



Stu Oltman

Stu has been an avid motorcyclist since 1966. He began touring the country on a 305cc Yamaha back then and has covered over a million miles on more than 40 motorcycles in the past 42 years.

He began his career in the motorcycle industry in 1975 after attending Kawasaki's service school in Atlanta. Since then, Stu has served in both technician and service manager positions in various dealerships across the US. He became involved in the automotive service industry in 1988, serving as both salesperson and technical trainer for various manufacturers of electronic test equipment. In 1998, Stu became involved with the Gold Wing Road Riders Association. After his purchase of a Wing and subsequent activity on the GWRRA message board system, the organization hired Stu as Wing World Magazine's Technical Editor – a position he continues to fill to this day.

Stu has written many "how to" articles for various motorcycle consumer and trade publications covering the full range of motorcycle repair with emphasis both on concepts and model-specific information. His electrical seminars have proven popular at rallies across the country, and he can be found helping riders solve technical issues on Internet forums ranging from vintage Japanese bikes to Aprilias. His DVDs covering repair of the Honda GL1500 models, edited by Illustrated Powersports, have proven especially popular.

Stu resides in Scottsdale, Arizona where he continues to write, ride, and teach. He and his wife Hilo still manage around 20,000 miles annually on various bikes, including at least one cross-country tour each summer.

This Is Going To Be Fun!

I'm so glad my friend Fred called me a couple of months ago. It was good to hear that he and Cherrie were doing well and no longer freezing their tails off up in the Northeast. I knew that Fred had been doing the touring gigs for some time now. But I was floored and flattered when he asked me to take on the technical duties at his planned new website, "Fred & Friends."

Many of you know me, or at least my name, from having read *Wing World* magazine. There, I answer readers' questions every month and provide occasional technical articles on various subjects. I like writing the articles much better. Not that there's anything wrong with answering (or asking) questions. Keep them coming. After all, most riders, expert though they may be, know

far less about their bike's workings than they might like. Does that stop any of us from picking up the nearest tool and wrenching away? No way! But, unfortunately, it doesn't necessarily get anything repaired, either.

There are two schools of thought on this – answer every question that comes in, even if I've answered it so many times in the past year that I'm ready to hang myself (what oil should I use?) - or instead, teach the readers "concepts." How things *work*. Without a clear understanding of how a part or system works, a person stands very little chance of diagnosing and repairing an elusive problem. And it's rather unproductive to provide technical instruction for completing a job when the person you're speaking with doesn't understand

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what you're saying, doesn't own the necessary tools, doesn't have a shop manual, and hasn't ever attempted to repair anything more complicated than a pencil sharpener. This line of thought is best summed up by an old Chinese proverb: "Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for the rest of his life."

I'd like to teach you to fish. Sure, I'll play fishmonger to the extent it's possible. But what I'd really like to do with this column is provide you with the basic information you'll need in order to understand what you're dealing with when you attempt to tune or repair your bike. And I'd appreciate your suggestions during the coming months until I get a feel for where the audience is in terms of needs, wants, and experience level.

What else can we do here? Right now, almost anything's possible; you tell me. I'll suggest what tools a person might want for working on bikes and where to get them. We can evaluate some of the latest technical accessories such as tire pressure monitoring systems and other things that make a bike safer or more reliable. For those interested, I'm even developing an introductory course on the use of digital storage oscilloscopes, often referred to simply as lab scopes, for diagnosing virtually any problem in a bike's electrical, engine management, fuel injection, or ignition systems. These tools have come way down in price in the past several years and can eliminate the 12-gauge diagnostic approach so often used – replace parts one by one till the symptom goes away. But first, I suspect most readers will appreciate a few articles on electricity as it applies to vehicles. This is a subject most working mechanics refer to as FM, because it can't be understood with our normal five senses. Yeah, we can sometimes hear, feel, see, or smell the results of electrical problems. But we can't use those senses to cure the root cause as we might with squeaking

brakes, worn sprockets, etc. Expect to see various parts of bikes torn down and systems overhauled with explanations in text and pictures describing how such systems are designed to work.

Vintage bikes are experiencing a surge in popularity right now, especially the Japanese models of the '70s and early '80s. Is your Water Buffalo misbehaving? Let us hear about it, and maybe we can help.

What am I *not* chomping at the bit to do? There are certain subjects that no matter how often they're explained and in what depth, debate rages on, based mostly on personal opinion and rumor. Most of you can guess at a few of the subjects to which I'm referring.

Racing modification is another topic I'd prefer to avoid. I'm not a race mechanic, and I suspect most of you don't intend to use your bikes primarily for racing. And because most commonly done induction, exhaust, and engine management modifications are half-baked efforts, they can result in more problems than solutions. My intention here is to help you avoid problems and correct them, not create them.

I'm really looking forward to developing a relationship with members of this website and providing a useful service – to dispel myths and rumors while creating insights that allow folks to become their own experts. To me, that's fun. And I'm grateful to Fred for providing me the opportunity.

-- *Stu*

Editor's Note:

During my years as Editor of Road Rider and Motorcycle Consumer News, I came to rely on Stu as my "go-to guy" for complex mechanical and electrical issues. He always came through for me, and in a straightforward and simple manner that even a mechanical idiot like myself could understand. I can't tell you how proud I am to have him on my team again!

Fred