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2016 IAMC Challenge Update

by Craig O. Olsen



So far this year 32 club members have signed up to participate in this year's Challenge, and of those 21 have posted one or more sites for a total of 293 site visits. Eight members are already in contention for an award - two for bronze, three for silver, and three for platinum.

Perhaps more site visits have been made by participants, but they have not yet posted their photos to the Challenge website documenting their site visit. It is not too late to post any of your unposed photos or get out and visit more sites. You have until December 31 to visit sites and post your documenting photos to the website.

Remember in order to achieve any tire level award (bronze, silver, gold, or platinum) sites 41-44 are mandatory. These are the four area dealerships that are instrumental in sponsoring our club. They are also the easiest sites to visit.

Ten lessons learned by a new off-road rider

by Kyra Sacdalan (Photos by Justin W. Coffey)

This article first appeared in Common Tread March 10, 2016, published by Revzilla at http://www.revzilla.com/common-tread/ten-lessons-learned-by-a-new-off-road-rider?utm_term=ten-lessons-learned-by-a-new-off-road-rider&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_content=stream&utm_campaign=boosted-posts It is reprinted here with the permission of the author and photographer.



The n00b's creed: I'm the best I've ever been, but I'll be better tomorrow.

The one thing all off-road motorcyclists have in common is the beginning.

Their first time throwing a leg over. That initial roar of the throttle that drew the blood out of your heart by force. The rumbling of nerves that grew louder than the engine when that tell-tale sign fast approached: "Pavement Ends."

My first experience off the beaten path was not quite so elegant. I'd owned my XT 225 for merely a month, had it in my possession for even less. A group of familiar faces smiled and cheered as the rush boiled my cheeks red, and I continuously circled the small grassy field in a friend's backyard. I wouldn't even graze dirt for a few more days, but until then I learned the importance of the front and rear brakes. That, and the inevitable: crashing. Little did I know, the Earth and I were embarking on an intimate relationship. We'd visit with each other often; it wouldn't always be pleasant; and I'd be better for it.



A year and a half of lessons learned, lots more yet to master.

In the years I've been riding, and those few that were off-road, I've been given endless lists of advice from folks much further from the "beginning" than me. Most have been heeded, but more surprisingly, I've learned a lot on my own. Though I'm still no expert, I think my wings are developed enough to leave the comforts of *Novice* and take off into the *Capable*.

Whether you relate or think I'm full of it, I want to share the vital information that carried me through the last couple of years on dirt, stone, sand, mud, grass, gravel, and so much more.



Size does matter, but not how you'd think.

Anyone who tells you size doesn't matter is fooling themselves. Unlike the American motto that has shaped this vast country since Texas found the Longhorn, for the n00b, bigger is not better — relatively. Because of my five-foot, two-inch frame, I've been forced to find what's best for me and not what I like best. I needed to find a bike powerful enough to handle my desired trails, but light and low so I could handle obstacles.

You don't have to ride the biggest, best and most powerful bike to have fun.

This not entirely unique circumstance has been a blessing in disguise. Wrangling the smallest bike possible over the last year and a half has accelerated my off-road abilities. A modest-sized motorcycle allows me to focus on the challenge at hand without the "bigger, better" bike concerns of replacing expensive parts, straining my body while guiding a bulky beast, picking up more than twice my weight over, and over again, or having a few hundred pounds of burning metal crush me (or part of me) during a crash landing.

You may not win any style points for riding something small and basic, but what's better than the look on your buddy's face when you chug past him on a steep, rocky incline on a lesser bike? From someone who knows personally, it tickles that ego just right. So ride those training wheels loud and proud!

You don't have to ride the biggest, best and most powerful bike to have fun.

Take a class.

There is a long list of off-road riding schools that teach the tricks of the trade. If I could afford to take them all, I would! I have learned a lot from friends, and a little from myself, but there's nothing comparable to being evaluated and advised by a pro. These are people who have real hours under their tires and experience on a variety of terrain. Picking their brains is not just worth the cost of a class, it's invaluable.

Ride your own ride.

Yes, it's easy to get carried away showing your friends just how well you ride (or want them to think you ride). Whether your level is beginner, intermediate or expert, someone will always be better and others worse. Be

honest from the get-go, with your buddies but mostly with yourself. Are they soaring out of sight at light-speed? Just ask them ahead of time to wait for you at junctions or leave distinct markers so you catch up when you can. It would be best to make sure someone sticks with you in case of emergency, but the short segments between stops allows everyone to go their own pace without completely losing each other. Another point to address: If a challenge is too intimidating, it's better to ask for help overcoming it than to have to recover your bike from the base of a cliff or visit a clinic.



