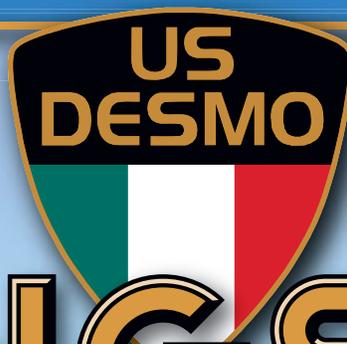


# DESMO LEANINGS



The Official Magazine of the Ducati Owners Club of the United States

Volume 7 Issue 2

Summer 2009

*Meet The Member: Chris Anderson  
Riding A MH900e From Georgia To New Mexico  
What Makes A Ducati Owner  
Ducks Along The Blue Ridge Recap*



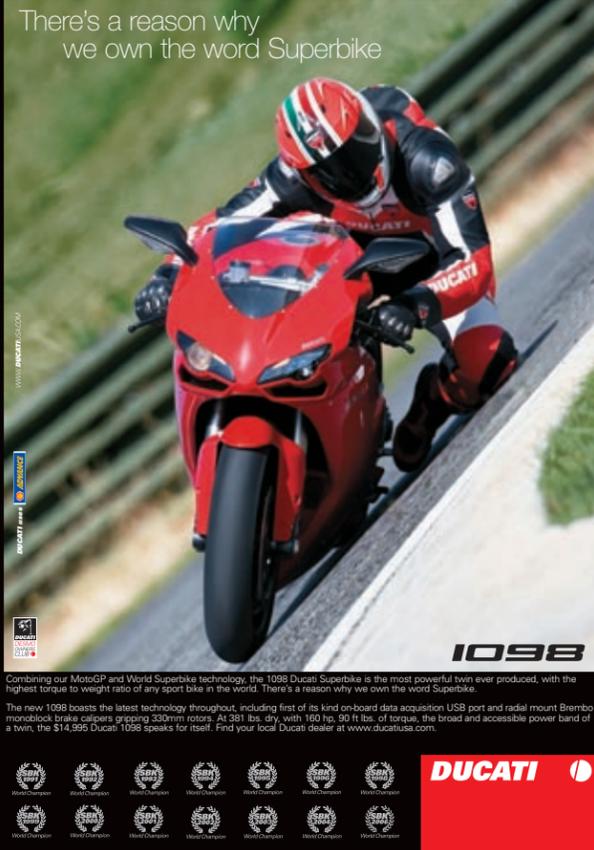
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Cover photo of Chris Anderson by etechphoto@usa.net 443-851-1723

## Greetings from il Capo

The riding season is fully upon us, and so far the club has had one track day and one weekend rally. We have our next track day coming up in just a little over a week, so it has been a busy spring for all of us. It is never too early to think about future events, so I would like to share an epiphany I had the other day. I have a son that rides a Ducati, but I am far from the exception. I sat down and with the help of a few friends made a list and came up with fourteen father-and-son teams. I think I smell a new event called "Son of a Gun!" Details will follow as I figure out what this all means. If you have not been contacted and you have a son or daughter that rides, contact me to add your family to our growing list.

These may be difficult economic times, but Ducati still seems to amaze us with new models. Three new naked bikes in just a little more than two years: the Hypermotard, the Monster, and now the Streetfighter. Not everyone likes the style of all of them, but it is easy to find one to love—they are all so different. The Hypermotard has become a film star with roles in "Yes Man" and now the new "Terminator" movie. It is almost as if I do not have to explain what a Ducati is when I meet a new non-motorcycle friend.

So far this year, the club has run with a positive cash flow. Thank you to all who renewed early in the year, as it makes a big difference. Our Ducks Along the Blue Ridge Rally had about the same number as last year but was still about 25% off previous years. We had some rain, but we got a full day of riding in, so fun was had by all. Everyone was surprised to see the commemorative item for the rally was a Ducati Corse-embroidered towel. The remaining two rallies both have something different, so come ride with us and end the suspense.

Locally, the Ducati dealer has organized an Italian bike night at a very nice pizzeria, Lorenzo's. Other than I ate too much pepperoni and had to ride home in the rain, it was a big success, and I look forward to the first Tuesday in the month to continue this event. You can never eat too much pizza.

Jim

il Capo



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more classifieds on page 27...

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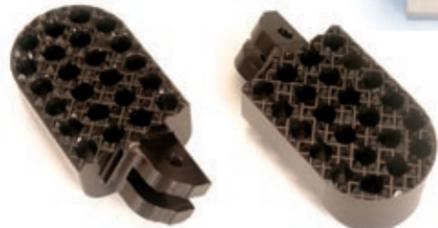
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# MEET THE MEMBER

## Chris Anderson

*story by Chris Anderson, Member #01013*

**HI** My name is Chris Anderson, I'm 45, and I won my first motorcycle race. I'm most grateful, even though it is a bit late in coming. You see, it was 40 years ago that I dreamt of this day. Mid-life crisis? What's that? It's simply the first time that finances allowed such an endeavor.

I suppose I should start at the beginning. To try to eliminate the risk of boring you, I'll leave out some details.

It was in the late '60s and my family and I lived in Germany, as I am an Army brat. My father took me to a Formula 1 race at age four. For years afterwards, I had a picture (black and white) blown up of one of the cars in the race and had it hung on my wall. That was the day racing took root in my heart. And if there was any question, we attended an open-wheeled event at Watkins Glen in the early '70s. Being a little older, I took in more of the whole atmosphere. Yep! This is what I want to do.

"Hello, Big Wheel." Remember those? They were an awful lot of work. Spinning that great big wheel just trying to get going. I had to find something with more forward thrust. The Huffy bike with the sissy bar, and learning how to ride wheelies, did the trick for a little while. My neighbor Georgie Holden in Rochester, New York, had a go-cart we'd ride through the fields. I got pretty good at that. Something about the stability of four wheels that made me fearless.

At age ten, we moved to Sussex, New Jersey, near the Adirondacks, but we would go and visit the Holdens at least twice a year. On one such visit, I remember of Georgie coming out of his garage on a Kawasaki dirt bike, with his brother on the back. Well, would you believe he popped that front wheel in the air and rode it all the way across the yard? I was astonished. Wow! I gotta learn how to do that. I never have. LOL. So that's where motorcycles and their lure took root.

I'll make this as quick and painless as possible. Here's the extent of my experience riding two-wheeled, motorized, addictive, passion-provoking instruments.

1. Age ten during one of our visits to Georgie. It's dark out, and we're in the field where the go-cart has carved many a trail. "Here's the brake," Georgie was saying, "the clutch, the gas; and the gears are one down, four up. Pull this and push down on that." Click, roar, yeahhhhhh! Click, roar, yeahhhhhh! "You're gonna kill yourself," was heard over that beautiful sound of Kawasaki dirt bike.

