STORY # 1

TWO - WHEEL PASSION

by **John Cerilli**

I started riding motorcycles in 1968 when I was 14 years old. My first bike was a 1965 Yamaha YG1-K, 80cc street bike. I really wanted a mini-bike but my father suggested "a full-size bike with real brakes and a clutch." As the years passed, I continued to ride Yamaha's and Kawasaki's on the street, but was always fascinated by the European bikes, especially Triumph's, BSA's, and Norton's. My best friend in high school had a 1973 Triumph Trident, and I remembered how well that bike handled on the back roads of upstate New York. It was smooth and stable at high speeds. When we rode hard down the twisties, I always seem to wind up behind him. Of course, I was riding a 1975 Kawasaki Mach III, which was prone to "the wobbles" even with the steering dampner cranked up full!

I bought my first European bike at age 24 when I lived in Austin. It was a new, 1978 Moto Guzzi 850 LeMans. I only had the bike two years, but I rode it all over the hill country and then the west coast after I moved to Mountain View, California. I remember it was the best handling and braking motorcycle I had ever ridden. I then moved to Arizona where I became involved with BMW'S. My first Beemer was a 1975 R75/5 which I rode around the United States and Canada for 8 months in 1982. On that trip I put over 25,000 miles on that ol' 750. I only went through a set of tires, a battery, and a set of plugs. It was a smooth and reliable bike. My secnd Beemer was a brand new, 1983 R80 RT. I rode it for 6 years all over the Southwest and put over 50,000 trouble-free miles on it.

In October of 1988 I traded the Beemer and some cash for an 88 FLH-S Harley (Evo engine, belt-drive). Two completely different rides, but the Harley wins out (in my opinion) for two-up, long distance touring comfort. However, the R80 RT was superior in braking, handling, and overall balance. I put over 45,000 miles on the ol' hog without any major problems. Same consumables as before: a set of tires, a battery, and this time, turn-signal relay.

I moved to Dallas in 1990, bought a new home, and found myself short on cash, and worst of all..... NO MOTORCYCLE !!!!! I knew it would be many months before I could back "in the wind" again, so in the interim, I bought a basket case 1975 Norton 850 Commando, Interstate, MKIII. It belonged to another high school buddy of mine and had sat in upstate New York in his barn neglected and forgotten for over 12 years!

When I look back it is hard to believe that I have been riding and enjoying motorcycles for over 24 years! It seems like it was just a few years ago when I learned to ride that little Yamaha on the back roads and corn fields of Northern Dutchess County! After all that time and all those bikes (I wish I could have kept them all...), I am still riding today with the same enthusiasm as I first experienced in 1968. I guess you could say that am still hooked on a **"two-wheel passion....."**