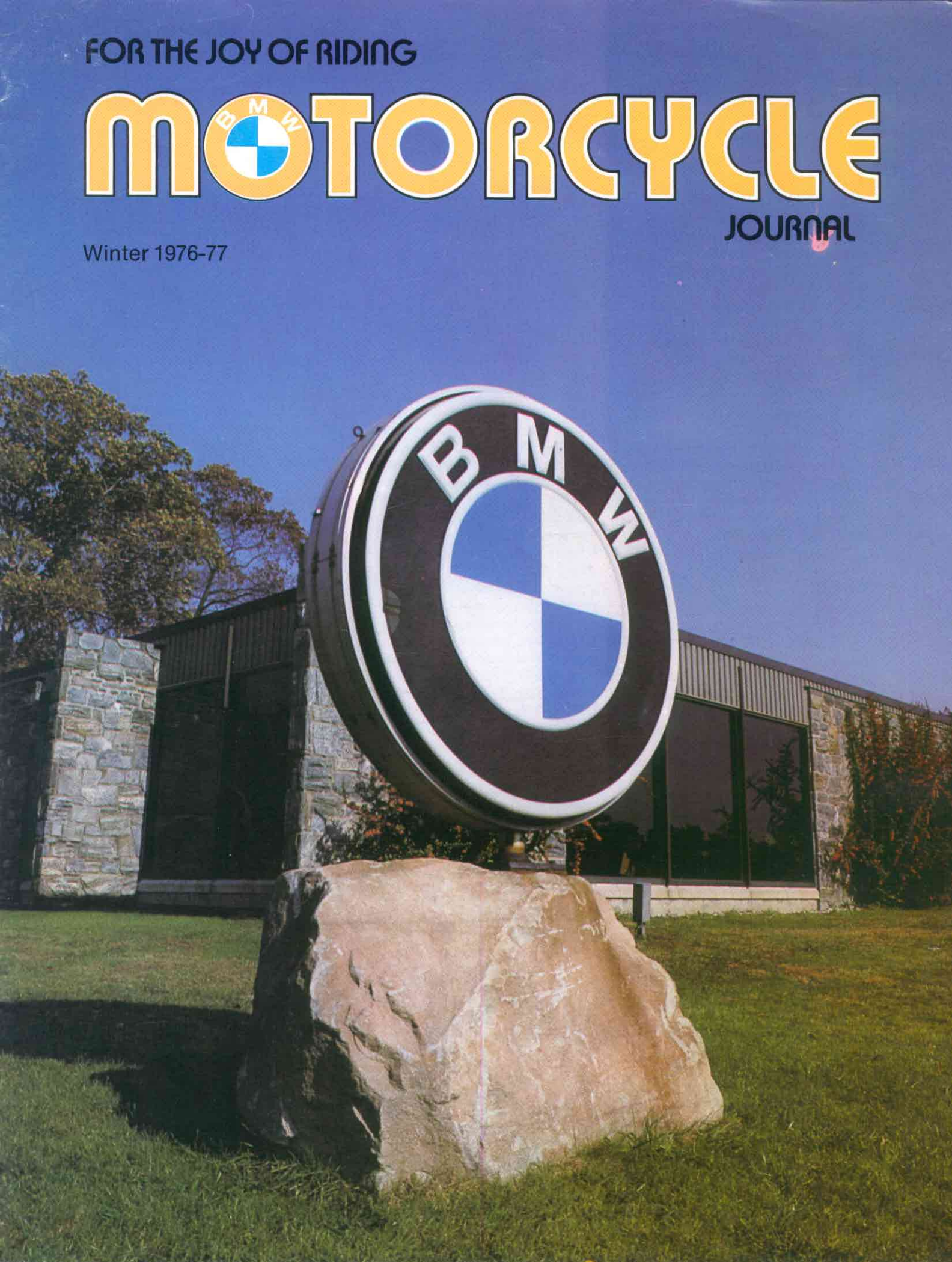
FOR THE JOY OF RIDING

BMW MOTORCYCLE JOURNAL

Winter 1976-77



For The Joy of Riding

Twenty-five years is almost half . . .

