

# RIDING OUT THE MONETARY CRI\$!\$

BY JOHN HUETTER



**Author reclines with reticent scooter. There's a cheap way out somewhere.**

Back in the not-so-distant but at least different old days when "your reporter" spent many of his hours, some of them pleasant enough, as editor of Major National Motorcycle Publications, the problem didn't seem so acute. When the demands of a serious racing habit, acquired late in life and all the more insidious because of it, required a fix it was usually possible to find what I needed at a price that I could afford. Like free. The remnants of a conscientious personality led me to avoid the





rip-off hustle of the motojournalism media known as print exchanged for parts. (Really, there is nothing quite so blatant going down in the moto-media as, "Hey, Freddy, gimme a new Dockwolopper 250 GP for the season and I'll give you lots of good ink in my book!", but it's close.)

#### YESTERDAY...

However, strange but useful items often came my way at times that often coincided with a need to race the following weekend. Nothing big: cables, a skid plate, a fender flap or fork protectors, the latest non-polluting

horsepower-increasing oil, things that I wasn't fully aware of at the time, add up . . . as the saying goes. Not to mention entry fees, both through the gate and to enter the race that brought you to the gate in the first place. Sometimes, if I announced with all honesty and candor that I was here to do an honest-to-God story for "Dirt or Road Motorcycle Review Competition Quarterly and Sporting News" a promoter, no doubt wishing to ease the financial pain of such weekly involvement by notoriously underpaid editors, would say, albeit reluctantly, "Well, we usu-

ally extend press courtesy around here . . ." which is more than can usually be said for the press.

So the impact of an expensive habit, double-digit inflation and Dow-Jones-plummeting depression never coincided to completely stagger me until I entered the Wonderful World of Free Enterprise. It's one Walt Disney didn't try to re-create. I mean I don't live in a cave. I knew inflation was bad because beer was up 20 cents a six-pack over a year ago (there's a hops shortage?) and I knew there was a depression because Jerry Ford told me so recently and



Koni tool gets strapped down by section of tubing and the nut that holds the cap on.

Presidents of the United States never lie, as everyone knows by now. And I knew I had a habit that bordered on being socially unacceptable. But I didn't know it was quite so expensive a habit. One reason I didn't know was that I hardly ever had a chance to ride my own motocross-oriented (but exceptional in all phases of the sport) motorcycle. During the days of regular offices and ringing telephones, I never had time because I was always riding somebody else's bike. One that belonged to the American distributor of a major or minor motorcycle manufacturer, more than likely. I would get impressions from these bikes and often pass them on to whomever forked over the money for

the publication in which that impression was printed. Sometimes months would go by before pangs of nostalgia would force me out to the garage to wipe the dust off the tank of my own scooter, see if the oil-soaking chain had dried out, and kick it through to see if life still lurked within. It was (is) a nice racing-type motorcycle. I just never had time to ride it much with the obvious consequence that very few items on it wore out, or broke, or needed maintenance.

#### ... AND TODAY

But that's all history. I had, for a person of moderate income, a heavy monkey on my back and didn't know it. At a point in time shortly before you read this, it all hit home. I found myself with one each racerly sort of dirty bike which, even to the eye

of the untrained observer, was suffering from bent handlebars, sagging chain, leaking fork seals, sacked springs, snapped levers, zonked out rear dampers, severely worn knobbies (I use the term loosely), cracking fender, pitted points, octagonal rims, flaccid clutch springs, dinged gas tank and a host of other maladies too horrible to mention. Funny all the things that happen to a racing motorcycle when you actually race it.

What this reasonably durable piece of competition-proven machinery was really doing was screaming, "Feed me money!" All the carefully measured pre-mix in the world, including a seven percent solution, wouldn't do. It had to be money. That magic ingredient was the only cure for these problems, as many of you have no doubt already discovered.

Now I am not into doing things for a motorcycle because it will make it pretty or feeling that it really deserves a new piston because the old one has been through hell, but many or all of the above-mentioned problems could very well have a severely detrimental effect on my own health and well-being. I don't like to think, let alone talk, about crashing . . . or its after-effects. A DNF isn't even too pleasant to contemplate.