Well, I started sliding off the bike, but somehow managed to survive and gave it back to its owner.

2. Age 14, after years of begging, was able to purchase a Kawasaki 100 enduro for \$200 of babysitting money. Would you believe that thing had 10 gears? Five for the street, five for the dirt. Had that thing up to maybe 80 mph on a long straightaway. Sorry to say, that thing ran for only about a month. After much tinkering and no help, I couldn't fix it. Don't even remember what came of it.



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3. "Oops," forgot this one. I went back to Germany for a month on my own at age 13. "Aufwiedersehen" was the only Deutsche word I knew. Uh, what's this under all this dust? A Vespa moped? At least I think it was a Vespa. GO ITALIA! "Ahhh, come here baby, let's dust you off." "Hey, Hans!" (Hans was my father's good friend whom he met while in the service.) "Can we fix her up?" I rode that thing all over the place. You should have seen me coming down the beautiful cobblestone streets, weaving in and out of traffic, holding onto this monstrosity twice the size of me and the Vespa. Huh? Oh, you'd call it just a teddy bear. You see, it was Inna's birthday. She's Han's youngest daughter, age 15. A real woman. I just had to buy the bear for her.

4. Age 15. Girlfriend's brother had an RM80. Fun bike. Light and fast. Got to ride it some. Most vivid memory was "coming to" after passing out in midair while taking a makeshift jump we constructed from

2x4s and a log. Sound familiar? Well, the 2x4s split when I hit them, and that's all I remember until I "woke up" dragging my body away from the still-spinning tire.

5. Age 18. Had to get out of the house, and so succumbed to that sadistic voice telling me to join the Marines. Off to Parris Island and South Carolina. Is South Carolina a state? Ended up in Hawaii. Yeah, I know, "poor soul."

Andy Carrie and I thought some Suzukis would spruce up the down time we had. And there was a lot of it. It was

1982, and the motorcycle-license road test was quite difficult in Hawaii. Suzuki handed me a small bike with big highway bars to practice on. Nobody told me about counterbalancing at sloow speed. The coned-in figure eight did me in. Well, I failed, but I kept my permit, and so Andy let me ride his new GS750E. Wow! "If that wheel comes off now," I said, staring at the front end while going 115 mph, "I'm toast." Plus, all those mailboxes whizzing by gave me a start. Good thing I didn't pass the test, as I might have killed myself. That bike wasn't fast enough for Andy, so enter a GS1100. That bike scared me. Only rode it once, and that was enough. Whenever I touched the throttle, it threatened to hurl me off the back. "Beast" proved to be too much for my comrade also, as he showed up at my rack at about 2am looking like a

mummy. "The worst part was the big nurse scrubbing dirt from my wounds," he said through what seemed to be a solid sheet of tape. LOL, what a sight. So, in short, I rode the 750 about a thousand miles.

6. Age 30ish. Everything was "ish" back then. Extracurricular activities, shall we say. Bob McLaren and the CR125. Sheesh! That thing was brutal. After hitting three trees and a rock wall at the same time, I found out. Had bruises and difficulty breathing, laughing, etc. for months. Sound familiar? Not much experience in the dirt.

7. Age 42. Finally had some money, so off to Hayesville, North Carolina. Yes, North Carolina is a state. BMW K1000RS. Top speed 142 mph. \$4,200. Not babysitting money. 13,000 miles and lots of high-frequency buzzing later, I finally went to my first track day with Corner Speed. I rode her 3-1/2 hours, took a bunch of stuff off, taped and safety wired her up, and went out on the track. SCARED? Boy, was I. You know the guy with the fluorescent vest tapping his tail section while looking back at you and doing a gazillion miles an hour? Yeah, I hate him too. No, just kidding. I was the slowest one out there and he was so patient, so informative, so pivotal during my "infancy." He must have seen the fire in my eyes. Or was that shear terror? All you teachers out there know what it's like to teach a student who has the unquenchable appetite to learn. So I gave him joy that day, and he rekindled the fire under my a\*\*. Good trade off.





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8. Goodbye BMW. Helloooooo DUCATI. A friend here in Pawley's Island, South Carolina (yes, South Carolina is a state), has an automotive shop and had two bikes. One was a 1999 900SS. 6,400 miles. Top speed 140 mph. \$6,500. Probably a bit much, but he's my friend, and I knew he was parting with a great love of his life. "It looks kind of small," I would often think as I would visit Patrick. And frankly, red isn't my color. "If you're looking for a sportier bike," which I was, "try this out." And so I straddled her, looked at her longingly. "What a gorgeous Italian figure," I thought as I stared at her lines. I gave her a little 'thrust,' so to speak, and we're off. We all know what the twin "feel" and sound can do. This is when infatuation had taken root. So I rode



her with respect and with delicate hands. Well, I was too scared to go any faster, if you must know. SOLD! I traded a Volvo S40 for her — my wife's S40. Shhhhhh!

She's not the prettiest nor the fastest Duc out there, but make no mistake about, she's Italian. Uhh? Not a woman? Excuse me. It's Italian. The motorcycle is a Duc. I put nearly 20,000 miles on that bike in a year and a half. Then I found another 1999 900SS for \$2,500 with only 11,000 miles up in Vermont. Thought it was a mistake, so I called to verify. "Yep, still for sale. I low-sided her at 35 mph, broke my collarbone, and ended up in the emergency room. Wife said no more."

Two thousand miles later she was home. I swapped tags and took it out for a ride (cosmetic damage only, by the way). It was about 2 mph faster than the other bike according to the speedo. Designated race bike.

9. Well after 30-plus track days, I had to give racing a try. After all, I am a racer. So in January '08, I went to Jennings with the Championship Cup Series and entered four races. Came home with a third, fifth, seventh, and a disqualification. The first race entered was the wrong one. I started the wrong race! LOL. Good practice. Then later that year I went to Roebing with WERA, entered three

races, and came home with a sixth and two fifths.

10. February '09. Daytona speedway winner! "Yeah baby, whoopee." A forty-year-old dream answered. "Thank you Jesus," was all I could push through my lips between sobs.

US DESMO, track days, mountain trips. This is my favorite part of the story. The people. You guys and gals have made me feel at home. Try not to get all bashful on me now, but I'm going to rattle off a few names. You see, il Capo wants to know how I got so good in such a short amount of time. Truth be known, I'm not that good. Put me on an 1198S, and I'd be starting all over again. 180 hp? Yeah, right. 75 hp is plenty tough enough to try to master.

