

DESMO LEANINGS



The Magazine of the Ducati Owners Club of the United States

Volume 7 Issue 1 Spring 2009

*Touring Tobacco Road
Building A Slab Side • CMP Track Day Recap
A First Ducati Experience • The Bear Slayer*


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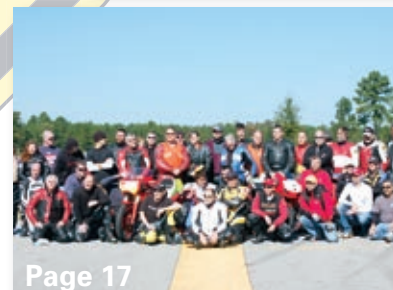
by R. C. Cole



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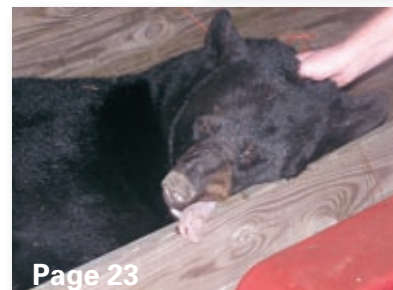
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Tall tales of fact and "friction"

Greetings from il Capo

Sitting here looking out my window, I see snow! This is Piedmont North Carolina, and we are not supposed to have snow. I rode just two days ago and it was 60 degrees, and this coming weekend is supposed to be that warm again and we are planning another ride. I will try to remember how cold it was when I am trying to figure out how to stay cool this summer.

This year is the start of year seven for US DESMO. If you count the years as a chapter for the Ducati Owners Club of Canada, then we are in our fourteenth year! Over the last six years we have signed up over 1,200 members and currently have about 600 active members. It is interesting to see how many of our members have MBS, or Multiple Bike Syndrome. Sure, many have more than one Ducati, but the range of interest is overwhelming—lots of Italian brands we have heard of and some that most of us have not. BMW and British bikes are also very common, but we had so many point out they have Harley Davidsons that we added it to our list of bikes for our membership application. Japanese bikes are well represented, too. The only thing in common is the love for something with two wheels.

2009 is going to be an interesting year. Ducati has brought out a number of new bikes or new twists on existing models. It is a fun time to be a Ducatisti, but it is not a fun time to have to buy or sell a bike. The economy is down for sure, and I for one do not see an immediate turn around. I hope Ducatis continue to sell and the investment costs for all these new models can be amortized.

As a club, we have seen the results of this economy in the reduced attendance at our rallies and track days. This comes right as both the tracks we use have raised rates. The club has had to pass this along in the form of higher registration fees for events. If this trend continues, we will have to look at club expenses and see if there is a way to save money. One quick way is to reduce the number of magazines we print each year by going to three issues in place of four. I do not like this idea and feel the magazine is an integral part of what makes US DESMO different.

On a brighter note we are trying to think outside the box in regard to event mementos. If all goes as planned, we will have three rallies and no T-shirts for 2009. I am not going to reveal what we have planned and ruin the surprise. If you want to find out what great items we have on tap, you have to come to a rally. Check out our 2009 schedule here or on the web site and come join us.

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more classifieds on page 27...

Classified ads are free for US Desmo members. Spring issue deadline is February 28. Summer issue deadline is May 31. Autumn issue deadline is August 31. Winter issue deadline is November 30. Please provide an accurate description of about 500 characters, price and contact information, plus a digital photograph. You can also list a classified ad on the US Desmo web site, www.usdesmo.com.



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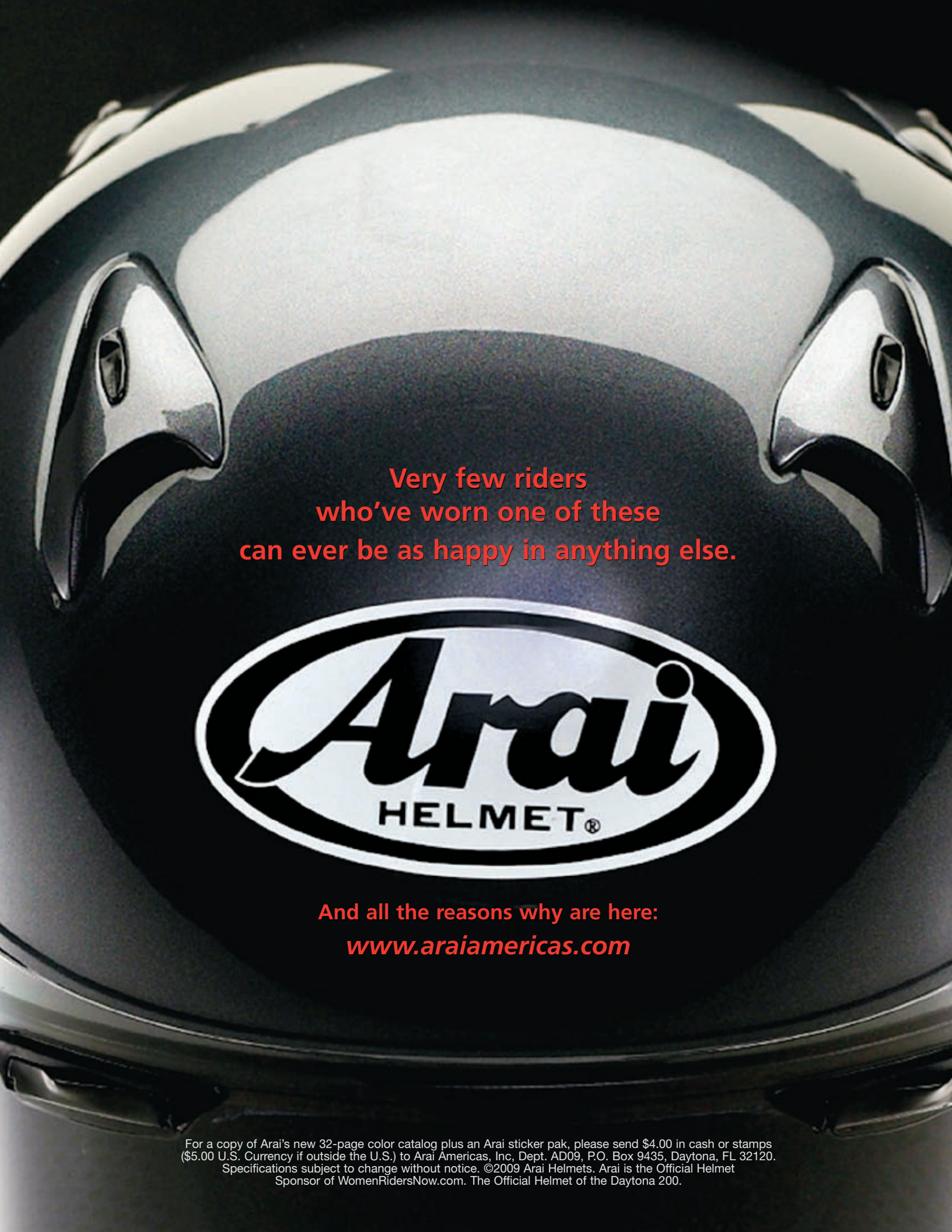
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Touring Tobacco Road



