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AutoMonday

Comfort is paramount when globe trotting

Last year, an old friend of mine and his wife, Bard and Kathy Boand, signed up for the GlobeRiders World Tour for 2006. That ride goes from Beijing, China west through Inner Mongolia, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and finishes in Munich, Germany. Ten thousand miles

in 66 days across eight time zones. Of course that's not totally "around the world," so the couple then plans to spend another month to ride from Munich to touch the front tire in the Atlantic Ocean in Spain.

From there, the bike will be air-freighted to New York City and they'll ride it back to Barrington. And since Bard has already ridden it from here to Seattle, Washington to ship the bike by boat to China, that will complete the around the world ride.

One of the requirements of going on the GlobeRiders tour, led by Helge Pederson, is you must ride a BMW GS motorcycle for the trek. So last summer, Bard bought a new BMW R1200 GS to place in his garage next to his Harley-Davidson Ultra Classic. He's been riding Ultra's for the last dozen years or so and to see him on anything else looked as out of place as a pair of tan

shoes with a tuxedo. And, of course, everyone in our riding club delighted in kidding this dyed-in-the-wool Harley guy for riding the German motorcycle.

Last June, Bard and I found ourselves riding out to a rally in Davenport, Iowa, for the first shake down run for his GS. Now Bard and I have ridden several thousand miles side by side; a few times out to Sturgis, many times out to Iowa, and a hundred day-rides in the area, so I know his riding habits and traits really well. About an hour out of Barrington, on a rural two lane road I began to notice him squirming and fidgeting around on the BMW. After another 20 minutes he began standing up on the pegs and shaking his behind back and forth like an exotic dancer looking for dollar bills.

A few miles later, we pulled off into a gas station, and pulled off our helmets. "What the heck are you doing, a buffalo mating dance?" I asked. And he shouted back, "I HATE this bike. The seat is hard as a brick and my butt is numb. I want my Ultra."

I couldn't hold back a laugh and said, "Listen pal, between the World Tour and this bike, you just dropped the price of a condo in Mexico, and you're gonna be riding this thing a few hundred miles every day for three months, so you better get to like it."

When that realization hit him, a somber look came over his face. "This seat is just killing



Bard and Kathy Boand on their way through China.

me. I don't know anything about these foreign bikes like you do, so you gotta find me a replacement seat or I'll never make it out of China. And Cathy won't make it out of Beijing." I replied, "Relax, we've got another 500 miles on this trip, and maybe you'll get used to it by the time we get back home."

When we returned home three days later, he gingerly dismounted the BMW, and walked out of his garage like a woman who had just given birth to a 12 pound baby. He put his arm on

my shoulder, and in a low, pained voice pleaded, "You gotta find me a new seat." I said, "Bard, I've got just two words for you, (and any BMW owner reading this can anticipate those two words) Rick Mayer."

Rick Mayer is a legend in the custom motorcycle seat world, and produces comfortable saddles for touring motorcycles from Aprilia to Yamaha. But perhaps he's best known for working his magic on BMW's, a manufacturer known for producing outstanding long

distance touring motorcycles, but not known for equipping them with commodious seats.

There are lots of companies making aftermarket seats for BMW's, and lots of places you can take your stock seat to have a gel pad tossed in. But if the seat still doesn't fit you properly, you'll burn through a lot of time and money, and endure more pain in the process. But a Rick Mayer seat is definitely not an "off the shelf" seat.

Continued...



Ken Glassman
Motorcycles

Glassman: Custom seats cushion a ride

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Each one is totally custom crafted taking into consideration the individual's body type, weight, shape, inseam measurement, hip measurement, riding style, and needs. So it's a slam dunk that you'll get the highest quality seat, and that it will fit you like a butt glove.

Rick Mayer travels to many events and rallies around the country, like Chicago's IMS Show in February, and he encourages customers to come visit his shop in Anderson, California. But most of his business is done via the internet and telephone. The first step is to visit his web site and fill out an order form, which includes the type of seat you want for your particular bike, (solo or dual) the color, material, etc. Then the most important information required is your height, weight, inseam, and hip measurements, and a description of the problems you have with the current seat. Those measurements, along with several photos of you sitting on your bike in the riding position, (along with your passenger if ordering a dual seat) as well as you straddling your bike as if you were at a stop light. From those measurements and photos, and your seat complaints, Rick's experience tells him how wide the seat cavity should be at the hips, how wide or narrow the seat contour should be at the front, and how to cut and fashion the foam around the seat pan to relieve any pressure points, and provide the correct support in the right places.