Compare the photograph on the cover of this issue with the two below and you will get a small idea of how far BMW motorcycling has come in these United States. All three are pictures of the main office of Butler & Smith, Inc., the importers and distributors of BMW for almost twenty-five years. And yet those years, which outnumber the lifespan of almost every other motorcycle marque made today, represent only about half of the history of BMW.

Butler & Smith was begun as a "trading corporation" in the U.S. back in 1949 and its founders, Erwin Adams and Alfred Bondy, both had a keen interest in motorcycles. Their first major line was NSU.

The early fifties was also the time of the scooter boom, both in the United States and in Europe. Butler & Smith, whose place of business then is shown at the lower left, responded by offering the NSU-Lambretta scooter. But the firm's primary concern was motorcycles and it looked with real interest at the beautifully made BMW's which were at last again being produced from a factory that had been ravaged and practically dismantled after World War II.

A few BMW's were then available in the U.S. through a handful of dealers, supplied by an importer-dealer named Victor Harasty. In 1953, Butler & Smith began negotiating with Mr. Harasty and with the factory in Munich. By year's end they had become the exclusive U.S. distributor and had acquired an inventory of parts and machines.

Shortly thereafter Butler & Smith began to offer the BMW R50, which represented a new series with swing-arm rear suspension and Earles-type front forks. The company also set up an affiliated firm to import boats with BMW marine engines, but two of these ignominiously sank in the waters around Miami, and so Butler & Smith resolved to stick to two wheelers.

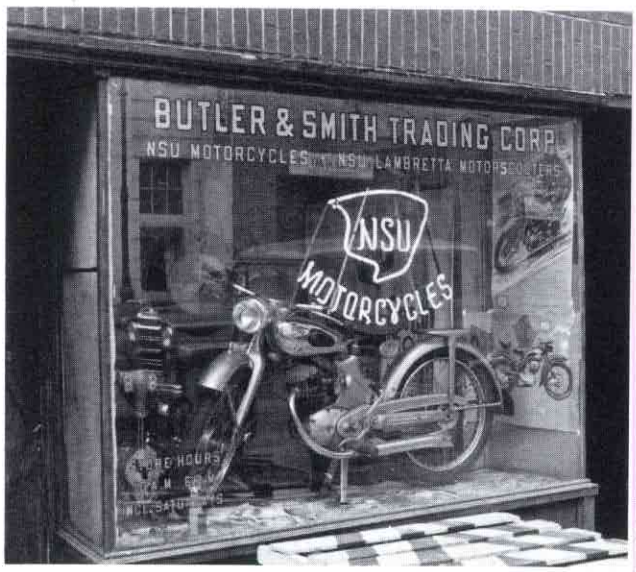
Interest in the fabulous BMW proved so keen that by 1955 Butler & Smith had surrendered its NSU franchise—a company which discontinued motorcycle production altogether in 1960.

Several employees came to Butler & Smith in the early fifties who remain with the firm today. They include Richard Kahn, Advertising & Public Relations Manager; Helmut Kern, West Coast Manager; Hannchen Jung, Parts Manager; and Udo Gietl, Service Training Manager. This long continuity of service has contributed significantly to Butler & Smith's reputation as a fine back-up organization.