story and photos by Chuck Tornga, Member #00809, praducs@verizon.net

Winter has settled in, and I'm reveling in spring plans for riding my Ducati on Appalachia's fine, twisty back roads. I see images of eccentric mountain folk nodding at me from ramshackle porches as I blaaatt around the curves at full lean. I should be sending in checks to reserve track days or planning routes through the Rockies and possibly Nova Scotia with friends, but that can wait. Clearing the cotton and patching the roof can wait as well. I need to "wrassle" with a few things that are bugging me.

My yellow 749S Superbike was a beautiful machine in track photos with newly repainted yellow skins; even nicer all dressed up in street clothes. She was a "10" model that was heavily photographed in commercials and biker coffee table books. But she's showing her age already, and that's what's really giving me the itch. How did I let this happen?

She had the showroom shine yet when I first took her to a Ducks Along the Blue Ridge rally, and she was just a bit dirty for the 1500-mile ride that was Ducks Fly South a couple years ago. Maybe it was that ride home along the Blue Ridge

Parkway where the all-day rain and fog soaked us, and nearly dropped us near Mt. Pisgah. That's where the amber engine-control light first went on. It was just a wet-short problem in the fuel-pump relay that eventually caused other issues, but that was fixed. Was it the hard crash at Virginia International Raceway? Everything on the bike was repaired to almost new condition as soon as bones and skin were back in order. Sure, the clutch squeals a bit now (shaft twist?) and the steering lock



photo by John Robinson, Pics of You, www.picsofyou.com

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tang is a skootch off center, but she still rides okay. An ace mechanic is replacing the crank and installing high-compression pistons in the 749S. I'd like to work in one or two other mods this year as well. The pistons are my Christmas present, but what about the dyno tuning? How about the rear shock that's coming due for a new spring and rebuild? The exhaust got tweaked when I crashed a year ago and doesn't fit as well as it should. The list is long.



On my last ride through central Georgia, I had a moment with one of the locals. It was a bit cool, and the steam coming off a kettle at a boiled-peanut stand drew me in. There was an old guy in a straw hat leaning over the salty brown brew, and I expected a clumsy chat trying to communicate through a thick patois. As he raised his head, I noticed that his straw hat sported a Stetson band. In crisply educated grammar he noted that very few sport bikes bothered to stop on their way



through. He appreciated my bike, but I caught his eye pausing at a crease in my fairing, a clue to my neglect. He glanced at his wristwatch and lowered his hat once again to study the blue flame on his shiny propane burner. He cared at least as much for that equipment as I did for my bike. I rode off with a warm bag of peanuts and a reinforced commitment to maintenance.

On a special back road, I saw a barn that was nothing but a skeleton with the thinnest possible veneer of side boards, propped up by decades of abandoned farm machinery. It called to mind Oliver Wendell Holmes' story of The Deacon's Masterpiece. The Deacon knew that, "There is always somewhere a weakest spot and to a buggy." So he swore to find that weakest spot and to "build one shay to beat the town." He built it carefully, and after 100 years to a day without ever breaking down, "it went to pieces all at once,— All at once, and nothing first,— Just as bubbles do when they burst."

My goal is to learn to maintain my "buggies" so that they last the same way. Recent lessons included inspection of wheel bearings when changing tires. I'll also be more attentive to my oil to avoid a repeat of the seized bottom end that was probably brought on by oil starvation.

With my long list of maintenance needs, I worry of becoming some new sort of urban bum. Jeeter ruins



a brand new car in just days through a mix of neglect, sloth, and plain old stupidity in Erskine Caldwell's classic book, Tobacco Road. This story about life in Appalachia early in the past century haunts the mountain folk with an uncomfortable stereotype. I feel that discomfort on the macadam below Deal's Gap.