Try to follow the likes of Marvin, Stevo, Rick, or his wife Joyce through the mountains, and you'll know in short order you've got your work cut out for you. These folks are so smooth and graceful—a real joy to be a part of. That is, of course, because they wait at the next



intersection for the stragglers. Uhhh, that'd be me. Thank you, guys.

If Clyde isn't jabbing you, he doesn't like you. So I felt "loved" when he started throwing some jabs my way.

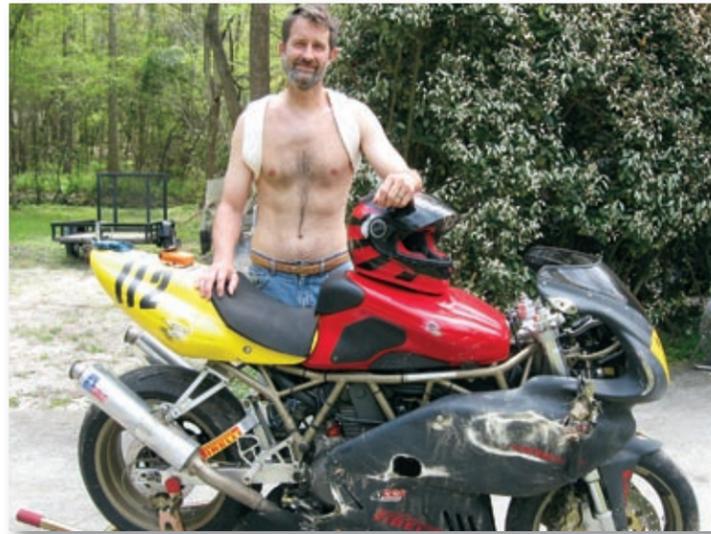
And on the track, he's all business. I pulled him aside at Roebing one session and asked for his undivided attention. "Follow me and tell me what the h\*\*\* I'm doing wrong please." I just couldn't get around the turns. For the whole session he tailed me, then he led me around. You know the guy with the fluorescent vest who goes a gazillion miles an hour? Thank you, Clyde.

That session led to Cogent Dynamics and a new suspension. "Yeah, baby." No more washing out the front end, which I'd done several times. Night and day is the difference between what the bike used to be and what she (it) is now. Thank you, Rick and Joyce.

Thank you, Christie Frick, on your black 999, racing around the track. Seeing you do it helped me believe I could do it.

Then there's our fearless leader. You all know what he's done for us and our club. His love and passion are

infectious. His hard work and dedication are paramount to the success of our club. Thank you, Jim, for all you do. You can believe me when I tell you, we are all very grateful. And you are, and will continue to be, in our prayers.



And to my beautiful wife, who has been so supportive. Letting this 5-year-old in a 45-year-old's body race to a dream. "Thank you, Honey."

And so, in closing, my hope is to win a championship in the category of the GT Lights or LW Grand Prix. You can chart my season at the CCS racing website.

Jesus Christ, as time goes by, is becoming my Everything. As the loving, passionate Father He is, I'm moved to tears in gratitude for His letting

me live my childhood dream and for introducing me to all you wonderful people.

Thanks for reading.

My full name is Christopher Bailey Anderson



# Doing Distance: MH900evoluzione

by Scott Cloninger, Member #00563 two.valver@gmail.com

**D**id you hear the one about the priest, the imam, and the rabbi who went to West Virginia to buy a sheep? Oh. You did? How about the one where Sammy Davis, Jr. and Frank Sinatra meet Saint Peter at the pearly gates? Oh. You heard that one too, huh?

Well, here's one I bet you haven't heard. Let me tell you the one about the guy who bought a Ducati MH900e in Roswell, Georgia, and rode it to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Haven't heard that one, have you? I thought not!

Okay, I guess it's time for a confession. Despite the set up and the plethora of possible developments and punch lines, this story is not a joke. It looks like a joke; it feels like a joke; it tastes like a joke. However, after actually riding the bike more than 1,700 miles, I can confirm that this narrative is anything but a joke. Our story begins in 1999, two years before the MHe was released for production, and with the birth of my infatuation for all things Ducati.

In the winter of 1999 and after several years of hinting, begging, and outright coercion, I finally talked my wife, Ashley, into letting me buy my first Ducati. I found my 1995 Ducati 900SS/SP on the old Ducati Index, and I knew when I saw that bike on the web that Goddess Destiny had spoken to me and demanded that I act. Little did I know that her sister Fate had a few cards up her sleeve for me, too.

My pilgrimage began when I left Chattanooga, Tennessee, on the morning of January 1st in my trusty Chevrolet S-10 pickup with the intention of driving to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, picking up the bike,

and driving home. Twenty-eight hours, a few fretful moments, one tire, and one helluva blizzard later, I had my new Super Sport home and my personal relationship with Ducati was underway, somehow reinforced by the travails of the acquisition.

Ten years later, after a bountiful decade in the

Ducati fold, I decided that an anniversary purchase would lend symmetry to my experience. I searched high and low for a worthy acquisition, sifting through a who's who list of Ducati royalty including an F1, which was the first Ducati that got my pulse racing during my CCS days, an 888, several 9x6 variants, a mid '70s GT, a Diana, and a bevel Super Sport. However, the bike that really turned my head was the MH900e. I had drooled over that bike more than any other during my search, so I turned my attention to finding a suitable box-stock MH.

I don't know about other folks, but I won't own a bike that isn't made to ride, so I began my MH search by reading reviews and querying current MH

owners about their riding and ownership experiences. The general consensus I found was that, like most Ducati models and other than a few quirks, the bike is reliable and is, undoubtedly, a head-turning beauty of a ride.

Please bear in mind, the Ducati community wasn't unanimous in acceptance of the MH's quirky nature and Spartan, some would say outright torture-rack, ergonomics, and I turned up a number of disparaging words targeted toward the MH. For instance, rous44



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on the ADV riders list said, “The MH900e was one of a half-dozen Ducatis I’ve owned (and was w)ithout a doubt the worst.... I drove it exactly 14 miles and sold it.” TerryTori, also of ADVrider said the MH is “Truly one of the most uncomfortable scoots a 52 year old guy could swing a leg over.” Even the administrator of the MHe owner’s board, Brian DeGroot, said, in reference to the advertised 2.2 gallon fuel tank, “Make sure you leave no (gas) station unvisited — no matter how long ago it was.”

Despite the several negative opinions I uncovered during my research, I came to the undeniable conclusion that the MH fulfilled my desire to buy something wholly uncommon, yet uniquely Ducati, so I began my search in earnest.

