

# DESMO LEANINGS



The Official Magazine of the Ducati Owners Club of the United States

Volume 4 Issue 2

Summer 2006



*DABR Reviews • CMP Trackday Recap  
Swingarm Woes • We Ride, We Eat • Why I Ride*

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## Greetings from il Capo

Three and a half years ago US DESMO got its start. Our goal was to grow and become a major club in the United States. At the time, there were not any organized clubs that did everything. Some were track-day clubs, some were virtual clubs, and some were just local riding groups. The only full club around was the Ducati Owners Club of Canada. We needed a United States version of that, and, with that thought, away we went. Well, here we are at the beginning of June as I write this, and member number 820 has just been issued.


After a series of rainy rallies, I was worried that they would become a thing of the past, but this spring saw us out in force. Seventy-six intrepid souls showed up despite another forecast for rain. Fortunately, the weather gods smiled on us, and we had a good day all day on Saturday. Two stories of rider's impressions of the weekend and lots of pictures are in this issue.


Our spring track day at Carolina Motorsports Park was a similar success in that we were full and had a waiting list. The weather could not have been better. The downside to all this is we seemed to have more people intent on doing agricultural work than normal. Fortunately, the two most serious crashes did not result in any broken bones as was initially feared. We will have a few more items to cover at the riders' meeting next time.

The first issue is a little late getting out, but we have made an effort to step up our efforts and have this one in your hands a lot sooner. We will continue to produce four issues a year as long as we can stand all the fun we are having on our bikes.

Mark your calendar, as October 21 and 22, 2006, will be the US DESMO first-ever weekend track day held at Carolina Motorsports Park in Kershaw, South Carolina. Do join us and make this first-ever weekend a success. We have been talking to Ducati about their participating in this event, so let's get lots of Ducatis signed up so we can show them how we run a Ducati event.

Remember, we have a spot for you in the club's magazine. A Bench Racing article is always needed, and we have our classified section, so send in your ideas for publication. Do not forget our web-page forum section. It is an excellent place to catch up on what is happening with the club.

Come ride with us. 



Jim



**Jim Calandro** ..... il Capo  
capo@carolina.rr.com

**Clyde Romero** ..... Consigliere  
clyderomero@worldnet.att.net

**Bob Lattanzi** ..... Consigliere  
schoolbusbob@att.net

**Terry Wyse** ..... Consigliere  
tlwyse@carolina.rr.com

**David Grogan** ... Revisore di Bozze  
dgrogan@slk-law.com

**John M. Rossi** ... NE Regional Rep.  
johnmrossi@comcast.net

**Tom Truskolaski** .. Redattore Tecnico  
LVN4LG@aol.com

**Lewis Kirk** ... Curatore del Sito Web  
ducati@dmzgraphics.com

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# Piazza del Mercato

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4700 miles. Upgrades include oval titanium LeoVinci hi-rise slip-ons, CycleCat handlebar risers & ventilated clutch cover, Rizoma radiator guard and mirrors, new Avon Azaros. Bike is in excellent condition. Price adjusted for pending 6000m service at \$7395.

Call Curt Spiegel at 704.289.1158 or email [cspiegel@carolina.rr.com](mailto:cspiegel@carolina.rr.com) for more information and photos.

## 1991 Ducati 851 SP3 #216

6 miles New out of box in June 2004. Never started. Perfect Condition. \$25,000. Photos available upon request.

Bryson Stephens  
[bryson@bogartsmotorsports.com](mailto:bryson@bogartsmotorsports.com)  
205.956.6693

## 1993 Ducati 888 SPO

9800 miles; FBF carbon-fiber exhaust cans and FBF ECU chip (original exhausts included); carbon-fiber front fender (original red included); adjustable brake/clutch levers (originals included). New Michelin Pilot Power tires. Cloth FBF Ducati cover. Complete service performed at BMW-Ducati of Charlotte less than 500 miles ago with new belts, valve adjustments, and all fluids replaced. This bike is in museum quality condition or could be ridden daily. \$9500US.

Jim Crews, [jcrews@wfubmc.edu](mailto:jcrews@wfubmc.edu)

## 2006 Ducati Paul Smart 1000

Brand new with 3 miles, MSO, #1586. \$14,500.

Brad Powell at [www.bradsbikes.net](http://www.bradsbikes.net)  
Marietta, GA 678.576.4258.

## 2004 Aprilia Nera

Very limited Dream edition, this one is brand new with only 39 miles, warranty until December 2006 \$29,900.

Contact Brad Powell, [bradsbikes.net](http://bradsbikes.net), LLC, Marietta, GA 678.576.4258

## 1977 Moto Guzzi 850 Le Mans I "The Hoffman"

This bike was purchased new by John Hoffman of Cycle Specialties and used as his personal bike until he moved to the Philippines. White with 49,000 miles. Modified for vintage sports touring with high rise bars and Corbin seat. Electric ignition, performance kit cam, close ratio gearbox, Ohlins shocks, and disintegrated brakes. The original components and other extras come with it. \$7,300.

Craig Hunley, Charlotte NC [cchunley@bellsouth.net](mailto:cchunley@bellsouth.net) or 704.576.3447.

## 1993 Ducati 900SS

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## 2002 Ducati Bostrom 998S

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I know what you're thinking. You went to the US DESMO spring track day at Roebing Road Raceway near Savannah, Georgia, and quickly mastered the track. By the end of the day, you were certain a contract to ride a Ducati factory superbike was in the mail. Unfortunately, the factory has requested that Capo Calandro subject you to a REAL test of your abilities to ride your fast Italian steed. May I suggest a second try-out at Carolina Motorsports Park just south of Kershaw, South Carolina?

Let's compare: Roebing Road is 2.2 miles long with 9 turns, minimal elevation change, and very little hard braking. CMP is 2.3 miles long with 14 turns, 30 ft of elevation change, and several hard braking zones. At least they both run clockwise. Unfortunately, this means the right side of your tires will be toast by the end of the day. Don't even think of trying to pass morning tech with questionable tires.

