



The Crab Pot

The MARC publication of the mid-Atlantic's
most At-Ease moto club

March 2007

The Motorcycle Club Newsletter of Record

THANKS!!

Apparently, my threat to continue providing book and movie reviews because of a dearth of motorcycle-related stuff worked: Buz and Lou both sent me some funny stuff for this issue – thanks! If I threaten to include my poetry, do I get articles??

"Whose bike this is, I think I know. His house is in the village though: he will not see me stopping here, to steal his little timing gear. My riding buddies think it queer, to stop without a beer joint near, but I ride a BSA and fear, the failure of my timing gear." You were warned... 🏍️

"I used to be Snow White, but I drifted."
Mae West

CRABS Spring Chili Feed!

Since March blows, literally and figuratively, we'll try to warm our bones and bellies with the return of the infamous, mostly-annual **CRABS Chili Feed**, swap meet, **St. Patrick's Day**, **Druidic Rite of Spring** and **Blessing of the Bikes Festa!**

So, turn up at the Byers' on **Sunday March 18 at 1 PM** or so and we'll have the pot on with some tomato-based, bubbly belly warmer inside and perhaps a little cornbread, along with our usual selection of beverages from the fridge.

Bring stuff to sell or trade: we'll have some things too. 🏍️

Morton's BMW Open House

The Usual Suspects will meet at Abell's Restaurant in Clements, MD around **0730 on Saturday 14 April 2007** to fuel up for a ride to Morton's Spring Open House. Feel free to join us. 🏍️

We Still Have Things!!

And T-shirts, sweatshirts, stickers, buttons, & stuff with Jen Seidel's brilliant CRABS logo aboard, all available at www.cafepress.com/chesriders. So put a thong in your heart and get yours today! 🏍️

From The "Oldie But Goodie" Files

(Submitted by Lou Church)

Little did I suspect riding my Valkyrie through a residential area could be so exciting: it was a nice neighborhood with perfect lawns and slow traffic. As I passed a car, a furry gray missile shot out from under it and tumbled to a stop immediately in front of me: it was a squirrel. I wasn't going very fast, but there was no time to brake or avoid it.

I hate to run over animals, especially on a motorcycle, but a squirrel shouldn't pose a danger to me and I barely had time to brace for the impact. Animal lovers never fear, squirrels can take care of themselves!

Inches before impact, the squirrel jumped to his feet and stood on his hind legs, facing my Valkyrie with steadfast resolve in his beady little eyes. His mouth opened and at the last possible second, he screamed and leapt! I am pretty sure the scream was squirrel for "Banzai!" or maybe, "Die you opposable-thumbed, human scum!"

The leap was nothing short of spectacular: he shot straight up over my windshield, impacting me squarely in the chest. Instantly, he set upon me. If I had not known better, I would have sworn he brought 20 buddies along. Snarling, hissing, and tearing at my clothes, he was a frenzy of activity. As I was dressed only in a T-shirt, summer gloves, and jeans, this was cause for some concern. The furry little bastard was doing some damage!

Picture a large man on a huge black Valkyrie, dressed in jeans, T-shirt, and leather gloves, pattering at 25 mph down a quiet residential street, in the fight of his life with a squirrel...and losing. I grabbed for him with my left hand and after a few misses, I managed to snag his tail. With all my strength, I flung the evil rodent off to the left of the bike, almost

running into the right curb as I recoiled from the throw.

That should have ended it right there. The squirrel should have sailed into one of the pristine yards and gone about his business, I should have headed home, and no one would have been the worse for wear, but this was no ordinary squirrel. This was not even an ordinary angry squirrel: this was an EVIL MUTANT ATTACK SQUIRREL OF DEATH! Somehow he caught my gloved finger with one of his little hands and, using the force of the throw against me, swung around and landed squarely on my BACK with amazing impact and resumed his antisocial, extremely distracting activity. He also managed to take my left glove with him! The situation was not improved, not at all.

His attacks continued and now I could not reach him. I was startled to say the least: the combination of the force of the throw and having only my throttle hand on the bars unfortunately put a healthy twist through my right hand and into the throttle. A healthy twist on the throttle of a Valkyrie can only have one result: ass-loads of torque. That is what the Valkyrie is made for, and she is very, very good at it.

