

# A PROJECT AND THE SWAP MEET

## 2016 AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days Proved Perfect

I don't know if it's the increase in motorcycle and car builder shows on cable television or whether I have allowed myself to be swept up in the customizing trend that is so prevalent in the motorcycling community these days.



By Rob Dingman

Maybe it's the excitement created by the recently-held AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days or maybe it's the cool AMA BMW R75 GS custom built by Analog Motorcycles founder/builder Tony Prust for the AMA to raffle off to raise funds for the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame.

Most likely it is a combination of all of these things that inspired me to take on a project bike of my own.

Earlier this year, after scouring Craigslist for several weeks, I picked up a 1986 BMW R80RT that I planned to customize into more of a naked standard than a café racer or brat-style bike. I didn't want the pressure of trying to restore an older bike back to its original state. Instead, I wanted to customize a bike in a way that preserved my options as the build progressed.

I think I committed a cardinal sin of bike building by buying someone else's unfinished project, but I knew that going in. The stock fairing had already been removed and disposed of, along with the ignition switch and directional lights that were mounted to it. To make it road-worthy, I acquired a used ignition switch and new front directional lights and installed them.

I thought it would be a good idea to ride the bike around for a while before I started to undertake any customizing. After putting only about 100 miles on the bike, I began to pull off parts that I planned to jettison, such as the luggage brackets.

The disassembly was so uncomplicated that, before I knew it, I had the rear sub-frame off and was cutting it up to make it several inches shorter.

While waiting to get the newly shortened sub-frame back from the welder, I replaced and rewired the clunky old non-working gauges with a new much smaller combination speedometer and tachometer.

I had been eagerly awaiting this year's AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days, because I had a swap meet shopping list for my

project bike.

It was worth the wait. Personally speaking, I was successful in the swap meet. Browsing through the vast offerings on display, I found a more streamlined fender for the rear of my bike—as well as a spare sub-frame, just in case I cut the original too short.

The rest of AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days also was spectacular. The weather was terrific all three days, and the crowd was as big as or bigger than ever. Entries in all racing disciplines were up significantly, and this year's swap meet was one of the largest we have ever had.

There were a number of new features incorporated into this year's event.

The most popular had to have been the pit bike races. This year, we thought we would provide an opportunity for event attendees to race their pit bikes in the infield. The course was designed by professional dirt-track racer Dan Bromley and the race was marshalled by AMA racing staff. It was a huge hit, drawing 53 entrants and hundreds of spectators.

No doubt, next year's pit bike races will be even more popular.

This year's AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days grand marshal was two-time AMA Superbike Champion and AMA Motorcycle Hall of Famer Wes Cooley. And a major theme of this year's event was a celebration of the 40th anniversary of

AMA Superbike racing, making Cooley the perfect choice for his role.

It had been 30 years since Wes Cooley competed on a motorcycle, and it was great to have him back on a bike doing laps at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. It was a thrill for race fans to see him again and, as humble as he is, he seemed surprised that people remembered who he was.

AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days, of course, is the most significant fundraiser for the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame and museum. Proceeds from the event go to the American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation, a wholly owned subsidiary of the AMA tasked with raising money for the Hall of Fame and museum. For this reason, companies that support the event financially deserve our appreciation and gratitude. They include Moto Armory, Nationwide Insurance, Suzuki Motor of America, Federal Motorcycle Transport, Old Bike Barn, Holland freight company, Iron Pony/Pony Powersports and Sena Technologies Inc.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers and partners who also support the event. This year's AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days was one of the most successful ever and if you haven't yet made it there, add it to your bucket list.

*Rob Dingman is AMA President and CEO.*

If you need it, chances are the AMA Vintage Motorcycle Days swap meet has it.

