

Can We Put a Stop to This?

By Jim Scott

The weather sucks, but I know it is going to break about the time my insurance kicks back in, so I asked the guys in the shop if they might want to do a tire job on my cycles. Yeah, that's plural. The touring machine gets new treads about every other year, and this year, the little one came up with some dry-rot, so do them both. And while you guys are at it, could you check the pads and replace them if they need it. Thanks. Hell, they needed work anyway. Act like the big spender. Pretty wife is still working. Retirement is so much fun.



The back tire on the little one needs to be ordered.

Seems the manufacturer built something into the design that negates competition for the rear tire...or somebody crossed a few nefarious bucks over some designer's greedy hands. What are you going to do? Next call I get is to ask if I want to change brake fluid. Seems the stuff is a tad cloudy. Hmmm. I changed the little one myself last year. It was pretty bad, but it was getting almost clear by the end of the DOT 5 bottle. What the hell, it was going on eleven years old. Back in the days of whale oil, we didn't have these issues. We were just losing whales. Good enough.....maybe. And you guys changed out the big bike two years ago when I did tires. Do I spend the money? Then I had a couple of visions.

Two years ago we were on day seven of a ten day tour. We left Cody, WY with an uneasy sense about the weather. Sort of the feeling you get on Wednesday after staying too long for taco Tuesday. You know something is going to happen. You just hope you are in a good place when it does. Well, we weren't. We were leaving the rest area where everybody takes pictures and relieves bodily functions from too much fun in Cody. Good ol' Doug tells me he is going to go ahead and have some fun running the curves down the Bear Tooth Pass (Elevation: 10,947 ft.)....on his big-ass bagger. I know he is a race car driver, and he hasn't crashed that often, but he had a lot more around him then and it was relatively flat. What can I say? Oh, and it started to rain.

About a mile down the road, there he was, flagging me down. "What?"

"I don't have any brakes!" he says. By golly, you're right. No leaks. No broken lines. But that pedal goes all the way down. It's going to be a slow ride, in the rain, to Red Lodge. I spot a sign going into town for Bone Daddy's Bike Shop. We make it and the guy works overnight to fix it, after going to his kid's high school football game. Turns out to be old brake fluid broke down in the high altitude. That'll be \$25.00, if that's OK. Doug threw in a souvenir shirt to show his appreciation and generosity.

Scene number two. Finishing up a trip around Lake Superior last year, we (Same guy with me.) were heading south along Lake Michigan on M35. Beautiful run with the lake on the left heading into Menominee for lunch. About 35 miles north, around J.W. Wells State Park, I saw something moving to the left of me. According to good ol' Doug, "All I saw was the deer, your lights go on, and the deer land on its side in the ditch. Do you want to stop to clean your skivvies?"

"What are you talking about? I never felt anything, or heard anything." Maybe I should have been concerned. The marks across my front fender from the hoofs scraping it are still there. How about those brakes!

I read articles about maintenance and keeping your machine fine-tuned and safe and all that. I paid a lot more attention when I was riding in the dirk, many year ago. Seems so easy to just get on that iron horse and run it. Everything works pretty well. I can change brake fluid. I could save the money. Yeah, but they are ABS.

"Thanks for the call Ed. Go ahead and change it out. Then it's done."

I really miss the whale oil stuff.

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