After a few months of searching, I found a perfect example, no. 1501 of 2000 made, under the care of Gary Cochran in Roswell, Georgia. The bike was a 2002 model — the bikes were made in 2001 and 2002 — and had spent most of its life in the living room of an Atlanta resident who shall remain nameless in order to protect him from the Gods of Wasted Time. You see, I have always lived under the personal dictum that any bike I own should be treated with the utmost respect... as long as the saying “ride it like ya stole it” sounds respectful. I feel that putting a motorcycle in a glass case (sorry George; your bikes are absolutely beautiful, but...) is an offense that should be severely punished, when possible, by seeing the “protected” bike ridden vigorously up Georgia 60 in the driving, mud-riddled rain by a 260-pound gorilla — myself, for instance — whilst the offending owner is pulled behind the bike in irons, weeping all the while. Luckily for me, Gary’s wife bought him no. 1501 for Christmas in 2007. Gary brought the bike back into operating condition and rode it enough to break it in properly, 1,706 miles to be exact.

Gary decided to sell the bike early in 2009 due to the fact that it didn’t receive enough attention in his multi-bike stable, so he listed it on Cycletrader.com where I discovered it, just like I had found my SS a decade before. After two days, several correspondences, and a series of phone calls, I arranged to travel from New Mexico to Georgia, buy, sight unseen, the “bike of my dreams,” and ride it back to Albuquerque.

According to my Rube Goldberg plan, I flew from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Nashville, Tennessee,

on Southwest Airlines on Tuesday, March 24th. From Nashville, I took a shuttle van to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where I met up with an old riding buddy, Doug “Dougati” Barnette, who graciously volunteered to haul me around and put me up for a couple of nights in exchange for

all the beer and “female companionship” he could stomach. I thought this would be less expensive than a hotel, as Doug is, in my experience, a lightweight in both respects. (Sorry to out you like this, Doug, but at least I told you I was doing it first, didn’t I? No? Oh, well.)

The next morning, Wednesday the 25th, dawned under a veil of clouds and rain. Having been warned about the MH’s notoriously “allergic to water” instrument cluster, I decided to rent a trailer to haul the bike from Roswell to Rossville, Georgia, where Doug makes his home. After acquiring the trailer, Doug and I headed toward Roswell, a suburb of

Atlanta, to exchange check for bike.

This is where I should say a few words about the small, tightly knit community that we all share. You see, I traveled 1,800 miles to buy a bike I had never laid eyes on from a man I had never met, and I trusted this arrangement enough to get on that bike and ride it back home in complete confidence. Many people could (and did) call this trust “naïve,” “risky,” or “just plain stupid,” but I simply knew that a man held in good esteem by our community could be trusted. I stayed under the roof of a Ducatista and friend, Doug Barnette. I consulted several other friends and community members, George Betzhold, Paul Bunde, and others, about the bike and the man from whom I was to buy it. I received words of encouragement about this bike and about my adventure from people I don’t know and whom I’ve never met, and I cherished and trusted every word that came my way. I can’t say that about many groups I’ve been associated with, but I’m proud to say it about you guys. Thank you all.

After a bit of advice from Gary via letter, as he was in Houston on business at the time, and from Gary’s friend Dave Ellis, whom Gary had arranged to meet me to facilitate the exchange, Doug and I loaded the MH into the trailer and headed back toward Rossville. Along the way we stopped at a couple of places to buy gear for my trip home, as a look at the weather forecast indicated that the clear weather I had hoped for was simply not to be.



For my ride back, I brought along some gear and planned to purchase several other items. I brought, from Albuquerque, my trusty Arai lid, a pair of Sidi boots, and my Joe Rocket ballistic jacket. I also brought along several pairs of ear plugs, four T-shirts, four sets of undergarments, and a supply of Zook wax to keep my face shield clear on cold mornings and during inclement weather. I bought a Givi suction-cup-mounted tank bag to fit the MH’s nonferrous tank cover, a pair of First Gear water-resistant pants, a pair of water-resistant Held touring gloves, a set of Frog Toggs rain gear (though I intended to use only the top because my Rocket jacket is definitely NOT watertight), a pair of Seal Skinz waterproof socks, and a pair of MSR white-fuel bottles in which to carry an extra half gallon of gasoline in case I overshot my excessively restrictive fuel load.

Wednesday night I dined at Chattanooga’s Market Street Tavern with a few friends including several members of the Intrepid Café Racers, a group formed by the late Buddy Turner, with whom I’ve ridden often in the past. Good food and a few adult beverages were consumed there, and then “The Pool” formed. “The Pool” was a betting affair where the bettor simply picked the mileage at which I would chuck it in and rent a truck to carry the MH the remainder of the way to Albuquerque. I was the only sucker “stupid” enough to pick any distance over 500 miles, and I picked “Albuquerque or Bust!!” Now I had a reason, beyond pride, to struggle through any possible future torture at the hands of the Hailwood. Money be damned, I want bragging rights!

The morning of Thursday the 26th dawned with more rain. The night before a number of my friends had followed me from the Market Street Tavern to Doug’s house to “oooh” and “aaaah” over the new hardware, and they helped me waterproof the instrument cluster and prepare the new bike for the journey ahead. Still, I decided to wait until the weather broke before heading west, and my break came at about 11am.

When the rain had slowed to a trickle, I donned my gear and mounted the MH for the first time. I eased the bike out of the driveway to the bike’s staccato chorus and headed toward Little Rock, Arkansas, my destination for the day. My intended course of action was to ride to Little Rock on day one of the trip, then finish the journey on day two with a blast through Oklahoma City and Amarillo, finishing the day with my triumphant arrival in Albuquerque.

Upon leaving Doug’s house I wound my way through a few hilly two-lane thoroughfares and wound up heading north into Chattanooga on St. Elmo Boulevard. It became instantly obvious that the MH was the most uncomfortable motorcycle I had ever ridden. I began to wonder if I had bitten off more than I could easily

chew, and whether or not I’d make it to Nashville, much less to Albuquerque. The seat was okay, but the bars were so low that I had to crane my neck back as far as it will naturally bend in order to see where I was going. This soon developed into neck pain, followed by neck cramps, and thence into pure, unadulterated panic. How the heck could I ride ten minutes like this, much less thirty hours?



I soon came to Interstate 24 and headed west toward Nashville. This was the first time that I experienced the joy of the MH’s eminently tractable two-valve power plant, and it’s also where I discovered that Mr. Terblanche isn’t as sadistic as I had begun to believe. As soon as the speedometer needle reached 60 miles per hour I felt as though a weight had been lifted. The wind blast from the short front fairing hit me full in the face and helped support my head and helmet, relieving my neck and converting the MH from a torture rack into a sincerely fun-to-ride motorcycle. At 70 miles per hour it actually became somewhat comfortable, and at 80...well... I’ll bet, hypothetically, that it’s a real blast at 80, or 90, or even 100 miles per hour!

