

THE RIDER'S WORKSHOP

MAKE THE TIME

AN INVITATION TO ZEN MOTORCYCLING



I have observed over the years that I have been in the motorcycle biz, that there are as many reasons to purchase a motorcycle as people buying them. Some folks just love to look at them, all shiny and new. Others buy them in anticipation of sunny Sunday afternoon spins saddled up with their sweeties. Some want to mosey on down to the nearest watering hole and admire their chrome wonders from a barstool. And there are those who buy motorcycles to capture a memory—there are so many reasons...

Buying a BMW motorcycle is different. I like to think the folks who purchase them want to RIDE!

Let's Ride!



These customers have done their homework and understand the BMW motorcycle's *potential*. Remember, most BMW's are made for the European market and as such, are built for a demanding rider. The bikes are built in such a way their owners can saddle up in Berlin in the AM and be in Rome in the PM. They travel at autobahn speed and, twist through alpine passes.

BMW motorcycles do this safely, comfortably and, with proper maintenance, reliably.

Over the years, my good riding buddies have enjoyed the adventures of our Sunday rides so much that I would like to open the good times to all of Bob's BMW's customers and friends.

We'll call it the Second Sunday Ride—for intermediate and advanced motorcyclists who are interested in riding safely over longer distances. We'll plan on leaving our general vicinity in early morning, and by our return in mid-afternoon, we'll have ridden 350 to 500 miles.

Let me describe the origin of this kind of riding as a fun way of cluing in riders on what to expect when they ride with me. Some of it has to do with my own riding experience. Perhaps my experience will mirror some of your own.

Like many folks getting into (or back into) motorcycling, I was initially puzzled as to *where* to go riding. When I did find a morning here or an afternoon there, I pretty much stuck to familiar roads. Since I live in Kensington, Maryland, a ride along the Potomac River and back was enough. It didn't take long though before I ventured out on my first "long ride"—from the Washington Beltway to Virginia's Great Falls, then west into Leesburg and out-bound to Point of Rocks. I had lived in the DC area nearly twenty years and had never been to the Point of Rocks Bridge before, so it was special to cross the Potomac River on other than a metropolitan DC bridge. With the ride back to the DC area, my round trip was roughly 85 miles.

Nearly all of this early riding I did alone.

One of the best things I did was ride up to Jessup, to hang around Bob's BMW on Saturday mornings. Conversations over coffee donuts would ensue and before long I began hooking up with riders who had what I wanted: motorcycling experience. When I started riding with these folks, my radius began to stretch. It was no longer enough to ride Route 7 to Leesburg. Instead, it became routine to ride from Leesburg to points beyond—it didn't matter where. We'd have lunch, and then I'd gun it home to Kensington in time for afternoon chores or a four o'clock Redskins game.

Jim Wilkerson's Paris Dakar R100 GS



One guy I hooked up with was Jim Wilkerson. Jimbo had been riding for 20 years and sported the best decked-out R100PD I have ever seen before or since. The man could also R-I-D-E. Since Jim's skills were much greater than mine, I figured I'd tuck in behind him, observe, try to copy and maybe learn something. For mile after mile, I stuck on him like green on beans, and I will never forget those early days riding together. We'd stop and eat somewhere far away, comment on the wilderness scen-

ery and talk about motorcycling. In the process we became compadres.

Upon coming to work at Bob's BMW to share the sales duties with Paul Mihalka, my tutorial was stepped up a notch. Paul is recognized as a high-miler. I remember casually asking him where he'd typically ride on a Sunday morning. I guessed maybe he'd say Gettysburg or Harper's Ferry. He told me he rode to Deep Creek Lake for breakfast—that's 175 miles away—then afterward began his "ride," I thought EUREKA—experience personified!

Now, I am not going to wax inspired here (nor do I want to swell a particular head) but the fact is, Paul is a master motorcyclist and in those days I was... "Grasshopper."

Let me describe our first riding experience together and then I'll get back to the Second Sunday ride.

Paul and I met one Sunday morning for brunch at a favorite restaurant of mine south of Front Royal, Virginia. To share brunch with me took some selling on my part, because normally Paul is on the back half of his Sunday ride by this time of morning. After brunch he suggested we go for a "little ride." I said, "no problem." I thought for sure we'd angle back towards Baltimore/DC area, and maybe he'd show me a new road or two.

Instead we swung westward, accelerated up and over the Blue Ridge and straight across the Shenandoah Valley. From the Shenandoah, we headed even further west into the Appalachians. As we swept northbound along a winding, deserted, valley road, it became crystal-clear I was on a ride like *none ever before*. This was virgin territory for me with new roads, new scenery, and brand-spanking new skill level just to keep up!

Paul gradually rolled on the throttle and laid down a spirited groove for a very satisfying amount of miles. Never overly fast, his style was effortless and very, very smooth. We had a brief stop to gas up, knock back a hot chocolate, and share a laugh, then more mountain roads further north. Man, the next thing I knew I was seeing "City Limit" signs for Berkeley Springs, West Virginia!

In all, Bethesda to Front Royal, then a back road express to Berkeley Springs, then more back road riding

south into the DC area. My trip odometer read 350+ miles, just like that.

My motorcycling life changed that day. My riding radius had been stretched and my motorcycling ability stretched even further. My ride with Paul also introduced me to "Riding Smooth." Up, down, and along all those miles of backroads, neither Paul's speed nor line wavered much. Before a curve, his brake light might flicker as he'd duck a shoulder, hike his big K-bike over only to straighten up and pull away in a blue puff of smoke.

His line wasn't a line; it was a rail! I asked Mr. Paul how he did this. He laughed and said simply, "I love to ride."

"Sheesh, how do you find so much time?" I queried.

"I make the time," he said.

Ah—"Make the Time." I must do that, I promised myself.

My riding has never been the same...

And so this is what our Second Sunday Ride is all about. It's about making time to ride our BMW motorcycles on distant backroads.

I would like to share with you some of what Paul and other high-milers have so generously shown me. Each monthly ride will feature super motorcycling roads and wilderness landscapes in faraway places

Our ride will be more of an event than merely a ride!

It's also about riding safe and practicing "Riding Smooth." Miles and miles of massaging your gears and setting up line after line of mountain curves will do this to you. Soon you will feel the polish. We'll all get stretched...we're all grasshoppers!

So if this is what you might like to do call me!

You'll want to show up on time, which means: make the time to ride to the ride. And show up with a full tank of gas. No one primed to ride wants to wait around for someone who's got to tank up. Make sure you've got warm duds (electrics, fleece) and a rain suit.

One last point and that is I own the responsibility for organizing the Second Sunday Ride. Those who choose to come along do so at their own risk...not that they're risky, gonzo-go-fast rides, because they're not. I just want to be clear. So make sure you're bright-eyed and your bike is up to the task of having a full, fun day on the long road.

Hope to see you Zen.

Jim Ford

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