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Photo Time Out

by Chuck Sheer

We all know the thrill and exhilaration of riding hard and fast and the adrenaline rush of pushing the “envelope” is definitely addictive. But, some of the most spectacular scenery in the world is just off the trail under our tires right here in Idaho, and when you are concentrating on that track, it's easy to forget about all the beauty surrounding it.



Too many times I have blasted past what I soon realized would have been a terrific opportunity to record some of that breathtaking scenery and was too focused on the trail to take a photo time out. And I certainly didn't want to turn around and backtrack, especially riding in the middle of a pack of gung-ho dual sport freaks.

Oh sure, there are those same old planned stops on the itinerary, you know the overlooks, the lookouts, the same places everyone stops for the photo ops that made Kodak their millions in Kodachrome processing. And those places are definitely worthy of an extended visit and exposure of a few megabytes of pixels. But what about all those other smaller and less grand photographic opportunities that have equal value and make a blog or “slide show” richer and deliver a more complete and powerful presentation?



When riding with a group, I often prefer to hang near the back of the bunch as this allows me to slow my pace, enabling me to seize those photo opportunities that otherwise would be lost. If I must endure a little razzing for being the slowpoke, so be it as the photos I will have made will definitely be worth it.

Here are a few hints to help you take home more great shots more often:



1. Keep your digital camera and equipment in a well-protected readily accessible area.

a. When it's possible, carry your mid-size camera in the tank bag. The full-function Nikon P7000 is my choice. It's easy open snap-on case protects it from colliding with other hard items when riding in rough terrain. The spare battery fits in a side pocket with cell phone, etc.





b. A small but rugged water proof and dust proof camera hung from a lanyard will fit conveniently in your riding coat pocket for easy and quick access. The small Fuji Z33WP is great for panoramas and candids.

c. You may wish to carry a full size SLR for major photo expeditions when the terrain is mild. Most can be packed with care to fit in a Happy Trails top box or a Givi trunk but they require more room and you may have to sacrifice another piece of dispensable equipment.





d. If used properly, a sturdy but packable tripod can make a huge difference in the quality of your images. Your photos will be sharper especially those made in long telephoto mode. I like to carry it for group shots, too, so I can actually be in a photo. A quick disconnect shoe/foot device will eliminate the screw-on screw-off hassle each time you set up. I like to strap my Manfrotto tripod in its bag behind me on the seat or to the top of a Happy Trails Pannier.

2. Often something, which seemed mundane on the trail can be of great interest when viewed later while composing your ride report. Don't be afraid to use up a load of pixels, more is better. I usually keep the MPs set at about 5 which is adequate for most of my needs but you can bump to 10 or more for shots that will require large reprints later.



3. Wildlife is difficult to photograph with the best telephoto equipment, so when you are lucky to come across wildlife, photograph it with the most telephoto you have (zoom in as close as possible). You may be able to crop in tighter later at home at your desktop.



4. Move around! Shoot from a high vantage point. Shoot from a low angle. Move left or right. Move closer or, if possible, move back (watch your step!) You may see a juxtaposition of elements that didn't occur to you originally. Moving closer in wide angle mode is entirely different than zooming in. It will completely change the relationship of subject to background and foreground. Take your time!

5. Watch for smaller things like groups of flowers, weather tortured trees, textures, reflections, etc.. Your bike and your riding buddies don't need to be in every photo you make.





6. Can't get that amazing panorama all in? Even the widest angle lens on your point and shoot may not cover the area of a panorama, and many "fisheye" lenses can distort an image beyond recognition. The solution? Shoot several consecutive images, I like to move left to right, slightly overlapping each frame. Then, at home with a little practice and software similar to a Photoshop, you can splice them together. Some cameras even have built-in panorama building programs.

7. Maybe hardest of all, try to anticipate and be ready to capture those candid moments, which can add humor and human interest to your presentation. "Staged" humor is not nearly as effective as the real thing.



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THE VOYAGE



MY THREE MONTHS SOUTH OF THE BORDER ON TWO WHEELS...

BY: Samuel Stone

Part II

We (Mark and I) had spent two glorious days in the wonderful old Colonial City of Durango, but we had a schedule to keep. You see, when we were putting this adventure together, we did not count on his engine grenading in Tucson and costing us three weeks for repairs. I had purchased a return ticket to back for my niece's wedding... Oh, but the best laid plans.

