

# Remembrances

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

## Me and Malcolm

It would be pretty hard for me to continue this monthly reflection without mentioning two of my most memorable motorcycling experiences: Riding with the famed multimillionaire publisher and adventurer Malcolm Forbes. I'm not saying these were my best experiences, just some of the most unusual and interesting. I'll get to the details in future months, meantime, this is how it all got started.

Sitting in a magnificent art deco bar in Cincinnati during the annual motorcycle industry trade show, I was talking to Denis Rouse, publisher of *Rider Magazine*. I told him I thought it would be great to do a story about a spring ride around New Jersey with Malcolm Forbes and Bruce Springsteen. After all, "The Boss" was one of Jersey's biggest promoters and Forbes had even run for governor of the Garden State. I knew some people who dealt with concert sound systems and Springsteen was one of their customers. So I thought it would be easy to make contact. Denis said he'd met Forbes and would call him.

Well, I got nowhere with my part, but several weeks later, on a Saturday afternoon, I was out in the garage banging on a piece of angle iron when I heard the phone in the kitchen ringing. My wife appeared in the doorway and said, very matter-of-factly, "It's for you. It's Malcolm Forbes."

Now here I am, a semi-nobody, middle-class stiff, in my nowhere middle-class one-car garage, and suddenly someone who, at the time, was one of the richest men in the world, calls me on the phone. I got up and nearly tripped over the junk I was beating on, fumbled my way to the phone and started stammering, "Ya-ya-ya, yessir, Mr. Forbes."

"Dave," he said, "Denis called me about that ride around New Jersey. I can't do it in May. But, we'll do it in July."

I wasn't yet into how to respond when dealing with commands of the ultra-wealthy, so I countered, "But, won't it be really hot then?"

"We'll make our own weather," he replied. After some instructions about getting hold of his secretary to finalize



**Dave Bucher (right) with Malcolm Forbes at his Château de Balleroy in Normandy, France.**

details he was gone.

I was in shock. Dazed. I wandered back out to the garage, picked up my big ball-peen hammer and just stared at it. Wow! Malcolm Forbes...*Forbes Magazine*, balloonist, motorcyclist, very big deal... had just called little old me. It was just sinking in when the phone rang again. My wife was in the doorway, now looking a little annoyed at having her afternoon interrupted. "It's him again!"

This time I was a bit more collected. "Dave, I'm taking my Harley balloon to my chateau in Normandy next weekend. They're having a rally in St. Ló and the folks there asked me to bring it." Then, he paused. That was it?

"Mr. Forbes," I kind of blurted out, "are you asking me to go along?" I don't recall his exact response, but it was along the lines of "Of course, why do you think I called?" He finished with some brief instruction to be at the private jet terminal at Dulles Airport in Washington on the following Friday evening.

I got off, told my wife. "My God, I'm flying to France next weekend with Malcolm Forbes on his personal jet." I had visions of a huge party of rich socialites, crossing the dark North Atlantic in a luxurious cabin, drinking champagne and chattering gaily. And the thought suddenly hit me. What the hell am I gonna wear?