

Pilgrimage to Daytona, or, Where have all the bikers gone?

by Stu Segal

Every year Bob Steel (our publisher) asks me to go to Daytona with him. He loves the place - he's been going to Bike Week religiously for over a decade, and has gone to Biketoberfest since it began. He doesn't "rave" about the place, but he really doesn't need to - going to the same place for vacation every year speaks for itself.

He told me it's "the" place for bikers. So we set a departure date a week ahead of Biketoberfest - unlike March Bike Week this could be exactly what we like to do, a vacation where we could ride every day from the day we pull out of our driveway til the day we return. After all, in October, except for some unseasonable weather somewhere, you can still ride very comfortably in all 48 contiguous states.

So day one I rode the 300 miles over to Bob's. On the second and third days we did the other 900 miles. Now I'm not going to bore you with the road trip details, but I will pass along two things. First, I-95 is one seriously boooooooring road - 900 miles of nothing to look at at all. Second, we only passed two other bikes headed to Daytona the entire trip.

Let me clarify that - we only passed two other bikes that were being ridden. First though we passed a van, one of those custom ones that has a captain's chair for the driver and flared wheelwells and is always being driven around by someone so obese they look like they need an elevator to get in and out - and behind the Jabba-the-Hut Mobile was a trailer with not one, but two, motorcycles. Not *just* motorcycles, but touring motorcycles (GoldWings). Now, I don't want to be too critical, but what do you need a touring motorcycle (or in this case two) for if you're going to drag it down the interstate behind your blubbermobile?

Since, as happens on interstates, we kept passing this same guy over and over, I had a lot of time to wonder about it and reached the (mistaken) conclusion that these Honda people don't ride their bikes like we Harley people do. By the time we reached Daytona we had passed about 18 other bikes, all Harleys, on trailers (OK, we did pass two Harleys being ridden). Now I was really curious - first of all how come we didn't see more bikes, and how come all the ones we saw were on trailers? Well, obviously, these must all be show bikes (even though they didn't appear any nicer than some non-show bikes Bob and I own, and ride).

But what really baffled me was - where were all the bikers we should have seen riding down? Was this a repeat of my first trip to Sturgis with Bob (when he got us there the wrong week)?

When we checked into the motel there were two other guys there, both with pretty righteous shovels, that came down in a van from NJ with the bikes in the back. Down at the other end of the lot was a guy cleaning his Delaware-tagged Ultra-Glide, obviously removing his thousand miles of road dirt - well it *was* a thousand miles of road dirt, the kind your bike gets from being trailered. So far the only people who rode were me and Bob.

The next day more people from NJ, Delaware and Pennsy pulled in (we stayed at a place popular with folks from there) - *every* bike came in a trailer or a truck, even the dressers all outfitted for touring.

Next day three guys from South Carolina *rode* in. When I asked them about their ride, they said, "Oh no, we didn't *raaad*, we unloaded the bikes across the street".

It keeps getting worse - then the guys from Florida pulled in, with their bikes in the back of their truck. So now, finally, the motel is sold out, all 60 rooms - from what we can see the only people that rode to this motel was us, and two other couples (an NJ police officer and wife on an FLH, and a 65 year old couple from Maryland). In all fairness though, some folks brought along their kids, and some other folks made Daytona an extension of a family-type vacation at Disneyworld, so it was easy to understand some folks not riding. But most of the folks who pulled their bikes in had themselves, an old lady, and a small bag with toothpaste and clean skivvies.

Anyway - nobody else in the entire motel rode to it, even though in the parking lot, in addition to the Rigid, Softails, FXRs, Lowriders, there were also FLHs, FLT, FLTCUs, FLHCUs, and these bikes had bags, tourpacks, radios, fairings, etc. So obviously I was in a motel of "biker/trailerers", and the people who rode were elsewhere in town (wrong again).

I started (subconsciously at first) noticing which bikes weren't ridden in - obviously the Ness, Doss, Kennedy type show bikes were brought on trailers, as were the V8 Boss Hoss's, and the longbikes, and the OK, so it was impossible to figure out what was trailered, how about what wasn't - determined by one (or all) of - high odometer readings, clothing and other stuff all over the bike, bulging saddlebags, bikes that were clean and well maintained with the exception that the leading edges that hit the wind (like the front edges of mirrors) had the paint or plating worn off, etc. Our not-too-scientific research revealed that only a small percentage of bikes actually got ridden, and it didn't seem to matter what type of bikes they were.

Seems there's only a small percentage of people who actually like to ride - and it almost doesn't matter what they own, they'd rather ride it than get there any other way. Sometimes they were on big touring bikes, Ultras and Wings - other times they were on bikes that were a lot tougher to travel on, FXRs, Softails, Crotchrockets, with throwover saddlebags, tankbags, bungee cords, etc. The one thing they all had in common was - the best part of the trip wasthe trip.

I spoke with some of the people who brought their bikes on trailers about why they didn't ride. One very seasoned looking couple who both rode (she a shovel, he a softail) told me that in their truck they have air conditioning and TV - now why would you need air in October, and if you want to watch TV maybe you should stay home on your sofa. Somebody else told me they wanted to get there fast - you mean your car can get there faster than your bike? Two other people told me that they had touring bikes but didn't want to ride those bikes, so they trailered their sportier bikes - OK, so why *do* you have a touring bike? But the

one that took the cake was the guy who trailered his UltraGlide, cleaned it for hours after he arrived, hours every day, and couldn't have possibly ridden 50 miles the whole week - it seems 10 years ago on the way back from Bike Week he hit snow in Maryland. OK, I don't like to ride in the snow either, but guess what, it's the frigging second week of October - does it *ever* snow in Maryland in October?

When we were packing to leave I saw one of the guys from South Carolina (a 6 hour ride) who trailered his bike. He asked me when we were leaving and how long it would take. When I told him it was about an 1,100 mile ride, his jaw dropped and he said "You're gonna raaad? *Your gonna RAAAAD!!??*" You would have thought I said I was going to sprout wings and fly.

When Bob and I visited Daytona H-D we saw the new FLH Springer bike, kind of an early fifties looking bike with a springer and fringe and other equally useful stuff. The literature told us that the Motor Company designed this bike for "High Profile Cruising" (meaning driving slow down Main Street so other people can see you).

We decided we're going to release the "next generation" of bikes before the Motor Company does - we're building bikes for "High Profile Parking". These bikes will have the latest in paintjobs and chrome, but they won't have any stuff that's unnecessary to the high profile lifestyle - stuff like electrical systems, pistons, cams, wheel bearings, etc. (and an added benefit is it doesn't need any maintenance or repair, ever). You can load this bike on your trailer (it's pretty light), unload it on Main Street, chain it to a pole, and every night sit on it while you drink a beer and puff on your Havana cigar - then, you don't even need to take it home; you just put it in the storage bin at your condo down at Ponce's Inlet or West Palm. This way you can fly down each year, and as long as you arrange it with us in advance, just show up on Main Street where we'll have your bike pre-parked and waiting for you - any takers? *SES*