Whatever obstacle gives you pause, it's best to approach it with a calm mind.

Being realistic can also help you stay calm. Those who know me recognize (laugh at) the fact that a lot goes on behind my visor. During a prolonged obstacle, I sing anything from Adele to Carrie to Fleetwood Mac — whatever fills my lungs and forces me to focus on lyrics, not nerves. On a wide, loose gravel road, I relax my clenched jaw and remind myself to remove that damned lip from the grip of my teeth. It's not hard to see how that could go wrong...

All that to say, I've learned to be my own coach and not my own worst enemy.

When in doubt, throttle out.

The throttle is your sword. When you confront an adversary, 99 percent of the time this is the weapon that will win your battle. Deep sand, steep rocky inclines, loose gravel, all enemies of a smooth ride. So when in doubt,

scan the horizon, give it gas and let the bike sort out its issues. Without momentum and speed you could sink, slip or slide into injury. If you trust your throttle, you may just make it out unscathed.



Stand, thrust and squeeze.

Stand, thrust and squeeze!

No, this isn't an at-home aerobic workout by Jane Fonda. This is that Holy Grail advice that you heard someone say, but couldn't quite execute. First, I'll tell you what I was once told, and what I am now telling you. Stand. Really press down on your feet and make the rest of your body strong but fluid. Most obstacles can be made simpler because your weight is redirected from the tail to the front and center. This action allows your back wheel to move freely and the bike to correct itself as it wishes. If you're going to stand, then make sure to thrust. Practicing a solid thrust every time you're at attention ensures that your weight is forward and your body isn't flopping around when absorbing the bump and grind of a good trail. And for the love of all that is good, squeeze that tank! Whether seated or standing, gripping the tank with your knees keeps you in control when on the brink of losing it.

Back brake, back brake, back brake.

What does every motocross, Supercross, supermoto, flat track, rally raid, enduro and Endurocross racer have in common? The same thing any trail rider like myself needs to know about: the back brake. Straight lines handle a little hand squeeze, but corners call for toe, sometimes ball, even instep. It's no revelation that too much front brake results in a flight over the handlebars. But the rear end is vital for cutting corners, descending, and just taking charge. This is short and sweet, but the phrase "put your back into it" finally means so much more.



What you learn here can also improve your riding on the street.

Dirt first, second and third.

What I've learned on gravel, stones, bedrock, water, mud, sand... has taught me miles more about riding on pavement than I ever knew before. The techniques I've learned on dirt transcend those on the pavement. Now, I can really handle my bike. I no longer fear the "Loose Gravel" sign or a random obstruction on the freeway.

Buy proper boots.

Within the first mile on dirt during the 2014 LA-Barstow-Vegas dual-sport ride — maybe my fifth or sixth time riding off-road — I hit a 90-degree, washed-out turn too hot and far too inexperienced. The next thing I knew, 267 pounds of hot metal pinned my foot to the ground. After waiting as long as possible, we removed my mid-level boot and found my ankle bruised and swollen, but not broken. I was able to conclude my two-day trek in the

Nevada backcountry. But if I had been wearing the good plastic-on-leather stuff with the shanks and the clasps and the Italian-branded sexiness, I might not still be feeling the pangs of a half-severed Achilles tendon. Better gear could have prevented that. And of course, a bit more practice.

Make your bike your best friend.

Be the "Bike Whisperer." Learn the sounds while you shift, when it's in gear and if it sputters. Lube the chain and change its oil. Look it over before every ride and you'll be more likely to recognize and avoid problems. Be like a Boy Scout: prepared. Pull your bike apart and put it back together again, then pack the tools that you used to make it whole. That's what you'll need to get yourself out of an inevitable pickle on the trail.

Be prepared. The rider needs spare parts, too, along with the bike.



You need more than tools to be prepared. You need to know what you're getting into, gauge your skill and energy levels, and carry essential spare parts not just for your bike, but also for yourself: food, water, layers of clothing.

Selfies aren't shameless.