The engine roared and the front wheel left the pavement. The squirrel screamed in anger as the Valkyrie screamed in ecstasy. I screamed in scared shitlessness. Picture a large man on a roaring Valkyrie, dressed in a squirrel-gash-ridden t-shirt, with only one leather glove, screaming and rapidly accelerating through 50 MPH down a quiet residential street on one wheel with the demonic squirrel of death on his back.

By this time the squirrel was also screaming the squirrel equivalent of bloody murder. With the sudden

acceleration, I was forced to put my other hand back on the handlebars to try to get control of the bike, leaving the mutant squirrel to his own devices. I really did not want to crash into a tree, house, or parked car. Also, I had not yet figured out how to release the throttle...my brain was just simply overloaded. I did manage to mash the back brake, but it had little effect against the massive torque.

About this time the squirrel decided that I was not paying sufficient attention to this battle (maybe he was an evil mutant NAZI attack squirrel of death) so he came around my neck and got INSIDE my full-face helmet with me (with the faceplate closed). He began hissing in my face and I am quite sure my screaming changed intensity, both from terror and from nearly having a mouth full of angry rodent. It had little effect on the squirrel, however. The RPMs on the Valkyrie maxed out (since I had not thought to shift), so her front end started to drop.

Finally I got the upper hand: I managed to grab his tail again, pulled him out of my helmet, and slung him to the left as hard as I could. This time it worked...sorta. Sorta spectacularly.

Picture a new scene: you are a cop. You and your partner pull off on a quiet residential street and park with your windows down to do some paperwork. Suddenly a large man on a Valkyrie with only one leather glove, dressed in a devastated T-shirt, roars by on one wheel at 80 MPH screaming bloody murder and with all his might throws a live gray rodent grenade directly into your police car.

I heard screams and for the first time in a while, they weren't mine. I managed to get the big motorcycle under control and dropped the front wheel to the

ground. I then used maximum braking and skidded to a stop in a cloud of tire smoke at the stop sign of a busy cross street. I would have returned to 'fess up (and to get my glove back). I really would have. Really...except for two things.

First, the cops did not seem interested or the slightest bit concerned about me at the moment. When I looked back, the doors on both sides of the patrol car were flung wide open. The cop from the passenger side was on his back, doing a crab walk into somebody's front yard, quickly moving away from the car. The cop who had been in the driver's seat was standing in the street, aiming a riot shotgun at his own police car. So, the cops were not interested in me. They often insist we "let the professionals handle it" and I was more than willing to do so in this case.

That was one thing. The other? Well, I could clearly see shredded and flying pieces of foam and upholstery from the back seat. But I could also swear I saw the squirrel in the back window, shaking his little fist at me. That was one dangerous squirrel and now he has a patrol car. A somewhat shredded patrol car but it is all his. I took a deep breath, turned on my signal, made a gentle right turn, and sedately left the neighborhood. I decided it was best to just buy a new pair of gloves...and an ass-load of Band-Aids. 🐿️

"How come it's always those with the least who invite you to dinner?"
William Least-Heat Moon in "Blue Highways" 🐿️

Tool Definitions

(Submitted by Buz Brinig)

1. DRILL PRESS: A tall upright machine useful for suddenly snatching flat metal bar

stock out of your hands so that it smacks you in the chest and flings your beer across the room, splattering it against that freshly painted part you were drying.

2. WIRE WHEEL: Cleans paint off bolts and then throws them somewhere under the workbench with the speed of light. Also removes fingerprint whirls and hard-earned guitar calluses in about the time it takes you to say, "sheeeit!"

3. ELECTRIC HAND DRILL: Normally used for spinning pop rivets in their holes until they get red hot.

4. PLIERS: Used to round off hexagonal bolt heads.

5. HACKSAW: One of a family of cutting tools built on the Ouija board principle: It transforms human energy into a crooked, unpredictable motion, and the more you attempt to influence its course, the more dismal your future becomes.

6. VISE GRIP PLIERS: Used to transfer intense welding heat to the palm of your hand.

7. OXYACETYLENE TORCH: Used almost entirely for setting various flammable objects in your shop on fire. Also handy for igniting the grease inside a wheel hub you're trying to get the bearing race out of.

8. WHITWORTH SOCKETS: Once used for working on older British cars and motorcycles, they are now used mainly as a sub for that 9/16 or 1/2" socket you've been searching for, for the last 15 minutes.

9. HYDRAULIC FLOOR JACK: Used for lowering an automobile to the ground after you have installed your new disk brake pads, trapping the jack handle firmly under the bumper.