The CMP track designers decided to follow European practice and name rather than number the 14 turns. Most racers prefer to number the turns, so I will describe the track using turn numbers rather than names. As you exit the pits, it is important that you stay tight to the left side of the track until you have exited left-hand turn 1. Accelerate out of turn 1 and drift right toward the apex curbing of right-hand turn 2. Exiting turn 2 you should drift left toward the outside of the track. Once you have the motorcycle upright it is time to head for the outside (right) of left-hand turn 3. Turn 3 is deceptively fast and allows gentle braking and an earlier turn-in than most riders think. Exiting turn 3 at speed will allow you to drift to the outside edge of the turn, and you should stay to the outside for the short downhill straight leading to the entrance of left-hand turn 4.

Brake hard before the turn-in point of turn 4 and then flick the bike hard left towards the

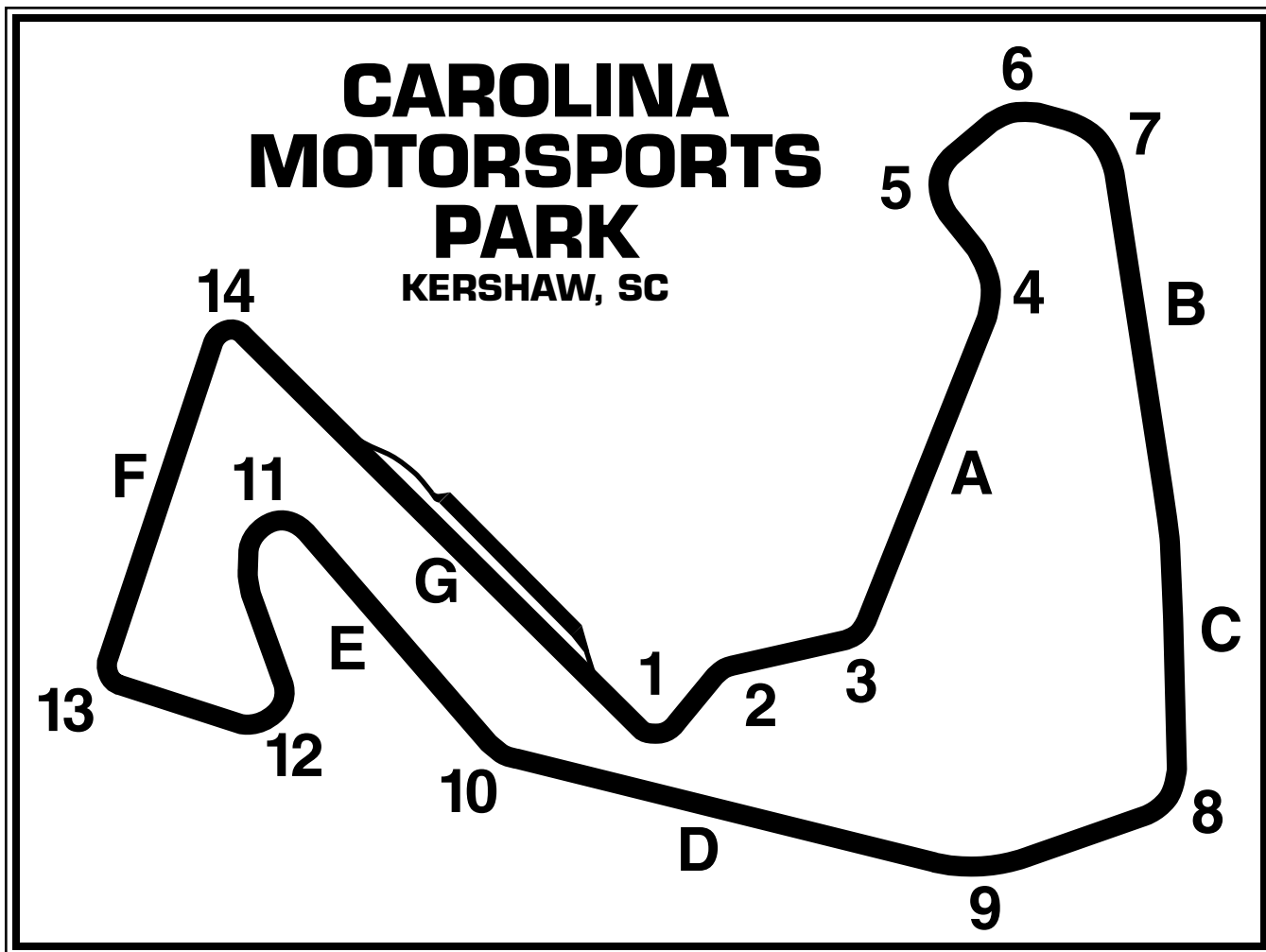
apex and allow the bike to drift wide at the exit and towards the inside curbing of right-hand turn 5. Turns 5, 6, and 7 combine to make a long changing-radius right-hand carousel turn. I prefer to enter turn 5 tight to the inside and drift left at the exit towards the outside of the track before tightening my line towards the apex of turn 6 and repeating for turn 7. If it is done properly, you will do a classic outside/inside/outside entry/exit for turns 6 and 7 without significantly altering your lean angle or speed.

Turn 7 exits onto the 1,841-foot "Outback" straight. This straight drops downhill before heading uphill just before the entrance of right-hand turn 8. Brake hard before the turn-in point. Turn 8 has a great deal of positive camber, allowing much greater speed than many riders will initially be comfortable with. The bike will drift left as you apply throttle at the uphill exit of turn 8.

Turn 9 is a gentle right-hand turn that should not require major steering input or throttle adjustment. Exiting turn 9, you are on the long back straight heading for right-hand turn 10, affectionately called the "Kink."