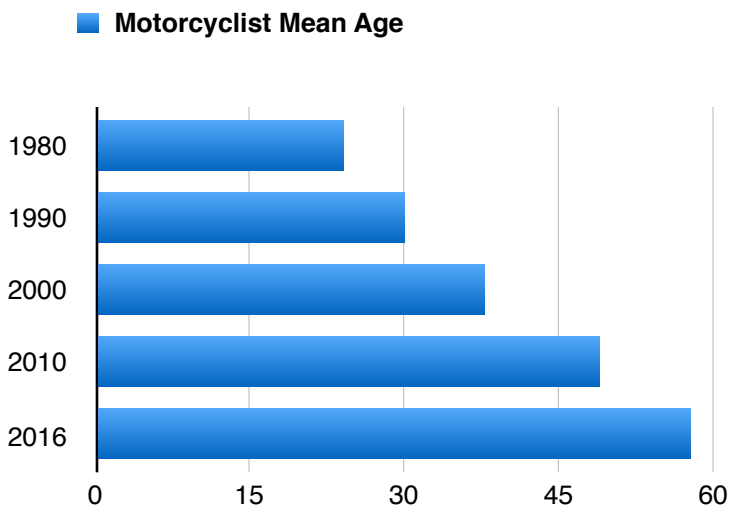
Do what you will on your Instagram account, but a camera, dynamic or static, is not only a way to cherish the fledgling moments of your dirt-bike relationship. It's also a learning tool. Dancers observe their form in a mirror. Football players watch game film to see where they went wrong. And for motorcyclists, photos and video are a great way to see how you're using your techniques or to study your lines. Even if it felt "right" at the time, referring back to those moments is a great way to understand what you were really doing and how to do it better next time.

A year and a half into this, my skills define my limits, and right now I'm at my best. But it won't be long until I'm even better.

The Second Half of the Story

by Craig O. Olsen, M.D.

The first half of this story began six years ago when I wrote an article about the aging motorcyclist for our club newsletter. [1] Over the past decade, the mean age of motorcyclists has increased by 0.83 years per calendar year. The population of motorcyclists is not only growing older, but the rate is increasing. The estimated mean age for 2016 is 58. [2-3] In 1985 the number of motorcyclists <25 years of age was 35.6% while those >40 years of age was only 14.5%. By 2003 those numbers had switched to 21.3% and 53.0% respectively.



Data from David Hough, MCN 47: 33, August 2016. [2]

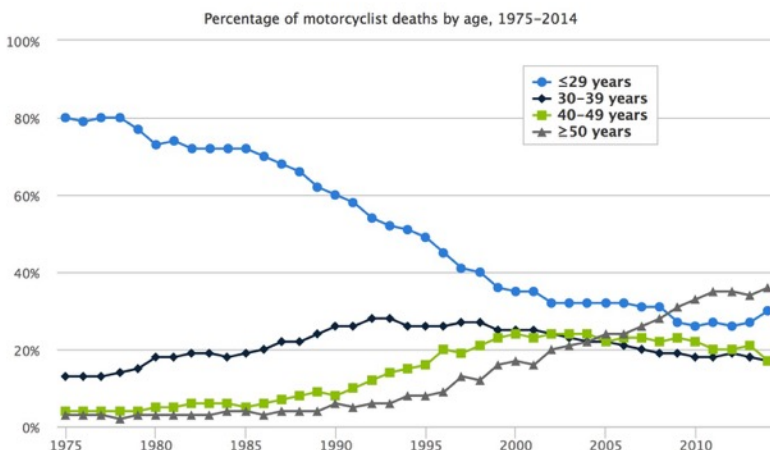
Table 4: Motorcycle Owners by Age in the United States for Selected Years, 1985–2003

Age	Year			
	1985	1990	1998	2003
<18	14.9	8.3	4.1	3.7
18-24	20.7	15.5	10.6	10.8
25-29	18.7	17.1	10.9	7.6
30-34	13.8	16.4	11.5	8.9
35-39	8.7	14.3	16	10.4
40-49	13.2	16.3	24.6	27.9
50+	8.1	10.1	19.1	25.1
Not stated	1.9	2.0	3.2	5.6
Median age	27.1	32.0	38.0	41.0
Mean age	28.5	33.1	38.1	40.2

NOTE: Data include owners of on- and off-road motorcycles.

SOURCE: Motorcycle Industry Council. Data received by personal communication from J. Goodwin, Sept. 30, 2008. Irvine, CA.