10. EIGHT-FOOT LONG DOUGLAS FIR 4X4: Used to attempt to lever an automobile upward off a hydraulic jack handle.

11. TWEEZERS: A tool for removing splinters of wood, especially Douglas fir.

12. TELEPHONE: Tool for calling your neighbor to see if he has another hydraulic floor jack.

13. SNAP-ON GASKET SCRAPER: Theoretically useful as a sandwich tool for spreading mayonnaise; used mainly for removing dog feces from your boots.

14. E-Z OUT BOLT AND STUD EXTRACTOR: A tool that snaps off in bolt holes and is ten times harder than any known drill bit.

15. TWO-TON HYDRAULIC ENGINE

HOIST: A handy tool for testing the tensile strength of bolts and fuel lines you forgot to disconnect.

16. CRAFTSMAN 1/2 x 16-INCH SCREWDRIVER: A large motor mount prying tool that inexplicably has an accurately machined screwdriver tip on the end without the handle.

17. AVIATION METAL SNIPS: See hacksaw.

18. TROUBLE LIGHT: The homebuilder's own tanning booth. Sometimes called a droplight, its main purpose is to consume 40-watt light bulbs at about the same rate that 105-mm howitzer shells might be used during, say, the first few hours of the Battle of the Bulge. More often dark than light, its name is somewhat misleading.

19. PHILLIPS SCREWDRIVER: Normally used, as the name implies, to round off the interiors of Phillips screw heads.

20. AIR COMPRESSOR: A machine that takes energy produced in a coal-burning power plant 200 miles away and transforms it into compressed air that travels by hose to an Pneumatic impact wrench that grips rusty bolts last tightened 70 years ago by someone at GM, and rounds them or twists them off.

21. PRY BAR: A tool used to crumple the metal surrounding that clip or bracket you needed to remove in order to replace a 50 cent part.

22. HOSE CUTTER: A tool used to cut hoses 1/2 inch too short.

23. HAMMER: Originally employed as a weapon of war, the hammer nowadays is used as a kind of divining rod to locate expensive parts not far from the object we are trying to hit.

23. MECHANIC'S KNIFE: Used to open and slice through the contents of cardboard cartons delivered to your front door; works particularly well on boxes containing upholstered items, chrome-plated metal, plastic parts and the hand not holding the knife. 🛠️

Picture of the Month

Back by popular demand (mine) is the picture of the month, featuring Zachariah Drysdale of North Carolina ripping it up on his Suzuki

Motocrosser on his way to 3rd at the Crystal Coast MX Park. Way to go Z!



Zahariah Drysdale
Crystal Coast MX Park
14 JAN 2007
RM-65 - 3rd Place

MORTON'S VANSON OPEN HOUSE

By The Crabdicator

On Saturday 17 February, Morton's BMW in Spotsylvania, VA had an open house in which Vanson Leathers was featured. If you look at the protective qualities of materials, it's hard to beat leather. Check out these comparisons of fabric tear strength (some may surprise you):

Cotton Jeans	4.5 lb!
70 Denier Std. Nylon	4.5 lb
500 Denier Polyester	8 lb
500 Denier Codura	22 lb
620 Denier Codura	35 lb
Leather	80-110 lb
1000 Denier Codura	110 lb

Vanson Leathers has been hand-making motorcycle clothing in Fall River, Massachusetts for over 30 years. "Mr. Vanson" is Michael van der Sleen and he used to go around the country in a van selling handmade, custom leather products. Today, Vanson is the only firm in the industry still making garments by hand (and here in the USA).

I had the good fortune to meet "Mrs. Vanson," Kim van der Sleen

at Morton's. She spent a long day selling garments off the rack, but what was more surprising was how many people got measured for custom garments. I bet she measured 15 people for custom jackets, pants, or full suits in addition to the off-the-rack sales.

I have been disappointed in the past by "custom" makers who were reluctant to go beyond certain bounds (namely Aerostich). Vanson has no such qualms. They'll do everything from a simple sleeve extension to a complete one-off design.

Betsy was the recipient of a stroke of luck: they had a jacket someone of her stature had custom-ordered and then walked away from because of the time involved (Kim freely admits they're slow because everything is handmade). The jacket is a great fit, which is miraculous because most firms, even those that cater to women, can't make a women's garment to fit all women.

