

# **BMW R100/S**

**Touring Oregon  
(Plus 4000 Miles Of Sidetrips)  
On One Of BMW's Best...**





# TourTest

By Brad Zimmerman

In retrospect, you really couldn't call it a tour. A "blitz" would be more like it. When my tour kit consists of: one motorcycle; one rider; limited luggage; and a straight, ultra-fast Interstate—it becomes a blitz. A 900-mile day is average. An 1100-mile-day is good, and hitting the 1200-mile mark is excellent.

This particular trip started out long before a leg was thrown over the seat. We were receiving a BMW, a new R100/S to test. My only previous experience with a "BeeMer" was in the 1000cc tour test a few months ago. At that time I got aboard the R100/7, and although it was nice, I wasn't overly impressed.

Then the information trickled in about the R100/S. It had more horsepower, a higher torque curve, and the final clincher—higher overall gearing, identical to the gearing found inside the ultimate R100/RS. That made the decision.

The fighting among the staffers over the BMW was amazing. Everyone wanted to do the test, each with a different idea. All arguments were thrown out in our staff meeting, each having valid reasons. I waited until last, knowing full well that everyone was pretty saddle-sore from the recent 750cc tour test, and most didn't want to take a tour on a bike minus a fairing. My idea, that of going through California, leisurely touring around Oregon, and then shooting through Washington up to the Canadian border, was brought up. I backed it with the fact that the overall cost would be low, considering that I could leech off friends in the Portland and Tacoma areas, plus had an offer from my old buddy Oz, who volunteered to take photos and run me through the high points of Oregon and Washington.

Just like Perry Mason, I won my case. I had two days in which to prepare. Preparation, in my case, consists of stopping by the AAA and grabbing a map, making sure I have clean socks, and the bike is in tip-top running condition.

Saturday was D (departure) Day. At four in the morning, the choke was pushed down, petcocks opened, and the starter motor engaged, bringing the two 500cc pistons into left-to-right motion. A few seconds of warm-up, one last check of the lights, and the driveway was vacated.

Interstate 5 was the main route this time, more for saving total riding time than for scenic beauty. If you've nev-

er had the pleasure, I-5 is boring, enough so that if you were to release a herd of stampeding buffalo loose heading in either direction, they would all be in a semi-coma within five miles. But it's fast, direct and undemanding on brain or bike.

The first problem occurred less than one hundred miles out. For some reason, the high-beam part of the quartz halogen headlight decided to retire, leaving me with only a low beam setting, still brighter than most high beams on the Japanese models.

Getting through the Grapevine area, a twist of freeway ranging through the mountains north of L.A., on low beam, was interesting. Fortunately, the Grapevine is a truck driver's raceway, and if I didn't go at least 75 mph, I would be mowed down; thus the lighting problem wasn't really critical.

In the gigantic San Joaquin Valley, I found a riding position that proved to be the hot set-up for the remainder of the trip. With the rear footpegs folded down, my legs were supported by the balls of my feet. A small tank bag took the pressure off my chest, as I could then lay down on the motorcycle, and tuck behind the small fairing on the S model. (In this position, you could easily travel well over 100 miles an hour, decrease the wind buffeting problem, and ride relaxed.) The only drawback I had was that I couldn't see out of the mirrors, necessitating a head turn-around every few miles to check for law enforcement accompaniment.

The BMW is awesome at high speeds. It's the most stable motorcycle I've ever been on; 75 mph feels more akin to 40 mph, and traveling

at a steady cruising speed of 90 to 95 mph didn't feel in the least bit uncomfortable; as a matter of fact, it became the norm for the California portion of the trip.

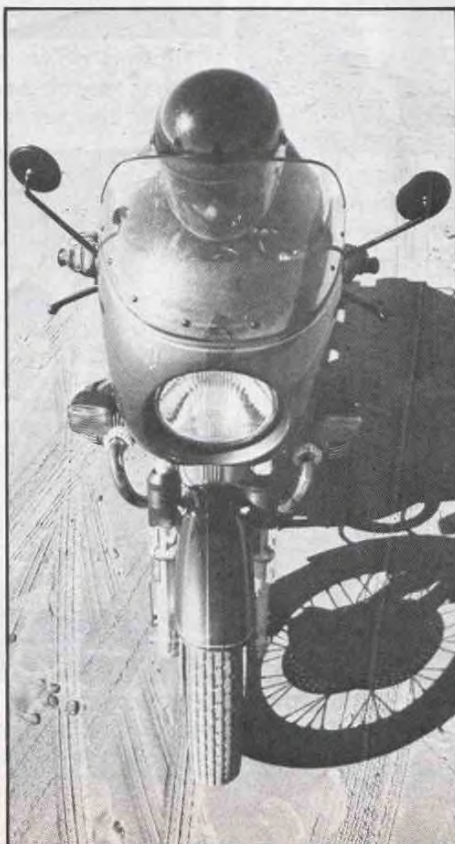
In mid-state, just south of Patterson, there is a large cattle holding pen, where perhaps over 1000 head are held for shipping, as they have been for years. It seems that regardless of when I leave home, I always seem to hit the holding pen around 6:00 to 6:30 a.m., perfectly timed to enjoy the aroma of many years' worth of cow manure, the smell of penned animals, and wet hay. This usually benefits me in two ways. First, if I'm drowsy, this rude nostril awakening does the job better than NoDoz, and second, it usually ruins my appetite for breakfast, thus the upcoming McDonald's doesn't do much business in Egg McMuffins.