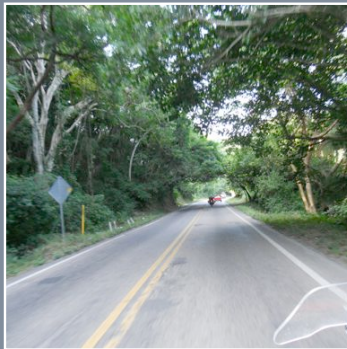
I had introduced Mark to a delightful soup meal called "Pozole" our fist night in Durango, but during our last evening, he ate something that would really disagree with him over the next few days. Early that morning, Mark had told me he was feeling very bad and had been throwing-up most of the evening. I told him we should hold off on the travel day; but he said no, let's get moving, and so we headed out.



Hummm, looks good



NAYARIT, MX



Traveling South on the....

Was a very interesting experience as we would go from scarce traffic to urban chaos

Beware the Topes but use them to your advantage

As we climbed out of the city and into the mountains, a cool chill enveloped me. Burrrrr... we hit the famous "Puerto El Espinazo Del Diablo" highway, known to some as Mx 40, a very twisty 180-mile or so road leading us west along a series of mountain ridges that dropped us into the tropical pacific coast just south of Mazatlan.

Poor Mark didn't enjoy the ride at all as he had a full onset bout of "Montezuma's Revenge." I do believe this was Mark's longest miserable day encountered. He just needed a place to hole up and recover. As the heat index climbed during our decent, I found a less than desirable motel accommodation at an inter-

section of Mx 200. It did have A/C, and that filled Mark's requirement.

He downed a ciprofloxacin and headed off to slumber land for the rest of the day and evening,; but he looked more comatose to me. I took a walk and brought more water back for Mark.

Next Morning he appeared to be rejoining the human race, or should I say running on three out of four cylinders. We were now on the Mexico 200, also known as the Pan-American, Headed south staying as much as possible on the "Libre" road along with most the population of Mexico. You see, the "Cuota" or toll roads are very expensive even by US standards.





At first, it is overwhelming with the perceived chaos of the highway system, dodging taxis, belching diesel chicken buses, etc, etc, but through observation and a short period of osmosis, we finally figured out two things. 1) There are no really enforced rules, unless of course a policeman needs to get a little extra cash. 2) Topes are passing lanes for motorcycles and high clearance vehicles. After awhile, you can actually feel the pulse of the road – hard to believe, but there is actually a rhythm as everything is in flux... God, I love driving in Mexico!

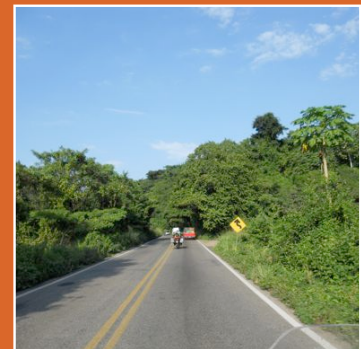
After an extremely hot and humid day in all my riding gear, we finally stopped in the quaint little fishing Pueblo of San Blas. You must forgive me, as all I

could muster was a cold shower and a very long siesta. We awoke very early to hit the road and attempt to beat the heat, as futile as it was. We rolled into Puerto Vallarta around 10 am, and it was already an unbearable heat index. I would have liked to stay a little while; but alas, we had a timetable to stick to. It took us a good 45 minutes to get through the very touristy town with its embedded stone streets. It felt like riding a corn cob. With getting stuck in traffic and sweating so hard, I could not see from the burning salt in my eyes... Oh, but what an adventure.

We finally made it to Barra de Navidad, a little north of Manzanillo. I like this little pueblo; there is a good vibe about it.



JALISCO



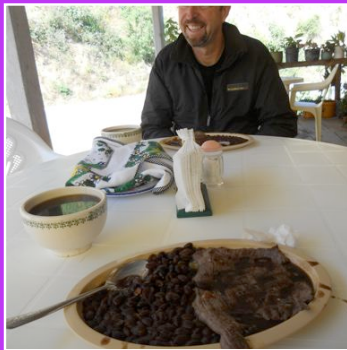
...Mexico 200

As you can see to the left, Mark is feeling much better.

Some of the best meals I ate were from the side-of-the-road vendors. What you see is a meal that cost us 3.50 US, and oh so good.