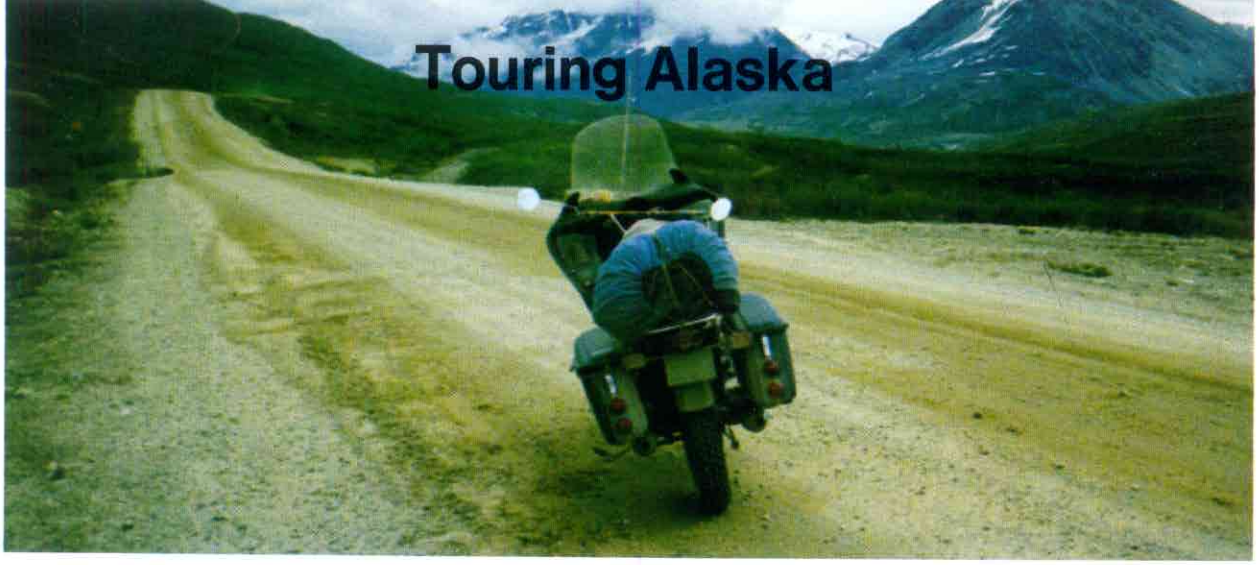
The construction of the giant Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, begun in 1953, required the relocation of Butler & Smith's headquarters from 63rd Street in Manhattan to 83rd Street (below right). In 1969, the company moved again, this time to its modern 55,000 sq-ft. center in northern New Jersey, shown on the cover. That same year the BMW -/5 models came out and BMW moved boldly into the superbike era.

As Butler & Smith gets ready to celebrate its 25th year as BMW distributors in the U.S., BMW celebrates its 54th year as a maker of fine motorcycles. It is a history that stretches out of the past to lead the present—and to continue to make BMW the most solidly backed motorcycle on the road today. And that, hopefully, is invisible but important support to your joy of riding.

John P. Covington



Touring Alaska



Most BMW riders fancy themselves made of pretty stern stuff, particularly if they've kept to their wheels through winters as severe as this of '76-'77. But there is a whole class of riders to whom zero degrees Fahrenheit is virtually sweater weather—if not downright balmy. These are the riders who live in or make it a point to get to our 49th state, Alaska. Many say it takes a trip to (or from) Alaska to really know what winter motorcycling is all about.

For example there's Ben Wilcox, who in his 61st year resolved to test climes more northern than his native Ohio. So he loaded up his R75/6 with tent, stove, sleeping bag and other gear and set out for Juneau. As it was an Alaskan summer, his most constant companions were rain and the mud this creates on the endless miles of gravel "highway." But he reports even Alaskan rain can be bitter cold. Under his rainsuit he commonly wore woolen sox and longjohns, woolen pants and sweater, and a down jacket. Wilcox managed to complete some 10,000 miles on his trip. Not especially lengthy for a BMW rider—but then he had had only two years of previous riding experience!

Another tourer to Alaska, Don Dolan, now a sales representative for Butler & Smith, likes to talk about the ravages that far north riding conditions can wreak upon an otherwise sturdy BMW. "You have to remember that those muddy pebbles behave like uncaged ball-bearings," he begins. On a recent trip north of the arctic circle he fell and broke his collar bone. "I had to ride back one-handed," he says. "Couldn't wait to mend because the cold weather was closing in fast."

Dolan took the Alaskan ferry "Matawooska" for part of the return trip and encountered several other BMW riders. "An amazing assortment of men and machines," he reports. "Almost all were healthily battered—with broken windshields, dented tanks, rock-chipped paint jobs, and worse. One guy even said he had run into a bear on his BMW. From the look of him and his bike, I think the bear won."

But Wilcox and Dolan really have to be regarded as fair-weather riders by Alaskan standards. On the way up, of course, but they haven't arrived. Riders of a profounder cut are the likes of James McCord and Johne Binkley—who live there year 'round. McCord, who earns his pay as executive vice president of the Fairbanks Economic Development Corp., has become something of a fanatic at coping with the cold. Apparently successfully, for he reports, "We have races in fifty below and no one gets frost bitten."

