

Shootin' the Breeze



by Bummer

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February at last!

I know this sounds stupid as Hell, but I actually look forward to February now. Just last February I remarked that it was the worst month of the year. I even hated the way the month was SPELLED! But an old friend of mine straightened me out about it [I've never been known for my patience and sometimes I need direction]. He reminded me that next month is March already, the beginning of Spring. And having this additional downtime allows us to take care of any last minute buisness that needs taken care of.

By February we've had just about enough of winter and we start looking forward to riding in our T shirts, but since it really isn't a good month for riding, it IS the perfect time to make sure yer scoot is ready.....To make sure that the tires are cool and everything else is workin' the way it oughta. In fact, according to him, since this month IS such a crappy riding month we won't just rush into things and end up regretting it. It's custom made for going over all the things that you've been putting off.....Kind of a yearly lock out safety feature.

For the past 30 years or more I've always tried to make sure my bike was up and running by April Fools Day. Luckily I haven't needed to tear this one down yet, but when I have torn 'em down in the past, that's always been a good day to set my sights for. My old buddy Deeter does most of my wrenchin' nowadays. But there was a time that when I needed something done, I did it myself simply because the bikes were usually swap meet specials and I couldn't afford to spend "Family" money on labor or even new parts.

Hell, the old bikes I rode had as many car parts on 'em from junk yards as store bought factory bike parts! And it all worked great! I rode the Hell outta ALL my bikes, and they didn't cost an arm and a leg to maintain. Used to be bikes were engineered that way: A Corvair piston fit a Shovelhead cylinder. A VW regulator fit a Sportster or Superglide. For years I used the small air conditioning cooler from a Cadillac as an oil cooler on my Shovel. The points from a small block Chevy fit a Shovel and points made for a Vega fit a Sportster. I bought my drive chains and even primary chains from a John Deere dealership and everything from my gas caps to my headlamps and tail lights usually came from a hardware store. I'm proud to say that my tank lettering for a few years was "Hardly Davidson"! The only time I even entered a bike dealership was if I needed something REALLY specific, like a carburetor jet....or to buy a shirt.....WHICH WAS \$3.50!!!!

Of course nowadays that's all changed. It's been said that nostalgia has the dangerous side effect of making you regret how things are now, and whoever said that was right. The performance of motorcycles has improved dramatically, but not certain aspects of the maintenance end of things. Not too much is even interchangeable between models from the same company, whether yer talkin' American made, Japanese, German, British or Martian. If certain of our lawmakers have THEIR way ya won't even be able to buy any AFTERMARKET parts.....You'll be stuck with buying the SPECIFIC part that was intended for that make, model and year bike only, manufactured by THAT company.

Now where the Hell was I goin' with all this? Oh yeah [I'm glad YER keepin' up], I was sayin' that February is a good month to get everything ready.....

About ten years ago I discovered a battery charger called a "Tender" that allows you to keep the battery on the bike all winter and kicks on and off automatically to charge it just when it needs to be charged. Ya bolt a permanent cable onto yer battery and just plug the tender into it. When ya wanna ride, ya just unplug it and go. This gizmo is actually better for the battery than taking it off and bringing it inside the house every winter like I've always done in the past. It's rare that something is made easier AND better at the same time. Usually easier is worse in the long run, but this thing actually prolongs the battery's life! I've had the same battery on mine for over five years now, and my son's Shovel has had it's battery for ten!

The main thing I can't stress often enough is to make SURE yer tires are good! And if yer the one who sits on the back make sure ya bitch the one who's responsible for such things into getting new rubber if necessary. Of all the things you can bitch about, THIS is probably one of the most righteous, and is definately YOUR buisness too. We've all slid around a bit on wet roads or loose gravel [especially in the Spring]. You increase yer chance of goin' down so much more if yer tread isn't good, but it's so easy to just put it off, until it's too late.

As I sit here writing this I'm looking out my window and all I see is snow. I'm drinkin' a cup of hot tea and thinkin' about warm sunsets....about poker runs, swap meets and country rides in the sunshine. About beautiful biker women letting their hair fly free in the wind [ALL biker women are beautiful]. About all the things that make this lifestyle what it is and why we enjoy it so very much.... Man! I can't wait.....C'mon Spring!

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