

VOICES

Dear Joel:

This is a letter I have not wanted to write and have put off too long. I wonder if advertisers realize how important the newsletter is to DUC' owners or how great an impact it has on members who look for new products or applications for their scooters. Continued advertising over a period of time has the effect of creating DIOC endorsement of a product or a service despite occasional disclaimers by yourself.

I think that if the newsletter is a service publication rather than a completely commercial effort it owes the membership access to space to evaluate those products or services. I was pleased at the publications of E. Hise's letter (23rd issue 1980) that was frankly critical of Powerhouse Products. B. Braverman's reply was also fairly published. On balance, and after calling Mr. Braverman, I decided to use P.P. Products in developing a Ducati that would prove to be competitive locally and at Daytona. As you will recall I discussed this project at some length. In fact we will be pleased to represent the club despite the club's inability to offer support for the enterprise. I'm writing to describe my contests with Powerhouse Products, Mr. Braverman and staff and to give some description of his products. I hope you will share this unedited with my fellow club members. I will be in Daytona in March again and will discuss the matter further with any and all interested.

Perhaps the most expensive element in the cost of building a competition engine is ignorance. Manipulation of that ignorance is P.P.'s and Mr. Braverman's stock in trade. In short; I ordered pistons 1000cc (called a kit because it contains rings?), sleeves (called special for some unknown reason) oversize titanium valves as well as valve springs with collars of titanium. I called and discussed cams and carbs and fittings. By the grace of whatever Gods there be I did not purchase these items. Let me explain why. The carbs are standard units (not modified, matched or changed for the Ducati) and as such are available elsewhere cheaper according to Mr. Braverman. The cables and rubber adaptors "supplied" are not supplied, rather P.P. will modify your cables for you. The rubber whether supplied or not is a snow mobile unit used for carb conversion. Your manifold conversion amounts to welding a flange to bolt this whole mess to. Mikuni carbs can be fit using other rubber pieces with no welding. Look at the setup Triumph uses for mounting carburetors. I did not buy cams because Mr. Braverman could not or would not give me any information on lift or duration other than that they were "great" or better than the Imola cams. I remain unconvinced.

With regard to the items I did order; I waited for months before I received the pistons. After repeated and expensive calls they finally arrived. The liners required an additional 6 weeks. The valves required almost 5 months. I never did receive the springs or collars. The time delays were never explained. The attitude seemed to be "well that's the way it is." In the meantime I managed to pick up a P.P. crank pin washer and rod bearing set.

A few words as to the product and quality Mr. Braverman, in his display speaks of "Pistons machined to extremely close tolerances." In fact the pistons are standard forgings carrying the same imprint as found on stock pistons. They are not forged exclusively for P.P. If P.P. valves are used the pistons require new cuts for clearance and alignment. The liners are standard cast iron and are unfinished in any way. If close tolerances are to be used, it is you who will use them. To compound the fun, no specs are sent and no directions. Ring gaps and clearance and final polish as well as templates for crank clearance in the liners are left to your inventiveness. It should be noted however that by the time you receive anything from Mr. Braverman you are so grateful you will accept practically anything.

More phone calls and expense did get the specs out of P.P. but the process was unnecessary and an example of the cavalier attitude characteristic of P.P.

It should be noted also that I paid more for the pistons and liners than the advertised price. Mr. "B" explained that prices had gone up and would be reflected in the next issue

of the DIOC newsletter. New issue - same prices and no indication that the prices are subject to change. It would seem Mr. "B" is a liar.

The valves were an education. I ordered and paid for titanium valves (\$180). Before the valves finally came I received a check for \$30. I thought it was Christmas. Quite some time later I received stainless steel valves (\$150). When I called P.P. Braverman informed me that people had had trouble with the titanium and so the switch to stainless. I asked why he had not told me about the switch before he shipped the valves. His answer was that he couldn't bother "calling" or writing over everything. He offered me a refund but I had already had my machine shop correct his sloppy work and put 6 angles on the valve. The retaining notch on the stem looked as if a small child with a file had made it. In all these conversations Mr. "B" was rude and arrogant. He was not in the least interested in living up to his advertising or his word given on the phone. I should have returned the valves. Since I had to grind the valves anyway, stainless valves are available in most speed shops and even through J. C. Whitney at approximately \$18 per valve. The point here is that there is nothing special about P.P. goods. Although they try very hard to give the impression that their materials are "easy" to use or "drop in" prepared. Such is not the case.

I had the occasion to consult a metallurgist about the hardening of the P.P. crank pin as opposed to the stock materials. The thrust washer was also examined. It was the considered opinion that the P.P. pin was in no way harder or superior to stock. The thrust washer varied only in that P.P.'s being thicker by 10 thousandths. Note also that their use requires more machining. The materials were not superior to stock. Perhaps oil problems unique to the "Duke" are best solved by external oil lines directing oil to the thrust washer. I am suggesting that there is dubious value to be gained from the use of P.P. crank pins and washers. I will not comment on the roller bearings.

In short, what I ordered took months to arrive. When they arrived they were not what they were purported to be. In addition, the quality of products received was in no way superior to stock materials. In fact the pistons appear to be of the same manufacture. P. Products deliberately misrepresents what they have to offer and when caught at it resort to being rude and arrogant. Mr. Braverman is simply a peddler. I cannot see him in the role of developing anything for the "Duke." The fact that he owns a Ducati is an embarrassment. I wish he would sell it.

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DUCATI WINS DAYTONA '77

Due to the popularity of this shirt we have a limited amount reprinted. The Drawing is of Cook Neilson riding the famous #31 750 SS. Shirt is on white Hanes, blue ringers (sleeves and collar) Blue and Black art work. A real keepsake for those of us that were there the day we trounced the opposition with a 28 second lead at the finish line. \$6.50 + \$1.50 shpg. U.S. funds, Canada add 20% overseas shipping is \$3.10.