Head towards the outside (left) of this long straight and brake before turning late into the Kink. Many racers will drag their knee through the Kink while going over 100 mph. The apex to the Kink is at an asphalt seam where a cut-through road intersects the track. After the apex of the Kink, drift left toward the outside of the next short straight.

Turn 11 is a decreasing-radius left. I prefer to turn in late from the center of turn 11 towards the curbing at the apex and allow the bike to drift wide at the exit. Exiting turn 11 you should head towards the outside (left) of the track preparing for the entrance to right-hand turn 12. Turn 12 is another classic outside/




- |                |                 |               |                     |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. Camden      | 6. Hope         | 9. The Swoop  | 12. Charlies        |
| 2-3. The Esses | 7. Charity      | D. The Avenue | 13. Lone Tree       |
| A. Dam Hill    | B. The Outback  | 10. The Kink  | F. Kershaw Straight |
| 4. Conspiracy  | C. O Hill       | E. Runway     | 14. Last Chance     |
| 5. Faith       | 8. Angels Angle | 11. Mulligans | G. Pit Straight     |

inside/outside turn. You should almost touch the inside curbing at the apex before allowing the bike to drift to the outside edge of the track while accelerating off the exit. Stay outside on the short chute leading up to right-hand turn 13, brake gently, and repeat the late turn-in outside/inside/outside line you just perfected in turn 12. Accelerate hard off the exit of turn 13 and head towards right-hand turn 14.

Brake hard leading up to turn 14 and once again use a late turn-in point so that you get maximum drive at the exit. You should almost touch the inside curbing at the apex as you practice your outside/inside/outside cornering technique. Turn 14 is one of the tightest turns you will experience on any racetrack. It is also the last turn and empties onto the start/

finish straight. Remember to concentrate on maximizing exit speed so that you can carry as much speed as possible down the front straight. As you accelerate down the front straight, steer towards the right side (inside) of the track to set up for left-hand turn 1. Brake hard for turn 1 and once again use a late turn-in point and tight apex to set up for the short chute into turn 2.

Repeat the above until your session is over and then pull into the pits and cool down with a bottle of Gatorade while your friends describe their scary experiences and how confused they are with the track layout. Then you can smugly explain what you have been doing to make it look easy. That Ducati factory superbike contract should arrive in the mail any day. 

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# What Is A US DESMO Rally All About?

by Jim Calandro, *il Capo*, Member #1

It is one of the most-often-asked questions I get when one of our club rallies is coming up. The first time it happened, it made me pause to think. Here in 2006 we are into our eleventh year of holding rallies. That may seem strange for a club that is three-and-a-half years old, but it comes from the fact that holding the



rallies was the egg that hatched into the club. Over the years the locations have changed, the event has gotten bigger, and it has settled down to be a consistent event that is quite a bit different from the first one.

Our rallies are a three-day affair. They start on a Friday, and anyone who arrives early finds no one at the hotel. There is a reason for this: we have gone riding! After all, we do try to hold the rallies in some of the best east-coast riding areas. The formal part of the event starts around 6 p.m. when registration is opened up in the hotel's meeting room. Yes, we use a hotel, not a campground. We ride mostly sports bikes, and a good bed and remote are essential after a long day on the mountain back roads.


At registration, you receive your event T-shirt (You did pre-register so you would get one, didn't you?). We also pass out the meal ticket for Saturday's dinner, door-prize ticket, route map, and event schedule, and we ask you to sign a liability release. Pizza and soda are available around 7 p.m. Most sit down to meet new friends or renew old acquaintances. Many adjourn to the parking lot to examine bikes and tell lies about how fast they are.



Saturday is the start of what we all came for, "The Ride!" We try to keep the route on two-lane back country roads with a maximum amount of turns and a minimum amount of straights. Both of our current rally locations have this type of road in abundance. If you have not ridden either area, words alone do not do them justice. If you have been there before, then you know. The routes are about 250 miles long and have a lunch destination. A modest meal is best, because you want to remain sharp for the rest of your ride. Driving off the side of a mountain is sure to leave a scar. On the return section of one of our rides, we even have a mandatory rest stop, as all that blood that should be powering your brain may be digesting your food.

Back at the hotel we get cleaned up and either get on the bus to our dinner location or eat in the hotel meeting room. Italian food is the bill of fare, of course. Not just spaghetti with a little tomato sauce, but chicken parmesan, manicotti, salad, garlic bread, and a dessert. The best part of the dinner is always the door prizes and awards. The door prizes are provided by local dealers and Ducati North America. The awards are usually spontaneous and involve things like the best save or the bent fork award. Needless to say, a lot of good-natured kidding goes along with any award like that.



Sunday is a mixed bag of tricks. If you have a long trip home, then you load up and head out. About half of our rally participants trailer to the event. For those who ride, the Ducati ST2 is the favorite choice. If you are not pressed for time, we head out for breakfast taking some roads not yet ridden. There is only one way to find out if you would enjoy all this, and that is to come and ride with us. 

## Eleventh Annual Ducks Along The Blue Ridge Rally

# An Inclination; Reflections from DABR

by Chuck Tornga, US DESMO Member #00809

My coworkers wonder. They gossip. Why would I leave on "that thing" to hang out with the crazy people in leather breeches? They've seen me commuting, leaned over the fly-yellow tank of my 749S with a backpack carrying dress shoes and tie. They ask how my wife feels about weekends alone, about the rain, and mostly about risk. The questions have become boring. I call Don ("Splash") Green at around 8:30 on Friday and mention that I may cut out from the office. I need some time on the road. These bureaucrats are driving me bananas.

Splash is, among other things, a well-educated philosopher. He quotes Hunter S. Thompson with "racetracks are for sissies." He likes to open up his ST3 on the freeway and get from point A to point B - FAST. He measures his pace in "puckers per mile."

We leave the top of the Chesapeake together, but he's well rested when I catch back up with him at the northern entrance of the Blue Ridge Parkway near Afton, Virginia.