I refueled the bike for the first time on top of Mont Eagle, and then headed on toward Nashville. I had planned my fuel stops at 90-mile intervals after several current owners’ assurances that the fuel-injected MH would easily get 40 miles per gallon at a highway pace. Apparently, my idea of a “highway pace” is somewhat different, because at mile number 89 my shiny, new, red mount sputtered twice and ceased making exhaust noises. I coasted to the shoulder and emptied my first quart bottle of top-secret auxiliary fuel supply into the tank, then proceeded on to my next planned fuel stop. When I got to the Chevron at mile number 90, I commenced to refill my empty quart fuel bottle and the MH’s tank. It was here that I discovered that Ducati was mistaken about the stated 2.2-gallon fuel capacity, which, according to the literature, includes the 0.5-gallon reserve. I dispensed a grand total of 2.72 gallons of fuel into the two containers, so I deduced that the bike must hold in the neighborhood of 2.7 gallons. I confirmed this

on two later occasions and pumped in over 2.5 gallons at nearly every stop between Nashville and Albuquerque.

The remainder of the day was relatively uneventful. I arrived at Little Rock a little earlier than I anticipated and checked into the La Quinta Inn on McCain Boulevard. There, I moved the bike inside the room and cleaned it thoroughly whilst I watched Memphis and Michigan State win their respective NCAA basketball games. I'm from North Carolina, and I'm a huge Tarheel basketball fan, so my game would be played Friday night. But for tonight, a little MH polishing and well-played basketball filled the bill pretty well.

Friday the 26th arrived with clear skies and cold temperatures. The weather report revealed that a blizzard had developed over an area including both Denver and Albuquerque that would later envelope all points eastward throughout the Texas panhandle and most of Kansas and Oklahoma. I spent a few minutes considering the connection between my buying a Ducati and the unnatural development of large scale blizzards, and then moved into an internal discussion of routes that would allow me to get home whilst avoiding the 20-foot snowdrifts predicted for Amarillo. After several minutes of talking to myself about the pros and cons of the southern route through Texas, which included several phrases like "gas stations too far apart" and "snow sucks," I decided to take the simplest route available to me and head southwest on I-30 toward Dallas, thence to El Paso, and north to Albuquerque via I-25.

As soon as I left Little Rock, the skies began to darken. The aforementioned weather forecast had also prognosticated severe weather from Dallas to Houston, but, as my choices were limited, I plowed on toward the southwest. As I approached my second fuel stop of the day, I noticed that the right blinkers were cycling at double pace, so I reminded myself, after I had refueled, to check for a defective bulb. I checked the front bulb first and it was illuminating properly, so I deduced that the rear bulb must be burned out. I poked my head around to the rear of the bike to discover that, not only was the bulb defective, it was missing entirely, along with the right blinker, left blinker, tag light, and the entire tag mounting bracket. Damn.

The second bugaboo of the MH had struck. I was told during my online discussions of the model that the "x-bracket" that supports the tag and signals had been recalled, but I failed to reinforce it for the journey, and that failure had bitten me in the backside. Oh well. *Que sera, sera*, I guess. At least I had waterproofed the instrument cluster. I remounted the bike and headed toward Dallas.

The sky darkened ominously as I neared Dallas, when Fate decided to pull another of the aces from her sleeve. Appropriately enough, in Fate, Texas, the bottom fell from the sky and began soaking me in earnest at a rate of two inches per hour, according to the local meteorologists. This blinding rain forced me to slow to a crawl in heavy traffic, dreading every vehicle that passed

me, especially the large trucks.

It was during this deluge that I discovered the effectiveness of the rain gear I had purchased in Atlanta. I can happily report that the Seal Skinz socks are the absolute cat's ass! They sat inside of my sieve-like Sidi boots for nearly two hours without soaking through, saving me considerable misery in the process. Likewise, the First Gear pants leaked not a drop. The gloves I wasn't so sure about until later. You see, like most riders, I tucked the sleeve of my jacket into the gauntlets of the gloves in order to keep the wind at bay. However, during the storm, the rain that hit my arms, shoulders, and chest ran down my arms and into the gauntlets of my gloves, soaking my hands in the process. A note to those who don't mind learning from others: when rain is forecast, tuck your gloves' gauntlets into your jacket. I did discover a few days later that the gloves are actually quite water resistant when you don't dump water into them from the top.

The Frog Toggs are a different story. I guess the old saying that you get what you pay for is true. The Frog Toggs top was relatively water resistant with the exception of its zipper, which allowed water through, soaking my torso completely. I believe these inexpensive items would be fine in a light shower or mist, but they were completely outclassed by the Great Flood of Dallas, 2009.

As I rode through the rain and into the relative clear to the west of the squall line, I thought I had weathered the worst of the day and concentrated on making time. I figured that if I put my head down, I could get to the Midland/Odessa area pretty easily and might even be able to make it to El Paso if I tried. And then the cold came.

To the east of the rain and even in the middle of the squall line the temperatures hovered between 65 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. As I rode westward, the temperatures dropped very quickly into the lower 40s, and then into the upper 30s. Just east of Weatherford, I realized that I was not only cold, but that I was wet and beginning to shiver. I decided that, discretion being the better part of valor; I should stop and dry my gear whilst planning for Saturday. That night I watched my Tarheels destroy Gonzaga and advance to the Elite 8. My gear dried, I rested, and all was right with the world.

Saturday the 28th blew in with winds of 25 to 30 miles per hour and gusts up to 60. Temperatures were in the upper 30s, but the sky was clear and the forecast showed no signs of precipitation between Weatherford

and Albuquerque as long as I adhered to my original routing via El Paso. I had a light breakfast, geared up, and headed west.

To describe a rather long day in few words, I blew around for about 600 miles until I arrived in El Paso. I ran out of gas again, twice, whilst heading through west Texas, and I received my only ticket there; a warning for improperly displayed registration. The Sheriff was actually pretty cool about the whole thing once he realized that I had ridden through hell and most of

Texas on my way home and radioed ahead to ask other officers to "let this tired ol' boy through." You folks around El Paso have it pretty well with regard to law enforcement personnel in my opinion.

I stayed on I-10 until I got to Las Cruces, New Mexico, where I stopped yet again for fuel. The sun sank as I refilled my tank, but I knew it was only 3-1/2 hours home from there, so I

soldiered on northward on I-25, arriving home around midnight.

Overall, my impressions of the bike are that it's a torture rack around town, but she really shows her sweet side at speed on the highway. As a rule of thumb, you can get over 90 miles per fueling at 70 miles per hour, around 90 miles at 80 miles per hour, and I think you'd probably get less than 90 miles per tank at a 90-mile-per-hour or greater pace, if you were willing to ride that fast. (Wink, wink, nudge, nudge.)

