

**From Cruiser to Crotch Rocket....and Back**

By Jim Scott

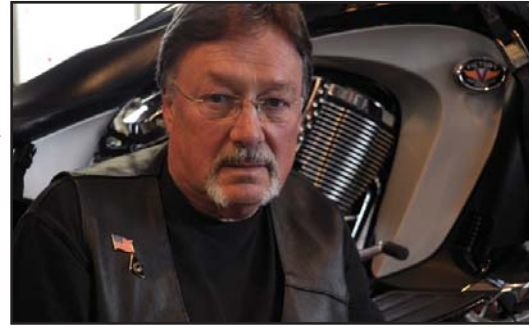
It was five years ago when I ran the Million Dollar Highway out in western Colorado. My Victory Vegas was challenged on a few spots and my wife asked me to stay closer to the yellow line, as opposed to the white one. There wasn't much room for error. But the ride down into Silverton, from the back side of Telluride, is a series of twists and blind corners, peppered with loose rocks and scared cage drivers crossing into your lane. It's a scenic highway, but it is sort of like walking through Victoria Secret with your wife. If you dare to look away from where you are going, you will die.

I just got back today from a week in that part of the world. What a trip! We did the Arches National Park, the Canyon Lands National Park, the Dead Horse State Park, and other stuff, but I don't have all the brochures. The roads out there are fantastic for cycles and we saw a ton of them. We were in a cage. It made for better conversation than chasing each other through it all and never seeing stuff, but man, what a biker's heaven.

Our plan was to do the Million Dollar on Wednesday, but it rained, and who wants to do a road designed to accommodate mule wagons in the rain. So we waited until Thursday.

I have two cycles, neither of which is anything close to a crotch rocket. My son had one and I road it once. My friend bought one, as a second bike in a trade deal, and I road it home. So when my host showed me the 600cc Suzuki I was going to ride (Since my wife had us fly out there!), I wondered if I was biting off more than I could chew. We spent the rain-day prepping the machines. His was 1100cc's. I said he shouldn't concern himself as to where I was. Hell, it is the only damned highway through the mountains. How can I get lost? But I did notice that my riding boots were a little too big to find that tiny shift lever, and the equally tiny brake pedal, both of which were hidden somewhere forward of these pegs that you had to assume the shape of a pretzel to find. I modified my wardrobe to facilitate operating said machine. I wasn't pretty. Utilitarian would best describe my cross between bagger-boy and Ninja man.

Off we went. Down from his mountain perch with his 1.5 mile driveway and out the access road to the highway....for a total of 6.6 miles of gravel....lose stuff. Hell, I was ready to raise the flag of accomplishment at that point, and on we road. It got to be fun. Really fun. All of my Lee Parks Advanced Rider Course started to come back to me. I was keeping up with the 1100. And then I recalled the item I read in a cycle



publication somewhere that said that riders going from cruisers to sport bikes were more likely to crash than those who went from sport to cruisers. I know that at 69 years of age I might only count for a half a statistic, but that would still present a problem for me and my family. But I was having fun. Banking that puppy; sliding off the seat like Marque Marques, leaning

into the curves with my old body....what a hoot!!

But it had to end. Somewhere around 80 miles, we were home....through the gravel again. The point where your head meets your back really hurt. The shaking stopped after two Foster's. (25 oz a can. Love those Aussies!) I was amazed at how much I enjoyed it.

So I got home today and got back on the Vegas to run into town. What a joy! Comfort, power, shine, and sitting upright.

The point I learned is this. I can have fun riding anything with two wheels. Some of them are designed to do different things. I enjoyed the crisp ride and the performance handling. It was much more sure-footed than the first time I ran that road. But I guess, that in the long run, my nearly three-quarter century of cycling has brought me to a point of acknowledging that most of the magazines are aimed at somebody I am not. That's OK, because I found out I can get out there with those guys and run with them because of what I learned coming up. So I have been there, but I am really glad to be back on my comfortable steeds. I probably set a bad precedent waving to all the baggers from a crotch rocket, but the only ones who didn't wave back were from Texas. I found out nobody out there in Colorado likes them anyway.



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