. When it was on, I preferred the look because it made the bike look more streamline and sleek. In the end, he found another Bonneville tank and had it restored with a new brighter color. It came time again for selling a motorcycle and I told him that it was all right to sell the Triumph, even though he passed it down to me. I felt he could get more money for the Triumph than the BSA. He did sell it, but still insisted that he must pass down a motorcycle to me. So of course, the BSA was the candidate. I liked it a lot better than the Triumph because since the bike was bigger it fit me a lot better. In addition, when Helena rode with me we were more comfortable. This is ironic because the bike that I called “Old Junky Bike” and the comments I made “Pop’s, you cannot polish a tyrd” was now the bike I owned. I did like how it looked, however, but I had a few ideas of my own.



see

[These are the Gold Star mufflers I fitted to it. Also, it has the newly painted Triumph tank](#)

same

a new Triumph Thruxton. This was the first time I ever rode a café racer style motorcycle. I fell in love with the riding position, and I just loved the feel of cornering on it. I could not stop grinning that day, as I went back to my grandpa’s house I started to really look at the BSA for other changes I could make. Finally, I concluded that I wanted to turn it into a café racer, but I was not sure on how I was going to do it.

I guess I found out why I called it the “Old Junky Bike” many years ago. It was not until this problem arose that I realized how smart I was when I was three years old. The new Bonneville tank, with that beautiful paint job, broke its weld. So now, we have two Bonneville tanks that have broken welds and it was a huge expense for us to handle a restoration on both of them. The only choice we had was to fit the 1971 BSA tank back on because it was the only tank that was still intact. However, it had a god-awful paint job and it looked very rugged. As I was looking at it, I saw that I could tip the handlebars down to simulate the riding position of the café racer that I dreamed of. I also decided that I would just get a new black paint job on it and use gold BSA decals to stick on.

So \$150 later, I had my new paint job and I had my café racer or so I thought. As I sat on it, I felt that my arms were crooked and it was a very awkward riding position. I then decided I had to find new handlebars to replace the European style. I originally wanted to put on clubman or ace bars, but my mounting bracket would not let me do it. The mounting bracket is not a traditional one; it is an eyelet so you have to slide the eyelets on the bars. The ace bars have sharp corners so you cannot do this. As I was searching on the internet, I ran into a person that specializes in café racer kits. I got in touch with him and told him my problem, his recommendation were drag bars.

Like my grandpa, I loved the Gold Star mufflers. In the summer of 2007, I was working long hours at a bicycle shop up in Washington Township, so I had some extra money. I decided to put some money into the bike and start the BSA project over again. I did purchase some Gold Star mufflers after a few weeks of saving up. I did this for myself, but I also knew that Pop liked them a lot and I did it for him as well because he never got to put on his favorite mufflers when he refurbished it originally. This was my thank you gift to him; I guess you could say I wanted him to his motorcycle with that missing feature. Do not get me wrong, though, I love them just as much as he does. At the time I put on these mufflers, I got an opportunity to test ride



[The BSA Café Racer Special, not the “Old Junky Bike” anymore.](#)

As I looked at the drag bars (a.k.a Norton Flats), I decided that I was going to get them. I also decided that if I am going to do a complete café racer, the BSA needed bar end mirrors. My grandpa had to step in and offer to get them for me, for a gift. I wish I could say that when I got all of the parts they went on just fine, but they did not.



Pop's aboard the BSA, original 71' tank (not restored)

The bars went straight on with ease, but the mirrors were the problem. They had a very cheap wedging clamp that eventually split because of access bending. I gave up hope and put on the original mirrors, but my grandpa thought otherwise. He got in contact with my uncle and they came up with an idea. They decided to design a wedge using a wedge from a bicycle stem (the handle bar mount that fits to the frame). When Pop showed me the wedge, I told him that it would be too big to use. I found out that when my grandpa and uncle got together they ground the wedges down by hand, using a grinder, to make them fit into the end of the bar. It took them four grueling hours. Thanks to them, the BSA has bar end mirrors that function great. Now I have my own version of a café racer, and it is in my opinion, the best café racer on the road but I might be just a little biased.

As I have reflected on these stages of my life, I noticed many different things. I always had gasoline running through my veins and I did not get to honor the Prince of Darkness until I was in my teens, thank God. I also realized that my love for motorcycles continues to grow to this day. Lastly, I do not think I could have a better friend or grandpa. I want everyone who reads this to know that. Pop's I cannot tell you how everything you done for me means to me. This is why I decided to write this, in honor to you.

(Word count: 1,972 words) words: 6 photos)