



## SMOKEY'S CORNER #8

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### Wheelies, Deeleys and Other Wonders:

I get a call from a friend "Deeleys is looking for someone to pick up and deliver bikes and parts", so off to see Trev. They put me to uncrating new motorcycles and washing used ones. Next day Trev. sticks his head out the back door and asks, "You driven the wrecker yet?" I reply "No." "O.K., next time!"

The wrecker was an old Harley 74 flat head with an enormous sidecar consisting of a wooden box reinforced with steel straps measuring about 30 inches wide 8 feet long with sides about 16 inches high, there was a tailgate at each end that formed sort of a ramp so a motorcycle could be rolled into it. This was used to carry motorcycles and parts etc. on deliveries. The transmission had reverse and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. When I got to drive it there was no 2nd gear, so you wound it up and quickly shifted into 3rd and flogged off down the road.

Never having ridden a Harley before let alone a side hack, I was a little apprehensive, especially after the previous driver filled me in on the idiosyncrasies of this particular unit. Bill says, "The side car and bike don't lean the right way, so when you get up to about 20-25 m.p.h. the handlebars start wobbling around, the best way is to get going as fast as you can and still control it, get into 3rd then put your left foot up on the handlebar, while holding onto the throttle with both hands!" I thought, "is he serious?" As he walks away he says "Oh yeah, be careful only the rear brake works!"

A couple of days later Trev. says "you ridden the wrecker?" I say "No." He says, "well today is the day, go see them at the front counter." My instructions - load up that new 305cc Honda Dream, get the papers for it from the Austin Shop, stop at the motor vehicle office at Commercial and Broadway and deliver it to the new owner on Mountain Highway in North Van.

I leave Deeley's Shop (same location as now) head to the Austin Shop (Where Deeley sold cars and had their main office near Granville on Broadway.) As I approached Cambie St. the light turns red, I'm behind a City Bus, I apply the brake, I 'm not slowing down at all! I shoulder check the next lane is empty, quickly steer into it narrowly missing the bus, finally coming to a stop halfway down the side of the bus! Hey! piece of cake! I arrive back at Deeleys to the apparent relief of everyone including myself. A fellow worker says to me " The last driver managed to flip the unit upside down, and another time he drove it right through the plate glass window of the showroom before they fired him.

Being young and stupid I knew nothing like that would happen to me! Right away I decided to fix the front brake, no wonder it didn't work, no cable! Went to parts got a cable, put it on, now I could stop, next step, I look at the bike and the side car, Hmmm! bike is leaning towards the sidecar. I ask Vic Smith the shop foreman how to set it up. He says "Don't know, ask Bill Goldfinch (head mechanic), Bill says "the bike is supposed to lean away from the side car" "How much?" doesn't know, says "try and see what happens!" The top bar that attaches the sidecar to the bike is clamped to the twin front down tubes with "U" bolts just under the fuel tank. I adjust them so the bike is leaning out a bit, go for a test ride, Wow! 30 m.p.h. one hand on the bars, no wobble, 50 m.p.h. what a difference.

Next problem, gears, I complain, Shop says don't want to spend any time on it, so just drive it. Shortly thereafter I do the shift into third, no third gear! Now I tear around in first gear (7 to 10 m.p.h.). They send me to the Kerr St. dump near Marine Drive with a load of motorcycle packing crates, because the City charges \$1.00 per crate to take them. When I return two and a half hours later, they complain how long I take! Finally, I say, "Fix it or I won't ride it any more". When I come back after my day off its fixed, problem,

bent shifter forks! Now the trip to the dump is done in no time, while there I weigh the unit on the scale 1200 lbs. empty!

One situation that occurred, like every time I stopped, especially on a hill, was the tendency of the front wheel to come off the ground. (wheelie, get it?) This occurred when the clutch was engaged, the drag caused by the sidecar wheel acting against the force of the driven wheel would make the machine veer to the right and depending on the force applied (read throttle) the front wheel would come off the ground. To counteract this, I would stop the machine at a angle to the left, the steeper the hill and or heavier the load in the sidecar the greater the angle. I got pretty good at judging the angle so when the wheelie occurred, the front wheel would come down in the straight-ahead position!

One day the foreman said "Go to North Vancouver and pick up a Police Harley that's been in an accident then come to the marina under the Second Narrows and pick me up. Off I go, takes me and two R.C.M.P. to load the Hog, down to the Marina pickup Vic, his toolbox, two batteries, and a generator, and Vic, all in the sidecar! Back to the Shop he says. I stop at a light on a slight incline, dial in my angle, Vic says, "Why are you stopping like that?" He soon finds out.

Hit a few bumps, the sidecar tire rubs on the fender, man this must be the heaviest load ever. This worsens as we go along. When we stopped at Broadway and Fraser Streets, my angle is 45 degrees. I let out the clutch, swings 70 degrees to the right! Mutterings and unprintable comments from the sidecar. Pull rig around 90 degrees This time the rig swings 180 degrees to the right! Loud cries of frustration and more comments issue from the sidecar occupant. I said to him "get out and push", he does amid more comments about my driving abilities compared to his attempts at making love. This does the trick, leaving Vic standing in the middle of the road. I ride to the shop, get off, look at the sidecar tire, a big groove is worn in the centre of the tread, caused by a fender mounting bolt.