Worst of all, I couldn't shake my habit. I tried remembering how painful my knees were on Monday mornings and succeeded, but I also remembered that singular internal rush that came with the collective rush to the first turn. I would shudder at a \$15 entry fee (increasingly all too common in these here parts) and then write a check, pretending it wasn't real money; just numbers in this little vinyl-covered book.

#### REALITY REARS ITS UGLY HEAD AND DEMANDS A SOLUTION

Something had to be done. The mental solutions ranged from giving up the sport entirely, cold turkey all the way (which might still happen due to reasons beyond my immediate or personal control, like the gummint) to striding into the offices of MXCycle Ltd. and demanding a full sponsorship in the pre-Old Timers 500 class including travel expenses, etc., etc. After all, I deserved it just as much as or more than all you other competition junkies. I'd been buying their product for years.

Survival in society being a series of compromises at best, none of that



happened. Miraculously, neither did my scooter cure itself of even one of its infirmities. It still demanded "Feed me money!" OK, money it was to be but as damn precious little as possible to make it safe, fun, and at least reasonably competitive to ride since those are the reasons for this clinging habit in the first place. (When I realized I would never be a Formula One racer, I went down to my local motocross bike dealer and . . . but that's another story.) (Don't stay tuned for it.)

Everything, but everything cost 10% to 100% more than the last time I worried about such items. But it always seems you can trade time for money and if you don't have the money (since your spending power has kept shrinking at the same rate as expanding inflation), then you'd better make the time. Strong self-reliance measures were called for. These will now be passed on to you in the hope that they will provide you with new ideas, inspiration, derisive laughter, or the final convincing reasons you need to give up your racing habit. But if you've read this far, I fear the chances of your ever completely shaking that habit are very slim. It's doubtful you'll read this far anyway since no publication is likely to print this after all the revealing things revealed in the first paragraphs.

### THE SHOCK REBUILDING TRIP (Better than new, really.)

Since most folks don't enjoy either unplanned, uncontrolled crashing or being pounded to hamburger from non-functioning rear suspension, we turn first in our quest for cheap racing to shock absorbers. Rather than buying new ones, rebuild the ones you have. The difference in price is \$40-60 a pair. Now are you interested? Actually, reworking dampers is E-Z for the home mechanic and immensely satisfying in both work and improved ride. Consider the four following well-known proprietary brands.

If you have KONIs, you'll need the basic O-rings, seals, fluid, and a new addition to your workbench: a KONI tool! Number One Products, the Motocross Fox, or Othman Distributing are three places to get the essential KONI tool at prices ranging from \$4.95 to \$5.95. Yes, you really

need it. Seals and O-rings are in the same range of dollars. More about KONIs in a minute but first, a word from . . . Telesco. Telesco rebuild kits are available (so far as we can determine) only from Bultaco dealers. They are an OK hydraulic damper *IF* you replace the damping fluid immediately, rebuild or no.

Boge/Mulhollands are the complete Dial-It-In-Yourself Damper. Not only are you encouraged to rebuild your Boogie (sentiments we can appreciate), you can build them the way you imagine you'd like them in the first place. They have a selection of bump damping, rebound damping, and spring rates that will completely confuse the neophyte. But if you kind of liked your new B/M dampers and they subsequently went away, most all dealers have the necessary fix-it parts. They also market their own fluid but some folks like HRL goosh in their Boge dampers and we're fast becoming Bel-Ray fanatics, even at \$12 a gallon.

If you enjoy bounding along on Charles Curnutt's products, he will rebuild them for you himself to original specifications, or new ones for that matter, at a cost of about \$20 last we checked. Mail them out to 29 Palms, California. This is commonly only a once a year procedure with Curnutts even if you ride every week. Wish he'd get his double-damping gas-fluid-whatever shocks in production.

