



# BULLETIN

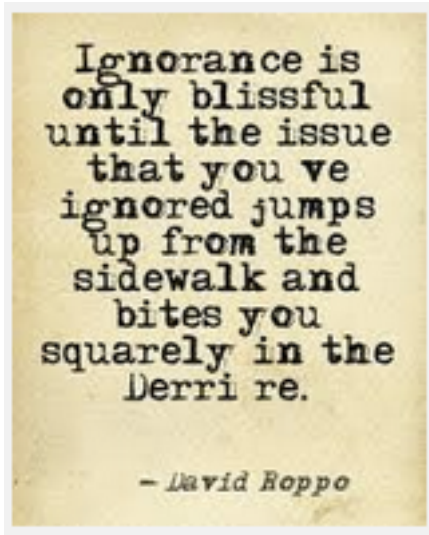
One More Mile Issue 111 Year 17 August 2016  
Riding is a way of Thinking @ [www.ommriders.com](http://www.ommriders.com)

It has been a great pleasure to have the distribution of the bulletin revamped and organized to be able to reach all friend and riders that over the years came in contact with OMM and expressed the desire to stay in contact.

## Knowledge is dangerous, it stops the fun

*“Becoming a good rider may take away part of the pure riding pleasure... it may turn dangerous, yes, but wasn't ignorance a bliss?”*

With information, knowledge and communication surrounding all of us from all sides one could be tempted to think that the real age of enlightenment has finally arrived.



Unfortunately the electronic overloading creates a strong rejection and some of the readers' riders start thinking back to the old good time when we were biking free legally with hairs on the wind.

Now, when all my hairs are gone and getting ready for biking takes time money and equipment, motorcycling can be less enjoyable. Or couldn't it?

As [Nikola Tesla](#) said *“it is paradoxical, yet true, to say, that the more we know, the more ignorant we become in the absolute sense, for it is only through enlightenment that we become conscious of our limitations. Precisely one of the most gratifying results of intellectual evolution is the continuous opening up of new and greater prospects”*

Tesla was a genius and a challenging personality but his vision of knowledge was very clear. Increasing the level of knowledge was not, for him, a road to popularity or a way of “being on the net”. Knowledge was a personal enrichment and not a stage for “fame and glory”.

Fame and Glory are in today in everybody's grasp and electronic pages offer a plethora of knowledge in heavy daily doses. Immanuel Kant, once of the most difficult philosophers to understand and absorb, take only one page in “dummies.com” and, voila, you can shine at any cocktail party.

It becomes more evident with the passing of time that access to media and to the ability of making “people” voice heard is not always an advantage.

It's ignorance bliss? I always believed that “knowledge will make us free” and a note from a good rider and sincere friend following the last Bulletins made my belief even stronger.

*“I had a long-standing question in my mind – writes Aydin from Ankara - on whether becoming a good rider takes away part of the pure riding pleasure... Dangerous, yes, but wasn't ignorance a bliss? Wasn't watching the stars without knowing anything about them a purer, simpler pleasure compared to staring at them talking astronomy? I had long realized that if you can really take biking to a level in which you can be confident and disciplined yet move very progressively, then you can find a very different level of pleasure you wouldn't exchange for the bliss of ignorance”*

Knowledge and how I use it, ignorance and the bliss of it were in my mind in a recent long and hard ride with a group of expert bikers: the team was flowing, fast and mostly systematic tracing nice lines around the demanding course.

Still the youngest riders were not enjoying it working hard in keeping pace and track. Then, after some tough sections of a mountain descent I realized why: I was not using my knowledge to make the ride enjoyable. I was just using it to show my competence, to show how good a rider I thought I was.

It was then clear: when knowledge is used as a tool to show superiority then ignorance is bliss. I slowed the rhythm and I moved to the end of the group not as a sign of founded humility but as a space for thinking.

When I was “showing knowledge” everything I learned about “competent riding” became violence on my fellow riders, became element of separation, became pushing people down... became ignorance.

Riding was not anymore a way of thinking but a way of dominating, controlling, imposing. My passion for knowledge turned into passion for my pride.

I learned a lot from that ride: knowledge is responsibility of service, is first of all sharing.