While my speed held in the above 80 mph bracket, the temperature soared, leveling out at 116 degrees well before ten in the morning, and staying there until after dinner. Riding in heat like this, you begin to curse the horizontal cylinders for their heat, praise upcoming roadside taverns for their cold beer, and finally forsake safety for survival, gradually eliminating more clothing until you find yourself in only tennis shorts, shoes and helmet. Damn what the Arabs say about keeping bundled up in the heat. They rode camels, not BMWs on hot asphalt interstates.

The extreme high heat necessitated numerous stops, often at gas stations for a quick shower using the radiator water hose, and an eventual slow-down in progress. The first night, I only made it to Medford, Oregon, after flying through the exciting twisty road through the Mount Shasta and Grants Pass areas.

A word of warning when you're going through these, and other heavily wooded areas. The Mario Andrettis of the multi-wheel set, especially the logging truck drivers, are extremely fast; I clocked one at 87 mph on level ground. These drivers get paid by the log load, thus are always in a hurry. The local police tend to look the other way when a logging truck comes WFO down a mountain road. You'd better be sure you're keeping an eye on the mirrors. The loggers will give you one toot of the horn, then pass, either on the right or the left, regardless of the fact that there may or may not be a passing lane. Logging truckers figure that if it's flat dirt, it's just as good as asphalt for passing purposes.

After the overnight in Medford, it was just a quick jaunt to Portland to load up with film, grab the Oz and his cameras, and start exploring Tillamook County.



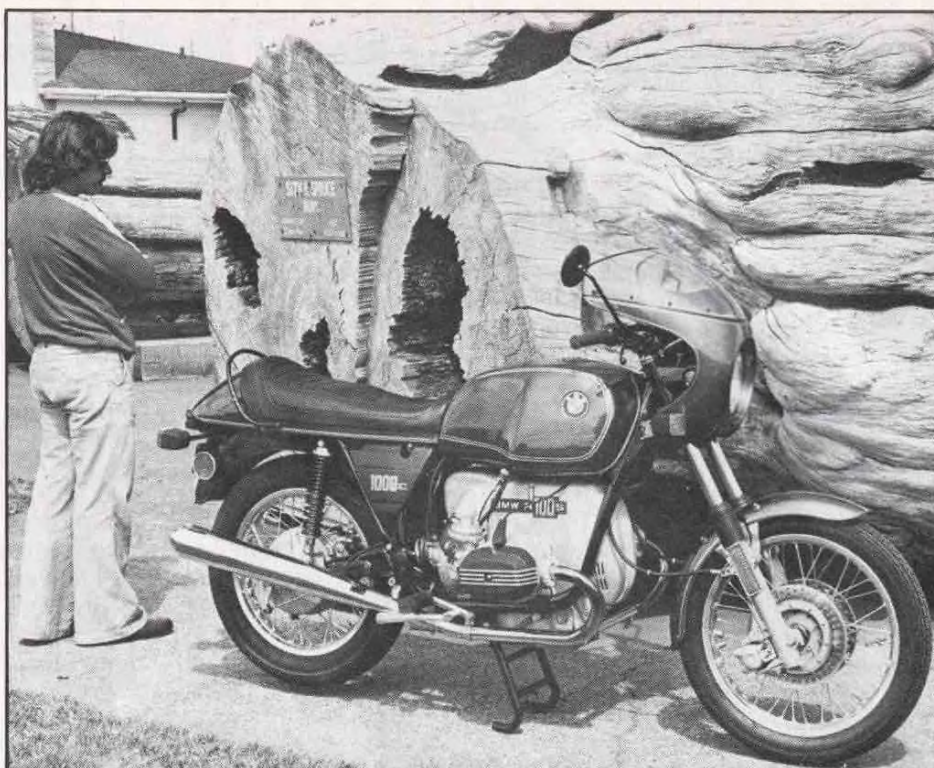


# BMW R100/S

Out of Portland, we headed through winding Highway 6, which skirts around the Trask Mountain area, and gives the rider the impression that around the next corner, he'll be greeted by "BP-Shell" banners, a corner flagman, and a grandstand teeming with spectators. It's that kind of road—obviously designed by a bulldozer with racing in mind.