The entire trip consisted of three days — one of 485 miles, one of 380 miles, and one of 842 miles. That's a total of 1,707 miles, just one mile more than the bike had on it when I picked it up, in three days on the — reputedly — most uncomfortable motorcycle ever produced. Would I do it again? I dunno. What do you think?

See me in Tooele, Utah, at the World Superbike races and you'll see my new MH there, too. Heck, that's a paltry 650 miles from Albuquerque!

*The author, Scott Cloninger, US Desmo member #00563, is currently the custodian of three motorcycles: a 2002 Ducati MH900e, a 1995 Ducati 900 SS/SP, and a 1967 Aermacchi/Harley Davidson Sprint SS masquerading as a CRTT. Scott lives happily in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his mostly tolerant wife, Ashley, and two insanely lazy dogs, Annabelle Lee and Emma. You may, at your whim, contact him directly at two.valver@gmail.com.*



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# What Makes A Ducati Owner?

by Tim O'Toole, Member #01040



**A**s the proud owner of two Ducatis and friends of many Ducati owners, I often ask, "Why own a Ducati?" I imagine most manufacturers have asked that question of their own line of motorcycles, and I'm sure Ducati has wondered why people prefer their products over the competition's. To answer this, you have to understand the company, its origin, its history, and the Italian heritage. Why do Italians design motorcycles like the Ducati brand? And why has Ducati been more successful compared to the other Italian manufacturers? Many may claim just understanding the male ego is sufficient to answer this question. Some women may think a Ducati is just an extension of our manhood.

Ducati is an Italian manufacturer of motorcycles founded in 1926 by three Ducati brothers: Bruno, Adriano, and Marcello. The company originally produced radio components and later produced the "Cucciolo" engine that was sold to be mounted on a standard bicycle. Their successes with the Cucciolo engine led the company

to produce its own line of mopeds after the war. I have yet to meet any Ducati owner that purchased his bike because he was looking for a moped, although many have purchased a Ducati because of the engine. Is the engine enough to own a Ducati?

Jump ahead some years. In 1954, a young man by the name of Fabio Taglioni arrives at Ducati as Technical Director. He is commonly known by Ducatisti as Dr. T, not to be mistaken for Mr. T, and he probably didn't wear as much gold. Taglioni developed the first desmodromic system on a 125 Trialbero in 1957, which became the brick and mortar of the company today. Now there's a word most Japanese owners can't pronounce: "desmodromic." Taglioni created an engine that is reliable for racing and production, where many before failed. The 90-degree L-twin has a distinctive sound matched by no other—okay, Harley Davison also has a distinctive sound matched by no other, thank God. So is the sound enough to own a Ducati?



Let's not forget this is an Italian manufacturer out of Bologna, Italy. The Italians have always had a flair for racing. The Italians and other Europeans believe that a race is won in the corners and not on the straights. What does that mean? Enzo Ferrari, just like the Ducati brothers, produced products that had less horsepower than the competition, yet their products could maintain higher corner speeds. This gave them an advantage over the competition: pure thoroughbred handling. Ducati, past and current, has managed to develop motorcycles with precise handling. So a Ducati handles better than the competition. Is this enough to own one?

Upon interviewing many Ducatisti and owners, they all have the same answer, "It's Italian!" Yes it is, but is that enough? What about Moto Guzzi, Aprilia, MV Agusta, and Laverda? These are Italian motorcycle manufacturers. Why Ducati over these other motorcycles? The Italian competitiveness is loud and clear in these other manufacturers. So why is Ducati more successful than its Italian peers?

I've heard over and over again that a Ducati is the Ferrari of motorcycles. Many of us who cannot afford a Ferrari fill the void with a Ducati. The sports-car desire that lingers in our veins is tamed by the exotic flare of this Italian manufacturer. Yes ladies, it's a male thing and it has nothing to do with the extension of our manhood. Arh, arh, arh!

Motorcycles are mythical, telling a story about their true legendary heritage. They become more than just a machine for transportation. Motorcycles have a way of bringing

people together; the camaraderie amongst fellow Ducatisti has a strong bond that encourages unique gatherings. Clubs are formed around the world based on this one manufacturer, and it's that common denominator, allowing people to swap stories about their experience, their knowledge, and the complexity of the machine. US DESMO is one of the premiere clubs in the United States. So, is the motorcycle or the club participation the reason to own one of these machines?

I was first introduced to the Ducati motorcycle brand by a good friend, Mark Schultz, in the early 1990s when he purchased his first Ducati, a 1995 900SP. At the time I had a BMW K100RS, which had more horsepower than his Ducati

but was heavier. It didn't take long for Mark to come to terms with his Ducati, and it was easily faster than my BMW. That was the time when my eyes opened to the Italian motorcycles and Ducati.

As a sportbike enthusiast, I found the Ducati line made sense. I sold my K100RS, went a couple of years without a bike, and bought one of the first K1200RSs in 1998. The bike was fun—a little heavy—but ran fine until about 13,000 miles when it began to self-destruct. During my ownership of the BMW K1200RS, I purchased a 1994 900SP.

Currently, I still own the 1994 900SP, a 2003 ST4S, and a Suzuki DR650, and no BMWs. I sold the K1200RS because of its problems and BMW's not standing behind their products. That's where the ST4S comes in. My wife, Diane, who enjoys riding with me, told me I needed to buy another motorcycle that will carry two people. After





mounted in a trellis frame with a dry clutch and loads of torque. The clacking chatter of the dry clutch with the deep-throated sound of the Termignoni exhaust is indicative of a Ducati motor. These engines have massive amounts of torque, pushing the motorcycle to drive into a corner with the precision handling of a thoroughbred race horse. Strapped between your legs, the bike allows the rider to become one with the motorcycle, as if sitting in the cockpit of a fighter jet. Ducati has a unique feel that you'll never find in another motorcycle. This may come from the individual approach of its singular design as opposed to the corporate, community-engineering staff of its competition. A hand-built motorcycle for one to embrace.

selling the K1200RS, I went for two years with only the 900SP, and the wife wasn't happy. However, what threw me for a loop was my wife's telling me to buy another motorcycle. What a quandary. I really thought about getting her psychiatric help. Who are you, and what have you done with my wife?

The 900SP is a classic bike with racer styling and handling and that Italian flare, albeit a mono-seat intended for only ME. So, after several months of research, constant deliberation, and comparison between various manufacturers, and seriously considering another BMW, I chose an ST4S before they quit making them. Why this bike over the others? When it comes to sport touring, Ducati is not at the top in this class. Ducati tends to put more emphasis on the sport side as opposed to the touring side, while BMW does the opposite. As a diehard sportbike rider, I found the ST4S fits the bill. The 996 motor, Öhlins shock, and that sportbike feel with bags was for me. It brought happiness to my wife and me, which is a hard combination to beat.