Not by imposing “your way of riding” but by helping the emerging of the good and valuable that every human being has inside... the good trainer brings out the good rider that is potentially inside every biker.

The “service of knowledge” has to be done with humility, discretion and with cancellation of the teacher.

Be aware of courses or trainers that, like myself, use knowledge to show off: “*follow me, watch what I am doing and learn*” is just a recipe for self-glorification and potential disaster.

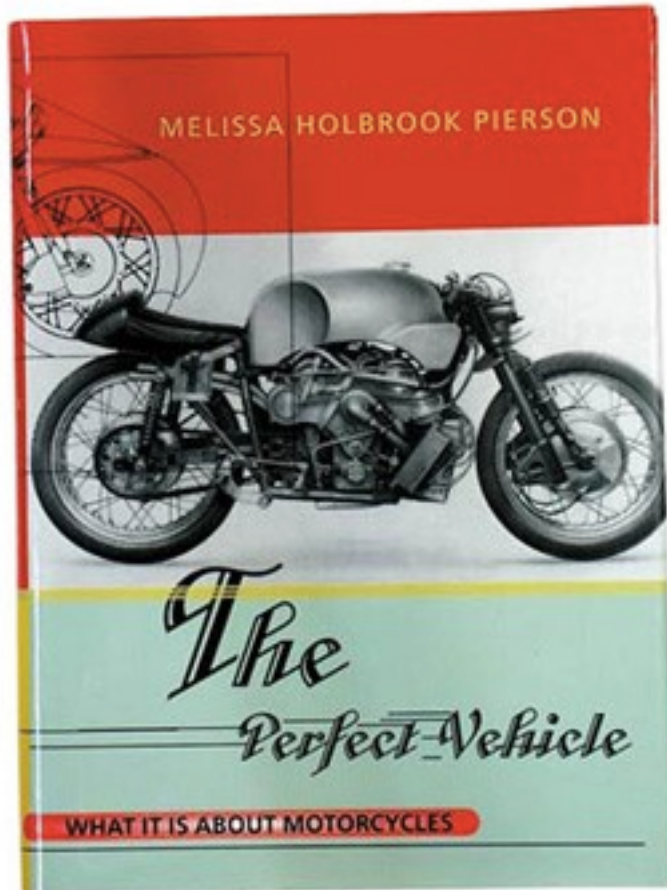
In this case ignorance is a real bliss.

**...from motorcycles I learned practically everything else...**

***“Melissa (Pierson) wasn’t having any of that. She knew the steed wasn’t worthy of a shred of trust, something that is intuitively obvious to anyone who has ever ridden a one-track vehicle. This thing, she wrote bluntly, can kill you faster than the emergency response team can peel you off the grill of a Volvo”*** Robert Higdon is a former attorney, a moto-journalist, a long distance riding record holder and a great friend of OMM. His writing has always been inspirational and this presentation of “The Perfect Machine” book is a good example. Is first appeared on one of Bob’s columns titled "A View from the Bunker," since his weltanschauung then (and now) has usually been pretty dark. Not so his illuminating thinking.

“ For some years now I have taken it upon myself to procure the principal speakers at the Square Route Rally, the annual bash of the BMW Bikers

of Metropolitan Washington. I could invite mechanics or bike dealers or judges or racers or designers or motor cops or safety instructors or bureaucrats who hold our future in their sweaty hands. I never do. I look for writers. As a result, we've had Ted Simon, Patrick Symmes, Simon Milward, and Greg Frazier as guests. One year in a moment of desperation I invited myself.



While it is almost holy writ, so to speak, that you should never meet a writer whom you admire, this year I called upon Melissa Pierson, the author of "[The Perfect Vehicle](#)" To understand why she was at the top of my list of motoscribes you need read nothing more than this, two sentences from one of the introductory chapters:

*"From my mother I learned to write prompt thank-you notes for a variety of occasions; from Mrs. King's ballroom dancing school*

*I learned a proper curtsy and, believe it or not, what to do if presented with nine eating utensils at the same place setting, presumably at the home of the hosts to whom I had just curtsied. From motorcycles I learned practically everything else."*

Trust me here: Writing doesn't get any better than that. I could teach a college course in expository writing using nothing but that paragraph. It is a jewel, a brilliantly polished gem, that lights up the table for the nine-course dinner that follows.