Vanson calls their garments "heirloom" pieces because they last so long that you'll hand them down to your children. With their cleaning and repair services, that's a very real possibility even if you go sliding down the road. They even have a new white "solar" leather that glows in car headlights!

So, don't be surprised if you see the us in our Hurricane perforated jackets for a long time to come. Thanks for all your help, Mrs. Vanson. 🍷

NEVER TOO LATE NATE

An Interview with Racer Nate Kern

by Mark Byers

Most racers start riding motorcycles almost as soon as they can stand. Nicky Hayden started at the back of the grid

with one of his parents holding the bike because he couldn't touch the ground. Nate Kern didn't even start street riding until he was 20, when he got a six-year-old 1992 Katana because: 1) it came with a helmet and 2) he could trade his truck for it. A former high-school football player and natural athlete, Nate soon found he had a knack for riding Japanese sportbikes like GSXR's. At first he was just another kamikaze sportbike squid, but his natural skill protected him from harm until some friends were able to divert his need for speed to the track. At 24, Nate started racing. It's hard to distinguish yourself from the crowd when you're a 24-year-old rookie; however, winning 8 out of 8 races at Daytona in 2002, being upgraded to pro, and taking 38 podium finishes out of 42 races for 3rd place overall in the CCS Mid-Atlantic Championship tends to give you a holed shot toward credibility.

His defiance of convention didn't stop there. Most young men would have continued riding Asian machines, but not Nate. He got to ride a BMW R1100S Boxer Cup bike at Daytona in 2003, taking 20th place after qualifying 42nd. He finished 2003 2nd in WERA lightweight twins and won the WERA Formula 1 Championship aboard a Cherry Hill BMW boxer. In 2004, he competed in the entire BMW Boxer Cup series, including the full European schedule of racing, where he admits to "learning a lot." In 2005 and 2006, he continued to campaign BMW Boxer Cup bikes for Main Line BMW of Devon, Pennsylvania in a racing world largely dominated by Japanese inline fours. In so doing, Nate had no small measure of success, amassing 9 Class and 2 Overall Championships in 2005 and 9 Class and 4 National Championships in 2006, plus

an 8-hour Daytona Endurance Race team victory. Reg Pridmore is probably the last guy to ride a BMW boxer with as much success as Nate Kern.

"Why would a young man with such racing prowess decide to campaign what most people feel is a heavy, underpowered bike with the disadvantage of protruding cylinders?" was the question foremost in my mind when I had the chance to interview Nate at a Morton's BMW Open House. It didn't take much time with this intense, but personable young man to find out. He was running around Morton's greeting customers, planning track days, signing autographs, and handing out stickers to kids, but he generously made time to answer my questions. If I had to pick one word to describe Nate, it would be "accessible" because he's always available whether you're a casual fan, a kid, a sponsor...or a fledgling freelance writer. One very unusual characteristic of Nate is that he invites practically everyone he meets to come to his pit. In a world where professional racers insulate themselves from the public with multi-level entourages, Nate is a rarity who thrives on the attention.

The first thing you notice about Nate, other than his friendliness, is his athleticism. He's tall and thin, although he admits to needing to lose 7 pounds before Daytona: "Every 7 pounds is one horsepower!" he says with a smile. He constantly does cardiovascular training on a mountain or road bicycle. He also does weight training, but he sticks to light weights with multiple repetitions, isometrics, and plyometrics. During the bench press, he holds the weight at arms length to build his ability to control the bike. He said, "Under braking, you can be holding up 1.5 times your body weight. Also, when I'm on the banking

at Daytona, I'm pushing maybe 80 pounds of countersteering input and holding it the entire time." Whatever he's doing is clearly working.

When I asked if he was a high-school athlete, he replied in the affirmative, but added "I quit everything because I didn't have anyone who'd come to watch me play." He went on to say "When I started racing, I used to hurry to get around the track just to get back to the point where I knew my friends were watching and cheering for me. When I started, I raced for everybody else. I really didn't start racing for myself until last year (2006)." Those statements speak volumes about why he thrives on his fans. Because of his open-pit policy, Nate tends to have a lot of "volunteers" in his pit, so I asked him if they were a distraction. "No, they're like family" he said. "I thrive on them and they actually help me concentrate: they get me into it and I love having people there to watch. I'm not like some guys who need 45 minutes alone before a race – people can be around when I'm putting my helmet on."

