

SPORT TOUR READER



Volume 1

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1995

From The Editor's Tankbag

Finding myself as editor of this second issue of Sport Tour Reader is somewhat intimidating. I helped Grant Norman, the Publisher, with the charter issue and we had some lengthy conversations about the lack of publications that were devoted to the rider's **experience** as motorcyclist and the **feeling** and **essence** of motorcycling. Despite our many years of motorcycling, and common experiences, we had a tough time defining, between ourselves, just what these experiences mean. Yet, some type of common bond seems to exist between motorcyclists, despite the fact that it is easier felt by riders, than expressed.

We both agreed that we wanted information about the pleasures, and sometime pain, of motorcycling, written by motorcyclists. Further, we wanted **stories** about motorcycling



and motorcyclists, and not about the hardware and mechanics of the motorcycle itself. I tried to identify some of these **feelings** in my article "What is the Essence of Motorcycling" in the first issue but I'm not sure how successful I was in that effort.

Lastly, we both felt that the word "Reader" was very important in the title of this new magazine. To quote some of Grant's comments for his introduction "Why Sport Tour Reader" in issue number 1: "The **Reader** part of the magazine title was chosen to separate the magazine from all the **other** magazines...I prefer this distinction in the format of the magazine. It has appeal to the motorcyclists that enjoy reading. We are filled by today's instant video gratification, computer games, ...etc. My aim is the pleasure of actually reading an exploration of the minds of fellow motorcyclists...."

I'm sure there are those of you out there who can do a better job of ex-

pressing why we motorcyclists have a certain **bond**. We welcome your submission of stories, essays, fiction, drawings, unique personal, club and or group experiences, self discovery through touring, racing, endurance, long distance, daily riding, etc., also places where you ride and why, as well as tips for riders. Let's share our experiences through this magazine.

Please submit materials for consideration to the following address:

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104355.252@compuserve.com or Fax to: (812)
339-9841. Macintosh or
DOS/Window disks gladly
accepted as well as typed or
printed hard copy.

I'll look forward to hearing from you and hope to see you somewhere down the road!

Paul

CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE

James Frank Jones

My father hated Harry Truman. On the day Truman was nominated, my dad bought me a Whizzer. He said "I want someone to be happy about today." He knew I lusted for a Whizzer.

The year before, I had ridden Hugh Don's. It was "store-bought", one that came assembled. Hugh's father was assumed to be rich since he owned his own business, and Hugh got the best. My father worked for wages. He wasn't rich. My Whizzer was made with a conversion kit put onto my old Schwinn. A couple of roughnecks assembled it. It looked like the picture in the manual, but somehow the belt adjustment never was right.

But it was wonderful, and on the days when the belt wasn't slipping too badly, I could run it on my private Bonneville. In our oil field of 1949 (pre-EPA), where the salt water occa-

sionally overflowed the slush pits, there was a 1/2 acre salt flat where jumps and a circle track and all manner of wonderful hazards could be built. Hugh and I raced there through many a summer afternoon. If there was danger present, it went happily unrecognized.

I'd already discovered motorcycles. I'd ridden a

short distance with John J. on his Harley when I was about 10. John J. lived down in the bottom, was of undetermined parentage, and rode a motorcycle. With so much against him, we didn't socialize much, and I was surprised and delighted when he asked me if I wanted to go for a spin. Even now, I can see the big leather saddle as I stretched

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to straddle it, and feel the powerful shake of the idling engine. It was a thoroughly worn-out pre-war bike which only ran on the front cylinder. The rear cylinder just sprayed oil onto the ankles of 10 year old passengers. That ride was like an out-of-body experience in its purity. It, to some small extent, influenced my adult life.

But then I got a car and things moved along. With college and the army, I had little exposure to motorcycles. I do remember visiting a Triumph dealer in Springfield, Mo., in '61, who showed me a curious Japanese machine called a Honda Dream. The frame was stamped sheet metal! For Goodness sake.

Fast forward a couple of years to San Mateo. I passed one of those Honda places to and from work, and one spring day I stopped to look. Then I began scanning the want ads.

I learned to ride on the Bay Bridge between Oakland and San Francisco. One of the want adds that caught my eye was for a bike in Oakland, a Yamaha

YDS-1. It was a little ragged but basically beautiful and good sounding, so I bought it and wobbled off toward the Bay Bridge and home in San Mateo. I had about five blocks of acclimation before the bridge, in 5 o'clock traffic. The traffic swept me onto the top deck of the bridge, where the wind crosses at 30 and the drain grates parallel your direction of travel. The wind and the grates created steering feedback that took away whatever control I had; the bike squirmed its way, pretty much on its own, the length of the bridge. After that, most rides were anticlimactic.

The YDS-1, which was long-of-tooth, was traded for a new YDS-2. It was more responsive, more stable, and parts rarely fell off. I rode through much of the beauty of Northern California, and each ride added something to my knowledge of the ways of motorcycles. For instance, I learned that the center stripe is slick when wet, and that the ground under the center stand isn't always

reliable.

My education with regards to the center stripe occurred with a rush coming down the mountain from Lick Observatory. We did a two wheel drift toward a sheer drop. It only lasted one heart-stopping moment before I had grip and control, but it's a lesson I won't forget. The center stand experience came my first camping night, when I awoke to a strong smell of gasoline and found that the bike had fallen inches from my head.

And running in the rain on Bayshore Freeway, 70 mph, bumper-to-bumper, we saw one of those chain reaction stops developing. I was sure I could out-stop the Olds ahead; I was uneasy about the Corvair behind. I headed into the grass of the median and hoped he wouldn't follow. The crashing stopped before it got to me.

What's the point I'm making here? Anyone who has driven a car or ridden a motorcycle has a fund of near-misses to recount. They affect different people in different ways. They

didn't affect me at all. I assumed, with the insouciance of youth, that nothing bad could happen to me. Such was the power of my invincibility that nothing bad could happen to my friends even.

I watched O'Brian ride his Bonneville through a barbed-wire fence and into a pile of scrap lumber. Hohoho. Bathe him in Mercurochrome. He's fine. I watched Paul Cain ride his Water Buffalo (mentioned in an earlier issue) in a field of tall grass; it reached almost to the headlight; it was the middle of the night; he was going about 50 when he disappeared into a gopher hole. Hohoho. Sure enough, when we finally found him, he was fine.