And what a dinner it is. The author leads us through the history of motorcycles, their construction, their allure, and their peril. Someone someday somehow may write as good a book about what it is about motorcycles — the perfect subtitle of Pierson's book — but none will write the story better.

At the outset, something about the machine appeals to a primitive part of her soul. She can't resist it. This is a literary psychodrama on so many different levels of understanding that it would be incomprehensible except for this simple fact: You and I have been there too. We looked at the bike. We had to have it. So we know what she's saying. We relate. Even people who haven't heard that siren call screaming in their ears can appreciate what is happening.

She buys a Guzzi, learns to ride it, to work on it, to meet friends on it, and to make it a part of her life. Her reflections are those of a post-novice motorcyclist channeling experiences through a master storyteller and craftsman. She tosses wonderful facts at us (e.g., *seven million ride bikes but three times that many watch birds*) and repeatedly pops us with a brilliant turn of phrase ("*Let's call him Tad, and me ready.*").

Additionally, she may have been the luckiest writer who ever lived, coming at her subject while still innocent enough to appreciate the machine's uncommon attraction, but not yet battered by its hellish risks. She thus managed to capture lightning in a bottle in this amazing, beautiful work. If it is the only book about bikes you ever read, it will be enough.

Given the scarcity of motorcycle-oriented titles published each year, and the even more rare genius of composition in that genre, I expected that the book's appearance almost ten years ago would have generated universal acclaim. It came close, but there was something about Pierson's acknowledgment of the approach-avoidance problem inherent in the bike's very essence that caused a ripple of discontent among biker-poets who are forever scribbling doggerel about their trusty steeds.

Melissa wasn't having any of that. She knew the steed wasn't worthy of a shred of trust, something that is intuitively obvious to anyone who has ever ridden a one-track vehicle. This thing, she wrote bluntly, can kill you faster than the emergency response team can peel you off the grill of a Volvo. Sure, it's a machine of exceptional beauty, function, and lineage, but you're never going to escape its physics. In the end it is going to do whatever it takes to wind up on its side.

Still, she said, if you can learn to handle this thing, to tame it like an unruly horse, surviving the elemental danger of the enterprise may be enough to offset the downside risks. Staring death in the face and coming out smiling has always been, and will always be, the straight flush in life's poker game. This yin and yang is the dark midnight of

motorcycling's soul. No one in the trade writes about it. It is the distant bell that is heard only by the unconscious mind. And no motorcyclist wants to hear it anyway. You don't go into the garage each morning and ask that shiny machine, "Is this the day you kill me, you bitch?" You already know the answer: it will if it can. You're supposed to be the master, so master it, if you can.

They tell us we can. Read the safety books, go to the safety classes, wear the safety equipment. Think safety, ride safely, be safe. And then the news comes through the motorcycle community like an electric current: [Larry Grodsky](#), Mr. Safety himself, has been killed by a deer. He was as good as they come; he could manage any risk; and we buried him nonetheless. If he can't make it, what chance do the rest of us have? Only the security of a dice roll.

This, I think, is the ultimate complaint with the subtext of Pierson's book. If you know how bad it is and you do it anyway, aren't you just asking for it? Isn't this the very definition of a death wish? And if all you want to do is die, just do it and shut the hell up. Why write a book about it?

There is a kind of sophomoric, post hoc logic to the argument, I admit, but Pierson's few critics are missing the larger point. She's telling the truth. There really is a clear and present danger in the game. You accept it? Fine. So do I. We know the score. And if it were only us, we could just put on the blinders, go back to the steed poetry, and take our chances. But there are others knocking at the door.

Thirty years ago my brother and I took a three-week road trip in a VW Beetle around the country. It has become, as *On the Road* adventures often do, the stuff of family legend. The other day my brother's son, now 18, asked me if the three of us were going to repeat the trip next summer, but this time on motorcycles.

"You don't have a bike endorsement", I dodged, hearing a distant bell. "I can get one before the sun goes down," he said.

