

December 2008

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky
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Inside

*Being
President
wasn't so bad*
By Matt Gaffney

*Just Do It.
Well,
Sometimes.*
By Paul Elwyn

*Tires: What You
May or May Not
Want to Know*
By John Zibell

*Lap of Kentucky
June 18-21*
By Jeff Cooke

*Gas Prices,
Classics, and
What Really
Matters*
By Bill Voss

Somewhere near Colorado Springs,
many miles from December of 2008.



By Matt Gaffney

I have never held office of any type, 4H, FFA, Conservation Club or even Iota Lambda Sigma. Just been a member, a very good follower and an even better wanderer.

Well, I must say that issue has been resolved. I have just completed my "year at the helm" of the Beemers of the Bluegrass as your President, and it wasn't so hard after all.

I always knew there were requirements of office holders but this one was quite sudden. Less than ten minutes in office and my signature was needed. Wow! I reckon I can do it.

Ok - at least I acted the part.

So my year is over and it wasn't so bad after all. Just sign the paper and ride. Pretty easy.

The ridin' part is the part I like. Made a few runs over the year. Went to some of Raymond and Lynn's Kickstand functions. In April there was the service department open house. That was a pretty nice showing. Got to see some familiar faces, and the weather was quite grand. Then in June they had their annual Jelly Bean Run for the Agape House. I like this one, because it brings out a lot of the ol' home boys. I get to catch up on my old friends lives and pass tales with friends. Just a good place to be on a Saturday afternoon. Kickstand had

a few more events, but I couldn't get the time to make 'em. Maybe next year.

I feel bad about our own event; I have given a hand the past few years but wasn't able to pitch in this year. Guess this was the year of me in my own mind. I never realized how much I enjoyed meeting new people until I had a hand in the event they were attending. I usually try to be there to help with set-up, take down or at least lend a hand to the poker run, but not this year. My apolo-geez, Roy. I will be there next year.

I did make a few more gatherings of sort. I am in an Internet group of riders called 'I-BMW.com' - the ultimate sport-touring portal. The site is mostly made up of K - bike riders. They are predominately owners of K1200RS but the K1200S types are gaining fast. They are from all over the world and are a quite unique group of riders.

We did a gathering in Snowshoe WV in May and had about 55 riders attend. It was a four-day event, and it rained for three of those. However, I did do the 'social' thing and conversed with some quite entertaining folks from the northeast. Amazing what motorcycles can do to the grand variances of lifestyles in this world.

There was also a gathering in Tapaco, North Carolina in September. This is just outside of the Dragon Tail strip of highway. Again there were about 60 riders but

this time the weather was simply wonderful. There is an over abundance of law enforcement officers in this area but there is an alternative; Just pick another road. There are no bad ones in that part of the country, kinda like a Windows program, plug and play. Just point and go.

Eddie Layton and I also put together a KY gathering in Richmond this year. There were 12 riders that attended and all said it was a blast. They were from North Carolina, Indiana and Montreal Quebec. All that attended wanted to know if this was an annual event. I looked at Ed, and Ed looked at me. Sure, we replied. We will let the 'home team' know of the dates in case you want to come.

The rest of my year riding was spent on the local highways. Mostly northern and southeastern parts of the state. I must admit that my current favorite bit of highway is 587. South of McKee on 421, go left to Beattyville. Man, that is a blast.

So, my year is over and I survived. This ain't such a bad bunch after all. It has been a pleasure and an honor to call myself 'your president'.

See you at breakfast.

This ain't such a bad bunch after all. It has been a pleasure and an honor to call myself 'your president'.

Just Do It. Well, sometimes.

By Paul Elwyn

Nike, I think, runs with the catchline in its advertising, "Just Do It." The idea is to live life to the fullest, while wearing Nike shoes, of course.

I'm the kind of guy who embraces that message. I just do it. Well, sometimes.