Time passed and I sold the YDS-2 and left California and settled back home in East Texas. After years of doing other things, I got a YDS-3. And things began to go wrong. I crashed my Karmann Ghia. I went into a turn too fast on a rural road, a road I had traveled often. I'd overcooked it and spun harm-

lessly on that turn several times before, but this time I went into the weeds where someone had left a piece of farm machinery. It was a shock and I felt betrayed that a lighthearted spin into the boonies would so damage my lovely little car. Similarly, I could hardly believe it when another driving error resulted in a spin into a curb that destroyed the left rear of my Fiat. What's going on here?

Then, on May 28, 1969, I was riding the TDS-3 to work on a lovely Friday morning. It was so lovely I took the long way, making an unnecessary loop out by Rock Hill. Rock Hill is the highest point in our county, a sandstone outcrop. Local dwellings have the sand stones outlining flower beds and fencing driveways. Just after cresting Rock Hill, I met an old gentleman about to turn his pickup across my path into his driveway. I couldn't tell if he saw me and his body language indicated that he was going to turn.

Rather than wait and see, I yielded the road to him. I remember thinking

that I'd have no problem riding down the ditch, missing the truck if it did turn, and emerging on the other side of the ditch onto someone's lawn.

My next memory was a flash of surprise that the bike was no longer between my knees. The next thing I remember was awakening to the radio broadcast of the May 30 Indianapolis 500. I was in the hospital where they had repaired the damage from my having knocked down one of those sandstone fences with my head. I had a concussion and lots of stitches on my face and a very sore neck and knee. But the main damage was to my self confidence. Somewhere between the ditch and the stone fence, I'd lost my immortality.

When I was up and about again, I went back to my flying lessons but it didn't feel right anymore. I didn't trust my judgment and the maneuvers that were comfortable before weren't any more. The rhythm was gone when I second-guessed everything I did. I dropped flying

lessons. I had already sold the remains of my YDS-3. I didn't care about riding. I wasn't even good at driving. I had a Ford LTD, then an old Continental. The low point came when I began to question my ability to brake correctly to turn into my driveway. Several times I would start braking too soon, then try to cover it up when the car slowed almost to a stop 30-40 yards short of the turn. I backed up with utmost caution. The clearances that were second nature before now required constant checks and reconsideration. Every drive was a tiresome bother.

In a very real sense, when I lost confidence in "forever-after", I lost confidence in the present. I've learned since that the psychobabble term for this is Post Trauma Depression. Whatever it was, it wasn't debilitating, nor as dramatic as I've described it. Life went on. As far as I know, no one else was aware of my little quirk. But neither did it go away.

A couple of years ago my eye fell on an ad in the

local paper for a BMW R100RS. Since the address was only a few blocks away, I set up an appointment to see the bike. My interest was mostly idle curiosity. In our small town there weren't many motorcycles and, to my knowledge, no BMWs.

It was a thing of beauty. I wanted it. I bought it. I had no intention of riding it. The previous owner rode it to my house and into the garage and it sat there for a year. I washed it regularly and Armor-all'd it and waxed it and loved it as a beautiful piece of sculpture. I fantasized about how it would be to ride but I doubted that I ever would.

Even when Ben and I trailered it to Dallas for service, I didn't truly believe that I could ride. He was taking his GSPD for service and my bike and I tagged along. Doc Storm BMW had my bike running in a couple of days but Ben's took longer. It didn't matter. I was in no hurry. It was two weeks before we got over to pick them up. But when Doug,

the service manager, rolled my bike out and touched the starter and I heard it running it became a real and vital thing. And it was mine and by George I WOULD RIDE IT.

But first the paperwork. Trailer it home. Buy insurance. Study the manual for the drivers license and take the test for a learner's permit. Sit on the seat and operate the controls and visualize how it would be. Stall for another week.

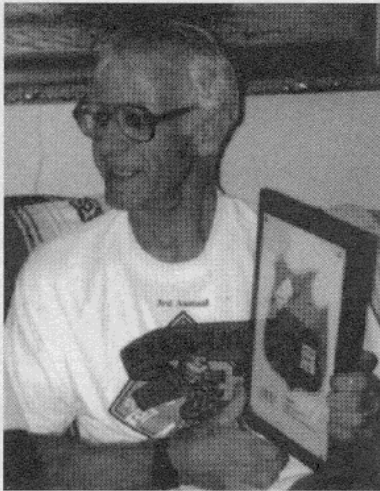
THE RIDE was easy compared to the obstacles I'd imagined. At the first turn I had a fleeting, "I don't know how to do this," but I was through the turn before the thought fully formed. Gear changes weren't smooth and I felt sorry for the drive train but they got progressively better.

I inched my speed up through a series of turns and managed them without knowing how. That first white-knuckle 20 miles gave me satisfaction I can't describe.

The monkey was well and truly off my back. In

the days that followed I rode the same twisting road again and again and each trip gave me a greater sense of well-being. I wasn't fast. I wasn't brave. I wasn't comfortable or relaxed. But I was chipping away at the self doubt that had gnawed at me for years.

In the succeeding year I've logged about 2000 miles, all within 50 miles of home. The satisfaction and sense of accomplishment grow. I'm OK. So maybe I'll take flying lessons.



James Frank Jones is an accomplished artist, photographer, draftsman, antique and car collector and motorcycle rider. He lives in Sulphur Springs, Texas.

Great Moments in Motorcycle Over-Packing

Paul J. Cain

My wife and friends long ago recognized my talent for packing. I drove a lot of small sports cars back in the 50s and 60s such as Austin Healy Sprites, M.G. Midgets, etc. and my college roommates had Fiat 400 and 500s.

Doing a lot of moving from home to school and from dorm to apartment meant a lot of packing. Like the old saying goes, "necessity is the mother of invention" and during this time period I became expert at packing a lot of things into a very small space for transport.

My most cherished possessions in those days (excluding my vehicle) included my record collection, stereo equipment, sports car and motorcycle magazines, books and clothes. Packing these things, along with other valuable items such as a homemade desk constructed from plywood, col-

lection of beer cans, wicker-clad Chianti bottles with candles and lava lamp made for some interesting 3-D/space puzzle challenges.

Thinking back to those days, life was much simpler without so many possessions. While moving in stages from Texas to Indiana over the past few months, I have come to realize the importance of "simplifying" my life by getting rid of "things"; however, this is a challenging task for a chronic pack rat like myself.