Once through Tillamook, our first stop was the Cape Meares State Park to check out the lighthouse, which according to original plans, shouldn't be there. You see, Oregon had wanted a lighthouse built in the area, but wires were crossed somewhere, and it was erected at Cape Meares instead of Cape Lookout. So much for extensive planning.

From there it was northward again, riding up Highway 101 along the coast, taking in such sights as the Tillamook cheese factory, the last functioning steam locomotive (retired



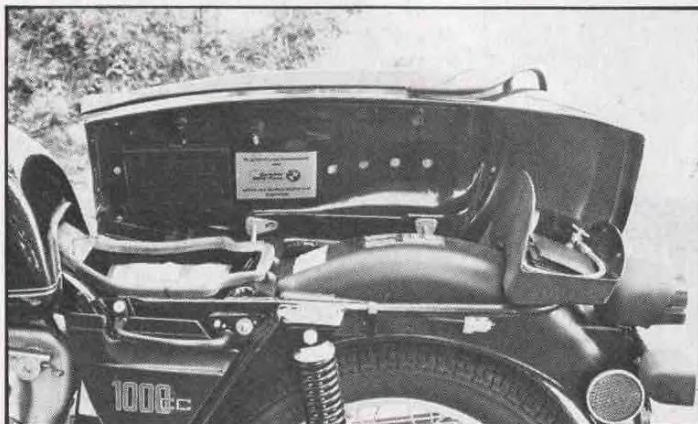
*This Sitka Spruce, measuring 12 feet, 6 inches in diameter and over 420 years old, is just an indication of Oregon's biggest resource—wood products.*



*It's a small fairing, more for looks than function, but will break the wind well if you crouch down behind the glass. The headlight is the most powerful we've found.*



*Tucking down behind the small fairing you'll find the usual speedo and tach, accompanied by a clock, voltage meter and sanitary European-type switches and controls.*



*The entire seat and rear section are hinged on the R100/S, providing access to the tool kit cavity and small above-fender for incidentals.*



*BMW boasts the best tool kit of any street machine. Not shown is the tire patch kit and tire pump that resides below the seat on the upper frame rails.*





In Astoria you'll find the Astor Tower, with Oregon's history painted in a circular pattern up the tower. It's also the site of the world's first cable television operation.

in 1964) that worked the logging trails, and up through Manzanita, Rockaway, Cape Falcon and Arch Cape, all previously Indian land, now owned by real estate moguls.

Our next stop was Cannon Beach, named so only recently when an old cannon, washed up from a wrecked Spanish Galleon, made its way to land. On Cannon Beach, you can take your motorized vehicle (car, bike, camper, whatever) right down onto the beach, drive up and down, check out the "haystack and needles" a strange rock formation just off the coast, and of course, applaud the jogging women in swimsuits working up and down the beach, much to a photographer's delight.

Further north is Seaside, a small town overflowing with neat little shops, such as a candle factory, homemade ice cream shop, a cookie store, Dutch shoe store, and the required number of antique (recently called so after being referred to for years as "old furniture" before the money value was realized) stores.

Finally the northernmost point of Oregon was reached. The town of Astoria, named after Englishman John Jacob Astor, was started in 1811, and named as a tribute to the man who started the trading companies in that area. The Lewis and

Clark expedition passed through, working their way down the bordering Columbia River. They set up camp in Astoria for a few months, taking a breather before heading eastward again.

In Astoria, you'll find perched atop the largest hill, the Astor Tower, a mammoth column that has the entire history of the state of Oregon scribed in a circular pattern. At the base of the column is the grave of Chief Comcomly, complete with his traditional burial canoe, an honor relegated him due to his assistance of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and his suggestions to the Astor family in setting up their "trading post" (now would be called a department store).

From Astoria we traveled south back towards Portland along Highway 202, zigzagging the Klaskanine River and running through the Clatsop state forest, passing appropriately named towns such as Knappa, Clatsop Crest, Clatskanie, Mist, Pittsburg (somehow out of place), Timber, and my favorite, Scappoose.

The following day we headed out of Portland once again, this time heading in a southeast direction towards one of Oregon's largest ski resorts—Mount Hood.