One of our members, celebrated in the last *Apex*, does Just Do It. He builds his race bike and races at Barber. That's just the way he is. And on December 6th with snow turning the Frisch's parking lot white, he was the only rider on a bike. The rest of us did NOT Just Do It.

The rest of us maybe considered doing it, wanted to do it, but did not do it. Sometimes I do not do it, and I like to think that that underscores my good sense, not that a rider in the snow on December 6th has bad sense, of course, but more Just Do It-ness.

But life "comes at you fast" as another company tells us in its advertising. And life these days appears especially grim, so let's not turn red over bringing a little more caution to the table. After all, we want to ensure we are ready for another, possibly less grim, day.

I am comfortable, having learned through the years how to dress properly for winter riding, but I think about the Jack London character who thought he had everything under control.

Speaking of grim, riding in the cold AND the dark requires a bit more commitment than riding simply in the cold or simply in the dark.

The dark part represents one of the sometimes not-so-subtle downsides of many birthdays and the effect on night vision. Also, with experience grows the awareness of thousands of deer and skunks awaiting within one leap of the roadway.

The more telling part is the cold.

Too often as I launch toward Lexington from Danville from the relative safety of our neighborhood at 6 a.m. on a winter Saturday, I am reminded of the Jack London classic tale of hubris, "To Build A

Fire." An overly confident Yukon man embarks on foot with supplies on his back and loyal dog by his side. The sub-zero weather causes his tobacco spit to freeze in his beard. He defies warnings that the journey is too dangerous, but his Just Do It sense of adventure and extreme confidence compels him to hit the trail.

He sends the dog ahead to test a snow-covered passage for thin ice that might conceal water beneath. The dog makes the crossing, but the man breaks through the ice, soaking his feet.

He returns to higher ground to build a fire to dry his wet socks and shoes. He manages with frozen fingers to light a fire, but as the fire grows, the heat causes a snow-laden tree branch to unload the snow, extinguishing the fire.

At this point the man's feet and fingers are numb from the cold and he struggles to re-light the fire.

When he realizes that his hands are too frozen to light the fire, he looks at the dog with a desperate plan to kill the dog, slit him open and warm his hands inside the dog so he might re-light a fire.

The dog, however, senses the man's intentions to kill him and refuses to go near the man who is quickly freezing to death.

Once the man has died, the dog heads to the nearest community for food and shelter.

Hubris, extreme pride...or confidence, kills the man. And man's best friend just doesn't care, which is another sobering thought.

As I ride through the darkness, my on-board computer flashes varying temperatures from 15 to 20 degrees.

I am comfortable, having learned through the years how to dress properly for winter riding, but I think about the Jack London character who thought he had everything under control.

Once that small air leak through my face shield numbs my face, I no longer feel any discomfort, much as the Yukon dude who died, likely. Then I begin to think about the possibilities.

What if a deer were to leap into my bike in the darkness, knocking me into the ditch? How long might I lie there with broken arms and legs, invisible to passing motorists? Would I eventually simply

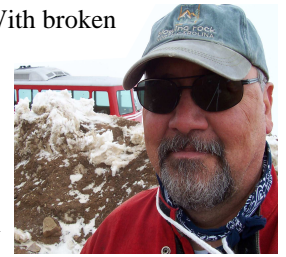
freeze to death? With broken limbs? With a nest of skunks spraying me for having disturbed their home?

These thoughts keep me company as each shadow appears to be a deer in waiting.

I've been riding to Saturday breakfast with Bluegrass Beemers since 1984, and I hope to do so for at least another 24 years. I likely will do so wondering if all along I have simply been lucky, not really in control of anything.

But then, I wonder, are we really in control of anything? Or are we simply challenging fate every time we climb out of bed.

At that point I say, "Just Do It." Well, sometimes.



January issue deadline, Dec. 32

Email to paul.elwyn@gmail.com.

Save text in Rich Text Format.

Submit photos in jpeg format.

JUST DO IT!