I take the lead from here. I know it's not a safe place for riding at 10 tenths, having witnessed a buddy's low-side of a 996 here last year. A few track days do not a racer make, so we employ a compromise technique. We lock the bikes in at 70 mph whether on a straight or a tight curve. Tourist traffic is light, so we seldom need to use the motorcyclist's secret clause of the double-yellow-line rule. Below Roanoke we hit rain, and our visors fog up. Splash is getting nervous on the twisty wet roads and wants to arrive in Mount Airy, North Carolina, before dark, so he takes the lead, and we search out some slab. The strategy works, and we arrive in time for some sausage pizza and cold beverage before collapsing for the night.

The morning crowd emerges for a light breakfast dressed in variants of racing leathers and Aerostich suits. A wide variety of two-

wheeled art is filling the parking lot as vintage machines are carefully rolled from trailers and last minute arrivals burble in. There may be as many STs and Multistradas as there are sport bikes. Wild colors and extreme styling are everywhere, but there are surprisingly few logos, and hardly any chromed bling in sight. Everyone is gawking at someone else's bike. The red 750GT with its bevel-driven cams is a knockout. I talk to an owner of a 999 and compare notes.



Splash and I latch onto a small group of promising-looking sport riders led by Scott Cloninger on a 900SS. I pull in behind Doug Barnette, the photographer. He's a perfectionist by nature and by trade, as I later verified from his web site. It shows in his riding style as well, with his careful line and attention to all the controls.

Soon his new 999 is showing him how serious it can be when he's heavy on the throttle, so he drops it back a notch and waves me by.

This gives me a chance to learn from Diesel Dave Ludwig. He's taking his blue S4R through some of the nastiest, tightest corners I've ridden while he's sitting perfectly upright, which I find confusing. His knee pucks are ground down to almost nothing, yet he's as formal looking as an equestrian on a Tennessee Walker. That's a hooligan bike he's riding: "Let's see some action," I think. I see more personality on the road after a suicidal spaniel shoots under his bike to become a puff of beige fur, like a dandelion in the wind. His response to the sudden impact was as composed as his handling of the switchbacks, but soon his formal riding style morphs into a near-perfect replica of Rodin's "The Thinker" on a bike. Now I understand the original sculpture. We hit some jolting bumps on NC 88 that verify my suspension settings and also explain why Diesel

*continued on page 16*





Dave is taking it a bit easy. He hasn't reset the preload, compression, or rebound on his new Monster, so it starts to porpoise. He'll be taking advantage of all those adjustments in the high-end forks and shock as soon as this trip is over.

Cloninger has studied the route description and knows the roads well, and his knee pucks show the wear to match his racing credentials. When he decides to adopt a more aggressive position, I know the sweepers are coming; this is what I came for. Before I know what's happening, the dizziness sets in, and I have to fall back a bit. A few minutes later they're pulled off in some gravel on a nasty turn. There's a stray weed stuck to the bottom of Cloninger's fairing, and then the grin on his face gives him away. He 'fesses up to a minor off-road excursion [which seems to have been inadvertently omitted from Scott's recount of the DABR in this issue. Ed.]. The riding has been fantastic, and the traffic predominantly cool, but we decide to call it a day before the fatigue factor kicks in. We're one of the groups to return without an accident.

With the riding over, we pack up and reflect over a cold one. From the saddle of Doug's bike,

Cloninger pulls back on the tie-down straps, looking like a Texas cowboy reining in a tough bronc. Loading the drop-dead gorgeous red 999 Mono for their drive south is almost as intense as leading our group at challenging but sane speeds through the snaking Blue-Ridge byways. Cloninger had fabricated mounting points for the trailer, and then dealt with Doug the Artist's concern about nylon straps scuffing his air-inlet channels inside the fairing, but he showed all the patience you'd expect of a professional engineer. We are a diverse group, inclined to attack life from different angles, but we share some personal principles. We're all inclined to do things right. We chose this marque to ride for its reputation of passion for excellence. We could have chosen cheaper bikes, or bikes with higher horsepower stats, but the balance of style and substance won us over. We know why we're here.

In another day or so I'll be hearing the questions again. They'll ask why we rode 1,000 miles all hunched over just to visit some place in the middle of nowhere. I have an answer now: "Just following an inclination!"

## My Experiences At Ducks Along The Blue Ridge, 2006

by Scott Cloninger, Owner of various motorcycles and US DESMO member #563

RAIN. Wednesday the television told me that it was going to rain, but I didn't want to believe it. The prognosis was confirmed today, and I knew that nothing would change by tomorrow. An 80% chance of rain was predicted for Friday, followed by a 60% chance of thunderstorms Saturday and an 80% chance of rain and scattered thunderstorms Sunday. DRAT!!!! What a horrible way to spend my Thursday morning, worrying about the weather. But this weekend is Ducks Along the Blue Ridge, and the forecast is inexorably linked to my enjoyment factor for the weekend. After listening to the forecast one last time, I loaded up my stuff and headed toward Mount Airy, North Carolina, rain be damned.

After picking up my traveling partner, Doug Barnette, I drove from Chattanooga toward Mount Airy muttering a simple prayer: "O mighty Sun God, please see fit to grant me a

day of clean riding. I vow to sacrifice two beers and a salami sandwich for a day of clean riding. Sun God, hear my prayer and banish the clouds, so that you might enjoy the bounty of the sammich."

As we drove along I-74 into Mount Airy, it struck me that the roads I had driven on for 350 miles shared a number of characteristics. Foremost among those shared characteristics was moisture. I hoped, with maximum intensity, that I'd find just a little dry time between bouts of rain to enjoy at least a small sampling of the area's exhilarating paved playground. Would the Sun God listen? Are two beers enough to bring the sun? Heck, what could it hurt to make it three?!?!

