

## Learning

I'VE HAD SOME wonderful teachers in school over the years, men and women who could share the excitement of their own sense of discovery with any student who cared enough to listen.

In second grade, I was apparently oblivious to learning, much to my parents' dismay, until my teacher, Mr. San Giorgio, conceived of a way to engage me. He introduced me to a book called *The Dragons of Blueiland*, a fantasy that inspired my imagination to such a degree that I volunteered to read it out loud to the class, which he allowed me to do for about ten minutes a day. It's still hard to believe I did that. But I was a willing learner after that, one of those people who typically sat in the front row in class and maintained eye contact with the teacher. And I can tell you from personal experience on the other side of the desk that such students give priceless feedback, making the job of imparting information so much easier. It's no wonder they often become the teacher's pet.

I don't know if there were other critical moments in my growth, but ever since then, I've always loved sharing information, and none more enthusiastically than my passion for motorcycling. If you're like me, and I suspect you are, being trapped in a social situation with people who know what you do, but could care less about bikes and riding makes me feel like I'm marooned on another planet. The unspoken truth that they can't make any sense of me—assuming I'm somehow weird—is a real conversation killer.

In a world where we elect politicians who refuse to tell us where they stand, preferring instead to give us sappy images of walking on the beach with their families while a voice-over slanders their rivals, and where choosing the lesser of evils is the most common way to decide how to vote just makes me sick. I'd much rather hear the truth, and I'd make the necessary allowances to have a real person in charge, one whose views I could count on, warts and all.

Living as though life is perfect, hiding the truth, has become a national pastime. Beautiful people seemingly enthralled with material possessions bombard us endlessly from the pages of glossy magazines and on television. Good for you if that's your reality, but I seriously doubt it. Most families are at least partly dysfunctional, relationships go sideways, and keeping life's ends meeting takes a lot of our time.

Thank heavens for MCN, a place we all share, where the relationship between reality and its description are as true as we can



make it. The fact that there is still a place in the world for such honesty is sometimes hard for manufacturers to bare. A few would clearly prefer a scripted relationship, where a pile of advertising money guarantees an obsequious response to new products. But inside those same companies are people who yearn to hear us tell it like it is.

Recently, I was stopped in the hall at a dealer convention by a senior employee of a major manufacturer. He saw my name badge and told me he was the project leader on a line of bikes, one of which we'd recently given a rather scathing review. It was warm in the hall, but the sweat that started to bead on my brow was partly in anticipation of what I might hear next. Anger? Justifications? But there was nothing of the kind, as he completely ignored the review to tell me how much he liked MCN. I'm sure he knew as well as I did why we'd said what we said, and perhaps it was important that other people inside the company hear it, too, rather than pretend everything was perfect. Whether it's calls, e-mails or face-to-face meetings, I hear such comments a lot, and every time it makes me proud and more determined than ever to make the next issue worthy of such regard.

And, as fortunate as we all are to have had great teachers in our lives, there's nothing like finding out for yourself what's happening. Years of wrenching on other people's bikes have given me the critical faculties to analyze components and systems and often to figure out why they don't work as they should. Plus, we test every bike, both for performance on the road and on the dyno, which reveals a great deal that might be missed otherwise.

For instance, in this issue we finally got confirmation that the BMW R1200GS has a problem with top end power delivery. Clearly, as good as the new GS is, it could be even better, with maybe 15 more horses.

And even when we can't stop what we're doing to R&D problems we've uncovered, we're in a position to talk to people who can and encourage them to find solutions, or to speak directly with manufacturers to better understand why things work as they do. This month's response to readers' concerns about slippery new tires is such an example.

Each month, our database of knowledge grows larger as improvements to such things as suspension, fuel injection and brake design supercede our previous benchmarks. It's personally exciting for me, and clearly something you want for your own knowledge.

And aside from the thrill of all-new motorcycles, refined hardware or the latest gear, there's so much to know about the external influences on motorcycling, from regulations brewing in Washington or Europe to the machinations of the MSF.

I don't wish to sound disrespectful. There are a lot of honest people working at other publications, but MCN remains unique because we can lead the way. And I can see that we've had an effect on the whole motorcycle journalism field. If they can get away with it, so can we, seems to be the idea. To the extent that's true, we're all better off and will be able to buy even better products. To the extent that it's not, MCN will continue to be worth the big bucks.

Perhaps as this is the November issue, the month of Thanksgiving, and with the pain and suffering of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath so terribly raw, I'd like to thank all of our contributors for the dedication they share to bringing each issue to fruition. I can tell you that they don't do it for fame and fortune. Instead, they love the community that has formed around this magazine and have decided to assist in its growth. Each of you who buys a subscription has made the same commitment, and we can all be proud that such an enterprise can survive. Many in the industry wouldn't have bet two cents on that happening when MCN was created.

We've proved the doubters wrong and created something extraordinary.

Bless you all!

*DAVE SEARLE*

—Dave Searle  
Editor