In a weak moment a short time ago, I discarded 20 years worth of motorcycle magazines and presently find myself wavering on the brink of discarding 25 years worth of National Geographic Magazines. I've always planned to read when I'm in my late 80s and bound to a rocking chair.

Anyway, these early packing skills certainly come in handy when it comes to getting a lot of stuff on a motorcycle. On my cross country motorcycle trips, I've always

over-packed in order to be prepared for any emergency that might occur while on the road.

In my "Cycles with Chains" days, I took extra master links, chain breaker, chain lube, etc.; added to that were extra tire irons, inner tubes, tools, extra spark plugs, etc. I might add that I have never owned a "luxo-tourer" with the luxury of a huge trunk and saddle bags, but have, until recently, stayed in the 750 to 800cc range of motorcycles.

My present mount, a Honda ST1100 with shaft drive and tubeless tires, eliminates the need for a lot of this "stuff" that I formerly carried and frees up space. Unfortunately, any "freeing up of space" on my bike translates into "fill this newly created vacuum with something else that seems at the time to be vitally important."

Not only do I leave home with all this gear, but have been known to bring back souvenirs from my travels; adding even more to my already loaded mount. This ultimate over-

kill has resulted in some "great moments in motorcycle over-packing." A few examples follow:

I remember discovering, in my years of meandering across the Southwest, the home of the "giant tumbleweed." This tumbleweed heaven is in an isolated area on the Arizona/New Mexico border (on the New Mexico side) called Fence Lake.

There are literally hundreds of large tumbleweeds stacked up by the wind against roadside fences for miles. The wind obviously blows most of the time in this area. The moisture must be above normal for that arid region in order to grow such large weeds or perhaps they blow in from an irrigated California area as part of an annual migration; anyway, the Fence Lake area is definitely the "home of the giant tumbleweed."

While riding through that area I thought about a friend back in Houston who is originally from New Mexico, telling me how his family, around Christmas each year, took a

tumbleweed and nailed it to a square wooden board to form a base and spray painted it white and decorated it with tiny blue balls for use as a Christmas table centerpiece.

I remember thinking what a novelty this would be back in Houston, as no one, short of a few displaced New Mexicans, would have seen anything like it. Undaunted by the fact that I was riding a motorcycle, I stopped somewhere outside Fence Lake and pulled one of these monster tumbleweeds out from a fence row and managed, with some difficulty, to tie it securely to my luggage rack. It was so big that it overlapped the passenger part of the seat and also obscured me when viewed from the rear of the bike (a BMW R75/6).

I rode carefully, determined to get this mother of all tumbleweeds to my home, in good condition, even if it meant riding at slower than my normal speeds for the next 1,100 miles. The weed didn't seem to pose any bike handling problems and

it definitely helped my posture as I generally tend to slump. The weed stuck me in the back each time I slumped so I quickly learned to sit up straight.

It was obviously quite an unusual sight for the occupants of cars approaching from the rear. This "thing" appeared to be a bush moving at 60 mph on a unicycle wheel. I'm sure the folks seeing this sight, who had been driving across the desert for hours, felt it was time to stop and get a cup of coffee as they were beginning to hallucinate.

What had started out as simply a project to get a large dried plant home, took on another entertainment dimension I had not contemplated. As cars changed lanes to pass me, I could see the people in them, through my rear view mirror, roaring with laughter. This prompted me to make a special effort to appear "cool" as if nothing unusual were attached to my cycle.

I tried to sneak in a sideways glance or two without appearing to turn my head toward the car.

Passengers invariably turned around to look back for quite a while after passing. After a separation point of several hundred feet, I felt safe in letting out a big belly laugh before the next car approached at which time I went back into my "cool, what-could-you-possibly-be-staring-at, mode."

The giant tumbleweed did indeed get delivered all the way back to Houston in good condition. My posture remained good for several months until I finally lapsed back into my old slumping habit. The tumbleweed was mounted, painted, decorated and used for about four Christmases until we were sick of it. I wrapped the mounting board with candy-striped paper before attaching the white spray painted tumbleweed. Also added were tiny twinkle lights, along with small blue balls (see Vol. 1, page 4 of STR Magazine, "Blue Balls to Bultaco" article).

As it turned out, this creation was much too big for a table centerpiece, unless you wanted to obscure

the person sitting on the opposite side, or hide yourself from some obnoxious relative visiting for Christmas dinner. It ended up on top of our piano during the holidays and received many compliments over the years. It just goes to show you how some extreme motorcycle over-packing can pay off from both a hauling and entertainment point of view.

I will pause at this point to say that I have a tremendous respect and admiration for those riders who can travel light. Like throwing things away, I'm still working on traveling with less but suspect I could use some group therapy in this regard.

Another "great moment in over-packing" item, actually items, that I have hauled on my bike over the years, always results in a lot of entertainment. For many seasons of cycle riding, I carried around a large net bag similar to the large ones used for transporting oranges and onions. This net sack compresses to a very compact size and serves as a good

emergency hauling device one can stuff away under the seat or in the back of a fairing.

Hempstead is a town about 50 miles west of Houston that is noted for it's production of fantastic watermelons. I've been a big watermelon fan since my childhood days when my grandfather raised them in his garden. In the warm Texas climate, I wouldn't trade a good, cold, watermelon for a steak.

On many occasions, coming back from a motorcycle trip out west, I stopped in Hempstead for watermelons on my way home. There are at least 3 or 4 places to make your watermelon purchase along the main road through town. Most of these places sell other fruits and vegetables and when they see me pulling up on the motorcycle, they probably assume I'm shopping for apples, perhaps pears or even peaches in season.

When I start looking at watermelons, employees and patrons get some rather perplexed looks on their faces. You can almost see the wheels turning in their heads - "is this guy really going to

attempt to haul a watermelon on that two-wheeled contraption?" I further astound them when I say "Will you give me a better price if I purchase two watermelons?" I suspect they always give me the better price just to see what will happen. Of course, at that time, they haven't figured out that I **must** purchase two watermelons.

I pay for the melons and put them next to the bike and by that time not only is the sales person staring in disbelief but any other customers that may be around generally stop to watch my every move. I proceed to fish out my mesh bag from some obscure corner of the bike. After placing the bag on the ground, I roll the two watermelons inside the bag and securely tie the end shut.