A few modifications to the ST4S—Öhlins springs and valves in the front forks, cut back the air box, installation of a Power Commander, and some gear changes—and she's ready to go. A Corbin seat with backrest keeps the wife happy. So, I find that the two Ducatis provide me the sportbike fun in the twisties and the ability to tour while challenging the road.

My 900SP with the 944 kit is the perfect example of the Ducati heritage. A two-valve, 90-degree engine

in Marietta, Georgia, states, "I chose to work on Ducatis because of their technology." Mark used to work for a dealer in Seattle during the early 1990s that handled Suzuki, Buell, and Ducati. From there he worked on the Ducatis because of their simplicity and technology, which are unique to their design. "They're easy to access the parts and the various components of the bike."

It's easy to see that Taglioni developed a unique design with the desmo engine. The heart of the



motorcycle is believed to be the motor, a 90-degree engine with a simplified valve system. It's understandable why mechanics have chosen to work on Ducatis. Today's Ducatis have become dependent upon the computer to control the various systems, which is probably not what Taglioni had envisioned. If modern technology has helped

to simplify working on a Ducati, is that the reason to own one?

Jim Calandro, il Capo, states, "The syncopated beat of a 90 degree twin harkens back to my days as a youth lusting over a hot rod V-8." Jim enjoys the Italian flare and styling, its performance and handling abilities. One thing that makes the Ducatis unique is the few decals placed on each bike, emphasizing the larger areas of painted surfaces and bringing out the beauty of the machine.

Other manufacturers' designs are filled with graphic striping and multiple colors as a means of developing individuality. Yet most motorcyclists feel this cheapens the styling of the machine. The Japanese have struggled through the years to compete with the Italians, who have always felt color speaks louder and adds character. This is apparent within all the motorcycles that Ducati produces. The Italian style shows up in the slim lines and narrow profile of each product, which encourages lighter weight and quicker handling characteristics. Most people talk about how easily a Ducati handles



machine—it's like a sore thumb with a white bandage; it stands out. If you have ever had the opportunity to ride other manufacturers' machines—BMW, Harley-Davidson, and the Japanese—you'll immediately see the difference compared to a Ducati, usually before you sit on the motorcycle. The slimness and shorter wheel

base allows the Ducati to track through a corner with grace. Mike Hailwood said by pushing on the peg of a Ducati you can steer through any corner. This is difficult to accomplish with heavier motorcycles.

I was once told by a Harley rider at Daytona during bike week that "Harley Davidson is not just a motorcycle; it's a way of life." This statement can be said for the Ducati line as well. Most people who own a Ducati are affected for life by the presence of this motorcycle.

So why do people prefer a Ducati over other manufacturers? Is it the styling, the engine, sleek lines, sound of a V-twin, handling, its outright beauty, or because it's Italian? The Italians have a saying, "a ciascuno il suo" (to each

his own). Whatever your reason for owning a Ducati, I'm sure the Ducati brothers are happy that you've joined the family, and we all know how Italians feel about their family. I know for me owning two Ducatis allows me the flexibility to travel and visit our beautiful country and at the same time challenge my friends on our Sunday rides to breakfast. Owning two Ducatis may not have increased my manhood, but I'm certainly satisfied.



through the corners, and even their heaviest motorcycle manages to navigate the corners with ease as compared to its competitors.

It's easy to see why the Ducati line of motorcycles is the chosen bike for the enthusiast's garage. Sure it's Italian, like all of us guys whom dream of owning something Italian one day. The styling of each Ducati is so unique when standing next to a competitor's

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# Ducks Along the Blue Ridge

## Rally Recap 2009

story and photos by George Smith III, Member #01261

**D**ownpours didn't really materialize until after lunch. Even then it was more like a steady light rain. Sure, it got the 60 or so bikes nasty, but it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the riders on Saturday.

Appalachian roads, scouted out by il Capo, required close attention but revealed spectacular views and unexpected surprises such as the loose horse on the

highway on U.S. Highway 58 before lunch.

Bimotas were absent this year. Paying lip service to cultural diversity, a Yamaha, a Suzuki Bandit, a Kawasaki twin, a baby Moto Guzzi, a KTM, and a pair of Aprilias were mixed in with 60 or so examples of nearly every belt-drive Ducati. MV, Triumph, and BMW were also represented. All were required to be the desmodromic versions of their respective marques, but the technical inspector overlooked a few violators.

Riders participating this year were all above average as demonstrated by the relative lack of accidents despite the damp, and occasionally wet, conditions. The wrecker fetched David Nash's Monster out of a creek, and, although he came back up to the road on a stretcher, there were no serious injuries.

'09's economy is tough for many, and attendance at many motorcycling events has been down, but the annual Ducks Along the Blue Ridge has a well-deserved reputation for fine organization, excellent routes, and the





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finest in camaraderie. The cream rose to the top as 60-plus riders showed up in Mt. Airy, North Carolina (Mayberry, USA), for this year's ride. Even though I live only a couple of hours away, I had never been on a bike in this area before, and I've decided that it won't be my last visit.

Riders started gathering at the headquarters Comfort Inn around midday on Friday. The weather forecast for the weekend was iffy, but the skies Friday afternoon were partly cloudy, and the Weather Channel didn't show too much green, so many folks went off to explore a little bit of the Blue Ridge until dusk. Pizza was available in the hotel's meeting room for supper (along with skateboard videos?) and afterwards a little clubbing was in order

for some, bench racing for others.

After breakfast Saturday morning, the riders broke up into smaller groups and set out for the hills and the twisties, just a few miles away. I was a bit nervous since a warning light appeared on the dash of my newly-resurrected Moto Guzzi only a block from the hotel. It had never come on before, and by the second mile, it was glowing brightly and insistently. I asked everyone what "T" was in Italian, but no one had a clue what my little glowing light might mean. I decided to ignore it and enjoy the rest of the day, and anyway it was green. (Incidentally, it's not in my shop manual at home either. If anyone out there has any idea what it is, please post the answer on the web site. I'll offer a fabulous prize for the first correct answer.) The morning was overcast, but mostly dry, and had some of the finest cycling roads I've ever enjoyed. Highway 58 must also be one of the area's best "fishing roads," as one stretch was lined on both sides with cars for a good mile or so. The forest of fishing rods in that section of river was so thick that I doubt a fish could swim through without getting snagged by a hook.