Aside from his fans, Nate has another "family" – the BMW family. When I asked him why he races BMW boxers, bikes not known for their racing prowess because of their power-to-weight ratio and protruding cylinders, he said "I used to judge a book by its cover: if you were a fat kid, I wouldn't pick you for my football team because I wanted to win. Now I even look at life differently because BMW bikes are the best training tool I've ever had. They force you to learn to lower your CG and focus on minimizing lean angle." He went on to point out how minimizing lean angle maintains the largest contact patch, which is good for traction (dry or wet) and that a lot of riders slide their butts

off the saddle and hang their knees out, but they leave their head over the tank and actually fight the bike. Continuing to praise the boxer, he went on to say "The telelever is my favorite suspension: it's so forgiving and you can't bottom out that coil spring." He particularly likes the telelever under straight-line braking.

I get the impression Nate enjoys the challenge of competing on a bike that most people still judge by its cover. He spoke about riding an R1200S in a race at Summit Point against 600's and said "I had so much fun: I bet I used every millimeter of that track. I got third, but it was like a win!" When I asked about his endurance win at Daytona, he talked about cranking down the intensity and riding with consistency as keys to victory there. "I did 11 laps within four tenths of a second of each other at night, in traffic. When I lost time to traffic in one place, I knew I had to make it up at another. It's hard because you still have to hit your physical reference points – your braking markers."

There's far more to the BMW family than the bikes, however: there are the BMW people. Nate has always been sponsored by local BMW shops and in 2007 he will get support from shops in Las Vegas, Atlanta, and Virginia depending upon which venue he's racing on a given weekend. Nate makes appearances at BMW shop and club events whenever possible. His presence at Morton's just a week prior to Daytona was testimony to the level to which he will go to support his sponsoring "family." Nate puts it like this "It's numbers versus relationships: the business guys want numbers, but you have to build the relationships. If you build the relationships, the numbers will come." I hope the suits are listening, because there's no more passionate or

accessible front-man for their brand than Nate.

I asked Nate what one piece of advice he would give the average rider and he said "Learn to minimize your lean angle by lowering your CG. Don't fight the bike." He went on to say "The best thing I've ever done is to take the Freddy Spencer riding school. I had to take a school to get my racing license, but it was nothing like Freddy's." I asked Nate about the dangers of racing and he said something common among motorcycle roadracers "I don't street ride." As for the track, he said "The danger is relative to your skill: if you're out front, there's less danger." If that's the case, Nate's riding well clear of most of the danger. As for the future, Nate intends to stick with BMW for as long as they'll have him, staying 4-5 more seasons if he can remain at the top. The next step in that is riding the R1200S at Daytona in March 2007.

There's a lot more to Nate Kern than can be summed up in a short article. He's that rare combination of a friendly, yet driven person. He clearly has found a home and a surrogate family within the bosom of BMW bikes, the people who sell and ride them, and their clubs. Nate is a distant relative of Wilbur and Orville Wright and, like them, is a two-wheel enthusiast who has thrown convention to the wind and done things people said couldn't be done. He's an "old man" riding what most people see as a heavy, odd-looking machine with protruding cylinders that limit its lean angle...and winning. Like the Wrights, Nate is flying (albeit with a German aircraft motor). Best wishes N8!

See Nate at VIR from 27-29 April and 22-24 June and at Summit Point from 25-27 May and 7-9 September or at

a track near you. He'll be the one on the bike with the protruding cylinders...

Learn more about Nate Kern at:

www.reedmoto.com

www.nate-kern.blogspot.com

www.bmw.xplor.com

Bloo Lou Hanratty and the Amazing Off-Road Trials of Death

By Mark Byers

The last time we saw Bloo Lou Hanratty, he was making his mark on history (or leaving a dent in it) by being the first man to survive a 100 MPH impact with a flatbed trailer full of Looper's Sooper Loos on the approach to Washington's Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Recovered from the ensuing injuries, not to mention the fines for creating one of the biggest biohazards since Chernobyl, Lou began looking for a replacement for the Honda CBR he'd turned into a deep-fried Japanese Slinky. Thinking it might sharpen his skills and save him from certain death at the hands of a Hayabusa or some other powerful street machine, Captain Randy suggested Lou consider getting a trials bike (something he could ride far from civilization and people or structures to which he might do irreparable harm). The Captain showed Lou some film of Dougie Lampkin climbing sheer rock faces and doing otherworldly things with trials bikes and Lou's ego was hooked.