I fret about becoming Jeeter in the US DESMO community. I know several guys who would die before letting their pride and joy suffer the indignity of a wet ride or being stored overnight while still besmudged by road dust. They don't ride all that much, but their bikes are gorgeous. At the track I see brand-new bikes being ridden hard without protection, and I see some great machinery ruined in the time it takes to say "Oh @#%\$."

A desmo superbike is too fine a machine to mistreat, but it's equally perverse to pass up the opportunity to ride it as it was designed to be ridden. What's the proper line to ride through the switchback of performance and preservation? I'll have the rest of this season to chew on that one. Hopefully the line I choose will keep me on the pavement among the Ducatisti. I hope to fit with those who care for their machines but aren't willing to waste the performance potential that is essentially Ducati.



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BUILDING A SLAB SIDE WITH FLAT SLIDES

(Or, How to Make an Old '90s SS Really GO!!!)

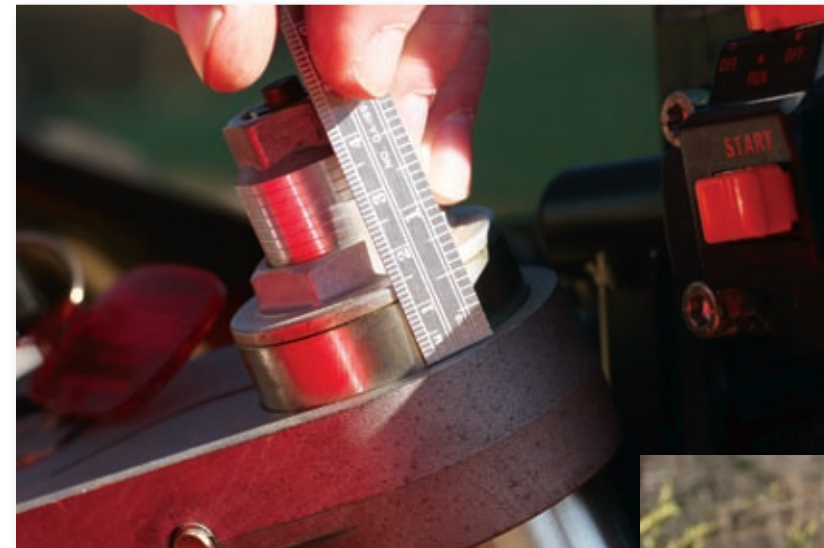
by Steve Ehrnst, photos by Joe Lee, Joe Cool Photography

Several years ago, when I was first looking for something sportier than the Harley Softail that I was currently riding, I wandered into a Ducati/Yamaha/four-wheeler/jet-ski dealer. The only available demo was a '99 SS900. I wasn't ready for that much sport at that time, but after a few years and a few Ducatis later, I became interested in the SS again. After all, an SS was the bike that put Ducati prominently in racing history back in the '70s. I had firsthand experience with the original 750 machines, as they routinely thrashed me and my '77 Sportster on my way to Alice's Restaurant or Half Moon Bay, circa '77-'79. Turns out there was a reason the Santa Cruz Mountains were loaded with SS750s back then. The historic Munro Motors, a Ducati dealer founded in 1958, was nearby in San Francisco. Ducatis were very

popular out West, and that may be why Ducati North America is located in Cupertino. In recent years, I became thoroughly adjusted to Ducatis. My initiation was on a 996 with heavy-gauge clutch springs and racing suspension. I do not believe it will be possible to experience anything more raw than that '99 996. Later for me, the 851 and 888 seemed tame. And the 999S was a Cadillac ride by comparison. Then along came an ST4S, and two Monsters. But the SS was missing from the equation. A cheap Ducati at that, especially if you liked the pre-'98 slab sides, like I do. I began my search in 2005, learning about SPs, CRs, Superlights, Final Editions, etc. But just the plain ol' '94-'97 full-fairing models with the rear grab handle appealed to me the most. Not even a mono; I liked the way the tail looked with the seat



cowling, and the handle is very useful. They were cheap, rarely selling over \$5,000, even with low mileage. They were usually modified only slightly, as this was an entry Ducati sport ride that got replaced by more expensive four-valve models as the riders moved on. Why spend money on the SS when you would never match the stock speed of the 851, 888, 748, and on up as Ducati increased



magnesium wheels for fork upgrades. Rick has since repaired or built forks for my ST4S, M1000S, and 999S. The fork work is essential, and it is a good place to start. He installed a Penske kit, Race Tech springs, new seals, and dust boots. This is a bit expensive, but worth it. The ride became cushy compliant, making me ride towards pot holes, instead of around them. Not soft, just able to soak up any kind of bump. It is essentially like having Ohlins without the price, but—alas—no bling of the gold tubes.

While you have the fork tubes off at Cogent Dynamics getting the rebuild, change the steering head bearings. They are too old now: dry, worn out, or all of the above. The bearings are not sealed and will at least need new grease. A steering damper is essential only if you plan to ride on the track or have a loose steering head. It is an easy fix for “head shake” on the street that you might get coming down off a wheelie too hard or flying over railroad tracks, but it is just that, a band aid for the

horsepower every year? They are still doing it to us. Your 1098 is now a dog compared to the new 1198!