Also of interest is that the number of females owning and riding motorcycles in the United States is increasing from 8% in 1998 to 14% in 2015. The majority of these women are younger from the Millennial Generation at 17.6% while women of the Baby Boomer Generation make up only 9% of female riders. [4]



An untoward consequence of the aging motorcycle ridership is summed up in the following 2010 statement from Science Daily: “Motorcycle riders across the country are growing older, and the impact of this trend is evident in emergency rooms daily. Doctors are finding that these aging road warriors are more likely to be injured or die as a result of a motorcycle mishap compared to their younger counterparts [1].”

Motorcycle Fatality Facts, IIHS & HLDI. [5]

These findings are not unique to the United States alone, but have been confirmed in other countries including, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and India to name a few. [1, 6-7]

There is nothing about the aging of motorcyclists that makes them immune to the inevitable deterioration of both physical and mental faculties experienced by the general population as it ages. At age 40 or 50 you may say that you will never stop riding, but at age 60 or 70 you might find that your priorities are changing. Five to fifteen years down the road (depending on your current age), there are realities to face, such as lengthened reaction time, poorer balance, fuzzier vision, and ongoing medical issues. As you age, your priorities will very likely be shifting from motorcycling to health. *"Permission to ride tomorrow may be morphing from what you want to what your health will allow."* [2]

So, what is your plan to deal with the inevitable age-related changes in your riding abilities? Do you have an exit plan - a theoretical age at which you plan to quit riding? Or do you intend to continue riding for a few more years, modifying your riding tactics to accommodate your decreasing abilities? Whatever your plan, it would be wise to take steps now to help make it happen without too much anxiety. While we may not have a choice about growing older, we do have a choice about the quality of life; and the choices we make today help determine how our plan turns out.

Operation of a motorcycle requires visual and perceptual functions, cognitive and attention capabilities, and motor skill responses. Addressing these human functions, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Rider Education and Training System (MSF RETS) has come up with the useful acronym of S.E.E., which means Search, Evaluate, and Execute. S.E.E. is a dynamic decision-making process with overlapping functions for maintaining a safety margin. A rider must search for potential problems, evaluate the level of risk, and execute a smooth, controlled response in avoiding or dealing with the problem. Following are some specific effects and recommendations related to aging riders: [8]

Search

1. Visual clarity diminishes with age, typically beginning gradually between the ages of 40-50 and declining modestly beyond age 60.
2. Night vision especially diminishes with age - an older person on average requires four times more light to see at night than a younger person.
3. Peripheral vision also diminishes with age.
4. Aging eyes are more sensitive to light, making it more difficult to adjust to light sources such as responding to the glare of oncoming headlights.
5. Aging eyes take longer to adjust from near to far objects and vice versa.
6. With age eyes take longer to adjust to the dark.
7. Depth perception diminishes with age and may affect judging appropriate gap selection when passing another vehicle and when crossing or turning at an intersection.
8. Hearing diminishes with age - 20% of people age 55 and 30% of those over age 65 are hearing impaired.
9. With age street and directional signs are more difficult to read potentially increasing the chance of input overload that occurs when there is more going on in traffic than may be accurately perceived or processed.

Evaluate

1. Aging riders are more likely to be on medications that may affect performance and behavior. Labels should always be read and a medical doctor's advice should be followed.

2. Older riders often need more time to process information, and this becomes an increasing problem when a rider must contend with several points of information simultaneously, especially in unfamiliar areas and where complicated signage may be confusing.
3. Aging riders misjudge space and distance more frequently.
4. Awareness of impending risk is delayed in older riders.
5. Riding accidents are typically caused by the interaction of factors. The number of road and traffic factors a rider may handle at any given moment varies, but aging may lower the number of simultaneous risk factors that a rider may be able to respond to safely.

Execute

1. Muscles weaken with age. Muscle tone and strength can deteriorate as a rider ages. Without weight training a person loses 6-10% muscle mass per decade starting at age 30.
2. Endurance often diminishes with age. Oxygen is not utilized as efficiently and muscles lose their elasticity.
3. Reaction time slows with age. Reacting to a hazard may take twice as long for a rider who has moved into middle age (40-54 years of age) and up to three to four times longer after age 55.
4. Control sensitivity lessens with age. The feeling of the road through the tires and handlebars lessens, as well as the feedback that occurs in cornering and braking. This may have more serious implications for the aging rider in emergency maneuvers to avoid a crash.

Recommendations - While these considerations should be taken into account by all motorcyclists, they are particularly valuable for riders reaching their mature years.