ROAD SIDE



... Food, it's the best

These small roadside vendors are so appreciative of our business and to have them fall over backwards for good service to us is enjoyable.

The people in Barra De Navidad are so cliché for what one would envision in a sleepy coastal fishing town south of the border. The town has had some pretty hard times imposed on it from last year's hurricane and possibly the recent one to hit. But the place and spirit seem resilient.

We did a short ride into Manzanillo and stayed in a nice hotel on the ocean. Mark, another Canadian couple and I were the only ones in the place. Talking to the proprietor, he said it's been this way for a few years, and that the negative media of dangers in Mexico have greatly stymied business. What I did notice is the very large population of expatriates, particularly Canadians. A couple days later, it was off

through some of the most beautiful and sparsely populated coastline in Mexico... through the state of Michoacán. During our time there, we were told to not stop while going through there due to cartel-involved activity. That was really too bad because it was a stunningly beautiful area of about 180 miles. If ever the chance, I will return to this area again. Because of all the warnings, we just run to Zihuatanejo – one very long, hot day. I remember nothing other than being sick to my stomach from border-line heat exhaustion... Again, we seek out a cheap motel with A/C over looking and next to a busy highway. I lay down in front of the A/C. Later, we discovered all we had was cold water, but that was OK in the stifling heat. I slept hard that night.





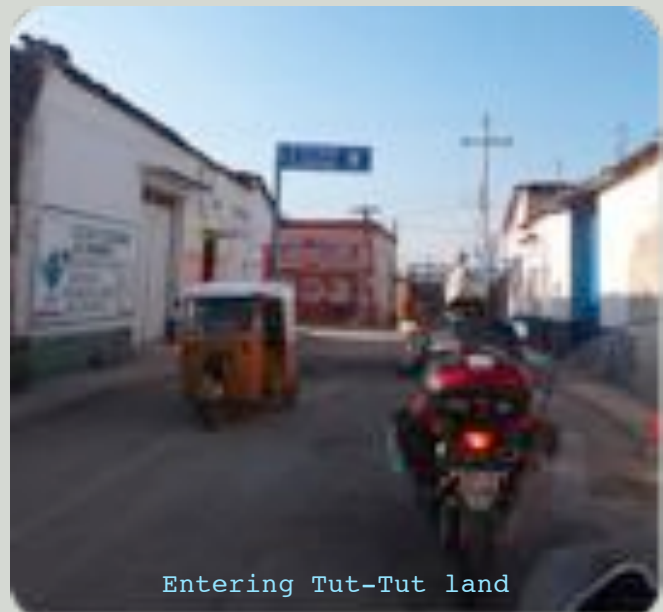
WATCH YOURSELF IT'S HOT AND HUMID DOWN HERE . . .

Before moving on, I would like to address a little about Manzanillo and Zihuatanejo. Manzanillo is a large port town and biased towards industry and port activities with a straight supply route to Mexico City.

Zihuatanejo, on the other hand I was told, is a sleepy fishing village... yea maybe 20 years ago. What I saw was a town of 50 to 70 thousand with severe infrastructure growing pains.

We rose early and hit the road as the sun was rising. It felt good, not to mention the lack of the chaotic ingress, egress of populace flow.

We made good time... well for Mexico we made good-time, passing through a mind numbing number of small pueblo's and their never ending accompanying toques.





...AND THE ROAD GOES ON

For the record, the life style started making passive yet drastic changes. The people became more open (friendlier), smiling and waving as we passed through – mostly the women and children. Men, on the other hand, gave us more of the stoic-piercing look. This was occasionally disrupted by a vendor and occasional municipal police officer smiling and waving us through. When a policeman waves down here he is usually waving you over. Whew!

As we meandered down the beautiful coast, I kept thinking to myself, I'm not going to make Cancun, no way. So, Oaxaca was the best alternative. We now had a little time to relax and enjoy the journey. We settled on staying in a small village just outside and to the north of Acapulco by the name of Pie de la Cuesta. Gal made us a really good deal of \$23 a night and just around the corner from the beach. Her English was pretty good, and she sounded a lot like Charo. (Google the name if you are too young to know it.)

We stayed two days, and from everything we were hearing about Acapulco, we decided to head north to end run the very large metropolis, putting us in





Puerto Escondido, a very happening place. It appeared to cater to the younger crowd, surfers and the like; but it had something for everyone.

