

# Open Road Cycles

**Y**OU DON'T NEED to tell me there are cycles in the universe; invisible tides that affect our lives. Call it what you will. Taken with the flow, they propel you in the direction you want to go. And if your timing is off, their cosmic undertow and rip tides can pull you back into danger even though outwardly, the scene looks the same for everyone.

Nothing makes this more obvious than taking part in an activity that tempts the Fates, like riding a motorcycle. And the need to maintain good timing is never more intense than when riding long distances, day after day.

It can be both physically exhausting and spiritually exhilarating at the same time. And, perhaps the spiritual rewards are roughly equivalent to the physical demands. Why else would we do it?

You have to really listen to your body and manage your energy if you want to be successful at it. In fact, you have to listen to more than your body, you have to listen to your intuition.

Our adventure-touring comparison ride covered in this issue was an epic adventure for all of us. But as the sponsor and official organizer of these things, I feel a special responsibility for the welfare of everyone.

This somehow requires that long before we gather to leave, I try to look into the future for a glimpse of what we might face.

I'll look at the calendar and try to envision the weather weeks ahead. The right gear for the weather is critical. And my intuition is usually more accurate than the weather forecaster's.

My mother's father could foretell the weather with absolutely uncanny accuracy. An immigrant from rural Finland, he may have inherited a farmer's keen sense of the land. As a boy, each morning before I left the house for my post as a school crossing guard, I would ask him what the day would be like and dress accordingly.

He was never wrong. Seriously, never. And I'll never forget the day I doubted him. I was about 12 years old. My guess was that the day would be cool and windy, but dry. He told me it would snow. This prediction seemed so preposterous that I proudly disagreed and dressed for the morning I envisioned. I think he was both a little hurt and amused that I would do that. A half hour later I was hugging my arms and jumping around trying to keep warm, wearing a light jacket, freezing in blowing snow! He was my nature guru.

But I also believe that we can influence events. Not by a lot, maybe, but by enough that when the cosmic pinballs start



cascading through the gates, if we get it right, we can win another game. Isn't that the point of existence?

For our trip, I created a story where everything went according to plan: We would be up by 7 a.m. We would avoid fatigue by stopping at reasonable intervals. We would stop before dark. We would keep a riding pace that could be enjoyed by each of us on very different motorcycles. Although I didn't consider it consciously, I knew the law of attraction would cause these projections to increase in probability.

There is strength in numbers, too. Every group activity benefits from deeply shared expectations of a given outcome—to return from a mission or succeed in a quest, for instance. It was Intention to the third power for us.

In a mysterious answer to my prayers, I had the most curious urge to buy some Immodium and pack it in my bag. I'd never taken the stuff in my life, so it wasn't like I had any special feeling about it. But I became obsessed looking for travel size packets. The bottles of liquid I found seemed like a bad idea. LT Snyder had recommended it for your long-distance travel kit in an article years ago, and said he always carried it. I never found the pills, but I eventually contented myself with the thought that LT would surely have some.

It turned out that LT would need them, on the morning of the second day, and he hadn't carried them this time. Two people had failed to heed their intuitions.

Something similar happened when David Hough and I shared an Aprilia Caponord for a ride from Anchorage to Irvine. He rode the northern leg to Seattle, I picked it up and took it down the coast.

In preparation, I went through a similar appeal to the cosmos; asking for guidance and envisioning success. That time, it was tire repairs that obsessed me, and I devised the mini 12V pump that was such a hit with our readers as a response. But again, it wasn't me who would need it, but David, and he didn't have it, making a long stretch of barren highway into an ordeal.

Looking back at our recent adventure, in particular the final day's battle with very high winds in the Banning Pass area, I'm struck by how I prepared for it.

At the last food stop, in Twentynine Palms, we were tired, but glad to be nearing home. At the end of the meal, I tried to rally my energy, closing my eyes and taking long slow inhales through the nose and slow exhales through pursed lips. Donny and LT must have exchanged glances but didn't say anything. It turned out that I would never need all my strength more than I did an hour later.

The topography of this pass is a kind of giant natural venturi between the mountains and the desert and thus home to one of California's largest windmill farms. As we approached the mountains that we would need to cross, the sidewinds increased in strength to sustained speeds of 60–70 mph with even stronger gusts that would blow us completely across the highway from the shoulder into the fast lane. There was nowhere to hide in the sandstorm, and the winds wouldn't let up. We had to continue. Traffic was very light in our direction, thankfully, and we managed to avoid any collisions.

Mother Nature had warned us of her power many times on the trip, with strong gusts blown across great distances, but had spared us until that moment. We literally felt like we were in a fight for our lives.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, I don't believe you should let yourself slow down more than you absolutely have to when you're caught in high winds. You lose your bike's gyro stability and the lack of forward momentum allows you to be pushed even further off course.

It wasn't pretty, but we got through it. And the spiritual reward was equal to the effort. Within a week, the fatigue had faded and we were each overjoyed to be alive and excited about the possibilities!

*DAVE SEARLE*

—Dave Searle  
Editor