They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions, so Captain Randy's route South was being built as a freeway. Randy is an accomplished trials rider and has been nearly since birth: he grew up wheelying his crib across the nursery, riding his big wheel sideways on the kitchen cabinets, and hopping his bicycle backwards down the basement stairs. When astride a motorcycle, the Captain

appears to be an alien gifted with the ability to suspend gravity for short periods while he takes ridiculously heavy, awkward, and ancient British bikes over terrain that would make a mountain goat shit his fur. The only problem with Captain Randy is that he sometimes forgets others are mere mortals not granted the ability to fly a motorcycle. Even though the good Captain possessed more than a modicum of trepidation about Lou's riding skills, his incurable optimism and desire to do good made him sure he could turn Lou into a better rider. The rest of The Usual Suspects were immensely skeptical, but we knew ensuing events would be highly entertaining, so we went along with the idea.

If you recall, money is not a problem for Bloo Lou: his past as an accountant means his lottery winnings are invested well enough to keep him in fancy motorcycles for far longer than any of us expect Lou to survive given his lack of riding skill. Captain Randy's suggestion that Lou take the conservative route and buy a used, small-displacement vintage trials bike fell on deaf ears: Lou is "queer for the gear" as they say and he spares no expense getting into the accoutrements in a big way. One weekend, Lou went out and bought the latest, greatest, highest-tech, Spanish trials bike he could find: a Montesa Cota 4RT. The 4RT is 249 cc's of single-overhead-cam, liquid-cooled, fuel-injected, 4-stroke sex on wheels. True to form, Lou also blew a big wad on the fanciest Gaerne trials boots, Hebo trials helmet, jerseys, pants, and gloves (all color-matched to the bike, of course). When he was done, Lou was done up like a medieval knight (if they'd had day-glo plastic armor in the middle ages).

Given Lou's enthusiasm, he might have done irrevocable harm to himself with the Montesa in the Captain's absence were it not for one thing: he couldn't get it started. You see, Lou's ineptitude at riding is coupled with a complete lack of understanding of mechanics. Lou nearly wore out the new Gaerne's trying to kick the Montesa to life, but at least he got a lot of practice donning his gear. Eager to get Lou started off on the right foot, Randy reprogrammed the fuel injection system to soften the bike's response as much as he could, set up the suspension damping to the most forgiving settings, and said prayers...lots and lots of prayers. Thus armed, the Captain agreed to start Lou's training the following Saturday at his brother Danger Dave's house.

If Captain Randy is an alien gifted with the powers of flight, Danger Dave is that alien on steroids. The moniker "Danger Dave" wasn't garnered for ineptitude, but rather from a complete mastery of offroad motorcycle skills that allow him to extricate himself from the most dangerous situations with ridiculous ease. Danger Dave is the anti-Lou: his diametric opposite. Randy scheduled Lou's first trials training session at Dave's in the fervent hope that some of Danger's mastery might rub off on Lou and prevent him from an immediate and grisly demise. It doesn't hurt that Danger's house backs up to county land that makes an extremely nice (if not totally legal) offroad riding area.

At the appointed hour the next Saturday, Bloo Lou arrived at Danger's with the Montesa inexpertly strapped in the back of his pickup. The whole business looked as if the bike had been entombed in random nylon webs of various colors spun by a giant,

psychedelic spider on acid. It took a full half hour to extricate the poor machine and another half hour for Lou to don his dizzying array of fancy new trials gear (at which point he discovered he had to take a dump, necessitating the removal of part of it for the deed). Captain Randy was unfazed, as he is the most patient of men, but Danger was all business (his riding time is now precious following the birth of his first) and the delay was putting him on edge. In the Navy, they say each catastrophe is preceded by a chain of events and Danger's impatience was boiling the metal to cast the first link.

Finally, Lou was ready and the Captain and Danger started his training with some engine-off balancing while commenting on Lou's body position, knee and elbow bending, and so forth. Eager to please, Lou allowed himself to be contorted into various positions like a day-glo Gumby (without understanding because in his mind he was already scaling vertical cliffs and performing unbelievable acts of off-road daring). Even so, eventually the Captain and Danger could let go of the bike for a few seconds without him pitching over, so they deemed Lou ready to go to the next level: riding the bike.