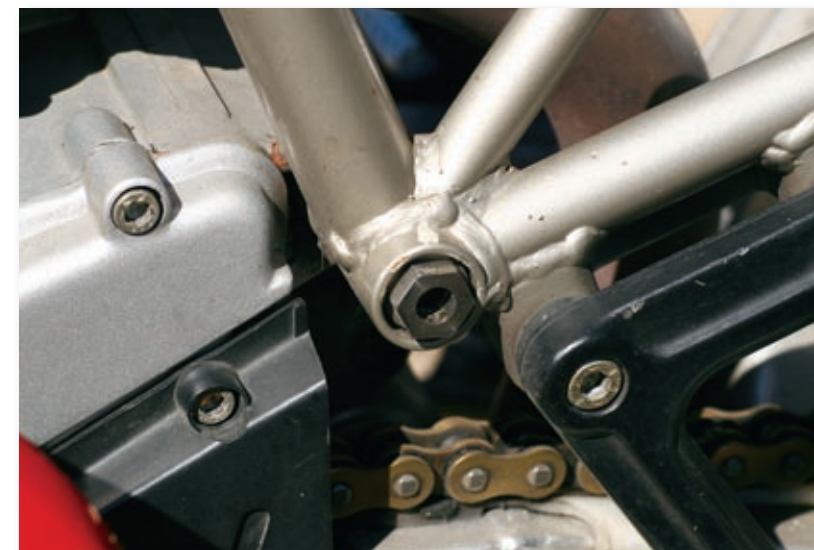
In the spring of 2006, I spotted a nice-looking '94 SS900SP on consignment at my local dealer, but it was not running, and the dealer couldn't solve the problem—a bad sign for the bike and the dealer. I forgot about it until the SP turned up in the hands of a friend known for a certain amount of mechanical wizardry. He got it going, and I started seeing it around at our local hangout, 29 Dreams. By October, I was ready to sell the punishing ride of the 996, and I took it to the Barber Vintage Festival II. The friend on the SS rolled up and we traded, straight across—SS900SP for 996—an apparent bad trade for me, giving up a four-valve superbike for an earlier, lower-value, two-valve machine. I did get to keep all of my special add-ons for the 996 to make the trade seem more equal. Most of these parts went on to Rick Tannenbaum, furthering my connection with him after selling some other 748 race parts at Barber Vintage Festival the year before. This second connection and my new/old SS got me involved in the suspension upgrades that Rick's Cogent Dynamics company could provide. Rick has been involved with suspension design and upgrades on Ducatis and various other bikes for a good while. In 2008, the Touring Sport team from Greenville, South Carolina, won the Moto ST endurance series on a modern SS900 using Rick's shock work.

I started by trading my 996 Marvic



bad steering bearings. However, the track is a different animal altogether. You need one and WERA requires it if you decide to try your hand at racing.

At reassembly, you can position your fork tubes in the triple tree according to how you want it to “turn in,”



fast or slow. It should be between 10 and 20mm from the base of the top clamp to the top of the fork tube, not the top of the cap. 10 would be slowest. To the best of my knowledge, the stock setting is 15mm. Increasing the amount through the clamp will quicken steering. SSSs are notoriously sluggish on steering in the stock format. However, there is a trade-off in stability when you lower the front. If you go too far, the bike will become unstable at speed due to not enough rake and trail, so test ride at various speeds while observing stability. Where you position the forks will also be determined by what you do with the rear shock. A longer rear shock will further reduce rake and trail. So, keep the fork tubes at 15mm or less when experimenting with a longer rear shock. And keep in mind, NONE of these shock- or fork-position settings will necessarily apply to other Ducatis, especially late models, which have minimum rake and trail to begin

with. That is to say, the common procedure of “lowering the front” does not improve every bike. A good read on sportbike steering geometry is James Parker's recent “Redefining Rake and Trail,” from the November 2008 Motorcyclist magazine, the one with the new KTM RC8 on the cover. Cogent Dynamics recommends running the forks at the stock height and adding close to 10mm to the rear ride height to improve turn-in and ground clearance.

That brings us to the rear shock, which should be replaced with one that has adjustable length (rear ride height adjustment). Someone will want your stocker on eBay. Rick builds a custom, triple-adjustable shock for the SS. It has an Ohlins spring and rides like a dream compared to the stocker.

To complete the suspension upgrades, you will need to get a set of Nichols motor-mount bolts (2). This is a low-cost performance improvement. The Nichols bolts will stiffen the chassis, which is sloppy with the original bolts due to poor design. The new bolts have a nut on each end and a thicker rod to fill the opening exactly. Again, the instructions are excellent, and this is a half-hour job. Cogent Dynamics sells the Nichols product and recommends it as an essential part of upgrading the suspension of an early SS.

Don't put your wallet away yet. Now on to performance. Pull out the old Mikuni carbs and coils (eBay again). Replace them with 41mm FCR Flat Slides and Dyna Coils from California Cycleworks. This is expensive, but necessary, and should be your last big expense unless you spring for some light wheels. The power will launch you seriously into the modern sportbike world. My bike has aftermarket slip-on mufflers with stock headers. There were no adjustments needed for the carbs. Just plug and play. The instructions that come with the package are so good, we don't have to tell you how to do it here. You will have to make some small mods on the

airbox so the linkage fits in on the left side. The throttle cables and throttle grip tube have to be changed, and all are included in the kit. There will no longer be a choke, so your lever on the left clip-on can be removed. These Keihin carbs have an accelerator pump instead of a choke. Starting procedure is a little different only in that you feather the gas as you crank and also after it starts. The Dyna Coils will ensure that you now have good, long spark compared to the anemic stock coils. With the Dyna Coils, you should increase the spark plug gap from the stock .023 inches to .038 or .040. This will give you the hottest, longest spark. The result will be better throttle response and easy starting.