Mayer uses a combination of both closed-cell and open-cell foam. Without going into a long dissertation on the scientific qualities and differences between the two, suffice it to say that each has a purpose, and it is the art and craft of placing each type of foam in the strategic places on the seat to accommodate the individual's particular anatomy that makes Mayer's seats so comfortable. And that art and craft has come from 30 years of experience and making thousands of seats, and getting feedback from the customers.

Mayer backs up his seats with

a commitment to excellence, not only by using the best materials and impeccable workmanship, but in customer satisfaction. If for some reason, the customer feels that the seat needs improvement, he merely has to send it back, and Mayer will fine tune it, so the customer gets exactly the comfort level he needs. And by actual count, only 2% of the seats ever need to come back for tweaking. Also, if you happen to buy a used bike that has one of his seats already on it, you can send it back to him and he'll modify it to suit your needs for only a \$25 charge, provided it would not require a new seat cover.

The first major test of my friend's new seat came this spring, when he rode the bike from here to Seattle. He said, "I could tell right from day one that this seat was twice as comfortable as the stock seat. But after a few days, and a thousand miles or so, the seat broke in and just seemed to be molded around my butt. By the time I reached Seattle, I felt like turning around and doing it all over again. 10 hour days in the saddle were no problem, and except for my radio and taller windshield, I wasn't longing for my Ultra. Now I'm really confident that doing 10,000 miles in 66 days will be a pleasure. And Rick Mayer was just the nicest guy in the world to deal with, and I couldn't be more satisfied."

Rick Mayer seats can be ordered in either vinyl or leather, and you can have him work on the rider portion only, if your bike's seat is built that way, or a complete dual saddle. Vinyl seats are only available in black, but leather seats can be ordered in a variety of colors.

Prices can range from \$419 for a leather solo seat and \$519 if you add the passenger seat on a BMW R1200 GS. For the larger BMW LT's or Honda Goldwings, add \$150. And the stock heating elements from those seats, if so equipped, can be retained. Those prices reflect and require that you send Rick your stock seat back once your new seat is delivered to you.

Postscript: My friends have since returned from their trip around the world and according



Rick Mayer designs custom seats for motorcycles.

to Bard, "This was the most exciting experience we've ever had. We rode two-up over 13,000 miles, (including our tour through Europe after we finished the World Tour in Munich) through more than a dozen countries. We rode through rain, sleet and snow, and in temperatures from below freezing to above 100 degrees. We rode on excellent roads, poor roads, no roads and goat paths. The BMW performed virtually flawlessly throughout the trip. But I don't think we'd have been able to do the trip if it wasn't for Rick Mayer's seat. I can't imagine what it would have been like to put all those miles on with an uncomfortable saddle. The Germans can manufacture a light bulb that will last forever, but haven't figured out how to make a seat good for more than 50 miles for their premier motorcycle, the BMW GS. I don't know Rick Mayer's heritage, but BMW should hire this guy, as he has solved this problem." We're ready to do it again, maybe in 2008."

So there you have it. I can't imagine a better testimonial for a seat than someone who has ridden one around the world. Rick Mayer is planning to be at our IMS show this February, in Rosemont. I will be bringing my seat from my Ninja 650R, and have him work his magic on that. I won't be riding my Ninja across the country, but it will surely make my trips across

state lines more enjoyable.

For more information about Rick Mayer seats, visit his web site at: www.rickmayercycle.com, or call 1-530-357-BUTT (2888).

Short Shift

Happy New Year to all our readers. I hope that 2007 will be a safe riding year for everyone. Don't forget that our International Motorcycle Show will be coming to the Donald Steven's Convention Center in Rosemont February 9 through 11. This year, the Daily Herald will be producing the Official Show Guide. Look for it in your newspaper on Monday, February 5. This year's show will be bigger and better than ever. Eric Hermann will be displaying his incredible motorcycle artworks, Matt Hoch will be showing off his newest custom bike, the Bub Enterprises Streamliner that just set the land speed record for motorcycles at 350 mph will be on display, and much more.

All the major manufacturers will display their entire lines of motorcycles and ATV's, and of course, there will be hundreds of vendors showcasing the latest in accessories and gear. You can get more information about the show by visiting the web site at www.motorcycleshows.com and clicking on the link for the Chicago Show. I'll see you all there.

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