The riders regrouped for Mexican food in Mountain

City, Tennessee, and by the time we paid the checks, we were reaching for the raingear. The route sheets directed us back to Mayberry, but my roommate Craig had been here before and had detailed maps of the area's roads, many of which were marked with yellow highlighter, showing where he'd been. George's Gap is one road that he can now highlight and deserves to be revisited and ridden in the dry. It's such a pleasure to follow someone



with the instinct for road-finding and the talent for road-holding that he has.

My 30-year-old Barbour suit continued to come in handy for the rest of the afternoon, as the rain continued to fall. As the roads flattened out and we approached Mt.



Airy, I was disappointed that the ride had to finally end. But we had the evening's meal and door prize awards at the Country Club to look forward to.

Il Capo has obvious deficiencies as a weather forecaster, but he and his crew are first-class ride organizers. My first DABR was a wonderful weekend. My newly-assembled ride performed flawlessly, the roads were among the best I've ever been on, and the company of the assembled riders was beyond compare! I look forward to next year's event. But I need a faster bike! 

# US DESMO SCHEDULE 2009

Ducks Head West (DHW), August 7-9, Erwin, TN

Ducks Fly South (DFS), Sept. 18-20, Hiawassee, GA\*

Track Weekend, Oct. 10-11, Carolina Motorsports Park, Kershaw, SC.\*

Track Weekend, Oct. 31-Nov 1, Roebing Road, Savannah, GA.\*

\*Indicates new event or new dates for traditional events.

see [www.usdesmo.com](http://www.usdesmo.com) for more information and registration forms

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# Touring Sport Ducati Gains MotoGT Championship Lead

by Wendy Hogg, General Manager, DUCSHOP, [www.ducshop.com](http://www.ducshop.com)

**T**ouring Sport Ducati took first and fifth place in the SunTrust MotoGT race at Road Atlanta on Saturday, moving the reigning national champions into the points lead. Riders Frank Shockley and Ryan



Elleby fought hard for the win on the team's Paul Smart 1000LE #77 bike, with Pete Friedland and Brad Phillips riding a solid race to finish fifth on the #38 bike despite a stop-and-go penalty.

Starting in third position, Shockley began the first stint of the two-hour endurance race, taking the lead in just three laps. But a brief off-track excursion took him back to fourth with a hard battle ahead for first. He had fought his way back to second when the pace car came out to slow the field so that oil on the track could be cleaned up. The leading Kawasaki team pitted during the enforced slow pace, moving the Ducati into the lead. When the race resumed, Shockley swapped with Ryan Elleby who, despite having no prior time on the bike, retained the lead to the checkered flag.

For a while it looked likely both teams would finish on the podium, but Friedland and Phillips were forced back to fifth place after a mistake in turn 12, a corner that was already their nemesis. Friedland high-sided at the same corner in practice after hitting a slower rider who had confused it for the pit-in lane. The crash damaged the bike's fairing and bent one of the Öhlins forks. Luckily, Öhlins USA's headquarters are just a few hours from the track, and the team managed to get the fork fixed and back to the track just 50 minutes before the start of qualifying.



The team heads next to Barber Motorsports Park, on the first weekend of May, where they hope to improve on their championship lead.

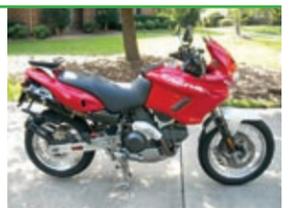
Ducshop proudly builds and maintains the PS1000LE engine. The team is also sponsored by Touring Sport Ducati, EZ Glide 350, Jimmy Durham, Öhlins USA, Speedy Moto, Robby Byrd, USDESMO, Swatt Motorcycle, JVE Limited, and Pilot Leathers.

continued from page 4

**2000 Cagiva Gran Canyon** — Bike is well sorted out and in good condition. Very comprehensive service just done. New tires. Bike has centerstand, heated grips, OEM hard saddle bags, and top tail trunk. Also included are 28 liter tank panniers and a Tourtech tank bag. Red with silver highlights. About 34,000 miles. Original pieces and other extras included. **\$4750** loaded; **\$4250** without the 5 bags and spares. **Craig Hunley, Charlotte, NC.** [cchunley@bellsouth.net](mailto:cchunley@bellsouth.net) or **704.576.3447**

**1999 Ducati 900 SS Track Day Ride**

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# BENCH RACING

Tall tales of fact and "friction"

## How To Tree A Motorcycle

by Jim 'il Capo' Calandro, Member #00001

**W**ay back in the dark ages I lived in Florida, and, unlike North Carolina, the roads down there are not worth bragging about. We have all seen the famous Tail of the Dragon T-shirt that says, "318 turns in 11 miles." Well, where I lived just north of Orlando, we talked about a shirt of our own: "11 turns in 318 miles." Needless to say, we needed someplace else to ride. Thus began our semiannual trek to Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia.

bright red Ninja in a tree. What had happened was the banking of the turn resulted in the bike getting a little airborne as it left the road. That coupled with the steep hillside put the bike about twenty-five feet off the ground at the base of the tree, but only about one or two feet above the road surface.

Now the challenge was to figure out how to remove it from the tree. No one wanted to get under the bike for obvious reasons, and pulling it

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*We have all seen the famous Tail of the Dragon T-shirt that says, "318 turns in 11 miles." Well, where I lived just north of Orlando, we talked about a shirt of our own: "11 turns in 318 miles."*

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One year a group of riders went up and were having a great time. One of the better riders was out front showing his stuff when he had a low-side and slid across the road and down an embankment. He managed not to go too far down the steep grade due to a smaller tree stopping him. He caught it under his arm, which did him no good, except preventing him from a long drop and possibly hitting something large and immovable.

After everyone stopped and rendered assistance, it became apparent that something was missing. Where was the darn bike? After looking up and down the steep grade, someone had the presence of mind to look up, and, sure enough, there was the bike. What we had was a

straight out did not look possible. A wrecker came to the scene and was no real help. Even if the boom were long enough, how would you attach the cable to the bike where it could lift it up and out of the tree.

After much discussion, it was decided to just lasso the bike and pull it quickly. Of course, the best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray, and this was no exception. The bike came out of the tree alright, but then it headed down the hill until the cable brought it up short. Let's just say our friend had a blank canvas to work from after they dragged the bike back up the hill. He did do an outstanding job and had a unique Japanese setting-sun motif on the bike when he put it back together. 



## Ducati Meccanica Collection

Introduced in 1954, the Ducati Meccanica logo with its distinctive wing and laurel design pays homage to Ducati's Bologna home and proud heritage. The Ducati Meccanica apparel collection, completely redesigned for 2009, combines vintage details and contemporary styling in both technical riding gear and fashion garments for men and women. Visit [www.ducati.com](http://www.ducati.com) to experience Ducati's complete apparel line.

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## 1098 R Bayliss Limited Edition: Unleash the spirit of Troy

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