

OMM BULLETIN FEB.08

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1. What's that? What was that? On being present. By Paolo Volpara OMM 2008

"*And why did you pick up biking?*" The Yamaha Midnight Star is cooling down clicking and releasing heat in the summer evening. The rider sits at the bar table on the side of the road but his eyes are not with me: he cannot stop looking at the "*awesomely powerful presence*" (Yam words) of his cruiser. We have been riding together all morning trying to polish techniques: he is what we call a re-born rider: scooter in early ages followed by a naked bike followed by an small crash, big enough to put him out of biking for twenty years. Now, in the middle of the forties, with money and power, Midnight Star is his return to two wheels. The morning, so far, was pleasant in roads and weather, in scenery and company, in all aspects except riding. My new friend, with already many K's on the clock is very nervous, very stiff, very rigid. He fights with the bike and, as far as I can see, the "*60-degrees-V-twin, high tech, liquid cooled, fuel-injected eight valve engine*" is winning. The "*cutting-edge technology and class-defining performance*" of "*the unique machine*" is not delivering pleasure: only tension, fear and pain. But, at the stop my companion get "*an addictive kick of excitement*" that the advertising promises you will get when "*just parked up on the street*". Definitely the Yamaha folks know what they talk about.

And it is not that he does not know how to ride: his technique is correct, the movements appropriate, the position-speed-gear sequence almost faultless. Mr. Midnight Star (let's keep him anonymous) is not there, his mind is not on the job, his presence is absent. Hence at the question "*And why did you pick up biking?*" the story begins: too long (and maybe too common) to report it in full: enough said that my friend went back to biking in search of companionship. Decades given to success at work made him lonely, broke the marriage, left him without valuable relationships. Enter the Midnight Star: what's better for meeting new people, impressing old acquaintances, stupefy women? Not really interested in biking, just a vehicle for other purposes.

But... if you washes dishes for the pleasure of having them clean you never take pleasure from washing them, you only postpone your pleasure to the future (having squeaking dishes)missing the present moment (the act of washing). Similarly Mr. Midnight Star was not present while riding anticipating the moment of stopping and the pleasure to tell (or feel) the past experience. And the bike does not like it: the spirit of the bike resents any absence, it despises the fact of not being there, in the moment, with all the intelligence, passion and dedication that the moment requires. So, things happen to Mr. Midnight Star while riding that he does not perceive, reality passes by while he is thinking about building relationships (as the chances of building relationships pass by while is thinking of biking)Because he is technically good he can ride miles without knowing *what's that*, asking occasionally *what was that...*

Riding absent requires a lot of courage, a lot of courage for a futile act: "*courage wasted by misdirection is the most heart-breaking of all tragedies*" and using courage for biking is definitely a misdirection of human virtues.

Courage should be kept for more worthwhile acts than dodging trucks. So, my friend is unhappy, his bike experience is unhappy, his whole life is unhappy: always postponing the joy of being present to some moment in the future.

Because what you do on the bike you do in life and if you cannot be present on the saddle you cannot be present when working, loving, resting.

All of us have moments in life when "being present" happens magically: those are the moments when time stands still, when all our being is there, willing and united. It could be watching a sunset, walking a new lane, kissing a woman or holding a child.

We know it: we are there completely.

The art of biking, the art of living is to hold that presence in every instant of our life: hard, demanding, intense but the only way of living. And the Yamaha Midnight Star is one of the doors to this existence.

2. Why we wave at other bikers

I believe I received the following article from Jon Taylor a while ago and, as all the messages that Jon passes around, it touched a deep layer of my biker/human soul.

As the (anonymous) writer "I have been shivering and sweating on a bike for more than 40 years... I love it when I see a younger rider on a "crotch rocket" scream past me and wave. New riders carrying on the traditions" I love the keeping of the tradition and more than that I like the recognition of the presence.

In a civilization of blinds to acknowledge the presence of a person who share (or presume to) the same passion is a great victory. I wave; I always wave with the exception of riders with no helmets: I know that maybe I should wave at them too but, being old, I am eccentric and I protest in this way.

But I wave... without getting returns too often. I do not mind, I wave for the sign of waving, I do it for my sake to show that my old eyes and my old brain still have an opening.

