

Remembrances

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

Where It All Began

They say your first bike is the one you remember most. I think that's true. In my case it was a well-used, '68 Honda CB350 that I bought from a homeward bound ex-pat while we were living in Nagoya, Japan, in the early '70s. Rider training? Hell, I could ride a bicycle couldn't I? So I just got on it and away I went.

There are so many stories associated with that bike that I could do a year's worth of Remembrances on them alone. My wife and I rode it, usually badly overloaded, all over the central part of Honshu, the main Japanese island. It was a time when many people in remote areas had never seen a foreigner, nor had Japan's building modernity yet reached those parts. So it was our passport to the times of Admiral Perry,

who forced the opening of the country in the mid-nineteenth century.

Most of our fellow *gaijin* chose to travel to the standard sightseeing destinations, using conventional train or bus transportation. But that little bike gave us the opportunity to get far off the beaten path and experience this amazing country in a much more granular fashion.

Unfortunately, things ended badly for the bike and for our biking experience in Japan. Preparing for one last, long and memorable road trip before our two-year stay ended, the opportunity arose to sell the bike to a newly-arrived Canadian guy. I was way too eager to ice the deal, so one sunny afternoon I took him to a deserted side street near our apartment. After some cursory instruction



on controls with the bike on the center stand, I set him off on his first solo ride. My elation at finding a buyer instantly turned to horror as he froze with the throttle wide open, wove wildly down the block and slammed into a concrete utility pole. His shattered leg put him in a Japanese hospital for a month and in a cast for half a year. It also put an end to the bike and that final trip we'd so looked forward to. Seems that not everyone can just get on a motorcycle and ride. It

was a lesson that I've not forgotten with the many bikes I've since owned and sold.

Still, coming across this photo, brought back a flood of positive memories. It was good to be young and adventurous in a strange but very safe land. And it was gratifying to be able to share those experiences with my new bride, bravely hanging on the back as we rattled around the backwaters of one of the most interesting places on earth.