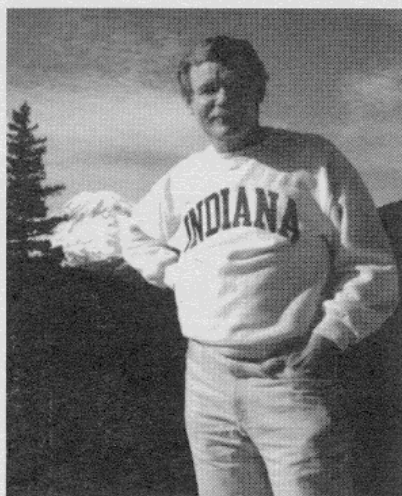
I then roll the melons to opposite ends of the bag, pick the bag up in the middle and place it over the passenger part of the seat like saddle bags (the melons should obviously weigh approximately the same) with a watermelon on each side of the bike. Carrying one watermelon on a fully loaded touring motorcycle can be a real chore, but carrying two is no problem. My camping

gear that frequently rides on the passenger seat can be removed, the mesh bag draped over the seat and the gear goes right back into place with the two watermelons occupying space previously not used.

In case you want to try this, be sure that the loading operation is done with no eye contact and in a very matter-of-fact fashion as it adds tremendously to the impact. As I crank up to head out on the road, I generally give a quick glance at the assembled audience as I ride away, noting a lot of smiles and laughter. On the open road each car that passes reacts in a similar fashion to the watermelons as noted earlier in the tumbleweed scenario.

Many of us who ride work to dispel the Hollywood "Hells Angels" image. I'm sure many of you riders have even better over-packing tricks to relate that can inject a bit of humor into the tumult of sharing the road with some of our 4-wheel friends, and perhaps alter the "bad guy" image.

Traveling light is a distant goal that I may someday achieve. By the way, has anyone tried bungying a snake to their sissy bar? - preferably with its head facing the tailgating car!



Paul Cain is a retired University of Texas professor who lives in Bloomington, Indiana. He has been riding motorcycles for over 30 years and likes to long-distance tour and write.

Memorial to Hulya

Brett Hutton

It was a perfect Memorial Day for motorcycling — sunny and warm. There were nearly thirty fellow motorcyclists gathered, loosely associated with a club out of Tacoma, Washington. Dave, Don, and Mark are the only riders I knew well, along with Sharon and Keesha, the ride organizers, whom I'd met on a previous ride.

Quickly forgotten cur-

sory introductions are made all around, with more attention paid to the rider's bike than the rider. The group's only passenger is a woman, Hulya, riding with her husband Thomas. He has an open, friendly face I instantly like, while hers I barely notice for the startlingly blue eyes. After waiting half an hour for any latecomers, we roll out of the Auburn parking lot at 9:30 a.m. A slower, more casual rider, I bring up the rear.

For several hours we cruise the back roads of the Maple Valley, enjoying the twists and turns, the road alternating from cool, shadowed tunnels of Douglas Fir, to sudden breathtaking vistas of a dazzling Mt. Rainier looming over open farmland. The bike purrs beneath me, a fellow rider looks over and grins, and all is right with the world.

Then I lazily top a rise to a scene I've never wanted to see: two motionless bodies in the road, a commercial-sized backhoe partly in a ditch, and someone frantically waving me to stop. The next few min-

utes are hazy. I'm in shock at the scene before me. Coming to a fast stop on the left hand shoulder, I quickly dig for the cellular phone in my saddlebag, stowed that morning "in case of emergencies." Dialing 911, I walk forward into sudden, violent carnage.

Sharon is running toward me from beyond the wreckage, her bike parked further down the road. Apparently the rest of the group is still going, unaware of what's occurred.

As the operator answers, my eyes are taking in the scene. Shock, horror and denial rock me while my mind scrambles to clear. By the matching suits and helmets I realize, without thinking, who they are. I don't want to believe my eyes, the leather-clad body nearest me is small enough to be the woman, and instinctively I know she's dead — something about the way she's lying, the blood pooling around her helmeted head.

She lies there like a dead cat in the road. Smashed. Limp. Lifeless.

"Nine One One, what

is the problem?"

"We, uh, have two motorcyclists severely injured."

"What is your location?"

"Jeez, I have no idea... Where are we?" I yell at a neighbor just running up.

"196th Street and Petrovitsky." I repeat into the phone, adding "Near the intersection of Maple Valley Road and Highway 18."

"Can you determine the extent of the injuries?"

"Um..." Just then Thomas rolls over, moaning, scarlet froth bubbling from his mouth. "They've uh, hit a backhoe tractor head on. Both seem to have severe internal injuries, one may... uh... one may be dead."

"Hold please, while I transfer you to the appropriate agency," I get to repeat my story, this time a little more concisely. Then the wait begins.

Her skin is warm when I search for her pulse. Where I should feel life surging... is nothing. She doesn't move, will never move again. What was moments ago a vibrant, smiling young woman is now

just an empty husk.

There is nothing I can do. Events out of my sight and out of my control happened and her death is nothing that can be stopped, pulled back from the brink of disaster. It is the disaster. It's happened. The little I can do is to help Sharon keep Thomas still. Kneeling by his head to shade his face, I hold his shoulders. Semi-conscious, he struggles to get up, asking how his wife is. Sharon looks at me and I shake my head. "We don't know," she tells him, "we're waiting for the paramedics. Just hang on."

They arrive quite quickly, maybe in as little as five minutes. The first paramedic looks at me questioningly. "He's conscious," I tell him, gesturing at Thomas, "but her..." He barely spares Hulya a moment's inspection before moving to Thomas. Turning, I see Dave coming up. He and Keesha turned back when we didn't show. His face sinks even lower when I tell him of Hulya.

She lies there ignored

as the paramedics and firefighters cluster around Thomas. No one pays her any attention, yet I can't not be conscious of her, face down on the rough black asphalt of a country road, skewed and partly covered, the pool of blood slowly congealing in the warm spring sun. A helicopter circles in from above, landing in the pasture next to the road.

Thomas is quickly and efficiently loaded and the helicopter lifts off with a pulsing thunder. The firefighters, paramedics, and officers stand around talking, still clustered. Their faces, I notice, are relaxed; this is just business. It's a beautiful day and there's no hurry to finish.

She lies there, still ignored. When they do begin to examine her, she's just a body, she isn't Hulya to these people. As they remove some of her clothing, investigating her injuries, I turn away. There is nothing I can do, I'm not wanted here anyway. Backing my motorcycle up, I pull away, leaving her there.