Once more, the names of towns got the imagination running, trying to

## Off The Record...

The mass scramble for first and second dibbs on the BMW has finally subsided and quite frankly I can't figure out the reasons for all the pushing and shoving. I took several quick rides totaling about a hundred miles, and though I haven't spent much time aboard BMWs, I'll stand strongly behind my first impressions. I mean, gee whiz, BMs are supposed to be neat and everything, but really, how can they charge nearly \$4300 for a machine that rattles your teeth, shakes the mirrors into a frenzy and produces numbness in your hands every time the tach needle drops below 3000 rpm? Who are they trying to kid? And the Magura grips? They're harder than old cement.

The bike has a definite personality, but it surely isn't its ability to transport a working person back and forth comfortably. Between all the twisting and lurching caused by engine and driveshaft design, and the loud gearbox clunking when shifting through the gears, it's not on my list of desirable commuting bikes, especially when I could buy three other machines for the price of one BMW.

The BMW does, however, have a place in this world and that's out on the open road where it can glide over long distances effortlessly. Take it away from the hassles of city traffic and it becomes a different machine—like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Even though the speedo is slightly optimistic (it indicates 60 mph

while officially traveling 54 mph), you'll find yourself over the speed limit constantly. It's the type of bike that's best to take out on weekends—when there's time and running room to properly exercise your expensive toy. —Rich Cox

The cost of a BMW is the key to understanding it. True, the German mark is the strongest currency in the world and it takes extra U.S. dollars to net the same profit on a BMW bought here as one bought in Germany. True, the R100/S comes with a clock and hand pin-striping and other extras not found on competing brands. True, the tradition of German engineering and precision craftsmanship merits extra cost. But how can you account for a BMW costing \$4295 when its technological and performance equivalent, a Honda GL1000, costs \$2938? Volume can't justify a \$1357 discrepancy in price. Neither can international monetary exchange or varying costs of raw materials.

Prestige is the difference, and much of this is self-generating by the high cost itself. Back in 1973 when BMW released the first R90/S, everyone thought its \$3500 price tag was folly. It was a daring move, but it was based on the psychological tendency of the human mind to equate the most expensive with the best. BMWs were suddenly dripping with prestige because they cost so much. The

public's fascination with wealth and expressions thereof culminate for motorcycling in the BMW 1000s, and that, as much as speed, comfort, smoothness or any functional superiority which might exist, accounts for brisk sales. Buyers are pleased with their ability to afford a BMW. BMW is pleased with profits, which are not entirely undeserved.

—Dale Boller

The BMW folks never cease to amaze me with their "antiquated" engine design that first appeared in the 1923 BMW motorcycle. There have been many changes and improvements, but these have been accomplished in the traditional Teutonic fashion: Make haste slowly, perhaps, but make it correctly. The BMW design never seems to get older... it just gets better through refinement.

Having spent many, many miles in the saddles of BMWs over the past calendar year, I tended to have some preconceived notions about what to expect. The 1000-mile tour test we did in the January issue of this year included a BMW R100/7 which wasn't sporting enough for me. But the R100/S is everything the famous R90/S was and more. A standing start quarter-mile in 12.48 seconds at 102.32 mph isn't at all slow, and when ridden moderately the S will deliver 50 mpg. Add the flawless paint, controls that control, brakes that stop and excellent suspension in spite of its softness and you've got a machine that I can defend if someone questions its rather expensive price. —Jody Nicholas



# BMW R100/S

figure out their origins. Places like Rhododendron, Zigzag, Bull Run, Eagle Creek and Gov't Camp are all on your list before getting to the Mount Hood summit.

During the summer, even when only the small ice glaciers are left, Mount Hood is bustling with tourists. The new lodge is being built, mountain climbing groups leave early each morning (despite the fact that it's easier to hike to the summit in winter with snowshoes), and skiers go up to check on the progress of the ever-increasing number of ski lifts.

On a clear day, which is usual for Oregon, you can stand at the top of Mount Hood, and see mountain

peaks in the outlying areas of Vancouver, Canada, Seattle, Washington, and Redding, California. From just one vantage point, by merely rotating yourself 360 degrees, you can take in three states, plus Canada.

From Hood, it's north again, to the border between Washington and Oregon, the great Columbia River, the route that Lewis and Clark finally ended up on when traveling through the thick forests became impossible.

Along the Columbia, you'll find very little industry, and for the most part, the river is identical to the old days before so-called civilization moved in. The only blemish is the Cascade Locks, needed for running Portland's powerplant and moving ships through the ever-changing altitude of the river.

On the southern side of the river lie the most beautiful waterfalls in the

Northwest. Bridal Veil falls, a two-stage waterfall, cascades some 200 feet to the river. Horsetail Falls, which partially breaks in half through its descent, is backlit in the late afternoon hours, showing the sun's rays through like a daily rainbow.

