

LETTERS

FROM A FORMER MEMBER OF THE UNINITIATED

Dear Joel: Though not a Duke owner myself, or a member of the UIOC, I have read every word of the last two UIOC issues, and have a personal interest in a 350 Sebring (named Nigel) and a 350 Desmo (Des). Their owner (my boss) Robert Ford is a member of UIOC, and after two glorious rides, has made me a confirmed member of that *%&#\$# motorcycle crowd!

It occurred to me that you or perhaps some of your readers would enjoy a story or two from a former member of the uninitiated.

I think the first thing I knew about a Ducati Sebring was that something called "timing" was the %&*\$#\$# worst creation on the planet. A child could have figured out a better system with a set of building blocks. A complete moron would have thrown out the whole thing halfway through the prototype... etc., etc....

The second thing I learned was that a Sebring owner has, as part of his standard kit a complete set of switches, wire, battery charger, tape, connectors - everything that has anything to do with electrics! I was told, with apathetic acceptance, "That's the way it is with Dukes," and the mound of used wire and tape built up with amazing rapidity in the backyard.

One day, about two months after I first joined staff, I asked innocently, "Why don't you sell Nigel and buy a motorcycle that doesn't have so many problems?" GOOD GOD! You'd have thought I'd asked him why he didn't sell his mother! In the next ten minutes I got a full rundown on things called; torque, handling, cornering, suspension, fuel consumption, outrunning the cops.... I didn't understand one tenth of what he was saying, but wasn't about to open my big mouth again to find out! When he ran down a bit, he added, "...and besides, he's never let me down."

I guess that last line was what caught my interest. For the next four months I watched with fascination as a motor was rebuilt, clutch assembly torn down and put together twice, fork oil sounded like dirty words until I got it splashed all over me a couple of times, and a 'damper' was something on a chimney till I heard the story of a sixty-mile-an-hour crash landing the day it didn't work (or maybe it worked too well - - I got confused about that point in the story.)

Then one day the Desmo arrived. I remember it well, because it took my salary as well as two full weeks of Robert's to buy him (and we ate for the next two weeks on my savings account!)

Robert rode him home with only one minor incident (he forgot the brake was on the reverse side and tried to shift into third with it.)

I think Des is what's know as a basket case. His front forks are bent, scars would indicate he's been dumped (is that the right word?) at least a couple of times, and Robert took one look at the motor and started tearing it down.

At the moment Des is in about twenty pieces, lying all over the basement floor. The office is cluttered with such items as; promo fliers for everything from Koni shocks to paint swatches,

Chilton's Guides in every size and color, phone numbers of every bike dealer and service-outlet in the New England area, sprockets, oil cans, tools, rags, shims, lightbulbs, a couple of dusty helmets.....there's even a couple of UIOC Newsletters in the "Pending" basket.

Nigel is up for sale. The electrics have apparently been solved by something called an "adapter" or "converter" - oops! I just remembered he has to have some adjustment made on the rear brake assembly first. He shares the stable in the backyard with a 1966 BSA 650 (Thumper) who's being used for temporary transportation till Des is ready.

I might add - we run a counselling service!!!? Much admiration and tons of success to all Duke owners! DIANA McCLURE, #8 Essex Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139

PS. If you print this and I get fired - you got any use for an ex-counsellor who's pretty handy with passing the instruments and dishing out the sympathy?? ■

"I MAY BE CRAZY BUT I'M NOT MEDIOCRE!"

Dear Joel:

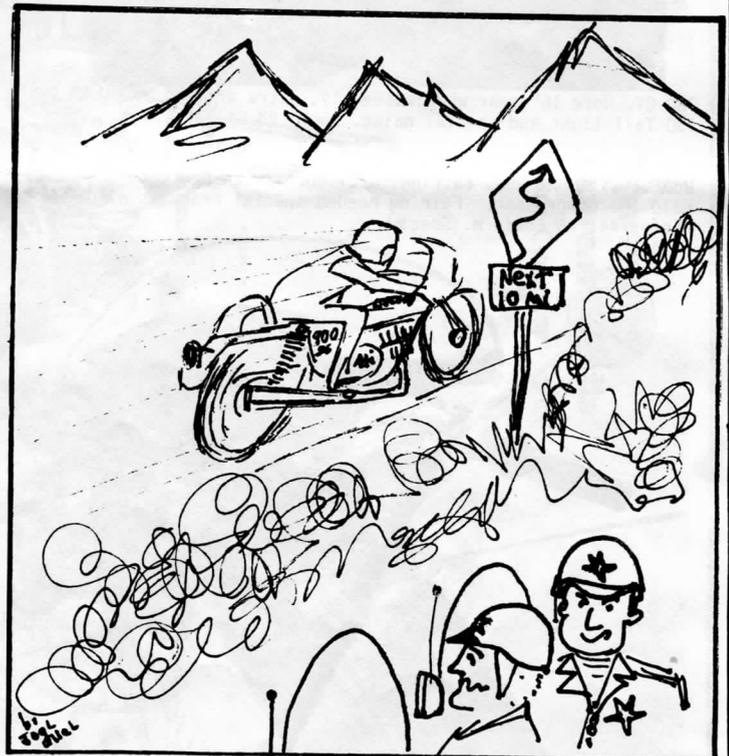
Right now I'm wearing the shirt. Great! Like the 750 Sport, quite unmistakable. You seemed alarmed at my ante (a \$50.00 donation that Ed donated to the UIOC). Don't be. If that fifty approached the price I've paid to do as I pleased with my scooters I might be less generous, but just knowing I might help further resistance against mediocrity is enough. I may be crazy, but I'll never be mediocre.

Or vicarious. I'm trying to figure a way to break back into racing. I refuse to ride dirt tracks again. I fell too often there and frequency seems to be the culprit. Give me pavement anytime. And they only race on dirt here. You should see the "seventh morn" here. The scratchers all ride limeys except for yours truly. Jap iron generally only wears scratches on unintended spots. Still, competing with bikes as well as cops and oncoming cars is no real competition. Let me know if you hear about something else up here. Hopefully I'll still be alive to respond.

Eventually, I'm going to sit down and write a novella about the whole thing that was being a motorcycle crazy in the Texas hill country. Legends of the backroads go back to the days of a club called Gods Bats. Charter members of that outfit were no less than the likes of Byron Black, whom you'll remember as long ago contributor to Cycle, and Gilbert Shelton (surely you've read Zap Comix). The current assortment is an incredible cross section of both people and bikes. Once, and I'll swear to it, I saw what had to be Rollie Free's Vincent casting a spray of sparks on the legendary second downhill on 2222. There are two Manxes rolling around town. (Austin) And some of the hairiest Jap specials you've ever seen anywhere, including the overplugged California coast hiway.

But to get back to it, legends abound and I'm jolly f#@*!g well part of them. Like the guy who sailed off into the Blanco upon impact with a formidable armadillo. (that was me) My poor Guzzi had to bear up to the rigors of drifting corners on Michelin GP tires. First I radically shorted the pegs, then narrowed my boots, and finally ventilated a set of mufflers. Some of those long downhills tapped the limits too, and if you never have hit an honest 140 MPH on a bike, you need to. After all, what's a bent pushrod now and then?

There were bad times, too. I knew three different guys who got killed when they hit animals. Armadillos are just for dodg-



ITS YOUR TURN CHUMP! I DAMN WELL NEAR BUSTED MY ASS TRYING TO CATCH THAT STUPID LITTLE 350 YESTERDAY AND THIS ONE'S A 900 DESMO.....