

# GRAND TOURING ON A DUCATI 750

by Rick Williams

Early in '75 I was looking for a new bike at the time owning a Suzuki 500. I finally settled on a Duke 750 GT which I purchased in May of that year. At the time I lived in New Jersey and had just completed my senior year in college.

I decided that I wanted to do some touring during that summer as the bike was outfitted with a pair of BMW r90s bars and an Avon cafe fairing (originally designed for a Honda 450). I originally planned to spend three or four weeks touring the Eastern and Midwest states.

With the streamlining provided by the full cafe fairing, I made it from N.J. to Detroit in just over 10 hours. I averaged 66 miles per gallon for the 684 miles; truly phenomenal for a bike of that displacement and the speeds traveled at.

The second day out, I dumped the bike on some Michigan oil and did damage sufficiently serious to give a repair bill of \$700.

Fortunately, the only part that had to be repaired in order for me to continue on were the bars. I replaced these with stock bars and bought a cheap handlebar mount fairing. The rest of the damage was mostly cosmetic; dented tank, torn seat, bent pipes, etc.

I made it to Omaha the next day and to Cheyenne the next. The bike continued to amaze me. Until that time the bike had not leaked or burned any oil. After changing the oil, I was only 1/2 quart low. Not bad after 1800 miles. My gas mileage had been consistently in the high 50's despite the high speeds maintained.

Once I reached the mountains to the west of Cheyenne the Duke's greatest attribute came into its own; the handling. Time and again, when riding on a mountain road I would catch up to a local biker on a Honda or Kawasaki or some other Jap bike.

Even in its loaded condition (I had about 80 pounds of gear on the bike) the Duke would walk away from anything it met. It was then that I was glad that I hadn't taken the choice of getting a more common bike.

As one can plainly see, I was quite always past my original intention to stay in the Eastern US. I spent the next three weeks in Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon and finally into California.

Riding down Highway 1 north of San Francisco would have been the highpoint of the trip if the rear cylinder exhaust guide hadn't decided to quit.



I arrived in S.F. trailing a lot of smoke and fouling plugs like mad. The first thing I headed for was a phone book to spot the nearest Ducati dealer. Sure enough, S.F. had a dealer. Well, I chugged over to the store. Not a Duke in sight.

Upon approaching the counter I asked the man if they carried any parts for Ducatis. He looked rather surprised but turned towards the rear of the shop and called for another guy.

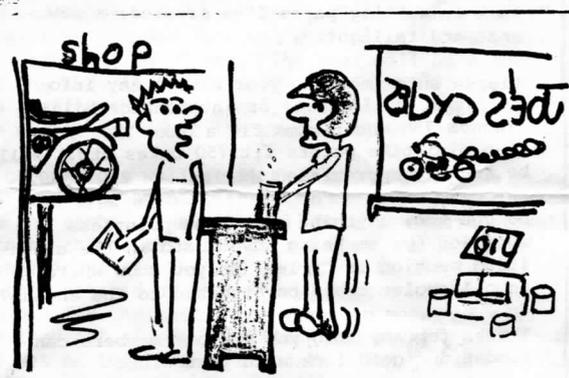
"I'm getting our Ducati expert," was the explanation. The other guy—the expert—appeared and asked what the problem was and why had he been called away from his cup of coffee.

When I told that I had Ducati problems he again asked why he'd been called. The reason was simple. "You're the only one who's ever seen one." I knew that I'd come to the right place. Instead of waiting in S.F. to get parts mailed up from Los Angeles, I decided to try to make it to LA to a relatives home, where I could borrow a garage to fix the bike in.

At the time, there were 6,500 miles on the bike. I made it to LA. Three quarts of oil and 6 spark plugs later. Parts were no problem and I had the bike apart and back together in a couple of days.

About two weeks later, the Naval Reserve of which I'm a member called me to let me know that they wanted me in Florida in two weeks.

So I hurriedly packed my gear and headed for N.J. I left late one afternoon so as to cross the Mojave at night. I reached Las Vegas around 10PM, and threw my sleeping bag down by the side of the road.



Our Ducati expert will fix yor sickle soon as he finds the points in that ther 860

Next morning I started up and took off. After an hour or so of riding the front cylinder quit. It seemed like a fuel starvation problem so I pulled over and disassembled the front carb. looking for dirt and other foreign matter. Nothing. So I put it back together and thinking that I'd just missed something started it up. Fine, nice smooth idle. Great! I just hopped on and proceeded to motor away. No good. As soon as I moved away the front cylinder, quit again.