We ended up staying at the Mayflower Hostel and Hotel. We of course got a room; dorm living didn't appeal to us, and we could also afford it.

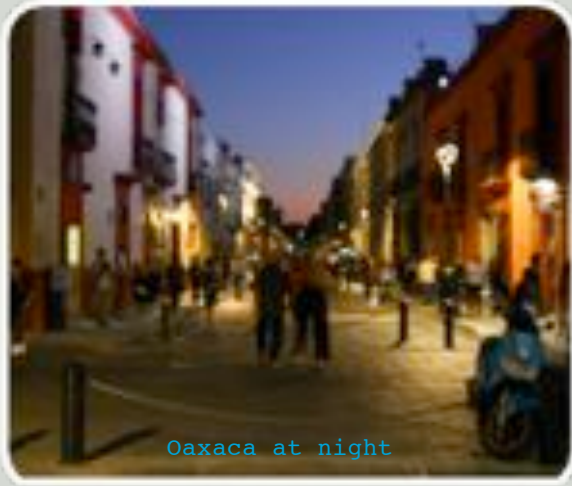
Aside from it being so hot and humid, siesta seemed to be the order of business in the afternoon, but be advised when the sun goes down, this place comes to life. I would also recommend this place as a lay over. It is clean, friendly and a quick bus ride to and from Oaxaca airport, which coincidentally happens to be where I am heading to fly back north to the states – Houston where my niece lives. It's great they have a direct flight to and from Houston to Oaxaca.

We headed up into the central highlands where it was cool and refreshing, entering the bustling city with horns blaring and the ballet of traffic in a beautiful dance of chaos, we embraced and danced out part to the El Centro.

It is here I'll park my bike at the motel and fly out in the morning; no wait a minute, I have one day to walk around and enjoy the town.



Oaxaca I love this City



Oaxaca at night

- NEXT UP
- Zipolite
 - San Christobal De las Casas
 - Palenque Myan Ruins
 - Playa De Carmen



Jetboil Adventures

by Lon Anderson

A Jetboil is a great way to pack a stove with a pot to boil water in for soup, coffee and for preparing freeze-dried meals that are store purchased like Mountain House or Backpackers Pantry. Is that all its good for? Well, it really is handy to have and use it this way if nothing else. I carry mine all the time and have enjoyed it very much over the years, of course any portable stove will do.



Don't get me wrong, being able to purchase freeze dried meals in a bag at a local Sporting Goods store or some other place is ok if you like to spend \$6 to \$9 for each meal. I keep a few of these at home for convenience if they go on sale.



Truly tasty meals though are the ones I put together myself. A few years ago, I came across a website called Freezerbagcooking.com (now called trailcooking.com). The website had some basic recipes that I tried and also offered a book for purchase entitled: **Freezer Bag Cooking: Trail Food Made Simple.** [1]



I purchased the book to read while sitting on the couch in the evenings and to see if this was really easy or not. Next, I printed out some sample recipes from the website and went to the store, WinCo in my case. The basic principle is to combine dehydrated or freeze dried ingredients, any canned meats desired in a freezer bag, add boiling water wait a few minutes then enjoy.



You will need to make or purchase one item referred on the website as a “pot cozy.” It is an insulated sleeve or bag to drop your freezer bag into to support it and retain the heat for the appropriate cooking or rather wait time. I made one from my wife’s automobile sunshade (after I bought her a new one of course). I used the kind that is foil looking with the small circular sealed air bubbles for insulation to keep the car interior cooler. You can obviously make several from one sunshade and some duct tape. I made mine 7 ¾” wide and 8 ½” tall. Basically, I cut a strip 17” x 7 ¾” piece folded in half lengthwise and taped around the edges to keep it together and have an open top pocket to drop the freezer bag into. You can purchase a cloth “pot cozy” from www.trailcooking.com if you are not inclined to make one. [2]

Here is an easy recipe to give it a try. You need to go to WinCo or somewhere where they have a bulk foods section. WinCo is near me so I have adapted.

Creamy Chicken Rice

- | | | |
|-----|-----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | C | Minute Rice |
| 3 | T | cream of chicken dry soup mix |
| 1 | T | diced dried onion |
| 1/4 | t | dried garlic |
| 1/4 | t | dried parsley |
| 1 | can | 3 to 5 ounces chicken |
| 1 | C | water |

Instructions:

Open the can of chicken, dump the contents including the juice into the Freezer Bag, and place it into the “pot cozy.” Add 1 cup of boiling water from your Jet Boil, stir the contents with a spoon, and set aside for about 10 minutes. Then enjoy your hot meal on the trail.