One of McCord's most interesting observations concerns foot warmth. "The one thing most people forget is the blast of wind on their knees. After all, the knees are where the blood is closest to the surface and hence will be cooled before reaching the feet. I have tried two items that work. One is a pair of hockey goalie knee pads. The other is the knees cut out of an old scuba-diving wet suit. The latter I put on under any other clothing next to the skin."

Adds McCord, "As long as my knees stay warm my feet do, even at below minus thirty."

McCord concludes, "You have to be aware of the cold, but with proper clothes and protection it really isn't a problem. People who get in trouble are those who don't prepare or those who get caught out or maybe dumped in a river. The best way I have found to fight hyperthermia is to take frequent stops. Get off and walk around your bike, walk down the road and back, but don't work up a sweat. If you sweat, when you get back on your bike, your body cools faster. Also be sure to get proper food in cold weather. Extremely important to keep coal in the furnace."

Although McCord accumulated this cold-weather wisdom, his friend Johne Binkley made its most convincing demonstration. Binkley resolved to ride his BMW R75 from the north coast of Alaska to the southern tip of South America. And because he works in the summer piloting a stern-wheeler riverboat, he had to depart in the dead of winter when the days in Alaska are less than two hours long.

Binkley and his bike hopped a cargo jet from his hometown Fairbanks to the beginning of the Alaskan pipeline at Prudhoe Bay. When he started south along the pipeline supply road it was dark, there was a 20-knot wind, and the temperature stood at 35 below zero. At one point on his trip, Lake Galbreath, the temperature dipped to —62F! Yet 34½ hours later he arrived back in Fairbanks—a distance of over 400 miles.

Along the way he slept only two hours and had to cope with a flat that resulted from a piece of rusty wire. Binkley knew in advance that the secret of staying mobile was to never shut off the engine. Subzero temperatures would quickly freeze it solid. Thus when he took his picnic breaks in the heated outhouses along the pipeline he left the engine idling. Even then, when not in motion, the tires would freeze with a flat-spot at the *(continued overleaf)*

bottom and would have to be ridden a considerable distance until they warmed up enough to return to round.

Of course the flat scotched his plan to keep moving. Binkley had to stop the bike, remove the wheel, and hitch a ride to a filling station for the tire repair. A friendly trucker later picked up him and the bike and took them to a heated warehouse where they could thaw. As he proceeded on his journey he found himself cheered on at every work camp. The truckers had spread the word by CB radio that some maniac was riding down the pipeline on a motorcycle.

McCord and Binkley had prepared the bike in advance for the trip. Remarkably few changes were made to the stock BMW, particularly to the engine and drive train. Most changes were made to the external equipment. All of the openings in the fairing were stuffed with foam rubber to minimize drafts. A relatively frostless, double-windscreen was created by adding plastic. Hard rubber was used to fashion a kind of lower fairing around the cylinders so that the heat would be lead back over Brinkley's feet. He draped a duffle bag over each side of the tank under which he could tuck his knees to keep them warm and out of the wind. Last but not least, he fitted the bike with Trials Universal tires into which he had inserted some 230 steel ice-studs, 140 in the rear and 90 in the front.

Binkley reports that the roads had been kept relatively free of snow, but ice could be a problem. He could travel as fast as 60 mph on hard-frozen gravel, about 40 mph on ice. He dropped the bike once at low speed because of the vibrations set up by frozen, flat-spotted tires. It took him another seven days to complete the trip from subzero Fairbanks to the milder climes of Oregon, where he could change tires and lubricants.

John Binkley did all this cold-weather riding at the ripe age of twenty-two years. He says the temperature never dropped much below 20 degrees F for the remainder of his trip all the way to Tierra del Fuego, at which he arrived on April 21st. He had no problems with the motorcycle. And he enjoyed the trip so much that he decided to leave his BMW in South America, go home for the working season, then return for the bike and ride it all the way back. After the lessons he learned motorcycling at —62 F, there just doesn't seem to be any cold left that's cold enough to threaten John Binkley. And the rest of us might just re-think our thinking about the cold winter of 1976-77.

