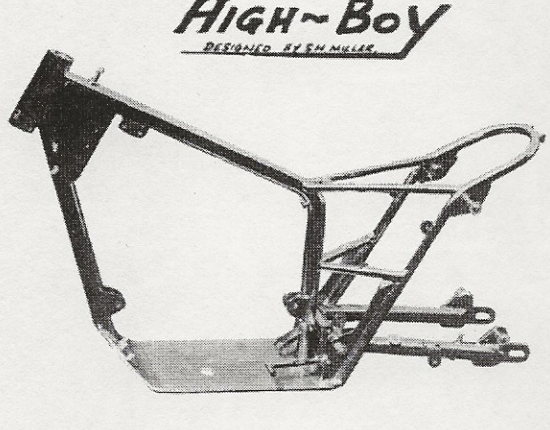


Alan Singer Restores Rare Sammy Miller Sherpa T

(Note: Alan sent this story a while ago, I apologize for not printing it sooner. Thank you Alan for your patience!)

I found an e-bay auction for an odd trials bike. It was a Bultaco M-151 motor in a British-made Sammy Miller frame. The bike was somewhat "weathered" and looked tired, but on the plus side, it was only a hundred or so miles away. The Model 151 is a bit of a rare bird, a 350cc Sherpa T, (actually 325cc) and was only in production for about six months. There were no bids, on a lark and lacking a current project, I put in the minimum bid at the last moment. When I picked it up, it was as expected, but it ran so I paid and took it home.



THE VERY LIGHTEST

EIGHT GOOD REASONS

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. 12" ground clearance | 5. Swinging arm on Silentbloc bushes |
| 2. Super lightweight in high tensile tube | 6. Torsionally resist rigid |
| 3. Every joint profiled and bronze welded | 7. Incorporating slimline rear brake |
| 4. Finished in chrome | 8. Chain oiler in frame |

An ad for the Sammy Miller Hi-Boy Frame/swingarm.

I did a bit of research. Sammy Miller built a number of frames for Bultaco motors in the '70's. I wrote to him at his museum but he was of limited help, saying that the records had been lost in a fire many years ago. He did send me a copy of an advertisement for the frames. The current operators of Sammy Miller Parts likewise had no information. I posted on several websites and here at La Voz, seeking any information with very little results. I found two 250 cc examples out west but that was all. Slowly, I pieced some information together. The frames were referred to as "High Boys", thanks to their use of a skid plate under the engine in place of frame tubes. There were probably three different series with slight variations. I believe mine to be the second series, based on the serial number stamped on

the steering head. I received a few early documents with the bike ad found the donor bike to have been purchased in the U.K. in March of 1975. More on this later. Sometime in the late '70's, Miller took a prototype to Japan and made a deal with Honda to supply frames for the then new TL-125. This marked the end for Bultaco-powered frames, and was a wise decision as he made many more frames for Honda power, and the company continues to make these today.

