



3 Degrees of Control

Jeff Hughes, *Sport Rider*, October 2003

Editor's Note - It was about two years ago that Richard French planned a ride down Old Highway 94 and then up through Campo to finish at the Golden Acorn Casino. Somehow, I wound up near the front of the pack with the fast guys. Following Jim Branch on his old Beemer and Eddie Seeber on his GS 1150 was like watching two surgeons dissect the road, their actions seemed effortless and yet deliberate. When I read this article by Jeff Hughes, the memory of that ride came back to me as well as the question, "How do those guys make it look so easy?" - The article is too long for this newsletter, so I had to shorten it, if you would like to read the complete article check it out at Sport Rider's web site (<http://www.sportrider.com/>) - Ron

In a sport whose very appeal is built around the merits of speed—a sport where our greatest heroes are those who go the fastest, a sport where even the most mundane machinery comes dripping with performance, where even the clothes we wear are based upon the need to attenuate the risk we perceive attendant to that speed—it's hard not to get caught up in the notion that speed is the thing. It's both the yardstick by which we measure ourselves and the mantle in which we wish to be draped. Hell, who doesn't want to be fast?

The corollary, an article of faith repeated so often that it seems to be any argument, is that speed—too much of it at least—is a bad thing. It's the bogeyman waiting to catch us out any time we cross the imaginary line of too much. Most of us nod our heads when we hear that.

The thing is, that doesn't always jive with out experience. We see guys all the time who manage to crash at quite modest speeds. And we know some—admittedly a much smaller number—who ride really fast, and have for a long time, but who never seem to crash. Not as in they don't crash very often. As in they never crash.

We all undertake a modicum of risk every time we thumb the starter—it's just inherent to the sport. But those of us who choose to adopt a faster pace deliberately assume more of that danger. We knowingly engage the laws of probability in a game of chicken. You play it long enough and you lose. That's what we've always been told, right?

Why is it then, that such a select group of riders manages to ride at an elevated pace over many miles, week-end after weekend, trip after trip, year after year, with little in the way of a mishap? Why are these riders seemingly held apart, aloof, from the carnage which too-often otherwise affects our sport? And how is it that so many other riders, traveling at much lesser speeds, still manage to toss away their bikes with such depressing frequency?

Well, maybe we've been looking in the wrong place all along. Maybe, just maybe, it's not about speed after all—at least not in the way we usually think of it. Maybe it's about something else, something as simple as the degree of control we exercise over a span of road.

It might happen on any ride, on any Sunday. We head out with some buddies, or maybe we hook up with that group of guys we were talking to down at the gas station, or maybe that devil on our shoulder is simply a little more vigorous in his exhortations this day. However it happens, we soon get to the road. The good one. The one that brought us out here in the first place. And there, in that mix of camaraderie and good tarmac and adrenaline-laced delight, we find ourselves giving away that which we had sworn to hold tight to—our judgment. It doesn't happen all at once. We give it away a little click here, a little click there, like a ratcheting cord. Soon, rolling through the curves faster and faster and laughing under our helmets all the while, we enter a new realm.....

.....Think about all those riders who've ever impressed us, like our rider at the beginning of this story. They all seem to have a smooth, fluid, easy quality about them, an assurance which belies any stress or fear. They're always balanced, always in control. I suspect somewhere along the line they've acquired a germ of

wisdom, hard-won over many miles, which has given them an appreciation of their own limits. They know where that tipping point is—where their mastery of their bike, the road, and the environment begins to slip away—and they long ago made the decision to stay this side of it.

When you do find them testing their limits—surely there's an argument to be made for exploring the edges of one's ability—it's likely to be at a time and place of very careful choosing, and it probably involves a racetrack. Much of wisdom involves simply knowing when and where to lose those impulses that we all carry.

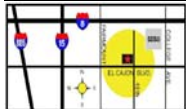
Another "word to the wise" that I came across somewhere on the internet....

.....Today Fortunately, I have only to look fast--my specialty. So, pasting myself to the bike's tank, I'm soon into a rhythm. Three upshifts, tuck in, slight hang off, left knee out, become one with the bike, then hard on the brakes--over and over again, and always very careful. The automaticity of it all leaves room to ponder. Why does age bring such caution? With less life ahead of us than behind us, one would think we would be more carefree with what remains. But, no, it is the young, with their whole lives before them who treat life with such casual abandon and ride as if there were no tomorrow....



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EVENT CALENDAR

- NOV Wed 9- RHR meeting at Giovanni's
- DEC Fri 9- Sun 11- CW Int'l Motorcycle show at Long Beach, Ca.
Wed 14-RHR meeting at Giovanni's

Inclement weather may cause the cancellation of any of the above RHR events. Contact Jim Branch at (619) 460-0669 the evening before a RHR scheduled ride/Track day if weather is a question. You can also check out the Web site for up-to-date changes in the Schedule : www.redhotriders.com

MotoPro 1425 South Coast Highway
House of Motorcycles Oceanside, CA 92054
(760) 433-4333

Next Meeting 11/ 9

There's nothing like the feeling of a perfectly fit and protective set of leathers. If you're jonesing for a new set (or your first set) you won't want to miss the November meeting where Adolph and Diane Rodriguez of Z-Custom Leathers (www.zcustom.com) in Huntington Beach will be showing their work. You've probably seen their suits on racers and magazine covers as well as other RHR members; their gear is well-known throughout the sport. Be sure to ask Adolph about making suits for Kenny Roberts Sr. when he was a kid! See you there.

Club Meetings:

Giovanni's Restaurant in Kearny Mesa, Corner of Clairemont Mesa & Ruffin Roads
6PM 2nd Wed of the Month

Newsletter Submission:

Newsletter submission can be sent to Ron Farkas, email is: hondaron@cox.net, Phone & Fax: 858-486-3257

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Red Hot Riders
would like to thank
Kipp McGowan
RK Racing Chain

(Speaker at September's meeting)

And

Dave Campbell
Campbell's MC Service

Brad Diez
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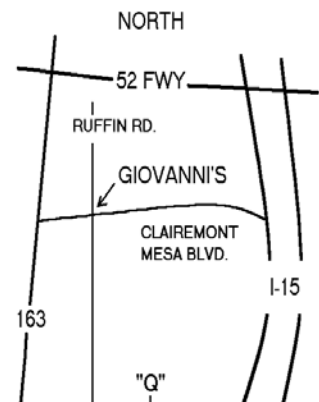
(Speakers at October's meeting)

Newsletter Editor Wanted

Yes, after two years of writing and publishing this newsletter, it's time for me to go. If you're interested in the job, please contact Jim Branch or myself at the next monthly club meeting.

I would like to thank ...

Jim Branch for the opportunity,
Andy Mansker for the help and guidance.
Those of you who were good enough to submit an article, story or pictures.
To Richard French, who set up the club rides and gave me something to take pictures of and to try and describe in this publication the fun on two wheels we had, and to all the Red Hot Riders who I hope enjoyed this newsletter and the information that it conveyed....Ron



MEETING LOCATION
Giovanni's Restaurant
9353 Clairemont Mesa
(858) 279-6700