

Remembrances

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

The Industry

When I stumbled into the motorcycle aftermarket business in the late '70s, it was during a boom phase in the boom-or-bust cycle of the motorcycle industry. Sales were huge, but the manufacturers hadn't yet started to equip their bikes with a lot of goodies, so the aftermarket was thriving.

Many of the companies that made performance parts or bolt-on accessories or lubricants and fluids were owned by ex-racers. The motorcycle media, which, in those pre-Internet days, consisted of dozens of national magazines, was also heavily populated by seasoned track veterans. As you probably know, you have to be half-crazy to race motorcycles. And after you're done doing that, you're being even crazier when partying.

So while my friends who had taken jobs in more conventional lines of endeavor were going off to do business in dreary places like Buffalo or Dubuque, I was sponsoring Supercross races in the Superdome, hanging out in the pits at dirt tracks, or doing trade shows in warm, fun places...and consorting with a bunch of crazy people.

The stories I could tell are endless; like the time an industry friend was sitting with a couple of guys on a tenth-story, beach-front balcony in Daytona during race week. "Look!" one of the guys said, "Those crazy people are driving their cars into the ocean...Hey, wait a minute! That's my car!" Seems this fool had lent someone his rental car keys and there had then been an impromptu contest to see who could get a vehicle farthest into the water before it sank.

In fact, rental car antics were quite common. A favorite was easing the car up against a wall and seeing how much smoke you could create by flooring it. I remember driving down the main drag in Vegas one sunny afternoon, going about 40, when the guy in the passenger seat reached over and threw the car into reverse. Ouch!

All of this nuttiness came to a focus at the annual industry trade show in Vegas. And the memory that is possibly its best metaphor happened while I was standing in the aisle in the middle of a vast convention center. Along came Peter Gray, one of the funniest, most sarcastic people I'd every met. Like me, he wasn't a motorcycling veteran, but an engineer, turned to selling helmets.



So he had an objective viewpoint.

In his usual, intense fashion, he leapt right into analysis: "Can you imagine, Dave, bringing someone from outside this industry to this show? First they'd be walking down the aisle and see the two guys from the Crotch Rocket Factory. In those days, public use of the word "crotch" was a pretty big deal. But Tim and Terry, who made incredible mini bike performance stuff in a wildly disorganized back room workshop in Santa Barbara, didn't stop with that. They always looked like they'd just rolled out of bed, had assembled their booth from cardboard and bailing wire and were down to their last dime.

"Then," he continued, "they'd run into the water shield man." This was a guy who was selling a two-layer face shield with a big tube arching over the top. So, to switch from clear to a smoke, you'd take off the helmet, fiddle with some valves and let the dark fluid in the tube replace the clear fluid between the two layers. Never mind that it was heavy and goofy looking, it cost over \$50 at retail, a fortune at a time when you could buy a clear and a smoke shield for two bucks a piece. But the real killer was his product literature, which actually claimed that

he'd thought up this crazy idea while he was confined to a mental institution.

"And then..." Gray gestured behind me and I turned to follow his sweeping hand as it revealed a huge banner, "You come around this corner to find a bunch of guys selling anal lube." True! There was a booth pitching some kind of synthetic oil and they'd picked the name "ANALUBE." Rendered in all caps on their sign, it really did look like Anal Lube. "Dave," he concluded, "this is a very sick industry."

Well, things change. The Crotch Rocket Factory is no more, though Tim and Terry moved on to greater accomplishments. No one ever heard of the water shield man after that one appearance. And it seems the trade name "Analube" was quickly and judiciously abandoned. The motorcycle aftermarket industry, too, has altered greatly, since that golden decade. All those wild and crazy guys either went broke when the next bust came or hired MBAs to get them through it. Now it's all about money instead of pranks and fun, and it's pretty much like all those other boring industries. I was so very lucky to be part of it during that one, short, magical time.