"The bike's passenger seat swept up just enough that I could see over my father's shoulders. That seat was my throne. My dad and I traveled many back roads together...searching for the ones we had never found before. Traveling these roads just to see where they went. Never in a rush, just be home by supper. I remember wandering down a back road with my father, sitting on my throne watching the trees whiz by, feeling the rumble of our bike beneath us like a giant contented cat. A motorcycle came over a hill towards us and as it went by, my father threw up his clutch hand and gave a little wave. The other bike waved back with the same friendly swing of his left wrist. I tapped my dad on the shoulder, which was our signal that I wanted to say something. He cocked his head back slightly while keeping his eyes ahead... I yelled, "Did you know him?" "What?" "You waved at him...who was that?" "I don't know. Just another guy on a bike....so I waved." "How come?" "You just do...it's important."

Later, when we had stopped for ice cream, I asked him why it was so important to wave to other bikers. My dad tried to explain how the wave demonstrated comradeship and a mutual understanding of what it was to enjoy riding a motorcycle. He looked for the words to describe how almost all bikers struggled with the same things like cold, rain, heat, wind, and drivers who didn't see them, but how riding remained an almost pure pleasure.

I was young then and I am not sure that I really understood what he was trying to get across, but it was a beginning of

something. Afterwards, I always waved along with my dad whenever we passed other bikes.

I remember one cold October morning when the clouds were heavy and dark, giving us another clue that winter was heading in from just over the horizon. My dad and I were warm inside our car as we headed to a friend's house. Rounding a corner, we saw a motorcycle parked on the shoulder of the road. Past the bike, we saw the rider walking thru the ditch, scouring along thru the tall grass, crowned with a touch of frost. Dad pulled over and backed up to where the bike stood.

I asked Dad... "Who's that?" "Don't know" he replied... "but he seems to have lost something. Maybe we can give him a hand." We left the car and wandered thru the tall grass ditch to the biker. He said that he had been pulling on his gloves as he rode, and that he had lost one. The three of us spent some time combing the ditch, but all we found were empty cans and bottles. My dad then turned and headed back to the car and opened the trunk. He rummaged thru various tools, oil containers, and this and that until he found an old pair of crumpled up leather gloves. He continued looking until he found an old catalogue. I understood what he was doing with the gloves...but I had no idea what he needed with the catalogue. "Here's some gloves for you" my dad said as he handed them to the rider... "and I brought you a catalogue as well." "Thanks".. I really appreciate it." He reached into his hip pocket and pulled out an old chain wallet. "Lemme give you some money for the gloves" he said. "No thanks" dad replied as he handed them to the rider. "They're not worth anything and they're old anyway". The biker smiled. "Thanks a lot." He pulled the old gloves on and unzipped his jacket. I watched as my dad handed him the catalogue and the biker slipped it inside his coat. He jostled it around, positioning it up high, centered, and then zipped it up. I remembered now making sense of why my dad had given him the catalogue. It would keep him a bit warmer. After wishing the biker well, my dad and I left him warming up his bike. Two weeks later, the biker came to our home and returned my father's gloves. He had found the address on the catalogue. Neither my father nor the biker seemed to think that my dad stopping at the side of the road for a stranger and giving him a pair of gloves, and that the stranger making sure that the gloves were returned, were events out of the

ordinary for people who rode motorcycles. For me, it was another subtle lesson.

It was spring of the next year when I was sitting high on my throne, watching the farm fields slip by when I saw two bikes coming towards us. As they rumbled past, my dad and I waved, but the other bikers kept their sunglasses locked straight ahead and did not acknowledge us. I remember thinking that they must have seen us because our waves were too obvious to miss. Why didn't they wave back? I thought all bikers waved at one another... I tapped my dad on the shoulder and yelled..."How come they didn't wave back?" "Don't know. Sometimes they don't." I remember feeling very puzzled. Why wouldn't someone wave back?

The next summer, I was finally old enough to learn to ride a motorcycle with a clutch. Many an afternoon were spent on a country lane beside our home, kicking and kicking to start my dad's old 1955 BSA. When it would finally come to a sputtering start, my concentration would grow to a sharp focus, as I tried to let out the clutch slowly enough, and bring us to a smooth take off. More often than not, I would lurch forward.....and begin to attempt to kickstart the motor again.

Eventually, I got my own motorcycle license, and began wandering the back roads on my own. I found myself stopping along side roads if I saw another biker alone, just to check and see if he needed help.....and I continued to wave at other riders. But I remained focused as to why some riders never waved back. It left me with almost a feeling of rejection, as if I were reaching to shake someone's hand, but they kept their arm hanging by their side. I began to canvass my friends about waving. I talked with people at biker events, asking what they thought. Most of the old riders told me they waved to other bikers and often initiated the friendly air handshake as they passed one another.