Finally is the granddaddy of them all, the largest waterfall in the West, Multnomah Falls, reaching a height close to 400 feet, plummeting water down at over 100 miles an hour to a shimmering pool below.

You have to hunt to find these places in Oregon, but these, and others like them, are in good supply, and easy to reach with a local map and some info from a native. The BMW also enjoyed the trip immensely. Through the coastal route, it went through tight corners marked at 35 mph, almost effortlessly at 80. After a while any sign with a curved arrow



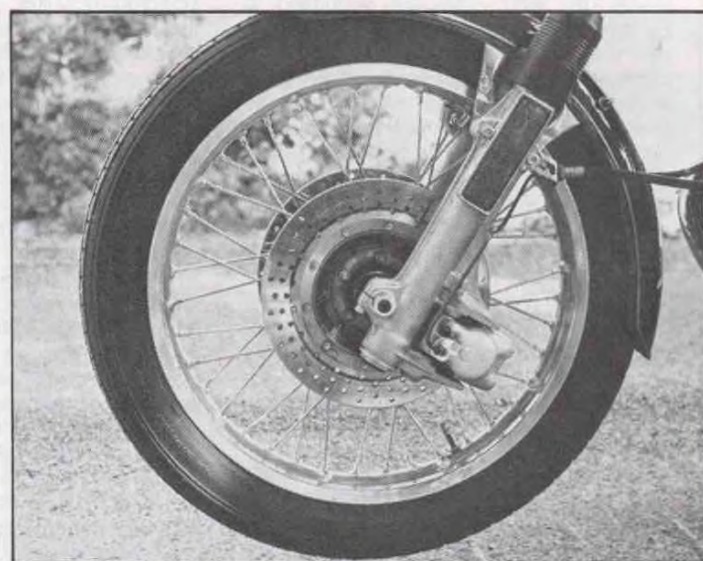
Originally buried in this above-ground canoe in typical Indian custom, Chief Comcomly, guide for Lewis & Clark, now resides below the stone marker.



The town of Tillamook, famous for its cheese, isn't a biggie. This shop owner was gracious enough to let us use the only car wash in town—the hose behind his shop. Notice how the BMW stands out in any crowd!



The large capacity gas tank holds over five gallons (good for 200-plus-mile trips before refueling). Footpegs are very comfortable, gear shift is mounted properly, and the new carbs feed the horizontal cylinders nicely. Black valve covers are also found on the R100/RS model.



Road-wise Metzeler tires take corners with ease, while the offset axle forks and good disc pads insure straight and quick stops. Due to the drilling (both for water displacement and cooling) the brakes send out a mechanical whine when pucks increase pressure on the discs.







# BMW R100/S

and a posted suggested speed meant turning the throttle farther open, up-shifting and leaning through corners, often changing lanes—not because you had to—but because you could.

Through the Mount Hood area many of the corners were posted at 15 mph, some of them uphill, in off-camber fashion. We never really got the BMW to scrape bottom, unless you counted the centerstand which quickly lost most of its paint.

During the descent from Hood, the excellent brakes came into play. The front dual disc set-up, drilled for water dissipation, made the most beautiful sound when the pads were squeezed. So pretty, that I went out of my way to go a little too fast so I could hit the front brake lever a little too hard, rewarding me with a sound similar to a small motor. Neat.

The BMW has superb handling, outstanding brakes, and once you

get used to very positive shifting and a resulting loud clunking noise, good gearbox action. The only thing I had to watch out for in Oregon was the abundant wildlife—deer in the early morning and late afternoons and the all-day road-crossing procession of chipmunks and squirrels.

The R100/S and I reluctantly got back on I-5 for a shot up towards Tacoma, Washington, and settled down once again to a smooth, high-speed run. The scenery fortunately was better than in California; the further north you get, the more abundant are trees and greenery. Once, after gassing up, we again hit a cruising speed of 85 mph. We were quickly (and quite suddenly) passed by two yellow Porsche Turbo Carreras—traveling a lot faster than we were. A quick twist of the throttle and we were in tow—running along at 100 mph all the way into Tacoma, where the twin \$28,000 cars bid us goodbye, really hit the gas, quickly disappearing ahead.

A rest in Tacoma was on the agenda for a day, plus a search for a new



*This giant old Sitka Spruce didn't develop into a massive single trunked tree as most spruce trees do along the Oregon coast. The candelabra branching and unusual size of the tree were formed by strong coastal winds and the sheltered hollow that it resides in. The base of the tree has a circumference of about 50 feet, with 12-foot-thick limbs.*

## PREVIEW: BMW R100/S FOR '78

By Jody Nicholas

The staff at *Motorcyclist* was so impressed with the 1977 BMW R100/S that the sight of a 1978 model which had arrived at Butler & Smith during the touring portion of the 1977 model test threw us into a frenzy. I, particularly, wanted to sample it so general manager Helmut Kern asked shop foreman John Heibler to prepare the machine and put a few hundred miles on it over the weekend. I picked it up at Butler & Smith with just over 300 miles on the odometer and after having received a brief on the changes for '78, motored a little less than gently up to our offices.