Join us for breakfast!

Are you gonna sleep your life away? Get out of bed and join the most dynamic motorcycle breakfast in the Lexington area.

Bluegrass Beemers meets every Saturday at Frisch's Restaurant on Harrodsburg Road in Lexington from 7:00 to 9:30 a.m. with no agenda beyond breakfast and conversation.

Following breakfast we adjourn to the parking lot to kick tires and admire bikes as weather allows.

Any rider who happens to be the **ONLY RIDER** to ride his bike wins a free breakfast!

Although we are a BMW club, most of us own other marques and welcome all riders regardless of the brand of motorcycle they ride.

So, if you have not made it to breakfast, get your motor runnin' and join in the fun next Saturday.

Tires: What you may or may not want to know

By John Zibell

Tires are probably the most important components on your motorcycle, yet the least understood, most neglected, abused, ignored, and generally overlooked. OK, they are black, round and hold air, what else is there to know? Keep reading and maybe we will discover enlightenment.

Sizing

These black rubber objects come in many sizes and hopefully the correct size is on your motorcycle. As much as possible you should be running the size listed in your owners manual. At most the current size should only be one size different from that listed in your manual. The only thing is there are many sizing systems. These systems are standard, 400X18; metric, 110/90HB18; and alpha numeric, MN90HB18. And guess what, the example sizes are all the same size.

The following chart compares the sizing systems.

FRONT TIRES: METRIC	INCH	ALPHA NUMERIC
=====	=====	=====
80/90	2.50/2.75	MH90
90/90	2.75/3.00	MJ90
100/90	3.25/3.50	MM90
110/90	3.75/4.00	MN90
120/80	4.25/4.50	
120/90	4.25/4.50	MR90
130/90	5.00/5.10	MT90
REAR TIRES:	=====	=====
110/90	4.00/4.25	MP85
120/90	4.50/4.75	MR90
METRIC	INCH	ALPHA NUMERIC
=====	=====	=====
130/80	5.00/5.10	----
130/90	5.00/5.10	MT90
140/80	5.50/6.00	----
140/90	5.50/6.00	MU90
150/80	6.00/6.25	MV85
150/90	6.00/6.25	MV85

Speed ratings

These are pretty straight forward. This little chart lays it out pretty well.

R - TO 106 MPH H - TO 130 MPH
 S - TO 112 MPH V - TO 149 MPH
 T - TO 118 MPH Z - ABOVE 149 MPH
 H RATED TIRES ARE NORMALLY FOR TOUR BIKES.
 V & Z ARE NORMALLY FOR SPORT BIKES.
 R & S RATED TIRES ARE GENERALLY FOR DUAL SPORT BIKES.

And yes, we can even tell belted from radial:
 B = BELTED, R = RADIAL.

Also involved with sizing is the aspect ratio. For a 130/90X18 tire the 90 is the aspect ratio. It is a measure of the height as a

percentage of the width. The lower the middle number the lower the profile of the tire.

So now let's put this all together. Lets break down the following tire size.

160/60ZR18

This tire is 160 mm wide, the height is 60% of the width (low profile) it is rated for sustained speeds over 149 mph, of radial construction and fits on an 18 inch rim.

Also important in fitting your tire is clearance to the machine and the width of the rim. The Dunlop and Michelin tire sites lists the acceptable rim sizes with their tire sizes see <http://www.dunloptire.com/cycle/index.html> and <http://www.michelin.com/us/eng/home.htm>

Load and tire pressure

That max inflation number on your tire is just that. That is the pressure you would use at the load rating of that tire running the speed for which the tire is rated. If your 160/60ZR18 is carrying max load (also stamped on the tire), and you are traveling at speeds above 149 mph, you would then inflate to the maximum pressure. Since we don't usually get to ride at those speeds, you wouldn't use that max inflation. So, once again, refer to your owners manual for the correct pressure. The pressure you run, based on experience and loading, should probably not vary more than 2 or 3 psi from that listed in your owners manual. If you go to Dunlop's fitment guide, they even provide recommended pressures for their tires on specific motorcycles.