Upon my arrival at the Quality Inn, I found that a number of my fellow Ducatisti had already arrived and had begun the weekend

*continued on page 20*

# TRACK DAY REPORT

## Carolina Motorsports Park May 22, 2006

by Jim Calandro, il Capo, Member #1

Last year it seemed that we got rained on at every event. Well, not so this year. We have had some days that, like Monday, May 22, looked ominous, but we got lucky and the day was great. We actually had a light rain falling on us when we were unloading and setting up for technical inspection. This kind of made everyone go at half speed, and we got onto the track late for the first time in six years of running events.

As our club grows, we get more people coming to events that we normally would not expect to show up. Several riders came down from Canada and joined us in the sun for a day of riding and camaraderie. This event was very full, and we had a waiting list of participants. Fortunately for some who showed up without a reservation, we had a few folks who had registered but could not make the event and canceled on short notice.

Carolina Motorsports Park is a fun 2.3 miles with 14 turns. It is a different track in that it has sections that demand different skills. The first seven turns have a distinct flow and lend themselves to one riding style. The last four turns are completely different and tend to be a lot harder to master. There is a rumor that no one really knows how to properly ride the last turn.

In this issue is a write up by Bill Birchfield on how he rides this track. As someone who has known and ridden with Bill for over 25 years, I can safely say he knows a fast way around. There is a rumor he is an alien, and I do not mean from Mexico; he is from another planet, for sure. Take a look at Bill's article and then come out with us October 21-22 to see if he is as accurate as I believe he is.

We had more red flags during this track day than we had all last year. This is partly explained by the good weather compared to riding in the rain, which always makes people be a lot more careful. We have control riders to watch over the track and riders, but we cannot be everywhere. If you are on the track and observe a violation of the rules, let a control rider (wearing an orange vest) know so we can talk to the party and make them aware of the infraction. Sometimes they are so intent on what they are doing they get carried away, and a friendly reminder can bring them back from euphoria. We want y'all to be safe out there.

This year we have a new photographer, actually a team, Jami and Charles Worley. Jami takes the still shots and does a good job of catching the action. Charles has a video camera set up

on his bike and will follow you around so you can see how impressive you are, or are not.

Remember our big weekend at CMP October 21-22 and come out and make it a big Ducati event.

Turn the page for more pictures...





# US DESMO CAROLINA MOTORSPORTS PARK SPRING TRACK DAY 2006



On track photos by Jami and Charles Worley  
www.FastBikePhoto.PhotoReflect.com  
Pit photos by Lewis Kirk

early. I saw license tags from Ontario, Florida, and all points in between that were attached to some of the finest hardware ever produced at Borgo Panigale. An early square-case bevel, an exquisite 888, Multistrada, 999s, Super Sports, Monsters and STs. Could the Sun God allow the desecration of such fine machinery? Surely not.

Friday began for me at about 6:30 when I awoke to the exquisite sound of silence. No alarm clock, no dogs begging for food, no television squawking... and NO RAIN!! Had my weather prayers been answered? I looked out the window to see a gray, gloomy sky, but I knew that it was time for a ride. I turned on the Weather Channel to see how long the respite would last, and all they told me was "rain." Rain today, rain tomorrow, and rain Sunday. Rain, rain, rain, rain, RAIN. Arghhhhhhhhhhhhh.

A small group of us decided to suit up and brave the weather despite the forecast. Led by Mark Thorogood, we rode through the town of Mount Airy and headed northwest toward Virginia. The staccato sound of the assembled Ducatis almost made the trip worthwhile, and the skill of the assembled riders was equally impressive. After about 30 miles of dry riding, I began to notice small clear gems of water appear on my face shield. First came a few drops on the visor, then a gentle spring shower, then a steady, miserable rain. I rode back to Mount Airy in the damnable rain, cursing the weeping sky and wondering why my offerings to the Sun God had gone unheeded. Tonight, nachos, four beers, and a Jagerbomb for the Sun God; that ought to do it for sure!

Friday night the event began in earnest, with registration at 6:00 accompanied by pizza and bench racing. Many of the guys with whom I had ridden during the day were there along with lots of new faces. A few stories were shared and a few beverages were consumed. I think that a good time was had by all. Even if the rain held, this made the trip worthwhile. Before turning in for the night, I made sure that my offerings to the Sun God were properly consecrated, then I dreamt of high-speed sweepers.

Saturday dawned much like Friday: No alarm clock, no dogs, no television, and no rain. I crept from my bed, assured that this, too, was simply the calm before the storm and equally sure

that the rain would recommence before I could suit up for the ride. I pulled aside the dense hotel curtain to find THE SUN!!!! There were no clouds, no rain, only THE SUN!! My prayers had been answered, and the time for the ride had arrived.

A small group composed of myself aboard my '95 SS, Dave Ludwig on a Monster S4R, Doug Barnette avec a 999, and two other excellent riders named Chuck Tornga, who rode a 749, and Don Green atop an ST4 headed out on the ride route laid out by Il Capo. I was designated "ride leader" since I grew up in the area (in Hickory, North Carolina) and know most of the roads fairly well.

We squirted out of town on Pipers Gap Road from which we entered the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Parkway was beautiful, and it felt as though it was completely empty except for our five Ducatis booming along at 80 miles per hour. I don't recommend that speed to others [nor does US DESMO, ed.], but I have to tell you it is quite entertaining to rail the sweeping Parkway turns at the head of a short train of Ducati enthusiasts with the cool May air sweeping away all thoughts of the hum-drum world. From the Parkway, we followed NC Route 18 south through Sparta then turned right onto NC Route 88.

In my 39 years of life, I had never ridden on NC 88 before, but I am usually game to ride any road as long as it's twisty. In his route description, Jim Calandro mentioned that NC 88 is "a bit bumpy and oddly paved," after which he rated the road a B on the patented US DESMO road-rating system. It might have been more appropriate to rate the road a 9.2.... on the Richter scale. The portion of the road between NC 18 and Jefferson, North Carolina, is horribly bumpy, and I told myself to kick Jimmy in the jumbles when next I saw him for recommending this torturous stretch of asphalt when there are so many other good roads that we might have used to tour the area. However, after the road leaves Jefferson, it turns into one of the best roads in the region, and my thoughts of physical harm for Jim turned to gratitude. I found myself at the intersection of NC 88 and US 421 grinning from ear to ear and laughing inside my helmet. Thanks for a new favorite, Jimmy!!

