

Hot Motorcycle



Honda Magna V4

While living in Greece, I owned a "souped up" Lambretta scooter. I also owned a Ford Bronco 4-wheel drive. But, strangely enough, I felt a lot safer riding the scooter than driving the Bronco. Why? Athenians are generally easy-going, fun-loving people, but when they get behind a wheel, they turn into veritable maniacs. On the scooter, I had very quick acceleration and very quick stopping ability to avoid getting hit. I was a smaller target with more avenues of escape and finally, I could easily just get off of the scooter if push came to shove.

After returning to Maryland in 1975, I missed the scooter sorely and acquired a Honda 350 4-cylinder motorcycle. Shelia liked to ride and the 350 was too small for the both of us so I acquired a Honda Magna V4.

The Magna was a real screamer. Its acceleration ability was even a bit scary. On good weather days, I always rode the motorcycle to work. The route from our house in Laurel to work took me via the Rte. 198 bridge over the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, then onto the parkway northbound to the next exit. There is a very short "acceleration lane" for getting onto the northbound parkway at the 198 intersection. A longtime pet peeve of mine was drivers who would start braking in the acceleration lane making it difficult to merge with traffic traveling at 55 to 65mph or better.

One morning on the way to work, there was a 1/4 mile opening in the northbound traffic and I was accelerating when the driver in front of me began braking. I basically "lost my cool," kicked the V4 into the next lower gear and opened the throttle, shooting out into the left lane and zooming north under the Rte. 198 bridge. As I passed under the bridge, I noticed a U.S. Park Service police car parked on the grass under the bridge and I saw the officer's head jerk upward as I went by. Knowing that he would be coming after me, I continued to the bottom of the hill, pulled off onto the shoulder, dismounted, took my helmet off and was standing there waiting for him when he pulled over behind me. He said, "Do you know you were doing 90mph when you went by me back there?" He was a young officer, perhaps in his late 20's. I smiled, pointed at the motorcycle and said something like, "It's easy to do on this machine." I could tell that he was admiring the motorcycle. I was as polite as I could possibly be and, although older than the officer, addressed him as "sir," saying "Yes Sir" or "No Sir" to his questions. He wrote a ticket.

After mulling it over for a few days, I decided to show up in traffic court instead of just paying the fine which would have been substantial. Because it was the U.S. Park Service police, I had to go to a federal court building in Washington, D.C. There was the possibility that, if the officer didn't show up, I would get away with it. On the scheduled day, I was called from the waiting area to a room where the young officer who wrote the ticket sat behind a desk. When he looked up and saw me, he said, "I remember you. A red Honda Magna, correct?" I said "Yessir,

that was me." He said, "I recall that you were very polite and cooperative. How does \$25 and no points sound?" Yeah! Sometimes it really pays to be polite.

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