What if your dampers are not rebuildable? A partial solution which may satisfy your particular needs on older Girlings, Yamaha, and Honda XL dampers is to drill a little hole in the fluid reservoir, pump out whatever it is they put in there, flush the internals and fill them while they're

inverted with a proprietary fluid of comparable viscosity. About as close as you're going to get with this method in determining what fluid viscosity to use is light, medium, or heavy. Let your spring rate be your guide since what you're trying to accomplish is control of the rebound of the compressed spring. High rate springs, heavy fluids, and so forth. Examples of such higher viscosity fluids, are Bel-Ray LT-300, Molly Blue Heavy, or one of the so-designated silicone-base fluids such as Fortner's or Poppy. A potential problem with the silicone fluids is that they may or may not lubricate the old shock seals adequately. If the rubber parts on the old shock are kind of shot anyway, leaking may result.

For drill, and photo authenticity, we rebuilt a set of KONIs and a set of Telescos. Besides, those are the ones we had that needed it. We opted for the Number One Products KONI rebuild kit because we dig on the pressure expansion seals. To wit, the more fluid pressure on the cap seals, the tighter they seal. Clever, no? The complete bag of goodies is \$14.95 plus the latest addition to your tool collection, the KONI cap remover. If the seal has been leaking, junk might have gotten into the body to score the piston. If it's too badly galled, a new piston and rod assembly is called for, but this is unlikely. It takes real gouges to make them in-operative and real pull to get a new one. If it's not leaking, there's still a red hot probability the internal O-ring is frazzled.

Use the KONI tool to remove the caps, after you've stripped the eye, nut and rubber bumper off the shock. (Ironically, if you use the new caps in the Number One Products kit,



Tired old Koni lies in pieces waiting for gentle hand to make well and good. Care replaces dollars.

you'll never have to use the KONI tool again—on those dampers. But don't throw it away. The new caps can be worked with a big adjustable wrench.) Take everything out paying attention to the assembly order and marvel at the delicate machining that keeps you from having a rigid frame. Rinse all parts in solvent and get the inside of the body clean, too. Put the inner tube back in, sitting in its little brass base and fill it as follows with Bel-Ray LT-300 or something else that you know for sure works as well. We don't know of anything commercially available that does. Remember how it came apart and after installing the new O-rings (on the top of the piston) and seals (in the new caps), put it back together the same way. Quantities of LT-300:

Eye-to-eye length 11.9"—62cc  
 12.4"—66cc  
 12.9"—70cc  
 13.4"—74cc

When you shove the piston and rod back in the tube, be gentle. Slide it in like, uh, well, slowly so you

**Getting the spring off the Telesco is man-eating job, but once you are this far going is easy.**

won't slop Bel-Ray all over your vise, workbench, etc. Lube the new seals with what you do spill and tighten the cap down in stages, alternating making the cap threads disappear and pushing the rod down a little. This will give the air a chance to escape and reduce subsequent foaming. Push the rod all the way down to its threads, then wait a bit for the last bubbles and finish tightening the cap down.

