

Remembrances

Dave Bucher looks back at some little gems of experience from his 45 years of riding and writing.

Shuttle Launch



March 1989 saw me headed to Bike Week in Daytona to do a piece for *Rider* magazine. But the most amazing thing I witnessed that trip wasn't in the streets or bars of Daytona, but from a small boat several miles out in the Atlantic.

Allen Alvarez was a motorcycle industry regular who was always around. Everyone knew him. Always looked prosperous. But I could never quite figure out what he did. Anyway, as Bike Week was closing down, I ran into him at a last-night party and he invited me to join him and some other folks on his boat...he lived in the area...to head out and watch a Shuttle launch.

I'm not sure how I made it out of bed at 4 a.m., nor how I groped my way through the dark to find his place. But I did and we got into the boat and underway just as the first glint of daylight was appearing. It was a peaceful ride down the river and, as the sun burst out, we had reached the briny blue...and were soon out of sight of land.

After about an hour of motoring, Captain Alvarez turned off the engines and we began our vigil. There was nothing but ocean in any direction, but he assured us that the launch site was just over the horizon and we were as close as allowed. Bobbing and waiting. Waiting and bobbing. Apparently there had been some delay. But at almost 10 a.m. there was a tremendous billowing of white smoke on the horizon as Discovery lifted off. The plume hadn't gotten too high when the roar, traveling unimpeded across the water, hit us. Roar. It was more like a shock wave. And it continued for some time as 37 million horsepower gathered together to break gravity's bounds.

It was a sight, a sound, an experience I'll never forget. Kind of put the whole crazy Bike Week thing and the wonder of Rolling Thunder into perspective.