The most obvious change is found on the instrument package.

The instruments still have black faces, but the numbers and letters are now pale green instead of white as before. And the tachometer is now electronic, not mechanical. A styrofoam-like panel has been fitted to cover most of the handlebar and cleans up the appearance of that sometimes cluttered area.

Other control changes at the handlebar include a beeper that warns when the turn signals are blinking but it is quieter and less obtrusive than the majority of warning beepers. The real benefit is that the beeper is silent when the machine is in neutral, or in gear with the clutch lever pulled in. Very clever, and it's a toss-up whether this system or the Yamaha self-canceling beeper/light is better. The headlamp housing is now finished in a dull black to reduce reflections.

Perhaps the best change for 1978

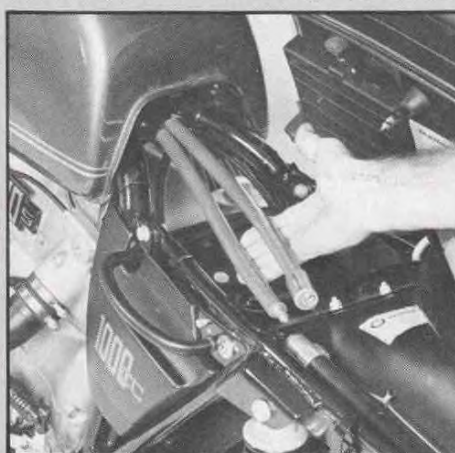
is a new shifting linkage laid out similar to a Honda CB400F. It increases the amount of pedal throw necessary to change gears and also reduces shifting effort proportionately. Result: easier and almost silent gear changes.

Although these changes won't add much if any to the already dear price of a BMW, inflation will mean that each model in the BMW range will cost approximately \$100 more than the 1977 models. But the 400 miles I spent with the '78 R100/S proved that \$100 extra is more than worth the improvements in the 1978 model, even though the engine isn't changed from '77.

Also new for 1978 are the 650 (an enlarged 600), the 800 (an enlarged 750) and for 1979 there will be a 450. It seems as though nobody ever sleeps at the Bayerische Motoren Werke.



Rubber cover protects shift linkage.



Cable lock under seat is standard.



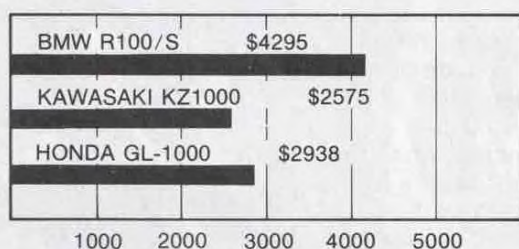
Note the clock at upper right of dash.



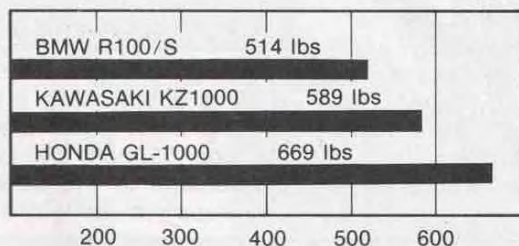
# BMW R100/S



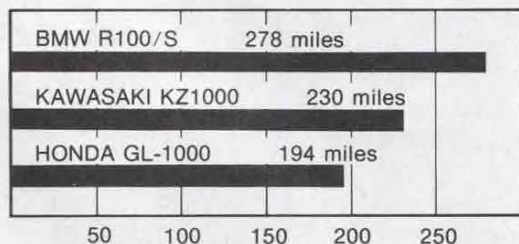
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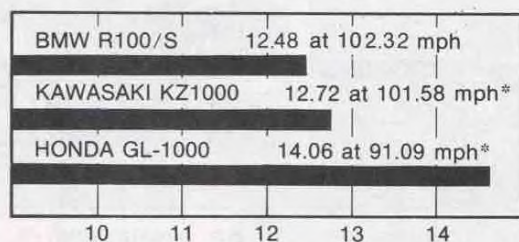
## WEIGHT