Trevor Says to me "take Ivan and those rolls of material to my place in Deep Cove, put them in my garage at the bottom of the driveway." The rolls were about six ft. long, 18 in. in diameter, weighted about 200 lbs. each, looked like indoor-outdoor carpet. Ivan and I drag the three rolls into the sidecar, with Ivan perched on top off we go!

Arriving we see that the back tire is just about flat, put air in it at the only garage, slow leak! We had to go down a very steep driveway to the garage to unload. We decide to take one roll down at a time. I decide to back down, the cut bank is on one side the other has a 4in. pole to hold the bank in place then a 25 ft. drop. Suddenly the sidecar swings down the drive and the unit heads for the edge, I'm ready to bale off, the rear tire stops against the 4in. pole. I was certain the whole thing was going to go over the edge, to land on the sundeck below. I drove the rest down forward, no problem. The tire is almost flat so we rush back to the gas station, more air, back to town. Halfway back the tire goes flat, nothing to do but continue at 5m.p.h. late for quitting time, "what took you so long?"

The tire they put on squealed loudly when you applied the brakes hard, I would come up to a car get in the blind spot lay on the brakes and laugh at their reaction. I did this to a old lady in a Packard, her reaction was to swerve into the next lane, almost onto the sidewalk, without looking. I thought, no more of that Al, scaring old ladies like that.

The mode of transportation during rainy weather was by Hino Humbee, what may you ask is that? This Japanese contrivance (a wonder) was a three wheeled, canvas topped, mechanical braked little motorcycle with a small pickup box on the back. Powered by a 200cc two cycle engine located between the drivers' legs, with the spark plug right there under a cover. This was a good place for it because it frequently fouled. Pockets were located on the canvas doors containing spare plugs and a wrench. I was cautioned about doing

quick turns under power, (power hah!) as the machine had a tendency to fall over on its side!! This had already been proved by another driver.

Needless to say, I avoided this machine, if possible, mind you it had a windshield wiper, turn signals and electric start. The toll booth operator tried to make me pay car toll for it (25 cents) and wouldn't believe it was a motorcycle until I had him look at the license plate! The regulations at that time were handlebars it was a motorcycle steering wheel it was a car. One of these things came in for repairs, been flipped on its side, I was told to deliver it and a fellow employee was to follow me and pick me up, yes, there he was behind me in his car I deliver the Humbee, no ride!, wait around, take the bus back to the shop, everyone's gone home. Next day, I find out he ran out of gas!

This job was quite interesting because you never knew what you would be doing next. If they wanted a small item rushed somewhere they would say "Take that Triumph out of the used bike line and rush this whatever to wherever (the generator fell off when I was doing 80 m.p.h. down Fraser St., I had to hold it on with my foot!), or it was take that Harley 74 full dresser downtown to get whatever. I had never driven one before, foot shift and all. A rear chain came off doing 50 m.p.h. up Main St.

As I mentioned earlier the side hack weighed 1200 lbs. empty, even so it was fairly easy to get the sidecar off the ground, this I did at every opportunity! I would park the hack at right angles to the curb in front of the Shop on Broadway, (back then it faced that way) this was done by pulling up parallel to the curb and reversing -smartly in an arc so the back wheel would come to rest against the curb, this maneuver caused the sidecar wheel to come off the ground. I thought nothing of this as it was not intentional. One day one of the counter staff said, "every time you pull up to park everyone stops to watch because no one else has ever done that!" (another wonder?)

One day I came around a long sweeping curve to the right, made a slight over correction to the left, the sidecar snapped up, startled, I looked over at it, I'm looking right into the bottom of the car!, I shut the throttle, the sidecar dropped with a crash. I figured a few more degrees higher and it would of flipped! Shortly after this I noticed a peculiar thing, when I accelerate the gearshift lever moves backward in the gate, when I decelerate it moves forward! Hmmm, I stop and check this out the frame is broken through both tubes just below the support for the sidecar this is all that is stopping the engine from dropping to the ground! I very carefully drive to the Shop, now this they fix right away.

THE ACCIDENT (another wonder?) They sent me over to Georgia St. near Stanley Park on a delivery, coming back empty along Hastings St. near Howe St. a car makes a left turn in front of me, a pedestrian steps off the curb, the car stops right in front of me, no problem I swerve to the left to go around the rear of the car, a 3 ton moving van pulls out from the left, sees me and stops. there is only so much space between the front of the truck and the back of the car, question, will I fit, not being able to stop and measure, I steer as close to the front of the truck as I can. BANG, I hit the rear of the car with side car! This flips the sidecar in the air high enough to clear the rear of the car, landing on the other side with a crash. I stop, dead silence, everyone is looking at ME. Survey the damage, the sidecar fender clipped the rear bumper of the car hard enough to push it over and make a mark on the paint. mangled sidecar fender, that's it! I report to the Shop, they say "Wasn't a Caddie or a Lincoln like the last driver, was it? "No", say I just a Ford, "I'll try to do better next time."

The reason I was hired at Deeley's was that they promoted one person from the shop to the parts department to replace the parts person who had left for a journey to England. Three months later this person returned and wanted his job back. This resulted in me coming to work one day to be told my services were no longer required.

Next week my friend told me the engine in the Wrecker blew up! The Last Wonder?