We followed US 421 into Mountain City, Tennessee, where we made a selection from the cornucopia available at Cooks Cafeteria. Since we left the hotel in a bit of a hurry in the morning, I hadn't had time to look over the beautiful machinery present at this event. I rectified my oversight in the parking lot after lunch. In particular, I remember drooling over a 999R that was dressed for the prom and my new personal favorite Ducati, the Sport 1000 (piloted by Dr. Ditch, but that's another story).

After lunch, we rode the switchback-laden US 421 from Mountain City to Shady Valley, Tennessee, where we turned onto 133 toward Damascus, Virginia. 133 is another road, like 88, where you can leave the throttle a bit more open and let the Ducati twin breathe. From 133 we turned right onto US Route 58.

I have to say that, despite a considerable amount of sand and gravel, US 58 is one of my favorite roads in the United States. The road is composed of a wonderful mix of medium-speed turns interspersed with tight switchbacks that conspire to make the sport-minded rider giddy with delight.

Between Damascus and Mouth of Wilson, North Carolina, Dave hit a dog and lived to tell the tale (though his oil cooler probably still smells like burnt dog), I caught numerous front- and rear-wheel slides (does that mean I'm pushing too hard?), Doug narrowly missed an oncoming Yukon that occupied his lane (his leathers probably still smell like something other than burnt dog), and Chuck found that he loves sport riding (so maybe my pace wasn't too fast, after all).


From Mouth of Wilson, we headed south into Sparta on US 21, then back toward Mount Airy via NC 18 and NC 89. You'll notice that in the previous few paragraphs there was no mention of rain. That's because the rain never came that Saturday. The rain was held at bay.

Saturday night we were treated to a dinner featuring a choice of lasagna, chicken Parmesan, or manicotti (some had all three), after which awards and door prizes were presented. The only serious award of the night was the US DESMO "Member of the Year Award for 2004," which was belatedly presented to Mark Thorogood. Mark's contribution to the success of US DESMO was proven by the

fact that he came to all of the US DESMO events in 2004 despite the fact that he lives in Ontario, Canada. Good on ya, Mark, and keep up the good work! Next the "Dog Splitter Award" was presented to Dave Ludwig for his canine-interment incident earlier in the day, followed by the presentation of the "Best Save on Gravel Award" (represented by a roll of toilet paper) to Jeff Iroler for managing to stay upright whilst warning those following him that the road was covered with gravel. Finally, the "Bent Fork Awards" (represented very aptly by mangled dinner forks) were presented to those who crashed during the day's festivities. Recipients of the Bent Fork Award included the Three Musketeers, Chad Shirley, Joshua King, and Thomas Malcom, who got together during a three-bike incident, and Juan Torres from Miami who had a solo get-off. In all seriousness, the presentation of these awards was given in the spirit of camaraderie, and I'm sure glad that the victims were in good health at the end of the day and were able to attend the dinner. Keep your heads up guys. Every motorcyclist is bound to crash sooner or later. At least you lived to "tell the tale."

After dinner, most of the attendees stood about imbibing adult beverages and discussing the day's events. I have to say that this discussion definitely made the weekend worthwhile. After all, where else can one have discussions about hang gliding, speeding tickets, double-leading-shoe drum brakes, Ducatis, Aermacchis, Jack Daniels, and Jell-O wrestling all in one night? Thanks to all who attended for making the weekend a blast!

Sunday morning, my offerings to the Sun God had been consumed, and the rain returned. What can I say? I drove home happy, and I'm still smiling nearly a week later. My personal thanks go out to Jimmy and Clyde for organizing such a wonderful weekend. I'll see you guys in the fall for Ducks Fly South, or at a track day even sooner.

By the way, if any of you need offerings made to the Sun God, just send four beers (imported stuff, not that cheap American watery concoction), a bottle of Jagermeister, and four cans of Red Bull, all on dry ice, to my house. I'll see that they are properly prepared and presented. 

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## Track Days: Where Do I Start?

by Jim Calandro, *il Capo*, Member #1

By virtue of my involvement with both US DESMO and Sportbike Track Time, I get asked this question more times than I can count. One answer that comes to me quickly is, "Not the way I did!" Back in the dark ages of motorcycling, before there were 999s or R1s, mere mortals could just show up and race. My first time on the track was at a WERA practice where I found out how fast I wasn't. I got passed going through turn one at Roebing Road on both sides simultaneously. Not a good thing for your first turn ever on a track. Fortunately,



now things are much better regulated, and there is a process in place. With the added speeds and capabilities of today's bikes, that is a good thing.

The first part of the above question that needs answering is what bike I should have for track days. Invariably, the questioner is trying to decide among an R1, a GSXR 1000, etc. Now here is a problem that they have not really thought about. If you are new to track days and having a little trouble keeping up with



your friends, the last thing you need is more horsepower. Turns get smaller with speed, and things that were hard to do just get worse. A bike with light weight and modest power will teach you more about going fast than any big, powerful bike will ever do. Two choices that immediately come to mind are the Ducati 900SS air-cooled bike and the SV 650 from Suzuki. They have similar characteristics in that they are not very heavy and make around 70 bhp. This is enough to catch your attention, but not enough to scare you silly.

A wise person once told me it is a lot more fun to ride a slow bike fast rather than a fast bike slowly. Sage advice if I ever heard it. What this translates to on the track is ease in initiating the turn and early power delivery during the turn. If you are not carrying a tremendous amount of speed into a turn, you do not have to brake as hard and upset the chassis. As you lean the bike over, being able to roll on the gas early settles the suspension into the "sweet spot," and it just handles better. Not having to worry about a sudden or precipitous change in

the power delivery allows this application of the throttle.