Riding Tips

1. Keep a greater following distance - perhaps three seconds or more. Some authorities recommend up to a six-second interval.
2. Avoid complicated and congested roads and intersections. "Input overload" is a phrase often used to describe the presence of too much information to be able to process accurately. Pick a route that contains less complicated roadways with less traffic flow and fewer turns.
3. Allow larger gaps when moving into a stream of traffic, and select a safe gap when passing another vehicle or crossing or turning at an intersection.
4. Make a point to check side-to-side at intersections. Take an extra moment to double-check cross traffic to get a good look.
5. Keep making good blind-spot checks. Traffic research shows that older drivers don't check blind spots as well as younger drivers.
6. Keep windshield, helmet face shield, and eyeglass lenses clean. Dirt and grime on a rider's "window to the world" may adversely affect quick and accurate perception of traffic or road problems.
7. Avoid tinted lenses at night. Any tint lessens the light available to the eyes and makes seeing well at night more difficult.
8. Wear sunglasses when daytime glare is a problem. Good polarized sunglasses may reduce the effects of glare significantly and make identifying a traffic hazard easier.
9. Adjust mirrors to avoid glare from following vehicles.
10. Avoid classes with wide frames or heavy temples that may create a blind spot.
11. Avoid being in a hurry. Leaving a little early will result in a more relaxed, enjoyable ride and create an opportunity for choosing greater time and space safety margins.
12. Remember the average age of the driving population is increasing, and you are sharing the road with others who may be experiencing the effects of aging on their operation of a motor vehicle. By 2020, it is estimated there will be more than 30 million licensed drivers age 70-plus.

Motorcycle Choice

1. Choose a motorcycle with large dials and easy-to-read symbols. Brightly illuminated gauges may be helpful for riding at night.
2. Choose a motorcycle that fits well and does not cause muscle strain because of an unusual seating position or because the controls are difficult to operate.

Personal Responsibility

1. Wear protective gear all the time. Using extra body armor may help mitigate injury should a fall occur.
2. Renew skills often by completing a MSF or STAR riding course. The half-day of practice is fun and helps keep riding skills fresh.
3. Separate alcohol and other impairing substances and conditions from riding. Over-the-counter and prescription medications may cause impairment, as well as the possible synergistic impairment when drugs are used in combination.

Taking care of your health as you age may facilitate your ability to ride longer into the sunset of your life. It is never too late to start nor too early to begin thinking about and taking positive steps to improve and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The two most significant factors in this regard are diet and exercise. Your life expectancy is inversely proportional to your weight. Overweight and obesity are strongly linked to type 2 diabetes, coronary artery disease, hypertension, stroke, certain types of cancer (colon, esophagus, pancreas, kidney, uterus, breast and prostate), dyslipidemia (high cholesterol and triglyceride levels), liver and gallbladder disease, sleep apnea and respiratory problems, osteoarthritis (degenerative changes in joint, cartilage, and underlying bone) and gynecological problems (abnormal menses and infertility). Weight reduction significantly reduces the risks associated with as well as developing all of these disorders. [9]

The sad truth is that while we have an abundance of food in the U.S., nutritional value seems to have become a very low priority. More and more American food is highly processed and overloaded with carbohydrates, corn syrup, salt, unhealthy fats and questionable chemicals. eating out (or brining home ready-to-eat meals) is so cheap and easy in the U.S. that it seems normal to order what looks good in the menu pictures, and gobble it down without any concerns for nutrition, portion sizes, or questionable additives. [10]

There are lots of sources to access on healthier eating with books available, a seemingly unending supply of online articles, and medical websites where you can search detailed information about health issues free of charge. [9-10] If you are confused or have difficulty, ask your primary care physician to refer you to a dietician for some professional guidance.



"What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?"

Exercise coupled with healthier nutrition has a synergistic effect in reducing weight and improving overall health. Research shows that exercise helps curb food cravings, increases energy, improves memory, and reduces the risk of certain cancers. For many finding time to exercise on a regular basis is a major problem. In that regard I like the physician's response to the patient in the cartoon to the left, "What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?" Exercise can and will improve your health and insure that you are able to continue riding well into your golden years.

Of the four components of physical fitness (defined as flexibility, strength, endurance and balance) strength is the easiest and quickest to develop. Strength building involves resistance exercises (using free weights, resistance machines, or the weight of your body). If you are out of shape and start doing regular resistance exercises, you may expect to see a 50 percent increase in your strength in less than a month. While it is possible to develop your strength from resistance exercises using commercial or home gym equipment, you can also accomplish it at home with very minimal equipment and expense. There are numerous sources for exercise programs focusing on the four components of physical fitness that you can do at home or at a gym. [10-12] The important thing is simply to begin and stick with it.