## CRUISING RANGE



## QUARTER-MILE



\*WITH FAIRING

## TEST BIKE: BMW R100/S

Price, sugg. retail.....\$4295

## ENGINE

Type.....Horizontally-opposed OHV twin  
 Bore/stroke.....90x70.6mm (3.54x2.78 in.)  
 Piston displacement.....980cc (59.8 cu. in.)  
 Compression ratio.....9.5:1  
 Carburetion.....(2) Bing 40mm CV Type V94  
 Air filtration.....Dry paper  
 Ignition.....Battery and coil  
 BHP @ rpm.....No claim  
 Torque @ rpm.....No claim  
 Lubrication.....Trochoidal pump, wet sump  
 Electrical power.....280W alternator  
 Battery.....Varta 12V 28 Amp

## DRIVETRAIN

Primary transmission.....None  
 Clutch.....Single plate, dry  
 Secondary transmission.....Shaft and Hypoid gear  
 Gear ratios, overall :1..1st 12.80; 2nd 8.32; 3rd 6.08; 4th 4.86; 5th 4.37

## CHASSIS & SUSPENSION

Suspension, front.....Telescopic fork, 8 in. travel  
 Suspension, rear.....Swing arm, 5 in. travel  
 Tire, front.....3.25 H 19 Continental RB2  
 Tire, rear.....4.00 H 18 Continental K112  
 Brake, front.....Double disc, 10.25x1.33 in. (260x34mm)  
 Brake, rear.....Drum, 7.9x1.16 in. (200x29.5mm)  
 Brake swept area.....193.63 sq. in.  
 Rake/trail.....28.5°/3.62 in. (93mm)  
 Wheelbase.....57.5 in. (146.1cm)  
 Seat height.....32.5 in. (82.6cm)  
 Handlebar width.....27.5 in. (69.9cm)  
 Ground clearance.....6.7 in. (17.0cm)  
 Instruments.....Speedometer, tachometer, brake, neutral, oil, generator, turn signal warning lights, hi-beam indicator

Stands.....Side and center  
 Tire retention device(s).....Retaining notches

## WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

Fuel capacity.....6.3 gal. (24 liters)  
 Oil capacity.....2.1 qts. (2.0 liters)  
 Weight, wet, unladen.....514 lbs.

## PERFORMANCE

Standing start quarter-mile.....12.48 sec. 102.32 mph  
 Average fuel consumption.....44.14 mpg (corrected)



# BMW R100/S

headlight bulb, eventually found at Federal Way Kawasaki/BMW/Yamaha a few miles north.

The trip back down to smoggy Southern California was not as enjoyable as the ride up. Another early morning departure, it was a straight 18-hour drive back home, once again going quickly, but without the enthusiasm of the northbound trip. All the while the BMW ran fantastically, used only a quart of oil in its 4000-mile trip—and never missed a beat.

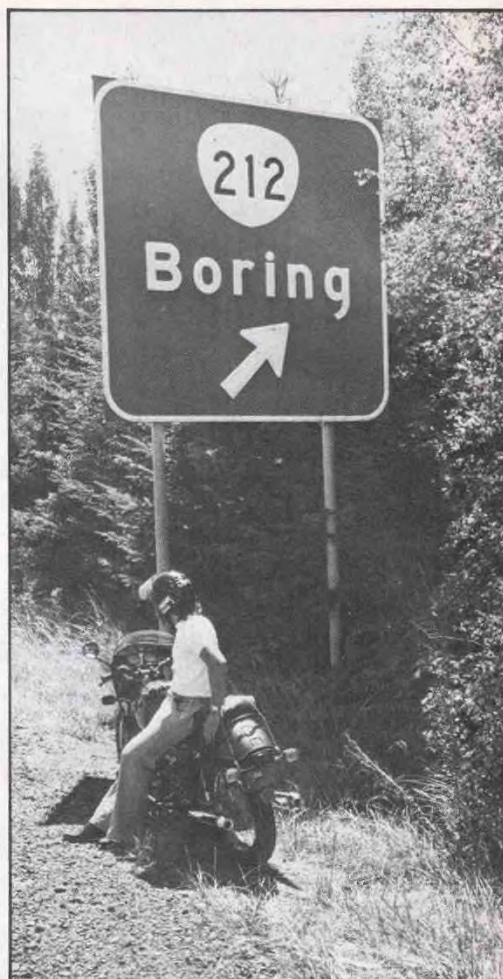
During that ride back, I had a lot of time to think about the machine. This was the first big experience I've had with a BMW. I was greatly impressed. It's a no-nonsense motorcycle. There isn't anything on it that shouldn't be there; yet it's missing nothing to make it work perfectly. It goes very fast, the engine barely turning over, it shifts well once you learn its habits, the stopping power is awesome, and despite the fact that it's got that tiny little fairing, it's the most comfortable stock motorcycle I've ever ridden. You've probably read the praises of the BMW in other road tests. After putting so many miles on it, I've got to admit that most likely all the praises are well founded. From its excellent loud horn, to its built-in tire pump it's a completely professional machine.

