



OMMRA Information Bulletin June 2000

From Paolo Volpara on Saturday, June 17, 2000

Comments, suggestions, ideas, question: volpara@homemail.com

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Dear Riders,

The reason for the late arrival of this bulletin is quite simple: I have been thinking and, for some of us, this activity is unusual and tiresome.

I have been thinking about what my friend **Sinan Sezer** told me days after a serious accident on motorcycle he sustained last month while travelling on the motorway with his wife. "I am reconsidering the use of the bike and I will never travel with a passenger again" Sinan told me in a hot afternoon while discussing the event. "I have seen the Dark Side of Biking". This last phrase stayed with me in the last weeks-rumbling trough my mind when riding or when thinking about riding. "Did I see the dark side of motorcycle?" I kept asking myself "and, if so, when, where, how? "

Like most of the old riders I had my good share of accidents and broken bones, my portion of punishments for stupidity, distraction, bravado and sheer bad luck: the last broken leg is quite recent going back only to the summer of 99 and just at the beginning of this year my good friend Sami died in a terrible accident.

I decided that the best way to personally discover the Dark Side of Motorcycle was to go back and remember, re-examine, re-live those dramatic moments and, with the wisdom coming from age, find an aspect of my favorite sport that I did not consider. This I did I saw again faces of pilots, friends, passengers, I saw corners that I misjudged, cars that surprised me, muddy paths with hidden traps, meters of asphalt sliding under my fairing... but I did not find the "Dark Side".

Then, just before dismissing this subject, I stumbled once more in the little poems I included in the May Bulletin. Maybe emphatic and a little "heroic" but with a great pearl in the closing part: *"When you have done this, and yet thrill to the promise of the un-risen sun that will soon shine upon the hook and crook of a gnarled mountain trace, fully apprehending the machine's propensity to deal death or exalt life -- then will you have become a motorcyclist."*

“The machine’s propensity to deal death or exalt life” is a good way to explain our passion for fast, powerful and awesome bikes. And it is also the road to understand the Bright Side of Motorcycling.

Biking is a sport and like any sport it requires attention, preparation and caution; like any sport it place the players in anomalous situations potentially risky; like any sport it involves a certain level of planned risk-taking and it brings the human in close contact with dangers.

We were nor born for rushing at 100 km. per hours at 30 centimeters from a rough, hard, abrasive surface called asphalt. Our body is not naturally equipped to sustain impact against immobile object at high speed and our reflexes are often inadequate to deal with the change of reality generated by the push of a Yamaha YZF-R1 or a Kawasaki ZX-9R.

Mastering the Power requires knowledge, discipline, experience and humility.

For the old bikers like myself old these three elements were imposed by the circumstances of the 50’s in Europe when a 125 cc. bike was all we could get and it had to go for long time. We learned on not-so-powerful machines with chassis demanding great attention to keep the going straight, with brakes requiring long anticipation and, more important, with the deep knowledge that we could not change the bike in the year to come. My first bike was a Gilera and I kept it for more than 10 years.

Racing (on and off road) has also been a good teacher: learning from people better than you, always asking for questions, always seeking a better answer.

Reading added new elements to the education: from books like “The Twist Of The Wrist” or “Motorcycle Excellence” we learned better lines to be experimented on the road, better observation techniques to be protect our lives when riding.

Most of all riding courses and riding with better riders have been my real master. Just going out for rides with professional riders and observing them, discuss with them, question them. Humility was imparted the hard way: you better recognize that somebody is a better rider than you are or face the tarmac.

How long this process lasted? How long do you intend to ride? I have never been out on the road on my bike without learning. The process of mastering the machine end of applying your mind and body to the bike never ended and it will never end; and this is the bright side of biking

“Do you drive a car? Do you ride a bicycle? If so you can ride a bike today!” As absurd as it sounds this is a normal selling proposition from bikes dealer to attract new customers and this is still the current mentality among several fellow bikers. From the first impact bike looks familiar: a bicycle with engine, responding to the same rules of cars, with just more sex appeal and the initial worry to operate the gears with hand and foot coordination. So, get the bike and ride on the sunset. If you manage to cover the first 100 km. without crushing (putting down the bike while maneuvering or parking it does not count) you can call yourself a motorcyclist the one who always face the bright side. Do not worry about lines, position, safety rules. Do not consider line of vision, “arrow head” and braking techniques. Forget “Scanning-Identify-Predict-Decide-Execute”. Enjoy the panorama, feel the wind in your hair and leave the helmet to the idiots. Better

still do all this with short pants, slippers and T-shirt... it is freedom after all. Take the bike to the near Bar, make some noising acceleration, rev the engine...then park and enjoy the reputation... you are a Biker after all.

Yes, my friend Sinan, I have seen the dark side of motorcycling but, fortunately you were not there.

You, like some of my friend, know “ the machine’s propensity to deal death or exalt life” and you approach the bike with passion, enthusiasm and caution. Sometime you see the bike’s “propensity to deal death”, sometime the accident happens but all this is still the bright side exalting life. A lesson to be learned, a close encounter with our mortality, a call back to the humility of learning. After, we go back to the saddle with more knowledge and more respect.

The Dark side we leave it to others.

Finally: we moved the start of the Four Corners of Turkey in Four Days to Monday morning at 05:00. Contact Selim Karadag at selim.karadag@teklan.com.tr if you want to be at the departure or at the arrival.

Ride safe in the 2000 Summer

Paolo Volpara