

MY MOTORCYCLING- DAYS FINAL EPISODE By Charlie Brown.

The Bultaco Metralla satisfied me for the moment. I could lift the front end in the first two gears and throw her around bends with abandon. This latter feature was the undoing of me. One day after work at Glebe (Sydney), I leaned her so far over on this tight left-hander that the footrest dug in and threw us both up the road. Luckily I was so far ahead of the following traffic I picked the Buly up and ran it to the side of the road before sheepishly watching them pass. After running-in, the opportunity for the moment of truth presented itself on one of my regular trips to Nowra. A nice long downhill stretch of road. I gradually opened her up, adopting a wind cheating posture. I was sure I'd see more than the claimed 104, what with a full fairing!! Disappointment number 1, 92 mph flat out. I realised disappointment number 2 as I grew more familiar with the Metralla. Unsuitable for touring - smoothest speed 50 mph.

I made an unsuccessful attempt to cure the vibration and perhaps add a bit more top whack. The engine/gearbox was lovingly stripped down on the polished wood bedroom floor of my flat and the complete crankshaft assembly was taken to 'Claude Cartledge Dynamic Balancing' workshop. A week later it was all back together and running sweetly. I could not discern any difference in the vibration, but it gave me about ten miles per gallon more - so something must have been done to it.

Meanwhile I was getting nowhere with my Thruxton restoration. I wanted it restored in the best manner possible and also to keep it. I did not want to sell it and perhaps see it eventually scrapped. I finally decided to contact Pud Freeman in Adelaide with an offer. He eventually agreed that we would be equal owners of the machine and share the cost of restoration. I duly trailered the Velocette to Adelaide so that restoration could commence.

It wasn't long before the 'give way to the right' rule claimed another victim - me. I was clobbered in peak hour traffic on a one-way street in Sydney. The cars to my right slowed down while I continued on the left when a V8 Falcon catapulted out of this tiny side-street and I found myself in the gutter. My previously broken ankle was hurting like hell and rapidly swelling so I quickly stuffed it back into the riding boot. A helpful bkie parked the Buly and straightened the footrest and gear lever. The car driver couldn't locate a copper anywhere in the hour I was there (so he said), so we mutually agreed to disregard our damages and go our ways. The same bkie gave me a push start in second gear. The pain was excruciating when I changed into third so I gritted my teeth, changed back into second and rode the rest of the eight miles to my flat. Next day the ankle was diagnosed as broken and into a cast it went, enforcing a two month rest.

I had plenty of time to think and take stock of the situation. The Metralla had to go - unsuitable for touring - and I had to get a job in Adelaide to be with my restored Thruxton and enjoy a change of environment. Despite the plaster cast and crutches I soon became self-sufficient. I would shop with a shoulder bag hanging from my neck and carefully drive the MG-, making sure I alighted in car parks and not main streets. I felt confident enough to drive to Adelaide for interviews, so I did and laid the foundations for securing a job when I moved there. Back in Sydney I had the dent removed from the Metralla's tank and straightened the forks as best I could.

Once out of plaster I prepared the Buly for sale. The bike was immaculate but for the slightly bent forks but with all the glitter and fairing the forks were unnoticeable. I went to the BMW (touring bike of choice) agent, Tom Byrne to buy an R60/S. Alas, the recent price rise had lifted the cost to \$1995 (late '73) and I was banking on the old price of \$1775. The salesman did offer me an R50/5 at that price. I said I'd check out the prices of Ducati and Honda (second and third choice) and he immediately offered to sell me a 500 at the old price, \$1625 or \$1665 with optional electric start as they had only two left and the factory had ceased production. What's more, he offered me the highest trade-in I could get anywhere. After checking the others (cheaper at around 1500) I returned to accept his offer and two days later (for preparation and fitting a starter) I took delivery of the new bike.

What a revelation, I'd never ridden a smooth bike before, - except for a brief while on the Square Four. On my many running-in trips down to Nowra I never ceased to marvel at the feeling doing 60 mph, gliding smooth and silent just like a bird. I had to make an enforced trip to S.A. as my licence was due to be withdrawn under the points demerit system. I felt justified in applying for, and obtaining, an S.A. licence because the revenue making, not safety conscious, NSW police persisted in playing with their new radar toys around bends on empty country roads, down the bottoms of hills and at the start of town speed limits. No wonder I accumulated more than the maximum number of points allowed but also a total of 160 in fines.

This time I was well set up with a pair of Craven panniers, Cibie driving light and air horns. It was boring, cruising at 70 - 80 mph, watching the speedo and tacho coordination. I mentally calculated that 6000 rpm should correspond to 90 mph. As the Boomer was well run in (2000 miles), I decided to clarify that. I was on the Calder Highway well out of Melbourne and the road was straight and empty, perhaps running slightly downhill. The tacho needle swung to 6000 so quickly that I decided to hold it open for the red line - 63,800. It stopped there and the speedo read 100 mph. I was so surprised that I thought I'd get it over the ton, down went the head and up went the backside but when I went to twist the throttle I found it right on the stop. I held the ton for a good 20 seconds which included a slight uphill stretch then resumed my selected cruising speed, boy, was I thrilled at topping the ton on a loaded bike reputed to be good for only 98 mph in exceptional condition.

I got my S.A. licence as planned and also registered the BM as well. The trip home was made with the N.S.W. plates attached. I hadn't broken any law as I had applied for my new licence when I wasn't disqualified. Anyway, I was soon to move to S.A. Once permanently in Adelaide I enjoyed the better bike riding weather, the more varied motorcycling sporting events and Friday State paper with a page or two devoted to reports on motorcycling. It also appeared that the Southern police were more safety conscious than revenue conscious, perhaps they have yet to catch up with more unmarked cars and sneakier radar operations.

I soon got caught up in more motorcycling involvement, joining the SA Tourers and Classic Owners. Two annual events I haven't missed since are the 24 Hour Trial and the Mildura rally. At one of the endurance events I met Trevor Green while watching the sidecar crews do their stuff. He fired my enthusiasm by offering me his BMW R50/2 trials outfit on which he won the event once and always placed well when he finished,

"You can ride that trial next year" he said, "and for only \$200 outlay". I was quite keen and shared the cost with Steve Clode - planning to attack the trial together.

The outfit was underpowered and overgeared but rode and steered well. It needed a complete overhaul, like Trevor said, nevertheless Steve and I decided to take it to the World's End Rally. That motor must be nigh on unbreakable, carrying the two of us, all of our camping gear, food and drink and my dog, Albi. We spent half the time in third gear and used plenty of oil. Steve won the sidecar obstacle race, beating all the more powerful outfits over the line.

Unfortunately our plans for the 24 Hour trial did not work out. My forthcoming marriage reduced the amount of wild motorcycling activity and I sold my share in the plot, even my beloved MG had to go.

I still retained a toehold on the two-wheeled side of life, it's now grown to a foothold as I have obtained a complete Bultaco Matador Mk 4, which I am restoring for everyday use. Then a beach-bashing 80cc Suzuki K1OP came my way from a friend who had no use for it. My days on the R50/5 are limited. The meteoric rise in registration fees will see to that, but I will still ride the Bultaco when it's finished and the BM with lightweight sidecar attached on Club runs. Now after 13 years and 20 different motorcycles I look back at a very interesting period of "My Motorcycling Days". Roll on the next ten years and perhaps another story to tell.....