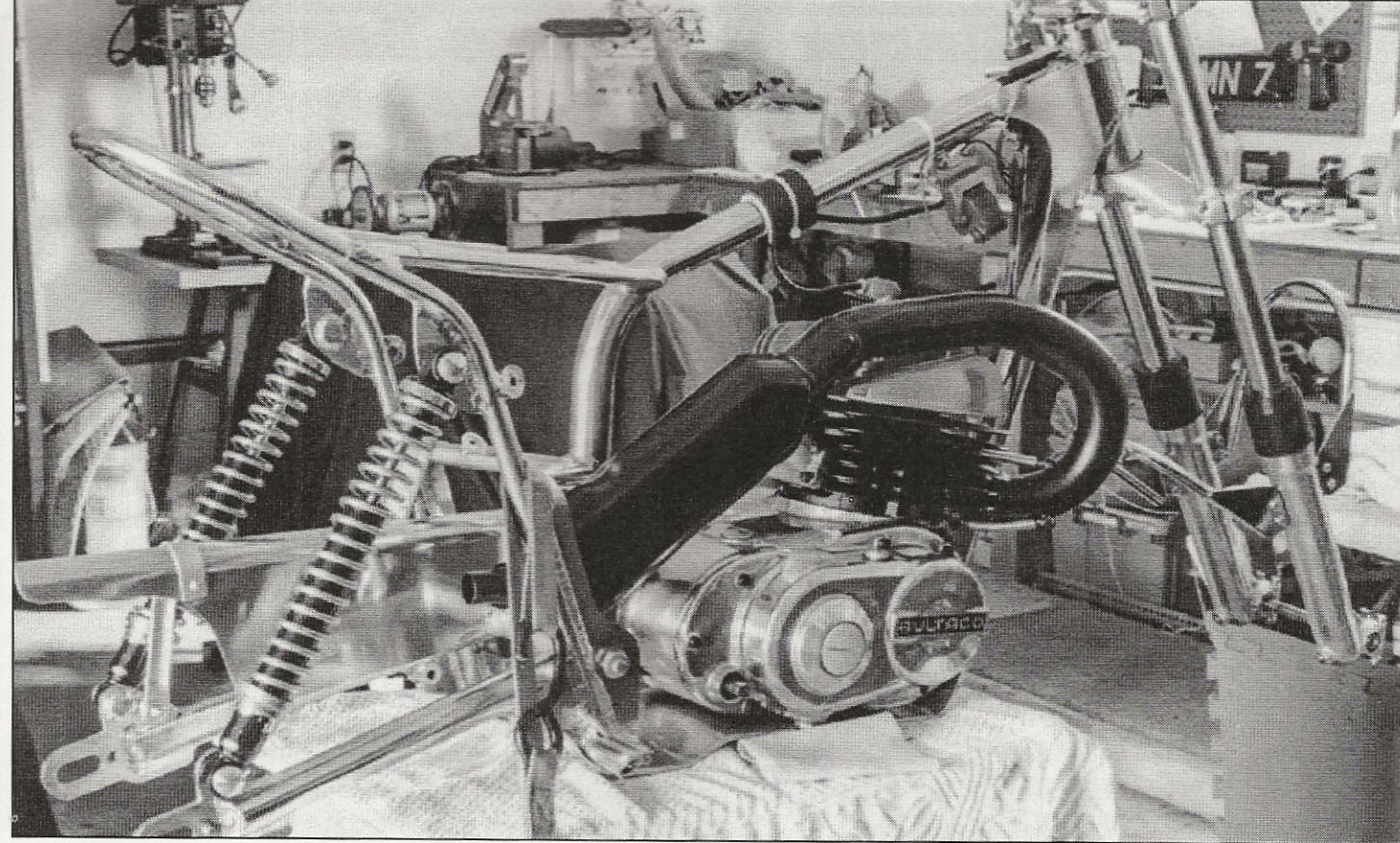
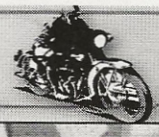
As an aside, the frames were welded up in a little town in the south of England, New Milton. That was also where the Rickman brothers had their Rickman frames built. My guess is that town probably had the highest concentration of top notch welders in the country.

While working the web for information, I began working on the bike, generally cleaning it, shooting lots of pictures and making lists of needs. I stripped it to the bare frame and along with general reconditioning, began the laborious task of polishing. Miller chrome-plated his frames, not triple-chrome, more of an industrial finish. (Ken notes: I believe the frames were nickel-plated only, which is often the first step in chrome plating) Using Ospho, Bronze wool, metal polish and lots of elbow grease, a really nice frame emerged. The motor, being relatively fresh, required only cosmetics; more polish, paint, etc. The forks were rebuilt and polished.

