

I've just turned eighty and my first Bultaco, bought new, turned fifty. That would be the Model 85, 250 Alpina. Through the seventies, it was my go to for enduros and trail riding. It got a couple of refreshes during that time. One winter I wrote to Sammy Miller, sent him a one pound note, and received his mimeographed parts list (remember those days?). Sending more notes, cash only accepted, a number of goodies subsequently arrived in New Jersey and were pressed into service.

Fast forward and probably twenty Bultacos have passed through my hands, with a dozen or so currently in the garage. Not all are dirt bikes, but there are several, and a few surrounding stories.

But back to the Alpina. In the early eighties it was parked due to a flirtation with vintage sports car racing. In 1990 a career move to Florida precipitated a general reassessment of my "stuff". The race car was sold, and the Alpina gifted to my best friend's son. He was twelve and this was his first "big" bike for the yard and local trails. A half dozen years later, he was riding hare scrambles on a Honda and the, slightly worse for wear, Bultaco came home. Fueled by nostalgia, it received my first ever motorcycle restoration, back to standard but with many of the Sammy Miller parts remaining. Cruising the Daytona infield during the AHRMA races was great - the Alpina got a lot of love.

Before getting into all the dirt bikes, let me mention there have been a number of Metrallas, an El Tigre scrambler, a Streaker, a Campera that morphed into a café racer, and most recently, a Tralla Sport (TS) road racer.

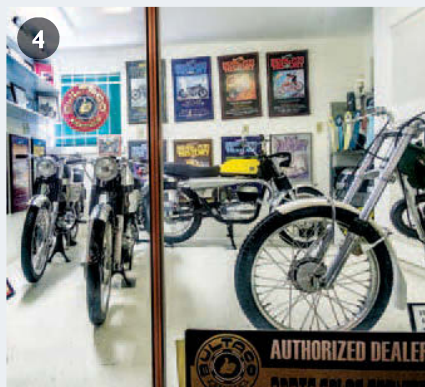


Somewhere along the line, I spotted an ebay ad for an unusual trials bike. I recognised it as a Sammy Miller Hi-Boy, something not often seen over here in the US. The opening bid seemed quite fair but there were no takers. Only a hundred miles away, I sniped a last second bid and it was mine. It needed and received a bare frame restoration. The rare Homerlite alloy tank was a mess, the seat torn, the fenders homemade, but the 325cc motor was fresh and fine.



Words and photos by Alan Singer

1. Alan's Matador Mk. 9. 2. A room full of artworks. 3. A beautiful display. 4. All things Bultaco! 5. The first Pursang. 6. The 200 wasn't a big seller but it is one of Alan's favourites.



Documents that came with it, including the original invoice and a few letters, led me to its first rider, a British teen whose father put it together. He finished second in the UK Junior Trials Championship one year. It travelled to France with him and subsequently to the US. The next two owners did little with it but kept it safe. After a year's work the Hi-Boy won a number of show awards before being installed as a house queen.

A year or so later Craigslist had an ad



7. Wall to wall Bultacos – Alan’s happy place. 8. There’s still work to be done. 9. Alan has a few other desirable bikes besides the Bullys. 10. This Bultaco Streaker looks fabulous. 11. 5 SD (Six Days). 12. Sammy Miller Sherpa T. 13. The Sammy Miller Sherpa T as bought.



for a late model Matador, a Mk.9. They are much more street oriented than the earlier Matadors, featuring metal fuel tank, lights and a comfy seat. The Mk.9 was developed as a competitor to Japanese dirt bikes like the Yamaha DT-1. Not commercially successful, they are relatively rare over here. This particular bike was very original and in decent shape. The seller was very motivated, so much so that I undertook a 2,000 mile road trip over the Easter weekend to retrieve it.



It didn't run, but it took just thirty minutes to clean the sand(!) out of the ignition and reset the points. The frame had some surface rust and the bike had plastic fenders. I took it apart, repainted the frame, cleaned and polished all the original paintwork and aluminum, sourced a set of original fenders and it was done. The 350 motor has lots of torque and a nice smooth power delivery. My guess is they didn't sell because they required mixing the fuel, the popularity of Japanese equipment and also the

limited dealer network.

I always loved the look of the misnamed Bultaco Metisse. Bultaco and the Rickman brothers made a deal to create a Bultaco powered Rickman Metisse. A bit later, Bultaco built a bike using the Rickman designed frame, though in mild steel. How this came about remains a bit of a mystery, but I believe there were attorneys involved. In any case, Senor Bulto named the new bike "Pursang", the French purebred vs the Rickman's mongrel. Later Pursangs were designated as Mk.s. This one, though advertised as a Bultaco Metisse was internally, and in factory publication, referred to as Pursang, simply Pursang, not Mk.I.

Found in central Florida, the Metisse was an old warhorse that had some period mods that had been retained during an earlier restoration. The main problem was that the fiberglass tank, incorrectly painted Rickman green, was porous and fuel fumes were lifting the paint. Sanded down, re-gel coated and internally sealed, the tank and other 'glass was painted in the correct Ford Springtime Yellow. A few new parts and lots of detailing resulted in a show-winning bike. Unfortunately, I found it very difficult to start and never mastered the knack, so a year later passed it on to another Bultaco enthusiast.

Speaking of tough starters, I picked up an original Frontera 360 during a trip north. The owner started it by jumping off a stool onto the kicker. Another knack I couldn't acquire. A good friend had earlier beaten me to a fairly rare Pursang Mk.9, a 200cc Model 170. For a few years the 200 MX class was popular over here and the M170 was considered the ultimate weapon. So my friend is bigger and younger than me and he hankered for a Frontera. We arranged a trade for the price each of us paid for our bike and I got a bike I could start!

The Pursang was a low hour, local bike, but was heavily weathered, requiring a full restoration. This took about a year but resulted in a beautiful example. The M170 has a unique paint scheme that differs from all other Pursangs and really sets it apart. It's one of my favorite motorcycles.

Finally, in the middle of the Covid pandemic there appeared a Facebook post. The fellow from whom I had bought the Mk.9 Matador had decided to sell his last Bultaco. This was his prized Mk.5 Six Days, a very special bike. The SD represents Bultaco's ultimate Matador enduro machine. It has many specialised accessories; watch holder, route roller, tank bag, tire inflator, quick change wheels and so on, plus a Pursang spec motor. We made a deal that included boxes of new and used parts, books and tools, essentially everything Bultaco in his possession. Another 2,000 mile trip brought it all home.

Using the stash to trade for parts and services, and to raise cash, I proceeded to do a bare frame restoration. The bike came out beautifully, it is as original as possible, with the paint and chrome better than new.

None of these motorcycles have returned to the dirt or been ridden in anger. I can hear some decrying that they are meant to be used. Perhaps, but not by this octogenarian. The vast majority of competition Bultacos have been used up over the decades since they were built. These have been saved for the next generation, that's enough for me.



1. The Matador Mk. 9 in all its glory. 2. The Pursang 200 engine. 3. Progress on the Sammy Miller Sherpa T. 4. Left side of the Pursang 200. 5. Matador Six Days. 6. Campera café racer with a Pursang engine. 7. Pursang 200 from the rear. 8. The Matador underway. 9. Red cars and red bikes! 10. The café Campera, the Metralla GTS and the Mazda Miata (MX-5). 11. A nice lineup. 12. The Metisse Project. 13. Matador SD progress.