He could, I know. And I could send him through the MSF beginner and experienced courses, shove bike rags down his throat, and dress him in Andy Goldfine's finest Kevlar. I can teach him all he knows, but I can never teach him all I know. That gap could one day be a fatal abyss. Thus comes my yin-yang moment: I accept living on the edge like a Flying Wallenda, but I recoil from putting someone who trusts me on the tightrope.

I don't know how this will turn out. Living in a bunker makes me pessimistic. Maybe the kid won't even like a motorcycle. That would solve everything. In the meantime, I've been thinking about a Christmas present for him. I know a good book. It would be the perfect gift."

[Here](#) you can click for a more detailed profile of Mr. Higdon presented at the IBA website.

**I was enjoying my ride when suddenly that bastard driver turned left**

PV for Read and Ride © OMM 2002

**Every time you listen to a biker's story reporting accidents (missed or real) the word "suddenly" will, soon or later, come out.**

*"I was enjoying my ride when suddenly that b... taxi driver [swerved left...](#)" "I was just reaching home when suddenly the bike went under me..."* Naturally the ample use of "suddenly" derives from the same macho nature of biking: speeding along without cage to protect you. **But, often, this little adverb is indicator for lack of vision ahead, a limited fantasy for prediction and a small amount of anticipation sense.** It would have been relatively easy to observe that the taxi just picked up a new client, to predict that the instructions from the passenger may produce a change of direction, to anticipate, finally, that a fast left turn could be in program.

You do not need an oracle to observe the dark signs at the center of the road when paying your motorway ticket, you do not need a sixth sense to predict that several trucks, stopping on the same spot for the same reason, left a long streak of diesel, you only need good common sense to anticipate the lack of traction you will find there.

"Suddenly" should appear less frequently in our bike stories and reality should move at a more reasonable pace when we are riding. It is true that you never let a motorcycle take you where your brain has not been five seconds earlier. Think about and you will agree. How many times after an accident you cursed the timing? "If only I had three more seconds"

Can we gain more time? Can time be expanded? Can somebody donate to us those additional seconds? The first obvious "yes" answer is on the right side of the handlebar.

If speed is a result of time and space, reducing speed gives more time for analysis, selection of options and action.

On this assumption comes the first rule for emergency situations: “When a hazard looms ahead the first thing to do is to reduce speed”. You may spend nights and days listening or telling stories or accident avoided by accelerating, swerving, jumping and (best of all) putting the bike down to the ground. Still you have to train for one only automated reaction to emergency situations: select and apply the best method of reducing speed according to the conditions. Rider has to take into consideration the initial speed, the position of the bike in respect of the vertical line to the road, the surface, the camber, the traffic situation and the distance from the hazard. Keep your vision high, look where you want to go (escape line) and reduce speed.

Re-align the bike close to 90 degrees vertical, dial the throttle down, shut it, apply smooth front braking, apply emergency tapering braking, engage your ABS... the options are few and they should be analyzed in tenth of second to be applied “automatically” Any other choice will reduce your time of reaction and will take you close to the hazard at higher speed.

It is worth to remember that if one has to crash it is better to do it at 30KpH than at 50: any speed you can bleed will reduce the results of the impact.

I quoted this as the first rule but I forgot to mention the Mother of All Rules : “Do not put yourself into an emergency situation”.

I remember years ago a TV program where the host was interviewing an ancient and serious Master of Martial Arts. At the question: “How your defense techniques work in a street fight?” the Master gave a simple and disconcerting answer: “If one of my student cannot see a street fight coming and cannot walk away before it develops- he said- he is a very bad student”

The expert rider, like the expert fighter, knows how to read the sign of a dangerous situation and how to steer away from it.

Still accidents happen and even the competent rider cannot always avoid them: the solution would be to proceed at walking pace preceded (as drivers did in old times) by a servant waving a red flag.

But what’s good in riding as a turtle burdened by terror of accidents? We must find a reasonable compromise or give up biking: this is when training can be of help.



The objectives of a serious training course are easy to list: a) give the student more time to react to the traffic/road conditions b) give to the student practical tools for maximizing the results of each input.

You do not need to trust my words. Just think of a difficult situation recently encountered in your riding: all you needed was an appropriate action and sufficient time to apply it.