Over the next few days

I learn the details of the accident. The driver of the tractor apparently turned directly into them, misjudging their speed or simply not seeing them. Sharon, riding just behind Thomas and Hulya, barely managed to avoid being a part of the wreckage, weaving through the exploding debris and bodies before coming to a stop beyond them.

From the look of the frame, Thomas laid the bike on its side before colliding with the tractor. The motorcycle was virtually cut in two, probably from hitting the lower edge of the front scoop. At the time, I hadn't noticed that Thomas was missing his helmet. It must have shattered on impact. They never did find it. He came through relatively well: broken jaw, broken ankle, bruised femur, minor scratches.

The real damage is in his heart. They were married less than a year. She was twenty-seven.

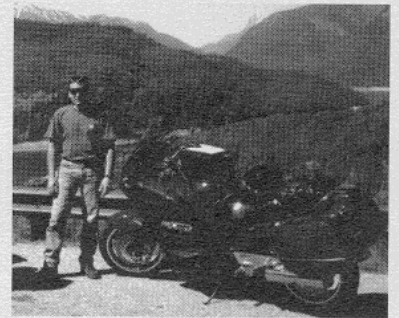
A week later and I still find myself unexpectedly broadsided by deep emotion. Just when I'm thinking I'm done, I see a woman

built like Hulya and find myself back there, her body stretched out in undignified sprawl at my feet, or I open my saddlebags to find the wrench kit from their motorcycle I absent-mindedly picked up off the road, or I see a news report showing a victim of violence half-way cross the world, knowing intimately now the look of death, where before it was just half-realized morbid fascination.

People ask me if I'm afraid to ride my motorcycle now. No, Hulya could just as easily have died in a car; there were several other deaths that Memorial Day, all in cars. Rather, I find myself with a newly gained sense of mortality. Sitting at a stoplight or at lunch, I look around me at the people I see and realize that death cuts through all barriers, bringing us in a moment to the bottom line of our common humanity; the one certain thing we all share, no matter how buried under prejudice, bigotry, righteousness, or other tools of separation.

I didn't need to know anything about Hulya to

intimately know her. She wasn't even alive and I felt the most vulnerable and intimate of connections. She was my mortality and my humanity. Her death breached a hole in the wall I keep between myself and others. The wall of separateness. I'll go to her funeral soon and I'll thank her. I'll breathe a little deeper, feel a little stronger, and notice the colors of life a little more thanks to her. And I'll wipe away the sudden mist in my eyes whenever I see a young woman passenger, on a motorcycle, on a beautiful sunny day.



Brett Hutton lives in Bellview, Washington, owns Windowworks, Etc. and has been riding motorcycles since he was a teenager.

Elefantentreffen

Martin Hildebrandt

Have you ever noticed a total silence and calmness while standing in a roaring crowd at a football game? Did you enjoy the feeling? If so, then you would probably enjoy the weird fun in attending the biggest motorcycle winter rally in Europe.

I have attended rallies for many years; normally with friends. After a short time, I generally have the urge to disappear, search for a lonely stretch of road and find a nice secluded place for my tent. Normally, politeness dictates that I refrain from this approach.

This rally is different for me and begins with preparation for the 500 mile trek each way from our home. Since temperatures are often below zero this time of year, and road surfaces slick, you can't just put on your leathers and go. Most people going this distance take two days but we normally do it in one day.

But then, both the machines, an ST1100ABS and an FJ1200ABS are getting

their winter dress; meaning additional windshields both for the hands and feet. Without these, you have small chance in keeping any feeling in your hands at 100 mph, even with heated grips. We've tried riding without this extra protection the first year and found it to be excessively painful. In fact, it took about a week to get full functionality back into my hands the first year we rode without the shields and with only "warm" clothes.

Clothes, well, that's an important topic and I learned some new things when attending this rally. My standards for "warm", "medium" and "cool" clothes changed by about two stages. First, I thought that long johns, wool pull-over, heavy leathers and rain gear, combined with a warm liner, "four-season" gloves and boots, would be warm. I've tried this at home, when riding on clear and sunny cold days for a hundred miles and never had problems. But, then I never left home two hours before dawn at -5C, with high winds and sleet. After

80 miles and two hours we were so cold, that we made warm-up sprints in full gear for 10 minutes to get **some** feeling back in our feet. The rest of the trip was done in two days, but don't ask me how.

For obvious reasons, the clothes I took this year were somewhat different: Normal warm underwear, long fleece pants up to the breast, extra long and thick fleece pullover going over the butt, cross boots size 13, 4 pounds each with enough space for two pairs of socks, leathers with extra foam protectors, who give much warmth to the back, knees and the elbows. Over this is added a Finnish overall of extra heavy Cordura/Sympathex laminate and 1 inch thick liner. They sell these to Alaska oil drillers. Further, three finger gloves/heated grips/added windshield combination, a fleece mask and electric heated visor for the helmet. We made the 500 miles in 5 3/4 hours, including three tank stops (the FJ needed them) and with no more cold.

But preparation

doesn't end with the clothes: Besides an excellent tent and the warmest sleeping bag money can buy, you need to carry food, lights and everything else to camp three days in the snow. This year I even hauled a 70 pound piglet for our group of 8.

The ride to this rally is much fun. You can enjoy your preparation (if it works) as well as the sight of stunned drivers around you. Then, on the last 150 miles you can enjoy the growing fleet of weird vehicles that are obviously heading for the same destination. These vehicles are, for the most part, **really** weird. Ural sidecars belong to the more common sights with the amount of complete stock street bikes probably falling somewhere below the 2% level. Other scenes include old MZ's and Jawas with additional last-minute-welded tinshields, Harleys with studded tires and Goldwings with spare tires on the back seat. After a while, these sights are nothing that turns your head. The piglet on my passenger

seat was still a bit unusual as I have to admit (see Paul Cain's article in this issue).

Arrival and getting on the ground is fun all it's own. The place is simply a small valley with a fence along the street leading to it, with a single opening to ride through where you have to pay your fee and pick up some stickers, a small manual and the permit to camp for three days. It's cheap, about 25.- DM altogether. The fun begins when riding downhill on the iced snow with a steepness between 10 and 25%. Everywhere where there's no snow are mudpits, so some experience in the dirt can be an advantage if you're looking for a place for your tent and fully loaded tourer. Some of the wimps leave their bikes at the street and carry their luggage by foot like I did. This gives you the opportunity to simply ride to the next farm to buy some straw or firewood.