If the final gearing is stock (15/37), you will need to change that to a larger rear sprocket. Gearing should be in the 15/39 to 15/41 range, depending on preference. This lower final-drive gearing will give the



bike additional power in the first three gears. Start with a conservative gearing like 15/39 unless you have ridden another one that you liked—not just another Ducati, but another SS. Other Ducatis have different gear-ratio transmissions and require different final-drive ratios. A budget way to reduce final gearing is to change the front sprocket from a 15- to a 14-tooth. Front sprockets are cheaper than rear sprockets, and one tooth on the front is equivalent to two teeth on the rear. However, this causes the chain to run through a tighter radius, which will take some power away (not much) and increase chain wear. A broken chain will cause a lot more expense in the long run than getting a couple of rear sprockets, so stick with the 15 front. When you replace the chain or sprockets after a long period of wear, it is essential to change all three together. You can substitute rear sprockets if all of the parts are fairly new.

Lighter, forged wheels will be the biggest improvement in reducing unsprung weight, but they will be the biggest expense compared to everything else. The wheels shown here are not light; they are stock.



After they pay me for this article, I will get the light ones. Wheels are definitely worth the expense for the performance—not to mention the bling—if you can afford them. Cogent Dynamics sells Carrozzeria wheels, which are less expensive than comparable Marchesini wheels, yet are very strong and of high quality. Cogent Dynamics also has sprockets and chains. If you decide to go for wheels, wait to change the chainset until then, as the new wheel will need a special sprocket that fits the brand.

Reduce sprung weight too, although it is much less significant than unsprung weight. I once installed a \$2,000 carbon-fiber gas tank on my 996 only to find no real handling difference, and it leaked. Carbon fiber is a waste of money, but I do like the look of it. The SS has a lot of small items that are heavy for their size. The footpegs, brackets, and undertail plastic are good examples. The pictured bike has the usual clean-tail look and light footpegs, which are cheap ways to reduce



weight but are not necessary or preferred by purists. It will add up if you put it all together on a scale. However, you could just go on a diet, as the rider is the greatest part of controllable, sprung weight

That's the lion's share of it. There are other helpful mods (spaghetti exhaust systems, engine kits) that you can make, but this is what has been done to this bike. If your SS is an early model, it will have rubber brake lines. These could be changed to stainless steel or kevlar easily. Brakes are an entity to themselves, with better pads, rotors, and levers available for all bikes. Whether you need to spend money there depends on how you use the bike. The track is very demanding on brakes. Fast track riders often have to improve braking components to reduce fade from heavy use.

About \$4,000 to \$5,000 for a bike, about \$4,000 in parts, and you have a great-handling machine that you built, with a little help from

Ducati. With Rick doing the suspension, the rest you can knock off in a few evenings in the garage. I did most of mine while my leg was in a brace, just for something to do when I couldn't ride or walk much. Marvin Jensen and Rick provided technical advice, but none of it was complex or required special tools.

The result is a bike that handles as well as any modern sportbike, and maybe better in the tight twisties of North Carolina, Tennessee, and north Georgia. Many of the best Ducati riders actually prefer the SS model over all others for mountain riding as well as the occasional

track day. And if you do have the unfortunate get-off, repair or replacement will not be too dear. You can spend as much on your whole SS as on late-model Ducati bodywork that gets damaged low-siding at the track.

Ian Falloon summed up the SS nicely in one of his later books, *Standard Catalog of Ducati Motorcycles, 1946-2005*: "While most of Cagiva's early efforts after they bought Ducati were disappointing, they made amends with the carbureted SS of '91-'97. This was a brilliant model and has justifiably become one of the classic modern Ducatis."



Sources and References

Forks and shock are by Cogent Dynamics. Contact Rick Tannenbaum, US DESMO member, www.motocd.com, Asheville, North Carolina. Nichols motor-mount bolts, chainsets, sprockets, brake lines, clutch slave cylinders, and other upgrades are also available. It is best to call him for details and advice.

Keihin FCR flat slide carbs and Dyna Coils come from California Cycle Works, www.ca-cycleworks.com. They are very helpful if you have questions about the mod parts, and they have a lot more performance goodies for your SS.

Marvin Jensen, mjkg851@hotmail.com, contributed and reviewed this article for technical accuracy and advised and helped with upgrades to the bike.

"Redefining Rake and Trail," by James Parker, Drawing the Line monthly column, Motorcyclist, November 2008, page 28.

Photos: Joe Lee, Joe Cool Photography, (205) 821-3971.

Feel free to contact me, Steve "Stev" Ehrnst, stevojudy@bellsouth.net, for any other questions, comments, or clarification.

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Eighth Annual Autumn Track Day Carolina Motorsports Park



story by Jim 'il Capo' Calandro, Member #00001, photos by Nick Nunez

The new track layout at Carolina Motorsport Park is a classic case of good news/bad news. Turns twelve and thirteen are a lot easier to move through, and you can really maintain some speed through there. That is clearly the good news. The bad news is turn fourteen arrives a lot sooner, and you are going a lot faster when you come up to it. Try not to hold your breath.

Weather is always a concern this time of year. It is the end of the hurricane season, so you never know if you will get washed out. Then an early freeze can hit you with bone-chilling riding. Well, we were fortunate enough to have a good day for this, and we got lots of track time in. This was important because we had Neale Bayly coming to write a story on our club and its events. Neale is a freelance journalist and has had many articles in *Moto-Euro* and *Motorcycle Classics*, and appeared on *Trippin' on Two Wheels* on SpeedTV, so we stressed to our members to bring their classic bikes to the track day.

The track day itself went very smoothly, and only a few riders had to make the ride of shame back on the trailer. We stopped for lunch, and Neale had us line up on the pit road for the obligatory group shot. Then there

were some individual shots of true classics. Helmut Niederer did not let us down and had his marvelous TT2 on hand. It is a classic in the true tre colore that is so synonymous with Ducati. It was great to have it parked next to my 999 tre colore that is a tribute to just that bike. It is amazing to see how small the TT2 is next to the modern bikes.

