

POWERFUL SOLUTIONS

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Motorcycles and Memories

What value is there in the ability to tell a good story?

Before written word existed, cultures depended upon an accurate (and perhaps sometimes embellished) recounting of important cultural events to communicate a sense of “self” to the community. Without languages and culture, civilization unravels. These are perhaps the loftiest goals of the spoken word. While not as critical to the maintenance of national identity, *our* ability to tell a story helps to extend a sense of *shared* experience with our audience. AS ALWAYS, our communication skills are critically important to our success. Once our points are tabled, will our Guests more easily be able to relate to the situation at hand?

This month we’re going to step back a little, from the struggle, and just consider a little personal perspective...

It was 1989 and I had just purchased my seventh motorcycle, this time from a buddy. It was a two-year-old Ninja 750. He had cared for it well and it was in great shape. Maintenance was due, though, and I remember changing the oil on the sidewalk out in front of my house. Time was short because I was in a hurry to get over to my girlfriend’s house. I buttoned things up and was on my way. At this point I had a little tenure with motorcycles which, combined with my youthful exuberance, made me bulletproof! Her house was roughly 20 miles from mine, with a good stretch of interstate in between. It’s a warm summer day, and I’m confidently stretching it out a little. Not that I would ever do such a thing, but you may be surprised to learn that at nearly 150 mph, you cover close to 220 feet per second! It’s true. Upon exiting the highway, I soon find myself sitting at a red light.

Ugghhh. The light turns green, and I’m once again twisting the throttle. Then IT happened. I am NO longer enjoying a warm summer’s day, or its clean pavement, but I’m on black ice! Well, that’s EXACTLY what it felt like, anyway. What had happened was that in my haste to wrap-up my oil change, I had pinched the oil filter housing’s O-ring. It has now *catastrophically* failed, dumping quarts of fresh engine oil onto the rear tire. It was EVERYTHING I could do to keep from falling off this motorcycle upon which I barely had any control. This was happening at probably 40 mph... hmmmmm, the power of reflection and its sometimes-scary reality!

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines *passion* as *an intense desire or enthusiasm for something*.

Nailed it!

For me, this is motorcycling. From the time, as a pre-school aged, goggle-eyed street-urchin riding on the tank on my Dad’s Honda CB 750 in the early 70’s, to the summer of 1979 and him bringing my first motorcycle home in the back of his truck, a 1973 Honda XL 250 Motosport (no problem for an 11 year old, RIGHT?!?)... I’ve been addicted!



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Motorcycles and Memories (*Continued*)

Two more off-road bikes followed that first Honda, a pair of Kawasaki KDX 175's, but that's where Dad drew the line. "Boy, the day you're man enough to ride a street bike is the day you're man enough to move out of my house!"

Hmmmmmm, he sounded serious. It was weird, though, because that's not what happened...

At 18, I was driving around one day and saw a 1983 Honda Shadow 500 for sale. The bike had around 1500 miles on it, was in perfect condition, and the price was right. I called the phone number on the for-sale sign and met the Seller at the bike. He asked me if I knew how to ride and I said, "Yes, but only on dirt bikes." He handed me his helmet and the key to the bike. "Fire it up," he said. "Jump on it and follow me back to my house." We are now on the interstate and this care-free soul has invested probably far more faith in me than he should have. It was all good, though, and I was *hooked*! I bought the bike as soon as we got to his house.

Enter the street bike phase...

"Boy, whose motorcycle is that out in my garage," Dad inquired. Nervously, I responded, "That... it... it's mine, Dad." And the craziest thing happened... NOTHING! That was it. Not another word was said on the subject. That first street bike was just what the doctor ordered, not too powerful *at all*, but a lot of fun, nonetheless. I quickly craved more power, though, which lead me to purchase a 1980 Kawasaki KZ 1000 from a neighbor down the street a few months later. Now there are two street bikes in Dad's garage... both mine. As a side note, to this day I can't figure out why Dad would never take me up on the offer to jump on one of the bikes.

"Which ever bike you want, Pop! Let's go for a ride!!!" I had extended this offer more than once, but he wouldn't do it. It's not as though he, himself, wasn't an enthusiast. He had long been riding. Heck, he had been a motorcycle cop for years, after all. Oh well, just another one of those unsolved mysteries.

Although the second bike was twice the engine size of the first, more power was needed, still. Enter the modern performance era...



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Modern performance motorcycles have long been the benefactors of engineering excellence. In 1984, Kawasaki Heavy Industries released the GPZ900R (produced for the 1984 and 1985 model years, also known as the ZX900A-1). Fans of the original Top Gun movie, circa 1986, can remember being introduced to this motorcycle (that Tom Cruise rode) as the Ninja 900... its moniker as it is known here in the United States. This motorcycle had a top speed of 151 mph (the first stock road bike to crack the 150-mph barrier) and was really the first bike on the market to possess reasonably good handling characteristics befitting its power development. Its release revolutionized the industry, and it became the predecessor to the modern-day sport bike.

I was intimately familiar with the handling prowess of this motorcycle, back in the day. A friend of mine had one. It was 1987. He and I would regularly go to work determining who had made the smarter purchase, he on his 1984 Ninja 900, or myself astride a 1985 GPZ 750 Turbo (also known as the ZX750E), my first new motorcycle purchased as an overstock... 2 years old, but right out of the crate. These two motorcycles had nearly identical performance specs, on paper, but were very different in reality. His motorcycle, with its superior chassis, suspension, and brakes was rock steady at top-speed. Mine, on the other hand, was a nightmare! The 750 would shake its head, leading to hair-raising doses of tank-slapping terror, on a regular basis. THIS is not an exaggeration! Her tube-steel chassis, 18-inch front wheel, and suspension (all carried over from her normally aspirated sister, the GPZ 750) were completely inadequate to handle the power developed by this turbo-charged version of the engine. The relative similarity in the names of these two bikes did nothing to accurately portray the engineering differences. Then there was the difference in power delivery. The turbo was like a light switch, nothing remotely resembling linear power. I remember breaking traction one evening, under full throttle, with the rear wheel stepping out and trying to pass the front wheel at an indicated 85 mph. With a speedometer driven by front wheel speed, there's no telling what the REAR wheel speed was at the time. Sketchy!

All these considerations aside, and despite his bike's superior handling and capabilities, my friend suffered an almost fatal accident one night as we, again, found ourselves in the grip of our youthful enthusiasm.

It was now time for something a little more manageable...

This is where our story began.

What's your relatability quotient? Everyone likes a good story. Mix in a little of yourself, when possible.

The story continues...

Think about it.

Good luck and good selling!



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