Camping these three days is also fun. We met and enjoyed the company of a group of 8 people this year. Most people didn't know

each other. I met Tommy, who had built an internal satellite navigation display into where his instruments are normally located on his ST. He's a designer and I would say "addicted" to motorcycles with 9 cycles and no automobile.

A different person had to prepare dinner each day and each of the cooks was trying to do his best. An original Vietnamese soup with fresh vegetables and noodles isn't easy to prepare with only some fire in the snow. The third day, at the farewell party, I prepared the piglet with some help from the others. It was finally given to the public after 9 hours of turning above the charcoal grill built of snow and aluminum tape. As expected, all our neighbors came and brought drinks or something else to eat. In the end, when Tommy's Hot Air Balloon was rising into the night, enlightened by the fire inside, the party had grown to about 100 people (did you think only 8 people would eat 70 pounds of pork?).

Up to the conclusion

of the outing, you're constantly busy with no time for boredom. While someone goes for straw to put under the tents, someone else is getting firewood. Believe me, you like to have "lots" of firewood when camping in the snow. There was typically at least one member of our group repairing his machine and in need of tools or a helping hand. Staying busy keeps you from getting cold and the need of help from your neighbor keeps you in constant contact with members of your group.

You tend to get a lot of respect for others at the rally, since they figure you are as mad as they are for being there. The tone is much more friendly and polite than I'm used to from other rallies. I haven't seen people in fistfights in some years and barely a hard word. Some joking about my purple leathers is no more than friendly teasing. But then that's not as astonishing as the people you meet are also different from the usual rally crowd. In another setting, you might change the side of

the street, if you saw one coming toward you on a sidewalk.

After two days of playing in the snow and mud, without a chance to even wash your hands, it's not uncommon to look like a wild bore. You'll also notice that the average participant here is much older than the boys going to Assen (another big European rally in June). Further, that people avoid talking about their jobs, houses and social position and stay on the topics of motorcycles, camping and life in general.

It took me three days, and a small accident of our neighbors from Belgium, to notice that one of our small group was a surgeon who does kidney and liver transplants. Two weeks later I found out that the man whom I told to turn the piglet for an hour, and who did it without complaint exactly the way that I had told him, wasn't only riding one of the weirdest Enduro sidecars that you've ever seen, but is also chief cook in a big hotel near the Swiss border. I think he enjoyed it and is still laughing.

The shooting star of our group was Heinz, a 25 year old mechanic from Eastern Germany, who not only managed to get his beautifully restored '51 BMW sidecar in and out of the rally without a scratch and in polished condition, but was also able to solve nearly every technical problem of the machines in our camping area.

This kind of help is common as well as good camaraderie. The rules are simple: You may go wherever you want, you may join someone's fire, and even his meal as long as you bring something to share with you. The person who took some of our piglet was in turn bringing bread, a box of beer, or a bottle of whiskey. You'll hardly find anyone mooching or trying to rip you off.

It is hard to believe, but despite the uncommon and stressing conditions, the accident rate of the participants is lower than that of the average summer rider. This is probably why you hardly see any police and "when" you do see them, they are polite and friendly

to an uncommon extent.

Of course, there are things that annoy me. It is difficult to accept the fact that people haul motors without wheels and exhaust, to just rev them up all night long and keep all the others from sleeping. Also, I can't understand why the organizers don't at least put some sand on the road to the main entrance where you get your permit. At least 20 people each year smash their fairings because they have to go 600 ft. down a steep hill to reach the check-in area. But then, I'm not forced to come, and should share the sense of humor regarding people who can't ride in the snow who probably shouldn't have come anyway.

After all, having ridden home and taken a shower after 5 days, with only 4 hours of sleep altogether, I've found more relief, freedom, peace and silence than in 2 weeks on a white beach and I'm ready to defend the "real" dangers of life again. Lastly, it was a really nice piece of motorcycling that I wouldn't miss for any price.



Martin Hildebrandt is from Stadthagen, Germany, is a computer software developer by profession and enjoys motorcycling in all types of weather as can be noted in his recent third place finish in the 1995 Iron Butt Rally. He rode his Honda ST1100.

My First Interstate Tour or How I Lost My Motorcycling Virginity

Elliott L. Pilton

I work in the bizarre world of federal law enforcement in Miami, Florida. Many of the guys I work with are riders. Bet you can guess their marquee of preference. Unfor-

tunately, that brand also kept me pushing dead bikes during my first trip to Daytona last March, but that's a whole other story.

In early 1994, after some visits to the home of my partner during which time I couldn't help but admire his gleaming '91 FXR, a small but incessant gnawing began working on the recesses of my mind.

It wasn't long after that that the bug finally bit full bore, and my friend, recognizing the symptoms, urged me to attend an MSF class at the local community college. That I did, and upon completion, resolved to have a new bike of my own by the end of the following week.

I accomplished my mission, and on October 21, 1994, rode home on my brand spanking new, nasty, candy red Honda Magna. I was so nervous riding off the dealer lot I thought I was delirious, but the looks I got from passing motorists and their admiring comments helped put me at ease. (Naturally, to make the trip home more memorable, the bike hit reserve on

busy US 1 before I knew it was time to flip the pet-cock!) I was hooked. For the next several months all I needed was an excuse to get aboard my mount. Toy Run, Daytona... You know the drill.

In February 1995, I plunked down my money to attend the Honda Hoot in Asheville, NC, with my wife, Tina. It would be our first interstate trip, which we would be riding two up on the Magna. With anxiety and anticipation I slogged through the months, desperately waiting for June to roll around. In preparation, I ordered Chase Harper saddlebags, a Rev-Pack "Rest-Pack" and all the other sundry items necessary to haul 10 days worth of clothing and gear on the bike. Finally, June came, and with it, the rains.

Now, those of you who know Miami know that rain in Miami is an experience in itself. Not that misty sort of Northwest rain, but rain that comes down with a vengeance, that seems to delight in causing local flooding, traffic snarls, and inflicting pain on bikers. I

had been through a few of these torrents over the prior several months, but never for more than an hour or so at a time, and with the comforting knowledge that home was not too far away.

Well, now I was faced with the prospect of riding 800 miles in rainy conditions riding two-up with my wife aboard a bike which is not designed for touring and certainly not for passenger comfort. In a word, I was nervous.