When you are all done, the Freezer Bag serves as a sealable trash container until you come to a place to dispose of it appropriately.

Other considerations:

Don’t be afraid to experiment. Home is a good place to try things first. The website www.trailcooking.com has been updated with lots of recipes and now they are customizable for your desired serving portions. I had a hard time finding dried vegetables, but used some of the soup starter instead from the bulk food section. Later, I found some freeze dried vegetables at the Boise Co-op – kind of expensive, but you are only using a couple of tablespoons per bag, so it lasts quite a while. If you like mashed potatoes, you can find the small packages of dried mashed potatoes that you can cook in the Jetboil by itself. Some of these are pretty tasty, especially the garlic flavored ones.

I found that Jetboil sells some extending handle utensils that are quite nice to have. You can find them at REI locally. The extendable handles make it nice to reach into the bag. [3]

If creating your own meals this way interests you, then you might be interested in going further with your adventure and look at preparing pan breads (also known as Bannock bread). You will need to carry a fry pan or at least a saucepan to cook in and some oil or, better yet, some clarified butter also known as ghee. Ghee is also easy to make at home. You can find videos for this on YouTube. Ghee can be purchased at the Boise Co-op, but is expensive. The nice thing about Ghee, is it is like having oil to cook with that has a true butter flavor and is shelf stable for long periods, making it perfect for motorcycle adventure trips. You can look on Advrider.com for some threads on Bannock bread as there are several ways to prepare it that may interest you other than using a pan.



I was concerned at one time about any chemicals that may be released when you cook in plastic after all the information came out about water bottles and BPA, etc. I found information from two of the major companies, so I stick to using them and avoid any no-name brands. Glad says their bags, food containers, wraps, storage bags and other food contact products are not made of phthalates or polycarbonate. Nor is Bisphenol A (BPA) used as a raw material in their production. [4] Ziploc products, according to their website, also do not contain BPA. [5]

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1. http://www.amazon.com/Freezer-Bag-Cooking-Trail-Simple/dp/1411660315/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top
2. <http://www.trailcooking.com/store/fbc-cozy-story>
3. <http://www.rei.com/product/756489/jetboil-jetset-utensil-kit>
4. <http://www.glad.com/faqs/>; [http://www.glad.com/pdf/Glad-Bisphenol A Declaration.pdf](http://www.glad.com/pdf/Glad-Bisphenol_A_Declaration.pdf)
5. SC Johnson does not use BPA in its plastic products, Ziploc® Brand Bags and Containers. <http://www.ziploc.com/Products/Pages/ContainersSmartSnapSeal.aspx>



There Are Only TWO Aspects to Motorcycle Safety

Editor's Note: *It is said that bad things happen to people, and motorcyclists do not get a pass. Most of us try to reduce the odds of a bad outcome by logically weighing the factors that may contribute to them. By understanding the factors that create a potential danger, we have a better chance of avoiding it. The following article written by Ax appeared in the Idaho STAR Newsletter and is reprinted with their permission. The principles espoused in this article are sound and apply to off-road as well as street riding.*

In my years in the motorcycle safety and rider training business, I have come to the conclusion that there are 2 aspects (and 2 aspects ONLY) to motorcycle safety:

- b. Prevent the crash



c. Survive the crash

...and the rider is responsible for both. You can make the argument that other drivers are also responsible for preventing crashes, and while there may be some truth to that, there is precious little you can do to make someone ELSE take responsibility (just ask anyone who has ever been married or has kids!). So, since it is the rider who stands to lose, it is the rider who is responsible for both preventing and surviving crashes. To put this in perspective, if WE (the riders) don't succeed in reducing the crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving motorcycles - in addition to the injury and loss of life - more government regulation of our sport is very likely.

This month's article will address the first aspect - PREVENT THE CRASH. Next issue, we'll talk about surviving the crash.

There are a number of skills that we know contribute to preventing crashes. A few notes:

ONE - None of this is rocket science, but at the same time, almost none of it comes naturally.

TWO - None of these items are guaranteed 'crash-preventers,' but they sure stack the odds in your favor!