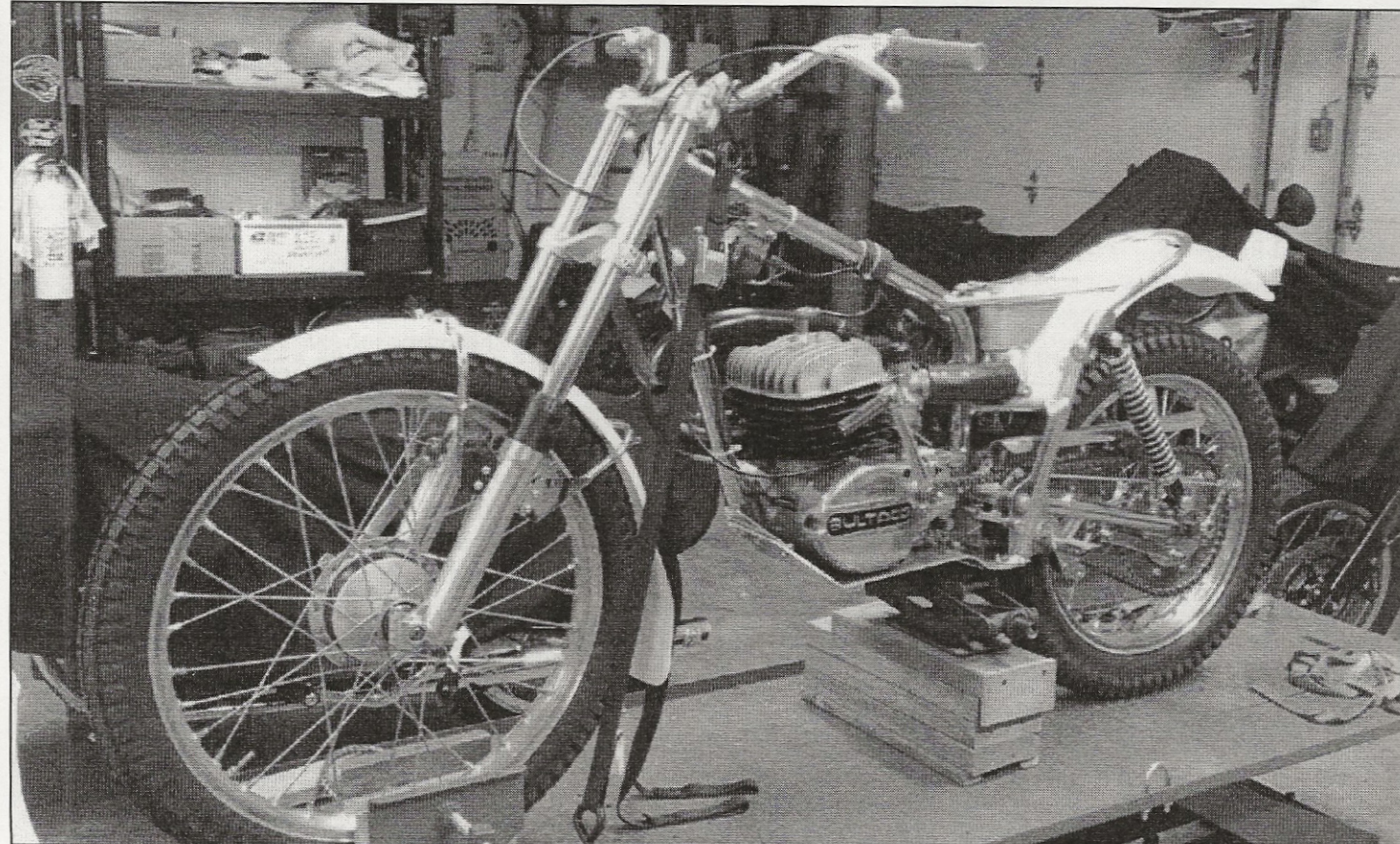
The wheels turned out to be a big problem. I found a few broken spokes initially, I thought I could simply replace them without disassembling the wheels. I carefully refinished the hubs and polished the rims with the wheels assembled only to find out that they would have to come apart and have all the spokes replaced. There were many incorrect spokes and some of the spoke holes had ben elongated so the wheels needed a complete rebuild. Had I realized this earlier I would have broken them down before busting knuckles on the hubs! In the end, though, they came out really nice.

The fenders wee a disaster. The front was homemade, the rear cracked, split and broken. I was able to source an original set of Sammy Miller front fender brackets in England, and fitted a pair of M-199 replica plastic fenders. The seat/tank has an interesting story. For a brief period in 1975, Britain banned fiberglas fuel tanks. The Bultaco importer had a local company Homerlite, build hand-hammered alloy gas tanks. These tanks were very light, but also very fragile. Mine required serious surgery, way beyond my ability. A friend's body shop did a great job, painting it British Racing Green. Sargent Cycle Products

La Voz de SMOG PG 5



Frame cleaned, engine in, it is starting to look like a motorcycle.



On the wheels, with fenders, air cleaner, and ignition. Almost there!

La Voz de SMOG PG 6



recovered the seat, after I repaired the seat pan, using a Kit Campeon pattern. I took some "liberties" but there was no "original" to restore to! It was a competition bike that had been modified and "massaged" through several iterations.