Thus, I encounter one of the dilemmas of this job. After riding the BMW, I want one. I can easily justify the relatively high cost by remember-

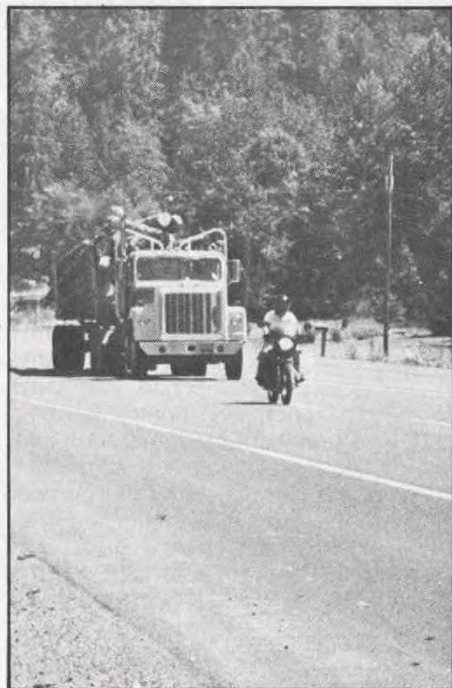


*Up until 1964, this steam-powered locomotive was used to remove trees from the Oregon forests. It is now on display in Garibaldi, Oregon.*

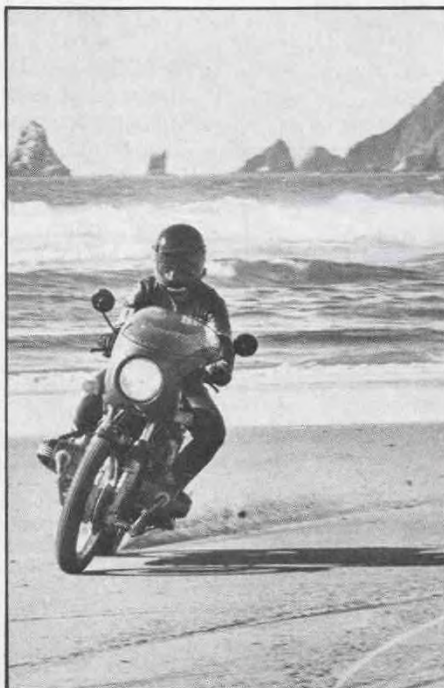
ing what it was like to ride the machine. It's worth the money, you surely get what you pay for. Which is another dilemma. If you decide to buy a BMW, don't ever let a friend ride it. You'll put him in a bad situation, that of experiencing what the Bavarian Motor Works people have to offer. Then he's got to go through all the hassle of selling his current mount to buy a BMW—which is exactly what will probably happen. I found out that the more experience you have with motorcycles, the more you know about them, and the more different bikes you have an opportunity to ride, the more thoroughly you'll appreciate and respect the BMW line. I never would have admitted it before, but Bob Greene was right—it's the ultimate machine—for just about anything. **M**



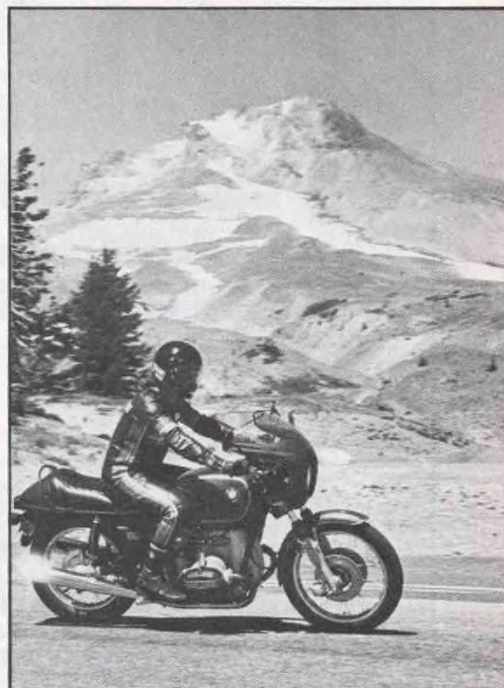
*This sign seemed to exemplify our feelings about riding a thoroughbred like the BMW down the interstate at the legal 55 mph. The bike was more comfortable in the 80-90 range and was happy to run well over 100 mph.*



*A tip for the touring rider in Oregon—watch out for the logging trucks! In this photo we were traveling along at 80, and were overtaken by the truck.*



*As this (and our cover) shows, we got plenty of giggles at Cannon Beach, Oregon, doing non-advised power slides down the beach.*



*In the background is Mount Hood, favorite ski resort of Portland natives, and one of the largest mountain peaks in the West.*