

# Group Riding with the River City Beemers

On a group ride, there are three goals:

- **Safety** -- no accidents or near misses.
  - **Successful navigation** -- we all arrive.
  - **Enjoyment** -- grins around.
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To make that happen a few practices have arisen within the club over the years that make it all work.

## Departures

- **Come with a full fuel tank.** Ride leaders have planned the route assuming you will have fuel for 150 miles as of the departure. If you don't then you may have to break off on your own en route to refuel.
- **Rides depart sharply on time.** Have your gear on and be fully ready for engine start *5 minutes before the scheduled departure time*. If you are a few minutes late you're going to miss it, but look around at the departure site ... frequently the ride leader will leave instruction sheets if possible.
- **Tell the ride leader if you have any special issues** before you depart. If you know you'll be a slower member of the ride, then when we line up, take a position near the rear.

## Underway

- **Staggered formation, 2-4 second interval.** Ride in a staggered line (**not** side-by-side) leaving 2-4 seconds between you and the bike in front of you. (This approach gives you emergency maneuver space. The guy in front can do a full panic stop and still not be run over by you if you have your head together, and also this provides lateral obstacle avoidance maneuverability.)
- **Stay close in congested city traffic.** Try and stay closer together than you would on the road, primarily so that you can attempt to all make the lights together. At lights, using 2 lanes is ok.
- **Ride at your own speed.** Occasionally a ride may get faster than you are comfortable with .... If so, **drop back!** *Ride your own ride* within the bounds of your skill, comfort and the limits of your machine. Let others pass you by staying to the right and waving them on if appropriate.
- **Pass safely when you need to.** If a large opening is occurring in front of the rider in front of you, and you would like to ride faster, then safely pass and move ahead in the pack.
- **Don't blast at 90 to close up a gap.** If a gap opens due to traffic or other restrictions, you don't have to ride 90+ to catch up ... just keep motoring reasonably and you'll regain position. (The CHP particularly recommends this approach.)
- **Keep track of the guy BEHIND you.** The ride leader can't keep track of any more than 4-5 bikes behind him. That means that we each have to watch out for the one behind us. If he stops or appears to have problems, then drop back or go back and see if help is needed. It's a buddy system.
- **Last guy waits at turns.** Where a turnoff occurs, if there is a significant gap between you and the rider behind you, the last person should wait at the intersection to be certain the following rider sees the turn. The last guy (sweeper) gets a green light.
- **If you need to stop,** hand wave or do something to tell people either you need help or for them to go on and you'll catch up. (It can be embarrassing when 20 riders do a U-turn to come back and find you relieving yourself in the bushes).
- **Traffic tickets are yours.** Even if you are just "keeping up" with the guy leading, any traffic ticket you get will be your own ... it's *your head* controlling *your hand* on *your throttle*.
- **ASK questions.** If you aren't certain about something, ASK! That's what the club is for. We get flattered to no end to be able to answer a question. (or at least thought to know the answer!)

## CAN YOU SPARE TWO OR THREE SECONDS??

*by Gary Stofer*

As the busiest time of the motorcycling year is starting to arrive I find it necessary to ask if you can spare me a couple of seconds. No, I'm not trying to drum up a little 'volunteer' help on club activities or projects, but as more and more people are starting to join in the club rides, I could sure use those two or three seconds. What I'm talking about of course is the two or three seconds I'd like you to leave between us as we're riding. When you're in front of me, I'll be at least two seconds behind. And I'd sure appreciate it if you would return the favor when I'm in front of you. (Of course, if you're getting ready to blast past me I'll understand.)

You see, I sometimes slow or stop abruptly for no apparent reason. Sometimes it's because I think I see a hazard in the road. Sometimes I think I might see something approaching from a side road or a field. Maybe a kamikaze dog trying to beat me to some imaginary finish line. As I am also an Airhead, sometimes it's just a field full of sheep. At any rate I have only three options for avoiding hazards. Speed up, slow down, or swerve, but when I have another motorcycle close on my backside, 1/3 of my options are eliminated. I become reluctant to hit the brakes hard for fear that the rider behind me might not be able to react in time. And if I'm also following the rider in front of me too closely, 2/3 of the options are gone.

When you're riding in a group, do you keep track of the bikes behind you? I do. But quite often I find myself checking the mirror for a bike that was behind me last time I looked, only to find it missing. But it's not missing, just tucked into my blind spot. I even have those little convex mirrors to help eliminate the blind spot, but there's still a big enough one to park a motorcycle in.

Sometimes when I'm leading a ride, I'm not actually too sure where the next turn is, but if I've got a little room behind me I can slow abruptly and make the turn. Have you ever been in a group of riders all making U turn because the leader missed the turn?? It's not pretty. Kind of like going to dinner at a Real Estate office. (Ask Tony) I used to say that if I didn't know you well enough to share your sleeping bag with you that I didn't want you within 2 seconds of me while we're riding. And then my wife started riding regularly so that axiom doesn't work any more. Two or three seconds; it's really not a whole lot to ask.

Reprinted from May '97 River City Beemers' President's Corner