Tire pressure more than anything else effects how well your tires stick to the road. This stick is what enables you to stay vertical, without traction the motorcycle won't even stay up.

Tires stick by melting a little, this melted rubber adheres to the road on one surface, and to the rubber which hasn't melted on the other. Some but not all of the melted rubber is pulled back to the tire as it rolls. This is why tires wear. Maximum adhesion is reached when the core temperature of the tire reaches 100 degrees C. Unfortunately it doesn't last long at this temperature, just ask anyone with race track experience. The recommended pressure in your owners manual is a trade off between good stick, and acceptable wear. The tire compound (hard vs. soft) also effects stick and wear, but no matter what the compound, the pressure in the tire influences which side of the trade off you ride on.

Tread

If you are on a race track on a dry and sunny day "you don't need no stinking tread." You actually get more traction with more rubber in contact with the road (a slick). However, if things get a little wet, the tread is actually your personal rain groove system to move water away from the center of the contact patch and put the rubber to the road. Without this tread you would "float" on the water, and motorcycles were not designed for boating (except maybe a K1200 light truck). The legal amount of tread remaining varies by state law, but I use the one cent gauge to indicate when it is time to replace my tires. Take a

Tires continued from Page 4

Lincoln penny, insert Abe's head into the tread, if you can see the top of his head, it is time for new tread.

By the way, I haven't mentioned the tire rotation arrow yet. This direction of rotation is important for the tread to move water. A tire running in the proper direction will push the water away from the contact patch, if it is on backwards, you are now pumping water to the contact patch, making for that floating feeling we all don't want to have, called hydroplaning. Hydroplaning is when the water is so deep, and the tire is moving so fast, it can't move the water away quick enough and the tire is actually planing on the water and not in contact with the pavement. In other words, no useable traction. Remember I said earlier that you need traction to stay up, when

you hydroplane, it is very easy for gravity to win.

Age

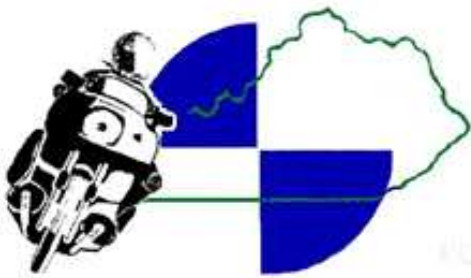
The rubber that makes up the compound of your tire is a virtual chemical soup. The chemical composition is effected by sunlight, ozone, and oxidation to name a few factors. Over time, the effectiveness of the rubber to stick is effected.

Tire manufactures recommend that you not use a tire over six years old. So how old is my tire? Thanks to 49CFR574.5 the Department of Transportation mandates manufacturers to date there tires.

The last four digits of the DOT code branded on every tire indicates the week and year of manufacture of that tire. If the last four numbers are 2507 it was made the 25th week of 2007. If you see a three digit date, they were made before 2000, so get rid of them.

Summary

Now that you have been the dutiful rider and read this whole dissertation what can you do to make life with your tires better? Check you tire pressures frequently, and use the recommended pressure in your owners manual. Monitor the tread depth, especially in the center to detect a case of interstateitis. When you get new tires installed, check that rotation arrow. Also if you mount your own, many manufacturers place a balance dot on the tire. Align the balance dot with the valve stem, less weight will be needed to balance the tire. And last but not least, check the DOT date. That inexpensive tire you just bought may not be such a bargain if it is over 6 year old, or the tires on that used bike you just purchased may have turned to stone.



It may be a little early, but I've got time on my hands and I wanted to give everyone plenty of time to prepare.

I am planning to resurrect the Lap of Kentucky event in 2009.