The main problem with this advice is the asker does not want to hear this. Their friends are all going so much faster and have told them which “big” bike to get. Problem is, they are at a different point on their skill set, and this advice is not the best. You can always move up later. If you buy used, you will not be out much money, and the next group of new track-day riders can buy it from you.

The second part of the question is from whom do I learn. Many want to jump right into the fire and go to a race school. There are many,



and they all do a good job, but they are really geared to the advanced rider wanting to move up his or her skill set and looking to race or do serious track days. California Superbike School, Kevin Schwantz Suzuki School, Ed Bargy Superbike School, Freddy Spencer's High Performance Riding School, and Cornerspeed are well known, and the list goes on, but is that where you should start? My answer is no; they are appropriate later when you have more experience.

There are two other levels of track-day organizations that have come about to answer this question. Sportbike Track Time is an example I am familiar with, so I will talk about them. Their level of instruction is not as intense as the race schools, and they do not teach things like late braking and trail braking. What they do teach you are the basic skills on how to ride safely yet fast on a track and things like separating all the many things you do into individual skill sets and working on one at a time. This reduces the amount of information

your brain is trying to process at higher and higher track speeds, so you can really learn it. Then you build on that skill with a new one for the next session.

The big difference between this approach and the race schools is the number of skills is reduced and not as difficult to learn. One school is not better than another; they are just designed to accomplish a different objective, and it would be a good idea to build on your skills by progressing from one to the other.

The last group of track-day organizations is like our own club, US DESMO. We are not an instructional group other than we will lead people who are new to the track around so they can get a feel for the flow. What we provide is a low number of riders and a low-cost track day. Our low cost is due to the fact we do not have to earn our livelihood from the track day. We are all volunteers, and, as a result, the club does not incur much in the way of cost outside the track-rental requirements. We can afford to run the track day with a lower number of riders, which translates to more safety. We also have more restrictive passing rules in the first two of our three groups to reduce the stress on newer riders.

What I like to recommend to a new rider is to get the right bike and come to a club event like ours where the numbers are low and the amount of track-time high. Get a feel for the track and being out there with others who want to ride quickly. With our passing rules, it is a lot like riding on the street but without the distractions. Your second time should be with some form of instruction from a group like Sportbike Track Time or Reg Pridmore's CLASS Motorcycle Schools. Neither of these groups will teach you to be a racer, but they will give you the basics of going fast.

Now the big decision is how far have I progressed and do I want to go to the “race level?” That is a question only you can answer, but you should at least ask it of yourself. For some, the intensity and speed of a race class is way more than they want to deal with. For others, it is the food of Gods! ⚡

*For links to track day and rider training organizations, see [www.usdesmo.com/links](http://www.usdesmo.com/links).*

# We Ride... We Eat!!!

*by Larry Haber, US DESMO Member #19*

Motorcycle riders are a varied group of looks, likes, and personalities, but one observation that I've made over the years is that they all ride, and then find a good place to eat. Many times the choice is made on time (or lack of it) and convenience. We have all struggled through a dismal meal at that chain restaurant located close to the interstate. Many times we pick our meal based on the glossy picture that is on the menu, and the meal never meets our expectations. It seems that the guy in the kitchen can't seem to prepare that dish as well as the corporate chef who created it for the photo shoot. Then there is fast food – inhaling the obligatory burger and fries – and then getting back on the road ASAP. That meal fills the stomach but unfortunately not the soul.

Many of us have ventured off of the main road to look for something more than a meal: we look for an experience. This sometimes leads to disappointment, but the possibility of winning big is a gamble that many of us are willing to take. That was the case on a recent trip to the Pooler, Georgia area for a US DESMO track day at Roebing Road Raceway.

I was scouting the exit ramp area for restaurants so that we could get a meal for the next day's track event. Of course, all of the usual suspects were there: the rib place, the burger joint, the Tex-Mex place, etc. This all sounded so blah-blah, and after all, I was looking for an experience!! Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a small roadside sign that looked like it said something about “fettuchini” or something. Fettuchini!!! That is some sort of Italian food. The thought of a good homemade Italian dinner the night before a US DESMO track day was pure ecstasy. So I sounded the dinner bell to the guys (cell phone circle), told them of my find, and agreed to meet at 7:00 p.m.

The restaurant is called Fettuchini & Co., and they are located off I-95 at exit 104, just a few miles from the track and convenient to most local motels and last minute stops (Wal-Mart) that we frequent. They are in a fairly new strip center partially off of the beaten path. They seat

around 60, so if you are planning to meet with a large group, give them a call so that they can arrange some tables together. The restaurant is family owned and operated and features homemade everything. The owners, Mark Scomo and his wife, Haley, are most recently from New Jersey (she's originally from South Africa), so a certain “Northerner/Yankee” vibe is in the air (I feel at home). The atmosphere is nice-casual and decorated with hints of Italy; no need for a sport coat, just leave the tank top at home. The diverse menu starts with appetizers and finishes with terrific desserts.

On a recent visit, or group tried almost everything on the menu. The fried calamari is crisp on the outside and tender and moist on the inside. The bruschetta with garden tomatoes and fresh basil tastes like it was just pulled from the vine. The rest of the menu features Italian house specialties such as tortellini tri-colore and penne a la vodka as well as chicken and veal dishes. The portions are generous, and the plating of the food is artistic. And what Italian restaurant is complete without homemade pizza? The pizza features homemade crust as well as fresh toppings and a fantastic blend of authentic cheeses.

I will advise you to save some room for dessert and coffee. All of their desserts are made in-house and taste like your old Aunt Tillie made them just before you arrived. The tiramisu is to die for, and the spumoni ice cream is a work of art. They serve coffee, cappuccino, and espresso to accompany your sweets, as well as beer and wine for those of you who like to add a little libation to your meal.