Remember, it is never too late to start nor too early to begin taking positive steps to improve and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The two most significant factors in this regard are diet and exercise. May the second half of your story be a healthy one that enables you to ride well into the sunset of your years.

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Season of the Bike

by Dave Karlotski

*This article appeared on NPR's Minnesota Public Radio Program, **The Savvy Traveler**, on August 25, 2000. **The Savvy Traveler** program is no longer running. It aired from August 1997 through March 2004. The article is reprinted here for your enjoyment. No exploration of motorcycle travel would be complete without consulting biker enthusiast Dave Karlotski, who has written several pieces about his motorcycle adventures for **The Savvy Traveler**, and here Dave tells what he enjoys about touring by motorcycle.*

<http://savvytraveler.publicradio.org/show/features/2000/20000825/postcard.shtml>

There is cold, and there is cold on a motorcycle. Cold on a motorcycle is like being beaten with cold hammers while being kicked with cold boots, a bone bruising cold. The wind's big hands squeeze the heat out of my body and whisk it away; caught in a cold October rain, the drops don't even feel like water. They feel like shards of bone fallen from the skies of Hell to pock my face. I expect to arrive with my cheeks and forehead streaked with blood, but that's just an illusion, just the misery of nerves not designed for highway speeds.

Despite this, it's hard to give up my motorcycle in the fall and I rush to get it on the road again in the spring; lapses of sanity like this are common among motorcyclists. When you let a motorcycle into your life you're changed forever. The letters "MC" are stamped on your driver's license right next to your sex and weight as if "motorcycle" was just another of your physical characteristics, or maybe a mental condition. But when warm weather finally does come around all those cold snaps and rainstorms are paid in full because a summer is worth any price.

A motorcycle is not just a two-wheeled car; the difference between driving a car and climbing onto a motorcycle is the difference between watching TV and actually living your life. We spend all our time sealed in boxes and cars are just the rolling boxes that shuffle us from home-box to work-box to store-box and back, the whole time, entombed in stale air, temperature regulated, sound insulated, and smelling of carpets.

On a motorcycle I know I'm alive. When I ride, even the familiar seems strange and glorious. The air has weight and substance as I push through it and its touch is as intimate as water to a swimmer. I feel the cool wells of air that pool under trees and the warm spokes of that fall through them. I can see everything in a sweeping 360 degrees, up, down and around, wider than Pana-Vision and than IMAX and unrestricted by ceiling or dashboard. Sometimes I even hear music. It's like hearing phantom telephones in the shower or false doorbells when vacuuming; the pattern-loving brain, seeking signals in the noise, raises acoustic ghosts out of the wind's roar. But on a motorcycle I hear whole songs: rock 'n roll, dark orchestras, women's voices, all hidden in the air and released by speed. At 30 miles per hour and up, smells become uncannily vivid. All the individual tree- smells and flower- smells and grass-smells flit by like chemical notes in a great plant symphony. Sometimes the smells evoke memories so strongly that it's as though the past hangs invisible in the air around me, wanting only the most casual of rumbling time machines to unlock it. A ride on a summer afternoon can border on the rapturous.

The sheer volume and variety of stimuli is like a bath for my nervous system, an electrical massage for my brain, a systems check for my soul. It tears smiles out of me: a minute ago I was dour, depressed, apathetic, numb, but now, on two wheels, big, ragged, windy smiles flap against the side of my face, billowing out of me like air from a decompressing plane.

Transportation is only a secondary function. A motorcycle is a joy machine. It's a machine of wonders, a metal bird, a motorized prosthetic. It's light and dark and shiny and dirty and warm and cold lapping over each other; it's a conduit of grace, it's a catalyst for bonding the gritty and the holy. I still think of myself as a motorcycle amateur, but by now I've had a handful of bikes over half a dozen years and slept under my share of bridges. I wouldn't trade one second of either the good times or the misery. Learning to ride one of the best things I've done.

Cars lie to us and tell us we're safe, powerful, and in control. The air-conditioning fans murmur empty assurances and whisper, "Sleep, sleep." Motorcycles tell us a more useful truth: we are small and exposed, and probably moving too fast for our own good, but that's no reason not to enjoy every minute of the ride.

If you'd like to find out more about Dave Karlotski's motorcycle adventures and favorite routes, you can link on to his website at <http://the751.tri-pixel.com/>.