There are many newcomers to the groups so I should explain that the Lap of Kentucky is an event that I ran in 2000 and again in 2001 that had riders circumnavigating the state on perimeter two lane roads. In 2000 we first headed west and then circled back around. In 2001 we

Lap of Kentucky June 18-21

headed east and came back around. For most folks the event (which covers approximately 1400 miles) took four (4) days to complete. We ran it in June to coincide with the long days of the summer solstice. The riders were provided with a route sheet for the Lap and this year we will provide both a route sheet and a GPS log.

This year it will begin on Thursday, June 18, 2009 and finish on Sunday, June 21, 2009. It starts and finishes at the shop.

I will be having awards for the oldest bike finishing, the smallest (displacement) bike finishing, the youngest rider finishing and the oldest rider finishing.

I plan to promote this event around the state and will probably limit it to 100 riders.

I will be providing further details, but I wanted to make everyone aware of the

event in order that you can put it into your 2009 riding schedule.

You will never appreciate Kentucky as much as you will during this ride. You will see widely varied terrain over the four days and you will be surprised at just how big Kentucky is.

I will also be looking for volunteers to help in various ways.

I hope that you all will try to participate.

By the way, I would love for any past participants to post any thoughts on the event.

Thanks,
Jeff Cooke
BMW Motorcycles of Louisville
(502)568-2311

Nice boxer! Whose is it?

This good looking boxer rested on a jack stand prior to its next race at Barber Motorsports Park in Birmingham, Alabama.

No story, here, because the admirer was not thinking about sharing in the *Apex*. What a shame, because a number of us likely would like to know what the owner did to raise this once humble standard touring model into the racer it is today.

Carry camera and notebook so the next time you see a neat bike, take a picture, and if possible, talk with the owner with the *Apex* in mind.



Unusual 1975 Norton ad in Craigslist worth a read



I'm not trying to sell a bike, here; simply passing along an unusual ad from Craigslist <http://sandiego.craigslist.org/nsd/mcy/942947761.html>. Paul

This Commando has never been restored. And it never lost its soul. Just lovingly maintained for 30 years and updated to be easy to start and ride.

This is not about a motorcycle. This is an appreciation of the simplest pleasures I know on the most perfect of days. This is not another numbing, flawless restoration. This is a bike with its humble soul still intact. It does not look like it is approaching another milestone birthday 35 years in the making!

It looks like it was traded in after a few summers of intimate conversations with quiet evenings over no name roads. It is an unbroken thread back to my youthful possession of a cocky sense of adventure and naiveté. A spirited humor that believed eight hundred and fifty cc's displaced would get me over a hundred miles per hour, and I would never want more...other than maybe capturing the attention of the most enchanting smile in town.

Whittled down to a kick start and a throttle, it hot wires my soul back together every time. A work of industrial art hammered out in black and chrome, Just changed over to Norton Red as a change of pace for me. It tiptoes from the quaint English midlands with the deliberate intent of eviscerating any pesty domestic distractions. At fifty-five years old, I've just retired as a workaholic and am simplifying my life. Minding my manners. Sleeping in later. Reading the paper in its entirety. Ignoring the phone... I bought this Commando when Reagan was in office.... many years ago...The coveted Honda the seller sold me this to finance has most assuredly came and went while this bike remained a reliable early morning ride in my garage shared with vagrant Harleys, Triumphs and even some cool vintage dirt bikes

as well.

This Norton has defied the notion that my favorite bike would always be my next one. **HARDLY USED AS A MOTORCYCLE, ADMIRER MORE AS A BACK ALLEY PIN-UP DARLING.** This is the story of basically a long-term, one-owner motorcycle. It has been dutifully maintained. Respectfully appreciated. Kept in my office as industrial art between bouts of binge riding to keep everything running right.

This isn't my bike. It's my baby. Since purchasing, I have consistently added a few miles and have come to quietly revere this pure motoring experience. Driven here and there with occasional desire, it's mostly idle as a blue-collar art object of obsessive pleasure. Just shy of original, there is a slight patina on this Commando without any obvious wear and tear. No wrecks, no dents. Only a few of the tiniest inevitable scratches.

