LetterS - continued Part II

THE GEORGE FRISCH LeTTER

I am pleased to see that an organization is being formed for the study and design of the fine Ducati motorcycles. Both my brother and I ride these fine machines and we are perplexed as to why they have not caught on to a greater extent in northern Illinois from the stand point of actual sales.

I am 31 years old and have been riding 13 years. During this time I have owned six Harleys, two Triumphs, one BMW, a Yamaha, three Hondas, a Norton and a Matchless. My association with Harley Davidson was the longest but ended in 1969 when everyone made machines twice as good for half the price.

My knowledge of the Ducati (3-17-76) singles is very limited; I was always aware of their existance but they seemed to disappear around 1964. I remember them as having rugged engines and poor electrical systems.

In March of 1973 I bought a new 1973 Ducati 750 GT; I had test ridden one and the first ride convinced me that I had to have one. As is my habit I bought the machine in the crate and assembled it and detailed it myself.

I found that the wiring and cable routing was a plumbers nightmare . Also the contact point set up was ridiculous; even Triumph gave up that system sometime prior to 1970. I refer of course to the single point backing plates as opposed to separate plates for each set of points.

The fuel tank leaked all along the bottom seam; I cured this by routing out the seam with a needle file and filling in the seam with Epoxy. This repair proved satisfactory for the entire 19,000 miles I owned the machine.

My petcocks leaked gas through into the fuel lines when turned off; I solved this by disassembling the petcocks and flipping the rubber washers upside down.

I installed air cleaner assemblys from an early model Triumph Bonneville; they are easier to service and have a nicer appearance. The crank case breather was routed around the battery and aimed at the drive chain. The chain was still in excellent condition after the 19,000 miles.

I experimented with 32mm Mikuni carburators for a year but was never able to get the bike to run correctly throughout the power ranges. I tried various jetting in the Amal carburators but found the stock jetting to be the best. NGK B7HS or NGK B8HS spark plugs seemed to be the right choice.

Setting the ignition timing and valves clearances was always a laborious task which fortunately did not have to be done too frequently. I had access to the special Ducati Timing tool which made the job liveable.

Around this area Ducati contact points cost $5.00 per set. I found that the 50cc Indian which is made in Taiwan uses the identical points and are available through Indian dealers for $2.25 per set.

My most successful alteration was the substitution of automobile coils and condensers for the originals. I used a pair of 12 volt Ford coils (available from a salvage yard for about $2.00 and General Motors condensers, (about $1.00 a piece.) The Ford coils are very short and the items for the six cylinder Fords have a single blade bracket which can be bent and fitted in the lower mounting hole of the original coils. Of course a ballast resistor must be in the circuit to protect the point from surges. A Chrysler ballast resistor bolts nicely on the mounting for the air cleaner for the front cylinder.

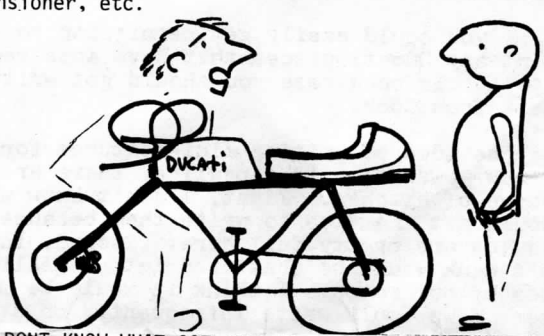
This inexpensive and easy change made the machine idle better, gives more mid-range performance, and doubles the life of the points and plugs. Gap the NGK ;lugs at .035. I highly recommend this change for anyone with a Ducati using a battery and coil ignition system.

One can smooth out the carburation by installing a brass float needle in place of the nylon original. However I've decided that Amal carburators got the bad reputation they have because of the poor ignition systems the bikes they were installed on happened to have. The automobile coil and condenser transplant will cause the Amal carburator to behave as well as any on the market.

I kept my 1973 750 GT for three years and 19,000 miles. The only mechanical failure was a voltage regulator, (warranty replacement was accomplished with a great deal of difficulty and effort by myself. Maintenance items included 3 sets of spark plugs, oil, a battery, one tail light, three sets of tires, and a tach. cable. Headlamp fuses, chain, and brakes were all original.

The polished alloy rims and fiberglass components were all very nice but a maintenance headache. Keeping these items in presentable conditon was an ardous task. The tank decal fell off so I installed the plastic name plates from the later models. These are inexpensive and can be glued on the tank and side panels with silicone seal.

I sold my 1973 750 and bought a 1975 860 GT. This was prompted by the many fine features of the 860: pointless ignition, conventional tappets, steel wheels and fuel tank, dellorto carburators, cam type chain tensioner, etc.



I DONT KNOW WHAT GOT INTO ME I STARTED REPLACING THIS AND TAKING OFF THAT AND BEFORE I KNEW IT.....

Here are some items I have found so far: the standard spark plug is too hot. Substitute an NGK B7hs; there is a 1/4 inch gap around the crank case breather pipe located in the front air cleaner allowing dirt a straight shot into the carburators; seal it off; The main jet is too lean, substitute a 124 or 125; the balance holes in the intake manifolds has casting flash on them not permitting the screw to seal out the air; substitute a pleated paper air cleaner element from an eight horse Kohler engine part No. 231847. This element is an 1/8" shorter than standard, and make up the difference with a piece of foam rubber.

The oil filter for the 860 costs $4.32. What stateside filter will substitute for the original? To my way of thinking an insert filter should cost about $1.00.

I would be very happy to join your organization. I feel I have information to share and would certainly be most anxious to learn what your other members have to say. I'm completely sold on the brand and have never liked any of the other machines I have owned nearly as much. 1211 Rolling Lane, McHenry,Ill.60050