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Motorcycle a family affair

BY GREGG WILLIAMS

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

After 38 years on the road, one BMW motorcycle has only ever had two pilots.

The first would be the original owner, George Jones. The second is his nephew and current owner, Paul Leochko.

High River, Alta., resident Jones is in his early 80s, and been an avid motorcyclist most of his life. He started at 16 aboard an army surplus Harley-Davidson WLC model.

Bitten by the bug, he sold the Harley and bought from Walt Healy Motorcycles in Calgary a brand new 650cc Triumph T110. Jones toured aboard the Triumph, going through the States as far as Buffalo, N.Y., and back.

"The Triumph was a great running bike," Jones recalls, "but you leave it sit, and you've got an oilpatch under it wherever you park it."

Jones and his wife of 50 years, Muriel, also toured aboard a 1970 Yamaha XS650 twin motorcycle. It vibrated so badly his hands would go numb and Muriel was uncomfortable on the pillion.

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Nephew maintains his uncle's 1972 BMW bike in its original glory

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"I'd heard that BMWs were smooth-running bikes," Jones says. With that information in hand, and the fact that he liked the look of the German-made motorcycles, on March 4, 1972, he went to T&T BMW in Calgary and bought a brand new 1972 R75/5 in Monza Blue Metallic for \$1,200.

"That was kind of expensive, it was a bit more than what other bikes cost back then," Jones admits. But the couple was comfortable on the BMW and they used it extensively, travelling to B.C. including Vancouver Island and into the United States.

It was a toaster-tank BMW that Jones had bought, and even though his nephew Paul Leochko was only four years old at the time, the machine left an indelible impression on the youngster.

"I was a little scared of bikes, but I remember my aunt and uncle coming around on it," Calgary resident Leochko, 42, says. "He'd work on the bike in the garage, and I'd sit on the porch and watch. He'd take me for a ride, I'd be on the gas tank and my aunt was on the back."

As he had only his learner's permit at the time, his uncle would ride

along on the BMW as the pair toured to destinations such as Banff, Okotoks and High River.

As he got older, Leochko took an ever-increasing interest in motorcycling. His dad bought a 1974 Yamaha 500 and Leochko started to ride that machine on the street.

He used it less throughout the 1990s, but he'd always make an effort to start it once or twice a year and make sure it was in running condition. In 2005 he had the bike completely tuned up and fitted with new tires.

Leochko now rides the BMW to special events, such as Thursday Night Bike Night at the A&W on 16th Avenue and on Ride For Sight.

A 2005 Harley-Davidson Sportster takes him on longer tours, but the BMW — with 117,000 kilometres on the clock — is special to him.

"Everything is 100 per cent original, with the exception of the tires, battery, gas lines and spark plugs (or consumables, as they are known)," Leochko says. "The paint has some scrapes and scuffs, but the only people who have ridden this bike are my uncle and I, and we put them there. I'd never consider restoring it."