My nephew volunteered to be the track-day photographer, and he took lots of shots both on the track and during the group portrait. He does not own a motorcycle, but you could see the gleam in his eye even from the seat of your bike while negotiating the track.

Attendance was down this year, and we attribute that to the conflict with the Vintage program, races at Barber Motorsports Park, and the MOTOST races at Daytona. We had this weekend first, but they did not seem to be impressed with my logic that they should move their date. As a result, we have moved our date two weeks earlier so we should not have this conflict any longer. Of course, I am sure we are now in conflict with some other event. It is so hard to pick a weekend during prime riding weather that is not in conflict with someone.

Be sure to look at our 2009 schedule and mark your calendar.





FIRST DUCATI EXPERIENCE

by Jim Wright, Member #00045

You remember back when you were young and occasionally overcome with bouts of stupidity? I am as old as il Capo, so I've reached the point where admitting my mistakes is easier. Several that I remember were made during my youth—this is about Ducatis, mostly.

I attended the University of Arkansas ("Harvard of the Southwest") from '64 to '68. I worked while in college and needed cheap transportation. I can't remember exactly why, but I decided a motorcycle was the solution and bought a '56 Triumph for \$450. It ran, could be

I took the proceeds from the insurance settlement from the Triumph and bought a new 1967 Ducati Diana Mk III. It came with a number plate that covered the headlight, an aluminum intake trumpet, a big black megaphone exhaust and a tachometer about the size of a steam gauge on a locomotive. The dealer changed the cigar-shaped stock muffler for one that looked and sounded better.

Somewhere I have the original bill of sale, but I think the total cost was about \$1,000. There's an exact duplicate in the Barber Museum (shown here). There was



parked anywhere without tickets as no one had tags then, and it had big, open megaphones and no front brake. After some learning and riding, it was totaled when a gentleman ran a stop sign, and I T-boned his Mustang.

Back to '66. When I needed parts for the old Triumph, I went to a dealer in Rogers, Arkansas. His shop was at the end of a dirt lane just across Highway 81 from the Daisy BB Gun factory. The dealership was small—seemed like three modest-sized rooms in what was probably an enlarged garage or something like that. He sold Nortons and Ducatis and had a couple of roadracing Nortons that were fascinating to someone who didn't know #hit from Shinola about roadracing then. (Some who have seen me at track days say I still don't!) It wasn't the friendliness dealership I've ever been in, but they had parts.

no key, just an ignition kill button. The couple of times I rode on the street with the megaphone, it would, as my late mother would say, "wake the dead."

I don't know how I first knew about Ducati. Maybe it was that dealership and that the bike was affordable to me. This was just as the Japanese invasion began, and there were beginning to be lots of Honda 305 "scramblers" and other Hondas around northwest Arkansas. I remember reading that the Mark III was the fastest 250cc at the time (that didn't last long). That would have attracted a young, impressionable person!

It is equally possible that I may have read about them in the writings of Charles Fox. If you read *Car and Driver* at that time, Fox, with David E. Davis, Brock Yates, and Warren Weith, shaped our thinking about both cars and bikes. If you can find any Fox columns



about bikes, they were the Peter Egan's of the day. I have made some attempts to find his writing, but haven't been successful. Not everything is archived on the Internet yet.

I probably neglected to mention that I was academically challenged for one semester, even at Arkansas. I mistakenly thought I wanted to be a doctor, and it almost got me to Viet Nam with an express ticket. Anyway, I needed to go to summer school to take those

easy courses such as ballroom dance and Arkansas history (which then was barely enough to fill a 3 x 5 card, as it was before the Clintons became famous) to bring the old GPA back into something that began with a 2.

To provide income, I worked on a maintenance crew at a turkey-processing plant at night. Maintenance was stretching it a bit; it was really "clean up." We got off about dawn each morning, and as I was riding home one morning, a car pulled out in front of me. I tried to go behind the car, but the triangle of gravel that gathers at some intersections got me and down the Duc went. It was interesting that the only damage to the bike was a hole in the top of the seat! My damage was a scuffed elbow.

As someone who later grew to be an "all the gear, all the time" rider, it's interesting to reflect on the lack of helmets at that time. Of the guys I rode with, I only remember one who even owned a helmet. I was very fortunate that in neither of the crashes mentioned here did my head touch anything!

I didn't ride it much for a while, graduated (yes), got a job (yes), and moved a few times, and the Duc went along for the moves. I lost interest in riding for a couple years and sold it for \$100 to a college friend in Colorado. Dumb!

Like many, I've moved around to other brands and admit that some of them have better bikes for some applications, but I sure like my Ducs.



BEAR SLAYER

by R. C. Cole, Member #00061

Well, what should I have expected? 2008 had been a mixed year. Back in May I got my knee down on the new turn 12 at Kershaw in the second session. (When you are 5'2", a knee down is a life event.) The third session I had a heart attack and was shipped to Columbia for a cardiac catheterization and a stent.

The hospital I work at deleted my position, then decided that it was needed (so I had my job back), then decided that I was only needed on the weekends. Now I work every weekend.

So November 8th started badly. Rhonda took Matthew and moved out that day while I was at work. But Rhonda, being the classy lady that she is, arranged to bring Matthew to Andy's so we could have supper together. After eating, I bid the two of them a tearful adieu and pointed the Vulcan towards the house, a mere three miles away. I made one mile without incident.