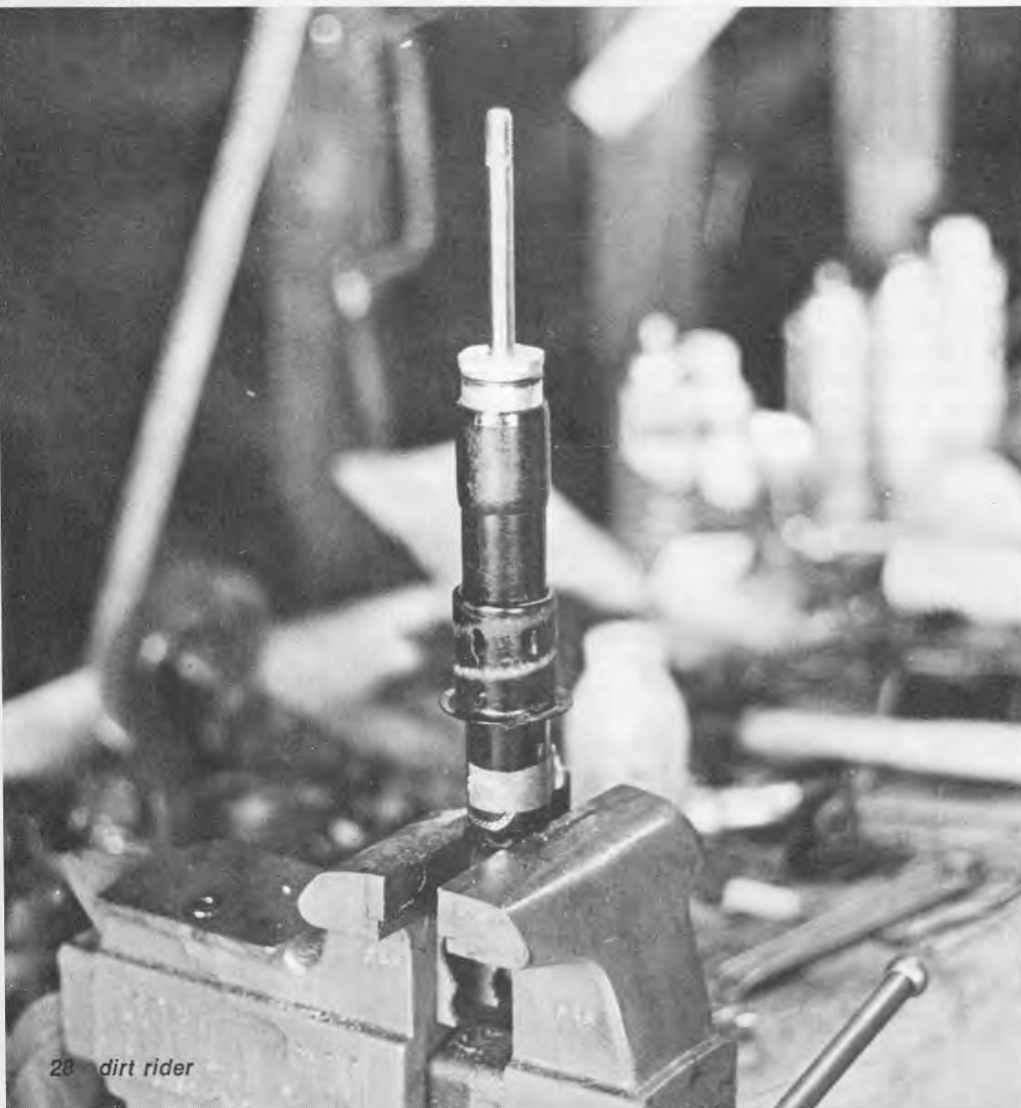
It takes a strong man to get the stock springs off the Telesco dampers. If you've been riding on them awhile, you've probably already replaced the stock springs anyway. Shock disassembly is straightforward and simple. Rinse them clean and fill them with 65 measured cc of Bel-Ray LT-100 and bleed out about 5cc along with the air bubbles by pushing the piston in slowly before the cap is screwed all the way down, just like with the KONIs. Replacement seals and O-rings should be available from your Bultaco dealer. Replace the stock damping fluid as described even if the rubber looks good. They'll damp better and a lot longer.

## WHAT'S UP FRONT

Now you have the leaky seals and sacked springs in the front damping units to deal with. If your forks were basically acceptable in function, that's all you have to do and we'll get on with it in a minute. If they're not, like they're not on a lot of Japanese bikes, one of the proprietary fork kits is the best low bucks solution. Number One Products has them, so do Terry Industries, and WEBCO. Cost is about \$5 to \$20 depending on the source and your brand of bike. The #1 kit used did give \$10 worth of improved fork feel. What you get are little pieces of metal that change the damping characteristics of your stock rods and orifices to something like what you wanted in the first place. If you have a good set of circlip pliers, installation following the detailed instructions that accompany all the kits we've seen is fairly straightforward, even for the fumble-fingered. Fork oil viscosity depends on your weight, the bike's weight and how and what you ride. Try lighter for motocross, heavier for cross-country racing.

Probably the cheapest method of spring replacement is to determine the wind you need by measuring coils/inch, coil diameter and external diameter of the spring, then seeking out the American Spring Company and snipping off the right length for your forks. It's also the biggest hassle. See if you can find somebody better endowed financially who is replacing their stock springs—unused or virtually so—with el trickos. Ask or bargain for the stockers. Also, Ceriani springs from Alsport/Steen's will fit a lot of forks that were basically copied from Cerianis, like CZ forks. This is more expensive but still a whole lot cheaper than buying and installing new forks. With a fork kit, new springs, and new seals you will effectively have new forks at a fraction of the price.