What should I do? Well, I did what any sensible neophyte would do. I contacted Paul Taylor through Compuserve e-mail (you all know Paul from his informative articles in the ST1100 Magazine and in this publication) to ask his sage advice. Paul and I had been corresponding on and off for some months prior to the trip and had tentatively arranged a meeting in Asheville during the Honda Hoot.

Saturday morning, June 17, I e-mailed Paul for advice and nervously awaited his reply. When I got it I was relieved. Paul told me of some of his "wet

and wonderful" riding experiences on multi-day tours and urged me to get on the bike and scoot.

Well, that was enough for me. Tina and I loaded up the bike, made sure the rain gear and snap-on visors were close by and jumped on the Magna. Off we went.

About fifteen miles later the first of the rains hit, and, standing by the side of the Palmetto Expressway, we got our first lesson in rapid raingear deployment. That done, we remounted and took off.

I had decided that if we were going to have an authentic motorcycle trip it would require staying off the interstates and taking smaller roads whenever feasible. To this end I planned on taking Route 27 from Miami up past Lake Okeechobee and on to Ocala, Florida (horse country where one can actually see rolling terrain breaking up the otherwise flat Florida landscape).

From Ocala, I planned on joining Route 441 the rest of the way north through Florida and Geor-

gia on into North Carolina. Once in North Carolina, I planned to take scenic byways to Asheville (more about those wonderful roads later).

Suffice it to say that we rode in significant rain from Miami all the way to Lake Okeechobee (about 2 hours) during which time I muttered a mantra of "thank God I remembered to pick up these snap-on visors for our open face Shoei's"... Best five bucks I ever spent and from a Harley shop no less!

Once past Lake Okeechobee, the skies relented, we pulled over and removed our raingear. Life was glorious again. The road was good, the sun was out, we were warm, and traffic was all but non-existent.

We stopped in Lake Placid for a late lunch at the type of cafe one would see on Andy of Mayberry. Tina and I enjoyed the scrutiny we received from the locals and a couple of Florida Highway Patrol Troopers at a rear table. We were bikers, Honda riders, but bikers nonetheless!

Finishing our lunch we rode the next couple of hours in mostly beautiful surroundings and made our stop for the night in Ocala, Florida, at a small but clean motel.

Well rested and well fed from Saturday night, Tina and I arose Sunday morning, got the Magna loaded and headed on out. Our game plan was to make it to Dublin, GA, via Rte 441, and spend the night there. This ride took us through some beautiful rolling Florida countryside outside Ocala. I had never seen this side of Florida before, having spent all of my time along the coastal areas and primarily in Miami, my smuggler's oasis.

We stopped for breakfast at a fine little mom and pop restaurant about 40 minutes outside of Ocala and enjoyed some homemade pancakes and coffee. Back on the bike, we soon crossed into Georgia and rode 441 up through the Okeefenokee swamp area. Hot and buggy, we looked forward to our fuel/beverage stops every hundred miles or so. The Magna has

a 3.6 gallon tank which ensures stopping by or before the time the seat does!

We made Dublin without incident and stayed at one of the nationally known discount motels available there. I took advantage of their garden hose and gave the Magna a good dousing to clean off some of the road grime. I would have skipped this had I known what I was in for the following day.

Monday dawned ominously, and The Weather Channel didn't have any encouraging news for us. We were in for heavy rains and some twisty roads. Remember now, I live in South Florida. My experience with twisty roads was limited to highway entrances and exits and the highest elevation the Magna had seen was the Powell bridge on the Rickenbacker Causeway between Miami and Key Biscayne, maybe eighty feet above sea level.

So, with fear and some trepidation, I loaded the Magna once more, and keeping a brave face, donned my Dry-Rider rain

suit, made sure Tina was equally attired, snapped on my face shield, and off we went.

Well, to make a long story short, it rained and rained and rained some more. But, to my eternal surprise and joy, the Magna handled the wet roads like it was born to it. The oncoming, fully laden lumber trucks traveling at mach speed didn't do much for my mental state however, and I found myself ducking for cover behind my paltry Hondaline cruiser windshield (such as it was) whenever I saw the enemy approaching.

Tina and I traveled through some beautiful, quaint towns and villages that day, the America I was hoping to see on this trip. White colonial homes with sprawling yards and American flags displayed. It was a great feeling despite the rain. We thoroughly enjoyed it. The hilly and twisty roads proved to be no problem for the fully loaded Magna, especially since the pilot was prudent (read: cautious) and traveled at a manageable speed through

the many blind curves that day offered us.

The "highlight" of the day had to be when we rolled into Dillard, Georgia, on 441, tired, saddlesore, wet and ready and willing to call it a day if we could find a motel of choice. Now folks, I don't know how many of you have had the "pleasure" of riding through a nine-mile long construction zone in Dillard, Georgia, through wet red clay which has the ability to cling to and coat just about anything you can imagine. Suffice it to say that my beautiful, glowing candy-red Magna was now a thing of the past, as the bike, our soft luggage, and raingear was covered in a layer of red clay, the properties of which I was about to receive an education.

Tina and I trudged on to Franklin, North Carolina, where we made our stop at the Days Inn. I begged the proprietor for a hose to clean my steed, and he directed me to the pump house up by the pool. Well, I scrubbed that bike with pure NC well water for well over an hour, but that Geor-

gia clay was tenacious. I got most of it off eventually, but it had taken up residence in small areas around my chain, sprocket and cylinder heads I could not reach and never did quite remove!

While removing clay from our luggage and raingear outside of our room, I spied some more motorcyclists pulling into the motel parking lot. A Suzuki Madura, a beautifully detailed black Goldwing, a Concours and a black ST-1100. Now I can't tell you exactly why, but there has always been something about that ST-1100 that gets to me, and seeing this one in person that day had me dying to try one out (more on that later).

I finally had our bike and gear looking respectable again and spent the next few hours swapping lies with my newfound motorcycling pals. Two were from the Tampa, Florida area, one from Arkansas, and one from Michigan or Minnesota, I can't remember which. These guys were great and enjoyed telling me stories

of their own trips, encounters and mishaps on the road. I felt a special bond that day, and I never will forget how I truly felt like part of the greater motorcycling community. Everyone seemed to get real joy from checking out and sitting on one another's bikes.

Well, we were in North Carolina, we had made it through the rain, the bike was "bloodied" but unbowed, and the best was yet to come. We had a great \$5.00 dinner, returned to our room and plotted our course.