The lacquer paint is perfect with no fading. Some tiny paint chips on the lower frame with typical random scuffs. Exposed edges under the seat. The chrome and aluminum isn't pitted or peeling. The fit and finish of all the mechanical controls and electrical switches is proper. The seat is still in its finest form on its original pan/foam/vinyl without any rips or tears or sags.

Lenses, reflectors and Stadium mirrors are clear and un-cracked. All gauges and lights work as new. The motor and gearbox hardly weep a drop a month and the Isolastic mounts are supple yet snug. The motor has never been touched save for oil and filter changes. The clutch was inspected and showed virtually no wear.

The transmission always snicks into gear cleanly and knows where neutral is every time. The frame is straight, and not oily and grimy. This motorcycle is transparent and honest in all the critical areas without any signs of neglect or abuse. Overall, it reflects the fit and finish of an honest showroom piece without sterile over gloss. With random surface rust on smaller unplated fasteners, it currently is not a concours bike. It looks period. The warm patina of all finishes is spectacularly gorgeous, appropriately aged. **CUTTING TO THE CHASE.** With a visceral exhaust note that inspired the most primal pleasure, most vintage British bikes were ridden blissfully hard and put away smoldering. In pieces, baskets and crates.

But this Norton's condition and unmolested completeness is getting rare. And respectfully, so is the buyer. This is an almost perfect experience for anyone more curious than

a numbing fastidious restoration of mixed parts, but smart enough to avoid loosely fluff and buffed originality hiding pending disaster. These bikes are bad liars. They blurt out how late they have been out with obvious symptoms of wear and tear. This Commando is better than mechanically solid. It appears and behaves like it is only a few years old. With the combustible soul of a locomotive, it certainly railroaded me into the superbike era with its endless charismatic torque and nimble handling. It doesn't smoke, the tight suspension doesn't sag or lean. It still handles like a bucket of new unstripped bolts. No dazzling rocket science on display here. More like Neolithic blacksmithing and farriering for first prize in seventh period Auto Shop. Only a few reversible upgrades keep it from being completely stock.

This bike is superbly vintage British, but slightly up to date. I noodled only a few rough edges in the name of self-preservation. Mine. The Mikuni carb conversion is bomb-proof reliable. The original Amal carbs have been boxed with the manifold and air cleaner for reinstallation if preferred. The fiberglass gas tank was riddled with delamination and hairline leaks early on and was replaced with a new black lacquered NOS steel tank when they were still available years ago. The pattern "peashooter" mufflers are throaty and shapely while the original "bean cans" are also wrapped and boxed, ready to blow perfect smoke rings at idle on any damp morning. Assorted stainless lines and an antisump valve simplify maintenance. The tires are safe and fresh. The fluids are current. The cables unfrayed. For personal choice I have added a new leather Corbin gunfighter seat.

Truthfully, motorcycles like this are thrilling in the catch and eventually sad to release. But it is way too cool not to share. Just look at it. Norton Red and chrome has always been my favorite color scheme dressing any motorcycle or steam train. It will be a pure prize for someone who understands the rarity of having the original Union keys.....and are the perfect accelerant for firing the Wayback machine into a showroom reenactment.

This is how it should be. Designs so alluring it defies the notion that newer is better. Something so damn analog it transcends our current digital veneers. Cash is required due upon actual delivery and inspection, simply swapped for title and motorcycle. Bike is currently titled and nestled in a warm flat sipping hot tea over Castrol biscuits.

Gas Prices, Classics and What Really Matters

By Bill Voss

It looks like we relived the 70s this year. We've been taken advantage of again on the price of gas. Guess they saw we could back off on demand by driving less, riding motorcycles, and giving up on the Suburban Assault Vehicles.