In the matter of fork seals, consider the trade-off between price and longevity. John Lancione's product from Universal Accessories is expensive but excellent: a pressure differential seal with a one year replacement guarantee against failure. Actually, they'll last longer than you'll own the bike. Price varies, but it's steep, about \$14. Honda seals are cheaper, fit a wide variety of fork sliders but work cheaper, usually. There's also the basic question of whether you want to support "Light Brown" or Honda.





## YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAIN

Most of us still ride chain-driven motorcycles. Most of these chains still wear out, particularly in competition. Generally speaking, buy the chain of the country you live in. It'll be the cheapest. If in Spain, buy Joresa; in Czechoslovakia, buy Favorit (also known as CZ chain); but if you're in the U.S., buy U.S. chain, probably Diamond. If you have the shop cut it for you from a roll of chain, it is often cheaper than pre-packaged chains. Don't forget to save your master link and get the right number of links, not length. Your old chain will have stretched. It's even cheaper at a chain supply store. You could buy a whole roll of 520 or 530 or whatever and cut it for your buddies' scooters at a slight profit to you and a savings to all. Take a sample with you to match up.

As a final note, "old" CZ chains start to look better and better as prices go up. CZ chain that appears too shot for competition will still work well on trailbikes and the like. If kinking's your problem, you've got a problem. Lots of WD-40 and two pliers provide an interim solution when combined with patience and elbow grease.

## TIRED TIRES

If your knobby is worn but not chunked, the low budget solution is to cut it. John Banks kept re-cutting one Trelleborg he had for most of a GP season. He was really attached to that tire. It will take two single-edged razor blades and most of a six-pack to trim the knobs on one rear 4.50x18 tire. If there's, say, three-quarters of an inch left on the knobs, it's probably worthwhile to get on it. Try to make your cuts as vertical to the tread surface as possible, particularly on the leading edge. Before you get to the cutting stage, get out your tire irons and flop your tire so the former trailing edge of the knobs is the new leading edge. It should be sharper.

If your tires are hopeless, consider buying retreads before you buy a new one. They are available in most parts of the country or by mail order and seem to run about \$20 for a rear knobby of 4.00 or 4.50 dimensions. Price of a new one of comparable quality is about \$35. Some riders in this area are convinced that retreads are the way to go, especially on hard surfaces.



## HANGING ON

If your handlebars are tweaked, take them off and, using a bench vise and a length of plumbing pipe, try to bend them back to a reasonable facsimile of their original shape. If there's still a crimp in them when you bend them back, don't use them.

(Text continued on page 80)

Many happy afternoons can be spent carving corners into your old knobs with a razor blade. Have fun.

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# CRISIS

(Text continued from page 29)

You'll hurt yourself eventually. Suzuki handlebars fit a lot of people and at \$7 a copy are one of the best deals we know about. Several shops are also beginning to offer lighter weight chrome moly steel bars for \$11-12. Still not bad. Distorted bars are one thing you really can't ride with. You lose control and gain fatigue and don't have a very good time at all. If your levers have gone bye-bye, consider some of the stock Japanese levers. Honda, Yamaha, Kawasaki levers, the newer ones anyway, seldom draw complaints even if they don't get compliments and, if you ride a European bike, will be less expensive than stock replacement items. You might have to buy the whole assembly to get a fit but it's still not too pricey.

## WELL-ROUNDED

Advice and experience on rims is simple. Go where the demand isn't. The most sought after rims these months are DID and ridgeless Akront. So the solution is to go after something less desirable (though it may function just as well) because it will usually cost less. Akronts with shoulders may suit your needs just fine if you ride in dry areas most of the time, like the desert, or even for enduro bikes where increased unsprung weight due to possible mud collection isn't as critical as in flat-out racing. The new American-made Sun rims are comparable to DID's in profile, have pretapped side screws for quick tire changes and cost about \$10.00 less per copy than a DID in most places. There are really few cheap solutions in competition wheels, just cheaper ones.

## SELF-TAUGHT SKILLS

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