The Montesa is fuel injected but without the benefit of a battery, so it requires a particular sequence to start. Lou's recent lack of success at bringing the beast to life were a result of misunderstanding the procedure. Captain Randy had the good sense to have Lou dismount so he could demonstrate the feat and once started and warmed, the Captain let Lou mount the machine (the forge is now pouring the molten metal to make the second link in the chain of events). Lou assumed the position on the bike and, with it

blessedly in neutral, began to wring the throttle to "get a feel" for the response. Captain Randy had "dumbed down" the fuel injection system as much as the factory limits would allow, but the 4RT still had the response of a scared-shitless monkey if the throttle was suddenly opened. Danger Dave was trying to advise Lou of the alacrity of the response, but his admonishments did not burn through the thought-jamming going on inside Lou's head as he pictured himself leaping huge logs to the delight of thronged spectators.

"OK Lou," the Captain finally said, "Let's try some big circles." With what he hoped was a confident smile, the Captain directed Lou to ride circles around a cone he'd placed in the center of Danger's yard. To understand the scene, you have to know that Danger has enough yard in which to run a monster truck rodeo and still have room for a swingset and a dog run. Both of them figured it would take some real work for Lou to do any serious harm to anything given the vast expanse of real estate with which he was working. Surprisingly, they were right: as dismal as Lou's riding skills are and as little as he was paying attention to their admonitions, the length of time Lou has spent saving himself from certain death on the road translated into a basic ability to ride around an acre of ground on the Montesa without doing serious damage to himself or the planet. That's not to say he was smooth, however, or that his feet were able to stay on the pegs for any length of time. Each attempt to start or stop brought on a lurch as either the powerful motor or the magnificent brakes were abused. Lou's circles looked a little like a horse on a carousel that bounces up and down in time with the calliope, but at the end of a quarter hour, they were passably

round and notably smoother, albeit still giant in size.

Encouraged by Lou's progress, Captain Randy left Bloo Lou in the capable hands of an impatient Danger Dave and ran off to collect his kids from soccer. Another link was thereby cast in the chain of events. Danger, anxious to finish the lesson with his inept student, said "Awright, let's try some more advanced maneuvers." [Insert ominous movie music here.] Danger led Lou to the middle of the yard and, with the bike started, said "Why don't you start trying to get a feel for the power response and try to lift the front wheel just a little." [Cue "Jaws" music and cast another link in that chain.]

When Randy returned about a half hour later, Lou's bike was strapped securely and professionally in the back of his pickup. Lou was hurriedly putting his gear in the cab as he prepared to beat a hasty retreat. Randy was somewhat puzzled until he got a look at Danger, whose appearance spoke volumes. Danger was sprawled in a lawn chair, looking particularly pissed off, with a beer dangling from his paw. It wasn't the beer or the look, however, that told the story: it was the appearance of Danger's shirt. You see, running up the front of Danger's shirt at an angle not unlike a stripe on a medieval coat of arms was a perfect imprint of a front Michelin trials tire.

Lou left and when the beer had taken effect on Danger, he explained to Randy what happened. When Danger suggested Lou get a feel for the power and try to lift the front end a little, he forgot that the words "gentle" and "nuance" aren't in Lou's vocabulary. With Danger standing what he thought was a respectable distance away, Lou opened the throttle on the Montesa what

he reported as "just a dab" (which in actuality amounted to...all the way). The fuel injection computer operates at about a hundred billion times the speed of Lou's brain, so it whacked open the throttle body and ejaculated a torrent of high-octane fuel into the intake tract. The resulting acceleration and wheelie ejected Lou from the bike so neatly, he found himself simply standing there in the yard in complete stupefaction at what happened. The riderless bike headed for Danger like a heat-seeking missile for a bonfire. Just before impact, the throttle closed and the front end started coming down so that the front tire left a perfect mark on Danger's chest as it knocked him flat. Danger ended up on the ground, between the wheels, with the bike lying on his legs.

Decorum prevents reporting the invective that spouted forth from the prostrate form of Danger as he extricated himself from beneath the Montesa. The look he gave Lou must have been absolutely murderous, because Lou made a run for the house and locked himself in the bathroom before he could be torn asunder by Danger's gorilla-sized arms. When a suitable amount of time had passed, Lou emerged from the head to find his bike firmly secured in the back of his truck and Danger prostrate in a lawn chair with a bottle of "nerve medicine." Lou promptly donned his regular clothes and was putting his gear in the truck when Captain Randy appeared.

[Stay tuned next month for the continued story of Bloo Lou's trials experience.]