I came to the bottom of the railroad overpass doing between 45-50 mph (in town in a 35 zone). BAM! I am on the ground in pain. (Did I see a large dog?? COULDN'T have been a bear.) Headlights coming up from behind, roll off the asphalt, more pain. Jeez, everything hurts.

A big tobacco-chewing first responder comes up to me. I hear the classic, "Can you hear me? Stay still." Naturally, my reply was, "WHAT THE HELL DID I HIT??" Bubba replied, "Hell, buddy, you done killed a big ole sow bear. Too bad bear season ain't 'til Monday."

I lay there taking inventory: both hands hurt, missing the right glove, right thumb really hurts. Don't wanna look. Feet hurt, right shoulder hurts, HELLUVA goose egg on my head, lost my helmet, blood in my eyes. Teeth seem okay. Back hurts but everything moves; hurts but moves. Have I had this dream before?



The cops made it to the scene after about five minutes—not anything going on in Chocowinity on Saturday night. Rhonda shows up. I close my eyes, then I hear Matthew. I look up, and Gabriel has him. "It will be all right, Daddy."

They are trying to put on a c-collar, but it is pushing against the lump on my head that is the size of a baseball. Seems like the ambulance takes forever. (It's less than a mile away, but this is a volunteer squad.) It gets there, and Bubba and crew load me up. My remarks about movers and fine china have them commenting about altered mental states (some people never get my jokes).

When I get to the local hospital, I am greeted by Beth O'Kane, RN, a wonderful nurse that I worked with at another hospital for six years. Beth is more than generous with the pain medication. Things begin to take on a warm, fuzzy glow. Except that I have to pee, and I cannot do so lying down strapped to a backboard.

X-rays, then get the leather jacket off when Beth is not looking. (I hate having jackets cut off of me.) More IVs, more pain medication. Try to stand up to pee when Beth is out of the room—BIG MISTAKE—the nursing assistant and Rhonda get me back on the stretcher. Someone is making noises about nurses being the worst patients.

Wah, wah, wah.

The ED doc wants to admit me. Since I no longer have a wife at home, I think that this is a good idea. The hospitalist however got his fellowship off a soup can and decides that all I need is a couple of liters of fluid and then I can go home. Wrong, dude. Mechanism of injury, a concussion. Nurse, can you get me the attorney section of the yellow pages?? Alright, now we have a room assignment. Oops, the dumbas...—I mean learned doctor—decides that I need to go to the trauma center 25 miles away.

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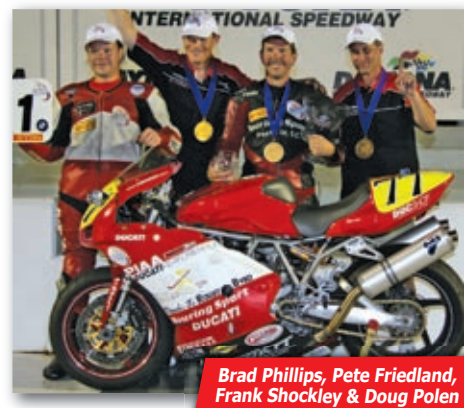


Doug Polen at speed on the Touring Sport Ducati 1000



Pete Friedland running at the front of the pack

Photos by Brian T. Nelson



Brad Phillips, Pete Friedland, Frank Shockley & Doug Polen



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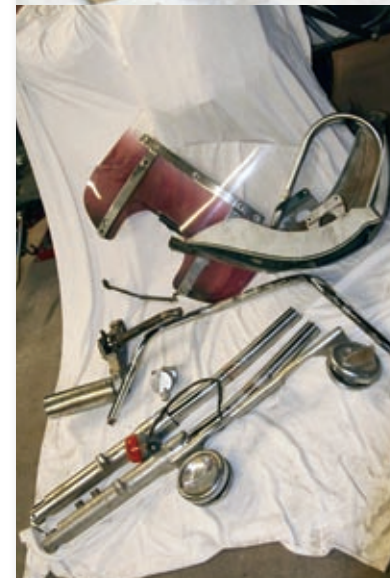
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SPRING 2009

Enter EastCare Ground MICU (Mobile Intensive Care Unit) transport and Marsha, RN. (I worked with her in the '80s.). More pain medication. (Ain't life grand?) I feel like hunting down another bear.

I wake up as the stretcher enters the Trauma Unit of UMC PCMH (University Medical Center at Pitt County Memorial Hospital), and there to kiss my cheek (and give me more pain medication) is Annie, RN. (I helped train her 15 years ago.)

As I recount the events, the bear is now a Grizzly Bear and 1200 lbs. I still cannot pee lying down. So after a little more pain medication, I cling to three nurses and walk 35 feet to the head. Man, that was better than the morphine.

Annie gets me upstairs before her shift change. Hmmm, nobody I know here, but they all know I am a nurse (not good). At least they seem determined that I remain pain free.

Now let's see. Lots of narcotics, nothing to do, and a fully charged cell phone. If you didn't get a call, it's because I didn't have your number.

Called Hooky (has a 1985 BMW K100 RT but rides a Honda 1100 Shadow). He said that Brunhilda was close to 400 lbs and he was gonna get some help over and skin her for me. Oh yeah, single again—gotta have a bearskin rug. Go great in front of the fireplace.