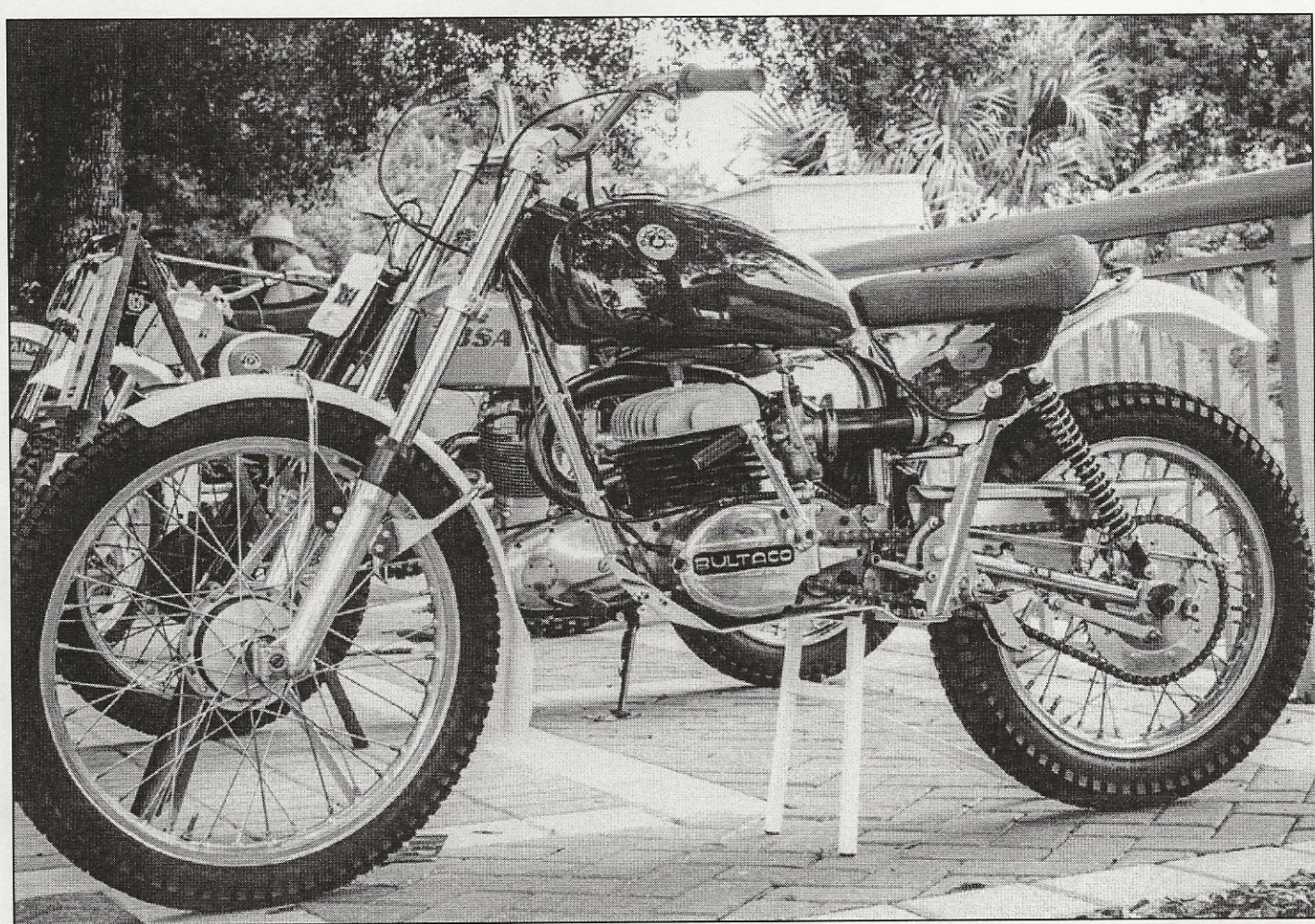
One quirk was that the hardware was a mixture of Whitworth and metric. Where possible, I converted to metric, sometimes tapping out to the next size. In truth, the bike went together pretty easily. The entire project took about five months. As usual, the final cost was about twice my rosy estimate, but I am quite pleased with the final result.

I mentioned receiving a few documents, one of which was the purchase receipt. I also got the original British registration papers with the name of the owner and an e-mail trail from 2005 between the original and second owners. I wrote to both men and sent photos of the completed motorcycle, beginning an extended correspondence.

Here's the story: Colin Blake was a teenage trials talent. After competing on a Triumph Cub and used Sherpa,

his Dad bought the M-151, and subsequently assembled the High Boy. Colin competed on it for a couple of years, including at the Ilse of Man Two Day. He kept the bike after getting married, took it to France and eventually he and the motorcycle emigrated to New Hampshire. His son rode it a bit, but mostly it laid idle. In 2005, with an impending move to the Pacific Northwest, Colin sold it to Brad Marshall. Brad says he rode it only once, it ran out of gas and he parked it. Brad moved to Florida and passed it on to Don Jacobs, from whom I bought it a few years later. And that completes the circle. If anyone has any more information on Sammy Miller frames and kits, please pass it on to me at adsinger@aol.com.

- Alan Singer.



Complete in British Racing Green, proudly displayed. Now it is ready to get dirty!