Visual Scanning - This means head and eyes up at horizon level and looking well ahead (if you don't see it and know it's a hazard, your other skills don't matter). There are two elements here; one is seeing and the other is perceiving. Get your eyes up so you can see 20 seconds ahead (look ahead to a point it will take you 20 seconds to reach - for example, at freeway speeds, that will likely be over 1/3 of a mile). This includes corners - to see the hazards as soon as possible, you need to actually turn your head and point your nose in the direction of the turn. This is part of proper cornering technique, but also part of good general visual scanning habits.

Following Distance (time = distance) - Americans tailgate...you know it...I know it. Every state I know of recommends a 2, 3, or 4 second following distance. Take a stopwatch and stand on the side of the road and measure what drivers (and riders) are actually doing. You'll find that it is closer to a half a second...maybe 1 second. Unfortunately, this is very common and it's really asking for trouble. Have a passenger take a stopwatch and measure your following distance and just see what it is. Once you know what it is, you are free to choose to adjust it. Knowledge is power.

Maximum Braking (Quick Stops) - Motorcycles have the ability to stop very quickly. Unfortunately, the crash reports tell us that many riders don't. Even after all these years, there are STILL riders who say 'stay away from the front brake.' Your front brake has MOST of your stopping power - learn it, live it, love it. What we see in the crash reports is riders locking up the rear brake (skidding), often ending up in a low side crash (laying it down), and using very little (if any) front brake. If you want to have the skill of stopping quickly, you HAVE to practice it - there is no other way. Since you use your right foot to stop every time in your car, that is what your 'emergency response' will likely be - UNLESS you spend time practicing using both brakes on your bike. The more often you stop with both brakes on your bike, the more likely your 'emergency response' will be the right one.



Cornering (running off the road or low-siding in a corner) - This is becoming more and more a common crash scenario. Proper cornering technique (and the ability to respond to 'mid-corner' surprises) is one of those skills that simply does not come naturally (even with lots of miles). There are books, courses, videos, magazine articles, etc. that can provide this information. Knowing it in your head is a good start, but there is no replacement for practice. If you can master counter steering, head turns (see 'Visual Scanning' above), and relaxation, you can avoid many of these cornering crashes.

Group Riding - I have often talked with riders who are proud of how tight their group rides. This isn't just one kind of group either - I hear this among police officers, HOG groups, and Outlaw groups. One phrase I sometimes hear is *"That's just how we ride!"* I encourage you to give this some thought. The two main issues we see in group riding are riding with a very short following distance within the group, and poor visual scanning. The result is predictable; we are seeing quite a bit of 'bike-on-bike' crashing. Here is the advice:

Spread out. Put 1.5 - 2 seconds between each rider in staggered formation (not the 1 second recommended in many rider training courses). If a car gets in the middle of your group, LET IT. Believe me, they don't want to be in the middle of a group of bikers any more than you want them there - they will leave soon.

Having a car in the middle of your group temporarily is much less of a risk than riding in a tight pack and 'fighting' against a car who may need to get over to take the next exit.

Avoid target fixation. Many riders in groups end up focusing on the rider directly in front of them (only about 1 second ahead) rather than 20 seconds ahead (see 'Visual Scanning' above). Yes, you need to know if the rider ahead of you changes speed, BUT if you are looking well beyond the rider (20 seconds ahead), your peripheral vision will give you the information you need. Just because the rider ahead of you rides into trouble, that doesn't mean you have to follow them there.

Break it up. Many of us ride in rallies and parades where there are hundreds of bikes in a single group. While this is impressive looking and makes for great media coverage, it's not what we recommend for most group rides. Break up your group into sub-groups of 4-8 riders (and each sub-group has a lead rider and a sweep rider). This makes it much easier to flow with traffic, and the riders can spend less of their attention on 'keeping the group together,' and more of their attention on visual scanning and hazard detection.

As I said before, none of this is complicated, but it does take deliberate practice. If we really want to be active in crash prevention, it starts with ourselves, our riding buddies, and our groups and clubs. By working on crash prevention, we accomplish several things:

Save ourselves and our friends from injury (or worse)

Save the families of those folks from having to watch their loved ones suffer

Improve the public perception of bikers (you know... 'the public'... the ones who vote)

Reduce the likelihood of more government regulation in the sport of motorcycling

Ride well, ride lots. Ride safe!

