

Headgasketless horsemen

I was delighted to read the write up about Manny's son Philippe in the January issue (Race Prep CBR125R part three). It is, however, scary to contemplate yet another of the "mad Barqueiro clan" taking to asphalt. Neil's characterizing Manny as being irrepressible seems apt. I'd like to share my two favourite Manny stories:

Several years ago, about 15 of us were tearing up Vermont back roads on the fastest, most advanced sport bikes known to man. I, through a combination of fear, deep-rooted self-preservation instincts and reasoning that someone had to live to tell the tale, was happily situated at the tail end of our frantic conga line as it convulsed its way across the countryside. We strung out over a fair distance, but I could clearly see the lead rider. It was Manny. Leading the charge and ever-increasing the distance between himself and the next closest loon, Manny was quickly leaving the rest of us in his dust. We were all mounted on high-calibre CBRs, GSX-Rs and Ducatis among other modern supersports. Manny, the same guy kicking our collective butts at the head of the line, was riding his long-suffering, bent and bashed XT550 Yamaha single, on worn off-road tires. I learned a lot from Manny that day. I was administered a good dose of humility, and more importantly I learned it mattered more who was on a bike than which bike they were riding.

Another time, a large group of us were making our way home from a yet another blast through Vermont (we just love the roads in that state). Just outside of Burlington, in gathering darkness and a good two hours from home, our friend Avi's RZ350 packed it in. Some of the group, myself included, sensing urgency due to our dark-tinted visors, inky blackness and small country roads decided to press on and get home ASAP. Manny and some others decided instead that this was the perfect time for a leisurely meal at Howard Johnsons.

I found out about the hair-raising finale to the day's adventure the next morning. Seems that after a lengthy meal at HoJo's, Manny's intrepid group were faced with the

problem of how to get Avi and his crippled RZ home. Renting a flatbed was out of the question—Manny, although a highly skilled motorcyclist is notoriously cheap, and, well, Avi is too for that matter. Manny's brother Raul, or Ralph as everyone knows him, was also present at the post-mealtime brainstorming session. Only knowing Ralph



There are as many braces and brackets propping Manny up as there are his bikes.

and Manny can you truly appreciate the solution they had devised.

Both Barqueiros are mad-keen bikers with a competitive streak: their solution? Manny traded off his bike to Avi, and a towline was duly attached from Ralph's BMW to the RZ, with Manny at the helm of the stricken two-stroke.

The route home was a snaking, twisted bit of blacktop, with no streetlights. Tractor-trailers frequent the route, as do all manner of furry critter, large and small. Our gallant duo set out at a reasonable pace that lasted until the first corner, when Manny discovered, to his surprise, that if he dragged the Yamaha's brakes slightly it put tension on the towline, and as he entered a turn, could then release the brakes and rocket around Ralph. In the dark. With no lights.

Ralph, of course, would not accept the

challenge unanswered, and so accelerated away whenever Manny entered his peripheral vision (don't try this at home kids, these men are trained professionals). Somehow they made it home unscathed, Avi's powerless RZ included. The lads were right chuffed with their successful ride, and yet another Manny story passed into legend.

Folks living along that stretch of road in Vermont say that on moonless nights, when the air is still, if you listen closely you can still hear the shrill cries of the 'Ghost Bikers' and the terrible screeching of their brakes as they race through the night. I tell no lie.

—Mike Common
Montreal, Quebec

Heavy-handed Spyder

After receiving the January issue I turned immediately to the road test of the Can-Am Spyder SE5. I found the test fair and balanced. I was surprised, however, to see the Spyder's steering described as requiring "herculean effort". I have found quite the opposite with my Spyder. It took me a little while to adjust to the sensitivity of its steering but once I relaxed my grip and lightly pulled back, rather than pushed on the handlebar, everything fell into place. There have been a few rare cases reported of Dynamic Power Steering (DPS) failure, which would definitely make the steering heavy and ponderous. A properly functioning Spyder should not require great effort to steer. Admittedly, it does take some strength to navigate the beast through the twisties, since both operator and passenger are fighting G-forces.

I do agree with the statement that, "for hardcore two-wheeled types, (the Spyder) remains an acquired taste." So too is a fine single malt Scotch, but I would say to long-time riders of conventional motorcycles like me (39 years and counting), if you allot sufficient saddle time to the Spyder, you just might find it an equally heady and pleasing elixir.

—Bruce Brown
London, Ontario

Send letters to Readers Write, Cycle Canada, 370 Queen's Quay W., Suite 100, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 3J3, or via email at cyclecanada@lcmmedia.ca. Include your address. Name and address withheld upon request.