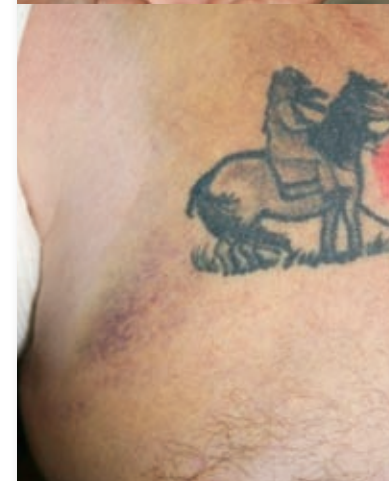
What I really want, though, is the bear claws. Seems that Matthew went to school and is telling everyone about Daddy killing a bear with his motorcycle and having a goose egg 'cause he lost his helmet. Well, this was chalked up to his four-year-old imagination. Gotta get the kid a bear-claw necklace.

Hooky called the next day. Fish & Game had come by and confiscated Brunhilda's remains. Seems a guy that wanted the carcass had called in Hooky's tag number. I really hope he shows up in my ED so I can show him MY appreciation. The only thing Hooky stashed was about 15 lbs of bear meat, so I did get some Brunhilda jerky later.

Four days later, I get out of the hospital. Two weeks later, I can drive again. Six weeks later, I start trying to rebuild the Vulcan. January 2, I got back to work. February 2, I took the Monster out for a shake down. For the first 15-20 minutes, ankles, knees and hips really spoke to me. Right hand is still swollen, and it's a task to get the glove on.

All in all, I am happy. Fractured right clavicle (collar bone), fractured distal R1 phalanges (end of my thumb), fractured proximal left fibula (small bone in leg), concussion, messed up right hand, messed up ankles, a number of scrapes and bruises. I learned a lesson: when you want to kill a bear, DON'T USE A MOTORCYCLE.

See ya on the Track.
Bearslayer, aka RC



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US DESMO SCHEDULE 2009

Track Day, Monday, March 30, Roebing Road, Savannah, GA.*

Ducks Along The Blue Ridge (DABR), May 1-3, Mt Airy, NC

Track Day, Monday, May 18, Carolina Motorsports Park, Kershaw, SC.

Ducks Head West (DHW), August 7-9, Erwin, TN

Ducks Fly South (DFS), Sept. 18-20, Hiawasse, GA*

Track Weekend, Oct. 10-11, Carolina Motorsports Park, Kershaw, SC.*

Track Weekend, Oct. 31-Nov 1, Roebing Road, Savannah, GA.*

**Indicates new event or new dates for traditional events.*

see www.usdesmo.com for more information and registration forms

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photo by Nick Nunez

BENCH RACING

Tall tales of fact and "friction"

A Learning Experience

by Jim 'il Capo' Calandro, Member #00001

I have been riding for almost forty years, and you just cannot ride that long without a few surprises.

One year I was going to Deal's Gap, before the magazines made it famous and a place of interest for the law enforcement officers, and got one of those "OH MY" surprises.

I had moved to North Carolina but had kept in touch with my north Georgia riding buddies. We were going to meet at the hotel at Deal's Gap, spend a few nights, and ride the local rides. I had ridden up with Wally Zink, a friend from the Charlotte area. He was on an early belt-drive 900 SS, and I was on my bimota db2 with the same motor. I led the way because I knew where we were going, and we settled into a pace that we were both comfortable

considerably faster than the day before. We left with our new-found friend right behind Wally, who had taken his now-familiar place behind me. When we stopped at the overlook at the other end, Mr. ZX 10 was nowhere in sight. We were all relieved he had not caused us any problems.

Well that evening when we were back at the hotel, we noticed the ZX 10 had some bodywork damage and some flora growing out of the fairing. Up comes our hero, and he wants to know where the guy on the SS is because he is going to have to pay for his bike's repairs. After asking a few questions, it was determined he had made all of three turns before he went agricultural. Apparently what had happened was he got behind on a tight turn, opened up his throttle to make up ground, and got sucked

When we were getting ready to ride that morning, a young man on a new ZX 10 Kawasaki came walking over to us and began a conversation about how those Ducatis are not all that fast.

with. We arrived late in the day and met up with my Georgia friends for dinner, and we turned in early so we could get a lot of riding in.

When we were getting ready to ride that morning, a young man on a new ZX 10 Kawasaki came walking over to us and began a conversation about how those Ducatis are not all that fast. He had the real bike, a ZX 10, and could out-ride any fancy Italian bike. We all looked at each other and knew this was trouble. After he left, we decided to speed up the departure process so we would not have to contend with this cerebral giant.

Unfortunately when we all got ready to ride, here is our hormone-addled challenger. What to do? We opted to ride and just try to stay out of trouble. One thing that I forgot to tell Wally was my group of Georgia friends was MUCH FASTER than I and the pace would be

into the next turn way over his head and rode it down into a gully.

In his eyes it was Wally's fault because the turn had caught Wally out—the increased pace—and he had gone a little wide into the grass but brought it back onto the pavement. Our hero, on the other hand, was closing on Wally fast, and, when Wally went wide, he Blue Angeled right in behind him. Because of his elevated speed, he did not recover and went off-road into some pretty dense vegetation. He was just lucky his bike was the only thing to sustain any real damage. We tried not to laugh when we explained that the following rider is responsible for his own ride and the rider in front of him certainly is not at fault. He did not take this at all well, but there were enough of us that he decided to go off and lick his wounds, especially the one to his ego.



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Introduced in 1954, the Ducati Meccanica logo with its distinctive wing and laurel design pays homage to Ducati's Bologna home and proud heritage. The Ducati Meccanica apparel collection, completely redesigned for 2009, combines vintage details and contemporary styling in both technical riding gear and fashion garments for men and women. Visit www.ducati.com to experience Ducati's complete apparel line.

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