They serve dinner until 9:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday and until 10:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. They accept credit cards and are able to give separate checks for large groups (very accommodating!!). Give them a try next time that you are in the area; they are certainly worth a venture off the beaten path:

Fettuchini & Co., Town Plaza at Godley, 125 Foxfield Way, Suite F, Pooler, GA 31322, 912-450-3463 ⚡

## BROKEN SWINGARM

Story and photos Bill Payne US DESMO Member #00234

I had a close one the other day, and I thought you might be interested. It could have caused a lot of road rash, but I was lucky!



gently with a plastic mallet, and slide the axle all the way through the swingarm mounts.

As I tap, tap, tapped on the right side, I took a quick glance at the left end of the swingarm to make sure the axle was headed in the right direction. You can imagine my surprise—melding to horror—as I realized that the entire end of the swingarm was rotated out and up at about 45 degrees! I reached over with my left hand and plucked off the last six inches of the swingarm—the whole chain-adjuster section. The unit had broken off at the aluminum-weld junction.

Upon further investigation, I realized that the rear section had actually been “milled off” by an improper wheel/spacer installation at some time in the distant past. (Why distant? No aluminum dust or shavings apparent). When the all-important left-end spacer is installed backwards



— with the beveled point facing out—the whole wheel/sprocket assembly moves to the left. This shift to the left is enough to bring

the mounting nuts of the sprocket into contact with the swingarm, right at the area of the weld between the chain-adjuster plate and the box section of the arm. The mounting nuts are



steel; the swingarm is aluminum — you do the math. If you examine the photos, you’ll see the “milling area” in question. There was enough



material to hold the chain adjuster in place—for a while. Apparently, my most recent ride, coupled with the lightweight (I swear!) tapping from the right side, was enough to finish off the cracks in the weld. Could have been a dusty, noisy end to a track day, eh?

So here’s the moral, in several parts:

1. If you ride a 900SS (or maybe other models, too), and the rear wheel has EVER been off the bike, go look at your swingarm NOW. Reach inside the left section of the swingarm, right where the chain-adjuster plate is welded to the box section. The weld should be complete, smooth, and finished. If you feel a grooved

section in that weld area, you may be in for a serious high-speed letdown.

2. When you install the rear wheels on these bikes, make sure (among other things) that the spacer on the left side has the BEVELED END FACING IN TOWARDS THE WHEEL. If it’s facing out, the wheel will move left and begin the grinding process and maybe kill your silly butt in the process.



3. I don’t know if the “milling” applies to the CR (i.e., steel) swingarms, as they are shaped a little differently; however, the spacer direction is critical on these bikes also. Failure to install with the BEVELED END FACING IN TOWARDS THE WHEEL will cause bearing failure (don’t ask how I know this, please).



In the meantime, I’m pulling the swingarm and in the market for a replacement. Does anybody know if it can be re-welded? Would you trust it? Are there any aftermarket units out there I should look at? Thanks, and ride well! ⚡

# BENCH RACING

Tall tales of fact and "friction"

Why I Ride — A Sense of Where You Are

by Bob Hancock US DESMO Member #00011


Riding in traffic is not my favorite way to pass time on a bike, but out of necessity, it seems, I find myself on the bike running errands more and more. Today, returning from a trip down town (Yes, Warner Robins has a downtown; not something to impress the Atlanta bound, but more than I care to deal with.), I thought of a recent conversation with an older woman at church. Standing next to my bike as she was getting out of her car, she returned my greeting with the comment, "I hate those things. They're so dangerous. I've had two friends killed on them." Rather than launch into my standard pitch about living life with gusto versus withering into an unappreciated mass of dimming flesh, normally embellished with the story of watching my 94-year-old mom slowly fade away, I just told her that the statistics weren't all that bad compared to car drivers because of the care, training, and situational awareness possessed by bikers who last. She parted with the smile of understanding, if not of being convinced.

On my way home, moving through traffic, I noticed the lack of expansive vision in my mirrors, the need to turn my head to see when changing lanes, and the extensive use of peripheral vision to safely navigate, all under the umbrella of the situational awareness (SA) I worked so hard to develop and keep while flying in the Air Force. Part of this SA is knowing where you've been, where you are, and how fast you are going, slowing, or accelerating relative to everyone else. I believe that it's an art form when done well.

John McPhee, noted author of creative non-fiction, lives in Princeton, New Jersey, near his alma mater. He writes for *The New Yorker* and is rather famous for his Profiles of various people in the magazine. Years ago, he spent time with and wrote an article and then a book, entitled *A Sense of Where You Are*, on classmate

Bill Bradley and his days in basketball before becoming a member of Congress. It's a wonderful story that contains bits like: "Every motion developed in its simplest form. Every motion repeated itself precisely when he used it again. He was remarkably fast, but he ran easily. His passes were so good they were difficult to follow. Every so often, and not often enough, I thought, he stopped and went high into the air with the ball... and a long jump shot would go into the net."

With that paragraph, my gear head heard motorcycles. Indeed, he could have been talking about a proficient rider until the last couple of sentences as the concept of being aware, of simplifying motion to its most basic elements, of having – developing – that sense of where you are, which is the essence of who we are as riders.

We can, we must, work on those other skills... making them our own by turning repetitive tasks into muscle memory... the shifting, braking, looking, seeing, orchestration of controls by both hands and feet while moving the body just so. When executed well, these moves translate into art. The art of motion, even ambition, distilled to the competition at the corner, the friction between survival and speed. Watch Valentino Rossi – The Doctor – and you will see grace, efficiency, "every motion developed in its simplest form." But the conductor must know where he is on the score. He must have the beat and be able to place it in context: which measure, which note, which lane, which gear – a symphony of sound and motion, lean and acceleration that only the hand on the throttle can achieve. Sing this song, this aria, seek the state of mindless bliss, approach the joy called the Zone often enough, and you won't mind the admonitions of the timid, the porch-sitters, the nannies running from the knife. 

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