I did meet some riders who told me that they did not wave to other riders because they felt that they were different from other bikers. They felt that they were a "breed apart". One guy told me in rather colorful language, that he did not "wave to no wussies". He went on to say that this kind of bikers was tough, independent, and they did not require or want the help of anyone, whether they rode a bike or not. I suspected that there were some people who

bought a bike because they wanted to purchase an image of being tougher, more independent, a not-putting-up-with-anyone's-crap kind of person, but I didn't think that this was typical of most riders.

People buy bikes for different reasons. Some will be quick to tell you what make it is, how much they paid for it, or how fast it will go. Brand loyalty is going to be strong for some people whether they have a Harley, Ford, Sony, or whatever... Some people want to buy an image and try to purchase another person's perception of them. But it can't be done.

Still, there is a group of people who ride bikes who truly are a breed apart. They appreciate both the engineering and the artistry in the machines they ride. Their bikes become part of who they are and how they define themselves to themselves alone. They don't care what other people think. They don't care if anyone knows how much they paid for their bike or how fast it goes. The bike means something to them that nothing else does. They ride for themselves and not for anyone else. They don't care whether anyone knows they have a bike. They may not be able to find words to describe what it means to ride, but they still know. They may not be able to describe what it means to feel the smooth acceleration and the strength beneath them. But they understand.

These are the riders who park their bikes, begin to walk away and then stop. They turn and look back. They see something when they look at their bikes that you might not. Something more complex, something that is almost secret, sensed rather than known. They see their passion. They see a part of themselves.

These are the riders who understand why they wave to other motorcyclists. They savor the wave. It symbolizes connection between riders, and if they saw you and your bike on the side of the road, they would stop to help and might not ask your name. They understand what you are up against every time you take your bike on the road....the drivers that don't see you, the ones that cut you off or tailgate you, the potholes that lie in waiting. The rain. The cold.

I have been shivering and sweating on a bike for more than 40 years. Most of the riders that pass give me a supportive wave. I love it when I see a younger rider on a "crotch rocket" scream past me and wave. New riders carrying on the

traditions. I will continue in my attempts to get every biker just a little closer to one another with a simple wave. And if they do not wave back when I extend my hand into the breeze as I pass them, I will smile a little more. Maybe they're just mistaken about who is a "breed apart."

3. RIDING BETTER FOR ONE MORE MILE: PROGRAM AHEAD

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| 15-Mar-08 | Ara-Control | Istanbul |
| 08-Apr-08 | Trafic Safety Seminar PV | Bursa |
| 22-Mar-08 | Ara-Theory (PV) | Ankara |
| 29-Mar-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |
| 5-Apr-08 | Ara-Control | Istanbul |
| 11-12-13.04.2008 | Amasra-Touring | Tour |
| 19-20.04.2008 | Ara-Road National | Ankara |
| 26-Apr-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |
| 27-Apr-08 | Ara-Control | Bursa |
| 3-May-08 | Ara-Control | Istanbul |
| 17-18.05.2008 | Ara-Road International | Istanbul |
| 20/5 | IAM | Istanbul |
| 21/5 | IAM | Istanbul |
| 22/5 | IAM | Istanbul |
| 24-25.05.2008 | Ara-Road International | Izmir |
| 31-May-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |
| 14-15.06.2008 | Ara-Road National | Bursa |
| 21-Jun-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |
| 03-06.07.2008 | Emok-Festival | Bilecik |
| 12-13.07.2008 | Ara-Road (TT,TT) | Istanbul |
| 9-Aug-07 | Ara-Control | Istanbul |
| 16-23.08.2008 | Karadeniz | Tour |
| 30-Aug-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |
| 13-14/9/2008 | 4 Corners of Marmara | Tour |
| 20-21/09/2008 | Ara Road International | Istanbul |
| 23-Sep-08 | IAM | Istanbul |
| 24-Sep-08 | IAM | Istanbul |
| 25-Sep-08 | IAM | Istanbul |
| 27-28/9/2008 | Ara Road International | Izmir |
| 4-Oct-08 | Ara-Control | Istanbul |
| 11-Oct-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |
| 18-19.10.2008 | Ara-Road National | Istanbul |
| 15-Nov-08 | Roadcraft | Istanbul |

The OMM Calendar and list of activities is presented in www.ommriders.com and invitations are sent to the ARA Yahoo Group open to everybody who wants to sign up at <http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/AdvancedRidingAcademy> OMM communities are riding in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa and Trabzon.