Classical example: “Too fast into a right corner... your brain and body tell you that you will not be able to steer the bike around, the apex approaches fast... you decide to brake... the bike continue in straight line toward the left side of the road... your back wheel locks... your front suspension has too many things to do... the asphalt keeps rushing under you”.

The end of this story may vary: you are lucky, no incoming traffic and enough space to stop before running off road, you are not so lucky and you slide crashing on the left side of road... just pride and plastic, if it is not your day this can be the last mistake you make.

For this exercise the result is not important: just consider what you could have done with a little (very little) more time to “read” that corner and with the right line position and steering technique.

The Motorcycle Roadcraft Police Rider’s Handbook presents an advanced riding system well proven and easy to apply: while continuously taking in information the rider moves flexibly and permanently along four phases: Position, Speed, Gear, and Acceleration.

The “System” reflects the simple fact that on the bike you can only play with two variants: you can modify the speed (up or down) and you can modify the direction.

As result self training must focus on two major parts: -How to get and to use valuable information. (Effective Time Management) and -How to modify speed and direction. (Effective Control Management)

“What happens when?” is a difficult (and sometime) presumptuous answer. Difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate all-possible-situations: time comes when even the most expert rider loses control for unpredictable reasons.

The mental process needed to go biking is a severe one, demanding at the same time control of the mind, the body and the machine. The required

dimensions for efficient self training are simple: curiosity & desire to learn, alertness & concentration, realistic evaluation and finally relaxation & enjoyment

With these mental tools it is possible to build up real experience taking lesson from all our rides and building in our brain a large repertoire of scenarios that will make us good evaluator of hazard. Without the right mental attitude, hours on the saddle may build up few pleasant memories, some fast and exciting pictures, moments of panic and stories to tell to stupefied friends: only momentary glimpses into what would have been a splendid opportunity to learn more. At the end “What happens when?” is a matter of metal attitude.

### **Maybe, at the end, all you need is inspiration**



**Elsbeth Beard is one of a select band of bold women to ride a motorcycle around the world, and she was the first Englishwoman to do so. She achieved this feat thirty years ago, in the days before sat-nav, internet, email and mobile phones, and she did**

**it mostly alone.** Read her story at <http://brand.bmw-motorrad.com/en/stories/people/elspeth-beard.html>

**WARNING: YOUR GEARS AND THE ACCESSORIES ON YOUR BIKE CAN GIVE THE WRONG IMPRESSION.**

Do not carry Alu panniers, Kangaroo bar protections, Explorer and/or Adventure and/or Kathmandu branded gloves, Kalahari and/or Tenere and/or Dakar and/or Latitude-Sandstorm branded gear, bandanas under the helmet, Hydration and Cooling systems on your back ... unless you know whether to turn right or left at Bessemele to reach Goroua Boulai coming from south. It can make observers believe that your “adventure/enduro/allroads bike” can seriously leave the front of the bar/pub/cafe and reach the near public park.

Do not wear Bomber and/or Pilot and or Tassel Leather and/or Rocker fringe Jacket, Chaps and/or any gear branded/or/ with Skull & Bones, no wallet with chain or chain without wallet or/and helmet from Wehrmacht or Allied Armies, no Candy and Rock and Biloxi boot, no Eagles and/or Iron Crosses and/or or Master Death, do not wear t- shirt with “If you can read this, the bitch fell off” unless you can sing at least 10 songs of Loretta Lynn without including “Coal Miner’s Daughter”.

Playing Johnny Strabler without the appropriate knowledge can give the impression of premature senility, lost tribe longing and incapacity of controlling the lean.



Bulleting Board for Decency and Good Taste Unlimited suggest that you can live happy without the following accessories:

1. GPS and GPS transmitter: happy people and good bikers like to get lost and not to be found
2. Special exhaust and silencer: happy people lose kilos and gain HP’s saving money and disturbances.
3. Cruise Control: happy people always play with the right hand and they never go straight
4. Auxiliary tank: good bikers like to stop for many reasons not excluding the natural ones. It keeps pants good & happy as well
5. Nasal strips: good bikers want to look as Valentino only on corners and while holding breath

Always wear protection does not matter what you are doing. And try to enjoy life as well, in between.

**IF YOU CAN'T BE A GOOD EXAMPLE BE AT LEAST A  
TERRIBLE WARNING**