The increased sales of scooters and motorcycles was significant and in some cases worrisome. I was talking to the Scottsdale BMW motorcycle salesman who had just sold a lady the Piaggio MP3. She test rode it around the parking lot and pulled up in front of us, forgot to put her feet down to hold the scooter up and fell right over. We picked the scooter up and she looked at her scraped elbow, but remained determined to ride her new gas sipper. She said she rode



Above: Yamaha R1 riders displaying a cumulative trauma disorder of the right hand or something out of the 60s? We don't really want to know, do we?

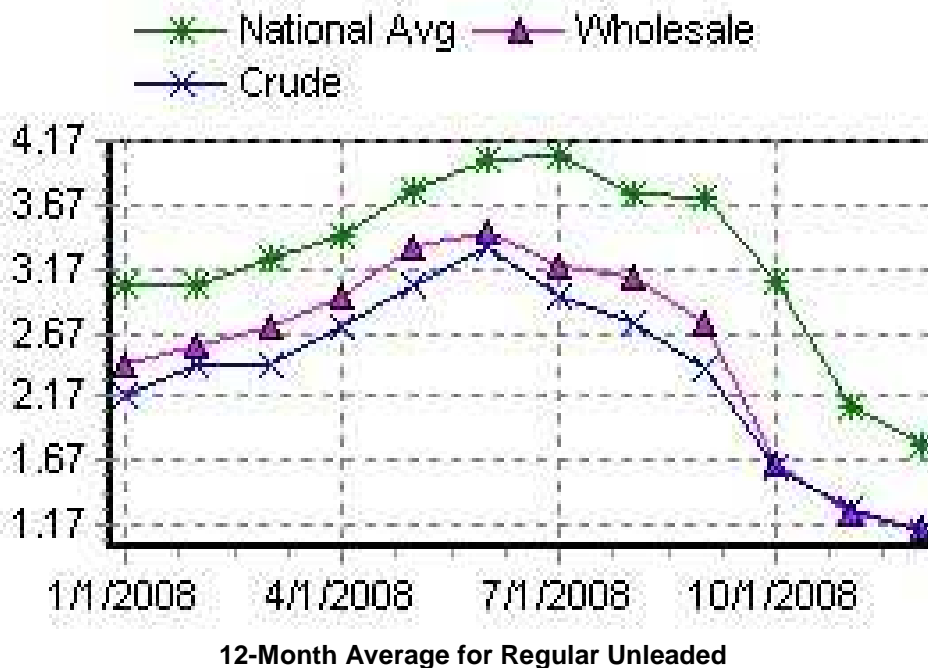
like fuel injection, electronic ignition, and tires that make the old ones "back in the day" seem like they were made of wood.

Fact is, "the look" of the Triumph T100, just like riding a motorcycle for the pure pleasure of it, never goes out of style. Plus, we can use far less gas at the same time and enjoy something we wish we had "back in the day" as good as it is today.

Isn't this what really matters?

Ride safe.

Billy Voss



Not a gas leak on that Ducati!



Next month's article will cover Native American culture, BMW motorcycles in the desert, and seeing Davy Jones of the Monkeys at the Fort McDowell Casino.

(All three are related in a deep and disturbing way.)

a scooter when she "was a young girl". Well, that was well over forty years ago at least. She got back on her scooter, shot off across the parking lot and almost drove into a parked car.

Now, as the graph shows, we should be seeing gas prices fall dramatically.

Those who were profiting on the outrageous oil prices became too afraid that we would finally develop alternatives, which we should.

For me I'll go back in time (in a way) and get that new green Triumph T100 with

fuel injection and a comfortable riding position. I don't want to grow my hair long, or do many of the things we did that were dumb (disco, smoking, unsafe you know what) when we were young, but the Triumph Bonneville T100 has a classic "look" and style today that was so popular back in the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

Today, the new Triumph T100 has brakes that work, doesn't require the carb "tickle" that made your fingers smell of gas, and no oil puddles. As a bonus, they've added a bunch of other updates