Cold Weather Tactics: Surviving, Thriving, and Enjoying Your BMW in the Winter

Servicing Your BMW

The surprising fact about preparing a BMW for cold-weather use is that there is so little to do. Most of the steps are little more than intensified routine maintenance. Nevertheless they are important; winter can be as hard on the machine as it can on the rider. The following steps will help you to trouble-free cold-weather riding.

Most important is to keep the machine in a razor-sharp state of tune. Keep ignition points and spark plugs clean and properly gapped. Check ignition timing frequently and make sure it is spot on. Waterproof the external high-tension leads and boots with a good silicone ignition spray.

Battery service is also critical. Low temperatures reduce battery output. They also thicken lubricants which increases the demand on the battery during starting. Use ammonia to clean off deposits on battery terminals, then restore to bright bare metal with a wire brush, sandpaper, or emory cloth. After clamping the wire connectors to the terminals, smear the assembly with acid-proof terminal grease or vaseline. Check battery acid level frequently and top up with distilled water just *before* you set out on a ride.

Because of highly-corrosive anti-ice chemicals on the roads, your bike should be kept clean and well waxed. Ideally it should be rinsed when you return from a ride on salted roads—even dry roads. Don't worry about some corrosion on aluminum engine and drive-train castings. This whitish powder or crust will wipe off easily in the Spring.

Cold-weather effects on oil viscosity are less noticeable on the high-quality multigrades. Switch to an SAE 10-40 or 10-50 for engine use. If it is *really* cold, you might change your transmission oil to an SAE 80 extreme pressure hypoid gear lubricant.

For reasons of weight, handling, and size, BMW's don't carry massive automotive-style batteries. An engine stiff with cold can therefore present a real challenge. This is the most effective starting drill: turn on fuel petcocks and wait for float chambers to fill; put choke in the "closed" position and set throttle at normal opening; on carburetors so equipped, depress the tickler to prime; pull in the clutch to reduce cranking load (make sure lights are off); press starter button.

If the engine is too stiff to crank at all, sometimes it can be loosened by putting the bike in gear, releasing clutch, and rocking back and forth on the tires. Then go through the drill above. If engine fails to fire quickly, check the carburetor floatbowls for water. This is sometimes the result of condensation and sometimes it comes in with the gasoline. The water will look like a clear marble in the gasoline. If present, dry out the float bowls. If it reappears immediately, you will have to drain and refill your fuel tank.

Once your engine fires, let it idle for a few minutes—until the choke is no longer needed. If it idles too long, the exhaust pipes will blue. Just before setting off, blip the throttle once or twice to clean the plugs.

A final cold-weather service tip: always use your centerstand when possible, particularly for overnight parking. Sometimes floatbowl needles don't seat properly when the carburetors are tilted at an angle (sidestand parking). If fuel petcocks are inadvertently left open, some gasoline may leak into the cylinder, washing lubricant from the cylinder walls and even contaminating crankcase oil. Fuel can also drip out the overflow opening, eventually draining the tank.

Storing Your BMW

Popular wisdom holds that a motorcycle will deteriorate almost as rapidly in storage as it will in hard use. This is mostly true, especially for the U.S. where winters usually offer a few random days warm enough for a longish ride. Keeping your BMW in tune and the battery charged and wringing it out once in a while on the open road is more than adequate "storage." But if circumstance require that you lay-it-up for two months or more, here is the best way to insure that it will be ready to go when you are.

The first step before storage is to thoroughly clean and wax your bike. Then take it out for a brisk ride of at least half-an-hour and top up the gas tank. When you return, turn off the fuel petcocks and let the engine idle until it dies (to burn up the fuel in the lines and carburetors). If you're really ambitious, dry out the floatbowls. Also, while the engine is still warm, drain and replace the crankcase oil.

