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**Pro-Cartoon**

When I saw the blurb on page 5 about substituting a survival tip for the cartoon I thought “that sounds interesting!” Unfortunately, I thought the tip was pretty useless. My goal is to survive the roads around Washington, DC and the mid-Atlantic area. Getting water from cacti doesn’t figure into the equation!

Larry Cain  
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 Gaithersburg, MD

Keep the cartoons! My wife thought you were right on the money. I’ll take my chances finding water.

Patrick McBrien  
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 East Berlin, PA

I had to chuckle, and then go back to look at the February cartoon, and then laugh again at the letters of complaint. That’s when I realized I had missed the

cartoon those last few issues. I say bring it back.

Jon Panush  
 jpanush@hotmail.com

Fish hooks, needles and surgical blades in the tankbag? Licking leaves? No thank you. Please bring back the cartoon.

Tony Deveau  
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 Lacey, WA

**Anti-Cartoon**

Keep the “Survival Tips” and dump the cartoons. They’re generally uninspired and often foolish. Otherwise, great work.

J. Frank Papovich  
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 Charlottesville, VA

Just read my April issue and noted the “Dear Readers” insert concerning the cartoon vs. survival tip. My opinion is that if MCN can’t refrain from cartoons that are

off-color and offensive to many readers, then it’s best to stick with the safety tips. Just my opinion.

Doyle Evans  
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**‘Cruisermania’ Wrong About Victory**

All of us at Victory Motorcycles appreciate your regular coverage of Victory in your publication. We have a tremendous amount of respect for your magazine and the credibility it brings to the entire industry.

That said, I wanted to just drop you (and your readers) a note in reference to Fred Rau’s “Contact Patch” in the April 2007 issue, titled *Cruisermania A Decade Later*. In this particular column, there were a few references to Victory Motorcycles and our current state of affairs that are simply not accurate and left all of us wondering where Fred may have obtained his data.

He wrote, “I predicted (in 1997) that single-line cruiser manufacturers, especially the new ones like Excelsior-Henderson, Indian and Victory, would be

**Attention MSF Instructors!**

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the first victims of the downturn in the cruiser market. Since then two of those have gone belly up and Victory is struggling.”

In reality, Victory is continuing to grow at close to 10 times the rate of the industry according to MIC data, our dealer network continues to expand (currently at more than 360 dealers) and as you and many of your readers saw a few months back in the J.D. Power and Associates report, our satisfaction scores with our customers are at industry-leading levels across the board.

Furthermore, Victory is and always has been the motorcycle division of Polaris Industries—a close to \$2 billion company that has been around for more than 50 years and is a recognized leader in the powersports industry. All of us on the Victory team are very proud of what Victory has become—the fastest growing motorcycle brand in the industry and the second largest manufacturer of motorcycles in the United States. I would like to remind Fred and your readers that we are healthy, we are profitable and rest assured we aren't going anywhere.

Later in his column, Fred also mentioned, “It also might be worth noting that Victory's newest, most expensive and most touted model, on which they seem to be banking their future, is a luxury tourer—not one of their mainstay cruisers.” Every Victory motorcycle is targeted toward a specific customer and industry segment—and the new Victory Vision is an extension of the current Victory family of bikes. It marks the brand's entrance into the luxury touring segment.

This bike was the most researched product Victory (or Polaris for that matter) has ever built and we have been thrilled with the early positive response to it by people around the world. While it would be ill-sighted to bank our future on but one type of motorcycle, the Victory Vision in fact helps complete our portfolio of product offerings and we believe it will fulfill the dreams of many riders who are looking to tour on an American V-twin luxury touring motorcycle.

We would cordially like to invite you and Fred to visit our facilities any time you wish—to gain a current and accurate picture of the state of the Victory Motorcycles business.

Mark Blackwell  
Vice President, Victory Motorcycle and  
International Operations  
for Polaris Industries

### Corner Braking

Would any of the techniques outlined in the Proficient Motorcycling article “Cor-

ner Braking” change if the bike had linked or unlinked ABS? (And yes, I am aware that ABS does not prevent a corner slide.)

My bike has linked ABS, and I have been reluctant to use trail braking in a curve, preferring to first upright the bike and then apply the brakes (space permitting). I used trail braking on my previous bike which had a conventional braking system.

