

PHILLIP FUNNELL

Pioneer - Motorcycling - Nominated 2014

By Jim Greenwood

Philip was born in Croydon England in 1936. His first motorcycle was a new 1952 Triumph 150cc. He traded this in on a BSA 650cc on which he was involved in a head on collision with a Norton in 1955. The collision left Phil with a bum leg. He then bought a Vincent Black Knight with a sidecar and became a motorcycle enthusiast. Phil bought a BMW R50 and began touring. He toured all of Europe and Asia then bought a new BMW R50/2 and did his first trip around the world.

He then converted it to a R60/2 and, with his wife, toured much of the world again.

Phil came to Canada in 1966 and opened a motorcycle shop. After selling Kawasaki, Yamaha, BSA, Ossa & Hodaka, he became an exclusive BMW dealer. Phil competed in enduros seriously and to a lesser extent in trials, cross country and desert racing.

Phil also did some production racing on BMW R100s and vintage raced a Borough Superior 1150 Special at Westwood.

For years Phil was the leading BMW dealer in Canada doing as much as 40% of BMW's motorcycle business in the country. Phil was a distributor for the Soviet Dnepr sidecar motorcycles. To prove their ability to handle the cold Phil rode one from Vancouver to Halifax in January. This it turns out was one of many cross Canada rides for Phil. In 1968 he rode a Harley Davidson belt drive from Vancouver to Halifax experiencing -40 degree temperatures and proving that the belt drive could handle it.



Long Range Motorcycle

2014 - Greater Vancouver Motorsport Pioneers Society

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In 1979, Phil did another motorcycle first by riding a BMW 800 to Cape Horn and back to Vancouver via Miami, from Vancouver he then rode to Tuktoyaktuk in March across the ice highway. The total ride was 47,700 km in eleven weeks three days, through 23 border crossings, 17 money changes, and 19 flat tires. He set records for travelling 1550 miles in 24 hours, had five 1000 mile days and twice did 2,300 miles in 36 hours.

Phil's first crossing from Herat to Kabul in 1960, he has twice travelled around Australia and New Zealand, rode through every state in the US and every province and territory in Canada except Newfoundland and Labrador. Phil has been to the Isle of Man six times, rode to Panama six times and through 74 countries.

In his spare time, Phil organized and took riders on long weekend rides through B.C.'s backcountry. Called Phil's Follies these rides tested the riders but were well attended and great fun.

As if riding through jungles, over deserts, through blizzards and being checked at borders by guards with machine guns, spears and everything in between wasn't enough, Phil also has another love. His sail boat! Right, this guy who has faced everything manageable on his motorcycle including two trips around the world, riding from the furthest south to the furthest north loves sailing. And, he has made six ocean passages solo totaling 68,000 nautical miles, but that is another story.

Phil is completing plans to ride across Russia from the eastern most port of Vladvostok to Europe and then to London. From there he will fly to St. John's Newfoundland and ride back to Vancouver a trip of approximately 32,000 km. He hopes to be back for his 80th birthday.

On top of all of the above, and besides customizing and building all the fairings and pod he does all his own tuning and repairs. Phil has written two books about his adventures.

Phil is an inducted member of the Canadian Motorcycle Hall of Fame.



Phillip Funnell on one of his Extended Tours