Next remove the spark plugs, squirt a little oil into the cylinders and turn the engine over a few times. Squirt again and loosely thread the plugs back into place. Then remove the battery, clean up the terminals and connectors with ammonia, followed by emory cloth, and coat them with vaseline or battery-terminal grease. Stuff an oil-dampened rag into each muffler, roll the bike to its storage position, and place it on the centerstand. If you like, cover the bike with a dropcloth or tarp, but don't use a tight waterproof plastic cover (unless you're storing outdoors) because moisture tends to condense on the underside of them.

While your bike is in storage, the following steps will help to preserve it. Take the battery indoors (where it's warm) and charge it with a trickle charger (less than 2 amps) about once a month. Keep the acid level above the plates by topping with distilled water.

About once every six weeks, some additional service to the bike will help. Remove the plugs, squirt some more oil into the cylinder, place the transmission in 4th gear, and rotate the crankshaft by turning the rear wheel. Give a final squirt of oil and replace the plugs. Then, while still in 4th gear, pull in the clutch and again rotate the rear wheel. This will free-up the clutch plate and keep it from sticking to the pressure ring. Check the tire pressures and rotate

the front wheel to minimize "flat-spotting." Because the BMW centerstand is so close to the center of gravity, there is little weight on the wheels and they do not have to be raised free of the ground by blocking.

Riding Your BMW

Old timers say if you've never been cold on a motorcycle you've never been cold. They're absolutely right; the trick to enjoying cold-weather riding is not to get cold. Although every rider experiments tirelessly with his own combination of riding gear, here are a few basic tips.

Keeping your body warm means keeping the heat from getting out faster than you generate it. And a sitting rider doesn't generate much heat. To keep the heat in you must be insulated and windproofed. Insulating value is almost solely a function of thickness. Thickness can be built up of many layers or it can be one continuous layer (such as in goose-down skiing jackets). Find the right thickness and your body temperature will remain stable.

Windproofing is tricky because the material should also be permeable to insensible water vapor. Your body is always letting off this vapor and if you stop it from getting away, it will usually condense into water and leave you sopping. That's why rubber and plastic raincoats are uncomfortable after a short while. But there are leather, canvas, denim and other materials which are both sufficiently stiff and windproof and yet still "breathe" properly for comfort.

When your body temperature starts to drop, your body protects itself by shutting off the warm blood supply to your extremities. Result: your fingers and toes get cold even though they may be well insulated. In fact when well-protected fingers and toes begin to get cold, that's a good sign you'd better do something to get warm. Get a bowl of soup, do some exercise, or whatever.

Your face, even though it may not feel cold, acts as a heat window to let body heat out to the environment. To stay warmer longer, keep it covered with at least a face shield and ideally with something like a skier's mask. Mittens, incidentally, are more effective than gloves for hand warmth. But since both hands and feet are used for motorcycle control, there are limits to how much you can pad them out.

As for cold-weather riding technique, the key points to remember are not to get too cold nor too tired. Uncertain riding surfaces mean that you must be doubly alert. In general, you go slower and you don't make any sudden changes, particularly on snow and ice. Most experienced cold-weather riders aren't fazed much by snow, but any rider who's around to talk about it is *very careful* on ice. Since you can't count on the same from drivers of four-wheelers, avoid heavy traffic.

Modern highway clearing practice more or less delivers bonedry pavement within a day or two of most snowfalls, so your year-round riding skills remain the same. In the winter your trips (like the days) tend to be shorter and your stops more frequent. But the roads are less crowded and the challenge is greater. You'll find a good brisk ride serves as an excellent cure for cabin fever. And after two weeks in the garage, even your BMW will seem more responsive to the joy of winter riding.

Centerspread and Rear Cover; only after exhaustive environmental and wind-tunnel trials did the final design of the fabulous 1977 BMW R100RS emerge.

THE BMW MOTORCYCLE JOURNAL, Winter 76-77. Volume 5, Number 1. Published seasonally by Butler & Smith, Inc., Walnut Street & Hudson Avenue, Norwood, New Jersey 07648. Distributed free to BMW owners of record: see your dealer. Others may obtain copies from Butler & Smith at $1.00 per issue postpaid. Address all correspondence to BMW Motorcycle Journal, P.O. Box H, Norwood, N.J. 07648. Editorial and photographic contributions are welcomed.

PHOTO: VOLKER RAUCH