Allen Smith  
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*Allen, the main concern with corner braking is whether you have enough traction to add braking force to tires that are already stressed trying to handle cornering force. The technique you prefer of straightening the bike before braking is the way to go for preserving traction. But, as you say, this isn't always possible which may require some amount of corner (trail) braking.*

*It's important that you are very careful about trail braking! Occasional use of light trail braking to adjust speed will likely give you little trouble, but trail braking increases the risk of traction loss even at moderate levels and should not be used as a routine method for adjusting speed for corners. Instead, brake earlier and with more force to ensure an entry speed that allows cornering throttle, not brakes.*

*To answer your question, linked brakes add a level of complication to managing traction when trail braking. Although you don't mention which system your bike employs, and there are several different forms in use, all linked brakes take control away from the rider by deciding the balance of the front and rear brake application created by the linkage. Instead the system may apply both brakes every time whenever either the front brake lever or rear brake pedal is applied with varying amounts of force distributed between the two tires. Some use front brakes linked to the rear pedal, some use rear brakes linked to the front lever, some separate the rear brake from linkage, others the front.*

*The advantage of linking both brakes is that brake force is shared between both tires, which in theory can preserve traction. But, cornering places more stress onto the front tire, which means additional brake force during cornering can put too much stress on the front tire. Plus, the rear tire can slide more easily because of its unloaded state. Thus, traction management during trail braking is more challenging without separate control of front and rear brake power.*

*One significant disadvantage of not being able to choose which brake to use is*

*if you want to use trail braking to tighten your cornering line. Rear brake force is effective at this maneuver, but front brake force will give you the opposite result, typically causing the motorcycle to run wide.*

*My advice is to not use trail braking as a regular method of cornering, no matter what bike you ride, and to accept that linked brakes take away rider control in an already risky situation.*

—Ken Condon

### Don't Panic!

I'm an admitted newbie to motorcycling (I just hit the 1000-mile mark), but I've already had a recent test of skills. This past weekend, while riding down a curvy beachside road in Maine, a less-than-competent SUV driver obliviously hooked a left turn in front of me. My inexperience showed as I slammed on the brakes and went into a rear skid.

Luckily, thanks to your continued safety articles, I'd foreseen her idiocy and had planned an escape route. I knew to look toward my escape route (not her shocked face), and I knew to work with the bike instead of trying to force it into an unnatural line.

Most valuable of all, MCN taught me not to panic. You really have no idea how much you've picked up until you have the (unfortunate) opportunity to put it to use. My brother, who was riding behind me, couldn't believe I stayed upright. Needless to say, he's already asking for my back issues.

Thank you so much. I can honestly say MCN saved my life this past weekend!

Jonathan Faldasz  
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*Jonathan, I'm glad to hear that you escaped unharmed from what could have been a tragedy, and I'm glad that we had something to do with your success. I'm also happy to hear that you are able to identify where you went right and where you need improvement. Good for you.*

*It's terrific that you were able to keep your wits about you to avoid target fixation. I'm sure identifying an escape route instead of locking your attention onto the SUV was a difficult thing to do.*

*As far as the braking miscue goes, you point out correctly that locking the rear brake is not good. It's important to remember that we react either poorly or skillfully depending on what habits we have developed. The natural reaction to panic is to stomp on the rear brake. But, with training in proper emergency braking technique, followed by continual practice to keep this important skill sharp, you*

stand a much better chance of braking with maximum effect while remaining in control.

*I recommend taking your bike to a parking lot and practicing maximum braking or better yet, enroll in a rider safety course to develop not only your braking skills, but also your cornering skills under the eye of professional instructors. It's money well spent.*

—Ken Condon

## Hanging Off Cruisers

The most common complaint about cruisers in the magazines is their lack of ground clearance. Hanging off is a good way to compensate for this. I don't suggest that cruisers should be ridden sportbike/track day style, but I find that on occasions where the curve is tighter than expected or the entry speed higher than appropriate for the curve, a little hanging off helps. Usually just shifting the butt to the inside and sticking the inside knee out yields a noticeable reduction in lean.

When I mention this on cruiser forums the response is generally negative, as if hanging off a bit is extremely improper for a cruiser rider. I think it should be in their bag of tricks, and should be taught in beginning riding classes since a large proportion of new riders start on cruisers.