Tuesday morning Tina and I had breakfast at the "City Restaurant", our favorite eatery in Franklin. We had dinner there the night before, and in truth it was the only place we had tried. Since it was great home cooking, we looked no further.

Following breakfast we headed on out of Franklin toward the "inevitable". We rode US 64 east from Franklin toward Highlands, Cashiers and Rosman. I had done my homework and studied "North Carolina Scenic

Byways" graciously supplied by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Man, this was the life. Though I am eight years away from being eligible for a pension at age 50, I had daydreams of owning some mountainside property and spending my days in this beautiful area.

As Tina and I got our first taste of truly winding roads along US 64, I found myself going pretty slow (Magna fully laden as it was) and realized that I was holding up some vehicle and motorcycle traffic which was developing behind me. Ah, but good luck! Look, Tina, a waterfall over the road, let's pull over, get a picture and let this traffic pass us by. And so begins the inevitable loss of motorcycle virginity!

Having spied Bridal Veil Falls, I pass it and make a left into the roadway which actually runs under the falls. What a great picture, I think. Looking at the beautiful waterfall, I bring the Magna to a halt, put my foot down, and wait a minute, I'm leaning

unnaturally to the left, oh, oh, oh shit, and over we go onto our left side, the Magna's engine racing noisily all the way down. Tina and I wrest ourselves from the pile of man and machine, check to see that we are relatively unscathed (we each had a black and blue or two), and proceed to right the bike. My ego is shattered. I am chagrined. How many people saw this? No one pulls over to help, so I guess no one paid attention or they realized it would have embarrassed me all the more. Who knows?

The bike righted, I begin damage inspection when into the turnoff appeared my new riding friends I had met at the motel the day before. Luckily, they did not see my faux pas, but I tell them what happened as I begin to inspect my pride and joy. Thankfully, damage was limited to a tiny scratch on the Hondaline crash bar, and a very small nick on the left mirror swivel and casing. Amazing! Someone actually does engineer these crash bars to limit

damage! Actually, I think having the wide Chase Harper saddlebags aboard the bike kept any further damage at bay. The tank and paint did not receive so much as a nick.

Well, my pals regaled me with stories of their own such mishaps, and though I felt somewhat better, knowing that it eventually happens to all riders, I knew that Tina's confidence had been somewhat shaken even though it was not an accident per se.

I was initiated. Now I was truly a member of the motorcycling fraternity, and had the badges of courage to prove it!

After our newfound friends departed for points unknown, Tina and I waited for the adrenaline rush to subside and then made our way toward Asheville, along beautiful US 64. We enjoyed the sights and smells along the way, but there was a lingering thought in the back of both of our heads the rest of that day.

When we got to Rosman, we took the left turnoff to NC 215 and took

this beautiful, twisty road north along the French Broad River to the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP). When we got to the BRP it was time to don our raingear once more as the road was totally socked in with fog.

Despite the fog, the road was a blast to ride, and occasionally we were rewarded with glimpses of the surrounding mountains and valleys. If you've lived in the flatlands for any length of time, this was heaven. We took the road to the turnoff for Interstate 26 to Asheville and made our way to the Radisson for the Honda Hoot.

While in Asheville we got to meet some great motorcycling people. Some, like Les and his son Jason from the Chicago area, Dale and his son Andy from around St. Louis, and Rich, also from the Chicago area, were folks we were just lucky enough to meet. Others were people that I had spoken to on-line via, Compuserve or America Online in the past months, two of whom I met accidentally while waiting to sign

up for a demo ride on the Aspencade and ST-1100!

It was great to meet Paul Taylor (a longtime Compuserve buddy) who was nice enough to come up and meet Tina and me at the Radisson and spend some time with us. Paul has been a great help to me over the months since I first got my Magna, until the present day, at which time I, like him, now am the proud owner of an ST-1100 ABS/TCS. But more on that later.

Tina and I got to experience some great roads in North Carolina that trip. US 64 and NC 215 as mentioned, the Blue Ridge Parkway, US 276 between Brevard and the Blue Ridge Parkway, and NC 9 from I-40 to Chimney Rock (a worthwhile site despite all the tourists).

We were lucky enough to schedule demo rides on the Aspencade, ST-1100 and BMW R-1100 RSL. Though each machine had its points, the ST stole our hearts while taking it through some paces on the Blue Ridge Parkway. I knew it was only a matter of time before I had to have

one. Little did I know that the ride home would bring about that eventuality.

It was our first motorcycle rally together (I had been to Daytona but enjoyed this much more) and Tina and I felt that we had found a new dimension to add to our lives. Tina told me in no uncertain terms that she would love to make motorcycle vacations a part of our lives together. This, of course, was music to my ears!

After four great days at the Hoot (much too short!) it was time to return to Miami, and for the return trip I reluctantly decided to take the Interstates to get home quicker. Departing Asheville, Sunday morning we rode I-26 through some light intermittent rain and fog to I-95 and south toward Georgia. In Georgia the rain began in earnest, and we rode for hours in torrential rain from Savannah, Georgia, to Daytona Beach, Florida. This was a ride in excess of 500 miles in less than ideal conditions. I told Tina that I had a second wind and could make it the rest of the way

home if she wanted. But Tina's back would not tolerate the seat on the Magna for another mile, so we stopped at a clean, dry motel for the night.

We talked that evening of future motorcycling trips and dream vacations. That's when I knew that to ensure Tina's comfort, and add the versatility of hard luggage, I would have to trade my beloved Magna for the ST-1100 (What a sacrifice. No more chains to adjust and lube, shaft drive, ABS, traction control, hard bags!).

On July 19, I traded my 1995 Magna (following many e-mail sessions with my guru, Paul Taylor) toward a new 1994 ST-1100 ABS/TCS and I have yet to quit grinning, the bike is great! I have ordered a Corbin Canyon Dual Sport seat with passenger backrest, and have equipped the bike with the Givi Maxia 50 liter top trunk. Wow! So far the stock windshield doesn't present a problem (probably because coming from a Magna, I don't know any better).

Now that I am so well

equipped, I hope to see all of you on the road real soon! Until then, ride safe, and keep an eye out for that grinning guy on the black ST!



Elliott Pitilon is a Federal Law Enforcement Officer who lives in Miami, Florida and is a recent convert to sport touring and Honda ST1100.