FOR TURKISH EYES ONLY

For the OMM friends in Turkey we continue our support to the activities WWF and specifically to the 2008 Water Campaign: "Contahareketi". The aim is to increase awareness about water leakage in big cities created by old and inefficient infrastructures. WWF are asking people to sign the petition to the Mayors in order to renew the systems of water distribution. At the end of the campaign WWF will present the documents to the 16 mayors of the big cities elected as pilot areas of the campaign.

WWF-TÜRKİYE'DEN CONTA HAREKETİ'NE DAVET

Eskimiş şebeke borularından suyumuzun neredeyse yarısını evlerimize ulaşmadan kaybediyoruz. Şehirlerimizdeki su boruları yenilenmezse çocuklarımızı susuz bir gelecek bekliyor. WWF-Türkiye (Doğal Hayat Koruma Vakfı) genç anneler ile birlikte contahareketi'ni başlatıyor. Kamuoyunda kentsel su kullanımı ve altyapı sorunları konusunda farkındalık sağlarken, gelecek konusunda derin endişeleri olan "genç anneler" üzerinden bireyleri kentsel su sorunlarına taraf olmaya çağırıyoruz. Kampanya kapsamında www.contahareketi.org adresinden toplanan imzalar ile 16 Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanı'ni şebeke borularını yenilemeye çağırıyoruz. WWF-Türkiye olarak, sizleri gelecek nesillerin susuz kalmasını önlemek ve bu konuda harekete geçmek için contahareketi'ne katılmaya davet ediyoruz. İnaniyoruz ki, kendinden önce çocuklarının geleceğini düşünen genç anneler ve geleceğe duyarlı tüm vatandaşlar, bu kampanyadaki en büyük destekçimiz olacak ve gelecek nesillere daha yaşanır bir dünya bırakmamızı sağlayacaklardır.

GENÇ ANNELENDEN BAŞKANA: BORULARI YENİLE BAŞKAN!

www.contahareketi.org

Genç bir anne olarak çocuklarınızın susuz bir gelecekte yaşamamasını istemiyorsanız web sitesine girin, kampanyamıza katılın ya da aşağıdaki formu doldurun, WWF-Türkiye'ye yollayın.

Sayın Başkan,

Şehir suyumuzun neredeyse yarısı şebeke borularından kaynaklanan sızıntılar nedeniyle evlerimize ulaşmadan kayboluyor. Şehrimizin suyu bilyor. Ailen şehrimizin ana su borularının yenilenmesini istiyorum.

Ben bir genç anne olarak, çocuklarım için susuz bir gelecek istemiyorum.

WWF-Türkiye (Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı) tarafından yürütülen contahareketi'ni destekliyorum, sizi ve ilgili tüm kurumları görevle çağırıyorum.

Ad-Soyad _____

Adres _____

E-mail _____

İmza _____



WWF Türkiye
Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı
Büyükdere Caddesi No: 47-48
Kat: 5 Beşiktaş, İstanbul
Fon: (0212) 528 2000
Faks: (0212) 528 2040

Kampanyamıza, genç anne olmayan duyarlı dostlarımızın da desteğini bekliyoruz.



CONTA HAREKETİ

Eskimiş şebeke borularından suyumuzun neredeyse yarısını evlerimize ulaşmadan kaybediyoruz. Şehirlerimizdeki su boruları yenilenmezse çocuklarımızı susuz bir gelecek bekliyor. WWF-Türkiye (Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı) genç anneler ile birlikte contahareketi'ni başlatıyor.

WWF-Türkiye olarak, gelecek nesillerin susuz kalmaması için harekete geçmek isteyen herkesi contahareketi'ne katılmaya davet ediyoruz. İnaniyoruz ki kendinden önce çocuklarının geleceğini düşünen genç anneler, bu kampanyadaki en büyük destekçimiz olacak ve gelecek nesillere daha yaşanır bir dünya bırakmamızı sağlayacaklardır.

WWF-Türkiye Kimdir?



WWF-Türkiye (Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı), doğa koruma konusunda yaklaşık 30 yıllık deneyimiyle, ülkemizin biyolojik çeşitliliğini korumak ve doğal kaynakların sürdürülebilir kullanımını sağlamak amacıyla çalışmaktadır. İnsanların doğayla uyum içinde yaşayacağı bir gelecek kurmak için çalışan WWF-Türkiye; Su Kaynakları, Orman, Deniz ve Kıyı programları altında çalışmalarını sürdürmekte, küresel iklim değişikliği konusunda da farkındalık yaratmaya çalışmaktadır. www.wwf.org.tr