Sherm Gallay  
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*Sherm, you are correct that moving your body toward the inside of the motorcycle, whether a sportbike or cruiser, shifts the combined center of gravity of bike and rider inside and down. This will allow a corner to be ridden using less lean angle. Shifting your butt off the seat will net the best results, but this can be a bit "extreme" for many riders.*

*Almost equally beneficial is to shift just your head and shoulders to the inside, which moves the uppermost amount of weight for good effect. An easy technique is to simply rock your hips onto the inside cheek, allowing your shoulders to follow.*

*For those who haven't tried this before, they need to be aware that the effect is significant, and that their cornering line may tighten more than expected, so it should be practiced in a safe place.*

*You are absolutely right that all riders should be aware of this "trick." Unfortunately, hanging off challenges the popular image of cruising. It's not unlike wearing full-faced helmets; it makes sense and is much safer, but can't pass the image requirements. Good luck and keep up the good work.*

—Ken Condon

## More Standard Bikes!

I read Fred Rau's latest column with interest. I agreed with his prediction that the cruiser market would decline. I feel that the slow decline he noted may be due to the lack of "standard" motorcycles being offered to the buying public. People with short inseams really have no choice but to buy a bike that will allow them to reach the ground easily and safely at stops. Even smaller displacement bikes have tall seats.

In another magazine, a writer referred to a bike as a "standard," yet the footpegs were clearly more sportbike oriented than those you'd expect on a standard. My recently (and dearly) departed 1980 UJM allowed my feet to be under my knees rather than my butt, and had a gastank that was only slightly higher than the seat. Bring 'em back, I say.

Ralph G. Lombardo  
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## Thanks flash

"Clearing Fluid Out of The Ears" by flash gordon md, May 2007, is a valuable contribution to comfort and communication. Before reading his article on a method for clearing liquid in the middle ear, I had experimented without success. The only solution has been to have a surgeon create a small puncture in my eardrum and evacuate the liquid.

I have waited for months to be considered for this procedure, so having an alternative is very much appreciated. My hearing aids are of no use when the middle ear is flooded with fluid. Thank you, flash.

Leonard Lloyd  
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## Re: 'Raise Your Voice'

Dale Darling's suggestions were explained well and hopefully will inspire more riders to participate in our political process. Something not mentioned, though, was to simply make a telephone call. Talking to a real person greatly enhances the likelihood of initiating some action.

Call your representative's Washington office and ask to speak with someone who handles the issue you wish to discuss. You'll typically be switched to a staffer who is familiar with the issue or is willing to become so.

Be polite and give your "Hollywood pitch." Don't blather, but be as concise and articulate as possible. Summarize your issue: what is your objective, what are your facts, what should the congressperson do for you?

After you've made your pitch, ask the staffer if you can e-mail additional information, and don't forget to include all of your contact information.

Getting your point across to someone who will probably handle your problem and making a "personal" connection over the telephone go a long way toward making your point and potentially getting action. Ask the staffer to contact you about any questions he/she has or for additional information.

After you've made the call and sent the e-mail, give the staffer time to evaluate your request. Make a return call after several weeks to check in. Don't be a pest.

While you're at it, get other people to call their representatives and do the same thing. More people bringing attention to your issue means you're more likely to get results. Another suggestion is to contact the representative on the congressional subcommittee that handles your issue. These are the folks who may ultimately get a bill out.

These same tactics can also be applied to state issues.

Rick Povich  
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## The Good Old Days

Thoroughly enjoyed your column on "Good Old Days" of early 1960s Japanese two strokes. At that time, Rhode Island School of Design had a vibrant motorcycle club made up of industrial designers who all rode English bikes—Triumph Bonneville, BSAs, Nortons, etc. Like an outcast, I purchased one of the first Yamaha two strokes, the fast YDS2. Off the line I could beat any of the bigger British bikes up to about 40 mph. After that they would overtake me, but that 250cc bike wowed everyone.

I can still hear the "bumblebee" roar of that two stroke and the blue smoke trail that followed me all over College Hill in Providence.

I rode that bike back to my home state of New Jersey, down to the shore in Beach Haven, and had a wonderful time riding that bike all over south Jersey.

After that I sold the bike and followed a successful design career, but never forgot that machine.

In 2004, I purchased a Yamaha FJR1300 and really enjoy it. The FJR is smooth, powerful and a refined machine. But for pure excitement, I still think of that 250cc YDS2 and the thrill of that two-stroke burst of speed. Nothing could beat that!

Ronald Russo  
Barrington, RI